



# BURNSVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

## CPNI Post-Workshop Report

October 12-13, 2017

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## 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 environments. 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.

CPNI is a 501(c)3 charitable organization and relies on grants and contributions to provide its assistance to qualifying towns. This program was provided by CPNI and its subcontractors and volunteers without charge to the Town.

<http://www.cpni-nc.org/>

## About Appalachian State University Team

The CPNI Team was joined for this workshop by two faculty and two students from Appalachian State University. Dr. Elizabeth Shay from the Department of Geography and Planning and her undergraduate student Nicholas O'Reilly, Dr. Maureen MacNamara from the Department of Social Work, and Department of Geography and Planning graduate student/intern for CPNI, Carly Everhart also attended and contributed to the workshop. Dr. Maureen MacNamara, Dr. Elizabeth Shay, and Nicholas O'Reilly were volunteer attendees to the workshop and provided geography, planning, and social work perspectives on Burnsville. Intern Carly Everhart helped compose the pre-workshop memo for the CPNI team, took notes and photos during the workshop, and contributed to the post-workshop summary report.

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## Executive Summary

On October 12 and 13, 2017 a two-day workshop was held in the town of Burnsville, North Carolina. The workshop featured meetings with town officials from Burnsville, CPNI and NCGrowth teams, Appalachian State University faculty and students, and Burnsville residents/business owners to discuss and assess the potential for growth in the town. A walking tour of the town also was conducted to visit key buildings and properties with development potential. Some key themes that were discussed during the workshop include:

- Interest in increasing tourism as well as accommodating projected population growth
- Maintaining historic character while attracting a younger population
- Major infrastructure needs – water/sewer
- Availability of social services to address health and aging needs
- Development potential of key buildings/properties

This report details the discussions and activities during the workshop. It lists the workshop participants, summarizes the main themes of the workshop discussions, discusses resident and workshop participant recommendations, and provides images of key properties and buildings in the town. The report closes with a list of key recommendations and next steps as suggested by the CPNI team.



## Workshop Participants

### CPNI Team

- Stephanie Cooper: Moseley Architects
- Jeanine Bachtel: UNC-Charlotte
- Aaron Bopp: SKA Consulting Engineers
- Laura Budd: Weaver Budd Law
- Brian Crutchfield: Timmons Group
- Mike Lester: Element Analytical
- Chuck Cardwell: SKA Consulting Engineers
- Pat Fogleman: CPNI Staff
- Randy Benson: Videographer

### Workshop Volunteers

- Carolyn Fryberger: NCGrowth
- Carly Everhart: Appalachian State University Intern
- Elizabeth Shay: Appalachian State University Faculty
- Maureen MacNamara: Appalachian State University Faculty
- Nicholas O'Reilly: Appalachian State University Student

### Town of Burnsville Participants

- Theresa Coletta: Mayor
- Wanda Proffitt: Former Yancey County Economic Development Director & Local Realtor
- Jamie McMahan: Yancey County Economic Development Director
- Ron Powell: Town Council (outgoing)
- Bunny McIntosh: Town Council (incoming)
- Tim Honeycutt & Ember Tribble: owners of "Menagerie", "Cool Catz Candy & Cream" and "Rad Dawgz Hot Dog Joint"

- Warren & Larissa Bare: "Otway Development, LLC"
- Wendy Reid: owner of "Yummy Yarn"
- Richard Kennedy
- Joyce Hones & Mark Woodham: owners of "W Studio"
- Dennis Matelski: owner of "Something Special Gift Shop" & "Monkey Business Toy Shop"
- Steve Bruton: volunteer coordinator for Mitchell/Yancey Habitat for Humanity
- Chad Fox: manager of the "Town Center" building
- Johnny England
- Lynn Thompson: owner "Off the Beaten Path"
- Jim Parlier: North Carolina Farm Bureau Insurance Agent
- Ronny Tipton: Burnsville Public Works

## Economic & Demographic Characteristics

### Economy

Notable businesses in Burnsville and the surrounding Yancey County include bed and breakfasts, motels, campgrounds, restaurants, and recreation/adventure.

Industries with most employees include:

- healthcare and social services
- retail trade
- accommodation and food service
- educational services
- construction
- textiles – Glen Raven
- telecommunications – Altec Industries
- others – mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction, construction, public administration, and arts, entertainment, recreation

DATA USA: Burnsville, NC. (n.d.). Retrieved September 25, 2017, from <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/burnsville-nc/#economy>

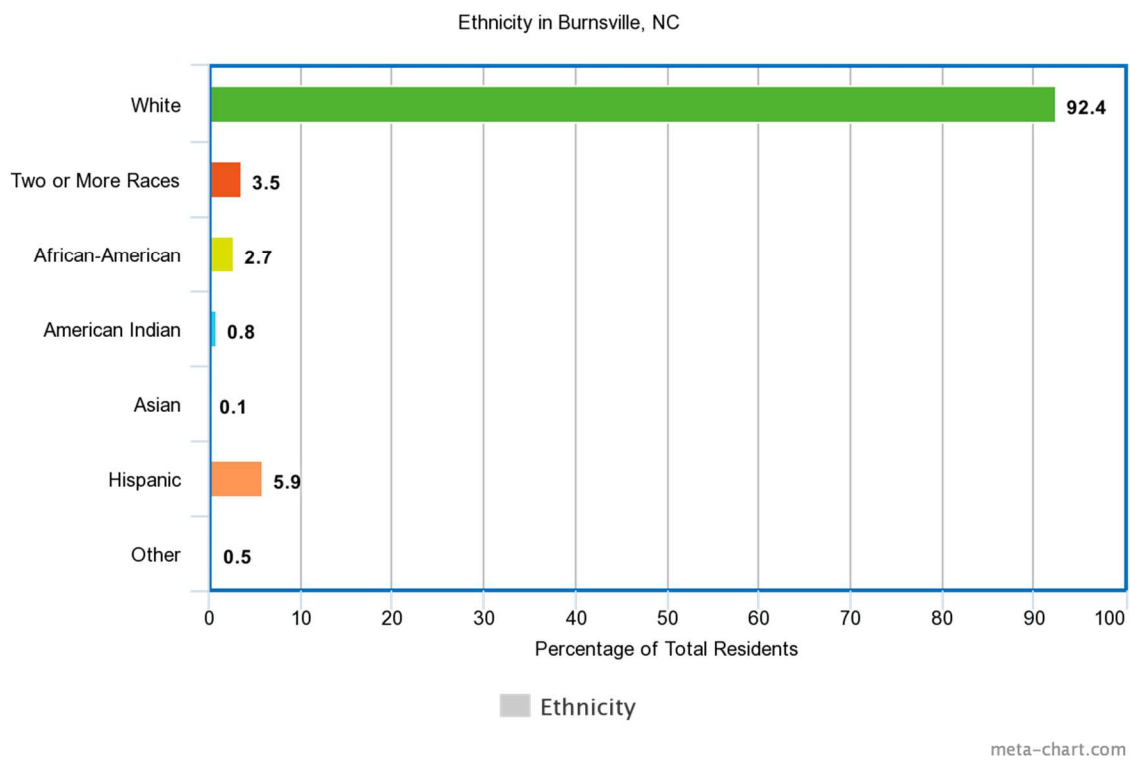
Yancey/Burnsville Chamber of Commerce, Yancey County Economic Development Commission, and the Town of Burnsville are committed to a business environment that supports business and entrepreneurship. Their goal: “provide the most current information and resources to assist in your locating and doing business in Yancey County.” The County has a Certified Entrepreneurial Community

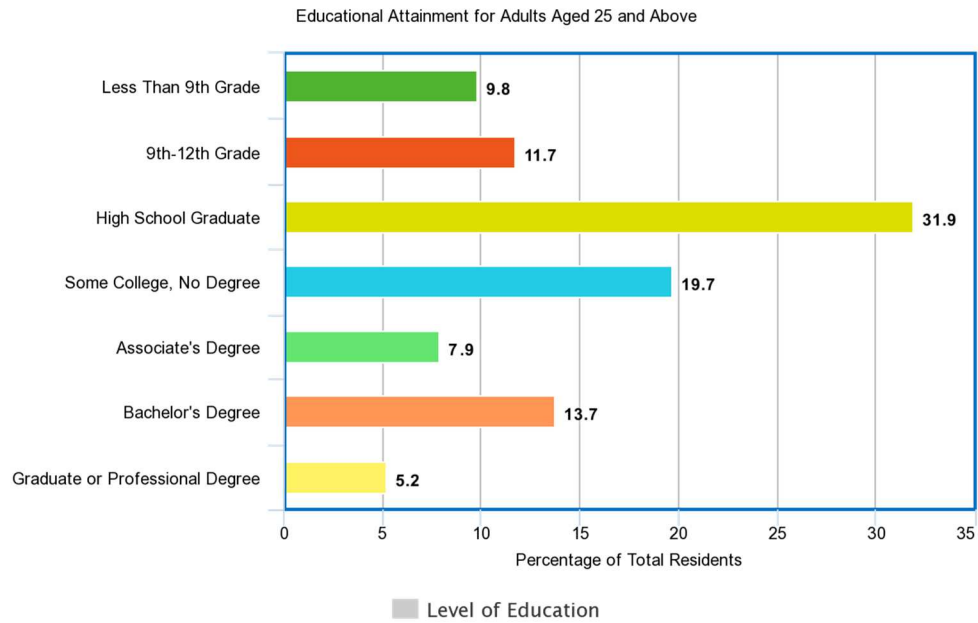
designation, which denotes policies, regulations, opportunities, and business climate that support entrepreneurial growth.

Yancey County Economic Development Commission: <https://yanceyedc.org/>

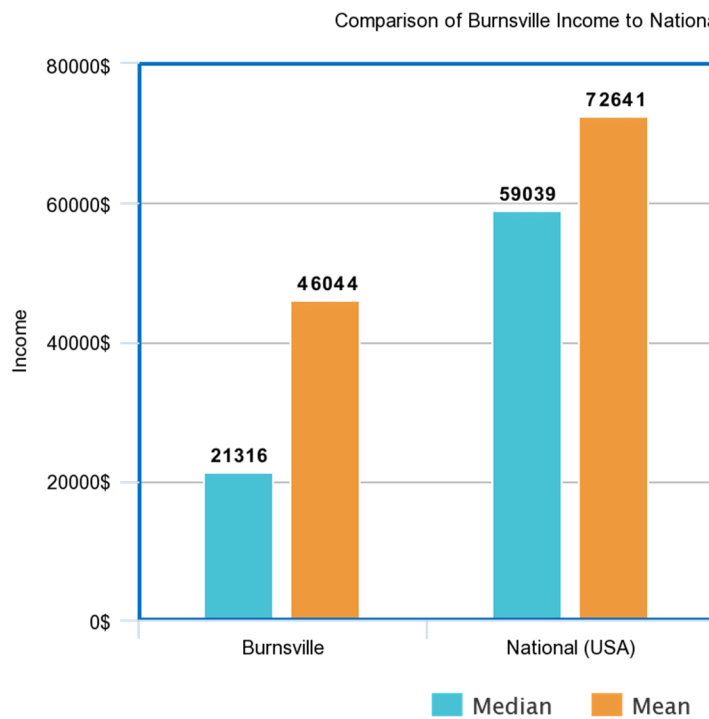
## Demographics

Population: 1,653; 52.6% female, 47.4% male





meta-chart.com



meta-chart.com

"2015 American Community Survey" American FactFinder.  
<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

## Workshop Summary



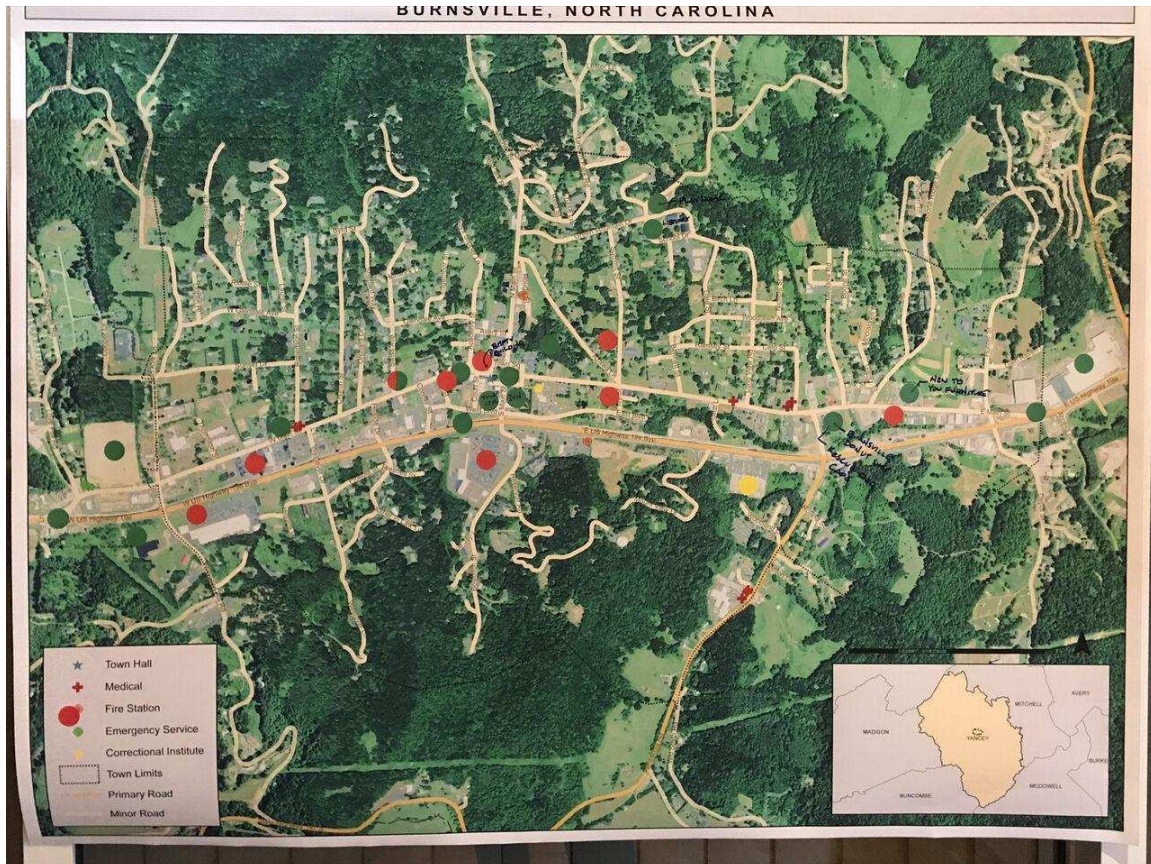
**October 12, 2017**

At the first workshop session, two exercises were conducted to understand the assets and shortcomings of the town. A map of the town was available for town residents and officials to put colored stickers on key locations in the town. A red sticker denoted something that the town wanted to get rid of, a yellow sticker denoted mixed response, and a green sticker denoted something that the town wanted to keep. Some of the highlights are as follows:

- Green – buildings with historical character
- Green – hosiery mill building
- Green – empty site where sock factory used to be
- Green – green space/park



- Yellow – Ingles (comment: “love the store, hate the parking lot”)
- Mixed Green and Red – old hospital (comment: building can’t be saved but land is already publicly owned)
- Red – parking lots on 19E



The discussion of the map activity centered on the town’s interest in annexing the former industrial locations just outside of town, attracting younger people to the town, economic growth through tourism and population growth, diverting traffic from Route 19E and into town, and necessary infrastructure needs for the town. The former industrial areas just outside of town are of interest because of



the limited land available within the town limits currently, and because they are potential places for new industries to come to Burnsville, where they would have plenty of space.

Attracting younger people to the town is of great interest to town officials and residents. Most of the discussion on this topic centered on Appalachian State student Nicholas O'Reilly's comment on the parking lots along Route 19E. He argued that they are an eyesore for people driving down Route 19E and may drive them away from the area without ever revealing Burnsville and what it has to offer. Other topics related to getting younger people into Burnsville included housing, art, farming, green spaces, and transportation.

Discussing potential economic growth, participants expressed interest in the tourism market for both seasonal and year-round tourism as well as future population growth. Absorbing growth from Asheville was discussed; the town seems receptive to this potential growth and the younger population it could bring, but also concerned about maintaining Burnsville's identity and character as a small town with historic charm. Marketing towards this growth is of interest to the town.

Attracting traffic from Route 19E is already in progress. The town is working on a Gateway project to place art installations and landscaping to beautify the entryway into town off 19E to attract and

direct visitors to the town. There also was mention of an ongoing project working with the NCDOT on negotiating landscaping along Route 19E to make the roadway through the town more attractive.

Brian Crutchfield discussed the existing Infrastructure with Ronnie Tipton, Town of Burnsville Public Works Director. Tipton indicated the Town has adequate capacity in their system to accommodate additional development. Any commercial and residential developments will not be a problem. If the Town were to land a significant Industrial prospect that uses a large amount of process water and sewer, it could be problematic in the short term. However, the Town has identified ways that it can add capacity to their systems should such a user come online. The Town's newest water and sewer lines are located along US Hwy 19E Bypass, and the oldest water and sewer lines are located along Main Street. The Town is spending significant money on repairing old infrastructure along Main Street. This will continue to be a problem until funding becomes available for larger improvements. The Town has been successful in obtaining some limited grant funding for improvements, but those are typically tied to new development and especially new job creation. They are continuing to look for available grants to assist them with infrastructure improvements and repairs. Until funding becomes available, it is likely that new development in the downtown area will have to bear the cost of some isolated infrastructure repairs.

The second exercise from the first workshop session had participants write on sticky notes what they would like to keep, toss, or create in Burnsville, and place them on one of three posters labeled as such. These were discussed on the second day of the workshop. The responses that were discussed further were:

- Keep - Character/history/small town feel of Burnsville
- Keep - Incubator space for businesses
- Keep - farmers' market
- Keep - focus on arts
- Toss - empty storefronts
- Toss - restriction on small businesses' building color
- Create - art based landscaping
- Create - signage directing people downtown
- Create - festivals, art shows, and music venues
- Create - a town app with maps of businesses, walking tours, links to businesses



## October 13, 2017

Day 2 of the workshop was entirely discussion-based. It centered on an informal conversation with Mayor Coletta and a subsequent brainstorming discussion led by the CPNI team. Topics discussed include the farmers' market, the utility capacity in Burnsville, the Old Post Office building, the Old Department Store building, the Blue Ridge Motel, the Keep/Toss/Create exercise, the pros and cons of the town, and resident suggestions and comments. Some additional highlights are as follows:

- Farmer's Market
  - Looking for year-round location
  - Want market open more than 1 day per week
- Utility Capacity
  - Spare capacity exists in water/sewer system – no constraints on potential growth in the foreseeable future
  - Lack of housing is a major issue –more and denser housing options are needed
  - Most important issue – aging infrastructure needs attention
- Old Post Office (current tenant is “Menagerie Mercantile”)
  - Mayor would like to keep Tim Honeycutt and Ember Tribble as tenants
  - At least 50 vendors can occupy the space
  - Interest in putting farmer's market near menagerie
  - Asbestos removal needed



- May need an elevator for ADA compliance depending on proposed use of second level



Menagerie Mercantile – Old Post Office Building

- Bailey Building (corner of Main St on Square)
  - No price has been set for the building – owner likely wants to sell the whole building except for his office
  - Potential for residential space upstairs



Old Department Store / Bailey Building

- Blue Ridge Motel
  - Potential for App State construction management project
  - Location allows for many possibilities
  - Restoring at least some of the property – just the sign
  - Potential for art studios
  - Mayor Coletta suggested the farmers’ market move here for year-round use
  - Possible incubator space
  - Similar building could be used for cohousing
  - Property could be used to build new apartments – great location and views



Blue Ridge Motel

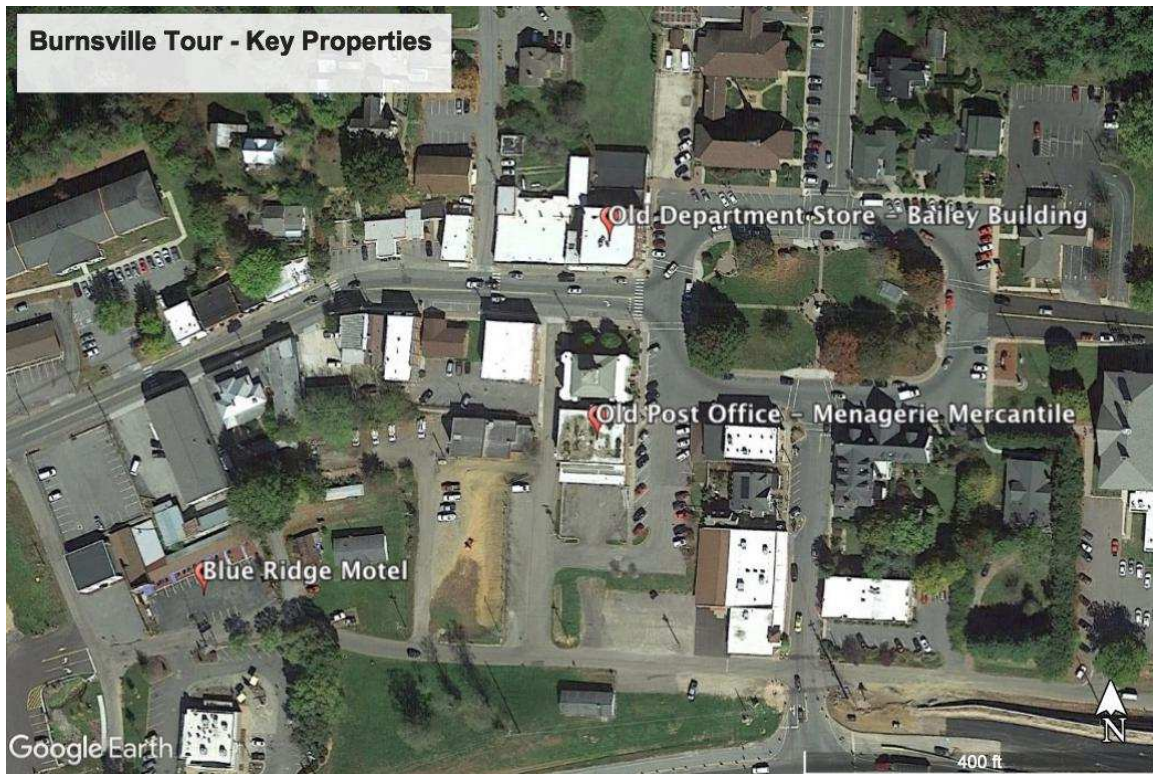


- **PROS AND CONS for Burnsville**
  - Pro – not much needs to be taken down
  - Pro – still some traffic despite being off of 19E
  - Con – parking lots on 19E but Gateways project and Burnsville Merchants group working on beautifying 19E by adding art and signage
- **Resident Comments and Suggestions**
  - Creating a town newspaper There is county paper currently.
  - Update businesses' websites
  - Market outdoor opportunities such as the Burnsville Metric and Collegiate Cycling Championships
  - Maintain good schools
  - Create residential housing downtown
  - Establish small investors groups for buying properties
  - Involve artist community with town community
  - Make area past Main Street Shoes (“no man’s land”) more attractive. This area includes the old hospital owned by the county.
  - Push “buy local” movement
  - Landscaping/art on highway
  - Find a permanent home for the Farmers Market with indoor opportunities for year round use.
  - Find a permanent home for the stage – currently set up temporarily in the square as needed.

In addition, attendees participated in a discussion regarding factors and potential solutions for people living in poverty in the area. According to community demographics (ACS, 2016), the poverty rate is 37.2% with over 50% children living in poverty. Among high school graduates, the poverty rate is over 25%, and for young adults who did not graduate high school the poverty rate is over 45%. Among those in poverty about a third are low-skilled individuals and about the same percentage of those in poverty are elders (about 21%). In addition, rental properties available to those living in poverty are older units. Some housing units are more than 50 years old.

In a discussion of health care needs in the community, it was noted that the local labor and delivery unit of the hospital was recently closed. Furthermore, Medicare reimbursements per enrollee in Yancey County, NC were \$8,125 in 2014 - a 1.21% increase during that year. Medicare reimbursements per enrollee in Yancey County, NC are \$1,463 less than the national average (*Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care*, 2016). The participants discussed possible social entrepreneurial options that might provide jobs/training to unskilled or low skilled workers and address healthcare needs of elders and disabled adults. There was discussion regarding options to develop social entrepreneurial projects that might include alliances with the Mayland Community College nursing program and other social service programs in the area.

## Walking Tour Summary



### October 12, 2017 – Tour

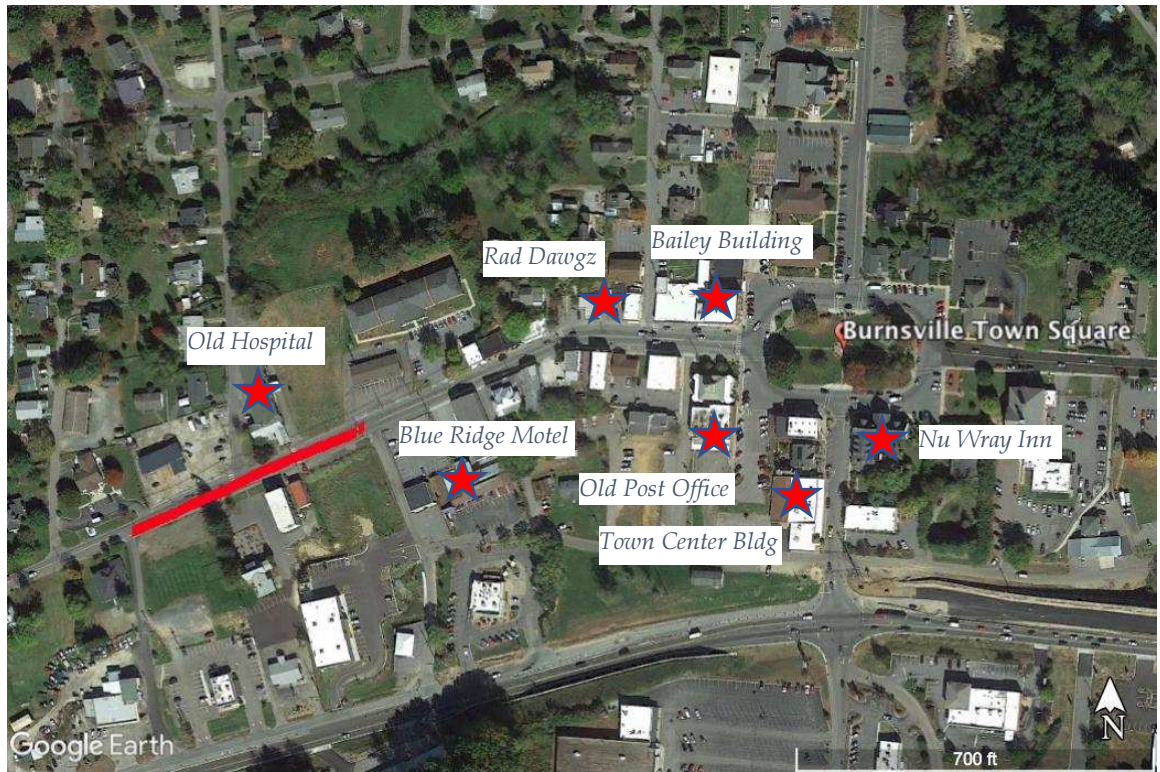
On the afternoon of Day 1 of the workshop, the CPNI team was given a tour of downtown Burnsville with visits to three properties of interest – the Blue Ridge Motel, the Bailey Building (a former department store that currently has one tenant who is not often on site), and the Old Post Office (currently housing the “Menagerie Mercantile”). Highlights from the tour are as follows:

- Blue Ridge Motel
  - Building not salvageable. The architects and engineers noted code, accessibility and building conditions that

may be cost prohibitive to bring the building up to current standards

- Owner is fine with tearing it down
- Location makes the property important for development
- Proximity to downtown makes the property open to many possible uses
- Interest in making art studios on the property
- Old Department Store - Bailey Building
  - Three stories
  - Vacant except for current owner Todd Bailey's attorney's office
  - Safety concerns – broken windows
  - Unattractive – plywood in windows
- The Old Post Office
  - Safety concerns – asbestos
  - Currently occupied by the Menagerie – town wants to keep because of central location, brisk business
  - Two floors: multiple tenants on first floor lease space to display antiques and memorabilia; second floor has vacant former offices and apartments
- “No man’s land” on West Main St. heading down the hill.  
Includes the old hospital building owned by the county along with several other vacant properties and empty lots.





*Key buildings visited*

## Recommendations & Next Steps

Throughout the workshop and during the final session, the CPNI team discussed suggestions and next steps for the town. These suggestions centered around the three properties that were visited on the tour, the potential marketing strategies for tourism, and attracting people to Burnsville.

- Tour properties
  - Blue Ridge Motel
    - Demolish building (limited use without cost prohibitive upgrades)
    - Restore/preserve sign
    - Possible project for ASU students

- Great location between Main Street and 19E
- Potential for art studios in town
- Mayor expressed interest in having year-round space here for the Farmers' Market - indoor/outdoor
- Potential for cohousing facility
- Could be useful as residential with great location and mountain views
- Old Department Store – Bailey Building
  - Rehab the building and sell
  - Potential for mixed-use with residential upper floors and retail on street front
  - Apartments/offices would have a great view of the square
- Old Post Office - Menagerie Mercantile
  - loading dock roof- not structurally capable of becoming an occupiable deck (would need to be rebuilt for this use).
  - Remove asbestos/ hazardous materials.
  - Potential for combination of menagerie inside and farmer's market outside
  - Also has potential for mixed-use with residential upstairs and retail downstairs
  - Apartments/offices would have a great view of the square

- Tourism



- Nu Wray Inn
  - Market wedding venue value/potential
  - Get the outside painted – volunteer labor or historical associations?
  - Market a package of Town Center and Inn for business meetings and conferences (CPNI enjoyed this set up for the two day workshop. It was very convenient for the event and enjoying the town).
  - Potential for serving Sunday brunch – southern homestyle cooking (done well!)
  - Pilot program with Mayland Community College culinary program to cater – no need to upgrade kitchen



- Potential for ghost tour
- The Inn should have maps of Burnsville in the lobby rather than Asheville! Keep the business local
- Market Bare Dark Sky Observatory at Mayland Earth-to-Sky Park – Mayland Community College. This is a truly unique local asset for the town and will attract people from all over the country. Market the rare dark sky designation (International Dark Sky Association) and focus some marketing toward professional and amateur astronomers who will come into the area and can enjoy the town as well. Good opportunity for a local business marketing package (inn/ restaurant, brewery, shopping package with discounts). This could possibly be something to market with Mayland CC and could also be offered online as a weekend getaway on “Living Social” or “Groupon website”.
- Market festivals and outdoor events in general
  - Current festivals include the Mt. Mitchell Craft Show, Literary Festival & Old Timey Festival
  - Coupled with hotel/motel offers
  - Host a festival, offer coupons for local businesses, and market places to stay in town
- Attracting New People to Burnsville
  - Build more residential – denser and in downtown

- Gateway project/ signage to encourage traffic to come through town. Downtown is major selling point to attracting new residents.
- Screen parking lots on 19E. Build along the road with parking behind .
- Build walkways/ greenways/ parks. Increase walkability of downtown.
- Invite new industries into town (this goes hand in hand with needed infrastructure upgrades)
- Keep incubator space for new startup businesses and start graduated rent program
- Keep good schools – attractive for young families
- Resurgence of small farms can attract Asheville growth.
- Emphasize “Farm to Fork” opportunities and take advantage of the current and expanding local farms.

The workshop ended with a round robin exercise in which everyone from the CPNI team and the ASU team stated what they thought was Burnsville’s greatest asset. The general consensus was that Burnsville is in a unique position. It has many properties that offer an opportunity to grow the town. Not much needs to be taken down and the capacity for growth is there. Now Burnsville must unlock the potential of each of those key properties along with a few other marketing strategies discussed in this report to grow in a way that allows them to keep their historic mountain town feel while making room for the next generation of Burnsville residents.





## Appendix A

Photos from the walking tour of Burnsville and the three key properties.



Blue Ridge Motel – office building exterior



Blue Ridge Motel sign and mountain view



Blue Ridge Motel exterior



Blue Ridge Motel exterior

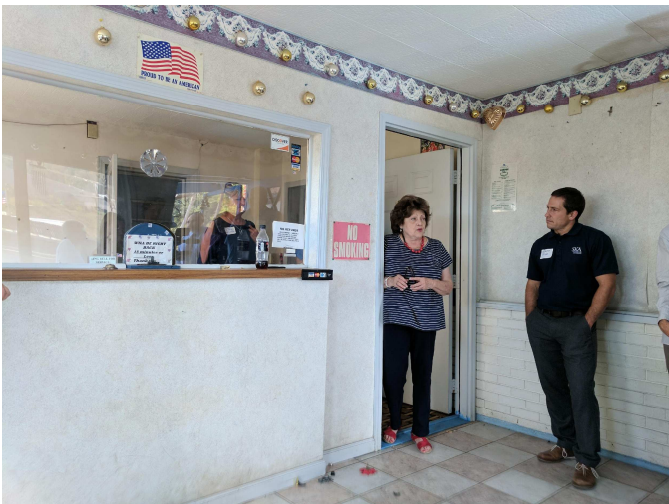




Blue Ridge Motel exterior



Blue Ridge Motel room interior



Blue Ridge Motel office interior



Blue Ridge Motel kitchen



Blue Ridge Motel upstairs interior





Blue Ridge Motel upstairs hallway



Blue Ridge Motel upstairs interior



Main Street looking east – Rad Dawgz and Cool Catz



Main Street - Something Special Gift Shop & Monkey Business Toy Shop



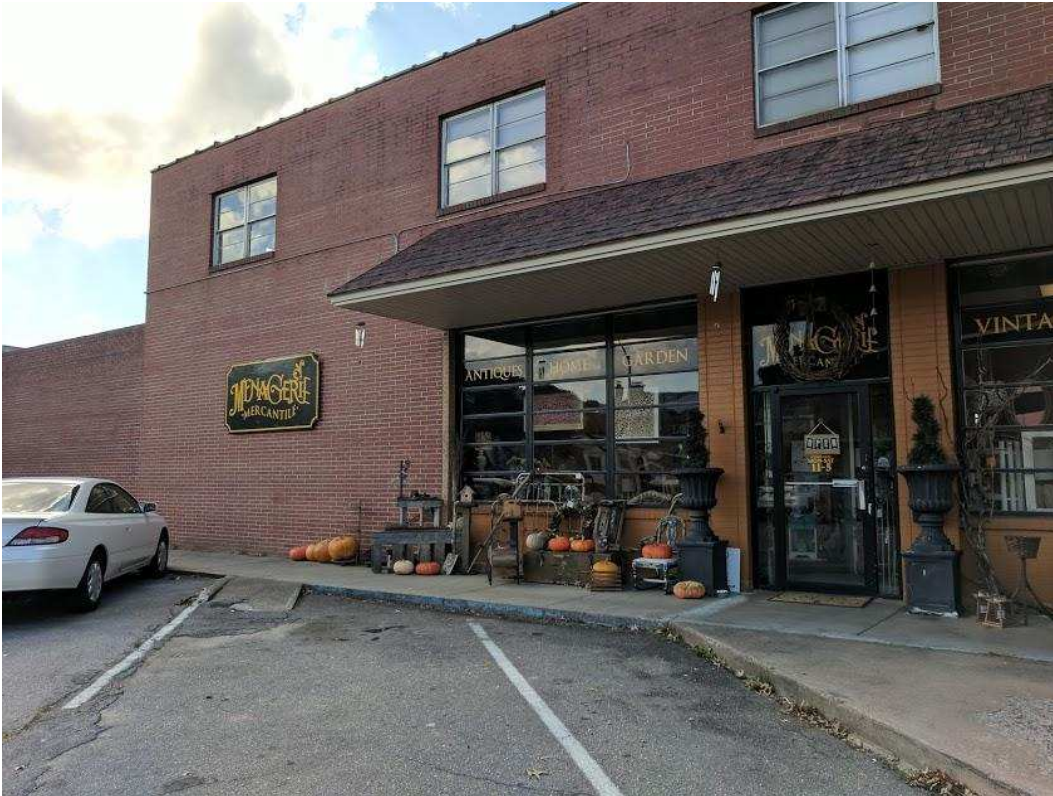


Old Department Store



Old Post Office – Menagerie Mercantile exterior





Old Post Office – Menagerie Mercantile exterior



Discussion on Old Post Office building



Old Post Office upstairs interior



Old Post Office upstairs interior





Old Post Office upstairs interior Old Post Office upstairs interior - view facing west



Old Post Office upstairs interior - view facing east