

Yadkinville Post-Workshop Memo

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*Prepared by Thanh Schado, M.A. Planning
Appalachian State University
Department of Geography & Planning*



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Overview

This post-workshop report is intended to support the Town of Yadkinville, North Carolina as they move forward following a June 2023 workshop. Members from CPNI and Thanh Schado, a graduate student in Geography and Planning at Appalachian State University, have compiled and summarized notes to produce this post-workshop report and to support subsequent action.

Information about Yadkinville, observations and summary of the public workshop, and recommendations for consideration by Yadkinville officials and residents are included here.

CPNI

The Construction Professionals Network Institute, Inc. (CPNI) is a non-profit initiative focusing on construction industry-related projects and community service throughout 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 its membership and collaborating partners comprehensive professional and technical expertise through 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.

ACTIVATE North Carolina

A program of the North Carolina chapter of AIA (American Institute of Architects), ACTIVATE North Carolina was founded in 2014 "to inspire people to take action and get involved in their communities." See <https://www.aia.org/resources/6154534-activate-north-carolina>.

Workshop Team

Name	Company
<u>Julie McLaurin</u>	DLR Group
James Currie	CMTA
Doug Burns	Becker Morgan Group
Brent Cockrum	FEI Civil Engineers
Todd Berg	Morris Berg
Wayne Robinson	VHB
Aaron Bopp	SKA Consulting Engineers
Pat Fogleman	CPN Staff
Thanh Schado (Graduate Student)	Appalachian State, Geography & Planning

Executive Summary

Workshop Overview

A total of eleven residents of the Yadkinville area attended the community workshop hosted by CPNI on June 8-9, 2023. Those in attendance were predominantly local business owners and town board members. Residents expressed a common vision for the town of growth and community and were unanimous in the need for revitalization of the downtown core. Residents also expressed the difficulty the town has in retaining young adults, 18 to 24, as Yadkinville does not have many activities or evening recreation such as dining or bars to offer younger residents. The main draw the meeting attendees noted is the young and growing local church that attracts folks as far as Winston-Salem to come and visit the town of Yadkinville on a weekly basis for church services.

Commented [MOU1]: Good—restrictive clauses require “that” and no comma

The majority of those who attended were either lifelong long residents of Yadkinville or younger folks returning to start a family in Yadkinville. While local businesses were well-represented at the workshop, other stakeholders (such as daytime workers, full-time parents) were largely absent, possibly because of the timing of the workshops during daytime hours. Despite the limited variety of groups of people present, participants were eager to contribute to a summary of the town’s history and inquired about the next steps towards revitalizing their downtown.

Commented [MOU2]: Awkward. Try “While local businesses were well-represented at the workshop, other stakeholders (such as daytime workers, full-time parents) were largely absent, possibly because of the timing of the workshops during daytime hours.” This is a little dicey though; sounds a bit critical, although it’s a fair observation. Maybe you can find a better way to smooth it out—more diplomatic than me!

Growth and community were the two main sentiments the residents expressed they would like to see and retain as the town changed. Attendees referenced the nearby community of Elkin, North Carolina as a model of success they would like to emulate; a quaint downtown with shopping, coffee shops, bars, and more to attract tourists. Beyond strengthening the downtown, the residents also expressed a need for hotels or other overnight accommodations. While Yadkinville is near the various wineries across Yadkin County, the lack of accommodations may drive tourists to opt for other neighboring towns to spend their time and money.

Commented [MOU3]: Aha—nice and crisp! Maybe revise the sentence on the previous page from: “Residents expressed a common goal and value for their downtown and unanimously agreed there should be changes made to revitalize their downtown core” to “Residents expressed a common vision for the town of growth and community, and were unanimous in the need for revitalization of the downtown core.”

Another concern the residents expressed was the plethora of unused or derelict buildings taking up high-value downtown space. For example, many buildings in the downtown core are not actively operating businesses (but rather open at the discretion of the business owner) and are mainly used as storage by the owners. Alongside inefficient use of space in the downtown area, the residents found their main street to be far too dangerous to walk, with commercial trucks

Commented [MOU4]: Sounds familiar!

frequently on the road between Highway 421 and the local industrial park. Residents requested a change in road infrastructure that would protect pedestrians but wouldn't negatively affect downtown businesses. Another notable mention by the residents besides the downtown revitalization plan was the redevelopment of one of their main parks. While the park is currently in the process of building an outdoor venue space on newly acquired property, Yadkinville residents expressed the need for more outdoor recreational activities for children, such as a splash zone.

Ultimately, based on the comments by the residents, the CPNI team recommended that the town hire a full-time events coordinator/long-range planner who would oversee the downtown revitalization plan and apply for grants. CPNI found that a town volunteer-based group or committee would be ineffective, as the plan would require someone to maintain the effort and follow the changes of the downtown closely on a daily basis in order to meet their goals.

Commented [MOU5]: Check my work. Maybe you meant that a new park is 'in the works' and will include an outdoor venue, rather than that it is currently undergoing this work

Workshop Schedule

Day 1 Thursday, June 8, 2023:

- 10:00– 10:30 AM: Arrive - CPNI Team arrives at Town Hall, 213 S. Van Buren Street, Yadkinville
- 11:00 – 12:30 PM Van/Walking Tour
- 12:30 PM - LUNCH – The Center Bistro, 226 E. Main St. Yadkinville (short walk from Town Hall)
- 1:30 PM: Return to Town Hall
 - o Introductions – Julie McLaurin, CPNI
 - CPNI & App State Team member
 - Community Participants
- 1:45 PM:
 - o Yadkinville Overview – App State Geography and Planning Dept.
 - History/Culture
 - Physical Character (Environmental, Topography, Landscape, Utilities, Transportation, Etc.)
 - Demographics
 - Market/Economic Conditions
- 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
 - o Yadkinville - Opportunities/Challenges – Mayor Eddie Norman; Mike Koser
 - o Open Forum with Community Participants
- 3:30 PM BREAK
 - o Afternoon discussions & recap; “Think tank” discussions with CPNI team
- 4:00 PM – 5:00 pm
 - o Continued Open Discussion
 - o Summary of Day 1 Discussion
- 5:00 PM – Adjourn for the day – CPNI team travels to Three Trails, 101 W. Main St., Elkin, NC
- 6:00 – 7:30 PM: Group Dinner – Southern on Main, 102 E. Main St., Elkin, NC (336.258.2144)
- 7:30 PM – Team Brainstorming - review the day, share thoughts, recommendations, ideas

Day 2 Friday, June 9, 2023

- 7:30 AM – 8:30 AM: Breakfast and Continue Brainstorming (CPNI/Thanh Schado, grad student)
 - o **Third Branch Café, 226 E. Main St., Yadkinville, 336.677.6006**
- 8:30 AM - 9:00 AM – Return to Town Hall
- 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM
 - o Continue Community Discussion

- 10:00am – 11:00 AM
 - o Community Visioning
- 11:00 AM - Noon
 - o Recommendations from CPNI/App State
 - o Next Steps
- Noon: Adjourn

Population

As of 2020, Yadkin County boasted a population of 38,000. The town of Yadkinville itself, the county seat, has a population of just under 3,000 people. Serving as the county seat means the community is home to the county courthouse, law offices, and a bustling weekday environment, and overall supports a lively town center with a variety of services. Despite the opportunities for work and leisure in Yadkinville, the World Population Review reported Yadkinville's population is declining slightly at a rate of 0.07% annually and the town's population has decreased by 0.21% since the most recent census in 2020.

Yadkinville at a Glance:

- General Population: 2,792 (-0.21% decline)
- Median Age: 42
- Ethnic Make-Up: 65.8% White, 26% Hispanic, 8% other
- Education: 82.3% High School Diploma, 11.6% bachelor's degree
- Median Household Income: \$43,722
- Property Ownership: 59% rate of home ownership

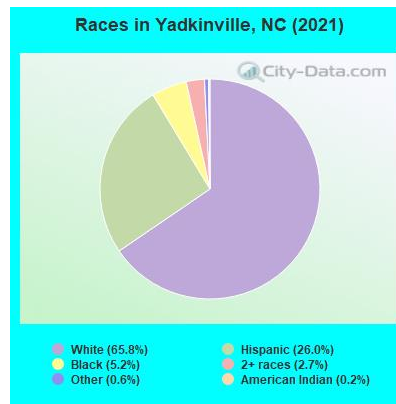


Image credits: <https://www.city-data.com/city/Yadkinville-North-Carolina.html>

Education

Regarding education, Yadkinville has a moderately high percentage of persons with a high school education at 82.3% of the local population. This is 4.7% percentage points less than the state average of approximately 87%. On the other hand, Yadkinville has a low percentage of persons with a four-year degree at 11.6% of the total local population. This is 10.1% percentage points less compared to the state average of approximately 21.7% (Statisa).

Culture

A community's culture and identity is important in retaining a town's original character and general feeling as a town. Wine is a prominent industry in Yadkinville given the climate, landscape, and appreciation for agriculture within the region. The first winery in the county opened in 2000, and the industry has continued to develop and grow over the past twenty years. Yadkin County is home to twelve active wineries and is known to have the largest concentration of wineries in the entire state of North Carolina. The Yadkin Valley Wine Region is also known to be the first official wine appellation, or region, in North Carolina. The wineries are specifically known for producing grape varieties such as Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Viognier, and Chambourcin. The prominence of wine culture in the Yadkinville community is expressed in its local Harvest Festival and Grape Festival, inviting tourists to come to visit and celebrate the natural environment, agriculture, and vineyards.

Town Tour and Built Environment

Overview

As a part of the planned workshop activities on June 8, members of CPNI, Appalachian State University, local Church Pastors, and town officials conducted a tour of the town by van and on foot. During the van tour, the group visited several residential areas surrounding the community, the industrial park, the downtown core, and the town's official government buildings, ranging from the county's courthouse to the downtown library.

Commented [MOU6]: I know you just finished your thesis with APA style! But I really prefer paragraphs belong a heading without an indentation

You can choose! Just taking this opportunity to suggest my own picky preference here. This style (with the indentation) is very common



Yadkin County Courthouse



Yadkin County Public Library

Downtown

Several derelict properties were viewed. Most of these properties looked distressed on the exterior, but were functional, at least as storage for property owners. Town officials noted that the reason behind the lack of use and maintenance by these owners is due to the low cost of rent in downtown Yadkinville. The situation of some downtown buildings not in active commercial use might be addressed by rents rising substantially, which could induce those property owners to either begin operating on a more consistent basis, or to leave and open space for new businesses. The one space that was described as most inspiring and inviting to visitors is their newly developed Art Corridor. The Art Corridor connects downtown studios to an art gallery that also houses the local theatre, where performers from across the state come to perform musicals, live music, and dance shows.

Commented [MOU7]: 'Reasoning' or 'reason'? 'Reasoning' is words people use to explain or justify something (correctly or not), but 'reasons' is more immediate. I think here it is the reason for the distressed ugly properties in the downtown

Commented [MOU8]: Only to pedestrians? Great that there is some good pedestrian utility here—but maybe people in cars also are drawn to the Art Corridor



Gateway between Downtown and Arts Corridor



Arts Corridor



Yadkinville Theatre

Recommendations from CPNI

Full-Time Town Employee

Yadkinville has no full-time staff who would be able to take on the initiatives that could move the town forward toward its vision. The CPNI team recommends that the town hire a full-time staff member who would be dedicated to the downtown revitalization initiative and to grant proposal writing. The Town's Comprehensive Plan contains a plethora of good and important ideas, as does this report. However, without prioritization and dedication to the initiatives, the ideas may languish. The first task should be to develop a position description and begin searching for viable candidates who can coordinate town-wide events, develop and address long-range plans, and write grant proposals. Town wide events are a vital aspect to the role as it contributes to the town's sense of community and belonging. The type and theme of events should be considered based upon the local culture as previously mentioned. The proximity to the various wineries in the area is an opportunity for Yadkinville to connect and build partnerships with the wine industry thus bolstering both the local economy and wine culture. Alongside the full-time position, the town should consider organizing a 501(c)(3) "Downtown Development Corporation." CPNI has seen this successfully implemented in other towns. The 501-c 3 would be able to leverage funds and buy and develop properties as needed. This would be a legal entity that could implement many of the initiatives undertaken by the full-time town employee as described previously.

Overlay District

Another approach that is recommended to Yadkinville is the application of an overlay district over the downtown core. An overlay district is a land use planning tool commonly applied to create a special zoning layer placed on top of the base or primary zoning district. The overlay district can provide elements such as design guidelines and relaxed zoning-incentives to bolster the overall appeal of the downtown core to both consumers and developers. Alongside the overlay district other similar incentivized opportunities can be used to attract developers to the area. Lastly, in terms of further ways to protect the town owned properties the town should

inventory and designate city and county land as a public-private partnership which will alleviate costs for potential developers.

Qualified Census Tract and Opportunity Zones

If applicable, Yadkinville should consider the use of the Low-Income Housing Tax Qualified Census Tracts. Communities with fifty percent of households with incomes below sixty percents of the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI) or have a poverty rate of twenty-five percent of more can receive benefits according to the Qualified Census Tract (Huduser.gov). Similar to the Qualified Census Tract, the capitalization of opportunity zones can be utilized based on the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017. An opportunity zones are census tract designated and most commonly include geographic areas that the federal government has identified as economically distressed. The federal government provides preferential tax treatment for investments within these designated areas. Projects located in opportunity zones provide tax advantages such as deferral of payment of any tax obligations arising from the sale of capital assets until 2026. To take advantage of opportunity zones, the first step is to identify properties that have been designated as an opportunity zone with Yadkinville.

Connectivity & Pedestrian Safety

Ultimately, a community's ability to cultivate a strong and vibrant downtown core is largely dependent on connectivity. Gateways, main streets, walkways, and other means of connecting downtown to the external community is a critical asset to encourage both locals and tourists alike to spend time in a downtown area. Old U.S. Highway 421 is the main roadway that runs through Yadkinville's downtown core, connecting the new 421 to the industrial park. Alongside the main street, gateways are another significant asset to downtown, providing tourists with a crucial first impression of a community. Downtown revitalization efforts change not only the physical infrastructure of a community, but the culture as well. It is important for the project to acknowledge the local history and residents in order to best support and uplift the community.

Below are visual references from the Blowing Rock Streetscape project done jointly with an engineering company, a design company, and local government officials of Blowing Rock. The plan addresses infrastructure changes that are intended to revitalize the visual appeal of the downtown area while also addressing pedestrian safety on the downtown roadway.



Blowing Rock Road StreetScape Design Plan



Pedestrian Infrastructure Design in Blocking Rock

Modernized Branding

Yadkinville is a community with a rich history of agriculture. It also is notable for being the first American Viticulture Area (AVA) in North Carolina. Yadkinville has an opportunity to modernize the downtown and community branding while also celebrating its rich history in agriculture. In Blacksburg, South Carolina, a design company worked with the town to implement improved pedestrian streetscapes and addressed the need for visual revitalization. The pedestrian streetscaping hoped to capture more visitors and dollars downtown while also focusing on younger residents and visitors via modernized branding. The Blacksburg brand strategy is designed to pay respect to the unique local history of the town while also embracing a new bustling and lively economy via investment in tourism. The brand logo recommended to Blacksburg embodies the historical working-class residents who worked on the railroads and iron mining while also capturing a clean aesthetic that would be inviting to potential visitors.



Blacksburg Downtown Plan



New Blacksburg Town Logo

Town Draw

Another means of attracting tourism and even future residents to Yadkinville is to establish a place-brand that encapsulates what makes Yadkinville unique. In many cases, the downtown represents the hearts of a community. Spindale, North Carolina recently underwent a streetscape improvement plan in tandem with a renewed community branding project. Between the downtown improvements and branding, the town was able to tell a more cohesive and compelling story to tourists. To start, Spindale developed a strategic plan that clearly defined all the unique assets the town has to offer. The strategic plan provided a roadmap for how the community could support tourism development and better capture the local aesthetic and story.



Spindale, NC downtown with the new logo and signage



Spindale, NC downtown with logo on public wastebin



Spindale banners on street lamps



Spindale downtown new streetscape

Conclusion

The recommendations contained in this report may help Yadkinville achieve its vision of revitalizing its downtown while also maintaining its historical character. This process will involve balancing the goals and preferences of older residents who hope to maintain the great qualities of Yadkinville and younger residents who hope to invite and bring in more economic and recreational activity into the community. Community building workshops, like the one hosted by CPNI, play a vital role in progressing the town towards its expressed goals and visions. It is highly recommended that the town of Yadkinville revisit their Comprehensive Plan and identify key elements they would like to expand upon or change. Also, the Comprehensive Plan should then be used as a foundation for a future Community Action Plan to define and plan out major tasks that will contribute to the town's progress and growth. Yadkinville is a quaint community that values its history but is also excited to grow and change to accommodate future tourists and residents. Through a shared understanding of how to achieve the town's goals and the initial steps recommended in this report, the downtown revitalization of Yadkinville is not too far off in the future.

Resources