

Asheville Comprehensive Plan Primer DRAFT

What is the Comprehensive Plan and why do we need it?

A Comprehensive Plan is a tool that many cities use as the leading means for establishing a high-level vision to guide citywide policy decisions over several years. The famed city planner John Nolen prepared Asheville's first Comprehensive Plan in 1925, and since then, the city has created a new Comprehensive Plan every few years as an official tool to guide future growth.

Asheville currently is renewing this tradition by conducting an update to the City's existing Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 2003. The update to the Comprehensive Plan will provide a visionary framework to help guide the city's continued long-term development, and provide an essential tool that will be used across the City's many departments.

The Comprehensive Plan Update has several goals:

- To highlight key aspirations, challenges, and opportunities that will define Asheville in the coming decades
- To set principles and priorities about where the city should be devoting its time, attention, and investment
- To help guide decision-making with respect to the key ongoing challenges of fostering a livable built environment, ensuring harmony with nature, growing a resilient economy, promoting interwoven equity, ensuring a healthy community, and bolstering responsible thinking at the regional scale
- To outline specific goals and strategies for addressing each of these challenges
- To create a unifying vision that integrates the many existing and ongoing planning and development efforts across the city
- To create a resource to inform policy decisions over the lifespan of the plan
- To develop a high-level methodology for implementing and measuring progress

Why is the Comprehensive Plan Update being conducted now?

The City's current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2003, and has guided the City's decision-making for the last 13 years. Since its adoption, the City has made progress in addressing many of its goals. However, since 2003 Asheville has continued to grow and change. The Comprehensive Plan Update will renew the city's thinking to reflect the key issues Asheville faces today, including, but not limited to: continued population growth, demographic changes, culture and character, livability, climate change, economic resiliency, sustainability, and equity.

Who is leading the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The Comprehensive Plan Update is being led by the City's Planning and Urban Design Department, in coordination with an Advisory Committee established by the City and a technical team of different city agencies. The City has hired a consultant team led by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), one of the country's leading urban design, planning, and sustainability firms to help guide and shape the process. SOM is working in association with four additional firms: Asheville-based Design Workshop, Asheville-based Chipley Consulting, St. Louis based-Development Strategies, and Charlotte based-VHB.

How is the plan being conducted?

The process for completing the Comprehensive Plan Update is projected to take approximately 18 months.

Early phases of the Comprehensive Plan Update include an analysis of Asheville's existing environment, its role within the region, social and economic conditions, and projected growth patterns. The team is working closely with city leaders to coordinate work with city planning efforts currently underway, and will incorporate a sustainable design strategy to track and measure the city's progress toward future goals.

The Comprehensive Planning process is designed for public engagement, to gather input from the city's residents and to reflect the diversity of voices within Asheville. Thus, the process for creating the plan includes several opportunities for the public to provide input, voice opinions, and to comment on in-progress plan materials.