


HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY PLAN

Steering Committee #2

January 13, 2021

AGENDA

- Introductions
 - Schedule Update
 - Public Engagement Results
 - Vision and Goals
 - Framework For Recommendations
 - Next Steps
- 
- A decorative graphic at the bottom of the slide consisting of several overlapping, wavy horizontal bands in shades of green and grey, creating a layered, mountain-like effect.

Welcome & Introductions

Steering Committee

- Harry Bears
- John Lupoli
- Michael Thompson
- Jim Ward
- Bill Reeves
- Hank Ross
- Kaye McHan
- Jerry Moore
- Hilary Wilkes
- Terry Potts
- Brad Armstrong
- Darren Whately

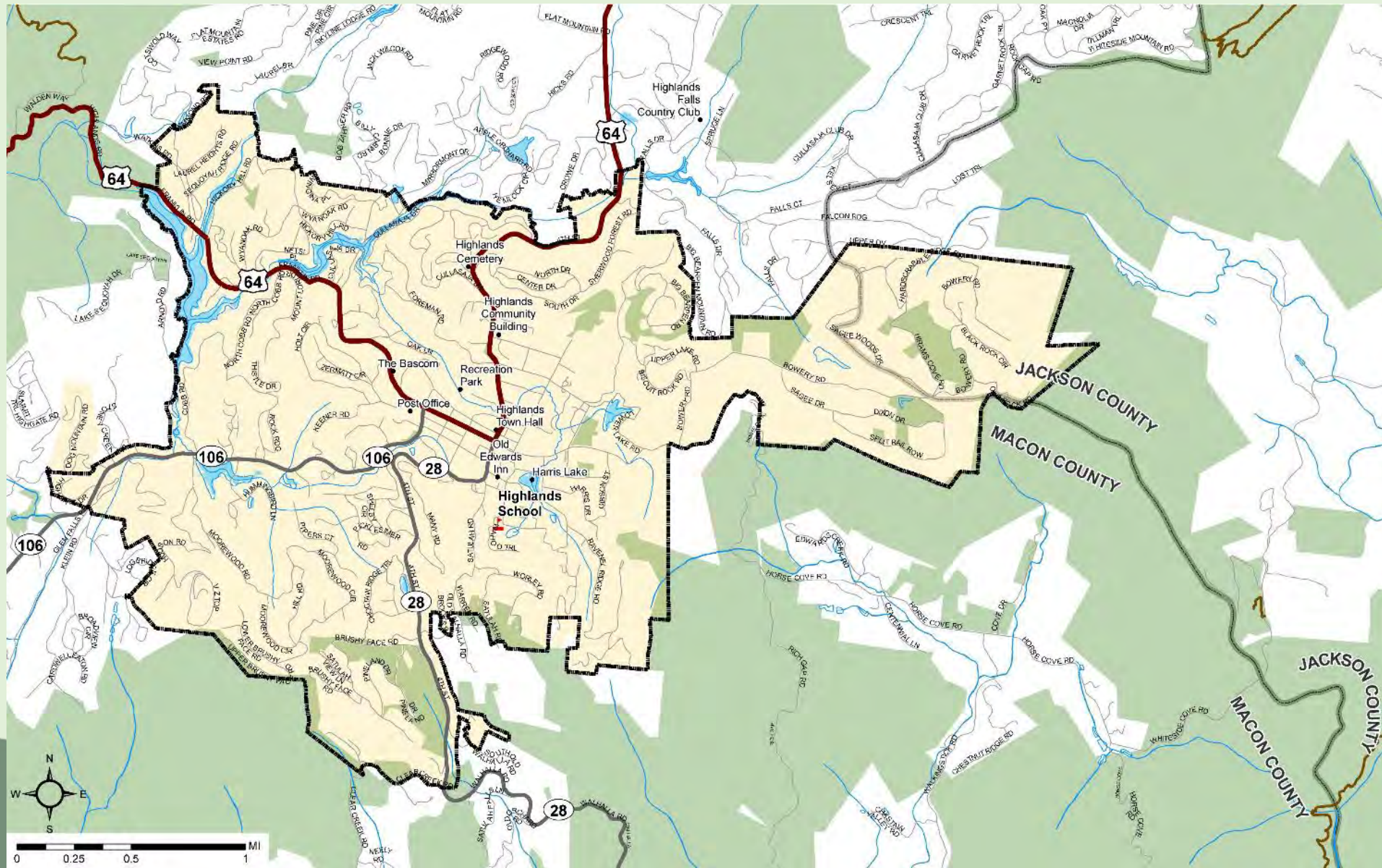


Community Plan Purpose

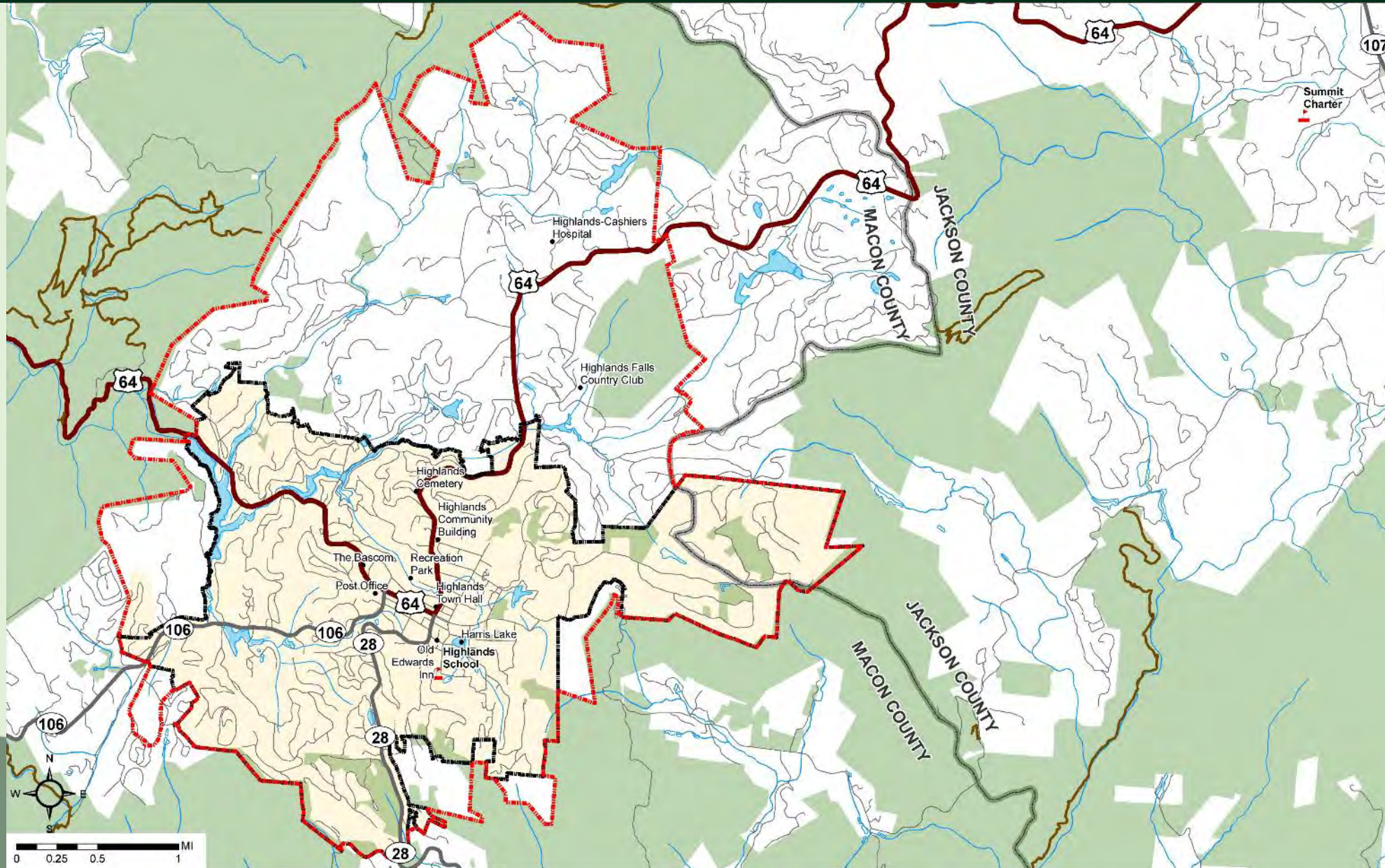
- Promote the public health, safety, and welfare of citizens.
- Guide and manage growth, change, and strengthen a community.
- Protect property values and investments.
- Improve the quality of life for residents and attract/retain businesses.



Town Limits



Study Area



Schedule

**We are
here**



Late Summer
2020

Fall 2020

Winter
2020-2021

Spring 2021

Summer 2021

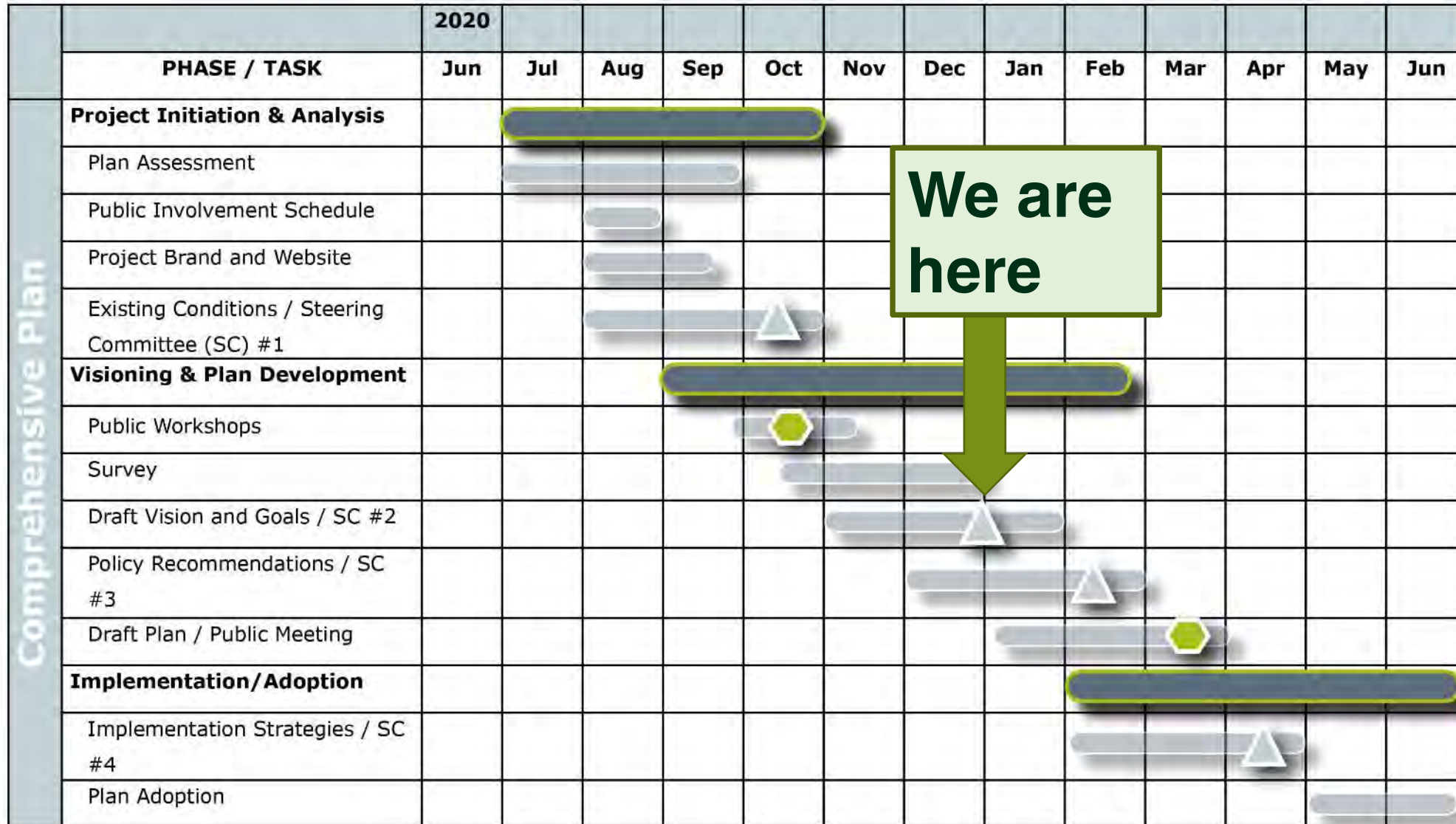
Phase 1
Project Initiation

Phase 2
Analysis & Visioning

Phase 3
Plan Development

Phase 4
Adoption

Schedule



We are here

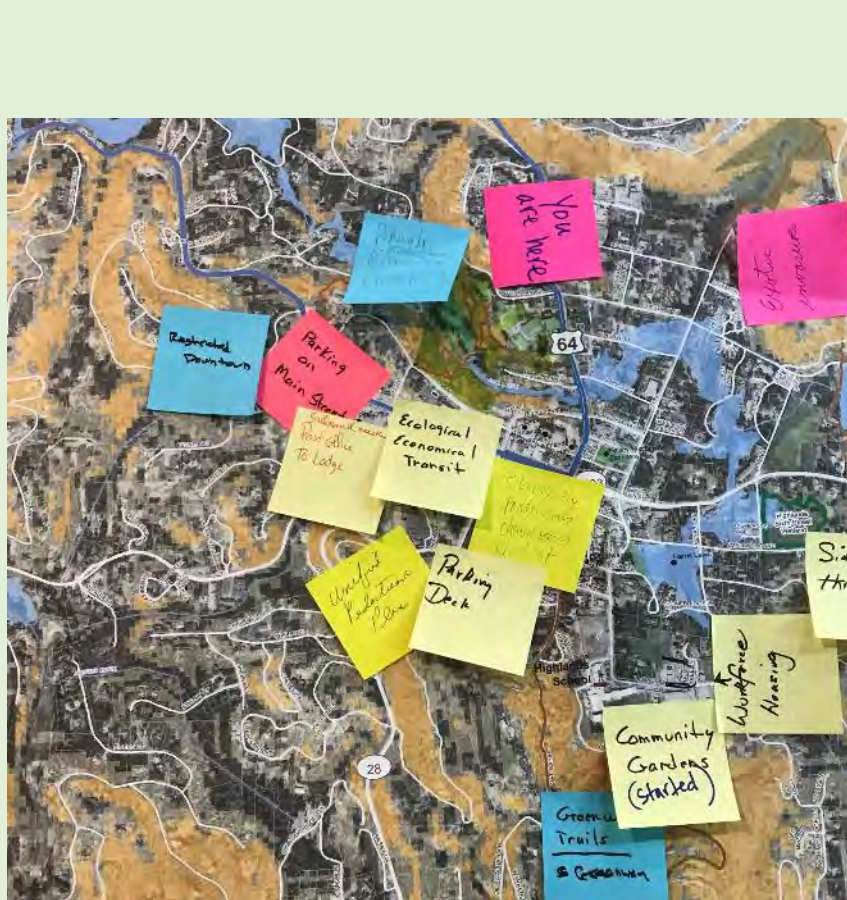
 Task
 Subtask

 Steering Committee Meetings
 Public Meetings

Public Input Events



Stakeholder Interviews



Public Meeting



Walking Tour

Public Input – Stakeholder Interviews

- Environmental and Recreation Interests
- School and Medical Representatives
- Real Estate and Development
- Town Staff
- Economic Development
- Neighborhoods / HOAs



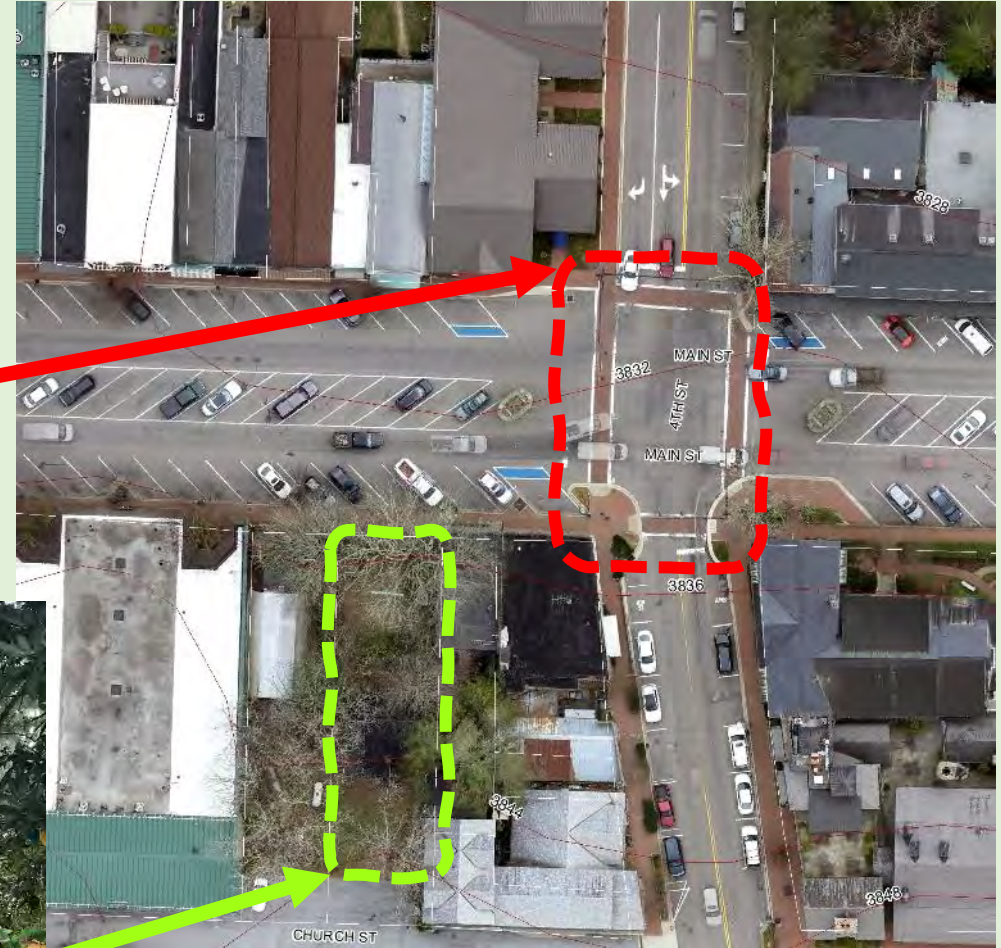
Public Input – Public Meeting

- **Walkability**
 - Unified approach
 - Priority sidewalk connections
- **Natural Resources**
 - Protect the water supply (Lake Sequoyah)
 - Heritage trees and greenspace protection
- **Recreation**
 - Greenways and trails
 - Improved access to certain sites
- **Parking downtown**
 - for and against

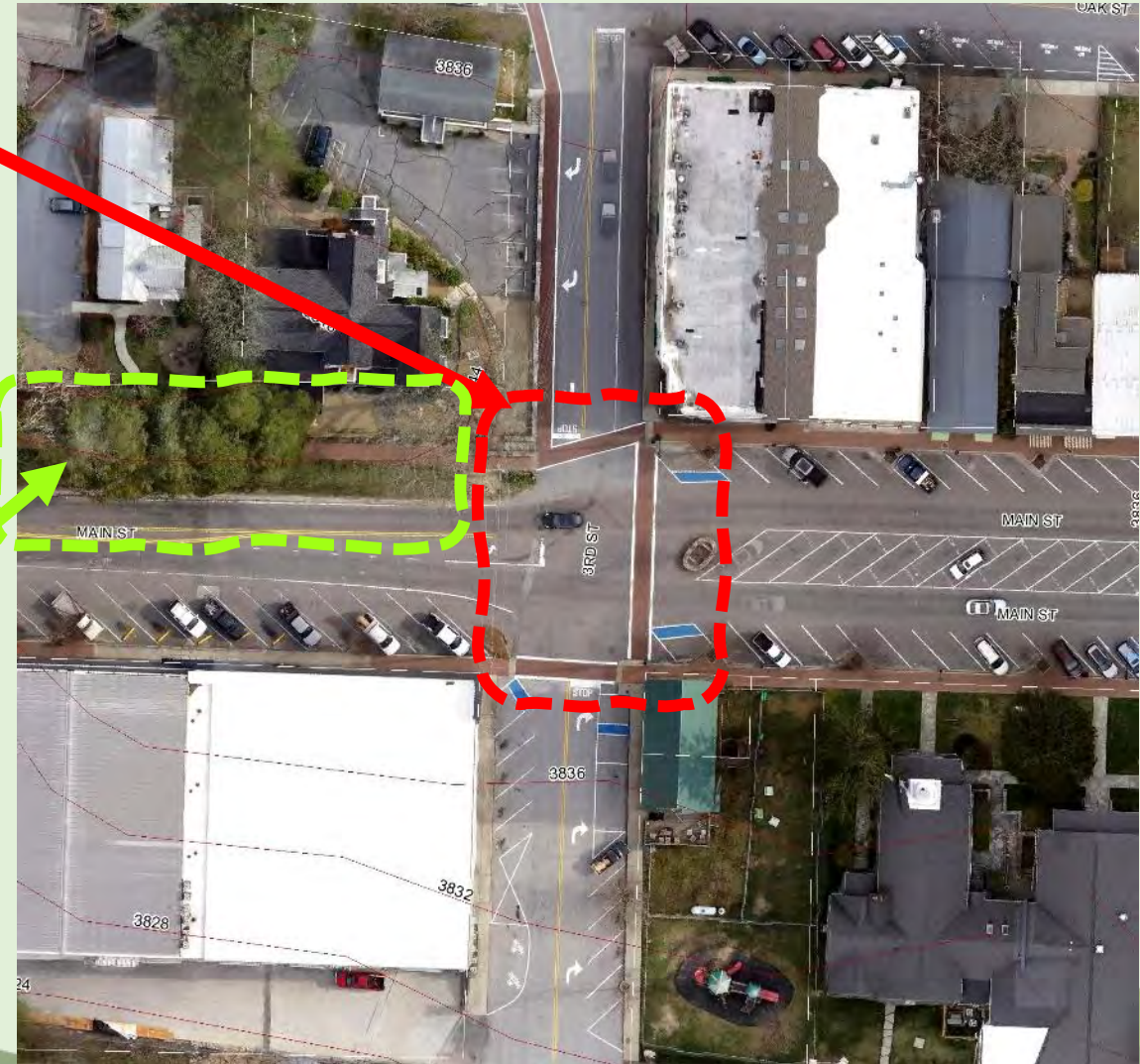


Click to see comments on the interactive map:
<https://tinyurl.com/HighlandsInputMap>

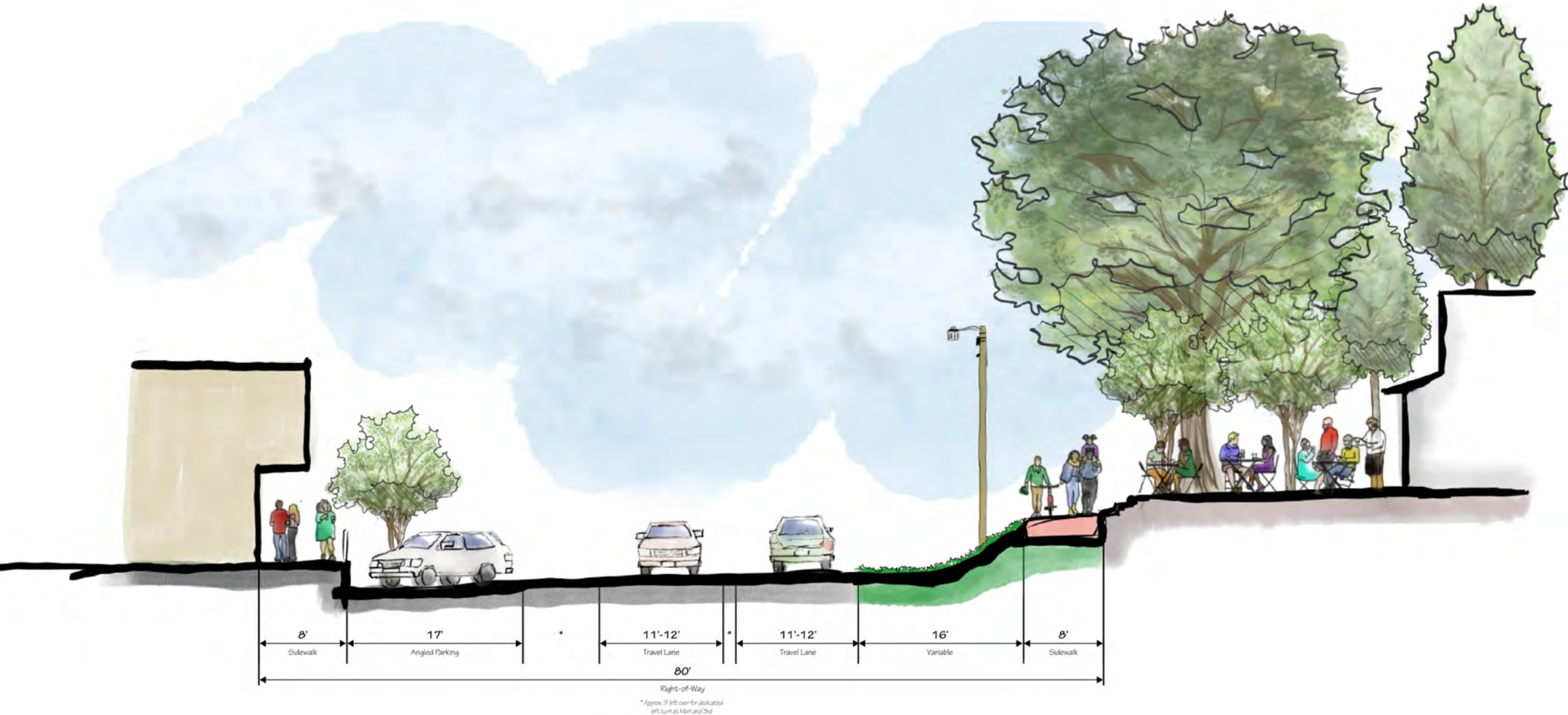
Public Input – Walking Tour



Public Input – Walking Tour



Public Input – Walking Tour



Public Input – Virtual Meeting

- Support for alternative modes of travel (walking and biking)
- Concern over truck traffic through downtown
- Short-term rentals
- Parking requirements / new development
- Fire Station site
 - New location for TOH Fire Department off of Franklin Road
 - Potential for redevelopment along Oak St



Public Input – Survey Results

- **Timeframe**

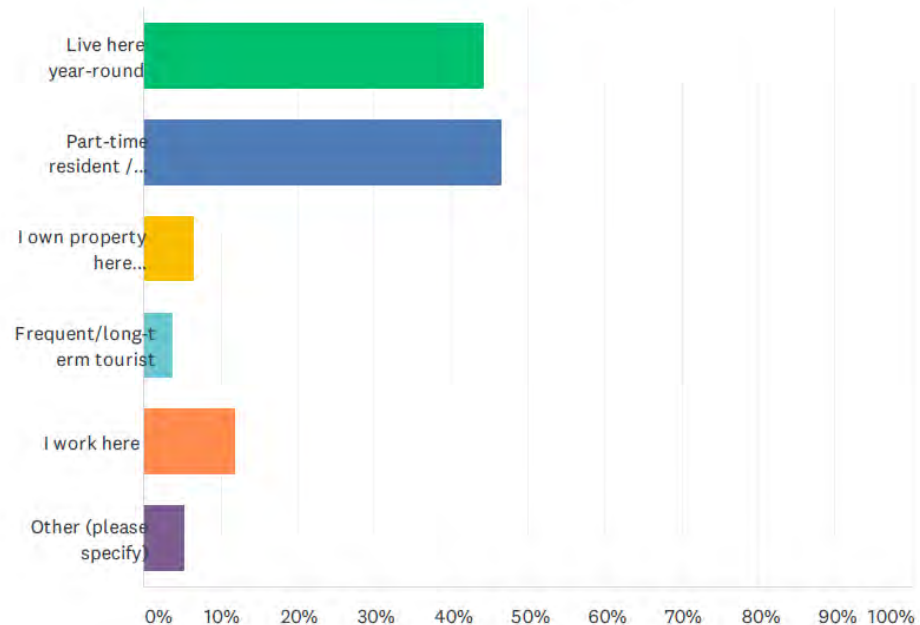
- Open since mid October
- Leaving it open till end of January

- **996 Responses**

- Mix of full-time and part-time residents and employees
- Large percentage of 55+ and high earners
- Low on younger demographic (under 34)

Q1 We want to hear from everyone that considers themselves a part of the Highlands community. How do you relate to Highlands? Select all that apply.

Answered: 990 Skipped: 4



Q4. What do you value about Highlands?



Q4. What do you value about Highlands?

“Norman Rockwell / Hallmark town”



Stockbridge Main Street at Christmas, by Norman Rockwell

Q4. What do you value about Highlands?

“Norman Rockwell / Hallmark town”



Highlands in the Snow, Source: www.facebook.com/RiverBunk.Highlands/

Q4. What do you value about Highlands?

“Tight knit **community**”

“Highlands offers us a **peaceful getaway** from the City, including **beautiful scenery, minimal traffic, a walkable downtown** and many opportunities for dining and shopping.”

“The **quiet mountain environment** and cool climate.”

“**Nature, hiking, dining, shopping, amenities** (hospital, parks) and town excitement!!”

“**Small town feel but** with a big picture attitude. Great dining and shopping and **tight community** feel... It is just a magical place. It is not perfect, far from it, but about as close to perfect as any place I have ever lived.”

Q5. What are your biggest concerns for the future in Highlands? (Choose up to three)



Q6. Visual Preference – Downtown Business District



Shops and
Restaurants



2-3 Story
Mixed Use
Buildings



Small-scale
shops



Parking in
Front

Q7. Visual Preference – Housing Near Downtown



Smaller homes with access shared open space or “Pocket Neighborhoods”



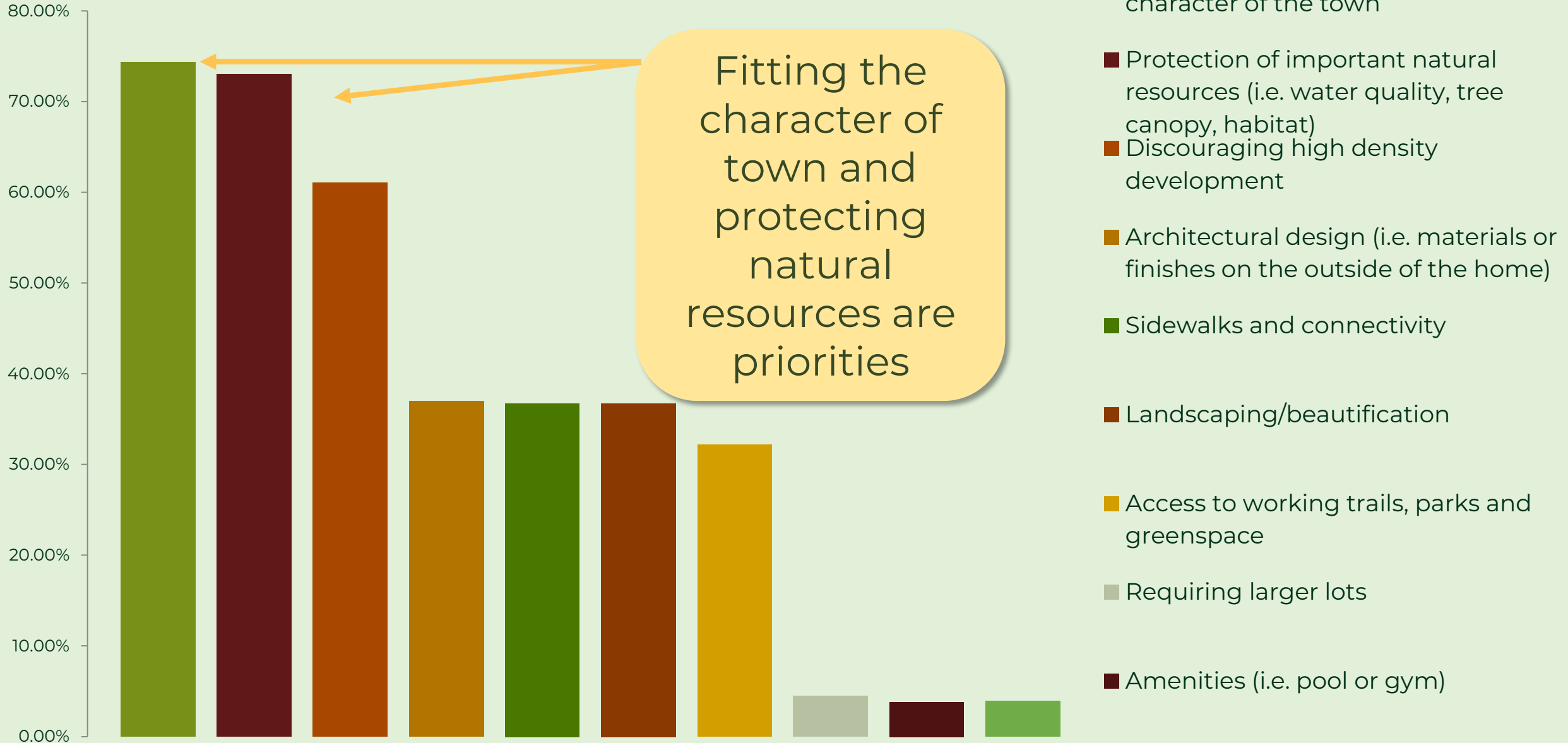
Live/work units are buildings with condos above shops or offices



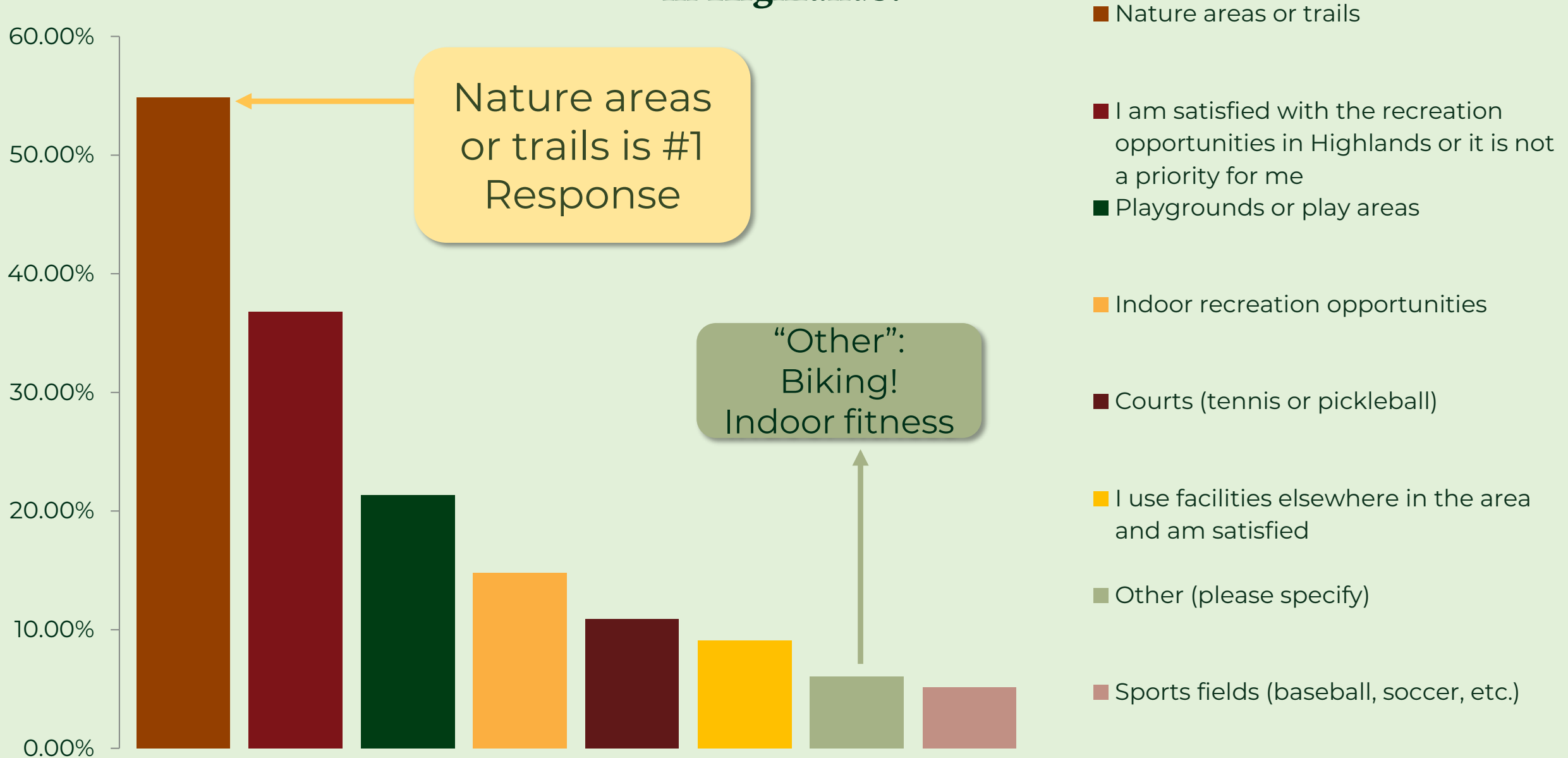
Larger-scale apartments were not preferred in the survey

Q14. What should be priorities for residential development design in the Town?

Select up to 4 priorities.



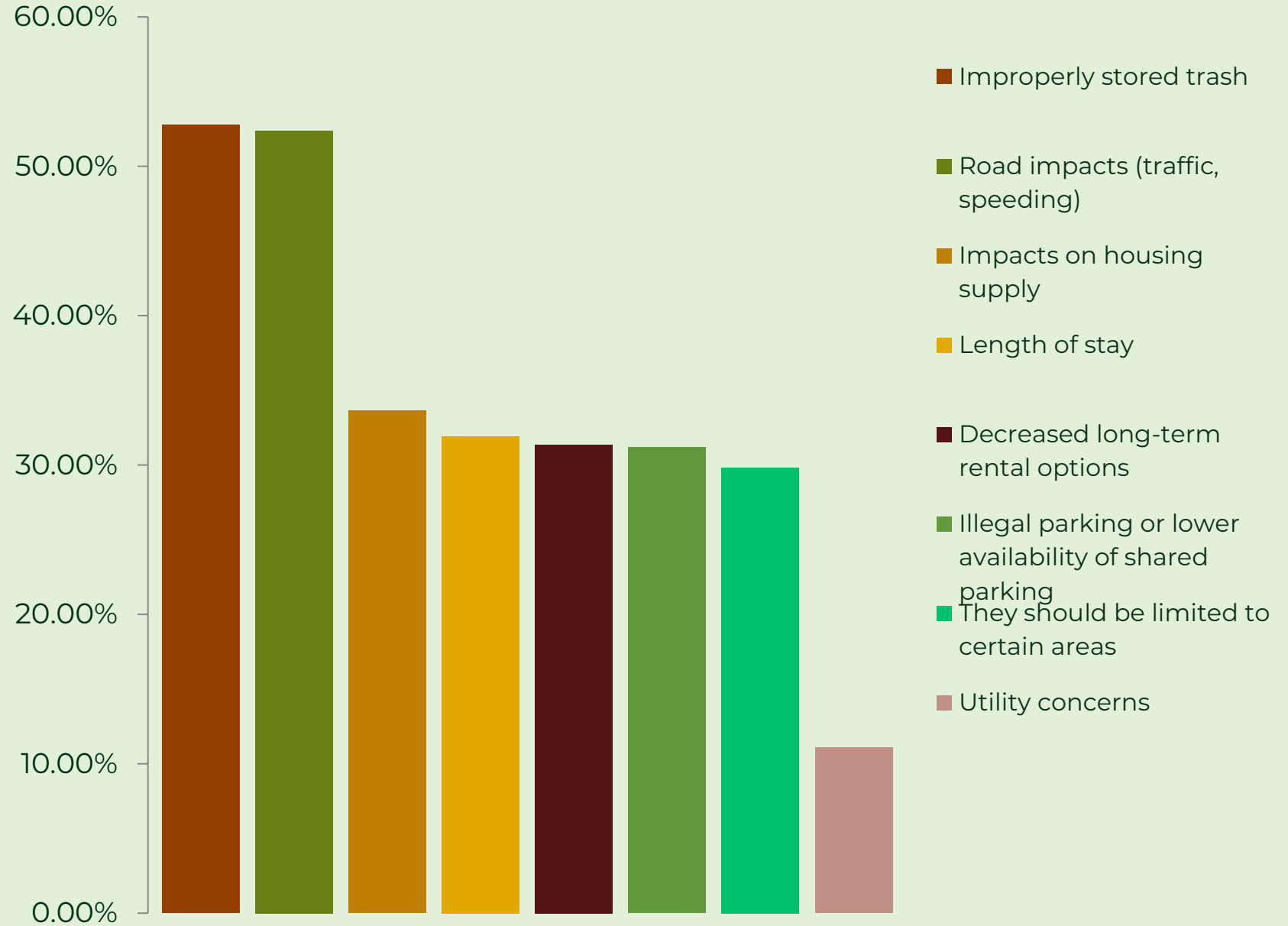
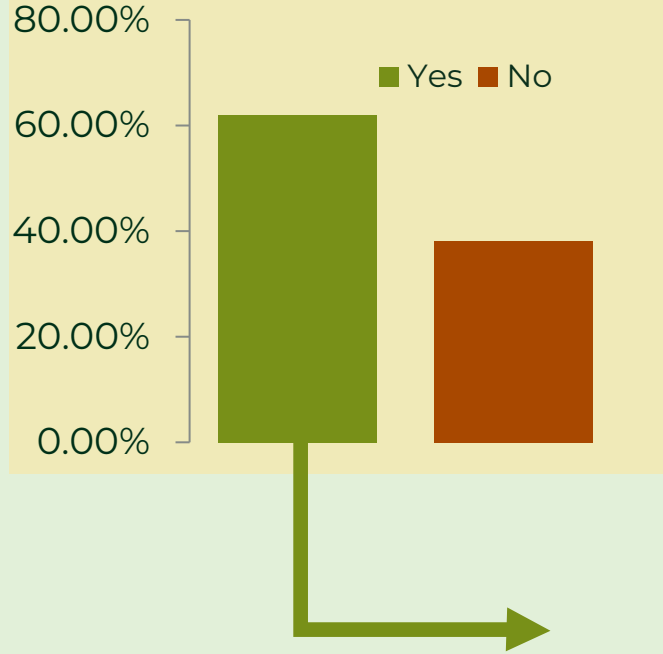
Q15. What sort of recreation opportunities would you most like to see in Highlands?



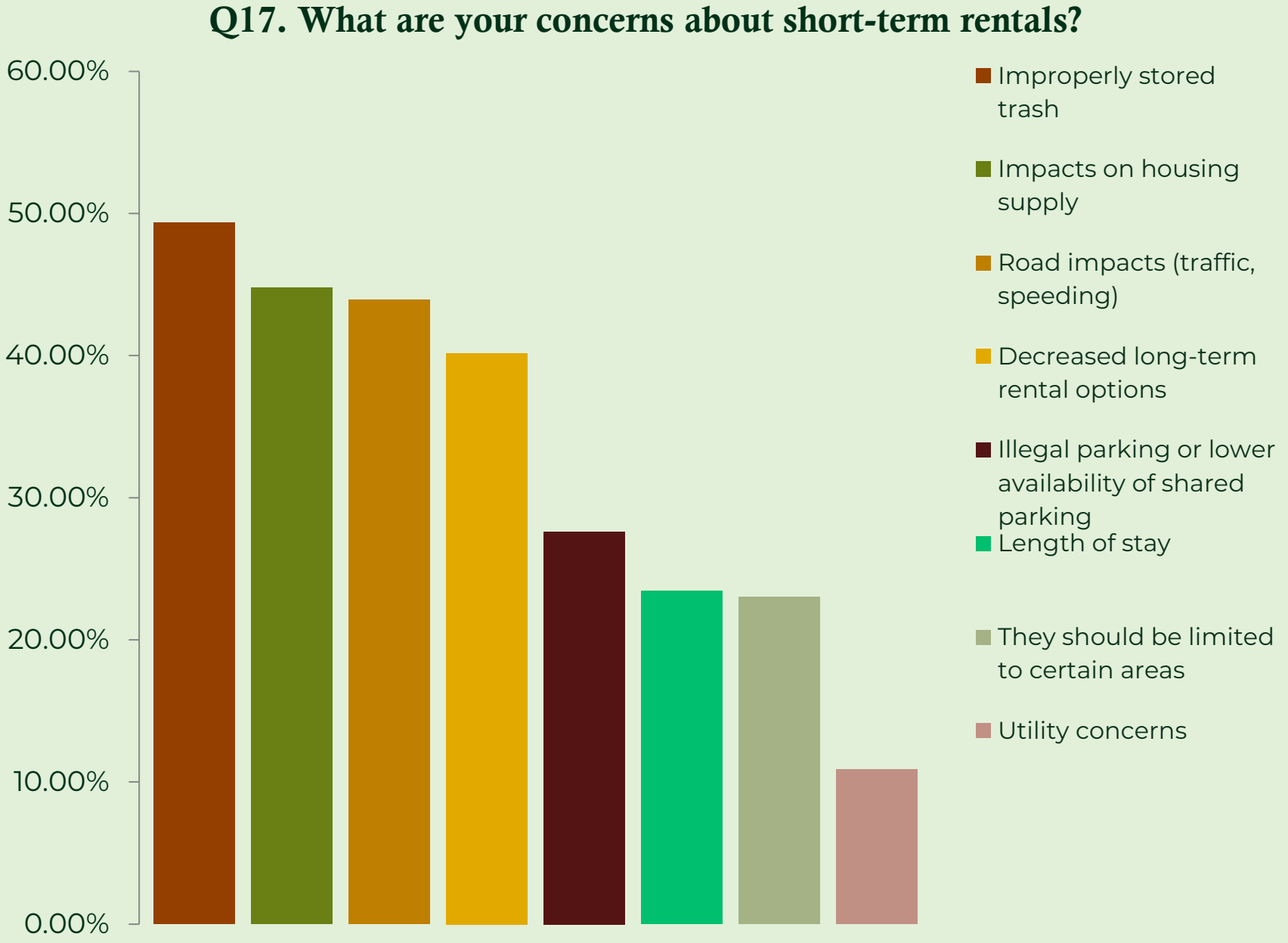
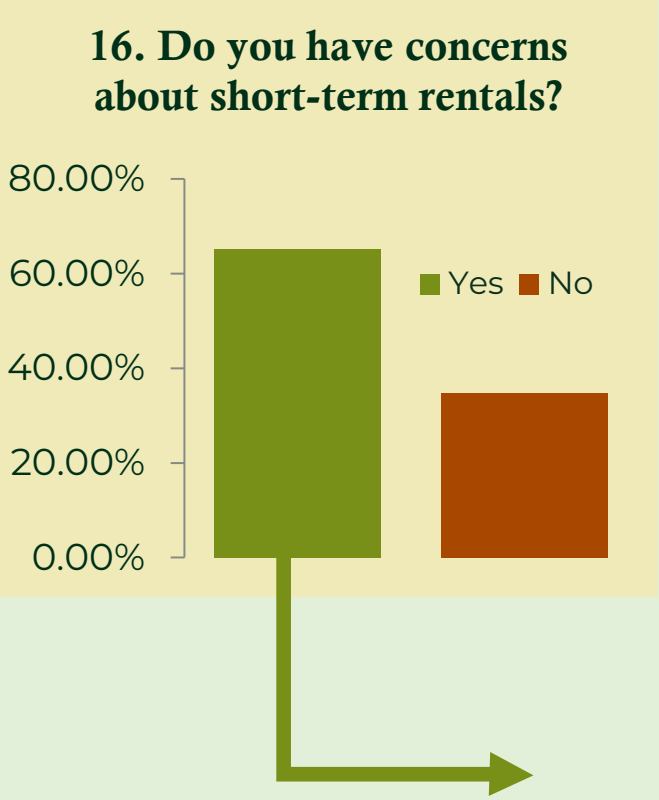
Short-Term Rentals

Q17. What are your concerns about short-term rentals?

16. Do you have concerns about short-term rentals?



Filtered for year-round residents



Public Input – Survey Results

• Transportation

"Walkability"

"Walking all over town"

"Access to hiking trails"

"Lack of traffic"

"Not widening streets"

"Walkable streets"

"Hiking the greenway"

"Trees on Main Street"

"More sidewalks"

"Dangerous intersections"

"Mountain bike trails"

57%

of survey
respondents
want more
shade trees

1 in 3

survey
respondents
seek parking
improvements

Public Input – Other Feedback

- Short-term Rentals
- Environment and Climate Change
- Downtown Business Owners Survey





Comments?

What was expected?
Any surprises?

Vision & Goals

Vision: An aspirational statement that captures what we would like to achieve in the future.

Goals: A broad statement that describes a desired impact and outcome

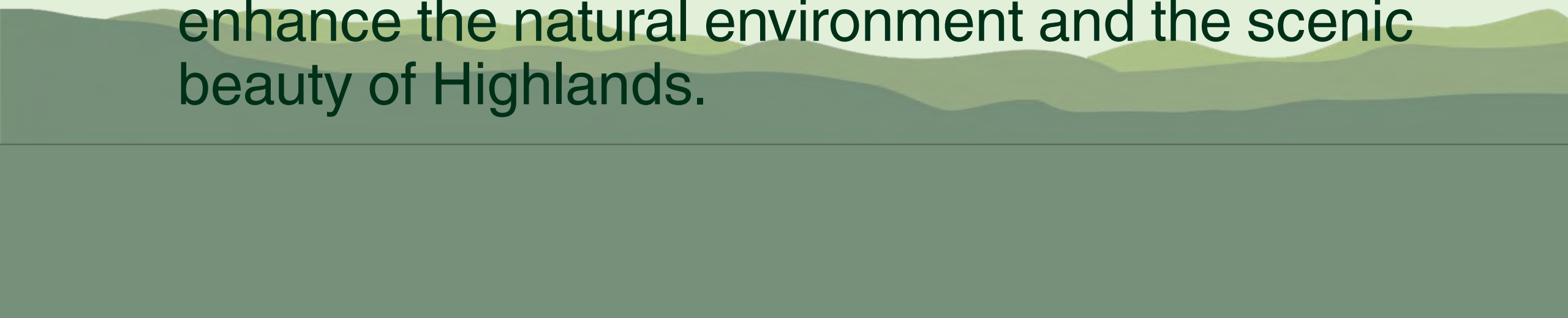
A decorative graphic at the bottom of the slide featuring a series of overlapping, wavy horizontal bands in shades of green and grey, creating a stylized landscape or horizon effect.

Vision

"An **attractive mountain community**, which is founded on **the beauty of the plateau's natural environment**, the uniqueness of Highlands' **village character**, and the richness of the area's **culture and history**".

-Vision from 2005 Plan

Goals

1. **Town Character:** Vibrant village center with distinct character that is surrounded by mostly low-density housing that blends with the natural environment.
 2. **Preservation of the Environment:** Preserve and enhance the natural environment and the scenic beauty of Highlands.
- 
- The bottom of the slide features a decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping, wavy horizontal bands in shades of green and grey, creating a stylized landscape effect.

Goals

3. **Pedestrian Focus:** Create a downtown and commercial areas that emphasis pedestrian comfort and safety.
4. **Culture and History:** Preserve and promote the rich cultural and historic resources of Highlands.
5. **Partnerships:** Old goal was for Plateau Governance. This needs to be revised to include partnerships to plan for and protect the plateau. Need to mention Macon Co., Jackson Co., HCLC, others.

Comments?

"An **attractive mountain community**, which is founded on **the beauty of the plateau's natural environment**, the uniqueness of Highlands' **village character**, and the richness of the area's **culture and history**".

-Vision from 2005 Plan

DRAFT Goals

1. **Town Character**
2. **Preservation of the**

3. **Pedestrian Focus**

4. **Culture and History**
5. **Partnerships to**

Framework

Land Use

Downtown &
Tourism

Recreation &
Natural
Resources

Public Services
& Infrastructure

Transportation



Framework – Land Use

- Reinforce town character through policies
- Enhance and codify design standards, especially for development downtown and along major corridors
- Focus on form and intensity, downtown, transition to residential neighborhoods and conservation areas
- Open space preservation and stormwater requirements in new development



Framework – Downtown & Tourism

- Aesthetics & Character
- Activity
- Pedestrian Scale
- Public Space
- Comfort
- Economic Development



Framework – Recreation & Natural Resources

- **Connections to green space and parks**
 - Sidewalks and trails
 - Other basic access improvements (i.e. parking, information, etc.)
- **Address recreation priorities**
 - Natural areas, playground, indoor fitness & programming, tennis/pickleball
- **Protect sensitive natural areas and water quality on the Plateau**
 - Land use and development policies
 - Coordination with partners, including HCLT, Macon Co., NFS



Framework – Recreation & Natural Resources

Near Highlands, there are

42,736 ACRES

OF PUBLIC LAND AND CONSERVATION AREAS*

*INCLUDES NANTAHALA NATIONAL FOREST WITHIN 5 MILES OF TOWN



36

ECOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT
NATURAL AREAS (DESIGNATED
NATURAL HERITAGE NATURAL
AREAS)



107

MILES OF TROUT WATERS WITHIN
5 MILES



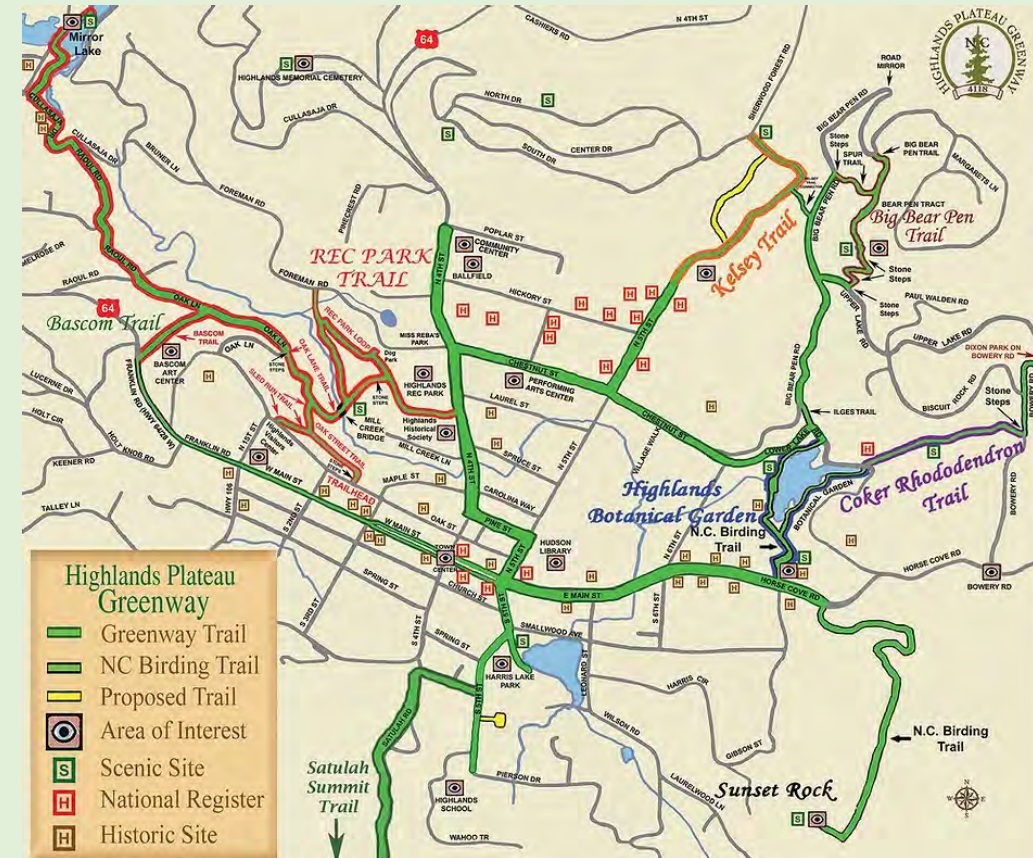
GREENWAYS, SIDEWALKS, HIKING TRAIL, AND MULTI-USE
PATHS

54 MILES

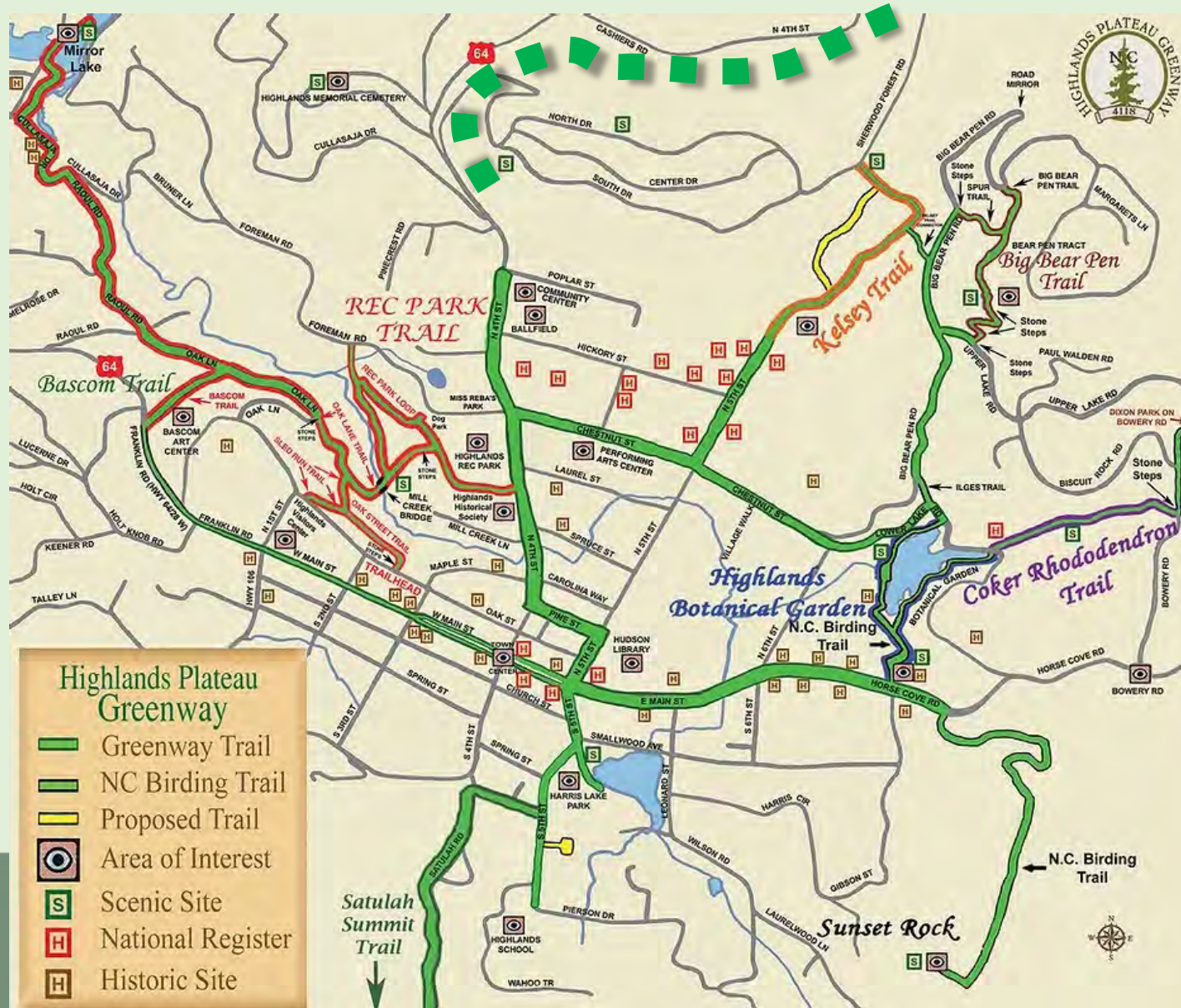
OF
TRAILS ON FOREST SERVICE
PROPERTY

7 MILES

OF
EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAILS
PART OF THE HIGHLANDS PLATEAU
GREENWAY



Framework – Recreation & Natural Resources



Visit Highlands NC [Send Message](#) [Liked](#)

Little Bear Pen, LLC

New Acquisition

Highlands-Cashiers LAND TRUST
"Saving Special Places since 1909"

Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust
4h · 📍

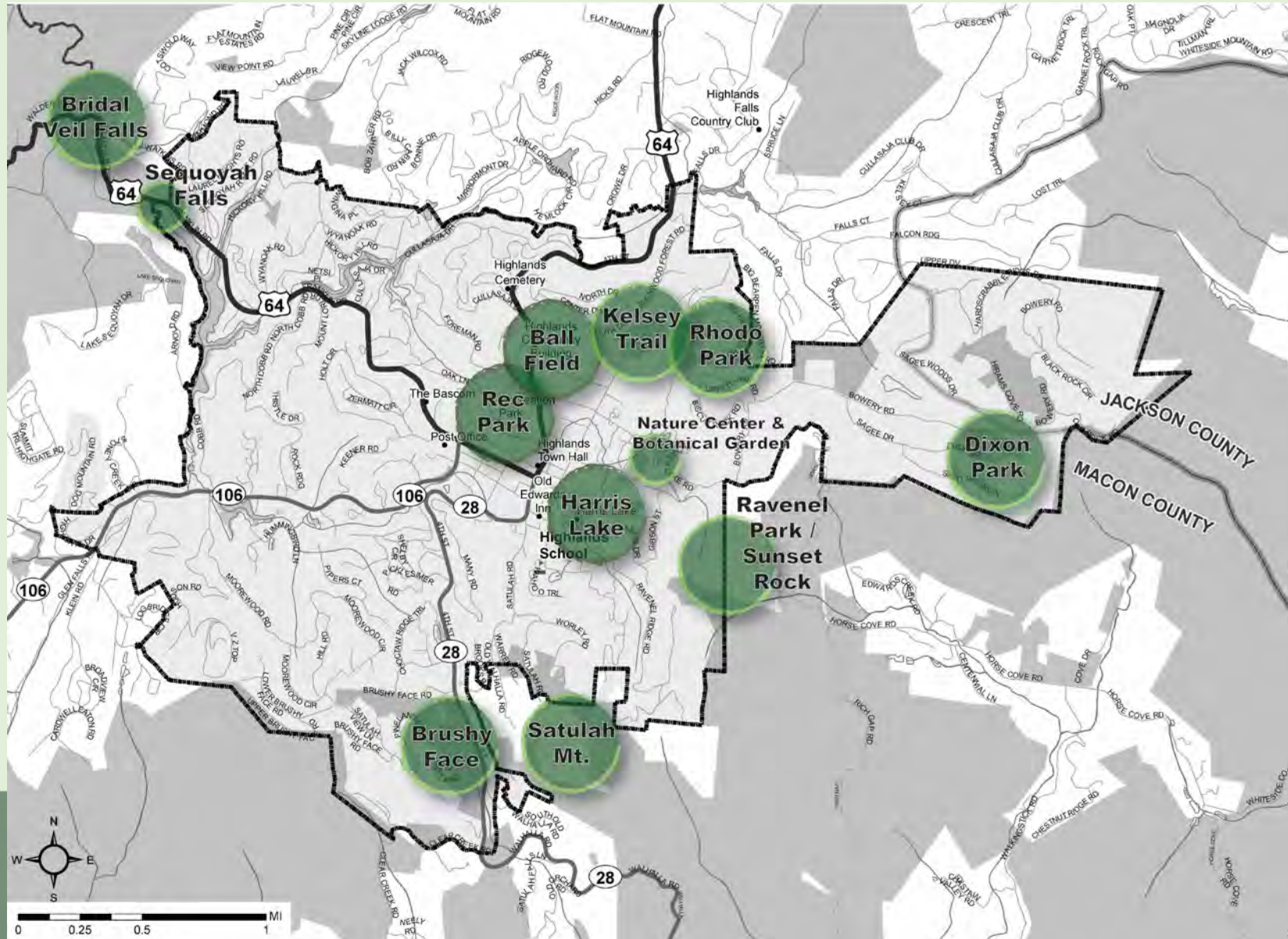
ONE MILE of protected green space is now a part of the Highlands Cashiers Land Trust! 🌲

Little Bear Pen LLC donated 28 acres along Hwy 64 to the Land Trust. The property extends from just past the Highlands Community Center to Sherwood Forest Road on the right as you leave town going East. The primary contact for the effort was Cantey Davis and he did a wonderful job pulling this together.

We are excited about the opportunities this provides!

[#wednesdaymorning](#) [#highlandscnc](#) [#cashiersnc](#) [#visithighlandscnc](#) [#highlandscashiersplateau](#) [#getoutside](#) [#explorencc](#) [#ncoutdoors](#) [#peopleandnature](#) [#travelnc](#) [#outdoorculture](#) [#ventureout](#) [#keepitwild](#) [#conserve](#)

Framework – Recreation & Natural Resources



Town/County Facilities

- Founders Park
- Highland Recreation Park
- Community Building and Baseball Field
- Highlands Recreational Field (Joint w/County)

Existing Public Access

- 6 natural areas owned by HCLT with public access

Framework – Public Services & Infrastructure

- **Water and Sewer**
 - Policy about extension
- **Electric**
 - Resiliency and customer service
- **Waste and Recycling**
 - Recycling
 - Convenience center needed
- **High Speed Internet**
 - Build on fiber project



Framework - Transportation

- **Parking**
 - Street upfits
 - Site for a future parking deck?
 - Incentives to park off Main Street? "Resident" decal?
- **Transit**
 - A circulator trolley during peak seasons?
 - Express route to Franklin?
- **Wayfinding**
 - Additional pedestrian wayfinding signs/kiosks?
- **Pedestrian Focus**
 - Rethink 3rd and 4th Street intersections
 - Ensure ADA accessibility
 - West Main Street redesign?
 - More shade trees along Main Street?
- **Bicycles**
 - Bike racks
- **Greenway**
 - Continue to invest in trail systems



Next Steps / Discussion

- Steering Committee #3 (February): Review and discuss draft recommendations.
- Draft Plan (March): Public meeting to provide overview of recommendations.
- Refine Plan and Develop Implementation Strategies (March-April)
- Plan Adoption (May-June)

