

The Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan

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The Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan for the Future

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The Valdese Town Development Plan was created to:

- ❖ Establish a vision for the town's future.
- ❖ Help the Town of Valdese look toward the future and help answer questions related to growth, development, and the coordination of public services and natural resources.
- ❖ Help assure that planning is done in a manner which best serves the public interest.
- ❖ Focus on land use, environmental protection, and infrastructure planning.
- ❖ Be an adopted policy document that can help offer guidance to appointed and elected officials in matters related to the Town's physical growth and development.
- ❖ Help constitute the legal basis for the Town's land use decision-making process and serve as the foundation for future land use regulations.

If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it.

~Abraham Lincoln

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

To address issues related to the faltering economy and specifically the decline of the textile manufacturing industry during the early 2000s, the North Carolina Rural Center chose the Town of Valdese to participate in its Small Town Economic Prosperity initiative (NCSTEP). An outcome of this project was the "Valdese Economic Development Plan." This plan offered many suggestions for Valdese that could help "create a more diversified and growing local economy." The plan also clearly identified a need for a current land development plan to help guide future land development and redevelopment throughout town. The NCSTEP plan recommended that a land development plan be completed as soon as possible with a special focus on the downtown area and also addressing many other planning-related issues, including commercial building facades, landscaping, walkability, and the need for a mix of commercial and residential land uses. In 2011, Valdese sought the assistance of the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Community Assistance to facilitate the planning process needed to formulate a Town Development Plan.

The Town of Valdese has created this plan to help shape the community's future development. To help prepare for future needs, "The Town Development Plan" examines issues such as land use, transportation, utility infrastructure, housing, commercial activities, and environmental conservation. Adoption of this plan provides decision makers with a rational process for establishing public policy related to the town's physical development over the next 10-15 years. The plan will serve as a reference for citizens, in both the public and private sectors, regarding the desired location, mix, density, and other characteristics of land development in Valdese.

1.2 Authority to Plan

North Carolina law requires that zoning regulations be made in accordance with a land use plan (G.S. 160A-383). State law further requires that when local governments rezone property or adopt zoning amendments, the decision-makers explain how their actions are consistent with any adopted plan, are reasonable, and are in the overall public interest. These legal requirements provide the framework and authority for municipal planning in North Carolina and help assure that land use decisions are not arbitrary or capricious. Zoning decisions made within the context of the Town's long term vision and goals as documented in the Town Development Plan will meet these requirements.

2 Community Profile

2.1 Area History

In May of 1893, a group of Waldenses, from the Cottian Alps of Northern Italy, settled on land located near the Catawba River in eastern Burke County in North Carolina, between the towns of Morganton and Hickory. The center of this community became the town of Valdese.

The Waldenses were pre-Reformation Christians with a religious ancestry that dates back to at least the 12th century. For centuries these Waldenses were persecuted by armies from both the governments of Italy and France and the official church. This tiny religious sect was forced to take refuge in the Valleys of the Cottian Alps of Northern Italy and remained secluded in the rugged mountains until they received their civil freedom by the Edict of 1848.

With this new peace their number grew rapidly until their Alpine farms could no longer support them. They looked elsewhere and began establishing colonies in other parts of Europe, South America, and the United States. They migrated to New York City, Chicago, Missouri, Texas and Utah, as well as Valdese. The Valdese colony became the largest Waldensian colony in the world located outside of Italy.

In the beginning, the Valdese settlers tried to make their living off the land as they had in Italy, but the poor soil would not produce. They turned instead to manufacturing, and with the same spirit of survival and determination of their ancestors, began to prosper. Valdese has long-benefitted from a manufacturing economy because of their efforts.

The Town of Valdese was incorporated in 1920 and elected its first mayor, John Long. Valdese celebrated the Centennial of its founding in 1993 and the Centennial Park and Fountain were opened on Main Street to commemorate the event. (<http://townofvaldese.com/pages/heritage>)

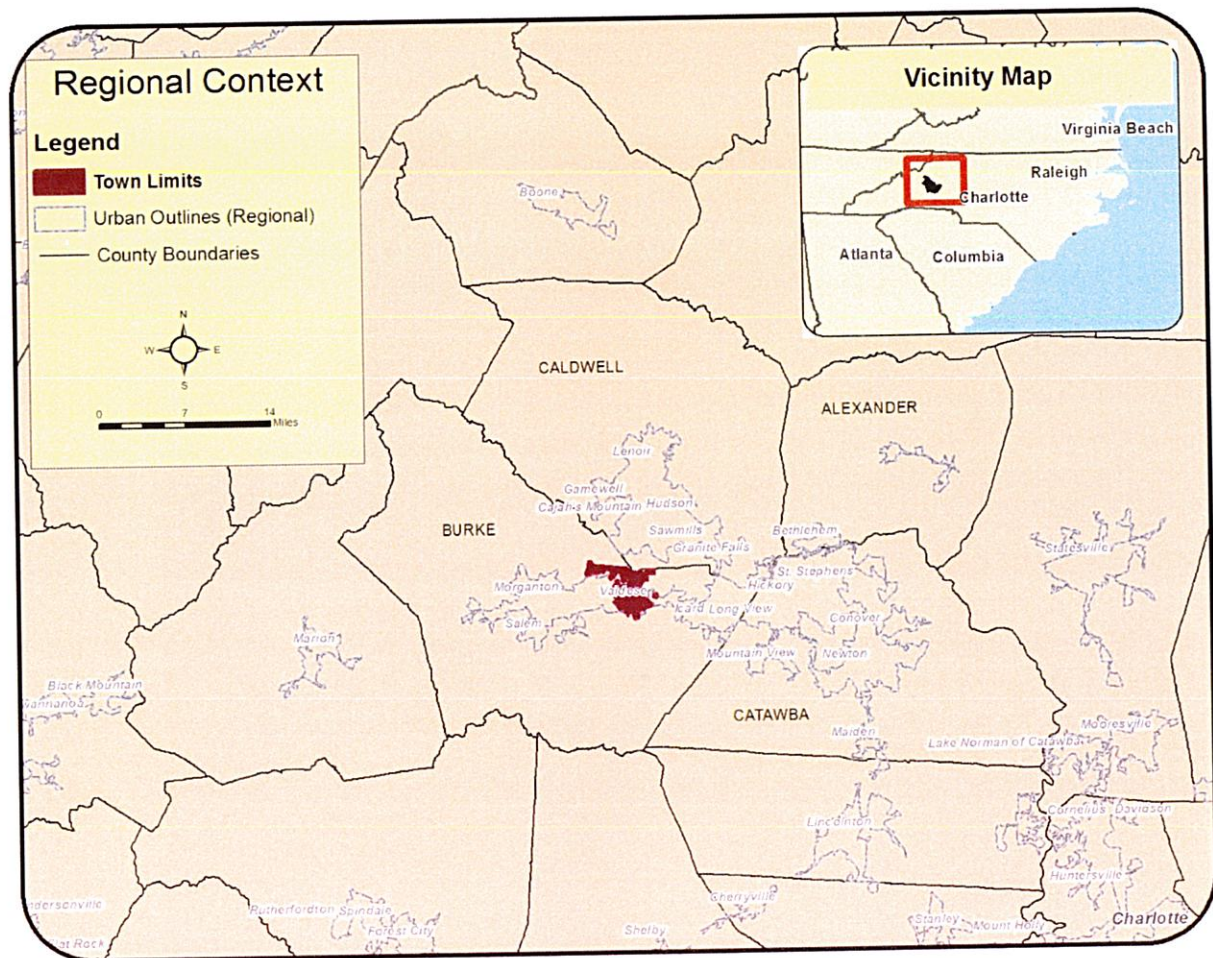


2.2 Regional Profile

Valdese is located in western North Carolina in east Burke County. It is the county's second largest town with an estimated population of 4,900 in 2012. The Catawba River/Lake Rhodhiss forms the town's northern boundary while the southern boundary coincides roughly with Interstate 40. The neighboring towns of Rutherford College and Drexel are situated nearby to the east and west, respectively.

Valdese is part of the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Area, which has a population of more than 350,000 people, and is readily accessible to many major employment, transportation, and recreation centers.

Downtown Hickory is approximately 15 miles to the east and Morganton, the Burke County seat, is 8 miles to the west. The location of Valdese makes it desirable for business, industry, employers, commuters, families, retirees, and second home owners.



2.3 Population Growth

2.3.1 Historical Population Growth (1970-2012)

There has been relatively slow population growth in Valdese since 1970. From 1970 to 2010, the town's population grew by 14.5 percent while Burke County grew by 19.5 percent. Between the decennial census year of 2010 and the year 2012, the Valdese population failed to grow and decreased by 0.4 percent. During this same time period, Burke County's population also experienced a slight decline and decreased by 0.2 percent. As a result, Valdese's share of the county total population, which was 5.3 percent in 1970, had decreased slightly to a 4.9 percent share by 2012.

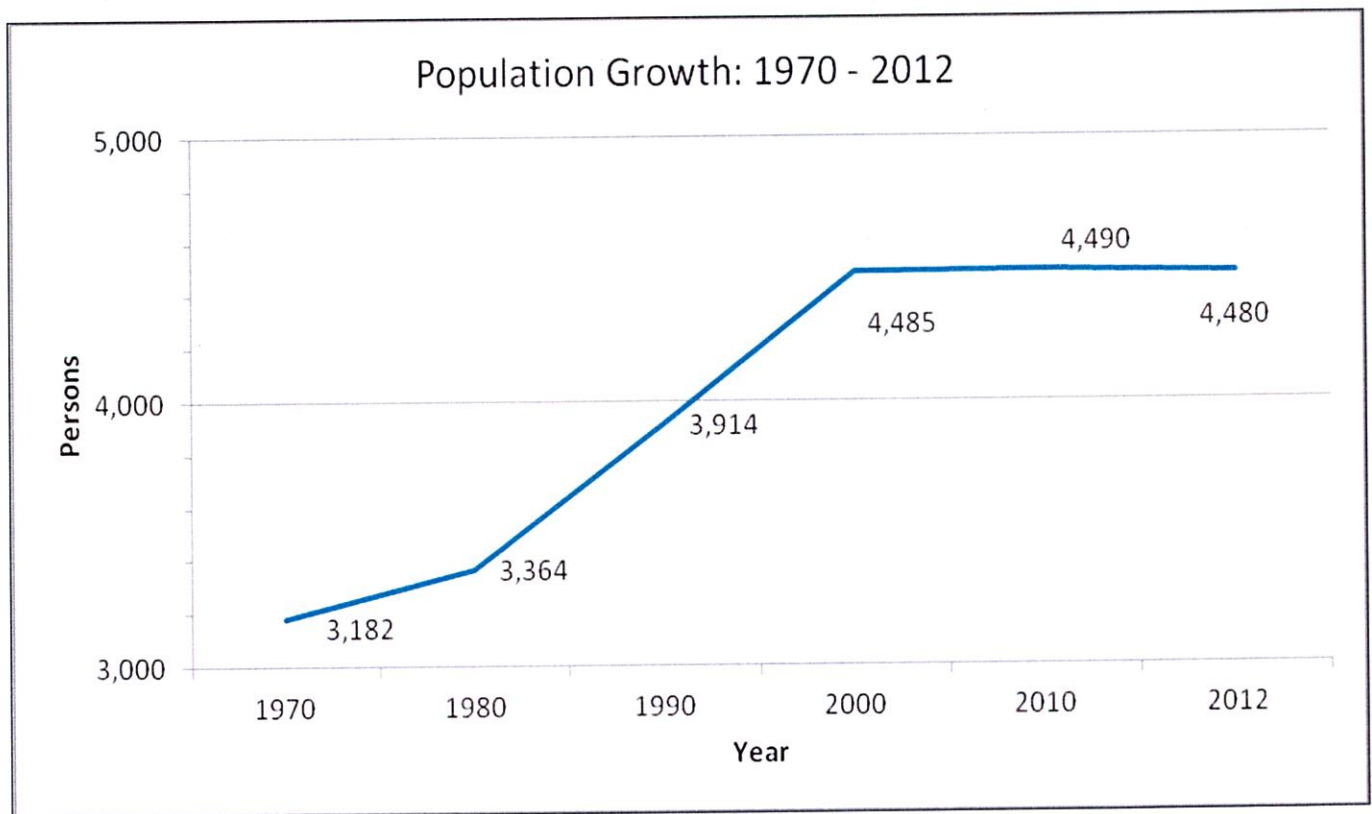


Figure 2-1: Population Growth: 1970 to 2012

It is shown in Table 2-1 that Valdese grew at a slower rate than the county, region, state, and nation as a whole between 1990 and 2010. While the town grew by 14.7 percent during that time, the county and state grew by 20 and 44 percent respectively. From 2010 to 2012, the rate of population growth in Valdese, and throughout the nation and particularly in the region, slowed dramatically until it actually reached decline in the Hickory MSA, Burke County and the Town of Valdese.

	1990	2010	2012	% Change 1990-2010	% Change 2010 - 2012
Valdese	3914	4490	4480	14.7	-0.2
Burke County	75,744	90,912	90,505	20	-0.4
Hickory MSA	292,409	365,497	363,627	25	-0.5
N. Carolina	6,628,637	9,535,483	9,752,073	44	2.3
United States	248,709,873	308,745,538	313,914,040	24	1.7

Table 2-1: Population Change 1990-2012

2.3.2 Projected Population Growth (2010-2030)

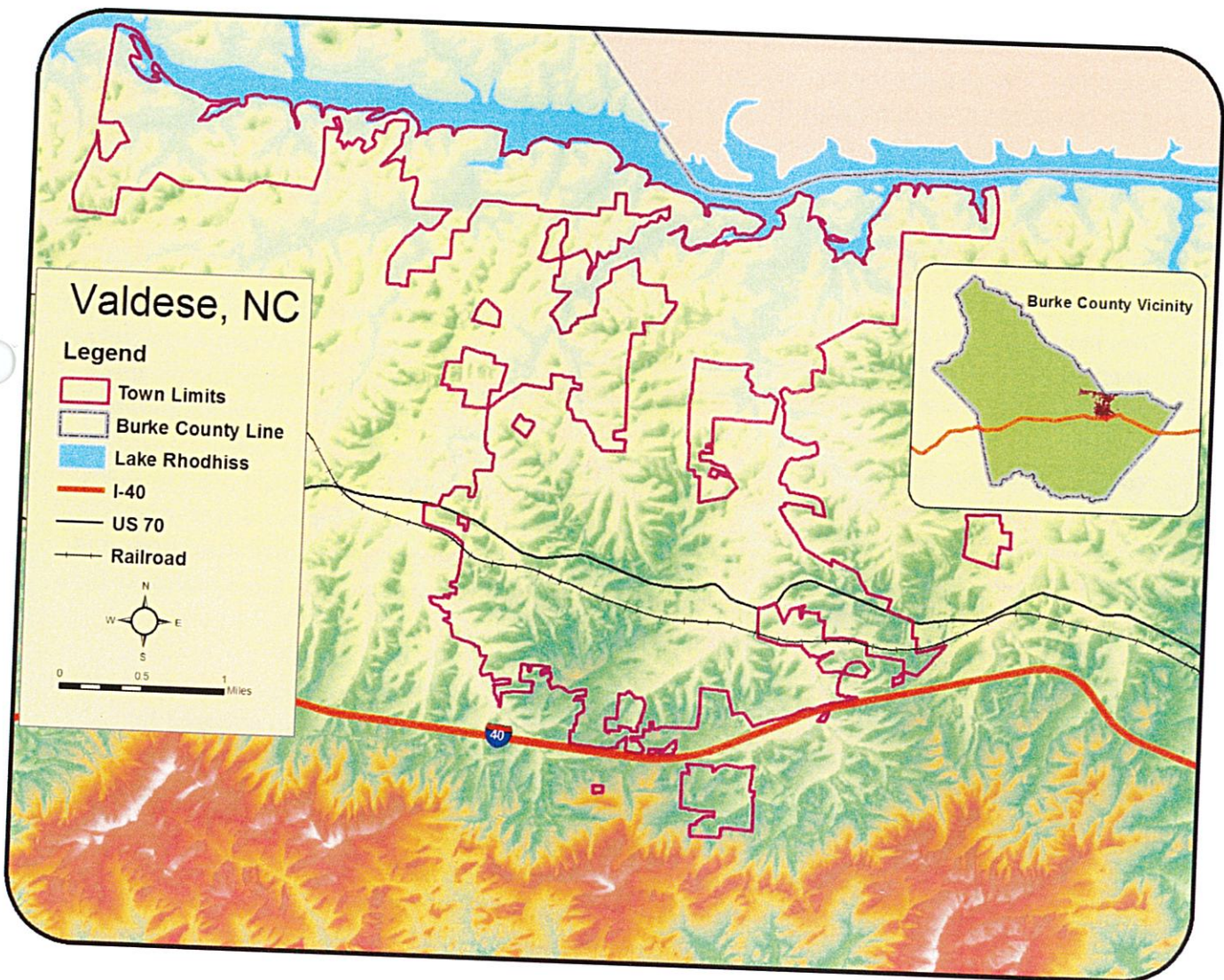
Projecting future population growth is inexact by nature and can be challenging at any scale. This is especially true for small cities and towns. Municipal population growth is largely dependent on issues such as birth rate, migration, annexation, and other factors, such as economic conditions.

The North Carolina Office of State Planning provides population projections for every county in the state. The population projections used here for the Town of Valdese assume that the town will continue to account for its historical share of the county population through 2030 (approximately five percent).

The Office of State Planning indicates that Burke County is not likely to experience any population growth through 2030 and actually predicts that the county will have a net loss of roughly 189 residents between 2010 and 2030, as shown in Table 2-2. This will leave Burke County with a population of approximately 90,723 in 2030. If during this time Valdese maintains five percent of the County's population, its population would remain fairly stable, gaining

1.3 Planning Area

The planning area includes the town's entire planning jurisdiction, in other words, the incorporated town limits of Valdese. This area covers roughly 7.5 square miles (4800 acres) in eastern Burke County. Although Valdese has no extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), in accordance with sound planning principles, the plan does take into consideration some unincorporated areas in the vicinity of the Interstate 40 interchanges numbered 111, 112, and 113.



1.4 Use of the Plan

The Town Development Plan is a reference and policy document intended to be used by those interested in the physical growth and development of the Town of Valdese. The Valdese Town Council and the Planning Board should use the plan to help guide their decision-making process regarding land use and zoning issues. Developers and landowners may use the plan as a guide to gain a better understanding of local development policies and the town's long-term goals. Town officials may use the plan to help prepare departmental work plans, budgets, and capital improvement plans.

The Town Development Plan should also serve as a complement to any other plans or programs intended to manage growth and development in the area. These may include, but are not limited to: the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization Long Range Transportation Plan, the Burke County I-40 Corridor Plan, and the Catawba River Basinwide Water Quality Plan. Users are encouraged to take advantage of these additional resources for further reference and comparison purposes.

1.5 The Planning Process

The land use planning process is cyclical in nature. It typically begins with the identification of a need for planning and continues through to the adoption of a planning document and a formal commitment to the implementation of the recommendations contained within. Ideally the planning process continues indefinitely with periodic evaluations, updates and amendments to the adopted plan. In 2011, the Valdese Town Council directed the Valdese Planning Board to create a land use plan for the town. The Planning Board, assisted by an Advisory Committee, town staff, and professional planners from the Western Piedmont Council of Governments and the North Carolina Division of Community Assistance, evaluated existing town conditions and formulated a vision and plan for future development and physical growth. The timeframe for a long range plan is typically 10-20 years long.

This planning process is participatory in nature and participants were asked three fundamental questions to get started: (1) What do we have in Valdese now? (2) What do we need for Valdese in the future? and; (3) What actions are required to make these goals reality? Determining the existing situation involved an in depth evaluation of current and historic baseline data relevant to land use issues and the identification of any topics or trends with the potential to influence local land use or development in the future. In order to establish community opinions and outlook regarding growth and development, the Planning Board and Advisory Committee engaged in several planning and visioning activities. A survey was also administered to the public to gather more community input on planning topics. Key issues were identified as a result of these public involvement activities. The plan's priority recommendations were developed within the context of the key issues that have been identified and ultimately form the framework for the implementation Action Plan.

Action Steps Required During the Town Planning Process

Action 1: The general public and Town Council recognize the need for planning.

Action 2: The Town Council agrees to commit people and money to draft (or update) the town plan.

Action 3: The Town Council gives the planning board the task of drafting (or updating) the town plan.

Action 4: The Planning Board prepares a work schedule and timeline for completion of the town plan.

Action 5: The Town Council appoints a citizen advisory committee to assist the Planning Board with public input, needs assessments, and information-gathering.

Action 6: The Planning Board and advisory committee draft a vision statement for the community and a set of priorities and recommendations for the town plan.

Action 7: The Planning Board completes the town plan and recommends it for approval by the Town Council.

Action 8: The Town Council formally adopts the town plan, or makes changes to the draft, and then adopts it.

Action 9: The Town Council commits to implementation of the plan and then, along with the Planning Board, uses the plan in the land use decision-making process.

Action 10: The Planning Board periodically drafts changes and updates to the plan and recommends them to the Town Council for approval.

Figure 1-1: Ten Action Steps of the Town Planning Process

1.6 Public Involvement

It was decided early in the planning process that in order to make the plan truly effective, as much public participation as possible would be necessary. To help address this need, Town Council appointed a Planning Advisory Committee to assist the Planning Board with the project. This committee was comprised of several town residents, each of whom is an important stakeholder in the Town's future. Also, Town representatives, including the Mayor, Town Manager, and major department heads were all consulted during the initial stages of the project. During a series of interviews these representatives provided valuable information about the various needs and capabilities of the town, especially in regards to public services and facilities.

To help assure that a broad cross-section of the community was represented, public input was sought throughout the planning process. To help identify the concerns of Town residents, a community survey was made available at Town Hall, the public library and the Valdese Recreation Center. Continual efforts were made to encourage public involvement and all Planning Board and Advisory Committee meetings, workshops, stakeholder interviews, and visioning exercises were open to the public.

1.7 Organization of the Plan

The Town Development Plan includes results from the public involvement activities, information gathering exercises, issue identification, priority recommendations, and implementation strategies that can help Valdese realize its vision for the future. The introduction provides an overview of the planning process and describes the scope and purpose of the plan, as well as the public involvement efforts and proposed end users. Chapters 2 and 3 offer the demographic and economic background of the community and a description of its natural and physical characteristics. All demographic data is from the U.S. Census Bureau unless stated otherwise. An existing land use survey is also included in Chapter 3. Public services and facilities are detailed in Chapter 4 and the town's Key Issues related to planning and development are identified in Chapter 5. The community vision statement and priority recommendations that supply the outline for the Action Plan are presented in Chapter 6. A future land use map, which should be used as an important resource when considering rezonings and other land use decisions, is included in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 provides the overall implementation strategy of the Town Development Plan, as well as an itemized Action Plan. The Action Plan offers policy recommendations to help make the Town's land use planning decision-making more efficient and effective and specific steps for attaining the community's vision of the future.

approximately 45 additional residents from 2010 to 2030 to reach a population of roughly 4536 inhabitants. As mentioned previously, recently annexed territory and underdeveloped residential subdivisions may contribute to the uncertainty of these population projections.

	Valdese	Burke County	North Carolina
2010 (estimate)	4490	90,912	9,535,483
2020 (projection)	4536	90,725	10,614,863
2030 (projection)	4536	90,723	11,629,559
Table 2-2: Population Change 2010-2030			

2.4 Population Profile

The population profile explains important demographic indicators for Valdese based primarily on data from two decennial censuses, 1990 and 2010. These two datasets provide a convenient comparison for a twenty year time horizon, which is similar to the time horizon used for the Town Development Plan.

2.4.1 Age Composition

As illustrated in Table 2-3, Valdese's population is aging considerably. The town's median age (half the population is older and half is younger than the median age) has increased 12.1 percent, rising from 38.8 since 1990 to 43.5 in 2010. By comparison, Burke County's median age in 2010 was 41.2, an increase of 17 percent since 1990. This aging trend is likely to continue over the next several years as current town residents lead longer lives and more retirees move to the area. Valdese is apt to have a median age close to 50 years by 2030. A rapidly aging population has several planning implications including more demand for age appropriate services. Additional healthcare, housing, and leisure amenities will be required to serve the future needs of this segment of the population.

Retirement aged adults, those 65 years or older, made up one fifth of the town's population in 2010. This represents a slight percentage increase (1.6 percent) since 1990 but a net increase of 177 retired residents during this same time period. Table 2-3 demonstrates that a large segment of the population, 900 Valdese residents, is already of retirement age and that older working adults are becoming an increasingly larger part of the population. The total proportion of working-aged adults in town remained fairly constant from 1990 to 2010 at 57.6 and 56.7 percent, respectively. However, a closer look at the various cohorts of working age adults reveals some apparent trends. The number of younger working adults (age 20 to 34 years) fell to just 15.2 percent of the population by 2010, which indicates a net decrease of 192 people

over the past twenty years. By comparison, 875 residents, or 24.4 percent of the town were young working adults in 1990. Additionally, the number of older working adults aged 35 to 64 years increased by 442, from 35.2 percent of the total in 1990 to 41.5 percent in 2010. The numbers of pre-school and school aged children were relatively stable during this time, comprising 23.8 percent of the total population in 1990 and 24.1 percent by 2010. The challenge moving forward will be to retain the youngest residents so they might enter the workforce and contribute to the town's future growth.

Age Group	Population			% Total Population	
	1990	2010	% Change	1990	2010
Under 5	252	265	5.1	6.4	5.9
5 to 9	244	258	5.7	6.2	5.7
10 to 14	198	277	39.9	5	6.2
15 to 19	242	284	17.3	6.2	6.3
20 to 24	312	250	-19.9	8	5.6
25 to 34	563	433	-23	14.4	9.6
35 to 44	489	585	19.6	12.5	13
45 to 54	444	638	43.7	11.3	14.2
55 to 64	448	600	33.9	11.4	14.3
65 and over	722	900	24.7	18.4	20
Total population	3914	4490	14.7	100	100
Median Age	38.8	43.5	12.1	--	--

Table 2-3: Age Composition, 1990 and 2010

2.4.2 Racial Composition

According to census data, the racial composition of Valdese is not particularly diverse, especially relative to the overall state and national populations. Whites make up the vast majority of residents at 94 percent of the total population. There are relatively few minorities living in town. Asians, with 3.3 percent, are the largest minority group, while African-Americans represent 2 percent of the town's population. Hispanic persons of any race represented 2.6 percent of the Valdese population in 2010. It should be mentioned here that the racial composition of the surrounding region is also not particularly diverse. For example, the minority population of Burke County, and the Unifour region as a whole, is approximately 15 percent of the total.

By comparison, in 2010 the United States was estimated to have a mix of 75 percent white, 14 percent black, and 6 percent Asian. In North Carolina the minority figures in 2010 were 70, 23, and 3 percent, respectively. Approximately 16 percent of the U.S. population is considered to be Hispanic, which refers to one's ethnicity rather than race. Hispanic people may be of any race. Hispanics were believed to represent approximately 8 percent of the North Carolina population in 2010.

2.4.3 Educational Attainment

In comparison with the state of North Carolina, Valdese is well situated in the area of educational attainment. Although the percentage of those in Valdese with a Bachelor's degree is a bit lower than the state average, there are proportionately more residents in town that are high school graduates, or have graduate and professional degrees. Figure 2-2 (on the following page) shows that in 2011 approximately 84 percent of Valdese's population aged 25 years or older had a high school diploma or higher. Of the town's 18-24 year olds, 60 percent had some college or a bachelor's degree in 2011, compared with 53 percent statewide. This is encouraging for the employment prospects of younger residents as well as for those businesses in the area seeking qualified workers. Skilled and trained workers are essential for businesses and industries considering expansion or relocating to an area and most well-paying jobs require at least a high school diploma. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in 2012 those with a high school diploma earned 38 percent more than those without a high school diploma and those with at least a four year college degree earned 126 percent more. Similarly, those without a high school diploma had an unemployment rate of 12 percent while 4 percent of those with a college degree were unemployed in 2012.

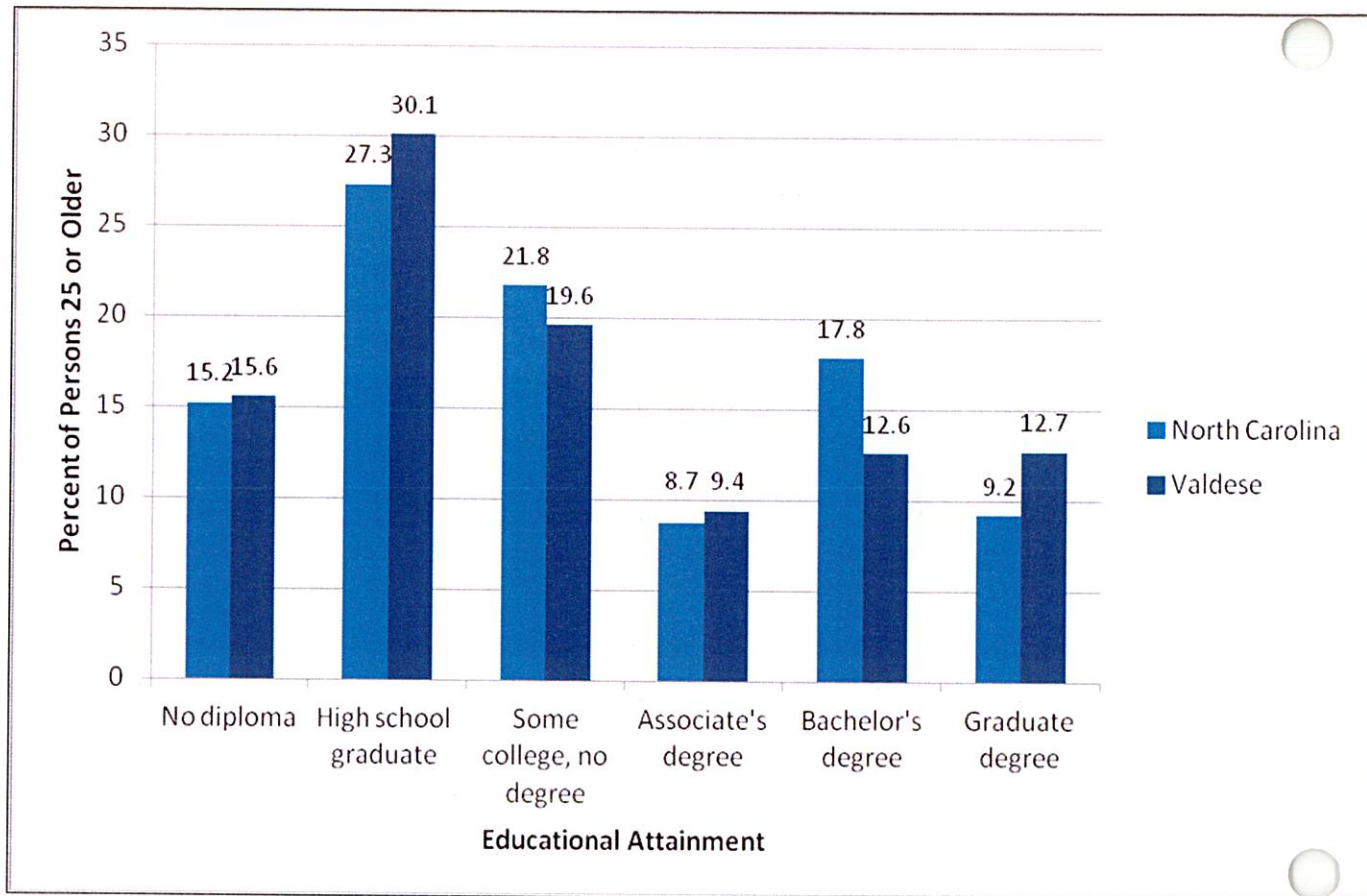


Figure 2-2: Educational Attainment of Persons 25 years or Older

2.4.4 Household Composition

The Census Bureau defines a household as consisting of all the people who occupy a housing unit. A house, an apartment or other group of rooms, or a single room, may be regarded as a housing unit. Family is defined as a group of two or more people who reside together and are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. A non-family household is considered to be a group of unrelated persons living together, or one person living alone. As demonstrated in Table 2-4 (on next page), the average household size, or persons per household, is shrinking in Valdese. Interestingly, the average family size in Valdese increased slightly between 1990 and 2010. As the population continues to age the shrinking trend for average household size is likely to continue.

	Households		% of Total Households	
	1990	2010	1990	2010
Married couple	na	884	na	45.9
Single female	na	254	na	13.2
Single male	na	89	na	4.6
Total Family Households	1166	1227	68.9	63.7
Living Alone	482	627	28.4	32.5
Not Living alone	44	73	2.6	3.8
Total Non-family Households	526	700	31.1	36.3
Total Households	1692	1927	--	--
	1990	2010		
Average Persons / Household	2.31	2.28		
Average Persons/ Family	2.80	2.86		

Table 2-4: Composition of Households

Table 2-4 shows that in 2010 most of the households in Valdese were occupied by families but also that the percentage of family households has fallen by more than 5 percent since 1990 to 63.7 percent. During this same time period the number of non-family households increased by 174 units to 36.3 percent of the total households. In Valdese, many more people now live alone than have in the past as indicated by the increase in the number and percentage of non-family households. The net gain of all households since 1990 has been 235 units, or a growth rate of just under 14 percent. Not surprisingly, this rate is very similar to the town's overall population growth rate during that same time at 14.7 percent. However, future increases in the number of household units are likely to occur at a faster rate than the rate of natural population increase. This is due to the high potential for in-migration and second home construction related to the residential subdivisions at Lake Rhodhiss.

2.4.5 Household Income

The average annual household income in Valdese during 2011 was reportedly \$51,697. The median annual household income was \$38,032. These income levels are both considerably less than the national and state figures. For both measures of income, Valdese households earned approximately 75 percent of the national rate and 82 percent of the state rate. Figure 2-3 shows that while 9 percent of households had a robust annual income of more than \$100,000, more than 30 percent of households earned less than \$25,000 per year, which signifies a certain amount of impoverishment.

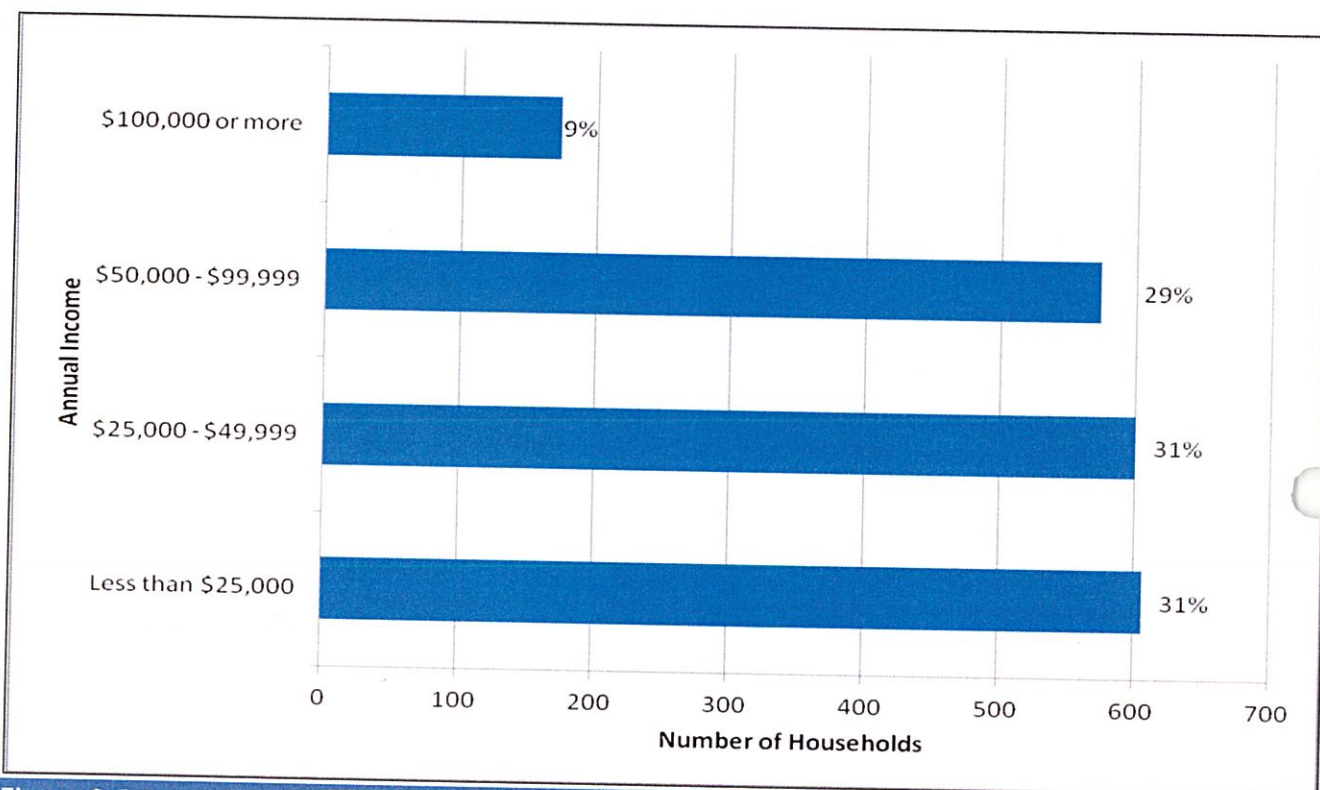


Figure 2-3 Annual Household Income in 2011

2.4.6 Poverty

The U.S. Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor. If the total income for a family or individual falls below the poverty threshold, then the family or individual is considered to be in poverty. The Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey (ACS) discovered that 10 percent of all people in Valdese, and 24 percent of children, live in poverty. Ten percent of all Valdese families, and 57 percent of families with a female head of household, were reported to be impoverished. For reference, in 2011 a family of four earning less than \$23,000, or an individual earning less than \$11,000, annually was considered to be in poverty.

2.5 Employment

2.5.1 Labor Force Characteristics

The civilian labor force includes all persons 16 years or older who are not in the military and are eligible and able for employment. A person is not considered part of the labor force if they have not sought a job in four weeks or more. Retirees, homemakers, and students are among those who typically are not included in the civilian labor force. Table 2-5 shows 2044 persons, or 55 percent of those 16 years or older, participated in the town's labor force during 2011. It is encouraging that the unemployment rate, at 8.8 percent, was considerably less than both county and state averages during that time.

	Valdese		Burke County		North Carolina	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Persons 16 or older	3699	--	73,910	--	7,616,397	--
Not in Civilian Labor Force	1459	39.4	33,638	45.4	2,782,615	36.5
Civilian labor Force	2240	60.6	40,067	54.2	4,751,695	62.4
Employed	2044	55.3	34,852	47.2	4,195,808	55.1
Unemployed	196	5.3	5,215	7.1	555,887	7.3
Unemployment rate		8.8		13		11.7

Table 2-5: Civilian Labor Force, 2011

2.5.2 Employment by Industry and Occupation

Approximately half of Valdese workers are employed in two industrial sectors. The education, health care, and social services sector is largest, accounting for 637, or one third of all jobs. The manufacturing sector now ranks second in Valdese, accounting for 20 percent, or 365 jobs. By comparison, only slightly more than a third of all workers in NC were employed in these two industries. The 2010 Census reflects the loss of manufacturing jobs during the early to mid-2000s and highlights by and large the importance that schools and healthcare facilities, as well as retail trade and personal services, can have on the employment outlook for Valdese (Table 2-6). Diversified industrial sectors should help make the town less dependent on a few large employers and reduce the impact a slump in one sector could have on the overall economy.

Industrial Sector	Valdese		Burke County	North Carolina
Civilian Labor Force (employed)	2044		34,852	4,195,808
	persons	%	%	%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	637	31.2	29.9	23.7
Manufacturing	365	17.9	20.2	12.8
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	220	10.8	3.3	9
Retail trade	216	10.6	9.5	11.5
Public administration	143	7.0	4.2	4.8
Other services, except public administration	124	6.1	4.8	4.9
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	119	5.8	8.4	10
Construction	112	5.5	7.3	6.6
Wholesale trade	42	2.1	2.8	2.9
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	37	1.8	5.2	4.4
Information	29	1.4	0.7	1.8
Finance and insurance, real estate and rental and leasing*	0*	0*	3.0	6.2
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0	0	0.7	1.4

Table 2-6: Percent of Workers by Industry, 2011

*Margin of error resulted in no instances being recognized by Census

2.5.3 Commuting Patterns

According to the 2010 census, the average travel time for all Valdese commuters from home to their place of employment, is approximately 20 minutes. Moreover, roughly 40 percent of the Valdese labor force works outside of Burke County. Survey results indicated that the Hickory and Morganton areas are major sources of employment for commuters. Valdese should strive to maintain local employment opportunities yet continue to recognize its attractiveness and potential as a residence for those who work in the more urban surrounding areas.

2.6 Economic Conditions

2.6.1 NC Commerce Tier Rankings

Every year the North Carolina Department of Commerce ranks each of the state's 100 counties based on its economic well-being. The state assigns each county a tier designation based on economic indicators such as unemployment rate, median household income, population growth, and property values. The 40 most-distressed counties are designated as Tier 1; the next 40 most-distressed counties are designated as Tier 2; and, the 20 least-distressed counties are designated Tier 3. Since 2007, Burke County has consistently been designated Tier 1 according to this system. The tier system is incorporated into various state economic development and tax incentive programs designed to encourage job creation and economic activity in the less prosperous areas of the state. This system allows businesses in Tier 1 counties that meet eligibility requirements at least \$12,500 state tax credits for each new job created.

2.6.1 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) County Economic Status

Each year the ARC, a regional economic development agency representing a partnership of federal, state, and local governments, also assesses the economic status of counties. ARC compares county averages for three economic indicators—average unemployment rate, per capita market income, and poverty rate. Each county in the nation is given a score according to these economic indicators and then ranked. ARC counties, including Burke, are then designated as distressed, at-risk, transitional, competitive, or attainment according to their rank. For many years (2002-2011) Burke County was considered a “transitional” county by ARC. Transitional counties are those counties that rank between the nation's strongest and weakest local economies. Beginning in 2012 through the current rankings for fiscal year 2014, Burke County has been classified as an “at-risk” county. At-Risk counties are those at risk of becoming economically distressed, as compared to other counties in the nation. In Burke County from 2007-2011, the average poverty rate was high at 18 percent, compared to a national rate of 14 percent. The 3 year average unemployment rate for Burke from 2009-2011 was 13.5 percent. Comparatively, the U.S. unemployment rate during that period was 9 percent. Finally, the county per capita market income in Burke County was \$21,215 in 2010, or 65 percent of the national average which was then \$32,562. It is important that city and county leaders be aware of these indicators and that they implement means to foster improvement in each one and in the overall local economy.

2.7 Housing

2.7.1 Housing Characteristics

There were 2159 total housing units in the town of Valdese according to the 2010 census. The census definition for a housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied (or if vacant, intended for occupancy) as living quarters. Between 1990 and 2010 the town added 364 units to its housing stock. The vacancy rate of total housing units was reported to have almost doubled from 5.7 percent to close to 11 percent vacant.

	1990	2010
Total housing units (#)	1795	2159
Total occupied units (#)	1692	1927
Owner occupied (%)	65	66.2
Renter occupied (%)	35	33.8
Vacancy rate	5.7	10.8

Table 2-7: Housing Characteristics by Occupancy, 1990 and 2010

Single-family dwellings are the most common type of housing units in Valdese. Seventy percent were single family homes in 1990 and by 2010 that number had grown to just over 74 percent. Most of the growth in multi-family housing came in the form of duplexes while the number of manufactured homes in town dropped significantly from 128 to 88 units. This represents a decrease of over 30 percent during this twenty year period.

	1990	2010
Single family (#)	1251	1604
Multi-family (#)	416	467
Duplexes	61	116
Apartments (3 to 9 units)	254	261
Apartments (10+ units)	101	90
Manufactured Home / other	128	88
Total Units	1795	2159

Table 2-8: Housing Characteristics by Ttp of Unit, 1990 and 2010

2.7.2 Homeownership

Homeownership is thought to be a positive contribution to the community, one that helps stabilize neighborhoods and maintain residential property values. Homeowners tend to have higher incomes and their households are more likely to be occupied by families. In 2010, owner-occupied housing units consisted of 66.2 percent of all housing units in Valdese. This represents a slight increase since 1990. By comparison, the homeownership rate nationally was 66.9 percent in 2010, but due to the economic recession had declined to 64.7 percent by 2012. Although a certain amount of rental housing is needed in most every community, there should be no major concern regarding a trend away from homeownership in Valdese.

2.7.3 Housing Age

Historic homes in established neighborhoods help give Valdese its quaint small town charm and historic character. Older homes can be prone to deterioration and blight, but with proper maintenance they can also be a tremendous community asset. The 2011 American Community Survey estimates that 1469 of 2159 total housing units in Valdese, or 68 percent, were built prior to 1980 making them well over 30 years old. Thirty-five percent of the total housing units in town were built before 1960 and are now more than 50 years old. Since the housing boom of the 1950s, residential construction has tapered off somewhat, but the newly annexed Lake Rhodhiss tracts should initiate a resurgence of new housing starts in the future.

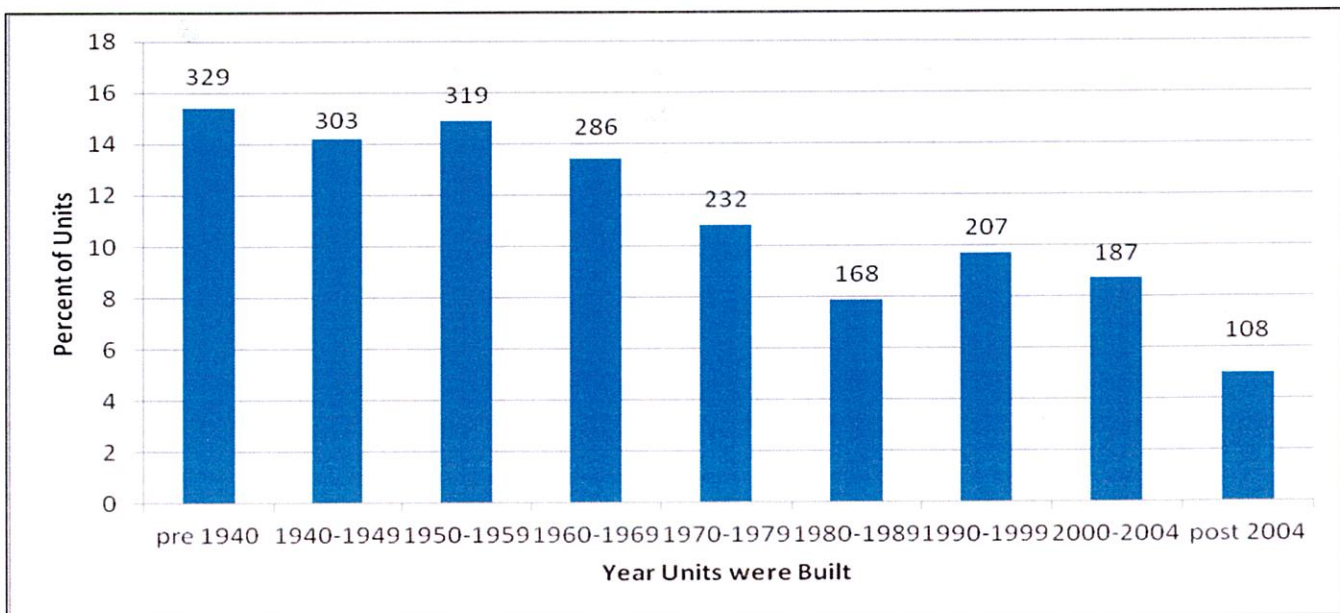


Figure 2-4: Year housing units built, 2011

2.7.4 Housing Affordability

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommends that a household spend no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. Households that pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording other necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. The lack of affordable housing is a significant hardship for low-income households, often preventing them from meeting their basic needs or saving for their future. The median value for homes in Valdese is \$129,300 and the median monthly cost of home ownership for those with a mortgage is \$978. The median monthly rent for a housing unit in Valdese was \$511 in 2011. In 2011, approximately 27 percent of renters were at or above the housing affordability threshold and 29 percent of homeowners with mortgages exceeded the affordability threshold.

3 Physical Profile

Certain natural conditions such as steep slopes, flood hazard areas, and particular soil types are not conducive to intensive development. Development in areas that face environmental constraints can disrupt the safety and well-being of the community, the natural environment, and ecological habitats. The information in this section may be used to identify areas that are most appropriate for future development, or in some areas conservation. The maps in this chapter were prepared using GIS data compiled from multiple federal, state, and local government sources. Although these maps are relatively large scale, land use decisions should be based primarily on site specific surveys and engineering studies. The information provided here are intended solely for general land use planning purposes. Historic building stock and existing land uses are also examined in this chapter.

3.1 Environmental Resources

The Environmental Resource Maps illustrate the natural and physical features that perform important environmental functions in the planning area. The natural environment occasionally hinders land development and this should be taken into careful consideration when making land use decisions.

3.1.1 Topography & Slope

Topographic slope is expressed as the percent of vertical change per hundred feet of horizontal distance. Map 3.1, which was produced using a digital elevation model (DEM), illustrates the percent slope throughout the planning area. Valdese is located in the mountain foothills region of North Carolina where steep slopes greater than 25 percent are present but not the dominating landscape factor. Steep slopes are poorly suited for most types of land development and even individual home sites in these areas will require excessive grading, excavation, and construction costs. Severe slopes exist primarily along streams and related drainage networks.

3.1.2 Flood Hazard Areas

Flood hazard areas are areas adjacent to surface water that are subject to periodic flooding. Residential subdivisions, industrial, and commercial buildings are inappropriate developments in flood hazard areas. Individual home sites are the only type of new development that may be suitable for flood-prone areas. Most of the flood-prone land in the planning area is in the 100-year floodplain which is delineated in Map 3.2. Property in the 100-year floodplain has a 1 percent chance of flooding during any given year and a 26 percent chance of flooding during the life of a 30-year mortgage. The 100-year floodplain is the standard often used to determine the need for flood insurance. The Town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program

(NFIP), which allows landowners to purchase flood insurance at reasonable rates. To prevent exorbitant property losses and to mitigate the damages associated with flooding, all types of development should be done in accordance with the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

3.1.3 Wetlands

Wetlands help preserve and improve water quality, protect wildlife and vegetative habitats, control flooding and soil erosion, and provide recreation and education opportunities. Wetlands in the planning area are mostly concentrated near small ponds and along Lake Rhodhiss. Development of regulated wetlands must be done by permit under federal and state wetland protection laws. The wetlands indicated on Map 3.2 are based on the National Wetland Inventory (NWI).

3.1.4 Water Supply Watersheds

A watershed is defined as the entire land area contributing surface drainage to a specific point. All land is located within a watershed of some type, but areas that feed surface waters used as a source for public drinking water are classified as water supply watersheds. The Lake Rhodhiss/Catawba River Watershed in Valdese is a class WS-IV Watershed subject to state regulatory and development standards. Land development, agriculture, and transportation activities require adherence to best management practices and stream buffering is required in some areas. Most of the town is located in this water supply watershed and is classified as "protected." Additionally, much of the planning area is classified as "critical area." This critical area is adjacent to the town's water supply intake where there is a greater risk associated with pollution than from other portions of the watershed. The critical area identified on Map 3.2 includes the area one-half mile upstream and draining into Lake Rhodhiss. Development in both the critical and protected watershed areas must be done in accordance with the provisions of Article N of the town's Zoning Ordinance, "Watershed Protection."

3.1.5 Soils

Soil type is a key factor that can contribute to the success or failure of a proposed land use. Each soil type is associated with a unique landscape that results over time through the combined influence of parent rock materials, vegetation, climate, slope, and other factors. The soil types in the planning area are identified in the Soil Survey for Burke County by the USDA. A portion of the soils have certain limitations for land development and are considered "very limited" for commercial or residential land uses. The USDA defines "very limited" soils as those having properties that could require special design, increased construction costs, and careful maintenance.

The Meadowfield-Rhodhiss (MoE) soil complex is represented in much of the study area and is rated by USDA in the soil survey as follows:

Suitability: Poorly suited to areas that have slopes from 25 to 50 percent and unsuited to areas that have slopes greater than 50 percent.

Development concerns: This soil type has limitations affecting most urban uses as a result of steep slopes, depth to bedrock, and the presence of large stones. Onsite investigation is needed for each intended use. Specific land uses such as roadway or building locations will require a detailed review of site conditions.

3.1.6 Land Cover

The land cover displayed in Map 3.3 has a spatial resolution of 30 by 30 meters and was derived from data collected by the Landsat Thematic Mapper (TM) satellite. From this imagery it can be seen that a large portion of the study area is forested and a significant amount is developed. Forested land is comprised primarily of a mixture of broadleaf deciduous trees and needle-leaf evergreen species. Developed is defined here as any 10,000 square foot mapping unit with more than fifty percent altered land cover, including asphalt, concrete, or other building materials.

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3.2 Historic Resources

Historic preservation promotes economic and infill development through the protection of existing buildings, sites, and infrastructure. Adaptive reuse is a development method that repurposes buildings for new uses while retaining their historic features. The rehabilitation of existing buildings, reclaim some of the historic architecture that made Valdese a great place to begin with. An example of this type of innovative redevelopment project can be found downtown in the recently renovated Waldensian Mill facility. This multi-use facility is currently occupied by the Burke Center for Community Economic Development and demonstrates how adaptive reuse can make the most of important historic sites that otherwise remain vacant or are eventually razed.



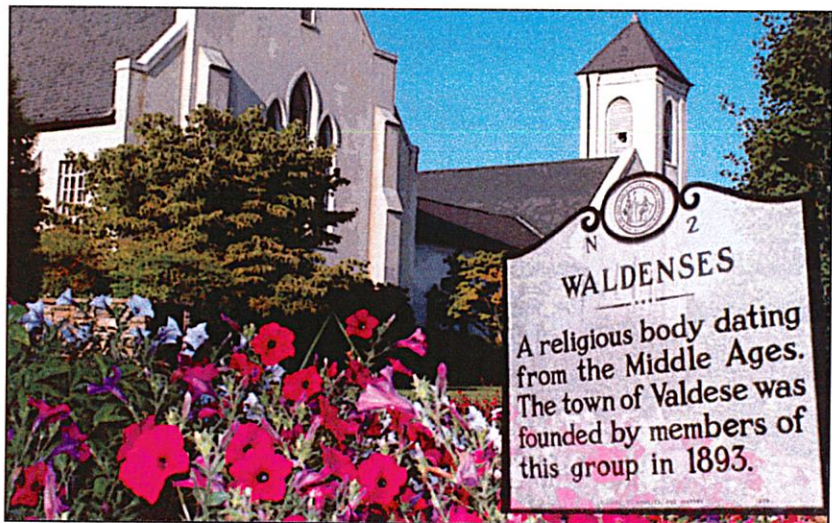
Valdese has a unique "sense of place" which promotes heritage tourism. Heritage Tourism is defined by the National Trust as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present." The Travel Industry Association of America found that people who engage in heritage tourism spend more, do more, and stay longer than other travelers. The town has been proactive in this regard by creating a Department of Tourism that markets the town's Waldensian heritage and related

attractions. Largely as a result of the work already being done by this department, the town has been selected by the North Carolina Department of Commerce for participation in its Small Town Main Street initiative. Historic preservation, downtown revitalization, and economic development are essential functions of the Small Town Main Street program and the Town of Valdese is well- poised to capitalize on its rich history.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) was established by the U.S. Congress in November, 2003 in recognition of the unique culture and natural beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the foothills of western North Carolina. In early 2004, the BRNHA initiated a public planning process to help catalyze local heritage preservation and development efforts. Local plans were produced to help guide the coordination of these efforts. The plan for Burke County and Valdese identified the Old Rock School Railroad Museum, the Meytre Grist Mill, and the McGalliard Falls Park as vital to the efforts to enhance and promote historic preservation and heritage tourism in the region.

Historic places also help define and distinguish communities. The National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support efforts to protect America's historic resources. Resources may include districts or sites that help identify the heritage or culture of a place. Properties that qualify for the National Register are considered worthy of preservation and may be eligible for state and federal tax credits if preserved to specific guidelines. Local regulations can also be adopted to protect significant properties from demolition and neglect.

Although the town has no officially designated local historic district, it does have 3 individual sites on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic resources in the planning area are listed below and shown on the Cultural Resources Map.



- Valdese Elementary School (Rock School) -- 400 Main Street
- Waldensian Presbyterian Church – 104 Main Street, East
- Dalmas, Jean-Pierre Auguste, House -- 4950 Villar Lane

3.3 Existing Land Use

Existing land use statistics are useful in determining the predominant type of development patterns throughout the planning area. These are meaningful and helpful in locating areas that may become available for future growth and development.

Table 3-1 and the accompanying Existing Land Use Map demonstrate that approximately 50 percent of the land area in Valdese is classified as undeveloped or open land. While a segment of this land may not be suitable for development due to environmental constraints or other factors, in Valdese a large quantity of prime land remains available for building and construction activity in the future. This is especially true for the large tracts of land in the northern part of the planning area and for the undeveloped residential subdivisions along Lake Rhodhiss. A close inspection of the land use map will also show that several sites nearer the central part of town are available for infill and redevelopment opportunities.

Land Use	COUNT %	SUM % (acres)	MIN (acres)	MAX (acres)	MEAN (acres)	SD (acres)
Residential	1693 / 62	1410 / 32	0.02	23.4	0.83	1.3
Commercial	118 / 4	82 / 2	0.03	8.9	0.7	1.2
Social/Cultural	88 / 3	378 / 8	0.03	68	4.3	10.8
Industry	37 / 1	313 / 7	0.07	44	8.5	10.8
Open Land	14 / 1	1518 / 34	0.8	295	108	98.7
Transportation	28 / 1	91 / 2	0.06	25.5	3.2	6.0
Undeveloped	770 / 28	691 / 15	0.01	12.1	0.9	1.2

Table 3-1: Summary of Existing Land Use

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3.3.1 Residential

Residential uses represent the largest category of developed land in Valdese. Residential activity occupies approximately 32 percent of the entire planning area. Early residential neighborhoods occurred within a short walking distance of downtown in traditional block patterns. Several single-family residences throughout the central business district, as well as along the fringes of downtown, have been converted to office, retail, or other transitional uses. Some of these currently repurposed homes include the Deal House, the Rostan Foundation Office, and the public library. In recent years, most residential development has been in large traditional subdivisions and on individual lots spread throughout town. At the time when the land use survey was conducted there were roughly 1700 residential lots in town with an average area of 0.83 acres.

3.3.2 Commercial

Only two percent of the planning area consists of commercial land uses. Generally, commercial development is concentrated in two distinct areas.

Historic downtown Valdese serves as the town's Central Business District (CBD). The CBD accounts for much of the commercial development in town. This district has a mix of specialty retail, restaurants, personal services, and other small businesses. Downtown is also the site of Town Hall and the Post Office, as well as many professional offices for attorneys, realtors, financial institutions, and other businesses that require easy pedestrian access for their clientele.

Other commercial activity is mainly concentrated along the U.S. Highway 70 corridor. Community or regional shopping centers anchored by "big box" retail stores, strip malls, and other automobile-oriented businesses tend to locate in this area.

3.3.3 Industrial

Roughly seven percent of the planning area consists of industrial land. Early industrial development in town located in close proximity to the railroad corridor and along US Highway 70. There are other industrial areas in the northern part of the planning area near Lake Rhodhiss, including the Valdese Weavers and SAFT America facilities off Lovelady Road.

3.3.4 Social/Cultural

Public, quasi-public, and civic uses such as libraries, hospitals, post office, schools, cemeteries, and religious institutions are classified as social and cultural uses. Eight percent of the town of Valdese is in this land use classification. Many civic uses are included within the downtown vicinity however the middle and high schools are located in the peripheral areas of town. As a

result of a satellite annexation, Valdese General Hospital is situated on a tract of land on Malcolm Boulevard, approximately 2 miles outside of Valdese proper, surrounded by the Town of Rutherford College.

3.3.5 Utilities / Transportation

These parcels contain transportation rights of way and infrastructure that distribute utility service to the community and region. This category includes electric substations, water storage and treatment facilities, sewer treatment plants, and other utility infrastructure. Utilities and transportation account for roughly two percent of developed land in the planning area.

3.3.6 Recreation

Recreational land uses include those parcels occupied by playgrounds, ball fields, walking trails, and other facilities used for recreation or leisure activities. Private indoor facilities such as fitness centers are classified as commercial uses.



3.3.7 Undeveloped and Open Land Uses

Undeveloped parcels exist mainly in a natural or mostly undisturbed state. As defined here, approximately 2200 acres, or half of the planning area, is undeveloped and open land. Open land and undeveloped locations are areas most likely to experience new development in the future. Much of this land is also likely to become a source of new property tax revenue for the town as it becomes improved. However, this should not be taken to mean that all 2200 acres of this land classification is suitable for development. Some of these lands will never be occupied due to environmental constraints such as steep slopes, severe soils, and flood hazards.

Agricultural: Agricultural lands are used for farming (crop or animal production), commercial plant nurseries, and similar activities. This is a relatively minor land use activity in the Town of Valdese.

Forest/Open Space: This category of land use consists of lots that are at least 5 acres in size and exist in a mostly natural and vegetated condition. This is one of the largest categories of existing land use in the area. Significant public improvements may be required to extend utilities and services to support development on these areas. Large tracts of recently annexed lands near Lake Rhodhiss intended for future residential development account for much of this land classification.

Vacant Lots: This refers to unimproved parcels with a relatively small area. Vacant lots are typically dispersed within established neighborhoods and other zoning districts and may be near existing public water and sewer infrastructure. Other than the large tracts of open land along the lake that were previously mentioned, undeveloped land within the town limits consists mostly of vacant lots.

Methods Used by Cities to Influence Land Use and Development

1. Providing Public Facilities

Estimating needs, selecting sites, and determining sequence and timing of capital improvements
Influencing pattern of development
Extending utilities to manage growth
Protecting future roadway corridors
Establishing capital improvement program to link budgeting to land use planning
Acquiring land and public improvements
Purchasing sites in advance
Encouraging donations of land
Requiring compulsory dedication of land and improvements in new developments
Imposing impact fees to pay for capital improvements required to serve new growth

2. Regulating Land Use and Development

Regulating division of land and construction of community or public improvements
Enforcing land subdivision ordinance
Adopting utility extension policies
Adopting special assessment and cost reimbursement policies for public facilities
Regulating water supply and wastewater disposal systems
Establishing standards for designing, constructing, and accepting subdivision streets
Enforcing driveway permit regulations
Regulating use and development of land
Enforcing zoning ordinance
Adopting watershed protection regulations
Regulating soil erosion and sedimentation control
Establishing development standards for flood hazard areas
Designating historic landmarks and establishing historic districts
Adopting special-purpose police-power ordinances (e.g. mobile homes, signs, junkyards)
Requiring local environmental impact statements
Enforcing the State building Code
Establishing property maintenance and public health and safety standards
Adopting minimum housing code
Condemning abandoned or unsafe structures
Abating public nuisances such as weed lots and litter

3. Providing Direction and Leadership

Adopting land use plan and publicizing it
Providing assistance to property owners, neighborhood, environmental, and other groups
Establishing voluntary design guidelines

4. Providing Financial Incentives

Providing rehabilitation grants and loans for housing
Providing housing rental subsidies
Providing loans and grants for historic preservation
Acting as economic entrepreneur
Constructing and leasing shell buildings; making site improvements and cash grants

4 Public Services & Facilities

Public services and facilities are necessary amenities that enhance the quality of life for Town residents and visitors. Community services and the physical infrastructure that is crucial for land development is costly and requires deliberate planning and careful forecasting to ensure that the town's resources (as well as the developer's) are used wisely. Some essential services provided (or supported) by the Town include schools, library, public water and sewer, parks and recreation, library, public works and street maintenance.

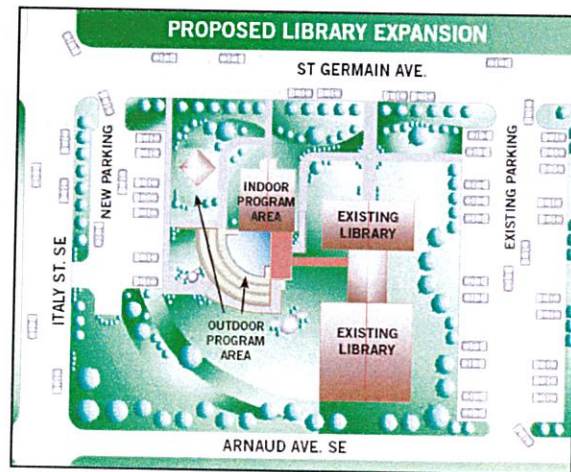
4.1 Schools

Public schools in town are administered by the Burke County Board of Education. However, the Town has supported development of schools throughout the planning area. Based on future county population projections, it is unlikely that many more new schools will be required within the time horizon of this plan. Public schools already established in the planning area include:

- Valdese Elementary School
- Heritage middle School
- Jimmy C. Draughn High School

4.2 Library

The Valdese Public Library, located at 213 St. Germain Ave, SE, opened in 1943 in a room at the old Post Office and in 1982 merged into the Burke County Public Library. For almost 70 years, this Library has grown and adapted to current needs. Plans are currently in the works to expand the library onto a neighboring property donated to the town by the Rostan Family Foundation. It has been almost 30 years since the previous expansion of the Valdese Public Library. With over 35,000 visits per year, it is one of busiest public services in Burke County. Full funding will allow complete refurbishment of the Cole House and Grounds, which will provide dedicated, flexible space for more library programs and community events.



4.3 Parks and Recreation

Note: During the planning process, the Town of Valdese adopted the "Town of Valdese Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan" addressing this subject.

The Town maintains several park facilities that host a variety of athletic events and recreational programs for residents of all ages. The following is a list of parks categorized based on the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) definitions for urban parks.

Neighborhood Parks: Neighborhood parks provide active recreation activities such as field and court games, playground apparatus, picnic areas, etc. These parks generally serve a single neighborhood or area of the town. Neighborhood parks can be developed jointly with public schools. Children's Park is an example of this type of park.

Community Park: These facilities provide a mix of active recreational activities such as athletic complexes, swimming pools, and similar activities; and natural areas for passive recreation activities such as walking trails and picnic areas. Park sites may be developed around water bodies for intense recreation development. These facilities may serve several neighborhoods or the whole community. McGalliard's Park is an example of this type of recreation area.



Regional Park Reserve: These parks primarily offer nature or passive outdoor recreation activities such as observing nature, wildlife habitat conservation, or natural resource management. They offer some degree of active recreation such as fishing, swimming, hiking, and picnicking. These parks have diverse or unique natural resources such as lakes, streams, marshes, and forests.

The Lake Rhodhiss Area— the Catawba River originates in the mountains of North Carolina near Linville and flows from Lake James through Burke County winding through Glen Alpine, Morganton and Valdese as it makes its way to Lake Rhodhiss and on to Lake Hickory and points beyond. River access for canoe and kayaking put-ins start at the headwaters near Lake James and are found all along the river, including several landings in the Catawba River Greenway Park in Morganton.

Special Use Facilities: Special use facilities, such as golf courses, marinas, zoos, and nature centers, offer specialized or single-purpose recreation activities. These facilities may be developed within local or regional parks. The Jimmy C. Draughn Aquatics and Fitness Center is an example of this type of facility.

Greenways (Linear Parks): Greenways are linear corridors of connected trails and natural areas. Greenways may follow built or natural corridors such as utility, street, or railroad rights-of-way, stream corridors, or floodplains. Greenways are used for hiking, biking, walking, and jogging modes of recreational travel. Greenways can have a transportation function if it links neighborhoods to local and regional destinations. The Valdese Recreation Master Plan indicates the possibility for the development of a greenway from McGalliard's Park to Lake Rhodhiss near the water treatment facility.

Park Type	Service Area	Desirable Size	Acres / 1000 Population
Neighborhood Park	¼ to ½ mile radius, a single neighborhood, up to a population of 5000	15+ acres	1 to 2 acres
Community Park	Several neighborhoods, up to a 1 to 2 mile radius	25+ acres	5 to 8 acres
Regional Park/ Reserve	Serves several communities within 1 hour or more driving time	1000+ acres, enough to encompass the resource to be preserved	Variable
Special Use Facility	No standard defined	Variable depending on desired size	Variable
Greenway (Linear Park)	No standard defined	Enough width to protect resource and provide maximum use.	Variable

Table 4-1: Recommended Park Standards

4.4 Public Water and Sewer

Access to clean water is an undeniable necessity for all town residents. The availability of public water and sewer utilities is also a principal requirement for businesses and industry seeking expansion or relocation in the area. The Town of Valdese extends public water and sewer throughout the planning area and to many neighboring communities. The decline of the industrial economy in Valdese, based historically on textile mills, has had a major impact on the town's utility systems. Due to several closings and downsizings, Valdese has lost \$500,000 in annual utility revenues and has significantly altered the operation and maintenance procedures for these facilities. Operating these utilities far under capacity tends to be disruptive to the systems and will require more attention to preventative maintenance.

4.4.1 Public Water System

There are three basic components to the public water system: 1) water supply and treatment, 2) storage, and 3) distribution. These components are described below:

Supply and Treatment: Lake Rhodhiss supplies water to the Valdese Water System. Water is extracted from the lake and treated at the water treatment plant on Lake View Road. The plant has a treatment capacity of 12 million gallons per day (mgd) while the town has a demand of roughly 3.5 mgd. There are no plans to expand the capacity of the water treatment plant before 2030, but there exists a need for extensive upgrades to the treatment plant's electrical components.

Water Storage: The Town has elevated water tanks with a combined storage capacity of 7 million gallons.

Distribution System: The Town owns approximately 165 miles of water lines ranging in size from three-fourths of an inch to 36 inches in diameter. Valdese water is distributed to customers according to the following percentage allocations: industry, 50; commercial, 30; residential, 5; and contract sales, 15. Contract customers include Burke County, Hildebran, Rutherford College, as well as the Icard water districts. Acquisition of the Triple water system in 2007 doubled the number of the town's water customers, mostly in the residential sector.

4.4.2 Public Sanitary Sewer System

In addition to the Town of Valdese, wastewater from the communities of Burke County, Connelly Springs, Drexel, Rutherford College, and Hildebran is delivered to the Lake Rhodhiss Wastewater Treatment Plant. The waste is conveyed via two major and two minor pump stations and approximately 50 miles of piping. Once properly treated, the effluent is discharged

into Lake Rhodhiss/Catawba River under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) environmental permit. The permitted daily capacity of the plant is 7.5 mgd and in general it collects two million gallons on an average day. Due to the loss of industrial customers, this system is currently oversized and has the excess capacity to take on new major customers. Whenever the system reaches eighty percent of capacity the Town will be required to obtain a new NPDES permit and build a new wastewater treatment plant.

4.5 Transportation Systems

The transportation system is designed to move people, goods, and services locally and regionally. Mostly, it consists of streets and highways, rail, and air transport infrastructure. It is recommended that the Town apply to the NC Department of Transportation for a "Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grant" to address its non-motorized transportation needs. The town's long range transportation needs are identified in the Greater Hickory Metro Long Range Transportation Plan (GHMLRTP). The GHMLRTP is prepared by transportation planners at the WPCOG in conjunction with area communities and is the authority on all transportation related issues in the area. The GHMLRTP, and any forthcoming edition, contain the most accurate and up to date information regarding the town's transportation planning needs and should be used as a supplement to this plan.

4.5.1 Streets and Highways

Within the hierarchy of street networks, surface roads have both a mobility function and a land access function. Roads with mainly a mobility function, such as expressways and arterials, are at the top of the hierarchy. Streets with mainly a land access function, such as collectors and local streets are at the bottom of the road network hierarchy. The categories described here are based on those adopted for urban streets and roadways by the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT). NCDOT is responsible for the construction and maintenance of most primary and secondary roads in the area, while the Town of Valdese maintains fourteen of these state roads. The town also owns and maintains another thirty six miles of local "Powell Bill" streets.

Powell Bill streets are those that qualify for NCDOT's Street Aid funding. The State Street Aid funding is financed through highway use and state gasoline taxes. According to state statute, Powell Bill funds may be used, "for the purposes of maintaining, repairing, constructing, reconstructing or widening of any street or public thoroughfare within the municipal limits or for planning, construction, and maintenance of bikeways, greenways or sidewalks." In 2012, Valdese was allocated \$149,200.43 of aid based on 35.79 miles of qualified road mileage. Powell Bill funding will vary according to the amount of state revenues received and when qualified street mileage increases as a result of the town taking ownership of new subdivision or other local roads in the planning area.

Expressways carry large volumes of traffic over long distances (statewide or interstate) at the highest rate of speed. These are controlled access, multi-lane highways with little or no access to adjacent lots. Access to this type of roadway is controlled from above-grade or below-grade exit ramps. These roads are sometimes referred to as major arterials. Interstate 40 is an example of this class of roadway.

Arterials provide the next highest level of service and maintain some degree of access control to nonresidential traffic. These streets may provide for travel within a county or between adjacent counties or regions of the state. Direct driveway access to residential properties is typically limited. These streets are often designated as US Highways or State routes. Main Street (US 70) is an example of an arterial street in Valdese.

Collector Streets such as Lovelady Road provide a level of service at lower speeds and for shorter distances than arterials. They *collect* traffic from local roads and distribute it to arterials or other collector streets while providing access to higher-density commercial and residential land uses.

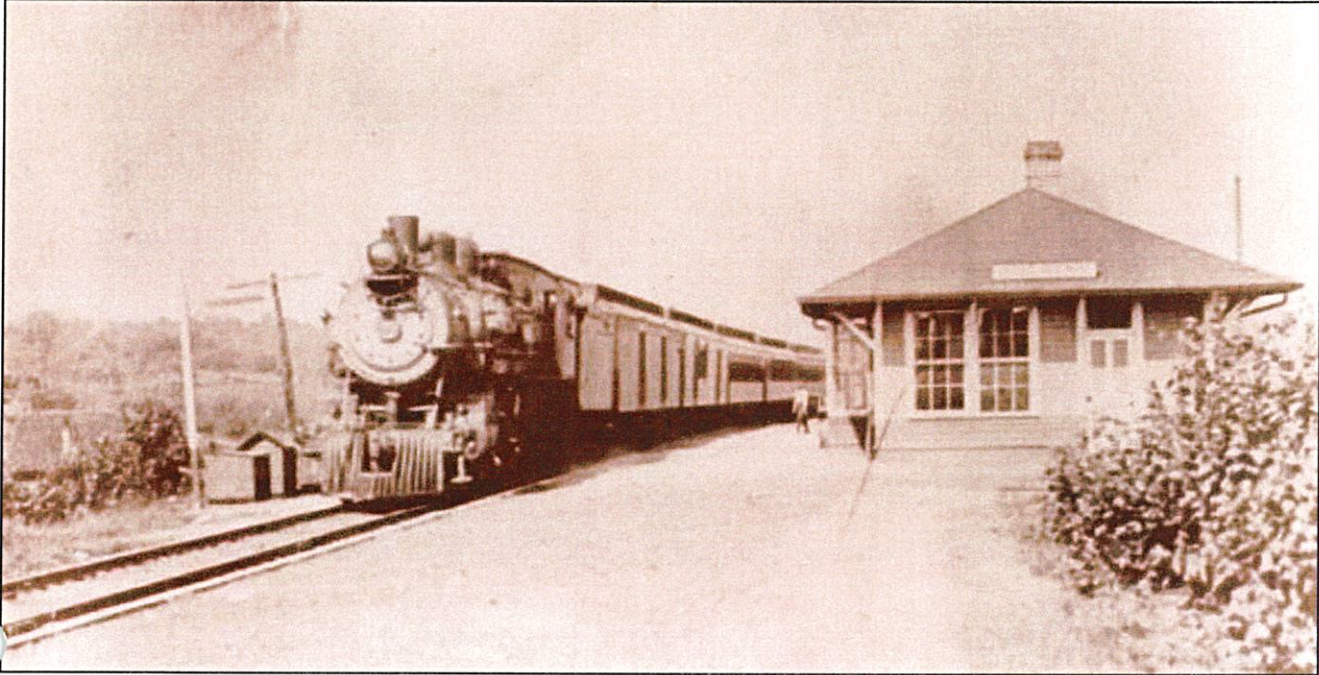
Local streets consist of all roads not defined as arterials or collectors. Their primary function is to provide driveway access to lots with little or no through traffic. Travel distances are typically less than 1 mile with design speeds of 20 to 30 mph. Most subdivision streets and frontage roads are local streets.

Table 4-2: NCDOT Road Hierarchy

4.5.2 Rail Transportation

Since the arrival in 1893 of the first Waldenses by train, the railroad has played a pivotal role in the history of Valdese. Railroad freight traffic is currently operated by Norfolk Southern and a future portion of the NCDOT initiated Amtrak passenger train service is planned along this line. In March 2001, NCDOT adopted a phased plan to extend passenger rail service to Western North Carolina. The plan includes the renovation or construction of train stations that incorporate other community uses. The NCDOT continues to work with communities on station and safety improvements and a passenger stop has been proposed for Valdese.

The Old Rock School Railway Museum is an important town asset. This unique destination has been developed and operated by the Piedmont & Western Railroad Club, a volunteer group of area railroad enthusiasts. The Railway Museum's mission is to preserve and present the history of railroad operations in western North Carolina through the use of art, photographs, static exhibits, and interactive displays.



4.5.3 Air Transportation

Valdese is in relatively close proximity to several airports. The Charlotte, Greensboro, and Asheville airports are each served by several major commercial passenger airlines that provide service to both domestic and international destinations.

Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT) is within approximately one hour's drive and is the sixth busiest airport in the world, offering more than 130 nonstop destinations around the globe. CLT is served by seven domestic carriers and three foreign carriers. CLT is US Airways' largest hub and the second largest airport on the East Coast. The Piedmont Triad International Airport, within a two hour drive, is served by five major commercial airlines and offers 54 domestic daily non-stop flights.

The Asheville Regional Airport is an easy drive from Valdese and is served by three commercial airlines that offer several daily non-stop flights. Connections may be made to many major airports, including Atlanta, Chicago, Orlando, and New York's LaGuardia. The Hickory Regional

Airport offers general aviation flight operations and is less than one half hour from Valdese.

The Foothills Regional Airport is only a few miles from Valdese and offers several general aviation services, including flight training, sight-seeing, and aircraft sales and rentals. Perhaps most importantly, it is a convenient landing zone for Carolina Medical Center helivacs.



5 Issues & Opportunities

The priority recommendations in the Town Development Plan are the result of information and data-gathering activities. This chapter includes an analysis of the community assets (strengths and opportunities) and liabilities (weaknesses and challenges) identified through these fact-seeking efforts. These were initiated early in the planning process and helped to define and demonstrate the town's most important planning issues and the action steps that should be taken over the next 2 to 5 years to address these matters.

5.1 Community Assets & Liabilities

Strengths: As in most places, the greatest assets of Valdese are its citizens. The people in the community create a nice and friendly small town atmosphere with plenty of charm. The clean quaint Main Street and beautiful location is rich with heritage and offers many festivities, events, and recreation activities such as Friday Nights downtown and other family friendly and safe attractions.

Weaknesses: Along with its many strengths regarding planning and development, the town also has its share of weaknesses, or liabilities. The residents of Valdese identified a lack of businesses, industries, and jobs as its primary drawbacks. There is apparently a need for more shopping opportunities and other commercial establishments in town such as restaurants and grocery stores. There is also considerable concern about the upkeep and vacancy of buildings downtown.

Opportunities: When asked about opportunities, responses were numerous with a large emphasis placed on bringing more businesses, more industry, and more jobs to the town. The folks want to continue to develop the area, especially downtown, and think there is potential to bring more restaurants, shopping and entertainment choices for families, retirees and other people.

Challenges: The state of the local economy is challenging the realization of these opportunities. Jobs in industry and other businesses are leaving and taking young people with them. A lack of population growth and development has become a real threat and businesses, buildings, and government are all in need of help to confront these challenges.

STRENGTHS...

activities appearance atmosphere attractions beautiful charm churches citizens clean community downtown efforts environment events facilities family feel festivities flowers friendly government grow help heritage history hometown hospital interstate involve live location main street nice offers office open people proximity public quaint quiet recreation residents school safe schools services simplicity small town spoken summer town upkeep

WEAKNESSES...

appearance area attract buildings businesses cars commercial development downtown eat employees employment empty events eyesore facilities favoritism food future general give grocery hickory home houses industry interstate jobs lack leaders limited loss lot major money morganston movie needs no businesses no industry no jobs nothing opportunities places plant police property public renovated residents restaurants road run-down shopping store street town upkeep vacant water

○ OPPORTUNITIES...

area baker, can help breakfast bring buildings businesses
children choices citizens commercial community continue develop doing
downtown drink eat entertainment establish etc families food furniture
grocery growth help hotel improvements increase industry
jobs lights live local main market mills more
park people recreation restaurants movie opportunities
shopping social sports store street textile theater town
valdese visitors work

○ CHALLENGES...

abc aging attract become buildings businesses citizens
city council debt development economy government
grants help homes industry jobs lack leaving manager money
needs population public raise rent replace restaurant school services settings
spend support taxes things town upgrade valdese work young

5.2 Key Issues

Key planning and development related issues were identified by the Planning Board and Advisory Committee. Ideas that address these issues were classified and prioritized according to each one's overall importance and relative ease of attainment. Action will be required to achieve the desired results of these clearly perceived ideas. These ideas were also vitally informative for the recommendations included in the Action Plan.

5.2.1 Downtown/Commercial Development

Restore downtown businesses. **Expand** central business district. **Establish** historic district. **Utilize** vacant buildings. **Build** and **enhance** downtown parks

5.2.2 Industrial Development

Retain and **diversify** existing business and industries. **Expand** specialty industries. **Strengthen** recruitment efforts. **Promote** public and private partnerships to **increase** job opportunities.

5.2.3 Local Economic Development

Sell what Valdese has to offer.

5.2.4 Residential Development

Promote diversified housing.

5.2.5 Community Appearance

Improve appearance of buildings and properties throughout town.

5.2.6 General Services

Improve quality of life through community programs that **promote** social involvement.

5.2.7 Natural Resources

Improve quality of life through **promotion** of natural assets.

5.2.8 Recreation and Cultural Resources

Promote cultural activities and tourism related activities more. **Offer** more outdoor recreation programs.

See Figure 5 (next page): Results from Planning Board and Advisory Committee Visioning Activity: Prioritized Issues and Opportunities for Action

6.3 Priority Recommendations

The following priorities and recommendations have evolved from the broad perspective provided during the community visioning and public input activities. Although the priorities represent separate categories, each focusing upon a key planning topic, they should not be considered wholly independent. In many cases the priorities and action steps overlap and may require simultaneous implementation. For example, the Town cannot effectively address residential development without also addressing the costs associated with the extension of public water and sewer infrastructure to new development areas.

6.3.1 Priority 1: Commercial/Downtown Development (CD)

CD1.1: Compile an inventory of the historically significant properties in the central business district.

CD1.2: Ensure that the scale and design of commercial development is consistent with the unique small town character of Valdese, especially in the Central Business District.

CD1.3: Ensure that new commercial development is designed with pedestrian oriented features and sidewalks that provide linkages to residential neighborhoods wherever practical.

CD1.4: Consider rezoning land surrounding I-40 exits to encourage commercial development where practical.

CD 1.5: Establish voluntary design guidelines for all commercial, multi-family, and institutional uses.

CD 1.6: Establish and promote a major regional commercial/retail hub utilizing exposure to I-40.

CD 1.7: Support Downtown Valdese Merchant's Association and assist with project such as marketing, retail gap analysis and ZIP code surveys.

CD 1.8: Pursue involvement with the N.C. Small Town Main Street program and guidance on the National Trust's approach to: Organization, Economic Restructuring, Design and Promotions.

CD 1.9: Recruit and help establish more "basic services" businesses to attract more town residents downtown.

CD 1.10: Recruit and help establish more establishments that that are family oriented to help attract more shoppers downtown.

CD 1.11: Create an inventory of downtown parking opportunities and utilize best practices to ensure adequate public parking.

Action planning refers to a sequence of steps, or *actions*, which must be well-executed for the plan to succeed. An action plan has three major elements:

- ❖ Specific tasks: what action will be done and by whom.
- ❖ Time horizon: a set timeframe when the action will be accomplished.
- ❖ Resource allocation: specific funds must be made available for the specific actions.

Action Planning must be “SMART”

Specific...

Measurable...

Accurate...

Realistic...

Time-constrained...

For example, “The Downtown Committee will help fund façade restorations on six Main Street shops by January, 2015.”

“SMART” Action Planning will form the basis of a “SMART” implementation strategy for the plan’s priority recommendations.

CD 1.12: Broaden the scope of the Town's façade improvement program.

CD 1.13: Rezone properties in the downtown area to promote the expansion of the Central Business District into several additional blocks and create a relevant new zoning district.

6.3.2 Priority 2: Industrial Development (ID)

ID 2.1: Continue to provide developers with incentives for the adaptive reuse of vacant industrial sites.

ID 2.2: Collaborate on a continuing basis with officials from WPCOG, Burke County, and other municipalities to remain informed and have input on developments that will affect Valdese.

ID 2.3: Keep an up to date inventory of industrial sites in and around Valdese that are available for development or redevelopment.

ID 2.4: Determine whether adequate efforts and resources are being dedicated to industrial recruitment to the Town of Valdese, and where shortcomings are found, identify additional measures to improve recruitment efforts.

ID 2.5: Work with the local school systems, community college, and workforce development agencies to ensure Valdese will provide new and existing industries with a skilled workforce.

6.3.3 Priority 3: Local Economic Development (ED)

ED 3.1: Continue to utilize the Tourism Development Authority proceeds to help promote travel and tourism in the Town.

ED 3.2: Inventory all vacant properties and buildings throughout town and identify potential uses that would be viable in those locations.

ED 3.3: Evaluate the Town's existing zoning ordinance to determine where amendments are necessary to encourage and enable more compact, mixed-use development.

ED 3.4: Continue to actively initiate and widen the reach of VEDIC.

ED 3.5: Market Valdese as a tourist "destination" for shopping, cultural, and outdoor recreation excursions.

ED 3.6: Evaluate the Town's land use regulations to assure the review and approval process is

carried out in an efficient and effective manner.

6.3.4 Priority 4: Residential Development (RD)

RD 4.1: Evaluate the Town's development ordinances for areas that will help promote a diversity of housing choices.

RD 4.2: Require site design standards for land uses adjacent to residential zoning districts that protect the overall character and general welfare of existing neighborhoods.

RD 4.3: Encourage the preservation of older homes in the community to help strengthen a sense of place and historical context.

RD 4.4: Amend Subdivision Regulations to require that all new roads be designed and constructed to meet NCDOT standards and be dedicated to the public upon completion.

RD 4.5: Encourage residential subdivisions that incorporate conservation subdivision design.

RD 4.6: Work with community development and affordable housing agencies to identify the best ways to provide and maintain sufficient housing options throughout town.

RD 4.7: Encourage the development of mixed-use and multi-family housing in appropriate zoning districts.

6.3.5 Priority 5: Community Appearance (CA)

CA 5.1: Adopt appropriate appearance and design standards for all new commercial, multi-family, and institutional developments and redevelopments.

CA 5.2: Establish a Community Appearance Commission in accordance and as allowed by N.C.G.S. 160A-452.

CA 5.3: Establish a Historic Preservation Commission in accordance with N.C.G.S. 160A-440.7 and to identify all historic structures and landmarks in Town and designate a Historic District in accordance with N.C.G.S. 160A-400.4.

CA 5.4: Create a revolving loan initiative that is funded publicly, privately, or through these partnerships, to purchase, rehabilitate, and/or resell historic properties whose owners are unable, or unwilling, to maintain their property.

6 Vision and Goals

This chapter identifies the type of community that Valdese wants to become in the future. The priority recommendations in this chapter provide the strategies that the Town will use to guide development and land use activities over the next several years. These recommendations also serve as the framework for the Action Plan.

6.1 Community Vision

The Planning Board and the Planning Advisory Committee participated in many visioning exercises and activities to identify the primary topic areas in which to focus the town's planning efforts. During these exercises board and committee members were asked to imagine what Valdese could be like in ten years and to concentrate specifically on the following question: *"What do you want Valdese to be like 10 years from now?"* This focus question elicited a vast range of ideas that were eventually grouped and categorized by their similarity (See Figure 5). Each group of ideas was assigned to a planning topic, or theme, which eventually became the basis for the plan's vision statement, priority recommendations, and action plan.

Using the outcomes from the several visioning exercises and input from the community survey, the Planning Board and Advisory Committee crafted the vision statement below, which reflects agreed upon possibilities for the town's future.

"Over the next 10-15 years, Valdese, North Carolina will be a progressive community that has revitalized and expanded its resources to become a vibrant community. Its friendly people, active downtown, and natural beauty will make it attractive to its residents and visitors. The Town of Valdese will be well known for its history, heritage, and quality of life."

6.2 Action Planning

Early in the planning process it was determined that any recommendations included in the Town Development Plan must meet specific criteria; the recommendations must be practical, tangible, and attainable.

The best approach for meeting these standards is through action planning.

19 9 6 3 Downtown / Commercial Development * Inviting and Vibrant Downtown Restored with a variety of Businesses CBD Expanded to 8 square blocks Established Historic District w/ Bed & Breakfasts Vacant Buildings Utilized Downtown Parks Enhanced or Built	Recreation / Cultural Resources More Promotion of Cultural Activities More Promotion of Tourism and related activities More Outdoor Recreational Activities and Programs	Industrial Development Existing Businesses and Industry (old and new) Diversified New Businesses Recruited Specialty Industries Expanded * Strengthened Recruitment efforts for Business & Industry Increased Job Opportunities due to promotion of Public-Private Partnerships	Natural Environment Quality of Life improved through promotion of Town's Natural Assets	Residential Development Diversified Housing Promotion	General Services Quality of Life improved through Community Programs that Promote Social Involvement	Community Appearance * Appearance of Buildings and properties throughout Valdeese improved	Economic Development Selling of what Valdeese has to offer
Blue Most Important Downtown Dev. Industrial Dev. Economic Dev. Resid. Dev. Comm. Appearance General Services Natural Envil. Recreation (6)	Blue Easiest Downtown Dev. Comm. Appearance Recreation Economic Dev. Industrial Dev. General Services Natural Envil. Resid. Dev. (6)	Blue Easiest Downtown Dev. Comm. Appearance Recreation Economic Dev. Industrial Dev. General Services Natural Envil. Resid. Dev. (6)	Blue Easiest Downtown Dev. Comm. Appearance Recreation Economic Dev. Industrial Dev. General Services Natural Envil. Resid. Dev. (6)	Blue Easiest Downtown Dev. Comm. Appearance Recreation Economic Dev. Industrial Dev. General Services Natural Envil. Resid. Dev. (6)	Blue Easiest Downtown Dev. Comm. Appearance Recreation Economic Dev. Industrial Dev. General Services Natural Envil. Resid. Dev. (6)	Blue Easiest Downtown Dev. Comm. Appearance Recreation Economic Dev. Industrial Dev. General Services Natural Envil. Resid. Dev. (6)	Blue Easiest Downtown Dev. Comm. Appearance Recreation Economic Dev. Industrial Dev. General Services Natural Envil. Resid. Dev. (6)

CA 5.5: Give highest priority for beautification efforts to major thoroughfares and entryways.

CA 5.6: Implement a comprehensive signage and wayfinding program throughout Town.

CA 5.7: Establish an entryway and commercial corridor overlay zone that includes more stringent appearance and site design standards.

CA 5.8: Seek ways to address the issue of absentee landowners and determine best practices for maintaining and upgrading deteriorating properties.

6.3.6 Priority 6: General Services (GS)

GS 6.1: The Town's website should be a major resource for residents and visitors to the area. Considering this, the website should be continually updated with timely and relevant information.

GS 6.2: Conduct an annual review of the Town Development Plan to monitor the Town's progress in achieving its goals.

GS 6.3: Maintain an updated street inventory that reflects the condition and maintenance needs of all Town streets.

GS 6.4: Continually evaluate the staffing, training, and equipment needs for all public safety departments.

GS 6.5: Limit the number of street curb cuts in new commercial development to avoid traffic congestion and help improve safety.

GS 6.6: Participate in the Unifour RPO to ensure a coordinated and regional approach to transportation planning and to identify funding for future transportation needs.

GS 6.7: Pursue NCDOT funding to develop a comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

GS 6.8: Prepare and adopt a Water and Sewer Facilities Capital Management Plan.

GS 6.9: Require that water, wastewater, and stormwater drainage system improvements to be constructed concurrently with new development and to provide adequate capacity to meet future demands.

GS 6.10: Discourage the extension of water and sewer lines into environmentally sensitive areas.

GS 6.11: Provide incentives for infill development where infrastructure already exists.

6.3.7 Priority 7: Natural Resources (NR)

NR 7.1: Revise standards for landscaping and tree planting in surface parking lots in all zoning districts.

NR 7.2: Preserve open space, forest land and other natural areas through appropriate subdivision and zoning regulations, including conservation subdivision design.

NR 7.3: Allow development only in areas of Town that have suitable soil and topographic characteristics.

NR 7.4: Limit development in designated floodplains, wetlands and waterways.

NR 7.5: Support the development of regional conservation plans.

6.3.8 Priority 8: Recreation and Cultural Resources (RC)

RC 8.1: Prepare and adopt a recreation master plan for parks, trails, and greenways.

RC 8.2: Require new development and redevelopment projects to incorporate public spaces and encourage appropriate treatment of the public realm for sidewalks, etc.

RC 8.3: Provide opportunities and accommodate regional sporting events and tournaments.

RC 8.4: Renovate historic outdoor drama "From this Day Forward"

7 Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Map serves as a guide for future development over the next 10 to 20 years. It is a generalized map of where the community may develop in the future and the type of land use that is likely and desired. This is not intended to be a mandate for future development projects, but rather an attempt to anticipate future growth patterns. It should be used in conjunction with the official zoning map but does not require that any specific property be rezoned. It is however, an important tool that should be used when evaluating future rezoning requests.

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8 Implementation Strategies

8.1 Overview

Implementation is a program of actions that will implement the policy recommendations. This chapter outlines a strategy of how the town can realize its vision and tackle key issues through action planning and steps designed to specifically address each planning topic area. The implementation strategy is designed to help ensure that future land use decisions and development activities will be consistent with the policies and actions recommended by the plan.

8.2 Implementation Tools

Action Plan The primary implementation tool for the Town Development Plan is the Action Plan. This tool provides several techniques and action steps that will help Valdese reach its planning and development goals. The Action Plan is fully explained in Section 8.4 of this chapter and is provided in full at the end of this document.

Planning and Development Regulations Development regulations refer to ordinances adopted by local governments to permit or restrict development activity. These rules establish the standards and procedures for new development or redevelopment within Valdese. The Zoning Ordinance regulates land use by attempting to guide growth and segregate disparate uses into appropriate development districts. Subdivision regulations establish a process for dividing land parcels into two or more lots for the purpose of land sales and building construction. These regulations also provide the design standards that dictate how development and public improvements shall be carried out. Others codes regulate development related issues such as storm water management, flood protection, and watershed protection.

Regional Coordination and Partnerships Plan implementation must be a collaborative effort by key decision-makers inside and outside town government. Public service providers of recreation, schools, utilities, highways, economic development agencies and others all have an interest in the town's future development. Through interlocal and joint use agreements, local governments can combine resources and eliminate duplication of services. State and federal funding and technical assistance programs can be pursued to leverage local resources. The Town regularly participates in regional planning efforts such as the county transportation planning process, economic development, and water supply planning. Coordination and partnerships may be appropriate to leverage local resources or when the town cannot act alone.

Small Area Planning Small area plans focus on subareas of the community such as a

neighborhood, downtown, or special corridors; target narrowly defined issues such as public improvements, recreation, transportation, or economic development; or focus on short-range implementation strategies of up to 5 years. Small area plans are built on the broad policies of the Town Development Plan.

Administrative Procedures Administrative procedures are adopted to establish a decision-making process that ensures development proposals are consistent with the plan policy recommendations, timely and efficient, and fair to all parties involved. Administrative procedures are often set by regulations in development codes.

Incentive Programs The goal of incentive-based programs is to induce private development or redevelopment in Town that is consistent with its land use and economic development policies. Incentives are commonly used to stimulate downtown revitalization, commercial development, and industrial recruitment. Examples may include tax incentives, technical and financial assistance programs, and streamlined permitting processes.

Budgeting & Annual Work Plans The Town Development Plan establishes annual departmental budgeting and work planning as very important priority in support of most planning related activities. Capital budgets and work assignments should be made only after close collaboration with the Planning Department. Many of the priorities outlined in the Action Plan affect various town departments and will require careful consideration for effective implementation.

8.3 Plan Evaluation and Updates

The Town Development Plan is based on conditions existing at a specific point in time. Over time, new issues or opportunities may emerge that require the town to adjust its priorities. A shift in the political or economic climate, new state or federal law, and other unforeseen changes are likely to require an update of this plan. Considering this, it is imperative that the town continuously monitor the plan and evaluate its effectiveness in responding to changing conditions. At a minimum, a good implementation program will require that the plan be revised and updated on an ongoing basis, typically every five years.

8.3.1 Annual Evaluation

An annual plan evaluation program determines if a plan update is needed. Activities should measure:

- If the plan is having the desired effects
- If the resulting development is consistent with the plan
- Changes in community values or conditions

- Changes in state or federal rules or programs
- Progress on implementing the Action Plan
- New programs to help implement the plan

8.3.2 Annual Progress Report

A report that contains the results of the annual plan evaluation activities should be produced each year. The report should be used to help develop the annual capital budgets and departmental work plans. The report should also recommend:

- New policies or modifications to existing policies should be adopted?
- Any needed revisions to the Future Land Use Plan
- Adjustment to the Action Plan, including removing, revising, or adding action items.

8.3.3 Town Development Plan Annual Review

A process should be established to amend the plan on an annual basis as needed. The process should be similar to that used to adopt the original plan, and should provide opportunities for public input and involvement wherever appropriate. Amendments should be based on the recommendations in the annual progress report and may be appropriate if:

- New opportunities to implement a policy are identified
- Community goals or priorities change
- State or federal law necessitates an update

8.3.4 Five-Year Plan Evaluation and Update

A full evaluation and update of the plan should occur every five years. This will help ensure that the plan remains relevant to changing conditions and remains an effective guide for land use planning and decision-making. In addition to the annual progress report, the five year evaluation and update should:

- Update the baseline trends and conditions
- Revisit the community vision, goal, and policy recommendations

8.4 Action Plan

The Action Plan is a list of priorities and actions that are essential for implementation of the Town's land development policies. Among others, these actions include improvement projects, changes to development regulations and procedures, adoption of new incentive programs, and enhancing current practices.

The Action Plan is not an exhaustive list of actions that may be used to implement the plan. New actions may be added to or subtracted in response to changing local conditions or opportunities. Any action item requiring the dedication of public funds to be accomplished should be reprioritized or considered for removal from the Action Plan if funds are not allocated within the recommended timeframe. Adjustments should be considered during the annual plan review and the five-year update.

The following items are included as part of the Action Plan:

- Action Item/Policy: including the planning topic
- Type of Action Item (e.g. regulation, plan, resolution, capital improvement, etc.)
- Responsibility and Resource Allocation
- Time Horizon/Priority

*“Make no little plans;
they have no magic to stir men’s blood,
and probably themselves will not be realized.
Make big plans;
aim high in hope and work.”*

-Daniel Hudson Burnham

Action Plan Matrix

TOWN DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

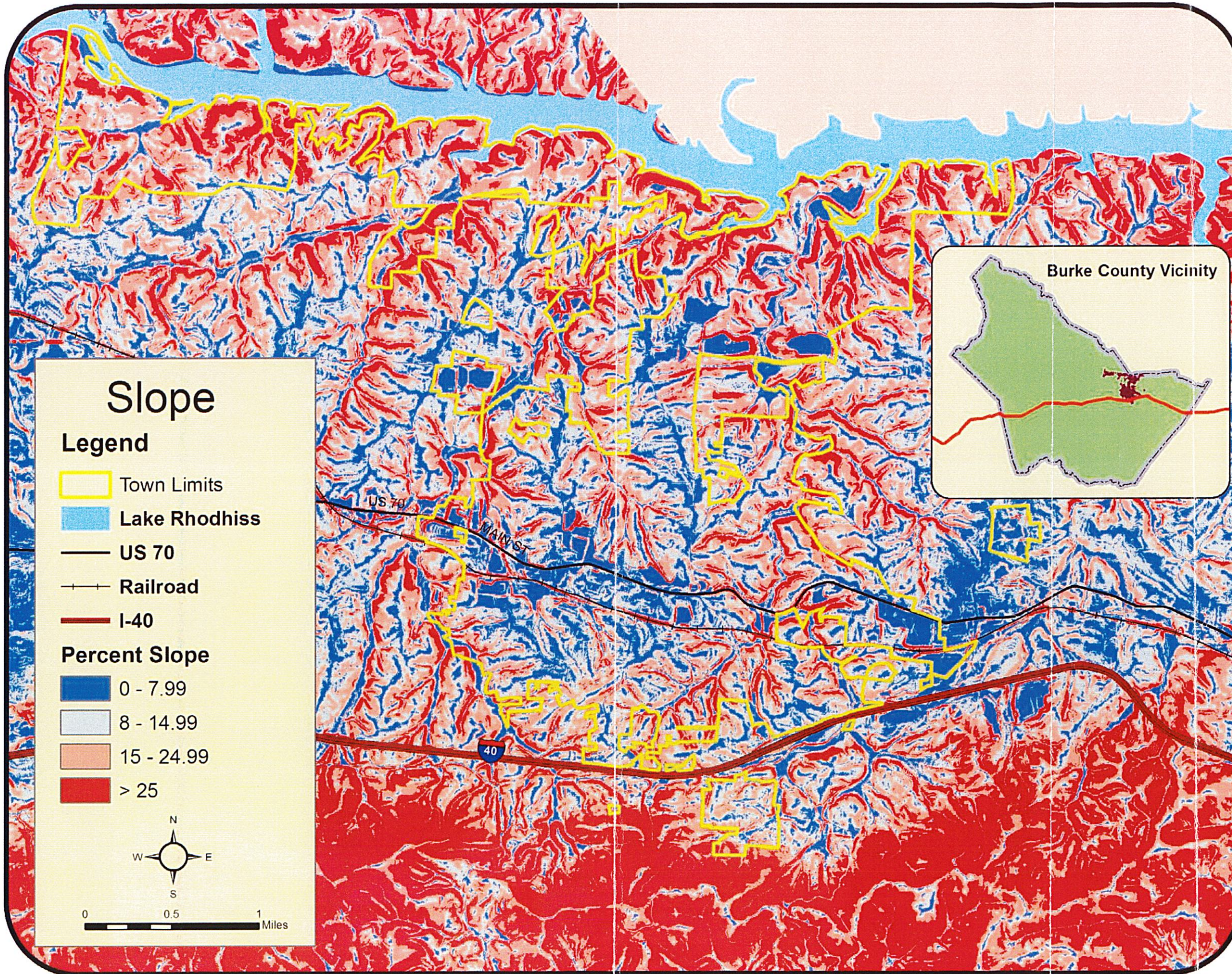
Responsibility Codes: Administration = AD, Public Works = PW, Planning and Zoning = PZ, Parks and Recreation = PR, Water and Wastewater = WW, Public Safety = PS, Planning Board = PB, Town Council = TC
Priority Codes: High= immediate implementation and resource allocation; Medium = actively pursue resources and swift implementation; Desirable = implement as resources and opportunities become available
Timeframe: Immediate (0-2 years); Medium (2-5 years); Long term (more than 5 years); Ongoing (continuous process)
Type of Actions: Policy; Regulation; Plan; Resolution; Capital Improvement

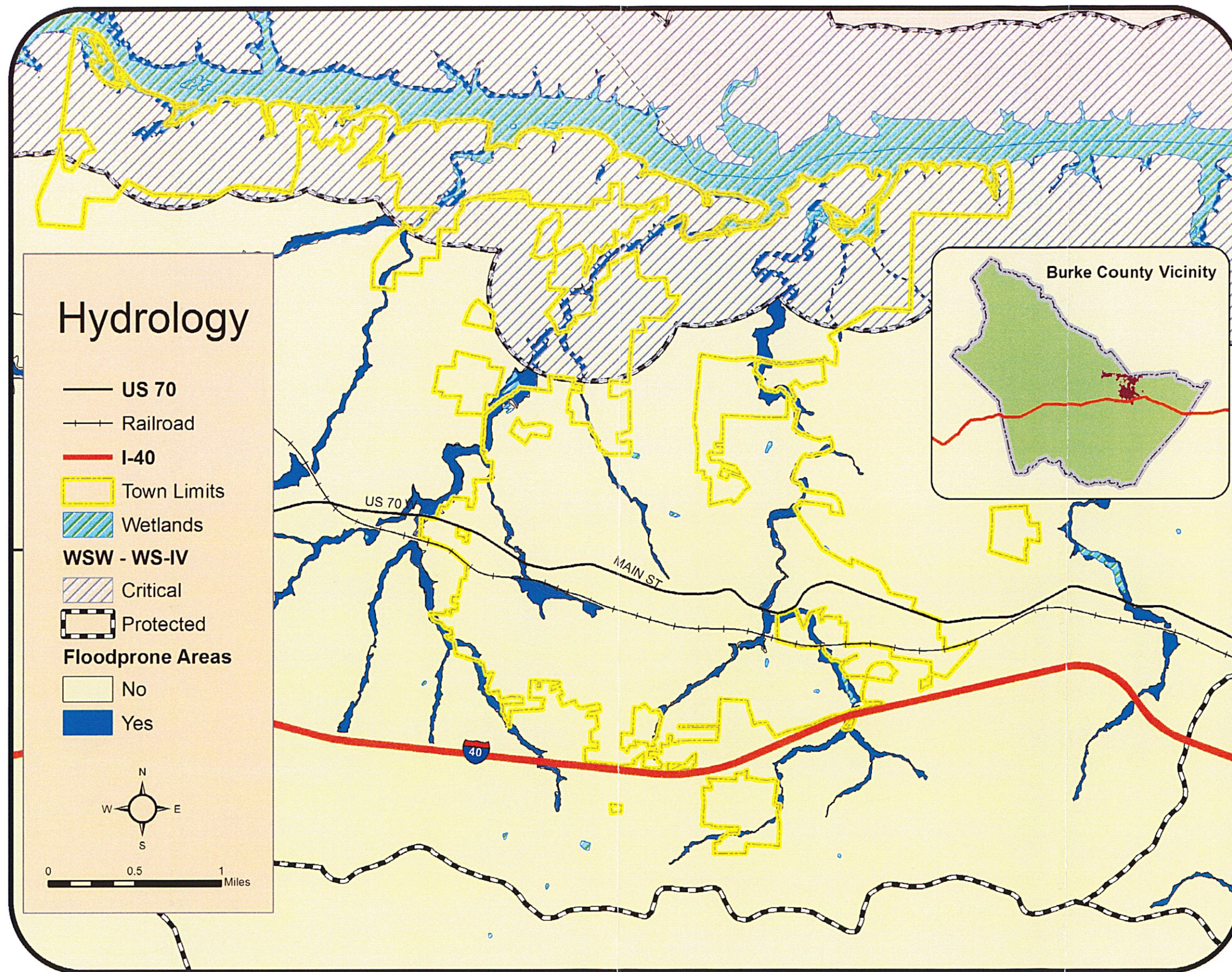
Priority #	Topic Area and Action Item	Priority	Timeframe	Type of Action	Responsibility	Funding Required
1 -- Downtown/Commercial Development (CD)						
CD. 1.1	Compile an inventory of the historically significant properties in the central business district.	Medium	Immediate	Plan	PZ	YES
CD. 1.2	Ensure that the scale and design of commercial development is consistent with the unique small town character of Valdese, especially in the Central Business District.	Desirable	Ongoing	Policy; Regulation	PZ	
CD. 1.3	Ensure that new commercial development is designed with pedestrian oriented features and sidewalks that provide linkages to residential neighborhoods wherever practical.	Desirable	Ongoing	Policy; Regulation	PZ	
CD. 1.4	Consider rezoning land surrounding I-40 exits to encourage commercial development where practical.	Medium	Medium	Regulation	PB/TC	YES
CD. 1.5	Establish voluntary design guidelines for all commercial, multi-family, and institutional uses.	Medium	Immediate	Plan	PB/PZ	YES
CD. 1.6	Establish and promote a major regional commercial/retail hub utilizing exposure to I-40.	Desirable	Long	Policy; Capital Improvement	AD	YES
CD. 1.7	Enhance Downtown Valdese Merchant's Association and assist with project such as marketing, retail gap analysis and ZIP code surveys.	High	Immediate	Plan	AD	YES
CD. 1.8	Pursue involvement with the N.C. Small Town Main Street program and guidance on the National Trust's approach to: Organization, Economic Restructuring, Design and Promotions.	High	Immediate	Plan	AD	YES
CD. 1.9	Recruit and help establish more "basic services" businesses to attract more town residents downtown.	High	Immediate/Ongoing	Policy	AD	
CD. 1.10	Recruit and help establish more establishments that that are family oriented to help attract more shoppers downtown.	High	Immediate/Ongoing	Policy	AD	
CD. 1.11	Create an inventory of downtown parking opportunities and utilize best practices to ensure adequate public parking.	Medium	Immediate	Plan	PZ/PW/PS	
CD. 1.12	Broaden the scope of the Town's façade improvement program.	High	Immediate	Policy; Capital Improvement	AD	YES
CD. 1.13	Rezoned properties in the downtown area to promote the expansion of the Central Business District into several additional blocks and create a new Zoning District.	High	Immediate	Regulation	PB/PZ/TC	

Priority #	Topic Area and Action Item	Priority	Timeframe	Type of Action	Responsibility	Funding Required
2 -- Industrial Development (ID)						
ID.2.1	Continue to provide developers with incentives for the adaptive reuse of vacant industrial sites.	Desirable	Ongoing	Policy	AD	YES
ID.2.2	Collaborate on a continuing basis with officials from WPCOG, Burke County, and other municipalities to remain informed and have input on developments that will affect Valdese.	High	Ongoing	Policy	AD/PZ/TC	
ID.2.3	Keep an up to date inventory of industrial sites in and around Valdese that are available for development or redevelopment.	High	Immediate	Plan	AD	
ID.2.4	Determine whether adequate efforts and resources are being dedicated to industrial recruitment to the Town of Valdese, and where shortcomings are found, identify additional measures to improve recruitment efforts.	High	Immediate	Policy	AD	YES
ID.2.5	Work with the local school systems, community college, and workforce development agencies to ensure Valdese will provide new and existing industries with a skilled workforce.	High	Immediate	Policy	AD	
3 -- Local Economic Development (ED)						
ED.3.1	Continue to utilize the Tourism Development Authority proceeds to help promote travel and tourism in the Town.	High	Ongoing	Policy	AD	
ED.3.2	Inventory all vacant properties and buildings throughout town and identify potential uses that would be viable in those locations.	High	Medium	Plan	PB/PZ/AD	
ED.3.3	Evaluate the Town's existing zoning ordinance to determine where amendments are necessary to encourage and enable more compact, mixed-use developments.	Medium	Medium	Regulation	PB/PZ/TC	
ED.3.4	Continue to actively initiate and widen the reach of VEDIC.	High	Ongoing	Policy	AD	
ED.3.5	Market Valdese as a tourist "destination" for shopping, cultural, and outdoor recreation excursions.	High	Immediate	Policy	AD	YES
ED.3.6	Evaluate the Town's land use regulations to assure the review and approval process is carried out in an efficient and effective manner.	Medium	Medium	Regulation	PZ	
4--Residential Development (RD)						
RD.4.1	Evaluate the Town's development ordinances for areas that will help promote a diversity of housing choices.	Medium	Medium	Regulation	PZ	
RD.4.2	Require site design standards for land uses adjacent to residential zoning districts that protect the overall character and general welfare of existing neighborhoods.	Medium	Medium	Regulation	PZ	
RD.4.3	Encourage the preservation of older homes in the community to help strengthen a sense of place and historical context.	Medium	Medium	Policy	AD/PZ	
RD.4.4	Amend Subdivision Regulations to require that all new roads be designed and constructed to meet NCDOT standards and be dedicated to the public upon completion.	High	Immediate	Regulation	PB/PZ/TE	

Priority #	Topic Area and Action Item	Priority	Timeframe	Type of Action	Responsibility	Funding Required
RD.4.5	Encourage residential subdivisions that incorporate conservation subdivision design.	Medium	Medium	Regulation/Policy	PB/PZ/TC	
RD.4.6	Work with community development and affordable housing agencies to identify the best ways to provide and maintain sufficient housing options throughout town.	Medium	Ongoing	Policy	PZ/AD	
RD.4.7	Encourage the development of mixed-use and multi-family housing in appropriate zoning districts.	Medium	Ongoing	Policy	PZ	
5--Community Appearance (CA)						
CA.5.1	Adopt appropriate appearance and design standards for all new commercial, multi-family, and institutional developments and redevelopments.	Desirable	Medium	Regulation	PB/PZ/TC	YES
CA.5.2	Establish a Community Appearance Commission in accordance and as allowed by N.C.G.S. 160A-452.	Medium	Long	Resolution/Plan	PB/PZ/TC	
CA.5.3	Establish a Historic Preservation Commission in accordance with N.C.G.S. 160A-440.7 and to identify all historic structures and landmarks in Town and designate a Historic District in accordance with N.C.G.S. 160A-400.4	Medium	Medium	Resolution/Plan	PB/PZ/TC	YES
CA.5.4	Create a revolving loan initiative that is funded publicly, privately, or through these partnerships, to purchase, rehabilitate, and/or resell historic properties whose owners are unable, or unwilling, to maintain their property.	Desirable	Ongoing	Policy/Capital Improvement	PZ/TC	YES
CA.5.5	Give highest priority for beautification efforts to major thoroughfares and entryways.	High	Immediate	Policy/Plan	AD	
CA.5.6	Implement a comprehensive signage and wayfinding program throughout Town.	Desirable	Medium	Plan/Capital Improvement	PZ	YES
CA.5.7	Establish an entryway and commercial corridor overlay zone that includes more stringent appearance and site design standards.	Medium	Medium	Regulation	PB/PZ/TC	
CA.5.8	Seek ways to address the issue of absentee landowners and determine best practices for maintaining and upgrading deteriorating properties.	Desirable	Ongoing	Policy	PZ	
6 -- General Services (GS)						
GS.6.1	The Town's website should be a major resource for residents and visitors to the area. Considering this, the website should be continually updated with timely and relevant information.	Immediate	Ongoing	Policy/Capital Improvement	AD	YES
GS.6.2	Conduct an annual review of the Town Development Plan to monitor the Town's progress in achieving its goals.	Medium	Ongoing/Long	Policy	PB/PZ	
GS.6.3	Maintain an updated street inventory that reflects the condition and maintenance needs of all Town streets.	Desirable	Ongoing	Plan	PW	

Priority #	Topic Area and Action Item	Priority	Timeframe	Type of Action	Responsibility	Funding Required
GS.6.4	Continually evaluate the staffing, training, and equipment needs for all public safety departments.	High	Immediate/Ongoing	Policy/Capital Improvement	PS	
GS.6.5	Limit the number of street curb cuts in new commercial development to avoid traffic congestion and help improve safety.	Desirable	Ongoing	Policy	PZ	
GS.6.6	Participate in the Unifour RPO to ensure a coordinated and regional approach to transportation planning and to identify funding for future transportation needs.	High	Ongoing	Policy	AD/PZ	
GS.6.7	Pursue NCDOT funding to develop a comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.	High	Immediate	Plan	PZ	
GS.6.8	Prepare and adopt a Water and Sewer Facilities Capital Management Plan	Medium	Medium	Capital Improvement	WW/TC	YES
GS.6.9	Require that water, wastewater, and stormwater drainage system improvements be constructed concurrently with new development and to provide adequate capacity to meet future demands.	High	Immediate/Ongoing	Policy/Regulation	WW/PZ/TC	
GS.6.10	Discourage the extension of water and sewer lines into environmentally sensitive areas.	High	Ongoing	Policy/Regulation	PW/PZ/TC	
GS.6.11	Provide incentives for infill development where infrastructure already exists.	Desirable	Ongoing	Policy	TC	YES
7 -- Natural Resources (NR)						
NR.7.1	Revise standards for landscaping and tree planting in surface parking lots in all zoning districts.	Desirable	Medium	Regulation	PB/PZ/TC	
NR.7.2	Preserve open space, forest land and other natural areas through appropriate subdivision and zoning regulations, including conservation subdivision design.	Desirable	Medium	Regulation	PB/PZ/TC	
NR.7.3	Allow development only in areas of Town that have suitable soil and topographic characteristics.	Desirable	Medium	Regulation	PB/PZ/TC	
NR.7.4	Limit development in designated floodplains, wetlands, and waterways.	High	Ongoing	Regulation	PB/PZ/TC	
NR.7.5	Support the development of regional conservation plans.	Medium	Ongoing	Policy/Plan	PZ/TC	
8 -- Recreation and Cultural Resources (RC)						
RC.8.1	Prepare and adopt a recreation master plan for parks, trails, and greenways.	High	Immediate	Plan	PR/TC	YES
RC.8.2	Require new development and redevelopment projects to incorporate public spaces and encourage appropriate treatment of the public realm for sidewalks, etc.	Desirable	Ongoing	Regulation	PB/PZ/TC	
RC.8.3	Provide opportunities and accommodate regional sporting events and tournaments.	Desirable	Ongoing	Policy/Capital Improvement	AD/TC	YES
RC.8.4	Renovate "From this Day Forward" outdoor drama.	Desirable	Long	Capital Improvement	AD	YES





Valdese Land Cover

