



Western Piedmont
Council of Governments

Creative Regional Solutions Since 1968

Western Piedmont Housing Growth Toolkit

NADO 2024 Annual Training Conference

October 22, 2024

The Ongoing Housing Crisis

- Estimates vary, but studies consistently show a nationwide shortage of *at least* several million homes given new household formation rates.
- People with lower and extremely-low incomes are at serious risk of housing instability.
 - Many are spending more than half their income on housing costs.
- Demographic trends: Newly-forming households who need smaller “starter” homes are competing with older residents looking to downsize.

Regional Needs



Housing for Our Diverse Workforce

Our economy must provide both jobs and housing for people of all skills.



Price Stabilization

The median sales price of a home in the region rose from approximately \$120,000 in 2013 to more than \$250,000 in 2023. Median rent is up 10% year-over-year statewide.



Sufficient Population Growth

Regional targets call for between 1% and 2% population growth per year for a healthy economy.



Replacing Aging Housing Stock

Nearly half (48%) of housing in the Hickory MSA was built before 1980 – the highest percentage of all MSAs in the state.

What Can We Do?

The Housing Growth Toolkit focuses on optimizing zoning and development review regulations and procedures to enable new and diverse types of housing production.

Goals

❖ Allow and promote more types of housing

- ❖ Preferences are changing
- ❖ Aging population and early-career workers are competing for housing
- ❖ Family size is shrinking, yet most new homes are very large

❖ Allow and promote denser housing

- ❖ Increasing supply can help stabilize costs
- ❖ Higher densities provide fiscal and environmental benefits to local government

❖ Quicker, predictable development reviews

- ❖ Optimize standards, and allow staff to administer
- ❖ Boards don't need to review technical plats and plans.
- ❖ Hearings only for major projects

How to use the Tool Kit

1



Review the Housing Types

Read the left page of each type as you work through the document to become familiar with the form and definitions of the various types.

2



Survey Neighborhoods

Survey local neighborhoods to determine what types of housing they already include.

3



Identify Needs

Using the insights from your local survey, determine which types are needed and desired in your current districts.

4



Review Strategies

Go back through the document and review the policy and strategy suggestions.

5



Modify and Adopt Codes

Modify the policy and strategy suggestions to integrate them into your jurisdiction's zoning and development code, and adopt the changes.

The Hope.... New Housing Types



Use Toolkit to Help
Review & Revise
Zoning/Subdivision
Regulations



Efficient, Clear Regulatory Process



More Choice and Density = Better Value for Taxpayers

Higher density housing leads to more efficient local services, and can help lower overall taxpayer costs.

- **Cost Savings:** Higher density housing allows the same amount of infrastructure to serve a larger number of people.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Higher density housing allows more land to be conserved as countryside, and protects water supplies and the natural beauty of the area.
- **Increased Revenue:** Higher density housing can increase the tax base, leading to greater revenue and potentially lowering the cost burden per residents while allowing for improved services.



Ten Practices for Enabling Housing Production

1. Allow more housing types across districts
2. Reduce minimum lot sizes
3. Reduce setback requirements
4. Revise street frontage requirements
5. Reduce parking minimums
6. Enable unique PUD projects
7. Allow accessory dwelling units
8. Shift reviews to staff
9. Reduce street width requirements
10. Consider incentives for density/design



1. Allow More Housing Types Across Districts

- Allow different housing types across residential districts.
 - Duplex, triplex, quadplex+
 - Multifamily
 - “Missing middle”
- Increase choice of housing options for different living situations.
- Design and placement standards can help infill fit into existing neighborhoods.



2. Decrease or Eliminate Minimum Lot Sizes

- Minimum lot sizes can increase the cost to buy and build.
- Can incentivize sprawl, as infrastructure and streets have to be run across more land to reach fewer people.
- Flexibility is needed for people to determine their own desires for the size of their land.
- Minimum lot sizes may still be required for well/septic and watershed regulations.



3. Reduce Setback Requirements

- Setback requirements are often overly large. This adds cost and reduces the ability for adaptive design on unusual or small lots.
- Builders will often exceed the minimums.
- Smaller setbacks, or even build-to lines, can bring structures closer to the street and limit impervious surface.
- Front and rear setbacks should balance privacy and connection to the street.
- Side setbacks can be lowered to 5-8 feet or offset from one side to allow for a shared driveway or rear parking .



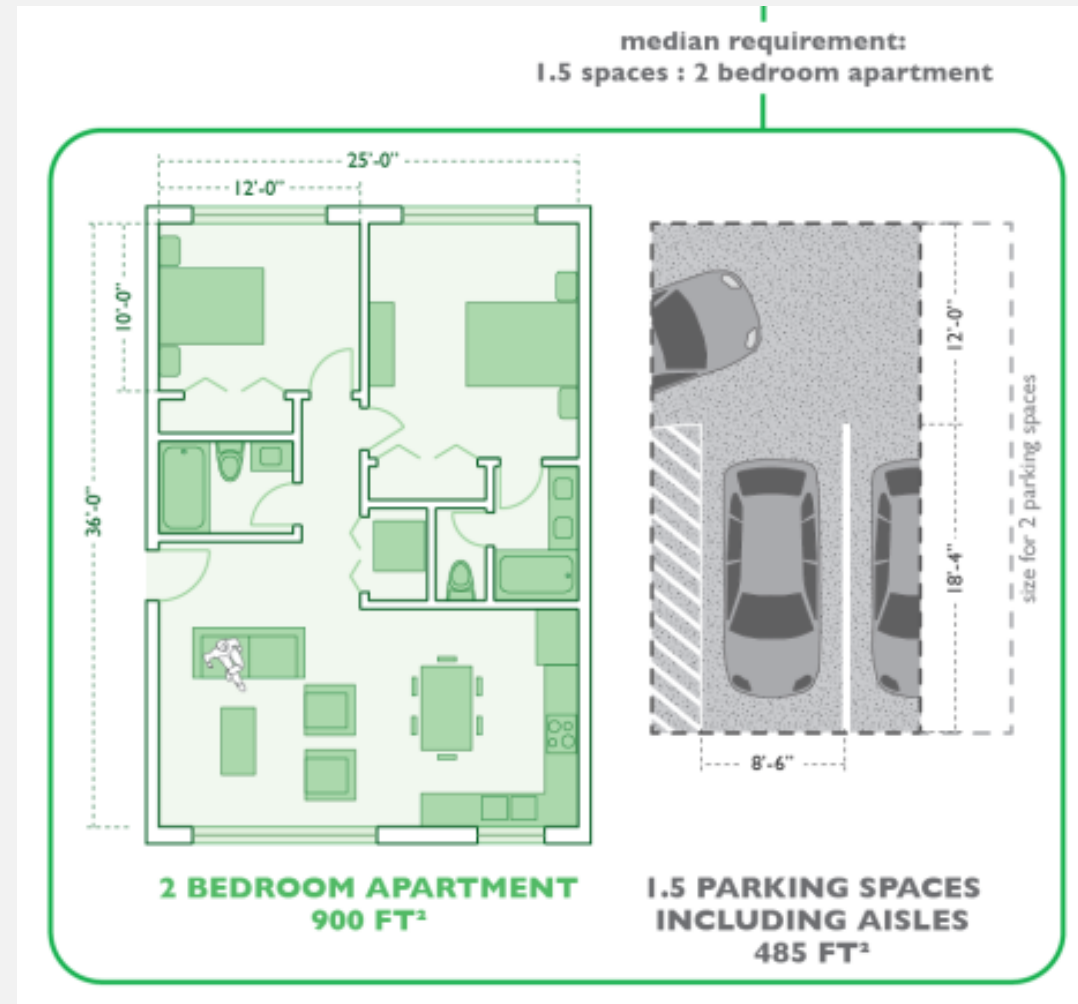
4. Revise Street Frontage Requirements

- As long as projects have access as a whole, not every lot needs to front a public street.
- Cottage courts and pocket neighborhoods could front green spaces with private access through alleyways.
- Other options could be greenways, plazas, courtyards, squares, etc.
- Opens up development possibilities for unusual lot shapes and contexts



5. Lower or Eliminate Minimum Parking Standards

- Parking minimums are often arbitrary.
- Excess parking causes environmental damage and increases cost.
- Builders should bear the risk of developing too little parking.
- Site plan review should note potential problems (lack of space for guests) and allow for creative placement.
- Parking residential homes should not have to be permanently paved.



Parking can take up huge amounts of land.

6. Allow Unique PUD and Adaptive Reuse Projects

- Planned unit developments like cottage courts, mixed use, or adaptive reuse can generate new projects.
- Opens up possibilities on unusual/difficult lots, brownfield redevelopment, downtown projects, etc.
- Can be done using staff review as well if ordinance has clear standards.
- Creative funding strategies may also exist for these projects, particularly adaptive reuse of older buildings.



7. Allow ADUs in Residential Districts

- Accessory dwelling units can add gentle density in existing residential districts.
- ADUs can add space for family members, caretakers, renters, singles, etc.
- Can usually fit well into existing accessory structure standards.
- Many new options are coming on the market for modular ADUs.



Commercial site plans often do not need board review,
but can involve large amounts of traffic...



Chic-fil-A in Hickory – 12 month 5 day
average of **1493 trips**

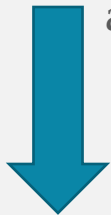


McDonalds in Hickory – 12 month 5 day
average of **543 trips**

Why require board review to address traffic concerns for residential projects, but not for commercial?



Chic-fil-A in Hickory - 12 month 5 day average of **1493 trips**



186 Housing Units



McDonalds in Hickory - 12 month 5 day average of **543 trips**



67 Housing Units

*Assuming a housing unit generates 8 trips per day...
That is equivalent to:*

8. Shift Project Reviews to Staff

- Most technical site plans and plats do not need to be reviewed by boards.
- Boards should reserve their time for truly large and transformative projects
- Public meetings can cause uncertainty about the approval process and create expectations that local governments have more authority on projects than they do
- Instead, effort can be placed into crafting high-quality codes, approved by the government boards, that allow for administrative review.



9. Reduce Required Street Paving Widths

- Roads for new residential subdivisions can be reduced in width as much as feasible.
- Wider, overbuilt roads lead to more impervious surface and increase cost, which is passed on to the owner/renter/taxpayer.
- Where feasible, alleys with ribbon curb can be used instead of large access roads.
- On-street parking can be encouraged to lessen parking and maneuvering space, and helps to slow traffic.



10. Consider Incentives for Design + Density

- Performance zoning or density bonus programs can award increases in floor area ratio and density, or a reduction in fees, in exchange for voluntary design features.
- May include things like innovative stormwater management, public space, transit stop, etc.

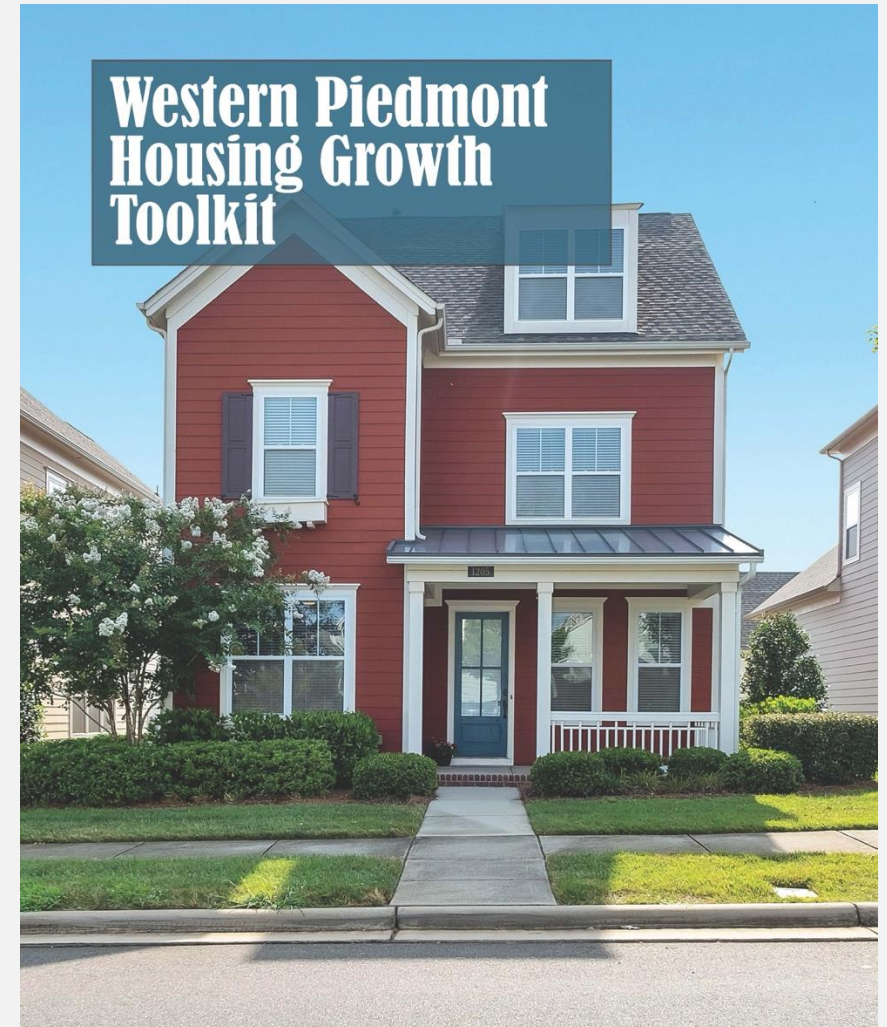


Housing Growth Toolkit

Specific policy suggestions and briefings for different housing types are included.

Can be used as a process guide for examining neighborhoods in your jurisdiction.

Policy recommendations can be compared to current zoning code, and changes considered.

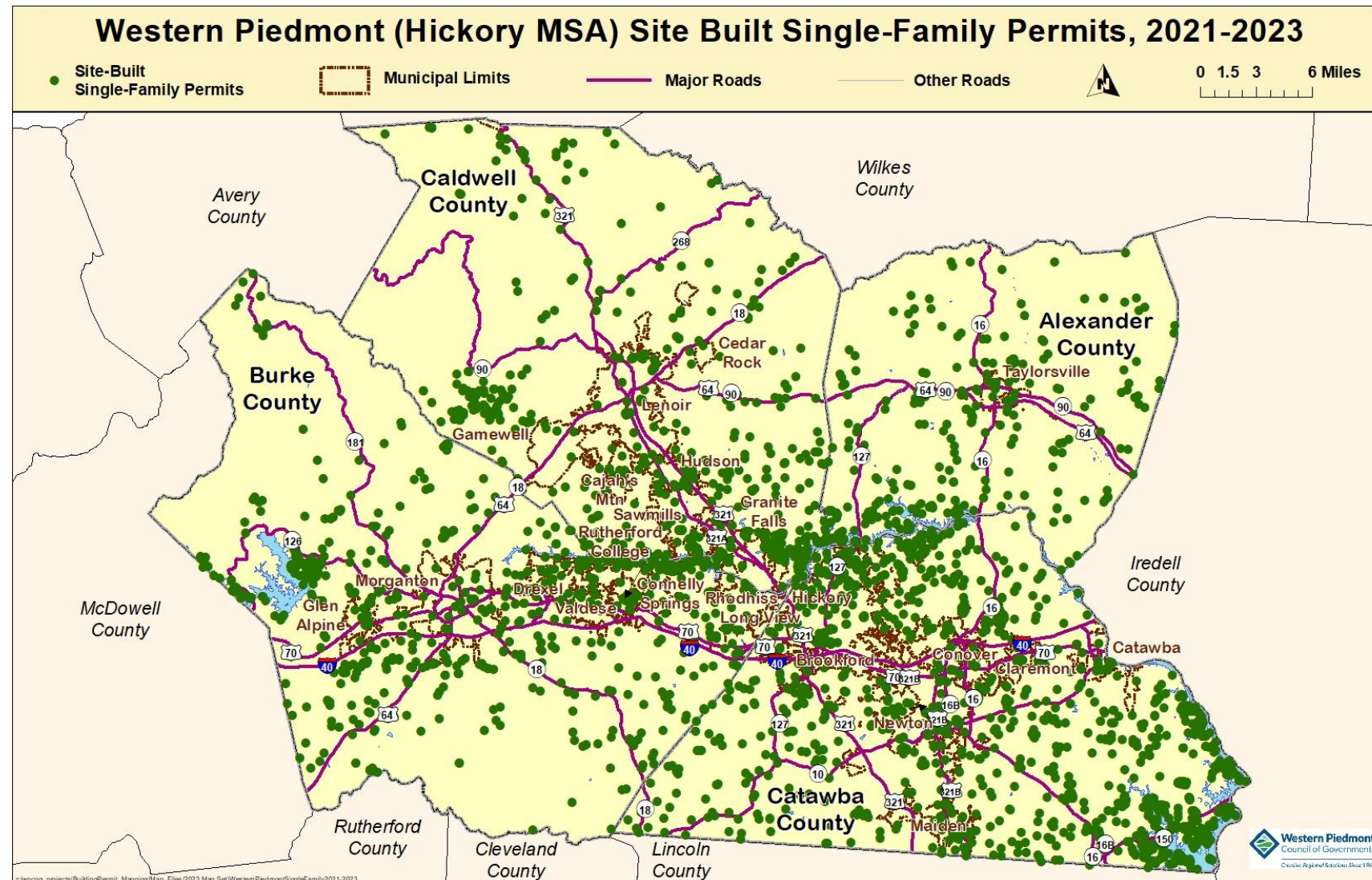


Implementation

- We are working with local governments to assist with amendments to their land development codes
- Some are implementing changes on their own
- Over half of our 28 local governments have implemented, or are in progress, some or all the toolkit recommendations



We are tracking progress in our region



We are tracking progress in our region

Population & Housing Unit Targets for the Region

County or Municipality	1%	2%	Annual Housing	Annual Housing	2021-2023 Units	2021-2023 Units	2021	2022	2023	2021-2023	
	Population	Annual	Annual	Units Needed to	Units Needed to	Needed to Reach	Housing	Housing	Housing	Housing	
	2020 Census	Pop. Growth	Pop. Growth	Reach 1% Annual Growth	Reach 2% Annual Growth	3% Total Growth (Avg. 1% per year)	Units Permitted	Units Permitted	Units Permitted	Units Permitted	
Alexander County	36,444	364	729	162	324	486	106	148	101	355	
Burke County	87,570	876	1,751	389	778	1,167	208	423	330	961	
Caldwell County	80,652	807	1,613	358	717	1,074	283	278	286	847	
Catawba County	160,610	1,606	3,212	714	1,428	2,142	1,078	1,687	1,456	4,221	
Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA	365,276	3,653	7,306	1,623	3,247	4,869	9,741	1,675	2,536	2,173	6,384
Brookford	442	4	9	2	4	6	12	2	7	1	10
Cajah's Mountain	2,722	27	54	12	24	36	72	3	2	36	41
Catawba (Town of)	702	7	14	3	6	9	18	4	8	74	86
Cedar Rock	301	3	6	1	3	3	9	0	1	0	1
Claremont	1,692	17	34	8	15	24	45	9	3	10	22
Connelly Springs	1,529	15	31	7	14	21	42	10	17	9	36
Conover	8,421	84	168	37	75	111	225	258	110	169	537
Drexel	1,760	18	35	8	16	24	48	4	3	6	13
Gamewell	3,702	37	74	16	33	48	99	2	0	4	6
Glen Alpine	1,529	15	31	7	14	21	42	3	9	19	31
Granite Falls	4,965	50	99	22	44	66	132	25	21	17	63
Hickory	43,490	435	870	193	387	579	1,161	214	581	282	1,077
Hildebran	1,679	17	34	7	15	21	45	2	6	5	13
Hudson	3,780	38	76	17	34	51	102	58	11	8	77
Lenoir	18,352	184	367	82	163	246	489	23	56	29	108
Long View	5,088	51	102	23	45	69	135	8	7	11	26
Maiden	3,736	37	75	17	33	51	99	8	16	40	64
Morganton	17,474	175	349	78	155	234	465	24	65	76	165
Newton	13,148	131	263	58	117	174	351	103	53	42	198
Rhodhiss	997	10	20	4	9	12	27	0	0	7	7
Rutherford College	1,226	12	25	5	11	15	33	7	7	4	18
Sawmills	5,020	50	100	22	45	66	135	11	9	11	31
Taylorsville	2,320	23	46	10	21	30	63	4	2	9	15
Valdese	4,689	47	94	21	42	63	126	9	149	13	171
Alexander County (Nonmunicipal)	34,124	341	682	152	303	456	909	102	146	92	340
Burke County (Nonmunicipal)	56,231	562	1,125	250	500	750	1,500	149	167	191	507
Caldwell County (Nonmunicipal)	41,329	413	827	184	367	552	1,101	161	178	181	520
Catawba County (Nonmunicipal)	84,737	847	1,695	377	753	1,131	2,259	472	902	827	2,201

Source: 2020 Census and Regional Building Permit Departments, compiled by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments.

*Assumes average household size of 2.25 persons per new housing unit.

Note: 2021-2023 totals include multi-family and single-family units.

Manufacturing housing is not included in the totals.

Met target for housing for 1% to 2% annual population growth

Less than target for housing of 1% to 2% annual population growth

More than target for housing of 1% to 2% annual population growth

2020 Census and 2021-2022 Population Estimates for the Region

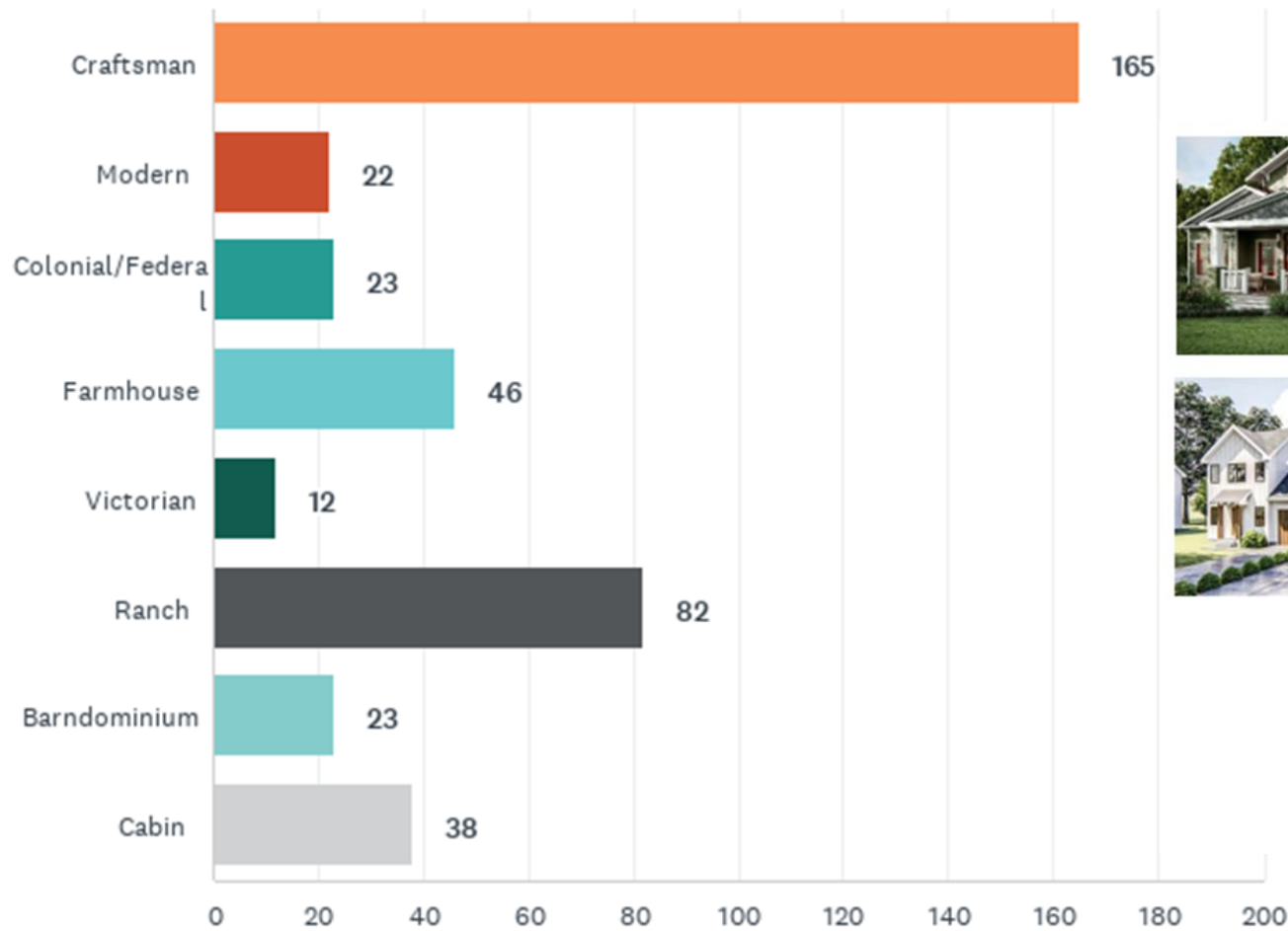
County or Municipality	Population			Pop. Change 2020-2022	Pop. % Change 2020-2022	Pop. Change 2021-2022	Pop. % Change 2021-2022
	2020 Census	Pop. 2021 Estimate	Pop. 2022 Estimate				
Alexander County	36,444	36,172	36,230	-214	-0.6%	58	0.2%
Burke County	87,570	88,398	89,078	1,508	1.7%	680	0.8%
Caldwell County	80,652	81,319	81,587	935	1.2%	268	0.3%
Catawba County	160,610	162,847	164,642	4,032	2.5%	1,795	1.1%
Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA	365,276	368,736	371,537	6,261	1.7%	2,801	0.8%
Brookford	442	450	456	14	3.2%	6	1.3%
Cajah's Mountain	2,722	2,738	2,744	22	0.8%	6	0.2%
Catawba (Town of)	702	714	720	18	2.6%	6	0.8%
Cedar Rock	301	305	305	4	1.3%	0	0.0%
Claremont	1,692	1,717	1,742	50	3.0%	25	1.5%
Connelly Springs	1,529	1,556	1,558	29	1.9%	2	0.1%
Conover	8,421	8,486	8,606	185	2.2%	120	1.4%
Drexel	1,760	1,759	1,766	6	0.3%	7	0.4%
Gamewell	3,702	3,733	3,745	43	1.2%	12	0.3%
Glen Alpine	1,529	1,554	1,548	19	1.2%	-6	-0.4%
Granite Falls	4,965	5,055	5,088	123	2.5%	33	0.7%
Hickory	43,490	44,363	44,765	1,275	2.9%	402	0.9%
Hildebran	1,679	1,702	1,703	24	1.4%	1	0.1%
Hudson	3,780	3,811	3,819	39	1.0%	8	0.2%
Lenoir	18,352	18,707	18,683	331	1.8%	-24	-0.1%
Long View	5,088	5,137	5,164	76	1.5%	27	0.5%
Maiden	3,736	3,729	3,807	71	1.9%	78	2.1%
Morganton	17,474	17,681	18,025	551	3.2%	344	1.9%
Newton	13,148	13,264	13,427	279	2.1%	163	1.2%
Rhodhiss	997	1,006	1,007	10	1.0%	1	0.1%
Rutherford College	1,226	1,242	1,253	27	2.2%	11	0.9%
Sawmills	5,020	5,061	5,075	55	1.1%	14	0.3%
Taylorsville	2,320	2,318	2,313	-7	-0.3%	-5	-0.2%
Valdese	4,689	4,911	4,920	231	4.9%	9	0.2%
Unincorporated Alexander County	34,124	33,854	33,917	-207	-0.6%	63	0.2%
Unincorporated Burke County	56,231	56,511	56,820	589	1.0%	309	0.5%
Unincorporated Caldwell County	41,420	41,519	41,734	314	0.8%	215	0.5%
Unincorporated Catawba County	84,737	85,853	86,827	2,090	2.5%	974	1.1%

Source: 2020 Census and NC State Demographer, compiled by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments

Local governments close to the 1-2% annual growth target.

Local governments meeting the 1-2% annual growth target.

Regional Housing Initiative – Visual Preference Survey



What architectural style do you prefer?



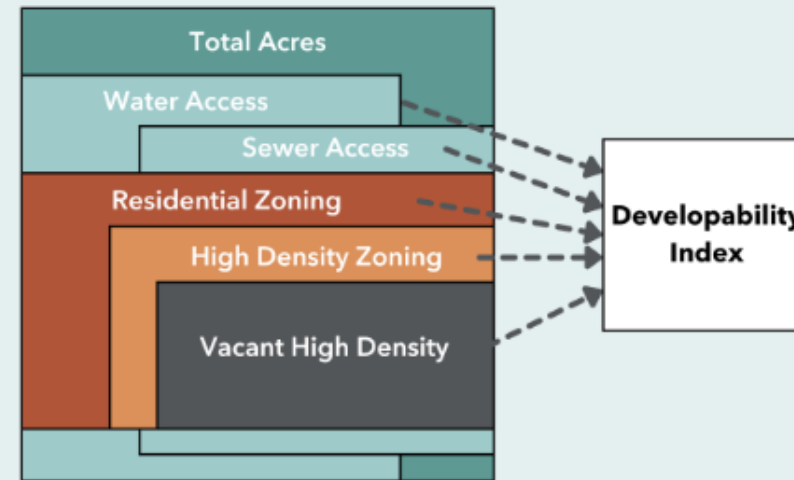
Methodology

Municipality Developability

Analysis:

The municipal developability score is an average of the percentages of acres that meet the following criteria:

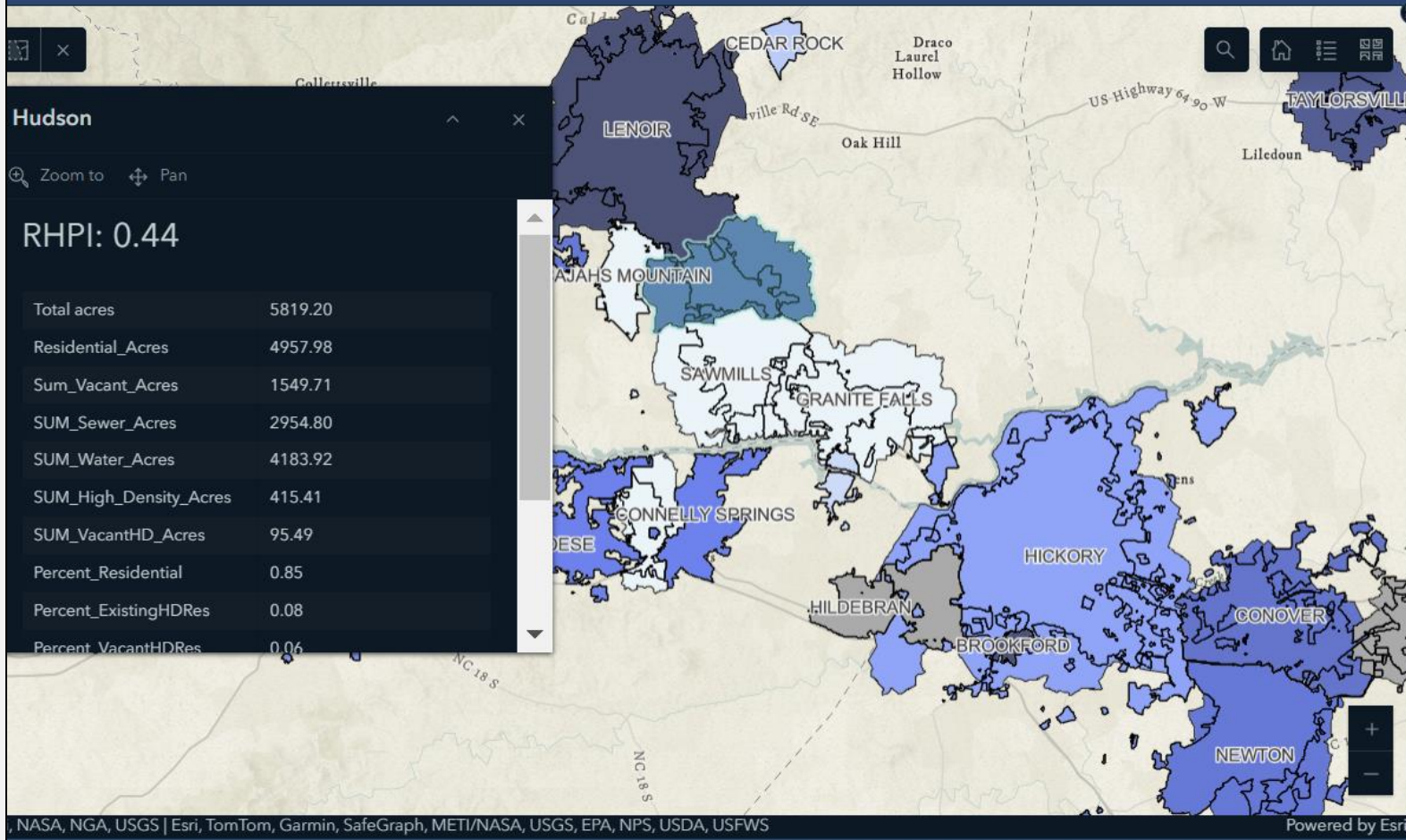
- Percent of total acres with water access
 - Parcel considered accessible if within 120 feet of water line.
- Percent of total acres with sewer access
 - Parcel considered accessible if within 120 feet of sewer line.
- Percent of total acres zoned for residential
 - Did not consider mixed use
- Percent of residential acres zoned for high density housing
 - Add what was considered high density!!!
- Percent of vacant acres zoned for high density housing



Visual representation of the developability analysis calculations.

The area analyzed included city limits and ETJ (when applicable).

Index Score and Recommendations



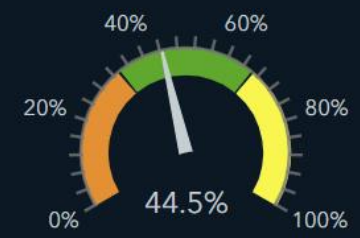
Hudson

Zoom to Pan

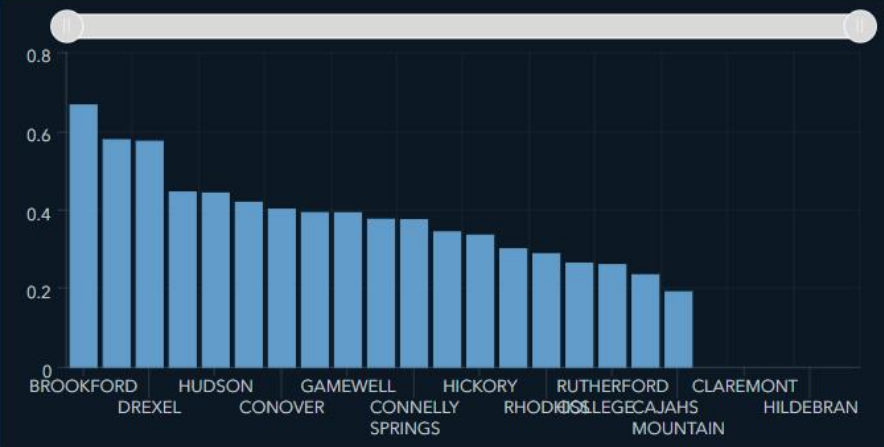
RHPI: 0.44

Total acres	5819.20
Residential_Acres	4957.98
Sum_Vacant_Acres	1549.71
SUM_Sewer_Acres	2954.80
SUM_Water_Acres	4183.92
SUM_High_Density_Acres	415.41
SUM_VacantHD_Acres	95.49
Percent_Residential	0.85
Percent_ExistingHDRes	0.08
Percent_VacantHDRes	0.06

Selected areas DI



Orange = Not enough housing
Green = Just right
Yellow = Plenty of housing, no room for anything else



Everyone needs a home

HOMES COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES



Condos



Single Family



Apartments



Townhomes



Duplex

Why should you want more housing?

- 👍 Increased homes built = lower housing prices
- 👍 Increased variety of homes = a strong and resilient economy
- 👍 Increased number of homes + variety = a home for everyone

**HOUSING IS
FOR EVERY
PHASE OF
YOUR LIFE**



Affordability

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

Median Household Income

\$57,943

Median Rent

\$797

Median House Value

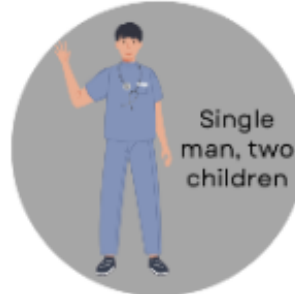
\$210,100

Education



Single woman, no children

Healthcare



Single man, two children

Public Safety



Married with one adult working, one child

Maintenance



Married with both adults working, three children

Average Salary - \$44,580

Annual Living Expenses:

Food = \$3,819

Housing = \$9,722

Childcare = \$0

Transportation = \$9,994

Required Salary = \$40,168

Monthly Attainable Housing Budget = \$371-\$1,114

Average Salary - \$31,950

Annual Living Expenses:

Food = \$8,444

Housing = \$12,231

Childcare = \$14,846

Transportation = \$14,569

Required Salary = \$82,381

Monthly Attainable Housing Budget = \$335-\$1,004

Average Salary - \$40,170

Annual Living Expenses:

Food = \$8,715

Housing = \$12,231

Childcare = \$0

Transportation = \$14,569

Required Salary = \$66,867

Monthly Attainable Housing Budget = \$335-\$1,004

Average Salary - \$49,090

Annual Living Expenses:

Food = \$13,685

Housing = \$15,850

Childcare = \$20,030

Transportation = \$16,744

Required Salary = \$51,810

Monthly Attainable Housing Budget = \$409-\$1,227

Local Success Stories



Lenoir Blue Bell Apartments (adaptive Reuse)

The old Lenoir Cotton Mill/Blue Bell Inc. plant in Downtown Lenoir has been transformed into 46 market-rate one- and two-bedroom apartments, offering amenities like a fitness center and on-site parking with key fob access. The City and Caldwell County, with the Economic Development Commission, funded studies and established an Historic Preservation Commission, securing historic landmark status and tax credits for the project. City staff and Council members also lobbied for Historic Preservation Tax credits and funded infrastructure improvements, enhancing the area with a new greenway and proximity to Unity Park and Community Gardens. This revitalization provides modern, desirable living spaces while preserving the site's historic significance.