

# Beaufort Comprehensive Plan Update

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## Steering Committee Meeting #3

### Meeting Information

Date: » May 6, 2021  
Time: » 4:00 PM  
Location: » Zoom Meeting: Video / Conference Call  
Attendees: » Guy Copes, Diane Meelheim, Robert Harper, Ralph Merrill, Paula Gillikin, Johnna Davis, Jay McLeod (Stewart), Allison Evans (Stewart), Kate Allen (Town), Kyle Garner (Town), John Day (Town), Commissioner Harker (Town)

### Agenda Items

- Project Schedule and Status Update
- Ongoing Analysis
  - Existing Land Use Map
  - Population Projections
    - Allison Evans, Stewart,
      - Provided an update on population projections and methods used to obtain 30-year CAMA required population projections.
      - Explained projected seasonal population for PEAK summer weekend and does NOT include day trippers
        - Lodging (hotels, B&Bs,
        - Seasonal Peak Population Projection
          - 2020: 10,055
          - 2050: 14,806
          - Potential for +40% growth by 2050
      - Discussion ensued regarding water supply projections
    - Mr. Merrill asked how about primary vs. second homeowners in relation to seasonal population projections. Discussion ensued. Mr. Merrill noted that the trend of second home ownership is increasing considerably in the vicinity of Front Street more so than the rest of the community. Mr. Harper agreed, noting it's challenging to obtain that data, especially once short-term rental occupancy is factored in.
- Public Engagement Summary (incl. Public Meeting #2, Survey #2)
  - Jay McLeod, Stewart
    - Provided a brief recap of public outreach thus far

- Focus Group Interviews (5 total)
- Survey #1: 1,691 participants
- Survey #2: 110 participants
- Public Meeting #2 – Breakout Groups: 77+/- participants
  - Recording: 1.2k views
- Discussed top three priorities from survey #1 results
  - Community Concerns
    - Infrastructure and natural environment
- Survey #2
  - Considerably less participation
  - Takeaways
    - Affordable/workforce housing
    - Stormwater/flooding concerns
    - Short-term rental regulations (lack thereof)
  - Mr. Copes asked about the current water levels and capacity of the Castle Haynes aquifer, and referenced a report from 2018; Mr. Harper mentioned a detailed study done due to the Aurora mines that looked at the Cape Fear aquifer compared to Castle Haynes and said that he would try to find it to share with the group. He added that the quality was better with the Cape Fear aquifer, but capacity is higher with the Castle Haynes aquifer.
  - Mr. Harper asked about the pie chart regarding the goal addressing the economy; asked if there may be confusion from the survey participants as far as eco-tourism/educational tourism and general tourism. Questions the validity of the data based on the favorable response to eco-tourism, which could be misleading. Mr. McLeod asked Mr. Harper to explain the difference between eco-tourism and regular tourism. Discussion ensued. Mr. Harper suggests differentiating between eco-tourism and traditional tourism in public outreach efforts going forward.
- Draft Goals Revision/Review
  - Mr. McLeod presented the revised goals and corresponding priorities based on feedback from breakout groups at Public Meeting 2 and Survey 2.
    - Protect, preserve and restore our shoreline, sensitive habitats, and waterways.
      - Topics include
        - Environmental water quality
        - Protection and enhancement of vulnerable natural environments, including Rachel Carson Reserve
        - Prioritizing living shorelines over bulkheads, where feasible

- Increase resiliency to natural hazards and climate change impacts for natural and built areas.
  - Topics include:
    - Stormwater management
    - Storm surge protections
    - Sea level rise
    - Disaster recovery
- Encourage a diverse housing stock that serves the needs of current residents
  - Topics include:
    - Encouraging diverse housing types
    - Aging in place
    - Addressing short-term rentals
    - Infill development
    - Neighborhood walkability
- Ensure infrastructure and facilities keep up with increasing demand and changing environmental conditions
- Embrace and leverage our unique economic assets and opportunities
  - Topics Include:
    - Natural and cultural tourism
    - Supporting small businesses
    - Economic development
- Support a multi-modal transportation system that is convenient, safe, and accessible, especially for non-automobile transportation
  - Topics include:
    - Cycle and pedestrian connections to neighborhoods
    - Cycle facilities
    - Accessibility
    - Downtown parking
    - Maritime
- Protect our unique character by enhancing and maintaining natural resources, recreational opportunities, historic downtown, and cultural resources
  - Topics Include:
    - Public water access
    - Downtown – historic preservation, public art, businesses

- Parks and recreation
- Cultural Resources
- Celebrate, recognize, and amplify the voices of our diverse communities
  - Topics Include:
    - Increasing diverse representation in town staff, boards and commissions
    - Addressing flooding in vulnerable communities
    - Recognizing Black contribution to Beaufort
    - Increasing accessibility
    - Ensuring public investments are equitably distributed
- Committee Feedback
  - Mr. Merrill said that he believes this is a great selection of goals. He said that something he feels is missing, as living in Beaufort is a different pace of life than other places, somehow needs to be included in the goal which reads, “Protect our unique character by enhancing and maintaining natural resources, recreational opportunities, historic downtown, and cultural resources.” Mr. Harper echoed Mr. Merrill’s thoughts.
  - Ms. Gillikin asked Mr. McLeod how detailed the objectives in the plan will be, and if they will lead to specific strategies and actions, or if they would be worded solely as objectives. Discussion ensued.
  - Infrastructure does drive/influence the population
  - Discussion regarding HB 401 which would require duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes in any residential zoning district, as well as allow accessory dwelling units in all residential districts as a permitted use by right. Mr. McLeod noted opposition to the bill as proposed and it’s a bit early to make decisions based on the proposal as there will likely be many changes coming forth.
  - Mr. Merrill said he struggles with the idea of “managing or slowing growth” and how it would be possible. Mr. Copes explained that he wants to maintain as much of Beaufort’s character as possible and referenced the many changes over the years. Ms. Gillikin said that its important to remember that the water is rising around us and will continue to rise around us in the coming decades. She said that if we don’t control growth, at least a little bit, it could lead to bigger issues down the road. She further added that this issue is also tied to environmental justice issues and the vulnerable populations
  - There was lengthy discussion about concerns about building structures in areas that shouldn’t be built upon; i.e. flood zones, environmentally fragile areas.
  - Mr. Merrill brought up low-density zoning in town that could influence affordable housing. He referenced property on NC-101 discussed at a recent Planning Board Meeting as an example.
- Preliminary Future Land Use Development

- Mr. McLeod explained that the future land use map does not rezone properties, but is used to guide land use decisions going forward
- Future Land Use Character Areas
  - Nonresidential
    - Downtown Commercial
    - Downtown Waterfront
    - Employment Center/Utility/Infrastructure
    - Commercial Center
    - Neighborhood Activity Center
  - Residential
    - Compact/Multi-family Neighborhood
    - Traditional Neighborhood
    - Suburban Neighborhood
    - Rural/Working Land
    - Conservation/Open Space/Parks/Environmental/Recreation
- Existing Land Use Map
  - Mr. McLeod presented the draft Existing Land Use Map
  - Ms. Gillikin asked about privately owned property that includes environmentally fragile areas and ways to protect these areas. Discussion ensued.
- Next Steps
  - Draft chapters will be available for review in the coming weeks.
  - June 22 – Steering Committee #4
  - July 27 – Steering Committee #5
  - August 24 – Steering Committee #6
  - October (12 or 14; TBD) – Public Meeting #3
  - October (TBD) – Survey #3
- Committee Discussion
  - Affordable/Workforce Housing Handout
    - Mr. McLeod explained that the Stewart team put together this handout as a primer for affordable housing discussions going forward. Discussion ensued. Mr. McLeod mentioned a recent RFP for an Affordable Housing Plan in another town in North Carolina (Wake Forest), which could be an interesting project to follow.
  - Other Comments

- Mr. Merrill asked Mr. McLeod to bring up the slide covering residential densities in town. He said that it would be helpful to have data showing property prices in different areas/zones of Town in order to get a better picture of attainability throughout the town. Discussion ensued.