CHAPTER 8
Healthy, Complete, and Equitable Communities
Chapter 8.
Healthy, Complete, and Equitable Communities

Goal:
Improved health and well-being; access to improved and enhanced community services, facilities, and infrastructure for all; and expanded opportunities for social equity among diverse community groups.

Introduction
The health effects of living in sprawling communities or in distressed city or rural areas have been the subject of much discussion in recent years. Studies and discussions at the national, state, and local levels over the last 10 years have made a strong connection between the goal of improving the quality of life of a community’s residents and the emerging issues of public health and social well-being. A comprehensive plan that seeks to create healthy, complete and equitable communities provides an opportunity to address important aspects of these issues.

What the 2001 Legacy Plan says about Healthy, Complete, and Equitable Communities...

| Encourage mixed-use development |
| Promote land use patterns and design standards that support public transit, walking, bicycling, and reduce automobile trips |
| Design streets to facilitate the use of all modes of transportation |
| Expand public transportation into a countywide transit system |
| Create a bikeway/sidewalk/greenway network that provides alternative means of transportation and recreational opportunities |
| Improve air quality, which protects the health of our citizens |
| Stimulate new development in slow growth areas |
| Provide parks and recreational facilities to meet the needs of a diverse population |
| Create a system of open spaces that provide recreational opportunities and enjoyment of nature |
| Create a network of greenways that link neighborhoods and activity areas |
| Preserve farmland and open space |
| Develop compact, pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods that contain a mixture of residential and commercial buildings, public spaces and amenities, and offer a variety of transportation options |
| Provide convenient and high-quality medical facilities throughout Forsyth County |
| Create communities that are friendly and accessible places for older and disabled people |
| Factor safety into the design of developments, neighborhoods, and communities |
| Locate and design educational facilities that provide quality education and are assets to neighborhoods |
| Ensure that a comprehensive program of solid waste management protects public health and the environment |
How Have the 2001 Legacy Plan Strategies Worked?

The 2001 Legacy Plan, to a limited extent, directly and indirectly addressed the issues of community health and social well-being. Implementation of specific recommendations in the chapters on growth management; transportation alternatives; open space, parks and greenways; environmental quality; community life; and building better neighborhoods have also served to benefit the health and social well-being of the community, but these impacts have not generally been emphasized. Legacy 2030 provides an opportunity to focus more directly on the creation of complete communities, which facilitate healthy living, age-friendly communities, active aging, and social equity.

Benchmarks identified in 2001 Legacy, with the possible exception of a benchmark for air quality, were not intended to measure improvement in the community’s health. However, many of the goals and objectives throughout Legacy that have been acted on address issues that affect health and equity. The completion of studies on parks, greenways, bicycling, and pedestrian facilities clearly help to provide opportunities for recreation and exercise. Measures for protecting water quality (see Chapter 7, Environmental Quality and Sustainability) should provide a cleaner and healthier environment to live in. The Triad Air Quality Compact and tree ordinance will work to improve the air we all breathe. The traffic calming program put in place by the City of Winston-Salem will make walking safer for pedestrians. The Revitalizing Urban Commercial Areas (RUCA) Program has been helping to stimulate growth in slow growing and struggling communities.

While we have done well with recreational opportunities and environmental regulations, we have not been as successful with other Legacy items. There have been few mixed-use/compact developments actually built in the county, an important factor in creating complete communities. Our transit system has grown very little, making it harder for those without cars to access jobs, services, health care, and healthy food choices. Lack of funding for projects, including farmland preservation, new parks, recreational facilities, and open space remains an obstacle to creating a healthier community.
Objectives, Policies, and Action Agenda

Objective 1: Promote and Protect Health and Equity

Develop and establish guidelines, standards, and mechanisms that ensure that land use planning and design positively affect community health and well-being.

Planning initiatives can broadly affect community health as well as the creation of complete, equitable communities. Land use policy and design can encourage compact, mixed-use communities with accessibility to employment, shopping, health, education, recreational opportunities, and services. They can also facilitate viable local rural and urban agriculture. Active living communities and neighborhoods can promote healthier, more active lifestyles and facilitate the use of alternative transportation modes. Transportation policies can facilitate access to jobs, health facilities and services, healthy eating choices, recreation and other community facilities. Designing age-friendly communities and neighborhoods can address the specific needs of children, the elderly, and physically challenged.

Land use policies can encourage development in underserved and slow-growth areas and provide other community infrastructure, including health, safety, and education infrastructure, that meets the needs of all residents of varying demographic and socio-economic groups including children, the elderly, low-income, minority, physically and mentally-challenged residents.
Policies

**Planning and Health Awareness** Increase public awareness of the contribution that comprehensive planning and urban design can make to creating healthy, complete, and equitable communities.

**Health-Related Policies** Strengthen the community’s capacity to support and implement health-related policies and programs.

**Health Communication** Work with the Public Health Department to increase communication and collaboration between health officials, health care providers, and planners.

**Consider Health in Planning** Ensure that decisions on land use, transportation networks, and the built and natural environment promote healthy lifestyles and access to healthy food choices.

**Health Opportunities** Improve the community’s infrastructure and resources to maximize opportunities for all residents to make healthful choices and positively affect community equity.

Action Agenda

8.1.1. **Input on Health Concerns** Solicit input from interested organizations and individuals to integrate health concerns into land use planning.

8.1.2. **Health Impacts** Consider the health and equity benefits and impacts of significant land development plans and projects, including the possibility of health impact assessments for major projects.

8.1.3. **Health Awareness** Raise awareness of health related issues through creation of a development review checklist. These can include a mix of land uses, access to parks and recreational facilities, provision of and/or access to sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and location relative to retail food stores and services.

8.1.4. **Consider Impacts** Consider the potential positive and negative impacts of new transportation projects on health and equity prior to approval.

8.1.5. **Affordable Transportation** Ensure that affordable transportation services are available to and from health and other community facilities, especially for the elderly, special needs, minority, and low-income groups (see Chapter 5, Transportation).

8.1.6. **Monitor Health Outcomes** Support ongoing and improved monitoring of health outcomes to measure the effectiveness of policies and programs to improve health and reduce health disparities.
Objective 2: Design for Active and Healthy Living

Design new developments and revitalize existing neighborhoods as compact, mixed-use neighborhoods that provide opportunities for active and healthy living, including transit, walking, biking, recreation, and access to healthy food.

Active living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines. An active living community is designed to provide opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to engage in routine daily physical activity. Recent data for Forsyth County reveals that only 42 percent of residents meet the recommended level of physical activity of 30 minutes or more per day for five or more days per week.

An emerging body of research points to connections between community design and community health (Figure 8-1). The mix of land uses, the density of development, and the physical layout of our communities can promote or restrict active living and healthy development. Communities that are designed so that residents can walk, bicycle, or take transit to destinations provide opportunities to incorporate physical activity into daily life.

Walkability and bikeability audits for Winston-Salem and Forsyth County show that destinations such as schools, libraries, shopping, and other community facilities are within walking distance (1/4 mile) of only 20 percent of neighborhoods and less than that in low-income neighborhoods. The audits pointed out that ample street calming measures are in less than 20 percent of neighborhoods, and that a continuous network of biking routes exists within only 20 percent of neighborhoods.

A walk score measures the walkability of any area and how easy it is to live with fewer car trips in that area. Winston-Salem received an average walk score of 35 out of 100 for rankings done nationwide. For Forsyth County’s towns, scores were: Kernersville 37; Clemmons 23; and Lewisville 20. This compares to a walk score of 75 for Boone, 51 for Asheville, 39 for Charlotte, 48 for Wilmington and 53 for Chapel Hill.

Walking and biking to destinations is facilitated by the construction of complete streets, retrofitting existing streets, improving street connectivity, creating livable streets and employing traffic calming. All of these topics are discussed in detail in Chapter 5, Transportation.

The Importance of Design for Healthy Communities

Research suggests that:

- People living in walkable, mixed-use communities are more than twice as likely to get 30 or more minutes of daily exercise as those living in auto-oriented, single-use areas.
- As density and mixed-use development increases, the amount of physical activity residents get each day increases.
- Residents in most mixed-use neighborhoods in Atlanta were more than 30 percent less likely to be obese than residents of neighborhoods with a lower mix of uses.
- Sidewalks and bicycle lanes promote physical activity.
- Multi-use trails are associated with increases in walking and bicycling, especially in urban areas and among lower-income populations.
- Traffic calming and safety measures protect residents and facilitate walking and bicycling.
- Public transit use is linked with higher levels of physical activity and lower rates of obesity.
- One-third of those who commute to work via transit get 30 or more minutes of daily exercise.
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<td><strong>Amenities for New Developments</strong> Integrate recreation facilities and</td>
<td><strong>8.2.1. Complete and Livable Streets</strong> Adopt complete streets and livable</td>
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<td>open space into the design of large-scale residential and mixed-use</td>
<td>streets policies to facilitate active living (see Chapter 5, Transportation).</td>
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<td>developments to provide parks, activity areas, and green spaces.</td>
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<td><strong>Neighborhood Amenities</strong> Facilitate the location of local-serving</td>
<td><strong>8.2.2. Neighborhood Commercial</strong> Create a neighborhood commercial zoning</td>
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<td>retail and public amenities at key, easy-to-access locations within</td>
<td>district that provides retail services but eliminates permitted uses that</td>
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<td>neighborhoods.</td>
<td>may have a negative impact on neighborhoods.</td>
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<td><strong>Health and Human Services Accessibility</strong> Locate health and human</td>
<td><strong>8.2.3. Identify Active Living Deficiencies</strong> Identify neighborhoods/areas</td>
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<td>service facilities to ensure easy accessibility, equitable distribution,</td>
<td>with active living (walking, biking and transit) deficiencies and priori-</td>
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<td>and compatibility with adjoining uses.</td>
<td>tize improvements for these areas.</td>
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<td><strong>Zone for Active Living</strong> Use zoning as a tool to create neighborhood</td>
<td><strong>8.2.4. Incentives for Needed Facilities</strong> In identified areas lacking</td>
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<td>centers and mixed-use nodes that promote active living and access to</td>
<td>needed facilities, consider offering incentives, such as greater density, to</td>
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<td>healthy food choices.</td>
<td>developers who provide needed community amenities such as civic multi-use</td>
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<td><strong>Encourage Transportation Options</strong> Establish land use patterns and</td>
<td>space, space for public markets, community gardens, and food retail stores.</td>
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<td>encourage transportation choices that reduce driving as well as</td>
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<td>improve air quality and respiratory health.</td>
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<td><strong>Consider Pollution Sources</strong> Locate and design new sensitive land</td>
<td><strong>8.2.5. Identify Healthy Living Needs</strong> Use the area plan process to identify</td>
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<td>uses such as schools, hospitals, elder and childcare facilities</td>
<td>community needs related to healthy living.</td>
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<td>carefully to avoid or minimize the impact of nearby air pollution</td>
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<td>sources.</td>
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Objective 3: Health Equity

Provide opportunities for the improved health and welfare of residents of varying incomes, ethnic groups, races, and abilities.

Disparities exist in the health of our community’s residents. Health disparities are differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions among various groups in any community. These disparities are most evident in the community’s minority populations. For all causes of death, the mortality rate among Forsyth County minorities for the period 2001-2005 was 34 percent higher than the mortality rate for Whites. The minority infant mortality rate in Forsyth County is more than 2.5 times the White rate. The premature mortality rate (age <65) per 100,000 population in 2008 was 197 for Whites and 343 for African-Americans. Across the nation, there are sharply higher rates of overweight or obese African-American and Hispanic children and adolescents. These youth, therefore, suffered higher risk of developing chronic diseases. In North Carolina in 2008, 41 percent of African-American children aged 10-17 years were overweight or obese compared with 28 percent of White children; in 2009 42 percent of Hispanic children aged 2-18 years were overweight or obese compared with 30 percent for non-Hispanic children.

The causes of health disparities in a community can encompass a range of factors that contribute to differences in the ability of all members of that community to gain equitable access to the resources that contribute to a healthy life. These factors range from disparities in education, income, access to jobs, adequate housing, healthy food, and physical infrastructure that supports healthy and active lifestyles.

Research suggests that low-income households and minority populations are more likely to be at risk for health problems related to a lack of physical activity than the population at large. Recent national research identifies a significant association between race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, and lack of access to physical infrastructure such as sidewalks, bike paths, sports areas, parks, and public pools. Furthermore, these individuals are less likely to be able to afford or access alternative forms of recreational facilities.

The absence of food options and the lack of access to grocery stores, which disproportionately affects minority populations, are well documented and are addressed in Objective 5, Food Access. Safety concerns in minority and low-income neighborhoods, which can have a negative impact on the health of the residents of these neighborhoods, is addressed in Objective 9, Safety and Security.

Policies

| Policies |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| **Address Needs Through Planning** | Identify and address the needs of minority and low-income populations in making planning decisions, including transportation options. |
| **Affordable Housing** | Ensure that zoning and other municipal regulations facilitate the construction of affordable housing for the community’s minority and low-income populations. |
| **Social Equity** | Consider social equity in all long-range planning processes. |
8.3.1. Revitalize Slow-Growth Neighborhoods
Consider revitalization plans for slow-growth neighborhoods that lack development and job opportunities. Identify needed improvements, implementation and funding mechanisms and a phasing plan.

8.3.2. Priority Upgrades
Identify neighborhoods as priority areas to upgrade existing housing, infrastructure, neighborhood facilities, and services.

8.3.3. Identification Process
Use the area plan process to identify areas in need of improvement.

8.3.4. Focus RUCA
Focus the RUCA Program in slow-growth neighborhoods.

8.3.5. Affordable Housing Incentives
Consider incentives for including affordable housing in infill and mixed-use developments.

8.3.6. Improve Transit
Collaborate with transit service providers to serve people who are transit-dependent by improving connections to job opportunities, health facilities, healthy food outlets, and recreation facilities (see Chapter 5, Transportation).

Creating a Child-Friendly Community
Children under the age of 17 currently represent 23 percent of Forsyth County’s population and are projected to represent approximately the same percentage of the population by 2030. As previously discussed, childhood obesity is recognized as a major health issue in Forsyth County. More than one-third of children and youth are overweight and 17 percent are obese.

Children need to be provided with the opportunity to walk or bike to school and other neighborhood destinations, play safely outdoors, live in a healthy environment, have access to healthy food, and interact with their peers and elders. The auto-dependent character of most suburban developments has negative impacts on the health, well-being, and development of children. The percentage of students who walk or bike to school has declined precipitously over the past three decades from 44 percent in 1969 to 13 percent in 2009. Children with few neighborhood amenities or lacking access to sidewalks, parks, playgrounds, or recreation centers have 20-40 percent higher risk of becoming obese or overweight.

Winston-Salem and Forsyth County have undertaken some initiatives to improve children’s physical activity and make the community more child-friendly, including Winston-Salem/Forsyth County’s Safe Routes to School Pilot Program projects; sidewalk construction; the placement of bike racks in the vicinity of schools, parks and recreation facilities; and the establishment of school and community gardens to promote healthy eating and physical activity.

Objective 4: Age-Friendly Communities
Design and develop age-friendly neighborhoods that cater to the needs of different age groups.

A nationally emerging trend is the desire for people to live in intergenerational, age-friendly neighborhoods. A mix of housing types in neighborhoods provides housing choices and more equitable access to services for people of all income levels and generations. The specific needs of our children and senior citizens need to be addressed when designing new neighborhoods or retrofitting existing ones.
Policies

**Design for Active Children** Encourage the design of developments that facilitate children walking, biking, and taking transit to schools, retail areas, recreation centers and other facilities.

**Safe Parks and Playgrounds** Provide safe, accessible facilities and services that cater to children and youth including parks, playgrounds, playscapes (natural play areas), sports facilities, and recreation centers.

**Childcare Facilities** Encourage the development of a range of childcare facilities.

**Childcare Locations** Locate childcare facilities in or near major new employment centers, wherever feasible.

**Safe Streets** Promote land use patterns and street connectivity that allow children to be more self-sufficient.

Action Agenda

8.4.1. Safe Routes to School Continue to participate in the Safe Routes to School Program (see Chapter 5, Transportation).

8.4.2. Connectivity Issues Review neighborhood connectivity issues near existing schools and parks through the area plan process.

8.4.3. Access for Children Consider access for children when making locational decisions for new parks and schools.

Creating a Senior-Friendly Community

Older adults (aged 65+) currently represent 13 percent of Forsyth County’s population and are projected to represent 17 percent by 2030. The goal of Forsyth County Aging Services Planning Committee is to create a senior-friendly community in Forsyth County. Creating a senior-friendly society involves putting in place the facilities and infrastructure to support healthy and active aging. The 2010 report *Thinking For the Future: Forsyth County’s Older Adults* identified financial, health, transportation, safety, education, and recreation issues that need to be addressed, including:

- Maintaining the 65+ population in their homes, when possible (80 percent own their home),
- Making structural improvements necessary for ease of access,
- Maintaining the healthy outcomes currently experienced by older adults in the county,
- Ensuring that pharmacies and medical care facilities are distributed throughout the county,
- Expanding and improving transportation routes, especially to rural areas,
- Ensuring a system is in place to address nondrivers; and,
- The limited use of recreation centers, which may be a function of location.

To address these issues and to provide for the projected increase in the number of senior citizens, plan recommendations can consider ways to create new age-friendly communities. Strategies can include providing access to services, recreation and shopping, and age-friendly design that encourages safe walking and biking. Existing neighborhoods, where possible, should be made more age-friendly through retrofitting.
Policies

**Senior/Special Needs Housing** Facilitate the development of affordable housing for seniors and people with special needs, including accessory dwelling units or granny flats to allow them to age in place, as well as independent living and assisted living facilities.

**Senior Services Locations** Promote the co-location of adult day-care and on-site health care services with senior housing.

**Senior Services** Facilitate the provision of safe, accessible senior activities, facilities, and services.

**Community Facilities** Encourage the establishment of multipurpose, intergenerational, age-friendly community facilities.

**Universal Building Design** Encourage and facilitate universal building design techniques that enable seniors and special needs persons to stay in their homes and neighborhoods.

Action Agenda

8.4.4. **Aging in Place** Investigate the creation of neighborhoods with lifecycle housing opportunities that allow seniors to age in place.

8.4.5. **Accessory Dwelling Units** Review zoning codes to provide options for accessory dwelling units or granny flats, co-housing, and downsizing to smaller houses in the same neighborhood.

8.4.6. **Housing Variety** Use the area plan process to promote a variety of housing types, including those that cater to seniors within the same neighborhood.

8.4.7. **Mobility Barriers** Collaborate with community organizations to help remove barriers to mobility and access to public and private facilities and services.

8.4.8. **Expand Transit** Expand the system of transit services for seniors and persons with disabilities to cover the entire county (see Chapter 5, Transportation).

8.4.9. **Senior Citizen Needs** Analyze senior citizen needs for possible new or additional projects, programs, and activities for this growing segment of the community.
**Objective 5: Food Access**

Provide safe, convenient opportunities for access to healthy, affordable food for all residents.

The availability of healthy food significantly affects the health of a community. Without access to healthy foods, a nutritious diet and good health are out of reach for many. State data for 2007 indicates that only 20 percent of adults reported eating the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. One-third of North Carolina’s children typically consumed one serving or less of vegetables per day.

Studies have consistently shown that there are fewer supermarkets and other retail outlets selling affordable, nutritious food in low-income communities than in wealthier ones, and in predominantly African-American and Hispanic neighborhoods than in predominantly White neighborhoods. Recent research in Forsyth County reveals that only 40 percent of Forsyth County’s ZIP codes had sufficient access to healthy food outlets, such as grocery stores, produce stands, and farmers markets. There are noticeable grocery gaps, where access to fresh food is limited, in some areas of our community (Map 8-1). Concern about the availability of healthy, local food led to the establishment of a local foods forum to consider approaches to improve the existing situation.

The major factors identified as important for ensuring a community’s access to fresh, healthy food are protecting agricultural land and production on the edge of urban areas, facilitating forms of urban agriculture, and establishing farmers’ markets and retail establishments that carry a variety of healthy food.

The Forsyth County Farmland Preservation Program is a voluntary program that has helped to preserve farming activities (see Chapter 7, Environmental Quality and Sustainability for details).

The Voluntary Agricultural District Program and the agricultural tourism use classification are two other tools recently employed by the County to assist in maintaining land on the periphery of urban areas in agricultural use.

Even with these tools in place, other tools for maintaining land on the urban fringe in agriculture and encouraging food production on these lands need to be explored. Urban agriculture and community gardens are movements that have developed due to the concern for nutrition and the cost of shipping food around the nation. Urban farming can take a variety of forms and can include community gardens, rooftop gardening, and hydroponic agriculture.

In many communities, vacant, underused land in urban areas has been transformed into community gardens. The community garden movement in Forsyth County traces its origin to 1992, and since then, there has been a steady growth in the number of gardens. Forsyth County has approximately 40 community gardens, mostly in Winston-Salem. A recent surge in interest in community gardening has resulted in the establishment of a resource program by the Forsyth County Cooperative Extension to grow the community garden movement by providing resources to new and already established gardens.

The 2010 study, *Community Gardens and Farmers Markets, Forsyth County*, defined community gardens as gardens where a group of residents worked gardens for the benefit of the community. The study identified challenges faced by the existing gardens and farmers markets where fresh produce is sold. Included in the study’s recommendations are:

- Providing infrastructure to widen gardening and market programs,
- Focusing efforts on establishing and mentoring gardens in low-income and minority areas,
- Promoting programs that place local produce in neighborhood stores in low-income areas,
- Studying approaches used in other communities to support gardens and markets,
- Facilitating the use of City- or County-owned land for community gardens and farmers markets,
- Increasing the amount of foods produced by gardens,
- Encouraging school gardens, and,
- Evaluating the impact of community gardens and farmers markets on the local food environment.
Data suggests that healthy food retailing is not uniformly present throughout the county. The lack of grocery stores, markets, and produce stores is particularly evident in the eastern part of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County. Neighborhoods affected include urban areas with a high concentration of minorities and high-household poverty along with rural neighborhoods. Fast-food outlets and convenience stores appear to be the most prevalent form of food retailing in the eastern portion of Winston-Salem.

The lack of healthy food retailing can negatively affect eating choices since a growing body of evidence suggests that individuals usually make choices in the context of what is available in their communities and neighborhoods. Studies done in many communities found that residents with greater access to supermarkets or a greater abundance of healthy food in neighborhood stores consume more healthy food and have lower rates of obesity, diabetes and other diet-related health problems. An additional issue is that grocery items typically cost more in inner city areas than other neighborhoods.

Marketing of healthy food can take a variety of forms. These include: supermarkets and groceries, restaurants with healthy food choices, mobile vending, corner or convenience stores that carry produce and other healthy food, and farmers markets, farm stands and produce stores where producers of fresh food sell directly to consumers.

Community supported agriculture is a direct form of marketing whereby individual farms sell shares of their products to individuals, and distribute products either to designated drop-off sites or to customers’ homes. Healthy food retail outlets not only bring important health benefits to the community, but they can contribute to the economic vitality of the surrounding neighborhoods by bringing jobs to the area, raising the value of surrounding property and attracting additional businesses to the neighborhood.

Land use and urban design policies can play a role in shaping the food environment of the community and facilitate healthy eating. Land use policy can identify land for rural and urban agriculture, as well as sites near neighborhoods for retailing. Urban design and land use regulations can shape the food retail environment by considering the prevalence and types of food outlets in neighborhoods, and the location of food outlets, including their proximity to residential areas and schools.

### Policies

- **Agricultural Land** Facilitate the use of land in the Rural Area and other suitable land located outside of the Rural Area for agricultural use (see Chapter 12, Rural Character).
- **Rural Development** Discourage development that is incompatible with agriculture uses in rural areas (see Chapter 12, Rural Character).
- **Healthy Food Production** Encourage healthy food production in urban as well as rural areas.
- **Healthy Food** Encourage a more balanced, healthy food environment.
8.5.1. Farmland Incentives Consider incentives and explore strategies to preserve more farmland and to encourage food production (see Chapter 12, Rural Character).

8.5.2. Urban Agriculture Undertake a sustainable urban agriculture assessment to explore the potential of creating and sustaining local urban agriculture.

8.5.3. Community Gardens Identify opportunities for establishing additional community gardens.

8.5.4. Study Vacant City/County Property Determine the feasibility and potential benefits of using vacant City/County property for community gardening and healthy food retailing.

8.5.5. Local Food and Economic Development Explore the economic development potential of local food production.

8.5.6. Urban Food Access Review zoning codes, municipal regulations and administrative procedures to facilitate and/or remove barriers to urban food access, including the location of farmers markets, farm stands, ethnic food markets, mobile vending, and a variety of payment options.

8.5.7. Small-Scale Agriculture Develop regulations that allow for community gardens and small-scale agriculture within residential neighborhoods and on publicly-owned property.

8.5.8. Urban Agriculture Review municipal regulations to facilitate and/or remove barriers to the utilization of land/buildings for various forms of urban agriculture production, including community gardens, hydroponic agriculture, and rooftop gardens.

8.5.9. Retail Food Incentives Consider a program of incentives to encourage a more balanced retail food environment, including the location of grocery stores, healthy food restaurants, and other food retailers in areas lacking them and upgrading existing neighborhood and convenience stores. Coordinate with community organizations, the Community and Business Development Department and the Public Health Department to develop and implement the program.

8.5.10. Food Retail Access Assist in identifying locations and assembling land for neighborhood-oriented grocery stores, produce markets, and other healthy food retailing outlets in areas lacking access to healthy food options.

8.5.11. Healthy Food Access and Transit Review the availability of public transit from neighborhoods without grocery stores or healthy food retailers to neighborhoods where these are available. Work with transit providers to address identified deficiencies.
**Objective 6: Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Open Space**

Provide parks and recreational facilities that meet the needs of residents at accessible locations throughout the county.

Parks, recreational facilities, and open space provide significant opportunities for physical activity and support mental health. Convenient, safe access to recreational facilities is directly correlated to an increase in the amount that people exercise. Green open spaces are important for mental health, particularly in denser urban environments, and help filter pollutants.

The goal of the 2006 City-County Parks and Open Space Plan is to provide a system of parks, preserved natural areas, and recreation opportunities in Forsyth County; to improve the quality of life of residents; and to meet the needs of a diverse population (see Chapter 7, Environmental Quality and Sustainability).

Recommendations were made in the plan to add park acreage in areas of existing or projected deficiencies, identify areas for natural resource preservation, upgrade and expand recreational facilities to meet identified needs, and complete feasibility studies for several potential park sites, including existing and former landfill sites. Since plan adoption, additional potential sites for proposed new or expanded parks and recreational facilities have been identified through the area plan process.

Master plans for some new and expanded park sites are currently being completed, while other master plans still need to be done. Also, there is some ongoing limited upgrading of existing parks and facilities.

Funding for the acquisition of land and the construction of new parks and facilities has, however, been limited. Feasibility studies for the potential of using existing and former landfill sites for recreational use have not been completed.

### Policies

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<td><strong>Public Parks</strong></td>
<td>Enhance and expand public parks within the city and county, particularly in lower-serviced areas identified in adopted plans.</td>
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<td><strong>Existing Parks and Facilities</strong></td>
<td>Reinvest in existing parks and recreational facilities.</td>
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<td><strong>Routes to Parks and Recreation</strong></td>
<td>Consider the availability of public transportation and pedestrian and bicycle routes to existing and new parks and recreational facilities (see Chapter 5, Transportation).</td>
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<td><strong>Municipal Cooperation</strong></td>
<td>Increase cooperation between Forsyth County, its municipalities, surrounding counties and other agencies in providing parks, open space, and recreational facilities.</td>
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<td><strong>Collaboration for Parks and Recreation</strong></td>
<td>Increase collaboration with nonprofit, corporate, and private entities to provide or to allow access to parks, open space, and recreational facilities.</td>
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<td><strong>Safe Park Environment</strong></td>
<td>Use sustainable design principles and promote park and facility design that discourages vandalism, deters crime, provides natural surveillance, and creates a safe and comfortable environment.</td>
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<td><strong>Public Farmers’ Markets</strong></td>
<td>Facilitate the use of public parks, plazas and other appropriate open space for public farmers’ markets.</td>
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<td><strong>Safe Access to Parks</strong></td>
<td>Promote safe access to parks for children.</td>
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Action Agenda

8.6.1. Parks Plan
Implement the adopted Parks and Open Space Plan.

8.6.2. Park Development
Prioritize areas for new park development based on: the lack of available parks and recreational facilities in identified areas, projected population growth, recommendations made in area plans, and feasibility.

8.6.3. Acquisition Program
Develop a parks/open space/land acquisition program and take action to acquire land, obtain easements and develop facilities as opportunities arise.

8.6.4. Underutilized Parks and Recreation Facilities
Address safety concerns, access, and other barriers to usage in existing underutilized parks and recreation facilities.

8.6.5. Funding New Parks and Recreation Facilities
Identify funding mechanisms to develop parks and recreation facilities, particularly in the most underserved areas.

Objective 7: Greenways
Create a network of greenways that provide recreation, open space, and alternative transportation links to shopping, employment, neighborhoods and community facilities.

Greenways are linear open space corridors that can be established along creeks, utility or railroad rights-of-way, scenic roads, or other routes. They may take a variety of forms including waterfront walkways, bicycle paths or multiuse trails, urban walking trails, hiking trails, and wildlife migration corridors. They provide opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation such as walking and biking and access to nature.

In addition to providing exercise opportunities, greenways can connect neighborhoods to community facilities and to one another. The preservation of natural areas and open space are another benefit of greenway corridors.

Countywide surveys done prior to completion of the City-County Greenway Plan revealed that walking, hiking and biking ranked first among recreational activities most enjoyed by residents and first among the recreation facilities they feel are most urgently needed in the community. The following is the status of planning and implementation of our community’s greenway system:

- Twenty-one miles of greenway trails have been constructed to date, most of them in Winston-Salem;
- The Greenway Plan was adopted in 2002 and updated in 2012;
- Additional proposals for greenways have been made in area plans adopted since 2002;
- The Greenway Plan Update focuses on prioritizing construction of proposed greenway trails based on connectivity, engineering feasibility, and public support;
- The primary source of funding in recent years has been federal transportation funds;
- Dedicated easements for future greenways are secured through the rezoning and subdivision process; and,
- Construction of trails has been slow and there is continuing resistance to their construction by property owners and residents in some areas.
**Policies**

**Greenway System** Establish a connected greenway system throughout the city and county to provide connectivity between existing greenways, sidewalks, and bikeways, as well as neighborhoods, major destinations, and community facilities.

**Greenway Easements** Consider new tools for acquiring greenway easements.

**Interagency Cooperation** Strengthen intergovernmental and interagency cooperation in planning, funding, developing, and maintaining the greenway system.

**Greenway Connections** Connect greenway trails to existing and proposed sidewalks and bike paths to facilitate access to community facilities.

**Action Agenda**

8.7.1. **Greenway Planning** Implement the recommendations of the adopted *Greenway Plan* and *Greenway Plan Update*.

8.7.2. **Greenway Priorities** Build priority trails identified in the *Greenway Plan Update*.

8.7.3. **Greenway Acquisition** Develop and fund a greenway easement acquisition program, including a description of greenway benefits to property owners.

8.7.4. **Greenway Design Guidelines** Establish design guidelines that include safety in the design and management of greenway trails.

8.7.5. **Greenway Coordination** Continue to hold regular meetings with surrounding municipalities and counties on greenway coordination.

8.7.6. **Greenway Marketing** Develop a greenway marketing plan.

8.7.7. **Greenway Maintenance** Establish a countywide Adopt-a-Greenway Program.

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*The Brushy Fork Greenway in Winston-Salem.*
Objective 8: Educational Facilities
Locate and design educational facilities that provide high quality learning opportunities for all, contribute to healthy living, and are assets to the neighborhoods where they are located.

Schools and other educational facilities are community assets. Not only should they provide quality education that fosters community equity, but they can also contribute to community health and well-being in a variety of other ways, including: locating in areas accessible by walking, biking, and transit; providing opportunities for physical activities; and sharing schoolyards and sports facilities. Education facilities can also be used for community/learning gardens and community events.

Policies

Older Neighborhood Schools
Rehabilitate and reuse older neighborhood schools, when possible, to increase opportunities for walking and biking to school.

Unused School Property
Consider alternative uses for school property that is no longer needed for school facilities.

School Location
Continue to locate schools where infrastructure already exists in the serviceable land area.

Action Agenda

8.8.1. School Locations
Work with the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system and the community to locate new schools to facilitate smart growth and accessibility by walking, biking, and public transit.

8.8.2. Use of School Facilities
Consider programs for after-school use of school facilities for playing fields, park spaces, and other activities.

8.8.3. Joint Use of Parks and Recreation Facilities
Continue employing joint use agreements between the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system and public agencies that allow schools without adequate playgrounds and recreation facilities to use public parks, recreation facilities and open spaces.

8.8.4. Active Transportation Options
Design new schools and expansion of higher-educational institutions with safe sidewalks, bike paths, greenways, and transit stops that facilitate walking, biking, and taking transit.

8.8.5. Underutilized Educational Facilities
Forge partnerships between schools, higher-education institutions, community organizations, and local government departments by transforming underutilized school grounds, playing fields, and other educational facilities into safe, vibrant community spaces for community events, recreational activities, community gardens, and green/edible schoolyards.

The Career Center South opened in 2012.
Objective 9: Safety and Security
Create safer, more livable neighborhoods that facilitate active and healthy living.

The level of neighborhood safety can positively or negatively affect the health and social well-being of our neighborhoods. Current research suggests:

- An association between crime or the fear of crime and lower levels of physical activity, especially among women, children, and the elderly;
- A lack of neighborhood safety discourages adults and children from walking or biking to destinations, children from playing outdoors and from using parks and other recreational facilities and, therefore, can negatively affect the health of a community or neighborhood; and,
- Children living in unsafe neighborhoods or those characterized by poor housing had a 30-60 percent higher likelihood of being obese or overweight than those living in better conditions.

Aspects of the physical environment can encourage or discourage street crime. Physical features, layout, circulation patterns, the design of buildings and neighborhoods and amenities, such as good lighting, trees, benches and other aesthetic qualities, can affect crime prevention, neighborhood deterioration and residents’ fear of crime.

Designing to facilitate “eyes on the street,” buildings that have windows, doors and porches overlooking streets, parks, and community open spaces, make for safer neighborhoods. Also, access to effective protective and emergency services encourage more people to frequent an area and can foster a sense of community and neighborhood safety.

In one study, people who classified their neighborhood as not at all safe were three times more likely to be physically inactive during leisure time than those who considered their neighborhood to be extremely safe. The Winston-Salem Police Department Strategic Plan identifies among its priorities improving the quality of life and reducing conditions that foster crime and fear of crime. This includes a focus on parks, schools, and other public areas. The Department is also working to improve community trust, interaction, involvement, and accountability.

The Center for Community Safety at Winston-Salem State University focuses on the utilization of research to enhance response to community safety issues. It collaborates with the Winston-Salem Police Department and community groups on a number of projects and initiatives aimed at making the community and its neighborhoods safer, such as the Weed and Seed Initiative, Project Safe Neighborhoods, and smart policing initiatives.

### Policies

- **Emergency Services** Ensure that new developments can be adequately served by fire, police, and emergency medical services.
- **Eyes on the Street** Encourage a mix of uses that provide eyes on the street and can facilitate security in neighborhoods.
- **Blight Removal** Facilitate the reuse or removal of vacant and abandoned land and buildings that contribute to neighborhood blight.
- **Property Maintenance** Encourage and support private landowners to maintain and upgrade their properties.
- **Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety** Provide for the safety of pedestrian and bicyclists by retrofitting neighborhoods, where feasible, to make them safer (see Chapter 5, Transportation).
8.9.1. Safe Design Consider safe design guidelines when assessing designs for new development or redevelopment projects.

8.9.2. Blighted Areas Concentrate code enforcement and the promotion of conservation and rehabilitation in areas in danger of becoming blighted.

8.9.3. Safety Standards Consider creating standards to address safety concerns with respect to the location, design and maintenance of parks, recreational facilities, and greenways.

8.9.4. Neighborhood Safety Concerns Work with area residents, property owners, and law enforcement to develop and implement design-oriented solutions that address the safety concerns identified in neighborhoods.

8.9.5. Lighting Consider the incorporation of pedestrian-scale lighting in the design of streets, parks and public spaces. Include an incentive program to encourage existing developments to provide improvements.

8.9.6. Law Enforcement Issues Work with law enforcement to identify land use issues affecting safety and security that can be considered as part of the rezoning process.

8.9.7. Weed and Seed Program Continue to seek grants through the Justice Department’s Weed and Seed Program.
Conclusion
While the 2001 Legacy Plan did not have a chapter on healthy, complete and equitable communities, it did have many recommendations that align with healthy community objectives. This chapter approaches a more intentional connection between community planning goals and public health, safety and welfare. This is an opportunity for the City and County and its various departments and agencies to consider what is needed to create more healthy and complete neighborhoods and communities in more of their processes, including area plan recommendations, rezoning decisions, facility planning, economic development programs, and housing revitalization efforts.