

## 1.0 Introduction

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# 1

## 1.1 CONTEXT

Lake Lure is a small town located in the northwest corner of Rutherford County in North Carolina. Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the physical setting of the town is a primary attraction for all of those who visit and live there. Its rural charm, spectacular views and natural resources define Lake Lure’s mountain character. The town encompasses the 720-acre Lake Lure, which offers opportunities for boating and other water-related activities, (as well as two other lakes: the 51-acre Bald Mountain Lake and a much smaller lake within Shumont Estates). From several vantage points around and on the lake are priceless vistas to the surrounding tree-covered mountains.

Lake Lure is close to a number of cities and towns that are popular destinations in the western part of the state. Rutherfordton, the county seat, lies within 18 miles of Lake Lure. Only six miles east of Rutherfordton is Forest City, the commercial hub of Rutherford County. Asheville, a city in western North Carolina that was also a resort destination in its early years, is just 26 miles to the northwest. The downtowns of both Rutherfordton and Asheville have a rich architectural heritage and are on the National Register of Historic Places (US National Park Service, 2006).

The natural heritage of the region is also important. Two area attractions, Chimney Rock and the proposed Hickory Nut Gorge State Park, are located within and adjacent to the town on the northwest, west, and southwest sides. The features of these areas are considered to be regional assets and also attract tourists from across the United States. (See Figure #1, Context Map.)

The history of Lake Lure dates back to 1925 when “Dr. Lucius B. Morse envisioned a world-class resort in western North Carolina [to be] developed by Chimney Rock Mountains, Incorporated. A lake created by impounding the Rocky Broad River at Tumbling Shoals formed the centerpiece of this resort. This lake became Lake Lure. As a first step in the development of the resort, Chimney Rock Mountains, Incorporated spent approximately \$600,000 to acquire 220 tracts of land. In total, Chimney Rock Mountains, Incorporated acquired about 8,000 acres or

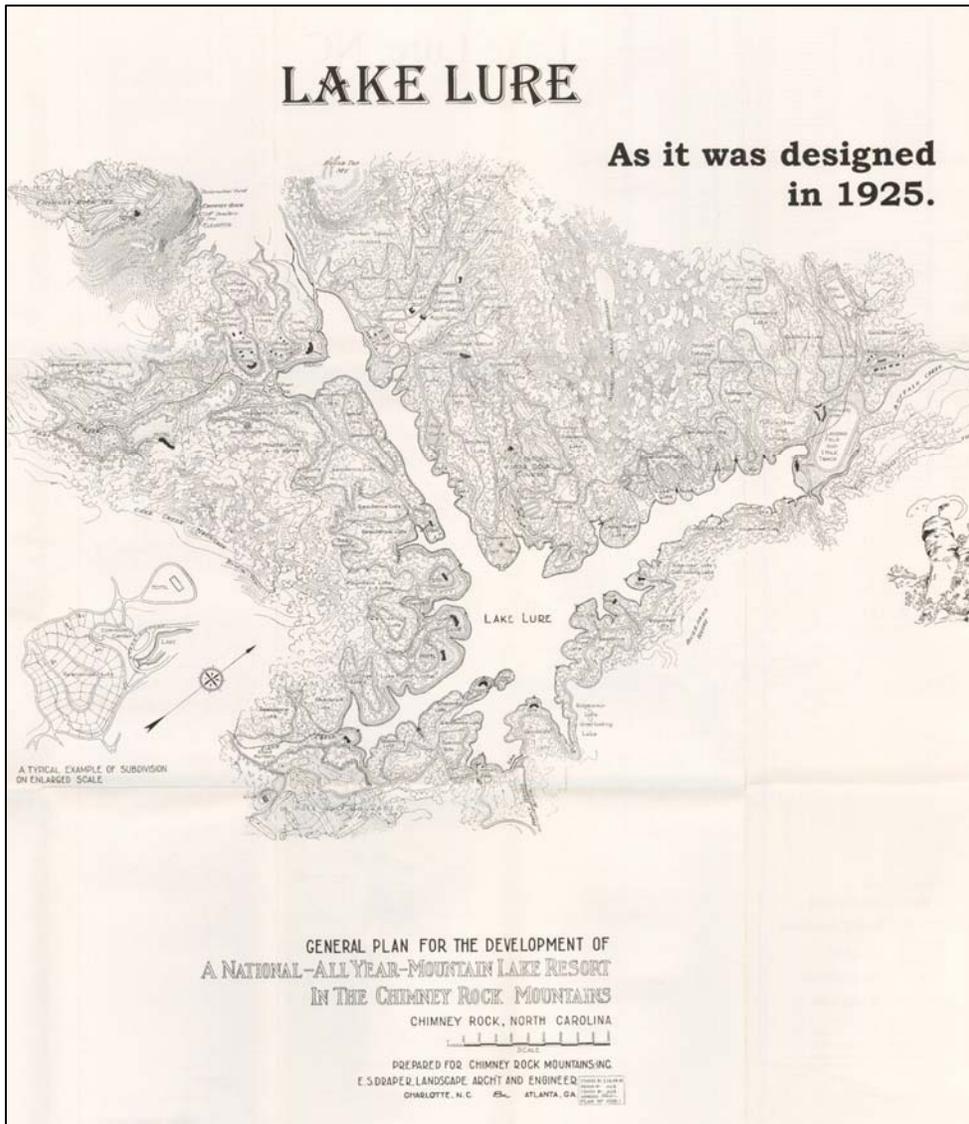
### Vision Statement

*“Lake Lure, the gem of the Carolinas, is a mountain lake community that has a harmonious balance of interests of our citizens, businesses and visitors, achieved through open communication and managed growth that emphasizes fiscal responsibility and stewardship of our natural beauty and environment.”*

*--Created by the Lake Lure Strategic Planning Steering Committee and modified by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.*

12 square miles, including the valley in which Lake Lure lies and the hills and mountains above” (Sherk, 2005).

Carolina Mountain Power Company was responsible for constructing the dam that impounded Lake Lure, which became official town property in 1965 and has remained the focal point of the community. Surrounded by natural beauty, Lake Lure has remained a popular western North Carolina vacation destination since its incorporation in 1927. To this day, Lake Lure still attracts thousands of visitors every year. Some of these visitors, in fact, have chosen to make Lake Lure their permanent home while others have chosen Lake Lure as the location for a vacation or second home.



*This original plan for Lake Lure as a resort destination is on display in Town Hall.*

Recently, a variety of factors, including exposure through national publications, have played a role in raising awareness and popularity of western North Carolina. As a result, development is happening at an increasing rate within and around Lake Lure. The impacts of such growth, direct and indirect, convinced members of the community to move forward with a comprehensive plan for the town to better manage future growth and development and to preserve the features that have attracted residents and tourists to the area over the last 80 years.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan**

Adopting the comprehensive plan is one step toward ensuring that new development and the infrastructure and services that accompany it help Lake Lure remain a more vibrant and active town, while much of the natural environment remains intact. Such a plan is a reflection of the community's desires and serves as a policy guide that will aid decision makers over the coming years. In order to be an effective guide, the plan must be comprehensive in the sense that it examines a number of key, interrelated factors simultaneously. More importantly, it is strategic, identifying the most critical issues and defining short and long-term strategies for addressing those issues.

Comprehensive plans are the most common plans used to guide development. It is a means of establishing long-term vision typically looking 15 to 20 years into the future. Though this plan is the first of its kind in Lake Lure, it is not the first plan to guide development in the town. Previous planning efforts produced similar plans, such as the Lake Lure Land Use Plan (1997), which provided specific recommendations regarding a future land use pattern for the town. In addition, the Report and Recommendations (1999) were prepared by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee as a way of defining short-term action steps for addressing a set of development issues similar to the issues identified in this plan. These plans and studies were among the many documents reviewed in the initial stages of this process to bring forward the ideas that are still relevant today.

Like other general plans before it, this plan will provide the framework for every planning effort that follows and serve as the “glue” that connects topic-specific plans and studies to each other. It is the basis for a number of strategic efforts aimed at addressing issues and opportunities.

This plan shall be utilized as a dynamic, living document that provides context for local officials who will make decisions regarding growth and

development in the community, services and facilities to support development, and efficient allocation of public funds. This plan also aids decisions of any group or individual who is concerned with growth and development as it serves to coordinate activities for developers, land trusts, environmental agencies, utility providers, private land owners, etc. This plan can be interwoven into Lake Lure's daily decision making process.

This 2027 plan has a planning horizon of 20 years. Although the document provides a broad vision and goals that the community should work toward over the next two decades, it must be reviewed annually and updated at least once every five years. These periodic reviews and updates allow for acknowledgement of changing circumstances.

### 1.3 Process to Develop the Plan

The planning process was orchestrated to involve the community at various levels. The process itself was divided into the following phases as highlighted below.

1. Project Initiation – This short phase included the creation of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC) composed of residents in the community representing a variety of interests. Members were appointed by the town council, and charged with the responsibility of providing guidance to ensure the final comprehensive plan reflects the desires and expectations of the entire community. Also during this phase, the data collection process was initiated. The data included information needed to conduct analyses of existing conditions, as well as existing plans, regulations, studies and reports. (See the Acknowledgements page following the Table of Contents for a list of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee members and Appendix F for materials reviewed. A list of Stakeholders may be found in Appendix D.)
2. Research and Analysis – This phase of the report included a wide spectrum of tasks. The research was based upon the information provided by the town and supported by input obtained through activities listed below.
  - Stakeholder Interviews – Key stakeholders who included community and neighborhood leaders, property owners' association representatives, business leaders, representatives of town, county and state departments and committees, and other individuals whose input supplemented the data collected. (See Appendix D)



*Steering committee members offer ideas and comments on initial plan concept ideas.*

- 2006 Community Survey – During April and May of 2006, almost 3,000 surveys were mailed to property owners in Lake Lure. Of that number, 941 surveys were returned. The survey involved full and part-time residents and reached its objectives as outlined in Appendix C.
  - Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting (CPSC) – This meeting was used to present and discuss findings, and develop a list of issues and opportunities to be addressed in the plan.
  - First Community Meeting – This meeting was used to introduce the process to the community and engage participants in a discussion of goals based on the issues identified. Initial survey results were among the information presented (see Appendices C and E).
  - Zoning and Planning Board – Representatives from the Zoning and Planning Board provided instrumental information for an in-depth analysis to past and present plans for Lake Lure. Information gathered from them was paramount in the development of initial and final concept maps.
3. Framework Concepts – Alternative concepts were developed to integrate the essence of the issues and opportunities gathered from phase two. The CPSC helped to establish possible directions for the plan with alternatives developed through a two part charrette.
  4. Plan Development – This phase involved a second community meeting, which allowed Lake Lure citizens to express their thoughts about their future. (See Appendix E.) The input that followed the evaluation of plan concepts (known as Concept A, Concept B, and Concept C) served as the foundation to the Final Concept Plan (see Figure #12). These concepts, or maps, express diagrammatical relationships between land uses and served as a tool for expressing overall goals for the future growth and development of the town. The latter portion of the fourth phase was used to prepare development scenarios that illustrate examples of how development might occur given ideas regarding potential policies. (See Section 12, Final Concept Plan & Development Scenarios.)

5. Plan Documentation and Adoption – This was the final phase of the process during which policies were developed and action items were prioritized. These policies and action items were presented at the third community meeting for input prior to the finalization of this report.

In its entirety, the plan was developed over a period of 16 months. As mentioned previously, the element of community input was an integral factor in the developmental process of the comprehensive plan. Hence, the information gathered is considered invaluable and integrated in nearly every level of this plan.

#### **1.4 Community Input Summary**

The community input process consisted of four methods for obtaining input: the CPSC meetings, key stakeholder interviews, a series of community meetings and a community-wide survey. The CPSC helped steer the direction of the comprehensive plan via meetings and work sessions. The key stakeholder interviews consisted of two full days of in-person interviews with a variety of key stakeholder groups. Three public meetings were included as critical components of the public process to solicit feedback and guidance at designated intervals during the project. The final community input technique was the community-wide survey.

The original purpose of the survey was to supplement other input and provide an alternative means of obtaining input from residents and non-residents, voters and non-voters. In delivering the survey, the town chose to distribute the survey to all property owners, giving the entire community an opportunity to respond. Out of 2,992 surveys sent, 941 were completed and returned. The response rate was an overwhelming 31.5%. The most interesting aspect of the survey is that its results aligned with and supported the qualitative input received through community meetings, from the CPSC, and from the key stakeholders. Specific results of the survey are presented in Appendix C.

#### **1.5 Vision Goals**

The purpose of the vision goals is to add clarity to the vision by establishing a clear direction and clear objectives for the comprehensive plan. Although there are goals systematically addressed in each section of the comprehensive plan, there are overarching goals, called vision goals, which are integrated at nearly every level. It is important to review the goals at this juncture for two reasons: 1) the importance of the community input has been thoroughly reviewed and highly influenced the vision goals and 2) within each section, issue-specific goals relate to

one (or more) of the following vision goals directly or indirectly. Hence, for clarity purposes, the following are the major goals of the comprehensive plan.

- **Manage growth conservatively**
- **Develop a sustainable economy**
- **Promote and preserve Lake Lure’s character**
- **Enhance and preserve the environment**
- **Improve public infrastructure**
- **Provide public services efficiently**

Each of the vision goals will be addressed fully in the remaining pages of this plan. Although the vision goals are neither repeated nor mentioned further, each serves as an important reference to grasp the plan in its entirety.

## **1.6 Organization of the Plan**

The plan is organized according to the fluency of topics, not by priority. Within each section devoted to a specific topic, the reader will find information presented in four subsections: Introduction, Inventory and Existing Conditions, Summary of Issues and Opportunities, and Goals, Objectives, and Policies. Section 12 includes the final comprehensive plan illustration along with development scenarios, which is the essence of the plan. Following the last section is an appendix, which includes information referenced in the comprehensive plan, such as the Implementation Matrix, 2006 Community Survey, Stakeholders Interviews, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Community Meetings, and Resources. Each is explained further in those sections.

## **1.7 Key Terminology**

To better understand this report, it is necessary to understand the terminology by which it is written. Although the following terms have been expanded upon further in the entirety of this report, each has been identified and briefly summarized for the reader’s comprehension:

- *Lake Lure Community Development Department*: Also referred to as the ‘Community Development Department’, this is the municipality’s department in charge of planning and zoning activities, including comprehensive plan implementation and carrying out adopted policies.
- *Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee*: Also referred to as the ‘CPSC’ or the ‘Steering Committee’, this group was

- comprised of citizens and property owners representing a broad cross-section of the Lake Lure community and guided the comprehensive plan process.
- *Stakeholders:* A variety of land owners, developers, agency representatives, and others from Lake Lure who were able to enhance the research by providing an additional layer of information regarding local issues and opportunities.
  - *2006 Community Survey:* A survey that was conducted in conjunction with this comprehensive planning process to gain knowledge of the community's attitudes toward growth and development within Lake Lure.
  - *Implementation Matrix:* This matrix summarizes the policies set forth in the plan and the related action items. It reflects priorities determined during the process. More importantly, it serves as a worksheet for those involved in initializing, monitoring and measuring progress on implementation activities. It indicates items that should be the focus of first-year activities, and facilitates the prioritization of future implementation activities.
  - *Development Scenarios:* A method used to communicate the spirit of the comprehensive plan by illustrating the result of putting the policies into action. (Three development scenarios were completed and can be found in Section 12.)
  - *Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction:* Also referred to as ETJ, it is the legal ability of a government to exercise planning and zoning authority beyond its boundaries. This permits governing bodies to make certain decisions about land development beyond the corporate limits.
  - *Goals:* Value-based statements that are not necessarily measurable. For the purposes of this plan, they express an ideal future condition.
  - *Objectives:* More specific, measurable statements of desired outcomes rather than goals.
  - *Policies:* Rules or courses of action that indicate *how* the goals and objectives of the plan should be realized.
  - *Level of Service (LOS):* A user's quality of service through or over a specific facility (highway, intersection, crosswalk, etc.) is classified by level of service (LOS). Level of service is designated "A" through "F." LOS A represents uninterrupted flow. LOS F represents a highly congested, packed condition. LOS evaluations focus on the peak 15 minutes of flow. LOS F represents more than 45 passenger cars per mile per lane (pc/mi/ln) as defined in the Highway Capacity Manual by the Transportation Research Board of the National Research Council.
  - *Undeveloped Land:* Land in its natural state before development.

- *Protected Land:* Land that has been protected from future development through a mechanism that takes away existing and potential development rights.
- *Scenic Overlay District:* A district superimposed over one or more general-use zoning designations for a particular purpose, such as protecting scenic viewsheds, for example.