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7.1 INTRODUCTION

The services provided in the Town of Lake Lure range from lake dredging to emergency response. Although not all of the services are provided directly by the town, it is important to consider all services throughout the town to thoroughly understand challenges as growth and development continues.

7.2 Inventory and Existing Conditions

This section of the comprehensive plan discusses various community services and facilities. It highlights conditions for police, fire and emergency medical services, public works, utilities, parks and recreation, education and healthcare.

Police, Fire, & EMS

The town's police department currently employs nine officers who are assigned to patrol all five zones encompassing the Town of Lake Lure:

- Zone #1 - All areas north of Lake Lure Village Resort, including Rumbling Bald Resort (formerly Fairfield Mountains Resort), and all property on Buffalo Creek Road
- Zone #2 - Buffalo Shoals Road north to Buffalo Creek Road
- Zone #3 - Snug Harbor Circle to Island Creek Road
- Zone #4 - Chimney Rock Park east to Snug Harbor Circle
- Zone #5 - Boys Camp Road and all roads adjacent, including Lake Lure Village Resort and Blue Heron Point.

The town's police department currently owns two police boats for lake patrol duties. All of the officers take part in controlling the lake.

The town funds the Fire and Emergency Management Coordinators Office for fire protection and emergency management and contracts with three volunteer fire departments: Fairfield Mountains Volunteer Fire Department, Chimney Rock Volunteer Fire Department, and Bill's Creek Volunteer Fire Department. Both the Fairfield and Bill's Creek departments operate two facilities each. They, plus the Chimney Rock department give Lake Lure five firefighting facilities. Together, the fire departments operate four pumpers, four pumper/tankers,



Location of maintenance facility could be utilized better by commercial development.

two tankers, four brush units, and two support units out of four stations. Two of the five stations are Fairfield fire stations and are located within the town limits, one is along Memorial Highway near the north end of the municipal golf course and the other is on Buffalo Creek Road. The remaining three stations are located within the Chimney Rock and Bill's Creek communities. The three departments support one another, responding to incidents inside and outside the corporate limits of Lake Lure with the help of approximately 70 volunteer firefighters.

The Insurance Service Office (ISO) standards use a scale of 1 (most capable of coping with a fire) to 10 (no protection available). These standards require Lake Lure to have four engine companies and two service companies. To obtain its maximum credit possible, Lake Lure must have 80 people per each emergency response. In 1996, 2000, 2004, and 2006, Lake Lure averaged 31, 27, 23, 17 personnel per emergency response, respectively. (Lake Lure was last inspected by ISO in 2004, when there were approximately 10 additional personnel attending each emergency response than in 2006) According to Lake Lure's Fire Coordinator, the average response has declined by a 50% over the past decade. Specifically, Bill's Creek, Chimney Rock, and Fairfield fire department has a response time of approximately 7, 9, and 6 minutes, respectively. (These numbers involve a large number of variables and can be misrepresentative of each department's response time.) Response time is measured from when an alarm is first signaled to the time the first emergency responder arrives at the scene.

The town owns a fireboat that provides high-pressure water to fire trucks on shore where there are no water supplies available. It also functions as a "water cannon" to help fight fires near the lake's edge. The Fire and Emergency Management Coordinators Office and volunteer departments are also supported by the North Carolina State Forest Service's firefighting airplane, which can carry and drop up to 1,400 gallons of water skimmed from the surface of Lake Lure on a fire with great accuracy. Currently, Lake Lure has a split-ISO rating, with a portion of the town rated as a "class 6" and another portion of the town rated as a "class 9." Those homes that received a higher rating of "class 6" did so due to their close proximity (within 1,000 feet) of a water source (e.g. lake or fire hydrant). This rating of class 6 has benefited portions of the community directly by reducing homeowner insurance rates within the town limits. Those areas with an ISO rating of class 9 do not have sufficient access to a water source.



Bill's Creek, Chimney Rock, and Fairfield fire departments service Lake Lure.

Currently, no EMS station is located in Lake Lure or Chimney Rock. There is one EMS station located on Bills Creek Road. This station includes two emergency units, the county EMS unit and the volunteer Hickory Nut Gorge EMS unit. Hickory Nut Gorge EMS is a volunteer organization that operates out of the county's facility adjoining the Mountain Branch Library located in Bill's Creek. All volunteers have had Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) training, but are not paramedics. Thus, their aid has been limited in the past. Recently, the county transferred one vehicle and associated staffing from the Spindale facility to the Bills' Creek facility. The staff of fully-trained paramedics is permanently based at the Mountain Branch Library, and are available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Therefore, there are two separate organizations operating out of the library. Key stakeholders participating in the process have identified the need to attract younger volunteer staff and to hire additional paid fire and emergency personnel to ensure adequate public safety services.

To be prepared in the event of major emergencies, Lake Lure has adopted three types of emergency-related plans. Currently, Lake Lure has three such plans:

1. Lake Lure Emergency Operations Plan: This plan should not conflict with the county's plan to respond to emergencies within the town. The town is in the process of updating the plan which involves the coordination of a local emergency planning committee, consisting of the town manager, police chief, fire coordinator, public works director, hydroplant operator, three volunteer fire chiefs, local volunteer EMS chief, county emergency management, and the county fire marshal. Although the town is in the process of developing the plan, it is awaiting the updated plan from the county to avoid any conflicts in its own plan.
2. Emergency Operations Plan for Lake Lure Dam: A consultant is responsible for maintaining the emergency operations plan for the dam, but Lake Lure is responsible for updating necessary information on an annual basis. Such information includes personnel contacts and other records.
3. Hazard Mitigation Plan: Recently, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has required that each jurisdiction that wants to be eligible for federal assistance, must adopt a Hazard

Mitigation Plan. In 2005, Lake Lure adopted a Hazard Mitigation Plan that outlines the required information. Such information includes a prioritized list of potential disasters. Lake Lure identified the dam breaking, forest fires, snow storms, and flooding as primary disasters each were ranked accordingly. Lake Lure is required to develop steps to improve response to such potential disasters. However, Lake Lure had already taken the necessary measures prior to FEMA requirements by distributing disaster response brochures (for a dam break) and utilizing a siren to caution in a hazardous event.

Other related emergency services provided by the town include clearing trees from roads for emergency access, evacuating citizens in time of danger, operating shelters when needed, searching for lost people and assisting with EMS and rescue squad when requested.

Public Works Department

The public works department is responsible for a number of services and facilities listed below. Street light service is provided by Duke Energy and the Rutherford Electric Membership Corporation (REMC).

Streets:

The town's public works department is responsible for the maintenance of town streets. This includes the maintenance of the street surface and subsurface, roadside drainage, street signs, street lights, and pavement markings. Currently, there are 27 miles of public roadway maintained by Lake Lure. This does not include private dedicated roads. (See the *Transportation and Circulation* section regarding transportation issues and potential improvements.)

Town Buildings:

The town's public works department is responsible for building maintenance. The following buildings are owned and/or maintained by the town:

- Town Hall / police headquarters
- Visitor Center

- Public works headquarters
- Public works storage building
- Public works shed & recycling center
- Marina building
- ABC Store
- Well houses
- Small beach house
- Gazebo
- Picnic sheds at Morse Park

Water System:

The town's public works department is responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of high quality water and is also responsible for the system's construction and maintenance of the pipes and manholes. The public works department performs water system chemical monitoring and water meter reading and prepares reports for various regulatory agencies.

Stormwater Management:

The town's public works department is responsible for catch basins and manholes. (See *Utilities Infrastructure* Section for additional information)

Other Services:

The town provides a number of other services, such as sanitation, recycling, grounds maintenance, landscaping and lake clean-up, by contracting with private entities. For example, the town has a contract with a private company for weekly curbside garbage pickup. The town's Public Works Department is responsible for overseeing sanitation and recycling (a drop-off center is located in the town center near the Arcade building) as well as supervises lake-dredging operations, landscaping and maintaining of all property by the town.

Utilities Department

Wastewater:

The town's utilities department is responsible for ensuring that wastewater is properly treated in accordance with state and federal environmental regulations. The department tests samples daily of wastewater at various locations. The samples are

laboratory tested in house and additional tests are conducted to by an outside lab for further analysis. In addition to testing, the department also prepares reports for various regulatory agencies regarding wastewater treatment. (See *Utilities Infrastructure* Section for additional information)

Dam:

The town's utility department manages the hydroelectric system at the dam. The primary function of the system is to generate electricity while controlling the level of Lake Lure.

The utilities department's management duties include monitoring lake levels, assessing the need for floodgate usage, and production of power. Heavy maintenance of the hydroelectric plant and the dam is outsourced when needed.

Currently, the town sells hydroelectric power to Duke Energy. The town generated approximately \$245,000 in gross revenue from the electric fund in 2006.

Parks and Recreation

A variety of park and recreation structures and grounds are maintained by the town. Currently, a park and recreation department does not exist within the town's organizational framework. All maintenance is performed by Public Works. The volunteer parks and recreation board has recently been reactivated. (See the *Parks and Recreation* section for a detailed list of the facilities.) Each facility has various maintenance requirements from structures to grounds. Each facility must be maintained at high service levels due to the nature of the public spaces.

A concession agreement exists with outside contractors for the operations of the Lake Lure Beach and Water Works and the Lake Lure Marina which includes daily business operations and programming.

Education

There are no public schools within Lake Lure. School age children are bused to various county schools outside of the town: Pinnacle Elementary School, Rutherford-Spindale Middle School and Rutherford-Spindale Central High School.



The Public Works department maintains Morse Park's grounds and structures.

According to the community survey, over 130 school-age children live in Lake Lure. With an average household size of 1.84 (indicative of childless households) and the characteristics of the population in the town today (residents that are seasonal, retired, and/or second homeowners), school needs in Lake Lure are not expected to change in the near future. (See Appendix A) The Rutherford County Schools Strategic Plan completed in 2003 did not cite any specific action for new schools within or near Lake Lure. However, stakeholders interviewed have expressed interest in exploring the potential for a charter school, a specialized athletic/adventure recreation school, or a school teaching technical expertise in Lake Lure.

Library

The Rutherford County operates the Mountain Branch Library in Bill's Creek.

Healthcare

According to the 2000 Census, the median age in Lake Lure is 58.6 years old. With an aging population, the demand for healthcare facilities in town is increasing. Over 60% of the survey respondents agreed that the town should try to attract a variety of medical service providers and has cited healthcare facilities as the third most favored development type in Lake Lure. Healthcare facilities in Lake Lure are currently limited to the privately-owned William Burch Medical Center located on Memorial Highway and the Valley Family Health Center in nearby Bat Cave.

Local area hospitals within a 30- to 60-minute drive include:

- Rutherford Hospital (143 beds, Rutherfordton, NC)
- Pardee Memorial Hospital (222 beds, Hendersonville, NC)
- Park Ridge Hospital (103 beds in Fletcher, NC)
- Mission-St. Joseph's Hospital (800 beds, Asheville, NC)

Cultural

The need for space for meetings and performing arts, accommodations for artist studios, and a library expansion were all mentioned in discussions regarding the enhancement of cultural opportunities in the town. The Rutherford County Arts Council began life in 1971 as the Performing Arts Guild. Today, the Arts Council continues its long-held commitment both to arts in education and to the production of high-quality cultural events. There are a variety of regional cultural facilities such as

the Flat Rock Playhouse and Asheville's Thomas Wolfe Auditorium. These facilities provide opportunities for cultural arts and theater, but there are few such opportunities in the immediate area.

7.3 Summary of Issues and Opportunities

- Responding to emergencies is challenging for Lake Lure for a number of reasons:
 - There is a lack of qualified personnel and willing fire and emergency volunteers:
 - There is a need for the police department to obtain additional staff members and lake patrol staff
 - There is a need to purchase better training equipment
 - There is a need to attract and retain younger volunteers for all services
 - There is a need for paid firefighter staff to increase the number of responders.
 - There is a need for EMS services in the southwest section of the town.
 - As growth and development continues, both emergency and police services may be more challenging to provide.
- Parts of Lake Lure have an ISO rating level of 9 while other parts of the town have achieved a level 6 rating.
- There is a growing concern about the limited supply of healthcare facilities in or within a short driving distance of Lake Lure. There is an opportunity to support future healthcare-related land uses and attract/accommodate visiting nurse services.
- School age children are bused to three Rutherford County schools outside of Lake Lure, Pinnacle Elementary School, Rutherford – Spindale Middle School and Rutherford – Spindale Central High School. In addition, some students from Lake Lure attend schools in Polk County and Henderson County.
- Stakeholders expressed interest in the potential for a charter school or specialty school (e.g., athletic, adventure recreation, etc.) in Lake Lure.
- The substantial increase in population during peak-season presents a problem for the town's capacity for service (fire, police, and infrastructure-oriented services).
- A need for meeting space, accommodations for artist studios, and a library expansion were all mentioned in key stakeholder discussions regarding the enhancement of cultural opportunities.

7.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

SF Goal 1: Improved location and organization of the community's facilities

Objective SF-1-1: Optimize town-owned/leased property for desired land uses

Policy SF-1-1.1:

Relocate specific buildings to effectively utilize land use by creating space for future development. Determine and evaluate alternative sites for relocation of the town's maintenance yard located within the town center.

Policy SF-1-1.2:

Improve government-owned buildings and land to fulfill future staff requirements

(1) Consider expansion of the existing town marina building as future demand rises.

(2) Evaluate future expansion options for the municipal golf course buildings. *This may include additions of restrooms, meeting space, and supporting building(s). It is possible that the improvement and expansion of the golf course could improve utilization of the course.*

(3) Evaluate the potential to locate future town offices adjacent to the community center in order to fulfill future capacity needs.

(4) Evaluate the need for expanding or relocating the police department facility (e.g. wing of municipal center). *If an expansion is deemed appropriate, consider a second floor addition. Additional parking can be accommodated by re-striping existing asphalt surface area to maximize amount of parking spaces. As an alternative, consider relocating the police department to provide additional room for expansion of town hall functions.*

- (5) Explore opportunities with the state to develop parking and building facilities to accommodate tourist and resident visitation to the proposed Hickory Nut Gorge State Park.

SF Goal 2: Adequate system of community services

Objective SF-2-1: Improve the community's welfare through the improvement or development of community services and programs.

Policy SF-2-1.1:

Provide special educational services within the town to inform public of Lake Lure's historical, natural, and cultural assets.

- (1) Encourage a special-use school, such as a cultural, environmental or technical school.

(2) Communicate regularly with Rutherford County Schools. *By sharing information, especially if there is a perception that the composition of population is transitioning to include younger families with children, Rutherford County Schools can better address Lake Lure's concerns and needs when updating the long-range facilities plan.*

- (3) Encourage participation in school board meetings, and have representation on the school board.

(4) Establish annual (or more frequent, if warranted) meetings with a representative of Rutherford County Schools to review and discuss information collected by both the town and Rutherford County Schools.

Policy SF-2-1.2:

Attract an arts school and performing arts program

- (1) Evaluate the need for an art school and performing art program.

(2) Coordinate with regional artisan groups such as the Performing Arts Center and Rutherford County Arts Council.

(3) Evaluate and determine potential locations for amphitheatres, stages, and facilities based on criteria such as land value, feasibility, accessibility, etc.

Policy SF-2-1.3:

Improve emergency services throughout the town.

(1) Develop recruiting efforts and network to increase the number of fire and EMS volunteers to ensure response times are not increased with the growth of town. *Continue to recruit outside of Lake Lure's corporate boundaries to attract volunteers from areas in the county that are provided services.*

(2) Develop an EMS facilities plan to identify needs related to future growth. *Evaluate EMS services and service areas town-wide and determine additional EMS locations as growth continues to maintain or improve response times.*

(3) Consider hiring paid firefighters to increase existing levels of fire services. *Recruit full-time paid firefighters with additional population growth. Additional firefighters (and respondents to emergencies in general) greatly improve ISO ratings.*

(4) Explore options for increasing police staff to allow two full-time police officers to be on duty at all times. *As the town continues to grow, hire additional patrol officers maintain or improve response times.*

(5) Communicate with Lake Lure employers to request their support for employee participation as volunteers in emergency services programs.

(6) Develop a police department facilities plan to identify needs related to future growth. *Consider*

police substations in the more populated areas to maintain or improve response times.

(7) Maintain sites identified as area helicopter landing zones for use in emergencies. *Morse Park meadow and Lake Lure Village Resort are among the emergency landing zones.*

(8) Continue conversations with the Rumbling Bald Resort POA to determine ways to eliminate the barriers to circulation created by the resort's security gates, at least for emergency access. *Providing this access could reduce response time for emergency vehicles traveling from Chimney Rock to Rumbling Bald Resort.*

Policy SF-2-1.4:

Improve access to medical facilities and services.

(1) Accommodate medical facilities in town by modifying zoning (regulations and map) so that such facilities can locate in areas identified as suitable in the plan. *Communicate with area healthcare providers to increase awareness of desire for medical services and facilities within the town as well as available sites for locating facilities.*

SF Goal 3: Town-sponsored activities that facilitate social interaction between residents

Objective SF-3-1: Develop additional town-sponsored events

Policy SF-3-1.1:

Explore opportunities for bringing the community together for social interaction and networking through special event offerings.

(1) Conduct a survey to determine the types of social activities residents would like to see developed. *Based on the result, determine whether desired activities require the expansion of a program or programs currently (or potentially) offered by the town.*