

1. What is GroWNC?

GroWNC is first and foremost a listening process, so that together, we may create our future. It is also a planning effort that has examined core issues relating to growth in a five-county portion of the WNC region. The residents of Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties provided their input, ideas, and solutions related to economic development and job creation, natural and cultural resources, housing, transportation, land use, energy, and health that has helped to create a plan for our future.

2. What is the purpose of GroWNC?

GroWNC is an effort to generate interest within our community in collectively working together to create our future. GroWNC seeks to identify and implement actions, steps and ideas that will create more jobs, lower housing and transportation costs, and carefully use our natural and cultural resources so that our children and grandchildren can enjoy them.

3. Isn't this just another plan? A regional vision?

There are many valid, viable, thoughtful efforts and plans that exist throughout the five-county study area, but they are not connected or integrated. Prior to GroWNC, no group had pulled them together to synthesize the information and ideas into identifiable action items. This effort has pulled together plans from across the region, primarily those that speak to economic development, housing, land use, transportation, energy, and health.

4. Who is facilitating this effort?

[Land of Sky Regional Council](#) was asked by area local governments to serve as the grant administrator and coordinating agency for GroWNC.

Land of Sky Regional Council contracted with [LandDesign](#), a planning and design firm with an office in Asheville, NC. LandDesign assembled an interdisciplinary team of economic, housing, transportation and communication experts to gather data, facilitate communication, and synthesize and present the information back to the region.



UNC Asheville's National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center (NEMAC) is assisting Land of Sky and LandDesign with community outreach, mapping of results, and development of online tools.

5. What is Land of Sky?

Land of Sky Regional Council (LOSRC) is a multi-county, local government planning and development organization in North Carolina. It is one of 16 such organizations in the state and serves Region B, which includes the counties of Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania.

Land of Sky Regional Council is made up of elected officials – mayors and county commission chairpersons and alternates – from member governments, one representative of economic development interests in each county and two at-large members. Members meet monthly to plan programs and set policies and goals to benefit the entire region.

Land of Sky's mission is to provide **creative regional solutions** to relevant and emerging issues in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania counties while providing a standard of excellence in the delivery of federal, state and regional services for our member communities.

LOSRC aids and assists local governments in various ways including: administration, planning, fiscal management, community and economic development, grant writing, and serving as a convener for regional issues. LOSRC also analyzes trends and advises on program changes and the availability of funding and programs that are important to their local governments and the region.

LOSRC administers state and federal funds for community and economic development, serves as the Area Agency on Aging and is an affiliate of the NC State Data Center.

6. How is GroWNC funded?

The planning phase is funded by a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, awarded in October 2010. Our region is one of 45 initial awardees from across the nation; 29 additional regions were awarded funds in November 2011. Many local, regional, state and federal partners are providing time and effort towards the planning and implementation of this project.

7. What if communities disagree? Will results be used at a local level?

All of us have worked together to determine a regional vision and plan, with the understanding that what works for one community may not work for another. The unique diversity of each community and county influenced the identification of common goals and action items for the region. Communities can select which strategies and actions to implement in their communities and also which ones to work on together for the region.

GroWNC acknowledges and respects the positions of individual communities differing on specific topics. It is expected that not all communities and local governments in our region will agree on every issue or recommendation.

8. Do local governments have to adopt the GroWNC recommendations?

No, but with the effort that all have invested to ensure a successful process, the result is an end product that can be utilized locally for many years to come. We expect some local governments will endorse or adopt the Regional Plan or parts of it and some will not.

The Land of Sky Regional Council endorsed the Regional Plan in October, 2013.

9. Does this have anything to do with UN Agenda 21?

GroWNC has nothing to do with a concept called Agenda 21.

According to the United Nations, [Agenda 21](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/) is “a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human impacts on the *environment*.” It was adopted by 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992. <http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/>

Unlike the focus of Agenda 21, GroWNC has been working with residents in the five counties in the study area to develop strategies to preserve and strengthen local economies, which ultimately strengthens the regional economy. These strategies can be adopted by the local governing bodies, or modified to suit their unique situations and goals.

10. How can I participate?

The planning process is complete, and now participation means taking actions and working with other organizations to implement strategies and recommendations. Take a look at the **Regional Plan**, **Executive Summary** and online **Strategy Toolkit** to help you decide and where to get involved.

Throughout the GroWNC process, there have been many ways to participate:

- **Consortium participation.** The GroWNC Consortium is made up of a mix of representatives from the governing bodies from each county, nonprofits, community groups, public and private housing groups, planning, transportation, economic development, research, educational and philanthropic organizations, and other groups interested in the future of our region. An ongoing member list is updated and posted on the GroWNC. Interested groups can request to become a Consortium member and submit a signed agreement to participate on this level.
- **Workgroup participation.** Workgroups formed around key topic areas early in the planning process; they are not currently meeting. We sought interdisciplinary participation for this process, and particularly sought out members of our communities not typically represented or in attendance at planning processes, but perhaps are most affected by their outcomes. Consortium members agreed to have representation on at least one Workgroup. Workgroup meetings were open to the public and interested residents were invited to attend these meetings or share their thoughts and ideas with the Workgroups.
- **Community group participation.** There are many planning processes and efforts in our region; we have an active community! Continue to support those community groups and share your feedback and planning ideas with us.
- **Share your ideas!** Drop us a line. Email us. Text us. Let us know your thoughts and ideas. GroWNC@landofsky.org

Community Meeting participation. We held two major series of meetings with our communities – one in the Spring and one in the Fall of 2012. The first Community Meeting shared the initial findings from the information gathering, research, and synthesis phase. Attendees had the opportunity to tell us how close or far off we were from their long-range vision for the region. We took that input and developed some alternative regional growth scenarios. We shared these and related outcomes and measurements at the second series of Community Meetings. You can review the materials from both of these Community Meetings in the [Public Involvement Archive](#).

11. How can my group or organization participate in the Consortium?

In general, Consortium members are representatives from local governments and other organizations in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties. We encourage local governments, businesses, educational institutions, non-profit organizations and others to join.

To be actively involved in a workgroup or the Steering Committee, you or your organization must be part of the Consortium. An agreement can be found on our website, under the Get Involved and the Consortium tabs. Complete this agreement and send it to GroWNC@landofsky.org. A complete list of Consortium members can also be found on the website (<http://www.gro-wnc.org/Consortium>).

12. How can I participate in a Workgroup?

We invited participation and formed Workgroups around a set of topic areas in January, 2012. The Workgroups met a number of times during 2012, to review and discuss data, plans and other existing conditions. Workgroup participants developed a set of goals to guide development of the regional plan. In many cases the goals were directly related to goal statements found in existing and adopted community plans.

The goal for the make-up of each workgroup was to have a cross-section of the range of stakeholders, including:

- representatives of the five counties;
- representatives of local/regional/state organizations;
- representatives of organizations who can provide technical input on the issues to be addressed;
- representatives of various segments of the population in terms of age, socio-economic background, employment, and geographic location;
- representatives of a range of interest groups (environmental orgs, business community, real estate/development groups, etc.); and
- those that are typically under-represented or -served in these processes, but are often most impacted.

13. How can I participate in the Steering Committee?

Each county was asked to make an appointment to the Steering Committee – the appointee could be an elected official, staff, an individual or someone from another organization.

Workgroups also nominated members for the Steering Committee. The Land of Sky Regional Council Board reviewed the nominations and selected these representatives.

The Land of Sky Regional Council Board was charged with ensuring that representation maintained:

- Geographic distribution across the five counties;
- Representation by under-represented communities; and
- Diversity of members (including local government, non-profits, and private businesses)

Read more about the Steering Committee and see a list of its members [here](#).

14. What's in it for me? Why participate? Why should I care?

Regional prosperity depends on the involvement and commitment of a variety of public, private, and non-profit entities. Just as each community is unique, the approach to achieving the regional vision may differ from place to place, but we need involvement from a variety of individuals and organizations to implement the recommendations and strategies.

This is the **first time** information has been synthesized at the **five-county level** to develop a set of **sound, voluntary, implementable recommendations and strategies** that connect the region's vision with the policies, programs, projects, and plans needed at local and state levels to achieve that future.

We all know there are limited resources; this process has enabled us to better understand the capacity we have to effectively use those resources in order to create positive outcomes that benefit our community.

15. How can I find out more? How are you communicating with the public?

You can check for regular updates on our website – www.gro-wnc.org – and through social networking platforms. We also have a blog and an email newsletter to keep you up-to-date on progress and to provide opportunities for input.

Throughout the planning process, our team has:

- Provided routine updates via **press releases** to the **local and regional media**, including non-English speaking outlets.
- Networked with **key community groups** by copying them on our press releases and updates.
- Worked with **Literacy Councils** and non-English speaking service organizations to ensure all levels of comprehension are met.
- Offered **presentations via speakers' bureaus** or ambassadors to present to community groups, civic clubs, business groups, industry leaders, and elected officials.
- Utilized **county and city websites** and newsletters, and public access channels.
- Provided opportunities to meet in our more **rural communities**, holding small group meetings at fire stations, libraries, churches, and local community centers.