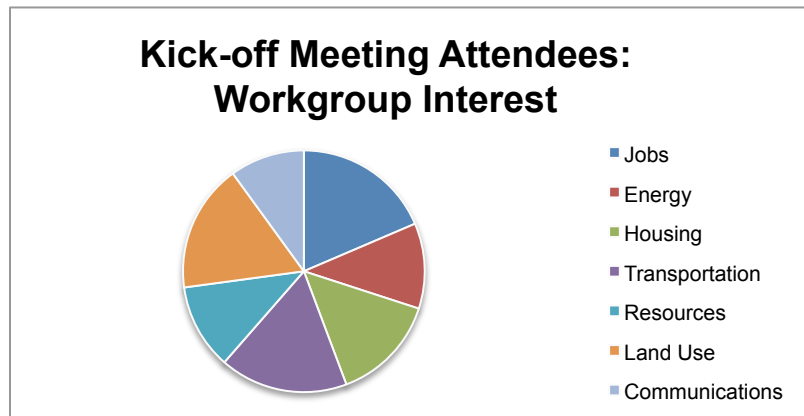


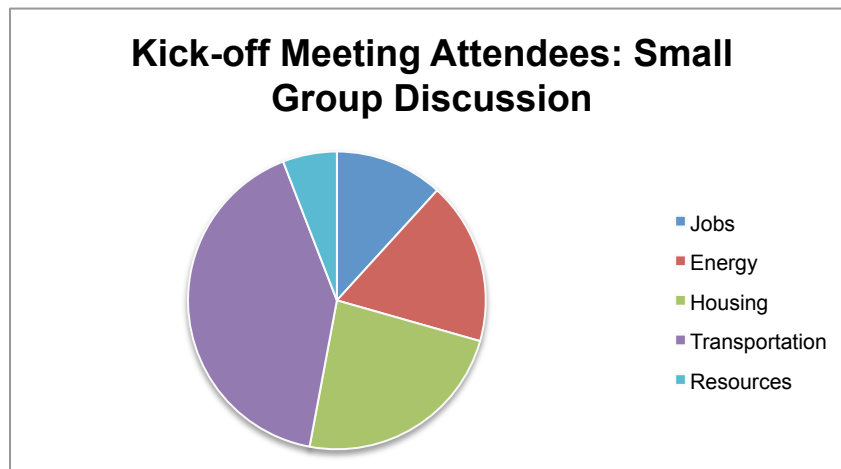
Kick-Off Meeting

A kick-off meeting for GroWNC (formerly the Livable Communities Initiative) was held on June 28, 2011 at the North Carolina Arboretum. We had 140 total attendees, representing local governments, state government, fed government, non-profits, education, business/consultants, Chambers of Commerce, and economic developers.

We received 34 completed project involvement forms. Attendees were asked to indicate Workgroup interest, which was reported as follows:



During small group discussion, attendees at each table discussed barriers and opportunities in one topic area of interest. Small group discussions were distributed as follows:



Small groups recorded the opportunities and barriers they identified on flip charts. The raw input for each subject area is copied below. This input will be shared with the Workgroups once they form as a starting point for their discussion.

Jobs and Economic Development: Opportunities
Linkage to Tourism/Recreation/Agriculture
Tied to Charlanta Corridor
Ziplines, biking, rafting, etc
Fiber penetration/internet
Transportation and other infrastructure is robust
Medical – wellness/health
Focus on common values – we are intentionally here due to quality of life
Large business coming to region
High tech
Education system
Mid-sized businesses
Encourage Entrepreneurship
Specialty Agriculture (rural communities)
Craft Tourism
Green economy diversification

Jobs and Economic Development: Barriers
Education needs – lack of capacity to fill medical jobs
Need more branch campuses – Masters/Engineering to support manufacturing
Lack of regional water plan – need larger view
“silo” thinking by communities
Distance/commute – transportation connections and choices
Cost of energy = money lost for our region
Engagement of second home owners
Losing out to other area cities (i.e. Greenville)
International focus/airport
Rural counties don’t have resources or infrastructure to lure large businesses
Benefits for entrepreneurs
Telling WNC’s stories
Living wage work
Manufacturing base has been lost – furniture/textiles
New job training
Marketplace development is slower than green job training
Funding cuts across state government reduces ability to recruit new industry

Energy: Opportunities
Crosses boundaries of all other components
Urban and rural communities co-exist equitably
Some models already naturally occurring. How do we enhance?
Promote growth of locally manufactured energy products
Create more local self-sustainability
Promotion of alternative fuels
Promote park and ride and mass transportation initiatives
Influence on agriculture
Review of building codes to promote LEED building and enhanced, yet affordable, energy efficiency
WNC is leader in alternative energy usage (eg energy exchange, methane gas, landfill)
Cutting edge technologies are available
Education at all levels, use of alt fuels and impact on environment
Plenty of established businesses doing this work that are ready to implement
Academic institutions, workforce development in place
Economic climate – incentives for energy conservation
Political support for alternative energy/energy conservation
Strong non-profit network, working with private businesses to form larger network
WNC has culture of self-sufficiency (“old sustainability”)

Energy: Barriers
Alternative fuels (algae, grass)
Food crop issue
Out of town suppliers
Lack of infrastructure of waste fuel/alt fuel production
Mountain top removal effects on tourism and ecology
Limited delivery systems
Need to import all fuels
Resistance to alternative fuels (views, wind farms)
Funding for alternative fuels
People are uninformed of energy choices and opportunities for energy conservation
Lack of energy education – especially at school levels so they understand energy usage and options
Cultural challenges and limitations for alternative fuel usage (i.e. Prius, hills/farmland)
Strong individual preference for how we use/choose energy sources

Housing: Opportunities
Focus on existing infrastructure
Affordable housing options situated new greenways and multi-modal transit options
Infill
Rehab old industrial buildings (i.e. textile)
Brownfields development
Life cycle housing (i.e. Abingdon, VA model)
Change policies to incorporate alternative energy
Close to jobs and transit
Housing choice voucher program (existing)
Mountain Housing Opportunities building new housing now
Could incentivize green, affordable housing at City level
Need more funding to augment Habitat for Humanity
Neighbors helping each other, self-organization strategies (i.e. Shiloh community developed own plan)
Community gardens and other community-building activities
Buy local for supplies and building materials
Grow our own food, fuel and medicine

Housing: Barriers
Density rules pertaining to living together (barrier)
Income disparity in African American and Latino populations
Living wage
Environmental regulations increase cost for housing
Affordable isn't affordable
Rentals are hard to find in rural areas
Need transit options in rural counties
Lack of knowledge of existing housing needs
Lack of funding to build affordable housing
Availability of affordable land along existing transit corridors
Existing housing that's energy inefficient
Lack of access to loans for home energy efficiency upgrades
Landlords fees, lack of incentive to bring in low-income housing (Section 8/Section 0)
Cease putting low income housing in most polluted areas
Land availability
Land costs
Closer to transportation/employment centers is more costly
Housing and transportation costs exceeds 30% affordability metric
Zoning
Development requirements cumbersome
Rehab/upfitting of existing stock – energy efficiency upgrades

Housing: Barriers (continued)
No coordination amongst entities
Rental v. ownership
NIMBYism/ BANANA
Gentrification/development
Affordable and workforce? (mixed income)
Density - example: Asheville/Henderson
Impact of 2 nd home market
Failed market developments – opportunity for affordable?
Where does affordable fit? Proximity to jobs, amenities, transportation
Importance of community plans – a necessary starting point to address affordable housing development
Lessons from other communities
Barrier – lack of coordination among housing producers?
Employer-assisted housing?
Public/private partnerships for housing
Is housing in silos?
Housing types: senior/disabled/workforce/affordable/MF/SF
The housing gap – workforce (80-120% AMI)
Housing for first responders? Can they live in the area they serve?
Retirees?

Transportation: Opportunities
Church vans & private transit – maybe contract church to operate transit (insurance/liability)
Networks exist – build on these
Floodplains for alternative transportation
AppalCart – Watauga County
Bike'n'Ride bike rental
Research model practices
RideShare
Mixed used development – build near transportation
Work at home and Distance Learning – flex time, schedule
Purchase “green vehicles” – universities, employers
Large employers provide transit
\$ in transportation
Housing and transportation must be coordinated
Para-transit system between all 5 counties
Alternative fuel sources, especially electric
EPA, HUD, DOT partnership
COA grant

Transportation: Opportunities (continued)
Ability to leverage resources
Political support/partnerships
Bike lanes
Obesity/health-wellness – incentive
Culture shift among younger people away from transit
Small/strong communities
Education – teach drivers how to drive with bicycles, policy changes for driver’s ed,
Light rail
Water transport
Private railway infrastructure, rails to trails
Renewing process v. destination

Transportation: Barriers
Rural
Cost of fuel and equipment/personnel/special equipment
Lack of public transit (limited) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Density not high enough - Dependability
Topography/terrain
One way in – one way out
Data for demand?
Alternate transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greenways - Bike/ped - Park and ride
Insurance/Liability
Overreliance on auto is in direct conflict with goals of project
Sprawl development is driven by auto transportation as a norm
Collision of values – urban/rural divergence
Incentivize “hamlet” development
Topography
Fuel costs, especially for people living in the margins
Limited public transportation to support viable employment, e.g. re-entering homeless vets
Our historic view of transportation e.g. unused train tracks, freight v. passenger
Undeveloped link with land use plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different owners of various transportation providers
NCDOT is 99% dedicated to local and highway road construction
Lack of system linkage – need to expand linkages
Reprioritize funding priorities
Regional DOT needs to address the complexity of planning/funding process

Transportation: Barriers (continued)
Freedom of individual transportation
Limited, effective choices to opt into more effective transportation modes
How to maintain rural lifestyle and have ecologically viable options re: transportation
Fragmentation of rural landscape
Communication and coordination with environmental regulatory agencies
Lack of broadband access inhibits local economic development
Connectivity
Transportation considerations should include “access” – mobility may be better term or should be strongly considered.
Accessibility to sidewalks and safe walkways, need for more “complete streets” thinking
Opportunities for transportation for aging and disability population for all needs (not just dr appts). Need regional transportation options (between counties)
Highway centric mentality
Geography/topography
Money – gas tax in decline
No buy-in from key decision-makers
Lack of public transit/distance
No trains – bus on ROW
Decentralization of jobs
Local funds
Can’t solve problems with old ideas and data
Need new approaches to a broken system
Comprehensive plan review of other counties
Livability strategies of other regions – look into

Natural and Cultural Resources

Comments:

- Policy and action on many scales
- How do we reach community?
- Gentrification (both rural and urban)
- Gatekeepers of small communities
- Main goal is preservation:
 - 1st identify
 - 2nd educate
- Set parameters
- Natural resources as ED tool
- Quality of life indicators

- Natural and cultural resources should be seen as different entities with own set of positive and negative factors

Land Use: Opportunities
How can this region establish its own vision independent of Raleigh
Federal/state land base – ED: natural products, tourism
Private land protection, sustainable forest practices
Biofuels potential
Historic land use – past benign neglect = opportunity, forest, lands, brownfields, etc. – redevelopment potential
Engage children/youth
Engage people where they are
Learn from neighboring local governments who have already struggled with uncontrolled growth
Foster better understanding of land use tools and purpose
Do more small area/local planning
Adopt/adapt best practices from successful communities
More shared housing/community building – zoning changes
Lawns/grass dead zone
Development pressures
Mountaintop development
Outdated zoning ordinances

Land Use: Barriers
Lack of comprehensive capital improvements planning – lack of expertise, political, money, lack of land control or too much control, lack of vision
Growing legislative barriers
Federal/state land base
Private land owners' decreasing interest in private forestry
Loss of supportive infrastructure for agriculture and forestry – i.e. ag supply, sawmills, etc.
Rail
Supply
Hemlocks – wildlife potential, recreation/tourism, fish habitat
Not connected frequently enough with transportation
Lack of communication among governments around regional policies
Lack of planning opportunities at relevant level (local and regional)
Lack of broad enough public involvement
Lack of effective land use policies/controls in rural areas to protect open space, working lands, etc.
Land Use: Barriers (Continued)
Lack of agreement/understanding of purpose of land use planning

How to engage people without requiring that they come to another meeting
Tax lawns or give tax credits to community gardens “seed funding”
Community demonstration projects for learning and idea exchange
Alternative energy areas – solar/wind, localized energy – biofuel plant
Energy companies incentivized to provide alternatives
Biking/walking alternatives, carpooling