

N·FOCUS

Local Government Services

Memo

To: Ranlo Board of Commissioners

From: Tom Weitnauer, AICP

Date: April 22, 2022

Re: Town of Ranlo Town Plan 2040 – Land Use Plan

N-Focus, Inc., is excited to provide you with the attached Town Plan 2040 - Land Use Plan. We request your review of this important document prior to our presentation to you during the May 12 Board of Commissioners meeting. This Town Plan was approved by the Planning Board on April 21, 2022 and was recommended to the Board of Commissioners for consideration of adoption by ordinance. The purpose of providing this document in advance of the Board of Commissioners meeting is to allow you sufficient review time.

As this document is voluminous, we suggest you initially skip the first few background chapters while proceeding to the more substantive chapters 5-9 where you will find insightful guidance for leadership in moving the Ranlo forward.

After you review chapters 5-9, you may want to then review chapters 1-4. These background chapters on the community profile, demographics, and the Town's resources provided the foundation for goals and action steps in later chapters. These early chapters also serve as critical documentation the Town will reference for bonus points when applying for competitive grants from federal, state, and regional sources, to garner bonus points for financial assistance to fund projects such as public parks.

Hot links throughout the digital PDF copy, denoted by underlined blue text, will take you to supporting and relevant documents cited in the Plan.

Deadline for Adoption of Comprehensive Plan – July 1, 2022: As you may be aware, Senate Bill 355 / Ch. SL 2019-111, Section 2.9(c) states, *"Any local government that has adopted zoning regulations but that has not adopted a comprehensive plan shall adopt such plan no later than July 1, 2022, in order to retain authority to adopt and apply zoning regulations."*

N-Focus, Inc. is grateful to be working with Ranlo to successfully meet this important deadline while providing an insightful plan for leadership in moving Ranlo forward.

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An Ordinance for Adoption
of the
Town Plan 2040 - Comprehensive Land Use & Master Plan

*Ordinance #*_____

WHEREAS, the Town of Ranlo Board of Commissioners has called for the development of a comprehensive land use plan in accordance with G.S. 160D-501; *and*

WHEREAS, the Town of Ranlo Board of Commissioners procured a consultant and directed the Planning Board to undertake such a planning process; *and*

WHEREAS, on Thursday April 21, 2022 the Town of Ranlo Planning Board, by unanimous vote, recommended the adoption of *Town Plan 2040 Comprehensive Land Use & Master Plan* in accordance with the procedures of G.S. 160D-501(c) and Article 6 of G.S. 160D; *and*

WHEREAS, a public legislative hearing was held on the 12th day of May, 2022; *and*

WHEREAS, the Town of Ranlo Board of Commissioners continues in its commitment to the future of Ranlo.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED, by the Town of Ranlo Board of Commissioners adopts the *Town Plan 2040 Comprehensive Land Use & Master Plan* as the requisite plan for the Town and to implement the foundational principles of the plan through strategic initiatives as deemed responsible and fiscally sound by this and future Town Boards of Commissioners.

Adopted this the _____ day _____

Lynn Black, Mayor

Sarah Rowan, Town Clerk

SEAL

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TOWN OF RANLO
Town Plan 2040
Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan



April 22, 2022 DRAFT

Adopted: _____

Recommended by Ranlo Planning and Zoning Board: April 21, 2022

Planning Board Approved

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Town of Ranlo
Town Plan 2040
Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan

TOWN OF RANLO

Ranlo Town Hall
1624 Spencer Mountain Road
Ranlo, NC

Adopted by the Board of Commissioners: _____

Board of Commissioners

Lynn Black, Mayor
Katie Cordell, Mayor Pro-Tem
Jamie Fowler, Commissioner
Trevor Hay, Commissioner
Douglas Moore, Commissioner
Wade Morton, Commissioner

Planning and Zoning Board

Todd Kepler, Chairman
Diana Palmer, Secretary
Lee Adams
Robin Conner
Kezia Simonds, ETJ Position
Sean Skidmore
Jason Berg, Alternate

Administration Department

Jonathan D. Blanton, Town Manager
Sarah Rowan, Town Clerk

Planning Department

Jonathan D. Blanton, Town Manager

Planning Team

Tom Weitnauer, AICP, Town Planner. Lead Author
F. Richard "Rick" Flowe, AICP, Principal Planner, Coauthor
Michael D. Harvey AICP, CFM, CZO, Senior Planner, Coauthor

Planning Board Approved

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Planning Board Approved

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1. WHY PLAN OUR TOWN?

The purpose of the ***Town of Ranlo Town Plan 2040 - Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan*** ("Town Plan") is to provide information and perspective used to pinpoint and prioritize actions to support a resilient, self-sustaining community. The Town Plan must encourage economic opportunities, while at the same time maintaining the character and resources essential to Ranlo in a vibrant, growing urban region. An up-to-date plan balancing the changing trends, environmental mandates, and the Town's vision is essential to the success of Ranlo and its inhabitants. Information contained in the Town Plan should serve as the basis for both investment and future development decisions.

Ranlo Town Plan has been designed for regular use by citizens, businesses, investors, leadership, and agencies in making decisions affecting the future of Ranlo. This Town Plan is vital to making informed decisions that will both account for current conditions while maintaining perspective about the future when doing so. A Town Plan is the foundation of almost all capital improvement and growth decisions. ***Adoption of Town Plan 2040 is not the end; it is a consensus on where to begin!***

1.1 About Town Planning

Long-term planning for the future of a community is vitally important. One tool to guide the future of a community is the planning process and adoption of a land use plan. Part of a land use plan is designed to provide an overview of a community's existing conditions and physical development. The main function of the plan is to serve as a guide to a community's future development policy. The goals of a land use plan aim to:

- involve the community in developing a long-term vision;
- address what should be maintained or changed in the future to achieve that vision; and
- identify future land uses in an overall community-wide context.

Part of the on-going planning process is monitoring the plan's progress as a fluid document. §N.C.G.S. 160D does not set a specific time frame for updating the comprehensive plan, but it does call for plans to be "*reasonably maintained.*" As recommended by the UNC School of Government, "*factors determining reasonableness would include rate of growth and change as well as physical, economic, and social conditions so professional practice calls for comprehensive plans to be updated every 5-10 years. If the community has experienced rapid change, then an update every five years may be more defensible.*" ***Planning is an ongoing process!***

1.2 Official State Policy

The State of North Carolina requires local governments in NC General Statute 160D to adopt a plan to be eligible for certain funding, powers and authority by July 1, 2022. The plan is to be used as an assurance to the public that local decisions are made with a perspective on the future implications of pending decisions, and to affirm that public accountability and fiscal responsibility are considered as part of the decision-making process.

Decisions made about public spending and growth can often appear centered around individuals involved and how they may benefit. When governing board decisions adhere to an adopted plan,

those individual interests are balanced with others affected by the outcome of decisions, which include citizens, property owners, and businesses.

1.3 Statutory Reference

Town of Ranlo Town Plan 2040 - Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan shall serve as the adopted plan pursuant to §N.C.G.S. 160D in the planning and regulation of development.

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2. ABOUT RANLO

2.1 Town of Ranlo Background

2.1.1 Location

The Town of Ranlo, North Carolina is located within Gaston County, approximately one mile north of I-85. The Town is bordered to the east by the City of Lowell and bordered to the south by the City of Gastonia. The Town of Ranlo, North Carolina is located within Gaston County, approximately one mile north of I-85. The Town is bordered to the east by the City of Lowell and bordered to the south by the City of Gastonia. Based on current Census data, the Town's corporate limits encompasses approximately 1.7 square miles of land area. In 2021, the Town annexed Spencer Mountain, an area of approximately 153 acres featuring a 1,250-foot summit.

Census Statistical Area: The Town is in a region defined as the *Charlotte Metropolitan Area*, which is also a part of the *Charlotte-Concord Combined Statistical Area* (hereafter 'the CSA'). Located in the Piedmont region of the state, the CSA includes urban/suburban areas in and around the City of Charlotte in both North and South Carolina, the largest in the Carolinas, is one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States (US) and the fourth largest in the Southeastern US. According to 2020 census estimates, the CSA has a total land area of approximately 3,200 sq. miles and a population estimate of 2,636,883 (population 18% population increase from the 2010 Census)¹

2.1.2 History

Gaston County: Gaston County, located in the southern Piedmont region of North Carolina, was formed from a portion of what was known as Lincoln County in 1846. The County:

- Ranks 73rd in size (out of 100 counties consisting of approximately 356.03 square miles;
- Is approximately 9th in population; and
- Has fifteen incorporated municipalities and several unincorporated communities (i.e. Hardin, Lucia, Crowders Mountain, Sunnyside, Alexis, Tryon, and North Belmont).

The county was named for William Gaston, member of the U.S. House of Representatives and justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. Early inhabitants of the area included the Catawba and Cherokee Indians followed by European colonists, most notably Scotch/Irish, German (including Pennsylvania Dutch), and English.

While early development focused primarily on agricultural land uses, notably corn production, and mining operations (i.e. gold, lime, sulfur, tin, and iron) beginning in 1845 the County experienced an industrial boom with the development of multiple cotton mills, which became vital to the county's early economic development efforts. Early economy was also supported by mining operations yielding.

¹ The CSA has a slightly larger population of 2,797,636 as this area includes the City of Albemarle and Shelby.

Most of the county is in the drainage basin of the Catawba River, except for small areas along the western boundary located within the basin of the Broad River. Both the Catawba and Broad Rivers are in the greater Santee River basin.

The Catawba forms the eastern border of the county and much of the central part of the county is in the drainage basin of the South Fork of the Catawba River. The highest point in Gaston County is King's Pinnacle, which rises approximately 800 feet above the city of Gastonia and 1,690 feet above sea level. The Pinnacle is part of Crowders Mountain State Park.

Ranlo: Incorporated on July 29, 1963, the Town had its origins in a community established around local textile mills and manufacturing centers including the Rex Spinning Company (1915), the Ranlo Manufacturing Company (1916) and the Priscilla Spinning Company (1921).

As detailed on the Town website, the name “Ranlo” *was combined from the names of two prominent local industrialists John Calvin Rankin and William Thomas Love*. The Town included portions of what historically was referred to as the community of Smyre, which was developed around the A. M. Smyre Manufacturing Company founded in 1917.

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3. COMMUNITY PROFILE

The development of a Town Plan first requires that identification and analysis of certain key growth factors be performed. The intent of the analysis is to ensure that policies contained in the Town Plan address current problems, trends, and issues facing the community, including the immediate area. The key growth factors included for analysis are discussed in several subject areas within the Town Plan. Collectively, these key growth factors summarize past and present conditions, while providing the essential yardsticks for estimating future conditions.

The U.S. Census Bureau prepares a detailed statistical portrait for local governments, counties and states of their respective social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics through the 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) products. The ACS 5-year estimates are constructed as period estimates and reflect the average characteristics over the five year period. In general, unless a user knows how the estimate for each characteristic is trending over time, it is not accurate to consider the 5-year estimate as an estimate at any given point within the 5 year period. However, under certain conditions, the ACS estimates can serve as a proxy. Figures from the U.S. Census Bureau 2015-2019 American Community Survey, released on December 10, 2020, were used in several instances in developing the Community Profile for the Town of Ranlo, as detailed in this section. Rather than refer to the 5 year period (2015-2019) throughout the narrative in this section, the last year of 2019, will be used for brevity, but the full five year period will be noted as the source for tables and charts. On November 10, 2021, the U.S. Census issued a press release that the Bureau must delay the 2016-2020 ACS 5-year data release originally targeted for December 2021. Additional time is needed to continue refining their methodology so that they can minimize the impact of nonresponse bias due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In their methodology of defining what is a current residence in the ACS, the U.S. Census Bureau considers everyone who is currently living or staying at an address for more than two months is considered a current resident of that address. This means that their expected length of stay is more than two months, not that they have been staying in the housing unit for more than two months at the time when the survey is conducted. Persons away from their residence for two months or less, whether in the United States or overseas, on a vacation or on a business trip, are considered to still be a resident at the address, and the unit is classified as occupied and eligible for inclusion in the survey. Persons away from their residence for more than two months are considered not to be a resident. For the ACS, if no one is determined to be a current resident in the sampled housing unit, it is classified as vacant.

◀ In summary, the demographic data contained with this element is derived from two (2) sources:

1. The 2020 Decennial Census; and
2. The 2019 American Community Survey (ACS).

In instances where actual Decennial Census data is still not yet available, this Plan utilizes ACS data. It is important to understand the differences between these two data sources:

- Decennial Census data represents a ‘physical count’ of ‘all residents’ occurring every ten years; &
- American Community Survey (ACS) produces population, demographic and housing unit estimates based on data samples (i.e. does not represent a physical county of all residents). Data is collected on either a monthly or annual (i.e. yearly) basis.

Due to the COVID pandemic, the US Census Bureau experienced challenges in securing full participation in the Decennial Census. There are noticeable discrepancies in some data sets, most notably population, from Census and ACS data. In completing this Document, the best available data was utilized. In those cases where a disparity exists, steps have been taken to try and document those differences and provide an explanation.

3.1 Population

3.1.1 Population Growth

Population Growth

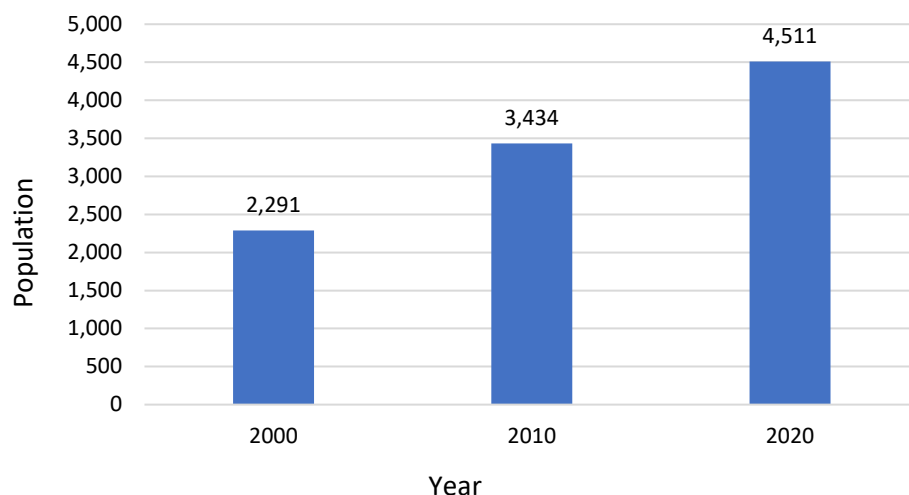
The U.S. Census Bureau's Census 2020 estimated the Town of Ranlo's population was 4,511 persons. The population of the Town of Ranlo increased by 5% between years 2000 and 2010 and increased at 3.1% between 2010 and 2020 for an average of 4.1% over 10 year periods as illustrated in Table 3.1.1A and Figure 3.1.1.A.

Table 3.1.1.A: Town of Ranlo Decennial Population Estimates and Growth Rates

Year	Town of Ranlo Population	Ranlo Population Annual Increases/Decreases	Between Years
2000	2,291		
2010	3,434	5.0%	2000-2010
2020	4,511	3.1%	2010-2020
	Average =	4.1%	10 year periods

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000 Census; 2010 Census; and 2020 Census

Figure 3.1.1.A: Town of Ranlo Decennial Population Estimates



Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000 Census; 2010 Census; and 2020 Census

Table 3.1.1.B illustrates the percentage of Ranlo population to the total population of Gaston County throughout the past 20 years. Over the past 20 years, the Town has averaged percentage of the County has continued to increase slightly.

Table 3.1.1.B: Town of Ranlo to Gaston County Population Comparison

Year	Ranlo	Gaston County	Ranlo's Population to Gaston County's Population
2000	2,291	190,679	1.2%
2010	3,434	206,213	1.7%
2020	4,511	227,943	2.0%

20 Year Average = 1.62%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 2000 Census; 2010 Census; and 2020 Census

3.1.2 Population Projections

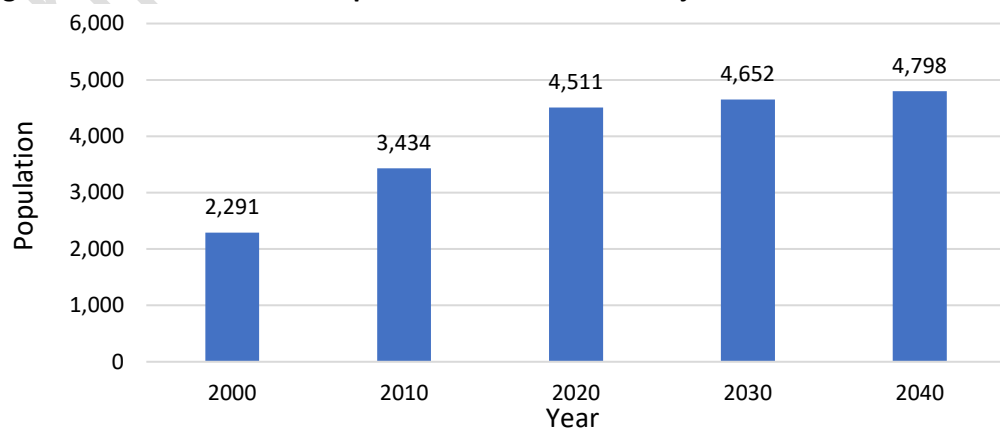
The average growth rate of (3.1%) between years 2010 through 2020 was applied to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau's Decennial Census population of 4,511 to project Ranlo's population in 2030 and 2040.

Table 3.1.2: Town of Ranlo Population – Estimates and Projections

Year	Population
2000	2,291
2010	3,434
2020	4,511
2030	4,652
2040	4,798

Sources: For years 2000, 2010 and 2020: U.S. Census Bureau For years 2030 & 2040: 3.1% growth rate which was the growth rate between 2000 and 2020.

Figure 3.1.2: Town of Ranlo Population Estimates and Projections



Sources: For years 2000, 2010 and 2020: U.S. Census Bureau

For years 2030 & 2040: 3.1% growth rate which was the growth rate between 2000 and 2020.

3.1.3 Diversity

Within the Town of Ranlo, approximately 4,207 residents identified themselves as *one race alone* to the US Census Bureau. For residents reporting one race alone:

- 64% of residents identified themselves as White;
- 25% identified themselves as Black or African American;
- 1% were American Indian and Alaska Native;
- 3% were Asian; and
- Approximately 0.4% identified as some other race.

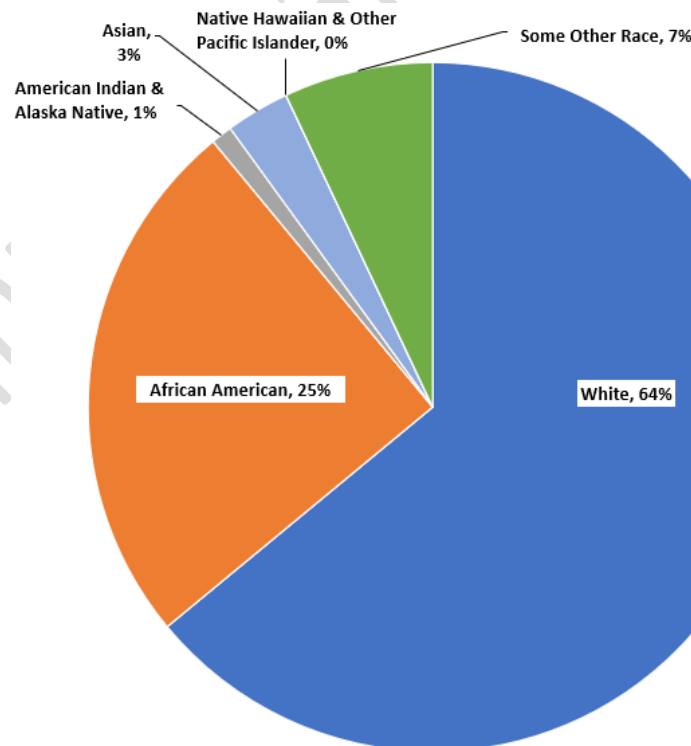
Approximately 304 residents identified themselves as being two or more races.

Table 3.1.3.A: Town of Ranlo Population by Race Alone

Race or Ethnicity	# Residents	Percentage
White	2,683	64%
African American	1,061	25%
American Indian and Alaska Native	41	1%
Asian	116	3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0%
Some Other Race	306	7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey and 2020 Decennial Census

Town of Ranlo – Population by Race Alone



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey, and 2020 Decennial Census

Figures from the *American Community Survey* shown in Table 3.1.3.B indicate an estimated 87.7% of people in Ranlo were White non-Hispanic. People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Table 3.1.3.B: Town of Ranlo Population by Hispanic or Latino Not Hispanic or Latino

Race or Ethnicity	Number of Residents	Percent Total Population
Not Hispanic or Latino	3,959	87.7%
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	552	12.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey and 2020 Decennial Census

3.1.4 Population by Age and Sex

The median age of residents within Ranlo is 35.4 years. An estimated 27.1% of the population was under 18 years, 37.4% was 18 to 44 years, 20.3% was 45 to 64 years, and 15.1% was 65 years and older.

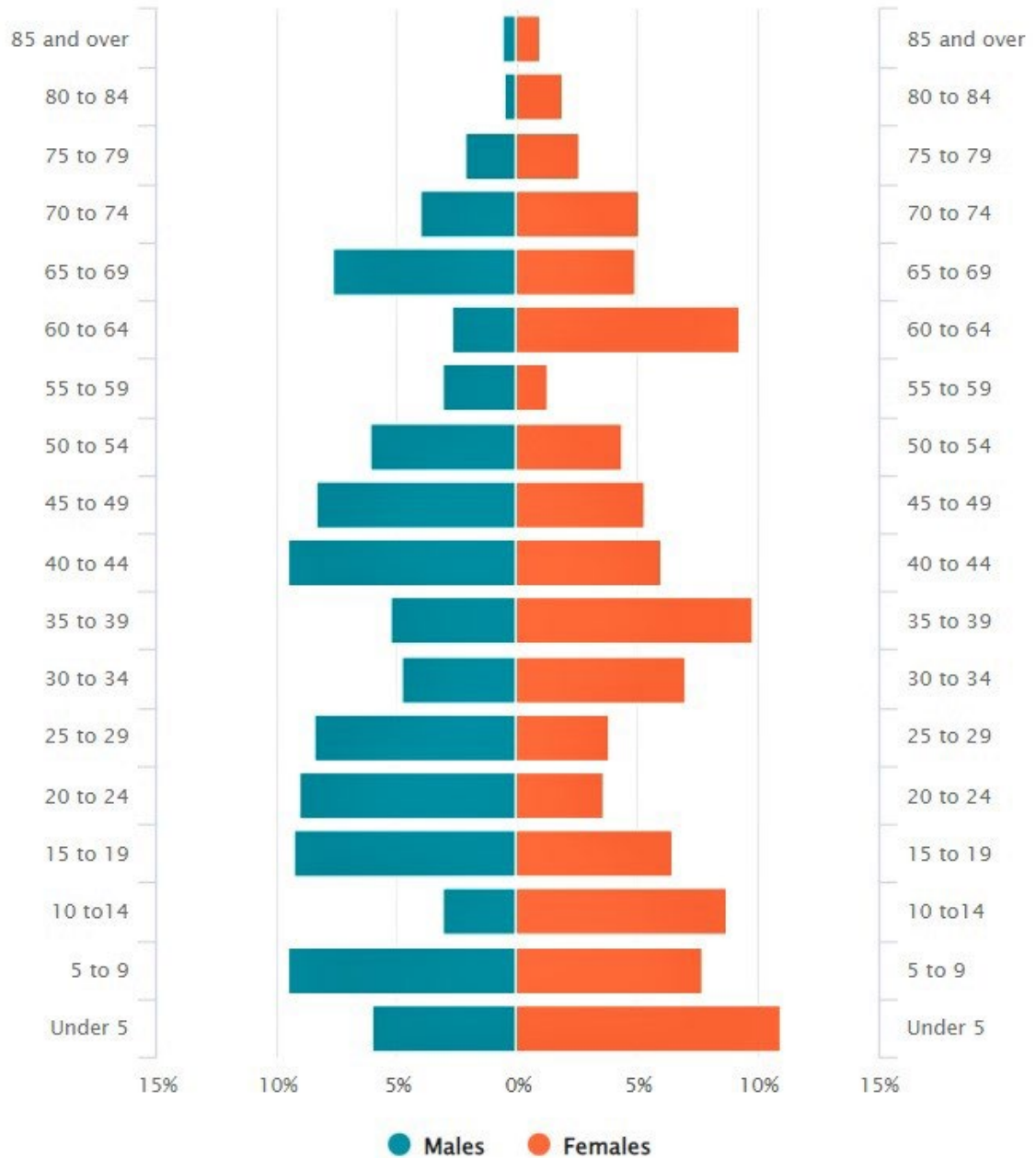
In 2019, of Ranlo's population, 50.5% were females and 49.5% were males.

Table 3.1.4: Town of Ranlo Population by Age and Sex

Age	Percent Male	Percent Female
Under 5	6.0%	11.0%
5 to 9	9.5%	7.7 %
10 to 14	3.1%	8.7%
15 to 19	9.3%	6.5%
20 to 24	9.0%	3.6%
25 to 29	8.4%	3.8%
30 to 34	4.8%	7.0%
35 to 39	5.2%	9.8%
40 to 44	9.5%	6.0%
45 to 49	8.3%	5.3%
50 to 54	6.1%	4.4%
55 to 59	3.1%	1.3%
60 to 64	2.7%	9.3%
65 to 69	7.6%	4.9%
70 to 74	4.0%	5.1%
75 to 79	2.1%	2.6%
80 to 84	0.5%	1.9%
85 and over	0.6%	1.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

Town of Ranlo Population by Age and Sex



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

3.2 Housing

3.2.1 Occupied Housing Characteristics

In 2019, Ranlo had approximately 1,416 total housing units of which 1,346 units were occupied (95.1%) or had people living in them while the remaining 70 units (4.9%) were unoccupied/vacant.

Of the occupied housing units, the percentage occupied by owners (also known as the homeownership rate) was 66.7% (898 units) while renters occupied 33.3% (448 units).

The average household size of owner-occupied houses was 2.59 and in renter-occupied houses it was 2.83. In comparing occupancy data, Table 3.2.1.A denotes the Town is in line with both Gaston County and the State of North Carolina.

Table 3.2.1.A: Homeownership Rates

Jurisdiction	% of Owner Occupied Units	% of Renter Occupied Units
Town of Ranlo	66.7%	33.3%
Gaston County	64.5%	35.5%
State of North Carolina	65.2%	34.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

In 2019, the median property value for owner-occupied houses in Ranlo was \$139,900.

Of the owner-occupied households (898 units) 63.9% or 574 units had a mortgage while 36.1% (324 units) were owned free and clear, that is without a mortgage or loan on the house. The median monthly housing costs for owners with a mortgage was \$1,108 and for owners without a mortgage it was \$380.

For renter-occupied houses, the median gross rent for Ranlo was \$1,075. Gross rent includes the monthly contract rent and any monthly payments made for electricity, gas, water and sewer, and any other fuels to heat the house.

Households that pay 30% or more of their income on housing costs are considered cost-burdened. As illustrated in Table 3.2.1.B cost-burdened households in Ranlo accounted for only 5.6% of owners with a mortgage (32 units), 21.9% of owners without a mortgage (71 units), and 58.7% of renters (262 units) in 2019.

Table 3.2.1.B: Ranlo Occupants with a Housing Burden

House Value	Percent
Owners with mortgage	5.6%
Owners without mortgage	21.9%
Renters	58.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

3.2.2 Housing Stock

U.S. Census Bureau data reported 41% of existing occupied residential structures have been constructed since 2000. These figures do not account for houses built since 2018.

Table 3.2.2: Town of Ranlo Occupied Housing Units by Age in 2018

Year Built	Number Structures	Percent Structures
Built 2014 or later	97	6.9%
Built 2010 to 2013	12	0.8%
Built 2000 to 2009	479	33.8%
Built 1990 to 1999	100	7.1%
Built 1980 to 1989	5	0.4%
Built 1970 to 1979	167	11.8%
Built 1960 to 1969	113	8.0%
Built 1950 to 1959	92	6.5%
Built 1940 to 1949	119	8.4%
Built 1939 or earlier	232	16.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

3.2.3 Housing Types

Of the 1,416 existing housing units, 93% were single-family houses (1,316 units); 4% were multi-family structures (i.e. buildings that contained two or more units) (57 units); and 3% (43 units) were mobile/manufactured homes.

Table 3.2.2: Town of Ranlo Housing Types

Housing Types	% of total housing units (1,416)
Single Family (Site Built)	93%
Mobile Homes	3%
Multi-family	4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey

Available Census data indicates the average number of bedrooms within the residences within are further broken down as follows:

- No bedroom: 0 units;
- 1 bedroom: 106 units;
- 2 bedrooms: 278 units;
- 3 bedrooms: 738 units;
- 4 bedrooms: 278 units; and
- 5 or more bedrooms: 16 units

3.3 Economy

3.3.1 Household Income

Household income calculations consist of the income of all individuals aged 16 years and older in the household. When analyzing the distribution of household income in the Town

of Ranlo, the largest percentage of households (18%) falls into the \$75,000 to \$99,999 income range followed by the \$50,000 to \$74,999 (14.9%) range.

In terms of the gross percentage of income, approximately 54% of households in the Town earn \$50,000 or more a year. (See Table 3.3.1).

Median household income divides the household income distribution with one-half of the cases falling below the median and one-half of the cases falling above the median.

Table 3.3.1: Town of Ranlo Household Income by Range

Income Range	% of Total Population
Less than \$10,000	3.5%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	9.9%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	11.9%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	9.4%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	12.1%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	14.9%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	18.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	14.4%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2.2%
\$200,000 or more	3.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey

3.3.2 Median Household Income

For households, the median income is based on the distribution of the total number of households, including those with no income. The median household income in the Town is \$56,800 per year. The Town of Ranlo's median household income is higher than that of Gaston County and North Carolina.

Median income is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as the amount obtained by dividing the total income of a particular statistical universe by the number of units in that universe. The median income is the amount that divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

Table 3.3.2: Median Income Comparison

Jurisdiction	Median Household Income
Town of Ranlo	\$56,800
Gaston County	\$56,595
State of North Carolina	\$56,595

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

3.3.3 Poverty Rates

The U.S. Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If the total income for a family, or unrelated individual, falls below the relevant poverty threshold, then the family (and every individual in it) or unrelated individual is considered in poverty. Since poverty is determined by the circumstances of individual families (e.g., family size, income thresholds and income), there is no single poverty rate for an entire jurisdiction or geographic area.

As Table 3.3.3 illustrates, the Town of Ranlo's percentage of people in poverty, as well as the percent of children in poverty, are higher than Gaston County, and lower than that of North Carolina.

Table 3.3.3: Poverty Level Comparison

Jurisdiction	% of People in Poverty	% of Children in Poverty
Town of Ranlo	10.8%	16.2%
Gaston County	10.4%	13.5%
State of North Carolina	13.6%	19.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

3.4 Education

3.4.1 Educational Attainment

In 2019, 85.8% (combined high school diploma and some college through graduate degree) of people 25 years and over had at least graduated from high school and 18.5% had a bachelor's degree or higher. An estimated 14.2% percent did not complete high school.

The total school enrollment in Ranlo was 966 in 2019. Nursery school enrollment was 85 students and kindergarten through 12th grade enrollment was 661 students. College or graduate school enrollment was 220 students.

Table 3.4.1: Educational Attainment of Population Aged 25 and Over

Educational Attainment	Percentage of Ranlo Residents
Less than high school diploma	14.2%
High school diploma or equivalency	36.8%
Some college, no degree	21.1%
Associate's degree	9.3%
Bachelor's degree	13.6%
Graduate or professional degree	4.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

3.4.2 Public Schools

Residents within the Town are served by the Gaston County School System, the tenth largest district in the State serving approximately 30,000 students (i.e. pre-kindergarten through high school) through 56 institutions including:

- 29 Elementary/Primary schools;
- 1 Intermediate school;
- 11 Middle schools;
- 12 High schools;
- 1 Special Needs school;
- 1 Alternative school; and
- 1 virtual school.

According to the Gaston County School District website, the *graduation rate for the Class of 2021 was 86.5% with 6 schools having a graduation rate exceeding 90% and 3 schools with a perfect graduation rate of 100%.*

The District offers career and technical education (CTE) programs at all high and middle schools. The District has established an early college program serving approximately 235 children as well as a new school choice/magnet program named the Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences (GECMS).

The County has a total of 4 charter schools operating within its boundaries:

- Piedmont Community Charter (Gastonia) serving Kindergarten through 8th grade – 1,200 enrolled students;
- Mountain Island Charter (Mt. Holly) serving Kindergarten through 12th grade – 810 enrolled students;
- Ridgeview Charter School (Gastonia) serving Kindergarten through 8th grade – 520 enrolled students; and
- Community Public Charter School (Stanley) serving Kindergarten through 4th grade– 485 students enrolled.

Depending on where children reside, Ranlo residents may attend the following schools:

- Brookside Elementary School located at 1950 Rhyne Carter Rd. in Ranlo;
- Holbrook Middle School located at 418 S Church St. in Lowell; and
- North Gaston Highschool located at 1133 Ratchford Rd. in Dallas.

3.4.3 Colleges and Universities

Ranlo is conveniently located within approximately 100 miles of the following colleges, university, and technical school campuses in North Carolina.

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Colleges and Universities	City	Distance From Ranlo (miles)
Gaston College Community College Campus	Dallas	6
Belmont Abbey College	Gastonia	8
ECPI University	Charlotte	16
DeVry University	Charlotte	20
Johnson C. Smith University	Charlotte	20
Central Piedmont Community College	Charlotte	21
Pfeiffer University – Charlotte Campus	Charlotte	22
Gardner-Webb University	Charlotte	23
UNC – Charlotte	Charlotte	27
Wingate University	Charlotte	29
Davidson College	Davidson	35
Lenoir-Rhyne University	Hickory	41
North Carolina Research Campus	Kannapolis	42
Appalachian State University	Boone	82
Winston Salem University	Winston Salem	93
UNC – Greensboro	Greensboro	106

As the region continues to grow, more educational and specialized job training opportunities will become available.

3.5 Workforce

3.5.1 Employment

According to 2019 U.S. Census data, there were approximately:

- 2,760 residents over the age of 16;
- 1,646 of these residents (59.6%) are employed;
- 134 residents (4.9%) are unemployed/not employed; and
- 908 residents (35.5%) are identified as not being within the labor force.

An estimated 1409 residents (85.6%) were identified as being employed as private wage/salary workers; 192 residents (11.7%) were identified as federal, state, or local government workers; and 45 residents (2.7%) were identified as being self-employed in their own (not incorporated) business.

As presented in Table 3.5.1.A, the largest number of the Ranlo's citizens in the workforce (aged 16+) are employed in the category of "management, business, sciences, and arts"

occupations (494 people or 30% of the 1,646-member workforce) with the second largest number employed within “sales and office” occupations.

Table 3.5.1.A: Occupations for Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over

Occupation	Number	%
Management, business, sciences, and arts occupations	494	30.0
Service occupations	222	13.5
Sales and office occupations	450	27.3
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	310	18.8
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	170	10.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey

In 2019, the civilian employed population in Ranlo, aged 16 years and older, worked in the following industries. The largest percentage of the Town’s workforce (18.2%) are employed in the category of the “education services, health care, and social assistance” industry.

Table 3.5.1.B: Employment by Industry

Industry	Number of Employees	%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, & mining	29	1.8%
Construction	82	5.0%
Manufacturing	217	13.2%
Wholesale trade	103	6.3%
Retail trade	147	8.9%
Transportation & warehousing, & utilities	188	11.4%
Information	44	2.7%
Finance & insurance, & real estate & rental & leasing	138	8.4%
Professional, scientific, & management, & admin. & waste	97	5.9%
Educational services, & health care & social assistance	300	18.2%
Arts, entertainment, & recreation, & accommodation, & food	76	4.6%
Other Services, except public administration	153	9.3%
Public administration	72	4.4%

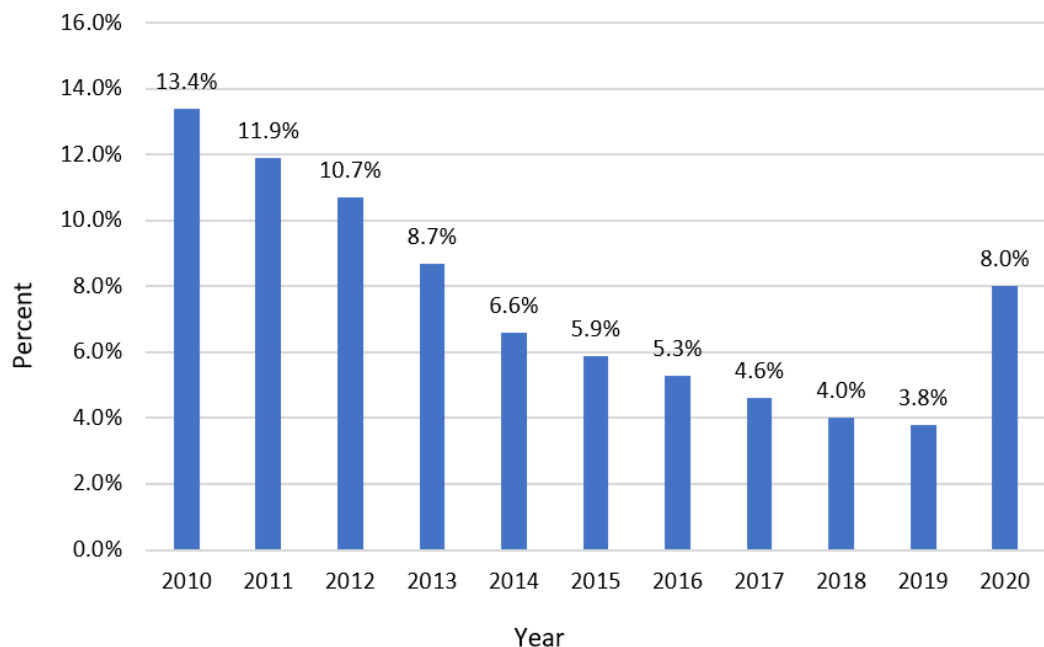
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey

3.5.2 Unemployment

Unemployment rates in Gaston County have shown a steady downward trend from 13.4% in 2010 to 3.8% in 2019, but then jumped up to 8.0% in 2020, likely due to the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic. These improvements demonstrate Gaston County managed to rebound from the great recession, up until the COVID impacts. Labor

statistics specifically for Ranlo are not available through the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table 3.5.2: Unemployment in Gaston County, 2010-2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

3.5.3 Commuting Patterns

As reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated 86.2% of workers drove to work alone in 2019 while 9.6% carpoolled. Among those who commuted to work, it took them on average 26.3 minutes to get to work. Table 3.5.3 presents Ranlo workers' modes of travel to work.

Table 3.5.3: Town of Ranlo Commuters' Methods of Transportation

Transportation Method	% of All Workers
Drive Alone	86.2%
Carpool	9.6%
Public Transportation	0.4%
Walk	0%
Other Means	1.9%
Worked at Home	2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey

3.5.4 Health Care Facilities

While there are no hospital facilities within the corporate limits of Ranlo, several major medical facilities are in the general vicinity.

Name	Distance from Ranlo (miles)	Services
Atrium Health Levine Children's Specialty Center	1	Children's hospital & medical facility
CaroMont Regional Medical Center	2	Full service hospital
Singh Surgical Associates	2	Surgical services
Internal Medicine Associates of Gastonia	2	General doctors office
OrthoCarolina Urgent Care - Gastonia	2	Sports injuries, pediatric injuries, joint care.
Carolinas Rehabilitation – Mount Holly – Belmont	9	Inpatient facility offering rehabilitation service
Atrium Health Carolinas Medical Center – Charlotte	21	Full service hospital
Novant Health Medical Center - Huntersville	27	Full service hospital

3.6 Future Trends Projection - *How does Ranlo prepare?*

Recognizing trends and how market dynamics can and do change, will enable Ranlo to position itself as a welcoming community for multiple generations looking at buying or renting a home, starting or growing a business, and finding Ranlo a good place to visit. This approach to planning reinforces the community's desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate, while aging community members will choose to remain. A vibrant and sustainable community is one where both the new and existing home markets are attractive to future generations and allow for aging members of the community to remain in the community by offering a variety of housing products near jobs, services and events.

According to contemporary real estate experts, the "50+" real estate market is changing. In these next few years, Generation X (those born between the years 1964 and 1977) will be joining the Boomers (born between 1946 and 1963) and Matures (between 1927 and 1945), making serving the age 50+ market both a challenging puzzle as well as an opportunity for both communities and the real estate industry itself.

A recent insightful online posting on RISmedia.com (a real estate trade site) states: "For the **Mature** buyers, those born between the years 1927 and 1945, the decision to move can be an emotional and complicated process. The sense of obligation to the family home may be a burden and a comfort at the same time." The posting goes on to state, "**Baby Boomers** are savvy home buyers. They approach the transaction with high expectations and confidence. They consider the home a reflection of their lifestyle, so image and status are important. Whether they are

downsizing, upsizing, or purchasing a second home, vacation home, or investment property, they know what they want and how to tell you about it.” And finally, the post states, “Newbies to the 50+ group, **Generation X** stands out because of their strong need for independence and practical yet cautious approach. They take on the responsibility of gathering information and rely strongly on facts and documentation. They ask a lot of questions and don’t want to get burned. They expect their home to complement their lifestyle and not the other way around.”

Preparations to embrace current and projected trends are a partnership of land development and real estate industries with local government leadership. New housing construction should address gaps in the market product offering; therefore, land development specifications appearing in the Town’s ordinances must be adequate to accommodate these trends. Replacing the town’s antiquated zoning ordinance, adding specifications for land development which creates new streets and supporting infrastructure, and maintaining quality control over the implementation of these standards must be prioritized to protect property rights of all parties while creating common-sense opportunities that don’t setup for failures in the future.

As with the housing markets, ever changing trends in consumption, product development, technology and generational shifts in personal choices/values must be considered when making decisions about commercial and other non-residential growth. This approach to planning reinforces the community’s desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate, while aging members will choose to remain. A community, where traditional values accompany craftsmanship must embrace the presence of technology in everyday life, commerce, and business. Innovation is an ever-increasing component of the economy at all levels; therefore, it must be considered in the formation of growth policy serving these innovators if we are to adapt and survive global influence on everyday life. *(Also see Sections 6 and 8).*

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4. NATURAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

4.1 Natural Resources

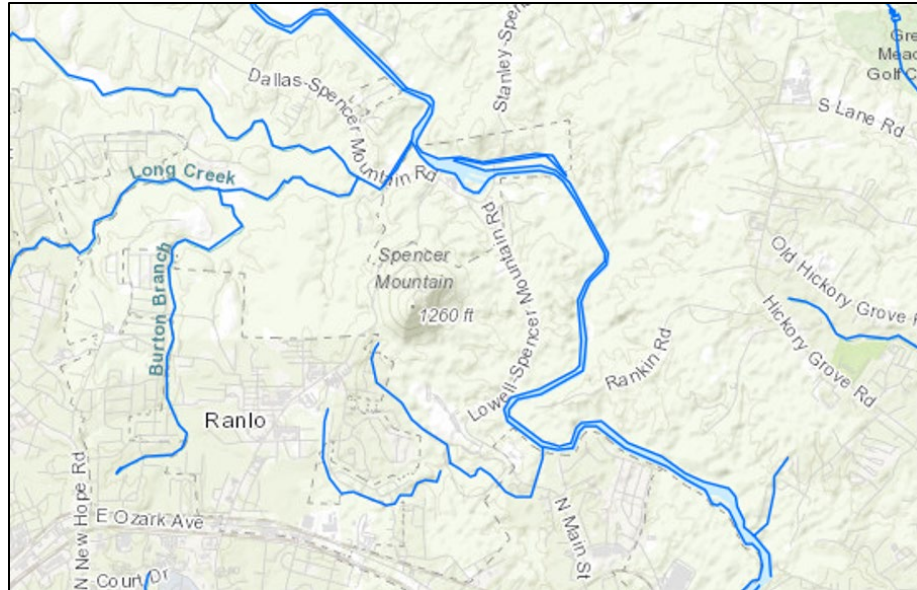
4.1.1 Water Resources

Water provides both recreational and life sustaining resources for the Town and the region as a whole. The Town and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) boundary are encumbered by, and adjacent to, the following waterways:

Waterway Name	General Location	State Classification	State Description
Housers Branch	North of Lowell Road – East of Spencer Mountain Road	Class C	From source to South Fork Catawba River
Unnamed Tributary at Ranlo	West of Mountain Side Lane	Class C	From source to Duharts Creek
South Fork Catawba River	East of the Town of Ranlo and Lowell-Spencer Mountain Road ²	WS-V	From a point 0.4 mile upstream of Long Creek to Cramerton Dam and Lake Wylie at Upper Armstrong Bridge (mouth of South Fork Catawba River)
Burton Branch	West of Ranlo	Class C	From source to Long Creek
Long Creek	North of Ranlo	Class C	From Mountain Creek to South Fork Catawba River
Little Long Creek	South of ETJ area	Class C	From source to Long Creek

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² While not in the corporate limits or ETJ of the Town, the South Fork of the Catawba River impacts development opportunities and constraints for the community.



Source: State of NC Division of Water Resources online classification map

Duharts Creek, flowing through the City of Gastonia to the south, also has a WS-V classification from the State. Fortunately, none of the water features in and around the Town are classified as Nutrient Sensitive Waters (NSW) by the State.

Identified waterways are predominately Class C waters with the South Fork Catawba River classified as a WS-V waterway, defined by the State of North Carolina Division of Water Resources (DWR) as:

- Class C waterways: *Waters protected for uses such as secondary recreation, fishing, wildlife, fish consumption, aquatic life including propagation, survival and maintenance of biological integrity, and agriculture. Secondary recreation includes wading, boating, and other uses involving human body contact with water where such activities take place in an infrequent, unorganized, or incidental manner; and*
- Water Supply Five (WS-V): *Waters protected as water supplies which are generally upstream and draining to Class WS-IV waters or waters used by industry to supply their employees with drinking water or as waters formerly used as water supply. These waters are also protected for Class C uses.*

CATAWBA RIVER BASIN

As previously indicated in this Town Plan the Town and Gaston County are located within the Catawba River Basin (hereafter 'the Basin'), which begins on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains in McDowell County flowing east then south into Lake Wylie on the North Carolina-South Carolina border. The Basin is approximately 3,285 sq. miles in area containing:

- A total of 9,389 miles of streams/ivers;
- 50,764 acres of lakes; and
- 11 individual counties and 64 incorporated municipalities.

Catawba River Basin within North Carolina



Source: N.C. Environmental Education

Major tributaries of the Catawba River traverse the County and provide a range of benefits to local residents, most notably: recreation, fishing, drinking water supply and, as permitted by the State, wastewater discharge. The Basin is composed of 19 watershed sub-basins, 13 of which are designated by the State as water supply watersheds (i.e. serves as public drinking water sources). Within the water supply sub-basins, the areas closest to public water supply intakes are further regulated to limit the density of development and minimize the potential for polluted runoff to reach the intakes. Certain water bodies in the County are classified by the State as 'High Quality Waters' or 'HQW', a supplemental classification intended to identify and protect:

Waters which are rated excellent based on biological and physical/chemical characteristics through Division monitoring or special studies, primary nursery areas designated by the Marine Fisheries Commission, and other functional nursery areas designated by the Marine Fisheries Commission. The following waters are HQW by definition:

- WS-I (Water Supply I – Natural);
- WS-II (Water Supply II – Undeveloped);
- SA (Market Shellfishing, Salt Water);
- ORW (Outstanding Resource Waters);
- PNA (Primary nursery areas or other functional nursery areas designated by the Marine Fisheries Commission); and/or
- Waters for which DWR has received a petition for reclassification to either WS-I or WS-II.

HQW designated waters typically have development limitations designed to reduce the overall impact of development activity, including cumulative limits on the total acreage that can be disturbed (i.e. unstabalized) at any one time.

There are several local waterways with both State and Federal recognition:

- The 23-mile-long Wilson Creek, which flows through the Pisgah National Forest and Wilson Creek Gorge before joining the Johns River, was designated a *National Wild and Scenic River* by the US Congress in 2000; and
- The lower 13 miles of the Linville River is designated by the State as a *Natural and Scenic River*.

4.1.1.1 Water Sports

While there are park facilities within the Town, none have water sport amenities. There are, however, numerous facilities in an around the Town offering such amenities:

Facility	Distance from Ranlo	Water Sport Services Offered
George Poston Park, Gaston County NC	4 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fishing;• Paved ADA accessible walkway around lake
Rankin Lake Park, Gastonia NC	5 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fishing piers and one viewing pier;• River access/boating including boat rentals (including canoes, kayaks, and pedal boats)
Town of Cramerton NC Goat Island Park and Greenway	6 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fishing Pier• River Access
Historic Baltimore River Access and Fishing Pier, Cramerton NC	6.5 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fishing Pier• River Access
Dallas Park	6.5 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fishing
Town of Cramerton NC Riverside Park	8 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fishing Pier• River Access
C.B. Huss River Access and Fishing Pier, Cramerton NC	8 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boat access to the South Fork of the Catawba River• Fishing pier
South Fork River Park, Gaston County	8 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural surface trails around water bodies;• Access areas for canoeing,
Crowders Mountain State Park, Kings Mountain NC	11 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boating and fishing access
Whitewater Center, Charlotte NC	16 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kayaking, whitewater rafting, etc.
Mountain Island Park, Mount Holly NC	14 miles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fishing,• Kayaking and canoeing

4.1.1.2 Water Supply

The Town purchases water from Two Rivers Utilities. All local municipalities in Gaston County, providing residents with public water service, obtain their drinking water from Mountain Island Lake and/or the South Fork of the Catawba River.

4.1.2 Land Resources and Geography

With the 2021 annexation of Spencer Mountain, the highest elevation of the Town is the mountains peak at approximately 1,250 feet above mean sea level. The main thoroughfare through Town, Spencer Mountain Road, has significant elevation changes ranging from 870 ft. (north towards Town of Spencer Mountain) to 806 ft. south adjacent to Lowell Road. Much of the Town has a gentle to significant rolling topography throughout.

From a regional perspective, the county is gently rolling to hilly with several pronounced ridges including the following.

- Kings Mountain Pinnacle
- Spencer Mountain
- Jackson 's Knob
- Paysour Mountain
- Crowders Mountain

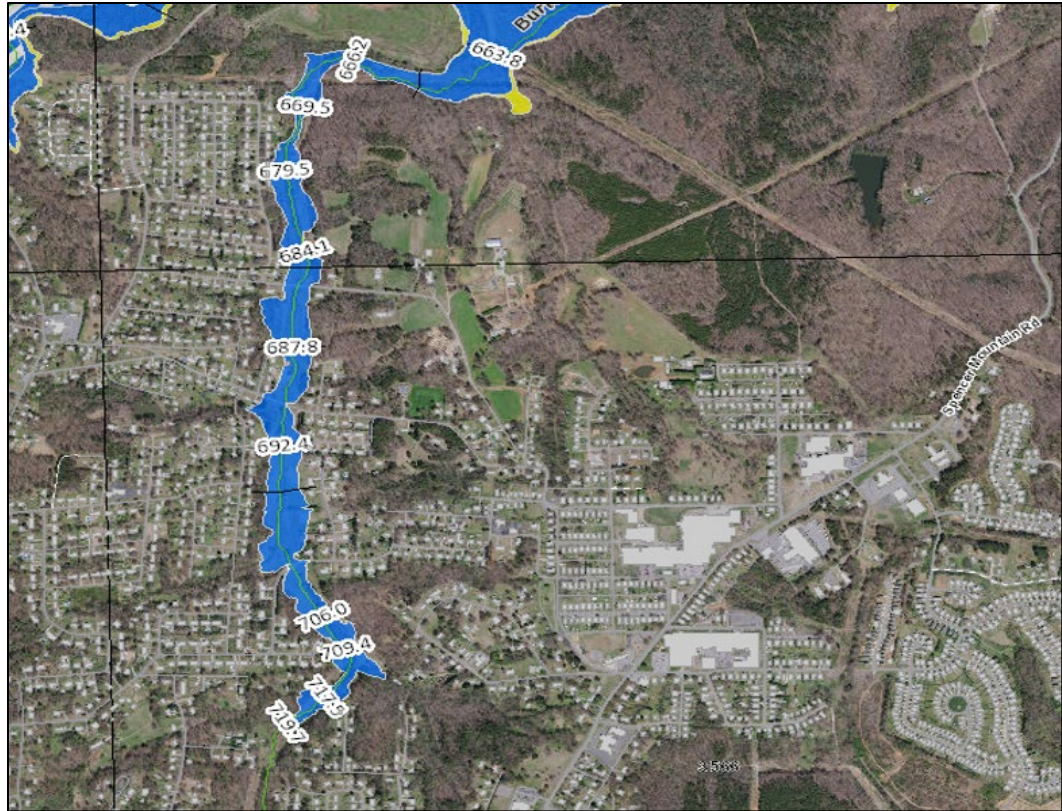
Elevations above sea-level in Gaston County range from 587 feet in the southeast corner to 1,705 feet at the Pinnacle of the Kings Mountain ridge in the southwest. The average elevation is estimated at 825 feet.

According to the Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service dataset published in 1994, as well as Gaston County GIS data, indicates the Town is composed on the following groups of soils.

- Cecil Sandy Clay Loam
- Congaree Loam
- Gaston Sandy Clay Loam
- Helena Sandy Loam Vance Sandy Loam
- Lignum Silt Loam
- Pacolet Sandy Loam
- Tatum Gravelly Loam
- Uwharrie Tony Loam
- Vance Sandy Loam
- Wilkes Loam
- Winnsboro Loam
- Worsham Loam

In general, soils within the community contain significant levels of nutrients and moisture and are characterized as having good drainage and infiltration of water. They are easy to till in support of agricultural operations and for growing most plant species. Soils with clay deposits will, generally, have poor drainage.

There are areas within the Town encumbered by special flood hazard areas. Soils in these areas have marginal or poor drainage characteristics.



Areas encumbered by floodplain are east of Hill Lane and begin at an average elevation of 720 ft. dropping to an elevation of approximately 663 ft. for a total distance of approximately 6,600 ft. While established/identified floodplain is adjacent to residential neighborhoods, it is predominantly located in protected open space areas.

4.1.2.1 Agricultural

The County as a whole, as well as local communities, have a rich farming heritage. Agricultural operations in the region, however, are declining due to rising land prices and pressures for urban style development and amenities. On both a local and County level, residents are engaging in efforts to protect agricultural lands and preserve a semblance of the area's historical agricultural economy.

As indicated in Section 4.1.2, the majority of soils in the Town are suitable to support agricultural operations. Streams connected to the Catawba water system provide a ready source of water for irrigation as well.

Despite the urbanization of the County, approximately 40% of the land area remains in woods or forest, the highest percentage of any of its neighboring North Carolina counties.

4.1.2.2 Recreation

The Town of Ranlo Parks and Recreation Department maintains a large park facility within the corporate limits. This facility, Ranlo Central Park, surrounds Town Hall and provides numerous amenities summarized below.

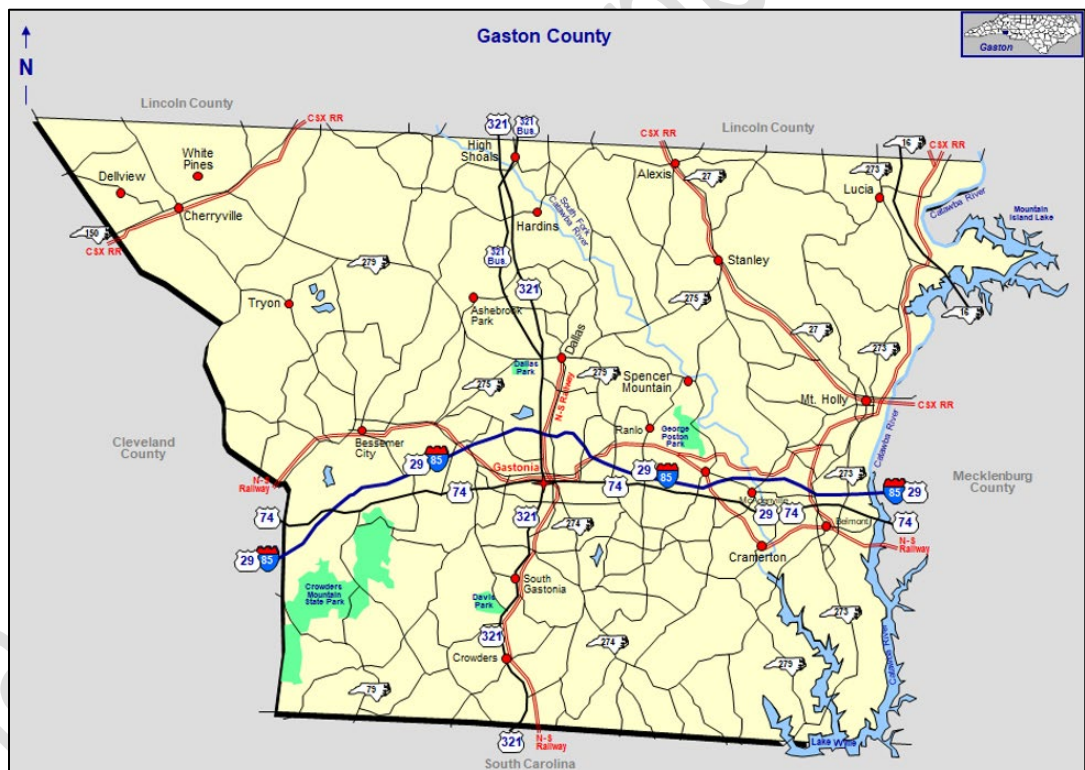
Park	Address	Amenities
Ranlo Central Park	1624 Spencer Mountain Rd (facility is separated by Park Dr.)	Playground, basketball and tennis courts, baseball fields, skate park, restrooms, etc.

4.1.2.3 Transportation Facilities

The Town of Ranlo Public Works Department maintains approximately 17 miles of roadways. Gaston County has several State and Federal roadways within its boundaries, including:

- State Routes: NC 7, 16, 27, 150, 161, 216, 273, 274, 275, 279;
- US Routes: US 29, 74, 321; and
- Interstates: I-85.

The Town has access to NC 7 and US 74 to the south as well as Interstate 85. To the west, near the Town of Dallas, is US 321. State Route 279 is also west of the Town.



The Town of Ranlo is part of the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO), a multi-jurisdictional entity made up of 34 local governments, NC Department of Transportation (DOT), US DOT, and other providers of transportation services jointly planning for transportation improvements for members.



Source - Gaston -Cleveland -Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO)

4.1.2.4 Growth

As detailed in Section 2.2, the Town is located within the Charlotte Metropolitan Area. In 2020, the US Census Bureau estimated the region had a population of approximately 2,236,883. This figure represented an 18% population increase from the 2010 census. Given identified development trends, and population forecasts referenced herein, the region's population is projected to continue increasing over the next 20 to 30 years.

4.2 Cultural Resources

4.2.1 Parks and Recreation, Outdoor Adventure and Community Outreach

Currently, the Town of Ranlo's Parks and Recreation Department provides maintenance to parks and facilities, which are centrally located at 1624 Spencer Mountain Road.



Source: Google Earth

As indicated in Section 4.1.2.2, local amenities/facilities at the park include:

- Multi-purpose field (baseball/softball/soccer);
- Basketball and tennis courts;
- Skate park;
- Picnic shelter; and
- Playground facilities.

The Town sponsors an annual fall festival in September at Ranlo Central Park throughout a two-day period that includes food and commercial craft vendors. The Town also hosts a monthly “Mill Town Night” from May through September. For the 2022 ‘Mill Town Night’ series, plans are being prepared to provide a firework show in July, a food-truck night, and a bingo night.

In addition to the parks providing water sport activities noted in Section 4.1.1.1, Gaston County is home to several other recognizable open space destinations and parks drawing visitors throughout the region. These are covered in more detail in Section 4.3.1.

4.3 Historic Resources

4.3.1 Heritage Preservation and Tourism

While the Town of Ranlo does not contain natural heritage sites or historic structures, the Town does engage in tourist events and is an active participant in regional heritage preservation efforts. As detailed in Section 4.2.1, the Town hosts an annual fall festival hosting food and craft vendors at park facilities every September.

There are several significant natural heritage areas throughout the county, including:

- Crowders Mountain State Park - The largest natural heritage site in the county with over 3,000 acres of land area supporting a diverse botanical and zoological genome;
- Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens (6500 S New Hope Rd, Belmont, NC) – A 380 acres botanical garden including a woodland trail and an Orchid Conservatory; and
- Mountain Island Educational State Forest (528 Killian Rd, Stanley, NC) – A 1,300 acre educational forest straddling Lincoln and Gaston counties.

Gaston County has twelve natural heritage sites listed as being of state or regional significance, six of which have this designation because of the presence of specific flora (i.e. the bigleaf magnolia or *Magnolia macrophylla*).

4.3.1.1 Downtown Ranlo

What is commonly referred to as ‘*Downtown Ranlo*’ is a collection of retail and business operations off Spencer Mountain Road near the existing Town municipal complex (1624 Spencer Mountain Road) up to Central Avenue and the Heritage Mill Antiques and Designer Mall complex at 1820 Spencer Mountain Road.

A study of downtown Ranlo, prepared in 2020 by Creech and Associates and LKC, made the following recommendations:

1. *Create a Spencer Mountain Road Highway Corridor Overlay District to establish design standards along the road. Standards to include requirements for:*
 - a. *Sidewalks;*
 - b. *Street Trees;*
 - c. *Maximum Building Setbacks; and*
 - d. *Parking Lot Locations*
2. *Re-zone the Town Hall site to a commercial zone to allow for proposed development;*
3. *Re-zone properties just south of the Town Hall site to allow for commercial development; and*
4. *Re-zone the Heritage Mill site to reflect proposed mixed-use development.*

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5. VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY - BUSINESSES, CITIZENS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Determining what is important to a community is critical. The information gathered through various forms of community participation will establish the foundation of the plan. The voice of Ranlo was sought by the techniques described below. This information, when summarized and ranked in order of popularity, provides the “value statements” about Ranlo. These statements provide the foundation for the preparation of goals and objectives. From these goals and objectives, the team crafted draft strategies refined for Ranlo’s needs by its elected leadership.

5.1 Community Participation – *What does our community want?*

Community participation in the Town Plan 2040 planning process started in the fall of 2022 through three different, but integral, approaches to attract comprehensive input.

The Town of Ranlo printed a list of questions on the back of utility bills mailed to all of their customers, asking them to return them to Town Hall. For the second method, the same questions were posted on an online platform and a link to the website was posted on the Town’s webpage and Facebook account. For the third method, downtown businesses were interviewed.

Questions asked through all three methods asked survey participants of their ‘likes’, ‘dislikes’, ‘wishes’, and ‘fears’ in the community, as well as identify top priorities for the Town’s progression toward the future. The Town received a total of 73 responses through the community input surveys (hardcopy and online) and business interviews.

The following sections highlight the process, results and opportunities for action.

5.1.1 Stakeholder Interviews

Business stakeholder interviews are a great addition to any community engagement process because they give detailed insight into the opinions and perspectives of many members of a community.

While attempts to reach all businesses were made, there are likely several home-based or e-commerce businesses that were not identifiable. Most of the interviews were conducted within the places of business. During the endeavor, the interviewers gained a more comprehensive understanding of people’s attitudes, as well as, the physical characteristics and local context of the community layout, conditions of infrastructure, and numerous other valuable insights of Ranlo.

5.1.2 Summary Results of Surveys – *What our community said!*

The survey and interview were composed of the following questions:

1. Do you reside within the Town of Ranlo?
2. What do you like about Ranlo (present)?
3. What do you dislike about Ranlo (present)?
4. What wishes do you have for Ranlo (future)?
5. What fears do you have for Ranlo (future)?

6. What should be the #1 priority for Ranlo moving forward?

The responses were then cataloged for ranking purposes enabling the results to be summarized graphically. The following pages illustrate the responses in order of their respective frequency rankings.

The rankings indicate **'Maintaining Streets, Water, Sewer, and Roads'** (36%) as the 1st priority. This answer was consistently emphasized by related answers to survey questions:

- *'What do you like about Ranlo?'* indicated *'Good Service'* (2%).
- *'What do you dislike about Ranlo?'*, respondents indicated, *'High Taxes and Utility Costs'* (3%), *'Traffic'* (1%), and *'Not Enough Sidewalks or Crosswalks'* (1%). 6% of respondents indicated concerns over Town administrative and financial management issues as well.³
- *'What wishes do you have for Ranlo?'*, 11% indicated a desire for *'More Sidewalks/Crosswalks'* while 3% indicated a need for *'Better Infrastructure'* overall (i.e. roads, bike lanes, parks, etc.)

There were several comment(s) made about the need to extend walking/hiking trails throughout the community, especially along Ranlo-Spencer Mountain Road.

For the 2nd priority, respondents identified **'Keep Crime Low'** (18%). These priorities and related responses are detailed below.

- *'What do you like about Ranlo?'* respondents indicated *'Family Friendly'* (12%) and *'Low Crime'* (9%).
- *'What do you dislike about Ranlo?'*, respondents indicated *'Poor Property Maintenance'* (17%).
- In responding to the question *'What fears do you have for Ranlo?'*, 32% indicated *'Crime'*.

The 3rd ranked priority was **'Walkability'** (13%) with priorities and related responses detailed below.

- *'What do you like about Ranlo?'* respondents indicated *'Outdoor Activities'* (4%).
- *'What do you dislike about Ranlo?'*, respondents indicated *'Not Enough Sidewalks or Crosswalks'* (1%).
- *'What wishes do you have for Ranlo?'*, 11% indicated a desire for *'More Sidewalks/Crosswalks'* while 3% indicated a need for *'Better Infrastructure'* overall (i.e. roads, bike lanes, parks, etc.)

³ While conducting physical interviews, several participants indicated a displeasure with the former Town Administrator while praising the current administration's efforts to address managerial and fiscal mismanagement concerns.

For the 4th priority, respondents identified ***'Retain our Character'*** (12%). These priorities and related responses are detailed below.

- *'What do you like about Ranlo?'* respondents indicated *'Small Town Feel'* (21%).
- *'What do you dislike about Ranlo?'*, respondents indicated *'Loss of Community'* (1%).
- *'What wishes do you have for Ranlo?'*, 16% of respondents indicated a need to *'Improve the Appearance of the Town'*, 9% of respondents indicated a desire for *'Historic Preservation'* efforts while 1% of indicated a need to preserve the Town of Ranlo's *'Small Town Character'*.
- In responding to the question *'What fears do you have for Ranlo?'*, 20% indicated *'Loss of Small Town Appeal'*. 2% of respondents identified *'Decreases in Property Values'* as a concern.

There was a two-way tie for the 5th ranked priority between ***'Growth'*** and ***'Community Events'*** (8%) with priorities and related responses detailed below.

- *'What do you like about Ranlo?'* respondents indicated *'Sense of Community'* (9%), *'Outdoor Activities'* (4%) and *'Local Businesses'* (3%).
- *'What do you dislike about Ranlo?'*, respondents indicated *'Stagnation of Growth'* (17%) and *'Nothing to do, No Events'* (13%). 6% of respondents indicated a concern over *'Not Enough Parks'* within the community.
- *'What wishes do you have for Ranlo?'*, respondents indicated *'Retain Residents'* (10%), and *'More Parks and Recreation Facilities'* (5%).
- In responding to the question *'What fears do you have for Ranlo?'*, 10% indicated *'Stagnation of Growth'* and *'Not Enough Stores and Restaurants'*.

For the 6th priority, respondents identified ***'More Jobs'*** (12%) with priorities and related responses detailed below.

- *'What do you like about Ranlo?'* respondents indicated *'Local Businesses'* (3%).
- *'What do you dislike about Ranlo?'*, respondents indicated *'Not Enough Restaurants and Stores'* (20%) and *'Stagnation of Growth'* (17%).
- *'What wishes do you have for Ranlo?'*, 14% of respondents indicated a need for *'More Sores and Restaurants'* and *'Retain Residents'* (9%).
- In responding to the question *'What fears do you have for Ranlo?'*, 8% indicated *'Loss of Employment Options'*.

The 7th and final priority identified by survey respondents saw a four-way tie between: ***'More Housing Options'***, ***'Improved Fire Protection'***, ***'Community Policing'***, and ***'Improved Local Government/Administration'*** (1%) with priorities and related responses detailed below.

- *'What do you like about Ranlo?'* respondents indicated *'Small Town Feel'* (21%), *'Affordability'* (14%), and *'Leadership'* (5%). 2% of respondents indicated there was nothing they *'liked'* about the Town.
- *'What do you dislike about Ranlo?'*, respondents indicated *'Poor Town Management/Leadership'* (6%), *'High Taxes and Utility Costs'* (3%), *'High Home Prices'* (1%), and *'Loss of Community'* (1%).
- *'What wishes do you have for Ranlo?'*, 9% of respondents indicated a need to *'Retain Residents'* (9%), *'Lower Taxes/Utility Bills'* (1%), and *'Improved Town Leadership'* (1%).
- In responding to the question *'What fears do you have for Ranlo?'* respondents indicated *'Lack of Employment Options'* (8%), *'Decreases in Property Values'* (2%) and *'Lack of Communication by Town Officials'* (1%).

Final Priorities. Since responses for priorities five and seven resulted in multiple answers, with respect to responses for *'What should be the #1 priority for Ranlo moving forward'*, it was necessary to add percentages to arrive at prioritizing the final list of goals.

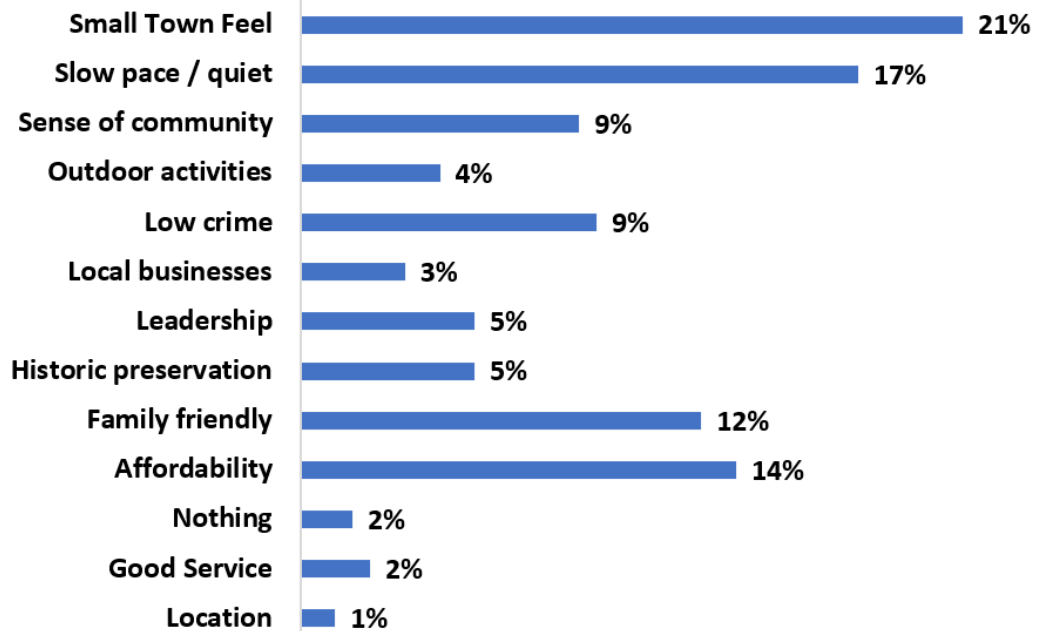
Several responses also have similar goals/objectives to address priority needs and were combined. For example, the goal(s) and objectives to address *'walkability'* within the community were combined under the priorities of *'Maintaining Streets, Water, Sewer, and Roads'*, *'Growth and Community Events'* and *'Retain our Character'* to avoid unnecessary repetition and duplication of effort.

Several answers to *'What should be the #1 priority for Ranlo moving forward?'* produced responses that have a scope and impact exceeding what can be accomplished through land use planning alone. They are, however, important concerns expressed by respondents of the Plan's community input. As a result, they were shared with the Town's Administrative Department to identify additional action(s) that can be taken to address same. Those priorities include *'Maintaining Streets, Water, Sewer, and Roads'*, *'Community Events'*, *'Improved Fire Protection'*, *'Community Policing'*, and *'Improved Local Government/Administration'*.

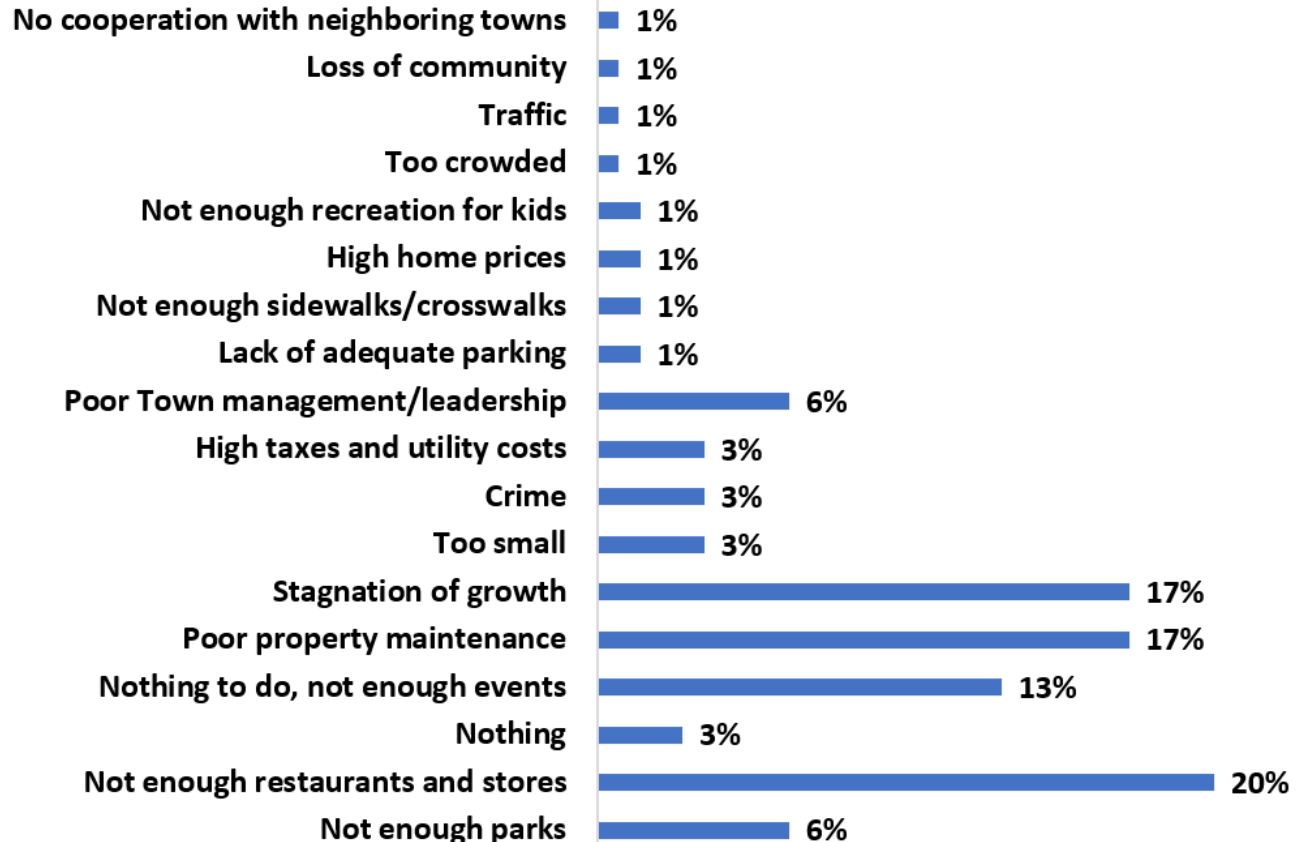
After combining tied responses, and taking the concerns listed above that have broader impact(s)/solutions than can be addressed by town planning activities alone, community concerns fall into the following final priorities.

- ***'Maintain and Enhance Local Infrastructure'***
- ***'Keep Crime Low'***
- ***'Retain our Character'***
- ***'Growth and More Jobs'***
- ***'Community Events'***
- ***'More Housing Options', and***
- ***'Improved Community Relations'.***

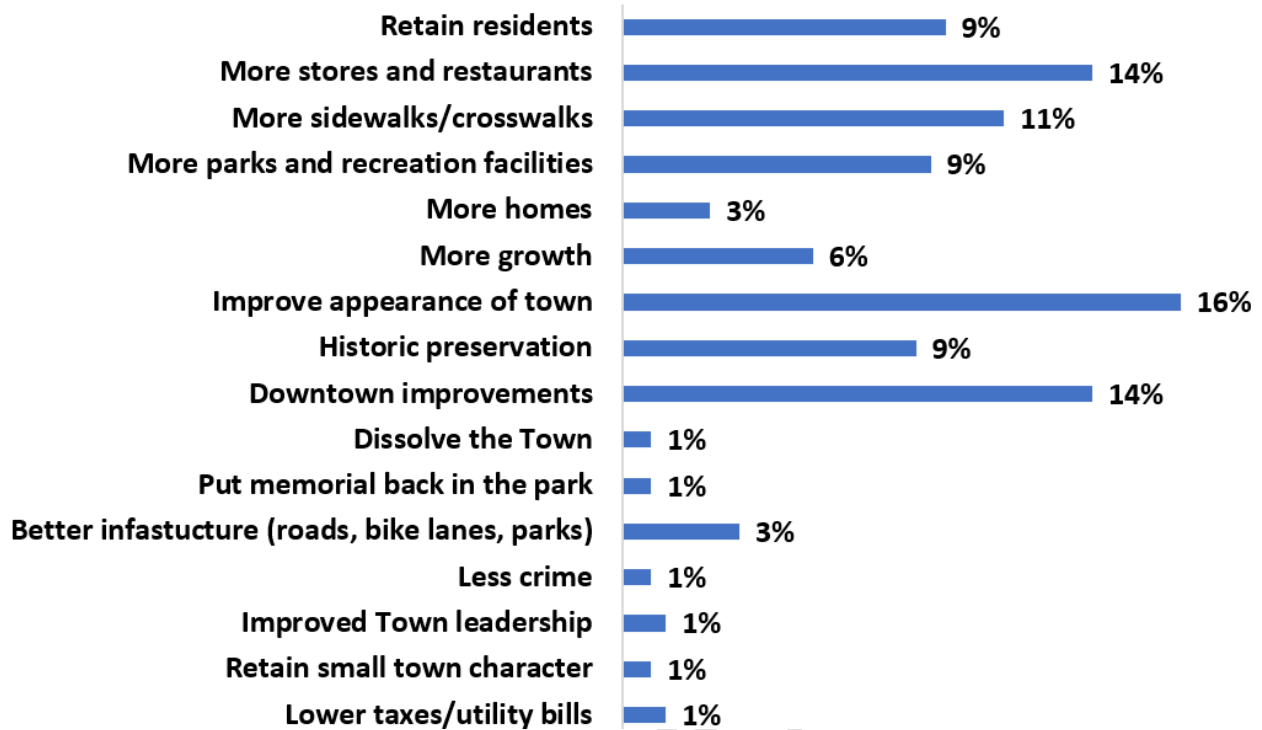
What do you like about Ranlo?



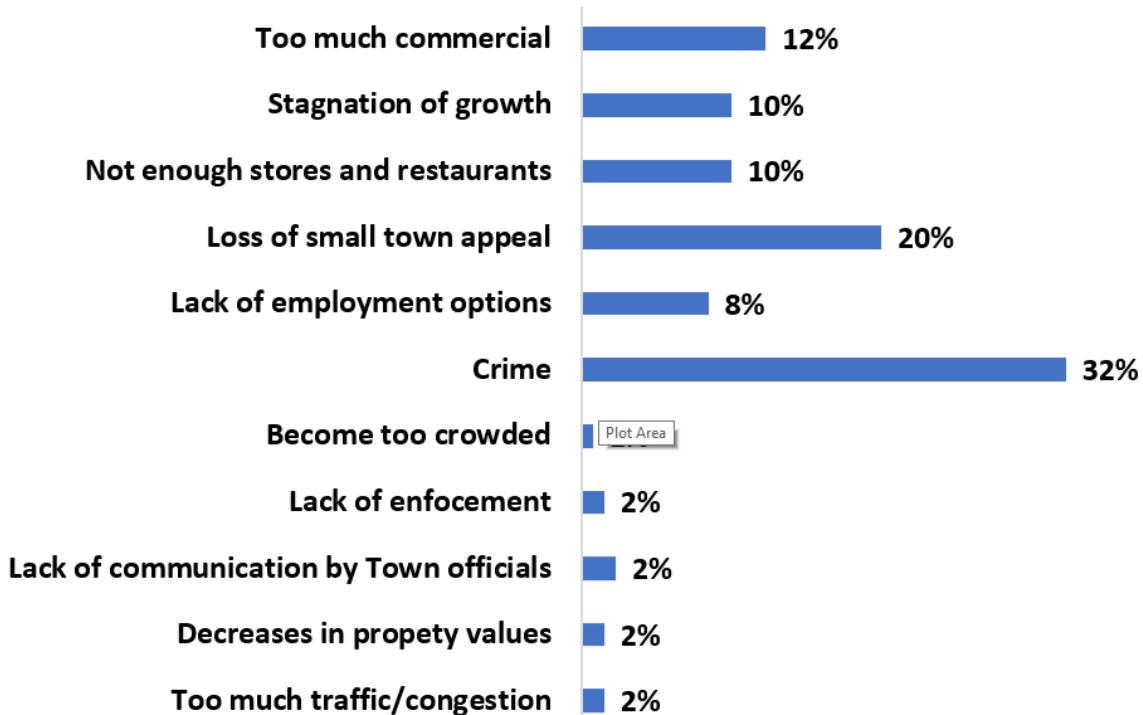
What do you dislike about Ranlo?



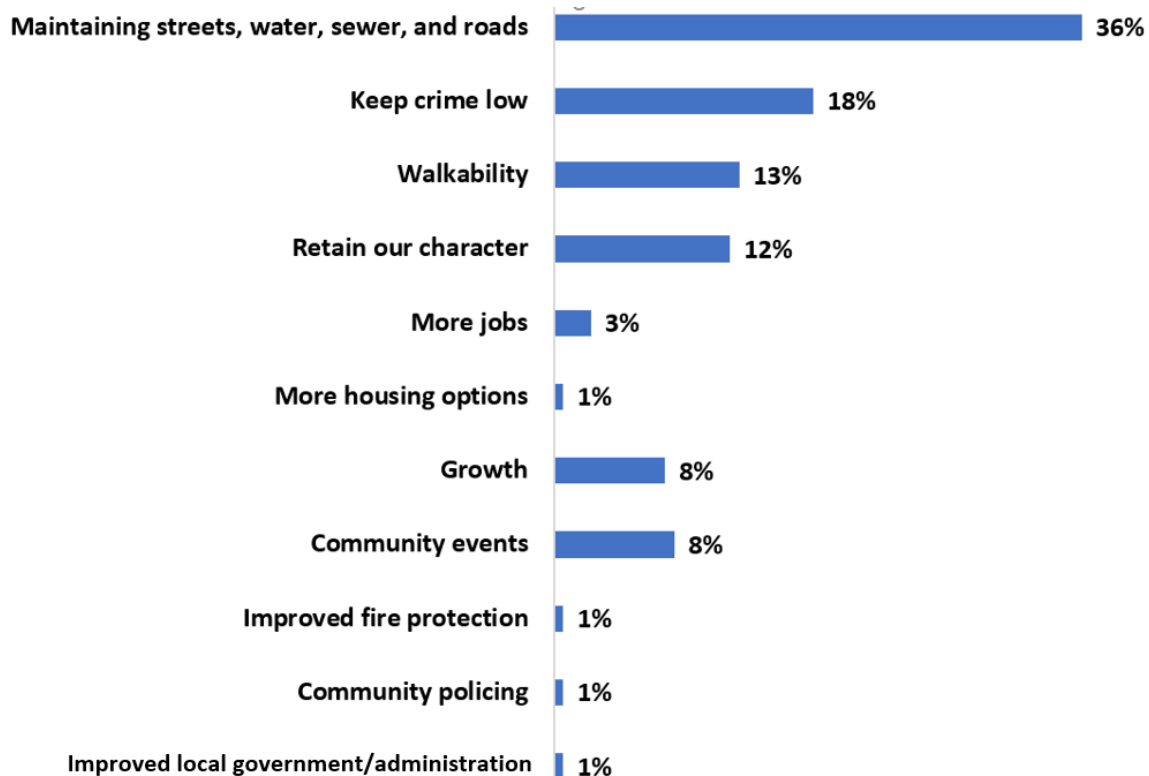
What wishes do you have for Ranlo?



What fears do you have for Ranlo?



What should be the #1 priority for Ranlo moving forward?



5.1.3 Community Input

The Town of Ranlo staff and planning team conducted the following activities to solicit community input for this Town Plan 2040:

- Advertised the online survey on the Town's website homepage and Facebook account;
- Printed survey questions on the Town's utility bills; and
- Interviewed downtown businesses.

Input from the survey and interviews is included in the summary data in Section 5.1.2 to illustrate the responses to the survey interview questions.

5.1.4 Social Media Platform

Social media applications (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) have become commonplace. Ninety percent of Millennials (adults born between 1982 and 1998) use social media on a regular basis, along with 77% of adults born between 1966 and 1981. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), Baby Boomers' use of social media has tripled since the year 2010, and 35% of those aged 65 and older report using social media regularly. Social media has revolutionized the way we communicate with each other (just as the telephone once did) and has become a vital means of interaction between individuals, organizations, and communities.

Local governments are using social media for outreach to constituents, for transparency in their operations, and to increase citizen participation. Common uses of social media include crime prevention and police assistance, emergency alerts and severe weather updates, local activities and event registrations, construction updates and road closings, advertising job openings, public service announcements, and announcements of Board of Commissioners and advisory board meetings. According to the [Institute for Local Government](#), local governments increasingly find social media to be more than just a means of disseminating information, and see it to help staff, citizen advisory groups and elected officials make better decisions, broaden community engagement and improve public discourse, and ultimately to increase trust in government.

The Town of Ranlo assisted in using the Town's website to facilitate community participation. After adoption, the Town can use social media to build support for implementation of the Town Plan 2040. As a tool for citizen engagement, the Town's social media platform can help the *Ranlo Town Plan 2040 Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan* remain fresh and in the forefront of this dialogue, becoming a 'living' document to help Ranlo achieve its goals.

5.1.4.1 Strategy: Develop a Consolidated Social Media Platform

Below are near-term action steps the Town of Ranlo can take to expand its social media platform and widen its digital footprint. The [International City Management Association](#) has a wealth of resources to assist the Town in this endeavor.

1. ***Continue to update and expand social media.*** The Town can continue to use its official website to work closely with all Town departments to provide current information to the public.
 - a. Update outdated and missing content throughout the website, especially in key areas.
 - b. ***Add links and open new social media applications as soon as possible.*** The Town should consider using Instagram. Even if posts are infrequent in the beginning, opening accounts now would ensure that the Town can claim the appropriate and authorized 'handles' (e.g., @townofRanlonc, etc.) and create topical and relevant hashtags (e.g. #visitRanlonc, etc.)

5.2 Goals-Objectives-Strategies

The objectives and strategies appearing under each goal appear in priority rankings based upon the number of public comments. These may be pursued as deemed appropriate by the Town, its citizens, and businesses.

5.2.1 GOAL 1: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE!

WATER:

5.2.1.1 Objective 1: Continue to work with Two Rivers Utilities, local municipal planning partners and, where appropriate, Gaston County on the

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development and implementation of a long-term water allocation agreement(s). The Town will need to secure guarantees for long-term water allocation to plan for anticipated/desired growth. Primarily, this will be in coordination with staff from the Two Rivers Utility system. To promote sustainable growth, however, efforts will be made to include surrounding municipal and County planning partners to ensure a comprehensive approach.

Strategy 1: *Develop a formal schedule to meet with Two Rivers Utility officials to review water usage to plan for the Town's water needs more effectively.* Meetings should occur, at a minimum, every two years to review water usage rates.

Strategy 2: *Update local ordinances to include Two Rivers Utility officials as a review partner in all subdivision and non-residential site plan review projects to ensure utility opportunities/constraints are properly identified and addressed during the plan review process.*

Strategy 3: *Working with the Two Rivers Utility, local municipal, and County staff, develop a long-range water service plan for the community including a schedule for regular servicing of lines (i.e. cleaning, flushing, etc.), installation and upgrading of utility lines, provision of water for fire suppression services (i.e. installation of fire hydrants), and addressing of water quality issues.* This service plan will also identify how Ranlo, surrounding municipal partners, Gaston County, and Two Rivers Utility can coordinate local educational efforts for members of the community.

SEWER:

5.2.1.2 Objective 2: Address the Town's long-term sewer needs. The Town will need to complete a comprehensive sewer study to identify and plan for long-term sewer needs addressing anticipated/desired growth.

ROADWAYS:

5.2.1.3 Objective 3: Address the Town's long-term road maintenance needs.

Strategy 1: *Complete an assessment of all locally-maintained roadways as part of the annual budget process.*

Strategy 2: *Develop and implement a local roadway maintenance master plan.*

Strategy 3 *Develop a 'Adopt a Local Street' program for business, neighborhood associations, and local civic organization to help in trash pick-up along locally maintained roadways within the Town limits and ETJ.*

Strategy 4: *The Town of Ranlo will promote NCDOT's existing "Adopt-A-Highway" volunteer program to attract participation within the town limits and ETJ for State maintained roadways.*

Strategy 5 *Complete a traffic study to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety along Spencer Mountain Road focusing on the intersections of Rhyne Circle, Park Drive, and Ranlo Avenue.*

STORMWATER:

5.2.1.4 Objective 1: **Prepare, fund, and implement a stormwater master plan so the Town may start budgeting towards the design of a community stormwater system.** This plan will be designed to cover existing developed areas and identify how new development will be expected to ‘tie into’ the system and augment the Town’s stormwater system.

Strategy 1: *Update the Town UDO to develop comprehensive stormwater management standards.* This includes thresholds for redevelopment projects (residential and commercial) to install and maintain stormwater management systems.

Strategy 2: *Coordinate with surrounding municipal and County partners where feasible to ensure sustainable and fiscally responsible approach to stormwater management.*

SIDEWALKS, NATURE TRAILS AND BICYCLE LANES:

5.2.1.5 Objective 5: **Prepare, fund, and implement a sidewalk, greenway and bicycle lane master plan so the Town may start budgeting toward building/expanding pedestrian access management system connecting existing and future neighborhoods, town amenities, and local businesses.**

Strategy 1: *Install crosswalks at key intersections to facilitate safe pedestrian access to key areas within the community.* During community outreach, several local residents and business owners expressed concerns over the lack of formal/defined crosswalks near Town Hall allowing residents to cross Spencer Mountain Road.

Strategy 2: *Ensure connectivity to parks and natural areas.* During community outreach, several local residents and business owners expressed interest in seeing sidewalks, nature/hiking trails, and dedicated bicycle lanes allowing access to Spencer Mountain and the South-Fork of the Catawba River. The existing sidewalk system is inadequate to address access needs.

Strategy 3 *Coordinate with surrounding municipal partners, Gaston County, and NCDOT staff to maximize development of pedestrian travel ways and improve connectivity where possible.*

Strategy 4: *Ensure access is ADA compatible for universal access.*

5.2.1.6 Objective 6: **Require developers to construct sidewalks and/or bicycle lanes in new neighborhoods and commercial developments.**

Strategy 1: *Update the Town UDO to require installation of sidewalks and/or bicycle lanes as part of residential and non-residential developments.*

PARKS:

5.2.4.7 Objective 1: Develop a master park plan for the Town of Ranlo.

Strategy 1: *Explore available sites for future Town parks.*

Strategy 2: *Explore properties the Town could acquire to construct public parks. Through the development process, new park sites and amenities could be coordinated for operation by the Town. Utilizing new property tax revenues can partially fund these positions as development occurs*

5.2.2 Goal 2: KEEP CRIME LOW!

5.2.2.1 Objective 1: Safe Neighborhoods.

Strategy 1: *Identify and continue practices that consistently achieve low crime rates throughout Ranlo neighborhoods.*

5.2.2.2 Objective 2: The Town of Ranlo will explore ways to receive training in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and apply CPTED concepts to Town-owned properties.

Strategy 1: *Upon future formation of a Planning and Zoning Department and a Police Department, staff will collaborate to seek funding to receive CPTED training. CPTED is the intentional design of the physical environment in ways that reduce or remove identifiable crime risks. CPTED concepts are composed of: natural surveillance (increases visibility); natural access control (controls access); and territorial reinforcement (promotes a sense of ownership).*

5.2.2.3 Objective 3: Staff of the Planning and Zoning Department and Police Departments will apply principles of CPTED, after receiving training, to their areas of authority to help reduce crime.

Strategy 1: *Planning and Zoning Department staff will promote the use of CPTED concepts while reviewing site plans of new development.*

Strategy 2: *Staff will promote the use of CPTED concepts by performing reviews of town-owned property and generating a prioritized list of retrofit projects, and complete them as funding allows.*

Strategy 3: *Police Department staff will offer property surveys to homeowners and businesses; and provide recommendations for making changes to bring their property into compliance with CPTED concepts.*

5.2.2.4 Objective 4: Complete a light audit of the Town to determine if there is a correlation between crime levels and poorly illuminated areas.

Strategy 1: In poorly lit areas, the Town will coordinate with local residents and businesses to erect additional outdoor lighting to increase security and visibility.

5.2.3.5 Objective 5: Work with local neighborhoods to establish neighborhood watch programs educational outreach programs.

5.2.3.6 Objective 6: Enforce and strengthen property maintenance standards.

Strategy 1: Enforce Existing Garbage-Related Ordinances. Enforce existing standards regarding dumpster maintenance, homeowner trash receptacles, and private garbage hauling.

Strategy 2: Strengthen Property Maintenance Standards. Adopt and enforce stronger property maintenance standards in the future UDO.

Strategy 3 Assign staff member(s) to monitor and coordinate roadside litter pickup efforts among participating civic and community organizations. As indicated within Goal 1, the Town should explore the creation of an “Adopt-A-Street” volunteer program within the town limits and ETJ to tangibly demonstrate civic pride, contribute to a cleaner environment, help retain and attract economic development, and serve as a reminder to the public not to litter the roadways.

Strategy 4: The Town of Ranlo Public Works Department will ensure garbage trucks use best management practices to reduce accidental release of litter from trucks.

Strategy 5: The Town of Ranlo should hire a code enforcement officer.

5.2.3 Goal 3: RETAIN OUR CHARACTER!

5.2.3.1 Objective 1: Ensure development within the Town is consistent with the policies, goals, and objectives of the Plan. Development shall be consistent with the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and various land use categories goals/objectives adopted as part .

5.2.3.2 Objective 2: Ensure proposed residential and non-residential development activities are similar in scope and intensity to surrounding land uses, are not out of character for the area in which they are located, and are designed to strengthen the Town’s identity.

5.2.3.3 Objective 3: Encourage development at appropriate densities in areas where existing services/infrastructure (i.e. water, sewer, road, stormwater, etc.) are already provided and are viable to support the project. Ranlo’s growth will be directed,

through application of the future land use map and zoning map, to areas where utilities and services are already provided.

5.2.3.4 Objective 4: Apply standards of the new UDO to ensure quality growth. A new unified development ordinance (UDO) being prepared at the time of adoption of this Plan will address the community's priorities to manage growth to ensure safety and quality.

5.2.3.5 Objective 5: Complete additional Small Area Plans or Master Plans of those focus areas denoted on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). Areas identified as 'future growth areas' on the FLUM will need additional study/analysis.

5.2.4 Goal 4: GROWTH AND MORE JOBS!

5.2.4.1 Objective 1: Harness the imminent opportunities of regional expansion while managing growth within Ranlo.

Strategy 1: *Encourage private investment within Ranlo by updating development ordinances to encourage desired development and establish quality standards and specifications to protect the environmentally sensitive and historically relevant assets of the Town.*

Strategy 2: *Adopt Required Review Procedures.* Adopt required review procedures and standards and specifications for development in the new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

5.2.4.2 Objective 2: Ensure quality development within the Town of Ranlo.

Strategy 1: *Encourage development first in areas where existing infrastructure and convenient proximity to Town services are already provided.* The first wave of the community's expanding business market will be directed, through application of the Future Land Use Map and Zoning Map, to areas where utilities and services are already provided.

Strategy 2: *Prepare a new UDO with standards to ensure quality growth.* The new unified development ordinance (UDO), currently being prepared, will address the community's priorities to attract business and manage growth to ensure safety and quality.

5.2.4.3 Objective 3: Have a good plan and ordinances so projects achieve the mission of the plan.

Strategy 1: *Adopt Town Plan 2040 to establish Ranlo as a successful community and a partner in the future growth and re-development of the area.* Establishing a clear vision and the action steps to achieve the goals established by the Town is the first task toward a bright future. (See Section 8.5.)

Strategy 2: *Prepare and adopt a new UDO establishing standards and specifications for new development and re-development consistent with Town Plan 2040.* The replacement of antiquated ordinances with relevant modern development standards will establish Ranlo as a leader in proactively seeking to refresh itself into a 21st century community. (See Section 8.5.)

5.2.4.4 Objective 4: Ensure the types of businesses permitted and their respective development standards at key locations improves visitors' first impressions; strengthens the Town's identity as having a modern and healthy economy; and attracts customers from within and outside of Ranlo.

Strategy 1: *At the time of adoption, the existing zoning map and the existing Zoning Ordinance are in the process of being updated and replaced with a new map and Ordinance to ensure Town staff, property owners, interested developers, the Planning Board, and the Board of Commissioners have a clear path forward in investment and rezoning decisions consistent with the Future Land Use Map and this and other related goals, objectives and strategies.*

Strategy 2: *As a complement to Strategy 1, ensure the types of businesses that are NOT permitted at key locations (i.e., at Town's major entrances, along major roadways, and at Ranlo's main intersections), have options to locate at strategically planned locations to ensure their ability to locate, relocate, potentially expand, and thrive among compatible land uses. (See 8.4.1.)*

5.2.4.5 Objective 5: Adopt standards and specifications and take actions that attract new businesses within downtown with higher development and code enforcement standards to ensure quality development.

Strategy 1: *Ensure the new UDO encourages investment in downtown. The UDO should integrate architectural design standards and enhanced enforcement requirements. (See 8.5.1.)*

Strategy 2: *Improve way-finding throughout the Town to enhance the visitor experience.* Local directional signage will help guide the visitor to shopping, services, accommodations, and food/beverage businesses in Ranlo. The Town should consider future design and funding of a way-finding sign program as the Town grows. (See 6.8.2.1.)

5.2.4.6 Objective 6: Support existing businesses and encourage additional businesses outside the downtown area that complement and not compete with downtown.

Strategy 1: *Ensure Town standards and specifications encourage growth and expansion of businesses.* The Town's new UDO should identify different commercial zoning districts with varying permitted uses and development standards.

5.2.4.7 Objective 7: Preserve the small-town appeal of Ranlo while encouraging compatible business growth through development of revised development standards and specifications.

Strategy 1: ***Create a Main Street District (MS) through zoning standards and specifications with architectural design standards and specifications as well as development incentives designed to allow existing business to grow and encourage compatible new development.*** Careful consideration will go into the preparation of design standards and specifications that reinforce the small town feel through an understanding of architectural and urban design principles that direct the placement and massing of structures.

Attention will be also given to what may be considered the public realm, typically composed of streets, sidewalks, and civic spaces to help guide the Town's decision-making of details when investing in light posts, outside furniture, landscaping and sidewalk surfaces.

Strategy 2: ***Give attention during preparation of the new Main Street District (MS) to address development standards of adjacent properties and streets.*** As the new Main Street increases in development interest and popularity as a destination for commerce, entertainment and civic events, it is important to allow adjacent areas to have the option to transition to new uses that may offer supportive roles through the service sector, such as professional offices, while remaining compatible to adjacent residential uses. This transition also helps add to the number of employees and the private-sector clients who may become frequent patrons of restaurants and businesses along Main Street. Dismissive planning of support areas to Main Streets inadvertently restricts the primary destination streets from maximizing their potential in retaining the community-cherished small-town feel.

The UDO can provide flexibility to allow access for parking, deliveries and other utilitarian functions at mid-blocks.

Strategy 3: ***Have the Town consider adaptive reuse of historic/existing structures for public uses before designing new structures.*** There may be existing historic structures contributing to the small town feel of Ranlo that are in need of significant reinvestment beyond the current property owner's abilities to provide. As opportunities arise, the Town will explore whether such historic structures may be repurposed into a government use.

Strategy 4: ***Have the Town consider context-sensitive designs when it is time for Town-owned buildings to be constructed so that designs reinforce the small-town feel.*** The architectural style of publicly owned buildings has historically provided inspiration for privately developed buildings which often mimicked many design elements to create a cohesive sense of place. Large investments by the Town of Ranlo for civic buildings can positively or negatively have a domino effect on the designs of private-sector investments in land development. To successfully respond to the community's desire to retain a small-town atmosphere, the Town must dedicate resources to design structures which emulate enduring qualities expressed by the community. An example of this principal was the design for the Town of Edenton, North Carolina's Police Headquarters building. Its design was inspired by the Town's historic cotton mill and although it served a large

governmental function, the building blended well with the surrounding historic neighborhood and instantly created a sense of pride for the Town and area residents.

Strategy 5: ***Incorporate a sense of small-town ambiance in public infrastructure.*** Details within the public realm (sidewalks, public plazas, parks, and public parking lots) of a town can be as important as the privately-owned buildings themselves for maintaining a tangible small town look. When the Town of Ranlo is tasked with selecting sidewalks, outside furniture, utility posts and even landscaping, the Town should already have a list of products from which to purchase that reinforce the small-town ambiance.

5.2.4.8 Objective 8: Foster growth in local-craft businesses.

Strategy 1: ***Incorporate in the new UDO, standards and specifications that respond to challenges associated with expanding and attracting local-craft businesses in downtown Ranlo.*** Restaurants, artisan specialty shops, and entrepreneurs producing products high in craftsmanship within proximity to each other will generate interest and establish Ranlo as a destination.

Ensure the UDO acknowledges the fiscal challenges a start-up business would have if required to develop property under the same conventional standards and specifications as a national retailer regarding minimum lot area, building setbacks, minimum parking and other site development standards. Adopt standards and specifications that allow conversions of existing structures into new uses, encourage shared parking, and provide flexibility in building setbacks to respond to unique lot dimensions.

Adopt administrative review procedures sensitive to challenges faced by local craft businesses to improve their successful start-up and future expansions in Ranlo.

5.2.5 Goal 5: COMMUNITY EVENTS!

5.2.5.1 Objective 1: Encourage community events co-hosted by local businesses and the Town.

Strategy 1: ***Provide businesses with periodic Town support staff and resources to attract residents and visitors to Ranlo for events (i.e., parades, Veterans Day ceremonies, holiday events, and concerts) to increase pride in the community and raise exposure to local businesses.***

5.2.5.2 Objective 2: Plan for the development of outdoor civic event spaces.

Strategy 1: ***Explore properties the Town could lease for the construction of public plazas for community events.***

5.2.5.3 Objective 3: Explore existing town-owned property and property the Town could acquire or lease for community events.

Strategy 1: *Explore existing town-owned properties the Town could repurpose or new property the town could acquire to construct public plazas for community events.* Through the development process, new park plazas and amenities could be coordinated for operation by the Town and/or community partners. Utilizing new property tax revenues can partially fund civic spaces and a community event planning as development occurs.

5.2.5.4 Objective 4: Identify opportunities to add parks as the number of neighborhoods grow.

Strategy 1: *Explore properties the Town could acquire to construct public parks.*

Strategy 2: *Identify opportunities for new development to provide parks in their plans.*

5.2.5.5 Objective 5: Pedestrian Pathways.

Strategy 1: *Require developers construct sidewalks in new neighborhoods and commercial developments.*

Strategy 2: *As detailed within Goal 1, prepare, fund, and implement a sidewalk master plan so the Town may start budgeting toward building a sidewalk system connecting existing and future neighborhoods to schools and town amenities.*

5.2.6 GOAL 6: MORE HOUSING OPTIONS!

5.2.6.1 Objective 1: Identify which barriers currently exist in Ranlo that inhibit it from being a more family friendly community.

Strategy 1: *Identify whether the following barriers exist in Ranlo that inadvertently inhibit it from being family oriented:*

- *Lack of affordable housing;*
- *Exclusionary and single-use zoning;*
- *Insensitive urban design;*
- *Property tax too high;*
- *Lack of services;*
- *Lack of quality education; and*
- *Crime.*

5.2.6.2 Objective 2: Continue to support housing at affordable prices.

Strategy 1: *Continue to offer practices within the Town's ability to foster development of housing at affordable prices.*

5.2.7 GOAL 7: IMPROVE COMMUNITY RELATIONS!

5.2.7.1 Objective 1: Continue to strive for both a government review and land use planning process that is transparent, fair, open, efficient, and responsive.

5.2.7.2 Objective 2: Undertake a comprehensive effort to inform and involve citizens of Ranlo in the land use planning process.

Strategy 1 Develop internal processes, audits and continue to offer citizen surveys to ensure satisfaction of the development review and approval process.

Strategy 2 Develop quarterly outreach meetings designed to offer educational opportunities to Ranlo residents on the Town's land use development processes to create and foster and understanding of local development opportunities and constraints.

Strategy 3 Develop an annual elected official retreat where the public will be allotted a set period to present comments/concerns. It is not necessarily intended to address these comments at the meeting but provide a forum where such questions can be asked and the Board of Commissioners and Town Administration can determine the best course of action to respond.

Strategy 4. Update the Town website to create a 'frequently asked questions' section where residents can post, and receive answers to, various questions associated with the Town of Ranlo.

5.2.7.3 Objective 3: Develop educational and public information programs to increase awareness of the potential for the design, construction and rehabilitation of commercial and residential structures that are energy efficient and/or use non-polluting renewable energy sources.

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6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Ranlo, North Carolina is located within Gaston County, approximately one mile north of I-85. The Town is bordered to the east by the City of Lowell and bordered to the south by the City of Gastonia. Based on current Census data, the Town's corporate limits encompasses approximately 1.7 square miles of land area.

The Town is in a region defined as the *Charlotte Metropolitan Area*, which is also a part of the *Charlotte-Concord Combined Statistical Area* (hereafter 'the CSA'). Located in the Piedmont region of the state, the CSA includes urban/suburban areas in and around the City of Charlotte in both North and South Carolina, the largest in the Carolinas, is one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States (US) and the fourth largest in the Southeastern US.

Ranlo has excellent access to I-85 with the closest of 3 interchanges (Exit numbers 20, 21 and 22) within 1.5 miles from Ranlo's town limits. Major interior thoroughfares in Ranlo include Spencer Mountain Road and North New Hope Road.

Incorporated on July 29, 1963, the Town had its origins in a community established around local textile mills and manufacturing centers. The name "Ranlo" was combined from the names of two prominent local industrialists John Calvin Rankin and William Thomas Love. Today, the largest percentage of the Town's workforce are employed in the category of "management, business, sciences, and arts" occupations while the largest percentage of employees in Ranlo are employed in the category of "education services, health care, and social assistance" industry.

6.1 Why Focus on Economic Development

Economic development is critical to a community for two reasons: 1) to provide an employment and income base for the community; and 2) to enable a community's leadership to maintain the lowest reasonable rates for its utility rate payers and taxpayers.

Effective economic development starts with the latter. Prudent management procedures for the efficient and effective operations of both utility enterprises and tax revenue systems will ensure that all money due to both the Town and the County is collected. Effective collection allows leadership to establish and maintain the lowest responsible rates for all rate payers and taxpayers.

6.1.1 Utility Rates

Achieving low utility rates for customers of the Town always begins with proper maintenance and operations of utilities while carefully managing the expansion of such systems. Maintenance of existing systems should emphasize quality control to eliminate leaks, account for water and wastewater usage, and avoid contamination. Placing an emphasis on these important factors will provide one way of improving the return on the investment by both the Town and the County for rate payers.

Another important approach to improving the return on public investment is to carefully manage the growth and expansion of the system. Extensions should be prudently studied and examined to determine the effective advantages to the current rate payers of such expansion and ensure sound decision making. Extensions without annexation may increase utility revenue, but at the same time may expose the rate payer, and taxpayer,

to financial obligations while the benefactor of the extension shares little or no risk in the cost of the extension. Exceptions should only be considered when public health is at risk and annexation is not eligible; therefore, obtaining a voluntary petition for annexation to be held until eligibility is attained can protect the Town, its rate payers and taxpayers.

A third important factor in increasing the return on the public's investment in the utility enterprises is to encourage infill development and redevelopment. Improving under-developed and under-utilized areas of existing development within the Town can increase the return on investment in existing infrastructure and contribute greatly to reducing utility and property tax rates.

6.1.2 Property Tax Strategy and Other Taxes Collected

The maintenance of low property (ad valorem) tax rates always begins with the prudent and effective management of reporting and collecting the other revenue sources towns receive in order to reduce reliance on property taxes. Emphasis on effective data reporting enables the retrieval of several types of taxes already paid by our citizens and businesses every day that can easily be overlooked in the absence of effective reporting practices.

The Utility Franchise Tax is a tax on utility billings collected by electric, gas, telecommunications and cable television companies that is distributed back to the Town by the respective utility. If the utility companies do not have current information reflecting the Town's boundaries, then inaccurate reporting to the State by the utility company results in reduced distributions to the Town by the State.

Another tax already paid by the taxpayer daily is the State tax on motor vehicle fuels, commonly known as the Powell Bill. The state distributes this tax to towns based upon a combination of population and street mileage maintained by the town. As towns' street networks grow by accepting new subdivision streets for maintenance, the Powell Bill data reporting must keep pace. Immediately upon completion of new streets, the Town should update its Powell Bill information during the next reporting cycle, so the Town begins bringing that revenue, already paid by the taxpayer, back to Ranlo to increase the funding available for maintenance. A new street may retrieve significant revenues over time before any repair cost are experienced.

State sales tax distributions to the Town are controlled by the County. The sales taxes collected and redistributed within a county may return to the Town by either population or property valuation-based formulas - determined in North Carolina by the local County Commissioners. This system is a counter-productive system in that counties often compete with towns for growth so they may keep a larger share of sales tax distributions to be shared locally. The only effective role a town may have in successfully growing its recovery of the sales tax collected by local businesses is through the careful management of the utility enterprises. Provision of stormwater, potable water, and sanitary sewer has a profound effect on the location of businesses; and towns that manage their systems with an emphasis on return on investment can improve their share of local sales tax recovered by supporting growth within the boundaries of the town.

Property taxes are the major source of local discretionary funding for routine services such as recreation, sanitation, public safety and administration. Maximizing the recovery of the taxes already collected by the state can reduce the level of taxation required of property owners.

6.1.3 Jobs and Economic Base

The economic base of a community is the collective group of business activities that bring money into the Town by providing a product or service. The category of “management, business, sciences, and arts” occupations has been the top sector in recent years bringing money into Ranlo, followed by “sales and office” occupations. The non-basic sectors including commercial development (driven by residential development) are typically that part of the local economy providing services and products sought by the basic sector workers and others, such as the dry cleaners, pharmacy, grocery store and repair service businesses. When “travel and tourism” is part of the economic base, many businesses serve both purposes; restaurants are a good example because they serve both local and non-local customers routinely. “Hotels and other hospitality” businesses can serve both the tourism and corporate sector of our future economic base.

The economic base establishes a true purpose for the community. The jobs created by the basic sector businesses are the obvious direct benefit of the economic base. Jobs are critical because much of the impact of the economic base depends on how well money is distributed throughout the community, and jobs are the primary method of distribution. Automation often tends to allow economic activity to skim over the surface of a community and not have as deep an impact. One way to maximize a positive economic impact of the local economic base sector business community is to establish local relationships with companies and enterprises to provide as much local support and local resources as possible to increase distributions of wealth locally.

Increases in the value of local properties by infill development and redevelopment of under-utilized areas help lower property taxes for all taxpayers, further improving the local return on the investments made in existing infrastructure (*see Section 6.1.2*).

6.2 Current Economic Profile - Conventional Sectors

6.2.1 Management, Business, Sciences, an Arts

The largest number of the Town’s citizens in the workforce (aged 16+) are employed in the category of “management, business, sciences, and arts” occupations (494 people or 30% of the 1,646-member workforce) with the second largest number employed within “sales and office” occupations. (*See Table 3.5.1 in Section 3*)

These occupation groups are all commercial in nature and show that the commercial sector is not only the key to Ranlo’s success, but these sectors will flourish when given the proper business climate and innovative options to attract attention. The updating of local zoning standards and specifications, as discussed in Section 8, will improve the business community’s options for innovative development.

A healthy commercial services sector is critical to supporting strong industry; therefore, practical standards and specifications such as zoning rules and non-residential property

maintenance codes must be administered to support the sector. Standards and specifications must be updated to protect property rights while preserving natural resources and establishing reasonable standards for enhancing the appearance of all new development and redevelopment. Equally important to updating the Ranlo development ordinances is professional administration to ensure equal and fair treatment to all Ranlo's businesses and citizens. Proper implementation will enhance these industries and occupations, allowing them to become more prosperous.

6.2.2 Educational Services, Health Care, Social Assistance and Manufacturing

Educational services, health care, social assistance and manufacturing have been important to Ranlo's historic growth. These businesses represent a vital sector in Ranlo's area economy providing jobs to many residents. *(See Table 3.5.1 B. in Section 3 for data within the corporate limits)*

6.3 Importance of the Infrastructure Networks

Infrastructure, including water, sewer, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, high-speed internet, roads, railroads, and airports make up the core infrastructure for a community. These networks often seem unrelated; however, lack of coordination between these unique systems can result in poor decisions regarding land use development.

Municipal utilities such as water, stormwater, sewer, streets, sidewalks and greenways generally represent most hard structure utilities. These utilities generally are based upon the network of streets and roads.

Non-municipal services such as electric, telecommunications, natural gas and broad-band fiber generally utilize flexible conduits for their conveyances. These service providers are typically located within or adjacent to public street and road right-of-way and therefore utilize much of the same network for distribution.

Coordination among these various service providers, as well as other governmental counterparts such as the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Gaston County and other providers, is also vital to efficient operations of Ranlo's utilities and public works functions. Conducting periodic meetings to review planned improvements and proposed developments by private development interests can often improve the level of service to all of Ranlo's businesses and citizens by identifying opportunities for cost savings through coordination. Inclusion of representatives of these various agencies on a local technical review committee coordinated by the Town's professional planning department will reduce costs to Ranlo rate and taxpayers.

Examples of cooperative initiatives may include provision of services for manufacturing facilities, where dual feed electrical supply, water, sewer, and a host of other functions can be coordinated ahead of time to ensure appropriate capacity is provided and corridor limitations are foreseen. Projects to consider should be evaluated based on merit to the Town's utility rate and taxpayers.

6.4 Existing Business Retention and Expansion

Ranlo must continue to work hard to create businesses that cater to current and future Ranlo residents and employees who commute into Ranlo via three I-85 interchanges. Diverse

businesses including resilient job creators, specialty markets, professional services, health professionals, and food and beverage establishments supplemented by small industry, craftsmanship, and artistic endeavors (both for-profit and non-profit) will be required if Ranlo is to refresh its local purpose in the region. Without this emphasis we risk becoming commercially stagnant and even franchise and chain business enterprises may choose not to develop with the Town of Ranlo. For existing business to remain healthy and expand, it is vital that careful land use planning and a future UDO has standards and specifications that allow expansion while consciously assessing compatibility between land uses and when incompatibility exists or may exist with expansion, that business have attractive options of where they may locate within the Town of Ranlo.

With existing availability of the railroad, the Town should continuously explore which existing businesses are dependent on the railroad's ability to serve them so development approvals and decisions unintentionally hamper the railroad's access to businesses are balanced with mutual progress of protecting railroad freight with businesses and residential developments not directly dependent on the railroad infrastructure.

6.5 Tourism, Travel and Hospitality

Projects that enhance the tourism experience in Ranlo should be considered and programmed into capital budgets over time to stimulate a continuation of new investment (both public and private) for the ever-changing tourism based industry.

6.5.1 Heritage Tourism

Heritage Tourism is defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic, and natural resources." It is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism and hospitality industry overall, and a major focus of the [State of North Carolina's tourism promotion](#) efforts.

Among four recommendations, the 2020 [Downtown Strategic Master Plan](#), recommended, *Re-zone the Heritage Mill site to reflect proposed mixed-use development*. The Downtown Plan also included a conceptual corridor goal to, *Redefine Spencer Mountain Rd. and in turn provide an identity that supports the historical heritage of the Town of Ranlo*.

Opportunities for the growth of Heritage Tourism include businesses that provide support services for artists and craftspeople. Such businesses include tool and musical instrument repair, wholesale, retail, and distribution of specialty materials used in the creative arts (weaving, basket-making, blacksmithing, pottery, woodworking, etc.), and services provided to residents and tourists such as demonstrations, guided tours, private lessons, and programming for public institutions and private and non-profit entities.

6.5.2 Recreation and Parks

The Town of Ranlo Parks and Recreation Department owns and maintains Ranlo Central Park. This facility, Ranlo Central Park that surrounds Town Hall with facilities including a playground, basketball and tennis courts, baseball fields, a skate park, and restrooms.

Section 4.1.1.1, Water Sports, in this Town Plan lists water sports amenities drawing visitors throughout the region while Section 4.3.1 lists several significant natural heritage areas throughout Gaston County.

6.5.2.1 Bicycling and Hiking

Although the Town has extensive sidewalks within the Town limits throughout its residential neighborhoods, several responses to the community input survey for this Town Plan were submitted about the need to extend walking/hiking trails throughout Ranlo, especially along Ranlo-Spencer Mountain Road.

In neighboring Gastonia, there are approximately 17 miles of hiking and jobbing trails. Crowders Mountain State Park is located in southwestern Gaston County, approximately 10 miles southwest of Ranlo. The park is over 3,500 acres of open space with a wide variety of hiking and camping opportunities. Views from the mountain provide a 25-mile panorama of the surrounding area.

The [Carolina Thread Trail](#) (CTT), the regional network of greenways, trails, and blueways that will one day connect 15 counties, is planned to pass through Gaston County. The Gaston County CTT Greenway Master Plan, adopted in 2009, has a proposed route with approximately 100 miles of trails in the county.

6.5.2.2 Angling (Fishing)

Crowders Mountain State Park is located in southwestern Gaston County, approximately 10 miles southwest of Ranlo offers fishing among its variety of activities. Nearby Lake Norman, Mountain Island Lake, and Lake Wylie provide ample fishing opportunities.

6.6 Manufacturing

Leadership boards of local government, both municipal and county, traditionally feel an obligation to emphasize traditional manufacturing; however, traditional manufacturing may only be a small part of the future economy of Ranlo and most other small towns. Traditional manufacturing blends traditional manufacturing with forward thinking values of naturally sourced and locally produced materials to produce tangible goods for a value added industry.

While these traditional opportunities do exist, Ranlo must recognize there are also pitfalls to placing all hope on 'traditional industry' – a sector that may inevitably employ humans to manage facilities that are designed for a specific level and duration of productivity. The reality is that smaller facilities are often the disposable ones. Larger facilities require a larger investment and typically are considered long-term commitments.

Technological innovation and globalism are fueling transformational change in both our cultural and business environments as discussed below.

6.6.1 Economic Transformation

An increasingly mobile workforce is utilizing digital, web-based technology – the ubiquitous 'mobile app' – that enables a business owner or employee to work from anywhere.

The global pandemic COVID-19 that emerged in late 2019 and lingered into 2022 led to many employees to remain home, at least temporarily, to help reduce the spread of the virus. Employees who were fortunate enough to remain employed while working from home replaced face-to-face meetings with computer-based meeting platforms, such as Zoom.+ As mentioned in an article entitled, “[What is the Future of Cities](#),” appearing in NPR’s Planet Money on May 19, 2020, author Greg Rosalsky reported how some major companies signaled that remote work from home is here to stay. The article quotes Harvard University professor Ed Glaeser, whom Rosalsky calls the leading scholar of urban economics, as saying that, at least in the short run, how large dense cities, having large employment centers, may suffer in the foreseeable future, while companies open small offices in more affordable lower-density midsize cities where employees may work remotely, once the pandemic is over.

Many jobs are no longer tied to a specific location. Anyone with a Smartphone and an idea can become an entrepreneur. As stated above, technological innovation and globalism are fueling transformational change in the cultural and business environment.

Opportunities for Ranlo in this new economic realm are directly related to the ‘quality of place’ issues that are explored throughout this Plan, while recognizing tourism, crafts, and other natural resource-based sectors. When employers, innovators and entrepreneurs can choose to live and work anywhere, it is quality of place – in addition to the basics of infrastructure and support services – that is often the deciding factor.

Ranlo has the attributes to successfully compete in this age of global commerce. The Town can glean from other proven economic development strategies and build its foundation by retaining young talent and attracting innovators from the greater region and around the country.

6.6.1.1 APP Based Economy

The ‘app-based’ economy isn’t just creating a new digital platform for freelance work. It is spawning a host of new economic activity. For example, more than a million ‘makers’ sell jewelry, clothing, craft supplies and tools, and all manner of home goods and accessories through the online marketplace

6.6.1.2 SHARING (or SHARED) Economy

The well-known lodging website [Airbnb](#) and similar accommodation platforms such as [Love Home Swap](#) and [onefinestay](#) have close to a million ‘hosts’ in nearly 200 countries. [Uber](#) and [Lyft](#), two other mainstays in the emergent realm of ‘crowd-based capitalism’, are transforming how we think about transportation. Uber, which started with four people around a desk and two cars on the streets of San Francisco, is a global phenomenon, serving over six continents with well over 1,000,000 drivers.

6.6.1.3 GIG Economy

The GIG economy is part of a shifting cultural and business environment fueled by technological innovation and globalism. An increasingly mobile workforce is utilizing digital, web-based technology that enables employees to work from anywhere, so that jobs are no longer tied to a specific location. Companies such as Uber, Lyft, and AirBnB are examples of this emergent realm.

The workforce of this new 'gig' economy largely consists of freelance 'independent contractors' who can select among temporary jobs, referred to as '[gigs](#)' (hence the term), and short-term projects from anywhere in the world. Likewise, employers can select the best individuals for specific projects from a 'global' labor pool and are no longer confined to any given area.

Opportunities for Ranlo in the GIG Economy are directly related to the speed and quality of digital connectivity and the 'quality of place' issues that are explored throughout this Plan.

6.7 Economic Development Opportunities

Several opportunities exist for Ranlo to re-establish a strong economic base. The following topics focus on first steps for advancing in the '21st Century'.

6.7.1 Innovation Districts

Innovation Districts are an outgrowth of the culture and technology driving today's economic transformation. Instead of focusing economic development efforts on isolated campuses or business parks, Innovation Districts focus on clustering start-ups and incubators in compact, amenity-rich areas (i.e., walkable downtowns, mixed use districts, etc.) where a mix of entrepreneurs work in collaborative spaces and share knowledge and resources (a staple of the 'Shared Economy'). Existing incentive programs would be paired with a partnership of 'innovation cultivators' – the companies, organizations, and other groups that support the growth of individuals, firms, and their ideas. They include incubators, small business and technology development centers, community colleges, local high schools, job training firms and others advancing specific skill sets for the innovation-driven economy. The initial focus should be a future downtown 'cluster' of businesses utilizing available properties, beginning with development of a single 'innovation space', or business incubator.

6.7.2 Home-based Businesses

Technological innovations make it imperative to re-examine and update zoning provisions that limit or prohibit work at home. The Town should analyze the content and impact of existing standards and specifications with an attitude toward implementation and enforcement that encourages entrepreneurship, creativity, and individual expression while protecting neighborhood residential character.

6.7.3 Small Business Incubator

The Town should explore the necessary public-private partnerships and funding sources to plan and develop business incubators in available manufacturing space. The incubator's mission would be to recruit, develop, and stimulate entrepreneurial talent in the region in order to foster economic growth, strengthen and diversify the local economy, and create new jobs. For example, a partnership-funded non-profit organization would lease (or own) a building that provides support services such as high-speed broadband internet, utilities, reception, and security, along with amenities like audio-visual equipment, conference rooms, and distance-learning capability. A collaborative effort with the community college could offer support systems such as

business plan and marketing strategy development, technical assistance, funding proposal preparation, and more.

6.7.4 Collaboration and Regional Partners

Economic development has been a major element of regional initiatives in recent years. All contain a host of economic development strategies to achieve the goals of job creation, talent retention, and entrepreneurship. The Town should take a leadership role in implementing those strategies that will help the community benefit from its world-class natural and cultural resources by tapping the technological potential of the 21st century economy, opening Ranlo and the region to the global marketplace.

The IRS tax code encourages long-term, private capital to invest in eligible low-income rural and urban communities, called Opportunity Zones, across the United States. Although the Town of Ranlo is not within a designated [Opportunity Zone](#), a designated opportunity zones is located just south of Ranlo in Lowell. The Town of Ranlo may want to explore the benefits of such a designation to decide whether to pursue an Opportunity Zone in the future.

6.8 Economic Development *ACTION ITEMS!*

The economic development opportunities Ranlo enjoys clearly fit into three categories. These are described as “Immediate”, “Programmable” and “Opportunity”.

6.8.1 Immediate Action Items:

The following immediate action items should be prioritized to accomplish in earnest. These items are intended to begin producing immediate results and improve the personality of Ranlo as a community addressing its goals.

6.8.1.1 Eliminate obstacles to the goals set by the Town in this plan.

Clearly identify opportunities and obstacles within local zoning policies to encourage business attraction, retention and expansion. Ensure walkable options for visitors requiring flexible alternatives. Establish clear signage standards to alleviate clutter and establish fairness among businesses. Establish opportunistic standards for business types in manufacturing, commercial service, and home-based business sectors to stimulate opportunity while establishing specifications for development to protect these investments, neighborhoods and the environment as mutual benefactors. Standards and specifications must be evaluated to support additional action items below.

6.8.1.2 Promote Ranlo as a “base camp” for travelers.

Promotion of Ranlo as a host community and base camp for individuals and groups seeking access to a variety of food/beverage choices will clearly set Ranlo apart from other communities catering to these visitors.

6.8.1.3 Promote Ranlo as a location for modern manufacturing.

Promote Ranlo as a community for entrepreneurs of forward-thinking business enterprises seeking an adventure (active outdoors) lifestyle setting near urban amenities.

6.8.2 Programmable Action Items:

The following programmable action items should be assigned to specific teams or departments to develop the ways and means to accomplish the tasks.

6.8.2.1 Install local way-finding signage.

Local directional signage will help guide the visitor to the concentration of automotive services, motorcycle services, accommodations, and food/beverage businesses in Ranlo.

6.8.2.2 Establish partnerships

Resources for collaboration and support of economic development initiatives are not always consolidated into one neat package. The resources in North Carolina flow into communities and regions through multiple agencies. Organizing strategic interagency partnerships and participating in effective ways often becomes cumbersome; therefore, identifying the best partnerships and managing effective relationships among those partnerships should be a defined responsibility of either the Town Manager or Town Planning and Zoning Administrator.

The Town should explore the necessary public-private partnerships and funding sources to plan and develop business incubators and available manufacturing space. *(Also see Sections 6.7.3 and 6.7.4 for additional information.)*

6.8.3 Opportunity Based Action Items:

The following opportunity-based action items will require continuous planning and forethought to recognize opportunities to act.

6.8.3.1 Establish criteria for financial participation in opportunities to expand the job and property tax base through strategic expansion of infrastructure.

Establish clear criteria for expansion of infrastructure (broadband, stormwater, potable water and sewer systems) based upon measurable benefits and a “return on investment” business model. Criteria should also include contingency factors for public health and welfare needs when potable water and sanitary sewer needs are critical.

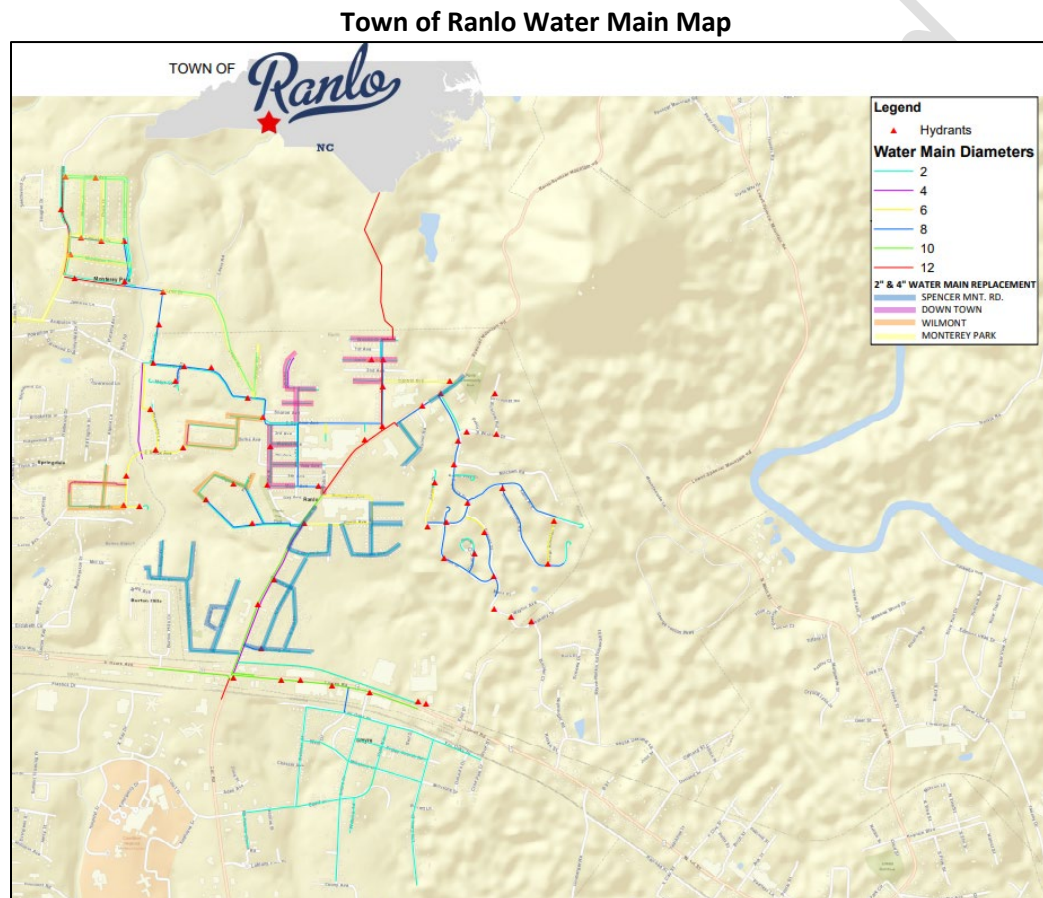
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7. INFRASTRUCTURE

7.1 Water and Sewer Utility Systems

7.1.1 Water Supply

As indicated in Section 4.1.1.2, the Town purchases water from Two Rivers Utilities. All water treatment is completed by Two Rivers Utilities and distributed by the Town.



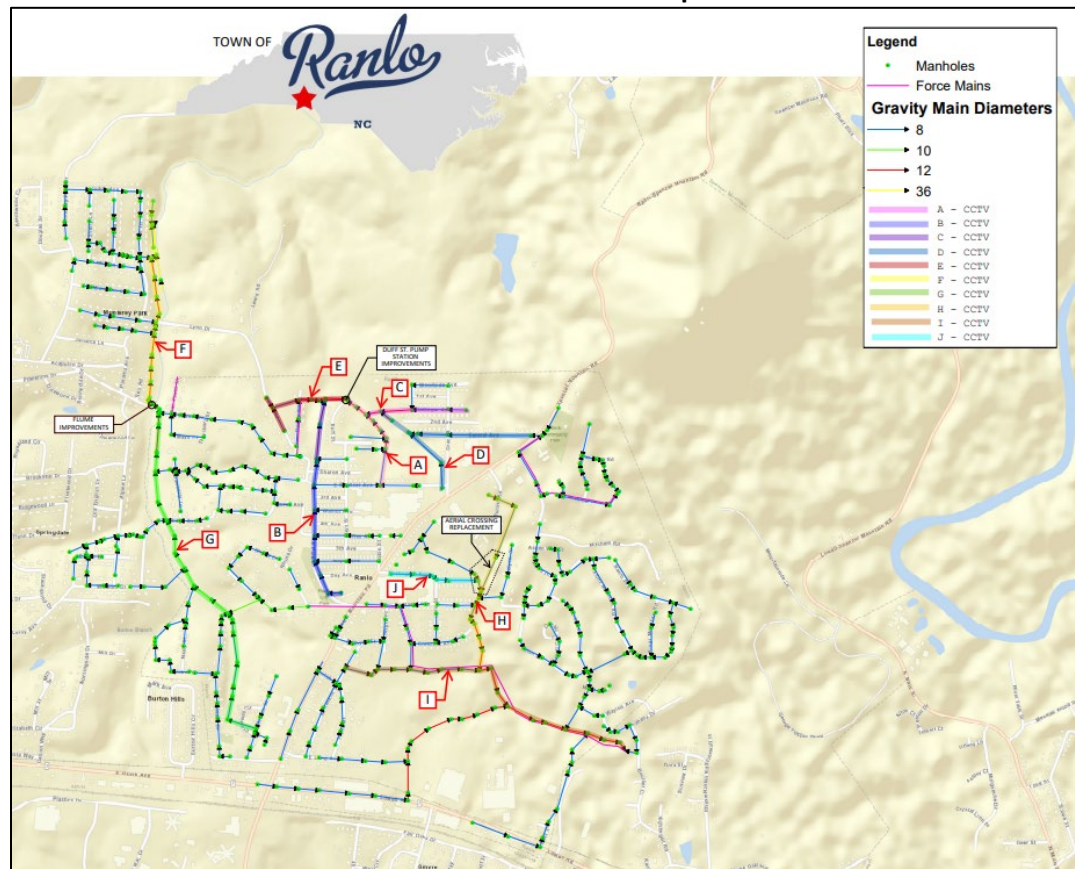
7.1.2 Sewer Service

The system is maintained by Town's Public Works Employees. The Town's sewer collection system consists of approx. 22 miles gravity flow sewer collection line as well as 657 manholes, broken down as follows:

- 15.8 miles of 8" line,
- 0.341 miles of 10",
- 1.387 miles of 12" line, and
- 3.650 miles of 15"

The system utilizes 8 sanitary sewer lift stations, situated at low points throughout the community, pumping affluent through force mains ranging from 4" to 6" in diameter. The total distance of force main throughout the system runs approximately 1.528 miles.

Town of Ranlo Sewer Map



Source: Town of Ranlo CIP, Map prepared by Wooten and Associates

7.2 Transportation Network

Recognizing trends and how peoples' preferences can and do change over time will enable Ranlo to position itself as a welcoming community for multiple generations into the future. This approach to planning reinforces the community's desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate and remain, while aging members will choose to age in place. This can be achieved by creating and sustaining a transportation system that is successful in meeting both the existing and anticipated needs of a diverse community that multiple generations will find attractive by including transportation options and choices that are safe, attractive and convenient.

One of the most common components of the transportation network and most visible characteristics of a neighborhood is the *street*, often taken for granted even though it can change everything about a neighborhood. The street strongly influences how people behave in their community. The following questions are presented to stimulate thoughts about neighborhood streets as an example of how important this simple concept is.

- Does the street have room to pass another car?
- Does the street have room for a visitor or emergency vehicle to park in front of a home or business?

- Does the street feature ditches or curbing for drainage?
- Does the street include sidewalks along its route?

The answers to these questions clearly define the character of the neighborhood, *for example*: neighborhood streets lined with ditches for storm-water conveyance will cause people to walk in the street just to visit a neighbor, or they may even give cause for residents to choose to drive a block away to visit that neighbor. By contrast, neighborhood streets containing curbing with sidewalks set back from the curb encourage people to spend time outside to walk or play together. Streets designed properly provide a place to learn to skate or ride a bike. The street with sidewalks becomes the neighborhood's central gathering place, where multiple generations of citizens associate in many ways. The properly designed street will change the characteristics of human behavior and contribute to improved and healthy lifestyles. How many times have you heard concerns about kids not getting enough exercise? Well, maybe our streets have not helped much with that problem. We can do better. We can improve the quality of neighborhoods in many ways.

Beyond the neighborhood street is a network of collector streets, often called arterials. These collector streets or arterials connect the neighborhood streets to the thoroughfares and highways that bring us all together. Streets also provide our principal connections to other modes such as airports and railroads. The following information about our transportation network and the actions we can take locally to improve how this network serves Ranlo's citizens and businesses will provide the foundation for many decisions facing the Town.

7.2.1 Roads and Highways

Ranlo has excellent access to I-85 with the closest of 3 interchanges (Exit #21 at Spencer Mountain Rd./Cox Rd.) located less than one mile to the southern town limit and leading directly through the center of Ranlo.

Another I-85 exit (Exit #20 at North New Hope Rd) is just over a mile from the west side of Ranlo serving access to neighborhoods and into the interior of the community via Auten Rd. to Brookneal Drive.

The third I-85 exit (Exit # 22 at S. Main St.) is only 1.5 miles from the southeast of Ranlo providing easy access to neighborhoods on the east side of the Town. Major interior thoroughfares include Spencer Mountain Road and North New Hope Road.

The Town is part of the Gaston -Cleveland -Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO) The GCLMPO is 1,140 square miles in area, stretching about 27 miles from north to south and 45 miles from east to west.

Based on available Census data and information from the GCLMPO, all three participating counties have more workers that commute out for work than commute in. Gaston and Lincoln counties send over one-quarter of their workers to Mecklenburg County. Cleveland County has the highest-percent of its workers actually working within their home county, at 66%, while only 44% of Lincoln County workers actually work in their home county.

Vehicles traveling in and through the three counties add up to over 10 million miles per day. Approximately 40% of this traffic takes place on I-85, US 321 north of I-85, and US 74 west of I-85.

A comprehensive transportation plan (CTP) has been prepared to assist local governments make long-range transportation decisions. The CTP was a joint effort between GCLMPO members and the NCDOT – Transportation Planning Branch (TPB) and includes alternative modes of transportation, such as transit, walking, and cycling, and identifies recommendations for solutions that provides for the safe, efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally sensitive use of the transportation system, while addressing current and future travel needs.

Unfortunately, Ranlo was not designated as having any roadway improvements as part of the CTP planning effort. As a result, roadway and transportation improvements will have to begin as a local effort.

7.2.1.1 Road and Highway Specific Action Steps

Several areas of Town have been identified for Mixed use and Commercial land uses as these areas should be encouraged to be redeveloped or enhanced as vacant or underperforming properties are replaced. *(See Sections 8.4.1 and Figure 8.4.1.)*

The Town should continue to foster reinvestment and infill development along Spencer Mountain Road near Town hall as part of downtown branding/restoration efforts. This should include development of sidewalks/pedestrian pathways and bicycle lanes. Further study is necessary to focus on connecting existing neighborhoods to what is intended to become the Town's redefined 'downtown core'.

There are areas of the Town where connectivity needs to be established, most notably extending Ranlo Avenue into the Mountain View neighborhood near Joselynn Drive:



At present, residents of the Mountain View neighborhood have no direct vehicular or pedestrian access to Town Hall/Ranlo Central Park or what is commonly considered to be the 'downtown' of the community. It is vital residents are afforded universal access to key areas of the community if there is to be viable economic development/growth achieved.

7.2.2 Railways

The Norfolk Southern main line passes from west to east across the county, passing through Kings Mountain, Bessemer City, Gastonia, Ranlo, Lowell, Cramerton and Belmont. From Gastonia, a branch line leads south to Crowders.

The County is served by Amtrak, with stops in Gastonia. Freight rail service is provided by the Norfolk Southern Railway, CSX and Patriot Rail. Patriot Rail operates state-owned trackage between Gastonia and Mount Holly with a spur extending to Belmont

CSX rail lines pass through the northwestern and northeastern corners of Gaston County. In the northwest, a line between Lincolnton and Shelby passes through Cherryville. In the northeast, a line between Lincolnton and Charlotte passes through Stanley and Mount Holly.

7.2.2.1 Railway Specific Action Steps

While the NCDOT Rail Division's [Comprehensive State Rail Plan](#) is not a financial or capital plan, it does provide a blueprint for potential future rail investments and priorities through 2040.

Rail is an important factor in economic development and is an efficient alternative to over the road transport. Other than the benefit of transporting high quantities of product, rail has some major environmental advantages. Typically, a rail company considers many factors when examining the possibility of expanding its service through spur lines to new industrial user (i.e. location of line, location of user, shipping volume, frequency of shipping, etc.). As part of the Town's continuing economic development efforts, additional effort/study may be warranted to ascertain the viability of expanding rail connectivity.

7.2.3 Aviation

The city of Gastonia owns and operates Gastonia Municipal Airport, which is a general aviation airport with a single runway approximately 3,779 feet in length. The facility is approximately 8 miles away. Charlotte-Douglas International Airport is the closest major, full-service airport with national/international passenger flights. Operating in Charlotte NC, the facility is approximately 14 miles from the Town.

7.2.3.1 Aviation Specific Action Steps

The Town of Ranlo will continue to cooperate with the County regarding assistance associated with the Gastonia Municipal Airport and with regional planning efforts designed to support future economic development activities at the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.

7.2.4 Bicycle and Pedestrian

7.2.4.1 Bicycle Facilities

The Town of Ranlo does not include designated bicycle facilities nor bike lanes within its corporate limits.

7.2.4.2 Pedestrian Facilities

Although the Town has extensive sidewalks within the Town limits throughout its residential neighborhoods, several responses to the community input survey for this Town Plan were submitted about the need to extend walking/hiking trails throughout Ranlo, especially along Ranlo-Spencer Mountain Road.

7.2.4.3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Specific Action Steps

The Town should establish specifications for adequate street construction by developers for both bicycle and pedestrian safety. *(See Sections 7.2.4.1, 7.2.4.2 and 8.5.1.).*

7.2.5 Transit Service

Each of the 3 counties participating within GCLMPO is covered by the community transportation system. These “dial-a-ride” or demand response programs are available to the general public, but primarily serve older adults and persons with disabilities.

Gastonia is the only City in the tri-county area that operates a fixed-route service that reaches most of the city.

Amtrak has a station in Gastonia, and the NCDOT contracts with a private operator for daily round-trip service between Boone and Charlotte, with stops in Gastonia and Lincolnton

7.2.5.1 Transit Service Action Steps

The Town will continue to support regional public transport regional transit services. At this time, however, the Town is not financially able to fund its own/independent transportation service. Local population is also not sufficient to warrant such a service at this time.

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8. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

8.1 Analysis of Existing Land Use and Development Patterns – *Where to Begin!*

Ranlo is similar to many small towns in the Carolinas in that it experienced much of its transformation during the post-World War II era when the industrial expansion led to better paying jobs and when increased automobile ownership enhanced individual mobility, while the inter-city and intra-city highway network was greatly expanded. The dramatic impact of this combination on American cities and towns was not foreseen and the problems associated with rapidly changing communities that followed led to long periods of decline in their once-vibrant core downtown areas.

What is commonly referred to as '*Downtown Ranlo*' is a collection of retail and business operations off Spencer Mountain Road near the existing Town municipal complex (1624 Spencer Mountain Road) up to Central Avenue and the Heritage Mill Antiques and Designer Mall complex at 1820 Spencer Mountain Road.

8.2 The Plan - *What do we want our community to be? How do we get there?*

8.2.1 Housing Growth

Recognizing trends and how market dynamics can and do change will enable Ranlo to position itself as a welcoming community for multiple generations looking at buying or renting a home. This approach to planning reinforces the community's desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate, while aging members will choose to remain. A community where both the new and existing home markets are attractive to future generations and allow for aging members of the community to remain in the community by offering a variety of housing products.

According to contemporary real estate experts, the "50+" real estate market is changing. In the next few years, Generation X will be joining the Boomers and Matures; serving the 50+ market will become a challenging puzzle for both communities and the real estate industry.

8.2.2 Commercial/non-residential Growth

As with the housing markets, ever changing trends in consumption, product development, technology and generational shifts in personal choices/values must be considered when making decisions about commercial and other non-residential growth. This approach to planning reinforces the community's desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate, while aging members will choose to remain. A community, where traditional values accompany craftsmanship must embrace the presence of technology in everyday life, commerce, and business.

In order to grow commercial and non-residential offerings a community must create opportunities for success. The first step is to promote interest in both residents and visitors alike. By increasing the presence of people in commercial setting, the critical mass necessary for businesses to sustain themselves will ensure vibrancy as the tourism visitors flow into and through the community. To accomplish this, the local zoning ordinance in

existence at the time of this plan adoption, must be repealed and replaced with development standards and specifications to promote refreshing internal growth.

8.3 Existing Land Use Issues – *Recognizing the Problems of our Past*

A plan, any plan, is only as good as the community's commitment to implement. While implementation strategies vary widely depending on the specific goals and objectives, many strategies will often include some form of incentive, motivation, criteria, or specifications for new growth, development and construction. Throughout various sections there are descriptions of incentives and motivations offering opportunities for success; however, a plan can fail when the criteria and specifications are inconsistent with the plan. The following subsections describe the challenges Ranlo faces with policies in effect at the time of adoption of this plan. The discussion continues in sections 8.4 and 8.5 with insight on recommended new approaches to refreshing Ranlo's economy and stimulating investment in Ranlo's future. These recommended policy changes are designed to achieve the goals, objectives, and successes noted and illustrated in this plan.

As a prelude to the discussion, Jonathan Coppage, a visiting senior fellow at the 'R Street Institute' researching urbanism and civil society posted an article challenging leadership to re-think how we administer and regulate development. The following excerpts are from his article posted by the American Planning Association October 20, 2016.

“Establishing by-right development and streamlining local permitting processes will allow developers to respond nimbly to market demands and will relieve the “guilty until proven innocent” status of new building development, which depresses construction starts across the country by [delaying and inhibiting](#) housing projects. What’s more, adopting leaner codes would remove obstacles to the countless smaller developers and would-be builders who want to invest in strengthening their local communities, but currently can’t afford to navigate the vast regulatory burdens and uncertain futures awaiting anyone who tries to build in America today. Trulia economist Ralph McLaughlin [found](#) that these regulatory delays may have an even bigger impact on housing production than zoning restrictions.”

“Main Street-style development — the “storefront on the first floor, apartments rented out above” style that forms the core of any older town’s historic center — is a residential building form that uses first-floor commercial space to serve community members and enliven a neighborhood. This low-rise density helps prop up the balance sheets of towns responsible for running utilities all the way out to suburban developments, as former city planner and engineer Charles Marohn [has repeatedly demonstrated](#). It also keeps a constant set of the “eyes on the street” that Jane Jacobs identified as necessary for safe streets; renters keep an ear out for burglars after business hours and shopkeepers keep the same at bay during the day. It is, in other words, the core of any successful town-building.”

8.3.1 Utility Policies at the Time of Plan Adoption

The Town of Ranlo obtains wholesale potable water supply and transports its bulk wastewater for treatment through an inter-local agreement with the City of Gastonia obtains wholesale potable water supply and transports its bulk wastewater for treatment

through an inter-local agreement with the City of Gastonia. Public water and sewer systems often provide the stimulus or “plant the seeds” for growth. Growth that is simply chasing utilities will result in higher rates for all rate payers and the resulting inefficiencies in other services will drive up taxes. The most effective way to keep tax and utility rates lower, increase the return on investment of the existing systems, and provide adequate revenue for the operations and maintenance of these systems is to be very deliberate in the extension of utilities. For the most part, the Future Land Use Map has been developed to focus redevelopment and new development of sufficient densities in areas where utilities already exist or are already programed to be extended.

8.3.2 Land Development and Construction Ordinances at the Time of Plan Adoption

“Land development” includes the installation of infrastructure as the first step toward new building construction. This phase of a project involves land planning that leads to civil engineering to establish the layout of roads and buildings. The criteria or specifications included in these ordinances should accomplish some basic objectives including:

- Ensure the purchaser or owner receives a safe and reliable building product,
- Ensure the state and federal mandates are satisfied to avoid penalties, and
- Ensure the result does not increase the burden on other tax and utility rate payers without deliberate determination that such increases are for the overall benefit of the community.

The following sections describe how ordinances in effect at the time of plan adoption are counter-productive to the objective set forth in this document. A recommended approach to replace these policies and ordinances is described in Section 8.5.

8.3.2.1 Zoning Code

As of the time this plan was prepared, specifications for criteria and specifications for new and existing development are in the *Town of Ranlo, NC Code of Ordinances*, Title XV, Land Usage, Chapter 154, Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance evolved over time from an early state model ordinance. The State encouraged the adoption of their model to help communities begin their introduction into managing growth for the long-term benefit of the community. The intention was that local governments would continue to modernize these policies, and this would yield desired results from state shared funding (grants and loans) the State was providing to local governments. The State’s mistake was to accept zoning as a substitute for a town plan.

These ordinances were flawed from the onset because of some basic assumptions about important issues. In short, these policies did little to manage growth, but in fact have led many communities to “paint by numbers” in administering growth, development and construction. Local governments began to lead new growth with zoning rather than preparing a plan based upon what a community desired to become as it matured. This approach is the cause of animosity toward zoning. The role of the zoning ordinance should have been to ensure consistent criteria and specifications as new growth and development occurred.

The existing Zoning Code establishes a pyramid of uses in the districts moving upward toward the presumed greatest use - the single-family home. This approach watered down

business investments and lead to sporadic patterns where businesses are not in the least protected from the pressures of the single-family home-owner.

Mixed-use development, as it is commonly referred to today, can be and often is very beneficial when the location works, and the criteria and specifications are deliberate. However, the mixes of uses in the mid-twentieth century zoning pyramid to be effective in improving many towns when they omitted a critical step - the preparation of a master or area plan. And, “failing to plan is planning to fail” as many communities can now attest.

This approach can work well provided there is a commitment to areas where the investment in infrastructure has already been made. Growth beyond these areas only encourages abandonment while increasing cost to Ranlo’s tax and utility rate payers.

Policies that promote success of neighborhoods, businesses and civic uses alike are far more desirable to all persons involved who care about the future of the community and the preservation of the investments made by property owners in the community. This approach respects property rights in balance. The rights of the subject property owner, and the rights of the adjacent or nearby property owner such that all parties are treated respectfully. When some property owners lose for another one to gain, the development decision must not be particularly beneficial to the community. *(Also see Section 8.5.1 for additional information.)*

During development of this Town Plan 2040, Ranlo was concurrently preparing a new Unified Development Ordinance to replace the town’s antiquated zoning ordinance, adding specifications for land development which creates new streets and supporting infrastructure, and maintaining quality control over the implementation of these standards to protect property rights of all parties while creating common-sense opportunities that avoid growth and development failures in the future.

8.3.2.2 Subdivision Ordinance

As of the time this plan was prepared, specifications for the extension of streets and utilities to serve newly created lots exist in the Town of Ranlo, NC Code of Ordinances, Title XV, Land Usage, Chapter 152, Subdivisions. During development of this Town Plan 2040, Ranlo was concurrently preparing a new Unified Development Ordinance to establish cost saving measures for the tax and utility rate payer for all new subdivisions. When new streets are built properly, they last longer and are far less costly to maintain. These new streets must also be reported to the NCDOT upon completion to ensure the local share of the fuel tax collected from every motorist when they purchase fuel, will be returned to the Town. When these fuel taxes are returned each year, they can do more for the older streets where repairs may be warranted.

Subdivision criteria and specifications also improve utility performance and reduce cost to serve all rate payers. By establishing specific criteria for the location of lines we can reduce confusion and improve the effectiveness of future maintenance and repairs. Each utility is designated a specific location in or near the street.

8.3.2.3 Building Code

The Gaston County Inspections Department administers issuance of building permits and inspections within the Town of Ranlo town limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) using the North Carolina Building Code.

8.3.2.4 Floodplain Management

As of the time this plan was prepared, standards that regulate development within a floodplain exist in the Town of Ranlo, NC Code of Ordinances, Title XV, Land Usage, Chapter 153, Flood Damage Prevention. While this ordinance is in place, it mainly covers building specifications like elevation, and public infrastructure, such as sewers. The existing ordinance does not adequately address land use in floodplains. This shortfall will be corrected in Ranlo's new Unified Development Ordinance.

8.3.2.5 Storm-water Management and Watershed Protection

A satellite area of the Town of Ranlo's corporate limits, located north of Town, lies within a designated Water Supply Watershed Critical Area (WS-IVC). The new UDO will include standards that provide an additional layer of protection for the drinking water supply to impose additional regulations within this WS-IVC WSWS area.

8.4 Future Land Use – *Where We're Going Next!*

The exciting aspects of this plan are not captured by the issues we've faced or the problems we believe we have, but the opportunities we have before us. The opportunities to build upon our previous successes are the greatest asset the businesses and citizens of Ranlo possess. This plan recognizes those attributes, identifies the community stakeholders' goals, and crafts a vision of our future. Along with the actions we must undertake to achieve the goals stated in this document, this plan provides the foundation for systematic decision-making by businesses, citizens, prospective investors in our community, and leadership at various levels.

Simply stated, the key to our success is to increase the population of the community by reasonable numbers in order to increase the economic activity to a level that will support the services we desire. The three groups to focus our energy on are as follows:

- Retain our young adults by creating the hometown they dream about.
- Attract newcomers by offering the dynamic small-town feel they seek.
- Encourage opportunities for our citizens to age-in-place through local options for senior living.

Creating an attractive atmosphere in Ranlo will contribute toward our efforts to attract young adults to return, to come home when they seek that long-term location to settle into. These same investments will attract the newcomers seeking a special small-town atmosphere with lifestyle opportunities they find attractive. When a community feels good about itself it shows and that will become its greatest attribute in attracting visitors who just want to be a part of it all. That's what successful towns do, they become special by taking deliberate steps toward that goal and they reap the rewards when they do it well.

One of the fundamental planning tools used to achieve the stated goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan in Ranlo is the design, application, and implementation of a Future Land Use

Map (FLUM). FLUM implementation is accomplished primarily through the application of zoning, although a variety of land use ordinances are available for various aspects of implementation. A key feature of land use planning in the Town of Ranlo is the requirement for consistency between the FLUM and the application of zoning.

The FLUM defines the location of coordinated and appropriate land use classes and is designed to accommodate a particular combination of land uses that would achieve a desired pattern of development. It serves as the primary tool for staff, the Planning Board, and elected officials during review of re-zonings to ascertain the appropriateness of a development proposal and provides the development community with clear guidance to the locations where development activity may and may not be appropriate.

There are eight future land use categories on the Future Land Use Map meeting the specific development needs of the Town:

- **Rural** – Land in rural areas of the community appropriate for low intensity/low density residential development that is not dependent on urban services (i.e. water/sewer). The category further identifies lands used for agricultural production, agriculturally based businesses and related activities needing protection from high intensity development activity. As indicated, development activity is typically low intensity in nature in order to encourage preservation of agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive areas, and open space while discouraging large lot residential subdivision type developments.
- **Neighborhood** – Identifies areas within a community where existing residential development has/is occurring at moderate to medium densities and where urban services (i.e. water/sewer) may be available. Residential development activities typically include single-family and duplex (i.e. two-family) homes and their appropriate accessory land uses. Residential neighborhoods are the dominant land use in this category, but development can include open space preservation, parks and recreation activities, and limited institutional land uses.
- **Transitional Neighborhood** – Land use category typically located in and around the Town Center and Civic Land Use Categories, providing for the completion of residential neighborhoods surrounding the Main Street/downtown districts and contiguous Civic Districts. Land located in this category is anticipated for development at urban densities and/or intensities where urban services (i.e. water/sewer) is available. Non-residential land uses are not appropriate for these areas.

The intent of the category is to recognize the need for in-fill development and the gradual transformation of existing development to high quality mixed density residential development supporting the central core of Ranlo. Higher density residential development allows a greater number of households to walk or bike, thus supporting businesses while reducing the parking demand and providing environmental and health benefits. A range of housing types (i.e. duplex, multi-family, etc.) is encouraged. Streets within the Transitional Neighborhood land use category shall be interconnected and shall typically include sidewalks and bicycle lanes providing connections to adjacent commercial and civic land uses as well as other mixed-use districts. Typically, pedestrian access shall extend into surrounding

Neighborhood land use categories to help foster connectivity where appropriate. A range of housing types is encouraged. Criteria for the mix of building types establishes compatibility.

- **Mixed Use** – The ‘Mixed Use’ land use category is established to provide opportunities for both compatible and sustainable re-development of both residential and non-residential land uses where underutilized commercial properties already exist as well as infill sites where site specific land planning of new development creates opportunities for businesses and various housing designs sharing community amenities and enhancements. Land located in this category is anticipated for development at urban densities and/or intensities where urban services (i.e. water/sewer) is available. Permitted non-residential land uses are designed to augment residential land uses, not detract from them. As a result manufacturing or traffic intensive commercial operation are prohibited.

As with the Transitional Neighborhood land use category, a range of housing types (i.e. duplex, multi-family, etc.) is encouraged. Streets shall be interconnected and shall typically include sidewalks and bicycle lanes providing connections to adjacent commercial and civic land uses as well as other mixed-use and transitional neighborhood districts.

- **Civic** – Land use category providing location(s) for educational, medical, governmental, religious, and other institutional uses. Urban services (i.e. water/sewer) are typically available and pedestrian access (i.e. sidewalks, bicycle lanes, etc.) are integral parts of development projects.
- **Downtown** – The Downtown land use category provides for the development, revitalization, reuse, and infill development of the Town’s core downtown area. A broad array of non-residential and residential land uses are typically permitted enabling the needs of residents and visitors to be met. Land located in this category is anticipated for development at urban densities and/or intensities where urban services (i.e. water/sewer) is available.

Desired development patter(s) associated with this category seeks to integrate shops, restaurants, services, workplaces, civic, educational, and higher density housing in a compact, pedestrian-oriented environment. The Downtown land use category is intended serve as defining the ‘hub’ of surrounding neighborhoods and of the broader community.

- **Commercial** - Providing opportunities for compatible, resilient, and sustainable non-residential development with a specific focus on retail and other similar commercial land uses. The category is typically located along major road intersections, or near major transportation routes, where urban services (i.e. water/sewer) are available or there is sufficient land area supporting on-site wastewater treatment.
- **Employment/Manufacturing** - Land in areas specifically targeted for economic development activity consisting of employment centers, industrial/manufacturing land uses, distribution centers, office, service/retail uses, and flex space (typically one-story buildings designed, constructed, and marketed as suitable for use as offices but able to accommodate other uses such as a warehouse, showroom, manufacturing assembly, or similar operations.) Such areas are located adjacent to interstate/major highways where urban services (i.e. water/sewer) are available or there is sufficient land area supporting on-site wastewater treatment. Typically, this land use category is reserved for uses requiring very large buildings and/or large parking and loading facilities for support. Small scale manufacturing and storage that is

compatible with less intensive land uses are typically located within the Commercial or Mixed-Use land use categories.

The following “steps” provide guidance for implementing the recommendations of this plan. While they are not rigid in their order, their importance is unwavering to the future success of Ranlo in the 21st century.

8.4.1 Refresh Ranlo by Developing Underutilized Areas “Close-in” First

Focusing attention on strategic locations to reignite interest to enhance existing commercial development can boost investment by re-thinking development in the corridors. Incentives to refresh and redevelop strategic sites in existing underutilized locations where existing infrastructure and location dynamics combine to support successful new investments will reinforce property values within these strategically important locations. The ***Future Land Use Map*** appearing in figure 8.4.1 depicts a pattern of development to accommodate a combination of residential, non-residential and mixed-use growth and redevelopment. The map serves as the overall plan to guide decisions about future infrastructure investments and other public services for Ranlo’s future growth. ***Zoning changes are required by North Carolina statute to be made based upon both reasonableness and consistency with this plan.***

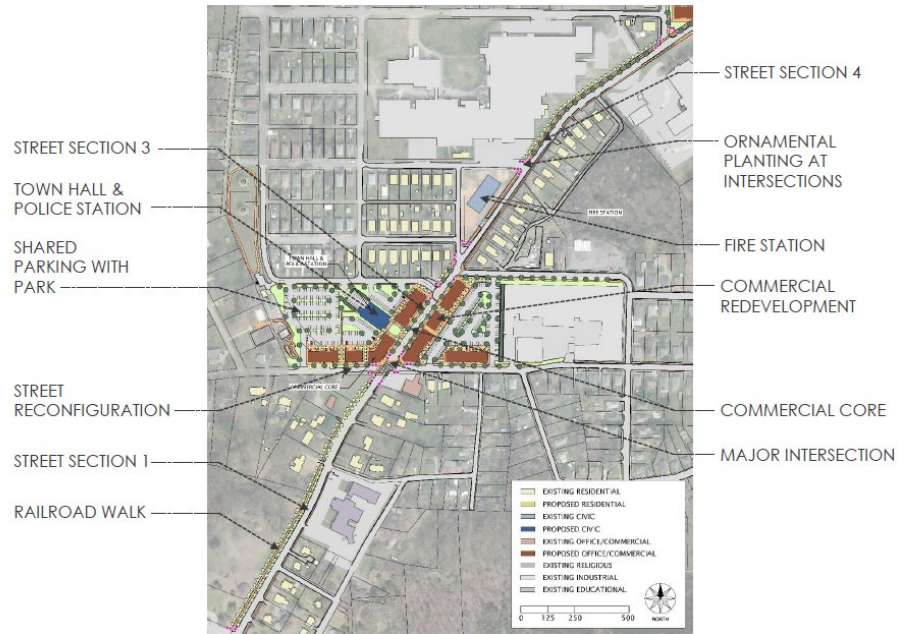
Re-defined Downtown Core: As previously indicated herein, in December of 2020 the Town received a downtown strategic master plan from Creech and Associates and LKC Engineering. One recommendation of this master plan called for the development of a ‘town campus’ housing government operations (i.e. administration, police, etc.) and community recreational amenities. The plan also recommended commercial development/redevelopment along with Spencer Mountain corridor as a means of establishing a downtown commercial area within the community.

This ‘concept’ fits nicely into the goals/recommendations of this Plan with respect to the creation of a downtown main street district.

A community’s downtown area has an important and unique role in economic and social development. Downtowns create a critical mass of activities where commercial, cultural, and civic activities are concentrated. This concentration facilitates business, learning, and cultural exchange.

Ranlo has several components of what is classically defined as a downtown area, but currently lacks the necessary land use regulation(s) and vision to bring to fruition.

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Source: Creech and Associates and LKC Engineering Downtown Strategic Master Plan

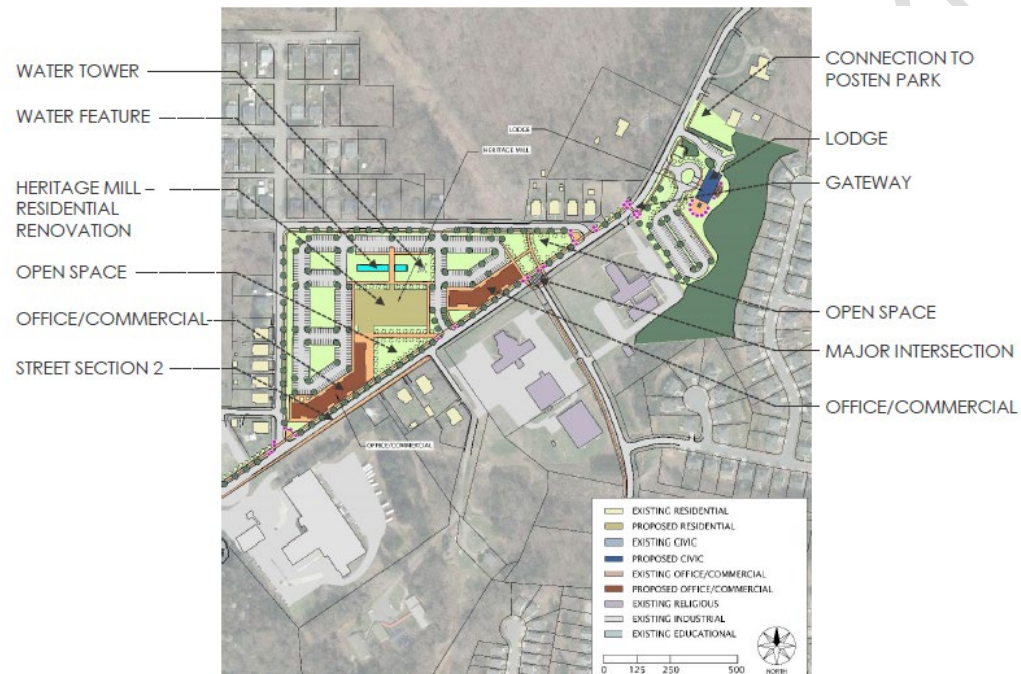
The Town has an opportunity to leverage the current town hall campus and solicit development proposals to not only develop a new multi-story administrative complex but development of multi-story buildings to serve mixed use commercial development needs (example below).



In this example in Holly Springs North Carolina, the Town constructed a multi-story town hall administrative complex, installed sidewalks and landscaping, and shared parking area while allowing development of two multi-story commercial structures housing retail, restaurants, and professional offices. The 'town hall campus' now serves multiple community functions including a central location for parking, providing space supporting necessary economic development activities and a central location for town services.

Through the employment of development agreements, the Town can begin the process of developing a true downtown core with recreational, town service, and commercial land uses in mind. This will help address the economic and social needs of the community and be a catalyst to further development/redevelopment along the Spencer Mountain Road corridor.

Heritage Mill Antiques and Designer Mall Complex: Part of the Creech and Associates and LKC Engineering master plan called for the redevelopment of 'Heritage Mill' property into a mixed-use project with residential, office, retail, and recreational components:



Source: Creech and Associates and LKC Engineering Downtown Strategic Master Plan

There are multiple structures on the property, totaling approximately 25,000 s.f.. of building area, serving numerous land uses including but not limited to:

- Warehouse/mini storage operation;
- Textile operation;
- Retail (i.e. an Antique mall, paint, and auto parts);
- Sign manufacturing;
- Vending machine sales and service;

While the 'concept' of redeveloping the property as a mixed-use project is consistent with several goals and recommendations of the Plan, steps need to be taken to ensure existing land uses and employment centers are not made non-conforming. For example, if the site is to be redeveloped with more emphasis on light manufacturing activities, the Town would not want to encourage a residential component and may wish to limit the types of retail and office operations on the parcel to avoid conflicts.

As denoted on the Future Land Use Map, the property is within the Employment/Manufacturing land use category. The Town has a unique opportunity to work with the current property owner and existing tenants to complete additional small area plans on the possible redevelopment of the site maximizing commercial opportunities and creating a more pedestrian friendly parcel as part of the overall strategy along Spencer Mountain Road.

8.4.2 Preservation and Conservation Areas

Given Ranlo's role in local governance in central Gaston County, our most effective tools for preservation and conservation are the moderation of growth and expansion of our municipal services and the policies governing expansion of the systems we operate. By working together with our counterparts at the county level we can stimulate investments where warranted and discourage investments in areas that will not be good for either Ranlo or Gaston County. This approach leaves these lands completely under the control of their locally elected officials. The only time Ranlo officials will be involved is when the topic of municipal service levels is explored.

8.4.3 Future Growth beyond the Town Limits

The outward expansion and growth of Ranlo must be guided by a combination of this plan and the information gathered when examining specific development plans and proposals in the future.

When considering growth and development proposals outside Ranlo's municipal limits, priority must first be given to the existing businesses and citizens, utility rate payers and property taxpayers. The following questions should be made a part of the formal consideration of request for annexation and extension of services, whether publicly or privately funded:

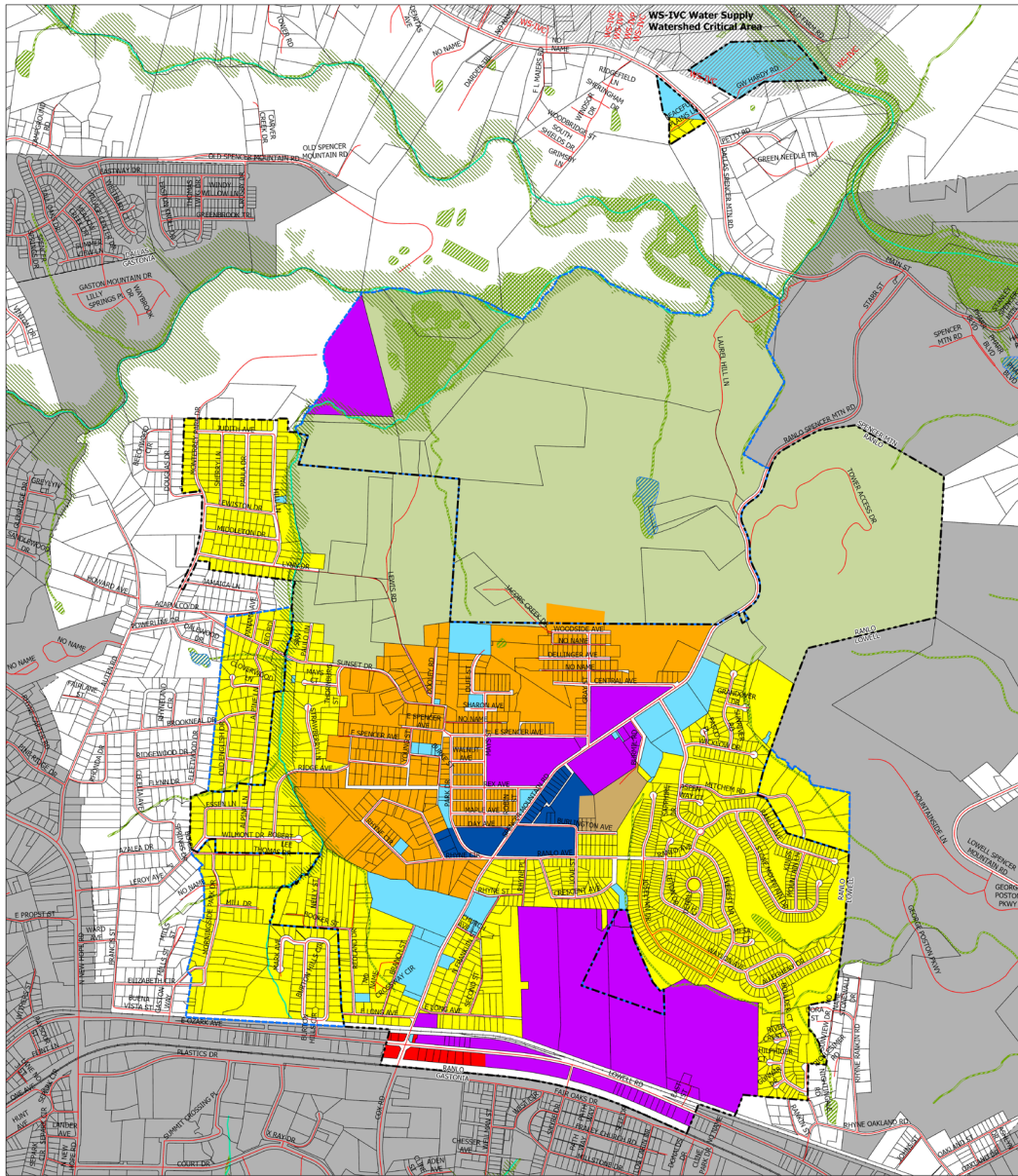
- Will the project contribute to the overall wellbeing of Ranlo's business and citizen well-being?
- Will the project contribute to the reduction of cost overall for services to current rate payers on the system?
- Will the project avoid the obligation of debt by the rate payer or taxpayer generated revenues in order to serve the project?

When these questions are answered by a resounding "yes", the project is likely worthy of further consideration; h

owever, if not, the project should be avoided.

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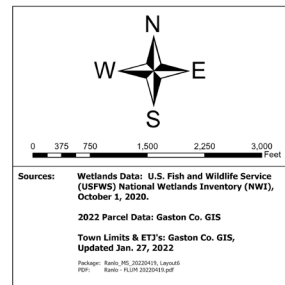
Figure 8.4.1 Future Land Use Map



Future Land Use Map

Ranlo, NC April 19, 2022 DRAFT

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| — Roads | — Rural |
| — Railroads | — Neighborhood |
| — Centerlines of Streams / Rivers | — Transitional Neighborhood |
| - - - Ranlo Town Limit | — Downtown |
| - - - Ranlo Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) Boundary | — Civic |
| — Surrounding Municipal Jurisdictions | — Mixed Use |
| — 2022 County Tax Parcels | — Commercial |
| — Water Bodies | — Employment/Manufacturing |
| — 2018 Flood Zone | |
| — Wetlands Identified by USFWS | |
| — WS-IVC Water Supply Watershed Critical Area | |



8.5 Re-thinking Ranlo's Zoning - A Common Sense Approach!

8.5.1 Planning, Zoning and Development – The Town 'Plans and Specs'

The traditional approach to land development ordinances in North Carolina was to adopt several different ordinances with individual topics based in the enabling legislation of the State. However, today provisions have been made to combine these varied ordinances into a single or unified development ordinance or UDO as they are commonly known. The UDO approach brings everything into one, albeit lengthy, ordinance with the benefits of consolidation eliminating the confusion over administration and procedure for the business or citizen undertaking a project. No longer would the applicant need to research separate ordinances to compile the criteria and specifications for their project. The exceptions to this consolidation or unification remain the building code governing structural, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical standards plus certain state and federal mandates governing the environment.

Preparation and adoption of the new Ranlo Development Ordinance (RDO) is required to accomplish two primary objectives: to modernize the Town's criteria and specifications to meet current statutory requirements, and to make certain the criteria and specifications are designed to help Ranlo thrive once again.

This approach emphasizes the adopted plan and then seeks to achieve the goals of the plan. Tying the Town Plan to the UDO not only achieves statutory compliance but transforms the role of zoning from regulatory in nature into more of a set of criteria and specifications.

This '*plans and specs*' approach to town building improves the relationship of the Town with its businesses and citizens by establishing objectives, then administering the new UDO to simply achieve those objectives. By using common sense policies to encourage re-use and reinvestment in Ranlo, the Town can reduce tax and utility rates as the plan is implemented. This approach benefits all Ranlos' businesses and citizens.

An article published in The Raleigh News & Observer, by community columnist Eric Johnson, entitled "[North Carolina's Rural Areas Need Investments that will Draw Young People.](#)" March 3, 2020, summarized the findings of a recent study conducted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Mr. Johnson works for the UNC College Board and the College of Arts and Sciences. UNC-Chapel Hill hosted a panel of scholars and pundits to determine how college students are selected and what they choose to do with their lives. The panelists' concern is that young people go off to four years of college and emerge with no sense of obligation to their home communities. Graduates collect their diplomas and move to big cities. The article notes that a student stood up at the end of the event and asked, "I'm from a small town, why should I move back?" The article's author addressed that question by stating, "...the kind of things that draw graduates back home are the kind of things that benefit everyone: a strong sense of local identity, an openness to new ideas and new people, infrastructure that encourages connection rather than isolation."

According to the article, at the same event, Zach Mannheimer of Alchemy Community Transformations gave a fascinating talk about rethinking economic incentives. He said, “North Carolina should stop trying to recruit companies and industries and instead focus on investments that recruit *people*.” “What’s unique about your community?” he asked. “What can your community do to incentivize more people to come here?” The article recapped the response to that question with, “That usually means public spaces downtown, art and cultural projects that puts a singular stamp on the community, and the patience to nurture small businesses instead of pining for a big corporate savior.” The article ended with, “Not everyone in North Carolina is going to live in Raleigh or Charlotte, no matter how hard we try to cram them all in. If the State is going to keep growing like ragweed, we need vibrant small towns and welcoming rural places.”

Another article posted online at [RISMedia Daily e-News written by Suzanne De Vita](#) on November 3, 2016 discussing a report from the Urban Land Institute’s (ULI) and PwC’s, “[Emerging Trends in Real Estate® 2017](#),” analyzes trends-to-come in both the U.S and Canada housing markets. Ten “gateway” markets, as defined in the report—those with both a diverse economy and “niche” neighborhoods—will stand above the rest (It should be noted that the Raleigh-Durham market has been identified as the number 7 “gateway” market in the nation). The report highlights the importance of practical zoning standards and specifications to meet the needs in today’s real estate market. Ms. Vita writes: “*Both on the investor side and the user side of the market, optionality—not just one use, not just one user, not just one user profile—may be gaining favor as a way to navigate the cross-currents of volatile markets,*” the report’s authors state. “*Optionality from a user standpoint allows for the adjustment of space needs to vary in terms of size, location, and use on an as-needed basis.*”

The trends discussed in the report point to a need for communities to be very deliberate in how they establish development related standards and specifications, including how they implement such non-conventional approaches to stimulating investment in the community.

As described in Section 8.3.1.1, today’s businesses seek “hot spots” for business location. This clustering of complementary businesses (i.e. shopping, dining, etc.) draws potential customers to locations where their interests or needs can be met. Location economists call this agglomeration. The benefit of agglomeration to the customer is both improved choices and typically better pricing of goods and services. A simple example of this phenomenon can be seen in a portion of downtown Ranlo, where several personal services establishments (salons and barbershops) are located within proximity of one another.

The best remedy for Ranlo’s existing underutilized commercial areas is to encourage re-use and re-development through new zoning criteria and specifications. This approach can work well provided there is a commitment to areas where the investment in infrastructure has already been made. Once the Town has reinvigorated these areas, then growth beyond the current Town Limits should be studied to determine benefits for the Town’s businesses and citizens.

Policies that promote the success of neighborhoods, businesses and civic uses alike are far more desirable to all persons involved; promote a more viable future of the

community; and preserve the investments made by property owners in the community. This approach respects property rights in balance: the rights of one property owner, the rights of the adjacent or nearby property owner(s), and the interests town-wide linked to a vibrant community.

Black's Law Dictionary defines 'property rights' as ***"The rights given to the person or persons who have a right to own the property through purchase or bequest. These are basic rights in any society though absolute right for a property is rare in any society."*** Law Dictionary: [What is PROPERTY RIGHTS? Definition of PROPERTY RIGHTS \(Black's Law Dictionary\)](#)

In North Carolina, and in most states, municipalities are created for the provision of services to the benefit of its businesses, citizens and property owners. The decision to reside in close proximity with others and to share in the provision of beneficial services provided by an organized local government defines the purpose of municipalities: 'to facilitate mutual benefits to those choosing to reside within a municipality'. Therefore, municipalities inherently seek to balance property rights for the mutual benefit of those affected by the actions of the individual. This compromise on the absoluteness of property rights is therefore an understanding that rules may be enacted for the benefit of the greater community. Simply stated, when adjacent property owners must lose something of value to them for another property owner to gain, then an action or decision by that individual must not be particularly beneficial to the community. These assumptions of mutual benefit, the foundation of a municipality or community, are the basis for the establishment of rules governing development and the up-keep of properties within a municipality.

The challenge becomes how well a community balances those rules with the protections of individual property rights, rather than to unreasonably suppress them.

A balanced and fair approach to the establishment of rules, standards and specifications must be the norm, not the exception. Focusing on the goals of the community rather than restricting a community out of fear or unwarranted bias must become the established culture and philosophy when making policy. The replacement of the current ordinances governing land development with professionally administered innovative policies instills trust and support for the municipality while creating greater opportunity.

First and foremost, in the effort to invigorate Ranlo is the approach to new housing construction. This plan, and the new UDO, will address gaps in housing market product offerings and land development specifications appearing in the Town's ordinances. The new provisions must be adequate to accommodate these trends. Replacing the Town's antiquated zoning ordinance, adding specifications for land development (which creates new streets and supporting infrastructure), and maintaining quality control over the implementation of these standards, will be the priority. This approach will protect property rights of all parties while creating common-sense opportunities that avoid growth and development failures in the future. *(Also see Section 8.2.1 for additional information.)*

The new UDO will require clear policies on water and sewer service extensions and connections beyond Ranlo's Town Limits to avoid falling victim to decisions that do not benefit property tax and utility rate payers. While the UDO will not apply to any property outside the Town Limits and the Town's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), it will apply to property voluntarily annexed into the Town to gain access to those utilities. In areas where voluntary annexation petitions would not be eligible at the time a request for connection is made, the Town should still obtain a petition by the property owner, binding on future owners, allowing the Town to proceed with annexation when the statutory criteria are met. *(See 8.3.1 and 8.5.4).*

Careful consideration must be given when crafting the criteria and specifications for development to avoid as much non-conformity or "grandfathering" as possible. While some properties may not avoid a non-conforming (grandfather clause) status, it is very important to make as much existing development compliant as reasonably possible. This attempt should not be misguided into making fundamentally poor choices in preparing the UDO, nor should it fail to recognize the role of property maintenance rules.

The following descriptions of districts or zones the new UDO should establish describe the character of the various neighborhoods and non-residential parts of Ranlo. These new districts should replace all existing districts and be accompanied by opportunity-driven district standards: opportunities for both growth and preservation of natural areas.

8.5.1.1 Agriculture District

The Agriculture District (AG) is established to protect lands used for agricultural production, agriculturally based businesses and related activities. Farmland is a defining element of Ranlo's traditional identity and the protection of these lands aids in preserving the character of the Town until such time as new development is preferred by the Town. Listed uses are limited, with an emphasis on uses that are agricultural in nature. Development density is very low to encourage preservation of agricultural lands while discouraging large lot residential subdivision type development and excessive septic system utility. The Agriculture District can also be used to preserve open spaces.

8.5.1.2 Single Family Residential Districts

The Single-Family Residential Districts (SFR-1, SFR-2 and SFR-3) provide for the completion of existing residential neighborhoods and the development of new residential neighborhoods. Allowed building/lot types in the Single-Family Districts are Detached House. Listed uses are restricted to Single-Family, including duplex (two-family), homes and their accessory uses. Neighborhoods in these districts are the dominant land use in Ranlo and are a major element in defining the character of the community. Standards for the Single-Family Residential Districts promote that new development maintains the character of the community. The Single-Family Residential Districts permit the completion and conformity of conventional residential subdivisions already existing or approved in sketch plan form by the Town of Ranlo prior to the effective date of these regulations.

8.5.1.3 Residential Main Street Transition District

The Residential Main Street Transition District (RMST) provides for the completion of residential neighborhoods in the residential area(s) surrounding the Main Street and contiguous Civic Districts through in-fill development. The intent of this district is to

recognize that gradual transformation of existing development to high quality mixed density residential development is needed to support the central core of the Town. Higher density residential development allows a greater number of households to walk or bike, thus supporting businesses while reducing the parking demand and providing environmental and health benefits. Allowed building/lot types in these districts are the Detached House, Attached House, and Multi-family Building. Streets in the Residential Main Street Transition District should be interconnected, with streets and sidewalks providing a connection from Ranlo's Main Street and other mixed-use districts to the Single-Family Residential districts surrounding these neighborhoods. A range of housing types is encouraged. Criteria for the mix of building types establishes compatibility.

8.5.1.4 Main Street District

The Main Street District (MS) provides for new development, revitalization, reuse, and infill development in Ranlo's core downtown. A broad array of uses is listed to enable the needs of residents and visitors to be met. Allowed building/lot types in this district are Urban Workplace, Shop-front, Detached House, Attached House, Multi-family Building, and Civic Building. The development pattern seeks to integrate shops, restaurants, services, workplaces, civic, educational, and higher density housing in a compact, pedestrian-oriented environment. The Main Street District serves as the hub of the surrounding neighborhoods and of the broader community. The Main Street District may be expanded over time to meet the needs of the growing community for downtown facilities and services. Expansion of the Main Street District shall be contiguous and not separated from the primary district area.

8.5.1.5 Civic District

The Civic District (CIV) provides a location for educational, medical, governmental, religious, and other institutional uses. Large developments in the Civic District are encouraged to provide a master plan to the Town. Institutional uses in the Civic District are required to provide pedestrian connections on their campuses and, to the extent possible, develop an internal street system with structures fronting on the streets. Parking should not be the dominant visible element of the campuses developed for institutional uses. Providing a unique district for civic uses will establish uniform standards.

8.5.1.6 Mixed Use Districts

The Mixed-Use Districts (MU-1 and MU-2) are established to provide opportunities for both compatible and sustainable re-development where underutilized commercial properties already exist as well as infill sites where site specific land planning of new development creates opportunities for businesses and various housing designs sharing community amenities and enhancements. Existing auto-oriented street, lot, and building designs can create uncomfortable pedestrian environments; however, with careful site planning these areas will allow a greater number of residents to walk or bike to businesses and services with an interconnected network of streets and sidewalks. Allowed building/lot types are Highway Commercial, Urban Workplace, Shop-front, Detached House, Attached House, and Multi-family. Dominant uses in this district are residential, retail and office. The Mixed-Use Districts are expected to serve Ranlo residents as well as persons who travel from surrounding communities. The development pattern in this district acknowledges the role of the automobile, with parking and access provided to

promote safety for the motoring public. Development standards in the Mixed-Use Districts promote the creation of a pleasant pedestrian-friendly auto-oriented environment while enabling a compatible transition to uses in adjacent neighborhood districts.

8.5.1.7 NC Highway 7 Commercial District

The NC Highway 7 Commercial District (C-7) is established to provide opportunities for compatible, resilient and sustainable development along the NC Highway 7 corridor. Development standards in the C-7 district acknowledge that the automobile is the primary mode of transportation. Development and design standards encourage pedestrian scale development along a secondary street network serving larger projects. Goals of the C-7 district include providing a pleasant calm environment for motorists, a safe environment for pedestrians within a network of streets and pedestrian facilities; promoting the safety of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians; and preserving the capacity of the transportation network outside the core area as shown in the adopted Town Plan. Uses in this district include commercial goods & services, employment, and some limited small-scale industrial. Allowed building/lot types include Highway Commercial, Urban Workplace, and Shop-front.

8.5.1.8 Vehicle Service and Repair District

The Vehicle Service and Repair District (VSR) is established to provide locations for specific uses that, due to their unique characteristics and importance to the community, and the traveling public, require different criteria and specifications than typical commercial development. Development standards in the Vehicle Service and Repair District acknowledge that the automobile is the primary mode of transportation in suburban communities and there is a vital need for such businesses to be located in close proximity to one another. Uses within the Vehicle Service and Repair District are buffered from adjacent uses. The dominant uses in this district are vehicle oriented and/or dependent and include vehicle-based services, vehicle repair shops and disabled vehicle storage areas. The Vehicle Service and Repair District is reserved for uses which require broad maneuvering spaces and avoid pedestrian interaction with potentially hazardous conditions. Goals of the Vehicle Service and Repair District include providing a pleasant environment for motorists, a safe environment for pedestrians along the network of streets and pedestrian facilities; promoting the safety of motorists and pedestrians; and preserving the capacity of Main Street and its interconnecting network of streets outside the core area as shown in the adopted Town Plan. Uses in this district include heavy commercial goods and services for motor vehicles, and some limited industrial. Allowed building/lot type is Highway Commercial.

8.5.1.9 Industrial District

The Industrial District (IND) is established to provide locations for industrial uses that, due to the scale of the buildings and/or the nature of the use, cannot be integrated into the community. Uses within the Industrial District are buffered from adjacent uses. The dominant uses in this district are manufacturing and warehouse storage. Small scale manufacturing and storage that is compatible with less intensive uses can and should be located in other non-residential or mixed-use districts. The Industrial District is reserved for uses which require very large buildings and/or large parking and loading facilities.

8.5.1.10 Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay District

The Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay District (TNDO) provides an alternative opportunity applicable only upon request for a Zoning Map Amendment for the development of new neighborhoods and the revitalization or extension of existing neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are structured upon a fine network of interconnecting pedestrian-oriented streets and other public spaces. Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND's) provide a mixture of housing types and prices, prominently sited civic or community building(s), stores/offices/workplaces, and churches to provide a balanced mix of activities. A Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) has a recognizable center and clearly defined edges; optimum size is a quarter mile from center to edge. A TND is urban in form, is typically an extension of the existing developed area of the Town and has an overall residential density of up to eleven (11) dwelling units per acre. TNDO districts should have a significant portion of land dedicated to improved open spaces, and reserve un-improved open spaces where environmentally sensitive areas are located.

8.5.1.11 Scenic Corridor District

The Scenic Corridor Overlay District (SCO) is established to protect the pastoral scenes and open spaces that provide a sense of arrival for residents and visitors traveling the major entrance roads and gateways to the Town. The pastoral scenes and undeveloped property along the entrance roads and gateways contribute significantly to Ranlo's community character and sense of place. The Scenic Corridor Overlay District provides development options for the owners of the property abutting the entrance roads and gateways. The goal of this district is to protect the scenic value of the corridors through a mix of incentives and development standards. These standards will preserve the suburban character of the Town by maintaining the sense of a suburban corridor in an urban environment; provide an aesthetically appealing experience for those traveling the corridor; provide multi-modal transportation options for travel; and promote a safe transportation corridor for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

8.5.1.12 Heavy Industry Overlay District

The Heavy Industry Overlay District (HIO) is established to protect all environments from the negative impacts of certain activities and types of development. It is the intent of this district to provide and permit certain public and private heavy industrial uses and facilities that incorporate hazardous materials and/or scientific technology, including wholesale, distribution, storage, processing, manufacturing and production. However, it is required that industries in this district take all necessary actions including but not limited to installation of apparatus and technological equipment available to prevent negative impacts on the environment and the community from the emissions of smoke, dust, fumes, noise and vibrations and other activities and/or products resulting from such hazardous industrial activities in accordance with federal, state and local regulations.

8.5.1.13 Mini Farm Overlay District

The Mini Farm Overlay District (MFO) permits buildings to be grouped on a site, parcel, or property in order to optimize the use of land and resources for both residential and agricultural purposes. By clustering development at a density no greater than one unit per developed acre, projects developed in accordance with these standards can obtain density bonuses while preserving unique natural features for agricultural use. The Mini Farm Overlay District mandates the dedication of both agricultural land and open space

with density bonuses provided as an incentive for adhering to the standards. It is the intent of this district to be used for new development in undeveloped outlying areas of the Town and its extraterritorial jurisdiction. Allowed building/lot type is Detached House.

8.5.1.14 Manufactured Home Overlay District

The Manufactured Home Overlay District (MHO) is established to protect the standard of living and neighborhood conditions. Established standards that will enable the use of innovative manufactured homes with a higher aesthetic standard will invigorate these communities. Non-conforming manufactured home parks that have not received approval for continuation would be amortized over a period of time to allow the owner/operator to meet reasonable financial payback expectations in accordance with accepted practices in North Carolina. Existing parks could be limited to less fundamental standards and specifications, while new parks are required to meet a higher standard. These parks may be ideally suited for alternative designs such as Tiny House, Park Model and other styles of housing where installation standards are considered temporary. The overlay could be expanded to apply to permanent installations of innovative manufactured housing in subdivisions or parks in accordance with G.S. 160D-909.

8.5.2 Development Agreements

Accommodating current and projected trends require a partnership of land development and real estate industries with local government leadership. Shifts in social values, particularly among different age groups, indicate a strong propensity to consume goods and services in vastly different ways than prior years. In order to meet the expectations of what consumers' desire, land development will need to change the way it has been functioning since the 1970's. No longer do people rely solely upon the personal automobile for their daily needs. Today, generations young and old are finding new means of sharing within their daily lives as described in Sections 3.6, 6.4 and 8.2. Therefore, local governments must find new ways to manage growth that is inclusive of a diverse and expectant population, development agreements are a new tool for local governments that many find effective in accomplishing new concepts.

Development agreements are a relatively new addition to the local government toolbox that has been recently modified to improve the way development specifications are established for a property. Having been authorized by the North Carolina legislature over a decade ago for the purpose of addressing larger phased developments and the need to hold entitlement to land development approvals for extended periods of time, the development agreement has opened a new avenue to creative design and town building. Section 19 of Session Law 2015-246 amended the statutes to remove the minimum size and maximum term of agreements. The changes effectively opened the window of opportunity just in time to create enormous flexibility in how new land development projects could be structured.

Today, development agreements offer a developer, landowner and the Town the ability to structure common sense approaches to projects that protect property rights and enable effective approvals and administration of projects when all sides agree. Ideally, the development agreement will not be used unwisely by local governments but will be utilized to offer higher degrees of trust. Trust, in the form of stability, eliminates concern

that changes in elected local leadership will impact how a project progresses from start to finish.

The development agreement cannot substitute standards and specifications for development but can offer two substantial benefits: it can establish opportunities for participation by the local government and it can freeze zoning standards in place for the life of the agreement.

8.5.3 Ordinance Administration

At this time this Town Plan 2040 was being prepared, a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) was also being developed to implement this plan. The Town Plan and UDO must be administered by experienced professionals to ensure protection of the rights of businesses and citizens. Such fair and unbiased administration must be proactive and seek to help these businesses and citizens achieve the successes they may seek that are consistent with both the adopted Town Plan and the UDO.

Proactive administration includes:

- Assisting businesses and citizens inquiring about their proposal and how their ideas fit into the comprehensive plan.
- Ensuring all inquiries enjoy all the privileges of the UDO.
- Providing accurate and prompt information to enable the business or citizen to rely on the information in making very important decisions.
- Identifying invalid permits and determining how to administer.
- Identifying non-conforming uses (showing on map), sending letters to describe how property rights will be preserved and limits on changes to the non-conforming use.
- Meeting with Gaston County Inspections Department to establish protocol for future projects.
- Preparing a guide on the “Table of Permitted Uses” to describe 1) why so extensive, 2) why include unwanted uses, and 3) how to use.
- Providing customer service functions to include Town of Ranlo’s Planning and Zoning Administrator administering final Certificate of Occupancy (CO) following all inspections by appropriate Town staff and County Inspections.

8.5.4 Water and Sewer Utility Extension and Service Policy

The Town’s current infrastructure service areas that already extend beyond the Town Limits will require clear policies on connections to avoid falling victim to decisions that do not benefit property tax and utility rate payers. Updating these extension and service policies should clarify both requirements and incentives for property owners. *(See Section 8.3.1 and 8.5.1.)*

Ranlo’s current sewer and water extension practices for new development require that access to these utilities be dependent upon the development site being incorporated within the Town limits. Therefore, any and all proposed development within Ranlo’s extraterritorial jurisdiction requiring water and sewer access must be accompanied by a petition for voluntary annexation. In areas where voluntary annexation petitions would not be eligible at the time a request for connection is made, the Town should require a petition by the property owner that is binding on future owners allowing the Town to proceed with annexation when the statutory criteria is met.

8.5.5 Stormwater Utility – *An Innovative Alternative to Reduce Development Costs*

Another way to improve the financial attractiveness of Ranlo for new investment seizes an opportunity still in its infancy among municipalities. This approach should be considered when and if the need is deemed either beneficial to the community or mandated by the State and/or federal agencies responsible for water quality. Under State and federal stormwater rules emerging across North Carolina, local governments are often tasked with either requiring new development to install stormwater facilities (BMP's) or requiring existing property owners of larger development to begin retrofitting stormwater BMP's in areas that were developed prior to certain years, or both. These rules promulgated by the State and federal agencies mandate local governments to restore natural pre-development flow conditions measured in both quality and quantity when new development is approved. These requirements are very costly and often impact development feasibility in significant ways.

An innovative new alternative to these expansive (and expensive) development requirements is to approach this mandate with a new municipal utility service created in part to finance the installation and maintenance of the required retrofits and to meet the needs of both new development and re-development with common-sense solutions. With a public utility, developers can not only enjoy reduced costs up front, but localities can enjoy enhanced tax base resulting in lower taxes throughout the jurisdiction when compared to the impact upon the pattern of development the traditional alternative of individual on-site BMP's create.

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9. BLUEPRINT FOR RANLO - SUMMARY AND PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Summary

The responsibility to implement this plan lies with the Town of Ranlo's Board of Commissioners. Through its leadership, this plan will serve as the blueprint for refreshing revitalizing growth. The core area of Ranlo will be strengthened, opportunity for economic success will be established, and the foundation for decision making will be provided.

The tasks associated with implementation will require a steady long-term focus on achieving goals. To identify and prioritize the many tasks associated with implementation of this plan, the following table illustrates which steps to take when, and who should be responsible. These tasks are accompanied by a range of costs for overall budgeting. Seeking partnerships to share in the risk and the reward of joint ventures will improve the success and reduce the cost to the businesses and citizens of Ranlo.

9.2 Actions to Implement Town Plan 2040

The information appearing in the Action Items Table 9.2 ***Blueprint for Ranlo: Actions to Implement Town Plan 2040*** provides a quick reference guide format for the ultimate prioritization of the actions and recommendations of this plan.

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Table 9.2 BLUEPRINT FOR RANLO: Actions to Implement Town Plan 2040					
Check-off	Adopted _____, 2022 by the Board of Commissioners	Target Years	Plan References	Responsible Groups	Notes
ROUND 1: Getting our house in order!					
	Finalize and adopt a new Unified Development (Zoning & Subdivision) Ordinance (UDO). At the time this Town Plan was adopted, Ranlo was underway in drafting the Ranlo Development Ordinance (RDO). The RDO will incorporate zoning districts, design standards, & specifications toward implementing a variety of goals and objectives in this Town Plan 2040.	2022	5.2.1, 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 8.3.2, 8.4.1, 8.5.1, & 8.5.2	Administration, Planning & Zoning Board, & Board of Commissioners	
A					
	Take steps to address local infrastructure needs. Initiate various studies (i.e. local roadway, access management issues, utility opportunities/constraints, master planning efforts for local parks, pedestrian access, recreation plans, new downtown corridor, etc.)	2023	5.2.1, 7.2.1.1, 8.3, 8.5.4, & 8.5.5	Administration, Public Works, & Board of Commissioners	
B					
	Complete master planning studies of new downtown corridor and potential redevelopment of current Town Hall property.	2025	5.2.3, 5.2.4, & 8.4.1	Administration & Board of Commissioners	
C					
	Address concerns related to crime and property maintenance.	2026	5.2.2	Administration, Police, & Board of Commissioners	
D					
ROUND 2: Reintroducing Ranlo to the world!					
	Plan, design, and install way-finding signage to direct people into and within downtown.	2025	5.2.4.5	Administration & Public Works	
A					
	Continue to update and expand social media to provide current information to the public.	Ongoing	5.1.4.1	Administration	
B					
	Encourage community events co-hosted by Ranlo businesses and the Town to come together as a community.	Ongoing	5.2.5	Administration, Parks & Recreation, & Public Works	
C					
	Expand recreational and pedestrian amenities.	Ongoing	5.2.1.5, 5.2.1.6, 5.2.1.7, & 5.2.5	Administration & Parks & Recreation	
D					
ROUND 3: Bringing a vibrant atmosphere to downtown!					
	Pursue the selection of future public offices and facilities in the downtown area.	2026	5.2.3 & 5.2.4.7	Administration & Board of Commissioners	
A					
	Adopt standards and specifications that attract new businesses within downtown with higher development and code enforcement standards to ensure quality development.	2026	5.2.4.7	Administration, Planning & Zoning Board, & Board of Commissioners	
B					
	Program the installation of cohesive place-making elements throughout civic spaces to help achieve synergy among existing and future businesses.	Ongoing	5.2.4 & 8.4.1	Administration, Public Works, & Board of Commissioners	
C					
ROUND 4: Expanding Ranlo's contribution to the region to benefit our local businesses!					
	Promote and encourage additional community events.	Ongoing	5.2.5	Administration & Board of Commissioners	
A					
	Continue to work on improving access to affordable housing.	Ongoing	5.2.6	Administration & Board of Commissioners	
B					
	Continue to improve community relations.	Ongoing	5.1.4.1 & 5.2.7	Administration & Board of Commissioners	
C					