

# Railroad Corridor Overlay Study

## Background

The Blue Ridge Southern railway passes through 11 out of 30 zoning districts of Waynesville. Generally, it claims a 100-ft right-of-way on each side of the tracks measured from the center of the railroad. While there are many small properties within this buffer, there are also several large parcels over an acre that are directly adjacent to the tracks. Additionally, parts of the Waynesville greenway also stretch along the rail corridor. In June of 2021, staff, Danny Wingate of Haywood Builders, and Planning Board member Stuart Bass met to discuss this study, and Planner Olga Grooman provided preliminary research and maps for discussion. Further work was delayed however, as the Board focused on development applications, and the work of the Planning Board's Subdivision Subcommittee.

## Comprehensive Plan

The 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan identifies an opportunity to “consider railroad corridor for development potential” (p. 88). The Economic Development section of the Plan further states that “while the Town has seen a loss in the industrial sector from what it used to be, industrial and commercial properties, particularly along the railroad corridor, are creating new opportunities and are a valuable economic resource for the future generation of manufacturing” (p. 83). The benefits and objectives of this study are specifically outlined in the goals #1 and 5 of the Comp Plan:

- **Goal 1: Continue to Promote Smart Growth**

“Study/implement a railroad overlay district to encourage redevelopment along the railroad corridor, especially in areas with access to existing/future greenway” (p. 67).

- **Goal 5: Create Opportunities for Sustainable Economy**

“Review the LDS to create opportunities within the Town of Waynesville's industrial areas and along the railroad corridor” (p. 70).

## Recommendation and Scope of Work

Re-institute the railway corridor overlay using a combination of planning board members and key stakeholders and tasking them with developing recommendations for zoning regulations that promote area improvement, economic development, and housing opportunity. It would be beneficial to engage the stakeholders who are either directly affected by the railroad or who can provide their knowledge and expertise on the subject. Such stakeholders may include the Haywood County Economic Development Committee, major property/business owners along the railway, attorneys, land surveyors, Parks & Recreation, and a representative of Southern Railroad in addition to a planning board representative(s). The first action of the study group would be to develop goals, a scope of work, and a schedule, for the study. Once completed, the work group would make recommendations to the Planning Board regarding any possible ordinance text amendments or zoning districts/overlays. The Scope of Work could include identifying appropriate and potential uses along the corridor, density, mixed-use, and gateways to the Town and adjacent business districts. The study could also consider if a special railroad overlay district would be beneficial and desirable to property owners, and promote a higher concentration of infill development and revitalization of some areas.