



# **Chatham Area Growth & Renewal Strategic Plan**

## **Draft Plan Presentation**

**September 11, 2024**

**Hill Studio & Arnett Muldrow**

# What is a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is a document that outlines an organization's goals and actions to achieve them. It sets a long-term vision for the future with goals, projects, and metrics for success.

## Why a Strategic Plan?

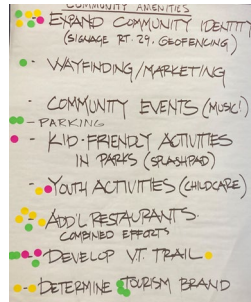
1. Create One, Forward-Focused Vision
2. Draw Attention to Biases and Flaws in Reasoning  
(enlist a variety of people to review and refine)
3. Track Progress Based on Strategic Goals

*This Plan:*

# Chatham Area Growth & Renewal Strategic Plan

Undertaken by a Foundation ...

Extraordinary investment of citizen time...



Chatham in many ways...

the Quintessential American Hometown



# Community Engagement Summary

# Summary

- **Project Kickoff**
  - Open to the public
  - ~30 – 40 attendees
- **Community Survey**
  - Live from May 29<sup>th</sup> – July 24<sup>th</sup>
  - 451 responses
- **Focus Groups**
  - Two focus groups on each topic; eight focus groups total
    - Housing
    - Community Amenities
    - Outdoor Recreation
    - Small Businesses
- **Stakeholder Interviews**
  - Representing:
    - Large Employer
    - Local Events
    - Town Manager
    - Town Mayor
    - County Economic Development
    - Historical Society
    - Youth
    - County Parks and Rec
    - Hargrave Military Academy

# Survey – Main Takeaways

## **Respondents appreciate...**

- Chatham's sense of community
- Quaintness
- Walkability
- Local businesses like Callands, El Caz, J&Ts, Shadetree
- The library
- The presence of Hargrave and Chatham Hall
- Scenic beauty

## **Respondents wish for...**

- More restaurants (notably a breakfast option, brewery or tasting room, family-friendly eateries, and an icecream shop)
- Greater access to local produce and goods
- More childcare options
- More senior services
- A hotel
- Affordable and diverse housing options
- Community gathering spaces
- More things to do/entertainment options

# Survey – Main Takeaways

## **Respondents envision a Chatham that...**

- Has expanded small businesses and restaurants in a vibrant downtown
- Is a destination for day trips and provides multiple entertainment options
- Has affordable and diverse housing opportunities
- Retains its historic aesthetic and small-town charm, but with modern amenities
- Supports entrepreneurship and small businesses
- Provides family-friendly amenities and activities
- Celebrates its history and cultural heritage
- Is economically diverse
- Has strong community engagement
- Remains safe and community-oriented

**Community  
Amenities**

**Community  
Recreation**

**Housing**

**Small Business &  
Economic  
Development**

# Community Amenities

# Goal #1: Expand community identity and create a shared vision for Chatham

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Develop gateways as a sequence to draw people to and through the community
- ✓ Create a community and downtown brand
- ✓ **Pursue a Business District Revitalization Planning grant**
- ✓ Update the Town's Comprehensive Plan
- ✓ **Expand the Town's historic district or identify new historic districts**
- ✓ Leverage Chatham's strong community engagement and volunteerism
- ✓ Engage with the African American community better



# Goal #2: Determine Chatham's tourism draw

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Explore and develop products that enhance and support the town's appeal to visitors
- ✓ Explore lodging options to accommodate visitors



# Goal #3: Create community gathering spaces and events

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Incorporate sitting areas through the community
- ✓ Promote the library's services and role as a community meeting place
- ✓ Host more community events
- ✓ Explore partnerships with Hargrave Military Academy and Chatham Hall to maximize the use of community facilities





# Goal #5: Improve accessibility within Chatham

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Expand parking opportunities downtown
- ✓ Revisit the efforts of extending sidewalks to underserved areas
- ✓ Pursue a volunteer-driven community service for transportation

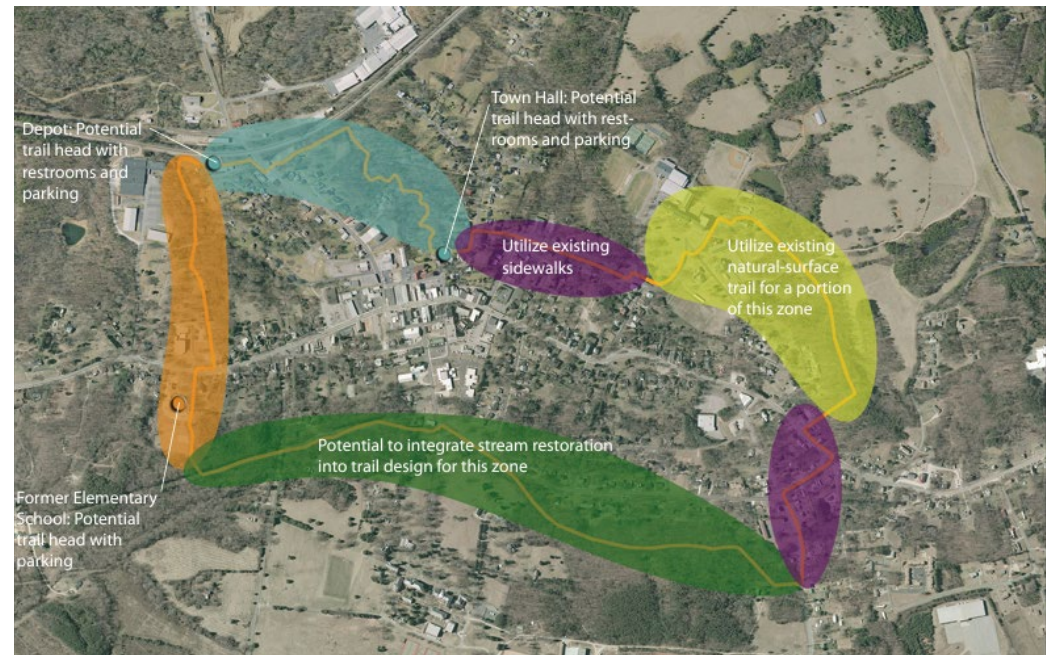


# Community Recreation

# Goal #1: Pursue opportunities to develop a recreational trail system in Chatham

## Strategies include:

- ✓ **Develop a trail system study**
- ✓ Assess the feasibility of developing the proposed trail
- ✓ Recommend improvements to the proposed trail route
- ✓ Explore opportunities to develop a series of interior trail loops that connect with the main trail



# Goal #2: Create more outdoor community event spaces

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Determine the feasibility of additional event spaces
- ✓ **Assess the possibility of an outdoor amphitheater**



# Goal #3: Encourage active and accessible outdoor recreation

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Explore the feasibility of establishing a recreation park on the south side of Chatham
- ✓ **Consider incorporating additional amenities into public parks and community centers**
- ✓ Improve existing trails to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs
- ✓ Increase the number of public benches throughout the town



# Goal #4: Increase opportunities and amenities for youth

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Consider the establishment of a splash pad
- ✓ Encourage childcare service providers to come to Chatham



# Goal #5: Develop a comprehensive marketing and communication strategy

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Create a centralized information platform
- ✓ Establish a physical information kiosk
- ✓ Leverage social media
- ✓ Collaborate with local media
- ✓ Implement targeted outreach
- ✓ Engage with community groups



# Goal #6: Strengthen partnerships with Hargrave Military Academy and Chatham Hall

## Strategies include:

- ✓ **Leverage their facilities for public use**
- ✓ Improve marketing efforts for shared facilities
- ✓ Utilize the properties of Chatham Hall and Hargrave Military Academy as key components of a potential community trail system



# Housing

# Goal #1: Prioritize housing that attracts young people

## Strategies include:

- ✓ **Prioritize the development of housing options that meeting their needs and preferences**
- ✓ Investigate funding opportunities for affordable and workforce housing initiatives



# Goal #2: Address dilapidated lots and vacant homes to encourage investment or sale

## Strategies include:

- ✓ **Pursue a Virginia Housing planning study to conduct a housing needs assessment**
- ✓ Initiate a coordinated cleaning effort
- ✓ Consider implementing an uninhabited building tax
- ✓ Enforce certificates of occupancy requirements



# Goal #3: Explore feasible options for senior housing

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Encourage the development of patio homes



# Goal #4: Explore options for downtown second-floor housing

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Pursue a Virginia Housing planning grant to fund a feasibility study
- ✓ Engage with downtown property owners



# Goal #5: Explore additional opportunities for increasing Chatham's housing stock

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Encourage the development of mixed-use housing projects
- ✓ Identify opportunity sites for expanding Chatham's housing stock
- ✓ Explore the feasibility of extending Peach Street to Route 57



# Goal #6: Make Chatham attractive for developers and builders

## Strategies include:

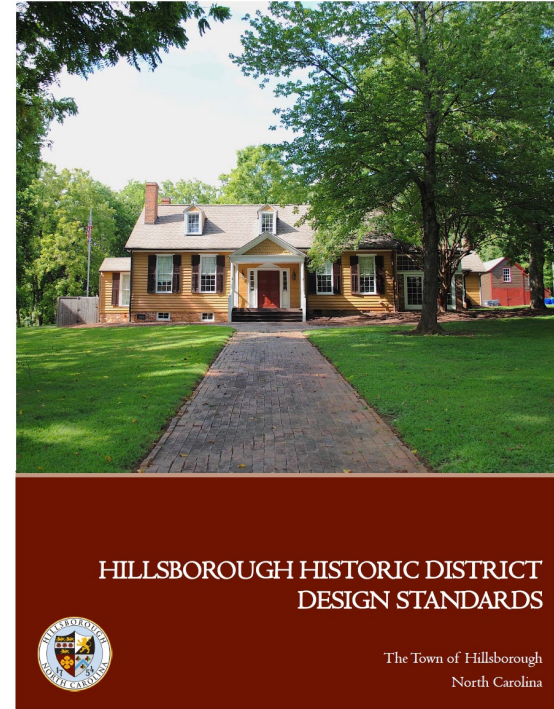
- ✓ Explore and implement financial incentives for residential developers
- ✓ Develop a strategy to leverage broadband internet as a key attractor for remote workers



# Goal #7: Ensure new housing is compatible with existing housing

## Strategies include:

- ✓ **Consider implementing design guidelines that align new projects with the character and aesthetic of existing homes**
- ✓ Investigate the feasibility of creating a residential plans library
- ✓ Support homeowners in navigating residential historic tax credit applications



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Case study of design guidelines for the Hillsborough Historic District in NC. These guidelines were prepared by Hill Studio.

# **Small Business & Economic Development**

# Goal #1: Increase access to local goods

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Share market research with existing and potential businesses
- ✓ **Recruit small independent grocery or market in the North Main area**
- ✓ Recruit new business and encourage existing business growth based on market research findings
- ✓ **Explore cooperative business models for utilizing larger retail spaces.**
- ✓ Consider incentives for new or expanding businesses
- ✓ Consider expanding enterprise zone



# Goal #2: Develop strategy to attract diverse businesses

## Strategies include:

- ✓ **Recruit restaurant offerings based on demand**
- ✓ Recruit niche & destination businesses to downtown
- ✓ Create strong business support and education process
- ✓ **Facilitate small business programming & business planning**



### YES, WE'RE OPEN

## THE CHECKLIST

- 1 CREATE A FEASIBLE BUSINESS CONCEPT**
  - Identify who will buy your service or product.
  - Research similar businesses and consider their models.
  - Understand the role of demographics and local economic data in business planning.
  - Determine market opportunity. Ask yourself, "Is there truly a market for my business?"
  - Consider how you will fund start-up costs.
- 2 DEVELOP A THOROUGH BUSINESS PLAN**
  - Make realistic financial projections for start-up, overhead, and upkeep costs before taking revenue.
  - Prepare a cash flow projection.
  - Determine feasible price ranges for your products or services, accounting for sales and use tax or meals tax as relevant.
  - Determine your financial record-keeping method. Do you want to hire a bookkeeper or do it yourself?
  - Identify the most effective marketing strategies to build awareness and generate leads.
  - Research insurance options and requirements.
  - Develop a plan to show customer appreciation.
  - Identify business tax requirements.
- 3 IDENTIFY LEGAL STRUCTURE**
  - Apply for a business license with the Commissioner of the Revenue and the State Corporation Commission. Ask whether you will need any other professional licenses to operate legally.
  - Decide which business structure is best for you (sole proprietor, LLC, partnership, or corporation). Consider state and federal tax liability with a legal or tax professional.
  - Consider whether any socio-economic certification programs (WVABC, HoI, microbusiness, veteran, etc.) will be beneficial.
- 4 PLAN FOR EMPLOYEE HIRING AND TRAINING**
  - Ensure staffing needs will be met for your planned hours of operation.
  - Learn all state and federal labor laws, and formulate a compliance plan.
  - Develop a plan to file payroll taxes accurately and on time. Seek assistance if necessary.
  - Identify training resources that will help prepare your employees to provide great customer service.
- 5 DETERMINE THE BEST BUSINESS LOCATION**
  - Identify your need for space. Consider how much space your competitors use, amount of foot traffic, cost per square foot, and market demographics in your location decision.
  - Contact the Department of Community Development to determine if your business can operate at your desired location.
- 6 REVIEW AND ADJUST THE BUSINESS PLAN**
  - Negotiate a lease or purchase of commercial space. Determine the cost of upgrades needed to make your location site code compliant to obtain a CO and appropriate zoning.
  - Determine value of road frontage and visibility for your business. Apply for a sign permit.
  - Adjust financial projections as you learn more about your business and your industry best practices.
  - Acquire all necessary permits and licenses before opening for business.
  - Consider seasonality. Adjust cash flow projections accordingly and select optimal start date.
  - Ask subject matter experts for feedback on your business plan.
  - Review trusted capital sources such as grants, loans, competitions, and local incentive programs.
  - If needed, discuss the process of procuring a loan with multiple lenders. Carefully weigh options.
  - Register for necessary taxes.
- 7 PRIME YOUR BUSINESS FOR OPENING DAY**
  - Determine marketing plan for grand opening.
  - Think through the details of your opening-day operations – prepare yourself and your staff.
  - Schedule a ribbon cutting with the local chamber and ask for their help alerting the local media.
  - Reach out to your target market and any relevant niche communities to let them know you are "Open for Business!"

# Goal #3: Market Chatham locally & beyond

## Strategies include:

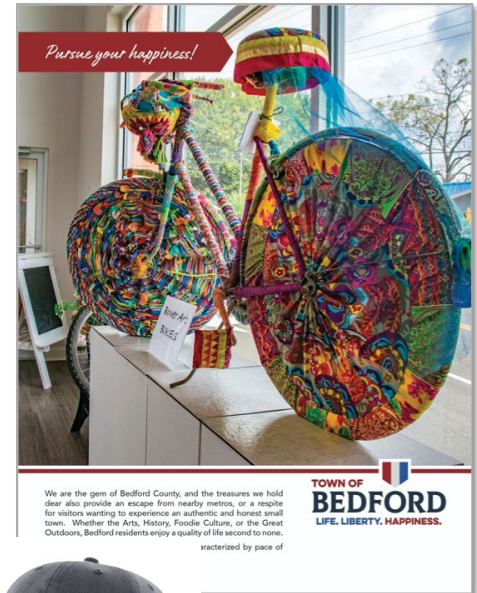
- ✓ Capitalize on unique position in region by collaborating with key destinations
- ✓ Continue to engage with Chatham Hall and Hargrave to grow partnership
- ✓ Encourage local businesses to offer internships to students
- ✓ Encourage local property owners to consider short term lodging
- ✓ **Consider development of small, boutique style hotel**



# Goal #4: Tell Chatham's Unique Story

## Strategies include:

- ✓ Establish unified effort to market the community, destinations, and businesses
- ✓ **Develop a branding & marketing plan**
- ✓ Promote the history of Gilbert, Sugar Hill, and other African American neighborhoods and businesses
- ✓ Identify funding through grants from VTC, VDOT





**Thank you!**  
***Next: Breakout session***