

## Vibrant Character and Identity

At the heart of every community lies its character and identity — a combination of physical, social, and cultural elements. And central to Forsyth County’s character and identity is a beautiful public realm: dynamic urban spaces, attractive neighborhoods with well-maintained, tree-lined streets, distinctive architecture and landmarks, and scenic rural landscapes.

Through a balance of urban growth and rural preservation, a mixture of well-designed public buildings and preservation of historic resources, and investments in public art, we are literally building on our community’s success. Preserving historic resources is a critical aspect of community character. By safeguarding historic assets, we honor our community’s heritage, maintain our unique identity, and provide opportunities for education and cultural enrichment. Public art installations also play a vital role in shaping community character by adding vibrancy, creativity, and cultural expression to public spaces. Whether through murals, sculptures, or interactive installations, public art engages residents and visitors alike, fostering a sense of identity, pride, and civic engagement. Our rural landscapes are also essential components of our character and identity. These open spaces offer respite from urban and suburban life, providing opportunities for recreation, reflection and connection with nature, as well as environmental benefits.

These features not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of our community, but also play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging, pride, and connectedness. Beyond our current residents, vibrant character is also central to creating the quality of life and livability that is central to attracting new people and businesses to our community.

**Goal 1: Make our public works beautiful. Parks, plazas, libraries, government buildings, roads and streetscapes, bridges, and other public facilities should be designed to be lasting, visually appealing, and make us proud of our community.**

- Invest in well-maintained and high-quality public facilities.
- Encourage high-quality, human-scale, and unique architecture and design for future public buildings.
- Maintain, update, and modernize our parks, community centers, libraries, and other public facilities, especially in disadvantaged areas.
- Minimize future maintenance costs by investing in more durable materials and designs for public facilities and infrastructure.
- Lead by example by appropriately repairing and maintaining historic public buildings.
- Include public art in the design stage of new public facilities.

**Goal 2: Maintain clean and attractive neighborhoods and public spaces.**

- Provide adequate funding for public services that improve the appearance of our neighborhoods and roadways through code enforcement and sanitation services.
- Continue to organize and consider expanding community cleanup events in the style of Forsyth Creek Week and the Great American Cleanup.
- Empower neighborhood organizations to beautify their neighborhoods through “Adopt a Street” and other cleanup programs.
- Support and promote neighborhood-driven beautification efforts with funding and by making water available for community flower gardens.

- Enhance CityLink’s capacity to make it easier for residents to report litter, graffiti, and illegal dumping.

**Goal 3: Expand our tree canopy and improve the quality of our green spaces in all areas of our community.**

- Maintain the Tree City USA status for Winston-Salem.
- Plant more large-variety trees in public parks, and around public buildings and other public spaces.
- Invest in structural soil for tree planting in Downtown and other appropriate areas to allow for a thriving tree canopy as well as sidewalk integrity.
- Identify streets and roads where the cultivation of tree tunnels would be beneficial. Select appropriate species that will grow over the sidewalks and roadway, creating shade and aesthetic appeal.
- Encourage the planting of native, drought-tolerant species of plants and prohibit invasive species.

**Goal 4: Safeguard the heritage of Forsyth County by preserving those areas and individual properties that reflect our cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history.**

- Protect our historic resources from deterioration and demolition.
- Expand our historic resources inventory to include underrepresented groups, resources, and building types.
- Encourage the establishment of additional historic districts, local historic landmarks, and historic sign designations where appropriate, especially in underrepresented neighborhoods.
- Continue to share information with local historic property owners on the requirements and best practices for maintaining their properties.
- Promote the use of state and federal historic tax credits to eligible property owners.
- Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic buildings where appropriate.
- Collaborate with local colleges, universities, and other organizations that can teach the trades and skills necessary for historic preservation work.

**Goal 5: Share our community’s unique history, culture, and character.**

- Research and create educational programming about previously underrepresented aspects of our community’s heritage.
- Continue to share our community’s unique history through events and publications. Plan story sharing activities and historic resource surveys that highlight our community’s diverse past.
- Continue to promote and encourage cultural tourism of our community’s unique past.
- Collaborate with state, local, and tribal preservation groups to promote our community’s historic resources.
- Continue to commemorate historic sites, events, and properties through the Historic Marker and Heritage Neighborhoods programs. Work with Forsyth County’s towns and villages to create their own marker programs that would recognize their significant sites, events, and properties.
- Maintain unique or distinctive view corridors.
- Promote programming for, and greater access to, our publicly owned historic places, such as Historic Bethabara Park, Union Station, Memorial Industrial School, and Winston-Salem City Hall.

**Goal 6: Preserve unique and distinctive rural areas while ensuring equitable access to public parklands.**

- Explore the creation of programs that could bank undeveloped land for specific uses, such as for recreation and open space, preservation purposes, or the expansion of farmland.
- Offer incentives to landowners who commit to long-term conservation easements of unique or distinctive rural or natural areas.
- Preserve more parkland as passive space, including woodlands, pastures, and lakes, for community retreat areas.
- Encourage cluster development to balance growth and the preservation of open space in appropriate areas.
- Establish partnerships with local land trusts and conservation organizations to facilitate land preservation efforts.
- Promote the development of greenways and natural corridors to preserve rural character and provide recreational opportunities.
- Explore National Register of Historic Places designation for significant rural properties.

**Goal 7: Prioritize public art that uplifts our identity and culture and is equitably accessible and distributed throughout our community.**

- Include public art in future public facilities investments, such as parks, libraries, recreation centers, greenways, and streetscape improvements.
- Prioritize public art that creates welcoming gathering spaces and better connects neighborhoods.
- Place public art in areas that would benefit from aesthetic improvements.
- Focus on public art projects that help create a sense of safety, such as providing pedestrian lighting and increasing crosswalk safety.
- Create neighborhood-specific artist residencies that highlight local stories and make the arts more accessible.
- Support the development of local artists who can best communicate local history and culture.
- Work with local fabricators to ensure that national artists can contract work locally to create our public art projects.