

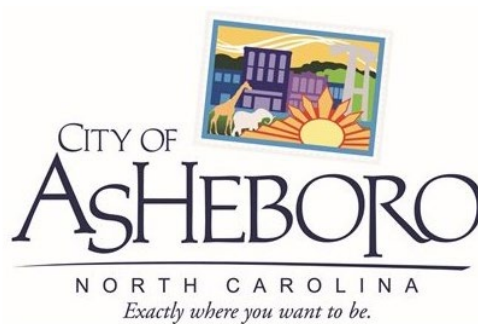
City of Asheboro

Land Development Plan Update

SOAR Exercise Analysis Summary



February 2020



What is a SOAR analysis?

SOAR is a strategic planning framework with an approach that focuses on strengths and seeks to understand the whole system by including the voices of our steering committee. Focusing on strengths means that the SOAR conversations center on what Asheboro is doing right, what could be enhanced, and what is compelling to those who have a stake in the community's success.

Related to the more well-known SWOT analysis, SOAR seeks to engage stakeholders at many levels, not just those in decision making positions. It consults those who are generally not city staff yet can offer invaluable insights into the strengths and opportunities of the community. It leverages the strengths and opportunities from SWOT as a foundation, but also adds aspirations and results. In turn, SOAR is an action-oriented analysis, focused on planning and implementation with attention given ultimately to results.

The SOAR analysis can generally be broken down into the following categories:

Strengths: What can we build on?

- What is Asheboro most proud of? How does our town reflect our greatest strengths?
- What makes Asheboro unique? What are we best at?
- What is our proudest achievement in the last year or two?
- How do we use these strengths to get results?
- How do our strengths position us against other similar municipalities?
- What do we provide that is unique in comparison to our peer communities?

Opportunities: What are our citizens asking for?

- How do we make sense of opportunities provided by external forces and trends?
- Where should we focus our efforts?
- How can we best meet the needs of our community?
- How can we distinctively differentiate ourselves from other North Carolina communities?
- What are identifiable areas of strategic growth?
- How should our planning approach change in order to move forward?

Aspirations: What do we care deeply about?

- Reflecting on Strengths and Opportunities, who is Asheboro, and what should Asheboro become in the future?
- What is our most compelling aspiration?
- What strategic planning initiatives would support those aspirations?

Results: How do we know we are succeeding?

- What meaningful measures indicate that Asheboro is on the right track to implementing our plan successfully?
- What are the indicators that would create a scorecard that addresses a triple bottom line of Economy, Environment, and Equity?
- What resources are needed to implement our most vital projects?
- In what ways does Asheboro improve when goals are met?

SOAR should sustain the values of Asheboro, while honoring the knowledge, capabilities, and spirit of its citizens. Brining the insight and experience of our citizens into the planning process yields unquantifiable benefit. In sum, SOAR is flexible in its application so that any citizen can be a part of Asheboro's strategic planning initiatives.

The following pages include responses from the second steering committee meeting held on December 12, 2019. Responses have been aggregated and ranked by frequency. "Other" responses were generally single occurrences.

Economic Development and Utilities

Strengths

1. City government is very pro-growth, progressive and business friendly
2. Significant water and sewer capacity
3. An educated/trained workforce through RCC
4. Proximity to the NC Zoo
5. Favorable geography
6. Other
 - a. A simple, small town environment
 - b. Downtown with a vibrant nightlife
 - c. Local incentives
 - d. Low transit times

Opportunities

1. Water and sewer utilities: expand service area, improve infrastructure, add recycling capacity
2. Encourage shopping and small business start-ups
3. Hospital and available healthcare network
4. Land availability – identify new areas for development
5. Greensboro – Randolph Mega Site
6. Other
 - a. Airport improvements
 - b. Communications network
 - c. Diversity in leadership roles
 - d. Expedited permitting
 - e. RCC
 - f. Reimage as a cool place to live
 - g. Shopping center

Aspirations

1. Workforce development: Higher wages, lower unemployment
2. Diverse mix of commercial and industry
3. Update communications network (expanded broadband and Wi-Fi service)
4. Other
 - a. Vibrant downtown
 - b. Improve tax revenue
 - c. New hospital
 - d. Transportation network

Results

1. Increased development, employment, and growth
2. Population growth / Increased tax base
3. Utilities expansion
4. Other
 - a. City funded loans
 - b. Sewer lift station
 - c. Show a new company
 - d. Water liner
 - e. Expanded city limits

Housing and Community Appearance

Strengths

1. Housing – affordable, quality and quantity of stock, geographic location and access, low taxes, construction of new apartments
2. Community – welcoming, clean, safe, well maintained,
3. Geography – central location, proximity to larger cities, access to transportation networks
4. Historic preservation
5. Downtown
6. Other
 - a. Code enforcement
 - b. Progress
 - c. Land availability/affordability

Opportunities

1. Housing – affordable housing, more multifamily, better apartments, restore/reuse old neighborhoods
2. Appearance – regulation and zoning enforcement, improve landscaping, downtown and historic districts
3. Mixed use development
4. Other
 - a. Commercial growth
 - b. Expedited permitting
 - c. North Asheboro
 - d. Pet friendly facilities
 - e. Underdeveloped
 - f. Parking
 - g. Vacant properties

Aspirations

1. Housing – increase high end properties, increase rental stock, more diversified stock, better quality, reuse of historic properties
2. Community – peaceful and quiet
3. Better commercial options (restaurants and shopping)
4. Incentives – both commercial and homeowner
5. Other
 - a. Better code enforcement
 - b. Employment opportunities
 - c. Mixed use developments
 - d. Population growth – return home by choice
 - e. Water / sewer expansion

Results

1. Housing – stronger demand for new housing, proximity to recreation and shopping
2. Population growth and increased tax base
3. Other
 - a. Community appearance
 - b. Higher median income
 - c. Improved public school performance
 - d. New business owners
 - e. Higher quality of life
 - f. 50% increase in fire, police, and social services
 - g. Higher rents, lower vacancies

Land Use and Transportation

Strengths

1. Roads – proximity, well maintained, low congestion
2. Zoning – proper and adequate, professional zoning team
3. Abundance of vacant land
4. Water supply and treatment facilities
5. Proximity to larger cities
6. Other
 - a. Downtown is strong and vibrant
 - b. Growth if city and county can work together
 - c. Public transportation
 - d. Warm and friendly

Opportunities

1. Community development – clean-up/remove/renew blighted areas, new housing, new recreation facilities
2. Transportation – walkable urban core, public transportation, connectivity, stop loud aggressive drivers
3. Public meetings, hearings and surveys
4. Other
 - a. North Asheboro
 - b. Better service for senior community
 - c. Sewer lift stations
 - d. Zoo related commercial development

Aspirations

1. Public transportation
2. Better/larger sidewalk network
3. Other
 - a. Be a fun and friendly city
 - b. Public/private development partnerships
 - c. Security cameras
 - d. Zoo related commercial development

Results

1. Increased population / tax base, commercial activity, population / housing, quality of life
2. New development (residential and commercial)
3. Other
 - a. More walkable destinations
 - b. Live/work/play in Asheboro
 - c. Public safety
 - d. Uber and Lyft
 - e. Social and economic equity

Natural and Cultural Resources

Strengths

1. Parks – lakes, trails, rec center, special events
2. Zoo
3. Sunset Theatre
4. Downtown
5. Community – friendly, diverse, generous
6. Neighborhoods – affordable, green, few low economic areas
7. Historic landmarks and locations
8. Wilderness
9. Other
 - a. Acme Gym
 - b. Randolph Arts Guild
 - c. Water
 - d. Winding country roads

Opportunities

1. Parks – enhance/grow trail and greenway network, implement rec center and sports plex, include dog parks
2. Downtown – create a more walkable, livable community focused on beautification and renewal of our historic district. Make downtown a destination with ample parking and projects like an arboretum or as an arts incubation district.
3. Cohesive branding / messaging
4. Route establishment (Cycling, farm, tourist)
5. Airport Funding
6. Other
 - a. underdeveloped

Aspirations

1. Zoo – commercial development, drive tourism, stay #1
2. Outdoor activities and expanded parks and rec
3. Community – safety, active, growth, a good place for families
4. Walkable community – interconnected sidewalks and greenways
5. Other
 - a. More opportunity at RCC
 - b. Salsa dancing and music
 - c. More shows at sunset theatre

Results

1. Tourism increase
2. Population growth
3. Increased/improved communication with city planners and officials
4. Other
 - a. Increase recreation budget by 200%
 - b. Healthcare for seniors and workers
 - c. Quality of life
 - d. Increased tax revenue

Conclusion

Through the SOAR exercise, common themes have begun to emerge that could shape development of the Land Development Plan.

- **In areas of community strengths:**

- The city's unutilized capacity for water production and wastewater treatment were frequently cited. This capacity means the city's public utilities, in general, have the ability to support significant growth, although expansion of the system likely will require upgraded infrastructure, such as pumping stations and pipe upsizing or replacement.
- Asheboro's excellent geographic location was recognized. Our proximity to North Carolina's coast and mountains, urban centers such as Charlotte, Greensboro, Winston-Salem and Raleigh as well as public wilderness lands and recreational attractions like Uwharrie National Forest and the North Carolina Zoo make Asheboro unique. This geographical advantage is bolstered by the region's robust Interstate highway system.

- **In terms of community opportunities:**

- General consensus favored new mixed land-use opportunities, where pedestrian-friendly development blends residential, commercial, cultural and/or institutional uses.
- Participants supported prior efforts by the city to improve community appearance through code enforcement and the removal of dilapidated structures, but believe more can and should be done to address community blight and support redevelopment of older neighborhoods.

- **In areas of community aspirations:**

- Asheboro leadership should continue efforts to enhance the quality of life for its residents. Supporting workforce development initiatives and diversifying the local economy can lead to higher wages and expanded employment opportunities. Investments in public infrastructure like sidewalks, public transit and the communication network as well as amenities that drive tourism will make Asheboro an even more attractive place to live.

- **In terms of desired community results:**

- We will know that we are on the right track when we see meaningful growth in population, commerce, tax base and tourism. Evidence of new housing in close proximity to commercial services, expansion of commercial and industrial sectors, and continued recognition of Asheboro as a tourist destination will indicate that city goals and policies have achieved the desired outcomes.