

YOUNG HARRIS



The Enchanted Valley

Blueprint For Community and Economic Development 2019 - 2024

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BLUEPRINT FOR COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2019 - 2024



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INTRODUCTION

Young Harris, known as the Enchanted Valley, is one of the most desirable locations in North Georgia. When traveling to Young Harris from Hiawassee you will crest the hill and the magic slowly begins to unfold before you. This magic remains with you through every corner, basin and mountain ridge located within the valley, creating the Enchanted Valley. The enchantment arises as daylight breaks and the morning mist meanders over the mountains, exposing the beauty of the land. The entire day is filled with the natural beauty of the valley, and as the sun begins to set a spectacular display of color will often fill the sky bringing the day to an end with a magnificent starlit sky.

Background:

The Blueprint for Community and Economic Development (Blueprint) is a community driven plan developed for the City of Young Harris. The Blueprint is designed to be the starting point for the City's leadership to being creating a village atmosphere and favorable environment for an economically prosperous future for the City of Young Harris.

Young Harris physical city limit is roughly one square mile. The City is home to approximately 600 permanent residents and 1200 students. The average household income is \$38,250 and the average age of residents is 20.6 years as the students are the primary recorded residents of Young Harris.

Located in the heart of the City is Young Harris College. The college owns over 50% of the core downtown properties. The College Administration, a major stakeholder in the community, has been involved throughout the process of this Blueprint.

Young Harris is rich with rural mountainous character and charm. To protect the integrity and beauty of the Enchanted Valley the governing body adopted comprehensive zoning, an Official Zoning Map. Existing land uses identified, outside of the college overlay district, are predominately single-family, with the entire center of town designated as a Special Business Corridor—200' from centerline of Highway 76.

Resources:

The Towns County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2016, is the primary planning document utilized for Young Harris, the other document used to assist with plan formation is the Young Harris Resource Team Report of 2012, prepared by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Information obtained from these documents and a series of public meeting, with stakeholder involvement, have been compiled to create the Blueprint.

THE PROCESS FOR PLANNING

In the planning process, open and effective community engagement (CE) is fundamental to creating and implementing plans with many key opportunities commonly identified throughout the process. The CE process relies heavily on stakeholder and citizen input to create a shared plan and implementation strategy.

The City of Young Harris and the Economic Development office organized and produced a series of Town Hall meetings. The Town Hall meetings were held in Young Harris City Hall on the following dates:

February 5, 2019

February 16, 2019

March 19, 2019

March 28, 2019

April 23, 2019

April 30, 2019



The April 23, meeting was held on the campus of Young Harris College with many students and staff participating. The attendees participated in a series of planned activities designed to solicit their input as to what they felt would benefit the Young Harris and Towns County the greatest.



SUMMARY

The City of Young Harris and the Economic Development Office engaged in a series of Town Hall meetings over a period of four months to identify and collect information to help better understand the issues, needs and desires of the community in conjunction with identifying the strengths and assets of the city and region. One of the Town Hall meetings was held on the campus of Young Harris College to learn about the students needs, current and upon completing their education, and to see how they believe the City should invest in growth.

The participants of the six Town Hall meetings were actively engaged in the discussions. Consistently, two priority areas emerged at the meetings: the need for a village atmosphere and to protect the natural beauty of the region in the course of developing the village.

The desire for the village atmosphere is driven by the yearning for gathering places that foster socializing and interactions with others, creating a connection to each other and the town. As mentioned above the participants of the town hall meetings discussed, in-depth, the natural beauty of the area and were emphatic that it be protected and not harmed in the development of the town. To address this major concern of the community a guiding principle is recommended to be adopted and considered with the development and implementation of each goal, strategy, objective and tactic.

Guiding Principle:

Preserve and protect the natural beauty of Young Harris while creating a viable, exciting, community .



Young Harris



Brasstown Valley, Young Harris



Cupid Falls, Young Harris

SUMMARY

The outcome of the Town Hall meetings have been broken down into four areas . The areas are based upon the National Main Street Program 4-point Approach©: Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Vitality.

ORGANIZATION

involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.



A strong organizational foundation is key to sustainability.

Items identified in the Town Hall meetings that would be addressed under organization

- ◆ To see where the community is going in the future
- ◆ Learn about potential development, future and in process , a working set of plans for city development
- ◆ How does it affect residents
- ◆ Increase city boundaries to better function as a city
- ◆ Unity of cities and county
- ◆ Controlled business license approval to keep small local feel but still allow some growth and tax revenue for community
- ◆ Controlled growth - zoning restrictions - do not become over commercialized

Celebrating

PROMOTION

positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.



Developing a “sense of community” is a complex goal and is comprised of many layers. One of the layers focuses on the experience of the community. Creating an air of excitement, welcoming, and acceptance, fosters community pride, which strengthens relationships, and enhances the experience of the community.

Relationships are a critical component of a sense of community and belonging. They are one of, if not the most critical, component of community.

Promotion of the community, whether it be in a marketing campaign, special events or civic organizations, all factor into community social benefits and impact the economic benefits that align with the exciting atmosphere.

Specific items identified under the category of promotion include but are not limited to:

- ◆ Logo design for the City of Young Harris, logos and slogan incorporating Enchanted Valley
- ◆ Community events, such as outdoor concerts, movies in the park, outdoor markets, Music in Park (folk, rock & roll, variety)
- ◆ Developing a unified news source where events, activities and happenings in Towns, Union, Clay and Cherokee counties can all be presented in one place.
- ◆ Marketing of community assets such as : Highlight Brasstown Creek, Corn Creek



DESIGN supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

Items identified in the Town Hall meetings that would be addressed under Design

- ◆ Keep small town atmosphere: beautiful, safe, quiet and friendly
- ◆ Protect the beauty of the mountains
- ◆ Dark Sky Ordinance (review current lighting ordinance)
- ◆ Public Arts as Creative Placemaking.
- ◆ Nice fence around around junk yard

City look

- ◆ Unification of design and refurbishment of older buildings through town.
- ◆ Simple, clean authentic, not gimmicky, rustic but not tacky
- ◆ Stay true to original roots
- ◆ entrance to the city limits to be clean and attractive
- ◆ Off street parking (lots)
- ◆ Children's park
- ◆ An ease of movement between local and college
- ◆ Parking areas for downtown area
- ◆ Sidewalks, stonework, downcast LED's
- ◆ No junk yards on main thorough fares, and require fencing, visual barriers



ECONOMIC VITALITY

focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

Young Harris’s tranquil and picturesque location enhances the overall quality of life and positions the City as an attractive location for technical, research, consulting and corporate operations for small to mid-size companies. Young Harris also has the potential to be known as a great place to experience a wonderful meal or to shop for specialty products. Many opportunities exist to expand these industries in the business corridors. The City focuses on entrepreneurs and small to midsized businesses.

Items identified in the Town Hall meetings that would be addressed under Economic Vitality

- ◆ Establish a city center/ create a downtown area
- ◆ Establish business incubator
- ◆ Attract and retain businesses: unique shops/ restaurants, beauty, nail, barber shops , small shops, deli, dress shops, men’s clothing, children's clothing, shoe shops, gifts etc., arts & craft store, healthy living type businesses with beautiful merchandise, art galleries (small tasteful)
- ◆ Fiberoptic
- ◆ Public transportation
- ◆ Medical – improved services
- ◆ Recreation areas - bike, hiking, walking trails
- ◆ Community room with good meeting space included
- ◆ Housing - The need for progression of types of housing as people move through stages of life. Starter homes, midlife homes, retirement “dream homes” downsize to single level homes.
- ◆ Reasonably priced housing for middle income, college staff, families , housing: single family, senior living/retirement
- ◆ Rental properties for medium income
- ◆ Redevelopment old EMC Site
- ◆ Redevelopment of the Old Kaiser Dean Home and adjoining property

ECONOMIC VITALITY - Desired Businesses

Businesses

More specific to small industry

Businesses that incorporate tech skills

The majority of the businesses desired are within the service industries:

Coffee shop, preferably not a chain with music

Restaurants, family restaurants, variety

Fun establishments, bars, roof top bars, Irish pubs, dancing

Healthy breakfast & lunch

Farm to table

Ice cream shop

Bank

Internet café

Brewery

Wine bar

Small safe place for the students to meet and have a beer (e.g., sports bar/pub)

Retail

Pharmacy, grocery specialty shops, all kinds

Unique shops/ restaurants, Beauty, nail, barber shops , Small shops, deli, dress shops, men's clothing, children's clothing, shoe shops, gifts etc., arts & craft store, healthy living type businesses with beautiful merchandise, art galleries , gas station Racetrack or something along that line, laundromat , (small tasteful)

Fitness center

Yoga

hair salon, nail salon,

YOUNG HARRIS COLLEGE TOWN HALL MEETING SUMMARY

A station was setup outside the commons and cafeteria area with the following list of questions and asked if they were to develop the town where would the funds be best invested. The students were given two \$100 bills and one \$50 (play money) to invest in the community. More than 100 students participated in the exercise.

| Question | \$100 | \$50 | Total |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Create a village like atmosphere in downtown Young Harris. Gathering places with outdoor seating, decorative light poles, walkable, redevelopment of run down and vacant buildings. | \$6,400 | \$1,150 | \$7,550 |
| Infrastructure improvements – high speed internet, underground utilities, public transportation | \$4,900 | \$1,400 | \$6,300 |
| Indoor Recreation: example indoor swimming pool, racquetball courts, basketball courts, indoor track.... | 5,200 | \$800 | \$6,000 |
| Community events- outdoor concerts, movies in the park, outdoor markets | \$2,600 | \$850. | \$3,450 |
| Recreation- outdoor, park development with play areas for children, sports fields, swimming pool. Trail development for hiking, mountain biking throughout the county. | \$2,200 | \$1050 | \$3,350 |

Additional items identified by the students during round table discussions with Mayor Gibby.

Living Here

| Positive | Negative |
|---|---|
| Scenery | Security presence (lack of) |
| Community | Businesses close too early (weekdays and weekends) |
| Slow-paced | Not enough city life: shopping, restaurants, bars, coffee shops with long hours |
| College | No public transportation: uber, taxis |
| The locals seem very supportive of the college students | Not enough affordable housing |

1. What are the three things the most important to you when looking for a place to live?

Safety, recreation, restaurants

Fun opportunities (recreation), good employment opportunity, affordability, but I want a nice place that I can afford

Beautiful location, Affordable, like-minded people, fast-paced businesses

24-hour fitness facility

Job opportunity

Nature opportunities, park maybe?

Pet-friendly, church, affordability

Safety, more food options, hiking trails (recreation), sustainability

Walking distance to restaurants, bars, shopping, igniting, good school districts

Safety, recreation, sustainability

Access to adequate and reliable utilities, (water, internet, trash pickup), location proximity to work, shops, medical etc.

Family location, community, safety, jobs

2. What matters to you in the appearance of a city?

Concise style, decoration

Fountain or water attraction

Cleanliness

Aesthetics

Statues,

Painted buildings

Popular restaurants

Environment consciousness

Cleanliness

Colorful, aesthetic buildings

Lots of plant, trees and flowers

3. How do we keep you here after you graduate?

More young folks

Internet

Young Harris pro-sports team

Medical care

Becoming a city

Remaining in town, not a city

Affordable places to live

More food/restaurants, bars/ shopping

Jobs

4. Type of housing desired after graduation:

- Multi (apartments)
- Townhome /condo
- Single family

5. What three things would make your experience better as a student?

Town Specific

- Better wi-fi
- City events
- Late night activity (off campus) walking distance/ bar etc.
- Shops/restaurants across college campus
- Multi coffee shop/bar and coffee shop – open late
- Grocery store
- Places to visit, age specific to college age
- More housing options – off campus and Apartments – affordable.
- Gas station in city limits
- Reviving town
- More parking
- 24-hour gym
- Public transportation
- Not having to wait forever at medical center

Campus Specific

- Wet campus
- On campus medical care (PA& nurse practitioner)
- More food options - Better cheap on-campus food
- More affordable tuition
- More intern opportunities
- Hockey team

6. If you could live anywhere in the United States where would it be and why (purpose of this question was to help develop an understanding of the mindset of the up and coming generation)?

- San Francisco – There are a lot of people in our area, beautiful scenery, lots to do, everything in walking distance. City is easily accessible, but also easy to get away
- Huntington Beach - its warmer with things to do with people my age.
- Nashville
- Ashville
- Midtown Atlanta because of the younger population of the cities... I like the night life and emphasis of the arts.
- Ponce City in Atlanta,

Continued: Young Harris College Town Hall meeting

- Savannah, GA – Historic downtown and always an attraction to see and events, numerous restaurants, great views
- I love my hometown of Covington Ga. You guys should really research this growing city!
- Charleston, SC - small historic town with a lot of city life

Additional Remarks: The accessibility features of a city are very important. Are sidewalks manageable by a wheel chair? Can a blind person navigate a street intersection independently? Has a city ever assessed its accessibility?

WORK PLAN

Starting Point:

Prior to initiating the Blueprint it is necessary to know what is currently in progress as these projects impact the City and tie into the Blueprint.

The following are in process and or scheduled as of June 2019.

Cupid Falls Park Improvements - Restrooms, covered pavilion, estimated completion date September 2019, playground equipment installation estimated completion date June 2020.

Mayors Park Improvements - covered pavilion, estimated installation date Fall 2019, event venue space estimated installation date Fall 2020.

Transportation Enhancement Grant - project description: To provide streetscape improvements, safety and facilities for pedestrian and bicycle access, also, landscaping and scenic beautification along Main Street (US 76515) within the City Limits. Estimated Completion Date October 2019

GDOT Project 122900 , Young Harris Bypass - widening and relocation of State Route (SR) 515/US 76 from Young Harris Street in Blairsville to Timberline Drive in Young Harris. Estimated Completion Date 12-2023.

The Work Plan:

Young Harris has a wonderful opportunity to redefine and revitalize the core area of the town. The spark that has ignited this opportunity is the location being finalized for the planned bypass around Young Harris. Knowing exact location of the bypass now allows for the City of Young Harris and the Economic Development Office to collaborate with the area residents to create the vision, establish priorities and develop an action/work plan. This blueprint is simply a starting point for community and economic development and is meant to be developed further as accomplishments are made and new opportunities are recognized.

WORK PLAN

Blueprint Vision Statement: Create an air of excitement that fosters community involvement, which strengthens relationships, and enhances the experience of the community.

Goals, Strategies, Purpose and Tasks

Definitions:

Goals: The high-level “dreams”

Strategies: Equivalent to the “How”

Purpose: “proof” the strategy is being implemented effectively. Objectives are defined in the detail of the individual work plan for each strategy. Objectives are measurable

Tasks: Tasks are specific actions necessary to meet the objectives and used as the action steps of the objectives. Tasks will have a complete mark when the step has been completed.

The following goals emerged from the planning process and were used to develop the Work Plan .

Goals:

1. Create a village town center featuring a vibrant mix of upscale retail, entertainment and cultural facilities combined with upper floor residential units.
2. Develop and enhance pro-growth policies and initiatives while maintaining high standards for development that are complimentary to the area.
3. Redevelopment or development of underutilized, dilapidated, and undeveloped properties
4. Improve the appearance of the town
5. Create a Public art program
6. Develop a comprehensive marketing program that connects our community, our business partners, and the surrounding area.
7. Create a feeling of excitement throughout the town

WORK PLAN

Goal 1: Create a village town center featuring a vibrant mix of upscale retail, entertainment and cultural facilities combined with upper floor residential units.

Strategy 1a: Create A Conceptual Downtown Master Plan

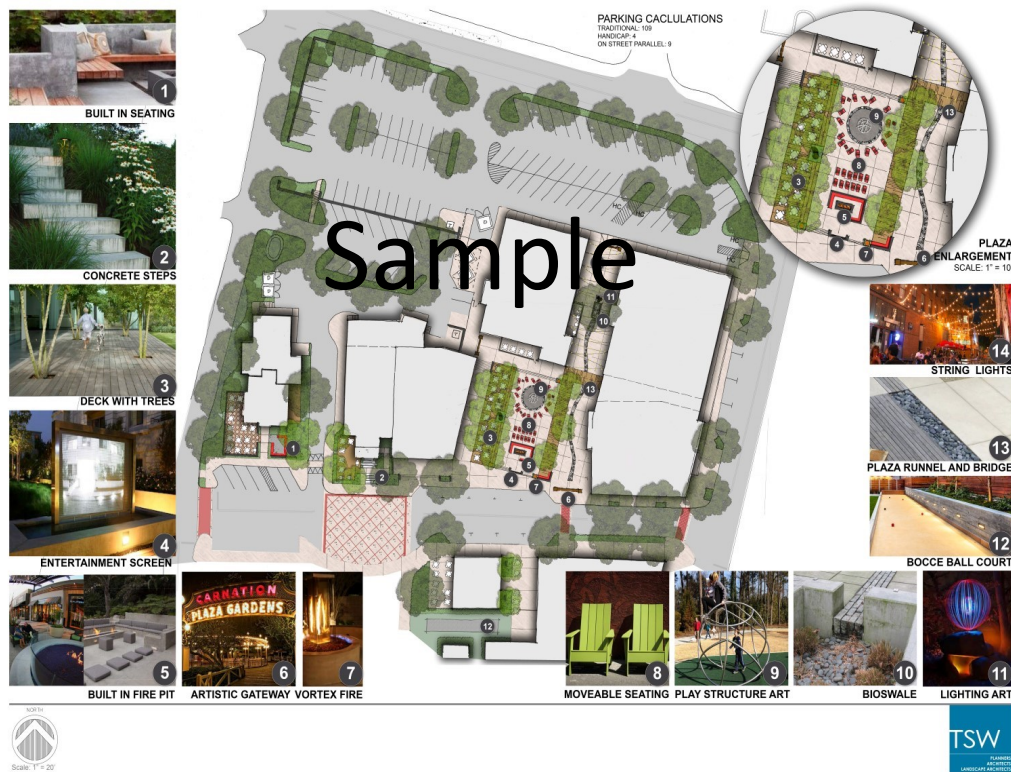
Purpose: To create a visual image that will service as a guide for public and private decision-makers regarding the future physical development of the City.

Timeline: Short-term 2019-2020

Lead: City Governing Authority, Economic Development Director,

Partners: Georgia Mountain Regional Commission

Funding: City, Grants



WORK PLAN

Goal 2: Develop and enhance pro-growth policies and initiatives while maintaining high standards for development that are complimentary to the area.

Strategy 2a: Review, update and modify existing zoning and ordinances to promote Young Harris as a business and entrepreneur friendly community.

Purpose: Align policies and decisions to coordinate with the desired development of the City.

Timeline: Short-term 2019-2020

Lead: City Governing Authority, Economic Development Director

Partners: Georgia Mountain Regional Commission

Strategy 2b: Increase the city boundaries

Purpose: Incorporate the immediate surrounding areas into the city, residential and commercial to provide areas for future growth with development standards that align with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Time-Line: Short to long term 2019 - 2024

Lead: City Governing Authority

Partners: TBD

Goal 3: Redevelopment or development of underutilized, dilapidated, and undeveloped properties.

Strategy 3a: Create a comprehensive property listing identifying ownership, condition, tax information and availability.

Purpose: Market blighted, underutilized and or undeveloped properties within the core of the downtown area for the purpose of attracting businesses that compliment and enhance Young Harris.

Time-Line: Short term 2019 - 2020

Lead: Economic Development Director,

Partners: Joint Development Authority, Property Owners

WORK PLAN

Goal 4: Enhance the appearance of the town

Strategy 4a: Create attractive gateways into Young Harris

Purpose: Develop appealing entrance / departure points of interest reflective of an enchanted valley

Timeline: Short-term 2019-2020

Lead: City Governing Authority, Economic Development Director

Partners: Young Harris College, Young Harris Garden Club,

Strategy 4b: Create small “pocket” parks throughout the City

Purpose: Pocket parks are social gathering places and assist with formulating a sense of place.

Time-Line: Long term 2019 - 2024

Lead: City Governing Authority, Young Harris College, Brasstown Valley Resort, Economic Development Director,

Partners: TBD

Strategy 4c: Create a Welcome Center with a small “pocket” park at the old Kaiser Deen Property

Purpose: A Welcome Center will create a focal point that allows newcomers to find the information they need in order to have the best experience possible in the valley.

Time-Line: Short term 2019 - 2021

Lead: City Governing Authority Economic Development Director,

Partners: TBD

WORK PLAN

Goal 4: Enhance the appearance of the town

Strategy 4d: Enhance the pedestrian experience, promote walkability and connectivity throughout the city through the development of recreational trails and pathways.

Purpose: Trails and pathways strengthen the foundation of a community,. They also promote an active lifestyle which helps to improve physical and mental health.

Timeline: Short-term 2019-2023

Lead: City Governing Authority, Economic Development Director

Partners: Landwater Conversation Fund, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, North Georgia Regional Commission, Young Harris College

WORK PLAN

Goal 5: Create a public art program

Strategy 5a: Form a committee to define and recommend a comprehensive public arts program.

Purpose: Public art contributes to defining the community's identity and uniqueness while promoting a sense of place or belonging. A comprehensive program defining the what, who, when and how is a critical component to a successful public arts program.

Timeline: Short-term 2019-2020

Lead: City Governing Authority, Towns County Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Director

Partners: Young Harris College, J.C. Campbell Folk School, Local artists

Lead: City Governing Authority Economic Development Director,

Partners: TBD

Goal 6: Develop a comprehensive marketing program that connects our community, our business partners and the surrounding areas to each other.

Strategy 6a: Create a city logo

Purpose: A logo is an important part of the city's message, marketing and image because it immediately conveys to the viewer the mission and values of the city. It keeps the city ever-present in the consumer's mind when it is easily recognized and used consistently on all advertising and communications. (bizfluent.com)

Timeline: Short-term 2019-2020

Lead: Economic Development Director, City Governing Authority

Partners: Young Harris College, Arts Community,

Strategy 6b: Create a unified news distribution outlet to promote Young Harris news and events.

Purpose: To inform the public of "activities" within the community : progress, meetings, events, important information about the community.

Timeline: Short-term 2019-2020

Lead: City Governing Authority,

WORK PLAN

- Goal 6:** Develop a comprehensive marketing program that connects our community, our business partners and the surrounding areas to each other.
- Strategy 6c:** Create a comprehensive marketing plan for Young Harris while being inclusive of the entire county.
- Purpose:** Promote Young Harris and the County
- Timeline:** Short-term 2019-2020
- Lead:** Economic Development Director, City Governing Authority
- Partners:** Local Governing Authorities, Towns County Chamber of Commerce, Young Harris College, Economic Development Authority, Brasstown Valley Resort, Towns County Convention and Visitors Bureau.
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- Goal 7:** Create a feeling of excitement throughout the town
- Strategy 7a:** Host and or solicit events to be held in the downtown area.
- Purpose:** Public events create activity within the downtown area and help to strengthen, build and add momentum to the community.
- Timeline:** Long-term 2019-2024
- Lead:** Economic Development Director, City Governing Authority
- Partners:** Young Harris College, Arts Community, Towns Chamber of Commerce, Towns County Convention and Visitors Bureau