# A Place to Call HOME

DECEMBER 2020



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Vision





## **A MESSAGE FROM CHEROKEE COUNTY** COUNCIL

lanning for the future is exciting. The sheer number of ideas that were talked about and integrated into this report shows the optimism and love so many of you share for this county we call home. Too often we find ourselves trying to solve problems by looking in the rearview mirror. This document, on the other hand, gives us a roadmap for the years ahead. We honor our past, but we are building our future. And we will do it together - the sentiment that the various leaders in Cherokee County need to be working together off of a shared vision came through loud and clear during the past six months. Cherokee County residents want the various governing bodies

here on the same page. We hear you, and we will honor that. To be clear: This report wasn't designed to sit on a shelf. Too many good-hearted and civic-minded men and women spent too much time providing input and discussion for that to happen. Some of the projects listed on the following pages have overwhelming public support. Others may take a little work to build that support. But all of them are designed to make it so children born today grow up in a Cherokee County that they not only are proud of, but one they will want to live and raise their own children in - your grandchildren. We hope, whether you participated in the discussions that generated this report or not, that you stay engaged. Come to your local government meetings. Speak on issues you are passionate about. Celebrate our successes – and we have many, but we heard time and again that we don't do enough to spread that good news. And most importantly, get excited about any opportunities you have to help drive this county forward. Because there's only one way we can do that: Together.



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WE SEEM AND ARE SEPARATE. WE DON'T COME TOGETHER FOR PROJECTS OR EVENTS. WE ARE ONE COUNTY AND SHOULD ACT LIKE IT, INSTEAD OF LETTING THE RIVER DIVIDE US." - SURVEY RESPONDENT

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Clear Vision is designed to be a roadmap for the next 17 years in Cherokee County – one that takes the community to the 140th anniversary of the county's founding.

The intensive, six-month process started with a steering committee that represented a cross-section of men and women with a vested interest in seeing this county move forward. From there, more than 500 community thought leaders were identified and sent surveys to gather input. Several of these thought leaders later participated in strategy sessions to help develop an action plan for each to the 10 projects proposed.

If some of the ideas or names in this document seem familiar, that's because the entire process was community-driven. The community established these priorities.

One constant refrain during the course of the visioning process was a desire to see Cherokee County leaders work cooperatively to drive beautification, economic development, infrastructure and tourism efforts that benefit the county, the City of Gaffney and the Town of Blacksburg, as fulfilling the county's untapped potential benefits all residents.

The heart of that potential perhaps lies in Cherokee County's natural resources - its rural beauty, mountain peaks, greenways and waterways - and the enormous opportunity of making the Broad River a unifying feature of the county, rather than one that divides.

The desire for unified vision and leadership manifests throughout this report - whether that's moving Parks and Recreation functions under the auspices of Cherokee County government, studying the feasibility of a single water and sewer authority or launching a single convention and visitors effort to promote all of Cherokee County and its municipalities. One elected official suggested an annual joint workshop for the county's various governmental bodies to keep everyone on the same page and strengthen the bonds between them.

Cherokee County leaders already realize that if the municipalities are successful, then the county is successful. The first steps of collaboration have already been taken, with the county assuming control of solid waste collection for Gaffney and Blacksburg, and the preliminary work done on a Revolutionary War Discovery Center.

This document contains Action Plans for 10 projects that can realistically be accomplished in the next 17 years:

- Creating a vibrant Parks and Recreation program that functions as a department of Cherokee County government.
- Building an airport near the massive Two Kings Casino under construction just across the county line.
- Beautifying the gateways into the county and its communities, with particular focus on interstate interchanges.
- Combating blight and working together to beautify downtown areas in Gaffney and Blacksburg.
- Taking advantage of Cherokee County's natural greenways and waterways, with particular focus on making better use of the Broad River.
- Expanding broadband (high-speed) internet access to underserved areas.
- Taking the initial steps to create a public transportation system that can expand if/when necessary.
- Expanding sewer service in underserved areas to promote economic development.
- · Creating a unified convention and visitors effort to market the entire county.
- Developing a comprehensive marketing plan with an internal and external focus to not only attract visitors but to better promote events, attractions and amenities to local residents.

105 South Shelby Street Blacksburg Water & Sewer Office Hours Mon-Th 8-5:30 839-2332

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## THERE IS NO POWER FOR CHANGE GREATER THAN A COMMUNITY DISCOVERING WHAT IT CARES ABOUT."

verarching themes include capitalizing on the massive Two Kings Casino under construction just beyond the county line, beautifying and developing the Interstate 85 corridor that runs through Cherokee County, and revitalizing and reinvesting in the downtown areas that are the hearts of Gaffney and Blacksburg. Cherokee County will never be what it used to be. But it doesn't have to be. What has come before – from the battles that helped shape this country to the bustling mills and farms and railroads – all of that is the foundation upon which the future will be built.

There is value in honoring history while forging a new future, including the sense of optimism this generates, which in turn helps create the momentum needed to realize the projects in this report. County leaders have been proactive in planning for the future. Preliminary discussions have already been held regarding the airport and expanding sewer service, for instance. The men and women who shaped this report have strong ties to and a deep love for their communities.

and a deep love for their communities. Cherokee County is poised to tap into that energy, so that the county's reputation precedes it as being family-friendly, a place major employers want to locate, and a place where youth and senior activities are plentiful. To them, Cherokee County already is A Place to Call Home.



he story of Cherokee County, South Carolina, is one of transition, growth and tremendous opportunity. It's a story of hard work, close community and forging through challenges to the higher peaks on the other side. It's the story of our home.

The county was created in 1897, made up of parts of Union, Spartanburg and York counties. It's named for the Cherokee Indians, who called this land home long before European settlers.

Those settlers brought with them a perseverance and tenacity and fierce independence. It's no wonder the county today is home to two significant Revolutionary War sites - Cowpens National Battlefield, where Brig. Gen. Daniel Morgan won a decisive victory over British Lt. Col. "Bloody" Banastre Tarleton in January 1781; and Kings Mountain National Military Park, where patriots in October 1780 won a victory that Thomas Jefferson considered "the turn of the tide of success." These revolutionary moments are just the first in a series of transitions that have made our community stronger.



Battle of Cowpens by Frederick Kemmelmeyer, c. 1809. (Yale University Art Gallery)

# Est. 1897







# A Clear Vision: Project Timeline



Steering Committee identified with Cherokee County Administrator Steve Bratton



## Sept. 14 to Oct. 18

Digital surveys conducted for each of the four sectors



## Week of Oct. 26

Presentation of findings to Cherokee County local governments



## November 10-13



Strategy Sessions held for each project/focus area



Cherokee County 2037: A Clear Vision unveiled



he steering committee. identified by Cherokee County Administrator Steve Bratton, spent hours on Aug. 11 and came up with nearly 100 ideas for projects that would drive Cherokee County forward over the next 17 years. This list was culled to 10 goals spread across four sectors: economic development, quality of life, infrastructure and tourism.

There were two rules: Focus on projects that were finite and attainable - curing cancer is laudable, for instance, but not within the scope

of the county's purview or its ability to accomplish – and that the process be driven from the ground up. That is, consultants were asked to go into the visioning process without any preconceived ideas or goals.

The whittling down process indicated that capitalizing on the planned Two Kings Casino and investing in, redeveloping and beautifying the county's two downtown areas are top priorities two priorities that remained high throughout the subsequent public input process. Several of

the projects, too, should be able to capitalize on the two federally designated Opportunity Zones in Cherokee County.

Other ideas were merged into broader focus areas – recruiting more iobs that pay competitive wages, for instance, became part of economic development; maintaining a smalltown feel wrapped into quality of life.

Some focus areas, like building an airport, were initially identified as part of all four sectors. Parks and Recreation fit comfortably under all of the sectors except infrastructure. Intergovernmental relations, while

# Steering Committee



## Abbie Sossamon

Associate Publisher & News Editor. The Gaffney Ledger



Jamie Vinesett

Comptroller at Freightliner



Michael Bridges

Pastor of Concord Baptist Church



## Glenda Hartzog

Downtown Gaffney **Business Owner** 

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not included as an actionable focus area, played into multiple projects, and public input gave substantial weight to Cherokee County and its various institutions having a unified vision and leadership.

While this report doesn't attempt to prioritize the 10 focus areas, projects that touch on multiple sectors likely would have a more far-reaching impact.

The Steering Committee performed a SWOT Analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each project.



## Will Cobb

Blacksburg Businessman

# IDENTIFIED **SECTORS**

### **Economic Development**



Unified CVB Comprehensive Marketing Plan

## SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) ANALYSIS

## **Economic Development**

Parks & Recreation

Cherokee County does not have a central state-of-the-art parks and recreation facility that would attract major sports tournaments and serve local residents of all ages.

**Strengths:** Such a facility would be a catalyst for growth, enhance guality of life for existing and potential residents and promote tourism. Locating this facility in an Opportunity Zone would open up more potential funding streams.

Weaknesses: Parks and Recreation currently does not fall under the auspices of Cherokee County: it is a separate entity from the county government. Because the Cherokee Recreation District is a special purpose district, legislative action would be required to change this.

**Opportunities:** Generally, the county has little to no parks and recreation programs for anyone older than 18 – nothing for young professionals, families, or senior citizens. There's an immediate opportunity to develop such programs. Consolidating parks and recreation under Cherokee County would have programmatic, construction and marketing benefits.

**Threats:** Constituency that sees no benefits to them and thus would be unwilling to support a new facility with tax dollars.



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## Airport

Building an airport would help Cherokee County recruit larger employers with better-paying jobs and allow the county to capitalize on Two Kings Casino. Cherokee County is the only county in South Carolina without an airport.

Strengths: The site for a potential airport identified in an earlier report is in a federally designated Opportunity Zone, which opens up more funding options. The Federal Aviation Administration would cover at least 90 percent of construction costs. A Cherokee County airport would be just minutes from Two Kings Casino, which will be one of the largest gaming complexes in the country.

Weaknesses: Land acquisition, construction.

**Opportunities:** An airport is an economic engine.

Threats: It is possible that public support for this project could weaken over time.





Improving the gateways into the county and its communities makes Cherokee County more welcoming to residents, visitors and potential employers. Lighting and beautification projects at key exits along Interstate 85 could help accomplish this, along with welcome signs at either end of the county.

Strengths: Improves safety and aesthetics.

Weaknesses: Cannot begin until the S.C. Department of Transportation finishes its interstate construction project.

**Opportunities:** Opportunity for public-private partnerships to accomplish this.

Threats: Lack of resources.

Interstate (Gateways)



### **Economic Development**

## Beautification

A clean and attractive community can help build residents' pride, reduce crime and improve overall guality of life and an area's reputation. This goes beyond just landscaping; a concentrated effort to tackle blight was identified as a need.

Strengths: Helps with economic development. Residents feel safe, a sense of pride and a deeper love of their community.

Weaknesses: A strategy is needed to actually combat the blight. What legal means could/should be pursued?

**Opportunities:** Is there a possibility of private-sector or grant funding to help with this?

Threats: None identified.





## Greenways, Waterways & Trails

Cherokee County's outdoors are its greatest asset – and this asset is largely untapped.

**Strengths:** A concentrated countywide effort focusing on hiking and biking trails, not to mention the amazing Broad River, would bolster tourism, improve overall quality of life and act as another tool to help recruit new businesses and industries. These improvements could also help increase the overall wellness of the community.

Weaknesses: At this point, there is no person or entity to champion these types of projects - someone or some organization to ride point on gathering private sector funders and focus on land acquisition.

**Opportunities:** Plenty of developable land along the Broad River. A huge opportunity also exists to tie into existing trail systems, particularly the Overmountain Victory Trail.

Threats: No funding sources identified at this point. Possibility of residents near the river opposing any development of it.

### Infrastructure

## Broadband

The coronavirus pandemic has shown us just how important it is for children to have access to broadband (high-speed) internet to keep up with their schoolwork.

**Strengths:** Aside from being absolutely essential for schoolchildren, access to broadband also stimulates economic growth and job creation and boosts healthcare and e-commerce.

**Weaknesses:** Could be cost-prohibitive. Also, the county (and possibly other entities) would have to work with internet service providers.

**Opportunities:** The county could pursue state or federal funding, even participate in a pilot program for expanding broadband in rural areas.

**Threats:** Would population, available resources and/or political power be enough to capture any available public money?





## Public Transportation

A small-scale public transportation system could help Cherokee County's underserved by opening up job opportunities and providing a reliable way to get healthier food or go to medical appointments.

**Strengths:** Such a system could help the greater good of Cherokee County by making sure all of its residents are served. This improves wellness and elevates the overall quality of life.

**Weaknesses:** No funding has been identified for any public transportation project at this point.

**Opportunities:** The county could identify and pursue grant funding.

**Threats:** Public transportation systems are often subsidized. The amount of taxpayer money needed to sustain these systems depends on how much the system is used. So, would enough people use this to make it worthwhile?

## Water and Sewer

Providing sewer access to unserved areas directly impacts the county's ability to recruit business and industry to those areas.

Strengths: This is an essential economic development tool.

**Weaknesses:** Several entities provide water and sewer to different parts of Cherokee County. The county lacks this infrastructure in key areas, including along the Interstate 85 and S.C. Highway 5 corridors.

**Opportunities:** This could lead to the creation of a countywide water and sewer authority.

**Threats:** Multiple providers mean multiple power structures might need to be consolidated; pushback from stakeholders in these various power structures is likely.





### Tourism

## Unified Convention and Visitors Bureau and Comprehensive Marketing Effort

A single, countywide entity to promote all that Cherokee County has to offer – including in Gaffney and Blacksburg – would help further the overarching desire of residents to have a unified vision and leadership. A comprehensive marketing effort would focus on the two downtowns, Revolutionary War and other historic sites, and greenways, waterways and trail systems.

**Strengths:** A unified convention and visitors bureau would allow the various entities in Cherokee County to pool their resources, create synergies and reach more people outside of Cherokee County. This all-encompassing effort would build community pride, enhance quality of life and provide more educational opportunities. It would also help build Cherokee County's reputation as a place where people would want to live or visit.

**Weaknesses:** This would require an unprecedented level of cooperation among the various governmental entities and other stakeholders in Cherokee County.

**Opportunities:** These two related planks of the tourism sector affect everything – from the county's ability to capitalize on Two Kings Casino to capturing traffic/tourism dollars along Interstate 85.

**Threats:** Pushback is possible from some members of the various entities that would need to work together.



# Community Input

ur steering committee identified more than 500 thought leaders in Cherokee County representing a diverse range of race, ethnicity, gender and age. The committee also took pains to include people from the City of Gaffney, the Town of Blacksburg and unincorporated communities in order to make sure all parts of Cherokee County were represented.

These men and women have a vested interest in seeing Cherokee County realize its full potential. They are small business owners, corporate executives, healthcare workers, pastors and other members of the faith community, public employees, journalists, philanthropists, teachers, parents and retirees.

They are the fabric of Cherokee County. These thought leaders were sent surveys to collect their input on the four sectors: economic development, quality of life, infrastructure and tourism. Surveys were conducted for approximately one month beginning Sept. 25.





### Methodology

Digital surveys were hosted on aclearvision.org. Over the course of approximately one month, that site saw:

- 1,031 total users
- 1,474 total sessions
- 3,236 page views

Mobile users, who tend to skew younger, accounted for 50.3 percent of the total users. Desktop users made up 44.6 percent of the total. And about 5 percent of users completed surveys using tablets.



### **Social Media Analytics**

Click-throughs: 513 Ad impressions: 48,262 Ad reach: 16,118 users

### **Print & Radio Advertising**

Print ads were placed in The Gaffney Ledger and The Cherokee Chronicle multiple times per week. More than 25,000 homes were reached. A 60-second radio spot played multiple times throughout the day on WZZQ and WFGN from Sept. 29 to Oct. 17, reaching more than 50,000 listeners.



### **Public Questionnaire**

A fifth survey that combined elements of each of the four sector surveys was administered during a daylong drop-in event at the Cherokee County Administration Building on Oct. 20.

### **Digital Survey Results**

- 500+ contacts made
- 120 total digital responses
- 100 percent completion rate

Survey results were shared with the Cherokee County Council, Gaffney City Council, Blacksburg Town Council, Cherokee County School District and the Gaffney Board of Public Works the week of Oct. 26.

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- Average time to complete surveys: 29 minutes
- 23.5 percent of thought leaders completed a survey
- 10 percent needed to get an accurate representation



# At a glance: Cherokee County



## Housing units as of July 1, 2019: 24,849

Owner-occupied	Median value of	Median Gross Rent	Households with	Households with broadbar
	owner-occupied homes	2014-18	a computer	internet 2014-18
69.1%	\$95,300	\$686	77.3%	61.1%
High school graduate	Bachelor's Degree	Median household income	Per capita Income	Persons in poverty
or higher	or Higher	(in 2018 dollars) 2014-18	(in 2018 dollars) 2014-18	

Housing units as of July 1, 2019: 24,849 Owner-occupied: 69.1% Median value of owner-occupied homes: \$95,300 Median Gross Rent 2014-18: \$686

Households with a computer: 77.3% Households with broadband internet subscription 2014-18: 61.1%

High school graduate or higher: 79.6% Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 13.8%

Median household income (in 2018 dollars) 2014-18: \$35,836 Per capita Income (in 2018 dollars) 2014-18: \$21,432 Persons in poverty: 16.8% \*Source: U.S. Census Bureau



## At a glance: Two Kings Casino

The Catawba Indian Nation broke ground this past July on the \$273 million Two Kings Casino in Kings Mountain, N.C., just minutes from the Cherokee County line.

The casino will sit on approximately 16.5 acres and feature various restaurants, entertainment options and about 1,500 gaming devices. The total project site is about 70 acres.

The initial phase of Two Kings Casino is expected to open in fall 2021.

Economic Impact:

- The two-year construction of the initial phase is projected to be \$311 million, generating an average of 1,173 jobs per year with a total payroll of about \$106 million. This includes construction, materials and supply chain costs, and dollars employees spend locally.
- The total annual economic impact of the initial phase of Two Kings Casino is expected to be \$428 million, which takes into account the casino's annual receipts of \$308 million.
- The facility is expected to employ 2,600 people with a payroll of \$65 million. It is expected to generate nearly 1,000 more ancillary jobs in the area with an additional \$34 million payroll.

Source: The Economic Impact of the Catawba Entertainment Facility on Cleveland County, NC







# At a glance: Opportunity Zones

Opportunity Zones are federally designated areas designed to encourage economic development in low-income communities. They were established in 2017 by legislation authored by U.S. Sen. Tim Scott.

Opportunity Zones were designated by the governor of each state. They provide special tax incentives designed to spur private investment in areas that need it most.

Each Opportunity Zone encompasses part of a downtown area.





Population 3,602

- White 2,950 (81.9%)
- Black 349 (9.7%)
- Other 303 (8.4%)

Poverty Rate - 33.2% Labor Force Participation Rate - 50.2% Unemployment Rate - 7.1% Median Household Income - 32,736

\* All data from ACS 2016 Five-Year Survey SOURCE: SCOPPORTUNITYZONE.COM

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## **Opportunity Zone around Blacksburg**

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## Opportunity Zone around Gaffney

### Population 3,300

- White 22,177 (66%)
- Black 987 (29.9%)
- Other 136 (4.1%)

Poverty Rate - 29%

Labor Force Participation Rate - 43%

Unemployment Rate - 2.4%

Median Household Income - 32,111

\* All data from ACS 2016 Five-Year Survey SOURCE: SCOPPORTUNITYZONE.COM



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Cherokee Speedway

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# Opportunity Zone along



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# Economic Development

### **Parks and Recreation**

vibrant Parks and Recreation program is more than baseball games and soccer matches - it can help recruit sports tournaments, which increases the nights hotel beds are filled and also generates revenue from restaurants and other sales. It can serve as an anchor for all residents of Cherokee County, from the unincorporated communities to Gaffney and Blacksburg. And it's one more arrow in the quiver economic development officials can use when trying to lure a prospective business to the area, as businesses want to move to communities where their employees can expect a high quality of life. A common theme in the various discussions around the future of Parks and Recreation in Cherokee County was that Parks and Recreation programs are limited to those 18 and under. Programs do not exist for young professionals, for instance, families or senior citizens. One major issue identified with Parks and Recreation as it exists currently in Cherokee County is that it falls outside of the control of county government. The Cherokee Recreation District is a Special Purpose District created by the state Legislature. While Cherokee County appoints the members to the district's board, the district itself is autonomous. Steering committee members, survey respondents and strategy session participants overwhelmingly felt the governance of Parks and Recreation should fall under Cherokee County.

Key public input and background:

- senior outreach.
- County government.

• Survey respondents named a state-of-the-art recreation center as a priority by a substantial margin, followed by a baseball complex and (roughly tied) an aquatics center and

• Approximately 95 percent of respondents said Parks and Recreation should fall under the jurisdiction of Cherokee

• Several survey respondents also mentioned the improved accountability that comes with having Parks and Recreation under the auspices of the county government.

• The Cherokee Recreation District has a dedicated millage that generates about \$800,000 annually in revenue.



In the past, a group of private citizens presented a conceptual plan for a \$16 million Cherokee County Recreation Center. In our strategy sessions, participants suggested that the Cherokee Recreation District board and/or County Council should discuss their "needs" versus their "wants" to help prioritize parks and recreation projects.

PARKS AND **RECREATION SHOULD BE UNDER THE** COUNTY'S CONTROL. IT WOULD HELP WITH **BUILDING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS** AND FOCUSING **RESOURCES.**" - SURVEY RESPONDENT

This rendering, part of a past citizen-led effort, shows a conceptual plan for a Cherokee County Recreation Center. Some of the ideas from that document can be built into a formal, countywide Parks and Recreation master plan



Action Plan:

- all at once or in phases.

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• Cherokee County Council should request legislative approval to move Parks and Recreation, currently a state Special Purpose District, under the county's control. • Retain a consultant to develop a Parks and Recreation master plan, taking into account and building upon the existing Cherokee County Recreation Center Conceptual Plan • County Council should begin deliberations as to whether Parks and Recreation improvements should be conducted



# IN TODAY'S WORLD, **AIRPORTS ARE NECESSARY** FOR ALL BUSINESSES."

### - SURVEY RESPONDENT

### Airport

herokee County is the only county in South Carolina without an airport, though building one here has been discussed since The Timken Co. first opened in the mid-1970s. Airport construction would primarily be paid for through federal and state tax dollars, not local dollars.

This is clearly an economic development tool; county economic development officials have said they have been turned down while trying to recruit industry because the interested parties needed closer proximity to an airport.

But it would also help Cherokee County capitalize on Two Kings Casino, currently under construction. The Catawba Indian Nation has expressed interest in seeing an airport in Cherokee County.

A new airport is also an infrastructure improvement and could boost quality of life and tourism.

Cherokee County has approximately \$134,000 set aside from a 0.2-mill tax levied from 2008 to 2014 that can be used to get this project started.

Key public input and background:

- Approximately 95 percent of the total cost of this project would be paid for by federal and state tax dollars, not local dollars.
- Nearly 90 percent of survey respondents said that building an airport would help Cherokee County recruit business and industry.
- Approximately 86 percent of survey respondents said that building an airport would specifically help Cherokee County capitalize on the planned Two Kings Casino.
- Survey respondents felt the casino could help bring hotels, restaurants, shops and other job opportunities to Cherokee County.
- Some sites under consideration are in a federally designated Opportunity Zone.
- The Federal Aviation Administration approval process will take approximately two years to complete.

Previous studies – one in 1979, the other in 2009 – have identified several potential sites for an airport. An ideal location would be one that is closer to the casino than airports in Shelby or Gastonia. If the county pursues this, the initial steps should be taken immediately given that casino construction has already begun. "If we don't do this, it's going to kill us in 10 years," one steering committee member said. The 2009 study forecast an initial development cost of \$37.5 million for land acquisition, planning, environmental review, design and construction – at first for a 4,000-foot runway, followed within a few years by an expansion of that runway to 5,500 feet. Over the course of 25 years, another \$12.3 million was identified in airport improvements to keep up with the facility's growth. All cost projections would need to be updated.

Action plan:

- lawmakers.
- land acquisition.





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• Retain a consultant to update the 2009 Cherokee County Airport Concept Plan and Economic Feasibility study, including updated costs and economic analysis. • Meet with FAA and the S.C. Aeronautics Commission about the renewed interest in this project in light of the planned casino. • Begin building political support with local, state and federal

• Complete the site selection process and begin planning for







### Interstate (Gateways)

panning approximately 20 miles, Interstate 85 has been described as the lifeblood of Cherokee County. Located at the heart of the rapidly growing corridor between Raleigh and Atlanta, I-85 through Cherokee County has an average daily traffic count of more than 60,000. Beautifying and improving the exits off the interstate ranked high as a priority among steering committee members and in the public input process. Installing monument signs welcoming travelers to Cherokee County at both major entry points also received favorable feedback.

Such improvements change the perception of an area; a welcoming gateway is a first impression to visitors and potential new residents. Think about where you would stop if you were on a trip with your family - you would take a well-lit exit that looked inviting. Major employers often want to locate within one mile of an interstate. The SCDOT I-85 Widening Project (detailed below) has already caused a significant uptick in potential businesses and industries looking to locate in the area to contact economic development officials here.







he ongoing SCDOT I-85 Widening Project – estimated to be complete in late 2024 – will increase the four-lane interstate to six lanes. Interchange reconstruction is included for exits 83, 87, 95, 96, 100, 102, 104 and 106, and rehabilitation of exit ramps at exits 78, 80, 90 and 92. The project also includes the construction of a new CSX railroad bridge crossing the interstate near mile marker 81, as well as replacing the existing Norfolk Southern railroad bridge. Construction on the southern leg of this project began in 2017, while construction of the northern end to the state line began in August 2019.

Key public input and background:

- A Clear Vision participants expressed an overwhelming desire to see the county, city, town and other governmental bodies work together.
- 95 percent of survey respondents believe investing in lighting, landscaping and other improvements at interstate exits and community gateways could help improve economic development
- Public feedback indicated near-unanimous support for these kinds of investments, with respondents citing attractive exits as a way to capture tourists, help existing businesses and recruit new ones. Several respondents also made the connection between better lighting and increased feelings of safety.
- Participants across several sectors indicated better roads were a general concern in "submit your own answer" spaces and open-ended questions.
- Cherokee County has approximately \$1.5 million in Accommodations Tax funding that could be used on interstate beautification projects.
- The City of Gaffney completed preliminary work and early conceptual designs for possible improvements at exits 90 and 92 in 2014.

To realize this portion of the vision, Cherokee County, the City of Gaffney, the Town of Blacksburg and possibly the Gaffney Board of Public Works and others should begin coordinating their efforts. Reaching out to the S.C. Department of Transportation and the S.C. Transportation Infrastructure Bank to determine if any funding is available through those agencies should be undertaken immediately.

Action Plan:

- Pool resources to fund a master plan for interstate development; consider hiring or designating a point person to ride herd on implementation.
- Identify and engage philanthropists, businesses and civic groups for assistance with spot improvements, named beautification efforts or regular maintenance.
- Form a cooperative entity similar to SPATS (Spartanburg Area Transportation Study) or GPATS (Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study), a joint venture between municipalities, the county, the S.C. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to oversee regional transportation planning and investments.







# Quality of Life

### **Beautification**

he Broken Window Theory goes like this: If someone throws a rock through a window in an abandoned building in one part of town, and that window goes unrepaired, then slowly the perception of that neighborhood begins to change. Soon, there are multiple broken windows, and more properties fall into disrepair. Crime tends to rise, civic pride tends to wane. Combating blight is one way to reverse course, and it can take different forms - beautification, revitalization and development. When asked what entities should be involved in neighborhood revitalization, aside from the county and municipal governments, respondents also named Limestone University, the Cherokee County School District, the faith community, civic and nonprofit groups, the Appalachian Council of Governments, Habitat for Humanity and perhaps the most-cited group - residents of blighted neighborhoods themselves. Empowering people to get involved in beautifying where they live was a strong sentiment among survey respondents, the steering committee and the

various strategy sessions.

There is a major opportunity here for Cherokee County's various governmental organizations to work together toward this common goal. There is also some low-hanging fruit that could help jump start this effort and build public trust in the government's intention and commitment, like identifying and working with faith-based groups that have home repair missions or establishing community cleanup days. Seeing small steps successfully completed acts as a proof of concept and helps build public support.



### Key public input and background:

- A Clear Vision participants expressed an overwhelming desire to see the county, city, town and other governmental bodies work together.
- On a scale of 1-10, survey respondents gave a weighted average of 8.79 to investing in neighborhood revitalization and cleanup of blighted areas. More than 54 percent ranked that 10 (very important).
- When asked to pick the top beautification efforts the county should focus on, a majority of survey respondents said working with the City of Gaffney and Town of Blacksburg to beautify the two downtown areas, followed by establishing clearly defined walking and biking paths, developing a recreation center, and beautifying the gateways into the county and its various communities. More aggressive code enforcement rounded out the list.
- In the public questionnaire, more aggressive code enforcement and more aggressive litter control ranked much higher, just under the focus on the two downtowns.

Strategy session participants said there was no one magic bullet to combat blight. Potential public, private and nonprofit partners were identified. Rather than bring in a third party to lead this effort, though, it was clear given the sense of pride Cherokee County residents feel and their desire to improve their overall quality of life that this effort should be led by county and municipal governments.

### Action Plan:

- Establish a committee of one or two elected officials from Cherokee County, the City of Gaffney and the Town of Blacksburg, along with the administrators for each entity to evaluate the biggest short- and long-term needs.
- Identify private-sector partners who may be willing to invest in named spot improvements, similar to the Spot of Pride program in Spartanburg.
- Identify nonprofit and faith-based grant opportunities and home repair programs.
- Create a tax incentive program in the two downtown areas to help recruit new businesses there.





### **Greenways, Waterways and Trails**

he Broad River has been called "the river that divides" Cherokee County. Why not make it the river that unites? Throughout the visioning process, making better use of the Broad River garnered overwhelming support. Cherokee County's greenways and waterways are perhaps its greatest untapped treasure. With the right planning, the county's natural beauty can be used to enhance quality of life for residents and act as a tourism draw. Survey respondents across the board described a desire to retain Cherokee County's rural charm and natural beauty. Strategy session participants described in vivid detail their favorite outdoor spots, some in Cherokee County but mostly outside - whether due to access or development. Some survey respondents suggested equestrian trails would be a nice addition to Cherokee County. Others suggested establishing a grassroots effort like Friends of the Reedy River to focus on preservation and the promotion of activities.

Key public input and background:

- bodies work together.

Strategy session participants noted the need to better educate residents about existing amenities. The 7.5-mile Lake Welchel Trail, for instance, "is popular with bikers and out-of-towners," but many local residents don't know about it, one participant said. The county needs to do a better job at claiming ownership of and touting its natural resources and amenities, participants said.

• A Clear Vision participants expressed an overwhelming desire to see the county, city, town and other governmental

• A majority of survey respondents said better use of the Broad River as a tourism destination would help "sell" Cherokee County to potential visitors and new residents.

• Approximately 42 percent of survey respondents said they would like to see kayak, canoe and/or tubing landings along the Broad River. Other outdoor amenities that received high marks were more parks with hiking and biking options and a countywide trail system that connects to existing trails, like the Overmountain Victory Trail.

• Survey respondents also favored development along the Broad River with trails, campgrounds, picnic areas and boat landings. Some suggested restaurants and residential developments along the river's edge and forestry learning centers.



Action Plan:

- robust trail system.
- natural resources and amenities.
- residents and visitors.



THE BROAD RIVER BRINGS SO MUCH POTENTIAL TO OUR AREA! WE SHOULD BE UTILIZING THIS AS A FOCAL POINT FOR RECREATION AND EDUCATIONAL USES. THERE ARE PLENTY OF PRIVATE AND **PUBLIC GROUPS THAT** WOULD PARTNER ON **OPPORTUNITIES ON** THE RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES. - SURVEY RESPONDENT

• Use Cherokee County's connection to the Overmountain Victory Trail to leverage federal funds for developing a more

• Retain a third party to develop a Greenways, Waterways and Trails master plan that includes an inventory of all

• Create a guide for hiking, biking and waterway use for

51  $\bigcirc$  $\Box$ 

## Infrastructure

### **Broadband (High-Speed Internet)**

2020, access to high-speed internet is a basic infrastructure need, along with electricity, water and sewer – and the coronavirus pandemic served to highlight this beyond any doubt.

The most critical need is for children attending school virtually who need high-speed internet for their classes and schoolwork. And according to the Federal Communications Commission, access to broadband also stimulates economic growth, spurs job creation and boosts healthcare and e-commerce. The healthcare component has also been highlighted during COVID-19, with many providers (including mental healthcare providers) opting to provide telehealth for routine appointments.

It is worth noting that because of the terrain, Cherokee County has some areas that have little to no cell reception.

Once the pandemic is over, it is likely some sort of virtual education option will remain in place. Likewise, many businesses and their employees have found value in working remotely, and that trend likely will continue even after the pandemic has passed.



\* SOURCE: PALMETTOCARECONNECTIONS.OR

Key public input and background:

- average of 8.65.

The Cherokee County School District issued approximately 600 Wi-Fi hotspots at the start of the pandemic. Given the essential need for this service among school children, it makes sense for Cherokee County Administrator Steve Bratton and Cherokee County School District Superintendent Dana Fall to take the lead on this project. Officials should begin reaching out to state and federal lawmakers about this for help with potential funding, and to discuss alternatives like free hotspots for families that cannot afford broadband internet subscriptions.

Action Plan:

- poverty level.
- expand broadband.
- replicated in other rural counties.

52

• On a scale of 1-10, survey respondents gave expanding broadband into rural parts of Cherokee County a weighted

• More than 70 percent of respondents recommended Cherokee County and the School District work together on this; nearly 60 percent said the county should work with the city and town to install more public Wi-Fi hotspots; and nearly 60 percent said the county should encourage any new development to include spaces where people can gather to use public high-speed internet. Respondents could select multiple answers on this question. • According to the U.S. Census Bureau, only about 61 percent of Cherokee County households had a broadband internet subscription between 2014 and 2018.

• Analyze underserved areas in terms of population and

• Identify and pursue state and federal grants that could help

• Bring in a third party to establish a pilot program in Cherokee County and develop best practices that can be



## **Public Transportation**

herokee County does not have any sort of public transportation system for low-income or elderly residents to get to doctor's appointments, grocery stores or other essential services. Garnering public support for public transportation may be difficult based on our survey responses. That said, it should be pointed out that residents who participate in such surveys tend In one of the strategy sessions, Rock Hill's public transportation My Ride Rock Hill launched in July 2019 with four fixed routes along key corridors. My Ride Rock Hill involved the city partnering with

to be more civically engaged, better educated and middle- to upper-income. In other words, the people most in need of public transportation were least likely to participate in the surveys. system was mentioned as a possible model for Cherokee County. Winthrop University, Piedmont Medical Center and Family Trust Federal Credit Union.

Key public input and background:

- lowest of any focus area.
- which this type of question was asked.
- Survey respondents did see the utility in public do not have reliable transportation.
- downtown Blacksburg.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION **WOULD OFFER MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR** SENIORS TO GET **OUT AND SHARE IN ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.**" - SURVEY RESPONDENT

• Of the 10 projects, public transportation was the most divisive. Approximately 75 percent of survey respondents said Cherokee County should invest in public transportation, the

• Approximately 71 percent of respondents thought public transportation would be useful in getting employees to and from the Two Kings Casino, currently under construction. • On a scale of 1-10, respondents gave public transportation a

weighted average of 6.55, the lowest among the projects for

transportation opening up job opportunities to people who

• Respondents also said that public transportation could be useful in getting shoppers to the Yellow Mall, getting college students to and from Limestone or SCC's Cherokee County campus, and connecting downtown Gaffney with



Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System acquired Mary Black Health System on Dec. 31, 2018. SRHS operates a fleet of 46 buses servicing more than 800 clients each day in Spartanburg County. While COVID-19 has slowed the integration of this system into Cherokee and Union counties, transportation to and from follow-up appointments is seen as critical. Getting hospital patients to these appointments is part of the continuum of care the hospital system strives for and generally reduces readmission rates.

Action Plan:

- Form a task force comprised of representatives of Cherokee County, the City of Gaffney, the Town of Blacksburg, the healthcare system, the faith community and the senior center.
- Identify potential public, private and organizational funders.
- Hire a third party to develop a master plan that identifies critical areas most in need of this service and proposes a scalable system that can start small and expand if/when necessary.

I WOULD SUPPORT PUBLIC I WOULD SUPPORT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION WITH A WIDE FOCUS THAT INCLUDES TOURISM, MOVING STUDENTS TO AND FROM LIMESTONE UNIVERSITY, AND TAKING RESIDENTS TO AND FROM DOWNTOWN OR THE YELLOW MALL."





## $\left( \begin{array}{c} 1 \end{array} \right)^{\prime}$ **INVESTING IN WATER** AND SEWER ALONG THE **INTERSTATE 85 CORRIDOR** SHOULD PROBABLY BE THE FIRST BIG PROJECT TACKLED, BECAUSE HAVING **INDUSTRY THERE WILL PROVIDE REVENUE FOR BROADBAND AND PUBLIC** TRANSPORTATION."

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

### Water and Sewer

he majority of property along the Interstate 85 corridor is not served by water and sewer. Businesses and industries often look to locate within one mile of an interstate, so this hinders economic development. Sewer in particular is a big economic development driver. A good rule of thumb is to estimate it costs \$1 million a mile to lay sewer. Cherokee County has multiple water and sewer providers, each serving distinct areas of the county.

Key public input and background:

Cherokee County has already taken a first step on the path of expanding sewer service. Beginning in November 2018, the county began setting aside 15 percent of any new FILOT (fee-in-lieuof-tax) agreement with industries. These dollars, housed in the Infrastructure Development Fund, can pay for certain road, water and sewer improvements, or be used to leverage bonds to pay for larger projects.

Action Plan:

- in need.
- their customers.

• Approximately 95 percent of survey respondents said they felt Cherokee County's various governmental entities should invest in water and sewer along the I-85 corridor. • Approximately 84 percent of respondents said they supported an outside, third-party firm analyzing the county's water and sewer needs, including the feasibility of creating a unified water and sewer authority.

• Retain an outside, third-party firm to study Cherokee County's water and sewer needs, prioritizing the areas most

• Retain a consultant to analyze Cherokee County's existing water and sewer providers and make recommendations for the best way the county can move forward. This study should look at efficiency, economies of scale and possible expansions, along with the feasibility of creating a unified water and sewer authority and its impact on providers and

• Cherokee County should begin laying sewer lines along the Interstate 85 corridor, its interchanges, and areas east of the Broad River, including the Highway 5 corridor, to promote growth.





A CONSOLIDATED **TOURISM AND VISITORS EFFORT IS** ABSOLUTELY NEEDED. IT TAKES TIME, **EFFORT AND LEADERSHIP TO PROMOTE** TOURISM. AND IT MUST BE ADDRESSED FROM A BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE AS WELL AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE."

- SURVEY RESPONDENT

# Tourism

### A Unified Convention and Visitors Bureau

herokee County has never been involved in tourism. Tourism means a lot of things to a lot of people and each one is a potential opportunity. Tourism, too, touches on projects in every other sector, whether that be the potential for a local airport, making better use of the Broad River, or how a reconfigured and rejuvenated Parks and Recreation program could draw people here. Spartanburg County, for instance, has enjoyed a surge in hotel stays from the various sports tournaments it has been able to land because of its facilities.

At the end of the day, tourism puts more dollars in county and municipal tax coffers that could help revitalize the two downtowns – which in turn would help draw more visitors, and it becomes self-perpetuating.

Acknowledging and building on the work the City of Gaffney has done should be a part of any countywide tourism effort. And public support seems to indicate that pursuing a Revolutionary War Discovery Center should be a part of this effort, too. In various "submit your own" response fields in the digital surveys, there was some mention of housing a county-led tourism effort under a county Parks and Recreation Department. This seems to be following the state model of having a Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

### Key public input and background:

- 100 percent of survey respondents said creating a consolidated tourism and visitors effort to unify efforts in Cherokee County, the City of Gaffney and Town of Blacksburg would help promote the county's brand and reputation both within its borders and in the eyes of potential visitors.
- 100 percent of survey respondents also said a unified tourism and visitors effort could help Cherokee County capitalize on Two Kings Casino.
- Approximately 87.5 percent of respondents favored creating a Revolutionary War Discovery Center to better promote the two national battlefields in Cherokee County.
- When asked what developments could help "sell" Cherokee County to potential visitors, approximately 72 percent of respondents said new restaurants, about 56 percent said better use of the Broad River as a tourism destination, and 50 percent said promotion of the two battlegrounds and creation of a Revolutionary War Discovery Center. Respondents could pick up to three answers for this question.
- In the public questionnaire, better use of the Broad River was the most popular answer to that question, followed by more recreation centers/fields and promotion of the national battlefields.

Strategy session participants talked about some of the setbacks of not having a unified convention and visitors effort, particularly in terms of planning and promoting events. "We are constantly stepping on each other," one participant said.

Throughout the visioning process, participants talked about the need to market Cherokee County attractions to existing residents, too, which will be discussed in the following pages.

### Action Plan:

- Begin discussions with the City of Gaffney, Town of Blacksburg and other stakeholders to garner buy-in for a unified/jointly funded effort.
- Retain a third party to develop a master plan that builds on existing tourism efforts and identifies existing needs, programs and potential funding sources.
- Create a jointly-funded (county, city, town) position under the county government to lead this effort and corral existing efforts.







" THE CONSTRUCTION **OF THE CASINO** WILL CREATE AN **INCREASED FLOW OF TOURISM IN AND AROUND OUR AREA** THAT COULD BE CAPITALIZED ON, BUT THAT WILL BE MADE **POSSIBLE ONLY IF** THERE IS A PLAN ON HOW TO GET PEOPLE TO WANT TO VISIT **OUR COUNTY.**" - SURVEY RESPONDENT



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### A UNIFIED VISION AND ENTITY ABSOLUTELY COULD BE USED TO PROMOTE OUR BRAND, BUT WE MUST HAVE NEW VOICES TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN."

### **A Comprehensive Marketing Plan**

nce a unified convention and visitors arm is established, one of that group's first efforts should be to develop a comprehensive marketing plan. While this would include a brand refresh and tion management component, one point made over and

While this would include a brand refresh and reputation management component, one point made over and over throughout the visioning process was the need for a marketing plan to have an internal component, too. "We have to change the mindset and sell ourselves within the county," one strategy session participant said.

Residents and respondents talked about the importance of promoting the Revolutionary War sites, for instance, though some admitted they have never visited either one. Similar stories were shared about visiting downtown shops and the Cherokee County History and Arts Museum.

So while an external marketing effort would focus on building Cherokee County's brand as a place people want to visit, stay and spend money, the internal effort would be about tapping into the sense of pride residents feel and using that energy to support local businesses and attractions. One strategy session participant suggested the internal component might also help reinvigorate the local philanthropic scene.



#### Key public input and background:

- On a scale of 1-10, survey respondents gave a weighted average of 8.94 to developing a comprehensive marketing strategy to build the county's brand and reputation.
- On a scale of 1-10, respondents gave a weighted average of 8.0 to the importance of the county, City of Gaffney and Town of Blacksburg working cooperatively to develop the two downtown areas.
- When asked what message Cherokee County should project to other cities, counties and states to bolster its reputation, the most popular survey answer was "It's somewhere I would want to visit," followed closely by "It's somewhere I would want to live."
- The answers to that question differed on the public questionnaire: In-person respondents overwhelmingly said they wanted the county to be known as "somewhere I would want to live and raise a family," followed by "somewhere I would consider locating my business."
- When asked where they take visiting family and friends from outside Cherokee County, the Gaffney Outlet Marketplace (Yellow Mall) was the most popular response. Almost equally popular were "submit your own" answers that indicated residents take guests outside of Cherokee County – to Greenville, Spartanburg, Charlotte, Shelby or the mountains of Western North Carolina.

Strategy session participants said a comprehensive marketing plan should include creating "ambassadors" to help promote existing businesses and attractions to residents, creating an inventory of assets the county has (if this is not part of the convention and visitors planning) and capitalizing on the scenic byways in the county.

#### Action Plan:

- Retain a third party to develop a comprehensive marketing plan with internal and external focuses.
- Coalesce county, city, town and other leadership to fund and implement plan.



68

# Outside of the Box

A potpourri of some of the more unique survey responses is included below to help spark more conversations and ideas:

- Add structures to part of the Broad River to create a white water rafting experience
- More upscale restaurants
- Build a civic center for high-profile events
- Strategically placed electric car charging stations
- Install a splash pad
- Recruit more white-collar jobs
- More workforce development programs
- Consolidate the City of Gaffney and Cherokee County governments
- Recruit a drive-in movie theater
- Build a performing arts center
- Develop a full waterpark similar to Shipwreck Cove in Duncan
- Build a park centered around a beautiful feature, like Falls Park in Greenville

70



# Community Input: Data

### **Questions Across All Sectors**

How would you sum up your vision of Cherokee County





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### in a few words?





50.00%

45.00%

40.00%

35.00%

30.00%

25.00%

20.00%

15.00%

10.00%

5.00%

0.00%



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what are you most proud of?

### When you think of Cherokee County,

### That's your vision.



#### **Economic Development**

Parks and Recreation is one of the areas that can be housed in every sector because it has a far-reaching impact on business, family, infrastructure, tourism and the overall health of the community. Just think of the Tyger River Park in Spartanburg County.

In your perfect world, which of these 3 Parks and Recreation facilities would you like to see in Cherokee County?



your own

FACT: Parks and Recreation lies outside the jurisdiction of Cherokee County government. Would it function better under the county's control?





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76







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Airports play an eminent role in the economic development of counties as they facilitate the fast movement of man and materials as well as employment generation. FACT: Cherokee County is the only county in the state without an airport. Do you feel that an airport would help recruit business and industry?

FACT: The largest casino in the southeast is under construction across the county/state line in Kings Mountain. Do you feel that an airport would help Cherokee County capitalize on that expansion?





14%

78







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What do you envision the Kings Mountain casino bringing to the county?

### activities along area BETTER blacksburg bring businesses

Casino county development DOLLARS eating economic family EMPLOYMENT gambling hospitality entertainment hotels food jobs increase INFLUX live local lodging looking love money motel needs OPPORTUNITIES overflow people possible restaurants sales shopping stays support tourism TAX visitors tourist travel

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important do you think an airport is for the recruitment of business and industry?



Interstate development is defined here as the gateway to cities and communities. As a person leaves an interstate, elements such as lighting, signage and landscaping provide the first impressions of the community.

Should Cherokee County invest in these improvements to help recruit business and industry?





**SO** 









Please rank those areas of focus in order of attainability from

Why did you select your top priority?





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#### **Quality of Life**

Beautification means more than just landscaping - though it can be a part of it. One broken window in one neighborhood can lead to another, which leads to another . . . and so on. As a neighborhood falls into disrepair, crime tends to rise. So neighborhood revitalization is a big part of this. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is redeveloping blighted areas to improve overall quality of life?



What entities should be involved in neighborhood revitalization efforts for areas that have fallen into disrepair?

authority blacksburg business CHURCH city code civic community council county DEVELOPMENT businesses economic enforcement councils gaffney FAITH fire government grants habitat healthy humanities housing IMPROVE local governments members municipalities neighborhood OWNERS non-profits organizations PARKS people priority recruitment residents RURAL skills strong taskforce town training university waste

### What other beautification efforts should Cherokee County focus on? Pick three.



85

downtowns



86

What is your vision for the best use of the Broad River?

**access** activities **along** area beautifying **BIKING blueway** brewery **brings** camping canoe fishing community destination educational EDGE floating **FUN** grassroots hiking historical history HORSEBACK kayak kayaking landings Natural picnic possibility POWER private property public tourism PLENTY trail **NATURE** recreation **TRAILS rivers** waterway WALKING riding river **REEDY** race **uses** 



#### Infrastructure

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has shown us just how important it is for children to have access to broadband (highspeed) internet to keep up with their schoolwork. According to the FCC, access to broadband also stimulates economic growth, spurs job creation and boosts health care and e-commerce. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is expanding broadband internet into rural parts of Cherokee County? FACT: Cherokee County does not have any sort of public transportation system for low-income or elderly residents to get to doctor's appointments, grocery stores or other essential services. Would you support the county investing in this type of infrastructure??



What are some other connectivity initiatives Cherokee County could focus on? Select all that apply.







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### On a scale of 1 to 10, how important do you consider public transportation in Cherokee County?

Not Needed	2	3	4	Somewhat Needed	6	7	8	9	Very Needed
10.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%	25.00%



FACT: The largest casino in the southeast is under construction just across the county/state line in Kings Mountain. It is expected to generate a substantial number of new jobs. Do you think employees who live in Cherokee County would use a public transportation system to get to and from the casino to work?





90







FACT: A majority or property along the interstate 85 corridor is not served by sewer service, which hinders economic development. Would you support the various governmental entities in Cherokee County investing more in this type of infrastructure along this corridor?

FACT: Cherokee County has multiple water and sewer providers, each serving distinct areas of the county. Would you support a third-party firm from outside of the county conducting an analysis of Cherokee County's water and sewer needs, including the feasibility of creating a unified water and sewer authority and its impact on providers and their customers?





16%

92



93

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 $\geq$ 



84%

#### Tourism

Cherokee County does not have a consolidated tourism and visitors effort to unify and amplify the efforts of the county, the City of Gaffney and the Town of Blacksburg. Do you think creating such an entity would help to promote things within the county and our brand in the eyes of potential visitors?

FACT: Cherokee County is the only county in South Carolina with two national battlegrounds. Should there be more emphasis and promotion of this in order to attract visitors, such as a Revolutionary War Discovery Center?





12.5%

94

### 87.5%





40.00% 30.00% 25.00% 20.00% 15.00% 10.00% 5.00% 0.00% It's a place It's somewhere It's somewhere It's known It's somewhere I would want I want to full of for its I would history beautiful consider locating to live and visit raise a family greenways my business and waterways

What message would you like to see Cherokee County project to people in other cities; counties and states? That

is, what would you like people to think when it comes to

Cherokee County's reputation?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how important do you consider a comprehensive marketing strategy to build the county's brand and reputation to the residents' pride?

Not Important	2	3	4	Somewhat Important		7	8	9	Very Important
0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.56%	5.56%	5.56%	16.67%	5.56%	61.11%
				Weighted /					

FACT: The largest casino in the southeast is under construction across the county/state line in Kings Mountain. Do you think a unified tourism and visitor effort could help capitalize on this massive development?





96

Yes







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80.00%

70.00%

60.00%

50.00%

40.00%

30.00%

20.00%

10.00%

0.00%

New retail outlets New hotels Better

New

restaurants

What other new developments do you think could help "sell" Cherokee County to potential visitors? Select up to three.

### When family and friends from outside Cherokee County come to visit, where do you take them?



On a scale of 1 to 10, how important would you say it is for the county, the City of Gaffney, the Town of Blacksburg and other entities to cooperatively focus on the downtown areas?

More

use of the campgrounds recreation recreation Broad River and hiking centers/fields activities for as a tourism trails adults and destination seniors

More

More

A performing Promotion

arts center

Please

of existing submit battlegrounds your own.

and creation of a Revolutionary War Discovery

Center

21	Not mportant	2	3	4	Somewhat Important		7	8	9	Very Important
	0.00%	0.00%	5.56%	5.56%	5.56%	11.11%	5.56%	16.67%	5.56%	44.44%





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#### **Public Questionnaire**

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FACT: The largest casino in the southeast is under construction just across the county/state line in Kings Mountain. It is expected to generate a substantial number of new jobs. How would you like to see Cherokee County capitalize on this development?



The visioning process has identified an airport, an expanded Parks and Recreation program that includes offerings for adults and seniors and is under the county's control, and beautification of gateways into the county and its various communities as priorities under economic development. What is missing?





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Parks and Recreation has a far-reaching impact on business, families, infrastructure, tourism and the overall health of the community. Think of the Tyger River Park in Spartanburg County. What types of Parks and Recreation facilities would you like to see in Cherokee County?

5.00% 0.00% Baseball Recreation Senior Batting Aquatic Soccer Public More family field golf course activity complex center outreach cage center and tennis places courts (not just for

kids)

The visioning process has identified expanded access to broadband (high-speed) internet, public transportation and investing in water and sewer line as three infrastructure needs in Cherokee County. What is missing from the list?





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#### If Cherokee County had a public transportation system, would you use it for ...

Neighborhood revitalization has been identified as a



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The Clear Vision steering committee has identified a consolidated tourism and visitors effort to unify and amplify the effects of the county, the City of Gaffney and the Town of Blacksburg as a priority when it comes to driving tourism. What else could help drive tourism in Cherokee County?



Cherokee County's greenways and waterways are perhaps its greatest untapped treasure. What outdoor amenities do you think are currently lacking in Cherokee County with regards to greenways and waterways?



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to existing trails (like the Overmountain Victory Trail)

options



What message would you like to see Cherokee County project to people in other cities, counties and states? That is, what would you like people to think when it comes to Cherokee County's reputation?

40.00% 35.00% 30.00% 25.00% 20.00% 15.00% 10.00% 5.00% 0.00% It's a place It's somewhere It's somewhere It's known It's somewhere I would want full of for its I would I want to to live and visit history beautiful consider locating raise a family greenways my business and waterways

### When family and friends from outside Cherokee County come to visit, where do you take them?



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## Acknowledgments

#### Foundational Steering Committee

Abbie Sossamon Glenda Hartzog Jamie Vinesett Michael Bridges Will Cobb

#### Special thanks to the following community members

**Bailey Humphries** Billy Transou Brad Wilkins Brandon Watkins Brian Ziegelheafer C.H. Cline Candace Transou Chad Day Charles Allen Montgomery, Sr. Chris Steed Christina Cody **Christopher Spencer** Clary Phillips Cody Butts Cody Sossamon Connie Weeks Craig Karriker Cynthia Lawhorn Daryl Smith David S. Crosby Davis Dickson Dorothy Manning Dorothy Petty Dr. Dana Fall Dr. Quincie Moore Drake Scott Earle Posey Faye Dickson Harold Pennington, Jr.

Heather Swayngim Henry Jolly James Taylor Jasmine Logan Jeff Connell Jeffrey Hammond Jim Cook Jonathon Will Jonna Turner Jordan Phillips Joshua Queen Kathy Jo Bratton Kay Grigg Ken Moon Kendall Kirby Kristen Stevenson Kristie Camp LaToya Corry LeighAnn Moon Lesley Bright Lewis Huskey Jr Libbie Cheek Libby Corry Lisa Glenn Lynn McAbee Lynne Shackleford Malachi Ford Marcus Bradley Mark Hardin



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Mary Trolio Michael Freyta Michael Hembree N. Andrew "Andy" Cooper Pam Cazel Patricia Hyatt Patty Bloomer Randy Phillips Rev Denton L Bennet Robert Love Ron Sandrock Ryan Rankin Shagg Stepp Shannon Bonner Sherrian Ellis Camp Susan Moore Tameka Whittenburg Teresa Spires Terrence Scriven Tom Hartman Tracie Wilson Travis TC Norrris Wayne Brown

Special thanks to the Cherokee County Council, City of Gaffney, Town of Blacksburg, Cherokee County School District and Gaffney Board of Public Works.



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