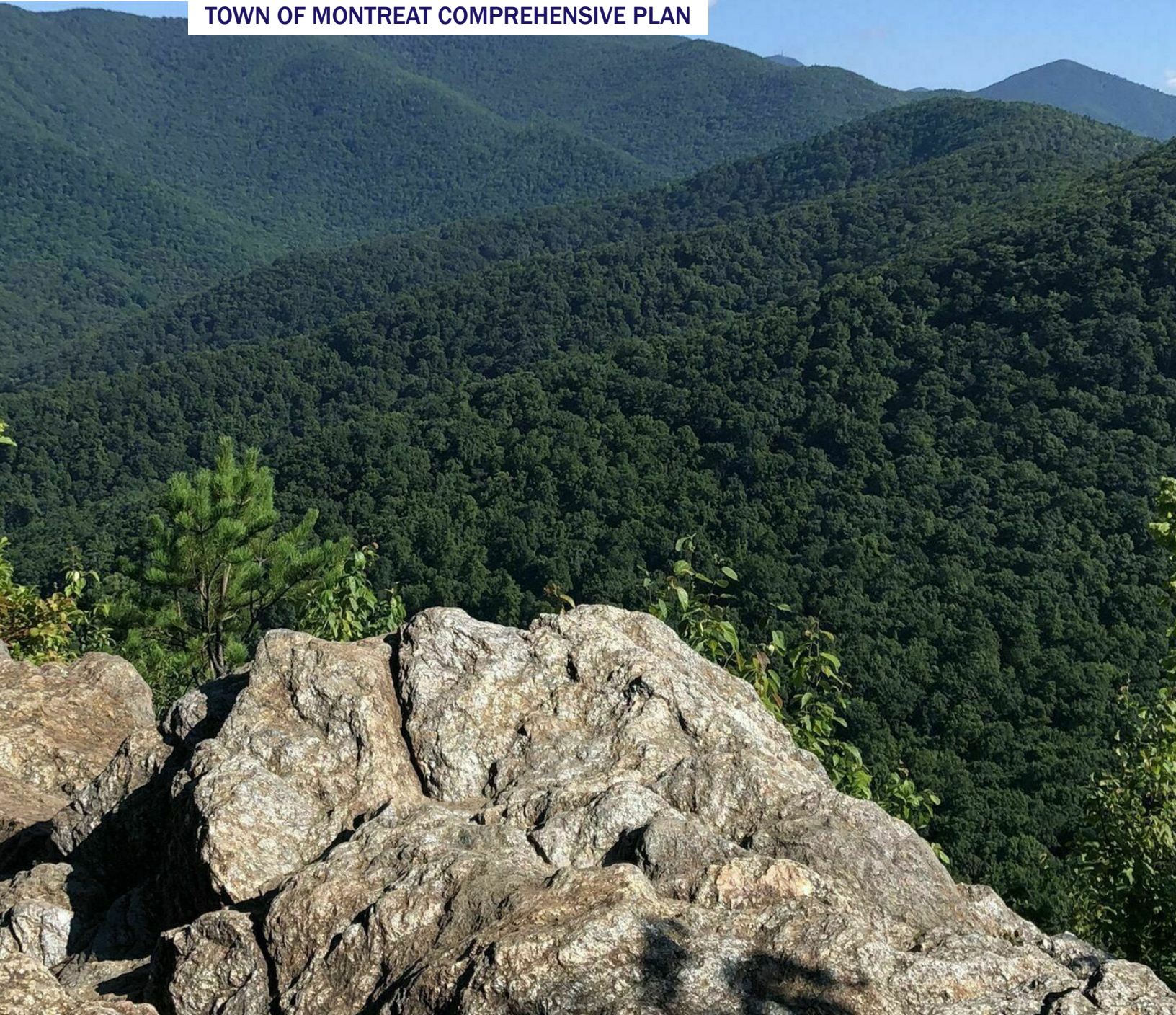




TOWN OF MONTREAT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



JUNE 2023

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the members of the community who were involved in this planning process including the Steering Committee, residents, staff, and members of Council. This plan is a reflection of their dedication to the future of Montreat.

Steering Committee

Mayor Tim Helms

Paul Maurer

Richard DuBose

Maggie Elliott

Mari Gramling

Bill Seaman

John Casper

Daniel Hewitt

Town Council

Tim Helms

Mayor of Montreat

Town Staff

Kayla DiCristina, AICP

Zoning Administrator and Code Enforcement Officer

Ben Blackburn

Interim Town Manager

CONSULTANTS

ms consultants, inc.

Trillium Planning



This page is reserved for formal adoption language.

Executive Summary

The town of Montreat is a small community located in Western North Carolina 18.2 miles east of Asheville. The community possesses great natural beauty and a strong sense of place and heritage, both of which have high meaning and priority for full-time residents, seasonal residents, and those whose lives are shaped by Montreat's several institutions. Once privately owned and operated by the Mountain Retreat Association, the town of Montreat was incorporated as a North Carolina township in 1967.

This plan is an update to the town's 2008 Comprehensive Plan and serves as a guide to achieving three vision statements developed for the town over the next ten years. This plan emerged over an 18-month-long process of collaboration between the consultants, town staff, and the steering committee. During this time, the participants reviewed and analyzed the existing town plan, and previous surveys and performed public engagement contextual to Montreat, including a community survey, a workshop, and several mini-meetings hosted by committee members.

Collectively, those who responded value the community's vast natural resources and the existing character of low-density residential housing. In the next ten years, those who responded hope to see solutions to the problems identified during the public engagement sessions, such as managing increased vehicular traffic volumes on roads and in parking lots and preserving the quality of Flat Creek.

The plan also identifies recent trends, including the Mountain Retreat Association's transition from summer- to four-season conference center, the growth of Montreat College, the continued increase of the full-time homeowner population, private home development, increasing tourism in the area, and limited opportunities for future development.

The 2022 survey that informs this plan is shaped largely by individual respondents, and their aspirations and concerns are appropriately reflected in the plan's three vision statements and objectives. The plan's findings are partly drawn from a broadly advertised, anonymous online survey form, available to any interested party, with 80% of the responses coming from individuals self-identified as not being full-time residents. When the 2022 survey is compared to a previous 2020 town survey of residents only, the results of both surveys show broad agreement, except for the descriptions of Montreat, where respondents were asked to characterize Montreat in three words (see Appendix, page 67). The differences apparent in the 2022 results may have been influenced by recent opposition concerning the Mountain Retreat Association's plan to construct a new lodge.

When analyzing both survey data and recent trends, the steering committee notes that the town's unique character, so valued by its residents and identified in their survey responses, is uncommonly reliant on the town's resident institutions and their continued vitality. Managing this dynamic – through careful discernment, leadership, and communication – will be a key to Montreat's future.

This plan responds to the desires and concerns of residents with three vision statements, each with its own accompanying objectives, addressing *Community Character and Development, Natural Preservation and Stormwater, and Traffic and Transportation*. This plan includes a general implementation strategy that assigns a priority and identifies town staff entities tasked with achieving each of the objectives presented.

The committee notes that taxes remain the town's primary revenue source. Given the general reluctance to pursue increased tax rates or commercial development, growth in home values represents the most likely source of future tax revenue increases. As such, financial limitations may impact the ability to fully realize this plan.

Table of Contents

Plan Overview	01
Planning Process	
Project Timeline	
Community Context	05
Population	
Land Use & Zoning	
Environment	
Public Engagement	33
Online Survey	
Engagement Events	
Montreat Tomorrow	43
Vision Statements	
Objectives	
Next Steps	
Appendix	58
Survey Questions and Additional Graphics	

Additional Planning Documents

Town of Montreat Tree Management Guide

Town of Montreat Wayfinding Signage Plan

Town of Montreat Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Greenways Master Plan

Town of Montreat Open Space Conservation Plan

Buncombe Madison Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

List of Figures

Figure 2-1 : Geographic Location of Montreat	6
Figure 2-2 : Montreat Planning Area	8
Figure 2-3 : Population Increase, 2010 to 2020	10
Figure 2-4 : Population, 2010 to 2020	10
Figure 2-5 : Travel Expenditures	11
Figure 2-6 : Median Home Value	11
Figure 2-7 : Residency	12
Figure 2-8 : Active Transportation	14
Figure 2-9 : Developed Land Uses	17
Figure 2-10 : Current Zoning	18
Figure 2-11 : Land Use	20
Figure 2-12 : Land Ownership	23
Figure 2-13 : Change in Extreme Precipitation in the United States	25
Figure 2-14 : North Carolina Wildfires	25
Figure 2-15 : Rain Gardens	27
Figure 2-16 : Land Stability Index	28
Figure 2-17 : Landslide Hazard Areas	30
Figure 2-18 : Stormwater Infrastructure	32
Figure 2-19 : Flood Hazard Areas	34
Figure 3-1 : Demographics	38
Figure 3-2 : Why Montreat?	39
Figure 3-3 : Montreat's Characteristics	40
Figure 3-4 : Support for possible Businesses	40
Figure 3-5 : Agree/Disagree Matrix Results	42
Figure 3-6 : Pedestrian Danger Areas	43
Figure 3-7 : Development Areas	45
Figure 3-8 : Desired Development Types	45

This page is intentionally left blank.



01

PLAN OVERVIEW

Planning Process

Project Timeline

PLAN OVERVIEW

Montreat is a unique community that needs a unique Comprehensive Plan. *Montreat Tomorrow* is an update to the 2008 Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Montreat that includes significant community input and a vision for the next decade of the Town. At the start of 2022, the Town of Montreat began the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. Research on existing conditions and trends, combined with stakeholder and community engagement, resulted in a plan that lays out the vision for Montreat for the next decade. *Montreat Tomorrow* is a resource that defines community values and will guide future decision-making in Montreat.

Planning Process

The planning process was a collaborative effort led by a Steering Committee of dedicated community advocates. The Steering Committee worked with consultants, the Mayor, and Town staff to facilitate meetings, workshops, and a community wide survey to gather public engagement and ensure final recommendations reflected the values of the Montreat community.

Observations and recent trends in Montreat informed how existing conditions were analyzed. Detailed analysis of the surrounding environment, demographic, and economic trends were combined with community feedback to create the vision statements and final recommendations in this plan.

Project Timeline



WHY PLAN?

Chapter 160D of the N.C. General Statutes requires local governments to have an up-to-date land use plan or Comprehensive Plan to enforce land use zoning. In addition to being a legal requirement for maintaining land use zoning authority, having a good land use or Comprehensive Plan in place can benefit the community.

The PlanNC Guidebook is a resource aimed at helping towns in North Carolina prepare impactful and streamlined plans. Quality comprehensive plans enable communities to “develop a shared vision that energizes local stakeholders and catalyzes lasting community improvements.”

As defined in the Guidebook, “A good land use plan is a community’s own vision for the future. A good plan is a roadmap for finding that future. And a good plan reflects the current conditions of a place as well as the actions for moving

forward. To accomplish such lofty goals, a good plan must be authentic to the place, built on substance, and framed for action.”

The PlanNC Guidebook emphasizes the opportunity that comes with the planning process to explore community values and priorities, and answer “big questions” about the future of the community.

“Through [the planning] process and with an adopted plan, a local government can engage citizens in decision making, wisely invest public dollars, guide development decisions, qualify for certain grant and government funding, and more.”

A Comprehensive Plan is one of many tools that contribute to community success by presenting a vision for the future, guiding investment and development decisions, and reflecting the community’s values.

Table 1-1 : Requirements and Options Provided in G.S. 160D-501

Purpose	“A comprehensive or land-use plan is intended to guide coordinated, efficient, and orderly development within the planning and development jurisdiction based on analysis of present and future needs.”	
Definition	“A comprehensive plan sets forth goals, policies, and programs intended to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of the jurisdiction.”	“A land-use plan uses text and maps to designate the future use or reuse of land.”
Data option	“Planning analysis may address inventories of existing conditions and assess future trends regarding demographics and economic, environmental, and cultural factors.”	
Process requirement	“The planning process shall include opportunities for citizen engagement in plan preparation and adoption.”	
Other plans	“A local government may prepare and adopt such other plans as deemed appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to, small area plans, housing plans, and recreation and open space plans.”	
Adoption	“Plans shall be adopted by the governing board with the advice and consultation of the planning board. Adoption and amendment of a comprehensive plan is a legislative decision and shall follow the process mandated for zoning text amendments set by G.S. 160D-601.”	
Relationship to other plans	“Plans adopted under this Chapter may be undertaken and adopted as part of or in conjunction with plans required under other statutes, including, but not limited to, the plans required by G.S. 113A-110.”	

Source: PlanNC Guidebook: A Practitioner’s Guide to Preparing Streamlined Community Plans

This page is intentionally left blank.

02

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Population

Land Use & Zoning

Environment



COMMUNITY CONTEXT

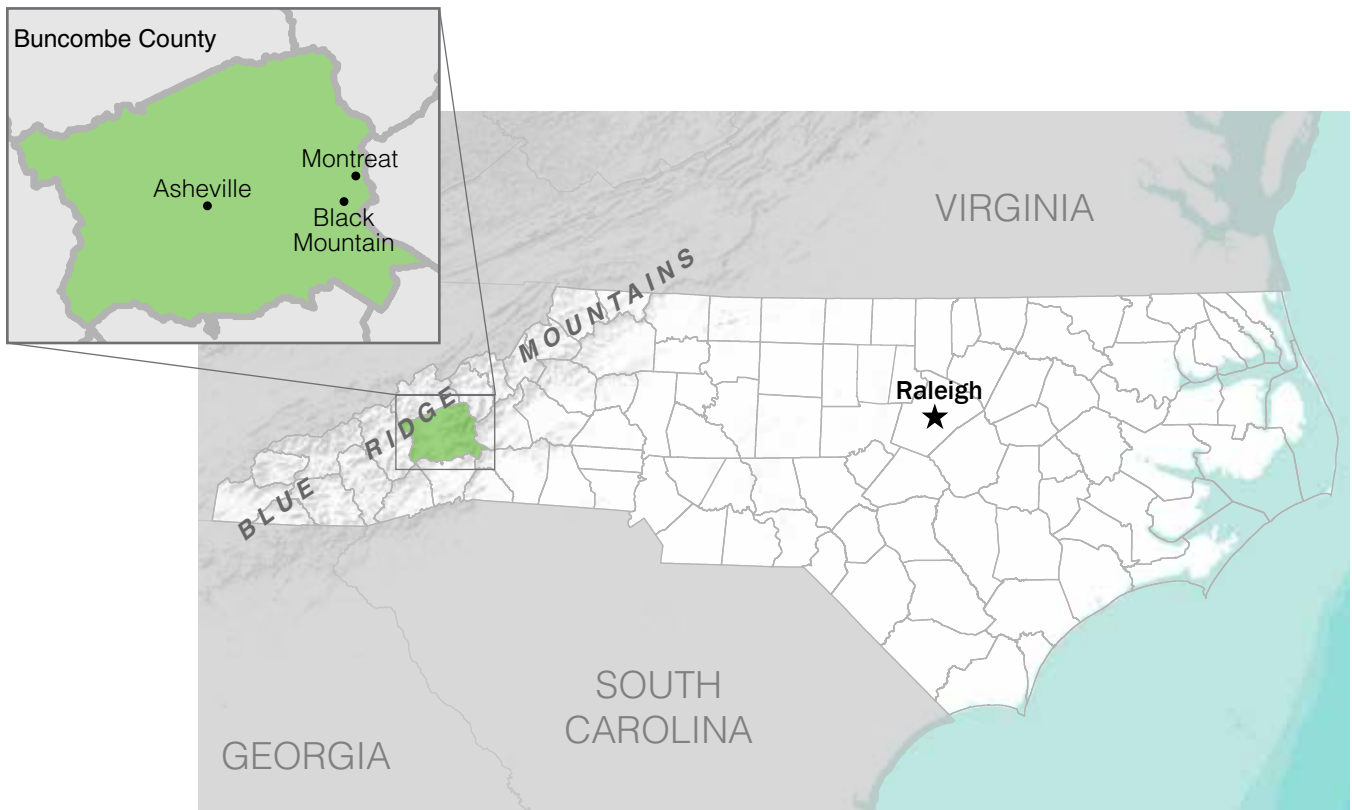
The Town of Montreat is located in Buncombe County east of Asheville and just north of the Town of Black Mountain. Figure 2-1 below has a map of the counties in North Carolina with an inset of Buncombe County. The Black Mountains provide the picturesque backdrop and plentiful opportunities to explore and enjoy the great outdoors.

Montreat’s unique history continues to shape life and development trends in the Town today. Founded in 1905 by the Montreat Conference Center, commonly referred to as the Mountain Retreat Association (MRA), town administration was privately managed until 1967 when the Town of Montreat was officially incorporated through the N.C. General

Assembly. The MRA and Montreat College, a private liberal arts college founded by the MRA in 1916 but now independent, still play a large role in Montreat. Many of the MRA properties are made available for public use. For example, as a by-product of its ministry, the MRA serves as a privately funded Parks and Recreation Department for the Town’s residents and visitors.

Today, Montreat has all the services of a small town including a public works department, a public water source, a police department, building inspections, and planning and zoning. The town is governed by a board of commissioners with five members including the Mayor and a Town Manager.

Figure 2-1 : Geographic Location of Montreat



Historically, Montreat is known for being a national conference center associated with the Presbyterian Church. Montreat is also home to Montreat College, a small private Christian college, and attracts outdoor enthusiasts seeking the many recreational opportunities available. The town itself has a small-town charm punctuated by the campuses of its two main institutions.

Montreat is surrounded by steep ridges that offer sweeping views of the Flat Creek basin below. The peaceful and restorative quality of the natural beauty has continually attracted people to the area, and continues to define the character of the town.









Observations and recent trends in Montreat informed how existing conditions were analyzed. Western North Carolina has seen a growth in population and rising housing costs over the last decade. Changes in weather patterns indicate that Montreat may experience an increase in severe storms, increasing temperatures, and longer dry periods. Figure 2-2 shows a map of Montreat and the planning area. The planning area includes the land within Montreat's municipal boundary and the land in the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ); more information on the ETJ can be found on page 16.

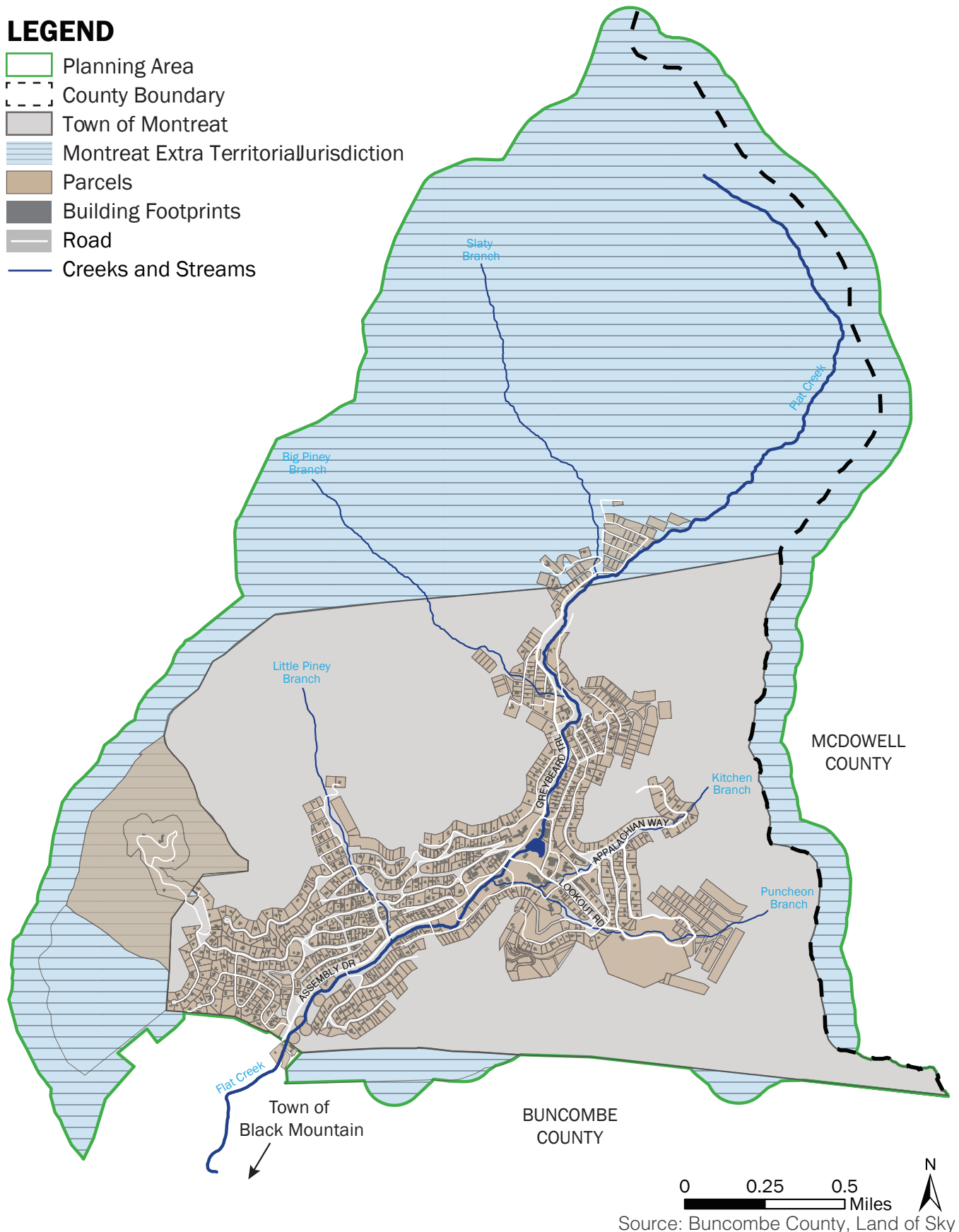


The Montreat Gate welcomes visitors and creates a distinctive sense of place.
Photo: Montreat Retreat Association

Figure 2-2 : Montreat Planning Area

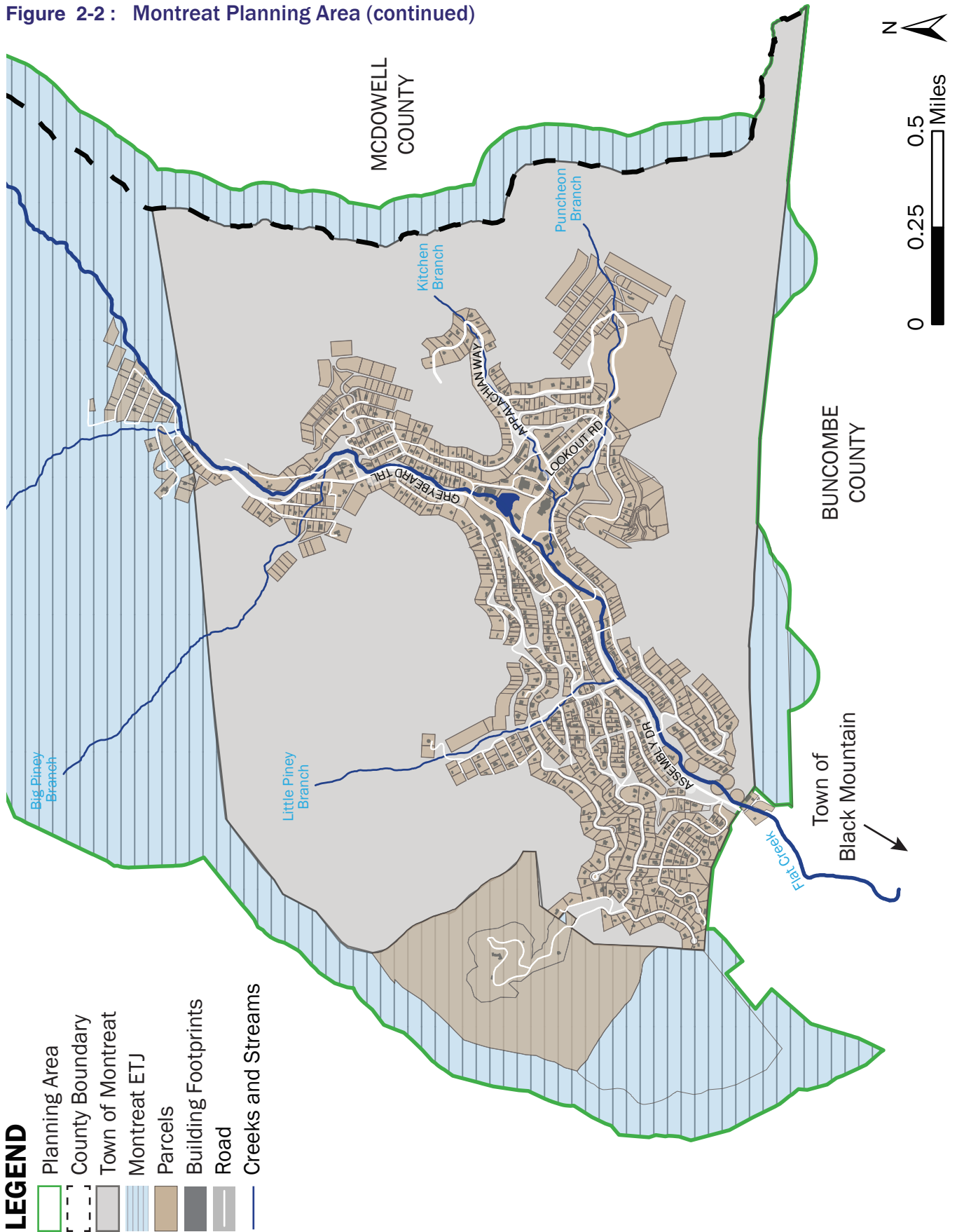
LEGEND

-  Planning Area
-  County Boundary
-  Town of Montreat
-  Montreat Extra Territorial Jurisdiction
-  Parcels
-  Building Footprints
-  Road
-  Creeks and Streams



Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-2 : Montreat Planning Area (continued)



- LEGEND**
- Planning Area
 - County Boundary
 - Town of Montreat
 - Montreat ETJ
 - Parcels
 - Building Footprints
 - Road
 - Creeks and Streams

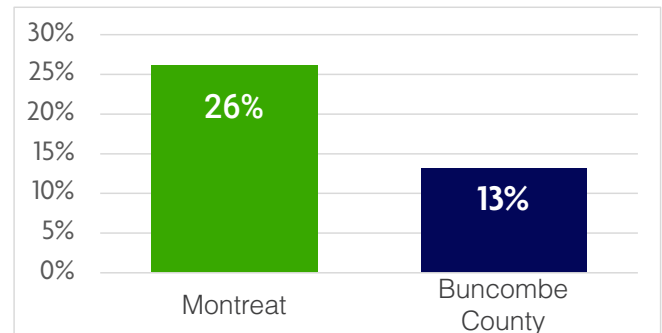
Population

The resident population in Montreat, the number of people present during non-business hours, fluctuates throughout the year due to the academic calendar, seasonal and part-time residents, and MRA program schedule. Montreat College enrolls around 650 students during the academic year. For these reasons, the population in Montreat is likely higher than the US Census estimates at most times of the year. The population represented in the Census data in this section reflects full-time residents of Montreat, as the Census does not capture part-time residents. The seasonal population changes put a strain on services during peak visitation in the summer months. The needs of part-time and full-time residents are different and that conflict can present challenges for town governance.

US Census estimates are also not reliable due to Montreat’s small size. The Census often relies on a sampling method which results in a high margin of error for small communities. Still, according to the decennial census, Montreat’s population grew at twice the rate of Buncombe County as a whole from 2010 to 2020 (Figure 2-3). While the specific estimates are not reliable, the trends over time can be used to gain insight into longer term population changes. Montreat’s full-time population has been steadily increasing since 2010 (Figure 2-4). In the absence of reliable Census data on Montreat’s population, other data sources

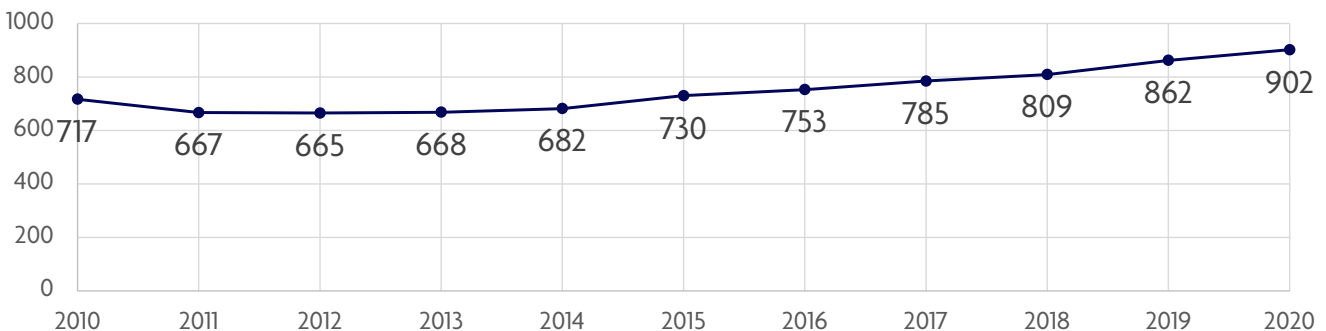
and anecdotal evidence can help shed light on recent trends. It is believed there are approximately 600 residences in Montreat with approximately 1/3 of them containing full-time residents. Based on increasing college enrollment, population growth trends, and county tourism data, it is likely that both seasonal and full-time populations are increasing (conference attendance numbers from the MRA are holding steady year to year; summer conference attendance is decreasing while off-season visits are increasing) Anecdotal evidence and survey responses (survey results are detailed in the following chapter) indicate that many seasonal residents move to Montreat permanently upon retirement. A growing population in a small town can cause strain on transportation networks and increase demand for parking, services, and commercial businesses. Development can also affect the environment, causing an increase in sedimentation and runoff.

Figure 2-3 : Population increase, 2010 to 2020



Source: OSBM State Demographer of North Carolina

Figure 2-4 : Population, 2010 to 2020



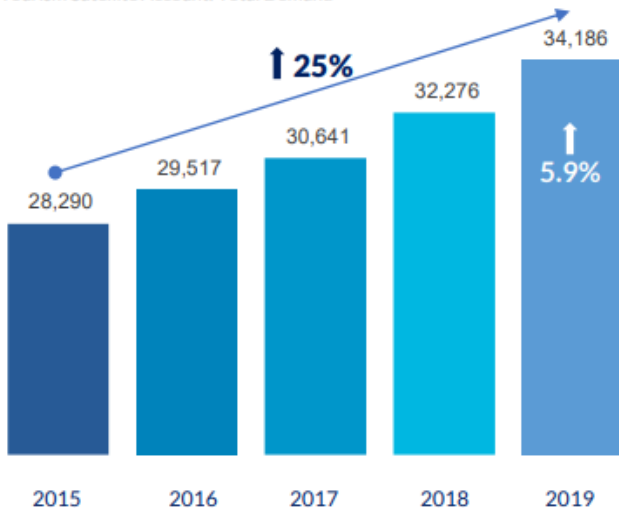
Source: OSBM State Demographer of North Carolina

TOURISM

The popularity of the region for tourism and recreation is increasing. Travel-related expenditures in the state increased 25 percent from 2015 to 2019 (Figure 2-5). In 2021 Buncombe County was the second fastest growing county in the state in visitor spending, composing 9.1 percent of the state’s overall visitor expenditures (Source: Tourism Economics, 2022). The survey results indicate that residents, both full and part-time, have strong feelings about tourism and its effects on Montreat.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Montreat attracts residents and visitors from around the region. There are a number of trails in Montreat’s jurisdiction available for day or overnight hikers. Visitors may also come to use the conference center or see Montreat College. As the popularity of Asheville increases, more people will likely look for other options in the region bringing more tourists, more hikers, and more short-term and weekend visitors to Montreat. An increase in visitors to Montreat, coupled with the growing population, will likely have an effect on parking at the trailheads and traffic in town.

Figure 2-5 : Travel Expenditures
North Carolina travel-related expenditures
Tourism Satellite Account: Total Demand



Source: U.S. Travel Association; Tourism Economics

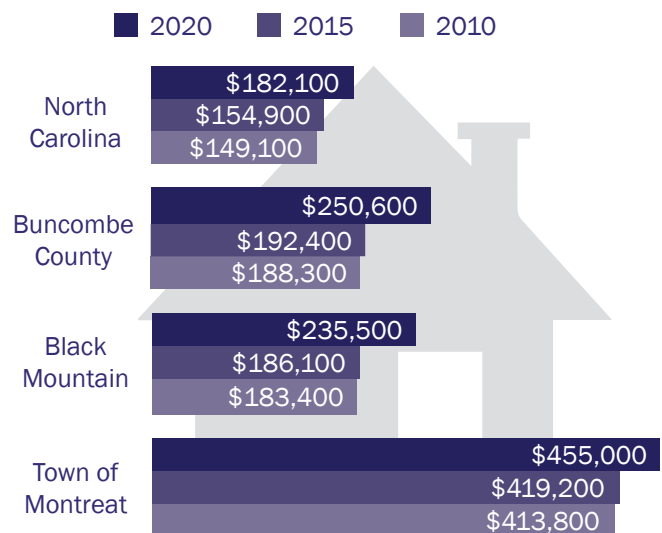
HOUSING

The median home value in Montreat is more than twice the median home value for North Carolina and nearly twice the median for Buncombe County and Black Mountain (Figure 2-6). Home values are rising slower in Montreat than the county and state. Despite a slower increase, median home values in Montreat remain higher than state and county medians.

As a retreat town, there are part-time residents of Montreat that own property in the Town that is not their primary residence. Many families have had vacation properties for generations and may spend many months in Montreat at a time. Figure 2-7 displays the residency of each property based on the owner’s registered tax address according to Buncombe County.

Reliable data on rental properties is difficult to find and continually fluctuates. An online search for rentals in Montreat shows a number of vacation rentals available, which may change throughout the year. The MRA has 235 rooms across 13 standalone cottages or lodges, and 29 campsites that are available to reserve. In sum, housing values in Montreat remain high and rental availability fluctuates over time.

Figure 2-6 : Median Home Value

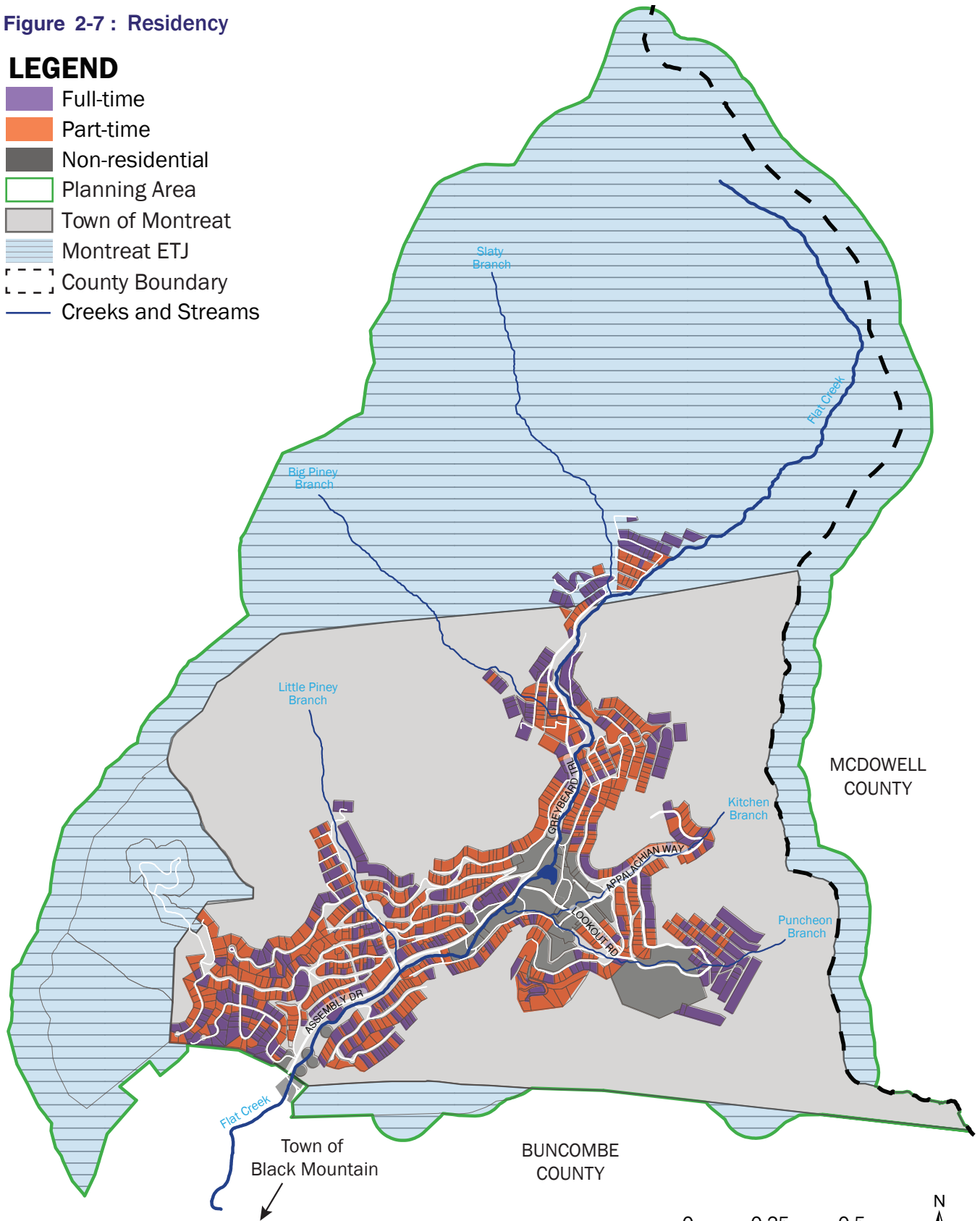


Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2020, 2015, 2010

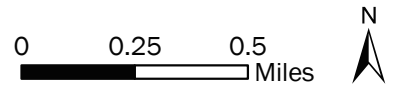
Figure 2-7 : Residency

LEGEND

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Non-residential
- Planning Area
- Town of Montreat
- Montreat ETJ
- County Boundary
- Creeks and Streams

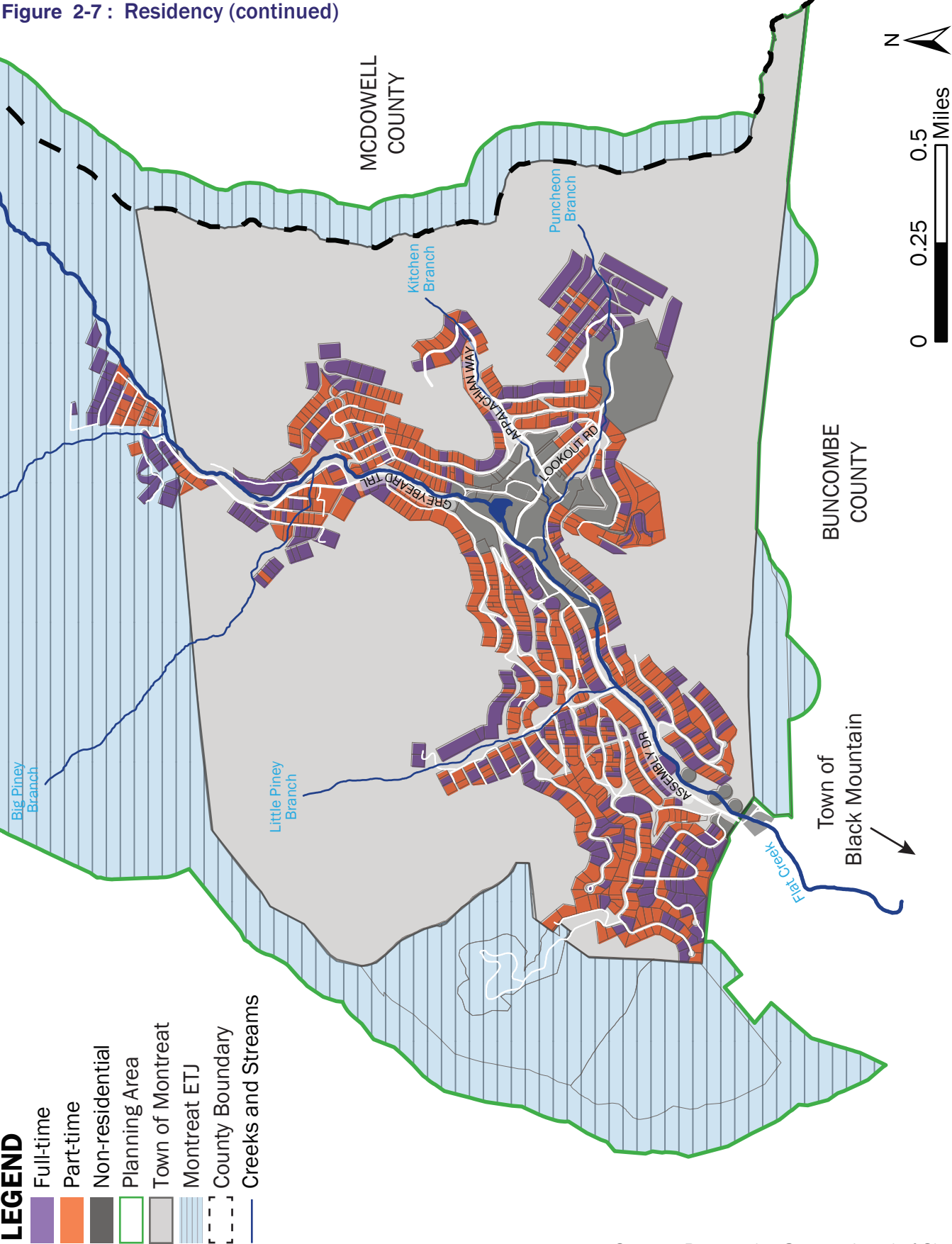


This map shows the assumed residency of the owner of each property based on the property owner's registered address according to the Buncombe County tax department.



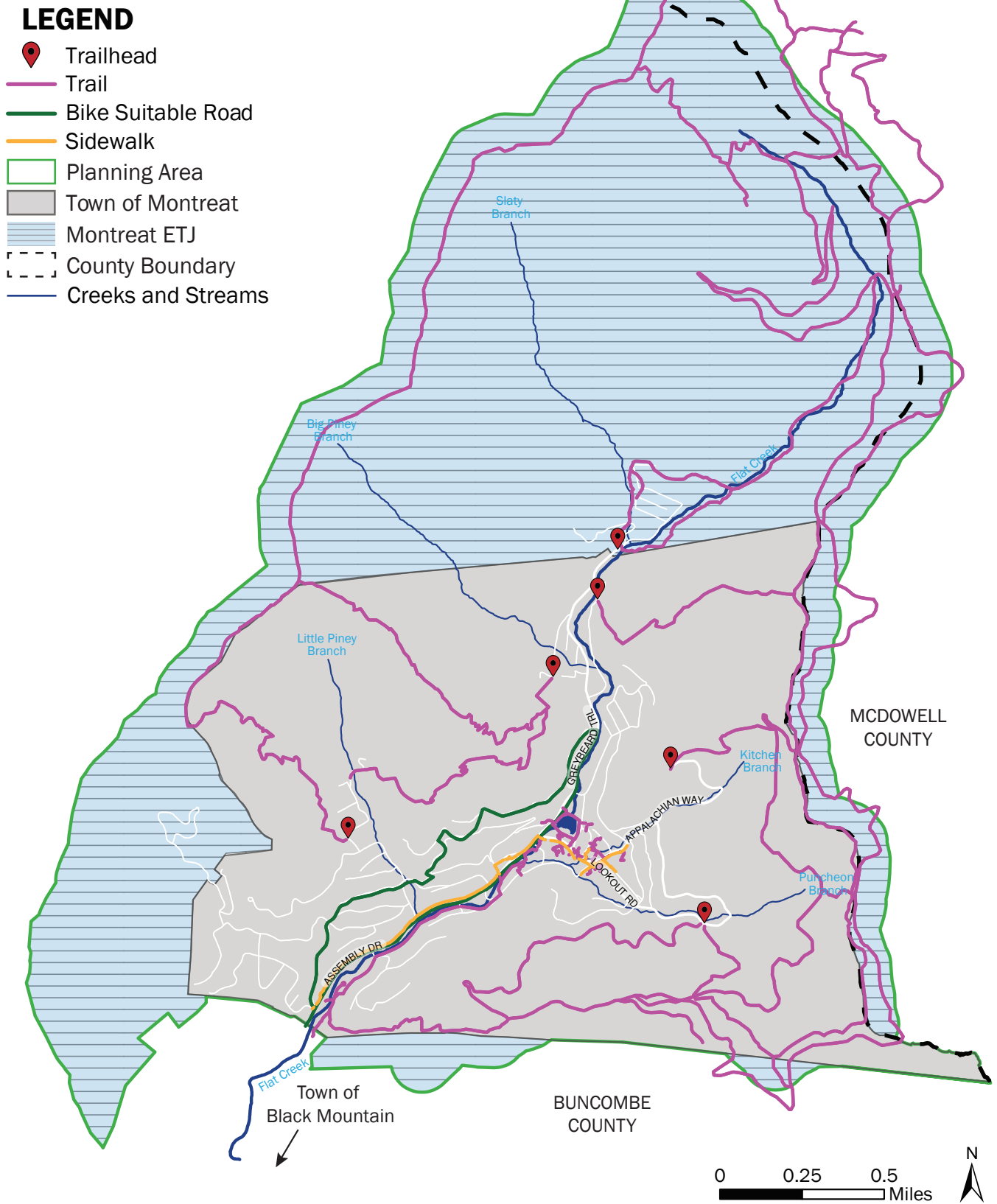
Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-7 : Residency (continued)



Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

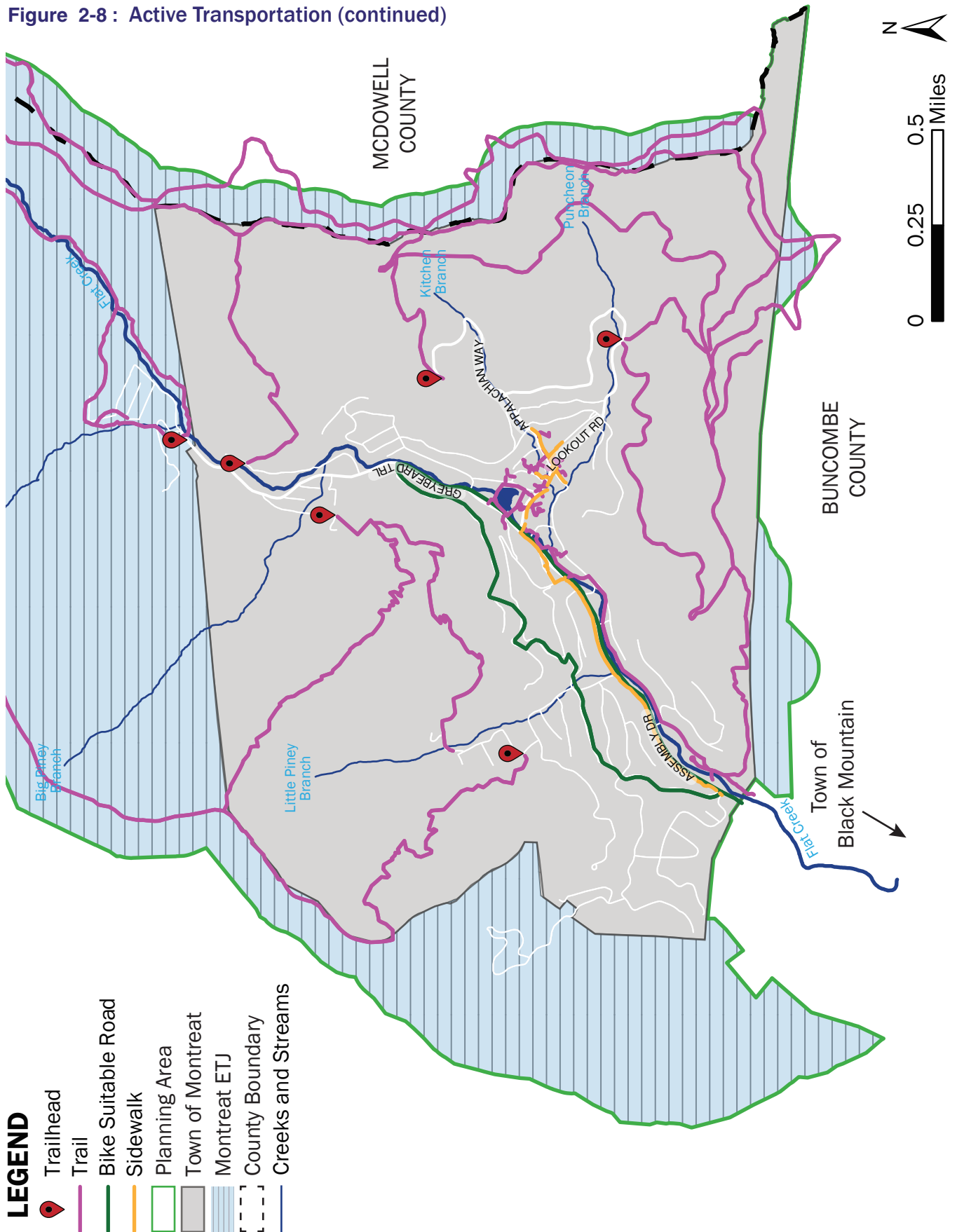
Figure 2-8 : Active Transportation



This map shows active transportation services in Montreat, including locations of trailheads, official trails, bike suitable roads, and sidewalks.

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-8 : Active Transportation (continued)



Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Land Use & Zoning

The town of Montreat has planning and zoning authority within the town boundaries and in the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) outside the Town boundary. Montreat's ETJ extends to 500 feet on the opposite side of the ridgelines surrounding Flat Creek Basin on all sides of the Town and to the peak of Greybeard Mountain to the north. The ETJ is mostly in Buncombe County, but because it extends 500 feet beyond the ridgeline, a small portion of the ETJ is in McDowell County to the east.

The land in the ETJ is mostly MRA property in a conservation easement with some small, town-owned parcels and private property. The largest piece of private property in the ETJ is the Billy Graham property to the west of Montreat.

LAND USE

Currently three quarters of the land within the Town boundaries is conserved and cannot be developed. Much of the remaining land has already been developed largely for residential use. Low-density, single family housing is the most common land use for developed land in Montreat (Figure 2-9). Institutional uses, like Montreat College, are on the east side of town near Lake Susan. By the current definition in the Montreat Zoning Ordinance (MZO), there are no commercial uses in Montreat.

Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

Extraterritorial jurisdiction is intended to allow municipalities to address issues that affect public health and safety that may extend beyond the city or town limits. ETJ has changed over time, but in North Carolina, like many other states, ETJ extends one to three miles beyond the Town limits depending on population commonly referred to as "perimeter zoning." The boundary of an ETJ is determined by a boundary ordinance adopted by the governing board of the municipality.

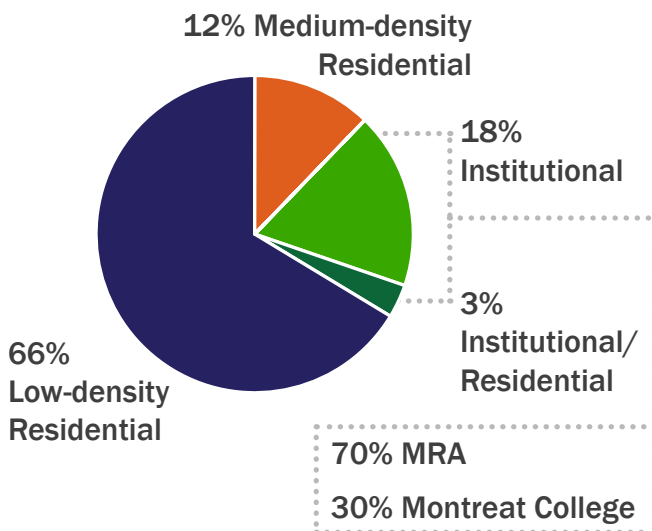
When a boundary ordinance is adopted, the municipality acquires jurisdiction over the ETJ area from the county for ordinances including: zoning and subdivision; housing and building codes; historic district regulations and historic landmarks; community development; erosion and sediment control; floodways, mountain ridges, and roadway corridors. A boundary

ordinance does not give taxation authority in the ETJ area. The city or town may choose to apply some or all of its regulations in the ETJ area. If the municipality chooses not to apply all its development regulations in the ETJ, the county may step in to enforce development regulations not applied, but is not required to do so.

In order to exercise its authority in an ETJ, all boards that exercise their function in the ETJ must include a member (or members depending on the population of the ETJ area) that represent the extraterritorial area. The county board of commissioners of each affected county is responsible for appointing those board members.

Source: Owens, D. (April, 2020). *Extraterritorial Jurisdiction for Planning and Development Regulation*. UNC School of Government.

Figure 2-9 : Developed Land Uses



Recreational Uses

Conserved land may be used for low impact recreational purposes. High value recreational uses provide high quality experiences for residents and visitors with minimal land disruption. Figure 2-8 on the previous page shows the existing trails in Montreat and the ETJ. The map also shows the sidewalks and bike suitable roads in Montreat. There is one sidewalk along Assembly Drive that goes from the Montreat Gate to the Town Center and Lookout Road. The bike suitable roads identified by the Land of Sky Regional Council are Virginia Road from the Gate and West Virginia Terrace to Greybeard Trail. Bike suitability is based on traffic volume and road conditions.

ZONING

Single family and two family dwellings are permitted in all residential zones. Multi-family housing, defined as having three or more separate dwelling units, is allowed in the Institutional/Residential (IR) zone. However, the MZO requires larger setbacks for developments with more than two units. Historically few if any multi-family developments exist in Montreat. Single-family dwellings are also permitted in the Town Center Overlay (TCO) district which is zoned both institutional (I) and IR. The zoning code permits commercial uses, as defined in the MZO, in the I zone and in the IR zone with a Special Use Permit.

The Woodland District (WL) includes 75 percent of the land within the Town of Montreat and a large portion of the ETJ area. The WL was formed in 2004 when the MRA granted 2,500 acres to the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy in a permanent conservation easement. Today, the conservation easement includes over 2,500 acres of undeveloped wilderness.

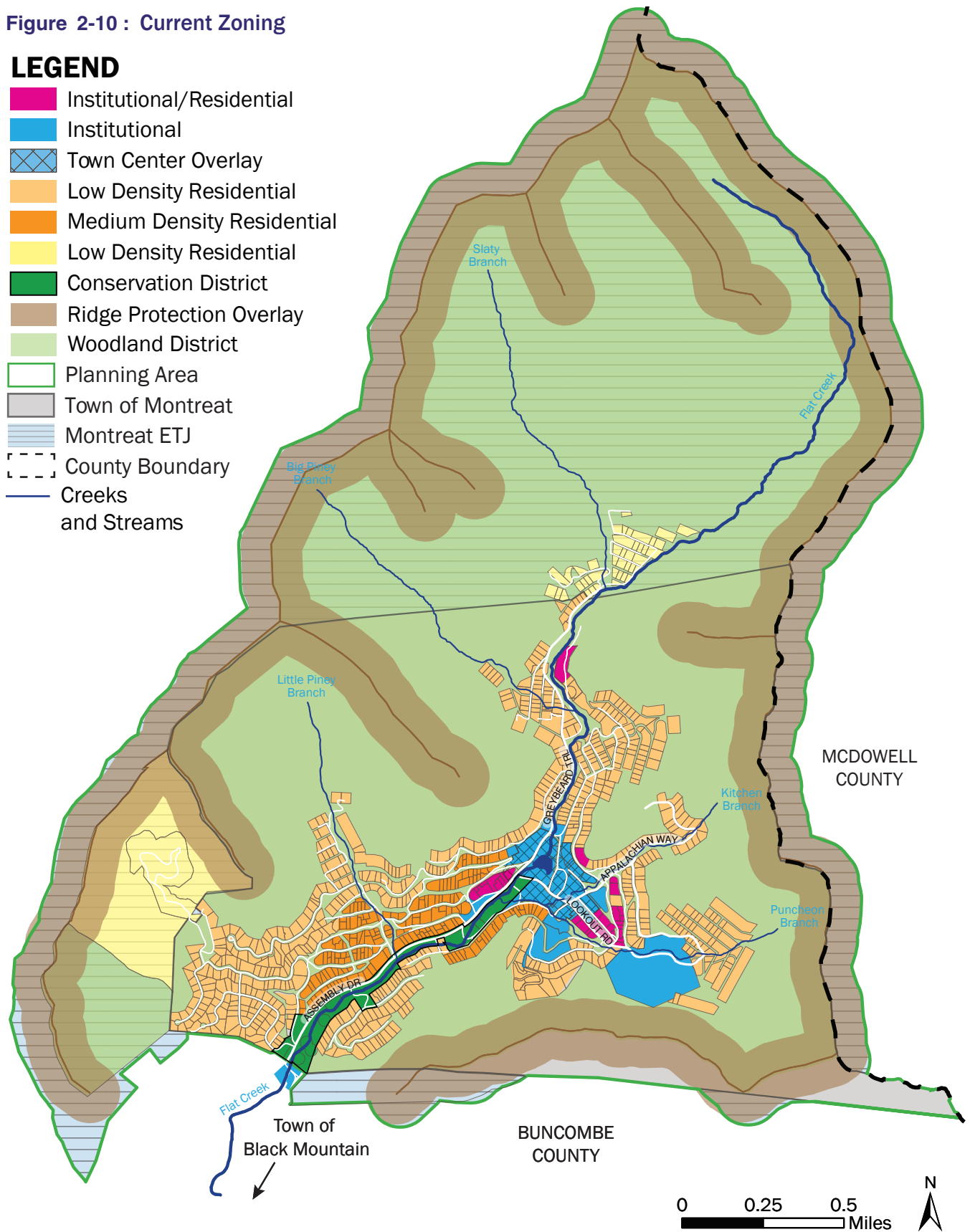
The Ridge Protection Overlay (RPO) is intended to protect the sensitive habitat of the ridgelines and preserve the views in Montreat. The regulations in the RPO are based on the North Carolina Mountain Ridge Protection Act of 1983. The RPO expands the area on either side of the ridgeline from 100 feet, required by the Mountain Ridge Protection Act, to 500 feet to further ensure that views are protected.

Figures 2-10 and 2-11 on the following pages show the current zoning and land use maps.

Figure 2-10 : Current Zoning

LEGEND

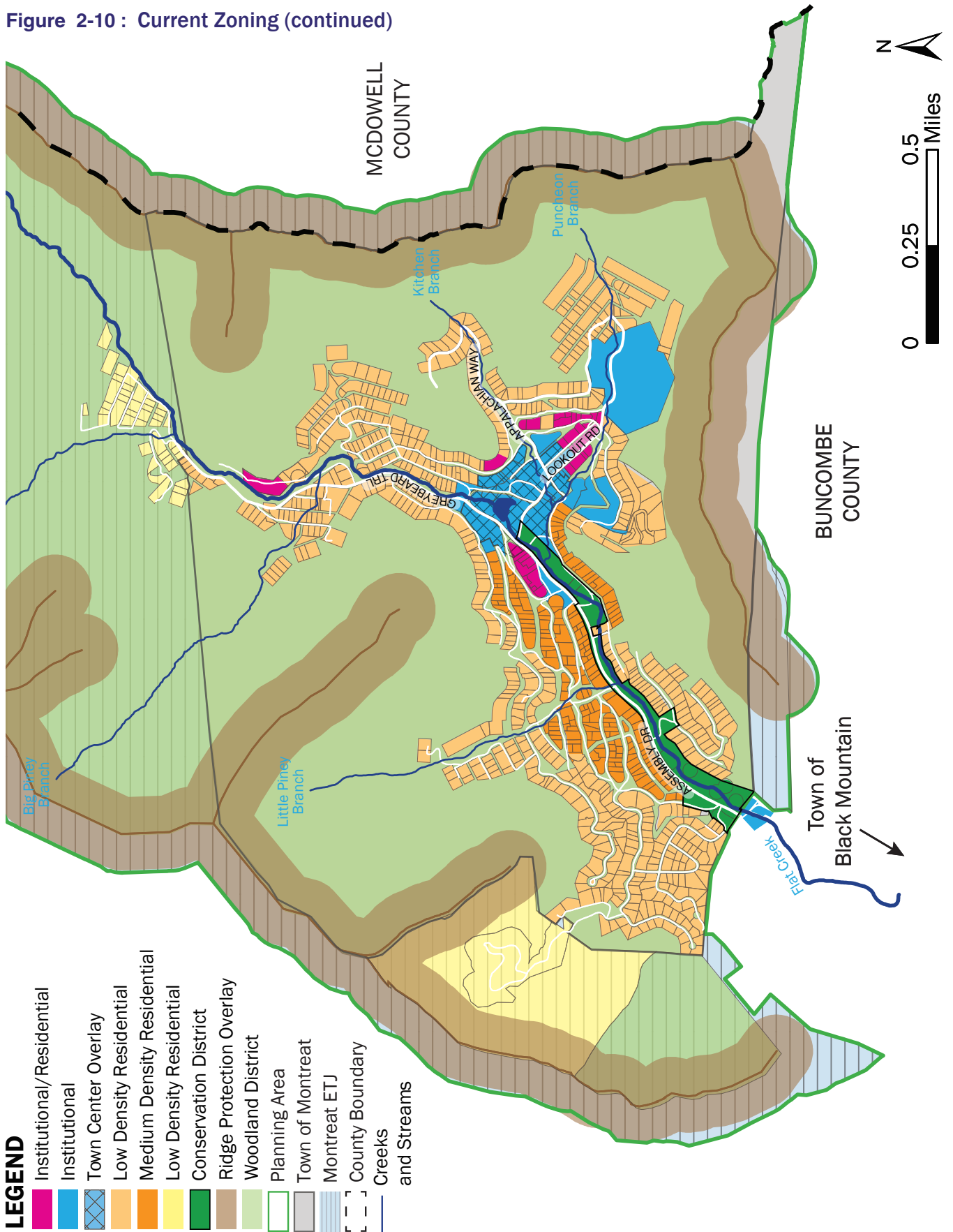
- Institutional/Residential
- Institutional
- Town Center Overlay
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Conservation District
- Ridge Protection Overlay
- Woodland District
- Planning Area
- Town of Montreat
- Montreat ETJ
- County Boundary
- Creeks and Streams



This map shows the current zoning for the Town according to the Montreat Zoning Ordinance.

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-10 : Current Zoning (continued)

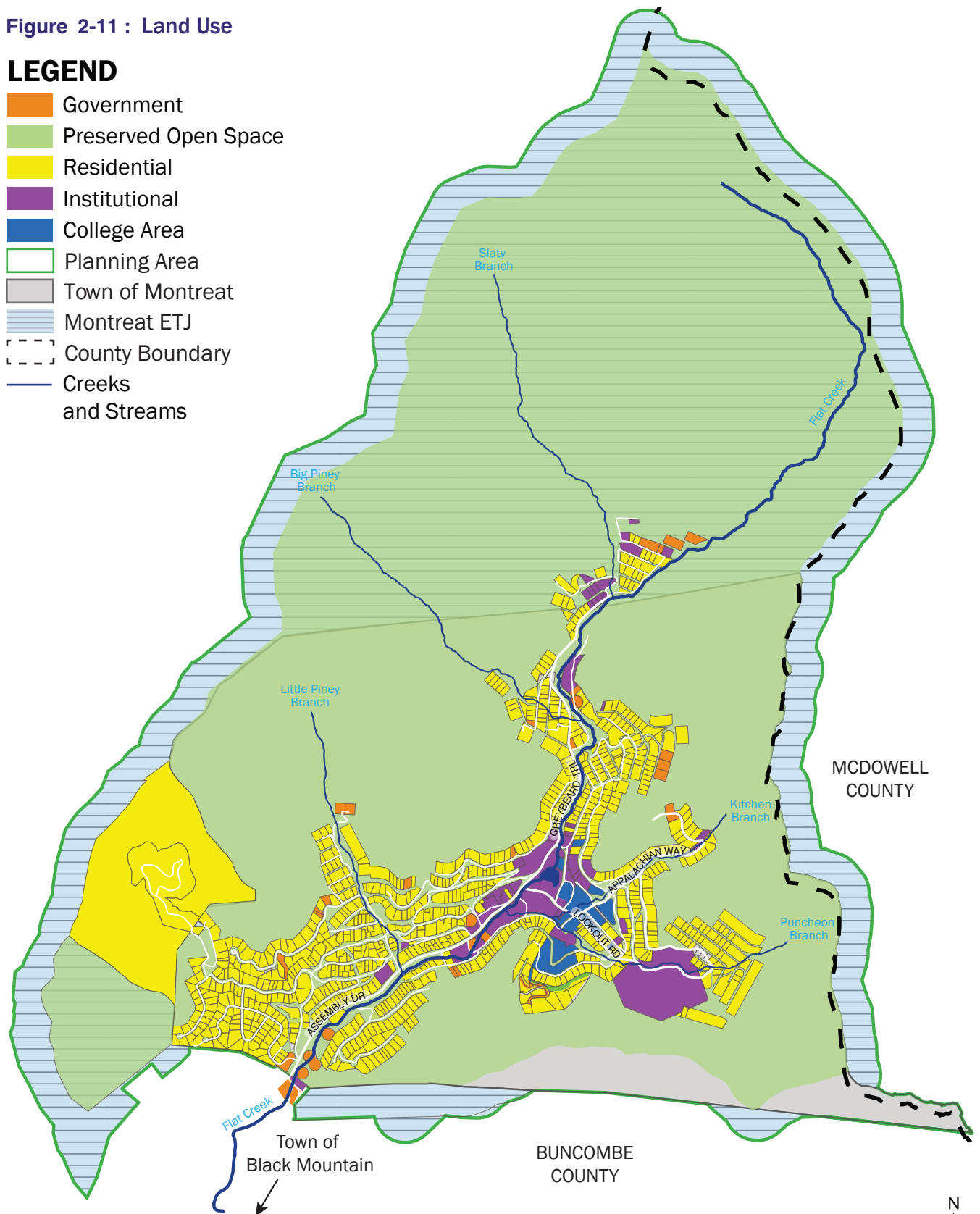


Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-11 : Land Use

LEGEND

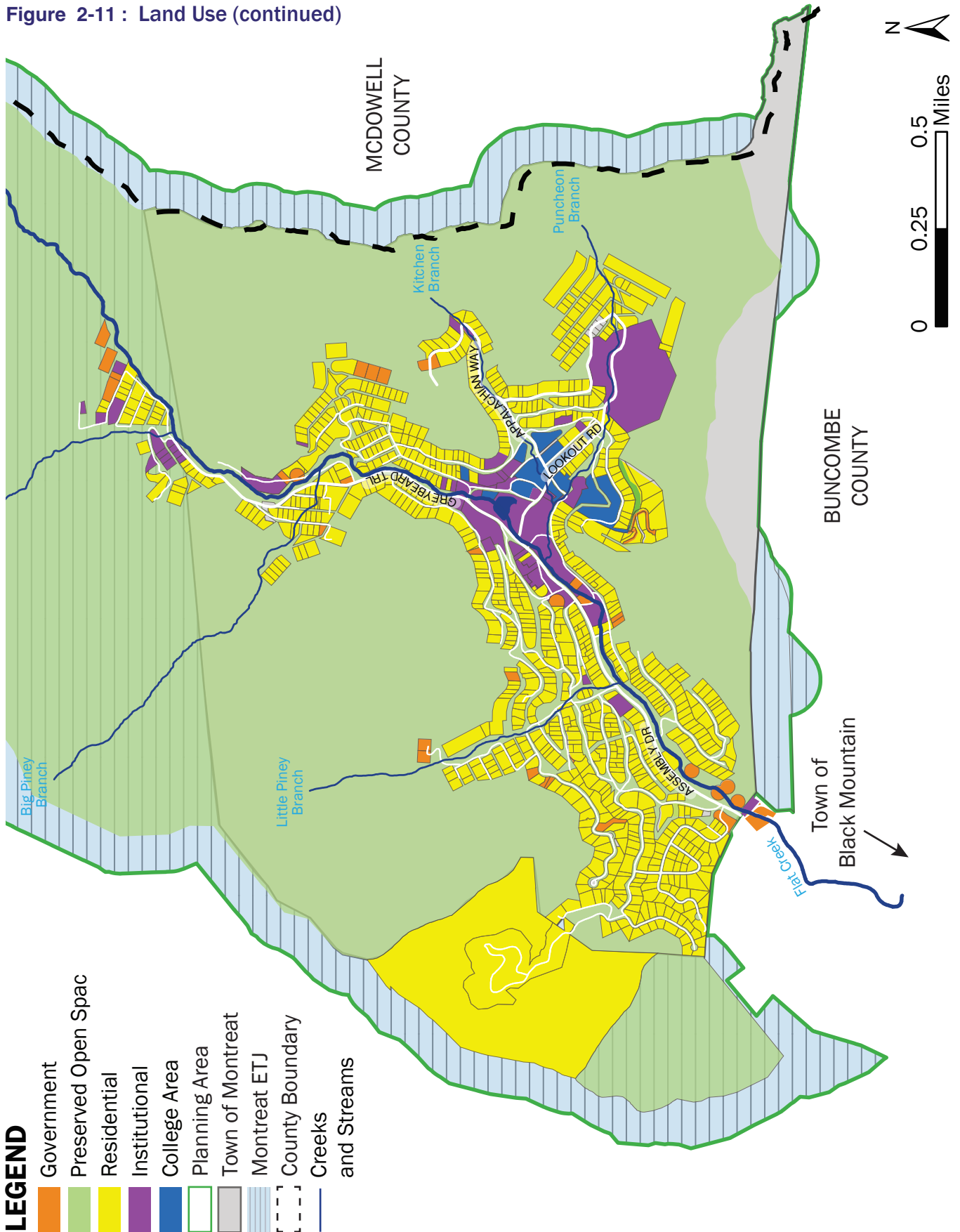
- Government
- Preserved Open Space
- Residential
- Institutional
- College Area
- Planning Area
- Town of Montreat
- Montreat ETJ
- County Boundary
- Creeks and Streams



This map shows the current land use for Montreat according to the registered property owner. Land owned by the MRA or other religious organizations is considered institutional, unless it is designated as preserved land.

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-11 : Land Use (continued)



- LEGEND**
- Government
 - Preserved Open Space
 - Residential
 - Institutional
 - College Area
 - Planning Area
 - Town of Montreat
 - Montreat ETJ
 - County Boundary
 - Creeks and Streams

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

FUTURE LAND USE

Montreat's history has created a unique situation where the MRA owns the majority of land in the town, but most of that property is in a conservation easement that currently prevents it from being developed. The land in the conservation easement can be used for recreation and there are a number of trails in the conservation easement that are accessible to the public. Although privately owned, this piece of MRA property is managed for public use. The two other major land owners in Montreat are the Town itself and Montreat College. Figure 2-12 contains a map of the major land owners in Montreat. Residential properties owned by individuals were considered privately owned properties.

Within the town boundaries, the majority of developable land has already been developed. Changes in future land use would likely require redevelopment of existing parcels. Most of the land in the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) is included in either the Woodland District (WL) or the Ridge Protection Overlay (RPO) and is also protected from further development. However there are some properties under private ownership in the ETJ that could be developed. Development of these properties brings up concerns about the impact on the environment and municipal services such as roads and stormwater management, as residents of the EJT are part of Buncombe County's tax base and not Montreat's tax base.

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements are voluntary agreements between a landowner and a public agency or qualified conservation organization. The landowner, commonly called a donor or grantor, agrees to preserve the land "in its natural condition without extensive disturbance." The organization or public agency, acting as the grantee, has the right to monitor the property and enforce the terms of the agreement. Landowners of property in a conservation easement retain their ownership of the land and are responsible for routine management of the land.

Conservation easements are usually implemented when landowners want to preserve their land, intensive land management is not required, and preservation of the land is compatible with current and future land uses.

Conservation easements provide some tax benefits to the grantor and can be permanent or agreed upon for a set amount of time. Each conservation agreement is written to meet the values and interests of the landowner and grantee, so what is allowed or restricted varies depending on the agreement.

VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

An Introduction for North Carolina Land Owners



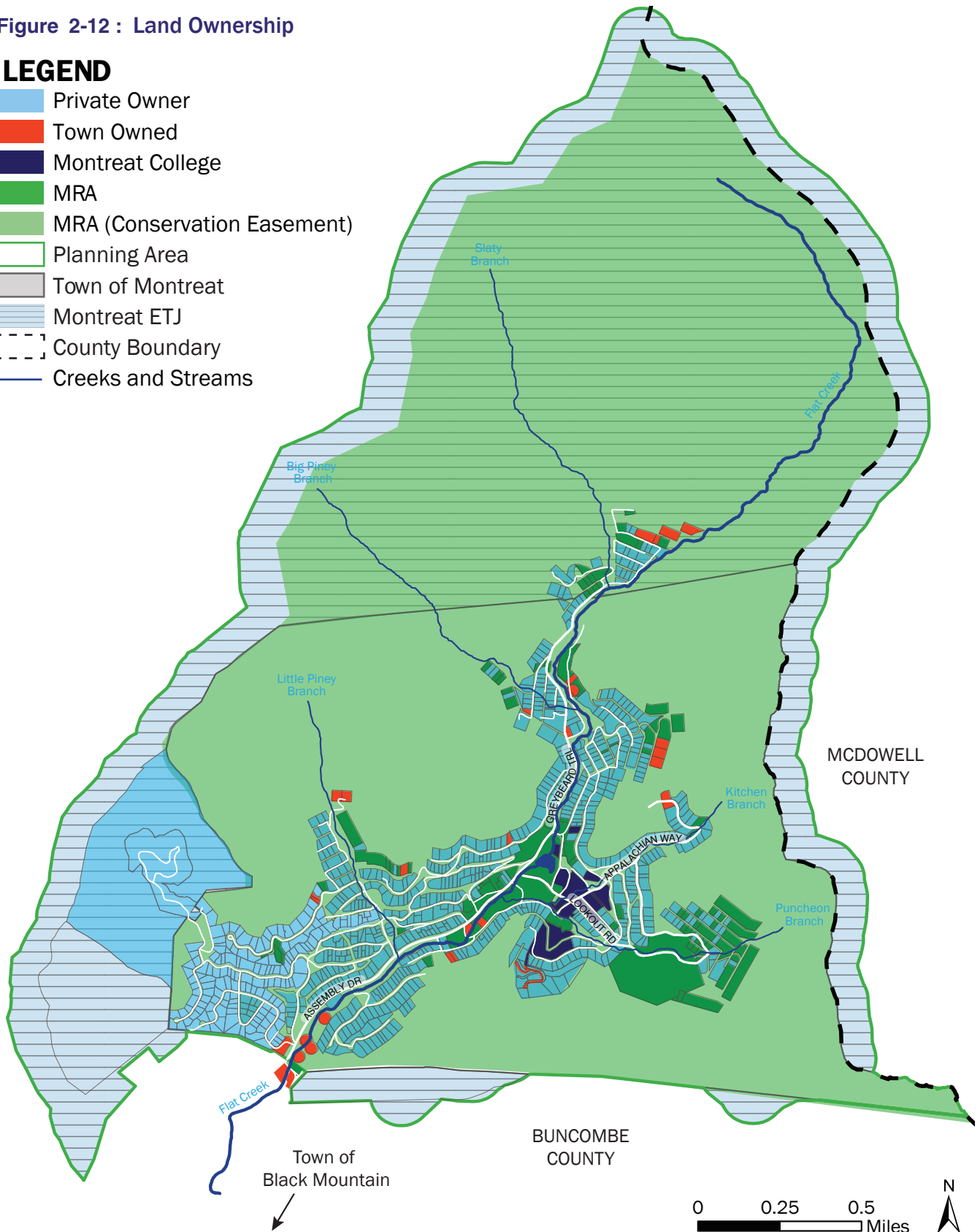
View the document [here](#).

Source: The North Carolina Land Trust. *Voluntary Conservation Agreements: An Introduction for North Carolina Land Owners*.

Figure 2-12 : Land Ownership

LEGEND

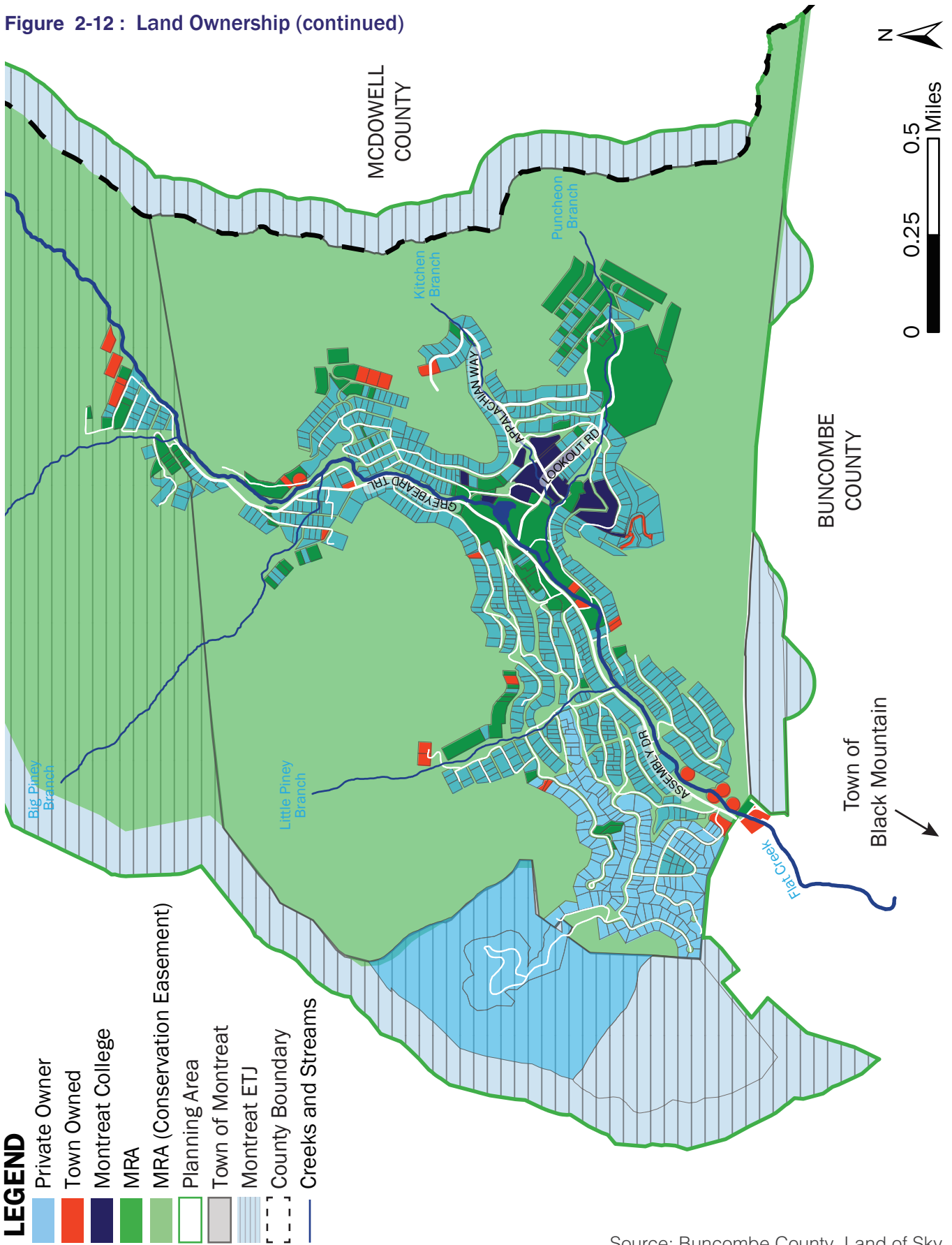
- Private Owner
- Town Owned
- Montreat College
- MRA
- MRA (Conservation Easement)
- Planning Area
- Town of Montreat
- Montreat ETJ
- County Boundary
- Creeks and Streams



This map shows the current land ownership in Montreat based on Buncombe County property records and may not reflect all easements, legal agreements, and development restrictions on these properties. Land owned by individual persons is considered private.

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-12 : Land Ownership (continued)



LEGEND

- Private Owner
- Town Owned
- Montreat College
- MRA
- MRA (Conservation Easement)
- Planning Area
- Town of Montreat
- Montreat ETJ
- County Boundary
- Creeks and Streams

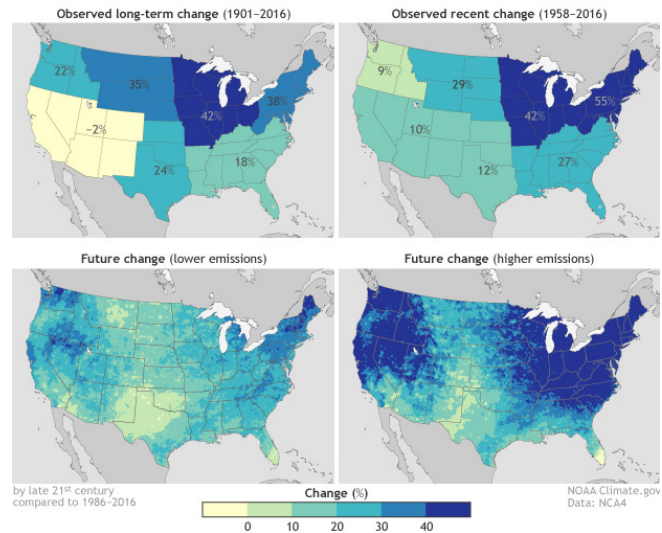
Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Environment

Montreat is nestled in the Flat Creek basin surrounded by the sweeping ridgelines of the Black Mountains. The natural beauty of the area has been admired and appreciated by Montreat residents and visitors since the valley’s conception. In the public survey, the pristine natural surroundings are frequently cited as one of Montreat’s greatest assets. The conservation easement and the RPO are evidence of the efforts to protect and preserve this undeveloped wilderness for future generations.

If extreme weather patterns continue to worsen, climate change will be a potential threat to the health of the forest. The southeastern U.S. has seen a 27% increase in heavy rains in the last half-century and will likely see more in years to come (Figure 2-13). As weather patterns change, native species may be out-competed by invasive species, further disrupting the local ecosystem. Concern about wildfires in North Carolina has increased since the devastating fires in 2016. The threat and intensity of wildfires could continue to increase due to dry conditions and historic forest management practices that have increased the prevalence of fire-sensitive species in the region (Figure 2-14).

Figure 2-13 : Change in Extreme Precipitation in the United States



Source: *Prepare for more downpours: Heavy rain has increased across most of the United States, and is likely to increase further.* National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate.gov.

Figure 2-14 : North Carolina Wildfires



Felix Stith is a Toe-Cane Watershed Coordinator for Blue Ridge Resource Conservation & Development (Photo: Appalachian Exposures)

“Here in western NC . . . [F]requency of fires drastically changed following European colonization and widespread settlement, resulting in less widespread wildland fire. Early state and United States Forests Service (USFS) fire suppression policies further reduced fire. The large reduction in fire, paired with extensive logging in the late 19th and early 20th century, drastically changed the forest structure and composition. [. . .]

Historically fire sensitive species would have lived along streams, and in shady coves with very moist soil, now these species often dominate on drier, well drained ridges, and even on steep south facing slopes. [. . .]

Many years of wildland fire suppression has increased forest density, and allowed for woody debris (fuels) to build up. These factors, paired with increasing drought and temperatures means when uncontrolled wildland fires now occur, they are often much more severe than they historically would have been.”

Source: Stith, F. All Wildland Fire Is Not Created Equal. *Toe Talk*. <http://www.blueridgercd.com/>

STORMWATER & EROSION

The mountainous terrain surrounding Montreat is the source of its beauty, but also requires proper management to limit the impact of human disturbances. Stormwater runoff can cause erosion and debris to flow into streams affecting stream water quality, and major storms can cause landslides and flooding. Most of the developed land in Montreat is on

relatively stable soil, but it is also in landslide deposit areas. Debris flows from a landslide can move swiftly, causing damage in the path of the flow and in the deposit areas. Figure 2-16 shows the land stability index and 2-17 shows where debris likely to settle if a landslide were to occur. Slope movement lines indicate the direction of flow and geodetic

Wildfires & Landslides

Studies from the west coast indicate that wildfire can change the hydrology of watersheds “destabilizing slopes and baking soils such that they actually repel water,” (USGS, 2021) which can result in post-fire debris flows or flash flooding when a storm passes over previously burned areas.

In Western North Carolina, landslide and debris flows after the wildfires in 2016 cost millions of dollars of damage. In 2019, UNC began a project to study the relationship between wildfires and landslides and debris flows in North Carolina.

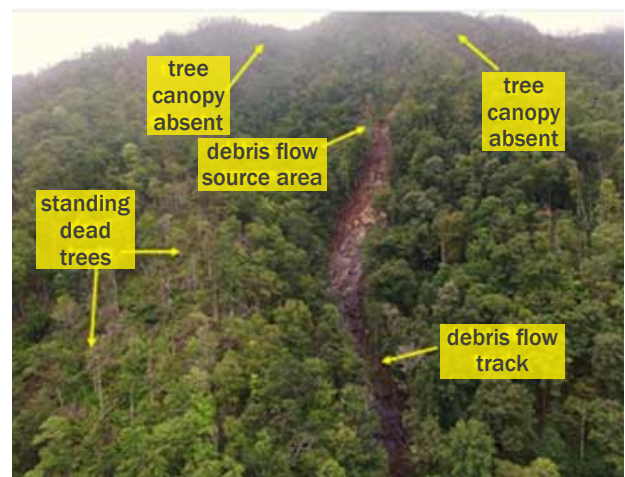
There are enough differences in the forest composition, fire severity, and recovery time between the east and west coasts that the same relationship cannot be assumed, but understanding the relationship can provide insight into landslide hazards and how to better prepare in the future.

“Understanding economic consequences of debris flows will be a driving factor in the continuation of studying wildfires and landslides in North Carolina [. . .] [A]n increase in extreme weather patterns, droughts, and wildfires or above normal rainfall, is setting up for more debris flows and community impact in the coming years,” (Patterson, 2020).

Sources: Patterson, C. (2020, May 26). *Researchers study the connection between wildfires and landslides in western North Carolina*. Collaboratory. <https://collaboratory.unc.edu/>
U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). (2021, Jan. 1). Post-wildfire hazards in Colorado can be as dangerous as the fires themselves. <https://www.usgs.gov/news/>



2016 Party Rock Fire
Photo: North Carolina Forest Service



Drone image showing an example of debris flow source area and track relative to a burned area.
Photo: Swain County Emergency Management

control points are geographic reference markers used in measuring landslide effects.

There are few places in Montreat for new construction as the steepness of the slopes and instability of the soil make the hillsides and ridges difficult for development. Development of currently undeveloped parcels or redevelopment of existing parcels can affect stormwater and erosion if impervious surface area is increased or trees are cleared.

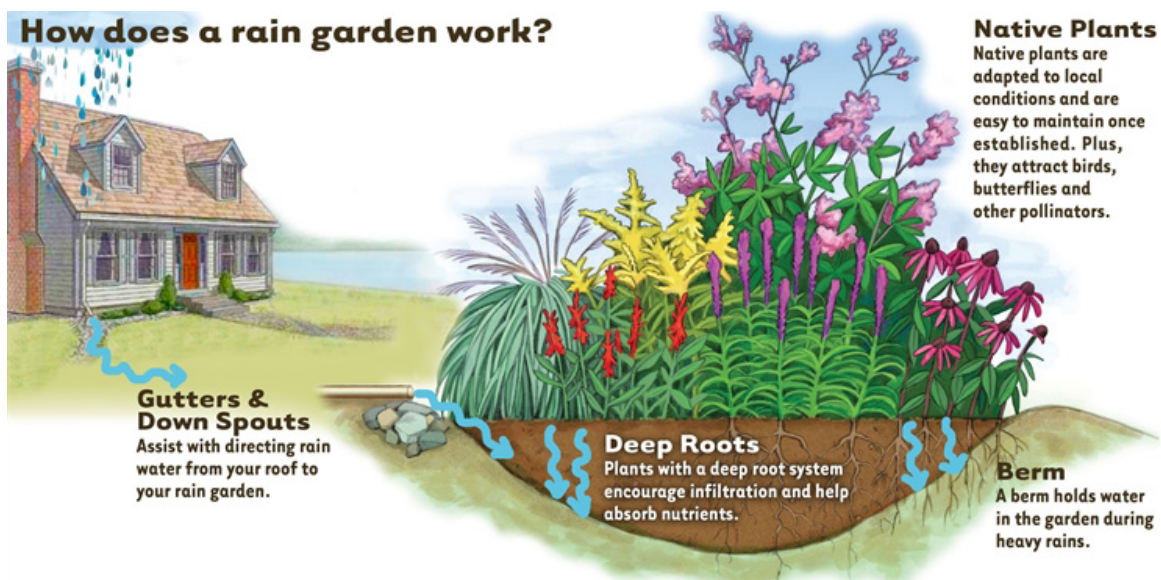
Montreat currently uses the Buncombe County Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance, but the standards only apply to larger developments, exempting most projects in Montreat. The limited development of the area has helped maintain the high water quality of the rivers and streams flowing through Montreat. Erosion and sediment control is important for maintaining the health of these water bodies and the larger watershed in the future.

The town has a stormwater control ordinance in place that requires stormwater permits

and best management practices for most development. The Stormwater Infrastructure map in Figure 2-18 shows the stormwater management network for Montreat. Separate stormwater sewer systems collect or convey stormwater in open channel conveyances (ditches) or closed conveyances (pipes or culverts) separate from the sanitary sewer system. Stormwater enters the stormwater system at an inlet and exits the system into nearby waterways at an outfall.

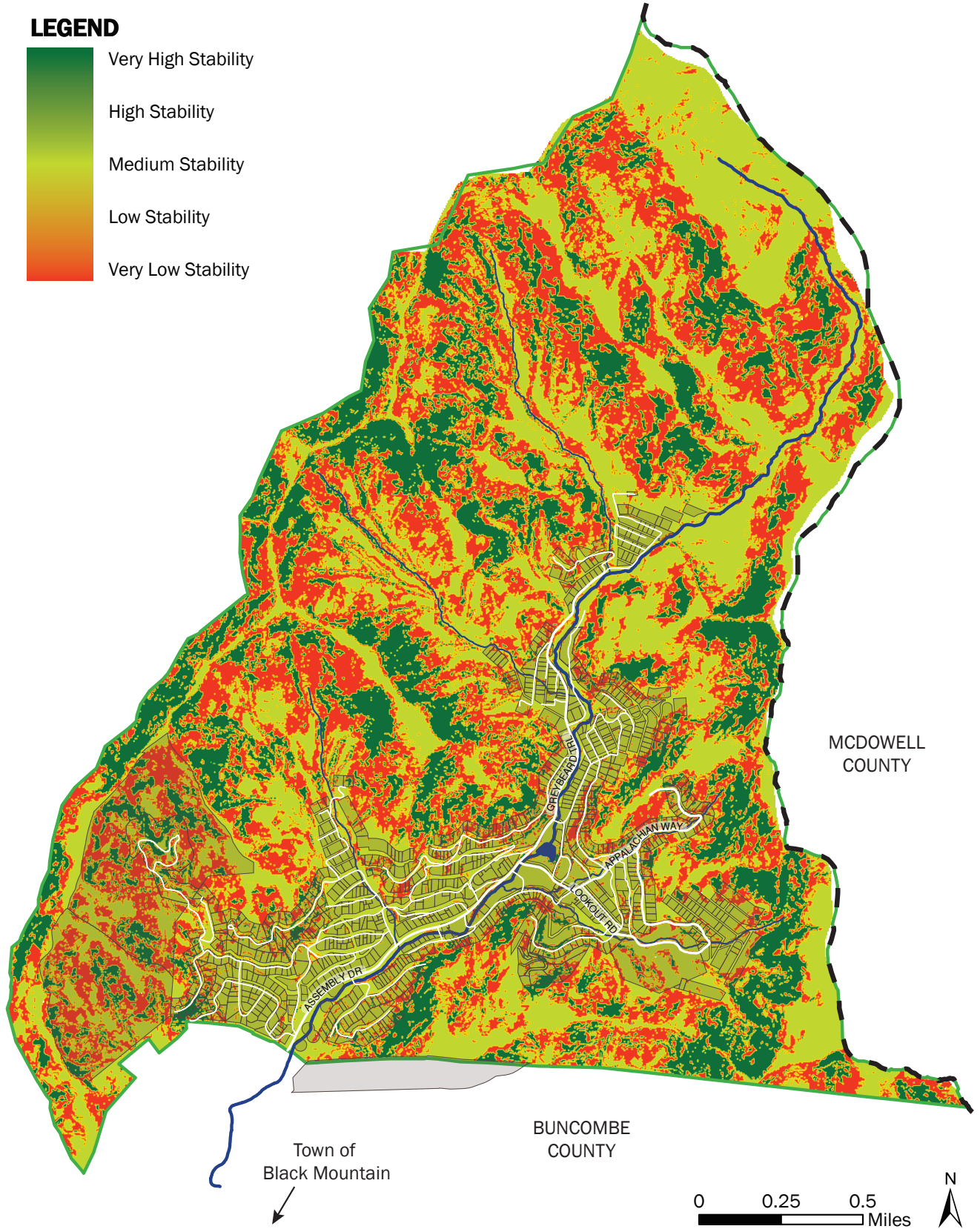
Stormwater control measures are designed to improve stormwater conditions by containing and slowing stormwater, allowing some of the water to filter into the soil before flowing into the creeks and streams. The current stormwater control ordinance emphasizes diffuse or directed flow designs, backyard wetlands and rain gardens (Figure 2-15), stormwater collection and refuse systems, vegetated swales, and removing impervious surfaces. Lake Susan, located on MRA-owned property, serves as a detention basin for floodwaters. See Figure 2-19 for a map of flood hazard areas in Montreat.

Figure 2-15 : Rain Gardens



Source: Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District. Rain Gardens. <https://www.warrenswcd.com/rain-gardens.html>

Figure 2-16 : Land Stability Index



This map shows the relative land stability based on surveys done by Buncombe County.

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-16 : Land Stability Index (continued)

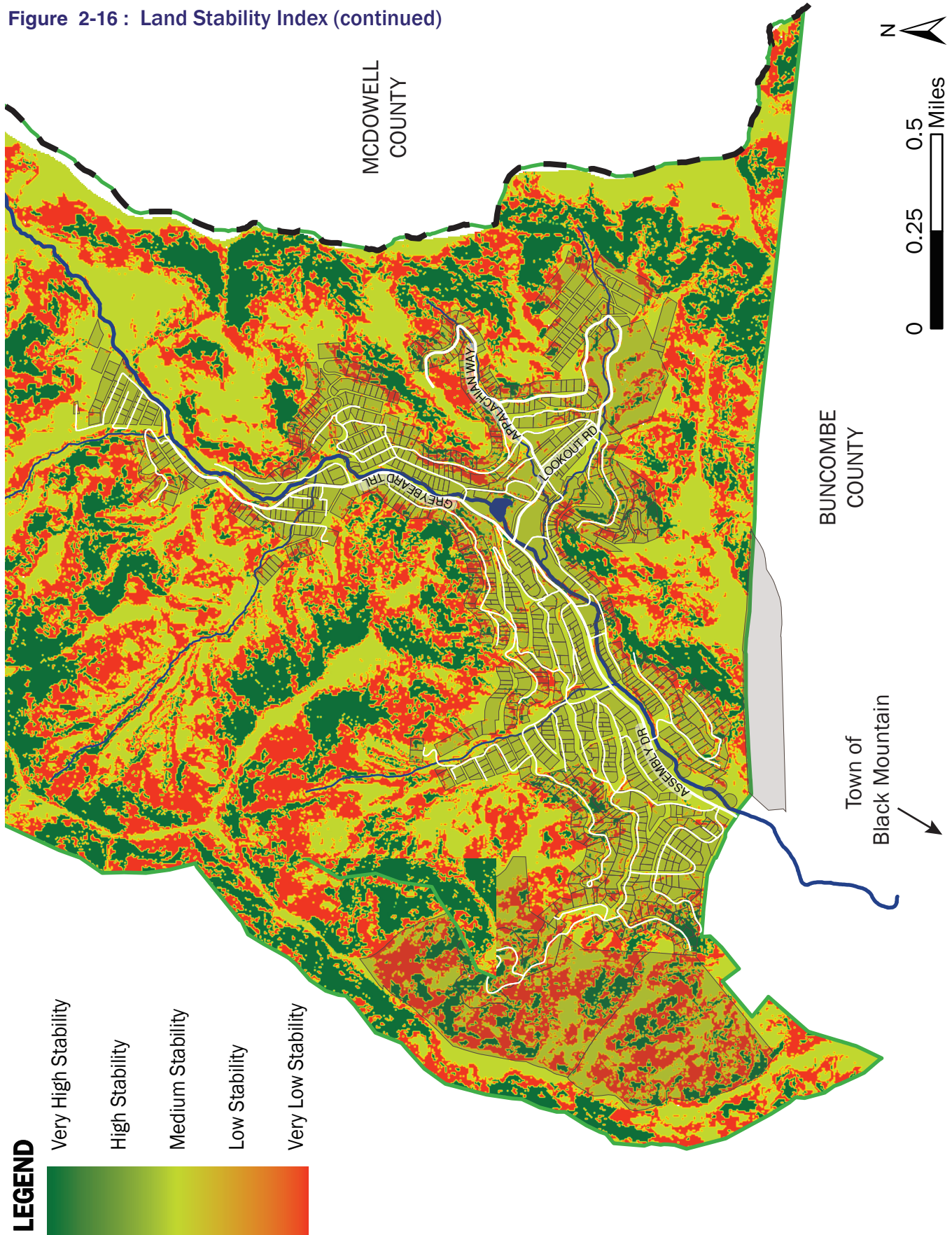
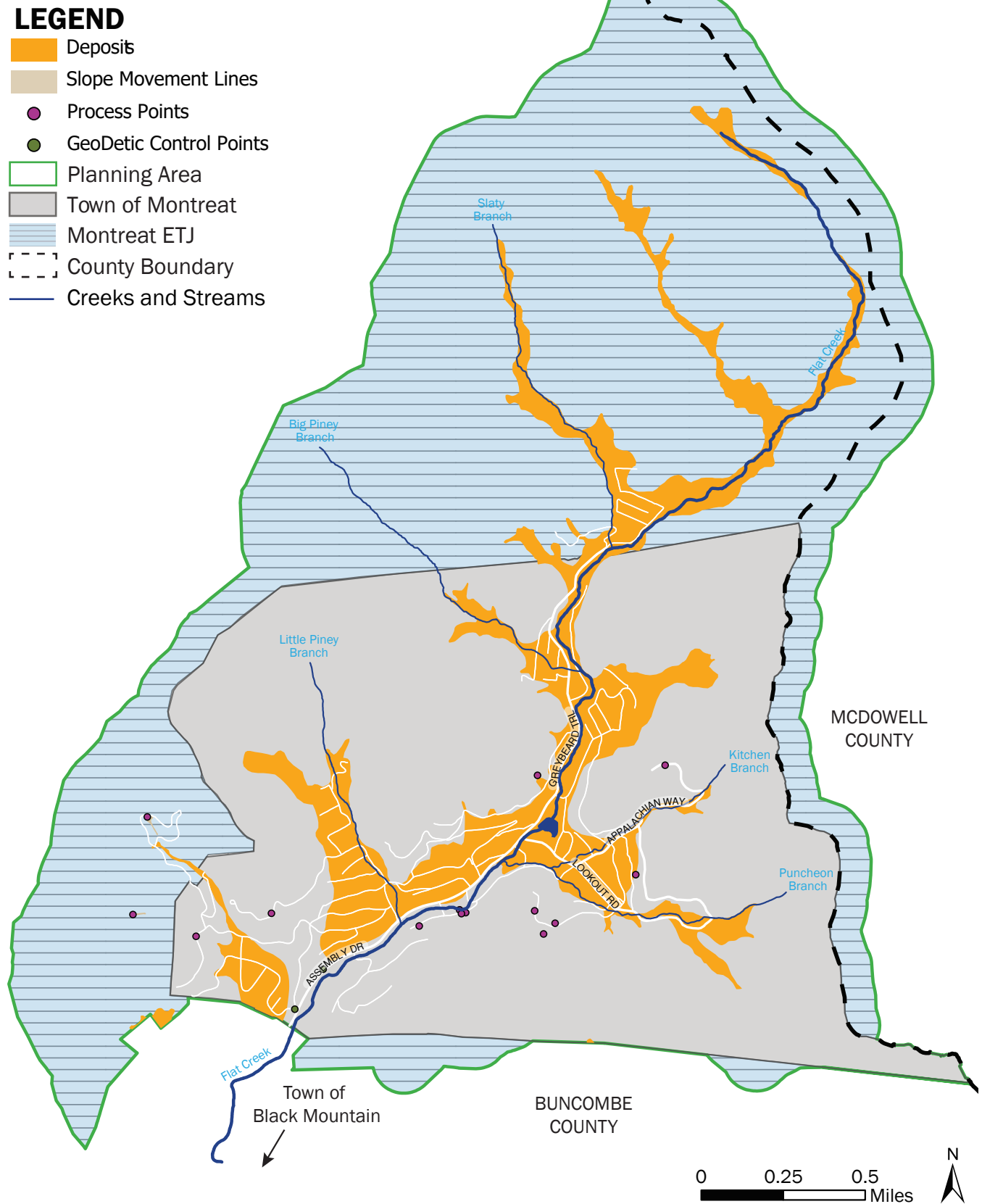


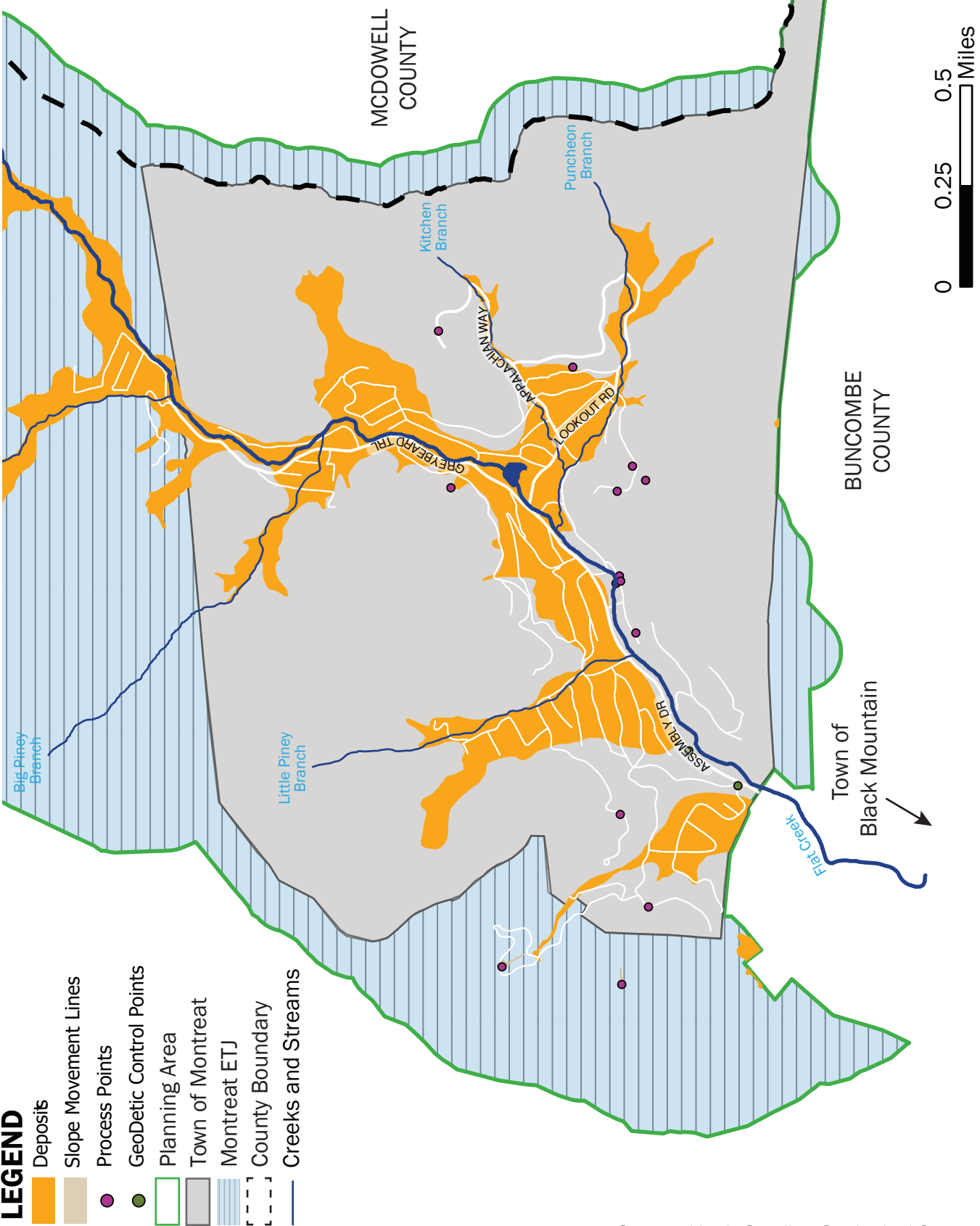
Figure 2-17 : Landslide Hazard Areas



This map shows the landslide hazard areas based on the estimated deposit areas of landslide debris.

Source: North Carolina Geological Survey

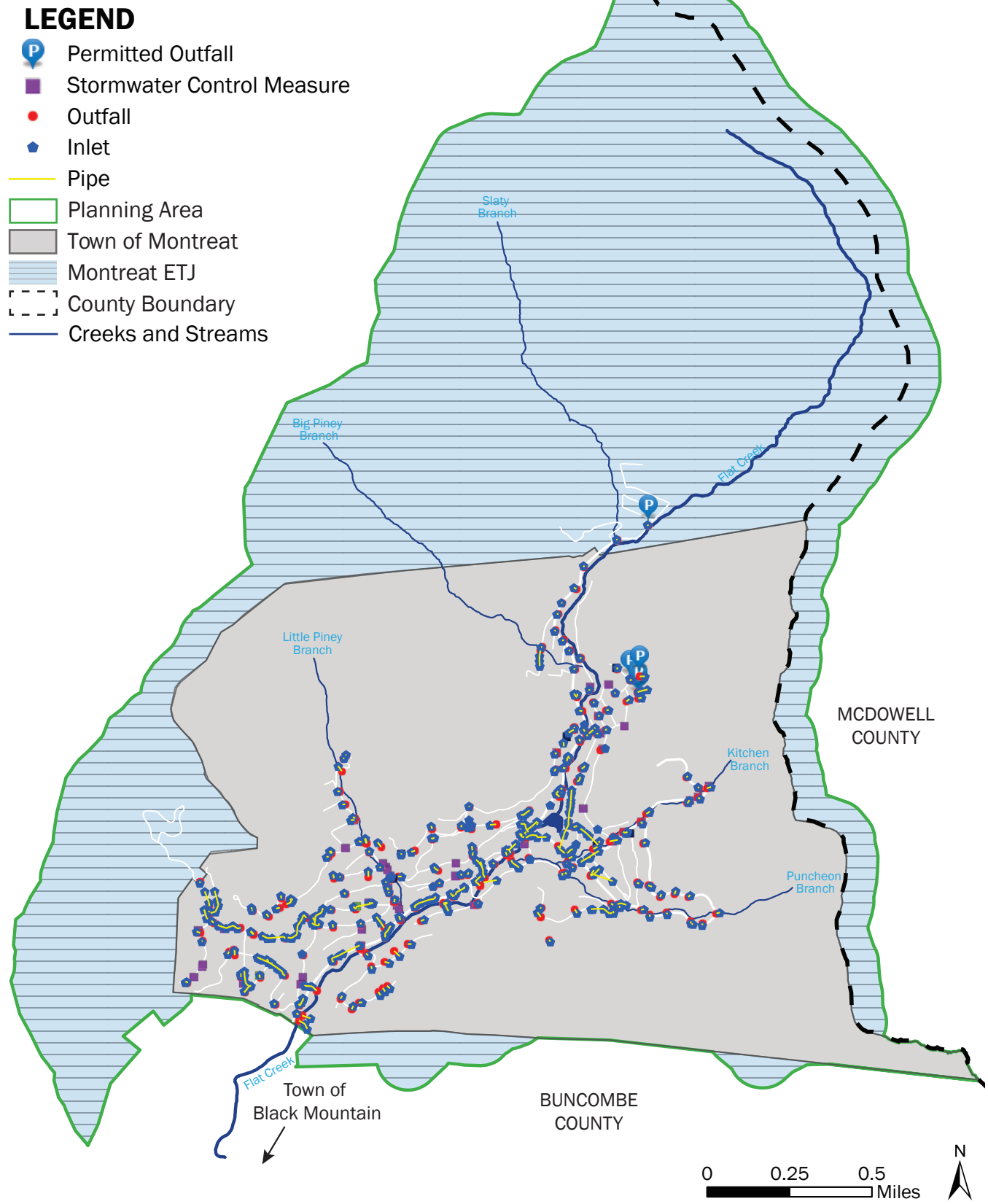
Figure 2-17 : Landslide Hazard Areas (continued)



- LEGEND**
- Deposits
 - Slope Movement Lines
 - Process Points
 - Geodetic Control Points
 - Planning Area
 - Town of Montreat
 - Montreat ETJ
 - County Boundary
 - Creeks and Streams

Source: North Carolina Geological Survey

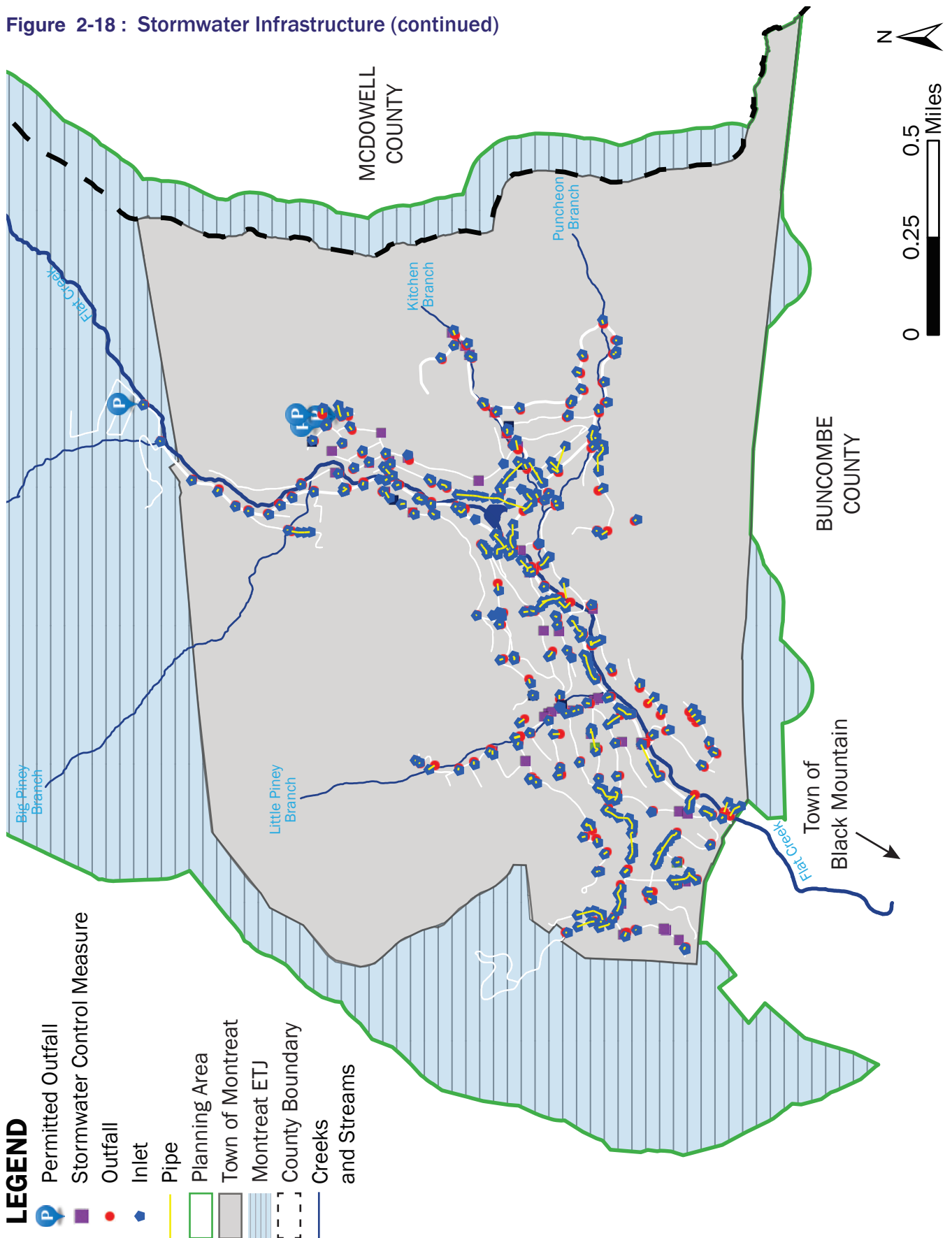
Figure 2-18 : Stormwater Infrastructure



This map shows the existing stormwater infrastructure in Montreat.

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-18 : Stormwater Infrastructure (continued)



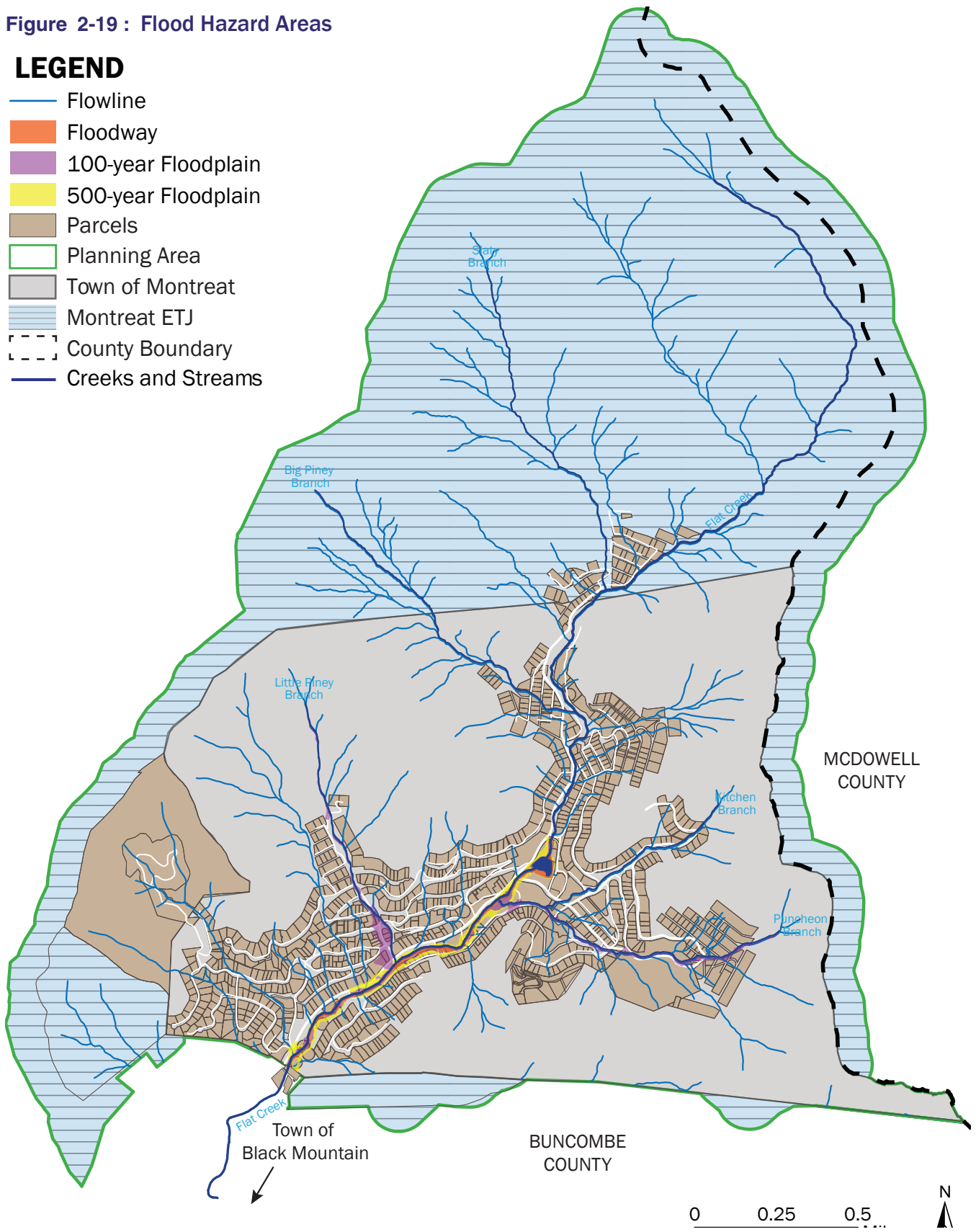
- LEGEND**
- Permitted Outfall
 - Stormwater Control Measure
 - Outfall
 - Inlet
 - Pipe
 - Planning Area
 - Town of Montreat
 - Montreat ETJ
 - County Boundary
 - Creeks and Streams

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-19 : Flood Hazard Areas

LEGEND

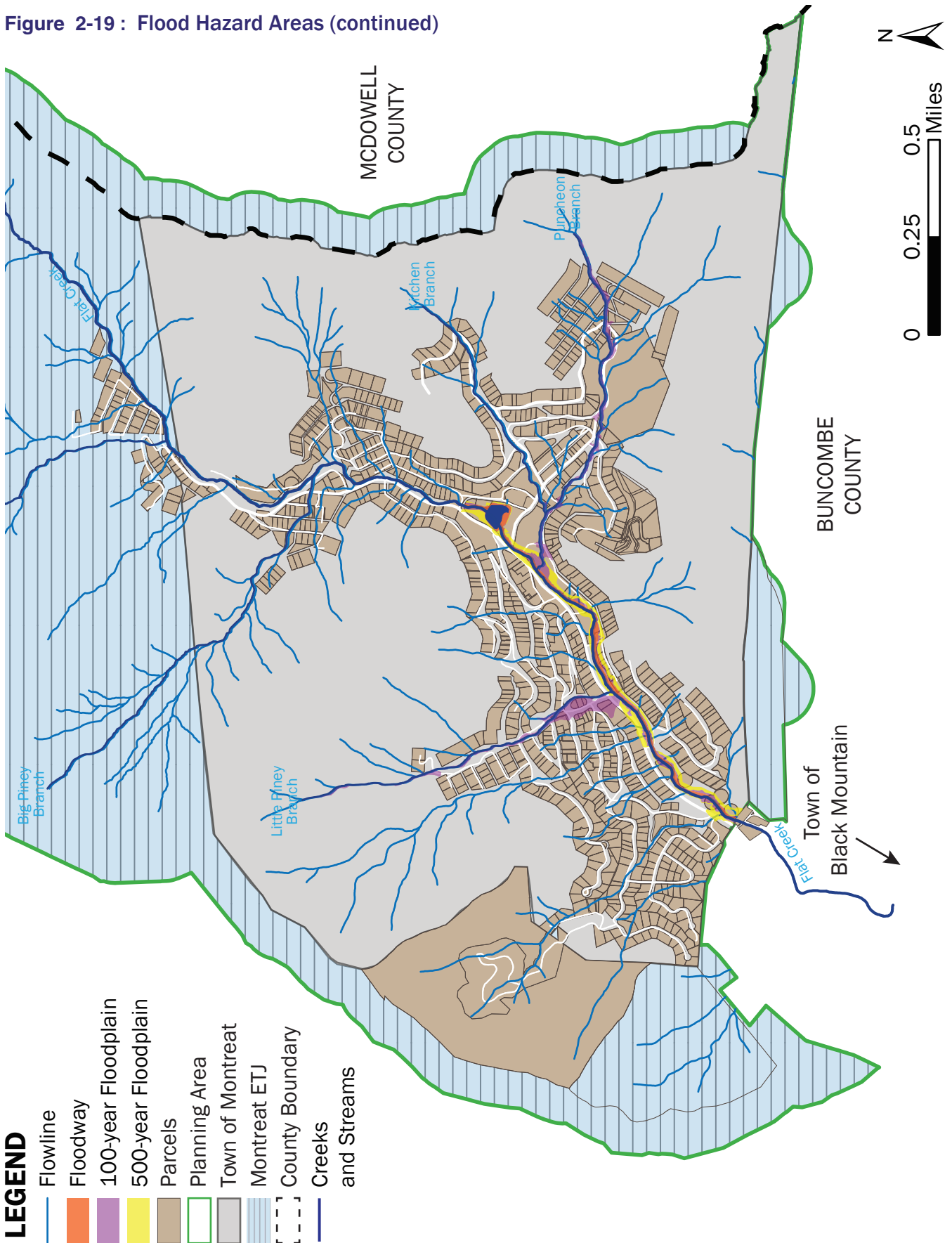
- Flowline
- Floodway
- 100-year Floodplain
- 500-year Floodplain
- Parcels
- Planning Area
- Town of Montreat
- Montreat ETJ
- County Boundary
- Creeks and Streams



This map shows the flood hazard areas identified by FEMA's National Flood Hazard Layer database.

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

Figure 2-19 : Flood Hazard Areas (continued)



LEGEND

- Flowline
- Floodway
- 100-year Floodplain
- 500-year Floodplain
- Parcels
- Planning Area
- Town of Montreat
- Montreat ETJ
- County Boundary
- Creeks and Streams

Source: Buncombe County, Land of Sky

This page is intentionally left blank.



03

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Online Survey

Engagement Events

Online Survey

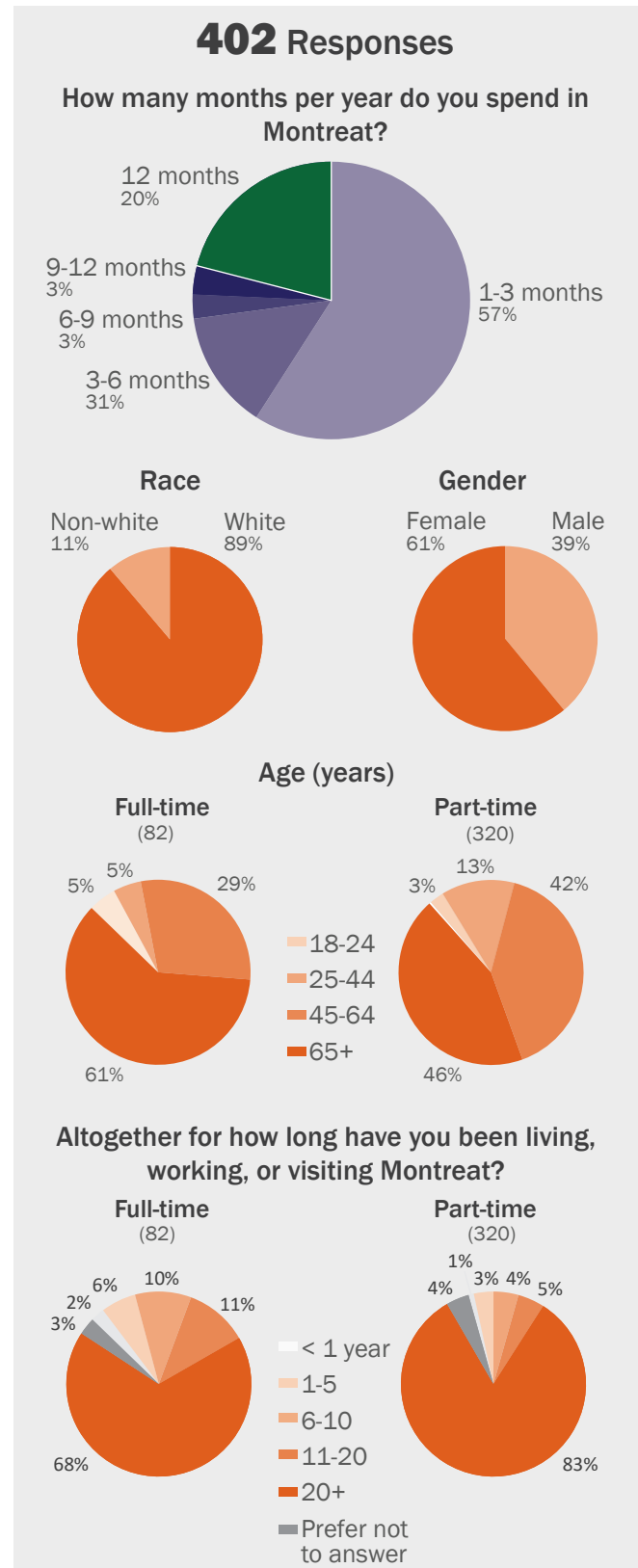
The online survey was open from May 21st to July 6th, 2022. Figure 3-1 summarizes survey participant profiles. Out of the 402 responses, 82 (20%) reported that they spend all 12 months of the year in Montreat. More than half of survey participants (57%) reported that they spend less than three months out of the year in Montreat; less than a month was not an option. Survey participants that reported spending 12 months per year in Montreat were considered full-time residents, while the other 320 responses were counted as part-time residents for the purposes of this plan.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority of survey participants were over the age of 45, with almost half (47%) over the age of 65. Part-time residents skewed slightly younger with a more even split between those age 45 to 64 and those over 65. More than 90% of survey participants were white and approximately 60% were female.

Since Montreat has many part-time residents, the survey also asked participants how long they had been living, working, or visiting Montreat. However, the survey did not distinguish between residents that have always lived in Montreat from now full-time residents that used to be part-time. This is important because many survey participants indicated that they are currently part-time residents but plan on moving to Montreat full-time when they retire. Fewer full-time residents have been associated with Montreat for more than 20 years than survey participants considered part-time residents (67% and 83% respectively). This indicates that, although the percentage of survey participants that are full-time residents is small, the part-time residents that responded to the survey have strong ties to Montreat.

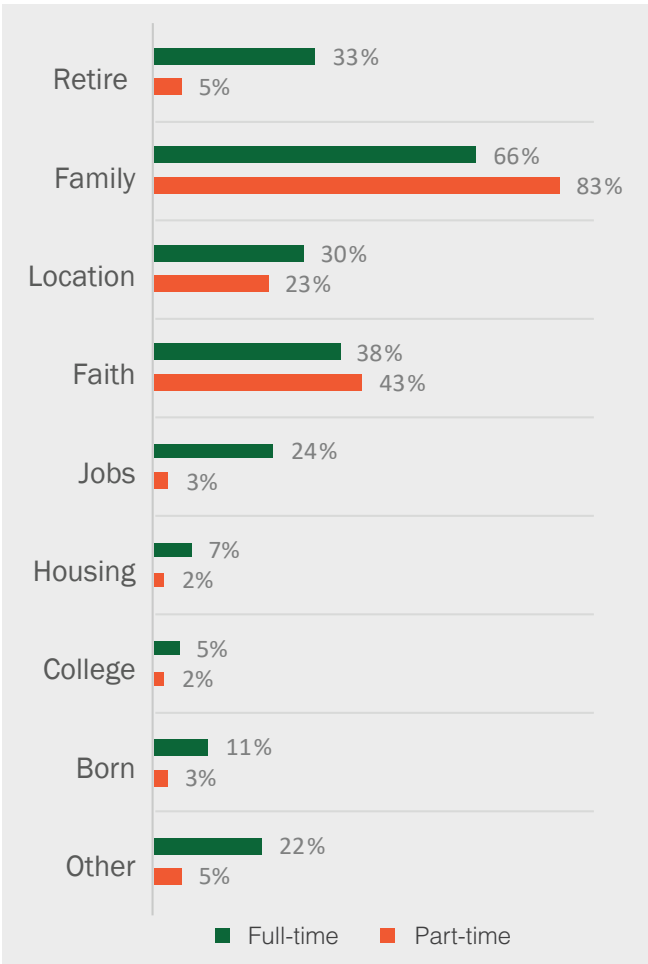
Figure 3-1 : Demographics



Due to Montreat’s unique history, what brought residents to Montreat is of interest. The most common reason that participants came to Montreat was family, followed by faith and location for both full-time and part-time residents (Figure 3-2). More than 30% of full-time residents reported that retirement brought them to Montreat. Less than five percent of survey participants reported that college is what brought them to Montreat, indicating that the survey results were probably not heavily impacted by the student population in Montreat.

Responses are broken down by part-time and full-time residents to highlight where there was a noticeable difference between the group’s responses.

Figure 3-2 : Why Montreat?

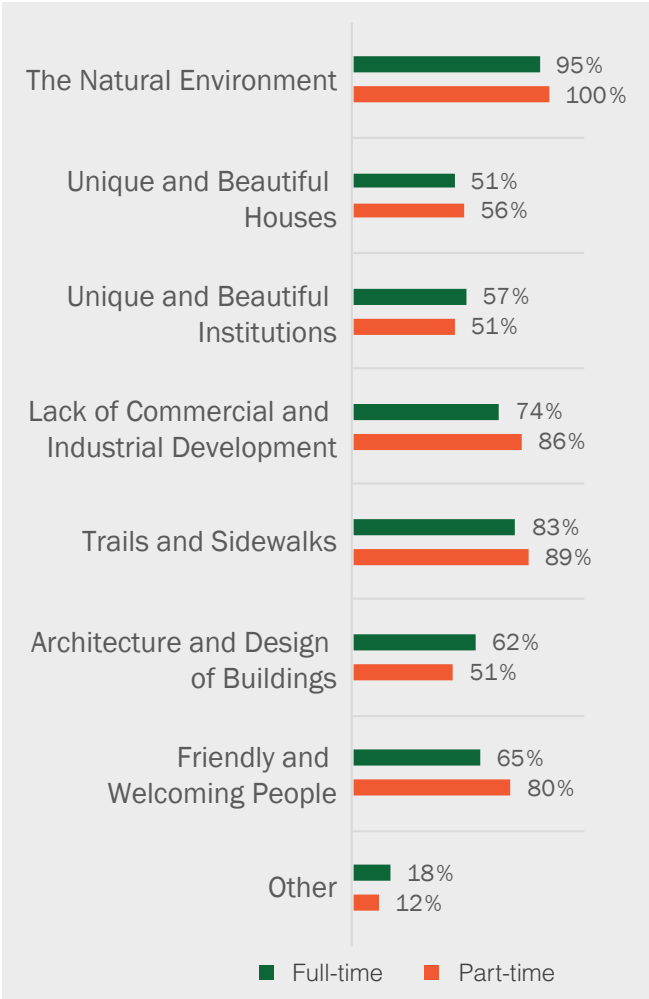


MONTREAT’S CHARACTERISTICS

A list of positive characteristics commonly attributed to Montreat was presented in the survey. Respondents were asked to select the characteristics that they agreed Montreat has and that they enjoy. They were also given the opportunity to describe any other attributes they thought were missing from the list. Full-time residents and part-time residents selected many of the same attributes, but some of the attributes were selected more frequently by one group than another. Figure 3-3 provides a breakdown of these results.

Currently there are no for-profit retail establishments operating in Montreat. Residents go to the nearby town of Black

Figure 3-3 : Montreat’s Characteristics



Mountain to go out to eat or shop for groceries. Survey participants were asked which, if any, kinds of businesses they would like to have in Montreat and where they would locate them. If there were to be businesses in Montreat, the preference is for a café or coffee shop and a small grocery or convenience store. Full-time residents indicated that they were more amenable to limited commercial business inside the town than part-time residents (Figure 3-4). 53% of part-time residents, and 35% of full-time residents selected none for businesses they would like to see in Montreat. Survey participants were also asked where they thought businesses should be located if they were in Montreat. The town center was most frequently identified as the appropriate place for businesses to locate. Maps displaying the results from these questions are in the appendix.

MATRIX QUESTIONS

A series of questions asked respondents to rank how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about potential concerns, future opportunities, and possible policies (Figure 3-5). In general, the responses from full-time and part-time residents were similar, with only a few of the questions resulting in notable differences in responses.

The questions that resulted in the greatest gap between full-time and part-time residents had to do with development and growth in Montreat. Part-time residents were more likely to indicate that they feel like Montreat is changing (75% versus 66%) and more concerned with how quickly Montreat is growing (60% versus 38%). Full-time residents were slightly less likely to indicate they were concerned that Montreat is growing quickly than part-time residents (29% versus 21%).

Full-time residents and part-time residents also differ slightly in what they would like to see in Montreat. Although the overall consensus is that residents would not like to see more tourism in Montreat, part-time residents indicated that they feel more strongly against tourism than full-time residents. 30% of part-time residents indicated they disagree and 46% indicated they strongly disagree with the statement “I would like to see more tourism in Montreat”, while 26% of full-time residents indicated they disagree and only 30% indicated they strongly disagree. Around a third of full-time and part-time residents (37% and 35% respectively) indicated that they would like to see more venues for events and gatherings in Montreat. Most survey participants indicated they would not like to see small-scale commercial businesses in Montreat, 44% of full-time residents and 58% of part-time residents. However, full-time residents were more likely to indicate they are open to having commercial businesses in Montreat than

Figure 3-4 : Support for Possible Businesses

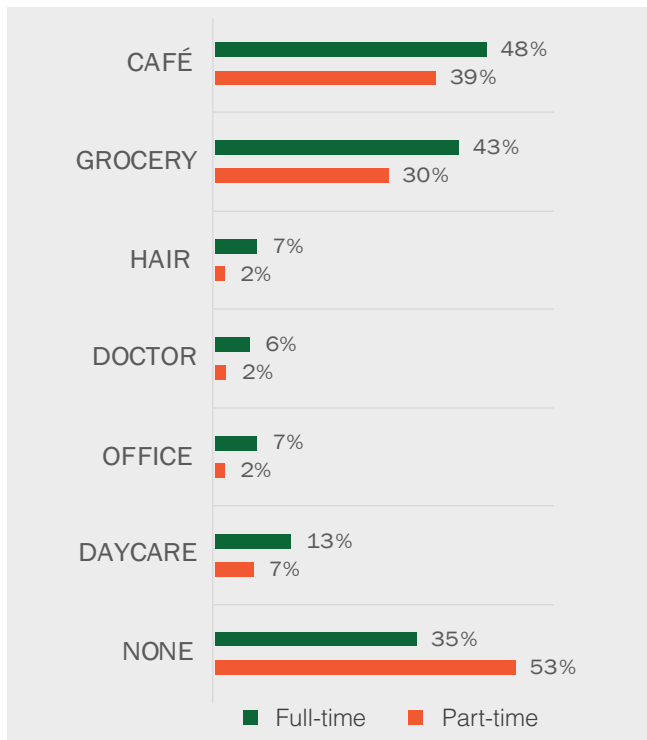
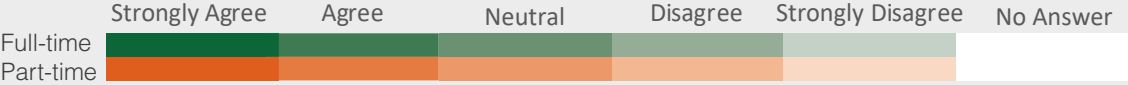


Figure 3-5 : Agree/Disagree Matrix Results

Matrix questions were answered on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, the arrows indicate the most frequent response for each question.



It feels like Montreat is changing.



I am concerned that Montreat is growing quickly.



I am concerned about stormwater run-off and flooding in Montreat



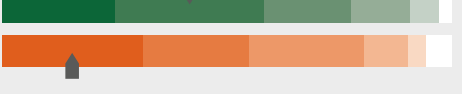
I am concerned about air quality in Montreat.



I am concerned about the health of Montreat's trees and forests.



Climate adaptation should be a priority for Montreat.



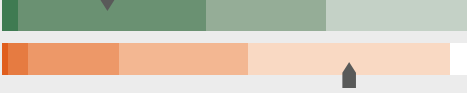
If new homes are built in Montreat, I would like them to look similar in style to existing homes.



Montreat's housing stock should include options at an affordable price.



I would like to see more tourism in Montreat



I would like to see new venues for community gatherings in Montreat



I would like to see new small-scale commercial businesses in Montreat



New buildings must not be built where their footprint may disrupt an existing creek or stream.



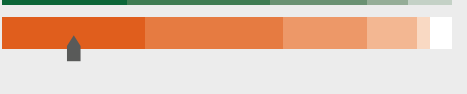
Property owners pay a fee through a stormwater utility, proportionate to the impact of each property on overall stormwater management



The Town of Montreat should create a Climate Change Action Plan with public and private partners to assess and reduce energy use.



New homes should be compact, preserving as much tree canopy and undisturbed land as possible.



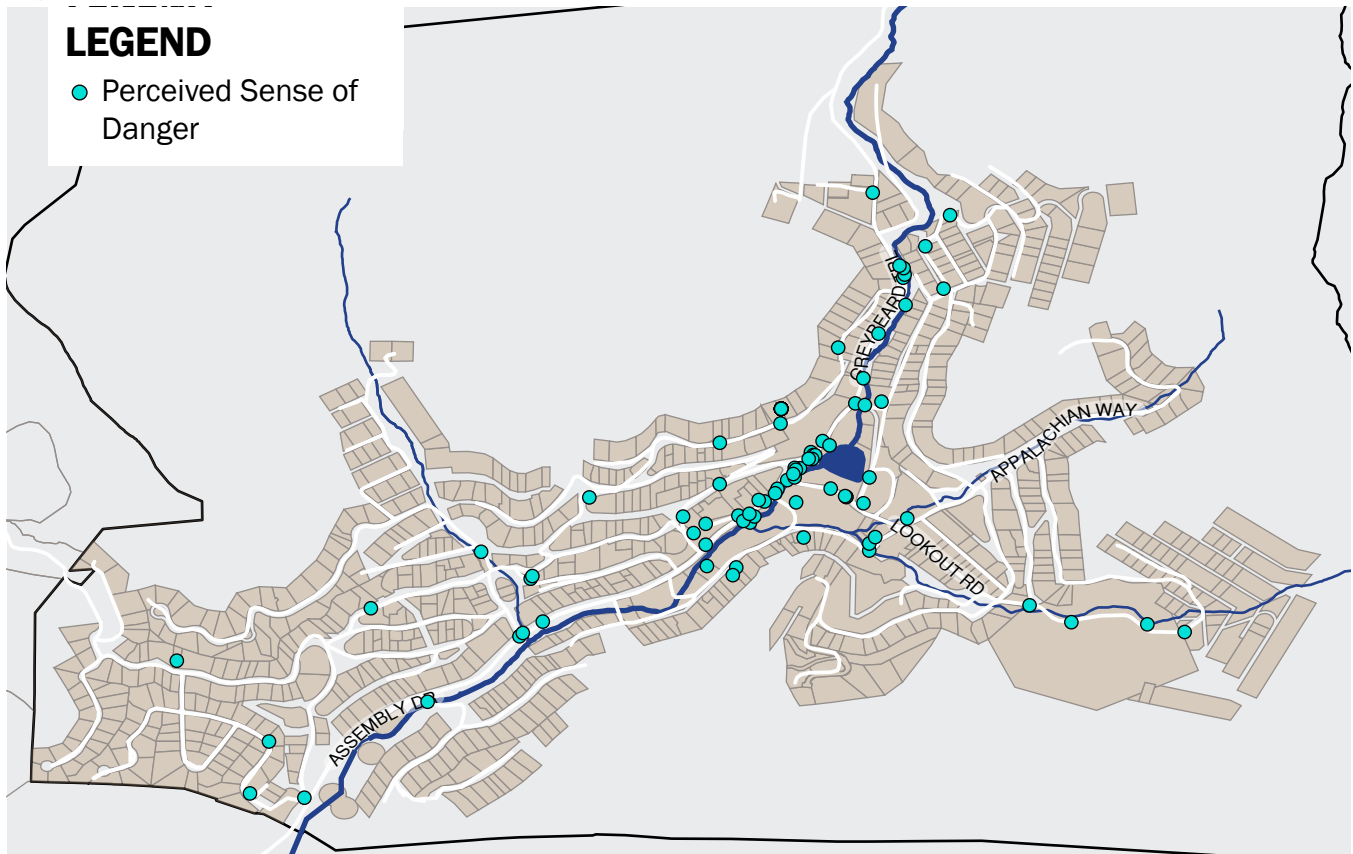
part-time residents with 39% responding that they would like to see small-scale businesses compared to only 26% of part-time residents.

The environment is a concern for most survey participants. Slightly less than two thirds (62%) of survey participants indicated that they were concerned about stormwater and flooding. About a third (35%) of participants responded that they were neutral about air quality in Montreat, while 36% indicated that they were concerned and 27% indicated they were not concerned. Almost three quarters (73%) of survey participants indicated that they were concerned about the health of Montreat's trees and forests. More than half (55%) of participants indicated that climate adaptation should be a priority, with another quarter (24%) reporting they were neutral to having that as a priority. As the natural environment was the most highly cited positive characteristic

of Montreat, it follows that residents are concerned with environmental quality and protection.

Both full-time and part-time residents had majority support for all four of the policy statements relating to the environment and conservation, but part-time residents indicated a stronger response overall. The most strongly supported policy was that new buildings must not be built where their footprint could disrupt a creek or stream, with 88% of all responses in agreement. Requiring new homes to be compact in order to preserve the tree canopy and undisturbed land, was also highly supported, with 60% of full-time residents and 67% of part-time residents agreeing with the policy. 54% of full-time residents and 62% of part-time residents indicated that they agree property owners should pay a stormwater utility fee proportionate to the impact of their

Figure 3-6 : Pedestrian Danger Areas



property on stormwater management. 51% of full-time and 57% of part-time residents support creating a Climate Change Action Plan in order to assess and reduce energy use in Montreat. Since the survey did not ask participants whether or not they owned property in Montreat it is unclear how many of the responses to these policies were theoretical—part-time residents not being affected by the policy, but supporting the idea—may partially explain why they were more likely to strongly agree with the policy statements.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Respondents were asked about how safe they felt walking in Montreat, and given the opportunity to indicate areas of potential pedestrian danger. Figure 3-6 shows where respondents feel pedestrian safety is a concern. Assembly Drive approaching Lake Susan was the area of most concern.

Engagement Events

MINI MEETINGS

To get feedback from as many people as possible, the project team created “Meeting in a Box” kits so that members of the steering committee could host their own mini meetings. The meetings focused on the topic of land use, and materials and guidance for discussion were provided. There were four mini meetings held, with a total of 56 participants and an average of 14 at each meeting. The meetings took place on July 21st, August 11th, August 15th, and August 30th of 2022.

Themes that came up in all of the meetings included: support for preserving Montreat’s history; concern with increased traffic especially from construction vehicles; and concern over large developments in Montreat. The financial challenges of funding various programs or initiatives was brought up multiple times as the Town has limited revenue sources. Residential property taxes provide the vast majority of revenue, and the Town lacks the commercial and industrial entities to provide sales and property taxes that most municipalities rely on. Some suggestions for increasing the Town’s revenues included implementing parking permit requirements, increasing water usage fees, soliciting donations and grants for programs and projects, and reevaluating policies regarding short-term rental properties to increase taxes or fees. It is important to note that some suggested solutions may not be permitted by North Carolina Law.

One of the meetings specifically focused on stormwater issues and stream health. Restricting development along stream beds, increasing community education, and increasing tree preservation efforts were all discussed as potential ways to protect water quality and reduce risk of damage from

flooding. In addition to general safety concerns, one meeting discussed creating an alternate exit route in case of emergency as there is only one road into and out of the Town.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

The community workshop was held on July 26th at Town Hall and was open to the public. Following a brief presentation, workshop attendees participated in an engagement activity where they contributed to an “Idea Garden” to build on the vision for Montreat. Some suggested ideas were provided that participants could “water,” (add supporting comments), “grow,” (build on the idea), or “bug,” (point out flaws or critiques) or come up with their own idea. The ideas that emerged from the activity focused on four main topics: traffic control, development, trails and sidewalks, and community environmental protections.

There is a desire for improved trail maintenance, more sidewalks and crosswalks, and more public seating like park benches. There is also support for educational signage for natural and historic landmarks. More crosswalks and sidewalks would help reduce concern for pedestrian safety. Speed bumps, lower speed limits, and no-car zones were also suggested as ways to calm traffic and increase safety. Parking congestion was cited as an issue that would require collaboration with Montreat College and the MRA to address. Annual parking permits and charging for on-street parking were brought up as potential solutions.

More development, especially commercial or institutional, is generally not desired in Montreat by those participating in the engagement events. Establishing a historic district or architectural review board to maintain the character of Montreat is a supported idea. Community environmental efforts like creating a stormwater utility

fee, removing dead or dying trees, and encouraging recycling were all supported ideas, but participants also pointed out “bugs” that would have to be worked out if these kinds of programs were to be implemented. Private property rights and the limitations of Montreat’s financial and jurisdictional capabilities need to be considered in any potential policies.

Montreat By You Worksheet

Community workshop attendees participated in a mapping activity that asked them to identify which type of development they thought was appropriate in different areas of Town. Montreat was divided into seven areas (Figure 3-7) where participants could identify where they could see bigger buildings on bigger lots, smaller buildings on smaller lots, townhouses and apartments, or other kinds of development. Figure 3-8 has the breakdown of the results.

Participants indicated that if any development was constructed, they would prefer smaller buildings on smaller lots in all areas of Montreat. The areas indicated for bigger buildings on bigger lots were on the edge of Town in areas three, four, six and seven. Although there were people who did not want commercial or other non-residential development anywhere in Montreat, the two participants who did indicate commercial development both placed it in area three, in the Town Center. There was not much desire expressed for townhouses and apartments, but areas three, four and seven were indicated as the most appropriate place for them to be developed. Responses expressed a desire for open space requirements for redevelopment as well as new development and raised concerns about water, sewer, and stormwater management.

Figure 3-7 : Development Areas

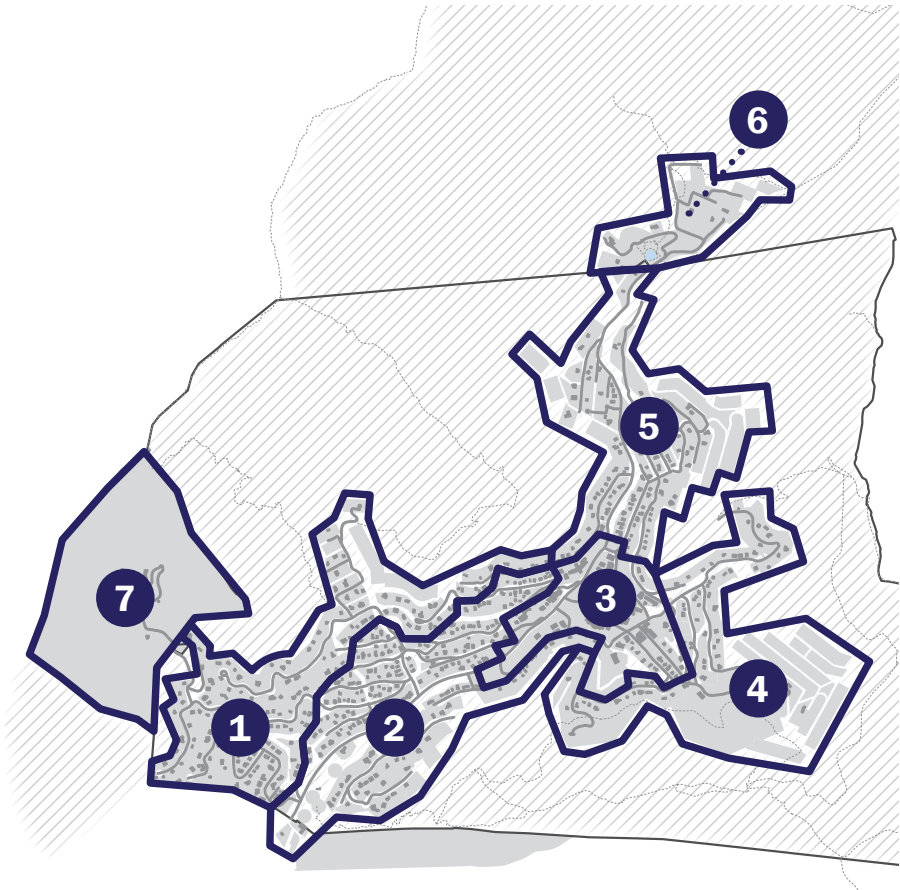


Figure 3-8 : Desired Development types

	Bigger buildings on bigger lots	Smaller buildings on smaller lots	Apartments/ Townhomes	Commercial	Other
Area 1	0%	15%	0%	0%	0%
Area 2	0%	19%	4%	0%	0%
Area 3	15%	12%	15%	8%	4%
Area 4	12%	27%	27%	0%	4%
Area 5	0%	19%	0%	0%	0%
Area 6	8%	15%	0%	0%	0%
Area 7	23%	19%	12%	0%	0%

This page is intentionally left blank.



04

MONTREAT TOMORROW

Vision Statements

Objectives

Next Steps

VISION STATEMENTS

The Steering Committee and consultant team worked together to create vision statements to guide the objectives for Montreat Tomorrow. Three major topics emerged from the planning process: Natural Preservation and Stormwater (Environment); Community Character and Development (Development); and Traffic and Transportation (Transportation). Specific objectives addressing these topics were then created and finalized by the Steering Committee.

The final objectives address the future of the environment, development, and transportation in Montreat. The guiding vision statements were written with points of tension or potential conflict in mind, reflect what was heard from the public, look to the future, and attempt to address some of the issues Montreat foresees in the coming years.



Montreat values and protects its tree canopy, streams, land, and natural beauty.



Montreat will be a community that respects buildings with historic value, encourages new development to consider the surrounding architecture, and strives for resilience in the face of a changing climate.















Montreat will be accessible for people as they age, safe for children and families, and calm for those driving, biking, and walking.

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives can be seen as stepping stones towards realizing the future of Montreat imagined in the vision statements. With the help of the Mayor and Town staff, each objective was given a priority level and determined to be either a long- or short-term goal. Short-term objectives should aim to be completed in five years, while long-term objectives are on a ten year timeline. The entity or commission responsible for leading the initiative for each objective was identified and is indicated below.

The objectives, timelines, and responsible entities are dependent on multiple external factors. The recommendations in this chapter are meant to be a guideline for how to proceed and are not legally binding.




LEGEND	
	Short-term Objective
	Long-term Objective
	High Priority
	Medium Priority
	Low Priority
	Town of Montreat
	Planning & Zoning
	Public Works
	Land Care Committee
	Tree Board
	Open Space Committee
	Firewise Committee

Environment




1 The Town of Montreat should develop regulations to encourage fire safety indoors and outdoors. These regulations should be customized to fit the needs of the community, weighing carefully the impact on public safety and natural areas as well as the likely responsibilities placed on property owners as such regulations are passed.






2 The Tree Board should collaborate with existing stakeholders and their representatives (the MRA wilderness committee, Montreat Cottagers, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy) to identify and recommend to Town Council strategies for protection of our forests and for its health and resiliency, and to propose funding required for such strategies.






3 Create a local erosion and sediment control ordinance for grading permits and requirements for projects that currently are not covered by Buncombe County's Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinances.







4 Explore the adoption of additional stream protection ordinances.



5 Institute periodic review (i.e., every five years) by the Tree Board of the *Recommended Species List* (Montreat Zoning Ordinance, Appendix A) to ensure riparian species (those that are native to creeksides) are included.



6 Explore conservation easements as an avenue for land protection.



CASE STUDY - FIREWISE SITES OF EXCELLENCE



The Firewise USA Sites of Excellence was a two year pilot program started in 2019. Seven Firewise sites were selected to participate in the challenge to increase participation in wildfire mitigation activities. The seven sites selected were small communities in high wildfire risk areas from across the country, many of them bordering a state forest. Two of the sites were vacation communities with only a portion of the population residing there full time. Each site had its own approach and challenges, but commonalities between them emerged. Firewise USA published the findings in 2022 and identified common challenges, successful strategies, and best practices for increasing participation in wildfire mitigation activities.

Wildfire mitigation is a community effort led by individual actions, success requires buy-in from residents. Two common challenges faced were resistance from residents who wanted to “live among the trees” and those who were concerned with privacy and government oversight. Providing education to residents about wildfire risks, working together to create specific action steps for mitigation, and providing opportunities for positive interaction with government employees, as well as encouraging neighbor-to-neighbor communication, helped overcome these challenges.

State forestry agency employees reiterated the importance of forming a relationship with the sites to better understand the community and how they could provide support and assistance most effectively. Creating “targeted, quantifiable goals helped Firewise sites focus their efforts and reduce risk.”



Educational events hosted with local fire department.

Other successful strategies used by the sites to improve buy-in and participation included:

- Utilizing Home Owners Associations (HOA) to enforce Firewise landscaping regulations
- Conducting home risk assessments and providing individualized recommendations
- Focusing on mitigating threats in the home ignition zone
- Setting an example for homeowners in common spaces
- Building a sense of community by organizing public chipping days, curbside brush collection, and communal slash pile burns
- Taking advantage of community events to provide education and information
- Bringing in local emergency management representatives or vendors to provide information on fire safety



Home risk assessments in 7-R Ranch conducted by the Texas A&M Forest Service.



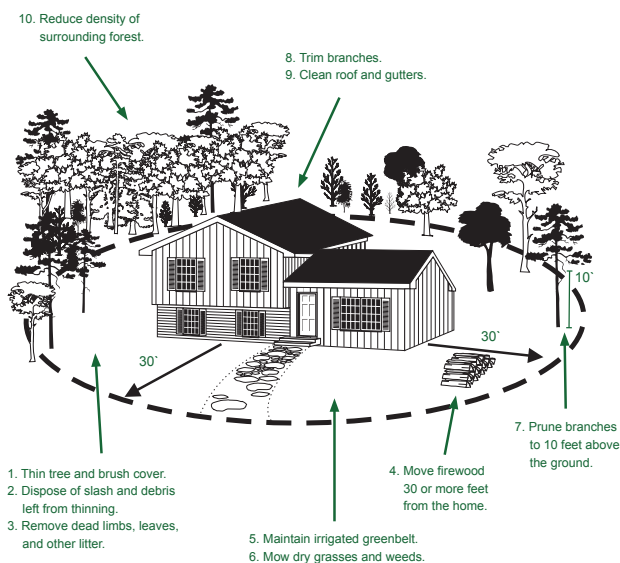
Firewise community workday in Arkansas.

Source: Miller, R. (2022, May). *Residents Reducing Wildfire Risks: Findings from the NFA® Firewise® Sites of Excellence Pilot, 2019–2020*. National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Firewise Landscaping

Firewise landscaping is about creating defensible space or a “survivable space buffer” around your home. The size of the buffer depends on the landscape, but for all homes there are three key factors for creating defensible space:

1. **Vegetation Choice** - Native plants that are fire resistant and a variety of species help create a healthier, more resilient landscape.
2. **Location & Spacing** - “Defensible” does not mean barren; plants should be widely spaced in irregular clusters to reduce risk.
3. **Maintenance** - Thinning, trimming, and removing dead limbs or brush to reduce the available fuel reduces the intensity and slows the spread of wildfires.



Source: Bardon, R. (n.d.) *Firewise Landscaping in North Carolina*. N.C. Cooperative Extension Service.



ADDITIONAL PLANNING DOCUMENT

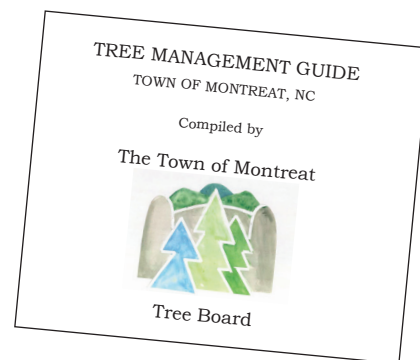
Tree Management Guide

Last Updated July 2019

The Tree Management Guide was compiled by the Montreat Tree Board to consolidate information about tree care and protection along with relevant regulations. The guide contains inventories of the trees along the public right-of-way (ROW) for Assembly Drive, and Greybeard Trail. The inventory includes information on tree health, location, and risk assessment.

Recommended species, what to do in case of a fallen tree, and planting and pruning guides are included as appendices. The Firewise Landscaping document from North Carolina State University is also included in the appendices.

[VIEW THE PLAN HERE](#)





ADDITIONAL PLANNING DOCUMENT

Open Space Conservation Plan

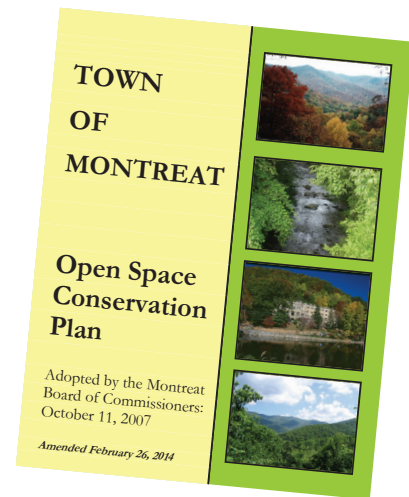
Last Updated February 2014

The Open Space Conservation Plan was intended to “enhance the Town’s ability to protect lands with high natural resource value.” The plan defines open space as “an area of Montreat’s landscape that is essentially undeveloped, such as ridges, streams, and woodlands,” and identifies three key types: natural areas, low impact recreation areas, and viewscape areas.




The plan prioritizes protecting land on large parcels that currently has no legal protections, is adjacent to already preserved land, and is of high resource value to maximize the benefits of preservation.

In addition to proposing an Open Space Fund to help finance conservation efforts, the plan also identifies other potential funding sources.




VIEW THE PLAN [HERE](#)






7 Implement the stormwater management plan as required and approved by Small MS4 NPDES Permit.



8 Inventory the Town's current stormwater infrastructure and identify opportunities for system improvements and expansions.






9 Create a voluntary stormwater control measure and flood risk mitigation program with established goals that includes educational opportunities and outreach efforts.






10 Investigate implementing viewshed protection regulations in Montreat.



11 Examine the existing Hillside Development Ordinance and ensure that it is enforceable, practical, and sufficient for its purpose, with consideration to the responsibility placed on those building on property in Montreat.



12 Support and implement the goals and recommendations for the Town of Montreat in the Buncombe and Madison County Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.



NPDES MS4 Program

The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) administers the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Program mandated under the federal Clean Water Act.

An MS4 is a system of conveyances owned by a municipality or public entity that deals with stormwater management and discharge. Only MS4s that meet certain criteria are regulated and require a permit. MS4s are regulated to reduce the amount of pollutants that are flushed into surface waters by runoff.

The MS4 Program expands after every decennial census. Small MS4 permittees were added after the 2000 census in phase two of

the Environmental Protection Agency’s MS4 regulations.

MS4 permits require a Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) to implement, enforce, and evaluate six minimum control measures:



1. Public Education & Outreach
2. Public Involvement & Participation
3. Illicit Discharge Detection & Elimination
4. Construction Site Runoff Controls
5. Post-Construction Site Runoff Controls
6. Pollution Prevention & Good Housekeeping

Source: North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)



ADDITIONAL PLANNING DOCUMENT

Buncombe Madison Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

Last Updated April 2021

The Buncombe Madison Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan “recommends specific actions to minimize hazard vulnerability and protect residents from losses to those hazards that pose the greatest risk.” In addition to structural solutions, other actions that can help reduce the region’s vulnerability to identified hazards, including “Local policies on community growth and development, incentives for natural resource protection, and public awareness and outreach activities,” are also recommended.

The plan focuses on hazards that pose “high” or “moderate” risk based on a detailed hazard risk assessment. Section 6 of the plan contains a detailed vulnerability assessment broken down by municipality in both counties.

[VIEW THE PLAN HERE](#)



Development

1

Support private property owners in the creation of conservation easements and/or deed restrictions on land with recreational value to the public.



2

Investigate implementing a maximum lot coverage standard in the Montreat Zoning Ordinance to cap the percentage of a lot that can be developed.



3

In cooperation with the Town, Montreat College, the Mountain Retreat Association, and local organizations, work to update and implement a wayfinding plan including educational signage.



4

Preserve, protect, and enhance the character of Montreat by evaluating and improving existing allowable uses, densities, and dimensional regulations in each Zoning District.



5

Investigate development regulations per Zoning District for short-term rentals with consideration for existing short-term rentals and potential funding sources.



6

Support current and new activities with local, regional, and state partners to educate the public about the value of historic properties and landmarks.



In the spirit of the long-term success of the Town of Montreat, work collaboratively with the institutions of the Town, including, but not limited to, Montreat College and the Mountain Retreat Association, on any future development plans to support the vitality and future of the institutions and the Town.



ADDITIONAL PLANNING DOCUMENT

Wayfinding Signage Plan

Adopted November 2013

The Wayfinding Signage plan was intended to create “a system of destination and directional signage to guide visitors to primary and secondary attractions in Montreat,” and promote walking and bicycling within town. The plan identified seven types of wayfinding signs that could be installed and where some of them should be located.



The plan also called for the Sign Ordinance to be updated to align with the Signage Design Manual, to be created with the help of a design consultant.

VIEW THE PLAN [HERE](#)






Transportation




1 Calm traffic and lower speeds by partnering with regional transportation agencies to conduct a study of feasible options. This may include, but is not limited to, investigating posting advanced warning signs near the Montreat Gate, seasonal speed tables near the campus, or additional stop signs.






2 Periodically examine the availability and demand for parking in the Town of Montreat. Develop strategies as needed to address parking issues. Special consideration to seasonal parking needs should be included.







3 Investigate developing a freight plan in partnership with local and regional partners. This plan may include, but is not limited to, designated truck routes, drop/off/delivery zones, and a permit system for overweight vehicles to be charged a fee.



4 Update and implement the Town's Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Greenways Master Plan.



5 Support private-public partnership opportunities to fund and support trail maintenance.



CASE STUDY - KEENE, NY

The town of Keene, New York has a population of just over 1,000 people and is composed of the hamlets of Keene, Keene Valley, and St. Huberts. Located in Adirondack Park, trails for many of the High Peaks can be accessed via trailheads along State Route 73 in town. The Adirondack Mountain Club Johns Brook Lodge is located in town along with the Adirondack Mountain Reserve (AMR), a privately owned conservation easement of 7,000 acres.

The town of Keene operates a shuttle on weekends and holidays from May through October that takes hikers from a parking lot in town to another parking lot owned jointly by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and a private landowner, but overflow parking is still a problem. The problem of parking at the trailheads has been acknowledged for some time. In 2017, an article from the Adirondack Explorer wrote, “On a busy summer day, over flow parking along NYS Rt 73 makes it a dangerous gauntlet. In the hamlet of Keene Valley, we regularly have blocked driveways and fire hydrants, and Adirondack Street and Johns Brook Road can be so congested that emergency vehicles can’t get through.”



AMR Ausable Club.
Photo by Anna Kirby.



Cars parked illegally on Route 73 below Roaring Brook parking lot.



AMR hiker shuttle.

Increasing tourism in recent years has exacerbated the problem, and in May of 2019 the DEC prohibited parking on a four-mile stretch of Route 73 without adequate parking alternatives in place. The town of Keene implemented a “front-country steward” program staffed by volunteers to provide visitors with information and help reduce illegal parking. A stakeholder meeting was held in August 2019 to address the parking issues along Route 73. There was consensus that a comprehensive management system was needed. The most supported solution was implementing a pilot hiker or parking permit program.

In 2021, the AMR and the DEC launched a parking reservation pilot program to help manage available parking. Also running May through October, reservations are free and can be made up to two weeks in advance. Reservations are required for all visitors using the AMR parking lot arriving by car, bike, or foot. Visitors who arrive via Greyhound or Trailways bus do not need a reservation and can show a bus ticket from the previous 24 hours instead. The program is only for hikes with trailheads on AMR land.

Sources: *The Lowdown on AMR Hiker Parking Reservations*, Adirondacks, USA. Izzo, E. (2019, Aug. 10). *Route 73 conundrum*. Adirondack Daily Enterprise. Wilson, J. (2018, April 19). *Hiker Traffic Along the Route 73 Corridor: Balancing Access, Safety, & the Needs of Residents*. Adirondack Park Local Government Day.



ADDITIONAL PLANNING DOCUMENT

Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Greenways Master Plan

Adopted January 2011

The Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Greenways Master Plan was designed to provide a framework for creating a walkable and bikable town with the goals of improving connectivity and accessibility, increasing safety, and encouraging environmental stewardship.

The proposed greenway along Assembly Drive, replacing the narrow dirt path, was completed, but other recommendations have yet to be implemented. Bike lanes along Assembly Drive and Lookout Road and sidewalks connecting key destinations in the core of Montreat were some of the other proposals.

The plan also contains valuable information on the location and accessibility of trailheads in Montreat.

VIEW THE PLAN [HERE](#)



NEXT STEPS

Keep in mind that implementation of planning goals is a process, and that objectives may require cooperation from multiple parties to complete. Each objective was assigned a priority and responsible entity. These assignments are intended to serve as a starting point for implementation and may change as different circumstances or situations arise.

Some general strategies that can help maintain momentum in achieving plan objectives are:

- Evaluate municipal funds on an annual basis to identify and allocate available funds.
- Identify internal and external pathways to secure new funding resources, as allowed by state law.
- Delegate existing subcommittees to lead implementation of objectives, and create new subcommittees as needed.
- Utilize internal staff to complete amendments and ordinance development (primarily through the Planning and Zoning Department).
- Review this plan and examine the status of objectives annually.
- Reevaluate priorities accordingly after review.

**APPENDIX:
SURVEY QUESTIONS AND
ADDITIONAL GRAPHICS**

Share your opinion about the following statements. Click all that apply.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
It feels like Montreat is changing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am concerned about stormwater run-off and flooding in Montreat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am concerned about air quality in Montreat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am concerned about the health of Montreat's trees and forests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Climate adaptation should be a priority for Montreat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am concerned that Montreat is growing quickly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to see more tourism in Montreat.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to see new venues for community gatherings in Montreat (like a new park or community garden).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to see new small-scale commercial business in Montreat (like a coffee shop or small office).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If new homes are built in Montreat, I would like them to look similar in style to existing homes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Montreat's housing stock should include options at an affordable price.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Below are some examples of possible policies that could be adopted in Montreat related to sustainability. How strongly would you support each of them?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
New buildings must not be built where their footprint may disrupt an existing creek or stream.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Property owners pay a fee through a stormwater utility, proportionate to the impact of each property on overall stormwater management.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Town of Montreat should create a Climate Change Action Plan with public and private partners to assess and reduce energy use.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New homes should be compact, preserving as much tree canopy and undisturbed land as possible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Are there any specific areas in Montreat that you feel are especially dangerous and/or inconvenient to walk, bike, or drive?

A follow-up question asking where will appear if you choose yes.

Yes

No

Currently, there are no for-profit businesses operating in Montreat. Which of the following, if any, would you support in Montreat?

Next, you will be asked about possible locations of whichever establishments you select below.

Café or Restaurant

Small Grocery Store

Hair Salon / Barber

Doctor / Dentist Office

Daycare

Offices

Other (I have an idea!)

None

The Comprehensive Plan will guide the Town's development in the future. Please share any other issues, comments, or other considerations you would like to be included in the plan.

Figure A-1 : Cafe

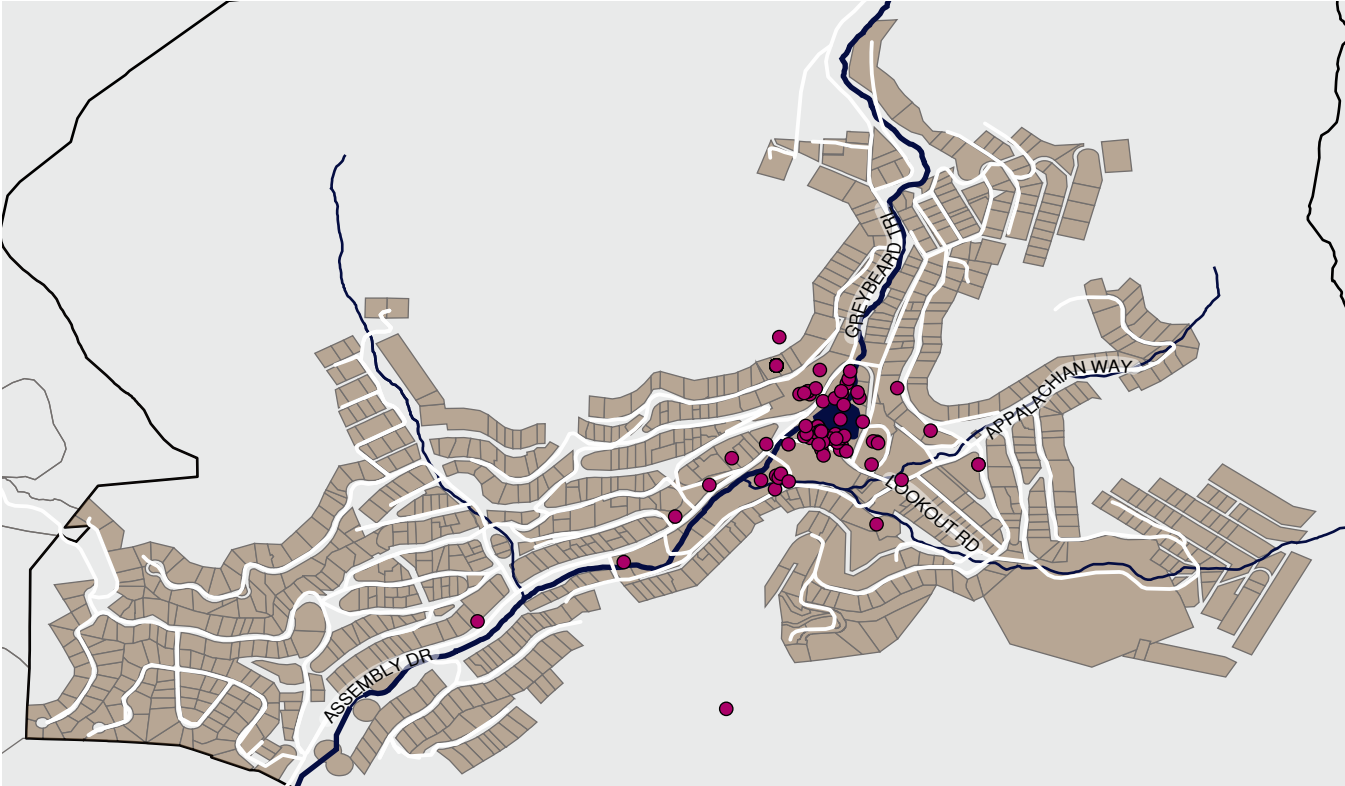


Figure A-2 : Grocery Store

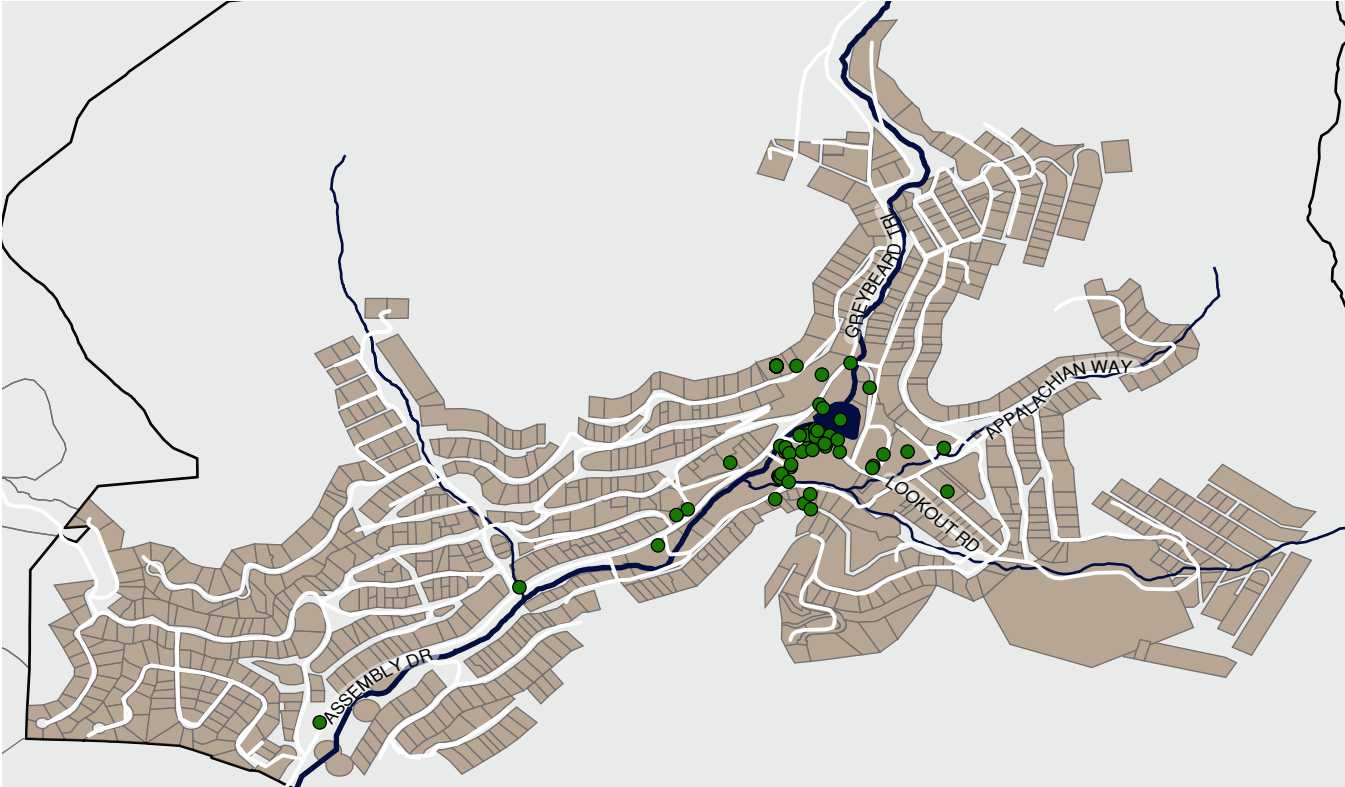


Figure A-3 : Doctor's Office

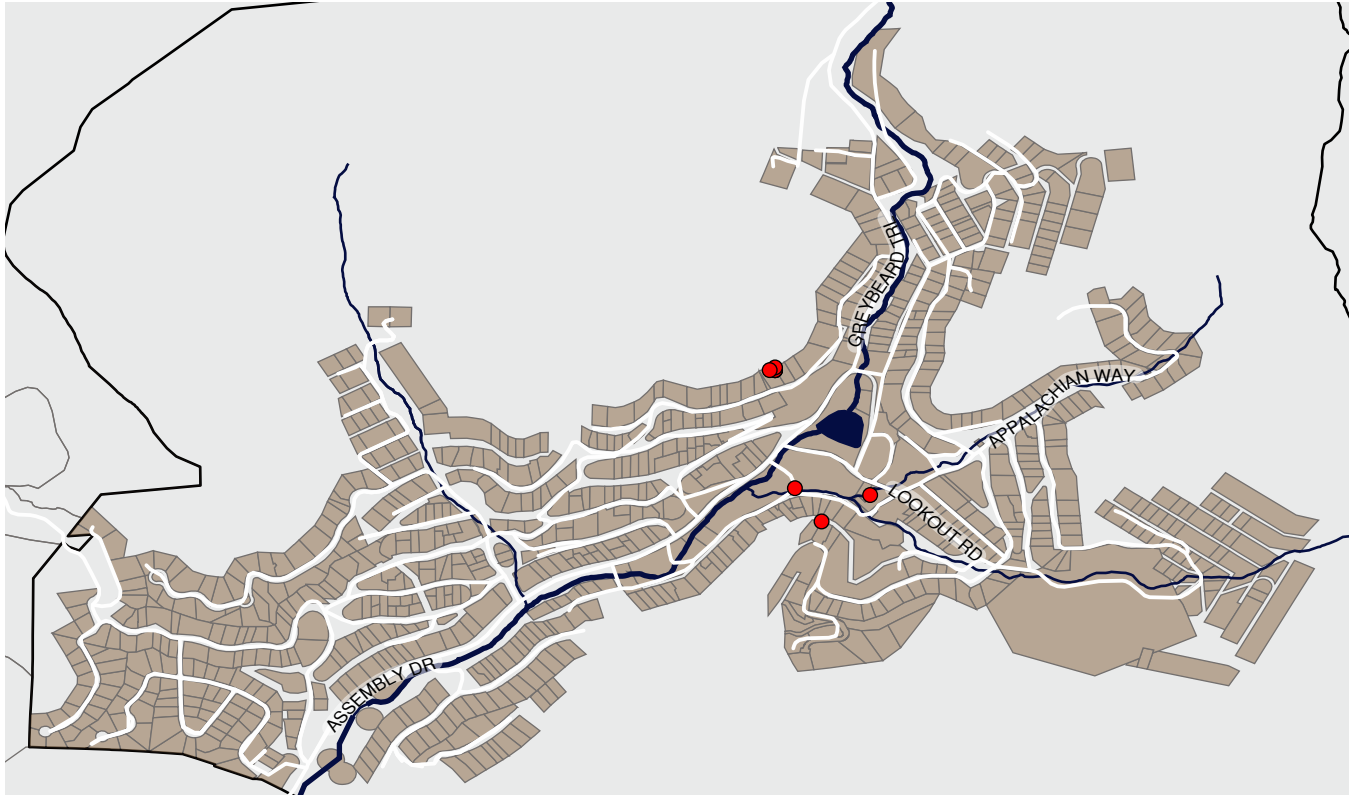


Figure A-4 : Office

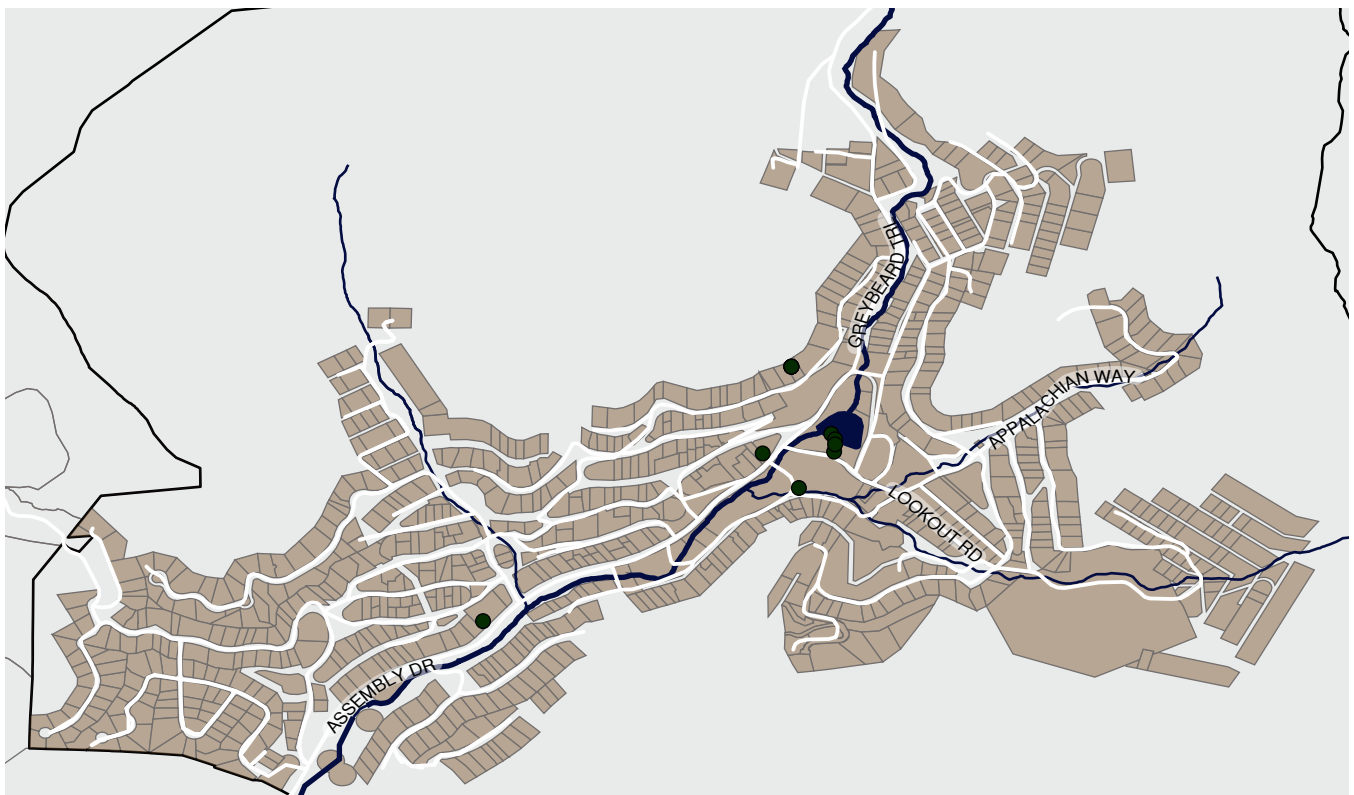


Figure A-5 : Salon

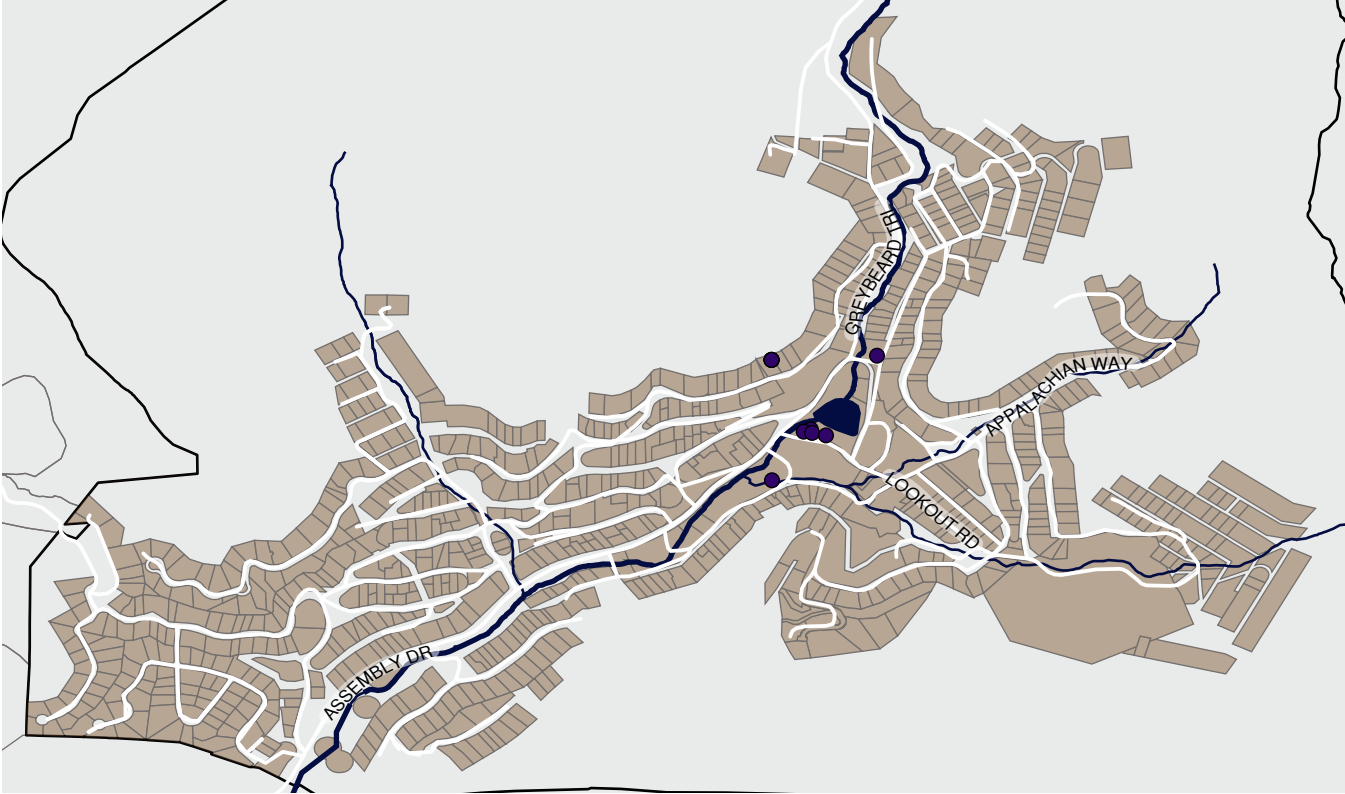


Figure A-6 : Daycare

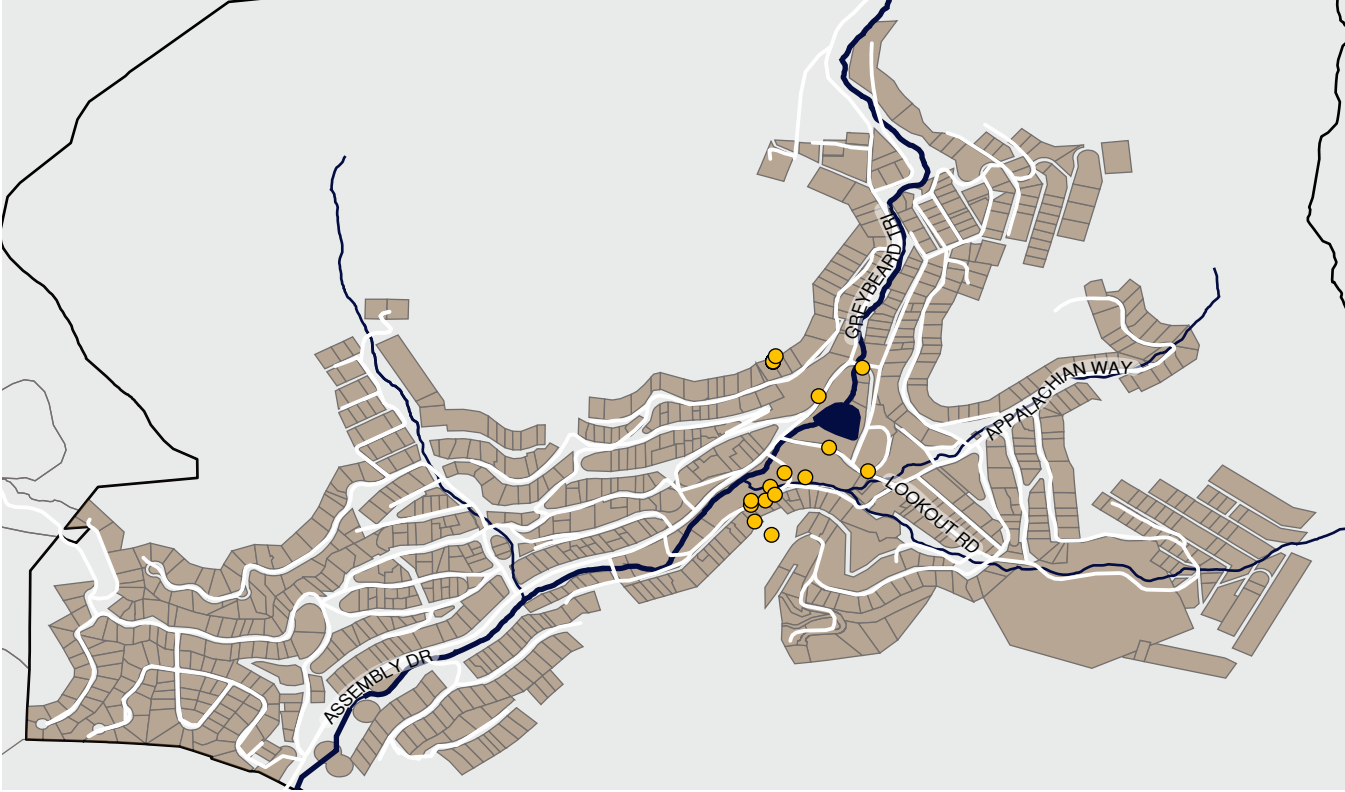


Figure A-7 : Other

