

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

**HENDERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

MEETING DATE: Wednesday, September 20, 2006

SUBJECT: Report on 2007-2011 Strategic Plan Input

ATTACHMENTS: *Listening to Our Community* Report

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

At this morning's meeting, staff will present a summary of the results from the community meetings and online survey conducted in August.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

This report is being provided for the Board's information and no specific action is necessary.

Listening to Our Community

2007-2011 Strategic Plan

Executive Summary: Community Input Phase



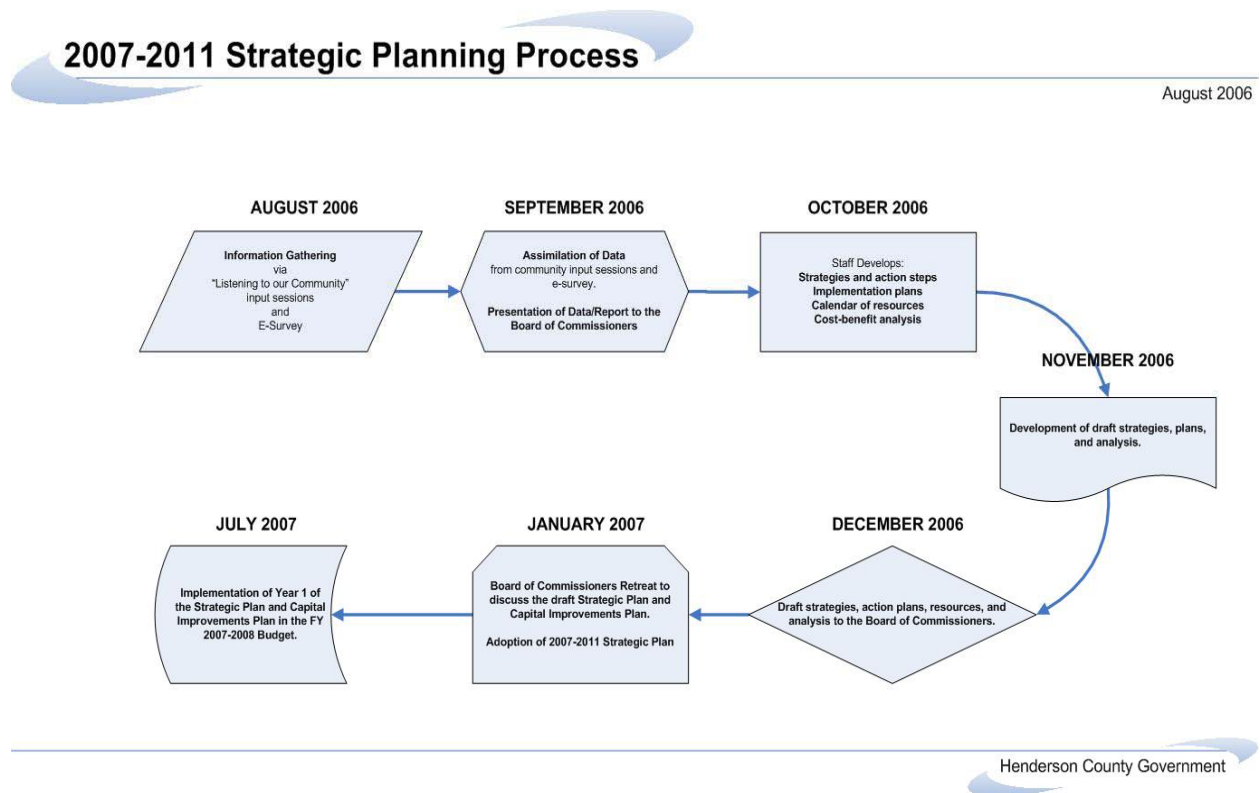
**Date Presented:
September 20, 2006**

**Presented by:
Selena Coffey
Assistant County Manager**

Introduction

In August 2006, Henderson County began its 2007-2011 Strategic Planning process. The initial phase of the process entailed a comprehensive public input process, including four (4) public input sessions and an e-survey process.

The flow chart below illustrates the process for the development of the Strategic Plan:



Listening to our Community Input Sessions

The community input sessions, entitled *Listening to Our Community*, were held on August 1st and 3rd to provide the citizens of the County the opportunity to have input on the development of the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan. The strategic planning process was given substantial media coverage, with press releases sent to all local media outlets and subsequent articles prominently published in the *Times-News*, the *Pisgah Mountain News*, and the *Hendersonville Tribune*. In addition, the input sessions garnered the attention of *WLOS* and announcements of the input sessions were televised on the County's own *HCTV Channel 11*.

As a result of this publicity, and that generated by the Strategic Plan Team members, the County Manager, and the Board of Commissioners, the process received outstanding participation from the community. Approximately 150 citizens attended the input sessions and 71 actively participated by speaking. Some speakers did so on behalf of external organizations, while others spoke simply as concerned citizens.

The following table shows the breakdown of the numbers of speakers per input session:

Session	Number of Speakers
#1	13
#2	23
#3	15
#4	20
Total	71

During these facilitated meetings, the speakers and audience were asked to focus on and answer the following key questions that serve as the foundation for the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan:

- 1. What do you feel are Henderson County’s most important issues, opportunities, and challenges (strategic issues) for the upcoming four to five years? And why?**
- 2. Do you have suggestions (strategies) for how the County should address these strategic issues, opportunities, and challenges?**
- 3. North Carolina law provides counties one primary source of revenue to be used to finance its operations – property taxes. In limited instances, counties are permitted to charge fees for services. Given this, how would you propose that Henderson County should finance the initiatives that you have suggested?**

In addition, the speakers were asked to provide any back-up materials necessary to further explain their positions. These back-up materials are available for the Board’s review.

E-Survey Process

Simultaneous to the input sessions on August 1, 2006, the County launched an online survey requesting input on the Strategic Plan. The survey was available the entire month of August and focused on the same three questions as those posed for the input sessions. To verify the survey respondent’s residence within the County, each respondent was asked to provide their name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. The Team received 391 total responses. Of this total, 61 responses were either incomplete or duplicative. Thus, 330 of the survey responses are being utilized for purposes of developing the Strategic Plan.

Input from Individual County Commissioners and Department Heads

Prior to beginning the input phase of the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan, staff met with individual County Commissioners to gain their responses to the three key questions. In addition, County Department Heads were invited to participate in the process by answering the survey questions. All data gathered from the input sessions, e-survey, departmental surveys, and input from the Board of Commissioners has been assimilated and bound for the Board of Commissioners’ review. This document has been provided to the Clerk to the Board and individual Board members may review it at your convenience.

Findings

In reviewing the responses received during the input sessions, online surveys, and responses from County Commissioners and Department Heads, the Team realized that we had a difficult task ahead of us. The attached bulleted list contains the critical elements of the input findings.

The assimilation of this data was difficult because so many of the strategic issues gathered during the input sessions and e-survey overlap each other and are duplicated depending on how the issues are categorized. For instance, the overwhelming majority of input suggested that *growth* is the key issue for Henderson County, but respondents narrowed their responses to reflect growth's impact on various issues, such as its impact on our transportation systems; public schools; public services such as emergency services and law enforcement; jobs; land use planning; etc. To further complicate this, growth was linked to quality of life issues such as recreation opportunities, health care, cultural and performing arts, nuisance abatement, preservation of natural resources, etc. Consequently, the Strategic Plan Team has categorized the issues to the best of its ability. Please note that many of these categories are interrelated and dependent upon each other. In addition, the Team has attempted to classify the issues as having *capital* or *operational* impacts on the County.

Major Categories

The following categories were determined as most encompassing of the issues raised during the month-long input process: ***General Government, Economic Development, Natural Resource Preservation, Human Services, Land-Use Planning, Public Safety, Education, and Cultural and Recreational***. These categories are explained in more detail as follows:

General Government

Some of the strategic issues proposed during the input sessions were those that were too broad for other categories and fall into the realm of general government. Among them were: *collaboration between government, the private sector, and non-profits for service provision; government accountability; managing illegal immigration; and the need to "keep property taxes low"* were frontrunner issues. Other prominent issues were the need for more *public input opportunities* and the need to "*build community*" between native residents and newcomers to the community.

Economic Development

Among the top issues expressed were those of ensuring that there are *job opportunities* for the County's citizens. Among the comments, were those focused on encouraging "good jobs with good pay" and the need for the County's active involvement in recruiting industry to the community. In addition, some respondents suggested that the *loss of small businesses and agriculture* is having a negative impact on our County's economy.

Natural Resource Preservation

As you may expect, a number of respondents commented about the natural beauty of our community and the need to maintain our *small-town feel* and *historical perspective*. However, some of the most ardent comments made during the input sessions were those that asked for the preservation of our natural resources regarding *water quality* and *recycling* efforts. The need for the development and enforcement of a local Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance was expressed specifically. Additional respondents focused their attention on such issues as *energy management*, *conservative building practices*, or “*green building*,” and *sustainable and renewable energy sources*. In addition, a number of respondents commented on the need to preserve the County’s *farmland*.

Human Services

Human services is another major category that emerged from the input process. Among the issues, respondents commented on the value of the County’s *non-profits* and the need for more advocacy for the County’s *aging population*, the *disabled*, and the *disadvantaged* in our community. Other input focused on the issues of *improved health care opportunities*, *advocacy for at-risk children*, *support for the “working poor,”* increased *childcare subsidy*, *better mental health services*, and the *coordination of children and family services*.

Land-Use Planning & Development

As noted earlier, almost all participants in the Strategic Plan input process commented on the impacts of growth on our community. Most of these comments focused on the need to *control or manage growth*, while others expressed their views about the need for *countywide zoning*, *development restrictions*, *aesthetic regulations*, and “*better planning*” in general. Growth meant other things to some, who suggested that the County needs to increase its efforts on *encouraging affordable housing* and specifically *developing an affordable housing trust fund* and the *development and enforcement of a minimum housing code*. Still, there were other respondents that proposed the need for a *countywide sewer system* and the *enforcement of the nuisance ordinance* to help manage the County’s growth.

Public Safety

Public safety issues were also raised during the input process. Most of these issues centered on *crime prevention* and the *eradication of illegal drugs* within the community. Other comments addressed the need for improvements to the County’s *Emergency Medical Services (EMS)* by increasing staffing, adding vehicles, and developing plans for construction of an EMS headquarters and additional satellite stations, as well as increasing funding and collaboration with the local Rescue Squad. Finally, several respondents identified *animal control issues* as those very important to our County, specifically the need for an *improved spay/neuter program* and the addition of animal control services such as a *volunteer program* and *animal cruelty investigations program*.

Education

A large number of participants in the input process supported increased funding for our public school system. *Schools capital and maintenance needs* were the top priorities among these respondents. Behind that, *increased teacher pay*, the need for *increased instructional funding*, the necessity of *class-size reduction*, and the need for *additional certified and support positions* were key strategic issues noted.

Cultural & Recreational

A large number of participants in the input process voiced their support for increased funding for recreation opportunities. Much of this input focused on the need for *soccer fields*, but a large number of respondents voiced their support for the *additional and improved county parks*, *greenways*, and *biking* opportunities. Several respondents supported the *Tuxedo Park and Library* projects specifically.

Conclusion

The attached overview of issues lists the issues raised during the input phase of the development of the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan. The issues are categorized as described earlier and are classified as capital or operational issues. In some instances, issues may be classified as both capital, and operational issues. The Team did not attempt to rank or prioritize the issues raised during this input phase.

Listening to Our Community & E-Survey Input 2007-2011 Strategic Plan

The following list represents the broad issues that were expressed during the *Listening to Our Community* input sessions held in August and the related e-survey for the development of Henderson County's 2007-2011 Strategic Plan. The following question evoked the responses listed below:

What do you feel are Henderson County's most important issues, opportunities, and challenges (strategic issues) for the upcoming four to five years? Why?

Overview of Strategic Issues

General Government	Capital	Operational
Establish public/private/non-profit partnerships.		●
Improve government accountability / Implement a performance management system.		●
Address illegal immigration.		●
Increase diversity on boards and committees.		●
Improve county technology infrastructure.		
Establish a Voting Equipment Oversight Committee.		●
Limit the role/scope of local government.		●
Encourage (increase opportunities for) public input in county government / public education program.		●
Promote a balance between retirees and youth in quality of life issues.		●
Provide fair tax appraisals and reappraisals.		●
Increase cost-effectiveness of county government.		●
Develop and implement a Cost Recovery Plan.		●
Improve quality of life in existing mobile home parks.		●
Provide proper maintenance of new courthouse (interior and exterior).		●
Make efforts to integrate immigrants in the county.		●

Economic Development	Capital	Operational
Need more job opportunities (higher pay/good jobs/more jobs).		●
Recruit more industries.		●
Construct an industrial park.	●	
Deal with loss of small businesses.		●
Recruit environmentally "clean" industry/business.		●

Natural Resource Preservation	Capital	Operational
Implement water quality initiatives.		●
Improve recycling program (add convenience sites, require recycling).	●	●
Develop and enforce a local Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program.		●
Develop and use energy management standards.		●
Encourage "green" / energy efficient construction.		●
Research and promote the use of sustainable and renewable energy sources.		●
Promote farmland preservation / Address loss of agriculture land to development.		●
Implement a long-term solid waste plan.		●
Promote historic property preservation.		●
Protect the county's mountains, streams, and ridges.		●
Implement air quality protection initiatives.		●
Promote and use fuel efficient (or hybrid) vehicles in county government.	●	●
Address noise pollution.		●
Address global warming locally.		●
Save trees in future developments.		●

Human Services	Capital	Operational
Support (and fund) the county's non-profits.		●
Fund (support) aging and elderly services.		●
Fund (support) services for the disabled and disadvantaged.		●
Address the issue of affordable health care / for uninsured / long-term care issues of aging population.		●
Fund at-risk youth programs.		●
Advocate to state/federal lawmakers for needs of the "working poor" / Address poverty and homelessness.		●
Contribute more to child/day care subsidy.		●
Provide better (and more) mental health services.		●
Promote the coordination of children and family services.		●
Provide support services for the Hispanic population / Services to integrate migrants into the community.		●
Provide more public transportation opportunities.		●
Fund caregiver support services.		●
Support legal services for needy citizens.		●
More public transportation opportunities for elderly and disabled.	●	●
Support families towards self-sufficiency and safety from domestic violence.		●

Land Use Planning / Development	Capital	Operational
Address unregulated building / manage growth while preserving small town atmosphere / control overdevelopment		●
Regulate land use / development restrictions / aesthetic standards / billboard regulations / Provide countywide zoning (“not spot zoning”).		●
Provide countywide sewer services.	●	●
Address affordable housing (not enough of) / Land and housing prices.		●
Develop and enforce a minimum housing code.		●
Establish a housing trust fund.		●
Enforce nuisance ordinance (manage abandoned cars, trailers, junk, trash, etc.).		●
Support road improvements, by-passes, coordination of lights, and congestion / traffic control / support widening of I-26.		●
Participate in downtown planning / parking issues.		●
Implement community planning.		●
Seek support of legislature to charge impact fees.		●
Need countywide public transportation.	●	●
Protect neighborhoods / Inform property owners of rezoning requests.		●

Public Safety	Capital	Operational
Fund crime prevention programs.		●
Provide for residents and visitors safety.		●
Provide more EMS staffing, equipment, and satellite stations.	●	●
Provide additional Rescue Squad funding.		●
Combat illegal drugs.		●
Implement a spay-neuter program / manage animal population.		●
Establish a local crisis center/emergency shelter.	●	
Address the issue of inexperienced / unlicensed drivers		●
Develop an Animal Services Volunteer Program.		●
Develop an Animal Cruelty Program.		●
Construct a new Emergency Operations Center.	●	
Implement an Emergency Communications System upgrade.	●	●
Construct fire training facilities.	●	
Better cooperation between jurisdictions in combating crime and illegal drugs.		●
Review long-term implications of volunteer fire protection.		●
Construct a law enforcement center.	●	
Consider providing Emergency Medical Services through a private provider.		●

Education	Capital	Operational
Increase funding for school buildings, infrastructure, and maintenance.	●	●
Build a new school in Mills River.	●	
Increase funding for class-size reduction initiatives.		●
Increase teacher pay / Provide local supplements.		●
Add positions to schools (i.e. auditor, nurses, technical, etc.).		●
Increase funding for schools instructional equipment.		●
Increase funding for schools food services.		●
Increase funding for BRCC capital and maintenance.	●	●
Provide funding for the BRCC Physical Education Activity Center	●	
Monitor academic achievement in schools.		●
Construct larger school buildings.	●	
Develop a funding formula for schools and community college.		●
Do more long-range school capital planning.		●
Provide additional job training for potential high school drop-outs.		●

Cultural & Recreational	Capital	Operational
Fund additional and improved soccer fields.	●	
Increase funding for parks and recreation / parks maintenance.	●	●
Fund greenways initiatives.	●	●
Promote safe bike routes.		●
Fund the construction of the Tuxedo Park and Library.	●	
Support the Mills Center for the Arts / Space for performing arts.		●
Do better parks planning.		●
Need swimming facilities.		●
Need more tennis facilities.		●
Balance recreation needs of youth and aged populations.		●
Participate in efforts to save Chimney Rock Park from development.		●