



■ A Catalyst for Collaborative Community Action

Asheville and Buncombe County are at a crossroads. Despite the recognition our community receives as a great place to live and visit, we have many challenges. As our differences have made it difficult to resolve long-simmering issues such as the Civic Center, water management and riverfront renewal, other challenges have piled up behind them. We must break the logjam of community renewal choices because if we don't, our community's uniqueness, quality of life and ability to compete with other attractive communities will surely become diminished over time.

Now is the time for the bold, collaboration that the Asheville HUB offers. The Asheville HUB began as a community visioning effort for economic development. Along the way, it embraced a broader mission of community and cultural development as well, and an amazing thing began to happen. Community leaders from the creative, technology, education, business, government, rejuvenation and agricultural sectors began to cross over traditional lines and work with each other in ways they never had before.

If that collaboration continues, coupled with a willingness to tackle our toughest issues, the Asheville HUB could be the best thing that has happened in Asheville and Buncombe County in years. Long-needed major projects will finally happen.

The Asheville HUB is a nonprofit, independent catalyst that is unifying community leaders and citizens around strategies for leveraging our competitive assets and improving our region. The HUB reference stems from Asheville's standing for over two centuries as Western North Carolina's economic, social and cultural hub.

The People behind the HUB

Hundreds of people from Asheville and Buncombe County's diverse communities participate in HUB activities. The 35 members of the Asheville HUB Alliance, who have been appointed by the City of Asheville or Buncombe County, provide leadership. It is this group whose level of collaboration is unprecedented in our community and who the community depends upon for moving Asheville and Buncombe County forward.

The Asheville HUB Alliance oversees the work of the Asheville HUB Cabinet, a larger group representing organizations such as the University of North Carolina Asheville, AB Tech, the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Mission Health and Hospitals, the Asheville Area Arts Council, HandMade in America, the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, the City of Asheville, Buncombe County and scores of businesses. These talented and energetic individuals are working together on behalf of the entire community.

Making Asheville's Vision a Reality

The Asheville HUB recently completed a visioning process identifying Asheville's competitive economic advantages and most promising opportunities. This vision offers economic, community and cultural development strategies around six clusters: technology, creativity, manufacturing, land and agriculture, rejuvenation (medicine and therapies), and enterprise.

As catalyst, the Asheville HUB is now moving to the implementation phase. It is helping determine which major projects should be undertaken first, based on criteria such as the potential return on investment, funding availability, intensity of competition from other communities, and alignment with Asheville HUB strategies. It also is helping to determine the best business models and organizations for financing and carrying out these projects.

Projects being considered by the community include a climate initiative that builds upon Asheville's climate assets, a performing arts center, National LambdaRail broadband network expansion, a digital

media center, a new Health Adventure attraction, a rejuvenation center, Eagle Street redevelopment, a riverfront parkway, and a center for health and aging.

As projects are implemented by other entities, the Asheville HUB Alliance will assume an ongoing oversight role and help ensure public and private sector accountability for each endeavor. Further, it will continue its efforts to bring Asheville's diverse constituencies together through:

- Community visioning, goal-setting, strategy formulation, monitoring and reporting (e.g., assuming responsibility for Asheville-Buncombe Vision).
- Project management and financing support for vital community projects, especially those that cannot be started or closed without such aid.
- Community advocacy and facilitation services for resolving key issues, especially those threatening our long-term prosperity and involving multiple local entities.

To sustain and build the community's momentum, the Asheville HUB will help marshal human resources and secure funding from multiple sources, including private businesses, nonprofit foundations, and state and federal agencies.

Making Good Choices

The collaboration achieved to date by the Asheville HUB Alliance is about to be tested. The group must come to terms with the fact that not everyone's favorite project can be pursued at the outset and that priorities must be established. By choosing the right initial projects through responsible decision-making, we can notch our first successes. With a few big wins, then we can undertake additional projects and make them realities, too.

If Asheville HUB Alliance leaders work together and make good choices, Asheville and Buncombe County will remain a dynamic, unique and thriving community — one made even more special by assets that are in our mind's eye today. The Asheville HUB is the catalyst that will make that happen.

The Asheville HUB Alliance

Terry Bellamy, *City of Asheville*
 Janice Brumit, *Brumit Development Company**
 Robin Cape, *City of Asheville*
 Dale Carroll, *AdvantageWest*
 Jack Cecil, *Biltmore Farms**
 Steve Cochran, *Sustainability Strategies*
 Joe Damore, *Mission Hospitals*
 Scott Dedman, *Mountain Housing Opportunities*
 Cliff Dodson, *Buncombe County Schools*
 Joyce Dorr, *Asheville Area Center for the Performing Arts*
 Wanda Greene, *Buncombe County*
 John Hunter, *Education & Research Consortium*
 Gary Jackson, *City of Asheville*
 Allen Johnson, *Asheville City Schools*
 Rick Lutovsky, *Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce*
 Kim MacQueen, *Gold Hill Associates*
 William Massey, *UNC Asheville*
 David McConville, *The Elumenati*
 Cheryl McMurry, *North Carolina Biotech Center*
 Doug Orr, *Black Mountain/Swannanoa Chamber of Commerce*
 Mack Pearsall, *Pearsall Operating Company**
 Anne Ponder, *UNC Asheville*
 Nathan Ramsey, *Buncombe County*
 Bob Roberts, *First Citizens Bank*
 Pat Smith, *Community Foundation of Western North Carolina**
 Virgil Smith, *Gannett Co., Inc.**
 Alan Thornburg, *Western Carolina University*
 Betty Young, *AB Tech*
 David Young, *Buncombe County*

* Member of the Executive Committee

For more information about the Asheville HUB, visit www.ashevillehub.com or contact David G. Brown, the Asheville HUB's executive director, at brown@wfu.edu.

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