

The Smart Growth Lenoir City Plan is guided by a vision statement and supporting planning principles that establish a shared direction for the City's future. Together, these guiding statements provide a framework for decisions about growth, development, conservation, and public investment while helping ensure that future actions reflect community priorities and support Lenoir City's long-term success.

Community Insights

The guiding statements are informed by an assessment of existing conditions and shaped by early community engagement. Together, these efforts identified the opportunities and challenges facing Lenoir City while revealing the values residents want to preserve as the City grows. The following insights summarize the key themes that emerged and provide the foundation for the Vision and Planning Principles.

Small-town character and its natural setting define Lenoir City.

Residents consistently describe Lenoir City as a welcoming, small-town community where natural beauty, established neighborhoods, and access to the waterfront contribute to a high quality of life. Existing conditions reinforce these qualities, with stable neighborhoods, high homeownership, and community preferences centered on preserving the city's identity as it grows.

Key Takeaways

- Residents value the City's small-town feel, scenic beauty, waterways, and close-knit community.
- More than 90% of survey respondents support protecting natural areas and preserving community character as growth occurs.
- Homeownership and long-term residency contribute to neighborhood stability and community identity.
- Many residents support growth if it reinforces, rather than changes, what makes Lenoir City unique.

Implication: The plan should prioritize policies and land use strategies that protect community character, established neighborhoods, natural resources, and the qualities that make Lenoir City unique.

Downtown and the waterfront represent key opportunities.

Residents see Downtown and the waterfront as defining community assets with the potential to become more vibrant destinations. Existing market conditions suggest opportunities for additional restaurants, retail, and gathering spaces that complement the City's character and serve both residents and visitors.

Key Takeaways

- Residents want a more active downtown with additional local restaurants, shopping, and entertainment.
- The waterfront is viewed as one of the City's greatest assets and a priority for future investment.
- Retail activity is concentrated along Highway 321, creating opportunities to strengthen Downtown as a complementary destination.
- Residents emphasize improving appearance, walkability, and public gathering spaces.

Implication: The plan should identify strategies to strengthen Downtown and the waterfront as connected destinations for local businesses, recreation, housing, and community life.

Parks, recreation, and community spaces support quality of life.

Residents consistently connect quality of life to parks, trails, recreation, and places where families and neighbors can gather. Demographic trends, including steady population growth and a mix of household types, reinforce the importance of expanding recreational opportunities and community spaces.

Key Takeaways

- Residents prioritize parks, trails, and outdoor recreation.
- Families want more activities for children and teens.
- Community events and gathering places are viewed as essential to strengthening civic life.
- Population and household growth will increase demand for parks and recreational amenities.

Implication: The plan should expand access to parks, trails, recreation, and community gathering spaces while integrating these amenities into future growth areas.

Jobs and local services matter, but should be well-placed.

Residents support economic growth that provides additional jobs, restaurants, and everyday services while remaining compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. Market trends indicate a stable economy supported by regional employment, but relatively lower household incomes suggest opportunities to expand local employment and commercial choices.

Key Takeaways

- Residents want additional shopping, dining, and everyday services closer to home.
- Employment has grown steadily, but many residents commute outside the City for work.
- Household incomes trail regional averages, highlighting the need for quality employment opportunities.
- Future commercial development should be context-sensitive and reinforce community character.

Implication: The plan should support targeted economic development and commercial investment in locations that improve access to jobs and services while remaining compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.

Transportation safety and congestion are seen as daily challenges.

Traffic congestion and transportation safety are among the community's most consistent concerns. Growth along major corridors has increased pressure on the transportation network, highlighting the need to better coordinate land use, transportation, and infrastructure investments.

Key Takeaways

- Congestion, intersection safety, speeding, and limited sidewalks are top concerns.
- Nearly half of survey respondents report difficulty getting around the City.
- Development is heavily oriented around Highway 321 and other major corridors.
- Residents support transportation improvements that improve safety and make it easier to walk and bicycle.

Implication: The plan should coordinate land use and transportation decisions to improve safety, reduce congestion, and expand mobility options for all users.

Growth is happening faster than many residents prefer.

Lenoir City continues to experience steady population and housing growth driven by regional demand and ongoing residential and commercial development. While residents recognize the benefits of growth, they consistently emphasize that future development should occur at a pace that infrastructure, schools, transportation, and public services can support.

Key Takeaways

- Population and household growth in Lenoir City have outpaced the Nashville regional average since 2010.
- Recent development activity has reinforced the need to align growth with infrastructure capacity.
- Managing growth was the most consistent theme throughout the engagement process.
- Residents favor carefully managed growth that protects community character.

Implication: The plan should establish a growth framework that aligns future development with infrastructure capacity, public services, and the community's vision for preserving quality of life.

Guiding Statements

Vision

The vision establishes the long-term direction for the Smart Growth Lenoir City Plan. It establishes a framework for future growth, development, conservation, and investment through planning principles that shape the plan's recommendations and implementation strategies.

Smart Growth Lenoir City provides a framework for managing growth while preserving the community's small-town character, natural setting, and quality of life. It guides future land use, transportation, infrastructure, economic development, and public investment to strengthen the local economy, strengthen neighborhoods and community places, improve connectivity, and support sustainable growth.

Planning Principles

The planning principles support the vision and provide a framework to guide future decisions. Together, they establish a clear direction for how Lenoir City will respond to change, protect what residents value, and pursue opportunities that strengthen the community over time.

Preserve Character | Protect what makes Lenoir City unique. Lenoir City will preserve its small-town identity, established neighborhoods, natural features, and historic character while improving how development looks and fits within the community.

What This Means

- Protect the City's small-town feel, scenic qualities, and established neighborhoods
- Support high-quality design, materials, and site planning that reflect local character
- Direct growth in a way that reinforces, rather than replaces, what makes Lenoir City distinct

Grow Opportunity | Promote a strong and resilient local economy. Lenoir City will expand opportunities for jobs, services, and local businesses while maintaining compatibility with surrounding areas.

What This Means

- Protect community character while accommodating appropriate economic growth
- Support local businesses, employment opportunities, and everyday services
- Direct economic development to locations that complement surrounding land uses

Strengthen Places | Strengthen Downtown and community centers. Lenoir City will invest in Downtown, the waterfront, and other key destinations to create active, welcoming places.

What This Means

- Protect Downtown's role as the heart of the community
- Support local businesses, restaurants, events, and gathering spaces
- Direct investment and redevelopment to create vibrant, walkable destinations

Connect Communities | Create a safe, connected, and reliable transportation system. Lenoir City will improve safety, reduce congestion, and expand options for getting around by car, foot, and bike.

What This Means

- Protect the safety and function of major corridors, intersections, and school access routes
- Support improvements to intersections, traffic flow, sidewalks, lighting, and bicycle connections
- Direct transportation investments to areas experiencing growth and congestion

Protect Nature | Preserve natural areas and expand recreation. Lenoir City will protect its natural environment while expanding parks, trails, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

What This Means

- Protect waterways, open space, and environmentally sensitive areas
- Support parks, trails, and recreation opportunities for residents of all ages
- Direct conservation and recreation investments to enhance access and long-term resiliency

Support Infrastructure | Align growth with infrastructure capacity and public facilities. Lenoir City will ensure growth is matched with the infrastructure and services needed to support it.

What This Means

- Protect public investments by avoiding overextension of infrastructure
- Support development in areas where services can be provided efficiently
- Direct growth to locations where infrastructure capacity can be expanded responsibly