Downtown Boone Development Association

Strategic Planning and Budget Retreat Meeting – February 10, 2026
8:30 a.m. – Jones House

Board Members Present: Ethan Rector, Renee Boughman, Fulton Lovin, Mike Forrester, Jordan Humler, Joe Lynch, Stephanie Boozer (virtually), Kendra Sink, Melody Pineda, Julia Moretz and Megan Kevorkian

Ex-Officio Members Present: Dalton George and Adrian Tait

Town Staff Present: Lane Moody

Others Present: NC Main Street Program Manager, Sherry Adams

Call to Order

At 8:35 Kendra called the meeting to order.

NC Main Street Program Manager Sherry Adams introduced herself and let the Board know that she was there to help facilitate the updating the work plan for the Downtown Boone Development Association.

She asked if the meeting could start with introductions and asked that each person state their name, business, and their first memory of Boone.

Following introductions, Sherry reviewed the DBDA vision and economic positioning statement with the Board. She noted that while the current vision remains strong, she recommended a slight update to better align with DBDA's evolving economic development focus and long-term direction.

Sherry presented a draft revised vision for 2026–2031 that emphasizes Downtown Boone as a place where community and commerce thrive together through walkability, regional connectivity, and sustainable economic growth rooted in the Blue Ridge Mountains identity.

She further noted that with this updated vision direction, she recommends moving from three economic development strategies to two more focused strategies moving forward.

Sherry asked for Board feedback on the draft vision. Following brief discussion, including comments related to length and clarity, there was general consensus among the Board in support of the draft vision, pending final review and consideration.

During discussion of the NC Main Street Assessment, Sherry noted that after reviewing the Board and program's work and progress, maintaining current momentum will likely require budgeting for additional staff support. She also recommended formally updating Lane's title to Director of the Downtown Boone Development Association, noting that the scope of the role extends well beyond that of a coordinator position. Board President Kendra Sink expressed agreement with Sherry's assessment. Dalton also voiced support for the Director recommendation and offered to help advance it as needed. Following brief discussion, Board members reached consensus in support of both recommendations.

Lane thanked the Board for their support and provided a brief update on the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant application, noting that while finalizing the proposed project budget she had developed draft RFP materials and project summaries and sought input from industry professionals on the cost estimates currently assigned to the marketing and communications strategy development and the Board leadership/governance training components. She noted that feedback indicated both estimates were likely low. Lane further shared that this could limit the amount of grant funding available to support the proposed part-time position; however, as would be discussed later in the meeting, she has worked to identify potential funding for that position within the current MSD budget.

In response to Economic Development Strategy #1 -*Transform Downtown into a vibrant, walkable hub that strengthens local connections and drives regional prosperity* - the Board reviewed a series of proposed action items intended to support this direction. The overarching goal of these proposed actions is to blend community engagement with economic growth by enhancing walkability and design, strengthening community connections, boosting economic vitality, and increasing regional visibility.

The Board discussed a range of draft concepts related to parking access, pedestrian connectivity, marketing and visitor education, partnerships, placemaking, and organizational capacity. These items are intended to help guide upcoming work plan refinements and will be brought forward for final consideration and vote at the end of the month.

Discussion included potential coordination with Watauga County on shared parking access and unified signage, expanded visitor education tools related to parking and walkability, and continued collaboration with the Tourism Development Authority and other regional partners. Proposed marketing and communications efforts include additional promotional materials, digital tools, and social media engagement goals.

The Board also discussed potential placemaking and infrastructure priorities connected to Howard Street completion, alleyway and mural enhancements, trail connectivity, and historical walking tour promotion. Organizational capacity discussions included proposed board development and leadership training, as well as consideration of future staffing structure adjustments.

Additional concepts discussed included exploring new economic vitality tools such as a Downtown Bucks-style program, expanded downtown ambassador or concierge-style resources, enhanced business and community education efforts, and future coordination with NCDOT on pedestrian infrastructure. Community engagement ideas included quarterly information sessions and volunteer recruitment goals.

The Board reviewed draft language for Economic Development Strategy #2, which focuses on cultivating collaboration among residents, entrepreneurs, and visitors to support a dynamic downtown economy built on shared experiences and sustainable growth.

The Board reviewed draft measurable action concepts across the Main Street Four-Point approach categories.

Under Economic Vitality, discussion included researching target business types that would complement existing downtown offerings and exploring recruitment or expansion opportunities. Additional concepts included exploring environmental sustainability incentives, potentially in partnership with Appalachian State University, to support building improvements and environmentally responsible upgrades.

Under Design, discussion included refreshing the rotating Public Art Program, exploring opportunities to align with the Appalachian State Rosen Outdoor Sculpture Walk, and identifying potential new sculpture or public art locations. Additional concepts included continued partnership with the Historic Preservation Commission to expand historic programming and public art opportunities, as well as exploring sustainability-focused design standards in coordination with the Town Sustainability Committee. The Board also discussed longer-term opportunities to identify additional spaces for historic interpretation and public art installations.

Under Promotion, discussion included developing storytelling content for media distribution highlighting unique downtown businesses and collaborative culture, expanding Restaurant Week programming, exploring real-time digital communication tools, and developing a comprehensive communications strategy with a goal of increasing social media engagement over time.

Under Organization, discussion included expanding workforce and partner education opportunities through periodic training for front-line hospitality, retail, and real estate professionals. Additional concepts included continued community engagement through festival presence and outreach materials, development of a volunteer recruitment and retention framework, expansion of partnerships with Boonerang organizers, and exploration of a potential Downtown Collaboration Task Force to gather input from residents, businesses, property owners, students, and visitors.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Lane asked if there were any concerns regarding the additional information provided related to the proposed budget and budget outline.

Lane noted that the most significant proposed budget adjustments include allocating additional funding to support a future part-time position and including a small sponsorship contribution to the Boone Lions Club in support of their downtown flag display program.

Lane shared that, after hearing no concerns, she will review the proposed strategic plan to ensure all identified action items are appropriately reflected within the proposed budget. She noted that updated versions of both the proposed strategic plan and proposed budget will be provided to the Board for final review and consideration for approval at the February meeting.

With no other the discussion the Board adjourned at 12:40pm.