Blueprint Woodfin is an effort to update the Town's current development regulations into a new consolidated Land Development Ordinance (or "LDO") and prepare an updated zoning map. The new LDO is a single document that integrates the current zoning, subdivision, floodway, signs, stormwater, and related standards into a modern, easy-to-use document that implements Woodfin Together and other adopted policy guidance.

Task 1, Project Initiation, included a series of ten stakeholder interviews conducted with 34 people virtually and in-person in July and August of 2025. Interviewees were selected by Town staff and chosen to represent a variety of perspectives, including Town board members, utility agencies, design professionals (architects/engineers), housing experts, Town residents, and members of the development community.

Stakeholders shared their views on what is or is not working with the Town's current development rules and review procedures. This document summarizes the input collected, but does not attribute any information to any one individual. Thoughts and ideas from discussions are paraphrased, grouped by topic, and consolidated in cases where multiple people expressed the same or similar sentiments. The input is not prioritized or listed in any particular order.

Interviewees were encouraged to share their thoughts freely, but were asked the following three questions:

1. What aspects of the Town's current regulations are problematic?
2. What parts of the Town's current application review process are in need of improvement?
3. What parts of the Town's current regulations or review process should not be changed?

The table below identifies the 34 project stakeholders interviewed.

**BLUEPRINT WOODFIN PROJECT STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWEES**

| Stakeholder | Affiliation |
|---|---|
| Larry Hopkins | Woodfin PBOA, Water District trustee |
| Gerald Greene | Retired Planner (Brevard, Jackson Co., Asheville, Knoxville) |
| Chris DeRonne | Woodfin PBOA |
| Jay McMullen | Duke Energy |
| Jennifer ___ | Duke Energy |
| Mike Parrish | Earth & Sky Dwellings |
| Chris Day | Civil Design Concepts |
| Jason Gillian | Site Design Studio |

| BLUEPRINT WOODFIN PROJECT STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWEES | |
|---|---|
| Stakeholder | Affiliation |
| Mike Anderson | Carolina Civil Engineering |
| Eric Upston | 3-Notch Engineering |
| Brian Brown | Vision Design Collaborative |
| Alvin Fuller | Summit Engineering |
| Carlton Collins | Design professional |
| Mark Meyers | Commercial property owner |
| Kevin Frank | Silverline Plastics |
| Ann Santangelo | Palmer Wahl Instruments |
| Jim Thompson | Orthopedic surgeon |
| Emily Santo | Osteo-strong |
| John Kerr | Quench Wine Bistro |
| Haylee Hirsch | Dog Hotel/Day Care |
| Ryan Appleton | Lazy Tiger |
| Susan Bean | Mountain True (housing) |
| Andrea Golden | Manufactured housing advocate |
| Reggie Jones | Ashville Habitat for Humanity |
| Jake ____ | Housing professional |
| Andrea Gonzalez | Affordable housing developer |
| Teresa Stoker | Long-term resident/neighbor |
| Glenda Overbeck | Long-term resident/neighbor |
| Jeff Angel | Long-term resident/neighbor, Fire Chief |
| Walt Brewer | Long-term resident/neighbor |
| Chip Parton | Interested party |
| Reese Lasher | Real estate agent |
| Teresa Carroll | Developer |
| Charlie Carroll | Developer |

The following pages provide a summary of the input collected from the stakeholders listed in the table above. Individual responses have been summarized into _____ topic areas. Similar thoughts or ideas are consolidated for the sake of brevity. These comments are summarized from the opinions of stakeholders and may or may not properly characterize current requirements or represent broad community sentiment. This information is used by the consulting team to identify trends and areas of focus for more discussion as the LDO project progresses.

Prior to the listing of individual interviewee comments, there are a series of general observations about the project, drawn from the input collected thus far.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS BASED ON INPUT RECEIVED

The following are some preliminary observations about Woodfin and the LDO project based on the input received and the consulting teams basic understanding of conditions in Town. These observations are likely to evolve and become more refined as the project progresses.

1. Woodfin is a mature community that was damaged by the departure of manufacturing. As the Asheville region has been "discovered" there has been a rapid increase in demand and land prices in Woodfin. This rapid price increase has been exacerbated by the lower level of affluence that existed in Woodfin generally, and the lack of land supply. The result is an acute lack of housing, gentrification, displacement, and social stratification as new more wealthy residents move into the hillsides surrounding the older parts of Town.

2. The topography and terrain of Woodfin are at the same time its best feature and biggest challenge. The Town has very little 'flat' land, and the flat land that does exist is in or near the floodplain. That puts a damper on land supply, which drives up land costs. A related issue is infrastructure, which is difficult to deploy in mountainous areas, and further contributes to land and development costs. It also means existing infrastructure often lacks capacity to accommodate growth.

3. In the past, the Town had a reputation as an easy place to do development, and there may or may not have been some abuses of the process. Certainly, there are several larger partially-completed developments in the MV district where approved master plans cannot be located or do not depict what was built. That is changing, and the Town is striving to implement and follow more formal application review processes. This has upset some applicants, and the challenge of how to address these large partially-completed but untrackable developments in the MV district.

4. Climate change is also adding some complexity and challenges. The Town is already constrained in terms of land supply, has difficult topographic conditions to deal with, has under-sized or difficult-to-right-size infrastructure to address existing and new development needs, and now has added concerns about changing floodways, loss of soil continuity on

slopes, ever-increasing stormwater runoff loads to accommodate, and a general public perception that the area is already over-developed given the growing natural constraints.

5. All these factors combine to paint a somewhat difficult picture. Woodfin is a beautiful, desirable place, that used to be a place for a wider range of people to live. Land supply and the various other constraints are making it more difficult to live in Woodfin without significant disposable income. This changes the social make-up of the community in ways that could ultimately affect its community character.

## INPUT SUMMARY

Stakeholder input statements are summarized into the following six categories:

1. Development Review Process
2. Transportation and Infrastructure
3. Housing
4. Land Uses
5. Environment
6. Town Policy

Comments are not attributed to any particular individual, and are in no particular order or priority. Statements are numbered for ease of reference. Readers are reminded that these are individual opinions, and are not asserted as facts.

## A. Development Review Process

1. The LDO should streamline the development review process so that it could be faster as a means of reducing costs

2. 90% of the services provided to residents and businesses in Woodfin are not provided by the Town (water, inspections, fire, etc.)

3. Some interviewees expressed support for more clearly codified standards and associated increased delegation to Town staff

4. There is a suggestion that minor subdivisions should include up to 5 lots, but more than 5 lots should require a major subdivision

5. Creation of flag lots during a subdivision should be limited to a maximum of three lots, and at least 40% of each lot should be comprised of road frontage

6. New developers are not paying attention to the challenges facing Woodfin

7. The Town should attempt to retrofit sidewalks into older parts of Town

8. There is confusion among business owners regarding the application of sign rules and the applicable standards

9. Some have mentioned a desire for a different procedure (other than the conditional rezoning process) that is more accessible to the public

10. In the past, applicants walked in, got a permit…but now, there is now a more detailed process to follow, and applicants need to be better informed about that

11. Development applications come to the Woodfin Water District Corporation as a last step in the process, and that is too late; should be done sooner

12. Some feel that conditional rezoning applications lack sufficient mitigation to address requested deviations from the standards

13. Some feel the Town staff does not push conditional rezoning applicants enough when there needs to be mitigation

14. Recent development review processes are more streamlined than in the past

15. In the past, Woodfin was seen as an easy place to do development, but that is changing

16. The terrain of the area means that the flexibility from conditional zoning is necessary

17. Recently, there has been a conscious effort by Town staff and elected officials to improve planning processes, have better organization, and better community input – the Town is trying to be more progressive and professional

18. The administrative review process in Woodfin has worked well

19. The public thinks that developers are putting the cart before the horse

20. The Planning Board is new and can be adversarial sometimes

21. Prior Town staff would support a proposed development up until the last minute and then call and say there was no Town support just before the hearing

22. The development review process in Woodfin is too long

23. There is a lack of predictability

24. Elected officials are reviewing preliminary plats

25. There should be more checklists to help applicants follow the process

26. There is a perception about a lack of willingness to take ownership or make a decision on the point of the Town- When asked about delays, the Town staff seems to blame the County

27. Stormwater review has delayed construction

28. Some feel the special use permit review process in Woodfin was easy

29. The Town's grandfathering rules are overly complicated

30. The development review process needs more transparency – who is holding something up – there needs to be more detail for applicant

31. The Town should consider one source (perhaps an ombudsman) to help people navigate the development process

32. Many feel like the permitting process takes too long

33. The sign rules are hard to understand, especially for multi-tenant buildings, and are "stingy" in terms of the amount of allowable signage area

34. It can be difficult to deal with Woodfin issuing development approvals, but Buncombe County doing inspections

35. The new LDO should be clear and include flexibility

36. It can be difficult, as a business, to work with so many different agencies. It is difficult to go to so many places for different permits

## B. Transportation & Infrastructure

1. Residential neighborhoods don't always need sidewalks, trails can be a good alternative, especially when larger sidewalk connections are not available

2. There is a desire for bike paths or bicycle access into Asheville (like the River Arts District)

3. Streets are difficult to build in Woodfin. Grades are steep, and its hard to accommodate turns

4. The stormwater ordinance has added a stormwater utility fee which has increased development costs

5. There is a substantial amount of confusion over roadway maintenance requirements – for example, the Town approves a development that requires heavy equipment to use a road to access their site. The equipment damages the street, and decreases safety for bicyclists and pedestrians

6. No "decent" roads exist that allow traffic to move around Woodfin easily

7. New developments are bringing increased density, but the existing roadways can not seem to handle the traffic well

8. The Town needs more trails and paths as alternatives to sidewalks

9. Some question if the Town has an adequate water supply to permit this much new development

10. Infrastructure of any kind is a problem in Woodfin; the roads are too narrow, and the terrain is difficult to work with

11. Need to maximize density in flatlands as a means of avoiding steep slopes and floodplains

12. The Town should strive for increased pedestrian orientation, like Reynolds Mountain – there may be a need to retrofit sidewalks and pedestrian features on commercial corridors

13. Sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure have been an afterthought

14. Transportation is an issue – the Town is hemmed in by the hills and mountains

15. There is a concern about TIA accuracy, and perhaps a third party engineer working for the Town may help allay public concerns about traffic engineering

16. The Town should be more walkable

## C. Housing

1. Infrastructure costs in Woodfin are high, and that can make new development (homes) more expensive

2. A property tax abatement (to the resident or a purchaser) would help with the provision of workforce or affordable housing

3. Some stakeholders suggested the Collier County Habitat for Humanity Land Trust as a model way to help provide affordable housing in Woodfin. It provides zero-interest loans to purchasers. There is an income limitation deed restriction in place, and Habitat gets a percentage of the profit from home sales for re-investment

4. There is a general perception from some that there are numerous homes that have been recently built, but that are not selling
5. Some respondents express concerns over housing units like apartments or condos that are only rented – people should buy their homes

6. There is support for the idea of "middle" housing (duplex, triplex, quadplex, small-scale attached single-family) despite concerns over rental, not ownership

7. Some interviewees expressed concerns about long periods of time between development of new subdivision and sale of homes or lots

8. Public/private partnerships would be helpful in establishing more affordable and workforce housing

9. The Town should get rid of overly-restrictive rules related to affordable housing

10. Today's affordable housing is not subsidized housing. In many cases, it is privately owned and not supported

11. The Town needs to understand the number of different players involved in the financing packages associated with affordable housing, and the challenges of securing financing

12. More flexibility in the establishment of affordable and workforce housing is needed
13. Incentives to market-rate builders to provide affordable housing do help

14. Even when amenities are included in affordable development, NIMBYism still exists

15. The Town should requiring easing, not waiving, open space and sidewalk requirements as a part of affordable housing development

16. The new LDO should have more housing types and ADUs, along with reducing fees, and easing design standards

17. There should be density waivers or inducements for providing affordable housing

18. The Town should consider governmental acquisition of land for affordable housing purposes

19. Multi-family development is a no-go from a political standpoint

20. Some say there is room for more density in Woodfin

## D. Land Uses

1. Some expressed a desire to develop a portion of proposed residential developments as short term rentals

2. Short term rental developments should maintain an on-site manager

3. Having an option for AirBNB or other short term rental can create a revenue stream for homeowners and that could help with affordability

4. Accessory dwelling units should not be allowed to be conveyed separately from the principal dwelling on the same lot

5. Some feel that the Town should require mobile home owners to improve their structures and the appearance of their lots, but enforcement in the Town is compliant-driven, and thus there is concern this kind of issue will never be addressed

6. Short term rentals (of the entire home or unit) need to be limited, but “home stays” where the owner remains present are okay

7. Some note that the Shopping Center District allows short term rentals, which is a source of concern

8. Some existing developments are not well-maintained, and are causing rodent and wind-blown trash problems. Should the Town be more proactive on enforcement?

9. The Town's mill building has cotton dust and other problems making it difficult and expensive to redevelop

10. The Town's manufactured home sanctuary should be continued, and the stance that such uses should be saved and protected is appropriate

11. Not sure what to do about gentrification or displacement

12. The Town has a building height limit because it does not have a ladder truck that can reach a five-story building, and is if did, the engine could not get around on the roads that exist

13. Residential and non-residential uses are intertwined today, and there is not a lot of use segregation in the older parts of Town

14. The new code needs more clarity about which uses are permitted (i.e., energy storage, which are new uses without a lot of context or experience)

15. The Town lacks parcels of an acceptable size to accommodate 3-story multifamily, and ironically, this results in a need to do higher multi-family buildings in the 4-5 story range

16. There are few-to-no by-right uses in Woodfin, and that should change

17. The Town should encourage more small businesses

18. The current Town rules do not deal well with manufacturing uses

## E. Environment

1. Steep slope rules have caused some difficulties in subdivision of minor plats in mountain-side areas (steep slop rules require ½ acre of land for lots, which may not be available or buildable given terrain)

2. There needs to be some additional flexibility in the steep slope rules for existing lots of record or for partially-developed (but unfinished) developments

3. The recent stormwater assessment alienated a lot of people on the west side of the River, but there are significant stormwater problems

4. The Town should be moving towards more urban development in areas most capable of accommodating development

5. Woodfin residents want a community that 'fits better' with the landscape/surroundings

6. The stormwater rules have a three-acre maximum drainage area provision, which is a problem since large sites must have multiple facilities

## F. Town Policy

1. There has been a lot of change in Woodfin lately

2. Current staff is very good

3. Given the challenges facing Woodfin, the Town should maintain a pro-development stance

4. Landslides from Helene have blocked access or complicated development of vacant lands, and the Town has not gotten the federal funding to address the storm-related problems

5. Some interviewees would like for the Town to provide more services rather than relying on outside agencies or the County (like for inspections). Woodfin should be more like Black Mountain, NC and have its own building inspectors

6. Woodfin is a community where people believe strongly in individual property rights, and do not want the government telling them what to do with their property

7. There is no discernible "center" to Woodfin

8. The Town should give some thought to the development configuration along Weaverville Road – strip shopping buildings, parking in front, few sidewalks, lack of landscaping, etc. There should be new requirements for reconfiguration when an existing building along Weaverville Road is redeveloped. The road corridor should have sidewalks, street trees, and be more pedestrian-oriented

9. The permitting fees in Woodfin are too high

10. The Town of Woodfin is a good partner in the development of affordable housing

11. The Town needs a broader definition of "vulnerable" land – sometimes, land is vulnerable because of income of its owners, not for environmental reasons

12. The Town's affordability strategy needs to address retention of existing affordable housing in addition to creation of new affordable units

13. The Town's policy guidance may be flawed in that it seeks to encourage more transit-friendly development, but also wants to maintain one- and two-story development

14. The Town wants to be sure that the Town's infrastructure does not get 'out-stripped' by new development

15. The elected and appointed boards are good at thinking about community needs

16. Woodfin staff is easy to work with

17. Some feel the Woodfin community wants a new identity different from its past, but it does not want to be like Asheville

18. There is no official downtown

**END OF REPORT**