

WAXHAW

Since 1889

The Millennial Task Force

Report: May 10th 2016



Special Thanks to...

Officer Shane Fox

Shane Fraser

Leslie Matthews

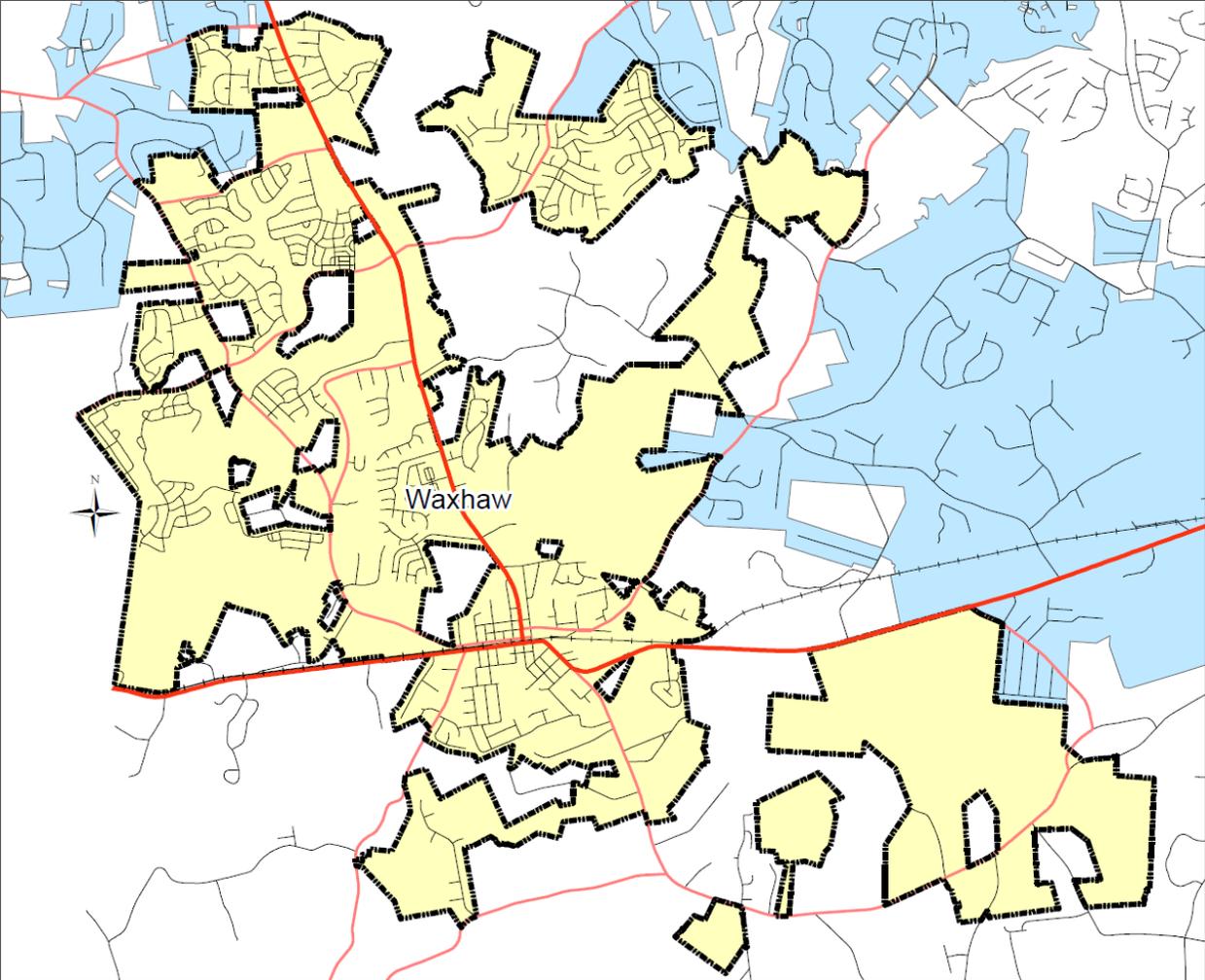
Tim Starnes

Michael Wilfong

Warren Wood

Melanie Presson and the Black Chicken Wine Cellar

Union County Chamber of Commerce's Young Professionals



Study Area

I. Introduction, Task Force Structure, and Mission

The millennial generation, defined by the Pew Research Center as those people born between 1981 and 1997, has surpassed the Baby Boomer generation to become the largest generation in the United States.¹ Like each generation before it, the millennial generation has unique characteristics in terms of educational attainment, housing preferences, and lifestyles. Capturing this population is important for towns and cities nationwide. As *USA Today* reports, “young migrant professionals are key to fueling economic growth and urban revitalization.”²

Recognizing this, the Waxhaw Board of Commissioners asked staff to create a task force to research how Waxhaw could attract and retain millennials. The following report by the Millennial Task Force outlines Waxhaw’s current demographics, discusses Waxhaw’s strengths and weaknesses as an attractive place for millennials, and concludes by offering recommendations to the Board of Commissioners regarding what Waxhaw can do to attract and retain millennials.

Structure and Mission

The Millennial Task Force was created in January 2016 and was made up of 3 Waxhaw staff members and 4 community members.

Town Staff:

Kayla Harrity (Event and Promotions Assistant)
Maxx Oliver (Planner)
Curt White (Downtown Development Manager)

Community Members:

Shane Fraser (SNA Today)
Leslie Matthews (Bank of America)
Tim Starnes (Union County Shelter)
Michael Wilfong (Michael Ryan Realty)

The task force’s mission was to research and recommend ways that Waxhaw can attract and retain millennials.

The task force held three meetings (minutes in the appendix). Meeting 1 was an information gathering and planning meeting, meeting 2 was a planning meeting for the Waxhaw Experience event, Meeting 3 was an information consolidation meeting. In addition to the meetings, the task force held an event at the Black Chicken in Downtown Waxhaw. The purpose of the event

¹ http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/11/millennials-surpass-gen-xers-as-the-largest-generation-in-u-s-labor-force/ft_15-05-11_millennialsdefined/

² <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/04/04/stateline-millennial-small-cities/25290139/>

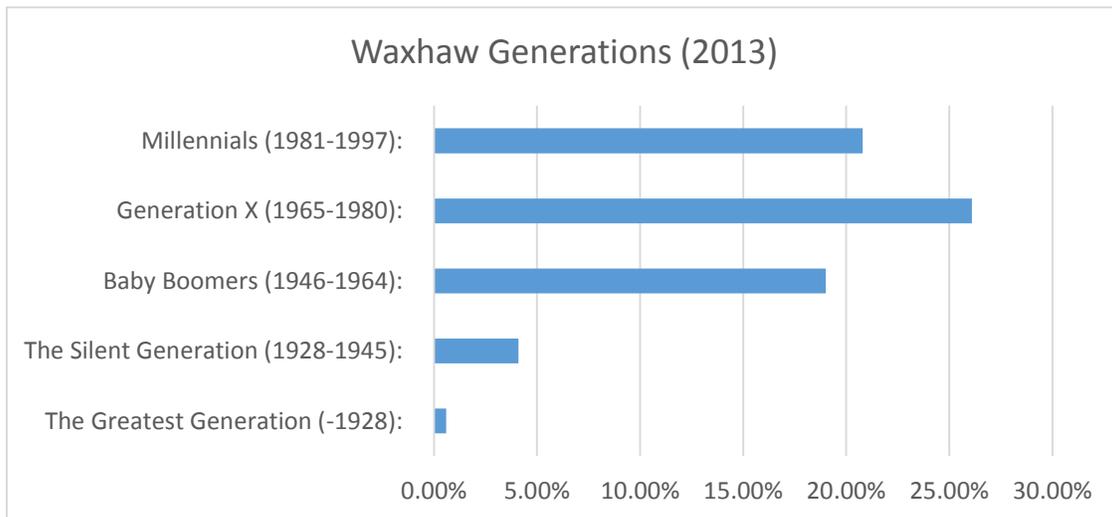
was to gather feedback from millennials about the downtown experience, while also marketing the town.

II. Demographics

Millennials make up about one fifth (20.8%) of the population in Waxhaw. This makes them the second largest group behind Generation X (1965-1980). However, it is important to take into account that some millennials were still at an age in 2013 (17, 18 years old) that would mean they would likely be living at home. These millennials likely did not have any say in choosing to live in Waxhaw. If we discount those millennials who are under 19 years old, the percentage drops to 15.15%, well behind Baby Boomers and Generation X. Secondly, we should consider the lack of college aged and recently graduated millennials. Only 3.70% of Waxhaw residents are between 20 and 24 years old. Younger millennials are almost non-existent in Waxhaw.

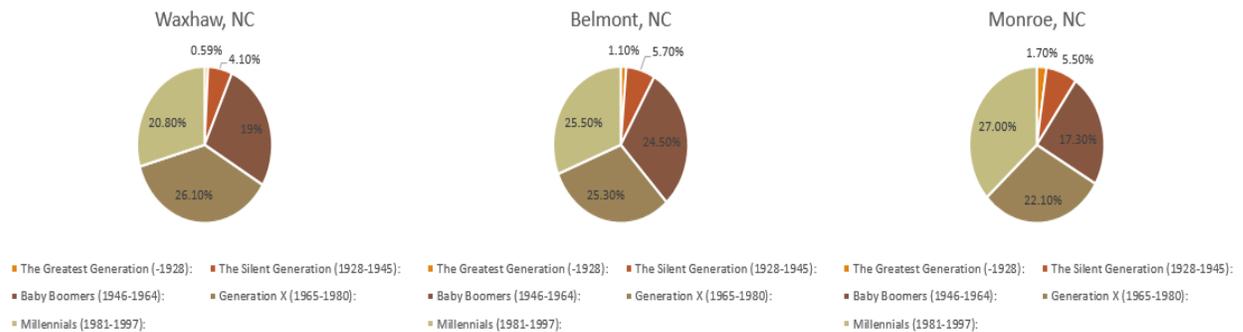
With regard to comparisons to other towns in the area, Waxhaw has less millennials as a percent of its population than Belmont, NC (25.5%) or Monroe, NC (27%).

A. Population by Age



B. Comparison to Other Towns

Waxhaw and Demographic Comparisons



III. Key Characteristics

- Millennials is the name for the generation born between 1981 and 1997 (Adults aged 18-34 in the year 2015)
- They are the largest single generation with 73.5 million people, or 23.5% of the U.S. population (Pew Research Center)
- They are the most educated generation
- Most delay marriage and having children
- 27% are self-employed (NC Main Street)
- They are tech savvy and socially connected
- They value community, family, and creativity

IV. Why Study Millennials?

As we alluded to in the introductory section, millennials are important for economic growth and revitalization. They are important for municipal competitiveness. Other towns will be competing for these entrepreneurially-minded professionals. They are important for future population growth and residential development. Goldman Sachs suggests that towns that retain millennials will see a surge in home sales when millennials reach their late 30s and 40s.³ Finally, they are important as we build a diverse and welcoming Waxhaw. Towns without a growing and young

³ <http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/pages/millennials/index.html>

diverse population may become stagnant and stop growing. This is why the Brookings Institution suggests that the future “does not look good for much of small town America.”⁴

V. What are Millennials Looking for?

The task force began by trying to understand what millennials are looking for. A great deal of research exists on the subject. The task force first studied existing research and then asked local millennials for their opinions.

A. Existing Research:

While millennials weigh a variety of factors when choosing where to live, most of the factors can be placed into what Billy Parrish, former director of the National Main Street Center calls “Cityness Qualities.”

- A Vibrant Downtown
- A Strong Sense of Place
- A Local Food Culture
- Arts and Culture
- Diversity of Housing Options
- Diversity of Business Activity

The common perception is that millennials only want to live in large cities. However, what they are really looking for are unique places that have city like qualities; hence the term, “cityness qualities.” In fact, news magazine OZY.com writes that, “The kids aren’t just flocking to the city proper, either, but to the metropolis writ large, including the fancier suburbs.”⁵ This presents a big opportunity for Waxhaw.

To say it another way, the NC Main Center and the National Association of Realtors concur that millennials prefer to live in walkable, dense, mixed-use communities defined by a sense of place.⁶ Indeed, it is hard to overstate the importance of location for millennials. The concept of “locational indifference” means that millennials place a premium on place. Dr. Robert Lang of the University of Nevada writes that, “...young adults (prefer) more expensive urban areas over lower-cost rural ones because the lifestyles and opportunities in such places make the extra burden of cost worth it.”⁷ Millennials may even often choose where to live before deciding where to work.

Finally, research also discusses the importance of “third places.” A third place, according to embracetheplace.com, is “any place in our lives other than work or home we spend time.” Third places “enhance the lifestyle experience” and may come in the form of dining, parks,

⁴ <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/03/31-population-slowdown-small-town-america-frey>

⁵ <http://www.ozy.com/fast-forward/why-millennials-are-avoiding-small-town-america/34058>

⁶ <http://www.realtor.org/news-releases/2015/07/millennials-favor-walkable-communities-says-new-nar-poll>

⁷ <http://www.npr.org/2014/10/21/357723069/millennials-continue-urbanization-of-america-leaving-small-towns>

places to exercise, open space, public gathering spaces, coffee shops, and more. They are critical in creating a sense of place and a community identity.

B. Anecdotal Research:

The task force gathered anecdotal, localized insight through its internal discussion and through the Waxhaw Experience event. Task force members who lived in Waxhaw reported that Waxhaw's schools, its historic downtown, and its quality downtown restaurants were key factors in their decisions to live in Waxhaw. For those members who did not live in Waxhaw, the key challenge was lack of housing options. The realtor on the task force specifically mentioned a lack of housing opportunities under \$200,000 and lack of diversity of the kinds of units available. One member of the task force shared that he has friends that are moving to Monroe instead of Waxhaw due to housing prices and housing options. Another couple moved to Indian Land, SC for the same reasons. The task force also mentioned that was a lack of "third places" and/or places to "hang out."

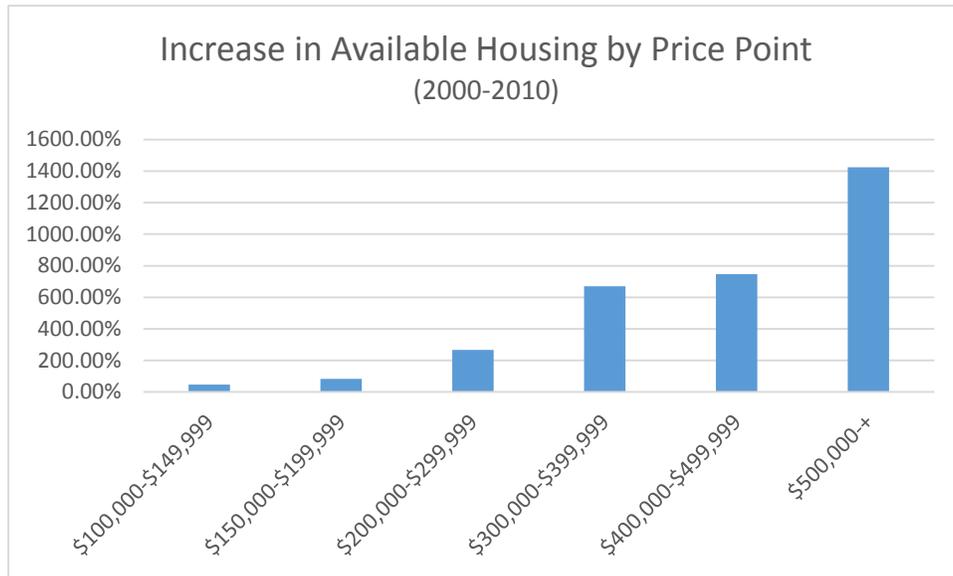
To gain a community perspective, the task force organized the Waxhaw Experience event. The Young Professionals of the Union County Chamber of Commerce were invited to spend an evening in downtown Waxhaw. Participants were invited to downtown on Thursday, March 10th to "Shop, Eat, Bring us your Receipt." The event was from 6-8pm. As long as participants shopped or ate downtown and then brought their receipt to the task force members and filled out a survey, they were entered in a drawing to win a \$100 gift card to a downtown business. The task force used the information from the survey to better understand how millennials perceive downtown Waxhaw. (Complete answers are in the appendix).

Survey responses pointed to the following as reasons why millennials come to Waxhaw:

- Community Events
- Small town feel
- Great Police Department
- Family-Friendliness
- Locally-owned shops
- Quality downtown restaurants

The survey respondents also listed challenges they perceived with Waxhaw based on their experience that evening and in general:

- Not enough variety in dining options, ex. "fast casual"
- Housing Options: One respondent gave an example of how they had to buy a house in Indian Land because they could not afford Waxhaw (see chart below).
- Business Hours: 11 out of 16 survey respondents reported that businesses were closed when they tried to visit on Thursday evening.
- Not enough places to shop



VI. Recommendations

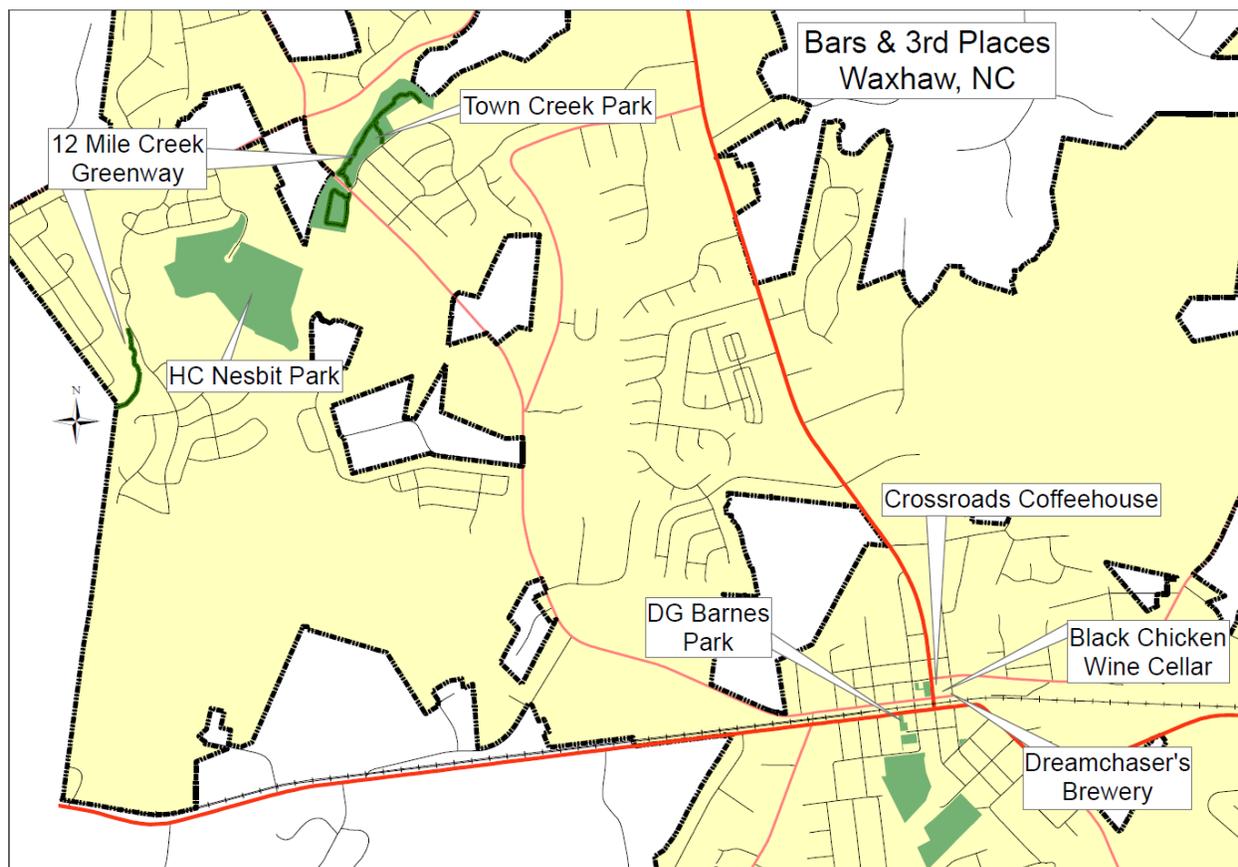
This section provides recommendations for the Board of Commissioners about steps Waxhaw can take to attract and retain millennials. The first set of recommendations are those that are immediately actionable, either because they build upon existing initiatives or because of their limited scope. The second set of recommendations are items that should be researched further.

Immediately Actionable:

1. Build on our Strengths: The task force identified several things that Waxhaw is already doing well and recommends that the town build on those strengths. The strengths that stood out the most are:
 - a. Historic Downtown-This contributes to the “sense of place” that millennials value. Efforts should be made in conjunction with the Waxhaw Promotions Committee to highlight the unique downtown for all events and town initiatives. When working with the Union County Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals, this should be at the forefront of the conversations. Staff should promote the historic downtown during the Young Professionals luncheon that Waxhaw will be sponsoring in June 2016.
 - b. Community Events-Community events are already a draw. Staff should consider adding elements to the events that appeal to residents of all ages and to those with and without children. Events like the Waxhaw Experience are a good example. Other ideas are food-oriented downtown events, events at the new brewery, and pet-friendly activities. The planned dog parade in June 2016 is a good start.
 - c. Downtown Dining-Downtown Waxhaw has many good restaurants, including a restaurant that was recently ranked the number one restaurant in the Charlotte area. Since restaurants tend to do well downtown, and since research supports the development of a local food culture, the town should encourage restaurant growth. This could be done in conjunction with the retail recruitment efforts being led by the

Downtown Development Manager. The new brewery is an unprecedented opportunity for downtown promotion. The Waxhaw Promotion Committee should promote the brewery as a destination. Also, the Waxhaw Promotions Committee should plan a First Friday event centered on restaurants.

- d. Continue the Commitment to Enhancing Downtown Walkability-The Transportation Alternatives Program grant will improve walkability and connectivity downtown. Every effort should be made to develop a walkable system that provides easy access to downtown attractions.
2. Collaborate with the Union County Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals: The town should support a close partnership with the Union County Chamber of Commerce's Young Professionals organization. This should include lunch sponsorships and outreach at Chamber events. Collaborating with this group is a great marketing and business recruitment opportunity for the town.
3. Develop "Third Places": The town should encourage the development of places where people can meet, linger, and spend casual time. This could be done as part of the Design and Appearance Committee work plan item related to the development of public gathering spaces.



4. Support Housing Diversity: Policies that encourage housing diversity should continue. The current downtown code allows apartments and townhomes. This should remain as part of the UDO rewrite. Accessory apartments, condos of all types (townhome style, apartment style), and live work units should be encouraged. Also, is it important to preserve existing housing, since it tends to be more affordable than new housing. A mix of uses is desired. Commercial and residential can work together to offset the cost and risk of the other.

Research:

1. Support a Diversity of Business Activity: The Economic Restructuring Committee will work on recommendations for an appropriate downtown business mix as part of their 2017 work plan. The town should also work with property owners and property managers to consider adding provisions to leases regarding business hours. For example, new downtown businesses should stay open in the evenings. The Downtown Development Manager should research whether or not other Main Street communities have established ratios of office to retail/restaurant uses downtown. This might be based on gross leasable area. This could be considered as part of the UDO rewrite.
2. The town should ask the Economic Restructuring Committee to include researching incentives for millennials in their incentives plan research work item. Many towns and cities nationwide are offering creative incentives that encourage millennials to live in their jurisdictions. At the very least, the committee should research whether a marketing campaign would be effective.
3. Wi-Fi: The town should look at the current reach and strength of its wi-fi network downtown and consider what it would cost to expand it. Free public wi-fi should be available everywhere in the downtown district. This will encourage people to spend time working in or taking leisure time downtown.

VII. Conclusion

The millennial generation is the largest, most educated, and most entrepreneurial generation. Understanding how to attract and retain them is an important piece of Waxhaw's economic growth plan. Waxhaw currently has some qualities that match this generation's preferences. The historic downtown, community events, and downtown dining are all attractive features upon which the town should build. However, more work needs to be done in the critical areas of collaboration, development of third places, housing diversity, and business diversity. Building an inclusive and diverse Waxhaw will contribute to economic vitality for years to come.

VIII. Appendix

- a. Meeting Minutes
- b. Survey Responses

Meeting Minutes

Millennial Task Force Meeting #1: MINUTES

February 17th, 2016

The Black Chicken

Mission: To identify ways that Waxhaw can attract and retain millennials

- I. Introductions
- II. Schedule
- III. Meeting Goals
 - a. Understand demographics
 - b. Establish a framework to help guide our assessment of how Waxhaw stacks up as an inviting place for millennials...What do Millennials Want??
 - c. Consider how Waxhaw might begin to bridge the gap

Before Next Meeting:

- Provide Curt with a Bio
- Send any additional thoughts or information regarding demographics, what Millennials want, and ideas on how to bridge the gap

Millennial Task Force Minutes:

Attendees: Curt White, Shane Fraser, Maxx Oliver, Michael Wilfong, Kayla Harrity, Tim Starnes

- I. Introductions: The group introduced themselves to one another
- II. Schedule: Curt outlined the schedule for the task force.
- III. Meeting Goal:

Curt reiterated the purpose of the task force, which is to identify ways that Waxhaw can attract and retain millennials.

 - a. Understand demographics: The group reviewed the demographic information, noting the small percentage of millennials in the Waxhaw area.
 - b. Establish a framework to help guide our assessment of how Waxhaw stacks up as an inviting place for millennials...What do Millennials Want??: The group discussed the “great downtowns” that they could think of. Wilmington and Charleston were mentioned for the restaurants, variety of options, and that stores were open late into the evening. Asheville was mentioned for its scenery, breweries, shops, restaurants, and amenities like spas. It was noted that Waxhaw has “no destinations.” Other comments included the importance of having “variety” so that everyone you go out with can find something to do that pleases them. Boone was also mentioned because of the passion that its residents have for the town. One member noted that Waxhaw “has good bones,” but that it lack a lot of the items mentioned above. The task force also agreed

that all of the activities in Waxhaw are for kids. They also mentioned that things are closed on Friday and Saturday nights, which is a negative for millennials.

Curt asked the group to discuss why those of them who live in the Waxhaw area chose Waxhaw. The following items were mentioned:

- Schools
- Being close to downtown Waxhaw
- More affordable than Ballantyne
- A couple specific restaurants were mentioned

Several challenges were mentioned:

- There are no housing options in the price range for millennials. Specifically, there are a lack of housing opportunities under \$200,000. There is a lack of housing diversity in terms of the kinds of units as well.
- The perception that all Waxhaw's growth is on the north side of town and that there is nothing downtown.

The items mentioned in the discussion were consistent with the "cityness qualities" outlined by Billy Parrish.

C. Consider how Waxhaw might begin to Bridge the Gap:

- The task force felt that the brewery would be a "pivotal point" in Waxhaw's development. It will be a true "draw."
- The task force suggested we build on our strengths, which is dining downtown and the brewery, and make Waxhaw a destination for those activities.
- The Waxhaw Experience: The task force developed an idea that would market Waxhaw to millennials while at the same time inform the task force about how Waxhaw could improve its appeal to that demographic. The task force planned an event called "The Waxhaw Experience." The event will invite the Union County Chamber of Commerce's Young Professionals to Waxhaw for the evening. The task force would also invite members of their own network to attend. Participants who visited at least two establishments would receive a raffle ticket for \$100 in gift certificates for downtown businesses. To get the raffle ticket, they would also have to fill out a survey that asked questions about their experience, including what they liked and what they didn't, in downtown Waxhaw. The task force agreed this would be a great way to promote downtown Waxhaw to millennials while also learning more about their desires. The task force agreed on roles each member would play and scheduled the event for March 10th, 2016.

- Running Clubs: The task force also decided to start doing a running club at the Black Chicken to draw people downtown. Running clubs are extremely popular with millennials in Charlotte, especially around breweries, which Waxhaw will soon have adjacent to the Black Chicken.

Millennial Task Force Meeting #2

March 2nd, 2016

Waxhaw Town Hall

Mission: To identify ways that Waxhaw can attract and retain millennials

Attendees: Shane Fraser, Michael Wilfong, Leslie Matthews (phone-in), Maxx Oliver, Curt White, Kayla Harrity

1. YPs/Waxhaw Experience Event: Survey, Marketing, Logistics

The group discussed the marketing and logistics for the Waxhaw Experience event. They group also discussed the survey and made edits.

2. Policy Recommendations

Maxx Oliver led the discussion on possible proposals for policy changes. Some changes would be in the Unified Development Ordinance, while others would be general Town policy changes or changes to the Town Code. Some ideas that were discussed:

- allow for food trucks on private property-UDO
- allow for food trucks in public ROW (not UDO-town ordinance)
- allow mobile retail/pop-up retail-UDO
- dogs at town events/dog friendly-town code
- alcohol policy...allowing at town concerts for example-town policy

- promote active uses in shopfronts downtown
- diversity of housing
- connectivity with greenways and sidewalks
- active lifestyles

-House-Charlotte type incentive? Michael Wilfong pointed out that we don't have enough stock of affordable housing for that kind of program.

-Student loan repayment assistance

The group also agreed that a promotional video for why it is great to live in Waxhaw would be good to make.

-The group also agreed we need more places to "hang out." These are referred to as "third-places," which according to embracetheplace.com are "any place in our lives other than work or home where we spend time..."

-More reliable wi-fi was also identified as need to facilitate third places as well as general work activities in the Town.

-Public Circulator Trolley-A trolley that went from neighborhoods into the downtown could be attractive for millennials and for families alike.

3. Other Outreach

The group discussed other key contacts to reach out to.

Laura Rogers (Formerly with NC Main Street)

Creative Edge

Provisions

Michael reiterated the “lack of housing options” for millennials in Waxhaw. Kayla gave the example of her own personal house search.

Shane challenged everyone to come up with an exact idea, that exact thing we think is missing. We have yet to identify exactly what kind of use or what kind of environment we are looking for.

Millennial Task Force Meeting #3

March 22nd, 2016

Provisions Food and Drink

Mission: To identify ways that Waxhaw can attract and retain millennials

Attendees: Shane Fraser, Michael Wilfong, Maxx Oliver, Curt White, Kayla Harrity

1. Waxhaw Experience: The group discussed the feedback from survey responses at the Waxhaw Experience.
2. The group consolidated the recommendations from their own discussions, research, and the Waxhaw Experience to create the list of recommendations for the report.

Survey Responses

The Waxhaw Experience

SURVEY RESULTS

Is this your first time visiting and/or dining in Waxhaw?

1. No
2. No
3. Yes
4. No, we come often
5. Yes
6. No
7. Nope
8. No
9. No
10. No
11. No
12. No
13. No
14. Nope
15. No
16. No

What locations did you dine in tonight?

1. Maxwell's Tavern, Waxhaw Creamery
2. Maxwell's Tavern, Waxhaw Creamery
3. Maxwell's Tavern, Waxhaw Creamery
4. Maxwell's Tavern, Waxhaw Creamery, Black Chicken
5. Maxwell's Tavern, Waxhaw Creamery
6. Maxwell's Tavern, Black Chicken
7. ~~Zoe~~ Maxwell's Tavern
8. Maxwell's Tavern, Black Chicken
9. Black Chicken
10. Black Chicken
11. Maxwell's Tavern (great atmosphere)
12. Maxwell's Tavern
13. Black Chicken
14. Maxwell's Tavern, Waxhaw Creamery
15. Maxwell's Tavern, Waxhaw Creamery
16. Maxwell's Tavern, Black Chicken

If none, why not?

7. 7 people

What locations did you shop in tonight?

1. No shopping tonight
2. None

3. None
4. N/A
5. None
6. N/A
7. Glok Chicken
8. None
9. None
10. Black Chicken
11. Provisions- such awesome unique spices/items
12. None
13. None
14. -
15. None
16. None

If none you did not shop, why not?

1. We came down just for dinner, plus I believe most of the shops were closed when we arrived
2. All the stores were closed
3. Not enough time, and shops were closed
4. All Closed
5. Timing. We arrived after most places had already closed
6. We arrived after most shops were closed. We arrived in town at 7:30pm
7. -
8. Didn't seem open. What shops are here?
9. I live here
10. -
11. -
12. Closed
13. Live here
14. Everything was closed ☹
15. Provisions was closed
16. Funki Monki and Gracious Interiors were already closed

How did you hear about our event?

1. Actually, we didn't know there was an event
2. Shane F.
3. Friend from church
4. Shane Fraser
5. My friend Shane Fraser and his wife invited us
6. Word of mouth
7. My peeps on the skreets
8. Flyer
9. In person
10. Wife
11. Curt White told me about it
12. Curt and Kayla
13. In person
14. Shane and Elise Fraser

15. Our group
16. Kayla Harrity and Michael Wilfong

Would you consider coming to Waxhaw again?

1. Of course- I live here and love it
2. Yes!
3. Yes
4. Yes
5. Absolutely
6. Yes
7. Oh yeah!
8. Yes
9. Yes
10. Live here
11. Yes
12. Heck Yeah
13. Yes
14. Of course
15. Yes!
16. Yes

Is there anything else you'd like to add about Waxhaw?

1. Waxhaw does a great job of putting on community events throughout the year- summer festivals, Christmas shows, etc... I also love the small town feel and I hope the town always tried to maintain as much of that as possible even as it continues to grow. I'd also like to give a plug for the police department; I've has several interactions with the local police (assistance with installing a car seat, I was pulled over for an expires tag and I was the first to come upon a car wreck late at night) and in each of those interactions the officers were very courteous and helpful- that says a lot about the town and community.
2. A fast dining experience, all the restaurants are "sit down" and take a while to eat. I would also like an Asian food option, maybe sushi. We were recently shopping and searching to purchase our first home. WE wanted to live in the Waxhaw community due to my husband's job. AS we were searching, we found that there were VERY few choices that fit our price range. It seemed like every neighborhood was ½ million dollar homes or families and no starter homes. We decided to expand our search into Indian Land, SC and we found more options in our budget. The tax differences also helped. We are happy that we are only a few miles away from this great community! We would love to see this community expand and have more choices for small families like ours to start our lives!
3. It has a great atmosphere. It feels very family friendly, but feels like it is expanding for the millennials.
4. WE love Waxhaw but there is never any businesses open when we come in the evenings. Late night wandering shops would be great! We also talk often about the struggle to find affordable homes when it's time to buy.
5. It is beautiful. My wife loves the vibe of the downtown area and most of the people we met were very nice. The atmosphere is very attractive.

6. Great town opportunity to become a building scene. Could attract more people with weekly deals or an active athletic scene.
7. Be there for the young liberals
8. Great feel, Beautiful, very dark and needs more lighting
9. -
10. Thai Restaurant, shopping boutiques
11. It's a great downtown, but could appeal to millennials more by offering unique locally owned retail and food establishments. Heritage is a great start... a place worth driving to. Unique boutique and gift shops (along the lines of paper skyscraper) would probably be good as well. I've also heard about a growing trend of library bars. I feel like something like that would fit in with the character of Waxhaw.
12. Waxhaw needs more restaurants downtown
13. -
14. Need more options to eat- more variety. We love the train!
15. Another restaurant like Maxwell's!
16. Enable the ability to bring alcohol to music nights and other social events or sell it there. (We have been to events in the past where you could bring your own alcohol, but we couldn't bring it outside of the designated are). Partner with the new brewery to have activities that bring young couples/families out, such as corn hole tournament there or have a big screen and play a family friendly movie after dark (block off the road in front of the brewery for this). Have someone head up a running club. Be more dog friendly. At first Fridays, collect email addresses from people and send out the Village News via email and include the events. (You may already be doing that, but never hurts to get more emails). Let people unsubscribe if they don't want it, but this is a good way to get ALL the information out there instead of having to reply to 20 facebook posts ☺

Zip Code:

1. 28173
2. 28226
3. 28210
4. 28173
5. 28210
6. 28173
7. 28173
8. 29720
9. 28173
10. 28173
11. 28269
12. 28173
13. 28173
14. 29707
15. 28173
16. 29720