

# MAXWELL AVENUE WOONERF CHARRETTE & SCHEMATIC DESIGN

*Town of Huntersville, NC*



# Public Engagement Plan

September 2024



## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Public Engagement Plan is to outline the methods that the Town of Huntersville and the consultant team (Fisher Associates with support from StreetPlans) will use to ensure that adequate opportunities are afforded to stakeholders and the general public in the facilitation of the Maxwell Avenue Woonerf Charrette planning process.

## PROJECT GOAL

The Town of Huntersville will receive a Final Schematic Design Report for the Maxwell Avenue Woonerf that includes potential temporary (Tactical Urbanism) and permanent strategies for achieving the vision. The concepts explored during the Charrette process may be applied to other potential future Woonerfs in the town.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2023, the Town of Huntersville adopted a Downtown Plan. The Plan provides a framework, strategy, and organizing principles to achieve goals related to infrastructure, transportation, land use, economic development, and environment.

One of the Organizing Principles set forth in the Plan is Mobility. Through this principle, the Town aims to treat the car as a guest on all streets, create an optimal pedestrian environment, plan for connected automobile circulation, and seek on-street parking solutions. This principle is evidenced in the illustrative plan, which identifies several potential “woonerfs,” defined as mixed-use shared/living streets.

The Downtown Plan identifies the Maxwell Avenue Woonerf as a Near Term potential catalytic project. In the illustrative plan, Maxwell Avenue functions as a linear park, walkway, bikeway, service area, plaza, roadway, and parking area. It presents an opportunity for temporary closure of the street for pedestrians only during special events.

Through the Maxwell Avenue Woonerf Charrette, the Town and project team aim to:

- Confirm the Woonerf approach;
- Develop a design concept and alternatives;
- Earn buy-in from the community, property owners, and businesses;
- Consider phased implementation (temporary and permanent).

## PROJECT TEAM

The purpose of this Public Engagement Plan is to outline the methods that the Town of Huntersville and the consultant team (Fisher Associates with support from StreetPlans) will use to ensure that adequate opportunities are afforded to stakeholders and the general public in the facilitation of the Maxwell Avenue Woonerf Charrette planning process.

### Town of Huntersville

Staff from the Town of Huntersville are responsible for project direction, oversight, and administration. The Town will maintain the website and be the initial point of contact for issues related to the Maxwell Avenue project. Town staff will secure meeting locations and promote public engagement opportunities through official website and social media channels.

#### Primary Contact:

Heather Maloney  
Transportation Manager  
hmaloney@huntersville.org  
O: 706-766-2214

### Fisher Associates

Fisher Associates is the consultant to the Town and project lead. Fisher staff will be responsible for all project scope items and for coordination with subconsultant firm StreetPlans. Fisher will facilitate the public Design Charrette and create promotional materials to be distributed by Town Staff. Following the Charrette, Fisher will lead the creation of the Schematic Design Report.

This includes planning, engagement, facilitation, and technical expertise to develop the Report.

#### Primary Contact:

Don Naetzker  
Project Manager  
dnaetzker@fisherassoc.com  
O: 585-334-1310 ext 226  
M: 585-690-5008

#### Secondary Contact:

Becky Timmons  
Urban Planner  
btimmons@fisherassoc.com  
O: 585-334-1310 ext 262  
M: 585-484-0377

## Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

The PAC will serve as an advisory board across the entire process. This ensures regular check-in and feedback from members. It will include representatives from each relevant Town department (Transportation, Public Works, Engineering, Planning, Communications, and Parks and Recreation), as well as the Assistant Town Manager.

## Project Advisory Committee Meeting Topics

The following are tentative topics that will be discussed by the PAC. The topics are subject to change and additional meetings may be added, as necessary. Throughout the process the PAC will review and discuss comments received by the public. Refer to the project schedule that follows for meeting timing.

- 1 Project Initiation Meeting**
  - Introduction to project, relationship to Downtown Plan
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Schedule, engagement, and tasks
  - Charrette timing
  - Project Deliverables
- 2 Review of Inventory Findings / Preparation for Outreach Activities**
  - Review background research and findings
  - Charrette logistics and engagement goals
- 3 Review of Potential Alternatives**
  - Presentation of draft plan, perspectives, illustrative master plan, subdivision concept, and other related concepts and data to the PAC for feedback.
  - PAC provide comments on the Draft Schematic Design Report.
- 4 Review of Draft Report**
  - Provide final comments on the full draft prior to approval process

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The community engagement process will establish two-way communications between the project team and the community to create a Schematic Design Report for Maxwell Avenue. The goal of the process is to develop broad-based consensus on various elements of the Schematic Design, while working with the framework of the Downtown Plan's goals.

It is important to note that this project – and by extension the engagement process – is strongly connected to the Downtown Plan. The zoning code update is, in effect, an implementation step, i.e., a continuation of that effort.

The Maxwell Avenue project will build off the extensive engagement efforts done during the Downtown Plan process. The public engagement focus will be on testing design alternatives and creating consensus and enthusiasm among the community.

While this Public Engagement Plan is intended to provide a framework for community participation, it is also intended to be a dynamic strategy. This Plan is developed with the flexibility to evolve over the course of the project as the effectiveness of various tools and techniques are evaluated and modified to better suit the project and community.

The Plan's approach incorporates the following steps to ensure a quality public engagement process:

- **Community Needs and Expectations:** Early in the process, the project team will identify key stakeholders and community leaders who represent the broader community.
- **Objectives:** The objectives established in this Public Engagement Plan will enable the project team to target outreach efforts accordingly. The objectives are based on the goals of the Maxwell Avenue project. They aim to outline the community's role and provide a clear understanding of what will be achieved.

- **Tools + Outreach Strategies:** The tools and outreach strategies identified in this Public Engagement Plan have been chosen based on the team's understanding of the community's expectation for involvement. The tools and strategies may vary depending on whether the intent is to inform, consult with, or collaborate with the intended audience.

### Charrette Format

Fisher intends to use a Charrette format to engage the community and bring special expertise to Huntersville. We will collaborate with StreetPlans, a nationally renowned expert in Tactical Urbanism, on this three-day intensive urban design workshop. A Charrette is a method used to gather community input as the consultant team works on the project on-site, in a public setting. This approach will allow the team to engage directly with the community and produce a large number of conceptual alternatives in a short period of time. We will invite key members of Huntersville's professional community, and will bring in additional brain power around ideas of equity, sustainability, incremental development, and market analysis.

Ideally, the Charrette will take place in a highly visible location such as an empty storefront within the study area, or on an adjacent property. Indoor activities can take place in a building, with outdoor activities housed in a temporary shelter or structure. Providing music and food will help attract participants and engage passersby.

The charrette will allow members of the community to see concepts developed in an open studio and discussed in "real time" while providing their thoughts to the team. Through a series of technical meetings, an open studio, and pin-up discussions, the team will use feedback loops to develop and refine concepts for the site.

### Tactical Urbanism

To explore projects identified through the Charrette process, Fisher and StreetPlans will identify Tactical Urbanism alternatives to test and move certain recommendations toward permanent solutions, and to offer low cost and short time frame solutions. These "quick-build" projects are a means to help the community determine what works (and what doesn't) before allocating or pursuing funding toward long-term investments.

This plan outlines an approach to achieve the following objectives:

- Listen to stakeholders and community members
- Solicit feedback and input on draft recommendations for the Maxwell Avenue Woonerf Schematic Design.
- Generate excitement and interest in the community for the Maxwell Avenue Woonerf.

### Engagement Planning

There are three phases to the engagement process. The first will take place in conjunction with **Task 1: Project Initiation & Kick-off Meeting** and **Task 2: Base Mapping, Background Research & Case Studies**. During this phase the Project Team, with guidance from the Project Advisory Committee, will identify stakeholders and the optimal ways to engage them.

During this time the Team will also develop materials for the Design Charrette, including base maps, presentations, and necessary graphics. Community outreach in this phase will advertise the Charrette and build awareness and enthusiasm for community input.

The bulk of the outreach activities will occur during **Task 3: Charrette Design and Facilitation**. The goal of this phase is two-fold:

First is to educate the community on the project, process, and goals. This includes an explanation of what a woonerf is and how it will function, It will be clearly communicated that the intent of this project is to implement one of the recommendations of the Downtown Plan, not to "re-litigate" the Downtown Plan itself.

The second goal will be to gather information from the community to inform the illustrative plan and Schematic Design Report. The following page describes the charrette process.

The Project Schedule at the end of this document provides a general timeline for engagement activities. Actual dates will be determined and refined during the course of the project.

## Design Charrette Details

- 1 Print/Web Materials** To promote the Design Charrette, the team can create postcards and fliers to be printed, emailed, and posted online. Engagement materials including base maps, presentations, display boards, and materials for a tactical urbanism exercise will be prepared.
- 2 Design Charrette** A Design Charrette, scheduled for October 17-19, 2024, will be an intensive engagement event with several opportunities for interaction between the project team, Town staff, stakeholders, and the general public. It will include a large meeting, small group gatherings, and one-on-one conversations.
- 2a Kick-Off Meeting / Hands On Workshop** On the first day of the Charrette, the consultant team will hold a kick-off meeting comprised of a presentation and hands-on session. During the meeting, the team will present best practices for planning and design, along with site background information and goals for the project. Woonerf examples will be presented to demonstrate the success of the approach and provide inspiration to the community.

Following the meeting, a hands-on workshop will be facilitated by the project team. Participants will have the opportunity to draw on base maps, sketch ideas, and share their vision for the neighborhood and the Maxwell Avenue woonerf. At the conclusion of the hands-on session, a representative from each table will relay their key ideas to the larger group.
- 2b Open Studio** On the second day of the Charrette, the team will set up a studio with work stations and an area for technical meetings with municipal departments and other key stakeholders. During the open studio, the public will be invited to come in, share ideas and feedback, and see the work being done. Meetings should be pre-arranged with the help of Town staff.

On the last day of the Charrette, the team will work to address comments and feedback from the technical meetings and public input. Concepts will be refined and draft illustrations will be produced.
- 2c Tactical Urbanism Exercise** A focused tactical urbanism exercise will be conducted for a portion of the Maxwell Avenue woonerf. This will be an opportunity to demonstrate an example of temporary infrastructure and show the public what is possible for the future.
- 2d Open House Pinup** The day will wrap up with a progress presentation and open house pinup to confirm the direction of the work being produced. After the Charrette, the team will return to their offices to continue refining the plans, diagrams, and illustrations for the Schematic Design Report.

## Project Schedule & Engagement Milestones

