

8.0 Community Appearance & Design Standards 8-1

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

Lake Lure's appearance, and the image it projects, is determined primarily by the natural and built environments, especially those which can be seen initially from public vantage points such as the roadways. The combination of the two creates the sense of place that attracts so many visitors to the area and influences their decisions to return. When describing the town's unique character, residents often refer to its natural beauty, specifically the lush landscape and the scenic views. The small town feel, which is determined mostly by the low-density development pattern, and the scale and style of architecture, is also among the characteristics used to describe the place. As evidenced by recent community efforts, maintaining and improving the community's appearance is important to its residents.

8.2 Inventory and Existing Conditions

Various features have been identified that have the greatest effect on community appearance. Each contribute to the quality of the environment and each may be threatened by future growth. Among them are landscape/landscaping, architecture, quality of development, signs, roadways, and lighting. In addition to these features that are all physical components of the environment, noise pollution has been identified as another issue that affects the appearance of the town in that it shapes residents' and visitors' image of Lake Lure. The specific conditions associated with each aspect of community appearance are described in more detail below.

Landscape/Landscaping

While evolving from its mountain landscaping to landscaping of a more suburban nature, and as noted in the Natural Resources section, Lake Lure is blessed with dense vegetation, a prominent component of the landscape. With each new development, natural vegetation is cleared. Providing landscaping on developed sites helps to soften development. Trees and shrubs visually break up the hard surfaces of the built environment, reduce the glare created by it, and screen the less attractive components of development (e.g., mechanical equipment, dumpsters, vehicles/parking areas). The replacement of indigenous vegetation through street tree planting and site-appropriate landscaping is encouraged and, in some zoning districts, is required. Commercially zoned districts, such as the Ingles site, would apply landscape requirements.

Architecture

Lake Lure's original Mediterranean-Mission-style architecture, which has been replicated throughout its municipal and some



Maintaining scenic viewsheds is key to protecting the community appearance of Lake Lure.

commercial buildings, is now one of several types in found in the town. Cabins nestled in the trees on the hillsides and along the lake's edge are constructed using natural materials and colors so as to blend with their surroundings.

Historic properties, be they designated or on a study list, help to define the character of Lake Lure but are not currently protected.

Residents of Lake Lure are also concerned with the appearance of the newer architecture and the impact of it on viewsheds and the overall appearance of the town. The need for architectural standards for residential and commercial development has been expressed via the survey results, stakeholder interviews and community meetings. According to the survey, 80% of the respondents would like to establish architectural guidelines for new commercial development and over 60% would like to see architectural guidelines drafted for residential development. Residents are also concerned about the increasing volume and size of some new residential construction as it is on a scale larger than what has historically been built in Lake Lure.

Quality of Development

Development, and its smooth blending with the environment, is also key to maintaining community appearance. Development that is sensitive to the environment considers multiple elements. For example, the placement of buildings, the size and location of parking areas, the integration of landscaping, the architectural materials, entry signs or monuments, and the configuration of roadways relative to the topography all contribute to the quality of development. The successful design approach minimizes the impact of each and, in some cases, reinforces the character of the town.

While the quality of new development in the town is a concern, residents and property owners are worried about the impact of poorly designed development within the view of Lake Lure. Developments beyond - but visible from within - Lake Lure's boundaries threaten the town's appearance. The clearing of trees for roads and building sites is having the greatest impact as such changes can be seen on distant ridgelines and mountainsides from miles away and from multiple vantage points. This presents a serious problem as watersheds are negatively impacted, viewsheds are interrupted and the town's character is adversely altered. (For more information please see the *Natural Environment and Open Space* section.) Lake Lure has no control over development beyond its current boundaries.



One type of sign used to mark the entry into Lake Lure.

Signs

Signs along roadways can interrupt views and otherwise negatively affect the appearance of the town, especially if the size, quantity and design are not in keeping with the character of the area. Many of the concerns expressed by the residents were in response to signs that are located in the county, just outside the town limits. Such signs, which include small billboards, are varied in their design, style, size and materials. Grouped together, they present a cluttered appearance. Most of the signs within the town's jurisdiction are understated, and the newer signs conform to the sign regulations, originally adopted by the town in 1979 and amended multiple times since then. While the town cannot control the design of signs in the county, it can maintain and improve signage within the town through ongoing enforcement of the sign regulations. Signs must serve a purpose (e.g., identification and direction) without detracting from the quality of the environment.

Signs can be used to enhance the community appearance by adhering to a common set of design standards and through repetition. Gateways, or entrances, into town are an example of an opportunity to reinforce character through coordinated signage. A single sign type repeated at each entry point can introduce the town, create a sense of arrival, and be used to convey the theme or sense of place. Lake Lure has four primary entrances into the town. Improvements to the gateway entrance at the intersection of NC-9 and US-64/74A, spearheaded by the park and recreational board, are underway.

Roadways

Lake Lure has attractive road corridors and scenic byways that could lose their aesthetic quality if development along them removes or changes the appealing features that earned the scenic byway designation. Currently, Lake Lure lacks controls that would substantially protect these corridors from being transformed into less attractive routes. Please see the *Transportation and Circulation* section for more information.

Lighting

Light pollution is a factor that diminishes the quality of life for residents in Lake Lure. An often cited example in community meetings is the larger commercial development, such as the Ingles grocery store. According to the survey (See Appendix C) and stakeholder interviews, there is a desire to improve regulatory measures to limit light pollution.

Noise

Noise generated from vehicles, specifically improperly muffled vehicles, creates undesirable levels of noise. Amplifying the problem, the steep slopes of the mountains that surround the lake create a wall off which noise is deflected. According to the survey (See Appendix C) and stakeholder interviews, there is a desire to improve regulatory measures to limit noise pollution.

8.3 Summary of Issues and Opportunities

- The scenic byway and other roadway corridors are not protected from future development and related changes that would adversely affect the appearance of them.
- There is a lack of sense of arrival to the town. Work has begun on one “gateway;” however, no plans for similar treatment of other town gateways have been developed.
- Structures in the town that have historic value need to be identified and protected.
- There is a lack of a means to communicate to developers the community’s character and the desired quality of development.
- Future development beyond Lake Lure’s jurisdictional boundary has the potential to degrade the quality of existing viewsheds that contribute greatly to the town’s general appearance.
- Excessive light pollution and noise pollution negatively affect the character of the community.

8.4 Goals, Objectives and Policies

CA Goal 1: A clear ‘sense of place’ for Lake Lure

Objective CA-1-1: Further develop Lake Lure’s ‘sense of place’ by creating design standards.

Policy CA-1-1.1:

Develop design guidelines that supplement standards contained in the zoning regulations and convey the community’s expectations.

(1) Gather public input and create an inventory of a full range of features that contribute to the character of the town

(2) Create a set of community design guidelines (visual manual) to align future development with Lake Lure’s sense of place. *This will depict the design standards (with graphics and text) to*

clearly communicate the desired aesthetics that Lake Lure wishes to accomplish. Architectural styles, building height, building orientation, materials, and landscaping are among the types of features for which standards may be developed.

(3) Improve public buildings and civic space in accordance with the guidelines to demonstrate importance of adhering to them.

Policy CA-1-1.2:

Develop and adopt a scenic overlay zoning district that applies to the designated North Carolina Scenic Byway corridor. *A scenic overlay district is superimposed over one or more general-use zoning designations for a particular purpose, such as protecting scenic viewsheds, for example. Include setbacks, landscaping, driveways; these shall be among the elements for which specific regulations are defined.*

Policy CA-1-1.3:

Develop streetscape design guidelines

(1) Enhance roadway corridors by developing uniform standards for streetscape elements. The design of each and the combination of them shall reinforce the town's character. Guidelines may address a wide range of elements including sidewalks, bicycle facilities, landscaping, signage and lighting and other streetscape amenities, street intersection crosswalks.

(2) Coordinate with NCDOT to ensure such guidelines may be implemented within NCDOT rights-of-way.

(3) Implement streetscape design guidelines in the town center. *Use the town center as precedence for private development to follow.*

Objective CA-1.2: Preserve character-defining elements



Commercial developments lack regulations to improve appearance.

Policy CA-1-2.1: Develop a study to identify structures that locally have historic value. *This study should inventory structures and properties that are already designated by the state, are on the National Register of Historic Places or are on a study list. In addition, this should include the structures and properties that are deemed to have historic value by the residents and property owners of Lake Lure.*

Objective CA-1-3: Create a ‘sense of arrival’ at or near Lake Lure’s corporate limits.

Policy CA-1-3.1:
Develop gateways for the entrances to Lake Lure

- (1) Define gateways to Lake Lure and develop a coordinated set of design plans for all gateways to create a uniform sense of arrival at the entrances of the town.

Objective CA-1-4: Evaluate and improve current regulations to enhance the quality of the environment.

Policy CA-1-4.1: Limit light and noise pollution

- (1) Develop a regulation to restrict light pollution, controlling foot-candles, specifying down-lighting, and a maximum height for cut-offs / directional parking and other light luminaries. *A balance needs to be determined between public safety and illumination of business areas.*

- (2) Identify the most common sources of noise pollution and develop regulations to minimize them (i.e. motorcycles).

Objective CA-1-5: Influence the quality of development beyond Lake Lure that impact viewsheds within the town’s limits so that these areas are consistent with Lake Lure’s character.

Policy CA-1-5.1:
Consider extending Lake Lure’s current and future regulations to areas beyond Lake Lure’s current



Viewsheds to distant mountain ranges are instrumental to Lake Lure’s community appearance. However, areas beyond Lake Lure’s incorporated boundaries are not subject to the town’s regulations or any development regulations.

jurisdiction if an extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) is established. (See policies regarding enforcement in *Government & Administration*.)

(1) Identify areas that are beyond Lake Lure's boundaries that are visible and could directly impact the appearance and image of the town if developed. Determine how town's regulations would offer protection from negative impacts, and strengthen regulations as appropriate.

(2) Apply the town's regulations to areas within the ETJ once established, as appropriate