

RECODIFY CASHIERS

Community Character Analysis (public review draft)

11-30-23



Recodify Cashiers is an effort being undertaken by Jackson County, in cooperation with the residents and business owners of the Cashiers area, to update the zoning standards for the Cashiers Commercial District (Section 9.3 of the Jackson County Unified Development Ordinance, or the “UDO”). Recodify Cashiers intends to bring the development regulations and review procedures in UDO Section 9.3 into closer alignment with the County’s adopted policy guidance for the area, the ULI study conducted for Cashiers, and the stated desires of community residents.

Task 3, Community Character, of the Recodify Cashiers project was completed in early May of 2023, and collected community input on the kinds of development that are consistent with Cashiers’ community character. In other words, Task 3 asked Cashiers’ residents and business owners to identify the key features of existing development that combine to make Cashiers “feel like Cashiers.” These features include things like building materials, building placement, signage, sidewalks, and many other development-related aspects. This document is the summary of that input.

This Analysis attempts to summarize which development features are most important or impactful to Cashiers’ community character and describe how these features can best be configured to maintain consistency with the established community character. In other words, the ideas in this Analysis are a “recipe” for how new development in Cashiers should be configured so it will better “fit in” with the community.

One important point to remember is that while preservation and emulation of the established community character is an identified goal of Recodify Cashiers, the project also seeks to make some changes to Cashiers’ current development template. Policy guidance and community input reveal a desire for a wider variety of residential options, a more vibrant village core, increased vehicular and pedestrian connections, and greater protection of open space. Aspirational uses, like mixed-use development and a wider variety of housing types, and aspirational infrastructure configurations like a well-connected pedestrian network, are largely absent from the current commercial district, and thus are not part of the *current* community character. In recognition, this Analysis provides some guidance on how best to configure new development to be respectful and supportive of established community character while also helping address these aspirations.



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This Community Character Analysis is organized into seven main sections or categories. These categories were identified and discussed during the presentations in Task 3 conducted in May and June of 2023. These seven sections focus on a particular aspect or element of community character and include details about the current conditions as well as information about aspirational goals, where relevant. Each category also includes a series of short character statements and/or annotated imagery that describes how new development can best be configured to emulate and promote established community character.

The seven sections in this Community Character Analysis include:

1. General Character;
2. Land Use;
3. Lotting Patterns (how lots are configured);
4. Street Design;
5. Open Space;
6. Buildings; and
7. Site Features (parking, landscaping, signage).

The ideas in this Analysis will be the subject of further community discussion, and following further refinement, will be incorporated into new Section 9.3 of the Jackson County UDO as purpose and intent statements and review criteria for new development applications in Cashiers.

One important aspect to remember is that while there are some basic themes and commonalities to development in Cashiers, not all development is the same, and some degree of variation is desirable. Not all new development should match existing development. At the same time, new development should follow the principles outlined in this Analysis in order to maintain consistent with established community character.



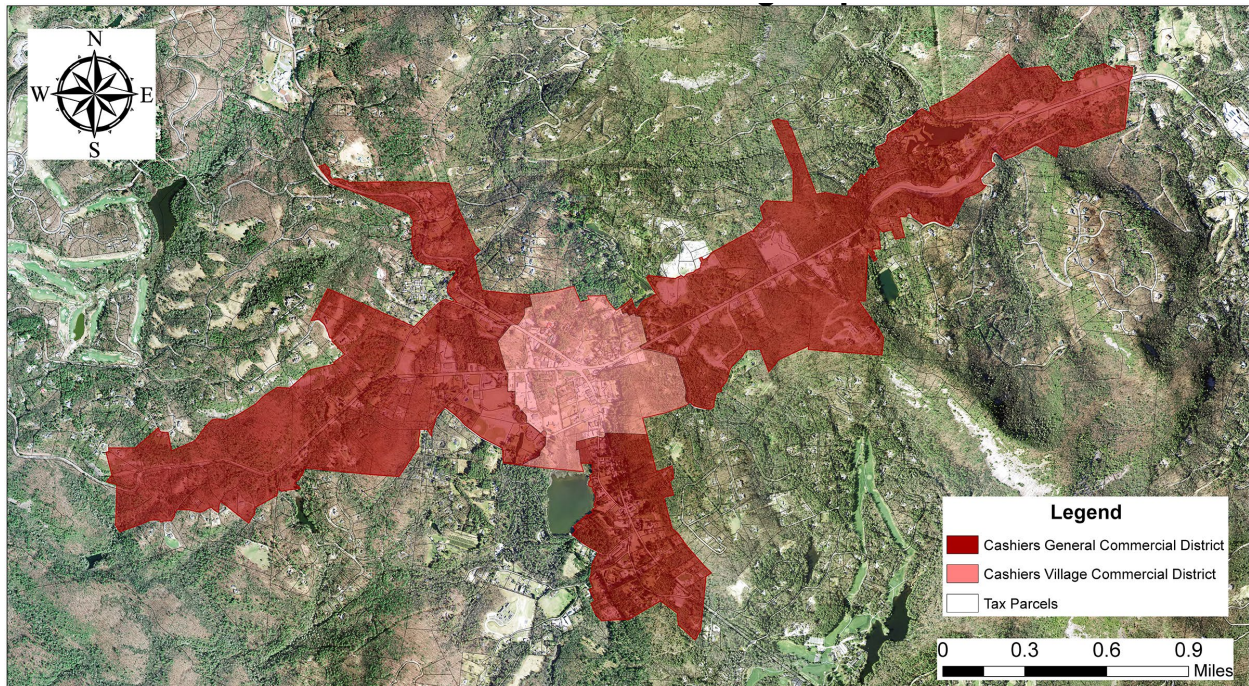
Crossroads of Highway 64 and Highway 107 in Cashiers (looking southwest)





1. GENERAL CHARACTER

The Cashiers Commercial District includes about a square mile of land area lining US Highway 64 and NC Highway 107 (area shown in pink and red on the map below). The District includes two sub-districts: Village Commercial and General Commercial. The Village Commercial area (light pink on the map) is an area extending approximately 1,500 linear feet outwards from the center of the crossroads of 64 and 107. The General Commercial area (shown in red) includes the balance of the zoned district area, which encompasses lots adjacent to Highway 64 and Highway 107 for varying distances of between 4,000 linear feet to the north and 11,000 linear feet to the east. The map below shows the boundaries of the Village Commercial and General Commercial sub-districts within the larger context.



Map of Cashiers Commercial District

While located on a mountain plateau, the commercial district is surrounded by hilltops and ridgelines in all cardinal directions. Mature vegetation and the surrounding ridgelines interrupt expansive views and create a sense of protective enclosure within the village and along the road corridors. Traveling the roadways within the community reinforces this feeling of enclosure – streets are narrow, with buildings and trees near the roadway’s edge. Sharp changes in topographic conditions constantly remind one of the mountainous environment.



Mountainous topography examples



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While Cashiers has long been a summer destination hosting numerous vacation homes, it is also a working community that provides a full range of year-round goods, services, and amenities that people need for day-to-day life. Uses serving residents' daily needs are nestled among boutiques - all within an eclectic blend of building styles in an informal organization. Buildings are canted to one another and to the street, creating opportunities for informal gathering spaces, trails and pathways, and places for vegetation to grow.



Bucks Coffee and Landmark Realty buildings

On May 9, 2023, a community character workshop was conducted with around 30 attendees. One of the exercises undertaken by the group was a review 44 different terms or phrases. Terms or phrases that were felt to be consistent with Cashiers or Cashiers' community character were circled, and terms inconsistent with the community were crossed out. This same exercise was also completed by 18 people at the Green Market on May 10. The following terms or phrases were identified by all four tables and at least 66% of the Green Market respondents as consistent with the Cashiers community character:

- Community for Residents
- Great Views
- Attractive
- Expensive*
- Home
- Deeply Rooted Heritage
- Place for Visitors
- Respectful of Nature
- Place for Kids*
- Natural Setting
- Quiet
- Small Town
- Village
- Plateau*
- Small Buildings*
- Unique
- Zoning Needed*

(*selected by all four tables at the workshop, but by 50% or fewer Green Market respondents)





Based on the input collected during Task 3, as well as input in the applicable policy guidance (the Cashiers Small Area Plan and ULI Report), the following statements are provided to describe Cashiers Community Character in a general way.

General Character Statements

1. Cashiers is a small, quiet crossroads community on a plateau in a natural mountain setting with great views of the surrounding landscape.
2. It is a desirable community with a blend of year-round and seasonal residents who welcome vacationers. The community is a home for residents (and their children) first and a place for visitors second.
3. There is a deep respect for nature, a strong ethos of environmental stewardship, and a reverence for historic features.
4. Smaller, informal developments are more in keeping with the community's desired scale and ecological impact than larger projects with larger buildings or more land disturbance.
5. The scale of development and presence of lush vegetation gives the community the feel of a wooded retreat, and new development should be consistent with this type of atmosphere.
6. Cashiers is a mountain community where landowners have had to work with topographic conditions instead of drastically altering them to accommodate development.
7. While Cashiers is a sensitive environmental landscape, it is also a center of human habitation.
8. Some of the key problems facing Cashiers are its incomplete utility system, traffic congestion, the challenge of protecting stormwater quality, and a lack of housing options for full-time residents and seasonal workers.



Looking east from Village Green



2. LAND USE

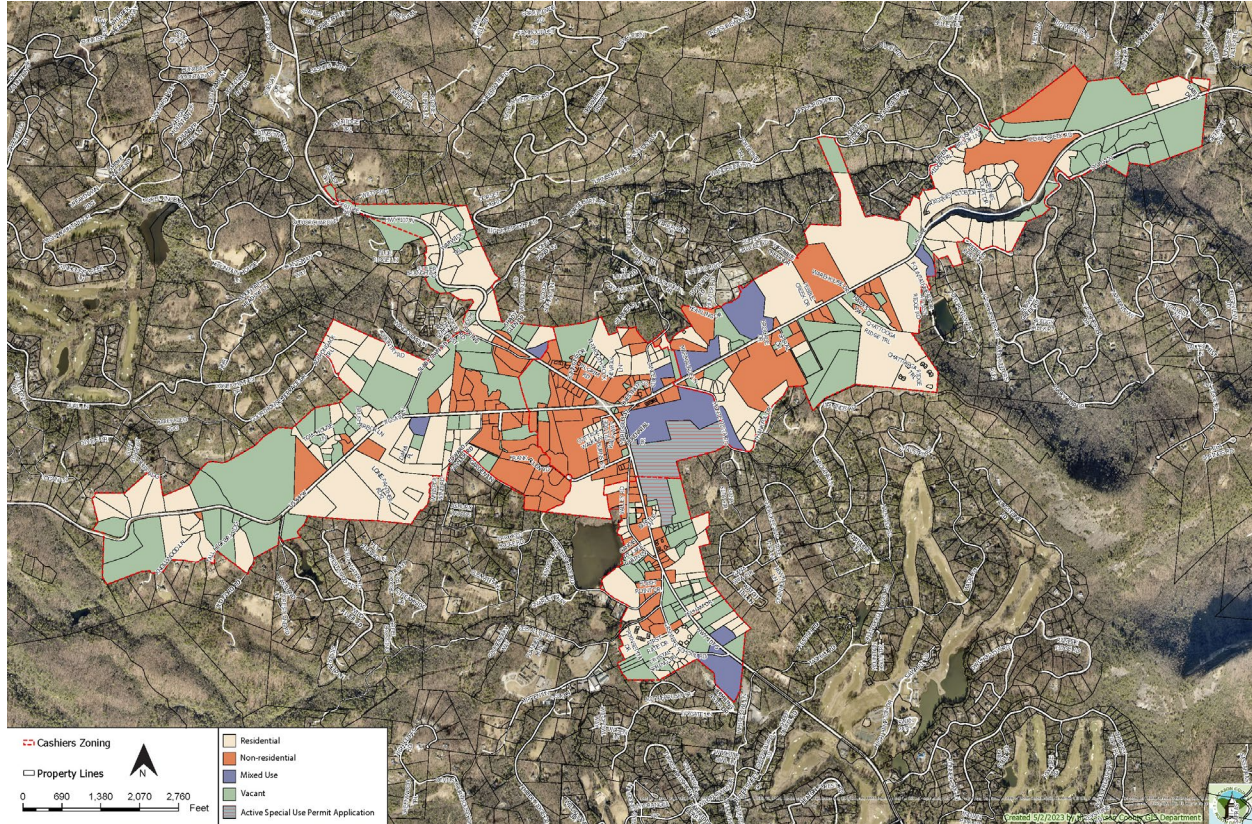
The Cashiers Commercial District was initially established in 2003 to prevent land uses that could damage the environment or that were incompatible with desired development patterns as expressed in the then-applicable policy guidance.

The Commercial District is comprised of two sub-districts, a Village Commercial (VC) sub-district centered on the crossroads and the land within approximately 1,500 feet of the crossroads, and a General Commercial (GC) sub-district comprising the balance of the District including lands along the major roadways. Interestingly, the primary distinction between the VC and GC sub-districts is not the range of allowable land use types (which are almost identical), but rather the depth of front and side setbacks, lot width requirements, and the building size thresholds that trigger special use permit review requirements (4,000 square feet in VC & 6,000 square feet in GC).

Land uses in the Commercial District are comprised of a blend of the following land use types:

- Commercial (comprised of retail, personal service, and office);
- Institutional (including governmental and park uses);
- Industrial;
- Residential (primarily single-family detached dwellings);
- Mixed-use; and
- Vacant land.

The map below illustrates the configuration of current land uses, by parcel, in the Commercial District.



Map of existing land uses within Cashiers Commercial District





One of the most striking aspects of the map is that while the area depicted is referred to as the Cashiers Commercial District, the area includes a wide range of different use types, including residential and institutional uses. Lands shown in the cream color on the preceding page are residential uses. Orange parcels are non-residential, which includes retail, office, personal service, industrial, and institutional uses (like churches, schools, or government buildings). Lots shown in blue are mixed-use, or locations that have both residential and non-residential principal uses either in the same building or in separate buildings on the same lot. It is also important to remember that some parcels shown as mixed-use are classified that way because of recent development approvals or because of recently-submitted, but not yet decided, development applications. Parcels shown in green are vacant lots.

The following paragraphs discuss general patterns for each of these land use types in more detail. Non-residential uses are organized into commercial, institutional, and industrial categories.

Commercial

Commercial uses are generally concentrated within a 1,500-linear-foot radius of the center of the crossroads, along with a group of commercial uses lining Highway 64 East. Commercial uses near the center of the crossroads tend to be close to one another and close to the street edge. Commercial uses located away from the crossroads are located farther from lot lines and are usually fronted by surface parking lots. Commercial uses tend to be configured either as single-use/single tenant buildings on their own lots (like United Bank), or as part of a shopping center. Shopping centers tend to be configured either as in-line multi-tenant buildings (like Cashiers Center; aka “Ingles”), as a campus-style development with different detached structures (like Cashiers Commons), or as a blend of both configurations (like Village Walk). While there are a handful of franchise (or “chain”) stores, most commercial uses are operated by local owners. Most retail uses appear to offer goods and services to residents as well as to visitors, rather than primarily to visitors as is common in resort or vacation destinations.



Types of shopping centers in Cashiers (in-line, campus style, hybrid (Village Walk))

Mixed Use

Mixed use development is a blend of two or more different use classifications, like residential and non-residential, located within the same building or located within separate buildings on the same lot. Mixed use is traditionally thought of as a single building with ground floor retail and upper story residential, though mixed-use can be any configuration of two or more different use classifications. There are nine lots on the land use map (on Page 6) designated as mixed-use. At least two of these sites (the “Kessler site” and the “Cashiers Marketplace” site) are so-designated based on approved or pending applications rather than existing mixed-use development. The other mixed-use sites are largely a combination of on-site non-residential (like retail) buildings and single-family detached homes on the same lot.



Institutional

Institutional uses are land uses owned or operated by governmental entities or by non-profits that provide community services. Cashiers has a concentration institutional land uses on lots lining Frank Allen Road southwest of the crossroads (Village Green, the Fire Department, Sheriff's office, Boys and Girls Club, Library, post office, senior center, County permitting office, among others). There are also institutional uses like churches along the major roadways. Institutional uses tend to be on their own large lots with larger-scale buildings than retail shops and offices.

Industrial

Industrial uses are engaged in the manufacturing, assembly, or processing of raw and semi-finished materials into durable products intended for further processing or for consumption by the ultimate purchaser. These uses provide employment and are vital to the local economy. Most industrial uses are engaged in the production or processing of materials related to construction, housing, or housewares. Industrial operations tend to be on larger lots, include numerous accessory structures or outbuildings, and include the outdoor storage of raw materials and semi-finished products. Interestingly, there are no concentrations of industrial uses in the Commercial District, and these uses tend to be located adjacent to potentially incompatible uses (like the Ledges of Cashiers Furniture between the Village Green and Boys and Girls Club, or Toxaway Concrete, which is surrounded by residential neighborhoods).

Residential

While the Commercial District was established as a commercial district, a significant portion of the occupied land area within the district is used for residential purposes, primarily single-family detached dwellings. While residential uses are interspersed throughout the district, single-family lots are typically found behind the commercial lots that line the major roadways (such as the homes on Cottage Walk or the neighborhood behind Cashiers Commons). In many cases, especially along NC 107 South, commercial uses have replaced residential uses within formerly residential structures. Along the corridors outside the village core area, single-family homes are found on lots abutting the major roadways. There are few multi-family, single-family attached, duplex, or other forms of higher density residential use throughout the Commercial Area, though isolated examples of these uses do exist.

Vacant Land

One other important category is vacant land. Vacant land includes un-subdivided tracts and lots of record that do not include a principal use. Lots or tracts that are subject to an approved development application but that do not yet contain an occupied principal building are not considered vacant. Of the 800 or so lots located within the Commercial District, around 540 have a building value greater than \$0.00. In other words, 67% of the lots in the Commercial Area have some form of building or structure improvement. About a third (33%) of the lots in the Commercial District are vacant or have no building or structure associated with them. The larger tracts of unsubdivided vacant land are found in the western portion of the District. One important issue to think about is how vacant land will be classified as part of the Recodify Cashiers effort. While the current Cashiers Commercial District is comprised of two commercial subdistricts (Village Commercial and General Commercial), the new district map anticipated as part of the Recodify Cashiers changes will include four subdistricts:

1. Non-residential;
2. Residential;
3. Mixed-Use; and
4. Conditional.





Vacant land is anticipated to be primarily designated with the residential sub-district designation though there are some vacant parcels, particularly within the village core proximate to the crossroads, that may receive a mixed-use designation. Landowners or contract purchasers may request re-designation of land to a different sub-district designation through the map amendment process in the UDO. Applications for establishment of the conditional zoning sub-district will have special requirements for up-front master planning and review by the Board of County Commissioners. As mentioned in an earlier section, achievement of the vision anticipated for Cashiers as expressed in the applicable policy guidance can not be based solely on existing conditions, and must also include pursuit of some aspirational goals. Some land use-related aspirations are listed below.

Aspirational Goals for Land Use

As mentioned on the first page of this analysis, there are often aspirational forms of land use that are desired by a community but that do not yet exist or do not yet exist in large numbers. In Cashier's, the following forms of land use are identified by the policy guidance or in the input collected as desirable despite not being present. So while these uses are desired, they are not a part of the current character.

- Mixed-use development (a blend of residential and non-residential land uses within the same building, with the ground floor building frontage occupied by the non-residential use);
- Live/Work units that combine non-residential operations with living quarters where the operator or proprietor of the non-residential operation lives above or behind the non-residential portion of the building;
- Single-family attached development also known as townhomes, where two or more dwellings, each on their own lot, share one or more party walls;
- Accessory dwelling units located on the same lot as a principal single-family detached dwelling (often above a garage, or in a smaller detached structure); and
- Single-family detached dwellings (there are some of these uses within the crossroads area (like those on Cottage Walk Lane) and on lots along the corridors, but there are currently no specific zoning provisions for these uses).

Example images of selected aspirational land use are included on the next page. These images are not from Cashiers or Jackson County. They are provided as examples of the kinds of uses described above. These images are not provided as a suggestion about how these uses might look if proposed in Cashiers – actual design and configuration of these uses would need to be in accordance with the community character requirements and/or conditions of approval. Rather, these images are provided as a means of establishing a uniform understanding of these aspirational use types as a starting point for further community discussion. The images are followed by a series of descriptive statements about current land uses in Cashiers.





Mixed-Use Development



Live/Work Units



Attached Residential



Types of aspirational development identified by Cashiers community

The following statements describe the Cashiers community character with respect to land uses, based on the input collected as a part of Recodify Cashiers.

Land Use Character Statements

1. Commercial, industrial, and institutional uses that serve both residents and visitors are welcome in Cashiers, provided they comply with the established community character requirements.
2. Mixed-use development is the desired form of land use within the “crossroads”, “core”, or mixed-use designated area of Cashiers; single-use commercial development is discouraged in this area.
3. All forms of residential development are desired and permitted in the crossroads and corridor areas, provided they are consistent with community character requirements.
4. New in-line multi-tenant commercial shopping centers with three or more commercial tenants of one story in height should be discouraged, but campus-style shopping centers with detached or semi-detached buildings and two-story hybrid in-line centers are acceptable.
5. Larger developments with a gross square footage beyond 20,000 square feet, whether single-use or mixed-use, may only be established on lots bearing a conditional zoning district designation approved via the pending conditional rezoning process.
6. All use types, except the establishment of an individual single-family detached home on its own lot, shall be required to set aside a minimum percentage of the lot as private common open space in one or more of the required formats.
7. Village Commercial and General Commercial district designations will be redefined as mixed use, non-residential, and residential zoning designations, along with the creation of the conditional zoning district option, which may only be applied through a rezoning.

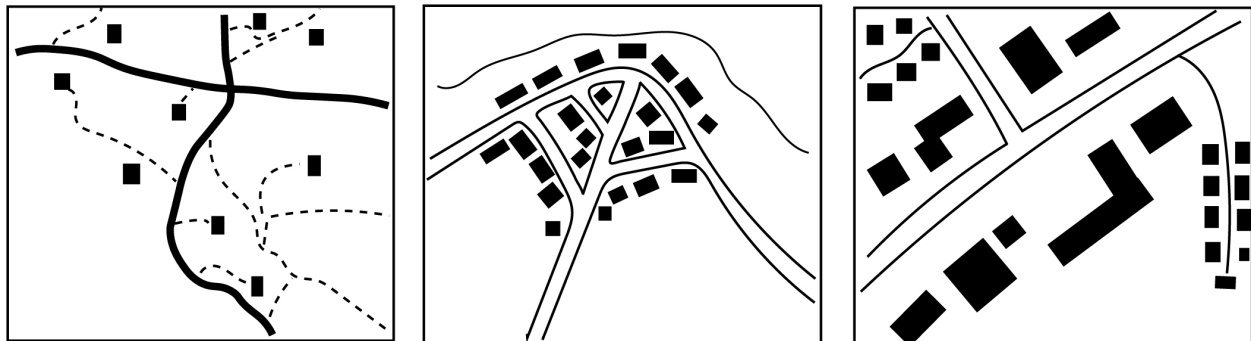




3. LOTTING PATTERNS

Lotting patterns refer to the configuration of lot lines for individual building lots or for acreage tracts that have yet to be further subdivided. Lotting patterns influence community character through requirements for building spacing from lot lines and spacing from adjacent streets. Lotting patterns help to establish the local context – whether the place is a village, an urban center, a suburban setting, or rural. One would expect smaller lots, smaller buildings, buildings located close to one another, buildings located near the street, building facades oriented towards pedestrians, and non-uniform building placement within a village setting. On the other hand, one would expect larger lots, larger buildings, larger spaces between different buildings, relatively uniform building placement, and buildings located farther from the street in suburban contexts. Rural areas typically have even larger lot sizes than those found in suburban areas, but typically maintain smaller buildings with lower intensity and more areas of undisturbed vegetation or agricultural activity between land uses.

Lotting pattern examples



Rural Pattern

Village Pattern

Suburban Pattern

Lot boundaries may only be established or revised via the County’s subdivision process, as established in the Unified Development Ordinance. Lot sizes and boundaries are influenced by topographic conditions, environmental features, street alignments, the needs of development located on the lots, and ownership patterns (some uses, like the tenant spaces at the Laurel Terrace Building on Highway 64 East are configured as condominium units - individual units, each use or tenant space located on its own lot despite being part of a larger single structure).

The map on the next page shows the configuration of lots within and around the “crossroads” portion of the Cashiers Commercial District (lot lines are shown in yellow and zoning sub-district boundaries are shown in red). The crossroads area, or the village core is shown at the center of the image. There is a considerable diversity in the sizes, shapes, and configuration of lots within the Commercial District. Interestingly, the vast majority of lots located just outside the District (like those shown in the lower right-hand corner of the image below) have already been subdivided and maintain a minimum size of around one to two acres in size (based upon what’s necessary in order to accommodate on-site wastewater facilities since there are no minimum lot sizes required outside the District).





Aerial photo of Cashiers crossroads area with lot lines shown

Based on a review of the County’s GIS data, there are approximately 800 parcels or lots located within the Cashiers Commercial District boundary. 515 of these parcels are located entirely within the district boundary, and 285 are transected by the boundary (meaning that only a portion of the lot is located within the Commercial District boundary).

The following paragraphs describe aspects typically associated with lotting patterns such as lot size, lot width, lot coverage (% covered by impervious surface), and setbacks.

Lot Size

Typically, the zoning district designation of land has significant influence on lot size and configuration. In Cashiers, there are two sub-district designations – the Village Commercial (VC) sub-district and the General Commercial (GC) sub-district. Neither sub-district includes a minimum required lot size. This means that other factors are controlling lot sizes – wastewater needs, parking, outdoor activities, or other aspects. When it comes to residential lots, lot size is most highly influenced by the amount of land required by the County’s Health Department in order to safely accommodate on-site wastewater (septic facilities). While the factors contributing to a lot’s ability to uptake wastewater are highly variable, generally speaking, single-family lots need to be at least 40,000 square feet in area in order to accommodate an on-site wastewater facility (while larger lots are necessary for non-residential uses that produce wastewater).





The table below provides a simple breakdown of the number of parcels by lot size range in the Cashiers Commercial District, based on the County’s GIS data:

LOT SIZE RANGES IN THE CASHIERS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT		
Lot Size Range	Number of Lots	% of Total
Less than 20,000 square feet in size	242	30%
20,000 square feet to 39,999 square feet in size	145	18%
40,000 square feet to 80,000 square feet in size	153	19%
More than 80,000 square feet in size	259	32%

Interestingly, about half (48%) of the lots in the Commercial District are smaller than 40,000 square feet. This is surprising given the somewhat limited availability of public wastewater service.

Zoning District Requirements

The table below provides a quick summary of the current dimensional requirements for lots and development located within the VC and GC sub-districts. One feature of note is that there is very little difference between the dimensional standards for the VC sub-district versus the GC sub-district. This lack of distinction in dimensional standards means that zoning sub-district designations have little-to-no role in differentiating development in the VC sub-district versus that in the GC sub-district.

DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LOTS WITHIN THE CASHIERS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT		
Type of Dimensional Requirement	Lots in the VC Sub-district	Lots in the GC Sub-district
Minimum Lot Size (square feet)	None	None
Minimum Lot Width (feet)	None	50
Maximum Lot Coverage (% of lot area)	70	70
Front Setback (feet)	Min. 10; Max. 20	Min. 15; Max. 25
Side Setback (interior lot line) (feet)	None	None
Side Setback (corner lot line)	Min. 10; Max. 20	Min. 15; Max. 25
Rear Setback	None	None

Lot Coverage

Maximum lot coverage, or the maximum amount of impervious surface allowable on a lot can have influence on a lot’s size, especially on commercial, industrial, or multi-family lots. Lots within the VC or GC sub-district are subject to a maximum impervious surface cover of 70% (in other words, at least 30% of a lot's surface must remain pervious and may not be covered by buildings or paving). In practice, lot coverage figures for developed lots in the Commercial District are less than 70% of the lot, and lot





coverage amounts tend to be lower on lots along the highway corridors than in the core, though this is likely a function of lot size.

Required Setbacks

Required setbacks are applied to principal and accessory structures and are included in zoning district standards to preserve light and air between uses on adjacent lots, to help prevent fire from moving from one building to an adjacent building, and to ensure that buildings are located outside of streets and travelways. In most cases, setbacks are expressed as minimum distances, meaning they are the minimum distance or amount of open land area that must be preserved between new development and a lot line or a street right-of-way edge. In Cashiers, the street setbacks are expressed as both a minimum and a maximum. In other words, there is a range of distance from streets within which a building **MUST** be placed – no closer than the minimum, and no farther than the maximum. In Cashiers, there are setbacks from streets (whether on the front or side of a lot), but there are no other zoning setback standards (though there may be other building setbacks based on other County rules).

Setbacks, whether required or not, have a profound influence on the relative intensity of development – or the degree to which surrounding land is occupied by buildings or development-related activity. The deeper the setbacks, the less dense the development tends to feel. Maximum setbacks are included in order to create a sense of enclosure by buildings along the street which is generally considered to be more pedestrian oriented since it creates a feeling of enclosure or protection.

The lack of side and rear setbacks in Cashiers has contributed to the diverse or organic placement of buildings relative to one another and to the streets they front. Some buildings are close to their neighbors, others are farther away. Unlike many “main street” communities where buildings maintain a uniform size, placement, and location, in Cashiers, building placement is more random.

Building Placement

One of the defining characteristics of the building template in Cashiers is the relatively random placement of buildings on lots. Buildings generally do not maintain uniform spacing from one another, and are often positioned on an angle, relative to the street they front (a condition referred to as “canting” where one corner of a building is closer to the street than an opposing corner of the same building). Uniform setback standards introduce a degree of uniformity to the development template that is at odds with Cashiers’ random and informal building placement – an important aspect of the current community character. The image to the right is from Page 197 of the 2008 Mountain Landscapes Initiative, and shows the somewhat random placement of buildings in the Cashiers core area.



Figure ground drawing of Cashiers crossroads from 2008 Mountain Landscapes Initiative (black shows existing buildings and streets)



Aspirational Goals for Lotting Patterns

As with land use, there are aspirational goals for lotting patterns that are desired by the community but that do not yet exist or do not yet exist in large numbers. In Cashier’s, the following kinds of dimensional standards (or associated lot types) are identified by the policy guidance or in the input collected as desirable despite not being present and a part of the current community character.

- Single-family attached residential development, or townhouses, that are located within their own individual lots, that are in turn, surrounded by open space that is held in common. Townhouse developments have no setbacks applied to the individual building lots, but instead apply setbacks to the perimeter of the development and minimum spacing requirements between individual buildings. The district dimensional standards need to be revised to recognize these kinds of uses.
- Conservation subdivisions are identified in the ULI report as a means of accommodating residential development while at the same time preserving approximately half of the land in an undeveloped state. Success with this approach relies on the ability to accommodate small lots with small or no setbacks (both of which are available under the current Commercial District regulations). At the same time, this approach does not work well in cases where lots must rely on individual on-site wastewater treatment systems, which works against small lots and no setbacks. Success with conservation subdivisions in Cashiers will depend on the ability for these forms of development to connect to public sewer service or utilize a community-level wastewater treatment system. One issue for further consideration is that community wastewater systems can require land application areas, which are not credited as open space.
- The current dimensional requirements specify maximum front and corner side setbacks that are insufficient to accommodate any parking between the building and the street it faces. Many of the uses and development configurations identified by the community as consistent with community character do permit a limited amount of off-street parking in front of the building; a condition that is not allowed under the current rules. This kind of limited “in front” parking is important for the continued success of smaller mixed-use and resident-oriented commercial development.



Fiddlehead Designs Building



Based on the evidence regarding existing development, as well as input in the applicable policy guidance and comments from the community, the following statements are provided to describe Cashiers community character with respect to lotting patterns.

Lotting Pattern Character Statements

1. Lots in Cashiers have a random quality with respect to size, orientation, and placement; and this random quality contributes to the desired eclectic community character.
2. Lot sizes within the core area of Cashiers tend to be small while lot sizes along the highway corridors tend to be larger than those found in the core area.
3. Building setback requirements (or the lack of them) have, over time, created conditions where buildings maintain a desirable informal, irregular spacing along street fronts.
4. Side and rear setbacks are not applied and this allows for buildings to maintain variable spacing. Development standards should embrace and promote techniques to promote random building placement.
5. Many buildings are canted to or offset from the street alignment instead of directly parallel to it, and this variability creates a more interesting streetscape along with opportunities for beneficial gathering areas or additional vegetation in front of or to the side of buildings.
6. Most non-residential lots in Cashiers maintain a limited and often informal off-street parking area between the building and the street it fronts. Limited numbers of “in-front” parking spaces are consistent with the established community character.
7. With the allowance for new forms of mixed-use and a desire for campus-style multi-building retail development, the development regulations need to be supplemented with minimum building spacing requirements for developments including two or more separate buildings to ensure safe and efficient on-site circulation.



Aerial view of Cashiers looking northeast



4. STREET DESIGN

The street network is the foundation of the public realm within a community, and exerts significant influence on community character. For example, the design speed of a street (the way in which the street is designed in terms of width, grade, and curvature) influences how fast cars may safely travel along the street. The speed of traffic conveys whether an area is intended for pedestrians (low traffic speeds) or intended primarily for vehicles (high traffic speeds). So, design speed influences the degree to which people perceive a streetscape as one for pedestrians or vehicles.

Street design also influences the degree of enclosure along the street’s alignment. Narrow two-lane streets allow buildings, signage, and street furnishings on either side of the street to be closer to one another than that found on three- or four-lane streets. Street corridors that provide a sense of enclosure tend to be more supportive of pedestrian use and tend to slow vehicle speeds. Street surfacing impacts community character by affecting vehicle speeds – gravel streets slow vehicles down and give an impression of a more rural character. Streets paved with unique surfaces such as bricks, cobblestones, or macadam help create a sense of historic significance. Streets that include curb, gutter, and sidewalks are more urban than those that do not. The relative degree of street connectivity can also influence community character. Generally speaking, village and urban environments maintain short block lengths and multiple available routes for walking or vehicular travel. Rural and suburban locations have longer blocks and fewer options for direction of travel.

The streets in Cashiers, including vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities, are one of the primary ways that residents and visitors experience Cashier’s community character. Due in large part to the area’s topography, roads are narrow, winding, and can be steep (at least outside the crossroads or village core area). Despite the somewhat flat nature of lands within and around the village core, streets throughout the Cashiers Commercial District generally maintain a “slow-speed village feel.”



Streets in the Cashiers Commercial District

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This “slow-speed village feel” results from narrow roadway widths combined with a strong sense of enclosure along the roadway – enclosure by existing tall trees, upslopes adjacent to the roadway, and buildings and signage located near the pavement’s edge. The village feel is also conveyed by a sense of what is missing from the streetscape – namely, sidewalks, curb and gutter, street lights, and overhead utilities. These facets combine to give Cashiers roadways a rural or village feel, depending upon the proximity of buildings.

Unfortunately, one of the biggest determinants of vehicular speed through the Cashiers area, at least on the primary State roads, is the presence of traffic congestion. In high season, it is not uncommon to see long queues from the signalized intersection at US 64 and NC 107, particularly during normal commuting times and during holidays. These State roads lack the necessary width or capacity to permit vehicular traffic to move quickly through the area. Coupled with this challenge is the relative lack of service or connector streets, common in other areas, that permit vehicles to move through the area on alternate routes. The central core area of the village has a somewhat well-connected roadway and pedestrian network, though Cashiers does not have a highly connected transportation network of streets, sidewalks, or bike lanes that would permit travelers to move through the area outside of the village core.

It is important to note that the County recognizes traffic congestion as one of the key livability concerns for residents and business owners in Cashiers. Strategies that may be deployed by the County may assist with this problem in indirect ways (such as creation of alternative routes or a transportation system that encourages people to park and walk around the community), but the County’s ability to affect meaningful change in terms of traffic congestion is very limited. The two highways that transverse Cashiers are NCDOT roadways under NCDOT’s control. Even if the County wanted to take over control of these roadways and how they were managed, State law prohibits that.



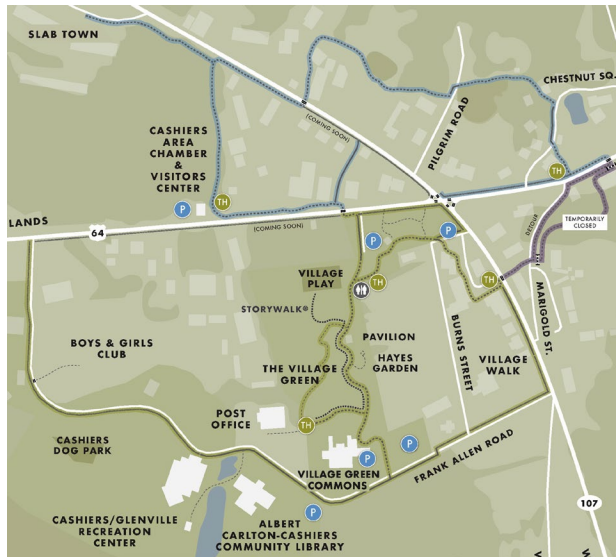
Southbound traffic on NC 107 (source: Google maps)

Because State law prohibits counties from owning and operating street systems, the County does not have many tools to address traffic congestion on these streets. All roads within Cashiers are either State roads, maintained and operated by the NCDOT, or private roads, maintained and operated by private entities.





The County’s UDO does have roadway requirements for all streets to comply with the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, for public streets to comply with NCDOT standards, and for all private streets to either meet NCDOT standards, or meet the applicable standards for private roads in the UDO. What is missing from the County’s current standards are mandates for continuing existing street alignments into vacant lands, stubbing streets to lot lines shared with adjacent vacant lots to help ensure that a connected roadway system will be continued in the future, a connectivity index or short block length requirement that helps create a street network with multiple routes, and requirements for alleys to serve non-residential, mixed-use, and multi-family development.¹



Public and private pedestrian sidewalks, trails, and walkways in Cashiers

The non-motorized transportation system of pedestrian and bicycle circulation is equally important, and plagued by the same sorts of limitations on County authority as apply to the street system. Most counties in North Carolina simply do not permit sidewalks – Jackson County is an exception. The current UDO has very limited standards for sidewalks – provision of sidewalks appears to be optional as part of a major subdivisions (though the standards do credit sidewalks towards open space requirements).

There are isolated sections of sidewalk along Highway 64, NC107, and Frank Allen Road in Cashiers. There is also a growing system of informal paths and trails located to the sides and rear of development sites (like the Village

Ramble) that contribute to overall pedestrian accessibility. Happily, the NCDOT has agreed to maintain sidewalks located within its right-of-way, and the County has agreed to participate in sidewalk maintenance as well. There are no provisions for bike lanes in the UDO though there may be recommendations for provision of bike lanes in other forms of adopted policy guidance.

While State law limits the County’s ability to own and maintain streets, the County’s development regulations can and do include requirements for streets and street-related aspects like sidewalks. The following is a short list of aspirational features suggested to help Cashiers and the County establish the kind of transportation network that is desired for Cashiers.

¹ NOTE TO STAFF: Many of the older non-residential developments in Cashiers lack any sort of managed ingress/egress from off-street parking onto the street right-of-way. In many cases, a lot’s entire frontage is one big accessway. This can be an unsafe configuration and more recent developments include controlled methods of ingress/egress. The question is the degree to which the standards should require existing uncontrolled ingress/egress access situations to be remedied, and the triggers for requiring controlled ingress/egress retrofits on these developed lots. Please clarify if the issue of uncontrolled lot access is one the County would like to address in the updated standards for Cashiers.





Aspirational Goals for the Street Network

Given the traffic congestion problems facing the community and the importance of the street network in helping to define community character, there are many important aspirational needs for the street network in Cashiers, including:

- New requirements for the provision of local private streets and alleys throughout the Commercial District as a part of new development.
- Inclusion of new street connectivity standards (a connectivity index, stub requirements, maximum block lengths, etc.) that will help ensure a street network with a variety of routes.
- New requirements for public sidewalks along both sides of Highway 64 and NC 107 throughout the Cashiers Commercial District.
- New requirements for the provision of private sidewalks, paths, or trails along local streets.
- Requirements for development to include pedestrian accessways and connections to adjacent existing off-site pedestrian accessways in areas where sidewalks are not practical.
- Increased coordination between the County, private developers, and non-governmental agencies operating with respect to funding and completion of missing street and pedestrian network connections in areas that are already developed and unlikely to be subject to new construction.

The following character statements help to define and describe the current street network as well as what kinds of changes would be helpful for Cashiers to get the most benefit from its street network.

Street-Related Character Statements

1. Cashiers has an informal, curvilinear, “village-style” street network. Curvilinear streets are more desirable than long straight streets that can contribute to higher vehicle speeds.
2. Local streets are generally narrow, comprised of two opposing lanes, each between 10 and 12 feet in width. Local streets are the preferred scale of street in Cashiers, though alleys are also desirable within the most intensely-developed areas.
3. While some collector streets (Frank Allen, Slab Town, Valley, etc.) are through streets that start and stop at street intersections, most local streets are dead-end streets with few connections to other streets. Extensions of these streets and connections through vacant lands to other existing streets as part of new development are important ways to address traffic congestion.
4. Except along Frank Allen, curb and gutter is largely absent, roadway shoulders are narrow and soft, and street drainage is accomplished via roadside ditches and swales. Curb and gutter should be avoided, particularly in cases where they will result in additional stormwater entering sensitive natural areas.
5. Most streets are paved with asphalt.
6. There are few-to-no formal alleys, though informal, unpaved accessways across lot lines in commercial areas are not uncommon and should be further encouraged.
7. Except along Frank Allen and portions of US 64 and NC107, improved sidewalk is largely absent. Most pedestrian ways are “desire lines” along paved streets and some informal trails (like the Greenway Ramble) at the backs of commercial lots in the core area. Cashiers should continue to require build-out of a public sidewalk system along major roads and allow for less formal methods of pedestrian connection along local streets and within developed areas.





5. OPEN SPACE

Open space, in this context, means land area and land features that are identified during the development process and set-aside by a developer or a subdivider for retention as open space in perpetuity. Open space could include environmentally-sensitive land like floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, or land adjacent to a watercourse. Open space could also be historic resources, farms, or managed forest land. Open space could also be active recreation land like athletic fields or courts, golf courses, pools, or similar features. The County requires any land designated on a County-adopted plan as a greenway to also be provided as open space. Open space in urban settings could be public plazas, gathering spaces, roof gardens, or other features like public art. Active forms of recreation lend themselves to village and urban character, while passive open space is typically associated with rural and suburban contexts.

Open space categories



Active Open Space



Passive Open Space



Gathering Area

Section 4.3.2 of the County’s UDO sets out the requirements for open space provision as part of single-family detached residential subdivisions of eight lots or more. The standards require between 10% and 20% of the site area to be set-aside as open space, depending upon the number of lots. While there is a priority listing of the kinds of lands that must be set-aside, an applicant has an option to configure up to 50% of the open space area as active recreation land. Generally speaking, open space set aside remains in private, common ownership, is managed by an owners’ association, and may not be included within a private lot.

The County’s UDO establishes limits on the kinds of features that may be credited towards or included within open space, and there is an option for an applicant to request payment of a fee-in-lieu of providing open space for all forms of land except greenways (which must be provided and trout stream buffer, which must also be provided). There is also an option for an applicant to request dedication of open space land, thereby making its maintenance a responsibility of the County. Interestingly, the County also credits sidewalk provision towards open space requirements, which is an innovative means to help encourage the establishment of sidewalks.

There are few examples of required open space in Cashiers today (though the Kessler project was approved with open space set-aside to be included). At the same time, there are many examples of more informal open space throughout the community. For example, many retail establishments provide outdoor seating and gathering areas for patrons. The Cashiers Greenway Ramble is another example of an informal open space that provides connection and mobility (even as a recreational pastime). There





are also other aspects, like public art, murals, and similar features that fall within the notion of open space throughout Cashiers. Open space is an important part of the community fabric for Cashiers, and the new development standards for the area should provide more guidance about its configuration.

One of the most notable aspects of the Cashiers area is the number and diversity of sensitive environmental features like wetlands, riparian areas, unique animal habitats, areas of tree cover, and areas occupied by unique forms of vegetation. There is a strong sense of connection with the natural environment and stewardship is a very important part of Cashiers' sense of community. Cashiers is located with a rainforest ecosystem with increased rainfall than is experienced in other parts of the State. At the same time, the presence of steep slopes and bedrock relatively close to the surface in many areas means that stormwater management is challenging and also very important – for the ecosystem and for public safety. Rain, stormwater runoff, and retention of water in lowland areas is very much part of the Cashiers community character, as is features that protect these resources. Innovative stormwater management, avoidance of riparian and recharge areas, and features that contribute to improved water quality should all be credited towards open space set-aside requirement.



Example of “green” stormwater infrastructure in front of Cashiers Commons

Aspirational Goals for Open Space

During discussions with community members and interested parties during Tasks 1-3 many individuals indicated a strong desire for conservation. This is consistent with the guidance in the ULI Panel Report, which also calls for the conservation of land. The following aspects are strategies to help protect open space and conserve important resources.

- Require all forms of development in the Commercial District to provide open space set-aside as a percentage of their site area (10% for residential development, 7% for mixed-use, and 5% for non-residential development).
- Apply requirements for open space set-aside at time of subdivision and site plan review (development of individual single-family homes on lots of record are exempted from open space requirements).



- Broaden the range of allowable forms of open space to include gathering areas, outdoor seating, outdoor dining, plazas and performance space, and trails in addition to greenways.
- Establish new criteria for the format of open space, which should be configured as at least 75% gathering area or active open space within the core or crossroads area, 50% active or gathering area as a part of mixed-use and higher density residential development, and passive open space everywhere else.
- Continue to credit the provision of sidewalks towards open space except on lots abutting US 64 or NC 107 (which will be subject to mandatory sidewalk provision).
- Explore adding new requirements for park land payment of fee-in-lieu, or dedication to the County, in appropriate areas, (in addition to open space set aside) to help create a revenue stream for greenway deployment.

Examples of gathering areas



The following character statements help to define and describe the open space resources in Cashiers as well as what kinds of changes further the community’s conservation goals.

Open Space Character Statements

1. Cashiers is situated within a valley on a mountain plateau, and as such, it includes numerous watercourses, wetlands, and bogs where stormwater collects and moves to downslope areas. These water features are the most important ecological aspects in the community and their protection is vital to the area’s continued viability.
2. Given the mountain terrain and topography of the area, slopes are a common feature on most lots. It is important to balance the competing needs of controlling sedimentation with a recognition of the legitimate investment-backed expectations of property owners who may need to develop areas with slopes of less than 35%.
3. Cashiers is blessed with a robust and varied forest canopy that plays an important part in animal habitat, stormwater uptake, surface water temperature control, erosion control, sound attenuation, and property value protection. Tree protection should receive increased attention, and retention of existing trees should become part of landscaping requirements.
4. Areas of informal outdoor gathering, dining, and performance spaces along building fronts and in less-prominent lot locations create places for residents and visitors to interact and convey the importance human interactions are common throughout Cashiers and should be promoted.
5. Cashiers has a layered system of informal trails and formal sidewalks that help residents and visitors move through the community, but additional emphasis is needed on completing missing links and connections, particularly in areas that are already developed.





6. BUILDINGS

So far, this Analysis has focused on larger, contextual aspects of the community character like the mountain setting, land uses, lotting patterns, the transportation network, and open space features. This portion will discuss how buildings support or detract from the Cashiers community character.

In May of 2023, the consulting team conducted a several input sessions with community members about the kinds of development in Cashiers that were or were not consistent with the community character. Exercises included identifying specific locations, ranking existing buildings or developments in terms of their level of consistency, and reviewing terms or phrases for their consistency with community character. Preliminary results were presented in June of 2023.



Participants in community character workshop May, 2023

This Analysis goes into more detail on which buildings and building details support or enhance community character and why. In other words, what is it about a particular building or development that makes it consistent with community character? In thinking about that question, it is important to remember that:

- Community character is a subjective concept based on individual values and opinions; and
- An assessment of a building or development’s consistency with community character is not an assessment of whether the use, building, or activity is “good” or “bad.”

RECODIFY CASHIERS - COMMUNITY CHARACTER WORKSHOP 5-6-23

Scenario 2: Community Character Consistency

Please examine each image. Place a 1, 2, or 3 on the line beneath the image.

1 means the feature, building, or use depicted is inconsistent with your idea of Cashiers community character.

2 means the feature, building, or use depicted is somewhat consistent with your idea of community character.

3 means the feature, building, or use depicted is very consistent with your idea of community character.

Leave the line blank if you are not sure.

Try not to assign a number value based on the quality of the image, or personal feelings. Objectively, is the image consistent with your idea of community character? How consistent? 1, 2, or 3?

Sheet 1: Shopping Centers

Image 1	Image 2	Image 3	Image 4
Image 5	Image 6	Image 7	Image 8

Example form for ranking development as a part of community character workshop conducted in May 2023

This Analysis identifies the constituent parts of individual buildings or developments that best exemplify Cashiers’ community character – meaning aspects such as building size, height, roof form, placement, materials, or other features. The ideas established in this Analysis will receive further consideration by the community and ultimately, may be translated into review criteria for new development in Cashiers.





Based on the research completed to date and discussions with members of the Cashiers community, the following 10 building features are the ones that are most impactful or most important with respect to community character. In other words, the following 10 features are the ones most important when considering if a building or a development supports or is inconsistent with community character. Readers are reminded that in several cases, there are also aspirational aspects to community character – things the community wants or needs, but that do not currently exist, and thus are not part of the existing community character. Just because a particular aspect or feature is not currently present in the community doesn't mean that it is inappropriate.

The ten most impactful or important building features identified include:

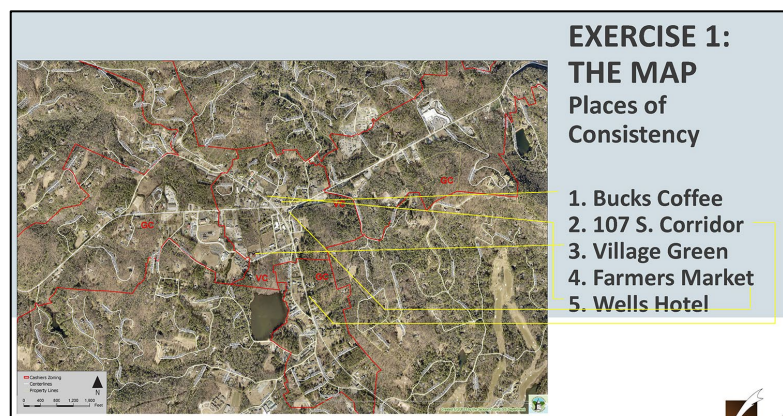
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Building Size | 6. Configuration of Multiple-Building Development |
| 2. Building Height | 7. Primary Entryways |
| 3. Roof Form/Pitch | 8. Glazing (transparency) |
| 4. Building Placement/Orientation | 9. Exterior Building Materials |
| 5. Building Spacing | 10. Primary Building Colors |

Building or Developments Consistent with Community Character

This section provides details on buildings perceived to be consistent with the Cashiers community character based on input collected during a community character workshop conducted in May 2023. The workshop divided participants into four different groups and had them work on the same exercises. The first exercise was to identify, on a map of Cashiers, buildings or developments that the group could agree were consistent with Cashiers community character. Each group prepared their own map. The five sites illustrated below were identified as consistent with Cashiers community character by all four groups.

While determination of what “consistency” means can be subjective, in this instance, buildings that were thought to be consistent are buildings that:

- Shared similar visual aspects;
- Did not stand out or draw unnecessary attention to themselves;
- Included common aspects, traits, or features found on surrounding buildings;
- Are consistent with shared ideas about what kinds of development forms are “desirable”; or
- “Fit in” or belonged with their surroundings.



Slide showing places of consistency (Community Character Analysis presentation 6/12/23)

The next pages provide details of building or development attributes for each of these five locations.





PLACES OF CONSISTENCY

1. Bucks Coffee Cafe



- A** Local Business
- B** Gathering Area
- C** Residential-Scale
- D** Storefront Windows
- E** Pitched Roof
- F** Earth Tone Color
- G** Clapboards
- H** Vertical Stone Accent

2. 107 South Corridor (Cornucopia, Fiddleheads, Vivace, & Highland Hiker)



- A** Residential Scale
- B** Pitched Roof
- C** Earth Tone Colors
- D** Wooden Siding
- E** Gathering Spaces
- F** Close to Street
- G** 1-2 Story Height
- H** Informal Parking
- I** Storefront Windows
- J** Sequential Additions

3. Village Green



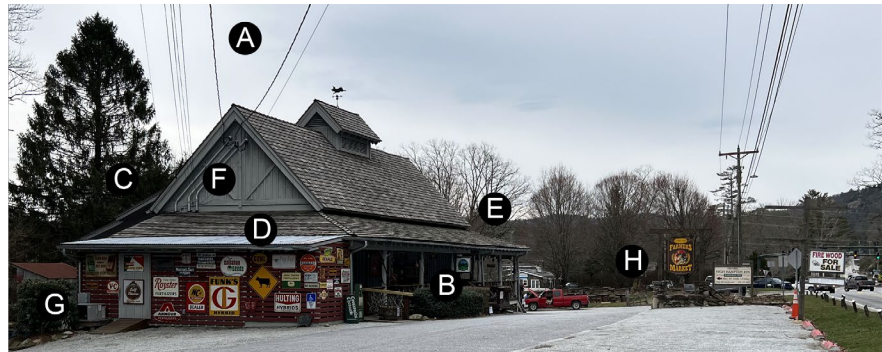
- A** Institutional Use
- B** Gathering Area
- C** Residential Architecture
- D** Sequential Additions
- E** Pitched Roof
- F** Earth Tone Colors
- G** Shakes
- H** Rafter Tails



PLACES OF CONSISTENCY

4. Farmers' Market

- A** Institutional Use
- B** Gathering Area
- C** Residential Architecture
- D** Sequential Additions
- E** Multi-Pitch Roof
- F** Earth Tone Colors
- G** Adornment
- H** Large Signage



5. Wells Hotel



- A** Local Business
- B** Gathering Area
- C** Residential-Scale
- D** Wooden Accents
- E** Pitched Roof
- F** 2 Story Height
- G** Clapboards
- H** Stone Accents
- I** Large Sign

Building or Developments Inconsistent with Community Character

This section provides details on buildings or development perceived to be inconsistent with the Cashiers community character by participants of the community character workshop conducted in May 2023. As with the first part of the mapping exercise – which areas are consistent – this portion of exercise one asked participants identify buildings or developments that the group could agree were not consistent with Cashiers community character. The five sites illustrated below were identified as being inconsistent with Cashiers community character by all four groups.

In this context, inconsistency does not mean that the group thought a particular use or development was bad, or harmful to the community – rather, the discussion was about the ways in which the building or development was configured in ways that were not in harmony with the established community character.

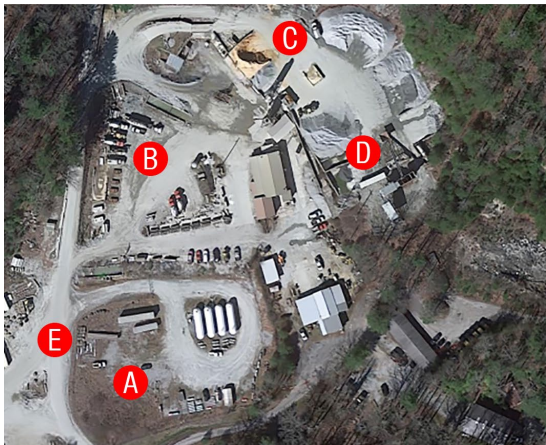
The next pages provide details of building or development attributes for each of these five inconsistent locations. This descriptive information is based primarily on the consulting team’s assessment of these sites, as few comments were received on what makes these buildings or developments inconsistent.





PLACES OF INCONSISTENCY

1. Toxaway Concrete



- A** Heavy Industrial Use
- B** Noise and Vibration
- C** Outdoor Storage of Raw Materials
- D** Potential for Silica Dust
- E** Heavy Truck Traffic

(Despite inconsistencies, this use is important to the community, it pre-dates many other uses, and is well-screened)

2. Cashiers Center (Ingles)



- A** In-Line Center
- B** Deep Front Setback
- C** Expansive Parking Lot

- D** No Interior Parking Lot Landscaping
- E** Most Parking in Front
- F** Monolithic Building Appearance
- G** Uniform Flat Roof (except Ingles)
- H** Drive-Through in Front of Building
- I** Visible Rooftop Equipment
- J** EIFS on Ingles Facade
- K** Tall Parking Lot Lights

3. Wilson Electric Building



- A** Deep Setback
- B** Most Parking In Front
- C** Mansard Roof
- D** EIFS on Parapet
- E** Heavy Material (EIFS) above Lighter Material (Siding)
- F** Stone Veneer
- G** No Entry Features





PLACES OF INCONSISTENCY

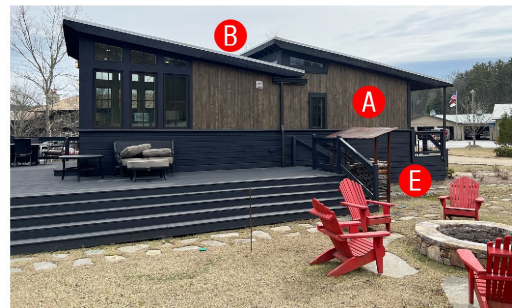
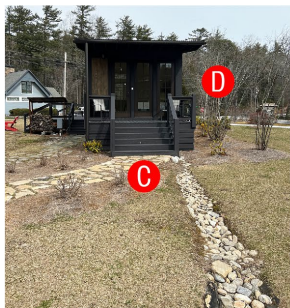
4. Spinx Stations (Highway 64 locations)



- A** Canopy in Front
- B** No Architectural Relationship between Canopy and Building
- C** Scale of Canopy
- D** Flat Roof
- E** Limited Glazing (windows)
- F** Service Areas not Screened

- A** Canopy in Front
- B** No Architectural Relationship between Canopy and Building
- C** Scale of Canopy
- G** Deep Front Setback
- H** Corporate Signage

5. Designer Cottages (display on Highway 64)



- A** Modern Architecture
- B** Monopitch Roof
- C** Building Width
- D** Scale
- E** Foundation Obscured

Building Features Impacting/Comprising Community Character

The following pages are devoted to specific building features that comprise or impact community character (from the 10 most important features identified on Page 25 of this Analysis).



Building Size

Building size typically means the total amount of floor area that is under a roof, even floor area below grade such as a basement. Generally speaking, all developments in the Cashiers Commercial District have less than 25,000 square feet of building floor area (except for Cashiers Center (the Ingles shopping center) which has a total building size that is dramatically larger than all other developments in the community). Further, 96 percent of the individual buildings in the District are less than 10,000 square feet in size.

The following table provides total building sizes for selected sites in the Cashiers Commercial District. This information is provided from the Jackson County tax card data.

SELECTED BUILDING SIZES IN THE CASHIERS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT	
Building Name or Location	Total Building Size by Development (in square feet)
Chamber of Commerce Building	1,044
Subway Building (ground floor)	2,705
Cashiers Farmer’s Market	3,233
Cornucopia	5,771
United Community Bank (including drive through)	6,139
Post Office (including covered areas)	9,340
Shoppes on the Green	11,268
Cashiers Library	14,019
Cashiers Recreation Center	22,750
Cashiers Center (Ingles Shopping Center)	124,037

County staff has assembled an inventory of building and lot size characteristics within the Cashiers Commercial District from Jackson County tax card data. The inventory includes 166 sites that contain approximately 192 separate buildings (including a few single-family structures). Approximately 39 of the sites in the inventory have no buildings (though some of these sites may have other built features like parking lots). The 119 sites in the inventory with buildings include a total of 873,466 square feet of building floor area. The table below provides a summary of building size ranges for the 192 buildings in the inventory.

BUILDING SIZE RANGES FROM SELECT SITES IN THE CASHIERS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT				
Building Size (in square feet)	# of Developments with Total Building Size in Range	Total Building Square Footage	Average Building Size	Median Building Size
Less than 2,000	22	873,466	4,646 square feet	2,384 square feet
2,000 – 4,999	47			
5,000 – 9,999	24			
10,000 – 19,999	19			
20,000 or more	7			
TOTAL	119			
There are a total of 190 buildings in the inventory on 119 sites.				





This data shows that the average building size of inventoried buildings in the Cashiers Commercial District is around 4,700 square feet. As mentioned above, almost all of the individual buildings in the inventory (96%) are less than 10,000 square feet in size.

Another way to think about building size is to compare it to the size of the lot upon which it is located. This gives a sense of a lot’s intensity, or the amount of lot area occupied by a building(s). The table below provides information on building intensity by providing details on the range of building sizes as percentage of the size of the lot upon which it is (they are) located.

A large lot with a small building would have a low percentage, while a small lot with a large building would have a higher percentage. An acre lot (43,560 square feet) with a 4,000 square foot building is 9% covered by the building. An acre lot with an 8,000 square foot building will have percentage coverage of 18%. Note that building coverage alone is limited to building floor area, not impervious surface, which also includes driveways, parking, walkways, and similar features. Total impervious surface percentages are always higher than just the amount of lot coverage associated with buildings.

The table below provides some details on building size as a percentage of lot size. Keep in mind that some sites have multiple buildings. Multiple building sites are likely to have higher building coverage percentages than sites with just a single building.

BUILDING SIZE AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE LOT SIZE FROM SELECT SITES IN THE CASHIERS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT			
Building Size as a % of Lot Area	Number of Sites with Building Size %	Average Amount of Lot or Site Covered by Building(s)	Median Amount of Lot or Site Covered by Building(s)
Less than 10%	44	20.5%	12.8%
10% - 20%	35		
20.1% - 49.9%	23		
50% - 75%	9		
More than 75%	8		
TOTAL	119		

This data shows that despite a maximum lot coverage regulation of 70%, the vast majority (over 85%) of the development sites in Cashiers have building coverages of less than 50% of the lot. In other words, building intensities are fairly low relative to lot sizes. One potential reason for this is the need for on-site wastewater utilities, another may be that there is simply not market demand for intensively-developed lots in Cashiers.

One other metric affecting building size and perceived intensity of development is the maximum residential density, or maximum number of residential units permitted per acre of land. Section 9.3 of the Jackson County UDO (the one pertaining to Cashiers) does not include a maximum residential density. During policy guidance and community character discussions with the community, one potential density metric that has been expressed is a maximum residential density of four units an acre. The revised standards being prepared for Cashiers should specify maximum residential densities for all sub-districts.





Building Height

Building height can have a profound impact on community character. For the most part, buildings in Cashiers maintain heights of one- to two-stories. There are a few buildings with three stories, though these are rare. The Cashiers commercial district regulations cap building heights at 45 feet, and measure building heights from the finished grade to the highest point of flat and monopitch roofs, and to the mid-point of pitched roofs. In cases where a building is located on un-even terrain, the maximum height is measured at the lowest point of elevation. The following images provide additional detail regarding building heights in Cashiers.



Creekside Shopping Center

Two-story Retail Building (consistent)



Cornucopia

Two-story Addition (consistent)



Vivace/Objet D'Art

Blended Building Height (consistent)



Wendys

Additional Height added (consistent)



J Gabriel

Buildings On Sloping Sites (consistent)



Highland Hiker

Flat Facade/Pitched Roof (consistent)



Village Green

Appears as 3-Story but tiered (consistent)



Cashiers Community Center

3-Story Building (inconsistent)



Spinx Station (Hwy 64)

Accessory Structure Taller than Principal Building (inconsistent)

Non-residential buildings in Cashiers maintain one and two-story heights



RECODIFY CASHIERS

Community Character Analysis (public review draft)

11-30-23



Building Placement/Orientation

One of the most unique things about Cashiers is its non-uniform building placement. Buildings are generally located close to the street they front. Many buildings in Cashiers have variable side yard setbacks and are canted to, or do not maintain a direct parallel relationship with the street they front. The net result is an informal or random building placement that gives one a sense that Cashiers is a rural mountain village that has developed slowly over time without much influence by the regional transportation network.



Shallow front setback;
building close to the
street (consistent)



Deep front setback
(inconsistent)



Buildings not parallel
with street they face
(consistent)



Variable side setbacks
(consistent)

Non-residential buildings in Cashiers are close to the street and have non-uniform placements





Building Massing

There are four common massing aspects found in non-residential and mixed use buildings thought to be consistent with Cashiers community character: simple building forms, a residential scale and character, visible framing (at least on front facades), and the appearance of sequential small additions added to the main building structure. In this context, “residential appearance” is a combination of factors including: small-to-moderate building size, pitched roof with overhangs, exterior materials common to residential structures, non-illuminated wall signage, and small-scale operable sash or casement windows. The following are images of non-residential development with massing that is consistent with the Cashiers community character.

Examples of non-residential building massing in Cashiers



Simple Building Form



Simple Building Form



Simple Building Form



Residential Appearance



Residential Appearance



Residential Appearance



Residential Appearance



Residential Appearance



Residential Appearance



Visible Framing



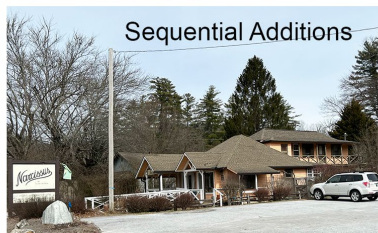
Visible Framing



Visible Framing



Sequential Additions



Sequential Additions



Sequential Additions





Configuration of Multiple-Building Development

Multi-building development in Cashiers is occupied primarily by retail uses (though some office uses also exist). While recent applications for the establishment of mixed-use development have been approved by the County, no examples of multi-building mixed use development currently exist. Generally speaking, multi-building development takes two forms: in-line tenant spaces where multiple tenants are located in individual spaces located beside one another in a single building or group of buildings, and campus-style spaces where individual tenants are in their own buildings served by shared vehicular access and parking. In some cases, like Village Walk, there can be a hybrid of both forms. While there are at least three in-line tenant shopping centers in Cashiers, the community has suggested one-story, in-line configuration is inconsistent with community character.

Examples of different multi-building developments in Cashiers

Rustiks Shopping Center
Campus-Style
(consistent)



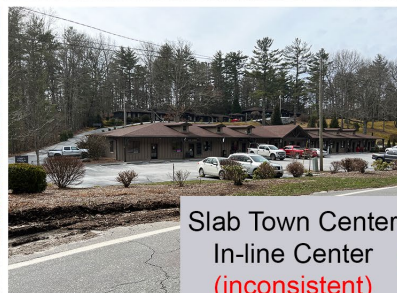
Cashiers Commons
Campus-Style
(consistent)



Old Cashiers Square
(Office Park)
Campus-Style
(consistent)



Cashiers Center
In-Line Center
(inconsistent)



Slab Town Center
In-line Center
(inconsistent)



Hearthstone Center
In-Line Center
(inconsistent)



Creekside
Hybrid (two-story/
semi-detached building)
(consistent)



Village Walk
Hybrid (two-story/
detached buildings)
(consistent)



Laurel Terrace
Hybrid (two-story)
(consistent)





Roof Form/Pitch

Roof form and pitch influence building architecture and appearance in profound ways. Generally speaking, it is common to see pitched (or “slanted”) roofs on residential and agricultural structures, and flat roofs (often with a parapet) on non-residential structures. Pitched roofs typically (though not always) include overhangs, which are often deeper above doorways and outdoor activity areas like porches or patios. Roofs with only a slight incline or steepness of 2:12 or less are generally considered to be flat roofs. Compound pitch roofs (roofs that are pitched, but at different angles over the same building) are also very common, particularly with older structures. Flat roofs typically include parapet walls that extend above the roof deck, and should be of sufficient height to screen rooftop equipment. There are also combination roofs that blend flat and pitched aspects, such as a mansard roof (mansard roofs are very common on stand-alone fast food restaurant buildings).

In Cashiers, it is quite common to see non-residential buildings with pitched roofs, and it much less common to see flat roofs (though some exist). Based on the input and discussion to this point, flat roofs on non-residential and mixed-use buildings are considered to be inconsistent with the community character. The following images provide some examples of roof form in Cashiers.

Example roof forms of non-residential buildings in Cashiers

Gable Roof
(consistent)



Hip Roof
(consistent)



Gambrel Roof
(consistent)



Compound Pitch
(consistent)



Dormer
(consistent)



Compound Gable
(consistent)



Flat Roof
(inconsistent)



Mansard Roof
(inconsistent)



Monopitch (“shed”)
(inconsistent)



Primary Entryways

The primary entryway for a non-residential, mixed-use, or multi-family building is an important part of a building and can either contribute to or detract from community character. The placement and configuration of a building’s primary entrance sends a subtle message about whether the building is pedestrian oriented and intended for a village or urban context, or if the building caters more to a suburban development template where arrival and departure from a site takes place primarily in private vehicles.

Entrances serving buildings in village and urban contexts are often oriented to a sidewalk or the street providing the building’s street address. They are at or near street level. Buildings with a suburban design often face parking areas rather than the street the building is addressed from.

In Cashiers, primary entryways to non-residential developments share some common features, including: facing the street that provides the building’s address, roof coverings for pedestrian protection from the elements, gathering areas (seating) proximate to the doorway, and changes in color or material from the primary exterior material.

The following images illustrate aspects of primary entryways that are consistent with the Cashiers community character.

- A** Entryway faces street fronting the building
- B** Roof feature identifies primary entryway
- C** Gathering area proximate to entryway
- D** Change in exterior material/ color to signify entrance
- E** Entry access cue
- F** Weather protection for pedestrians
- G** Outdoor display
- H** Entryway does not face the street (*inconsistent*)

Primary entryway features in Cashiers

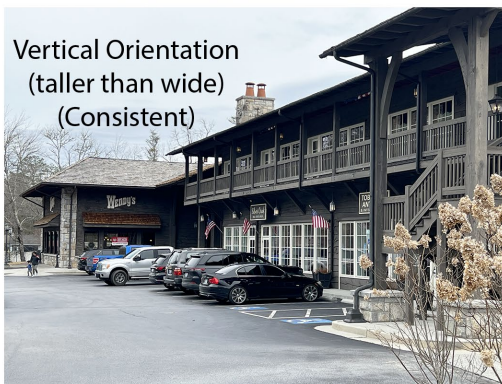




Glazing (transparency)

Glazing or fenestration (also referred to as “transparency”) is a term describing the amount of glass on a building’s façade. Generally speaking, windows on non-residential buildings in Cashiers are configured vertically (longer than they are wide), include divided lights (mullions or framework), and are operable (or appear that way). Even buildings with significant amounts of glazing still include at least half of the façade wall as an opaque building material. While the height of the bulkhead below a storefront window can vary, it is uncommon to see full floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows in Cashiers.

In most cases, the amount of glazing on the second story of a two-story building is less than the amount or glazing found on the first floor. Finally, most (but not all) entryway doors are glass. The images below provide examples of glazing in Cashiers that is and is not consistent with the established community character in Cashiers.



Examples of building glazing in Cashiers



Exterior Building Materials

The appearance of buildings is a key part of community character, and one of the primary determinants of building appearance is exterior materials. As mentioned in other portions of this Analysis, one of the aspects unique to Cashiers is the prevalence of residential architectural shapes and building scale even for non-residential buildings. The same can be said for exterior materials. In many cases, non-residential buildings in Cashiers rely on building materials more commonly found on residential structures – for example: wooden clapboard siding, board and batten, cedar shakes, and stone accents.



Non-residential buildings in Cashiers configured to appear as residential and agricultural buildings

There is a strong precedent for use of “natural” material, such as wood, stone, and metal. In some cases, these materials are configured in ways to promote a “rustic mountain lodge” appearance.



Non-residential buildings in Cashiers configured to portray a rustic mountain lodge character

Stone, while occasionally used a primary exterior material (such as on Wells Fargo or the Boys and Girls Club buildings), is more often used as a vertical accent (such as columns or chimneys). It is important to note that stone veneer configured as a narrow stone band mimicking a stone foundation is not a typical part of the established Cashiers community character.



Use of stone on non-residential buildings in Cashiers

RECODIFY CASHIERS



Community Character Analysis (public review draft)

11-30-23

Wooden siding is very prevalent throughout Cashiers. Most typically, it is found as horizontal clapboard, though there are some variations, such as rough-hewn siding, and even instances where siding direction changes, as can be seen on the Cornucopia building. Board and batten siding is also very typical.



Clapboard (Consistent)



Board and Batten (Consistent)



Rough-Hewn (Consistent)



Multi-directional Clapboard (Consistent)

Common siding materials in Cashiers

There are three basic roof material forms in Cashiers (found on pitched roofs): asphalt shingles, standing seam metal, and cedar shake.



Asphalt Shingles (Consistent)



Standing Seam Metal (Consistent)



Cedar Shake (Consistent)

Common non-residential roofing materials in Cashiers

The images on the following pages show a variety of exterior materials that are rare or not generally consistent with the Cashiers community character.



RECODIFY CASHIERS

Community Character Analysis (public review draft)

11-30-23



Synthetic Stucco
(Inconsistent)



Smooth-faced
Cinderblock
(Inconsistent)



Sheet Metal
(Inconsistent)



Wooden Sheathing
(TS-111)
(Inconsistent)



Masonite
(or comparable)
(Inconsistent)



Brick
(Inconsistent)



Concrete Masonry
Unit (CMU)
(Inconsistent)

Examples of exterior materials inconsistent with community character in Cashiers





Primary Building Colors

Primary building color is an important part of building appearance and includes both exterior walls as well as roof color. As used here, primary color means the colors on the largest fields of the building's exterior walls and roof that are visible from off-site areas. Accent colors are the colors used for trim, coping, edging, windows, doors, and ornamentation.

Color has three main aspects: saturation, hue, and brightness. Hue is the actual color that is seen (red, blue, green, etc.). Saturation is the degree to which one color is mixed with another color. Colors with a low saturation are mixed with black or white and thus more muted, dull, or shaded. Colors with a high saturation are not mixed with black or white, and thus appear more bright. Brightness (also known as brilliance) is the intensity of the color – the higher the brightness, the higher the intensity or vibrance of the color. Another helpful concept is the “temperature” of a color, or the degree to which it is “warm” (yellow, red, orange) or “cool” (green, blue, and purple). In some cases, some colors have been chemically altered to convert portions of the ultraviolet spectrum to be visible to the naked eye – these colors are called “neon” or “fluorescent” colors because of their high saturation and high brightness. Orange vests used by hunters are an example of a neon orange color.

In Cashiers, primary building color hues tend to be “earth tones,” “cool” colors, black, and white. Earth tones include grey, brown, beige, green, and rust. Often, primary building colors in Cashiers have low saturation, or appear as tints or shades of a particular hue. Primary building colors are dim, and not overly bright. The use of natural exterior materials also results in significant variability in color value or hue, like that associated with weathered wood. Bold, bright, and neon primary colors are uncommon and inconsistent with the established community character (though they are commonly used as accent colors with less impact on community character).

Another aspect of primary building color is the number of different primary colors on a building. Generally speaking, a building using more than two primary colors on building walls can be confusing or visually disruptive, particularly when the brighter or warmer color is below a darker or heavier color.



Example of primary and accent colors in Cashiers



7. SITE FEATURES

This final section of the Cashiers Community Character Analysis explores site features and how they impact community character. Specifically, this section examines current conditions related to off-street parking, landscaping (screening), and signage. While these specific features were not a subject of significant discussion by community members in May of 2023, they are an important part of the visual character of the community and are worthy of discussion here.

Off-Street Parking

Off-street surface parking can be a dominating aspect of a building or site based on four factors: its placement (whether in front of or to the rear of the building it serves), the surfacing material used, the amount of the lot or site occupied by parking, and how it is accessed from the adjacent street. Parking lots located in front of buildings denote the character of a suburban, rural, or auto-oriented location. Parking lots that are paved with asphalt, pavers, concrete, or other solid surface impart a sense of a formal urban or suburban landscape, while unpaved parking is less formal and more common to rural and village locations. Access to parking also imparts an idea about the local context – whether formal (urban/suburban) or informal (rural/village). Surface parking areas subject to access controls in the form of a driveway are urban or suburban in nature. Off-street parking areas that are directly accessible from the street they abut without some sort of designated entrance are rural in nature.

In Cashiers, most non-residential sites include at least some off-street parking between the front of the building and the street it faces (though many sites developed in the last 30 years include all the off-street parking in front of the building). Generally speaking, having at least some off-street parking in front of the building is consistent with community character in Cashiers. Aside from a handful of multi-tenant retail uses, off-street parking lots appear to be properly sized – in other words, they do not include an “excessive” number of parking spaces. Sites with excessive amounts of off-street parking (like that found at the Cashiers Center site) can interrupt the rhythm of development along the street and present a long void in the sense of enclosure that is inhospitable to pedestrians. Large, often vacant, off-street parking lots are inconsistent with the Cashiers community character. Many of the older and smaller non-residential uses in Cashiers maintain unpaved parking areas – parking lots paved with gravel, cinders, grit, or similar material. This is consistent with rural and village character. Access to off-street parking presents an interesting challenge in Cashiers. Many of the older non-residential sites have very informal access to their parking areas, and this informal access is consistent with community character. However, this is also very unsafe for pedestrians and vehicles. New Section 9.3 of the UDO will have to explore ways to preserve community character while also ensuring safe access.



Access management in Cashiers



Landscaping and Screening

There are five basic kinds of landscaping: parking lot landscaping, perimeter buffers (between dissimilar uses), streetscape landscaping (including street trees), screening of site features (like refuse containers), and foundation plantings around buildings (which could include both shrubs and trees). With the exception of foundation plantings, landscaping requirements are most often found in urban and suburban contexts, not rural and village contexts. Modern trends in planning are also moving away from suburban-style perimeter landscaping buffers between different use types in favor of other rules like building design controls that protect compatibility between dissimilar uses without deep landscaping buffers, particularly in urban and village contexts.

Parking lot landscaping takes two forms: landscaping around the perimeter of the parking lot (intended to soften the view of cars and interrupt headlight-sweep) and landscaping located in islands within the parking field. Landscaping within parking lots is often limited to more formal surfaced lots with demarcated spaces and formalized drive aisles. Generally speaking, while there are some parking lots with plantings, parking lot landscaping is not generally consistent with Cashier’s established community character. Streetscape landscaping is intended to fulfill two main functions: soften the appearance of buildings as seen from streets and sidewalks, and to protect pedestrians (when planted as street trees between the street and a sidewalk or pedestrian way. Few uses in Cashiers include any sort of streetscape landscaping or plantings. Where provided, this landscaping tends to function more like foundation planting than it does streetscape landscaping. Streetscape landscaping is generally not consistent with the community character in Cashiers, though the community may wish to explore increased use of street trees along Highway 64 to protect pedestrian ways. Screening of site features, like refuse collection, outdoor storage, and mechanical equipment can be accomplished by landscaping or from built features like fences or walls. In Cashiers, screening, when present, is accomplished primarily through built features like fences and walls. The following images provide some examples of landscaping conditions in Cashiers.



Landscaping features in Cashiers





Signage

Signage size, location, quality, and illumination can have a profound impact on community character. Non-residential signage is one of the primary indicators of auto orientation and a community’s emphasis on design quality. The image on the left is from Gatlinburg, TN, and the one on the right is from Jackson Hole, WY. In Gatlinburg, much of the signage is configured as a stand-alone pole sign or monument sign, is oriented to automobiles, is internally illuminated, and includes changeable copy. In Jackson Hole, the majority of the signage is wall-mounted, pedestrian scale, and externally illuminated.



Signage comparison between Gatlinburg, TN and Jackson Hole, WY (source Google maps)

A handful of the older retail establishments in Cashiers rely on wall-mounted signage, but most non-residential signage in Cashiers takes the form of pole or monument signage near the adjacent roadway. Most signage in the village is externally illuminated, or includes an external light source that shines on the sign face (internally-illuminated signage is typically formed plastic mounted into a frame). There are several examples of signage that include architectural details or flourishes that enhance the architectural quality of the signage. The images below provide examples of signage that is or is not consistent with Cashiers’ community character.



Examples of signage in Cashiers