

## Repairing the Mistake of I-277



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## Small Tweaks and Large Shifts in 2023

*By Lori Thomas*

We are now four weeks into the new year and already past the expiration date of many resolutions. Effective cultural and economic programming normalizes January as a season of change and improvement, as if the other 11 months of the year are not as suitable for such reflection and action.

As this season of self improvement wanes, however, we are asking you to focus some of your remaining resolution energy on our city, our region, and all of us who live here. Read with us as we launch the first of a series of guest contributors to our newsletter. These writers, journalists, academics, and thought leaders have been asked to reflect on the question, ***What small tweak or large shift would you make in 2023 that would catalyze sustainable growth and ensure more equitable wellbeing in our region?***

Our first guest contributor is [Phil Veasley](#) who asks us to reimagine Interstate 277 around uptown and provides options to do so. Phil is a transportation engineer and regularly blogs about reconnecting communities around Charlotte, the Triangle, Atlanta and beyond that were destroyed by 20th century highway and urban renewal projects. He creates plans and outlines opportunities and he challenges us to consider how repairing some of the segregating impacts of racist policies is still possible.

If you have been reflecting on a small tweak or large shift our city or region needs, [pitch it to us](#). We'd love to hear from you. And as you may have seen in previous editions of this newsletter, we are seeking a new [Director of Research Translation and Engagement](#) at the Institute who will help us bring stories, data, and ideas for change to you and our larger region. The application period remains open until

February 17th. If you are interested or know of someone who is interested in telling data stories and translating research so it can be used by our community, please let us know or pass this information along.



## Repairing the Mistake of I-277

**Special Contributor: Phil Veasley, El. Toole Design**

*Editor's Note: This article is the first in a series of guest contributors considering the question, "What small tweak or large shift would you make in 2023 that would catalyze sustainable growth and ensure equitable wellbeing in our region?"*

The construction of I-277 was a failed urban renewal ploy during the mid to late 20th century. It was one that tore apart some of the most dense and Black neighborhoods of Charlotte. Many cities are finally starting to realize their urban freeways were a mistake and putting forth efforts to remove them. For the first time ever, the federal government is even offering aid aimed at helping reconnect communities.

As with most large cities, Charlotte is experiencing an affordability crisis. When combined with the sprawling nature of the region, many people are left doubting the sustainability of the future. Removing portions of the freeway while mitigating the impacts of the rest could go a long way in not only repairing the damage of the past but also restoring faith in an equitable, sustainable future.



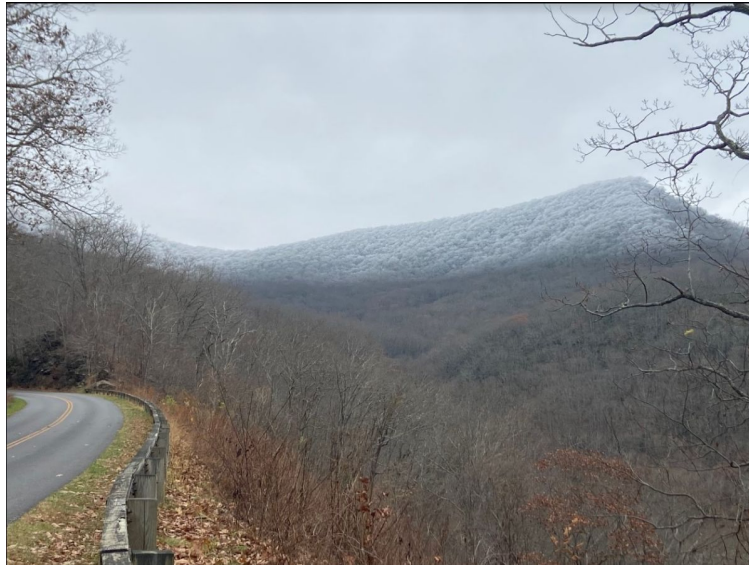
## Creating a Charlotte Region Zoning Atlas

**By Aaron M. Houck**

The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, with generous funding from the [Mercatus Center](#) of George Mason University, is participating in a national research project designed to collect data about zoning laws from around the country. The Charlotte Region Zoning Atlas will collect information about zoning ordinances that have been adopted

Zoning Atlas will collect information about zoning ordinances that have been adopted across the [fourteen-county region served by the Charlotte Urban Institute](#).

Zoning is one of the most important policies adopted by local governments. It is the dominant type of land use regulation in the U.S. (though not in other developed countries). It works by limiting the type and intensity of use landowners may make of their property. That is, just because you own your property, you cannot build whatever you want on it, even if you have the financing and customer base to support your plans. You also need legal permission from the local zoning authority.



## [A Winter Hike on the Blue Ridge Parkway](#)

*By Ruth Ann Grissom*

Over the years, my husband and I have hiked many trails near the Blue Ridge Parkway – Graveyard Fields, Mt. Pisgah, Black Balsam Knob, Looking Glass Rock. This fall, we lucked into an opportunity to hike on the parkway itself.

We happened to be in Asheville after remnants of Hurricane Nicole passed through the mountains. By Sunday morning, there was snow at the higher elevations. It was 15 degrees on Mt. Mitchell. We decided to stick to the lower ridges. We drove north on the parkway, aiming to do a short, steep hike to Rattlesnake Lodge ([Rattlesnake Lodge - Asheville Trails](#)) and then venture out on the Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) if it wasn't too windy.

After passing the visitor center, we saw an ominous sign. Road Closure Ahead. Despite our concern, we pressed on toward our intended trailhead, but about a mile from our destination we were stopped at a locked gate.

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