

Item Title: Public Hearing on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment 03-22 to Adopt the Lower Swift Creek Area Plan

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners holds a public hearing and adopts the attached resolution to amend the Wake County Comprehensive Plan, PLANWake, related to the Lower Swift Creek Area Plan.

Item Summary:

Purpose: In accordance with the North Carolina General Statutes and the Wake County Comprehensive Plan, all amendments must be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

Background: Wake County's comprehensive plan, PLANWake, was adopted in 2021 as a tool to manage the unprecedented growth that the county has and will continue to experience.

To meet the goals set forth in PLANWake, numerous Wake County policies and documents had to be updated as part of the implementation process. One such example is adoption of area plans encompassing the unincorporated areas of Wake County. These area plans are designed to provide more localized land use (applications) analysis and public engagement. The Lower Swift Creek (LSC) Area Plan is the first of six area plans that will replace the current area land use plans.

At their October 5, 2022 meeting, the Wake County Planning Board voted unanimously that the Board Commissioners adopt the Lower Swift Creek Area Plan as an amendment to PLANWake and the proposed text amendment.

Board Goal: This action supports Growth and Sustainability Goal 1: Preserve and enhance the County residents' quality of life through coordinated land use and transportation planning.

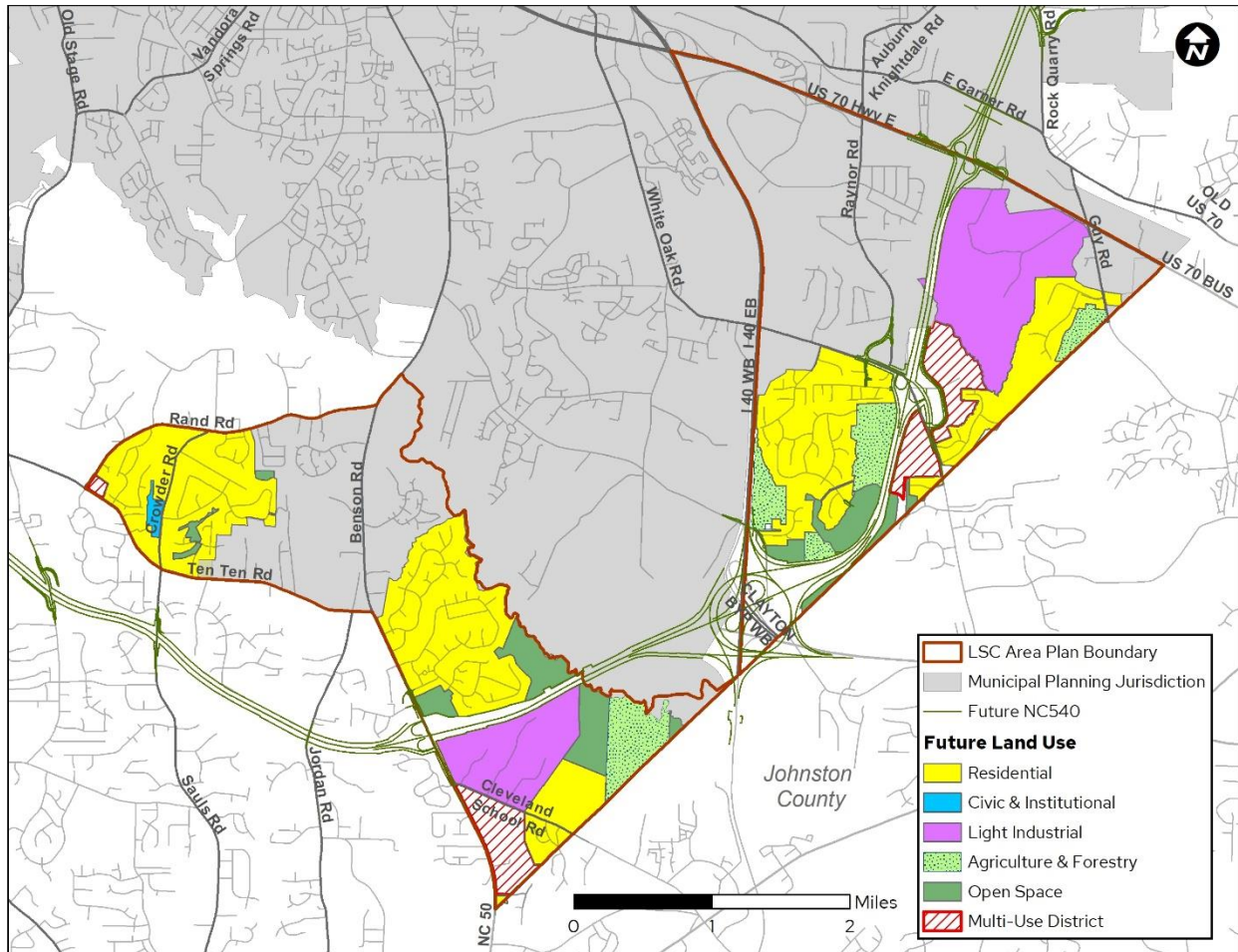
Fiscal Impact: This action has no fiscal impact to the County.

Additional Information:

Municipalities have grown significantly over the past 20 years, either through annexation or expansions of extra-territorial jurisdictions. This growth has resulted in the considerable reduction of Wake County's planning jurisdiction, which rendered the former area land use plan geographies obsolete, and its policies outdated. The new boundaries for the area plans represent the logical and updated geographic groupings of the remaining area. Additional considerations such as watersheds, rights-of-way and U.S. Census block groups contributed to the updated area plan boundaries.

While PLANWake will continue to serve as the overarching vision for the county, the area plans can and should be used as an opportunity for local land use planning decisions, identify needs for an area, and adjustments to the growth development framework map.

Lower Swift Creek Area Plan



The Lower Swift Creek Area Plan is the culmination of a months-long process to conduct research, analysis, and outreach to implement the vision and goals of PLANWake in a localized manner. Wake County planning staff took this opportunity to reassess its past policies and methods and employed new tactics and avenues to create a long-term planning document.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting the conventional methods of public outreach, such as in-person meetings or canvassing, planning staff mostly harnessed virtual or online methods to interact with the community and garner feedback throughout the process. Along with a central website and social media posts, staff utilized an online platform that was able to capture feedback from the public in an engaging and interactive way. Since February 2022, 791 unique users visited the plan's online engagement platform and 156 users interacted with it, meaning they either commented or completed a survey. Additionally, the site received 2,467 total views, 158 survey responses and 51 comments.

The future NC 540 is currently in construction and will bisect the LSC area. This new highway will bring greater automobile access to residents of the area but will also change the landscape and travel networks significantly. A focal point of the LSC Area Plan was to find a way to leverage this investment in a way that can benefit residents and help manage the type of growth that this project will inevitably spur. The recently adopted PLANWake amendment to adopt new guidelines regarding how and where multi-use districts (formerly known as activity centers) are developed had a direct influence on the LSC Area Plan and its multi-use districts.

Coordination with stakeholders and municipal partners is a key step in the planning process, and the LSC Area Plan was no exception. This coordination resulted in the introduction of a new land use category, Agriculture & Forestry, in order to maintain and promote the county's predominate rural land uses, such as farming. This is in conjunction with forthcoming code amendments to establish additional standards for developing adjacent to farm uses. Additionally, county staff aligned the LSC Area Plan with the Town of Garner's comprehensive plan, Garner Forward, most notably in the non-residential land use categories and around NC 540.

As part of the adoption process, planning staff additionally recommends the following text amendment to PLANWake that inform readers of the new area plan's adoption.

“NOTE: On October 17, 2022, the Wake County Board of Commissioners adopted the Lower Swift Creek Area Plan as an amendment to PLANWake as part of the process to update its area land use plans.”

Attachments:

1. Presentation
2. CPA-03-22 Staff Report
3. CPA-03-22 Staff Map
4. CPA-03-22 Resolution
5. Planning Board Minutes