

Item Title: Public Hearing on the Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment 01-25 to Approve the Eastern Wake Area Plan

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners holds a public hearing and adopts the attached resolution to approve the Eastern Wake Area Plan and amend the Wake County Comprehensive Plan, PLANWake.

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 significant 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 analysis and public engagement. The Eastern Wake Area Plan is the fifth of seven area plans that will replace the current area land use plans.

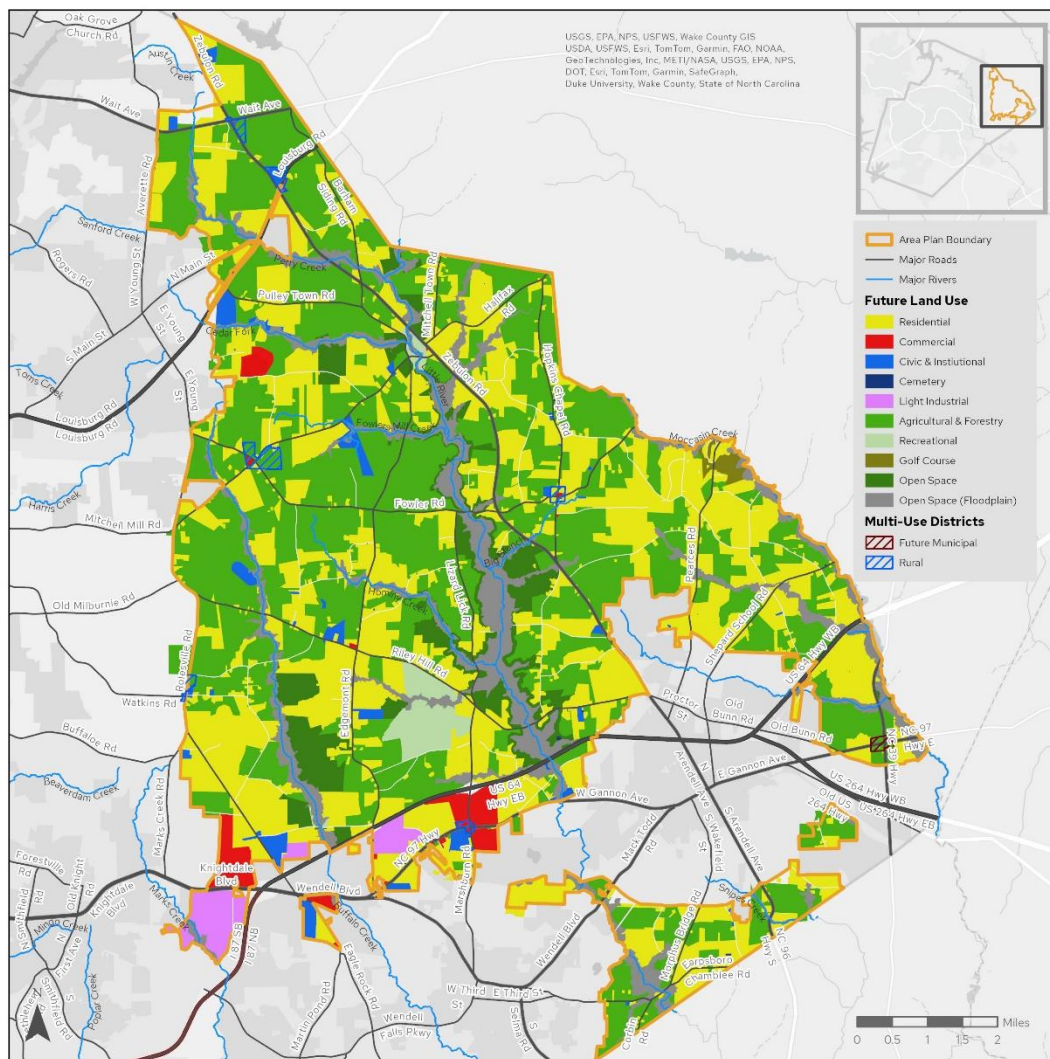
At their October 1, 2025 meeting, the Wake County Planning Board voted unanimously that the Board Commissioners adopt the Eastern Wake Area Plan as an amendment to PLANWake and the proposed amendment to the Development Framework map.

Strategic Plan: This action supports Growth, Land Use and Environment Goal 1: Between 2024 and 2029, 97% of growth and development will be directed toward cities and towns that provide municipal services, transportation, and utilities.

Fiscal Impact: This action has no fiscal impact.

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County's planning jurisdiction, which rendered the former area land use plan geographies obsolete, and its policies outdated.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.

Eastern Wake Area Plan

The Eastern Wake 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.

Building on the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, planning staff 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 May 2025 and over two rounds of engagement, 1,040 unique users visited the plan's online engagement platform and 189 of them interacted with it, meaning they either commented or completed a survey. Additionally, the site received 1,633 total visits, 162 survey responses and 62 comments.

Staff held one virtual and two in-person meetings within the study area. The virtual meeting was held on March 6, 2025, and the in-person meetings were both held at the Wake County Eastern Regional Center in Zebulon on April 16, 2025, and June 26, 2025. The information and conversations during these events directly contributed to Eastern Wake's content and overall direction.

An important aspect of the Eastern Wake Area Plan is the "Agriculture" land use classification. This designation was first introduced in the previously adopted Lower Swift Creek Area Plan. The Agriculture & Forestry designation is unique in that it specifically calls out farming practices as the primary and intended long-range use instead of utilizing a passive term like rural to describe the area. Much of the feedback staff received were from the agricultural community who expressed their desire to continue farming their land into the future and not to sell to developers. This is underscored by the Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VADs), Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts (EVADs), and conservation easements in the area as well as the overall interest and support of these programs by local landowners.

PLANWake Development Framework Map

Along with the adoption of the Eastern Wake Area Plan, staff recommends an amendment to the PLANWake Development Framework map to reclassify 43 acres in the from Rural to Community. This is to reflect an annexation by the Town of Zebulon that occurred since the Development Framework map was created as the Rural designation is no longer appropriate. This is a standard procedure to reflect the dynamic nature of Wake County's growth and one of the goals of the area plans is to identify such situations.

Findings

1. The Eastern Wake Area Plan is consistent with the goals and visions set forth in PLANWake.
2. The Eastern Wake Area Plan received input from residents, municipal partners, and stakeholders.
3. The Eastern Wake Area Plan provides an update to the existing area land plan policies, development framework map, and land use designations.

Recommendations:

Planning Staff: Staff recommends approval of the proposed amendment as presented.

Planning Board: The Planning Board recommended, by a unanimous vote at their October 1, 2025 meeting, that the Board of Commissioners approve proposed amendment CPA-01-25 as presented.

Attachments:

1. Presentation
2. Eastern Wake Area Plan
3. Staff Report
4. Map
5. Resolution