

Item Title: Public Hearing on Wake County Comprehensive Plan Amendment 02-22

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 multi-use Activity Centers.

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: The former County Land Use Plan used Activity Centers to identify areas throughout the County to promote the development of mixed uses that provide nearby residents with daily and weekly needs. The adopted 2021 Comprehensive Plan (PLANWake) includes a brief description of how those Activity Centers would function. The plan also acknowledged at the time that more analysis was needed to refine policies and guidelines that were established under the former Land Use Plan.

After PLANWake was adopted, staff developed a PLANWake Work Plan for implementing the recommendations. The Work Plan lists Activity Center policy guidance as a work item to be completed, explaining, “Consider changes after an inventory and analysis of intended purpose versus use”.

At their July 20, 2022 meeting, the Wake County Planning Board voted to unanimously rename Activity Centers to Multi-Use Districts (MUDs). Staff concurs with this decision and are proposing to make this change as part of this Comprehensive Plan 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.

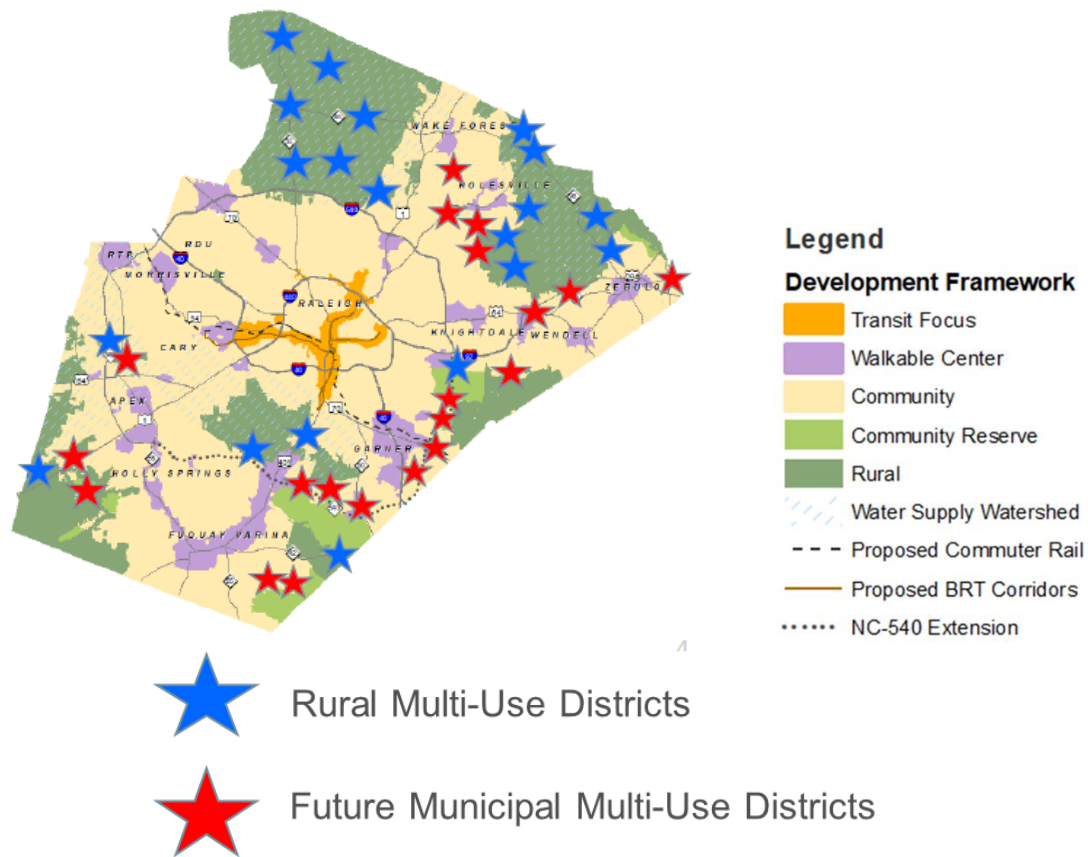
Fiscal Impact: This action has no fiscal impact.

Additional Information:

In county land use plans, Activity Centers identify the most appropriate location for commercial development to help serve the daily needs of the surrounding area. The current Activity Centers are identified in various planning documents associated with the Wake County Land Use Plan adopted and amended during the period spanning 1997 – 2020. Activity Centers are used by the county to guide decisions on rezoning requests

and development permits. Some uses are allowed in Activity Centers by right (if it is in compliance with the underlying zoning), while certain uses are only allowed through rezoning or special use permit, requiring approval from the Planning Board or Board of Adjustment respectively.

This Comprehensive Plan amendment is proposing to change the name of Activity Centers to Multi-Use Districts (MUDs). The new name is easier to understand and it is similar to what municipal jurisdictions use. Secondly, the amendment creates a two-tiered approach wherein the Activity Centers (Multi-Use Districts or MUDs) follow different development protocols based on their classification on the PLANWake Development Framework Map, shown below.



Rural MUDs (blue stars)

- Classified as Rural and Community Reserve on the Development Framework Map.
- Rural MUDs are intended to remain in county jurisdiction for the foreseeable future (or forever in the case of water supply watersheds).
- Design standards are appropriate for small-scale neighborhood uses in county jurisdiction.

Future Municipal MUDs (red stars)

- Classified as Walkable Center and Community on the Development Framework Map.

- Future Municipal MUDs are identified for new growth and municipal annexation and development.
- Design standards would be determined through a municipal/county collaborative process with the intent of making the development municipal-like in design.

The amendment updates the Development Framework Map on Page 45 of the Comprehensive Plan to reflect the new naming convention and the symbols (blue and red stars) showing the two types of MUDs. No changes to existing MUD boundaries are proposed.

The amendment makes other improvements and clarifications to county policy:

- Changes the name Activity Center to Multi-Use District.
- Makes changes to the rural guidelines to better align design standards with goals of PLANWake. Eliminates guidelines for mid-sized and regional MUDs and the more “urban” type design expectations that are not feasible in rural jurisdiction.
- Sets design priorities for development in areas expected to become municipal within the timeframe set by PLANWake.
- Provides guidance for evaluating proposed amendments to MUDs, emphasizing area plan updates are the most appropriate time to make major changes to MUDs.
- Carries over the objectives and general policies from the guidelines in the former land use plan because they remain valid (ex: distance between MUDs, general size limitation for MUDs). Edits to these sections are minor, such as updating the naming conventions. One objective was added: “Foster uses that support rural lands and the rural economy...”

During public engagement for PLANWake, residents directed that the plan focus on guiding growth within existing communities or on the edges of communities. The county/municipal design collaboration for Future Municipal MUDs is intended to encourage compatible design in areas transitioning to municipal jurisdiction. Municipal planning staff have reviewed the proposed amendment and support a collaborative approach to development of Future Municipal MUDs.

Attachments:

1. Presentation
2. Proposed Text Amendment
3. Proposed Map Amendment
4. Resolution
5. Planning Board Minutes