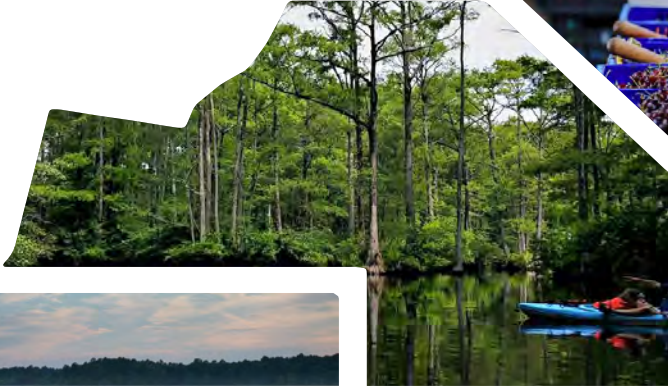


NOVEMBER 2020



PLANWAKE



GUIDING
OUR
COUNTY'S
FUTURE

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ABOUT PLANWAKE

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the population of Wake County reached a critical milestone of one million residents. The region’s economy and higher learning environment has resulted in some of the highest population growth rates in the nation. Each year, Wake County adds another 25,000 residents, or about 60 people per day, to its community. It is home to many thriving industries and startups with twelve cities and towns that offer a variety of living, working, cultural, entertainment and civic opportunities.

Over the next decade, these growth trends are expected to continue and another 250,000 new residents will likely call Wake County their home. Under current growth rates, 28,000 additional acres of new development could occur and all remaining unprotected land in the County could be converted to development within 25-50 years.

These exceptional trends in prosperity also present challenges. Many of our residents have seen the costs of housing, food, education and other needs rise, without an equivalent increase in their incomes. With more and more people calling Wake county home, valued farmlands, rural areas and forests have converted to housing and commercial development, and traffic congestion has made trips to work, school and shopping longer and more challenging.

A CALL TO ACTION

The PLANWake process involved an unprecedented level of community engagement, with more than 9,000 completed in-depth resident surveys and 150,000 question responses. The public feedback was resounding: residents throughout Wake County want to see a different path forward. The remaining portions of this plan will describe how this new path will be directed.

PLANWake Community Perspectives

- » Significant new perspectives, policies and efforts are needed to best accommodate the next decade of new development and population growth.
- » New development should be directed within cities and towns.
- » Create more walkable spaces and places.

PLANWake Vision Outcomes

- » Inclusive and Equitable
- » Healthy and Active
- » Sustainable and Vibrant

PURPOSE OF PLANWAKE

PLANWake is the plan to chart a new course. This plan articulates the new vision for the greater Wake County community — one that will build off of recent planning advancements made through the Wake Transit Plan, the Wake County Affordable Housing Plan and others to plan for the next wave of growth in a manner that enhances quality of life for all residents. This new course directs growth to existing towns, supports the development of connected and walkable transit-supportive centers and works with rural landowners to protect important open spaces, farms and forests.

Guided by community responses, PLANWake sets the priorities and vision for Wake County to achieve in the next decade.

The Plan Framework is organized into three main components that address a comprehensive list of community issues.

- » **Vision Outcomes:** aspirations for the future.
- » **Development Framework:** map to guide growth.
- » **Performance Metrics:** metrics to evaluate progress.

PLANWAKE STRUCTURE

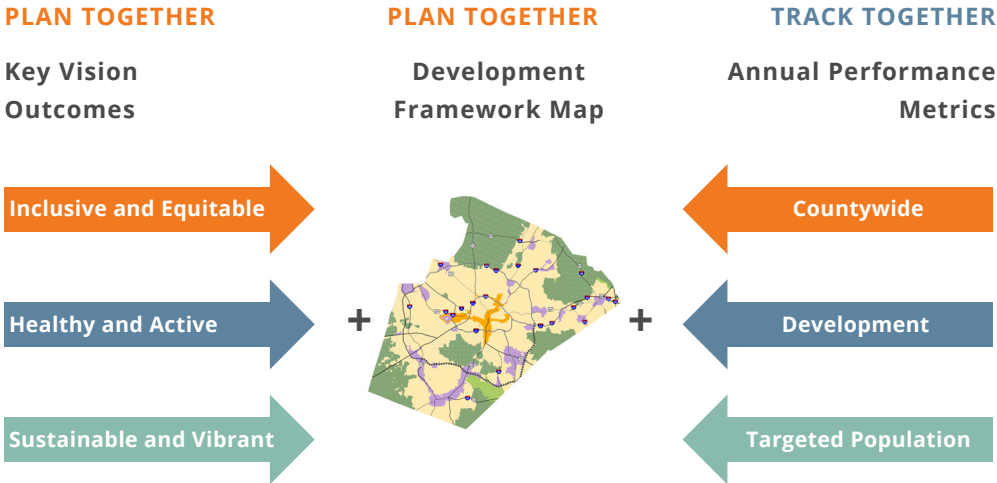


Figure 1: PLANWake Structure



THE PLANWAKE APPROACH

The PLANWake approach is different from typical comprehensive plans. The planning process was focused on working in partnership with municipal and interjurisdictional partners. This plan is dynamic and requires ongoing coordination and collaboration among many different actors. As a result, the PLANWake approach involves three key actions, described below.



Figure 2: PLANWake Approach

PLAN TOGETHER

PLANWake is built on collaboration. The planning process challenged all parties to identify things that could and should be done better and asked for ideas on how to make these things a reality. By establishing the PLANWake vision outcomes and the PLANWake development framework, the plan sets overarching goals for the County, municipal and jurisdictional partners. Planning together establishes the expectation of coordinated actions across jurisdictions.

TRACK TOGETHER

Previous plans have had similar goals but limited means of determining if goals were being met or not. PLANWake establishes performance metrics for community-wide and municipal goals. Monitoring performance metrics and plan implementation progress is essential to taking the right actions and adjusting actions to be even more successful moving forward.

ACT TOGETHER

PLANWake is only one part of a complex interworking of plans, policies and investments. To achieve the goals of PLANWake, Wake County and its municipal and jurisdictional partners will need to align and coordinate the implementation of multiple plans and actions with the PLANWake vision outcomes and the PLANWake development framework. It is expected that land development and conservation decisions, particularly, will be coordinated with PLANWake.

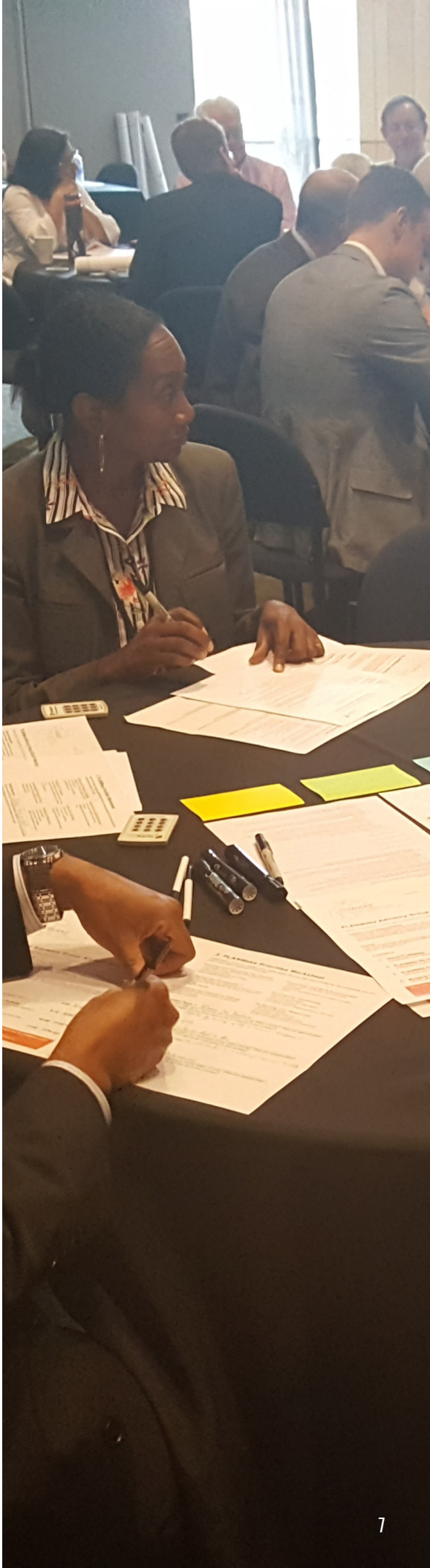
LONG RANGE PLAN / ANNUAL ACTIONS AND CHECK-INS



Figure 3: Long Range Plan / Annual Actions and Check-Ins

- 1** Adoption of this PLANWake Comprehensive Plan is an important first step in the planning process to guide Wake County's future. It establishes the desired outcomes and policy direction for intentionally creating a future that supports the community's priorities.
- 2** The Comprehensive Plan will guide the development of Board Goals that serve as the overarching policy guidance for the entire Wake County community and will be used to establish work priorities for the County's departments and administrators.
- 3** Budgeting and capital investment decisions will be guided by the intended outcomes in this plan. Funded projects and investments will support implementation of the new county vision.
- 4** Wake County government, in partnership with neighboring jurisdictions and other agencies, will work to implement the priorities identified in this larger planning process.
- 5** Monitoring performance metrics and plan implementation progress is an important step in the planning process. Implementation metrics help track the County and municipal progress achieved on recommended policies and actions. Performance metrics measure key outcomes both community-wide and between jurisdictions.

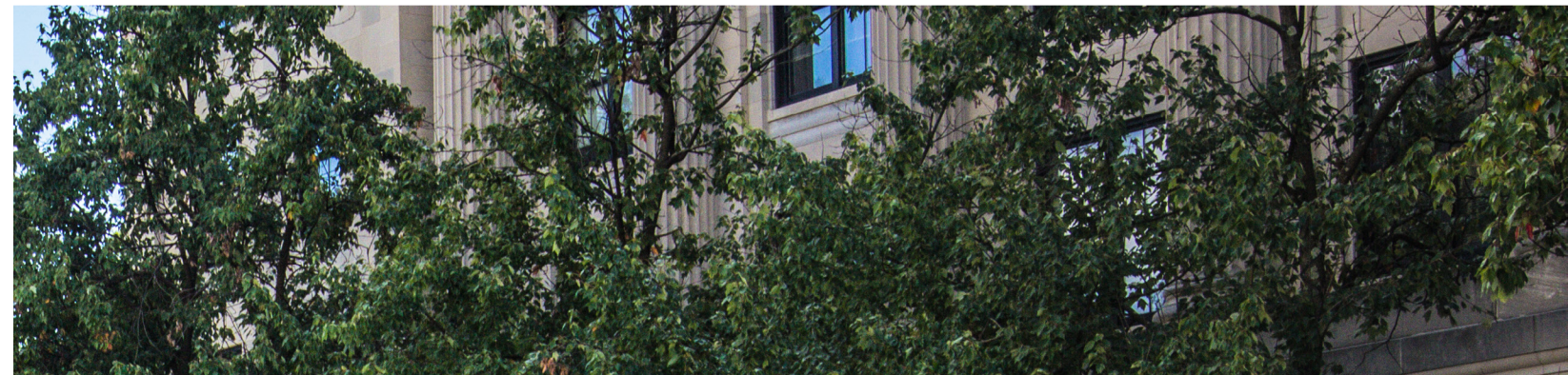
In the future, the County will update this plan to address new conditions and opportunities and continue the ever-dynamic planning process.



1 PLANWAKE VISION OUTCOMES - PLAN TOGETHER

Throughout the PLANWake process, stakeholders from across the community have been consistently requesting a change in the way development is managed and investments are made to spark positive change in the community. PLANWake sets out these positive aspirations for Wake County over the next decade through its three Vision Outcomes: to become a more inclusive and equitable, healthy and active, and sustainable and vibrant community. The Vision Outcomes articulate the highest level of aspiration for Wake County and serve as a guide for decision-makers and staff over the years to come.

The main tenets of these Vision Outcomes are strongly supported by the community as demonstrated through consistent responses to all three public engagement surveys conducted during the process. These Vision Outcomes serve to not only guide policy direction within PLANWake, but also to guide development of other future plans to be developed by the County and its partners. They are comprehensive in nature and are driven by the community's objectives for the environment, transportation, development, housing, infrastructure, health and the economy.



GROWING INTENTIONALLY

PLANWake sets out a strategy for growing intentionally to achieve the vision outcomes and priorities. The path to achieving the outcomes is interconnected and designed to reinforce a new system of growing intentionally.

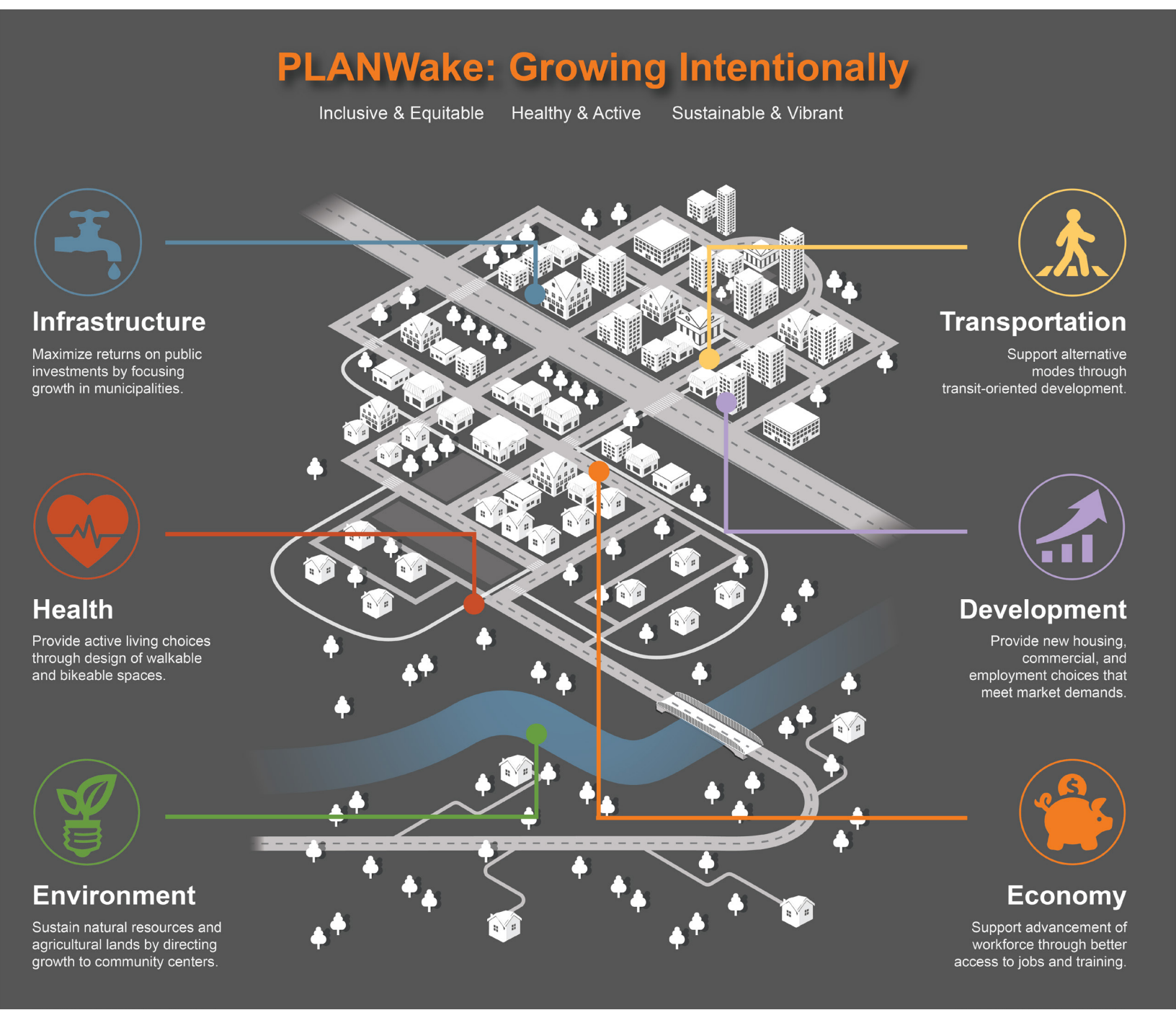


Figure 4: PLANWake Development Framework Graphic

PLANWAKE VISION OUTCOMES

The three PLANWake Vision Outcomes articulate the intended future for Wake County. The Vision Outcomes are grounded in public input and achieving them is the priority of the plan. They also provide a measurable system that can be used to track progress toward their achievement through performance metrics.



Inclusive and Equitable



Wake County will strive to ensure that all Wake County residents will be able to live, work and enjoy their lives, regardless of their income, wealth, race, age or background.

Healthy and Active



Wake County will strive to ensure that all Wake County residents will be able to access the services, providers, foods and recreational amenities that support a healthy lifestyle, no matter where they live or what they earn.

Sustainable and Vibrant



Wake County will strive to ensure that all Wake County residents will have an opportunity to thrive in a community that supports economic, social and environmental health and resiliency.



INCLUSIVE & EQUITABLE

WHERE WE ARE NOW?

Over the past ten years, Wake County has seen a prosperous economy for many, with significant job growth, low unemployment and a proliferation of high-wage industries. This prosperity, now and historically, has not been shared equitably among residents and workers. In particular, Black and Brown communities, non-college educated populations and low-income residents have struggled to find adequate and dignified employment, stable living situations, access to services, and time and space for leisure. Others have struggled to live healthy and active lifestyles, access healthcare, and achieve financial security. Nearly one in eleven residents in Wake County lives in poverty (~93,000 residents) and many more struggle to make ends meet and save for the future.

The vision outcome of an inclusive and equitable Wake County aims to create a county where the unique needs of each resident population in our community are strategically met through providing good options for housing, health, and transportation while ensuring safety and protecting livelihoods of citizens.

“We want Wake to remain affordable to low and median income families.” - Wake County resident

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Becoming a more inclusive and equitable Wake County requires the County to work in collaboration with the 12 municipalities and partner agencies to support the upward mobility of the most vulnerable people and households. Changing the patterns of development and enhancing transportation choices between destinations is an important first step. Providing a variety of affordable housing near commercial and employment centers can go far in reducing affordability challenges of lower income households. It can also ensure that these residents aren't limited to living in outlying neighborhoods that provide few opportunities for physical activity and are far from health services, particularly for those households that cannot afford a personal vehicle. As the impacts of climate change increase, it will also be important to ensure that the most vulnerable populations are protected from the impacts of severe weather events.

AN INCLUSIVE & EQUITABLE WAKE COUNTY WILL LEAD TO...



Better preparedness to assist all our residents during severe weather events.



A comprehensive and unified response to the pressures of climate change.



More healthcare options, more affordable healthcare and longer lives.



More housing choices and more affordable housing options.



An employable workforce and diverse cultural attractions.



More and safer transportation options and more connections to destinations.

Many residents choose where to live by what they can afford, rather than where they want.

Many Wake County residents have seen minimal increases in their paychecks, but have experienced higher living expenses and longer travel times. There are opportunities to foster a more prosperous economy, including workforce training options, expanding access to opportunity through the built environment and supporting industries that pay living wages.

Housing affordability and stability are challenges for many Wake County residents.

According to the Wake County Affordable Housing Plan, there is a current shortage of approximately 56,000 homes in Wake County affordable to families making less than \$39,000 a year.

Additionally, approximately 5,000 people in Wake County experience homelessness.

Focusing affordable housing investments in areas that can provide households in need with proximate access to services, education and employment can alleviate these challenges.



HEALTHY & ACTIVE

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Thanks to decisive leadership, the Wake County community has seen huge successes in health and economic growth. But for decades, cities and towns in and around Wake County have grown according to patterns that made active living more difficult for some and impossible for others. More space became dedicated to cars rather than people, growth patterns set neighborhoods at far distances from destinations and one predominant housing and neighborhood type reduced living choices for current and future generations. Meanwhile, traffic reached a tipping point, becoming an economic hindrance as well as a generator of air pollution. Now there is an opportunity for a new direction that fosters healthy, active and connected communities.

The Vision Outcome of a healthy and active Wake County community aims to create a county where all residents and workers have the choice to live healthy, active and productive lives.

"We have a fantastic greenway system, and we should utilize this to its fullest potential, incorporating it into our public transit and linking neighborhoods to grocery and shopping. This will provide neighborhoods the option to bike to shop, rather than drive."

"Sidewalks and bike lanes are important to getting cars off the roads and promoting healthy citizens." - Wake County residents

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

The success of Wake County rests on the population's ability to use a safe, equitable and sustainable multimodal transportation network with high quality choices for everyone.

The region must now take a different approach that creates a more connected system of streets, more non-automotive infrastructure and land uses that support and enhance high-quality transit, achieving more equitable results and unleashing the region's full economic development potential.

To truly accomplish this will require collaboration between the towns and the County to ensure that greenway networks can connect, and that open space and parks are networked in a logical manner.

A HEALTHY & ACTIVE WAKE COUNTY WILL LEAD TO...



Better water quality overall.



Less encroachment on local farmers and food systems.



Better health outcomes and less need for health interventions.



More preserved open spaces and agricultural lands.



A more productive workforce and more upward mobility.



Shorter commute times, less congestion and less pollution.

PLANWAKE Survey results indicated that large proportions of the population drive to get places even though they would prefer to use other modes of transportation.

Nearly 450,000 workers (80%) drive alone to work and have an average commute time of 25 minutes.

According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the annual transportation cost in Wake County is \$13,717. This is on average 22% of a household's income.

Residents of Wake County are on course to spend far more to support transportation by automobile than for other forms of transportation.

Transit ridership in Wake County increased by 6.6% from 5.6 million rides to 6.1 million rides (FY2017 to 2018).

What Affects Your Health?

Wake County defines health as physical, mental and social well-being, recognizing that health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Behavior, education, community support and location of residence are key determinants of health.



SUSTAINABLE & VIBRANT

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Wake County and the larger Triangle Region are one of the fastest growing areas in the nation. Emerging industries, quality of life investments and a focus on education and innovation have resulted in significant growth, many community benefits and have made this area quite attractive to new residents and businesses. Correspondingly, existing residents have also become increasingly concerned about leaving the county better for future residents and workers who will make Wake County their home.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2018 report summarizing the impacts of the climate crisis describes how communities in the southeastern United States will experience higher temperatures, extreme weather events and increasingly volatile direct and secondary threats without prompt action. Continued growth that focuses on the current development model is likely to exacerbate these problems.

The Wake County community expressed a strong desire to grow in a sustainable manner, and protect green space and local food production, which can have the effect of enhancing quality of life, resiliency and sustainability.

The Vision Outcome of a sustainable and vibrant Wake County community aims to create a county that is green, livable and vibrant for current generations and for all generations that follow us.

“Wake County must lead the way in making structural changes to transportation, the greatest contributor of greenhouse gas and heat to the environment.”

“A focus on sustainability will help us maintain a high quality of life in Wake County.” - Wake County residents

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Wake County’s vision of being sustainable and vibrant is founded upon the County being socially, economically, and environmentally viable in the future. This will largely be determined by the County’s growth patterns and infrastructure investments. In the future, Wake County will initiate efforts that achieve these combined goals. In collaboration with municipalities, the County will make land use and capital investment decisions that direct growth to existing communities and planned centers for investment. The County will also collaborate to manage growth on the edges of the community to protect valuable forests and farms in a manner that protects the economic health of rural landowners. These efforts will support a growing demand for walkable and vibrant centers and use County resources to protect natural areas that provide water quality, habitat, and recreational benefits and recreational opportunities.

A SUSTAINABLE & VIBRANT WAKE COUNTY WILL LEAD TO...



Lower cost to build and maintain utilities and infrastructure.



Lowered costs of providing clean water and better resiliency.



Stronger social fabric and interpersonal connections.



More capacity for new residents and future development needs.



Increased prosperity for all, creation of new jobs.



Reduced need for costly new roads and widening projects.

Public survey respondents indicated they favor directing growth within existing communities, in a pattern such as that below.

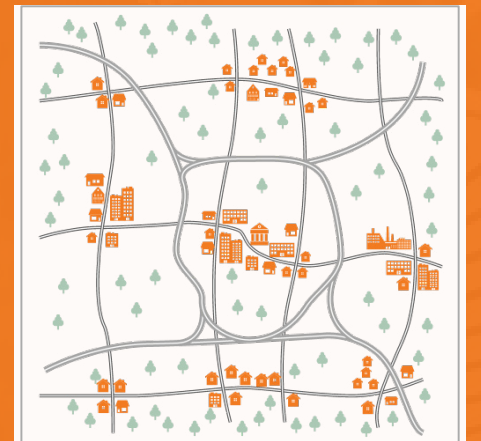


Figure 5: PLANWake Public Survey Preferred Growth Pattern

During the first round of public engagement, residents directed that the plan focus on guiding growth within existing communities or on the edges of communities.

As population grows throughout Wake County, land outside the 12 towns and cities is being converted from farm, forest and other open space uses to residential and commercial uses. The County has an opportunity to work collaboratively with the municipalities to adequately manage growth on the edges of communities.

Studies have shown that preserving natural systems is almost always the most cost effective long-term way of reducing flooding, protecting the water supply and maintaining habitat and air quality.

2 PLANWAKE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - PLAN TOGETHER

Wake County's previous planning initiatives have provided a valuable land use and interjurisdictional foundation, but those initiatives have not provided comprehensive insight into how multiple efforts can achieve the community's priorities. The PLANWake Development Framework provides this insight.

The framework was collaboratively developed by Wake County, its municipal partners and community stakeholders. The planning process challenged all parties to identify things that could and should be done better and asked for ideas on how to make these things a reality. Key issues identified were directing new growth to municipalities, protecting natural areas and open space and creating quality walkable places. This map, categories and policies provide a coordinated structure for the County to continue working with its partners to grow intentionally over time.

The framework sets out a strategy for growing intentionally to achieve these goals and the vision outcomes. With the right changes, Wake County can retain the balance that continues to draw new residents to the county and better support the people who already live here.



THE PLANWAKE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The PLANWake Development Framework consists of the Development Framework Map with five mapped classifications and a set of policy goals and expectations for each development framework classification. The development framework map is shown in Figure 6 and the development framework classifications are detailed on pages 22 through 31.

PLANWake Development Framework Map

The PLANWake Development Framework Map identifies the future land use and character vision for all of Wake County. This sets a cohesive county-wide framework for Wake County to guide decision-making on unincorporated lands within its formal jurisdiction.

The intention of the Development Framework is to support municipal annexation and growth within the Transit Focus, Walkable Center, Community and Community Reserve areas. Rural and Water Supply Watershed areas are not intended for municipal scale growth during the next decade or beyond.

This map and the following classifications and policies should be used by the Wake County Board of Commissioners, Planning Board and staff to guide land use decision making.

DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK MAP

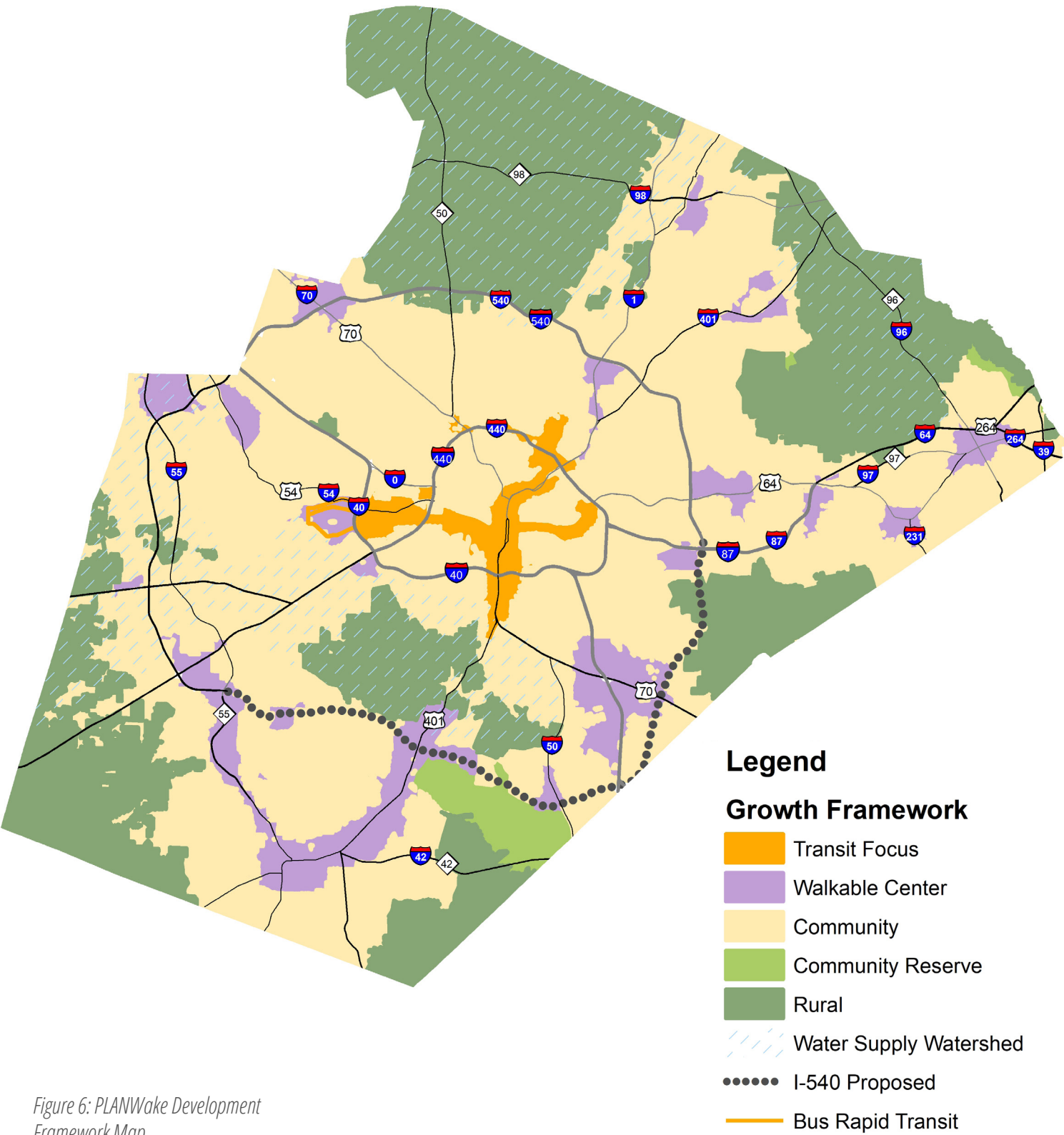


Figure 6: PLANWake Development Framework Map

TRANSIT FOCUS

The Transit Focus Areas are the most intensively developed areas within the county and are along the future Wake County bus rapid transit corridors that traverse Central Raleigh and portions of Cary and Garner. These areas are planned to serve as dense urban settings, and this classification is intended to increase the number of people living and working along high-use transit corridors to reduce the overall need for personal vehicles in the County. New developments will support the growth of downtown Raleigh. This district has the potential for significant infill projects, or site redevelopments that increase placemaking. Projects in this area may also seek to take advantage of the planned commuter rail project that may eventually traverse the county between RTP and Garner, connecting residents from Durham, Morrisville, Cary, Raleigh, and beyond.

- » Approximately 2% of entire Wake County.
- » Located within municipalities.



CHARACTER, PATTERN, AND LAND USE

- » Mid-rise and high-rise developments that are mixed use and transit-oriented in nature.
- » Walkable district with pedestrian and bicycle amenities.
- » Mixed commercial retail, office spaces, large institutions and sports facilities.

TIMING OF DEVELOPMENT

- » These areas can support immediate and continued redevelopment of the highest density mixed use projects in the county. Development in these areas shall be supported by the regulatory process to encourage the further redevelopment of Downtown Raleigh.

INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT

- » Any development occurring in the Transit Focus Areas will be fully supported by municipal water and sewer utilities.

JURISDICTIONAL COLLABORATION

- » The Transit Focus Areas are located almost exclusively within the City of Raleigh. Garner and Cary also have land under this designation. However, all jurisdictions will be involved through their connection to the broader transit network and are encouraged to develop accordingly along major transit corridors.



DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Building Height:	4-12 stories
Street Character:	Urban, gridded streetscape, multimodal complete streets
Residential Density:	20-40 dwelling units/acre
Primary Uses:	Mid- and high-rise mixed use, transit-oriented development
Secondary Uses:	Small-scale commercial/office, multifamily

WALKABLE CENTER

Walkable Center areas are places where redevelopment or new development is expected. These areas include established suburban, commercial or employment centers or future opportunities at critical transportation hubs. As the county continues to experience substantial population growth, these areas are poised to receive the most growth, as they have the most development capacity and offer the greatest number of urban amenities, including convenience to work and schools, and access to public transit. Lands near the future NC 540 interchanges are included in this category and are intended to become centers for mixed use development activity.

- » Approximately 10% of entire Wake County.
- » Located within both Wake County and municipal jurisdictions.



CHARACTER, PATTERN, AND LAND USE

- » Dense, walkable transit-supportive centers.
- » Predominantly comprised of mixed use projects, often with commercial on the first floors and residential or office uses above.

TIMING OF DEVELOPMENT

- » These areas can and should support immediate and ongoing development, redevelopment, and infill developments. The I-540 extension project will occur in phases and developments should be timed to support orderly and concurrent phasing of new development that supports corridor construction.

INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT

- » Any development occurring in the Walkable Center areas shall be fully supported by existing municipal water and sewer utilities, or by future extension of municipal utilities in the case of I-540 interchange locations.

JURISDICTIONAL COLLABORATION

- » Each municipality has planning and zoning authority over its own Walkable Center areas, except for locations along the I-540 corridor. To the extent possible, the County will seek to unify and align relevant development policies across jurisdictions.



DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Building Height:	4–8 stories
Street Character:	Pedestrian-oriented, complete streets, connected grid, transit-ready
Residential Density:	16–30 dwelling units/acre
Primary Uses:	Mid- and high-rise mixed use buildings
Secondary Uses:	Townhomes, condos, multifamily

COMMUNITY

Community areas are lands for municipalities to expand and grow beyond their current boundaries. Public utilities are not currently provided in these areas, but they will likely be extended to serve these areas within the next decade.

Community areas are primarily undeveloped and offer a significant opportunity to create walkable, sustainable and mixed use places through good design principles and careful planning. These areas also offer the opportunity to conserve valuable open space and to develop parks and other green recreational pursuits that can support the local economy and foster a connection to the land.



- » Approximately 54% of entire Wake County.
- » Located within both Wake County and municipal jurisdictions.



CHARACTER, PATTERN, AND LAND USE

- » Predominantly residential use with a mix of home types, including townhomes, small multifamily buildings (duplex, triplex, etc.), apartments and single-family homes.
- » Secondary uses include neighborhood-scale businesses, smaller employment centers, institutional developments and recreational facilities.
- » These areas offer the scenic views and pastoral amenities of suburban living, while retaining close access to the benefits and cultural opportunities of the adjacent urban centers.

TIMING OF DEVELOPMENT

- » The Community areas are prime land for new development. The Community areas located in southern and eastern Wake County will likely experience significant growth as the I-540 Extension project is completed. These areas are already partially developed with single-family neighborhoods and are likely to be fully developed within the next 10-20 years. Sustainable development that creates rational jurisdictional boundaries is desired to maximize the provision of municipal utilities in the future.

INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT

- » Any development occurring within the Community areas should be served by municipal water and sanitary sewer services. Wake County will work with the landowner and municipality to coordinate annexation and service extension efforts.
- » Lot lines and home sites should be designed to minimize the extent and cost of the roads and utility lines required to serve them.

JURISDICTIONAL COLLABORATION

- » Collaboration between Wake County and each town will be focused on supporting municipal utility service and municipal annexation.



DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Building Height:	1-5 stories
Street Character:	Walkable, complete streets, connected grid, transit-ready
Residential Density:	4-12 dwelling units/acre
Primary Uses:	Single-family, townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, multifamily
Secondary Uses:	Neighborhood commercial center, small employment office center, neighborhood-scale mixed use

COMMUNITY RESERVE

Community Reserve areas are low-density areas that are proximate to municipal boundaries but are not currently served by public utilities. These areas contain environmentally sensitive habitats and primarily support a mix of residential subdivisions, forests and farms. Growth in these areas has been fragmented, creating a disconnected “swiss-cheese” pattern. In the coming decades, growth in these areas will focus on filling in the gaps with sensible-scale developments that function as a gradient between the adjacent higher-intensity municipalities and the rural areas of the County. Subdivisions located in the Community Reserve areas should be conservation-oriented, featuring clustered home sites, and significant portions of permanently protected open space.

- » Approximately 2% of entire Wake County.
- » Located predominantly within Wake County jurisdiction (outside municipalities).



CHARACTER, PATTERN, AND LAND USE

- » Predominant land uses include residential subdivisions, working farms, forests and conservation areas.
- » Residential development is low-density, and conservation or cluster subdivisions are the preferred approach.
- » Small-scale commercial and mixed-use properties will serve local needs for basic goods and services.
- » Some light-industrial applications or homebased businesses may also be in the Community Reserve areas.

TIMING OF DEVELOPMENT

- » Some Community Reserve lands are already partially developed with low-density residential developments and small scale businesses. These areas are not expected to be fully developed until such time when urban services and public utilities can be reasonably provided. Over time as services are available, these Community Reserve areas may develop enough intensity and diversity of uses to become more significant community nodes that provide a range of commercial and residential options.

INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT

- » Development occurring within the next 10-20 years will be served by community wells and septic systems. These systems will be designed and built for connection to municipal utility services when they are available.
- » Development projects shall be responsible for roadway upgrades along frontages. Developments should be discouraged if they produce a significantly high volume of traffic on local roads.

JURISDICTIONAL COLLABORATION

- » All the land in the Community Reserve classification is within Wake County’s planning and zoning jurisdiction. Raleigh, Rolesville, Wendell, Zebulon, Knightdale, Garner and Fuquay-Varina have Community Reserve lands within their Urban Services Areas, meaning that these areas could be annexed in the future, although this is not expected within the timeline of this plan.



DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Building Height:	1-3 stories
Street Character:	Walkable, curvilinear (with no cul-de-sacs), complete streets
Residential Density:	Low, conservation subdivision design
Primary Uses:	Single-family, neighborhood-scale businesses
Secondary Uses:	Duplexes, small-scale multifamily, civic institutions, small-scale mixed uses

RURAL

The Rural areas are the least developed and lowest-density residential and natural lands in Wake County. These areas are marked by extensive forest coverage and agricultural activity, and include surrounding lands of Harris Lake, Swift Creek, Little River and Falls Lake. Much of the land in the Rural area has significant ecological value as green infrastructure and provides important ecosystem services for Wake County. These lands also offer important open space and recreational opportunities for Wake County residents. The Rural area provides an important functional and aesthetic counterpoint to the more intensively developed urban areas in the county. Development should be generally limited within these areas to retain the rural amenities, character, water quality and ecosystem benefits that they currently exhibit.



- » Approximately 32% of entire Wake County.
- » Located predominantly within Wake County jurisdiction (outside municipalities).



TIMING OF DEVELOPMENT

- » It is the intent of the Rural area to remain generally in a natural state with very low-density residential for either the foreseeable future or in perpetuity. Development intensity may only increase if portions of these areas are annexed into an adjacent municipality; however, this is not expected to occur within the timeframe of this plan. Nonresidential developments should be limited to those that support rural activities such as farming, forestry, habitat conservation, recreation, rural economy businesses and eco-tourism.

INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT

- » Any development occurring in the Rural area will be served by on-site or community wells and on-site septic or community sewer systems. These areas are expected to remain unserved by municipal utility services (sewer and water) for either the foreseeable future or in perpetuity. Development activity should remain minimal enough to not require any immediate improvements to the local road network.

JURISDICTIONAL COLLABORATION

- » Land in the Rural area is within Wake County's planning jurisdiction. However, every jurisdiction in Wake County (except Morrisville) contains land in this classification within its Urban Services Area. The County will work with the municipalities to ensure that their development policies align and to maintain the Rural classification with limited construction and development.



CHARACTER, PATTERN, AND LAND USE

- » Predominant land uses include working farms, timberlands, forests, residential and conservation areas.
- » Residential subdivisions for Rural neighborhoods are low-density, and use conservation, open space or cluster designs as the preferred approach.
- » Extensive swaths and corridors of connected habitats and open spaces should be protected.
- » Limited small-scale commercial and rural businesses are located at rural crossroads, including neighborhood retail, community centers and other institutions.
- » Utilities like solar farms may locate here.

DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

Building Height:	1-3 stories
Street Character:	Two-lane roads, swales, NC DOT-maintained
Residential Density:	Low, hobby farms and conservation design
Primary Uses:	Single-family, farms
Secondary Uses:	Barns, silos, convenience stores, agricultural support services

3 PLANWAKE PERFORMANCE METRICS - TRACK TOGETHER

Progress is best achieved as a cycle that identifies a clear direction, sets out actions to achieve the direction, evaluates performance and then adjusts policy direction accordingly. With this approach in mind, PLANWake includes a strategic set of Performance Metrics to track progress over time. These metrics will be reported to the community and decision-makers on an annual basis for the purpose of celebrating achievements and identifying challenges to achieving desired outcomes.

The metrics provided in PLANWake are a starting point for generating more formal metric targets. The Performance Metrics define the directional aspiration for each metric. Further benchmarking, target setting and sub-metrics for Performance Metrics will be developed as part of PLANWake implementation.



PLANWAKE PERFORMANCE METRICS

The following performance metrics are used to track progress of achieving the PLANWake vision outcomes. They are organized into three categories: Countywide focused, Development focused, and Targeted Population focused.

COUNTYWIDE PERFORMANCE METRICS



INCREASE NON-AUTOMOTIVE TRIPS.

PLANWake sets the goal of increasing the number of trips that are made via walking, bicycling, or transit. To track this goal PLANWake will track the countywide metric of vehicle miles traveled, or “VMT.” The VMT metric estimates all of the trips made by automobile and truck. Typically this number has increased year after year at about the same rate as the population increase. The amount of VMT is also strongly tied to strength of the economy. PLANWake establishes a goal of seeing VMT increase slower than population even through periods of economic strength.



DECREASE POPULATION EXPERIENCING SEVERE HOUSING PROBLEMS.

PLANWake sets the goal of reducing the number of households living in units with severe housing issues including overcrowding, high housing costs or lack of kitchen or plumbing facilities. To track this goal PLANWake will track the annual countywide survey information of severe housing problems. Historically the percentage of households living in housing with severe problems has stayed consistent (around 15% of all households) even as new housing has been constructed and redevelopment has occurred.

PLANWake establishes a goal to reduce the number of households living in housing units with severe housing issues by 70%.



PROTECT OPEN SPACE.

PLANWake sets the goal to protect open space. To track this goal PLANWake will track the countywide parcel layer that identifies properties that have been protected. Although Wake County and its partners have a long history of preserving open space, in recent years significant acres of land have been converted from farmland and forestry to residential lots and commercial developments. Benefits of protection include conserving areas that serve as rural vistas, provide environmental benefits and provide public recreational opportunities. PLANWake sets the goal to protect 30% of the County’s land area as permanently protected open space through public-private conservation efforts and preservation alongside development.



INCREASE HOUSEHOLD INCOME.

PLANWake sets the goal to reduce the number of employees not making a living wage. To track this goal PLANWake will track countywide metrics noting how many workers make less than \$15 per hour. Historically the percentage of employees not making a living wage has stayed consistent (around 20% of all households) even as new jobs in the area are created and the median household income of the county increases. PLANWake establishes a goal to reduce the number of employees earning less than \$15 per hour by 50%.

DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE METRICS



INTENTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

PLANWake sets the goal to see new development mostly go to the appropriate areas in municipal areas. To track this goal PLANWake will track the countywide parcel layer that identifies properties that have been developed. Although Wake County and its partners have a long history of accommodating municipal growth (around 85% of new development currently occurs in the municipal areas), there has also been a trend to develop larger, less connected lots in the county jurisdiction. This trend has in some cases been pushed by municipal policies that restrict new development. PLANWake sets the following goals:

- » 32% of new development should occur in the Transit Focus Areas.
- » 31% of new development should occur in the Walkable Centers.
- » 35% of new development should occur in the Community Areas.
- » 2% of new development should occur in the Community Reserve and Rural Areas.



MAINTAIN AND EXPAND TREE CANOPY.

Increase the percent of tree canopy protected on private development sites by 20%.

TARGETED POPULATION PERFORMANCE METRICS



REDUCE THE PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS BURDENED BY THE COST OF HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION.

PLANWake sets the goal of reducing the number of households over-burdened by housing and transportation costs. To track this goal PLANWake will track the annual countywide survey information on cost burden. Historically the percentage of households paying more than 50% of household income toward housing and transportation has stayed consistent (around 15% of all households) even as new housing has been constructed and redevelopment has occurred. PLANWake establishes a goal to reduce the number of households paying over 50% of household income toward housing and transportation by 40%.



EXPAND ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.

PLANWake sets the goal of increasing access to services to vulnerable populations. To track this goal PLANWake will track the annual countywide survey information of severe housing problems. Tools to identify vulnerable populations will also be utilized. Historically vulnerable populations have identified barriers to accessing vital services like medical care, groceries and education. PLANWake establishes a goal to reduce the number of residents noting issues accessing services by 50%.

4 EXISTING COUNTY POLICIES - ACT TOGETHER

PLANWake is the highest-level policy guide in Wake County. It provides direction on development, area plans and public services decisions. The plan seeks to guide growth and decision-making not just for Wake County government operations, but also through collaborative efforts between all jurisdictions and community partners in the County.

The comprehensive scope of this plan is not intended to be tackled all at once. This chapter offers actions for Wake County and its partners that will be prioritized following adoption of the plan. The implementation actions support the vision outcomes, development framework and policies of the plan, also recognizing the reality of limited time, budgets and resources. The County will also work collaboratively to monitor implementation of the plan and progress toward achieving performance outcomes.

Successful implementation requires continued involvement and engagement from a variety of stakeholders and partners to implement actions, monitor outcomes, and ensure that ongoing decisions are consistent with the plan's intent. As Wake County grows and changes, this plan will also need to be updated to preserve its relevance as a guiding document. This chapter provides guidance for the county to do that.





DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK POLICIES

Development Framework Policies augment the Development Framework Map and category guidance by providing more specific policy direction on extraterritorial jurisdiction expansions, water supply watersheds, standards for areas that are intended to transition to municipal development, Urban Services Areas and guidance for enhancing Wake County development standards.

EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION POLICIES

Although state law specifies the requirements for municipal extraterritorial jurisdiction, or “ETJ” expansion, it does not provide detailed evaluation criteria.

The following ETJ criteria have been established in order to evaluate the municipality’s ability to provide services and its capability and commitment to good planning and managing of development.

CRITERIA 1 - WAKE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK MAP DESIGNATION

The requested ETJ must be located within a area designated as Walkable Center or Community on the PLANWake Development Framework Map. ETJ expansion in areas not noted as one of these two designations will require an amendment to the Wake County Comprehensive Plan. Any ETJ requests for Community Reserve or Rural areas will require an amendment to the PLANWake Comprehensive Plan to change the designation of the area to a more appropriate category that supports municipal development. Likewise, any applicable Small Area Plan will also need amending to identify this area as a site for municipal development.

CRITERIA 2 - GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE ETJ EXPANSION AREA

Requests for ETJ expansion should be where joint planning has taken place between the county and the municipality in areas that are prime for investment. The municipality must demonstrate recent growth and development activity (annexations, development requests, water and sewer expansion, new roadways) within the requested ETJ area. This activity, along with population and job growth, must be compared to areas already with the municipality’s corporate limits.

CRITERIA 3 - MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ALIGNMENT

The Municipal Comprehensive Plan must align with the Wake County Comprehensive Plan and Development Framework. The municipality should demonstrate past examples of working with the development market to implement projects consistent with the Municipal Comprehensive Plan.

CRITERIA 4 - MUNICIPAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN/PROGRAM AND SERVICE EXPANSION PLAN ALIGNMENT

The municipality must demonstrate that it is ready to provide appropriate infrastructure to the requested ETJ area. The provision of infrastructure, including water and sewer lines, vehicle capacity, storm water, sidewalks, greenways, parks and other capital projects, shall be documented in a multi-year Capital Improvement Plan/Program. The municipality must also demonstrate that it is ready to provide appropriate municipal services to the requested ETJ area. These services shall include police, fire, trash collection, inspections and other municipal services.

CRITERIA 5 - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The municipality must demonstrate that it conducted meaningful public engagement with impacted residents and landowners and document how the concerns of residents and landowners have been addressed by the municipality (such as UDO changes or modification of the request). The municipality shall document all outreach activities to all populations.

CRITERIA 6 - ACHIEVING COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY GOALS

The municipality must demonstrate a track record of working with the County to achieve county-wide comprehensive goals. This track record will be assessed on the following factors: support and actions related to affordable housing, walkability, transit use, vulnerable communities, storm water and green infrastructure.



WATER SUPPLY WATERSHED POLICIES

Wake County has a long history of working with the State of North Carolina and municipal partners to protect and preserve its usable water supply. One of the key components of the County’s water supply policies are specific development regulations that are applied to its drinking water supply watersheds, or “WSWS.” The County adopted these regulations in 1984 and strengthened them in 1992 in cooperation with the North Carolina State Environmental Management Commission, or “EMC.” The EMC requires that: a) each designated WSWS have a specific watershed management plan or strategy in place; and b) that the strategy takes the designated type of the watershed into account to determine appropriate policies.

The County and the State have identified seven WSWSs in Wake County and applied a State classification for each of them. The State uses these classifications to determine the type of point source discharges it will permit in each WSWS. The classifications are also used to determine what set of WSWS standards local governments must implement to control non-point source pollution (mainly stormwater runoff).

Little River	WS-II
Smith Creek	WS-II
Swift Creek	WS-III
Falls Lake	WS-IV
Jordan Lake	WS-IV
Richland Creek	WS-IV
Cape Fear	WS-IV

The boundaries of any drinking WSWS are defined by the highest elevations or ridge lines that surround it. Each watershed has a “critical area” within its boundaries, which is that part of the watershed closest to the water supply source where it is most important to minimize the discharge and maximize the filtration of potential pollutants. The most stringent restrictions and regulations apply in the critical area. In most WSWS, Wake County defines the critical area as extending either 1/2 mile + 300 feet (or 2,940 feet) in a straight line fashion upstream from and draining to the intake, or the normal pool elevation of the reservoir in which the intake is located or to the ridge line of the watershed— whichever is nearest. The remainder of the watershed is designated a “non-critical” area.

The State’s Water Supply Watershed Protection Act makes local governments primarily responsible for controlling non-point source discharges within WSWSs by requiring local governments to adopt land use regulations meeting the State’s minimum water supply watershed requirements. The State’s requirements provide both low- and high-density options. The low-density options emphasize limits on housing density and impervious surface coverage, as well as the use of vegetated buffers along watercourses. The high-density options do not limit housing density and allow greater impervious surface coverage, but call for the installation and long-term maintenance of wet detention basins or other engineered stormwater management systems that both control the rate of stormwater discharge and allow the removal of suspended solids.

Wake County and area municipalities have worked together to create and enforce water supply

watershed plans or strategies for each watershed. Generally, these plans apply the State’s low-density option in the portions of the watersheds that are in the County’s jurisdiction and the high-density options in the areas of the watershed that are in the municipal jurisdiction.

There have been changes in water quality management since the WSWS plans and strategies were adopted. First, additional regulations, like the Neuse River Basin Buffer requirements and the EPA’s Storm Water Phase II rules, have been put in place. These regulations have applied many tools that were originally only required in a WSWS to many of the municipalities and most sections of the county. Second, State and local efforts to preserve, protect, and improve all of the watersheds in the county have expanded. The efforts include the creation of watershed-specific action plans and identification of funding sources for improvements. Third, efforts to preserve, protect, and improve watersheds have expanded to examine entire watersheds regardless of County or municipal boundaries. These regional strategies focus on treating stormwater runoff and pollutants at the source and consider the economic and social co-benefits of water quality improvement investments in the watershed.

PLANWake strongly supports the WSWS plans and strategies, and its development framework map classifies all of the county jurisdiction areas in the WSWS as Rural. This classification expands beyond the aforementioned low-density option and prioritizes the preservation of existing land uses and natural lands. These uses have been shown to have positive water quality outputs.

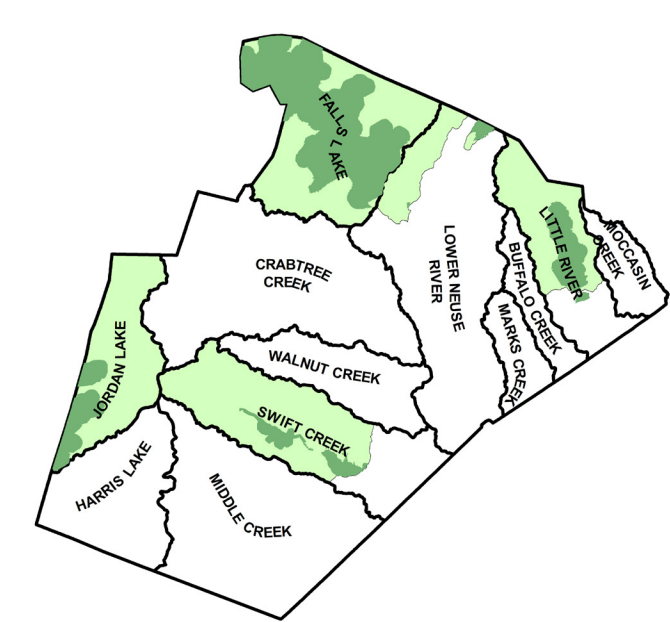


Figure 7: PLANWake Water Supply/ Watersheds Map

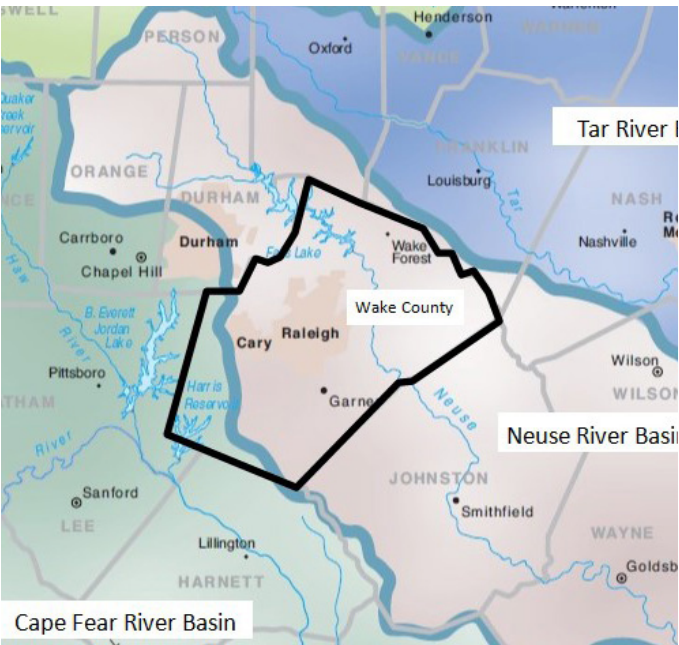


Figure 8: PLANWake Sub-Watersheds Context Map

Source: State of NC DWQ.



FACILITATING MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

For many years, the County has supported municipal annexation and utility service for unincorporated lands that are identified as appropriate for municipal scale development. The County's Transitional Urban Development Standards, or "TUDS," require that proposed developments within a certain distance of a utility line develop as municipal development.

Advancing this concept, the county will develop Municipal Transition Standards, or "MTS," to tie these requirements to applicable areas identified on the PLANWake Development Framework Map. The intent is that all potential developments in areas identified as Walkable Center, Community, and Community Reserve on the PLANWake Development Framework Map will be required to follow the updated Municipal Transition Standards.

While the specifics of any new regulatory standards will be developed as a result of updates to the County's Unified Development Ordinance, the intention is that new MTS guidelines will result in a municipally approved, annexed and publicly served development. This will require a multi-jurisdictional process that includes Wake County, the applicable municipality, and the landowner/property developer in discussions about how best to achieve a municipal development. During this process, several critical pieces of information can be shared and evaluated to identify the best possible course of action: policy guidance provided by PLANWake and any applicable small area plans or municipal plans that include the development site, regulations that currently apply to the development site, an evaluation of the cost to provide municipal utility services to the development and conversely, an evaluation of the cost to provide potable water and wastewater service under the County's jurisdiction. Through deliberate planning collaboration, these efforts can result in innovative solutions that achieve the vision outcomes of this plan.

URBAN SERVICES AREAS

Nearly two decades ago, Wake County worked with its municipal partners to develop a system of coordinated planning that established a formal Urban Services Area, or "USA," for each of the 12 towns and the City of Raleigh. These USA's were defined by formal interlocal agreements between neighboring jurisdictions to identify the jointly agreed upon annexation boundaries. Within each USA, the respective municipality has the ability to request or hold extraterritorial jurisdiction, extend municipal utilities to serve new development, and ultimately annex unincorporated lands within the USA. This framework allows each community the autonomy to set their own unique vision. The County has also served as an important convener and offers efficient centralized services and assistance to all Wake County residents.

The 1996 Land Use Plan for Wake County established short-term

and long-term divisions within the USAs. These divisions were intended to guide development to the short-range areas and hold development in the long-range areas until such time that municipalities were ready to serve and annex proposed developments. Over time, those divisions became outdated and growth pressures and new infrastructure plans extended into the long-range USAs, effectively outdated these distinctions.

The PLANWake Development Framework was designed using the formal USA boundaries. County staff worked with each municipality to identify the locations within the respective USA where the locality is intending to grow into and serve with municipal infrastructure over the next 10-15 years. These mapping efforts were the basis for forming the boundaries for the Development Framework map categories.

Moving forward, the County will use the Development Framework Map to guide coordinated planning in each municipality. The County should encourage its municipal partners to update their annexation agreements to ensure these legal boundaries are maintained over time. The County should also work with the municipalities to update any plans or regulations that apply to Rural areas that are not intended for future municipal growth and annexation.

URBAN SERVICES AREAS MAP

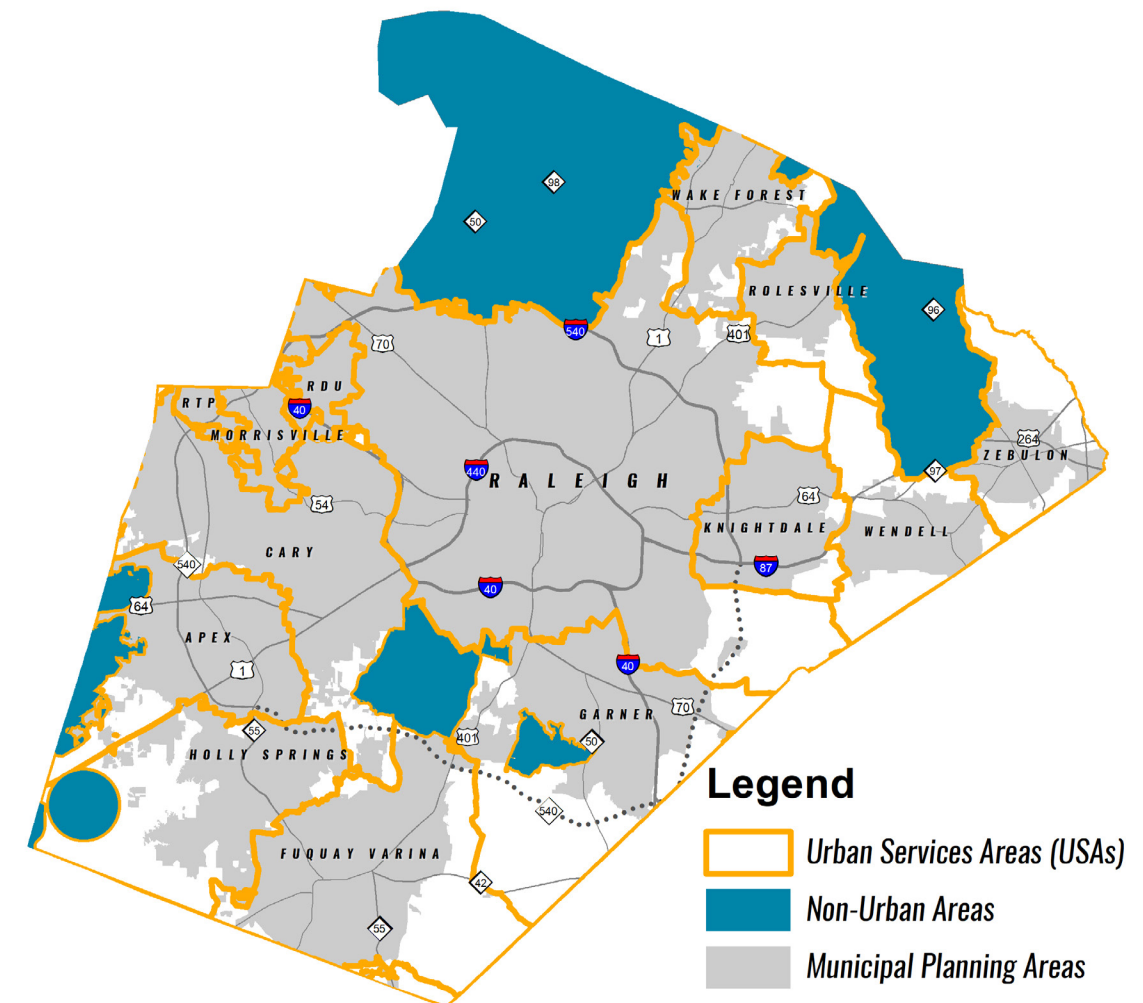


Figure 9: PLANWake Urban Service Areas Map

EXISTING AREA LAND USE PLANS

Wake County has adopted several area land use plans that provide detailed policy guidance related to development. Each area plan was developed through a robust public engagement process in which area residents and stakeholders were jointly engaged in conversations about the area’s future. Plan policies centered on land use guidance, annexation guidance, target areas for rural preservation and conservation and potential utility expansion plans.

Since adoption of those plans, the County has changed. Municipalities grew and annexed new areas, new infrastructure projects were completed, and planning priorities changed with new knowledge and a different population. As a result, some of the policy guidance in the area plans has become outdated, but some of the detailed policy guidance in those plans remains valuable.

To address these concerns, PLANWake will change the use of the area plans. The development framework map in this plan serves as the primary policy guidance for land use and development in the county. The current area plans will also continue to provide detailed policy direction, specifically with regard to commercial development. Over time, the area plans will be replaced through new public engagement processes and updated plans. When reviewing development applications, in addition to the land use guidance in PLANWake, policy in the appropriate area plan should be reviewed and considered at the discretion of Wake County Planning. Activity centers identified in the area plans are discussed on the following page.

Click below to access each of the area land use plans.

Southwest Wake Area	East Raleigh-Knightdale Area
Southeast Wake Area	Northeast Wake Area
Fuquay-Varina/Garner Area	Swift Creek Area

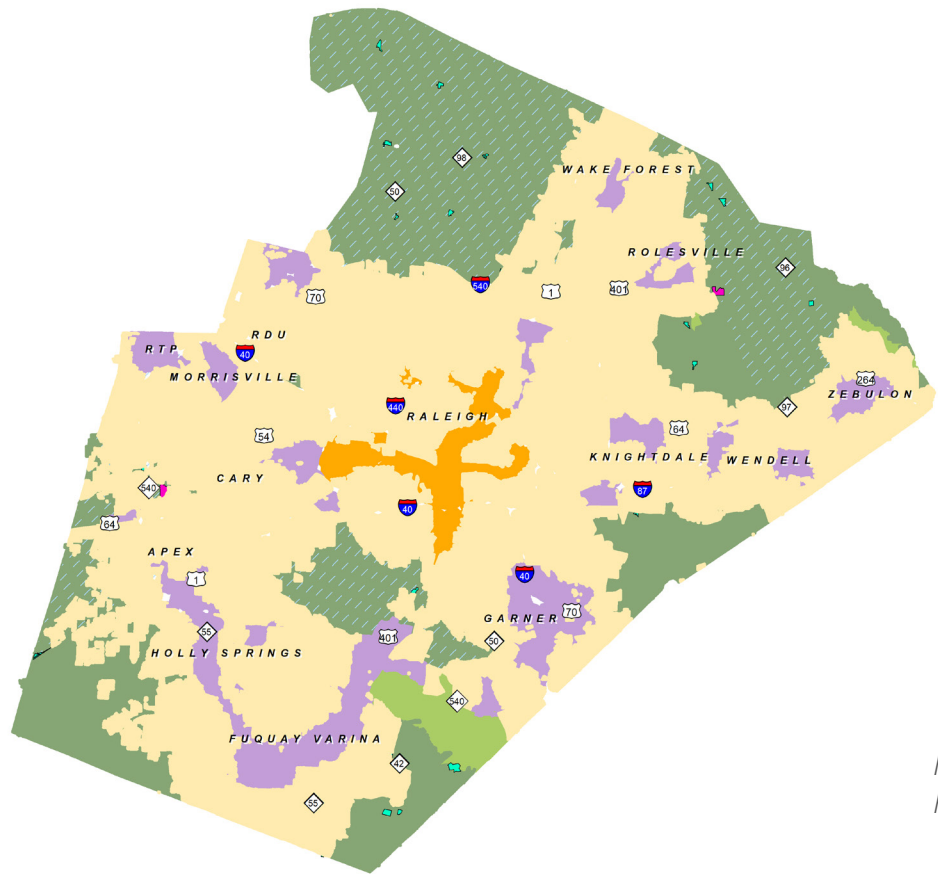


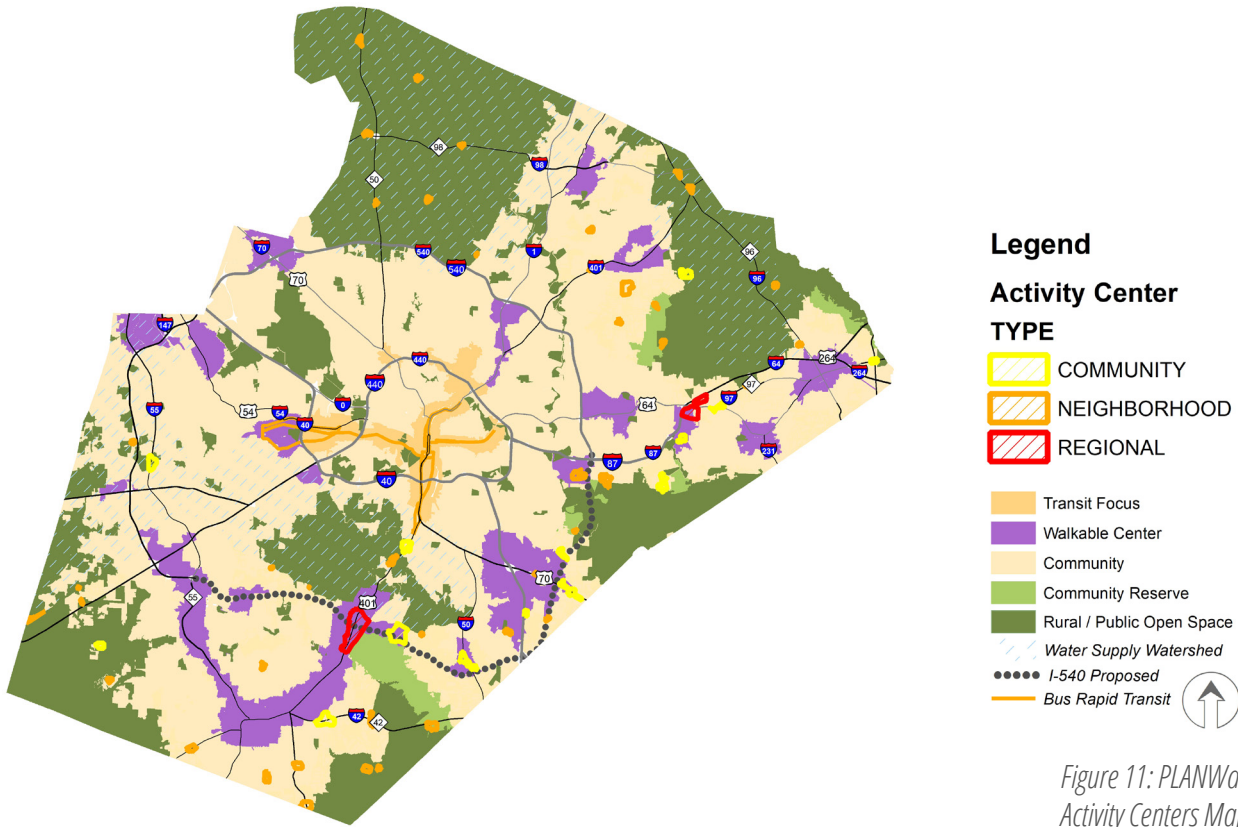
Figure 10: PLANWake Area Plan Locations Map

ACTIVITY CENTERS

In the area planning process, Wake County, area municipalities, and residents have cooperatively identified “activity centers.” These activity centers are the places stakeholders have felt are most appropriate for commercial and mixed-use development to occur. Typically, these activity centers are located at the intersections of major or moderate sized roadways. In many instances, the activity center is centered around a location that is or has historically been a commercial use. A good example of this would be an older gas station or community store that historically served the needs of the area population.

Activity centers are intended to play two primary roles. The first, as noted, is to identify the most appropriate location for commercial development to help serve the daily needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. In this role, the activity centers are used by the County to guide decisions on rezoning requests and development permits. In this role, the County is primarily concerned with how a proposed use fits and serves the existing population. The second role of the activity center is to preserve opportunity areas for commercial development to occur and expand as the municipal areas expand to accommodate continued population growth. To serve this role, the activity center policy provides guidance on the intended maximum size of each activity center category. In this role, the County is primarily concerned with how a proposed use would serve the needs of a future population.

DRAFT ACTIVITY CENTERS MAP



Legend

Activity Center TYPE

COMMUNITY

NEIGHBORHOOD

REGIONAL

Transit Focus

Walkable Center

Community

Community Reserve

Rural / Public Open Space

Water Supply Watershed

I-540 Proposed

Bus Rapid Transit

Figure 11: PLANWake Activity Centers Map



Since adoption of activity center policy, the disconnect between the policy intent and the built environment outcomes has grown, including alignment with public infrastructure and investments. First, commercial uses that were originally developed in the county are not later being incorporated into the municipalities. Second, the types of uses constructed in the activity centers, although permitted, do not meet many of the activity center goals, specifically goals on mixed uses and connectivity. Last, the activity center policy does not appropriately address differences between development in areas anticipated to be future municipal areas and areas expected to remain in the County's jurisdiction.

To address these concerns PLANWake will change the use of the activity centers. Where activity centers are located within areas classified as Walkable Center on the Development Framework Map, the goals, objectives and policies of Walkable Center shall supersede the activity center designation. Where activity centers are located within areas classified as Community or Community Reserve on the Development Framework Map, the municipal comprehensive plan shall supersede the activity center designation. Activity centers shall still apply in areas classified as Rural on the Development Framework Map. These areas should be developed as guided by the most recent and applicable area plan and the Wake County Unified Development Ordinance. Activity Center designations in the Rural areas will be revisited as the area plans are updated.

The table on the following page provides general guidance for each of the activity center types.

ACTIVITY CENTER TYPES

Rural / Neighborhood Activity Center



Provide services and employment to residential neighborhoods and rural areas.

Uses serve immediate surrounding neighborhoods and rural areas. Building scale and architectural design are context-sensitive and compatible with adjacent residences.

Up to 35 acres

- Walkable Centers
- Community
- Community Reserve
- Rural

Major Activity Center



Provide a range of services, employment, and residential uses in compact, walkable form.

Diverse uses serve residents of municipality and adjacent municipalities. Buildings are compact, walkable, human-scale and provide a vertical mix of uses.

Up to 120 acres

- Transit Focus
- Walkable Centers
- Community

Regional Activity Center



Establish transit-oriented urban centers with retail, employment, civic, and residential uses.

Uses draw residents and workers from throughout Triangle for civic and economic activity. Buildings are transit-oriented, green, high quality, and provide a vertical mix of uses.

Up to 375 acres

- Transit Focus
- Walkable Centers
- Community

5 BRINGING THE PLAN INTO REALITY - ACT TOGETHER



AMENDING PLANWAKE

The Board of County Commissioners is responsible for adopting the plan and prioritizing the recommended implementation actions included in PLANWake on an annual basis.

Tracking plan metrics is a key part of implementation. Tracking metrics helps evaluate how well the plan has been implemented and how effectively it is achieving the community's priorities. Performance Metrics can be used to help measure and monitor outcomes. Monitoring should be an ongoing process, measured and reported to the public, and used to make adjustments to the plan as needed.

A regular implementation report will be delivered to the Board of County Commissioners that tracks progress toward achieving the plan's actions and tracks performance metrics over time.

AMENDING AND UPDATING PLANWAKE

The Comprehensive Plan represents a long-term vision for the future. It is meant to guide policy decisions for Wake County over the next ten years. The Wake community will likely undergo growth and change throughout this time period. In order for the Comprehensive Plan to remain a relevant, living document, it should be reviewed and updated as new conditions arise.

In North Carolina, the municipal and county planning and zoning enabling statute (G.S. 160D) requires that local governments adopt a comprehensive plan or land use plan if they have an adopted zoning ordinance. Per the statute, these plans “set goals, policies, and programs intended to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of the jurisdiction” and these plans are to be “reasonably maintained” with occasional updates.

This statute also requires that zoning be “in accordance with a comprehensive plan” and that local governments make statements of consistency when making rezoning decisions on a development application. If a local government approves a rezoning request that is not consistent with the comprehensive plan resulting in a zoning map amendment being adopted, and the action was deemed inconsistent with the adopted plan, the zoning amendment shall have the effect of also amending any future land-use map (e.g., Development Framework Map) in the approved plan, and no additional request or application for a plan amendment shall be required per the statute.

That being said, it is good planning practice to monitor changes to the Development Framework Map to identify trends that may warrant a closer look at the plan's policy direction and map guidance. It is recommended that Wake County establish specified pre-determined intervals (e.g., annually) when plan amendments will be presented to the elected body resulting in the formal amendment of all inconsistencies that have been created through the rezoning process.



APPENDICES



PLANWAKE COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

CHANGE NEEDED TO PLAN FOR GROWTH

Throughout the PLANWake process, a majority of residents and stakeholder participants said they believe significant changes are needed to prepare for the next 250,000 residents that are projected to live in Wake County over the next decade. Many residents identified protection of natural areas, farms, forests and meadows; more travel options; and more parks/trails and walkable neighborhoods as the most important priorities for change.

PLANWake respondents also identified key priorities for the Wake County community, including high quality education, protecting natural areas, lakes and rivers, supporting employment and attracting jobs.

DIRECT GROWTH WITHIN CITIES AND TOWNS

When residents were asked where new growth over the next decade should be located, 70% of them said new development should be located within existing towns and cities either as redevelopment of older existing developments or new development on currently undeveloped lands. This sentiment was also supported by the PLANWake Advisory Group (76%), the Wake County Water Partnership (93%) and the Voluntary Agricultural District Board (83%).

These priorities were consistent across age cohorts with some variation in younger and older generations. The PLANWake Advisory Group also identified locating development around transit and reducing suburban sprawl as key priorities.

PROTECT OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL AREAS

When thinking about the future, community survey respondents identified the protection of natural areas, farms, forests and meadows as the most important change they would like to see. This was further supported by respondents identifying the loss of natural areas and trees as their second highest concern for the future and the #2 most important action to accomplish through the plan as protecting natural areas, lakes and rivers.

The PLANWake Advisory Work Group's tie for top objective for guiding growth was preserving water quality, wildlife habitat and other natural open space.

CREATE WALKABLE SPACES AND PLACES

Across all age groups, residents said that the most important characteristic of a good neighborhood is support for walking (walkability). When asked how they would prefer to get to different destinations in the future, respondents said they would like more options to bike and walk to all destinations (work, shopping, parks, schools, other) than offered today. Similarly, when asked where they would live in the future if they chose to move, 64% of survey respondents identified they would prefer to live in a downtown or walkable neighborhood where more transportation options are available.

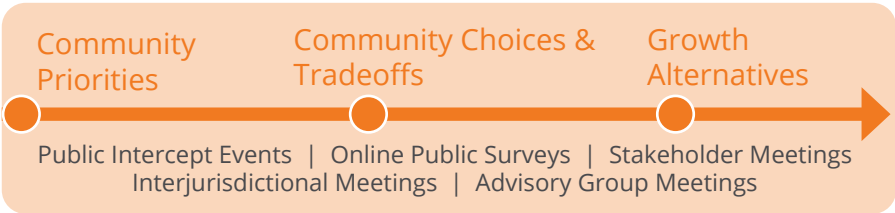
PLANWAKE PUBLIC OUTREACH

BY THE NUMBERS

- 9,000+
Surveys Completed
- 150,000+
Comments Collected
- 100+
Public Events
- 55+
Stakeholder Meetings

The PLANWake community planning priorities emerged from over a year of public engagement that involved thousands of community-members, dozens of in-person events held across the county and tens of thousands of in-person and online community input data points. Public engagement was conducted in three phases: (1) Community Priorities, (2) Community Choices & Tradeoffs and (3) Growth Alternatives. Each phase of public engagement built upon the public input collected from the previous phase. Overwhelmingly, community members made it clear they valued the following plan priorities:

- » Significant changes are needed to plan for the next decade of growth.
- » Growth should be directed within the twelve cities and towns.
- » Open spaces and natural areas must be protected.
- » New development should create walkable spaces and places.



“The trees and natural areas in Wake County are some of the top things that makes this a desirable, beautiful place to live. We must preserve the natural areas that we have.”

“We need to grow in an ecologically conscious way, growing up rather than out, with more multi-use buildings, walkable neighborhoods and mass transit systems that are functional and user-friendly.”

-Wake County residents

IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

PLANWake will be implemented through policies and actions using a comprehensive set of tools described below.

Capital Investments

Public infrastructure, facilities and other capital projects can be used to advance goals in this plan, and may include municipal investments in sidewalk construction, utility replacement or parks. Capital investments should align with the growth goals of this plan.

Planning

PLANWake provides high-level guidance for Wake County's growth and development. Complex issues will require more detailed and ongoing planning, such as interjurisdictional area and watershed planning. This Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for future planning initiatives.

Regulations

Some actions may require regulatory changes, such as reviews, diagnoses, and updates to the UDO. Ordinance amendments should be consistent with the goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

Partnerships

Many of the actions cannot be carried out by Wake County alone and require partnerships with other governments, local and regional institutions and organizations and other community stakeholders. Wake County will formalize and leverage partnerships to advance this plan.

Programs and Initiatives

New or revised programs and initiatives can advance the goals and policies in this plan. Programs should align with the Comprehensive Plan.

Development Reviews and Decisions

Applications for development should be consistent with the vision outcomes, Development Framework and policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

Incentives

Incentives are one tool that some local governments use to guide private development in a way that promotes the goals and policies of a comprehensive plan. For instance, developers could receive credit for constructing affordable housing and for providing sustainability features. Any incentives developed in Wake County should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The PLANWake Planning Process

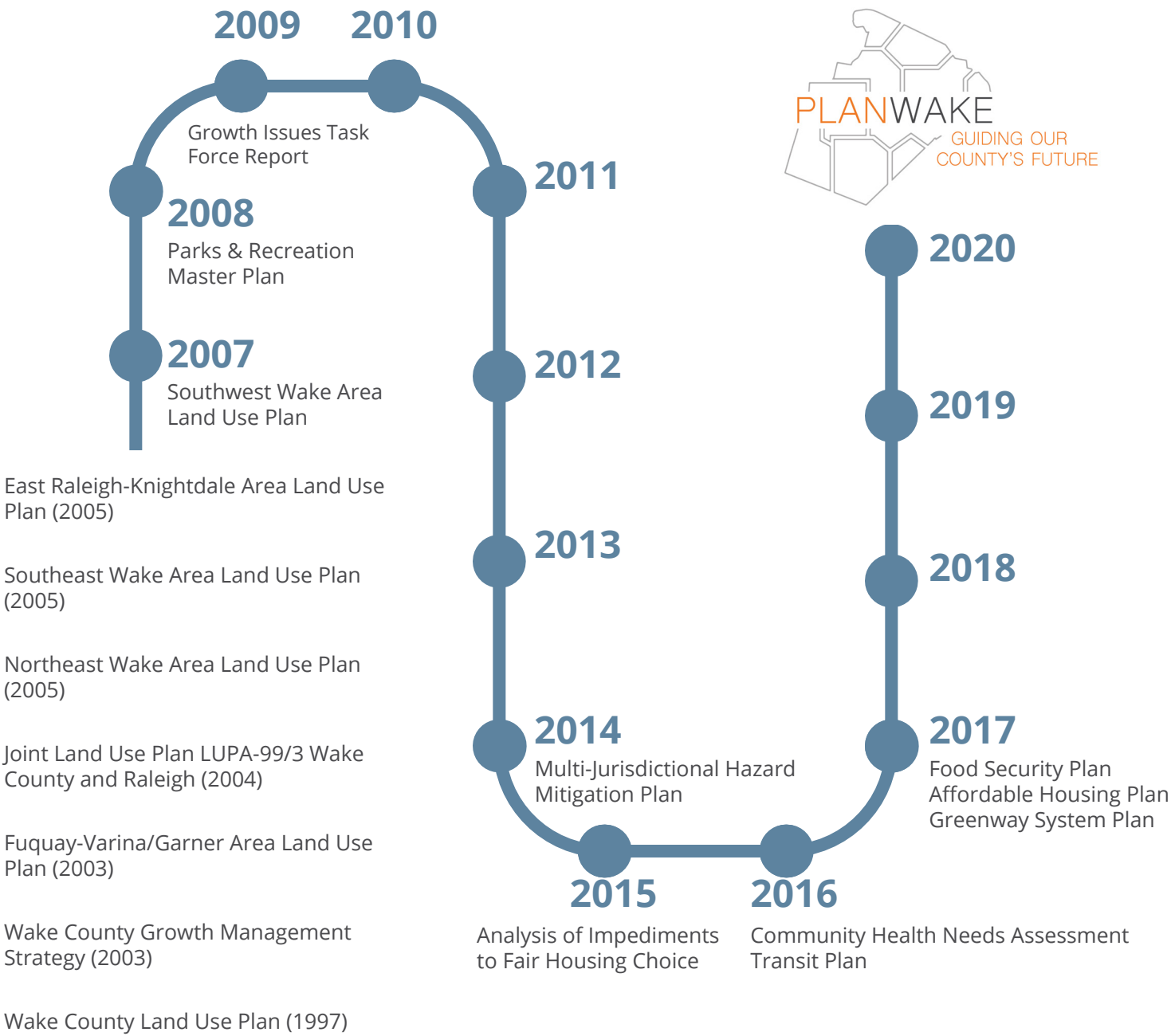


Figure 12: PLANWake Planning Process

PLANWAKE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT HISTORY

Wake County's early land use planning and growth management efforts took forward-thinking steps to manage growth between the municipalities and conserve open space. The 1997 Land Use Plan and 2003 Growth Management Strategy encouraged directing most new growth within municipalities. The County succeeded in implementing many policies in those plans; however, some of them proved to be more challenging.

Each of Wake County's twelve municipalities has its own comprehensive plan that guides growth and development on land within its planning jurisdiction. Over the years, as each jurisdiction naturally grows and changes, the need for cooperative planning efforts has increased. This is particularly important to plan together for the last remaining lands in Wake County. PLANWake marks a renewed common interest in working together to achieve the goals of each municipality and the County.



COUNTY LAND USE ACTIONS

ACTION 1

ASSESS AND REVISE THE WAKE COUNTY UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

Recommendations:

1.1 Update Zoning Districts

- » Create new districts for rural economy, rural residential, permanent open space, and cluster/conservation neighborhood lands.
- » Create new districts for pedestrian- and transit-oriented lands in coordination with municipal jurisdictions.

1.2 Improve Development Standards

- » Create urban form and design standards for pedestrian- and transit-oriented lands in coordination with municipal jurisdictions.
- » Adopt maximum block length and minimum street connectivity standards for new neighborhoods.
- » Require centrally-located park and civic spaces in new neighborhoods.
- » Require multi-use paths, protected bicycle facilities, and pedestrian infrastructure.
- » Create standards and incentives for green and energy-resilient building practices.
- » Revise parking requirements to prioritize non-motorized transportation.
- » Require higher performance stormwater management facilities.
- » Enhance standards for canopy protection and reduction of clearcutting.
- » Incorporate green stormwater infrastructure practices.

ACTION 2

PLAN FOR GROWTH IN URBAN SERVICES AREAS AND MUNICIPAL ETJ

Recommendations:

2.1 Required Dialogue with Municipalities

- » Prioritize development in municipalities before allowing development in Community and Walkable Center areas in the Wake County planning jurisdiction.
- » Work with municipalities and developers to understand water and sewer plans.
- » Discourage or limit development in the County’s jurisdiction that doesn’t meet the objectives of this plan.

2.2 Interjurisdictional Small Area Planning

- » Develop interjurisdictional area plans for the Community and Walkable Center areas.
- » Consider water and sewer expansion, greenways and active transportation connections, natural systems and corridors, and roadway needs within small area plans.
- » Prioritize development in Investment Areas, with strong consideration for increasing development intensity in those areas.

2.3 Engage the Public and Stakeholders Early in the Small Area Planning Process

- » Involve property owners, neighbors, the general public, and other stakeholder groups in area plans for the Community, Walkable Center, and Transit Focus Areas.
- » Consider appropriate transitions and buffers, sewer expansion concepts, and roadway needs in the area plans.
- » Prioritize engagement in Investment areas to plan for these high opportunity areas.

ACTION 3

PRIORITIZE PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE AND RURAL LAND

Recommendations:

3.1 Prioritize Open Space Acquisition

- » Work with preservation groups and other partners to prioritize properties and portions of properties in the Community Reserve and Rural Edge areas for public and non-profit acquisition if property owners want to sell their land.
- » Prioritize protection of connected properties along open space corridors and adjacent to corridors.

3.2 Foster a Vibrant Rural Economy

- » Use a comprehensive set of strategies to support rural economic businesses, including agriculture.
- » Encourage Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts.
- » Invest in business retention and training tools for the next generation of farmers or rural economy business owners. Carefully

consider farm needs in planning and development review of new neighborhoods.

3.3 Decrease Development Pressure

- » Explore ways to make development within municipalities easier than in the County jurisdiction. Consider tools to reverse the trend of leapfrog sprawl, including using zoning as a tool to ensure the appropriate timing of intentional outward growth.
- » Identify and require preservation of natural, cultural, and historic resources.

3.4 Conservation Subdivisions

- » Encourage or require the development of conservation subdivisions in Community Reserve areas to protect open space as part of new development.
- » Where development occurs, ensure it is built according to complete neighborhood design principles.

Fostering A Vibrant Rural Economy

What is the rural economy?

While agriculture is a key industry in the rural economy, the 21st century rural economy includes many more uses, such as biking and hiking trails, agritourism, wineries and breweries, fruit and vegetable picking, and hospitality businesses like wedding venues, treehouses, and bed and breakfast establishments.

What are communities doing to build a strong rural economy?

Supporting local farmers with farmers’ markets and purchasing local produce for school meals.

Providing access to capital, such as a small business economic development grant program focused on the rural economy.



ACTION 4

UPDATE RELEVANT SMALL AREA PLANS

Recommendations:

4.1 Small Area Plan Updates

- » Work with municipalities to update existing Small Area Plans or develop new Small Area Plans that are guided by the policy direction of PLANWake, address current conditions and issues, and provide more localized guidance for land use decision-making.
- » To the extent possible, undertake Small Area Plan updates as a multijurisdictional planning process that leverages public input from municipal and county residents.
- » Develop criteria for prioritizing Small Area Plans that focuses on locations where the highest pressures for growth and change are imminent.
- » Encourage municipalities to adopt the jointly developed Small Area Plans.
- » Consider development of interlocal agreements to support application of the jointly developed Small Area Plans.

ACTION 5

TRACK PERFORMANCE METRICS

Recommendations:

5.1 Develop Formal System for Tracking and Reporting Performance Metrics

- » Develop benchmarks for each of the seven PLANWake Performance Metrics based on current year data.
- » Produce a PLANWake Annual Report for the public and to be presented to the Planning Board and Board of County Commissioners to report on implementation progress and any challenges to achieving desired outcomes.
- » Consider development of a PLANWake tracking dashboard on the Wake County website to track metric performance over time.
- » Consider adding additional metrics to track performance on community sustainability and resiliency.