

MARCH 2019



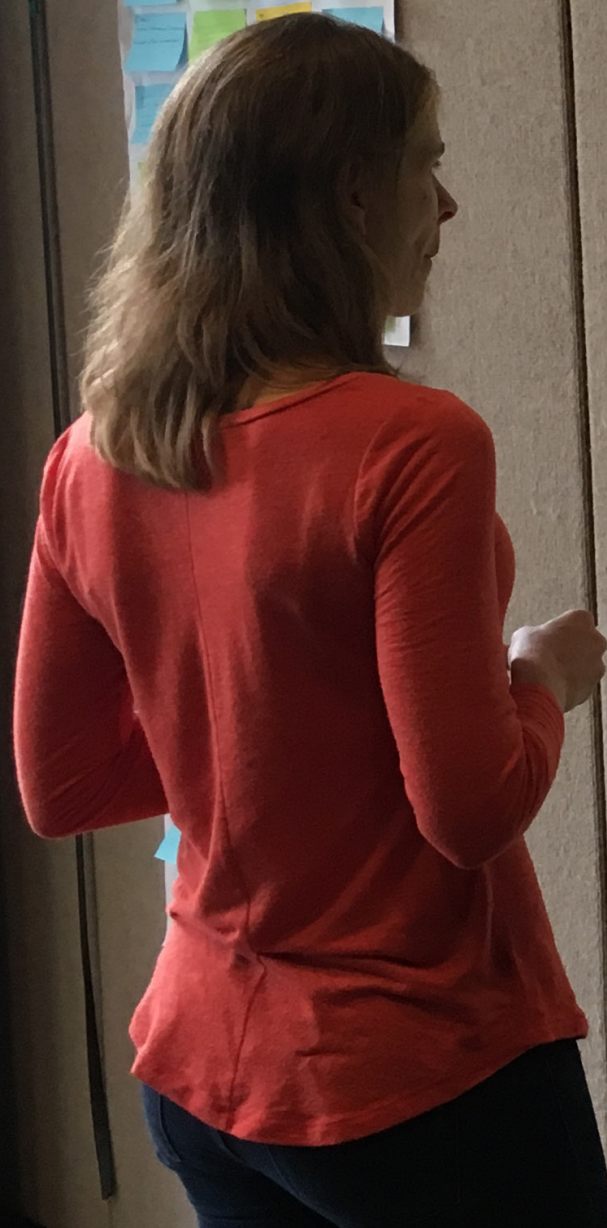
GUIDING OUR
COUNTY'S FUTURE



REFLECT ON WAKE

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Summary of Phase II



GUIDING AND FOCUSING OUR GROWTH

- Association, Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ), and Urban Service Areas
- Land use, development and design
- Fiscal aspects of growth

CONNECTING OUR PEOPLE TO PLACES

- Transportation mobility and access (multimodal)
- Parking and access
- Greenways and trails

SUSTAINING OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Utilities, wells, wastewater, and stormwater
- Solid waste
- Resiliency and planning for the impact of weather events

PROTECTING OUR RESOURCES

- Historic preservation
- Farmland and food systems
- Air and water quality / conservation
- Wildlife and habitat protection and preservation



Reflect on Wake

Wake County has done a lot right to grow jobs and build a vibrant community. Now, more and more people are moving here. In fact, more than 60 new people call Wake County home every day.

As we grow, residents are starting to see changes too—in our schools, how we get around, where we work and the jobs that are available to us, and in the way our neighborhoods and centers look and feel. To ensure future growth is accommodated in a responsible way, the county is embarking on a community-wide planning effort, PLANWake.

Reflect on Wake was the initiation phase of the PLANWake process focusing on identifying community priorities. This report illuminates the ideas and aspirations shared by thousands of Wake County residents over the last five months, reflecting on Wake County's past, where it is today, and where it should strive to be in the future.



About PLANWake

Wake County is one of the fastest growing communities in the country, adding 165,000 residents since 2010, (25,000 new residents each year). Wake County has a thriving economy with 12 cities and towns that offer a variety of living, working, cultural, recreational, entertainment, and civic opportunities to residents throughout the region.

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 paycheck. 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 the grocery store longer and more challenging.

PLANWake is an opportunity to chart a new course. Now is the time to assess the progress, challenges, and opportunities in Wake County. The County has existing plans that have served the community well. PLANWake will evaluate and build off of the goals, policies, and actions in these plans.

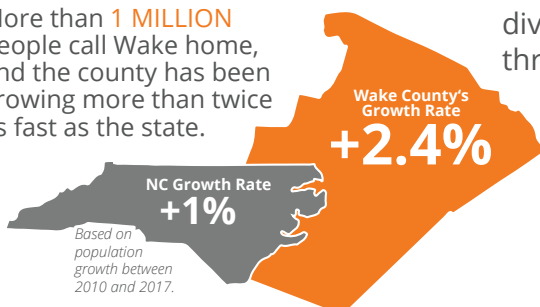
WHAT IS PLANWAKE?

PLANWake is a process to assess the big questions, renew the community's vision and goals on a range of issues, and outline a path to success for the coming decade.

PLANWake involves taking a thoughtful look at Wake County's major challenges and opportunities and working together to develop a strong vision that represents the diverse values of residents throughout the County.

The process will result in a new comprehensive plan with high-level policies that help guide actions and decision-making addressing critical issues that impact our daily lives.

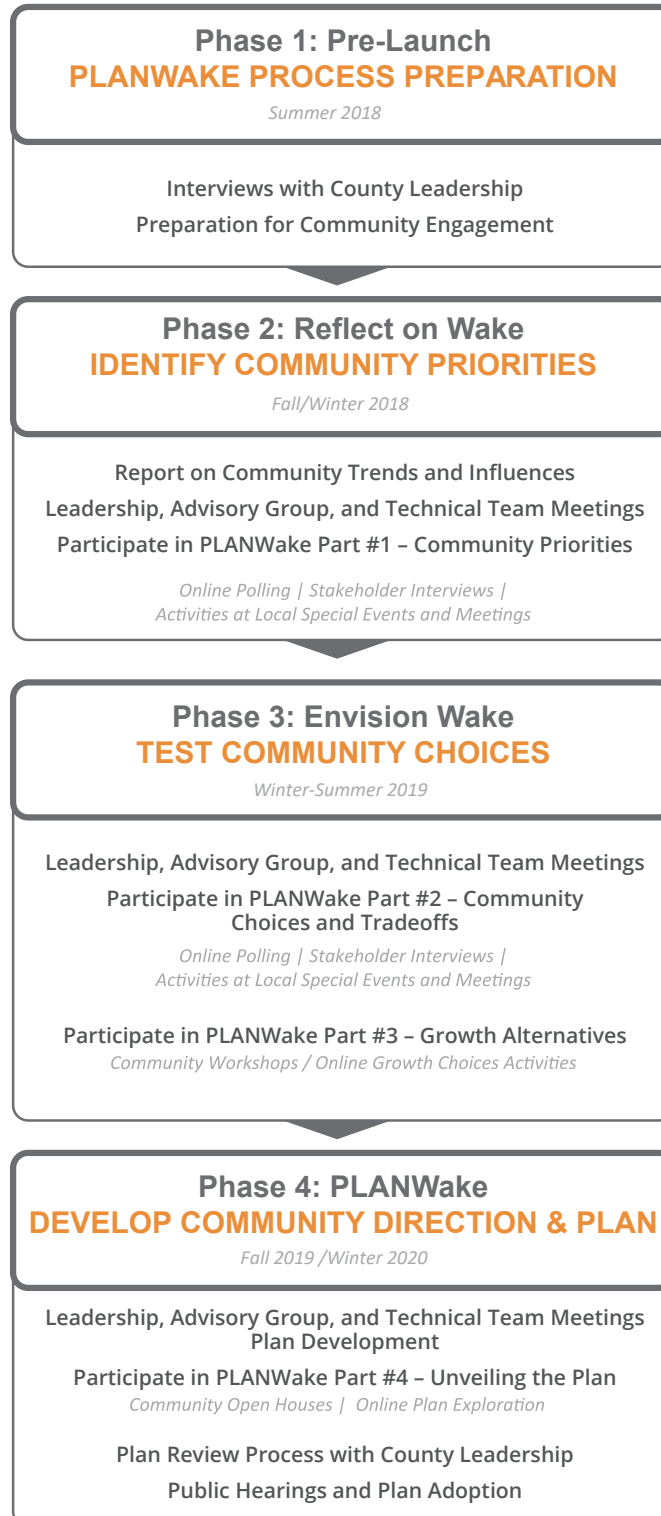
More than **1 MILLION** people call Wake home, and the county has been growing more than twice as fast as the state.



WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a guiding document that helps the County make practical decisions about its future – decisions that reflect the values and principles held by the public. Although PLANWake asks the public to imagine the County over the next several decades, the plan provides a rational basis for decision-making and achievable actions over the next 10 years.

The County has several recently adopted plans that will remain important guiding documents; other plans may become absorbed into this plan. In both cases, the comprehensive plan serves as an umbrella document that coordinates decision-making and investment.



About Phase II: Reflect on Wake

3,642

Surveys Completed

93,247

Ideas and
Comments
Collected

45

Public Events

18

Stakeholder
Meetings
Conducted

Before Wake County sets a charter for its future, it is important to reflect upon the past and present conditions of the community. Phase 2: Reflect on Wake provided an opportunity for residents who have an interest in the future of Wake County to learn about how the county has grown and changed, and to reflect on how these trends could impact the county in the future.

Beginning in September 2018 and running through January 2019, the PLANWake project team conducted a community-wide survey focused on identifying key priorities that should be addressed during PLANWake. To encourage representation by community residents from all parts of Wake County, project team members handed out surveys and talked with participants at 45 public events held throughout the county. (To see the list of community events, check out page 12 in the appendix.)

Concurrently with the survey, the project team also held stakeholder meetings with several Wake County advisory boards and other community organizations as another method of gaining feedback from a broad array of community perspectives. This included the first meeting of the PLANWake Advisory Group (PAG), which included more than 30 community representatives and leaders. (See the appendix on pages 22 and 40 for information on the PAG and stakeholder meetings.)

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

Through the robust public engagement effort that lasted five months, the PLANWake project collected more than 93,000 comments and reactions from nearly 3,700 Wake County residents. Nearly 300 community leaders were engaged during advisory board meetings, meetings of professional organizations, and other community meetings.

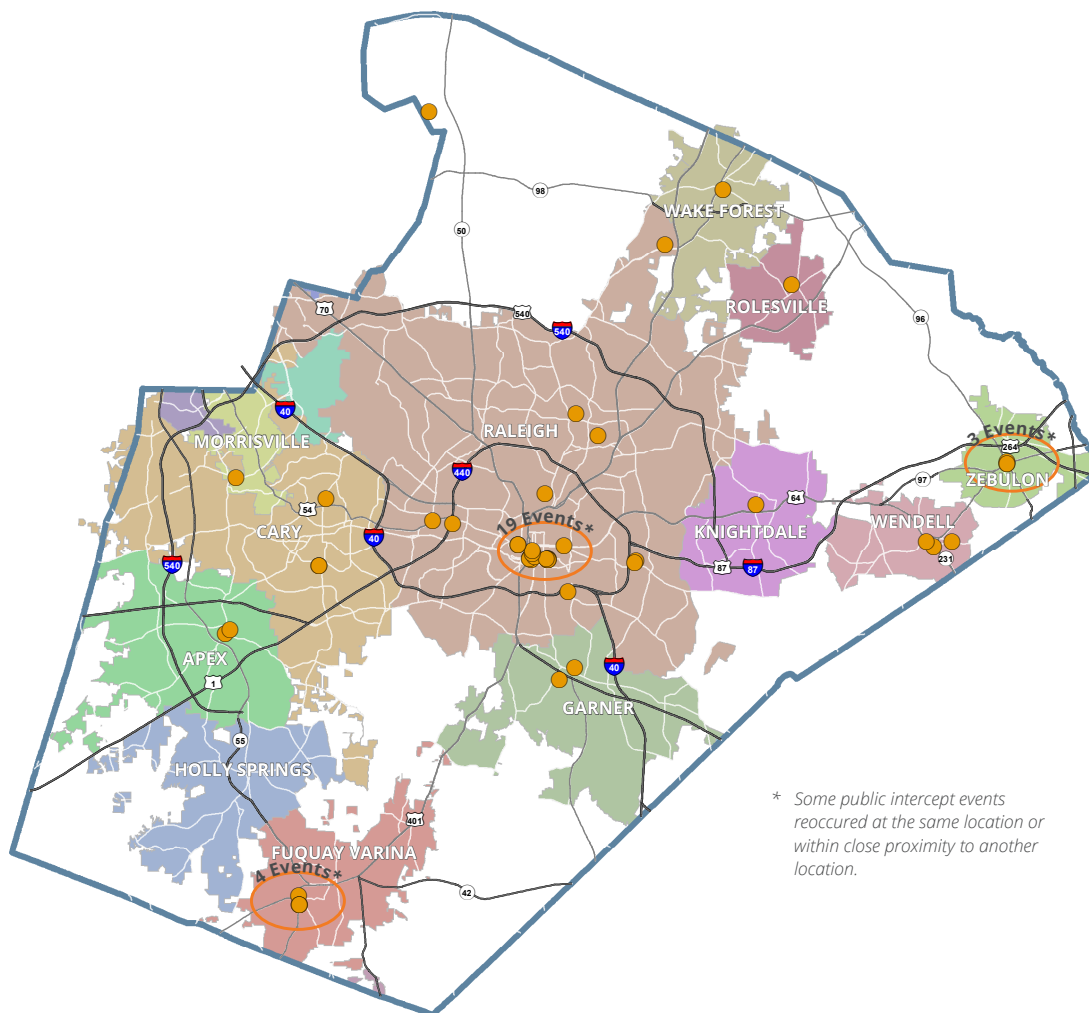
The Reflect on Wake survey was completed by community members from all 12 municipalities and the unincorporated portions of the county. The majority of poll respondents (85%) were working age (19-65 years) and live in a municipality (77%). While the majority of respondents were from the municipalities, the share of survey respondents located in the unincorporated areas of the community (20%) was actually higher than the share of total population for this same geography (8%). The majority of respondents (61%) have lived in Wake County for more than 10 years.

Youth (0-18 years) that compose 25% of the population made up 4% of the survey responses. Persons aged 36-64 that compose 41% of the population represented 65% of the survey responses. In future phases of this project, it will be important to increase engagement with youth.

Community members had multiple opportunities to share their ideas and priorities for Wake County's future during Phase II: Reflect on Wake.



Public Events Map



* Some public intercept events reoccurred at the same location or within close proximity to another location.

FEEDBACK ON COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Through the various inputs provided by residents responding to the online survey and community members engaging during stakeholder meetings several key community priorities emerged.

Significant preparation is needed to prepare for growth over next 10 years.

A vast majority of survey respondents and stakeholders identified that 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. Related to preparation for future growth, survey respondents identified (#1) protection of natural areas, farms, forests and meadows; (#2) more travel options; and (#3) more parks/trails and walkable neighborhoods as the most important priorities for change. When asked about the priorities to accomplish through PLANWake, survey respondents identified (#1) high quality education, (#2) protect natural areas, lakes and rivers, and (#3) support employment and attract jobs.

Protection of natural lands and open spaces is a priority.

When thinking about the future and change they would like to see, community survey respondents identified the protection of natural areas, farms, forests, and meadows as the #1 change they would like to see. This was further supported by respondents identifying the loss of natural areas and trees was their #2 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 #1 objective for guiding growth was preserving water quality, wildlife habitat, and other natural open space.

Directing growth to locate within towns is a priority.

When asked where new growth over the next decade should be located, 70% of survey respondents identified that 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 responses were consistent across age cohorts, with some variation in younger and older generations. The PLANWake Advisory Group also identified locating development to support transit as the tie for the #1 objective and reducing suburban sprawl as the #2 objective for guiding growth.

Creating walkable environments is a priority.

Across all age groups, survey respondents 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 identified that 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.

Other Themes from Public Input

Several other themes emerged from the Reflect on Wake public inputs, primarily through stakeholder discussions. These themes can be explored more directly with the broader community during PLANWake Phase 3: Envision Wake that focuses on identifying preferences for community choices and the associated tradeoffs of those choices. These themes included:

- Supporting an equitable future for all, including new employment opportunities, equitable public services, and adequate and affordable housing.
- Continuing to plan for growth with municipalities, particularly as it relates to phasing of growth in municipal extraterritorial jurisdictions and planning for the utilities needed to support future growth.
- Supporting sustainable development and planning for climate change and resiliency in response to weather events (flooding) that can impact water quality and stormwater management systems.
- Advancing community health and social services for all residents of Wake County.
- Managing natural resources such as groundwater and surface water sources to maintain quality of the resource and adequate supply for future residents.
- Protecting historical and cultural resources to maintain Wake County's heritage as growth continues.
- Continuing to advance educational excellence of the county's public school system.
- Preserving farmland and growing local food systems to support healthy community goals and maintain the viability of agriculture in Wake County.