



## MIDDLE CREEK AREA PLAN

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Photo: Barnes Farm & Produce LLC

## Introduction

In 2014, the population of Wake County reached a critical milestone of 1 million residents. The region's economy and higher learning environment has led to some of the highest population growth rates in the nation. Each year, Wake County added another 22,500 residents, or about 56 people per day, to its community. It is home to many thriving industries and startups with 12 core municipalities 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 225,000 new residents will likely call Wake County 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 to 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.

## CHAPTER 1

# Overview and Background

## PLANWake

### Purpose

PLANWake is the comprehensive plan of Wake County. This plan articulates the new vision for the greater Wake County community — one that will build off recent planning advancements made through the Wake Transit Plan, the Wake County Affordable Housing Plan, the Wake County Greenway System Plan and others to account 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's 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.

### 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 stakeholders. As a result, the PLANWake approach involves three key actions.

#### 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

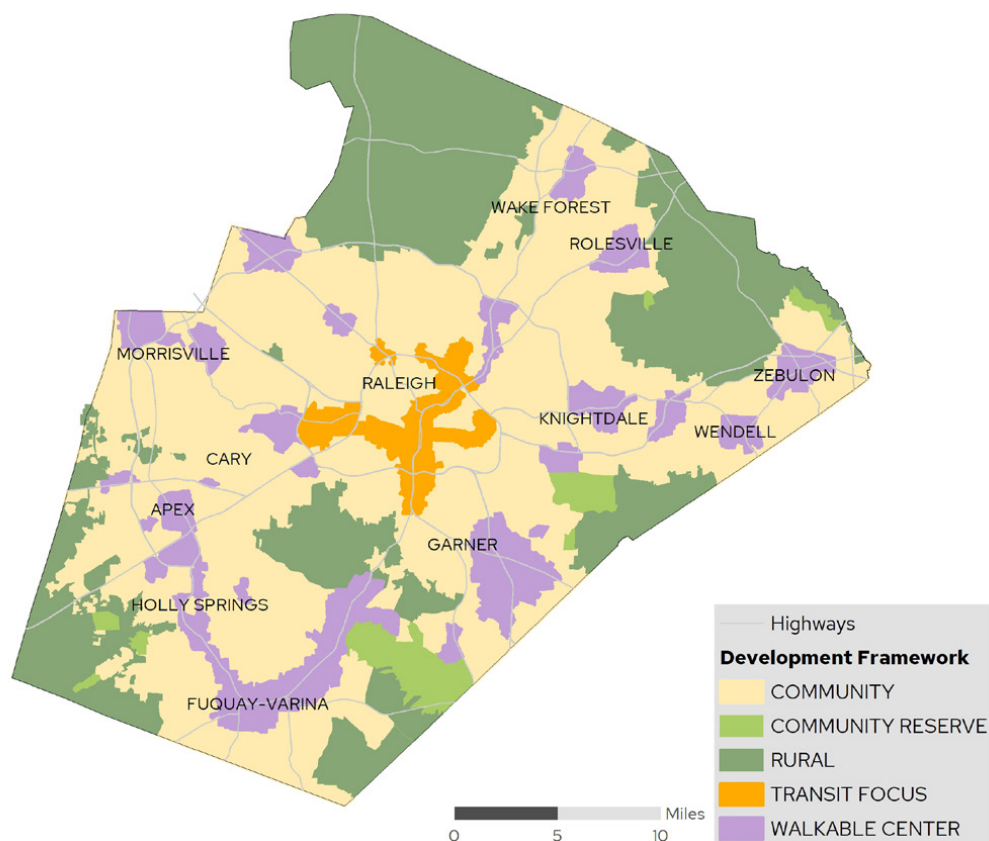
Previous plans have had similar goals but limited means of determining if goals were being met or not. PLANWake establishes performance metrics for community-wide and municipal goals. Monitoring performance metrics and plan implementation progress is essential to taking the right actions and adjusting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



## PLANWake Development Framework



## Municipal Transition Standards

Wake County is growing very rapidly, and the availability of developable land is drastically declining. A major aspect of Wake County's comprehensive plan, PLANWake, is to limit the types of development that create and encourage sprawl.

Inherent to this subject is the fact that the county does not offer its residents water or sewer utilities, so they rely on well and septic services. These services require more area per property and limit the ability to develop land more densely, which would help combat the sprawl.

In support of municipal annexation and connections to utility services, the county's Transitional Urban Development (TUD) policy required that any unincorporated property within 2,500 feet of

municipal utilities develop under municipal standards. In 2021, the Wake County Board of Commissioners adopted an updated policy that builds off TUD and addresses our present-day growth challenges.

Called the Municipal Transition Standards (MTS), this new policy will require residential and non-residential development within 2,500 feet of municipal water or sewer to make the utility connection and develop with the municipality. It also requires any proposed regular subdivision or non-residential development located in the Walkable or Community areas — as designated on the county's Development Framework Map — to contact the service-providing municipality to discuss the feasibility of a connection to water and sewer. (Wake County Unified Development Ordinance Section 12-11 Connections to Public or Community Systems)



## Area Plans

To meet the goals set forth in PLANWake, numerous Wake County policies and documents had to be updated or overhauled as part of the implementation process. One such example is adoption of area plans encompassing the unincorporated areas of Wake County. These area plans are designed to provide more localized land use (applications) analysis and public engagement. The Middle Creek (MC) Area Plan is the second of six area plans that will replace the current area land use plans. The Lower Swift Creek Area Plan was adopted in October 2022.

Municipalities have grown significantly over the past 20 years, either through annexation or expansions of extra-territorial jurisdictions. This growth has resulted

in the considerable reduction of Wake County's planning jurisdiction, which rendered the former area land use plan geographies obsolete and their policies outdated. The new boundaries for the area plans represent the logical and updated geographic groupings of the remaining area. Additional considerations such as watersheds, rights-of-way and U.S. Census block groups contributed to the updated boundaries.

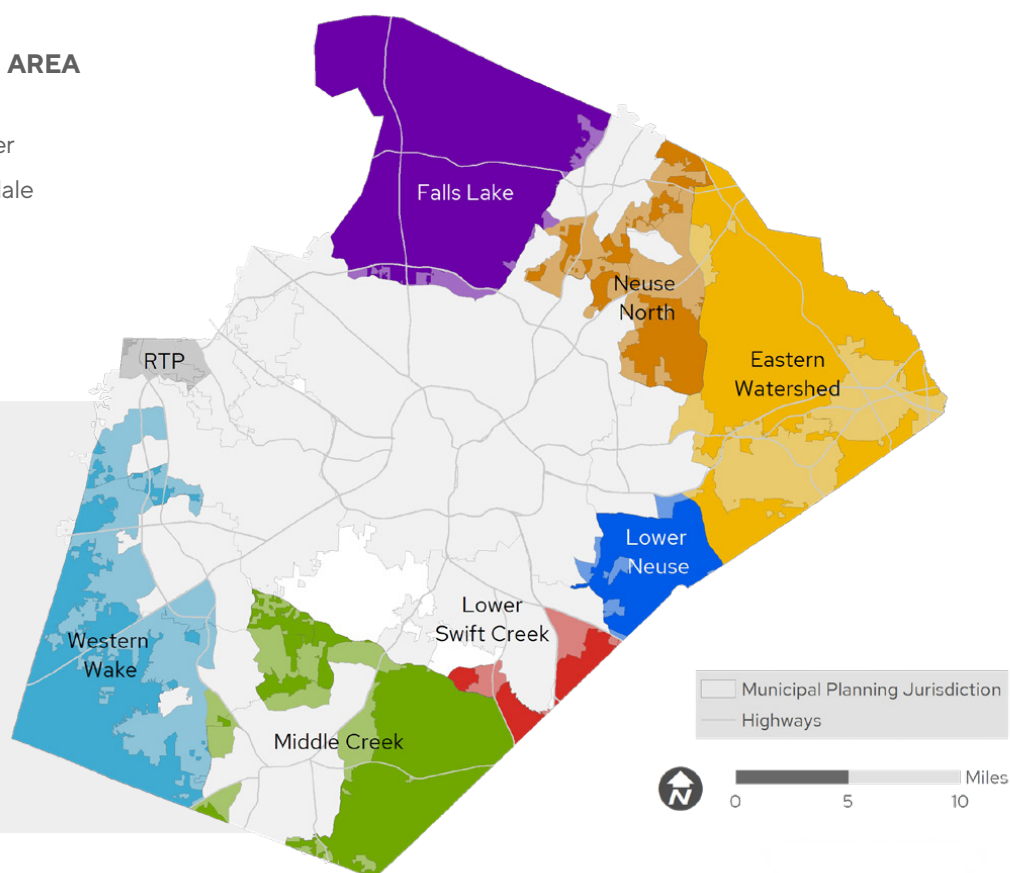
While PLANWake will continue to serve as the overarching vision for the county, the area plans can and should be used as an opportunity for certain elements – i.e., the development framework – to be modified, updated or amended as necessary.

### CURRENT/FORMER AREA LAND USE PLANS

- Fuquay-Varina/Garner
- East Raleigh/Knightdale
- Northeast
- Southeast
- Southwest

### NEW AREA PLANS

- Lower Swift Creek
- Middle Creek
- Falls Lake
- Eastern Watershed
- Western Wake
- Neuse North
- Lower Neuse



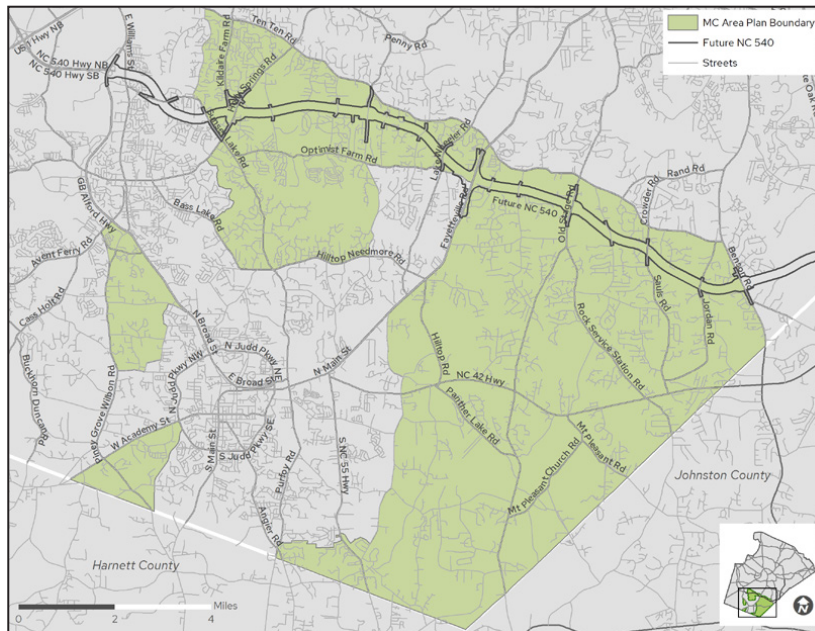
NOTE: While there is an area plan on the map for the Research Triangle Park (RTP), the RTP Foundation is responsible for any long-range or master planning initiatives in this area. Its inclusion is to identify it as an unincorporated area in Wake County's jurisdiction. Wake County will NOT be conducting an area plan in RTP.

## Middle Creek Planning Area

The Middle Creek (MC) Area Plan covers an area of Wake County that is approximately 45,825 acres, or just over 71 square miles. It is in the southeastern portion of Wake County and borders the Johnston and Harnett county lines.

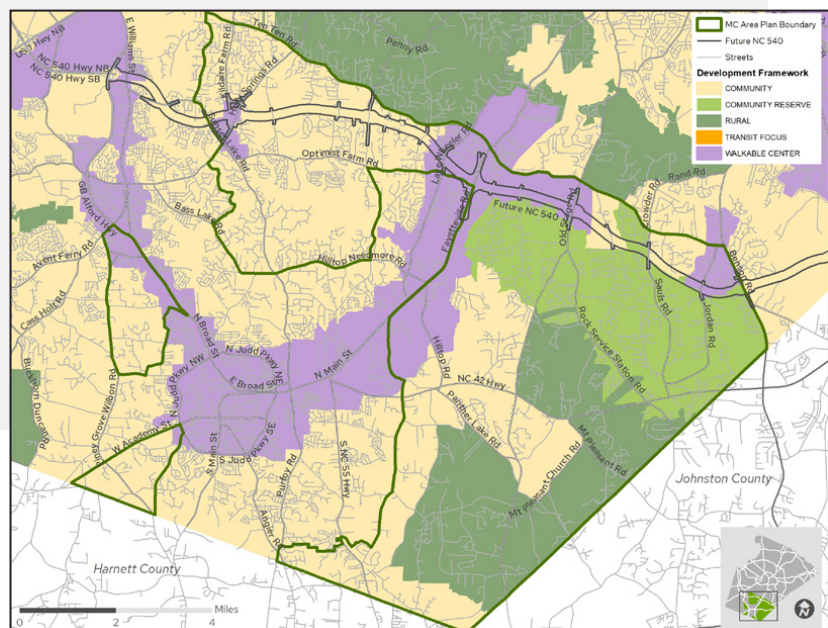
The MC area can be divided into four distinct areas, the largest being the southeast portion encompassing

Willow Spring up to Ten-Ten Road. The northern portion is west of US 401 and ranges from Hilltop-Needmore Road from the south to Ten-Ten Road in the north. The western area is bordered by Piney Grove Wilbon Road and North Broad Street. The southwest area is bounded by West Academy Street and the Harnett County Line.



**Middle Creek  
Area Plan Boundary**

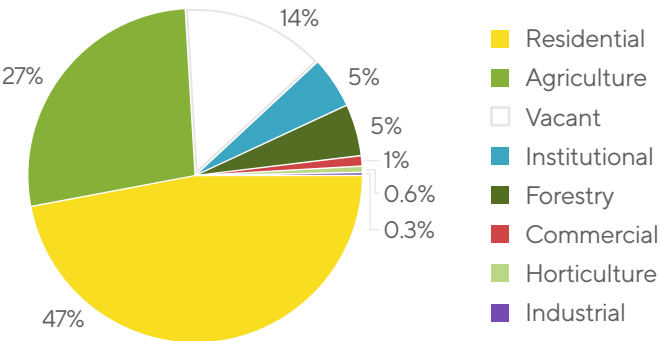
**PLANWake  
Development  
Framework**



# Current Land Use

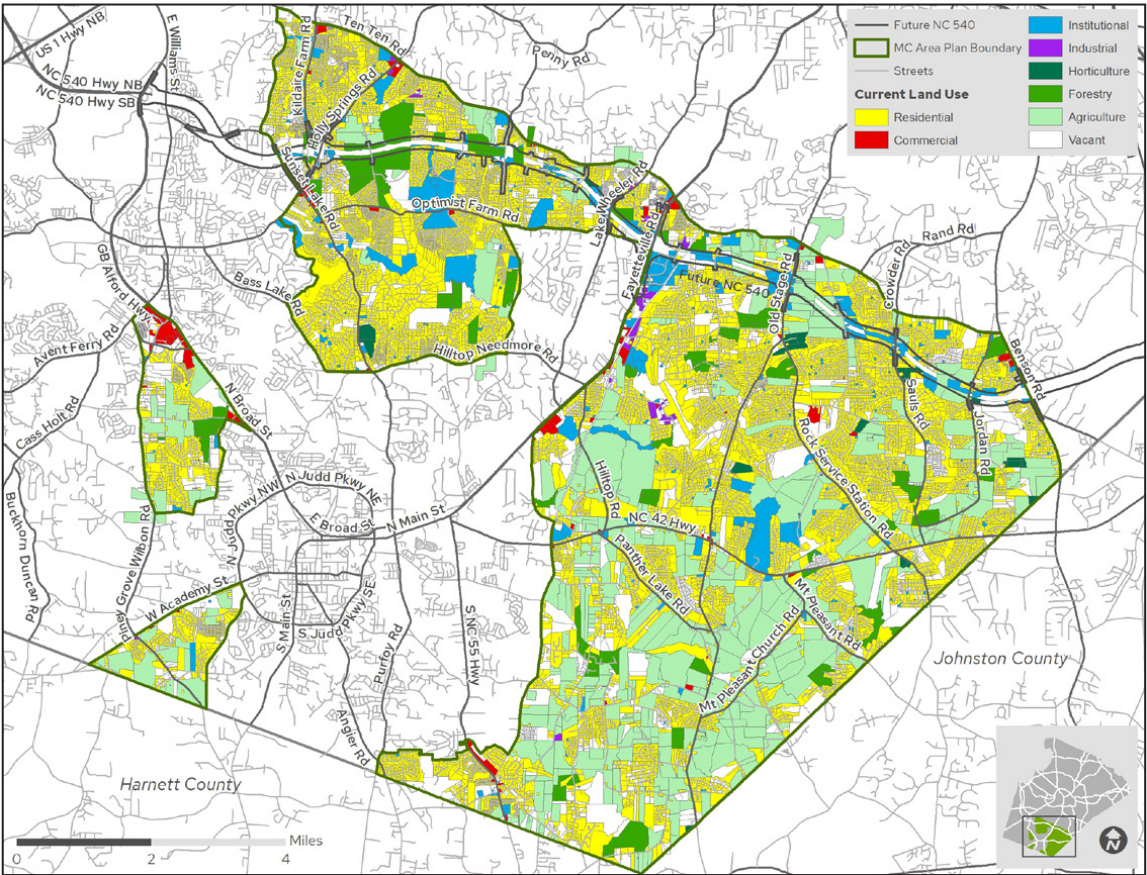
The predominant land use in MC area (as is the case in all of Wake County) is residential utilizing nearly 20,000 acres or 47% of the total area. Agriculture is the next-highest use making up 11,450 acres or 27% of the MC Area, the majority of which is in the southeastern area around Willow Spring. Vacant parcels are next at nearly 6,000 acres with the remaining acreage distributed among the other land uses.

MC Area Current Land Use %



Current Land Use	Acres	Parcels
Agriculture	11,450.93	433
Commercial	447.21	133
Forestry	2,131.95	85
Horticulture	251.96	28
Industrial	136.73	48
Institutional	2,329.51	520
Residential	19,912.30	19,639
Vacant	5,852.24	2,823
Total	42,512.83	23,709

Current Land Use

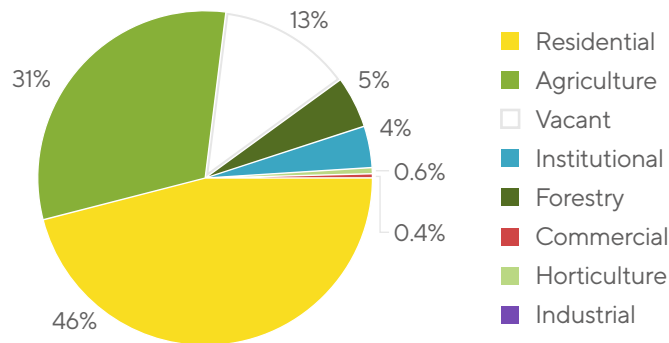




## Current Land Use – Wake County Jurisdiction

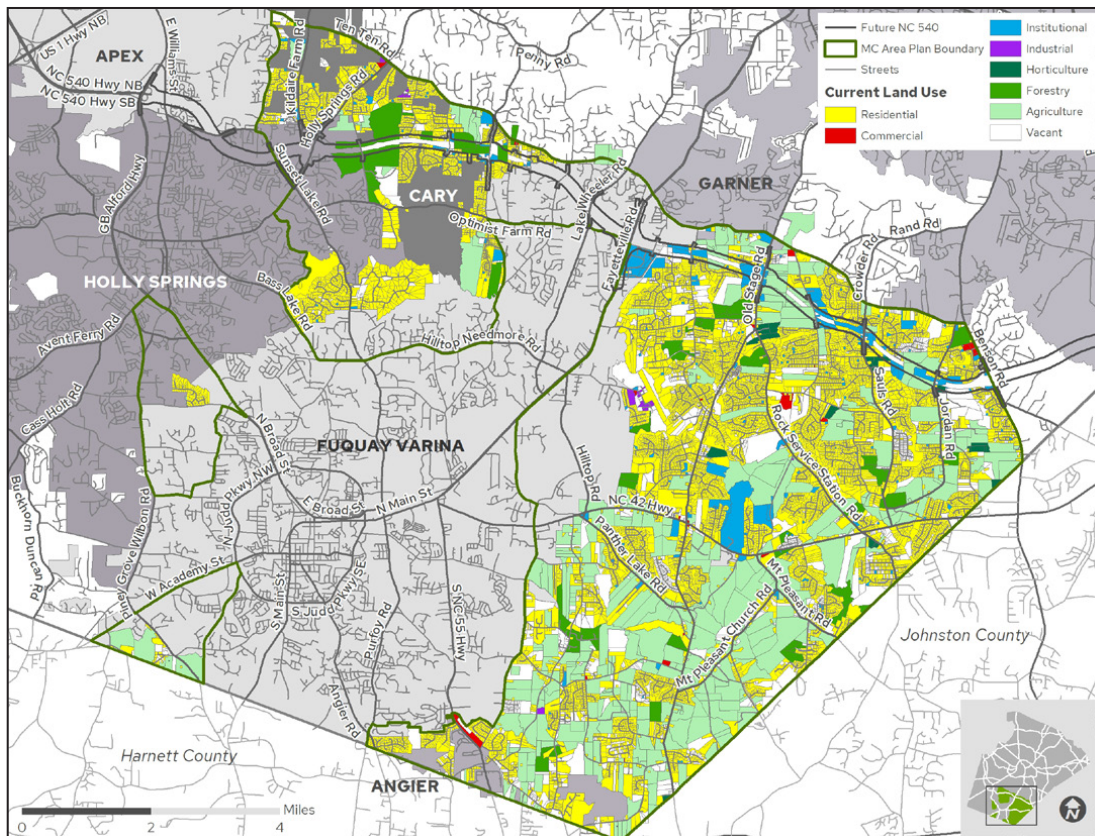
The current land use distribution does vary slightly when considering the area of MC only within Wake County's planning jurisdiction. However, it is useful to visualize the distribution of land uses in this perspective, especially when comparing it to the future land use classifications presented later in this plan. To start, the total acreage is reduced from 42,512 to 30,878 acres, and the percentage of residential use increases to 46%. Despite this difference and the reduction overall in total area, the distribution of land uses largely remains the same.

### Current Land Use % – County Only



Current Land Use	Acres	Parcels
Agriculture	9,508.82	363
Commercial	111	26
Forestry	1,548.09	55
Horticulture	188.27	25
Industrial	55.13	24
Institutional	1,192.82	329
Residential	14,310.53	11,281
Vacant	3,963.88	1,471
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,878.54</b>	<b>13,574</b>

### Current Land Use



## Population and Housing

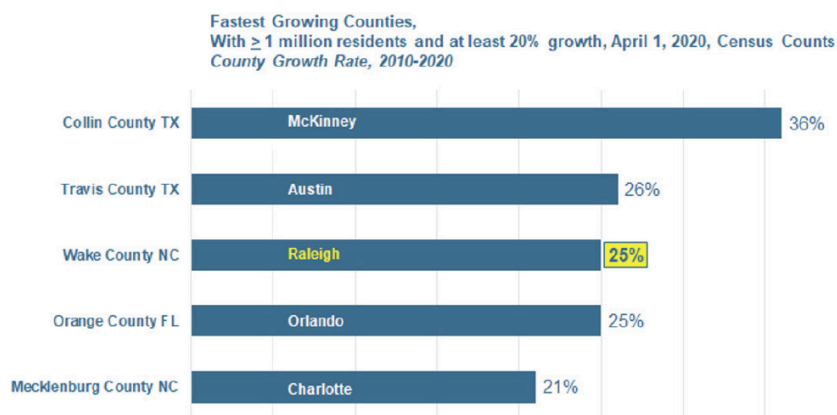
Wake County continues to experience population growth. Nationally between 2010 and 2020, Wake was the third-fastest growing county with at least 1 million residents. In North Carolina, Wake County experienced larger population growth (228,417) than any other county, including Mecklenburg County (195,854), and in doing so, surpassed Mecklenburg in

becoming the most populous county with 1,129,410 residents. (U.S. Census Bureau)

This has created a demand for housing and a supply that is struggling to keep up. Housing prices continue to rise, leading to folks looking elsewhere in neighboring counties.

## Wake County's 2020 Population

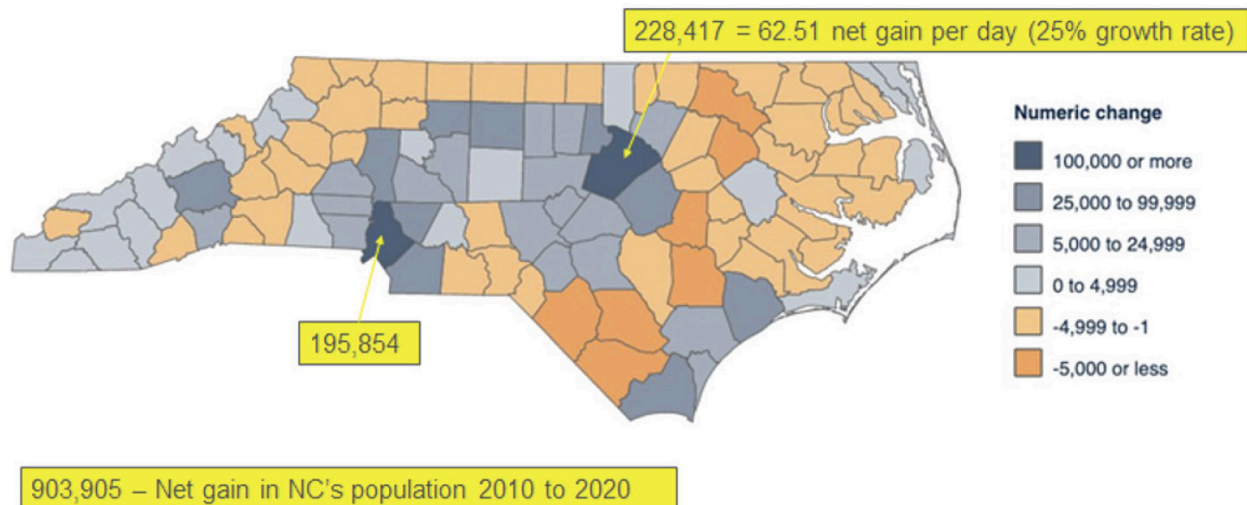
### National Context



### State Context

1.	Wake County	1,129,410
2.	Mecklenburg County	1,115,482
3.	Guilford County	541,299
4.	Forsyth County	382,590
5.	Cumberland County	334,728
6.	Durham County	324,833
7.	Buncombe County	269,452
8.	Union County	238,267
9.	Gaston County	227,943
10.	Cabarrus County	225,804

## Numeric Change in Population - 2010 to 2020

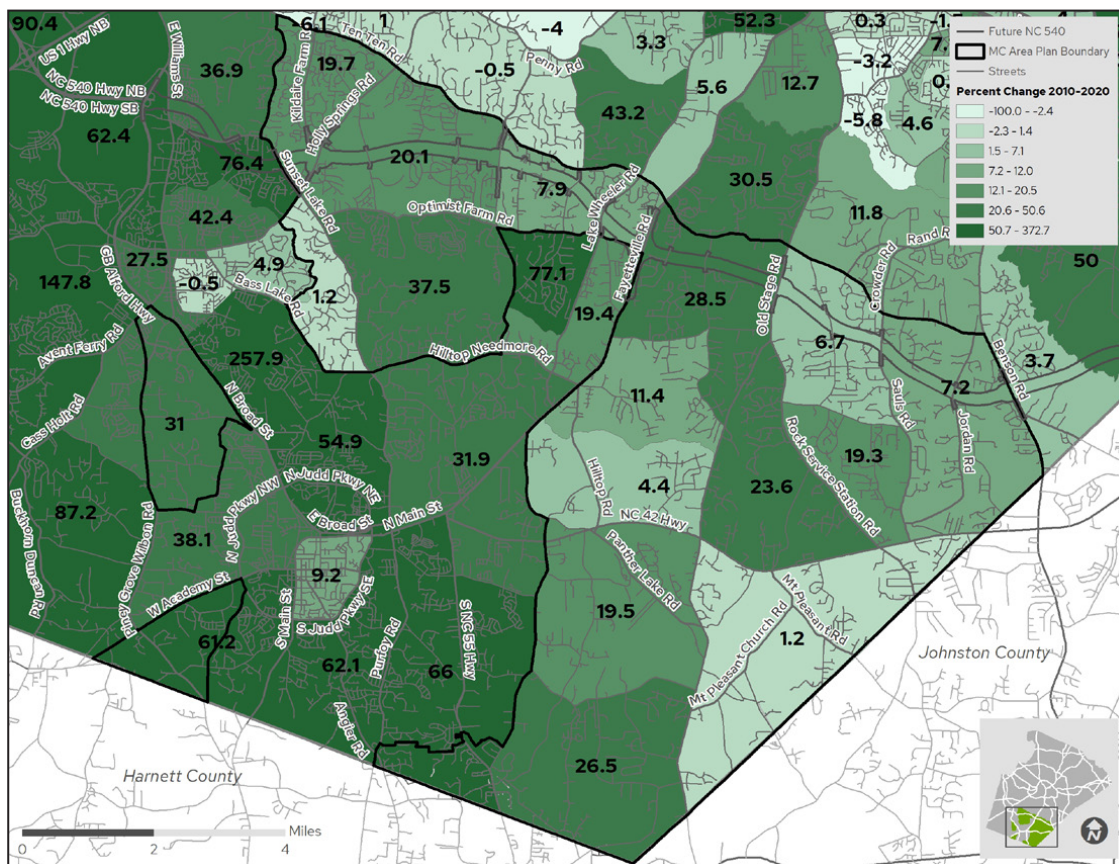


The 2020 Decennial Census counted the population of the Middle Creek area as 54,395, an increase of approximately 4,000 people since the 2010 Census. While a good portion of this increase has occurred within the adjacent municipalities, the increase that did occur within the MC area is significant when we consider the context. Many of these areas that experienced this growth, especially in the southeastern areas, were considered rural not too long ago. The change has had profound effects

on the landscape and traffic of a once primarily agricultural region.

The areas southwest of Rock Service Station Road and along the Harnett and Johnston County lines are excellent examples of this type of rapid growth, especially in the unincorporated parts of the county. The western parts of the study area did experience a higher percentage of growth, but this development pattern was to be expected given the availability of public utilities and other municipal services.

### Percent Population Change 2010 to 2020 by Census Tract



### Future Population

The MC area, along with the rest of the county, has experienced significant growth in recent years, but what does that growth look like in the future? In the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the

Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) and the Durham/Chapel Hill/Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC) projected the population, household and job growth

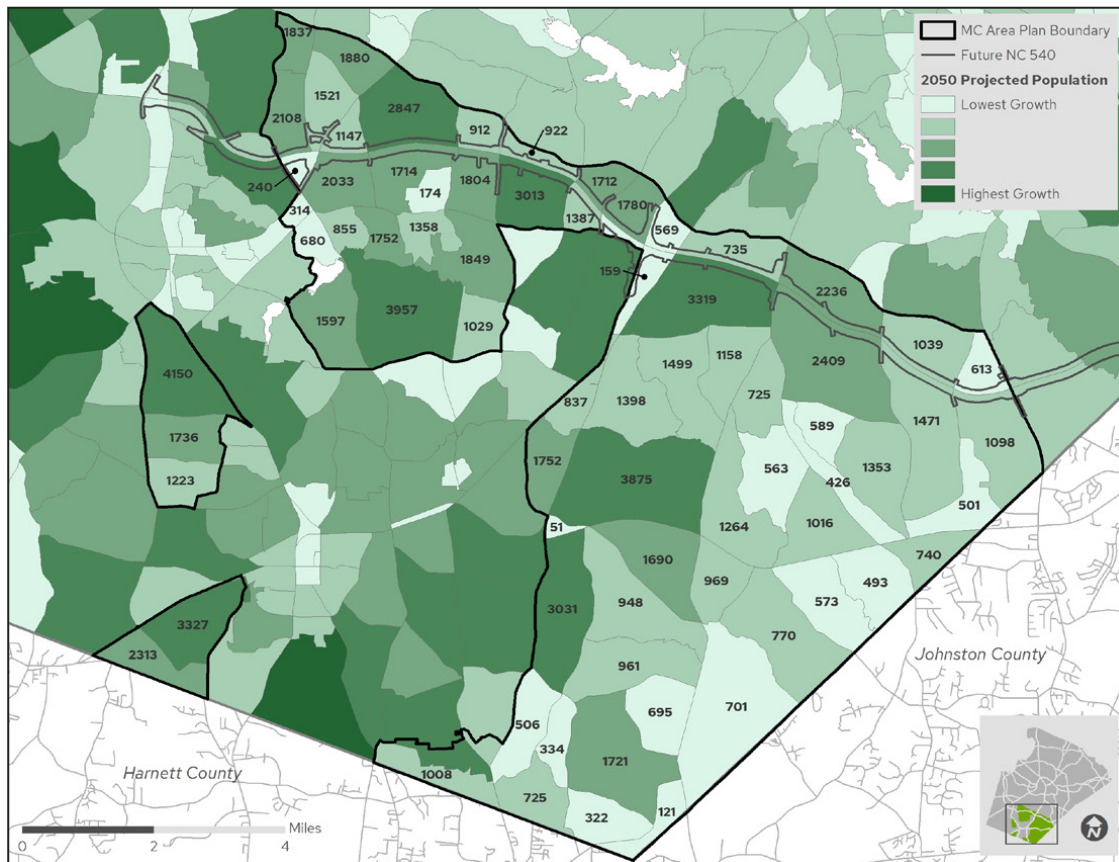


in order to understand future transportation patterns and plan for them.

According to the 2050 MTP, the MC area's population is projected to almost double by 2050, totaling approximately 100,000 people. Most of this growth occurs within municipal planning jurisdictions and along major transportation corridors.

Despite it being comparatively lower in unincorporated parts of the MC area (especially the southeastern portion), the higher growth areas still tend to follow the main transportation corridors, such as Future NC 540, NC 42 Hwy, Old Stage Road and Rock Service Station Road.

## Middle Creek Projected Future Population - 2050 by Census Block Group



## Transportation

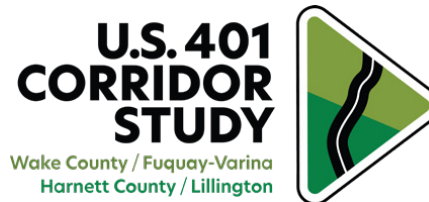
In addition to housing, the rapidly growing population is having a considerable effect on transportation. Since there is a direct correlation between land uses and transportation (i.e., modes, travel times, parking, congestion), aligning the two is of utmost importance.

Creating further urgency is the construction of N.C. 540 directly through the MC area. Leveraging the type of development in and around the interchanges as well as any non-automobile transportation projects will have a lasting impact on the entire community.

## US 401 Corridor Study (2021-2023)

Beginning in 2021, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) has been conducting a corridor study of US 401 to determine the most appropriate and feasible improvements to address congestion issues in this area of the county. The study will also explore alternatives to US 401 that are identified in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2045 (MTP 2045), which fall within the MC study area.

The 401 Corridor Study will ultimately be presented to the CAMPO Executive Board with a recommended route alternative based on a number of factors,

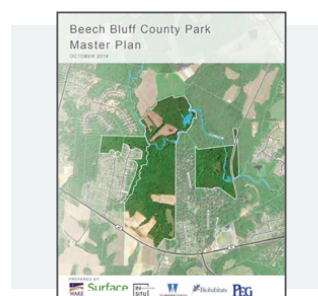


including limiting the number of affected properties, cost and effect on overall traffic patterns/flow. At the time of this plan's adoption, the study is scheduled to identify the route during Summer 2023. Once the Executive Board approves a route, it will then become part of the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan cycle.

## Additional Projects, Studies & Plans

### Beech Bluff County Park

At the time of adoption, Beech Bluff County Park, Wake County's newest park, is currently under construction and is expected to open in 2024. The 300-acre park is located in the MC area on NC Highway 42 and will feature undeveloped forests, wetlands, trails and a park visitor center.



### Southeast Area Study

In 2017, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Agency (CAMPO) completed the Southeast Area Study (SEAS) to define the area's strategy to accommodate existing and future travel needs. Along with the part of Wake County that includes the Middle Creek area, the study includes Johnston County and 11 municipalities – Archer Lodge, Benson, Clayton, Four Oaks, Garner, Kenly, Micro, Raleigh, Selma, Smithfield and Wilson's Mills.

The plan identifies Raleigh's relative proximity as a major influence on traffic patterns, more urban environments and a demand for a more flexible transportation system in an area that's been largely rural and suburban until recently. The majority of

residents in the SEAS area travel through the MC area during their commutes in and out of Raleigh (from within Wake and adjacent counties), which has made the MC area the locale for the five worst crash locations from 2014 to 2017.

Along with roadway recommendations, the SEAS also provides recommendations for non-automobile transportation, such as bicycle, walking and transit.



of reasons, but especially so for those residents living in the eastern part of the county (as indicated in blue on the map below).

One in five private wells in the shaded area exceeds health guidance levels for radionuclides. Public Water systems (including community wells) are routinely tested. If you get a water bill, your water is already being tested. But if you have a private well, you should have it tested for uranium, gross alpha activity, and radon in water, as well as other contaminants.

Resources and information are available so residents understand how and where to get their well water tested as well as steps to take once they get their results.

[illegible]



## Social Equity

Social Equity identifies the health and wellbeing characteristics of the community by analyzing socioeconomic statistics (U.S. Census) including housing, education, food security, poverty levels and income, among others.

The Social Equity Atlas combines these factors to indicate populations with varying degrees of vulnerability. The MC area consists of populations with differing vulnerability levels.

Community Vulnerability and Economic Health are two key indices that the Social Equity Atlas uses to identify and measure our communities' socioeconomic conditions. The main source of these data is the most recent 5-year estimates of U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey at the Block Group level.

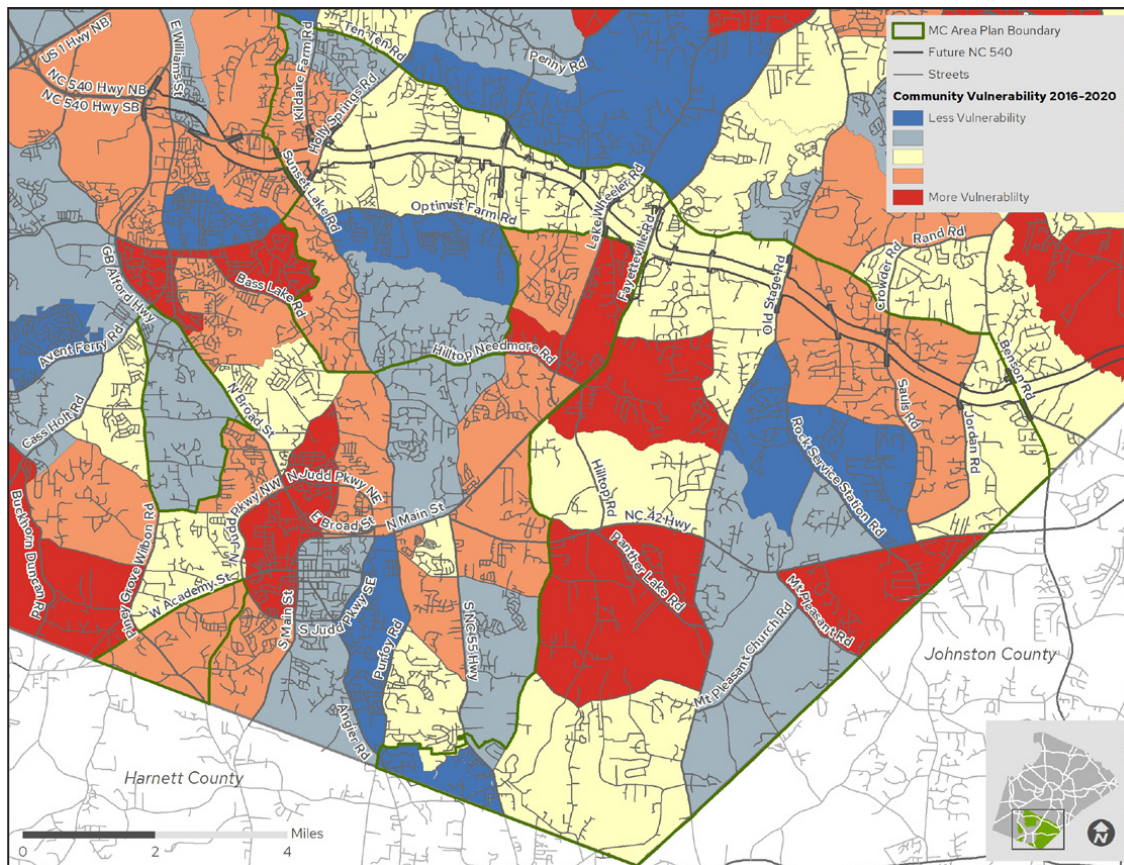
For the most up-to-date information, refer to Wake County's Social Equity Atlas webpage.

### COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY INDEX

The Community Vulnerability Index helps determine where resources and initiatives are lacking by using a combination of the following factors.

- **Unemployment** - The population age 16 and older who are unemployed in the civilian labor force.
- **Age Dependency** - The population younger than the age of 18 and older than the age of 64 combined.
- **Low Educational Attainment** - The population of ages 25 and older who have less than a high school diploma.
- **Housing Vacancy** - The total number of vacant or unoccupied housing units in a block group.
- **Below Poverty Level** - The population living below the federal poverty threshold in Wake County.

## Community Vulnerability by Census Block Group



In terms of the MC area, the more vulnerable communities are in areas in red, namely in between NC 42 Highway and Mt Pleasant Road, south of NC 42 Highway in between Old Stage and Kennebec roads, and east of US 401 near Hilltop-Needmore Road. These areas ranked 479, 523 and 530 out of the 579 block groups in Wake County. In these areas there are higher percentages of residents with age dependency; that is, persons who are either younger than 18 or older than 64.

The least vulnerable community in the MC area is in the block groups at Old Stage Road and Rock Service Station Road. While they had a high relative percentage of age dependency, other contributing factors such as low unemployment rates, those without a diploma or housing vacancy were able to combat that.

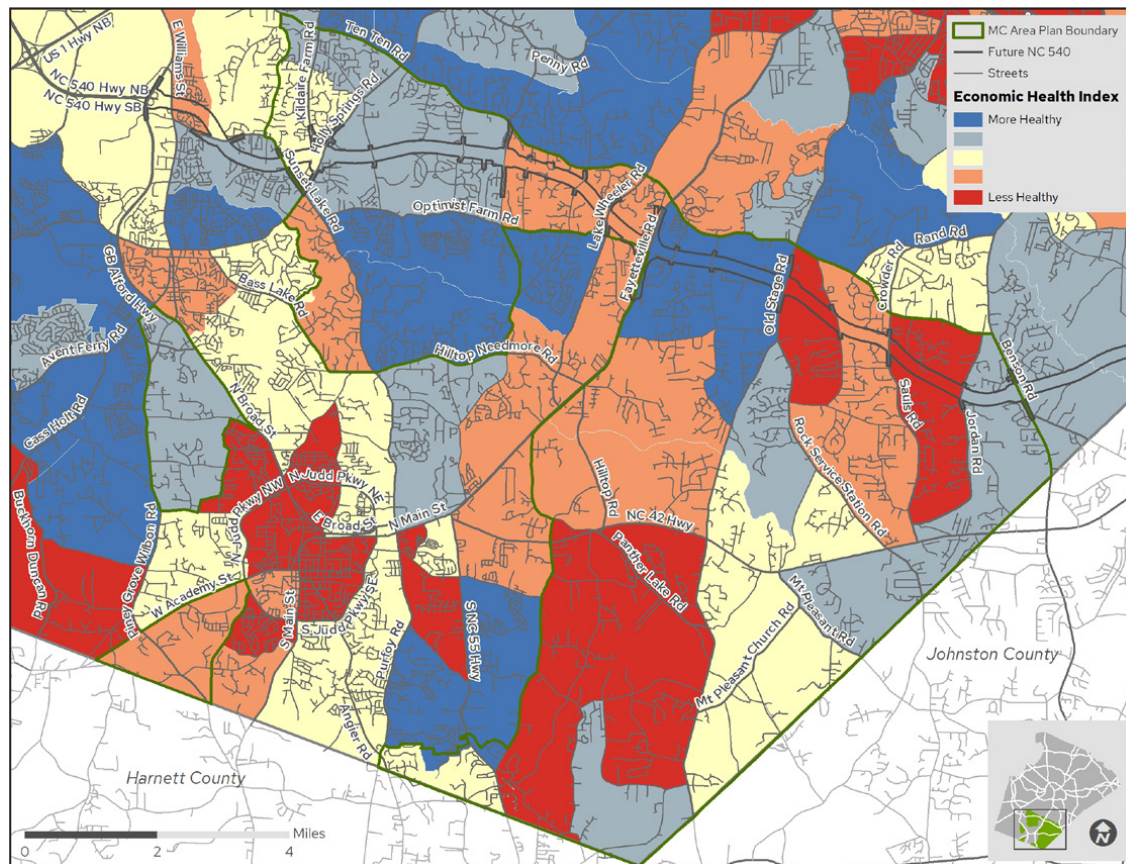
### ECONOMIC HEALTH INDEX

The Economic Health Index uses the following factors to compare the conditions within each community to better understand what type of financial constraints

residents within that community may be facing. Federal initiatives, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Program and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), utilize similar factors to identify low-income neighborhoods and household types, respectively.

- **Median Household Income** - The median household income in the past 12 months.
- **Food Stamps** - Measured as a percentage of households in each block group.
- **Rent as Greater than 30% of Income** - Gross rent as a percentage of household income.
- **Home Mortgage as Greater than 30% of Income** - Mortgage status by owner cost as a percentage of household income.
- **Persons Living 100%-200% of Federal Poverty Level** - Ratio of income to poverty level for whom poverty status is determined between 100 and 200 percent.

### Economic Health by Census Block Group



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In terms of economic health, the least healthy communities shared some similarities with those in the Community Vulnerability Index. Specifically, the cluster in between Kennebec and Old Stage roads and south of NC 42 Highway extending down to Harnett County. They ranked 527, 541, and 561 out of

the 579 block groups in Wake County. This is mainly due to the high percentage of residents who spend more than 30% of their total income on either their rent or mortgage. This leaves very little to spend on everything else in their lives.



## CHAPTER 2

# Land Use Plan

## Community Engagement and Outreach

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the conventional methods of public outreach that relied on highly attended community events, in-person meetings and canvassing. These methods, while allowing for face-to-face interaction and a more hands-on approach, also tended to engage a vocal minority relative to the larger community. Many community members are often not at liberty to physically attend a community meeting for many reasons, including childcare, transportation, work or financial, and others may not have even known about it. As a result, the responses and input received were often not representative of the community at large. Moreover, even as the restrictions from the pandemic continually lessen and more in-person events take place, portions of the population who are unable to attend for various reasons will always exist. Virtual or online community engagement can bridge this gap and allow more members of the community to

provide their input and be heard, and even more so when it is accessible from a cell phone.

Wake County staff utilized an online engagement platform specifically designed for this type of community participation. Through the interactive map, email listservs and online surveys, staff was able to get a better understanding of those issues that affected the MC area or that were important to residents.

In addition to the virtual public engagement tools, staff also conducted in-person outreach at multiple locations in and around the MC area. At the MC Area Plan's kickoff, planning staff attended two polling places within the MC area on Election Day, Nov. 8, 2022, to inform voters that the plan was upcoming and how they could provide feedback. The two sites were Turner Memorial Baptist Church in Garner and Triangle Community Church in Apex.



On Jan. 24, 2023, planning staff conducted a virtual public meeting to present information, receive feedback and answer any questions from residents. The meeting was livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube and is available to view on the MC Area Plan webpage – [wake.gov/mc](http://wake.gov/mc) – for those unable to attend.

As restrictions on large indoor public gatherings loosened throughout the year, planning staff decided to hold an in-person community workshop on Feb. 16, 2023, at a local church for residents to comment on the plan's draft future land use designations. The Wake Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) staff greatly assisted by conducting extensive outreach among the agricultural community in order to promote attendance. The workshop marked planning staff's first in-person meeting of this nature since 2019 and resulted in a highly attended workshop that garnered an abundance of feedback.

The success of the community workshop resulted in a follow-up meeting on April 20, 2023, to update residents on the plan's progress and developments.

Planning staff elicited additional feedback from the public with its collaboration with the Juniper Level Missionary Baptist Church. Planning staff was on site during the church's Sunday services to speak with congregants about the Middle Creek Area Plan and inform them on ways to engage.

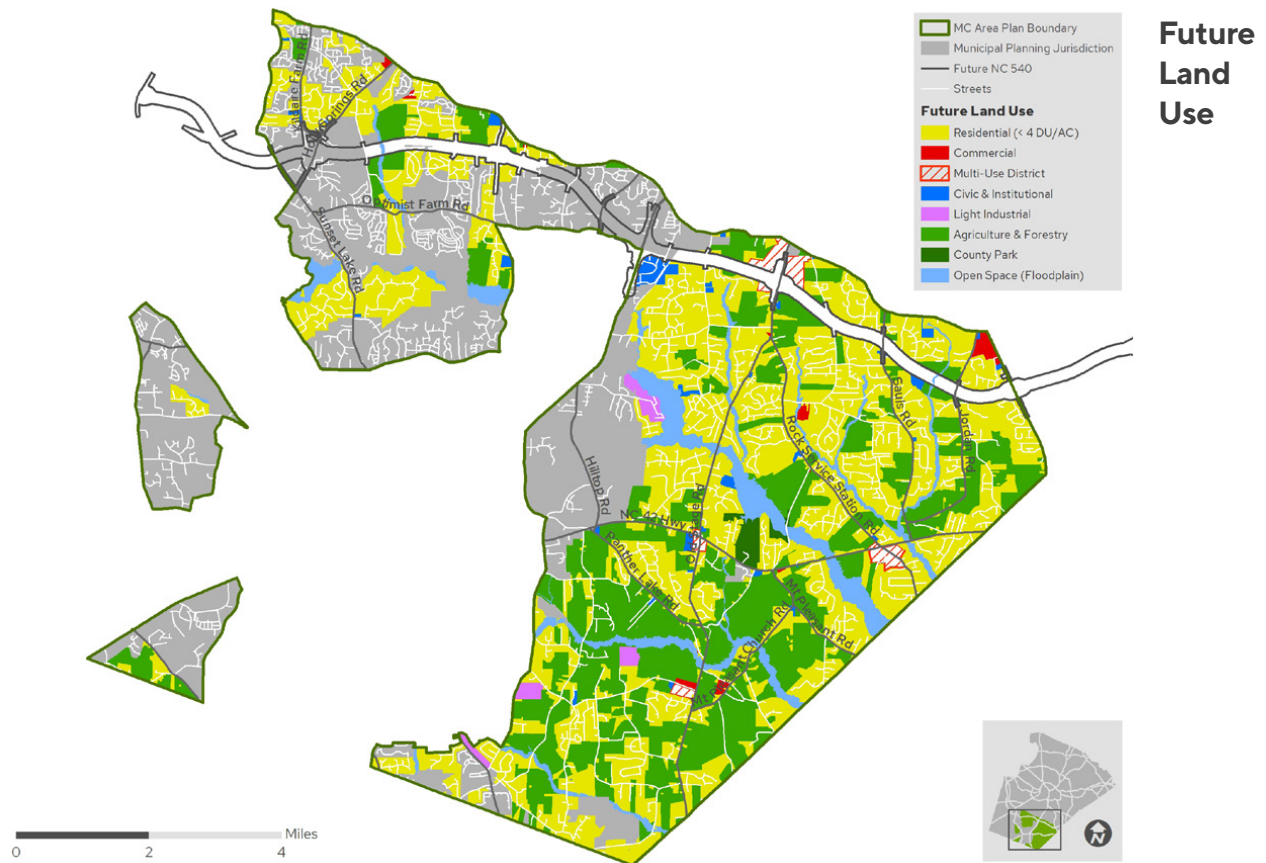


## Middle Creek Area Plan

Land use planning is typically performed by looking 20 to 30 years into the future to establish the best possible uses of land as determined by the public, planning staff and stakeholders. However, it is reasonable to assume what is considered the best use of this land now can and often does change well before the 20 years are complete. For this reason, planning documents are referred to as "living documents" in that they can and should be amended and updated as necessary. Amendments can be requested by individual property owners, which undergoes a public hearing process, and updates

are typically conducted by planning staff every five years or so to ensure the data and information are still accurate and relevant.

The future land use map is based on the most recent and up-to-date information. Some portions of the surrounding municipality's jurisdictions are within the MC area, and this is represented in grey. Any development proposed within these areas would be subject to specific town's development ordinances.



Land Use Classification	Description
<b>Residential</b>	The Residential classification indicates future areas for any residential land uses with a maximum density of four dwelling units per acre.
<b>Commercial</b>	The Commercial classification indicates commercial uses outside of multi-use districts (MUDs) that are currently in existence.
<b>Multi-Use District</b>	Formerly known as Activity Centers, Multi-Use Districts (MUDs) are areas near transportation corridors where non-residential development is envisioned to serve the community.
<b>Civic &amp; Institutional</b>	The Civic & Institutional classification indicates areas intended for neighborhood-oriented non-residential development including schools, religious institutions or community centers. This classification is intended to be less intensive than other non-residential areas such as Multi-Use Districts.
<b>Light Industrial</b>	The Light Industrial classification indicates areas that could have a range of non-residential uses including commercial and light industrial.
<b>Agriculture &amp; Forestry</b>	The Agriculture & Forestry classification identifies areas where agricultural, horticultural or forestry uses are expected to continue.
<b>County Park</b>	The County Park classification represents Beech Bluff County Park.
<b>Open Space</b>	The Open Space classification designates floodplain areas intended for uses such as active or passive recreation or to remain undeveloped.



## Multi-Use Districts

### Overview

Formerly known as activity centers, multi-use districts (MUDs) are the places stakeholders have felt are most appropriate for commercial and mixed-use development to occur. Typically, these are located at the intersections of major or moderate-sized roadways. In many instances, the district 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.

Multi-use districts are intended to play two primary roles. The first is to identify the most appropriate location for commercial development to help serve the daily needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. In

this role, the county uses multi-use districts 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 multi-use district 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 multi-use district policy provides guidance on the intended maximum size of each multi-use district category. In this role, the county is primarily concerned with how a proposed use would serve the needs of a future population.

### Purpose and Approach

PLANWake describes an approach to development of multi-use districts. This approach stresses collaboration between the municipality and county to apply design standards to any non-residential development within multi-use districts in areas designated as Community or Walkable Center by the Wake County Comprehensive Plan (PLANWake). These areas are intended to be developed at urban intensities in the future, therefore any development that occurs while under county jurisdiction should mimic municipal design standards as closely as possible. The county's policy is to work with municipalities to apply specifications consistent with a municipality's plans and ordinances.

To align multi-use districts with the intentional growth framework set out in PLANWake, the county will take a two-tiered approach (Rural and Municipal) with multi-use districts.

**Rural Multi-Use Districts** are multi-use districts designated as Community Reserve or Rural on the PLANWake Development Framework Map.

These areas are intended to either remain in county jurisdiction in perpetuity or are not intended to

become municipal in the foreseeable future. Non-residential development will occur on well and septic or private utility and will be small scale in nature, especially within water supply watershed areas.

Rural multi-use districts could contain shopping, services, recreation and small-scale office and institutional uses needed to meet the day-to-day needs of the neighborhood. Examples are a grocery or convenience store, pharmacy, restaurant, medical or dental practice, insurance agency, law firm, small neighborhood business office, bank, school, daycare, church, park and civic club. Rural multi-use districts will serve surrounding farm and forestry uses and could contain small-scale food processing facilities, cottage industries or veterinary offices. Service stations and dry-cleaning uses would be appropriate in rural areas outside of the water supply watersheds. A full list of allowable uses can be found in Section 4-11 of the Wake County Unified Development Ordinance. Underlying zoning will determine the uses allowed in the multi-use districts, so a rezoning or a special use permit may be needed to achieve certain uses.

### Rural Multi-Use Districts Guidelines

A residential scale and proportion should be encouraged in rural multi-use districts. Connectivity will focus on cross access within the district and low-stress connections to abutting neighborhoods.

#### Rural Guidelines

<b>Size</b>	Up to 35 acres
<b>Maximum lineal distance that non-residential uses may extend along a roadway</b>	2,000 feet
<b>Maximum depth that non-residential uses should extend back from roadways</b>	500 feet
<b>Minimum separation from other neighborhood multi-use districts</b>	1 mile
<b>Minimum separation from community or regional multi-use districts</b>	1.5 miles

**Municipal Multi-Use Districts** are multi-use districts designated as Community or Walkable Center on the PLANWake Development Framework Map. These areas are intended to be annexed and served with municipal public utilities in the future. Multi-use districts in these areas generally align with municipal plans for development. The goal of development that occurs in the county jurisdiction is to harmonize with future expected municipal development.

Municipal multi-use districts may have uses permitted in rural multi-use districts, plus uses that provide goods and services needed less frequently than a

daily basis. Examples are shopping malls, hotels, movie theatres, major cultural, educational or entertainment facilities, car dealerships and mid- to large-size office parks or businesses.

Because multi-use districts located in areas designated as Community or Walkable Center by PLANWake are intended to be developed at urban intensities in the future, any development that occurs while under county jurisdiction should mimic municipal design standards as closely as possible. The county will work with municipalities to apply development standards consistent with a municipality's plans and ordinances.

### Municipal Multi-Use Districts Guidelines

Collaboration with municipalities is key to achieving the goals of the multi-use districts in areas designated as Community and Walkable Centers. There are three types or intensities of multi-use districts: neighborhood, community and regional.

#### Neighborhood Guidelines

<b>Size</b>	Up to 35 acres
<b>Maximum lineal distance that non-residential uses may extend along a roadway</b>	2,000 feet
<b>Maximum depth that non-residential uses should extend back from roadways</b>	500 feet
<b>Minimum separation from other neighborhood multi-use districts</b>	1 mile
<b>Minimum separation from community or regional multi-use districts</b>	1.5 miles

### Community Guidelines

<b>Size</b>	Up to 120 acres
<b>Maximum lineal distance that non-residential uses may extend along a roadway</b>	3,200 feet
<b>Maximum depth that non-residential uses should extend back from roadways</b>	800 feet
<b>Minimum separation from other community or regional multi-use districts</b>	3 miles
<b>Minimum separation from neighborhood multi-use districts</b>	1.5 miles

### Regional Guidelines

<b>Size</b>	Up to 375 acres
<b>Maximum lineal distance that non-residential uses may extend along a roadway</b>	4,000 feet
<b>Maximum depth that non-residential uses should extend back from roadways</b>	2,000 feet
<b>Minimum separation from community multi-use districts</b>	3 miles
<b>Minimum separation from neighborhood multi-use districts</b>	1.5 miles



## Middle Creek Multi-Use Districts

### NC 540 and Old Stage Road Multi-Use District

**Designation:** Municipal

**Type:** Regional

**Size:** 185 acres

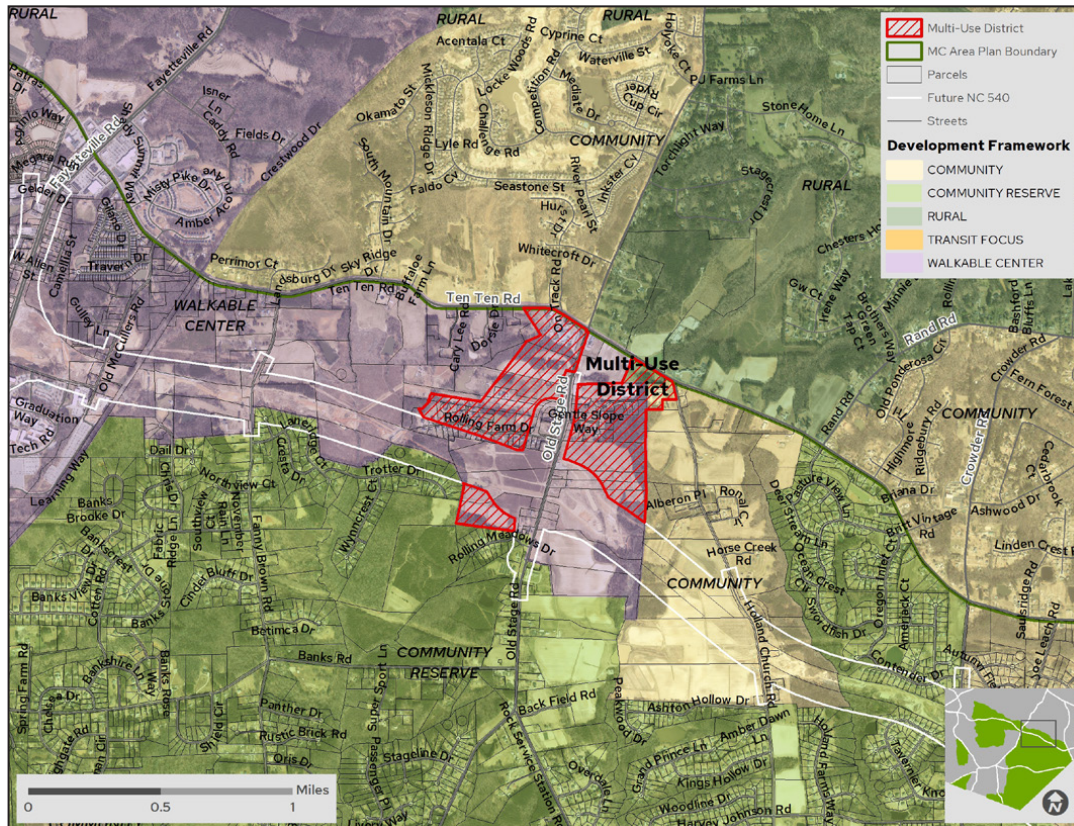
This multi-use district (MUD) is at the future interchange of NC 540 and Old Stage Road. Old Stage Road is proposed to be a four-lane major thoroughfare by the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and will serve as a vital connector route for residents coming in and out of the Middle Creek Area. This MUD is located along the northern border of the MC study area and abutting the Town of Garner's planning jurisdiction.

The area north of Ten-Ten Road is also within the Swift Creek Land Management Plan, a cooperative agreement between Apex, Cary, Garner, Raleigh, Wake County and the North Carolina Division of Water Quality to preserve water quality within the Swift Creek Watershed.

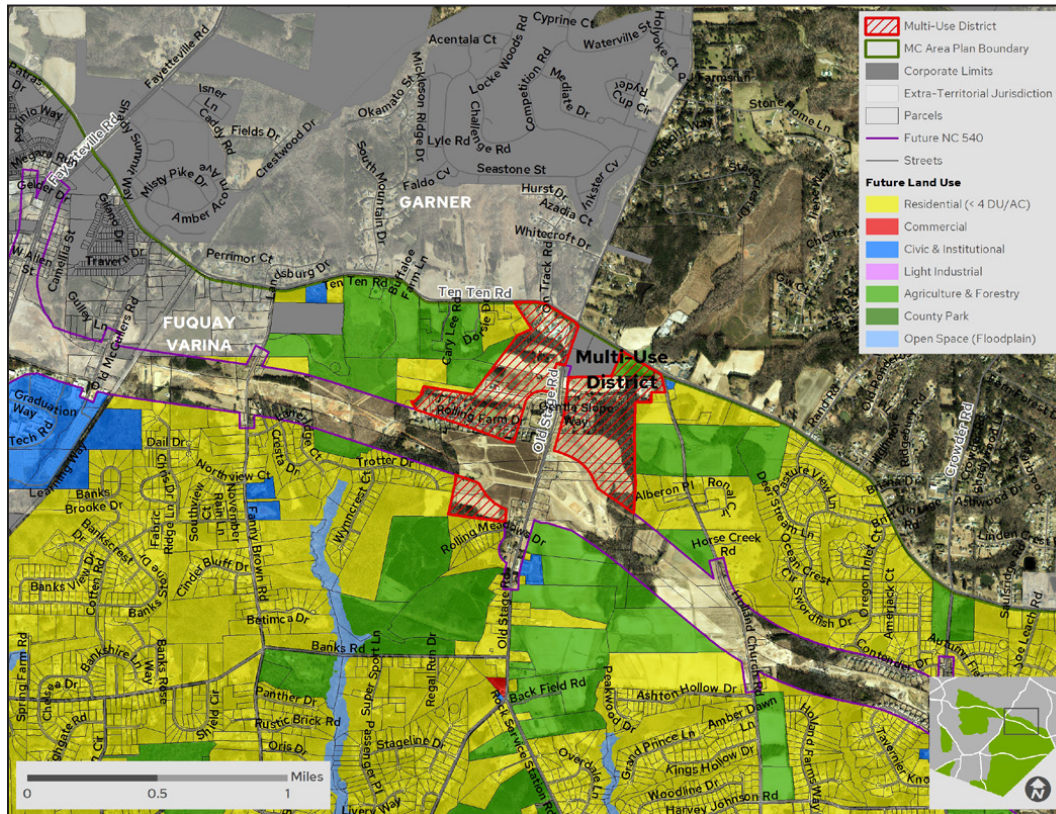
This MUD is currently zoned Residential-30 (R-30) and within the Walkable Center of PLANWake's Development Framework Map.

Water and sewer utilities are currently available at Old Stage Road and Ten-Ten Road.

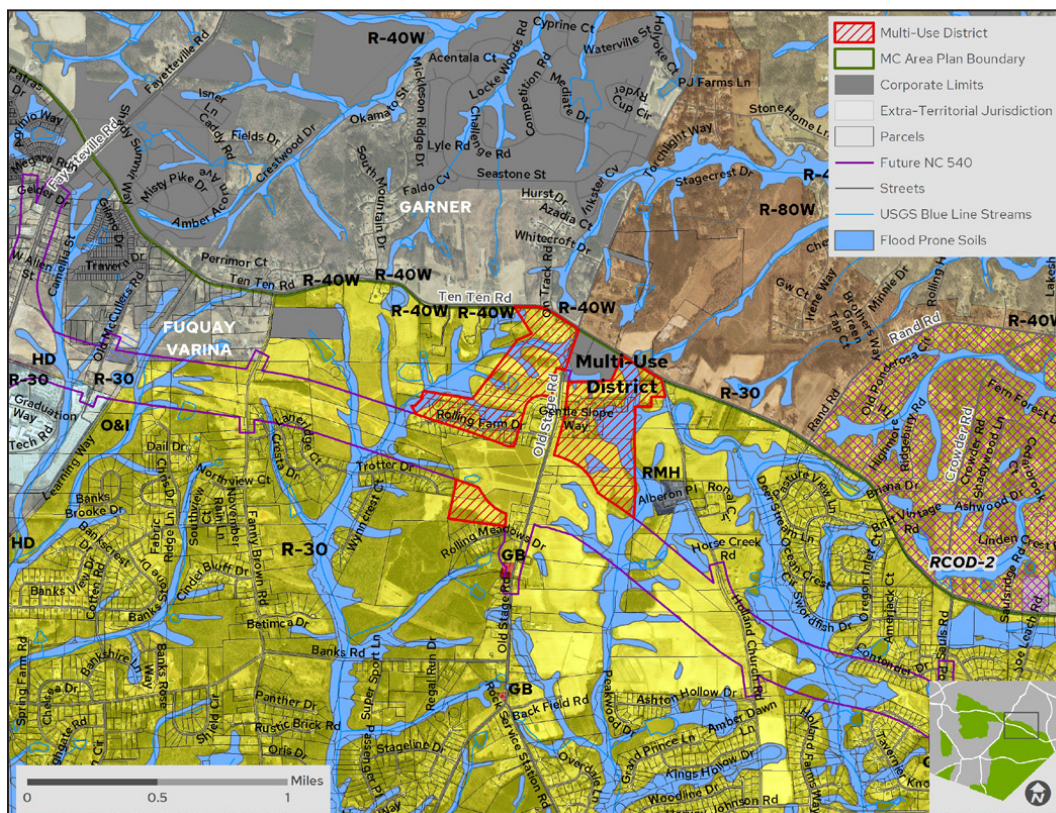
### NC 540 and Old Stage Road Multi-Use District Framework







**Future  
Land Use**



**Environmental**



## Old Stage Road and NC 42 Highway Multi-Use District

Designation: Municipal

Type: Community

**Size:** 36 acres

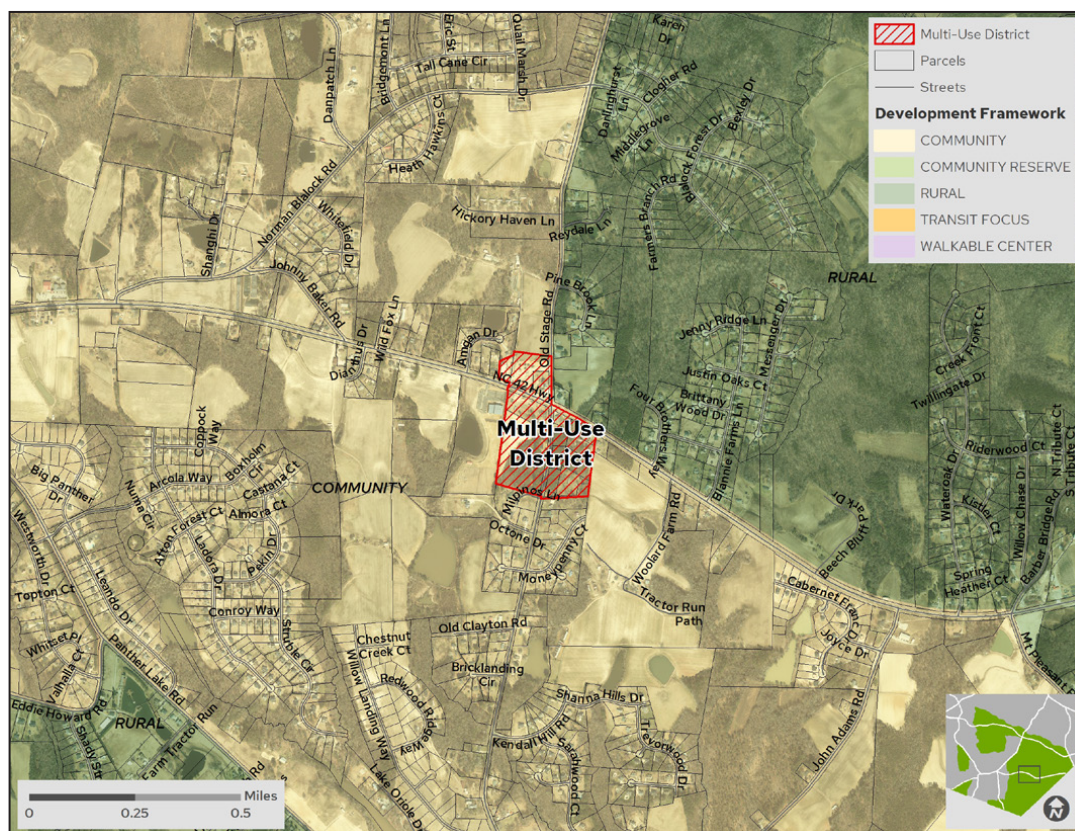
This MUD is located at the intersection of Old Stage Road and NC 42 Highway. Old Stage Road will serve as an important connector between two major corridors: NC 42 Highway and future NC 540 to the north. As such, the 2050 MTP proposes that Old Stage Road be a major thoroughfare and widened to four lanes along this stretch.

Parcels fronting NC 42 Highway within the county's jurisdiction are zoned Highway District (HD) including

those within this MUD. The HD zoning district primarily allows for residential uses while allowing certain non-residential if a special use permit is approved by the Wake County Board of Adjustment. Two parcels are zoned Heavy Commercial (HC) and one is zoned General Business (GB), which both allow a wide variety of commercial uses.

A water line along NC 42 Highway can provide this MUD with water utilities should they be required. However, currently, sewer utilities are not readily available nor are they in the vicinity.

## Old Stage Road and NC 42 Highway Multi-Use District Framework









## Old Stage Road and Bud Lipscomb Road

**Designation:** Municipal

**Type:** Community

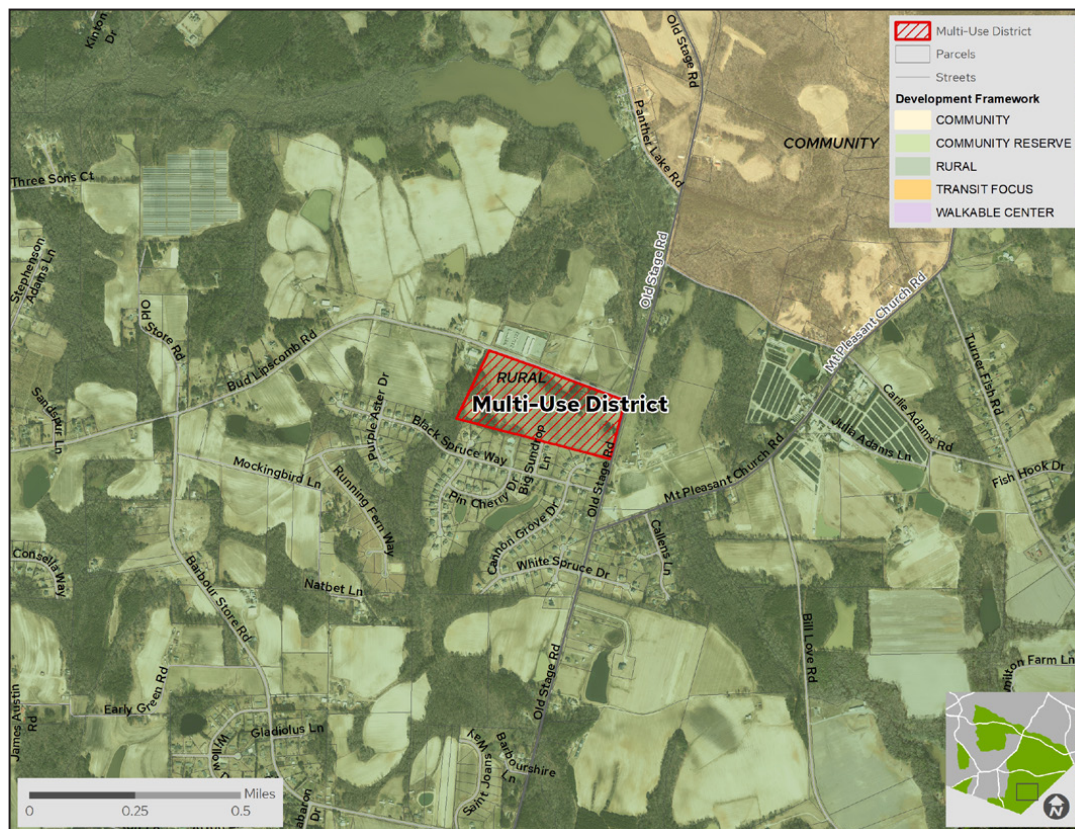
**Size:** 37 acres

The MUD at Old Stage Road and Bud Lipscomb Road creates a prime opportunity for a non-residential use in a largely rural area. The 37 acres offers residents of the Willow Spring community a centralized location that is well suited to meet their needs and is to scale with the surrounding area.

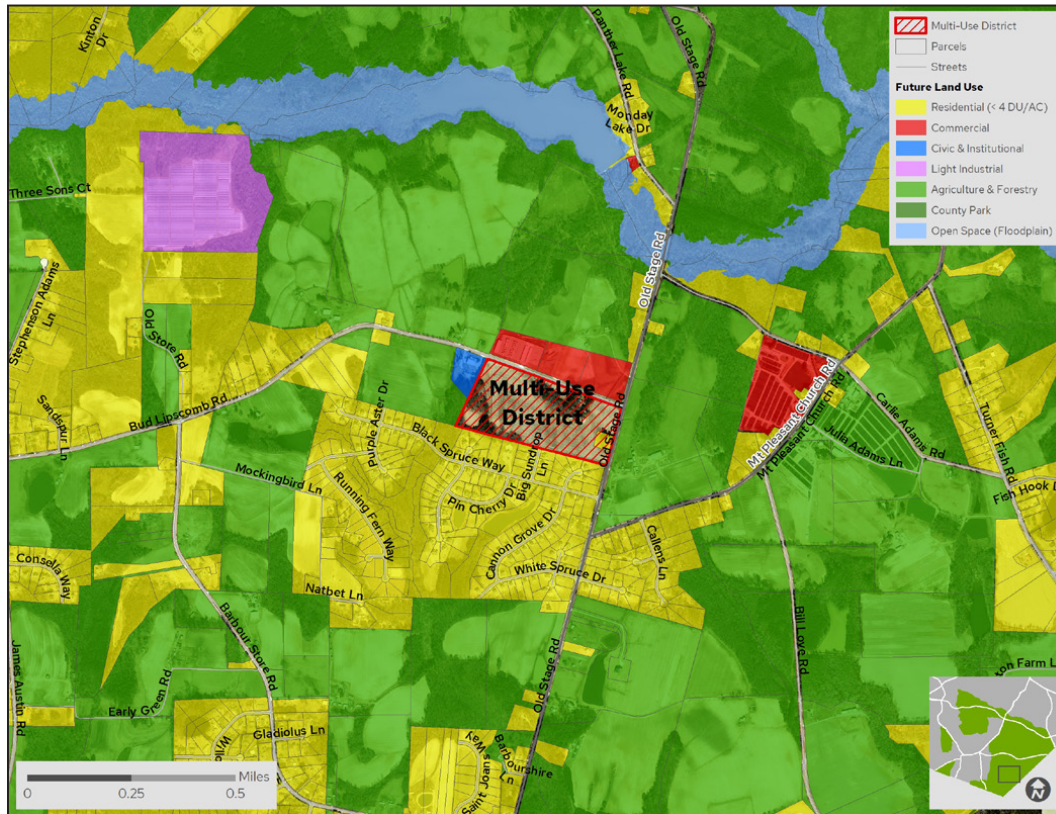
The MUD is currently zoned Residential-30 (R-30). At this time, based on current travel patterns, this portion of Old Stage is not proposed for widening in the 2050 MTP.

The nearest utilities service is a water line a mile north at John Adams Road. Sewer utilities are not readily available.

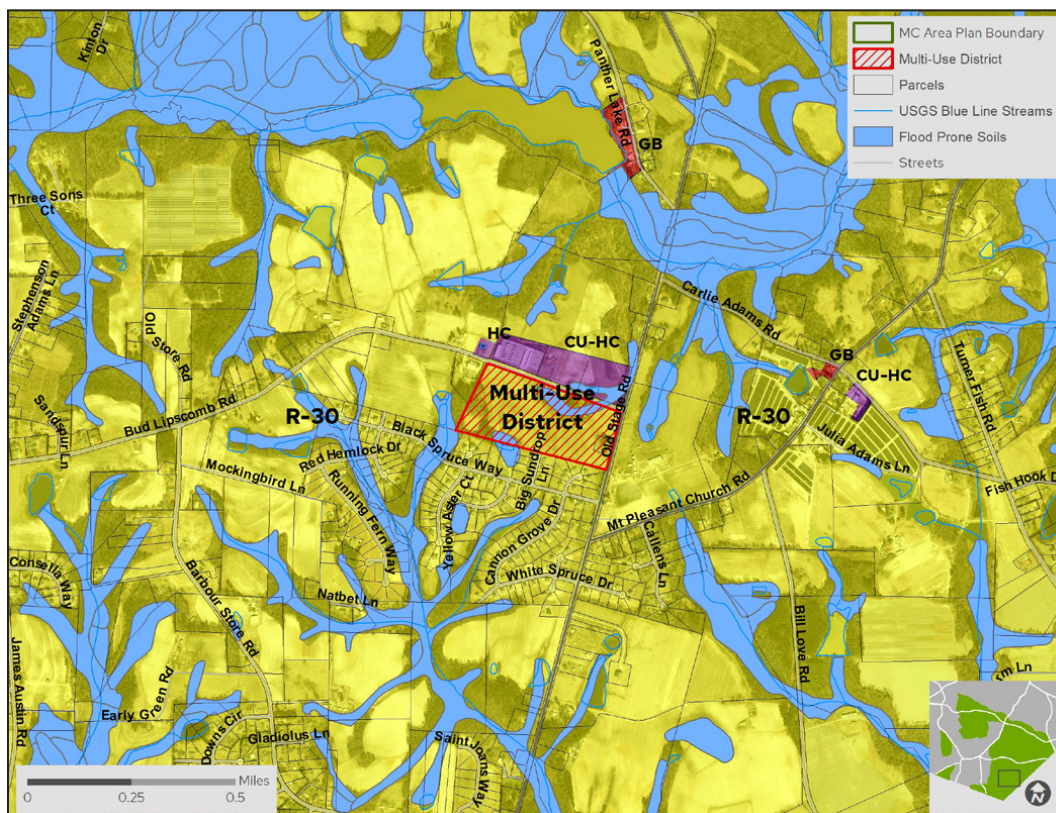
## Old Stage Road and Bud Lipscomb Road Multi-Use District Framework







**Future  
Land Use**



**Environmental**



## Rock Service Station Road and NC 42 Highway

**Designation:** Rural

**Type:** Community

**Size:** 96 acres

This MUD is located at the intersection of Rock Service Station Road and NC 42 Highway. In the 2050 MTP, NC 42 is proposed to be a four-lane boulevard between John Adams Road and NC 50. Its role as a critical artery in and out of Wake County will continue as the region grows, and this MUD looks to take advantage of that. Its intersection with Rock Service Station Road creates an opportunity for providing services in a part of the county where it is lacking.

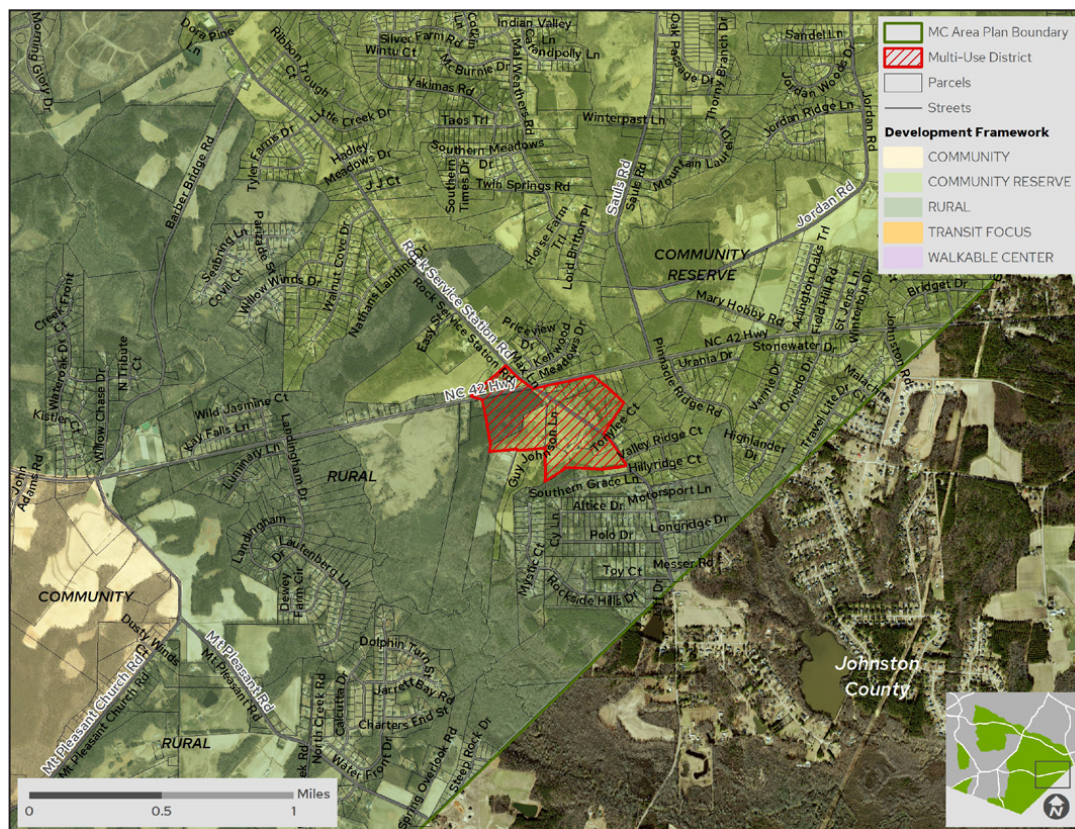
The MUD contains parcels with differing zoning districts. The parcels fronting NC 42 Highway are zoned Highway District (HD). The HD zoning district primarily allows for residential uses while allowing certain non-residential if a special use permit is approved by the Wake County Board of Adjustment. Two smaller parcels at the eastern corner of the intersection are zoned General Business (GB), which

already allows certain non-residential uses. The remaining parcels are zoned Residential-30 (R-30)

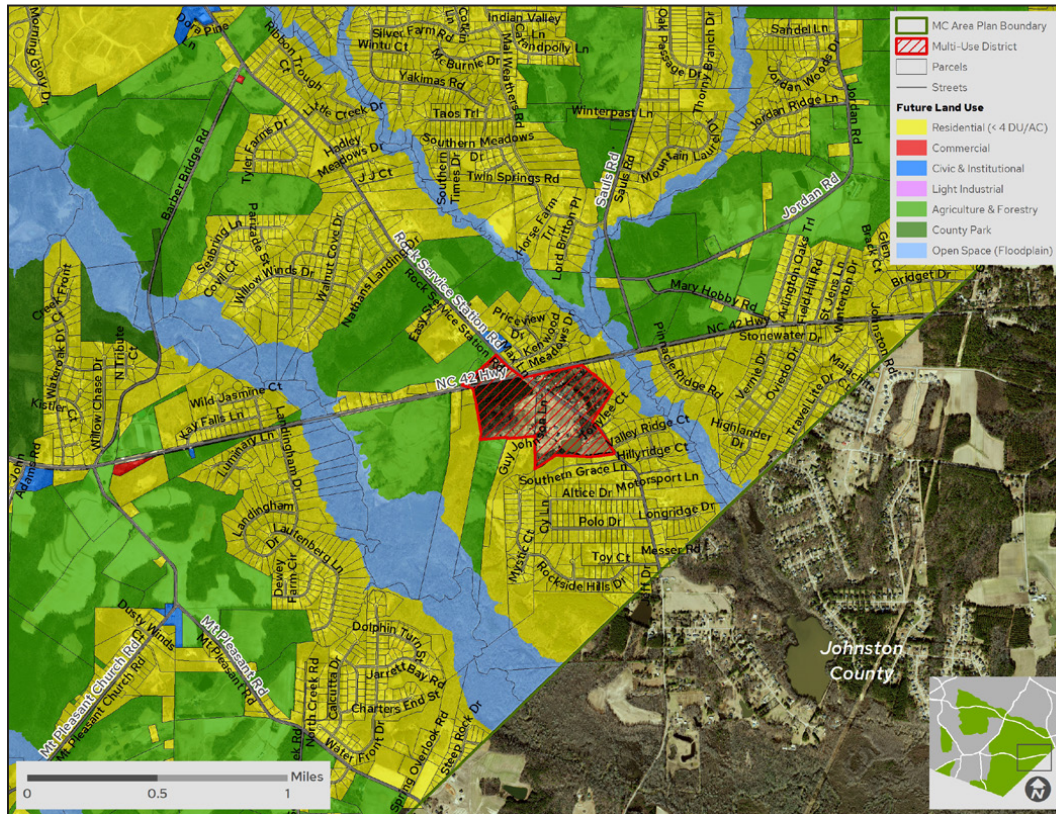
As the MUD is within the Community Reserve and Rural designations of the Development Framework, it is considered a Rural MUD. This indicates that these areas are intended to either remain in county jurisdiction in perpetuity or are not intended to become municipal in the foreseeable future. Rural multi-use districts will serve surrounding farm and forestry uses and could contain small-scale food processing facilities, cottage industries or veterinary offices. They could contain shopping, services, recreation and small-scale office and institutional uses needed to meet the day-to-day needs of the neighborhood.

The Town of Fuquay-Varina's water utility line runs along NC 42 Highway and joins with Johnston County's water line at this intersection, making public water readily available. Sewer utilities, however, are not nearby. The terminus of the water line that runs east along NC 42 Highway is located at this intersection.

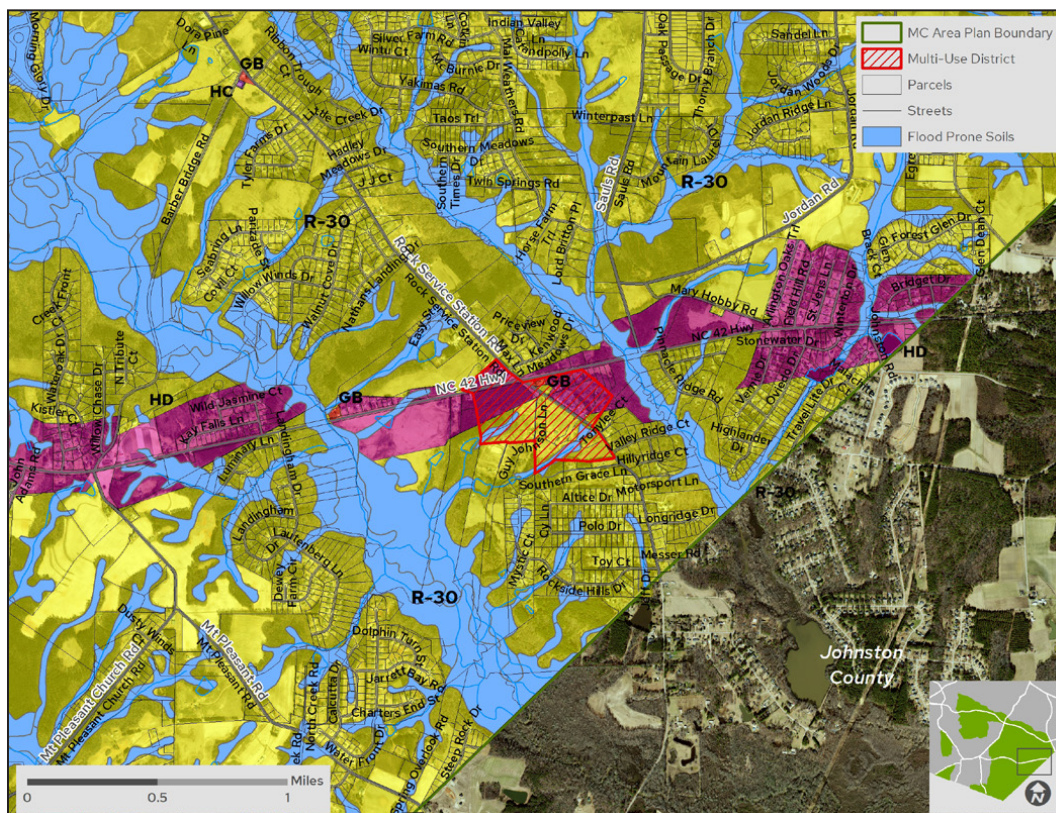
## Rock Service Station Road and NC 42 Highway Multi-Use District Framework







**Future  
Land Use**



**Environmental**



## CHAPTER 3

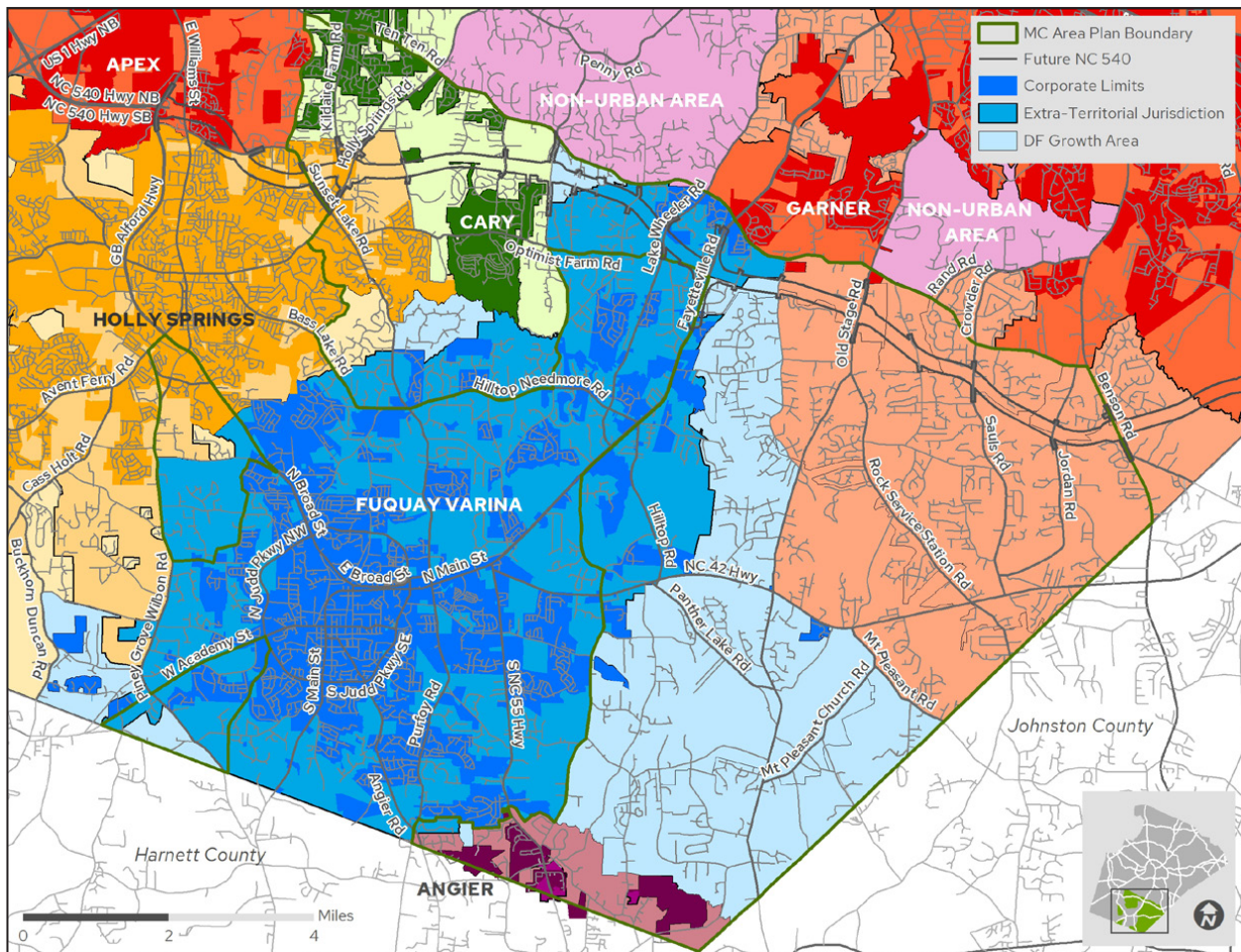
# Additional Planning Elements

## Municipal Planning Jurisdictions

A municipality's planning jurisdiction comprises the land within its corporate limits plus the land within its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). North Carolina state statutes have authorized municipalities to regulate development in their ETJs through their zoning laws and development ordinance since it is expected,

but not a given, that they will become part of the corporate limits in the future. Wake County does not provide water and sewer services — this allows municipalities to better ensure development patterns and associated infrastructure will allow the efficient provision of urban services.

### Municipal Planning Jurisdiction





In North Carolina, the decision to extend or expand a town's planning jurisdiction must be approved by the respective county's governing board. And although state law provides a framework for evaluating ETJ and deciding whether the county should agree to municipal requests for ETJ extensions, it does not provide detailed criteria.

**PLANWake, as part of its adoption by the Board of Commissioners, established the following six criteria for evaluating a municipality's request to expand its ETJ.**

## CRITERION 1

### **WAKE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK MAP DESIGNATION**

The requested ETJ must be located within an 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 PLANWake Comprehensive Plan to change the designation of the area to a more appropriate category that supports municipal development. Likewise, any applicable Wake County area plan will also need amending to identify this area for municipal development.

## CRITERION 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, and new roadways—within the requested ETJ area. This activity, along with population and job growth, must be compared to areas already within the municipality's corporate limits.

## CRITERION 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.

## CRITERION 4

### **MUNICIPAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN/PROGRAM AND SERVICE EXPANSION PLAN ALIGNMENT**

The municipality must demonstrate it is ready to provide appropriate infrastructure to the requested ETJ area. The provision of infrastructure, including water and sewer lines, vehicle capacity, stormwater, sidewalks, greenways, parks and other capital projects, shall be documented in a multi-year Capital Improvement Plan/Program. The municipality must also demonstrate 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.

## CRITERION 5

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The municipality must demonstrate 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.

## CRITERION 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, stormwater and green infrastructure.

## Relinquishment of Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

Any request by a property owner to relinquish ETJ back to the county's jurisdiction must be submitted to the municipality's planning department in which it is located. This request will be reviewed by staff to determine if there is merit to undergo the public hearing process. Any decision on these matters is solely made by the municipality's elected officials.

If the decision to relinquish is successfully adopted, the county will assign its most comparable zoning district within 60 days, as required by state statute. This will undergo the typical public hearing process that occurs for rezonings under Wake County's jurisdiction with final approval by the Wake County Board of Commissioners.

## Affordable Housing

The Wake County Affordable Housing Plan, adopted in 2017, identifies various trends driving the lack of affordable housing in the county, namely population growth, an incommensurate household income to cost ratio, lack of affordable housing options among the residential development overall, and loss of existing affordable housing due to redevelopment (p. 17).

To put these trends into a real-world context, there is a current shortage of approximately 56,000 homes in Wake County affordable to families making less than \$39,000 a year. Further, approximately 5,000 people in Wake County experience homelessness.

The housing plan looks to "ensure that quality affordable housing is available for all Wake County

residents" (p. 5), but their proximity to commercial and employment centers is also crucial. This 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.

## Agriculture and Farmland Preservation

According to the Wake Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in 2022, there are more than 77,000 acres of farmland and 691 farms in Wake County. In the MC area, there are 11,450 acres on 433 agricultural parcels. In other words, Middle Creek is home to approximately 15% of the farmland in all of Wake County.

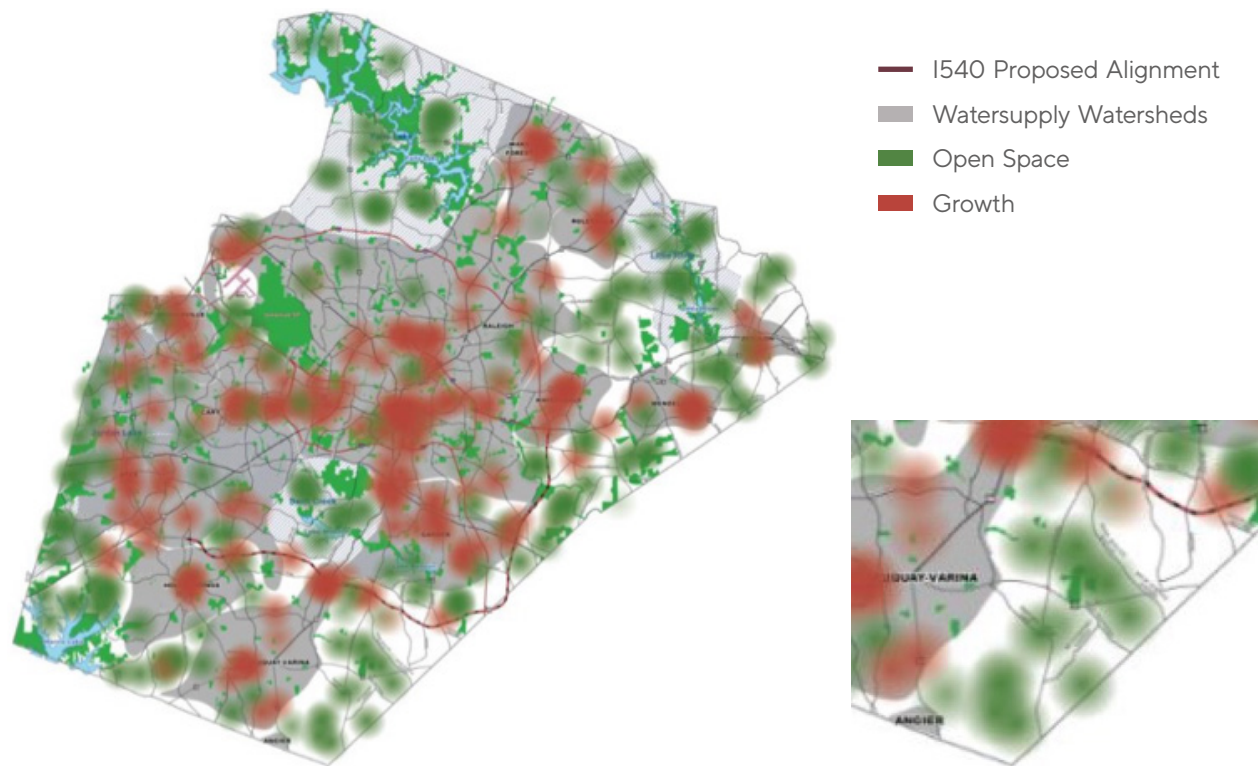
Soil and Water Conservation Districts — enabled by NC General Statute 139 — are organized as governmental subdivisions as part of a larger

comprehensive conservation program. These districts have assisted private landowners for more than 75 years through technical assistance and financial assistance to support best management practices. The SWCD's mission is to conserve the soil, water, and related natural resources of Wake County by providing education, information, technical assistance, and economic incentives to County citizens that will protect the water quality of all Wake County watersheds.

PLANWake has a goal to help preserve rural areas by easing the development pressures that they face. This is inherent in its policies to direct more dense development to the municipalities as opposed to low density development that takes up more land, which contributes to a loss of natural resources and increases roadway congestion. The process to develop PLANWake included in depth

discussions and planning exercises about where growth should be directed and where land should be prioritized for protection. Figure 1 below displays the composite results of dozens of individual responses. Respondents indicated a desire to direct growth away from the Middle Creek area, with some opportunities for development on the edge of Fuquay Varina and along the 540 corridor.

**Figure 1: Community Priorities Planning Exercise Results**



The PLANWake process identified a need to develop additional tools to support working lands and land conservation. Building upon PLANWake's momentum, SWCD staff and multiple advisory boards worked together to create the Farmland Preservation

Program ordinance adopted in June 2022. The Preservation Program provides a suite of non-regulatory incentives for landowners.





## Voluntary Agricultural District Program

Wake County created the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) Program in 2002. This program allows owners of farmland to voluntarily agree to keep their land in agricultural use for 10 years. Participating farms or groups of farms would be called “agricultural districts.” Farmers are free to withdraw from the program with a 30-day written notice.

Benefits that can be provided to agricultural districts under state statute include waivers from water and sewer utility assessments, additional notification provided to buyers of property in the area regarding the presence of farm operations (provides additional protection from nuisance suits associated with

chemical spraying, animal waste odors, etc.), and requires hearings for public projects proposed in agricultural districts.

Participation in the VAD program has several benefits: Helps promote traditional farming within the community by increasing the visibility of farms around the county. Gives farmers a louder voice to affect local government decisions about their land. Reduces potential conflicts between farm and non-farmland users.

## Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Program

While the same benefits exist under the new established Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) program, farmers would be committed to the full 10 years without being able to withdraw. As a result, the EVAD program has some additional parameters for entry:

- The property must have at a minimum acreage that is either engaged in horticulture, agriculture, or forestry or contiguous acreage of qualifying farmland that is owned by the same deeded owner.
- The landowner must execute an agreement to sustain, encourage and promote agriculture in the EVAD with Wake County and have it recorded on the deed.
- Renewals for three years after the initial period is an option.

Along with the VAD program, the EVAD offers the following additional benefits:

- EVAD participants may receive up to 25% of gross sale of nonfarm products and still qualify as a bona fide farm, which are exempt from local zoning regulations.
- Eligible to receive a higher percentage of agricultural cost-share funds that benefit farmland.
- Priority consideration is given to EVAD participants for grant awards from state departments, institutions or agencies.

## Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program was established to permanently preserve the existing farmland from growth and development. The program restricts non-farm development by creating an easement, or agreement between the landowner and SWCD, to keep the land available for agriculture or forestry. As the easement is a recorded deed, the agreement is binding and stays with the land even if the ownership changes.

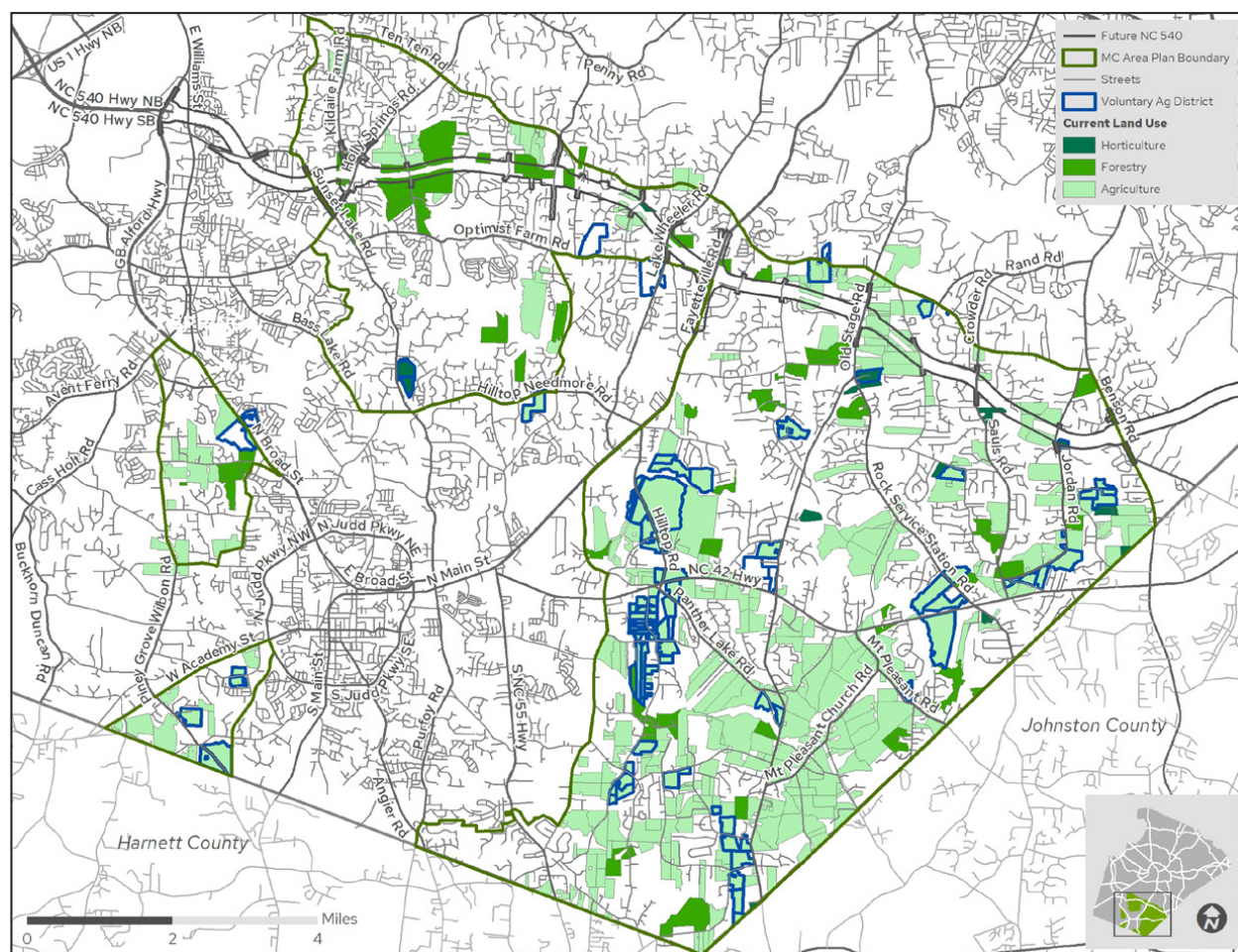
In addition to preservation of farmland the program has the following benefits:

- Tax benefits such as incentives or reductions.

- Protects farmland from looming development pressures.
- Protects local food production and supports sustainability.

In 2022, the Wake County Board of Commissioners allocated funds to be used as match for recommended conservation easements. The funding comes from the annual “rollback tax”, the three years’ worth of back taxes that must be paid if a property comes out of present use value.

## Wake County Farmland and Forestry



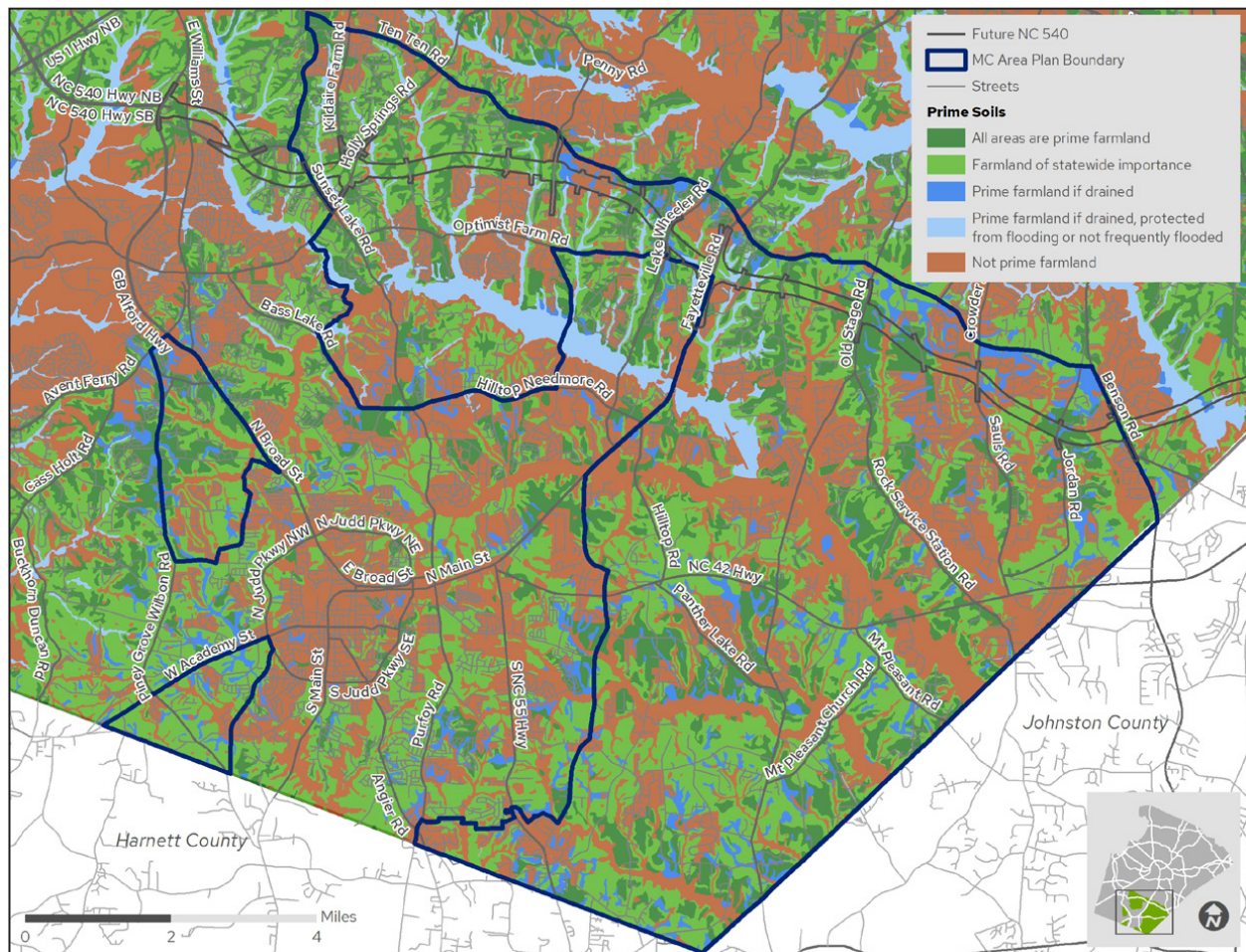


## Prime Farmland

The 2040 Farms Under Threat Report is a multi-year initiative conducted by the American Farmland Trust to document the country's farmland status. The report projected that, at the current rate of development, North Carolina will have lost nearly 1.2 million acres or 11.6% to development between 2016 and 2040, which rank #2 and #6 nationally. Wake County, specifically, is projected to lose 46,600 acres between 2016 and 2040.

The Prime Farmland map shows varying types of soils in the MC area that are or are not considered prime farmland. In addition, that map shows areas where there is the potential for farmland if the land is drained, or if the land is drained and either protected from flooding or doesn't frequently flood during the growing season.

### Prime Farmland in Middle Creek area







Capital Area Preservation (CAP) is Wake County's non-profit historic preservation organization, and their descriptions of the notable historic properties in the Middle Creek area are below.

### Notable Historic Properties & Landmarks

#### **Panther Branch Rosenwald School**

Constructed in 1926, the Panther Branch Rosenwald School is an excellent example of the Three-Teacher Community School. It is one of only four extant Rosenwald School buildings in Wake County, out of 21 that were built from 1921 through 1926, and the only remaining example of the Three-Teacher Community School plan. The Panther Branch Rosenwald School is significant for its contributions to the African American history of Wake County and for its association with the educational contributions of the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

#### **Dr. Nathan Blalock House**

Built circa 1912 for Dr. Nathan Blalock on the site of an earlier family home, this Colonial Revival home features lavish details. In front of the house sits a miniature triple-A playhouse. Among the outbuildings are several tobacco barns and early twentieth-century tenant houses. The house is owned by and lived in by descendants of Dr. Blalock.

#### **Turner & Amelia Smith House**

In 1886 William A. Myatt provided 211 of land for his daughter Amelia and her new husband, Turner Smith, on which to build a dwelling. Like his brother Frank, Turner Smith worked as a millwright at Myatt's Mill. The dwelling features a center hall plan with a prominent rear shed which makes the first floor two rooms deep. The cornices of the roof and the porch are embellished with large brackets. Other notable characteristics include circular gable vents, molded cornerboards, four-over-four windows and a front entrance surrounded by narrow sidelights and a transom. The house's decoration displays overall modest Italianate features. Scott Burns and Kenneth Foreman purchased this house in early 2005 and subsequently donated an easement to CAP. The property is currently being rehabilitated under the terms of a rehabilitation agreement with CAP.

# Swift Creek Land Management Plan

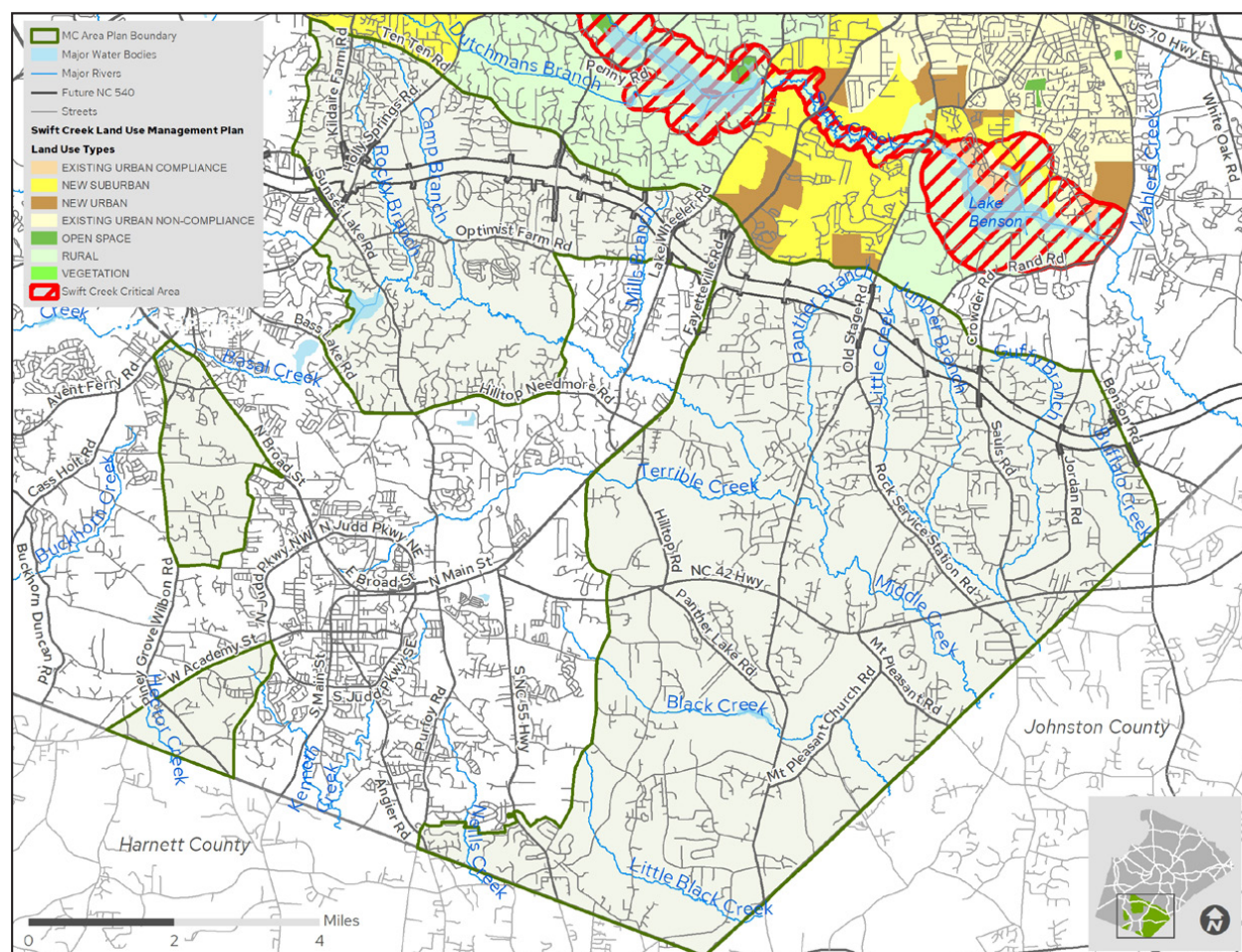
The Swift Creek Land Management Plan (SCLMP) is the result of a cooperative agreement between Apex, Cary, Garner, Raleigh, Wake County and the North Carolina Division of Water Quality to develop a land management plan for the Swift Creek watershed west of N.C. 50 and north of Ten-Ten Road.

The goal of the SCLMP is to preserve water quality in the Swift Creek area to qualify for a Water Supply-II (WS-II) classification. This is a surface

water qualification defined by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) to ensure that surface water bodies are protected from nearby land uses.

While the SCLMP does not fall within the MC area – the border runs along Ten-Ten Road – it does provide context for the impact that development within the MC Area can have on other areas, especially when it comes to water quality.

# Swift Creek Land Management Plan





## Open Space and Greenways

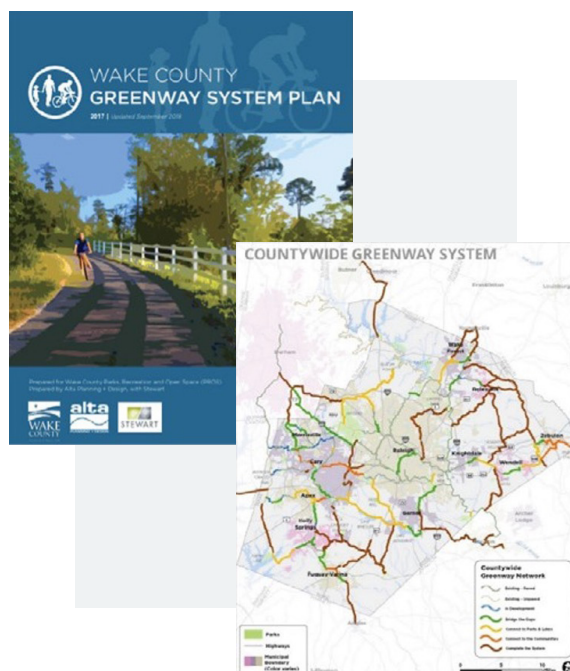
Open space is natural land that has not been converted to residential or commercial development. It includes forests, greenways, parks, meadows, wetlands, floodplains and farms. As Wake County's population grows, these areas have begun to face increased pressure from developers, and the county has recognized the need to protect these natural areas for future generations.

Moreover, protecting the remaining natural lands in the county provides residents with a sense of place. Wake County has a long history of environmental stewardship, and the creeks, streams, forests and farms are responsible for creating the communities we live in today. It is vital to preserve these spaces for future generations to enjoy as well.

There are a host of benefits of protecting open space — i.e., buffers along streams and wetlands — and constructing greenways, and these benefits often overlap or affect multiple aspects of our lives. The Wake County Open Space Program has outlined them in its Wake County Consolidated Open Space Plan, and they include economic, environmental and recreational benefits.

The Wake County Greenway Systems Plan focused on the greenways aspect as it is a “[unique] investment that can be made on a local and regional scale that provides such a wide range of positive impacts. Greenway trails — and the on-road bicycle facilities and sidewalks that connect them — improve quality of life by providing opportunities for transportation, recreation, public health, economic development and environmental stewardship.”

The plan solicited input from a wide range of public and private stakeholders to establish a guideline for creating comprehensive greenway trail connections over the entire county and includes segments within



the MC area. Beech Bluff County Park, located on NC 42 Highway, is the destination for two of these segments. The first segment head south from Garner east of US 40, follows Panther Branch and crosses Old Stage Road before arriving at the new park. The second heads east from Holly Springs along Middle Creek before terminating at the park.

The final segment in the MC area utilizes the NC 55 Hwy right-of-way in the form of a side path to connect users south and into Harnett County.

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## Conclusion

The Middle Creek Area Plan is the product of a months-long process involving community input, staff research and stakeholder guidance; however, this process should not be considered over at its adoption by the Wake County Board of Commissioners. The plan is not a static document to be placed on a shelf upon its adoption but a living document – one that can be amended based on the needs and vision of the community it serves. Along with these amendments, it is recommended that Wake County Planning staff take steps to update the MC Area Plan every five years and the give the community a chance to revisit its goals and visions.