



Wake County Planning Board

Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, June 3, 2026, 1:30 p.m.
Wake County Justice Center, Room 2700
301 S. McDowell St. – Raleigh, N.C.

1. Call to Order – Mr. Ted Van Dyk, Chair
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Petitions and Amendments
4. Approval of Minutes from April 1, 2026
5. PLG-RZ-005868-2025: A rezoning request to change 10.42 acres from existing Residential-30 to Conditional Zoning Industrial-1. (Adam Cook, Planner II)
6. Data Center Update (Terry Nolan, Planner III)
7. Traffic Impact Analysis (Steven Finn, Land Development Administrator)
8. Reports
 - Committee Reports
 - Staff Reports
9. Chairman's Report
10. Adjournment



Planning, Development & Inspections

A Division of Community Services
P.O. Box 550 • Raleigh, NC 27602
www.wake.gov

MINUTES OF REGULAR PLANNING BOARD - April 1, 2026

LOCATION: Wake County Justice Center, 301 S. Salisbury St., Room 2700, Raleigh, NC

MEMBERS PRESENT:

1. Mr. Ted Van Dyk (Vice Chair)
2. Mr. David Adams
3. Mr. Amos Clark
4. Mr. Asa Fleming
5. Dr. Kamal Kolappa
6. Ms. Suzanne Prince
7. Ms. Sally Rice
8. Mr. Bill Stallings
9. Mr. Thomas Wells

MEMBERS ABSENT:

1. Ms. Brenna Booker-Williams (Chair)

COUNTY STAFF:

1. Mr. Steven Finn
2. Mr. Tim Gardiner
3. Ms. Caroline Loop
4. Mr. Timothy Maloney
5. Mr. Josh McClellan
6. Ms. Terry Nolan
7. Ms. Beth Simmons
8. Ms. Becca Truluck

COUNTY ATTORNEY:

- Mr. Roger Askew, County Attorney

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1. **Meeting Called to Order:** Mr. Van Dyk called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.
 2. **Swearing in of New Member Bill Stallings:** Mr. Askew called Mr. Stallings to the lectern and administered his oath of office as a member of the Planning Board.
 3. **Recognition of Former Member Bill Jenkins:** Mr. Van Dyk called Mr. Jenkins to the lectern to thank him for his service to the Board, and presented him with a plaque to commemorate his tenure.
 4. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair:** Mr. Askew opened the floor for nominations for Chair, and Mr. Wells nominated Mr. Van Dyk. His nomination was seconded by Ms. Prince, and he was unanimously elected Chair. Mr. Askew then opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair, and Mr. Wells

nominated Ms. Rice. Her nomination was seconded by Dr. Kolappa, and she was elected Vice Chair unanimously.

5. Petitions and Amendments: None.

6. Approval of January 7, 2026, Minutes: Ms. Prince made a motion to approve the January 7, 2026, minutes as submitted. Mr. Wells seconded the motion, and the Board adopted the minutes unanimously.

7. Proposed Ordinance Amendment OA-01-26 - Terry Nolan, Planner III

Ms. Nolan began by explaining that the purpose of this Ordinance Amendment is to reflect administrative changes in formatting and agency names, as well as clarify the requirement to follow the County watershed design manual. This was initially prompted by the reorganization of Planning, Development & Inspection into Planning and Development Services, but during review staff noticed other amendments in the UDO that would benefit from updated language.

Overview of administrative changes:

- Health and Human Services changes to Public Health
- Director of Health and Human Services changes to Director of Public Health
- Environmental Services changes to Watershed Management
- Environmental Services Director to Planning & Development Services Director
- Environmental Services Stormwater Engineer to Watershed Management Stormwater Engineer
- Wake County Community Services to Wake County Solid Waste
- Housing and Community Revitalization Division of Wake County Human Services to Housing Affordability and Community Revitalization Department
- Community Services to Wake County Information Technology (in reference to GIS)

Ms. Nolan added that watershed management State Statute references will be corrected, and that the amendment would reflect State Agency Department of Natural Resources name change to the Department of Environmental Quality. Two additional changes related to previous Planning Board amendments: changing references from “mobile homes” to “manufactured homes” and renaming “bed and breakfast homestay” to “short-term rental,” to better reflect the model currently in use.

Staff finds that the text amendment brings the UDO into alignment with County operations, are consistent with State Statute, and that it is consistent with the intent and purpose of the Wake County Unified Development Ordinance. Staff recommends that the Planning Board recommend adoption of Ordinance Amendment 01-26 to the Wake County Board of Commissioners.

With no comments from the public, Mr. Van Dyk opened the floor for a motion on OA-01-26.

Board Motion for Consistency OA-01-26

Dr. Kolappa made a motion in the matter of OA-01-26, that the Planning Board adopt and offer to the Board of Commissioners the following recommended statements finding that the proposed text amendment is consistent with the Wake County Comprehensive Plan and Wake County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The purpose of the Wake County Comprehensive Plan and the Wake County UDO, as seen in Article 1-22, is to provide a guide for the physical development of the county, preserve and enhance the overall quality of life of residents, and establish clear and efficient development review procedures. The text amendment included herein accomplishes this as described in the following statements:

1. The text amendment brings the UDO into alignment with county operations

2. The changes are consistent with State Statute
3. The text amendment is consistent with the intent and purpose of the Wake County Unified Development Ordinance.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Adams and was adopted unanimously.

Board Motion for Approval on OA-01-26

Ms. Rice made a motion in the matter of OA-01-26 that the Board finds that the adoption of this proposed text amendment is consistent with the Wake County Comprehensive Plan and Wake County Unified Development Ordinance and is reasonable and in the public interest and hereby make a motion to recommend approval of this proposed text amendment to the Wake County Board of Commissioners.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Prince and was adopted unanimously.

8. Neuse North Area Plan, Tim Gardiner, Long Range Planning Administrator

Mr. Gardiner updated the Board on the Neuse North Area Plan, the sixth of seven area plans in Wake County. Neuse North encompasses 10,890 acres (17 square miles) and falls within municipal jurisdictions of Wake Forest, Rolesville and Raleigh. It is also adjacent to Knightdale and Franklin County. It is less cohesive than the previous area plans and poses unique challenges due to its irregular nature. Mr. Gardiner explained that in approaching this area plan, staff have set expectations with residents that each of the three areas they have identified will have different points of focus.

The Neuse North Area Plan's points of focus are divided into three sections: East Raleigh / Rolesville (mostly agricultural use), Wake Forest / Rolesville (within Smith Creek Watershed), and US 1 (including mostly older subdivisions mixed with industrial areas).

Mr. Gardiner explained that tailoring public engagement that is unique to each of these areas is important in developing the Neuse North Area Plan, and that it will also help staff as they begin to revisit the other existing plans. The seventh plan, Falls Lake, should be completed in 2027, after which they intend to review each area plan, using the tools they learned along the way to better refine their approach. Staff conducted their first Community Meeting virtually on February 4th and had 60+ attendees. He noted the meeting was helpful in alleviating confusion and concerns about the scope of the plan, particularly from those worried this involved annexation of land. Staff were able to explain that these are planning tools to ensure that the County is ready for development if and when it occurs. If development did not occur, Wake County did not intend to change the character of the surrounding area. He provided slides from the County's online engagement survey, noting what residents identified as things they liked in the area, what could be improved, and general comments. Residents expressed strong opposition to annexation or ETJ expansion, high-density and unplanned development, but also shared their desires for preservation, community spaces, and maintaining the rural quality of life. The interactive map provided similar feedback and included concerns about the Smith Creek Watershed.

The first in-person Community Meeting was held on March 12th at the Raleigh Family Moose Center and included interactive stations for residents to follow the process of the area plan and ended with a table where they could leave feedback for staff. Mr. Gardiner noted that one of the key areas identified by visitors was the East Raleigh / Rolesville section, and preserving its agricultural identity. Staff is working with the Soil and Water division to identify residents that may want their property labeled as future agricultural, paving the way for VADs, EVADs, and Conservation Easements.

Next steps for the Neuse Area Plan include identifying Multi-Use Districts (MUD) that could be future commercial sections but are not within municipal jurisdictions due to annexation. The Development Framework map will also be updated to match the area plan, particularly the Smith Creek watershed. When PLANWake was developed, the watershed was designated as rural, intended to remain within the County, but Wake Forest and Raleigh are currently considering the land use differently, so staff will review the Framework Map to see if the designation still applies. Mr. Gardiner anticipated strong community feedback tied to this and perhaps the area extending to the western boundary of the Little River watershed. On the other side of these reviews, Mr. Gardiner anticipated that staff would present the draft Land Use Plan, followed by a second community meeting. The details of this meeting have not been determined, but the Board will be notified and invited to attend. Staff will continue to refine the interactive map to include proposed Draft Land Uses while they conduct a proximity and access survey.

Mr. Gardiner provided a slide of the Neuse North Area Plan timeline, explaining that staff is roughly a quarter of the way through the process, and that they expect to bring a Draft Plan before the Board this summer. The goal, given feedback from the Planning Board and community members, is to propose a final Neuse North Area Land Use Plan for adoption by the Board of Commissioners in the Fall.

Mr. Fleming asked if the Area Plan study included any infrastructure capacity analysis related to stormwater runoff and water quality, and Mr. Gardiner responded that there are countywide tools available to review individual basins, but they are not currently unique to the Area Land Use Plan. He indicated that he would be happy to bring those research tools into review of the plan if it would help the Board and the Commissioners in their determinations. Mr. Fleming clarified that it would be helpful for the Board members to address concerns from community members, and Mr. Gardiner concurred. He did note that it would be more relevant in areas like East Raleigh / Rolesville, which is more likely to stay rural, and has different stormwater controls. Mr. Maloney added that the One Water Plan deals with the broad strokes of Mr. Fleming's question but may not be as specific as what he is asking for. The County is entering into an agreement with Research Triangle Institute to prepare a tool that focuses on all of the watersheds, and down the line this might be of use to the Board members.

Mr. Wells asked if the Land Use Plan map could be paired with the Development Framework Map to better understand how the areas border the municipalities, and Mr. Gardiner responded that he would include it for the next update. He noted that this was a similar question to one they received from members of the public regarding the intention of municipalities towards unincorporated land. Much of the Neuse North Area Plan is fragmented specifically because the unincorporated areas are adjacent to existing ETJs. Mr. Adams asked if staff received feedback from landowners interested in selling or developing their properties, and Mr. Gardiner responded that the Smith Creek Watershed includes a property owner interested in developing their land and has been working with Wake Forest. Staff want to be sure in all three of the areas that they reflect the County's goals honestly, while being aware that property owners are able to make decisions with the municipalities. Maintaining the character of the existing land use is important to the County.

Mr. Van Dyk asked if there would be a corresponding transportation plan to Neuse North, and Mr. Gardiner noted that the County is under contract to develop transportation guidelines. A consultant is reviewing roadway standards and requirements in these areas to align with PLANWake, CAMPO and NCDOT. These results supplement the existing land use guidelines, and when they are complete, the consultant will update the Board. Mr. Clark asked about the distinction between the Smith Creek and Little River watersheds, and Mr. Gardiner clarified that the watershed standards

for Smith Creek are slightly different in that Wake Forest respects the classification but that they consider it to be similar to the Swift Creek watershed, where development is allowed.

9. Committee Reports

Mr. Van Dyk updated the Board on the Code and Operations Committee meeting in March, noting that the virtual meeting was efficient and productive.

10. Planning and Development Services Report

Mr. Finn reported that development activity remains consistent, and in the last three months, the technical review committee has received five subdivision applications with a total of 270 lots. Four of the five submissions are Open Space subdivisions. This year, staff received three preliminary subdivisions of over 100 lots, which is significantly above the normal size or infill subdivision. They are evenly distributed around the County: Falls Lake, Knightdale, Garner, and South Cary near Apex.

Mr. Finn noted that the Board of Adjustment remains active with appeals to zoning enforcement, including two coming in April. Recent enforcement trends involve the tree and vegetative protection zones, specific to code enforcement and interpretation of the ordinance. Staff has seen a 24% increase over the past Fiscal Year.

Mr. Van Dyk asked if staff would be able to present one or two of the Open Space subdivisions for informational purposes, and Mr. Finn responded that he would return to the Board in a month or so with a general overview and some specific examples. Mr. Adams asked if the larger subdivisions included Wake County Public Schools assessment reports, and Mr. Finn responded that the School District is represented on their Technical Review Committee.

Mr. Gardiner updated the Board on the Data Centers review, noting that Ms. Nolan is now working with the municipalities to create actionable plans. Nancy Daly, who is responsible for the One Water Plan, is now in the Long-Range Planning department and is working on actionable stormwater studies and safeguards. He noted the transportation guidelines process will include public engagement and outreach that members are invited to attend, and that the Board can expect to see a schedule of updates once the consultant is onboard. Census data indicates that Wake County is still growing at a rate of 66 people per day, which is consistent with last year's statistics.

Mr. Maloney informed the Board that the ordinance amendment presented by Ms. Nolan will likely go before the Board of Commissioners in June. The Commissioners are currently holding public hearings for the County budget, and that staff would prefer not to interrupt the public process. When it reaches the Board, the Chair will need to be present. He indicated there are no current agenda items for May, and closed by requesting that the Chair make any changes and appointments to the committees heading into the next meeting.

11. Chairperson's Report

Mr. Van Dyk requested that the Board receive an update on the NCDOT 540 reforestation and planting efforts, particularly any detailed plans. He noted that the greenway crossing 540 over the Neuse River is County jurisdiction and have been cleared by NCDOT, so any efforts to reforest would be something he was willing to advocate for.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

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REGULAR MEETING
WAKE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
April 1, 2026

Vice Chair Ted Van Dyk declared the regular meeting
of the Wake County Planning Board for
Wednesday, April 1, 2026, adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Ted Van Dyk
Wake County Planning Board

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**Proposed Zoning Map Amendment
Staff Report**

Planning Board Meeting: June 3, 2026

Case #: PLG-RZ-005868-2025

Request: This request is to rezone one parcel consisting of approximately 10.42 acres from Residential-30 (R-30) to Conditional Zoning Industrial-1(CZ-I-1).

Location: The parcel is located at 4605 Windy Knoll Road with frontage on Watkins Town Road.

Current Zoning: Residential-30 (R-30).

Proposed Zoning: Conditional Zoning Industrial-1 (CZ-I-1)

Proposed Conditions:

1. The property shall be used solely for a tree service operation and associated equipment storage.
2. No retail sales or commercial customer traffic shall occur on the property.
3. Operations on the property shall be limited to equipment storage, staging, and incidental maintenance within existing structures.
4. Hours of operation shall be limited to 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
5. No outdoor storage of materials or equipment shall occur except as screened by vegetation.
6. No additional principal structures shall be constructed without further zoning approval.
7. The use shall comply with all applicable Wake County Unified Development Ordinance requirements.

Existing Land Use: Single-family Residential

Petitioner: Martin & Gifford, PLLC – Adam Stallings

Owner: SOKO Enterprises, LLC

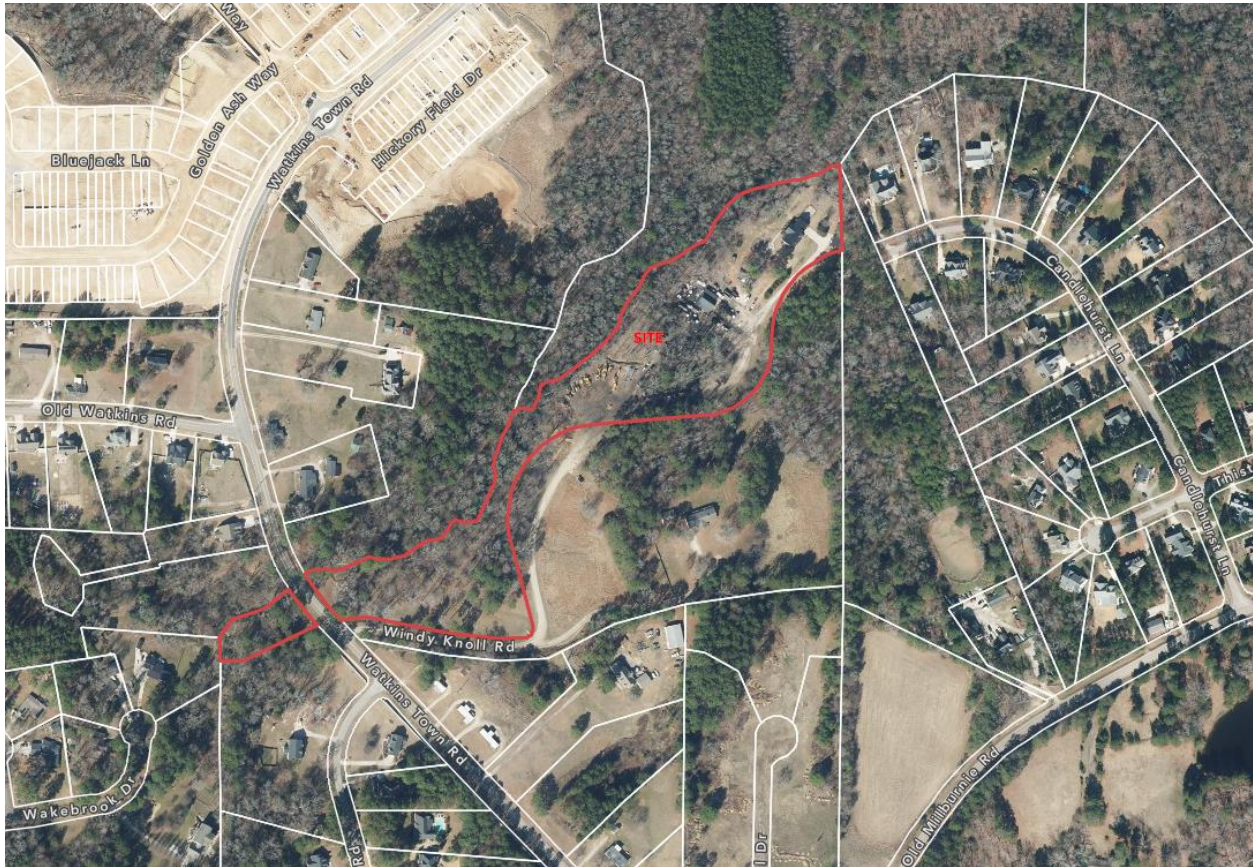
PIN Number: 1746990345

Surrounding Land Uses and Zoning Districts

Direction	Land Use	Zoning District
North	Vacant & single-family residential	R-30 (Wake County)
East	Vacant & single-family residential	R-30 (Wake County) & R-6 (Raleigh)
South	Single-family residential	R-30 (Wake County)

Direction	Land Use	Zoning District
West	Single-family residential	R-30 (Wake County)

Aerial Map



Land Use/Zoning History

- 1976: General Wake County zoning was first applied to the subject properties and surrounding areas
- 2025: Complaint received about the operation of a tree removal business
- 2026: Notice of violation for the unlawful operation of a commercial tree and landscaping contracting business issued
- 2026: Notice of violation issued for land-disturbing activity

Wake County Comprehensive Plan

The subject property is located in the Community Area on the Wake County Development Framework Map. The Community Area is envisioned as having a predominantly residential use with a mix of home types that 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.

The PLANWake approach is “Plan together, Track together, Act together”, with strategies focusing on collaboration between jurisdictions. The parcel is designated Community on the Development Framework Map. Community areas of the map are described as lands already in municipal corporate limits or municipal extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and lands on the fringe of these areas for the municipality to expand and grow into. PLANWake policy recommends supporting municipal utility service and municipal annexation of the subject parcel.

Municipal annexation is not always a feasible option for land areas designated Community, but PLANWake recommends supporting municipal future land use planning. The subject parcel is shown as low-density residential according to Raleigh’s Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map.

Wake County is currently updating the area plan in this vicinity. Until that process is completed the East Raleigh/Knightdale Plan is currently in effect. The plan designates the subject parcel as Residential 1.5 to 4 units per acre.

In accordance with the North Carolina General Statutes and the Wake County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), any proposed rezoning should be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. It is the planning staff’s professional opinion that the rezoning to Conditional Zoning Industrial-1 zoning would not be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and is not reasonable and appropriate for the area.

Required Statement of Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Public Interest

North Carolina General Statute 160D-604 and Section 19-20-6 (E) of the Wake County UDO require that the Planning Board provide the Board of Commissioners with a statement of whether or not the proposed rezoning petition is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and otherwise advances the public health, safety, and general welfare. In making a determination to approve the rezoning petition, the Board of Commissioners must adopt a statement describing whether or not the proposed petition is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and otherwise advances the public health, safety, and general welfare, or why it chose not to follow the Comprehensive Plan and how that decision is reasonable and in the public interest--if that is the case.

The planning staff has drafted a statement indicating that the proposed rezoning is not consistent and not in the public interest for consideration by the Planning Board (see attached).

Input from Neighboring Property Owners

Planning staff mailed out letters to adjacent property owners and posted a public meeting notice sign on Watkins Town Road. The planning staff has received phone calls in response to those efforts to solicit neighborhood feedback.

Utilities

The subject property is currently developed with individual on-site well and septic disposal systems. New non-residential developments located within the Community Area of the County's Development Framework Map are required to contact the jurisdictional municipality regarding a potential utility connection.

Environmental Issues

A portion of the subject properties contain Wake County flood hazard soils and USGS blue line streams. Various provisions of the Wake County UDO will restrict or prohibit development within these environmentally sensitive areas. The site currently has an active notice of violation for land-disturbing activity from the Water Quality Division of the Wake County Department of Planning and Development Services.

Transportation

The subject property has frontage on Watkins Town Road and is served by a 60-foot private access easement (Windy Knoll Road). The segment of Watkins Road that serves as frontage of the subject site is currently a 60-foot public right-of-way.

Any future redevelopment on the property will be required to comply with the requirements of the Wake County UDO related to the provision of transportation facilities identified on the Wake County Transportation Plan. Any roadway improvements and/or driveway permits will have to be coordinated with, and approved by, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

Traffic Impact Analysis

A Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) is required by the Wake County UDO, for any development, that generates more than 1,000 trips per day, or more than 100 peak-hour trips, as determined by the Institute of Transportation Engineers' Trip Generation Manual for specific proposed uses. Any required TIA must be submitted during the development plan approval process.

Planning Staff Findings

1. The proposed Conditional Zoning Industrial-1 rezoning is not compatible with the surrounding residential development.
2. The proposed Conditional Zoning Industrial-1 rezoning is not consistent with the Community Area of the Comprehensive Plan's Development Framework Map and will not protect the public health, safety and general welfare.
3. The Comprehensive Plan recommends supporting municipal future land use planning. The subject parcel is shown as low-density residential according to Raleigh's Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map.
4. The proposed Conditional Zoning Industrial-1 rezoning is not consistent with the East Raleigh/Knightdale area plan. The East Raleigh/Knightdale area plan designates the subject parcel as residential.

Planning Staff Recommendation

The planning staff **does not recommend approval** of the requested zoning map amendment, PLG-RZ-005868-2025, as presented, and finds that the zoning map amendment is **not consistent** with the Comprehensive Plan, and does not otherwise advance the public health, safety, and welfare.

Planning Board Recommendation

Please see the attached draft statement for consideration in making a motion regarding this rezoning petition.

Draft Statement for Consideration by the Planning Board

The Wake County Planning Board has reviewed the rezoning petition (PLG-RZ-005868-2025) for the 10.42 acre area located at 4605 Windy Knoll Road to rezone Wake County zoning district Residential-30 (R-30) to Wake County zoning district Conditional Zoning Industrial-1(CZ-I-1). The Planning Board offers the following (1) statement of consistency, reasonableness and public interest, and (2) recommendation:

- 1) The Planning Board finds that the requested rezoning to CZ-I-1 is:
 - a) Not compatible with the surrounding residential development;
 - b) Not consistent with the Community Area of the Comprehensive Plan's Development Framework Map and will not protect the public health, safety and general welfare;
 - c) Not consistent with municipal future land use planning. The subject parcel is shown as low-density residential according to Raleigh's Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map;
 - d) Not consistent with the East Raleigh/Knightdale area plan. The East Raleigh/Knightdale area plan designates the subject parcel as residential.
- 2) The Planning Board hereby recommends that the Board of Commissioners deny the rezoning request as presented.

Data Centers

Findings, Recommendations, and Next Steps

Terry Nolan

June 3, 2026



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wake.gov

Background

- Wake County hosts regular meetings with municipal planning directors and stakeholders.
- Municipalities expressed interest in the county organizing regional discussions.
- Focus is on hyperscale data centers requesting 100+ Mega Watts (MW) of power.

Goals

Establish a unified set of tools, resources and documentation to help guide decision-making

- Coordinate planning efforts across jurisdictions to address shared challenges and opportunities.
- Develop a unified framework for evaluating and managing the impacts of data centers on infrastructure, environment, land use, and community well-being.

What we learned

- Most municipalities in Wake County have fielded inquiries for a data center.
- Wake County Tax Administration notes value of data centers includes significant business personal property that rapidly depreciates. Value is uncertain because assets are listed annually and include large additions or removals.
- Many resources available and model ordinances are being developed to help communities.

Wake County Report Structure

- **Initial Considerations**
 - Power and Water
- **Site Considerations**
 - Unified Development Ordinance Use
 - Backup power
 - Noise and low frequency sound
 - Setbacks and screening
 - Reuse and decommissioning
- **Community Considerations**
 - Limited tax revenues and job creation
 - Advanced understanding of community needs

Recommendation 1: Power

Ensure developers are aware of Duke Energy's assessment policy for uses needing over 100 Megawatts.

- Upfront costs for review and analytics.
- Power request may require new infrastructure and time to construct.
- Assessment is the basis for discussion on future costs and commitments.

Happening Now:

- Working with Duke Energy to determine how this process can best be aligned with the rezoning and site development process.

Recommendation 2: Water

Work with agencies to develop a water and sewer assessment policy for uses needing over 500,000 gallons per day (equivalent to ~3,000 homes).

- Model intent of Duke Energy process
- Determine threshold for “hyperscale”

Happening Now

- Working with agencies to determine thresholds, process steps, and technical tools to be used. Draft model language. Create a basis for future cost and commitment discussion.

Recommendation 3: Land Use

Work with municipalities to develop unified development ordinance (UDO) land use type for uses that require more than 100 Megawatts.

- Most municipalities don't have a specific land use category currently
- Create new category
- Require community dialogue before approval (rezoning)

Happening Now

- Working with municipalities to determine the best definitions and other elements to incorporate into the local UDO. Draft model language.

Recommendation 4: Use Standards

Work with municipalities to verify UDO requirements on setback, buffers, noise and lighting and update as needed.

- Ensure that ordinances cover potential specialized concerns
- Start with available guidance

Happening Now

- Working with municipalities and Regional Pines Council of Governments to determine the best definitions and other elements to incorporate into the local UDO. Draft model language.

Recommendation 5: Community Needs

Work with municipalities to identify and prioritize larger facility needs.

- Data centers do not provide traditional jobs or consistent tax base associated with commercial development.
- Identify ways community can balance expected impacts with community benefits.

Next Steps

- Work with municipalities to identify and prioritize community needs. Detail best practices for developer/ community rezoning commitments and community benefit agreements.



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Planning and
Development
Services

DATA CENTER COORDINATION: RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Planning and Development Services

March 2026

Purpose

This report summarizes the research conducted by Wake County into regulations and placement of large or hyperscale data centers and provides recommendations for local community consideration. It also documents the next steps that will be taken to provide more guidance for local communities.

Role: Wake County's role is to coordinate and convene stakeholders to share information and guidance, as appropriate. Stakeholders include municipalities, public utilities, Duke Energy, economic development, the Wake Water Partnership, the Central Pines Regional Council of Governments (CPRC), and the NC Department of Environmental Quality.

Multiple entities are contributing to the knowledge base and best practices on the issue of AI and the related growing demand for hyperscale data centers. Wake County is working alongside and in coordination with CPRC as they research best practices in order to support local governments. Apex staff are generous with their time as they process the annexation and rezoning request for the New Hill data center. Lastly, the Board of Commissioners has representation on the North Carolina AI Leadership Council, whose mission is "to guide the responsible and effective use of Artificial Intelligence in state government".

Background: Nationally, the demand for and location of hyperscale data centers is evolving and expanding driven by a demand to support artificial intelligence applications in business operations and consumer services. In general data centers are located where five factors converge:

- 1) Internet capacity (fiber)
- 2) Demand for service (population)
- 3) Available space (land)
- 4) Electrical capacity
- 5) Cooling capacity (water/air)

Data centers are likely attracted to Wake County based on the first two factors, fiber and population. The other factors, land, electricity, water, are likely challenges or restricting factors based on costs and competition from user potential uses.

In 2025, the Town of Apex received an application requesting annexation and rezoning of a 190-acre site for a hyperscale data center. Several other municipalities have also received inquiries. Data centers are not new to our community. There are five located in Wake County (examples: SAS, NetAPP, BB&T, Global), but these data centers are generally smaller and serve to support another larger use.

Definition: Following the lead of Duke Energy, this report shall focus on data centers that propose to consume more than 100 Megawatts (MW) daily in electrical power (see recommendation 1). Municipalities may choose to apply recommendations from this report in other instances. For context, the current daily output of the Shearon Harris Nuclear Plant is 928 MW and the data center request in Apex would consume around 250 MW daily.

Initial Considerations

Hyperscale data centers are different than many other warehouse or industrial uses because of the enormous demand for electricity for power and water for cooling. Based on this, it is recommended that communities work with potential developers to understand how electrical and cooling needs could/will be addressed very early in the process.

1) Electricity Assessment: Overall, Duke Energy noted that they will adjust, as needed, to meet future energy demands, but the cost for expansion cannot just be passed on to existing and future rate payers. Duke Energy routinely charges potential commercial users an upfront fee to develop an assessment of the infrastructure needed to serve a site. Duke Energy recently formalized its policy for applicants needing 100 or more MW. The policy requires applicants to pay a \$100,000 non-refundable fee to cover research and analysis and to make financial commitments to the long-term usage and payment for the energy load requested. This policy applies to all of Duke Energy's service area, including applicable ElectriCities¹.

2) Municipal Water and Waste-Water Assessment: Although the municipalities in Wake County have different levels of future municipal water and waste-water capacity, all the communities have goals to maximize the usefulness to the community of this future capacity. Future capacity in the Wake County area is difficult and costly to attain and once allocated it is likely to be even more expensive and difficult to replace. A use, such as hyperscale data center, that requires 1 to 5 million gallons of water per day for one time use would significantly impact the community's future options. The data center industry has, and is continuing to evolve, various on-site methods to reduce daily municipal water usage. These methods, however, usually add chemicals to increase efficiency and protect internal loops, and these chemicals may impact waste-water treatment. Data centers have also used municipal reuse water and captured rainwater to reduce the use of municipal water. All systems lose water to evaporation. The efficiency of cooling methods will be affected by Wake County's average temperature.

¹ ElectiCities is a membership organization that provides power supply to communities.

Data centers also use different amounts and types of water during maintenance and replenishment windows. To encourage dialogue between the municipality and the applicant, it makes sense for municipalities to set a threshold amount of annual water usage that will trigger specific questions and criteria.

Site Considerations

Continuing the theme that hyperscale data centers are different than other uses based on size and the impact of on-site operations, Wake County's research identified the following specific areas of concern and provides recommendations on local ordinance changes to best prepare for potential applications.

1) Applicable Zoning: Wake County's research found that Wake County municipalities do not have a consistent definition, assigned zoning district, or specific standards for large data centers. Some municipalities noted the language in existing zoning districts could be interpreted to allow data centers. Wake County's research found that the rezoning process could serve as a pathway for facilitating the best dialogue between the proposed development and the community. As noted, the larger community dialogue in the proposed Apex development was started by a request to annex and rezone the property.

2) Placement and Use of Back Up Generators and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS): Data centers generally require redundant back-up systems to maintain operations if electric grid power is unavailable. Though solar, battery or other low noise solutions can be encouraged to assist or augment with back-up power needs, based on power requirements, most centers have diesel or natural gas generators. Although these generators are like the generators used in other commercial and industrial locations, the difference is the number of generators required and the frequency of generator use. To address concerns with generator noise and emissions, it is recommended that municipalities work with developers to carefully locate these on site. There are examples where generators have been placed within specifically designed locations surrounded by the data center building and far removed from any property lines. Communities have also requested / required information on the number of hours generators will be used and hours for testing.

3) *Noise / Low Frequency Sounds:* Adjacent landowners in some areas around the country have noted concerns with noise and vibrations generated by servers within the site. These sounds are often sensed as much as they are heard.

4) *Setbacks and Screening:* Data centers are 24-7 operations with security needs. This often translates to a requirement for lighting in many areas of the site during all hours of dusk and darkness.

5) *Reuse and Decommissioning:* Like other technology heavy uses, data centers, especially the equipment within the center, have an expected life cycle. Reuse provisions require that aspects of the site and building design are planned to accommodate future uses and technological advancement. Decommissioning provisions define the state the site must be in if the use is discontinued. Both provisions are often supported by formal commitments, agreements and/or financial commitments.

Community Considerations

Wake County's research identified the following specific areas of concern and provides recommendations on community wide impacts to best prepare for proposed data centers.

1) *Limited Tax Revenues:* Wake County's experience (see Further Notes 2) with existing smaller scale data centers suggests that the taxable value of the center will decrease relatively quickly. This is because a large percentage of the site's value is equipment, i.e. servers, server connections, server stands, that depreciate quickly based on expected useful life and tax policies. Based on this, it is recommended that municipalities estimate conservatively on projected revenues that will be generated via tax revenues.

2) *Limited Job Creation:* National statistics suggest that data centers create fewer permanent jobs per square foot, per dollar invested, per kilowatt hour uses, and per gallon of water used than many other large-scale developments. Based on this it is recommended that municipalities estimate conservatively on projected revenues that will be generated from future income taxes.

3) *Advanced Understanding of Community Needs:* Wake County's research indicates that data center developers value clear expectations and pathways to site construction

and operation. Because data centers are not expected to greatly expand the jobs and tax base that communities typically rely on to multiply the benefits of commercial investment, it is important for the community to have a specific discussion on how it will balance community impacts with overall community benefits. The electricity assessment, the municipal water and sewer assessment, and the site development requirements outlined in the recommendations will provide context for this consideration. Nationally, communities have identified specific project investments that could be funded as part of larger project cost / benefit consideration and approval process. Some of these investments have been closely tied to potential data center impacts such as funding for plant improvements to expand municipal water or grey water capacity while others are tied to larger community needs or issues like the funding for other community facilities like fire stations, parks, or transportation improvements. The data center developer would need to agree to all funding agreements and the cost would need to be proportional to impacts.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Recommendation 1: As a first step of the process, require that property owners and / or potential developers attest that they have contacted Duke Energy and are aware of the electricity assessment policy.

Next Step 1: Wake County and its partners will build on the recommended basic check list to further flesh out process steps and model documentation for the community, developer, Duke Energy dialogue. Although Duke Energy has formalized their process for users requesting more 100 MW, the question still has “chicken and egg” aspects about it as the community wants to know the ability and timing of Duke Energy to serve a proposed development and Duke Energy wants to know the community’s position on permitting the development overall. The model documentation and, as possible, clear check points, will be tied into further development of community tools as noted in recommendations 2, 3, and 4.

Recommendation 2: Adjust municipal water connection policies to require a special assessment process for uses that propose to use over 500,000 gallons of municipal water or municipal gray water daily. The goal of the special assessment would be to set

early and up-front expectations on water and sewer demands, understand on-site methods that could or would be used to reduce water usage, understand the potential fluctuations in water usage based on temperature, system maintenance or other system operations, assess investments that would need to be made to meet demand, and identify long term commitments and agreements needed to protect the water and sewer agency.

Next Step 2: Wake County will work with water agency partners (Raleigh, Cary, Holly Springs, Fuquay-Varina) and others to determine the best ways to modify the commercial water service application process to require further documentation and assessment for large water uses. Like Duke Energy policy, it is very possible that this process will entail upfront fees to cover detailed studies. A recent review of water capacity across Wake County, noted that a use requiring 1 to 5 million gallons per day would require significant site-specific and regional investments and would likely trigger system-wide capacity concerns as well. Based on this, it is possible that the area would prohibit uses that directly cool with municipal water and require usage of municipal gray water or other on-site solutions.

Recommendation 3: Consider a separate unified development ordinance category specifically for uses that require more than 100 Megawatts of power. This use would be permitted only in specific zoning districts or overlay.

Next Step 3: Wake County and its partners will develop model language for a unified development ordinance (UDO) category that covers a use that will require more than 100 MW of power. This language will explore the best ways to fit into various municipal regulations and may not be one size fits all. The goal of this language will be to define that data centers are allowed if they meet all minimum requirements, but that a rezoning process will be required to designate a specific site. This site-specific process will allow adequate dialogue between the developer and the community regarding community impacts and investment. If the partners determine that model language cannot be developed quickly enough, the group shall develop model language for a temporary moratorium on uses requiring more than 100 Megawatts of power that will stay in place only until full UDO changes are adopted.

Recommendation 4: Review ordinance requirements to verify that adequate provisions are in place to allow the community to work with the developer to find the best solutions to ensure that adjacent properties are shielded from generator noise and other impacts. Potential issues not covered by the noise ordinance may need to be discussed as part of the rezoning process.

Next Step 4: Wake County and its partners will develop model language for unified development ordinance (UDO) changes related to placement and use of back-up generators and battery energy storage systems (BESS), noise / low frequency sounds, setbacks and screening, reuse and decommissioning, and other site-specific issues as identified.

Recommendation 5: As part of facilities assessment, particularly water and sewer facilities, and public outreach, municipalities should understand community needs and identify potential investment opportunities. These opportunities should be prioritized based on impact and categorized based on location. As appropriate, as part of the rezoning approval process, the municipality should consider these investments as part of developer approved conditions or part of a developer approved community benefit agreement.

Next Step 5: As an extension of ongoing municipal facility and community needs assessments, Wake County and its partners will identify and prioritize projects like fire stations, parks or transportation improvements that could be funded to offset specific community impacts. This work will include a review of recommendations for best practices in developer approved conditions and developer approved community benefit agreements. This work will be right-sized with the understanding that hyperscale data center applications may be limited in Wake County by high land costs and competition for water, sewer and electrical capacity.

Further Notes

1) Work Coordinated with Central Pines Regional Council of Governments (CPRC): All Wake County work on data centers will continue to be coordinated with CPRC. CPRC is currently coordinating similar discussions, gathering research about best practices and has produced a report. [CPRC report](#)

2) *Data Center Depreciation Table Example:* The following table is provided by Wake County's Tax Administration Office showing an example depreciation schedule for servers and equipment within a data center.

Data Processing Equipment Depreciation Schedule (U-5)			
	Installed Cost New	Percent Good	Taxable Value
Year 1	\$20,000	80%	\$16,000
Year 2	\$20,000	61%	\$12,200
Year 3	\$20,000	41%	\$8,200
Year 4	\$20,000	20%	\$4,000
Year 5	\$20,000	5%	\$1,000
Year 6	\$20,000	5%	\$1,000
Year 7	\$20,000	5%	\$1,000

Wake County Unified Development Ordinance Traffic Impact Analysis

Steven Finn, Zoning Director

June 3, 2026



@wakegov    

wake.gov

Purpose

1. To evaluate proposed development impacts on street capacity
2. Review current Level of Service data with build-out scenario within local road network
3. Identify traffic issues regarding internal and external access to the development site

Consultant Role

1. Work with applicant, staff and NCDOT to establish study area to be evaluated including off-site segments and intersections when proposed trip generation is >10% of daily traffic volume
2. Provide detailed technical review of the Traffic Impact Analysis submitted by applicant's traffic engineer
3. Identify drops in Level of Service and traffic issues (e.g. "stacking," signalization needs, internal and external access to the development site)

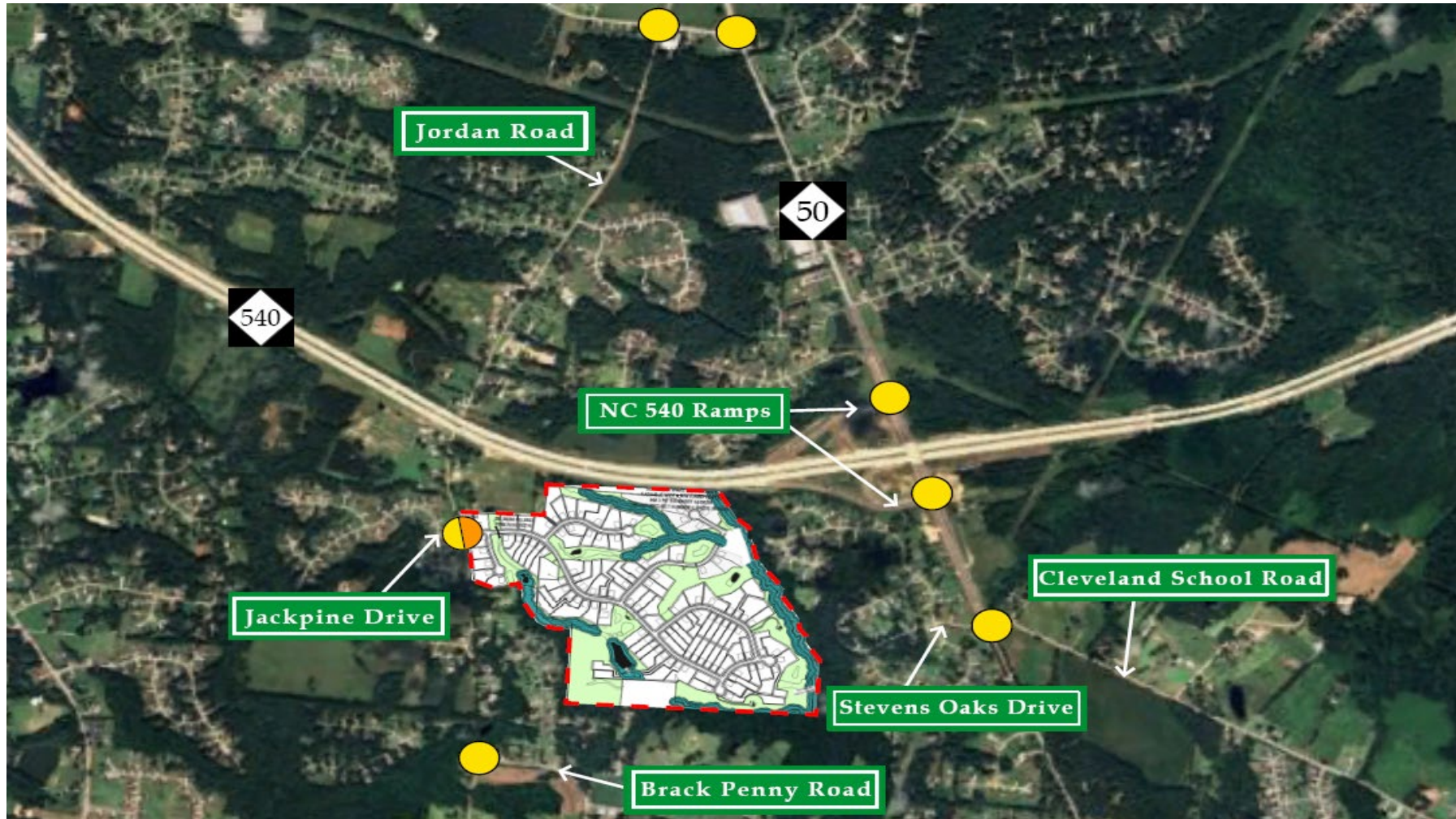
Staff Role

1. Integrate findings into the review process
2. Coordinate consultant findings with applicant's traffic engineer and NCDOT
3. Monitor consultant activities and billing focused on prescribed roles

Process Dynamics

1. Applicant traffic engineer analysis vs. our consultant
2. Level of Service findings and methodology (ART 15-12-3)
3. NCDOT perspectives and position (e.g. don't want to use condemnation or potential improvement)

Study Area Sample



TIA Findings Sample

RAMEY KEMP ASSOCIATES

Poole and Smithfield | 78

Recommended Improvements by Developer

Poole Road and Smithfield Road

- Provide an exclusive southbound right-turn lane with a minimum of 75 feet of storage and appropriate deceleration and taper length. *[Phase 2]*

Smithfield Road and Major Slade Road

- Provide an exclusive southbound right-turn lane with a minimum of 125 feet of storage and appropriate deceleration and taper length. *[Phase 2]*

Poole Road and Major Slade Road

- Provide an exclusive northbound right-turn lane with a minimum of 100 feet of storage and appropriate deceleration and taper length. *[Full Build]*

Smithfield Road and Site Access A

The proposed development is expected to provide approximately 0.6 miles of widening along its frontage on either side of Smithfield Road to construct a portion of the planned four-lane divided section.

- Construct eastbound approach with one (1) ingress lane and two (2) egress lanes striped as one left-turn lane and one right-turn lane. *[Phase 1]*
- Provide an exclusive northbound left-turn lane with a minimum of 150 feet of storage and appropriate taper. *[Phase 1]*