



**Board of County
Commissioners
Work Session**

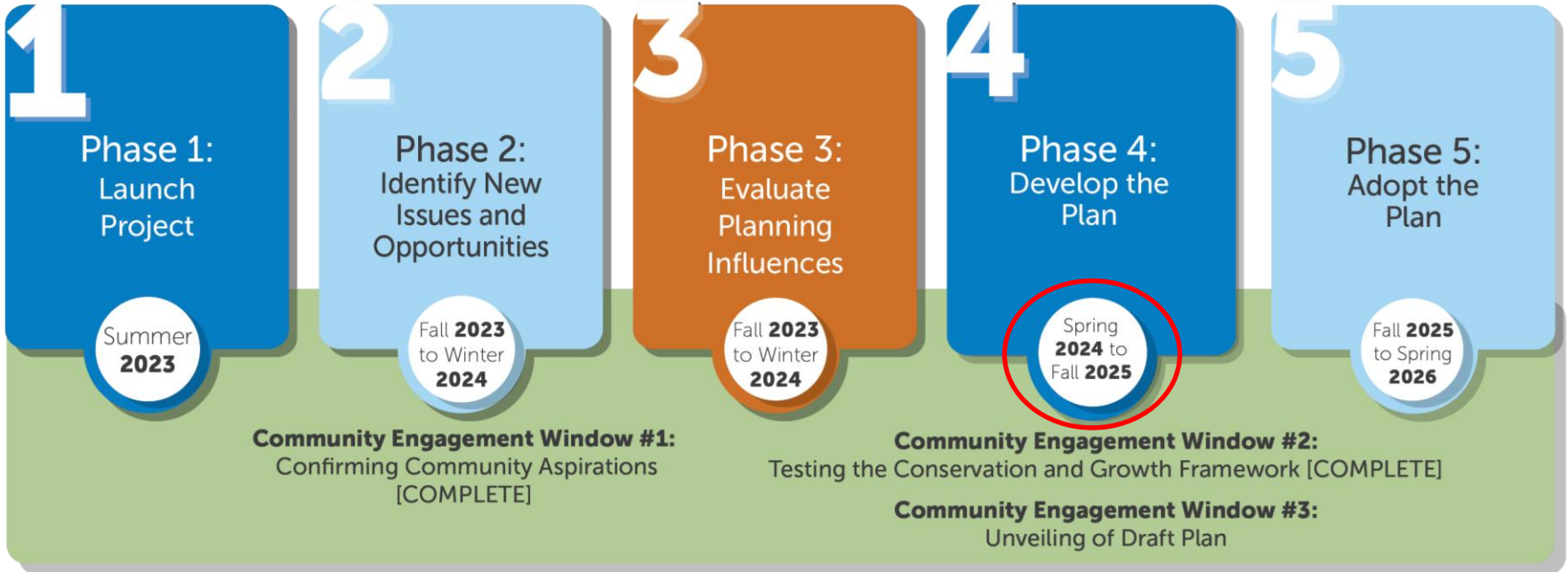
March 11, 2025

Agenda



1. Project Update
2. Review of Land Use Plan 2050: Conservation and Growth Framework
 - a. Policies and Actions
 - b. Conservation and Growth Framework Map
 - c. Environment and Habitat Map
3. Questions/Discussion

Project Timeline



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT →



Land Use Plan 2050

Public Review Draft

Land Use Plan 2050

Public Review Draft



PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

MARCH 3, 2025



Planning Process



- 3** Community Engagement Windows
- 8** **Community Meetings** and Workshops
- 9** Tabling, Presentation, or Other Engagement Activities
- 10** **Briefings** to Planning Board and BOCC
- 14** Staff Working Group **Meetings**
- 57** **Stakeholder** Interviews
- 355** Total **In Person Attendees**
- 584** Community **Surveys** Received



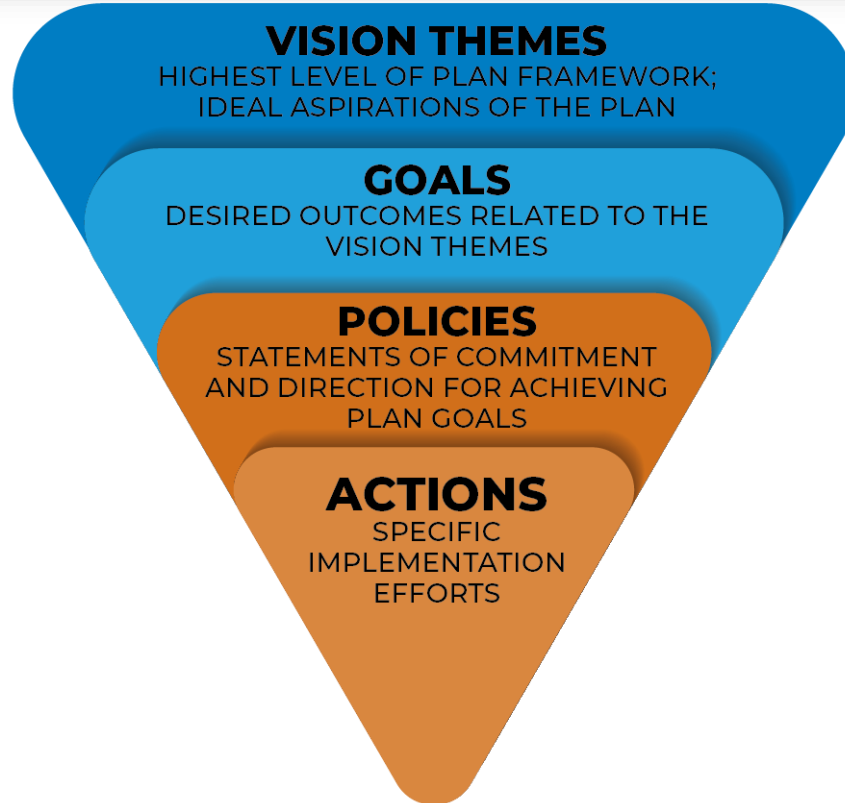
Land Use Plan 2050

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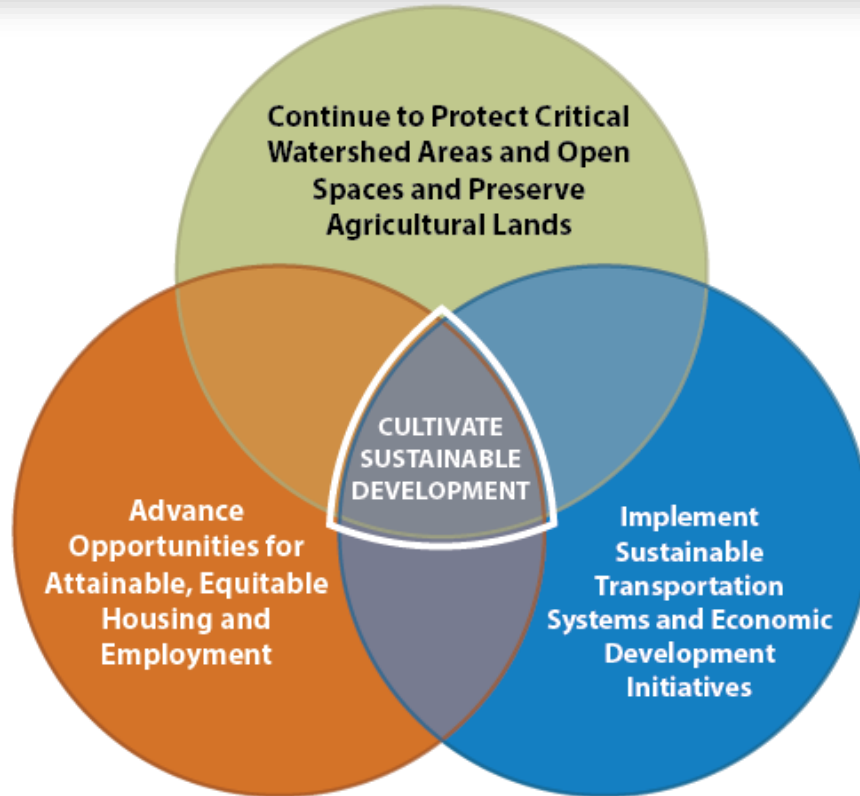


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Overview of Plan Framework



Vision Themes



Goals



- 1. Agriculture, Working Lands, and Open Spaces**
- 2. Community Equity**
- 3. Economy and Employment**
- 4. Environment, Parks, Recreation**
- 5. Housing Attainability**
- 6. Regional and Local Growth**
- 7. Resiliency**
- 8. Services and Community Facilities**
- 9. Transportation and Mobility**

Policies



Agriculture, Working Lands, and Open Spaces

- Preserve **working lands** for **farming and forestry**
- Preserve **natural heritage**
- Support **local agricultural business**

Community Equity

- **Equity lens** into land use planning decision-making processes
- Provide **transparency, communication,** and community **education** about land use planning
- Integrate **health considerations** into all aspects of planning
- Create an environment supportive of **older adults**

Policies



Economy and Employment

- Support commercial and industrial uses in the **Economic Development Areas (EDA)**
- Support commercial uses in the **Rural Activity Nodes**
- Ensure (EDAs) are designed using **sustainable development principles**

Environment, Parks, Recreation, and Resilience

- Improve recreational opportunities in **underserved areas**
- Support **transportation and connectivity** goals
- Protect, conserve, and restore **natural resources**
- Balance development needs with **environmental protections and conservation**
- Promote **sustainable and resilient development**
- Create **resilience hubs** for the community

Policies



Housing Attainability

- Encourage the development of housing options that are **attainable to the local workforce**
- **Reduce barriers** to the development and construction of housing
- Support development, rehabilitation and preservation of **affordable housing**

Regional and Local Growth

- Support **sustainable development and joint planning with municipalities**
- Consider sustainable development in **development proposal review**
- Continue to develop and use **intergovernmental land use planning tools**

Orange County Land Use Plan 2050 Policies



Services and Community Facilities

- Guide **infrastructure** service decision-making
- Strategically support investment in water and sewer infrastructure in **key Economic Development Areas**
- Evaluate and develop specific policies for the use of **private water and wastewater systems**
- Integrate **carbon neutrality goals** with economic development
- Invest in **green infrastructure**

Transportation and Mobility

- Ensure that land use decisions support **bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts**
- Align land use planning with **transit investments**
- Support **rural transportation needs** while maintaining rural character

Actions

- 58 total actions
- Organized by Goals
- Example Actions page pictured here

ACTIONS

The Actions identified below, organized by Plan Goals, will be further evaluated for prioritization by Orange County.

Agriculture, Working Lands, and Open Spaces Actions

1. Continue to regularly update the Orange County Lands Legacy Program Action Plan and Farmland Protection Plan.
2. Continue to utilize the County's Lands Legacy Program to:
 - a. Conserve rural land use and historic farm properties.
 - b. Conserve watershed riparian buffer lands and prioritize areas in water supply watersheds.
 - c. Conserve lands of historic, cultural, or archaeological significance.
3. Amend the UDO to incorporate Agriculture Subdivisions as a Flexible Development option.
4. Continue to utilize the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) programs to encourage the protection of farmland from conversion to other uses.
5. Support the development of a regional sustainable food network by supporting the protection of working farmlands and agricultural uses and supportive uses.
6. Direct incompatible development away from land that contains valuable productive resources, such as prime farmland and prime forestland
7. Permanently conserve areas identified as NC Natural Heritage Program Natural Areas.
8. Align the "open space" definitions in the UDO and this Comprehensive Land Use Plan to ensure that they are consistent and agree with each other.
9. Conduct regular updates to the County's inventory of natural areas on a parcel scale.
10. Pursue a study to define and identify scenic resources in Orange County. Establish development standards and entitlement practices to protect scenic resources, including landscapes, ridgelines, meadows, and geologic features that have special scenic character or historic or aesthetic interest or value.
11. Expand the Eno-New Hope Conservation Plan evaluation countywide for identification of priority areas of the county to be protected either through the entitlement process or acquisition of some form.
12. Ensure that agritourism is properly regulated for environmental health, land disturbance, and stormwater management, as it is exempt from zoning regulation by NC G.S. 160D-903.



Pumpkin Carving with Goats

Conservation and Growth Framework Map

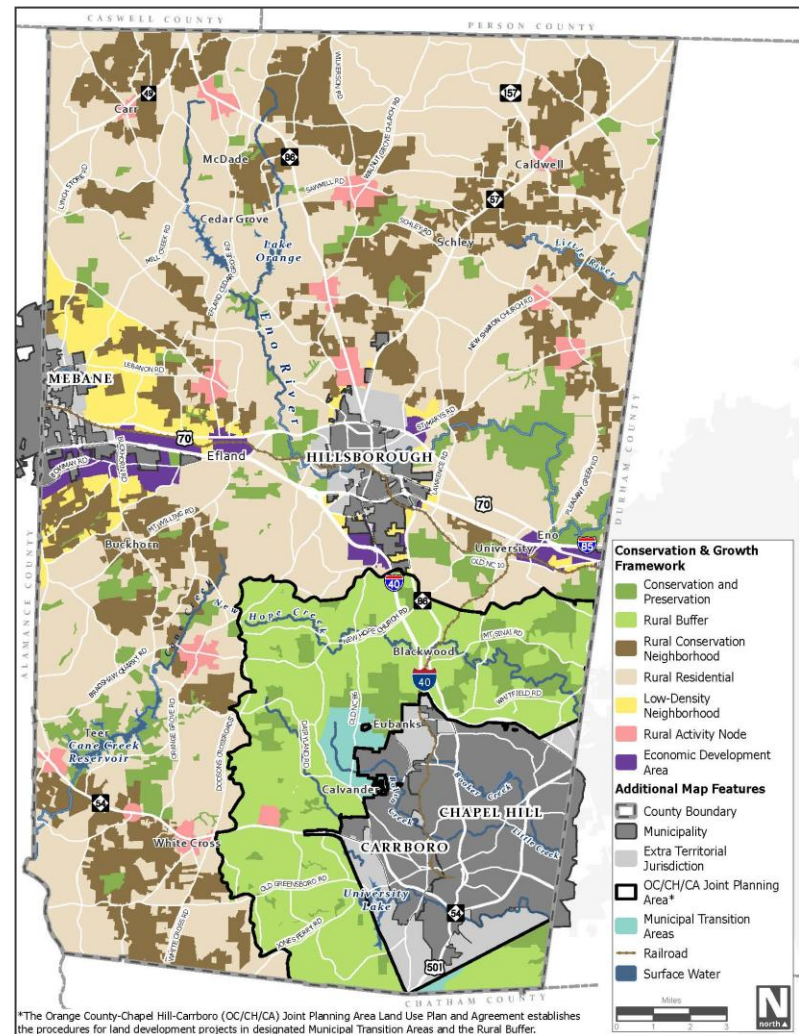
- Update to the currently adopted Future Land Use Map (FLUM)
- Establishes new policy direction through future land use guidance
- Specific focus on supporting new sustainable housing and economic development opportunities in strategic locations

Conservation & Growth Framework

- Conservation and Preservation
- Rural Buffer
- Rural Conservation Neighborhood
- Rural Residential
- Low-Density Neighborhood
- Rural Activity Node
- Economic Development Area

Additional Map Features

- County Boundary
- Municipality
- Extra Territorial Jurisdiction
- OC/CH/CA Joint Planning Area*
- Municipal Transition Areas
- Railroad
- Surface Water

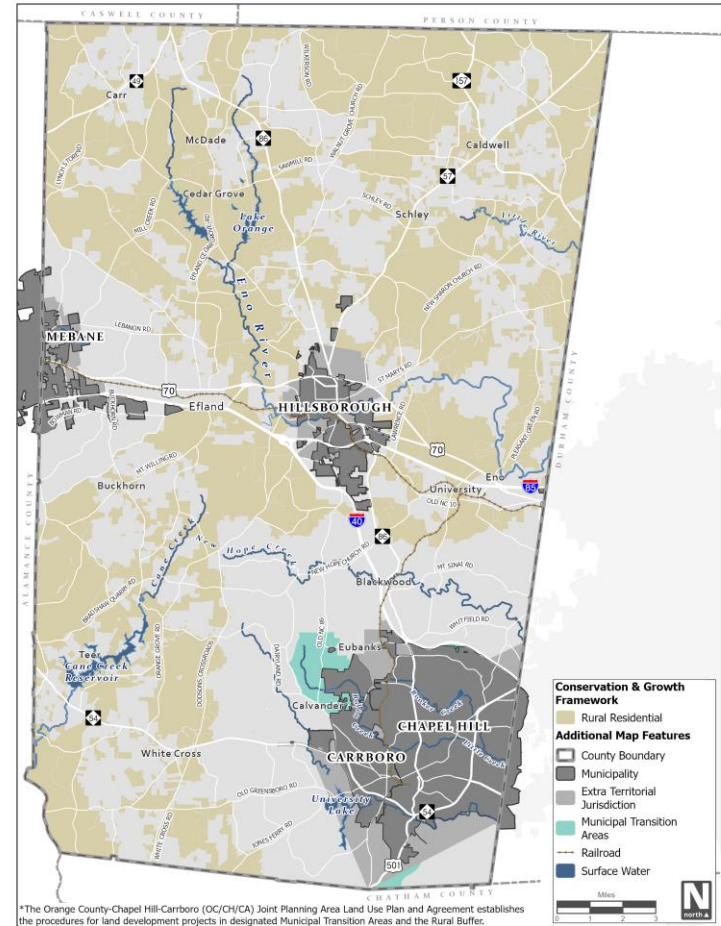


*The Orange County-Chapel Hill-Carrboro (OC/CH/CA) Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan and Agreement establishes the procedures for land development projects in designated Municipal Transition Areas and the Rural Buffer.

Rural Residential

Description

Rural Residential lands are the predominant land use category in unincorporated Orange County. These lands share borders with every other type of land use. These lands include different characteristics that vary from undisturbed forests and natural areas to the many historic farms and dairies that have shaped the aesthetics and functions of the landscape. Developed properties consist of low-density and large-lot residential subdivisions (>2 acres), agricultural and horticultural uses, and forestry. Smaller-lot subdivisions (0.92-2 acres) are scattered amongst large-lot subdivisions, large fields for conventional farming, and smaller mixed-intensity homesteads

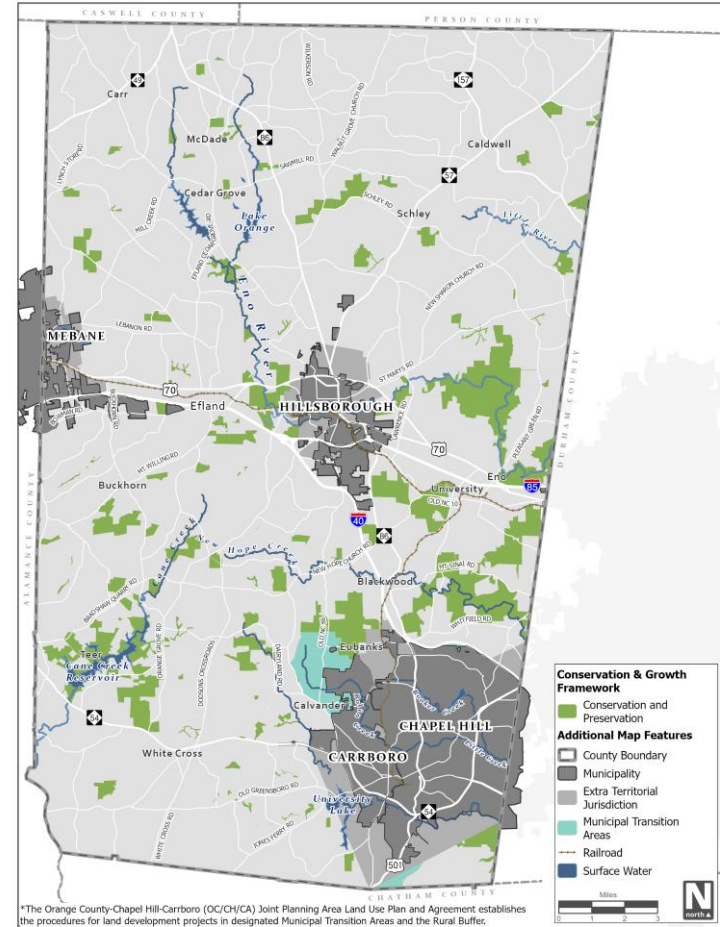


Conservation and Preservation



Description

Lands in this category are permanently protected from future development by conservation easements; effectively preserved through the nature of their ownership, type of stewardship, and current use; or protected for a certain timeframe. Conservation easements are voluntarily established by the landowner through donation to or payment from a holding entity, which may be Orange County, a land trust, or some other conservation-based organization. Preserved lands include either active or passive open spaces, parks, and undeveloped lands that are not expected to develop, although they do not have legal protections in place. Examples of Conservation and Preservation lands include publicly accessible places such as Eno River State Park, Duke Forest, and local parks, and others that are not open to the public and are held by organizations such as OWASA (Orange Water and Sewer Authority), which owns them for the purpose of permanent water supply protection.

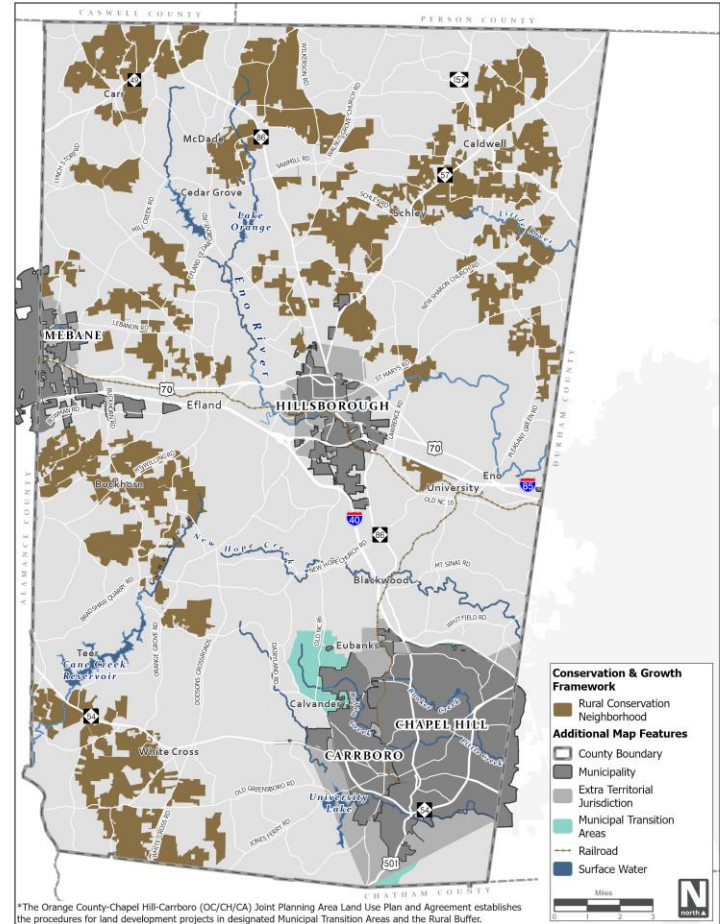


Rural Conservation Neighborhood

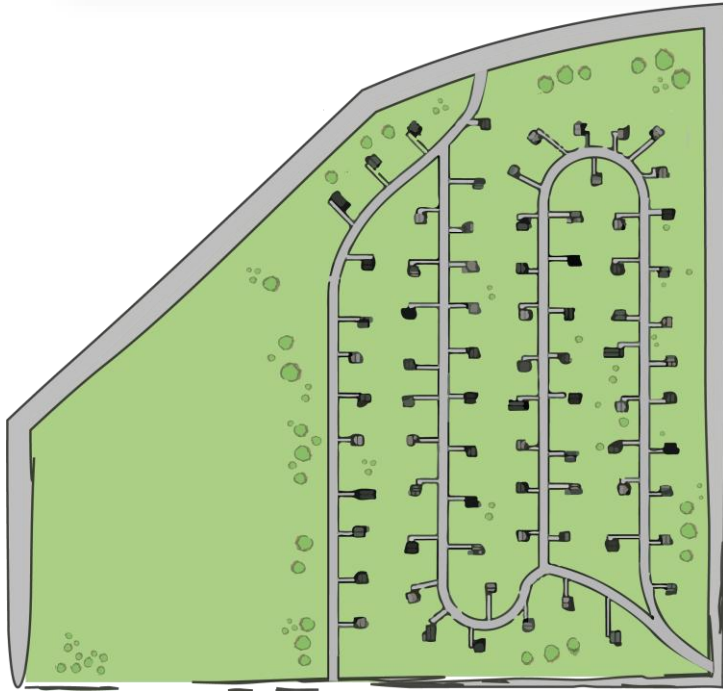


Description

Rural Conservation Neighborhoods are clustered subdivisions of varying size that allow homes on smaller lots in exchange for protecting a larger portion of the site as open space. Open spaces are protected from development, controlled by easement, HOAs and/or POAs, and can be common spaces with limited passive recreational opportunities, left in a natural state, or for agricultural production. Open space is sited to prioritize existing high-quality habitats, unique landscape elements such as rock outcroppings or steep slopes, as well as prime farmland soils, streams, and riparian areas. In the case of lands to be preserved for agricultural production, the presence of prime farmland soil is a determining factor. Single-family residential homes (attached or detached) are the predominant land use, but these clustered subdivisions may include accessory uses such as common meeting and general-use buildings, community gardens and small-scale farms, and/or limited commercial operations that primarily serve the immediately surrounding community.



Conservation Subdivision



RURAL CONSERVATION NEIGHBORHOOD (RCN)

Description

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Character, Pattern, and Land Use Vision

- The intent of Rural Conservation Neighborhoods is to provide opportunities for residential and limited neighborhood commercial development within a rural setting, while also protecting the most valuable environmental and agriculturally viable portions of the site, supporting the critical ecosystem services they provide such as clean air, water, and habitat for wildlife.
- Homes and buildings placed closer together promote the social interconnectivity of the immediate community within the development, also allowing for some communal and collaborative uses on the remaining lands.
- A primary goal for Rural Conservation Neighborhoods is for priority open space to be conserved, such as wetlands, floodplains and alluvial soils, steep slopes, natural areas and wildlife habitats, historic and archeological sites, and wildlife corridors. As of the writing of this Plan, the currently adopted Unified Development Ordinance contains a list of Primary Open Space areas in Section 7.12. [Chapter 4: Implementation](#) includes an Action to align primary open spaces features identified in this Plan and the UDO for protection in the Rural Conservation Neighborhoods.



Serenbe Farms, Fulton County, GA (Google Maps Image)



RURAL CONSERVATION NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING BLOCKS

Primary Uses

- Single-family detached housing
- Two-family housing (duplex)
- Farms, agriculture, forestry
- Protected open space (recommended 60% of site)

Secondary Uses⁵

- Townhomes, accessory dwelling units, and other smaller scale residential (which could include duplexes, cottages, bungalows, or tiny homes)
- Multi-family housing
- Limited neighborhood-scale commercial and retail, and home-based businesses

Infrastructure to Serve Development

Water and Wastewater: Community wells and septic systems may be established, or private wells and septic systems with sufficient lot sizes

Jurisdictional Collaboration

Required with Carrboro and Chapel Hill for the potential Blackwood Station location (see [Chapter 4](#)) and encouraged for Hillsborough and Mebane if annexation occurs beyond current defined growth areas

Applicable Zoning Districts⁶

Rural Buffer (RB), Agricultural Residential (AR), Rural Residential (R-1), Neighborhood Commercial (NC-2), Local Commercial (LC-1)

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

1.6 units / acre gross density

⁵ Schools and faith-based organizations are supported county-wide across all land use categories.

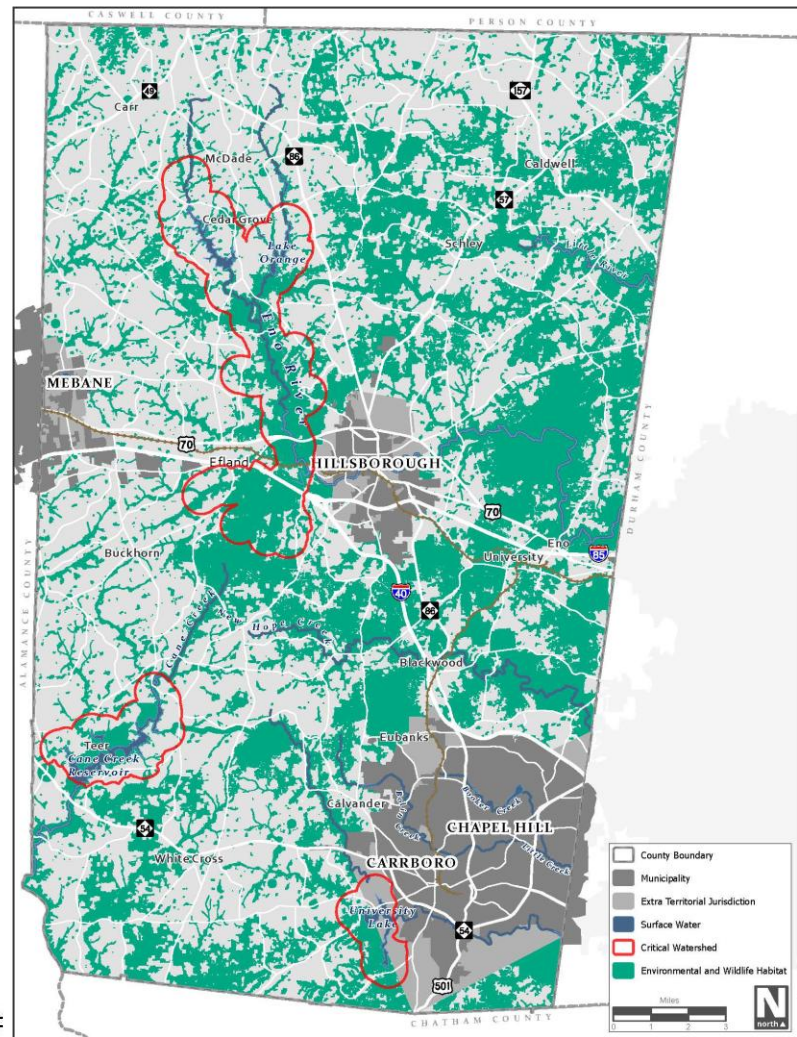
⁶ Conditional districts may be utilized in Orange County in certain circumstances. One such circumstance is when a conventional district designation would not be appropriate for a certain property, but a specific land use permitted within the district would be consistent with the UDO and the adopted land use plan. For other circumstances and more information on how these are utilized, see the [Orange County Planning & Inspections Department website](#).

Environmental and Wildlife Habitat

- Map identifies:
 - “Highest” and “Higher” priority wildlife habitat patches and corridors identified by the *Eno-New Hope Landscape Conservation Plan*
 - 100-year floodplain
 - Steep slopes
 - Wetlands
 - Resource Protection Areas (identified in 2030 Plan map)

- Guided higher intensity Land Use Categories on the Conservation and Growth Framework map

- Intended to guide land protection and site planning efforts, particularly for conservation subdivisions that have required open space set-asides

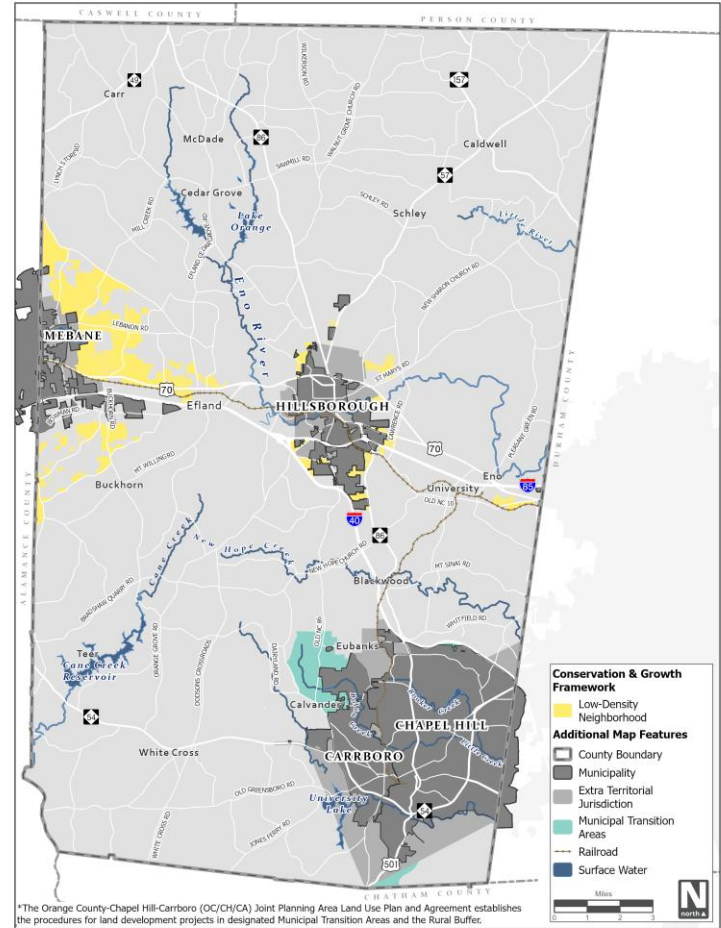


Low-Density Neighborhood



Description

The Low-Density Neighborhood category is largely developed and limited in extent along the Highway 70 corridor between the City of Mebane and Efland, north of Hillsborough, and near the Durham County Boundary. These areas anticipate a transition from rural land uses and patterns to denser forms, likely due to more recent access to utility services outside of incorporated municipal limits. Current uses include low-intensity residential neighborhoods, small-scale commercial properties, schools, and faith-based organizations.

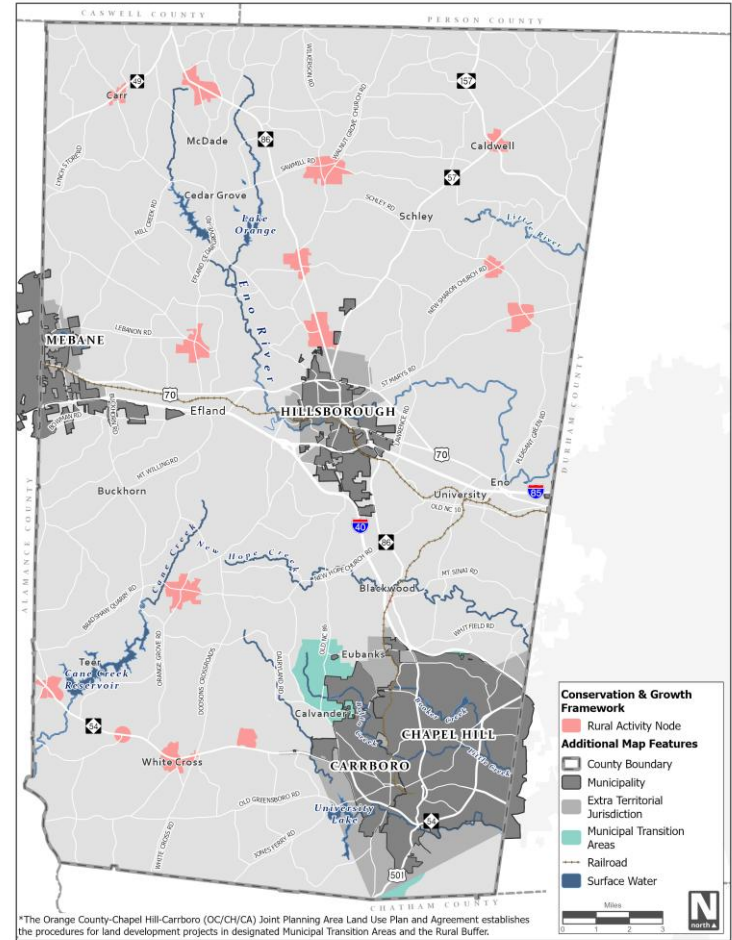


Rural Activity Node



Description

Rural Activity Nodes are key intersections of larger rural roads and state highways that can or do already serve the surrounding community with commercial retail and service uses. Nodes are located at strategic crossroads to provide daily commercial and service needs within a short drive of rural neighborhoods and home sites in the county. Existing development varies greatly by location but generally includes single-family homes, neighborhood-scale commercial uses such as service stations and convenience stores, farms, forestry, and undeveloped parcels.

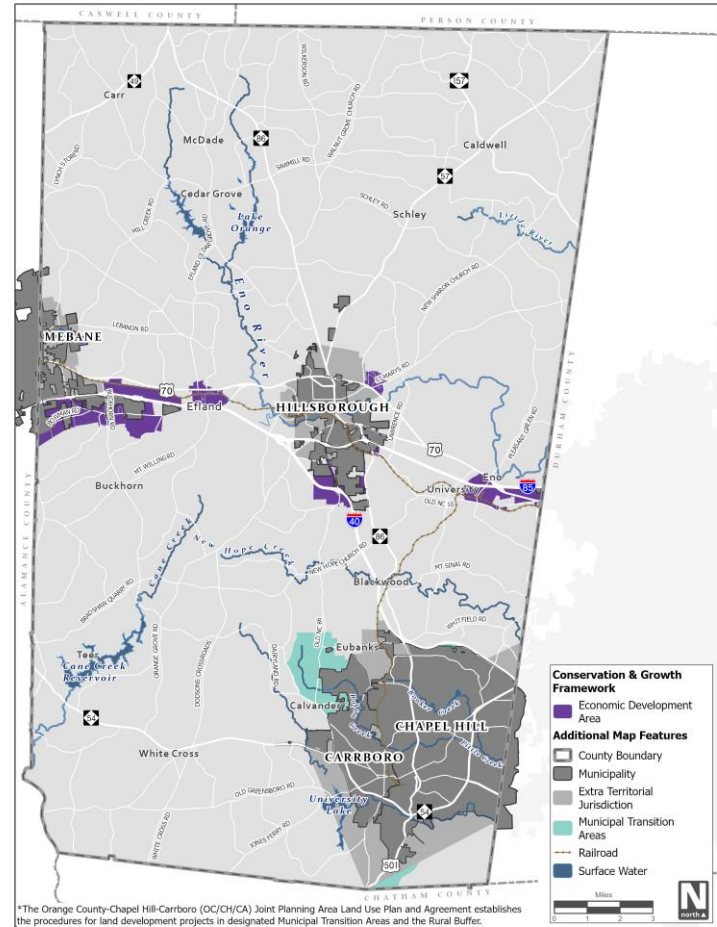


Economic Development Area



Description

Economic Development Areas (EDA) are strategically located adjacent and along the interstate corridors that traverse Hillsborough, Mebane, and Durham, to be convenient and accessible places for commerce and job centers of varying scale where residential developments are less suitable. Existing developments here include warehouses, small commercial retail and service operations, warehousing, residential subdivisions, undeveloped lands, and farms. They are located outside of the critical water supply watersheds. The Unified Development Ordinance contains regulations for appropriate impervious surface ratios for Economic Development Areas within protected water supply watersheds.





Timeline/Discussion

Project Timeline



APR 2025	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - April 8 BOCC Briefing - Revise draft plan - Public notification begins for CEW#3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online survey launch - Webinar - In person meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In person meetings - Board summer recess begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board summer recess 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff Working Group meeting
SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Final Staff Working Group meeting - BOCC Briefing on CEW#3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning Board Briefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BOCC Briefing on Public Hearing Draft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning Board Meeting for Plan Endorsement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BOCC Hearing for Adoption



Discussion



Objectives:

- Board to provide initial feedback during **March 11** work session
- Receive comments on Draft Plan by **March 25**
- Review all comments and summarize how they will be addressed during **April 8** work session

What comments do you want to share at the March 11 briefing?

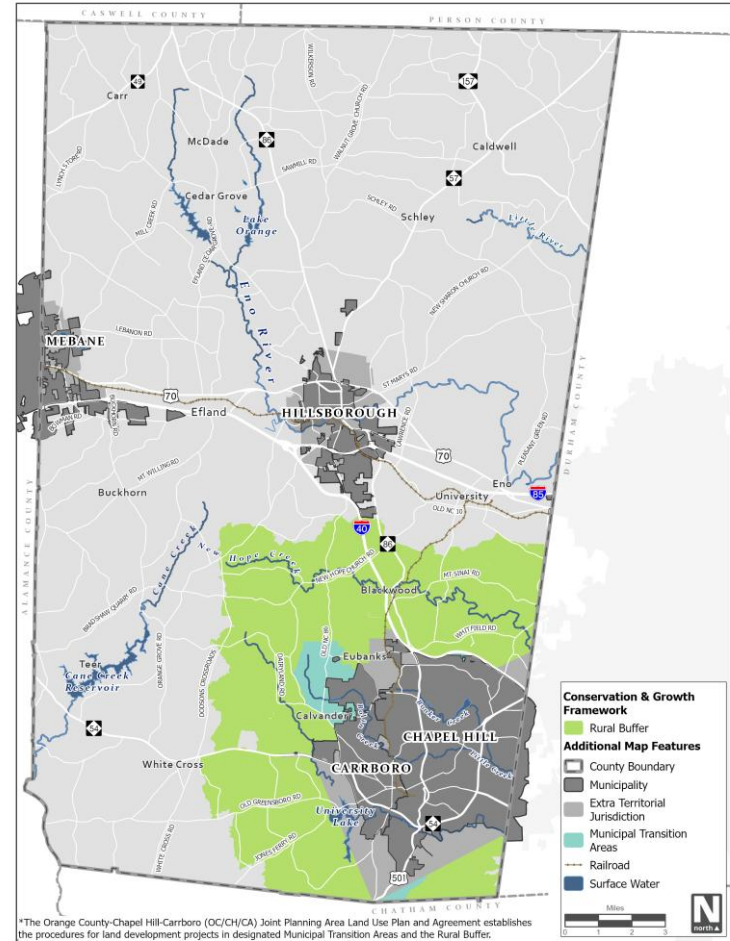


Rural Buffer



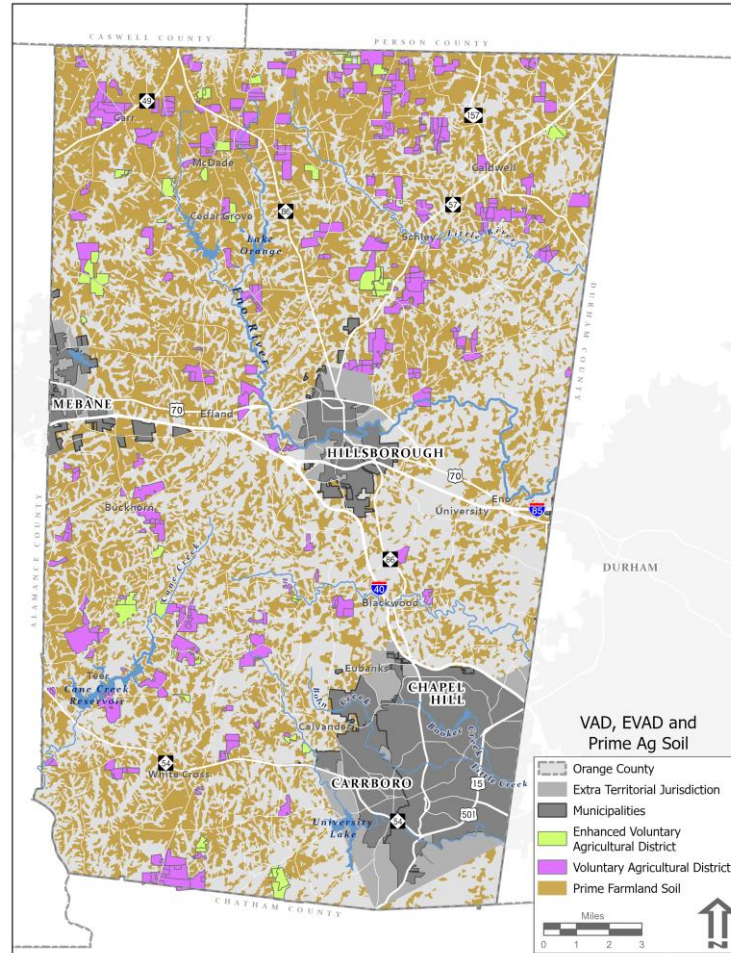
Description

The Rural Buffer was established through the Joint Planning Land Use Plan and Agreement (“JPA,” involving Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Orange County) and this document should also be consulted to further determine intentions for the area. It provides opportunities for low-density residential development, agriculture and farm uses, agricultural support uses, forestry, and open spaces. Homes are generally located on lots of at least two acres in size, and the landscape is dotted by working farms varying from small private homesteads to large and well-established local farms. Larger lot sizes allow for high priority habitats, streams and riparian areas, and prime farmland soils to be largely avoided when placing new structures and associated infrastructure.



*The Orange County-Chapel Hill-Carrboro (OC/CH/CA) Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan and Agreement establishes the procedures for land development projects in designated Municipal Transition Areas and the Rural Buffer.

Agricultural Districts and Prime Farmland Soil



Impaired Waters and 100-Year Floodplain

