



April 30, 2024

**Board of County  
Commissioners  
Briefing**

# Agenda



1. Briefing on Project Progress
2. Land Use Alternatives
  - a) Purpose, Intent, and Approach
  - b) Key Influences
  - c) Key Question to Answer
  - d) Proposed Land Use Alternatives
3. Next Steps



# Project Progress

# Project Progress



**1**

**Phase 1:  
Launch  
Project**

Month  
**1**

- Meetings:
- Staff Meeting
  - Staff Working Group Meeting #1, in-person
  - Reconnaissance Tour
  - Stakeholder Interviews
- Major Deliverables:
- Project Management Plan
  - Context Mapping
  - Project Branding
  - Summary of Stakeholder Interviews
  - Project Website

**2**

**Phase 2:  
Identify New  
Issues and  
Opportunities**

Months  
**2-7**

- Meetings:
- Staff Working Group Meetings #2-#5
  - Community Engagement Window #1
- Major Deliverables:
- Current Policy Profile
  - Community Engagement Window #1 presentation and materials
  - Summary of Engagement Window #1 Results
  - Summary of New Issues and Opportunities

**3**

**Phase 3:  
Evaluate  
Planning  
Influences**

Months  
**3-8**

- Meetings:
- Staff Working Group Meeting #6
- Major Deliverables:
- Fact Book

**4**

**Phase 4:  
Develop the  
Plan**

Months  
**9-20**

- Meetings:
- Staff Working Group Meetings #7-15
  - Community Engagement Windows #2-#3
- Major Deliverables:
- Staff, Staff Working Group, and Public Review Drafts of Comprehensive Plan
  - Public engagement materials for Community Engagement Windows #2-#3
  - Summary of Phase 4 Public Input Results

**5**

**Phase 5:  
Adopt the  
Plan**

Months  
**21-26**

- Meetings:
- Staff Working Group Meeting #16
  - Public Adoption Hearings (2)
- Major Deliverables:
- Public Hearing Draft of Plan
  - Final Adopted Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Transmittal of Final Source Files

# Phases 2-4 Status Report

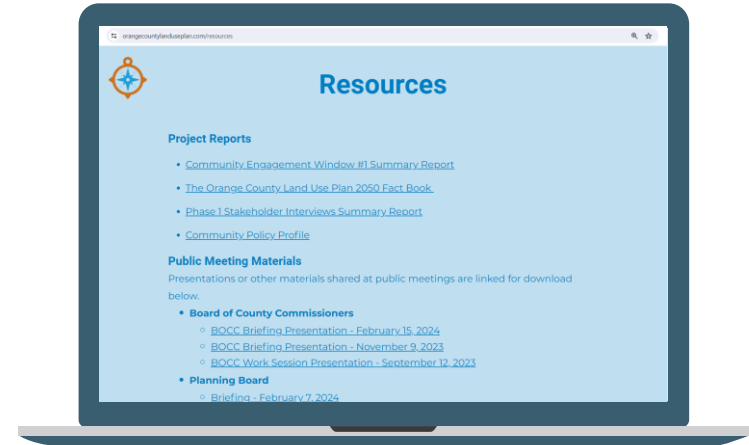


## Work that has been completed:

- Phase 2:
  - Published the Community Engagement Window #1 Summary Report
  - Finalizing New Issues and Opportunities Report
- Phase 3:
  - Published the Fact Book
- Phase 4:
  - Project Team Work Session – Land Use Alternatives
  - Initial drafts of Plan Outline for Staff Team Review

## Work that is underway:

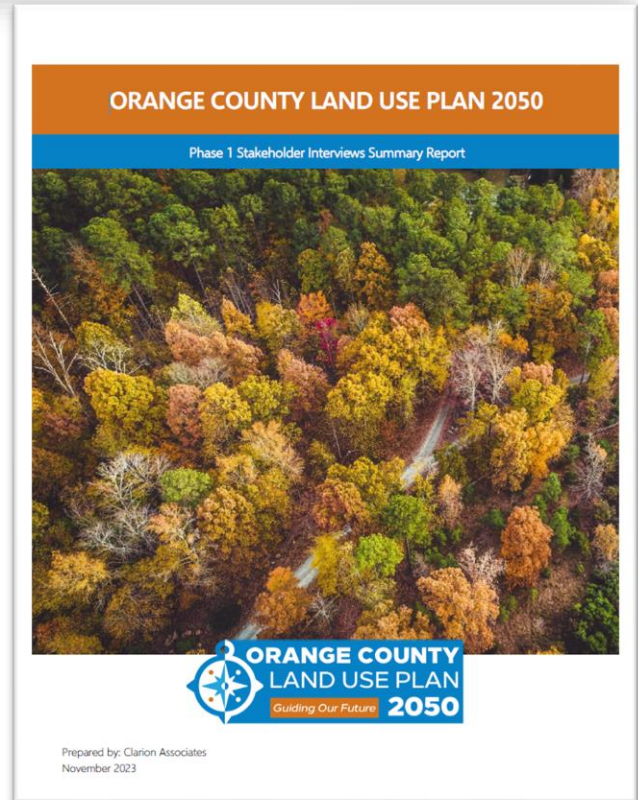
- Phase 4:
  - Develop Draft Plan Framework, Vision, and Goals
  - Development of Land Use & Development Recommendations Report (land use alternatives)
  - Develop Plan Policies and Actions



# Community Engagement Window #1 Summary Report



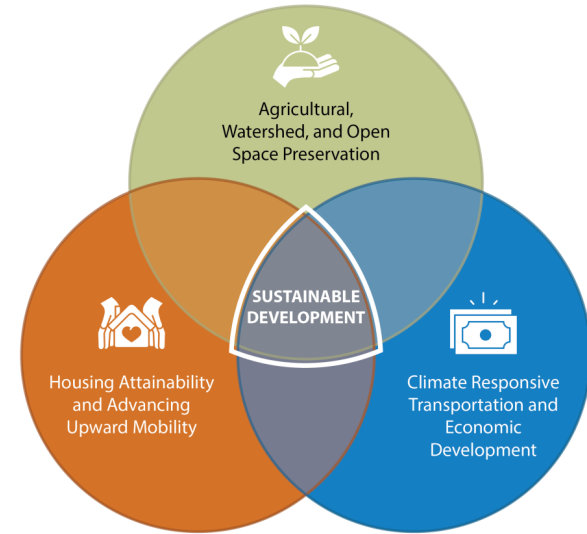
- Provides a summary report of the activities, objectives, and outcomes of Community Engagement Window #1
- Provides a foundation for Phase 4 work
- Available on the website under [Resources](#)



# New Issues and Opportunities Report



- Draft reviewed by County Staff Team
- Finalizing report for website
- Synthesizes the critical issues and opportunities identified in Phases 1-3
- Provides a foundation for Phase 4: Develop the Plan



New Issues & Opportunities:  
**Key Themes**

# Fact Book



- Shares data and trends on community planning topics and future planning influences that are important considerations for developing plan policies.
  - Leverages existing technical reports prepared by County as well as recent American Community Survey data
  - Includes data analysis shared during CEW #1 workshop
- Available on the website under [Resources](#)





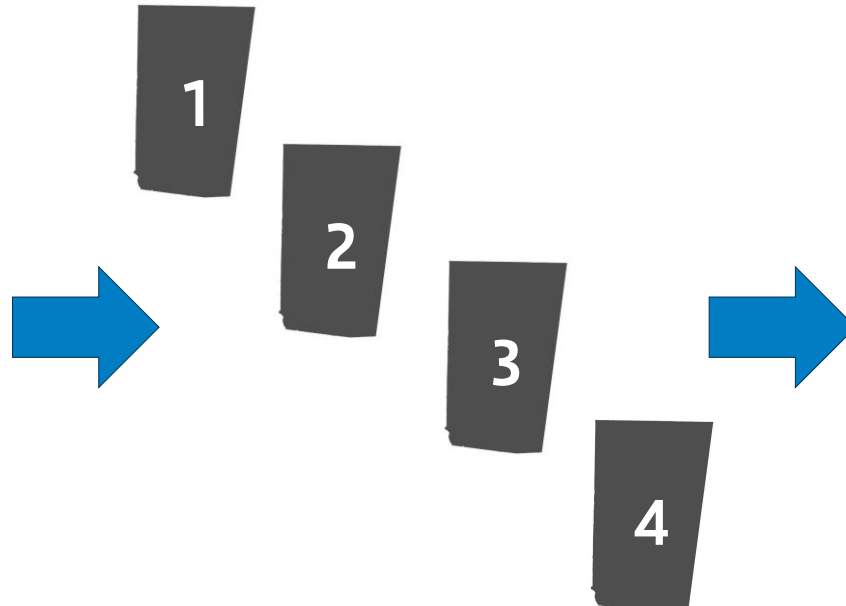


# Land Use Alternatives: Purpose, Intent, and Approach

# What are land use alternatives?



Build off Current Policies



Land Use Alternatives:  
Explore and Test Hypothetical  
Future Land Use Policies



Inform Selection for  
Preferred Policy Approach in  
2050 Plan

# Key Terms



1. Land use **alternatives** and land use **scenarios** are synonymous terms.
2. **Conservation and Growth Framework** is a thematic title for the **future land use map (FLUM)** and **categories**.

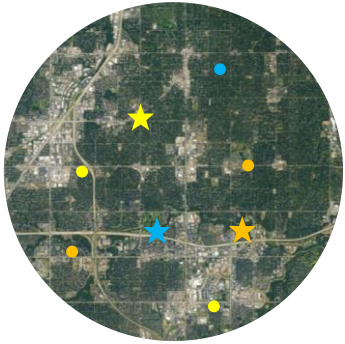
# Purpose/Intent of LU Alternatives



- 1. Model hypothetical future land use policy alternatives** for unincorporated Orange County and assess outcomes.
- 2. Share outcomes** of alternatives modeling with County leadership and residents and **gather feedback** to inform development of 2050 Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

The final preferred Conservation and Growth Framework (FLUM) may be a combination of policy directions from more than one of the alternatives.

# Land Use Alternatives Process



Identify the **areas** where we might want to see **change**.

Explore the **potential land use alternatives** for those areas.

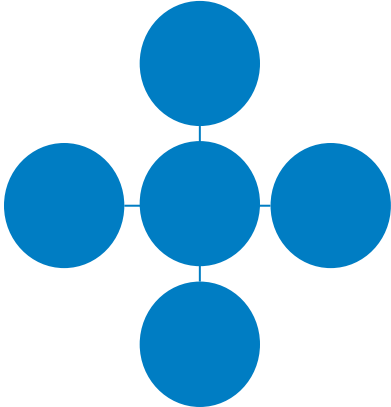
Evaluate the **outcomes of those changes**.

Inform the **policies and land use changes needed** to support the desired outcomes.

# How LU Alternatives Will Be Used



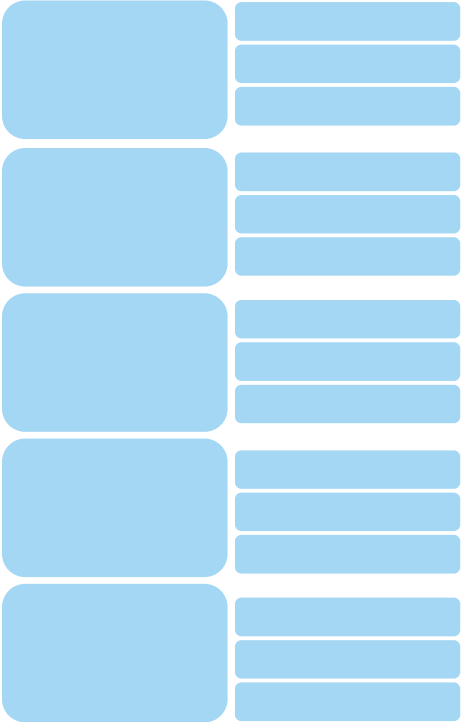
Generate  
Computer  
Models of  
Land Use  
Alternatives



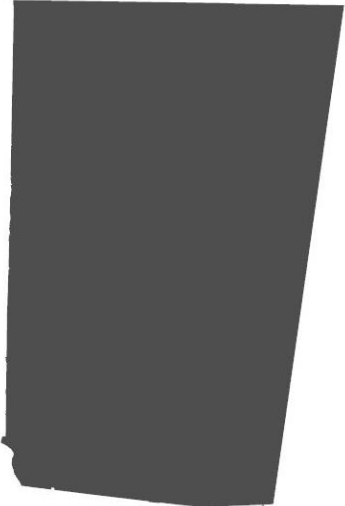
Share and  
Collect  
Feedback  
from Public  
Engagement



Refine Plan  
Goals and Policies



Adjust Future  
Land Use Map



# Testing Alternatives in Orange County



Initial Public Inputs on Plan Vision and Goals

Existing Conditions & Planning Influences Analysis

Development of Land Use Alternatives

Public Inputs on Preferred Aspects of Land Use Alternatives

Development of Policies and Growth and Conservation Framework (map and categories)

# Land Use Alternatives Discussion



## What's the question?

Define the question that alternatives modeling will answer

## What are the alternatives?

Conceptual alternatives that respond to question

## What is the modeling approach?

Methodology and tools to model alternatives



# Work Completed To Date



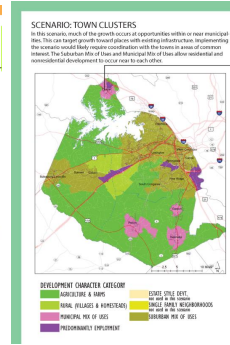
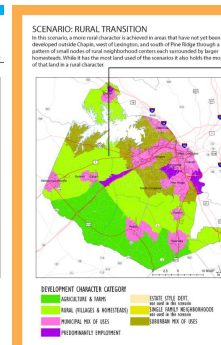
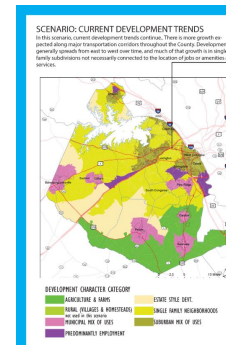
1. **Project team work session** to discuss question, conceptual alternatives, and begin discussing methodology.
2. **Staff Working Group** meeting to share the recommended question, conceptual four (4) land use alternatives, and discuss data needs.

# Alternatives Approach: Exploratory



## Provides for exploration of critical community topics:

- Natural resources and agricultural lands protection
- Creating more affordable housing
- Reducing carbon footprint through reduction of VMTs and transit
- Economic equity and jobs creation

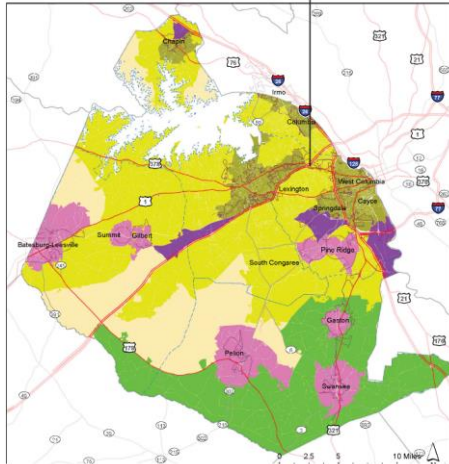


# Example of Exploratory Approach



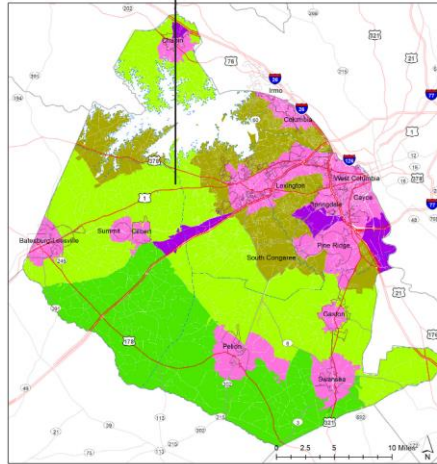
## SCENARIO: CURRENT DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

In this scenario, current development trends continue. There is more growth expected along major transportation corridors throughout the County. Development generally spreads from east to west over time, and much of that growth is in single family subdivisions not necessarily connected to the location of jobs or amenities and services.



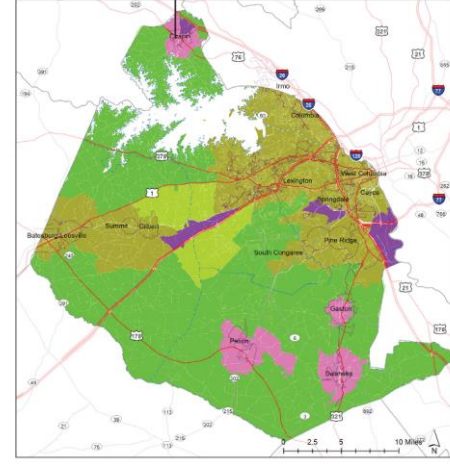
## SCENARIO: RURAL TRANSITION

In this scenario, a more rural character is achieved in areas that have not yet been developed outside Chapin, west of Lexington, and south of Pine Ridge through a pattern of small nodes of rural neighborhood centers each surrounded by larger homesteads. While it has the most land used of the scenarios it also holds the most of that land in a rural character.



## SCENARIO: TOWN CLUSTERS

In this scenario, much of the growth occurs at opportunities within or near municipalities. This can target growth toward places with existing infrastructure. Implementing this scenario would likely require coordination with the towns in areas of common interest. The Suburban Mix of Uses and Municipal Mix of Uses allow residential and nonresidential development to occur near to each other.





# Key Question for Land Use Alternatives to Answer

# About the Key Question



- **Focuses effort** so all groups involved have a common understanding of purpose and intent
- **Focuses analysis** to ensure that testing includes a manageable number of variables and results in meaningful outcomes
- **Serves as a “beacon”** during the development of the alternatives when other questions tend to creep in

# Identifying Key Question



- What specific question do we want the land use alternatives to answer?
- Or put another way, what is the critical land use planning question that would benefit from alternatives analysis and testing with the public?

# Key Influences to Consider

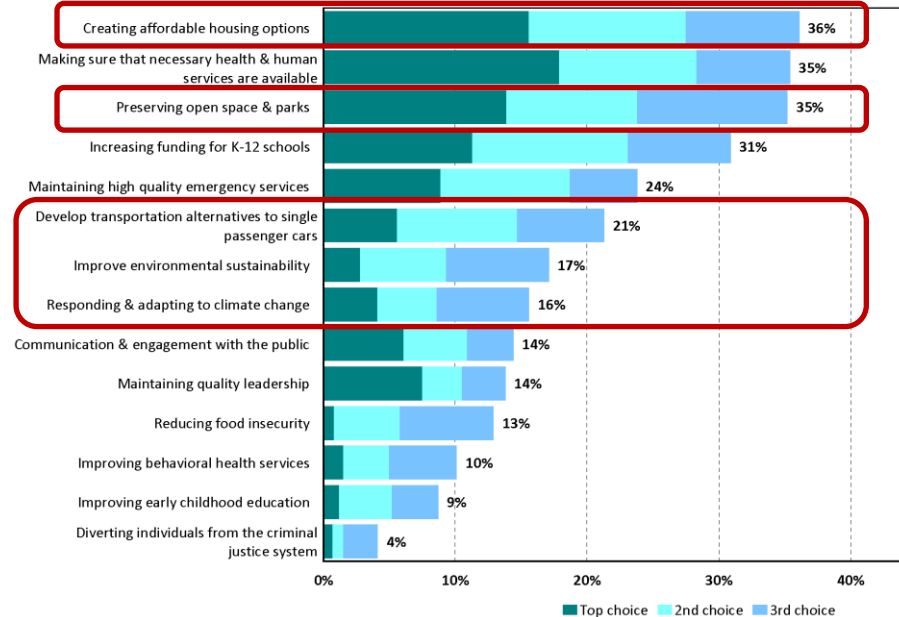


Orange County, NC 2023 Survey

## Q1. Most critical roles for the County government in the next 10 to 20 years

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top three choices

  = Direct Land Use Plan implication (including nexus with transportation)



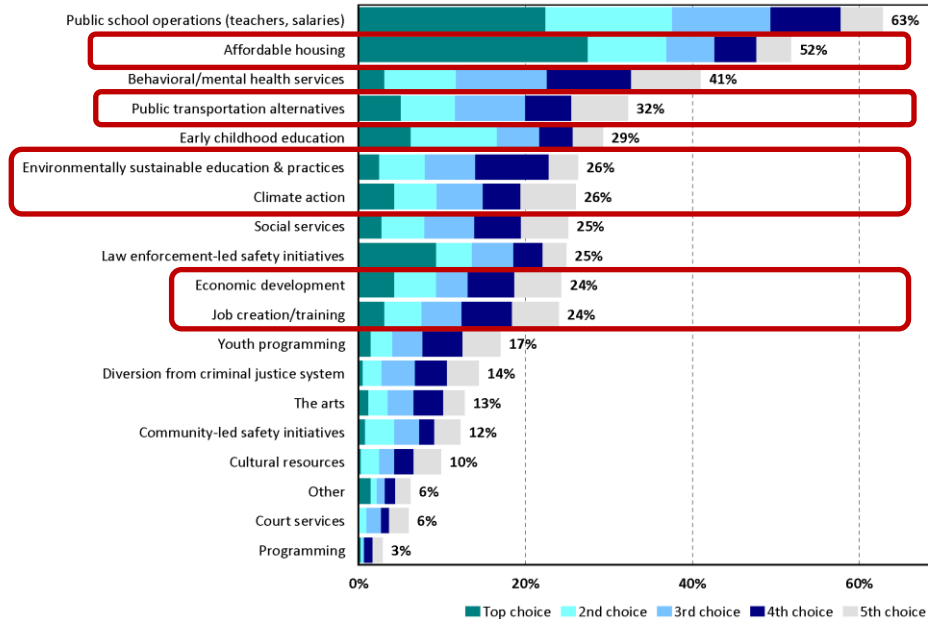
# Key Influences to Consider



Orange County, NC 2023 Survey

## Q11. Top local government services to be prioritized

by percentage of respondents who selected the items as one of their top five choices





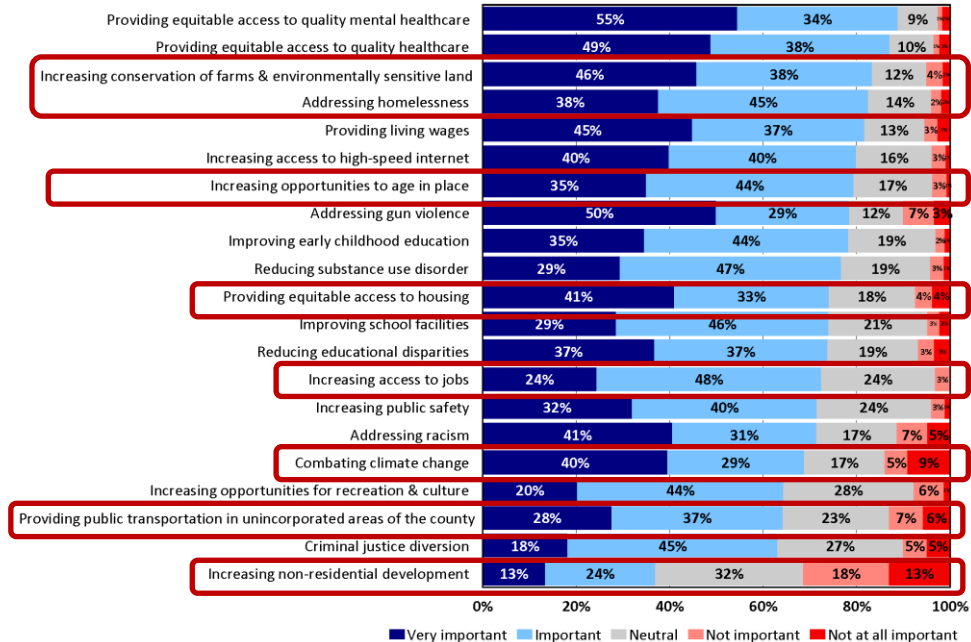
# Key Influences to Consider



Orange County, NC 2023 Survey

## Q17. Rated Future Priorities of the County

by percentage of respondents (excluding "don't know")



# Key Influences to Consider



- Depending on how you ask the question, the priorities change.
- It may be hard to understand the interconnections of some of these issues.
- Example...

# Key Influences to Consider

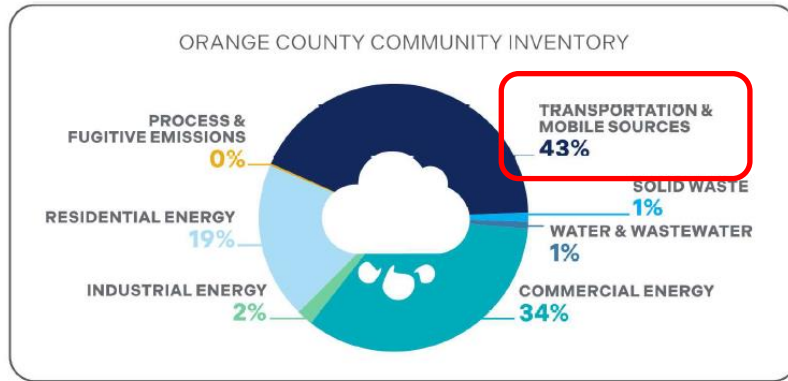


Figure B: Orange County Community Inventory

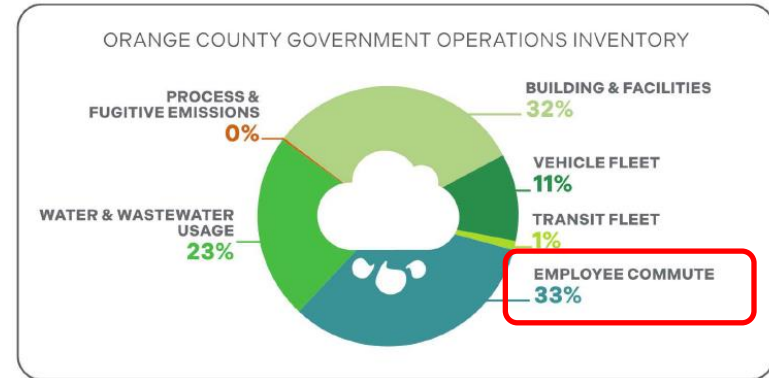


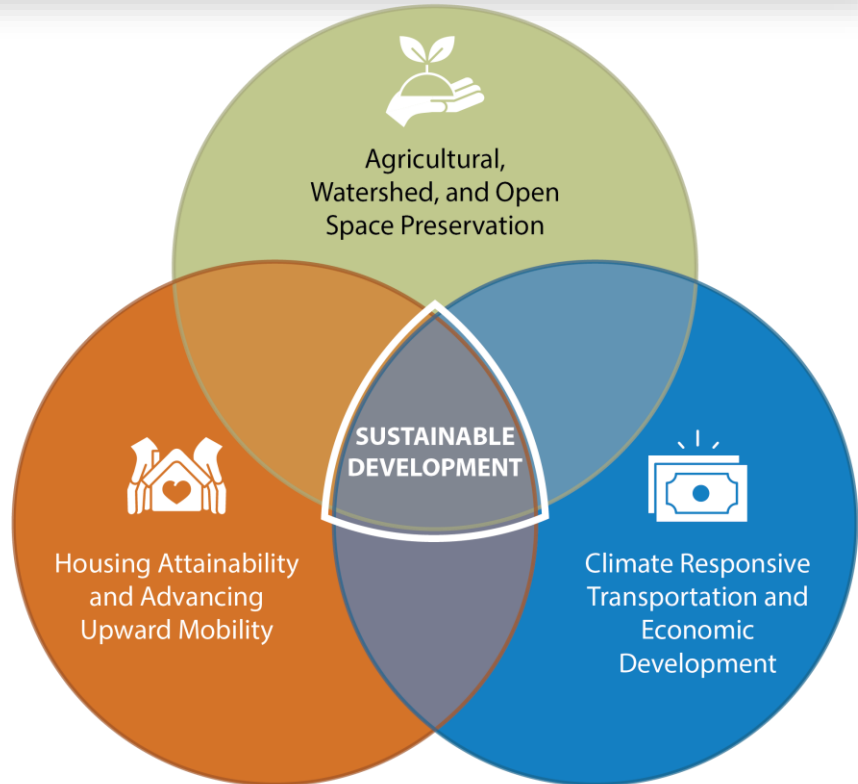
Figure C: Orange County Government Operations Inventory

Interconnection of housing/affordability and climate action as it relates to commuting (distance between work and home).

# Proposed Key Question



Which aspects of the land use alternatives best achieve the balance of sustainable development in unincorporated Orange County?



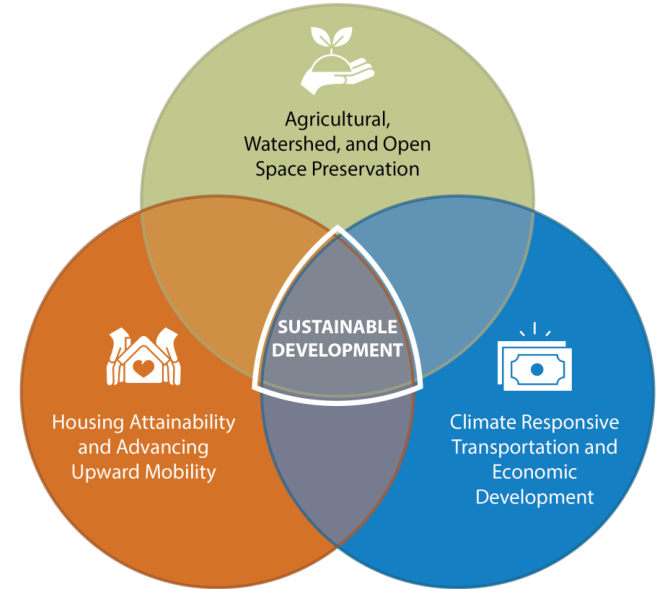


# Proposed Land Use Alternatives

# Key Influences to Consider



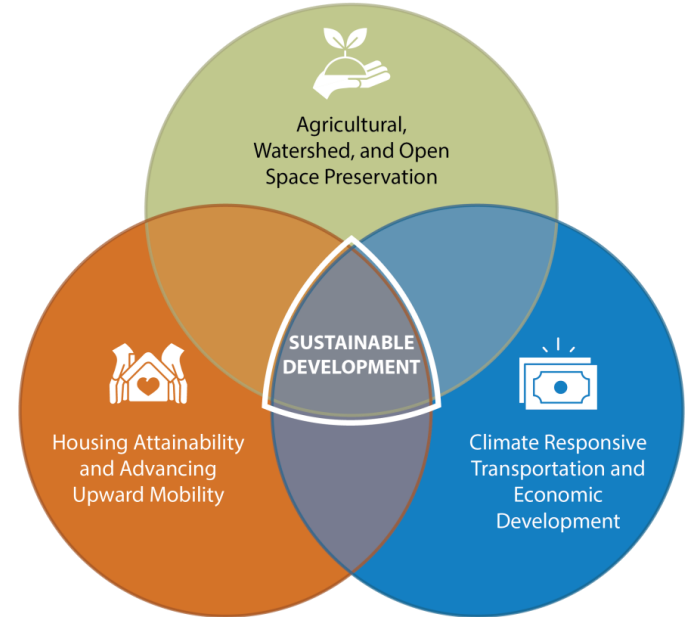
- Climate Action Plan
  - Rural buffer and conservation priorities
- Strategic Plan
  - Environmental stewardship, natural areas protection, affordable housing



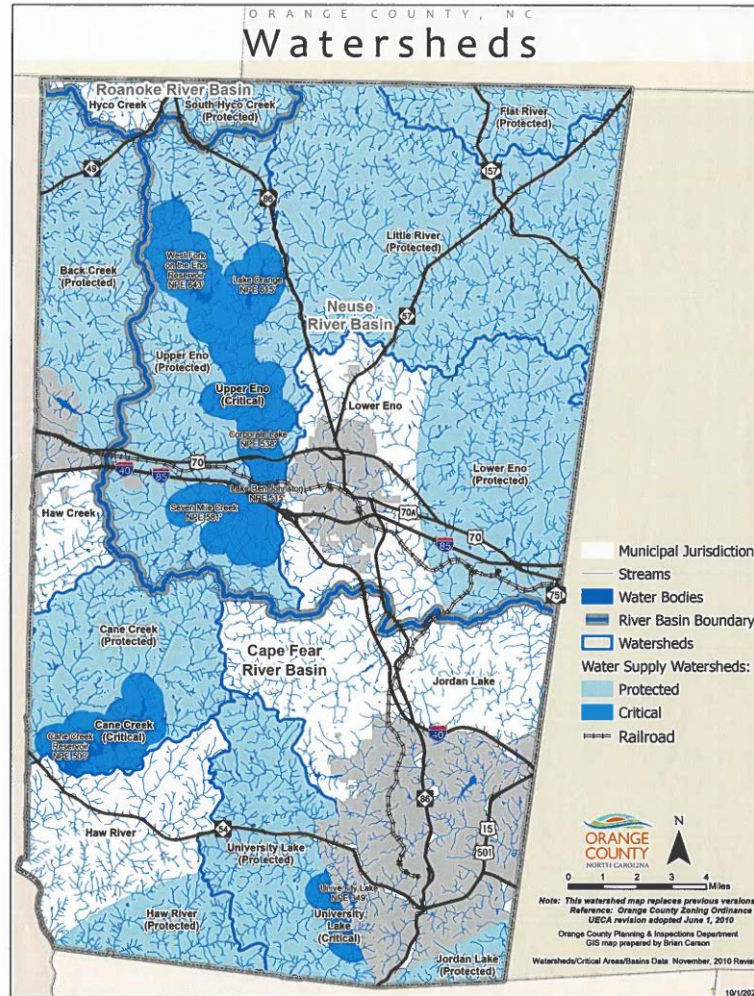
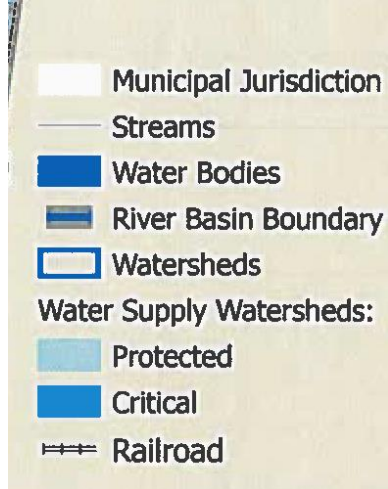
# Key Influences to Consider



- Fact Book findings:
  - Demographic shifts
  - Housing trends
  - Climate impacts
  - Agricultural lands loss
  - Natural resource impacts



# And Data...





# Recommended Alternatives



1. Continue Current Policies
2. Enhance Agricultural and Environmental Protections
3. Add Low-Impact, Mixed-Use Neighborhoods in Strategic Locations
4. Add Higher Intensity, Mixed-Use Centers in Strategic Locations

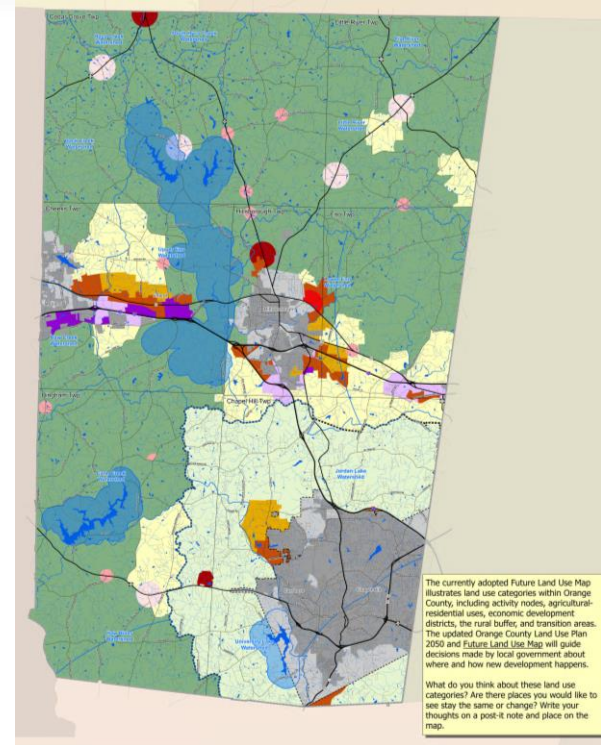
# Alt 1: Continue Current Policies



#1

## Policies to Test:

- Continue with currently adopted FLUM and associated zoning densities
- Minor adjustments to change to parcel-based map and combine duplicative FLUM categories



# Alt 2: Enhance Agricultural and Environmental Protections



#2

## Policies to Test:

- Lowering densities to protect priority agricultural, environmental, watershed, and rural lands
- Assumption that new affordable/denser housing is accommodated within the municipalities
- Could also eliminate the Rural Community Activity Nodes that are not currently developed

## Alt 3: Add Low-Impact, Mixed-Use Neighborhoods in Strategic Locations



#3

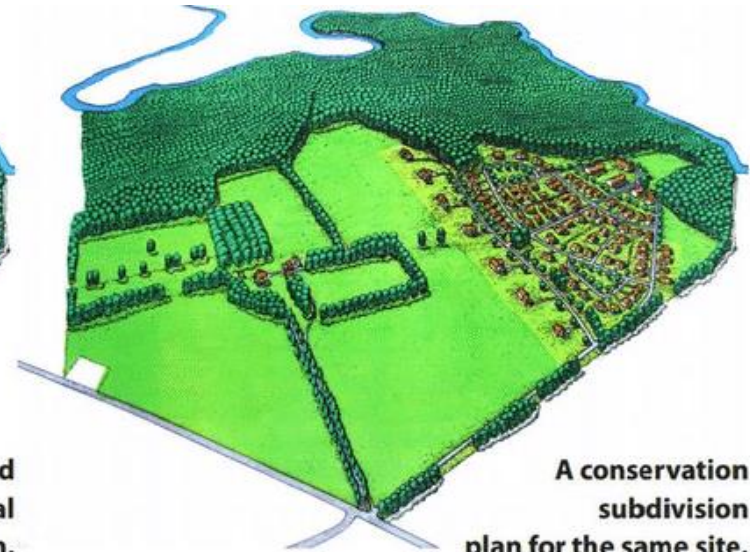
- Focus on creating **conservation subdivisions** that could include a mix of housing types and possibly neighborhood serving commercial areas
- Protect key ecologically valuable areas of site
- Will likely require municipal utility services or community systems to serve development
- Identify locations within County's jurisdiction proximate to municipalities and outside of WSW critical areas
- Potential testing of locations in Rural Buffer

# Ex. Conservation Subdivisions



Images courtesy  
of Randall Arendt

**A proposed  
conventional  
site plan in New Bern.**



**A conservation  
subdivision  
plan for the same site.**

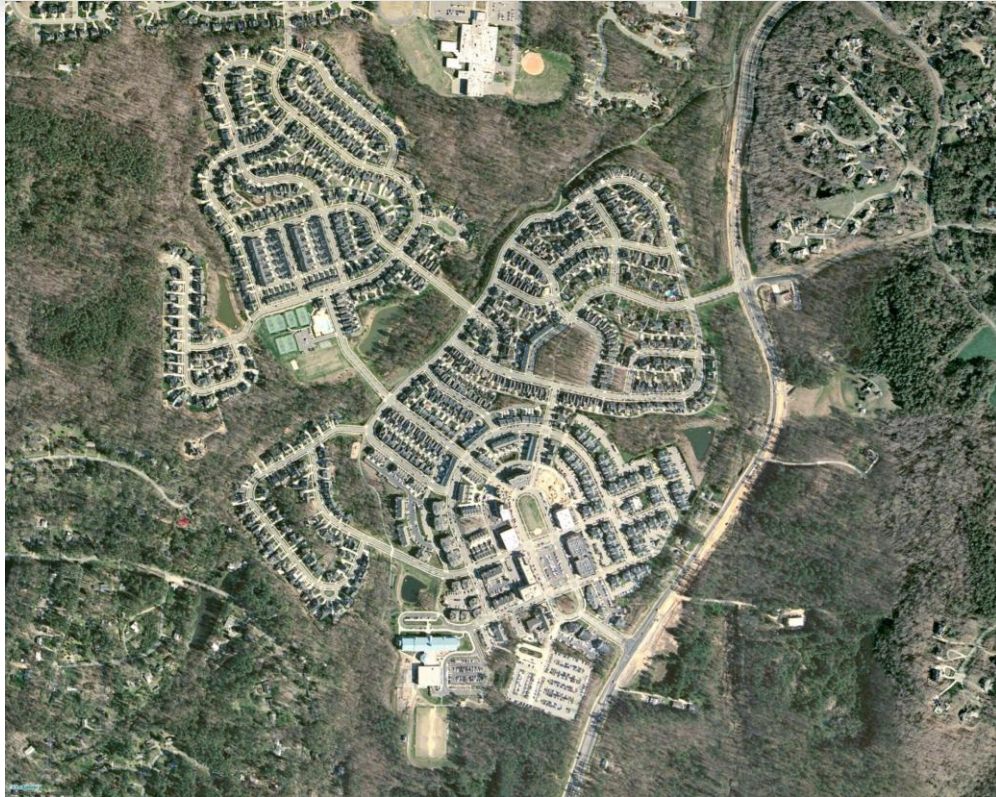
## Alt 4: Add Higher Intensity, Mixed-Use Centers in Strategic Locations



#4

- Focus on maximizing available land that could include a mix of housing types and commercial/employment areas
- Protect currently required areas (e.g. RPA)
- Will require municipal utility services to serve development; community systems could be an option
- Identify locations within County's jurisdiction proximate to municipalities and outside of WSW critical areas
- Potential testing of locations in Rural Buffer

# Ex. Higher Intensity, Mixed-Use Center



Southern Village



Questions?



# How refined should analysis get?



For #2 (Expand Agricultural and Environmental Protection), should the following be included?

- Agricultural Preservation Board's plan work
- Eno River and New Hope Landscape Plan for Wildlife Habitat Connectivity (ecologically valuable areas)
- Lands Legacy Program Priorities

(There are timing and effort implications to add in these inputs into modeling.)

# BOCC Feedback on LU Alternatives



- To stay on schedule, will need any further BOCC inputs by middle of May 2024.



# Wrap Up and Next Steps

# Next Steps



## Next Steps

- Phase 4 - Develop Plan (Summer 2024):
  - Draft Plan Framework, Vision, and Goals
  - Growth and Conservation Framework
  - Land Use & Development Recommendations Report
  - Preparation for Community Engagement Window #2