



Northampton County, North Carolina 2040 Comprehensive Land Use Plan

NOVEMBER 4, 2020 WORKING DRAFT



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Chapter 1: Introduction	3
Chapter 2: Key Data and Information	7
Chapter 3: Goals and Objectives	10
Chapter 4: Future Land Use Map	13
Chapter 5: Implementation Plan	18

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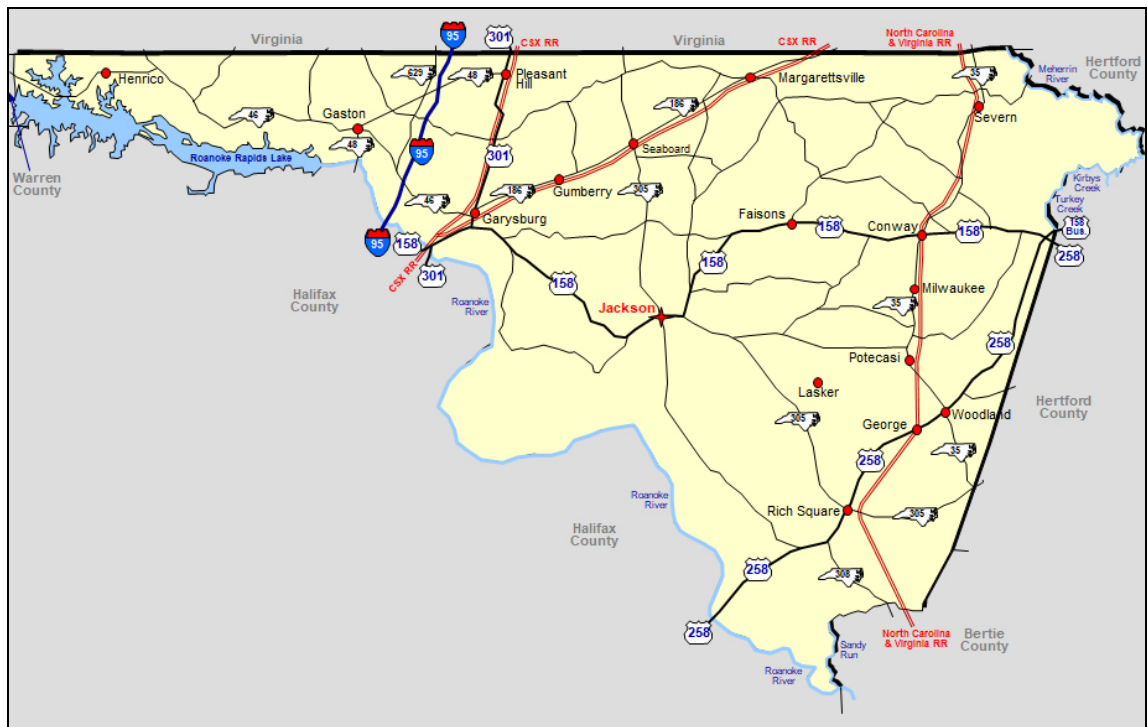
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Executive Summary

[**Note:** The Executive Summary will be drafted as the last step of preparing this plan.]

Executive Summary Outline

- Purpose and Context of Plan
- Summary of Existing Conditions
- Overview of Key Plan Themes
- Future Land Use Map
- Implementation plan



Chapter 1: Introduction

Welcome to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Northampton County, N.C.

This plan is intended to focus on the future of Northampton County, and to provide information and guidance as decisions are made regarding future land use and development.

USER'S QUICK GUIDE TO THE PLAN

Up until now, Northampton County has not had a Comprehensive Plan, and adoption of this Plan represents the first such document for the County. Details regarding the preparation, adoption, and implementation of Comprehensive Plans are spelled out in NC General Statutes that authorize local governments in NC to use Comprehensive Plans as key growth management tools, with an emphasis on land use.

The terms “Comprehensive Plan” and “Comprehensive Land Use Plan” are often used interchangeably by communities. “Comprehensive Land Use Plan” is the term that will be used with this plan.

A Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a “blueprint” that provides guidance to influence where and how a community will grow over a period of time. It consists of maps, goals, objectives, and strategies.

This Northampton Comprehensive Land Use Plan is organized around three broad themes, which serve as a framework for the goals, objectives, and strategies contained in the plan:

- *Managing Growth*
- *Expanding Economic Opportunities*
- *Preserving Farmland/ Rural Character*

These guiding themes for the plan are discussed in **Chapter 1**. Then, **Chapter 2** summarizes a brief history of Northampton County, and provides a summary of information about existing conditions. **Chapter 3** presents goals and objectives that grow out of the guiding themes. Many of the goals and objectives are interrelated. **Chapter 4** presents a Future Land Use Map, along with strategies designed to direct and manage growth in a purposeful, intelligent manner. Here in Chapter 4, the goals and objectives are translated into geography. **Chapter 5** outlines action steps for implementing this plan.

This Comprehensive Land Use Plan will serve as a policy document that outlines a vision and goals for the future of Northampton County, with a focus on land use issues. An Advisory Committee was appointed by the Board of Commissioners, to discuss land use issues in Northampton County, review draft documents, and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. Beginning its work in March, 2020, the Advisory Committee was made up of 16 members representing various interests within Northampton County, including: County Residents, Homebuilders and Developers, Property Owners, Business Owners, and Service Providers.



Background

North Carolina legislation authorizes but does not require local governments to adopt Comprehensive Plans. Most cities and counties in North Carolina do have Comprehensive Plans, but there are multiple jurisdictions with smaller populations (including Northampton County) that do not.

Northampton County does have a Zoning Ordinance that regulates use of land, along with an accompanying set of Subdivision Regulations that address property lines and how parcels of land are divided into developable lots. Both of these regulatory documents are periodically amended as conditions change or as clarification is needed.

In the 2019 session of the NC General Assembly, General Statute provisions authorizing city and county land management regulations were recodified and modernized, and combined into a new Chapter 160D of the NC General Statutes. Every city and county zoning ordinance in the State now is required to be updated to conform to this new statutory framework by July 1, 2021.

One of the rules in the new Chapter 160D is that, in order for a jurisdiction to have authority to administer a zoning ordinance, it must have an adopted Comprehensive Plan. Chapter 160D describes components that may be included in a comprehensive plan, and the approval process for adoption of comprehensive plans. Chapter 160D makes clear that comprehensive plans are advisory, not regulations, but requires that such plans be adopted, and included in consideration of zoning decisions. Section 160D-501(a) of the General Statutes states that, in order for a local

government to be able to adopt and apply zoning regulations, “a local government shall adopt and reasonably maintain a comprehensive plan that sets forth goals, policies, and programs intended to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of the jurisdiction.” Without a comprehensive plan, a local government is not authorized to have and administer a zoning ordinance. Approximately 20% of North Carolina counties do not currently have adopted comprehensive plans. Accordingly, a “grace period” has been established: a local government with zoning but without a comprehensive plan must adopt a plan by July 1, 2022, in order to continue implementing zoning regulations.

Strategy for Northampton County

The Northampton County Board of Commissioners began this initiative to prepare a Comprehensive Plan and make required amendments to the Northampton Zoning Ordinance. The intent has been to pursue both of these initiatives (preparation of a plan and preparation of ordinance amendments) concurrently, to achieve efficiencies in professional work and in public engagement. Ordinance amendments must be adopted by July 1, 2021 in order for the Northampton Zoning Ordinance to remain viable. For the comprehensive plan deadline: there is a grace period for jurisdictions that currently have zoning regulations but do not currently have a comprehensive plan, which affords more flexibility for that initiative. It is the intent for Northampton County to have plan and ordinance documents in alignment with State requirements by early 2021.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PLANNING IN NC

When the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation in 2019 (modified in 2020), requiring that jurisdictions in North Carolina have a Comprehensive Plan in order to be able to administer and enforce zoning and subdivision regulations, it clarified but did not change the regulatory authority of those land use planning tools. While a zoning action taken by a local government is not required to be consistent with an adopted Comprehensive Plan, there is a requirement that, when adopting or rejecting any zoning text or map amendment, the governing board must approve a brief statement describing whether its action is consistent or inconsistent with a Comprehensive Plan, and explaining why the action taken is reasonable and in the public interest.

The base of this new Northampton Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a Future Land Use Map, presented in Chapter 4.

RELATIONSHIP OF LAND USE PLAN TO ZONING

A key point to emphasize is the relationship of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan to Zoning and Subdivision regulations. Northampton County currently has a Zoning Ordinance and a set of Subdivision regulations, which contain mandatory rules and restrictions regarding use of land in the County. A Comprehensive Land Use Plan, by contrast, does not set specific rules and restrictions regarding land use; rather it is intended to serve as a guide to decision-making regarding the future of Northampton County.

The Northampton County Comprehensive Land Use Plan focuses on the

unincorporated portions of the county and areas outside of existing municipal Extraterritorial Jurisdictions, where the county exercises zoning jurisdiction.

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan is a general policy document to guide the physical development of Northampton County. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan does not have the force of law for the enforcement of its goals and objectives. Zoning maps and ordinances must be adopted to create the regulations and enforcement authority to implement this Northampton County Comprehensive Land Use Plan. An Implementation Plan is included in Chapter 5 of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan to provide a “roadmap” as to how the plan goals and objectives can be implemented.

SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES

Three key themes surround and inform the issues that are addressed in this Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Those themes are described as follows:

Managing Growth

Northampton County seeks to grow in a manner that preserves and expands opportunities for existing and new residents, while preserving the heritage and culture of the County.

There are key transportation corridors that pass through Northampton County, offering infrastructure that supports growth. The proximity of nearby population concentrations can offer employment and other opportunities for Northampton residents. One of the key challenges is how to accommodate and manage growth in a manner that contributes to the economy, culture, and character of Northampton County. Strategies can include a focus on residential development in key locations,

and employment and retail uses located near residential neighborhoods, in or close to towns, helping to protect the rural character of the community. Future growth should be managed to ensure that when completed, public facilities are in place to service new development.

Northampton County's commercial activity centers should be well-designed and accessible by a variety of transportation modes. A mix of land uses, including residential, office, commercial, and light industrial uses is desirable. Wise development of the County's commercial corridors is a critical component of a balanced economy.

It is expected that Northampton County's overall density will remain relatively low, with clustering of housing occurring along with preservation of open space.

Commercial and industrial nodes should be planned to guide non-residential growth to areas intended for such developments. New development should be oriented to serving nearby residential areas. New non-residential development should have adequate traffic circulation, transportation accessibility, and be sensitive to the natural environment.

Expanding Economic Opportunities

Recognizing the need for expanded shopping and employment opportunities, Northampton County welcomes a wide variety of businesses, providing many jobs, from part-time work to professional employment. With its railroads, major state roads, and interstate highways, Northampton County is a marketable site for business parks and industrial development. Business parks and industrial uses should be low impact, environmentally sound, and connected to the community.

The historic and rural character of Northampton County is important, and should be maintained where possible as a defining feature in new developments and redevelopment projects. New residential, commercial, and employment centers should be designed to reinforce Northampton County's character. New development should be designed to fit with and preserve, where possible, the natural environment, and be attractive from roadways and adjacent properties.

Preserving Farmland / Rural Character

Northampton County is known for its rural heritage and environment. It is important that farming needs to be protected as an important part of the Northampton County lifestyle, and also as a key anchor of the Northampton County economy. In addition, the natural vistas of farmland and vacant wooded parcels of land enhance the visual character enjoyed by area residents and visitors, while preserving farmland. Property-owners' rights need to be respected, as they have been in the past.

Pressures to develop farmland and take it out of production are increasing, along with accompanying threats to rural character and damage to the agricultural component of Northampton County's economy. Continuation of agricultural land uses is important, and the County continues to explore mechanisms to encourage farming and preservation of rural character.



Chapter 2: Key Data and Information

This Chapter provides a summary of available information, serving as a foundational data source for the Plan. When this Plan is updated in future years, this existing conditions information will serve as a point of comparison for helping to determine whether or not Plan objectives are being achieved. It is recommended that these data sources should be updated regularly, as possible.

BRIEF HISTORY

Northampton County was formed in 1741 from neighboring Bertie County. Settlement in the area began in the late 1660's. It is bounded by the state of Virginia and Hertford, Bertie, Halifax, and Warren counties. The Roanoke River determines the southwest border of Northampton County. The Meherrin River marks the northeastern boarder. The present land area is 533 square miles. Northampton County is number one in peanut production in the state of North Carolina and number two in cotton production. Agri-business accounts for approximately half of the revenues generated by local business. The principle types of farm products are peanuts, cotton, broilers, and hogs.

POPULATION AND HOUSING UNITS

Northampton County had a population of 22,086 in 2000, 22,099 in 2010, and an estimated of population 19,483 in 2019. Approximately 69% of housing units are owner-occupied.

Most development in Northampton County (outside of municipalities) has occurred along historic transportation corridors and in the western portion of the County near Lake Gaston.

ECONOMIC STATISTICS

The main focus of economic activity in Northampton County is related to agriculture. Overall, total employment in the County totaled 4370 jobs in 2018, up 3.5% from the year before.

Many Northampton residents commute to other counties for employment.

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Northampton County has a rich history. It also currently faces numerous conditions that represent strengths, disadvantages, and opportunities. Following is a summary of current circumstances.

Strengths:

- Rich Agricultural Heritage.
- Rich history - - Starting with Northampton as expansion from Jamestown in 17th century.
- A collection of friendly communities.



- Access to I-95 Corridor.
- Rail corridors – north-south rail corridor, and corridor east and into Virginia.
- Lakes: Attract development, provide recreational opportunities, housing.
- Two Community Colleges (Halifax and Roanoke-Chowan); connections with high schools in the area; agreements for workforce development.
- The I-95 corridor has an established industrial park. The county owns land that is available for commerce, and part of this property has water and sewer available.

There are also circumstances and issues which present various levels of disadvantage to the County.

Disadvantages:

- Limited shopping, entertainment opportunities.
- Limited employment opportunities.
- Not taking enough advantage of two nearby community colleges in Halifax and Hertford Counties.
- Need to increase housing stock; insufficient access to housing can make it hard to attract workforce.
- Presence of nuisance and vacant properties.
- Existing problems with floodplains, especially eastern end of County, can affect main street businesses.
- Lack of good transportation systems is a problem in many parts of the County.

Taking those strengths and disadvantages into consideration, community discussion has focused on the opportunities that emerge as possibilities as Northampton County moves into the future.

Opportunities:

- New development possibilities exist in key locations of the County, especially in the I-95 corridor and around Towns.
- Opportunity to showcase County advantages/amenities to attract business development.



- Construction of US 158 expansion near and around Garysburg which will change transportation and commuting travel patterns, possibly opening up new opportunities.
- Approved water expansion projects (USDA) are a significant achievement that will help spur growth; availability of public water is a significant benefit.

- Opportunities to attract young entrepreneurs, to help reverse existing demographic trends (population decline, aging profile). Opportunity to achieve a good balance of seniors, young entrepreneurs, vibrant families, and strong neighborhoods.
- Objective should be a good stock of attractive and affordable housing for all. Opportunity for the County to take an active role.
- Opportunities for greater presence, involvement of Community Colleges.
- County recently allocated \$1,000 to each town to develop Mainstreet landscape, helping each of 9 towns to have a vibrant main street; Towns can leverage these funds.
- Availability of housing and commercial space go hand in hand. Promote live and work opportunities for families and neighborhoods.
- There is an abundance of open space available. Combined with possible grant money there are opportunities to provide areas that are accessible for people to use.
- Need to take care of our senior population. They've worked here, invested here, and we want to provide an array of services to them. Look at examples of Senior Centers in other communities.
- Explore opportunities for branding, based on geography (I-95 corridor, hunting, fishing, etc.).
- Need real estate structures that businesses can buy, lease, rent to own, including space for small retailers. Currently there is not a good inventory of good, affordable buildings for businesses to move into.

Chapter 3: Goals and Objectives

This chapter offers a summary of the issues, goals, and objectives for the Northampton County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

CURRENT ISSUES

Over the course of preparation of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan, multiple discussions were conducted to identify key issues, strengths, and opportunities related to land use issues in Northampton County. Led by the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, the following topics were raised and discussed:

- Strong community fabric: Northampton residents are connected. Whether business or neighbor, people here are always supporting each other.
- Northampton County has many strong points. The creation of Lake Gaston was a significant benefit for the County, but the County has not taken full advantage.
- I-95 runs through the center of the County, creating the benefit of a major transportation corridor.
- There is significant opportunity to promote tourism, and encourage visitors.
- There is a mix of new residents and long-term residents, and a mix of interests.
- Need to have a good balance between residences and businesses.
- Transportation is critical. There are opportunities to identify key links between transportation and land use, including use of roads, trails, bikepaths.
- There are some areas designated for highway business now on the zoning map, but few and far between. Need to allow for more.
- Two towns have Extraterritorial Jurisdiction areas (Garysburg and Woodland), where jurisdictional conflicts occasionally arise. More intergovernmental coordination is desirable.
- Ongoing communication with Towns about zoning is essential, including promoting understandings regarding which jurisdiction enforces which ordinances, and development of interlocal agreements. County does provide building inspection services to Towns via interlocal agreements. One municipality, the Town of Lasker, currently has a Comprehensive Plan.

PLAN FRAMEWORK

The meanings of the terms goal and objective, as used in this plan, are summarized as follows.

Goals are statements about what the County aims to achieve over the next 20 years, or over the life of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Goals should give decision-makers and citizens a clear idea about the County's intended direction. It is possible to use indicators to measure how well a community is accomplishing its goals.

Objectives provide a definite course of direction for the County that will guide decisions and set a framework for actions. They provide ongoing guidance for elected leaders, appointed officials, community leaders, staff, and administrators as they make decisions about development, programs, and capital investments in the County.

The goals and associated objectives in this Comprehensive Land Use Plan are organized into three categories, following the outline of key themes:

- *Managing Growth and Infrastructure*
- *Expanding Economic Opportunities*
- *Preserving Farmland / Rural Character*

Following are the goals and objectives of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan, organized as noted according to the three themes.

THEME: MANAGING GROWTH

The County realizes that the availability of land in this area is not a limiting factor to growth. It also realizes that growth can have significant impacts on agriculture, community character, and tax base. The County will implement this plan to achieve well-planned growth patterns that are fiscally, socially, and environmentally responsible.

Goal 1: Grow in a Fiscally Efficient, Compact Manner.

Dispersed development patterns create a higher tax burden on the county than more compact patterns that can make more efficient use of existing infrastructure. In addition, sprawling development patterns can increase conflicts with agriculture. The County will encourage new development to locate near existing communities.

Objective 1A: Encourage growth to be located within existing areas.

The County will continue to work with municipalities to adopt clear boundaries for Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Areas and expected areas of annexation. County regulations and zoning will be adjusted so as not to encourage growth outside of these corporate areas, and to encourage development to locate in areas that are planned for availability of services such as water and sewer.

Objective 1B: Allow for higher densities and a greater mixture of land uses near developed areas.

The County will encourage development and mixed land use patterns in areas that make the most efficient use of infrastructure.

Goal 2: Encourage preservation of rural character.

The County recognizes that taking measures to mitigate potential negative impacts to the community at large will help it grow in a way that is conducive to its needs and maintenance of its character.

Objective 2A: Preserve rural character.

Support initiatives designed to permanently preserve open space and agricultural land.

THEME: EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

A balance of residential and non-residential growth is critical to Northampton County. Special efforts are needed to take advantage of opportunities created by proximity to nearby urban areas, and by the presence of the I-95 corridor. The County needs to grow and diversify its economy in a manner that does not impede the continued vitality of agriculture or the quality of life and community character aspects that make Northampton County a desirable place to live.

Goal 3: Diversify and expand the economy.

Objective 3A: Business expansion and development

Encourage and promote the development and expansion of new and existing business and industries by offering a progressive atmosphere for enterprises that will diversify the local economy, expand the tax base, and enhance the quality of life in Northampton County.

Objective 3B: Identify Future Industry Sites

Identify areas best suited for industrial and commercial development, and make land use and infrastructure decisions to encourage development in those areas.

Objective 3C: Promote Agricultural Entrepreneurship

The County will continue to encourage agricultural business undertakings, by providing information about state and federal farm incentive programs.

THEME: PRESERVING FARMLAND AND RURAL CHARACTER

Agriculture is the history and legacy of Northampton County, and remains a critical component in the life of the County. In addition to supporting active agriculture and horticulture, the importance of preserving rural character (both visually and culturally) continues to loom large.

Goal 4: Preserve Farmland

Encourage protection of productive areas of the county for continued agricultural and forestry use.

Objective 4A: Ensure well-planned Rural Development

Discourage development patterns that result in the excessive reduction of farmland, open space, and wooded areas.

Objective 4B: Support Preservation Efforts

Encourage/promote programs and regulations that result in the protection of farmland, open spaces, and wooded areas.



Goal 5: Continue the Agricultural Tradition in Northampton County

Northampton County has been an agricultural community since its founding. Agriculture is a valued and defining feature of the history, landscape, and culture of the county that will be retained for future generations to enjoy.

Objective 5A: Support Local Agriculture

Work to market and promote local agricultural production through such vehicles as farmer’s markets and community supported agriculture.

Objective 5B: Encourage Agri-tourism

Promote appropriate agri-tourism activities that can help support a local farm’s economic vitality.

Chapter 4: Future Land Use Map

Chapter 4 offers a Future Land Use Map to guide land development decisions.

SUMMARY

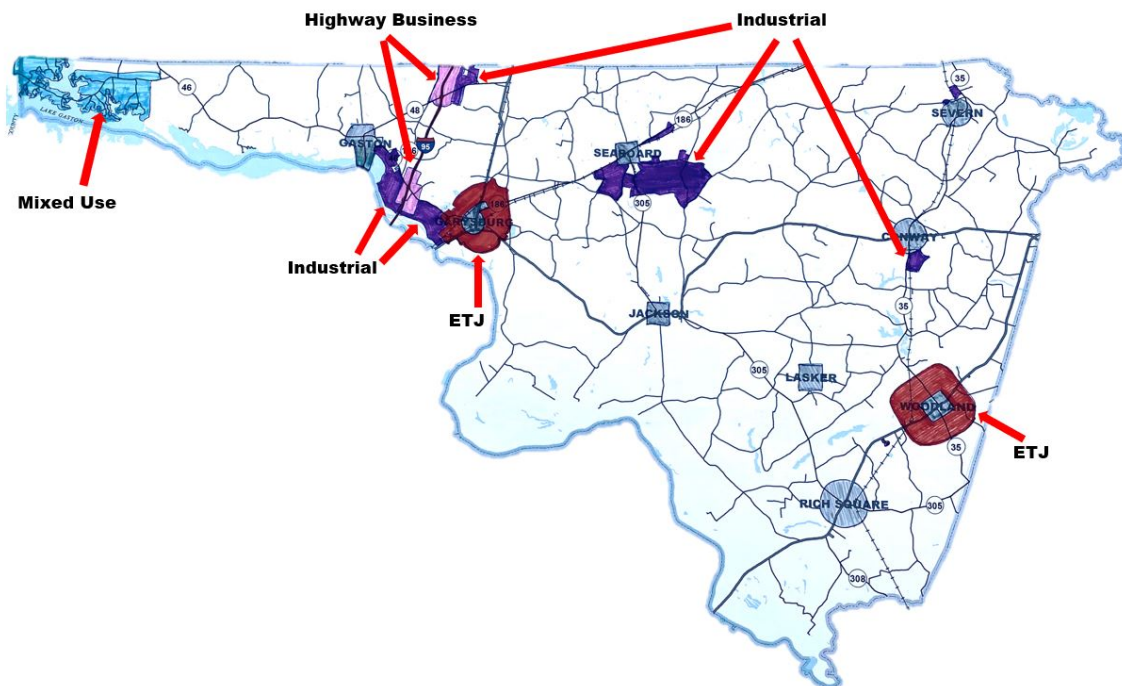
Northampton County's land use patterns have historically been heavily influenced by the prominence and locations of agricultural activity. Agricultural-related activity continues to be the dominant land use, but is now joined by industrial uses, highway business establishments, and lake-oriented residential development

Current land use patterns evolved to a large extent from a combination of influences: transportation infrastructure, local soil and environmental conditions, and regional context. A key purpose of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan is to

look forward: to understand current circumstances and to use that information to help manage future growth.

DRAWING THE LAND USE MAP

One place to start is to review existing County Zoning designations. First, land that is within corporate limits of towns or municipal Extraterritorial Jurisdiction is not subject to County zoning designations. For the remainder of the County, subject to County zoning, most of the land carries zoning designations related to agriculture and/or low-density residential uses. Other selected areas are zoned to allow retail, office, industrial, or a mix of uses. The following map shows the general locations for properties in Northampton County's zoning jurisdiction that carry these zoning designations.



This map illustrates the general locations of non-rural properties which carry zoning designations that permit more intensive uses.

Looking ahead, with consideration of recent and likely-to-be forthcoming transportation improvements, a picture starts to emerge about where new dwelling units and accompanying non-residential growth can or should occur. The new areas of growth could be spread across the county, or could be focused by a combination of policy, regulation, and investment.

There is opportunity for Northampton County to target development and growth in areas best suited to accommodate it, to encourage land use patterns to occur in a manner that best promotes the County's goals and objectives.

Key considerations include coordination with municipal planning initiatives, and taking into account decisions and investments already in place.

Encouraging economic development in corridors, with related and nearby residential areas, can create employment opportunities in areas that can be served with utilities and infrastructure, and directly address the County's goals and objectives.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

Through creation of a Future Land Use Map, Northampton County is charting how best to accommodate future housing, commercial and employment uses. Northampton County intends to provide

new opportunities for business development, organize development into cohesive centers, provide connections between working, shopping, and housing uses, and set up a framework for future transportation improvements. A compact development form lays the groundwork to help create a sustainable, efficient, and livable future Northampton County.

Future Land Use Classifications

The table on the following page describes the land use categories used to create the Future Land Use Map. These land use classifications are intended to guide future development decisions, provide direction for re-zonings, and inform the process for updating the County's development regulations and zoning map.

The future land use categories include:

- (1) Agriculture/ Low-Density Residential;
- (2) Mixed Uses: Retail, Office, Residential;
- (3) Highway Business;
- (4) Industrial;
- (5) Municipal Jurisdiction; and
- (6) Extraterritorial Municipal Jurisdiction.

These six Land Use Classifications correspond to clusters of Zoning District definitions, as shown in the following table.

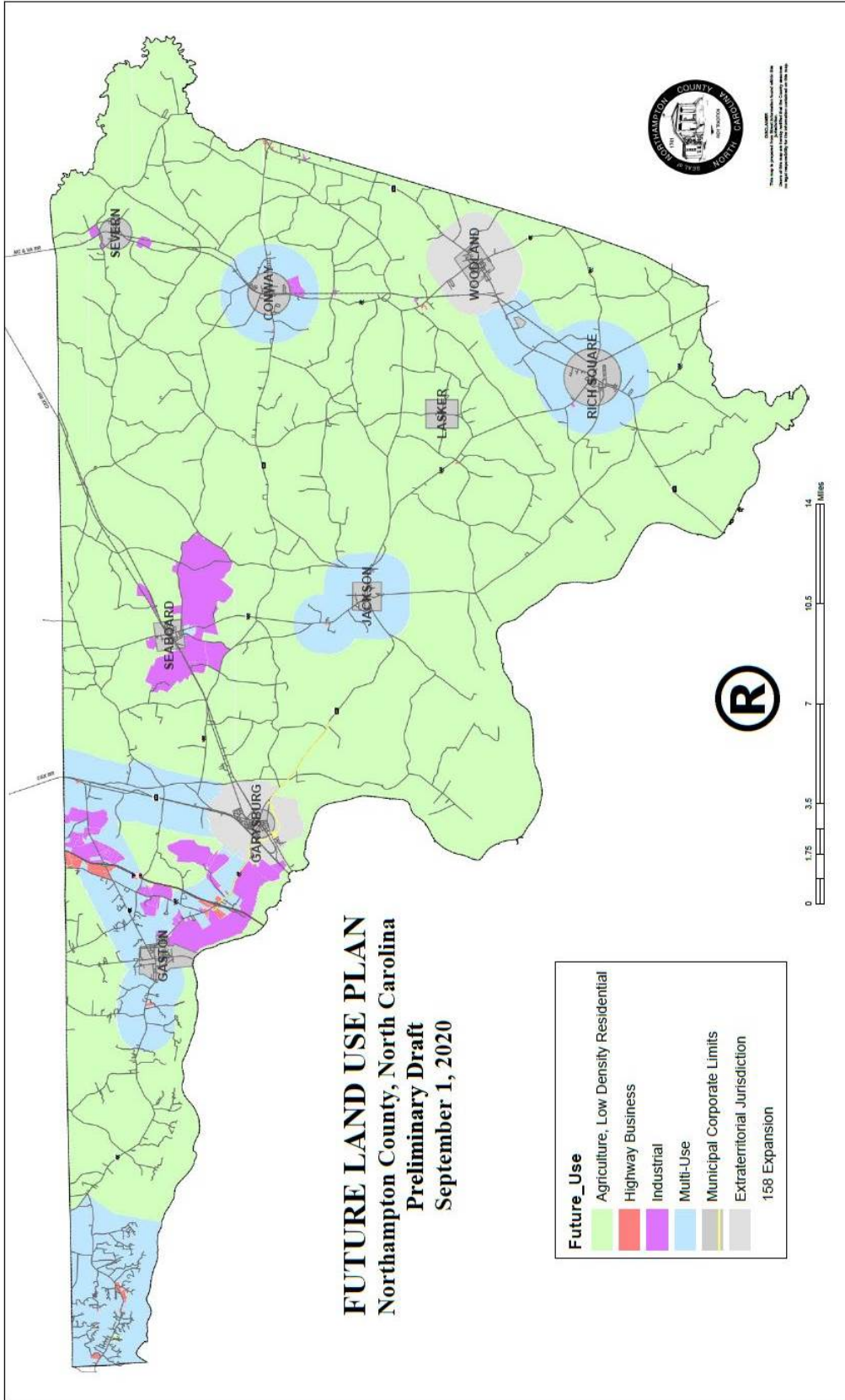
Land Use Categories for Northampton Future Land Use Plan

Existing Zoning District	Future Land Use Category
Agricultural-Residential District (AR)	Agriculture and Low-Density Residential
Agricultural-Residential Watershed District (AR-1)	
Agricultural-Residential Watershed District (AR-2)	
Residential District (R-15)	
Residential Watershed District (R-1)	
Residential District (R-10)	
Residential Watershed District (R-2)	
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Neighborhood Business District (NB)	Mixed Uses: Retail, Office, Residential
Neighborhood Business Watershed District (NB-1)	
Neighborhood Business Watershed District (NB-2)	
<hr/>	
Highway Business District (HB)	Highway Business
Highway Business Watershed District (HB1)	
Highway Business Watershed District (HB2)	
<hr/>	
Light Industrial District (LI)	Industrial
Heavy Industrial District (HI)	
<hr/>	
Municipal Corporate Limits	Municipal Jurisdiction
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Extraterritorial Jurisdiction	Extraterritorial Municipal Jurisdiction
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Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Plan Map that has been created, based on this information about existing conditions, current zoning designations, and overall County goals

and objectives, appears on the following page. This map illustrates the recommended geographic locations of these land use categories shown above.



Municipal and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction areas are shown in shades of gray. Highway Business areas are focused around key transportation intersections. Industrial areas are shown in key locations, and mirror zoning designations for industrial uses. Multi-use areas are intended to accommodate a mix of retail, office, and residential uses, which can reinforce each other, and are located around municipal boundaries, along key highway corridors, and in the western part of the county where lake-oriented development is thriving and appropriate.

The remainder of the County (including most of the land area of the County), is designated for Agriculture and Low Density Residential uses, reflecting the rural character of those areas, the absence of public facilities which can support more intense development forms, and the importance of farming in those areas.

This is not a zoning map; it is a guideline, not regulation, that focuses on future land use patterns - - 10, 15, 20 years out. It is a plan, a guide. It is an expression of expected and desirable development patterns.



Chapter 5: Implementation Plan

This Chapter outlines action steps to be taken to help implement this Plan.

SHORT TERM / LONG TERM OBJECTIVES

Through the Future Land Use Map, Northampton County is charting how best to accommodate future housing, commercial and employment development. The County encourages new opportunities for business development, encourages development to locate in and near key activity centers, and encourages connections between working, shopping, and housing uses, while maintaining a vibrant agricultural heritage. Specific areas and issues of interest include:

- The historical nature and image of the County has been rural agriculture. That nature and that image are changing.
- Residential development is welcomed, especially in areas near townships
- Non-residential development should be focused on highway corridors and towns.
- Most of the county is rural, so it is likely that any business will be local. There is need to make it possible to build small local businesses that serve rural citizens, and encourage small business development.
- US 301 corridor should be considered for industry or other development, partly based on easy access to I-95.
- River Road from NC 46 to the Warren County line already has several different highway business locations. Additional businesses can be encouraged because of proximity to Lake Gaston.

- There is need to provide jobs for Northampton residents, but there is also need to avoid bringing in industry that will cause damage to the land or contaminate groundwater or air.
- Emphasize importance of farming, especially in eastern portions of county.
- Emphasize recreation for public use in Henrico / Lake Gaston area.
- Widening of US 158 near/around Garysburg is an important project, and opportunities related to that project should be explored.

Given the importance of those issues and the points of geographic focus, and given the community issues and discussion that have been reviewed, the following specific recommendations emerge for consideration and action.

Specific Recommendations

- Retail development is needed and should be encouraged in these areas:
 - NC 46 from I-95 to Jackson
 - In and around Henrico, serving Lake Gaston area
 - 158 from Conway to 258
 - The area around Rich Square, along US 258
- Continue to explore improvements to US 158 between I-95 to Jackson.
- Promote retail development in and around Gaston.
- Allow industrial development in I-95 corridor and parts of US 301 corridor.

- From Gaston-Garysburg along NC 46, allow some retail and industrial development near I-95.
- From Garysburg east along US 158 to the County line, keep rural and agricultural.
- From Gaston-Garysburg along NC 46, allow some retail and industrial development near I-95.
- Need retail development in/around Garysburg to pull traffic off the new 158 interchange.

zoning ordinances to be expansion friendly. Other elements of the Plan include efforts to expand existing water delivery potential to underserved communities, to establish an Economic Development Commission, and to secure funding for capital project needs in the county.

The goals and objectives of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan are consistent with those Strategic Plan elements, and call for land use patterns that align with visions for the future of Northampton County.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Through the Future Land Use Map, Northampton County envisions how best to accommodate future housing, commercial and office development, and future employment opportunities. The Future Land Use Map sets up a framework for organizing development activity.

The Northampton Board of Commissioners has also worked to construct a Strategic Plan for use in pursuing the County’s objectives. Among targets in that Strategic Plan is an intent to adjust planning and

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

One of the keys to success in implementing the vision for future land use patterns in Northampton County is effective coordination with the County’s municipalities. Pursuit of desired development patterns is enhanced through execution of Intergovernmental Agreements that identify opportunities for collaborative actions. Preparation of such agreements is ongoing, and execution will help to achieve desired outcomes.



