

Draft Recommendations

Recommendations are designed to achieve the plan goals. They will guide County staff, boards, and decision-makers in their policy, funding, land use, and programming decision making. Recommendations are listed by their most relevant Plan Topic and consist of big ideas, objectives, and/or actions. Due to the interrelated nature of County planning, it is very common that some items may serve more than one goal or plan topic.

- Big Ideas are 2-3 topic-specific items the Plan seeks to accomplish.
- Objectives are the principles that will guide decisions.
- An Objective may also have supporting Actions, which are specific steps that can be taken to fulfill the objectives and goals.

1. Land Use & Development

Big Idea 1: Utilize the future land use map to direct nonresidential development to employment and commercial nodes.

Big Idea 2: Update County ordinances and zoning and subdivision standards to better align with these plan recommendations and the future land use character areas.

Objective 1.1: Guide growth in the unincorporated county based on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). In addition to using the FLUM and future land use character areas in rezoning and public investment decisions, the following should be considered when issuing permits and making land use and development related decisions.

- 1.1.1: Only permit lot sizes below 30,000 square feet in accordance with the Future Land Use character areas and only when public drinking water and sewer services are available.
- 1.1.2: Acknowledge the demand for residential growth south of and around Hwy 264 and around Hwy 64 (Future I-87) and coordinate that suburban-density growth with existing municipalities through coordinated utility investments.

Objective 1.2: Revise County ordinances to better align with this plan and with input received during the plan development process.

- 1.2.1: Consider whether more dense or very large suburban residential subdivisions (those with densities equal to or less than one dwelling unit per acre) should provide suburban facilities and services that suburban residents expect. These might include broadband lines (or conduit to facilitate future broadband service connections), sidewalks, street lights, higher vehicular and pedestrian connectivity standards, and recreational amenities (clubhouse, amenity center, greenways, and/or parks).
- 1.2.2: Reduce potential conflicts between new neighborhoods and agricultural operations through design requirements, including preservation of open space, separation requirements, and vegetated buffers.
- 1.2.3: Consider evaluating standards for reducing residential driveway access to state roads with average annual daily traffic (AADT) of 1,000 or greater.
 - Standards could limit residential drivers to a maximum of one residential driveway per lot (or one driveway per 100 dwelling units when multiple dwellings/multifamily dwellings exist on a single lot).

- Maximum of one non-residential or mixed use driveway per 300 feet per street, except in Rural or General Commercial future land use character areas or in nonresidential zoning districts.
 - No driveways shall be permitted in the functional area of an intersection.
 - Consider limiting new residential driveways to directly access thoroughfares under the following conditions:
 - No more than one residential subdivision of up to four lots per parent tract per 5 years.
 - If a residential subdivision has multiple phases and/or is a major subdivision, require that the first phase subdivided and constructed be a phase other than the lots that would be directly accessing an existing thoroughfare. Do not allow the final platting of lots accessing a major thoroughfare until at least 50% of the lots of the entire subdivision project are platted.
- 1.2.4: Explore the implementation of increased setbacks on major thoroughfares (NCDOT classifications Major/Principal Arterial, Minor Arterial, Major Collector, Minor Collector) or on roads experiencing high development pressure and or designated as "Recommended" for improvement in the current County Transportation Plan.
- 1.2.5: Consider evaluating cluster development standards.
- Continue to allow cluster developments in R40 that apply R30 standards, while eliminating allowance for cluster development in R30 built to R20 standards.
 - Consider increasing open space requirement in Cluster Subdivisions to at least preserve 40% of the site as common area with at least 25% of that as usable, contiguous, and enhanced recreational area.
 - Enhanced recreational space contains fixed improvements such as sports fields, courts, golf courses, pools, all-weather trails, playgrounds, and accessories such as benches, picnic tables, and shelters that allow for active recreation as opposed to passive open space.
- 1.2.6: Discourage newly created lots being served by access easements. Consider lowering limit on number of subdivisions served by a private road from 10 to 5.
- 1.2.7: Evaluate maximum block length and minimum connectivity standards related to subdivision standards and adjust for context, based on the future land use character area and the density of development proposed. For context, most residential subdivisions should have maximum block lengths of 600-800 feet, commercial areas should have 400-600 foot blocks, and only the most rural or large-lot industrial subdivisions should have block lengths of 1,000-1,200 feet. This helps create walkable neighborhoods when residential densities are higher, and subsequently helps reduce traffic congestion.
- 1.2.8: Consider adopting stronger criteria for evaluation of rezoning requests, such as:
- Including a more specific statement of impact on the transportation system and if mitigating actions will be taken.
 - Including a more specific statement of impact on the public utilities system and if any proposed extensions will be able to justify the increased financial burden on operations and maintenance for large-scale residential developments such as those 300 units or larger.
 - Incorporate a representative from the school district on the Technical Review Committee for large-scale residential developments such as those 300 units or larger.

- Rooftop solar energy should be encouraged, especially in industrial facilities and big box commercial sites.
- 1.2.9: Examine open space standards or park dedication requirements for large-scale residential development separate from existing cluster requirement.
- Objective 1.3:** Increase resiliency against flooding.
 - 1.3.1: Secure grants to continue clearing efforts for the free flowing of creeks, streams, rivers(s) and other waterways are maintained.
 - 1.3.2: Prepare education campaigns and/or ordinances for property owners who own property contiguous to the creeks, streams, river(s) and other waterways of responsibilities of keeping the tributaries clear.
 - 1.3.3: Ensure riparian (vegetation) buffers are maintained or developed along the tributaries during development to allow for banks to flood and adapt to changing conditions.
- Objective 1.4:** Keep productive land in farms.
 - 1.4.1: Work with the Cooperative Extension Agency to establish a countywide index of materials on programs available to support farmers, including Voluntary Agricultural Districts, present use value programs, and other conservation incentive programs.
 - 1.4.2: Consider or explore establishing a program for the County to allocate funds towards purchasing development rights on agricultural land.
 - **Case study:** Alamance County has a program for preserving agricultural lands by purchasing development rights.
 - 1.4.3: Continue and promote participation in the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program.

2. Economic Development

Big Idea 1: Build Nash County as an employment hub.

Big Idea 2: Support farmers in the retention and expansion of agricultural operations.

Objective 2.1: Build Nash County as an employment hub to provide jobs for new and current residents through business retention, attracting new employers, and supporting entrepreneurial efforts.

- 2.1.1: Continue implementing recommendations from the Economic Development Strategic Plan and keep this document and mission updated and current.
- 2.1.2: Support development of regional, industrial employment uses (e.g. – logistics and warehousing, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, agri-tech, agricultural and food processing, etc.) in the unincorporated County as part of targeted economic development opportunities and/or in locations that position these uses strategically or with access to key workforce.
- 2.1.3: Integrate economic development planning with land use planning, including developing infrastructure systems in designated growth areas. Discourage locating commercial uses in designated economic development sites and industrial-designated character areas. Use the Future Land Use map to identify sites to secure and ready for economic development.

Objective 2.2: Promote agriculture as an important part of Nash County’s economy and character.

2.2.1: Celebrate Nash County's agricultural industry in County social media, tourism materials, events, and programming. Include statistics on the economic impact of farms.

2.2.2: Explore opportunities to increase support for local agricultural production and processing through targeted infrastructure improvements.

Objective 2.3: Continue to support major regional employers, targeted employment industries, and associated supply chain industries and facilities, including but not limited to finding ways to maximize the new CSX intermodal facility in Rocky Mount.

2.3.1: In particular, supporting and expanding access to existing businesses should be prioritized, like expanding market opportunities for Nash County agricultural producers.

Objective 2.4: Increase broadband connectivity.

2.4.1: Improve Nash County's Broadband Availability Index ranking per the NC Broadband Infrastructure Office.

2.4.2: Pursue and support the extension of broadband internet throughout the County.

2.4.3: Continue participation in broadband planning programs. Work with the State and Federal Government to receive and distribute funding for Broadband infrastructure grants.

Objective 2.5: Leverage agricultural and recreational tourism to support economic development.

2.5.1: Work with Explore Nash County to include improvements in county recreation in their outreach materials.

2.5.2: Encourage agritourism operations as a means for farmers to diversify their incomes.

2.5.3: See also Parks, Recreation, and Open Space recommendations related to recreational tourism.

- **Case Study:** JoCo Grows Agriculture Marketing Committee was formed in 2019 and includes members of the farming and agribusiness community to discuss marketing efforts from on-farm events, buy direct and pick-your-own, to providing resources for marketing agricultural assets of Johnston County.

Objective 2.6: Maintain and expand the success of and access to local agricultural products and markets.

2.6.1: Participate in regional efforts to process the County's agricultural products locally.

3. Transportation

Big Idea 1: Plan for regional transportation success.

Big Idea 2: Ensure that the development of Nash County's transportation system benefits the whole community.

Big Idea 3: Explore the potential for a regional greenway system.

Big Idea 4: Ensure land use planning and development supports all modes of transportation including bike/pedestrian, transit, aviation, rail, and highways.

Objective 3.1: Continue to work with NCDOT, Upper Coastal Plain RPO, Rocky Mount MPO, and other partners to plan for regional transportation needs.

3.1.1: Work with NCDOT and coordinate with the Upper Coastal Plain RPO to develop and adopt a thoroughfare plan that accompanies the County Comprehensive Transportation Plan which addresses the relationship between land use and transportation.

3.1.2: Continue to seek grant funding through the Upper Coastal Plain RPO for corridor studies along primary roadways throughout the county. Use these studies to establish a vision for each roadway corridor and its surrounding land use, with input from the community they serve.

3.1.3: Continue to support (and if possible, expedite) the upgrading of US 64 to interstate standards, as future I-87.

3.1.4: Advocate for highway interchanges proximate to major economic development sites.

Objective 3.2: Mitigate access management issues in new development.

3.2.1: Work with NCDOT on enhanced access management standards for state-maintained roads in Nash County, limiting the number of driveways for individual businesses and homes, and encouraging development to establish an interior road network that disperses traffic.

3.2.2: Ensure that new subdivisions have adequate ingress and egress, with limited cul-de-sacs, to help connect neighborhoods, improve access, limit congestion, and encourage walking and bicycling. Standards for minimum external ingress/egress points should be established that create connected neighborhoods. When stub roads are provided for future road connections, ensure adequate turn-around radii for emergency vehicles.

Objective 3.3: Provide for the logical, sustainable development along corridors such as major regional thoroughfares such that free flow of traffic is prioritized, and adequate right-of-way area is reserved for future highway widening.

3.3.1: Special consideration should be given to roadway corridor relationships with surrounding counties.

Objective 3.4: Expand non-automobile transportation options in the County.

3.4.1: Support NCDOT's recently updated Complete Streets Policy and Implementation.

3.4.2: Promote the development of smaller neighborhood-oriented commercial service activities and safe, walkable intersections to serve current and future surrounding residential neighborhoods (e.g., the Winstead Crossroads and Halifax Road/Mill Branch Road intersection).

3.4.3: Consider development of infrastructure to support commuters that travel outside of the county such as commuter rail, car and van-pool sites.

Objective 3.5: Explore the expansion of the electric vehicle charging network, especially in residential sites with a significant density of homes or nonresidential sites with a high number of expected visits per day.

3.5.1: Explore and apply for grant funding to support electric vehicle infrastructure.

3.5.2: Consider supporting and joining Clean Cities Coalition and building partnerships to advance affordable domestic transportation fuels, energy efficient mobility systems, and other fuel-saving technologies like vehicle (EV) charging stations.

Objective 3.6: Consider a feasibility study for a greenway/multi-use path network plan throughout the County.

3.6.1: Future plan should include the following

- A particular focus on redirecting pedestrian and bike traffic that is currently on most heavily traveled roadways.

- Greenway connections within one mile of schools.
- Exploration of potential trails along rivers for recreational use and regional tourism.
- Emphasis on connections in areas near municipalities.

Objective 3.7: Plan for success of Rocky Mount – Wilson Regional Airport.

- 3.7.1: Ensure land use planning and development is conducive with the growth and development of Rocky Mount-Wilson Regional Airport. The airport is a huge asset in both corporate and freight air services.
- 3.7.2: Partner and work with the Rocky Mount-Wilson Regional Airport Authority to ensure the airport reaches its full potential as an economic engine for the region.

Objective 3.8: Where practical, support transit-oriented land use and development.

- 3.8.1: Partner and work with Tar River Transit to ensure services are reaching out into the rural community to offer transportation services to everyone that is in need. One of the highest-ranking comments on employment is lack of transportation in rural communities.
- 3.8.2: Encourage transit agencies to provide regional services and coordinate with neighboring transit agencies to provide services across current transit boundaries.

4. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Big Idea 1: Develop Nash County’s outdoor recreation system to help draw tourism and employers.

Big Idea 2: Preserve and enhance the County’s natural environment and water resources.

Objective 4.1: Continue to implement the Recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Department Comprehensive Master Plan.

- 4.1.1: Assess implementation success, projected maintenance costs, level-of-service provision, and continuing and emerging needs as part of an update to the Parks and Recreation Department Comprehensive Master Plan.

Objective 4.2: Provide regional parks, greenways, and open space to meet active and passive recreational needs for all members of the community.

- 4.2.1: Develop the Tar River as a recreational resource: boat launches, fishing access, riverside trails, campgrounds, advertising, and public awareness, etc.

Objective 4.3: Protect the natural environment through regulatory measures to reduce the impact of growth on habitats and water sources.

- 4.3.1: Protect environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, floodways, watersheds, and Tar-Pamlico and Neuse riparian buffer areas through conservation easements and greenway trail development.

Objective 4.4: Promote and invest in public parks, recreation, and open spaces that meet or exceed an established county-wide level of service.

- 4.4.1: Identify priority areas expected to experience future residential growth so that facilities can be developed where demand is predicted to increase.

Objective 4.5: Integrate expanded recreational opportunities into tourism development and business recruitment strategies.

Objective 4.6: Make mature, native forest an open space priority, especially near streams and contiguous with stream buffers or wetlands. Preserve mature, connected upland forests, too.

5. Infrastructure, Utilities, & Services

Big Idea 1: Use local land use planning to help guide public infrastructure installation and system development.

Big Idea 2: Ensure emergency services, schools, public utilities, parks, and other County services continue to serve County residents effectively.

Objective 5.1: Continue to inventory public utility lines and facilities and coordinate maintenance, upgrades, and system expansion with other public works.

Objective 5.2: Establish standards for private utilities.

5.2.1: Any private community water or wastewater systems must be designed to public utility standards with the understanding that they may be incorporated into the public system at an appropriate future date. Private systems should be designed to allow easy integration to the public system in the future should it be necessary, including installing relevant infrastructure to the limits of the parent parcel(s) and development.

Objective 5.3: Coordinate growth through utility planning.

5.3.1: Locate new utilities to maximize efficiency of services, minimize cost of service, and minimize impacts on the natural environment.

5.3.2: Prioritize expansion of County-owned sewer system(s) to locations that will help serve employment and commercial areas in addition to residential areas.

Objective 5.4: Consider partnering with municipalities on regional utility solutions so municipalities can support denser growth if they so desire.

Objective 5.5: Consider increasing the minimum distance from existing public utilities where new development is required to connect.

Objective 5.6: Improve coordination with emergency service providers on land use planning decisions.