

Land Use Plan

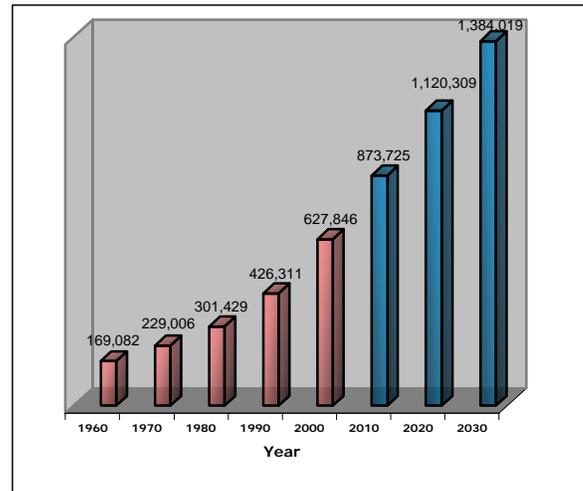
I. Background

In 1982 the Wake County Board of Commissioners adopted the *General Development Plan* (GDP) as Wake County's first growth plan. The Board has revised the GDP a number of times since then, most substantially in June 1988. At that time, the Board revised the Perimunicipal Planning Areas (PPAs) (which were the 10-15 year growth areas for municipalities), established the joint planning program, and established criteria for evaluating requests for extraterritorial jurisdiction. Since 1988, the Board and municipal governments have adopted eight joint plans for the PPAs.

Recently, a number of factors have suggested that there was a need to prepare a more comprehensive plan for Wake County, and a more detailed land use plan to replace the General Development Plan. The factors include:

Growth in Wake County: Between 1960 and 1990, Wake County's population increased by more than 150%. This rate of growth raised the issues of how to balance growth with a high quality of life, how to foster and continue economic expansion, while at the same time maintaining the features which make this area so attractive.

Wake County Population
Past, Present, + Projected



By 2027, the population of Wake County is projected to exceed 1 million.

Municipal Growth. Another factor were concerns that development was occurring without municipal standards in areas of the County, which would soon be annexed into towns' corporate limits. After annexation, these areas required a significant expenditure of funds to bring them up to municipal standards.

Farmland and Open Space. Concerns were raised about the desire to preserve dwindling farmland and open space. The Wake County Board of Commissioners had endorsed the recommendations of an Open Space Task Force, and had created, but provided limited funding for, a Purchase of Development Rights program for farmland preservation.

Public Transportation. The Board of Commissioners had endorsed an action agenda for regional public transportation, which included proposals to change land use patterns to support public transportation. On a regional scale, the aim was to focus much of the region's

growth over the next twenty years within potential transit corridors.

To address these issues, the Board of Commissioners in 1991 asked the Planning Board to prepare a Comprehensive Plan, including a Land Use Plan to replace the GDP.

Land Use Plan Process. During 1992, the Planning Board and planning department staff conducted 5 public forums, one each at Wake Forest High School, East Wake Middle School, Fuquay-Varina Middle School, Apex High School, and the County Courthouse, to hear from the citizens about the direction of the County's growth. Several discussion meetings were also held with planners from each municipality in Wake County, plus the planners from Wake County schools, the Raleigh-Durham Airport, and the Triangle Transit Authority. The Planning Board prepared a *Vision Statement and Goals and Objectives for the Comprehensive Plan*, using the ideas and suggestions from these forums and meetings.

The Board of Commissioners adopted the *Vision Statement and Goals and Objectives for the Comprehensive Plan* in September 1992. The Board of Commissioners established the elements of the Comprehensive Plan as follows:

- Land Use
- Environment, Natural Resources and Energy
- Transportation
- Housing and Community Revitalization
- Human Services
- Public Safety
- Public Utilities
- Education, Cultural and Leisure Resources
- Economic Development

(The Board of Commissioners has since then adopted Plans for the Transportation, Housing and Community Revitalization elements, as well as parts of the Human Services, Public Utilities, Environment and Natural Resources, Education, and Cultural and Leisure Resources elements.)

The Land Use element is related to all other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. For instance, the Land Use Plan outlines the location, intensities and timing of development, and the transportation element recommends ways to accommodate trips between land uses. Similarly, the water and sewer plan shows how planned urban land uses can be provided with central water and sewer services. In the case of the Wake County Land Use Plan, the Water and Sewer Plan will provide the phasing

sequence for the Land Use Plan in Urban Service Areas of the County.

1994 Draft Plan- Phase IA. From the Goals and Objectives and the 1992 meetings, the planning department produced a draft of the first phase of the land use element in 1994. The draft element primarily addressed the rural areas of the County. Given the interest expressed by the Soil and Water Conservation District Board and others in maintaining viable agriculture and rural character, the plan suggested policies designed to help maintain the low-density, rural character of agricultural and forested areas, where desired by property owners. But public response was negative, and since the success of the land use plan depended on acceptance by the community, the Planning Board created a task force to prepare the land use plan.

Land Use Task Force (LUTF) and Advisory Group (AG). At the end of 1994, the Planning Board appointed a 17 member task force and a 28 member advisory group to develop a land use plan.

During 1995 and 1996, the Land Use Task Force (LUTF) prepared a Vision Statement, Goals, and Strategies for the plan. Committees of the LUTF and AG also prepared discussion papers outlining ways to implement the goals and strategies, which the LUTF asked be used in preparing the Land Use and other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. These discussion papers are included in Chapter XII, Appendix. The LUTF did not prepare an actual land use plan.

On July 3, 1996, the Planning Board accepted the LUTF's recommended Vision Statement, Goals, and Strategies of the Land Use Plan. The Planning Board asked County Planning Staff to prepare a new Land Use Plan which incorporates the LUTF's recommendations and uses the recommendations contained in the discussion papers. The Planning Board also asked that the plan:

- *Has a long term time frame, during which most of the County will be urbanized.* The plan should indicate where municipalities anticipate extending urban services during that time frame, consistent with the ability of governments to extend water and wastewater services, as well as provide needed transportation improvements. If property owners

wish to accelerate the extension of service lines, they may do so at their cost.

- *Emphasizes the development of communities.* The plan should designate residential areas (in municipal, County and joint land use plans) with adequate land at appropriate densities, including mixed uses in suitable locations, served by community facilities, such as schools, parks, transportation and other governmental services.

- *Encourages development in and around municipalities and where urban services are or will soon be available.*

The plan should encourage local governments to:

- pre-zone enough land in appropriate locations to satisfy demand for urban land uses,
- systematically extend water and wastewater services,
- ensure that development regulations do not discourage development within their jurisdictions, and
- streamline their development review procedures.

- *Does not discourage development in outlying areas.* If the municipalities provide adequate services and make it easy to develop in accordance with their plans, the market should respond by developing close to municipalities and their services.

- *Proposes intensities and locations for land uses that can be supported by the transportation system and design access to roads so that their ability to carry traffic safely and effectively is not diminished.* The plan should encourage transit-oriented developments along existing and planned transit corridors. The transportation plans should similarly be reevaluated to accommodate changes in land use patterns.

- *Defines what resources should be maintained, sets priorities, and proposes incentives and voluntary ways to encourage their maintenance.* These resources might include: natural areas, historic sites, major

wildlife corridors, parks and greenways, scenic highways, water-supply watersheds and significant groundwater recharge areas.

- *Incorporates the Land Use Task Force's common interests, which are:*

- The plan should be created through the direct involvement of people (or at least their representatives) affected by the plan.
- The plan should address the land use needs of Wake County in a way which coordinates with the ability of governments to provide water and sewer utilities, transportation improvements, schools, protective and other services.
- The plan should try to achieve its objectives by providing incentives and by supporting and guiding market forces rather than by fighting them.
- The plan should not try to micro-manage land use, but should set forth basic principles and let those who are developing the land determine the details.

This document, which includes two maps, provides the framework for meeting those objectives.

The first map - General Classifications, addresses the long-term time frame. Working with municipal planners, Wake County Planning identified areas where each municipality is likely to provide urban services over the long term. This map is substantially complete, with the exception of the status of land in the vicinity of the Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant. Both Apex and Holly Springs identified portions of that land as a future Urban Services Area, but any urbanization there will have to be planned to maintain adequate evacuation time in case of a nuclear release. The map also needs to be refined to define which municipality will be responsible for certain portions of the Urban Services Areas between Apex and Holly Springs.

The second map - Land Use Classifications, is a work in progress. Working with municipal planners, Wake County Planning agreed that revisions to adopted land use plans should be done only with public input. Since it was not feasible to conduct public input sessions throughout the County at that time, the map outlines recommended land uses from

previously adopted plans. This map will need to be revised for two reasons. First, the previous plans were not prepared to implement the LUTF's recommendations, and second, those plans were intended for a shorter time frame, so they cover less land area.

[Note: The countywide Land Use Classifications Map is being replaced by a series of land use classification maps prepared and adopted as part of the Area Land Use Plans (see Section VIII A).

The land use plan text will need to be revised and refined to be more specific on how the plan will be implemented.

This Land Use Plan differs from the General Development Plan by using a longer time frame, emphasizing property rights to a greater extent, and maintaining water quality protection policies in water supply watersheds. As it is refined and revised, the plan will emphasize the development of communities, coordinate with the transportation system better, define which natural resources should be maintained, and propose incentives and voluntary ways to maintain them.

This land use plan will concentrate more on positive actions to encourage development in and around municipalities, e.g., coordinating with the water and sewer plan, working with municipalities to revise their regulations and procedures to encourage development there.