



# COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

ADOPTED ON :  
NOVEMBER 7, 2022



# NASH COUNTY

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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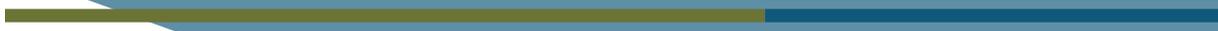
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# INTRODUCTION



# PROJECT OVERVIEW

In the Summer of 2021, Nash County began the process to update its Land Use Plan. The result is a document that reflects a vision that will guide the County's growth and development for the next 20 years.

## PROCESS

The year-long process consisted of substantial community engagement paired with in-depth analysis of the existing conditions in the county. To become familiar with the past and present conditions of Nash County, the project team conducted demographic research, spatial analysis, and familiarized themselves with existing planning documents. To create a vision for Nash County's future, the team sought input from stakeholders, members of the public, County staff, and County leadership (Planning Board and Board of Commissioners).

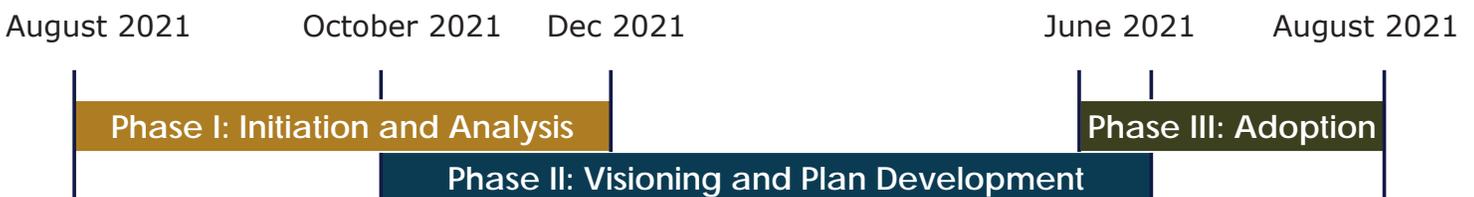
## ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement formed the foundation of this plan. Outreach included a public meeting, a community survey, and conversations with many County stakeholders, residents, and community members. A full description of public engagement is available in Chapter Two of this plan. Components of public engagement included:

- Stakeholder Focus Groups
- 585 Community Survey Responses
- Three Public Meetings
- Eight Steering Committee Meetings
- Planning Board and Board of Commissioner updates

This Comprehensive Plan makes land use recommendations for the **UNINCORPORATED AREA** of Nash County. It also makes recommendations for county-wide services such as parks and utilities.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE



## WHY PLAN?

An updated Comprehensive Plan is a State-required document for enacting zoning in North Carolina, and is also a strategic tool for local governments to shape their future.

It presents an opportunity every 5-10 years for a community to have a conversation about

- where they are
- where they're going
- where they want to be
- and how they will get there.

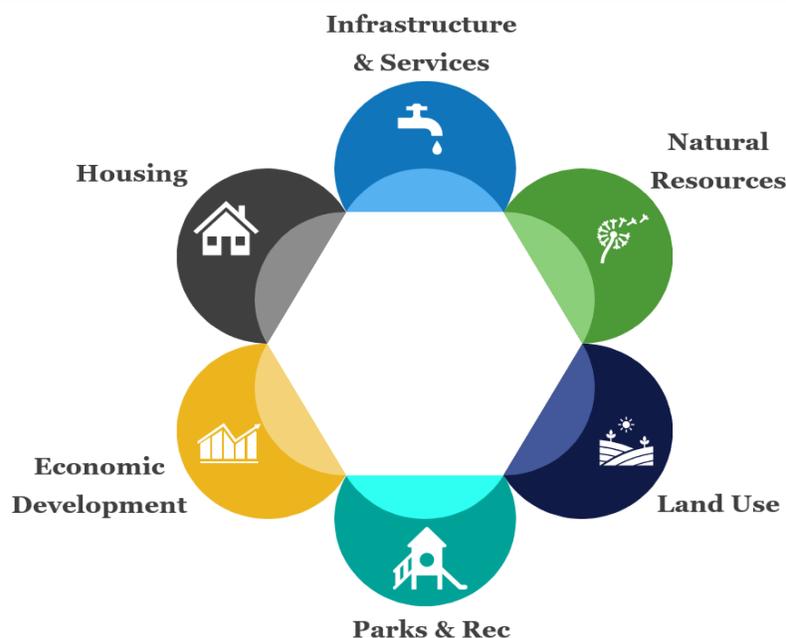
This Comprehensive Plan project came at an opportune time for the County. Recent development applications have increased, and the prior future land use map needed an update considering this recent uptick in potential development.

The Comprehensive Plan will serve as guidance for all other planning and decision-making in Nash County such as:

- Zoning and code updates
- Small Area Plans
- Parks and Recreation Planning
- NCDOT Planning
- Economic Development Planning
- Rezoning decisions
- Funding and programming

Incremental decision making and further planning are some means by which the Comprehensive Plan will be implemented.

## A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADDRESSES, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO...



# STUDY AREA

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan offers land use regulations for the unincorporated areas of Nash County. The municipalities have jurisdiction in the corporate limits and extraterritorial limits over land use. However, all County residents pay taxes to and benefit from County services and programs. Therefore, the entire Nash County community was invited to participate in the planning process. Their input will influence County matters, such as recreation planning and infrastructure, that affect all county residents no matter which jurisdiction they live in.

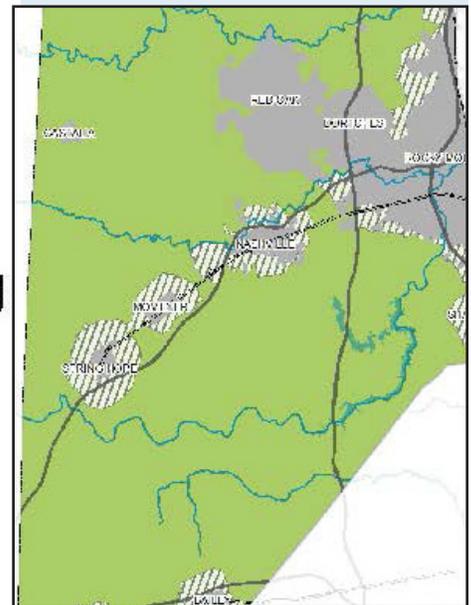
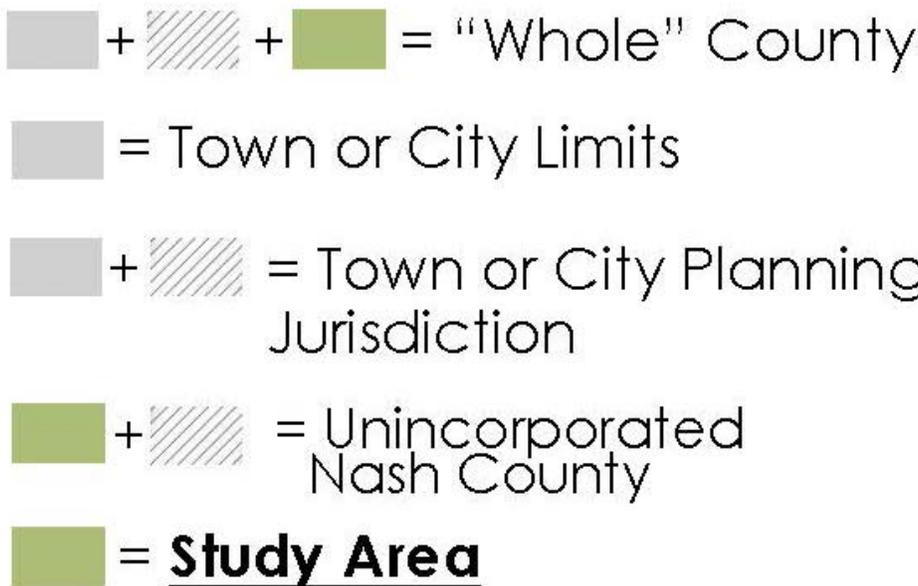
The land use recommendations are for the area outside of corporate and extraterritorial limits, otherwise referred to as the "study area."

The Study area covers **80%** of Nash County.

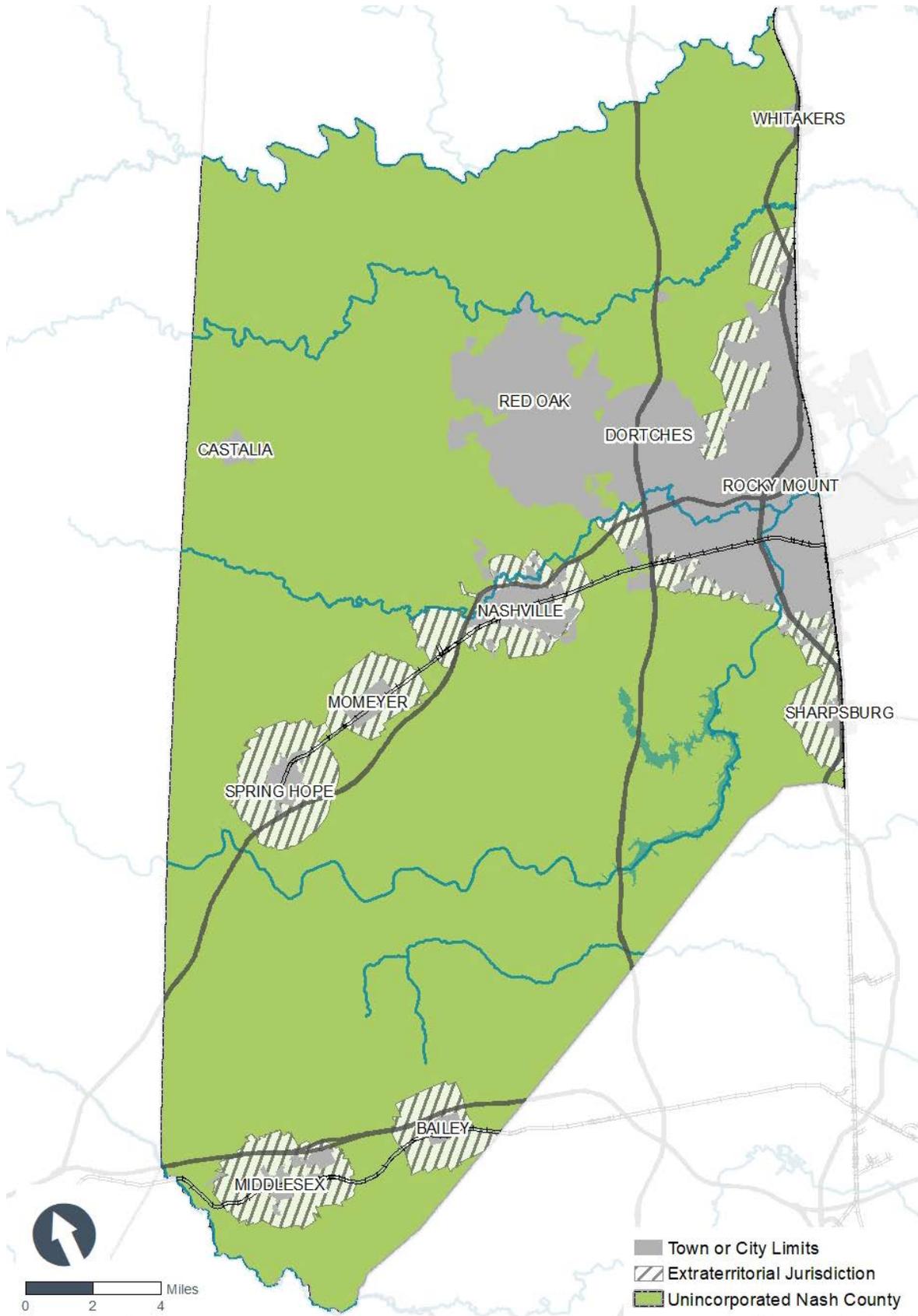
Roughly **40%** of the County's population lives in the study area.

## PLANNING JURISDICTION

At least in regards to land use, this plan generally has jurisdiction in the areas not controlled by municipalities through their corporate limits or Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). However, the characteristics of all areas (independently and combined) were often considered when performing analysis and creating recommendations. This plan is primarily concerned with the Study Area (i.e. - areas not inside town or city planning jurisdictions).



# MAP 1. EXISTING LAND USE







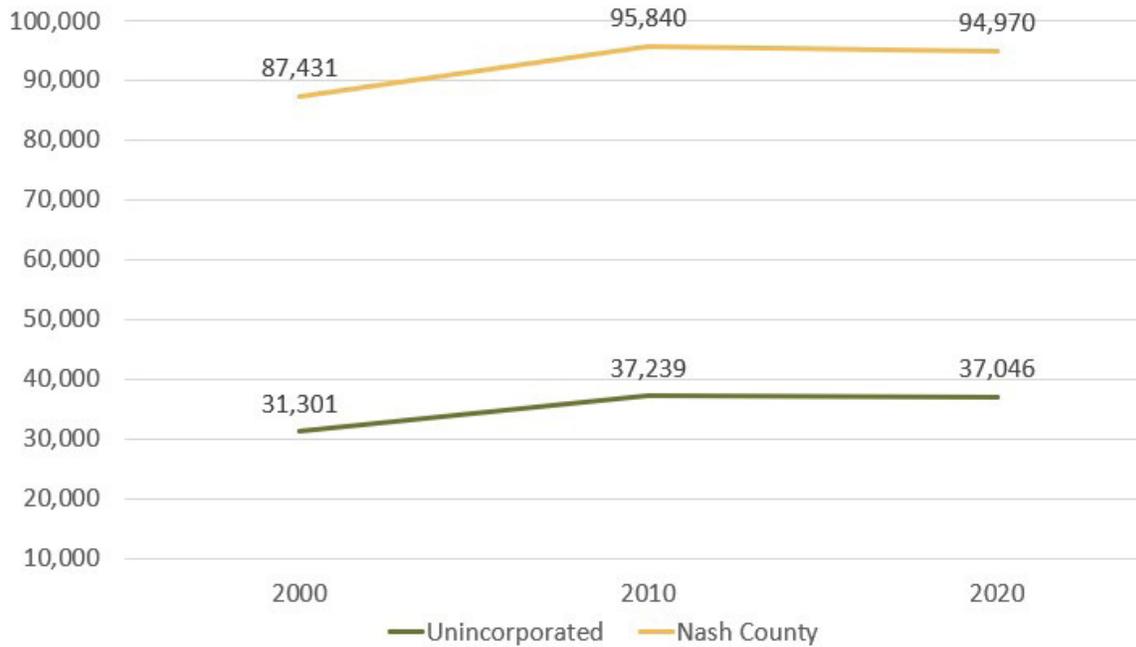
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**ENGAGEMENT,  
EXISTING  
CONDITIONS &  
GOALS**

# POPULATION

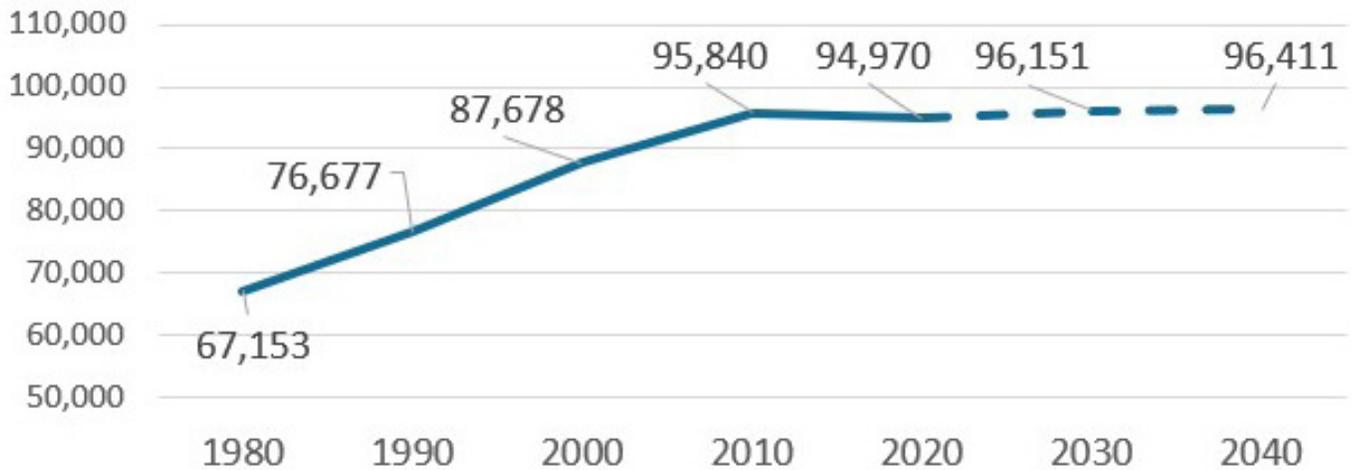
The unincorporated County has grown nearly 18% since 2000

## HISTORIC POPULATION



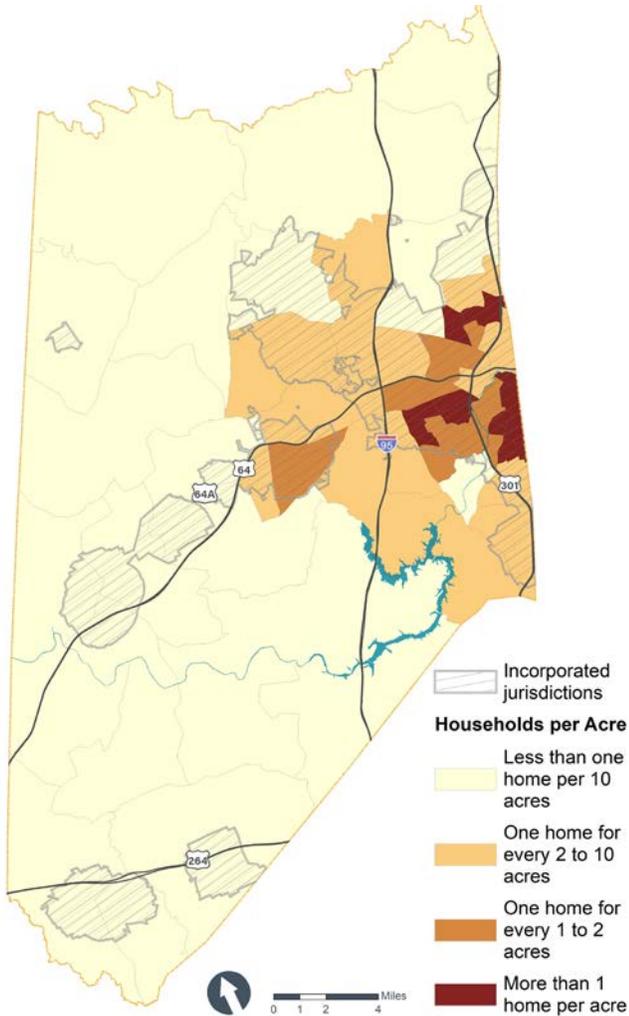
Source: Decennial Census

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS (ENTIRE COUNTY)



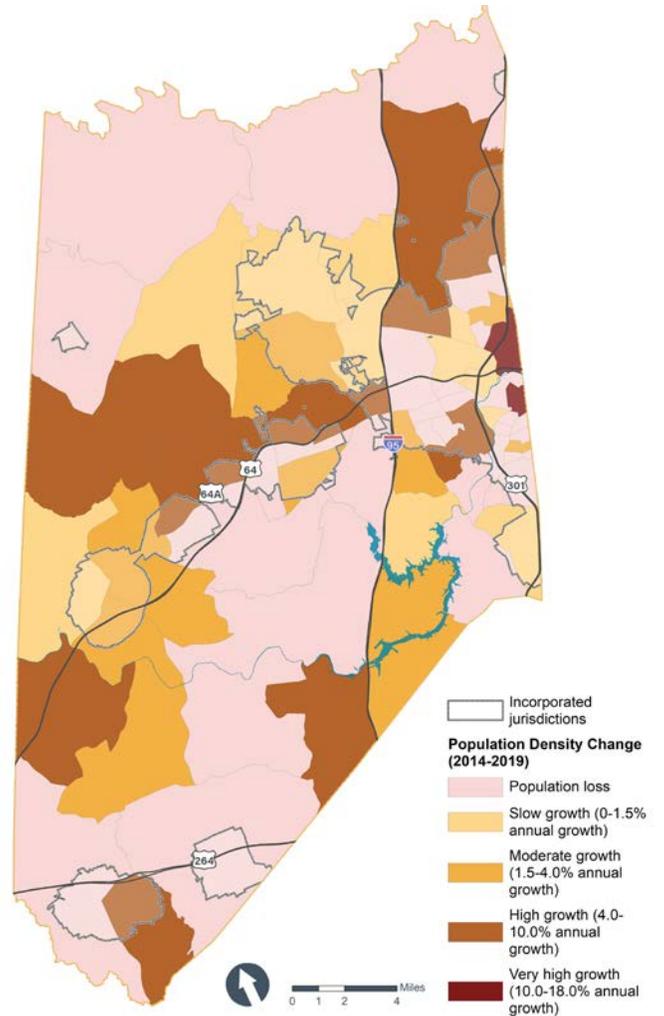
Source: Decennial Census, NC OSBM 2022

**MAP 2. HOUSEHOLD DENSITY BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP**



Unsurprisingly, the incorporated areas of the county are its most densely populated, particularly in and around Rocky Mount and Nashville. The least densely populated areas are found along the border of Halifax County.

**MAP 3. CHANGE IN POPULATION DENSITY BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP**



Growth has not occurred evenly throughout the County. Many census block groups experienced population loss from 2014-2019. The block groups that gained population density between 2014 and 2019 can be found in and around Rocky Mount and along US 64, I-95, and US 264.

# RACIAL AND AGE COMPOSITION

- Data estimates show that Nash County has similar racial makeups in the unincorporated county as in the county overall.
- Changes in racial makeup from 2010 to 2019 show that the two largest groups, those identifying as White or Black/African-American, have been relatively steady in numbers over the past decade. The County has seen changes in other racial groups, particularly those identifying as American Indian, Asian, and Pacific Islander.

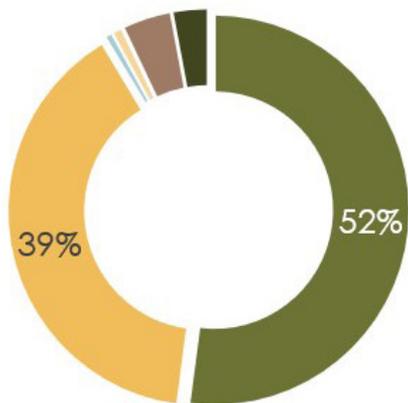
## RACIAL COMPOSITION CHANGE STUDY AREA, 2010-2019

	2010 COUNT	2019 COUNT	% CHANGE
White	23,931	23,153	-3%
Black or African American	10,215	10,406	2%
American Indian	273	382	40%
Asian	144	220	53%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	6	21	250%
Some other race	2,098	2,484	18%

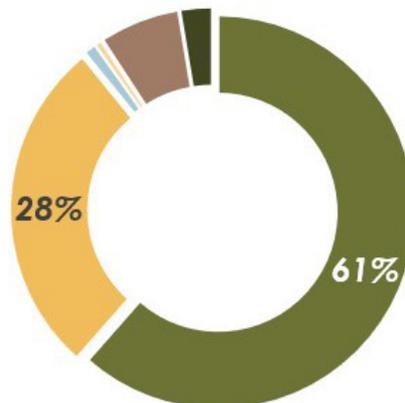
*Shown by percent growth. ACS 5-year estimates, 2010, 2019*

## RACIAL COMPOSITION

Nash County, 2019



Unincorporated, 2019



- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific
- Some other race
- Two or more races

*Source: American Community Survey, US Census, ESRI*



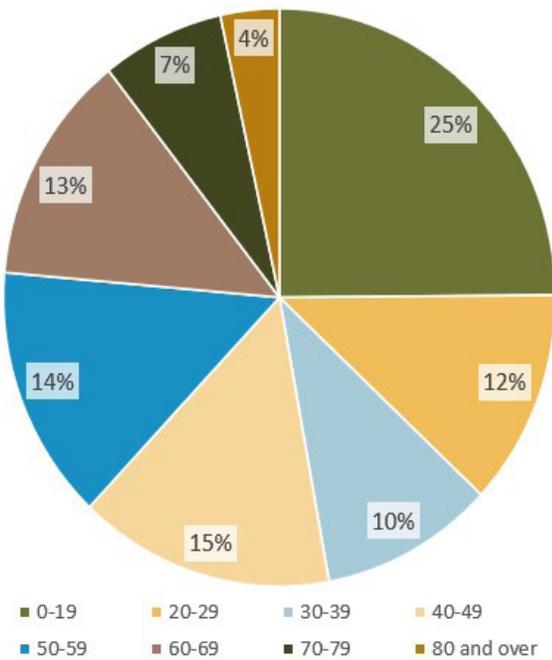
- As of 2019, 25% of the study area's population was less than 20 years old accounting for approximately 9,365 people. 52% is between 20 and 59 years, and approximately 24% is over age 60.
- Changes in age cohorts indicate an aging population, which is also a trend echoed amongst stakeholders. The median age within the study area has increased from 39.6 in 2010 to 42.3 in 2019 (ACS 5-year Estimates.) The age groups that have decreased as percent of the total population since 2010 are those under 19 years old, and those between 30 and 59 years. Population between 20 and 29 and over 60 has increased since 2010.

### STUDY AREA MEDIAN AGE

**39.6**      **42.3**  
 2010                      2019

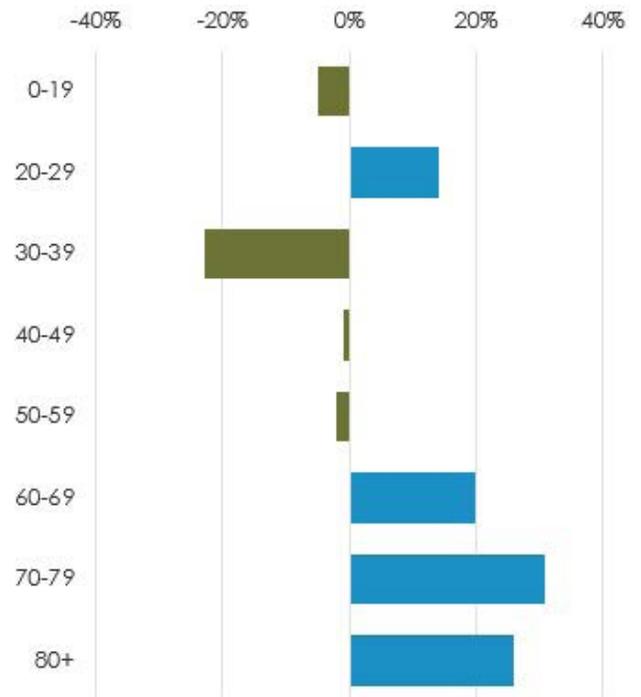
*ACS 5-year estimates, 2010, 2019*

### AGE COMPOSITION 2019



*ACS 5-year estimates, 2019*

### AGE COHORT CHANGES 2010-2019



*ACS 5-year estimates, 2019*

# HOUSING

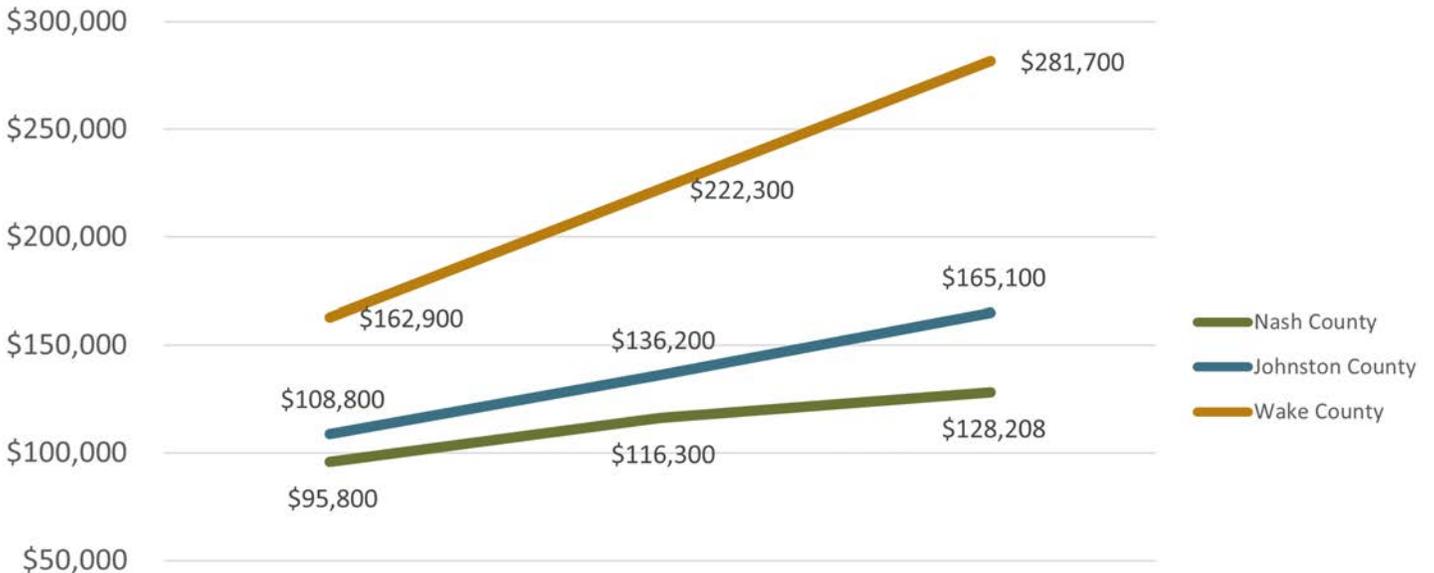
Nash County is known as a relatively affordable alternative to other areas with rising home prices and features a housing stock of primarily single-family homes (including mobile homes). Data shows that as home prices have risen in North Carolina, prices have not risen as rapidly in Nash County as compared to Johnston and Wake Counties.

Data on building stock age reflects the reported trends of increased construction in the unincorporated County. The average construction year for buildings Countywide is 1986, but 1990 within the unincorporated areas.

## COUNTYWIDE MEDIAN HOME VALUE



## CHANGES IN MEDIAN HOME VALUE BY COUNTY



Source: US Census Bureau

## 2019 ESTIMATES FOR UNINCORPORATED AREA

HOUSING UNITS

15,764

MEDIAN HOME VALUE

\$127,984

SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

64%

VACANT HOMES

12.5%

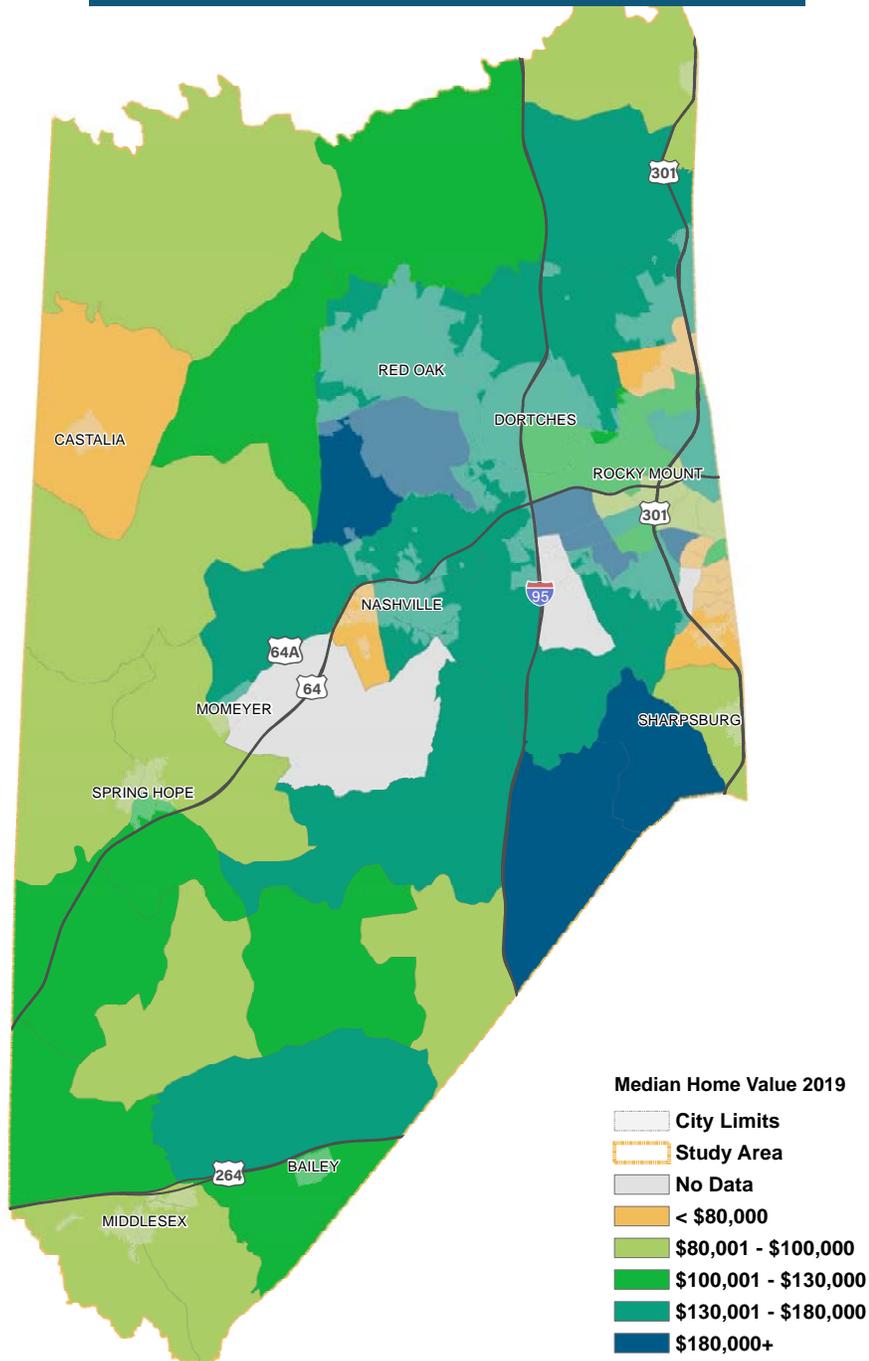
PAYING MORE THAN 35% OF INCOME ON RENT

37%

### HOUSING BY TYPE, 2019, UNINCORPORATED AREA

Single Family	10,022	63.6%
Townhome	81	0.5%
2 units	92	0.6%
3 or 4 units	175	1.1%
5 to 9 units	119	0.8%
10 or more units	52	0.3%
Mobile Home	5,223	33.1%

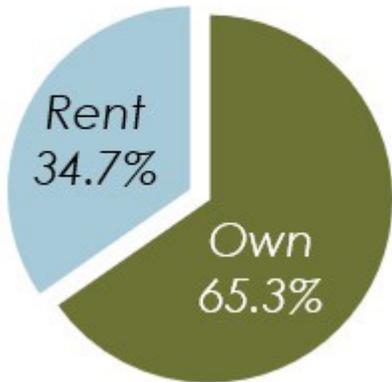
### MAP 4. MEDIAN HOME VALUE BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP



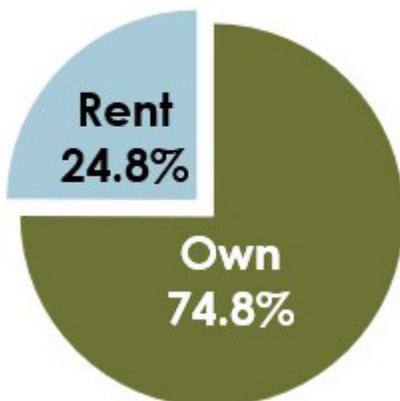
The areas with the highest median home values are found in Rocky Mount, Red Oak, and around the reservoir.

### HOUSING TENURE

Nash County



Unincorporated



Source: ESRI, US Census Bureau

# SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Majority of the homes in Nash County were built prior to 2010 and are located within municipalities. Since 2010, single-family residential development has occurred throughout the county with majority of homes being constructed in the southern portion.

In the fiscal year 2020-2021 there was an increase of nearly 80% more single-family residential development than the prior fiscal year. Single-family residential development decreased in the beginning of the fiscal year

2021-2022 by slightly more than 76%. This decrease could be due to ongoing supply issues slowing down residential and non-residential development.

## 2019-20

- 360 Residential Units
  - 1 Multi-family
- 24 Commercial Bldgs

## 2020-21

- 451 Residential Units
  - 0 Multi-family
- 27 Commercial Bldgs

## 2021-22 (August 24)

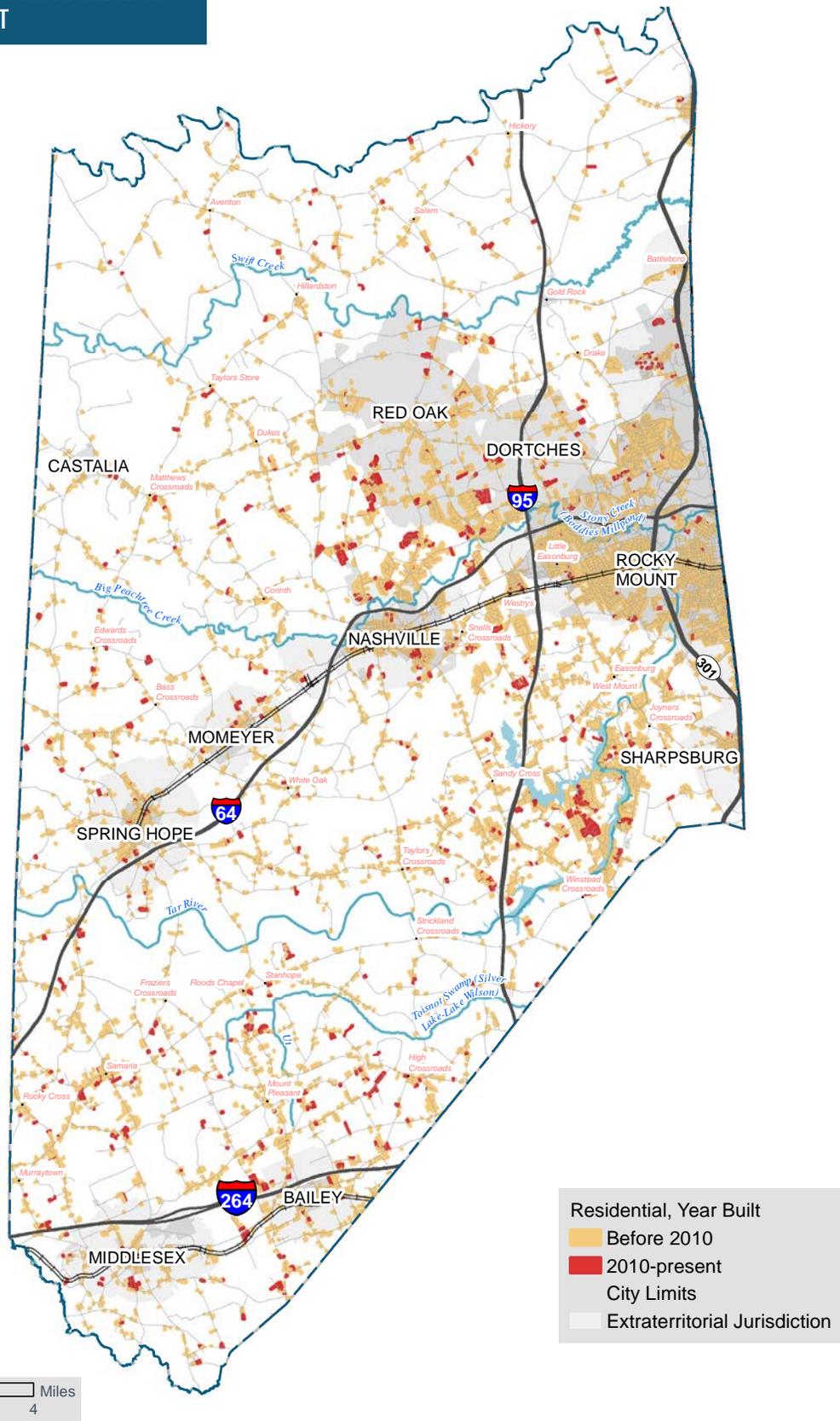
- 46 Residential Units

NASH COUNTY PLANNING & INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT PERMIT & INSPECTIONS REPORT - FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2020-2021														TOTAL (THIS FY)	TOTAL (LAST FY)
	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	MAY	JUNE			
<b>NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED</b>															
Single-Family Dwellings	20	22	33	28	17	42	37	27	40	33	20	15	334	236	
Modular Homes	1	4	1	0	0	3	2	2	1	2	2	3	21	12	
Manufactured Homes	2	8	10	8	4	14	11	5	7	11	3	12	95	111	
Two-Family Dwellings / Duplexes	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Multi-Family Dwellings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
<b>NEW COMMERCIAL BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED</b>	7	2	1	0	1	0	2	2	2	3	6	1	27	24	

NASH COUNTY PLANNING & INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT PERMIT & INSPECTIONS REPORT - FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2021-2022														TOTAL (THIS FY)	TOTAL (LAST FY)
	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	MAY	JUNE			
<b>NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED</b>															
Single-Family Dwellings	17	15											32	334	
Modular Homes	1	1											2	21	
Manufactured Homes	7	5											12	95	
Two-Family Dwellings / Duplexes	0	0											0	1	
Multi-Family Dwellings	0	0											0	0	
<b>NEW COMMERCIAL BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED</b>	0	0											0	27	

Report Last Updated: August 24, 2021

# MAP 5. SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL PARCELS BY YEAR BUILT



# STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder interviews were structured as six sessions over the course of one day in October 2021. These sessions were free-form conversations that allowed those who know the County best to discuss with the project team current conditions, future projects, and community priorities.

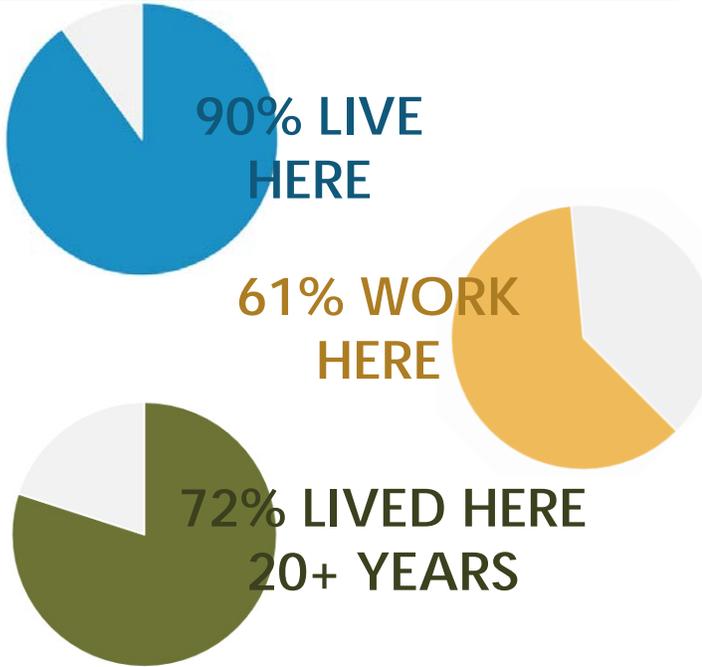
Top comments from the stakeholder sessions have been organized into plan topics below. Many comments address multiple topics.

Session	What we heard
<b>Economic Development and Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County is in a great location near the Triangle for future commercial, residential, and industrial growth.</li> <li>• Need utility planning and industrial sites to attract large companies</li> <li>• Employers will also be looking at how Nash County can support their employees: schools, housing, and parks are important attractors</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation, Education, and Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracting employees to all industries is a struggle right now</li> <li>• NCC is working with Hospital, but doesn't currently offer agriculture training</li> <li>• Resources to attract employees and residents needed, like middle class housing and internet</li> </ul>
<b>Municipal Representatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure and utility planning is badly needed</li> <li>• Would like to see Internet connectivity</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowners should be educated on their options for their land, other than just selling when they retire</li> <li>• Need to plan for orderly, contextually appropriate growth and development</li> <li>• Soil and water quality protections needed</li> </ul>
<b>Building and Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to figure out how smaller lots will be dealt with by the County</li> <li>• People want large lots</li> <li>• Need to consider stormwater treatment and anticipating urbanization by strengthening regulations</li> </ul>

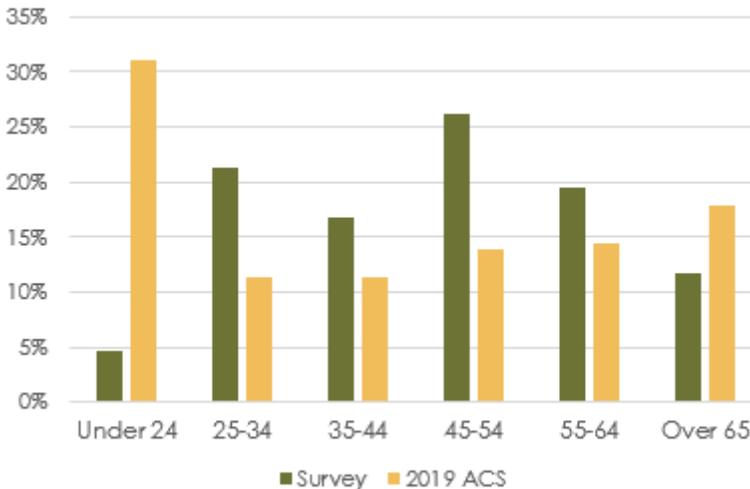
# SURVEY RESULTS

The community survey ran from for a month in Fall 2021. It was available Online and advertised on the County website and in the County water bills that were mailed to residents. The survey received 585 responses that represented an the community.

## WHO RESPONDED



## RESPONDENT AGE VS. CENSUS DATA...



...ALL AGE GROUPS WERE REPRESENTED!

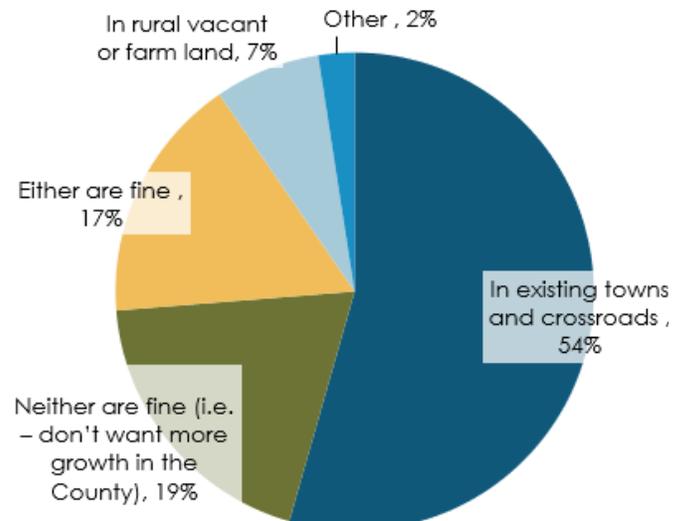
## RESPONSE THEMES

- Preserving agriculture
- Developing in or near municipalities
- School capacity
- Economic development
- Preference for large home lots

## WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR THE PLAN?

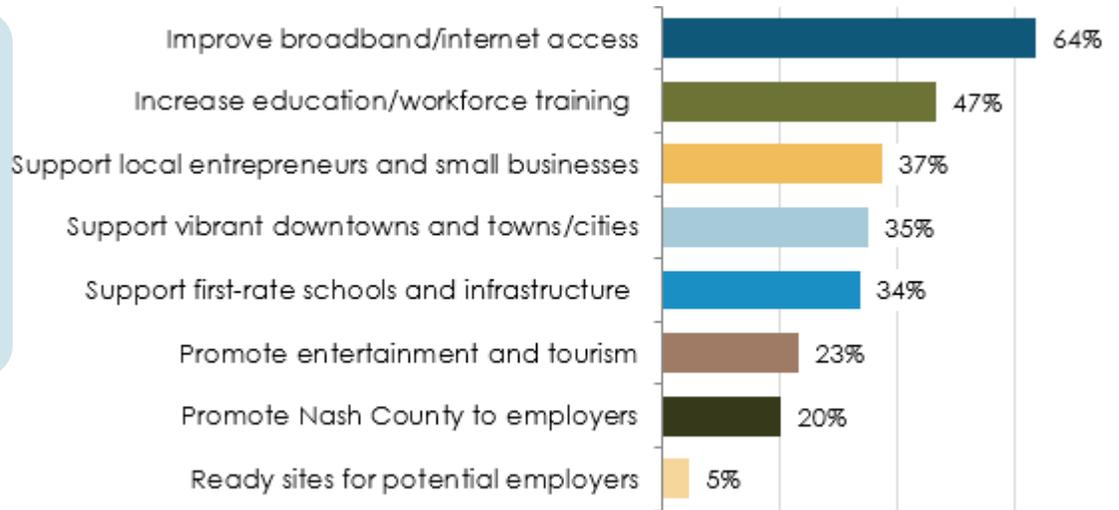
- 1 Reducing loss/Impact to farmland and natural resources (66%)
- 2 School Capacity and/or quality (48%)
- 3 Job Growth/Economic Development (43%)
- 4 Utility and infrastructure capacity (39%)
- 5 Changes in rural community character (37%)

## WHERE SHOULD THE COUNTY HELP GUIDE NEW DEVELOPMENT?



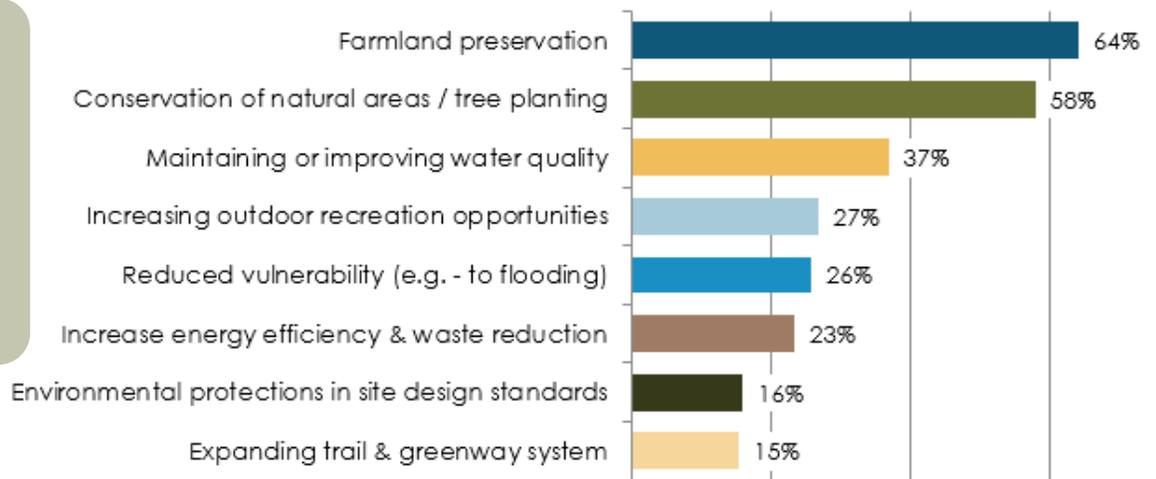
## WHAT ARE YOUR ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES?

Internet access and workforce training are respondents' top economic and infrastructure priorities



## WHAT ARE YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES?

Farmland preservation, conservation of natural areas, and protecting water quality are respondents' top environmental priorities



## WHAT FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT IN ESTABLISHING AND

1



Requiring larger lots

2



Access to greenways, schools, parks

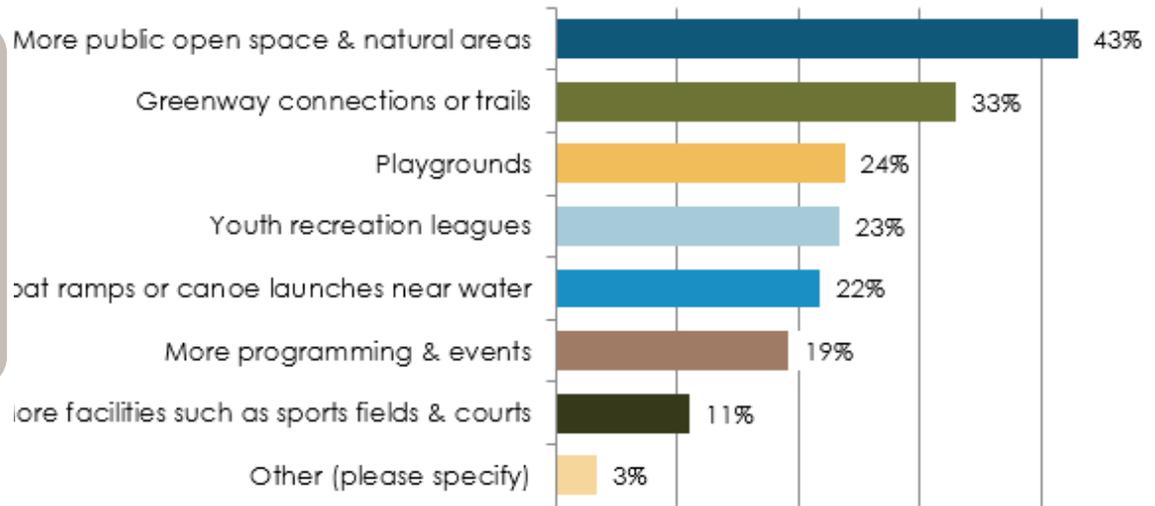
3



Landscaping and beautification

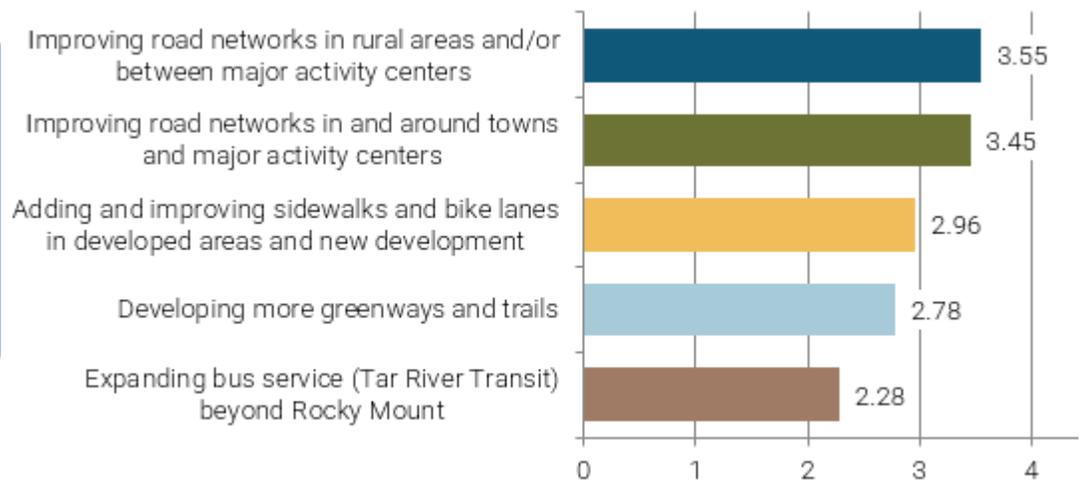
## WHAT ARE YOUR PARKS AND AMENITY PRIORITIES?

Respondents priorities support passive recreation areas, such as public open spaces, natural areas, and greenways



## WHAT ARE TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES? (RANKING AVERAGE)

Connections across the county and within activity centers are respondents' top priorities



## MAINTAINING RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY?

4



Sidewalks

5



Homeowners Associations

6



Neighborhood Amenities (clubhouse, pool, gym)

# PLAN GOALS

The following goals were developed through public comment, stakeholder interviews, and discussion with the steering committee. These goals have guided the creation of recommendations for this Plan as well as the creation of the Future Land Use Map and associated character areas. Some goals may address multiple topics. The order of the goals **does not** indicate level of priority or importance – all goals have equal weight.



1. Anticipate purposeful residential growth through **infrastructure and utility planning** in the unincorporated county.



2. **Implement the Economic Development Strategic Action Plan** in a way that supports the desired growth pattern and helps grow the local economy.



3. Preserve the county's agricultural heritage, protection programs, and **support farmers and agricultural operations**.



4. **Protect the natural environment**, specifically water resources, water supply watersheds, and forested areas.



5. **Expand the park system** by providing a variety of accessible and equitable recreational facilities, programs, and opportunities.



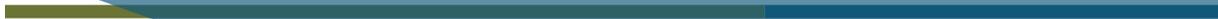
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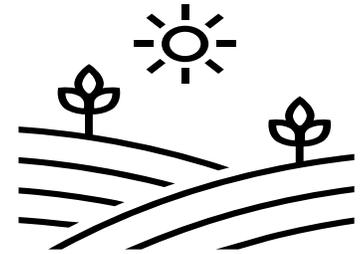
## LAND USE



# EXISTING LAND USE

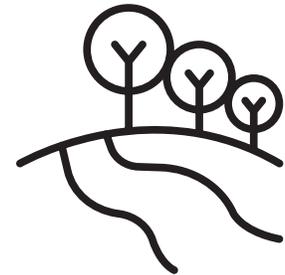
Agriculture, vacant parcels, and low density rural residential make up the majority of land use in the unincorporated areas in Nash County. Higher density uses like single-family residential, commercial, and industrial uses lie mostly in the municipal boundaries within the county. Agriculture makes up nearly 65% of the land area. There is a total of 36,750 acres that are residential properties (7% lie in the unincorporated areas), including low density rural residential. Nearly all multi-family residential is located within the incorporated areas of the County, with 41 acres in the unincorporated areas (making up 6% of the total 640 acres). Vacant land makes up 12% of the entire county with majority of vacant land lying in the unincorporated areas. Commercial and industrial land uses are nearly equally split between the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County.

65%  
Agriculture

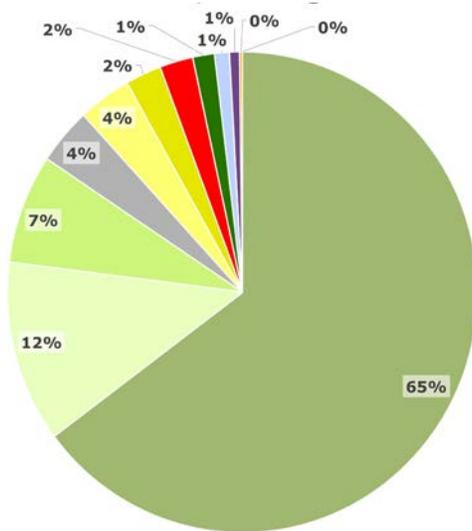


11%  
Residential

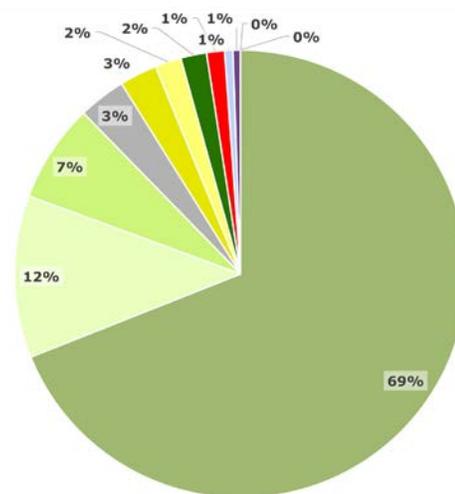
12%  
Vacant



WHOLE COUNTY

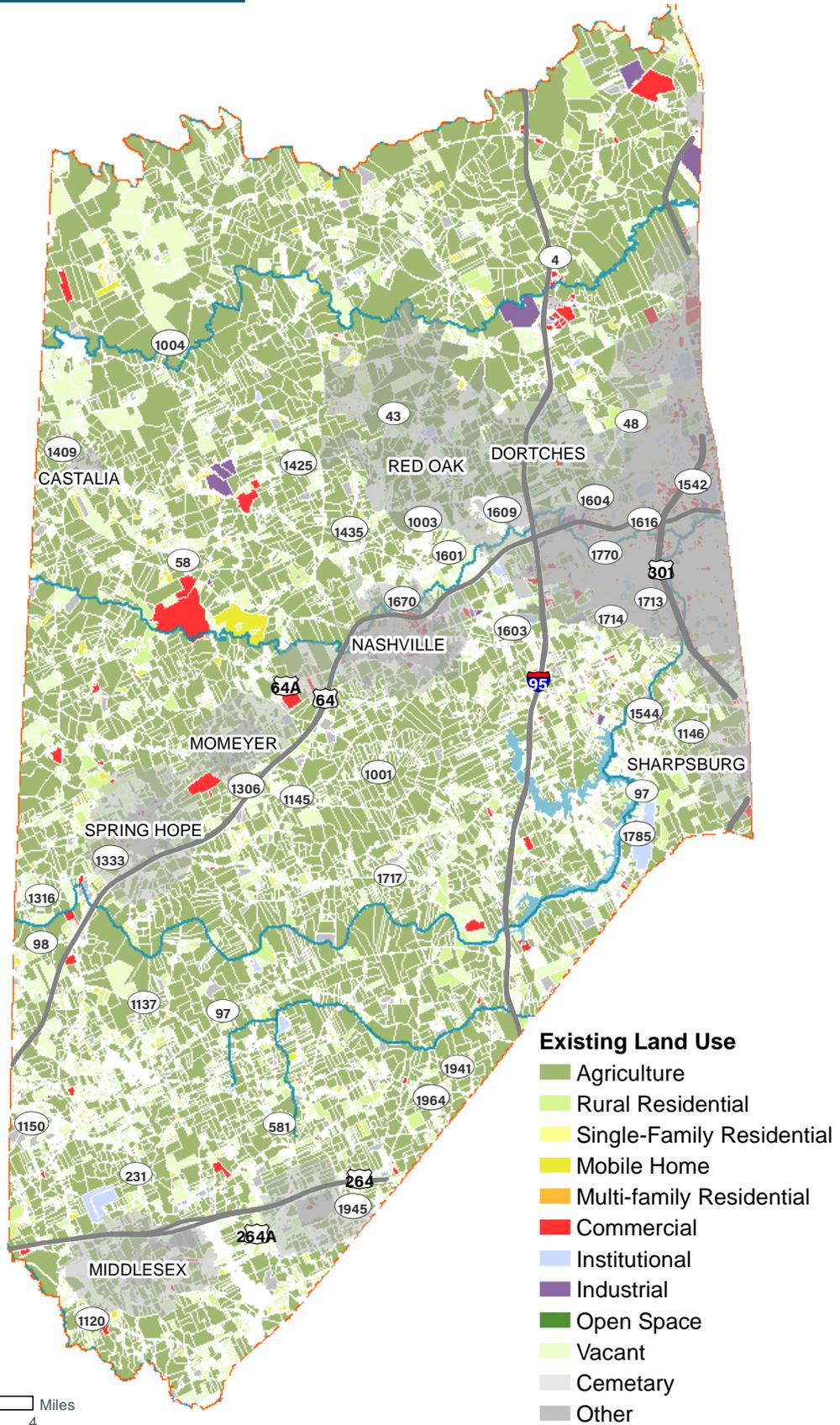


STUDY AREA



- Existing Land Use**
- Agriculture
  - Rural Residential
  - Single-Family Residential
  - Mobile Home
  - Multi-family Residential
  - Commercial
  - Institutional
  - Industrial
  - Open Space
  - Vacant
  - Cemetery
  - Other

# MAP 6. EXISTING LAND USE



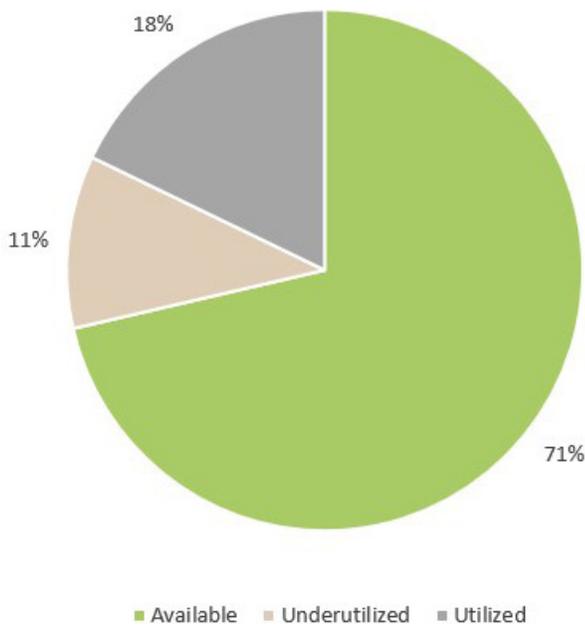
# LAND SUPPLY

For a land supply analysis, land is divided into three categories: available, utilized, and underutilized. These classifications are based on the value of the land compared to the value of the buildings on it. Properties with high value structures and certain kinds of structures are considered "utilized" and less likely to be redeveloped. The analysis does not take into consideration development limitations on the land, such as environmental constraints like floodplains and steep slopes. It also does not take into account whether the property is currently occupied and operating.

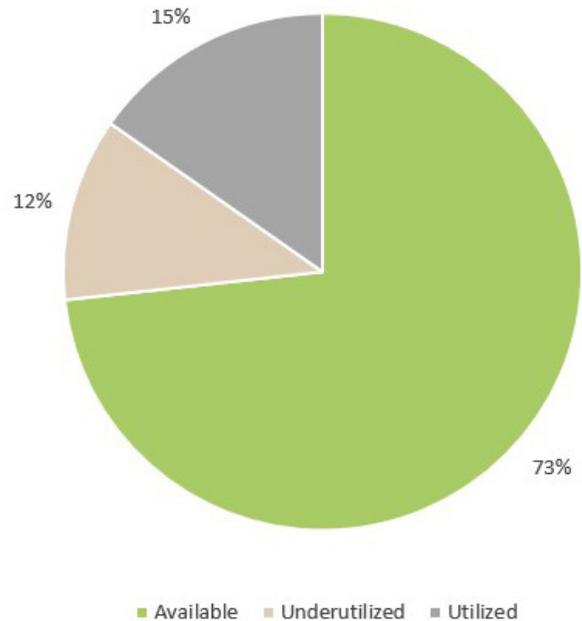
The land supply analysis shows that 73% of the study area (land outside of corporate limits and the ETJs) is "available". As noted, this does not mean they are occupied and in use. Some of the large factory sites are not in use, but could be adapted into use in the future. Much of the land is currently in use agriculturally.

Available	Vacant, farm, or forest with no significant structure
Underutilized	Potential for infill and redevelopment based on structure value to land value ratio
Utilized	Built lands not likely to redevelop

## WHOLE COUNTY



## STUDY AREA



# MAP 7. LAND SUPPLY MAP





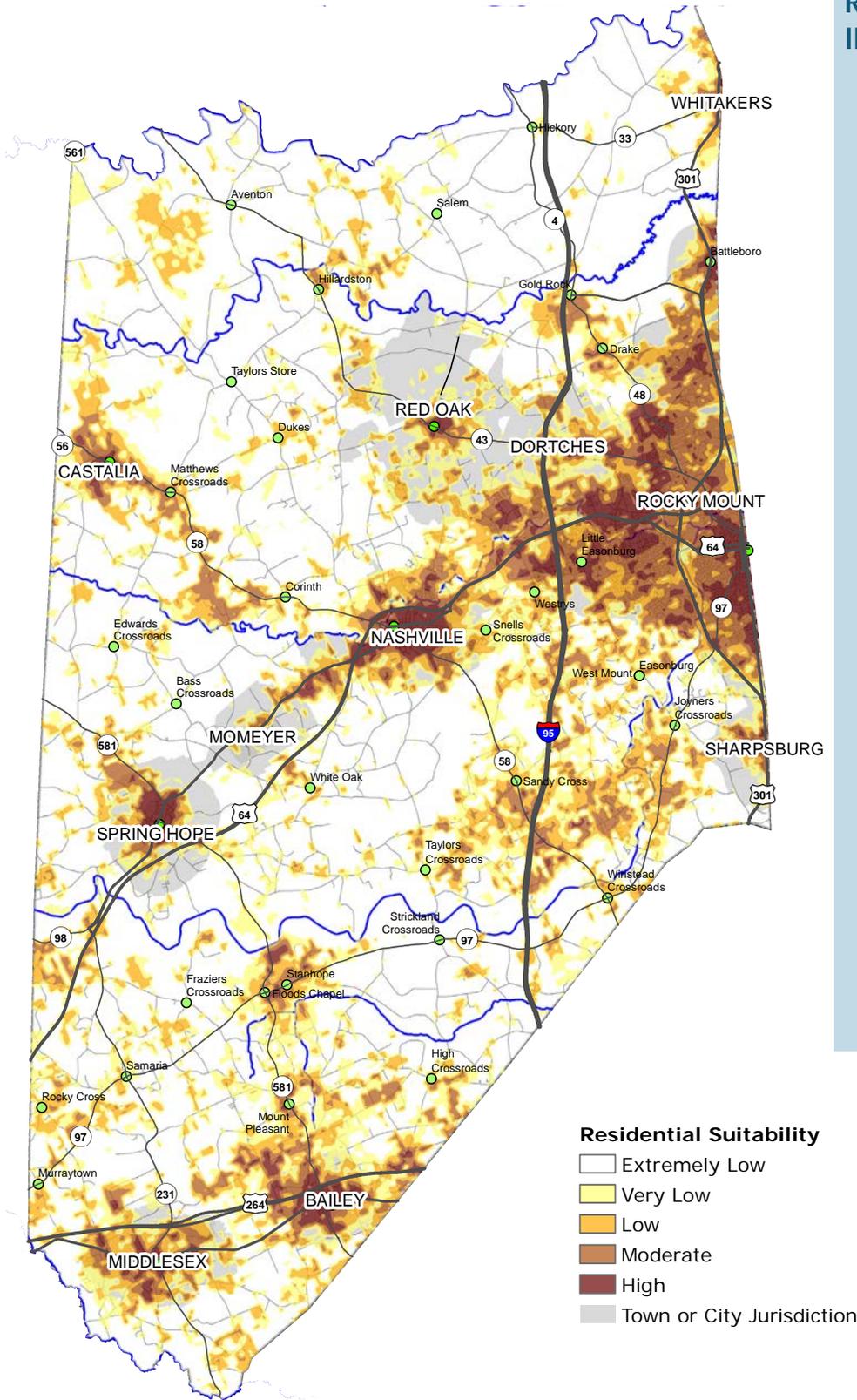
## SUITABILITY

Suitability mapping is a method of determining the best or most likely areas for certain uses to be located. It is done using GIS software and a user-selected set of criteria, or inputs. Based on the inputs, areas within the study area are determined to be more or less supportive of the use in question.

A set of criteria, or inputs are chosen, separately for each type of suitability analysis. For example, when carrying out a residential suitability analysis in GIS, a user will assign lower values for areas closer to industrial uses, as it is undesirable for homes to be built near existing industry. Higher suitability values would be assigned to land near schools or parks, because these are more desirable areas for building homes. By layering several input values and calculating a final suitability value for every cell on the map, the GIS software produces a map showing the areas where uses are more and less likely to be located.

The following pages show the suitability maps for residential, commercial, and conservation uses in Nash County. The inputs for each map are shown alongside them. Suitability mapping is a very useful, but not the only, dataset used to create the future land use map for the County.

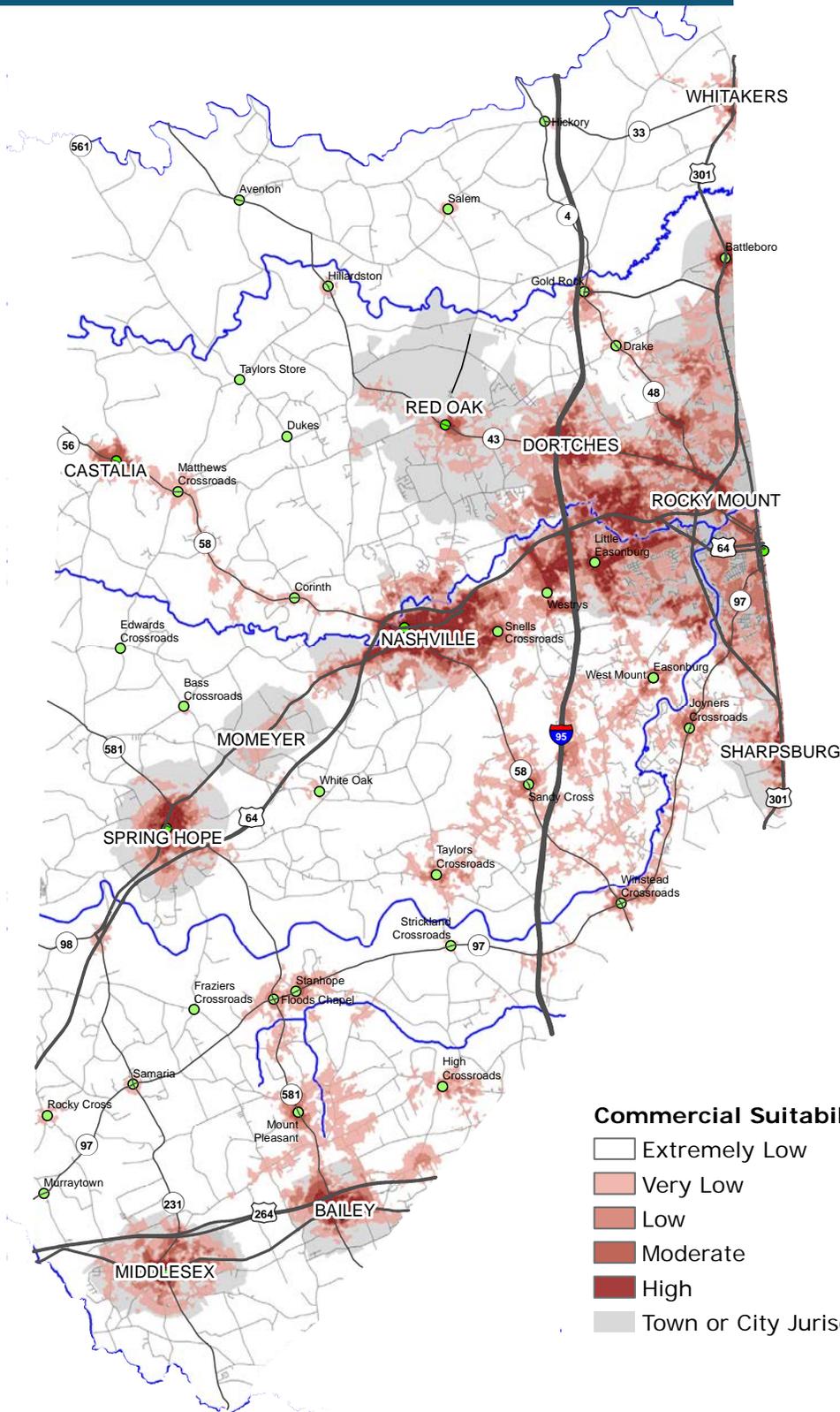
## MAP 8. RESIDENTIAL SUITABILITY



### RESIDENTIAL SUITABILITY INPUTS

- Proximity to concentrations of existing streets
- Proximity to retail and services
- Proximity to schools and parks
- Distance from industrial uses
- Distance from environmental constraints
- Distance from water supply watershed regulations
- Suitable soils
- Access to public water supply
- Large parcel size
- Distance from agriculture
- Proximity to downtowns and within municipal boundaries

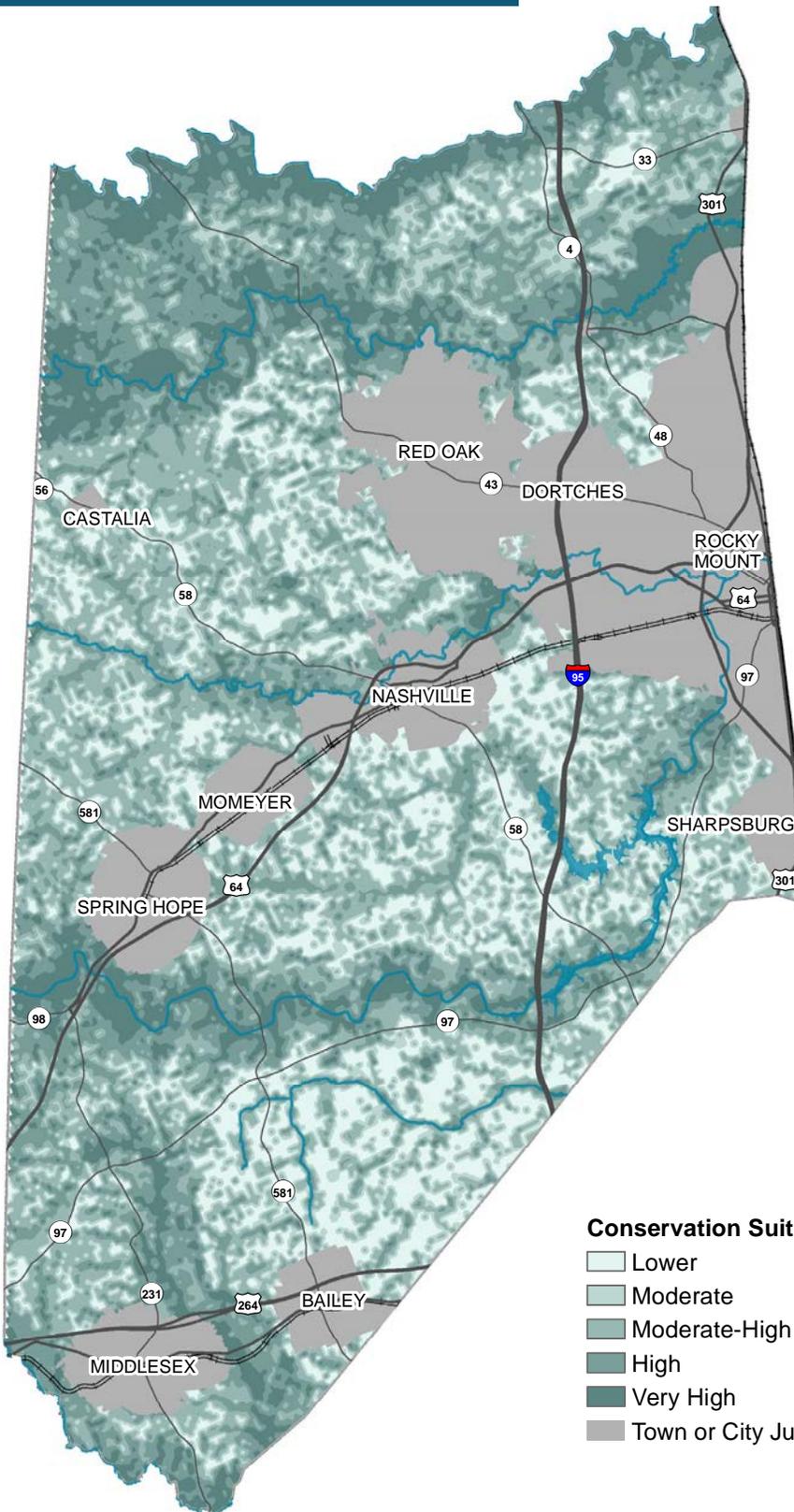
## MAP 9. COMMERCIAL/SERVICE/RETAIL/OFFICE SUITABILITY



## COMMERCIAL SUITABILITY INPUTS

- Proximity to existing residential development
- Proximity to existing commercial uses
- Proximity to high traffic roadways
- Adjacency to major roads
- Proximity to highway exits
- Access to utilities
- Buildable topography
- Distance from environmental constraints

## MAP 10. CONSERVATION SUITABILITY



### Conservation Suitability

- Lower
- Moderate
- Moderate-High
- High
- Very High
- Town or City Jurisdiction

### CONSERVATION SUITABILITY INPUTS

- High concentrations of biodiversity and wildlife
- Proximity to Natural Heritage Elements
- Proximity to Natural Heritage Natural Areas
- Proximity to USGS streams
- Proximity to intermittent streams and headwater streams
- Proximity to Managed Areas
- Proximity to wetlands
- Steep slopes
- Floodplains
- Cropland, pastures, and timberland

## PURPOSE

The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and character areas represent the future and are one of the factors that guides decision makers in the County staff in future rezoning, land use, or permit issuance decisions. A FLUM is also valuable for communicating public investment priorities (including possible future extensions of public facilities and services) to private sector investors. The FLUM is descriptive and not prescriptive. It identifies the predominant land use types and character intended for different parts of the study area. In some specific areas or instances, it may not be perfectly applicable, whereas perhaps other recommendations from this plan may be more applicable. All other plan recommendations should also be consulted.

The Future Land Use character areas on the following pages describe intended land uses, density, and design of new development in different parts of the County's planning jurisdiction. The descriptions are for the predominant uses expected to occur and may not capture all existing land uses.

THE FLUM will help guide the transition from present day to the desired future state. It is not advisable to immediately rezone properties to reflect the FLUM, but rather to evaluate each rezoning request individually based on a variety of factors including the request's individual merits, surrounding context, presence (or absence) of adequate public facilities, potential financial impact (or burden) of the project, impact on neighboring properties and uses (specifically including any nearby or potentially-affected agricultural uses), vested rights, environmental impact, timing, etc. The character areas should also be used to further refine the land use vernacular and enhance the local development flavor. These character areas can also provide direction for any updates to the County's land development regulations to help make the community vision a reality.

The following describes the future land use

character areas are described in terms of general character, example uses, necessary infrastructure, and other concerns related to their application. While typical uses and potential uses are described, these lists are not exhaustive or necessarily prohibitive. For instance, some uses may be appropriate in many (or all) future land use character areas. These might include uses such as government maintenance buildings, small utility substations (electric, natural gas, sewer lift stations, water towers, etc.), parks and recreation, conservation and open space areas, etc. Even large utilities (e.g. - water treatment plants, electrical generation plants) might be appropriate in many locations, too.

## CONSIDERATIONS

However, some uses should be carefully considered so that they do not unintentionally create an attraction that creates a demand for development in inappropriate areas. For instance, institutional uses such as churches, primary and secondary schools, colleges, clinics, or hospitals might be appropriately sited in most areas, but if located in rural or agricultural areas would create an attraction for more development to occur in these less suitable areas that don't have the services to support them.

Extension of utilities should reinforce this Plan's priorities and goals, and should be done in a way that is strategic and creates a cost-efficient system. Some land use or development programs, like targeted, public economic development, may involve extending major public infrastructure to rural areas. If a use like a school or employment center requires extension of public sewer, that would then create a strong incentive for additional, dense development to tap into that sewer line. Extensions of utilities and their potential impacts 10-20 years later should be carefully considered when these decisions are made.

Likewise, the size of operations is also a consideration. For example, a small church might be appropriate in a rural context, but a

mega church might not.

## AVOIDING PRE-EMPTIVE UPZONING

The temptation often exists to preemptively up-zone all property fronting a highway or major road to widely allow commercial uses. The argument is usually that this highly-visible and accessible property is suited to commercial use and that by speculatively up-zoning property, it will generate new development and investment, and possibly even diversify the economy or balance of land uses. The reality is that speculative up-zoning does not create quality places, spur development not otherwise supported by demand, or generate wealth. Developers and business owners will pursue a rezoning to suit the business community's needs if and when there is market demand.

**Is pre-emptive up-zoning ever advisable?** In extremely limited instances – for example, perhaps for a specific, economic development project or other government-sponsored catalyst site that involves major public investment.

**What are the effects of pre-emptive up-zoning?** Pre-emptive upzoning typically negatively impacts the character of an area, rather than building last wealth. Strip commercial up-zoning creates sprawling, low-quality commercial development that is in excess of market demand and thus does not attract high-value tenants. It results in a congested, automobile-dependent area that never achieves the commercial density or mass necessary to build a place the community will value. The excess of commercially zoned land also depresses the overall value of that land, leading to reduced land sale revenue (on a per acre basis) for local landowners.

**Is there a better solution?** Only up-zone properties abutting existing commercial development in areas where the appropriate infrastructure exists. The necessary infrastructure includes, but is not limited to: a secondary street network with maximum block length standards (to disperse traffic), shared driveways that serve multiple businesses (to reduce traffic congestion), cross access easements that create connections between adjacent businesses, sewer service that supports density, quality design standards, pedestrian facilities, fire suppression infrastructure, public spaces, and proximity to a significant population of customers. Or in accordance with site-specific, targeted, publicly-led economic development pursuits.

# FUTURE LAND USE

## CHARACTER AREAS



Water Protection and  
Natural Resources



Agricultural/Residential



Rural Commercial



General Commercial /  
Minor Employment



Major Employment and  
Industrial

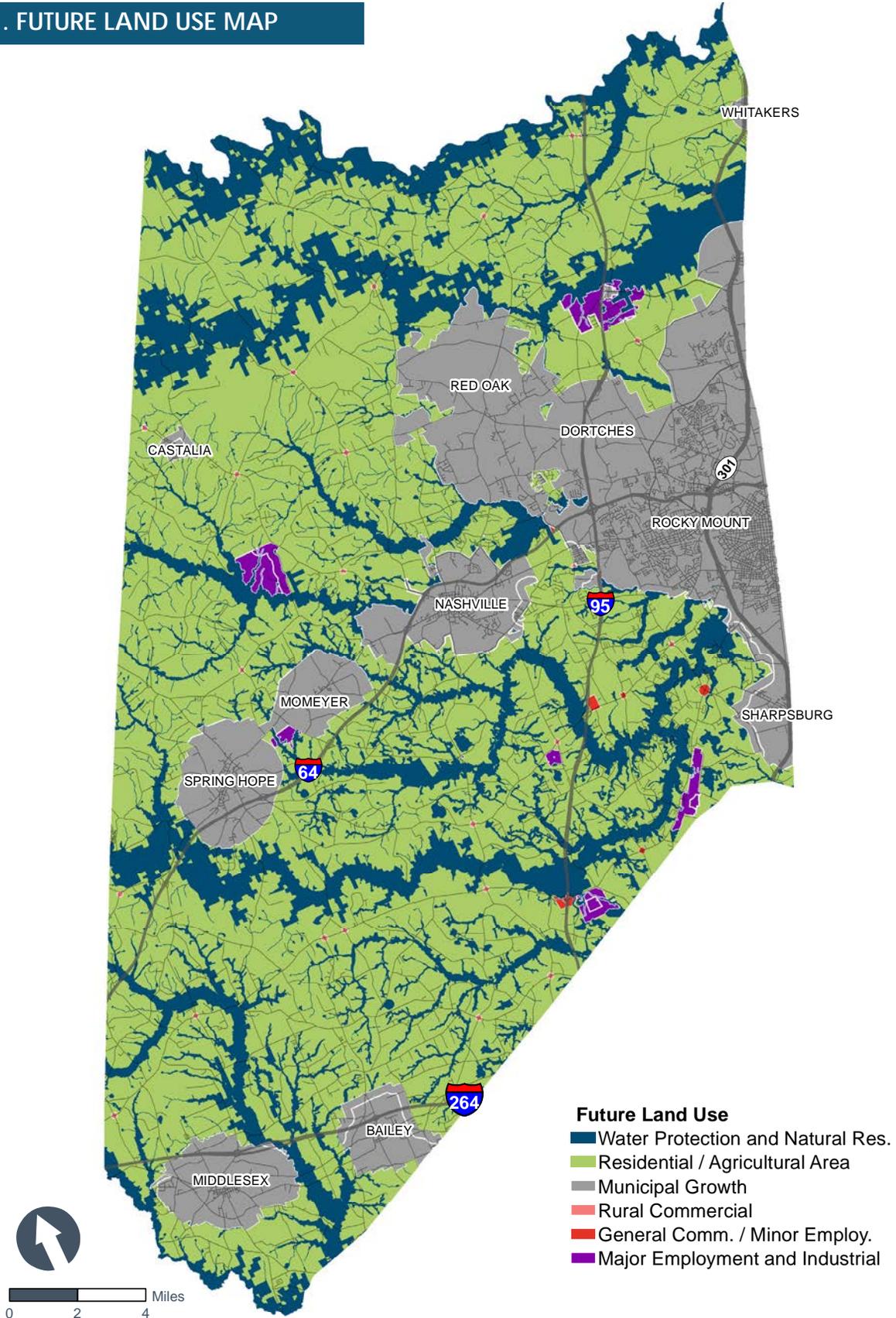


Municipal Growth

## Highlights of the Future Land Use Map

- Space for rural housing growth throughout the entire unincorporated areas of the County
- Nodes for rural commercial growth at key crossroads across the County
- Nodes for larger commercial uses at key locations
- Key industrial sites preserved

MAP 11. FUTURE LAND USE MAP



# RESIDENTIAL / AGRICULTURAL

The Residential / Agricultural land use designation defines those areas of the County where agriculture, agriculture-supportive, and residential uses are found. Although preservation of agricultural operations is still a concern, it is understood that these communities and areas may also experience some residential development as well. Conflicts between agricultural, residential, and non-agricultural uses are to be discouraged.

## SERVICES

Most development will depend upon on-site water and/or septic systems. Where public water is available, it should be extended and utilized. Public sewer systems may be extended into the residential / agricultural area based on the County's utility plan. Care should be taken to locate utility expansion in a way that ensures cost-efficient service.

## TYPICAL USES

Agriculture and agriculture-supportive uses are the current primary use of land in this area. Uses that would typically be allowed in Residential / Agricultural areas include residential (single-family site-built, modular, and Class A and B manufactured homes); agriculture, forestry, small churches, and agriculturally-associated manufacturing, processing, supply, and logistics. Other nonresidential uses that may or may not explicitly support agriculture, such as maintenance, sales, etc., may be permitted providing the following locational criteria are met:

- Frontage or access to major State highway or secondary road.
- Located within ¼ mile of a major intersection (intersection of two or more major State highways or secondary roads).
- Proximity to similar uses.
- Spatial separation from non-compatible uses.



- Context-appropriate scale.

### **If Context Appropriate**

Very limited non-residential uses - commercial, office, or public/institutional - meeting locational criteria and limited in size and scale.

### **RESIDENTIAL LOT SIZE CONSIDERATIONS**

Minimum allowable residential lot sizes should typically be at least 30,000 square feet.

### **Other Considerations**

When residential rezonings occur that allow for greater density, those rezonings should be limited to RA districts only, unless public water and sewer are available

# WATER PROTECTION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Water Protection and Natural Resource areas are classified as a 1000' buffer around any water body being protected. It may also include areas designated as primary conservation areas. Development is generally discouraged in areas that would affect the adequate protection of current or potential public water supply reservoirs, high quality natural resource areas, or areas where runoff is attributed to increased development.

## SERVICES

It is advisable to minimize the amount of public facilities in these areas. Limiting impervious surfaces can minimize negative consequences to the water bodies. Wherever possible, development should utilize public sewer to help preserve water quality. Stormwater control measures are also important.

## TYPICAL USES

Traditional parks, such as sports fields, playgrounds, public water access points, or recreation facilities, may be appropriate in some locations. Open space might include passive parks, wildlife viewing areas, natural area access, or low-impact walking or bicycling trails. Environmental areas are those sensitive, natural areas that should not be developed in the traditional sense, and if they must be, then development should have as little impact on these sensitive areas as is absolutely necessary. This includes regulatory floodplains, shorelines, and coastal marshes and wetlands, where the highest and best use may be the accommodation of floodwaters and/or natural habitat.

### If Context Appropriate

Single family residential, if proper protections are in place to ensure water quality is not degraded. Typical lot sizes may be one acre or greater, depending on water quality concerns and/or the need to reduce a concentration of septic systems and runoff potential in sensitive areas.



## RESIDENTIAL LOT SIZE CONSIDERATIONS

Minimum allowable residential lot sizes should typically be at least 40,000 square feet, although overall density of a larger area should be much lower and lot sizes within watershed protection areas should be lower still. Protection of the water resource should be the highest priority.

### Other Considerations

Revisions to the zoning districts and/or creation of more restrictive districts may be necessary in order to protect the drinking water resource and sensitive environmental areas.

# GENERAL COMMERCIAL / MINOR EMPLOYMENT

General Commercial / Minor Employment areas are designated at key locations, typically at major highway intersections. The purpose of this land use category is to encourage more efficient, nodal, and attractive development, integration of commercial uses with other land uses, and to discourage unsightly and inefficient strip commercial development. Strip commercial development (characterized by non-related business development with numerous driveway cuts, and little to no interconnectivity) detracts from community appearance and has significant negative impacts on both road capacity and traffic safety.

General Commercial / Minor Employment areas should be planned to accommodate a range of land uses including small- and large-scale commercial uses possibly transitioning to office/institutional uses or higher density residential uses that would buffer and transition to surrounding lower density residential and agricultural areas.

## SERVICES

These areas should be served by both public water and sewer. General Commercial / Minor Employment areas oriented to highway interchanges should be characterized by their compactness and business orientation to highway travelers or a regional customer base. Transition to surrounding agricultural or residential areas is likely to be more sharply defined than the more gradual transition from a community-based commercial area.

Strip development is discouraged and interconnectivity is enhanced to serve the nonresidential uses. Any secondary street network should be developed to the end of the adjacent lot or development so that it can easily be continued to parcels beyond. Cross-access across nonresidential uses should also be required. Consider sidewalks when adjacent to existing or anticipated residential development, along all public rights-of-way on the side with the business(es) and connecting to the entrance of each unit.



## TYPICAL USES

Small- and large-footprint, higher intensity, regional commercial, retail, services, or offices, including less pedestrian friendly uses such as vehicle and machinery repair, sales, and rental, lumber yards, commercial nurseries, etc. Automobile-dependent businesses predominate.

## If Context Appropriate

Hotels, fast food restaurants, and other convenience uses may also appropriate, if sited appropriately.

## Other Considerations

Maintaining connectivity through these developments and to surrounding and adjacent neighborhoods and parcels is important. Allowing these developments to connect only to the main thoroughfare will contribute to additional traffic congestion as neighboring developments will have to travel the major thoroughfare to enter through the front, instead of having access from the sides and/or rear of the parcel. The connectivity, longevity, and public utility of the public street network must not be considered subordinate to a shopping center's preferred development plan. The right-of-way network established at the subdivision or site plan stage of development defines the built environment often for many, many, decades.

Residential development directly adjacent to these areas is a good way to form close knit neighborhoods that are at least partially walkable.

# RURAL COMMERCIAL

Rural Commercial Areas are designated at key road intersections within the Residential/ Agricultural area and where additional non-residential services would serve the surrounding residential populations. These areas are intended to accommodate limited commercial services that are appropriate to crossroads development in predominantly rural or agricultural areas.

## SERVICES

Land uses within this category are expected to develop with private water supply (or public water, as available) and with on-site septic tank systems. Although it would be desirable for these businesses to be served by both public water and sewer, it is usually not possible in more remote locations.

Strip development is discouraged and interconnectivity is enhanced to serve the nonresidential uses. Any secondary street network should be developed to the end of the adjacent lot or development so that it can easily be continued to parcels beyond. Cross-access across nonresidential uses should also be required.

## TYPICAL USES

Appropriate land uses include residential, public/institutional, and limited commercial and light industrial uses. Businesses should be characterized by a local customer base and not targeted to attract customers countywide or regionally.



# MAJOR EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL

Major Employment and Industrial Areas are designated where industrial uses are either already present or desired. Typically these areas coincide with previous investments or strategic locational assets.

## SERVICES

Most development within these areas will be served by public water and sewer, although development with on-site wells and septic tank systems is possible.

## TYPICAL USES

Allowed uses would include major industrial uses, wholesale, office and public/institutional uses, and limited commercial uses. Residential uses should be restricted so that they do not limit the potential of these important community employment centers. Industrial development should be physically separated and buffered from existing residential uses where noise, odors, or other negative effects could be expected. This can be accomplished through site design techniques or by physical distance from the property lines to existing residential development.

### If Context Appropriate

Projects locating in residentially developing or established areas should provide sufficient area within the project site to buffer noise, lighting, sound, or other impacts that may occur.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Economic development is essential to the economic sustainability of Nash County. Desirable sites in high visibility areas are also attractive for residential development. Assembling significant tracts of land for large economic development projects can be difficult.



# MUNICIPAL GROWTH AREA

These areas are located within municipalities and the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) of municipalities. Land use in these areas is governed by the adopted plans of each jurisdiction. Supporting existing towns and communities was determined to be a major public priority based on the public input during the development of this plan. Maintaining a strong rural character immediately surrounding municipalities' planning jurisdictions will provide greater incentive for developers to annex into existing communities, thus strengthening those communities' tax base and also providing municipalities with the ability to ensure surrounding development meets local expectations for quality and connectivity.

## SERVICES

As provided by the municipality.

## TYPICAL USES

It is anticipated that the vast majority of future residential, commercial, service, and office development will be located in municipalities, where the services, programs, and facilities exist to support residents, workers, and visitors expectations for those resources. These areas are governed by the development standards of each individual community.

## If Context Appropriate

As determined by the municipality.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Industrial or employment-generating development of a regional nature may be suitable in rural or unincorporated areas of the County, but locating these uses near their workforce and competitive assets (e.g. - transportation and logistics, supportive industries, necessary utilities, natural resources (for extraction or processing), etc.) is also very important to ensuring the prosperity of employment-generating land uses. Although it is anticipated that most growth in municipal areas will be residential

in nature, there will also be associated nonresidential development as well.



# CHARACTER AREA MATRIX

The following matrix further describes the type of development envisioned for each FLU character area.

Future Land Use Class	Description and Typical Conditions	> 100,000 sqft	25,000-100,000 sqft	5,000-25,000 sqft	< 5,000 sqft	Single family res.	Civic / Institutional	Offices
Major Employment and Industrial	Employment uses, including but not limited to manufacturing, distribution, storage; some office and other supporting uses; may be regionally significant	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Accessory
General Commercial / Minor Employment	Higher intensity commercial, office, services, civic, and retail uses, typically serving a greater region than just adjacent neighborhoods	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	* (Services, Accessory)
Rural Commercial	Lower intensity commercial, office, service, civic, and retail uses, typically serving the immediate area or at a rural crossroads	*	*	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	* (Services, Accessory)
Rural / Agricultural	Residential and agricultural uses. Occasional agricultural-supportive uses. Residential lots minimum 30,000 sq feet.	No**	No**	*	*	Yes	*	* (Accessory)
Water Protection and Natural Resources	Agriculture, timber operations, conservation, parks, outdoor or passive recreation	No	No	No	No (except associated with recreation)	*	*	No

Notes:

\*Dependent on context, conditions, design, buffering, utilities, etc.

\*\*Except agriculture

# LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

## 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:** 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.

## CASE STUDY: PASQUOTANK COUNTY RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS

All new residential subdivisions in Pasquotank County must have direct vehicular access to a new interior street. Interior streets provide safe, efficient vehicular access to residential homes and help control the movement of traffic and establish desirable traffic patterns. Residential streets are designed for low speed low traffic, and as short trip facilities.

As Nash County continues to grow, these minimum standards will help establish desirable traffic patterns and reduce congestion on major thoroughfares.



- 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 eliminating cluster development standards.

- 

**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.
- 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 to establish a countywide index of materials, resources, 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.
- 1.4.3:** Continue and promote participation in the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program.

## CASE STUDY: VOLUNTARY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Alamance County, North Carolina provides a precedent for this type of program. The Alamance County Farmland Preservation Program has preserved hundreds of acres of farmland since its inception. This program enables the County to buy the development rights to agricultural land, thereby protecting it from development. A Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) provides a way to financially compensate willing landowners for not developing their land. In buying development rights, the County would establish a conservation easement that permanently restricts development on the land. The landowner still owns the land and can use or sell it for purposes specified in the easement, such as farming or timber production. A new program in Nash County, is needed to protect farmland. A voluntary farmland preservation program could be used to supplement the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation program and other state and federal funding.







# 4

## ECONOMY



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

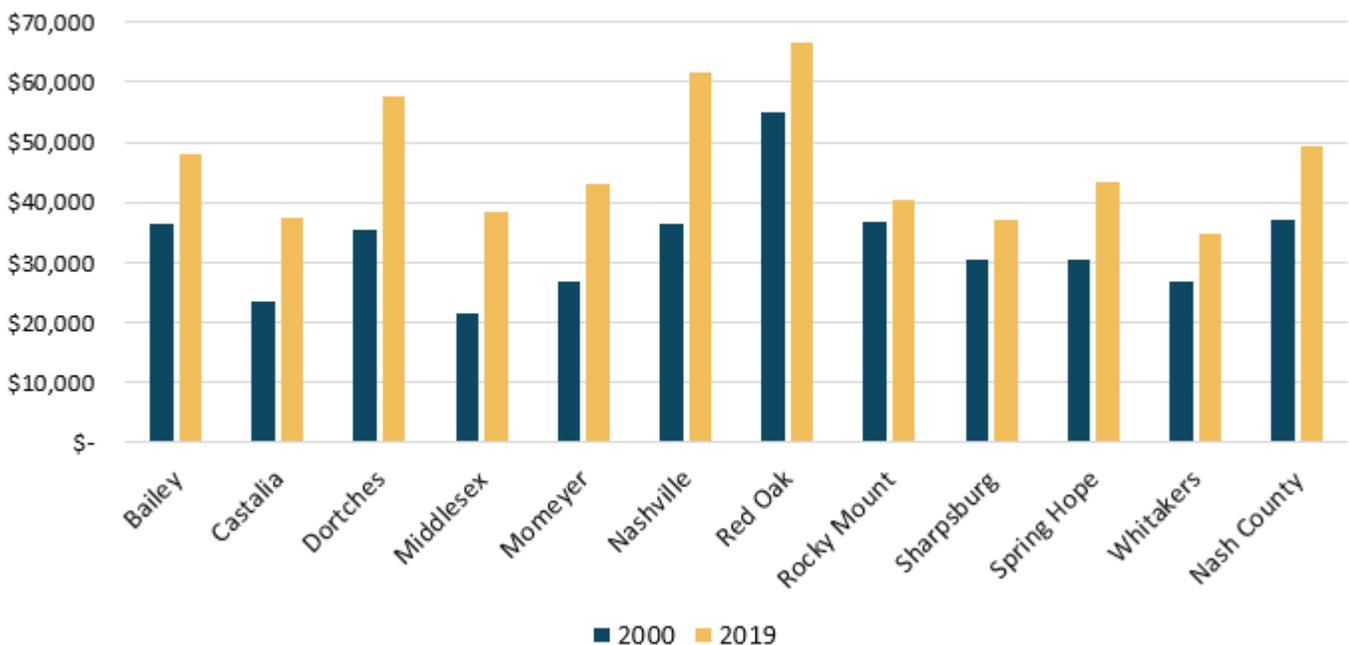
Nash County's recent growth can partly be attributed to its growing economy. The County's Economic Development Department has been working hard to leverage the County's strategic location to recruit large employers. At the same time, the County's farmers continue to represent a crucial part of Nash County's economy.

## INCOME

Incomes in Nash County are on the rise. The median household income for the 2019 entire County in 2019 was \$49,483, and an estimated \$52,373 for the unincorporated area. These are just slightly below the 2019 median household income across North Carolina of \$54,602. Incomes have risen an average of 44% from 2010 to 2019 in the municipalities, as illustrated in the table below.

During that same time, the population in poverty has risen slightly from 14.1% in 2010 to 16.9% in 2019 (*ACS 1-year estimates*).

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Source: 2010 Decennial Census, ACS 5-Year Estimates 2019

## 2019 ESTIMATES

POPULATION IN POVERTY

16.9%

UNINCORPORATED AREA  
MEDIAN HHI

\$52,373

POPULATION WITH A  
BACHELORS DEGREE  
OR HIGHER

17%

JOBS COUNTYWIDE

42,594

## EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

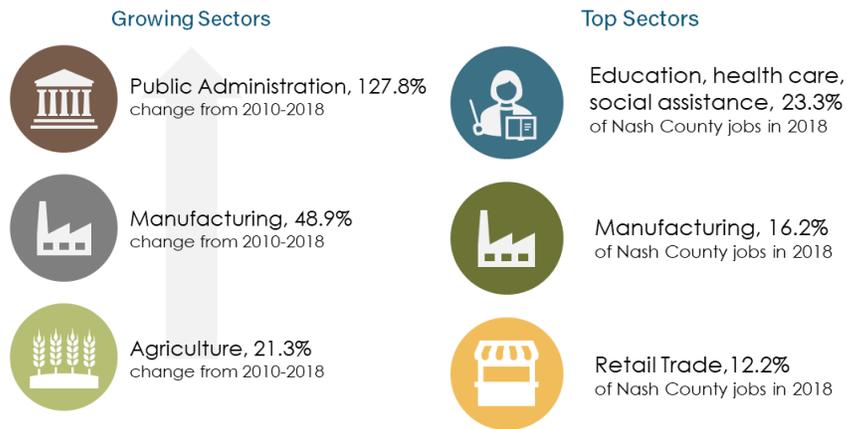
Based on the most recently available data, manufacturing remains a prominent component of Nash County's

economy. It is both the second-largest employment sector as of 2018 and the sector with the second-most growth between 2010 and 2018. Public administration and agriculture were the other top two sectors with the largest growth between 2010 and 2018, demonstrating agriculture's role in Nash County's economy overall.

### ECONOMIC RANKINGS

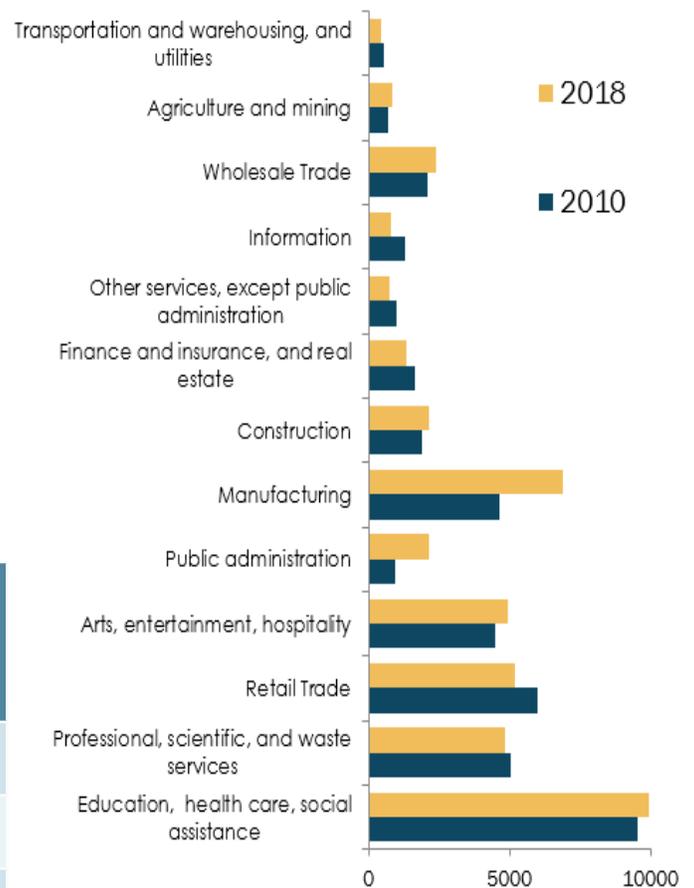
Nash County is considered one of forty "Tier 1" Counties according to the State's three-level system for designating county economic development (*Source: 2021 NC Development Tier Designations*). This ranking determines funding opportunities available for counties to assist in economic development. Counties are assigned a ranking based on four characteristics, and assigned rank values compared to all counties in the state. Values closer to 100 indicate better economic conditions or higher growth, values closer to zero indicate worse economic conditions or lower growth. As demonstrated by the table, Nash's unemployment rate was its lowest-ranked characteristic. A ranking of 20 means it had the 20th-highest unemployment rate of counties in the state. A ranking 33 for property tax base per capita (PTBPC) means the 33rd-lowest PTBPC in the state. Overall, the county was ranked 38 (1=most economically distressed, 100=least economically distressed).

### TOP EMPLOYMENT SECTORS



Source: 2018 Census On-the-Map

### EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR



Source: 2010, 2018 Census On-the-Map

Characteristic	Count	Nash County Rank
Property Tax Base per Capita (2021)	\$82,699	33
Population Growth (2016-2019)	1.93	55
Median Household Income (2018)	\$50,122	64
Unemployment Rate (2020)	7.3%	20

## AGRICULTURE

Agriculture remains a major element of Nash County's economy. Of the \$191.7 million made from farm products in 2017, 66% of that came from crops with the remaining third coming from livestock. Sweet potatoes and soybeans are the major vegetables growing in Nash County. The county is also one of the top producers of tobacco and cotton in both the state and country. Chicken and hog farms are the major livestock animals, similar to neighboring counties.

Of the 425 farms counted in 2017, 72% reported having internet access, 42% hired farm labor, and 6% sold directly to consumers.

There are two major statewide programs to support farmland preservation. One, the Present Use Value (PUV) Program, taxes rural landowners at a lower rate based on the use of the land, rather than the value of its "highest and best use." This program offers up to 90% tax savings for private eligible landowners in North Carolina (*NC Forest Service, 2014*). The Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program is a county-level ordinance program that is available statewide. It is available to lands that are part of the PUV tax program. Lands in the VAD program must be managed according to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service guidelines with respect to highly erodible lands. It allows landowners protection



from nuisance lawsuits and water and sewer assessments to be waived if the landowner agrees not to develop the land for a non-farm use for 10 years. If the land is part of the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) program, landowners receive further financial benefits.

**AGRICULTURAL LANDS  
ACCOUNT FOR APPROXIMATELY  
69% OF THE COUNTY'S  
UNINCORPORATED LAND**



-7% since  
2012



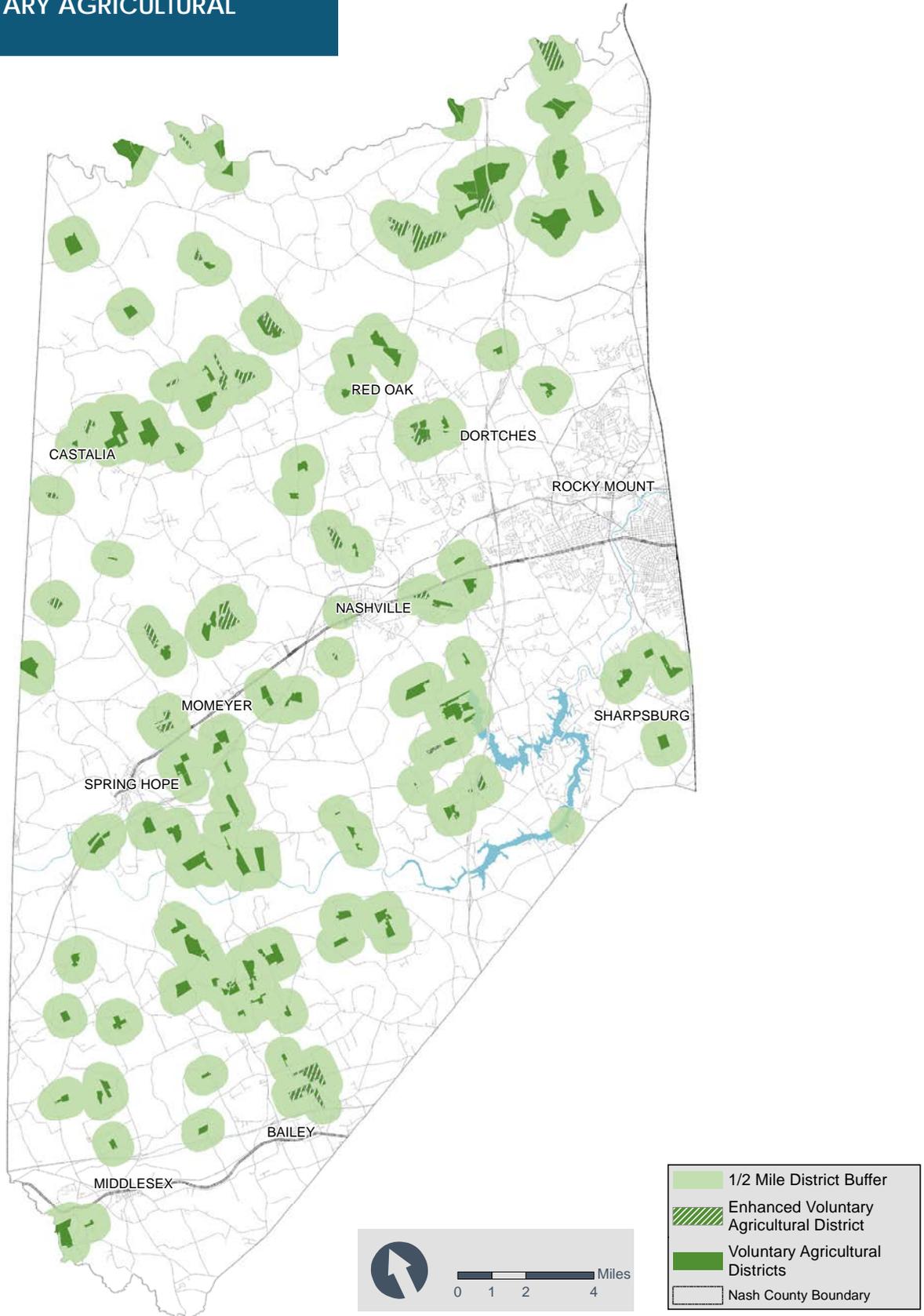
-1% since  
2012



+4% since  
2012

Source; 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture

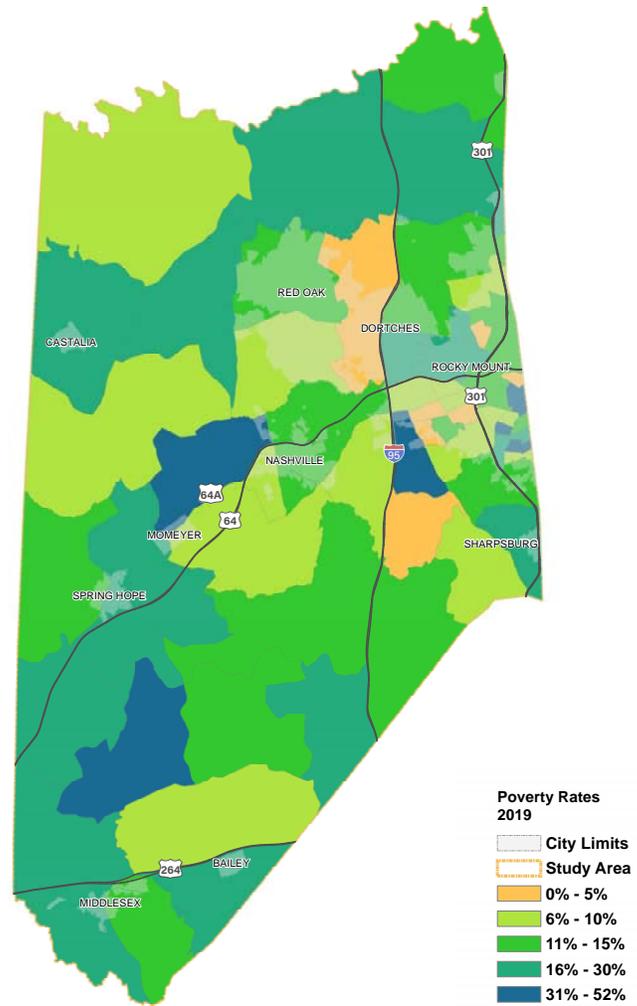
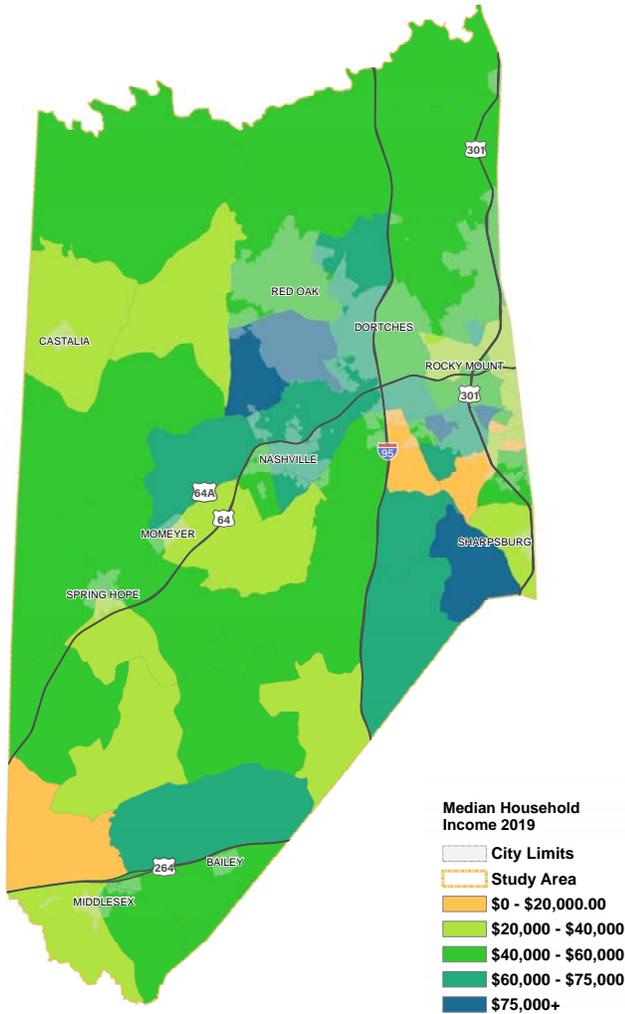
# MAP 12. VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT MAP



# ECONOMIC INDICATOR MAPS

MAP 13. MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP

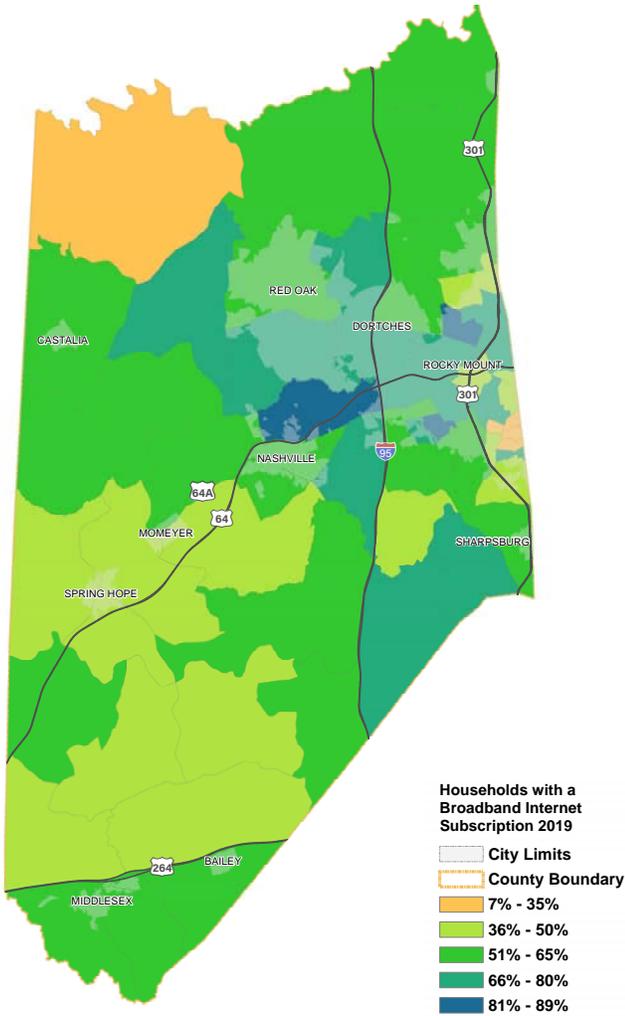
MAP 14. POVERTY RATE BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP



Higher median household income rates were found in the eastern portion of the county, in and around the municipalities such as Rocky Mount and Dortches. However, some of the blocks with the lowest rates were also found directly outside of those municipalities. There were also pockets of lower median household income found in the southeastern part of the County.

Poverty rates vary throughout the County. The areas with the lowest rates (<5%) are more common in and around the municipalities on the eastern side of the county, while higher rates were found in the Southwest portion.

**MAP 15. BROADBAND INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP**



A popular topic during community engagement was internet connectivity. Residents would like to increase availability and speed of internet service in the County, and broadband availability also contributes to economic development. Rather than mapping possible internet availability, the map shows broadband internet subscriptions, which accounts for those who are connected due to availability or cost issues, rather than availability alone. Subscriptions are more common near the municipalities, with lower rates in the more rural parts of the County.

# ECONOMIC THEMES

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is already a key County government initiative, with a team working to recruit large employers to the county. One oft-mentioned obstacle to economic development is infrastructure availability, including water, sewer, and internet availability.

## AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is a major component of Nash County's economy and not to be placed in the backseat. Data shows that farm products from the County are worth \$191 million annually, and that agriculture accounts for 37% of land within the county. It also contributes an unquantifiable amount of character to the County that the community holds dear.

Agriculture will likely continue to be a big part of land use in the County or many decades to come. Farmers need alternatives to selling their land (likely to developers) when they retire. They also increasingly need access to labor and Internet to keep their operations running. More income is coming from agri-tourism than in the past, which also benefits from internet access and preserved land. And while many people move to the County to enjoy the rural character, some new residents struggle to adapt to life directly adjacent to farms. Future agricultural success depends upon adopting smart policies regarding land ownership, land use, internet availability, and more.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

## 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.) 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 or residential 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 impact of 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.

**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.

**JOCO GROWS**

JoCo Grows Agriculture is a program that educates consumers who are often disconnected from agriculture. The JoCo Grows committee is comprised of agribusiness owners, farmers, and community members who are passionate about agricultural preservation. JoCo Grows Agriculture serves as a resource for local farms in Johnston County through marketing efforts that help drive traffic to local farms and agritourism events.

JoCo Grows uses their website and social media presence to promote local farming heritage and agritourism events to educate visitors and increase income for local farms, ranches, and agribusiness owners. A program like this would encourage agritourism throughout Nash County while encouraging agricultural preservation.







# 5

# TRANSPORTATION

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## ROADWAYS

Nash County is uniquely located with easy access to the eastern seaboard by way of Interstate 95 (I-95), US 64 (Future I-87) and US 264. Most traffic is focused along the I-95 and US 64 corridors, with substantial daily traffic. US 64 has undergone some improvements to interstate standards to increase accessibility to Norfolk, VA, providing more convenient access from Nash County to regions like the Research Triangle and major port cities. This highway network connects the county with the major market centers of the eastern seaboard as well as the growing Piedmont industrial areas.

Nash County is a member of the Upper Coastal Plain Rural Planning Organization (RPO) which also includes the counties of Edgecombe, Johnston and Wilson. Regional RPOs are responsible for coordinating transportation planning efforts in non-urban areas. The Upper Coastal Plain RPO, as well as the Rocky Mount Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), work with the NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) in making transportation related decisions in the four-county area. With citizen input, the RPO is responsible for developing a transportation priority list to promote projects and programs with NCDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). In North Carolina, the State assumes the major responsibility for financing and constructing roads. Municipalities are responsible for local municipal roads, but counties do not have any responsibility for road construction.

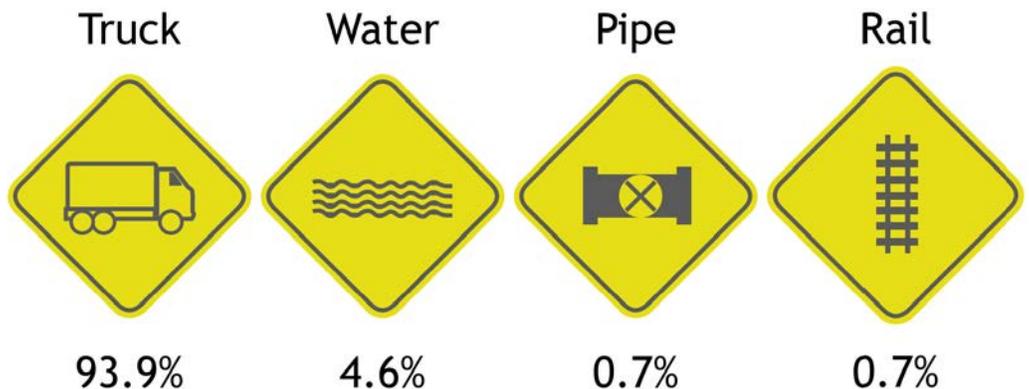
The adequacy of the transportation infrastructure is a key determinant in

economic development and in quality-of-life issues. Providing transportation routes and options will promote economic investment while inadequate infrastructure can slow or deter economic growth. Inadequate highway capacities also result in loss of economic productivity and lead to driver frustration over long commuting times.

Traffic volumes typically correlate with the purpose and function of each roadway's design and location. Annual average daily traffic (AADT) indicates the traffic average for the year at specific locations, provided by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). [See map at right] According to NCDOT ranking of counties by crash data, Nash County has been ranked around 19<sup>th</sup> in terms of highest crash rates for the past five years.

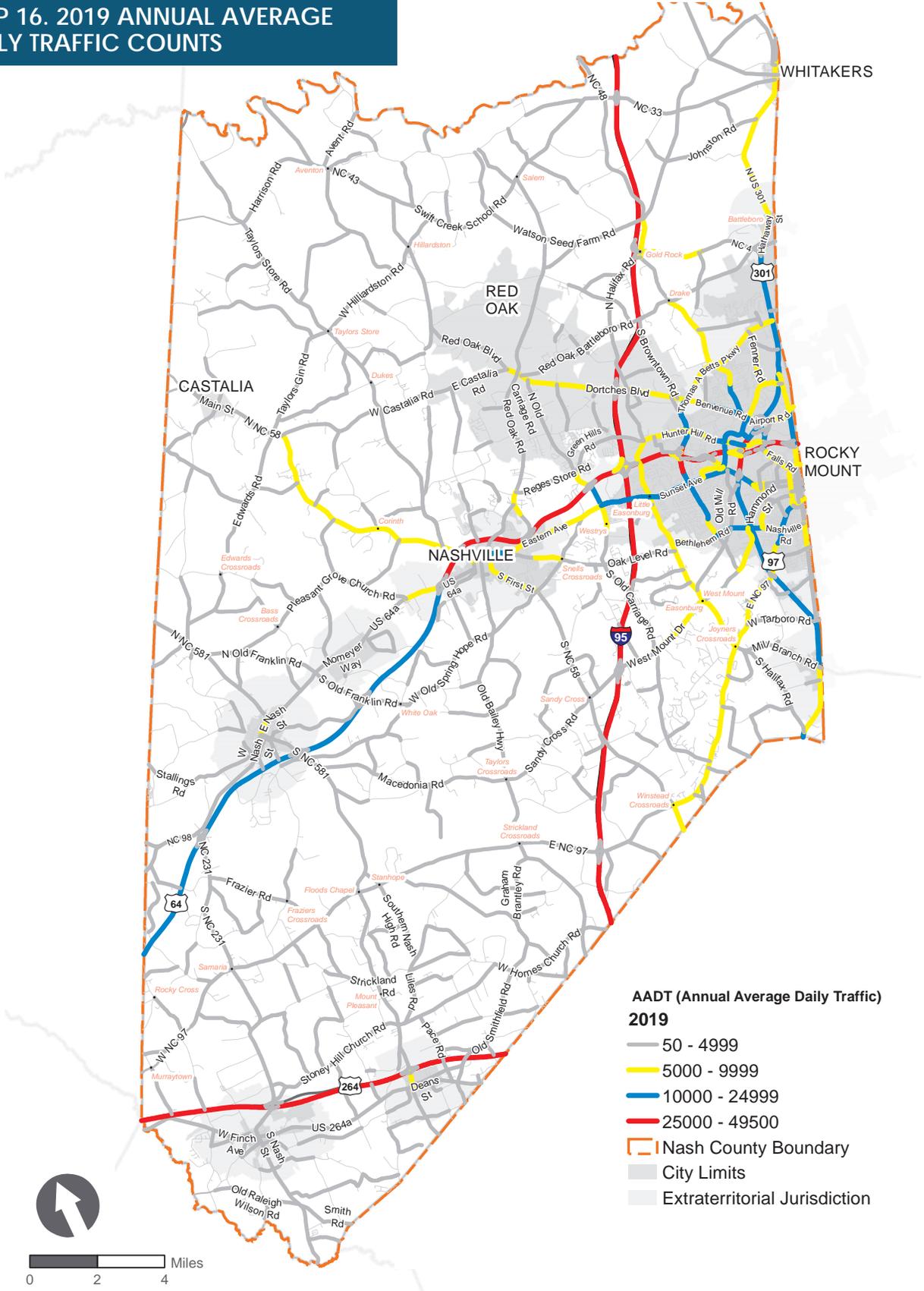
Nash County's location is a key asset for its future economic development. The Future I-87 Corridor traverses rural eastern North Carolina via US 64 in Raleigh to US 17 at Williamston and heading north to the North Carolina-Virginia State line. This connects Raleigh at its southern terminus and the Hampton Roads-Norfolk region in Virginia at its northern terminus. US 64 intersects with I-95 between Nashville and Rocky Mount. When fully upgraded, this new interstate corridor will be a fast, access-controlled connection between the Port of Virginia and I-95.

### 2015 NASH COUNTY FREIGHT MODE SPLIT



Source: Rocky Mount MTP

# MAP 16. 2019 ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC COUNTS



## MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK (WORKERS 16 AND OLDER)

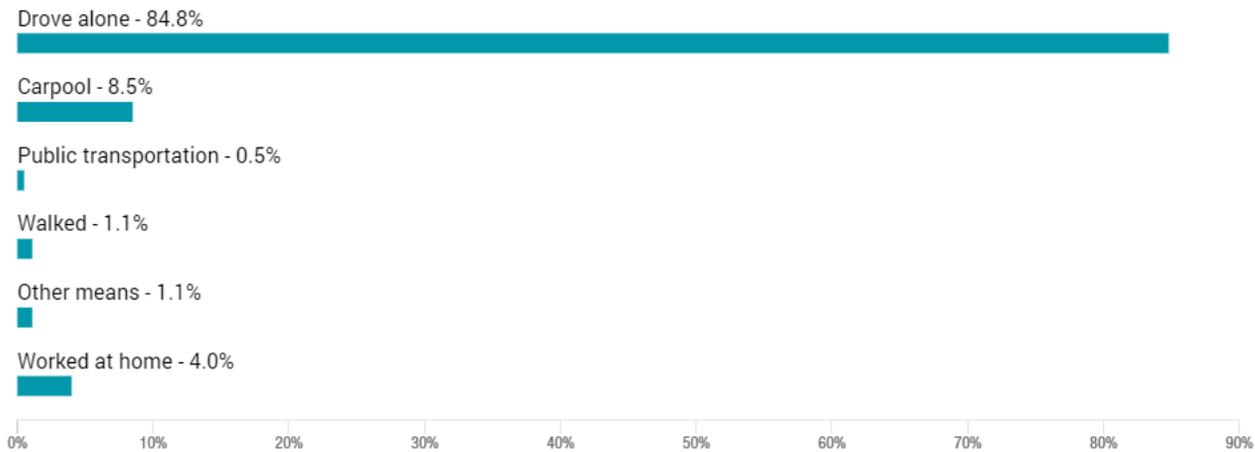


Chart Survey/Program: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

### BICYCLES, SIDEWALKS, AND GREENWAYS

While the downtown areas in Rocky Mount, Nashville, and some other towns have adequate sidewalks, there is very little bicycle infrastructure in the County, and many rural areas are not well suited for either walking or bicycling. As NCDOT retrofits roadways throughout Nash County, new curb ramps, crossings, sidewalks, and even multiuse trails may be added as part of the state’s Complete Streets policy. It is important for County staff to make sure that their preferences are heard regarding corridors in need of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as well as intersection improvements. Nash County can also be instrumental in working with municipal leaders to develop a regional greenway/ multiuse trail network, linking towns to one another through scenic rural and agricultural corridors.

### TRANSIT

As a critical component of a complete transportation system, transit is closely tied to land use and economic development decisions. At its best, transit provides an efficient and inexpensive transportation mode for persons making the traditional suburban-to-urban commute and those traveling between key activity centers. It is important that public transit service remain a viable, efficient

mobility option for those who need it most – senior citizens, the physically or economically disadvantaged, and other patrons who choose to ride.

### Rail

The railroad system in Nash County plays an integral part in business development and accessibility for local logistics companies. Carolina Coastal Rail provides services to many businesses in the areas of Spring Hope, Nashville, Bailey, and Middlesex, connecting them to CSX transportation rail lines. CSX Transportation provides a global network of opportunity connecting Whitakers, Rocky Mount, and Sharpsburg with the rest of the East Coast. The CSX Corporation is one of the nation’s

### CSX LOCATION

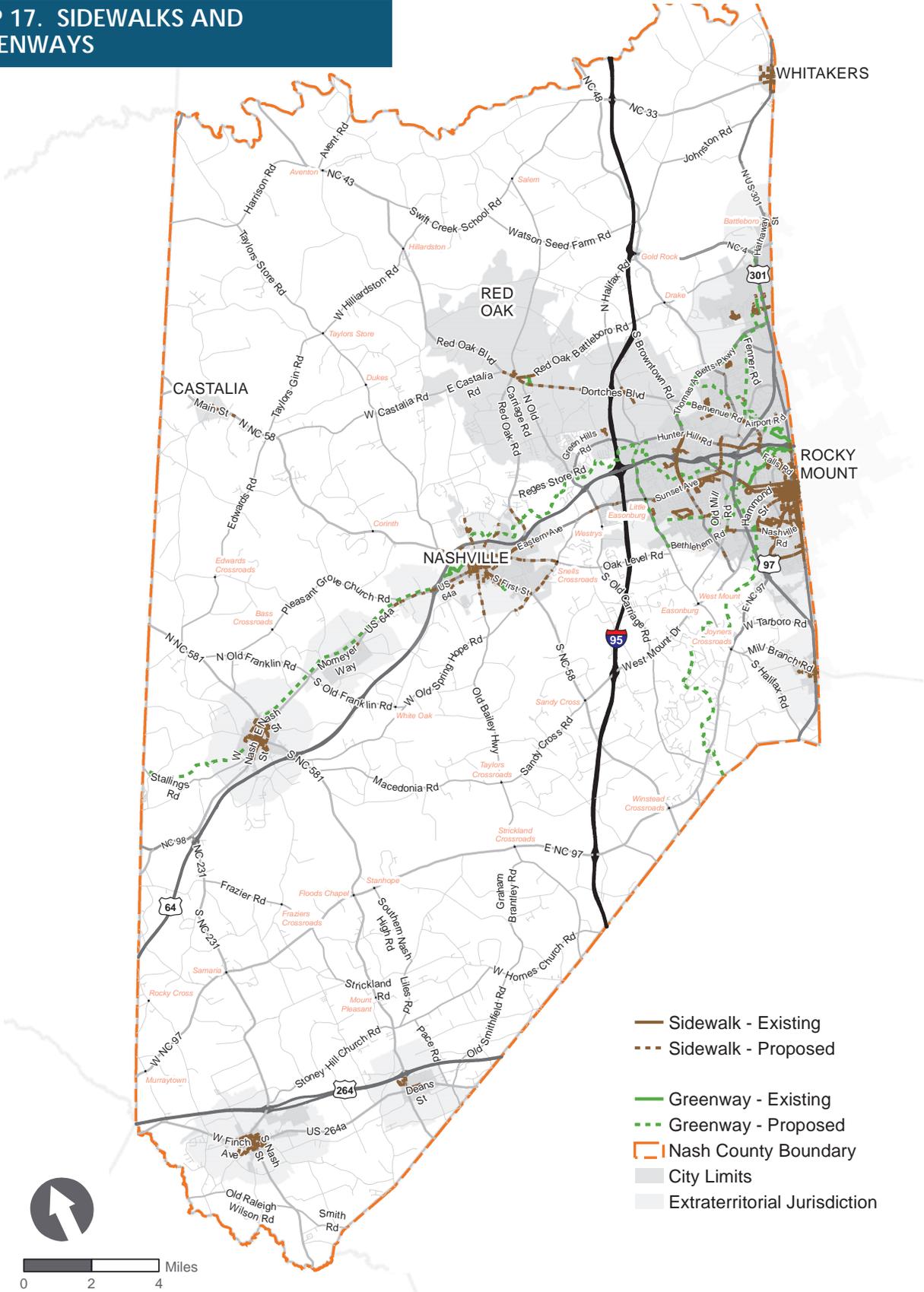


#### Strategic Location

Positioned to reach more than five million consumers within a 120-mile radius.

- Located five miles off I-95 in Rocky Mount, NC
- 60 miles northeast of the growing Raleigh metro
- Convenient proximity to the Triangle region’s major consumption market

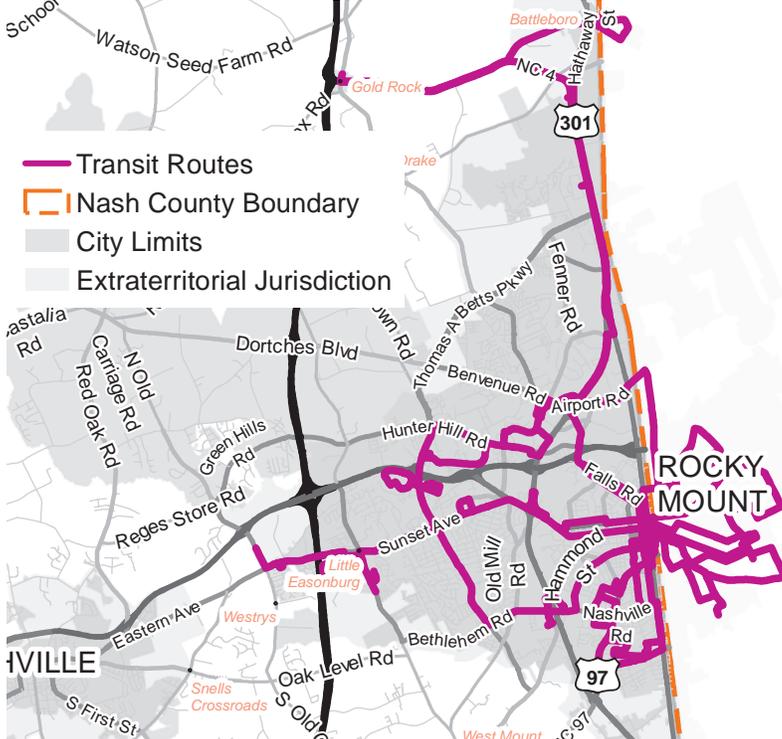
# MAP 17. SIDEWALKS AND GREENWAYS



leading transportation suppliers, providing rail service and the transport of intermodal containers and trailers to a broad array of markets. Markets served include energy, industrial, construction, agricultural, and consumer products. Amtrak services are also available along this rail with a passenger station located in the heart of Historic Downtown Rocky Mount.

Located five miles off I-95 and 60 miles northeast of the Raleigh metro, the new CSX Carolina Connector Intermodal Facility (CCX) in Rocky Mount features three wide-span, zero emission electric cranes with a lift capacity of 110,000 containers per year. This is a state-of-the-art facility featuring completely automatic operations. The terminal, which is within 30 miles of over 500 acres of Nash County-owned industrial sites, provides convenient truck access to local and regional markets. Businesses connected to the CCX facility have access to over five million consumers within a 120-mile radius.

### TAR RIVER TRANSIT ROUTES



### Public Transit

Tar River Transit is a public transportation service providing affordable fixed-route bus service throughout the City of Rocky Mount. Though bus routes primarily serve the Rocky Mount area, two routes extend out to I-95, with connections at Nash Community College and North Carolina Wesleyan College in Battleboro.

Two Rural General Public shuttle routes are provided for any citizen living in Nash and Edgecombe counties. Residents that live in county areas such as Nashville, Spring Hope, Castalia, Middlesex, Tarboro, Pinetops, Conetoe, and Whitakers can ride to and from these areas from within the city limits of Rocky Mount. These routes are available Monday through Friday and follow the same holiday schedule as the regular fixed route buses. The origination of each route is at the downtown bus station located at 111 Coastline Drive in Rocky Mount.

Tar River Transit is a public transportation service providing affordable fixed-route bus service throughout the City of Rocky Mount.

Tickets are \$1.25/fare, with multi-ticket passes, free rides for children, and free transfers. Seniors and those with disabilities ride the bus for half price (60 cents). Though bus routes primarily serve the Rocky Mount area, two routes extend out to I-95, with connections at Nash Community College and North Carolina Wesleyan College in Battleboro.

Two Rural General Public shuttle routes are provided for any citizen living in Nash and Edgecombe counties. For a fare of \$4.00, residents that live in county areas such as Nashville, Spring Hope, Castalia, Middlesex, Tarboro, Pinetops, Conetoe, and Whitakers can ride to and from these areas from within the city limits of Rocky Mount. These routes are available Monday through Friday and follow the same holiday schedule as the regular fixed route buses. The origination of each route is at the downtown bus station located at

111 Coastline Drive in Rocky Mount. Tar River Transit also provides on demand transportation for people with disabilities through the Dial-A-Ride program (DARTS). This program enables eligible people to access public transportation.

### Aviation

With a large advanced manufacturing and agricultural presence, Nash County is also home to the Rocky Mount-Wilson Regional Airport (RWI), a public airport that covers 364 acres and conducts approximately 30,000 operations annually. Its location just three miles from I-95 makes it convenient for those conducting business nearby, as well as enabling the seamless flow of distribution along the east coast. RWI is located five miles

from the 142-acre I-95 NC Distribution Site, one of three Nash County-owned industrial properties. The airport's location between several major interstates allows for easy access to the Raleigh area for business travelers and could offer an alternative to the Raleigh-Durham Airport (RDU). While bigger metropolitan airports are essential for thriving city centers, airports like RWI support the vital industries of the surrounding area by giving companies convenient access to the factories, plants, and offices that are located outside urban areas.

**The N.C. Department of Transportation Division of Aviation reports RWI PROVIDES 450 JOBS and \$2.9 MILLION IN TAX REVENUE annually**

### RWI AIRPORT



Source: Business View Magazine

# TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

## 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 to 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 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

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

**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, natural areas, or between municipal activity centers/downtowns 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 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.





# 6

## PARKS, RECREATION, & OPEN SPACE



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Nash County has a rich system of rivers and creeks that serve as resources for drinking, agriculture, natural habitats, and more. The most prominent river, the Tar River, weaves across the southern portion of the County, and a system of creeks such as Stony Creek and Swift Creek connect throughout the rest of the County. All of these waterways offer habitats for many species, such as the endangered Neuse River waterdog and Carolina madtom. The surrounding watersheds for these waterways occupy 95,468 acres, or 27.5% of the entire county's land area.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

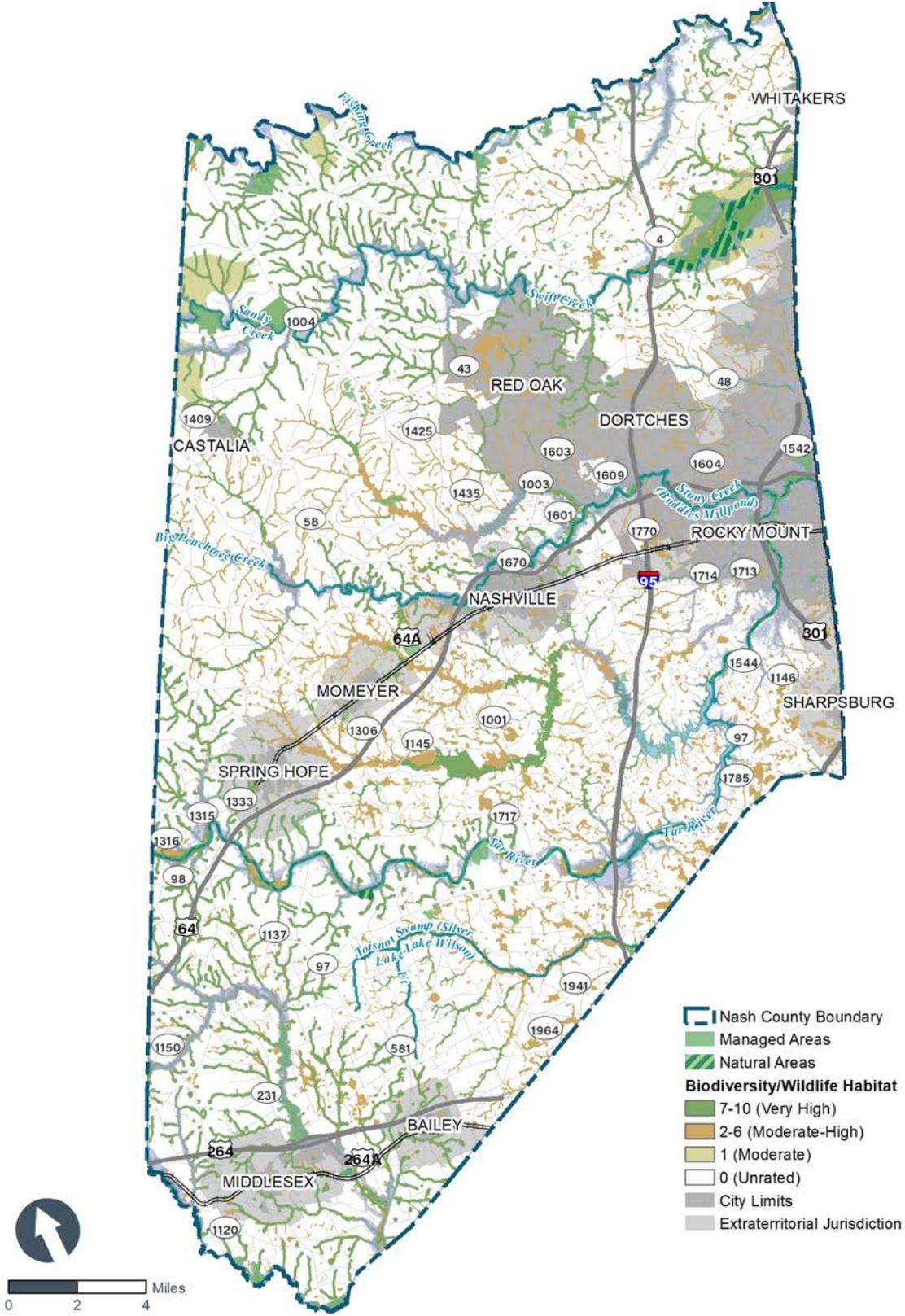
The majority of public parks in Nash County are located in the municipal limits but Nash County recently completed its first all-inclusive park, Miracle Park. Disc golf is a popular sport in Nash County and the County currently offers six disc golf courses. Additionally, there are several schools used by the county for non-school recreational athletic programs and other game fields and playgrounds.

Nash County adopted a Parks and Recreation Department Comprehensive Master Plan in 2014 which outlines future recreational opportunities throughout the County. The County recognizes the need to expand its recreational opportunities and is taking an active role.

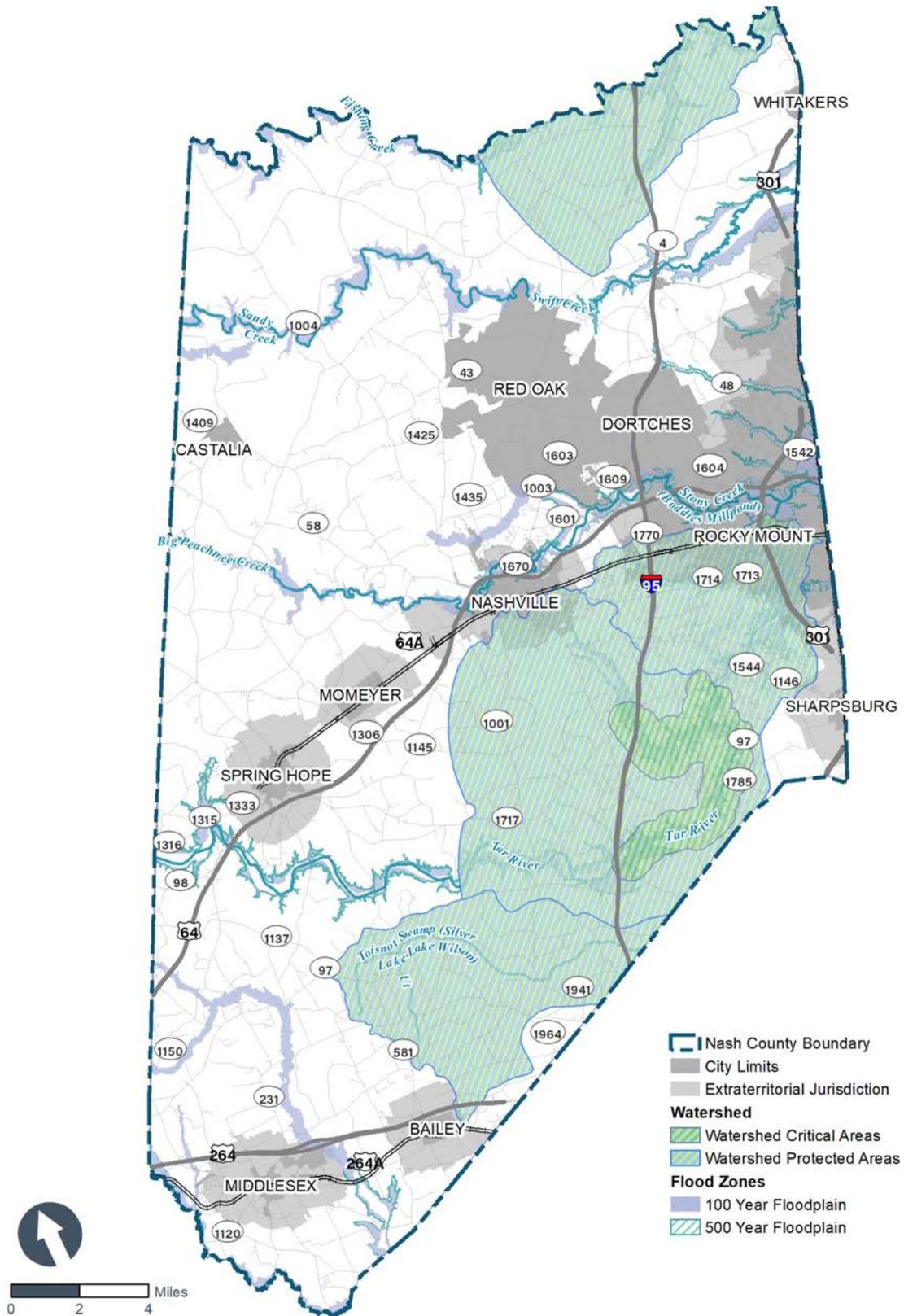
There are opportunities for fishing in the Tar River near Battle Park. In addition, walking trails within Battle Park connect to Sunset Park where there is basketball, tennis courts, and a large dog park. Not only is the Tar River perfect for fishing, but the slow-moving water also provides great opportunities for kayaking and canoeing.

Community feedback was unanimous in support of expanding the County's system of active and passive recreation opportunities in and around its natural areas. During stakeholder interviews, many participants expressed a desire for the County to capitalize on its natural resources as recreation opportunities. These could include water access for activities such as boating and fishing, and access to natural areas for greenways or trails. This echoes the top priorities for parks from the survey, which were "More natural areas" and "More greenways and trails." The County's economic development team also supported expanding this system, as it would be a draw for employers concerned about their workers' quality of life.

# MAP 18. NATURAL RESOURCES



# MAP 19. WATER RESOURCES



# PARKS, RECREATION, & OPEN SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS

## 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.

**4.2.2:** Assess and possibly revise the recreation and open space dedication requirements for new residential subdivisions.

**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.

**4.4.2:** Explore opportunities to enhance programming needs of youth, senior, and disabled populations.

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

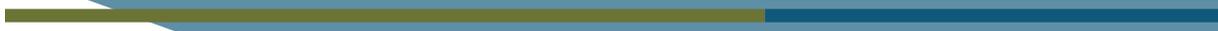
**Objective 4.6:** Make mature, native forest an open space priority, especially near streams and contiguous with stream buffers or wetlands. Preserve mature, connected upland forests, too.





7

# INFRASTRUCTURE & UTILITIES



# EXISTING CONDITIONS

Public infrastructure is critical to a community's welfare and overall wellbeing. The availability of public infrastructure has a significant impact on land use and development patterns. An adequate supply of water and sewer capacity is an economic driver that supports the location of residences, commerce, industry, and governmental services. Nash County has made significant investments in public infrastructure and is currently working with the Towns of Red Oak and Dortches to bring public water to serve the northern portion of the county.

## WATER AND SEWER

The City of Rocky Mount operates a public utilities system that provides water and sewer services to residents of Nash County and Edgecombe County. Rocky Mount provides services to several municipalities, including Whitakers, Nashville, Dortches, and Sharpsburg. Other portions of Nash County are served by a regional water and wastewater system.

Spring Hope, Bailey, and Middlesex have municipal well water systems. Spring Hope and Bailey also have municipal wastewater collection and treatment systems. However, the Town of Bailey's sewer system is currently nearing capacity, and a statutory moratorium has been imposed. Middlesex sewer systems are also nearing capacity with environmental constraints limiting the possibility of further expanding.

Water and sewer service exist in the southeastern portion of the county. The County has recently acquired the Town of Castalia's water system and tower, but a large portion of the unincorporated area still rely on wells and septic systems which puts constraints on the types of development that can occur.

## INTERNET

Internet access was a common theme discussed during community engagement. Like many rural areas, high speed internet access is either not available or cost-prohibitive. According to the NC Division of Broadband and Digital Equity, as of 2019 78.3% of the county's population has access to fast internet (100 MBPS download/3 MCPS upload). This statistic does not account for affordability of the service. However, when looking at internet access, Nash County has room to improve. The state's broadband availability index, which looks at several variables and calculates an availability index number for each county, rates Nash County internet availability at 60, which is relatively low. For reference, Wake County's internet availability index is a 96.

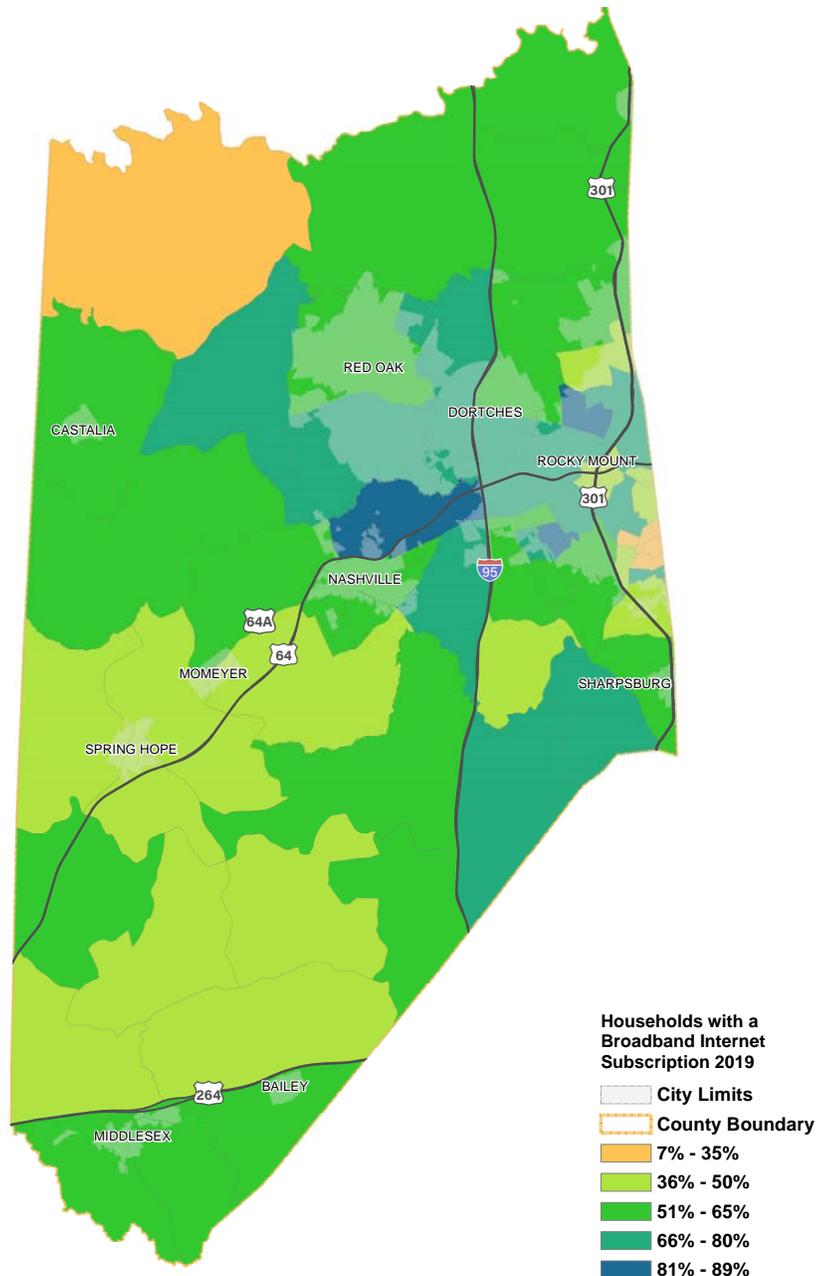
Fiber optic cable capacity will be installed along the entire length of the Future I-87 corridor and the US 64 extension. This investment will permit NCDOT to manage the corridor in a coordinated manner, implement state-of-the-art wind and water monitoring, prepare for future implementation of connected and autonomous vehicles, enhance broadband capability in this rural area, and offer opportunities for NCDOT to lease excess fiber capacity for potential revenue. Fiber is already being installed along I-95 corridor.



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## MAP 20. BROADBAND INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS BY CENSUS BLOCK GROUP

The map above shows percent of households that have broadband internet subscriptions, which shows higher rates in the Rocky Mount-Dortches-Nashville portion of the County. Fewer households in the more rural areas have subscriptions, which may be a function of affordability, lack of providers, lack of infrastructures, or all of the above.



# INFRASTRUCTURE, UTILITIES, & SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

## 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.

- The current understanding in the County is that the local government provides the best and most lasting guarantee of adequate maintenance and service provision of public utilities.

**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 revising utility extension policies and 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.

