

Harnett County Update

**North Carolina Sandhills
Conservation Partnership**



Local Land Use Planning

Presented by Sarah Arbour

Harnett County Planning Services



Presentation Overview

1. Adoption of the Land Use Plan (2025)
2. Challenges: Session Law 2024-57 (S.B. 382)
3. Implementation of Conditional Zoning
4. Q&A



1. Land Use Plan Update

Adopted in April 2025

New Land Use Classifications

Identified Opportunities, Goals, and
Implementation Tools

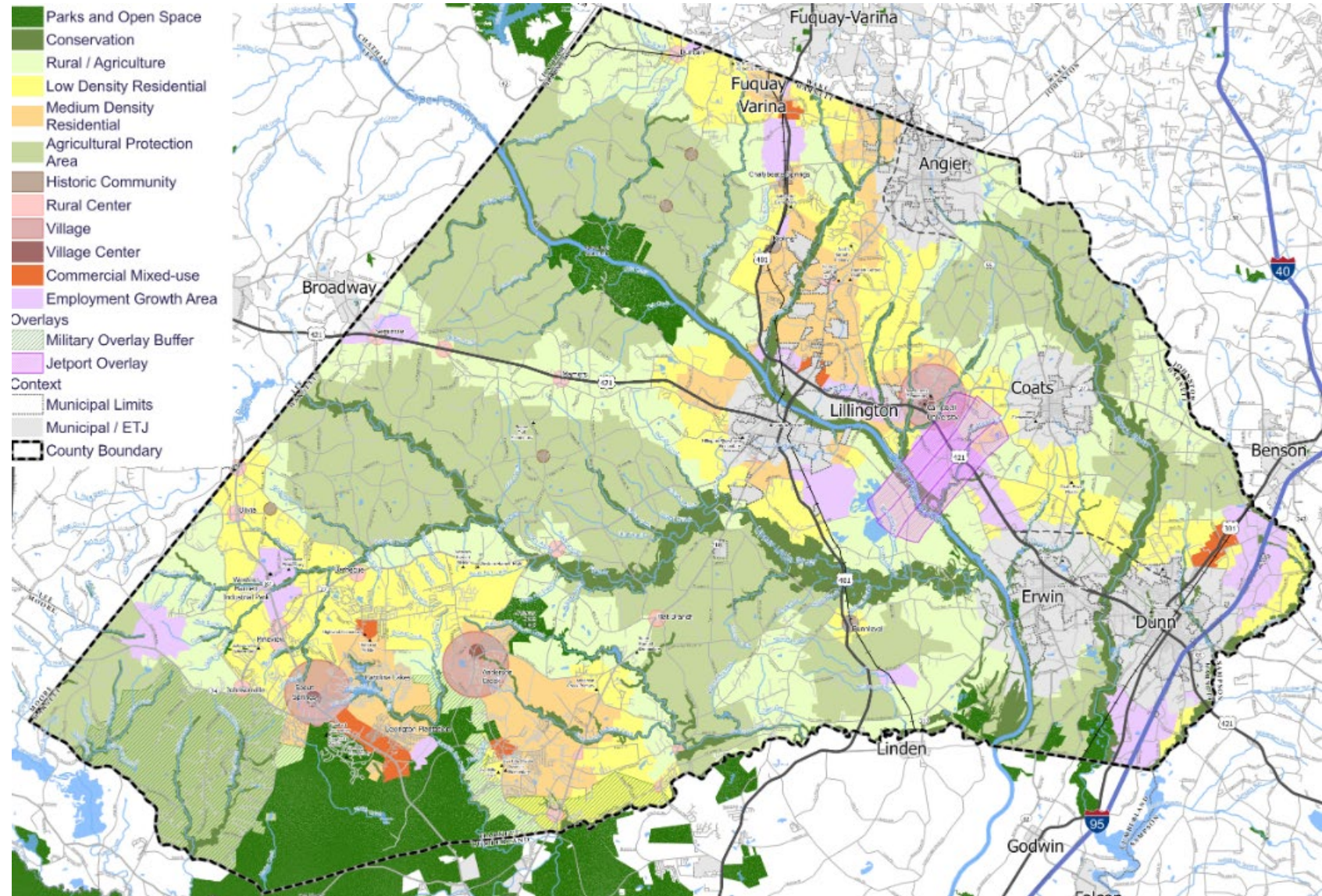


Land Use Classifications

Agricultural Protection Areas

Conservation

Parks and Open Space



Harnett Horizons 2040 Land Use Map

Land Use Classifications :

Agricultural Protection Areas

Agricultural and Rural Areas



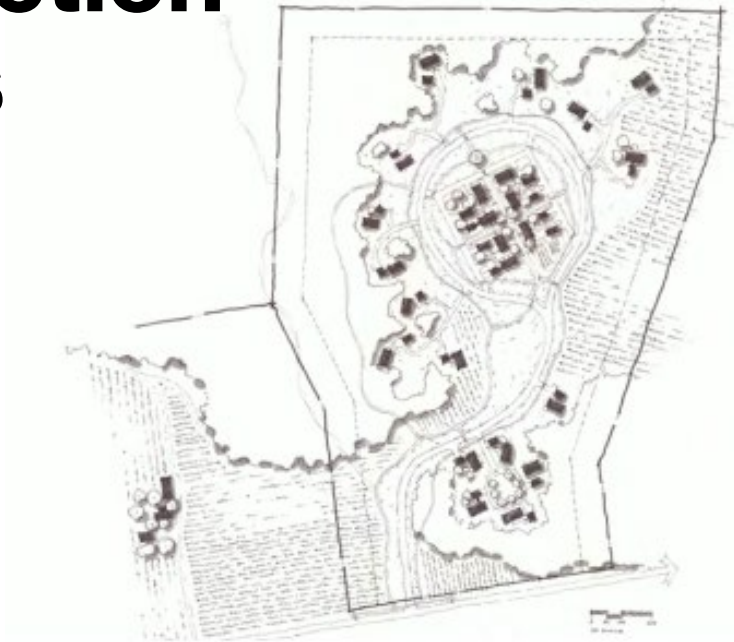
AGRICULTURAL PROTECTION AREAS

Areas of the county with concentration of agriculture, timber operations and natural resources. Farmland preservation efforts should be focused in these areas. The established low density development pattern and ongoing agricultural activities in these areas contribute to their rural character. This character can be enhanced by encouraging only low intensity uses such as agriculture and support businesses, and very low density single family residential with context sensitive rural design. New residential development should be limited in density and scale. Density should generally be less than 0.5 dwelling unit per acre.



Land Use Classifications :

Agricultural Protection Areas



A Farmhouse Cluster Subdivision illustrated above is designed to fit into the surrounding agricultural landscape.

Strategy: Update zoning to reduce density and improve design in Agricultural Protection Areas

Consider targeted rezonings and an Agricultural Protection Overlay Zoning District to lower allowable densities to less than .5 an acre.

Add a Farmhouse or Rural Cluster major subdivision option to incentivize small-scale, low-density development

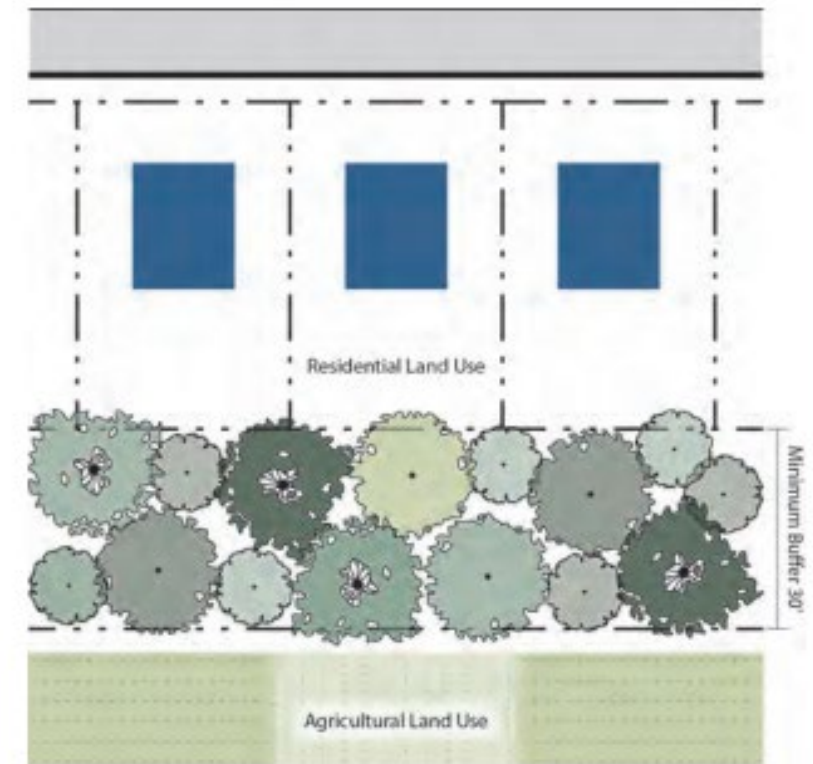
Add requirement for major subdivisions to install or preserve a landscape buffer adjacent to working farmland.

Land Use Classifications :

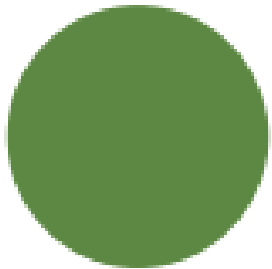
Agricultural Protection Areas

Agricultural Buffers

To reduce impacts to working farmland new subdivisions in certain zoning districts with lots under 25,000 square feet could be required to preserve or install a landscape buffer. This would allow existing farmland operations to continue without potential conflicts from new development.



Land Use Classifications : Conservation



CONSERVATION

Environmentally sensitive areas, including floodplains and areas located in the Conservation Overlay Zoning District. Primary uses in these areas includes recreation, forestry, and agriculture.



Land Use Classifications

Conservation



Goal: Maintain and increase standards for new development

Improve open space standards for new development. Currently, a by-right subdivision does not require open space. A minimum of 10-15% should be added.

Encourage conservation subdivisions in areas with sensitive environmental resources through updates to the Compatibility Development Option.

Incentives for conservation subdivisions with 40% open space that includes smaller lot sizes with a maximum overall gross density cap.

Require a percentage of open space to be outside of regulated features (i.e. floodplain, stream buffers and wetlands). Require a percentage of open space to be contiguous.

Land Use Classifications : Conservation

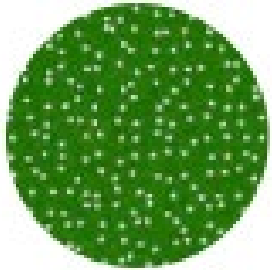


Conservation Subdivisions

Conservation subdivisions are designed to cluster development away from key natural resources and have higher amounts of open space than conventional subdivisions. Currently there is a "Compatibility Development" option in the Unified Development Ordinance that allows for smaller lot sizes in exchange for higher open space standards. Conservation design was preferred 2 to 1 in the survey. The current options does not allow or require true conservation design as open space standards are too low and true clustering is not allowed, even in areas with water and sewer.

Land Use Classifications :

Parks & Open Space



PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Parks and other forms of protected open space, including large conservation easements. This character area also includes Fort Bragg. Primary uses in these areas includes recreation, forestry, agriculture and military operations.



Land Use Classifications :

Parks & Open Space



Strategy: Encourage a mix of passive and active open space based on context

Encourage more natural areas in rural areas and areas with sensitive environmental resources

Utilize pocket parks, common greens, and plazas as gathering spaces in new neighborhoods

Update standards to include incentives for entry features, additional landscaping, and tree preservation.

Strategy: Require the reservation of high-quality, connected open space in new development

Seek to identify opportunities to conserve open space networks, existing mature tree canopies, steep slopes, floodplains (100 and 500 year), priority wildlife habitats, and significant natural features as part of public and private development plans.

2. Challenges :

Session Law 2024-57 (S.B. 382)

Implementation Challenges : “Down-Zoning”

Area	Possible Conflict with Down-Zoning Legislation
Open Space Requirements	A reduction of developable land
Targeted Rezoning	Requires written owner authorization
Increased Agricultural Buffers	A reduction of developable land
Reduced Densities	By new definition, down-zoning
Changing Allowable Uses	A reduction of use of the property/Potential to create non-conforming situations

3. Conditional Zoning

Conditional zoning is a recommendation of the Harnett Horizons 2040 Land Use Plan

Adoption of a Conditional Zoning Process

The County adopted a text amendment in March of this year to implement a conditional zoning process.

Implementation Tool

Since the new “down-zoning” law, Conditional Zoning may be the most effective available tool for implementing the recommendations of the Land Use Plan.



Q & A

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