



Town of Lillington Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update

Town Council & Planning Board Briefing

January 2026

RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

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Presentation Overview

- Project schedule
- Draft Vision Statement
- Goals Statements & Policy Recommendations
- Draft Future Land Use Map & Character Areas
- Draft Plan Format (what you can expect to see)
- Next steps

Project Schedule

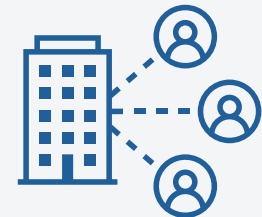
PROJECT SCHEDULE



Vision

“Lillington is a welcoming, connected community where families thrive and the Cape Fear River unites neighborhoods, nature, and a vibrant downtown. The community supports a healthy, engaged lifestyle and a growing local economy.”

Planning Process



Goal Statements & Policy Recommendations

	Goal Theme	Goal Statement	Policy Recommendations
	1. Revitalize Downtown	<i>Create a vibrant and energized downtown that serves as a daily destination for retail, services, and entertainment, supported by well-connected parks and green spaces that safely link downtown to the river and surrounding community assets.</i>	Policy RD-1 Promote downtown redevelopment & building activation. Policy RD-2 Increase connectivity to downtown & improve the public realm. Policy RD-3 Focus on Business Recruitment & Property Marketing Policy RD-4 Promote Downtown as a Cultural Destination
	2. Improve Traffic Congestion and Safety	<i>Prioritize improved traffic management and implement innovative road designs to reduce congestion and enhance safety for all modes of transportation at key intersections.</i>	Policy TS-1 Build Partnerships. Policy TS-2 Improve traffic management. Policy TS-3 Capital Improvements. Policy TS-4 Prioritize transportation improvements with new development. Policy TS-5 Improve local street network & connectivity. Policy TS-6 Promote traffic calming & residential safety.
	3. Expand the Town's Pedestrian Network	<i>Expand sidewalks, trails, and greenways to connect neighborhoods, natural assets, parks, and downtown, providing the infrastructure to support active, outdoor lifestyles for residents and visitors.</i>	Policy PN-1 Expand Sidewalk & Greenway Network. Policy PN-2 Plan Implementation & New Plan Development. Policy PN-3 Capital Improvements. Policy PN-4 Maintain and update standards to promote pedestrian-oriented development.
	4. Prioritize Commercial Development	<i>Support retail and service businesses that generate well-paying local jobs, promote high-quality commercial development, and strengthen the community's tax base.</i>	Policy CD-1 Strategic commercial growth areas. Policy CD-2 Recruit & retain businesses. Policy CD-3 Prioritize key redevelopment nodes. Policy CD-4 Update development & design standards.

Goal Statements & Policy Recommendations

Goal Theme	Goal Statement	Policy Recommendations
 5. Ensure Balanced Growth	<i>Ensure equitable revitalization and development across all areas of Lillington by promoting a balanced mix of land uses on both sides of the river, with investments that enhance the quality of life for all neighborhoods.</i>	Policy BG-1 Promote Strategic and Equitable Investments. Policy BG-2 Invest in Community Revitalization Projects. Policy BG-3 Support strategically located mixed-use and housing diversity projects.
 6. Preserve Community Identity	<i>Preserve and strengthen community identity by revitalizing existing commercial buildings to maintain the town's history, uniqueness, and small-town charm; reinvesting in infrastructure to support infill development near downtown; enhancing key gateways with attractive signage and branding; and creating welcoming spaces for cultural groups to gather and contribute to the town's future.</i>	Policy CI-1 Focus on preserving local historical properties and adaptive reuse. Policy CI-2 Focus on town gateway improvements and branding. Policy CI-3 Increase cultural & community gathering spaces.
 7. Prioritize Connectivity to the Cape Fear River	<i>Promote the Cape Fear River as a vital natural asset that connects neighborhoods, attracts visitors, and supports an active, outdoor lifestyle for residents.</i>	Policy CF-1 Expand Riverfront Access & Trails. Policy CF-2 Protect Natural Resources. Policy CF-3 Promote Connectivity to the River. Policy CF-4 Create a Riverfront Identity.
 8. Capturing Residents & Workers	<i>Create a vibrant live, work, and play environment where residents and workers choose to stay in Lillington to meet their shopping, medical, dining, and entertainment needs.</i>	Policy CRW-1 Support worker retention & attraction through vibrant destinations. Policy CRW-2 Engage residents & workers through placemaking, programming and strategic land use planning. Policy CRW-3 Expand housing options to diversify residential base.

Policy Implementation Example

GOAL 1 - REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN

Create a vibrant and energized downtown that serves as a daily destination for retail, services, and entertainment, supported by well-connected parks and green spaces that safely link downtown to the river and surrounding community assets.

Policy RD-1 | Promote Downtown Redevelopment & Building Activation.

RD 1.1: Promote mixed-use infill development that reflects the scale and architectural character of historic downtown.

RD 1.2: Encourage a mix of housing types on sites that could serve as a transition from commercial to single family residential development.

RD 1.3: Encourage infill and redevelopment in areas well-served by infrastructure and services.

RD 1.4: Ensure new buildings and renovations downtown reinforce existing design & character.

RD 1.5: Continue efforts to join NC Main Street Program.

RD 1.6: Support adaptive reuse of historical buildings and streamline permitting for building upfits and tenant fit-outs.

RD 1.7: Allow medium and high density residential and mixed use development as part of development or redevelopment of underutilized commercial lands.



Efforts to implement the 10th Street bypass, construction of the S. 8th Street & W. Ivey Street parking lot and the planned streetscape improvements along W. Harnett Street, S. 8th Street, and W. Front Street show the Town's commitment to downtown revitalization.

Action Matrix Example:

Policy Number	Policy Implementation	Lead	Support	Time	Cost
RD-1.1	Promote mixed-use infill development that reflects the scale and architectural character of historic downtown.	Planning & Inspections (PI); Administration (AD)	Town Council (TC)		

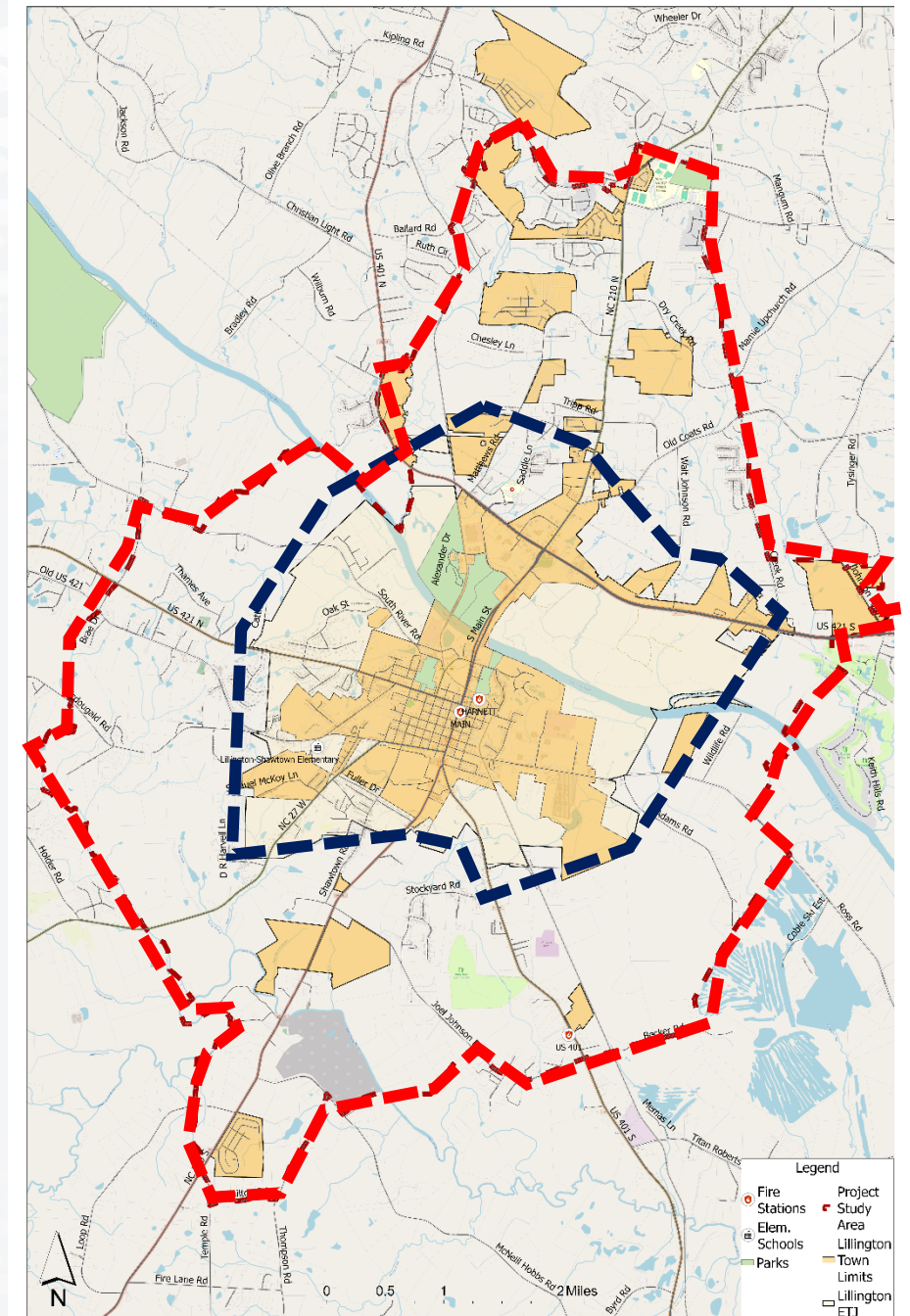
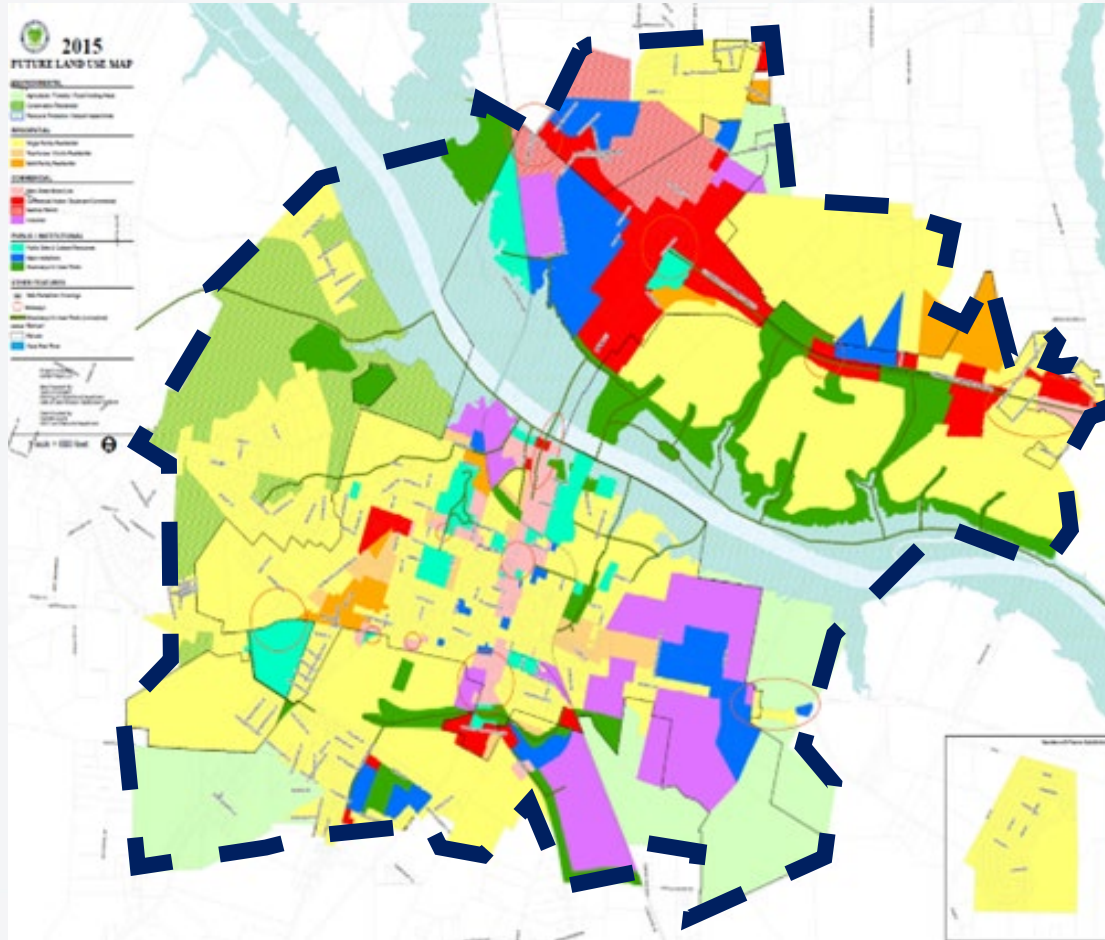


Questions or thoughts?

Future Land Use Map

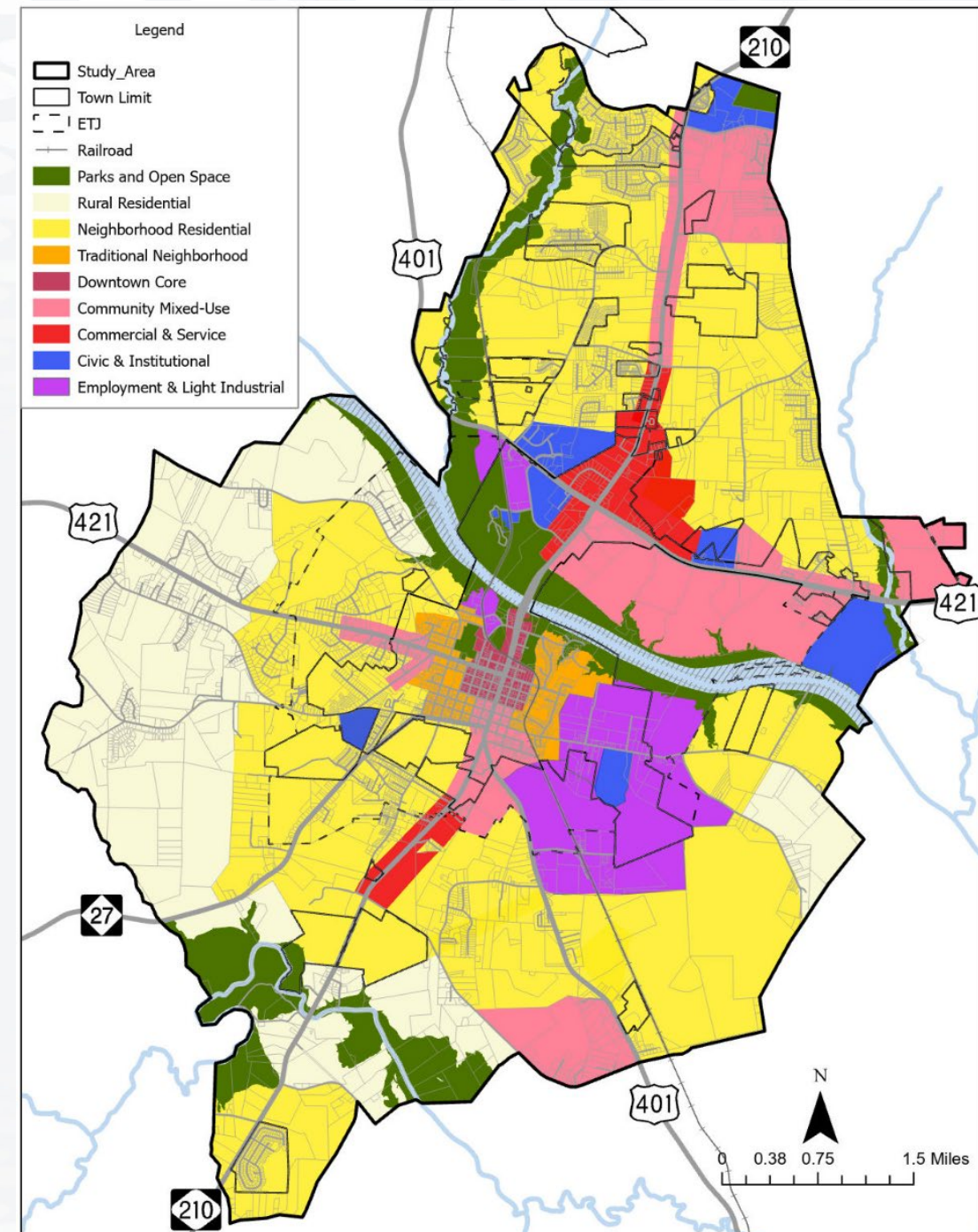
- FLUM and associated character areas are meant to guide land use and infrastructure decisions in the Town's current jurisdiction and future growth areas (study area).
- Highlights include:
 - Defined downtown core area that builds on current downtown revitalization efforts.
 - Designated mixed-use types.
 - Industrial and Employment areas.
 - Commercial areas along major highways and thoroughfares.
 - Areas for new residential development.
 - Sensitive/Environmental areas.

Future Land Use Map



Draft Future Land Use Map

- Each color corresponds to a character area.
- Descriptive, not prescriptive, and indicate a predominant land use or set of uses, intensity, and shared design details.
- Does not propose a change to existing development, but a direction moving forward for new development and redevelopment.



Character Area Summary

Rural Residential

- *Outskirts of town*
- *Environmental conditions*
- *Lack of utilities*
- *1 dwelling/acre (large lot)*
- *Conservation subdivisions*



Neighborhood Residential

- *Suburban neighborhoods*
- *Single Family, limited townhomes*
- *Typical subdivision*
- *Limited small-scale commercial along major roads*



Traditional Neighborhood

- *Established neighborhoods*
- *Infill development*
- *More pedestrian-oriented*
- *Single Family, townhomes*



Character Area Summary

Community Mixed-Use

- *Mix of Uses*
- *Planned communities*
- *Connectivity*
- *Focus on design*
- *Central Public Gathering Places*



Downtown Core

- *Mix of Uses*
- *Adaptive reuse*
- *Reflect character*
- *Pedestrian-oriented*
- *Public Gathering Places*



Commercial & Service

- *Auto-oriented*
- *Primarily commercial*
- *Focus on design & aesthetics*
- *Landscaping & buffering*
- *Unified Signage*



Character Area Summary

Civic & Institutional

- *Government, Health, & Educational*
- *Design considerations*
- *Entryways*
- *Internal circulation*
- *Cohesive architecture*



Employment & Industrial

- *Light Manufacturing, Warehousing, Employment-based.*
- *Highways & public utilities*
- *Landscaping & fencing buffers*



Parks & Open Space

- *Parks, Greenways, Natural Areas, Floodplain & Riparian buffers*
- *Access to Cape Fear & trails*
- *Recreational opportunities*



Character Area Samples

Parks & Open Space



Rural Residential



Neighborhood Residential



Traditional Neighborhood



Downtown Core



Community & Mixed Use



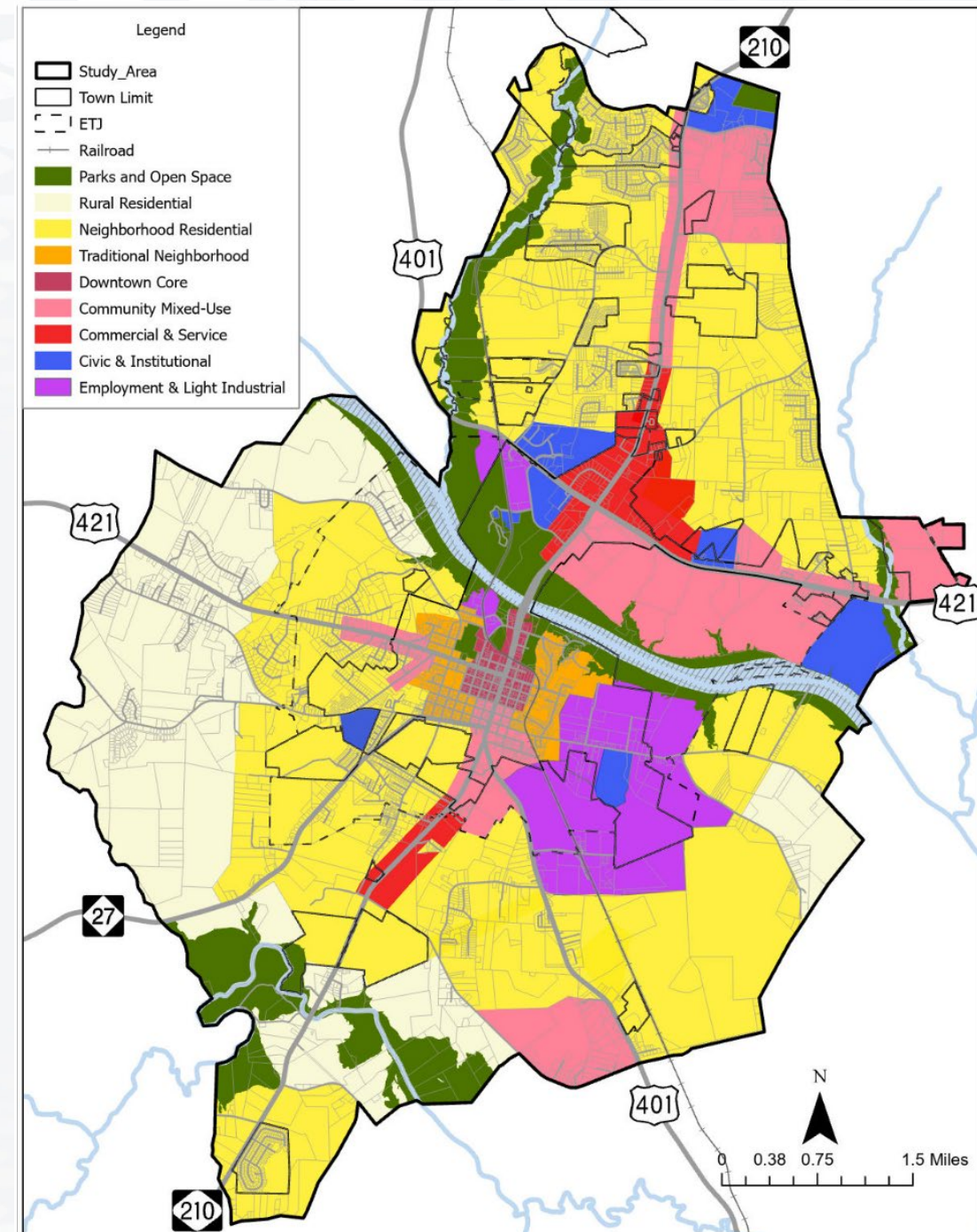
Commercial & Service



Civic & Institutional

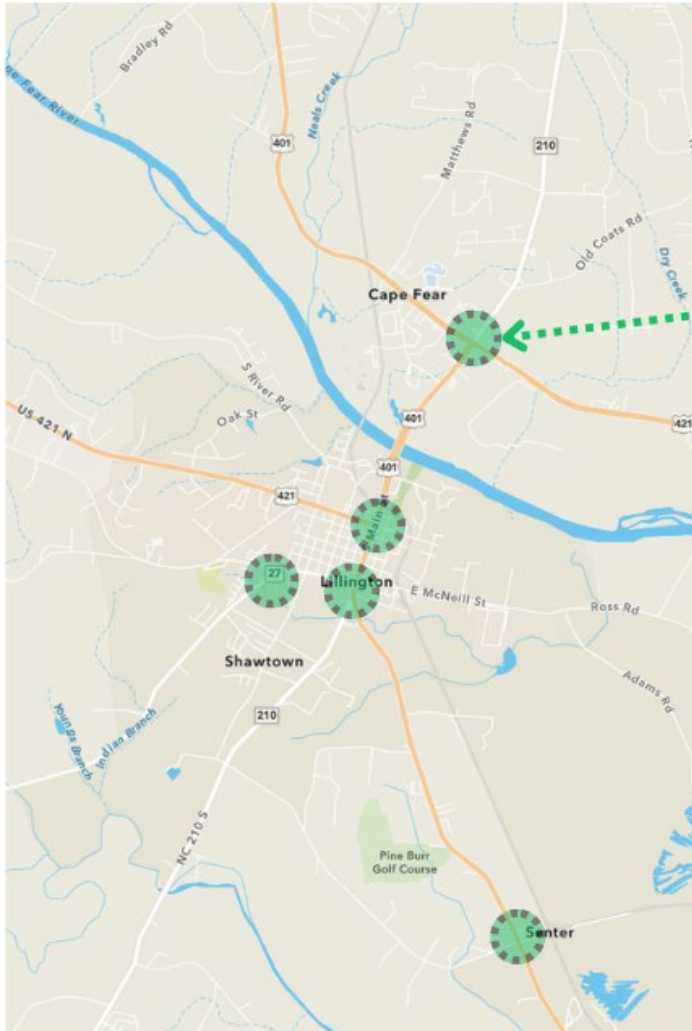


Employment & Industrial



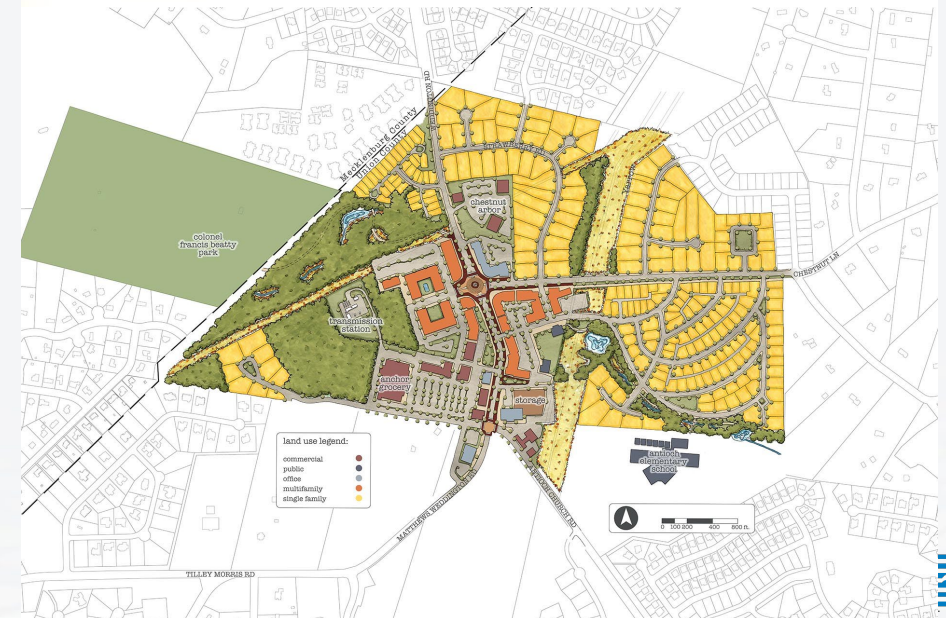
Key Development Nodes

KEY DEVELOPMENT NODE CONCEPT



Small Area Plans (SAPs) give communities the opportunity to create focused, area-specific planning guides. The green dots identify key development nodes in Lillington that are well-suited for future SAPs. Effective small area plans typically address potential land uses, transportation and access, building placement and design, and needed infrastructure improvements.

Small Area Plan Example:





Questions or thoughts?

Draft Plan Format

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PLAN CONTENT

GUIDING FRAMEWORK

The Town of Lillington is a thriving community in the heart of Harnett County, North Carolina. Incorporated in 1903, it serves as the county seat and is strategically located between the Raleigh and Fayetteville metropolitan areas. Residents benefit from a robust health care network contribute to an employment base and the overall well-being of the citizens. Similarly, parks, greenways, and Raven Rock State Park promote active lifestyles and community connections. Nearby Campbell University is an important institution that serves as an anchor for education, employment and cultural enrichment. Lillington's small-town charm, high quality of life, and scenic natural areas along the Cape Fear River make it a desirable place to live.

In March 2025, the Town launched an update to the Lillington Comprehensive Land Use Plan to address the growth, be in conformance with NCOS 1600, and ensure that future development supports a thriving community with a high quality of life.

The planning process included a detailed analysis of existing conditions and robust community engagement to identify key opportunities and challenges. These efforts informed the plan's vision, goals, and actionable recommendations. The result is a blueprint for how Lillington should grow and develop over the next 10 to 20 years, ensuring the town remains a vibrant and connected community for current and future residents.

PLAN PROCESS

A well-designed, comprehensive land use plan strikes a balance between data, analysis, market demand, and community input. This plan builds upon the foundation of the 2015 Land Use Plan through a planning process that combined an understanding of existing conditions with meaningful community engagement. These elements helped establish guiding principles that shaped the plan's direction. This foundational work set the stage for an updated land use strategy, supported by clear objectives and actionable strategies to help the Town "bridge the cape."



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Community input served as the cornerstone for developing the new Comprehensive Land Use Plan, with residents actively sharing their priorities, concerns, and aspirations. Outreach efforts included promotions through the Town's social media channels, official website, and flyers distributed at Town Hall. To broaden awareness of the planning process and encourage participation in the public survey and engagement events, the Town of Lillington partnered with KCI to host an informational booth at Cape Fear Fest and a pop-up event at a downtown coffee shop.

- Community engagement activities included:
- Stakeholder Interviews
 - Cape Fear Fest
 - Coffee Shop Drop In
 - Public Workshop No. 1
 - Virtual Public Workshop
 - Public Workshop No. 2



Public engagement event held in downtown Lillington

Steering Committee

A panel of community leaders was established to guide the overall process, offering strategic advice, local insight, and expertise on key elements of the plan. The committee brings together representatives from Harnett County Planning Services, NCDOT, small business owners, and Lillington's staff and elected officials.

The committee helps to promote opportunities for engagement from Town residents and analyzes feedback to ensure accuracy. Over the course of the project, the committee met five times to provide insight into various phases of project plan development.

Stakeholder Interviews

On April 16, 2025 the KCI consultant team conducted interviews with key stakeholders that had been identified by town staff. This included discussions with individuals with expertise in the following six groups:

VISION & GOALS

VISION

The vision statement is a brief, inspirational description of what the town aspires to achieve in the future. It reflects shared community values that are tied to the goals of this plan. These broad and long-range goals should serve as a guiding light as staff, elected officials, and community groups work towards creating a better community.



Vision Statement

Lillington is a welcoming, connected community where families thrive, and the Cape Fear River unites neighborhoods, nature, and a vibrant downtown. The community supports a healthy, engaged lifestyle and a growing local economy.



PLAN ELEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

As Lillington continues to grow and evolve, it is essential to recognize that different parts of the community possess distinct physical characteristics, land use patterns, historical context, and opportunities for future development. These differences shape how residents experience their neighborhoods, how businesses operate, and how infrastructure and public services are delivered. To reflect and respond to this diversity, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan introduces a Character Area Framework—a strategic approach to guiding content-sensitive growth, preservation, and investment throughout the town's jurisdiction and within the broader planning study area, which includes areas anticipated for future expansion.

Character Areas represent geographic areas that share common traits and planning considerations. They help translate community values into land use guidance by accounting for the varying roles, conditions, and needs of different areas. Each Character Area provides direction on appropriate land uses, desired development patterns, transportation improvements, and public investments, ensuring that future growth reinforces Lillington's identity while enhancing livability, connectivity, and economic opportunity. These areas are illustrated on the Future Land Use Map and form the foundation for policies and implementation strategies throughout this plan.

For planning purposes, Character Areas are classified into four general categories: Residential, Mixed-Use/Commercial, Employment, and Natural. Each classification contains more specific subcategories tailored to Lillington's development context:



This Character Area framework serves as a flexible but intentional guide to future decision-making—balancing growth with preservation, supporting infrastructure planning, and ensuring that each part of Lillington develops in a way that reflects its purpose, potential, and place within the broader community.

LILLINGTON TODAY

COMMUNITY PROFILE

This section provides an analysis of demographic and economic conditions in the Town of Lillington and the study area included in this plan. The information collected here serves as background context to support the recommendations presented later in this document.

Population & Housing

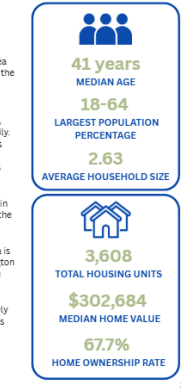
The most recent American Community Survey (ACS) estimates the town's population to be 4,683, with the study area at 9,405. The total daytime population of the town increases to 7,175, including 4,768 workers.

Lillington has experienced steady growth, with household incomes also rising steadily. Adding to household wealth, home values have also risen and outperformed the county. Single-family housing growth has shifted to rent vs. owner-occupied ratios.

The largest percentage of the population in the study area includes those age 18-64, the town's workforce.

The average home value of the study area is \$302,684. The median gross rent in Lillington is \$934/month, and 8.8% of all renters are paying more than \$1,500/month for rent.

Housing in Lillington remains competitively priced relative to surrounding metro areas when adjusting for home size, age, and amenities, though prices have risen noticeably over the past decade.



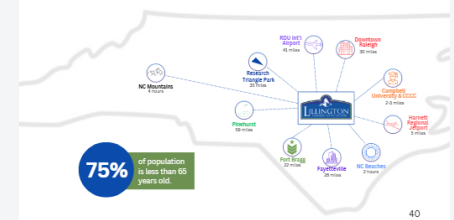
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Building an economically resilient community through job creation, business attraction, and diversification of the local economy is essential to sustaining a stable and growing tax base for the Town of Lillington. This remains a key priority for the town as it continues to grow.

Economic opportunities, including employment and access to services and retail, are vital to residents and the long-term sustainability of the Town's tax base. In order to maintain a high quality of life in Lillington, residential growth needs to be off set with non-residential development at key locations.

Many professionals living in Lillington travel elsewhere to work. Partnering with organizations dedicated to bringing economic opportunities and workforce development to the region, will become crucial as available real estate for large scale developments become scarce and employment trends towards high-tech and medical services continue to increase. Planning for the land use and programmatic needs of growing a more diverse and robust economic environment will help ensure a resilient Lillington in the future.



POLICIES & ACTION PLAN

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Implementation of this Plan is essential to ensuring that the Town's long-term vision becomes reality. While the plan provides a framework for guiding growth, development, and preservation, its success depends on clear, actionable steps that align with local priorities and available resources. The following recommendations are designed to translate the plan's goals into measurable actions, provide guidance for decision-makers, and establish a roadmap for public and private investment. Together, they offer the tools needed to manage change, strengthen the local economy, and maintain the quality of life valued by residents. The policy recommendations respond to the goal statements established as part of the planning process for this document. Each goal focuses on a critical part of the community and provides goal statements, recommended policies, and implementation strategies. The eight goal statements are highlighted below.

- Goal 1 - Revitalize Downtown**
Create a vibrant and engaged downtown that serves as a daily destination for retail, services, and entertainment, supported by well-connected parks and green spaces that safely link downtown to the river and surrounding community assets.
- Goal 2 - Improve Traffic Congestion & Safety**
Prioritize improved traffic management and implement innovative road designs to reduce congestion and enhance safety for all modes of transportation at key intersections.
- Goal 3 - Expand the Town's Pedestrian Network**
Expand sidewalks, trails, and greenways to connect neighborhoods, natural assets, parks, and downtown, providing the infrastructure to support active, outdoor lifestyles for residents and visitors.
- Goal 4 - Prioritize Commercial Development**
Support retail and service businesses that generate well-paying local jobs, promote high-quality commercial development, and strengthen the community's tax base.
- Goal 5 - Ensure Balanced Growth**
Ensure equitable revitalization and development across all areas of Lillington by promoting a balanced mix of land uses on both sides of the river, with investments that enhance the quality of life for all neighborhoods.
- Goal 6 - Preserve Community Identity**
Preserve and strengthen community identity by revitalizing existing commercial buildings to maintain the town's history, uniqueness, and small-town charm; reinvesting in infrastructure to support infill development near downtown; enhancing key greenways with attractive signage and landscaping; and creating welcoming spaces for cultural groups to gather and contribute to the town's future.
- Goal 7 - Prioritize connectivity to the Cape Fear River**
Promote the Cape Fear River as a vital natural asset that connects neighborhoods, attracts visitors, and supports an active, outdoor lifestyle for residents.
- Goal 8 - Capturing Residents & Workers**
Create a vibrant live, work, and play environment where residents and workers choose to stay in Lillington to meet their shopping, medical, dining, and entertainment needs.

Next Steps

- Town Council briefing
- Planning Board briefing
- Community Input Event #2 (*Wednesday 1/14*)
- Work session with staff to finalize draft
- Update draft plan
- Steering Committee Draft Plan Review
- Planning Board & Town Council review/adoption



TOWN OF LILLINGTON COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

Thank you!