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MEMORANDUM



To: Guilford County
From: Brenna Laffey, Design Workshop
Date: 5/18/23
Project Name: Guilford County Comprehensive Plan
Subject: Public Meeting #1 Summary
Copy To: Emily McCoy, Jessica Garrow, Reilly Thimons, Corey Dodd

Stakeholder engagement is critical to capturing and confirming the vision, objectives, and goals to clearly guide next steps and further establish the foundation for the Guilford County Comprehensive Plan update. Feedback gained during Public Meeting #1 provided the team with an initial understanding of assets, challenges, and visions held by County residents and a basis on which team members can tailor future outreach efforts for engaging broader audiences.

During Public Meeting #1, the Planning Team:

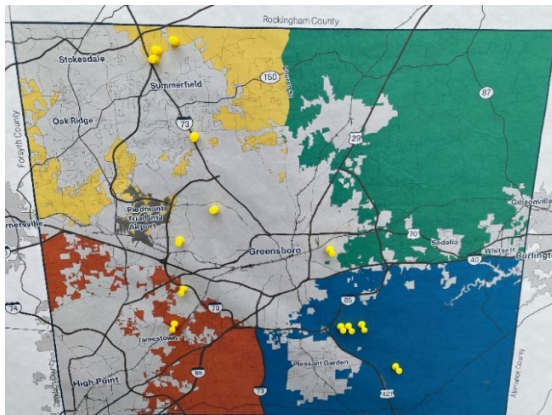
- Introduced the Comprehensive Plan process
- Introduced the Planning Team
- Explained the status of work completed to date and initial understanding of existing conditions and trends
- Explained next steps
- Conducted a live polling exercise and Q&A discussion
- Directed participants to the project website and encouraged participation in the community pulse survey

Location, Date & Time:

NC Cooperative Extension – Guilford County Center
3309 Burlington Rd, Greensboro, NC 27405
Tuesday, April 25, 2023; 6:00pm – 7:00pm

Attendees: (25 including 7 participants via Zoom link)

Demographics of attendees: Attendees were from across the county. There was an opportunity for participants to identify where they live. Not all participants completed the map-pinning; however, those who did were fairly distributed across the Southeast, Southwest and Northwest quadrants, with none pinning the Northeast (See map pinning below). In addition to the map-pinning exercise, demographic cards were distributed, and 11 attendees completed this card.



Summary of Feedback – Public Meeting #1 for the Guilford County Comprehensive Plan Update:

Live Polling:

Following a presentation, an interactive live polling exercise was conducted via Mentimeter allowing for anonymous responses and live results to be presented. Paper copies were made available; however, all participants utilized the online format.

1. Which community type best represents where you live?

- **Summary:** Most workshop attendees identified as living in suburban subdivisions and rural living or farmstead community types, followed by rural subdivision, mixed-use community, and lastly traditional/historic neighborhoods and multi-family subdivisions. None of the attendees identified as members of a lakefront/waterfront community.
 - Rural living or farmstead (5)
 - Rural subdivision (2)
 - Suburban subdivision (6)
 - Lakefront/Waterfront community (0)
 - Traditional/Historic neighborhood (1)
 - Multi-family subdivision (Apartments/townhouses) (1)
 - Mixed-use community (City/town outskirts) (2)

2. Guilford County's greatest assets are...

- **Summary:** Overall responses regarding County assets can be categorized within themes of education, location, natural and cultural resources, and quality of life. Multiple participants identified the availability of quality higher education through colleges and universities as a key asset of the County. The proximity of contrasting rural and urban qualities and the County's central location within North Carolina were also identified as major assets. Rural open space, farmland, accessible clean drinking, and recreational waters were identified as natural and cultural assets that should be protected. These assets contribute to quality of life within the County along with affordable housing, diversity, safety, and a family friendly atmosphere.

Themes were identified based on responses. Individual responses are listed below each theme.

- Education
 - Colleges and universities
 - Education availability
 - Good education
 - Higher education
 - Universities
- Location
 - Location
 - Location in state
 - Mid-state
 - Rural proximity to urban
- Natural & Cultural Resources
 - Clean water
 - Farmland
 - Green spaces
 - Haw River
 - Natural resources
- Open land
 - Open land
 - Open space
 - Rural
 - Watersheds and lakes
- Quality of Life
 - Affordable
 - Affordable housing
 - City/county collaboration
 - Diversity
 - Family friendly
 - History
 - Low density
 - Potential
 - Quality of life
 - Quiet
 - Quiet living
 - Safe
 - Togetherness

3. Guilford County's greatest challenges today are...

- **Summary:** Multiple participants identified the need for quality food, job, and school access, concerns about disparities in income, and limited support for aging populations as key challenges the county faces. Development challenges included needs for planned, efficient, and quality growth as part of a cohesive vision. Demands on current infrastructure highlight the need for improved public transportation, public water and sewer. Attendees identified increasing crime and intergovernmental relationships as political challenges. Regarding workforce development, there was support for the local economy and higher paying jobs that can serve as opportunities to encourage youth to remain in the County post-graduation.

Themes were identified based on responses. Individual responses are listed below each theme.

- Accessibility & Disparities
 - Affordability
 - Affordable housing
 - Age friendly
 - Equity
 - Food deserts
 - Income disparity
 - Jobs
 - Low income
 - Racial Issues
 - Schools
 - Social inequities
- Natural & Cultural Resources
 - Lack of water
 - Lack of water and sewer
 - Public sewer
 - Public transportation
 - Public water
 - Preserving character
 - Preserving resources
 - Protecting farmland
 - Protecting private lands
 - Protecting rivers
- Development
 - Avoiding sprawl
 - Development – planning
 - Efficient land use
 - Growth adverse
 - Lack of vision
 - Land use
 - Managed growth
 - Planned growth
 - Quality residential growth
- Infrastructure
 - Demand on infrastructure
- Politics
 - City/county collaboration
 - Increasing crime
 - Intergovernmental relationships
 - Political climate
 - Political infighting
- Workforce Development
 - Lack of high paying jobs
 - Supporting local businesses
 - Youth leaving

4. What word best describes your vision for Guilford County?

- **Summary:** Participants were asked to identify their vision for Guilford County in one word or phrase. Words and phrases included ideas like common ground, attractive, recreation, harmony, and prosperous, which speak to respondent's desires for an atmosphere of inclusivity and equity that can be embodied within an all-encompassing plan. Other comments were topical based, indicating support for a healthy mix of growth strategies, infrastructure that supports a diverse culture, transportation efficiencies, and preservation and conservation efforts that will maintain a balance between future development and the protection of the County's special rural and farmland areas. Each of these elements contribute to sustaining Guilford County's quality of life.

Themes were identified based on responses. Individual responses are listed below each theme.

- Accessibility & Disparities
 - Accessible
 - Equitable opportunities
 - Equity/Equitable
 - Inclusive access
 - More affordable housing
 -
- Development
 - Big picture plan
 - Control growth
 - Economic development
 - Equitable growth
 - Growth
 - Guided development
 - Healthy mix of growth
 - Planned growth
- High Level Visions
 - Attractive
 - Balanced
 - Change
 - Desirable
 - Encompassing visions
 - Find common ground
 - Future thinking
 - Harmony
 - Prioritize current residents
 - Prosperous
- Recreation
- Shared goals
- Stronger cities
- Infrastructure
 - Amazing downtown
 - Cultural center
 - Transportation hub
- Natural & Cultural Resources
 - Emphasis on farm preservation
 - Environmental responsibility
 - Keep it green
 - Maintain a level of rural
 - Preservation of green areas
 - Protecting history
 - Protecting property
 - Protecting the environment
- Quality of Life
 - Family friendly
 - Family oriented
 - Flexible
 - Innovative
 - Quiet

Main Questions Asked/Comments made:

- How will future annexations be impacted by the Plan, or will the Plan influence / affect future annexations?
- What can the County do to support expansion of water and sewer services?
- Concern about how the traffic created by the new development in the eastern county will be accommodated.

Next Steps:

The purpose of the engagement at this point in the planning process is to understand, generally, how residents feel about their lived experiences in the County – what works, what needs to change, and what is missing. This workshop is part of a series of outreach efforts to create awareness and direct people to take the survey. Out of this engagement phase, the project team will receive the information needed to begin to craft a vision statement and high-level, overarching goals for the initial draft plan. From there, more detailed and nuanced conversations will occur specific to land use and tools to inform any eventual recommended policies or strategies that will be encompassed by the Plan.