



# Town of Four Oaks

## Land Use Plan Analysis and Update

May 16, 2022

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following members of the Four Oaks community for their input and participation on the Stakeholder Group. Your insight and local expertise helped guide this phase of the Land Use Plan evaluation.

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# I. Purpose

The Town of Four Oaks began its story as a railroad community in 1886. At the time the Town was primarily focused on tobacco and cotton farming. Four Oaks was officially incorporated in 1889. Through the years, the Town has evolved and adapted as it continued to grow. The year 1918 saw the introduction of electrical services to the Town. 1960 brought with it Interstate 95 and increased accessibility. The shape of Four Oaks has very much been impacted by larger transportation and infrastructure investments.

However, in recent years, Town leadership has been actively working to guide the Town's future growth. Completion of the 2001 Land Use Plan encouraged strategic growth along US-301 and I-95. North Carolina planning practice is now requiring the adoption and maintenance of these Land Use Plans for all communities practicing zoning. The Town of Four Oaks must evaluate the existing plan and begin taking measures to review the original recommendations against updated demographic data and scenario development to acknowledge where the Town must continue focusing its efforts.

## **In summary, updating the 2001 Land Use Plan is threefold.**

- » **It fulfills the State Legislature's requirement (N.C.G.S. § 160D-501) to "adopt and reasonably maintain a comprehensive plan or land-use plan" as part of adopting and applying zoning regulations. In other words, this document is required by the State in order for the Town of Four Oaks to continue to apply and enforce zoning regulations.**
- » **It is a reference for governing bodies deciding text or map amendments. N.C.G.S. § 160D-605 requires governing boards to adopt a consistency statement affirming that a development proposal aligns with the broad goals of the adopted comprehensive plan.**
- » **It establishes a clear vision for the Town and defines strategies to realize that vision. The plan evaluates existing conditions, identifies areas for improvement, and prioritizes next steps for the Town. Establishment of this unified vision and strategy development also creates a competitive application when seeking funding for project development.**

Phase I of this Land Use Plan update process covers analysis of updated demographic data, review of previously adopted planning documents, engagement/strategizing with Town Leadership, scenario planning, and evaluation of the 2001 Land Use Plans recommendations. Phase II should cover public engagement, vision/goal development, recommendation development, and the adoption of an updated Future Land Use Map.



Barbours Grove Park on Baker Street

## II. Phase I Process

1. Project Initiation – The project team met with Stakeholder Group in February of 2022. This group consisted of Town citizens, department heads, and administrative leadership. Team staff discussed the purpose of the project, established the schedule of project deliverables, and worked with the leadership to discuss planning priorities and other considerations.
2. Background Analysis – The project team collected data, conducted field research, and reviewed previous plans to understand existing conditions and evaluate projected trends.
3. Scenario Planning – The project team reconvened with the Stakeholder group to present background findings and begin scenario development. This stage included collaborative planning concerning baseline trends of the Town and led to initial sketches of land use priorities for the Town’s future Land Use Plan.
4. Plan Considerations – Following the planning exercises with the Stakeholder Group, the project team reevaluated the existing Land Use Plan recommendations for their merit in future planning considerations. Each recommendation was evaluated by the team and the Stakeholder Group to determine if it was completed, obsolete, or still a planning priority. Additionally, the project team provided new considerations for the future Land Use Plan based on the findings of the updated demographic data, previous planning efforts, and scenario planning.
5. Review and Adoption – The project team presented the finding of this report to the Town of Four Oaks Planning Board on June 7th, 2022. Furthermore, the report was recommended for adoption as an update to the existing 2001 Land Use Plan to ensure that the updated demographics and planning considerations were incorporated into the Town’s plan.

# III. Background Analysis

## A. Public Engagement

Following adoption of this report. It is recommended that the Town take the findings and considerations to the public for review and comment. Public feedback will further inform the considerations of the plan, and ultimately help shape the future vision, goals, and recommendations of the new Land Use Plan.

### 1. Stakeholder Group Discussion

On February 9th, 2022, the project team met with the Stakeholder Group to discuss the project process and key elements of the Town. The Stakeholder Group and project team began discussions with evaluation of locations of interest and planning priorities.

- » Locations of Interest
  - › 12-year-old business park
  - › Ashley Furniture and I-40 Land Availability
    - Approx. 180 acres of land
  - › Overarching growth locations
    - I-95 (East) Industrial Growth
    - I-95 (West) Residential Growth
  - › Commwell Health plans
    - Approx. 100 acres of additional commercial planned
  - › I-95 exit 90 reconstruction
  - › Pharmaceutical training facility
  - › New water tower
  - › Houseautry facility with additional land for comm.

Four Oaks is experiencing industrial/commercial growth and is working to guide that growth in specific locations throughout the Town. Future growth must be intentional in ensuring that friction between industrial/ commercial growth and residential neighborhoods does not spoil the small-town charm of the community.

### 2. Planning Priorities

- » Balancing growth with small-town charm
- » Balancing future growth with utility strains
- » Update Future Land Use Map (2001)
  - › Focused growth based on I-95
- » Use of infrastructure management and evaluation software to maximize efficiency

- » Playgrounds are good quality. Town may be absorbing athletic leagues (soccer, basketball, etc.)
  - › Staffing concern
  - › Potential partnerships (great existing relationship with Civitan group)
- » Master Parks and Recreation Master Plan
  - › 55+ recreation options
- » Sidewalk development in extraterritorial jurisdiction of the Town
- » Encouragement of Tourist Homes (AirBnB/VRBO)
  - › Is a good overnight option for the Town
- » Natural gas extension to business park

The Stakeholder Group identified many priorities that are focused on potential “growing pains” that the Town may face in its staffing and utilities. Additionally, resident quality of life was a major priority for the Stakeholder Group, with members wanting to guarantee walkability throughout Town and the availability of recreation options for all ages. One of the largest priorities identified by the group was updating the existing Future Land Use Map. Members remarked that the existing map requires a robust update to ensure that future growth allows for industrial/commercial development, but also preserves the residential culture and quality of life that residents enjoy today.

### 3. SWOT Analysis

Results of this SWOT Analysis were reviewed, along with demographic findings and scenario planning, during the consideration of 2001 Land Use Plan’s recommendations. The project team evaluated each recommendation with an understanding of how the Town can leverage its strengths and work around/address its weaknesses. Future plan considerations also examined the opportunities and threats identified with the Stakeholder Group. The intent for the new Land Use Plan is that it works to mitigate the future threats to the Town while capturing each identified opportunity.

## SWOT Analysis

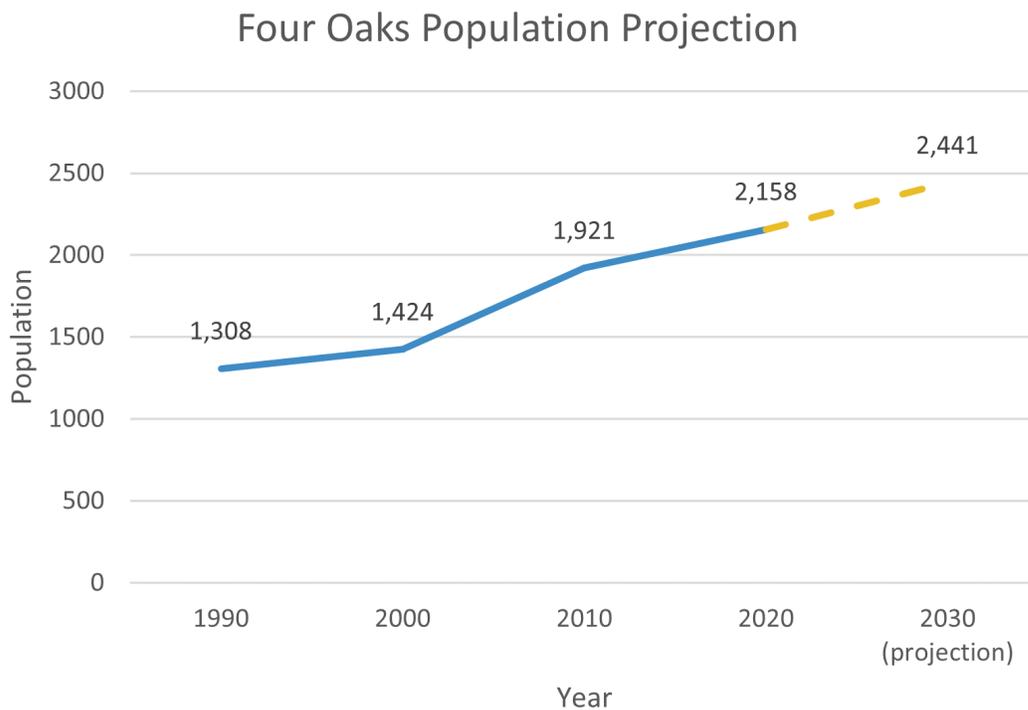
Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Access to infrastructure management software</li> <li>» Passion and present community members</li> <li>» Location of I-40 and I-95- Accessibility to Raleigh, Fayetteville, Goldsboro</li> <li>» Availability of land- Land value is relatively low compared to other areas</li> <li>» County government is working to create water/sewer capacity- Great partnership opportunities</li> <li>» Fantastic public services- Confidence in Town management and responsiveness</li> <li>» Current size and view of future growth</li> <li>» Proactive planning</li> <li>» Existing downtown identity and investment</li> <li>» Low tax rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Build out sidewalk network- Non-residential / extraterritorial jurisdiction</li> <li>» Future Parks and Recreation Master Plan</li> <li>» Future industrial/commercial footprint availability</li> <li>» Downtown district revitalization / streetscape improvements</li> <li>» Natural gas extension to industrial lands</li> <li>» Update Future Land Use Map for clarity and consistency</li> <li>» Micro-brewery- Will require ordinance update</li> <li>» Advanced manufacturing (robotics) school planned for Town</li> <li>» Economic Development Alliance</li> <li>» I-95 Widening</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Size- Need for restaurants, amenities</li> <li>» Aging infrastructure - Water/sewer/ roads/sidewalks</li> <li>» Funding- Low tax base and low utility fees</li> <li>» Aging equipment for Town services</li> <li>» Gateways into Town- Aesthetics/ nuisances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Understaffing- Future staff needs (Town Manager) and governing board assuming manager responsibilities efficiently</li> <li>» Director of Economic Development funded for 3 years</li> <li>» Future businesses fund role (Economic Development Director)</li> <li>» Managing growth</li> <li>» More residential coming in, maintaining</li> </ul>

## B. Demographic Analysis

Four Oaks has changed and evolved over the past decades. One of the key tasks in understanding the current state of a community is analyzing its demographics and population to identify trends in historic data as well as future projections. The following demographic data was obtained from the American Community Survey and the Decennial Census, two products of the United States Census Bureau. Although this data is static in nature, an analysis will allow the Town to make informed decisions based on trends that may impact the delivery of services over the next ten to fifteen years.

### 1. Population

The Town of Four Oak's population has experienced exponential growth over the past 30 years. In 1990, 1,308 citizens lived in the Town. From 1990 to 2000 there was an 8.9% increase in population. However, the largest percentage of growth, 34%, occurred in the 2000's, when population grew to 1,921 people. Between 2010 and 2020, the population continued to grow, reaching 2,158 residents, a 12.3% increase from 2010. On a regional scale, the growth in Four Oaks has paralleled the growth in Johnston County. According to the Johnston County Heritage Center's census data archives, the County's population significantly increased by 50.0% between 1990 and 2000, 38.5% between 2000 and 2010, and 27.9% between 2010 and 2020. Although the growth in Four Oaks has been constant, the rate of growth has not been consistent. Population projections for the Town continue this upward trend with an estimated 2030 population of 2,441 residents.



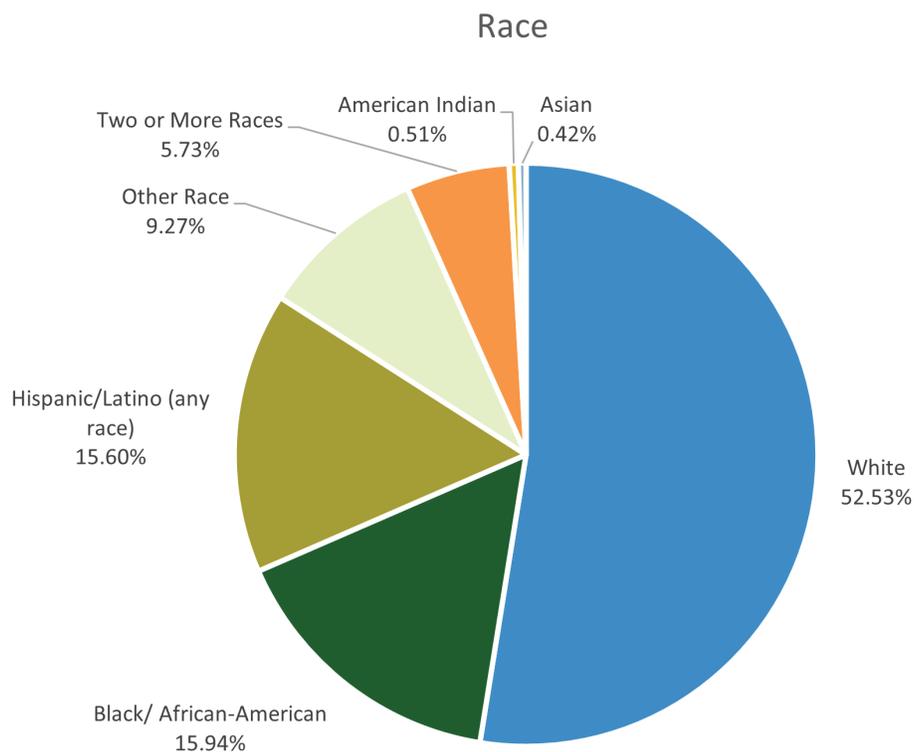
The growth indicated by the historic and current data represents a changing Town population. Planning efforts can assume that Four Oaks will continue to grow over the next 10 to 15 years, meaning the Town's future needs must be considered in the present. Evaluation of existing and planned infrastructure, as well as the Town's policies regarding growth, will be a necessary exercise in Plan development.

## 2. Race

The Town of Four Oaks is experiencing a gradual but increasingly diverse racial and ethnic population. White residents comprise of 62.3% of the Town's total population in 2020. Black residents represent 18.9% of the population with 11% of the Town's residents being identifying as "Other" on the 2020 Decennial Census. Persons who identify with two or more races represent 6.8% of the population. American Indians represent 0.6% of the population and Asian residents represent 0.5%.

Minor changes were noted in the Town's population since 2010, including a slight increase in the Black population, who experienced a 1.4% increase. Persons who identify with two or more races saw an increase of 3.8%. American Indian and white residents saw a decrease in population, experiencing 0.3% and 7.5% decreases, respectively. Compared to Johnston County which consists of 65.9% white residents, the Town of Four Oaks has a similar level of diversity.

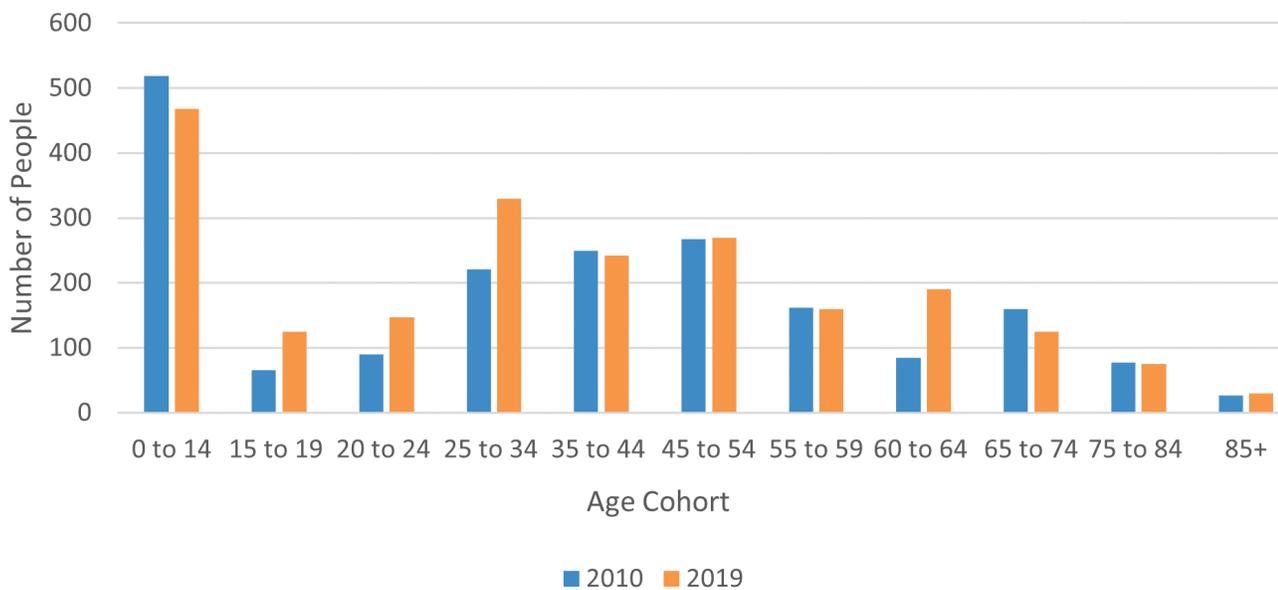
Additionally, both the Town and County saw a slight increase in Hispanic/Latino ethnic groups. Four Oaks increased 4.4% from 14.1% in 2010 to 18.5% in 2019. Similarly, Johnston County increased from 12.9% in 2010 to 15.9% in 2019 representing a 3% increase overall.



### 3. Age

Since 2010, the Town of Four Oak's age distribution has slightly shifted younger. In 2010, the population of residents aged 65 and older represented 13.7% of the total population; however, in 2019, that group represented 10.7% of the population. The median age of residents decreased by 1.2 years from a median of 37.5 in 2010 to 36.3 in 2019. This median age is younger than Johnston County which had an estimated median age of 38.4 in 2019. Citizens under the age of 18 experienced a slight decrease in the population share from 29.1% in 2010 to 25.1% in 2019. Though many changes were minimal in Four Oaks, there were two substantial changes that should be noted. In the 25 to 34 years age group, there was a 3.8% increase from 11.5% of the population share in 2010 and 15.3% of the population share in 2019. In the 60 to 64 years age group, there was a 4.4% increase from 4.4% of the population in 2010 to 8.8% of the population in 2019.

#### Four Oaks Cohort by Population



This data reflects two population trends: increased populations of millennials (those aged 20 to 39) in urban areas possibly representing an increase in young families moving to Town, and the increase of retirement age folks, ages 60-64, possibly choosing Four Oaks as their new home. All other population groups over 65 years of age saw decreases or stagnated. Considering these changes, planning efforts must be considerate and inclusive of all age groups and abilities.

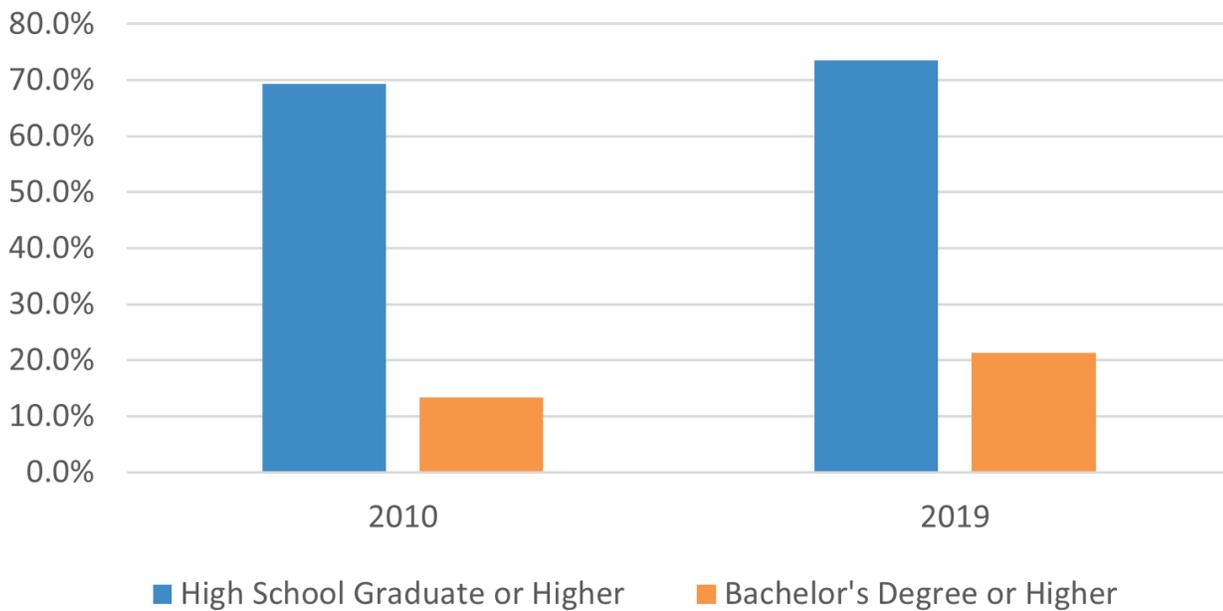
#### 4. Housing

Since 2010, Four Oaks has added approximately 67 housing units, a 7.5% increase in the housing stock. However, the overall occupancy rate of the Town decreased from 90.9% to 89.7% in 2020, a 1.2% decrease. The vacancy rate also rose as there was a 1.2% increase in the number of vacant units resulting in 10.3% of the housing stock being vacant in 2020. This is drastically different from Johnston County which had 6.3% of its housing vacant in 2019. In 2010, the balance of owner-occupied and rental housing in Four Oaks was 50.1% and 49.9%, respectively. Owner-occupied housing accounted for 55.1% of the Town's housing stock in 2019 while in the County it accounted for 73.0% of all housing stock. There appears to be a downward trend of renter-occupied houses within the Town and an upward trend of owner-occupied houses as renter-occupied housing saw a 5.0% decrease from 2010 to account for 44.9% of all housing stock.

Four Oaks has experienced some slight changes in household dynamics. From 2010 to 2019, it saw a 4.4% increase in households that are constituted of families. In 2019, 67.4% of households were family households, leaving 32.6% of households comprised of non-family members.

As mentioned previously, Four Oaks has experienced an increase in both the housing stock and vacant units with an overall decrease in occupancy. Notably, there are more owner-occupied households in the Town as well as more households with persons under the age of 18. Also, there was an increase in households with families as well as a notable decrease in households that are non-family. This represents interesting planning challenges and opportunities for the comprehensive plan. An increase in property ownership as reflected in the increase in owner-occupied housing means that more residents are choosing to purchase homes in Four Oaks and further invest in the community. However, increased vacancy rates indicate that some of the housing stock remains unused. An increase in households with persons under the age of 18 should indicate that the location and presence of parks and recreation should also be considered a priority to ensure there are ample activities for all age groups and familial makeups. This plan shall work to continue balancing the Town's housing stock while recognizing the implications of the increasing number of family households and those households with those under 18.

## Educational Attainment (25+)



### 5. Education

Educational attainment is a measure of education received for citizens 25 years or older. From 2010 to 2019, high school or higher educational attainment increased from 69.3% to 73.5%, a 4.2% increase. Furthermore, 21.4% of citizens possessed a bachelor's degree or higher level of education in 2019, an 8% increase from 2010. Educational attainment is greater in Johnston County where 86.9% of residents have graduated from high school and recipients of bachelor's degrees or higher degrees make up 22.9% of the County's population. Both the Town and the County are experiencing increases in educational attainment. Continuing to attract residents that have diplomas, degrees, and skill sets is something this plan shall also aim address. Furthering education may create more opportunities for employment in specialized industries and increased incomes.

### 6. Employment and Income

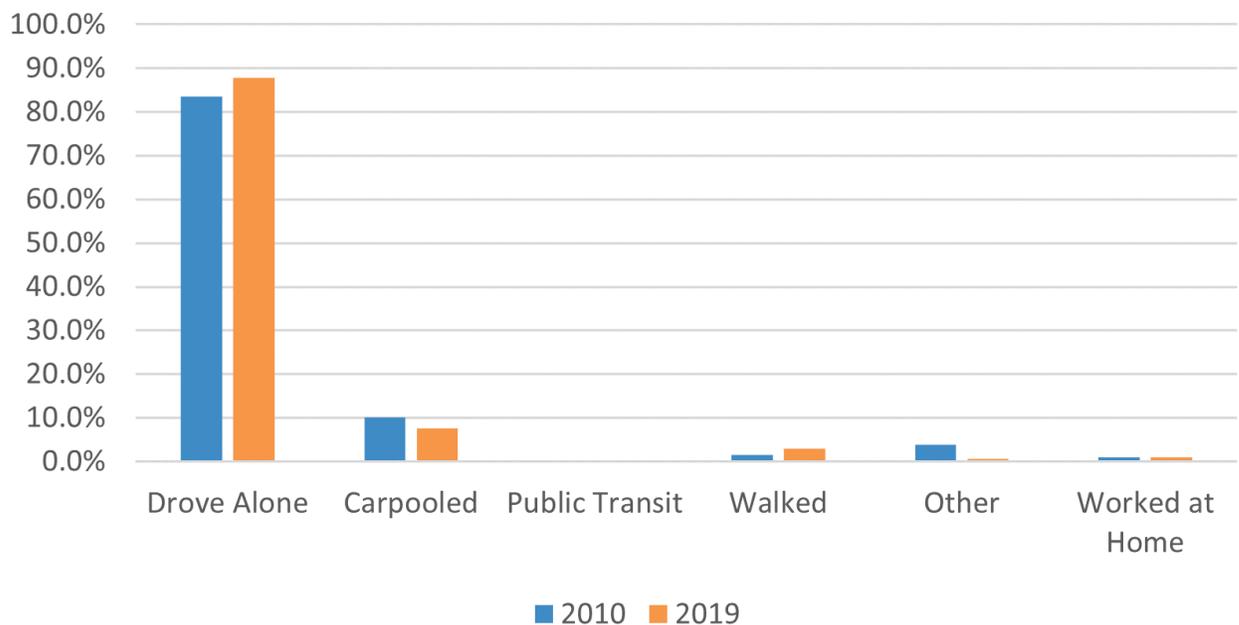
Employment among citizens aged 16 years or older has increased slightly from 2010 to 2019. 77.2% of this group was employed in 2019. Resident income has improved by 64.2% from 2010 to 2019 with a median income increase of \$17,877 inflation adjusted dollars to \$45,174. Income levels remained relatively stable in 2019 apart from three groups; "Less than \$10,000" which decreased 16.2% to 3.7% of the median income, "\$50,000 to \$74,999" which increased 11.8% to 22.3% of the median income, and "\$100,000 to \$149,999" which increased to 5.1% in 2010 from 13.6% in 2019. Compared to the County, the median income of Four Oaks is \$13,971 less than the region. It is important to understand the community's context in the region prior to determining plan objectives to maximize project/policy feasibility.

Residents of Four Oaks increased their incomes by over 50% between 2010 and 2019. This new wealth leads to greater opportunities for services and amenities as the tax pool increases. The Town and this plan should address the future needs for amenities that will encourage residents to purchase homes here to decrease the vacancy rate as well as to entice other people of similar economic status to invest into the community and make Four Oaks their home.

### 7. Commuting Characteristics

The number of workers (16 years and over) increased slightly from 1,338 in 2010 to 1,921 in 2019. During the same period, the percentage of people who drove alone to work increased from 83.6% to 87.9% and carpool decreased from 10.1% to 7.6%. People working from home and taking public transportation to work have remained consistent, as there is not any public transport within Four Oaks and 1% of the population has continued to work from home between 2010 and 2019. There has been an increase of mean travel time to work from 26.5 mins in 2010 to 32.1 mins in 2019. This data does not include the most recent Coronavirus pandemic in which many across Four Oaks and County may have been required to work from home.

## Means of Transport to Work



## 8. Regional Context

The Town of Four Oaks is located within the Piedmont region of North Carolina along US Highway 301. It is in Johnston County and is just 7 miles away from Smithfield, the Johnston County seat. Four Oaks' location along the highway and its proximity to Smithfield creates a direct path to growth. The ease of access to the County seat will hopefully contribute to economic and commercial opportunities while maintaining Four Oaks' rural charm.

The Town has experienced exponential growth over the past 30 years, consistent with how rapidly Johnston County is also growing. Young professionals are being drawn to amenities and opportunities of larger communities but are also moving or staying within Four Oaks as the data reflects. Constant refinement of its vision will allow the Town to find its place in an ever-evolving regional climate.

Sources: Census and American Community Survey

## C. Analysis of Previous Plans and Studies

The Town of Four Oaks' comprehensive plan can be understood as the next step in a lineage of long-range plans and reports that have helped guide the Town's growth throughout the years. These documents work to build upon one another and thus must be considered during the creation of this comprehensive plan. This plan will integrate the goals and findings of the previous works and coordinate them in a way that drives holistic improvement throughout the community. Please refer to the following plans and a brief synopsis of their takeaways.

### Previous Plans and Studies

- » Four Oaks Land Use Plan (2001)
- » Historic Streetscape Corridor District (2006)
- » Historic Downtown Development Plan and Downtown Fringe Overlay Plan (2006)
- » Four Oaks I-95 Interchange Overlay District (2006)
- » Johnston County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2015)
- » Four Oaks Code of Ordinances (2016)
- » Downtown Streetscape Master Plan (2020)

## 1. Four Oaks Land Use Plan (2001)

Adopted in 2001, the Town of Four Oaks Land Use Plan Update aims to update the strategy for development and needs of the town previously outlined in the 1990 Four Oaks Land Use Plan. The plan recognized the decline of businesses moving to Four Oaks, as well as the increase of cars and heavy trucks driving through the Town. The document set a plan for development that welcomes economic increase in the form of new businesses within the downtown core and external industrial areas, as well as enforcing the protection of the small-town character of Four Oaks. The primary goals regarding commercial development were:

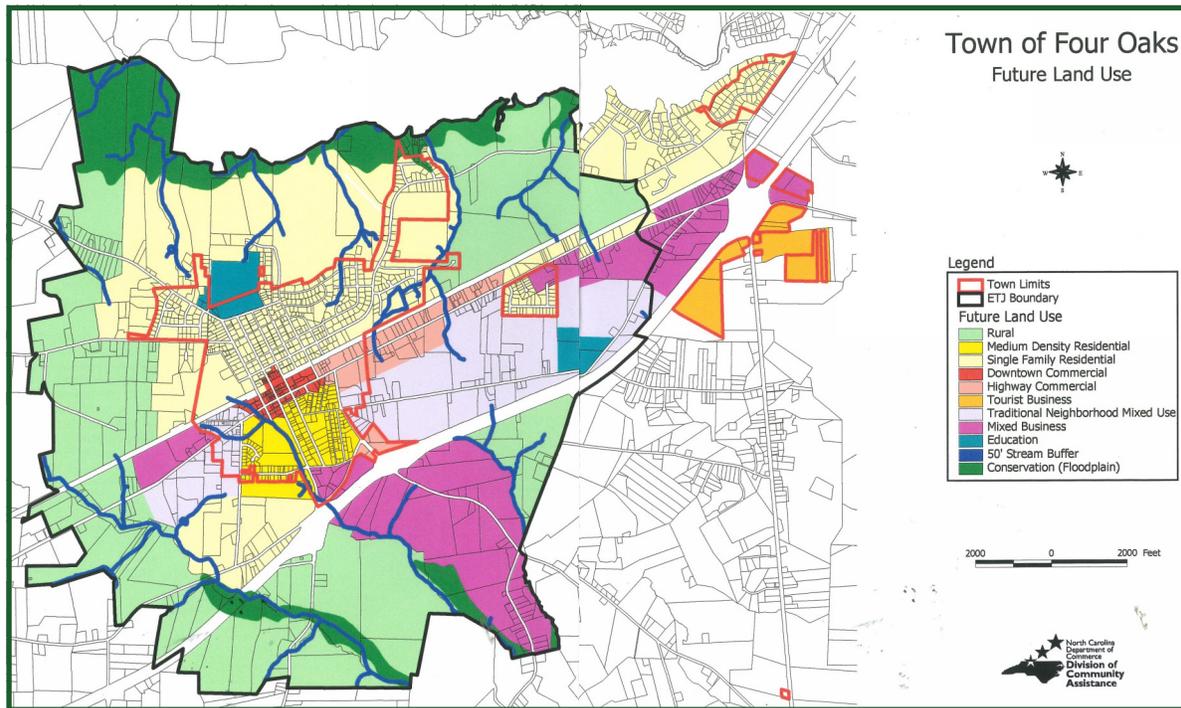
- » To protect and enhance the small-town character through establishing a historic resources committee,
- » Update regulations to encourage a more aesthetic development style through a new landscape ordinance,
- » Establish requirements for sidewalks in new developments, and
- » Update the zoning ordinance to require that shopping centers have a coordinate appearance, including a master sign plan.

It was constantly expressed that the current traffic pattern of heavy trucks through the downtown was not appealing and damaging to the overall character. This plan establishes a standard for economic development that encourages new businesses to revitalize the downtown area and attract more tourists to the Town. Additional goals were to provide recreational facilities to serve the needs of all residents of Four Oaks, provide natural areas of beauty, and protect important environmental resources. Specifically, this included improving existing parks, planning for new parks, and providing a multi-use indoor facility for performances, concerts, art, festivals, etc. Lastly, a final goal was to continue to build upon the coordinated street system by garnering more connections to the regional road network.

From the public meetings with the Four Oaks Planning Board, a summary was provided within the previous plan of items that were most important to the community. Many of the resident priorities were focused upon family-oriented development, preserving and providing green areas, and the preservation of character, historic buildings, and green spaces. Residents did also express the concerns about traffic and congestion, but a majority of the items supported in the questionnaire was centered around public programming that revitalized their town and added to its existing beauty and charm. This plan shall work to ensure that the public's opinion on priority items is heard and maintains at the forefront of the overall initiative.

The plan also noted two public schools within the Town limits as well as colleges and universities located within a commuting distance. Future partnerships between the educational facilities of Four Oaks and Johnston County can lead to an increase in educated folks that will further drive the economy. A desire for commercial and industrial businesses has been expressed over time and having more residents who have furthered their education and/or acquired a trade or skill can entice companies to find roots in this area where qualified persons are already residing.

Many of the original goals of the 2001 Land Use Plan will be addressed for the first time or enhanced with an update to the plan. Throughout time, the importance of preserving the small-town character has remained a consistent desire for the Town. The new plan should build upon any primary goals that were not addressed and account for new regional plans as well as resources to assist the Town in their efforts to withstand growth and preserve character.



Town of Four Oaks Future Land Use Map

## 2. Historic Streetscape Corridor District (2006)

The Historic Streetscape Corridor (HSC) District plan aimed to establish the HSC district as well as design and development standards within the area to establish a certain aesthetic. The plan urged that a typical street width should be instituted as well as standards for sidewalk and landscaping to establish a consistent design. The land use plan update can build upon this district by reviewing requirements with the Design Review Committee to guarantee that projects going forward are being developed to the standards.

## 3. Historic Downtown Development Plan and Downtown Fringe Overlay (2006)

Similar to the HSC District established in 2006, the HDD Plan and the establishment of the DTF was to provide development and design standards for the historic downtown and the areas directly outside of the limits. A notable difference however was that this plan clearly prohibited certain uses that would not be compatible with the downtown character. Many of the other components, such as landscaping and sidewalk requirements, screening of facilities, signage, and building design standards are similar to those within the HSC district. The plan also established the Design Review Committee as the deciding body on whether

standards are being met or if a violation has occurred. The land use plan update should guarantee that enforcement of these standards is feasible and that the Review Committee has the resources needed to continue to conduct reviews in this area as the Town grows and businesses are attracted to the Historic District.

4. Four Oaks I-95 interchange Overlay District (2006)

The Four Oaks I-95 Interchange Overlay District is established for one of the Town's primary gateways at the I-95 and Keen Road. The overlay establishes additionally landscaping standards, larger front setbacks, and encourages open spaces to provide a more appealing entrance into the Town.

5. Johnston County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2015)

At the time of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) adoption, heavy trucks used Keen Road to access, a then, new industrial park in Four Oaks due to indirect access from the existing interchange on I-95 at Keen Road (SR 1178). An improvement was proposed to the I-95 interchange at Keen Road to provide direct access for the truck traffic, while maintaining the current structures and incurring as little disturbance to the existing system as possible. The I-95/Keen Road interchange is the only current access to I-95 for the Town of Four Oaks. At the time of adoption, the Town expressed the issue of trucks in the downtown area and the desire to keep the industrial park traffic out of downtown. Allendale Road (SR 1164), a residential street, was mentioned as another roadway in Town that had previously required maintenance and reinforcement due to the deterioration of the road from the heavy loads.

Several minor roadway improvements were proposed to N. Baker Street from E. Hatcher Street to US 301 (Wellons Street), N. Church Street from W. Hatcher Street to US 301, and W. Sanders Street / E. Sanders Street from N. Church Street to Maple Street, including the provision of a 24-foot cross section with curb and gutter. Proposed pedestrian improvements include expanding of the Town's sidewalk connections. Lastly, the CTP proposed a multi-use path from the railroad/local park to Hockaday Road.

Improvements proposed by the CTP are the responsibility of the NC Department of Transportation and Johnston County to manage funding and develop project schedules. It is the responsibility of the Town of Four Oaks as a partner to continue to be proactive in its planning for how and where it wants growth. This land use plan update can further enforce the separation of industrial uses from the downtown core and areas where preservation is a priority. Pending the completion of these improvements and the interchange, the Plan should note existing new infrastructure and highlight how to use zoning to attract businesses to these area as well as noting any gaps in infrastructure the Town may need to provide at a future date.

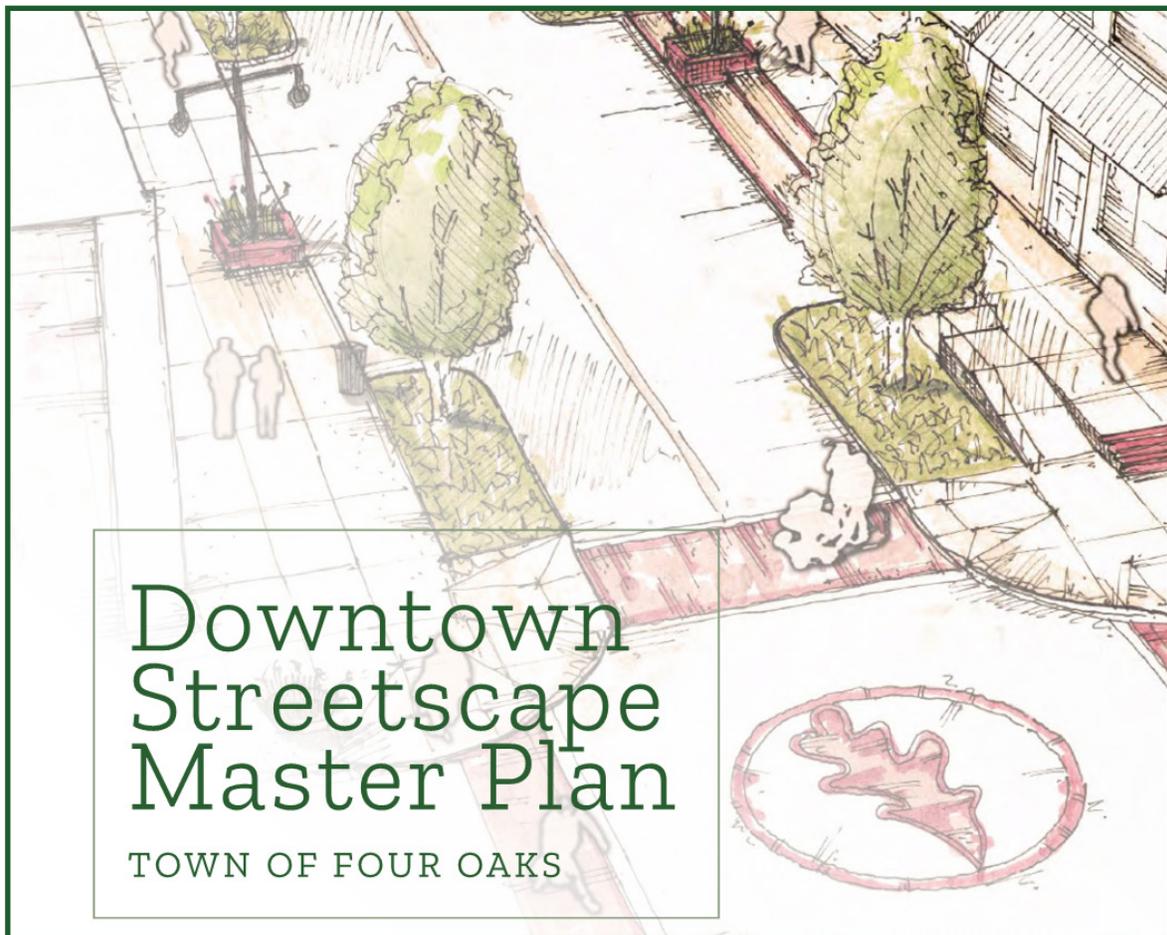
6. Four Oaks Code of Ordinances (2016)

Currently, development processes and decisions are guided by the Four Oaks Code of Ordinances. This document includes public works, nuisance guidance, and personnel matters as well as subdivision regulations, business regulations, and the zoning code. Normally, zoning codes and ordinances establish development standards for buffering, screening, landscaping,

and other design components. The Four Oaks Code of Ordinances does not currently include guidelines such as these within the text. The establishment of the HSC District, the DTF Overlay, and the HHD plan is also missing from this text. This future land use plan shall establish goals and initiatives the Town would like to set forth and accomplish in the coming years. The zoning ordinance should then provide the framework necessary to enforce the standards initiated by the plan. At a minimum, a separate zoning and development ordinance should be considered to ensure that all aspects of development are clearly addressed

7. Downtown Streetscape Master Plan (2020)

The Downtown Streetscape Master Plan was undertaken to improve pedestrian amenities and circulation through the Town’s Central Business District, and to assist businesses with economic development. Major recommendations include the development of a pedestrian square at the intersection of Lassiter Street and South Main Street. This square is intended to provide a flexible space that includes restaurant seating, greenery, and passive recreation. Sidewalk improvements are also proposed, recommending the widening of existing sidewalks and the use of larger sidewalks in future development. The plan stresses the importance of project funding and identifies potential future partnerships to ensure project success.



Cover of the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan

## IV. Scenario Planning

Evaluation of demographic trends indicate that the Town of Four Oaks will continue to see steady growth over the next 10 years. This creates a multitude of implications regarding utilities, services, and opportunities for the Town. One of the most notable changes will be that of the built environment. Growth can mean a great variety of things when it comes to the development of land. At their core, Land Use Plans are designed to capitalize on growth, direct where it occurs within the Town, and ensure that quality and desired uses are being brought into Town.

This report is intended to review the updated demographic trends that have occurred since the previous Land Use Plan adoption in 2001, review the recommendations of the plan and subsequent Town plans/reports, and evaluate the potential future development patterns of the Town in order to inform and enhance the development of a new Land Use Plan. To this extent, this report will evaluate the current, projected, and desired future land use patterns in Four Oaks to provide growth scenarios for Town consideration.



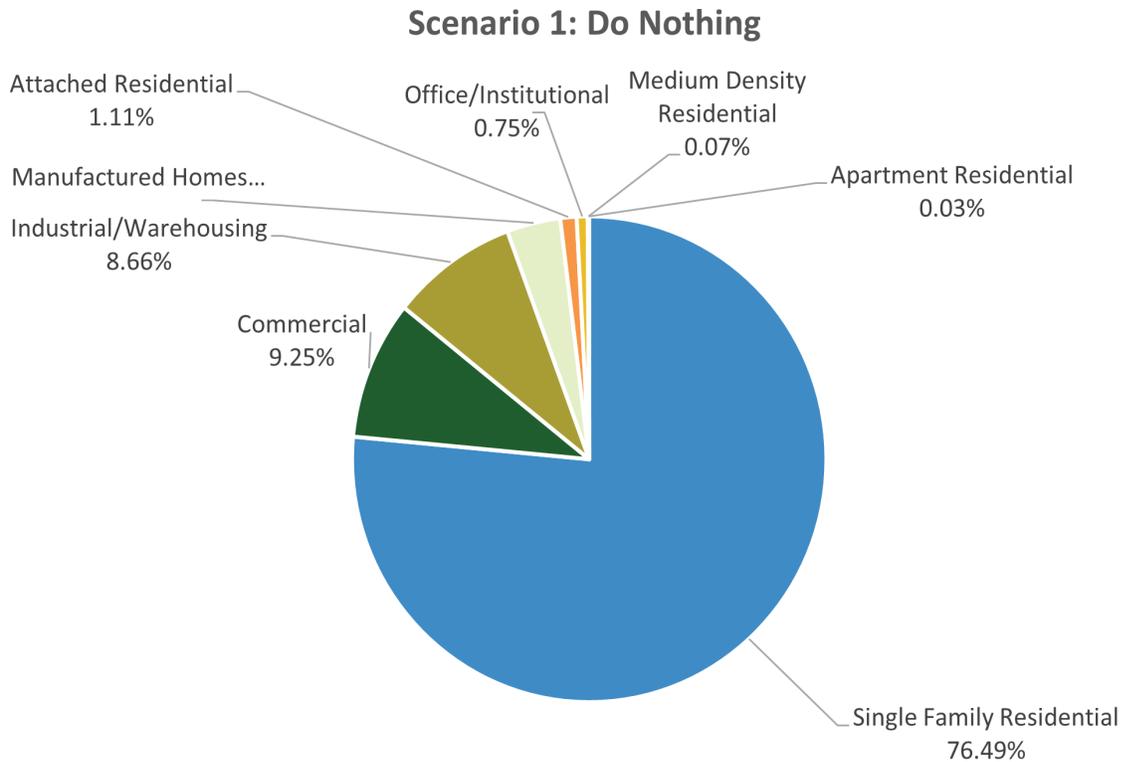
Building Mural

### A. Scenario 1: Do Nothing

The first land use planning scenario is considered a “Do Nothing” approach. Projecting land utilization without the constraints of any future planning helps establish a baseline for the Town and can function as a control in which to evaluate the other scenarios. This scenario assumes three critical pieces of information:

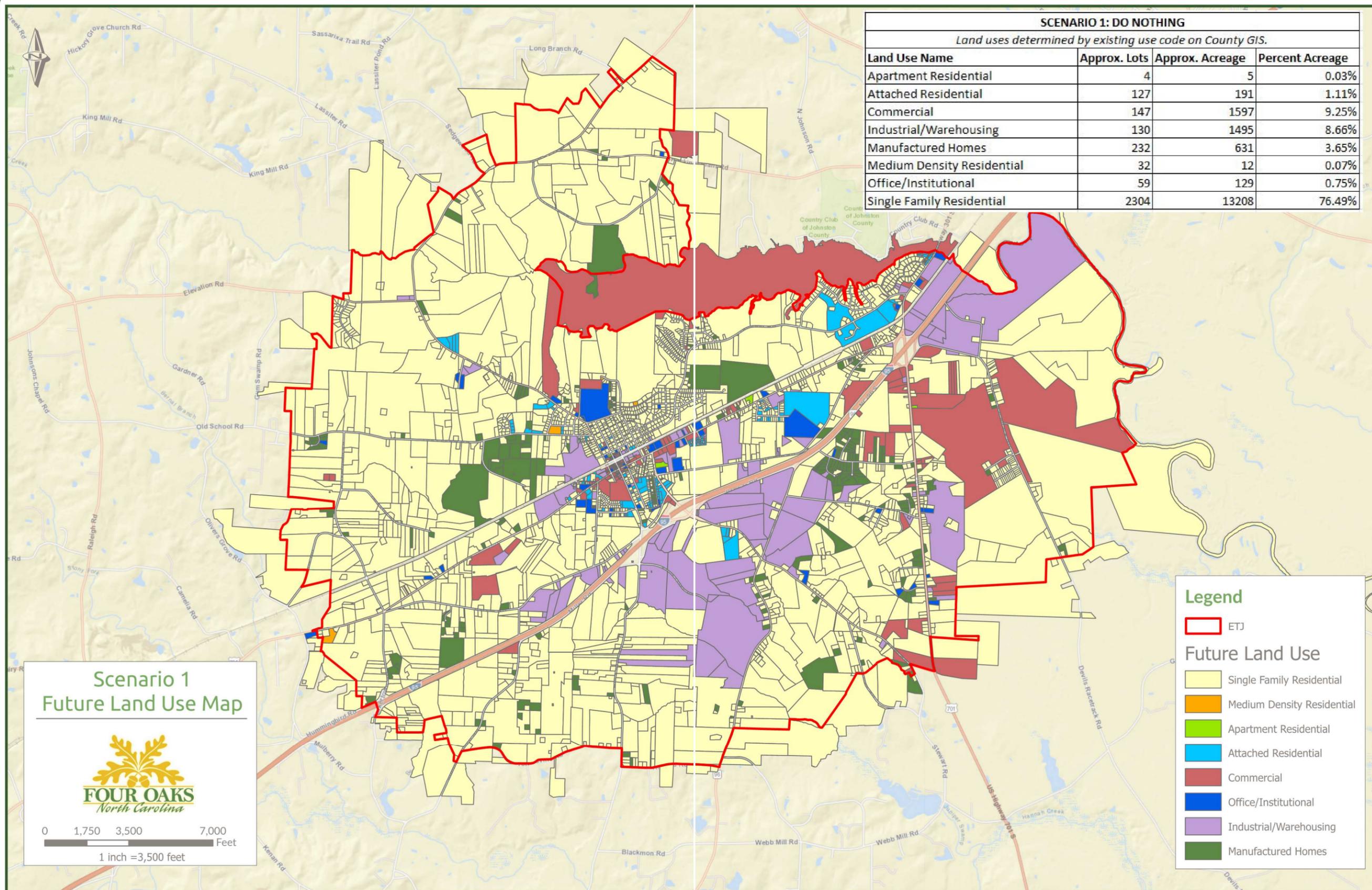
1. Existing land uses will remain as they are and will not be rendered non-conforming.
2. Parcels of land without clear present uses will be developed as they are currently zoned.
3. No future planning intervention will be applied.

Scenario 1 helps visualize the current conditions of the Town and potential to develop via the existing zoning. The Town of Four Oaks has a large supply of single family housing. There could be a potential for the Town to experience suburban sprawl as outlying parcels begin to develop. The scenario shows that only approximately 18.66% of the land in Town is used for non-residential purposes. The downtown core has no clearly identified land use either, creating a potential mismatch of incongruent uses. However, the commercial and industrial centers displayed in this scenario are close together, indicating a clear path for future expansion.



### Scenario 1 Overview

Pros	Cons
Clear industrial and commercial centers.	Very limited commercial/industrial lots.
	Singular housing type dominates Town.
	Potential for single family sprawl and utility strains.
	No clearly identified downtown core.



**SCENARIO 1: DO NOTHING**  
*Land uses determined by existing use code on County GIS.*

Land Use Name	Approx. Lots	Approx. Acreage	Percent Acreage
Apartment Residential	4	5	0.03%
Attached Residential	127	191	1.11%
Commercial	147	1597	9.25%
Industrial/Warehousing	130	1495	8.66%
Manufactured Homes	232	631	3.65%
Medium Density Residential	32	12	0.07%
Office/Institutional	59	129	0.75%
Single Family Residential	2304	13208	76.49%

**Scenario 1  
Future Land Use Map**



0 1,750 3,500 7,000  
Feet  
1 inch = 3,500 feet

**Legend**

ETJ

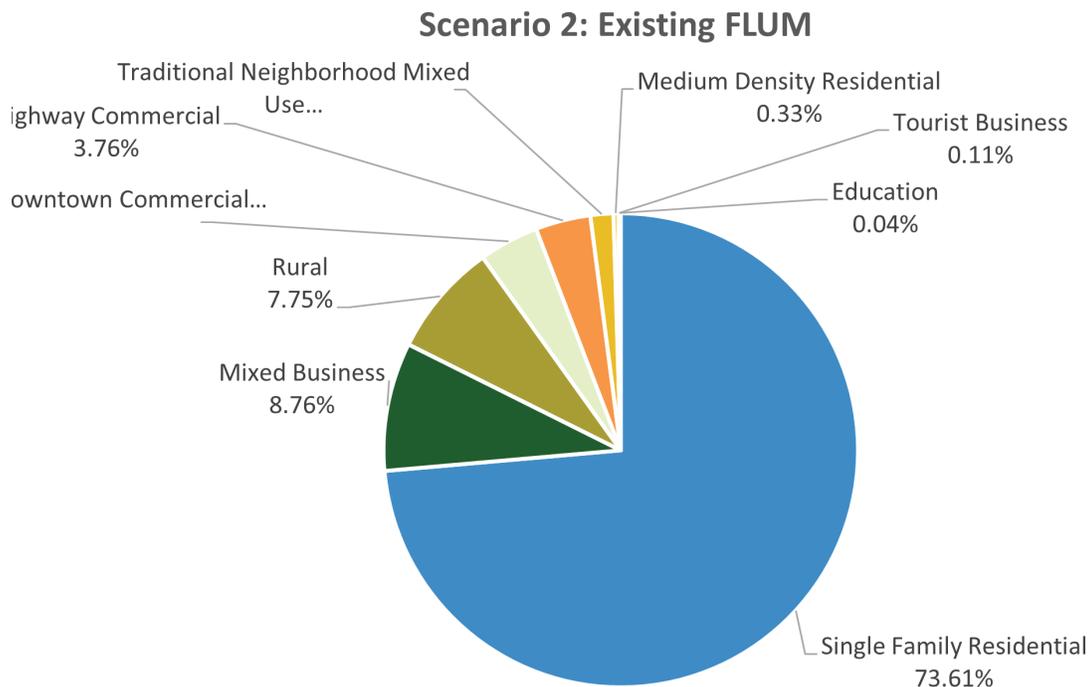
**Future Land Use**

- Single Family Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Apartment Residential
- Attached Residential
- Commercial
- Office/Institutional
- Industrial/Warehousing
- Manufactured Homes

## B. Scenario 2: Existing Future Land Use Map

The second land use planning scenario leveraged the existing Future Land Use Map from the Town's 2001 Plan. In addition to demonstrating spatial and programmatic changes from the first scenario, the utilization of this existing map helps pinpoint areas in need of improvements/updates and other significant gaps identified since the Plan's 2001 adoption. This scenario assumes three critical pieces of information:

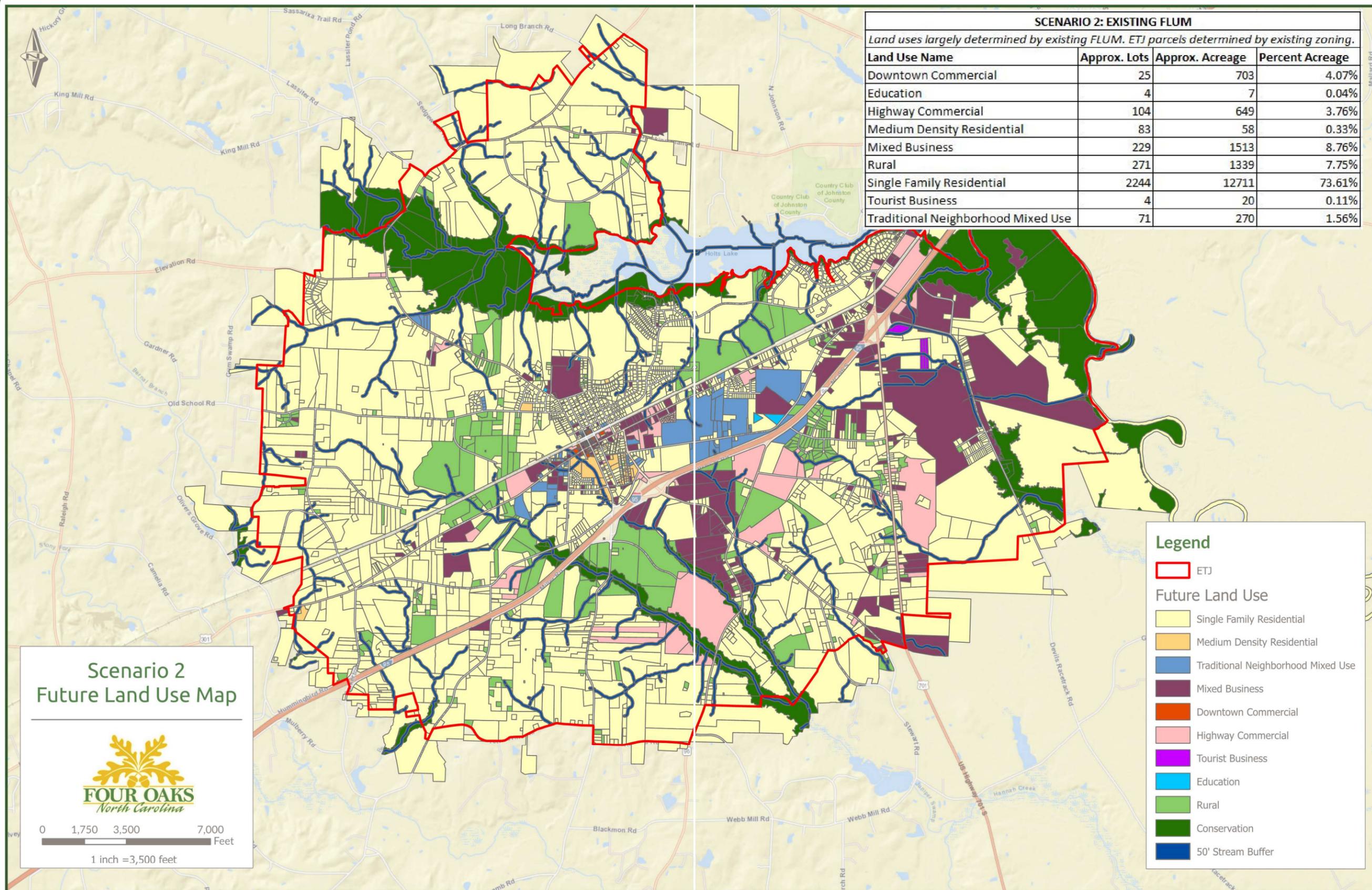
1. The Town continues to enforce the existing Future Land Use Map.
2. The Extraterritorial Jurisdiction has expanded and is shown correctly on the Johnston County GIS Department's website.
3. All areas without an existing future land use designation will adopt uses in accordance with the parcel's land use data or zoning data in accordance with Scenario 1.



Scenario 2 demonstrates intentionally designated land uses throughout the Town. While outlying parcels lacked a future land use designation and thus relied on the underlying use or zoning designation as appropriate, designations indicate more holistic and compatible uses than in Scenario 1. The addition of "Rural", "Downtown Commercial", and "Mixed Business" help detail the desired land uses for the Town's future. However, due to the lack of future land use designations for all parcels within the Town's jurisdiction, the dominance of single family housing continues. The Town also continues to suffer from the limited acreage of non-residential lots.

## Scenario 2 Overview

Pros	Cons
Added detailed land uses.	Singular housing type dominates Town.
Clearer intent for Town Core and US 301.	Potential for single family sprawl and utility strains.
Rural and Conservation uses help address sprawl.	Very limited commercial acreage.
Addition of Mixed-use Districts.	No clearly identified "Industrial" use.



**SCENARIO 2: EXISTING FLUM**

*Land uses largely determined by existing FLUM. ETJ parcels determined by existing zoning.*

Land Use Name	Approx. Lots	Approx. Acreage	Percent Acreage
Downtown Commercial	25	703	4.07%
Education	4	7	0.04%
Highway Commercial	104	649	3.76%
Medium Density Residential	83	58	0.33%
Mixed Business	229	1513	8.76%
Rural	271	1339	7.75%
Single Family Residential	2244	12711	73.61%
Tourist Business	4	20	0.11%
Traditional Neighborhood Mixed Use	71	270	1.56%

**Legend**

- ETJ
- Future Land Use**
- Single Family Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- Traditional Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Mixed Business
- Downtown Commercial
- Highway Commercial
- Tourist Business
- Education
- Rural
- Conservation
- 50' Stream Buffer

**Scenario 2  
Future Land Use Map**



**FOUR OAKS**  
North Carolina

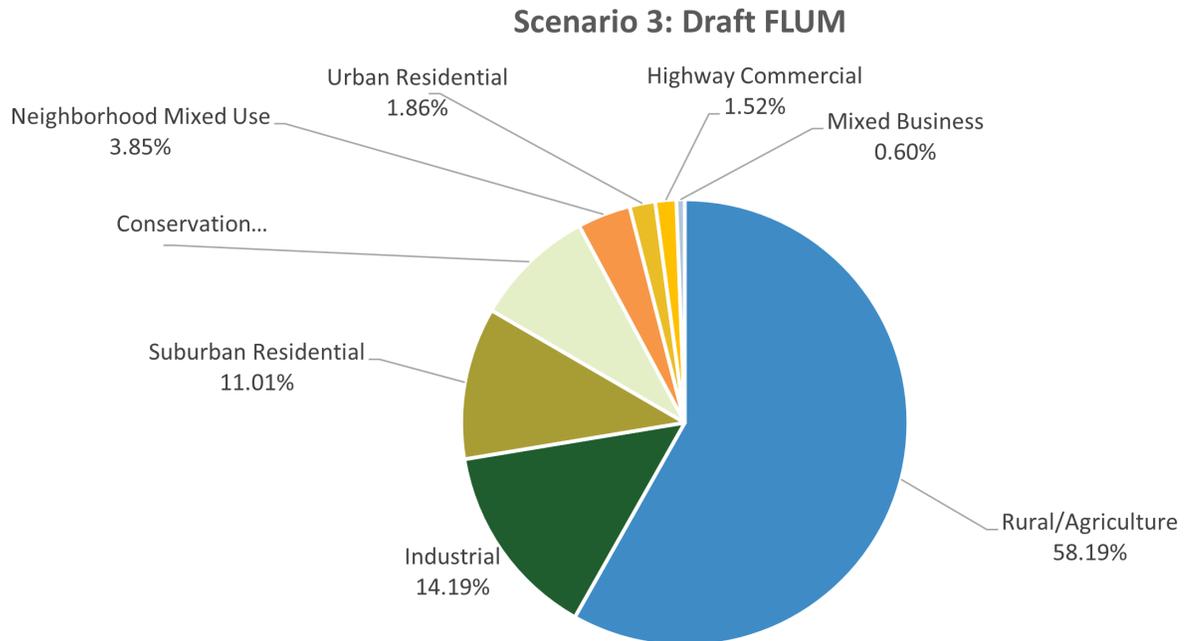
0    1,750    3,500    7,000

Feet

1 inch = 3,500 feet

## C. Scenario 3: Smart Growth

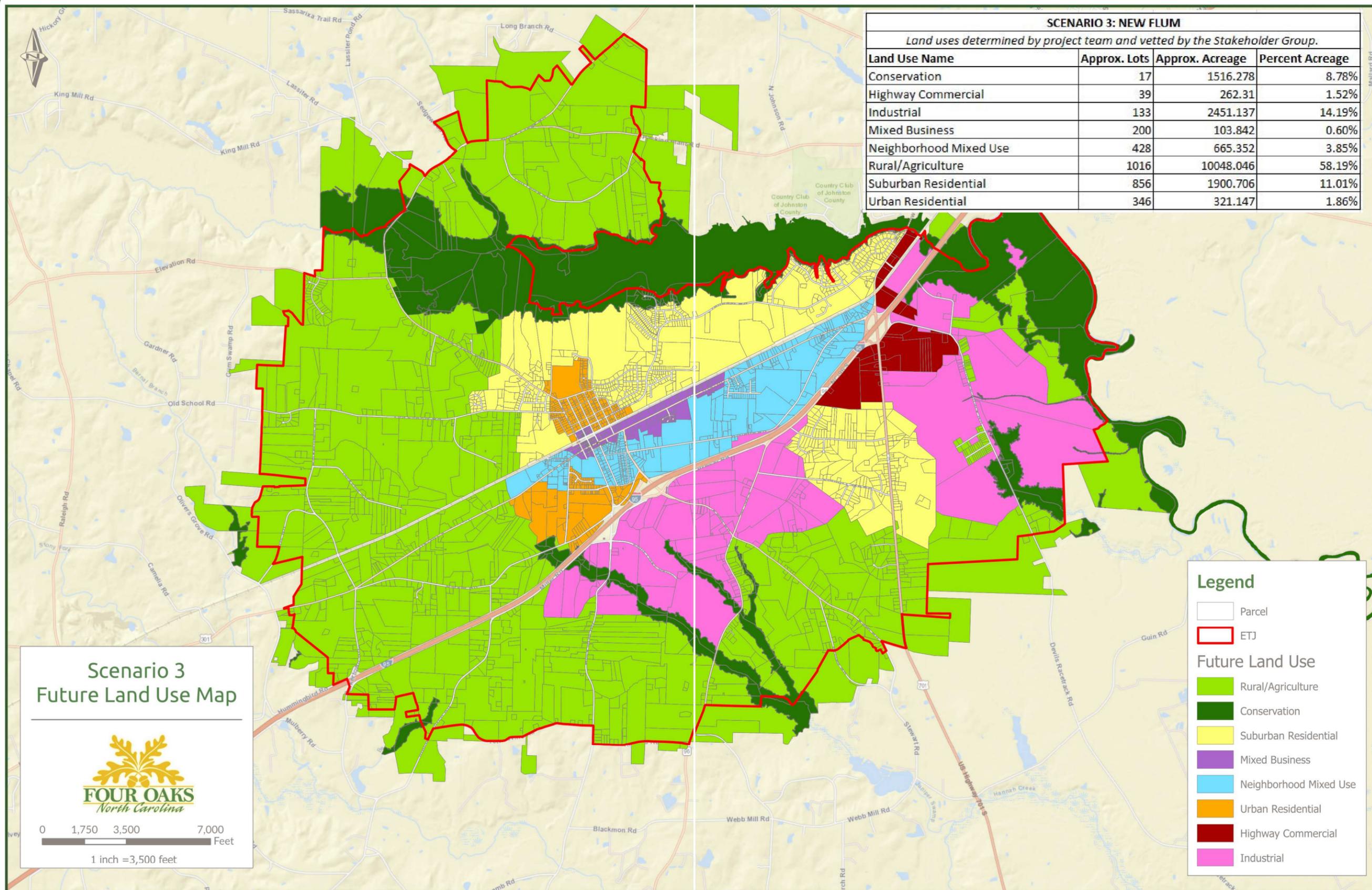
The final planning scenario represents a fresh examination of the Town's jurisdiction, goals, and land usage. Recommendations were drafted and developed through direct work with the project's Steering Committee. The land use designations and their locations within the Town limits were drafted by the Project Team and represent opportunities that the Town can seize through the adoption of an updated Future Land Use Map and Land Use Plan.



Scenario 3 takes a fresh look at the Town's future land uses. Building off of the lessons learned in Scenarios 1 and 2, Scenario 3 is focused on strategically concentrating growth in targeted areas. The Town's core primarily consists of Mixed Business uses, which have the capacity to include mixed use residential options. Downtown is also flanked by denser residential uses including Suburban Residential, Neighborhood Mixed Use, and Urban Residential. Rural and Conservation uses return from Scenario 2 and are projected to protect Black Creek/Holts Lake and protect from sprawl in the extraterritorial jurisdiction. Industrial and commercial uses have been expanded from their locations identified in Scenario 1 to help accommodate future non-residential growth. US-301 is flanked by Neighborhood Mixed Use to accommodate a mixture of residential housing and neighborhood-serving commercial uses for daily needs. However, even with expansion of the industrial and commercial cores, the Town is still limited in its non-residential growth due to the existing building patterns and Town layout.

### Scenario 3 Overview

Pros	Cons
Expanded Commercial and Industrial uses	Limited commercial and industrial growth.
Centralized growth to limit sprawl.	
Intentionally identified downtown core.	
Expanded Mixed-use designations for flexibility.	



SCENARIO 3: NEW FLUM			
Land uses determined by project team and vetted by the Stakeholder Group.			
Land Use Name	Approx. Lots	Approx. Acreage	Percent Acreage
Conservation	17	1516.278	8.78%
Highway Commercial	39	262.31	1.52%
Industrial	133	2451.137	14.19%
Mixed Business	200	103.842	0.60%
Neighborhood Mixed Use	428	665.352	3.85%
Rural/Agriculture	1016	10048.046	58.19%
Suburban Residential	856	1900.706	11.01%
Urban Residential	346	321.147	1.86%

**Legend**

- Parcel
- ETJ

**Future Land Use**

- Rural/Agriculture
- Conservation
- Suburban Residential
- Mixed Business
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Urban Residential
- Highway Commercial
- Industrial

**Scenario 3  
Future Land Use Map**

0 1,750 3,500 7,000  
Feet  
1 inch = 3,500 feet

## V. 2001 Land Use Plan Considerations

Based on reviewed demographic data, progress and intent of previous planning efforts, and ongoing collaboration with the Stakeholder Group, the project team puts forward the following analysis of the recommendations made by the 2001 Land Use Plan:

Category	Recommendation	Responsible Party	2022 Evaluation
Preservation	Appoint a Historic Properties Commission.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Do not recommend pursuit.
Character	Appoint a Downtown Revitalization Committee.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Do not recommend pursuit.
Character	Fund the Tree City USA program - \$2 per person.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Transportation	Fund sidewalks in concurrence with the sidewalk plan using Powell Bill Funds and by applying for TEA-21 matching grants.	Town Board of Commissioners	Need to determine scope of "sidewalk plan". Could be complete with NCDOT plans for extending sidewalks.
Recreation	Fund parks improvements in concurrence with the parks and recreation plan.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Public Services	Fund additional staff to administer programs.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.

Category	Recommendation	Responsible Party	2022 Evaluation
Preservation	Provide funding to apply for a National Register Historic District.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Character	Increase the property tax rate to fund programs.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Character	Develop a Web site promoting Four Oaks as a family-oriented Town and promoting downtown, local businesses and institutions.	Town Board of Commissioners	Complete. Link site ( <a href="http://johnstoncountync.org/fouroaks">johnstoncountync.org/fouroaks</a> ) on all Town sites.
Land Use	Adopt amendments to the Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances as recommended by the Planning Board.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Would recommend complete look at Ordinance to determine present needs.
Land Use	Adopt stronger nuisance regulations as recommended by the Appearance Commission.	Town Board of Commissioners	Ordinance last updated in 2009. Recommend review of current enforcement to ensure its efficient.
Preservation	Establish a local historic district per the recommendations of the Historic Resources Committee.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Public Services	Support the activities of the appointed boards, committees, and commissions.	Town Board of Commissioners	Complete.

Category	Recommendation	Responsible Party	2022 Evaluation
Economic Development	Hold open houses for economic developers, realtors and business leaders to showcase the attributes of Four Oaks and the opportunities for fruitful investment in Four Oaks.	Town Board of Commissioners	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Transportation	Request that NC Department of Transportation update the 1991 Town of Four Oaks Thoroughfare Plan with input from the Town.	Town Board of Commissioners	No longer necessary as the 2015 CTP addresses new transportation concerns.
(see below)	Draft and recommend the following amendments to the Subdivision Ordinance.	Planning Board	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Land Use	» Require the donation of recreation land or payment of a fee.	Planning Board	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Land Use	» Require the construction of sidewalks.	Planning Board	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Land Use	» Require that subdivisions implement street connectivity and limit the number of lots on cul de sacs.	Planning Board	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
(see below)	Draft and recommend to the Town Board the following amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.	Planning Board	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.

Category	Recommendation	Responsible Party	2022 Evaluation
Transportation	» Establish a Highway 301 overlay district with minimum lot sizes for business development, minimum distance between business driveways and shared driveway requirements.	Planning Board	Historic Downtown Development Plan & Fringe Overlay District was established. Zoning Ordinance needs to be updated to include standards.
Land Use	» Add a provision to allow clustered developments.	Planning Board	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Land Use	» Update the light industrial zoning districts and create a district to allow trades with a commercial component.	Planning Board	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Land Use	» Require commercial and business developments to have a coordinated appearance.	Planning Board	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Land Use	» Strengthen regulations for manufactured homes on individual lots and for manufactured home parks.	Planning Board	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Character	Develop an annual work plan and annual report to the Town Board that includes funding needs.	Appearance Commission	Unclear is Commission is established/meets.
Character	Draft recommendations to strengthen the sign ordinance and to prohibit internally lit plastic box signs.	Appearance Commission	Unclear if Commission is established/meets. Would recommend pursuit.

Category	Recommendation	Responsible Party	2022 Evaluation
Character	Draft amendments to the nuisance ordinance to strengthen its applicability and make enforcement easier.	Appearance Commission	Ordinance last updated in 2009. Recommend review of current enforcement to ensure its efficient.
Character	Recommend to the Town Board public improvements that benefit the appearance of Four Oaks.	Appearance Commission	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Character	Implement the Tree City USA program.	Appearance Commission	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Transportation	Develop a sidewalk plan for the Town that provides pedestrian access between existing and planned destinations.	Appearance Commission	Need to determine scope of "sidewalk plan". Could be complete with NCDOT plans for extending sidewalks.
Preservation	Develop a brochure explaining the landscape ordinance and publicize the benefits of this ordinance.	Appearance Commission	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Recreation	Develop an annual work plan and annual report to the Town Board that includes funding requests.	Parks and Recreation Committee	Unclear if Commission is established/meets. Would recommend pursuit.
Recreation	Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the Town of Four Oaks.	Parks and Recreation Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.

Category	Recommendation	Responsible Party	2022 Evaluation
Recreation	Request that the Town Board make improvements to existing parks in accordance with the Appearance Improvements Master Plan.	Parks and Recreation Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Recreation	Apply for grants on behalf of the Town to improve facilities for Parks and Recreation.	Parks and Recreation Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Recreation	Review with the Planning Board proposed donations of land for recreation through the subdivision process to determine if they are suitable and serve the Town's recreation needs.	Parks and Recreation Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Recreation	Work with Johnston County to develop a regional park along Black Creek in the vicinity of Four Oaks.	Parks and Recreation Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Preservation	Develop and adopt Historic Resources Committee bylaws, annual work plan and annual report to the Town Board that includes funding requests.	Historic Resources Committee	Unclear if Commission is established/meets. Would recommend pursuit.

Category	Recommendation	Responsible Party	2022 Evaluation
Preservation	Study the historic resources of the Town of Four Oaks and recommend an area for National Register District application. Apply for one or more National Register District(s) that includes downtown Four Oaks and the historic residential areas.	Historic Resources Committee	Unclear if Commission is established/meets. Would recommend pursuit if existing structures meet National standards.
Preservation	Distribute materials describing the benefits of both a National Register Historic District and a locally designated historic district.	Historic Resources Committee	Incomplete. Determine who the materials are for. Could be partnership with Chamber of Commerce.
Preservation	Develop a local historic resources walking tour of Four Oaks.	Historic Resources Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Preservation	Recommend the designation of a local historic district and serve as the Historic Commission to the locally designated historic district.	Historic Resources Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Character	Develop local guidelines for reviewing proposals to determine if they are appropriate to the historic character of the property and the district.	Historic Resources Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.

Category	Recommendation	Responsible Party	2022 Evaluation
Character	Develop and adopt Downtown Revitalization Committee bylaws and an annual work plan and annual report to the Town Board that includes funding requests.	Revitalization Committee	Unclear if Commission is established/meets. Would recommend pursuit.
Character	Develop an overall plan for downtown Four Oaks using the National Main Street Center approach.	Revitalization Committee	Completed with Downtown Streetscape Master Plan by WithersRavenel in 2020. Zoning Ordinance needs be updated to include standards.
Character	Implement a facade grant program using public and private funding. Develop guidelines to ensure that improvements are appropriate to the historic character of the structure and the character of the street.	Revitalization Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Economic Development	Develop a brochure promoting downtown Four Oaks and the businesses and services located in the downtown area.	Revitalization Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.
Economic Development	Recruit new businesses into downtown Four Oaks that complement existing businesses and provide products and services to the residents of Four Oaks.	Revitalization Committee	Incomplete. Would recommend pursuit.

## VI. Future Land Use Plan Considerations

In addition to the review of the 2001 Land Use Plan recommendations, the project recommends consideration of the following items during development of the updated Land Use Plan:

- » Inclusion of a “Rural/Agricultural” district to help concentrate growth towards the Town’s center. This will help prevent sprawl and additional strains on Four Oaks utilities.
- » Providing mixed use districts can help expand walkability and multi-modal travel. This model pursues the all-encompassing live/work/play lifestyle that keeps residents in Town limits for all their needs.
- » Each residential unit type must be considered. The plan should identify where a residential unit type should be located, from a rural single family home to an apartment complex.
- » The plan should identify large portions of parcels for each land use type and avoid a mosaic of land uses. Spot designations can cause confusion, complicate interpretation, and develop equity concerns.
- » Consider detailed descriptions for each land use provided. This can include recommended uses, residential densities, and other planning considerations. Detailed land use descriptions can clearly identify the Town’s intent for its future landscape and provide clearer guidance when approached with any future land use application.
- » Providing a statement that all future land use designations include public facilities such as utility needs or parks allows for such uses to be developed where needed in the Town, regardless of the overarching land use designation.
- » The Future Land Use Map should be reviewed by the public prior to adoption. Members of the public can help identify oversights in the map and serve as local expert advisors prior to adoption.



Mount Pilot Country Store Storefront

# Appendix A: Scenario Development Technical Information

## A. Scenario 1 "Do Nothing"

1. Parcel shapefile data was obtained by Johnston County GIS.
  - » Parcel data includes Land Use fields
    - › Land Uses were consolidated into overarching fields such as "Commercial" and "Industrial/Warehousing".

Land Uses in Four Oaks	Consolidated Use
"Null"	(see following steps)
Auxiliary Improvements	(see following steps)
Banks	Office/Institutional
Camps	Commercial
Car Wash	Commercial
Churches	Office/Institutional
Clubs,Ldgs	Commercial
Comm/Service	Commercial
Commercial	Commercial
Convenience Store	Commercial
Day Care Center	Commercial
Duplex Triplex	Attached Residential
Duplex/Triplex	Attached Residential
Fast Foods	Commercial
Furn Show Room	Commercial
Garden Apartment	Apartment Residential
High Rise Apartment	Apartment Residential
Homes for Aged	Office/Institutional
Hotel/Motel 3 Floors or Less	Commercial
Industrial	Industrial/Warehousing
Light Manufacturing	Industrial/Warehousing
Manufactured Home (Double Wide)	Manufactured Homes
Medical Building	Office/Institutional
Mini-Warehouses	Industrial/Warehousing
Mobile Home (Single Wide)	Manufactured Homes

Land Uses in Four Oaks	Consolidated Use
Mobile Home Park	Manufactured Homes
Mortuaries, Cemeteries	Office/Institutional
Office	Office/Institutional
Other County	Office/Institutional
Other Municipal	Office/Institutional
Other State	Office/Institutional
Pbl Schools	Office/Institutional
Prefab Warehouse	Industrial/Warehousing
Restaurants	Commercial
Service Garage	Commercial
Service Station	Commercial
Shopping Center-Mall	Commercial
Shopping Center-Strip	Commercial
Single Family Residential	Single Family Residential
Single Family Resort	Single Family Residential
Super Market	Commercial
Townhouse Apartment	Medium Density Residential
Townhouse Single Family	Medium Density Residential
Utilities	Office/Institutional
Vacant	(see following steps)
Veterinarians Office	Office/Institutional
Warehouse	Industrial/Warehousing

- › Null values, “Auxiliary Improvements”, and “Vacant” values in the Land Use column of the parcel data could not be categorized into one of the consolidated uses.
- » For all parcels with a Land Use of “Auxiliary Improvements”, “Vacant”, or otherwise null, the project team brought in the Town’s existing zoning to give a rough indication of how these parcels will develop under current conditions.
- › The project team used the following conversion of parcel zoning designations to future land uses to account for the three Land Uses that could not otherwise be categorized.

<b>Zoning Designation</b>	<b>Equivalent Future Land Use</b>
R-6	Attached Res
R-A	Single Family Res
R8-5S	Single Family Res
R8.5M	Medium Density Res
I-2H	Industrial/Warehousing
R-6-MH	Manufactured Homes
I-1L	Industrial/Warehousing
B-1C	Commercial
B-2H	Commercial
AR-SUD	Single Family Res
H-1	Industrial/Warehousing
I-1-SUD	Industrial/Warehousing
R-A-SUD	Single Family Res
I-2	Industrial/Warehousing
CB	Commercial
GB	Commercial
I-1	Industrial/Warehousing
GB-SUD	Commercial
B-3 CZ	Commercial
B-3	Commercial
R-20A	Single Family Res

# B. Scenario 2 "Existing FLUM"

1. The Project Team georeferenced an image of the Town’s Future Land Use Map from the 2001 Land Use Plan into ArcMap.
  - » All parcels in ArcMap were updated to contain the corresponding future land use.
2. Note that the Johnston County GIS information depicts a much larger Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) than what is shown on the 2001 Future Land Use Map. It is believed that the ETJ has expanded since 2001.
  - » To effectively model this scenario, the Project Team needed to model the growth in the ETJ that was not accounted for in the 2001 Future Land Use Map.
    - › As there is no future planning guidance for the remaining parcels, they have been modelled to follow the results of Scenario 1, indicating that the Town is not proactively planning for the future of those parcels.
    - › Prior to utilizing the land uses from the first scenario, the Project Team created a conversion table so that the terminology of land uses used in Scenario 1 were converted to match the terminology used in Scenario 2.

S1 "Do Nothing" Uses	Approximate S2 "Existing FLUM" Equivalent
Single Family Residential	Single Family Residential
Medium Density Residential	Medium Density Residential
Apartment Residential	Traditional Neighborhood Mixed Use
Attached Residential	Traditional Neighborhood Mixed Use
Commercial	Mixed Business
Office/Institutional	Mixed Business
Industrial/Warehousing	Highway Commercial
Manufactured Homes	Rural

# C. Scenario 3 "Smart Growth"

1. Scenario 3 utilized findings from the first two scenarios and iterative work with the Steering Committee to be developed.
2. Land uses were determined by the Project Team and use locations were designated by the project team.

