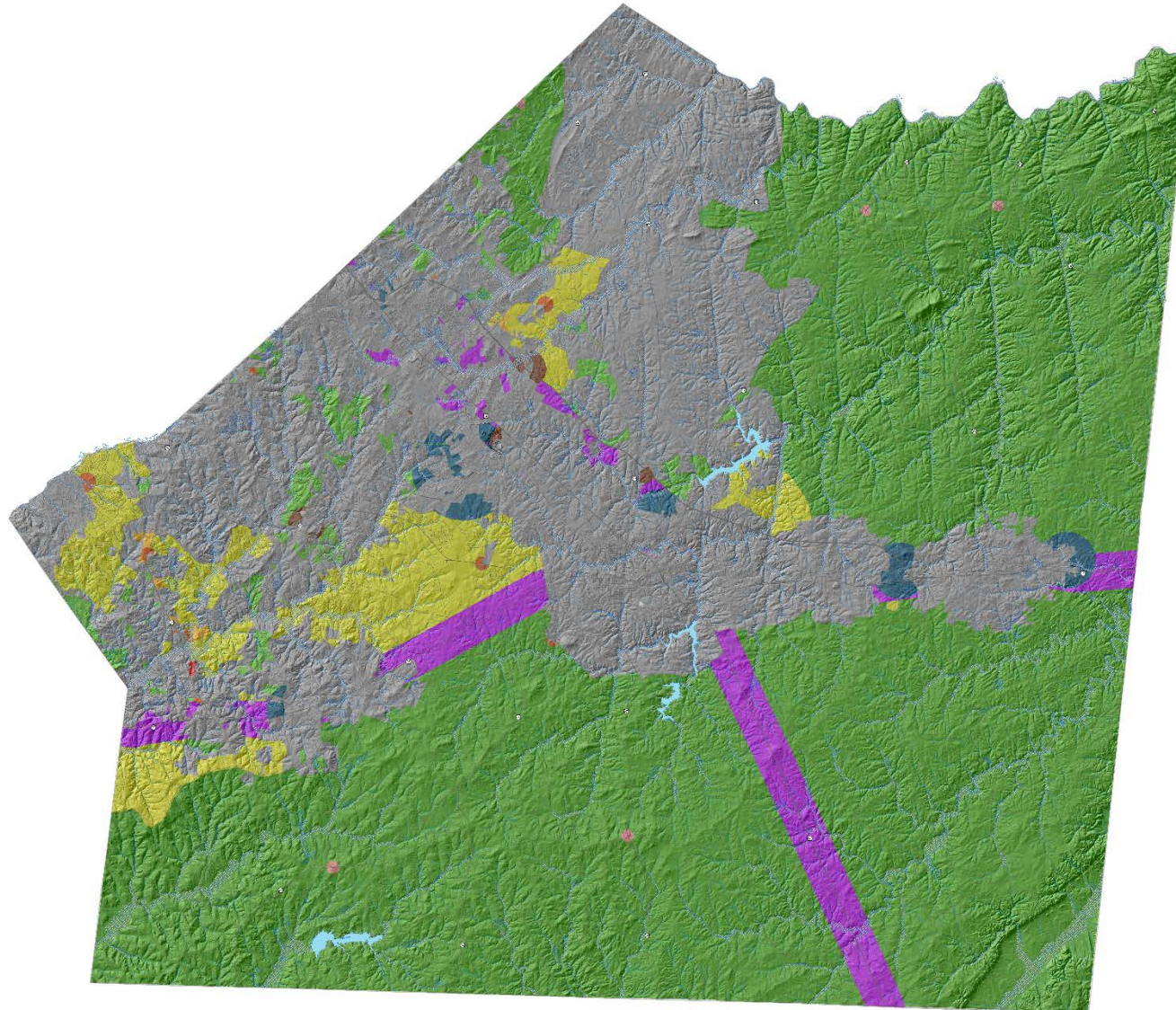


Draft Rural Land Use Plan

Land Use Board
October 21, 2025

2050 LAND USE MAP



Land Use Plan Descriptions

- Transition Zone:** Upzonings would be denied by Union County and reference to adjacent municipality for annexation.
- Agricultural Area:** Farming, forestry and rural residential.
- Single Family Residential:** Detached single family (>2 unit/acre).
- Mixed Residential:** Mixed residential (detached single family, patio, and cottage homes, townhomes, and multi-family).
- Employment Corridor:** Logistics, industrial, and agri-business related uses.
- Employment Center:** Industrial and office uses.
- Community Center - Large:** Community-serving commercial centers with a larger footprint and service area.
- Community Center - Small:** Community-serving commercial uses (retail, restaurant and services) including opportunities for office, civic, institutional and mixed residential uses.
- Neighborhood Center:** Neighborhood-serving commercial uses (retail, restaurant and services) and mixed residential uses.
- Rural Center:** Small scale commercial and civic uses.
- Town Center:** Existing downtown or town center with a range of uses including commercial, office, civic, institutional and mixed residential uses.



Union County

2050

• **ROLE OF STEERING COMMITTEE**

- Research options
- Solicit public feedback
- Make recommendations to LUB and BOCC

ROLE OF LAND USE BOARD

- Make recommendations to Board of Commissioners
- Participate in planning process as requested
- Provide feedback to the Steering Committee

ROLE OF BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

- Provide feedback to the Steering Committee
- Approve plan
- Implement strategies

• **APPROVED VISION STATEMENT**

In the rural areas of Union County, we cherish a way of life where farms and protected open spaces define our community. As stewards of the land, we treasure the balance between living close to nature and preserving our agricultural heritage. Expanses of productive farmland remind us daily of where our food comes from, and by adding options for property owners, lowering density, and enhancing environmental protection requirements we preserve our natural resources and encourage public appreciation while ensuring agriculture thrives. This approach will sustain our rural character and provide a vibrant future for generations to come.

• OUTREACH

- Two rounds of public engagement (visioning and strategy development)
- Social media postings
- Weekly newsletter
- Email to 500+ interested residents and municipalities
- Updates on County web site
- Interview on WIXE
- Almost 400 responses from public
- Presentation to municipal planners
- Public steering committee meetings

• **WHAT ARE STRATEGIES?**

- A policy or action designed to achieve a goal
- They are the teeth of the plan
- Need to be thought through to avoid unintended consequences
- Ideally are effective on their own and not require other strategies to achieve effects

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

Name	Description	Implementation
Expand agricultural easement purchase program	Protect 10% of all agricultural land by 2050	Increase funding to \$3-5 million per year
Add flexibility for commercial uses in rural areas	Allow low impact commercial development without rezoning on five acre minimum lots and four acres of protected land per acre of development	Unified Development Ordinance amendment
Require contiguous areas for open space in major subdivisions	Require open space to be concentrated, with 50% contiguous, focused on forests and streams	Unified Development Ordinance amendment
Purchase priority land with fee in lieu for open space requirements	Allow smaller impacted subdivisions to avoid open space requirements by paying into agricultural easement program	Unified Development Ordinance amendment

• RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

Name	Description	Implementation
Express concern over impacts from bypasses	Express concern over development impacts from bypasses south of Waxhaw and Monroe	BOCC policy
Limit major subdivisions in certain zoning districts	Require major subdivisions to have access to water or sewer	Unified Development Ordinance amendment
Expand rural area in the Land Use Map	Add six square miles immediately west of Monroe to rural residential district	Land Use Map amendment
Add Six Rural Centers to Land Use Map	Add small commercial centers to six intersections in rural areas	Land Use Map amendment

• NEXT STEPS

- November 17- BOCC approval
- November 25- Steering Committee starts UDO amendment process
- December – Steering committee refines draft UDO amendments
- January – Steering committee recommends UDO amendments
- January 20 – Land Use Board reviews amendments
- February 16 – BOCC holds public hearing for amendments and considers approving

THANK YOU!



2050 2. **STRONGLY SUPPORTED STRATEGIES**

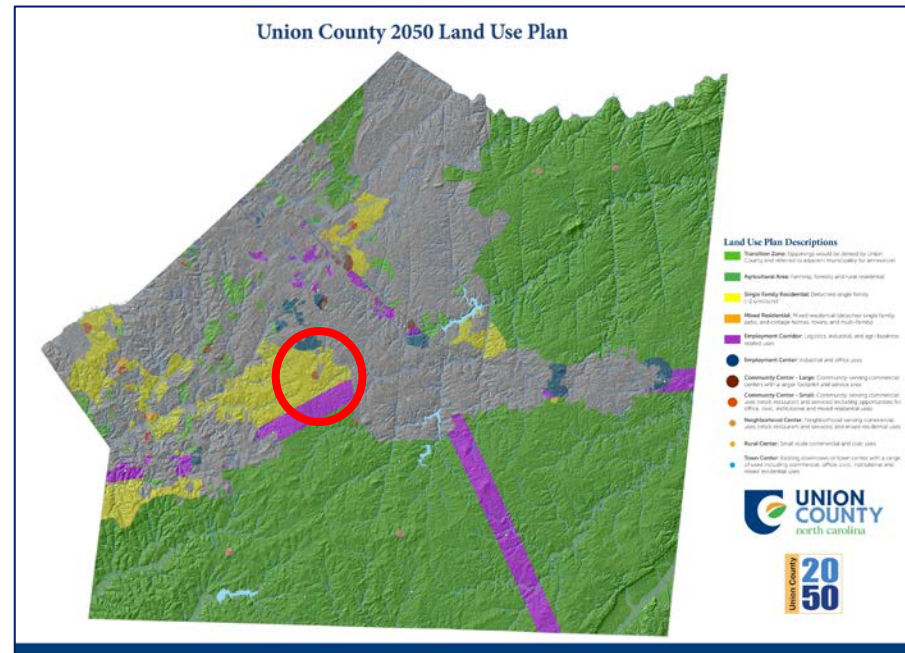
- Expand agricultural easement purchase program
- Require contiguous areas for open space in major subdivisions
- Proposing removal of one or more bypasses
- Limit subdivisions in certain zoning districts
- Protect intact forests in the 30% open space required area. Rare and protected species, wetlands, and streams are tied after forests

The steering committee and public levels of support are consistent for the above strategies.

Implementing these strategies would require a combination of Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) amendments, additional County funding, and coordination with municipalities and the NCDOT.

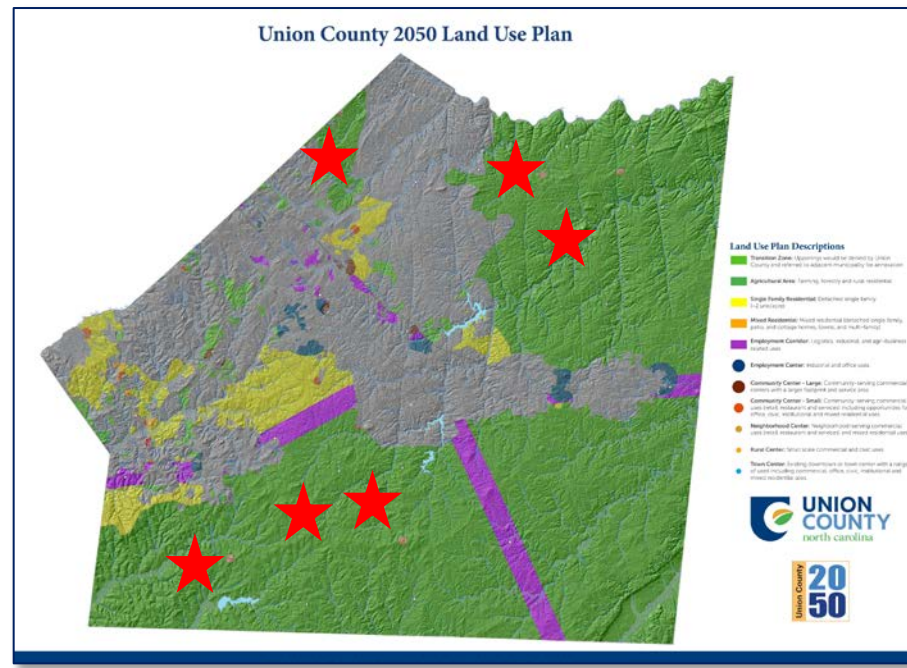
2050 SUPPORTED STRATEGY

- Expand rural area on land use map
- Implementing this strategies would occur through an amendment to the land use map for Union County
- Frequent comments:
 - “We have enough high density housing in Union County. We can’t get county water here in parts of Unionville.”
 - “Union County is already upside down on development with disproportionately more residential development happening.”
 - More rural is a better use of this beautiful county. We don’t want to be Mecklenburg. Let rural designations help keep the green space charm“
 - “I think rezoning this area back to rural is fantastic, our 2 lane roads are already over crowded with the housing developments already in Union County. I believe there is already too much high density development here and any areas that can be changed back to RA-40 is a step towards the right direction again.”



• SUPPORTED STRATEGY

- Add six rural centers to the land use map
- Frequent comments:
 - “We don’t mind driving to town”
 - “Commercial centers will turn into broader developments”
 - “I think this could be a good thing, but we can’t let this get out of hand”
 - “We have enough gas stations, grocery stores, and shopping centers. Open a park, or even better plant corn on the properties.”
 - “I appreciate and like this idea. It appears this is intended to "officially" document what has already occurred at the locations identified.”



2050 • NOT SUPPORTED STRATEGIES

- Purchase parcels in priority areas in exchange for higher density in remaining areas
 - Concerns over implementation and lawsuits
 - Would require NCGA enabling legislation
- Allow low impact commercial and industrial uses on residentially-zoned land
 - 5-10 acres most common suggestion for minimum lot size
 - Need to determine ratio of developed to protected land, such as four acres protected for every acre developed
 - Implementing this strategies would require amending the UDO to add a new “rural business” use for RA-zoned land
- Frequent comments:
 - “This would not be enforced and there should be strictly following the land use zoning rules.”
 - “These seem like very low impact uses and would blend with the land and development.”
 - “It should be acre for acre. If you’re going to take 5 for use then you protect five acres. I believe that we are losing sight of rural living by adding more and more.”
 - “I think that if someone wants to start and run a business on their own land, they should be able to do so without jumping through hoops or being denied due to a lack of land.”
 - “Can we just not please. Why would a residential area that went in knowing around them was residential now want commercial vehicles and businesses in their neighborhoods.”
- Observation: Strategies that increase flexibility for property owners and developers not supported as much as strategies that limit development

• **HOW TO RESTRICT MAJOR SUBDIVISIONS AS A USE**

- Strictly speaking, subdivisions are not a land use
- Current NCGS limiting downzoning of property
- Eligible strategies:
 - Require Special Use Permit for major subdivisions
 - Add an additional requirement that a major subdivision in the rural area would require access to at least one public utility
- Ideal strategy – downzone all land in rural areas and process subdivisions as rezonings

