

# Rural Land Use Plan Strategies and Public Feedback

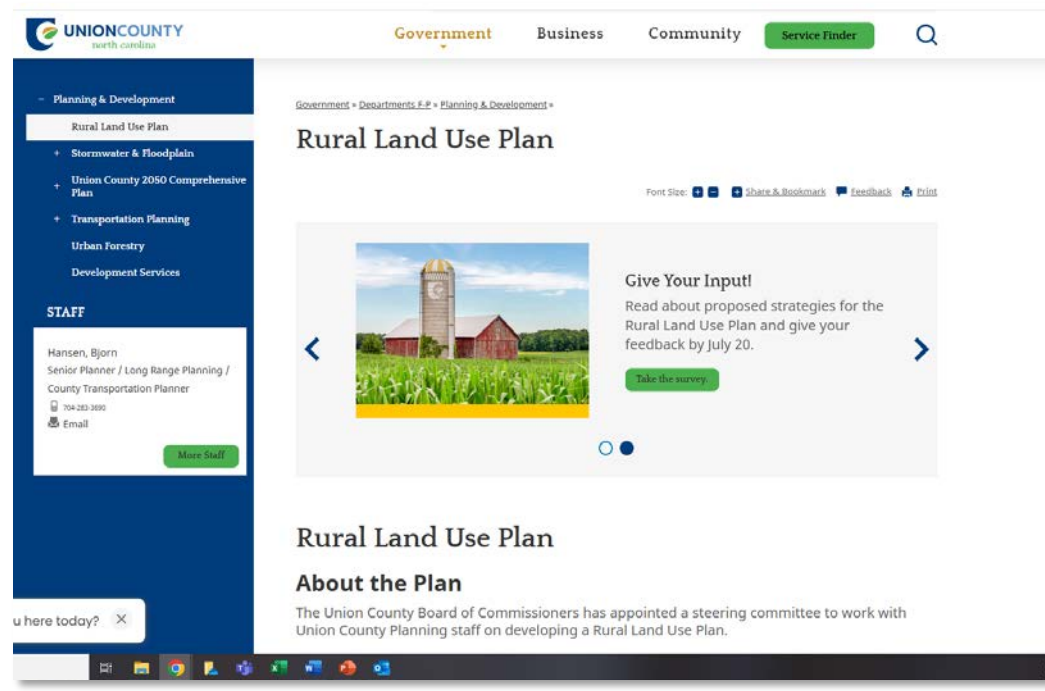
August 2025

## • **WHAT ARE STRATEGIES?**

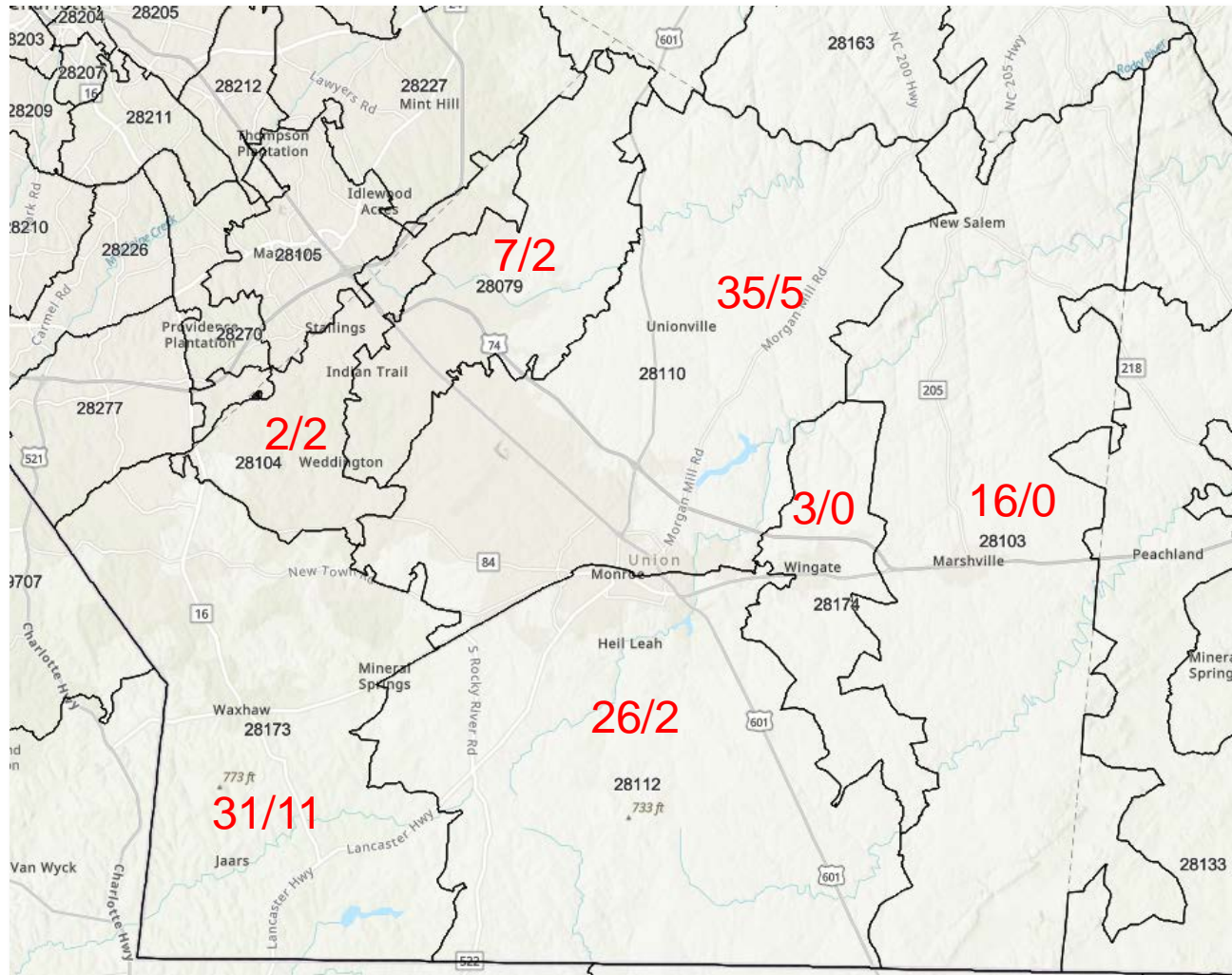
- A policy or action designed to achieve a goal
- They are the teeth of the plan
- Need to be thought through to avoid unintended consequences
- Ideally are effective on their own and not require other strategies to achieve effects

## OUTREACH

- Social media
- Weekly newsletter
- Email to 500+ interested residents and municipalities
- Posted on County web site
- Interview on WIXE
- 166 responses



# FEEDBACK RESULTS BY ZIP CODE (LIVE OR WORK IN RURAL AREA/ DON'T)



## • NEXT STEPS

- August 11 – Present draft strategies to Board of Commissioners
- August 26 – Committee approves strategies
- September and October – Draft plan development
- October 21 – Present draft plan to Land Use Board
- October 28 – Committee endorses plan
- November 17 – Present plan to Board of Commissioners for approval
- December through March – amend land use map and UDO to implement strategies
- June 2026 – BOCC decision on any funding considerations

## • **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

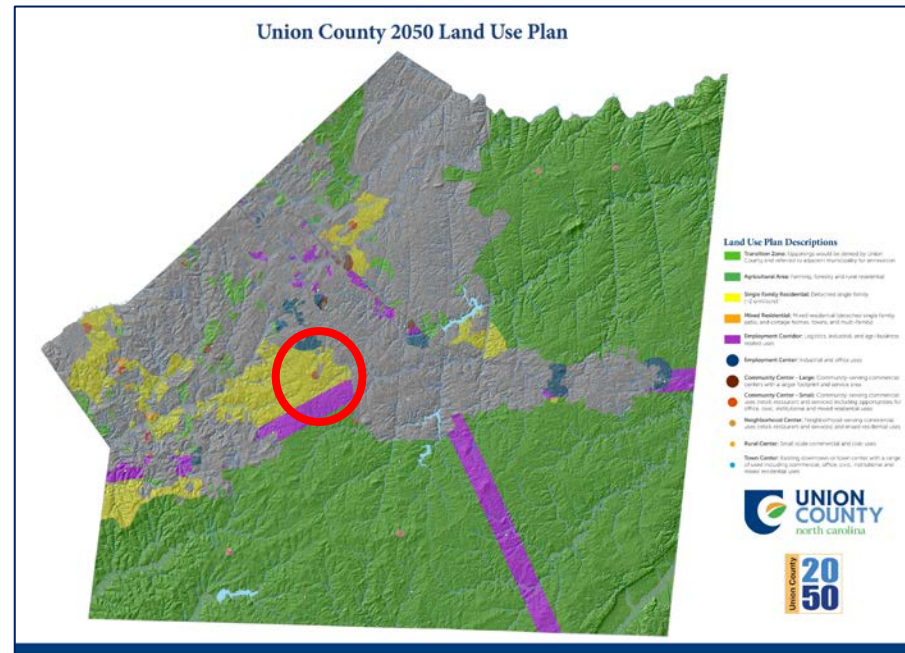
The steering committee and public levels of support are consistent for the above strategies.

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



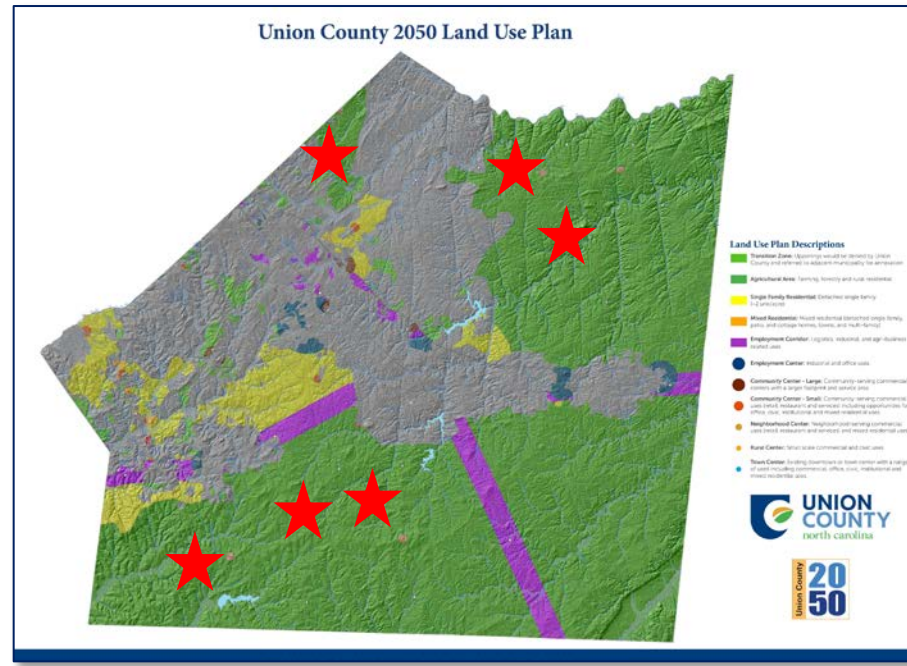
## • SUPPORTED STRATEGY

- 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.”





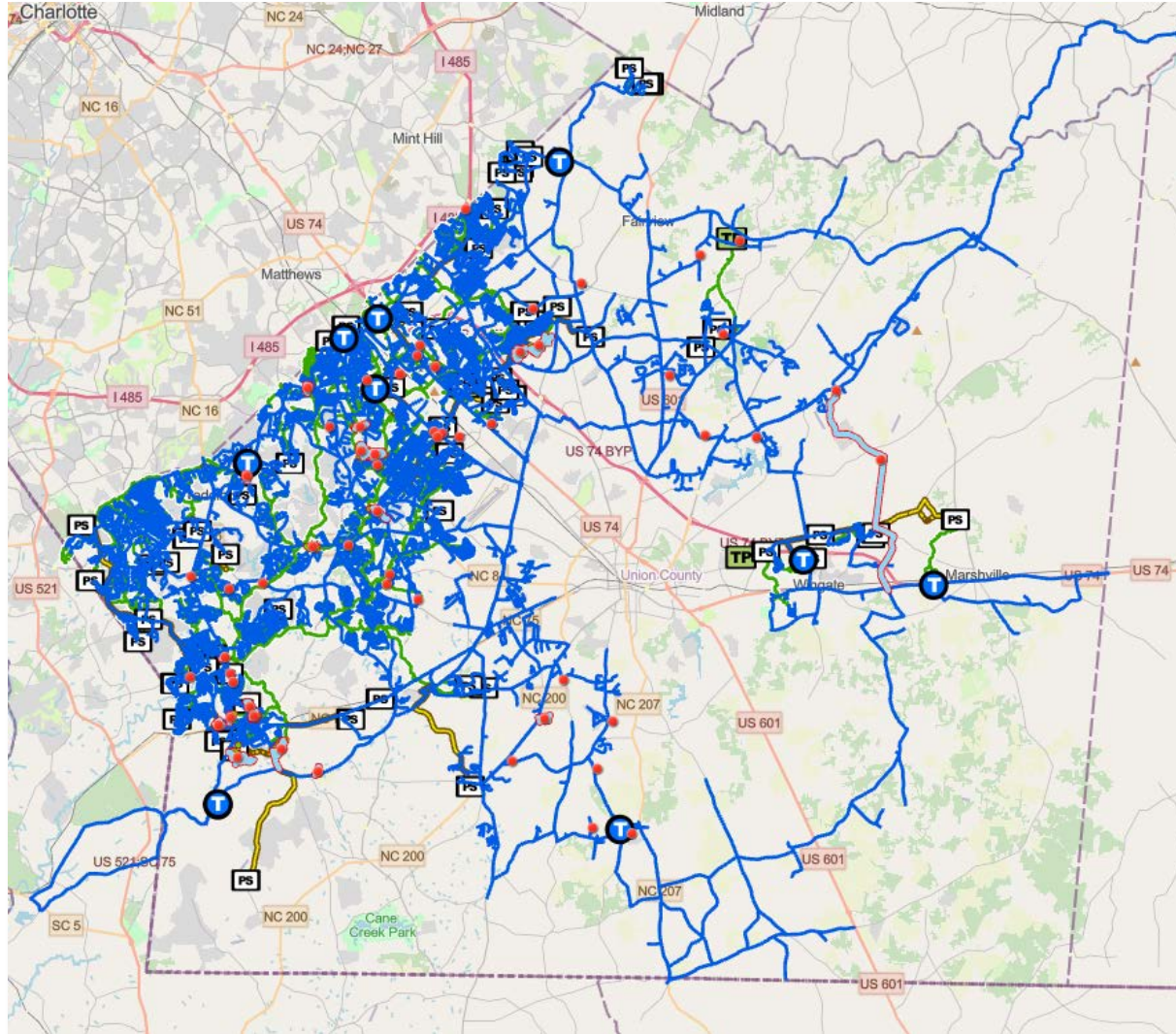
## • NOT SUPPORTED STRATEGIES

- 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

# UTILITY NETWORK MAP



**THANK YOU!**

