

# SHAPING ORANGE COUNTY'S FUTURE TASK FORCE



## Report and Recommendations

April 5, 2000\*

*\* The Task Force Provisional Recommendations were adopted April 5, 2000, and revised on June 22, 2000. On September 12, 2001, the Task Force met and agreed to consider the report to be final.*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Shaping Orange County's Future (SOCF) Task Force wishes to acknowledge the governments and Boards of Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Orange County for their commitment to and financial support of this project. The Task Force particularly thanks the representatives from these boards who worked to shape the process for the project and those who served on the SOCF Steering Committee and provided guidance to the Task Force in implementing the project. The Task Force also thanks the Town of Hillsborough for their participation.

Most especially the Task Force wishes to thank the many county citizens who participated in the project through meetings, surveys, and other events.

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*Thanks also go to the many other government staff and other experts who contributed their time to the project including: Ted Abernathy, Kendall Abernathy, John Alderman, Marcia Angle, Barbara Baker, Quinton Baker, Don Belk, Fleming Bell, David Bonk, Esquirido Braddy, Don Brannon, Randy Bridges, Michael Brown, Sally Brown, Ben Callahan, Anna Cassily, Ed Cheney, Marvin Collins, Marti Pryor-Cook, Keith Cook, Jane Cousins, Don Cox, Robert Dowling, Donna Dyer, Tommy Dyer, Warren Faircloth, Tara Fikes, Hudson Fuller, Jeannie Garten, Ray Greenlaw, Margaret Hauth, Amy Hawley, John Hodges-Copple, Kim Hoke, Sheila Holeman, Jonathan Howes, Mike Jennings, Ann Johnson, Bob Jones, Ann Kaplan, Carol Laing, Carolyn Leith, Lucy Lewis, Bob Lockwood, Livy Ludington, Larry Massenburg, Sarah Magruder, Phil Mason, Tom Maynard, Karen McAdams, Slade McCalip, Prudence Meehan, Chris Moran, Peter Morcombe, David Moreau, Catherine Nelson, Maria Palmer, Jerry Passmore, Neil Pederson, Blair Pollock, Gwendolyn Price, Dan Reimer, Pat Rhodes, Richard Richardson, Kim Roberts, Sue Russell, Howard Stier, Bob Strayhorn, Bill Strom, David Thaden, Paul Thames, Tom Waldrop, Trawick Ward, Nick Waters, Jim White, Tim Williams, Rachel Willis, Kenneth Withrow, Donna Wyland, Dispute Settlement Center facilitator volunteers, and to the many others we are sure to have forgotten.*

*This report is dedicated to the memory of Barbara Page:*



*Barbara Page*

*Task Force member Barbara Page wasn't one to mince words. The first memory many of us have of Barbara is at our conflict-resolution retreat in November 1996 – talking about getting down to business and addressing the lack of community between Northern and Southern Orange. Her untimely death over the holiday period in 1996-97 saddened us all.*

*It is to Barbara's memory that the Task Force dedicates this report – and our hope that this document will help bridge some of the lack of community that Barbara felt strongly about.*

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# INTRODUCTION – PURPOSE AND PROCESS

In December 1996, a group of 30 citizens met for the first time to begin work on a comprehensive initiative called “Shaping Orange County’s Future”. Their charge was to develop a quality growth and community-building plan for all of Orange County (both its towns and rural areas) that addresses a multitude of issues with implications for the county’s current and future quality of life.

This group was the outgrowth of a report from a steering committee of elected officials and interested citizens after a 1993 conference on quality growth plans for the county.

This group of citizens – known as the *Shaping Orange County’s Future Task Force* – has developed a vision and a set of recommendations after over 400 hours of meetings, community forums, outreach activities and brainstorming sessions. The subsequent pages of this document spell out this vision for the future and recommendations for attaining it.

## Why Shaping Orange County’s Future?

In a county that has seen many citizen committees and studied many far-reaching and difficult policy issues over the last few decades, one might ask why Shaping Orange County’s Future is needed.

The answer to that question is found in the very agreement to create the initiative:

*“Carrboro, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough and the unincorporated areas of Orange County are at a crucial period in our history. The next twenty years could determine whether Orange County will continue to be an attractive, desirable place to live... We could become like Los Angeles with urban sprawl... Another possibility is that the four governing bodies working together with each other and the citizenry could develop an Orange County model as determined by the values and visions of the people...”*

*With growth, we must make sure that we better our community, improve our relations with each other and, hopefully, lay the foundation for future generations to lead fulfilling lives...”*

*At a 1993 conference... sponsored by the Assembly of Governments, nationally recognized quality growth planner, Dr. John DeGrove said that we could grow smart or we could grow dumb. The way to grow smart... (is) to develop a comprehensive quality growth strategy.”*

So, while we have undertaken many studies and plans over the years, these efforts have infrequently been coordinated at the local government level to ensure that town plans and county plans are consistent. Most plans to date have focused on land use issues, without delving into the deeper quality of life, sustainability, and community-building issues that are directly relevant to a comprehensive planning process.

## **The Process**

Shaping Orange County's Future was designed to learn about our citizens' hopes and dreams, concerns and interests regarding the future, and to find common ground among all of these interests in order to both imagine and plan a future that truly reflects the "values and visions of the people".

In June 1994, the elected boards agreed to a 15-step process, which can be found as Appendix A to this document.

The process called for a diverse citizen committee to be formed from across the county to examine local issues through the use of citizen committees, and to explore the underlying concepts of sustainability and community-building.

## **Focus of the Report**

In a project with such a broad scope and so many activities, it is not possible to fully address every issue that has arisen. Instead, the Task Force has opted to produce a focused report that addresses:

- Overarching themes that affect the way we live
- Important goals and recommendations that could enhance the sense of community and address the issue of growth, and
- A set of specific action strategies, where appropriate, to focus efforts in future years.

Additional detail on topics may be found in the extensive Appendix section of the report, which is available upon request. Appendices A through Q (citizen committee reports, and staff reports on past and projected trends, and Recommendation Summary Tables) can also be found on our website, [www.co.orange.nc.us/shaping/default.htm](http://www.co.orange.nc.us/shaping/default.htm) .

*Note: Because this is a visioning project focused on actions to accomplish a desirable future, there will undoubtedly be many questions and issues that arise as how to accomplish the future outlined in this report. One of the follow-up steps in this process is an evaluation by the county's elected boards and staffs on the ideas contained herein - the implications, costs and ramifications of pursuing this course.*

A brief summary of the many activities of the Task Force is provided in the table below.

# **SOCF Timeline and Activities**

## **November 1996- February 2000**

- November, 1996 - Task Force retreat focusing on team-building and conflict resolution
- December 10, 1996 – First Task Force meeting
- February-March, 1997 – Community SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) Exercise conducted
- May-June, 1997 – “What’s On Your Mind” Community Forums and citizen surveys
- July-August 1997 – Plans for Citizen Committee Process
- September 1997 – Speaker Series for 6 Committee Topical Areas
- October 1997 - Citizen Committees formed (Economy, Education and Cultural Arts; Environment and Resources; Human Services, Health and Safety; Land Use and Growth; Transportation, Infrastructure and Services)
- February – May 1998 – Children’s Visioning Project to obtain 5<sup>th</sup> graders input into shaping the future and teach them about planning and community building
- February 1998 – Sustainability “Umbrella” Committee begins work
- March 1998 – Community-Building “Umbrella” Committee begins work
- April 1998 – 6 Citizen committees complete reports
- June 1, 1998 – Interim Report and Update to Assembly of Governments
- June 25, 1998 – Reports of the Sustainability and Community-Building Committees received
- July-September, 1998 – Synthesis Work Group prepares report coalescing work to date
- September-October, 1998 – Conflict/Opportunities Committee wrestles with identified difficult issues
- October 1998 – January 1999 – “Orange County Profile” prepared by staff and received by Task Force
- November 1998 - Step Six Work Group prepares plan for beginning to develop scenarios of future and examines data needs
- January – March 1999 – Staff produces “Baseline Scenario – Year 2030” based on current trends
- February-April 1999 – Task Force splits into three facilitated scenario work groups to analyze baseline and develop a preferred vision of the future
- May-June 1999 – Task Force develops “A Preferred Scenario for Year 2030”, to be developed as a newspaper insert
- July-August 1999 – Task Force begins examining ways to take scenario and create recommendations and the final report
- August - September, 1999 – Task Force conducts two “storyboarding” sessions to brainstorm possible recommendations
- October, 1999 – Newspaper insert runs in Chapel Hill News, Village Advocate, and News of Orange
- October 1999 – Task Force asks staff to develop “strawman” final report based on guidance from Task Force
- November 1999 – Strawman report presented to Task Force.
- April 2000 – Task Force adopts provisional report and transmits to elected boards.

In order to know where we would like to go it’s important to know where we have been and where we are likely to go if present trends continue. The next section of this report addresses some of these trends regarding county growth and offers projections for future growth.



# ***SECTION I***



## ***TRENDS:***

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE,  
RECENT TRENDS, AND FUTURE  
PROJECTIONS**

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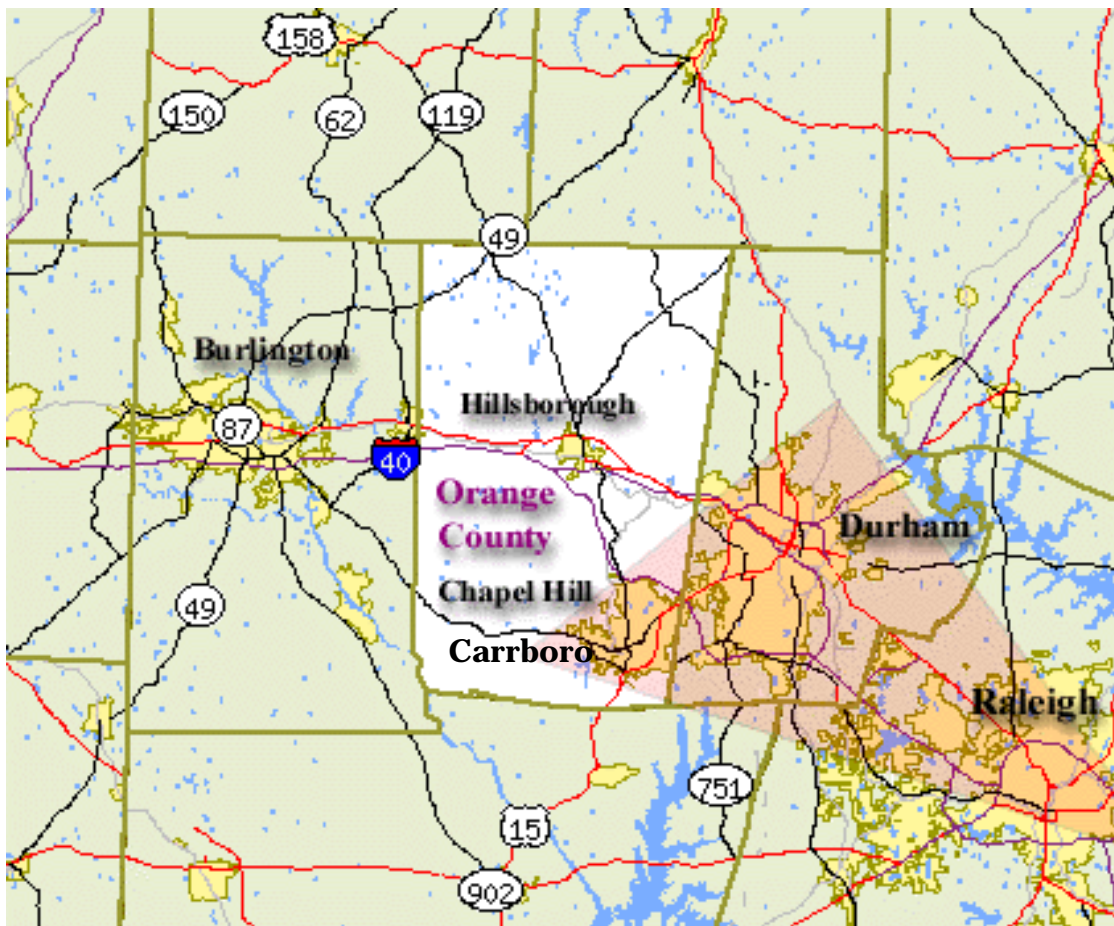
# Overview

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In order to understand the relevant issues for creating a desirable future, it is important to examine what past trends, and projections of these trends into the future, can tell us. Due to the limits of space, this section largely focuses on the impacts of growth in the County since this is a major impetus for the project. How much growth the County experiences, both in totality and rate, as well as how this growth is handled will have major implications for quality of life in the county.

A much more detailed look at status and trends relating to all the major issues covered by the project, from jobs to housing to health care can be found in Appendices B and C. Appendix B, the *Orange County Profile*, provides in-depth coverage of trends in recent years for all major issues. Appendix C is a *Baseline Scenario* for the year 2030 that was created based on projections of current trends. Details on data sources and how the projections were made can be found in these appendices.

This section begins with a presentation of a historical overview of Orange County circa 1800 and 1900, and then details recent trends focusing on the impacts of growth on the County. This is followed by a summary of projected trends.



# Orange County - 200 years ago

1775-1825

The start of this period, 1775, found America still a British colony, but not for very much longer. It was a time of incredible change and development for Orange County and the Nation. The United States declared its independence, created a constitution, and set legal precedents with landmark cases decided by the Supreme Court. As the 18<sup>th</sup> century concluded, divisiveness over the issue of slavery grew stronger. The US finally banned the importation of Africans for slavery in 1807.

## SNAPSHOT -- 1800

- Thomas Jefferson is elected President of the United States.
- Approximately 60 million buffalo roam the Great Plains.
- African-Americans in Philadelphia petition congress to end slavery.
- US population: 5,308,483
- Orange County population: 15,657 (Orange County at this time included parts of what is now Durham County)

In Orange County, most farms tended to be small subsistence farms rather than the expansive plantations found in other parts of the south. In fact, three-quarters of the landowners owned less than 500 acres of land, most of it uncleared, and only three percent of landowners held more than 1,000 acres. While these Orange County agriculturists were much less dependent on slavery than other southern counties, 20% of our population in 1790 was enslaved. This number had risen to 27% by 1800.

The most pressing local political issues of this period, however, were not generally related to agriculture and slavery, but rather to independence, taxation, and the creation of a new government. Orange County (created in 1752) was in its infancy as a political entity and was working hard to determine its place in regional and state politics. In 1782, Hillsborough was even selected as the state capital, although it lost that place to Raleigh only a year later. In 1789, the University of North Carolina, the first state-supported university in the country, was chartered and surveyed on top of New Hope Chapel Hill.

In the early 1800s, places like Cedar Grove, Caldwell, Oaks, and White Cross were all important centers for local farming communities. While Hillsborough remained the primary economic hub for the region, these smaller communities played an important role as supply stations for everyday goods and services and as gathering points for social activities. Overall, the character of Orange County during this period was agricultural, with burgeoning institutions of government and education, and a population largely of Scots-Irish and German extraction. Bustling with activity and growth, it continued to play a major role in the region as an economic and political center, and even had a stake in larger, national issues as well.

# Orange County - 100 years ago

1875-1925

This period of Orange County's history is shaped by the bust, boom, and bust again of the agricultural sector. Still dealing with the social and economic effects of the civil war, the nature of farming in the county changed, small towns became larger, and new towns sprang up along the rail lines. It was an exciting time as Orange County started to develop an identity which it would carry into the modern era. However, 1875 saw Orange County farmers in bad shape, with the value and size of farms shrinking.

## SNAPSHOT -- 1900

- Adlai E. Stevenson and Spencer Tracy born
- Amelia Earhart is 3 years old.
- William McKinley is president of the US (he is assassinated in 1901)
- 115 lynchings are recorded nationally despite efforts by Rep. George H. White of North Carolina, the last black man elected during the Reconstruction era, to make lynching a federal crime.
- US Buffalo population slowly recovering from a low of 1500 animals in the late 1800's
- US population: 76,094,000
- Orange County (current boundaries) population: 14,625

Due to financial burdens, changing regulations and new patterns of land ownership, cash crops slowly replaced subsistence farming in Orange County. Bright leaf tobacco became a major crop in the northern parts of the county. Cotton became the main cash crop of the southern part of the county. Along with crop types, farm ownership patterns were also changing. In fact, by 1910, 25% of black farmers in Orange County owned their own land. At its 1920s peak, tobacco was selling for about 25¢ per pound. Cotton prices in 1910 were about 30¢ per pound.

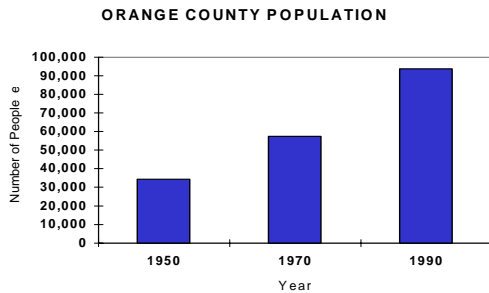
Post-Civil War financial troubles also interrupted the development of public education in Orange County. However, small log and framed single-room school houses continued to emerge in the county. By the 1880s, African American schools numbered 31 and white schools, 33. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century both white and black churches had been organized in Hillsborough, Chapel Hill, and the surrounding rural areas.

Just after the turn of the century, taxes became more burdensome for Orange County residents as the county paid for its expanding railways and roads. Also Carrboro's history began during this period. First named Venable in 1911, its name was officially changed to Carrboro in 1913. Other new communities forming along rail links were Efland, University Station, and Blackwood. Finally, two giant steps toward the modern world we know today were undertaken during this period: the beginning of aviation as a means of transportation with the Wright Brothers first flight in 1903; and the generation of electricity for growing manufacturing operations, provided by large companies like Southern Power, now Duke Power, which still operate in Orange County.

# Recent Trends

## Population

Between 1950 and 1990 Orange County's population increased by 173%. The policy question is whether these trends are desirable and whether we should work to alter them in the future.



Source: US Census

As of 1990 57.4 % of county residents lived within the municipal limits of the county's four towns: Carrboro, Chapel Hill, Hillsborough and Mebane (Orange Co. portion only). On a township basis, Chapel Hill Township contained the largest percentage of persons (66%) and Little River the lowest (2%). The population distribution in the other townships was: Bingham 5%, Cedar Grove Township 4%, Cheeks 6%, Eno 6%, and Hillsborough 11%.

## Housing Growth

Approximately 91% of the county's housing stock was built after W.W. II and 61% was constructed after 1970.

Between 1950 and March 1990, the number of housing units in Orange County increased from 8,422 to 38,683, an addition of 30,261 dwelling units. This increase was in response to countywide population growth experienced during the same time period. Between 1950 and March 1990 the number of households in Orange County increased by 364%, an actual increase of 28,322 households. The majority of housing added in the county was concentrated in what are now municipal portions of the county. For every 1 rural dwelling constructed between 1950 and 1990, approximately 2 were built in municipalities.

Housing Constructed		
Period	Municipal	Rural
1950-59	1446	624
1960-69	5329	1179
1970-79	6351	5360
1980-89	6811	3160
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,934</b>	<b>10,323</b>

Source: US Census: 1950-1990

Within the municipalities residential development has largely been focused in Chapel Hill, which has accounted for 64% of all residences built in municipal portions of the county, between 1950 and 1990. The numbers for Carrboro, Hillsborough, and the Orange County portion of Mebane, have been 28%, 7% and 0.69% respectively.

Comparative information on local housing costs is shown below:

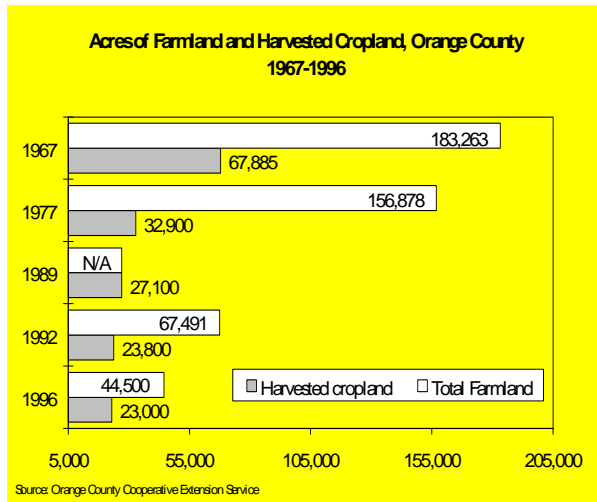
Year	Town of Carrboro <sup>2</sup>	Town of Chapel Hill <sup>2</sup>	County			Total Average Price
			Orange	Durham	Wake	
1994	NA	NA	\$167,265	\$119,958	\$141,227	\$142,817
1995	NA	NA	\$171,038	\$123,266	\$158,431	\$150,912
1996	NA	NA	\$192,144	\$130,749	\$162,474	\$161,789
1997	NA	NA	\$197,071	\$138,876	\$170,170	\$168,706
1998	\$170,456	\$223,057	\$209,208	\$143,529	\$175,039	\$175,925
1999	\$207,776	\$252,232	\$218,875	\$146,795	\$187,217	\$184,296

Source: Triangle Multiple Listing Services

1. Based on single family detached, townhouse, and condominium units for new and resale properties listed only with the TMLS.
2. Town of Carrboro data includes housing within town limits.
3. Town of Chapel Hill data includes 27514, 27515, and 27516 zip codes (which includes some properties within Carrboro town limits). The 1998 and 1999 average prices of detached single family homes *only* were \$276,443 and \$293,702 respectively.

## Farmland Loss

As the graph below illustrates, the amount of total farmland<sup>1</sup> in the county has declined by 138,763 acres (or 76%) from 1967 to 1996. Harvested cropland<sup>2</sup> in the county has declined by 49,730 acres or 68.3% over the same time period.



Farmland loss in the county has been triggered by a variety of factors. Higher land values, loss of federal price supports, increased environmental regulation, increased taxation, the advent of the corporate farm, and changing market forces have reduced the overall profitability of farming. Of particular concern in

recent years has been the increasing trend of conversion of farmland to residential use. Data is not available to determine what percent of farmland has been converted for residential purposes.

## Loss of Prime Forests

A study done by the Triangle Land Conservancy for Orange County showed that in 1988 prime forests<sup>3</sup> covered nearly 90,000 acres or about 35% of Orange County. Nine years later the study found that 10% of these prime forests had been lost or reduced in size.

<sup>1</sup> Farmland refers to land upon which any of the following agricultural activity takes place: cultivation of soil for crop production, planting and production of trees and timber, and the raising of livestock for individual and public use, consumption and marketing.

<sup>2</sup> Harvested cropland refers to land upon which crops were harvested or hay was grown, this includes land in orchards, citrus groves, vineyards, nurseries and greenhouses.

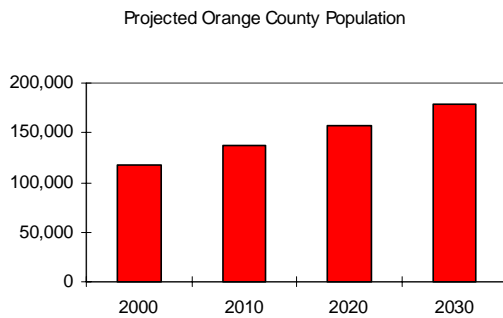
<sup>3</sup> Prime forest is defined as hardwood or mixed hardwood forests at least 40 acres in size that are undisturbed, or only slightly disturbed by human activity.

# Projected Trends

This section takes a look at the next 30 years and suggests where we are likely to be headed given current trends and policies.

## Projected Population & Housing Growth

An estimated 65,850 persons are projected to be added to the current population by 2030. The annual population growth rate is projected to be 1.45% between 1998 and 2030. In 2030 an estimated 178,740 persons will live in the county. The growth rate (1.45%) will be considerably slower than the 1960-1998 growth rate of 2.57%, but the actual number of people added will be almost as many, with 65,850 people added between 1998 and 2030 compared to the population gain of 69,920 people from 1960 to 1998.



Source: Woods and Poole Economics Inc.

A breakdown of housing unit projections by township reveals the following, based on the assumption that distribution patterns for units built from June 1998 to July 2030 will be the same as for units built between April 1990 and June 1998:

Housing Units by Township		
	1998	2030
Little River	1,201	2,501
Cedar Grove	1,930	3,503
Cheeks	2,748	4,749
Hillsborough	4,587	6,332
Eno	2,773	4,824
Bingham	2,906	4,913
Chapel Hill	30,156	45,136
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,301</b>	<b>71,958</b>

It is important to note, however, that we are already seeing changes to the previous distribution pattern, particularly with an increase in building activity in and around Hillsborough.

The projected growth will put pressure on the county's education and transportation systems, as well as on our water and air quality and the integrity of natural areas.

## Education

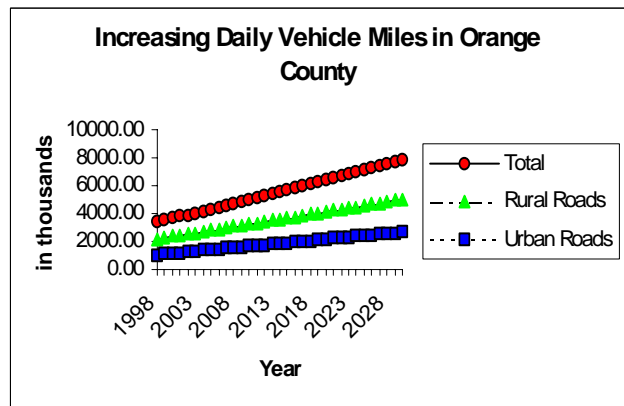
Based on the expected population growth by the year 2030, school enrollment will increase by:

- 6,520 elementary students;
- 2,740 middle school students; and
- 2,800 high school students.

Based on these projections and continuation of current trends (same ratio of students in public schools, same public school structure and capacity standards) another 10 elementary schools, 4 middle schools and 2-3 high schools will be needed by 2030, for a total of 16-17 new schools.

## Transportation

Projections suggest an annual increase in daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) of 2.34%. Average VMT is expected to increase from 35 miles per driver per day to 45 by 2030, if past trends continue.



Extrapolated from current trends.

This increase would be attributable to continuation of current

- regional land use patterns;
- commuting patterns of county drivers; and
- transportation infrastructure provision.

## Land Developed

In next 30 years it is projected, under current patterns, that 2/3 as much land will be developed as has been developed from the time of European settlement to the present day. An estimated 46% of land in the county will be developed by 2030, as compared to an estimated 28% in 1998, if current trends continue. Chapel Hill Township will be largely built out, with remaining undeveloped acreage mainly in the Rural Buffer.

## Loss of Prime Forests

If the trend in prime forest loss from 1988 to 1996 continues (a reduction of 1,000 acres per year), by 2030 there would be less than 47,000 acres of prime forests left, or about 52% of the 90,000 acres existing in 1988.

## Demographic Changes

The table below depicts important demographic changes the county is likely to see:

	1998	2030	
	#	#	% change
Total Pop.	112,880	178,740	58%
Children	22,912	45,851	100%
Seniors	13,398	33,302	148%
Racial Minorities	23,392	36,600	56%
Latino	3,063	16,770	448%

These changes are important because they indicate how some service provision needs will change in the future. The steepest increase will be in the Latino population, which will comprise an estimated 8% of the population by 2030. Children and seniors will also increase disproportionately in relation to total population increase.



# ***SECTION II***



## ***STATEMENT OF VALUES***

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# VALUES SHAPING THE VISION

SOCF's vision for the year 2030, as well as the goals and recommendations, reflect at their core the following set of shared values. These values act as a compass, guiding our direction and serving as a warning if we should run off course. They represent what we hold in high esteem, and help us to define a desirable future for Orange County.

## **A Shared Set of Values:**

- ☞ Sustainable, renewable use of resources and environmental stewardship through joint planning, cooperation and action.
- ☞ Towns which are friendly and accessible, centers of education, culture, and civic life; places where individuals and neighborhoods thrive along with the institutions, organizations, and businesses which serve their needs.
- ☞ Rural areas which retain natural, visual and economic resources by maintaining the integrity of forests, streams and open space through voluntary incentives, thus preserving the land's continuing potential for agriculture and other appropriate uses.
- ☞ The development of children and youth, as well as adult citizens in various phases of their lives, by providing excellent elementary and secondary education, cultural experiences, and lifelong learning opportunities all of which foster intellectual, social and spiritual growth, develop marketable skills, and contribute to the fulfillment of individual potential.
- ☞ A strong commitment to the well-being of all individuals, young and old, of any race or ethnicity, and with any disability, by providing for basic physical and social needs, including those which support children and families, in an atmosphere of safety, equity, dignity, justice and economic opportunity.
- ☞ Governance that provides necessary public services efficiently, proactively establishes collaborative ties within the region and state, encourages civic participation, and is fully representative of all the county's citizens, responsive to their needs, consistent and fair, socially just in decision-making, and accountable for the promises and obligations incurred on citizens' behalf.
- ☞ A shared sense of community, civil, collaborative, vibrant, friendly, caring and both diverse and inclusive; where citizens feel responsible to and for one another; where involvement in community life is both encouraged and anticipated; where the contributions of all are welcomed and respected.



# ***SECTION III***



## ***A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING:***

### ***THE FRAMEWORK FOR GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO SHAPE ORANGE COUNTY'S FUTURE***

# Introduction

The next two sections of this report offer a series of goals with recommendations and action strategies to achieve those goals. The first section focuses on achieving our two overall themes: **Sustainability** and **Community-Building**. These themes serve as a framework for all of SOCF's work. The next section (Section IV) is again organized into a series of goals, recommendations and action strategies, but focuses on five topical areas which are important to address: Environment and Land Use, Economy, Housing, Human Services, and Education.

This section begins with an explanation of the two SOCF themes, Sustainability and Community-Building, and then presents goals, recommendations, and action strategies to address these two broad objectives.



# Theme 1: Sustainability

A goal central to the SOCF project is for Orange County to move toward becoming a **sustainable community**. What that means is that we must seek to develop *a community that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs*.

## Principles of Sustainability

The meaning of sustainability can be further understood by examining four basic principles regarding human needs, natural systems, and the relationships between them. These principles are basic, indisputable truths that govern life on earth. They are global in nature, but apply to our local community as well.

1. For a given natural resource, if the depletion rate exceeds the replacement rate, the resource will be available for only a finite time. **Thus, unchecked use of resources has implications for our future generations.**
2. Human activity produces harmful substances, which must be mediated to maintain balance in the natural systems. **Human-generated waste, such as plastics, sewage, and carbon monoxide, must be carefully managed to minimize and eliminate damage to the earth.**
3. **Earth's ecosystems, of which humans are a part along with other living beings, are interdependent and most stable when they include a diversity of species.** Overuse and pollution of the natural environment has implications for maintaining the earth's biodiversity.
4. **Human needs span physical, economic, environmental, cultural, social, and spiritual dimensions.** Human needs can be met equitably, justly, and with dignity without compromising the physical environment. Achieving greater fairness is essential for social stability and the cooperation needed for making large-scale changes within the framework laid out by the first three principles.

These global principles are locally relevant because our community is part of a region, part of a continent, and part of a world. Our individual and collective decisions and actions affect the quality of human life and the quality of our natural environment not only in the local community, but also in the world. By understanding these principles, and the consequences of continuing to violate them, we establish a common basis for working toward becoming a sustainable community.

# Theme 2: Community-Building

Though community-building is part and parcel of being a sustainable community, the way we interact with one another to build community is so basic to the outcomes we hope to achieve that it seemed appropriate to adopt the concept as a project cornerstone in its own right.

## Principles of Community Building

Community-building is the means by which past generations in a given locale are bound to new generations, and how the current residents relate to one another. Each generation must establish the ways in which it will embody respect for, and give specific meaning to, the following general principles\* in order that they and their successors may experience and advance the concept of “community”:

1. Developing an awareness and understanding of the local traditions, history, heritage and memories;
2. Creating and maintaining a sense of identity and belonging;
3. Honoring a framework of shared values;
4. Establishing and maintaining networks of supportive individuals and a climate of caring, trust, teamwork, and shared responsibility;
5. Establishing and maintaining institutional arrangements that diminish polarization, teach diverse groups to know one another, and encourage coalition-building, dispute-resolution, negotiation, and mediation;
6. Supporting wholeness within diversity while allowing healthy conflict and an atmosphere of open dissent;
7. Establishing and maintaining collaborative ties among leaders of different generations, jurisdictions, communities, economic sectors, and organizations.
8. Supporting strong individual communities that recognize and accept responsibility for the larger community’s well-being;
9. Maintaining the existing infrastructure of neighborhood associations, congregations, citizen groups, youth-serving organizations, and professional and volunteer associations; and
10. Fostering a community-wide commitment to the common good.

Applying these principles to community issues and decision-making will help people to work together effectively and live in harmony.

\* Adapted and modified from an influential article written by John Gardner, entitled “Building Community”, published in 1996 by Independent Sector, Washington, D.C.

# **Goals and Recommendations:**

## **Sustainability and Community-Building**

## **GOAL 1: *Put Community Building First***

### **Rationale**

To have a truly sustainable community we must foster multicultural involvement in the local traditions, history, heritage, and memories. We need to fully include all people within the community, minorities, seniors, children and youth, and people with disabilities. Thus, our community's diversity and inclusiveness is the foundation for creating and maintaining a vibrant, healthy community life. We need to strengthen relationships and understanding between Orange County's rural and urban residents, among residents of varying ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds, and between the University of North Carolina and all of its Orange County neighbors. It is also important to understand that in order for our community to be truly diverse we need to ensure that people who work here can afford to live here. Thus, the availability of affordable housing for low and moderate income households is a critical requirement.

**To deepen the sense of community in Orange County, the community building principles listed in the previous section must be applied whenever we attempt to understand and make decisions about our area's problems and directions.** In particular the local elected boards, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the Orange Water and Sewer Authority each have a responsibility to advance and expand the building of community because of their obvious and determinative influence in so many of the issues facing Orange County.

The pressing problems of each year, or five or ten years, may stay the same or they may change. Certainly, they will increase in number and complexity. What we need, then, as a basis for generating specific solutions to those problems, is a shared sense of community among all of our county's individuals and institutions.

We do have much in common here in Orange County: our rich cultural life and history, and our dedication to the community's accomplished artists and artisans. The presence of UNC, as well as many other organizations and institutions provide the community with cultural opportunities, galleries, and performance space. Parks and recreational activities also provide opportunities for Orange County residents to build community through sports and outdoor activities. The county also celebrates its significant cultural history, both historic and prehistoric, and its abundance of historic resources.

The county's cultural, recreational, and historic resources must be solidly supported and nurtured by the community, so that each Orange County resident has the opportunity to participate in and enjoy these remarkable assets which enrich all of our lives.

Open space, farmland preservation, natural resource protection, and environmental quality are widely shared values in Orange County. All of these provide citizens with many opportunities for meaningful volunteer efforts in their support, for partnerships between the University and the community at-large, for unique identity-enhancing events, and for the highly participatory and effective interjurisdictional collaboration required for their safekeeping.

# Community

## **Recommendation 1:** *Foster community interaction and activity.*

### **Action Strategies:**

#### **A. Increase opportunities for residents from different parts of the county and different backgrounds to work together.**

The SOCF process has raised our expectations for what is possible through the collective efforts of a diverse set of citizens. To continue building a sense of community, we must continue to invent and embark upon joint projects that embody such shared values as our desire to provide basic human services to all of our citizens, to preserve open space and the environment, and to develop our young people to their fullest potential.

#### **B. Create multi-use community facilities**

that would enable a variety of functions such as a school, community center, senior center, senior care facility, adult learning center, teen center, day care facility, medical clinic, branch library, arts space, and outdoor recreation. Locate these centers in town neighborhoods and villages located in town transition areas.

#### **C. Promote neighborhood design, for new neighborhoods which encourages social interaction.**

#### **D. Create more all-county shared events, such as an Orange County Fair, art, drama, and music festivals.**

Strive to make events multi-cultural and of interest to all residents of the county.

#### **E. Improve relationships between the University and Orange County residents.**

The University is both a means by which some community-building takes place and an impediment to it. We note with enthusiasm the community building aspects of the UNC athletics program, and our citizens' access to the University's libraries, cultural events, and amenities. We acknowledge with appreciation the University's role in attracting our base of highly educated and active citizens, and the valuable links beyond Orange County generated by the University's cultural and academic programs. While there are many positive links between the University and the larger community, there are also some things that could be done to improve those connections. The University could:

- Increase staff assigned to local and community relations.
- Elicit citizen and county representation on appropriate UNC committees and boards;
- Increase the University's contributions to local problem solving by encouraging faculty and staff involvement.
- Hold "open houses" on various topics, information sessions, and celebrations.
- Make a more public statement of the campus resources and activities available to local citizens.
- Share recreational facilities and services on a planned schedule.

#### **F. Publish an Orange County community handbook/calendar**

for organizations and their activities, community events, cultural and artistic opportunities, etc. A copy to be available to every family and in the library. Encourage UNC to do the same covering events and campus organizations which provide community activities (i.e. Think Again, the continuing education publication which has information on all the not-for-credit learning opportunities the University makes available). Publish this information on the internet as well.

#### **G. Establish partnerships between urban and rural residents through community support for local farming by:**

- having farm tours for school children as well as adults;
- creating links with organizations that support farming;
- supporting marketing and consumption of local farm products; and
- surveying local citizens' needs/desires for farm products.

# Inclusion

## **Recommendation 2: *Support purposeful inclusion of all people.***

### **Action Strategies:**

#### **A. Support the Human Rights and Relations Commission and its charge to build community:**

- Form a broad-based coalition utilizing existing organizations to develop a plan to foster multiculturalism in the community.
- Provide adequate staffing for plan development.

#### **B. Comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).**

Create a position for a full-time County Disability Services Coordinator. The goal of creating the position would be to ensure that governments, businesses and individuals act in full compliance with the ADA. The coordinator would initiate and oversee a public awareness campaign, conduct an inventory of businesses and government agencies to determine compliance with ADA regulations, act on discrimination complaints, serve as an advocate for persons with disabilities, and serve as staff to the Orange County Disability Awareness Council.

#### **C. Improve services for Latinos/Hispanics and other non-English-speaking populations.**

- Service provision should be integrated and include:
  - referrals to and information about available services in our community;
  - translating and interpreting;
  - assistance with housing concerns, financial and consumer issues, and emergency assistance.

(It is suggested that such services be located at schools since children are already located there. Public safety needs should be addressed as described under Public Safety on page 62, Recommendation 3.)

- Recruit bi-lingual employees to government positions, and provide Spanish language training to employees.
- Encourage the UNC School of Education to increase its focus on bi-lingual/ESL training and education.
- Provide English as a Second Language classes (ESL) so that non-English speakers have an opportunity to learn English. (See also Education Goal 1, Recommendation 6, page 69 and Goal 2, Recommendation 2, page 70).

#### **D. Encourage diverse citizen participation:**

- Aggressively recruit a diversity of citizens, with an emphasis on recruiting people from under-represented groups, for local boards and volunteer organizations.
- Send representatives to African American and Latino centers, housing complexes, and churches to foster dialogue.

#### **E. Ensure that affordable rental and owner-occupied homes are available for low and moderate income households.**

See page 58 for details on action strategies to address housing issues.

# Communication

## **Recommendation 3: *Reshape local governance for community-building.***

A framework that establishes effective communication among public officials will lead to a stronger sense of community among citizens. Public officials can lead by example and by authority in this important and vital endeavor by adopting community-building principles into ordinance form and putting them into practice as they conduct and consider their business. Establishment of a community building ordinance will ensure that a community-building framework will be maintained, even as boards of public officials change with new elections, appointments, or resignations.

### **Action Strategies:**

#### **A. Have the Board of Orange County Commissioners, the Hillsborough Town Board, the Chapel Hill Town Council, the Carrboro Board of Aldermen, and the Boards of Education for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and Orange County each approve a set of ordinances that would specify how community building would be integrated into their own individual procedures as well as into the processes by which they conduct their collective work across jurisdictions.**

The Boards as constituted could approve ordinance language as provided to them, such as the following:

- **A general definition** of what is necessary to insure community building and maintenance.
- **Principles for discussion** that would apply to each elected Board, joint board meetings, and the various advisory boards, committees, work groups and task forces that assist the boards with policy and decision making. Examples of such discussion principles could be found in those adopted by the Carrboro Board of Aldermen, or in Roger Schwarz's article, "Groundrules for Effective Groups," published by the UNC Institute of Government.
- **Principles and steps for collaborative conflict resolution** could be adopted. The steps for such a process might include acknowledgement that there is a conflict and the need to settle it; identification of the affected parties and effective ways for them to participate in face-to-face sharing of information about the dispute; joint brainstorming by all parties as to potential solutions and shared evaluation of the ideas; selection of a plan that all agree upon; setting aside time to implement the plan and evaluate how it is working; and the use of mutually acceptable third party neutrals (mediators and facilitators) who could help parties use the conflict resolution process.
- Principles for how citizens are to conduct themselves at **public hearings**. Examples of such principles can be found in those adopted by Carrboro's Board of Aldermen.
- A definition of "**consensus**" that would permeate the framework.

#### **B. Support and commit to the participation by appointed and elected officials in programs that reinforce the shared community building framework, explore community building principles, and provide opportunities to develop community building skills.**

- The commitment to such government official education could be made by joint policy enactment, and might include a recommendation that members of advisory boards participate, as well recommending that elected officials take a refresher course at the midpoint of their terms.
- By making such a commitment, the Commissioners and members of the various town boards would be demonstrating to citizens that they are willing to learn about community building and abide by their own rules. Such modeling by boards and commissions would set an example to motivate citizens to follow the disciplines of community-building, consensus decision-making, and conflict resolution.
- The program(s) might cover:
  - the set of ordinances, rules, policies and agreements approved by the local jurisdictions for consensus and decision making described above; and
  - the use of effective communication, conflict resolution, mediation, meeting facilitation and other community-building and community-maintenance techniques.



**Recommendation 4:** *Ensure adequate space is available for cultural arts.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. **Provide and promote gallery space in all public and quasi-public buildings.**
- B. **Encourage displays of art and arts performances in public spaces and in businesses.**
- C. **Create partnerships between high schools and the community to create cultural arts centers**  
which are accessible at reasonable costs for appropriate community events.
- D. **Establish a space for arts and community groups**  
to have shared offices/meeting space to plan projects and foster partnerships.
- E. **Promote the accessibility of space**  
for artists' studios and cooperatives.

**Recommendation 5:** *Support greater funding for cultural arts.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. **Create incentives to support local artists.**
- B. **Create a public-private partnership to fund the arts.**

**Recommendation 6:** *Establish better collaboration and communication among artists, the community, and community leaders.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. **Develop a county arts incubator**  
in collaboration with the Economic Development Commission.
- B. **Establish a community arts resources center**  
to be a central place for providing and sharing information about grant availability and proposal writing, marketing, and the activities of artists and arts organizations nationwide. Such a center could also serve as a meeting place to plan joint ventures.
- C. **Broaden the Orange County Arts Commission database to include rural and immigrant arts.**

# Historic Preservation and Parks

## **Recommendation 7:** *Support historic preservation.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Increase developer and citizen awareness of significant historic resources and the need to protect them;**  
and offer rewards to developers who successfully incorporate and preserve county history in their projects.
- B. Identify and protect important corridors, areas, and sites of historic and cultural significance;**
- C. Encourage heritage tourism**  
by protecting historic and archaeological sites and opening selected sites for a county “historic trail”.
- D. Support the preservation and sharing of the county’s history**  
through displays and museum exhibits.

## **Recommendation 8:** *Improve parks and recreation facilities and services.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Improve and expand park and recreation facilities:**
  - Create more parks and nature trails adjacent to schools, and in high density areas.
  - Create rustic woodland trails along creeks.
  - Create a joint effort involving Duke, UNC, and local governments to develop three to four unpaved, rustic woodland trails for hiking between county landmarks and parks/open space.
  - Develop bikeways.
  - Develop a teen center in Hillsborough.
- B. Fund acquisition of land and easements for future parks, rustic woodland trails, and bikeways as follows:**
  - Issue bonds.
  - Pursue public/private partnerships.
  - Develop new funding sources for parks, such as improving payment-in-lieu systems and exploring impact fees.
  - Provide incentives for landowners to donate small plots of vacant land for neighborhood benches and playgrounds.
- C. Increase community access to parks located in the county:**
  - Expand access to existing school facilities for community recreation and cultural uses.
  - Establish an open facilities policy for OWASA lakes and for all parks in the county, to allow citizens of any jurisdiction to use them.
- D. Provide more outdoor education services**  
including nature interpretation, and lessons in outdoor skills and sports.

## **GOAL 2: *Address Citizen Concerns about Representation in Government***

### **Rationale**

Two issues have been raised concerning citizen representation in government, one in regard to lack of representation for residents living in town extra-territorial jurisdictions (ETJs), and the other in regard to rural citizen representation on the Board of County Commissioners.

Citizens in the Town ETJs have expressed concern about being regulated by the towns, without having a say in who is elected to town boards. This issue of regulation without representation is a difficult one without easy answers. Carrboro's institution of a "planning board" for the Northern Transition Area provides an example of a possible mechanism for addressing such citizens' concerns.

The issue of County Commission representation was first raised in the SOCF process during Community Forums held in the summer of 1997. Since then it has reappeared and been discussed on numerous occasions, and is unanimously considered by the Task Force as one of the most critical issues for the SOCF initiative to address. For many rural residents who have spoken with the Task Force, it is the primary issue that they feel needs to be addressed.

Many residents feel their viewpoints are not represented adequately through the current process for electing County Commissioners. This has led to divisions within the county. Changing the system by which County Commissioners are elected so that all residents feel they have representation in the government could go a long way toward building community within the county.

For a brief history of County efforts to address this issue including formation of a task force to study the issue in 1993 and drawing of a draft plan in 1996 please see Appendix N. This appendix also has information on methods of elections and parameters that new election plans must meet



# Addressing Concerns

**Recommendation 1:** *Address issue of representation on the Board of County Commissioners.*

## **Action Strategies:**

**A. Convene a short-term study committee with geographical representation and racial/gender/ethnic diversity**

with the specific task of analyzing options for making the Board of County Commissioners more representative of the county's rural citizens. The group should have a short (6 month) timeframe and be **charged to come up with recommended options for changing the elective process, (including looking at increasing the size of the board if determined to be needed), for the County Commissioners to choose from and put on a referendum for a County-wide vote.** Any such options should not dilute minority voting and representation and be consistent with one person/one vote Federal mandate. The Committee should also explore the issues behind feelings of need for a change in method of election, to help address any needed policy changes.

**B. Make sure that any development of new electoral system options addresses diversity and looks at previous work and other types of reform voting methods.**

**Recommendation 2:** *Ensure adequate representation for citizens living outside municipal limits, but inside municipal planning jurisdictions (i.e. in Town Extra Territorial Jurisdictions (ETJs)).*

## **Action Strategy:**

**A. Convene a short-term study committee for each ETJ made up of diverse representation (including citizens living in ETJs) to look at making Town elected boards more responsive to citizens residing in ETJ or transition areas.**

The study committee should consider options such as Town referendum/special legislation allowing limited voting authority for ETJ/transition residents and/or the establishment of a liaison-type seat on the elected board for those living in these areas.

**Recommendation 3:** *Continue to ensure that all Town and County advisory boards and commissions have broad-based representation, in terms of gender, race and ethnicity.*

**Recommendation 4:** *Continue current (and ensure in the future) a public process that focuses efforts to make government an open process in full public view, using tools like public hearings and forums, televised meetings, the Internet, and future technologies to provide vehicles for citizen involvement.*

## **GOAL 3: *Create and Maintain a Centralized Information Base for Decision-making***

### **Rationale**

Data collection and analysis are critical to effective decision-making, and to becoming a more sustainable community. More complete data is needed for policy-makers to better:

- determine the effectiveness of policies and programs;
- determine the limits of resources (land, water, air) to support growth in the county (*see Recommendation 2 under Goal 5 on page 34*);
- determine the fiscal impacts of growth; and
- monitor sustainability indicators (*see recommendation 1 under Goal 5 on page 34*).

Much data and information are collected by various agencies and educational institutions, yet there is no central office for compilation and distribution of this information. Lack of a central database impedes the sharing of information, resulting in inefficiencies when different departments and organizations duplicate data collection. Of equal importance is the fact that some data may not be used at all if it is not readily accessible or people are not aware that it even exists.

A central database would greatly facilitate use of collected data, and would ultimately result in a savings of staff time for data collection and analysis. It would also provide a single reliable source to guide the use and interpretation of data, and would help in evaluating what services are needed and how effectively they are being provided.



This important shared task can help to build a stronger sense of cooperation and collaboration among the jurisdictions of the county. A central source of data will also provide citizens with a better understanding of the basis of governmental decision-making which, in turn, will foster more citizen support and participation.

# Data Center

**Recommendation 1:** *Provide a central information base for decision-making.*

**Action Strategy:**

A. **Create a jointly-funded, county-wide intergovernmental Data Center for the purpose of collecting and analyzing data in the following areas:**

- Economy
- Environment
- Human Services
- Education
- Local Government and School Finance
- Transportation

Such an agency should be supported by all Orange County governments and jurisdictional agencies. Information from the data center would be available to all agencies, organizations and individuals.

The Data Center could serve as a center for compilation and dissemination of information collected from various local and state offices and other organizations. A listing and description of all available data could be made available on the internet, along with actual data wherever feasible. The State Center for Geographic Information and Analysis is an example of an existing data center at the state level.

## **GOAL 4: *Improve Government Efficiency and Effectiveness***

### **Rationale**

As our community grows and our collective needs change and expand, many of our expectations of government services have also grown. Without question, we demand more services from local government and the public schools today. In North Carolina, the most constant and reliable revenue source to provide services is the property tax, and as such, our levels of service and our choice to fund excellent school systems often leads to increased property taxes.

As property taxes rise governments are pressured to provide services more efficiently at lower costs. “Efficient” service could be defined as productive of desired effects without waste of time and materials. Unless we are willing to forego certain services, or accept cutbacks in education priorities, tax increases will likely continue to be a part of our foreseeable future. As this occurs, governments will continue to be pressured to look at innovative ways to cut costs by reducing waste and inefficiencies.

Providing services efficiently with reduced waste, can help achieve our sustainability goals. However, it is important to note the possibility of conflict between what may be fiscally most efficient and what is most sustainable. In such cases there is a great need to balance the impacts and remember that decisions that move the county away from being a sustainable community will (or are likely to) have negative impacts that are never quantified and put into the fiscal equation. For example, if one bases a decision on whether to buy recycled paper solely on cost of the paper, one would be forgetting the external cost of cutting down more trees to make the new, “cheaper” paper. These externalities that are left out of the equation may or may not be quantifiable, much as the value of a forest in terms of providing wildlife habitat or aesthetic value is difficult to quantify. Our vision of future government services must then be cognizant that some “efficiencies” are best foregone for other, long-term benefits.

The Task Force finds that there are current programs and future opportunities to improve efficiency in service provision and government spending recommended below.

# Efficiency

## **Recommendation 1:** *Create a coordinated Government Efficiency Project.*

### **Action Strategy:**

- A. Create a coordinated Government Efficiency Project to combine and build upon work already done by the individual governments to achieve greater efficiency. The Project should **study the feasibility and impacts of combining some Town and County services to reduce redundancy and provide services more efficiently and more cost effectively**. One example previously identified is consolidation of the three Parks and Recreation Departments.

## **Recommendation 2:** *Explore options for getting the legislature to allocate more powers to local governments to allow them to better plan for and manage growth.*

### **Action Strategy:**

- A. **Initiate and support efforts to change state legislation to allow for Home Rule, and local authority to institute desired programs, such as Transfer of Development Rights, Impact Taxes, and Inclusionary Zoning.**

## **Recommendation 3:** *Look at alternative revenue sources to pay for Town and County services.*

### **Action Strategy:**

- A. **Research feasibility and impact of creating alternative revenue sources including consideration of a local sales tax, a real estate transfer tax, and increasing impact fees (or taxes).**

## **Recommendation 4:** *Ensure that decisions regarding infrastructure provision are consistent with environmental protection and fiscal goals.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Adopt coordinated Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances** for the entire county to ensure that development does not outstrip existing services or cause undue financial burden to taxpayers;

- B. **Determine carrying capacity of land and decide where to invest resources** such as water, sewer, landfill and parks.
- C. **Coordinate local and regional water/sewer boundaries with urban growth boundaries.** Support the signing of the proposed Water and Sewer Management, Planning and Boundary Agreement, from Water and Sewer Boundary Task Force. These boundaries should maintain the existing rural buffer around Chapel Hill/Carrboro.
- D. In accord with the Water-Sewer Boundary Agreement, **ensure that any water and sewer extensions into rural areas needed to address failing systems are designed to serve only the area experiencing failure and not allow for additional tap ons.**
- E. **Explore new water and wastewater technology options** that are created over time, and have been proven to be effective.
- F. Consistent with the actions of the Schools and Land Use Councils, ask the school systems to **collaborate up front with local governments in the school site selection process**, to ensure land use implications are considered. Coordinate and integrate planning the location and design of new schools and community buildings into overall growth management, sustainability goals, and into the overall comprehensive plans of the jurisdictions. Design should incorporate mixed-use facility goals (see Education recommendations, page 68).
- G. **Provide equal funds per square foot of building space** to the Orange County and Chapel Hill/Carrboro school systems **for building new schools and remodeling or renovating old ones.** (Cost of the land is not part of the allocated amount).

**Recommendation 5:** *Quantify (where possible) the effects of different patterns of growth on local budgets and tax burdens.*

**Action Strategy:**

- A. Conduct a cost-of-services study to **examine the “real” costs of different types of land uses and development** (agricultural, residential, commercial, office, industrial).

**Recommendation 6:** *Work with UNC and UNC Health Care System on issues of fiscal equity regarding costs and benefits to the community.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Follow up on and support the recommendation of the joint UNC and Town of Chapel Hill Task Force on Fiscal Relationships to **examine in more detail the positive and negative tax revenue implications of future University and UNC Health Care System growth.**

- B. **Continue efforts to achieve and maintain fiscal equity** (regarding costs and benefits) between the University and UNC Health Care System and the Orange County community.

**Recommendation 7:** *Work to coordinate our land use and transportation planning boundaries.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. **Review periodically extra-territorial and planning jurisdictions** to assure that boundaries are still consistent with land use patterns and efficient service provision and planning.
- B. **Review and revise, if necessary, existing metropolitan planning organization (MPO) boundaries for the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro and Burlington-Alamance MPOs to see if they adequately meet transportation planning needs and involve all stakeholders.** Consider whether areas in western Orange County outside of MPO's should be included.
- C. **Look at the existing Triangle J Council of Governments** to see if its boundaries reflect the Triangle region and meet local needs.

**Recommendation 8:** *Improve communication and awareness among local governments regarding each jurisdiction's programs and initiatives.*

**Action Strategy:**

- A. **Institute a mechanism that ensures that all local government staffs communicate and are aware of the initiatives and programs of other local governments in the county.**

**Recommendation 9:** *Improve and streamline the development review process, while protecting citizens' rights, for commercial and residential development in areas targeted for development.*

**Action Strategy:**

- A. **Provide clear guidelines and positive incentives for developments that meet the community's goals.**

## **GOAL 5: *Adopt Policies to Move the Community Toward Sustainability***

### **Rationale**

Moving toward sustainability will take a concerted effort on the part of local governments to be leaders in educating the public on sustainability, assessing the limits of the county's natural resources (land, water, and air), formulating policies to become more sustainable, and measuring the success of such policies.



# Sustainability

**Recommendation 1:** *Set sustainability indicators and benchmarks/targets to achieve.*

## **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Use the list of 44 sustainability indicators created by the SOCF Sustainability Committee as a starting point.** (See Appendix O for a list of the 44 indicators and a report detailing their feasibility in terms of data availability and other factors.) As appropriate, for each indicator set a benchmark, that is, a target to be achieved. (For example, by 2005 achieve a 40% reduction in solid waste produced.)
- B. **Create a permanent county database for these key indicators** (as part of a centralized database for the county, as described in Recommendation 3 on page 29).
- C. **Track progress** with annual sustainability reports to the community.
- D. Use the indicators to help **determine the effectiveness of current policies and as a basis for making needed policy changes.**

**Recommendation 2:** *Understand and assess natural resource limitations to ensure sustainable use of resources and limits to growth.*

## **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Examine status and trends of each resource**, based on a small number of key indicators.
- B. **Establish a general guide of standards and criteria based on resource limits** that will help define parameters of sustainability for Orange County.

**Recommendation 3:** *Create strong mechanisms for regional planning involving local municipalities, counties, major institutions, and citizens.*

*Develop local participatory and collaborative inter-governmental processes that provides the setting and framework for achieving shared goals and responsibilities, but support the separate identity of each participating government. Current joint meetings and efforts to collaborate among local governments in Durham, Orange and Chatham counties should be continued and enhanced.*

## **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Work with Durham and Chatham Counties and their recent visioning efforts to develop a “Triangle-West” regional vision and plan**, which can be a model for regional planning statewide.

The regional plan should:

- involve all municipalities, major institutions and counties in the area;
- be driven by consideration of environmental and resource limitations; and
- develop guidelines for a Growth Budget to allocate scarce resources in each area, and control the amount and timing of growth.

- B. **Lobby the NC General Assembly for a statewide planning mechanism** that would require regional planning and local government cooperation.

## **Recommendation 4: *Adopt and implement policies embodying a governmental commitment to using the most sustainable technology and practices.***

*(County and Town Governments need to take a leadership role in moving toward sustainability. The following would apply to all area local governments.)*

## **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Adopt green building standards for all new government construction.**

Standards should include guidelines on

- environmentally sensitive site design;
- use of non-toxic or least toxic building materials;
- use of materials that can be recycled and that contain recycled content;
- energy and resource efficient design;
- use of renewable energy sources; and
- maintaining good indoor air quality.

- B. **Adopt a policy to systematically replace older vehicles with new low or no emissions vehicles that are alternatively fueled and/or fuel-efficient.** The policy should include targets for percent of fleet changed over and a timeline for transition.

- C. **Establish a program to reduce vehicle miles driven by government employees.**

Measures to reduce vehicle miles traveled could include:

- carpooling and vanpooling;
- public transportation incentives;
- telecommuting;
- teleconferencing;
- flex-time scheduling to avoid travel during peak traffic; and
- other appropriate strategies.

- D. **Purchase products made using fair labor practices.**

- E. **Establish a comprehensive reduction, reuse, and recycle program.**

Such a program should include components for:

- reducing office paper waste through use of the internet where feasible, reuse of paper for scrap or draft printing for personal use, and requiring two-sided photocopying of documents whenever possible;
- purchasing durable, minimally packaged, energy efficient products;
- giving preference to purchasing products containing recycled content, and/or are readily recyclable;

- collecting recyclables, including high-grade office paper, mixed paper, corrugated cardboard, aluminum cans, and glass and plastic recyclable containers; and
- educating staff on waste reduction policies.

F. **Join the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign.** This program requires communities to complete an emissions inventory and implement practical strategies to reduce emissions. The program provides support for implementing an emissions reduction plan, and plan implementation results in savings on energy spending, as well as reduction of green house gas emissions and local air pollution. (Information on the program can be found on their website at [www.iclei.org/us/us\\_ccp.html](http://www.iclei.org/us/us_ccp.html)).

## **Recommendation 5: *Institute a sustainability education program.***

### **Action Strategy:**

A. **Institute a county-wide program administered at the county level to promote concepts of sustainability and educate the public on sustainability including programs focused on:**

- reducing per capita water consumption;
- reducing use of harmful household chemicals (from lawn care products to cleaning products);
- promoting landscaping that uses regionally native plants which require less water and less fertilizer, herbicide and pesticide inputs and reduce erosion; and
- helping businesses take a greener approach to cut wastes, especially toxic wastes and reduce resource use.

# ***SECTION IV***



## ***CRITICAL AREAS TO MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE OUR QUALITY OF LIFE:***

- 1. ENVIRONMENT AND LAND USE***
- 2. ECONOMY***
- 3. HOUSING***
- 4. HUMAN SERVICES***
- 5. EDUCATION***

# Introduction

This section covers goals, recommendations and action strategies specific to issues of [environment and land use](#), [economy](#), [housing](#), [human services](#), and [education](#). The section is organized under these five topical focus areas. Please keep in mind, however, that these recommendations also interweave aspects of sustainability and community-building, the two underlying themes which are the foundation of this report.



# Focus Area 1. Environment and Land Use

## **GOAL 1: *Promote Land Use Patterns that Meet Our Citizens' Needs While Protecting Natural Resources***

### **Background/Rationale**

There are three questions related to growth and development that are crucial to understanding future needs. First, how much growth are we likely to see in the future, and what is our best estimate in terms of the number of new persons, new houses, new cars that the County will see? Second how much growth is desirable or can be accommodated without degrading our quality of life? Finally, are there ways to accommodate the growth to lessen any negative impacts, both environmental and social, taking into consideration community opinion, forums and focus groups?

Based on current trends, SOCF estimates that another 66,000 people may live in the county by 2030. If trends from the past ten years continue ~45% of this growth will be within current town borders, and ~55% will be in the rural areas of the county.

To prevent sprawl and help maintain the county's rural character, we must identify areas of the county in which to promote denser, mixed-use development - and channel growth in these areas in order to minimize the environmental, social and fiscal impacts of development.

The governments of Carrboro, Chapel Hill and Orange County agreed on a Joint Planning Land Use Plan in 1986 in a joint effort to minimize the environmental, social and fiscal impacts of increasing development in this area of the county. Their plan concentrated growth in the towns and urban transition areas by limiting water and sewer extensions into and beyond the rural buffer, and called for protection of drinking water supply watersheds like University Land and Cane Creek.

Land use patterns can affect the sense of community in a neighborhood or town. They should be designed to enhance desirable aspects of community character in new and old neighborhoods, and create and maintain socioeconomic diversity.

SOCF envisions that the goal to promote land use patterns that meet people's needs and protect natural resources can be achieved through recommendations that address two objectives. 1) We need to use available tools to focus growth in desired areas and limit development in areas we wish to conserve. 2) We need to manage development and create land use patterns that maintain quality of life and help to build community.

The first two recommendations below address these two objectives and the third describes a process for improving citizen participation and community planning throughout the county.

# Develop

**Recommendation 1:** *Develop a countywide plan to focus two-thirds of future growth into Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough, Mebane, and “transition areas”, and to limit growth in rural areas. Parallel to this planning process, equal thought and efforts should be given to the current and as yet untested growth management “tools” and policies in order to control the negative and unwanted side effects of this growth.*

## **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Create an inter-governmental “Growth Management Board”** with representatives from all designated “future” growth areas in the county to cooperatively develop:
- fair formulas for accommodating future growth in the designated areas;
  - growth targets for each area;
  - estimated growth budgets (using realistic “carrying capacity” estimates for each area); and
  - a five year time horizon for each plan.

The basic intent of this general concept is to seek full participation of all sections of the county to cooperatively plan for the pressures of growth in the county.

- B. The second major aim of this Board is to **explore existing and new ideas for growth management** and to recommend to local planning boards their findings to:
- Evaluate and explore the range of zoning options to use for managing orderly growth. (There are many unique cases that often do not easily and equitably fit this sometimes rigid formulation. It is important to look at zoning theories that are partially based on performance standards and requirements.)
  - Limit extension of water and sewer; to work together with the county and region to establish boundaries for extending these services.
  - Evaluate Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances to manage growth and encourage development to pay for its real costs.
  - Encourage a program for voluntary purchase of development rights and also of lands to preserve contiguous areas of environmental importance (including farmlands) that should not be developed.
  - Seek to establish a Transfer of Development Rights program.
  - Provide positive incentives to developers who build in targeted areas.
  - Pursue infill and redevelopment of land in Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough and Mebane, but only where appropriate to:
    - be compatible with and enhance the neighborhood;
    - protect, strengthen and nurture existing neighborhoods, their associations and community life;
    - encourage the addition of small-scale commercial enterprises compatible with neighborhood character and which provide services or products; and, where possible, are within walking distance;
    - consider vertical expansion (building up, not out), where it is in keeping with the surrounding areas and the environment;
    - encourage redesign and redevelopment of existing buildings instead of demolishing and rebuilding new ones;
    - assure new development meets design standards.

# Promote

**Recommendation 2:** *Promote land use patterns that create/enhance quality of life and sense of community, and that use land and other resources efficiently.*

## **Action Strategies:**

### **A. Municipalities and their Extra Territorial Jurisdictions (ETJs)**

Within municipalities and their ETJs (see Definitions section) **promote “compact mixed-use” development (CMU’s)** in areas of Towns targeted for growth:

- Provide for CMU’s **in areas best served by urban services** (the existing Towns and transition areas), by limiting development options in other areas.
- Encourage CMU’s to be **comprehensive in nature** - including residential, commercial, social and civic components, and light industry where appropriate.
- Establish effective and specific **design standards** for site and building design of any mixed-use development.
- Require CMU’s to **integrate housing of different values, styles and sizes**.
- Establish basic **guidelines for CMU’s** that are adhered to by all jurisdictions so that:
  - most residences are within a 15-minute walk to commercial activity;
  - all residences have easy walking and bike access within the development and to neighboring developments; and
  - developments are people-friendly and enhance the sense of community by requiring some or many residences to have vehicles parked in rear.

### **B. Transition Areas**

In Transition Areas (see Definitions section), **create “village” style development to focus development and develop highly diverse communities with a genuine sense of place to live and grow**. A suitability analysis should be conducted to determine possible locations for villages within the Transition Areas. These “villages” should:

- Integrate uses (residential, commercial, light industrial, and institutional);
- Be centered around a town square with a multi-use community center (that would serve as a focus for community services, cultural activities and community life) and compact, mixed used development;
- Require a mixture of housing sizes, density and single and multi-family units;
- Be pedestrian-oriented and have bicycle paths;
- Be served by bus or transit service.
- Be surrounded by a growth boundary and incorporate open space within that boundary;
- Be located near, but not on major transportation corridors;
- Allow “villages” to be zoned at an appropriate density for creating village style development and highly diverse communities.

### C. Rural Areas

- **Support development of citizen-driven Small Area Plans for the County's five identified rural community centers** (Caldwell, Carr, Cedar Grove, Schley, and White Cross). These centers have served historically as centers for services to local rural populations and foci for community activity. Support the creation of **“hamlets”** (see definitions section) in these locations - **small-scale (non water and sewer dependent) development** to provide an expanded mix of housing, local commercial enterprises and community services **that enhance rather than destroy the community character** of these places. These “hamlets” are not meant to expand beyond the existing rural community node boundaries, or encourage provision of water and sewer services to these areas.
- **Explore the feasibility of expanding the existing Rural Industrial Node** (located in northern Orange near Prospect Hill at the confluence of NC 86 and NC 49), which could provide local jobs to rural residents, and perhaps develop into a village, similar to that within the current transition areas (see Action Strategy B, above). Pursue planning for this area in conjunction with nearby Caswell and Person counties.

- D. **Create a joint land use plan with a focus on preserving and protecting the rural and farm lands** that make up most of the county. **Ideas must come from citizens working with elected officials, and funds provided to make the ideas succeed.**

# Adopt

**Recommendation 3:** *Adopt a process to develop, in small increments, specified large-scale areas (i.e. areas where growth is preferable) as Hamlets, Villages or Compact Mixed-Use Developments using a citizen-driven process.*

## **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Identify, with citizen input, relatively undeveloped large-scale areas where planned growth is preferable.**
- B. **Create a Small Area Plan designing the layout for each growth area.** Once the location for development is determined, a citizens task force comprised of stakeholders (including, but not limited to, land owners, developers, and persons with professional expertise) designs the area layout using a set of design guidelines. These should include guidelines for integrating uses, diversity of housing types, pedestrian oriented development, and environmentally sensitive design. A map would be produced showing where mixed use areas, residential areas, transportation corridors, and open space would be located.
- C. **Allow development of relatively small parcels of land incrementally over time.** Landowners, who would be involved from the start, could then sell relatively small parcels to be used for the designated purpose. In villages and CMUD's, local government could purchase the community center land and contract construction, perhaps in stages. Roads and bicycle and pedestrian paths would also be built in stages as the development grew.
- D. **Allow variability and flexibility about how builders/developers use each parcel to achieve the broader development goals set forth by citizens.** At this point, with buy-in on the goals of the plan, citizens must trust in the initiative and innovation of business, commercial and home-building interests. Within the bounds of the design guidelines, development should be market-driven.

## ***GOAL 2: Conserve Natural Areas, Farmland and Other Important Open Space***

### **Background/Rationale**

In the Task Force discussions and community forums, a prominent issue has been protection of natural areas and open space. Widespread support has been demonstrated for the importance of protecting the most critical natural and cultural areas. Orange County took a significant step forward to this end in January 1999, with the formation of an Environment and Resource Conservation Department to oversee, implement, and coordinate goals for land protection and resource conservation. As a part of this, the Department has prepared a Lands Legacy program to preserve and protect the most important areas within the county.

Orange County and the four towns, working through this department and existing agencies such as the Triangle Land Conservancy and the Eno River Association, have an opportunity to be the catalyst in preserving the many critical natural and cultural places that exist in the county. In regard to land conservation, the new Lands Legacy initiative should be fully funded to implement land and development rights acquisition programs and other land conservation strategies, working with the Town staffs to develop a Transfer of Development Rights program.



# Conservation

**Recommendation 1:** *Use the Lands Legacy program to develop a comprehensive Countywide Natural Areas Conservation/Open Space Plan that addresses the following.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. **A program to protect important natural areas;** conserving areas identified in the 1988 *Natural Areas Inventory for Orange County* as well as buffers around these areas and corridors among them, and large, contiguous tracts of hardwood forest as outlined in the 1997 and 1999 reports titled *A Landscape with Wildlife for Orange County (Parts I & II)*, as well as other environmentally sensitive areas.
- B. Identify and **protect the most important prime farmlands** in the county, so that these lands may be kept in production;
- C. Recognize that **open space needs vary in different parts of the county** (including preservation of farmland and land for recreation);
- D. **Set annual goals** as benchmarks for preservation of certain natural areas and wildlife habitat (i.e. “x” acres per year);
- E. **Integrate all of the above** to maintain as best as possible:
  - a viable ecosystem for plants and wildlife;
  - corridors critical for animal migration;
  - critical habitats;
  - an agricultural landscape; and
  - outdoor recreational opportunities.
- F. **Coordinate the preservation of natural areas and open space** in both rural areas and towns

**Recommendation 2:** *Achieve Natural Areas/Open Space Conservation Plan objectives through:*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. **Fee-simple land acquisition** of the most important and threatened areas;
- B. **Purchase of conservation easements** that allow the owner to maintain title to the land in exchange for certain rights and protection (particularly important for farmland);
- C. **Purchase of Development Rights**, where appropriate;
- D. **Transfer of Development Rights** from natural area lands to identified receiving areas;

- E. **Tax exemptions** for actively farmed land and managed forestland;
- F. **Explore development of a forest banking system** that provides an annual return to owners of large, hardwood forests in exchange for the conservation of the forest. These forests would be selectively harvested on a generally longer rotation in order to maintain a healthy forest ecosystem.
- G. **Purchase of timber rights** for properties that provide a wooded visual resource, but don't have significant natural resources warranting purchase or easement.

**Recommendation 3:** *Secure and increase funding for acquisition of land and development rights.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Increase local funding through **bonds** for open space and natural areas.
- B. Create a **dedicated local funding source** for acquisition of these areas.
- C. Aggressively pursue **grants** from state and Federal agencies to assist in acquisitions
- D. Increase advocacy for state and federal funding for programming, land acquisition and administration.
- E. Support **State and Federal proposals** to fund natural lands acquisition and farmland preservation.
- F. Maximize purchasing power through use of federal, state, and land trust **partnerships**.
- G. Explore development of a **land conservation revolving fund**.

**Recommendation 4:** *Educate and encourage homeowners, landscapers, and nurseries to use native or non-invasive exotic plants in landscaping. Invasive ornamental plants grow aggressively and threaten native species in many natural habitats.*

## **GOAL 3: *Create Environmentally Sustainable Transportation Systems that Meet People's Needs***

### **Background/Rationale**

Transportation issues in Orange County revolve around a two-pronged axis: **air quality** and **traffic**. Auto pollution accounts for approximately 75% of the county's nitrogen oxide emissions according to the NC Division of Air Quality. The county may be designated non-compliant with new EPA rules in 2000, largely due to these emissions. The vast majority of vehicle trips in the county are in Single Occupancy Vehicles.



A second problem with this auto-dependency is the amount of traffic we are experiencing in Orange County and the Triangle. Dependence on the private auto, along with new national air quality standards, and air quality and traffic problems in the Triangle area, necessitate that we rethink how we travel from place to place and the number of daily trips and miles we drive. It is clear that we need more environmentally sound transportation systems, along with land use patterns that decrease the need for vehicles as previously discussed.

Another important transportation need is the provision of adequate transit for those unable to own and drive an automobile.



# Public Transportation

**Recommendation 1:** *Help guide decisions on investment in alternative transportation options by determining citizen willingness to use such options.*

**Action Strategy:**

- A. **Conduct a scientifically-valid survey** both regionally and locally of a representative sample of residents to determine interest and willingness to use various alternative forms of transit.

**Recommendation 2:** *Based on the survey (under Recommendation 1) and other valid assessments of need, expand the availability and use of public transportation.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Designate specific locations for **public transportation nodes** throughout the county. Nodes will accommodate pedestrians, parking and bicycle racks, and be interconnected by dedicated public transportation corridors – dedicated so that public transit vehicles will not compete with private autos and trucks for corridor lanes.
- B. **Increase bus service** between Hillsborough and Chapel Hill/Carrboro.
- C. **Lobby for increased federal and state funding** for public transportation
- D. **Expand the public and special transportation network** for seniors and the disabled – both frequency and location.
- E. Place **park and ride lots** at appropriate locations.

# Traffic Management

**Recommendation 3:** *Promote consideration and creation of auto-limited zones in higher density areas, so as to make these areas more pedestrian-friendly and reduce use of private autos.*

## Action Strategies:

- A. **Work with UNC to make the main UNC campus an auto-limited zone.** Students, faculty and staff would park out in park and ride lots and take frequently run shuttle service to campus. Parking would still be provided for handicapped drivers, visitors, and Carolina Inn guests.
- B. **Conduct an analysis of potential areas and a way to transition to auto-limited zones in downtown Chapel Hill and Carrboro.**
- C. **Encourage Hillsborough to explore the possibility** of creating an auto-limited zone in a portion of the downtown area.
- D. **Provide shuttle service** from park and ride lots to the University and downtowns. The shuttles must be spaced at frequent intervals during peak times.
- E. Provide **dedicated bus-only lanes** to shuttle people from park and ride lots to UNC campus, downtown discharge nodes, and other frequently visited destinations.
- F. Encourage **phasing out use of private auto lots at high schools** in order to reduce overall private vehicle use and encourage bus ridership (both school buses and public transit where applicable).

**Recommendation 4:** *Make bikeways and sidewalks defining elements of both new and re-development and incorporate into existing development.*

## Action Strategies:

- A. Build **bicycle lanes** on all major thoroughfares within urban areas of the county.
- B. Subject to designs that reduce the impact on landowners, include **paved shoulders** (4' wide) for all upgrades to major and minor thoroughfares (re-paving or widening)
- C. Require all urban thoroughfares to have **sidewalks** and all rural thoroughfares to have shoulders for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- D. Build sidewalks between schools and residential areas.
- E. Create **safe pedestrian crossings** to transverse major highways where needed.

**Recommendation 5:** *Encourage use of additional transportation demand management strategies for large employers, including:*

- Carpools and vanpools;
- Compressed work weeks, in which employees work a full 40-hour work week in fewer than the typical 5 days;
- Flexible work schedules, which allow employees to shift their work start and end times (and thus travel times) to less congested times of the day;
- Telecommuting;
- Provision of preferential (HOV) lanes (*if judged to be efficient*) on major roads serving the area which provide time savings to those using ridesharing; and
- Mixed use development.

# Air Quality

## **Recommendation 6:** *Pursue additional measures to protect air quality.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Promote ownership of **low emission motor vehicles**; Seek legislative approval for Orange County to grant tax incentives for ownership of low emission automobiles, e.g. lower annual county tax on such vehicles, lower license renewal fees.
- B. The County and Towns should take the lead in instituting an **ozone action plan** as model for other local governments and industries.
- C. Institute **hourly monitoring of air quality** in the central districts of the four towns during times of anticipated adverse conditions for air quality. The objective is to provide rapid feedback to the community on the effects of traffic congestion on local air quality and feedback on the impact of park and ride lots and other transportation strategies on local air quality.
- D. Lobby for greater state inspection of heavy-duty trucks.

## **Recommendation 7:** *Reduce congestion and pollution with minimal new road construction by making the following action strategies into primary goals of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Develop **multi-modal alternatives** (pedestrian, bikeways/HOV lanes, public transit).
- B. Make **redesign of congested intersections** a priority.

## **Recommendation 8:** *Local elected officials should work for a better transportation planning system (including new road design and construction) within and between their government jurisdictions. It should also include inter-county and regional transportation planning. (See Goal 4, Recommendation 7, page 33).*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Make it a major priority to work with local state legislative leaders, state associations of county officials, and state municipal associations with a focus on how to **develop a new relationship between NC DOT and local governments (county and municipal)**. The aim of this new relationship is to build in a more creative and authoritative voice on the part of local governments in local transportation planning, new road construction, corridor evaluation, exiting road improvement and alternative transportation modes.

- B. Local governments, under existing planning policies, should continue supporting, as a high priority, the full and immediate disclosure of all local transportation and thoroughfare plans. They should **encourage inter-governmental cooperation and facilitate greater citizen interest and participation in evaluating such plans** with particular attention to such issues as:
- Detailed corridor locations and road design;
  - Environmental impacts – air and water and particularly on natural areas and watersheds;
  - Historic sites, neighborhoods, and structures;
  - Impact on long-standing communities and neighborhoods; and
  - Alternative ideas and the reasonableness of a no-build alternative.

## **GOAL 4: *Pollution Prevention and Waste Reduction***

### **Background/Rationale**

The quality of life in Orange County depends greatly on the impact of human activities on the environment. This section addresses [protection of water quality](#), and [reduction of the amount of energy consumed and solid and hazardous waste produced in the county](#).

We need to satisfy water quality standards and protect the water quality of all streams from point and non-point pollution, particularly those used for public water supplies, and to protect critical habitat for rare aquatic species. Protection of water quality depends on where and how we develop the landscape and on monitoring and enforcing regulations, such as regulations on Underground Storage Tanks.

Energy use reduction should focus on reducing use of non-renewable energy resources and reducing air pollution from energy use. (Reducing energy use for transportation was addressed in the previous section on Transportation.)

Reducing and eliminating hazardous wastes and reducing solid waste produced will help protect water quality from toxics and will reduce costs and landfill space needed.



# Pollution Prevention

## Recommendation 1: *Protect water quality.*

### Action Strategies:

- A. Continue current efforts to **guide growth away from public water supply watersheds to prevent new discharges into these watersheds**;
- B. **Fund expanded inspection programs** to ensure individual water systems are not polluted and individual waste water systems and underground storage tanks are non-polluting;
- C. **Lobby for state construction projects (including DOT and OWASA projects) to come under local authority for sedimentation and erosion control** monitoring and enforcement, **or lobby for the State to adopt regulations as stringent as those of Orange County**. Alternatively, if this is not successful, lobby for increased funding for state to monitor construction projects under their jurisdiction and some type of stiff penalties for projects out of compliance.
- D. Push the State to develop and release information about **stream assimilative capacity**.
- E. Continue to **improve well construction methods**.
- F. Identify **wellhead protection areas** that should be protected for ground water quality.
- G. Develop an **ongoing, long-term groundwater monitoring program** to evaluate groundwater quality and quantity.

## Recommendation 2: *Promote environmentally friendly/green building and site design.*

### Action Strategies:

- A. Provide **fast track approval for subdivisions and commercial buildings using environmentally friendly design standards**, including solar power, reclaimed/reused water reuse systems, low or non-toxic building materials, innovative energy-efficient design, low impact development design for stormwater management, and cisterns to collect rainwater on buildings, etc.
- B. Achieve legislation to allow a **local property tax break** for solar houses/green built houses and commercial buildings.
- C. Adopt **low impact development design standards for management of stormwater runoff**. Low impact development design emphasizes maintenance of natural drainage processes, control of stormwater at its source, and use of simple, non-structural, and small-scale solutions, such as “rain gardens” to capture and filter stormwater runoff from parking lots.

- D. Modify development standards to **reduce the amount of impervious surfaces created** by:
- Promoting the use of pervious (i.e. porous) pavement;
  - Reducing parking space requirements, and creating maximum limits on number of parking spaces allowed;
  - Encouraging site designs that reduce necessary driveway lengths;
  - Reducing required travel lane widths of roads by working with DOT on design standard requirements.

*Note: This action strategy should not be construed to undermine the previous recommendation promoting bicycle lanes and sidewalks. There is an environmental trade-off in building these, but the environmental benefits of building them out weigh the negative impact of creating more impervious surface.*

- E. **Create fee structure for stormwater management** which is based on property size and which is reduced when smaller percentages of a property consist of lawns or high maintenance vegetation.
- F. **Improve tree planting requirements for parking lots** in order to reduce the tonnage of auto gas that evaporates into air in hot parking lots.
- G. **Establish environmental standards** that all development proposals must meet for approval.

# Waste Reduction

## **Recommendation 3:** *Reduce per capita energy use from non-renewable sources.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Initiate simple energy accounting studies** in all new major construction projects to monitor trends in energy use, particularly per capita use.
- B. Conduct a study to **consider subsidizing alternative electrical production.**
- C. See also the recommendations under Recommendation #2 above regarding energy-efficient building, and Goal #3 regarding Transportation.

## **Recommendation 4:** *Reduce solid and hazardous waste.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Continue and enhance efforts to promote reduction, reuse and recycling of solid waste and the elimination of the use of toxic chemicals;** meet Orange County's adopted goal of 45% solid waste reduction by 2001 and 61% by 2006.
- B. **Develop and enforce standards for non-toxic, etc. building materials,** so when construction debris and demolition materials eventually enter the landfill they will be essentially harmless.
- C. **Encourage building reuse** rather than demolition.
- D. Require manufacturers to be responsible for taking back packaging to encourage reuse and internalize the cost of disposal.
- E. **Raise tipping fees and institute a pay as you throw system.**
- F. Encourage more **regional planning regarding recycling and management of solid waste,** including locating a materials transfer site that would include C&D building materials.
- G. **Support regional efforts to prevent Shearron Harris from becoming a statewide site for storing used fuel rods.** Shearron Harris should be a storage site only for its own spent fuel rods and should not be allowed to be a disposal site for spent fuel rods from other nuclear facilities.

## **GOAL 5: *Protect Our Water Supply***

### **Background/Rationale**

Water is a limited natural resource. We must continue to assess the limits of water supply and storage capacity, stay conservatively within these limits, and work to [safeguard our drinking water supplies](#) from pollutants. [Water conservation strategies](#) will become increasingly important as our population grows.



# Water

## **Recommendation 1:** *Continue to assess water supply limits and safety, and ensure sufficient supply.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Continue current methods and develop new methods to ensure that planned communities have sufficient water.
- B. Protect groundwater and limit its use to its recharge rates/carrying capacity, as determined through scientific studies (such as the current Water Resources/USGS effort).

## **Recommendation 2:** *Aggressively promote water conservation.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Establish a **water conservation program** for all water providers for UNC, all four towns and the county that:
  - provides strong incentives to reduce water consumption, including charging customers for the true cost of water consumption (done in such a way as to not negatively impact persons with low incomes);
  - promotes landscaping that places minimum demands on water supply through citizen education, incentives and ordinances to encourage and/or require water conservation measures;
  - develops a database on water use.
- B. Develop a **water reclamation program** for all water providers, identifying possible users of reclaimed water and providing incentives for use.
- C. **Permit use of gray-water** for watering landscape, flushing toilet, etc. – as this can be done safely.
- D. Use cisterns to collect rainwater on public buildings to provide graywater and lessen impact on stormwater runoff.

## Focus Area 2. Economy

### **GOAL 1: *Support a Diverse Economy that Meets Local Needs***

#### **Background/Rationale**

Orange County has a very strong economy due in large part to the county's location in the Triangle area and to the presence of UNC in Chapel Hill. Though the economy is strong, in some quarters Orange County has a reputation as being anti-business, largely due to lengthy development review processes and regulations on the careful location of non-residential development.

While these processes and regulations accomplish many laudable goals in limiting sprawl and protecting neighborhood and rural character, they may also have created an undesired and unintended effect of driving out local businesses. There are ways to accomplish both important goals. The anti-business image needs to be shed and replaced with a new image and strategy for economic development for active, yet selective economic development that meets local needs and is in line with our sustainability goals.

Business diversity, having a balanced mix of larger commercial/industrial operations and numerous, small businesses/ micro-enterprises, is important to maintaining a healthy economy. We should build on current strengths such as the presence of UNC-CH and UNC Hospitals, and make farming a significant part of the economic development program of the county. There is strong community support for agriculture in Orange County, and preserving agriculture and promoting markets for local products will support our local economy and preserve farmland.

Businesses should be selectively recruited to three target areas identified by the Task Force:

- [Appropriate locations in each of the four towns;](#)
- [The Economic Development Districts;](#)
- [A new economic node in northern Orange](#)

Through economic development that focuses on creating a job base with jobs that pay a living wage and providing training for such opportunities, we can decrease the disparity between wealthy and poor in the county.

Business opportunities should be meshed with skills development training. Durham Tech offers some community college classes in the county and the new Skills Development Center has started to provide job placement and some skills training. These services, however, are in need of expansion to adequately serve Orange County's population. Further skills training and vocational programs are needed in the county in order to increase individual wage potentials, abilities and employability.

# Business

**Recommendation 1:** *Have the Orange County Economic Development Commission, Orange County Board of Commissioners, Hillsborough Town Council, Chapel Hill Town Council, Carrboro Board of Aldermen adopt a set of criteria for supporting current businesses and recruiting new businesses that will support sustainability goals and work off of current and emerging economic strengths. Suggested criteria are:*

1. **Use existing resources** (including existing human resources and creating products from local “waste” resources);
2. Help **meet local and regional needs**;
3. Promote **homegrown**, local entrepreneurship;
4. Be **non-polluting** and environmentally friendly;
5. Capitalize on business opportunities related to creation of environmentally sound and efficient transportation systems;
6. Provide jobs with **decent wage potential** (i.e. jobs that pay a living wage or higher); mid-level/skill/wage jobs;
7. Have a **positive impact on the tax base**;
8. **Purchase locally-produced agricultural products**;
9. Support a **stable and diverse local agricultural economy**, particularly organic farms that meet local needs;
10. **Build on current strengths** such as the presence of UNC-CH and UNC Hospitals by supporting spin-off businesses;
11. **Accommodate growing businesses** that need to expand.

**Recommendation 2:** *Actively recruit and support desirable businesses that meet the above criteria (at a minimum, that meet the criteria regarding environmental friendliness, decent wage potential and positive tax impact).*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Work with the Chambers of Commerce and the Economic Development Commission to establish and fund a **public/private task force** which will:
- make a list of businesses which meet the criteria outlined above;
  - identify specific “best prospect” companies within those business areas which might be persuaded to come to Orange County;
  - develop a strategy and set of materials to highlight benefits of doing business in Orange County to attract desirable businesses;
  - learn the requirements of target businesses which seem receptive, e.g. space, skill, financial, etc.;
  - work with appropriate government and private bodies to develop specific proposals;
  - follow up to make sure everything promised is delivered;
  - work with the community college and the skills development center to provide training to match jobs with recruited businesses.
- B. **Make development regulations more flexible to accommodate desired businesses.**
- C. Have County and Towns **construct a shell spec building** in order to attract companies needing immediate space. When sold, build another.
- D. **Support maintenance and start-up of desirable businesses through a variety of means:**
- non-monetary incentives, including fast-track approval;
  - government guaranteed business loans;
  - investment;
  - marketing support; and
  - other means.

# Support

## **Recommendation 3:** *Seek Federal, State and private funding to support sustainable development initiatives.*

*For example, apply for an EPA Sustainable Development Grant to study feasibility of starting an eco-industrial park (see glossary on page 93 for definition) in an appropriate location.*

## **Recommendation 4:** *Improve farming viability by supporting farming – traditional and new – through a public/private partnership which:*

- (in particular, UNC Hospitals, the University, the school systems, and other local businesses and institutions);
- **backs low-interest financing**, particularly for persons wishing to start up a new operation;
- ensures better **protection against nuisance lawsuits**;
- exchanges long-term or perpetual farmland preservation for **tax and other financial incentives**;
- **establishes partnerships between urban and rural residents** by developing community supported agricultural programs;
- **establishes an Agriculture Center** that offers demonstrations, marketing classes, and facilities for freezing, storing and processing local agricultural products.

## **Recommendation 5:** *Consider the long range impacts to the county of electronic commerce (e-commerce), both positive and negative.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Examine the potential negative impacts of e-commerce** on loss of local shopping and business profitability.
- B. **Support local e-businesses.**

# Workforce

**Recommendation 6:** *Address affordable housing as an economic issue. Promote affordable housing in order to support good businesses.*

*Note: Affordable housing is dealt with in-depth in the Housing section on page 58.*

**Action Strategy:**

- A. **Encourage local Chambers of Commerce to appoint a group** made up of developers and business people, with housing advocates **to understand and address housing affordability and diversity as an economic/business issue**, and get the business community more involved in seeking solutions to this issue.

**Recommendation 7:** *Expand services provided by the Skills Development Center.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. **Make the Skills Development Center a comprehensive classroom skills training and job placement center.** The Center should work in connection with community colleges and high schools to provide marketable skills training, well-funded English as a Second Language (ESL) and literacy classes, and job placement services.
- B. **Develop a center with facilities for hands on technical skills application.**

**Recommendation 8:** *Develop a partnership involving the Skills Development Center, high schools, and higher education institutions with the business community to train workers and provide job opportunities.*

*Project needs for trained workforce members; identify prospective “trainees” with appropriate potential; invest to develop trained workforce.*

**Recommendation 9:** *Lobby legislature to locate a branch of Durham Technical Community College in Orange County (i.e. a West Campus of Durham Technical Community College).*

*Orange County is one of the few counties of its size without a community college.*

## Focus Area 3. Housing

### **GOAL 1: *Ensure Availability of Affordable, Quality Housing***

#### **Background/Rationale**

Local housing affordability and quality, and housing policies that can help all citizens obtain these necessities, are crucial to Orange County's quality of life and to its economy. Housing affordability and the ability of families to own a quality home, and thereby build an asset base, are critical issues. In our society, where the income gap has been steadily increasing, expanding the ability of residents to buy, rather than rent, a home is a fundamental and important step to narrowing this gap by enabling those with low incomes to build assets.



Orange County's supply of [affordable housing](#) is dictated by a variety of factors, the most significant being [project profitability](#), and [availability of land and infrastructure](#). Affordable housing in Chapel Hill and Carrboro is also significantly affected by the presence of the University. The pressure [UNC students](#) put on the affordable housing market is immense.

Additionally, because of land use policies that discourage urban services outside of municipal areas, and stringent development regulations, traditional affordable housing (apartments, single family homes) is limited to areas within or adjacent to municipalities. Within rural Orange County, mobile homes constitute the greatest source of affordable housing. But these homes, though more affordable up-front, depreciate rather than appreciate in value over time, and being subject only to federal standards rather than the more stringent state standards, are less well-designed in terms of insulation and fire safety.

Nearly 10% of the county's housing supply is considered to be substandard. Substandard housing is commonly characterized by excessive cost burden, overcrowding, and structural problems such as inadequate heating, plumbing, etc.

A wide mix of housing types and options is needed for the county, and provision of safe, durable, affordable housing to meet the needs of all people should be a top, countywide priority.

# Encourage Ensure Assist

**Recommendation 1:** *Encourage public and private initiatives to provide and develop a wide range of affordable housing options.*

## **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Encourage support of a range of housing options, including:**
- Homeownership for those at HUD guidelines (currently 80% of median income), as well as those from 80-100% of median;
  - Homeless emergency housing;
  - SROs (Single Room Occupancy units);
  - Low cost multi-family rental housing especially within Urban Service Districts that have none;
  - A large portion of rental housing with an option to buy;
  - Tax credit rental housing that is affordable to those conforming with HUD guidelines (currently 50% of median income);
  - Low income homeownership opportunities, such as those provided by Habitat for Humanity;
  - Modular homes as a viable option for low income homeownership;
  - Increased construction and availability of handicapped units, both subsidized and at market rates.
- B. Encourage the University to develop options for UNC employees to have **affordable homes on University land.**
- C. Encourage the University to **increase considerably the proportion of students housed on campus** as a means of freeing up private housing for others.
- D. Work with the legislative delegation to **pass legislation on:**
- Impact taxes, rather than fees;
  - Inclusionary zoning; and
  - A real estate transfer tax.
- E. Examine means such as a moderated regulatory process, expedited review, increased density, flexible infrastructure and street standards to see if any of them will **promote construction of affordable housing that will remain affordable for the long term.**
- F. Continue to **support the development of a land trust** to maintain affordability and encourage making public land available to non-profits.
- G. **Develop a dedicated source of revenue from public and private sources** (e.g. lending institutions), **or from adequate and substantive bond issues**, to provide funding for non-profit ventures for low-income housing for both rural and urban residents.

## **Recommendation 2:**     *Ensure safe, quality housing.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Increase funding for housing rehabilitation** and repair programs for seniors, low income, and persons with disabilities.
- B. **Strengthen and enforce the Housing Code** to bring sub-standard housing up to standards.
- C. Strive for excellence in product design, and **produce homes that are safe, durable, comfortable, cost effective, energy efficient, and appropriate to the existing community.**

## **Recommendation 3:**     *Assist low income individuals to develop an asset base.*

### **Action Strategy:**

- A. Work with lending institutions to **establish innovative financial asset guarantee programs** to make it possible for low-income individuals to qualify for loans.

## Focus Area 4. Human Services

### **GOAL 1: *Ensure Availability of Affordable, Quality Child Care***

#### **Background/Rationale**

Our children are our future. The kind of care they receive will greatly affect their health and well-being and that of our community. Approximately 70% of children live in households where all parents are working outside of the home. With the advent of the Work First program this percentage is likely to rise. At the same time that we have been coming to rely on child care facilities to care for our children, studies have shown that the first few years of life are critical to a child's healthy development, making provision of quality child care services a critical issue.



Along with quality of child care, affordability is a major issue. Though the majority of parents rely on child care facilities, government policies and funding have not yet caught up with needs. In total 60% of child care costs are paid by parents, 39% by government, and 1% by the private sector. Most families in Orange County cannot afford the full cost of child care, and costs are rising.



# Childcare

## **Recommendation 1:** *Ensure that quality child care is available to all children.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Ensure provision of child care for county families in **high quality, safe facilities with educated child care providers** supervising all young children;
- B. **Involve parents** in the total process through classes and hands-on;
- C. **Create additional affordable (sliding-scale) after-school and summer programs**, available to all children, including those with disabilities, using highly trained, well-paid staff with trained high school students as assistants;
- D. Develop strategies to ensure that **early childhood specialists (teachers) are compensated fairly**, including benefits;
- E. **Encourage businesses to adopt parental leave policies** to make it possible for parents to care for their children at home in their first years:
  - Encourage county and town governments to establish model policies for family friendly work environments;
  - Resolve the dilemma of reconciling parental leave policies to allow parents to care for young children at home with the federal Work First program, which is encouraging parents to work rather than care for young children at home. Look for creative funding sources to equalize discrepancies between “back to work” and parental leave.
  - Search for economic ways to encourage small businesses to adopt parental leave policies. Perhaps, create a consortium of small businesses to make such approaches economical; and
  - Establish a public awareness campaign promoting family leave policies.

## **Recommendation 2:** *Address child care affordability.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Work with our legislative delegation to encourage **public funding for child care, similar to K-12 levels**; and in the mean time create a plan with identified money sources to ensure that all families are able to access affordable child care;
- B. **Share costs with private sector** through on-site day care.

## **GOAL 2: *Promote Public Safety***

### **Background/Rationale**

Public safety covers an array of topics: [crime](#), [fire protection](#), [emergency management](#), and [disaster management](#). The recommendations below address issues seen as being of primary importance for each topic.



# Public Safety

## **Recommendation 1:** *Eliminate child abuse and partner/spousal abuse.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Develop a **major public relations campaign** that focuses on eliminating child abuse and partner/spousal abuse and promoting positive family relationships.
- B. **Improve treatment** for victims of abuse.
- C. **Provide appropriate treatment and punishment** for abusers.

## **Recommendation 2:** *Continue and build on current community policing efforts.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. **Expand community policing.**
- B. Encourage **neighborhood watch programs** in all neighborhoods.
- C. Discuss safety issues in a common-sense, non-alarmist manner with children in schools and adults in other venues.

## **Recommendation 3:** *Address the needs of minority populations as well as especially vulnerable populations in delivery of public safety services.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Develop **crime prevention programs** serving those populations.
- B. **Develop relationships with other service providers** who have special ties to those populations.
- C. **Encourage internships with youth from these populations.**
- D. **Recruit officers with foreign language capability**, as needed.

**Recommendation 4:** *Improve adequacy of fire protection by rationalizing service provision to send the closest fire truck to the fire.*

**Action Strategy:**

- A. Pursue inter-jurisdictionally coordinated (among towns and rural areas), long-range planning that considers rationalization of fire protection through cooperative agreements, or rationalization of service areas around stations.

**Recommendation 5:** *Promote family disaster preparedness to make every household self-sufficient for at least three days after a disaster.*

**Action Strategy:**

- A. Incorporate disaster preparedness education into community policing, neighborhood watch, and school programs.

**Recommendation 6:** *Create a countywide, integrated communications system for emergency management which enables inter-departmental communication among jurisdictions.*

## **GOAL 3: *Support Seniors' Quality of Life***

### **Background/Rationale**

There are currently an estimated 14,000 seniors living in Orange County. This number is expected to increase by 148% to more than 33,000 by the year 2030. The large senior population presents opportunities and challenges to the community.



# Seniors

**Recommendation 1:** *Maintain Seniors in the least restrictive environment through a continuum of readily available care,*

*including Wellness Programs, Homemaker and Home Repair Services, Transport and Escort Services, Home-Delivered Meals, Adult Day Care, Case Manager/Ombudsman Services, Assisted Living Arrangements, At-Home Care, Nursing Homes.*

**Recommendation 2:** *Establish Senior Centers in communities throughout the county as a focus for integrated services for seniors, including:*

*Information and Referral; Wellness and Exercise Programs; Nutrition Services; Adult Education; Leisure Activities; Counseling on Housing, Employment, Volunteering, Finance, etc.; and on-site services from health Department, Social Services, and other agencies.*

**Recommendation 3:** *Reduce property taxes for Seniors and persons with disabilities with low to moderate incomes.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. The County, working with the Orange County Department on Aging, should **lobby the legislature to raise the income cap under the Homestead Exemption Act** to a higher percent of median income to cover a larger percentage of lower income seniors and persons with disabilities.
- B. Look into the feasibility of allowing seniors with low to moderate incomes the option to **defer local property taxes** until either their house is sold or their death. Look into possibility of charging interest on deferred property taxes. This would allow seniors on fixed incomes with rising property taxes the option of remaining in their homes.

**Recommendation 4:** *Provide tax and other financial incentives to encourage families to provide in-home care of the elderly.*

**Recommendation 5:** *Provide appropriate work opportunities for seniors to re-enter the labor market.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Provide job-training for seniors.

**Recommendation 6:** *Adult continuing education will be a growing need over the next 30 years. See Goal 2 under Education on page 70 for recommendations on lifelong learning.*

## **GOAL 4: *Promote Health and Mental Health***

### **Background/Rationale**

The old adage, “the best defense is a good offense,” translates in public health thinking into another favorite, “**prevention is the best medicine**”.

Recognizing that many health conditions can be prevented through education, and mental health problems controlled through treatment, the chief priorities for intervention at the county level should be prevention, education and treatment. These strategies, informed by the inevitability of inheriting tomorrow those conditions we fail to prevent or treat today, can best be addressed through the following actions.



# Health

**Recommendation 1:** *Focus local policies, priorities and funds on creating a healthy environment for residents, and on promoting healthy behaviors. Policies and funding should support the following.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. **Develop public awareness campaigns** on the major preventable causes of premature death.
- B. Create ample **safe sites for physical activity** such as bikeways, sidewalks, jogging trails, public basketball courts, parks, etc.
- C. Provide **nutrition education** for all populations.
- D. Address problems of teen pregnancies and teen abortions, HIV, poor parenting, child abuse/neglect and sexual assault through **better provision of age-appropriate family life education**.
- E. Develop a public awareness and education campaign **informing the public about mental illness**, its incidence, symptomology, treatment modalities, and prevention.
- F. Develop a public awareness and education campaign informing the public about **substance abuse prevention**.

**Recommendation 2:** *Evaluate adequacy of health care facilities in northern Orange County.*

**Recommendation 3:** *Encourage and continue provision and enhancement of community based services that meet the demand for treatment for mental health, mental illness, and substance abuse.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Continue provision and enhancement of community based services that meet the needs of **children with developmental disabilities and behavioral issues**.
- B. Continue provision and enhancement of community based services that meet the needs of **adults with physical or mental disabilities, or mental illness**.
- C. Continue provision and enhancement of community based services that meet the needs of **victims of abuse or trauma**.

- D. Continue provision and enhancement of community based services that meet the needs of **teen or adult substance abusers**.

**Recommendation 4:** *Advocate with the legislature and employers to provide adequate coverage/funding for health/mental health services.*

**Action Strategy:**

- A. Particularly address:
- **Health care coverage** for those not on a health plan, especially new and expecting parents;
  - **Prescription drug coverage** for seniors;
  - **Mental health services.**

## Focus Area 5. Education

### **GOAL 1: *Provide Quality K-12 Education***

#### **Background/Rationale**

Orange County residents clearly expect the best in K-12 education. Orange County is home to some of the most outstanding schools in the state, with two of our high schools among the top 100 public high schools in the country. The education system strives to prepare students to be responsible citizens, and well-rounded, critical thinkers with marketable skills.

SOCF envisions schools as the center of multi-use community facilities in the future. This approach would **heighten parent and community involvement** in the education of our children and youth, **utilize the buildings and grounds more fully**, and help to **provide important community services more efficiently**, from after school programs for younger children, to senior care, to cultural arts programs in which high school students and community adults could often participate together.



**Orange County High School**

# Schools

## **Recommendation 1:** *Have schools be part of multi-use community centers*

*that can include facilities such as a branch library, senior center, performance and meeting space, and a park with playing fields. Land for schools should be purchased with this larger concept in mind. Thus, school systems and local governments should collaborate on identifying future school sites to ensure that these are adequate and appropriate for such extended uses.*

## **Recommendation 2:** *Encourage the school boards to look at the feasibility of reduced class sizes and smaller schools, while maintaining diversity.*

## **Recommendation 3:** *Encourage greater cooperation between the Orange County and Chapel Hill/Carrboro school systems and consider appropriateness of school system merger in the future.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Foster **increased cooperation** between the two system administrations.
- B. Streamline provision of certain functions where appropriate by **combining services**.
- C. Develop more interaction among the schools so that **school children can build community with each other** across schools and school systems.
- D. Focus on answering the following questions to **determine whether and when school merger might be appropriate:**
  - What would be the impact of different size school districts?
  - How would merger affect efficiency of administration of the two districts?
  - What would the financial impacts be?
  - Is there really a serious disparity in opportunity across the two systems?
  - Is technology so disparate between the two?

## **Recommendation 4:** *Continue to develop a long-range technology plan, encouraging cooperation between the two school systems and the University.*

## **Recommendation 5:** *Improve special needs services.*

### **Action Strategies:**

- A. Enhance opportunities for **inclusion of special needs children** in the school districts.
- B. **Add additional resources** for Exceptional Education Support Services and early education services.

- C. Continue and enhance programs to **provide advocates for special needs children** to help their families negotiate the system.

**Recommendation 6:** *Continue and improve literacy levels for all non-English speaking children and youth.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Continue and improve the teaching of **English as a Second Language** (ESL) in all schools.
- B. Provide basic skills training for those ESL students who need additional help.

**Recommendation 7:** *Continue and improve special programs that prepare at-risk children.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Continue and improve programs to **prepare at-risk pre-K children** (i.e. four year olds) for school.
- B. Continue and improve **remediation programs for older students** to bring them up to or closer to grade level.

**Recommendation 8:** *Continue and enhance efforts to provide students with hands-on, real world experience.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Continue and enhance **vocational training in all schools** which prepares students for technical schools. Enlist participation from local businesses.
- B. Continue and enhance **skill development opportunities** available in apprenticeships and on-the-job-training.
- C. Continue and enhance **mentor and internship programs at the high school level** exposing students to the nature of careers and career preparation in a variety of fields, such as business, teaching, law, medicine, and research.

## **GOAL 2: *Support Lifelong Learning and Adult Education***

### **Background/Rationale**



Orange County benefits immensely from the excellent educational opportunities provided by UNC, as well as nearby community colleges, local community groups and parks and recreation departments. The wide array of lifelong learning opportunities available locally enriches the lives of county citizens. These offerings give residents the chance to sharpen their professional skills, learn new skills, expand their cultural horizons, and enjoy a variety of leisure activities.

Equally important to helping people get the most out of their lives and contribute positively to society are lifelong learning and adult education opportunities that provide literacy education, adult basic education, [English as a Second Language \(ESL\)](#) and [citizenship education for all residents who need or can benefit from such programs.](#)



# Adult Education

**Recommendation 1:** *Foster and enhance lifelong learning opportunities for all adults offered through UNC, area community colleges, parks and recreation departments, and community groups.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Develop and circulate a **calendar of community-based lifelong learning opportunities** and continue to circulate the University’s listing of such opportunities (“*Think Again*”).
- B. Seek involvement of the University’s Continuing Education Division in **planning and developing a range of non-credit, campus-based enrichment programs** for Orange County citizens.

**Recommendation 2:** *Enhance Adult Education opportunities focusing on basic skills, literacy, and preparation for citizenship.*

**Action Strategies:**

- A. Ensure that such literacy services, Adult Basic Education, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are **available and accessible to all adults who need them.**
- B. Ensure **citizenship education is available** for immigrants seeking American citizenship as well as for young people approaching voting age.



# ***SECTION V***



## ***THE CITIZENS' ROUNDTABLE***

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# ***THE CITIZENS' ROUNDTABLE - A PROPOSAL OF THE SHAPING ORANGE COUNTY'S FUTURE TASK FORCE***

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## **Background/Rationale**

The Citizens' Roundtable has been described in the SOCF 2030 Vision as a modern substitute for the "public squares of an earlier America," places where citizens met regularly in villages and towns to share ideas related to the new nation, its government, and its people. Unlike most current advisory boards in Orange County and its municipalities which have a specific focus and purpose (i.e. the Planning Board, the Board of Adjustment, the Recreation Commission), [the Citizens Roundtable would engage citizens in the discussion and analysis of a broad range of concerns and issues related to our countywide community life.](#)

As we begin a new century and a new millennium, we look back on a period of recent history within which our diversity has seemed more important than our unity; what divides us more compelling than what draws us together. Clearly, that diversity itself, coupled with the mobility of modern life and the electronic technology which has changed our workplaces, social habits, and ways of communication, are all responsible for this "degree of separation" our society is experiencing. It would appear that we have less common history, less sense of place, and far fewer opportunities to interact directly with one another than was the case years ago. As we assess these new realities, many of us wonder how we can connect as citizens and neighbors to develop and sustain common values. Thus, we search for meaningful tasks that bring us together—work and ideas that we share, and plans to which we can all contribute.

## **Purposes**

In setting forth the purposes of The Citizens' Roundtable, it is important to note first, that much of the thrust for this idea comes from the success of the Shaping Orange County's Future initiative and the work of the Task Force established to lead this effort. Thus, the SOCF Task Force serves as the model for The Roundtable concept, the model for engaging citizens in community issues and ongoing community planning. For more than three years, this group of thirty citizens, appointed by the County Commissioners from a list of volunteers expressing interest in the project, and supported by county and municipal planning staff, has worked together to identify community values and, with those providing direction, to articulate a positive vision of what Orange County could be like thirty years from now.

The purposes of The Citizens' Roundtable will be much the same, that is, [to provide citizens from throughout the county with a place for informal discussion of ideas and concerns of special importance to them as well as to the larger community and its quality of life.](#) The Citizens' Roundtable will also [serve as a sounding board for ideas and plans on which the elected boards would like citizen feedback.](#) But most important of all, The Citizens' Roundtable will [review progress on the SOCF recommendations, as presented to the County Commissioners and the Council of Governments in June, 2000, and make an annual report to those bodies.](#) Additionally, the group will look at changing conditions and suggest "course corrections" to the original recommendations.

It should be noted that it is anticipated that The Citizens' Roundtable could become an important force for building community in Orange County. However, community-building is not its primary purpose, but rather, an important by-product as was the case with the Shaping Orange County's Future Task Force. The real purpose of the Roundtable like the SOCF initiative is in addressing real issues and, through the consensus process, in finding real solutions which, in essence, represent a true community-wide commitment.

Success of the Roundtable will also depend on the commitment of local elected boards to seriously consider the recommendations and input of the group.

## **Structure and Operation**

**Membership:** Initially, in considering the number of appointees to The Citizens' Roundtable, a group half the size of the SOCF task Force was suggested (15). However, in further discussion with Task Force members their recommendation was that it should have the same number of appointees as the Task Force (30), their reasoning being that since not everyone can be present every time, having 30 ensures solid attendance and diversity at each meeting. And by allowing people to be absent without guilt, appointees would be encouraged to serve a full term. Interested citizens would be asked to volunteer and Roundtable appointments would subsequently be made from that pool of names. It is proposed that all of the county's governing bodies have an opportunity to make appointments to The Citizens' Roundtable: the County Commissioners, Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough. There should also be appointees from those portions of Mebane and Durham within Orange County's jurisdiction. The County Commissioners should oversee all of these appointments in terms of countywide representation and diversity in regard to age, sex, race, and other factors such as disability and/or special experience, training, or education.

**Term of Office:** A suggested term of Office for appointments to The Citizens' Roundtable would be three years, long enough for the group to come to know each other well and establish rapport, and short enough to enable most people to serve a full term. With thirty members, terms could be staggered with one third rotated off each year. Another approach might be for each selected group to serve their three-year term together and then, at the end of that term, for a new group to be appointed. As the SOCF Task Force has observed, such continuity has been a critical factor in establishing the atmosphere of civility and trust which has contributed so much to its ability to work well together.

**Co-Chairs and Staff:** The SOCF Task Force has operated with co-chairs, one representing the Northern and more rural part of the county and the other, representing the Southern and more urban part. They have essentially managed the meetings and served as the liaisons with the staff in planning the agendas and other task force activities. There have been two Orange County Environment and Resource Conservation Department staff assigned to assist the Task Force in setting its directions and in taking care of most of its administrative work. They have also researched and written many of the background documents that particular issues have required. A third staff member has been a facilitator from the Dispute Settlement Center in Chapel Hill. He has overseen orientation and training sessions for the Task Force, has served as a facilitator for many discussions, and has provided ongoing guidance to the group concerning discussion techniques and operating by consensus. It is proposed that these same leadership arrangements be maintained for The Citizens' Roundtable, that is, professional planning and facilitation staff.

## **Concluding Comments**

As the SOCF Task Force nears the completion of its work, we are looking to the near future, as well as that of thirty years hence, with the knowledge that endings are also beginnings. It is time for new faces and new minds to pick up where others have left off, which is part of the motivation for proposing The Citizens' Roundtable. For some time now it has been clear to us that much of what we have in place with the SOCF initiative would continue to be of importance as the future unfolds. But new citizen concerns and ideas will be needed to plan for that future, and to shape it to the visions of Orange County's people.

The Citizens' Roundtable we propose is not intended to have its 30 members talking only with one another but always, to have others sitting at the table with them. Meetings should be held at various locations around the county so as to regularly involve those from both rural and urban areas.

"The Citizens' Roundtable" means exactly what it says. We use the term "Citizen" here to describe ordinary people as distinguished from those who are elected or appointed to official roles in government. And we use the word "Roundtable" to describe a group gathered for conference or discussion, whether or not they are seated at a round table! But, as legend tells us, the famous table around which King Arthur and his knights sat was indeed round, and for a purpose –to avoid quarrels as to precedence, or the right of priority among its members. For the fact is, there can be no "head" at a round table. Thus, the Citizens' Roundtable presupposes that all who sit there for discussion and dialogue are equals. And that presupposes that all will be heard, and all will be listened to.



# ***SECTION VI***



## ***A VISION FOR THE YEAR 2030***

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*Note: The SOCF Vision for the Year 2030 was created last year as a precursor to the SOCF recommendations and provisional report. Through further discussions by the Task Force, in the process of creating the current recommendations and action strategies, this vision has been refined and clarified. Therefore, please note that the vision does not directly link in all cases to the recommendations and action strategies outlined in Sections III and IV.*

# VISION FOR THE YEAR 2030

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## INTRODUCTION

This scenario for the year 2030 represents the vision of the SOCF Task Force, after hearing from citizens around the county and researching the issues, on what a desirable future for all of Orange County could be. Naturally, this vision includes many aspects of our current high quality of life that we would like to maintain as well as ideas on what we would like to become. This vision of the future represents our hopes and aspirations for what the future can be if we continue to share our ideals and to pursue them with energy and wisdom, together.

## SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT AND MEETING OUR NEEDS

Orange County in 2030 has earned a reputation as one of the most livable areas in the nation. In large part, this is due to long-standing countywide commitments to sustainable use of resources, stewardship of the environment, and planned efforts focusing on the management of growth and development. All of these commitments have helped to keep the economy vibrant and nurtured a sense of community while protecting the county's unique character and its natural environment.

*“Orange County in 2030 is a sustainable community that has successfully integrated its economic and physical development with preservation of its natural environment - clean air and water, wildlife habitat and open spaces - through joint planning, cooperation and action.”*

### *JOINT PLANNING*

A “Triangle West” comprehensive plan coordinates the jurisdictional plans of the towns and counties of Durham, Orange and Chatham. Additional regional planning occurs through dialogue and joint policy-making among Orange County jurisdictions, and neighbors in the Triangle and Piedmont Triad regions. Joint planning agreements based on environmental and economic functional units, rather than jurisdictional boundaries, exist where appropriate.

Over the years, significant effort has been expended on increasing interaction between the leadership of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and that of the towns and county. Chancellors appoint a special liaison to meet regularly with town and county officials to apprise them of the University's planning initiatives and, in turn, to apprise the Chancellor of town and county issues and concerns. This system of open communication has resulted in a more positive and productive relationship than is the case in many “town and gown” communities by enhancing UNC's role as an active participant in the life of Orange County and the role of citizens in the University's growth planning efforts. UNC plans cooperatively with the jurisdictions of the county for growth management.

A comprehensive transportation plan involves collaboration among the governments and citizens from all jurisdictions in the county and region, as well as the NC Department of Transportation, and major institutions in the county, such as UNC and UNC Hospitals. The plan has reduced traffic congestion, air pollution, and the need to pave more land, and provides modes of transit for those who cannot drive or do not own a vehicle. As a result of this effort, the county has

reversed trends of increasing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), reduced traffic congestion, and decreased the percent of Single Occupancy Vehicle trips.

The towns and county have adopted coordinated Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances (APFOs) which ensure that development is not approved until governments are prepared to provide the necessary supporting infrastructure, including streets, sewer and water, and schools. Through joint agreements with Orange County, urban growth boundaries exist around Chapel Hill/Carrboro, Hillsborough, Mebane, and Durham.

Through this coordinated planning, much of the growth over the last 30 years has been focused into the four towns: Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough, and Mebane, and town transition areas. In town transition areas creation of “village” style development has been encouraged to develop diverse communities and preserve local open space. These villages have developed in measured steps, away from sensitive natural areas. Each village has become a small, yet diverse, community providing a genuine sense of place to live and grow. By focusing development into the towns and transition areas and providing incentives for land preservation in rural areas, the integrity of many of the county’s large natural areas has been preserved.

### ***DATA COLLECTION AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION***

Comprehensive environmental data collection and analysis are used to determine resource and environmental limits and provide guidance to sustainable use. Based on this data, Orange County, in conjunction with other counties in the region, has, after studying the pros, cons and feasibility, instituted a Planned Growth Budget, which is a system to fairly allocate use of the region’s finite resources of water, air and land.

### ***PROTECTING WATER SUPPLY AND QUALITY***

Data is collected to determine limits to sustainable use of surface and ground water supplies that do not exceed assimilative capacity, the ability to support healthy aquatic life, and that maintain adequate year-round water flow. Water conservation has been addressed in several ways. Per capita use of water has been slowly declining due to the incorporation of water conservation into the design of all new construction, promotion of the use of landscaping that requires less watering, and implementation of other short and long term conservation strategies.

Water quality is protected through a variety of means. Vegetative buffers along streams and rivers protect water quality and provide continuous wildlife corridor habitat. Landscaping is accomplished with less fertilizer, herbicide and pesticide application in both amount and toxicity. In rural areas soil erosion continues to be successfully controlled through use of farm and forestry best management practices and enforcement of regulations. In towns, monitoring and enforcement of soil erosion regulations has improved so that streams are well protected from erosion caused by construction and other activities. Ground and surface waters are regularly monitored for quality, and problems are promptly addressed. Wastewater treatment discharges are also carefully monitored and limitations are enforced.

Development planning and expansion of sewage treatment capacity considers the costs of wastewater treatment and the assimilative capacity of the stream. Development is planned to protect water quality within critical surface water supply watersheds and in groundwater recharge areas.

## ***PROTECTING AIR QUALITY***

Air quality is protected and standards adhered to through achievement of the county's transportation plan goals. Transportation plan goals to protect air quality focus on reducing dependency on single occupancy vehicles through provision of alternative means of transit, auto-free zones and pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development, as well as by encouraging the use of less-polluting, alternatively fueled vehicles. Increasing emissions reduction technology and use of alternative-fueled vehicles has greatly reduced air pollution from automobiles in Orange County as well as across the nation. Air quality is also protected by businesses that are environmentally friendly and have strategies for reducing emissions, such as using energy efficient building construction, using solar rather than electric power, buying material locally so as to reduce truck transit, and promoting telecommuting as a means to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

## ***ENERGY CONSERVATION***

All building construction in Orange County meets energy efficiency standards, and public buildings must use maximum, cost-effective energy efficiency technology. To further encourage energy conservation homebuyers are made aware of the energy use of prospective home purchases. Energy conservation is also achieved through the county's widely used transportation system.

The towns and county have joined the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign and created and implemented a local action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the county. Implementation of the plan has decreased government energy consumption and provided energy savings.

## ***FOSTERING AN ECONOMY THAT MEETS LOCAL NEEDS***

The county seeks to accommodate and keep growing businesses that need to expand, and it selectively recruits new businesses that meet the community's needs. In particular, the county supports and recruits businesses that are non-polluting and environmentally friendly; that employ local people; that utilize "waste" resources (i.e. reuse waste to make new products); that have a positive impact on the tax base; and that pay a living wage, thus allowing people who work in the county to live here as well.

## ***SUPPORTING A DIVERSE ECONOMIC BASE***

Orange County's economy is based on a balanced mix of larger institutional, commercial and industrial operations and numerous, small businesses. UNC and UNC Hospitals continue to be major economic forces in the county. Businesses have been and are recruited to the towns, the villages within town transition areas, the Economic Development Districts along I-85, and to a new economic development node in northern Orange County. Farming has remained a viable way of life in rural areas and an important part of the local economy. Homegrown, local entrepreneurship is encouraged, including UNC-CH and UNC Hospitals spin-off enterprises, innovative agriculture and related businesses, and cultural and heritage arts programs which attract tourism. A comprehensive skills development center and technical and vocational community college programs continue to prepare people for mid-level jobs and for entry level jobs with potential for advancement. Governments support start-up and maintenance of desired

businesses through a variety of means including incentives, government-guaranteed business loans, provision of grants, investment, marketing support, and flexible regulations.

Orange County also has a stable and diverse agricultural economy. Recognizing the value of farmland for retaining rural character and open space, and the importance of domestic agriculture to our national security, county citizens have made a strong commitment to support local agriculture. The county provides a variety of incentives and supports to retain farms. County schools and other local institutions purchase local produce, and business support services provide local farmers with assistance in marketing products, adopting new technologies, and starting up value-added businesses that make farming more profitable.

## WHERE PEOPLE LIVE AND WORK – THE TOWNS, TRANSITION AREAS, AND RURAL SETTINGS

### *GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOWNS*

*“Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough in 2030 are economic hubs of the county and offer an array of cultural amenities. Compact, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods make these walkable communities that are able to accommodate public transportation.”*

The towns in Orange County all offer opportunities and amenities more frequently found in larger places, much of this due to UNC’s presence and the needs of its students, faculty and staff. Yet the towns retain their small town feel and friendliness as well as their own unique character based in their historical roots. Mixed use development is encouraged in commercial districts and in downtown areas through allowances made for increased density and flexibility. The downtown areas continue to be the activity hubs for businesses, governments, institutions, and cultural activities.

Transportation initiatives play an important part in preserving the quality of life which all of the foregoing describes. Public transit, including paratransit for persons with disabilities, connects town residents to each other, to major metropolitan areas in the region and to rural areas of the county. Transit Distribution Centers with rail stations, bus service, park and ride lots, pedestrian paths, bike lanes, and van/car pool lanes provide convenient, multi-modal transportation options. Auto-limited zones in areas of downtown Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough, as well as areas of the UNC campus, alleviate traffic congestion and make these areas safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Park and ride lots are located at intervals near the edges of the zones and frequent shuttle service is provided to outlying lots.

Pedestrian-friendly, compact mixed development with neighborhood connector streets is encouraged. Policies to promote integration of land uses have created walkable communities with mixtures of housing types, workplaces and commercial development. Infill development on large tracts is compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development that follows traffic corridors. Some older neighborhoods have incorporated small neighborhood services and a mixture of housing types. In established neighborhoods, infill development is encouraged only if it is consistent with, and an asset to the existing neighborhood. Multi-use neighborhood community centers provide schools, parks, community services and cultural activities, and serve as a focus for neighborhood community activities. Greenspace is introduced where possible as town and neighborhood parks and greenways.

In an effort to reduce development in rural parts of the county and to preserve natural areas and the county’s rural character, policy incentives are provided for concentrating more development within the towns and transition areas. The towns of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough and Mebane all have growth boundaries that plan for orderly and manageable physical expansion and define a clear line between urban and rural areas.

## ***GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN TOWN TRANSITION AREAS***

Villages have been the focus of growth in the town transition areas, which are areas planned for incorporation, and that have become incorporated into town boundaries. Growth has been incremental and carefully planned with extensive citizen input. The villages have been designed to complement the historic and cultural character of their locations. They are pedestrian-friendly and are formed around a central mixed-use area with commercial, industrial, institutional and residential uses, a village square, a transit center (where appropriate), and a multi-use community center, decreasing the need for automobile use. Multi-use centers serve as schools, community centers, senior centers, senior care facilities, adult learning centers, child care facilities, health clinics, libraries, and provide office and meeting space for government and volunteer organizations. Thus the multi-use center is a focus for community services, cultural activities and community life.

*Growth in the town transition areas has been concentrated into small “villages” that provide a variety of services, businesses, and a strong community life for residents. They are socio-economically diverse communities with a variety of housing types.*

Each village has a mixture of housing types and is socio-economically diverse. Incentives promote the development of affordable and disabled accessible housing.

Villages are developed through citizen and stakeholder input, to design communities that grow in measured steps. Through consensus, a people-centered design has been developed that sets broad parameters for development, with local builders and architects having flexibility to design and build an architecturally diverse mixture of buildings that complement the character of the area within these guidelines. The result has been development of highly diverse communities having a genuine sense of place and close-knit community atmosphere. Each village has a boundary to limit its expansion and incorporate 50% open space within each boundary.

Public transit connects villages and towns. Each village center has a multi-modal Transit Distribution Center with bus service, park and ride, pedestrian paths, bike lanes, and van/car pool lanes. Paratransit for persons with disabilities has improved and expanded in rural areas to serve all who need it.

## ***GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS***

*The county’s five identified rural community centers provide small-scale commercial and community services for local rural populations. Agriculture is still a major economic activity in rural areas.*

Development of Small Area Plans for the county’s five identified rural community centers (Caldwell, Carr, Cedar Grove, Schley, and White Cross) is encouraged. Each of these has served historically as a center for services to local rural populations and a focus for community activity. The creation of “hamlets” in these locations – small-scale, non water and sewer dependent development - is supported to provide an expanded mix of housing, local commercial enterprises and community services that enhance rather than destroy the community character of these places.

The other rural areas of the county allow for large-lot development of three acres (or more in designated water supply watersheds) lots. When zonings were changed, provisions were made for the creation of up to five lots at the previous zoning.

These rural areas also contain the “receiving areas” for a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program for the purpose of farmland, natural area, and other land conservation. The TDR program allows landowners to transfer the right to develop one parcel of land to a different parcel of land. It protects natural areas and farmland by shifting development from these areas to areas planned for growth. When the development rights are transferred from a piece of property, the land is restricted with a permanent conservation easement. Buying development rights allows landowners to build at a higher density than ordinarily permitted by the base zoning.

### ***CONSERVATION OF NATURAL AREAS AND OPEN SPACE***

A “green infrastructure” made up of parks, natural areas, wildlife corridors, farms and other open space exists. Recognizing the need to protect land for different purposes, some lands are preserved for resource or endangered species protection, and human use is not allowed or is restricted. Other lands are designated for human use and activity for recreation or for work such as farming and timbering. The county’s Natural Areas Inventory and other subsequent assessments have been used to prioritize land acquisition objectives. The amount of open space preserved in perpetuity has increased dramatically over the past 30 years through acquisition of land and development rights. Farmland has been voluntarily preserved through incentives, such as tax relief, and through initiatives, such as a voluntary Purchase of Development Rights program.

*Rural Orange County in 2030  
has a network of permanently  
preserved natural areas, wildlife  
corridors and open space.*

Sustainability has become a way of life for all landowners, whether their holdings are large farms, forest tracts, or quarter acre lots with small gardens and yards. In each case owners take pride in careful management of the natural resources on their property. They enjoy its use in their lifetimes knowing they will leave the land’s value in place for the next generations.

# SERVING DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS – DEVELOPING LEARNERS OF ALL AGES

## *HIGH QUALITY K-12 EDUCATION*

The community of Orange County highly values education, and schools in the county provide quality education to all of their students. The education system prepares children to be responsible citizens, well-rounded critical thinkers, and to have marketable skills. Positive learning environments are created by maintaining low student-teacher ratios, emphasizing time-on-task, supporting creative and innovative teaching, and having clear student behavioral expectations and consequences. Special needs of students are met, and special programs prepare at-risk, pre-kindergarten children for school and provide remediation for older students. Programs and curricula are periodically evaluated to assess effectiveness in meeting student needs. Educational choice exists in the form of public schools, charter schools, and private schools, with a variety of options available within the public schools such as vocational and technical skills training programs.

Education helps to create Orange County’s strong sense of community, with parents highly involved with the schools and their children’s learning. Students, teachers, administrators, and parents are all held to high standards, and work cooperatively to achieve them. Schools are multi-use facilities, which provide opportunities for positive interactions between students and other persons and groups in the community. Students explore the community through apprenticeships, workstudy, volunteering, mentoring programs, field trips, and service learning, and members of the community come to the schools as guest teachers. Partnerships are encouraged between high schools and the community to create cultural arts centers using school facilities and involving students with community adults in a number of activities. Also, schoolchildren from the county and its towns have regular interaction with one another sharing special arts and cultural activities several times a year.

*“Orange County in 2030 offers high quality educational opportunities for a lifetime of learning”*

While Orange County and Chapel Hill-Carrboro continue to operate as separate systems, many administrative processes have been effectively merged and a cooperative spirit exists between superintendents, staff, school boards, and teachers resulting in the sense that education is a shared task for the entire community, rural and urban.

## *ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION*

Adult education is promoted for professional development and personal enrichment. A strong public/private partnership invests in job and language training. Skills training and job placement services are provided by a long-established skills development center and by community college programs. Community college programs with dedicated space also provide opportunities for lifelong learning. Many apprenticeship and vocational programs are also available. Literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are accessible to all who need them, and citizenship education is provided to newcomers to the United States seeking citizenship. For seniors there are Learning in Retirement and Peer Learning Programs, many focusing on history, literature and the arts.

## *THE UNIVERSITY*

UNC's location in Chapel Hill adds another dimension to the educational and cultural life of Orange County and its towns. The University is a valuable resource, not only to its state and nation, but to its closest neighbors in Orange County with whom it shares many of its facilities and programs. Its attractive campus includes an art museum, galleries, planetarium, libraries, a continuing education center, auditoriums, meeting rooms, sports facilities, professional repertory theatre, arboretum, and botanical garden all of which are open to the public for special programs, concerts, recitals, films, lectures, forums, sporting and other events. But most important, UNC makes accessible to local residents who seek to pursue lifelong learning and other academic opportunities, an array of substantial continuing education programs, as well as highly respected degree programs, both undergraduate and graduate. For those over 65, courses leading to an undergraduate degree are provided free-of-charge and every now and then, an older-than-average student makes local headlines by earning a long-dreamed of, but never completed, Bachelor's Degree.

## **COMMITMENT TO THE WELL-BEING OF ALL THE COUNTY'S CITIZENS – HUMAN SERVICES AND HEALTH CARE**

Comprehensive human and health services are readily accessible and available to all residents. Human services are provided through a network of care and partnerships between government agencies and numerous volunteer organizations. The community is sensitive to and supportive of the needs of different people. Integrated services are provided to enable all people, those with disabilities, those on a low or fixed income, Hispanics/Latinos, and recent immigrants from other nations, to meet their basic needs and be fully included in the community.

*“In Orange County in 2030 a comprehensive network of health and human services is available to all residents throughout their lifetime.”*

### ***CHILD CARE***

Orange County residents, working in conjunction with child care advocacy organizations, are committed to promoting the physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being and growth of children and their families. Responsible parenting is promoted, encouraged, and taught. Child care quality across the board has improved, and unsafe, substandard day care has been eliminated. Provision of adequate salaries for child care workers has helped improve care quality by attracting and retaining qualified workers. Constructive supervised activities, such as after school care, tutoring, summer programs, and cultural and social experiences, are provided for all young children.

Citizens strongly support advocacy of child care issues such as quality care and prevention of abuse and neglect. Quality child care is universally affordable (defined as costing no more than 10% of gross income) and accessible. The state government has been successfully lobbied to fund child care at funding levels similar to what the State allocates for K-12 education, making quality child care more affordable and therefore accessible. Costs for child care are also shared with the private sector through their provision of facilities on-site.

Child care is readily available for all families. In addition to free-standing centers and congregations, child care is now available in association with senior facilities, schools and businesses. Many businesses have family friendly policies that encourage and support parental care for infant and toddler children at home.

### ***SENIORS***

Senior centers exist throughout the county as part of multi-use community centers. Each center serves as a focal point for comprehensive, integrated services to seniors. Seniors are able to live in the least restrictive environment possible through provision of a continuum of readily available care, from at home assistance to nursing home care. Expanded public transportation provides increased mobility for many seniors.

Orange County has also become something of a mecca for active seniors due in part to its being home to UNC, a university with a national reputation, and to the UNC Hospitals and the sophisticated medical care available. A number of retirement communities have been developed which focus on this group of seniors who retire to Orange County from all over the country. Many in this group share their experience and professional skills through volunteer activities for children, youth, and other adults, thereby making an important contribution to their new community.

### ***AFFORDABLE HOUSING***

A comprehensive affordable housing policy exists due to collaborative efforts of the towns and county. Affordable housing (defined as housing costing no more than 30% of household gross income) is available to meet the needs of all individuals in Orange County, including older adults, persons with disabilities, the mentally impaired, battered women, low-income households, and the homeless.

To ease the affordable housing crunch in and around Chapel Hill/Carrboro, UNC has significantly increased the percentage of students housed in University-sponsored housing, as well as sponsored housing for staff and faculty. This has opened up new housing options in Carrboro and Chapel Hill for lower-income residents.

### ***HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH***

Health services - physical, mental (including services for drug abuse) and prescription - are well funded and are easily accessible to all citizens. Health care coverage for new and expecting parents is provided to enhance family health and well-being.

Preventive health care is emphasized, and education on physical and mental health issues is provided to all citizens. Due to these efforts people are living more health conscious lifestyles – they are exercising more, following better diets, and smoking less. Education programs on health and exercise start at an early age to promote healthy living and improve quality of life.

Community aid and support have helped address drug abuse issues. Many support groups exist, reducing the isolation such people feel and providing a basis for effecting change.

### ***SAFE COMMUNITY***

Crime rates are low due to community policing, extensive citizen involvement in “Neighborhood Watch” programs, and community awareness and responsiveness to issues of abuse. Community safety has also been improved by promoting development patterns that enhance community closeness, and through educational programs for children and adults on safety issues. The county takes full advantage of available technology so that citizen needs for emergency services are responded to promptly. Adequate fire protection systems and response times exist, even in rural parts of the county. The county has an integrated emergency management communication system that enables effective communication among departments and jurisdictions.

# RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

## *GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY AND SERVICE PROVISION*

The Town and County governments have found new ways to reduce redundancy in service provision, and provide services efficiently, and in a cost-effective way. Inter-organizational and inter-governmental collaboration and coordination are the norm. The governments cooperate on regional issues, and together rethink and redefine their responsibilities developing new ways to address inter-jurisdictional issues. Turf issues that arise are settled through use of facilitators and a dispute resolution process. The governments of the county have combined some services to achieve greater fiscal efficiency. As a result some services that used to be provided separately by the towns and county are now provided for all citizens by a countywide agency.

*“In 2030 Town and County governments provide quality services efficiently. They work together cooperatively to meet citizens’ needs, and citizens are actively involved in shaping government decisions.”*

Other policies to improve fiscal efficiency include multiple use of government facilities, selective economic development that helps balance the residential to non-residential ratio of the tax base, and other techniques to address growth impacts. Governments provide quality services efficiently with clear, fair and timely administration of regulations.

Ongoing environmental, economic and social data acquisition and creation of a central information base for decision-making is a key priority for monitoring

success of government programs and spending, and to determine community progress toward sustainability.

## *CITIZEN REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION*

The elective process for the County Commission has been changed to ensure that the diverse interests of all the county’s residents are fully represented. All citizens, rural and urban, feel well represented.

The governments within the county actively pursue community involvement in decision making. An ongoing Citizen’s Roundtable, modeled after the Shaping Orange County’s Future Task Force, is relied upon by the town and county governments to provide an avenue for citizens’ concerns to be transmitted and heard by the elected bodies. The Roundtable is charged to examine issues, gain broad citizen input, come to consensus, and then make recommendations to the governing boards, who give serious weight and consideration to this input. The Roundtable is also charged with monitoring implementation of the adopted SOCF recommendations and examining the county’s vision for any necessary course corrections.

Roundtable members are volunteers who are selected for appointment by each of the governing boards in the county to reflect the diversity of Orange County’s citizens. The Roundtable, as well as other advisory boards and the governing boards, use facilitation and dispute resolution techniques to solve community issues.

In a real sense, the Citizens Roundtable replaces the public square of an earlier America, providing for open discussion and dialogue among citizens, and the sharing of hopes and dreams concerning the well-being of our community, now and into the future.

## A SHARED COMMUNITY LIFE – CIVIL, COLLABORATIVE, CARING

A vibrant community life exists throughout the county. Families, single people, and seniors have many opportunities for recreation and interaction with other community members. Multi-use centers, located in town neighborhoods and villages, serve as a focal point for such activities. These centers are built around schools, with parks and playing fields as well as facilities which provide a comprehensive range of services such as senior day care, child care, a part-time health clinic, a branch library, and meeting space. In addition the centers provide cultural and recreational activities such as ball games, movies, dances, and art classes. The location of day care and schools with other community facilities brings children and adults together, which benefits both. Because these centers are located in settings of compact, mixed commercial and residential development, they are readily accessible places where people of all ages come together to learn, socialize, receive care, and build community.

Along with the community centers, many services and activities exist in the county that enrich people's lives. From volunteer opportunities, to cultural arts, to athletics and outdoor recreation, to cultural events that celebrate the rich character of our rural areas and towns, and our cultural and ethnic diversity, there is always something to do. The cultural arts – music, theatre, dance, visual arts – are strongly supported, with many opportunities for arts education and enjoyment available at numerous facilities and venues. A community of artists, artisans and writers thrives through local support. Full advantage is taken of the county's natural, cultural and historic resources to provide recreational activities and opportunities for learning.

*“Orange County in the year 2030 enjoys a vibrant community life rich in recreational and cultural opportunities, and celebrates its diverse natural, cultural and historic resources. Shared activities bring people together to work, play and plan.”*

The community is inclusive of all people and there is openness, innovation and experimentation. Purposeful inclusion of families of all economic levels and fostering of shared activities among various groups has strengthened the sense of community throughout the county. Barriers have been broken down and community built through full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the cultivation of civility, interaction and connection among all racial and ethnic groups, the creation of socio-economically diverse neighborhoods, and the advancement of open and active communication between rural and urban citizens of the county. People work, play, and plan together, and share many common tasks. The community has moved beyond acceptance and tolerance to something deeper and more meaningful, and that is mutual respect, understanding, appreciation, and caring.



# ***SECTION VI***



## ***DEFINITIONS***

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## ***Definitions of Key Concepts***

Note: This section does not attempt to define all terms used in the report. In addition, key terms like Community-Building and Sustainability have pages devoted to their description and are not included here. If a term is described to a level of detail in the document, it is not included in this listing.

**Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO):** A zoning and/or land development regulation with the goal of synchronizing development with the availability of public facilities needed to support that development. The location, amount, type or mix of development is a product of the County and municipal comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances (APFO's) pace growth by affecting the timing of development to ensure that it is matched with the availability of public facilities as noted by a jointly-prepared Capital Improvement Plan.

**Affordable Housing:** Housing that can be purchased at a cost between 2.5 to 3 times a household's total annual income. Rental housing is considered affordable if a household spends no more than 30% of total household income on rent including utilities (HUD 2000 Standards). In Orange, Durham and Wake Counties, most affordable housing programs focus on families at 80% and below of median income.

**Auto-Limited Zones:** Areas where pedestrian traffic and transit access is encouraged, and use of personal automobiles is likewise discouraged via limited parking, narrow or "cobblestone" streets, or other measures. This could be a block of a downtown area, a portion of a campus, or other areas – to be identified depending on access and transportation needs.

**Compact Mixed-Use (CMU) Developments:** CMU's would focus development within areas targeted for growth in the municipalities and their ETJ areas. These would be located in areas best served by urban services and would be comprehensive and "internal" in nature, including housing, commercial activities, civic and social components, and light industry (where appropriate). Design standards would be used to ensure that the CMU is appropriate in scale and nature to its surroundings, it would include a mix of housing types, values and styles. CMU's should generally be within a 15-minute walk to commercial areas, have easy walking and bike access, and be "people-friendly", enhancing the sense of community among those living and working in a CMU.

**Development:** The process of creating new land use activity on previously undeveloped land, for the purpose of housing, population, and other non-residential uses.

**Eco-Industrial Park:** A eco-industrial park is a community of manufacturing and service businesses with enhanced environmental and economic performance through collaboration in managing environmental and resource issues. Eco-industrial parks embody sustainable community economic development by bringing together ideas such as industrial ecology, pollution prevention, sustainable design, architecture and construction, and company partnering.

**Extra-Territorial Jurisdictions (ETJ's):** Land outside of (but adjacent to) the corporate limits of a municipality where the municipality assumes land use planning and development permitting authority. These are envisioned to be areas which, over time will become part of the municipality's corporate limits.

**Growth:** A natural increase, as in size or amount, particularly in relation to housing and population.

**Growth Budget:** A Growth Budget is an important policy planning tool for organizing a large body of key resource data to use as a basis for making tough decisions regarding growth and balancing demands on resources. Development of a growth budget would involve assessment and tracking of resource availability/quality for land, water, and air with an eye to examining the limits on amount and rate of use of these resources so that their quality and intrinsic values are maintained/not impaired. It would also examine the impacts of growth/development on other resources such as transportation and sewer infrastructure. This resource assessment would then be used as a basis for developing a budget that would be a means for allocating these resources, guided by knowledge of limitations to growth and of what is required for growth in this area. The budget would be most successful/rational if developed on a regional scale, with broad input and participation.

**Hamlet:** A hamlet is a rural configuration of houses and small commercial enterprises and community services, developed in keeping with the current community character, located at any one of the five existing Rural Community nodes (centers) in the County (Caldwell, Carr, Cedar Grove, Schley, White Cross). Hamlets would not have access to public water and sewer lines, and development of these centers as hamlets is not meant to encourage extension of urban services to these areas.

**Inclusionary Zoning:** Inclusionary zoning is a technique applied to new housing developments in which a certain portion of the units being constructed are set aside to be affordable to low- and moderate-income home buyers. This technique may be applied to both rental and owned units, and single- or multi-family housing projects. Inclusionary zoning ordinances can be either mandatory, requiring developers to build a specified number of affordable units, or voluntary, based on development incentives, such as density bonuses which allow a developer to build more units (at a higher density) on the same site in exchange for the inclusion of a number of affordable units. Inclusionary zoning ordinances generally contain provisions defining income eligibility requirements, criteria used for determining the pricing of affordable units, restrictions on the resale of affordable units (to ensure that new owners do not turn around and resell the units at market rates), and provisions for the payment of fees in-lieu of construction.

**Infill Development:** Development that occurs on undeveloped lots in existing town neighborhoods or developed areas, which may or may not be of higher density or scale than the surrounding neighborhood.

**Living Wages:** Wages needed to cover the costs of living that families of different sizes must meet to be self-sufficient. This number varies depending on the size and composition of the family.

**Multi-Use Community Centers:** Centers strategically located within municipalities and in villages within transition areas that serve as a focal point for social interaction and life for those in the surrounding community. The facilities at a multi-use community center would bring together in one campus uses such as schools, community centers, senior centers, adult learning, teen centers, day care facilities, a medical clinic, branch libraries, arts space and outdoor recreation.

**Rain Garden:** Rain gardens retain and filter water using plants and soils to remove pollutants from stormwater naturally. Rain gardens are created in low-lying areas, with specific layers of soil, sand, and organic mulch. These layers naturally filter the rain as it runs into the rain garden. After a storm, the soil absorbs and stores the rainwater and nourishes the garden's grasses, trees, and flowers. The traditional system of curbs, gutters, and storm drains carries stormwater runoff directly to local streams and rivers without any bioretention filtering process. Instead rain gardens filter and reuse the water, reducing stormwater pollution, while providing attractive landscaping.

**Redevelopment:** Development inside towns that replaces existing structures with new and sometimes different development in the same location.

**Rural Areas:** Areas in Orange County which lie outside of municipal corporate limits, extra-territorial jurisdictions (ETJ's) and/or Transition Areas (as defined in the adopted land use plans).

**Rural Economic Development Node (Rural Industrial Node):** As designated in the County Land Use Element, a designated area outside of urban services boundaries and strategically located as to transportation network that is planned for lower-intensity commercial and industrial facilities and employment opportunities, at a scale consistent with the lack of urban services.

**Small Area Plans:** A land use plan for a small community or area that focuses on the communities needs and desires (while cognizant of overall comprehensive plans for the Town/County), and is developed by citizens from the area in conjunction with professional and technical assistance.

**Suburban Sprawl:** The unmanaged and largely unplanned expansion of developed areas at a less-than-urban scale (i.e., not usually requiring urban services) into corridors/areas of a rural nature.

**Transfer of Development Rights:** A program that enables the right to develop a property to be legally transferred to another property, in exchange for some type of compensation (usually monetary). This program can allow a parcel of land with unique resources or constraints present (within a "selling area") to transfer its share of expected development potential (i.e., how many residential lots could be created under existing land constraints and standards) to another property in a different location, where such development might be more practical because of location or proximity to urban services (the "receiving area").

Example: A farmer in a watershed that is designated as a sending area has 100 acres, and the land could reasonably expect to yield 45 house lots. The farmer sells the rights to develop 42 lots for \$x thousand, and via a legal agreement retains the rights to three new lots for family members. The development rights are sold to the developer of a residential development in a Town transition area, who is then allowed to increase the density/ # of lots of his/her development accordingly.

**Transition Areas:** As designated in adopted County and Joint Planning plans, these are areas that are in transition from a rural land use pattern to a more-urban pattern, and currently (or in the future) will have access to urban services such as public water and sewer service. In the adopted plans, these areas are located north and west of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, to the north, south and east of Hillsborough, in the Mebane/Efland corridor, and at the junction of I-85 and US 70 at the Durham County line.

**Urban Sprawl:** Unmanaged and largely unplanned expansion of urban-scale land uses and/or services into corridors/areas of a rural nature.

**Village:** A small, unincorporated, self-contained community of less than 200 acres, located inside designated Transition Areas, that offers a mix of residential, non-residential services and open space to meet the physical, social and economic needs of the area. Villages should be designed and developed by area residents and other stakeholders, and offer a focal point for future development outside of the urban boundaries. Villages may be built to enhance and augment historic community centers, or may be new sites strategically-located for service provision.



# ***SECTION VII***



## ***LIST OF APPENDICES***

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# LIST OF APPENDICES

- A. The Development of a Comprehensive Quality Growth Strategy and Community Building Plan for Orange County (“The 15-Step Process”)
- B. Orange County Profile
- C. Baseline Scenario
- D. Economy Committee Report
- E. Education and Cultural Arts Committee Report
- F. Environment and Resources Protection Committee Report
- G. Human Services, Health & Safety Committee Report
- H. Land Use and Growth Committee Report
- I. Transportation, Infrastructure & Services Committee Report
- J. Sustainability Committee Report
- K. Community-Building Committee Report
- L. Synthesis Report
- M. Conflicts and Opportunities Committee Report
- N. SOCF Research Paper on Processes for Elective Office in Orange County
- O. Measuring Sustainability: An Evaluation of the SOCF Indicators
- P. Summary Table for Sustainability and Community-Building Strategies
- Q. Summary Table for Critical Areas to Maintain or Improve Quality of Life

**All appendices are available upon request for a fee, or can be found on our website at <http://www.co.orange.nc.us/shaping/fullrept2.htm>.**

