

# CHATHAM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Planning Board and Board of Commissioners Update  
December 2016



**The Comprehensive Plan** is meant to be a document that takes in account previous plans and **provides strategic direction in the form of policies, programs and projects** that will guide land use, infrastructure investment, and service decisions over the long term.



“ If you don't know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else.”

Yogi Berra

# THE PLANNING PROCESS

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

1

### County-Assessment + Draft Goals

“Chatham Today”  
Assessment of current  
and emerging conditions,  
identification of issues  
and opportunities, and  
development of goals

2

### Develop Initial Concept Plan + Policy Ideas

“Shaping Chatham’s  
Future”  
Development of future  
land use concepts and  
policy ideas

3

### Refine Concept Plan + Policy Framework

“Putting the Plan into  
Action”  
Refine concepts and  
policies and draft action  
steps and strategies

4

### Plan Documentation + Adoption

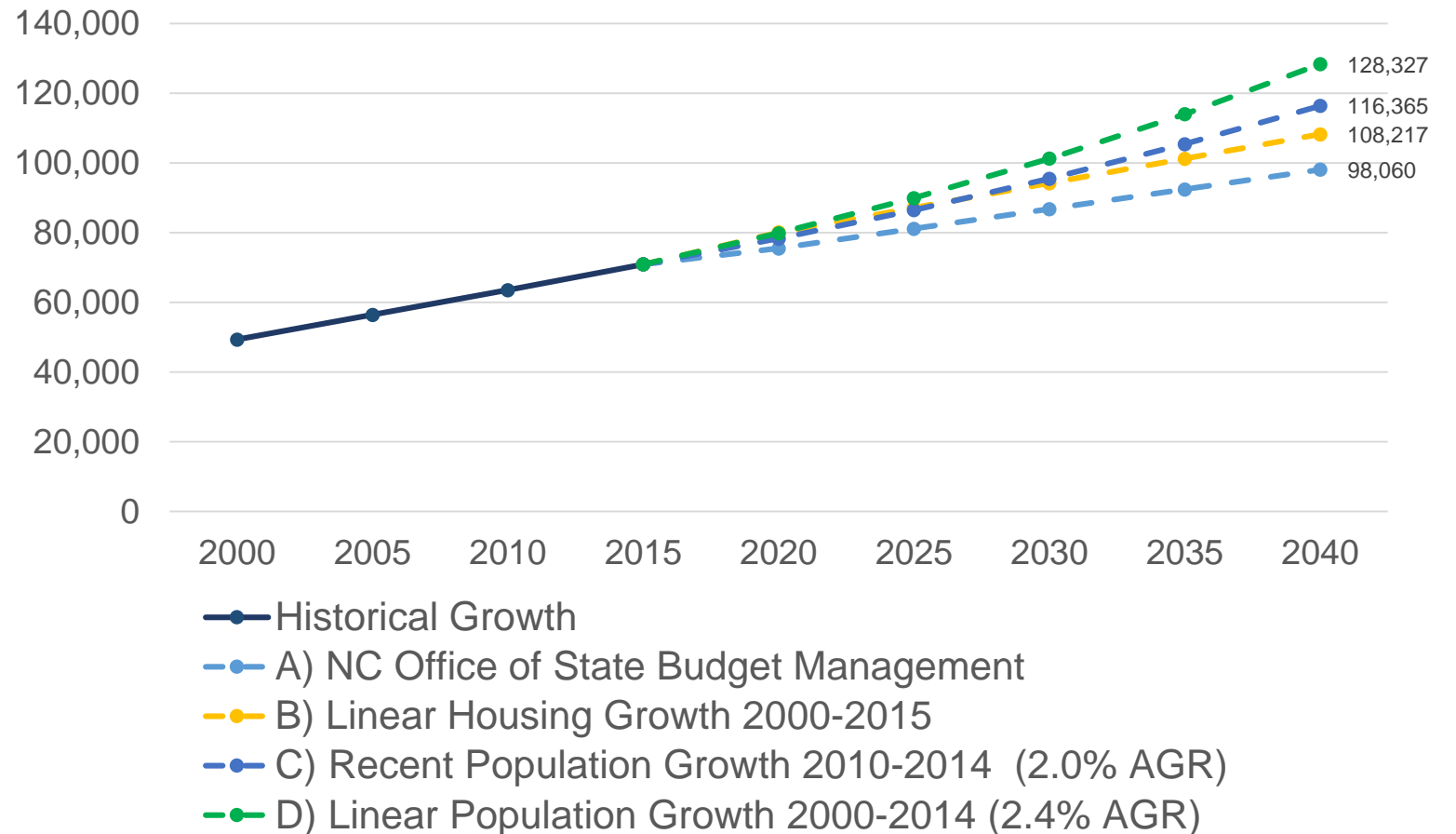
Collection of plan  
components into a final  
plan report document to  
be presented for adoption

*We are here*

*Presentation of draft plan and recommendations  
during February public meetings*

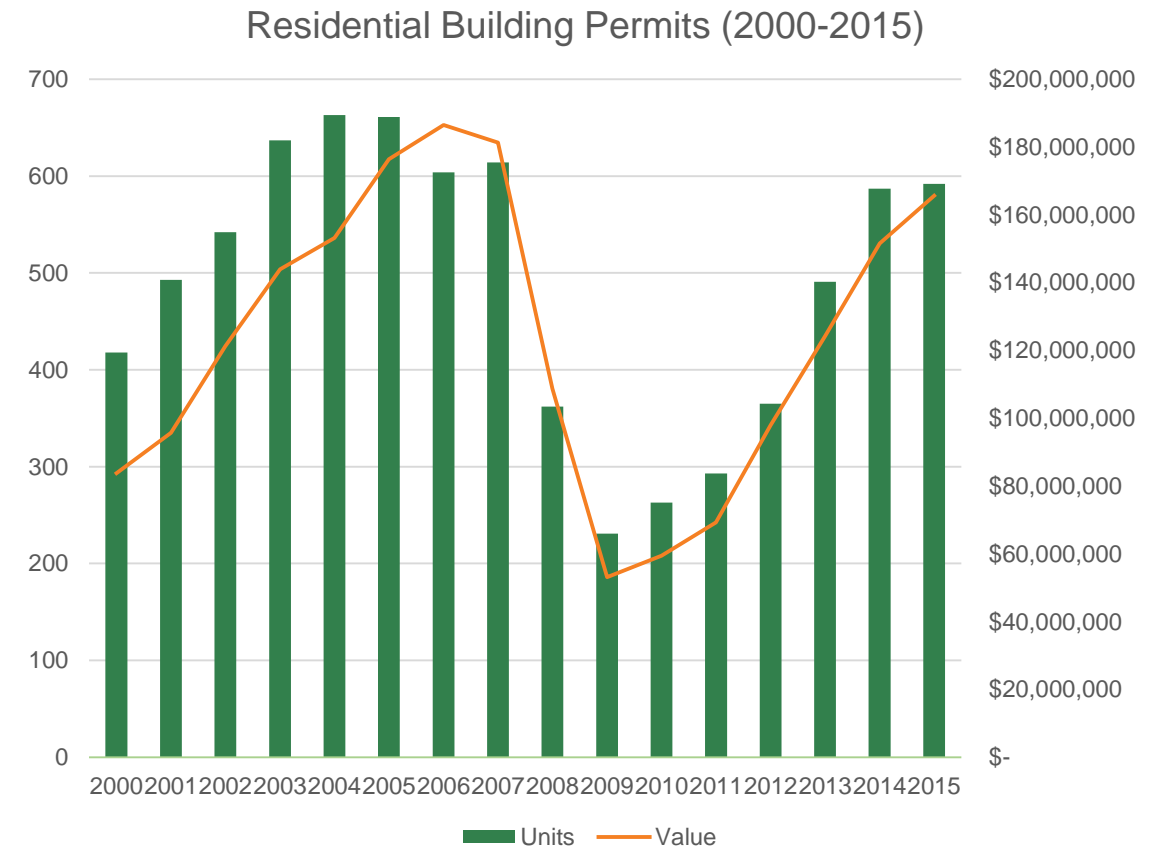
# Population Projections

- Current county population estimate is 70,928
- Four projections through 2040 with estimates varying from 98,000 to 128,000



# Projections Implications

- Could be demand for 12,000-25,000 new homes
  - Pre-recession rates of building permits is likely barring future recessions
  - Does not include full build out of Chatham Park (only 50%)
  - Design, density and location of development will be key to reducing impacts
- Jobs to Housing Balance of 0.46 (2015) could range from 0.43 to 0.55 in 2040
  - Depends on rate of population increase and employment figures
  - Impacts tax base, access to jobs, commute time, emissions



# DRAFT GOALS\*

1. **Preserve the rural character** and lifestyle of Chatham County.
2. Preserve, **protect, and enable agriculture** and forestry.
3. **Promote a compact growth pattern** by developing in and near existing towns, communities, and in designated, well planned, walkable mixed use centers.
4. **Diversify the tax base** and generate more quality, in-county jobs to reduce dependence on residential property taxes, create economic opportunity and reduce out-commuting.
5. Conserve **natural resources**.
6. Provide **recreational opportunities**.
7. **Provide infrastructure** to support desired development and support economic and environmental objectives.
8. **Become more resilient** by mitigating, responding, and adapting to emerging threats.
9. **Provide equitable access** to high-quality education, housing and community options for all.
10. Foster a **healthy community**.

*\*Approved by SC 10/20/16*

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

## INITIAL SURVEY



The screenshot shows the introduction page of a survey. At the top left is the Plan Chatham logo, which features a stylized house and waves with the text "PLAN CHATHAM" and "working together to preserve & progress" below it. Below the logo, the text reads "Chatham County Comprehensive Plan Survey (Steering Committee Preview Version)". A blue header bar contains the word "Introduction". The main content area has two questions:

**1. Gender**

- Male
- Female

**2. What area of the County do you live in?**

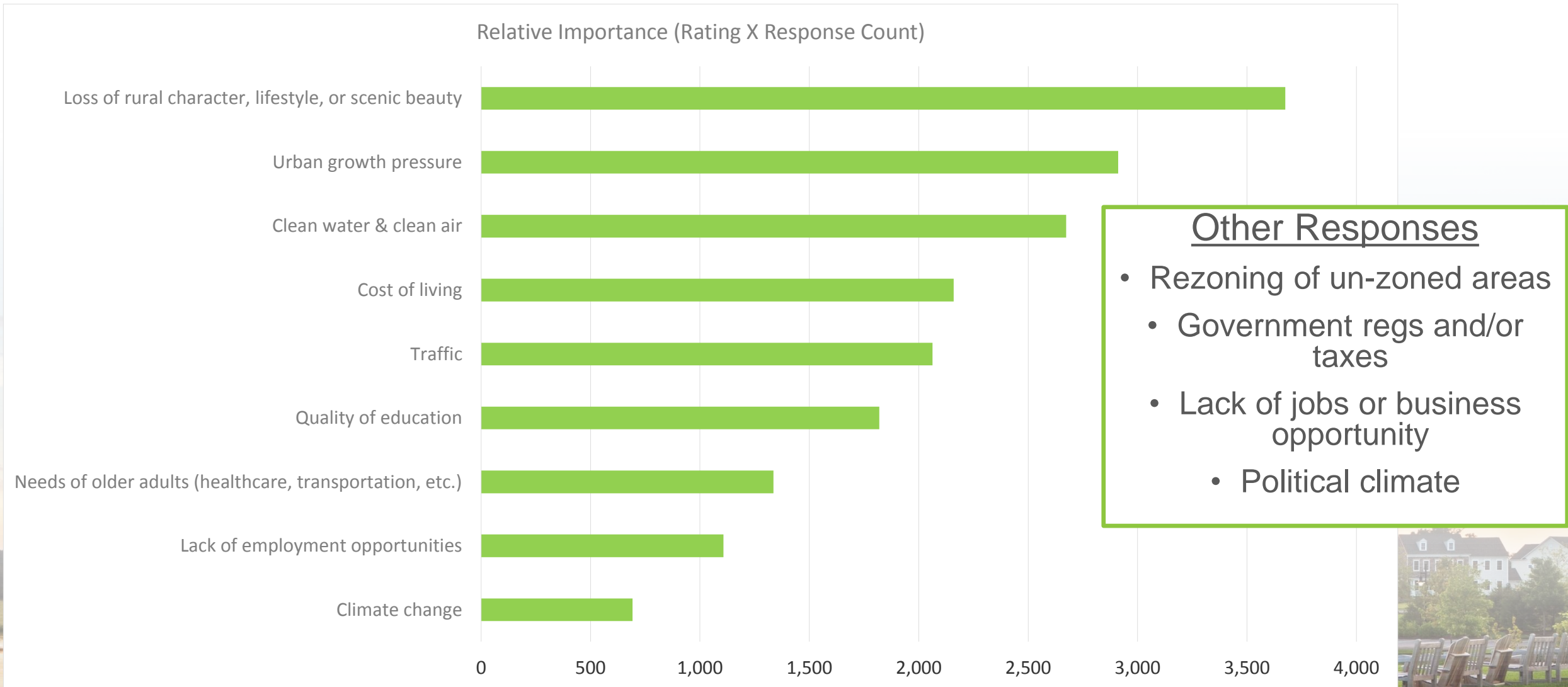
- Central Chatham & Pittsboro area
- Northeast Chatham (north of US 64 and east of Haw River)
- Northwest Chatham & Siler City area (Silk Hope, Snow Camp, etc.)
- Southwest Chatham (south of Siler City and west of NC 87)
- Southeast Chatham (south of US 64 and east of NC 87)
- Other (please specify)

Below the "Other" option is a text input field.

Thanks for everyone  
who took the survey.  
We received almost  
1600 responses!!!



# Q8: What are your biggest concerns about the future for you and your family?



# Goal 1. Preserve the rural character and lifestyle of Chatham County.

## ISSUES / SOURCE

- Preserving the rural character and lifestyle of Chatham County was voted as most important in survey.
- Form and function is important

## OBJECTIVES / DRAFT RECS

- OBJ: Preserve and restore cultural and historic resources.
- OBJ: Preserve farms and lifestyle in the western part of the county and forests and open space in the eastern part of the county.
- **Development design** recommendations may help preserve form of rural character (architecture, open space, etc.)
- “Lifestyle” has need for **flexibility for rural businesses**, especially for agricultural related entrepreneurship



# Goal 2. Preserve, protect, and enable agriculture and forestry.

## ISSUES / SOURCE

- Related to rural character and lifestyle
- Agriculture (all types) is key component of Chatham's economy and identity

## OBJECTIVES / DRAFT RECS

- OBJ: Maintain the number and diversity of farms and forestry operations.
- OBJ: Support existing and expanded agriculture and forestry operations, including value-added production.
- OBJ: Reduce encroachment on or development pressure on agriculture
- Agricultural focus group has had two meetings and a agricultural industry survey has been conducted



# AGRICULTURAL SURVEY

**124 Responses  
will be used to develop  
recommendations for  
Comp Plan**

**Residential growth and  
associated impacts** was  
voted the #1 primary threat to  
agricultural operations in  
Chatham County

# AGRICULTURAL SURVEY

**124 Responses  
will be used to develop  
recommendations for  
Comp Plan**

## **What should the county be doing to support agriculture?**

1. **Consider impact** on agriculture and forestry of new ordinances and regulations
2. **More education and outreach** to farmers and prospective farmers
3. **Designate areas of important agricultural lands** and/or concentrations of working farms on a future land use map and direct development away from these areas
4. **Create an agricultural zoning district** to limit residential density in key agricultural areas or improve site design to reduce conflicts
5. Support for **agricultural related instruction** in high school and at community colleges

# Goal 5. Conserve natural resources.

## ISSUES / SOURCE

- Related to rural character and lifestyle
- Agriculture (all types) is key component of Chatham's economy and identity

## OBJECTIVES / DRAFT RECS

- OBJ: Maintain and restore the quality and quantity of groundwater and surface water resources.
- OBJ: Preserve and protect the ecosystem services provided by green infrastructure.
- Strategies to **preserve and improve tree canopy and water quality**
- Require/incentivize **Low Impact Development (LID)**
- Encourage or **require conservation design** in certain areas



*Each development conserved green spaces but did not connect them.*

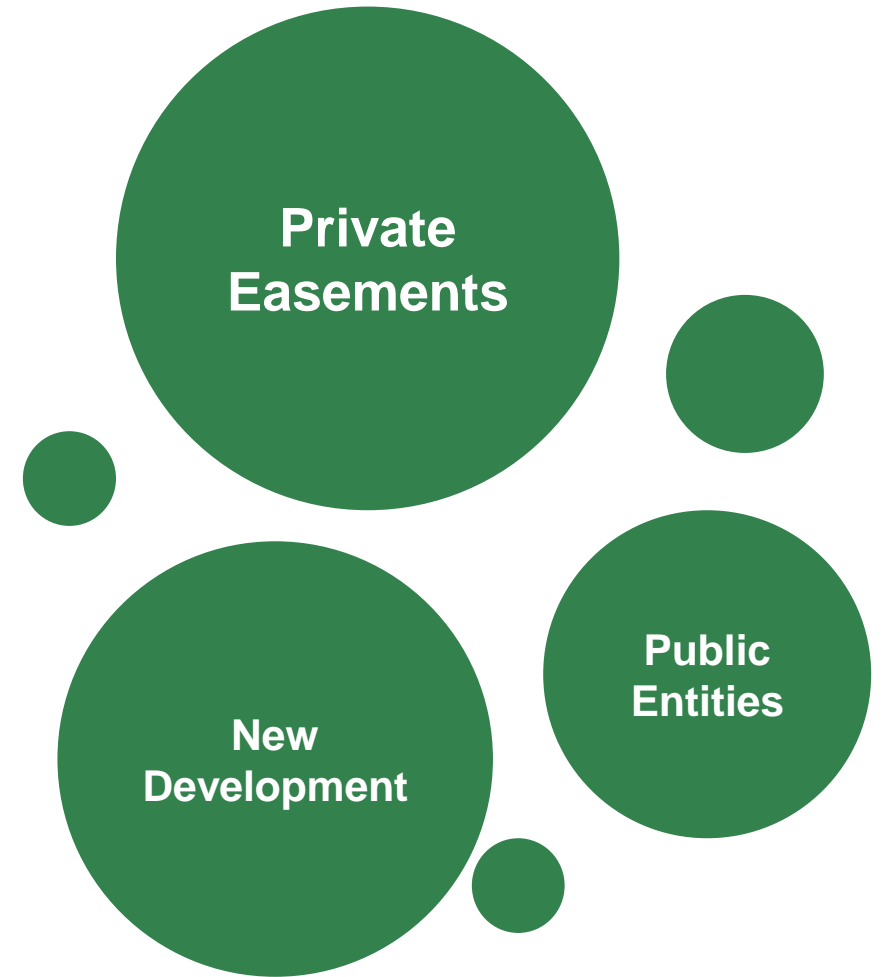


*These sites maintain connections between them while achieving the same level of development.*

*Importance of connected green space (Source: Evaluating and Conserving Green Infrastructure Across the Landscape, Karen Firehock)*

# BIG IDEA

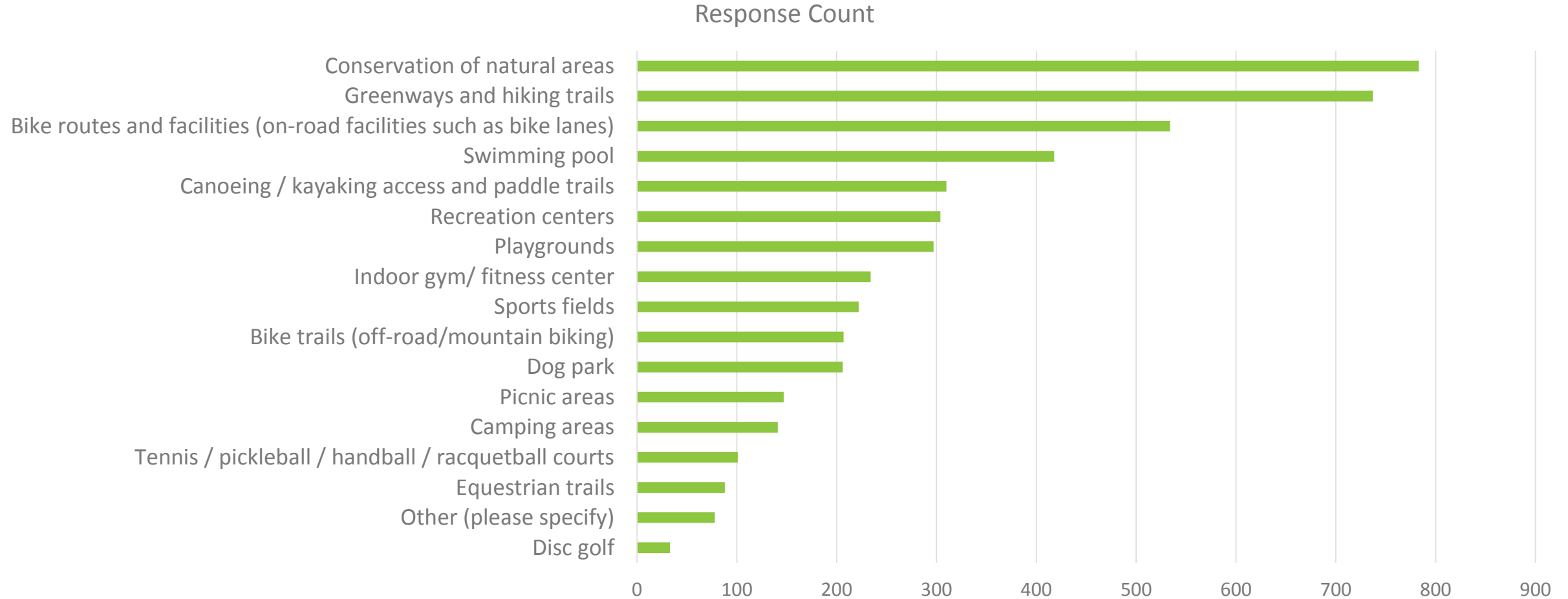
PERMANENTLY PROTECT  
20,000+ ACRES OF  
ADDITIONAL LAND BY  
2040\*



*\*FOR PERSPECTIVE THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 46,000 ACRES OF PROTECTED LAND CURRENTLY IN CHATHAM COUNTY. THIS INCLUDES PRIVATE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS.*

# Q16: What should be the highest priority recreational facilities for the County? (Choose up to 4):

Answered: 1340 Skipped: 329





# Goal 5. Provide recreational opportunities and access to open space.

## ISSUES / SOURCE

- Recreation and open space are part of the Chatham County brand
- A key to economic development (QOL and tourism)

## OBJECTIVES / DRAFT RECS

- OBJ: Provide expanded recreation opportunities and improve access to parks, community facilities, trails and open space
- **Maintain and improve existing parks**
- **Need for indoor rec center** that is multi-purpose
- **Build trails and greenways** (need trails coordinator position)
- **Promote active transportation** (i.e. complete streets)
- Leverage **natural, cultural and historic resources** (i.e. tourism)—improved river access, new park types for nature and historic parks
- Specify role of **private development**

CURRENT ACCESS TO PARKS		
Residential parcels within 0.5 miles of a park	3,358	13%
Residential parcels within 0.5 mile of a complete trail or park	4,297	17%
TOTAL RESIDENTIAL PARCELS	25,799	

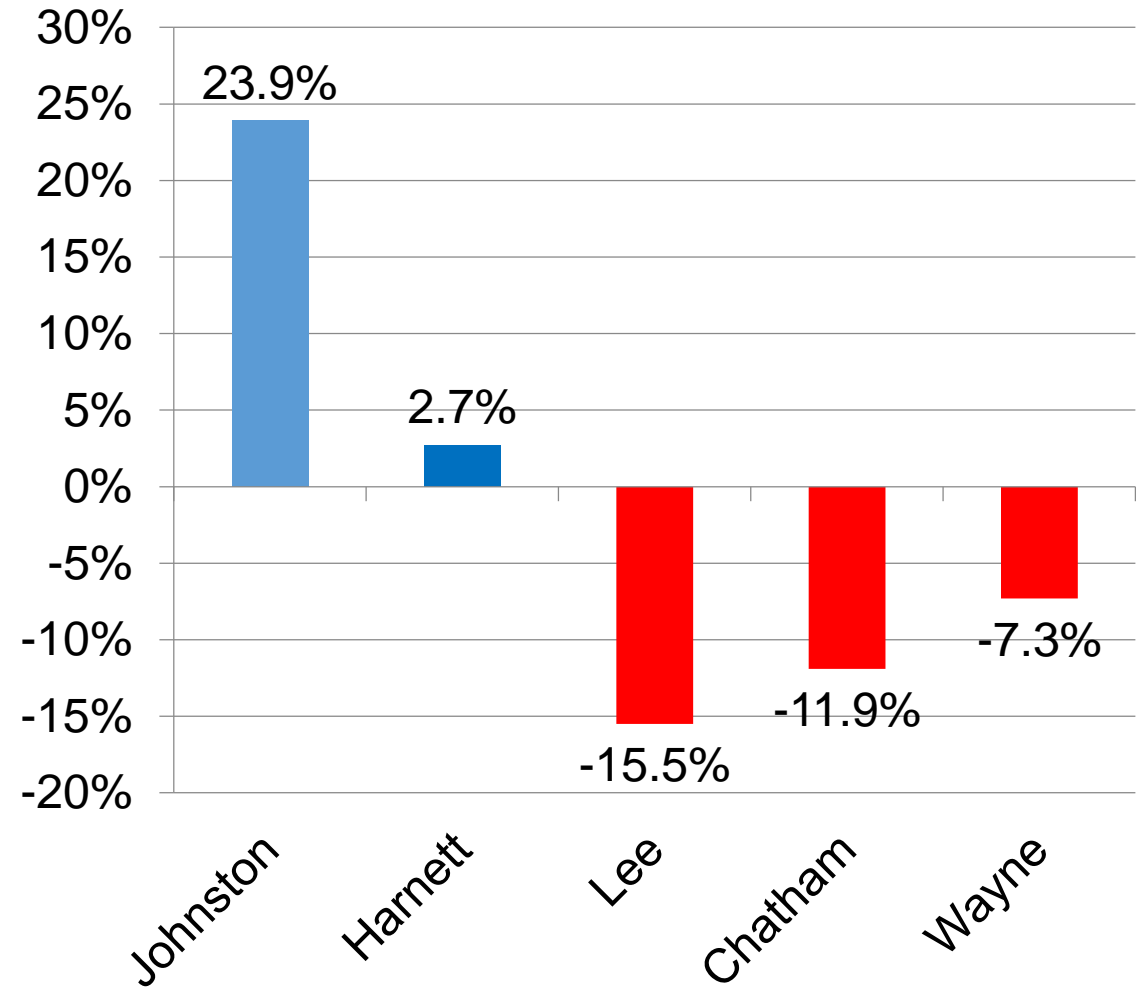
*Level of service analysis for parks and trails.*



*Private amenities will be key to filling level of service gaps*

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Job growth is down (need more jobs, higher-wage jobs)
- Median household income is high (NE)
- Inequities across the county
- Concerns about economic strategy aligning with infrastructure/utility capacity
- Focus on quality of life and community character
- Need for county-wide collaboration



COUNTY JOB GROWTH 2000-2014

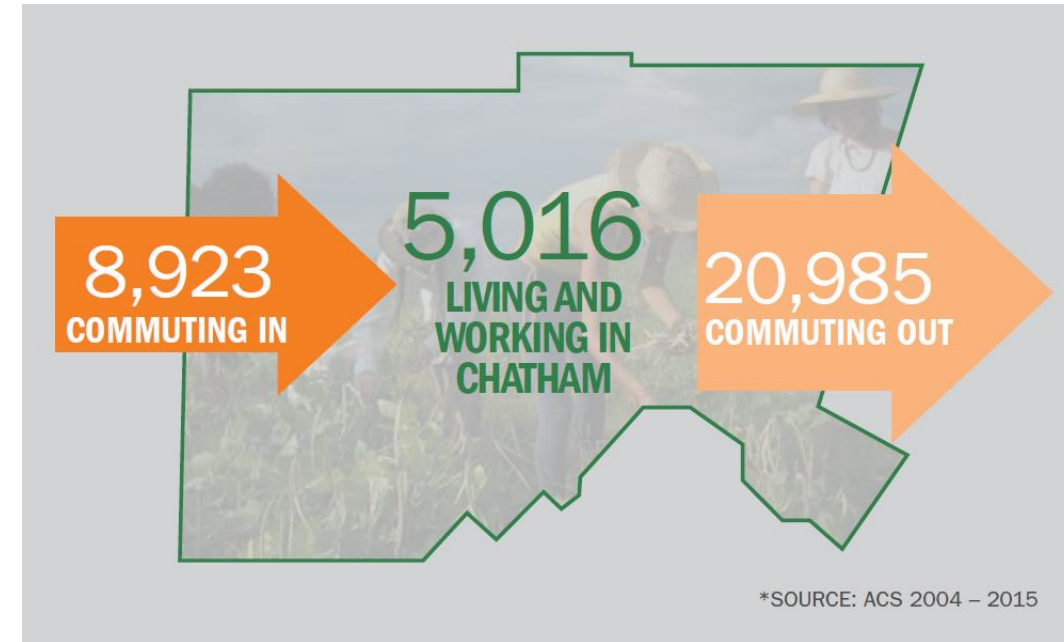
# Goal 4. Diversify the tax base and generate more quality, in-county jobs to reduce dependence on residential property taxes, create economic opportunity and reduce out-commuting.

## ISSUES / SOURCE

- 21,000 people leave the county each day for jobs
- Commercial + industrial portion of the tax base (dollar value) is 8% of total (compared to 20-40% in Lee, Durham and Wake)
- Approximately 58% of retail sales “leak out” to other counties. Losing \$207 million annually in potential sales

## OBJECTIVES / DRAFT RECS

- OBJ: Increase non-residential share of the tax base and high-quality, in-county jobs.
- **Strengthen support** for existing businesses
- **Infrastructure in support of retail and employment** in Towns and other defined “centers”
- Support for **entrepreneurship and tourism**



*Commuting patterns in Chatham County*

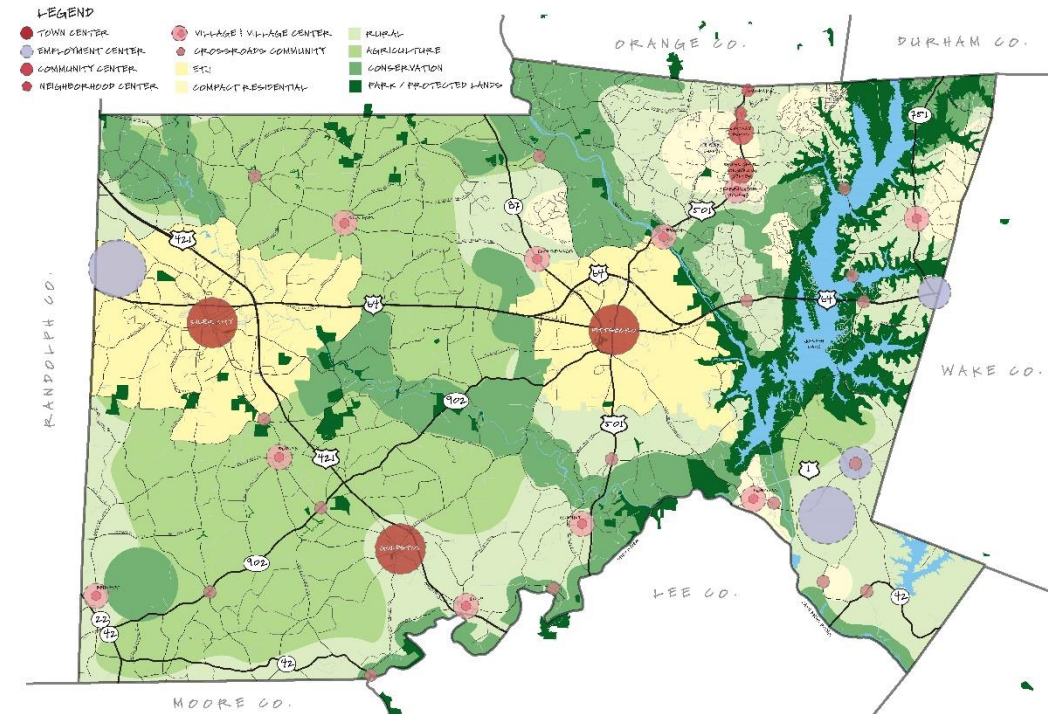
# Goal 3. Promote a compact growth pattern by developing in and near existing towns, communities, and in designated, well planned, walkable mixed use centers.

## ISSUES / SOURCE

- Compact growth pattern key to preserving rural character on the “edges” and achieving environmental and agricultural goals
- Surveys indicate importance of small town feel, scale, sense of place and desire for walkable, mixed use

## OBJECTIVES / DRAFT RECS

- OBJ: Reduced impacts, proximity of multiple uses, long-term cost to serve
- **Direct development** toward towns and planned growth areas to reach critical mass needed for walkability, transit, etc.
- **Avoid “strip” commercial development** along corridors
- **Prevent urban development in areas with key natural assets** and agricultural operations



*Draft Land Use and Conservation Framework Plan*

# NEXT STEPS

- Next round of public meetings will be in February (week of Feb 20<sup>th</sup>)
- Draft Plan for review in March
- Joint BOC / PB worksession
- Adoption in spring of 2017

