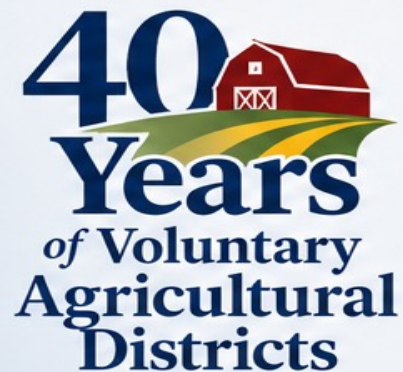




★
*North Carolina Department of
Agriculture and Consumer Services*

Planning and Zoning

- Gillian Phillips, Long Range Planning Development Manager, Buncombe Planning Department
- Jesse Day, Regional Planning Director, Piedmont Triad Regional Council
- Jason Davis, Henderson County Planning Board & North River Farms

**N★C
FOREVER
FARMS**





Protecting Farmland through Land Use Policy

Presented by

Gillian Phillips, AICP, MPA

Long Range Planning Division Manager

Buncombe County Planning & Development Department



BUNCOMBE COUNTY



Why Protect our Working Lands?

Supports water quality, aquifer, recharge, and soil conservation

Compact development patterns reduce impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff

Conserved farms maintain ecosystem services, habitat continuity, and local food system

Overwhelming support for conservation of farms and environmentally sensitive areas in Buncombe County



Buncombe County

2043 Comprehensive Plan



- First ever Comprehensive adopted Plan in Buncombe County
- Integrates land use, hazard mitigation, environmental conservation, and working lands
- Establishes policy direction for future zoning, text amendments, and development regulations

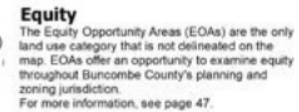


Growth, Equity, & Conservation Framework (GEC)

- Created the first ever Future Land Use Plan map for the County. This helps guide where growth should occur
- Prioritizes the conservation of rural and agricultural lands
- **Directs development intensity to infrastructure-served areas to avoid sprawl into farmland**
- Provides legal and policy basis for zoning updates that will help protect working lands.



GROWTH, EQUITY, & CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK MAP



Conservation Land Use Categories

Categories:



Protected Public Land



Conservation Working Lands



Rural Community



Rural Center

Defined the Character by:

- ✓ Limited uses
- ✓ Lower Density
- ✓ Scale of development matching area



COMP PLAN POLICES SUPPORTING WORKING LANDS



- Supports continued and additional funding for conservation easements
- Incentivize cluster development and voluntary conservation of land
- Supports preserving rural character and farmland protection through Zoning changes
- Promote place based economic development



Work Together

- Made sure farmers and rural community members were represented when working on the Comp Plan
- Our Land Resources Department is a stakeholder and we keep them in the loop and constantly engaged through our planning and development regulation drafting processes
- Work together to make sure both sets of regulations (development and VAD) are being enforced
- Preserving rural character and farmland protection through Zoning changes



Questions?



BUNCOMBE COUNTY





PIEDMONT TRIAD
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Regional Strategies For Open Space and Farmland Preservation

CREATIVE REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

NC Voluntary Agriculture District Conference July 23, 2026

Jesse Day, AICP – Regional Planning Director

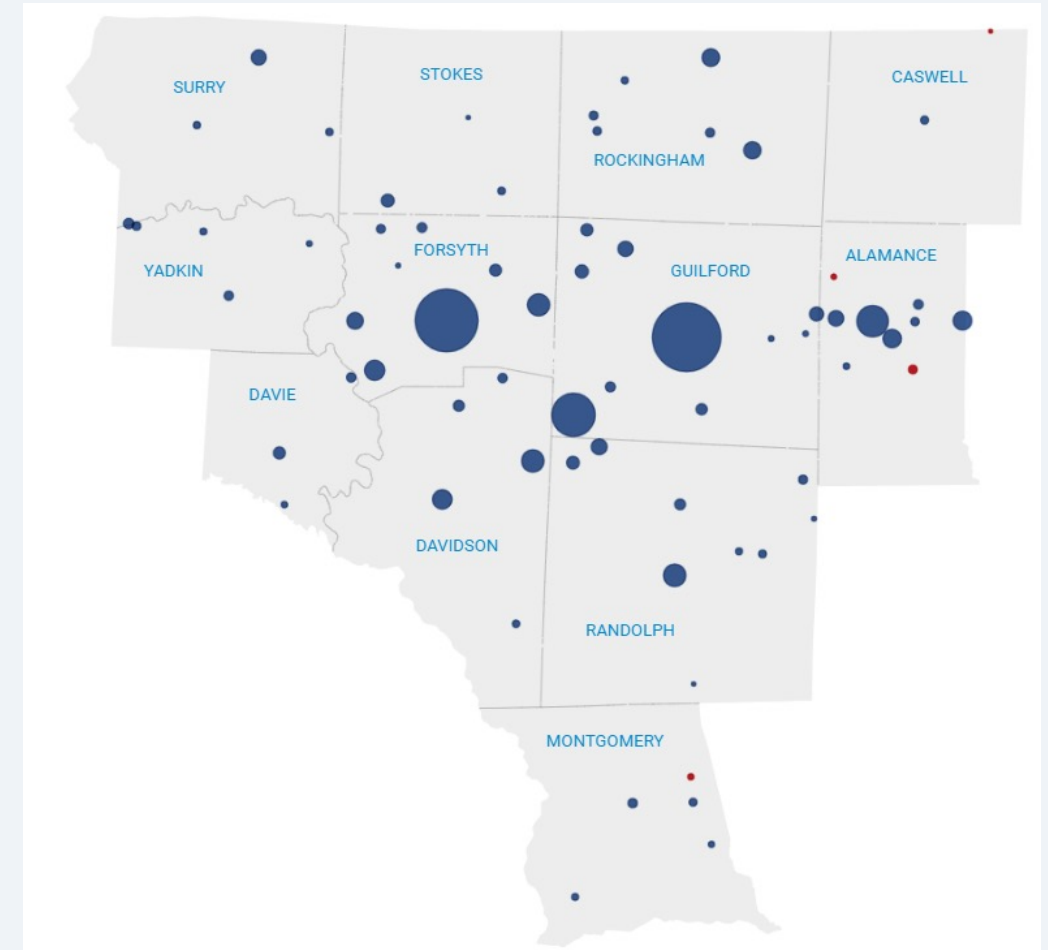




What we do



12 counties and 64 municipalities in total:





Presentation Goals

- Understand how the City of High Point Comprehensive Plan catalyzed a regional open space preservation effort
- Review tools for funding open space and farmland preservation
- Review additional efforts to support the Piedmont Triad food system through **Growing Food Finance**



Organizational Framework of the Plan

OUR VISION

Core Values & Planning Principles

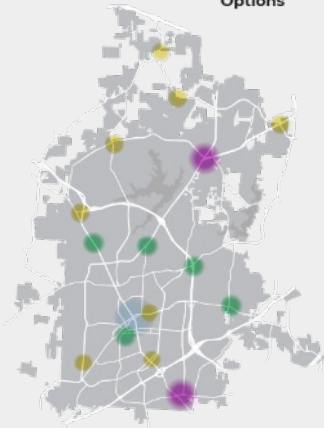


Three Priorities



Cultivate a Sense of Community and Unity
Strengthen the Sense of Place and Economic Vitality of Downtown
Diversify and Integrate Housing with Other Land Uses and Transportation Options

Preferred Growth Scenario



OUR GROWTH FRAMEWORK



OUR WAY FORWARD 15 Strategic Initiatives

Cultivate a Sense of Community and Unity

- 1 Focused Investment in the Activity Centers
- 2 Fund Community Development and Housing
- 3 Create a Community Reinvestment Fund
- 4 Revitalize Washington Street as a Catalyst Neighborhood Center
- 5 Collaborate with Partners to Revitalize the Southwest Area

Strengthen the Sense of Place and Economic Vitality of Downtown

- 1 Geographically Focused Investment
- 2 Economic Development Incentives for Downtown Housing
- 3 Connect to Core Neighborhoods with Streetscape Improvements
- 4 Collaboration with Local and Regional Partners
- 5 Downtown Branding

Diversify and Integrate Housing with Other Land Uses and Transportation Options

- 1 Update the Development Ordinance
- 2 Initiate a Multifaceted Approach to Diversifying Housing
- 3 Complete Streets and Transit Options
- 4 Connect the City by Completing Sidewalks
- 5 Develop a Greenbelt Program

OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

COMPONENT 3 OF THE GROWTH FRAMEWORK



Would you prefer to see the City fund open space preservation and acquisition as part of a line item in the General Fund or consider a bond for open space?

“ I would prefer the City issue a bond for open space preservation and acquisition. If we wait too long, it will all be gone.”

“ Both, we need immediate funds and ongoing funds.”

“ I would prefer a line item in the General Fund, similar to how we fund streets, sidewalks and other important projects. I understand this would be an annual contribution.”

19%

I would prefer a line item in the General Fund, similar to how we fund streets, sidewalks and other important projects. I understand this would be an annual contribution.

17%

I would prefer the City issue a bond for open space preservation and acquisition. If we wait too long, it will be gone.

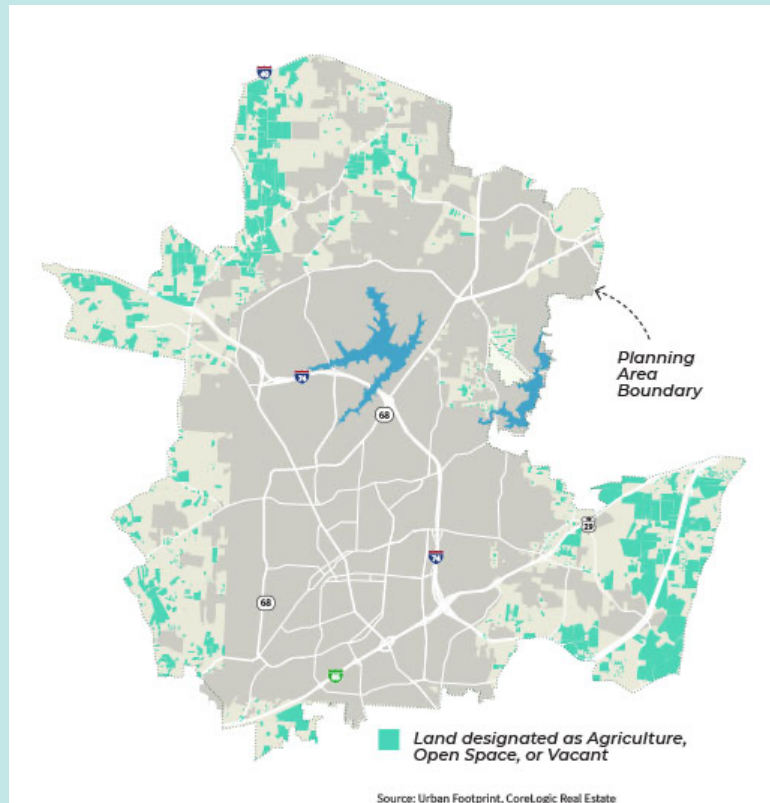
59%

Both, we need immediate funds and ongoing funds.

6%

Other local funding option.

The preservation of open space, agricultural land, viewsheds, and land for future recreational amenities is as much a part of the growth framework as the other components.



CATEGORIES OF TOOLS TO PRESERVE LAND

PLANNING



Identify important natural resources, preserved lands, and linkages

REGULATION



Use of local ordinances and state laws to protect important natural resources and lands that surround preserved areas

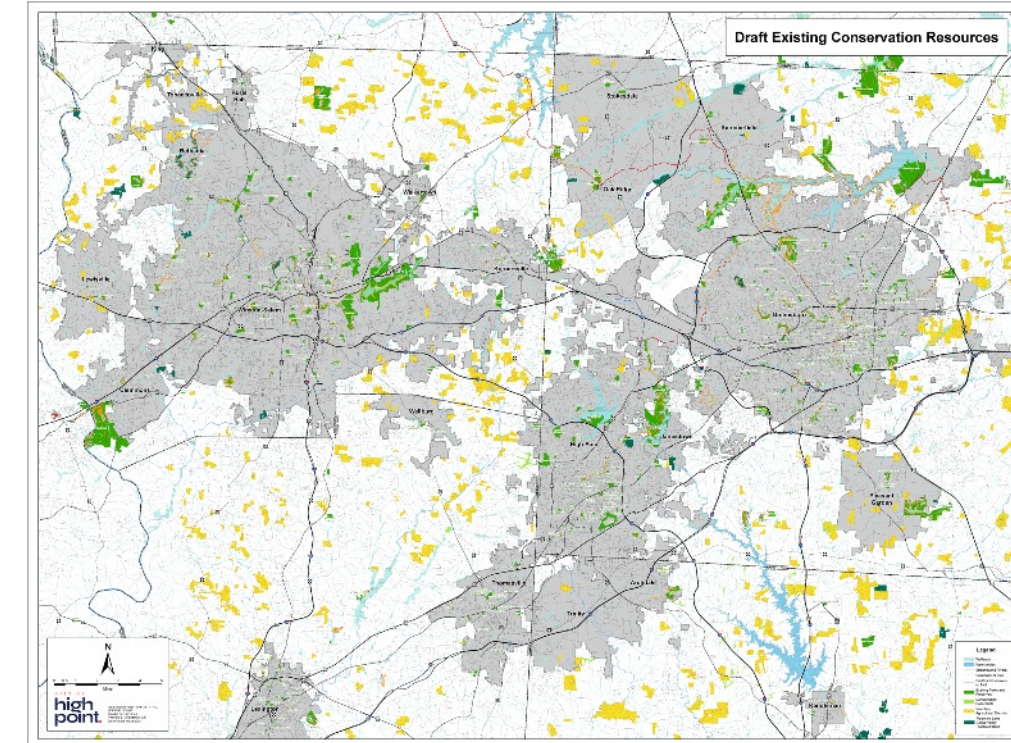
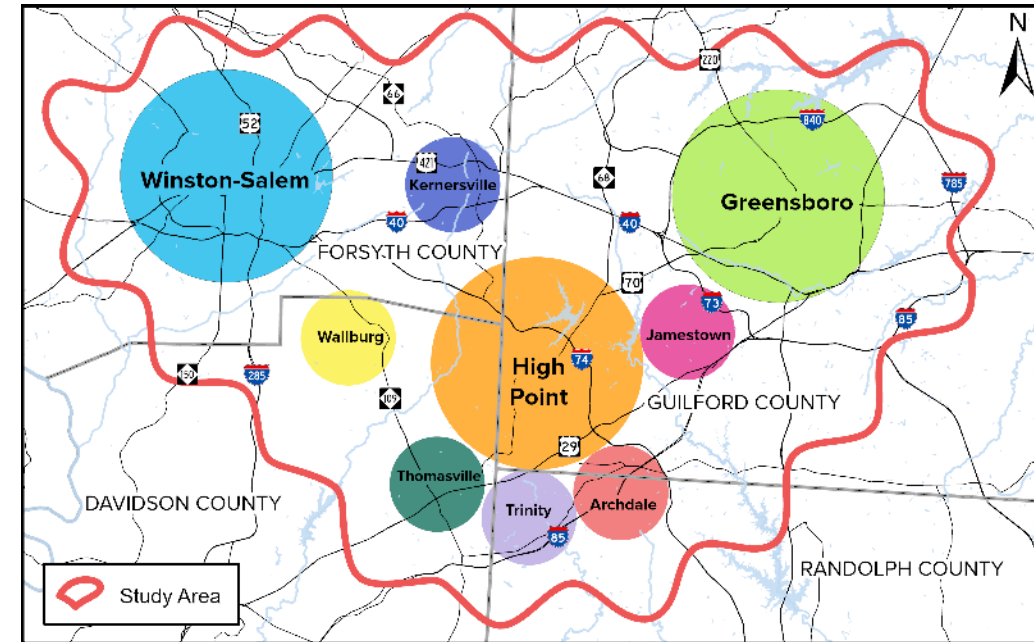
ACQUISITION



Obtain land through purchase or donation; includes purchase of full title, development rights and/or conservation easements

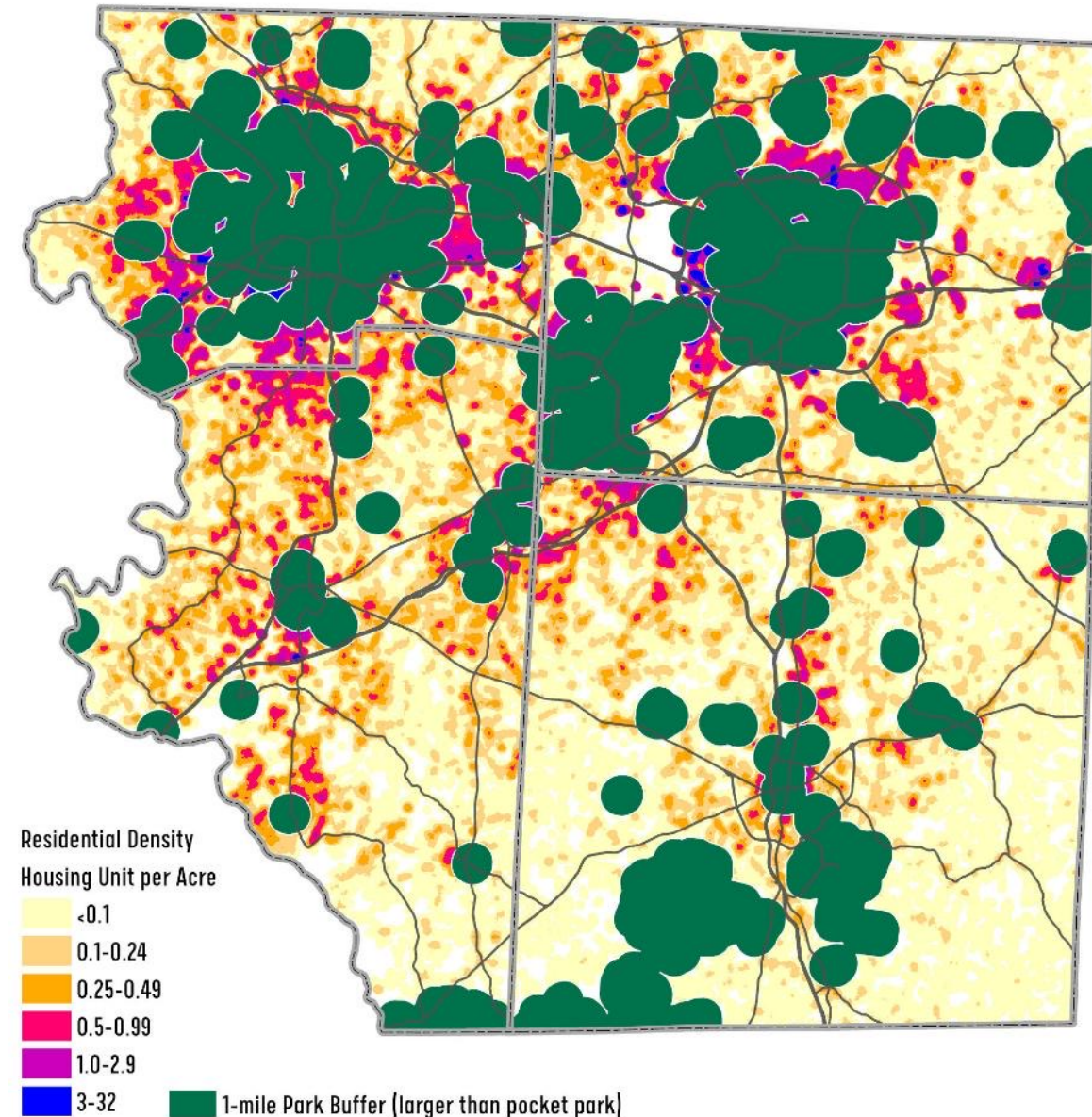
Regional Open Space Initiative Project

- **Early 2025**
 - Conduct research on other open space initiatives
 - Convene local governments and non-profits in conservation and farmland preservation
- **Late 2025**
 - Map Assets (e.g. preserved lands, VADs, parks)
 - Define why this is important now? What are strategies that could work for our region?
- **Spring 2026**
 - Focus groups with conservation, food system, economic developers and real estate professionals and builders



Where? What is Important to Value, Map and Model?

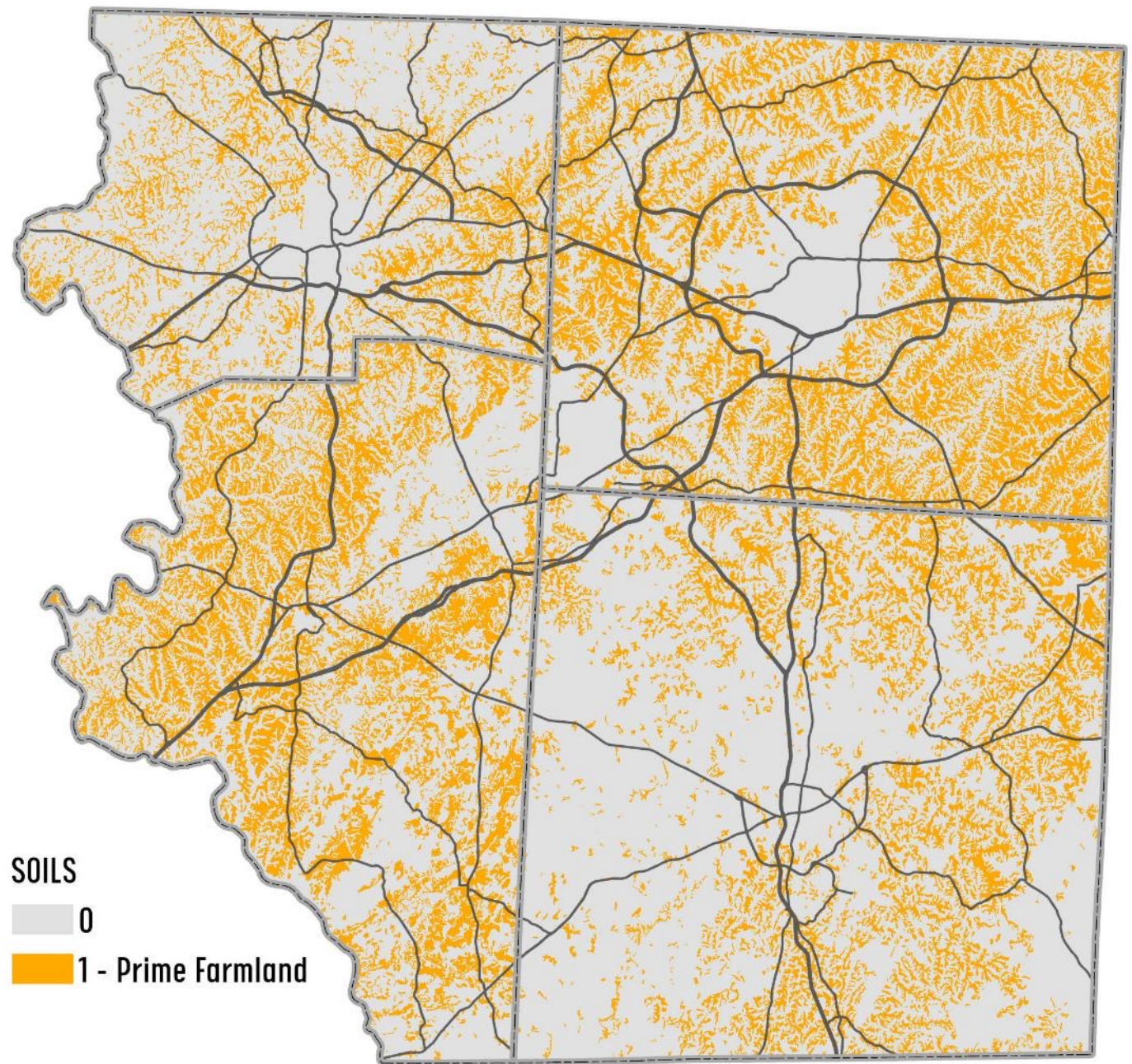
- **Established 5 Asset categories for GIS model**
 - Recreation (population proximity to trails, parks and water bodies)
 - Agriculture and Food System (VADs, PUV, Prime farmland, active farms)
 - Forest – contiguous forest cover
 - Conservation (Natural heritage areas watersheds)
 - Growth Pressure (Zoning, future land use)
- **Overlay with population and growth**
 - Need to understand areas where growth and high value assets for preservation exist



AGRICULTURE: SOIL

Data Sources:

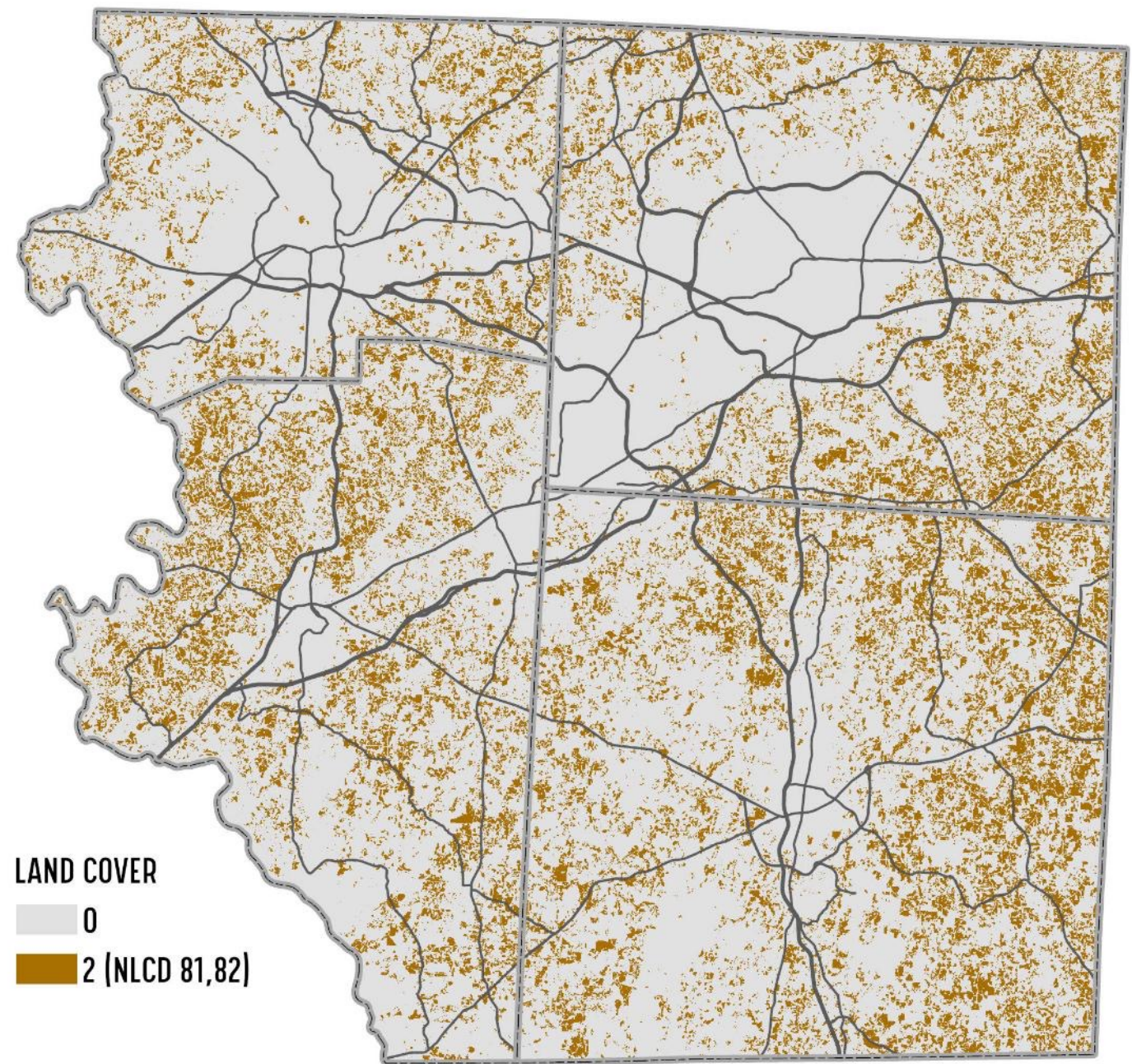
- SSURGO Soils



AGRICULTURE: AG LAND USE

Data Sources:

- National Land Cover Database

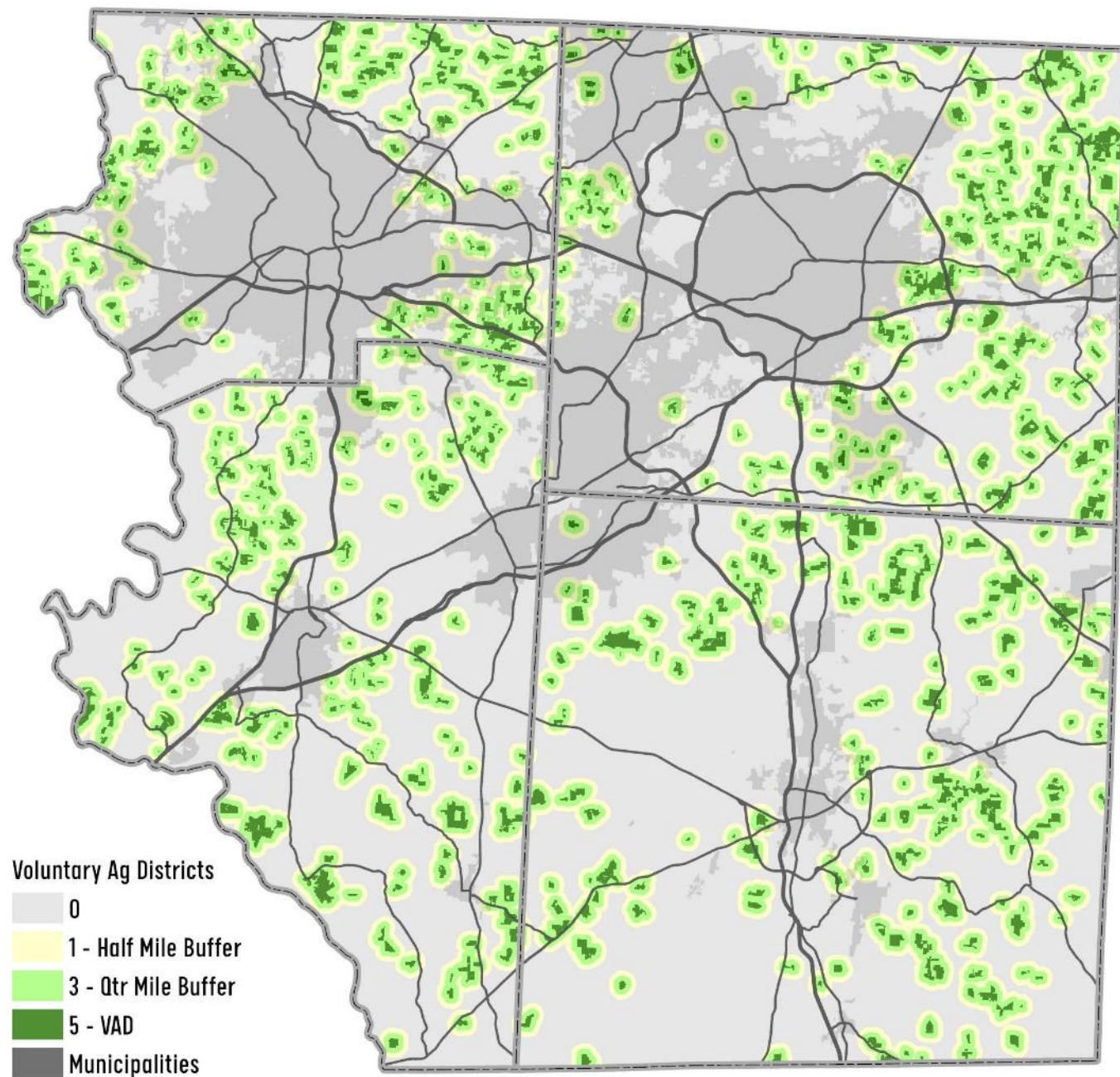


Where are the Agricultural Assets?

AGRICULTURE: VAD

Data Sources:

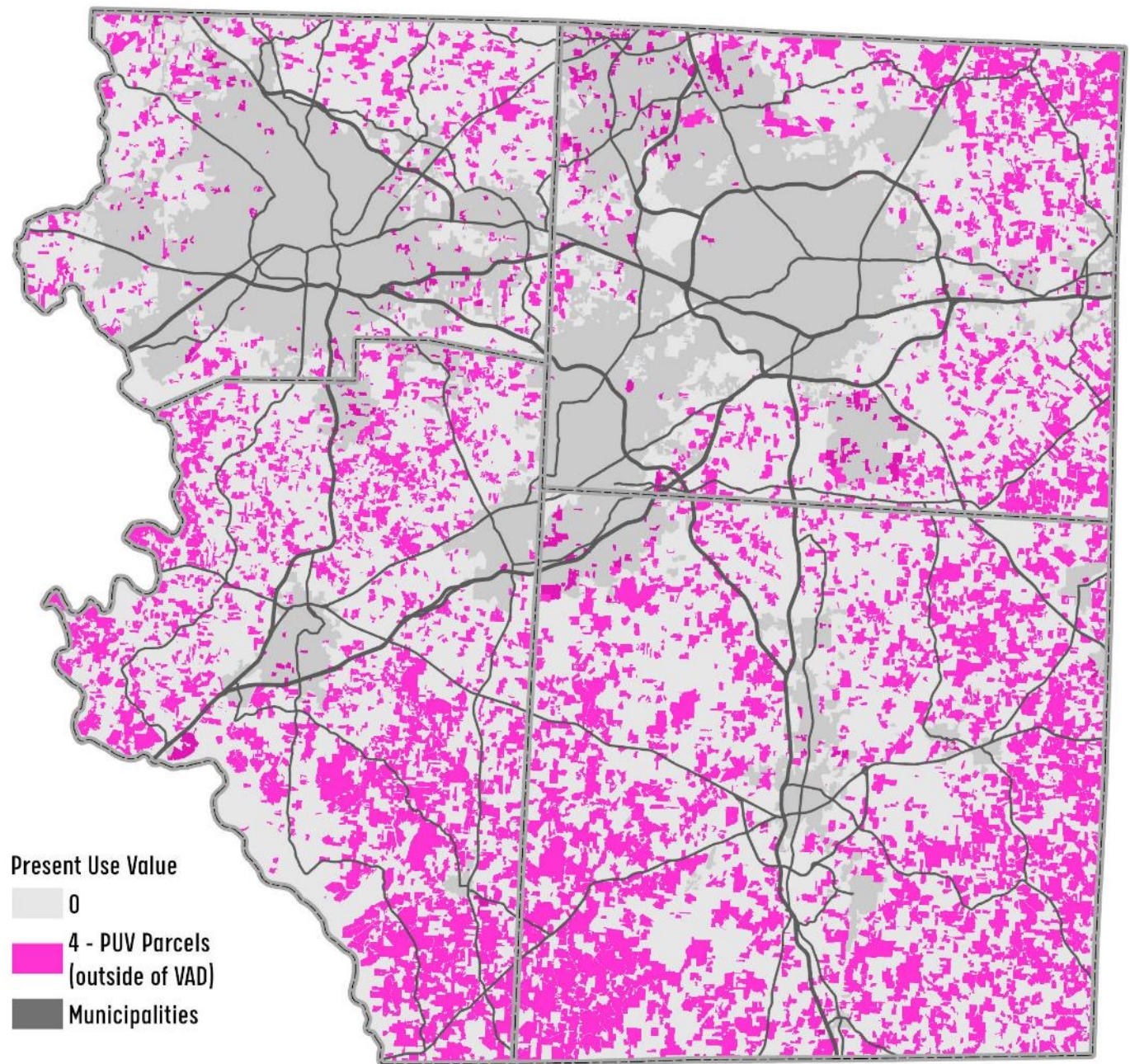
- County Data



AGRICULTURE: PUV

Data Sources:

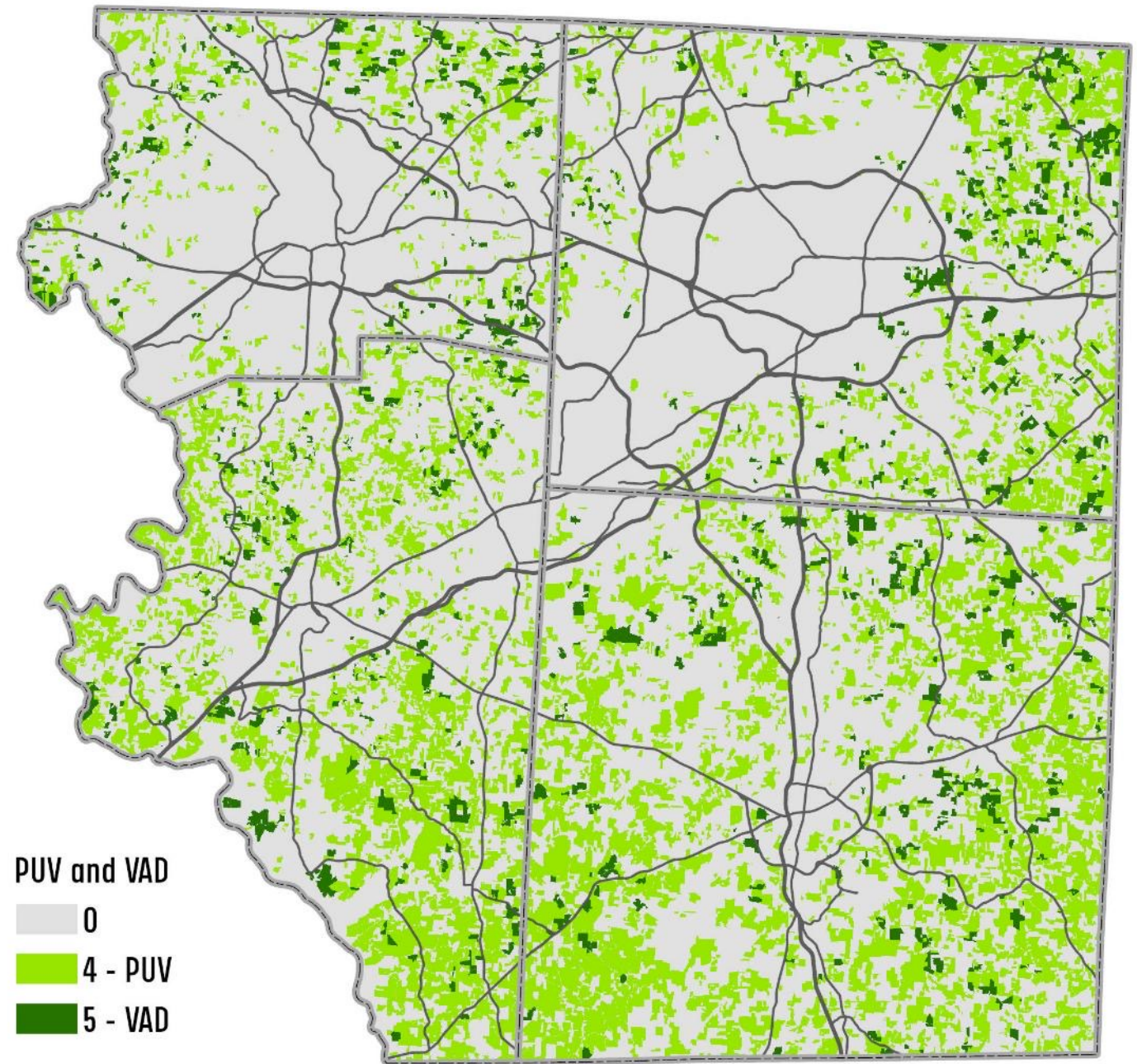
- County Data



AGRICULTURE: PUV & VAD

Data Sources:

- County Data



How? What are the Tools to Achieve the Goal?

- **Policy Based**

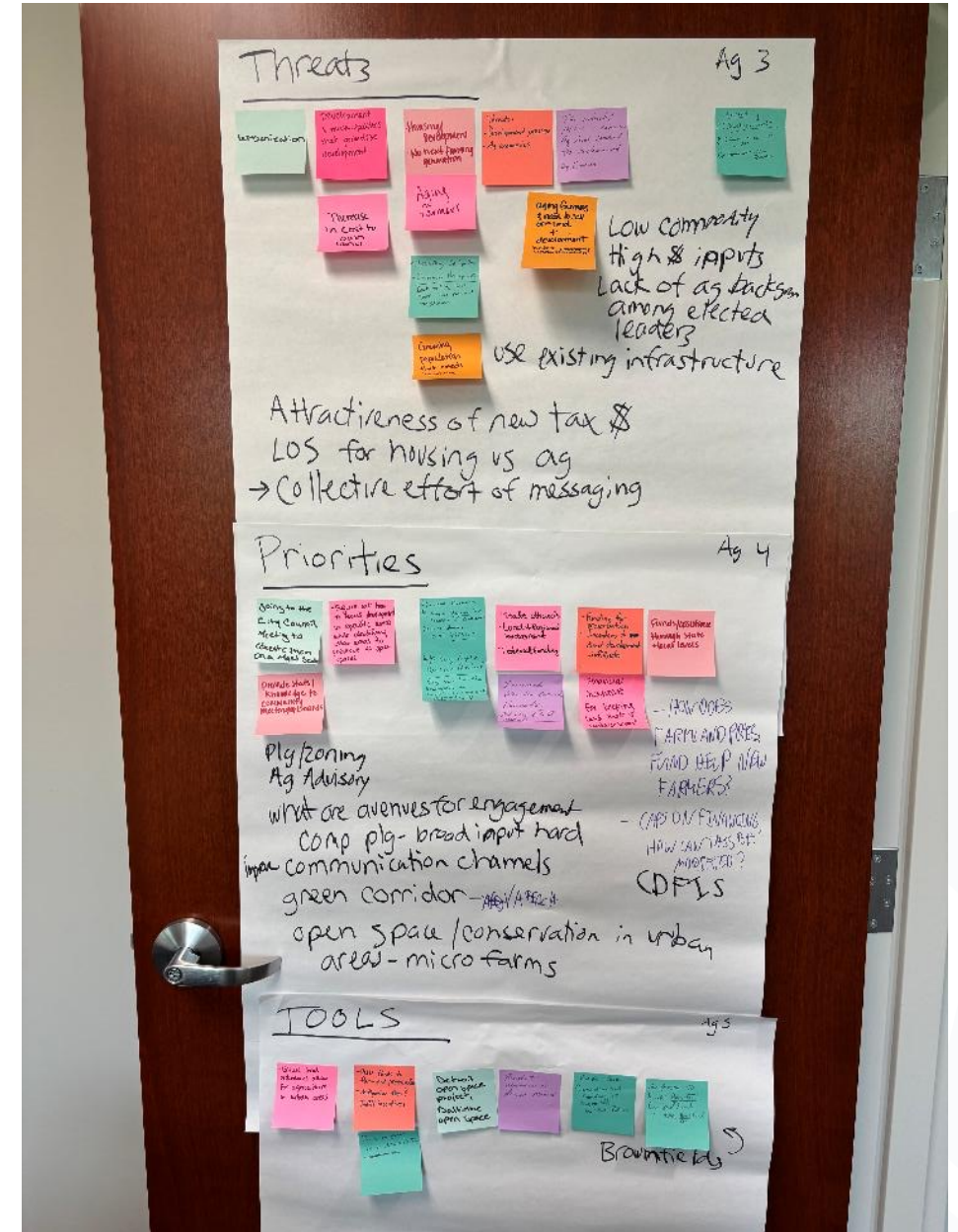
- **Regional credit system for land preservation**
- **Zoning policy changes to increase density where infrastructure exists**
- **Impervious surface credits for stormwater management**
- **Increase tax incentives for land preservation**
- **Brownfield development to reduce pressure on greenfield development**
- **Establish a Regional Open Space District**

- **Acquisition**

- **Modify farmland preservation funds and programs to better support farms (2026 budget includes \$ increase)**
- **Open space bonds**

- **Voluntary Programs**

- **Trail access on active farmland**
- **Land protection roundtables**





GROWING
FOOD FINANCE

Growing Food Finance in the Triad

a regional project funded through the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) Partnerships Program

Growing Food Finance is led by Piedmont Triad Regional Council and the Piedmont Triad Regional Food Council in partnership with CDFI's.

- Supports access to healthy foods in underserved communities
- Strengthen local food businesses and food retail
- Expand access to capital through grants and low-interest loans
- Build stronger local and regional food systems

\$3 Million Investment

\$1 M Capacity Building- Food Finance Technical Assistance Hub

- Business counseling and mentoring
- Financial readiness resources
- Quarterly workshops & seminars
- Regional gatherings

\$2M Credit Enhancement

- Interest rate buydowns
- Loan guarantees
- Reduced lending risk



Connecting Land Use, Agriculture, and Food Finance



Land-use decisions influence whether farmers can remain productive. Producers also need strong businesses and places to sell their products.

-
- Farmland preservation and food finance are complimentary strategies.
 - Protecting agricultural land is only part of the solution.
 - Long-term agricultural viability also depends on investments in the business, infrastructure, and access to financial tools that allow local food systems and communities to thrive.





Thank you for attending

**If you have any questions or concerns,
please feel free to contact me.**

Jesse Day, AICP
Regional Planning
jday@ptrc.org
336-904-0300



www.ptrc.org



Jason Davis
Owner of North River Farms, DB bar D Outfitters & Davis Ranch LLC
Henderson County, NC



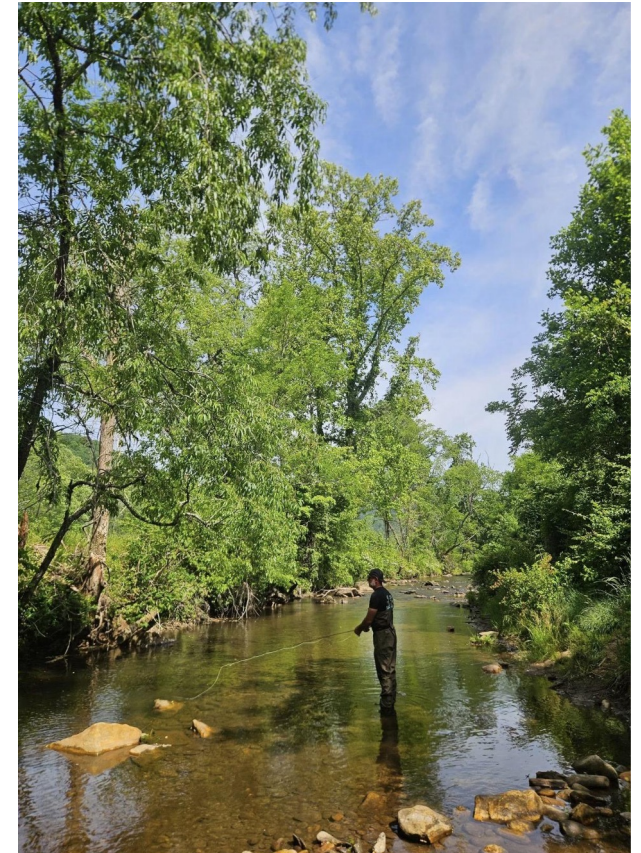


North River Farms

In 1999, I founded North River Farms with the knowledge, guidance, and hands-on experience I gained while working alongside local dairy, row crop and vegetable farmers. Their mentorship helped turn a lifelong dream into reality. We now farm over 1200 acres in Henderson, Buncombe and Transylvania Counties.

DB bar D Outfitters

In 2018, I recognized the need to diversify and my shared love with my three sons of the outdoors into DB bar D Outfitters to expand our agritourism division. DB offers and encourages more people to experience the beauty of the outdoors with private guided fly fishing trips, float trips, guided hunts and riverside camping.



Davis Ranch

In 2019, farmland became harder to continue to afford and I saw the need for the equestrians needing a place to keep their horses and trainers to run their programs. I purchased my grandparents cattle farm in Leicester and currently leasing other retired farmlands to create ***Davis Ranch***. Another division of our agritourism and a friendly place for all levels of riders, competitors, and even pony camps and lessons for beginners.



The concept of Farmland Preservation is a receptive and welcoming conversation among most audiences.

- The first step is to preserve the farmer
- The second step is the farmer has to have productive land





Local Planning & Zoning decisions affect the long term visibility of agriculture lands

Planning and zoning forces a
take back look at what “Best
Use” is of land in a certain area
based off of multiple factors,
such as topography, location,
soil type, utilities and
infrastructure



- North Carolina is 2nd in the nation for loss of farmland
- Land values are gradually pricing themselves out of farming
- Residential pressure, commercial & industrial pressure- Agriculture is being squeezed into the floodplains, farming up close and personal, high risk land
 - Conservation easements do not always benefit agriculture. Example: Agriculture land turned back into wetlands or wilderness
 - Urban sprawl does not benefit agriculture.





Everyone likes to eat, everyone likes the idea of agriculture, farms, and open space.

However this means a tolerance of agriculture best management practices. Not everyone likes noise, lights, smell, agriculture traffic, mud in the road or water runoff. These are often referred to as an agriculture nuisance.



- New development is necessary as the population grows
- Development can be at odds with agriculture operations that are often land-dependant



Most land development that occurs without proper planning is inefficient, using more land than needed to comfortably house and support communities

- Inefficient land use can cause land prices to increase, which may cause farmers who lease to lose their land to higher bidders if the owner chooses to sell.
- Poorly planned developments weaken food security and local food systems.



Good planning includes creating comprehensive plans and using zoning approaches that encourage compact , efficient growth.

- Henderson County adopted the 2045 Comprehensive Plan in 2024, which aims to preserve agriculture. This plan is consulted for all legislative development decisions, such as rezoning and major subdivisions.
- Henderson County employs zoning regulations to ensure compatible uses are placed near farming operations.



Proactive planning ensures agriculture remains viable by preserving farmland, reducing fragmentation, and maintaining the land base needed for long term food production



Farms Under Threat Report:

North Carolina is expected to pave over, fragment, or compromise 1,197,300 acres of farmland by 2040. This is the equivalent on 9,100 farms, \$1.25 billion in farm output, and 19,600 jobs (based on the averages)

- 62% of this conversion will occur on North Carolina's Nationally Significant Land
- The majority of this farmland will be converted to "low-density residential" like scattered subdivisions large-lot housing.