



County Village District Design Guide

Harnett Horizons 2040

January 2025





Harnett Horizons 2040

Planning a Brighter Future

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Introduction

The Essence of a Village

In North Carolina, a village often represents a small-scale, cohesive community that balances traditional charm with modern functionality. Its design emphasizes walkability, a strong sense of place, and human-scaled development.

The key characteristics of a village include the following:

Compact and Walkable Layout

Villages are often arranged around a central hub, such as a town square, green, or main street, making amenities accessible on foot or by bicycle. Streets are designed to prioritize pedestrians, with sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic-calming measures.

Mixed-Use Development

Residential, commercial, and civic spaces are integrated to promote convenience and social interaction. Small shops, cafes, and essential services are often located near housing, reducing reliance on cars.

Community-Oriented Spaces

A central gathering area, such as a plaza or park, serves as the heart of the village. Design includes spaces for events, markets, and casual socialization.

Human-Scaled Architecture

Buildings are typically lower in height (1–3 stories) and designed with architectural details that reflect local character and history. Facades and layouts are inviting and oriented toward the street.

Natural Integration

Villages often incorporate natural landscapes, such as open spaces, greenways, or nearby forests, to preserve a rural or semi-rural atmosphere. Sustainable design practices, like stormwater management and native plantings, are emphasized.

Connectivity

Streets and pathways are designed to connect neighborhoods and amenities seamlessly. Multimodal options, including bike lanes and proximity to transit, are encouraged.

Cultural and Historical Identity

Villages reflect the unique cultural, historical, or regional characteristics of their area through design and preservation efforts.

Villages like Pinehurst in North Carolina exemplify these principles, with their historic core, walkable layout, and integration of green spaces. Similarly, newly designed “village centers” in urbanizing areas are adapting these concepts to provide a balance between rural charm and modern needs.





Village Center - Pinehurst, North Carolina



Introduction

The Significance of a Village

Villages are vital and play a crucial role in urban planning for several reasons, serving as models of sustainable, human-centered growth while preserving cultural and community identity.

Promoting Walkability and Reducing Urban Sprawl

Villages emphasize compact, mixed-use development, minimizing the need for extensive travel by car. They reduce urban sprawl by concentrating growth in defined areas, preserving surrounding open spaces and natural resources.

Strengthening Community Identity and Social Cohesion

Villages often serve as cultural and social hubs where residents can interact, fostering a strong sense of community. Their design reinforces a shared identity, whether through architectural style, public spaces, or local traditions.

Sustainability and Environmental Benefits

By encouraging higher-density development within a smaller footprint, villages protect agricultural land and natural ecosystems. Walkable designs reduce dependency on cars, lowering greenhouse gas emissions and promoting healthier lifestyles.

Resilience and Adaptability

Villages often include a mix of uses - residential, commercial, and civic - which support local economies and enhance resilience to economic shifts. Their human-scaled designs are more adaptable to demographic and technological changes.

Efficient Use of Infrastructure and Resources

Concentrated development reduces the cost of providing infrastructure, such as water, electricity, and transportation. Public investments like schools, parks, and transit systems can be more efficiently utilized in compact areas.

Economic Vitality and Local Businesses

Villages support small businesses and local economies by creating environments where businesses thrive within walking distance of residents. They attract tourism and new residents by blending modern amenities with charm and character.

Preservation of Cultural and Historical Heritage

Villages often serve as guardians of a region's cultural and architectural history, maintaining a connection to the past. They are focal points for celebrating local traditions, festivals, and art.

Human-Centered Urban Design

Villages prioritize the needs of people over vehicles, creating spaces that feel welcoming and livable. Their scale and design make them accessible for all ages, from children to seniors.

Models for Sustainable Urbanization

As urban areas expand, village-style planning offers a scalable framework for creating livable, sustainable neighborhoods. They demonstrate how growth can coexist with environmental stewardship and community well-being.

Villages represent the harmonious intersection of tradition and progress, offering a template for thoughtful, sustainable development that benefits residents and the environment.

In Section 02 of this Guide, the components of a village are further outlined for planning and design consideration.

In order to guide the development of Village Districts based on existing settlements within Harnett County, Sections 03 through 05 outline the planning and design strategies and interventions to promote village enclaves.

Section 06 explores the opportunities for implementation of the Harnett County Village Districts with careful attention to regulatory and administrative considerations to ensure that development aligns with county policies and goals.





Village Center - Kannapolis, North Carolina

01

Harnett County's 3 Key Opportunities

1: Maintain and Celebrate Small Town Character

Harnett County embodies small-town character and charm through its close-knit communities, scenic landscapes, and friendly atmosphere – all stemming from its start with small-town character. We have the opportunity to not only maintain this legacy, but compliment a historical development pattern while filling county needs.

The county's historic downtowns showcase local businesses and quaint shops. The pace of life is slower, emphasizing family, community events, and traditional values. Scenic rivers, parks, and nature trails offer outdoor activities, while the county's agricultural roots are evident in local markets and festivals. The blend of history, natural beauty, and a warm sense of community creates an inviting and peaceful environment for both residents and visitors.

Turn of the Century Beginnings

Harnett County, North Carolina, has a rich history shaped by its geographic features and infrastructure. Early settlements often formed near rivers and streams, such as the Cape Fear River and tributaries such as Buies Creek, which provided vital resources for agriculture, trade, and transportation. These waterways supported mills and small farming communities, creating hubs of activity in the otherwise rural landscape. With the arrival of railroads in the late 19th century, towns like Dunn and Erwin emerged as key centers for commerce and textile production, leveraging the rail network to connect with larger markets. Additionally, crossroads such as those at Lillington, the county seat, became focal points for trade and governance, facilitating the growth of small towns that served the needs of surrounding agricultural areas. Together, these natural and manmade elements shaped the settlement patterns and economic development of Harnett County.

Buildings reflect the economic growth of the late 19th and early 20th centuries with a rich supply of tall pines for timber and water for agriculture. Early

European settlements provided strong connections to brick vernacular reflected in civic centers such as houses of worship, recreation and educational facilities. These structures, primarily found in historic village centers, feature styles such as Victorian, Colonial Revival, and Neoclassical. Many buildings are primarily brick and wood, with decorative facades, large windows, and intricate woodwork. The enduring architecture provides a window into the past while adding to the county's nostalgic and charming atmosphere.

Legacy of Traditional Main Streets

The traditional main streets are legacies of its historic commercial and social life. These streets born from bustling centers of commerce and community gatherings, lined with general stores, banks, and small businesses that served local residents and travelers.

Agricultural Beginnings

Harnett County has its agricultural beginnings, around traditional town centers, in its rich soil, rooted in favorable climate, and geographic features. Early settlers cleared the land for farming, cultivating tobacco, cotton, and corn as staple crops. The Cape Fear River provided essential transportation, allowing farmers to trade their goods. Small farming communities grew around these agricultural activities, with local markets and trading posts becoming vital economic hubs. Agriculture shaped the county's social and economic development, establishing a tradition of farming that still influences the area's culture and community events today.



1 Traditional Farmhouses



2 Downtown Lillington



3 Serenity | Fuquay-Varina

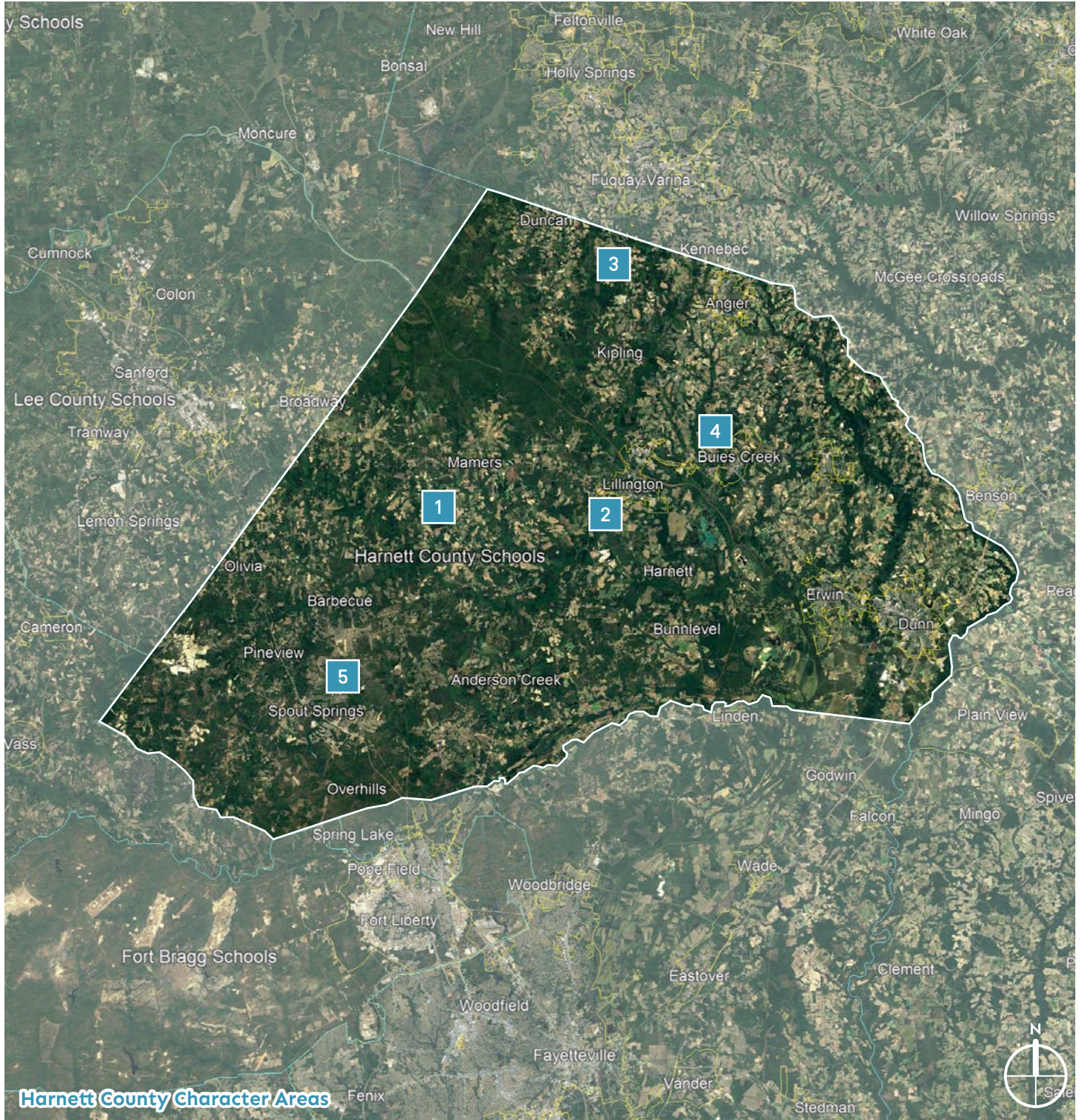


4 Campbell University



5 Large Lot Single Family





Harnett County Character Areas

Harnett County's 3 Key Opportunities

2: Provide Missing Amenities

Harnett County is in transition. Once a rural-only county is now faced with growing popularity in the form of greatly increased residential population and job growth. This growth, however, has highlighted and exacerbated limited access to key amenities throughout the County. We have the opportunity to position County Villages to thoughtfully provide these key amenities to residents throughout the County.

Food and Beverage Lacks Options and Variety

The County has limited food and beverage or restaurant options, particularly in its rural areas. Most of the dining scene consists of fast food chains and family-style eateries, while specialized cuisine and diverse dining experiences are scarce. As a result, residents seeking greater variety often travel to nearby urban centers for more eclectic choices, from international flavors to trendy cafes. The lack of diverse culinary offerings creates a gap for locals and visitors who wish to enjoy unique and varied dining experiences without leaving the county.

Recreation is Clustered Around Incorporated Towns

Recreational activities are often clustered around town centers, creating challenges for residents in more rural areas. Facilities like sports fields, parks, and community centers tend to be concentrated in towns, leaving residents outside these hubs with fewer convenient recreational options. Public transportation limitations and the distances involved mean those living in outlying areas may struggle to access these amenities. As a result, participation in organized sports, fitness programs, and other community activities can be difficult, limiting opportunities for socialization, fitness, and relaxation.

Fresh Food is a Major Challenge

Access to fresh food can be challenging due to the limited presence of grocery stores and fresh produce markets in some rural areas. Many residents must travel significant distances to reach supermarkets that offer a wide selection of fresh fruits and vegetables. In certain parts of the county, especially where public transportation is scarce, this lack of proximity can lead to reliance on convenience stores or fast food outlets, which often provide fewer healthy options. This situation contributes to food deserts, making it difficult for some residents to consistently access fresh and nutritious foods.



1 – Grocery Stores

Grocery stores are key amenities, offering fresh food, household essentials, and health products. They ensure residents have convenient, reliable options to meet daily needs.



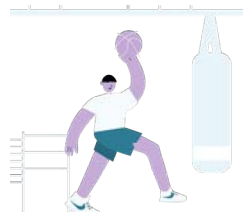
2 – Food and Beverage

Food and beverage establishments are essential, offering varied dining options that cater to diverse tastes. They also foster community connections and provide gathering spaces.



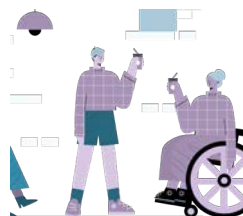
3 – Open Space

Open spaces are essential for recreation, relaxation, and connecting with nature. They boost well-being through exercise and social interaction.



4 – Recreation

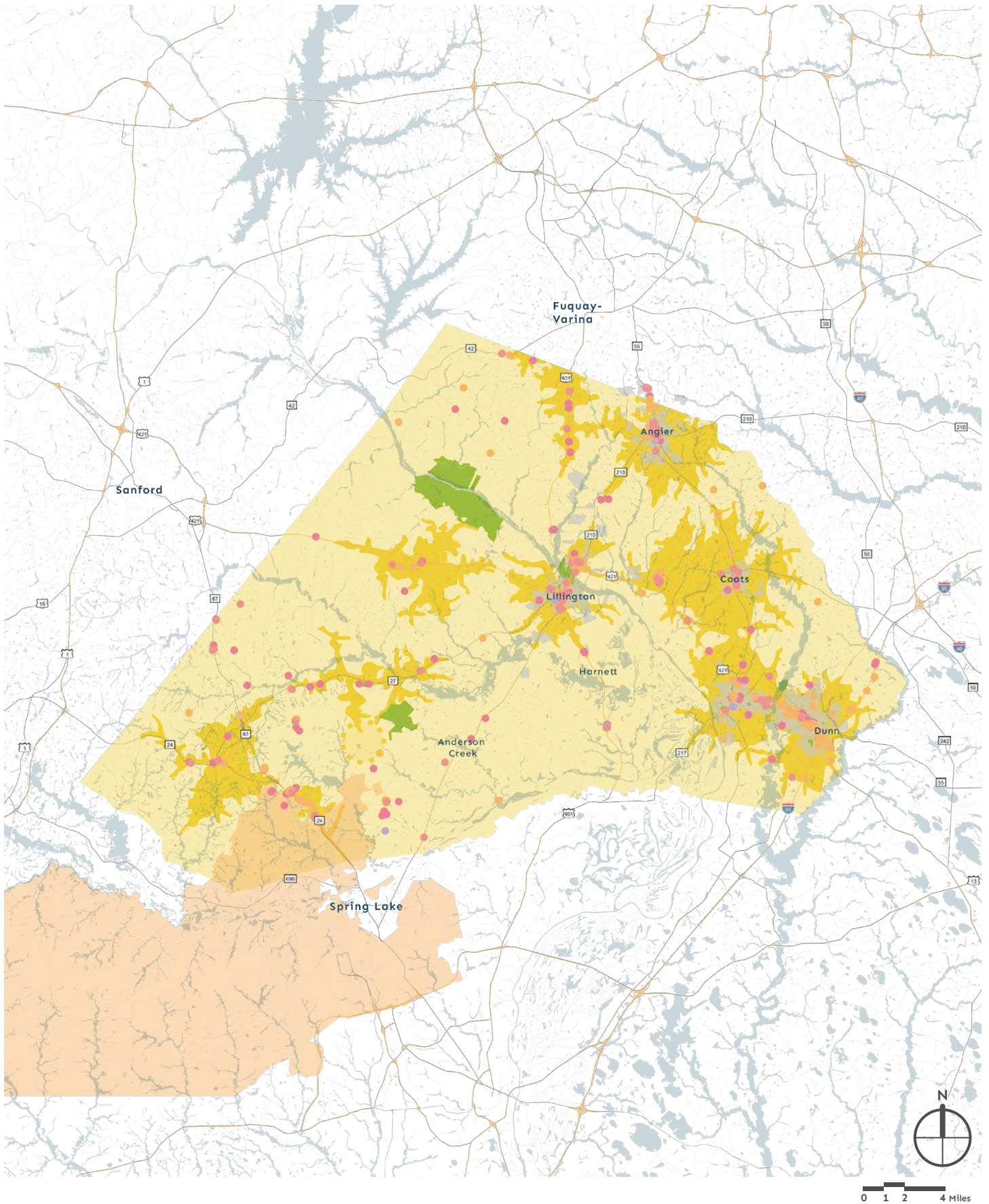
Recreation facilities are crucial, offering spaces for physical activity and leisure. They also foster community through social interaction and shared activities.



5 – Daily Goods

Daily amenities are essential, offering access to healthcare, transportation, and essential services. They meet basic needs and help maintain quality of life for residents.





Harnett County's 3 Key Opportunities

3: Strengthen County Economics

With agricultural beginnings comes larger parcels outside of this historic town centers, and has left an easy conversion to spread out development patterns as pressures grow. This today, however, has translated into many large lot single family patterns, which has required more County services to support, and ultimately, now costs Harnett County over \$1,000/acre annually. We have the opportunity to leverage incoming growth to strengthen our economy, not strain it.

Compact Development Subsidizes Large Lot Single Family Development

Harnett County's Town Centers and adjacent traditional residential neighborhoods are a large economic boom for the County when considering the annual tax revenue per acre, less the annual services cost per acre. This translates into these patterns greatly subsidizing the swaths of large lot single family development.

223,000 Acres are Undeveloped

57% of non-incorporated Harnett County is currently undeveloped. There is an economic question to consider when imagining how different development patterns would change the economic complexion of the County. If 10% of the 223,000 acres were developed as the different development patterns as outlined to the right, they would provide a wide range of impacts:

- **Town Center Pattern:**
Net +\$78M annually
- **Town Center Adjacent Pattern:**
Net +\$34M annually
- **Missing Middle Pattern:**
Net +\$23M annually
- **Compact Single Family Pattern:**
Net -\$17M annually
- **Large Lot Single Family Pattern:**
Net -\$23M annually



Town Center Pattern (+\$3.5k/ac)

Traditional town center development patterns feature a walkable layout with commercial, civic, and residential buildings clustered around a main street. This pattern typically returns >\$3,500/acre in net annual taxes.



Town Center Adjacent Pattern (+\$1.5k/ac)

Traditional residential development patterns near town centers have grid-like streets and homes close together, within walking distance of downtown. This pattern typically returns \$1,000 to \$2,000/acre in net annual taxes.



Missing Middle Pattern (+\$1k/ac)

Missing middle development patterns consist of multi-unit housing types like duplexes and townhomes, bridging the gap between single-family homes and apartments. This pattern typically returns \$500 to \$1,500/acre in net annual taxes.



Compact Single Family Pattern (-\$750/ac)

Compact single-family development patterns feature smaller lots with homes built close together, maximizing space and community interaction. This pattern typically returns -\$500 to -\$1,000/acre in net annual taxes.



Large Lot Single Family Pattern (<-\$1k/ac)

Large lot single-family development patterns have spacious lots with homes set far apart, offering privacy and extensive outdoor space. This pattern typically returns less than -\$1,000/acre in net annual taxes.



02 County Village Vision

Traditional Small Town Village Districts

When curated well, the County Village District not only enables greater opportunity, amenity, walkability, and economic impact – but also unlocks a remarkable district character and charm. The images below illustrate the overall identity, and speak to specific attributes to strive for with individual elements.





County Village Vision

Several Village District Candidates Identified

Four potential County Village Zones have been identified. When considering both the potential impact to the County, as well as ease of overall implementation – Rawls Church, Anderson Creek, Carolina Lakes, and Buies Creek jump to the top of the list.

Buies Creek as a Priority

Buies Creek is a small, unincorporated village in eastern Harnett County, nestled within an agrarian landscape along US Route 421 and the Cape Fear River, between Erwin and Lillington. Known for being home to Campbell University, a private liberal arts institution set on 850 acres, the village has a population of approximately 2,940 residents, bolstered by 2,150 full-time undergraduate students, 1,000 faculty, and 570 staff, totaling around 6,600 people. The University has invested heavily in student services and amenities, but access for the wider community is limited. Essential services like healthcare, dining, and shopping are located six miles away in Lillington, with limited pedestrian access. Buies Creek, with its compact campus and traditional, walkable small-town development, offers a unique opportunity to expand upon its vibrant, inclusive village center.



Carolina Lakes

Carolina Lakes is a gated suburban community in western Harnett County, adjacent to Fort Liberty (formerly Fort Bragg). It features about 1,700 homes around seven lakes and offers amenities like boating, kayaking, and golf in a wooded setting. The diverse residents include active-duty military, civilian contractors, retirees, and families with school-age children, who rely on nearby Fayetteville for shopping, schools, and cultural activities.



Anderson Creek

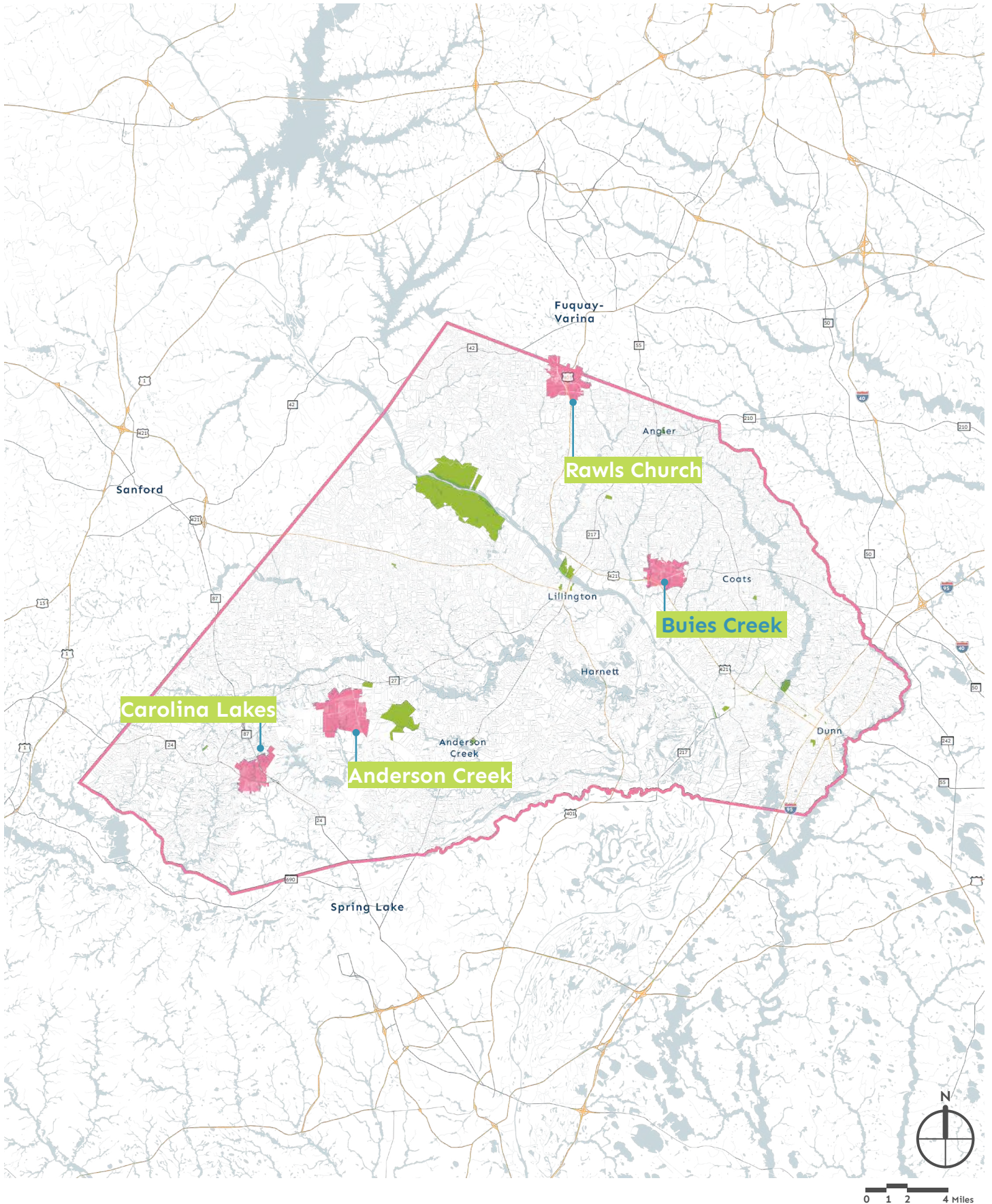
Anderson Creek, located in Spring Lake, NC, is the nearest suburban residential community to Fort Liberty in western Harnett County, close to Fayetteville. This enclave includes Anderson Creek Club and Anderson Crossing, gated communities within 1,700 acres of scenic forest, making it the largest populated township in Harnett County with about 7,450 homes. Each neighborhood offers unique, affordable luxury homes with views of a golf course, lakes, or nature preserves. Amenities include a daycare and preschool, pools, golf course, parks, fitness centers, and walking paths. Fayetteville, nearby, provides shopping, dining, healthcare, and entertainment.



Rawls Church

Rawls Church, near Fuquay-Varina in northern Harnett County, offers rural charm and easy access to shopping, dining, parks, and cultural amenities. The new Serenity community spans 55 acres of woodland and rolling hills, featuring a clubhouse, pool, play areas, and open spaces along Hector Creek. It includes around 1,200 homes, attracting a diverse range of buyers, from first-time buyers to empty nesters and those 55 and older.





County Village Vision

Four Key Components

To realize the vision for the County Village Districts, there are four key components to deploy that shape the development pattern for the place. These key components and tools can be found in traditional development patterns throughout the Triangle, North Carolina, and the broader Southeast of the United States.

Best Practices

To realize a vision for villages in North Carolina, best practices must be rooted in thoughtful planning and community-centric design. These districts should prioritize walkability by designing compact, interconnected street and block networks that ensure residents can easily access daily needs within a 10-minute walkshed. Integrating green spaces is crucial, creating a balance between built and natural environments while providing public gathering places that enhance community life. A diverse mix of housing types with smart density should be incorporated to cater to different demographics, fostering inclusivity and supporting sustainable growth. Finally, establishing an amenity spine with a central public space anchors the community, creating vibrant hubs for social interaction, commerce, and cultural activities. These practices not only enhance livability but also preserve the unique character and charm of North Carolina's village districts.

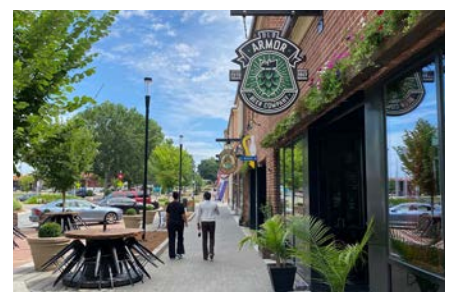
Street, Blocks, and Buildings Work Together

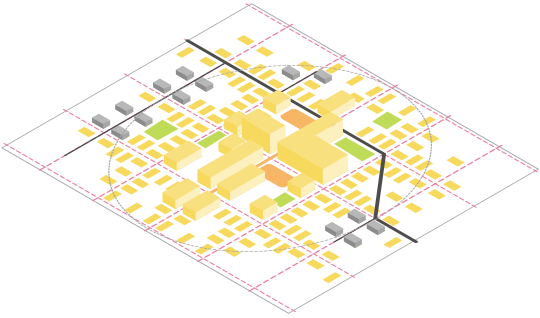
In well-designed villages, streets, blocks, and buildings work in harmony to create a cohesive, vibrant environment that fosters community interaction and enhances the quality of life. Streets are more than just pathways; they are public spaces designed for walking, cycling, and socializing, with pedestrian-friendly features like wide sidewalks, street

trees, and slow traffic. Blocks are arranged in a compact, connected network that promotes walkability, ensuring that homes, shops, and public spaces are easily accessible within a short distance. Buildings are thoughtfully positioned to define the edges of streets and blocks, creating a sense of enclosure and continuity. They vary in scale and function, accommodating a mix of uses that bring life and diversity to the village. Together, streets, blocks, and buildings form a unified urban fabric that supports a lively, inclusive, and sustainable community.

Policy and Economics are Crucial

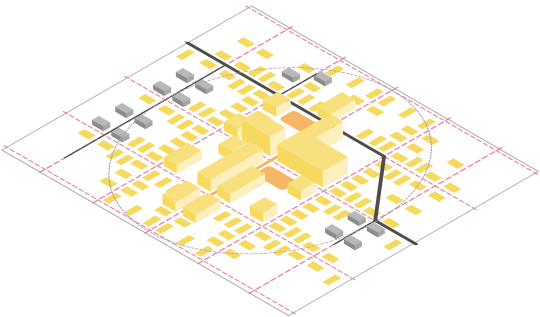
The success of village districts hinges on strong policy frameworks and supportive economic strategies. Policy plays a crucial role in shaping the development of village districts by establishing zoning regulations, design standards, and incentives that encourage mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly environments. These policies ensure that village centers remain compact, connected, and vibrant, fostering a sense of community and place. Economics supports this vision by creating sustainable financial models that attract investment, promote local businesses, and provide affordable housing options. By aligning policy and economic strategies, village districts can thrive as hubs of social, cultural, and economic activity, ensuring their long-term vitality and resilience.





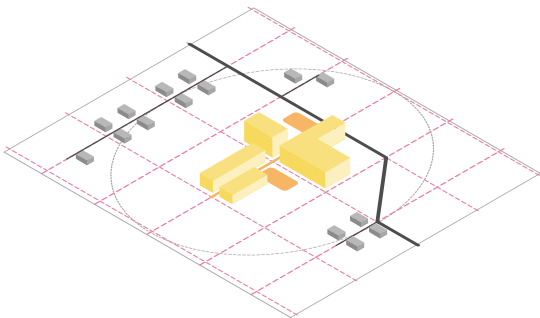
Integrate A System of Green Spaces and Defined Edge

Green spaces strategically placed throughout developments, create natural gathering areas and recreational spaces while a defined edge, such as a green buffer, clearly separates urban village areas from rural or undeveloped land, preserving the landscape and reinforcing community boundaries.



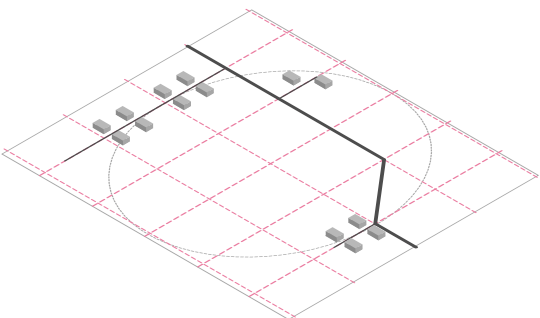
Surround with Diversity of Housing with Thoughtful Density

A mix of housing options, from compact single-family homes to townhouses and apartments, is integrated into neighborhoods, promoting inclusivity and adaptability. Smart density ensures efficient land use while maintaining the character of the community, supporting walkability, and reducing sprawl.



Establish an Amenity Spine with Key Central Public Space

A central corridor or "amenity spine" connects key destinations within a village, such as parks, shops, and schools. At the heart of the amenity spine, a central public space serves as a communal gathering area, fostering social interaction and creating a focal point for the community.



Create a 5 min Walkable Street and Block Network

Streets and blocks are designed to ensure that essential services, amenities, and public spaces are within a 5-minute walk from any point in the neighborhood. A compact, pedestrian-friendly layout enhances accessibility, encourages walking, and fosters a vibrant, connected community.

03 Case Study: Buies Creek

Buies Creek Small Town Character Today

Buies Creek is a small, unincorporated community known primarily as the home of Campbell University. Its quiet, rural setting blends the charm of a close-knit community with the vibrancy brought by the University's diverse student body.

Campbell's Local Roots

Campbell University was founded in 1887 as Buies Creek Academy by Baptist minister J.A. Campbell. It evolved from an academy to a junior college named Campbell Junior College in 1926, and ultimately became a four-year institution in 1961, adopting the name Campbell University. The university expanded over the years, adding graduate programs, including a law school, pharmacy school, and medical school, establishing itself as a significant educational institution in the region.

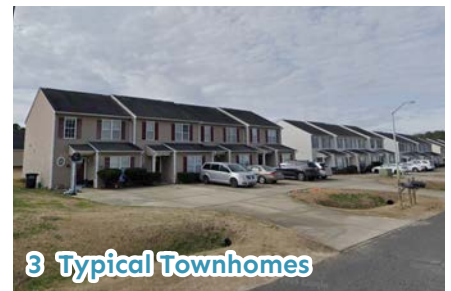
Campbell Today

Today, Campbell University is known for its diverse academic offerings and commitment to faith-based education. It includes 11 schools and colleges, offering over 150 undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in fields like health sciences, law, business, divinity, education, and engineering.

The university excels in health sciences with a medical school, pharmacy school, and physical therapy programs, alongside a well-regarded law school now located in Raleigh. Campus life is vibrant, featuring numerous student organizations, athletics, and community engagement. Campbell emphasizes leadership, service, and faith to nurture graduates for impactful careers, while its peaceful Buies Creek setting provides a serene yet accessible environment.

Life Beyond Campbell

Outside of Campbell University, Buies Creek remains a tranquil, rural community that embodies a small-town feel with a close-knit atmosphere. The surrounding area is marked by local businesses, residential neighborhoods, and expansive farmlands, reflecting the region's agricultural heritage. Despite the university's presence, Buies Creek maintains its identity as a quiet enclave where residents value simplicity, strong community ties, and the scenic beauty of the North Carolina countryside.





Case Study: Buies Creek

Variety of Potential Locations for County Village District

Five potential locations for a County Village District appear when considering impact and ease of implementation with connectivity to surrounding infrastructure and contiguous assemblage of existing parcels. East Buies Creek provides the best combination of impact and ease of implementation.

Five Potential County Village Districts

When planning for a new Village District, selecting the right location is crucial to ensuring long-term success, community integration, and sustainable growth. Four potential locations were considered - Buies Creek Main Street, Buies Creek North, Kivett, Southeast of Campbell, and Buies Creek East, each evaluated based on their impact and ease of implementation, with particular attention to connectivity with existing infrastructure, surrounding urban village context, connectivity with natural systems, parcel ownership, and the ability to assemble contiguous parcels. Among these, East Buies Creek emerges as the optimal choice, offering the best combination of impact and ease of implementation.

East Buies Creek Provides the Greatest Impact and Ease of Implementation

The County should support efforts by Campbell University and the private sector to brand the area as the Village of Buies Creek and create infill and adjacent development that compliments the university, adds commercial opportunities and addresses need for mix of housing in this part of the county.

Buies Creek East is ideally situated in close proximity to existing infrastructure, making it a prime candidate for a pilot Village District. Its location allows for seamless integration with the surrounding urban fabric, street network, and natural areas along the Cape Fear tributaries of Buies Creek and East Buies Creek, providing direct and efficient access

to major thoroughfares and nearby neighborhoods. This connectivity not only facilitates ease of movement for residents but also supports Campbell University, a large employment base, and local businesses by ensuring a steady flow of customers, goods and services. Additionally, the presence of established infrastructure, including utilities and transportation links, reduces the complexity and cost of development, allowing for a smoother, faster implementation process.

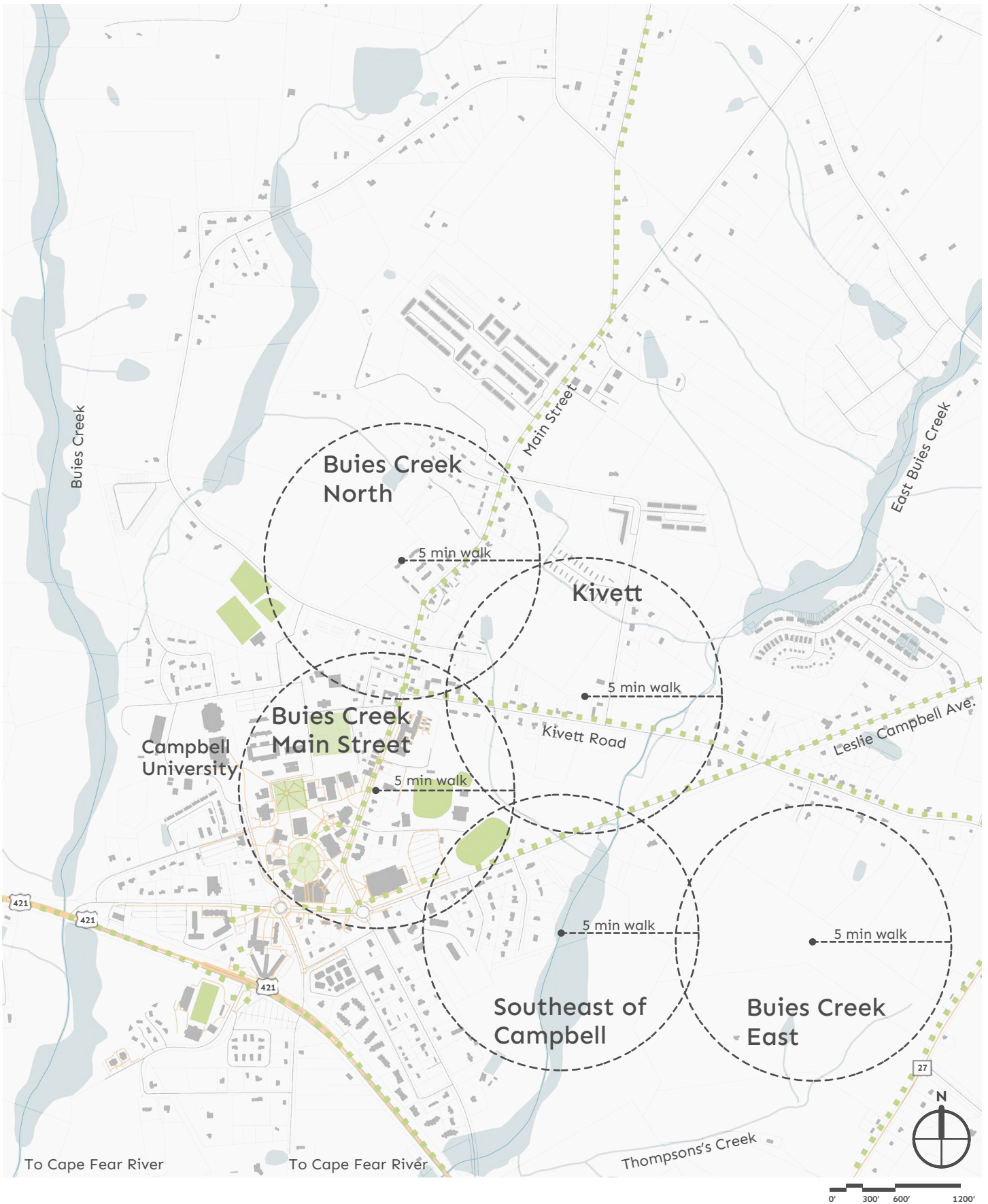
The selection of East Buies Creek as the site for a new Village District will have a profound impact on the local community and the broader region. Reinforcing Buies Creek Main Street as the central hub in this area, the new village development will serve as a catalyst for economic growth, attracting new businesses, residents, and visitors. The district will be designed to be pedestrian-oriented supporting a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses, fostering a vibrant, self-sustaining community. This development will create new job opportunities, stimulate local commerce, and enhance property values, contributing to the overall prosperity of Harnett County. Furthermore, by concentrating development in Buies Creek East, the district can serve as a model for sustainable, walkable communities in the region

One of the key advantages of Buies Creek East is the availability of contiguous parcels that can be easily assembled for new development. This allows for a cohesive and well-planned village district, where land can be efficiently utilized to create a balanced mix of diverse housing,

retail, public spaces, civic, institutional and amenities. The ability to assemble these parcels without significant legal or logistical hurdles ensures that the new village district can proceed without the delays often associated with land acquisition in more fragmented areas. This contiguous land assembly also supports the creation of a unified design vision for the district, where public spaces, streets, and buildings are harmoniously integrated to create a strong sense of place and community identity.

The ease of implementation is a critical factor in the successful development of a County Village District. East Buies Creek offers a relatively straightforward path to development due to its existing infrastructure, available land, and supportive regulatory environment. The area's current zoning and land use policies are conducive to the type of mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development envisioned for the district. Additionally, the community's openness to growth and development further facilitates the process, reducing potential resistance or delays. The combination of these factors means that East Buies Creek East can move from planning to execution more rapidly than other potential locations, bringing the benefits of the district to residents and the County sooner.





04 Case Study: Buies Creek Main Street Four Key Design Strategies

Design Strategy #1: Create a 5-min Walkable Street and Block Network.

A walkable street and block network in Buies Creek would focus on compact, redevelopment of existing Main Street and adjacent village blocks, enhancing the unique small town charm adjacent to Campbell University, and utilizing the natural beauty of Buies Creek as a key amenity. This approach fosters a vibrant, sustainable community that offers both convenience and a strong sense of place.

Connectivity with Existing Streets

The foundation of a walkable network begins with establishing strong connectivity with existing streets. The design should aim to extend and complement the current street grid, creating a seamless transition between the new development and surrounding areas. By aligning new streets with existing ones, we enhance accessibility and ensure the network feels like a natural extension of the community. This connectivity reduces travel distances, encourages walking and cycling, and integrates the development into the broader urban fabric, making it easier for residents to access nearby amenities and services.

Walkable Assemblage

A walkable assemblage focuses on creating a mixed-use environment where everything residents need is within a short walk or bicycle ride. The village infill design clusters homes, shops, offices, and recreational spaces together, reducing the need for long commutes or car trips. This mix of uses, combined with short block lengths and frequent intersections, creates a vibrant, walkable community. Streetscapes should be designed to be inviting, with wide sidewalks, ample green spaces, and active street-level retail that engages pedestrians. By ensuring that daily needs are within easy reach, the walkable assemblage fosters a lively, self-sufficient neighborhood where walking is the most convenient mode of transportation.

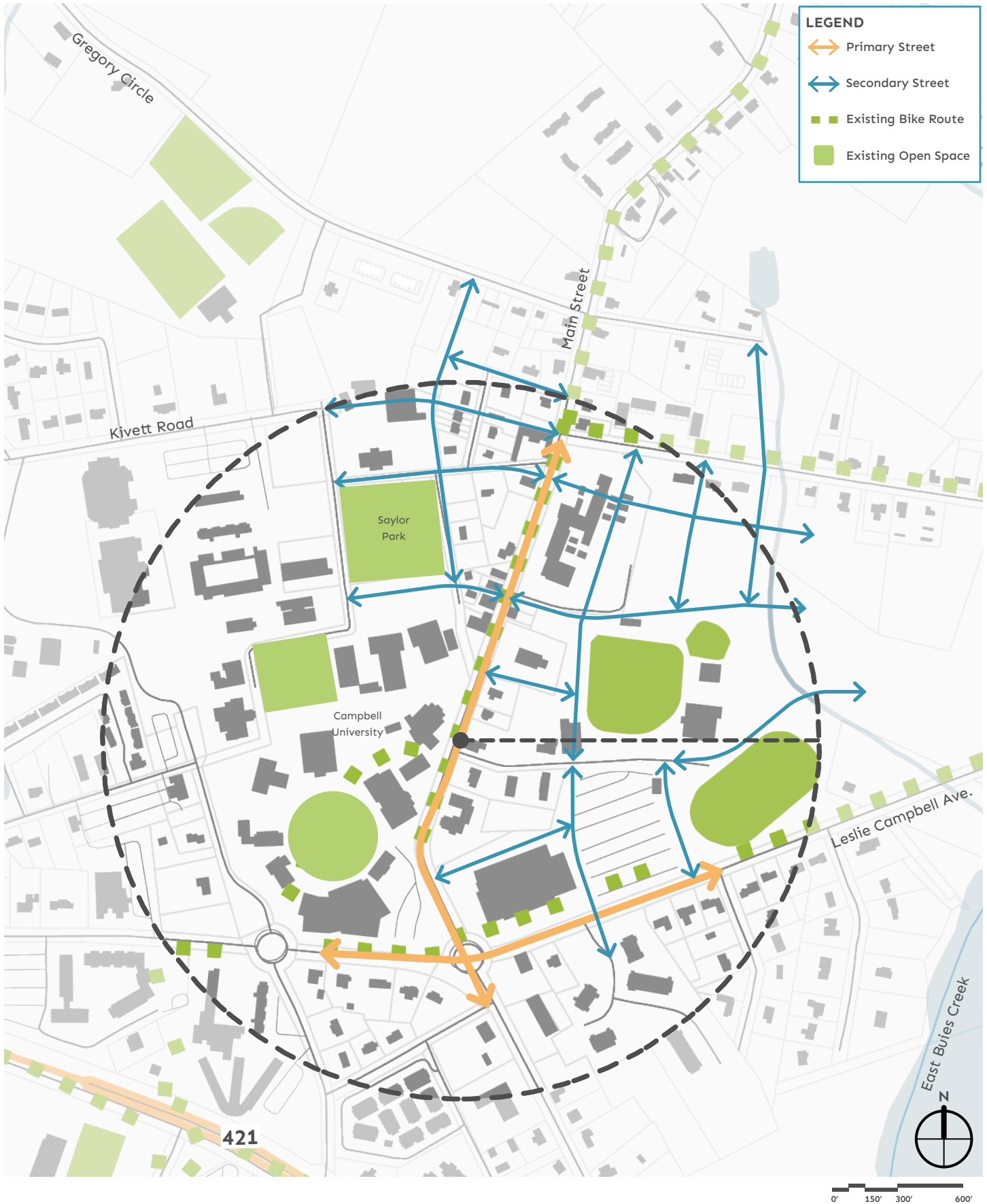
300' x 300' Blocks

The urban village fabric is structured around a typical 300' x 300' block within small regional communities as well as a size chosen for its balance between density and walkability. This block size allows for a compact, grid-like pattern that promotes easy navigation and frequent interaction between different parts of the community. Within these blocks, a variety of building types and uses are integrated, creating a rich, diverse environment. The grid structure also supports flexibility in street design, allowing for the inclusion of public plazas, green corridors, and pedestrian-only streets. This consistent block size reinforces the identity of the area, making it easy to orient oneself and fostering a strong sense of place.

Pedestrian-Oriented Streets

The streets within the network are designed primarily for pedestrians, transforming them into vibrant public spaces. Sidewalks are wide and lined with trees, providing shade and comfort for walkers. Traffic calming measures, such as narrow lanes, raised crosswalks, and curb extensions, slow down vehicles and prioritize pedestrian safety. Streets are further activated by ground-floor retail, cafés with outdoor seating, and public art installations, creating an engaging, lively atmosphere. The focus on pedestrian-oriented streets ensures that walking is not just a means of transportation but an enjoyable experience in itself, promoting a strong connection between people and the public realm.





Case Study: Buies Creek Main Street

Four Key Design Strategies

Design Strategy #2: Establish an Amenity Spine with Key Central Public Space.

Amenity Spine as Main Corridor

The Village Amenity Spine should be a thoughtfully enhanced Main Street corridor that connects different parts of the village and the University, concentrating key amenities along its length. Serving as the village's primary axis, it links residential areas with commercial, cultural, and recreational facilities. Along this pedestrian-friendly spine, residents will find shops, cafés, local businesses, and community services, all within a short walk from the Village Green. The spine features wide sidewalks, street trees, layered lighting, wayfinding, and places to sit and gather, encouraging strolling, social interaction, and reducing car dependence, fostering a walkable village lifestyle.

Village Green as Central Public Space

The Village Green is a key central public space designed to be the focal point for community life. This space functions as the "living room" of the village, where residents gather for social activities, events, and daily recreation. The Village Green might include features like a central lawn, shaded seating areas, playgrounds, a pavilion for performances, and perhaps a water feature or public art installation that anchors the space. The design emphasizes openness and flexibility, allowing the Village Green to host a wide range of activities—from farmers' markets and festivals to casual picnics and impromptu gatherings. A welcoming and inclusive design ensures that it is accessible to all, fostering a strong sense of community.

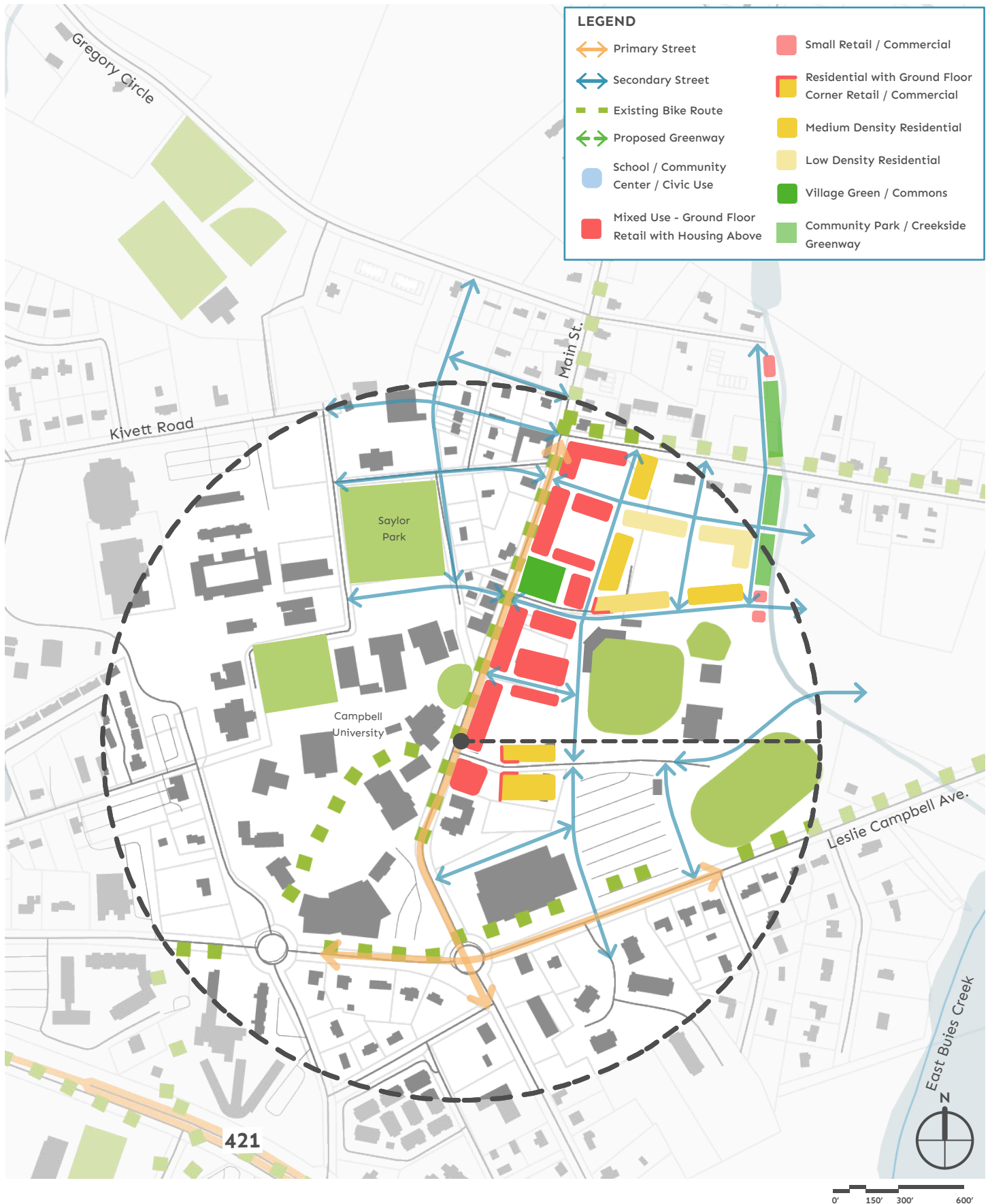
Integrate Natural & Historic Context

The design of the Village Amenity Spine and Village Green should seamlessly integrate with the natural, historical, and cultural context, enhancing the area's unique character. This involves preserving and highlighting natural features like champion trees, watercourses, & topography, while incorporating landmarks or architectural styles that reflect the village's heritage. Pathways along the spine should connect with creeks or offer views of the landscape, bringing the natural environment into daily village life. Buildings & public spaces along the spine should respect the village's architectural vernacular, creating a cohesive and authentic sense of place for residents and visitors.

Multi-Use and Layered Experiences

Creating multi-use spaces and layered experiences along the Village Amenity Spine and within the Village Green involves designing spaces that serve multiple functions & can adapt to different uses throughout the day and across seasons. For example, a marketplace along the spine might function as a retail space during the day & transform into a venue for evening events or outdoor dining. The Village Green could host a variety of activities, such as yoga classes, concerts, or seasonal festivals, each drawing different segments of the community & keeping the space lively and engaging. By layering these experiences & uses, the design ensures that the village remains vibrant & active, catering to a diverse population with varied interests and needs.





Case Study: Buies Creek Main Street

Four Key Design Strategies

Design Strategy #3: Surround with Diversity of Housing with Thoughtful Density.

Complementary to County Character

The design begins with a deep respect for the character of Harnett County, known for its rural charm, historic roots, and close-knit communities. Any new infill or redevelopment should be carefully crafted to complement this character and scale integrating seamlessly with the surrounding landscape and built environment. Architectural styles reflect local traditions, incorporating materials, colors, and forms that are familiar to the area. Streetscapes are designed to enhance the county's scenic beauty, with tree-lined roads, modest setbacks, and open spaces that echo the small village vernacular. The goal is to ensure that new development doesn't disrupt the existing fabric of Buies Creek and Campbell University but rather enriches it, creating a sense of continuity between old & new

Thoughtful Density

Thoughtful density creates a village community that is both sustainable and vibrant. Infill and redevelopment should be arranged in a compact, efficient manner that maximizes land use while preserving open spaces and natural features. This approach avoids overwhelming the existing infrastructure and maintains a human scale, where buildings are proportionate to their surroundings. Density should be focused around key areas - the Village Main Street, a community center, transit nodes, civic or recreation amenities, reducing the need for long commutes and encouraging walking & cycling. This careful calibration of density supports a thriving community life, where people live close to services, amenities, and each other, fostering a sense of belonging and interaction.

Diversity of Housing Options

A diverse range of housing options is essential to accommodate the varying needs and preferences of new and existing residents. The design should include a mix of housing types — single-family homes, townhouses, duplexes, cottages, apartments & live work that encourage missing middle options —ensuring that people of all ages, incomes, and household sizes can find a place to call home. This diversity also supports a more dynamic and inclusive community, where different generations and demographics can live side by side. Affordable housing options should be integrated seamlessly into the community, without segregating or stigmatizing any group. By offering a range of choices, the village should attract a broad spectrum of residents, contributing to the economic & social vitality of the area.

Small Scale, Incremental Development

Small-scale infill development allows for the gradual and sensitive introduction of new housing within existing neighborhoods and the village center. This approach minimizes disruption while making the most of underutilized land, such as vacant lots, underdeveloped parcels, or spaces between buildings. Infill development is designed to blend in with the existing context, respecting the scale, massing, form, style and character of neighboring structures. It adds housing incrementally, allowing communities to grow organically rather than through large, impersonal projects. This method not only increases housing supply but also revitalizes areas that might otherwise be overlooked, enhancing the overall fabric of the community.





Case Study: Buies Creek Main Street

Four Key Design Strategies

Design Strategy #4: Integrate A System of Green Spaces and Defined Edge.

Public Places to Gather

At the heart of the community lies a network of green spaces designed as public places for gathering and social interaction. These spaces, whether they are parks, plazas, or pocket gardens, should be thoughtfully distributed throughout the village and surrounding neighborhoods, ensuring that every resident is within a short distance of a welcoming outdoor environment. Each green space is designed to reflect the community's character, offering a variety of experiences—from serene natural settings to more active, programmed spaces for events and recreation. These public places are more than just parks; they are the living rooms of the community, where neighbors meet, children play, and people of all ages can connect with nature and each other. By prioritizing these gathering spaces, the design fosters a strong sense of community and belonging, making the neighborhood a more vibrant and inclusive place to live.

Daily Amenities

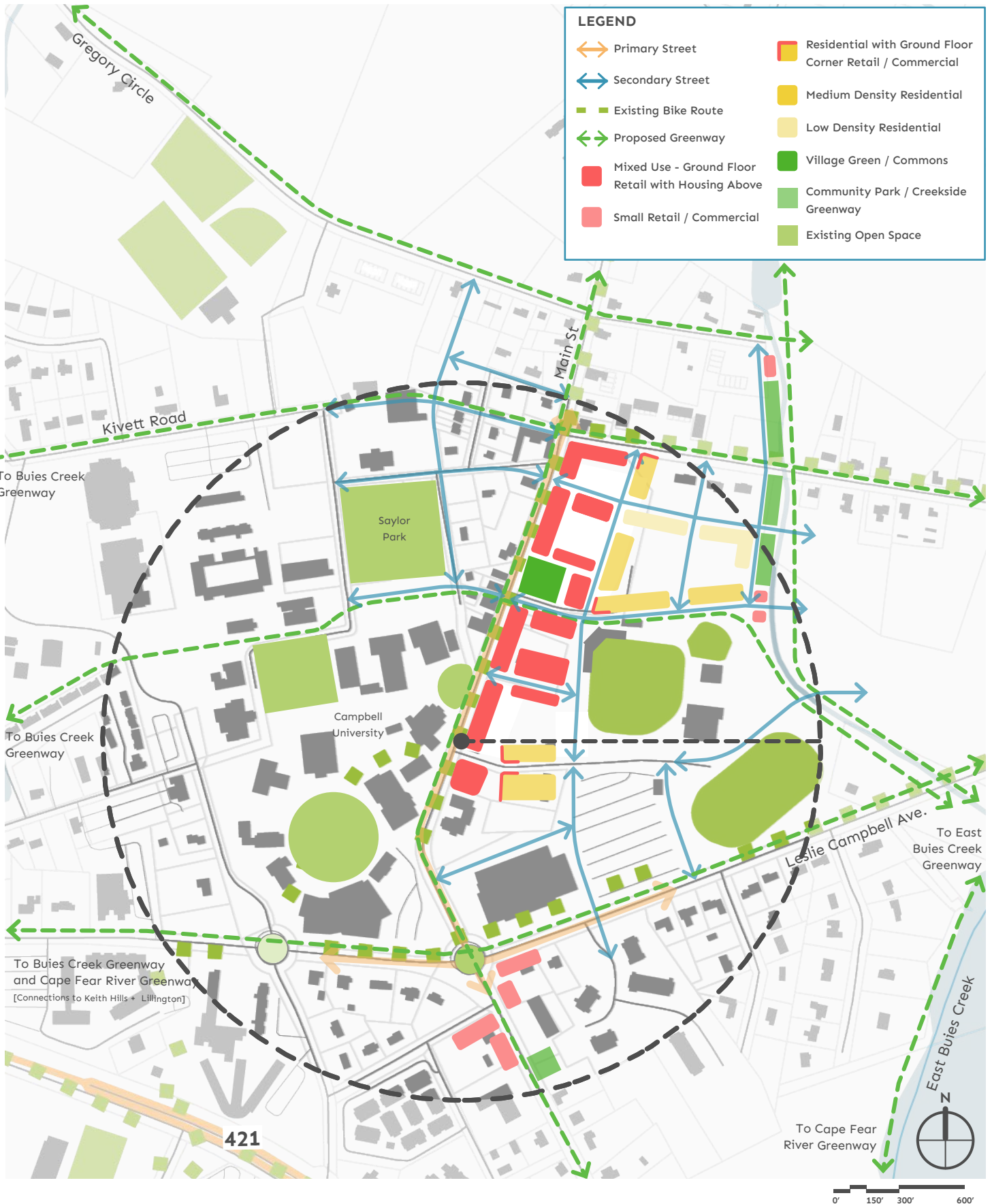
In addition to providing spaces for social interaction, the system of green spaces should strategically integrate with access to daily amenities and services. Small commercial nodes are located at key points along the green space network, ensuring that residents can easily access shops, cafés, healthcare facilities, community center and other essential services without needing to rely on cars. These nodes are designed to be part of the community fabric, with buildings that open onto green spaces, allowing

for seamless indoor-outdoor experiences. For example, a neighborhood café might have outdoor seating that spills into a park, or a small grocery store could be adjacent to a community garden where residents grow fresh produce. This integration not only makes daily tasks more convenient but also enhances the vibrancy of the green spaces by encouraging regular use and interaction throughout the day.

Walkable + Bikeable to Daily Needs

A key design element of the village is ensuring that all residents have walkable and bikeable access to daily needs. The green space network is interconnected by a series of pedestrian and bicycle paths that weave through the community, creating a safe and enjoyable environment for non-motorized transportation. These paths are designed to be direct and intuitive, linking homes with green spaces, amenities, and services in a way that makes walking and biking the most convenient and attractive option for short trips. The paths are also designed with comfort and safety in mind, featuring lighting, seating, signage, art and natural shade from trees. By prioritizing walkable and bikeable access, the design reduces the community's reliance on cars, promoting a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle while also reducing traffic congestion and pollution.





LEGEND

Primary Street	Residential with Ground Floor Corner Retail / Commercial
Secondary Street	Medium Density Residential
Existing Bike Route	Low Density Residential
Proposed Greenway	Village Green / Commons
Mixed Use - Ground Floor Retail with Housing Above	Community Park / Creekside Greenway
Small Retail / Commercial	Existing Open Space

05 Case Study: Buies Creek East Four Key Design Strategies

Design Strategy #1: Create a 5-min Walkable Street and Block Network.

Creating a 5-minute walkable street and block network in for Buies Creek East involves careful planning to balance development, natural features, and proximity to Campbell University while maintaining a distinct identity.

Contiguous, Undeveloped Assemble of Land

The Buies Creek East area was identified as a potential option comprised of approximately 100-acres of greenfield characterized by Piedmont Forest and agricultural heritage land adjacent to the existing village of approximately the same size. Key features of this area include contiguous land, compact structure, supported by an established network of roads and infrastructure affording a cohesive urban village district design which prioritizes pedestrian access. Any potential site should be structured to support a dense, mixed-use environment where residential, commercial, and recreational spaces are within a short walking distance. Options should encourage active transportation modes and foster a close-knit community atmosphere preferably organized around existing neighborhoods or settlements

Adjacent to Campbell, but Outside of the "Campus" Identity

While the network should be adjacent to Campbell University, it must establish a distinct identity separate from the campus. This can be achieved through unique built forms, architectural styles, public spaces, and streetscapes that differ from but are complementary to those on campus. The goal is to create a neighborhood that benefits from the university's proximity—like access to student populations, university facilities and events—without blending into the campus. Branding and design choices should emphasize this distinction, making

the area attractive to both university affiliates and the broader community.

Leverage Natural Features as an Amenity

Buies Creek's natural features, including its namesake creeks and tributaries along with surrounding conservation land, and proposed greenways and parks should be central to the design creating village neighborhoods connected to the watershed and onto adjacent town centers. These features can be integrated into the walkable network as focal points and viewsheds - such as parks, trails, greenways and riverfront promenades creating alternative transportation modes and connecting urban ecology, sustainable design and natural stormwater management. The creeks should extend the proposed greenway network along the Cape Fear River lined with pathways, seating areas, and natural landscaping to create a serene environment that residents and visitors can enjoy as passive recreation. Leveraging these natural assets not only preserves and enhances the aesthetic as well as environmental quality of the area but also increases property values and promotes a healthy, active lifestyle.





Case Study: Buies Creek East

Four Key Design Strategies

Design Strategy #2: Establish an Amenity Spine with Key Central Public Space.

Designing a walkable extension of the Village requires a comprehensive approach that integrates land use, transportation, public spaces, and community amenities to ensure that all essential services and daily needs are within a reasonable walk from any point in the village districts and their neighborhoods.

Street Infrastructure and Connectivity

Working within Buies Creek East, the design of a walkable network builds upon a modest, rural settlement pattern with a limited existing blocks and streets. The major arterials that frame the new village development include Leslie Campbell Ave. to the west, Hwy. 27 to the east and Kivett Road to the north with affording connections with the center of Buies Creek. Key connections extend the current street grid, seamlessly integrating with the surrounding community to create a natural, familiar extension within small dimensional standards. The grid design supports flexibility in multi-purpose hierarchy, allowing for the inclusion of “complete streets”, alleyways, lanes, green streets, public plazas, pocket parks, green corridors, and pedestrian-only streets. The new mobility network reduces travel distances, emphasizes walking, cycling, and micromobility as well as providing the community residents with access to new amenities, services and local employment.

Walkable Assemblage

Creating a walkable assemblage in the new neighborhood is essential, with a mixed-use core providing convenient daily goods within a short walk or bike ride. The design clusters homes, shops, offices, schools, and recreational spaces to reduce car dependency, featuring active streetscapes and manageable block lengths for a vibrant community. The Buies Creek East Village Center, near existing small businesses on Kivett Road, will serve as the neighborhood’s heart, with a main street and village square surrounded by key amenities such as a grocery store, cafés, pharmacy, and community centers. Essential services are distributed around the central green

space and smaller neighborhood hubs, ensuring accessibility within a 10-minute walkshed. Public transit should link all districts, reducing short car trips and supporting sustainable transportation options for longer journeys.

300' x 300' Blocks

The urban fabric is once again structured around a typical 300' x 300' village block chosen for its balance between density and walkability. A compact, grid-like pattern promotes easy navigation and frequent connections to different parts of the community. A variety of land uses and building types accentuated by varied village architectural styles are woven within the blocks to create a rich, diverse environment. Using a consistent block size reinforces the identity of the Buies Creek village districts, providing a comprehensible layout and ease of orientation continuing to foster a strong sense of the village concept.

Pedestrian-Oriented Streets

A series of vibrant public spaces define the pedestrian streetscape. Generous sidewalks are lined with shade trees and lighting to provide comfort and safety. Narrow drive lanes, raised crosswalks, curb extensions and bike lanes prioritize pedestrians, cyclists and intentionally slow traffic. Ground-floor retail, civic spaces, senior / community center, cafés with outdoor seating, and public art create social cohesion in an engaging, lively pedestrian public realm. Streetscapes should be designed in a similar style as in center of Buies Creek with warm paving tones, ample street trees, a verdant landscape, comfortable street furnishings, signage, wayfinding and exciting ground floor shops and businesses that engage pedestrians.



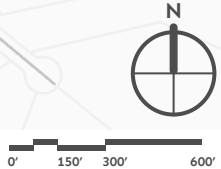
To East Buies
Creek + Cape Fear
River Greenways



LEGEND

- Primary Street
- Secondary Street
- Existing Bike Route
- Proposed Greenway
- School / Community Center / Civic Use
- Mixed Use - Ground Floor Retail with Housing Above
- Small Retail / Commercial
- Residential with Ground Floor Corner Retail / Commercial
- Medium Density Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Green Amenity Spine
- Community Park / Creekside Greenway

To East Buies
Creek + Cape Fear
River Greenways



Case Study: Buies Creek East Four Key Design Strategies

Design Strategy #3: Surround with Diversity of Housing with Thoughtful Density.

Complementary to Urban Village Character

The new Buies Creek East Village District should reflect the historic Main Street pattern, characterized by modest, human-scaled buildings, a vibrant business district, and a mix of two to four-story structures with ground-floor shops and active storefronts. To create a vital village center, focus on enhancing pedestrian activity and residential density with pedestrian-scale buildings, shade, and local goods and services that reflect the community's diversity. The neighborhood should offer a diverse range of housing types for all ages, incomes, and backgrounds. Civic buildings, such as churches, schools, and libraries, should be situated on squares, plazas, or greens to serve as landmarks and reinforce their cultural significance

Thoughtful Density

Smart density promotes compact, well-connected development that fosters a sustainable, resilient, and comfortable lifestyle. Diversifying housing types—ranging from small single-family homes and auxiliary dwelling units to townhouses, apartments, and affordable housing—supports demographic diversity. In Buies Creek East, density is increased near the village center and along main streets, while maintaining lower- and middle-density residential areas on the periphery. This balance enhances walkability and vibrant community life without straining infrastructure.

Diversity of Housing Options

Mixed residential areas are envisioned on either side of the linear green village commons. Land use within the mixed residential areas should be primarily residential, including a range of housing types, densities, and price points, interspersed with a local cafe or corner shop. The range of housing types should address the needs and desires of people of different ages, family sizes, cultures, and incomes. Residential land uses support a broad range of housing types, medium to high densities and developers that support transit use, as well as a convenient walking / cycling environment. Residential land uses should also complement, capitalize on, and orient to the desirable river and greenway open space amenities.

Small Scale, Incremental Development

In a rapidly evolving urban landscape, fostering sustainable growth while preserving a community's character and scale is crucial. Small-scale incremental development within a compact urban village offers a balanced approach to urbanization, allowing organic growth while respecting the existing fabric. Instead of creating an entirely new village district, this method enables gradual adaptation, introducing new housing, retail, and public amenities in response to community needs without disruption. An initial phase should focus on the mixed-use core and establish the amenity spine for future expansion. This approach allows for flexible, manageable development, ensuring infrastructure and services keep pace with growth and demand.



Compact Single Family Homes



Cottage Courts



Townhomes + Apartments



Mixed Use - Shops + Flats



Diverse Densities + Housing Types



To East Buies
Creek + Cape Fear
River Greenways



To East Buies
Creek + Cape Fear
River Greenways

Case Study: Buies Creek East

Four Key Design Strategies

Design Strategy #4: Integrate a System of Green Spaces and Defined Edge.

Public Places to Gather

Green spaces are strategically located to serve as central public gathering places, anchoring the community and providing residents and the community at large with accessible areas for recreation, relaxation, and social interaction. These open spaces form the public realm, whether parks, plazas, streetscapes, greenways, trails or community gardens, act as focal points within the urban fabric, drawing people together and fostering a sense of community. By positioning these green spaces at key locations within the Buies Creek East village district, such as at the intersection of major pedestrian routes or near civic and commercial centers, they become integral to daily life and contribute to the overall identity of the area.

Access to Daily Amenities

The green spaces within the village should be interconnected by a network of green corridors that provide direct, safe, and pleasant routes to daily amenities and services. These corridors can take the form of tree-lined streets, landscaped pathways, or linear parks that connect homes with schools, shops, and workplaces. By integrating these green corridors into the urban design, residents are encouraged to walk or bike to their destinations, reducing reliance on cars and enhancing the overall walkability of the village. This network of green spaces not only improves access to vital daily needs and community amenities but also contributes to the environmental sustainability of the development by promoting active transportation and enhancing local biodiversity.

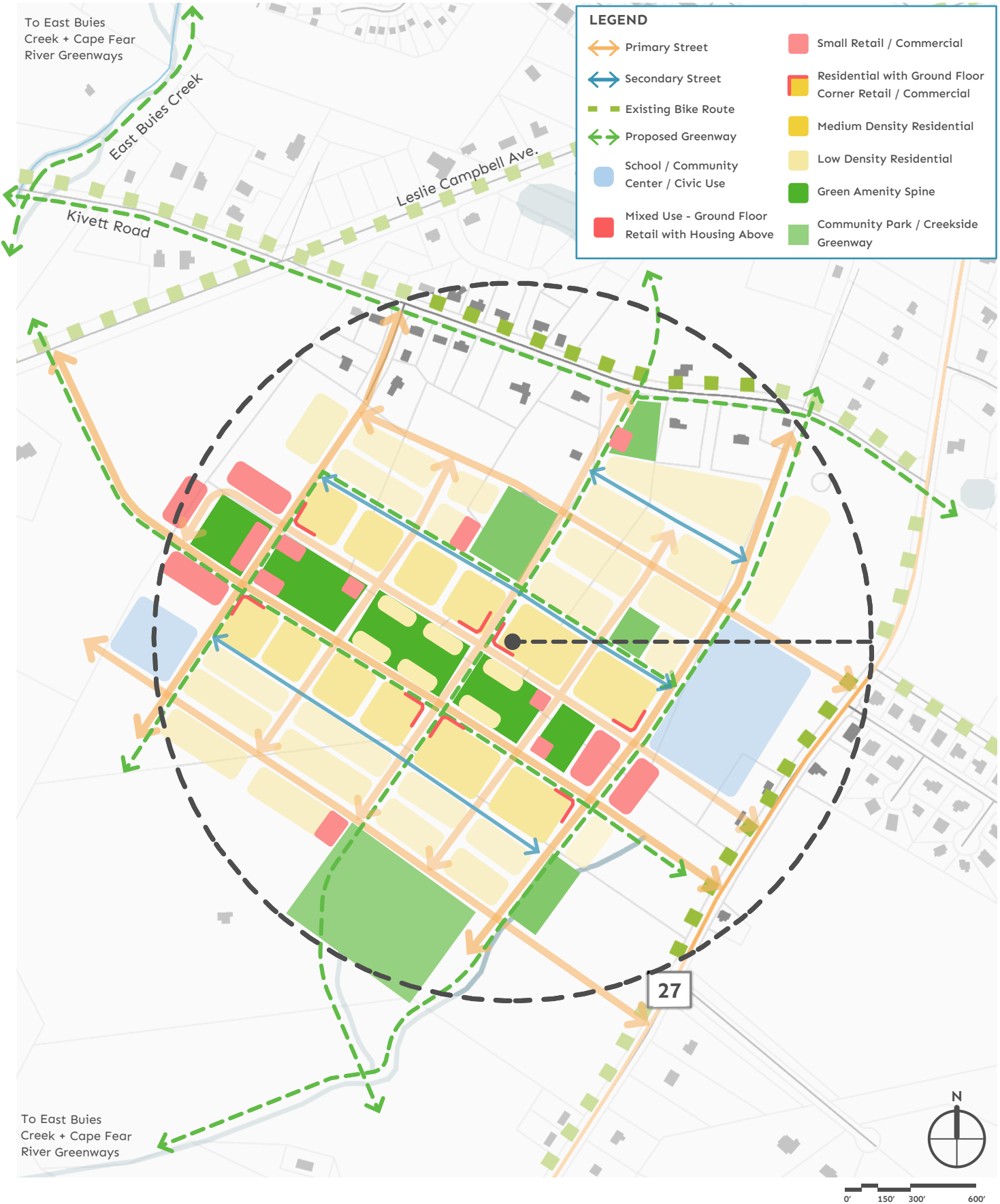
Creating a Defined Edge

Establishing a clear, defined edge around the new village district is crucial for maintaining its identity and managing the transition between Buies Creek Main Street, new development, and undeveloped areas. Green buffers like woodlands, wetlands, greenways, or parks can create this edge, serving as natural boundaries that separate the village from surrounding communities or undeveloped land. These buffers protect the village from encroachment, preserve the landscape, and offer recreational opportunities. By clearly defining the development's edge with green spaces, the village integrates better with its natural surroundings, ensuring a harmonious balance between built and natural environments.

Walkable + Bikable to Daily Needs

Creating a walkable village where residents can easily access daily needs is key to fostering a vibrant, sustainable community. Walkability starts with a compact, connected, and pedestrian-friendly network of streets and blocks. By placing homes, shops, schools, and public spaces within a short walking or cycling distance, residents are encouraged to walk or bike rather than rely on cars. Access to vital needs—like groceries, healthcare, and childcare—is prioritized by locating these services within the village core or along a central amenity spine. Green spaces and safe, well-lit pathways enhance the walking experience, making the village functional and enjoyable to navigate.





LEGEND

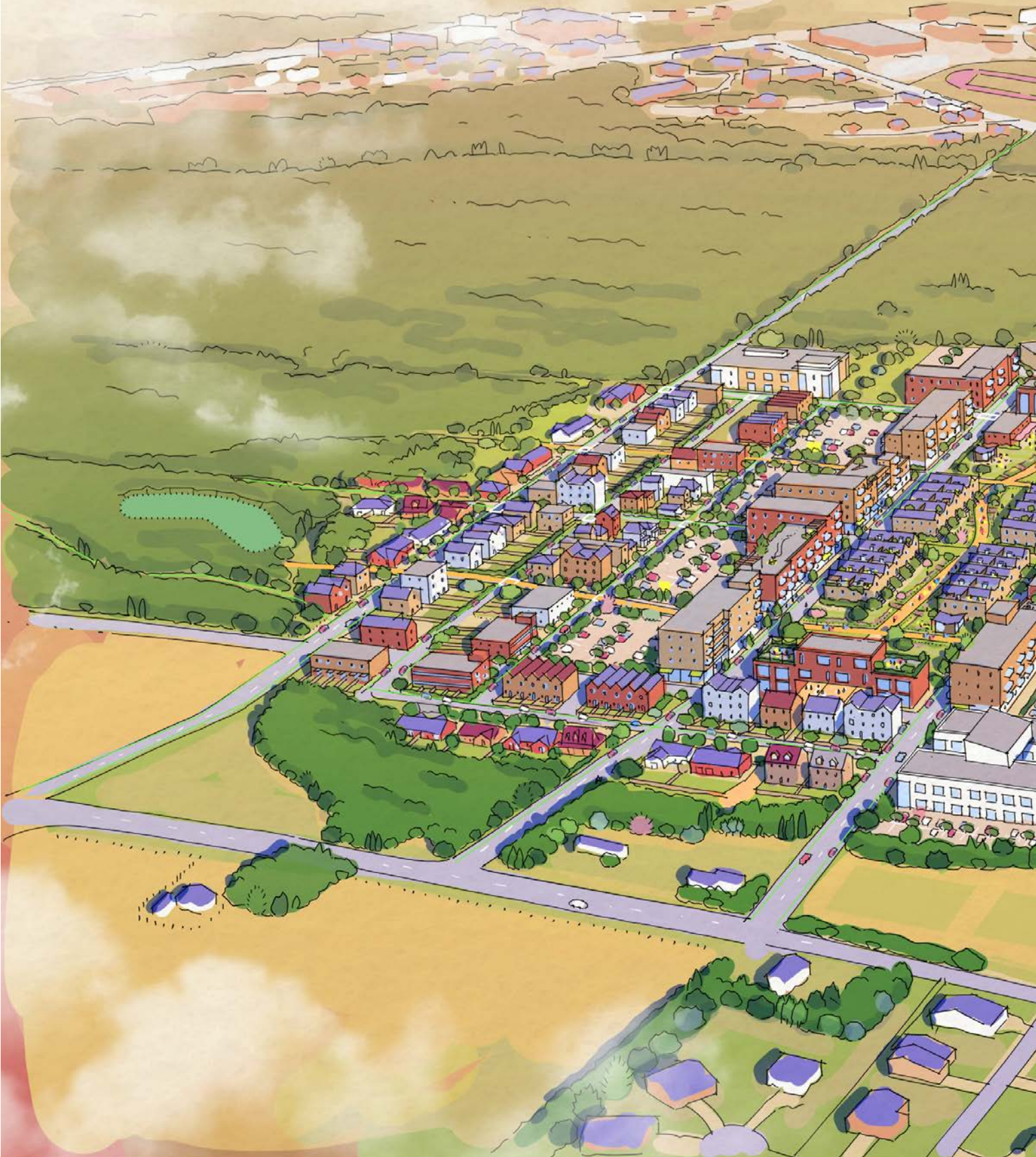
Primary Street	Small Retail / Commercial
Secondary Street	Residential with Ground Floor Corner Retail / Commercial
Existing Bike Route	Medium Density Residential
Proposed Greenway	Low Density Residential
School / Community Center / Civic Use	Green Amenity Spine
Mixed Use - Ground Floor Retail with Housing Above	Community Park / Creekside Greenway

Case Study: Buies Creek East Village District Concept Plan

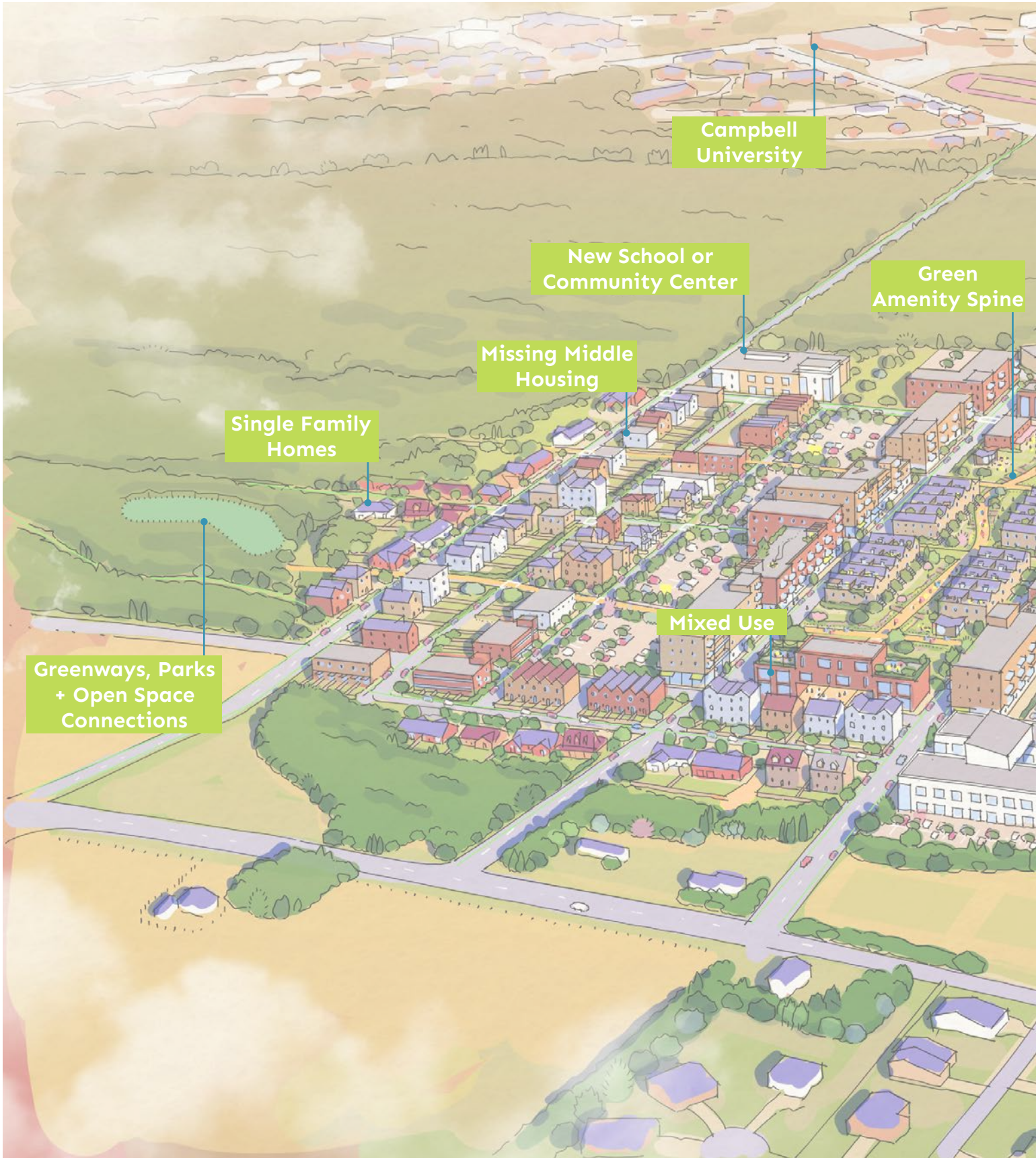
The walkable village concept plan implements the strategies in a scalable and replicable approach. The plan is anchored by a vibrant central community green, supported by density and a highly-pedestrianized public realm. It incorporates essential community amenities such as schools, parks, and light retail, ensuring residents have convenient access to daily needs. The design steps down in scale as it moves toward the existing residential context, aligning with the surrounding character and promoting a cohesive neighborhood environment.











Campbell University

New School or Community Center

Green Amenity Spine

Missing Middle Housing

Single Family Homes

Mixed Use

Greenways, Parks + Open Space Connections





Buies Creek
Main Street

Village Center
Retail + Commercial

Townhomes

Cottage Courts

Apartments /
Grd. Flr. Retail

New School +
Recreation Fields



Imagine yourself in the heart of this thoughtfully designed village square, where lush green spaces are seamlessly integrated with surrounding townhomes and cafés. Picture yourself lounging on the grass in the central park, carefully placed to encourage gatherings, or strolling along pedestrian pathways that weave through outdoor markets and local businesses. Every element—wide sidewalks, active edges, and strategically planted trees—creates a space that fosters connection, bringing nature and community life into perfect balance for a walkable, vibrant urban environment.



06 Implementation Considerations

Regulatory

Implementing Harnett County Village Districts requires careful attention to regulatory considerations to ensure that development aligns with county policies and goals.

Regulatory considerations include reviewing and revising County zoning regulations, land use policies, and building codes to accommodate the mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly nature of the village districts. Additionally, regulatory frameworks will need to be updated to support flexible design standards, streamlined approval processes, and the integration of infrastructure improvements. Addressing these regulatory concerns is essential for facilitating smooth and efficient development while maintaining each district's intended character and functionality.

Complement with Harnett Horizons

This document serves as a non-binding supplement to the Harnett Horizons County Comprehensive Plan, providing additional strategic guidance and detailed recommendations for the development of a County Village District. It complements the broader vision outlined in the Comprehensive Plan by offering specific insights and design narratives that support the plan's goals for sustainable growth, community development, and infrastructure integration within Harnett County while focusing on the integration of pedestrian-oriented village districts.

Mechanisms to be Adopted

Mechanisms for the formal adoption of the Harnett County Village District locations as well as planning, zoning and design guidelines will be incorporated into the County Comprehensive Plan. These mechanisms will outline the necessary steps, including public engagement, stakeholder consultation, and regulatory processes, to ensure that the proposed locations are thoroughly vetted and aligned with the county's long-term vision for sustainable development and community enhancement. Small Area Plans for the Village Districts could be developed to provide detailed planning and zoning guidance and tailored strategies for the unique needs and opportunities within each potential County Village District, ensuring cohesive and context-sensitive growth.

County Village District Exact Locations Not Formally Adopted

The exact locations and boundaries for Harnett County's Village Districts have not yet been decided nor have they been formally adopted. The potential areas outlined in this document are preliminary considerations based on initial impact and feasibility assessments. Final decisions regarding the village district locations and boundaries will be made following further analysis, public input, and coordination with relevant stakeholders to ensure alignment with the county's broader planning goals and community needs.



Implementation Considerations

Spectrum of Village District Implementation Options

Though several mechanisms for implementation have been considered, the recommendation is for the County to proceed with a series of simple steps that strike the best balance of flexibility to transition over time.

Next Steps

The essential steps are outlined below:

A. Future Land Use Map Revisions

Designate areas on the Harnett County Future Land Use Map (FLUM) as village districts based on the design strategies outlined with in this Harnett County Village Design Guide and context-sensitive development. Additional focus should align Zoning Code revisions to align with updated FLUM designations. Infrastructure planning for necessary upgrades to roads, utilities, and public facilities. Community Engagement sessions to ensure revisions reflect resident and stakeholder priorities.

B. Conditional Zoning

Conditional zoning should address a tailored zoning approach that allows specific land uses and development conditions to be customized the village district while ensuring alignment with broader planning goals. The conditional zoning should provide flexibility for innovation while preserving the district's character and meeting community needs.

Customizable conditions provide for specific conditions or restrictions to be applied to a property or projects within a designated village district, such as design standards, permitted uses, or infrastructure improvements. Village character compatibility ensures new development aligns with the cultural, historical, and architectural aspects of the village district. Focus on community engagement provides opportunities for public input and negotiation to address community concerns and priorities. The County can maintain enhanced oversight related to the scale, design, and impact of development projects.

C. Village District Small Area Plans

Based on the Harnett County Villages identified, Village District Small Area Plans are detailed, localized planning documents used to guide the development, revitalization, or preservation of specific village districts within a community. These plans shall be designed to reflect the unique character and needs of each of the village areas while aligning with broader municipal or regional goals. Key purpose and features shall include the following:

- **Community-Centric Design:** Emphasize human-scaled development with walkable streets, public spaces, and mixed-use areas. Foster a strong sense of community identity through thoughtful design and land-use planning.
- **Land Use and Zoning Recommendations:** Provide detailed guidance on permitted land uses, building heights, density, and architectural styles. Encourage a mix of housing options, retail, and services to create a vibrant and functional district.
- **Public Realm Enhancements:** Focus on improving streetscapes, parks, plazas, and pedestrian pathways. Incorporate sustainable design elements like green infrastructure and energy-efficient features.
- **Preservation of Character:** Protect historic buildings, cultural landmarks, and natural features that define the area's identity. Balance new development with the preservation of existing community assets.
- **Economic Development Strategies:** Identify opportunities to attract businesses, support local entrepreneurs,

and enhance the tax base. Integrate strategies for tourism, retail, and cultural events to boost economic vitality.

- **Transportation and Connectivity:** Enhance access to public transit, bike lanes, and pedestrian routes. Ensure connectivity between the village district and surrounding neighborhoods or regions.
- **Community Input and Stakeholder Engagement:** Involve residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in the planning process to ensure the plan reflects local priorities.

D. Specific Form-Based Overlay

A Form-Based Overlay for Villages may be developed as a complementary zoning tool designed to regulate development in a way that prioritizes the physical form and character of the built environment within a Village District over specific land uses. It aims to preserve and enhance the distinctive qualities of a village while fostering sustainable and community-oriented growth.

A Village Overlay District would be based on a form-based code for areas destined to become new walkable centers. Rather than dictating the use of a building, form-based codes guide the placement, massing and features of buildings so that the sum creates a pleasant, active street. Establishing rules for the look and feel in conjunction with community discussions helps to codify what residents would like to see, which in principle could help them feel more comfortable with change. Buildings within 15-minute villages should encourage multiple uses and flexible spaces such as a municipal permit center some days of the week, and/or perhaps a pop-up shop on other days.

Implementation Considerations

Administration

Though several approaches to administration have been considered, the recommendation is for the County to continue developing key relationships within each of the four County Village Districts that have been identified. Cohesive places, like County Village Districts, thrive off of an administration that guides coordination between key constituents, development, infrastructure, policy, place, brand, economics, and ongoing maintenance.

In the future, consideration should be given to forming advisory groups for one or more villages which may necessitate a Village Design Review Board for review and guidance prior to approval by County Planning and the Board of Commissioners.

Other options for consideration in the long term may include the following:

Option 1: VID (BID/MID) District

A VID (Village Improvement District) is a public-private entity that is originally setup by a County/Municipality, to pool and coordinate ongoing maintenance, vision, and programming of a place. The participation is voluntary, and the funding is usually mostly donations from stakeholders (business owners, developers, etc), and a smaller amount from the public stakeholders.

Benefits:

- **Enhanced Public Spaces:** VIDs focus on beautification and maintenance, making the area more attractive and well-maintained.
- **Economic Development:** VIDs support local businesses through marketing and events, leading to increased property values and economic growth.
- **Community Engagement:** Local stakeholders in VIDs have a direct say in spending, fostering collaboration and aligning improvements with community needs.
- **Increased Safety:** VIDs fund public safety initiatives like better lighting and security measures, reducing crime and improving security.

- **Event and Marketing Opportunities:** VIDs organize events and marketing campaigns to attract visitors and create a vibrant community atmosphere.
- **Local Control and Accountability:** VIDs provide tailored solutions, ensuring transparency and accountability in managing funds and initiatives.

Drawbacks:

- **Increased Costs for Property Owners:** VIDs impose additional taxes or assessments, which can burden property owners, particularly small businesses, and may lead to perceptions of unequal cost distribution.
- **Potential for Gentrification:** As property values rise, there is a risk of gentrification, leading to higher rents, displacement of long-term residents, and potential loss of the village's original character.
- **Administrative Challenges:** Managing a VID requires complex administration, which can be time-consuming and may lead to disagreements among stakeholders over priorities and management.
- **Risk of Exclusion:** Non-property owners, like residents, may feel excluded from decision-making, and non-commercial areas might be neglected in favor of commercial improvements.
- **Short-Term Focus:** There may be pressure to show quick results, leading to short-term projects that overlook

- long-term planning and sustainability, with potential misallocation of funds.
- **Economic Vulnerability:** VIDs depend on the local economy, and during downturns, funding may decrease, straining the district's ability to continue its activities or increasing the burden on struggling businesses.

Example:

- **Town of Cary**
The Cary Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) is part of its downtown redevelopment plan. The BID helps advance the timing of private development in Downtown Cary. Given current success, Town Council refined the criteria of the program to provide Cary greater precision in determining projects that best align with the Imagine Cary Community Plan (ICCP).



Implementation Considerations

Administration

Option 2: MSD District

An MSD (Municipal Service District) is a designated area within a municipality where additional services, improvements, or regulations are applied, funded by special assessments or taxes levied on properties within the district. MSDs are often used to support projects that enhance public infrastructure, beautification, safety, and economic development.

Benefits:

- **Enhanced Public Services:** MSDs improve infrastructure and offer targeted services like street cleaning and enhanced public safety, boosting the quality of life for residents and businesses.
- **Economic Development:** By enhancing the environment, MSDs attract new businesses, retain existing ones, and increase property values, driving economic growth.
- **Tailored Solutions:** MSDs allow localized control, enabling custom programs and projects that address the specific needs and characteristics of the district.
- **Enhanced Community Engagement:** MSDs involve local stakeholders in decision-making, fostering community involvement and collaboration on issues like crime prevention and economic revitalization.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** MSDs leverage resources from both the public and private sectors, enabling large-scale improvements and increasing funding opportunities

through special assessments.

- **Long-Term Planning:** MSDs provide a framework for sustained development, focusing on long-term goals like economic diversification and urban renewal, ensuring ongoing investment and strategic growth.

Drawbacks:

- **Increased Costs:** Property owners face additional taxes, which can be a burden, especially for small businesses, with potential inequity in cost distribution.
- **Risk of Gentrification:** Rising property values can lead to gentrification, causing displacement of lower-income residents and small businesses, reducing community diversity.
- **Administrative Complexity:** Managing an MSD requires complex governance and administration, which can lead to inefficiencies and bureaucratic delays.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** Competing priorities among stakeholders may result in conflicts, perceived favoritism, and delays in project implementation.
- **Limited Flexibility:** Funds must be used within the district, limiting adaptability to broader needs or economic fluctuations, potentially straining finances during downturns.
- **Community Opposition:** Resistance to additional taxes and challenges in gaining consensus can hinder the creation of an MSD, especially if benefits are unclear

- **Economic Downturn Vulnerability:** During recessions, additional costs can strain businesses, reduce revenues, and limit the district's ability to fund improvements.

Examples:

- **City of Raleigh**
The Raleigh Municipal District (Downtown) and the Hillsborough Street Municipal District are two MSDs in Raleigh. The Downtown MSD funds have been used for economic development, public space enhancement, historic preservation and modernization, community engagement and tourism promotion. The Hillsborough Street MSD funds are focused on support for local small businesses, pedestrian Friendly improvements, community programming, urban revitalization as well as cultural and academic connection.
- **Town of Morrisville**
The neighborhoods of Carpenter Park, The Gables, Huntington Park, Kelton II, and Kelton Square are included in the Municipal Service District in Morrisville. The Morrisville MSD was established to facilitate the conversion of private residential streets into public streets.
- **City of Greensboro**
The College Hill and Dunleath (formerly Aycock) Historic Districts are MSDs in Greensboro. MSD funds in Greensboro have been used for projects such as landscaping, gateway signs, period lighting, and sidewalk trash receptacles.

Implementation Considerations

Administration

Option 3: TIG or TIF District

A TIG (Tax Increment Grant) district, also known as a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, is a tool used by municipalities to encourage economic development in specific areas by redirecting future property tax revenue increases (the “tax increment”) generated by new development back into the district to fund public improvements or incentivize private investment.

Benefits:

- **Stimulates Economic Development:** TIG/TIF districts attract private investment and revitalize blighted areas, reducing urban decay.
- **Public Infrastructure Improvements:** Funds from tax increments can enhance infrastructure like roads and utilities, making the area more appealing and leveraging private investment for broader community goals.
- **Job Creation:** New developments generate jobs and stimulate local economic growth through increased business activity.
- **Increased Property Values:** Development boosts property values, leading to a higher tax base and more municipal revenue after the district expires.
- **Flexible Financing Tool:** TIG/TIF districts are funded by future tax revenue, avoiding upfront taxpayer costs, and allowing customizable incentives aligned with local goals.

- **Encourages Mixed-Use Development:** These districts promote diverse land use, creating vibrant, self-sustaining communities.

Drawbacks:

- **Inequitable Benefits:** The benefits may be concentrated among developers and businesses, potentially excluding low-income residents and risking gentrification, which can displace long-term residents and small businesses.
- **Fiscal Impact on Public Services:** Redirected tax revenue may reduce funds for essential services like schools and public safety, and if the district underperforms, the municipality may face budget shortfalls.
- **Long-Term Financial Risk:** The success of a TIF district hinges on increased property values and tax revenue. If development lags or market conditions worsen, the municipality could face debt or underused improvements.
- **Complex Administration:** Managing a TIF district involves significant oversight, including planning, monitoring, and legal navigation, which can be time-consuming and challenging.
- **Potential for Abuse:** There is a risk of misallocated funds, favoritism, or corruption, leading to questions about the district’s fairness and effectiveness.

Examples:

- **City of Roanoke Rapids**
The TIF district was created to finance the construction of the Roanoke Rapids Theatre, aiming to boost tourism and local commerce.
- **City of Kannapolis**
The TIF district supports the revitalization of its downtown area, focusing on infrastructure improvements to encourage business growth and urban development.
- **Town of Woodfin**
The TIF district was implemented to fund enhancements such as roadways and utilities, facilitating mixed-use development and community growth.



Implementation Considerations

Economic Incentives

The County is interested in establishing and developing one program for economic incentives which is focused on infrastructure improvements. Other options maybe considered in the future either independently or in tandem with this initial program, which can unlock greater development quality and capacity for a longer term ROI in tax revenue and place.

Infrastructure Improvements

Infrastructure improvements involve the county investing in or upgrading public infrastructure such as roads, utilities, transportation networks, and public spaces. This can create a more conducive environment for private development by reducing the initial investment burden on developers.

How It Works:

- **County Investment:** The county might fund improvements to critical infrastructure in targeted development areas, such as extending water and sewer lines, upgrading roadways, or enhancing public transportation.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Sometimes, these improvements are part of a public-private partnership where both the county and developers contribute to the costs.
- **Targeted Development Areas:** Infrastructure improvements are often focused on areas with high development potential or where significant economic impact can be realized.

Benefits:

- **Attracts Developers:** By improving infrastructure, the county makes the area more attractive to developers, who can then focus their resources on vertical construction & other site-specific investments.

- **Increases Property Values:** Improved infrastructure often leads to increased property values, which in turn generates higher tax revenues for the county over time.
- **Enhances Quality of Life:** Infrastructure improvements benefit the broader community, not just developers, by improving accessibility, safety, & overall quality of life in the area.

Drawbacks:

- **High Upfront Costs:** Infrastructure improvements require significant public investment, which can strain municipal budgets and potentially lead to higher taxes or debt.
- **Uncertain Return on Investment:** The anticipated economic benefits, such as increased development or property values, may not materialize, leaving the municipality with costly infrastructure and limited returns.
- **Risk of Overbuilding:** Investing in infrastructure without sufficient demand can result in underutilized facilities, wasted resources, & maintenance costs without corresponding economic growth.
- **Potential for Inequitable Distribution:** Benefits from infrastructure improvements may be concentrated in specific areas, leading to disparities in development and neglecting other parts of the municipality.

- **Disruption During Construction:** Infrastructure projects can cause significant disruption to existing businesses, residents, and traffic, potentially leading to short-term economic losses and public dissatisfaction.
- **Environmental Impact:** Large-scale infrastructure projects can have negative environmental effects, such as habitat destruction, increased pollution, & changes in land use that may not align with sustainability goals.

County Village District Design Guide

Harnett Horizons 2040

