



## Introduction

In March 2024, three meetings were held and an online opportunity was provided for the community to review and provide feedback on three land use and transportation plan amendment scenarios. The meetings were held on: March 6<sup>th</sup> at the Apex Senior Center, March 18<sup>th</sup> at Pleasant Plains Baptist Church, and March 20<sup>th</sup> at the New Hill Community Center. A total of 75 people attended the three public meetings.

Meeting materials were posted on the project website on February 20<sup>th</sup>, in advance of the first public meeting. An online survey that matched the in-person comment form was open from February 20<sup>th</sup> – April 1<sup>st</sup>. Eighty-one online and paper survey responses were provided. Additional community input, separate from the online survey, was provided through email. A recorded presentation that was posted on the project website and played during the public meetings received 474 views on YouTube.

More information about the planning process and the public engagement completed to date is available at: [www.apexnc.org/wbbap](http://www.apexnc.org/wbbap).

During the staff presentation to Town Council, a graphic summary of input received on the three plan amendment scenarios will be presented and the attached community-proposed Friendship and New Hill Community Land Use Map & Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District will be summarized. This staff report summarizes that information **and also** includes input received on the Draft Additional Plan Recommendations and the Draft Vision & Goals.

## Draft Additional Plan Recommendations

The Draft Additional Plan Recommendations and the associated comments received are listed below.

### *Future Land Use*

- Encourage development of a small-scale downtown near the intersection of Humie Olive Rd and Old US 1.
  - Architecture of The Summit does not align with the Humie Olive Concept Development. Question of what controls will be put in place to ensure the small-scale downtown feel.
- Encourage development of grocery/convenience offerings near the intersection of New Hill Holleman Road and US 1.
  - Grocery store is proposed as part of the New Hill Plaza, but the project's high-density housing does not align with small-scale community.

### *Transportation*

- Study and potentially invest in turn lanes and a traffic signal at the intersection of Friendship Rd and Old US 1.
  - Traffic signal and turn lanes needed at intersection of Friendship Rd and Old US 1.
  - Concerned the traffic study included a school holiday.
- Conduct a feasibility study for a potential grade separation at either NC 540 or S Salem St to improve vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access to Pleasant Park.
  - Town should not open Phase 3 of the park given the unsafe conditions.
  - Prepare an updated traffic study for Pleasant Park.
  - Provide additional roadway improvements to prevent near-miss incidents.



- Coordinate with NCDOT on its annual resurfacing contract for opportunities to stripe bicycle lanes and/or provide bicycle signage within the study area.
  - Raised centerline reflectors and reflective paint on road shoulders at the time of repaving would assist nighttime driving as drivers face oncoming headlights.
  - Reduce posted speed limit along Old US 1 from 55 mph to 45 mph.
  - In 2023, NCDOT determined that Friendship Rd is ineligible for bike lanes. Additional cycling should not be encouraged until road improvements are made for both cyclist and motorist safety.
- Coordinate with regional partners on transportation requirements for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians associated with new development in the vicinity of the study area.
  - Include a community member in the discussions regarding Richardson Rd.
  - The Richardson Rd extension is a major highway up to 130 feet wide with 20,000 daily vehicles. This is much wider than existing roadways in the community and may generate traffic volumes in line with NC 540.
  - Update scope for traffic studies to include traffic that is generated when a development's school is capped or when a park fee-in-lieu occurs.
  - Conduct traffic studies.
- Further explore a potential transit connection between downtown Apex and Pleasant Park.
  - Bus stops must be internal to the park and not on Pleasant Plains Rd. Town staff need to supervise minors who come to the park without an adult.
  - Support the GoApex bus, but a bus stop is needed closer to the study area.
- Suggested Recommendations
  - Friendship Rd is 6.5-ton weight limited. Work with NCDOT to increase enforcement.
  - Old US 1 has blind spots due to rolling hills. Work with incoming development to reduce hills.
  - Old US 1 has concrete buckling under the pavement. Work with NCDOT to have concrete removed from problem areas.
  - Restrict left turn hours at Friendship Rd/Old US 1 intersection.
  - Explore roundabouts.
  - Coordinate with other agencies to construct road infrastructure.
  - Traffic signal needed at Kelly Rd/Old US 1
  - Construct bike lanes along Old US 1 from Friendship Rd to NC 55.
  - Remove timers from lights at NC 540/Old US 1.

### *Quality of Life*

- Encourage economic development along the Richardson Road corridor at the future Friendship Road/US 1 interchange.
  - This is an Apex goal, not a community goal.
  - The community understands development will occur. It should reflect Historic Friendship and New Hill.
- Utilize the Town of Apex Affordable Housing Incentive Zoning Policy to encourage mixed housing options in the study area.
  - Mixed housing should be banned as it was not part of Historic Friendship or New Hill.
  - Small-scaled Habitat for Humanity styled homes with small yards or replicas of New Hill travel cottages are a better fit.
- Suggested Recommendations

## STAFF REPORT

### Western Big Branch Area Plan Update

May 14, 2024 Town Council Meeting



- Provide more housing.
- Provide parks.
- Keep areas for people with low incomes to live.
- Do not build a landfill near New Hill.
- Increase buffers in UDO to protect rural properties.

#### *Environment*

- Review best practices and develop a policy to encourage the preservation of forested areas.
  - NC Forest Service and Wake County Soil & Water should be included in the development of the plan.
  - Town should look to establish a community forest in the study area, similar to the Cary Tree Archive.
  - Town should look to establish a permanent farmers market and community farm, similar to Good Hope Farm in Cary.
- Continue to designate properties within the study area as either part of the Primary or Secondary Watershed Protection Areas after being voluntarily annexed into the Town of Apex.
  - Property owners would like to know the future classification before annexation.

#### *History*

- Incorporate New Hill Historic District gateway signs into the Town-wide Wayfinding Signage Program.
  - Should include both New Hill and Friendship historic gateways.
- Encourage residents of the Friendship and New Hill communities to participate in the Town of Apex Historical Marker Program.
  - Agreed. Please provide the process.
- Add a subtitle to the plan document: Western Big Branch Area Plan – Encompassing the Friendship and New Hill Communities.
  - The Western Big Branch Area Plan name should be abandoned. Let property owners nominate the name.

#### Draft Vision & Goals

##### Fall 2023 Public Input Process & Results

A draft vision and set of goals were developed based on input provided at the August 2023 public open houses. An online survey was released to gather input on the draft vision & goals from October 25 – November 13, 2023. 71 individuals either participated in the survey or provided input through email. 82% of survey respondents either agree or strongly agree with draft vision and draft goals as presented in August 2023. Based on the public input provided, staff maintained draft vision and added one goal (#7) based on online survey results. The updated vision and goals were used to inform Draft Additional Plan recommendations. The Draft Additional Plan Recommendations were presented to the public for input in Spring 2024. The full summary of input on the draft vision and goals is available on the project website at: <https://publicinput.com/i5237#tab-45673>.

##### Spring 2024 Public Input

###### *Draft Study Area Vision*

The Western Big Branch Area Plan envisions a future where the rural residential character of the study area is valued and actively protected, the unique history of the New Hill and Friendship communities is acknowledged



and celebrated, new development is responsive to the needs of surrounding residents, and multimodal travel is safe and context sensitive.

*Draft Study Area Vision Comments*

- Most of the community generally agrees.
- The community is more than just rural, it includes a variety of farm types. These tracts provide economic value through environmental protection.
- Study Area Vision and Town Ordinances need to be expanded to address the potential nuisance that new development creates in the study area.

*Draft Study Area Goals Comments*

The draft study area goals and the associated comments are listed below.

1. Preserve rural residential land, agriculture, and open space
2. Maintain and enhance the tree canopy
3. Protect water resources
  - Rural nature and tree canopy cannot be preserved when there is more than one house per acre.
4. Honor the history of the Friendship and New Hill communities
  - Agreed. Thank you.
5. Encourage development of a small-scale downtown near the intersection of Humie Olive Road and Old US 1
6. Encourage development of grocery/convenience offerings near the intersection of New Hill Holleman Road and US 1
  - It is understood that commercial development may occur along Old US 1 and New Hill Holleman Road.
  - Mixed-use and high density residential is not cohesive to adjoining rural properties and fails to actively protect the rural nature of the study area.
7. **(Added after 2023 online survey)** Encourage economic development along the Richardson Road corridor south of Old US 1 and at the future Richardson Road/US 1 interchange
  - This is not a community goal. This would further divide the community and destroy portions of Bosco Rd and potentially Friendship Rd.
  - Remove this goal.
8. Improve the safety of area roadways for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians
  - Agreed.
9. Mitigate the impact of surrounding development on existing roads
  - Replace the word “mitigate” with “eliminate”.
  - When development is approved with park fee-in-lieu and schools are capped, there is more traffic. Account for this in traffic studies.
  - Connector roads are not supported as these roads do not protect the rural character and does not increase the quality of life.



### 10. Provide trails, greenways, and trailheads

- Community is split:
  - Opposed if facilities come with townhomes.
  - Support if facilities come with commercial development.

### Additional Comments

The following comments were provided about the planning process as well as about topics separate from the Western Big Branch Area Plan.

- Concerned about the lack of transparency associated with the Little Beaver Creek Conservation Easement.
- Concerned about the three scenarios versus having a dialogue about what the community wants.
- Perception that the Town is looking to expand the same kind of development as is found in Apex versus development unique to the study area.
- Friendship and New Hill residents lack representation.
- Planning Department steered the options.
- Concerned that the input provided at the August 2023 open houses on what attendees would like to see more of and less of in the study area was used as approvals.
- Against Apex's use of eminent domain and development (Richardson Road, Hunter Street Sidewalk, Pleasant Park).
- The community plans to propose a Historical Farm Overlay District to reflect the historical significance of farming and to support and encourage urban farms, mini farms, horse farms, and larger farms in the study area.

### Scenarios Introduction

- In August 2023, the community shared their preference is to maintain existing land uses in the study area and also improve the transportation network. The purpose of these plan amendment scenarios is to convey tradeoffs - that is, transportation improvements within the study area would primarily be constructed through private development. Without development, transportation improvements will be limited.
- In general, as the scenario number increases from one to three, the land use intensities increase and the transportation network expands.
- Scenario 1 emphasizes study area goals 1 and 2, which include:
  - Preserve rural residential land, agriculture, and open space; and
  - Maintain and enhance the tree canopy
- Scenario 3 emphasizes study area goals 7 through 9, which include:
  - Encourage economic development along the Richardson Road corridor south of Old US 1 and at the future Richardson Road/US 1 interchange
  - Improve the safety of area roadways for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians, and
  - Mitigate the impact of surrounding development on existing roads
- Scenario 2 attempts to balance preservation of existing land uses and transportation improvements.

### Scenario Preferences

- Most preferred: Scenario 1
- Second preferred: Scenario 2

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- Least preferred: Scenario 3

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Top Rank	43	15	6
Second Rank	5	38	12
Third Rank	16	3	37
<b>Weighted Rank</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.6</b>

### Scenario One: Minimize Change

#### General Comments

Comment	Frequency
Maintain the rural feel (low density and few vehicles).	5
Leave us and the area alone/keep the area the same.	4
It is not realistic to expect this area to stay as is (new water, sewer, etc.).	4
Support this scenario.	2
Do not support this scenario.	1
Concerned it pushes housing further into non-developed areas with less infrastructure.	1
Current pace of town growth is not sustainable.	1
There is a misperception on what the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) does. The FLUM does not force sales or require right-of-way dedication.	1
Allow people to stay in the area or sell if they choose.	1
Half of Bosco Road is destroyed.	1
*Update map to reflect Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts and Voluntary Agricultural District properties.	

\*Comment submitted separately from survey

#### Location-Specific Land Use Comments

- Change the Kilcastle Farms properties to Rural Density Residential
- Change both sides of New Hill Holleman Rd to Low/Rural Density, apart from the US 1 interchange
- Support the Rural Transition Density along Hazelhurst Cir
- Change 3601 Friendship Rd to Rural Density Residential
- Change both sides of Friendship Rd to Rural Density Residential

#### General Land Use Comments

- Like the rural development levels/atmosphere
- Support density around major intersections
- Support life science campus (or similar) rather than subdivisions with commercial, with the exception of grocery.
- Concerned the medium density and commercial areas will have a domino effect
- The US 1 / NC 540 area should not be fully preserved. Provide options for people to live and work.

#### Location-Specific Transportation Comments

- Shift Richardson Rd away from Country Haven Ln and Bosco Rd

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- Transportation improvements are needed, particularly along Friendship Rd and Old US 1
- Improve Friendship Rd/Old US 1 intersection
- Against New Hill Loop collector
- Against Richardson Rd extension
- Against Friendship Rd widening – protect historic structure
- Support side path along Old US 1
- Support removal of Bosco Rd collector
- Support Richardson Rd/Bosco Rd alignment
- Close Friendship Rd bridge
- Against removal of bike lanes from Friendship Rd
- Against collector street between Friendship Rd and Pleasant Plains Rd

### General Transportation Comment

- Bike lanes are needed

### Scenario Two: Incremental Change

#### General Comments

Comment	Frequency
Do not support.	5
Leave us/the area alone.	4
Best balance of development and road improvements.	3
Good overall.	2
Average / safe.	1
Hoping this will bring a good mix of housing and business with the necessary infrastructure improvements.	1
Since the current infrastructure is overwhelmed by growth, we need transportation updates. At the same time, this plan will help preserve the unique history and nature of the Friendship Community.	1
Support 3-lanes along Friendship Road, but without land use changes to Creeks Bend. Prefer rural density for Creeks Bend.	1
Buildings are often abandoned. Green areas and trees should be prioritized.	1
Keep the rural nature.	1
Receive resident approval before future planning.	1
Half of Bosco Road is destroyed.	1

#### Location-Specific Land Use Comments

- Prefer Rural Transition Density instead of Medium Density for Hazelhurst Cir
- Concerned about Medium Density along Bosco Rd
- Second choice because Friendship Rd area is Medium Density rather than Low Density

#### General Land Use Comments

- Not balanced - development area is larger than rural area
- Not sufficient - higher intensity is needed

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- Seems optimal - keep major retail along major corridors, especially US 1

### Location-Specific Transportation Comments

- Shift Richardson Rd away from Country Haven Ln and Bosco Rd
- Support removal of Bosco Rd collector
- Support Richardson Rd extension to Old US 1 only
- Against Richardson Rd extension

### General Transportation Comments

- Support the bike lanes
- Close, but improvements will not keep up with development
- Prioritize infrastructure improvements that focus on public safety and congestion reduction
- Raise fee in lieu costs to match actual costs

### Scenario Three: Expand Transportation Network

#### General Comments

Comment	Frequency
Do not support.	6
Leave us/the area alone.	5
Costs to the Town outweigh benefits.	2
If roads are changing, builders will offer more money and land will sell. Have a plan for future land owners, not current ones.	1
This scenario would destroy the rural character and historic structures in Friendship.	1
Good overall.	1
Half of Bosco Road is destroyed.	1
Expanding the street network and increasing density is needed to reduce traffic all over town.	1

### Location-Specific Land Use Comments

- Against Medium Density or High Density around Old US 1/Friendship Rd/Humie Olive Rd
- Makes use of the existing and proposed interchanges at US 1 to provide economic growth

### General Land Use Comments

- Too dense
- Community does not want more townhomes
- Puts density near major intersections and possible public transit
- Too much residential development
- Increased density around Vicious Fishes will be good for Apex and surrounding areas
- Fills the gap in residential density between north of Old US 1 and Holly Springs
- Higher intensity uses will support public transit.

### Location-Specific Transportation Comments

- Shift Richardson Rd away from Country Haven Ln and Bosco Rd
- Remove the intersection of Bosco Rd and Richardson Rd



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- Two streets, Bosco Rd collector and new local connection) are proposed through 8164 Providence Oak Path
- Against Bosco Rd collector
- Against Richardson Rd extension
- Additional travel lane needed on Old US 1 bridge over NC 540.

### General Transportation Comments

- Support expanded public transit
- Against planning for transit
- Roads will not handle traffic volumes
- Improve safety for cyclists, beyond bike lanes
- Add roadways through undeveloped land that is not historic
- Against Church Rd extension through New Hill Community Center property
- Expanding the street network is preferred to adding lanes to US 1
- Support expanding the transportation network to reduce congestion

### Draft Additional Plan Recommendations

The draft recommendations are informed by the study area vision and goals as well as the information gathered to date. The draft recommendations are divided into the five planning themes that were presented during the August 2023 Open Houses: Future Land Use, Transportation, Quality of Life, History, and Environment.

Survey respondents were asked to review the Additional Plan Recommendations and rank their top three priorities. The recommendation to study and potentially invest in turn lanes and a traffic signal at the intersection of Friendship Road and Old US 1 received the highest weighted rank. The recommendation to review best practices and develop a policy to encourage the preservation of forested areas received the most top-priority responses.

Rank	Weighted Rank	Additional Plan Recommendation
1	1.4	Study and potentially invest in turn lanes and a traffic signal at the intersection of Friendship Road and Old US 1.
2	1.57	Review best practices and develop a policy to encourage the preservation of forested areas.
3	1.60	Further explore a potential transit connection between downtown Apex and Pleasant Park.

Draft Additional Plan Recommendation	1st Rank	2nd Rank	3rd Rank	Total Responses	Weighted Rank
Study and potentially invest in turn lanes and a traffic signal at the intersection of Friendship Road and Old US 1.	13	6	1	20	1.40
Review best practices and develop a policy to encourage the preservation of forested areas.	17	6	5	28	1.57

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Draft Additional Plan Recommendation	1st Rank	2nd Rank	3rd Rank	Total Responses	Weighted Rank
Further explore a potential transit connection between downtown Apex and Pleasant Park.	3	1	1	5	1.60
Encourage development of a small-scale downtown near the intersection of Humie Olive Road and Old US 1.	3	2	3	8	2.00
Encourage residents of the Friendship and New Hill communities to participate in the Town of Apex Historical Marker Program.	1	2	1	4	2.00
Utilize the Town of Apex Affordable Housing Incentive Zoning Policy to encourage mixed housing near major intersections in the study area.	0	1	0	1	2.00
Encourage development of grocery/convenience offerings near the intersection of New Hill Holleman Road and US 1.	2	6	3	11	2.09
Incorporate New Hill Historic District gateway signs into the Town-wide Wayfinding Signage Program.	1	2	2	5	2.20
Conduct a feasibility study for a potential grade separation in the vicinity of Pleasant Park to improve vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access to the park.	1	1	2	4	2.25
Coordinate with regional partners on transportation requirements for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians associated with new development.	1	3	3	7	2.29
Continue to designate properties within the study area as either part of the Primary or Secondary Watershed Protection Areas after being voluntarily annexed into the Town of Apex.	1	6	5	12	2.33
Encourage economic development along the Richardson Road corridor at the future Friendship Road/US 1 interchange.	1	2	4	7	2.43
Coordinate with NCDOT on its annual resurfacing contract to stripe bicycle lanes and/or provide bicycle signage within the study area.	1	1	5	7	2.57

### Friendship and New Hill Community Land Use Map & Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District

130 residents have signed a petition to propose a neighborhood conservation overlay district called the Historical Farm Overlay District. The full proposal is included as an attachment to the staff report. The proposal notes that purpose of this zoning overlay district is to preserve and enhance the general quality and appearance of established neighborhoods by regulating built environmental characteristics such as lot size and frontage,



building setback, and building height. This district is intended to reduce conflicts between new construction and existing development and encourages compatible infill development.

Key elements of the overlay district proposal are listed below.

- Residential development:
  - Provisions regarding building height, fencing, buffers, stormwater, tree preservation, and seller disclosure
- Citizen Advisory Committee:
  - Review and provide non-binding comments on pre-applications for development
  - Participate in neighborhood meetings
  - Participate in Town Council Work Sessions, Technical Review Committee meetings, and public hearings

In addition to the overlay district proposal, the community members provided additional feedback regarding the Land Use Map and Transportation Plan.

Land Use Map Comments

- Residential development:
  - No more than one home per acre
- Commercial development:
  - Target commercial development along Old US 1, New Hill Holleman Road, and future Richardson Road
  - Do not allow mixed-use commercial with residential development
  - Encourage agritourism

Transportation Plan Comments

- Focus on improvements to perimeter roads (Old US 1, NC 540, New Hill Holleman Road)
- Minimize interconnectivity
- Shift future Richardson Road east