



# **STANLY COUNTY 2040 COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN**

**THIS PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK.**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Steering Committee

Joseph Burleson, Burleson Development Group  
Dr. Jarrod Dennis, Superintendent, Stanly County Schools  
Kelly Hart, Citizen Representative  
David Jenkins, Director, Health Department  
Amanda Kirby, Director, Soil and Water Conservation District  
Chris Lambert, Director, Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Candice Lowder, Director, Economic Development Commission  
Travis Morehead, Director, Three Rivers Land Trust  
Sandy Selvy-Mullis, Director, Stanly County Chamber of Commerce  
Katelyn Stegall, Extension Agent, NC Cooperative Extension  
Pamela Sullivan, Director, Senior Services  
David Underwood, Stanly County Planning Board  
Molly Alexi\*, Director, NC Cooperative Extension  
Dr. John Eckman III\*, Chair, Stanly County Planning Board  
Scott Efird, Director\*, City of Locust Planning Department, Stanly County Board of Commissioners  
Paul Reynolds\*, Director, GIS Department  
Duane Wingo\*, Director, Stanly County Utilities

*\*Steering Committee Advisor*

## Board of Commissioners

Tommy Jordan, Chair  
Zach Almond, Vice Chair  
Peter Asciutto  
Mike Barbee  
Scott Efird  
Lane Furr  
Bill Lawhon

## Planning Board

Dr. John Eckman III, Chair  
Joel Mauldin  
Michael A. Williams  
M. Tim Fesperman  
David A. Underwood  
T.J. Smith  
Kevin Brickman

## County Staff

Andy Lucas, County Manager  
Bob Remsburg, Director, Planning Department  
Bailey Emrich, Planner II, Planning Department

## Consultant Team

Centralina Regional Council

*Cover Image Credit: RuLa Expressions*









# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 1. Introduction

- a. Land Use Plan Audience & Purpose
- b. Plan Development Process
- c. Land Use Plan Document

## 2. Stanly Today (Existing Conditions)

- a. Study Area
- b. Demographic Trends
- c. Household & Family Characteristics
- d. Local & Regional Economy
- e. Transportation
- f. Infrastructure
- g. Community Services
- h. Community Health
- i. Parks & Recreation
- j. Natural Resources
- k. Existing Land Use & Development Trends

## 3. Stanly Tomorrow (Community Vision)

- a. Community Engagement & Feedback
- b. Vision & Guiding Principles

## 4. Future Land Use

- a. Future Land Use Designation Areas
- b. Community Types

## 5. Policy Recommendations & Strategies

- a. Land Use
- b. Economic Development
- c. Transportation & Mobility
- d. Infrastructure & Facilities
- e. Community Health & Safety
- f. Parks, Recreation, & Natural Resources

## Appendix

- g. Community Engagement Summary Report
- h. Future Community Types-Existing County Zoning Crosswalk Table



## Chapter 1: Introduction



# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## LAND USE PLAN AUDIENCE & PURPOSE

A comprehensive land use plan captures the vision, values, and goals for a community's future. Comprehensive plans rely heavily on community input to identify these goals and create strategies for achieving the community's vision. They also include a land use map to help guide future development. A comprehensive land use plan serves as a guiding document for communities looking to grow in a managed, intentional way as they move toward the future. Land use plans have several audiences and serve a variety of functions within the community they represent.



One primary audience of a land use plan is the community itself. Land use plans should be developed “by and for” the community and should reflect the vision and values of the stakeholders present at the time the plan was put together. Community members can reference land use plans as a written record of their desires and aspirations for the community as they work with County staff and elected officials to achieve those aspirations.

Land use plans also serve as a useful tool for County staff, who are primarily responsible for pursuing implementation of the policy recommendations within the plan. Staff members may consult the plan as they prepare the County budget each year and may use the policy recommendations to guide specific work activities. Although some recommendations must come to fruition through a change to County ordinances, staff can play a role in encouraging these ordinances to be proposed and in implementing the policy recommendations that do not require an ordinance change. Staff are also responsible for updating and maintaining the land use plan – if amendments arise after the initial plan is adopted, staff will incorporate those edits and ensure the plan is available to the public.

Most importantly, the land use plan serves as a resource for elected and appointed officials, especially those who make decisions related to land use or zoning. The Board of Commissioners and the Planning Board should be familiar with the land use plan and should consider the alignment of future development proposals, capital improvement plans, and other County planning initiatives with the plan's recommendations.



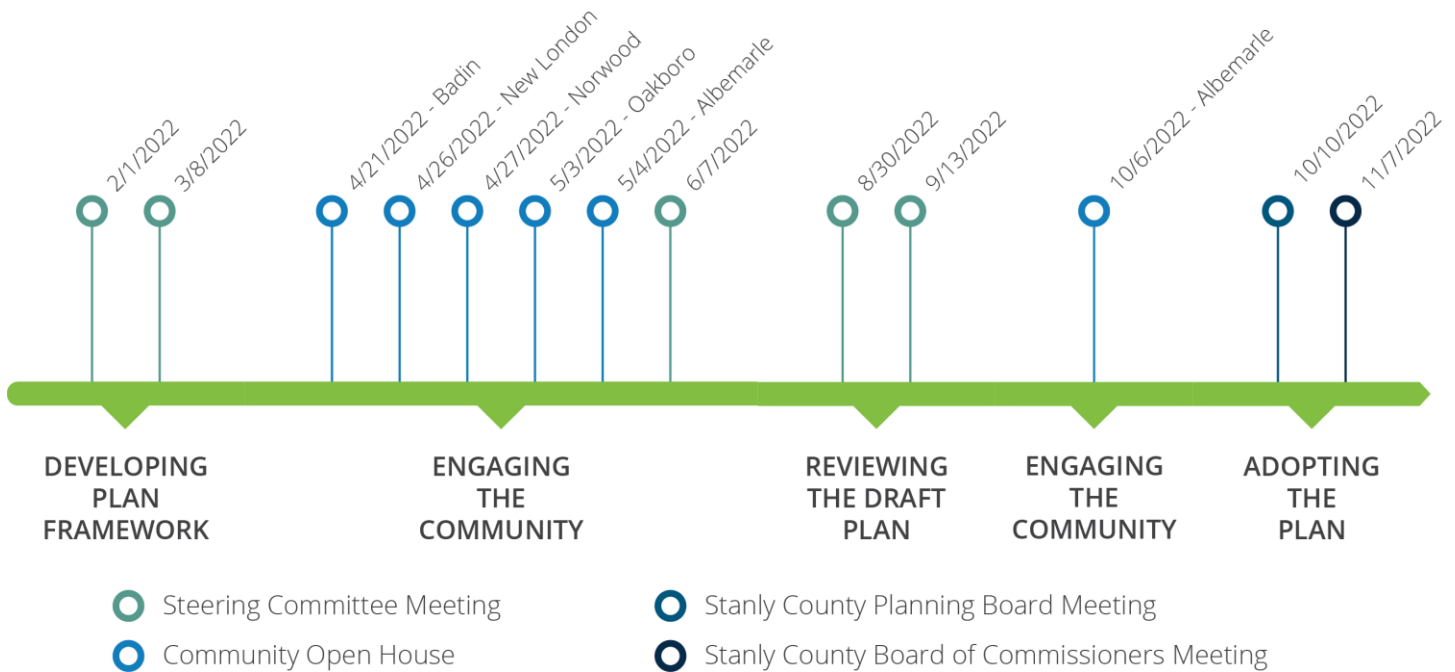
In January 2022, Stanly County began a one-year comprehensive land use planning process to update the community's comprehensive land use plan. Stanly County and the surrounding region are facing a period of unprecedented growth and development, and community members want to ensure Stanly can effectively manage growth while maintaining its rural character and natural assets. This land use plan will serve as a framework for smart, managed development that aligns with community priorities.

Stanly County's comprehensive land use plan has and will continue to serve as a decision-making aid for both the Planning Board and the Board of Commissioners as they consider development decisions. Since the plan captures community priorities and aspirations, elected and appointed officials can look to the plan for guidance on what is most important to their constituents. They can also reference the community types and the future land use map as they consider specific development proposals to determine whether development is aligned with the vision for the community's future. Finally, elected officials may aid in the implementation of certain policy recommendations by amending or creating new ordinances to reflect the policies and strategies within the plan document.



## PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The comprehensive land use plan update began in January 2022 and concluded with the Board of Commissioners' adoption of the plan in November 2022. Planning activities were facilitated by project consultants and guided by County staff and a twelve-member Steering Committee of community leaders. Community members from across the County were heavily involved in the process through extensive community engagement efforts, including six open houses and a community survey garnering over 1,300 responses. The plan offers specific visions and strategies for a variety of topics, including land use, economic development, transportation and mobility, infrastructure and facilities, community health and safety, parks and recreation, and preservation of natural resources.



## LAND USE PLAN DOCUMENT

This plan is structured to allow the reader to learn about Stanly County, its history and current trends, and its community priorities and aspirations before exploring specific strategies to achieve desired growth and preservation outcomes. Chapter 2 (Stanly Today) reviews the County's history, demographics, local economy, transportation and infrastructure systems, natural assets, and other community assets and planning efforts. Chapter 3 (Stanly Tomorrow) offers insight into how community input was translated into guiding principles and core subject areas for the plan's recommendations. Chapter 4 (Future Land Use) describes the land use types and characteristics that are recommended through the Future Land Use Maps. Finally, Chapter 5 (Policy Recommendations & Strategies) provides policy recommendations in each of the subject areas identified in Chapter 3 that will address the community's needs and priorities while helping to realize the vision set forth in the Future Land Use Maps.





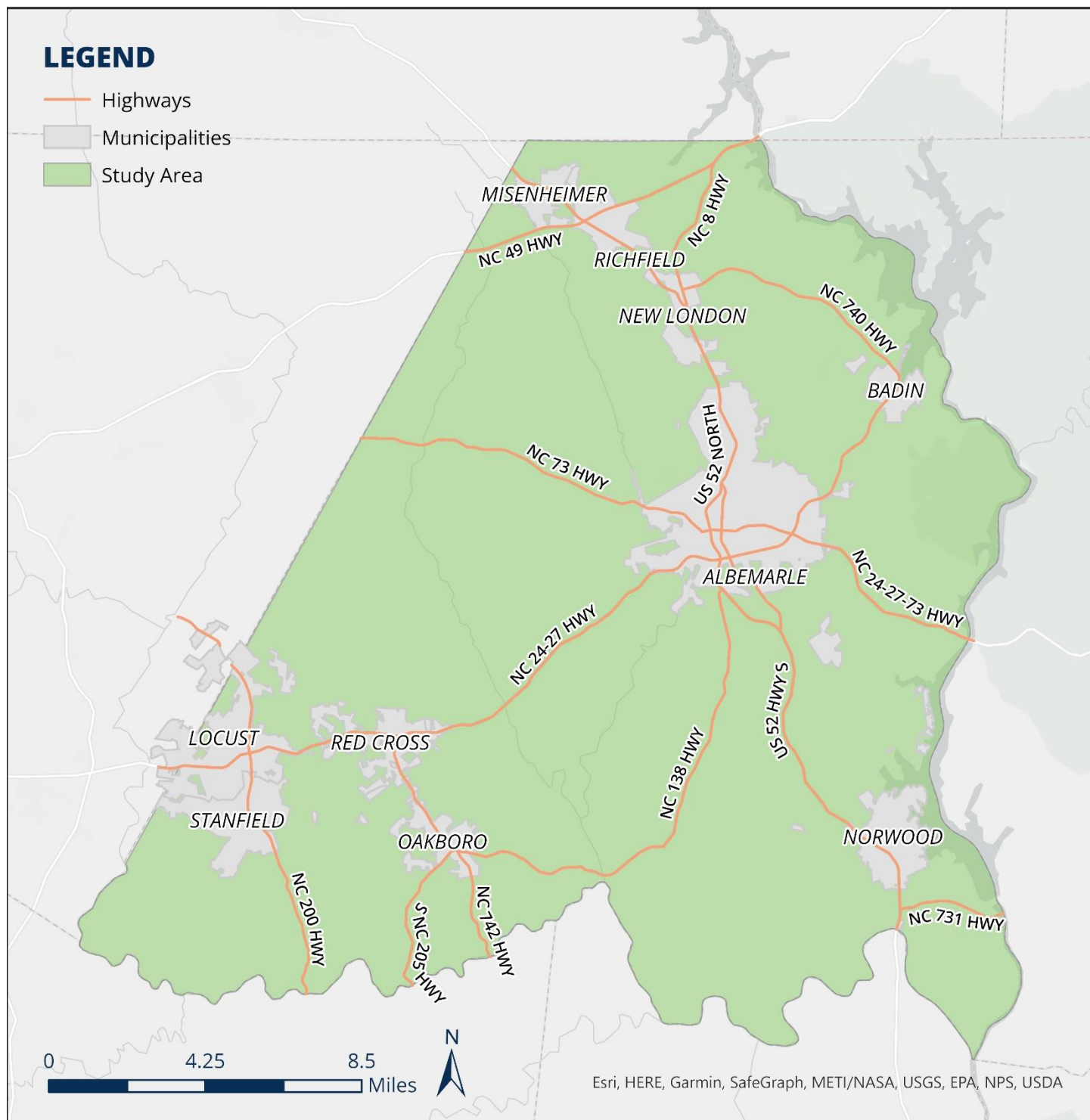
## Chapter 2: Stanly Today



# CHAPTER 2: STANLY TODAY (EXISTING CONDITIONS)

## STUDY AREA

Figure 1. Land Use Plan Study Area





## History

Stanly County is situated in the center of North Carolina and is affectionately referred to as North Carolina's "Central Park" due to its natural beauty and proximity to diverse natural resources. Stanly County ranks as North Carolina's 45th largest county in population (out of 100) with an estimated 62,524 residents, and as the state's 64th largest county in land area (399 square miles). The County is bordered by the Yadkin-Pee Dee Rivers and Uwharrie National Forest to the east, and by the Rocky River to the south.

The Uwharrie Mountains are approximately 500 million years old and are believed to be the oldest mountain range in North America, predating even the Appalachian Mountains. Human inhabitation of the area that would eventually become Stanly County is thought to date back approximately 10,000 years. Originally home to American Indian tribes such as the Tuscarora, Cheraw, and Keyauwee, the area was settled by European colonists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Stanly County was formed in 1841 from a portion of neighboring Montgomery County that lay west of the Yadkin-Pee Dee River. The County was named in honor of John Stanly, a resident of New Bern who served as Speaker of the North Carolina House of Commons and a U.S. Congressman.

## Communities

The 10 incorporated cities in Stanly County are Albemarle, Badin, Locust, New London, Norwood, Oakboro, Red Cross, Richfield, Stanfield and Misenheimer. Albemarle is the largest city and the County seat. Unincorporated communities include Aquadale, Big Lick, Cottonville, Endy, Finger, Frog Pond, Millingport, Palestine, Palmerville, Plyler, Porter and Tuckertown.



## Regional Context

Stanly County is bordered by Montgomery County to the east, Richmond, Anson, and Union Counties to the south, Cabarrus County to the west, and Rowan County to the north. Considered part of the greater Charlotte metropolitan area, Stanly County is experiencing development pressures related to the fast-growing Charlotte region. The 2022 American Community Survey identifies the city of Charlotte as the 15th largest in the United States, growing by over 100,000 residents in a single decade. Growth in the metropolitan region's central city and surrounding communities has spurred economic growth across the region, leading to a rapid rise in housing demand and placing unprecedented pressures on the region's transportation networks. Over one-third of Stanly County residents and over half of the broader region's population lives in one county and works in another, further emphasizing the need for regional consideration of transportation and labor networks.

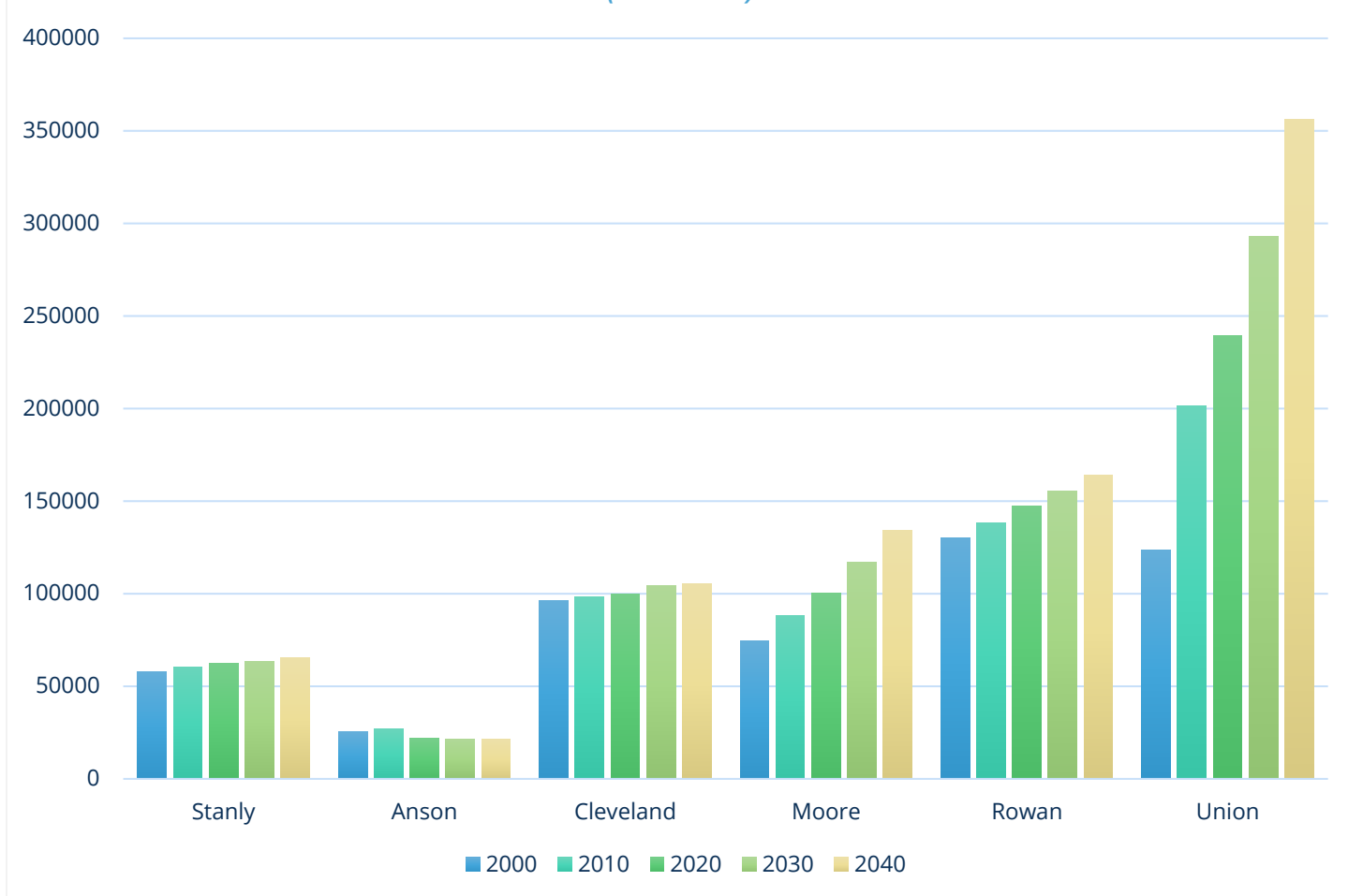


## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

### Population

Several peer counties were selected for population comparisons, including Anson, Cleveland, Moore, Rowan, and Union. These counties were selected due to their geographic placement from a major NC metropolitan city (Charlotte or Raleigh), their adjacency to Stanly County, or their similarity to Stanly County in terms of population, economic base, and transportation networks. Since 2000, Stanly County has grown at a slower rate than NC but faster than some peer counties. Overall, Stanly County grew by close to 4,500 people between 2000 and 2020, at a rate of 7.6%.

*Figure 2. Observed & Projected Population for Stanly County and Select Counties (2000-2040)*



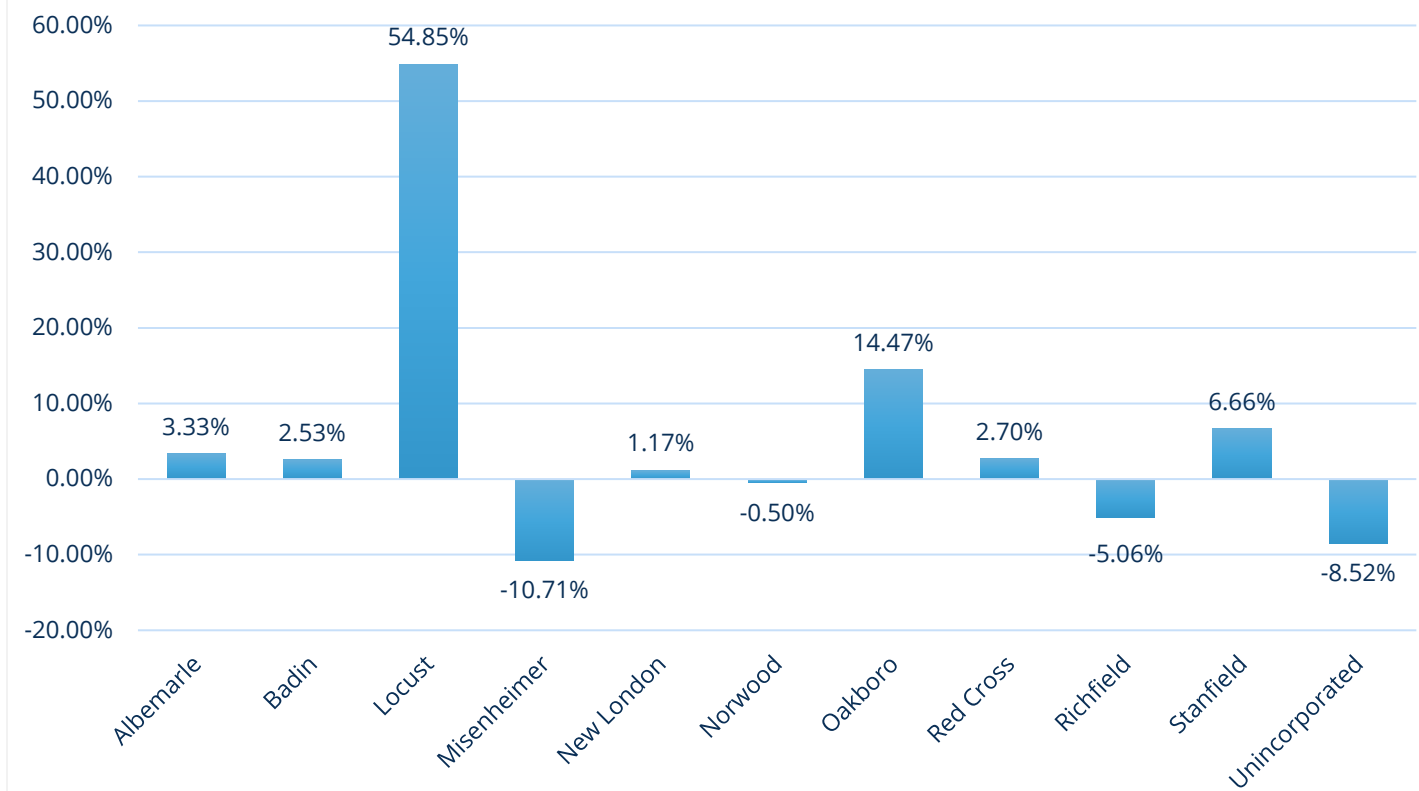
Within Stanly County, the growth has been distributed primarily inside the municipalities, with strongest growth since 2000 in the communities of Albemarle, Badin, Locust, and Oakboro. The most significant growth occurred in Locust, spurred by the geographic proximity to Mecklenburg County and major highway, water, and sewer infrastructure. Between 2010 and 2020, Locust had the fourth fastest population growth in the Charlotte region. Growth pressures on the western edge of the county are expected to continue as growth from Mecklenburg and Cabarrus counties spill into Locust, Oakboro, Redcross, and Stanfield. The unincorporated portion of the County saw a decrease in population between 2000-2020, from 32,572 to 26,426. This trend is expected to continue as municipalities develop around their existing and planned infrastructure and service investments and geographically expand into previously unincorporated areas.



*Table 1. Municipal & Unincorporated County Population (2000-2020)*

Municipality	2000	2010	2020
Albemarle	15606	15903	16432
Badin	1042	1974	2024
Locust	2412	2930	4537
Misenheimer	461	728	650
New London	358	600	607
Norwood	2167	2379	2367
Oakboro	1209	1859	2128
Red Cross	581	742	762
Richfield	513	613	582
Stanfield	1179	1486	1585
Unincorporated	32572	28886	26426

*Figure 3. Population Growth Rate from 2010-2020 in Unincorporated Stanly County and Municipalities*



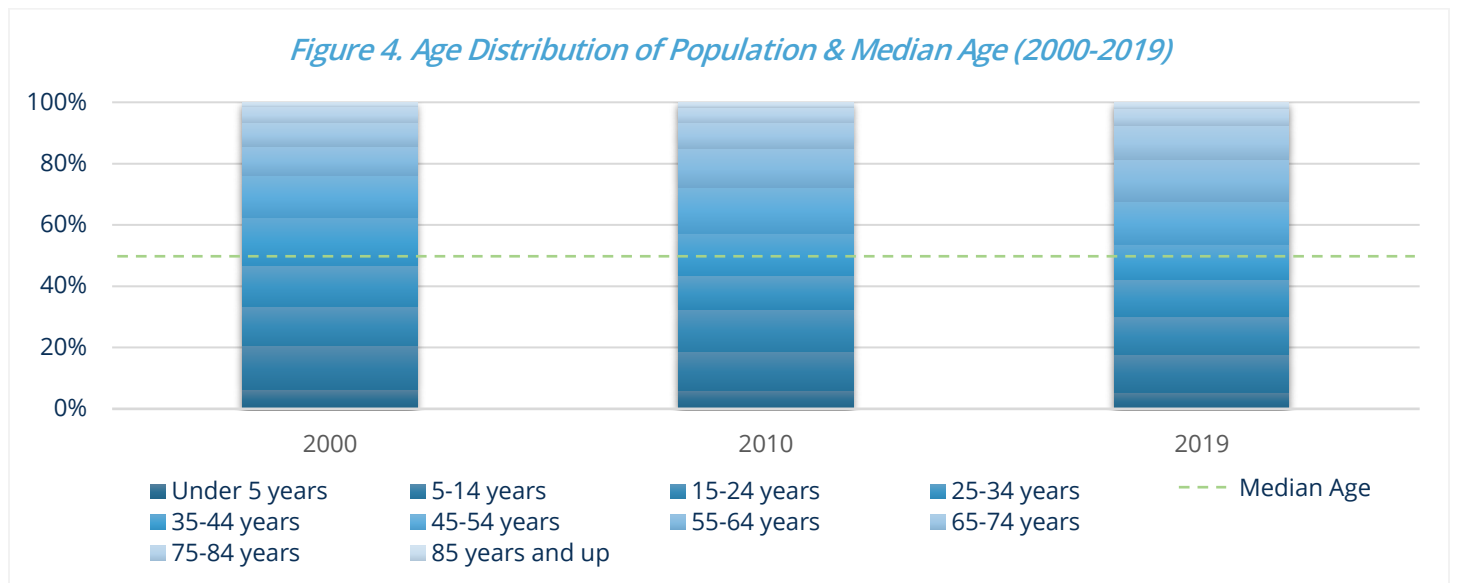
Stanly County's steady growth rate has allowed time for deliberate and intentional planning. The overall population growth and geographic shifts indicate that the county will need to prepare for expansions in infrastructure, services, and facilities but shift its role in the housing sector as the majority of future residential growth will likely occur within municipalities.



Looking ahead to 2040, Stanly County's growth is projected to continue. Estimates by the North Carolina State Demographer suggest that Stanly County will grow by an additional 4.7% (nearly 3,000 people) between 2020 and 2040. This projected growth rate is lower than many other peer counties; however, based on community feedback received throughout the engagement process, it is believed that this approximation underestimates the potential for future growth in Stanly County. Especially as neighboring Cabarrus and Union Counties continue to rapidly develop, residents and local staff believe developers and industries will turn next to Stanly County and its abundance of agricultural open space as a development opportunity. This underscores the importance of comprehensive planning efforts at this juncture in Stanly County's development and growth; the County must be very deliberate and strategic in its planning decisions over the next 20 years if its charm, rural character, and natural assets are to be retained and preserved.

## Age and Gender

In 2019, roughly 30% of county residents were 24 years and under, while 32% are older adults aged 65 and older. This is a shift from 2000 when roughly 33.4% of residents were 24 years or younger and 24% were considered seniors. During the twenty-year period between 2000 and 2020, the median age in Stanly County has shifted from 37.2 to 42.0, an increase of 5 years. This significant leap in the median age will be a major factor in how the County considers growth, development, community services, housing type, and communication with constituents.



*Table 2. Median Age for Stanly and Comparable Counties (2010-2020)*

Jurisdiction	2010	2020
Stanly	39.9	42.0
Anson	40	41.5
Cleveland	39.8	41.9
Moore	44.7	44.1
Rowan	38.7	40.3
Union	35.6	38.6

*Table 3. Population Under 18 for Stanly and Comparable Counties (2010-2020).*

Jurisdiction	2010	2020
Stanly	23.0%	21.7%
Anson	22.8%	20.0%
Cleveland	24.1%	22.0%
Moore	21.8%	21.3%
Rowan	24.1%	22.3%
Union	30.3%	26.9%

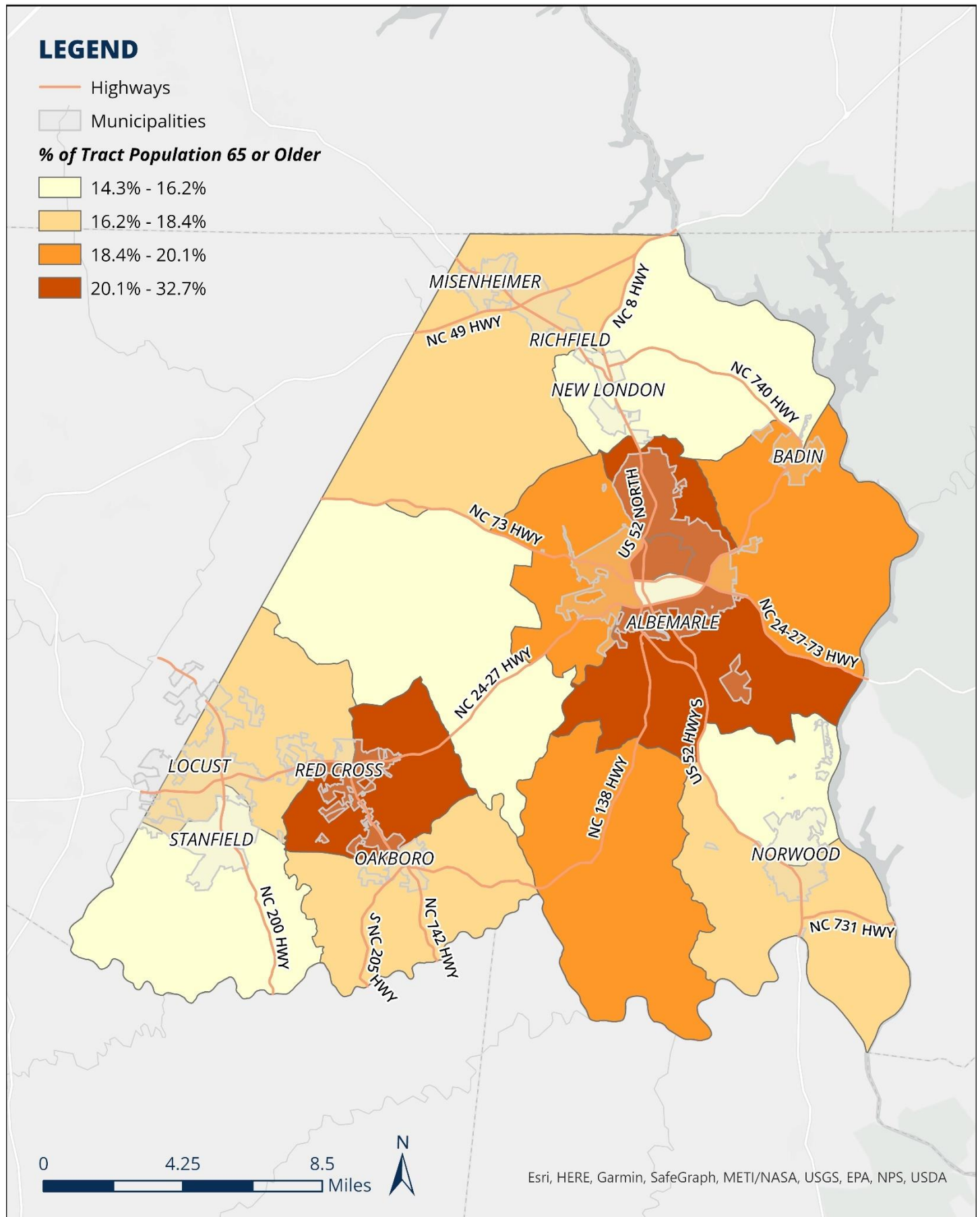
The 2020 median age in Stanly County is higher than the state's median age of 38.9. The age demographics of Stanly County are fairly similar to the breakdown in peer counties; however, the jump in median age over the last two decades is slightly higher than in peer counties (only eclipsed by Union County). Interestingly, while all peer counties and Stanly County have seen slight decreases in the percentage of the population under age 18, Stanly County has also seen one of the smallest decreases compared to peer counties (only Moore County has retained more of their youth population). Thus, Stanly is experiencing growth in the older adult population and consistency in the youth population, meaning the County will need to invest in educational programming and infrastructure, transportation to suit each of these populations, and parks and other passive and active recreational facilities to support both demographics.

While all age groups are expected to expand in the future, the senior population is expected to continue to rise due to many factors including attraction to Stanly County communities and natural beauty, in-migration of older generations following family to the Charlotte region, and longevity. Figure 5 shows the distribution of seniors in the County as a percentage of overall population, illustrating that many of the areas with the highest percentage of seniors are in areas with more limited access to transportation and services. The County will need to proactively plan for the needs of the growing senior population, including additional transportation, healthcare, and age-in-place supportive developments, to help this segment of the population maintain a high quality of life.





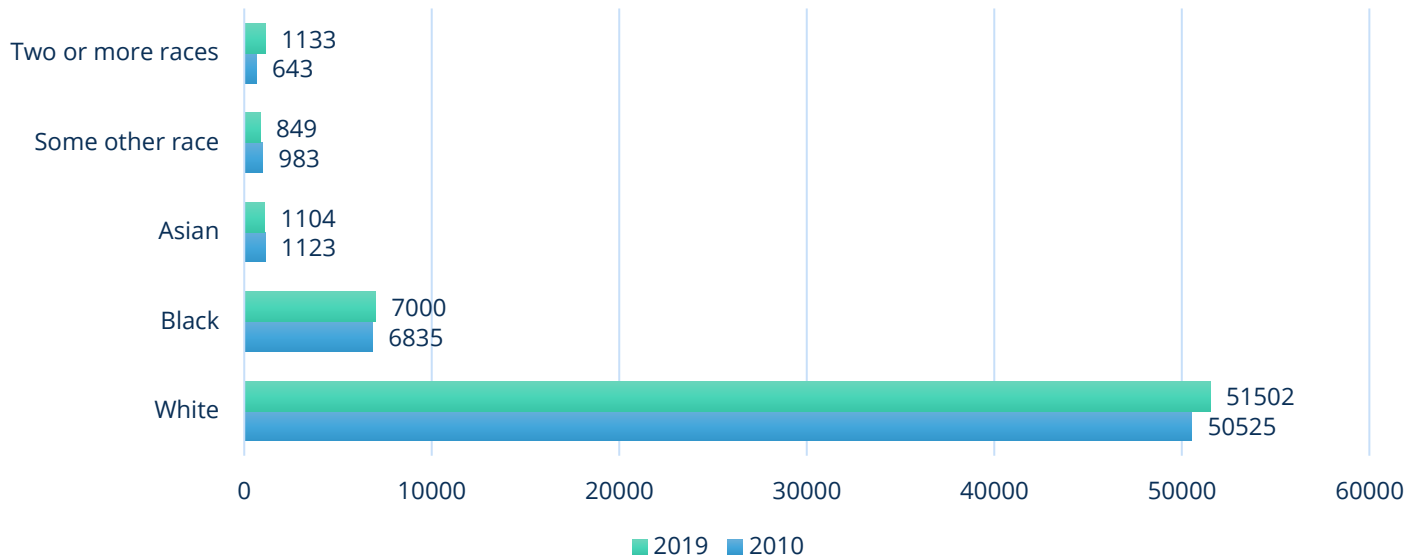
Figure 5. Distribution of Older Adult Population (65+) by Census Tract



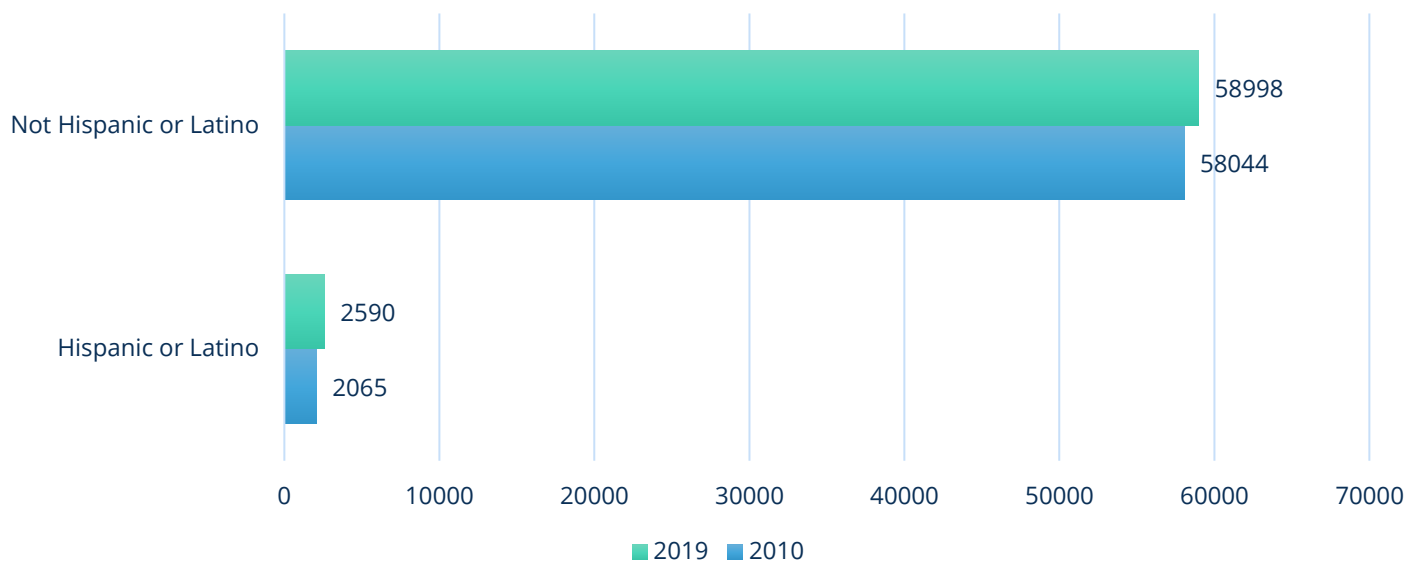
## Diversity

The racial composition of Stanly County is predominantly White at more than 80.7%, well above the state and national averages of 61.9% and 57.8% respectively. This group had the most growth in Stanly County, increasing by 2,243 from 2000 to 2020. The largest ethnic groups in the County include White (Non-Hispanic), Black (Non-Hispanic), and Asian (Non-Hispanic). Stanly County was more diverse in 2020 than in 2000, with the White (Non-Hispanic) population adjusting from 83.8% of the population to 80.7%. Between 2000 and 2020, the share of the population that is Hispanic/Latino grew the most, doubling to 4.6% in 2020.

*Figure 6. Racial Composition of Stanly County (2010-2019)*



*Figure 7. Ethnic Composition of Stanly County (2010-2019)*



Lack of English proficiency can pose significant language barriers for residents seeking education, employment, medical care, housing, and other services. However, 93.96% of the County's population speak English as a primary language. The non-English language spoken by the largest group is Spanish, which is spoken by 4.25% of the population.

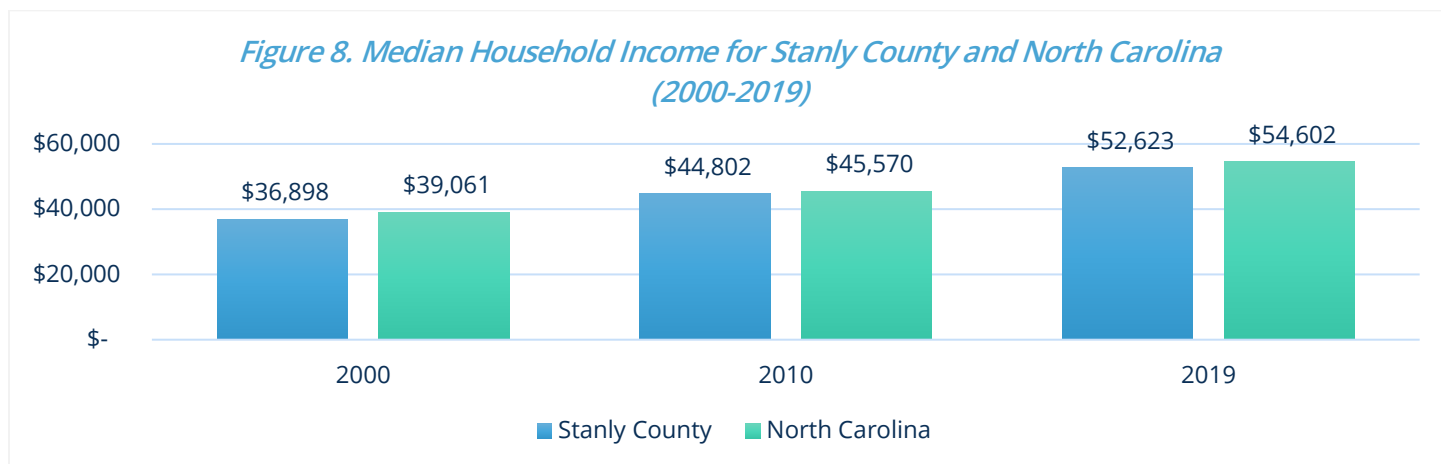


The 2020 median age for the Hispanic population in NC was 24.8, while the median age for the same group in Stanly County was 23.5. While only a slight deviation, this difference is worth some attention as it could have implications related to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and other programs directed to youth in the County.

## HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

### Income and Poverty

In 2019, median household incomes in Stanly County were lower than incomes statewide. Median household income in the County was \$52,623, roughly \$2,000 below the state median of \$54,602.



Median household incomes vary across the county, with the highest incomes in census tracts south of Stanfield (Census Tract 9308.02; \$64,694), northeast Albemarle (Census Tract 9393; \$60,286), and the area surrounding Misenheimer and Richfield (Census Tract 9301.01; \$59,688). The Census Tracts with the lowest median household incomes include Census Tract 9305 and 9312.02 in northern Albemarle, with median household incomes of \$37,857 and \$37,634 respectively.

Poverty is defined as having insufficient resources to meet basic living expenses, including the costs of food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and medical expenses. Among Stanly County households 12.9% live in poverty, as compared to 14.7% of North Carolina families and 12.3% nationwide. The largest demographic living in poverty are females ages 35-44 followed by females 25-34. These data are consistent with national trends indicating female-headed households with children have a much higher poverty rate than the population in general, married households, and male-headed households with children. These data have implications for County programming and services. Pockets of poverty are spread throughout the County as indicated by Figures 10 and 11.

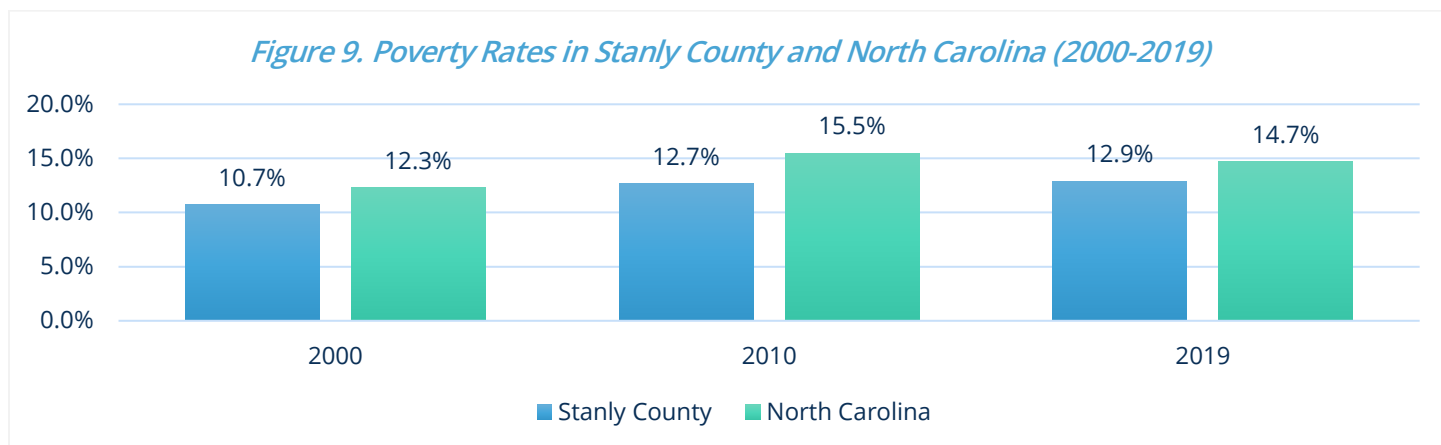


Figure 10. Median Household Income by Census Tract

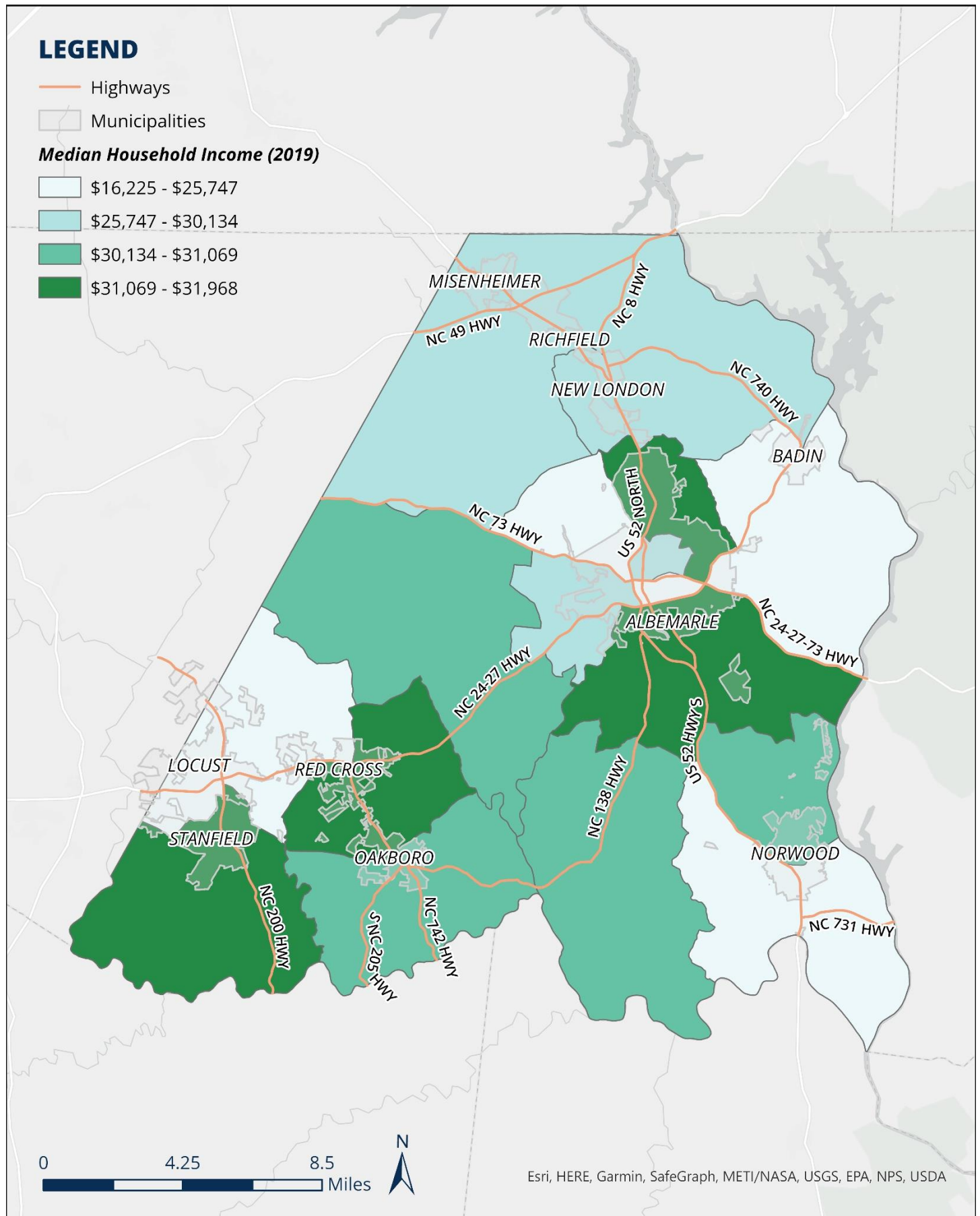
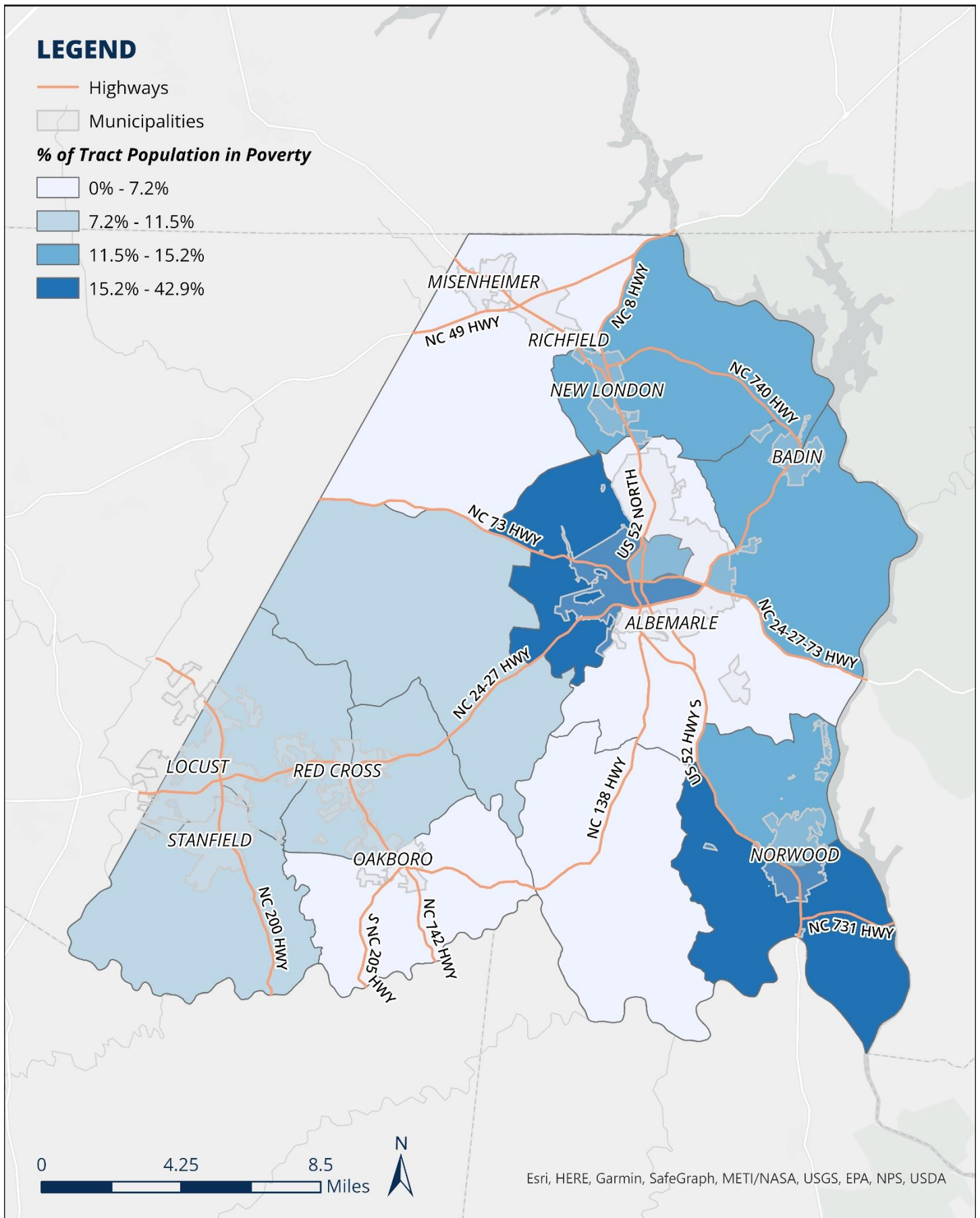




Figure 11. Poverty Status by Census Tract



Poverty rates differ by race in Stanly County, with 41.3% of the Black population below the poverty level. The poverty rate among those that worked full-time for the past 12 months was 1.48%. Among those working part-time, it was 16.82%, and for those that did not work, the poverty rate was 17.92%. Poverty rates also differ by age in Stanly County, with only 8.1% of those over age 65 living under the poverty level but 18% of those under age 18 living in poverty. This provides additional insight into the need for Stanly County to invest in and retain employment opportunities and industries that provide livable wages, particularly for families and young adults just joining the workforce.

## Education

There are 22 public schools in the Stanly County School system:

- 11 elementary schools
- 4 middle schools
- 7 high schools

Oakboro Choice STEM school is an elementary school serving students in grades K-8. Two high schools (Stanly STEM Early College and Stanly Early College) provide Stanly County students with the opportunity to earn both their high school diploma and their Associate's Degree from Stanly Community College upon graduation. Stanly County also has one charter school, Gray Stone Day School, which provides education for grades 6-12. There are also several private and religious affiliated schools throughout Stanly County.



Stanly Community College (SCC) offers diplomas, certificates, and two-year degrees in a variety of programs. The College also provides adult education programs through which it imparts skills such as fluency in English, high school diplomas, daily living skills, and soft skills for job preparedness. SCC also offers a Stanly STEM Early College program allowing high school students to earn their diploma and Associate's Degree. SCC has expanded its physical presence to Locust where its Crutchfield Education Center is located. The Crutchfield Campus specializes in health care programs.

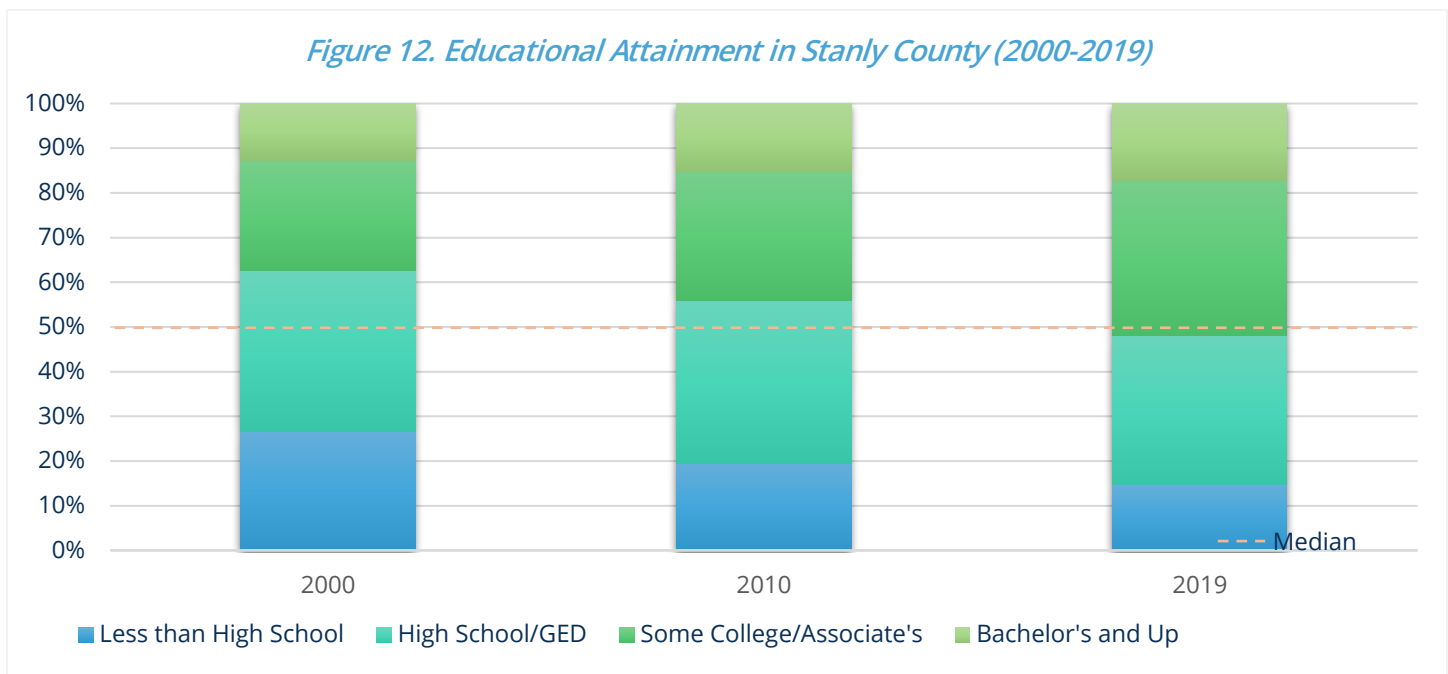


Pfeiffer University, a private liberal arts university, has its main campus located in the Village of Misenheimer, a Charlotte campus, and a newly opened Center for Health Sciences in Albemarle which offers several master level programs in health sciences.

## Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is a key indicator of current and future earnings potential and tied closely to the skills and opportunities that are available to people as they seek to live healthy lives. The relationships between education, socioeconomic status, and social mobility are complex but have a strong influence on the overall health of individuals. Education can often provide people with opportunities for better health that include better jobs, earnings, resource availability, and healthy behaviors.

Educational levels measurably improved in Stanly County between 2000 and 2019, with the percentage of population with a Bachelor's degree or higher increasing from 12.7% to 17.3%. Similarly, the percentage of residents with some college education increased from 24.7% to 34.7%. High school graduation rates, however, have dipped slightly, with 35.9% achieving a high school/GED in 2000 and 33.3% of the population achieving that milestone in 2019.



The graduation rate for Stanly County Schools for 2019-2020 is 89.4%, which is slightly higher than the state's 4-year graduation rate of 87.6%. Continued investments in public schools may be necessary to maintain the County's strong educational attainment.

## LOCAL & REGIONAL ECONOMY

The local economy impacts every aspect of community life, from jobs and taxes to where people live, necessary infrastructure, and environmental quality. A healthy economic climate offers increased income potential for Stanly County residents, a supportive environment for business and industry to succeed, and increased fiscal stability for local governments to maintain and expand community services and infrastructure and withstand economic downturns. Several agencies work in concert to provide employment opportunities in Stanly County, including the Stanly County Economic Development Commission and the Stanly County Chamber of Commerce. NCWorks helps job seekers with career development and training, and the Stanly Community College Small Business Center assists entrepreneurs in establishing their business.

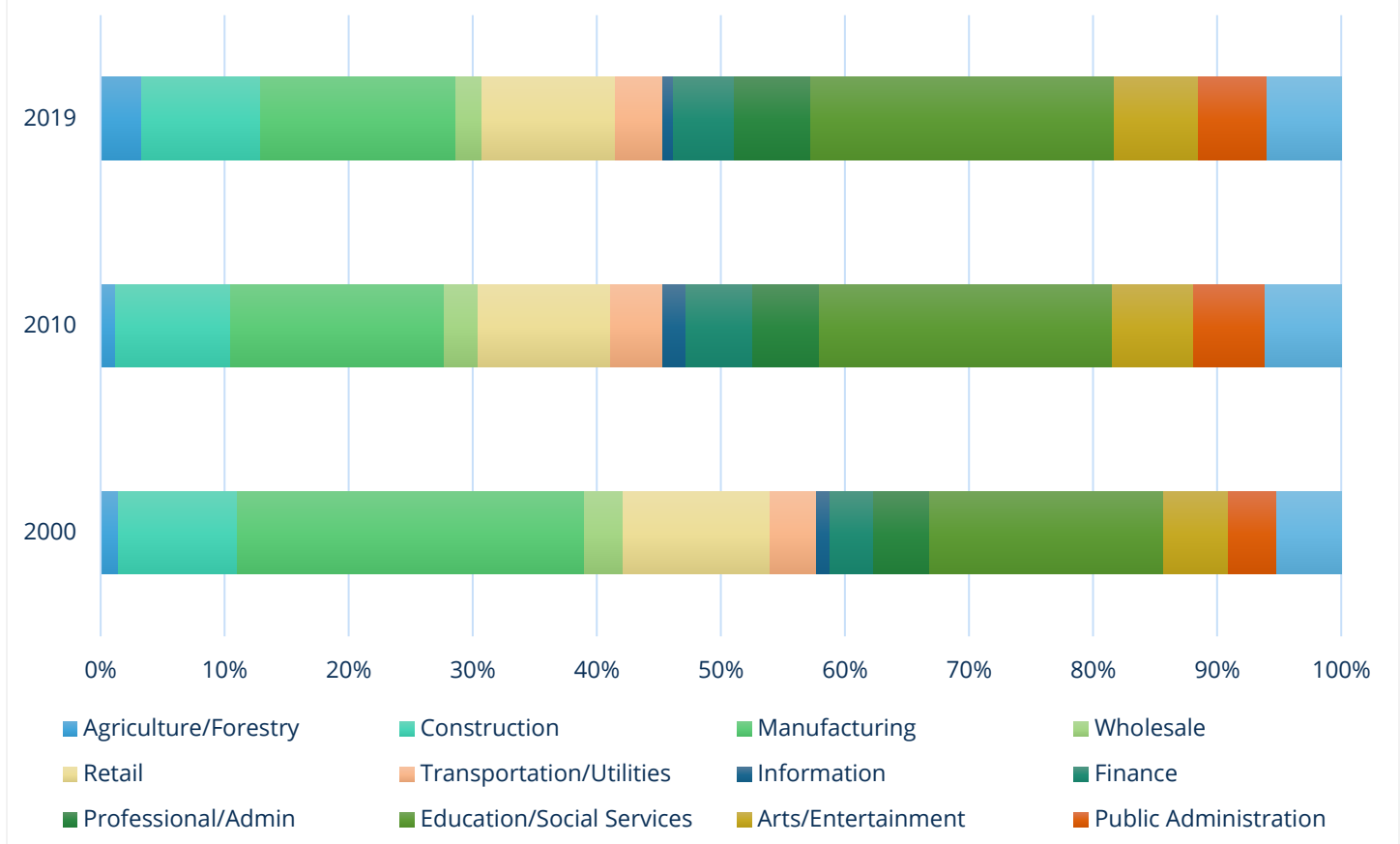
## Economic History

In 1841, Stanly County was formed from a portion of Montgomery County and included small farms along the Yadkin-Pee Dee and Rocky rivers, known for wheat and other grains. Later, gold mining enriched the area, with 11 mines operating in the county at one time. Potential river trade with South Carolina was impeded by the Narrows of the Yadkin, a rapids-filled gorge in the Uwharrie Mountains; however, town growth in Stanly County picked up in the late 1800s with the establishment of railroads that encouraged textile, timber, and building supply industries. In the early 1900s, a major hydroelectric dam spanned the Narrows, and the aluminum producing town of Badin was established. For much of the last hundred years, textile and other manufacturing jobs supplemented agriculture to provide the economic fuel to sustain Stanly County communities, with proximity to Charlotte producing an economic advantage in recruiting manufacturing firms and providing access to cultural and retail amenities.

## Local Economy

Today, Stanly County's economy represents a diverse mix of economic sectors. The largest employers include Stanly County Schools, Atrium Health, and the County itself. Based on the total number of employees in each sector, in 2021 the County's top industries were manufacturing, retail, healthcare and social assistance, hospitality and food service, education, and construction.

*Figure 13. Employment by Industry in Stanly County (2000-2019)*



The highest-paying industries within Stanly County include utilities, management, administrative and technical services, manufacturing and construction, wholesale trade, and information and finance. The highest paid jobs held by residents of Stanly County are those in the areas of Architecture and Engineering, Fire Fighting and Prevention, Protective Service Workers, and Health Diagnostics.



*Table 4. Average Weekly Wage in Q4 of 2021 by Industry.*

Industry	Average Weekly Wage
Utilities	\$ 1,735
Management	\$ 1,623
Administrative, Waste Services	\$ 1,216
Construction	\$ 1,208
Wholesale Trade	\$ 1,206
Finance, Insurance	\$ 1,185
Manufacturing	\$ 1,102
Professional, Technical Services	\$ 1,092
Transportation, Warehousing	\$ 1,079
Information	\$ 1,058
Public Administration	\$ 1,035
Health Care, Social Assistance	\$ 967
Real Estate, Rentals, Leasing	\$ 926
Educational Services	\$ 887
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting	\$ 853
Other Services	\$ 688
Retail Trade	\$ 572
Accommodation, Food Services	\$ 344
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	\$ 221

## Labor & Employment

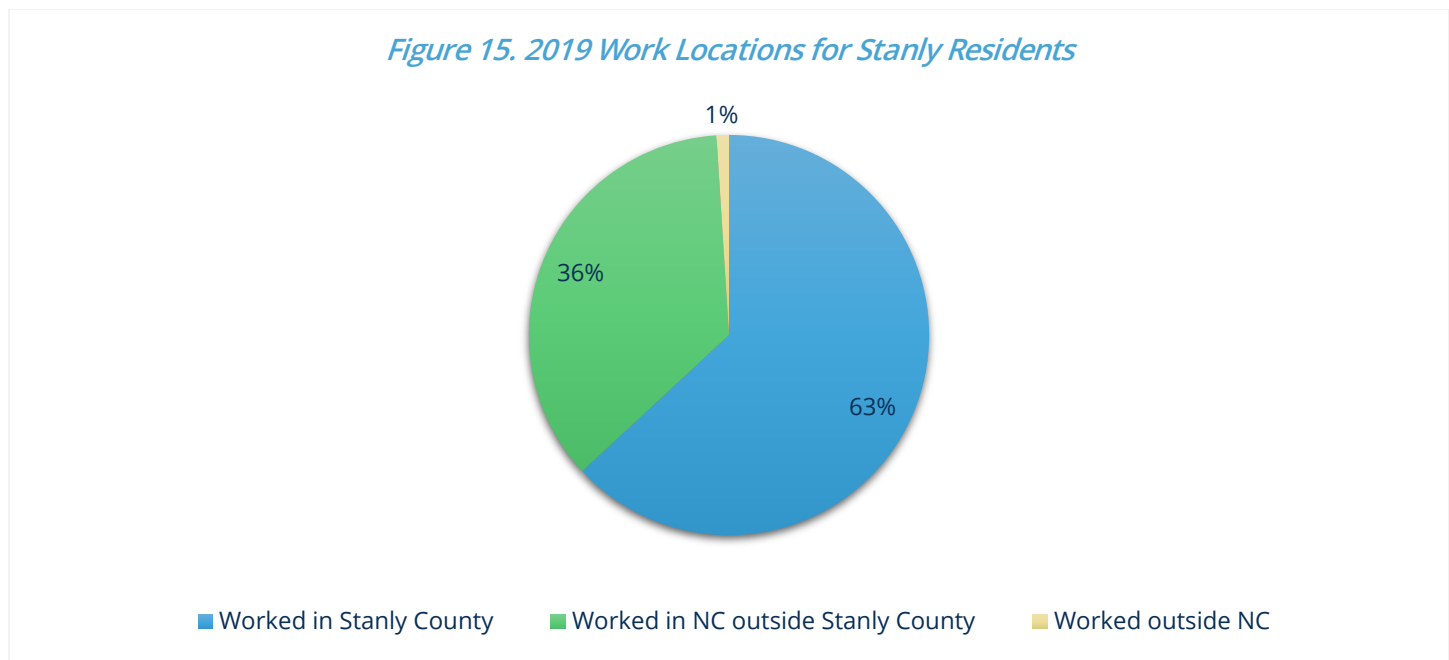
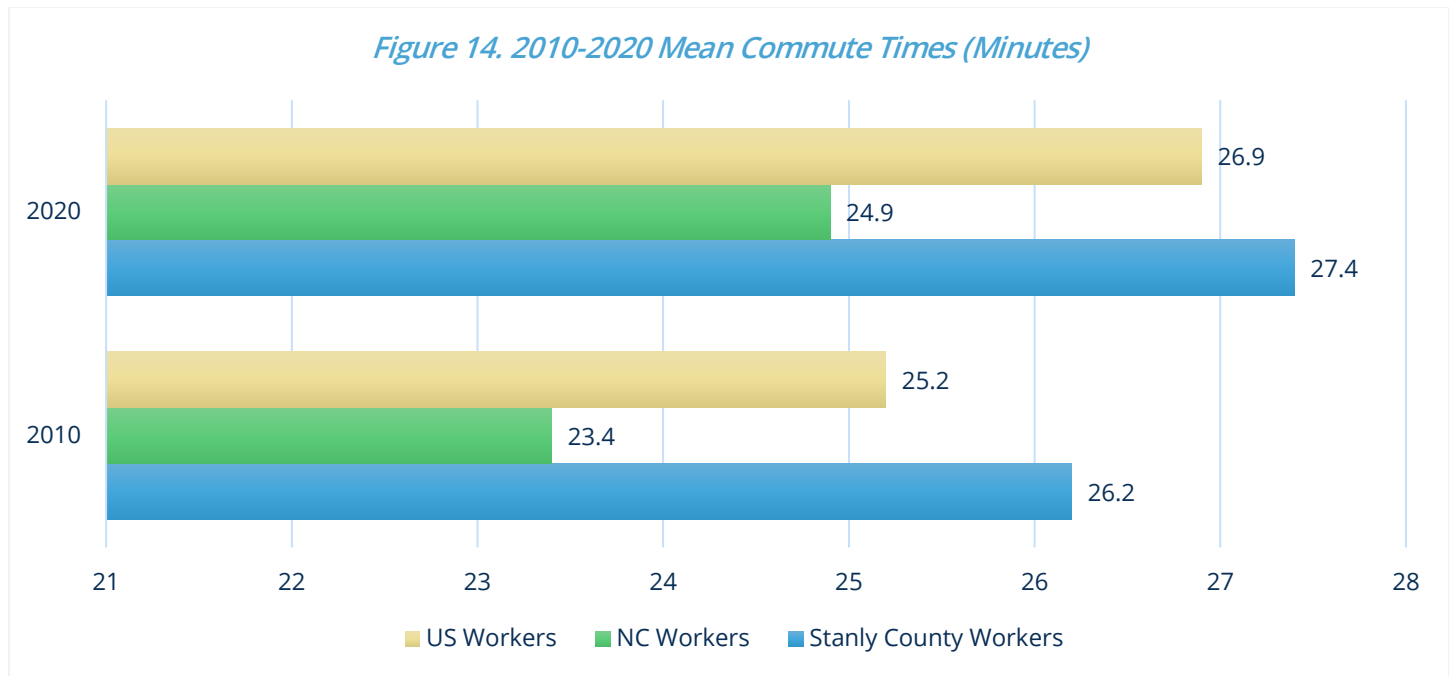
During the years 2020-2022, the United States and North Carolina economies were greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, creating interruptions in labor markets and the monthly data collection of key economic indicators. Nevertheless, North Carolina's economy as a whole seems to have rebounded to pre-pandemic job levels; however, the recovery across the state has been uneven, with economic realities deeply rooted in regional forces.

Reviews of the labor market in this period indicate that Stanly County's unemployment has recovered significantly from mid-pandemic levels (2021), with the March 2022 unemployment rate at 3.3% while the 2021 annual rate was 6.3%. The County is also seeing improvement in labor force participation rates as the economy rebounds from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; the average labor force size throughout 2021 was 18,459, but the average for the fourth quarter of 2021 alone grew to 19,297.

## Commuting

As mentioned previously, over one-third of Stanly County residents work in another North Carolina county. Just under 1% of residents work outside North Carolina; the remaining 62% of the County's workforce is employed within Stanly County. Commute times for Stanly County workers are generally higher than the national average and have increased over the last 10 years. In 2010, the mean commute time for Stanly County workers was 26.2 minutes, one minute slower than the national average of 25.2 minutes. In 2020, Stanly County commuters experienced 27.4-minute commutes on average, compared

to the 26.9-minute national average. Noting this, strategic investments in Stanly County’s transportation network are needed to ensure efficient, safe commutes for all Stanly County employees.



### Industry Spotlight: Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector is a point of pride in Stanly County, with 90 identified manufacturing businesses in the County as of the end of 2021. Recent major manufacturing plant locations and expansions have grown the job market within the county, including the relocation of Charlotte Pipe and Foundry from Charlotte to Oakboro. Charlotte Pipe and Foundry is investing over \$325 million in a new state-of-the-art facility with the anticipation of 400 new jobs and considerable spin off multipliers as suppliers and services seek to be in proximity to this major investment.

The top 10 manufacturing employers in the county collectively employ over 2,100 employees, equating to approximately 10% of the County’s total workforce. Table 5 shows the top 10 employers in this industry as identified by the Stanly County Economic Development Commission.





*Table 5. Top 10 Manufacturing Employers in Stanly County (2022)*

Rank	Company Name	City	Sector	Total Employees
1	Fiberon	New London	Wood Products	575
2	Michelin Aircraft Tire Co LLC	Norwood	Aerospace	389
3	Shult Homes (CMH Manufacturing Inc)	Richfield	Construction	301
4	Preformed Lined Products	Albemarle	Telecommunications, Energy	243
5	Auria	Albemarle	Automotive	161
6	HW Culp Lumber Co	New London	Saw Mill	118
7	Universal Forest Products Eastern	Stanfield	Lumber	107
8	Stanley Engineered Fastening	Stanfield	Construction	83
9	American Fiber & Finishing Inc	Albemarle	Broad woven Fabric Mills	50-99
10	CT Commercial Paper LLC	Oakboro	Converted Paper & Paperboard Products	50-99

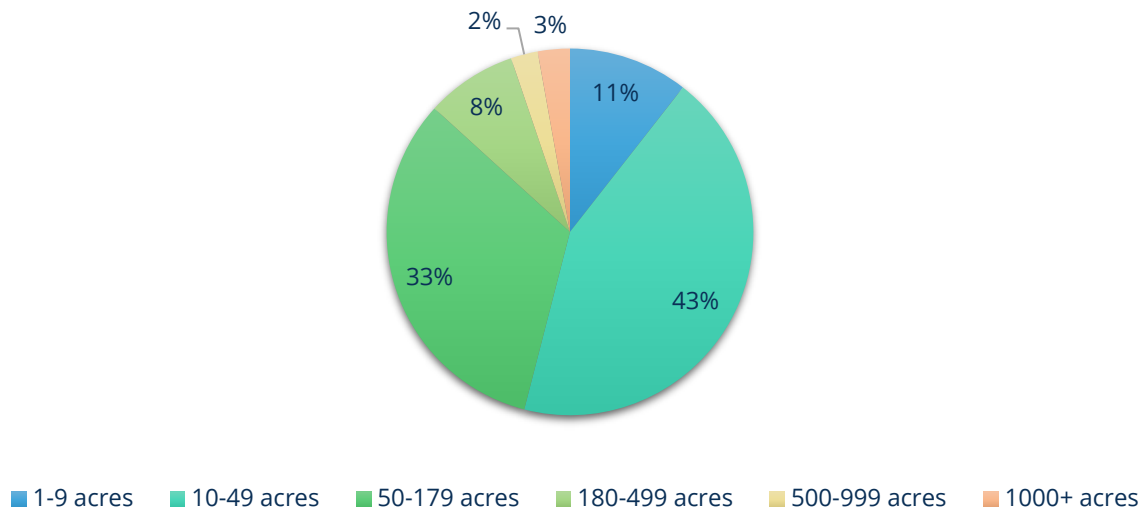
### Industry Spotlight: Agriculture & Forestry

While employment in the agricultural sector is not as high as the manufacturing sector or other industries, agriculture and forestry have been cornerstones of Stanly County's culture and economy for centuries. Agricultural uses, including cropland, woodland, and pastureland, comprise the single largest land use within the County. Across the County's 672 farms, 96 of which are family-owned, farmers produce a variety of crops and livestock that generated over \$90 million in revenues in 2017. The Census of Agriculture recorded the average farm size as 143 acres, with 54% of farms smaller than 50 acres.

Stanly County is a vital agriculture county for North Carolina and ranks 10th in the state for cotton production, 18th for cattle and calf production, 22nd for sheep, goats, and wool, 25th for cattle milk

production, 27th for poultry and eggs, and 29th for products related to horses, ponies, mules, and burros. Stanly County is also one of only 38 counties producing cultivated Christmas trees.

*Figure 16. 2017 Stanly County Farms by Acreage*



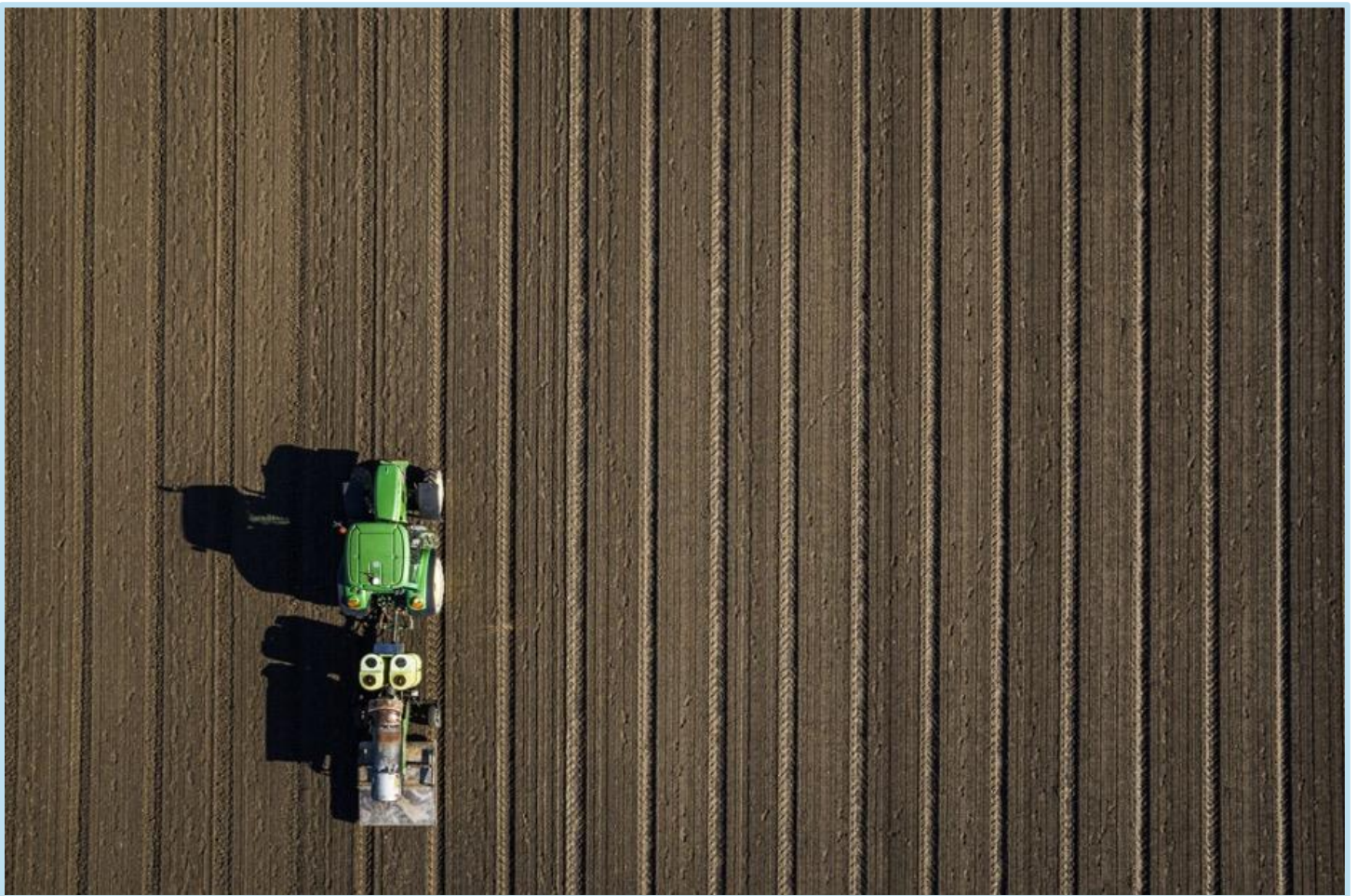
The importance of agriculture to Stanly County's economy and rural culture cannot be understated. However, agriculture in Stanly County and across North Carolina is under rapidly increasing threat of development, particularly due to growing housing demand. In a report also based on a 2040 horizon year, the American Farmland Trust projected that North Carolina is at risk to lose the second-highest total farmland acreage (1.2 million acres) and the sixth-highest percentage of farmland (11.6%) to residential development between 2016 and 2040 if more strategic development decisions are not leveraged to intervene with current trends. The same report projects that Stanly County will lose between 7,500-10,000 acres of total farmland (5-10% of the County's existing agricultural land) within the same timeframe. The County must be strategic in its development decisions to ensure this important asset is





not compromised or lost to residential land uses, while still allowing for smart, intentional growth to support other industries.

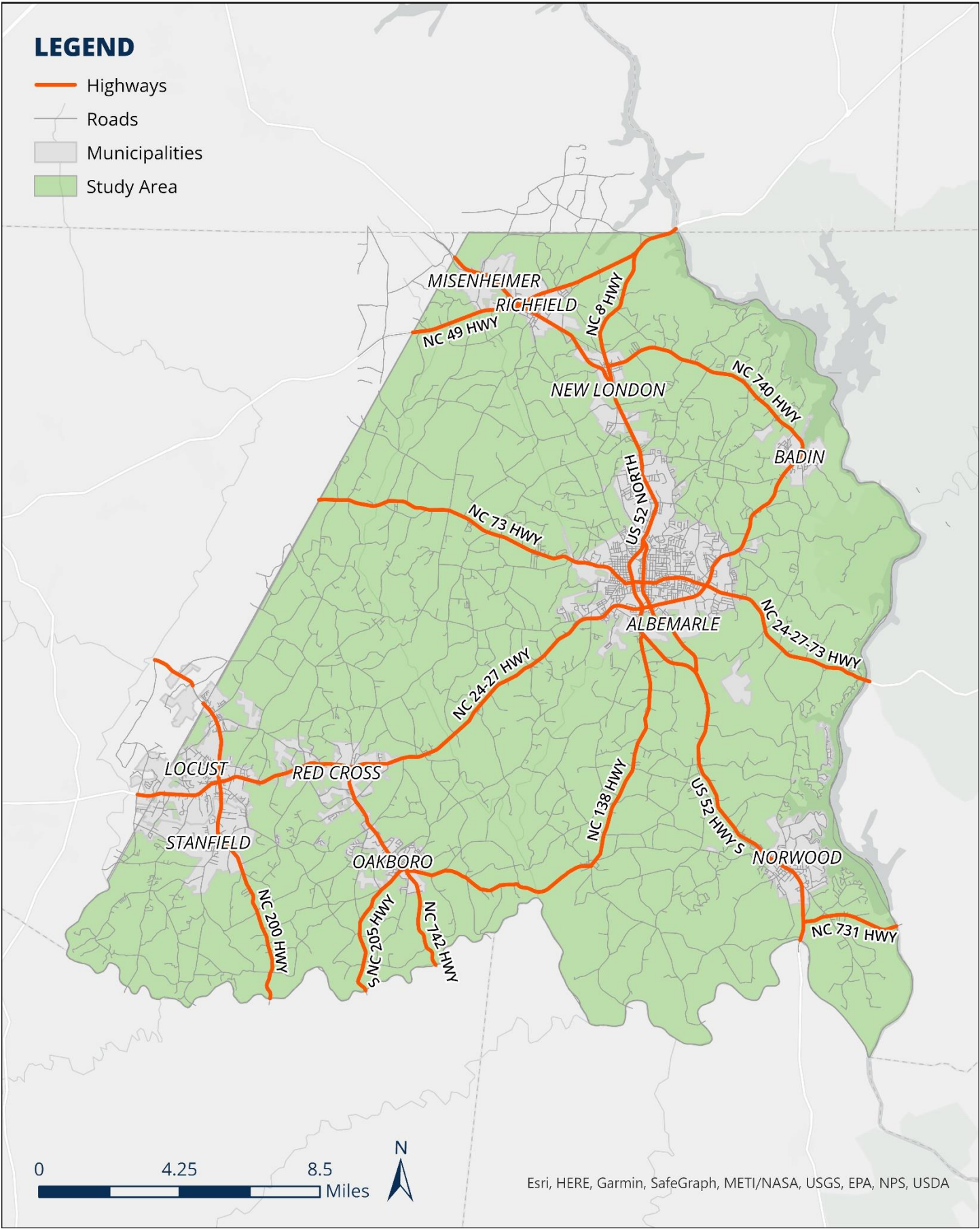
As Stanly County looks for ways to protect and enhance its rural character, agritourism emerges as another facet of the agricultural sector that can be leveraged and strengthened to promote the County's unique assets. Currently, the North Carolina Cooperative Extension operates a range of programs and services to support farmers and educate residents and visitors to the County about the importance of agriculture. Notably, the Cooperative Extension is housed at the Stanly County Agri-Civic Center, an event and office space used to support the county's agricultural and cultural activities. The Agri-Civic center also houses offices for the US Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Natural Resources Conservation Services, North Carolina Forestry Service, Farm Service Agency, and the Stanly County Soil and Water Conservation District as well as a 1050-seat performing arts theatre, banquet facilities and several multi-purpose meeting rooms. Stanly County is currently building a new livestock center as part of the Agri-Civic Center that will support young farmers, allow for livestock and equipment sales, and bolster the agritourism industry.



## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation can be thought of as the movement of people and goods from one place to another. The transportation network is comprised of all of the modes of transportation and linkages that facilitate these movements throughout and beyond the County. Connectivity, redundancy, and accessibility are all crucial elements of a successful mobility system or goods movement operation, and these are especially critical for Stanly County given the importance of the agricultural and manufacturing sectors to the local economy.

Figure 17. Stanly County Road Network





## Roadway System

Stanly County's road network features several key major and minor arterial roadways. While the County road network does not include any major interstates or freeways, major thoroughfares such as NC-24/27, NC-49 and US-52 provide critical connections for freight and passenger movement across the County, region, and beyond. Figure 17 shows local roads and major highways throughout Stanly County.

Major Arterials:

- US-52
- NC-49
- NC 24-27 (Cabarrus County line to Albemarle)

Minor Arterials:

- NC-24-27-73 (East of Albemarle to Montgomery County line)

Given the regional nature of industry and economic development, regional coordination and collaboration on transportation planning efforts is critical to keeping Stanly County economically competitive. Stanly County is served by the Rocky River Rural Planning Organization (RRRPO), which coordinates with NCDOT and local jurisdictions to develop long-range multimodal transportation plans and prioritize projects for inclusion in the State's Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). See the table below for the list of funded roadway improvement projects planned for 2020-2029 in Stanly County.

*Table 6. STIP Roadway Improvement Projects (2020-2029).*

STIP Roadway Project	Roadway	Project Description
B-4974	NC-24/NC-27/NC-73	Replace bridge over Pee Dee River
B-5811	Rogers Rd	Replace bridge over Big Bear Creek
B-6046	Church Rd	Replace bridge over Long Creek
R-5965	Various; Town of Oakboro	Various upgrades as part of economic development project
R-5965A	Several Intersections	Intersection safety improvements
R-5965B	Several Intersections	Intersection and roadway safety improvements
R-2530B	NC-24/NC-27	Roadway expansion from Bird Rd to Pee Dee River

## Public Transportation

In Stanly County, public transportation service is provided by the Stanly County Umbrella Services Agency (SCUSA), which offers services to both able-bodied persons and persons with disabilities. SCUSA service includes trips to and from agencies, employment sites, businesses, medical centers (including out-of-county medical trips paid by Medicaid), community college, Senior Center, nutrition sites, dialysis, nursing homes, daycares, and more. Services are provided utilizing vans and buses through subscription and demand response routes. Taxi service is limited, and transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft are not prevalent in the County. Transportation was a community concern outlined in the 2021 Stanly County Community Health Assessment (CHA) report, with a focus on accessibility to human services.

Key issues recommendations from the 2021 CHA included:

- Additional funding for SCUSA services to reduce individual rider costs.
- Adjustments to SCUSA scheduling – there is a need for nighttime hours and other hours that facilitate access to job opportunities and medical or mental health counseling appointments.
- Incentivize taxi companies to operate in the County.
- Treat public transit as a community facility, without expecting profit or high user fees to support this service.
- Pilot a trolley system for areas around Albemarle for access to jobs, healthy food, medical care, and community pharmacies.

Ensuring Stanly residents have access to the services and resources needed to maintain a high quality of life means expanding mobility choices for residents. Fixed-route transit services operate in Rowan, Cabarrus, Mecklenburg, and Union Counties. Exploring opportunities to connect SCUSA to these existing services may enhance connectivity and support low-income residents of Stanly County in accessing the resources they need. Expanding mobility options along strategic mobility corridors, such as NC-24/27, NC-49, and US-52, will provide additional flexibility to commuters and ensure Stanly's economic competitiveness with the surrounding region. For more information about how Stanly and the rest of the Charlotte metropolitan region are leveraging transportation choices to enhance mobility and access for all residents, visit [www.connect-beyond.com](http://www.connect-beyond.com).

## Bicycle & Pedestrian Networks

Stanly County is home to a 185-mile bicycle network that primarily leverages existing roadways and rights-of-way. See Figure 18 to view the county-wide bicycle network. Communities within the County are also working to enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety and access. Table 7 below includes the list of funded pedestrian and bicycle improvement projects planned for 2020-2029 in Stanly County.

*Table 7. STIP Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvement Projects (2020-2029).*

STIP Bicycle/ Pedestrian Project	Roadway	Project Description
EB-5841	US-52 from W Main St to Snugges St	Construct sidewalk on east side of road
EB-5857	NC-200 from N Love Chapel to Carmel Rd	Construct sidewalk and ADA ramps on west side of road
EB-5972	N 2nd Ave from Park Ridge to Salisbury Ave	Construct sidewalks, ADA ramps, and crosswalks
EB-5973	Salisbury Ave from US-52 to N 2nd St	Construct bike lanes
EB-5974	US-52 Business Ramp from NC-24/27 to 2nd St	Construct sidewalks

At this time, most pedestrian and sidewalk infrastructure resides within municipal limits rather than within the County's jurisdiction. However, as municipalities and other unincorporated areas grow and new development is explored, Stanly County should consider the implications for current and future pedestrian connectivity.



Figure 18. Stanly County Bicycle Network

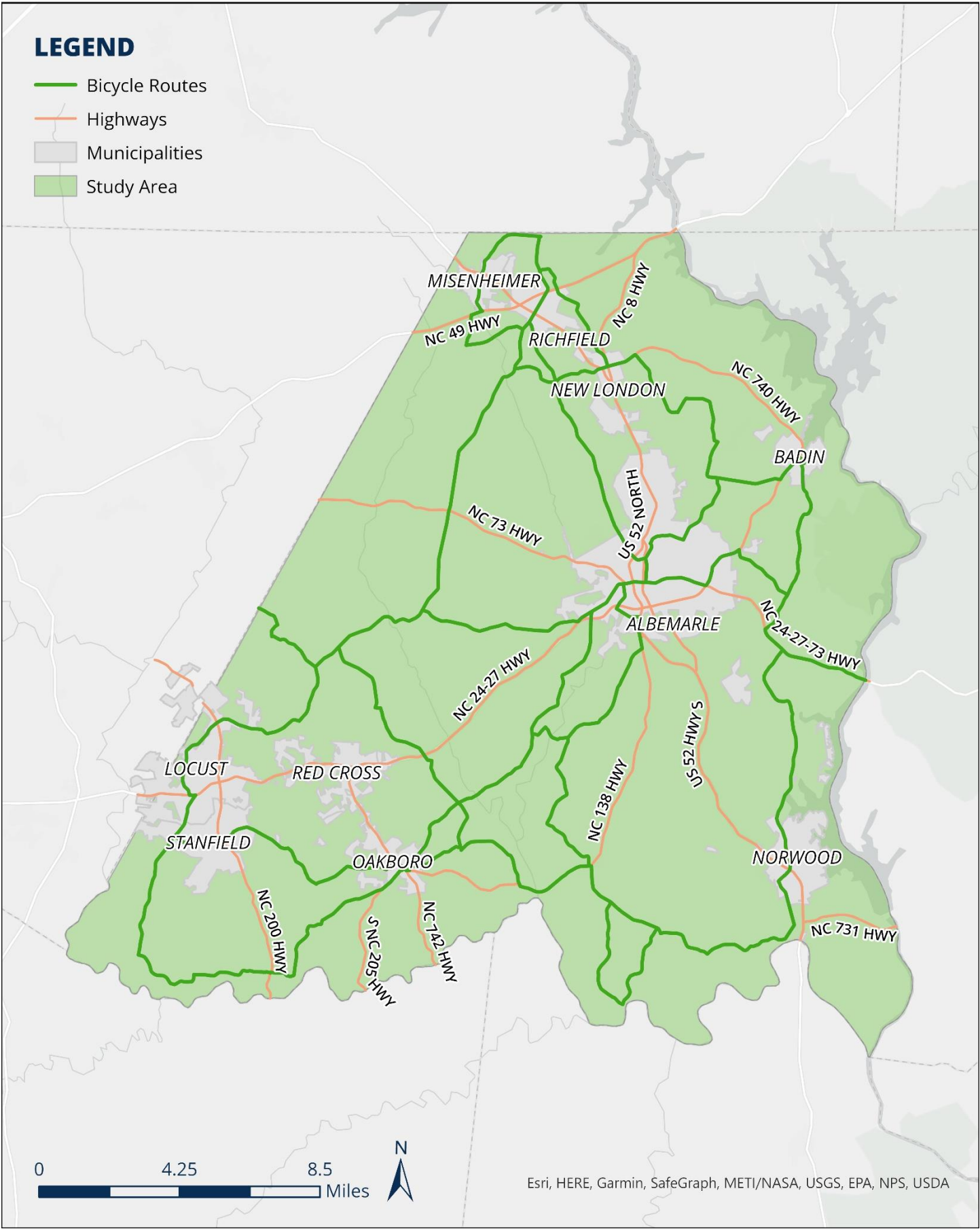
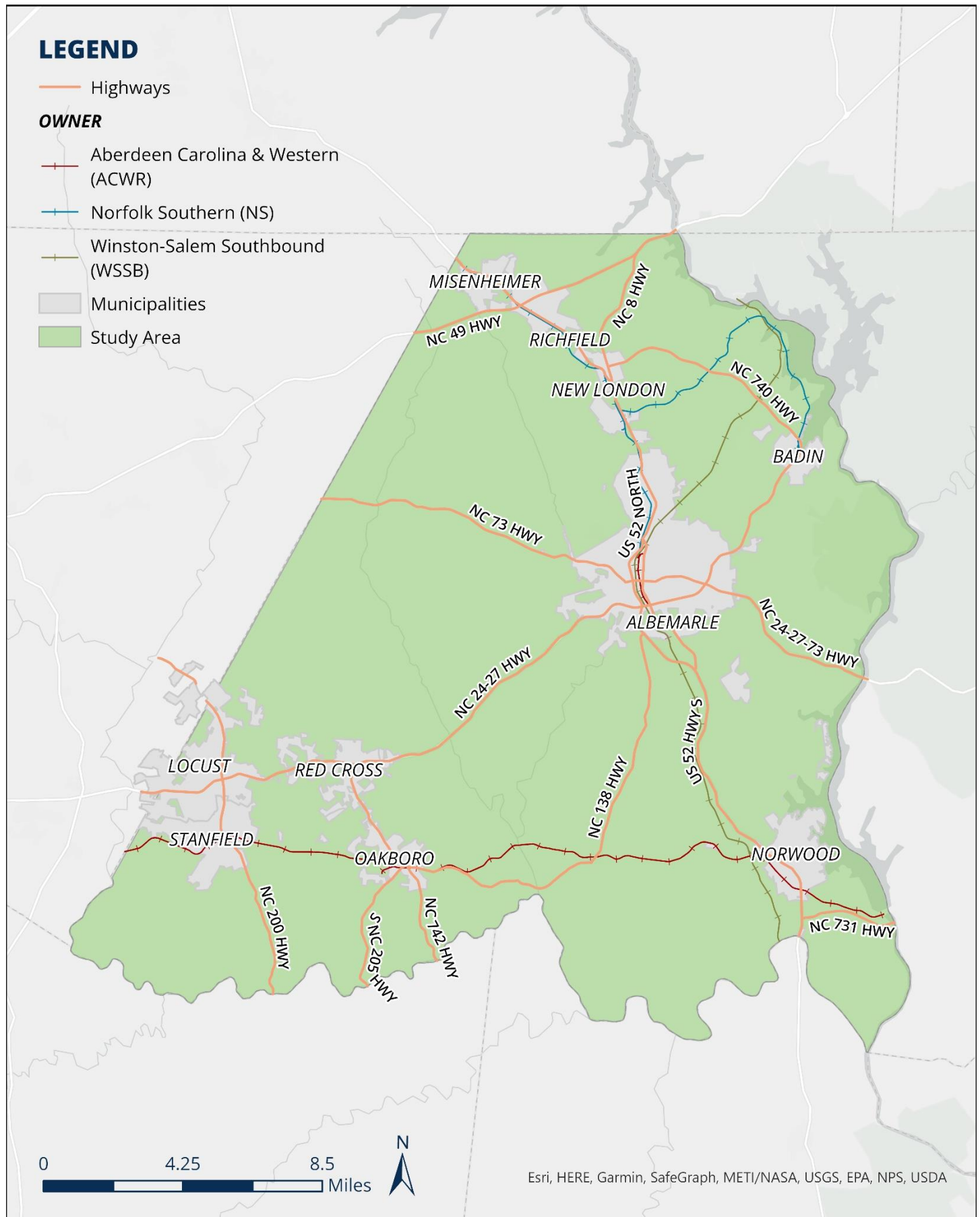


Figure 19. Stanly County Railroad Network





## Railroads

Railroads in Stanly County facilitate the movement of goods and freight throughout the surrounding region. Access to rail service is often cited by prospective industrial developers as a critical asset within the County. Three rail lines operate in Stanly County as follows:

- The Norfolk Southern (NS) rail line enters the county from Salisbury to the northwest and proceeds to Albemarle and Badin by way of Richfield and New London.
- The Winston-Salem Southbound (WSSB) rail line enters Stanly County from High Rock Lake in Davidson and Rowan Counties, then proceeds through Albemarle to Norwood before continuing to Wadesboro in Anson County.
- The Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railway (ACWR) runs east-west and connects Stanfield, Oakboro, Aquadale, and Norwood within the county. Beyond the county, this rail line connects Stanly County to Charlotte to the west and Montgomery County to the east.

Though not currently supported, there is potential to leverage the existing rail lines in Stanly County (particularly the ACWR line) for future local and/or regional passenger rail service if demand is determined to exist.

## Airport

Stanly County Airport (VUJ) is a county-owned, joint civil-military, public use airport in the northeastern corner of the County. Home to two runways and a 12,000 square foot terminal, the airport provides fueling and maintenance services, hangar leasing, aviation training, and office space and conference rooms for rent. The airport typically sees around 15-30 flights per day. The airport hosts several units of the North Carolina Air National Guard, including the 145th Airlift Wing primarily based at Charlotte-Douglas International Airport.

To support the airport's operations and ensure the compatibility of surrounding land uses, Stanly County has established an Airport Overlay (AO) District in the County zoning ordinance. The AO District designates seven Airport Land Use Zones based on Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations and other health and safety standards. Each zone has specific allowable and conditional uses, height requirements, and considerations for new and existing structures to ensure community safety. For more detail, see Article VI, Section 613 of the [Stanly County Zoning Ordinance](#).



# INFRASTRUCTURE

## Water & Sewer

All Stanly County municipalities have access to public water service. Within the County's jurisdiction, public water is supplied in some cases, especially in areas with proximity to municipal jurisdictions or major transportation corridors, and all other residents are served by private wells. The County's water is sourced from the Yadkin-Pee Dee river and purchased from the City of Albemarle and the Town of Norwood. Water is provided to County residents and some municipalities by Stanly County Utilities.



A current major concern for Stanly County Utilities is the lack of water system redundancy to the southwestern corner of the County, home to fast-growing Locust, Stanfield, Red Cross, and Oakboro. Today, only one water main extends from Albemarle to this rapidly developing area. If this water line were to be compromised due to a natural disaster or other unexpected circumstances, the result would be catastrophic for residents of western Stanly County. As can be noted on the Stanly County Water Master Plan, adopted March 2022, the Utilities Department plans to build an additional water treatment plant in Badin in the next 20 years to expand water supply. This plant will connect to a water line via the Millingport area to serve the western portion of the County and provide much-needed redundancy and resilience for

the system. While these planned expansions are necessary to support healthy communities and a healthy environment, the Millingport area also includes some of the County's best farmland, so the County must be cautious about the extent of infrastructure provided in this area to avoid excessive development and conversion of critical farmland.

Sanitary sewer is available within all Stanly County municipalities, and a handful of sewer lines extend beyond municipal boundaries from Albemarle, Norwood, and Red Cross into the County's jurisdiction. For all other County residents, sanitary sewer service is accomplished through the use of private septic systems. The County owns two major sewer treatment facilities – one in Badin, and the West Stanly Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) east of Oakboro – and Albemarle and Norwood each own



treatment facilities as well. The WWTP site has about 40 acres available for future expansions, and work has begun to double the capacity of the plant by 2025. Already, work has been completed to increase the facility's capacity from 900,000 gallons to 1.2 million gallons per day.

A current challenge facing Stanly County and its municipalities is the lack of coordinated, cross-jurisdictional efforts to plan for sewer infrastructure across the county. While the Stanly County Utilities Department provides sewer service to a limited number of County residents and some municipalities, many jurisdictions own and operate their own municipal sewer systems. There is a lack of collaborative planning between these municipal and county entities, making it difficult to provide effective and efficient service county-wide. Some discussion has begun around consolidating most municipal sewer systems under Stanly County Utilities, which would then operate in conjunction with the City of Albemarle's sewer system. While jurisdictions have had mixed reactions to this proposal, Stanly County should consider the fact that enhanced coordination would allow for more standardized user fees, system fees, and expenses for system maintenance and expansion across the County.



As recently as September 2022, the Stanly County Board of Commissioners voted to approve new water and sewer system development fees for new developments requesting utility connections. Calculated based on the extent of usage and number of system connections, these fees will provide significant assistance to the County in meeting the need for additional capital improvements and expansions as the population grows.



Figure 20. Existing Water Infrastructure in Stanly County

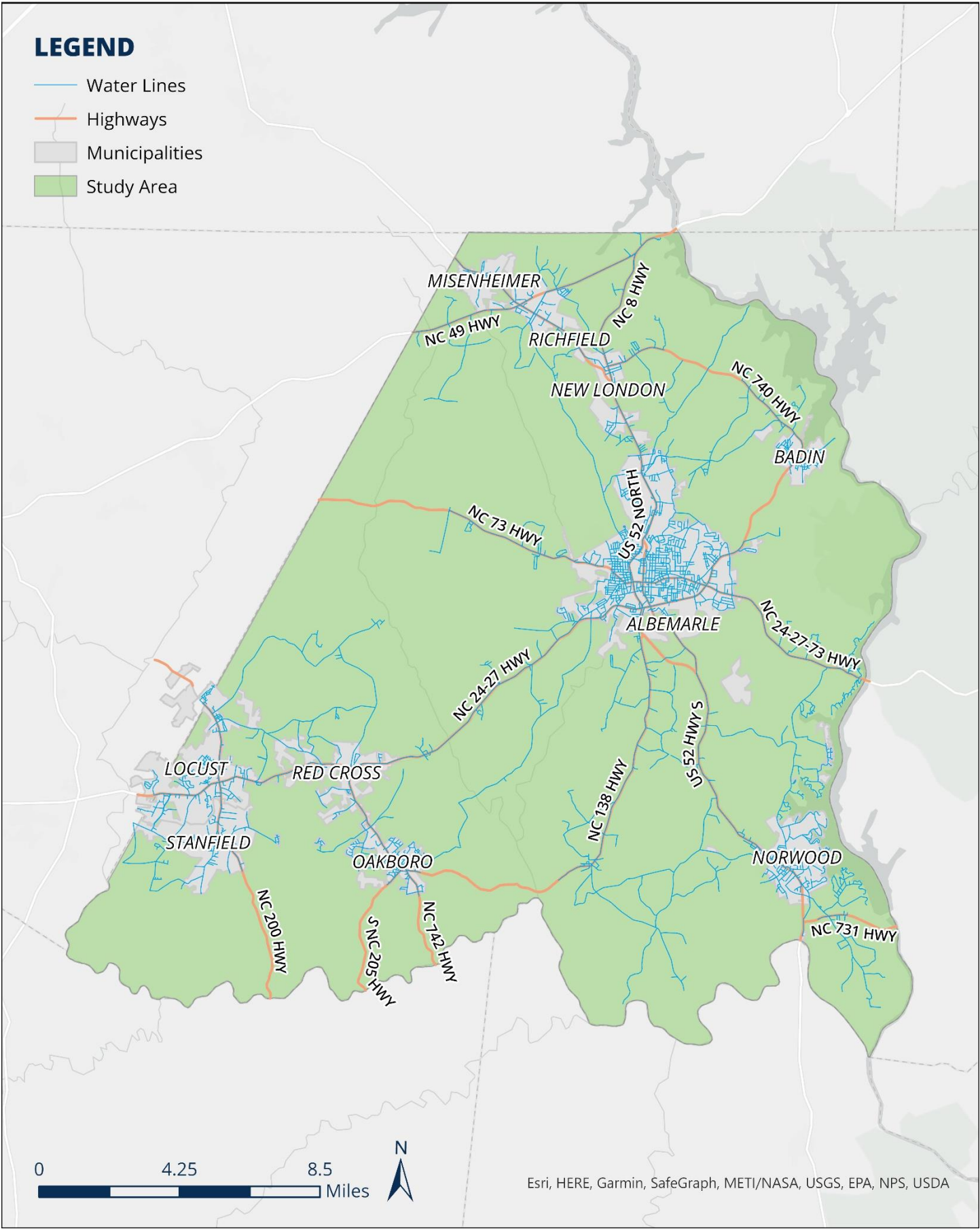




Figure 21. Existing Sanitary Sewer Infrastructure in Stanly County

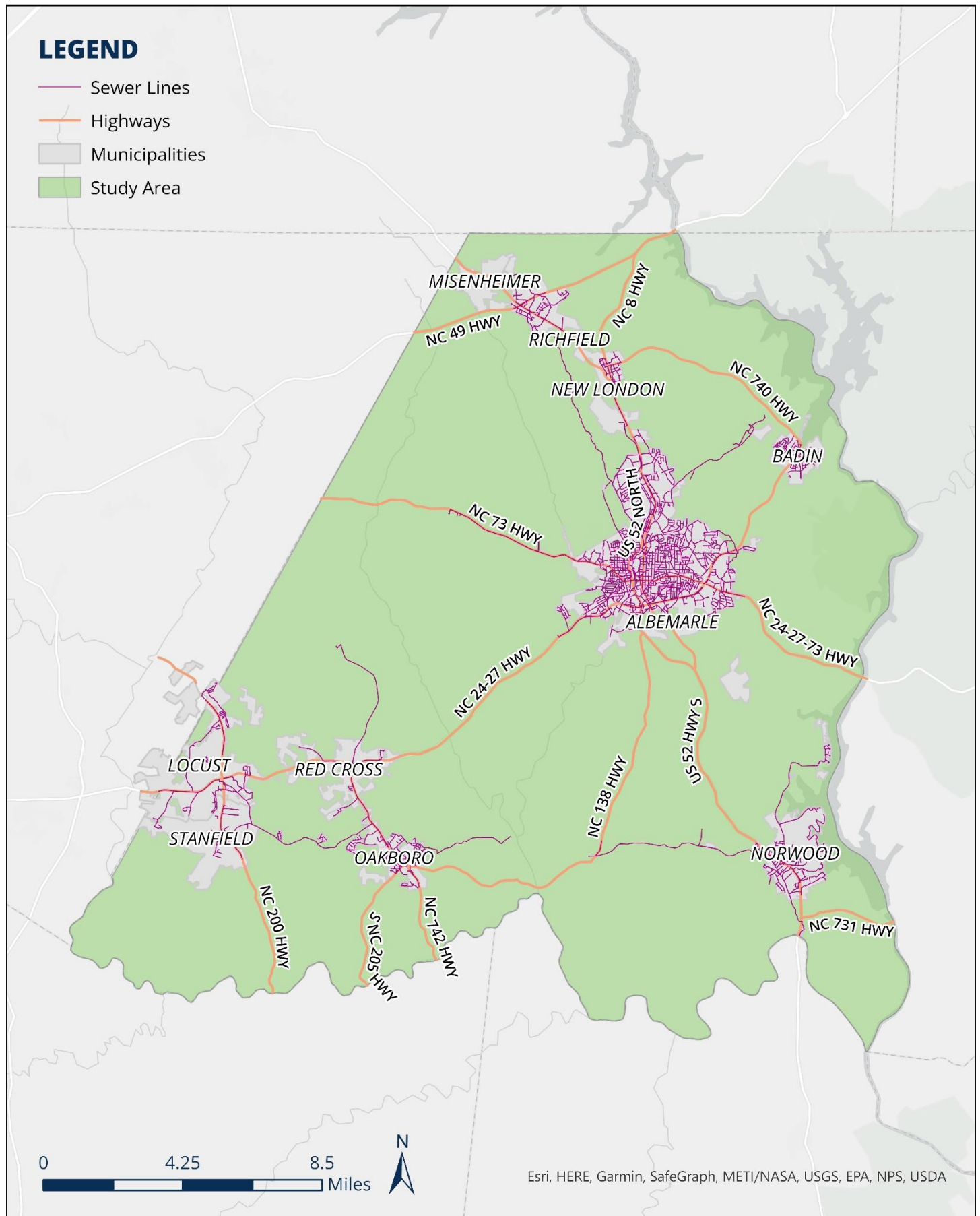




Figure 22. Proposed Water System Infrastructure Buildout (5, 10, & 20 Year Planning Horizons)

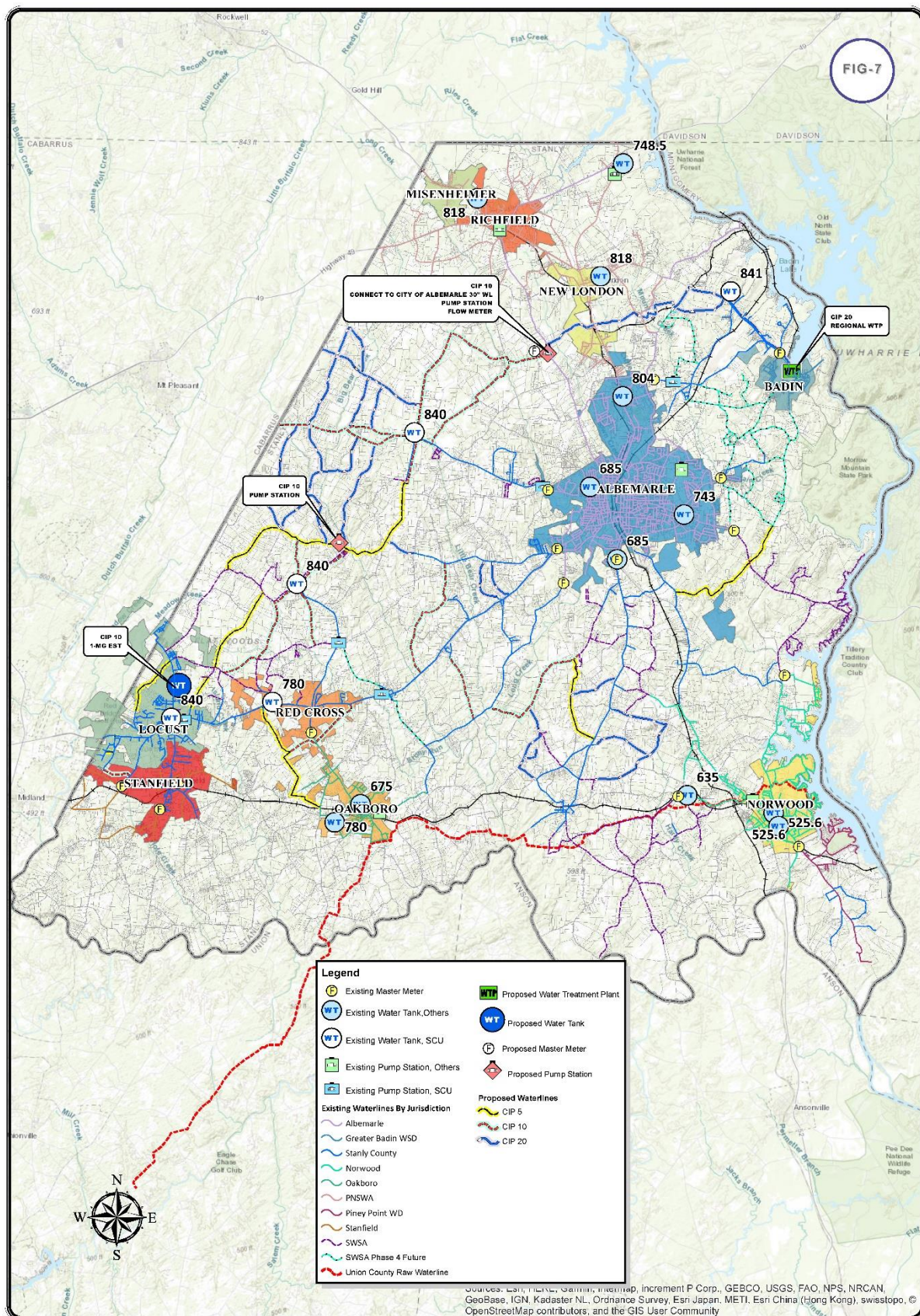
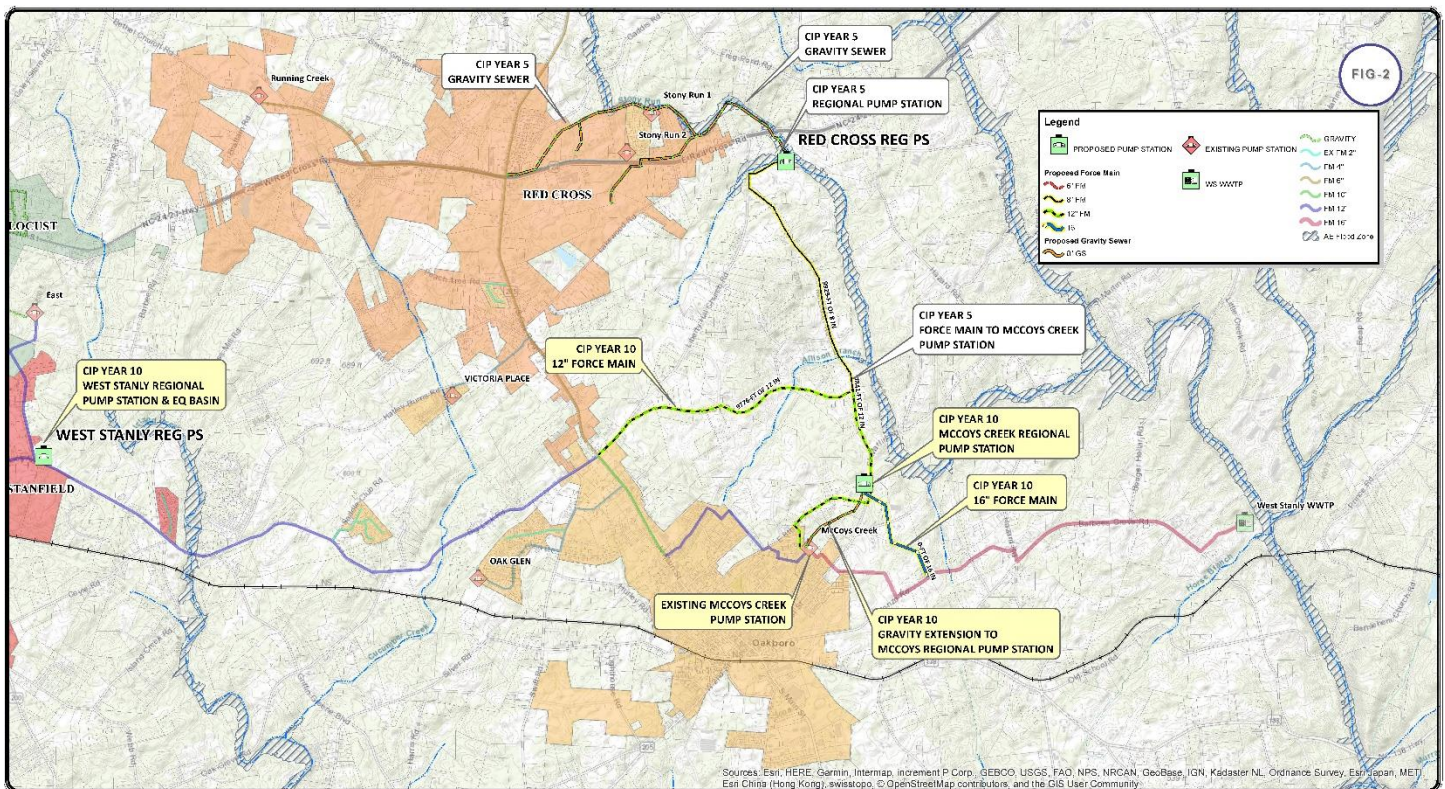


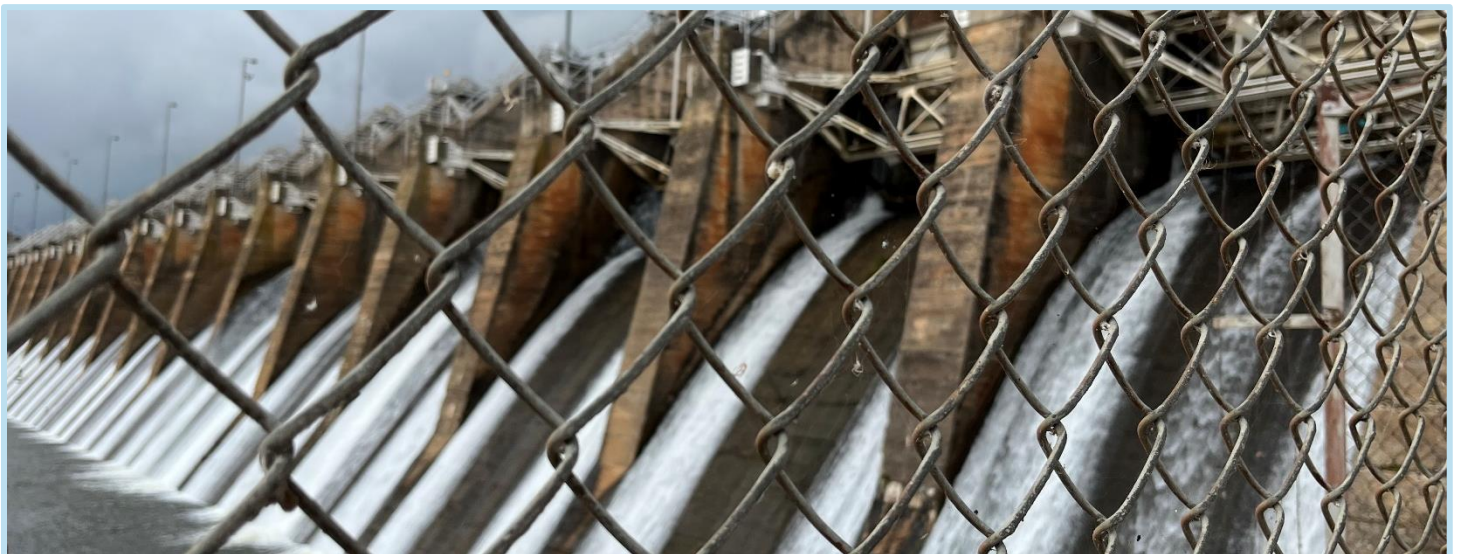


Figure 23. Proposed Sewer System Infrastructure Buildout (5 & 10 Year Planning Horizons)



## Electricity & Natural Gas

The entirety of Stanly County has access to electricity through Duke Power, the North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation, North Carolina Municipal Power Agency 1, and the Pee Dee Electric Cooperative. Power is distributed to residents by Duke Energy, Progress Energy, Union Power, and the City of Albemarle. Natural gas is provided by Piedmont Natural Gas, a subsidiary of Duke Energy. The service area for natural gas includes Albemarle, Norwood, Badin, Aquadale, Locust, Stanfield, and the Stanly County airport.





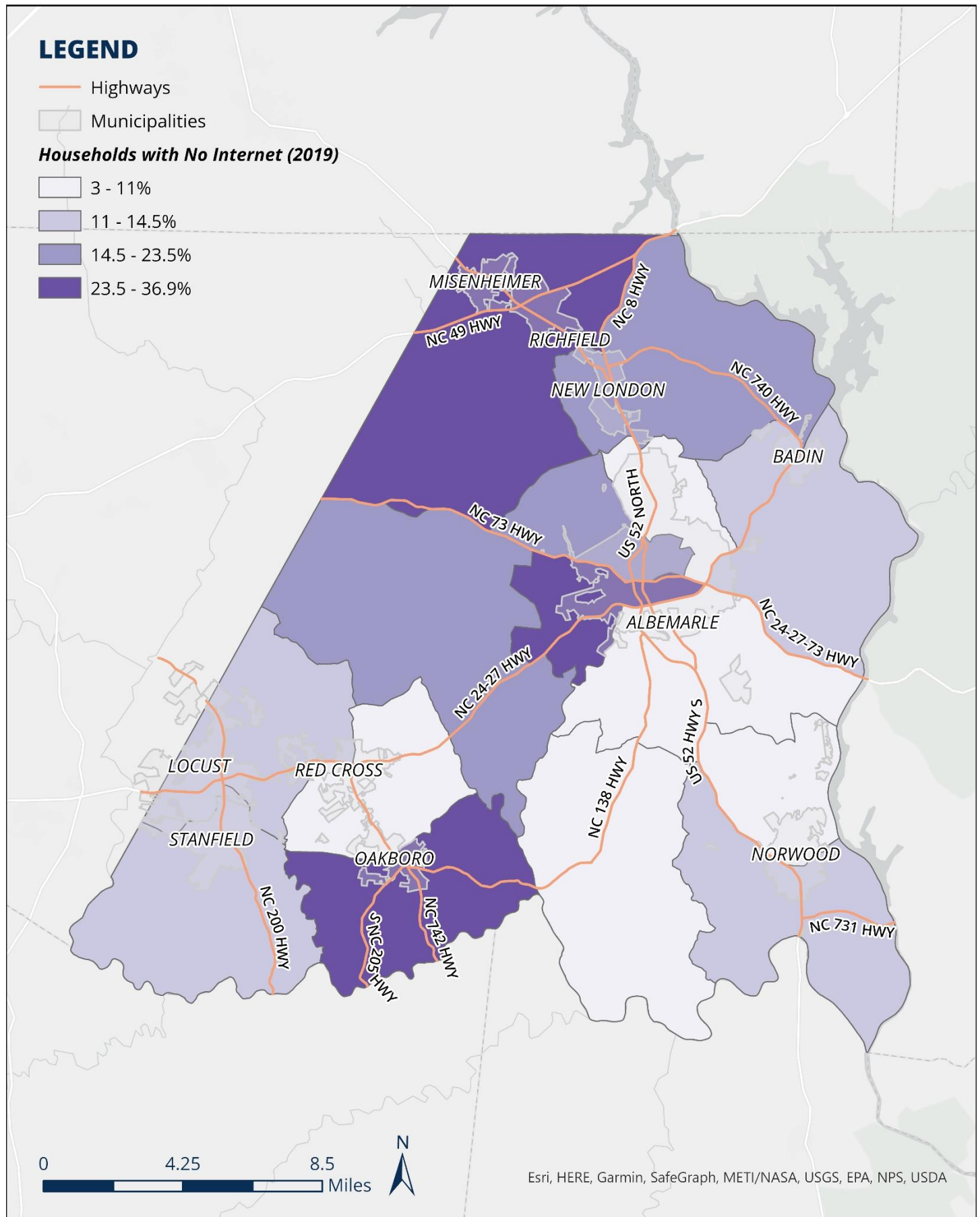


## Internet Access

Access to broadband is becoming increasingly critical for communities as residents, students, and businesses rely more on internet and cellular service in their daily lives. Based on the 2019 American Community Survey, 12.1% of Stanly residents did not have access to any computer or other smart device with which to access the internet. According to both the 2019 American Community Survey and a 2020 survey of broadband access and speeds by the North Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Office (NC DIT), an estimated 18% of Stanly residents do not have reliable access to internet. Figure 24 shows concentrations of insufficient internet access within Stanly County. To ensure continued economic competitiveness and access to resources, services, and other daily necessities for residents, expanding broadband service county-wide should be a vital priority for the County as 2040 approaches.



Figure 24. Access to Internet by Census Tract



# COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Fire**

Stanly County has 13 volunteer fire departments, 1 municipal department (Albemarle), and 1 rescue department (Stanly Rescue) with approximately 400 personnel that provide protection to Stanly County residents. With the exception of Albemarle Fire Department, all are non-profit corporations. The fire departments provide fire protection based on districts established by the Stanly County Board of Commissioners. Stanly Rescue provides additional services such as vehicle extrication, search and rescue on land and water, as well as a support service to all fire departments. All non-profit entities, with the exception of Stanly Rescue, are funded primarily through a fire tax, the rate of which is determined and collected by the Board of Commissioners. The Fire Marshal's Office is responsible for fire inspections, fire investigations, commercial plan review, fire prevention education, and coordination and improvements between emergency management and first responder agencies.

**Law Enforcement**

The Stanly County Sheriff's Office employs about 120 staff members. The Sheriff's Office oversees the enforcement division, including deputies and administrative support, and provides law enforcement services within unincorporated communities as well as several municipal jurisdictions. A number of divisions and programs exist within the Sheriff's Office, including but not limited to administration, patrol, detectives, K9 divisions, court bailiffs, detention center, school resource officers, and the special response team. The Office also provides services to the public such as house and business security checks.

**EMS**

Stanly County Emergency Medical Services is responsible for providing ambulance and paramedic services for the County. EMS operates seven full-time ambulances and responds to over 13,000 calls for service annually out of four bases located in Albemarle, Red Cross, New London, and Norwood. EMS also operates a Community Paramedic Program and provides substance abuse assistance via a hotline.

# COMMUNITY HEALTH

According to the Stanly County Community Health Assessment 2021, the two major causes of death in Stanly County 2015-2019 include heart disease and cancer. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for those 85 years old and older and the second cause of death for those between the ages of 40 and 84. Notably, the third and fourth leading causes of death in Stanly County 2015-2019 include Alzheimer's disease and all other unintentional injuries (drowning, accidental poisoning, falls, burns, choking, etc.), both of which are trending upward, with Alzheimer's disease being the second most common cause of death for those ages 85 and older.

Table 8. Leading Causes of Death in Stanly County (2021).

Rank	Cause of Death (Total Population)
1	Heart Disease
2	Cancer
3	Alzheimer's Disease
4	Unintentional Injuries
5	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease



Underemployment and unemployment were seen as a leading community issue in terms of accessing health care and being able to lead a healthy lifestyle. Major identified barriers to being gainfully employed included substance misuse, lack of transportation, and lack of affordable care for dependents, such as aging parents and children.

Beyond employment and income, health disparities are prevalent in Stanly County by gender and race. Males have higher death rates than females for eight of the 10 most common diseases. Females' rate of mortality was higher than males for cerebrovascular disease and Alzheimer's disease. Infant mortality for non-Hispanic Black infants is higher than non-Hispanic Whites. However, mortality rates for non-Hispanic Black infants are improving, while the rate for non-Hispanic White infants is worsening.

Substance misuse or overuse is noted as the top health issue in the county. It has been reported that substance misuse significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, attributed to social isolation and stress and decreased access to substance use treatment, harm reduction services, and emergency services.

Healthy living, including being obese or overweight and one's degree of access to nutrition and physical activity, is the second ranking major health issue in Stanly County. According to the results of the 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey question regarding body mass index (BMI), 35.8% of the Piedmont North Carolina participants self-identified as being overweight and 33.8% self-identified as being obese. Only 28.8% self-identified as being in the BMI recommended range. Issues of weight impact residents of all ages. Most programs addressing this health issue are incorporated in programs to deal with heart disease and diabetes.





Mental health has also been identified in the top five health issues facing the County since the 2018 CHA report. In 2018, the major emphasis was on the mental health of children and youth. Since experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health has been a major concern for children, youth, and adults. Isolation and its negative effects on all ages has become a concern. Social interaction greatly decreased these past two years due to lockdowns and change of structured activities (including in person school, in-person work, and closed businesses) resulting in isolation. Inactivity and a lack of physical activity rose to #5 (33.20%) in the 2021 CHA report, up from #11 (22.78%) in the 2018 CHA report. With the COVID-19 pandemic minimizing indoor social interactions, physical activity has taken on an increased importance in the lives of people.

*Table 9. Community Health Assessment (CHA) Top 3 Health Priorities for Stanly County (2021 & 2018).*

Rank	2021	2018
1	Substance Misuse/Overdose	Tobacco Use
2	Healthy Living (obesity, nutrition, physical activity)	Substance Misuse
3	Mental Health	Overweight/Obesity

## PARKS & RECREATION

Stanly County is one of only seven North Carolina counties with no county-sponsored parks and recreation department, commission, or programming. The other six are Caldwell, Cleveland, Edgecombe, Halifax, Hertford, and Randolph Counties. In Stanly County, parks and recreation are primarily made





available to residents through state and municipal parks and recreation facilities. Some recreational programs are also available to county residents through Stanly County Senior Services and the Stanly County YMCA in Albemarle.

Perhaps the most well-known and beloved park in Stanly County is Morrow Mountain State Park, east of Badin along the Yadkin-Pee Dee River. Morrow Mountain State Park provides a myriad of adventures from the summit of the namesake mountain, along the banks of the Yadkin River State Trail, and to the shores of Lake Tillery. The park is home to a multitude of Native American artifacts made of rhyodacite as well as argillite mined by the Civilian Conservation Corps to create many of the park's structures. One of these CCC-built structures is the state parks system's only day-use swimming pool. The park offers camping facilities and several rental cabins as well as 37 miles of hiking trails, 19 miles of horseback riding trails, seasonal boat rentals, locations for fishing and boating, and educational programming.

Other parks and recreational facilities are operated and maintained by Stanly County municipalities. Albemarle Parks & Recreation maintains 300 acres of park land across six different parks, with facilities including a disc golf course, swimming, athletic fields, basketball and tennis courts, playgrounds, trails, and more. Badin, Locust, Oakboro, Stanfield, Richfield, New London, and Norwood also provide public parks and recreational facilities to residents. Stanly County is also home to portions of the Carolina Thread Trail, which connects existing parks, recreational infrastructure, and greenways throughout the state. Figure 25 shows a map of Carolina Thread Trail expansion throughout the broader Charlotte region, including Stanly County.



Figure 25. Map of Carolina Thread Trail Planned & Completed Infrastructure in Charlotte Region.



Notable facilities include the Locust City Park (offering a state-of-the-art sports complex for baseball, softball, football, soccer, tennis, and basketball), the Oakboro District Park (offering a large pond with walking trails, picnic shelters, an amphitheater, and baseball, softball, and soccer fields), the Richfield Community Park (offering soccer, baseball, and softball fields, walking trails, and a fishing pond), and the Darrell Almond Community Park in Norwood (offering fishing, walking trails, and an amphitheater). The Town of Badin has several hiking trails connecting to Morrow Mountain State Park and is also in the process of developing a waterfront park near the town center along Badin Lake. There are several public access points along Badin Lake, and Norwood is seeking to add public beachfronts along Lake Tillery.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Geology

Home to the western end of the Uwharrie Mountain Range, Stanly County primarily features a landscape of rolling hills. Historically, oceanic volcanoes formed the rock upon which Stanly County rests today during the Cambrian Period. Now identified as part of the Carolina Slate Belt, one of North Carolina's nine geological belts, the county's land is mostly comprised of mineral-rich sedimentary and volcanic rock.



Today, these geologic resources are mined in Stanly County and beyond for an array of minerals, including some gold, as well as crushed stone. Extractions are used for a variety of products, including street pavement, ceramics, paint, brick, and sewer and drainage pipes.

The mountainous history of Stanly County plays some role to this day in development decisions, especially where slopes are concerned. Steep slopes can limit the potential of an area for residential, commercial, and industrial development and make farming difficult. Most steep slopes in Stanly County are located in proximity to Morrow Mountain State Park and the eastern side of the County adjacent to the Yadkin-Pee Dee River.



## Soils & Prime Farmland

Stanly County's geologic history also significantly impacts the County's potential for agricultural production and other types of development due to its soil composition. Certain soils allow for better drainage and retention of stormwater and irrigation, making them more productive for agriculture and, additionally, more suitable for other types of residential and commercial development. According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Survey, Stanly County is home to several dozen soil types.

The USDA defines prime farmland as "soils that are best suited to producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops... [producing] the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources." These areas often experience little to no erosion and flooding, particularly during the growing season. Table 10 demonstrates the prime farmland soil types present in Stanly County and their acreage, and

Figure 26 demonstrates the availability of prime farmland soils across Stanly County. Based on these metrics, Stanly County has approximately 104,760 acres of prime farmland available within the County's jurisdiction, comprising about 40% of the County's land area. The largest concentrations of these soils lie north and south of Millingport, north of Locust and Oakboro, northeast and northwest of Albemarle, and south of Norwood.

Preserving agriculture in Stanly County is critical to supporting the local and regional economies and protecting rural character. Consideration of prime farmland soils is an important factor in ensuring agricultural preservation is effective. Stanly County pursues farmland preservation through programs for Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VADs) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts (EVADs). The VAD/EVAD program was established through a 2016 ordinance, which updated Stanly County's then-existing VAD program. The program is overseen and implemented by an appointed Agricultural Advisory Board with guidance from the Soil and Water Conservation District and support from the County office of the NC Cooperative Extension.

Farmers and landowners who designate their land as a VAD or EVAD through this program enter into an agreement with the County to prohibit non-farm use or development of the land for a period of at least 10 years. Under the EVAD program, this land protection is irrevocable for the period of the agreement. Participants within both programs receive additional benefits and protections, such as protection from nuisance suits filed by neighbors. According to the current VAD/EVAD database maintained by Stanly County GIS, a total of 14,820 acres of farmland have been preserved through the program. Figure 27 shows the currently registered VADs and EVADs in Stanly County.

*Table 10. Prime Farmland Soils & Acreage in Stanly County.*

Soil Symbol	Soil Phase	Acreage	% Land Area
BaB	Badin Silt Loam, 2 to 8 Percent Slopes	35,656.5	13.8%
CfA	Chenneby Silt Loam, 0 to 2 Percent Slopes	1,810.9	0.7%
ChA	Chewacla Loam, 0 to 2 Percent Slopes	668.0	0.3%
CoA	Congaree Fine Sandy Loam, 0 to 2 Percent Slopes	823.1	0.3%
GeB	Georgeville Silt Loam, 2 to 8 Percent Slopes	6,139.6	2.4%
GfB2	Georgeville Silty Clay Loam, 2 to 8 Percent Slopes	1,953.0	0.8%
HeB	Hiwassee Gravelly Loam, 2 to 8 Percent Slopes	537.4	0.2%
KkB	Kirksey Silt Loam, 0 to 6 Percent Slopes	17,438.1	6.7%
LgB	Lloyd Gravelly Loam, 2 to 8 Percent Slopes	1,329.5	0.5%
OaA	Oakboro Silt Loam, 0 to 2 Percent Slopes	9,453.6	3.7%
TbB	Tatum Channery Silt Loam, 2 to 8 Percent Slopes	23,611.2	9.1%
TcB2	Tarrus Channery Silty Clay Loam, 2 to 8 Percent Slopes	5,337.7	2.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>104,758.6</b>	<b>40.5%</b>



Figure 26. Distribution of Prime Farmland Soils in Stanly County

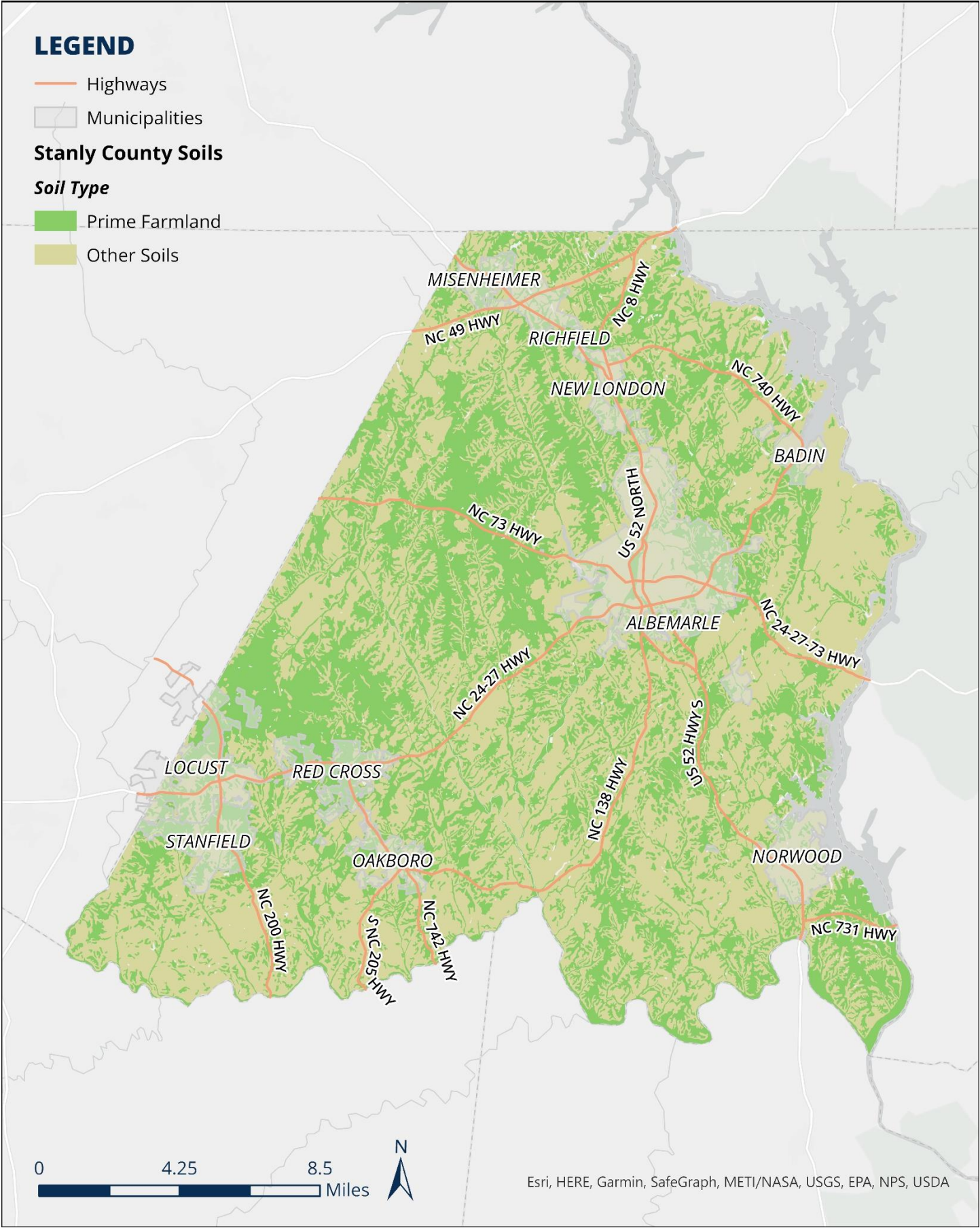
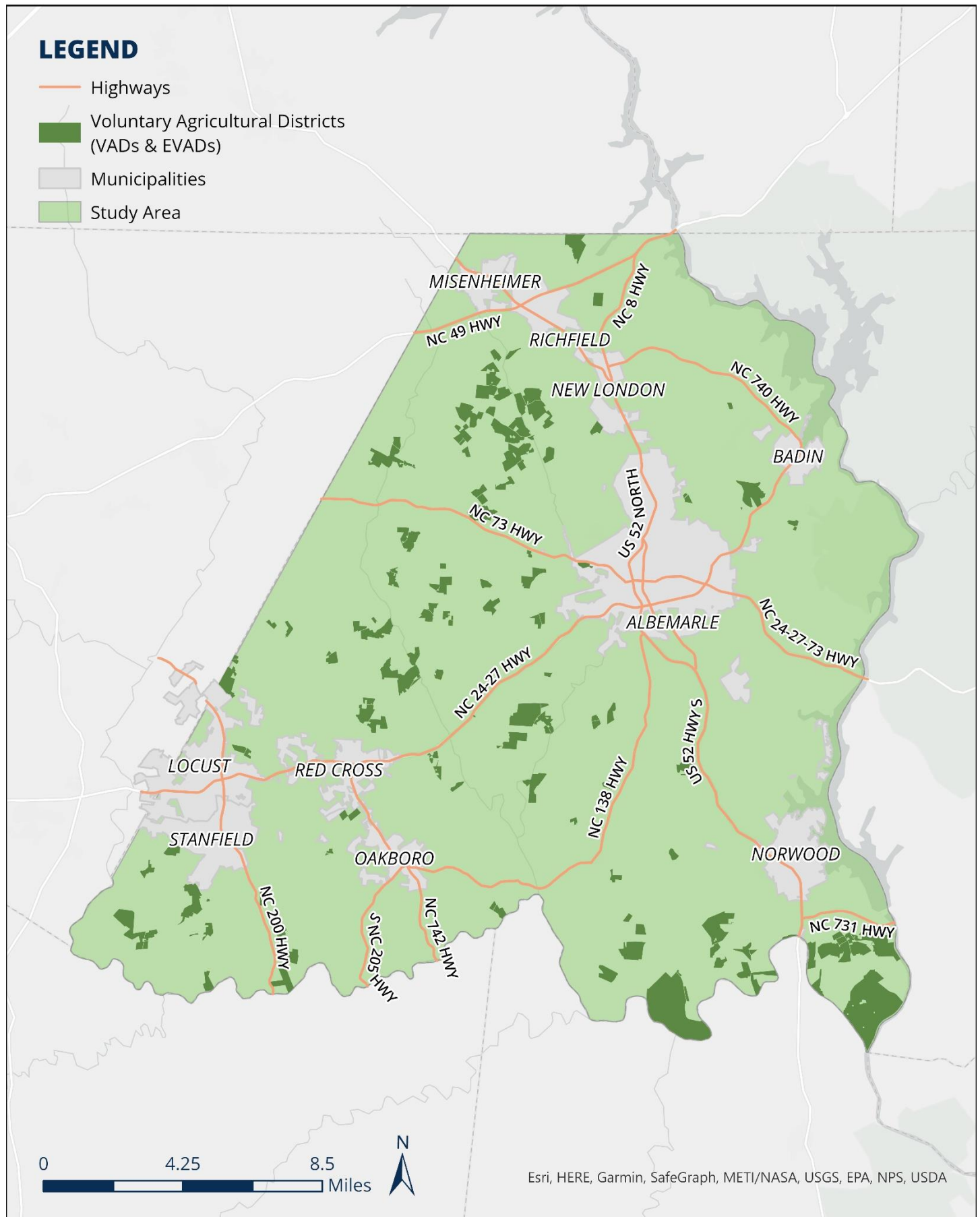


Figure 27. Distribution of VADs and EVADs in Stanly County

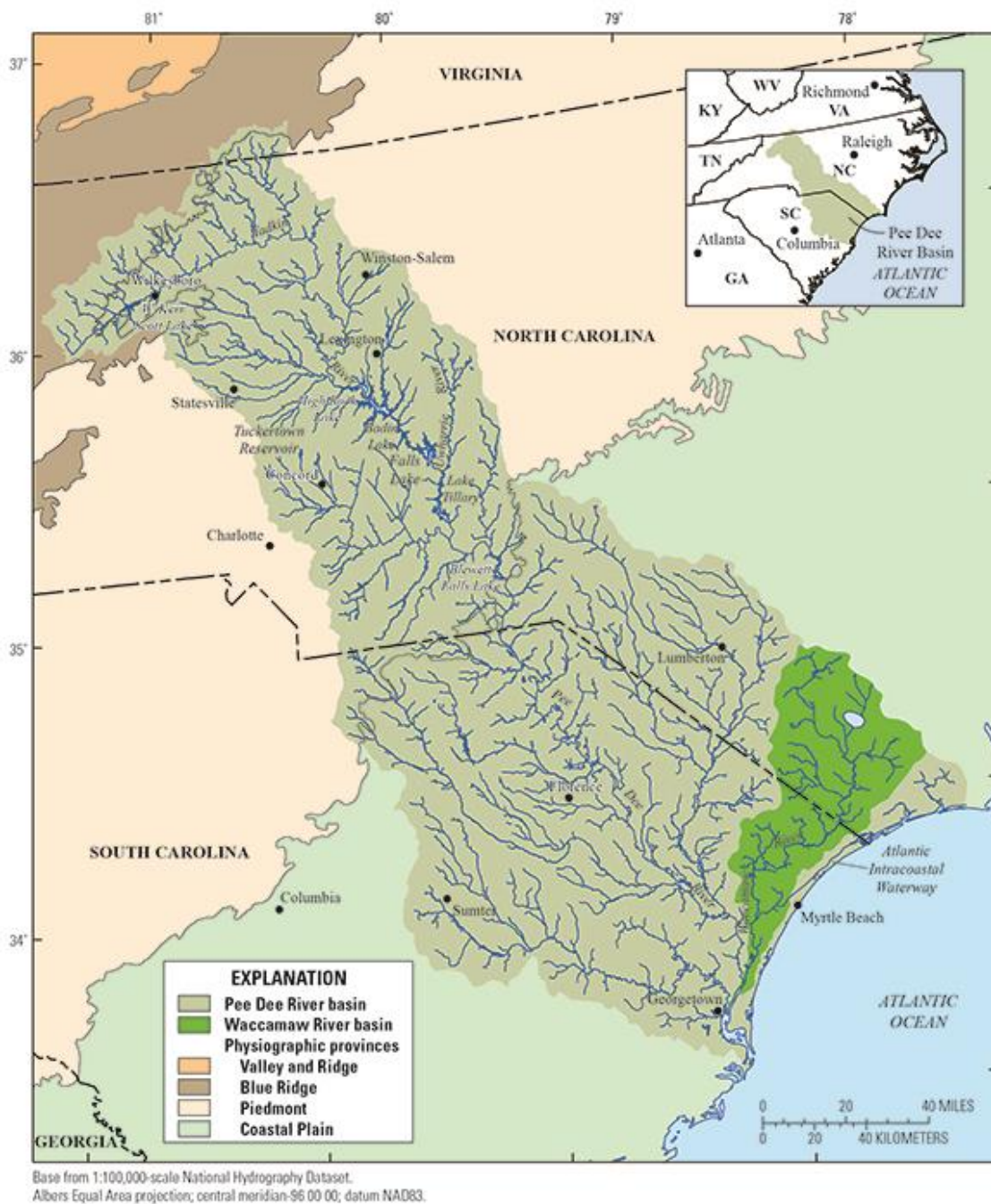


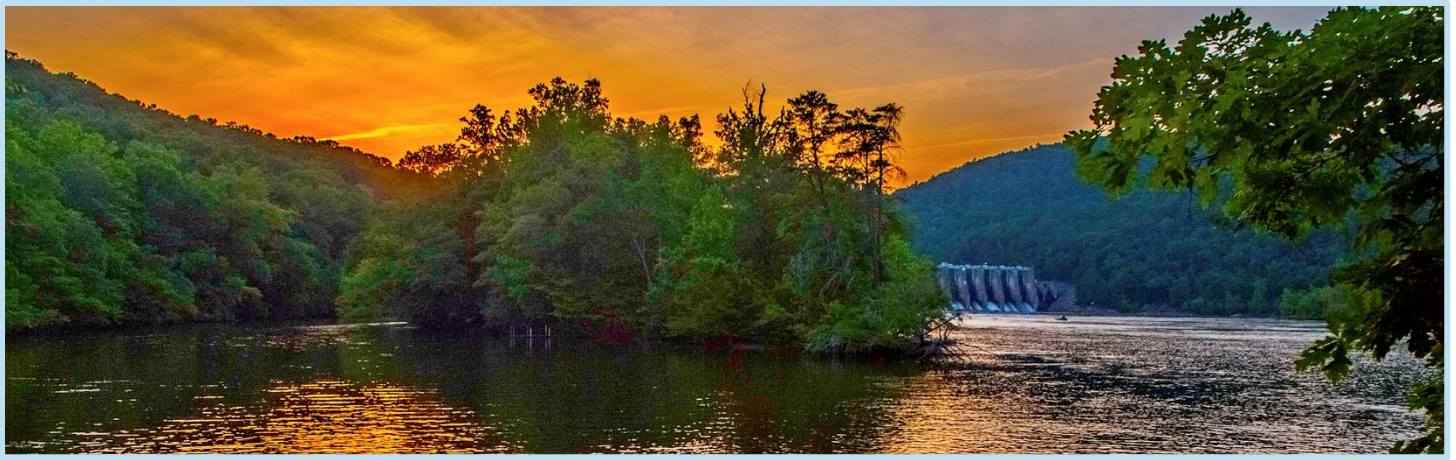


## Hydrology

On two of four sides, Stanly County is bordered by major rivers: the Yadkin-Pee Dee River to the east and the Rocky River to the south. Portions of the county lie within these rivers' watersheds, with two-thirds of Stanly County draining into the Rocky River and the other third draining into the Yadkin-Pee Dee River. The Yadkin River, one of North Carolina's longest rivers at 215 miles in length, originates in northwest North Carolina near the Watauga and Caldwell County borders. Near Morrow Mountain State Park, the Yadkin is joined by the Uwharrie River from the north and becomes the Pee-Dee River. The 95-mile Rocky River originates in the southeastern corner of Iredell County near Mooresville and joins the Pee Dee River at the southeastern corner of Stanly County. From this confluence, the Great Pee Dee River continues into South Carolina before flowing into the Atlantic Ocean near Georgetown, South Carolina, spanning 232 miles in total length. All three rivers are part of the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin.

*Figure 28. Map of the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin*





The Yadkin-Pee Dee River is dammed in four locations within Stanly County's jurisdiction, creating several lakes that comprise part of the Uwharrie Lakes Region. These locations include the following:

- Tuckertown Dam, located northeast of New London. This dam forms the Tuckertown Reservoir along the northeast corner of the County.
- Narrows Dam, located east of Badin. This dam forms Badin Lake.
- Falls Dam, located just south of The Narrows and east of Badin and Morrow Mountain State Park. This dam creates the Falls Reservoir. Tuckertown, Narrows, and Falls Dams are owned by Cube Hydroelectric and are part of the Yadkin Project, a hydroelectric project licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).
- Tillery Dam, located east of Norwood. This dam forms Lake Tillery and generates hydroelectric power for Duke Energy.

The Yadkin-Pee Dee River watershed is home to a number of wetland species, several of which are listed as endangered or threatened by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program. Currently, nineteen species in Stanly County are designated with special conservation status, with four species (one fish and three mussels) listed as endangered, six species (one fish and five mussels) listed as threatened, and six species (one fish, two mussels, and three amphibians) of "special concern". It is worth noting that, as of Stanly County's 2010 land use plan update, only nine wetland species had been given a designated conservation status. The welfare of these species is heavily dependent on high water quality, and proactive measures to preserve their habitats have additional positive implications on the quality of water for residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Stanly County must continue to pursue and prioritize the preservation of wetland habitats and ecosystems to sustain a healthy watershed environment. Figure 29 demonstrates designated watersheds in Stanly County.

Due to its proximity to several major rivers, Stanly County also has several areas designated as flood hazard areas by the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). Figure 30 shows the location of these hazard areas, which are expected to experience a 1-in-100 chance of flooding annually. Flood-prone areas generally accompany major rivers, reservoirs, creeks, and other tributaries of the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin. To protect important watersheds and floodplains and limit the proliferation of incompatible or dense development in flood-prone areas, Stanly County has adopted two ordinances, the Watershed Protection Ordinance and the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. The first ordinance limits the density and character of development that can occur within identified watershed areas, while the second regulates the types of development, construction, and other activities that are permitted to occur in the interest of limiting erosion and flood damage. The Watershed Protection Ordinance also distinguishes between Critical and Protected Areas, with distinctions in the extent to which certain uses are permitted based on these designations.



Figure 29. Designated Watershed Areas in Stanly County

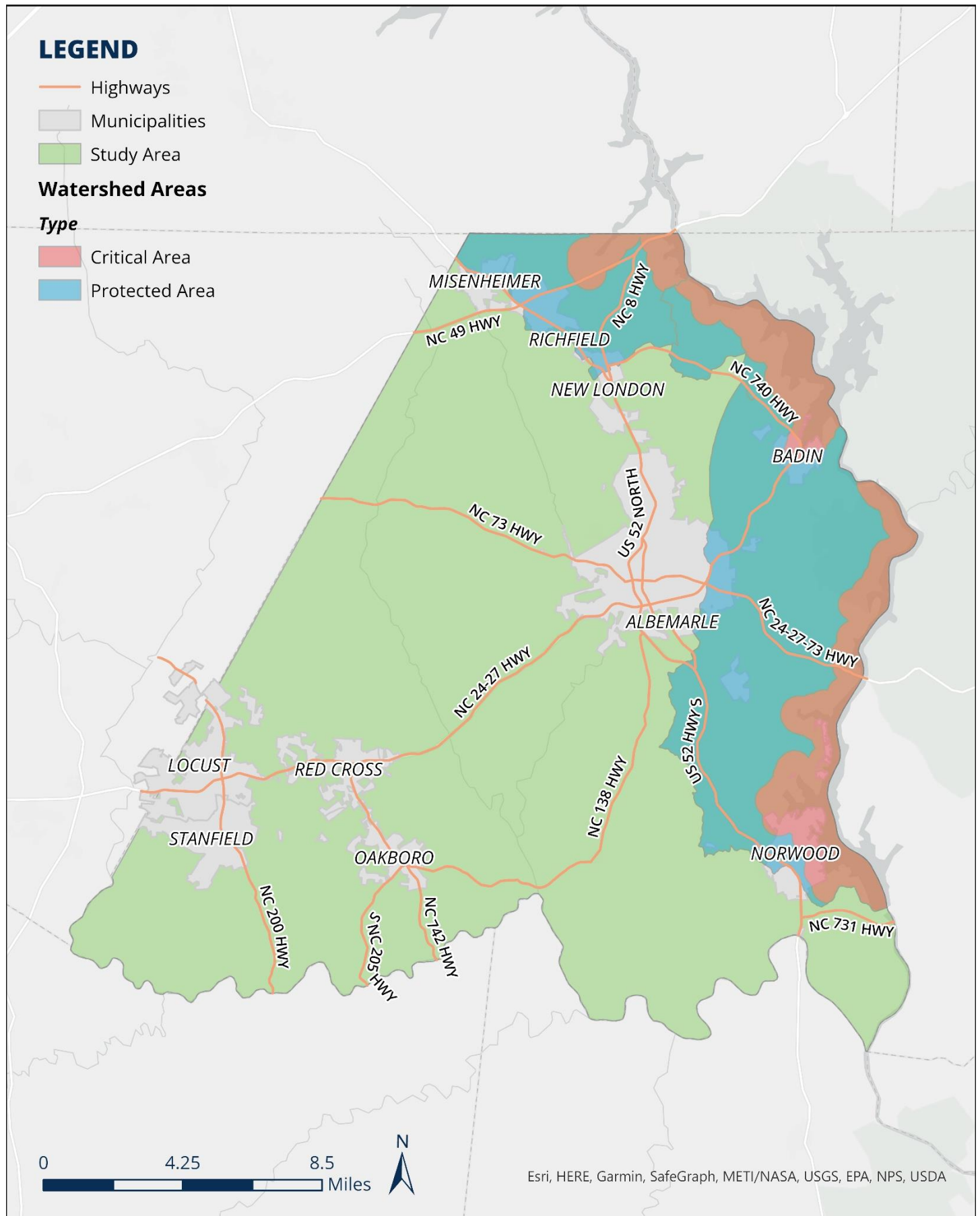
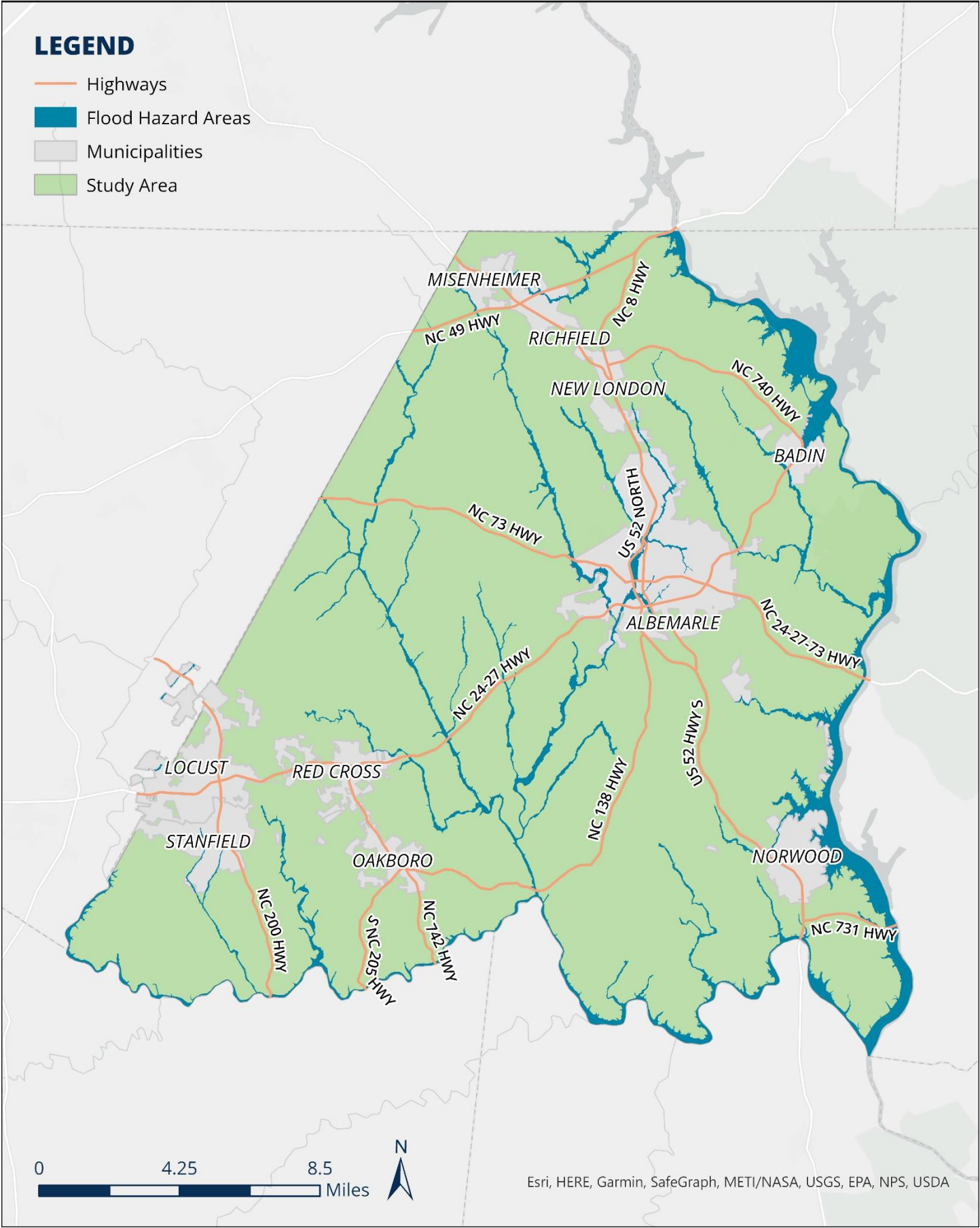


Figure 30. Designated Flood Hazard Areas in Stanly County





## EXISTING LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Land use is not a random process. Numerous distinct variables influence the way a given piece of land is used. Some of the variables are influenced by factors beyond the control of the community, including economic factors such as the demand for new development, the cost of property, and the cost of construction. Environmental factors such as soil conditions, topography, and the location of floodplains or other natural limitations are largely pre-determined. Other variables, however, are within the control of the community, including the capacity and location of public utilities and facilities, the delivery of county services, and the physical appearance of development. While these variables are not always constant, they have an impact on the use of land and on each change in land use.

Tax assessor records in Stanly County group land uses according to the following five categories:

- Residential (includes single family dwellings, multi-unit dwellings, and waterfront homes)
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Exempt (includes civic land uses, churches, preserved open space, and other tax-exempt uses)
- Vacant (includes agricultural land, open space, and other undeveloped or underdeveloped land)

Viewed as a whole, the use of individual pieces of property forms a pattern of land use that describes the character of the County in several ways. It helps to explain where residents live and work, how they obtain goods and services, and where they seek recreation. Existing land use patterns are a starting point in the process of developing policies for future development in the County. Figure 31 demonstrates the existing land uses in Stanly County, identified based on tax assessor records for each parcel. Table 11 identifies the distribution of existing land uses according to acreage.

*Table 11. Existing Land Uses in Stanly County by Number of Parcels & Acreage (2022)*

Land Use	Parcels	Acreage
Residential	26,028	101,843.1
Commercial	1,501	5,250.5
Industrial	120	2,954.0
Vacant	12,704	131,146.4
Exempt	1,224	14,166.0
Total	41,577	255,360.0

Currently in Stanly County, approximately 40% of land countywide is used for residential dwellings. About 3% of total land area is used for commercial or industrial purposes, indicating land for these uses might be at a premium. Exempt land uses, which include government-owned sites (such as County and State facilities, schools, and offices), churches, and community organizations, comprise around 6% of land area in the County. The remaining land area, designated by the tax assessor as “vacant”, includes agricultural land, open space, and undeveloped areas and comprises over half the County’s land area at 51%.

To fully understand trends in development, it is also important to consider how land use has changed over time. The planning team evaluated current tax parcel records from June 2022 and compared them to records from May 2013 to gain an understanding of how certain land uses have changed in Stanly County during the last decade.

Figure 31. Existing Land Use in Stanly County (2022)

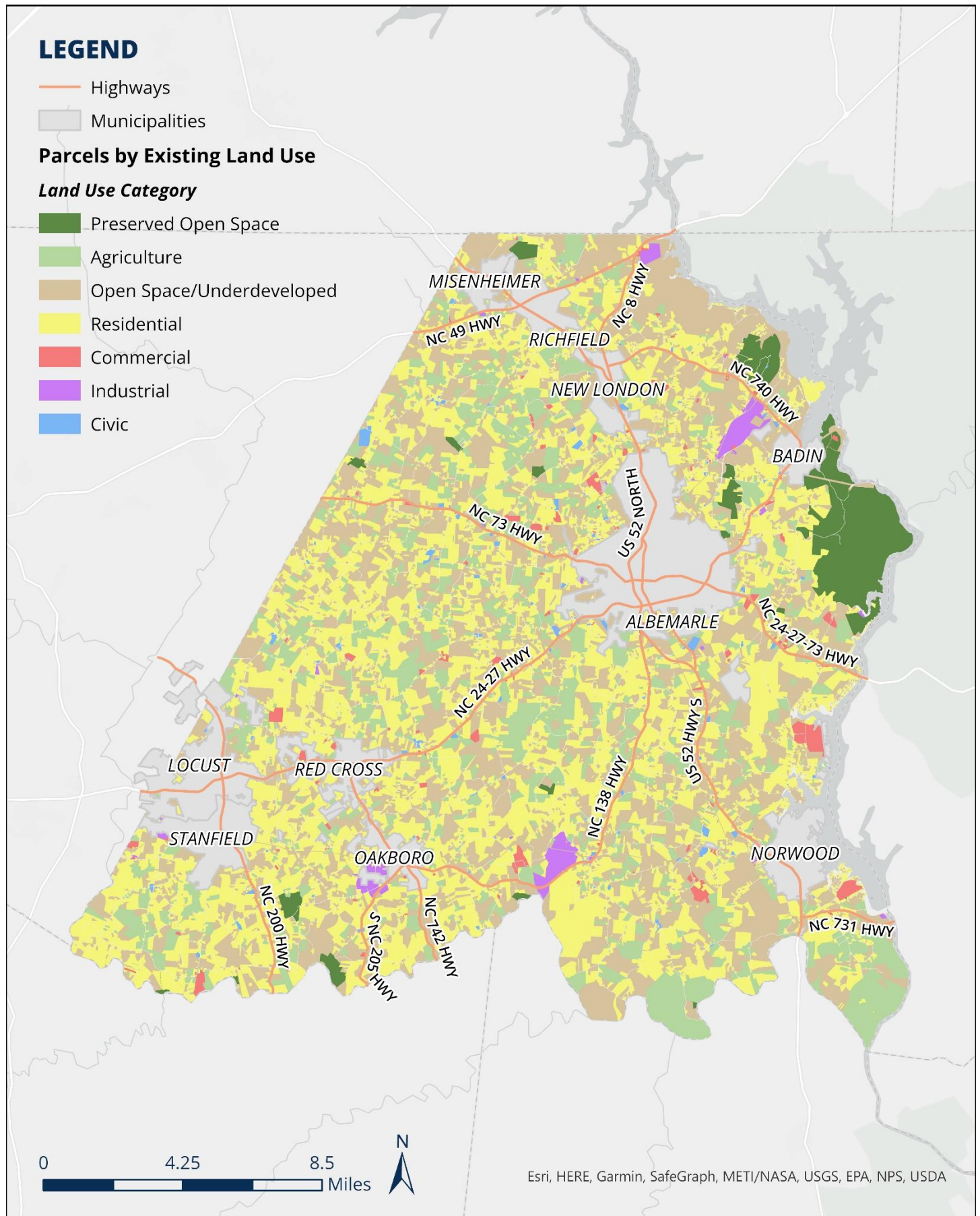




Table 12 shows the change in total parcels, total acreage, average parcel size in acres, and percentage of total land use for each land use category. Over the 10-year period, the number of parcels increased by nearly 2,500, indicating a general trend of subdividing parcels into smaller lots. The total number of parcels increased in each land use category, with Residential parcels comprising most of the 2,500-parcel increase (nearly 2,000 new residential parcels were identified in 2022). Residential, Commercial, and Exempt parcels all saw decreases in average parcel size, while Industrial and Vacant parcels saw increases in their average parcel size. Rather than indicating that farmland parcels and other “vacant” land use parcels are growing larger, this may instead reveal that smaller farms have experienced conversion to residential development and other land uses more quickly than larger farms and large stands of forests or open space. Generally, these trends reveal that industrial, commercial, and residential development are all growing steadily in the County and support the need for strategies to preserve existing farmland and natural resources, especially smaller family farms.

*Table 12. Existing Land Use by Parcels, Acreage, and Average Parcel Size (2013-2022)*

Year	Total Parcels		Total Acreage		Average Parcel Size	
	2013	2022	2013	2022	2013	2022
Residential	24,109	26,028	110,046.3	101,843.1	4.6	3.9
Commercial	1,353	1,501	5,102.6	5,250.5	3.8	3.5
Industrial	106	120	2,378.3	2,954.0	22.4	24.6
Vacant	12,525	12,704	122,573.1	131,146.4	9.8	10.3
Exempt	1,044	1,224	15,259.7	14,166.0	14.6	11.6
Totals	39,137	41,577	255,360.0	255,360.0	6.5	6.1

## Chapter 3: Stanly Tomorrow





## CHAPTER 3: STANLY TOMORROW (COMMUNITY VISION)

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & FEEDBACK

In order to develop a land use plan reflective of the vision and aspirations of Stanly County residents and stakeholders, the planning team implemented a multi-faceted community engagement process. Stakeholders were able to provide feedback in a variety of ways, and the development of the plan contents was also guided at each stage by the Steering Committee.



#### Steering Committee

The twelve-member Steering Committee was selected by County staff to represent the community and guide the planning process. Comprised of multidisciplinary community leaders and citizen representatives from across the community, Steering Committee members represented interests including agriculture and natural resource preservation, economic development, community services, utilities and infrastructure, and more. The Steering Committee met virtually with the project consultants and town staff five times throughout the planning process to provide feedback and guidance on plan elements, review plan materials, develop the vision, guiding principles, and policy recommendations, and review the draft plan and Future Land Use Maps. Steering Committee members also played a critical role in promoting and sharing the open house events, community survey, and other key information about the plan development process across their personal and professional networks.

#### Community Engagement Days

In April and May 2022, the planning team held five separate engagement days in communities across the county to gather input from a diverse array of stakeholders and community interests. Each engagement day included meetings with municipal leaders and staff to highlight critical opportunities and needs for each jurisdiction, a community tour of municipal and county attractions and facilities, and a community open house open to the public. At these open houses, community members learned about the land use

plan process, reviewed maps and data about current conditions in Stanly County, and provided feedback on their vision for the County's future through an interactive mapping activity and conversations with the planning team. Approximately 60 residents and stakeholders attended the five open house events. A sixth community open house was held in October 2022 to share the draft plan recommendations and maps and allow community members to provide additional feedback; approximately 20 residents attended the final open house.





## Community Survey

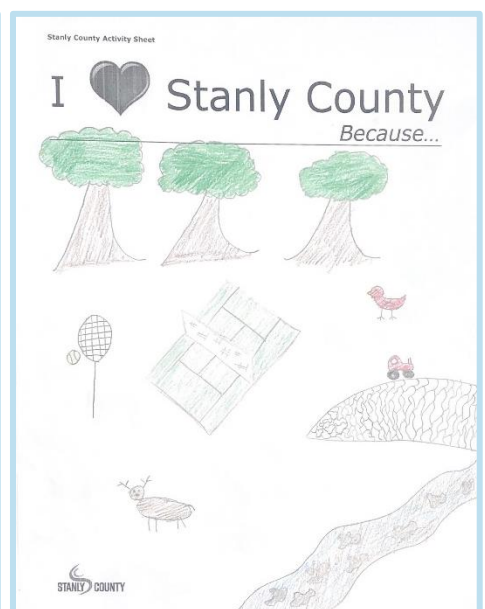
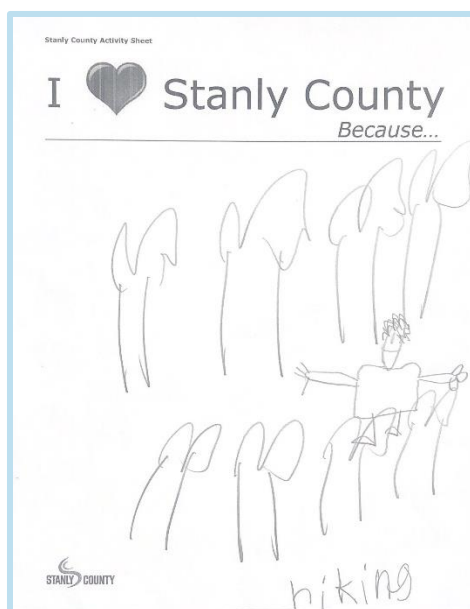
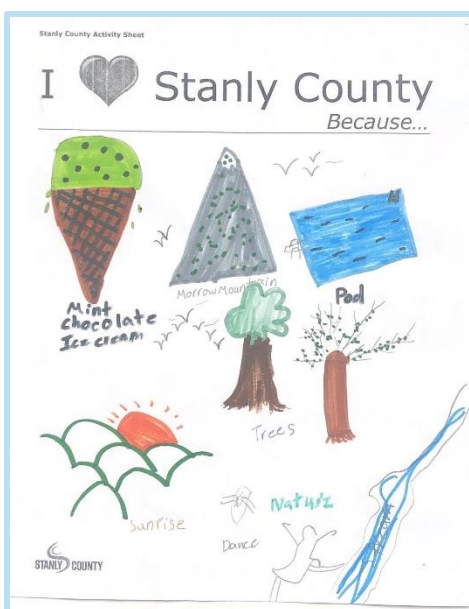
An online public survey was launched in April 2022 and remained open through May, providing community members with an extended opportunity to share more detailed feedback about their vision and priorities for the County's future. Printed surveys were made available at Stanly County Commons in Albemarle and at Town Hall for each of the other four jurisdictions visited during the engagement days. The survey and open house events were advertised to the community through public flyers, newsletters, newspaper ads, and posts to the County Planning Department Facebook page.

The community survey generated over 1,300 responses from community members and stakeholders, and the results provided a wealth of information about community character and values, community demographics, and stakeholder preferences on topics such as land use, economic development, transportation, and parks and recreation. Several open-ended comment sections also provided respondents with opportunities to share direct feedback with the planning team and raise up unique concerns not explicitly mentioned in the survey.

## Community Engagement Results

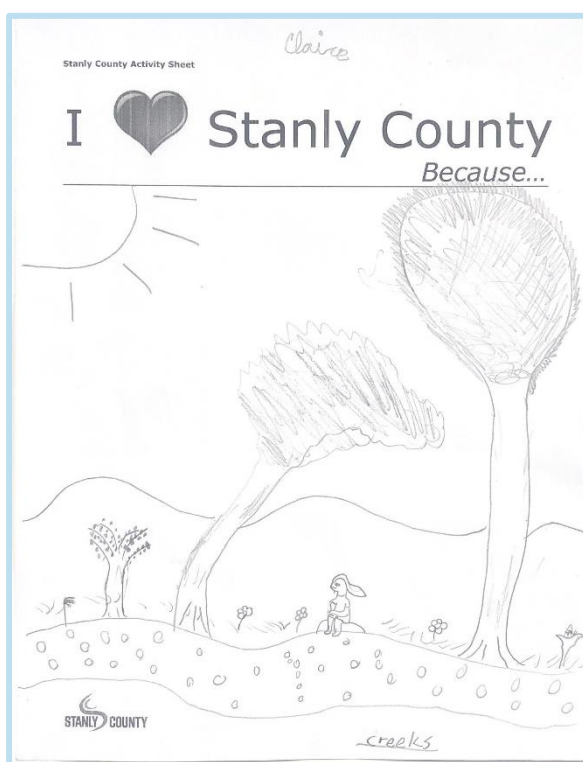
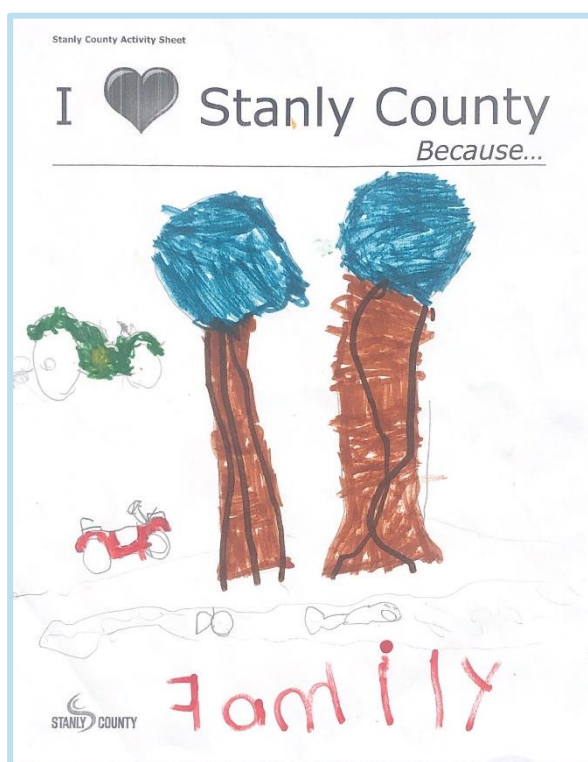
Participants in the community survey and open houses identified as Stanly County residents, property owners, business owners, employees, parents of Stanly County schoolchildren, retirees, and more. Most survey respondents (92 percent) were between the ages of 25 and 84, and survey respondents and open house participants represented nearly every incorporated and unincorporated community across the county. Just over half of survey respondents (56 percent) did not have children under 18 in their household.

In general, community members indicated through their survey responses that the strong agricultural presence and rural character define and distinguish Stanly County from surrounding communities. The survey results established a strong preference for concentrating growth, especially higher density growth, in and around the county's municipalities and maintaining low density land uses throughout most of the county's jurisdiction. Community members also expressed nearly unanimous concerns about growth and development outpacing the development of water, sewer, transportation, and broadband infrastructure and insisted this supportive infrastructure must be in place before other types of development can be pursued in the county.



*How respondents feel about the present and future of Stanly County:*

Rank	What makes Stanly County unique or special?	What is the biggest challenge facing Stanly County today?	How do you hope to be able to describe your community & county in 20 years?
1	Small town feel	Housing developments	Small town charm preserved
2	Sense of community	Access to high paying jobs	Great place to live, work and play
3	Rural character	Improving the school system	Great place to raise a family
4	Farmland	Loss of farmland	Safe community
5	Natural beauty	Access to affordable housing	Good schools
6	Natural resources	Rapid population growth	Access to high-paying jobs and opportunities
7	Morrow Mountain	Health and safety	Farmland and rural character preserved
8	Friendly people	Growth outpacing infrastructure	Thriving local businesses
9	Lake Tillery	Access to healthy food	Natural resources protected
10	Family-oriented values	Access to internet	Intentional, well-planned growth

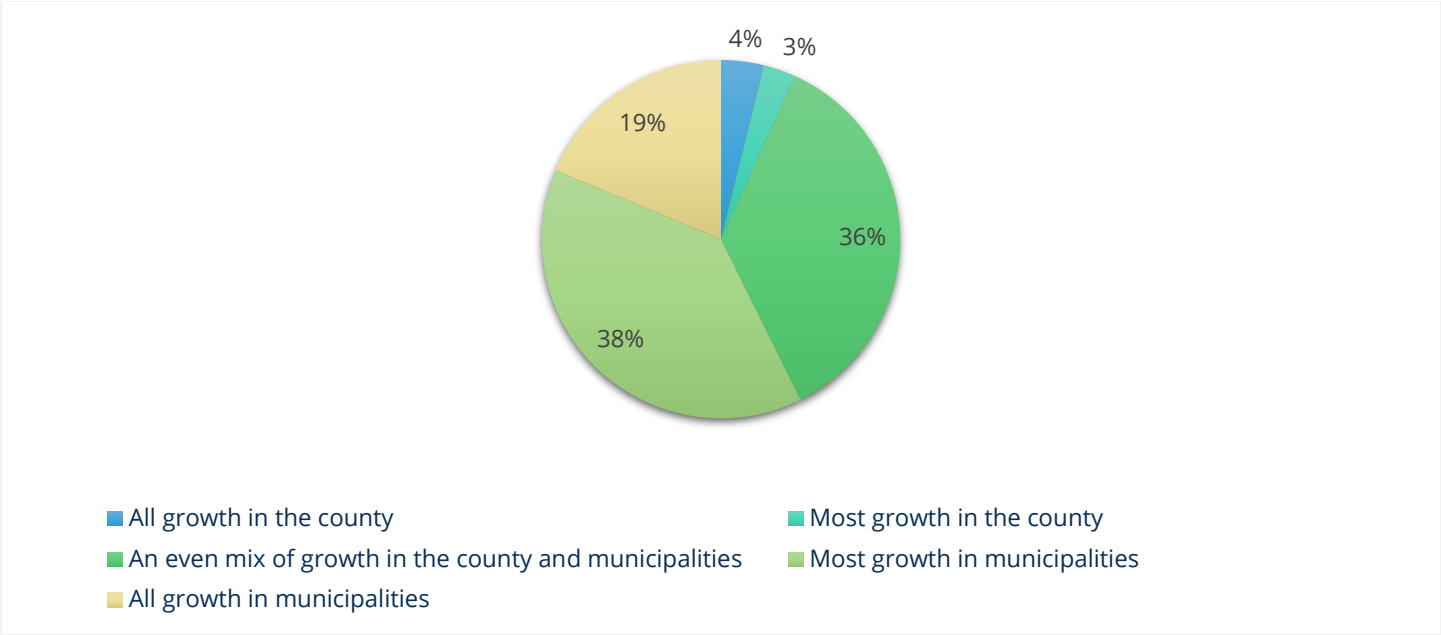




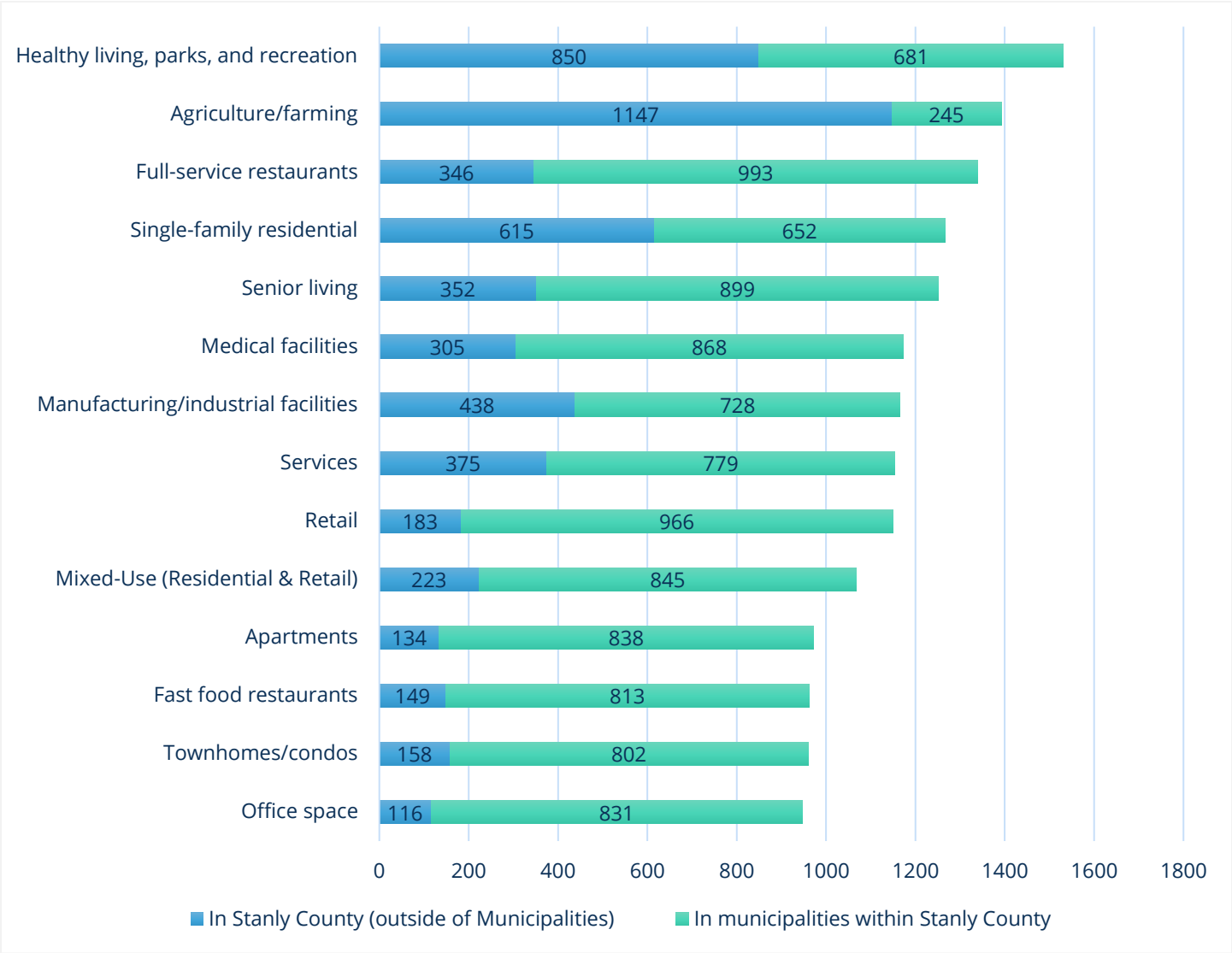
*The places that best illustrate what respondents appreciate most about Stanly County:*



Where respondents want to see future growth occur in Stanly County:



Types of development respondents want to see Stanly County encourage, and where:





*Types of development respondents want Stanly County to prioritize:*

Rank	Development Type
1	Agriculture/farming
2	Healthy living, parks, and recreation
3	Full-service restaurants
4	Medical facilities
5	Senior living
6	Retail
7	Single family residential
8	Services
9	Manufacturing/industrial facilities
10	Apartments
11	Mixed-Use (Residential & Retail)
12	Fast food restaurants
13	Townhomes/condos
14	Office space

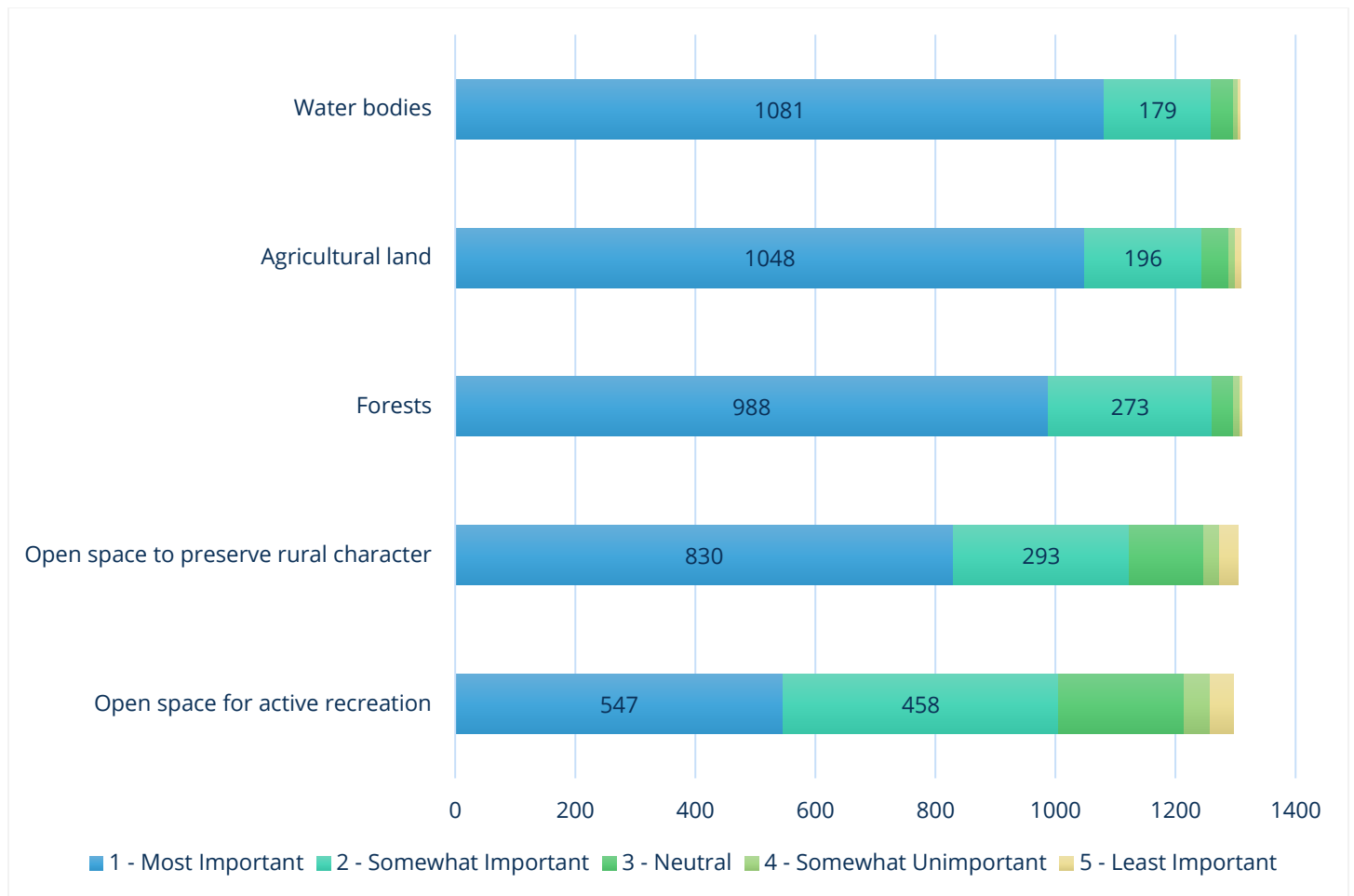
*Business sectors respondents feel are most important to Stanly County's future economic vitality:*

Average Ranking (1 – highest; 8 – lowest)	Sector
2.269	Agriculture/forestry
3.060	Healthcare
4.002	Manufacturing
4.345	Retail
4.349	Services
5.215	Professional offices
5.409	Tourism
7.089	Other

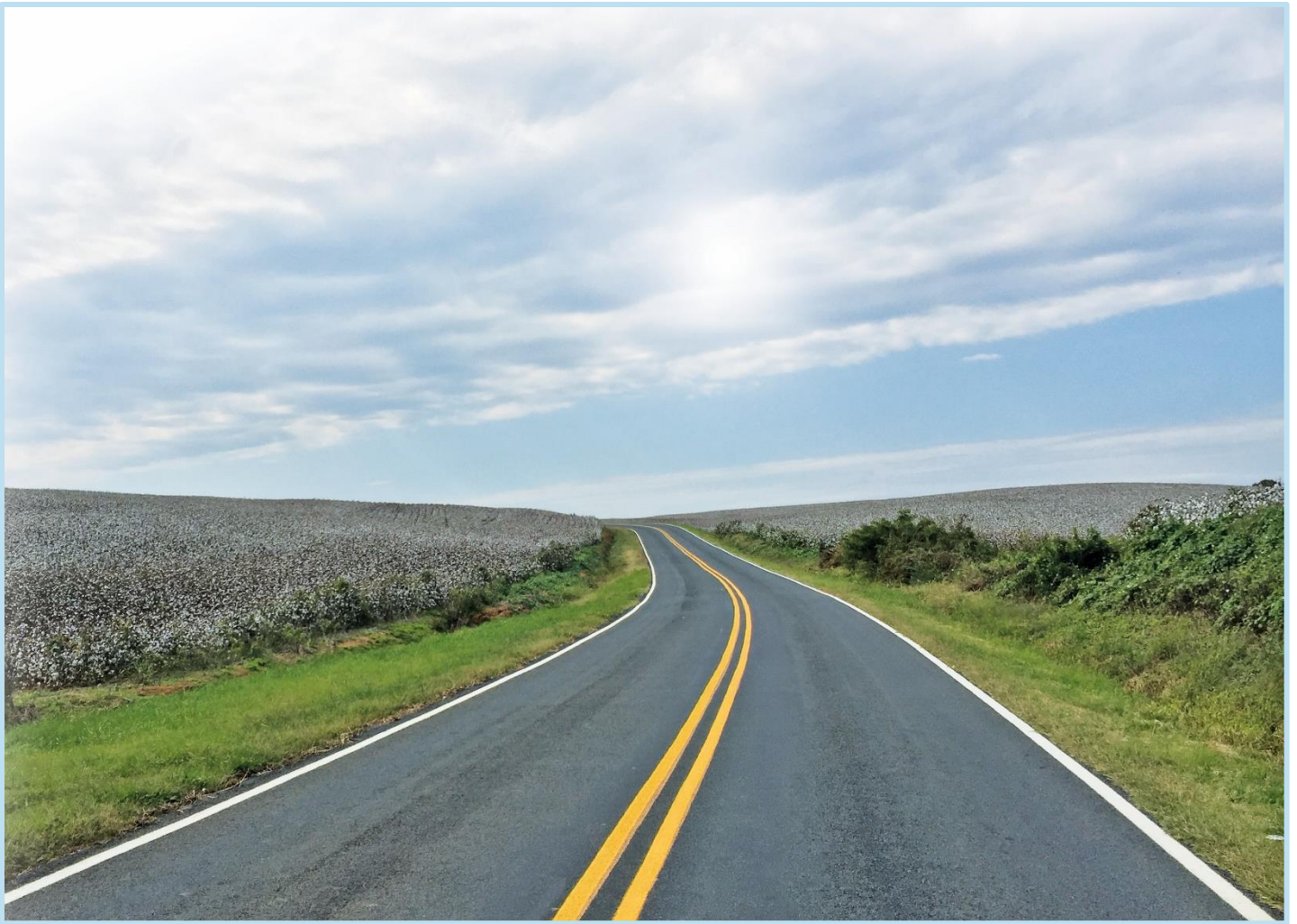
*How respondents want to see Stanly County prioritize future infrastructure investments:*

Average Ranking (1 – highest; 5 – lowest)	Infrastructure Type
1.775	K-12 schools capital needs
2.435	Broadband/Internet access
2.825	Water and sewer
3.059	Parks and recreation
4.689	Other

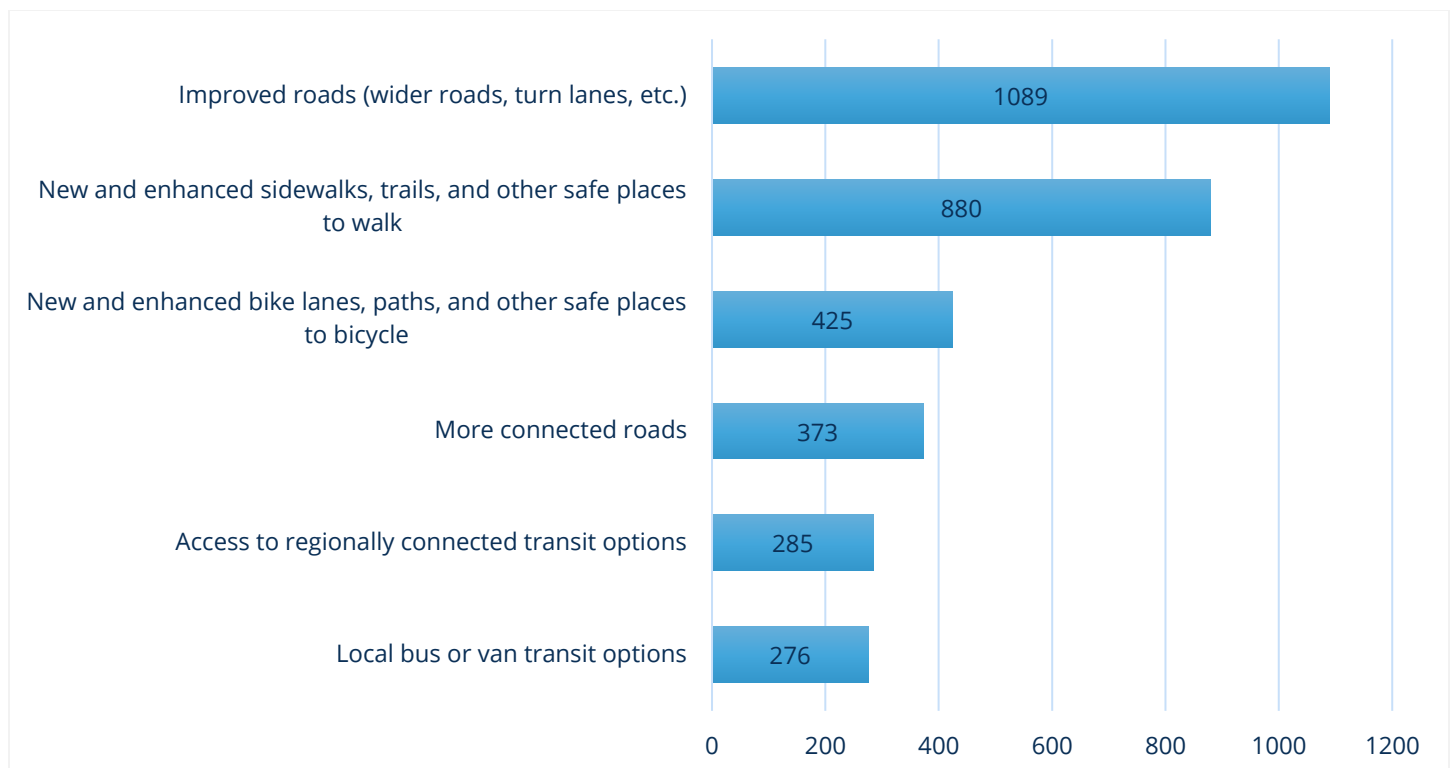
*Natural resources respondents feel are important to conserve (1 – most important; 5 – least):*







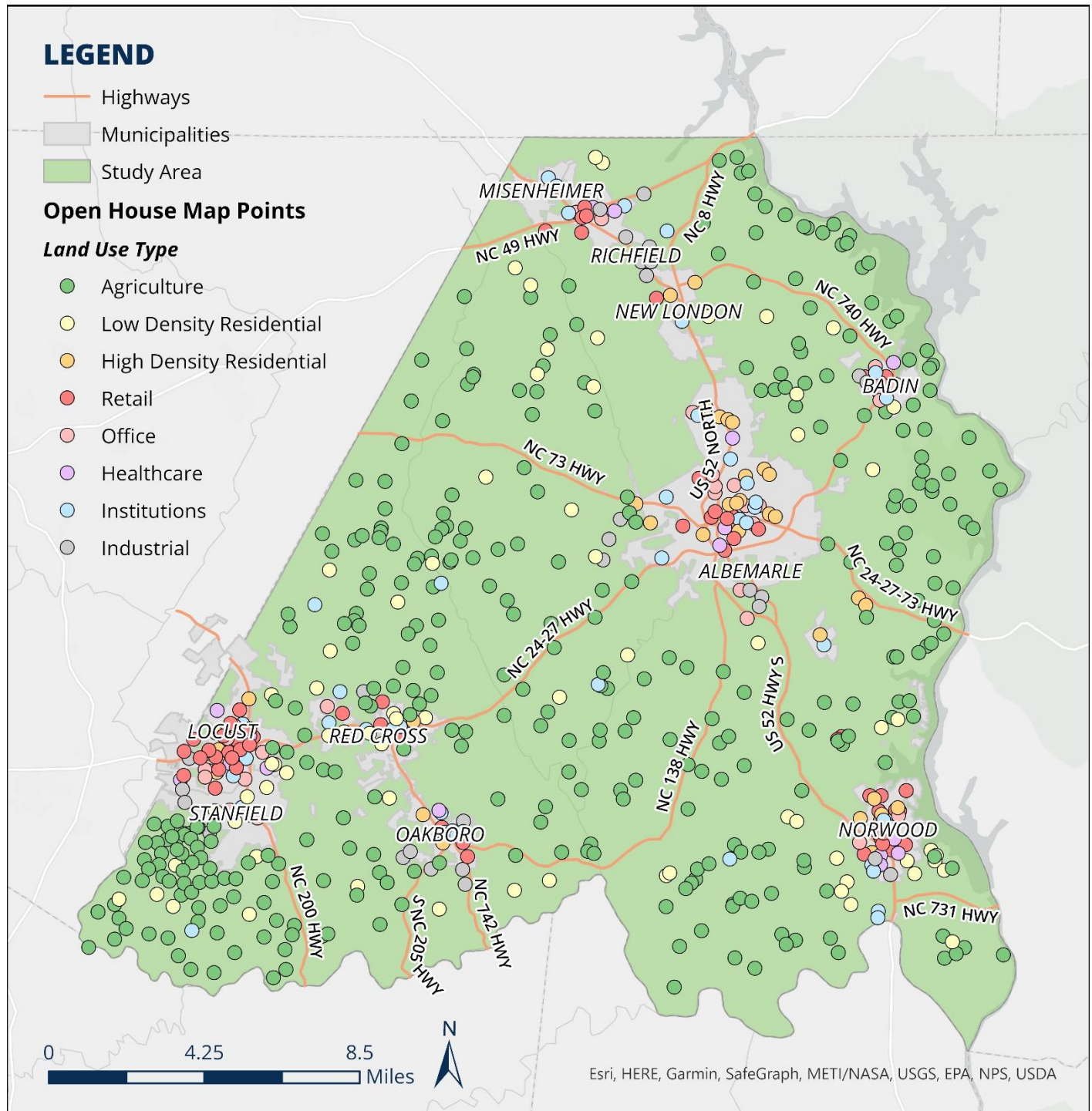
*Top three transportation features respondents feel are most important for Stanly County:*



### Where respondents want to see development and preservation in Stanly County:

Through the interactive mapping activity at the community open houses, participants also provided input about exactly where they wanted to see certain types of development and preservation occur in the county over the next 20 years. Some disagreement arose about whether to concentrate growth along the county's transportation corridors; some participants stressed the importance of prioritizing growth where infrastructure already exists, while others expressed concerns about how growth along corridors could jeopardize rural vistas. In general, however, participants wanted to see more intense land uses concentrated in and around the municipalities, with lower density residential uses, agriculture, recreation, and open space preserved in the county's jurisdiction.

### Community Open House Map Inputs





## Community Vision & Guiding Principles

The Steering Committee was enlisted to distill community feedback into the six policy areas and develop guiding principles for each area as well as a community vision. Steering Committee members each proposed one vision statement describing how they envision Stanly County in 20 years' time and brainstormed policy objectives for each plan policy area. The planning team integrated these suggestions with input from the community survey and open houses to create the final vision statement and principles for the plan.

The vision statement is designed to be a broad, high-level description of the community's shared vision for Stanly's future. The guiding principles further support the overarching vision by clarifying the community's aspirations for each policy topic. The final policy recommendations are categorized according to these topics, and the recommendations in each category are intended to support both the guiding principle specific to that policy topic as well as the broader vision statement for the plan.

**“Stanly County is a thriving community where our residents enjoy a rural lifestyle alongside access to the best opportunities, amenities, and resources North Carolina has to offer. We provide a high quality of life to current and future generations by maintaining a flourishing local economy, protecting our rural character and natural resources, and promoting focused and sustainable growth.”**



In order to achieve this vision, Stanly County will:



### **Land Use**

Support a mix of land uses and development types to promote prosperity and vitality for all, protect rural culture, and leverage and preserve the beauty and utility of our water, air, and land.



### **Economic Development**

Promote the needs of small businesses and agribusiness, preserve the potential for industrial growth and development, and attract and retain employment opportunities that allow residents to live, work, and prosper in Stanly County by capitalizing on existing investments, new technology, and training opportunities while diversifying the economic base.



### **Transportation & Mobility**

Support safe pedestrian, bicycle, passenger, and freight transportation in Stanly County to allow for ease of movement and access to important destinations to fulfill daily needs within and outside the county.





### **Infrastructure & Facilities**

Plan for the robust and timely development of public facilities and infrastructure to strategically meet the needs of Stanly County's residents and businesses, with an emphasis on sustainability, innovation, and partnerships.



### **Community Health & Safety**

Invest in facilities, infrastructure, partnerships, and programming for all to support active living, access to healthy foods, preventative medicine, and responsive public safety, fire, and emergency medical services.



### **Parks, Recreation, & Natural Resources**

Maintain Stanly County's identity as a destination for stellar recreation, open space, and natural amenities by collaborating to develop future recreational programming and infrastructure, maintaining and preserving natural resources, and promoting and celebrating our natural assets.



## Chapter 4: Future Land Use





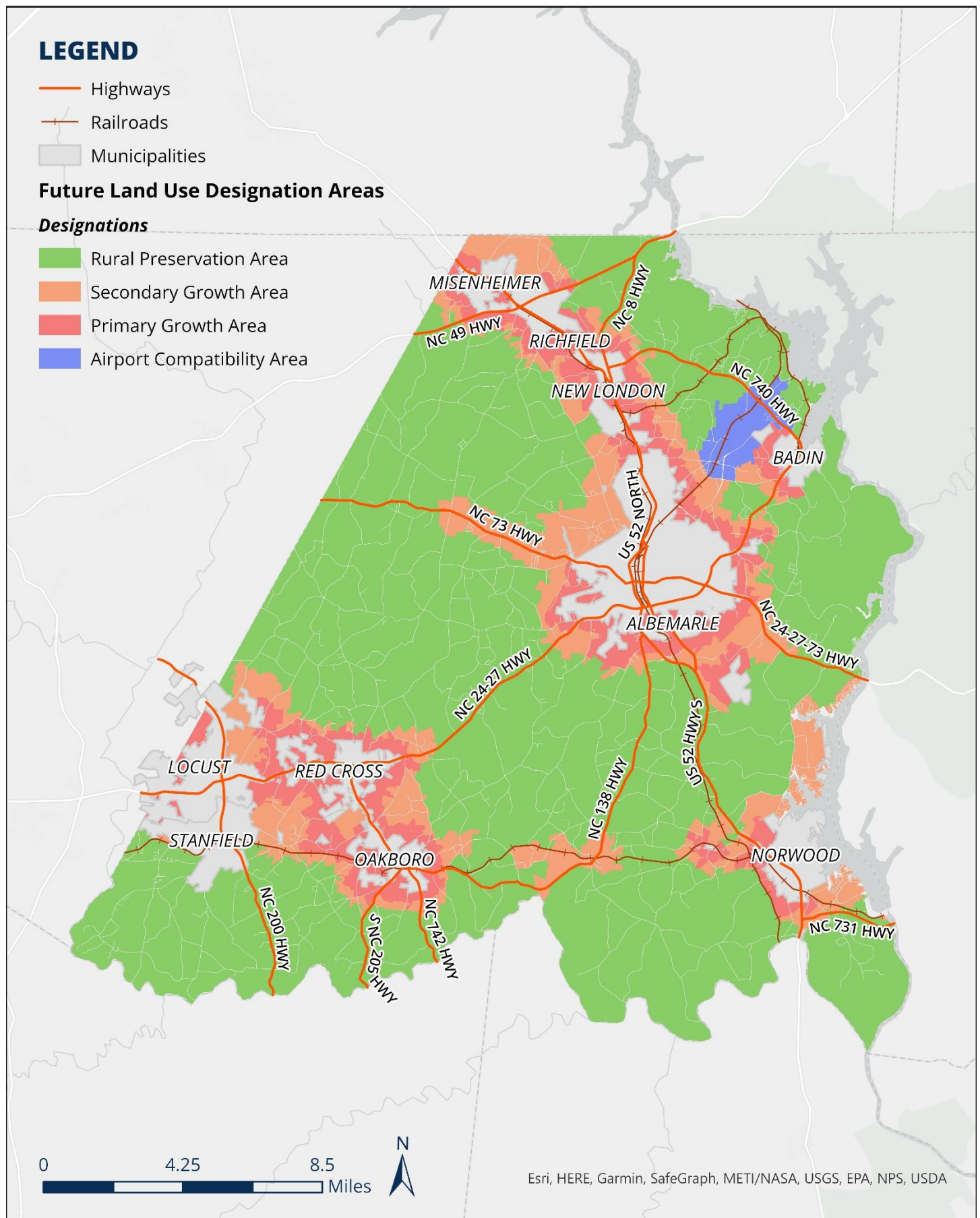
## CHAPTER 4: FUTURE LAND USE

To realize the community's vision for the future of Stanly County, the planning team developed two Future Land Use Maps that can be used in tandem to provide a framework for future development. The first is a map of Future Land Use Designation Areas that provides broad recommendations for where to concentrate higher density development and where to emphasize preservation and low intensity land uses. The second is a map of Community Types aimed at approximating the types of specific land uses that are best suited to each Designation Area.

### FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION AREAS

The Future Land Use Designation Areas were developed to strategically guide future growth and development while ensuring the protection of critical farmlands, soils, and rural character throughout the county. The community expressed a strong desire to see high density residential and commercial development kept in and around municipalities, especially where supportive infrastructure already exists. To realize this vision, four designation areas were developed: Rural Preservation, Secondary Growth, Primary Growth, and Airport Compatibility.

To select the Primary and Secondary Growth areas, the planning team first created ¼-mile and ½-mile buffer zones (corresponding to Primary and Secondary Growth areas, respectively) around each of the County's municipalities. From these buffer zones, the planning team then consulted the locations of existing and planned transportation, water, and sewer infrastructure and removed growth areas where all three types of supportive infrastructure are not currently present or planned to be present within the planning horizon of this plan. Some growth areas were modified slightly to account for feedback from Steering Committee members and existing municipal land use plans. The remainder of the county was designated as a Rural Preservation area, with the Stanly County airport facilities and ¼-mile of surrounding land identified as an Airport Compatibility area.





## COMMUNITY TYPES

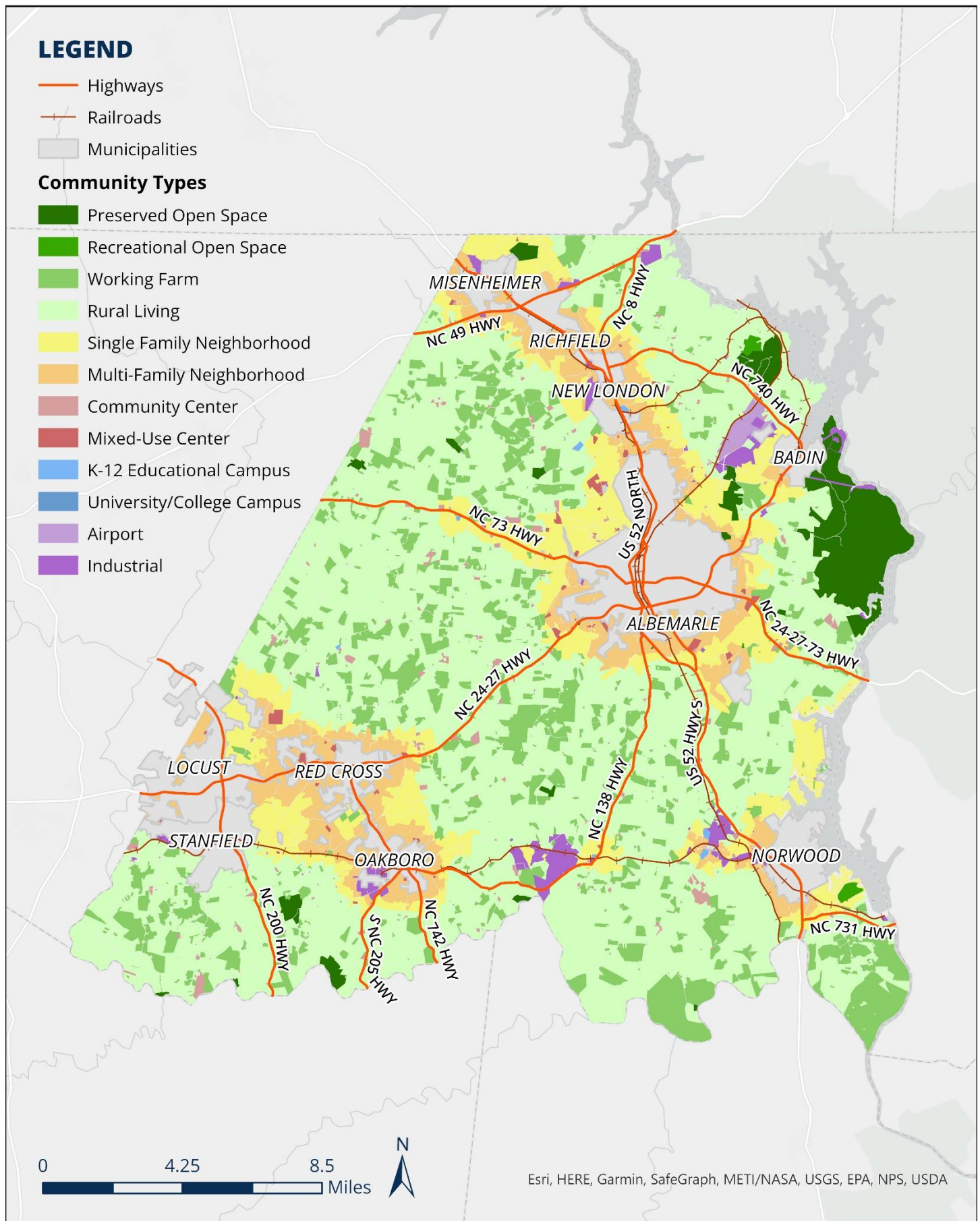
The Community Types were developed specifically for Stanly County based on public input, guidance from the Steering Committee and County Staff, current County zoning, the County's last land use plan, and future land use projections based on the Metrolina CommunityViz Model (MCM). The MCM predicts future population growth, employment, and land use patterns based on existing trends, plans, and ordinances.

<b>Preserved open space</b>	Land dedicated to permanent conservation by legal means. These areas may be preserved because of their outstanding natural beauty, or because they serve environmental stewardship or wildlife management purposes. The areas are typically undisturbed or undeveloped and have been protected from development by public, private, or non-profit organizations.
<b>Recreational open space</b>	Land dedicated for active and passive recreation uses. These areas are intended to be publicly accessible and include parks, sports complexes, and athletic fields.
<b>Working farm</b>	Land actively used for agriculture or forestry activities, including cultivated farmland, timber harvest, livestock, and woodlands. These areas may also support primary residences and any out-buildings associated with activities on the working farm.
<b>Rural living</b>	Land characterized by large lots, abundant open space, and a high degree of separation between buildings. Large acreage, rural family homes, and "hobby farms" are scattered throughout the countryside and often integrated into the landscape. The lot size and distance between dwelling units decrease with greater development densities. Minor subdivisions of 4 or fewer lots are allowed; major subdivisions are discouraged, except in the case of conservation subdivisions, which cluster development and leave large areas for permanent open space, agriculture, and rural vistas. <b>Recommended minimum lot size:</b> 5 acres.
<b>Single Family Neighborhood</b>	Land generally formed as subdivisions or communities, which consist almost entirely of single-family detached residential types, with a relatively uniform housing type and density throughout. These range from large-lot, low-density single-family homes to denser formats of smaller single-family detached homes to manufactured homes. Many neighborhoods 'borrow' open space from adjacent rural or natural settings. Blocks are typically large, and streets are rural or suburban in character. Often found near community centers, which helps provide the consumers and employees needed to support these businesses. <b>Recommended minimum lot size:</b> 15,000 sq. ft. if water and sewer are available or will be made available within 12 months (Secondary Growth Areas), or 7,500 sq. ft. (Primary Growth Areas).
<b>Multi-Family Neighborhood</b>	Land generally formed as communities or complexes, with a relatively uniform housing type and density throughout. They support higher density development than Single Family Neighborhoods and may support condominiums, apartments, or senior living. Often found near mixed-use centers, which helps provide the consumers and employees needed to support these businesses. <b>Recommended minimum lot size:</b> 3,500 sq. ft.

<b>Community Center</b>	Land that satisfies daily needs for surrounding rural neighborhoods. Small nodes of commercial activity — gas stations, convenience stores, restaurants, and some community services — are concentrated at rural crossroads to serve nearby and more distant communities.
<b>Mixed-Use Center</b>	Land supporting the daily needs of surrounding residential neighborhoods. They typically locate near high-volume roads and key intersections and are primarily designed to be accessed by automobile, but access management best practices can be implemented to improve access for pedestrians, cyclists, and other road users. Common types include retail, civic centers, community services, and other activities meant to serve broader economic, entertainment, and community needs. Buildings in the core of a mixed-use center may stand three or more stories. Residential units or office space may be found above storefronts.
<b>K-12 Educational Campus</b>	A public, private, or charter school that serves students in kindergarten through twelfth grade (including elementary, middle and high schools). Day care centers and nurseries are not considered part of an educational campus.
<b>University/College Campus</b>	A university, college, or trade school campus, including residence halls, academic buildings, and other employment uses needed to support an institution for higher education. Building uses and intensities on campus vary widely based on the school's mission and available space, topography, etc.
<b>Airport</b>	Land that supports commercial or general aviation air traffic into and out of Stanly County. An airport may include one or more runways, terminals, taxiways, jet fuel and storage facilities, or paved aircraft parking areas. Complimentary uses (e.g., rental car facilities, hotels, restaurants, long-term parking lots) may surround an airport. Restrictions on use, building or structure placement, and maximum height are enforced in designated runway airspace protection areas.
<b>Industrial</b>	Land supporting manufacturing and production uses, including assembly and processing, regional warehousing and distribution, bulk storage, utilities, medical research, and assembly operations. These areas are found near major transportation corridors (i.e., highway or rail) and are generally buffered from surrounding development by transitional uses or landscaped areas that shield the view of structures, loading docks, or outdoor storage from adjacent properties. Clusters of uses that support or serve one another are often encouraged to locate in the same industrial center. More intense industrial uses may require larger sites because activities are not confined entirely to buildings.

Certain Community Types correlate to specific Designation Areas on the Future Land Use Maps, while other Types are allowable in all Designation Areas. For example, industrial and educational land uses are generally allowed in all Designation Areas. Commercial uses are encouraged to develop in a context-sensitive manner; higher density Mixed-Use Centers correspond to Primary Growth areas, while Community Centers should be encouraged in Secondary Growth and Rural Preservation areas to allow for a transition between higher and lower densities. Similarly, Multi-Family Neighborhoods correspond only to Primary Growth areas, while Single Family Neighborhoods should be allowed in both Primary and Secondary Growth areas and Rural Living should be prioritized in Rural Preservation areas. Open space designations and Working Farms should be permitted across several Designation Areas depending on context but are generally prioritized within Rural Preservation areas to facilitate the preservation of rural vistas and critical natural resources. For more information about how Community Types relate to the existing Stanly County Zoning Ordinance, see Appendix B.









## **Chapter 5: Policy Recommendations & Strategies**



## CHAPTER 5: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS & STRATEGIES

Implementation of the land use plan will require additional actions that update policies and practices to better align the status quo with community aspirations. The policy recommendations and strategies included herein provide a mix of policy guidance and recommended steps required to realize the future land use map and set a course to becoming the Stanly County envisioned for 2040.

### LAND USE

#### 1. Preserve rural character through coordinated, well-designed residential growth.

1.1. Amend the zoning ordinance to codify recommendations for the Rural Preservation area of the future land use map to support larger minimum lot sizes for single family residential and encourage Conservation Subdivisions.

Rural character and farmland preservation emerged as top priorities in the planning process. Specifically, stakeholders wished to protect existing farms from encroachment, preserve the county's most productive agricultural soils, reduce conflicts between residential and farm related uses, maintain green buffers along public road frontages, and remain intentional about how to use the limited supply of undeveloped land.

In rural preservation areas, major subdivisions should be minimized and their impacts mitigated through conservation design principles. Conservation Subdivisions have been used in communities to preserve rural and agricultural features, allowing development to cluster while preserving the valuable natural and economic features of the rural landscape.



*These sketches show how a predevelopment landscape (left) typically changes with conventional suburban two-acre zoning (center) and how that contrasts with a more compact development pattern (right) utilizing conservation design principles.*

*Source: Rural By Design, Randall Arendt, 2015*

1.2. Create design guidelines for Conservation Subdivisions that demonstrate how residential growth can be incorporated while avoiding or mitigating impacts to the rural landscape. Key concepts include:

- Open space requirements that exceed underlying districts (>50%).
- Clustering development away from natural features and views from adjoining roadways.
- Protecting water quality, existing farmland, and/or other natural features.
- Facilitating permanent preservation of protected open space through administration of protected areas by HOAs, land trusts, or agricultural district programs.

1.3. Leverage conditional zoning to incentivize Conservation Subdivisions through flexible lot sizes, density bonuses, and other incentives.

1.4. Discourage rezoning from agriculture and rural residential districts to higher intensity residential uses unless rezoning requires a Conservation Subdivision.

## 2. Promote quality development compatible with local character.

2.1. Consider policies to improve type of open space in new developments, require connections to adjacent amenities, and increase amount of open space required.

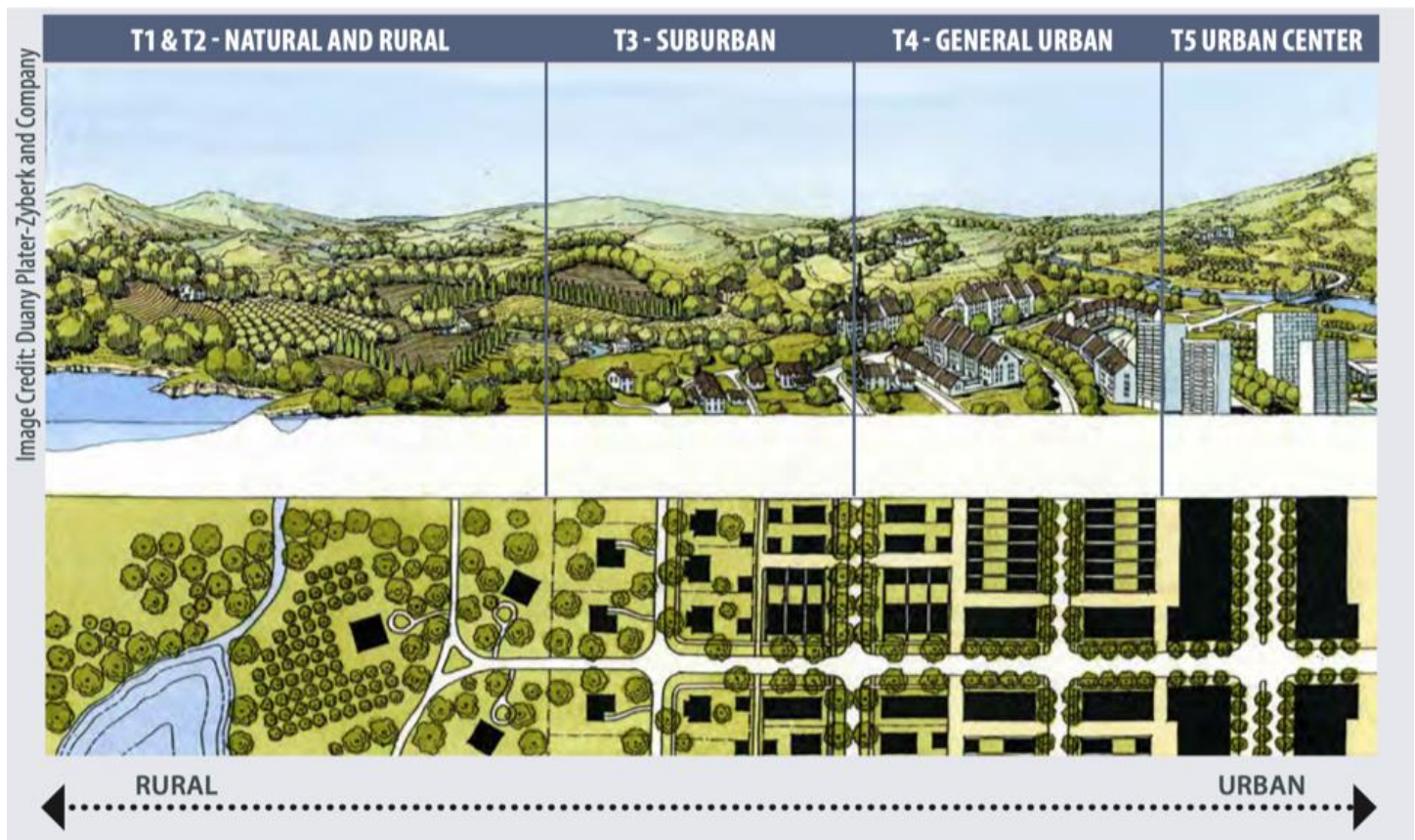
2.2. Promote low impact development techniques to generate less runoff and reduce stormwater maintenance costs.

2.3. For developments within ½-mile of a municipal boundary, support projects consistent with adopted municipal plans and/or consistent with the scale and density of existing neighboring land uses.

## 3. Preserve the rural character of Stanly County outside of municipalities and identified growth areas.

3.1. Continue to incorporate rural compatible primary and accessory uses into the zoning ordinance, such as community gardens, green houses, etc.

3.2. Expand requirements for landscaping to support rural character, including requirements for berms and landscaping along major roadways, landscaping within developments and parking areas, buffers between uses.



Rural to urban transect.

Source: Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company



#### 4. Create and maintain partnerships with municipalities for coordinated growth approaches.

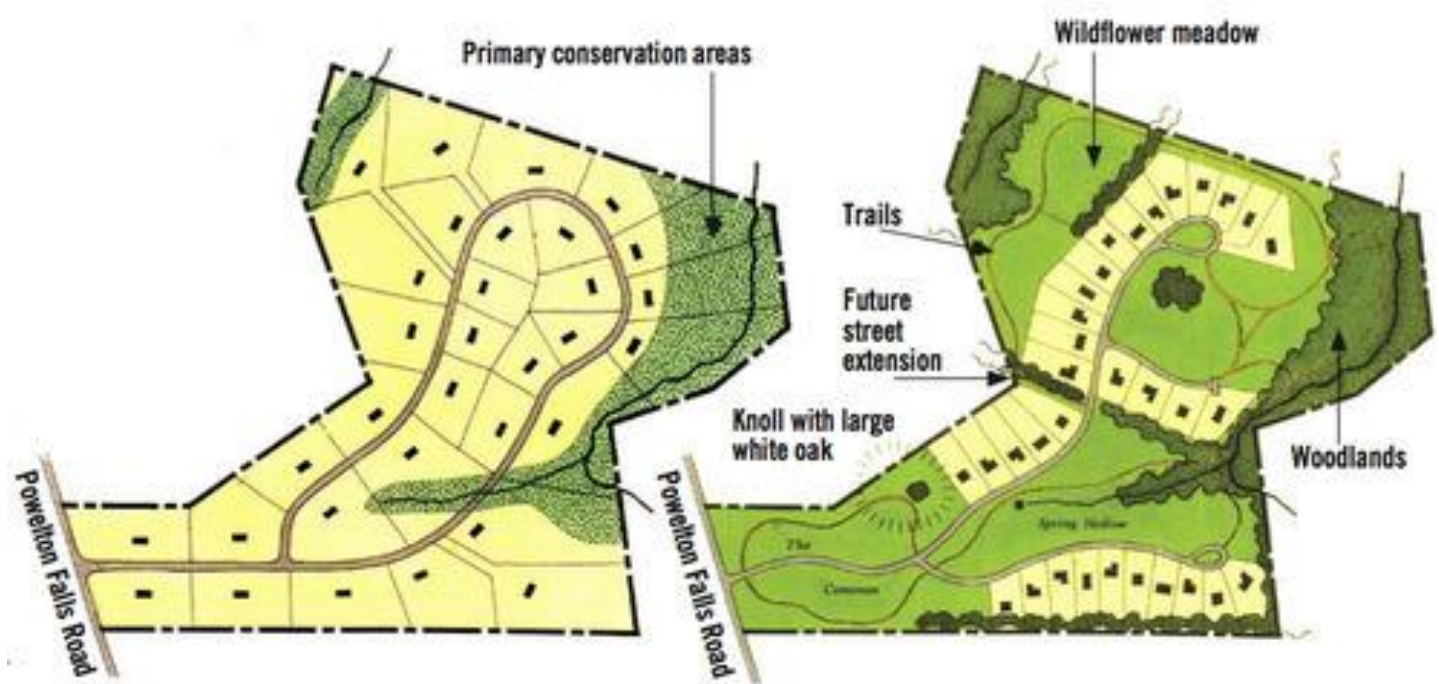
- 4.1. Revisit extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJs) around municipalities to create clarity of jurisdiction and land use requirements for residents, the development community, and government jurisdictions.
- 4.2. Develop a cross-jurisdiction technical review process to encourage coordination and communication about projects meeting determined development thresholds.

#### 5. Ensure a land use planning process that is transparent, fair, open, efficient, and responsive.

- 5.1. Develop materials to support public understanding of land use processes (potential topics include building permits, permitting of day care centers, starting a business, and Rezoning 101).
- 5.2. Conduct customer service surveys to ensure satisfaction of development review and approval process in the vein of continuous improvement.
- 5.3. Require community meetings for projects over a determine threshold prior to planning board and county commission hearings.
- 5.4. Consider alternate methods for communicating about growth and development topics (social media, newsletters, faith communities, and others).

#### 6. Consider life, health, and property safety.

- 6.1. Continue to prohibit development in flood hazard areas designated by the Federal Emergency Management Flood Insurance Rate Map.
- 6.2. Continue administration of Stanly County Watershed Protection Ordinance and evaluate consistency with zoning ordinance.
- 6.3. Coordinate emergency disaster plan and community education program to increase awareness of dangers of natural and human-made emergency events and preparation needed.



*Common subdivision design vs conservation subdivision design.*

*Source: 10 Principles of Conservation Subdivision Design, Bruce Firestone, November 2014*

## 7. Ensure opportunities for residential development to meet local and regional needs.

7.1. Develop density and quality standards for anticipated residential growth, unique to each residential community type outlined on the Future Land Use Map and growth priority area.

7.2. Continue to use conditional zoning to regulate development quality and to mitigate impacts of growth.

7.3. Monitor conditional zoning for recurring conditions. After three years, evaluate and incorporate recurring requests that are permitted by statute into underlying zones.

7.4. Develop administrative systems to track conditional zoning approvals, allowing for map-based inquiries to support responsive customer service and efficiencies in practice.

7.5. Support the use of existing housing stock as affordable housing alternatives through code enforcement, weatherization, and community development rehabilitation programs.

## 8. Promote fiscally responsible sustainable growth consistent with the provision of public facilities and infrastructure.

8.1. Coordinate location of higher density non-residential growth with existing or planned locations of adequate supporting infrastructure (water, wastewater, road network) and consistent with LUP.

8.2. Coordinate with municipalities for focus higher density residential growth within municipalities or in adjacent primary growth areas. Medium density residential growth in the County's jurisdiction to be focused within mixed-use developments at key nodes, within Conservation Subdivisions, or within other Conditional Zoning districts.

8.3. Develop mixed-use standards to create context sensitive growth and walkability in areas of medium intensity development.

8.4. Develop and/or amend existing policy and zoning codes to support lower density development in the Rural Preservation areas.

8.5. Explore adoption of overlay districts within the County Zoning Ordinance to reflect the three levels of growth areas outlined on the Future Land Use Map.

8.6. Address overlaps in policy and protection between the existing Voluntary Agriculture Districts and the Rural Preservation overlay.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### 1. Convey the cultural and financial value of rural culture, agriculture, and the natural beauty of Stanly County to retain and improve quality of life.

#### 1.1. Coordination with Stanly County Cooperative Extension to advance agritourism strategies.

Agritourism includes any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment, or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, ranching, historic, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions. An activity is an agritourism activity whether or not the participant paid to participate in the activity. Support for agritourism can involve training farmers on marketing and business development, installing signage on highways and major arterials to indicate farmland, and providing financial and legislative resources to farmers. For more information, see <https://nc-ana.org/resources>.



Source: Agritourism: Heading Out to the Farm, NC State University, Dee Shore, October 2020

#### 1.2. Encourage projects that have a regional tourism draw to attract and retain business to support the attraction of other economic development in coordination with Stanly County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). Examples include:

- Venues that support hospitality tax
- Blue ways along Rocky River
- Tubing and rafting enterprises
- Morrow Mountain State Park
- Lakes as destinations and sources for commerce, short-term rentals, etc.



## 2. Coordinate infrastructure and policies to support economic vitality.

2.1. Work with County and municipal service providers to ensure the maintenance and proactive expansion of utilities in areas experiencing or targeted for employment growth.

2.2. Work with NCDOT, Rocky River RPO, and SCUSA to ensure adequate levels of service for transportation infrastructure and services that support industrial and business growth areas.

2.3. Coordinate with state and regional partners to promote economic development projects and to strengthen Stanly County's position regionally.

2.4. Coordination with Stanly County Economic Development Commission to identify strategic growth areas for industrial development.

Consider identifying Employment Areas for primary economic development opportunities. Employment Areas facilitate job growth in areas that have access to adequate transportation and other supportive infrastructure, are in close proximity to existing employment and community services and have available land that is suitable for development. Uses encouraged near these centers include, but are not limited to, industrial, warehouse, office, research, utility, tech-flex, and technology. Employment Areas may also include a limited amount of supporting commercial and residential uses. However, these uses should only be situated where not in conflict with existing employment land uses and should not be built in such a way as to preclude the use of those lands most suitable for office or industrial development

2.5. Preservation of land around airport; potential for aviation related growth to support airport.

2.6. Ensure that land use surrounding major business centers (Albemarle Business Center, Badin Business Park, Bradley Industrial Site, Brickyard, etc.) are compatible with future economic growth opportunities.

## 3. Preserve and strengthen agriculture sector jobs and production.

3.1. Minimize conflicts between new residential, commercial, and industrial development and existing farming interests.



Source: Carolina Farm Stewardship Association



3.2. Continue support of small farms through farm-friendly zoning: allowing local markets, produce stands, farm to table institution programs, food processing and distribution centers (food hubs), farmers markets, mobile vendors, and other agri-business markets that benefit local producers.

3.3. Continue to preserve and protect farmland through the use of Voluntary Agricultural Districts and encourage additional farms to participate in the program.

#### 4. Create healthy employment centers.

Healthy employment centers incorporate a range of infrastructure types, land uses, and facilities and services to promote healthy, active lifestyles. Co-locating essential community resources – such as grocery stores, early care programs, and medical services or pharmacies – within walking distance of an employment center allows employees to access several critical daily needs while increasing their daily physical activity and promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors. This concept is especially important in rural communities where sidewalk or bicycle infrastructure may only be concentrated in select areas and many residents depend on automobiles to get around.



Source: Sidewalk Labs

4.1. Encourage opportunities to locate major office or light industrial uses close to walkable mixed-use centers connected through trails or other walkable infrastructure.

Creation of these environments will be critical to maintaining a strong position relative to corporate decision makers that value walkable environments. This may require coordination with municipalities at urban edges.

4.2. Encourage opportunities to develop amenities near existing and planned industrial and business parks (parks, fitness related amenities).

## 5. Support existing businesses.

5.1. Provide clarity on common processes for business expansion and improvement, including signage, parking, landscaping, and thresholds for site improvements.

5.2. Work with Stanly County Economic Development Commission to conduct regular surveys of existing businesses to understand their current challenges, needs and how to maximize assistance.

## 6. Invest in a strong education system to support economic growth.

Oversight of K-12 education at Stanly County Schools primarily falls to the Stanly County School Board. However, county-wide collaboration on programming and capital needs for K-12 education and beyond – including early care programs as well as higher education and vocational training programs – is critical to supporting families and the local and regional economy. Strong collaborative partnerships with education stakeholders ensure pathways to employment for students and recent graduates, facilitating opportunities for students to remain in Stanly County after graduation. A strong education system is also of the utmost importance in recruiting new employees to Stanly County to support major industries, particularly those who have schoolchildren or are looking to start and raise a family.



*Source: Higher Ed Facilities Forum*

6.1. Coordinate with the Stanly County School Board on land use issues including planning for new sites, expanding existing school sites, and decommissioning school sites.

6.2. Continue to maintain strong partnerships between the County Economic Development Commission and the institutions of higher education in Stanly County to coordinate on capital and programming needs and ensure alignment between training programs for current students and employment opportunities for recent graduates.

6.3. Partner with the County Economic Development Commission to create strong communication materials to support families seeking education choices when moving to Stanly County for employment.

6.4. Prioritize the creation of key sites for early care and early child education to support the workforce in Stanly County.

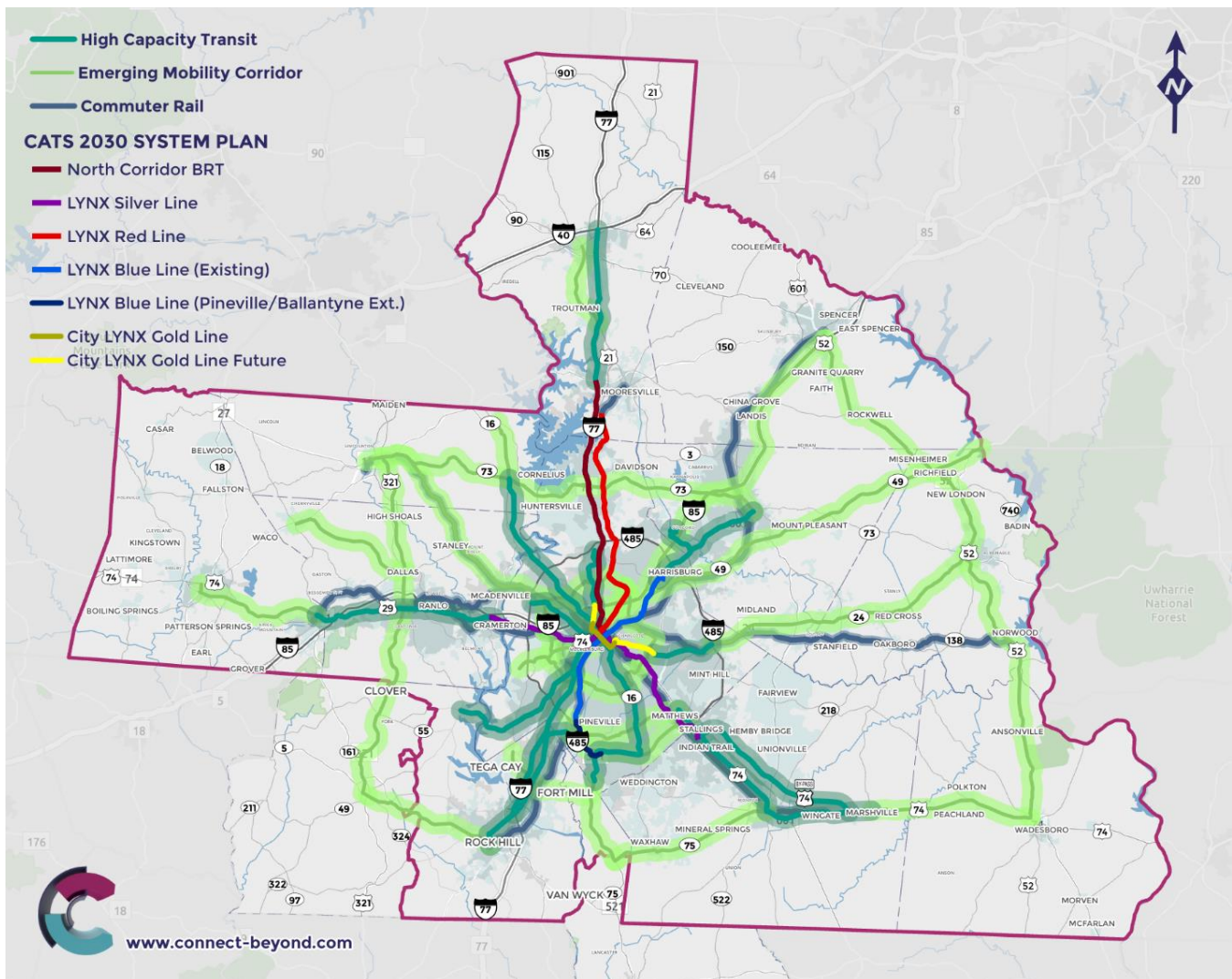


# TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

## 1. Support and engage in regional transportation planning processes.

- 1.1. Engage with NCDOT for bi-annual STIP development.
- 1.2. Support major road improvement projects identified in the STIP and engage community members for feedback in state and regional planning processes.
- 1.3. Engage with RRRPO on regional transportation coordination and planning efforts.
- 1.4. Coordinate with Centralina Regional Council and local employers on participation in the forthcoming regional Transportation Demand Management program.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) complements transportation infrastructure by assessing how people make transportation decisions and helping people use the infrastructure already in place for walking, biking, public transit, and telework. TDM is focused on reducing the negative impacts of driving – including increased traffic congestion, vehicle emissions from idling, and negative health impacts from commuting daily – by capitalizing on existing infrastructure. While TDM strategies can be leveraged by people traveling for any reason, most TDM programs target commuters, since commute traffic often places the most significant burdens on transportation networks. In 2025, Centralina Regional Council will begin to administer a regional TDM program to assist interested employers across the greater Charlotte region in developing commuter choice programs for their employees.



1.5. Coordinate with municipalities, RRRPO, Centralina Regional Council and NCDOT to make strategic mobility investments along Emerging Mobility Corridors (Hwy 24/27, Hwy 49, and Hwy 52).

1.6. Promote transit connectivity through coordination between SCUSA and other local fixed-route and on-demand transit providers (CCTS, Rider Transit, Salisbury Transit, CATS).

## 2. Prioritize active transportation enhancements to promote healthy living and improve accessibility for all.

2.1. Identify hot spots for active transportation needs and prioritize investments accordingly.

In prioritizing investments, the County should look to coordinate with NCDOT and nearby municipalities to focus investments near employment centers and other attractive destinations for County residents, keeping in mind the principles behind Healthy Employment Centers and other incentives for healthy living.



*Sidewalks provide dedicated space intended for use by pedestrians that is safe, comfortable, and accessible to all. Sidewalks are physically separated from the roadway by a curb or unpaved buffer space.*

*Source: Small Town and Rural Design Guide website*

2.2. Work with NCDOT and municipalities to create and implement a county "Complete Streets" policy, reflective of Universal Design best practices, to guide planning efforts on state roads.

2.3. Pursue funding from NCDOT to complete a multi-jurisdictional Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan for the county and lead collaborative planning efforts for active transportation infrastructure.

2.4. Require sidewalks where residential development is within walking distance (up to ½-mile) of schools, parks, and other public facilities to better support healthy and active living.

2.5. Facilitate coordination between municipal Parks & Recreation departments, County planning staff, and Carolina Thread Trail to promote connectivity and collaborative planning of greenway and multi-use trail infrastructure.

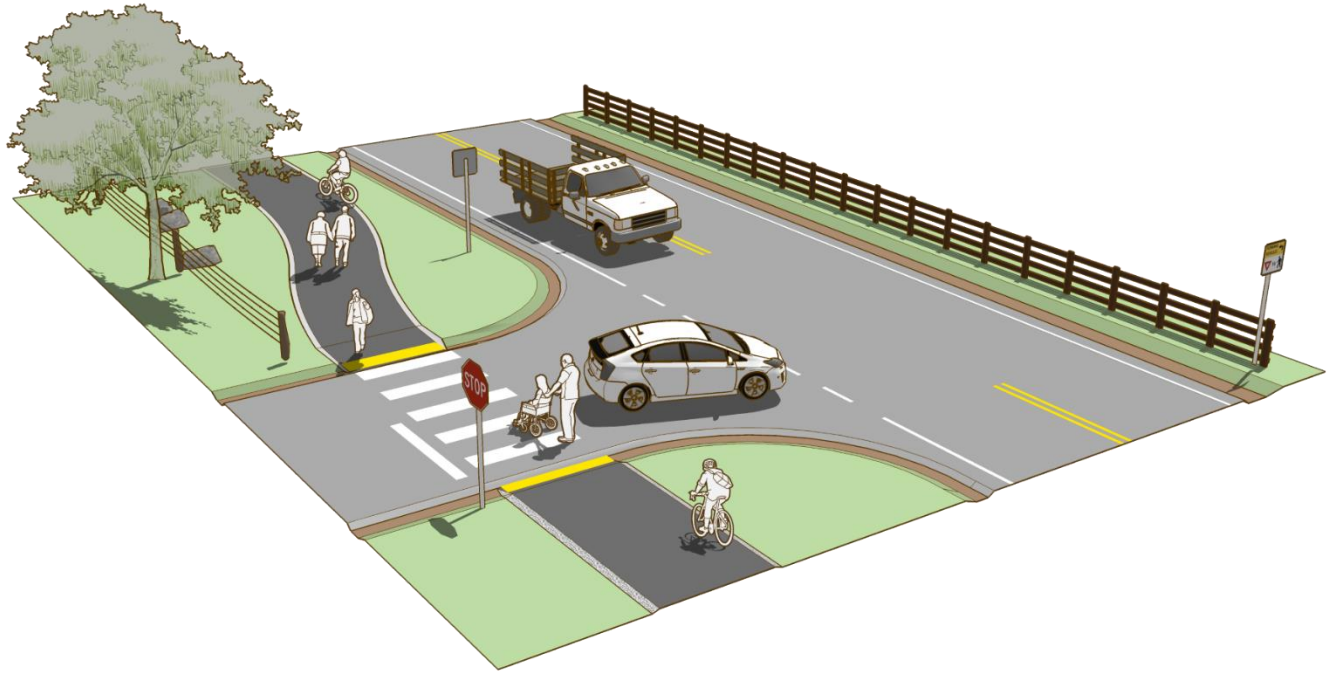




Source: Carolina Thread Trail



In 2016 the FHWA developed the [Small Town & Rural Design Guide](#), which is intended to be a resource for transportation practitioners in small towns and rural communities. The guide applies existing national design guidelines in rural contexts, addresses challenges specific to rural communities, and highlights case studies from small towns and rural areas across the country. FHWA distributes annual funding opportunities through state Departments of Transportation, so Stanly County can collaborate with NCDOT and interested municipalities to identify potential demonstration projects and funding sources.



3. Encourage transportation safety improvements to reduce collisions and promote safe, efficient multimodal travel.

3.2. Assist municipalities with the development of educational materials to promote safe travel behavior among drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, and other road users.

86 – Chapter 5: Policy Recommendations &amp; Strategies





Source: NCDOT

3.3. Promote access to public and publicly accessible spaces through safe, multimodal transportation connections.

3.4. Support safe railway/roadway intersections throughout the county.

3.5. Coordinate municipal funding applications for Safe Routes to School programming.

#### 4. Encourage strategic development of transportation corridors to protect Rural Preservation Areas and viewsheds.

4.1. Prioritize improvements to existing high-capacity corridors rather than construction of new ones.

4.2. Work with NCDOT to explore opportunities for the designation of additional scenic byways.

4.3. Develop access management principles promoting commercial development patterns that limit disruption to free-flowing traffic.

According to [Texas A&M University](#), access management is a term for a set of techniques that control several elements of a street, such as the spacing, design, and operation of driveways, turns, medians, and intersections. It serves as an effective congestion reduction technique as it controls where vehicles may enter and leave the road. Access management is a design approach to:

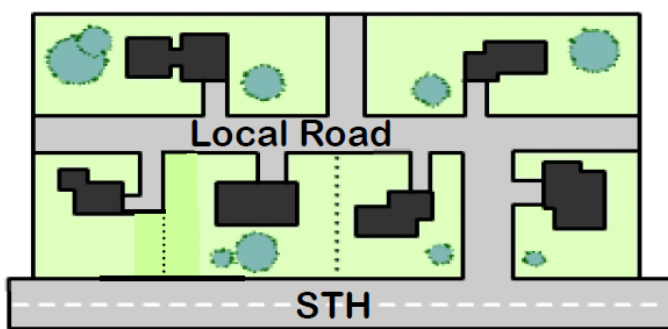
- Improve safety
- Reduce congestion and increase traffic flow
- Preserve public roadway investment

Adequate access management improves safety on roads by limiting the number of locations where cars can slow down or speed up to exit or enter the road. Large variations in speed adversely affect safety and

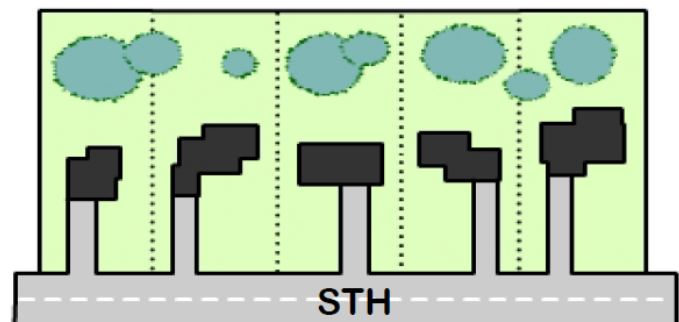
increase crashes when compared to a road with smooth traffic flow. Access management strategies, on the other hand, create safe and efficient street networks that allow drivers to reach their destinations while eliminating headaches by reducing the number of slowdowns they experience. Access management strategies include:

- Reducing the number of driveways
- Controlling turning movements through raised medians, turn bays, deceleration lanes, and/or spacing regulations
- Requiring the use of frontage roads, which can limit driveway access to major arterials
- Preserving rural character through the use of vegetative buffers between frontage roads and major arterials
- Promoting walkable & bikeable commercial and mixed-use development
- Ensuring connectivity of nearby land uses

### **PROMOTE**



### **AVOID**



*Access management can be leveraged to not only improve traffic safety, but also to enhance and preserve rural character.*

*Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation*

4.4. Improve the appearance and quality of development along major transportation gateways through appropriate regulations (such as a Highway Corridor Overlay District).

4.5. Identify new collector and thoroughfare street alignments within Primary and Secondary Growth Areas (refer to Future Land Use Designation Areas).

## **5. Strategically plan for a transportation system that supports the County's economic development priorities.**

5.1. Promote public transportation, alternate modes of transportation, and encourage carpooling and park-and-ride participation to aid commuters and journey to work within and outside of Stanly County.

5.2. Continue to enforce the Airport Overlay District to promote airport-compatible development patterns near the Stanly County Airport (low density residential development, rural home occupations, small scale retail and service uses, civic & institutional uses).



# INFRASTRUCTURE & FACILITIES

## 1. Pursue a collaborative, multi-jurisdictional approach to utility and infrastructure planning in Stanly County.

1.1. Promote county-wide planning and coordination with municipalities regarding water, sewer, solid waste, and broadband internet.

1.2. Promote the consolidation of private and municipal utility systems into a countywide utility provider under the Stanly County Utilities Department and a municipal utility based within the City of Albemarle.

1.3. Regularly revise fee structure, connection, and reimbursement policies to ensure adequate levels of utility service.

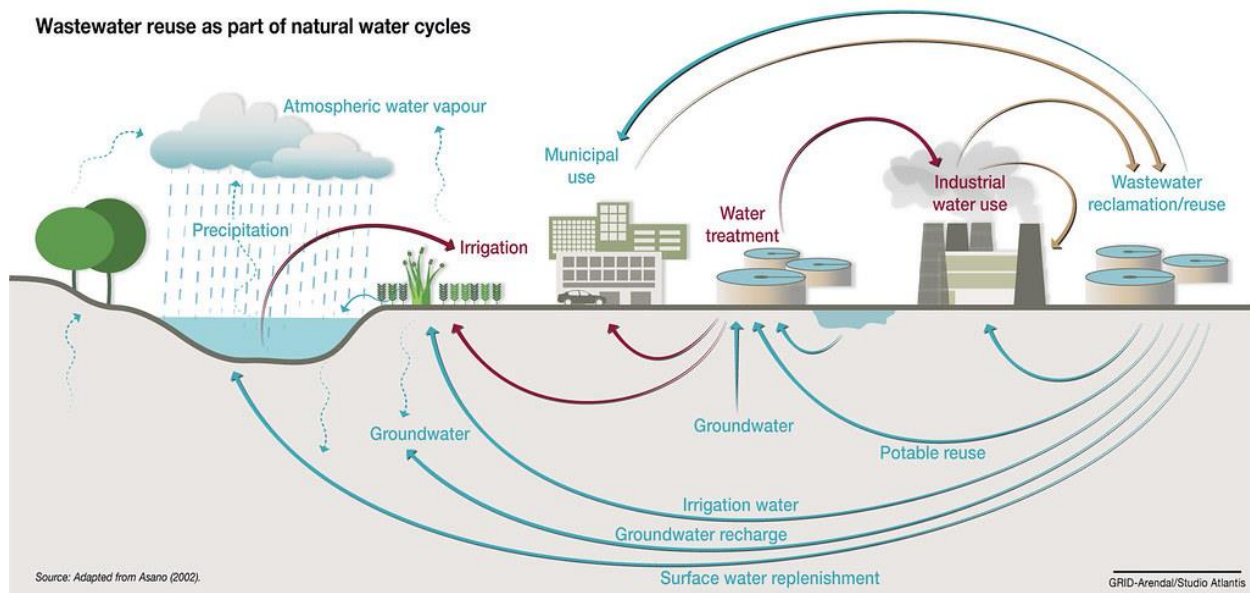
## 2. Align infrastructure development with established land use and preservation priorities.

2.1. Develop utilities policies, systems and services that facilitate compact development and support economic development in defined areas.

2.2. Limit utility extensions or upgrades in Rural Preservation Areas.

2.3. In instances where utility extensions into Rural Preservation Areas are needed to increase system capacity or redundancy, consider utilizing land use strategies such as conditional zoning or increased minimum lot sizes to limit development intensity.

As described in Chapter 2: Existing Conditions, the western portion of Stanly County desperately needs additional redundancy in the water system to ensure consistent water availability and quality. While a new water line is proposed to extend through the Millingport area, passing through much of the County's prime farmland soils, this need not mean that extensive residential or commercial development follows in this area. The County should leverage the County Zoning Ordinance and the tools within to ensure that this and other critical capital infrastructure improvements do not automatically initiate extensive development or conversion of critical farmland.



Source: Adapted from Asano (2002)

2.4. Prioritize infrastructure extensions that increase the utilization of existing systems and connections, while ensuring system redundancy and mitigating hazards.

2.5. Utilize existing public rights-of-way for utility purposes in an effort to reduce the need for new rights-of-way and easements in the future.

### 3. Prioritize an approach to water and sewer infrastructure development that promotes preservation of natural resources and rural character while meeting demand of current and future residents.

3.1. Fund and construct utility capital improvements identified in the Stanly Utilities CIP for water and sewer.

3.2. When evaluating new development proposals, consider the potential demand implications on existing and planned water and sewer capacity, the relationship to existing and future service areas, and commitments for current and future capacity allocations.

3.3. Require new development to demonstrate an ability to provide adequate water supply and wastewater treatment indefinitely for all proposed uses.

3.4. Discourage community well and septic systems to avoid detrimental long-term environmental impacts.

3.5. Develop policies and incentives to promote water conservation, including improvements to infrastructure, installation of low-flow devices, implementation of water purchase rates that reward minimization of water use, and public education on benefits of water conservation.

3.6. Require new developments over a certain size to include water reuse systems.

3.7. Require or incentivize Low Impact Development techniques and Green Stormwater Infrastructure in and near higher density development areas.



*Traditional development versus low impact development patterns on a residential subdivision, where each site has 110 lots. Parcels are clustered to preserve valuable existing trees and reduce impervious areas, cut and fill are significantly reduced, and relatively small-scale, BMPs are distributed throughout the site to manage rainfall and runoff where it is generated.*

*Source: City of Grants Pass, OR Stormwater Management Manual, 2018*



The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines Low Impact Development (LID) as “systems and practices that use or mimic natural processes that result in the infiltration, evapotranspiration or use of stormwater in order to protect water quality and associated aquatic habitat.” Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) refers to the system of natural areas and manmade landscaping that provide habitat, flood protection, cleaner air, and cleaner water. These practices aim to preserve, restore, and create green space using soils, native vegetation, and rainwater harvest techniques. More information and recommended strategies can be accessed at [www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure](http://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure).

#### **4. Coordinate planning and development of additional infrastructure in Stanly County to support economic development, health, and community safety priorities.**

- 4.1. Promote and explore grant funds and partnerships to facilitate the expansion of broadband internet service to high-priority areas within the county.
- 4.2. Only allow the development of alternative energy systems that minimize adverse impacts to prime agricultural lands and designated watershed areas.
- 4.3. Encourage the permitting by right of infrastructure improvements which promote economic growth.

# COMMUNITY HEALTH & SAFETY

## 1. Pursue built environments that promote and cultivate healthy lifestyles.

1.1. Prioritize multimodal transportation network improvements that promote connectivity to healthcare, healthy food, and parks.

1.2. Prioritize infrastructure investments in identified Wellness Priority Areas (communities experiencing exacerbated health impacts, lacking safe access to healthy food, healthcare, or parks and recreation).

1.3. Improve efforts to integrate services, facilities, and amenities into Primary and Secondary Growth Areas to enhance efforts to improve mental health.

1.4. Encourage neighborhood design that promotes active living for seniors.

A 2005 [study](#) published by the National Library of Medicine explored the impact of neighborhood design on activity levels among older adults. The study found that availability of nearby shopping and services provided older adults with opportunities to walk to meet others and stay active without depending on a vehicle, and that the perception of neighborhood attractiveness (through presence of gardens, building and street design) influenced older adults' desire to be active. It also noted that, in areas where older adults have concerns about traffic safety and pedestrian infrastructure is inadequate or inaccessible, walking and active lifestyles are limited. The study emphasized that public transportation is also a critical necessity for seniors who need to travel beyond their immediate community to access medical services and other assistance but aren't able to use a car to do so.



Source: Senior Living

1.5. Consider developing a "Healthy Community Checklist" to provide guidance for new development that ensures prioritization of healthy and active living for community members of all ages.



## 2. Improve access to amenities and resources that facilitate healthy living.

- 2.1. Implement a healthy corner store initiative.
- 2.2. Encourage healthy food outlets to accept SNAP, WIC, and other nutrition benefits.
- 2.3. Encourage expansion of mobile healthcare services and telehealth services.
- 2.4. Expand preventative and rehabilitative mental health services.
- 2.5. Build community support for better healthy food access through community education initiatives and programs centering on nutrition, gardening, and healthy cooking.



- 2.6. Broaden interest and skills in small-scale production and local consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- 2.7. Coordinate with Atrium Health and other healthcare providers in nearby jurisdictions to facilitate access to specialty healthcare services, both within Stanly County and through transportation improvements to other locales.

## 3. Provide health services and programming specific to current and future community needs.

- 3.1. Utilize community health needs assessments and other community-based data and inputs to inform health initiatives.
- 3.2. Promote cross-departmental collaboration between the Stanly County GIS and Health Departments to leverage geospatial technologies and data to support health initiatives.
- 3.3. Based on identified priority areas for health services, investigate opportunities to implement satellite Health Department locations or provide pop-up trainings and services to fill existing gaps.

As described in Chapter 3: Community Vision & Goals, community members expressed a desire through both the community survey and interactive mapping activity to see additional healthcare facilities located throughout Stanly County, especially in more rural areas and communities with high concentrations of

older adult populations. Depending on the area and target audiences for services and trainings, these pop-up or satellite locations could focus on a range of health services and topics, from wilderness EMS to older adult health and wellness to mental health and counseling.



Source: UNC Chapel Hill School of Nursing

- 3.4. Identify gaps in services for those with issues related to mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse.
- 3.5. Raise awareness of existing mental health resources in Stanly County.
- 3.6. Develop senior-specific programming to engage seniors and provide opportunities to cultivate multi-generational communities.
- 3.7. Explore and pursue funding opportunities through NC DHHS and other rural health non-profit organizations to develop a Community Health Worker training and deployment program in collaboration with Stanly Community College and Pfeiffer University.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are trusted members of the community trained to address residents' behavioral, medical, and social needs. These frontline public health workers help facilitate access to care by serving as a community liaison between residents and local health care providers. CHW training is adaptive, allowing roles to expand and scale up or down based on evolving local health system needs. Their tasks vary but frequently include health education and care coordination support. Many CHWs assist patients with appointment reminders, facilitating referrals to community resources, promoting preventive services, and chronic condition management strategies. A CHW program could also be leveraged to support satellite or pop-up County Health Department locations.



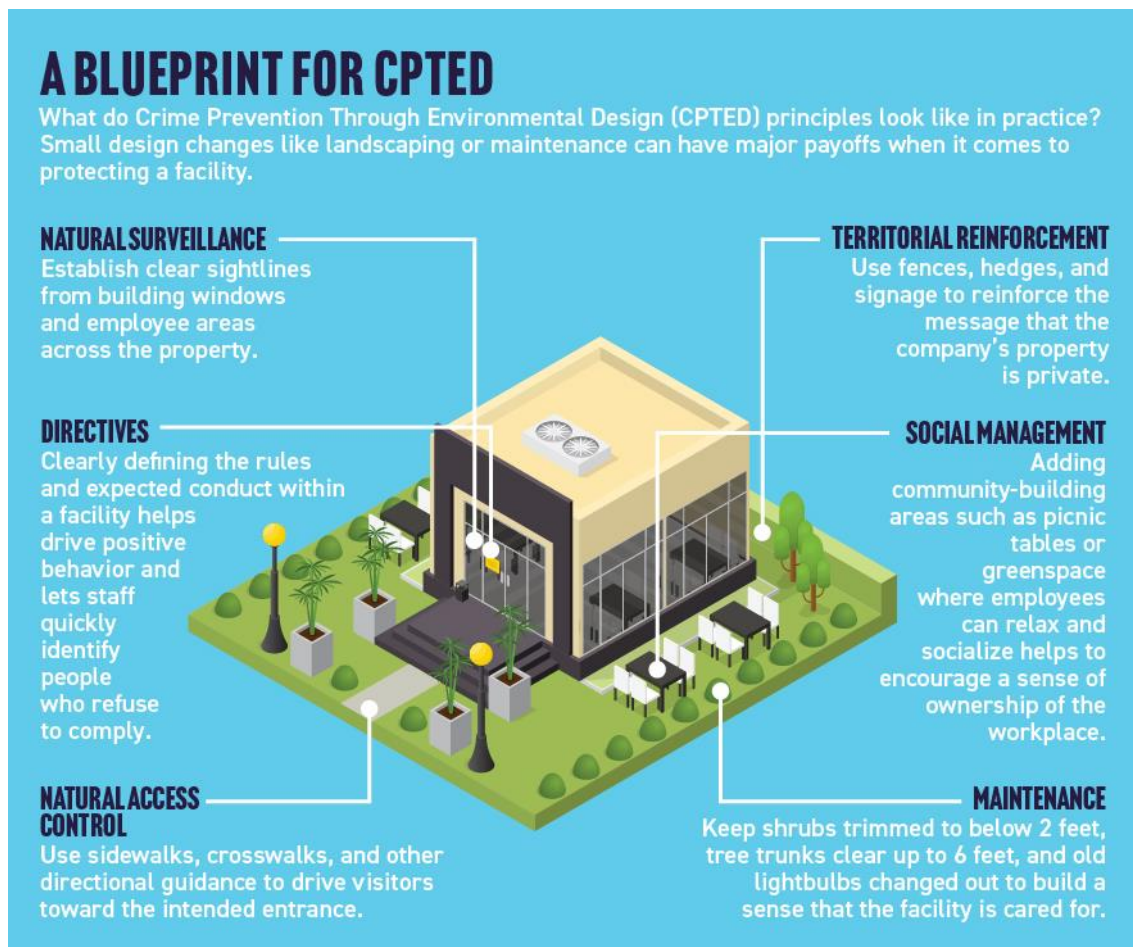
#### 4. Support the development and expansion of public services to meet community demand and promote public safety and welfare.

- 4.1. Expand public services, including police, fire, and EMS, concurrent with demands.
- 4.2. Encourage provision of training on community engagement and best practices for law enforcement.
- 4.3. Coordinate with municipalities to understand where current and planned development may necessitate new public service facilities (police stations, fire departments), plan for these anticipated needs, and develop a consistent strategy to leverage new development to fund public service expansions.

#### 5. Plan for safe public spaces.

- 5.1. Conduct review of policies around streetlighting, emergency notification systems, and other safety infrastructure that typically accompanies pedestrian infrastructure to ensure public safety.
- 5.2. Provide staff trainings on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design best practices and facilitate opportunities for collaboration between law enforcement and planning staff to capture shared learnings and address safety at a hyper-local scale.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a multi-disciplinary approach of crime prevention that uses community and architectural design and the management of built and natural environments. CPTED strategies aim to reduce victimization, deter offender decisions that precede criminal acts, and build a sense of community among inhabitants so they can gain territorial control of areas, reduce crime, and minimize fear of crime. CPTED is also known around the world as Designing Out Crime, defensible space, and other similar terms.



Source: *Growing a Sense of Ownership with CPTED*, Claire Meyer, May 2022

# PARKS, RECREATION, & NATURAL RESOURCES

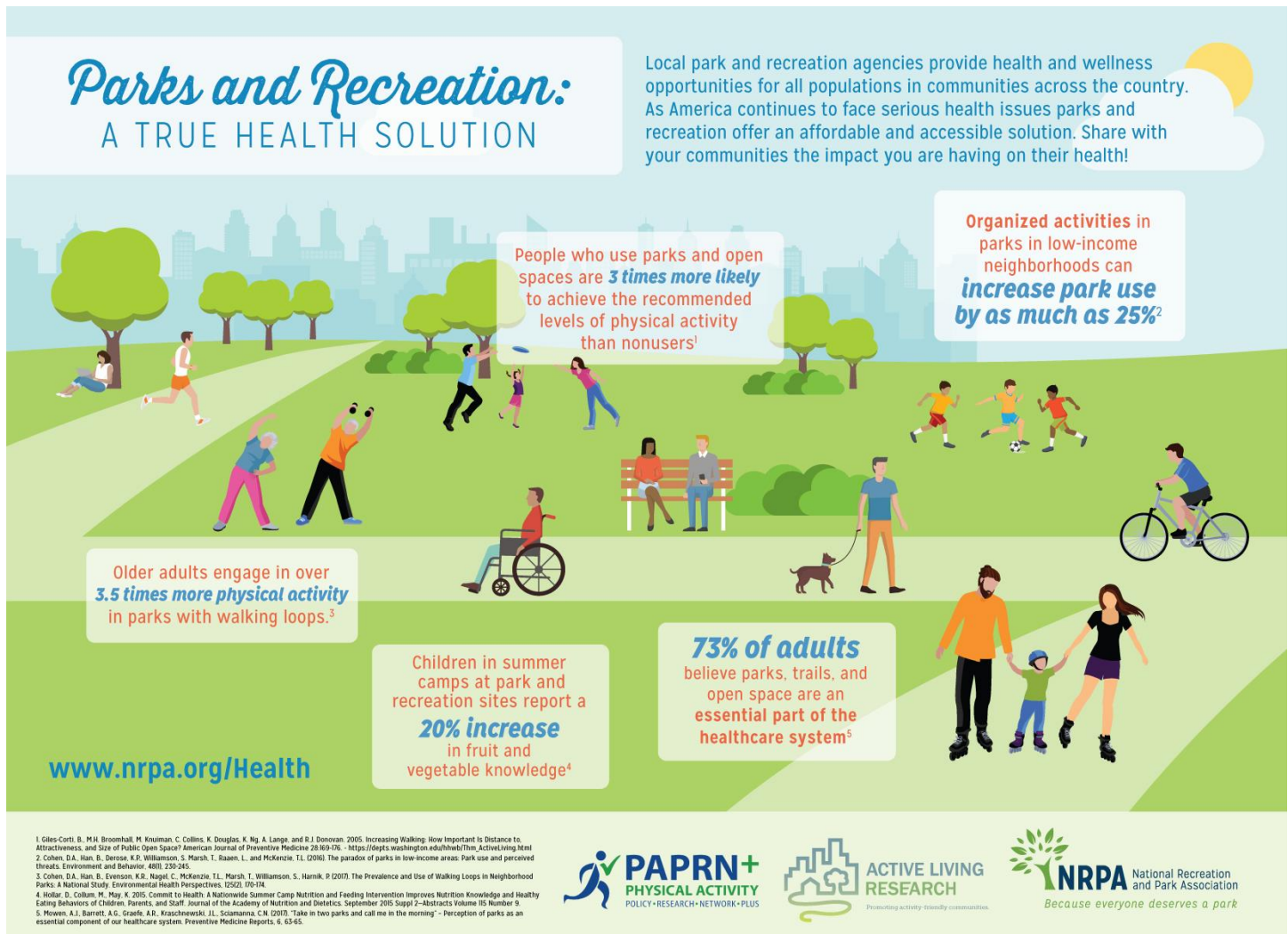
## 1. Facilitate and assist with local parks and recreation planning and programming to ensure local access.

1.1. Fund a staff position within the County Planning Department that is either solely or primarily focused on providing technical support services to the municipalities and county on Parks & Recreation planning and programming.

1.2. Support grant writing for municipal parks and recreation activities.

1.3. Continue coordination with Stanly County Schools to ensure community shared use of outdoor school recreational facilities such as open fields, ballfields, and playgrounds.

1.4. Study and address system gaps in active recreation to improve physical health, and address system gaps in passive recreation to enhance mental and emotional well-being.



Source: National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

## 2. Lead regional parks and recreation planning efforts.

2.1. Create and conduct annual survey to establish needs of residents as a service to municipalities.

2.2. Create a Parks and Recreation committee for cross-jurisdiction coordination, prioritizing and spearheading County activities.



- 2.3. Identify regional park and recreation planning needs for Stanly County (facilities with a regional draw).
- 2.4. Lead the development of a Greenway and Blueway Master Plan as a standalone document or as a component of a county Parks & Recreation plan update.
- 2.5. Support public and private investment in active and passive recreation opportunities and infrastructure.
- 2.6. Require dedication of land for greenways in new development where shown on adopted plans.
- 2.7. Explore opportunities and foster cross-department collaboration to provide recreational programming and opportunities for community members with a diverse range of ages and abilities.

### 3. Position Stanly County as a destination for eco-tourism.

- 3.1. Leverage the Stanly County Convention & Visitor's Bureau (CVB) to create County-wide communication and branding component to market recreational activities in the county.
- 3.2. Improve canoe and kayak access to the Rocky and Yadkin-Pee Dee Rivers.



### 4. Recognize and celebrate the value of Stanly County's natural assets.

- 4.1. Collaborate with the County Soil & Water Educator to develop educational programs in collaboration with Stanly County Schools to educate students on the existence and value of natural resources in the County.

4.2. Update Stanly County website to include information and maps related to natural resources and other natural assets and provide information about resource protection and management to property owners.

## 5. Protect and restore Stanly County's natural resources.

5.1. Develop an open space framework or plan to connect wildlife areas and corridors, maintain air and water quality, and balance ecosystems.

5.2. Develop a viewshed preservation plan and work with property owners to preserve important viewsheds.

5.3. Continue to preserve natural resources and limit development in floodplains and watersheds through the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance and the Watershed Protection Ordinance, respectively.

5.4. Encourage Best Management Practices in agricultural and timber operations.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are acceptable practices that can be implemented to protect water quality and promote soil conservation during agriculture and forestry activities. BMPs may refer to structures installed to divert runoff or increase soil cover, or they can also refer to processes and practices implemented during agriculture or forestry operations, such as pre-harvest planning, marking stream buffers with paint or flags, or identifying stream locations onsite. For more information about BMPs, consult the [North Carolina Forest Service](#) or the [North Carolina Cooperative Extension](#).

5.5. Encourage tree plantings and restoration activities in watersheds with low or diminishing tree cover.

5.6. Encourage development design that limits habitat clearing or destruction and preserves unique natural features on sites (including wildlife hubs and corridors, mature forests, rare habitats, and riparian areas).

5.7. Limit light pollution within Rural Preservation Areas.

5.8. Protect and limit development in and around Significant Natural Areas as identified by the North Carolina Heritage Program.

5.9. Engage the Stanly Soil and Water Conservation District on development proposals within Rural Preservation Areas.





**THIS PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK.**

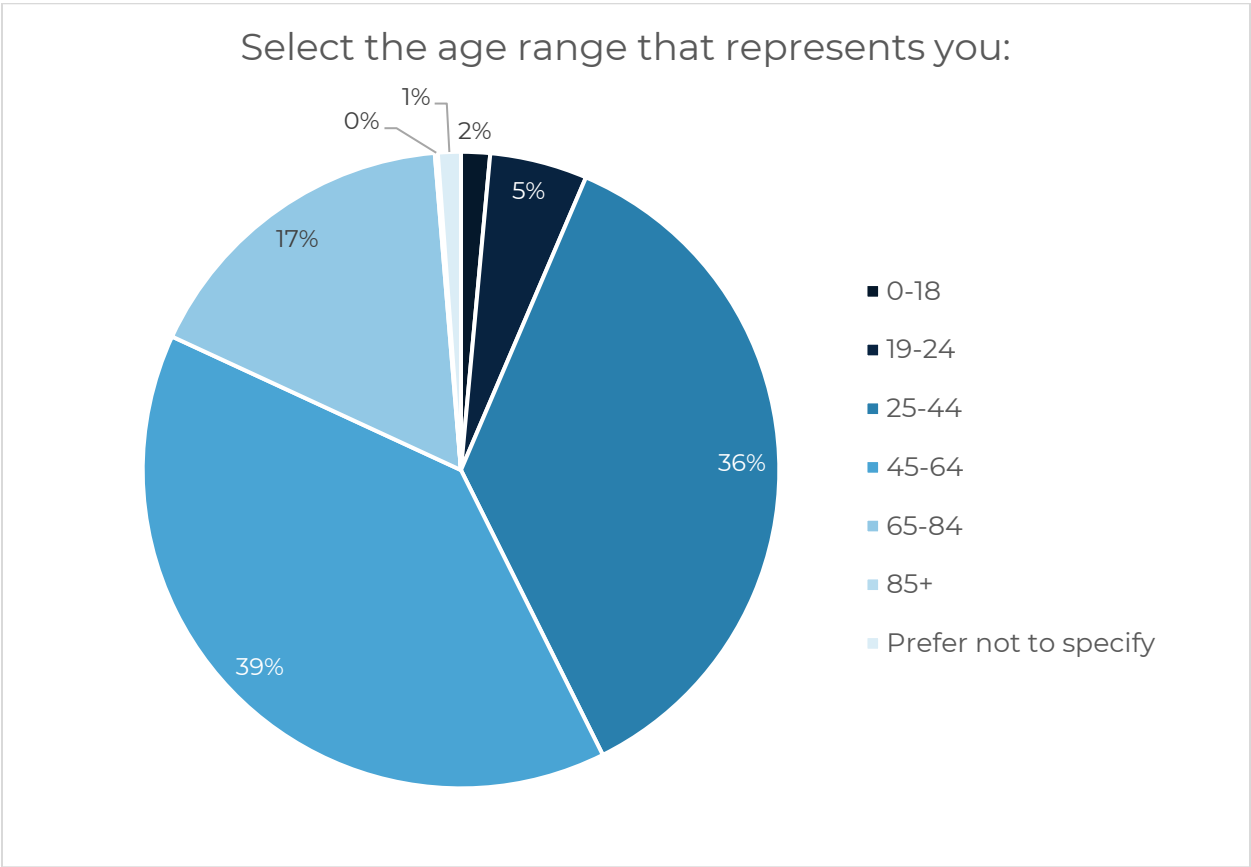
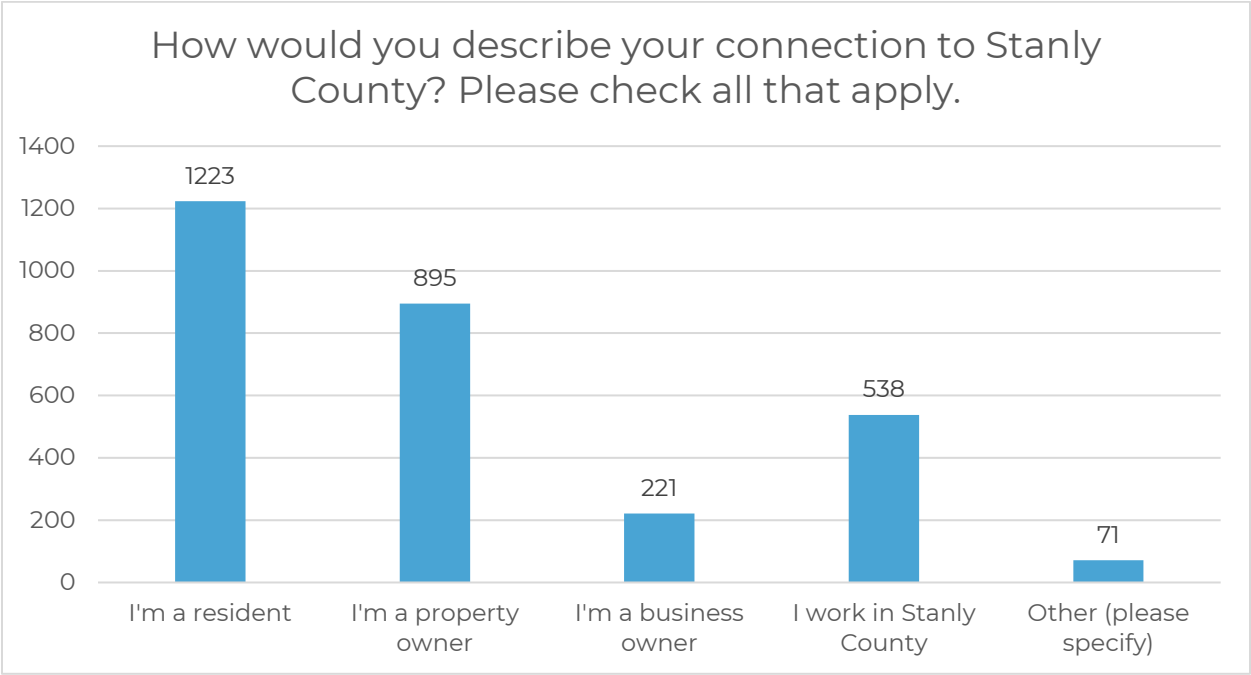
## Appendix



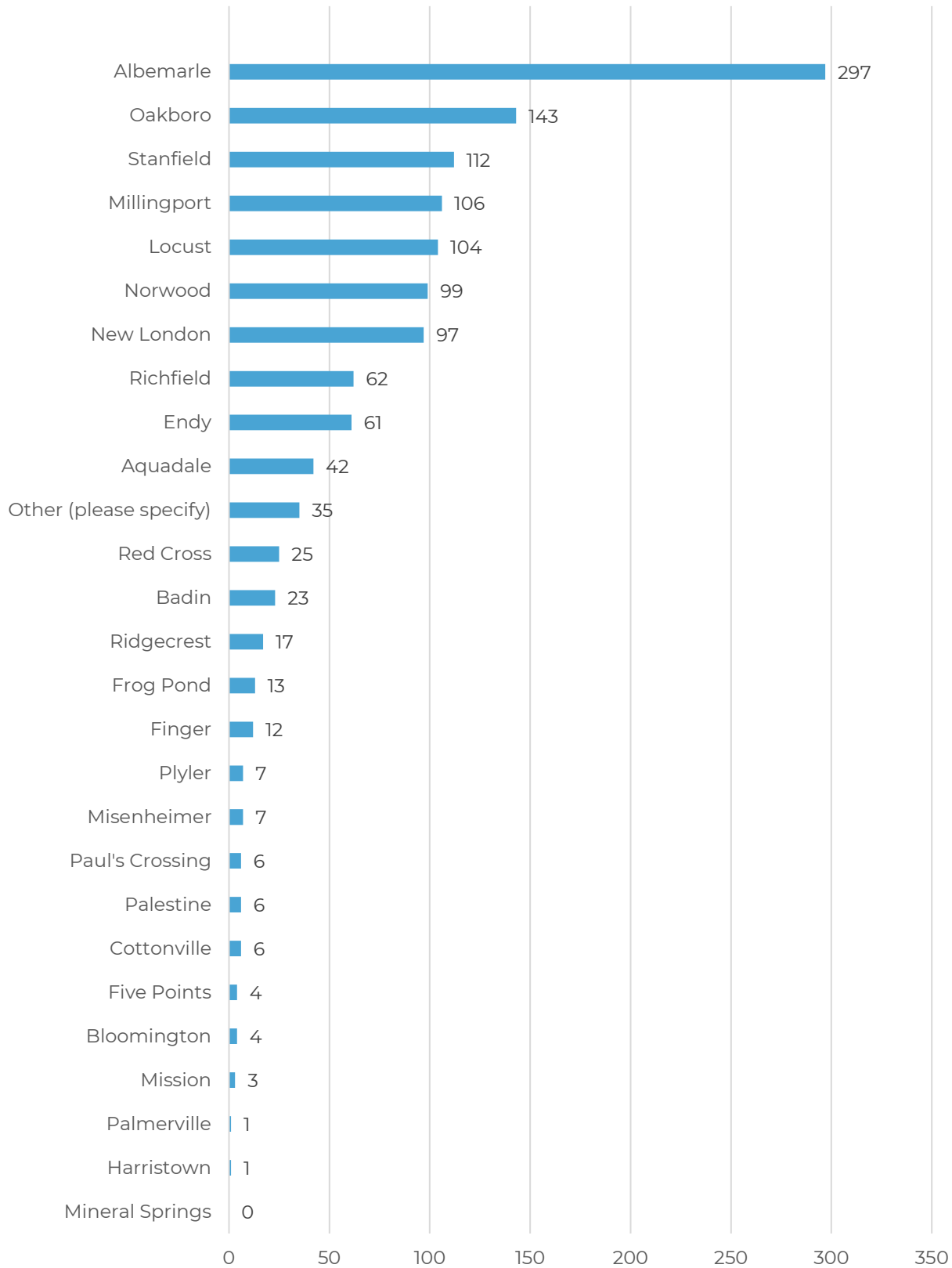


APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

Who responded to the survey?

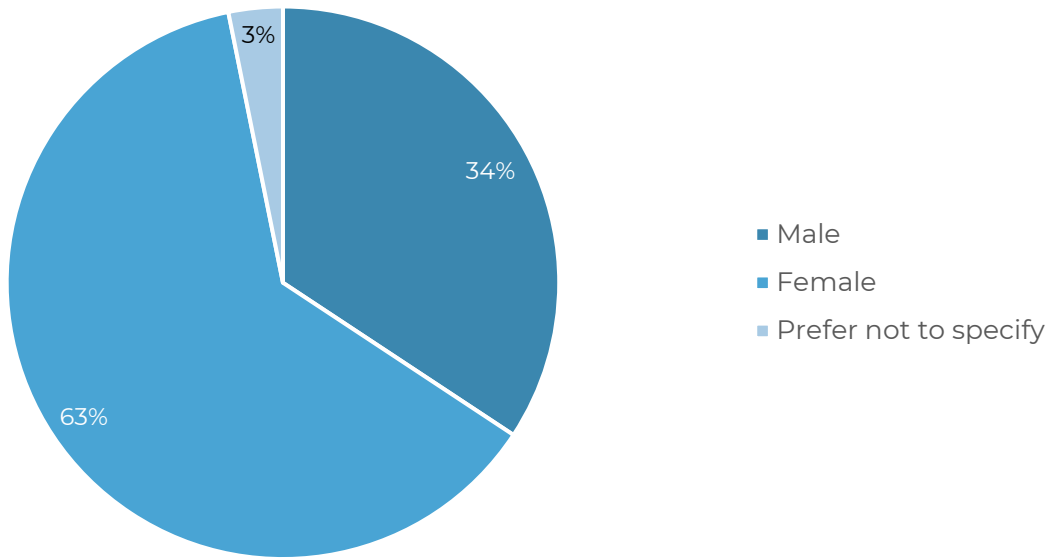


## Please check where you live:

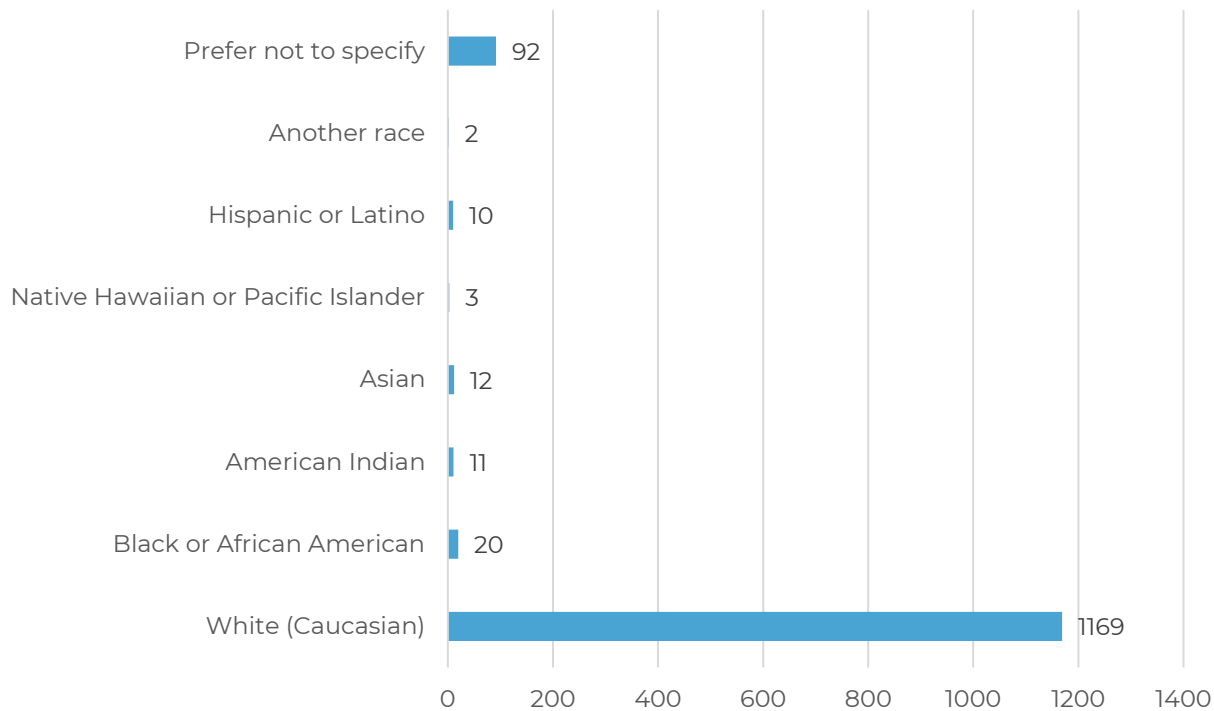




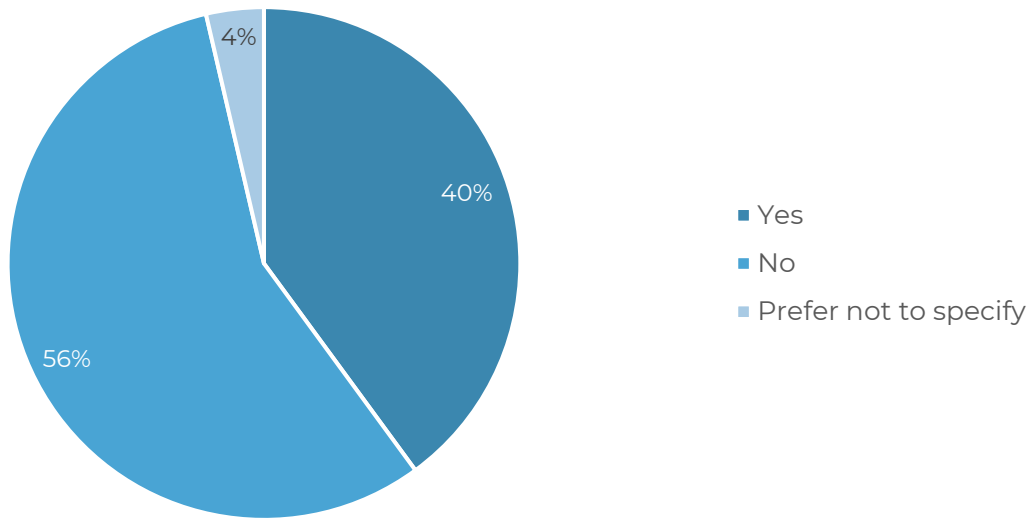
Select the gender you identify with:



Select the racial and ethnic identities that represent you (please select all that apply):

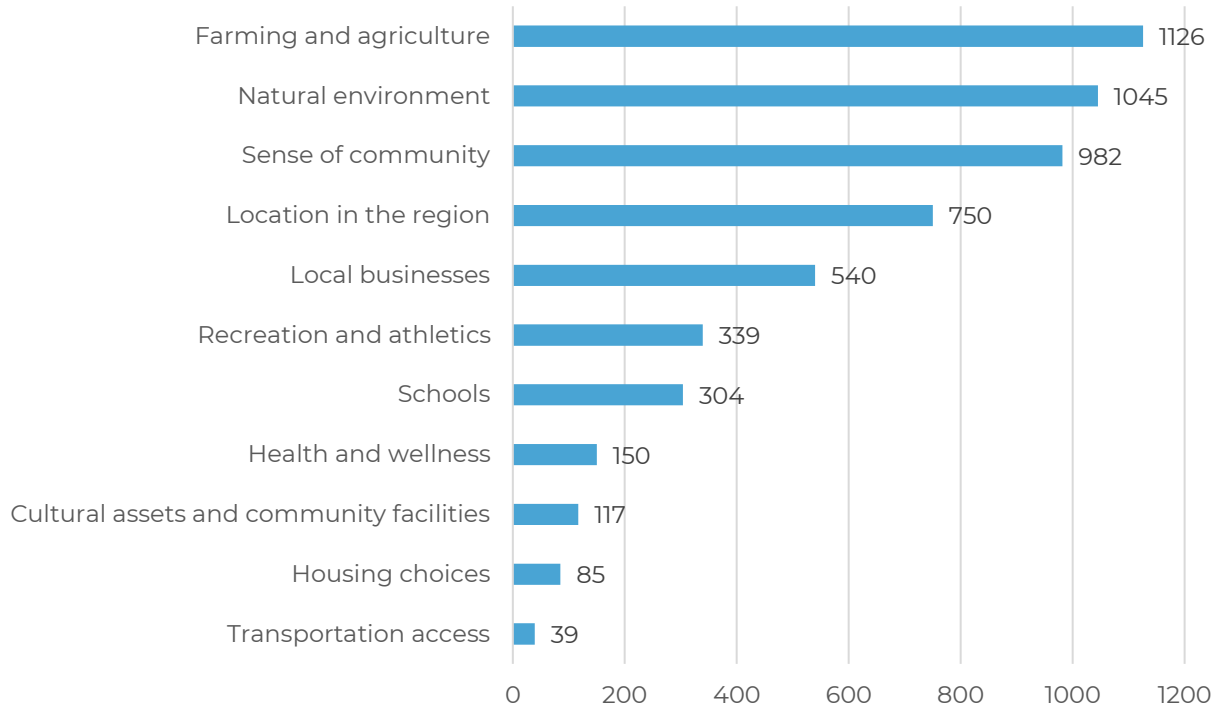


Do you have children under age 18 in your household?



**How do respondents feel about Stanly County?**

What best defines Stanly County's character and quality of life? Please select up to five (5) options.





What makes Stanly County unique or special?

Rank	Response
1	Small town feel
2	Sense of community
3	Rural character
4	Farmland
5	Natural beauty
6	Natural resources
7	Morrow Mountain
8	Friendly people
9	Lake Tillery
10	Family-oriented values

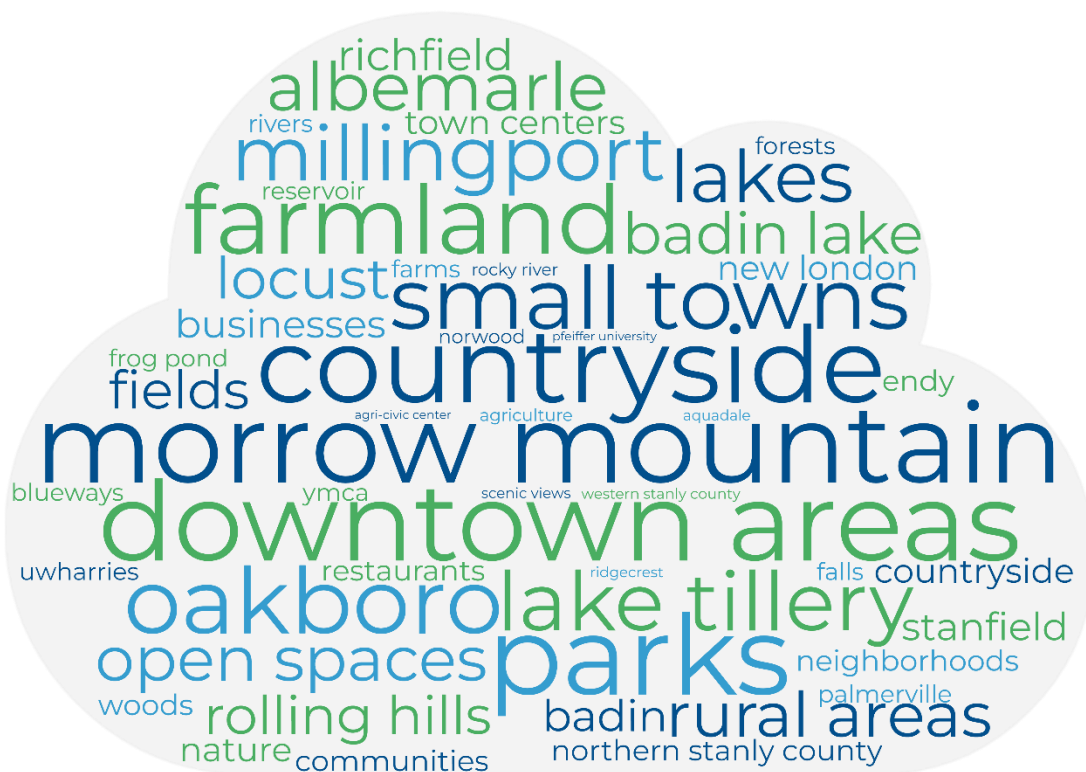
What is the biggest challenge facing Stanly County today?

Rank	Response
1	Housing developments
2	Access to high paying jobs
3	Improving the school system
4	Loss of farmland
5	Access to affordable housing
6	Rapid population growth
7	Health and safety
8	Growth outpacing infrastructure
9	Access to healthy food
10	Access to internet

How do you hope to be able to describe your community and County in 20 years?

Rank	Response
1	Small town charm preserved
2	Great place to live, work and play
3	Great place to raise a family
4	Safe community
5	Good schools
6	Access to high-paying jobs and opportunities
7	Farmland and rural character preserved
8	Thriving local businesses
9	Natural resources protected
10	Intentional, well-planned growth

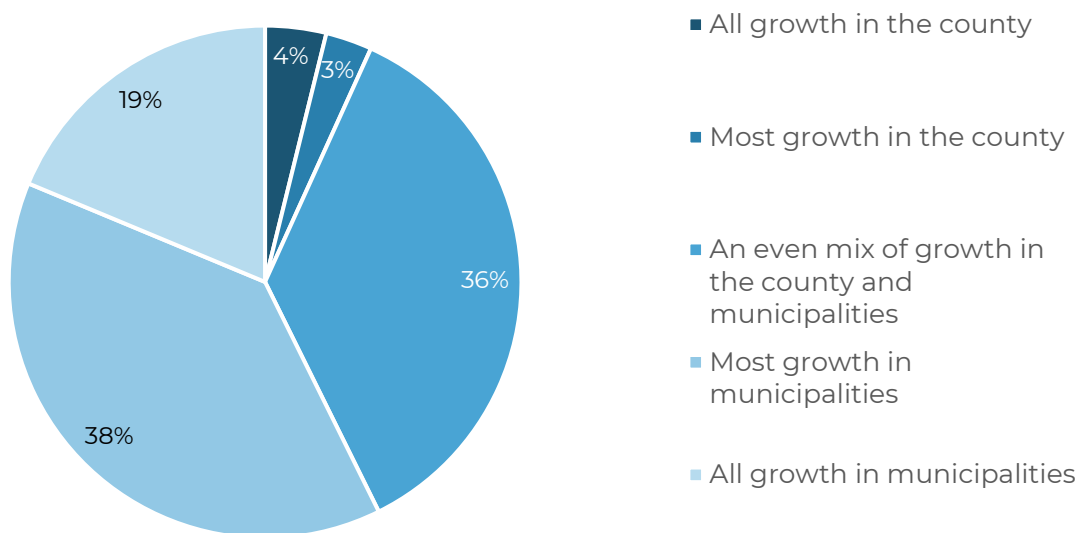
What place illustrates what you appreciate the most about Stanly County?



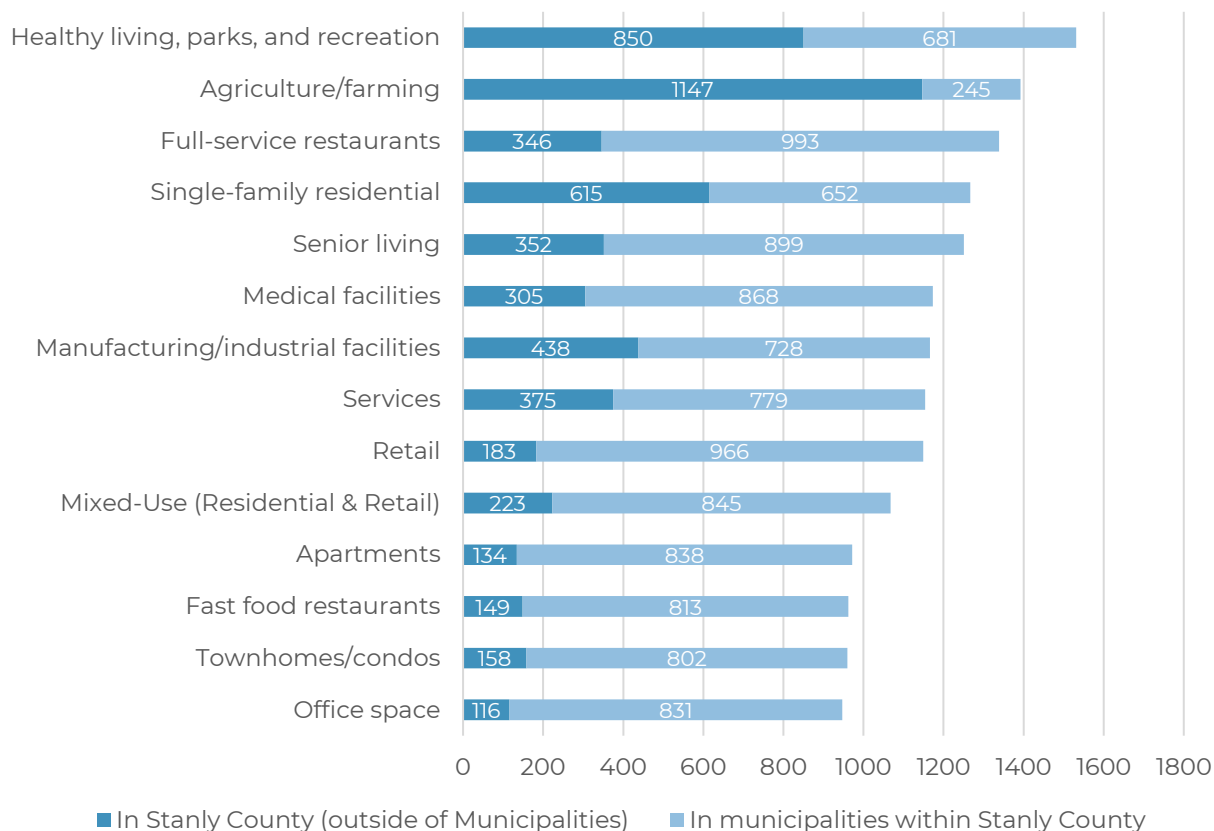


## How do respondents feel about growth and development in Stanly County?

Where do you want future growth to occur in Stanly County?



In the future, what types of development should Stanly County encourage? Please check all that apply.



In the future, what types of development should Stanly County prioritize?

Rank	Development Type
1	Agriculture/farming
2	Healthy living, parks, and recreation
3	Full-service restaurants
4	Medical facilities
5	Senior living
6	Retail
7	Single family residential
8	Services
9	Manufacturing/industrial facilities
10	Apartments
11	Mixed-Use (Residential & Retail)
12	Fast food restaurants
13	Townhomes/condos
14	Office space

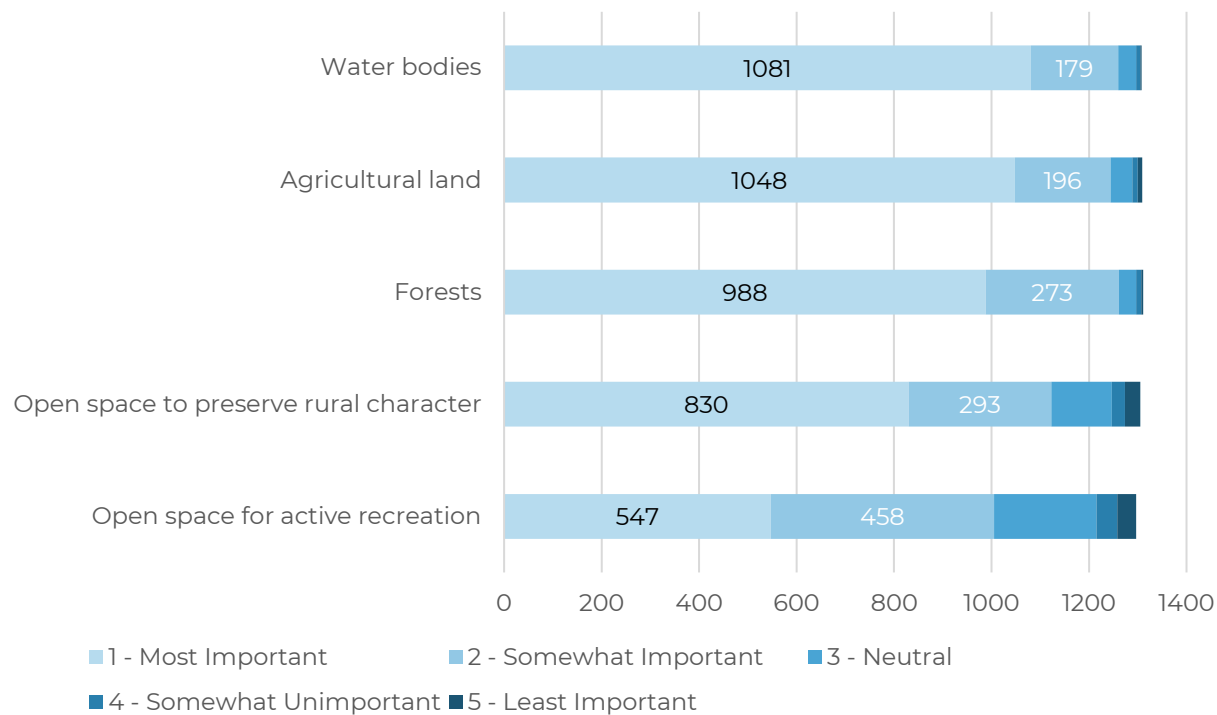
How important are the following business sectors to Stanly County's future economic vitality? Please rank the options provided from 1 (most important) to 8 (least important).

Sector	Average Ranking
Agriculture/forestry	2.269
Healthcare	3.060
Manufacturing	4.002
Retail	4.345
Services	4.349
Professional offices	5.215
Tourism	5.409
Other	7.089



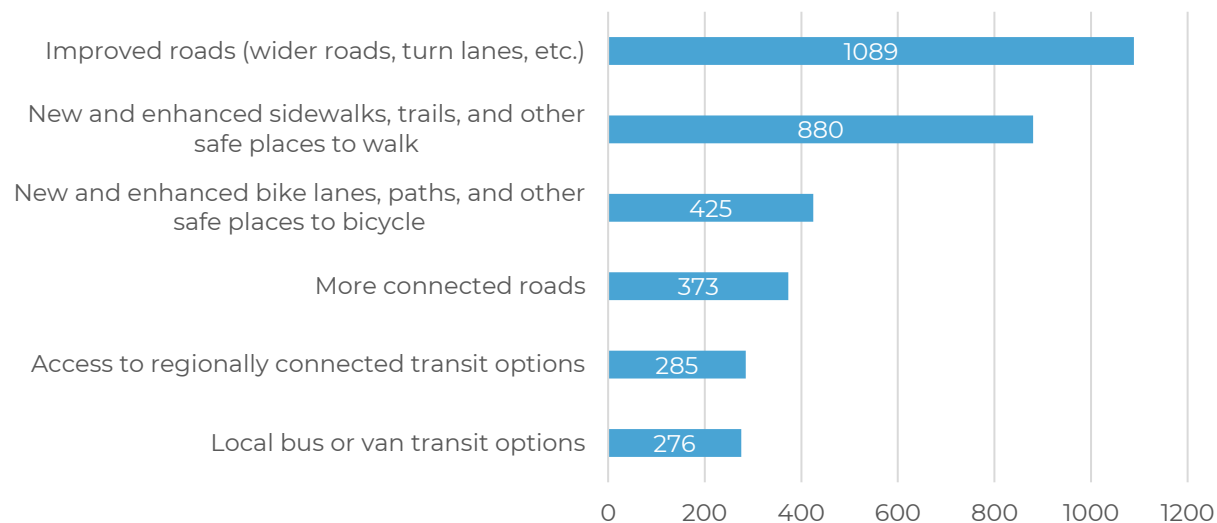
## How do respondents feel about conservation in Stanly County?

Please identify how important you believe it is to conserve each of the following natural resources in Stanly County on a scale of 1 (most important) to 5 (least important).



## How do respondents feel about infrastructure in Stanly County?

Thinking about transportation for the future of Stanly County, which features listed below are the most important to you? Please select your top three (3) preferences.



Where should the County focus infrastructure investments? Please rank the options provided from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important).

Infrastructure Type	Average Ranking
K-12 schools capital needs	1.775
Broadband/Internet access	2.435
Water and sewer	2.825
Parks and recreation	3.059
Other	4.689

Where should the County focus infrastructure investments? Please rank the options provided from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important). **RESULTS FILTERED BY WHETHER RESPONDENT'S HOUSEHOLD HAS CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18.**

Rank	Infrastructure Type (No Children)	Infrastructure Type (Children)
1	K-12 schools capital needs (1.921)	K-12 schools capital needs (1.560)
2	Broadband/Internet access (2.323)	Broadband/Internet access (2.577)
3	<b>Water and sewer (2.717)</b>	<b>Parks and recreation (2.933)</b>
4	<b>Parks and recreation (3.138)</b>	<b>Water and sewer (3.000)</b>
5	Other (4.685)	Other (4.721)



## **What else did respondents want the county to know?**

- Land Use
  - Preserve farmland and develop closer to municipalities
  - Prioritize reuse and infill development over new development
  - Improve coordination between county & municipalities
- Housing
  - General opposition to large subdivisions and housing developments
  - Mixed sentiments about support for higher-density housing (apartments and townhomes), but a need for affordable housing
  - Concerns about housing quality
  - Need for senior housing
- Economic Development
  - Preserve the agricultural sector and protect farmers
  - Prioritize local businesses over chains and large corporations
  - Need higher wages and more job opportunities in Stanly County
  - Improve access to grocery stores and retail
  - Prioritize full-service restaurants and locally owned establishments over fast food chains
  - Mixed sentiments about whether manufacturing should be a priority and, if so, where it should be located (county land vs. municipalities)
- Transportation
  - Need improved roads that can support the growing population
  - Need safer sidewalks, improved walkability, and better pedestrian infrastructure
  - Desire for enhanced bicycle connectivity
  - Interest in local public transit enhancements
- Facilities & Infrastructure
  - Desire to see County charge developers impact & development fees
  - Need for additional water/sewer infrastructure
  - Need for broadband internet access and improved cell service
- Education
  - K-12 school system needs to fund improvements in programming, teacher and staff salaries, and facilities
  - Higher education needs to provide a path to jobs in Stanly County
- Community Health and Safety
  - Desire for additional rehabilitation facilities
  - Concerns about drug use, crime, and traffic violations
  - Improve access to and awareness of healthy food
- Parks, Recreation & Natural Resources
  - Desire for additional parks and recreation programming/infrastructure
  - Mixed sentiments about tourism; support for tourism helping the local economy, concerns about tourism harming community character
  - Preserve natural resources for use by current and future generations
  - Environmental concerns about solar farms

## APPENDIX B: FUTURE COMMUNITY TYPES-EXISTING COUNTY ZONING CROSSWALK TABLE

Designation Area	Community Type	Recommended Min. Lot Size (Approximate)	Connection(s) to Current Zoning
Rural Preservation	Preserved open space		
	Recreational open space		RR
	Working farm		RA; RR
	Rural living	5 acres (~215,000 sq ft)	RA*
	Community Center		NB; SC
	Industrial		M1; M2; GB
	Educational Campus, K-12		RA
	University/College Campus		RA
	Conservation Subdivision**	At least 50% of project area conserved	R40
Secondary Growth	Working farm		RA; RR
	Single Family Neighborhood	.33-.68 acres (15,000-30,000 sq ft)	R40; R20
	Community Center		NB; SC; HB
	Industrial		M1; M2; GB
	Educational Campus, K-12		RA; R40; R20
	University/College Campus		RA; R20; GB
Primary Growth	Single Family Neighborhood	0.17-.68 acres (7,500-43,000 sq ft)	R10; R20; R40
	Multi-Family Neighborhood	0.08-0.25 acres (3,500-11,000 sq ft)	R8; R10
	Mixed-Use Center	0.13-0.25 acres (5,500-11,000 sq ft)	R10; R8; SC; HB; CB
	Industrial		M1; M2; GB
	Educational Campus, K-12		R40; R20; R10; R8
	University/College Campus		R20; R10; R8; CB; GB
Airport Overlay	Airport		AO
	Others***		Defer to lower density uses

\*Pending changes to the RA district in the Stanly County Zoning Ordinance to reflect these minimums.

\*\*Recommended maximum Conservation Subdivision density; pending formal adoption of conservation subdivision standards.

\*\*\*See Zoning Ordinance for allowable uses.