



SUSSEX COUNTY LAND USE WORKING GROUP MEETING #4

May 19, 2025

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS



Sussex County

- Todd Lawson
- Vince Robertson
- Jamie Whitehouse
- Brandy Nauman

McCormick Taylor

- John Mullen
- Christina Arlt
- Jillian Dierks

Kramer & Associates

- Andrew Bing



WORKING GROUP ROLE AND DELIVERABLES

RECOMMENDATIONS THAT:

1. Implement smarter, sustainable development
2. Ensure growth is supported by infrastructure
3. Address affordable/workforce housing needs
4. Preserve farmland and natural resources
5. Prevent low-density, uncoordinated sprawl



WORKING GROUP ROLE AND DELIVERABLES

DELIVERABLES & TIMELINE

- **Q2 Focus:** Develop draft recommendations
- **Q3 Focus:** Finalize recommendations & present to County Council
- **Q4 Focus:** County Council prioritizes list of recommendations; begins public hearing process for Ordinances and/or Comprehensive Land Use Plan updates





MEETING OVERVIEW



Today's Agenda

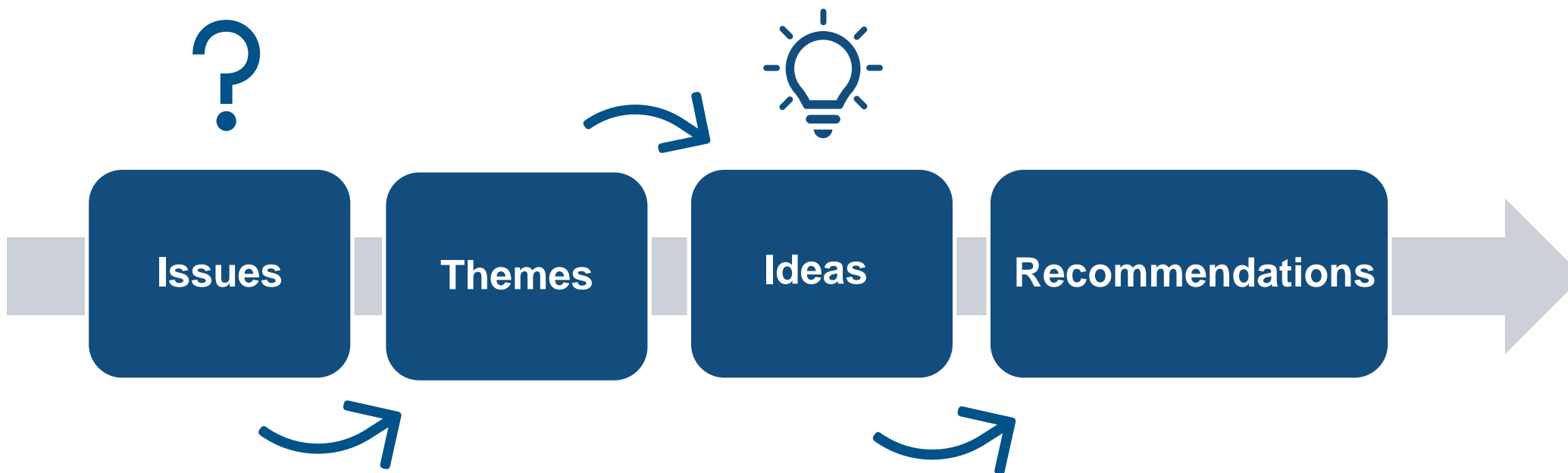
- **Welcome & Meeting Overview**
- **Recap of Last Meeting**
- **Technical Discussion:** Supporting smart, sustainable, infrastructure-efficient growth and limiting low-density sprawl
- **Questions & Final Thoughts**
- **Public Comment**



RECAP OF LAST MEETING



PROCESS





MEETING SCHEDULE

Schedule

- **Meeting #3**
 - Address affordable/workforce housing needs
- **Meeting #4:**
 - Supporting smart, sustainable, infrastructure-efficient growth and limiting low-density sprawl
- **Meeting #5: Thursday, June 12 (10:00 – 12:00)**
 - Preserve farmland and natural resources
- **Meeting #6: Thursday, July 10 (10:00 – 12:00)**
 - Focus on Recommendations

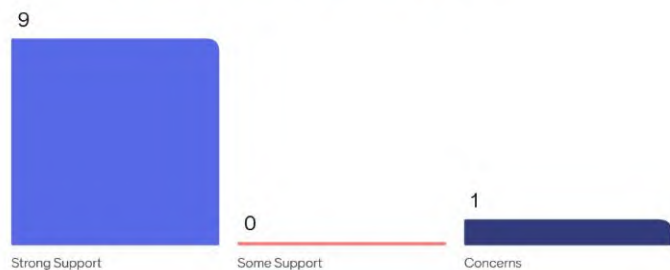


LAST MEETING

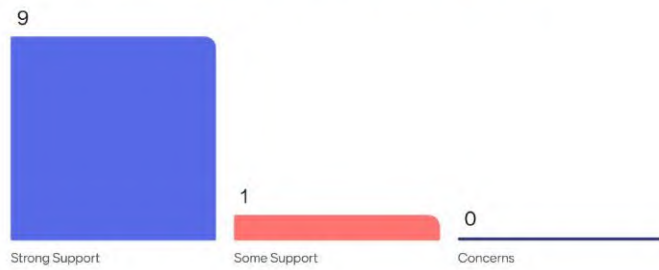
Consensus areas from polls & discussions:

- Strong support for aligning growth with infrastructure.
- Agreement on the need for missing middle housing in the right locations.
- Broad interest in clearer, predictable processes.

Allow missing middle housing types by right



Focus development in designated growth areas



Create predictable zoning and permitting paths





LAST MEETING → THIS MEETING

Shift in Focus

- **Meeting #3:** “Why and how housing should happen.”
- **Today:** “Where development and growth are most appropriate.”
- We are moving from what we want to where it makes sense.

This is about balancing growth, infrastructure, and preservation.





MEETING FOCUS: SUPPORTING SMART, SUSTAINABLE, INFRASTRUCTURE-EFFICIENT GROWTH AND LIMITING LOW-DENSITY SPRAWL



SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

WHAT IS 'SMART GROWTH'?

A **planning approach** that aims to create sustainable, livable communities by aligning development with infrastructure, protecting natural resources, and promoting diverse housing and transportation choices.





PRINCIPLE #1: MIX LAND USES

Encourage a **diversity of uses—homes, shops, offices, parks**—within close proximity to reduce vehicle trips and support local economies. Mixed-use development promotes vibrancy, safety, and more efficient infrastructure use.





PRINCIPLE #2: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF COMPACT BUILDING DESIGN

Promote **more efficient land use** by allowing for smaller lots, shared walls, and vertical development in appropriate areas. Compact design reduces sprawl, lowers infrastructure costs, and supports walkable, transit-friendly communities.





PRINCIPLE #3: CREATE A RANGE OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHOICES

Provide **diverse housing types** and **price points** to meet the needs of all residents—young families, workforce, seniors—ensuring that growth supports community diversity and economic resilience.





PRINCIPLE #4: CREATE WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOODS

Design streets and public spaces to **prioritize pedestrians and cyclists**, with sidewalks, crossings, and safe access to amenities. Walkable neighborhoods improve public health, reduce traffic congestion, and foster community connection.





PRINCIPLE #5: FOSTER DISTINCTIVE, ATTRACTIVE COMMUNITIES WITH A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE

Support design standards and community character that **reflect Sussex's unique identity**, historic towns, coastal villages, rural landscapes, while **encouraging thoughtful, high-quality development**.





PRINCIPLE #6: PRESERVE OPEN SPACE, FARMLAND, NATURAL BEAUTY, AND CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS

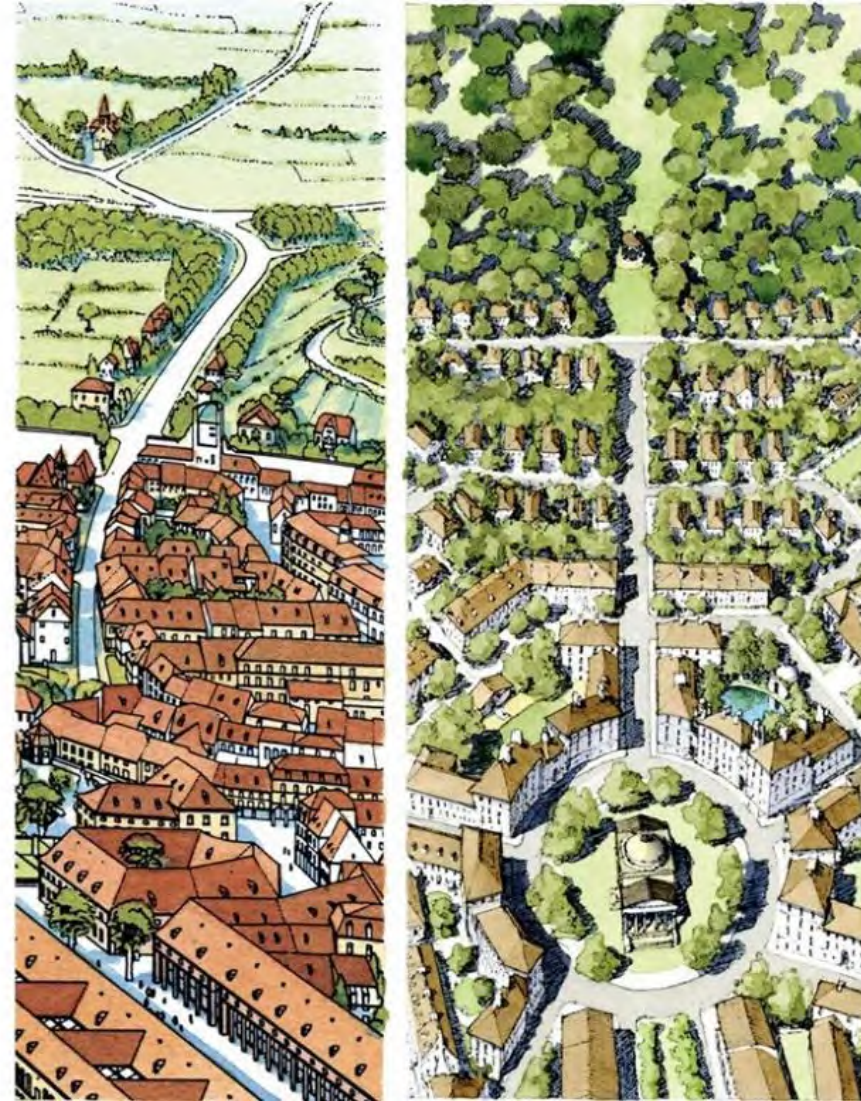
Protect Sussex County's **natural assets**—farmland, wetlands, forests—not just for aesthetics, but for water quality, flood mitigation, and long-term environmental health. Integrate conservation into development planning.



PRINCIPLE #7: STRENGTHEN AND DIRECT DEVELOPMENT TOWARD EXISTING COMMUNITIES



Focus growth in and around **existing towns and villages**, where infrastructure already exists, to avoid costly sprawl. This supports revitalization, economic efficiency, and reduces development pressure on rural lands.



PRINCIPLE #8: PROVIDE A VARIETY OF TRANSPORTATION CHOICES



Encourage **development patterns that support transit, walking, biking, and carpooling, especially in growth areas.** A range of transportation options reduces congestion and provides mobility choices for young and old.





PRINCIPLE #9: MAKE DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS PREDICTABLE, FAIR, AND COST EFFECTIVE

Simplify and clarify zoning codes and development processes to provide **certainty for developers, neighbors, and decision-makers**, reducing unnecessary costs and delays while ensuring community benefits.



PRINCIPLE #10: ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION IN DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

Engage residents, businesses, and stakeholders **early and meaningfully** in land use planning to build trust, improve outcomes, and create shared ownership of the community's growth vision.












PLACE TYPES & POLICY TOOLS EXERCISE



PLACE TYPES & POLICY TOOLS EXERCISE

- **Objective:**

- Align **Place Types** with appropriate **growth, infrastructure, and conservation strategies**.
- Identify which **planning contexts, regulatory tools and strategies** fit each place type.

For this type of place type, which of these elements make sense- and which don't?	<div>Historic downtowns, walkable main streets, mixed-use hubs, highest development intensity</div> 	<div>Commercial corridors and activity nodes along major roads, serving local and regional needs.</div> 	<div>Neighborhoods near town edges, often with grid streets, medium density housing, and local-serving uses.</div> 	<div>Residential subdivisions with separated uses, larger lots, and curvilinear streets, often auto-dependent.</div> 	<div>Scattered residential subdivisions with larger lots, rural setting, and limited infrastructure connections.</div> 	<div>Active farmland, low density residential, and open rural landscapes supporting agriculture and resource protection.</div> 	<div>Wetlands, floodplains, forests, and conservation lands prioritized for environmental protection and hazard mitigation.</div> 
	Town Center	Corridor & Mixed-Use Node	Municipal Adjacent Neighborhood	Residential Neighborhood	Low Density Subdivisions	Rural/ Agricultural Areas	Natural/ Sensitive Lands
Growth / Infill Areas							
Permitted Use: Mixed-Use							
Permitted Use: Multifamily							
Permitted Use: Duplex, Triplex, Quad							
Reduced Lot Sizes, Bulk & Setback Standards							
Increased Building Height							
Affordability Incentive							



PLACE TYPES & POLICY TOOLS EXERCISE

How the Exercise Works:

- **Across the top: Place Types**
 - *Town Center, Municipal Adjacent Neighborhood, Rural Area, Natural & Sensitive Lands, etc.*
- **Down the side:**
 - **Planning Contexts**
 - Should this Place Type function as an Infill & Growth Area, a Conservation & Resource Protection Area, and/or a Transportation-Connected Area?
 - **Policy Tools & Strategies**
 - *Permitted Multifamily, Increased Height, Enhanced Environmental Site Assessments, etc.*

	 Town Center	 Corridor & Mixed-Use Node	 Municipal Adjacent Neighborhood	 Residential Neighborhood	 Low Density Subdivisions	 Rural/ Agricultural Areas	 Natural/ Sensitive Lands
For this type of place type, which of these elements make sense and which don't?							
Growth / Infill Areas							
Permitted Use: Mixed-Use							
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Increased Building Height							
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PLACE TYPES: TOWN CENTER



Georgetown, Delaware

- Historic or emerging **community hubs**
- **Walkable main streets** with shops, services, dining
- **Mixed-use buildings:** retail, office, residential
- **Higher intensity** of development & activity
- Key nodes along major corridors with **public infrastructure**

PLACE TYPES: CORRIDOR & MIXED-USE AREA



Five Points, Lewes

- Areas located along **major transportation corridors** and key intersections.
- **Commercial-focused areas** that serve both local residents and regional traffic.
- Include a mix of:
 - Retail, services, offices, larger-scale commercial uses
 - Residential uses
- Typically, **auto-oriented**, but with potential for better design, access management, and multimodal improvements.



PLACE TYPES: MUNICIPAL ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOOD



- Neighborhoods **near municipal boundaries**
- **Grid-like or connected street layouts**
- Mix of **residential areas with some local-serving businesses**
- Typically supported by **public water, sewer, and road networks**
- Serve as a **transition between town centers and outlying areas**



PLACE TYPES: RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD



- Predominantly **residential subdivisions** with **separated land uses**
- Characterized by **larger lots** and **curvilinear streets or cul-de-sacs**
- Designed for **auto-oriented travel**
- Often located **at the edges of communities**, expanding suburban growth

PLACE TYPES: LOW DENSITY SUBDIVISIONS



- **Residential subdivisions in rural or edge areas**
- Characterized by **larger lots** and **dispersed development patterns**
- Often located where **agricultural or natural landscapes predominate**
- Typically have **limited or no access to public sewer and water**
- Access is generally **via local roads with few connections**



PLACE TYPES: RURAL / AGRICULTURAL AREAS



- **Working landscapes of Sussex County**
- Includes **active farms, forestry lands, and large open spaces**
- Supports **agriculture, resource protection, and rural character**
- Residential development, where present, is **low-density and limited in scale**
- Often includes **environmentally sensitive areas** like watersheds and scenic viewsheds



PLACE TYPES: NATURAL / SENSITIVE LANDS

- Areas containing **wetlands, floodplains, forests, and preserved conservation lands**
- Provide critical **ecological functions**: water quality, habitat, flood management
- Often overlap with **agricultural or rural landscapes**
- May include publicly or privately **conserved lands**





PLACE TYPES & POLICY TOOLS EXERCISE

For Each Place Type, Discuss:

1. Planning Context Designations:

1. Should this area be prioritized for:

- ☒ Infill Growth
- ☒ Transportation Connected Areas
- ☒ Conservation & Resource Protection

2. Policy Tools & Strategies:

1. Which tools/strategies are appropriate for this place type?

2. Mark:

- ☒ Appropriate
- ☐ Not Appropriate
- ☐ Needs Discussion / Conditional

Goal:

- Develop a **shared understanding** of:
 - Where growth should be focused
 - Where protections are needed
 - How policy tools align with different place types

Build a foundation of **zoning reform, conservation efforts, and infrastructure alignment** based on place-specific contexts



PLANNING CONTEXTS

Planning Contexts describe the key characteristics of different areas: growth potential, infrastructure alignment, and environmental sensitivity.

They guide how we apply **regulatory tools and strategies** to ensure development happens in the right places, in the right way.

Planning Context	Description
Infill & Growth Areas	Areas where new development or redevelopment should be supported
Transportation-Connected Areas	Areas where development patterns should reinforce connectivity and mobility options.
Conservation & Resource Protection Areas	Areas where preservation of natural resources, agricultural lands, and sensitive environmental features is a priority.



Historic downtowns, walkable main streets, mixed-use hubs, highest development intensity	Commercial corridors and activity nodes along major roads, serving local and regional needs.	Neighborhoods near town edges, often with grid streets, medium density housing, and local-serving uses	Residential subdivisions with separated uses, larger lots, and curvilinear streets, often auto-dependent	Scattered residential subdivisions with larger lots, rural setting, and limited infrastructure connections	Active farmland, low density residential, and open rural landscapes supporting agriculture and resource protection	Wetlands, floodplains, forests, and conservation lands prioritized for environmental protection and hazard mitigation
Town Center	Corridor & Mixed-Use Node	Edge Neighborhood / Municipal Adjacent	Residential Neighborhood	Low Density Subdivisions	Rural/ Agricultural Areas	Natural/ Sensitive Lands



INFILL & GROWTH AREAS: TOOLS & STRATEGIES

Tool

- Permitted Mixed-Use
- Permitted Multifamily
- Permitted Duplexes, Triplexes, Quads
- Permitted Townhouses & Cottage Courts

Strategy

- Reduced Bulk & Lot Setbacks
- Increased Building Height Allowances
- Affordability Incentives

Which tools and strategies are appropriate, not appropriate, or need more discussion for each place type?



	Historic downtowns, walkable main streets, mixed-use hubs, highest development intensity	Commercial corridors and activity nodes along major roads, serving local and regional needs	Neighborhoods near town edges, often with grid streets, medium density housing, and local-serving uses	Residential subdivisions with separated uses, larger lots, and curvilinear streets, often auto-dependent	Scattered residential subdivisions with larger lots, rural setting, and limited infrastructure connections	Active farmland, low density residential, and open rural landscapes supporting agriculture and resource protection	Wetlands, floodplains, forests, and conservation lands prioritized for environmental protection and hazard mitigation
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EXERCISE – INFILL & GROWTH AREAS



TRANSPORTATION-CONNECTED AREAS: TOOLS & STRATEGIES

Tool	Description
Street Grid or Connectivity Requirements	Ensures new development connects to existing streets and pathways, avoiding or minimizing dead-ends and cul-de-sacs.
Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure	Sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes that support safe, active transportation options.
Transportation Improvement Districts	Coordinates infrastructure investments and developer contributions to manage transportation impacts.
Strategy	Description
Reduced Parking Requirements	Reduced minimum number of required parking spaces for developments to encourage multimodal access, reduce impervious surfaces/land consumption, and reduce project costs.

Which tools and strategies are appropriate, not appropriate, or need more discussion for each place type?

For this type of place type, select if these elements make sense and which don't?	Urban downtown, walkable neighborhood, mixed-use, higher density development	Commercial corridor and activity center along major roads, serving local and regional needs	Employment area with shops, offices, retail, dining, recreation, transit, and parking	Residential development with mixed-use, high density and parking, transit, and recreation	Suburban development with single-family homes, low density, and parking	Rural development with single-family homes, low density, and parking	Rural development with single-family homes, low density, and parking	Rural development with single-family homes, low density, and parking
Place Type	Urban Center	Corridor & Mixed-Use Node	High Employment / Regional Center	Suburban Neighborhood	Low Density Subdivision	Rural / Agricultural Area	Natural / Sensitive Land	
Transportation Connected Areas								
Street Grid or Connectivity Requirements								
Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure								
Transportation Improvement Districts								
Reduced Parking Requirements								



EXERCISE – TRANSPORTATION CONNECTED AREAS










CONSERVATION & RESOURCE PROTECTION AREAS: TOOLS & STRATEGIES

Tool	Description
Enhanced Environmental Site Analysis	Requires a more detailed assessment of environmental resources on development sites, incorporating mitigation measures and informing site layout to minimize impacts on sensitive natural features.
Increased Open Space Set Aside	Increased percentage of preserved open space within subdivisions to protect natural resources, provide community benefits, and maintain rural character

Strategy	Description
Flexible Lot Layout	Ability to utilize flexible lot layouts to concentrate development away from sensitive features

Which tools and strategies are appropriate, not appropriate, or need more discussion for each place type?

For this type of place type, which of these elements make sense- and which don't?	 Historic downtowns, walkable main streets, mixed-use hubs, highest development intensity	 Commercial corridors and activity nodes along major roads, serving local and regional needs	 Neighborhoods near town edges, often with grid streets, medium-density housing, and local-serving uses	 Residential subdivisions with separated uses, larger lots, and curvilinear streets, often auto-dependent	 Scattered residential subdivisions with larger lots, rural setting, and limited infrastructure connections	 Active farmland, low density residential, and open rural landscapes supporting agriculture and resource protection	 Wetlands, floodplains, forests, and conservation lands prioritized for environmental protection and hazard mitigation
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Conservation & Resource Protection Areas							
Enhanced Environmental Site Analysis							
Increased Open Space Set Aside							
Flexible Lot Layout							



EXERCISE – CONSERVATION & RESOURCE PROTECTION AREAS



DISCUSSION



WRAP UP



MEETING SCHEDULE

Schedule

- Meeting #5: Thursday, June 12 (10:00 – 12:00)
 - Preserve farmland and natural resources
- Meeting #6: Thursday, July 10 (10:00 – 12:00)
 - Focus on Recommendations
- Future Meetings TBD



FINAL THOUGHTS & OPEN FLOOR

- Questions
- Takeaways and final thoughts



PUBLIC COMMENT