

# TRIANGLE FARMS FOR FOOD:

## Strategy + Action Plan

NOVEMBER 2016



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This report made possible by:  
Triangle Community Foundation  
Sustainable Foods North Carolina  
Conservation Trust for North Carolina

The ideas and direction in this strategy have been generated through the generous participation and engagement of numerous experts and stakeholders throughout the Triangle region. Without their input our strategy would not have reached the depth and thoughtful approach that it has.

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Conservation Trust for North Carolina  
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A lush green forest scene with a stream flowing through the center. The trees are dense and vibrant green, with sunlight filtering through the canopy. The foreground is filled with various green plants and small yellow flowers. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

# INTRODUCTION

This plan presents a comprehensive approach to protect agricultural land, in particular farmland that can supply local food to people in the Triangle region of North Carolina. This multi-faceted strategy involves diverse partners to keep farmland in farming, support current and beginning farmers, advance agricultural awareness, and build a strong local food economy.

Numerous and diverse partners including local governments, state agencies, nonprofit organizations and academic institutions currently are working to address challenges raised in this report and implement some of the solutions recommended. Such activities, tailored to local conditions, needs, partners, and resources, are important and effective. The intent is not to recreate, take over, or undervalue those efforts. However, developing the potential of regional approaches and collaborative capacities is critical for guiding and supporting local action. This strategy will build on and enhance current local activity by expanding partnerships, leveraging resources, and facilitating collective action.

If fully implemented, the impacts of this plan will be felt from urban city centers to rural townships and communities, and from community gardens to commercial agricultural operations. Residents will benefit from greater food security and increased access to local healthy food. Producers and rural communities will benefit from greater market demand and increased farm profitability. Supporting businesses will benefit from increased economic activity. All people will benefit from open space resulting from permanent protection of farmland in the region.

## CALL TO ACTION

The Triangle region is expanding at a pace never seen here before. With this growth, the future of the Triangle's farmland, rural heritage, and farm economy is threatened. From the western corners of Chatham and Orange Counties to the eastern reaches of Johnston County, complex and accelerating pressures are putting farmland at risk. The preservation of farmland and the continued relationships between Triangle residents and Triangle farmers will depend on system change that makes farming, farmers, and farmland part of a shared future where growth and preservation find innovative paths to common ground.

The population of North Carolina's Triangle region grew 30% between 2000 and 2010, and the area is now home to approximately 2.25 million people. The geographic area of the Triangle is under 2 million acres, almost one-quarter of which is agricultural land. The growing population is increasing pressure to develop these agricultural lands. The amount of farmland in the region is decreasing; since 1992, the Triangle has lost more than 63,500 acres of farmland.

MORE THAN  
**63,500**  
**Acres**  
OF TRIANGLE FARMLAND HAS BEEN  
LOST SINCE 1992.



At the same time, the market potential for local foods has expanded. The Triangle is home to 3,970 farms with total direct sales to consumers of \$3.65 million per year. Direct market sales in the region increased by 82% between 1997 and 2012. Yet Triangle residents spend at a bare minimum \$4 billion annually on food overall, representing a huge untapped market for local foods.

There is already strong state-level support for farmland preservation and local food. The NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund has spent nearly \$20 million to protect 10,000 acres of farmland and support local food projects. The 10% Campaign, a well-known NC

APPROXIMATELY  
**2,250,000**  
PEOPLE LIVE IN THE  
TRIANGLE REGION

LESS THAN  
**0.1%**  
OF CURRENT TRIANGLE FOOD  
SPENDING  
IS DIRECT FARM-TO-CONSUMER

IF **10%** OF ANNUAL  
FOOD SPENDING SHIFTED  
TO LOCAL FOOD\*,  
**\$400 MILLION**

IN DIRECT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY  
WOULD BE GENERATED FOR THE  
TRIANGLE'S FARM ECONOMY

*\* THAT'S LESS THAN \$3.50  
PER PERSON PER WEEK TO SPEND  
LOCALLY*

initiative led by the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, sets a goal of 10% of food dollars being spent on local food.

On average, it takes one acre of land to feed one person annually. To supply at least 10% of our foods locally, the Triangle will need to ensure that at least 225,000 acres of land remain available for agricultural production. This means that roughly 50% of the remaining farmland in the Triangle needs to be protected and transitioned into profitable local production.

Local Food Councils are taking shape in every Triangle county, addressing all aspects of local food

systems, including farms and food insecurity. An estimated 237,870 people in the region are food insecure and could benefit from increased access to fresh, local food. If farming initiatives, especially urban ones, can be connected to those most in need through innovative policy and planning, a healthy new generation of North Carolinians can be raised that value local food, farmers, and farming.

Through the flexible, multi-faceted action proposed in this strategy, partners will preserve Triangle farmland for generations to come. Join us in implementing this strategy to protect farmers and farmland, and grow a vibrant agricultural economy across the Triangle region!

## **COLLECTIVE VISION**

The collective vision for the Triangle Farms for Food Strategy:

**Active, productive, and economically viable farms are common sights throughout the Triangle's rural and urban landscapes, contributing to sustainable communities and a resilient regional food system.**



# PRINCIPLES GUIDING OUR STRATEGY

Farmland preservation encompasses much more than conserving land – it is about equitable support for farmers, land use planning, innovative land development models, agricultural economic development, agritourism, agricultural infrastructure, and an informed public that understands the importance of farmland and local food. The following principles support this multi-faceted approach, and serve as guideposts throughout this strategy and action plan.

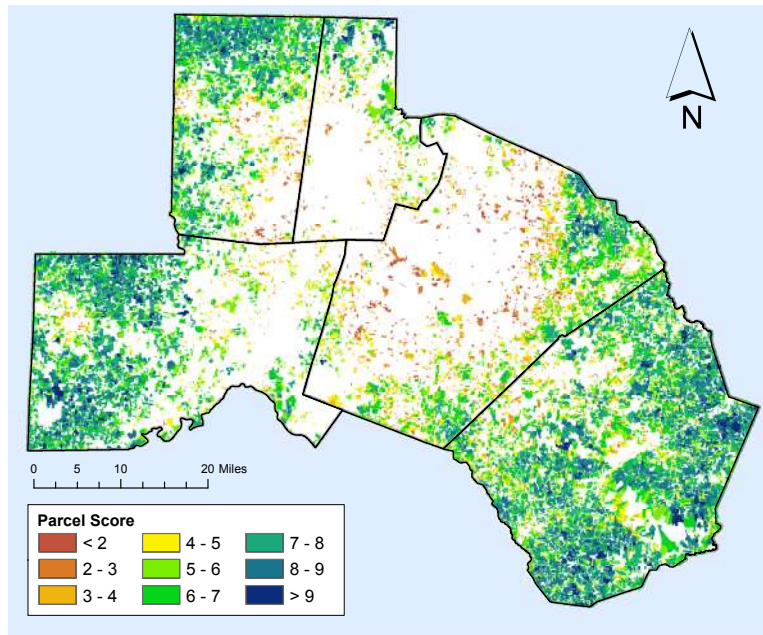
- The threats to farmland and farmers are complex: systems approaches and flexible, collaborative solutions are required in response.
- Farming must be profitable and sustainable for farmers.
- Everyone must have the opportunity and ability to access farmland, economic opportunities, and local food.
- Farming models and new food system infrastructure must align with regional development patterns and access to markets.
- Short-term results as well as a long-term vision are important for keeping momentum toward system change.
- Actions will build on local progress toward farmland protection and agricultural and community economic development.
- Actions will connect partners including food councils and regional governmental councils and organizations.
- Farmland preservation approaches will support all parts of the agriculture sector, including large commodity farms, small acreage producers, agriculture support services, and conventional and organic producers.

# METHODS, MAPS AND DATA

## GIS MAPPING

The Project Team began developing this strategy by conducting a GIS-based analysis to prioritize farmland for protection in Chatham, Durham, Johnston, Orange, and Wake Counties. A baseline farmland layer was created based on agricultural land cover data, overlaid with several criteria related to prime farmland, threat of development, and distance to markets. Ultimately two conservation models were developed – one that prioritizes protection of more traditional large rural farms, and one that prioritizes smaller farms closer to urban areas and USDA food deserts. Additional details about model development can be found in the Appendix.

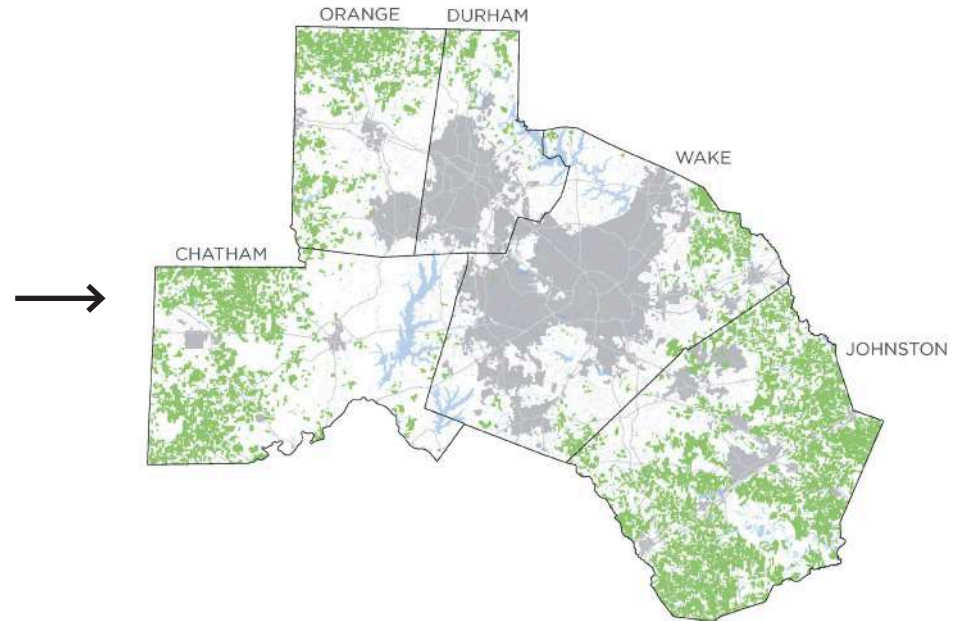
## RURAL FARMLAND PROTECTION MODEL OUTPUT



MAP PREPARED BY MEREDITH WOJCIK  
 CONSERVATION TRUST FOR NORTH CAROLINA  
 NAD 1963 STATE PLANE NORTH CAROLINA FIPS 3200 FEET

The maps above depict the results of our GIS-based analysis to prioritize farmland for protection in the Triangle region. Each analysis is done on a base layer of agricultural land cover. The **Rural Farmland Protection Model** overlays several criteria to identify the highest priority opportunities for farmland conservation, including: presence of prime agricultural soils, large acreages of agricultural land, farther from urban areas,

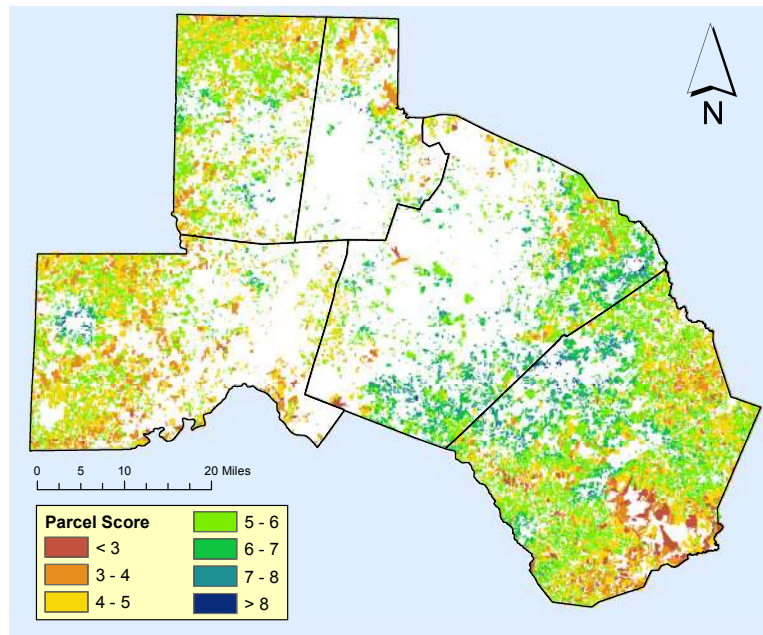
## TOP SCORING RURAL FARM PARCELS FOR PROTECTION



close proximity to agricultural protected areas, smaller surrounding population size, and land in present use value.

The green areas on the **Top Scoring** map on the right are areas that ranked highest (8 or above on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest priority).

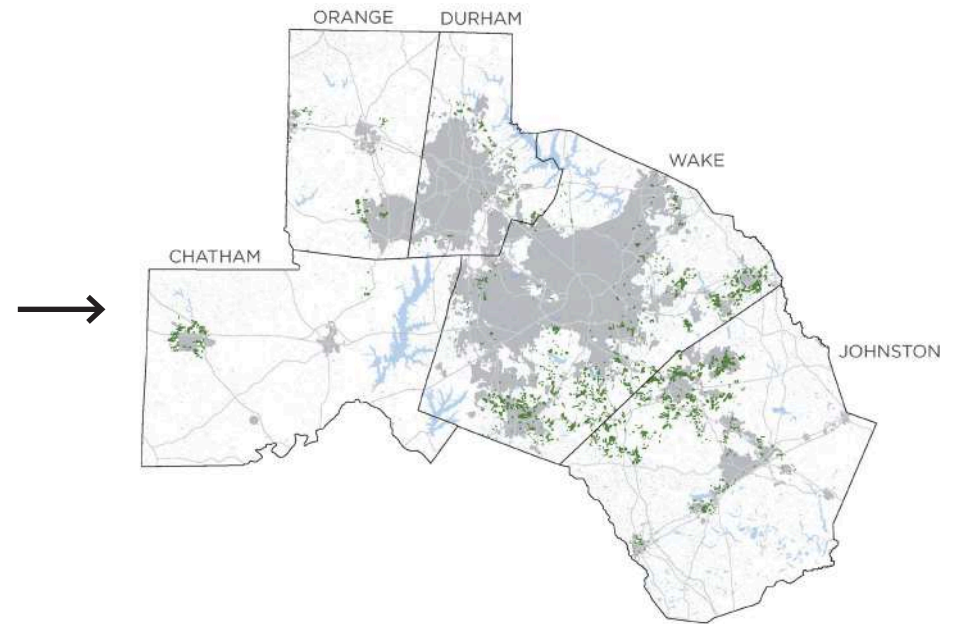
## URBAN FRINGE FARM PROTECTION MODEL OUTPUT



MAP PREPARED BY MEREDITH WOJCIK  
 CONSERVATION TRUST FOR NORTH CAROLINA  
 NAD 1963 STATE PLANE NORTH CAROLINA FIPS 3200 FEET

The **Urban Fringe Farm Protection Model** overlays criteria to identify the highest priority opportunities for urban agricultural conservation, including: presence of prime agricultural soils, small acreages of agricultural land, closer to urban areas, close proximity to agricultural protected areas, larger surrounding population size, and proximity to USDA food deserts. The green areas on the **Top Scoring** map on the right

## TOP SCORING URBAN FRINGE FARM PARCELS FOR PROTECTION



are areas that ranked highest (8 or above on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest priority). One limitation of this model is that because we used agricultural land cover as the base layer, potential urban farming opportunities are under identified. Vacant lots, unused portions of public or private parcels, lawns, and other areas that could become community gardens or plots for urban agriculture are not represented.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Next were a series of meetings with resource professionals from each county representing agriculture, planning, and economic development departments, agencies and organizations. Five meetings, one in each Triangle county, pulled together a total of 63 resource professionals. The farmland protection maps stimulated conversation and feedback on potential focus areas. These meetings gathered information on current county farmland preservation and farmer support efforts, and elicited ideas for farmland protection and agriculture and community economic development. A list of the resource professionals who provided feedback can be found in the Appendix.

## EXISTING PLAN REVIEW

During the resource professional and community outreach phases, members of the project team reviewed county Farmland Protection Plans and Agricultural Economic Development Plans for each county to better understand the county-specific context, priorities, and strategies for this work. The aim with the Triangle Farms for Food Strategy is to not duplicate work and recommendations of the plans

Following the resource professional meetings, three stakeholder meetings were held to engage the Triangle-wide community on why farmland preservation is important, what strategies we can use to protect working farms and farmland in the region, and where we should focus our efforts. Held in Raleigh, Hillsborough, and Pittsboro, these meetings were attended by 80 people, including many farmers. The workshop gathered over 300 ideas on ways to protect farms and farmers, along with 11 maps pinpointing potential place-based strategies. A list of contributors can be found in the appendix, along with the ideas generated at the stakeholder meetings.

that already exist, but to build on those efforts and identify opportunities and efficiencies at the regional scale.

Together, these sources provided the data used to develop the Triangle Farms for Food Strategy and Action Plan.



# STRATEGY AREAS

# SIX STRATEGIES

The Triangle Farms for Food Strategy and Action Plan seeks to address many of the determinants of farmland loss through a wide range of initiatives, programs, and policies. Based on the data collected, six key themes were identified around which the Triangle Farms for Food Strategy is structured: Leadership and Coordination; Land use Policy and Land Protection; Valuing Farmers and Farmland; Farmer Education and Assistance; Local Food Economy; and Funding and Financing.

For each strategy area we have identified a mission (what we are going to do) and articulated a rationale (why we are going to do it). The Action Plan 2017-2020 outlines objectives for each strategy area (how we are going to do it) and recommends priority actions to implement the Strategy that will help achieve our collective vision.



WITHIN EACH STRATEGY AREA:

**MISSION**



IS SUPPORTED BY

**RATIONALE**



AND LEADS TO

**ACTIONS**

# 1

## LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

### MISSION:

Develop and put into place an organizational model to support implementation of the strategy.

### RATIONALE:

Addressing farmland protection and local food access is a collective responsibility. No single entity has the resources and capacity required to effectively address this complex issue. Bringing together individuals and organizations already active on these issues will enable coordination across sectors to build on what is already being done.

By engaging these organizations and aligning their activities, the resources we already possess can be used more effectively and will have greater impact. Implementation of this strategy will depend on an effective leadership team consisting of an organizational driver, strategy area leaders and supporting partners, all of whom are bolstered by active stakeholders. Identifying the leaders and partners needed in this approach has already begun, and is expected to expand over the first year of strategy implementation.





# 2

## LAND USE POLICY AND LAND PROTECTION

### MISSION:

Integrate farmland preservation and agricultural development into existing and new land use policies and protection strategies, coordinated at the regional scale.

### RATIONALE:

Land use, planning, and economic development decisions made within the Triangle can have significant impacts on the potential to convert farmland to other uses or to create farm operations in nontraditional places.

If we integrate high priority farmland protection and agricultural development areas into land use policies, we will create opportunities to explore innovative farmland protection and agricultural production activities in conjunction with other land use priorities.

Coordination at the regional level is important to capitalize on inter-jurisdictional opportunities and avoid unintended consequences of local land use decisions on neighboring counties and municipalities. Farmland preservation in the Triangle must co-exist with regional development objectives that make the Triangle a vibrant and growing region.



# 3

## VALUING FARMERS AND FARMLAND

### MISSION:

Re-establish the public's agricultural literacy and shared values for farmland that lead to market value and political will to preserve agricultural land and support a healthy farm and food system.



### RATIONALE:

Greater urbanization and increasing distance from farm to market characterize the contemporary world and food system. These trends have led to a decline in general knowledge about food and farming. By rebuilding an understanding of the value of farms among citizens, organizations, and policy-makers, decisions and policies can be made that value farmland appropriately. If consumers develop a greater awareness of the value of local farmland, they will be more likely to demand local farm products, and to speak up in support of the Triangle's farms and farmers.

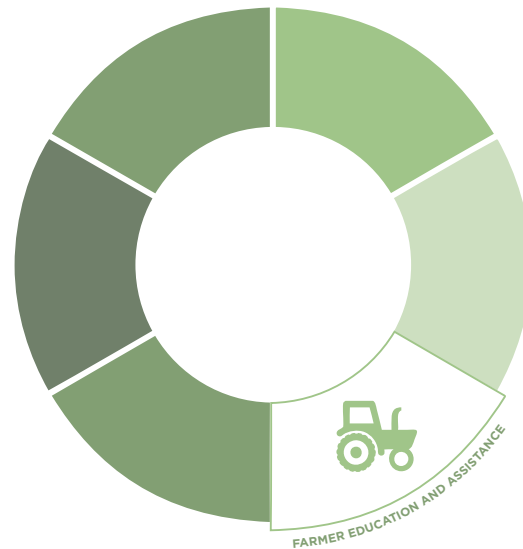
While the value of preserving farmland may be built on clear principles and logical arguments, it may not follow that effective policy will result. To complement issues-based policy advocacy and programs, a campaign to create a moral desire for farmland preservation at the community level can be powerful in building public and political will around a cause such as farmland preservation. A regional identity to support this moral connection to farmland can also be used as a marketing and branding tool for local food products, and it can help to coordinate policy-making across the multiple jurisdictions in the region.

# 4

## FARMER EDUCATION AND ASSISTANCE

### MISSION:

Provide agricultural education, business training, technical support, farm incubation opportunities, and succession planning assistance to cultivate the next generation of farmers and to support farmers of all experience levels so they have the means and skills to thrive.



### RATIONALE:

As the Triangle's agricultural landscape changes, so too do the education and training needs for students, new farmers, and established farmers looking to transition to the next generation. Supporting the region's agricultural heritage and expanding its agricultural economy depends on comprehensive, affordable college training programs, on-the-ground learning experiences, accessible technical support for a variety of products and market opportunities, and widespread, well-informed succession planning.

Moreover, those starting a career in agriculture - whether they are first-year farm apprentices or people pursuing a mid-life career change - face many barriers in establishing their farm businesses, from difficulties securing loans and accessing affordable, productive farmland to student loan debt. Successfully preserving Triangle farmland depends on having a diverse group of well-trained, well-supported farmers with equitable access to support, assistance and opportunities to keep land in production or bring land into production in new places and innovative ways.

# 5

## LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

### MISSION:

Expand markets and infrastructure to keep local food products in the Triangle's food system.

### RATIONALE:

The essential value in farmland is that it produces what consumers demand. Whether commodity farming or in small diversified farms, the revenue found in growing and selling crops or animal products is the economic foundation for farmland preservation.

From a market standpoint, the greatest opportunity for farmland preservation lies in expanding the revenue available to farmers, thus attracting new farmers and new capital, and increasing the financial value of farming as a land use. If we increase demand for local products and enhance the production, distribution, and processing infrastructure that keeps local products in the local market, we can ensure a thriving farm and food system.



# 6

## FUNDING AND FINANCING

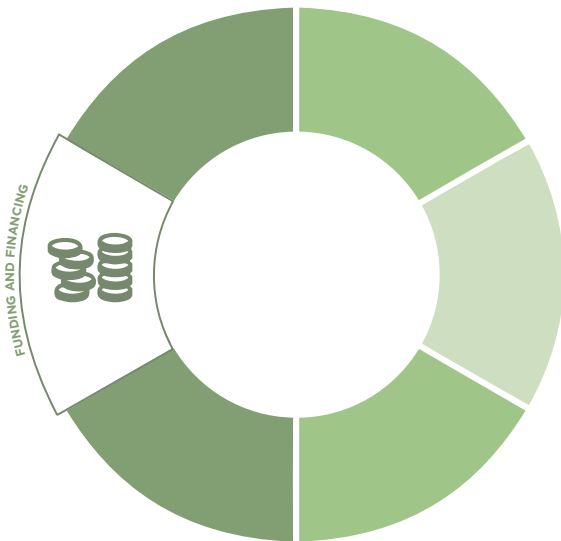
### MISSION:

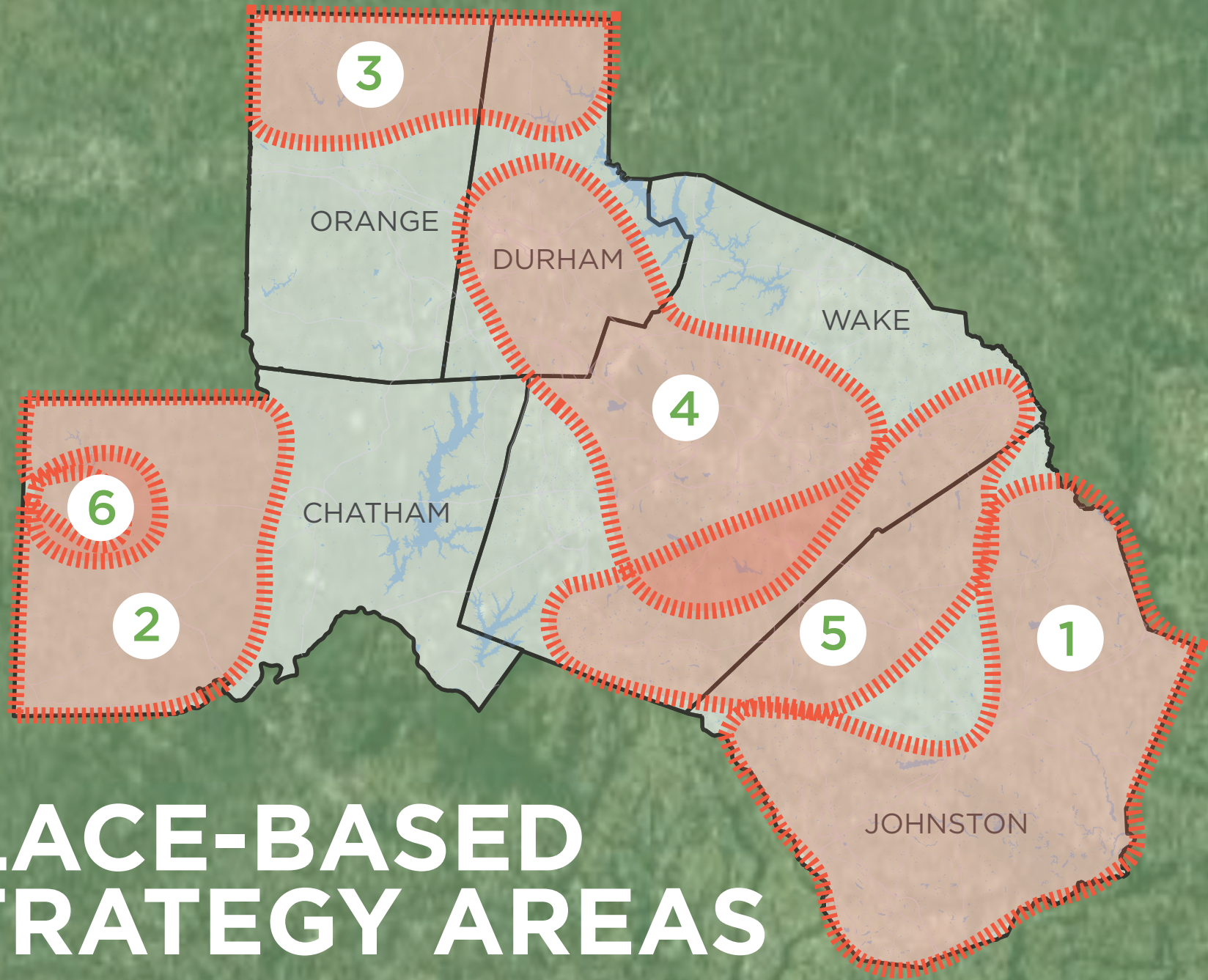
Increase public funding for farmland preservation programs, and attract new capital to farm businesses and local food system projects.

### RATIONALE:

Growth in the Triangle is exploding. In the face of limited farm profitability, development pressure, rising taxes, and high equipment and supply costs, farmers often make the hard decision to sell their land. While more people means a larger market for agricultural products, significant financial barriers prevent new farmers from acquiring land, and prevent established farmers from increasing revenue by entering new markets. Increased access to funding and capital is necessary to support farmland preservation in the Triangle's growing economy. Funding traditional conservation efforts will increase the reach and effectiveness of these programs.

Opening new capital channels for farmers at all stages of their career will help bring new energy, creativity, resources and equity to farming, helping the sector develop its value in relation to the Triangle's development trends.





# PLACE-BASED STRATEGY AREAS

# PROPOSED PLACE-BASED STRATEGIES

- 1 SOUTHEASTERN JOHNSTON COUNTY LARGE FARMS
- 2 WESTERN CHATHAM COUNTY LARGE FARMS AND LIVESTOCK
- 3 NORTHERN ORANGE AND DURHAM COUNTIES: TRANSITIONS AND NEW MARKETS
- 4 URBAN AGRICULTURE FOCUS IN DURHAM AND WAKE COUNTIES
- 5 COUNTY LINE: WAKE AND JOHNSTON COUNTY SMALL FARM NETWORKS
- 6 SILER CITY FARM RING

Place-based strategies recognize that the agricultural, economic, and social landscape of the Triangle is not homogenous. Capitalizing on local differences will be an important part of achieving this ambitious vision.

The local approaches presented in this section cut across the six strategy areas discussed above, drawing on unique local opportunities for farmland preservation actions. Resulting from a combination of the farmland mapping analysis with stakeholders'

ideas and observations, these place-based strategies align with the principles outlined previously and the action plan that follows, using local assets and observations to address multiple facets of farmland loss.

The GIS model informs these strategies by identifying priority farmland for preservation. The map-based stakeholder ideas indicate farmland pressures, local assets, and potential activities suggested by people with on-the-ground experience in these locations. By overlaying these data sets, possible place-based strategies have emerged in response to local conditions, presenting flexible opportunities for partner engagement.

It is important to realize, that these are not the only opportunities to implement different farmland preservation actions in the Triangle region. Each place has its own wisdom that must be part of effective solutions. This section is meant to support the process of place-based problem solving.

WITHIN EACH PLACE-BASED STRATEGY:

**MAPPING**



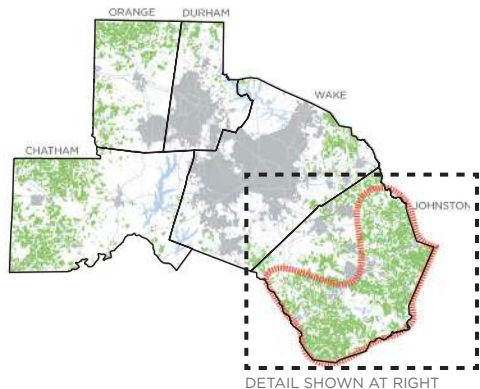
**STAKEHOLDER OBSERVATIONS**



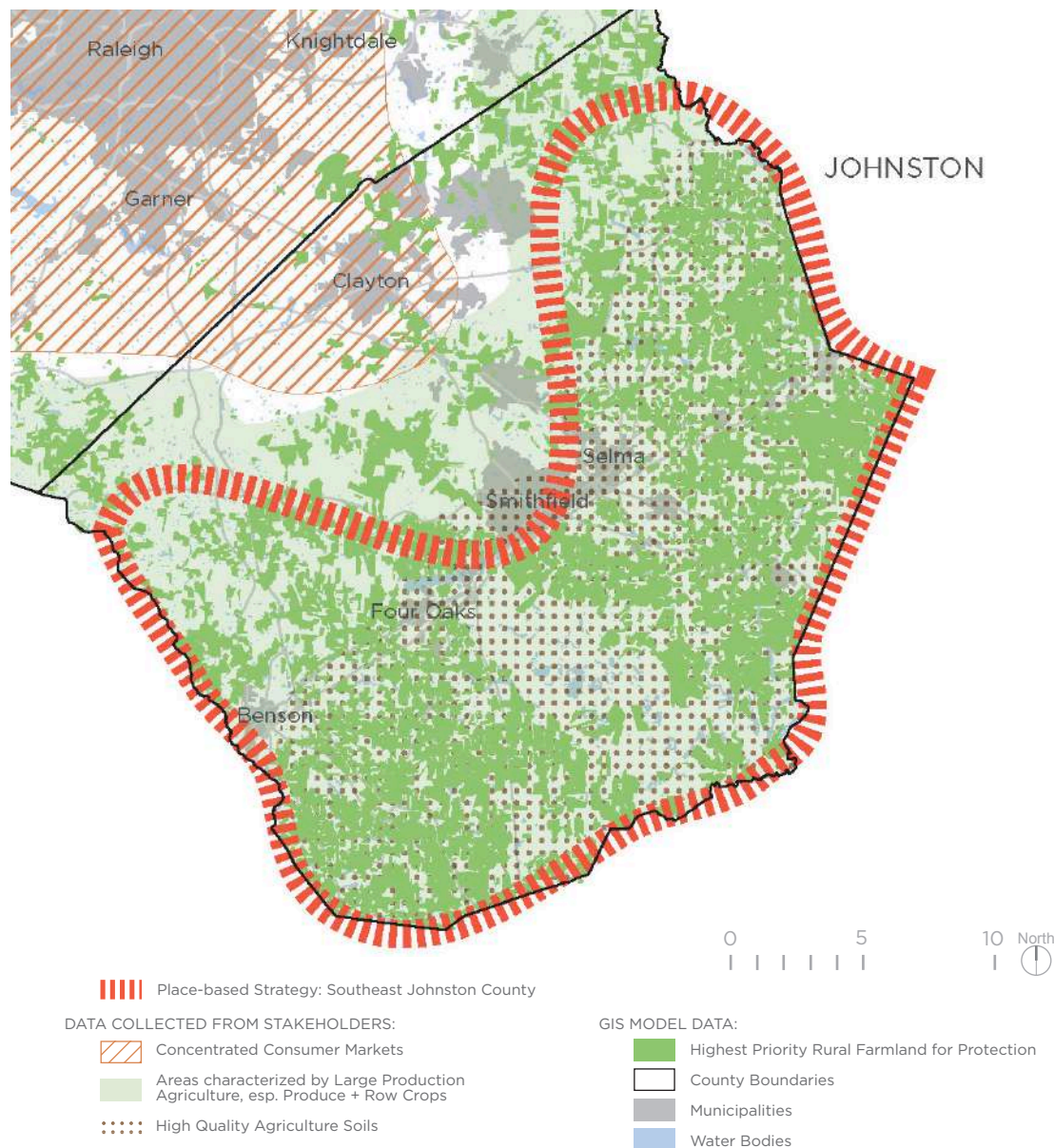
LEAD TO

**ACTIONS**

1



## SOUTHEASTERN JOHNSTON COUNTY LARGE FARMS



### ASSETS & OBSERVATIONS:

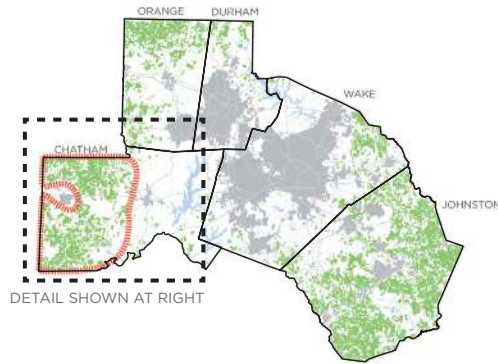
- Concentration of high priority rural farms
- High quality agricultural soils
- Existing connections to concentrated markets and consumer demand
- Area of large production agriculture, in particular produce and row crops

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Expand local grain production and processing
- Focus on farm transition issues including estate planning for aging farmers
- Facilitate land and knowledge transfer between aging and beginning farmers
- Expand farmer training programs that match the local agricultural character
- Continue farmland preservation efforts
- Incorporate underlying soils quality into planning decisions
- Keep existing farmland active to increase long term farming viability.



# 2



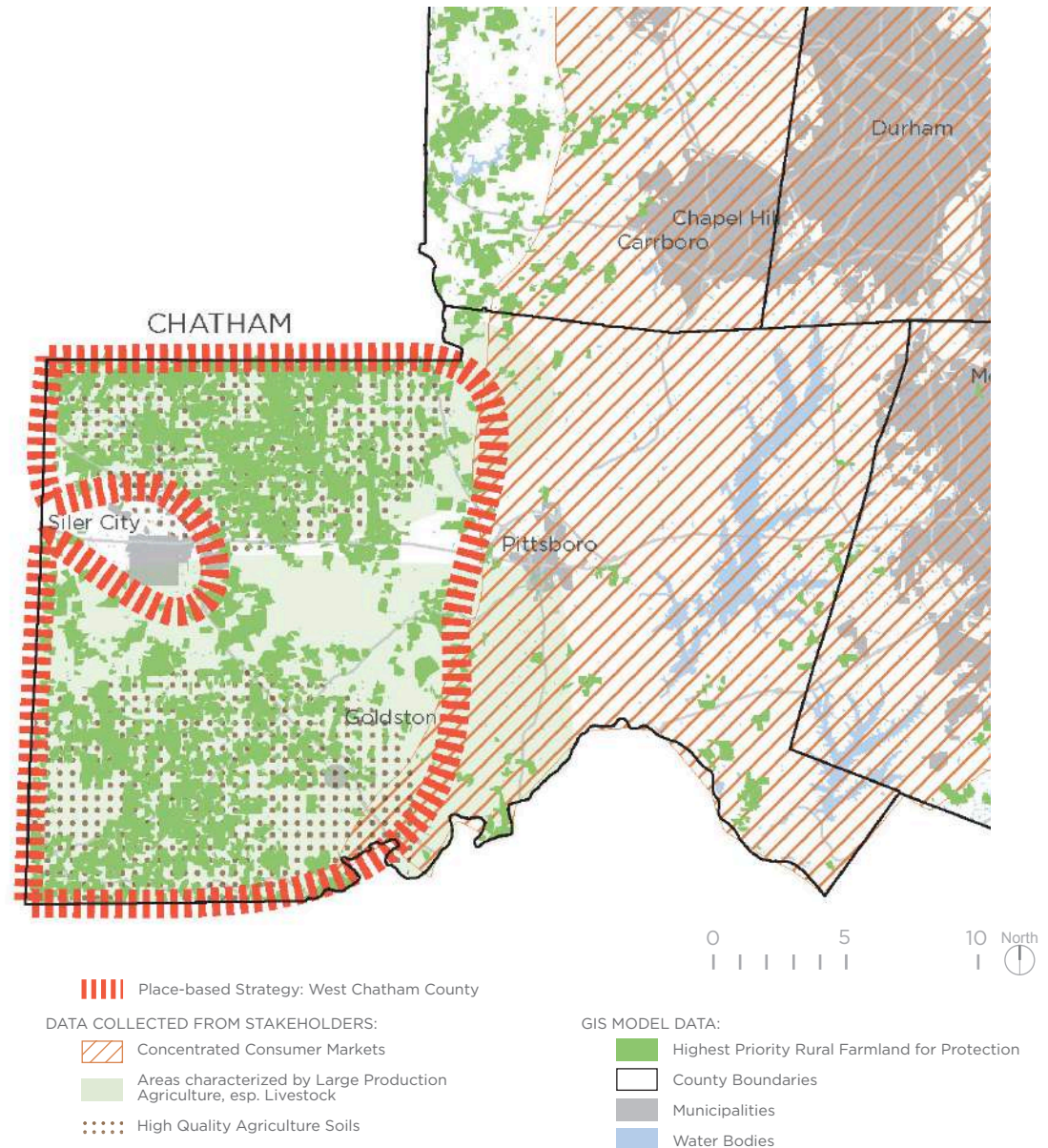
## WESTERN CHATHAM COUNTY LARGE FARMS AND LIVESTOCK

### ASSETS & OBSERVATIONS:

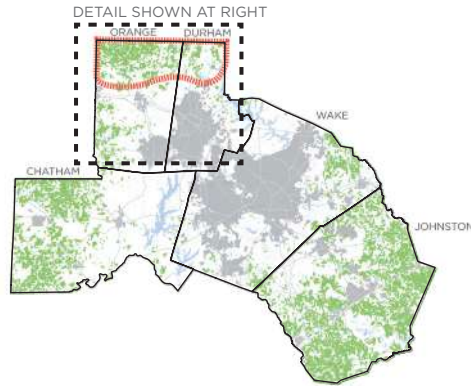
- Concentration of high priority rural farms
- High quality agricultural soils
- Area characterized by large production agriculture and livestock farms
- Pittsboro’s Central Carolina Community College Sustainable Agriculture Program, and new farmers training program

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Develop coordinated direct and cooperative marketing ventures, particularly in livestock processing and value added meat processing
- Expand farmer training programs that match the local agricultural character
- Continue farmland preservation efforts
- Incorporate underlying soils quality into planning decisions
- Keep existing farmland active to increase farming viability



# 3



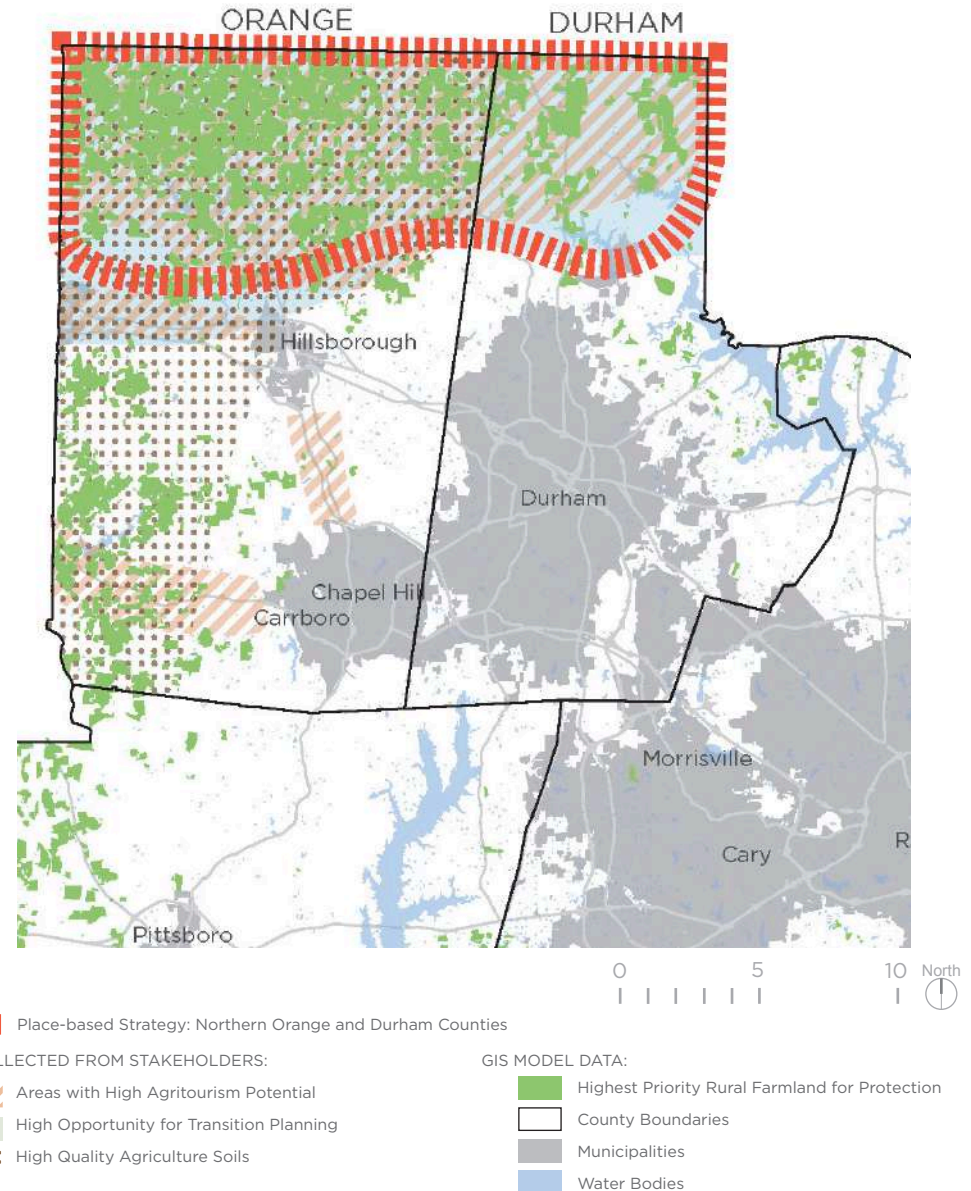
## NORTHERN ORANGE AND DURHAM COUNTIES: TRANSITIONS AND NEW MARKETS

### ASSETS & OBSERVATIONS:

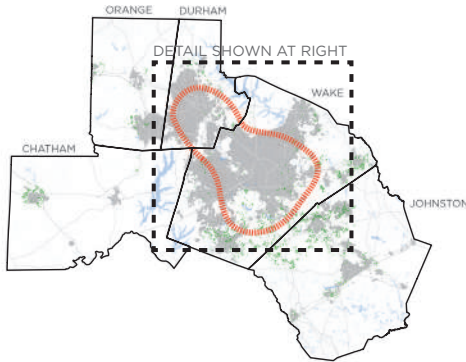
- High quality agricultural soils
- Proximity to concentrated markets and consumer demand
- Aging farmers looking to transition out of farming
- Major transportation routes, nearby urban areas and scenic rural landscape
- Strong current support from counties for farmland protection, farmer training, and farm/ food entrepreneurship
- Local urban culture helps attract young farmers looking for urban as well as rural experiences

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

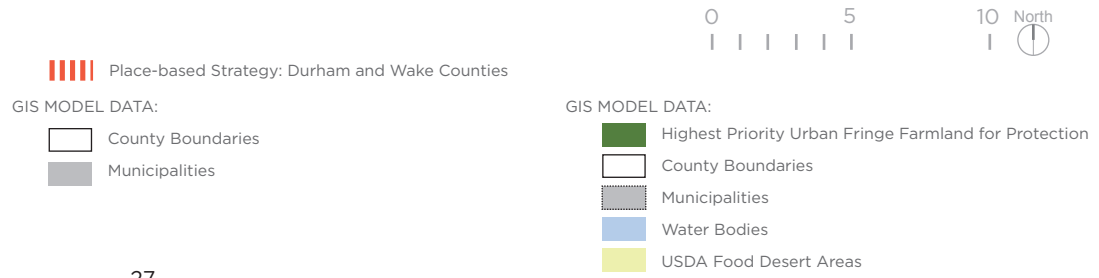
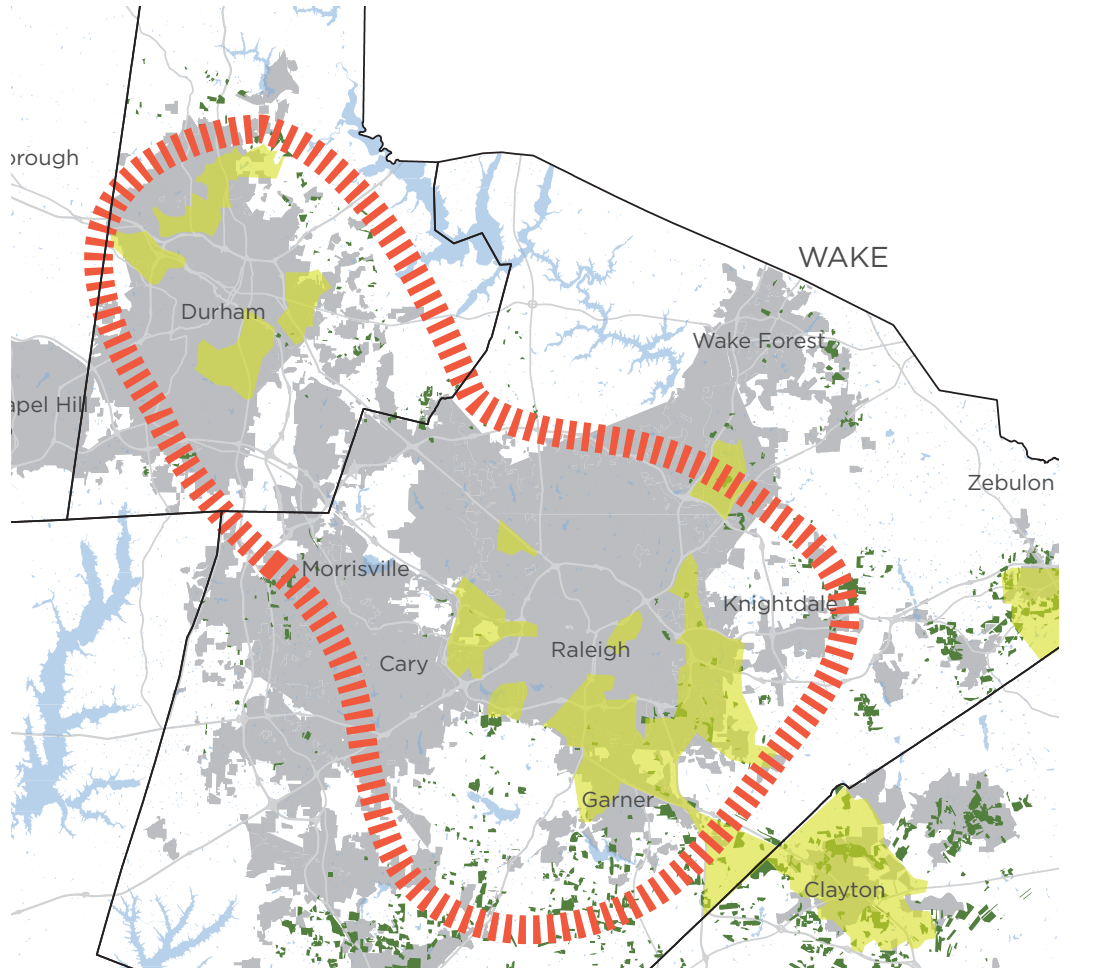
- Focus on diversified farms and entrepreneurship to engage the shifting landscape of the agricultural economy
- Accelerate farm transition efforts
- Build on existing local food production
- Take advantage of the Piedmont Food and Agriculture Processing Center
- Increase agritourism venues



# 4



## URBAN AGRICULTURE FOCUS IN DURHAM AND WAKE COUNTIES



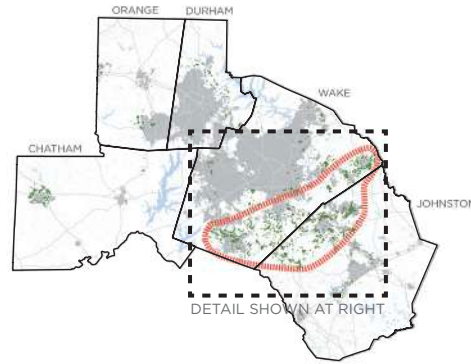
### ASSETS & OBSERVATIONS:

- Concentration of markets and consumer demand
- Chefs and restaurant customers in Raleigh and Durham have a growing interest in locally sourced food
- Multiple USDA Food Deserts identified
- School interest in gardening and farming opportunities, such as the DPS HUB FARM

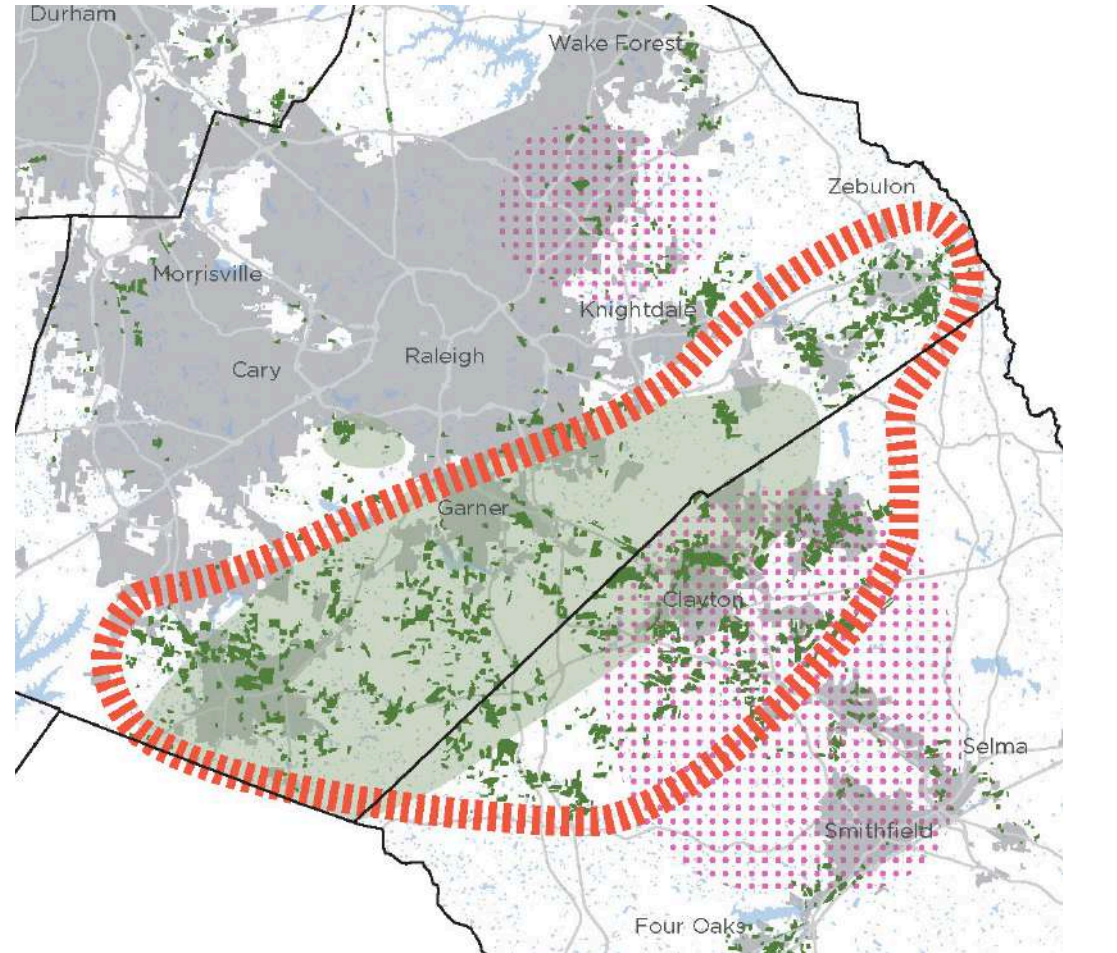
### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Clarify the need for urban agriculture
- Increase resources available for urban agriculture coordination and projects
- Identify and activate suitable locations for urban agriculture and community gardens
- Expand and develop farmers markets and food hubs
- Develop urban incubator farms
- Connect schools with urban farms in farm-to-school programs

# 5



## COUNTY LINE: WAKE AND JOHNSTON COUNTY SMALL FARM NETWORKS



### ASSETS & OBSERVATIONS:

- Concentration of high priority urban fringe farms
- High concentration of markets and consumer demand
- Area of small, diversified farms
- Potential for food hubs to connect local producers with local markets
- Programs like present use value and Voluntary Agriculture Districts available for small farms

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Design integrated supply chain infrastructure, marketing, and farmer resources
- Support small acreage production through food hubs
- Develop a coordinated production and marketing plan
- Build product recognition and scale of aggregated production.

||||| Place-based Strategy: Wake and Johnston County

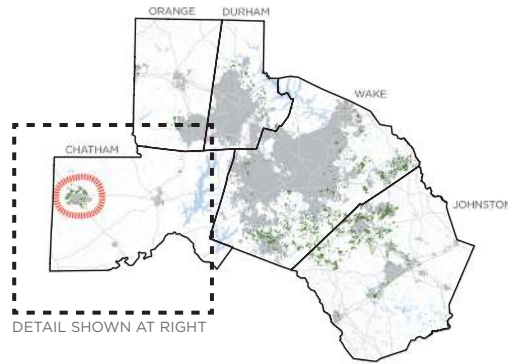
DATA COLLECTED FROM STAKEHOLDERS:

- Areas characterized by Smaller Diversified Farms
- Potential Areas for New Food Hubs

GIS MODEL DATA:

- Highest Priority Urban Fringe Farmland for Protection
- County Boundaries
- Municipalities
- Water Bodies

# 6



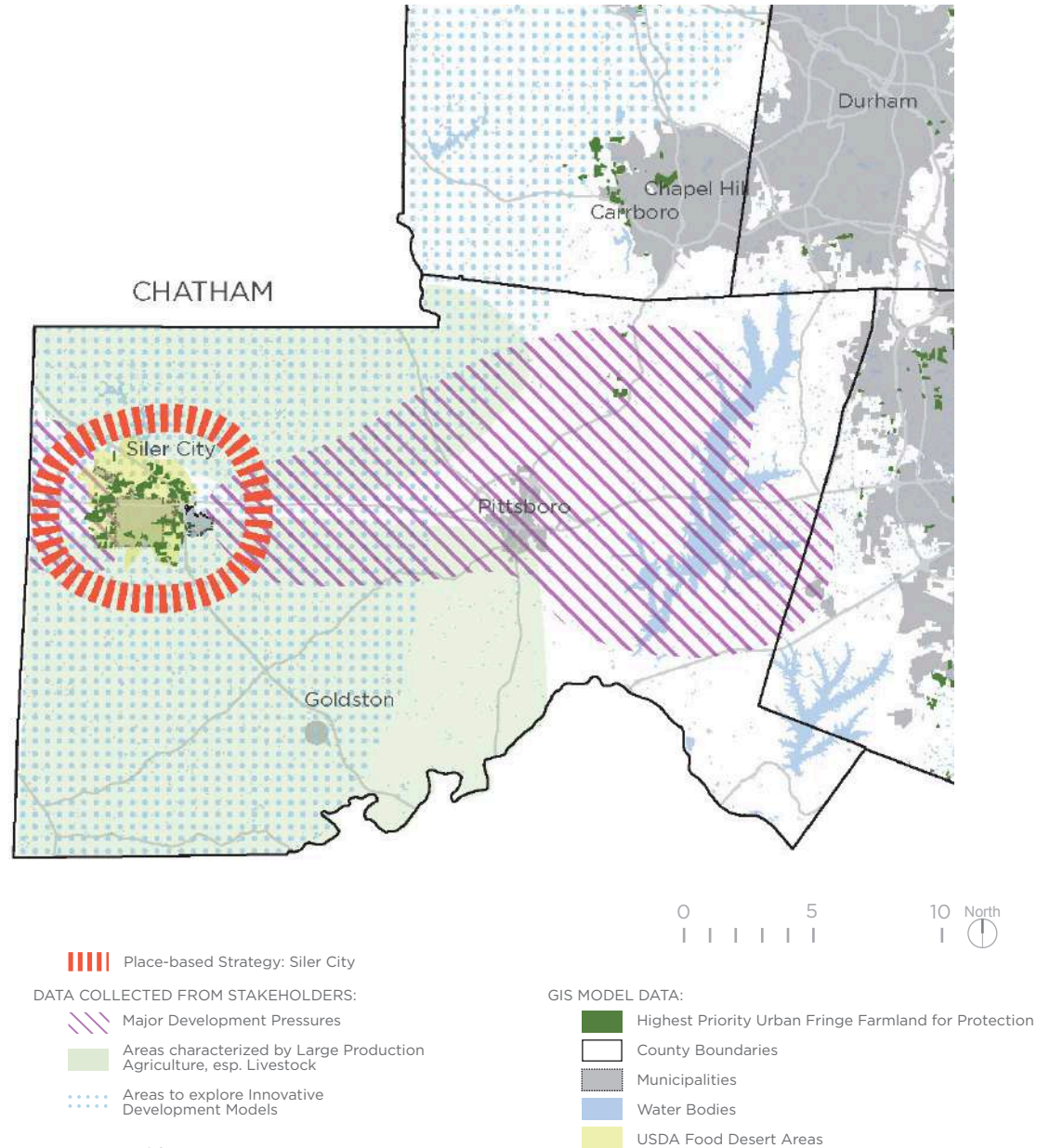
## SILER CITY FARM RING

### ASSETS & OBSERVATIONS:

- Concentration of high priority urban fringe farms
- Experiencing development pressures from east and west, threatening conversion of farmland to development
- Multiple USDA Food Deserts identified
- Food access and food security, to ease food desert conditions, can be supported with local farms
- New residential cluster development models

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Initiate a farm belt project to create a peri-urban ring of small, diversified, intensively cropped farms to provide local food, training opportunities and agricultural jobs in the community
- Integrate agriculturally-oriented cluster developments so that new development can co-exist with farmland preservation





# ACTION PLAN 2017-2020

The Action Plan offers a comprehensive approach to addressing farmland protection and local food access in the Triangle region, and will guide efforts over the next three years. The Action Plan includes a number of recommended actions to support each objective for the strategy areas. Within the action lists, there are both existing and proposed new actions. The majority of the actions included here were suggested by stakeholders during the engagement phases of this project, and many of them were mentioned multiple times.

The actions included in this Action Plan were evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Achievable in three years**
- **Supports three or more of our principles guiding action**
- **Generated through engagement of resource professionals and/or stakeholders**
- **Has regional impact**
- **Supports greater farmland preservation**

## **INDICATORS**

The success of this strategy and action plan will be measured at different levels. At the highest level, we expect all of our actions to affect the agricultural land base. To track this we have identified two cross-cutting metrics for success:

1. **The number of acres of Triangle region land in agricultural production; and**
2. **The number of farms in the Triangle region.**

A baseline for these two cross-cutting metrics is the latest NC Agricultural Census. These two metrics will be revisited with subsequent Agricultural Censuses (beginning with anticipated release in 2020) to measure progress.

Within each strategy area, indicators for measuring progress on each objective will be developed by the strategy area teams that will be established to carry out this work.

1. Leadership and Coordination		
Objectives	Actions	Related Place-based Strategies
Establish leadership team to guide strategy implementation	Identify appropriate organizational driver to coordinate the strategy area teams, collect data to measure progress, and ensure accountability.	NA
	Develop and implement funding model to support organizational driver.	NA
	Identify and recruit appropriate leads for each strategy area.	NA
	Identify and recruit supporting partners for each strategy area.	NA
	Identify appropriate organizational structure (e.g. informal coalition, formal partnership) for the leadership team.	NA
	Ensure all interests are equitably represented at the table.	NA
Facilitate regular communication and collaboration among stakeholders	Convene regular meetings of the leadership team, partners and stakeholders to share success, identify barriers, and enable continued progress.	NA
Develop regional approaches and partnership capacities to protect farmland focus areas and promote agricultural economic development	Build support within the NC Department of Commerce, NC Department of Agriculture, and regional and county authorities for a regional farmland protection and agricultural economic development position.	ALL
	Explore collaboration among local and regional governments to expand the local food economy.	ALL
	Incorporate urban growth projections, agricultural infrastructure information, agricultural economic data, stakeholder input, and other local data into regional farmland protection and economic development strategies.	ALL



<b>2. Land Use Policy and Land Protection</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Related Place-based Strategies</b>
Expand land use initiatives that support farmland protection and agricultural economic development	Integrate prime farmland soils and existing agricultural areas into land use and open space planning considerations and requirements.	1,2,3,5,6
	Develop proposals to include agriculture priority areas, agricultural enterprise zones, farm enterprises, and other incentives as part of Voluntary Agricultural Districts and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts.	1,2,3,5,6
	Consider establishing urban growth boundaries and rural buffers.	4,5,6
	Facilitate dialogue between planners, developers, elected officials, and farmers to promote mutually beneficial land use decisions that protect farmland and agricultural communities.	1,2,3,5,6
Integrate high priority farmland protection focus areas into farmland preservation strategies	Increase communication about the value of high priority farmland protection focus areas as determined by local land trusts and conservation organizations to local and state elected officials and agriculture support organizations.	NA
	Target state and local conservation efforts and resources to farmland focus areas.	1,2,3,5,6
Develop policy that leverages benefits of/supports urban agriculture	Incorporate urban agriculture into comprehensive plans and development ordinances.	4,5,6
	Develop land use strategies to connect urban growers with vacant or underutilized land, particularly in food desert areas.	4,5,6
	Create pathways for agricultural production on available public lands.	4,5

<b>3. Valuing Farmers and Farmland</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Related Place-based Strategies</b>
Increase the number of people that visit farms, and are exposed to agricultural ideas and experiences	Build and expand creative on-farm partnerships such as with churches, youth recreation, pre-K programs, higher education, hospitals and wellness centers, etc.	3,4,5,6
	Increase opportunities for farm-based internships.	3,4,5,6
	Increase and promote agritourism activities in Triangle, such as by exploring policies that support working farms that engage in agritourism.	3,4,5,6
	Expand multi-faceted farm-to-school programs that include farm field trips, school gardens, and local farmer-to-school opportunities.	4,5
Strengthen emotional and moral connections to Triangle farmland	Promote and expand recognizable brands for Triangle region agriculture to create a powerful desire to support regional farms and food.	All
	Engage innovative marketing and branding professionals and learn from successful marketing campaigns to build branding strategies.	All
	Build partnerships with agricultural economic development organizations to implement brand and marketing strategy that links local food trends to farmland preservation outcomes.	All
Strengthen political will to preserve farmland	Compile and share resources for farmland and local food awareness campaigns among elected officials at all levels.	NA
	Implement campaign to educate elected officials on importance of farmland preservation and how agriculture contributes to the regional economy.	NA

<b>4. Farmer Education and Assistance</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Related Place-based Strategies</b>
Increase training and incubation for new farmers	Examine the direct and indirect costs and benefits of incubator farms.	3,4,5,6
	Develop new models for incubating farmers that lower costs and increase impact.	All
	Expand farm and agricultural business education offerings and participation.	All
Create centers for agricultural education, training, outreach, and technology	Explore partnerships between Cooperative Extension, Community Colleges, and Early College Programs to develop farm programs and agricultural training centers.	All
	Expand agricultural outreach and training programs at existing local food centers such as food hubs, incubator farms, conserved agricultural lands, or farmers markets.	3,4,5,6
	Support establishment of a regional agriculture and food technology center.	All
Strengthen farm succession planning on Triangle farms	Increase funding resources for regional workshops on farm succession planning for landowners, attorneys, and land inheritors.	1,2,3
	Develop informational and funding resources for succession planning, including support for advisors to do individual consultations.	1,2,3
Build farmer support networks and social communities	Provide incentives to existing farmers to mentor or apprentice beginning farmers.	1,2,3
	Create events and online spaces for new farmer networking, socializing, and relationship-building.	4,5,6
	Create networking opportunities to support minority and limited resource farmers.	All
Increase access to affordable farmland	Expand farmland access programs in coordination with incubator farms and regional farm schools to facilitate new farmers finding affordable agricultural land.	3,4,5,6
	Create opportunities for agricultural production on conserved lands.	1,2,3,5,6
	Ensure comprehensive listings of available agricultural properties on land link websites.	NA
	Establish a buy-protect-sell program to make farmland available to new farmers at agricultural land prices.	1,2,3,6
	Collaborate with diverse land preservation organizations to identify ways to support minority and limited resource landowner access to farmland.	All

5. Local Food Economy		
Objectives	Actions	Related Place-based Strategies
Create a comprehensive local food infrastructure that supports economically viable local farm operations	Conduct a study of food distribution in the region and the potential for public or public/private food hubs to improve regional aggregation, packaging, distribution and sales of local food.	All
	Explore collaboration among public farmers markets in the region to facilitate strategic planning for the healthy growth of public markets and an increase in overall attendance and consumer spending.	4,5,6
	Assess the existing capacity of small-scale processing and food manufacturing facilities in the region and the feasibility of expanding this sector.	2,3,4,5,6
	Expand or create local food entrepreneurship and business incubator programs.	4,5,6
	Expand and strengthen existing networks of food and farm businesses and support organizations, encouraging sustainable small business development through economies of scale.	All
Increase demand for regional produce and food products	Encourage employers to incentivize employees' participation in Triangle-based Community Supported Agriculture programs.	4,5,6
	Work with Triangle governments, institutions and wholesalers to identify ways to increase procurement of local/regional foods, such as through food purchasing policies.	3,4,5,6
	Increase funding for "Double Bucks" programs that provide price incentives for federal food assistance recipients to buy fresh local produce, and expand it to more farmers markets and grocery stores across the region.	4,5,6
	Explore methods to increase regional/local foods in K-12 schools and other institutions.	4,5,6

<b>6. Funding and Financing</b>		
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Related Place-based Strategies</b>
Allocate more public funding for farmland conservation programs	Reinstate state conservation tax credit for permanent agricultural easements.	1,2,3,6
	Increase state funding for farmland preservation and create a new funding program focusing on local food production, such as urban ag projects, incubator farms, small acreage farms, etc.	All
	Increase local government funding for farmland preservation and agricultural development projects.	All
	Streamline ability to match local, state, and federal funding resources for agricultural easements.	All
	Explore county and municipal cost share programs, grants, and tax incentives for urban agriculture and urban farms.	4,5,6
Improve impact and effectiveness of property tax incentive programs	Make nonprofit conservation and agricultural organizations that own working farms eligible for equitable property tax incentives similar to the PUV program.	1,2,3,5,6
Create new financial benefits to support farm businesses, innovation, and entrepreneurship	Develop opportunities for long-term equity leases that allow farmers to build equity in a site.	NA
	Enhance food business access to capital and credit to enhance ability to purchase from local farmers.	3,4,5,6
	Establish and expand revolving loan funds, low interest loan programs and grants for farmland acquisition and local food system projects.	4,5,6
	Establish low interest loans and business development planning grants for farmers and food businesses that mitigate food insecurity and improve equitable food access.	4,5,6
	Promote compatibility of farmland preservation and water quality protection programs through grant and cost-share criteria, funding, and regulations.	1,2,3
Establish financial assistance programs for new farmers	Expand affordable loan programs for new or beginning farmers to obtain land and equipment.	All
	Increase visibility and accessibility of existing financing resources for new farmers.	All
	Establish a tax credit for landowners that sell or lease farmland to new farmers at agricultural values.	All

# APPENDICES

The following appendices are available online at

<http://www.ctnc.org/protect/triangle-farms-for-food-strategy/>

1. GIS Farmland Prioritization Methods
2. GIS Mapping Results
3. List of Contributing Resource Professionals
4. List of Contributing Stakeholders
5. Stakeholders Ideas and Input
  - a. Values
  - b. Strategies
  - c. Place-based Activities

With questions or for more information, please contact Edgar Miller at [edgar@ctnc.org](mailto:edgar@ctnc.org)



