

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Interviews, public feedback, and data collection suggest a multitude of possible action areas for the public and private sectors. Recommendations are organized under the following thematic headings:

- Transition
- Farmland Protection Advisory Board
- Rural-Urban Connection
- Marketing
- County Government
- Regionalism
- Farming Communities

Each recommendation includes a suggested lead implementer, who would be responsible to assure that a strategic approach is established and milestones are achieved. However, all of these initiatives will succeed only with the cooperation of multiple partners.

KEY:

AEDC	Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator
BOCC	Board of County Commissioners
CCP	City-County Planning Office
CES	Cooperative Extension Service
CM	County Manager's Office
CVB	Convention and Visitors Bureau
DAC	Durham Arts Council
DCFM	Durham County Farmer's Market
DCP	Durham Central Park
DFR	Division of Forest Resources
FB	Farm Bureau
FPAB	Farmland Protection Advisory Board
IFS	Interfaith Food Shuttle
NCFTN	North Carolina Farm Transition Network
OSRE	Open Space & Real Estate Division
SEEDS	South Eastern Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District

PRIORITY RATINGS

- 1 Can be done within next 18 months. Minimal financial cost, with partners ready to collaborate.
- 2 Can be achieved in 2-3 years. Requires a longer time frame, organizational commitment, and perhaps additional funding.
- 3 Long-term goal over next 5 years. Significant new initiative that will require relationship-building, development of grassroots support, and outside funding.

a. **Transition**

Durham agriculture is full of transitions. The traditional tobacco and field crop landscape is now filling with houses, horses, and horticulture. Agricultural activity is no longer based primarily on commodities sold at a world market price and shipped to a faceless consumer across the globe. Now, Durham's part-time farmer may be selling organic vegetables or goat cheese to a neighbor down the road or a coworker at the Farmers Market. This is indisputably Durham's competitive advantage: someone can always grow it cheaper, but no one can grow it more locally. The traditional farm leadership in the county is aging, and the future of agriculture will depend on new farmers and absentee landowners seeking out innovative opportunities.

1. **The Durham County Farm Bureau will cultivate new farmers for leadership opportunities within the Farmland Protection Advisory Board, Soil and Water Conservation District, Farm Bureau, and other agricultural organizations.** Traditional field crop growers and part-time specialty farmers bring varied perspectives and knowledge. Farming of the future will not likely include many full-time farmers, but Durham's agricultural history has long included alternate sources of income to support farming lifestyles. Combining the knowledge and experience of lifetime farmers with the enthusiasm and marketing savvy of value-added newcomers will yield a powerful force for the future.
Partners: FPAB, SEEDS, CES, SWCD
Priority: 1
2. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will identify and communicate with landowning families to assist in their process of planning for the future of their farms.** FPAB will present a series of workshops for the farming community to provide information about legal, financial and marketing opportunities. The *North Carolina Farm Transition Network* (NCFTN), located nearby in Hillsborough, specializes in this area and can help Durham create a targeted educational program based on their successful *Planning the Future of Your Farm* series.¹
Partners: NCFTN, SWCD
Priority: 1
3. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will perform outreach to assemble and facilitate training of a body of professionals in the particular needs and opportunities associated with the ownership of rural land.** Attorneys, accountants, and financial advisors will be providing important guidance to families making difficult long-term decisions, and ensuring their proper knowledge of agricultural tax issues, conservation programs, and land protection opportunities. This offers the best hope that families utilize all available incentives to keep their land in farm use. NCFTN, NC State University, and the NC Farm Bureau have collaborated on continuing education courses around the state that tackle thorny technical issues.²
Partners: NCFTN, SWCD
Priority: 1

¹ <http://www.ncftn.org/planning/index.html>.

² <http://www.ncftn.org/RLU/index.html>.

4. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board with assistance from the Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator will link prospective new farmers with landowners who would like to see their farms better utilized to help beginners start farming at an affordable cost.** Many states have developed successful linking programs allowing new farmers to apprentice with experienced growers, and NCFIN offers a Land Link website for North Carolinians. However, these introductions tend to work best through individual connections rather than a centralized electronic system. Members of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board should make it a priority to reach out to their neighbors and figure out who might be open to a newcomer on their land and what it would take to make them successful.
Partners: CES, IFS, NCFTN, SWCD, FB
Priority: 2

b. **Farmland Protection Advisory Board**

The FPAB has been given the authority and responsibility from the Durham County Commissioners to “foster the wise use of our farmland resources by working with farmers, the community, government entities and agencies and other resources to identify and implement strategies for the preservation and enhancement of our farming community while protecting the land and soils for future generations.” This broad mandate reflects the great responsibility and opportunity bestowed on FPAB members by the citizens of the county. The FPAB needs to be creative and forward-thinking, challenging the farming community, general public and county leadership to enhance the transition of Durham agriculture to the next generation.

1. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will develop an updated farmland preservation ordinance that may include the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District option.** The EVAD program allows landowners to commit to keeping their land in agriculture for 10 years, in exchange for a set of benefits to be determined by the county. This allows the FPAB to recommend a new set of incentives that strengthen the partnership between farmers and the county, while giving landowners an additional protection option. FPAB will schedule outreach meetings in various parts of the county to elicit public feedback on the proper set of incentives for the updated ordinance. They should use the representatives from each district to understand more specific needs at various locations around the county. **Partners: CCP, BOCC, OSRE, SWCD**
Priority: 1
2. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will broaden board membership and attempt to fill all available slots.** It is important to gain the perspectives of new farmers, agricultural supply providers, youth, educators, realtors, alternative enterprises, etc. This offers a prime opportunity for the cultivation of new agricultural leaders. The board should also include forestry expertise as part of providing for the full range of needs of the rural landowner.
Partners: SWCD, DFR, CES
Priority: 1

c. **The Rural-Urban Connection**

Durham is an intimate county. With only a single municipality, the city supports the farms, and the farms support the city. Durham’s farmers are so small in numbers that they need the understanding and purchasing power of city dwellers to survive, while urban residents depend on the fresh food, water quality protection, open space, and governmental fiscal savings that the farms bring.

1. **The Cooperative Extension Service will support expanded urban agriculture opportunities.** Durham’s vibrant community gardening scene is unique in North Carolina and offers a wonderful venue for fresh food, entrepreneurial training, and brightening up many neighborhoods. Several buyers mentioned the lack of winter-time locally grown produce; this is an opportunity waiting to be seized by entrepreneurial small-scale farmers.
Partners: SEEDS, AEDC
Priority: 2
2. **The Cooperative Extension Service will explore the possibility of Durham becoming a Regional Outreach Training Center for urban agriculture.** The infrastructure and interest already exists through SEEDS and other community gardening organizations.
Partners: SEEDS, AEDC
Priority: 3



3. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will expand linkages between farming generations.** SEEDS does great work teaching kids to grow and sell food. There is a wealth of knowledge in rural residents who have grown food all their lives. The Farmland Protection Advisory Board should seek out opportunities to share the experience of the retiring generation of farmers with this next wave of horticultural enthusiasts by creating a mentorship³ program that matches older farmers and entrepreneurs with enthusiastic urban, suburban and rural youth.
Partners: FB, SWCD, AEDC, CES
Priority: 2

4. **The Cooperative Extension Service with the support from the Horticulture, 4-H and Livestock Extension Agents will support and promote agricultural 4-H programs.** Financial and technical assistance are a worthy investment in the next generation of farmers and a stronger urban understanding of rural communities. Samantha Gasson's 4-H program is doing a superb job of private fundraising to support their calf-raising endeavors, and Durham Cooperative Extension Service should become a more active partner in this and other grassroots efforts (p 40).
Partners: FB
Priority: 2

5. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will advocate for the expansion of agricultural education in the schools.** Such a program would incorporate forestry education into environmental science classes and expanding the county's sole remaining agriculture (ag) education program at Jordan High to other schools in the system and/or adding "Ag After School" programs. Farms offer an extensive range of educational opportunities in biology, genetics, and environmental science, but these connections remain largely untapped. Programs such as Mike Dupree's school greenhouse initiative needs funding support (p 39). The majority of Durham's remaining farmland is in the northern part of the county, yet there is no agricultural education program at Northern High School. The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Program's *Growing Minds* program is an example of a comprehensive approach to teaching our kids about where their food comes from and how to grow and prepare healthy meals.⁴
Partners: FB, SWCD, CES
Priority: 1

d. Marketing

With the relatively affluent and well-educated Triangle population, multitude of fine restaurants, and strong awareness of local food, a gold mine of opportunity awaits the entrepreneurially minded Durham farmer. The recent Farm-to-Fork fundraiser in Orange County, which matched area chefs with local farms, sold out its \$50 tickets, creating a vibrant scalpers market on Craigslist in search of farm-fresh creations.

³A good example of such a mentorship program is Score: <http://www.score.org/index.html>

⁴<http://growing-minds.org/>

1. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will promote local farms as an important part of its community character.** Farm tours modeled after the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association’s annual spring tours, maps of local pick-your-own and agritourism operations, and joint promotional efforts with the Convention and Visitors Bureau (see Asheville’s Foodtopia campaign⁵): will all raise public awareness of the diversity of local farms and create new loyal customers.
Partners: CES, CVB, SWCD, AEDC
Priority: 2

2. **The Board of County Commissioners with assistance from the County Manager’s Office will explore the establishment of purchasing programs by local governing bodies, such as the schools system, from local suppliers to promote local food production.** ⁶ With a phased-in mandate for government institutions, Durham could encourage private enterprises to follow suit and create a consistent demand level for local farmers.
Partners: AEDC, CES, FPAB
Priority: 3

3. **The Cooperative Extension Service will facilitate the development of new Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) connections.** With its large and community-spirited urban population, Durham could be a hotbed for CSAs, in which consumers buy a share of a farm’s harvest, receiving a weekly box of fresh produce, flowers, eggs, and meat. Community centers, churches, hospitals, and large employers could serve as advertising locations and drop-off points for farms looking for a convenient and consistent customer base. The current CSA market is supplied by farmers outside Durham County. An expanded CSA program offers a new market opportunity for Durham farmers.
Partners: FPAB, AEDC
Priority: 3

4. **The Cooperative Extension Service, with assistance from the Livestock Extension Agent, will focus public and private efforts on developing locally grown meats.** Currently, no one is marketing Durham-raised meats. There is enormous demand for grass-fed, natural, and organic beef, lamb, goat, pork, and chicken, for health- and quality-conscious consumers. Pastured livestock operations lend themselves well to moderate-sized acreage and can fit in with rapidly developing areas, as they don’t require huge operating investment. With processing facilities not too far away in Yanceyville and Siler City, local growers have proximity to the infrastructure and market needed for success.
Partners: FPAB, AEDC
Priority: 2

⁵ <http://www.exploreasheville.com/foodtopia/what-is-foodtopia/index.aspx>)

⁶ See page 32 of plan

5. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will link Durham’s vibrant arts community with its growing farms.** Old tobacco barns could be renovated as studios, farmers could be paired with artists for creative endeavors, and seasonal tours through the countryside would offer opportunities for increased sales for both.

Partners: DCP, DAC

Priority: 3

6. **The Durham Farmer’s Market Board will highlight the successes of the Durham Farmers Market and increase the Durham farmer presence.** Expand activities with local chefs and community groups to grow the customer base. The booming growth of this market is the talk of the Triangle. Now it just needs more vendors who live in Durham County, who can tell the story of local agriculture to citizens and media.

Partners: FPAB, CES

Priority: 1

e. County Government

Durham’s civil servants collaborate very enthusiastically for the preservation of farmland and promotion of profitable opportunities. This study has highlighted several ways local government could enhance this cooperation and the future of agriculture.

(reference, section 7.2.3 of the adopted Durham Comprehensive Plan)

1. **The Board of County Commissioners will continue current county efforts to acquire permanent conservation easements from interested farmers.** Permanent easements are an important tool to help ensure the long term availability of farmland in Durham. The current county policy of aggressively seeking grant funds has made this a very cost effective program.

Partners: OSRE, FPAB

Priority: 1

2. **The Board of County Commissioners, with assistance from the County Manager’s Office will work create a dedicated funding source for the protection of farmland and open space.** With rising real estate values, a bond measure is a particularly cost-effective means of protecting land quickly. There are a number of possible funding sources that could be used to pay off such a bond (see *Farmland Preservation* chapter for options).

Partners: FPAB, SWCD, OSRE

Priority: 2

3. **The Board of County Commissioners with assistance from the County Manager’s Office will urge the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service to create a new staff position to support livestock, forage, field crop production and 4H in Durham County.** The closest livestock extension agent was based in Orange County and has recently retired, leaving a gap in farmer support at a time when livestock production is increasing. The recent retirement of the regional livestock extension agent supporting Durham’s farmers will increase the challenge for the development of new operations, unless

Durham contributes financially to this position once again.

Partners: CES, FPAB, FB

Priority: 2

- 4 **The Board of County Commissioners with assistance from the County Manager's Office will create a new staff position(s) to support agricultural economic development opportunities.** This could be a full-time or part time employee. In other counties around the country, this position is housed here in Cooperative Extension, Economic Development, the Soil and Water Conservation District, or a combination. In Polk County, the position reports to the County Manager, with direction and oversight on plan and program development and implementation provided by the Farmland Protection Advisory Board. The ideal candidate would have experience in business development *and* agricultural production. The FPAB shall aggressively pursue grant opportunities to assist with the cost of the initial year(s) of position employment.
Partners: FPAB, SWCD, OSRE, CES
Priority: 2
- 5 **City-County Planning Office will consider modifications to the Unified Development Ordinance to improve the flexibility for bona agriculture to accommodate the new types of farms that are emerging.** Text amendments to allow increased farm buildings and employees for farm-related enterprises and support more urban agriculture are good first steps. An entirely new Agricultural Zoning Classification could be created that encourages and supports these activities. The Limited Agriculture Ordinance allowing poultry and beekeeping inside the city limits could be expanded to cover other farming enterprises.
Partners: CM, FPAB
Priority: 2
- 6 **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board with assistance from the Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator will work to establish a local Food Policy Council, which could identify gaps in the local food chain and focus efforts on educating citizens and farmers on how to be part of a safe and secure food system.** The NC General Assembly has recently adopted legislation establishing a statewide Food Policy Council, which could provide support and networking opportunities for a local version.
Partners: CES, CM
Priority: 3
- 7 **Cooperative Extension Service will coordinate and aggregate to help small farmers achieve economies of scale.** Durham's relatively small growers face an uphill battle in buying large lots of supplies, recycling agricultural plastic, consolidating products for shipments to institutional buyers, and creating a local identity. Local economic development and business development assistance could create a level playing field to help local growers compete with larger competition from the outside.
Partners: AEDC, FPAB
Priority: 3

- 8 **City-County Planning Office will explore the feasibility of a Transfer of Development Rights program.** Efforts to spur investment in the central urban core and stimulate development around the proposed new rail stations during challenging budgetary times lend themselves well to this privately funded planning mechanism.
Partners: CM, FPAB
Priority: 3

f. **Regionalism**

Durham is blessed to be in an area with so many agricultural amenities and motivated consumers, but faces the challenge of strong competition from farmers from other counties. The Triangle is a region with a clearly defined identity, and there are existing structures that could serve as a starting point for regional collaboration. The Triangle J Council of Governments and the NC Department of the Environment and Natural Resources are actively engaged in regional planning work, and Durham's representatives on any regional plans should have a strong understanding of the needs of the agricultural community. Durham should work closely with adjacent counties and municipalities to identify regulatory barriers (such as signage) which impact operations of local farmers. Other surrounding counties are also working on these farmland protection plans; Durham could be a leader in convening neighbors to discuss synergies and economies of scale in promoting the future of agriculture.

1. **The Soil and Water Conservation District will assure that all plans and rules surrounding water protection emphasize the needs and importance of local farms.** Durham's watersheds are under statewide jurisdiction. The farm community should actively participate in the creation and implementation of land use rules as they affect drinking water and recreational priorities for other counties. The County could also play a role here, both in advocating for farm friendly rules and in creating local rules that work in conjunction with state rules but impose no additional burden on Durham County agriculture.
Partners: CM, CCP
Priority: 1
2. **The Board of County Commissioners with assistance from the County Manager's Office will continue support and participation in the evolution of the *Piedmont Food & Agricultural Processing Center*.** Upon completion, use of this facility by Durham County will be highly beneficial.
Partners: CES, FB, FPAB
Priority: 2
3. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board with assistance from the Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator will create a "New Farmers Guide."** Durham agricultural support personnel should be familiar with the wonderful range of services available for new farmers in surrounding counties and be able to refer new growers. Examples of such resources include Breeze Farm Incubator, the Sustainable Agriculture Program at Central Carolina Community College, Growing Small Farms Extension

programs, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, Research and Extension at NC State, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association and American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, NC Farm Transition Network, nearby value-added processing facilities and agricultural supply providers.

Partners: CES, FB, SWCD

Priority: 2

4. **The Interfaith Food Shuttle will develop a local food distribution facility to receive the production of the many small farmers in the area and help distribute food to those in need.** This facility could be used to coordinate collection and provision of healthy food for low-income families and individuals.

Partners: FPAB, AEDC, BOCC

Priority: 3

g. Farming Communities

Farmers need a community of support and infrastructure to survive: equipment sales and repair, seeds and inputs, neighbors and trusted advisors.

1. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will identify Durham's unique and diverse farming heritage, such as minority and century farms, and schedule activities to increase this highly localized identity.** This would help newcomers become integrated into rural areas and find ways to share resources and expertise with longer standing farmers. Small area meetings within each Voluntary Agricultural District could identify their farming resources (stores, experienced farmers, custom service providers, marketing outlets, rentable land) to determine the future viability of farming in the area, as well as what the neighborhood needs to make farming successful.

Partners: FB, SWCD

Priority: 1

2. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will prioritize the preservation of our existing farming communities.** Proximity to other farms and agricultural suppliers is a strong predictor of long-term success and stability of a farm.

Partners: OSRE

Priority: 2

3. **The Farmland Protection Advisory Board will incorporate forestry education and needs into farmland protection strategies.** Forest practices in the county face the challenge of small lots which are difficult for management and attracting timber harvest. The annual landowners' summit should include expanded forest management education, and any additional outreach activities should emphasize potential profitability and natural resource benefits from timber harvest and timber stand improvement. The Farmland Protection Advisory Board should seek a member with strong forestry interests and knowledge.

Partners: DFR, OSRE

Priority: 1

9. **AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX**

This matrix organizes the recommendations by key implementer, with suggested implementation partners and priority categories. Successful accomplishments will depend on the creation of a strategy and work plan to carry out each recommendation, with target milestones and a commitment to revisit progress on a regular basis. A strong collaborative effort will be needed to fit these activities into already busy work agendas; the best way to achieve this will be to solicit grassroots support and volunteer assistance from citizens and community groups.

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Lead Implementer	Recommendation	Number	Partners	Priority
City-County Planning Office	UDO clarifications	e.5.	CM, FPAB	2
	Explore Transfer of Development Rights	e.8.	CM, FPAB	3
Cooperative Extension Service	Expand urban agriculture	c.1.	SEEDS, ADEC	2
	Urban ag training center	c.2.	SEEDS, ADEC	3
	Agricultural 4-H programs	c.4.	FB	2
	CSA expansion	d.3.	AEDC, FPAB	3
	Locally grown meats	d.4.	AEDC, FPAB	2
	Coordinate small farmers	e.7.	AEDC, FPAB	3
BOCC & County Manager's Office	Local food purchasing program	d.2.	AEDC, CES, EPAB	3
	Conservation easements	e.1.	OSRE, FPAB	1
	Dedicated funding source for farmland preservation	e.2.	FPAB, SWCD, OSRE	2
	CES Livestock Agent	e.3.	CES, FPAB, FB	2
	Agricultural Econ Development Coordinator	e.4.	FPAB, SWCD, ORSE, CES	2
	Support Piedmont Value-Added Center	f.2.	CES, FB, FPAB	2
Durham Farmer's Market	Highlight Durham farmers market	d.6.	FPAB, CES	1
Durham Farm Bureau	New farm leadership	a.1.	FPAB, SEEDS, CES, SWCD	1
Interfaith Food Shuttle	Food distribution facility	f.4.	FPAB, AEDC, BOCC	3
Soil and Water Conservation District	Represent farmers in regional planning	f.1.	CM, CCP	1

Lead Implementer	Recommendation	Number	Partners	Priority
Farmland Protection Advisory Board	Help landowning families transition	a.2.	NCFTN, SWCD	1
	Outreach to professional advisors	a.3.	NCFTN, SWCD	1
	Link landowners with new farmers	a.4.	CES, IFS, NCFTN, SWCD, FB	2
	Amend farmland preservation ordinance	b.1.	CCP, BOCC, OSRE, SWCD	1
	Broaden VAD board membership	b.2.	SWCD, DFR, CES	1
	Expand generational linkages	c.3.	FB, SWCD, AEDC, CES	2
	Expand agricultural education	c.5.	FB, SWCD, CES	1
	Promote local farms	d.1.	CES, CVB, SWCD, AEDC	2
	Link artists with farms	d.5.	DCP, DAC	3
	Establish Food Policy Council	e.6.	CES, CM	3
	Create “New Farmers Guide”	f.3.	CES, FB, AEDC, SWCD	2
	Farming community ID & outreach	g.1.	FB, SWCD	1
	Tie farmland preservation funding to key communities	g.2.	OSRE, AEDC	2
	Emphasize forestry needs	g.3.	DFR, OSRE	1

10. CONCLUSIONS

This report has documented a multitude of issues surrounding the past, present, and future of Durham County agriculture. Farmers, landowners and public- and private-sector individuals with an interest in the future of local farming face a broad range of challenges and opportunities. Durham's traditional crops and farmers are disappearing, and the county must quickly replace them with new growers and enterprises. With such a strong demand for locally grown foods, Durham sits in a strong position to cultivate its next generation of farmers, but a successful farm requires support infrastructure. Of particular importance to these new farmers is production and business development assistance.

The county has a long history of, and firm policy guidance for, protecting farmland. The local partnership working together on farmland protection is a statewide leader in leveraging funds from multiple state and federal sources, but in the next few years, budget shortfalls on all levels will make it difficult to maintain momentum. Durham's Urban Growth Boundary has stemmed the tide of development and farmland conversion in important agricultural areas, and the increasing emphasis on water quality protection will likely slow future growth. The City-County Planning Department and Open Space and Real Estate Division have successfully solicited local input through area open space plans, and they have shown responsiveness to needed changes in local ordinances and regulations as they impact farmland. It is incumbent upon farmers to be proactive in identifying potential barriers to success and working constructively with county staff to address them.

It is a cliché to say that this report won't help anyone if it sits on a shelf and collects dust, but the real challenge will come in moving these ideas forward amidst other busy schedules. The implementation matrix is designed to outline specific responsible entities and partners, and it is important to continually review progress and barriers. An annual progress report can be very valuable in this process.

The most important outcome of this report, however, will not be the particular recommendations or statistics, but rather the cooperation it can help create between offices, agencies, organizations, and individuals. Successful farmland protection and agricultural development in Durham County will depend on the collaboration of nontraditional partners, pursuing common goals and utilizing differing strengths to move the sector forward. Interested groups should think in terms of crossing lines: traditional and new, urban and rural, young and old, conventional and organic, white and black and Latino. Local agriculturalists must get out and talk to folks they never have before and try to learn something new. There are too few farmers and too few acres remaining to stay in separate boxes. If the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts, Durham agriculture can continue to enrich the county's diverse history by enhancing the quality of life for all of its citizens.