

PLAN CHATHAM: CHATHAM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

AGRICULTURAL SURVEY SUMMARY

- Basics
 - Survey Time Period: October – December 2016
 - 132 Responses
 - Good representation of different areas of the county (48% from the west, 52% from the east)
 - All types of agriculture represented (livestock, poultry, fruit/vegetable, specialty, horticultural and forestry operations)
 - Majority of responders worked with farms between 20 and 100 acres.
- Findings
 - Q4: **Residential growth and associated impacts was identified as the primary threat** to agricultural operations
 - Secondary threats include property tax rates, land prices, wildlife threats and water availability.
 - Q5: What factors contribute to **long-term viability of farms**?
 1. Limited surrounding residential development
 2. Productivity of soils
 3. Present Use Value (PUV) designation
 4. Proximity to agricultural operations and size of farm
 - Q6: What should strategic farmland map show?
 - Existing agricultural operations, protected lands (easements + PUV), best soils
 - Also interest in identifying lands important for other reasons (water quality and habitat)
 - Q7: What types of non-farm businesses are compatible with or help support farming directly or indirectly?
 - Agri-tourism (including event venues, B&Bs)
 - Food industry/Grocery/Restaurants
 - Processing facilities (food and forestry)
 - Farm and feed suppliers
 - Stockyards
 - Welding, Machining, Engine Repair
 - Q8: What should the county be doing to support agriculture?
 1. **Consider impact** on agriculture and forestry of new ordinances
 2. More **education and outreach** to farmers—and to non-farmers (about benefits of farms (ecological and economic))
 3. **Designate areas of important agricultural lands** and/or concentrations of working farms on a future land use map and direct development away from these areas
 - Some support for **zoning modification**, including an agricultural zoning district and **more flexibility** in current zoning.
 - 2.3% of respondents (3) said the county should be doing nothing more than its doing.

- Q9: What is it about your farming future that keeps you up at night?
 - **Residential Growth & Conflicts**
 - “That the focus of Development in Chatham County, is to eliminate farmers all together in Chatham. That housing owners beside our farm will at some point protest and ask for our farm to be closed because they may not like to live beside a farm due to the noises of animals or the smell of an animal...”
 - “Developments that encroach near farms that drive land prices up and take away from land that can be used to further expand farms. It is hard to compete with a developer when you are trying to buy land to farm and they have investors that want to build houses. Biggest fear to me is that I will be limited to space and my surroundings are developments. This can be seen if you go just into Wake County...”
 - **Strict ordinances and zoning regulations**
 - “Additional regulations from Federal, State, and County. Although farming is exempt from zoning, the new zoning enacted by the BOC will enable the county to put more and more regulations on us. If Agriculture is to remain #1 in Chatham County, the BOC and Chatham County must stop regulating us.”
 - “That with continuing regulations and restrictions that small farmers will be forced to sell out due to the financial burdens created. Some say this regulations are required to prevent damage to the surrounding environment but farming is 100% dependent on the environment.”
 - **Support for and understanding of local agriculture**
 - “Support of small agricultural enterprises: It's very important that we allow and continue to allow current small growers with 2-10 ..to create, develop and sustain small agricultural enterprises and be supported in this and not hindered by prohibitive rules and reg's, especially going forward. One of the most encouraging parts of living in this area is how gracious the climate...is for folks to create their own agrarian enterprises. Any rules and reg's going forward should further encourage..and allow residents to procure, own and operate small agriculture ventures to fortify and strengthen the resilience of our community.”
 - “We live in a society that has little to zero respect for farmers. People believe that food magically appears in the grocery store.”
 - “Finding workers when farming in an isolated part of the county; it would help if the CCC encouraged students to work in Deep-Chatham and/or supported their travel costs. I can't even get my extension agent to visit me unless there is a crisis because my farm is remote; more funding for extension.”
 - **Sustainability**
 - “Impacts of wide scale land development to water sources and critical wildlife areas, Accountability for violations of environmental impact violations, Strategic preservation of land and natural areas, Soil and water management”