

Southeast Special Area Study

Phase 2 Report

SEPTEMBER 2020

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PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT



Raleigh

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1 Introduction

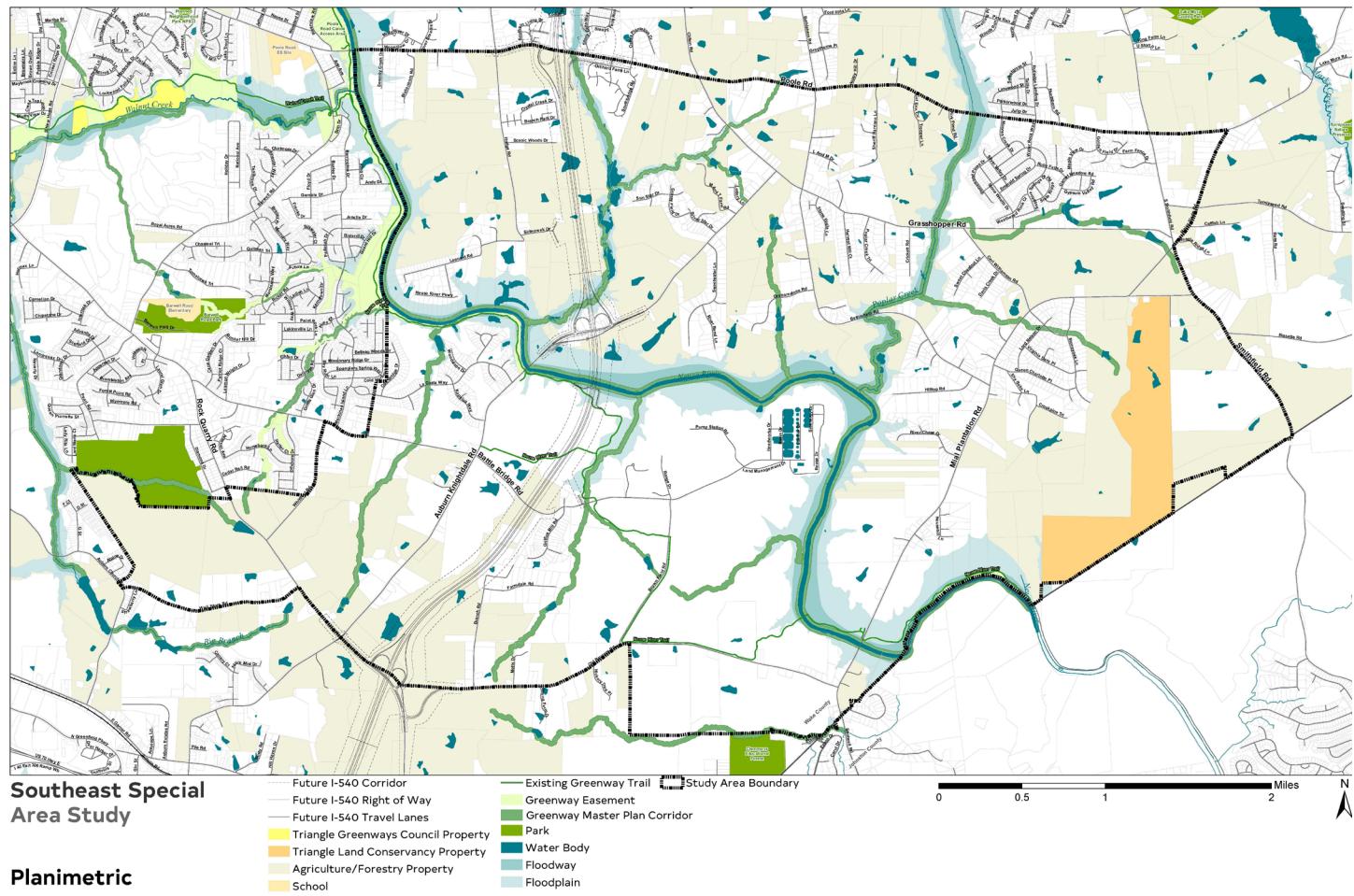
Area Study Process and Plan Purpose

The continuing growth of Wake County can mean more development pressure on the City. No surprise, these pressures can extend to the surrounding rural and natural areas. The 2030 Comprehensive Plan identifies the Southeast Special Study Area as an area where appropriate future land use should be studied further.

This study (Southeast Special Area Study) aims to accomplish two things:

- Examine policies that guide conservation and development in Southeast Special Study Area; and,
- Engage the public in conversations about what matters to them.
- The intended result is area-specific policy guidance for the Southeast area. This report summarizes Phase Two of the public engagement efforts for this study.

FIGURE 1 STUDY AREA



Two phases of public engagement have been completed for the Southeast Special Area Study. [Phase One](#) took a look at existing conditions. Several public 'listening sessions' and an online survey highlighted the following community priorities:

- natural resource preservation;
- safe travel through the area by various modes; and,
- proximity to commercial areas

During Phase Two, multiple City departments held a workshop to develop policy options for this area. These options aimed to address the needs and priorities of the community as communicated in Phase One:

- Work with County and non-profits to preserve land in the southeast area.
- Require tree preservation along the Neuse River.

- Require tree preservation along the future I-540.
- Plan to build greenways along streets in the area to connect with the larger network.
- Add greenway connections to the planned greenway network.
- Encourage commercial activity to center on either one or two development activity centers in the southeast area.

With this list of draft policy options, staff reached out to the community in Phase Two engagement. A full summary of community preferences is provided in the Appendix.



2 The Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

This study provides the opportunity to prepare the study area for changes that have not yet come to life. One of the options discussed during Phase Two was the expansion of the ETJ.

The ETJ is a planning jurisdiction where property owners may request annexation into Raleigh. Properties within the ETJ also have Raleigh zoning.

The best way to put an area study into action is to change policies and identify capital projects. This includes policies related to land use, transportation, parks, and public utilities. However, the City of Raleigh can only carry out policy and construct projects within its ETJ. It has no planning authority outside the ETJ.

With most of the study area outside of the ETJ, the ability of the City to advance the community priorities in Phase One depends on if and where the ETJ extends. The current ETJ ends roughly at the western boundary of the study area.

There is an ETJ extension process in Raleigh which City Council could pursue. North Carolina state law allows extension of the ETJ up to three miles from the current city limits. City Council could: pursue this maximum, some amount less than it, or choose to take no action.

Because the ETJ extension is central to the priorities of this area, Phase Two questions centered about this option. The goal was to communicate the connection between the ETJ extension and where this study can make a realistic impact.

3 Phase Two Engagement

Overview

The second phase of public engagement took place during February and March 2020. During this time, the City provided its response to the priorities and concerns expressed during Phase One. The input from Phase One was used to develop land use and transportation scenarios for advancing area priorities.

Engagement activities

Public feedback came from in-person events and an online survey. Two community meetings were held in February 2020:

- Evening meeting at Primera Asamblea de Díos de Raleigh.
- Morning drop-in meeting at the Philippian Community Church.
- In addition, an online survey was open for public comment between February 7 and March 23.

FIGURE 2 PHASE TWO ENGAGEMENT



Phase Two engagement activities aimed to understand two things:

- Which policy options are most important to the community, and;
- Which ETJ option does the community prefer.

A short video accompanied the survey and online materials. The goal of the video was to recruit community members to take part in the survey. A link to the video, as well as the list of survey questions, is available in the Appendix.

Summary of input

Over 150 people participated in Phase Two engagement, producing around 125 individual comments. This input confirmed the importance of priorities identified in Phase One. It also showed a split among participant preference for the ETJ extension.

Should Raleigh extend the ETJ in the Southeast area?

Participants ranked three options by their preference for the ETJ:

- No extension;
- Extension of one mile; and,
- Extension of three miles.

Option A and Option C had very similar responses with 32 and 35 people ranking it as number one, respectively. In contrast, 13 people ranked Option B as their top choice.

Among the responses, some people ranked all three options, some only ranked two,

and a significant number of people only ranked one:

- 22 people ranked Option A as their top choice and did not rank the other two options.
- Six people ranked only Option B
- 11 people ranked only Option C

While Option C had the greatest number of people indicating it as their first choice, many of those who preferred A felt strong enough about this option to not rank B or C at all.

The survey comments mirrored these two preferred options. Many comments emphasized not extending the ETJ at all, preferring the community stay rural and residential in nature. There was a strong sentiment that policies focused on commercial development in specific areas are not necessary. Many feel existing commercial centers are close enough. Comments included sentiments such as:

"There are plenty of more developed areas in Wake County in which to live if that is what is wished. Please do not seek to change what we have and value."

"I don't have a second choice. Do NOT want Raleigh to extend the ETJ. NO NO NO!"

Yet some commenters noted the benefit of ETJ expansion. Several people mentioned the potential positive effect of focused planning for the area. This includes the extension of City utilities. Comments included sentiments such as:

"Development is not currently coordinated nor done in a thoughtful manner. Bringing it under a single authority gives us the best voice."

"I want the ability to develop my property and can not do that unless you extend ETJ."

What policies are most important to you?

The second part of the survey aimed to understand the preferences for policy implementation. Since Option A would not extend Raleigh's planning authority into the southeast area, these questions focused on policies to prioritize if B or C were preferred.

The intent was for participants to record their priorities among the policy options, regardless of which option was chosen.

Overall, the results mirrored those of

Phase One, showing a strong interest in conservation policy options. Among the six (or seven, depending on the question) policy options, the top three under both Option B and C were:

- Develop policies to encourage tree preservation along the Neuse River.
- Apply zoning to require tree preservation along I-540.
- Work with local non-profits and the County to preserve existing farmland and forests.

Developing policies to encourage tree conservation along the Neuse River was the highest ranked policy option. A complete list of in-person activities, survey questions, survey responses, and comments are available in the Appendix.

4 Next Steps

Moving forward, Phase Two engagement results will be used to guide the development of draft policy recommendations. Phase Three of the study will focus on a single ETJ option and likely involve refinement of the study area. More detailed thinking on

policies and projects to advance community priorities will occur. A third phase of public engagement is currently planned for Fall 2020 to receive public input into the draft policies.

5 Appendix

Overview

The Phase Two engagement took place during February and March 2020 and served as a report to the community on the City's responses to the priorities and concerns they expressed during the first phase of the study. The goal was to reflect the feedback and responses from the questions posed to the community during the Phase One meetings and online survey.

Stakeholder Outreach

Following the previous round of engagement, staff compiled the Phase One input and survey data into a Phase One report. With a better understanding of the community's priorities, the multi-departmental core technical team met to brainstorm possible land use and transportation scenarios for advancing those priorities.

The resulting policy options made up the core of Phase Two engagement:

- Work with County and non-profits to preserve land in the southeast area.
- Require tree preservation along the Neuse River.
- Require tree preservation along the future I-540.
- Plan to build greenways along streets in the area to connect with the larger network.
- Add greenway connections to the planned greenway network.
- Encourage commercial activity to center on either one or two development activity centers in the southeast area.

In addition, City of Raleigh staff had regular touchpoints with Wake County planning staff throughout Phase Two to coordinate the progress of Southeast Special Area Study with the [PLANWake](#) planning process.

Public Outreach

Feedback from the public was provided through in-person events and an online survey. Two community meetings were held in February 2020, including:

- Evening meeting at Primera Asamblea de Díos de Raleigh on February 12 at 6:30 p.m.
- Morning drop-in meeting at the Philippian Community Church on February 25 between 7 and 9 a.m.

In addition, an online survey was open for public comments between February 7 and March 23.

Phase Two engagement activities aimed to understand which policy options were most important to the community and which ETJ option the community preferred. Given the number of policy options and details of the ETJ question, the survey and online materials were accompanied by a short video that acted as a virtual presentation to participants. The goal of the video was to inform and prepare community members to participate in the survey. The video can be viewed [here](#), and more detail about the survey questions is included below.

Event Process

In-person events included a presentation from staff on the policy options and an introduction to the ETJ question. There was a period of question and answer, and attendees were invited to view informational materials available. Input was recorded via paper surveys.

Survey Overview

Over 100 people participated in the Phase Two survey, and there were around 125 individual comments. The survey included two main sections: a question on extension of the ETJ and two questions about policy option preferences. The video summarizing the policy options was embedded and viewable in the beginning of the survey, and an explanation was provided for the ETJ question.

Survey Questions

The following text contains the written explanation and questions included in the Phase Two survey:

The Southeast Special Area Study is a planning project focused on an area in southeastern Wake County where new infrastructure is being built and development pressure is increasing. While most of the area is currently outside the bounds of Raleigh's limits, there is a possibility that residents in the study area may one day decide to annex and become a part of Raleigh. In June 2019, the City of Raleigh held several listening sessions and released a [previous survey](#) to understand what residents wanted for the future of this area. We've come up with some ideas as to how to achieve these goals. This survey aims to get your feedback on these ideas.

During the first phase of our engagement, we heard that residents of the area have four primary goals for its future:

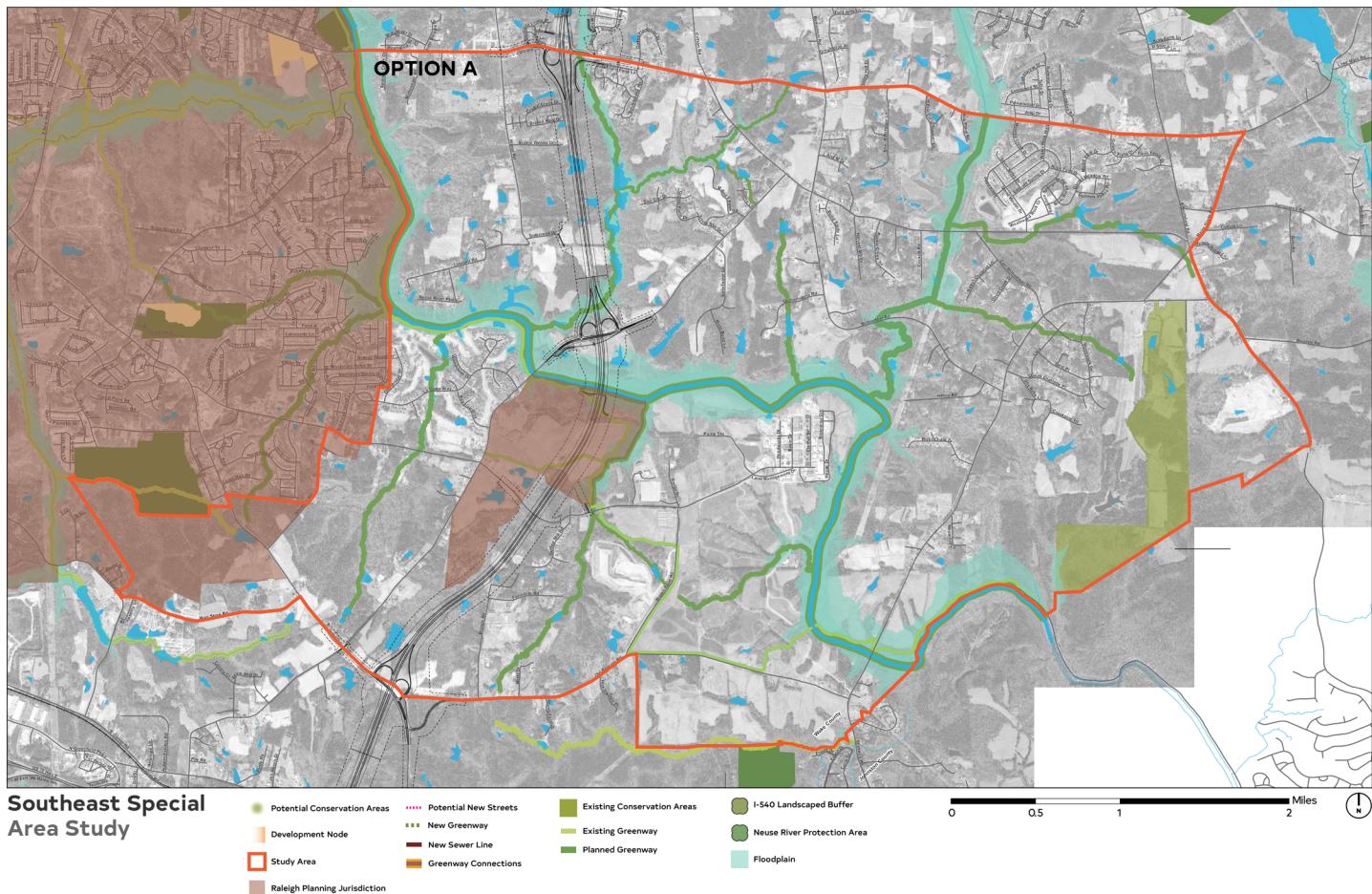
1. Preserve natural resources and the rural character;
2. Improve travel for motorists;
3. Improve travel for cyclists and pedestrians; and
4. Improve access to shopping and destinations.

How we work toward these goals depends on whether or not we extend the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) to the southeast area and--if so--by how much. Currently, the ETJ does not cover properties in the study area, so our ability to make recommendations for the area is limited.

Properties in the ETJ are not taxed by the City of Raleigh and, thus, do not receive most City services like water, sewer, trash, and fire response. They are, however, subject to the zoning rules of the City instead of Wake County. This means that the City can provide guidance for areas in the ETJ, which can shape development and infrastructure in the future.

We have several ideas as to how we can help the residents in the Southeast Special Study Area achieve their community goals. We've packaged them below based on what would have to happen to the ETJ boundaries in order for us to make the listed recommendations.

OPTION A NO CHANGE TO ETJ



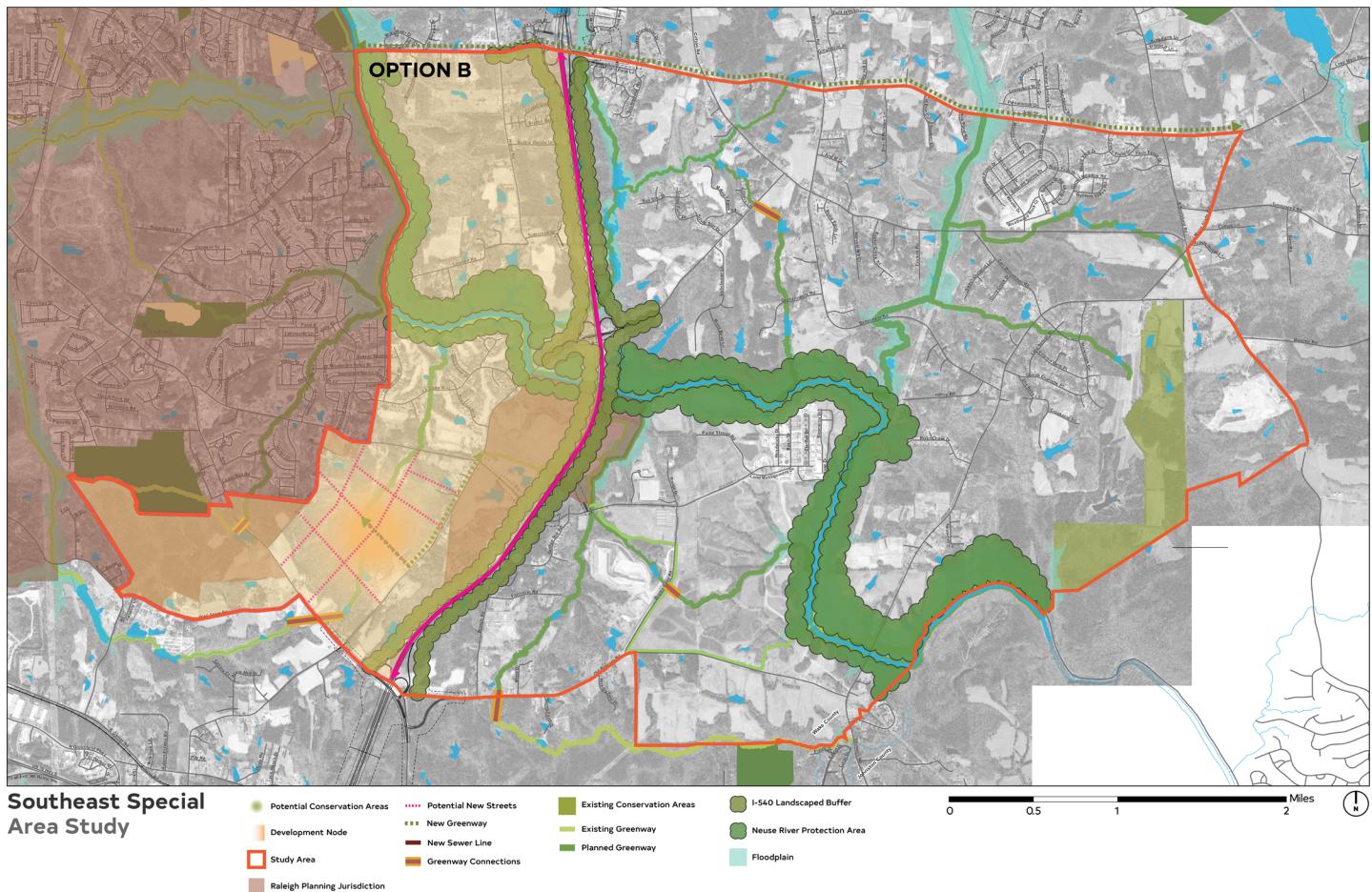
OPTION A: NO CHANGE TO ETJ

Raleigh could leave the ETJ where it is without extension into the southeast area. The study area would continue to have Wake County zoning. Raleigh would not be able to implement most policies within the study area.

With this option, Raleigh could recommend the following:

- Work with non-profits and Wake County to encourage the preservation of existing farmland and forests in the southeast area

OPTION B EXTEND THE ETJ (1 MILE)



OPTION B: EXTEND THE ETJ (1 MILE)

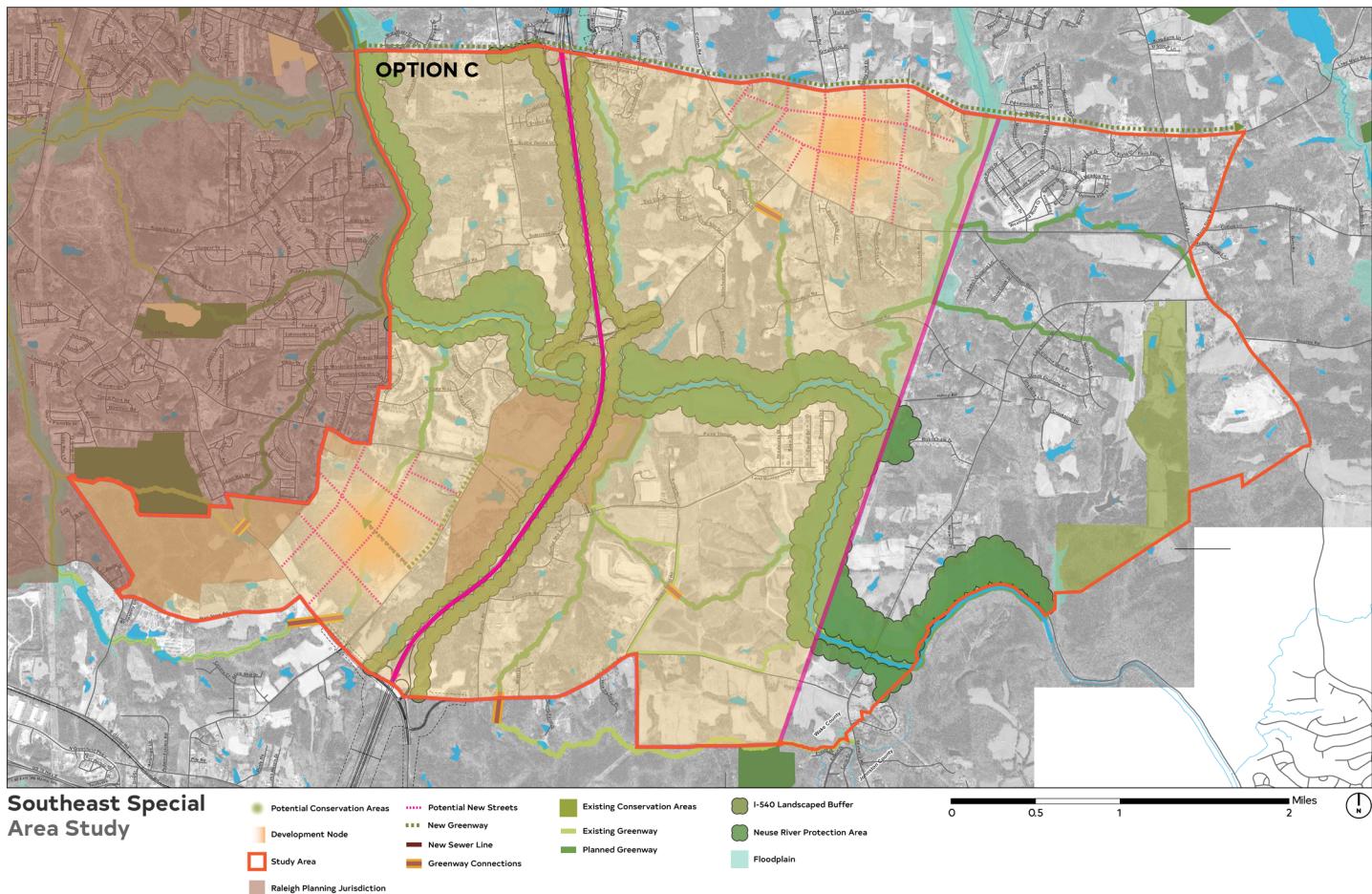
Raleigh could extend the ETJ about one (1) mile to the new I-540 corridor. Areas west of I-540 would have Raleigh zoning and areas east of it would continue to have Wake County zoning.

With this option, Raleigh could recommend all or some of the following:

- Work with non-profits and Wake County to encourage the preservation of existing farmland and forests in the southeast area

- Develop policies to encourage tree preservation around a portion of the Neuse River west of I-540
- Apply zoning that would require tree preservation along the western side of the future I-540 corridor in the southeast area
- Change the City's greenway plans so they connect in loops west of I-540
- Change the City's greenway plan to add greenways along some roads west of I-540
- Develop policies to encourage commercial development in an activity center in the western part of the study area

OPTION C EXTEND THE ETJ (3 MILES)



OPTION C: EXTEND THE ETJ (3 MILES)

Raleigh could extend the ETJ about three miles from city boundaries, which is the full extent allowed by North Carolina law. Most of the study area would have Raleigh zoning while the eastern portion outside the ETJ would continue to have Wake County zoning.

With this option, Raleigh could recommend all or some of the following:

- Work with non-profits and Wake County to encourage the preservation of existing farmland and forests in the southeast area

- Apply zoning that would require tree preservation along both sides of the future I-540 corridor in the southeast area
- Change the City's greenway plan so they connect in loops throughout the study area
- Change the City's greenway plan to add greenways along some roads throughout the study area
- Develop policies to encourage commercial development in one activity center in the central part of the study area

- Develop policies to encourage commercial development in two activity centers (one in the western part of the study area and one in the central part of the study area)
1. Based on the possible ideas presented above, please rank the following ETJ options from most preferable to least preferable:
- Option A: Leave the ETJ as is.
 - Option B: Extend the ETJ about one mile.
 - Option C: Extend the ETJ about three miles.
2. If Option B is preferred and we extend the ETJ to I-540, which of the possible policy options would you like to see prioritized? Please rank the following options from highest priority (1) to lowest priority (6). If you do not want the option considered, you can leave it off your ranking list.
- Work with local non-profits and the County to preserve existing farmland and forests.
 - Develop policies to encourage tree preservation along the Neuse River west of I-540.
 - Apply zoning that would require tree preservation along the west side of I-540.
 - Change the City's greenway plans to connect in loops west of I-540.
 - Change the City greenway plans to add greenways along some roads west of I-540.
 - Develop policies to encourage commercial development in one activity center.
3. If Option C is preferred and we extend the ETJ three miles (past I-540), which of the possible policy options would you like to see prioritized? Please rank the following options from highest priority (1) to lowest priority (7). If you do not want the option considered, you can leave it off your ranking list.
- Work with local non-profits and the County to preserve existing farmland and forests.
 - Develop policies to encourage tree preservation throughout the study area.
 - Apply zoning that would require tree preservation along both sides of I-540.
 - Change the City's greenway plans to connect in loops throughout the study area.
 - Change the City greenway plans to add greenways along some roads in the area.
 - Develop policies to encourage commercial development in one activity center (either the western OR central part of the study area).
 - Develop policies to encourage commercial development in two activity centers (the western AND central parts of the study area).
4. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about these options for the southeast area?

Survey input

A summary of survey question responses is available in an interactive report online [here](#). All survey comments can be viewed online [here](#).

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