



Reflecting Raleigh

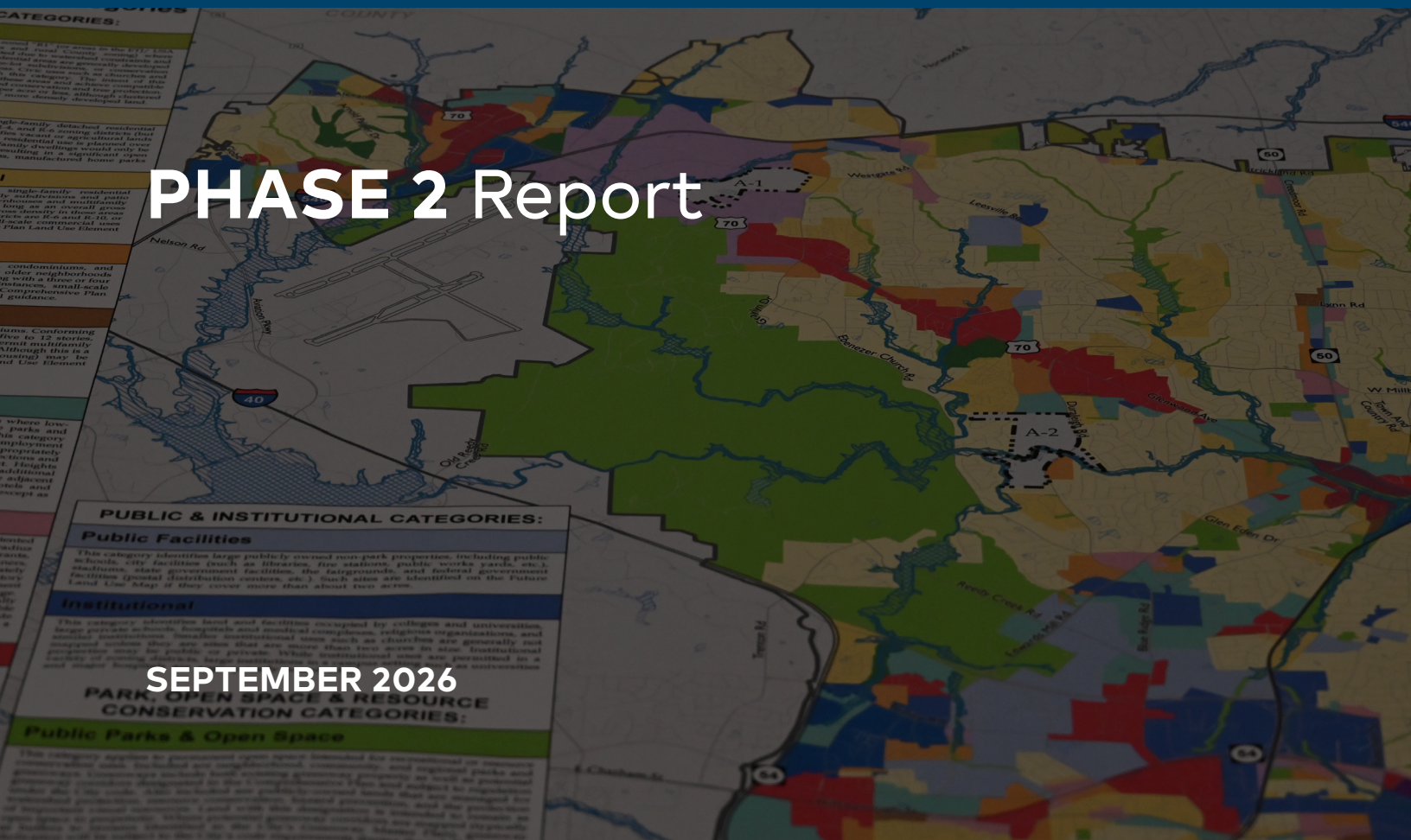
THE NEXT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Raleigh
Planning

PHASE 2 Report

SEPTEMBER 2026



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Introduction

Effective comprehensive plans outline a vision for how a city will grow and a roadmap for how to achieve that vision. Raleigh has concluded the second phase of developing its next comprehensive plan through a collaborative, multi-year process called Reflecting Raleigh.

Community priorities and existing conditions compiled during phase 1 of Reflecting Raleigh established a foundation for the plan's vision. During phase 2, three groups of stakeholders worked to refine the vision by exploring nuances and weighing tradeoffs of community priorities, and sketch out the roadmap:

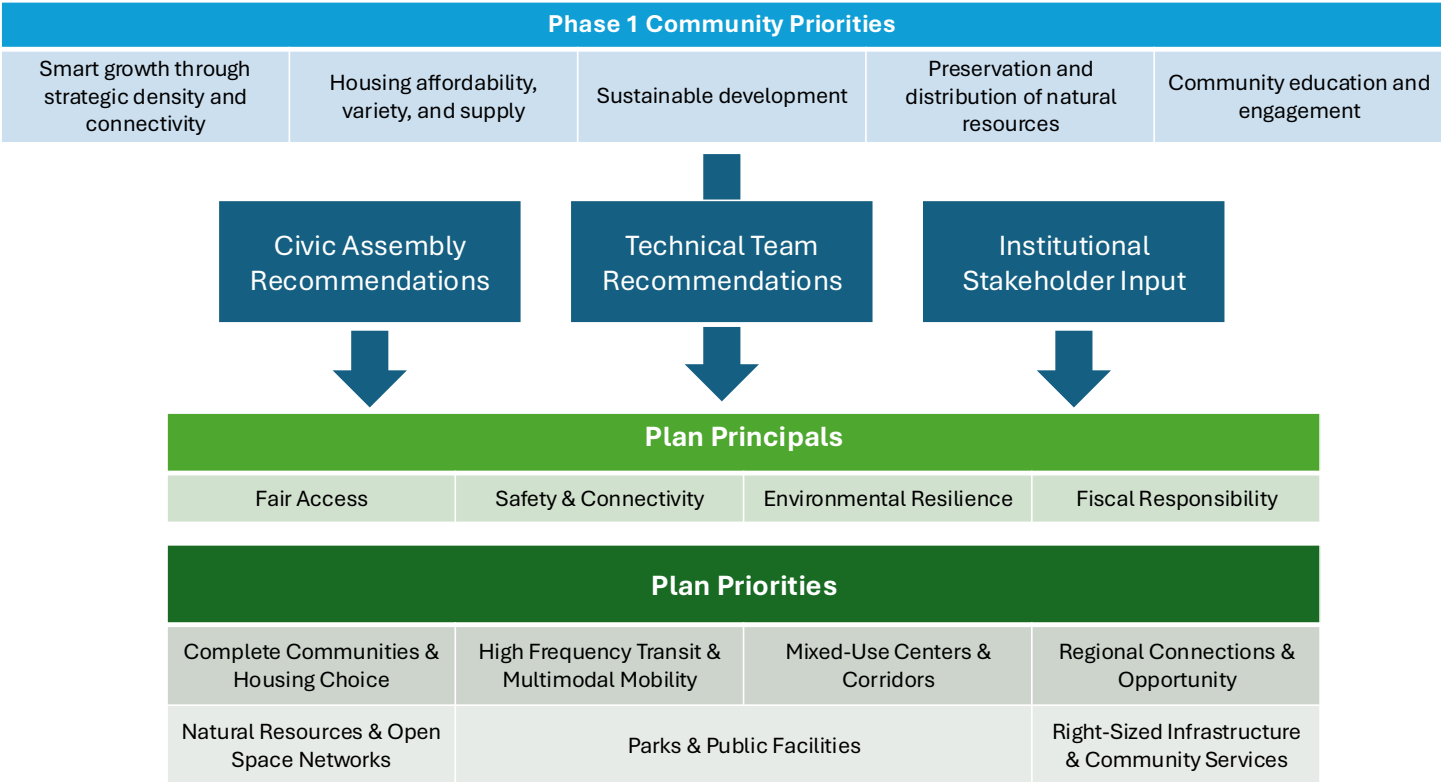
- Raleigh's first **Civic Assembly**, consisting of a randomly selected and broadly representative group of residents. This group was convened to provide specific recommendations on a central component of Raleigh's existing growth framework: how neighborhoods in mixed use centers and along frequent bus routes should grow in the future.
- Five teams of **Technical Experts**, comprised of city staff, appointed board and commission members, and practitioners from the Raleigh community. These teams reviewed existing conditions and recommended topical goals and strategies to implement those goals.
- Representatives from **Institutions**, including neighboring municipalities, regional partners, and North Carolina state agencies. Through individual interviews and focus groups, these stakeholders shared long-term goals, emerging issues, and opportunities for collaboration and alignment with Raleigh's Next Comprehensive Plan.

This report summarizes the key takeaways from phase 2, along with information about the process, activities, and recommendations from each of the stakeholder groups listed above.



Key Themes from Phase 2

Several themes emerged from institutional stakeholder input and from the recommendations of the Civic Assembly and Technical Teams. These themes align with and build on the five thematic community priorities identified in phase 1. The themes highlighted in phase 2 will inform the vision and framework of the final plan, which will be drafted during phase 3 of Reflecting Raleigh



Civic Assembly

The Civic Assembly was a central component of Reflecting Raleigh phase 2, designed to get meaningful input from a representative group of Raleigh residents. In their deliberation, Assembly members weighed some of the tradeoffs inherent in the community priorities identified in phase 1 of the project, ultimately producing a list of recommendations which will inform Raleigh's framework for growth and development over the next 25 years. [Read the Assembly's complete report.](#)

Recruitment, Selection, and Process Design

The goal of the Civic Assembly was to hear from a group of Raleigh residents that broadly reflect the demographics of Raleigh. To achieve this goal, 10,000 invitations to join the assembly were delivered by mail to residents and additional invitations were provided to community groups to ensure that the final make-up of the Assembly reflected Raleigh's population. Over 270 residents responded, and from those respondents, 40 Assembly members were selected through a stratified random sampling process called sortition. Of those 40, 32 consistently attended all six meetings. Information about the Assembly members is included in the appendix.

Selected Assembly members were tasked with responding to the following, City Council-endorsed question:

"Raleigh is in the process of improving transit service around the city. How should the next comprehensive plan help improve access to the new service? What should the neighborhoods around frequent transit look like?"





A team of consultants from the National Civic League supported city staff from Planning and Development and Community Engagement in leading this initiative.

The Assembly met over six Saturdays at Raleigh community centers. Each meeting included childcare when needed, translation services, breakfast, and lunch. The goal was to ensure there were as few barriers to participation as possible. To that end Assembly Members were also provided with a \$1,000 stipend for participating.

The Civic Assembly agenda was split into three overlapping phases:

- **Phase I: Learning**
- **Phase II: Deliberations**
- **Phase III: Recommendations**

Speakers for the learning phase included city and county staff along with local and national experts. Interspersed with the speakers were large and small group facilitation sessions that allowed the Assembly to talk through their thoughts and eventually make recommendations. The National Civic League served as the lead facilitator. Small group facilitators came from six departments across the city and were vital to the success of the Assembly's deliberation.

Following their deliberations the Civic Assembly drafted, discussed, and voted on their final recommendations. This cycle of drafting, discussion, and voting occurred multiple times over their final three sessions. The Assembly decided that any recommendation that received 75 percent support from the members would be included as a recommendation to City Council and Planning staff. Their final voting resulted in a set of 30 recommendations, 26 of which were fully endorsed by the Assembly to be considered in developing Raleigh's Next Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendations

In response to the remit, the Civic Assembly supported the city's current approach to growth management, advising that 60 percent or more of new development should be directed into designated growth centers and along corridors served by frequent transit. The Assembly also advised that the city advance programs, policies, and infrastructure to ensure the benefits of public investment in transit are shared fairly and that long-term residents are not displaced as a result.

The Assembly's full list of recommendations fell into three broad categories:

- Endorsement of Existing Policy
- Endorsement of Existing Budget Priorities
- Opportunities for Adjustment & Enhancement

Recommendations that endorse existing policy include the creation of specialized zoning in transit corridors, encouraging the development of mixed-use centers along corridors, and focusing our growth to areas well served by transit. Areas that support current budget priorities include the expansion of Raleigh's sidewalk network, improved pedestrian crossings, and increased amenities at bus stops. Some areas where the Assembly suggested adjustments include using City-owned land near transit to encourage activity and connections, and allowing more retail uses in areas served by frequent transit.

Across these categories, the Civic Assembly's recommendations address the following topics:

- **Encourage density and varied uses along frequent transit routes.** Multiple recommendations highlighted the importance of concentrating highdensity, high density and mixed use development within key growth areas and corridors well served by frequent transit. There was support for establishing active destinations along these corridors, including providing attractive destinations at the end of routes. The Assembly recommended ensuring that essential services are incorporated into these areas as they will contribute to the creation of complete neighborhoods where residents can meet daily needs within the corridor. The Assembly saw increasing housing density along Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes as a strategy to expand supply and promote longterm housing affordability.
- **Provide opportunities for small-scale development to prevent displacement of existing residents.** The Assembly recommended expanding flexible housing options along transit routes by allowing a broader range of residential uses on existing properties, including reducing barriers to creating accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, and other missing-middle housing types. They also suggested permitting small-scale, neighborhood-serving commercial activities in currently residential areas to support local businesses, activate underutilized spaces, and create more walkable corridors with essential services.

- **Recognize existing community features and history when considering rezoning property.** The Assembly called for protections for existing low-income residents living near BRT corridors to prevent displacement. They emphasized that zoning and development decisions should acknowledge the context and needs of existing communities, avoiding building types that are incompatible with current neighborhood conditions. They also highlighted the need for expanded city efforts to address quality of life concerns, including enforcing litter removal, improving reporting and maintenance of public spaces, and proactively allocating resources as density increases.
- **Prioritize equitable neighborhood development and transit access to avoid disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities.** Strategies they offered to maintain community stability included encouraging higher-density housing in areas susceptible to gentrification and those near transit routes. To preserve Raleigh neighborhoods' cultural and historic identity, the Assembly recommended integrating historical markers and supporting cultural programming in new development.
- **Strongly encourage pedestrian infrastructure and safety.** The Assembly was deeply concerned with improving safety along high frequency bus corridors by pairing increased density with strong pedestrian-focused infrastructure. Assembly members viewed higher density as a way to create more active, populated, and accessible streets, which would in turn lead to improvements in safety. The Assembly encouraged the building of additional sidewalks and direct pedestrian routes from neighborhoods to bus stops. They also recommended improving the accessibility and comfort of bus stops through the expansion of benches, shelters, and trash receptacles.
- **Leverage City property to improve resources along transit routes and improve connectivity.** Discussions also led to the recommendation that Raleigh should work to integrate public land and greenways to serve as connections and access points for bus routes. They recommended using city-owned properties along transit corridors to create or enhance community amenities such as parks, libraries, and community centers, which they believe could help improve safety when co-located with bus stops. Environmental concerns were also highlighted in the recommendations, with suggestions to reduce flooding and heat-island effects through rain gardens, native plantings, expanded tree canopy, cool pavement materials, and limiting roadway expansion.

These recommendations are reflected in broader themes from phase 2 input, and will help shape the Next Plan's Future Land Use Map and Urban Form Map as well as the plan's vision, priorities, and implementation strategies.

Technical Teams

Alongside the Civic Assembly, five topic-based technical teams convened to:

- Validate and expand on the community priorities and key emerging trends identified in phase 1.
- Review and recommend land use policies to advance community priorities and address emerging trends.
- Identify related programs, projects, plans, and studies, that the Next Comprehensive Plan should support and align with.
- Recommend programmatic priorities that should be included in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Recommend short-, medium- and long-term action items, such as regulatory changes, that should be implemented during the life of the Next Comprehensive Plan to advance community priorities and address emerging issues.
- Recommend service standards and metrics to track the Next Plan's implementation.

Each team consisted of 20 to 25 members, including City staff from various departments, members of boards and commissions, and community experts. Teams met monthly between January and June 2026 for presentations and discussion, facilitated by a core team of staff from the lead department: Planning and Development, Transportation, or Housing and Community Development.



Land Use

This team's recommendations focus on how Raleigh can manage continued growth while improving access to housing, transportation choices, neighborhood-serving uses, public spaces, and natural resources.



Read the team's detailed report



Transportation

This team's recommendations focused on facilitating transportation choice. Their priorities included transit supportive development, multimodal connectivity, access to resources, and funding for infrastructure maintenance

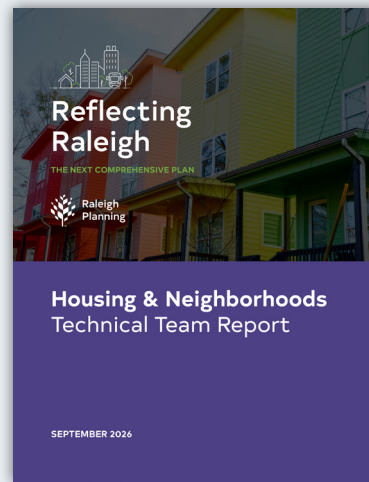


Read the team's detailed report



Housing & Neighborhoods

The group's discussion centered around neighborhood context and compatibility, including historic preservation; housing supply, accessibility, affordability, and complete neighborhoods. The members of the group represented a variety of interests, values, and areas of expertise. Discussions centered around Raleigh's growth and the subsequent impact on housing access and affordability, existing neighborhoods and residents, and historic assets. The group had differing opinions on how the City should balance the demand for growth and housing supply with existing neighborhood context. Central to the discussion was not whether the city will continue to grow, but instead how the city's housing production should respond to this growth.



Read the team's detailed report

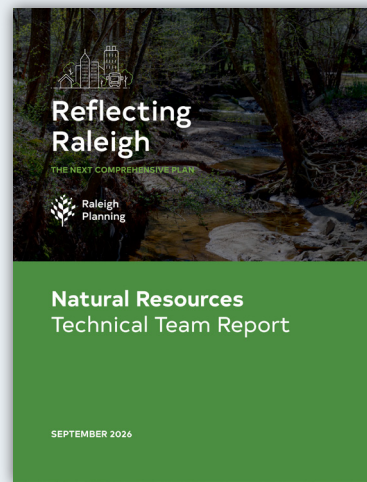


Natural Resources

This team focused on environmental protection, sustainable development and conservation, and protection of water resources.

Priorities for the team included:

- Designing, funding, and implementing nature-based solutions, including green stormwater infrastructure, Biophilic City and Sponge City concepts.
- Linking nature to human health and well-being, including urban agriculture and food access.
- Aligning priority ecological corridors with public open space to advance habitat preservation and connectivity.
- Setting and tracking sustainable standards for growth and development.



Read the team's detailed report



Infrastructure and Community Services

This team highlighted several critical issues, including the need for integrated and resilient growth planning, improving regional and interjurisdictional governance, aligning land use priorities across City departments, protecting natural resources, increasing fiscal accountability, evaluating emergency services colocation, and reviewing level of service (LOS) practices and metrics.



Read the team's detailed report



Institutional Stakeholder Engagement

To complement input from the residents participating in the Civic Assembly, and the subject matter experts participating in the technical teams, the Reflecting Raleigh team also spoke to 25 municipalities and organizations to learn about their priorities, emerging trends or issues, and long-term planning considerations. The key themes identified by the interview participants are summarized below. A full list of participants is included in the appendix.

Population, Demographics and Economics

- Population growth & change is a defining regional trend and is bringing continued development pressure to the region.
- Economic mobility is low, even though there are many well-paying jobs in and around Raleigh.
- Affordable housing is a widespread priority. Certain populations have specific needs.
- Economic uncertainty, coupled with uncertainty around state and federal regulation, makes it challenging for municipalities and organizations to create long-term plans.

Frameworks for Development and Preservation

- Most municipalities have a goal of targeting development and preserving rural land, but the dispersed and growing regional population makes doing so a challenge.
- Interview participants noted that land availability constrains both low-density and higher-density development.
- Interview participants identified missing-middle housing as one way to accommodate more homes, although development challenges and regional market preferences have limited uptake.
- Preservation of open space in Wake County will have to be strategic/targeted.

Sustainable Municipal Growth

- Municipal growth and strategic annexation is a challenge for towns in the region.
- Many towns have a goal of diversifying their tax bases beyond residential alone.
- Infrastructure coordination is key for quality and cost-effective service at scale.

Transportation

- Live-work patterns are widely dispersed around the region, making connectivity a top issue.
- Certain corridors are of particular local and regional focus.
- Local governments see transit as a priority and Raleigh as a leader.
- Walkability is a shared goal among municipalities and a common desire among residents, but the reality of regional auto-dependence is unlikely to change in the near future.

Development Trends and Priorities

- Multiple Raleigh organizations stressed a need for flexibility and clarity in development regulations.
- Organizations see promise in neighborhood-level mixed use.
- Interview participants noted that Raleigh has some office vacancy but characterized its office market as healthier than those in many other places.
- The current legislative trend in NC is toward transferring state-owned facilities to private ownership.
- Organizations highlighted geographic areas of interest for development.

Planning Process Advice

- For effective regional collaboration, Wake County advised that clarity is key.
- Clarity and directness are also important for engagement.
- Some municipalities break up their plan writing/adoption processes to help keep focus.
- Implementation should be considered throughout plan development when plans are made.

Together with robust community engagement from phase 1, recommendations from the Reflecting Raleigh Civic Assembly, and policy input from a series of technical teams, this information will be used to draft policies for the next comprehensive plan. Input from institutions and neighboring municipalities will be used to help align goals and coordinate regional collaboration.

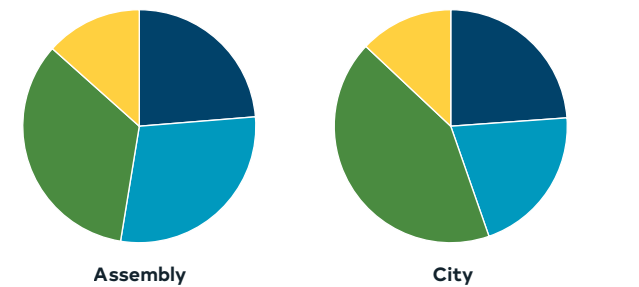
Looking Ahead to Phase 3

Planning and Development staff are currently working with two consulting firms to support phase 3. Interval, LLC, a planning firm, will work with staff to draft a final plan based on this input. Covive, a web design firm specializing in communications and design will create an online website where Raleigh's Next Comprehensive Plan will live. Over 100 people contributed their time and expertise to this phase of Reflecting Raleigh. Their insights will shape the framework, goals and strategies of the plan, advancing a community-supported vision for equitable and sustainable growth.

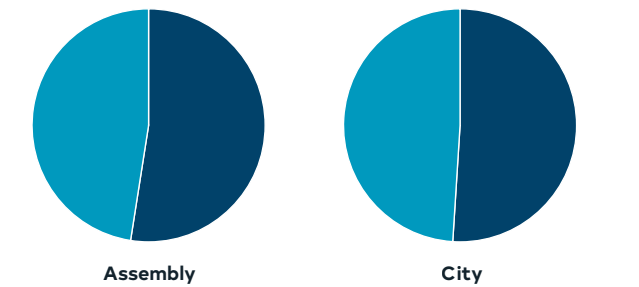


Appendix

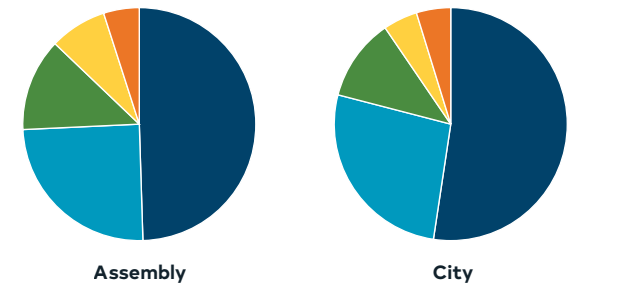
Civic Assembly Demographics



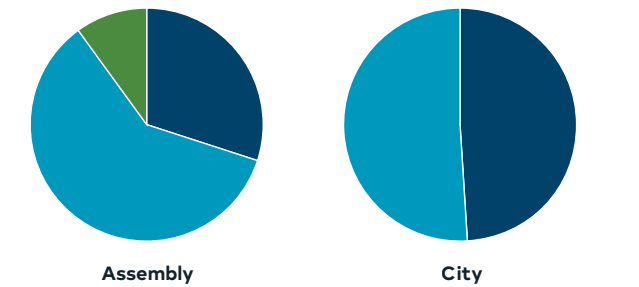
Age		
	Assembly	City
15-24	23%	21.3%
25-44	28%	18.6%
45-64	33%	37.8%
Over 65	13%	11.6%



Gender		
	Assembly	City
Male	53%	51%
Female	48%	49%



Race		
	Assembly	City
White	50%	55%
Black	25%	28%
Hispanic or Latino/a	13%	12%
Asian and Pacific Islander	8%	5%
Other	5%	5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0%	0%



Housing Tenure		
	Assembly	City
Renter	30%	49%
Owner	60%	51%
Other	10%	0%

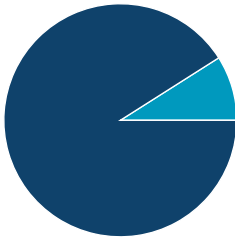


Assembly

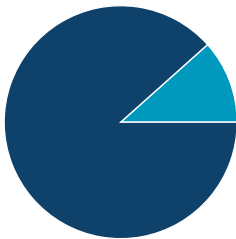


City

City Council District		
	Assembly	City
● A	19%	20%
● B	13%	20%
● C	28%	20%
● D	22%	20%
● E	19%	20%



Assembly



City

Ethnicity		
	Assembly	City
● Hispanic	9%	11.6%
● Non-Hispanic	91%	88.4%

Institutional Partners

A total of 38 municipalities and organizations were identified for inclusion in the conversation series based on the criteria below:

- Municipalities in Wake County or with jurisdiction extending into Wake County
- Entities with significant land holdings that can affect city and regional growth
- Major employer serving and located in Wake County (more than 10,000 employees per Wake County Economic Development)
- State of NC Agencies/Departments
- Public agencies operating in Wake and surrounding counties
- 501c3s 501(c)(3) organizations who have longstanding partnerships with the city

Of the identified municipalities and organizations, 25 accepted invitations for an interview. These organizations are listed in the table below:

Organization	Meeting Date
CAMPO	2/17/2026
Centennial Authority	6/2/2026
City of Durham	2/24/2026
Cooperating Raleigh Colleges	2/3/2026
Duke Energy	2/16/2026
Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce	3/13/2026
Hillsborough Street Community Service Corporation	2/24/2026
North Carolina State Property Office	5/15/2026
One Wake	6/4/2026
Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority	6/11/2026
Town of Apex	2/26/2026
Town of Cary	5/5/2026
Town of Clayton	2/27/2026
Town of Fuquay-Varina	2/17/2026
Town of Holly Springs	3/16/2026
Town of Knightdale	5/6/2026
Town of Rolesville	4/16/2026
Town of Wake Forest	4/21/2026
Town of Wendell	2/18/2026
Town of Zebulon	4/15/2026
Wake County (Planning & Development Services)	2/9/2026