



2025

**TOWN OF POLKVILLE
LAND USE PLAN**



**CLEVELAND COUNTY,
NORTH CAROLINA**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the Polkville Planning Board for their support and guidance. Special thanks are extended to, landowners, local business owners and concerned citizens in the Town of Polkville who participated in our survey.

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A scenic view of a forest with evergreen trees in the foreground and misty mountains in the background. The text 'INTRODUCTION' is overlaid in the center.

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

THE TOWN OF POLKVILLE

Polkville is a small rural municipality in the northern part of Cleveland County, in western North Carolina. Its city limits extend two and a half miles from its singular stoplight at the intersection of SR 226 and SR 182. Located approximately 50 miles west of Charlotte and 60 miles east of Asheville, Polkville is easily accessible from US-74 and NC-226. The town is situated in fertile farmland, rich in history. Polkville's early settlement history encompasses its small-town form and character, which is an aspect the town wants to continue to grow. This comprehensive plan is the first comprehensive land use plan developed for the Town of Polkville.

NEED FOR A LAND USE PLAN

Land use plans are intended to guide future development based on an analysis of present and future needs. It sets forth goals, policies, and programs to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of municipalities. This comprehensive plan should be adopted by the governing board with the consultation of the planning board. By North Carolina law, each local government must have a reasonably up-to-date land use plan in order to enforce land use zoning.

Due to a variety of changing circumstances within Polkville, Cleveland County, and its surrounding areas the Town of Polkville should be exploring avenues to grow and keep its small town character. Polkville's Land Use Plan is the town's call to action for its residents. These upcoming changes should be something residents should be a part of. With this plan, the Town of Polkville can guide public, private, and corporate stakeholders toward land development solutions and policies that shape Polkville's physical, environmental, social, and economic characteristics for the future.

WHO IS AFFECTED?

In North Carolina, land use plans are advisory, which simply means that the maps, goals, and recommendations included in this document do not constitute regulations. This document does not determine the course of action of the Board of Commissioners, the Planning Board, or the town staff. This land use plan should be taken as a guiding map to what could be done for the development of Polkville. Every landowner, developer, town or county staff, and appointed and/or elected officials should take into consideration the importance of this plan for the future of Polkville.

OVERVIEW

WHAT DOES THIS PLAN CONSIST OF?

This plan consists of narrative, maps, charts, tables, and illustrations that depict the future of Polkville and discusses the tools the town needs to fulfill its goals and remain consistent moving forward. The plan is organized into the following parts:

1. Overview: introducing the land use plan
2. Vision: summarizing the town's future plans and core values
3. Land Use: describing Polkville's current conditions and future land uses for an accurate analysis
4. Infrastructure and Public Facilities: summarizing the town's existing systems for its upkeep and development
5. Goals & Objectives and Recommendations: identifying how the land use plan will be implemented

VISION

The Town of Polkville is primarily a small rural residential area which focuses on its close-knit community and local living. The town has a small number of local businesses supported by its residents. At the heart of Polkville lies its people. The town is defined by the small-town family values cherished by both lifelong residents and those who have chosen to call it home. These values are integral to the community and are upheld by everyone involved in its governance. Polkville is also dedicated to treating all its citizens with equal respect and fostering a rich diversity of backgrounds and cultures. Moreover, the town is committed to preserving and nurturing its natural environment, ensuring that Polkville remains a vibrant and welcoming place for future generations.

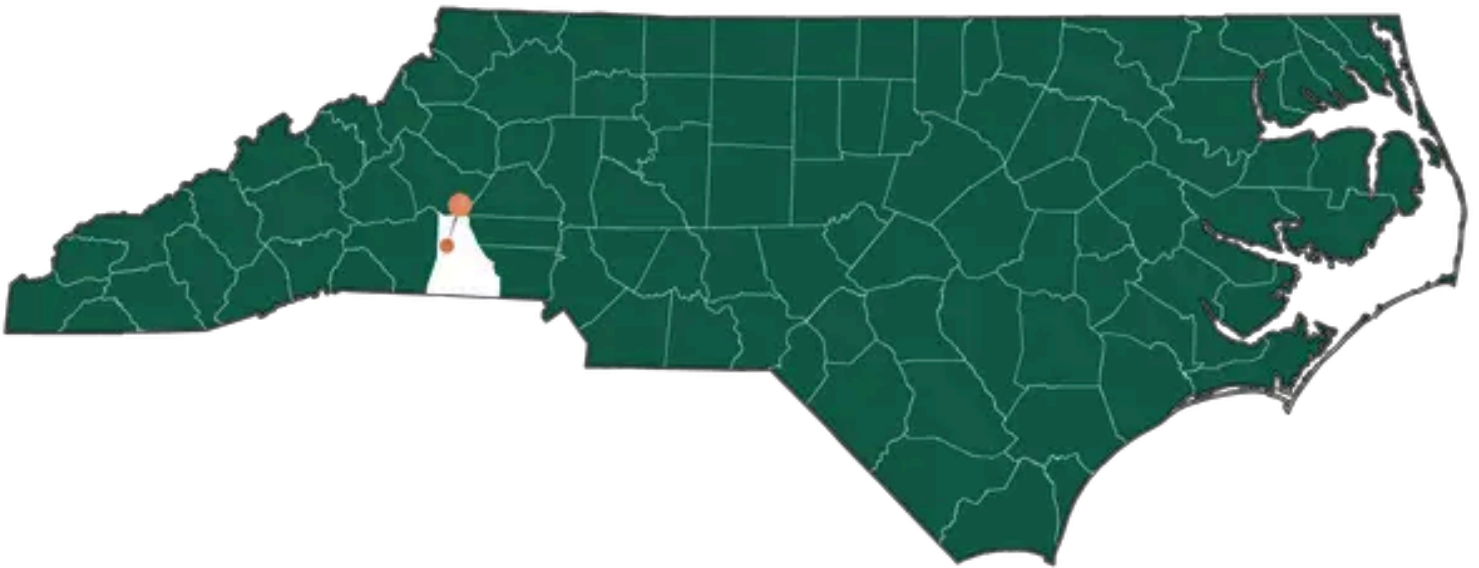
CORE VALUES

- Honor is a foundational core value of the town, embodying a deep commitment to integrity, respect, and accountability. The community holds itself to the highest standards of ethical conduct, ensuring that all actions and interactions are guided by fairness and honesty. This dedication to honor shapes the town's character, fostering a culture of trust and mutual respect among its residents.
- Strength is a fundamental core value of the town, embodying its resilience and collective fortitude. The community takes pride in its ability to confront challenges with determination and unity, drawing on diverse skills and experiences to overcome obstacles. This spirit of strength empowers residents to support one another, build a robust community, and continuously strive for progress and improvement.
- Unity stands as a cornerstone of the town's core values, reflecting the community's commitment to working together harmoniously. The town prides itself on fostering a sense of belonging and collaboration among its residents, bridging differences and building strong, cohesive bonds. This dedication to unity ensures that everyone contributes to and benefits from a shared vision, creating a supportive and interconnected community.

HISTORY

The Town of Polkville was named after James K. Polk, who was the President of the United States from 1844 to 1848. The community dates back to 1791, but was not incorporated until 1971. Before Polkville was established as a settlement, Native Americans were settled along the Grassy Branch River.

The primary east-west route in Cleveland County ran from Lincolnton through Fallston, Lawndale, and Polkville, extending to Rutherfordton in the neighboring county. In 1987, the city limits of Polkville were expanded to a radius of two and a half miles from its sole traffic light at the intersection of SR 226 and SR 182. The Polkville Volunteer Fire Department serves the area. Most residents receive their water from Cleveland County Water.





DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION

Figure 1. Population in Polkville

Between 2010 and 2018, the population of the Town of Polkville held fairly steady around 540 residents. However, since 2018, the population has been steadily decreasing and now stands around 525.

At the county level, Polkville’s population is the 9th most populous municipality in Cleveland County.

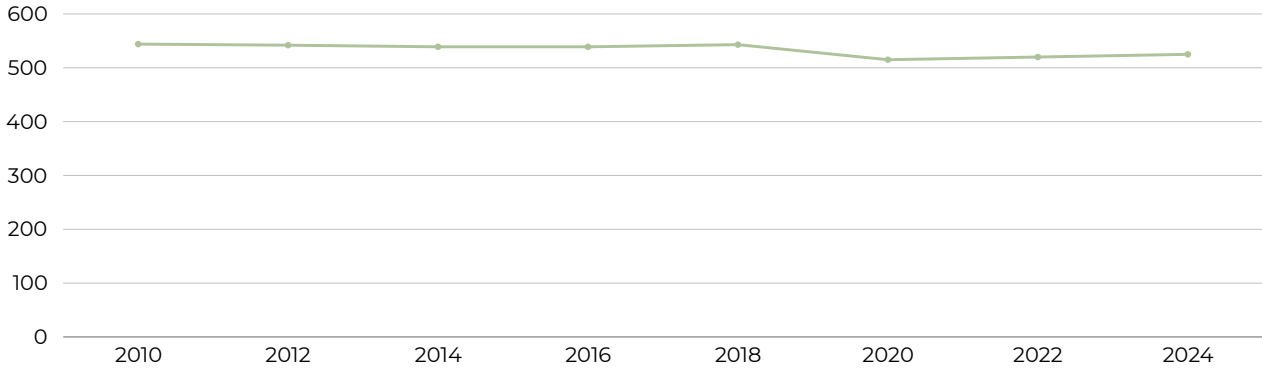


Figure 2. Population by Age in Polkville

The graph below shows the age composition of Polkville from the 2020 Decennial Census. The median age is estimated at 47.4 years. In comparison to North Carolina's median age of 39.4 years, this provides a valuable indicator for population aging in Polkville.

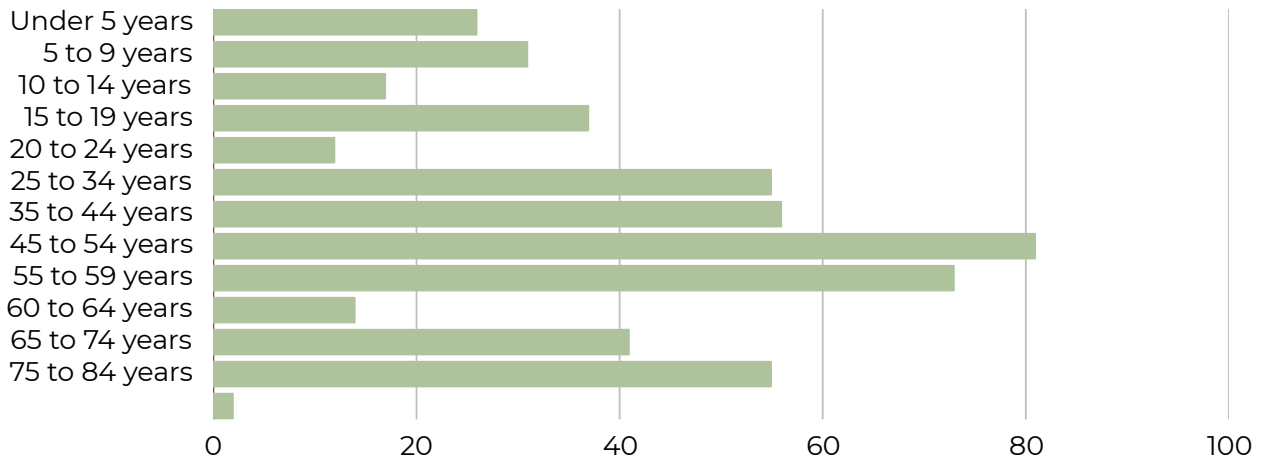


Table 1. Race

RACE

White	476
Hispanic or Latino	11
Black	6
Asian	4

*Data from 2020

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

Figure 3. Employment 16 Years and Over in Polkville

The residents of Polkville have long been employed in a wide variety of industries. According to the 2020 Decennial Census, the highest proportions of residents worked in the educational services, healthcare and social assistance at (16.9%). The next two industries being other services, except public administration categories at (16.5%) and manufacturing at (14.8%). The lowest industry being finance, insurance, and real estate at (0%).

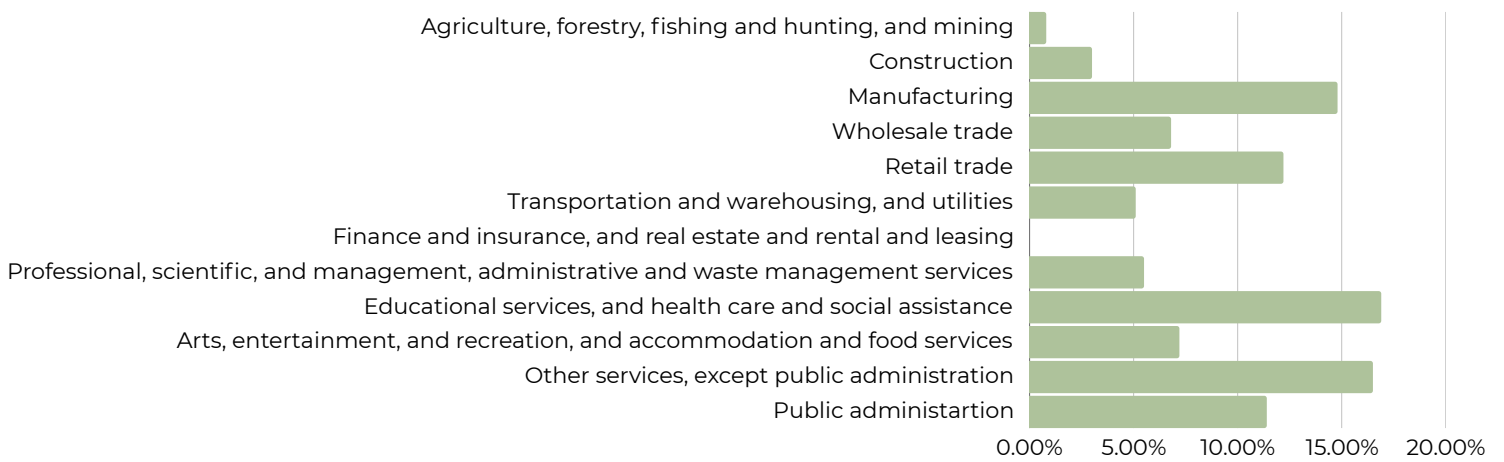
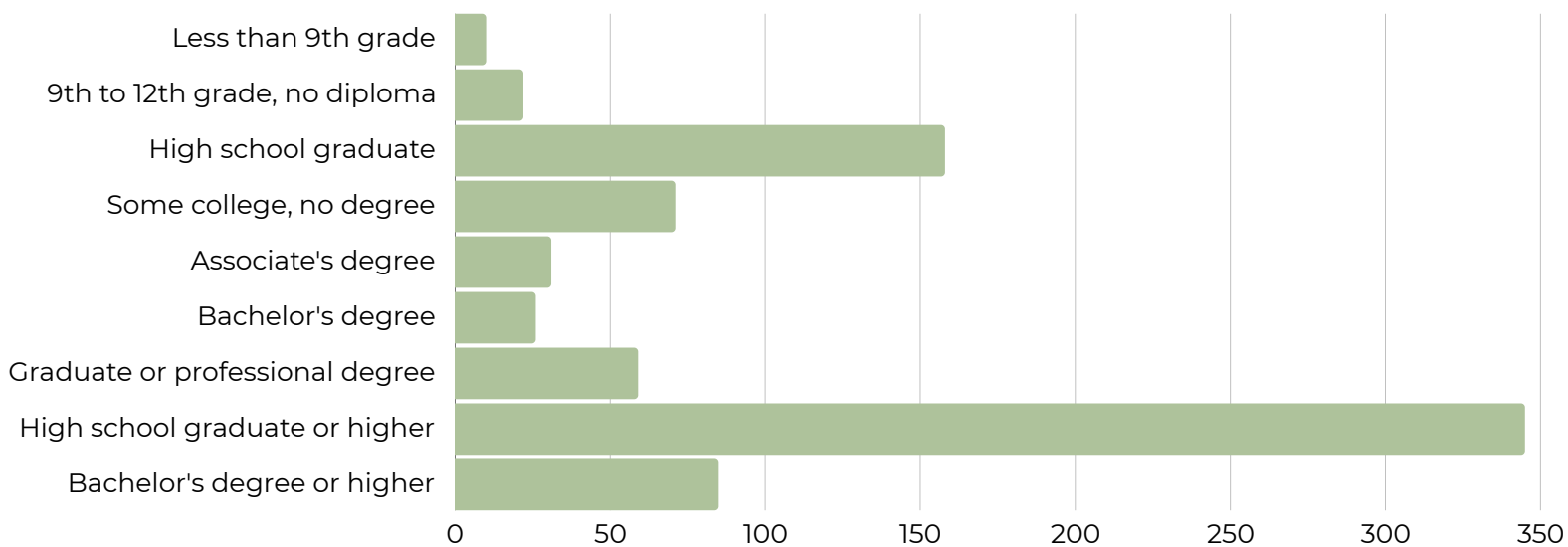


Figure 4. Education Level for Population Over 25 Years in Polkville

The table above shows the education composition of Polkville residents 25 years and older. As shown, the majority of residents have at least a high school diploma.



INCOME & HOUSING

Table 2. Income and Poverty

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME		POVERTY RATE	
North Carolina	\$67,481	North Carolina	12.8%
Cleveland County	\$51,470	Cleveland County	17.6%
Polkville	\$53,194	Polkville	14.5%

The 2020 Decennial Census revealed that the median household income of Polkville is \$1,724 greater than the county, but lower than NC by \$14,287. Household income is based on all households, regardless of household arrangements (e.g. roommates, families, etc.). The 2022 American Community Survey reveals that 14.5% of Polkville residents are in poverty compared to 17.6% at the county level and 12.8% of all North Carolina residents.

According to the 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 76.4% is the homeownership rate in Polkville with majority being single family homes.

Table 3. Occupied Housing Units

Type of Housing		Year Structure Built	
Single Family	147	2020 or later	0
Moblie Homes	35	2000 to 2009	43
Attached Housing	6	1980 to 1999	38
2 Apartments	3	1960 to 1979	59
		1940 to 1959	37
		1939 or earlier	14

Complete Facilities

Plumbing	191
Kitchen	191



NATURAL ENVIORNMENT

GEOGRAPHY

The geography around Polkville features a mix of rolling hills and relatively flat areas, typical of the Piedmont region of North Carolina. This region lies between the Appalachian Mountains to the west and the Coastal Plain to the east.

The landscape in and around Polkville is characterized by:

1. **Rolling Hills:** The terrain features gentle hills and valleys. This rolling topography is common in the Piedmont region and provides a scenic backdrop to the area.
2. **Forests and Woodlands:** The area is surrounded by a mix of deciduous forests and woodlands. You'll find a variety of trees, including oak, pine, and hickory.
3. **Agricultural Land:** The surrounding areas are often used for farming and agriculture, with fields and pastures being a significant part of the local landscape.
4. **Waterways:** There are small streams and creeks in the vicinity, though larger bodies of water are not prominent in Polkville itself.

CLIMATE

Polkville, North Carolina, experiences a humid subtropical climate, which is characterized by:

1. **Hot Summers:** Summers in Polkville are typically hot and humid, with average high temperatures often reaching the upper 80s to mid-90s Fahrenheit (around 30-35°C). Humidity can make the heat feel more intense.
2. **Mild Winters:** Winters are generally mild compared to more northern regions. Average high temperatures in winter usually range from the upper 40s to mid-50s Fahrenheit (8-13°C). Overnight lows can occasionally drop below freezing, but extended periods of freezing temperatures are rare.
3. **Moderate Precipitation:** Polkville receives a moderate amount of rainfall throughout the year, with an average annual precipitation of around 45-50 inches (115-125 cm). Rainfall is fairly evenly distributed, although summer months can see a higher frequency of thunderstorms.
4. **Humidity:** The area tends to be quite humid, especially during the summer months, which can contribute to a sticky or muggy feeling.
5. **Seasonal Changes:** There is a noticeable change in seasons, with warm, humid summers and cooler, milder winters. Spring and fall are generally pleasant with moderate temperatures and lower humidity.

Overall, Polkville's climate is typical of the southeastern United States, offering a relatively mild and comfortable environment for most of the year.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Bough Ridge
Tunnel



EXISTING LAND USE

In order to plan for the future of the Town of Polkville, it is crucial to understand the existing use of land at the current time. Land Use refers to the primary activity occurring on a particular parcel of land. Land use designations are not always perfectly accurate, but the intent is to gain a broad picture of the community that may inform future development needs and patterns. The following section will cover residential, commercial, civic, agricultural, and industrial uses within the 832 acres in Polkville.

Low Density Residential (LDR), Rural Residential (RR), and Mobile Homes

These designations represent areas with low housing density, primarily consisting of single-family homes or mobile homes. LDR areas feature basic infrastructure like roads, utilities, and some neighborhood amenities. Lot sizes in LDR areas are generally smaller, ranging from 1/4 to 1 acre. RR areas, in contrast, are located in more rural, less developed regions with larger lot sizes, minimal infrastructure, and a focus on open space or agricultural uses. Mobile homes can be found in both LDR and RR areas, often located on individual lots or within mobile home parks.

Highway Commercial

The town of Polkville's commercial land use is focused on Polkville Rd. Commercial refers to areas designated as businesses and activities focused on commerce, trade, and services. These businesses are intended to support the local economy. Polkville has an emphasis on small locally owned businesses like HomeTown Market.

Civic

Civic refers to areas or land uses designated for facilities and institutions that serve the public and community needs. These spaces are intended for government, cultural, educational, and social purposes, providing services that benefit the general population of Polkville.

Industrial

Industrial land use refers to areas designated for activities related to manufacturing, production, processing, storage, and distribution of goods. They are typically set aside for businesses and operations that may involve heavy machinery and processes that generate noise, pollution, or other externalities. Within Polkville the only two industrial businesses are Deviney Lumber and Salvage and Welding Services LLC.

Agriculture

Agricultural land use refers to areas designated for farming, livestock grazing, crop production, and other activities related to the cultivation of food, fiber, and other agricultural products. These areas are typically set aside for activities such as planting, harvesting, and raising animals, and may involve the use of machinery and land management practices. Agricultural land is often characterized by open spaces, large fields, pastures, and sometimes specialized facilities like greenhouses or barns.

CHARACTER AREAS



Town Center

This character area refers to Polkville's main corridor through Polkville Rd where highway commercial, residential, industrial and civic supporting uses are located. This area of development includes a blend of local businesses surrounded by residential properties. There is also a presence of blighted structures and vacant lots. City blocks are organized in traditional neighborhoods with little presence of pedestrian-friendly sidewalks.

Typical Uses: Commercial; single-family residential; public gathering spaces

Traditional Neighborhoods

The Traditional Neighborhoods character area is primarily single-family residential uses encompassing stick built and modular homes. A number of mobile homes and mobile parks are also seen in this area. Within this area blighted properties and single-family homes for sale are present. Streets are well connected with no access to pedestrian-friendly sidewalks.

Typical Uses: Single-family residential; neighborhood commercial; public parks and recreational facilities

Conservation Design / Low Density

These areas include lower density areas that have significant natural resources and/or constraints. Livestock, corn, soybeans, and hay farming is the most common use of land in this character area.

Typical uses: Single-family residential; agriculture; outdoor recreation

Open Space

The Open Space designation applies to parks, public recreational areas and floodplains. Grassy Branch River categorizes a portion of land in a high flood risk zone.



FUTURE LAND USE

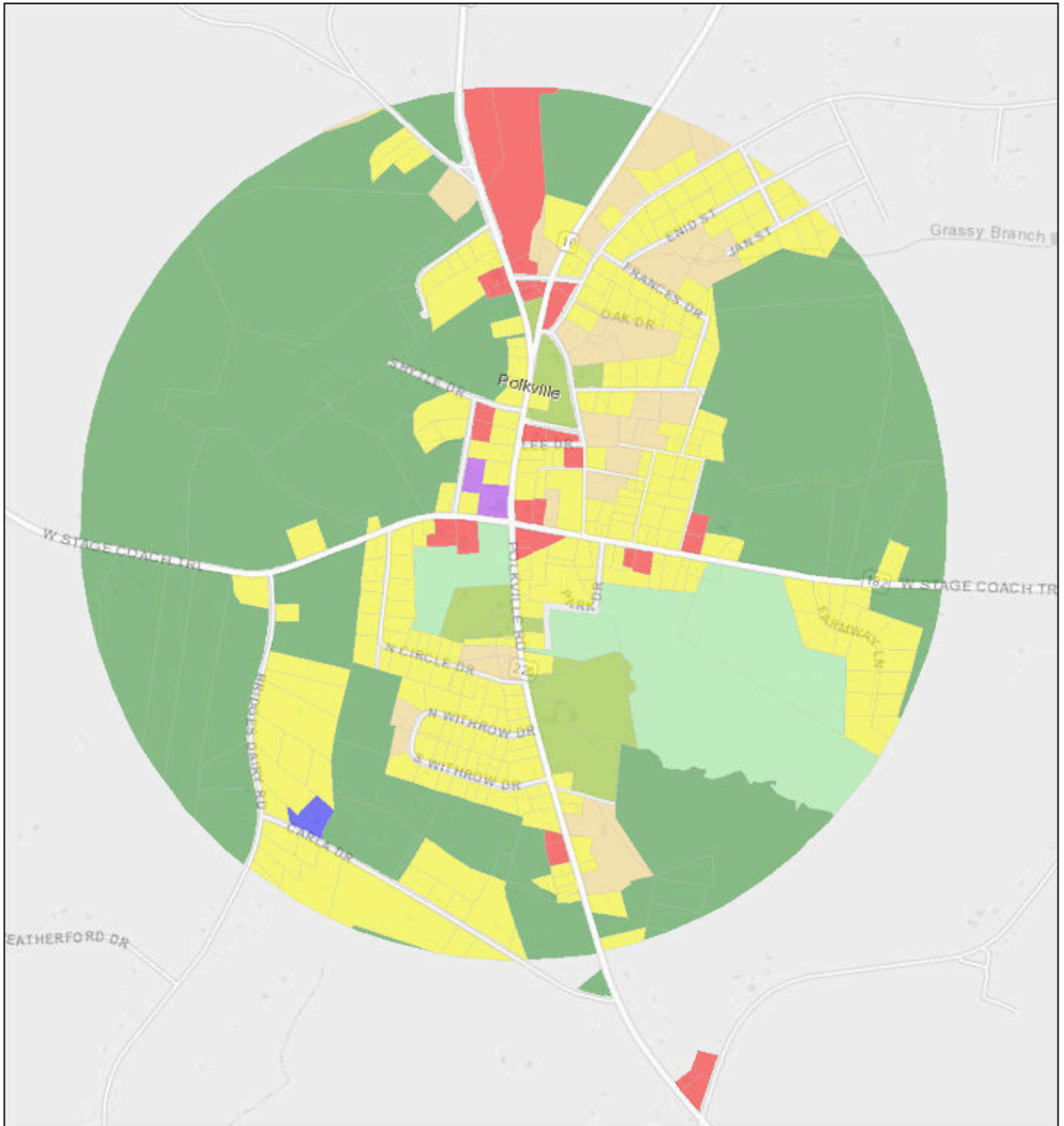
FUTURE LAND USE



The following pages include the Future Land Use Map and Character Areas. The Future Land Use Map illustrates the proposed land use pattern for Polkville's future development. It is designed to guide development, manage growth, and inform land use decision-making in the town.

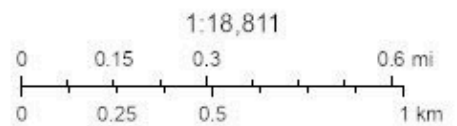
The Character Areas shown below describe the Future Land Use Map and provide typical uses and shared design characteristics of different areas of the town. The Future Land Use Map and Character Areas are not exhaustive or prohibitive. It is up to the governing board at the time of the application to decide what will most accurately promote the goals established in the plan.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP



1/13/2025

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Light Gray Canvas Reference | Recreation |
| Future | Agriculture |
| Low Density Residential | Manufacturing |
| Rural Residential | Education |
| Highway Commercial | Other |
| Civic | |



State of North Carolina DOT, Esri, HERE, State of North Carolina DOT, Esri, HERE, Garmin, GeoTechnologies, Inc., USGS, EPA

CHARACTER AREAS

Town Center

This character area refers to the heart of Polkville. This rural environment includes a sensitive blend of preserved and renovated older structures, new construction, and public spaces that integrate with surrounding properties. The pedestrian-friendly sidewalks would allow for walkability for those neighborhoods close to the main corridor.

Traditional Neighborhoods

The Traditional Neighborhood category is designed to maintain the character of established neighborhoods while allowing some flexibility of housing types. Residential revitalization should be emphasized in these areas. The extension of sidewalks to this area would increase the walkability to local businesses and civic areas.

Conservation Design / Low Density

The conservation of this character area is emphasized because of the town's rural nature, significant natural resources and/or constraints. Conservation Design is encouraged to protect the natural resources of Polkville agricultural use. This type of development clusters structures and site improvements together on a portion of a site for open space.

Open Space & Constraints

This character area encompasses renovated parks and recreational facilities. The areas of constraint refer to conservation areas and floodplains. Structures that support or are associated with the intended uses are typically permitted in non-vulnerable areas.



INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC FACILITIES

RESOURCES

The Town of Polkville maintains a variety of parks and recreational facilities for the public to enjoy. These include:

PARKS AND RECREATION (Polkville Rd and Park Dr)

The town's two community parks provide a plethora of athletic and leisure opportunities. Some notable offerings are:

- Small Playground (handicapped accessible)
- Pickleball Court
- Large Playground
- Baseball Fields
- Picnic Shelter
- Restrooms

SIDEWALKS

Currently the only sidewalk that exists is along the small park on Polkville Rd. Extending sidewalks to the rest of Polkville Rd and the surrounding neighborhoods would increase the walkability of residents throughout the main corridor and boost local businesses. Creating a safe space for pedestrians would promote the safety of residents.

CLEVELAND COUNTY WATER

The Cleveland County Water Authority is responsible for supplying water to many communities within Cleveland County, including Polkville, NC. The authority sources its water primarily from the First Broad River, which serves as a key surface water supply for the region. The water is treated at the Lawndale Water Treatment Plant, which removes impurities and ensures that the water meets safety and quality standards.

Once treated, the water is distributed through a network of pipes and infrastructure maintained by the authority. This system ensures that Polkville and other nearby towns receive a reliable supply of clean drinking water. Regular monitoring and maintenance are conducted to ensure that the water quality remains high and complies with state and federal regulations.

Cleveland County Water also provides information about water quality reports and conservation tips to the public, ensuring transparency and engagement with the community.

RESOURCES

SEWER SYSTEM

The Polkville Wastewater Maintenance Maps provide an organized view of the town's wastewater infrastructure, intended to assist with routine and emergency maintenance. Key elements include:

- Pump Stations: Marked by symbols, these indicate critical locations where wastewater is collected and pumped to higher elevations or treatment facilities.
- Manholes and ARV Manholes: These access points are scattered throughout the system, allowing for inspection, cleaning, and maintenance of the sewer lines.
- Gravity Sewer Lines: These represent sections of the system where wastewater flows naturally due to gravity, typically from homes or businesses to pump stations or treatment plants.
- Force Mains: Pressurized pipes that transport wastewater, especially where gravity flow is insufficient, such as to higher elevations or across long distances.

The maps are segmented into zones (labeled A1, B1, C1, and D1) to facilitate localized maintenance. Streets such as Shytle, Lee, Pine, and Church are clearly marked, along with more rural extensions like Bridges Dairy and Harris Creek. The force mains extends towards Kingstown, which indicates an interconnected wastewater system with neighboring areas. This layout allows maintenance crews to identify problem areas quickly and make necessary repairs, ensuring smooth operation of the wastewater system.

POLKVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

The PVFD is located along Polkville Rd. The Polkville Volunteer Fire Department provides essential fire protection and emergency response services to the community. Their services include fighting fires, responding to medical emergencies, conducting rescue operations, and offering fire prevention education. The department also engages in community outreach, promoting safety awareness and hosting events to strengthen community ties. As a volunteer organization, they rely on local support and fundraising to maintain equipment and training for their firefighters.

CLEVELAND COUNTY EMS POLKVILLE

Cleveland County EMS in Polkville offers comprehensive emergency medical services to the community. Their primary services include rapid response to medical emergencies, advanced life support, patient transport, and on-scene medical care. The team is trained to handle a variety of situations, from trauma and cardiac emergencies to non-life-threatening medical issues. Additionally, they engage in public education and community outreach programs to promote health and safety awareness. Their goal is to provide prompt and effective care to ensure the well-being of residents in Polkville and surrounding areas.

CLEVELAND COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Cleveland County Sheriff's Office provides a range of essential services to Polkville, NC, including law enforcement, crime prevention, and community safety initiatives. Their responsibilities encompass responding to emergency calls, conducting investigations, and enforcing laws to maintain public order. Additionally, they offer community outreach programs, educational resources on crime prevention, and support services for victims of crime. The Sheriff's Office works closely with local residents to foster a safe and secure environment in Polkville.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SWOT ANALYSIS

We asked respondents to identify the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the Town of Polkville. The highest ranked from each category can be found in the chart below.



PUBLIC SURVEY



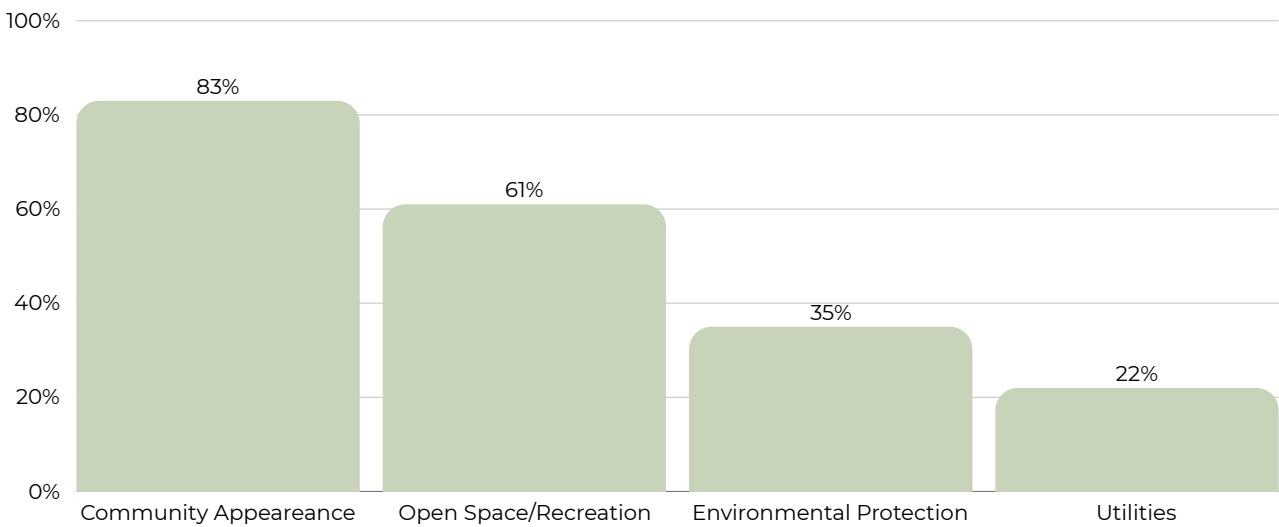
Role of the Community

Community engagement initiatives for this plan began in October 2024 and continued throughout the planning process. Residents of Polkville were engaged through a community survey, which was distributed both online and in-person. The survey gathered input on residents' priorities and concerns regarding future development, land use, and infrastructure improvements. It provided valuable insights into what the community values most, such as the preservation of rural character and the desire for more walkable areas. The responses from this survey played a crucial role in shaping the direction of the plan, ensuring it aligns with the needs and aspirations of Polkville's residents.

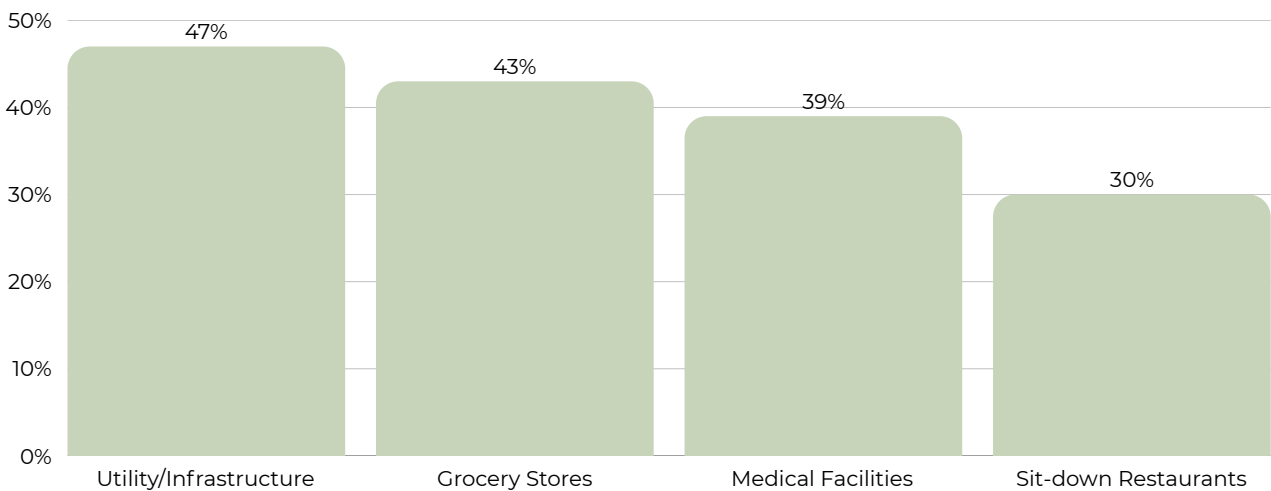
PUBLIC SURVEY

The community survey that was released to the residents of Polkville included 20 questions designed to assess the public's preferences, concerns, and priorities regarding the town's future development. The questions covered a broad range of topics, including land use, housing density, transportation infrastructure, and the preservation of natural spaces. Residents were asked to provide feedback on how they envision growth in the area, their level of satisfaction with current amenities, and what changes or improvements they would like to see.

Over the next 10 years, what issues should the Town of Polkville prioritize?

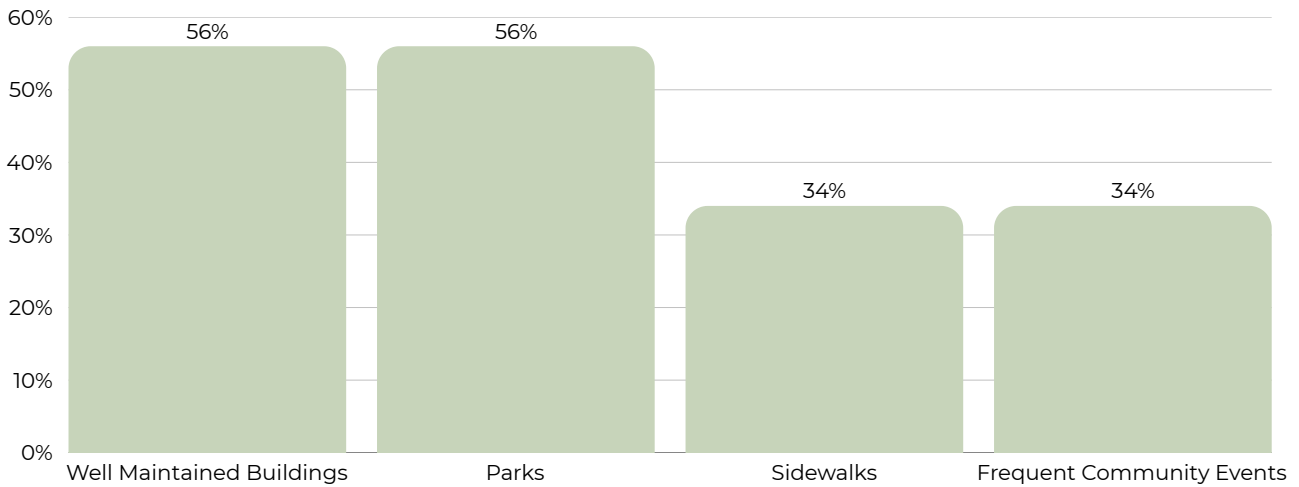


In the future, what type of non-residential development is needed in Polkville?



PUBLIC SURVEY

What features do you think are crucial for a successful town?



Based on the three questions above, Polkville residents have identified several priorities for the town's future. The majority (83%) emphasized the importance of enhancing the town's appearance, followed by a strong focus on improving utilities and infrastructure (47%). Additionally, expanding grocery store options (43%), establishing a medical facility (39%), and improving town parks (56%) were also highlighted as crucial areas for development. These insights reflect the community's desire for a vibrant, well-connected, and accessible town that meets the needs of all residents.

When asked "What types of improvements do you envision in the town?" 47% of residents expressed a desire for enhancements that would make the town more pedestrian-friendly, with a focus on safer, more accessible sidewalks

As is shown in the table below, residents identified their top three attributes of importance as open spaces (69%), agriculture community (65%), and locally owned businesses (60%).

Table 1. Top Three Attributes of Polkville by Importance

ATTRIBUTES

Open Spaces	69%
Agriculture Community	65%
Locally Owned Businesses	60%

An aerial photograph of a suburban residential neighborhood. The image shows several houses with different roof colors (grey, brown, white) and styles. There are green lawns, trees, and a paved road with a few cars. The overall scene is bright and clear. The text 'GOALS & OBJECTIVES' is overlaid in the center in a bold, green, sans-serif font.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOALS

The following pages are the goals and objectives laid out for the future of the Town of Polkville:



Goal 1: Encourage a development pattern that respects Polkville’s sense of place and prioritizes a livable and safe environment.



Goal 2: Preserve Polkville’s natural resources through conservation of environmentally sensitive areas.



Goal 3: Plan for efficient, equitable, and resilient infrastructure and services that maintain and improve quality of life throughout the town.



Goal 4: Expand housing opportunities and affordability for all residents while preserving the character of Polkville.



Goal 5: Support economic viability and grow the tax base in addition to cultivating local businesses.

OBJECTIVES

LAND USE

- Objective 1.1: Encourage a growth pattern that takes advantage of existing infrastructure by identifying areas across the town that are best positioned to accommodate future growth. This would include areas with well connected streets, proximity to schools and parks, and access to public utilities.
- Objective 1.2: Support the revitalization of outdated commercial areas by pursuing opportunities to improve commercial buildings and blighted structures along Polkville Rd.
- Objective 1.3: Increase the supply of affordable housing by promoting infield development that aligns with the scale and character of existing neighborhoods
- Objective 1.4: Stabilize and preserve the character of neighborhoods by supporting residential revitalization.
- Objective 1.5: Engage and empower neighborhoods by communicating land use planning efforts, policy development, approvals and processes.
- Objective 1.6: Preserve character of low-density and rural areas by promoting conservation efforts for areas designated for agricultural use.
- Objective 1.7: Encourage open space in new development by requiring conservation design in spaces with sensitive natural resources to protect agricultural lands and restore biodiversity.
- Objective 1.8: Foster the growth of locally owned businesses by creating a supportive environment through incentives, streamlined permitting processes, and the development of designated commercial areas within the town.

OBJECTIVES

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- Objective 1.1: Continually work to improve safety, comfort, and convince for pedestrians across the city.
- Objective 1.2: Maintain and expand public parks.
- Objective 1.3: Work toward sewer expansion to accommodate for future growth.
- Objective 1.4: Collaborate with the Transportation Administration of Cleveland County to expand bus routes to Polkville, improving accessibility and providing convenient transportation options for residents.
- Objective 1.5: Advocate for the establishment of medical facilities in Polkville by collaborating with Atrium Health to ensure residents have access to essential healthcare services within the community.

ENHANCING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

- Objective 1.1: Create support groups for families facing specific challenges, such as addiction recovery or financial hardships.
- Objective 1.2: Partner with local health departments, addiction services, and other nonprofits to provide comprehensive support and resources for those affected by substance abuse.
- Objective 1.3: Organize outreach events to connect with the community, provide resources, and build relationships among residents.
- Objective 1.4: Collaborate with local nonprofits, government agencies, and churches to pool resources and enhance the support offered to the community.
- Objective 1.5: Establish a food pantry to provide free groceries to families in need, or explore partnerships with neighboring food pantries in Cleveland County to expand support.
- Objective 1.6: Establish a local farmers market to promote fresh, locally-sourced produce, or explore collaborating with neighboring farmers markets in Cleveland County to enhance accessibility and support regional agriculture.