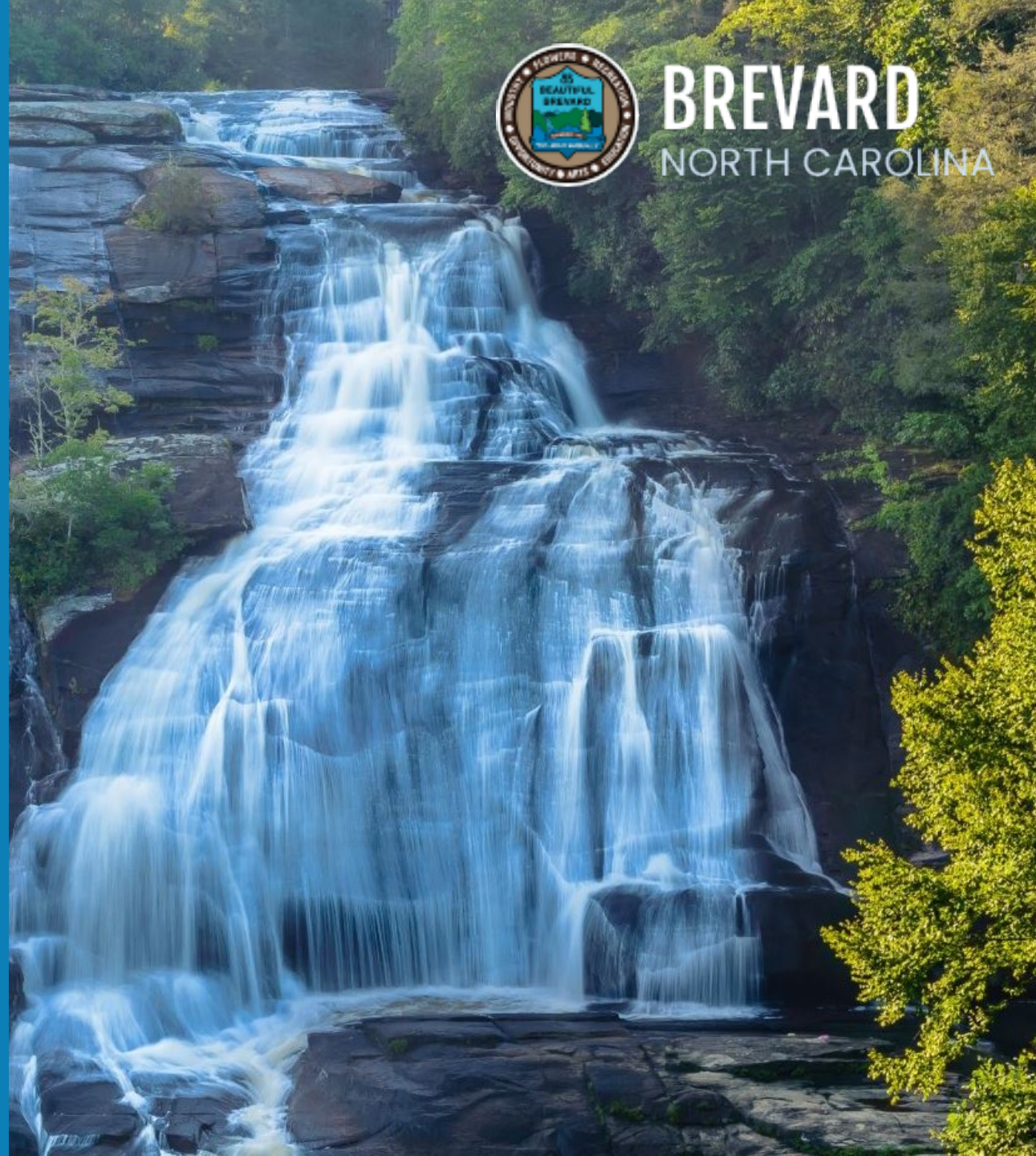
GREEN GROWTH AUDIT

City Council Public Hearing

March 16, 2026



What is Green Growth?

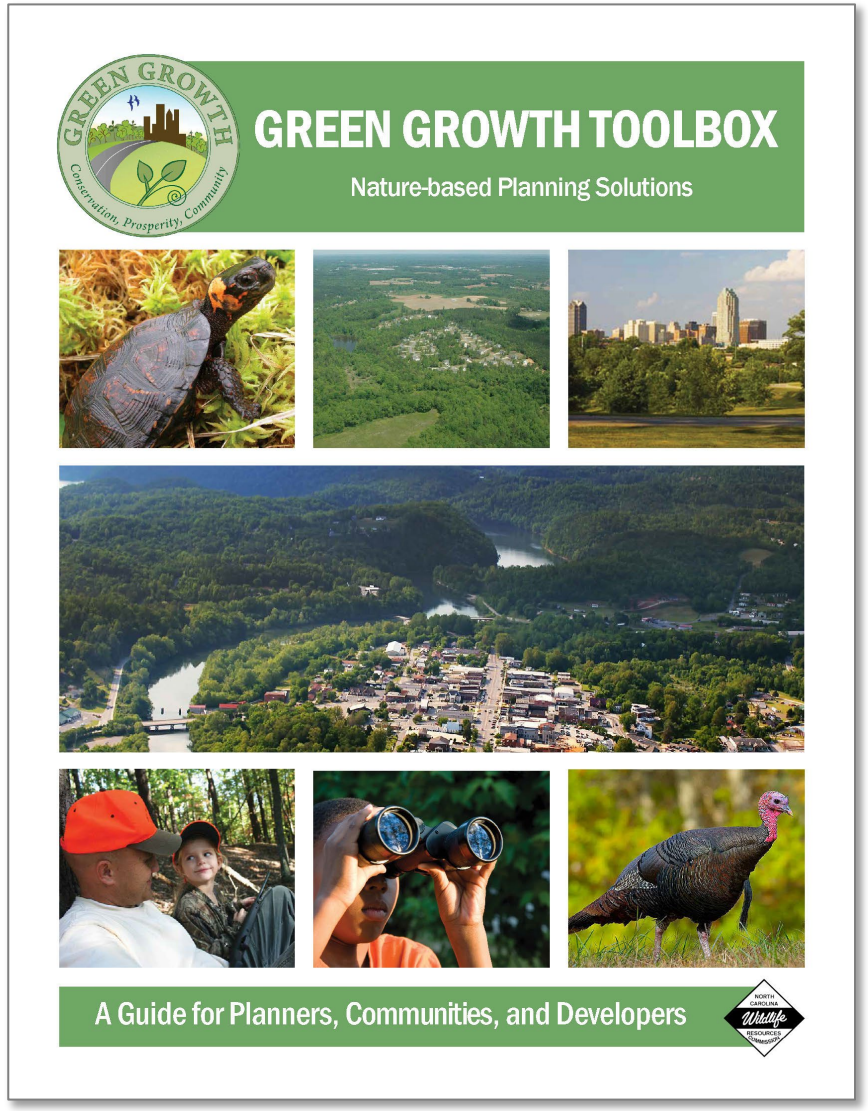
“GREEN GROWTH” means conserving wildlife, habitat, and other valuable natural resources as communities continue to grow.

- Balance new development and economic opportunity with environmental goals
- Development can be both environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial



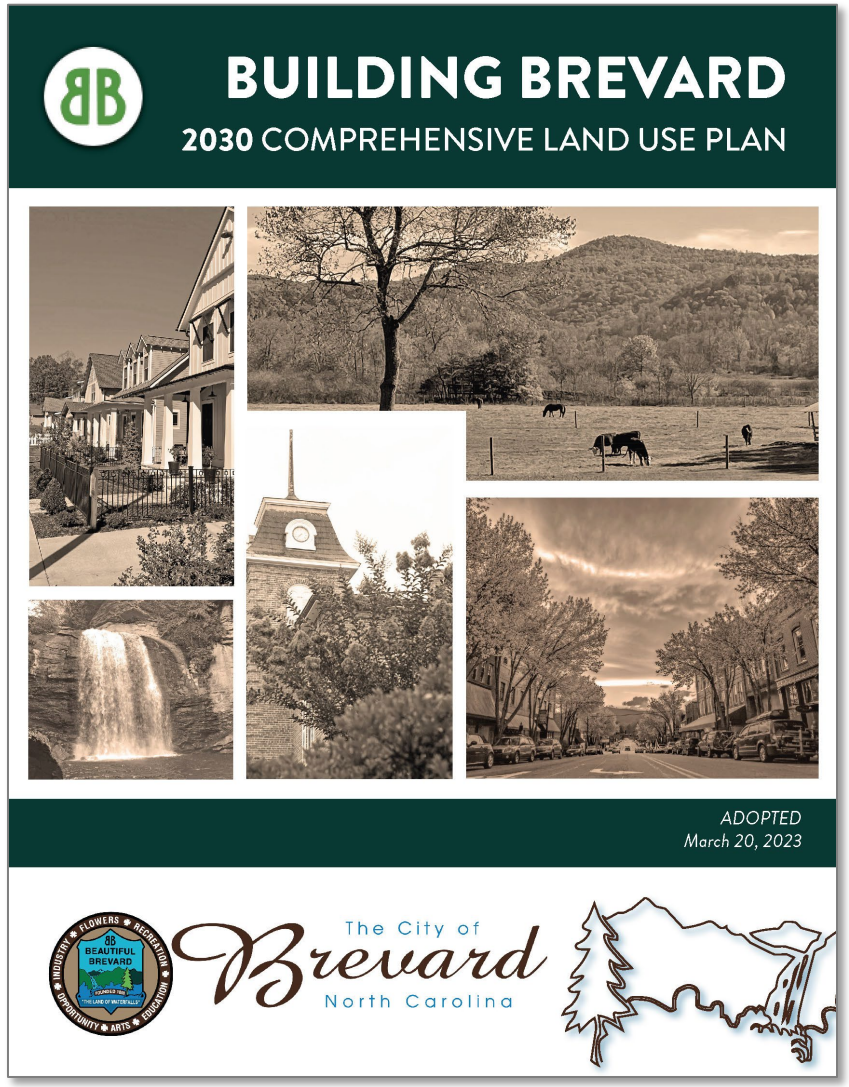
Background

- In 2023, **North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission (NCWRC)** selected City of Brevard to participate in their Partners for Green Growth program
- Provided technical and financial support to audit the City's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and identify opportunities for better aligning development regulations with green growth principles.
- Staff, with support from NCWRC, completed a comprehensive review of the UDO – the **"Green Growth Audit"**



Background

- Build on the goals and recommendation from the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan
  - Goal 2: Encourage a development pattern that respects Brevard's sense of place and prioritizes livable communities
  - Goal 4: Create a built environment that prioritizes a safe, active, multi-modal transportation system and community health and wellness
  - Goal 5: Celebrate Brevard's natural resources through conservation of environmentally sensitive areas, improving access to recreation, and restoration of native ecosystems.
  - Goal 8: Plan for efficient, equitable, and resilient infrastructure and services that maintain and improve quality of life throughout the city



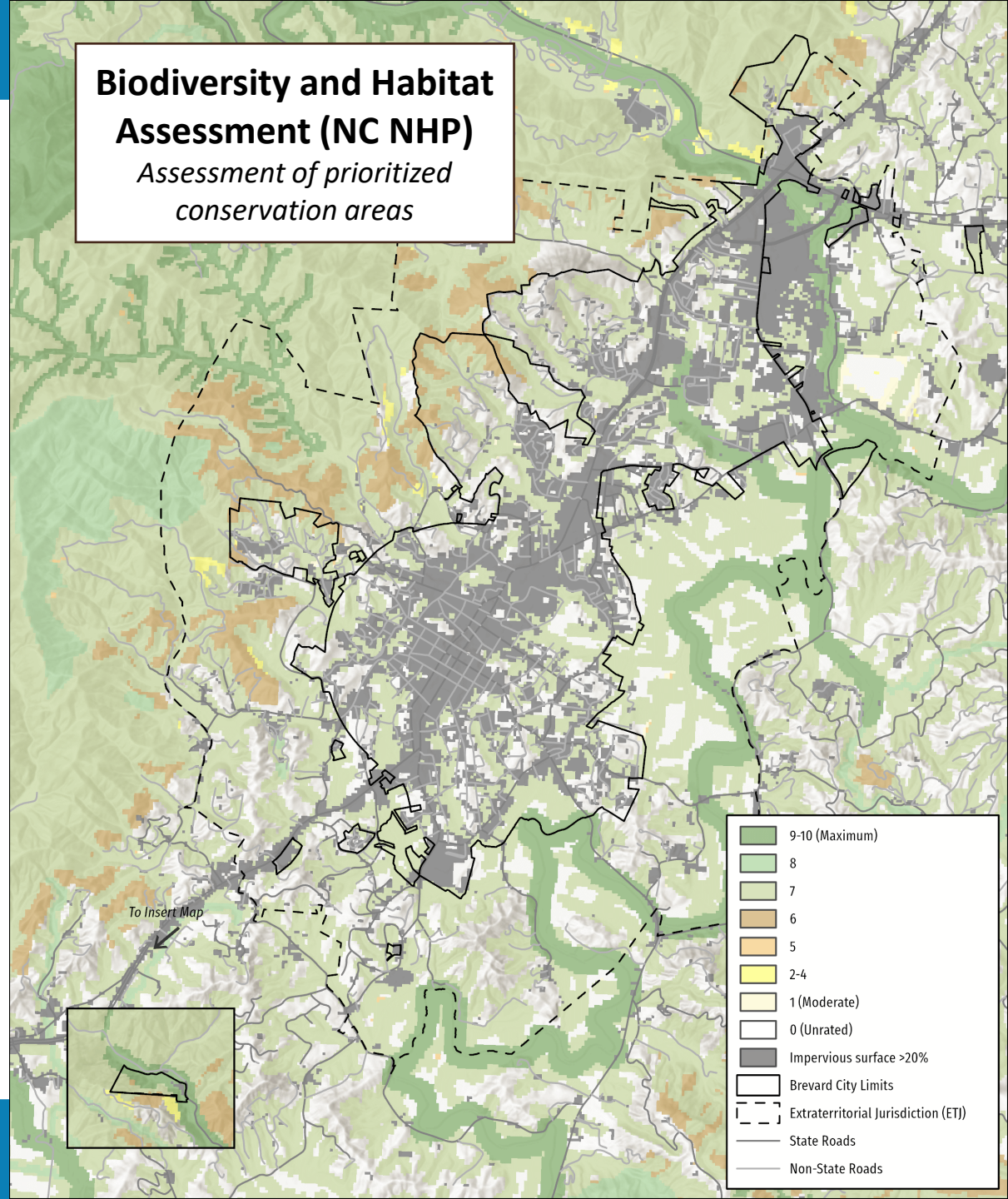
Purpose

- Urban development and growth should align with sustainability, environmental preservation, and climate resilience goals
- Analyze the UDO's effectiveness in promoting sustainable development, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing resilience to climate change.
- Identify opportunities to:
  - reduce regulatory barriers to conservation;
  - align ordinance requirements with best practices;
  - enhance requirements for native plantings and vegetation preservation; and
  - incentivize greater wildlife habitat protections in sensitive areas.
- Develop actionable recommendations to strengthen the UDO's alignment with green growth principles



Environmental Context

- Comprehensive review of environmental conditions
  - Habitat assessment, elevation, landslide susceptibility, surface waters, tree canopy, etc.
- Utilizing data from NCWRC, NC Natural Heritage Program, NC Department of Environmental Quality, among others
- Emphasizes the importance of protecting natural habitats and ecosystems in the sensitive areas and concentrating development in built-out areas



Green Growth Strategies

1. Conservation of Land with Efficient Development Strategies
2. Mitigation of Negative Impacts of Development
3. Preservation of Sensitive Areas
4. Restoration of Natural Ecosystems and Wildlife Habitats



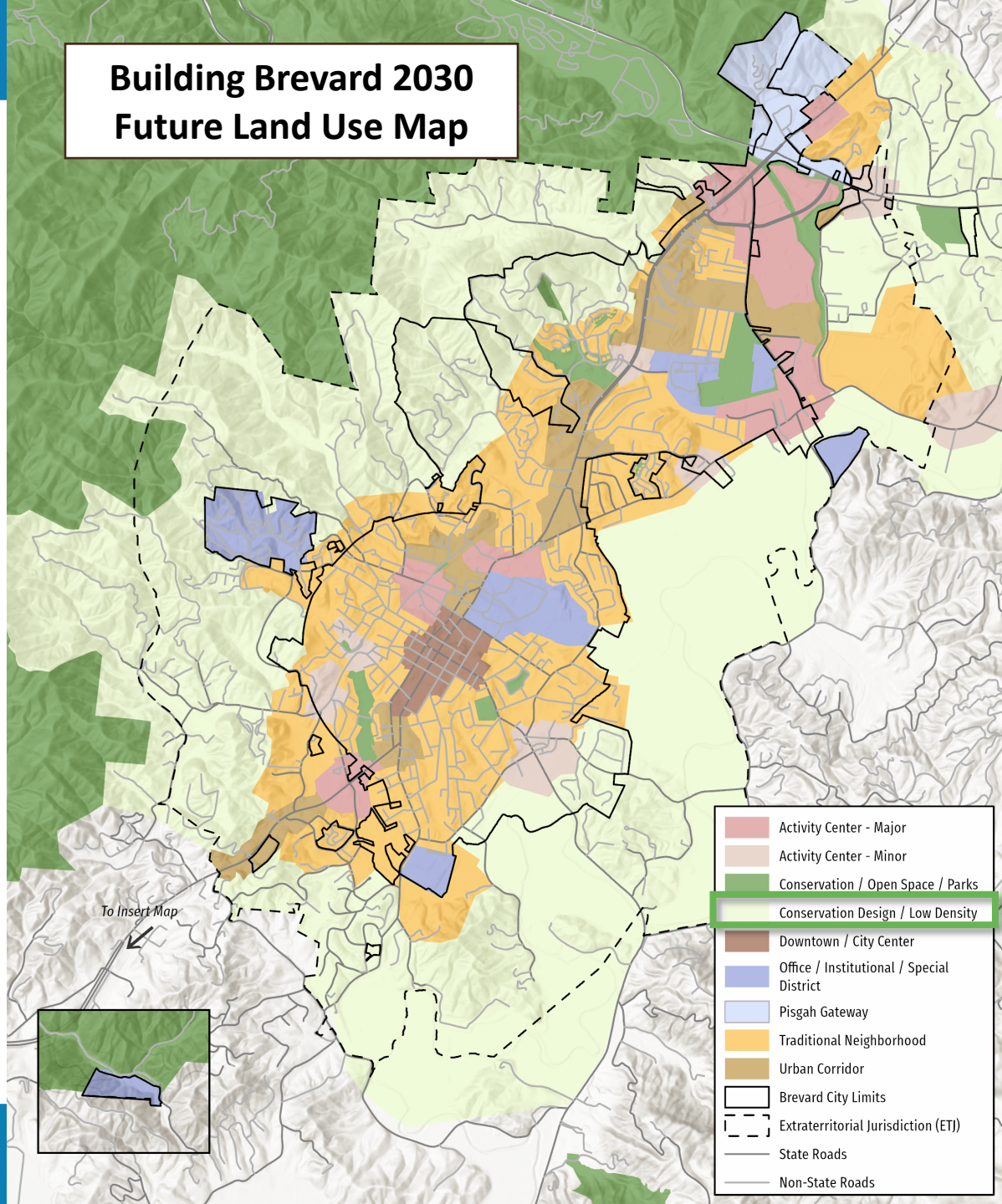
Strategy 1: Conservation of Land with Efficient Development Strategies

1. Limit development in sensitive areas

- Reframe the General Residential–4 (GR-4) zoning district as a “Conservation Zoning District” to conserve sensitive areas and limit sprawled development

2. Prioritize infill development in regulations

- Consider additional incentives for infill development
- Upzone areas of the existing GR-4 that are suitable for development and do not require additional environmental protections



Strategy 2: Mitigation of the Negative Impacts of Development

1. **Require environmental assessments prior to large-scale construction**
   - Introduce scalable submittal requirements based on project size and scope
   - Establish performance-based standards tied to the survey results
   - Prepare guidance for environmental assessments with information to fulfill this requirement and additional sources
2. **Control sedimentation and erosion from development**
   - Allow administrator to require erosion and sedimentation control plan for smaller projects in sensitive areas
   - Bolster procedures for the review of sedimentation and erosion control measures for smaller projects



Strategy 2: Mitigation of the Negative Impacts of Development

3. Improve stormwater management

- Refine the types of development activities that are required to comply with the stormwater management provisions
- Establish incentives for small developments that are exempt from stormwater management requirements to implement low-impact development techniques
- Amend the infrastructure / street design standards to utilize existing curb and gutter systems where available, and establish alternative street designs that reduce stormwater channelization



Strategy 2: Mitigation of the Negative Impacts of Development

4. **Preserve and expand tree canopy and conservation landscaping**
   - Revise screening and buffer standards to mitigate the impact of high-intensity areas (e.g., parking lots, roads, industrial uses) but prioritizing environmental function
   - Require all landscaping plans be sealed by a qualified design professional
   - Limit removal of trees to a defined building envelope, driveways and utility routes in sensitive areas
5. **Manage urban heat**
   - Amend the applicability of the heat island mitigation requirements to include smaller buildings and/or any flat roofs
   - Set performance measures for tree canopy coverage of sidewalks and other pedestrian areas



Strategy 3: Preservation of Sensitive Areas

1. **Protect steep slopes**
   - Maintain the City's recently amended steep slope regulations and monitor its effectiveness
   - Consider adding other provisions to the steep slope regulations pertaining to higher erosion control and stormwater measures
2. **Prevent flood damage**
   - Maintain the City's high standards for flood damage prevention and retain or improve the standing as Level 8 in the CRS program
   - Codify incentives to set aside the floodplain as preserved open space (like steep slope regulations)
3. **Enhance surface water protection**
   - Consider requiring an additional buffer for low-impact use / managed vegetation beyond the 30-foot protected riparian buffer for perennial streams and incentivize for others
   - Codify procedures for permitting streambank restoration efforts

Strategy 4: Restoration of Natural Ecosystems & Wildlife Habitats

1. **Integrate restorative open spaces in development**
   - Establish purpose-based open space categories (e.g., conservation areas, passive recreation, active recreation, stormwater management, greenways)
   - Refine minimum design standards (e.g., size, shape, slope, access and usability)
2. **Reduce light pollution**
   - Establish a dark sky zone with higher requirements (likely as part of a conservation zoning district)
   - Require downward-aiming, shields, louvers, and glare reduction techniques for all fixtures on certain projects or in certain zoning districts
   - Prepare guidance that outline the lighting requirements and direct applicants to resources and pre-approved products
3. **Incorporate native species in landscaping**
   - Adopt official lists of native and non-native species by reference and update administratively
   - Amend regulations for nuisance grass and clearly define exemptions for intentional natural areas

Implementation Guide & Next Steps

- A suggested roadmap for potential revisions to the UDO
- Matrix assesses the impact, time frame, resources, and viability under state law
- Legislative authority – SL 2024-57
  - Changes to “down-zoning” authority – requires written consent of property owner
  - Cannot create “nonconformities” in non-residential district

STRATEGY	ACTION	IMPACT	TIME FRAME	RESOURCES	VIABILITY
1. Conservation of Land with Efficient Development Strategies					
1.1 Limit development in sensitive areas	A. Maintain the City's no minimum lot size and associated flexibility in calculating development density on the parent parcel, allowing the clustering of development in less sensitive areas and accommodating unique environmental conditions	Low	Ongoing	Staff time	Possible
	B. Reframe the General Residential–4 (GR-4) zoning district as a “Conservation Zoning District” with the stated purpose of the zoning district being to conserve sensitive areas and limit sprawled development	High	Long-Term	Staff time	Impossible with associated regulations

Implementation Guide & Next Steps

- Implementing the recommendations is an intentional and incremental process
- Guidance, not a list of required actions
  - City Council will ultimately consider each action prior to adoption – balancing community impacts, environmental outcomes, and the city's shared goals
- Not every improvement must be comprehensive or immediate to be meaningful
- Any step is a tangible improvement and builds momentum for future transformative changes



Adoption as Addendum to the CLUP

What this Means

- Becomes part of the adopted policy guide for “the present and future physical, social and economic development of the jurisdiction” (NCGS 160D-501)
- Used to assess the reasonableness of planning and zoning changes (consistency with the plan)

Process to Formally Amend the CLUP

✓Planning Board – Recommended approval February 24th

✓City Council Public Hearing – Tonight

- City Council Vote – April 20th

