Project Overview

The Town's [Suitability Analysis – Natural Area Model](#)[1], associated with the Town's Complete Community Strategy (a Comprehensive Plan component), is a tool to generally guide future growth in Chapel Hill. The model provides a foundation of decision-making for elected officials and serves as a guide for community members to better understand the Town's vision for the future.

The model will be used to identify areas to protect and preserve and, in conjunction with the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), to encourage development within the six identified Focus Areas.

The Suitability Analysis – Natural Area Model is a composite reflection of the Future Land Use Map (FLUM map series) and Complete Community Strategy. The FLUM map series includes flood resiliency, extreme heat resiliency, tree canopy density, impervious surfaces, and existing habitat and potential connections.

The Suitability Analysis – Natural Area Model was created by Town staff to provide a platform for analyzing the goals of development and environmental protection. The objectives of the model include:

- Balance development with conservation
- Preserve and enhance ecology, natural resources, and habitats
- Encourage forest and mature tree protection
- Ensure habitat corridors

This will be a living model that we anticipate updating annually and as new data becomes available. This model is presented as additional information for the Complete Community Strategy.

Objective and Background

Using resiliency model helps us identify areas best able to sustain a diversity of habitats for plants and animals. The resiliency model can also guide the Town in efforts to identify and preserve land best suited to aid climate conservation.

Council Strategic Focus Areas and Goals

The model offers guidance to Town officials, elected bodies, appointed bodies, developers, and community members on meeting the Town's goals and objectives.

Town Council adopted Strategic Focus Areas and Goals in April 2023 to guide the Town's functions. The following are considered:

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[1] https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/f7621b8cd4a64c21b3de946d4844142a

Strategic Focus Area 1: Environmental Stewardship – to mitigate the climate changes through management of the Town resources, partnerships, and natural environment and as we densify to also strengthen protection of sites in our natural areas plan and parks master plan.

Strategic Focus Area 3: Affordable Housing and Housing Production – to increase housing access across a range of incomes and housing types and achieve equitable housing outcomes for historically marginalized populations.

Strategic Focus Area 4: Connected Community – to create a highly connected community where bicycling, walking, and transit are convenient, everyday choices for our neighborhoods, businesses, and public spaces are accessible to all residents without a car.

Future Land Use Plan

On December 9, 2020, the Chapel Hill Town Council adopted *Chapel Hill - Charting Our Future - A Land Use Initiative* as a component of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. This report, commonly referred to as the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), is to service as a road map to guide future decisions about how the Town should evolve over time. The FLUM includes these maps:

- Resiliency Assessment for Extreme Heat and Flooding
- Existing Habitat & Connections Map
- Long Term Network Facilities Map

The Resiliency Assessment Map series were created as part of the 2018 Triangle Regional Resiliency project and the map series reflect concern regarding flooding and extreme heat. It guides land use decisions and development application evaluations.

Development of Model

The development of the model attempts to identify areas within the Town's Jurisdictional Limits that exhibit characteristics consistent with criteria defining natural habitat. The criteria are diverse and were separated into one of three sub-models: Natural Habitat, Hydrology and Land Use/Land Cover.

How to use the Model

The Suitability Analysis – Natural Area Model identifies areas within the Town's Zoning jurisdiction that are important natural habitat for plants and animals. This effort is to conserve the Town's biodiversity and critical landscape connectivity. The intent is that this suitability analysis, as an element of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, be used to review proposed development and redevelopment projects.

The Suitability Analysis – Natural Area Model is a tool to generally guide and direct future growth and implement the community's vision. The Suitability Use Model, along with other
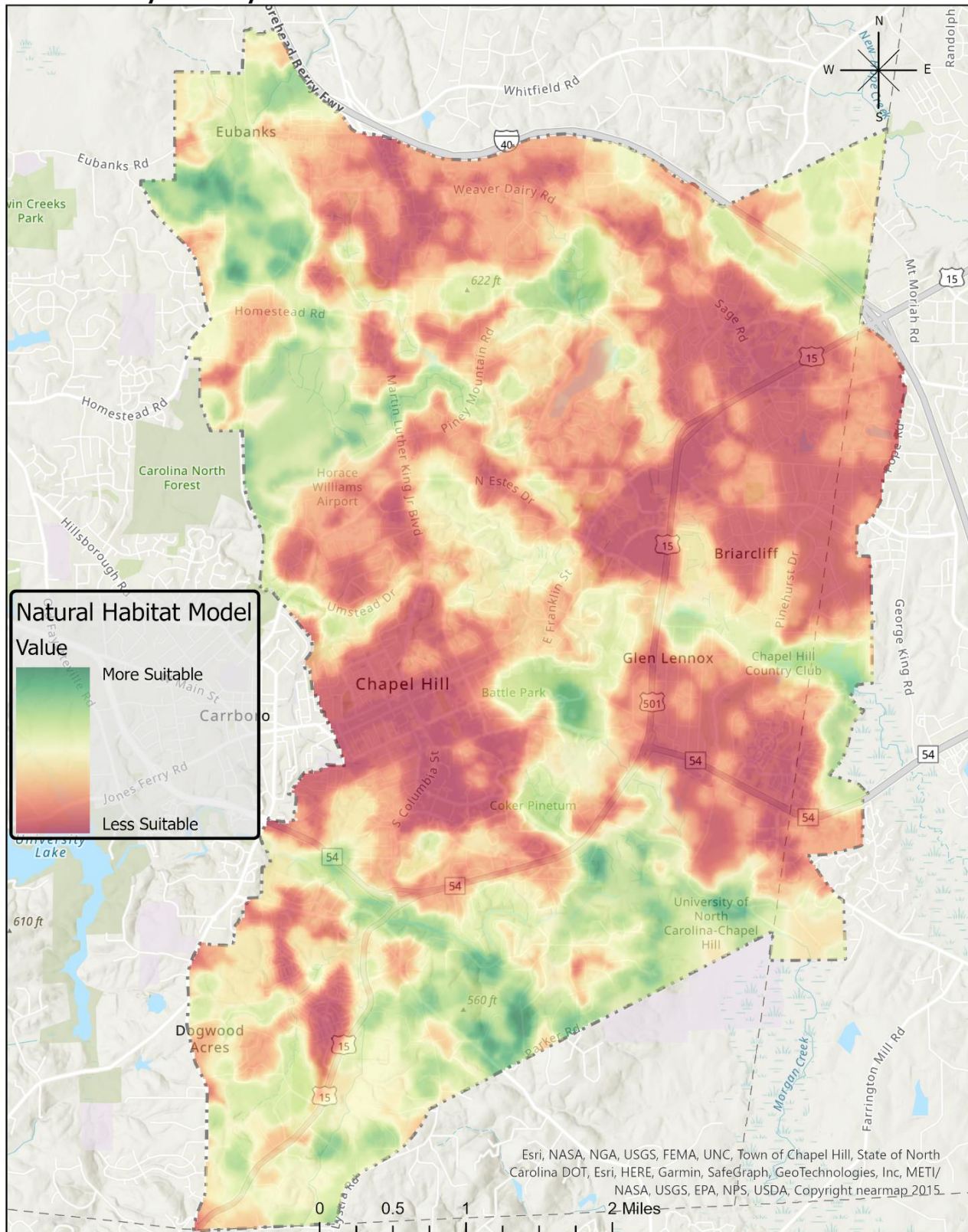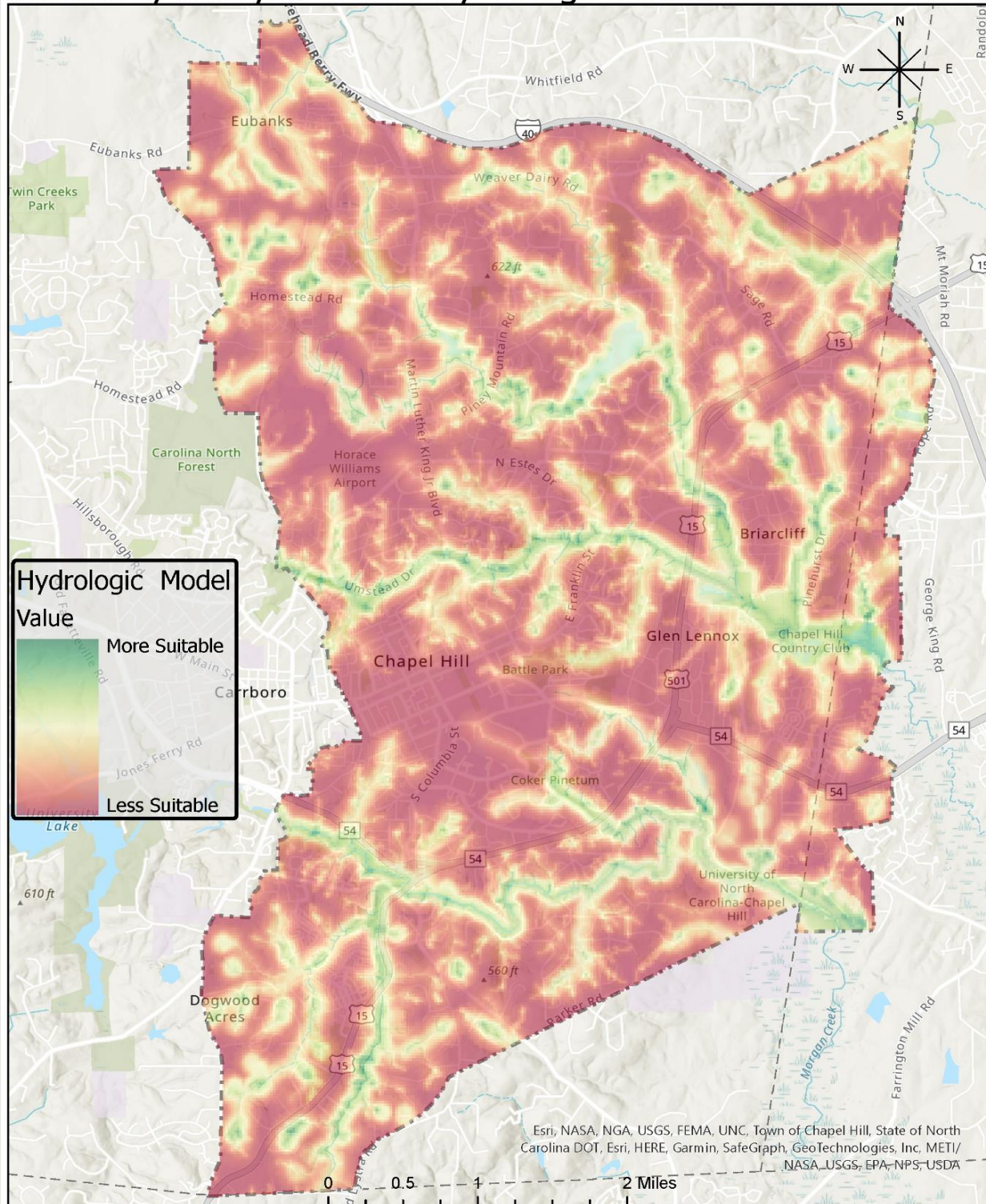
components of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, will serve as the foundation for decision-making for elected and appointed officials.
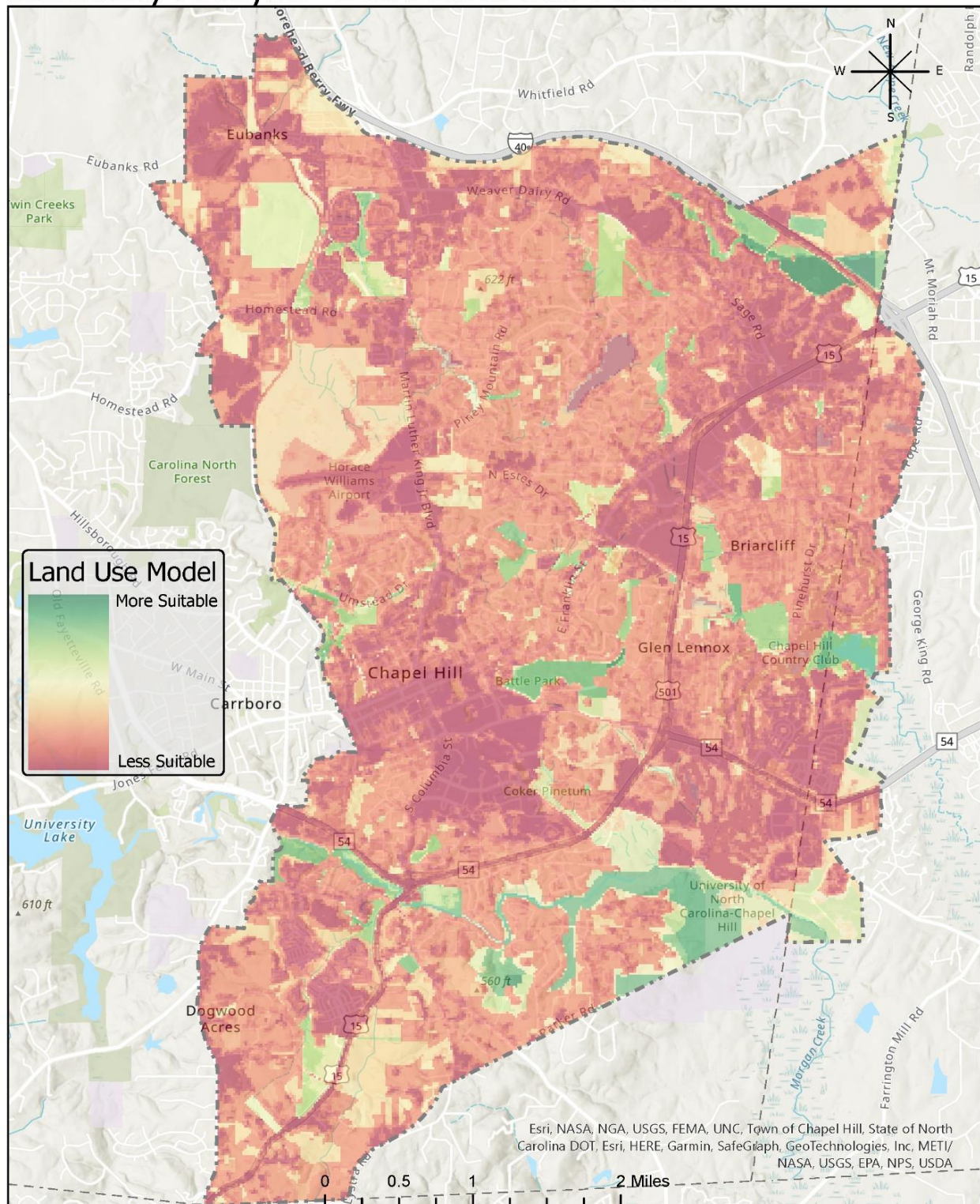
Suitability Analysis- Draft Natural Habitat Model

Suitability Analysis- Draft Hydrologic Model

Suitability Analysis- Draft Land Use Model

Suitability Analysis- Draft Natural Area Model