



Creative Solutions FOR Thriving Communities

CENTRALINA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Aging in the Suburbs



GROWING Jobs and Our Economy | CONTROLLING Cost of Government | IMPROVING Quality of Life

Aging in the Suburbs: Changes in the Built Environment That Support Well-Being and Mobility as We Age

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Session Take-Aways

- Aging in community should be a goal of public policy
- To fully support aging in community, typical suburbs must be radically reimagined and changed
- Even so...small improvements are still improvements, and do not necessarily foreclose larger improvements
- Process of reimagining should include not just one neighborhood but multiple neighborhoods
- Start with “tactical suburbanism”

Aspiration:

A built environment that supports aging in community

What is the built environment?

- Exterior public realm – tangible elements
 - Paths, sidewalks, and roads
 - Greenways, parks, public gardens, and arboretums
 - Plazas, town squares, and town greens
 - Farmers' markets
 - Community food gardens
 - Houses, stores, and many other types of buildings
- Exterior public realm – ambient air
 - Smog (tropospheric ozone)
 - Fine particulate matter, including diesel particulate matter

AGING IN COMMUNITY OCCURS WHEN OLDER ADULTS...

- Live safely, comfortably, and free of loneliness, boredom, and helplessness...
- In single-family homes, shared housing, clustered housing, condominiums, or cohousing
- Receive compassionate care at home, in day care, or in a neighborhood eldercare home
- Claim their role as elders
- And...

AGING IN COMMUNITY OCCURS WHEN OLDER ADULTS...

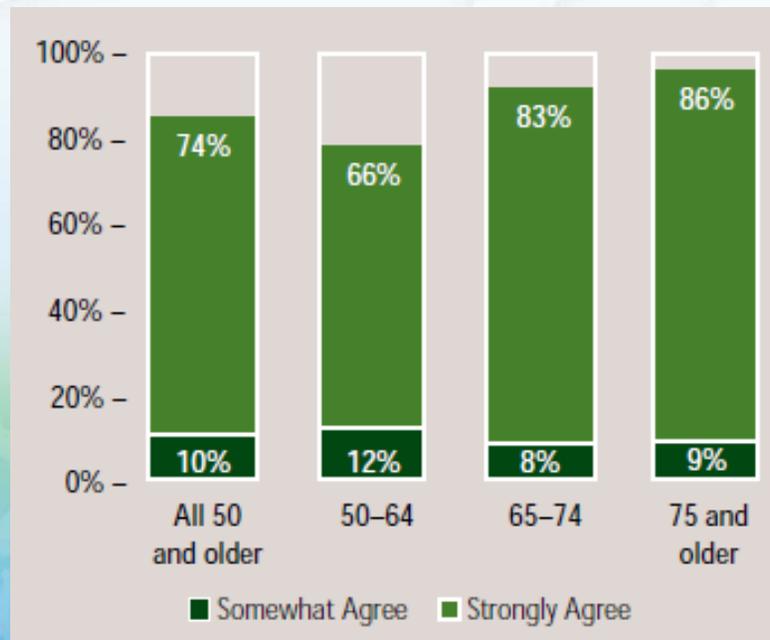
- Reside in multigenerational neighborhoods that provide:
 - social connections
 - relief for caregivers
 - older adults with opportunities to supplement their income (barter economy)
 - affordable housing to home care aides
- Are not exposed to injurious concentrations of ambient air pollutants
- And...

AGING IN COMMUNITY OCCURS WHEN OLDER ADULTS...

- Travel safely and comfortably in the neighborhood and the encompassing region
- Use a transportation system that accommodates the physical, sensory, and cognitive impairments experienced by many older adults
- Safely negotiate travel using wheelchairs, slow electric vehicles, canes, and walkers.

Aging in Place

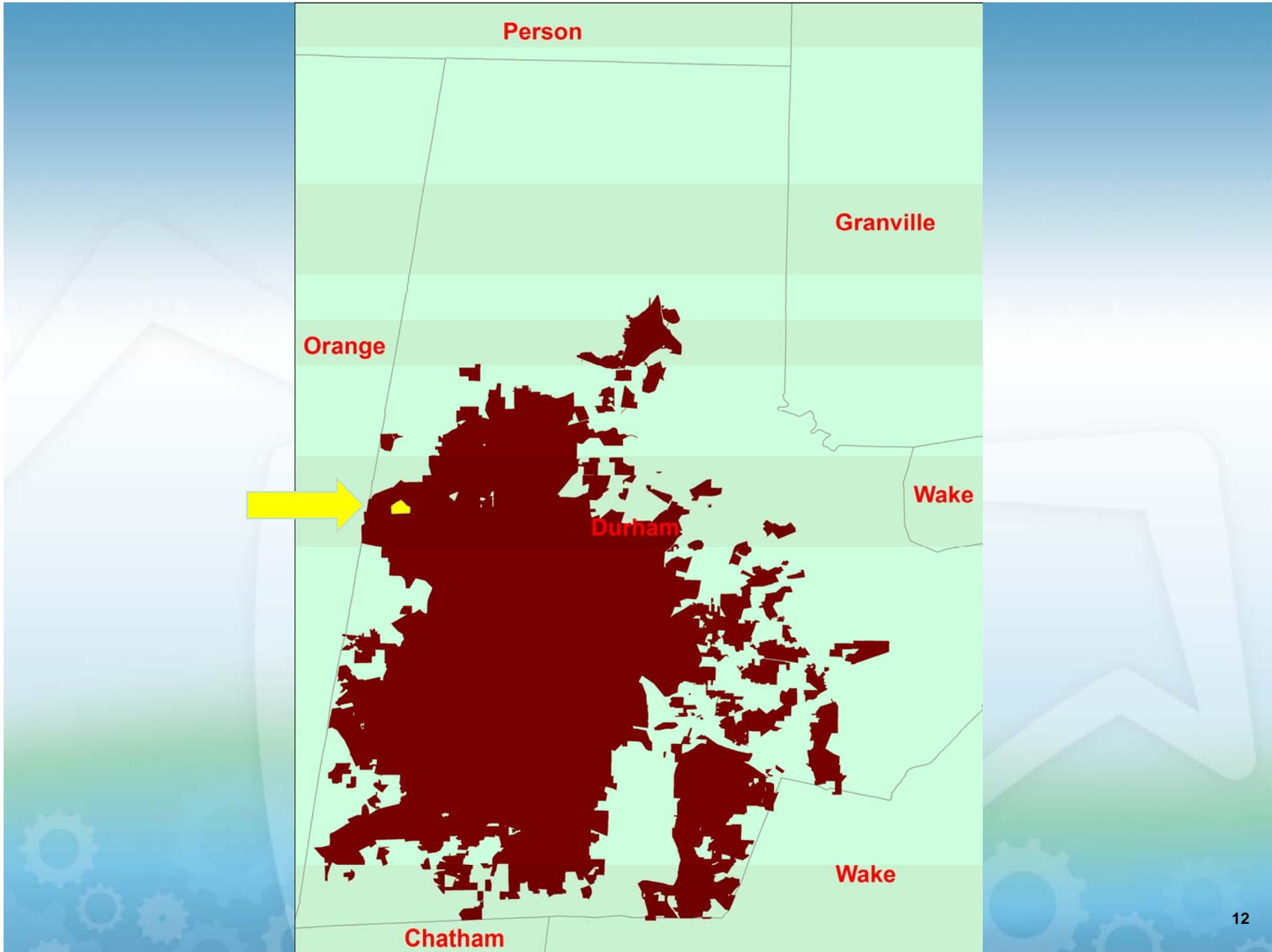
“Now I’d like to ask a question about your home. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘What I’d really like to do is stay in my current residence for as long as possible.’”



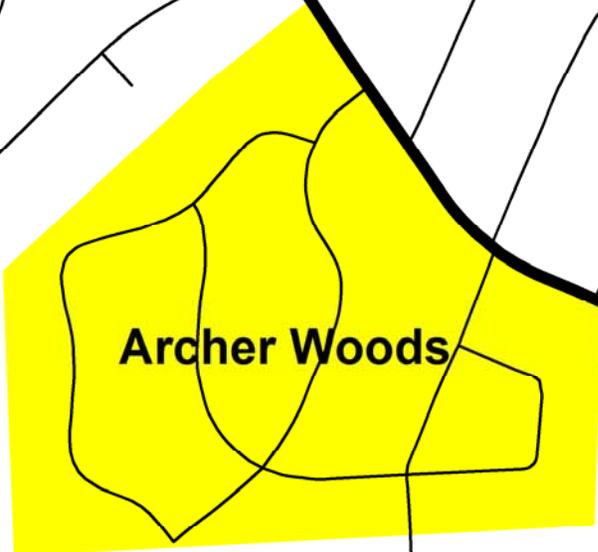
Aging in Community Complements Aging in Place

- Aging in place is centered on dwellings and private consumption
 - Private building interior: door widths, grab bars, motion sensors, etc.
 - Private building envelope: single story, stepless entry, electronic locks, etc.
 - Purchase of in-home healthcare and assistance
- Aging in place does not intrinsically encompass neighborhood-scale or town-scale features
- Aging in community is centered on neighborhoods and people working together outside of conventional commercial institutions

Archer Woods Today



Cole Mill Road



Archer Woods





Google earth

Basic Facts About Archer Woods

- 1970s residential subdivision with red-brick ranches and split levels of about 1,700 - 2,100 sq. ft. on ½ acre lots
- Walk Score is 5 (out of 100)
 - Convenience store ½ mile away
 - City park 1 mile away
- 1,934 persons at least 65 years old in Archer Woods and in nearby neighborhoods in Durham County*
- 2,509 persons between 45 and 65 years old in Archer Woods and in nearby neighborhoods in Durham County*

How well does Archer Woods support aging in community?

- On the positive side, it is not hostile to bicycling, and air quality is healthful
- Zoning code prohibits certain housing options, at least these:
 - Smaller than 400 square feet (heated floor area), although G.S. 160A-383.5 clears the way for “temporary family health care structures” not larger than 300 gross square feet
 - Tiny houses built on trailers – if they would be considered to be “travel trailers” or “recreational vehicles”
- Car is required to safely travel outside the neighborhood
- No parks, neighborhood gardens, or any kind of neighborhood center

Reimagining Archer Woods (1)

Small But Important Changes:

Accessory Dwelling Units

Palette of Accessory Dwelling Units





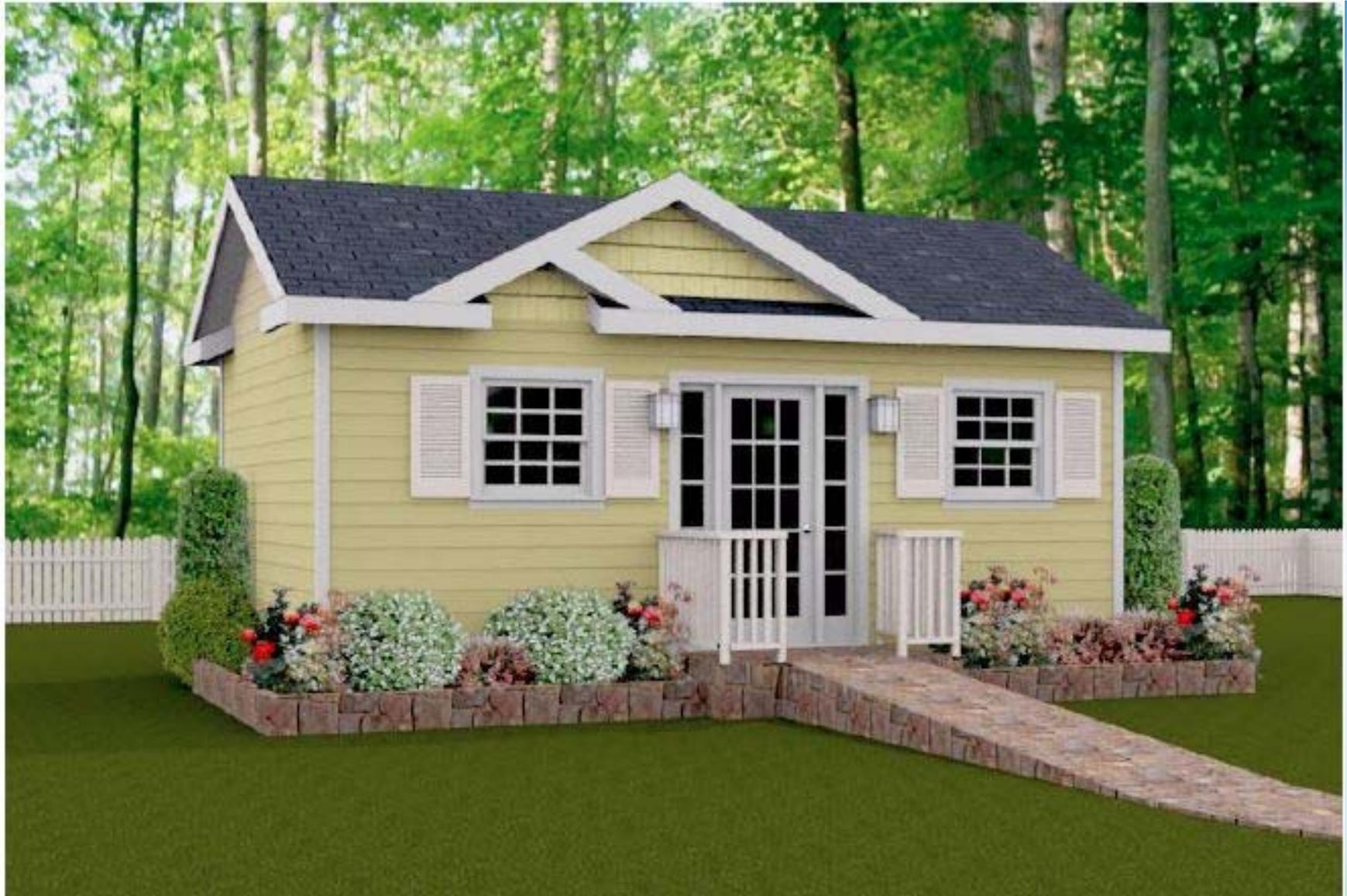
Tiny house, 392 sq. ft.



Tiny house on 20 ft. trailer, 131 sq. ft. downstairs



House made from a shipping container, 320 sq. ft. interior

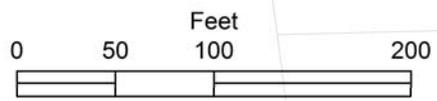


MEDCottage, 299 sq. ft.

**Tiny home on trailer
(140 sq ft)**

**Tiny home built to
shipping container
dimensions (320 sq ft)**

**Accessory dwelling units
added to rear of house
or backyard (800 sq ft)**



Assessment of “Small But Important Changes” Scenario

- Accessory dwelling units would be barely visible from the street
- Modifications are impermanent and can be undone in minutes or hours
- Housing choices have improved for older adults and home care aides
- But...
 - People still have to walk in the street
 - Home-by-home improvements do not benefit the larger neighborhood

Reimagining Archer Woods (2)

More Ambitious Changes:

**Daytime Eldercare Center or
Eldercare Home
Plus Sidewalks and
Simple Gathering Places**



Neighborhood-Scale Adult Daycare Facility
(Daytime Eldercare Center)



Neighborhood-Scale Assisted Living Facility
(Eldercare Home)



Sidewalk wide enough for two persons side-by-side



Glow in the dark sidewalk



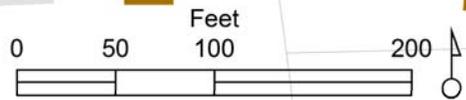
Mail box kiosk with benches

Mailbox kiosks
with benches

6-foot wide sidewalks
on both sides of street

Daytime eldercare center
or eldercare home
(2600 sq ft)

Mailbox kiosks
with benches



Assessment of “More Ambitious Changes” Scenario

- Supports physical activity and social interaction
- Older adults can walk and travel using walkers and wheelchairs safely and side-by side, even at dawn or dusk
- Kiosks offer resting places and opportunities for spontaneous social interaction

Reimagining Archer Woods (3)

Radical Transformation: Suburban Eldercare Green



Community garden



Contemplative and restorative public space



Pocket neighborhood, with community green and commons building

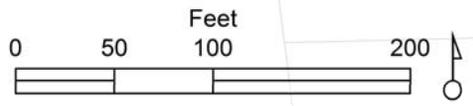


Children's play area with fountain

Suburban Eldercare Green

Buildings

-  Daytime eldercare center
-  Eldercare home
-  Children's play area
-  Contemplative garden
-  Community food and flower garden
-  Commons building
-  Masonry oven
-  Small home (900 sq ft)
-  Tiny home (140 sq ft)
-  Tiny home (400 sq ft)
-  Tiny home (600 sq ft)
-  Mailbox kiosk with benches

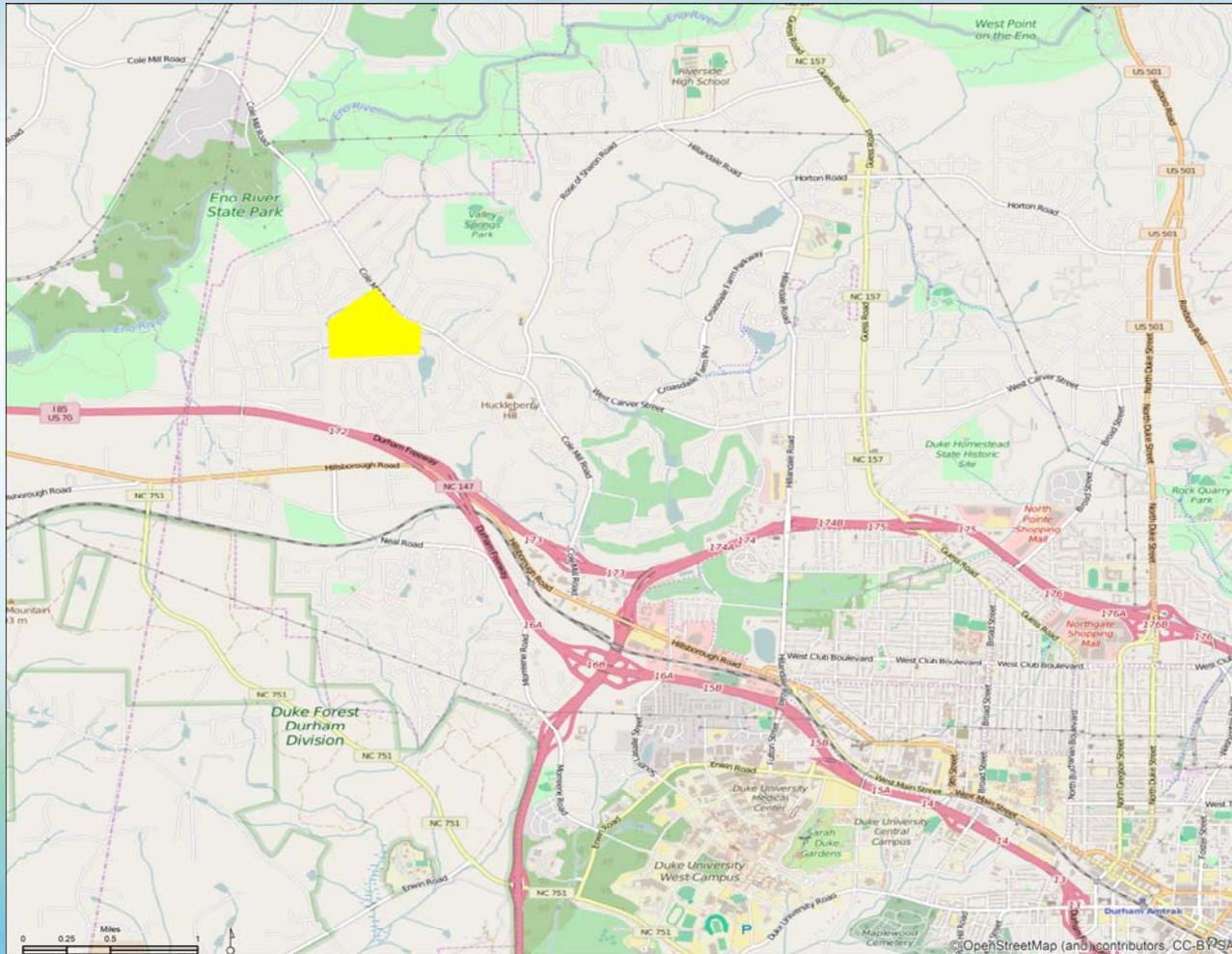


Assessment of Suburban Eldercare Green

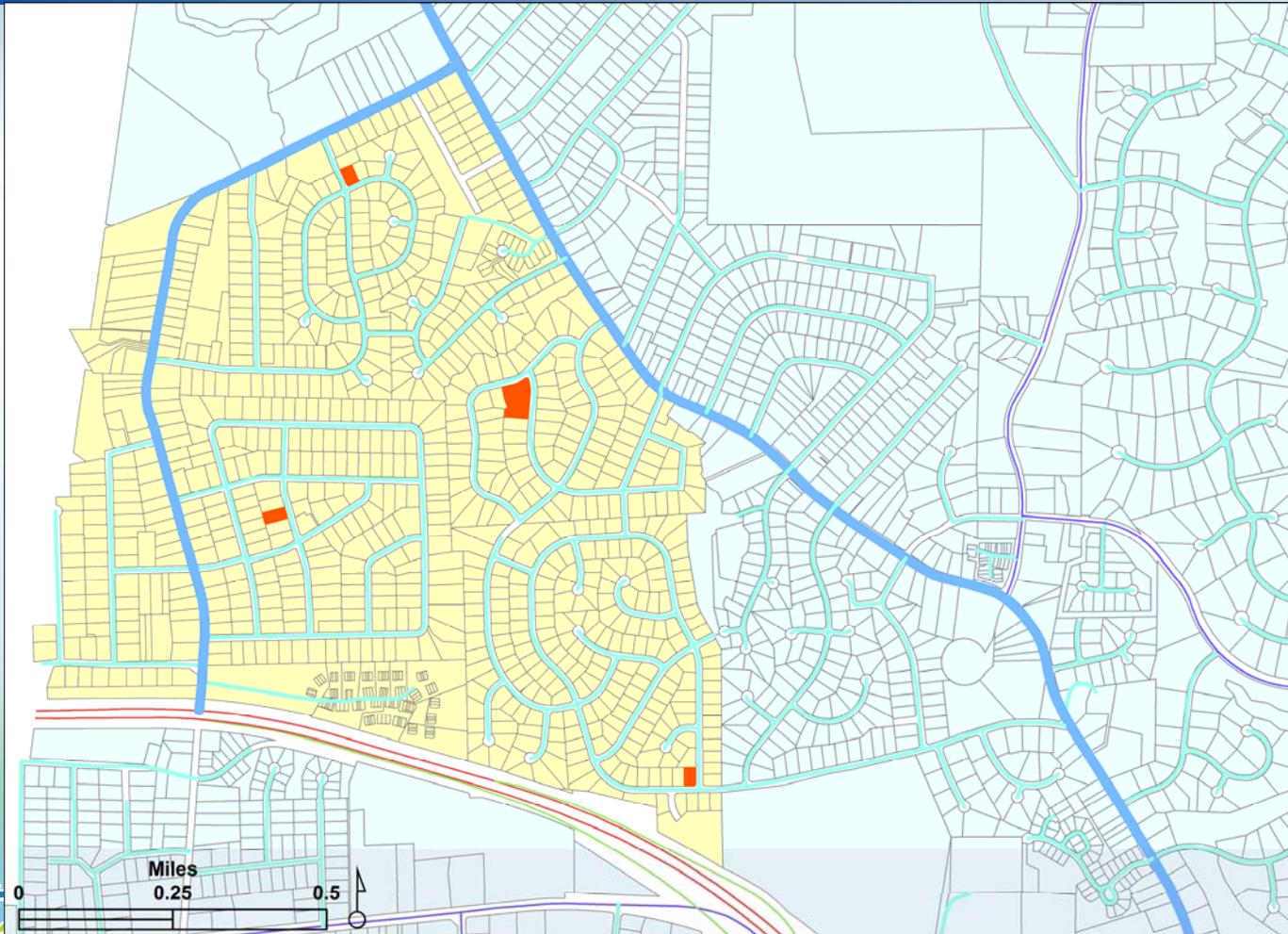
- Diverse housing options
- Multigenerational social interaction
- Gardens offer physical therapy, social interaction, reduce out-of-pocket expenditures on food, etc.
- Helps older adults and caregivers deal with very uncomfortable or tragic incidents of advanced age
- Affordable and nearby housing for home care aides

Several Additional Design Considerations (To-Do List)

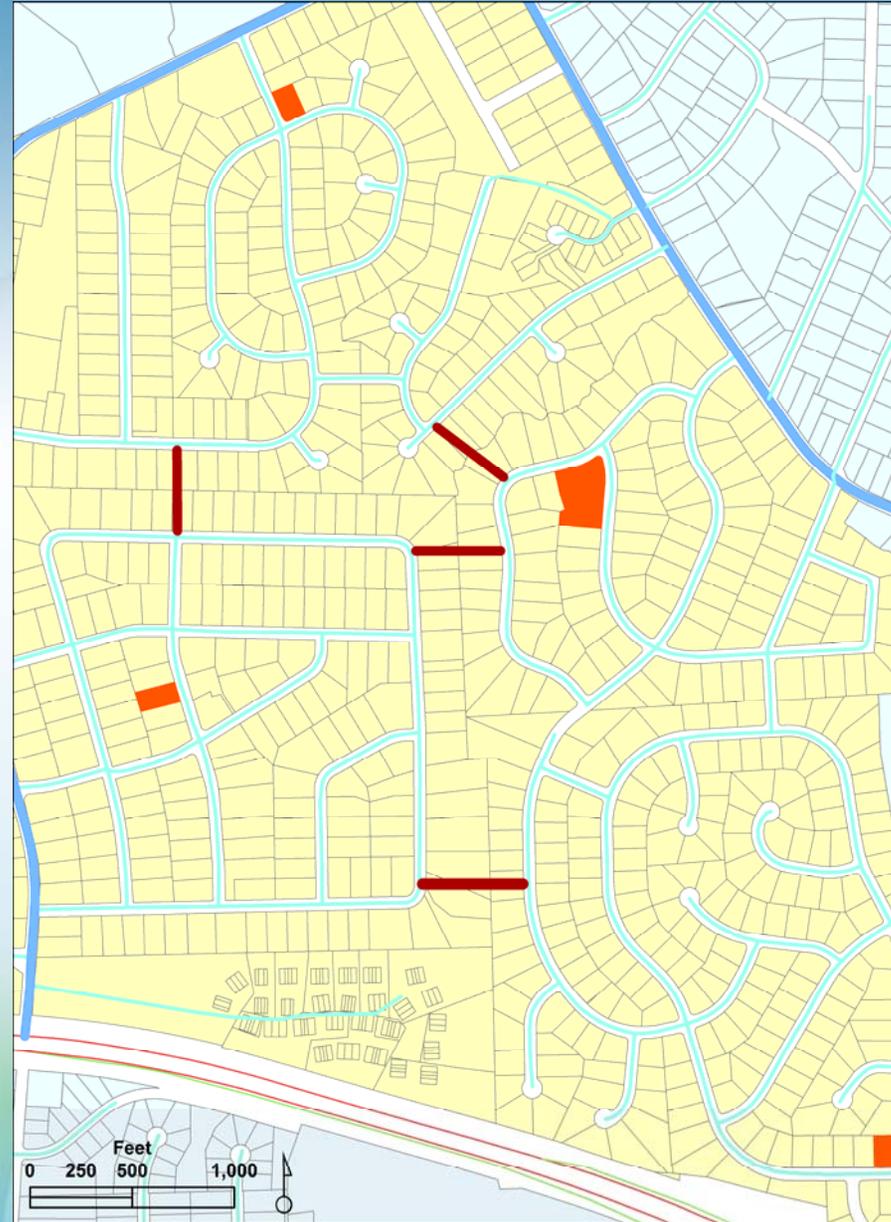
How to connect Archer Woods to the rest of Durham with an elder-friendly transportation system?



Which other neighborhoods should have Eldercare Greens?

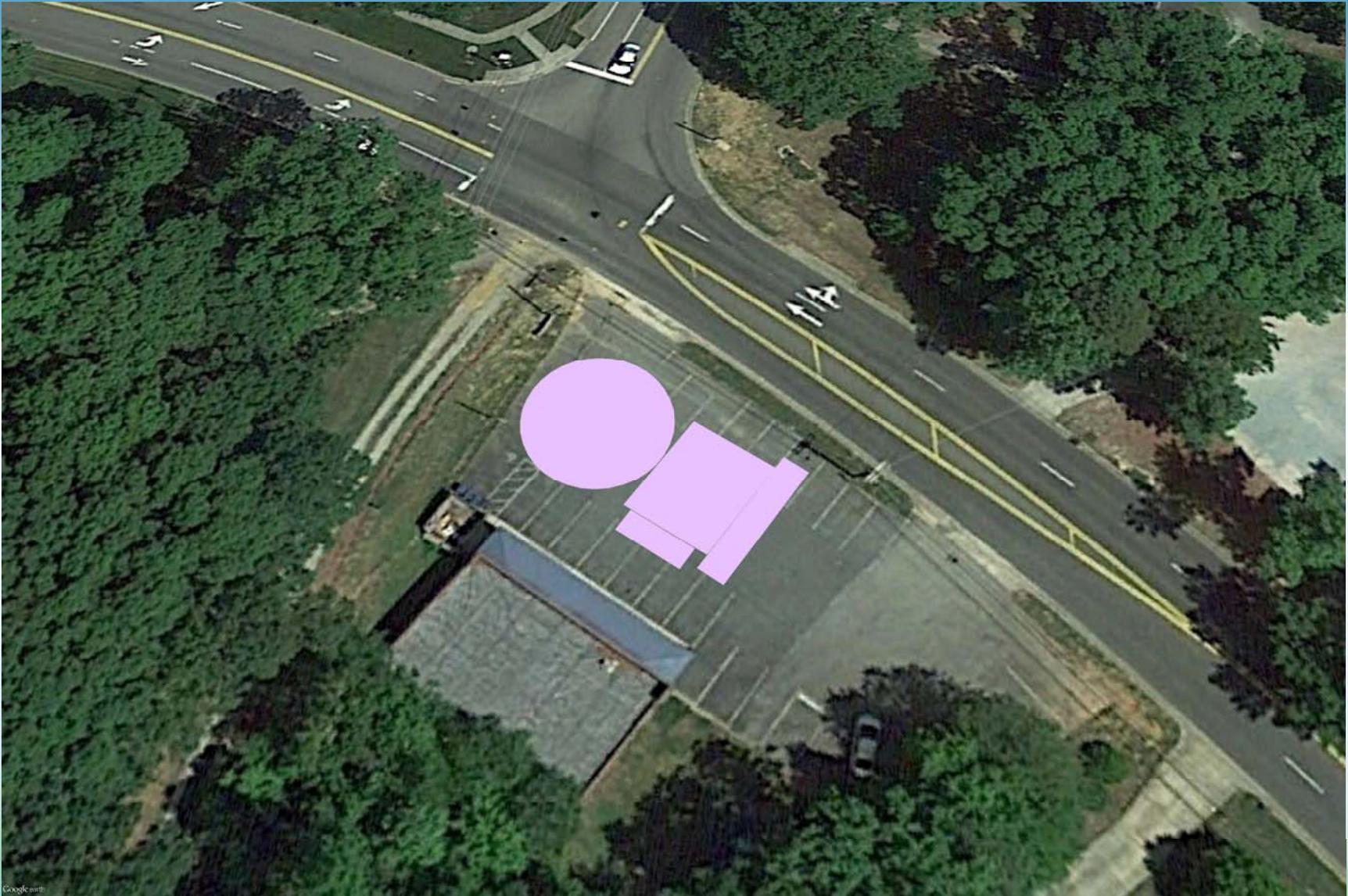


How should contiguous neighborhoods be connected in an elder-friendly manner?



Imagine an Eldercare Green in “tactical suburbanism” style





Pop-up Eldercare Green in parking lot of a vacant building near Archer Woods

Conclusion

Most Important Points

- Aging in community should be a goal of public policy
- To fully support aging in community, typical suburbs must be radically reimagined and changed
- Even so...small improvements are still improvements, and do not necessarily foreclose larger improvements
- Process of reimagining should include not just one neighborhood but multiple neighborhoods
- Elder-oriented tactical suburbanism could be a fun and powerful way to start process of reimagination