



CAPE FEAR A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR OUR FUTURE

OUR IDEAS. OUR REGION. OUR FUTURE.

FOCUS

APRIL 2015

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SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Cape Fear Region – the place we call home – is changing every day. The daily changes are small, but slowly they accumulate and become clear with the passing of time. We may notice ground broken for a new subdivision, a new restaurant in downtown Wilmington, more congestion on the ride to work, or a new flight offering to a distant city. While change may become clear only in these moments, we know it is coming. Our region is growing rapidly.

Looking back three decades illustrates the importance of planning for the future. In the early 1980s, Wilmington was a sleepy coastal community. Interstate 40 had yet to reach the city. Brunswick, Pender, and New Hanover Counties combined were home to 162,000 people. Michael Jordan was just a high school basketball star at the recently opened Laney High School on the northern outskirts of Wilmington. However, the forces of change were already well in motion.

Over the next 30 years, our region would grow to nearly 384,000 people. Wilmington blossomed again into one of the Southeast's most important coastal cities. The City has fueled the broader region's growth with its major employers, the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW), numerous tourist attractions, the Port of Wilmington and New Hanover Regional Medical Center. Today, we are a major player in North Carolina's economy and compete with regions across the nation and world for business and investment.

Given all that has changed during the last three decades, what can we expect our region to look like in 2040? While continuing growth is inevitable, our responses are not. We can choose to stay on the same path, and run the risk of seeing continued traffic congestion, loss of open space, and missed economic opportunity, or we can chart a new course that provides all residents with more housing and transportation choices, more job opportunities, and a clean environment to enjoy and share with the tourists that visit our community. Growth can enhance each of these things, if channeled into high quality and coordinated development.

We can influence how growth occurs in the future. Our local governments, working with private businesses and institutions, can bring about development that enhances our region's renowned quality of life and expands prosperity for all people for many generations to come. The *Regional Framework for Our Future* provides a summary of the key challenges facing our region, a menu of strategies to help us address those challenges and a blueprint for regional action.



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INTRODUCTION

THE NEED FOR A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK PLAN

The *Regional Framework for Our Future* comes at a critical time. Development has spread across the landscape, blurring the lines between cities, towns, and counties. Brunswick, New Hanover, and Pender Counties have grown into a single region – anchored by the City of Wilmington – that is among the most scenic, successful, and fastest-growing regions in the United States. The growth has been good for business in many ways, but it has not come without growing pains. People across the region are especially concerned about affordable housing, traffic congestion, job opportunities, and protecting our environment.

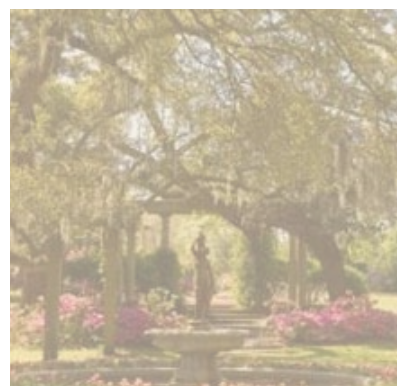
Meanwhile, addressing the big issues facing our region has never been tougher. They transcend boundaries between communities and counties like never before. No single community working alone can address each of the region's threats or realize its full potential. At the same time, the existing regional governmental and non-governmental organizations need assistance to address the wide range of challenges. Therefore, it is critical that we come together as public, private, non-profit and community partners to share our collective resources to build a better region, while maintaining local control over our land, infrastructure, and services.

The growth has been good for business in many ways, but it has not come without growing pains.



INTRODUCTION

PARTNERS SUPPORTING THE REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR OUR FUTURE



In 2011, the Lower Cape Fear Sustainable Communities Consortium (FOCUS) formed to support better cooperation among the region's local governments. The *Regional Framework for Our Future* is the culmination of nearly three years of work by the Consortium's member to coordinate their planning and create a regional plan for sustainable development. The Consortium's 14 members include :

- AMEZ Housing
- Brunswick Housing Opportunities
- Cape Fear Council of Governments
- Cape Fear Regional Community Development Corporation
- City of Wilmington
- New Hanover County
- Pender County
- Town of Burgaw
- Town of Carolina Beach
- Town of Leland
- Town of Surf City
- Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Wave Transit
- Wilmington Housing Authority

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with support from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funded the Consortium's work effort through a 2012 competitively awarded grant.

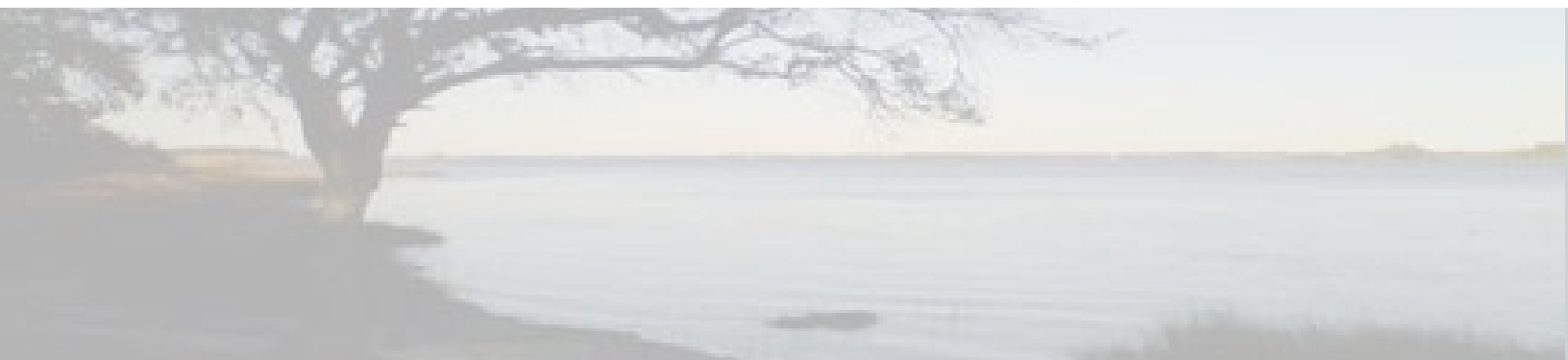
INTRODUCTION

STEPS IN DEVELOPING THE REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR OUR FUTURE

FOCUS took several steps to arrive at the *Regional Framework for Our Future*. First, FOCUS pulled together baseline data from 2010 on the region's population, housing, economy, and infrastructure. Next FOCUS estimated the region's population and employment in 2040 and used the projections to study the effects of four plausible growth alternatives, known as *Alternative Futures*, which differed in the location and intensity of new development. These growth projections also inform the *Regional Market Assessment*, which provided a snapshot of current market dynamics and likely trends that will influence the rate and location of growth across the region. FOCUS also commissioned three reports –

a *Regional Health and Wellness Gap Analysis*, a *Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice*, and an *Equitable Growth Profile of the Cape Fear Region*. These reports provided more information and baseline data about the region's housing, health, and equality of opportunity. Finally, FOCUS worked with the Town of Leland (Gateway District), City of Wilmington (South 5th Avenue and Greenfield Area), New Hanover County (Castle Hayne) and Pender County (Coastal Pender) to develop a series of *Catalyst Reports*. Each catalyst report focused on a specific geographic area and identified a menu of potential incentives, policies and other actions that each jurisdiction could take to achieve desirable quality growth and development.

The *Regional Framework for Our Future* synthesizes the findings from these efforts into a set of organizing principles, potential implementation strategies and recommendations. These recommendations reflect not only the insights and technical expertise of the FOCUS' members and their consultants, but it also reflects ideas and strategies gathered from the general public, elected officials and other community stakeholders. The *Regional Framework for Our Future* planning effort included more than 40 meetings throughout the three-county region, received more than 4,000 public comments, and provided regular updates and disseminated key information through its 700 Facebook followers and 2,000 people that receive its bi-monthly newsletter online.



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SECTION TWO

THE CASE FOR ACTION

The region is growing and the composition of our population is changing. The FOCUS planning effort included data gathering and analysis to identify the dynamics and drivers of development today, the likely quantity of growth (people and jobs) by 2040, and four different plausible development scenarios to demonstrate how and where that growth might happen in the future. The analysis findings and the public's reaction to these findings make a compelling case that in order to accommodate future growth and achieve our desired quality of life in the future; we have to take a new and different approach. The following pages present this case for action.



THE CASE FOR ACTION

CAPE FEAR

REGION TODAY

This section lays out some of the important trends and facts that have shaped the region we see today. Unless otherwise noted, these data come from the Regional Market Assessment.

POPULATION

Our high quality of life, welcoming people, beautiful beaches, and historic places are not a secret. North Carolina and our region enjoy a stellar reputation nationally for quality of life and cost of living. As a result, we are attracting new businesses, retirees, college graduates and others locating here to enjoy our quality of life and seek opportunity. The following highlights some key facts about our population:

- ▶ Our region was home to about 384,000 people in 2013.¹
- ▶ We are among the fastest growing regions in the nation. Brunswick County was North Carolina's fastest growing county in 2013. Brunswick (47th) and Pender (98th) are also among the 100 fastest growing counties in the United States.²
- ▶ Our population is older than the state or nation. Brunswick leads the way with a median age in 2010 of 47.6, an entire decade older than the U.S. (37.2) or state (37.4) median.
- ▶ Households today are less likely to have children living at home than in previous decades. About 26 percent of our households had children in 2012 compared to 32 percent in North Carolina and the United States.

ECONOMY

The region's job growth kept pace with population growth until the 2007-09 recession. The economy is still recovering in 2015, but recent trends indicate that we will likely keep pace or exceed growth projections in the future. Some key facts about jobs and the economy include:

- ▶ New Hanover County is home to the vast majority of jobs, but Brunswick and Pender Counties are adding jobs at faster rates, creating greater distances between jobs and homes.
- ▶ Our economy benefits from a well-educated population. About 31 percent of our adults age 25 and older have a bachelor's degree compared to 27 percent in North Carolina and 28.6 percent in the United States.
- ▶ The region's economy is dominated by local serving businesses, many of which cater to the retiree population. While these are good jobs, we lack an equal balance of jobs that export goods and services and bring outside money back into the local economy. About 20 percent of the region's jobs are in exporting businesses. This is five percentage points below the state average.
- ▶ Nine key industries drive the region's export economy – aerospace engines, biopharmaceuticals, business services, chemical products, heavy construction services, hospitality and tourism, information technology, power generation and transmission, and production technology.
- ▶ *The Pathways to Prosperity: New Hanover County's Plan for Jobs and Investment* report completed in March 2014 provided a detailed analysis of current economic activity and key assets of the region. In addition to confirming continued growth in existing small business sectors, it also identified four target industries to further strengthen the local economy including: life/marine sciences research and development; high value office operations; precision manufacturing; and aircraft assembly, modification and maintenance.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. American FactFinder. 2013 Population Estimate.

² U.S. Census Bureau. Population Estimates, County Totals: Vintage 2013. <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/counties/totals/2013/index.html>.

THE CASE FOR ACTION CAPE FEAR REGION TODAY

HOUSING

Housing is an important part of the region's economy. The soft demand for housing contributed to the region's slow recovery from the 2007-09 recession. However, the outlook for the housing market is strong. Here are some key trends and facts:

- ▶ Affordable housing is fairly easy to find for middle and upper income households, but there is a shortage of housing and rental opportunities for lower income households.
- ▶ Given the household incomes across our region, this results in about 39 percent of homeowners and 54 percent of renters living as housing cost-burdened, meaning they spend 30 percent or more of their gross income on housing.
- ▶ Prior to the recession, single-family housing permits peaked at about 4,300 per year in Brunswick County, 2,700 per year in New Hanover County, and 1,000 in Pender County.
- ▶ New Hanover County became the region's leader in housing permits immediately after the recession, but the rate of new residential growth still trailed the pre-recession levels. New Hanover issued about 1,800, Brunswick 1,200, and Pender about 200 residential permits in 2012.
- ▶ Single-family, detached homes dominate the local market. They accounted for about 78 percent of the region's new housing between 2000 - 2012 despite socio-demographic, and market trends showing growing demand for other housing types.



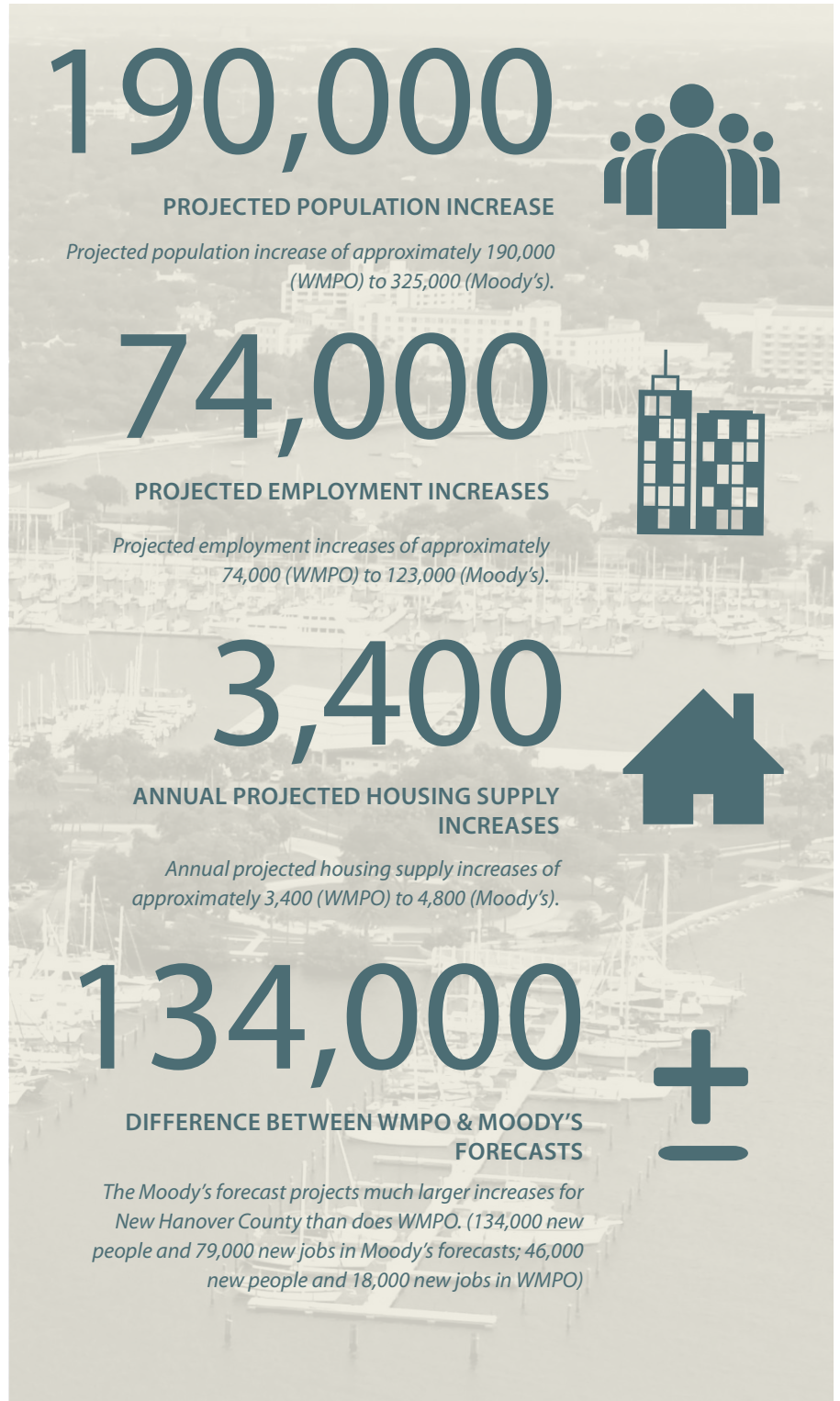
CAPE FEAR REGION IN 2040

How much the region will grow in the next 25 years is not entirely predictable, but there are standard accepted practices and data sources used by regions across the country to do estimate that can inform public policy. The following presents the key findings of this analysis for the Cape Fear region.

LONG-TERM FORECAST OF POPULATION AND JOBS

Growth projections completed by the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning Organization (WMPO) and the private sector firm Moody's show a wide range of population and job growth potential for our region by the year 2040. Despite the large ranges, both sets of projections reflect the potential for significant increases in both jobs and population, as shown to the right.

What these projections tell us is that our region will need to find a way to accommodate a significant amount of growth while still providing the high quality of life standards experienced by current residents, workers, and visitors. As such, the FOCUS Alternative Futures effort took these projections and looked at four different plausible development scenarios to illustrate how different patterns of growth might affect the region – both positively and negatively.



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THE CASE FOR ACTION

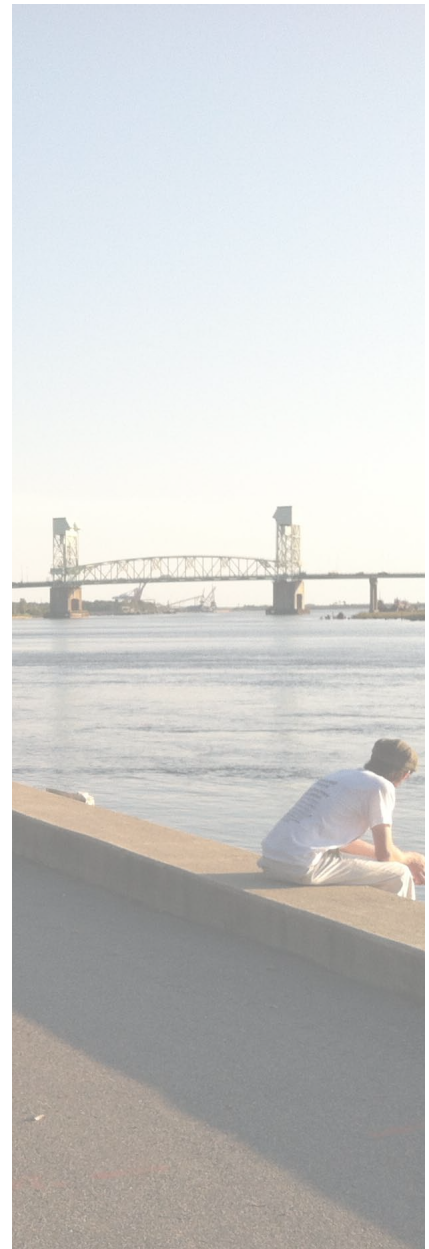
ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

The *Alternative Futures* scenario analysis provides insights on how different development patterns might affect the Cape Fear Region's economy, environment, and access to jobs, housing and recreational opportunities. The analysis included using Geographic Information System (GIS) based software to take the projected number of jobs and housing anticipated through the year 2040 and allocating them across the region based on some basic assumptions concerning availability of land and existing infrastructure. The major variables of the development analysis included location, density and mix of uses based on different planning policies and market assumptions.

The *Alternative Futures* effort included four different regional growth scenarios. The first scenario or the baseline, – called Business as Usual – reflects a continuation of the past development trends of low-density, dispersed development with separated land uses. This typical low-density subdivision model has been common in the Cape Fear region and across North Carolina for several decades. In contrast to the Business as Usual scenario, the analysis

also produced three additional regional scenarios (Mixed Use, Infill and Redevelopment, and High Growth Nodes). These alternatives demonstrated how development could occur in a more compact manner and include more infill, redevelopment and mixing of uses while also reducing pressures for growth in locations where there is a desire to remain rural and agricultural, or in areas where there are highly valued environmental resources.

**Alternative
Futures shed light
on how different
development
patterns could
affect the Cape
Fear Region.**



THE CASE FOR ACTION

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES

On May 22, 2014, a public workshop was held to present these four scenarios to the public. The presentation illustrated the potential impacts and opportunities of each scenario based on some key quality of life indicators. During this workshop, approximately 120 people participated in an interactive touch pad voting exercise to react to these scenarios by answering a series of questions aimed at gauging support for different types of development concepts. This effort revealed that the majority of people supported moving away from the Business as Usual scenario and more towards future development patterns that would encourage mixing of uses, more compact patterns and utilization of existing infrastructure. By encouraging a greater percentage

of new growth into more compact patterns, the scenarios also illustrate the potential for preserving more agricultural lands and strengthening quality of life in rural towns. The intent of the scenarios is to demonstrate how the region could create more housing and transportation choices while fostering economic development that is sensitive to the existing character of a given community. The following pages provide a narrative description of each scenario, along with a conceptual map illustrating different densities and intensities of growth associated with each. A fuller description of each scenario and the relative impacts of each can be found in the *Alternative Futures* report included in the *A Framework for Our Future - Technical Appendix*.



BUSINESS AS USUAL

DISPERSED GROWTH

This lower-density scenario simulates “business as usual” development policies and codes for the region’s local governments. This scenario assumes future demand for housing types and location will be similar to recent trends where suburban, single-family large-lot homes dominate the market. It also assumes a continuation of travel behaviors, with nearly all residents driving cars to work, shopping, and recreation.

The areas expected to change the most under this scenario include:

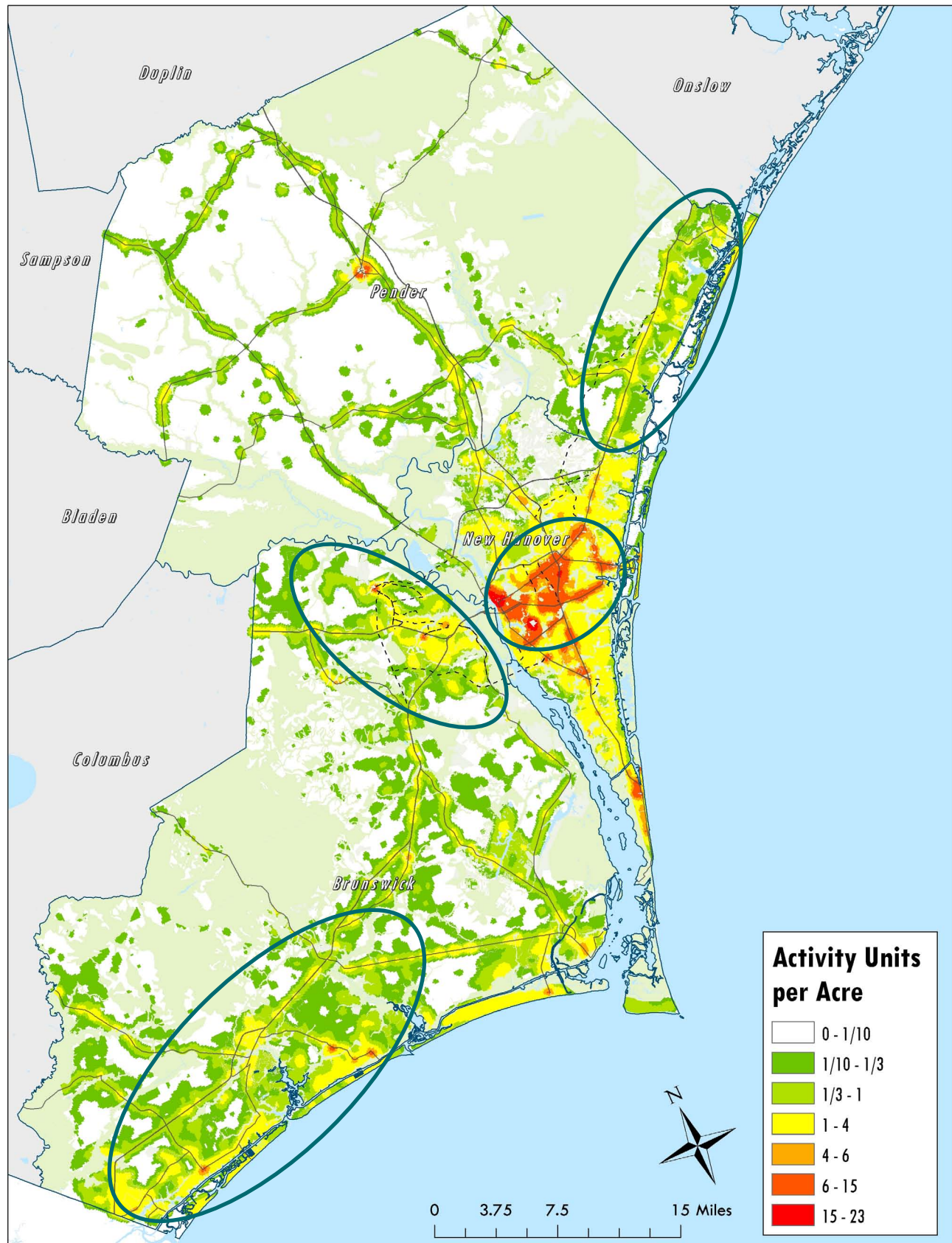
- ▶ Coastal and eastern areas of Brunswick County and the Town of Leland area will continue to see higher rates of growth in more dispersed patterns.
- ▶ The City of Wilmington will continue to see slow and steady infill development.
- ▶ Northern New Hanover County, would convert considerable areas of existing rural lands to suburban residential development.
- ▶ Coastal Pender County would see new large mixed use subdivisions along U.S. 17.
- ▶ Development pressures would continue into the rural areas, changing the existing rural lifestyle and converting working lands, and taxing existing transportation networks.

This scenario caters to the predominant market interests of suburban housing on greenfield sites, and it is clear the region has enough available land to accommodate such demand. However, relative to the other three scenarios, Business as Usual will bring the most traffic congestion and the poorest access to public transit, parks, recreation areas, and job centers. It will also result in a faster rate of urban growth in currently rural or undeveloped areas. These are all notable impacts in a region that depends on its high quality of life to appeal to new residents and businesses.



BUSINESS AS USUAL

DISPERSED GROWTH



MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT

GROWTH IN NEW CENTERS ACROSS THE REGION

This is a higher-density scenario designed to simulate the increased popularity of different housing options. This includes increasing the percentage of condominiums, townhomes, and apartments located within walking distance of key amenities like restaurants and retail. The scenario assumes housing, services, and jobs would locate in established communities and commercial centers, and that new jobs would shift further away from the traditional regional centers and industrial uses of the past. The scenario does not assume significant changes in local development regulations, but rather assumes development changes based primarily on market forces.

The areas expected to change the most under this scenario include:

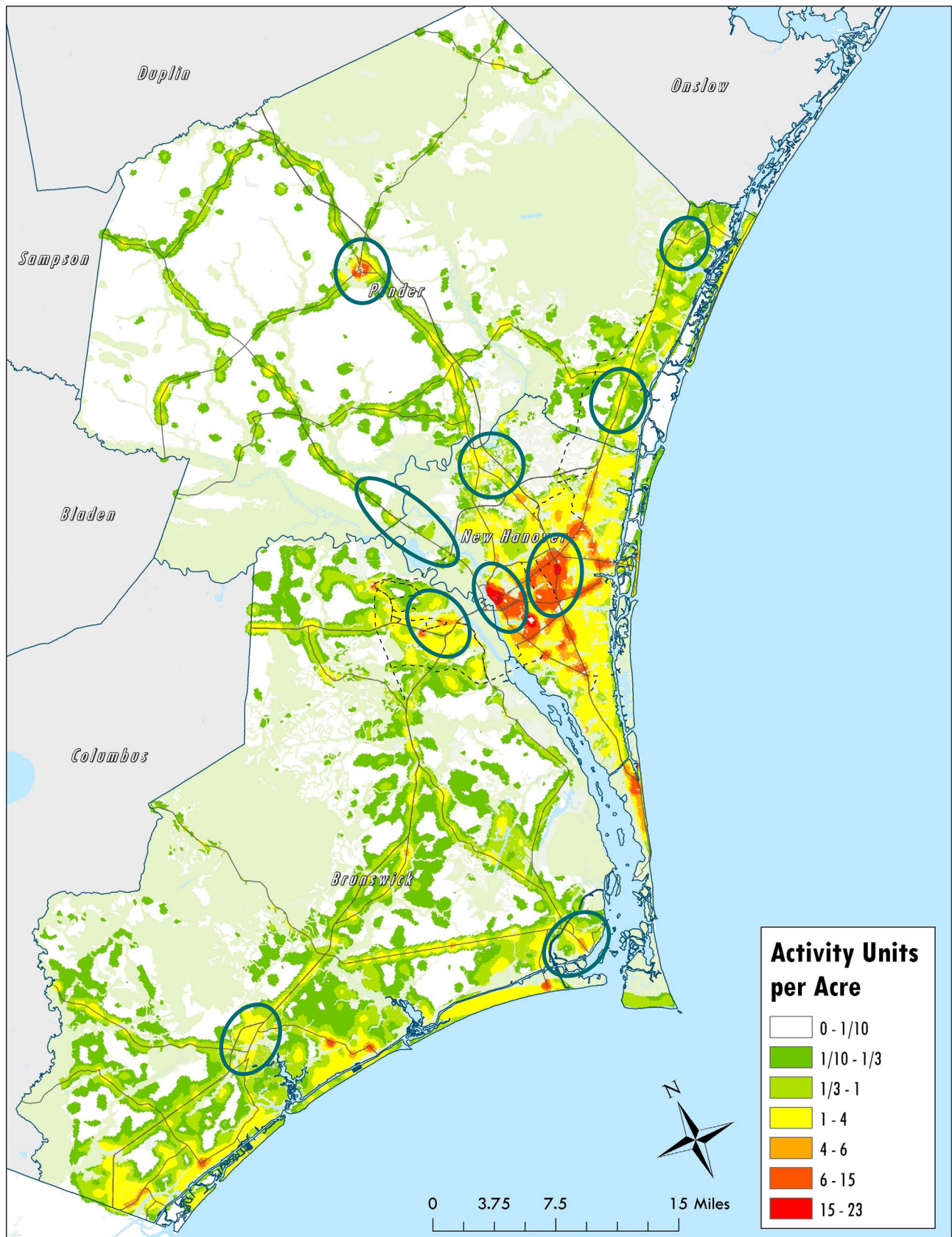
- ▶ Coastal Brunswick County would see significant new development in growth nodes such as the City of Southport and the Town of Shallotte.
- ▶ New mixed use development would occur in established areas such as the towns of Burgaw and Leland, downtown Wilmington, the Market Street/New Center area, and the Mayfaire Town Center.
- ▶ Mixed-use districts along US 17 in Coastal Pender County and in the Town of Surf City would emerge and expand.

Because this scenario locates homes closer to key destinations such as jobs and other non-residential amenities, overall accessibility is higher and traffic congestion is slightly lower in this scenario than the Business as Usual scenario. While this scenario initially performs well on addressing some of the future congestion, it would still require significant public investment in services like parks and schools to prevent negative quality of life impacts in the rapidly expanding suburban areas.



MIXED USE

GROWTH IN NEW CENTERS ACROSS THE REGION



REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL

GROWTH IN EXISTING AREAS

This scenario reflects a more aggressive public policy approach to facilitate and promote infill development and redevelopment into the existing urban centers. The scenario assumes a high percentage of new housing and jobs going in existing developed areas, with housing densities increasing for single-family and multi-family homes. Additionally, jobs concentrate in existing centers, emerging commercial areas, and along major roads, creating a shift in travel behavior towards more walking, cycling, and transit use.

The areas expected to change the most under this scenario include:

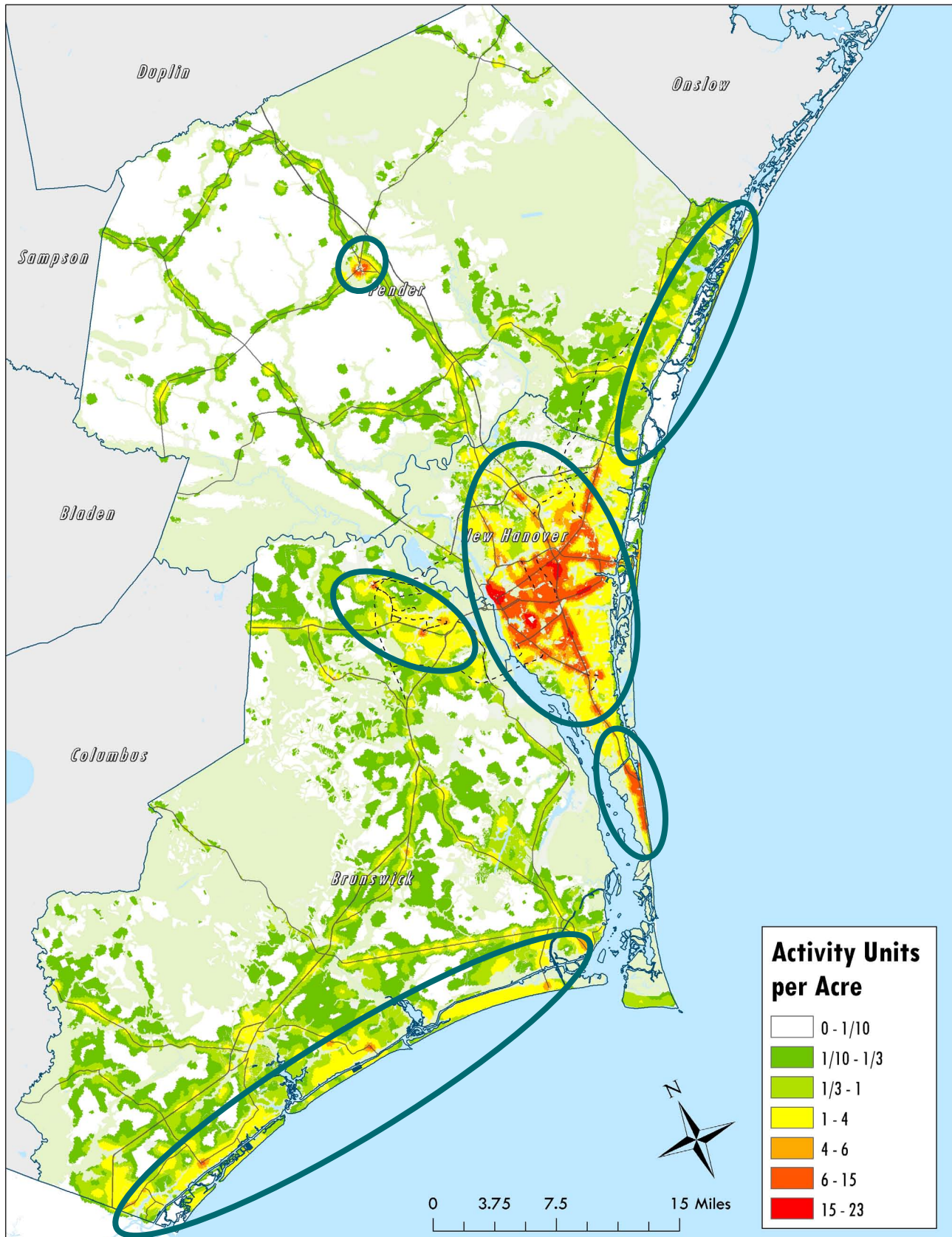
- ▶ Infill development occurs in established beach communities in Brunswick, New Hanover, and Pender Counties.
- ▶ Existing urbanized areas in the City of Wilmington, New Hanover County, and eastern Brunswick County, would experience a high level of development with a focus on redevelopment of existing commercial corridors.

This scenario would improve access to jobs and amenities, and make public transit a more convenient and viable mode of transportation relative to the previous two scenarios. Additionally, the total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) would be lower. While this scenario results in more compact, mixed-use patterns of development that offer more housing and transportation choices in the existing urban areas, some of the dispersed and spread-out pattern of development will also continue in the outer suburban locations similar to the Business as Usual scenario.



REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL

GROWTH IN EXISTING AREAS



HIGH GROWTH

GROWTH IN EXISTING AND NEW CENTERS

This is a higher-density scenario where local governments plan for and facilitate growth in concentrated urban centers within the region. This scenario assumes that a high percentage of new housing and jobs would go into existing developed areas, along with a shift in demand for more compact housing options (condominiums, townhomes, and apartments) and away from single-family houses. Jobs would be highly concentrated in existing centers and established commercial areas, creating more opportunities for people to use transit, walk, bike and take shorter vehicle trips to reach key destinations. This scenario requires aggressive new land use policies and zoning codes to require much higher densities in existing urban areas and commercial corridors, as well as new policies that limit density or prohibit growth in undeveloped and rural locations.

The areas expected to change the most under this scenario include:

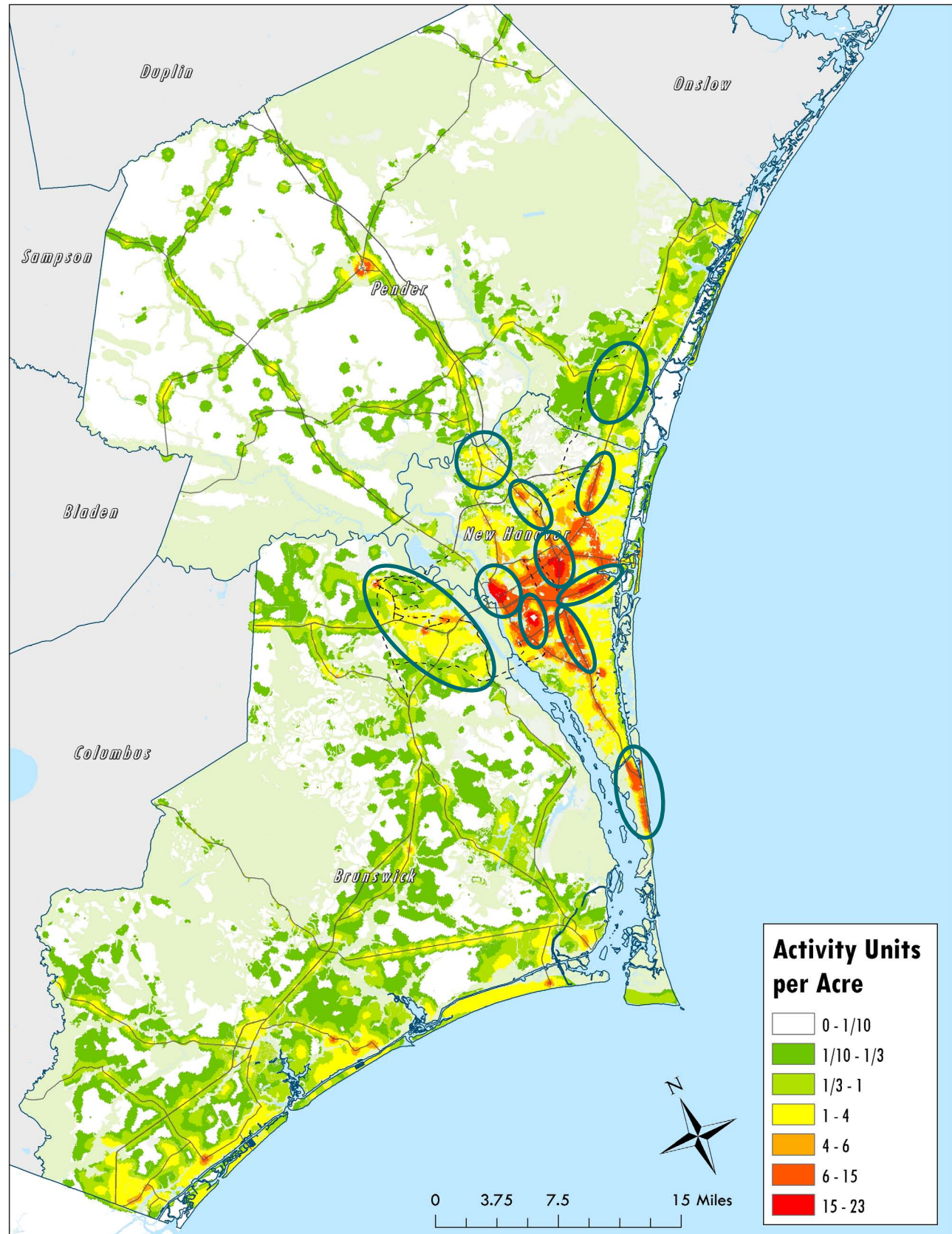
- ▶ Select areas in the City of Wilmington including downtown, the New Center area, Mayfaire Town Center, South College and Oleander, would be transformed by higher density urban development.
- ▶ New Hanover County on North College Road, U.S. 17, and Castle Hayne, would see higher density infill development occur.
- ▶ Pender County, would see mixed use and mixed intensity development in the Coastal Pender Region and in the Town of Surf City.
- ▶ The Towns of Leland and Belville would see more infill and redevelopment occur in previously developed areas north and south of U.S. 17.

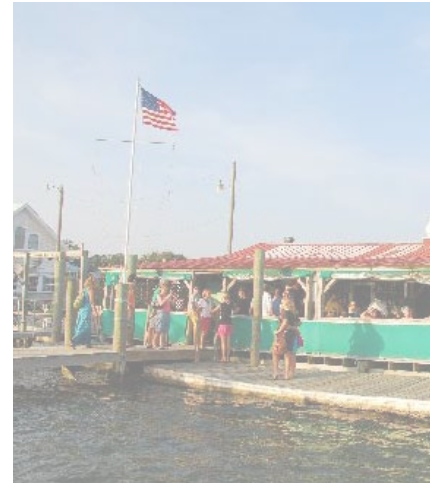
The scenario would bring the largest reductions in vehicle miles traveled, the best transit access, and the best access to regional jobs. This scenario would require significant changes to public policies to drive market demand.



HIGH GROWTH

GROWTH IN EXISTING AREAS AND NEW CENTERS





SUMMARY

The four scenarios illustrated in the *Alternative Futures* process show that there are many different ways that our region can absorb and locate the expected population and job growth. Under low-growth or high-growth scenarios, this analysis demonstrates that there is ample land available for growth. This means that without changes in local policies or other incentives, the market will likely create a Business As Usual scenario.

However, the other three scenarios also provide plausible alternatives for our region with some modest land use policy and infrastructure investment strategy changes. Each of these scenarios attempts to demonstrate how the region could grow while also accomplishing several community goals such as reducing the rate of VMT growth, increasing housing and transportation choices, reducing development pressures on environmental and working lands, reinvesting in existing neighborhoods and commercial districts and supporting economic development across the region.

These alternative scenarios could be implemented through policy changes, incentives and coordinated planning across the region to ensure more infill

development, redevelopment, more compact and mixed land uses, strengthening of rural towns and preservation of working lands and environmental assets, implementation of multimodal transportation investments and coordinated economic development. In fact, several of these policy changes are already underway at the local level as seen through the updated goals, policies and strategies of existing and newly developed Comprehensive Plans and Land Development Codes.

Having a range of transportation options, nearby access to a range of goods and services, preservation of working rural lands and villages, the presence of high-quality urban, suburban, and rural housing options can only be maximized by proper, thoughtful policy intervention and private sector buy-in. Therefore, the regional tradeoffs for consideration center on how best to implement strategic land use and development policy interventions in a way that can positively influence the private market and create new and existing places where people want to live, work and play. This same community conversation is occurring in regions across the

country. Due to changing market preferences for where and how people want to live, more and more communities recognize the competitive advantage that comes from providing viable choices for people at all stages of life in terms of where they live, how they get around and the opportunities they have to prosper.

The key to the Cape Fear region's ability to continue growing and prospering while maintain a desirable quality of life is to ensure that the new growth does not diminish the quality of place and experience that entice so many people to stay, relocate and visit the region in the first place. The *Alternative Futures* scenarios offer examples of how different development patterns can influence these dynamics, and the need for additional policy intervention to achieve the desired results. Our region's economic vitality is inextricably linked to our quality of life, which means we must change our approach from Business as Usual to ensure continued growth that supports desired community outcomes.

SECTION THREE

KEY FINDINGS

The future growth projections (how many people and jobs can we expect) along with considerations of the *Alternative Futures* analysis (where and what form that growth could take) should ultimately help inform the public policy and private sector responses to proactively plan for growth. The following presents some additional key findings for consideration.



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KEY FINDINGS

GROWTH IS AN OPPORTUNITY AND A CHALLENGE

Our region's population is expected to nearly double between 2010 and 2040. We are likely to see between 120,000 to 350,000 more people living here over the next twenty-five years.

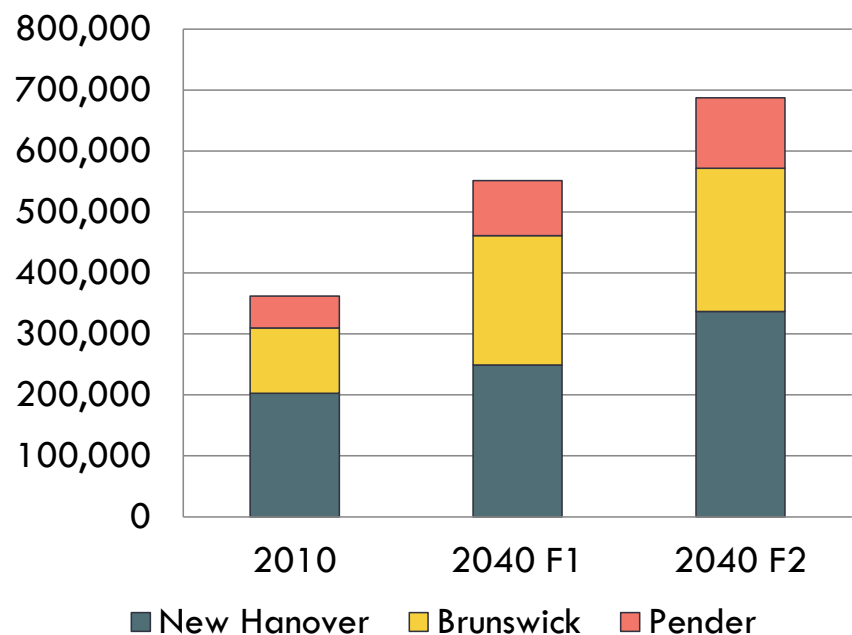
FINDING

Our region's population is projected to nearly double between 2010 and 2040. Our high quality of life and the economic engine of the City of Wilmington fuel growth. Growth can be a positive economic force to reinvest in existing places, and build new and better communities. It can provide opportunities for all.

PROOF POINT: The region's population increased 160 percent from 1980 to 2010, which is more than double the state's rate of growth during the same time.¹

¹ Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice for the Lower Cape Fear Sustainable Communities Consortium, Page 16.

POPULATION FORECASTS



FINDING

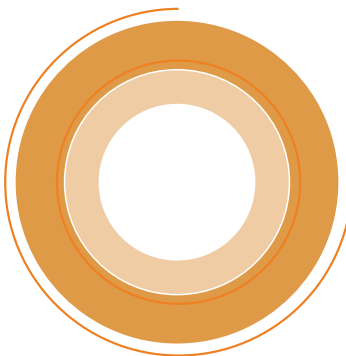
Where this new growth locates and the form it takes will affect long-term quality of life. Existing developed areas alone cannot accommodate the anticipated growth. Our region is full of undeveloped greenfield sites that are easy to develop, but also have economic value as agriculture land, open space for wildlife and recreation, and ecological value as storm surge protection areas.

PROOF POINT: The majority of land in the region is undeveloped or sparsely developed, and much of it is unprotected. The region's cities and towns are surrounded by undeveloped and available lands that are likely targets for future development.¹

PROOF POINT: Preservation of agricultural working lands within close proximity (100 miles or less) to urban centers creates opportunity to grow local food systems. Studies show that food produced and consumed locally "creates more economic activity in an area than does a comparable food produced and imported from a non-local source."²

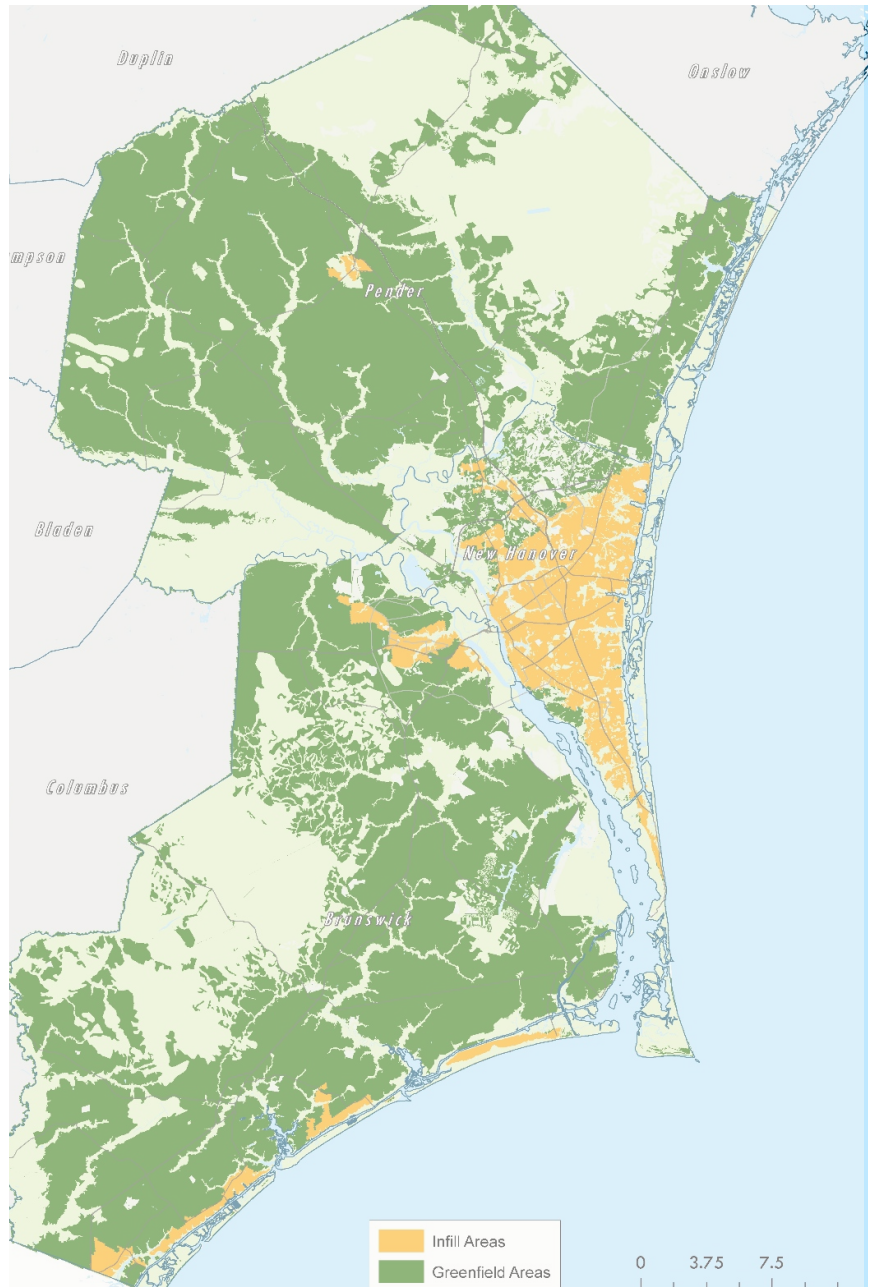
1 FOCUS Consortium. Cape Fear Alternative Future.

2 Center for Environmental Farming Systems and North Carolina State University. Research-Based Support and Extension Outreach for Local Food Systems. <http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/>



FINDING

New models of development that provide more housing and transportation choices are a template for the future. Market forces alone will not create Complete Communities. They require a new policy framework for shaping growth.



GROWTH AS AN OPPORTUNITY AND A CHALLENGE

The region's demographics, population and job forecasts, and the Alternative Futures analysis point to several key findings that shape the recommendations presented in the "Making Complete Communities Happen" section.

KEY FINDINGS

A CONNECTED REGION IS EMERGING

FINDING

Brunswick, New Hanover, and Pender Counties are inextricably linked through their economies, housing and labor markets, and a regional transportation system. They share fundamental values: their connection to the coast, their desire to be good stewards of the environment, and their desire to improve the lives of their current and future citizens.

PROOF POINT: The public identified regional collaboration as the second most important initiative for the region's future, just behind economic diversification.¹

PROOF POINT: Jobs are locating throughout the region, strengthening the economic links between the counties. New Hanover County's share of the region's jobs is declining.²

¹ FOCUS Forum, May 22, 2014.

² FOCUS. Regional Market Assessment.

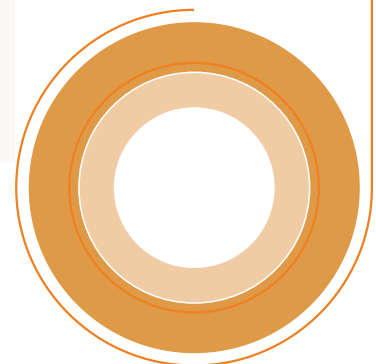
FINDING

We would benefit from the creation of a new organization or more formally establish regional partnerships for economic development. This would enable us to speak with one regional voice when recruiting new businesses, enable public-private partnerships on key infrastructure needs, and foster faster site identification and site improvement projects as needed to position key job centers across the region.

PROOF POINT: The NC Tomorrow Plan identified "fragmented economic development efforts, conflicting vision for the future, uncoordinated, weak incentives" as major regional weaknesses.³

³ Cape Fear Region NC Tomorrow Plan, Page 22.

Brunswick, New Hanover, and Pender counties are inextricably linked through their economies, housing markets, and a regional transportation system.



KEY FINDINGS

OUR ENVIRONMENT IS A CRITICAL ASSET THAT SUSTAINS LIFE, FUELS GROWTH, & PROTECTS PROSPERITY

Rare species add economic value through tourism and their potential use to science and industry. Access to our beaches and rivers is a major economic driver of our region.

FINDING

Our environment – especially the coastline and rivers – are assets that support population and economic growth.

PROOF POINT: New Hanover, Brunswick, and Pender Counties have more than 100 miles of Atlantic shoreline. The state's Division of Tourism estimated the direct economic impact of tourist dollars spent in the three counties to be \$1.032 billion in 2013.¹

¹ North Carolina Department of Commerce, Economic Impact of Tourism in North Carolina and Visitor Spending Estimates. <http://www.nccommerce.com/tourism/research/economic-impact>.

FINDING

Our region is the most biologically diverse on the East Coast, aside from Florida. Rare species add economic value through tourism and their potential use to science and industry. Protecting their habitat is important.

PROOF POINT: Brunswick and New Hanover Counties rank first and second in North Carolina for the number of rare species. In our region there are 22 plants and 19 animals that are found nowhere else in the world – including the Venus Flytrap.²

² Cape Fear Arch Conservation Plan, Page 5.

FINDING

We cannot stop population growth. Fortunately, we can accommodate growth and protect our environment at the same time. But it takes public policy and coordination between private sector developers, local governments, and non-profit groups to work together to identify the most suitable land for development and the most critical land for preservation.

KEY FINDINGS

INEQUITY IS HOLDING
THE REGION BACK

FINDING

The region has high and persistent levels of income inequity that are holding the economy back from its full potential. Investing in worker skills and education will help close the gap.

PROOF POINT: People of color earn about \$5 per hour less than white people at every level of education.¹ Eliminating the income disparity would have increased the region's GDP in 2012 by about \$1.3 billion.²

FINDING

Our Latino and black citizens are far less likely to have an associate or college degree or higher when compared to white citizens. This is important because jobs increasingly require this post-secondary level of education or higher. The gap in educational attainment for a portion of our community will hold back our economy.

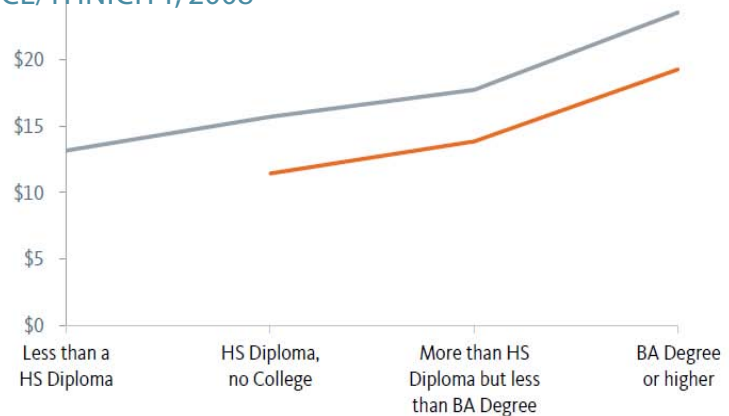
¹ PolicyLink. Draft Equitable Growth Profile of the Cape Fear Region. Page 27.

² PolicyLink. Draft Equitable Growth Profile of the Cape Fear Region. Page 35.

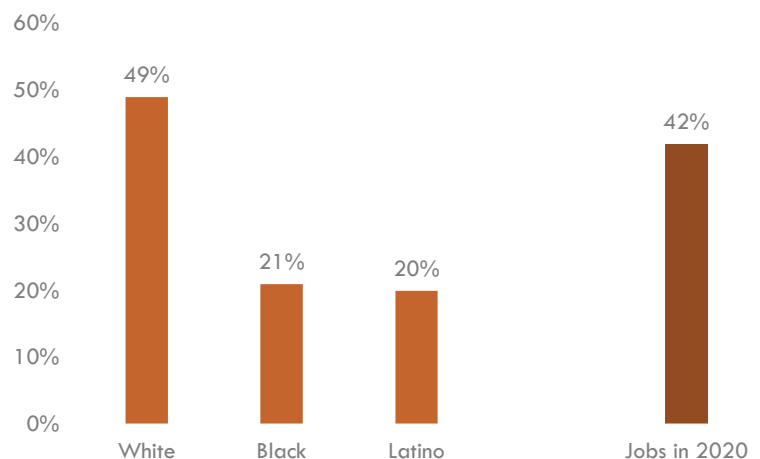
PROOF POINT: In 2008 nearly half of the region's white residents had an associate degree or higher while only about 20 percent of black and Latino residents did. This is important because about 42 percent of jobs will require an associate degree or more by 2020.³

³ PolicyLink. Draft Equitable Growth Profile of the Cape Fear Region. Page 32.

MEDIAN HOURLY WAGE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND RACE/THNICITY, 2008



SHARE OF WORKING AGE POPULATION WITH AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE OR HIGHER BY RACE/ETHNICITY IN 2008, AND PROJECTED SHARE OF JOBS THAT WILL REQUIRE AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE OR HIGHER IN 2020



KEY FINDINGS

RESIDENTS WANT MORE TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING OPTIONS

To address changing market preferences and demand, the region will need more housing options (price and type) and more opportunities for people to walk, bike and take transit.

FINDING

Our region's prevailing development pattern – marked by separation of land uses connected only by high-speed highways and streets – has made us dependent on our cars, left us vulnerable to fluctuating fuel prices, and made our streets dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists. Demand is rising for walkable neighborhoods with a mix of uses and better access to jobs. Local governments should use their development codes and policies to enable more

housing and transportation choices in new development.

PROOF POINT: Traffic volume continues to rise on most of the region's major highways and roads. Most locations experienced traffic growth of between 30 and 50 percent between 1999 and 2013.¹

¹ North Carolina DOT. Traffic Volume Maps. <http://www.ncdot.gov/travel/statemapping/trafficvolume-maps/>.

PROOF POINT: About 55 percent of the respondents to an MPO survey said they would prefer to bicycle to work or school and about 45 percent said they would prefer to walk. The numbers are even higher for trips that involve running errands.²

² Wilmington MPO, Cape Fear Transportation 2040 Survey Results.

| Housing Type | Supply | Demand | Surplus/(Deficit) |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Large Lot Single-Family | 52 million units | 31 million units | 21 million units |
| Small Lot Single-Family | 39 million units | 48 million units | (9 million units) |
| Attached | 39 million units | 51 million units | (12 million units) |

FINDING

Our region is a magnet for retirees from across the country. But many are moving to places where they will depend on their cars, creating a need for more transportation options and services in the future.

PROOF POINT: Brunswick and Pender are among the top 10% of counties nationally for in-migration of people 55 and older from out of state.

PROOF POINT: The region has several areas with a high concentration of elderly citizens, but no public transportation options. These include the Porters Neck community and Greenville Loop area of Wilmington, and the Town of Carolina Shores and the Village of Saint James in Brunswick County.³

³ Health & Wellness Gap Analysis, Page 3-15.

FINDING

We need more affordable housing and a wider variety of housing types in order to reduce the strain on overburdened renters and owners, to revitalize and sustain urban neighborhoods, and to respond to market demand for smaller housing driven by an aging population and smaller average household size.

PROOF POINT: Nearly 39 percent of homeowners in the Cape Fear region are cost burdened, meaning they spend 30 percent or more of their gross income on housing costs. The rate of cost burdened homeowners nearly doubled between 2000 and 2010, and is about six percentage points above the rate for North Carolina as a whole.¹

¹ Health & Wellness Gap Analysis, Page 2-14.

PROOF POINT: Renters are even more cost burdened. About 54 percent of all renter households in the region meet the 30 percent standard. Wages are an important factor.

FINDING

Large distances tend to separate housing and jobs, requiring extensive vehicle travel and leading to congestion. Affordable housing is difficult for many people to find near their jobs. Mixing affordable housing with jobs, shopping, and services is part of the solution as it allows us to bring our homes and key destinations closer together. This also makes active transportation options – such as walking and biking – more viable, supporting better public health, and reducing auto travel time and expenses for everyone.

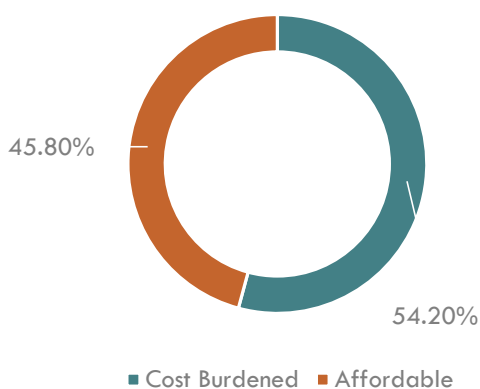
PROOF POINT: A 2014 survey of Millennials found that 54 percent would consider moving to another city if it had more or better transportation options and 86 percent find it important for their city to offer opportunities to live and work without relying on a car.²

PROOF POINT: About 95 percent of the region's households spend more than 45 percent of their income on housing and transportation.³

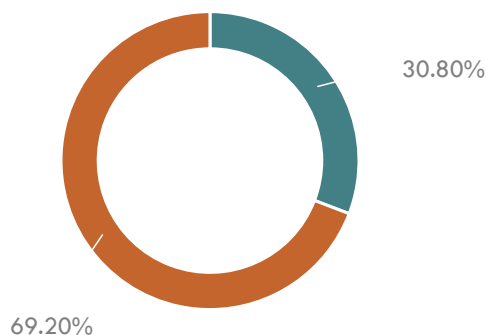
² Transportation for America. "Survey: To recruit and keep Millennials, give them walkable places with good transit and other options." April 22, 2014. <http://transportationforamerica.org/2014/04/22/survey-to-recruit-and-keep-millennials-give-them-walkable-places-with-good-transit-and-other-options/>.

³ Center for Neighborhood Technology. H+T Affordability Index. <http://htaindex.cnt.org/>.

Rental Housing



Owner Housing



KEY FINDINGS

OUR ECONOMY HAS UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

Our region has several ingredients needed to grow knowledge-based industries and nurture entrepreneurship.

FINDING

Regions that offer a high quality of life have a major economic advantage in today's world, where people and companies are less tethered to a place. Projects that improve quality of life will help set our region apart, attracting companies that want to be near highly skilled and mobile workers, and encouraging our talented supply of college graduates to plant roots here.

PROOF POINT: Citizens that attended public workshops for the NC Tomorrow Plan identified a "lack of well-paying, high skilled jobs, which contribute to 'brain drain'" as a top regional weakness.¹

FINDING

Our region has several ingredients needed to grow knowledge-based industries and nurture entrepreneurship, such as a steady supply of young educated people from local colleges and a favorable

¹ Cape Fear Region NC Tomorrow Plan, Page 22.

climate. But small business incubation and higher level orchestration among government, institutions, and business are needed for us to reach our full potential.

PROOF POINT: UNC-Wilmington, Cape Fear Community College, and Brunswick Community College combined have about 28,000 students that are developing skills that could eventually be applied in local businesses if there are job opportunities.²

PROOF POINT: Annual job growth in the Cape Fear region was nearly twice the national rate between 1990 and 2007. But it has lagged behind the national rate since 2007.³

FINDING

Our existing infrastructure provides a strong economic base for the region. These assets - which include the port, airport, water and sewer systems, and street

² Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Page 25.

³ Draft Equitable Growth Profile of the Cape Fear Region, Page 16.

network - have capacity to generate economic growth and jobs. The region is poised to take advantage of state initiatives to grow the Port of Wilmington.

PROOF POINT: North Carolina's ports support 65,000 jobs statewide and generate \$500 million in state and local tax revenue.⁴

PROOF POINT: The Wilmington International Airport offers nonstop connections to four of the nation's largest hub airports and handles nearly 800,000 passengers per year. The airport also has more than 150 acres available for business park development.⁵

⁴ North Carolina Ports Authority. "New Study Assesses Economic Contribution of North Carolina's Ports." <http://www.ncports.com/news/news-releases/new-study-assesses-economic-contribution-of-north-carolinas-ports/>.

⁵ O'Neal, J. Elias. "ILM Unveils Plans for New Business Park." Wilmington Biz. September 15, 2012. http://www.wilmingtonbiz.com/Real_Estate_-_Commercial/2012/09/15/ILM_unveils_plans_for_new_business_park/4292.

SECTION FOUR

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES: A WINNING STRATEGY

Growth has been good for the region's economy. It has brought new people, jobs, and opportunities. Yet the *Alternative Futures* analysis makes it clear that continuing with the Business as Usual approach to just accommodating new development could lead us to lose some of the very qualities that attract people to the region in the first place. The region can take a more proactive approach. It can create a model for growth that helps create a connected network of unique places across the region where housing options and transportation choice can support a vibrant economy across the rural, suburban and urban continuum. The key is to provide a policy framework that creates Complete Communities.



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COMPLETE COMMUNITIES: A WINNING STRATEGY

WHAT IS A COMPLETE COMMUNITY?

WHAT IS A COMPLETE COMMUNITY?

A Complete Community is one that provides for most of a person's daily needs within a close distance from their home. A person living or working in a complete community can pick up groceries, visit the dentist, take a stroll and relax in a park, and go to school all within their neighborhood. They might also be able to work in their neighborhood, or their neighborhood might be connected to another job center just a short drive or transit trip away. Creating a regional network of Complete Communities can be accomplished by identifying centers where new development can take on a form that allows for

residential and non-residential uses to be located on the same site mixing uses vertically, or by creating centers where different uses are located within walking distance of one another. Mixing uses and making development more compact so things are closer together creates opportunities to develop different housing options for a wide range of people at different phases of life (e.g. retirees, recent college graduates, families with children, etc.) and incomes levels to live and work in the neighborhood. People in Complete Communities have more opportunities to walk and bike, and can cut down on their time traveling to work, to school or the grocery store, freeing their time for other activities.

A complete community is one that provides for most of a person's daily needs within close distance from their home.



Regardless of location, Complete Communities share the following common design elements making them attractive and healthy places to live.

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES DESIGN ELEMENTS

- ▶ Include a mix of housing types including single-family homes, townhomes, condominiums, and apartments of various sizes and price points. This will accommodate the region's large aging population, shrinking average household size and changing market preferences.
- ▶ Support shorter travel distances between places, making it easier for people to walk, bike to take shorter car trips for some of their needs. This will cut back on time and cost required for people to reach destinations, encourage greater physical activity in people's daily lives, and give children more freedom to travel. In locations where Complete Communities can align with an existing or proposed transit corridor, transit can also become another viable transportation choice for people seeking to live car free or car-light lifestyles.
- ▶ Provide access to nature and open space for passive and active recreation and help preserve critical natural resources. This supports our region's \$1 billion tourism economy, helps protect natural resources to keep the region resilient to storm surges, and helps protect ecosystems that have potential value in biotech industries.
- ▶ Allow people of all stages of life and income levels to access a variety of jobs and services easily. This will help grow our economy by increasing access to our diverse workforce
- ▶ Tap into existing infrastructure so that local governments can make efficient use of their previous investments in water, sewer, and streets. This will help local governments and taxpayers spend less to support new growth and development.
- ▶ Relieve development pressure off existing undeveloped agricultural and rural lands to ensure long-term viability of local food systems and continue offering housing choices for rural lifestyles.
- ▶ Create a connected network of Complete Community centers across the region linked by a robust multimodal transportation system.

Complete Communities represent a change in direction from the Business as Usual scenario. Our region has grown outward from the City of Wilmington for several decades in a pattern marked by a strict separation of uses. In many locations, shopping, work, and home are typically spread far apart with little or no opportunity to access these destinations without having to get in a car. This pattern has not simply come about because of market dynamics. Many zoning codes and street design requirements reinforce it. However, the market is evolving, best practices in local planning and design policies are changing, and people are looking for more choices in how they live and travel. The policies, codes, and design requirements that underlie the conventional development pattern must continue to evolve to keep up with the times.

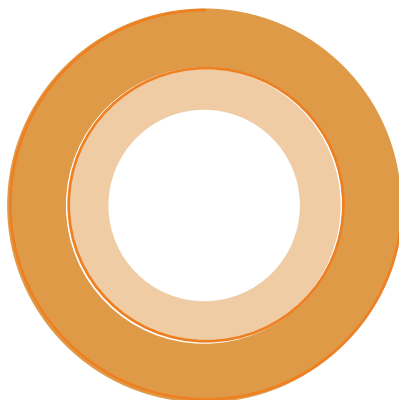


COMPLETE COMMUNITIES: A WINNING STRATEGY

MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS OF GROWTH

Complete Communities perform better on nearly every indicator considered in the Alternative Futures analysis.

Complete Communities perform better on nearly every indicator considered in the *Alternative Futures* analysis. These benefits come not just from building new Complete Communities, but also from investing in existing compact and walkable locations, such as traditional downtowns, town centers and rural villages. The *Alternative Futures* demonstrates that when Complete Communities are implemented across the region, we can realize the following outcomes:



- ▶ Vehicle miles of travel per capita increases at a slower rate.
- ▶ People have more job choices within a shorter commute of their homes.
- ▶ More people can live in walkable neighborhoods which can support more active lifestyles and better public health outcomes.
- ▶ More people have access to transit at their homes and workplaces.
- ▶ More people live and work near parks and open spaces, including beaches.
- ▶ More growth can be accommodated in existing developed areas, which allows for the preservation of fragile ecosystems and agricultural lands.
- ▶ Provide more housing options for all income levels located across the region with greater access to educational and job opportunities.

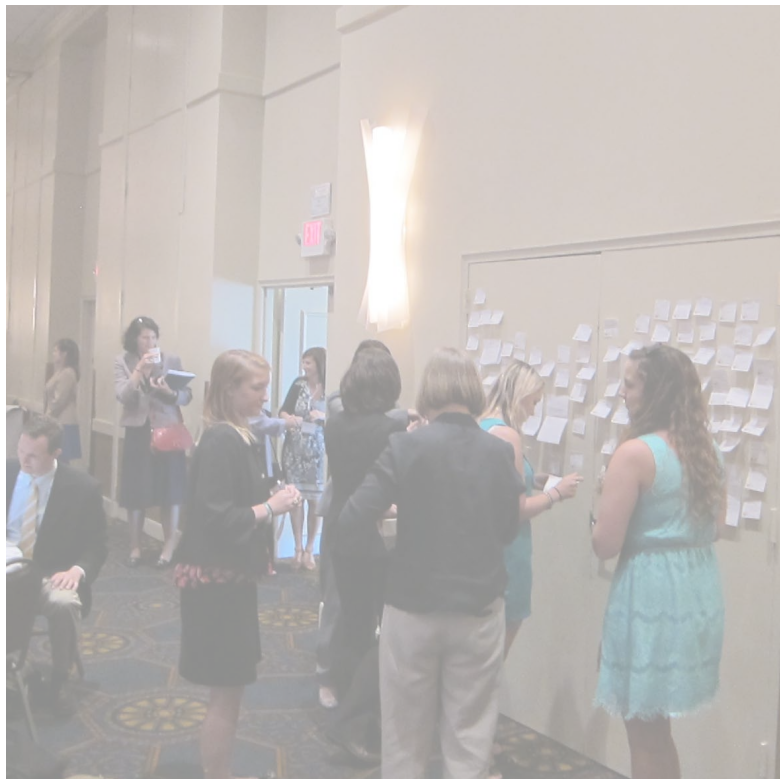
The public benefits of Complete Communities are not the only reason for investing in them. The demand for walkable, mixed-use communities is increasing throughout the nation. The Cape Fear region has favorable demographics for this approach to development. Our average household size is declining and the educational level of residents is increasing. Additionally, the area is a magnet for retirees, many of whom will need different transportation options and types of housing than was built in the past.

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES: A WINNING STRATEGY

SUPPORTING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES WITH PUBLIC POLICY

The path to Complete Communities starts with a vision. However, a vision is not enough. Local governments must also have a mix of zoning and development codes as well as incentives to support making it easy and attractive for the private sector to build Complete Communities.

Several of the region's counties and local governments have made progress in developing policies and codes to support Complete Communities. Cities across North Carolina and the country have revised their zoning codes and subdivision regulations in order to support new forms of development that mix uses and provide more choices in the type of housing and transportation options that are available to people.



Partnership for Sustainable Communities

Livability Principles

The concept of Complete Communities is consistent with the livability principles that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are using to guide their funding programs and policies. The six principles are:

1. PROVIDE MORE TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.

2. PROMOTE EQUITABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

3. ENHANCE ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS;

Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.

4. SUPPORT EXISTING COMMUNITIES

Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.

5. COORDINATE AND LEVERAGE FEDERAL POLICIES AND INVESTMENT

Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

6. VALUE COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Wilmington's historic neighborhoods in and around downtown are among the best examples of a Complete Community in North Carolina. The downtown core is surrounded by several square miles of compact, walkable, and mixed-use neighborhoods. However, the city also includes extensive single use, sprawling development outside of this historic core reflecting typical development since the 1980s. For more than a decade, the city has been aligning its plans behind its vision for the year 2025, which the city crafted in 1999, helping to guide the rest of the city towards a more Complete Communities¹. The city is currently completing another update of its comprehensive plan, reflecting many of the key principles of Complete Communities.

The counties and smaller cities and towns across the region are also taking steps to enable the development of Complete Communities. New Hanover County is preparing its first comprehensive plan slated for completion in 2015 and already developed small area plans, such as the Castle Hayne Community Plan, that call for development and infrastructure consistent with Complete Communities. This plan will create the framework for the development of a comprehensive zoning code rewrite for New Hanover County which is anticipated to begin in 2015. Meanwhile, Pender County adopted the Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 2010. That same year, Pender County also adopted its Unified Development Ordinance, which takes the broad vision and policies outlined in the comprehensive plan and turns them into enforceable codes. Both documents will be updated beginning in 2015. One innovation of the Pender County Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the mixed-use district, which covers most of the U.S. HWY 17 in Coastal Pender County corridor where the county encourages mixed use greenfield, infill and redevelopment. The town of Burgaw has a strong walkable main street district and continues to update its policies and codes to foster continue rural village style growth in its historic center, while also providing economic incentives to attract local jobs and retain a strong agricultural base. In Brunswick County, the Town of Leland adopted a master plan that calls for creating a walkable mixed-use downtown and, as of 2014, was working to implement the plan through a Unified Development Ordinance.

CITY OF WILMINGTON VISION FOR 2025

Wilmington will be an attractive, safe place to live, work, raise a family, and retire. The City will be known for historic character and culture, a vibrant downtown and beautiful waterfront, environmental assets, thriving neighborhoods with convenient access to amenities, quality educational and health care institutions and its strong economy with exceptional employment opportunities, shopping and services. Its 2004 Future Land Use Plan, 2005 Design Preferences, its Brownfields Redevelopment Initiative, has taken steps to encourage development consistent with complete community concepts.

¹ City of Wilmington. *Future Land Use Plan*. September 7, 2004. http://www.wilmingtonnc.gov/planning_development_and_transportation/plans_documents/future_land_use_plan.



Despite these actions and accomplishments, the region still must do work to continue removing obstacles to development of Complete Communities. These obstacles include a policy and legal environment that still makes it easier to build the conventional style of development rather than building mixed use or creating infill and redevelopment. Another barrier or potential missed opportunity is the need for coordinated planning across county and city boundaries. If a significant new development project comes into one jurisdiction, the adjacent jurisdiction will be impacted, but more importantly, the infrastructure needs may warrant a regional approach or pooling of resources. Local governments could benefit not only from implementing the codes and policies needed to create Complete Communities within their own jurisdictions, but a larger regional blueprint for growth is needed to ensure a complementary network of Complete Communities is created and supported by a strong mix of regional transportation options. This level of regional planning requires additional capacity and coordination to effectively to realize the desired results.

Another obstacle is the potential of directing all transportation resources to addressing the needs of the driving public only or missing opportunities to target transportation investments towards economic development initiatives. As more opportunities for walking, biking, and taking transit emerge in Complete Communities, a transportation policies will also need to shift to better align with the desired land use and development visions. Additionally, as the region targets certain locations for new job growth (such as the North 421 corridor), transportation investments should be redirected to support these initiatives. Doing so requires action not only at the local level but also with the regional transportation partners including the WMPO, the Rural Planning Organization, and the North Carolina DOT, WAVE Transit and additional community transportation providers to ensure that future job centers are well connected by multimodal corridors and to other mixed use centers.

Finally, the provision of water and sewer across the region will require a combined effort to manage some demand through innovative building techniques that reduce stormwater runoff or allow for creative water reuse and reclamation. It also will require more direct coordination, collaboration and public private partnerships between local governments and the utility providers such as the Cape Fear Public Utilities Authority and other providers to ensure that utility expansions align with local growth goals on where to locate new development.

The remaining pages of the *Regional Framework for Our Future* detail specific recommendations for the regional partners to consider in moving forward with a bold new vision for coordinated regional growth and development. These pages also highlight many of the efforts already underway by a variety of different regional stakeholders. These pages are not all-inclusive and reflect a snapshot in time of both recommendations and key accomplishments. Therefore, it is anticipated that this final section entitled A Call for Regional Network of Complete Communities will be a living document for years to come.



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SECTION FIVE

A CALL FOR A REGIONAL NETWORK OF COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES

It is clear that the region will continue to see its population and jobs grow quickly in the next few decades. Many community members and local elected officials embrace this growth as an opportunity to encourage positive development, but also want to make sure that development spurs the creation of diverse and higher paying jobs while providing opportunities for all citizens to improve their quality of life. They also want to be sure that new growth does not negatively affect the existing quality of life that makes our region such a great place to work, live, serve and recreate. Therefore, the *Regional Framework for Our Future* is a statement of desired outcomes organized across three key principles areas:



A REGIONAL INCUBATOR FOR MAKING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES HAPPEN

FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES



BUILD LIVABLE PLACES

This means fostering new forms of growth and development that meets market demand while also making sure people have convenient access to daily destinations such as jobs, shopping, recreational opportunities and cultural amenities. It also means doing so while ensuring long-term environmental stewardship and enhancing the distinctive character of our existing beach towns, rural main streets and working agricultural lands, city centers and suburban neighborhoods. The Complete Community design concepts reflect ideas that can be scaled and applied to a wide range of places – from rural villages to urban neighborhoods to new centers of commerce and employment.



PROVIDE ABUNDANT CHOICES

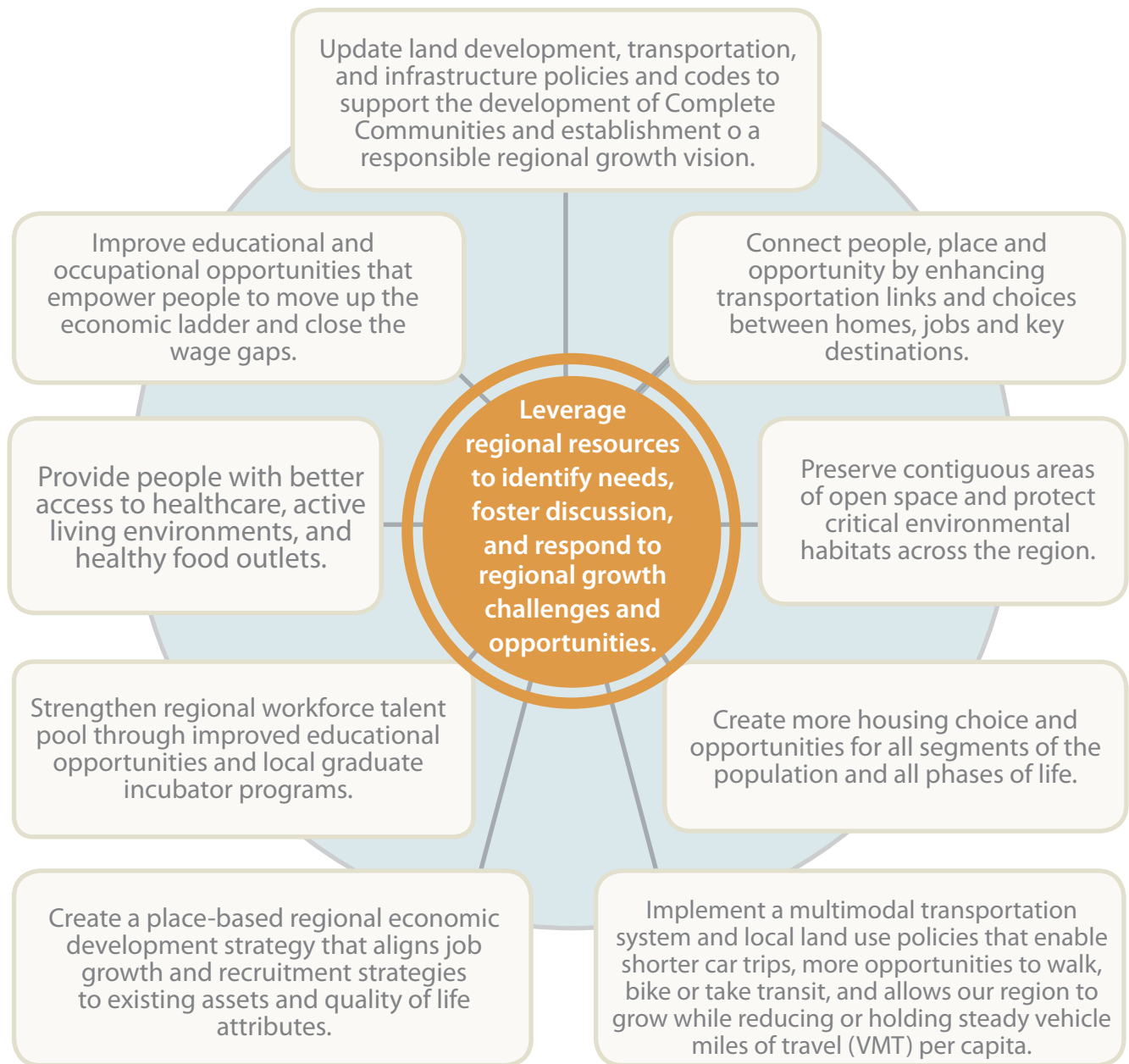
This means using the economic engine associated with new growth to create better opportunities for individuals, families, communities, and businesses to prosper and grow. Doing so requires both the physical infrastructure to improve regional access to jobs, improve health outcomes and position multiple areas for economic development; but also the programmatic infrastructure necessary to empower individuals and families to seek and obtain a better quality of life. It also means creating a strong regional brand and marketing strategy for economic development that highlights the unique character, distinctive assets and abundant choices of the Cape Fear region. Finally, abundant choices also means empowering each community to grow and prosper by tailoring the concepts of livable places to reflect their own unique values and sense of place.



CONNECT VOICES

This means building new partnerships among public, private and community leaders to regularly communicate, coordinate and take action on creating a network of Complete Communities across the region. These partnerships can help create “one voice” for the region making us more competitive in the national marketplace when trying to attract private investment, and potentially more politically competitive within the state in attracting limited public sector funding for major programs and infrastructure. These partnerships can also ensure that there is a voice for all people in the region, ensuring long-term access to information and opportunity for all.

FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES



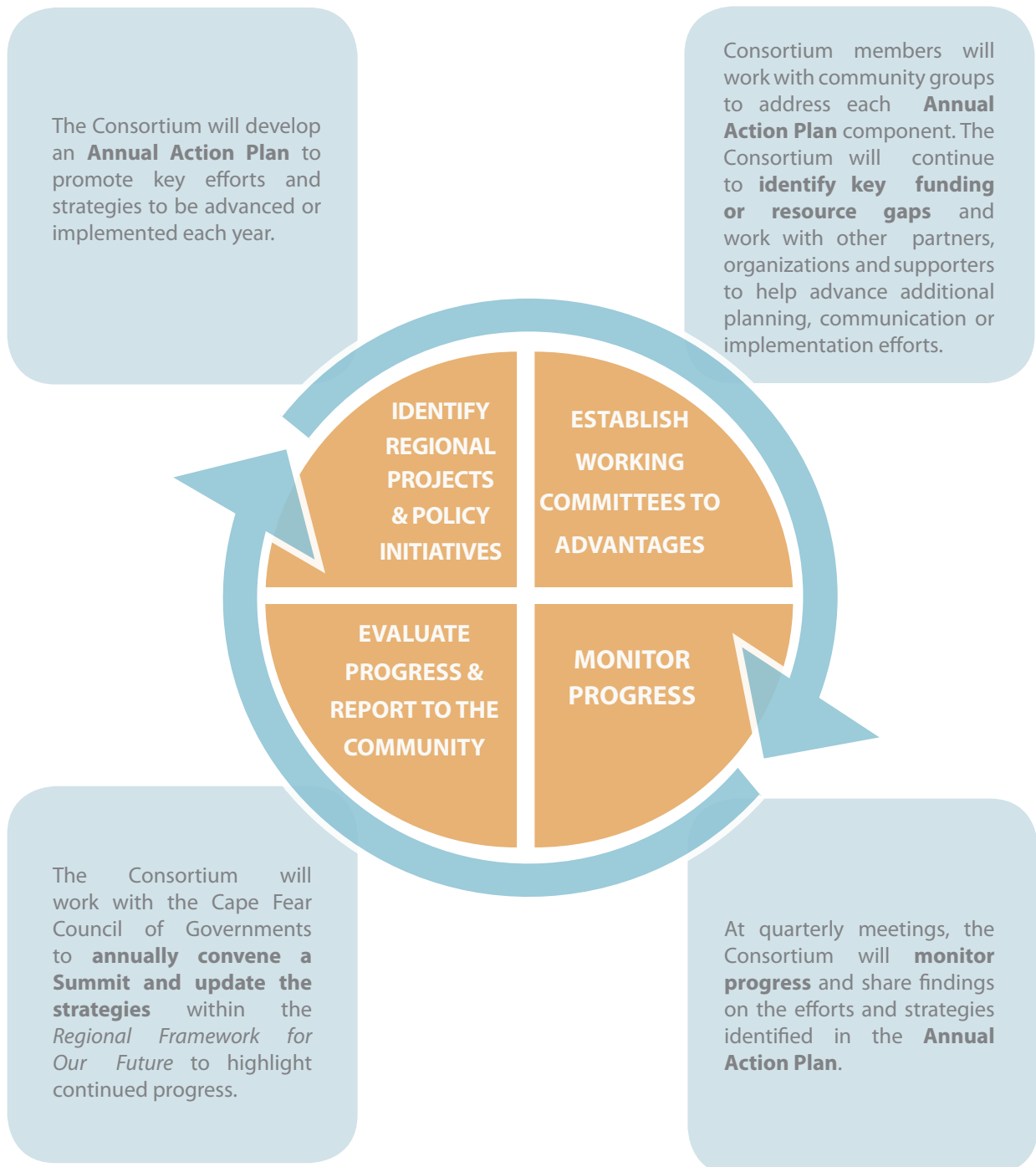
Based on the issues and opportunities presented throughout this document, the diagram above presents the **10 key strategies** we need to implement to create a positive blueprint for growth and development in our region for years to come. For each strategy, the following pages include a summary of 'what we are doing right' which highlights efforts already underway at the local level to advance a network of Complete Communities. Each strategy area also includes a list of 'potential implementation actions' that identifies

areas where we need to do more. This section is by no means an exhaustive list of what is already happening or what needs to be done, but rather highlights a snapshot of where we are today in an effort to spark continued dialogue. These tables can serve as the ongoing format for how we monitor success, prioritize activities and take action in years to come. This section of the document is meant to be a 'living' document that can help to monitor progress, foster information sharing on best practices and help to leverage resources.

A CALL TO ACTION

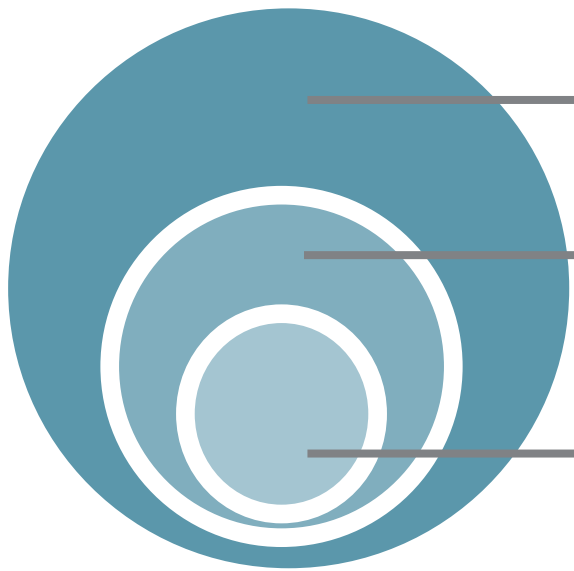
As illustrated on the previous page, the key strategy in the center describes the need to regionally **connect our voices** and leverage resources for **continued regional action**. While many of the local governments involved in this process are already changing local land use policies and rethinking their economic development strategies to help create a network of Complete Communities and ensure that our existing quality of life only gets better - more regional effort will be needed.

As a result of the FOCUS planning process, the Consortium members have agreed to keep meeting to ensure the coordination, communication and regional planning necessary to advance the 10 implementation strategies. The diagram below illustrates the organizational steps necessary for keeping this regional planning process moving forward. Additionally, the Consortium will need to mobilize in the near term and continue to seek new partnerships with the private sector, other organizations and the general public to ensure long term success.



ONGOING COLLABORATION

The Consortium members cannot take on implementation alone. They will need help from new public, non-profit and private sector **partners** as well as additional individual **supporters** that reflect the diversity of interests and community types across our region. This may include formal or informal partnerships between individuals or organizations and the Consortium to organize and implement key project or initiatives and/or secure new grants or other funds for continued planning and implementation. It may also involve efforts to continue communicating and organizing public events to foster dialogue and ongoing support for implementation.



SUPPORTERS

individual residents of the community who support the *Regional Framework for Our Future* and are interested in its implementation

PARTNERS

private and non-profit organizations working with the FOCUS Consortium to help implement specific projects, foster communications and support other activities

FOCUS CONSORTIUM

an alliance of local governments, regional agencies and other business and community organizations that is the driving force of regional collaboration and implementation of the *Regional Framework for Our Future*.



MAKING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES HAPPEN

BUILD LIVABLE PLACES

STRATEGY A

Update land development, transportation, and infrastructure policies and codes to support the development of Complete Communities and establishment of a responsible regional growth vision.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Policies and codes are the vital connection between our vision of the future and what gets built on the ground. Policies reflect local community values and aspirational goals about the future, providing the direction for local government action and investments. Codes further support policies, providing more specific rules and guidance on the shape of development. To realize a vision of Complete Communities in the Cape Fear region, the policies and codes adopted by our region's local governments should reflect a coordinated regional strategy for

growth, best practices in growth management policy, and alignment between the type and location of growth and the provision of major investments in infrastructure (such as transportation, water, and sewer). This policy framework also helps establish clarity for the private sector and thereby enables more partnerships opportunities for delivering projects that support complete community concepts.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Our region's local governments and agencies have already taken steps in this direction. The table below highlights some of these specific actions.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|-----------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FOCUS Consortium conducted an Alternative Futures study that looked at specific patterns of growth and development aimed at achieving livable community outcomes. WMPO prepared a transportation demand management (TDM) plan and program. The goals for the draft 2040 LRTP include prioritizing bicycle and pedestrian improvements/and transit expansion. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pender County's 2010 Comprehensive Land Use Plan and its Unified Development Ordinance supported smart growth and complete community concepts and will be updated beginning in 2015. Pender County's Coastal Pender Collector Street Plan integrates land use and transportation concepts to support mixed use, more compact patterns of development and gridded street patterns. New Hanover County is preparing its first Comprehensive Plan inclusive of specific policies aimed at supporting complete community concepts. This will be followed by a major zoning update in 2016. New Hanover and Brunswick Counties have Low Impact Development Guidance (LID) manuals; Pender County incorporates LID principles in the Unified Development Ordinance. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilmington's Comprehensive Plan supports revising the city's Land Development Code. The Town of Burgaw allows for Residential Cluster Subdivisions to allow greater density when open space is reserved/preserved. Surf City establishes a town center. Shallote explores new urbanism. Wilmington has an LID Guidance Manual. Leland has adopted a downtown master plan and Form Based Code. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leading developers are including many elements of Complete Community designs in new developments. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower Cape Fear Stewardship Development Coalition recognizes development that demonstrates outstanding environmental stewardship. Cape Fear Public Utilities is working with local governments on expansion along the 421 corridor. Pender Commerce Park is a Pender County Economic Development site. |

WHAT IS MISSING?

State, regional, and local governments have taken some steps to implement policies and codes that will result in Complete Communities, but much more can be done. This includes the following:

- ▶ Establish a regional growth vision and blueprint that identifies priority growth areas, priority rural and conservation areas.
- ▶ Incorporate specific criteria reflecting complete community guiding principles (e.g. supporting multimodal transportation, growth in existing centers, priority corridors, etc.) into identifying and prioritizing regional transportation projects.
- ▶ Expand efforts to create a regional infrastructure investment strategy that supports directing of growth into desirable locations.
- ▶ Establish criteria and align funding of regional water and wastewater projects that supports directing of growth into desirable locations.
- ▶ Establish specific policies and codes to support rural village development patterns and incentives to preserve rural working lands.
- ▶ Establish inter-local planning agreements between jurisdictions to jointly plan and coordinate major infrastructure improvements; and review of major development projects.
- ▶ Enact additional policies and codes to enable Complete Community design concepts such as compact, mixed land uses and a mix of housing types/sizes located in within preferred growth areas

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy A.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFCOG and other partners revisit Alternative Futures to reach consensus on regional vision for growth. • WMPO establishes project evaluation criteria that prioritize projects that enable more compact, complete community concepts such as Complete Streets, bicycle, pedestrian and transit projects where appropriate when located in preferred growth areas. • WMPO hires TDM coordinator for the region to implement regional TDM plan in concert with local employers. |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement innovative codes such as Form Based Codes or Traditional Neighborhood Overlay Districts in targeted growth centers. • Provide incentives such as fast track development reviews and density bonuses where appropriate to encourage complete communities development patterns located in preferred growth areas. • Establish parking maximums and density minimums in areas targeted for compact development. • Prioritize infrastructure that enables complete communities through capital improvement plans. • Prioritize provision of sidewalks and other Complete Streets infrastructure in locations with a strong mix of use, and bicycle and pedestrian demand. • Allow accessory dwelling units by right in all residential zones. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Home Builders Association and local Urban Land Institute partners to highlight best practices in complete community design inclusive of a full range of housing choices. • Continue to provide incentives for public-private partnerships to build complete communities. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align Cape Fear Public Utility planning and programming documents (current year and 10-year Capital Improvement Program, the Growth Policy, Capacity Allocation Ordinance, etc.) with the regional growth vision. |

STRATEGY B

Support continued growth in the region while reducing or holding steady current levels of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita by enabling shorter vehicular trips and more travel by means other than cars alone. Ensure that the region creates a multimodal transportation system where walking, biking, and transit are viable transportation options for a portion of people's daily activities.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Transportation is the bedrock of our regional economy. The transportation network connects

our businesses to suppliers, workers, and the outside world. Transportation also affects our daily lives. Good transportation systems minimize the amount of time and money we need to spend each day getting from point A to point B by balancing how closely together we locate different daily destinations (proximity) and how quickly we can get there (speed). As our region grows, it will be critical for us to take balanced approach to our transportation system that uses both strategies to address increases in travel demand. We need to invest in better inter-regional travel while also allowing people more transportation options (walking, biking, transit or shorter auto trips) to reach their daily destinations. Regions that offer a high quality of life with robust transportation systems are in a better position to compete for workers and jobs in today's

knowledge-driven economy. Creating Complete Community development patterns and/or retrofitting existing commercial centers and neighborhoods to support Complete Streets concepts responds to peoples shifting preferences towards walkable neighborhoods. It also helps to promote more transportation choices, potentially reducing transportation costs, supporting more physically active lifestyles and potentially reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Our region's local governments and agencies have already taken steps in this direction. The table below highlights some of these specific actions.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|-----------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMPO Cape Fear Commutes LRTP includes new services and alignments; and WMPO recently prepared a transportation demand management (TDM) plan and program. • The goals for the draft 2040 LRTP include prioritizing bicycle and pedestrian improvements and consideration for bus rapid transit and new transit services. • Wave Transit's Short Range Transportation Plan calls for improving bus service frequency in key regional corridors. • Pender Transit working with WAVE and Duplin Transit to provide a deviated fixed route to allow riders to access other two transit services across county lines. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Hanover County's first Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policies to support more multimodal transportation options and compact communities. Also includes an Exceptional Design Zoning District (EDZD) which supports more transit ready development. • Pender County Comprehensive Plan including policies to support future transit options, as well as walking and biking options. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilmington's Comprehensive Plan supports compact development with a mix of uses along high capacity transit corridors. • Surf City is currently developing a bicycle and pedestrian master plan funded by NCDOT. • Town of Burgaw's Bicycle and Pedestrian plan currently in development that is looking at walkable environment gaps; West Side Parks Plan anticipated to be developed in next year that would address one gap area. • Leland's Comprehensive Plan supports compact development with a mix of uses along high capacity transit corridors. • The Comprehensive Plans for both Wilmington and Leland include support for connecting their downtowns by bus to the airport and the airport business park. • Wave Transit opened three park and ride lots in Brunswick County in 2015. • Wave Transit operates a free trolley in downtown Wilmington. • Town of Navassa adopted a Complete Streets policy. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support creation of Complete Community developments; support City of Wilmington Transportation Bond measures; support employer based TDM programs. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger coordination between RPO/MPO on rural transit initiatives. |

WHAT IS MISSING?

State, regional, and local governments have taken some steps to increase the number of transportation options through new services and updated policies and codes. The following gaps are among the most important to address:

- ▶ Establish a dedicated funding source, such as a transit sales and use tax, for the expansion of public transportation across the region.
- ▶ Develop a regional strategy for generating new local revenues to address long term local transportation funding gaps as new growth and development drives future transportation demands.
- ▶ Establish zoning overlay districts in select locations to support transit-oriented development (TOD) on future high capacity transit corridors.
- ▶ Prioritize bicycle and pedestrian improvements to better connect existing and future transit stops with key destinations.
- ▶ Develop a coordinated three county greenways, trails, and bikeways plan aimed at creating more inter-county connections via trails, greenways, and dedicated bike routes.
- ▶ Establish transit supportive densities in key centers/locations currently or to be served by transit where there is a desire for more compact, dense patterns.
- ▶ Improve intercounty connectivity between population centers and jobs in downtown Wilmington.
- ▶ Link regional bicycle, pedestrian and trail master planning efforts to regional multimodal transportation strategy – e.g. seek opportunities to connect trails to key destinations.

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy B.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a feasibility and implementation plan that demonstrates how a local option transit tax would improve services. • Prepare a regional transit vision that identifies corridors for future high capacity transit improvements, such as bus rapid transit. |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Hanover County and Wilmington collaborate to create a TOD overlay zoning district for future high capacity transit corridors. • Identify street segments where a road diet would be feasible and would advance a local goal to make an area more walkable. • Adopt local complete streets policies to complement North Carolina DOT's policy on the state network. • Align bicycle and pedestrian improvement priorities in locations where Complete Community concepts (compact and mixed use) are creating increased walking and biking demand. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore more privately funded alternative transportation options (buses, shuttles, bikeshare, transit, etc.) as core part of tourism and hospitality based industries, especially during peak tourist seasons. |

STRATEGY C

Preserve contiguous areas of open space and protect critical environmental habitats.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Our beaches, rivers, estuaries, and salt marshes are valuable recreational assets that attract tourists to our region and provide

enjoyment for local residents from far and wide. These ecosystems and habitats also provide protection from the coastal storm surges that hurricanes frequently bring to our region and are home to many different species of animals and plants. In fact, the Cape Fear region is home to more rare species than any other part of North Carolina, and is the most biologically diverse region on the East Coast outside of Florida. We must balance development with preserving these critical assets that serve as the cornerstone of our economy and quality of life.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Our region's local governments, agencies and non-profits have already taken steps in this direction. The table below highlights some of these specific actions.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|-----------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The region has a Coastal Area Management Action (CAMA) Plan that also applies to the regional jurisdictions. CAMA identifies critical ecosystems and habitats protection and preservation plan. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Hanover County prepared a Comprehensive Greenway Plan. New Hanover County adopted a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. New Hanover County and Brunswick County have LID Guidance manuals. Pender County incorporates LID principles in the Unified Development Ordinance. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Hanover and Brunswick Counties have Low Impact Development Guidance (LID) manuals; Pender County has a LID Ordinance. Pender County Catalyst Report supports looking at solutions such as a regional parks and recreation authority to leverage multi-county resources. New Hanover County has a Flood Damage Prevention ordinance aimed at directing new building and development away from flood prone areas. New Hanover County has a parks and garden masterplan in development. Joint City of Wilmington and New Hanover County LID Guidance Manual. Wilmington will rewrite its Land Development Code to incorporate specific environmental protection features. Pender County recently secured a three county hazard mitigation grant aimed at identifying strategies to help make the coastal communities more resilient to major storm events. Pender County developed a Parks and Recreation Master Plan and a Water and Wastewater Master Plan; Pender also reaching out to additional private water companies to explore innovative water/wastewater reuse projects. Wilmington has conservation resource regulations. Wilmington has Hewletts and Bradely Creek Watershed Restoration Plans. Wilmington prepared a Comprehensive Greenway Plan. Town of Burgaw established Flood Development Ordinance and Conservation/Preservation zoning district. Surf City and Pender County are partnering to create a new greenway along an existing powerline easement owned by Duke Energy. City of Leland is working on creating a network of restored wetlands. Surf City hosts a summer farmers market that promotes locally sourced food from nearby farms and home grown products for sale. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developers such as River Bluffs Development Group, and Trask Land Company recognized for their commitment to Low Impact Development and other environmental sustainability efforts. Cape Fear River businesses continuing to support education and tours of river to highlight river stewardship. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil and Water Conservation District provides education to help farmers take steps to minimize impacts on the regional watershed. Nature Conservancy owns 17,000 acres of the Green Swamp in Brunswick. Cape Fear River Watch is a local non-profit dedicated to protecting the Cape Fear River Watershed. Lower Cape Fear Stewardship Development Coalition recognizes development that demonstrates outstanding environmental stewardship. North Carolina Coastal Federation's educational efforts regionally. The North Carolina Forest Service offers technical assistance to property owners to help establish, manage, and restore longleaf pine ecosystems. |

WHAT IS MISSING?

The actions listed above are important steps. Local governments, the private sector and non-profits can take the following additional steps to ensure our region's environment continues to serve our economy, quality of life, and health. The following gaps are among the most important to address:

- ▶ Establish a regional growth vision and blueprint that identifies priority growth areas, agricultural and conservation areas across the region
- ▶ Establish a regional economic development strategy that includes specific indicators aimed at ensuring new job growth supports desired growth patterns and enhancement of quality of life.
- ▶ Enact land use policies and codes that direct growth into areas most suitable for development while conserving critical habitats such as watersheds, stream and river corridors, and wildlife habitats.
- ▶ Provide additional incentives for landowners and farmers to reduce polluted stormwater runoff into stream, rivers, and estuaries
- ▶ Partner with organizations like Farmland Trust to preserve critical working lands.
- ▶ Develop more robust water conservation, supply and water protection strategies across the region.
- ▶ Support energy and water conservation programs and promote alternative energy sources.
- ▶ Establish of a regional greenprint to guide development of a regional open space plan and an acquisition strategy aligned with Coastal Area Management Act plans.
- ▶ Establish a regional funding mechanism to purchase open space and preserve critical environmental assets

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy C.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a public service announcement campaign about the economic value of tourism and the importance of clean waterways and coast to the region's economy and well-being. |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage recently awarded Hazard Mitigation Grant for tri-county region to advance creation of natural systems protection and preservation strategies in support of hazard mitigation programs. • Identify priority preservation areas in comprehensive plans and align them with regional greenprint to create contiguous wildlife habitats and open space. • Ensure that local building codes allow for best practices in green building design such as the use of alternative energy options, LID, etc. • Prohibit development within a buffer zone to rivers and streams. • Offer stronger incentives for developers to implement LID techniques. • Encourage startups and entrepreneurs seeking to establish ecotourism and biotech industries dependent on long-term stewardship of region's natural resources. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in local and regional non-profits supportive of education and protection of natural resources. • Provide public access to waterways and estuaries for passive recreation and educational use through easements and with other public/private agreements. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create regional mapping and analysis to identify regional greenprint and monitor protection and preservation efforts. |

STRATEGY D

Create more housing choice and opportunities for all segments of the population and phases of life.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Homeowner and renters in our region are more likely to be cost burdened by their mortgage payments or rent than a typical North Carolinian. Meanwhile, recent surveys show that housing

and lifestyle preferences are shifting, and that many people, especially young adults, are looking for more housing and transportation options. Therefore, providing more housing options at a range of price points is not only a strategy to address the cost burden problem, but also for attracting recent college graduates and the companies that want to locate in places that give them a recruiting advantage. Additionally, our region is a primary destination for retirees who would like housing options that allow them to 'age in place' as their personal mobility and physical activity has the potential to diminish overtime. Therefore

we must align our housing strategy with Complete Community design concepts that encourage diverse housing options located in areas where access to healthcare, jobs, recreation, faith based and social activities remain strong for all segments of the population.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Our region's local governments, and agencies and non-profits have already taken steps in this direction. The table below highlights some of the changes they have already made.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CFCOG is the region's Area Agency on Aging and currently administers Home Community Care Block Grant funding and other direct service funding of community-based services enables older adults to live independently in their own homes as long as possible. The Cape Fear Regional Community Development Corporation (CDC) is a non-profit housing, community and economic development organization that provides information, education and counseling related to home ownership and entrepreneurship to low and moderate income residents of the Cape Fear region. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Hanover County's Comprehensive Plan includes goals to ensure that local codes and policies support the development of a wide range of housing types. New Hanover County leveraged \$500,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Economic Recovery (ER) monies to rebuild affordable homes that incorporated green building principles, energy efficiency, water efficiency and resource conservation. Brunswick County housing constructs hurricane proof affordable housing prototype. Town of Burgaw staff and planning board have been working on update of multi-family development regulations which includes consideration of policies such as density bonuses and streamlining review process for some developments. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilmington provides density bonuses for public benefits in the Central Business District. Wilmington will rewrite its Land Development Code to enable more housing choice. Wilmington Housing Authority promotes and conducts outreach to area employers on Wilmington Homeownership Opportunities Program. Wilmington supports community development programs using federal, state, and local funding. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cape Fear Community Land Trust develops and stewards affordable housing in the region. CapeFearHousing.org is a regional housing locator service and website that helps people find available housing that best fits their individual and family needs; it also connects people to other housing resources. The Wilmington Regional Association of Realtors (WRAR) is committed to working with jurisdictional partners on housing choice issues. Affordable Housing Design Advisor (www.designadvisor.org) provides guidance and best practices in affordable housing design. The Cape Fear Housing Coalition focuses its efforts on affordable housing and community development in the City of Wilmington. Local Habitat for Humanity is an active partner in helping to provide workforce and affordable housing. There is a new homeless project in development near Greenfield lake |

WHAT IS MISSING?

The actions listed above are important steps, however more can be done by local governments, the private sector and non-profits to ensure that our region creates housing. Local governments can take the following additional steps to ensure that people have more housing choices and people are able to remain in their community with desirable housing options for at all stages of life. The following gaps are among the most important to address:

- ▶ Establish of a new regional housing task forces or coalition or expand the reach and mission of the Cape Fear Community Development Corporation to address key issues.
- ▶ Create public private partnerships and incentives for developers to provide affordable, moderate and workforce housing in their development projects.
- ▶ Establish requirements for minimum percentages of affordable and workforce housing in residential development projects.
- ▶ Build local developer capacity and knowledge about using low and moderate -income housing subsidies from the state and federal levels.
- ▶ Enable fast track permitting and development for key housing choice projects.
- ▶ Coordinate among local governments on how and where to provide affordable housing opportunities.
- ▶ Locate compact, higher density housing in locations where walking, biking and transit are viable options thereby potentially reducing the housing and transportation cost burden.
- ▶ Involve major employers in identifying and implementing solutions to provide workforce housing.
- ▶ Enable zoning that allows for and encourages a mix of housing types in all new developments.

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy D.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|---|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a regional Housing Task Force/Coalition that will coordinate local government, non-profit and private sector actions towards providing more workforce and affordable housing as the region continues to grow. • Convene a meeting with the region's large employers to explore their interest in starting employer-assisted housing programs. |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase contributions to the region's Community Land Trust. • Ensure each community has an inclusionary zoning policy and does not prohibit housing choice. • Require a percent of new housing units in multifamily projects be affordable to families earning below an area median income threshold. • Organize a training session for local developers, especially those with an interest in infill development, to learn more about how to use Low Income Housing Tax Credits and New Markets Tax Credits. • Ensure all local policies and zoning codes enable an adequate supply of housing types within each jurisdiction to meet changing market preferences and continued demand. • Invest in local schools and neighborhood development to attract new investment and improvements to underperforming neighborhoods where existing affordable, quality housing already exists and/or may be appropriate for infill development. |

MAKING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES HAPPEN

PROVIDE ABUNDANT CHOICES

STRATEGY E

Create a place-based regional economic development strategy that aligns job growth and recruitment strategies to existing regional assets and quality of life attributes.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Our region's quality of life is also an important factor in why people and companies choose to stay or locate here. The rise of the service sector and knowledge-driven industries has elevated the importance of quality of life attributes. As people and jobs have become more mobile, the regions that offer people a high

quality of life have succeeded. We are fortunate to have many natural and built assets upon which we can build an even stronger quality of life.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The table below highlights some of the changes that agencies and local government have already made to build on existing assets, improve quality of life, and market our attributes to the outside world.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|-----------------------|---|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cape Fear Economic Development Council (CFEDC) supports networking and capacity building around the future economic development of the Cape Fear region based on existing strengths of the region including "Quality of place" as the lynchpin of the region's future. The Cape Fear Regional Community Development Corporation (CDC) is a non-profit housing, community and economic development organization that provides information, education and counseling related to home ownership and entrepreneurship to low and moderate income residents of the greater Cape Fear region. Wilmington Business Development Inc. works to attract and assist new job expansion/re-location efforts in the Greater Wilmington region. CFCOG is the region's workforce development agency connects people and jobs across the region. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Hanover County is working to implement recommendations from the county-based economic development plan, "Pathways to Prosperity". Pender County is also partnering with Wilmington Business Development, Inc., Pender Progress Corporation and Four County EMC to target additional economic development opportunities in Burgaw. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilmington is investing in the Park Avenue Greenway and studying several other potential greenways. Wilmington is supporting recommendations from the New Hanover County economic development plan, "Pathways to Prosperity". Wilmington is preparing a Riverfront Improvement Plan to prioritize investments in its downtown that will increase access to the river. Wilmington selected a mixed-use development proposal to replace the Water Street Parking Deck. Wilmington prepared a small area plan for its historic downtown. Surf City hosts an economic development page on its website to help spur new investments in town. Town of Burgaw, Pender County and Four County Electric have partners to prepare shell building site for future center. Leland established the Gateway District to target redevelopment and commercial growth in its aging commercial center. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilmington's Chamber of Commerce supports the Cape Fear Future initiative – which is a targeted program to further develop the region's knowledge-sector economy. This includes specific efforts to increase opportunities/availability for STEM education programs and projects in the tri-county region including creation of a comprehensive, web-based resource to maximize teacher/parent access to STEM programs for K-12 students. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brunswick County Community College has established the "Sustainability Through Innovation Leadership Center" which provides tools and resources to businesses on sustainability practices. Regional Mountains to Sea Trail Route planned to connect Pender County Burgaw and Surf City. The NC Battleship Commission is planning a memorial walkway along the river and around the USS North Carolina. UNCW Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship adopted the tagline "Where the River of Innovation Meets an Ocean". Cape Fear Community College and Brunswick Community College have multiple locations across region and are both major stakeholder dedicated to addressing workforce development needs of the region. |

WHAT IS MISSING?

The actions listed above are important steps. The following gaps are among the most important to address:

- ▶ Engage local banks and lenders to encourage and nurture entrepreneurship in targeted industries by making it easier to access information and financial resources.
- ▶ Identify and certify key sites and location across the tri-county region to minimize time needed in site selection and other new business start up delays.
- ▶ Identify key job growth centers and locations where additional site preparation and infrastructure investments are needed to catalyze growth. Identify investment funding options.
- ▶ Establish specific incentives and marketing targeted towards ecotourism, biotech companies, and other industries that can tap into the region's natural assets.
- ▶ Develop a new regional brand for us in marketing the area and recruiting new employers.
- ▶ Establish regular meetings and coordination amongst county and municipal level economic development professionals.
- ▶ Create a college graduate retention program with local employers, local governments, etc. to help region compete with larger metro areas for talent.
- ▶ Engage agricultural based industry stakeholders to identify key issues and opportunities for supporting entrepreneurship and protection of working lands.

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy E.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a regional brand and use social media to promote the region as a whole. • Develop an online database of available sites in the region and their infrastructure and site preparation needs. |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish revolving loan funds to support small businesses and startups, especially in areas targeted for job growth. • Establish partnership between Wilmington Business Development and Brunswick County Economic Development as recommended in the "Pathways to Prosperity" report. • Provide funding for a loan-loss reserve to a local bank willing to set up a loan program for small businesses within local government's jurisdiction. • Develop in-house expertise on economic development and state funding programs that support job growth and attraction in support of "Pathways to Prosperity." • Leverage recently awarded Hazard Mitigation Grant for tri-county region to advance planning in long term economic resiliency in response to extreme weather and other coastal hazard events. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand existing chamber based programs to address tri-county needs and issues. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local non-traditional stakeholders into economic development discussions to ensure consideration of equity, environmental and people building capacity issues. |

[1] <http://ced.sog.unc.edu/small-business-access-to-capital-part-iii-loan-loss-reserve-fund/>

STRATEGY F

Strengthen regional workforce talent pool through improved educational opportunities and local graduate incubator programs.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The strength of the local workforce is a major attractor for potential employers considering locating in the region, but more importantly, the local workforce also provides the seeds for local entrepreneurship. The region's two community colleges

and UNC-W are major assets and strengths in supporting a strong local workforce. The region can grow its economy by encouraging these students to remain in the region and start their own businesses. However, the region also has serious gaps in educational achievement that are especially pronounced among people of different races and ethnicities. Therefore part of the region's strategy for economic development must simultaneously focus on retaining existing college educated workers, and ensuring greater opportunities for attainment of a college education or other advanced training for a greater portion of the community. The region can improve the economy for everyone by closing those gaps.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Our region's local governments, colleges, universities and non-profits and agencies are taking steps in this direction. There was also the establishment of the Sustainability through Innovation Leadership Center at Brunswick Community College in 2013, which provides up-to-date resources and tools for business, industry, and the larger community to create awareness and training on sustainable practices. The table below highlights some of the changes that agencies and local government have already made.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|-----------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cape Fear Regional Community Development Corporation (CDC) is a non-profit housing, community and economic development organization that provides information, education and counseling related to home ownership and entrepreneurship to low and moderate income residents of the Cape Fear region. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued support and funding for local community colleges. Support recommendations of the "Pathways to Prosperity" report. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilmington's Comprehensive Plan supports collaborating with institutions and other governments on economic development issues. Wilmington's Comprehensive Plan calls for improving local school systems to ensure students are community college ready and that local schools are an asset for business recruitment. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilmington's Chamber of Commerce supports the Cape Fear Future initiative – which is a targeted program to further develop the region's knowledge-sector economy. This includes specific efforts to increase opportunities/availability for STEM education programs and projects in the tri-county region including creation of a comprehensive, web-based resource to maximize teacher/parent access to STEM programs for K-12 students in New Hanover, Brunswick, and Pender Counties. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNCW established a Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship in 2009; has recruited three businesses and helped launch 12 startups in the region. Cape Fear Community College recently opened a new campus at Surf City providing added opportunities in Coastal Pender County. Brunswick County Community College recently created a job training program targeted toward Hispanics and Latinos; BCCC also developed 6 to 12 month continuing education program for job training programs (e.g. new machinist program in Leland). Qeno provides training and resources to support capacity building in local non-profits. Ongoing discussions between regional business leaders and local community colleges to workforce skills gaps across the region and to align education and workforce systems in different jurisdictions to better train workers. Hometown Hires is a collaborative initiative between private, public and nonprofit organizations that matches local individuals with local employers who want to help break the cycle of generational poverty in the Cape Fear Area. |

WHAT IS MISSING?

This strategy is very important for the region's future economy and quality of life. The region's local governments, institutions, and businesses know it is a problem and more must be done. The following gaps are among the most important issues to address:

- ▶ Create locally grown hiring programs within municipal governments and with local employers that give preference to graduates from local community colleges and universities. Tap into local alumni networks to foster program growth.
- ▶ Expand current Career Pathway programs through local community colleges tailored to skill building and credentials needed to find family-sustaining employment to respond to emerging industry¹.
- ▶ Expand apprenticeship programs, career academies, and other education and training targeted more specifically to connect at risk youth and/or other at risk populations with work experience and connections.
- ▶ Identify critical funding and opportunity gaps for students in schools with a high concentration of poverty or low graduation rates. Close the funding gap through engagement with non-profits and other philanthropic organizations.
- ▶ Establish regular forums for regional collaboration among UNCW, community colleges, local school districts, and economic development professionals to tackle issues related to workforce growth, workforce attraction, and skill gaps.
- ▶ Continue opportunities for businesses and civic leaders to participate in our schools and work to significantly grow the base of business leaders committed to public education through programs like the Superintendent's Business Advisory Council and "Lunch and Learn" that facilitate business & school partnerships.

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy F.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFCOG can expand its workforce development activities by serving as the regional convener for building partnerships for workforce development in conjunction with ongoing Consortium activities. Can include business leaders and local educators building upon the Wilmington Chamber activities. |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase participation in-school breakfast programs at local schools through proven strategies such as Grab and Go meals. • Initiate local hiring programs that prioritize hiring of new graduates from the region. • Expansion of Head Start programs across the region. • Creating more publically funded quality, affordable day care and after school care opportunities across the region. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More direct role in helping to develop workforce develop needs and programs across the region through apprenticeships and other on the job training efforts. • Establishment of a Leadership Cape Fear Region program aimed at building capacity for leadership and entrepreneurship across the region. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local non-traditional stakeholders into economic development discussions to ensure consideration of equity, environmental and people building capacity issues. |

frac.org/pdf/School_Breakfast_Large_School_Districts_SY2013_2014.pdf

¹ Lauren Eyster, Theresa Anderson, and Christin Durham. Innovations and Future Directions for Workforce Development in the Post-Recession Era. Urban Institute, July 2013.

STRATEGY G

Connect the region's key destinations, workforce, and jobs more effectively.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Like many North Carolina metropolitan areas, the Cape Fear region has gone through some growing pains. Counties that in the recent past did not view themselves as being part of the same region are now tightly connected economically. The region's transportation system provides the means for people to connect with jobs, education, healthcare, each other and other opportunities critical to ensuring a high quality of life. As the region has grown and spread-out, people and jobs are more dispersed, creating greater reliance on auto ownership and the need to travel greater distances for key opportunities. As the region grows, it will continue

to be important to enhance the multimodal transportation connections between people, jobs and educational opportunities. It is also important to connect this region to other parts of the state through all modes. Specifically, the region needs stronger connections between counties and to other major metropolitan regions in the state.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Our region has invested hundreds of millions of dollars into its transportation system over the last couple of decades. The NCDOT, WMPO and local governments continue planning for improvements that will connect the region. The table below highlights some of the steps they have already taken.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|------------------|---|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WMPO is preparing Cape Fear Transportation 2040, the region's next long-range transportation plan which supports major transportation investments for economic development. Wave Transit has extended services into surrounding counties, recently establishing service to Carolina Beach. Wave Transit has a program for installation of new bus shelters across the region. First park and ride lots in Leland to alleviate problems associated with causeway expansion. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pender and New Hanover Counties are supporting land use planning and coordination with WMPO and NCDOT on the Hampstead Bypass, a major new cross county roadway anticipated for construction in next 10 years. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilmington's Comprehensive Plan supports investing in transportation improvements that will nurture industries that are key to the economy. Wilmington's Comprehensive Plan supports extending bus service to the airport. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Carolina DOT conducted a feasibility study of extending passenger rail service from Raleigh to Wilmington via Goldsboro and Fayetteville. |

WHAT IS MISSING?

WMPO regularly updates the region's transportation plan and engages all of the local governments within its jurisdiction. The most glaring gaps are not in planning, but in actual infrastructure and services. The following gaps are among the most important to address:

- ▶ Provide more transportation options, capacity and services connecting the fast growing Brunswick and Pender counties to New Hanover County and downtown Wilmington.
- ▶ Work towards building of consensus and way forward on 2nd railway connection to Port of Wilmington from the Piedmont region.
- ▶ Prioritize the exploration and feasibility study of a 4th River Crossing of the Cape Fear River.
- ▶ Identify priority transportation projects that align with specific economic development initiatives (e.g. 421 Corridor).
- ▶ Improve rail and intermodal access to the region's port.
- ▶ Study feasibility and build consensus with private sector transportation stakeholders to create a complementary bus service between the airport and major attraction in the region as area increases in both population and jobs.
- ▶ Provide better transportation connections to other metropolitan areas, including a limited access highway connection to the Charlotte region, a passenger rail connection to the Triangle region, and more options for air travel.

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy G.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|---|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with MPO/RPO to establish a blue ribbon regional economic and transportation task force to convene and discuss the identification of regional priorities for transportation in support of major economic development initiatives. • Create a new WMPO project evaluation criteria that rewards projects that improve access for these industries. • Conduct a feasibility study for peak season express bus service between the airport and key regional tourist destinations. |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a tri-county task force to study the creation of a regional transit system plan that looks at long-term opportunities for expansion of Wave Transit and other public transportation systems to serve growth centers of jobs and population outside the current base of operations in New Hanover County and Wilmington. • Establish a tri-county task force to advance feasibility study for additional River Crossing. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage private sector transportation providers in discussions for the provision of new shuttle or bus services to ensure balanced approach in expanding transportation options regionally. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore feasibility of establishing passenger rail service to Raleigh and connections to the Amtrak corridor. |

STRATEGY H

Address public health issues by providing people with better access to healthcare, active living environments, and healthy food outlets.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Our efforts to attract new businesses and improve quality of life will mean little if the health of our citizens continues to decline. Like many locations across the United States, we

have experienced rates of rising obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Reversing these trends must be a top priority and in many locations across the country, local governments are taking on this issue by looking at how the built environment affects public health. At the most basic level, this means creating opportunities for people to walk, bike and live a more physically active lifestyle, as well as ensure that people have access to healthy foods and healthcare within a convenient distance from home. Additionally, this also means ensuring that our elderly populations can age in place and stay healthy and active in the community.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Our region's local governments and agencies have started taking steps to understand our public health problems and their causes. The table below highlights some of the steps that agencies and local government have already made.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|------------------|---|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FOCUS Consortium conducted a Health and Wellness Gap Analysis that identified 8 major goal areas to address health and wellness gaps in the region. The top four indicators that put community members at risk include: Socioeconomic Status (Income, Education, Employment); Proximity to Full Service Grocery; Proximity to Healthcare Provider; Access to Active Transportation. The CFCOG is the region's Area Agency on Aging and currently administers funding of community-based services enables older adults to live independently in their own homes as long as possible which includes helping to provide access to food and healthcare. WMPO supports ongoing funding for safe routes to schools programs. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pender County's Comprehensive Plan and UDO encourage development that supports walking and biking. Pender County recently completed an Active Living and Healthy Eating Assessment. Pender County's UDO supports strategies for promoting access to healthy foods through farmers markets and other initiatives. New Hanover County's Comprehensive Plan effort includes specific goals to support more active transportation. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Wilmington's Comprehensive Plan has specific goals and strategies to support Aging in Place initiatives. Town of Burgaw's Bicycle and Pedestrian plan currently in development that is looking at walkable environment gaps; West Side Parks Plan anticipated to be developed in next year that would address one gap area. Pender County and New Hanover County are coordinating to connect multi-use trails across county lines in Scott's Hill area. Town of Burgaw's Land Use Plan supports implementation of bicycles and pedestrian facilities to encourage active transportation. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilmington Health is a premier facility in the state. Feast Down East strengthens the local food system through its Farm-to-Chef Program, the SENC Foods Processing and Distribution Program, Farm to School Program, and Buy Local campaign. New Hanover Regional Medical Center (NHRMC), Wilmington Health (WH), and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) launched the Accountable Care Alliance to enhance care and provide greater value for healthcare consumers in Southeastern North Carolina. The region is already home to several local farmer's markets or other direct farm to consumer operations. El Puente is a new farmers market for Burgaw planned for spring-fall 2015. Pender Christian Services helped establish community garden at local public housing development in Burgaw. Wilmington Green working to establish community gardens in multiple sites in New Hanover County. |

WHAT IS MISSING?

There is room for our region's local governments to get more involved in promoting physical activity and access to healthy foods. Some of the gaps that they can address with support from non-profit organizations and institutions, include the following:

- ▶ Improve access to healthy foods and healthcare in several low-income neighborhoods.
- ▶ Increase transit access to major healthcare centers.
- ▶ Implement educational programs to expand the knowledge base about healthy eating and food preparation techniques.
- ▶ Conduct an inventory of gaps in the region's bicycle and pedestrian network.
- ▶ Implement land use policies and codes that require pedestrian and bicycle facilities in new development where demand is warranted.
- ▶ Increase bike and pedestrian access to parks, open spaces and other natural areas for recreation.
- ▶ Encourage more regional coordination of para-transit services to leverage resources and reduce individual jurisdictional burdens for providing transportation services to rural and elderly populations.

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy H.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map the gaps in the region's pedestrian and bicycle network relative to key origins and destinations as well as high areas of bicycle and pedestrian demand. • Examine multimodal accessibility (access to daily needs by all modes) and target pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements to those areas with the poorest accessibility and greatest need. |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate local policies and codes to ensure that neighborhood based grocery stores or other healthy food retail operations are allowed and encouraged. • Implement Complete Community policies to support community design that makes walking and biking viable transportation options. • Target context appropriate investments for sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian lighting and shade, bike lanes or sharrows, cycle tracks or off road trails in areas with low auto ownership and high pedestrian demand. • Work with private retailers to seek healthier offerings in local 'corner stores' and/or target new grocery stores in underserved locations. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local retailers and farmers can partner with local governments to identify areas across the region where there is unmet demand for fresh local foods. • Engage private employers in supporting active living and other public health programs. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with WAVE Transit to evaluate regional transit routes relative to providing service to healthcare facilities and grocery locations. • Leveraging the strong physical fitness oriented organizations and businesses centered around marathons and tri-athletes to better connect with community education and opportunities for active living. • Work with local USDA and Extension service to identify opportunities for urban gardens, community gardens and other local food opportunities. |

STRATEGY I

Improve opportunities for moving up the economic ladder and closing the wage gaps.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The region has severe gaps in educational attainment and income between people of different races. These gaps are holding the regional economy back. They harm everyone, not just the people left behind. The Equitable Growth Profile of the Cape Fear Region completed in early 2015 as part of the FOCUS effort estimated that the region's economy would grow by \$1.3 billion (or about 9 percent) by closing the racial gap in income through higher paying jobs and wages. Many of the challenges

in this strategy area mirror those required to strengthen the region's labor force as a whole (Strategies 5 and 6), however this particular strategy would aim those same initiatives more directly at those populations who currently lag behind.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

Our region's local governments and non-profit organizations are taking steps to improve quality of life and access to job and educational opportunities for all people. The table below highlights some of the steps that agencies and local government have already taken.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|-----------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOCUS Consortium commission the Equity analysis study that identified key areas of wage gaps, income disparity, etc. by different populations. • Wave Transit and North Carolina DOT support Share the Ride NC, a ride matching system to help match up transportation needs. • Wave Transit's Short Range Transportation Plan recommended changes to the system to make routes more direct and shorten travel time specifically serving lower income neighborhoods and populations. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Hanover County's economic development plan, "Pathways to Prosperity" lays out business recruitment strategies that can be built upon to create job training and apprenticeship programs. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilmington Comprehensive Plan supports locating affordable housing in close proximity to job centers. • Partner with faith based organizations and non-profits in distressed, lower income neighborhoods to help educate and connect residents with alternative education and training programs. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with local non-profits, CDC's and other workforce development organizations to better understand workforce strengths and weaknesses in an effort to better align job opportunities with available work ready employees. • The Cape Fear Future effort under the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce include commitments to advancing job opportunities for all. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Way of the Cape Fear Area has a Hometown Hires program that matches disadvantaged people with local employers who want to help break the cycle of generational poverty. • Engaging faith based organizations in neighborhoods to help provide transportation access, connect residents with local workforce development programs and other opportunities. |

WHAT IS MISSING?

- ▶ Provide more targeted public investment in underinvested neighborhoods, public facilities, crime prevention and underperforming schools.
- ▶ Provide more targeted investments in transportation systems that do not require car ownership to connect people with jobs and educational opportunities (e.g. carpool and vanpool matching services, more public transit and walkable places).
- ▶ Create a greater balance of workforce housing with jobs, especially affordable housing located near job centers.
- ▶ Implement programs to create greater social interaction between older and younger residents to build social capital and support mentorship.
- ▶ Conduct more outreach to ensure greater involvement in local and regional planning by people representing all racial and ethnic communities in the region.
- ▶ Work on recruiting more people representing all racial and ethnic communities in positions of leadership.
- ▶ Provide more programs that provide more job opportunities and mentoring for people previously convicted of a felony

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy I.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|---|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish regional performance measures and target for housing affordability, jobs/housing balance, educational attainment by race and ethnicity, and transportation mode share and update them annually. |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify priority areas for workforce and affordable housing near job centers in comprehensive plans. Invest in neighborhood wi-fi and other internet access spots to ensure access to internet and opportunities. Co-locate senior centers and activities at schools and encourage interaction between students and seniors through mentoring programs. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More active role in local community efforts to hire locally, and hire from segments of the population currently underemployed. Bring together regional employers to provide summer job shadowing opportunities and work study options for high school students. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish regional blue ribbon panel to advance the discussion of regional inequity issues to better coordinate resources and identify solutions as cited in the Equitable Growth Profile of the Cape Fear Region report. Support broadening of programs such as Boys and Girls Clubs to promote social skills in at risk youth. Expand the Hometown Hires program regionally. Launch a program to connect institutions – such as UNCW, hospitals, and school districts – with local suppliers of goods and services, especially those owned by minority groups. Continue targeting economic development strategies that increase local wages and provide higher paying jobs. |

MAKING COMPLETE COMMUNITIES HAPPEN

CONNECT VOICES

STRATEGY J

Leverage regional resources to identify needs, foster discussion, and respond to regional growth challenges and opportunities.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The individual communities across the Lower Cape Fear area are growing into a single region with strong economic

and social ties. The region's local governments, institutions, and non-profit organizations must act to strengthen regional collaboration and find ways to more formally work together to strategically address the issues and opportunities laid out in the *Regional Framework for Our Future* document. The region will also benefit from efforts to connect the diverse voices from around our region to continuously identify key issues and implement strategies moving forward.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

The FOCUS planning effort reflects a significant accomplishment for the region relative to bringing together existing and new regional stakeholders to discuss the growth challenges and opportunities we collectively face. Additionally, many local governments and regional organizations have been working in concert with one another for many years. The table below highlights some of the regional efforts and initiatives already in place.

WHAT WE ARE DOING RIGHT

| Organization | Action |
|------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CFCOG currently provides regional planning support with a particular emphasis on workforce development and needs of the aging. • The FOCUS Consortium efforts provided technical assistance at the local level on implementing Complete Community concepts through the four Catalyst Projects. • The FOCUS Consortium efforts will result in the publication of several key studies, new GIS-databases maintained by CFCOG and best practices in Complete Community implementation strategies. • CFCOG and WMPO staff coordinate their planning efforts and provide cross agency representation at regular meetings. • The FOCUS Consortium members have agreed to continue meeting regularly to prioritize actions and monitor progress on the recommendations of the <i>Regional Framework for Our Future</i>. |
| County | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Hanover County's economic development plan, "Pathways to Prosperity" calls for greater collaboration among the counties in regional economic development planning and marketing which in turn provides a blueprint for continued efforts in regional economic development. • Pender County's recently awarded Hazard Mitigation Grant for the tri-county region will help to advance implementation of Complete Community concepts that support hazard mitigation goals. • Consortium county members have agreed to continue supporting the FOCUS efforts at the regional level. |
| Municipal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consortium municipal members have agreed to continue supporting the FOCUS efforts at the regional level. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FOCUS Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) members have expressed interest in continuing to stay engaged in ongoing regional initiatives. The RAC reflects broad representation from public, private and non-profit organizations as well as individual community members. |

WHAT IS MISSING?

The earlier pages of this chapter outline some of specific steps that need to be taken at a regional level in response to the **call to action**. Additionally, the following efforts should be undertaken to establish a longer term regional framework for success.

- ▶ Build on the *Alternative Futures* effort to establish a conceptual vision map that identifies a regional blueprint to guide growth and development in the future.
- ▶ Establish a new regional economic development entity or expand the mission of an existing one to coordinate efforts of existing organizations, build on the “Pathways to Prosperity” report and other initiatives.
- ▶ Leverage the ongoing efforts of the FOCUS stakeholders to provide additional planning support to local governments seeking to implement Complete Community concepts.
- ▶ Establish a regular forum where the region’s mayors, private sector leaders and non-profit executives can meet and discuss ideas concerning growth and development issues for the region.

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The following identifies some specific actions to be taken by different regional partners to address next steps under Strategy J.

| Organization | Action |
|--------------------------|--|
| Regional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand capacity of the CFCOG to continue supporting efforts of the FOCUS Consortium. • Expand the Consortium membership and establish a more formalized stakeholder steering committee (which could be a continuation/expansion of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC)) with additional representation from the community, the non-profit and private sectors. • CFCOG to take the lead in concert with the Consortium to hold an annual summit on the <i>Regional Framework for Our Future</i>. • Consortium to develop an Annual Action Plan which includes project priorities and initiatives. • The Consortium and the CFCOG to annually review, monitor and document progress on actions contained herein • The Consortium to continue to identify key funding or resource gaps and work with other partners and supporters to help advance additional planning, communication or implementation |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local jurisdictions should provide formal endorsement of the <i>Regional Framework for Our Future</i> recommendations. • Through the Consortium or through more formal or informal means, local governments should better coordinate on cross-jurisdictional issues related to growth and development. |
| Private Sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local private sector developers and community leaders can establish a business roundtable to regularly meet and discuss specific initiatives the private sector and undertake in support of implementation efforts under the <i>Regional Framework for Our Future</i>. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new non-profit entity (focussenc.org) can continue efforts in support the Consortium in communicating and seeking additional resources to support ongoing planning, coordination and implementation efforts. |

WWW.FOCUSSENC.ORG

CONSORTIUM CHAIR | chair@focussenc.org
INFORMATION | info@focussenc.org

