OVERVIEW

Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan

CITY OF WILMINGTON
NORTH CAROLINA

INTRODUCTION

Wilmington is a unique place with a bright future. As the center of the Cape Fear region, the city faces important issues related to urban growth. The ***Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan*** process was initiated in May of 2013 to address the city's challenges and opportunities head on.

The ***Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan***...

- was developed based on two years of public input, data analysis, meetings with stakeholders and subject matter experts, and observation of best practices for urban development.
- sets the general direction for future growth and redevelopment across the city for the next 25 years.
- serves as a guide for decision makers regarding land use, real estate development, capital investments, and placemaking.
- helps identify and recommend physical improvements such as streets, bicycle paths, parks, sidewalks, and other public facilities.
- provides the foundation for the modernization of the city's land development regulations.

Plan Elements

1 *The Growth Factors Report*

This document is a snapshot of what Wilmington looks like today and tells the story of how the city has evolved over time. It provides the context, or "starting point," from which the community has moved forward to create a shared vision for the future.

2 *The Foundations Report*

The Foundations Report serves as a guide to the community input received from residents, students, professionals, and organizations throughout the listening phase of the plan. This helps form the basis of the Policies and Growth Strategies Maps.

3 *The Policies*

Policies are the core document of the plan. They are preferred practices and priorities surrounding physical development, quality of life, and livability of the city. The intent of these policies is to guide and complement the work of all city departments and actions of the City Council and the city's development partners.

4 *The Growth Strategies Maps*

The series of maps depicts preferred growth patterns and displays how future development could affect the city in unique ways. Five individual maps describe different features and combine to form a single composite growth map. These are intended to provide a framework for future growth rather than a parcel-specific "future land use" map.

5 *The Growth Strategies Report*

This report looks forward and works with the Growth Strategies Maps to describe how future development could affect the city in unique ways. A series of bold visions are presented throughout the report that emerged from the community input process and are worthy of consideration for future growth.

This plan is based on the desire for a more compact and walkable development pattern with residential, retail, services, and jobs located more closely to one another.

– Policies, p. 12

Key Points

Wilmington's population is expected to continue to grow over the next 25 years. Wilmington can be a safe, healthy place to live with a high quality of life by focusing on infill and redevelopment, job growth, and housing options. Wilmington's opportunities for growing outward are severely limited. Over the next 25 years, Wilmington should focus on growing inward and upward, integrating land uses to reduce traffic congestion and improve housing, working, and shopping options. A more densely developed, walkable city can be achieved while maintaining the integrity and desired character of the city's neighborhoods.

INTEGRATED LAND USES

SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS

INFILL AND REDEVELOPMENT

REDUCED TRAFFIC CONGESTION

DESIRED CHARACTER

HEALTHY PEOPLE

HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

AGE IN PLACE

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WELL-DESIGNED PLACES

CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

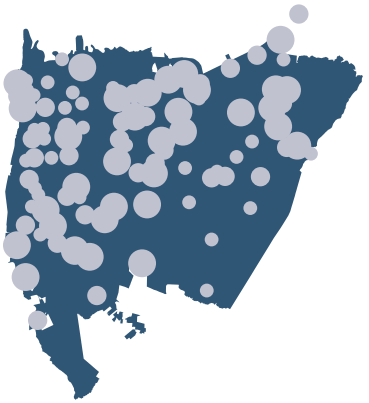
APPROPRIATE DENSITY

Wilmington must grow inward and upward, not outward and far apart.

This plan focuses on urban development in key growth areas and on creating vibrant places. Infill, redevelopment and revitalization are critical to Wilmington's future.

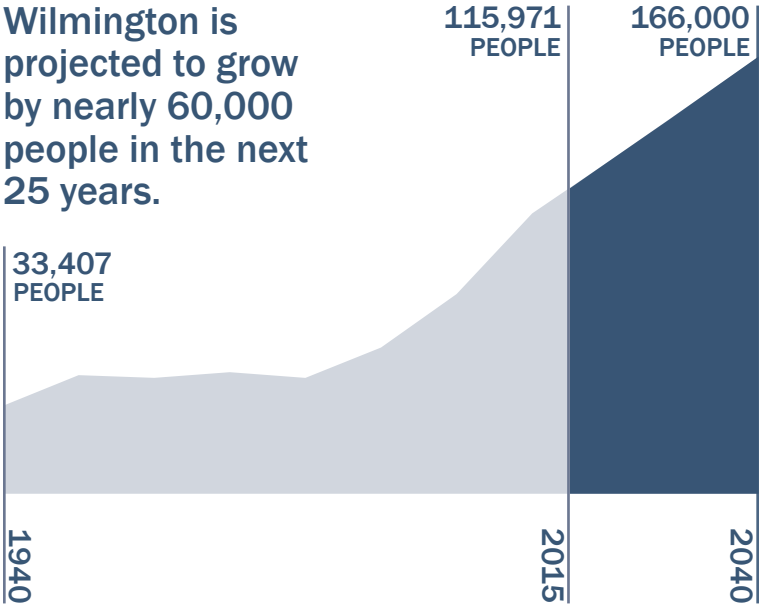
"Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is one of our highest priorities."

-Citizens of Wilmington



The plan uses a *framework* map, not a *parcel-specific* land use map. Mixed-use centers are a key element.
(Growth Strategies Maps and Report)

Wilmington is projected to grow by nearly 60,000 people in the next 25 years.

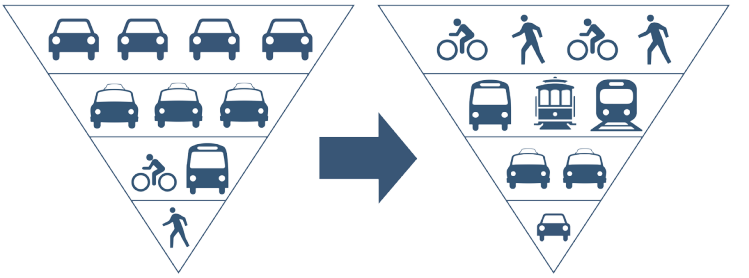


(Growth Factors Report, Chapter 1)

This document does not stand alone. Collaboration with regional public and private partners is absolutely necessary.

PERSEVERE

The city's motto remains relevant in dealing with critical planning issues.



Move toward a more balanced transportation system (Polices, Chapter 2)

Plan Themes

Throughout the ***Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan*** process, seven key themes were identified, based on public input. These themes are important ideas for shaping Wilmington's future. They are noted throughout each document in the plan.

Creating a Place for Everyone

Wilmingtonians want a diverse and inclusive community, full of family-friendly, vibrant, and creative environments. Citizens want a welcoming community that includes arts and culture, activities for youth, families, and seniors, and high-quality housing that is available to everyone.

Getting Around

Diverse modes of transportation are needed for an inclusive, connected community. Regional partnerships can link greenways and other amenities. Options for pedestrian and bicycle transportation, along with other modes of transportation, should be explored as valid alternatives to automobile transportation, as well as other options for local and regional mass transit.

Changing Places, Revitalized Spaces

Development of vast open land is no longer an option in Wilmington. Envisioning suitable infill and redevelopment and optimizing existing development will be critical to our community's well-being, not only downtown, but within neighborhoods across the city. Balancing the need for open space and a well-designed built environment will be key to future development.

"If you don't know where you are going, you will end up someplace else."

— Yogi Berra

Regional Collaboration

Wilmington does not and cannot exist in a bubble. Collaboration with other local governments, including New Hanover County and surrounding towns and counties, is critical to Wilmington's and the region's success. Cooperative relationships with the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and Cape Fear Community College, as well as the public school system, state ports, and utility providers will help us all flourish.

Unique Places, Captivating Spaces

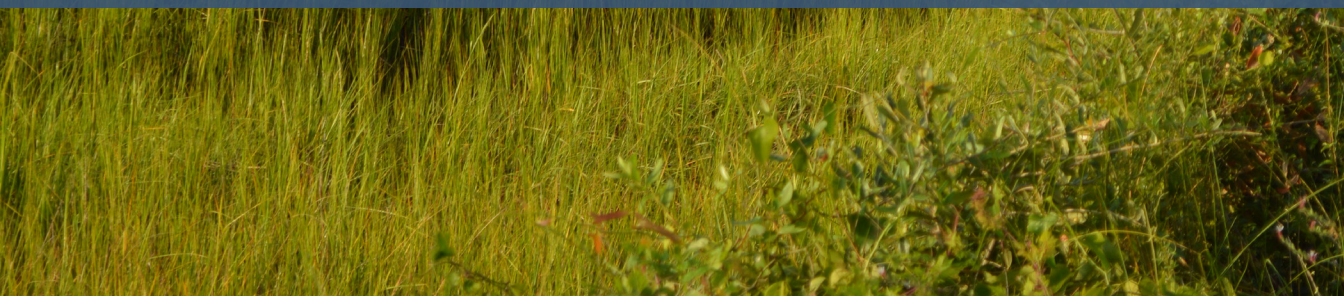
The built environment encompasses places and spaces created or modified by people, including buildings, parks, land use patterns, and transportation systems. Since the built environment has profound consequences for individual and community well-being, all elements of our built environment should enhance the character of our community, being functional and aesthetically appropriate, enriching the lives of visitors and residents alike.

"We have so many things going in our favor — a great university and community college, great beaches, great quality of life, diverse economy, great medical facilities — so the city is going to continue to grow."

— Mayor Bill Saffo

Nurturing our Community

Environmental sustainability is at the core of our vision for the future. Our natural resources are a major factor in attracting residents and visitors to the area; balancing retention of their accessibility and protection of these resources will be a challenge. How we manage our interaction with the natural habitat, from parks, water, and open spaces, to locally-grown agriculture, to protecting water quality to solid waste disposal will be critical to Wilmington's future success.



Opportunity and Prosperity

Fostering opportunities for economic growth and development that enhance the concepts of each of the other themes is critical to our future prosperity. Creating jobs, building a strong workforce, facilitating commerce, and promoting business vitality are necessary to the success of a healthy, well-balanced community.

Image Source: North Carolina State Ports Authority

How to use the Plan

1 As Used by City Staff

City staff should consult the plan when reviewing development proposals and making recommendations for facilities, services, and capital improvements. Department heads must be familiar with this content, especially when preparing work plans, budgets, and capital improvements.

2 As Used by the General Public

Wilmington residents can and should reference the Policies, Growth Strategies Report, and Growth Strategies Maps when addressing a particular proposal or other matter before the City Council or other appointed boards or commissions.

3 As Used by Appointed Boards and Committees

Since the plan touches on elements that effect all aspects of life in the city, members of appointed boards and committees should be familiar with the plan to best carry out their work and mission. Some boards, such as the Planning Commission, will more regularly consult the plan documents for guidance in decision making.

4 As Used by Other Agencies and Partners

The City of Wilmington and nearby local governments must work together. These and other groups should consult this plan when considering plans and projects under their authority. Wilmington will call the plan to the attention of state officials, particularly with regard to transportation, environmental, and economic development initiatives.

5 As Used by Development Interests

Developers, property owners, builders, and others involved in building our city should consult the plan when formulating plans. Since the city is nearly built out, it is necessary to create site plans that consider the larger context, rather than focusing solely on individual sites.

Bold Visions for the Future

The ***Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan*** targets commercial corridors, key gateway areas, existing urban areas and main streets for infill development and redevelopment. These already-developed areas could be converted to safe, walkable, mixed-use places without affecting the character of Wilmington's lower-density, single-family neighborhoods. Several bold visions and diagrams are presented throughout the plan.

The photos below show a before and after example of a bold vision for Carolina Beach Road.

Before

After

Existing

Redevelopment vision for various sites at Dawson, Wooster, and South 3rd streets, serving as a gateway into Wilmington

"Our city deserves our attention, respect, and guidance in managing appropriate growth and development for the next generation. This plan informs the 'team'—all of us—as to the desires and aspirations of our community in a clearly stated vision."

— David Spetrino, Local Developer

ACCESS THE PLAN ONLINE
www.wilmingtonnc.gov

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www.allwaysgraphics.com

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www.wilmingtonnc.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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CITY OF WILMINGTON
NORTH CAROLINA

City Council

Mayor Bill Saffo

Mayor Pro-Tem Margaret Haynes

Neil Anderson

Paul Lawler

Kevin O'Grady

Laura Padgett (former member)

Charlie Rivenbark

Earl Sheridan

ADOPTED 3/1/2016

City Motto

"Persevere" is Wilmington's motto, established and written onto the official seal in 1866.