CREATE WILMINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

# Foundations Report

Executive Summary

Growth Strategies Maps

Policies

**Foundations Report**

Growth Factors Report

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1/30/15

## Welcome to the future of Wilmington.

# How to Use the Comprehensive Plan Box Set

## Five Components of the Box Set

**1**

**Growth Factors Report**
Maps, graphs, and charts that support the policies and growth strategies. Provided are maps of existing conditions and various factors related to Wilmington's growth.

Electronic readers click here to view or download this document.

**2**

**Foundations Report**
A summary of public input collected throughout the process and results from each tool, including the Neighborhood Planning Areas, Connect Wilmington, and Alternative Future Visions.

Electronic readers click here to view or download this document.

**3**

**Development Policies**
Comprehensive policies address the themes/issues; policies are based on public input, best practices, the growth factors report, interlocal agency coordination and scenario planning results.

Electronic readers click here to view or download this document.

**4**

**Growth Strategies Maps**
These maps illustrate desired areas for future growth, infill, and redevelopment based on public input and planning analysis. They are designed to work in conjunction with the development policies.

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**5**

**Executive Summary**
An "at a glance" reference for the entire box set.

Electronic readers click here to view or download this document.

## Find Your Way Around

**Box Set Cross-Reference:**
*Name of Reference Provided*

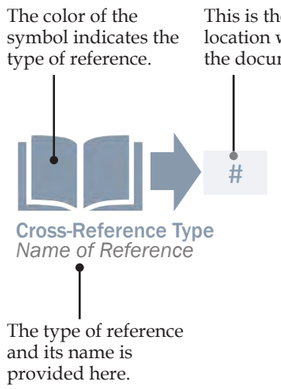
This symbol is used to point you to a different box set component.

**Document Cross-Reference:**
*Name of Reference Provided*

This symbol is used to point you to a different part of the document you are currently reading.

**External Resource:**
*Name of Resource Provided*

This symbol is used to point you to an external resource, such as a plan, report, or study not contained in the box set.

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# Wilmington Comprehensive Plan Themes

The ***Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan*** is developed around seven key themes for shaping Wilmington's future:

### 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.

**Topics Covered:**

- Affordable housing
- Arts & cultural resources
- Youth activities
- Seniors
- Family amenities
- Accessibility
- Parks and recreation
- Crime and safety
- Cultural diversity
- Job creation
- Education

### 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 amenities, along with other modes of transportation, should be explored as valid alternatives to automobile transit, as well as other options for local and regional mass-transit.

**Topics Covered:**

- Interconnectivity
- Sidewalks
- Greenways
- Alternative transportation modes
- Mass-transit
- Traffic
- Regional cooperation
- Driver behavior
- Connecting land use and transportation

### Regional Collaboration

Wilmington does not and cannot exist in a bubble. Collaboration with other local governments, including New Hanover and surrounding towns and counties, is critical to Wilmington's and the region's success. Cooperative relationships with UNCW and CFCC, as well as the public school system, state ports, and our utility providers will help us all flourish.

**Topics Covered:**

- Leadership/excellence in government
- Town and Gown relationships
- Balancing needs and resources
- Common goals and collaborative policies

### Changing Places, Revitalized Spaces

Development of vast open land is no longer an option in Wilmington; our future will include a significant level of infill and redevelopment. 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 a key to future development.

**Topics Covered:**

- Infill
- Redevelopment
- Densification
- Neighborhoods
- Historic Preservation
- Sustainability
- Placemaking

### 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 not only functional, but aesthetically appropriate, enriching the lives of visitors and residents alike.

**Topics Covered:**

- Aesthetics
- Site design
- Architecture and building design
- Code and tech standards
- Greenspace
- Infill
- Redevelopment
- Connecting land use and transportation
- Placemaking

### Nurturing our Community

Environmental sustainability is at the core of where we want to go in 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 our future success.

**Topics Covered:**

- Natural resources
- Tourism
- Balancing built and natural environments
- Greenspace/open space
- Parks and recreation
- Access to local food
- Water quality
- Climate change

### 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.

**Topics Covered:**

- Economic development
- Jobs
- Technology
- Health care
- Placemaking
- Code and technical standards
- Leadership and excellence in government
- Regional cooperation
- Common goals
- Leveraging resources
- Public-private collaboration



DRAFT 1/30/15

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CREATE WILMINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

# Foundations Report

This report is produced as a part of the overall comprehensive plan development process and is meant to highlight factors that formed the foundation of the policies and maps spelled out in the plan. A major component of this process is the input of the Wilmington community, but several other factors also helped shape the plan's policy components, including best practices, growth factors and trends, and projected demographic changes. This chapter serves as a guide to the community input received from residents, students, professionals, and organizations throughout the listening phase of the comprehensive plan. In addition to providing a map through the public input process, this document is also intended to help enhance and continue the discussion of planning issues in Wilmington by sharing the viewpoints collected.

This report is composed of three parts: a summary of the community input collected, an outline of the city's legacy planning documents, and a detailed analysis of the 12 Neighborhood Planning Areas. The raw data from the various input collection tools is available on the city's website wilmingtonnc.gov.

## Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

The steering committee was supported by staff from the City of Wilmington Planning, Development, and Transportation department, with assistance from every department within the city.

The Wilmington City Council appointed a 15-member citizen steering committee to assist in the public input process, provide guidance and leadership, and to represent the voice of the citizens in the overall process.

The members of the steering committee are:

- Robert Rosenberg, Chair
- Howard Capps, Vice-chair
- Carlos Braxton
- Kemp Burdette
- Deb Hays
- Elizabeth Hines
- J. Clark Hipp
- Paul Lawler
- Bonnie Nelson
- Linda Pearce
- Tom Pollard
- Randy Reeves
- Jennifer Rigby
- Frank Smith
- Kevin Smith

## Table of Contents


**1 What We Heard**

1.1 What We Heard by Planning Themes
1.2 Neighborhood Area Engagement
1.3 Business & Community Leaders Roundtables
1.4 Planning on Tap
1.5 Student & Youth Outreach
1.6 Issues Surveys
1.7 Man on the Street
1.8 Meeting in a Box
1.9 Connect Wilmington & Social Media
1.10 Other Small Group Meetings & Engagement Tools

**2 Alternative Future Visions**

2.1 Current Trends
2.2 Creating Live-Work Places
2.3 Transit-oriented Development
2.4 Urban Centers & Neighborhood Nodes
2.5 Community Corridors
2.6 Neighborhood Transitions

**3 Policy Audit & Legacy Planning Documents**

3.1 Regional Plans
3.2 Small-area & Corridor Plans
3.3 Future Land Use Plan
3.4 Function-related Plans
3.5 Master Plans


DRAFT 1/30/15



## Building on Foundations (About This Report)

Wilmington is a historic and dynamic coastal city. Wilmington has many treasured neighborhoods, an extensive historic district, a vibrant downtown, thriving commercial centers, a growing population. Wilmington is also nearly built out, so there are special challenges when it comes to accommodating new growth, redevelopment, and infill.

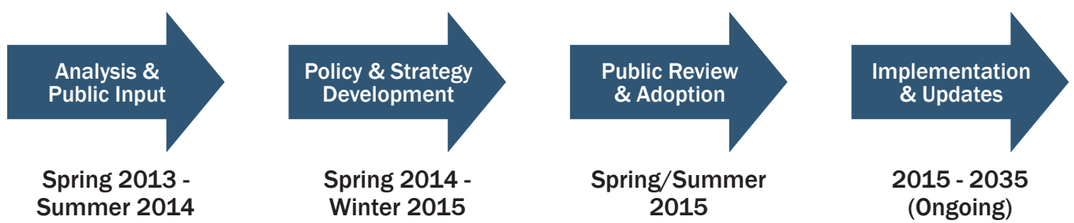
The community has shaped the vision for the future of Wilmington: residents aspire to be a safe community that in inclusive and affordable, maintains its unique character, fosters a healthy economy and healthy citizens, and remains an attractive place to live, work, and play.

Rapid growth, coupled with outdated growth policies and development regulations present both challenges and opportunities. In 2013, the city began the process of establishing a vision of what kind of city residents want to have 20 to 25 years from now. This multi-year process was to lead to not only the creation and adoption of a city-wide comprehensive plan, but also a total reconsideration of the city's growth management system. Foremost among these following activities will be the replacement of the city's antiquated land development code.

The ***Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan*** lays out a path toward achieving the vision of a thriving, healthy city that responds to the pressures and demands that come with being a modern, dynamic city.
The ***Create Wilmington*** process kicked off with a city-wide meeting, as the plan is rooted in listening and understanding issues that impact citizens' everyday lives. This meeting set the tone for future conversations, where participants worked to identify what is working well, where there is room for improvement, and what their big dreams for Wilmington are. This process was grounded in the idea of meeting people where they are – not only in terms of how they like to participate, be it in person, online, or traditional public meetings – but also in terms of understanding what people value about their community. The process was also a two-way street, in that meetings were also intended to show citizens how comprehensive planning can benefit them, their neighborhoods, and future generations of Wilmingtonians.

***Create Wilmington*** is a multi-year process that includes the development of the comprehensive plan followed by the re-envisioning of the city's land development code. This report, therefore, is not the end of the public input process. Rather, it is a report on the input collected to date, that which has helped shape the comprehensive plan's policies and growth strategies, a transparent look at the guiding voice of the community. More conversations will follow, and citizens will again be called on to participate in the conversation, both through the land development code rewrite and the supplemental neighborhood and small area plans that will follow.

## Planning Process

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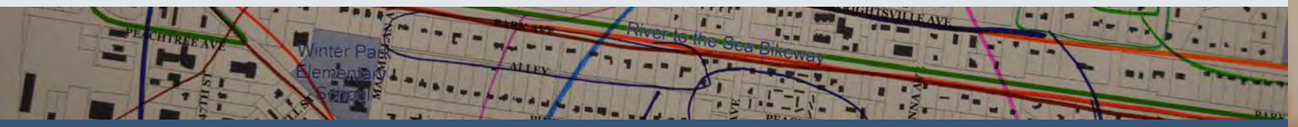



# 1 What We Heard

**1.1** What We Heard by Planning Themes
**1.2** Neighborhood Area Engagement
**1.3** Business & Community Leaders Roundtables
**1.4** Planning on Tap
**1.5** Student & Youth Outreach
**1.6** Issues Surveys
1.7 Man on the Street
1.8 Meeting in a Box
1.9 Connect Wilmington & Social Media
1.10 Other Small Group Meetings & Engagement Tools

# Introduction

The Create Wilmington process began in earnest with a city-wide meeting at City Hall on May 14, 2013. This meeting kicked off a year-long public input process. Throughout the public input process, various input tools were utilized to determine what citizens like best about Wilmington and what their desired future for Wilmington might be.

To broaden the discussion, the public input process included several meeting series. The first series was with Wilmington's business leaders; the second was with Wilmington's neighborhoods. A number of "man on the street" surveys were conducted across the city, a "meeting in a box" tool was developed for existing groups and organizations, "Planning on Tap" meetings were held in local gathering places, and online surveys were available throughout the process. Input was also collected from school children at representative public school sites, on-campus meetings at UNCW and CFCC, as well as an on-site meeting in the Hillcrest community. The Create Wilmington team also expanded public input through Connect Wilmington, an online survey and forum tool. In addition to the public input collection process, there were several other outreach and engagement opportunities, including social media, a Lunch and Learn series, an educational poster series, and a speaker series.

Other channels for communication were established through social media, including the sharing of case studies, articles, and research. In addition to traditional media outlets, the team also used social media, and email listserv, signs in neighborhoods, and the city's newsletter to encourage engagement.
The Create Wilmington team compiled thousands of individual comments from more than 1,000 citizens. In this report, you will find details about the listening process. All of the comments received were sorted and analyzed using a keyword approach. This method helped to reveal patterns, which then led to major issues and themes. The key themes follow this introduction. The key themes in turn, helped create the six "Alternative Future Visions" that were presented for feedback and which will help shape the Growth Strategies Maps.

## Outreach Groups

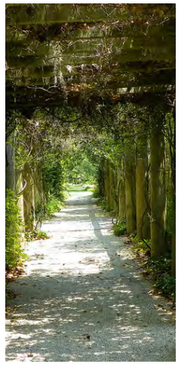
- Business Leaders
- College Students
- Neighborhoods
- Small Groups
- Middle School Students
- Online Surveys
- High School Students
- Citywide Events

# Public Input

## 1.1 What We Heard by Planning Themes

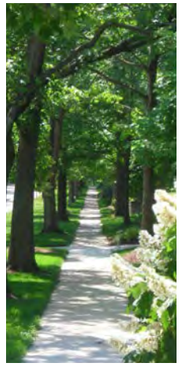
### Creating a Place for Everyone

- Additional parks and parks programming
- Additional public water access
- Keep green spaces and add additional
- Make/keep downtown a destination for locals and tourists
- Additional family activities downtown
- Riverwalk is a great asset
- Reduced crime, increased safety
- Increase transportation options for all people, regardless of age or ability



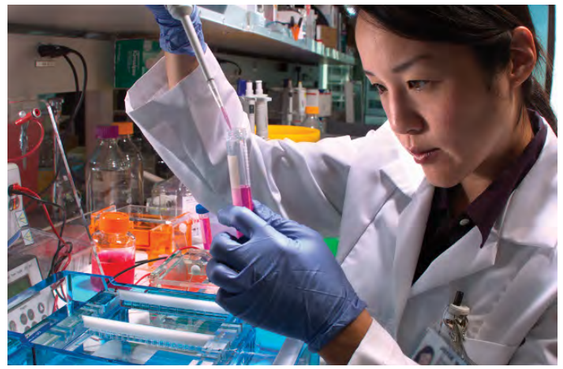
## Getting Around

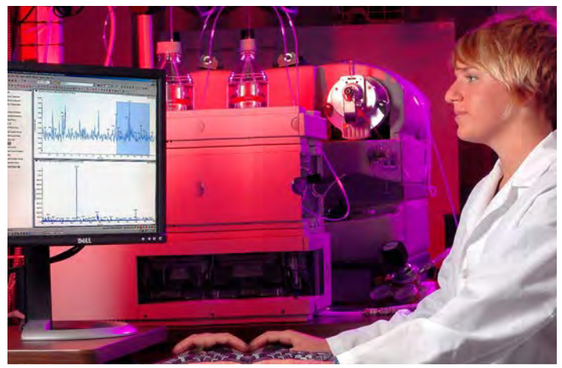
- More sidewalks and bike lanes
- Safe and equitable mobility for all ages and abilities
- Decreased traffic congestion
- Specific intersection improvements
- Roundabouts at major intersections
- Improvements to public transit
- Restore streetcar line from downtown to Wrightsville Beach
- Passenger rail service
- Better connections between land use and transportation
- Market Street road diet



## Opportunity and Prosperity

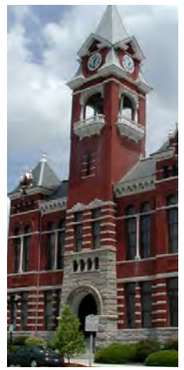
- Bring additional jobs to Wilmington
- Attract higher-paying jobs
- Clean jobs/industries are preferred
- Retain young people, more jobs for recent college graduates
- No Titan Cement
- Tech jobs are desirable

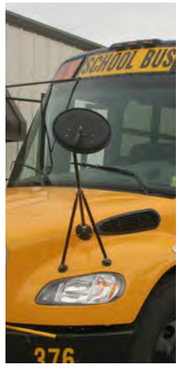




## Regional Collaboration

- Improvements to public schools
- Regional transportation improvements – rail, air, and highway
- A shared vision for the future



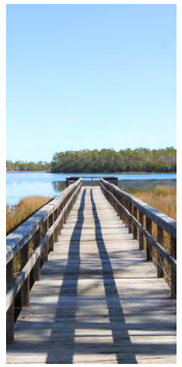


## Changing Places, Revitalized Spaces

- Redevelop northern downtown
- Denser development patterns to improve transit options
- Make downtown safer
- Invest in “place” to spur economic development
- Protect neighborhoods
- Redevelopment of underutilized buildings, especially along major road corridors

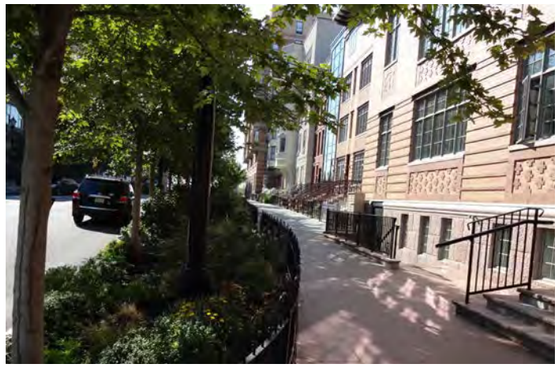
## Nurturing Our Community

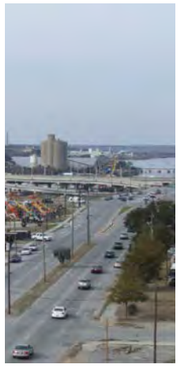
- Clean air and water
- Clean up creeks and waterways
- Clean jobs/clean tech preferred
- Maximize use of alternative energy sources
- Reduce flooding
- Protect and enhance tree canopy



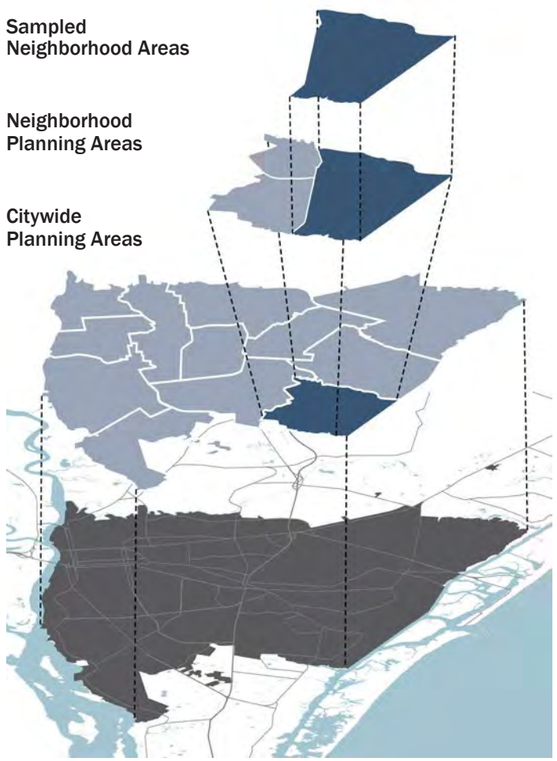
## Unique Places, Captivating Space

- Bury utility lines
- Increase density in certain locations
- Protect neighborhood character
- Enhance gateways
- Protect historic charm and character
- Manage nightlife
- A large event venue



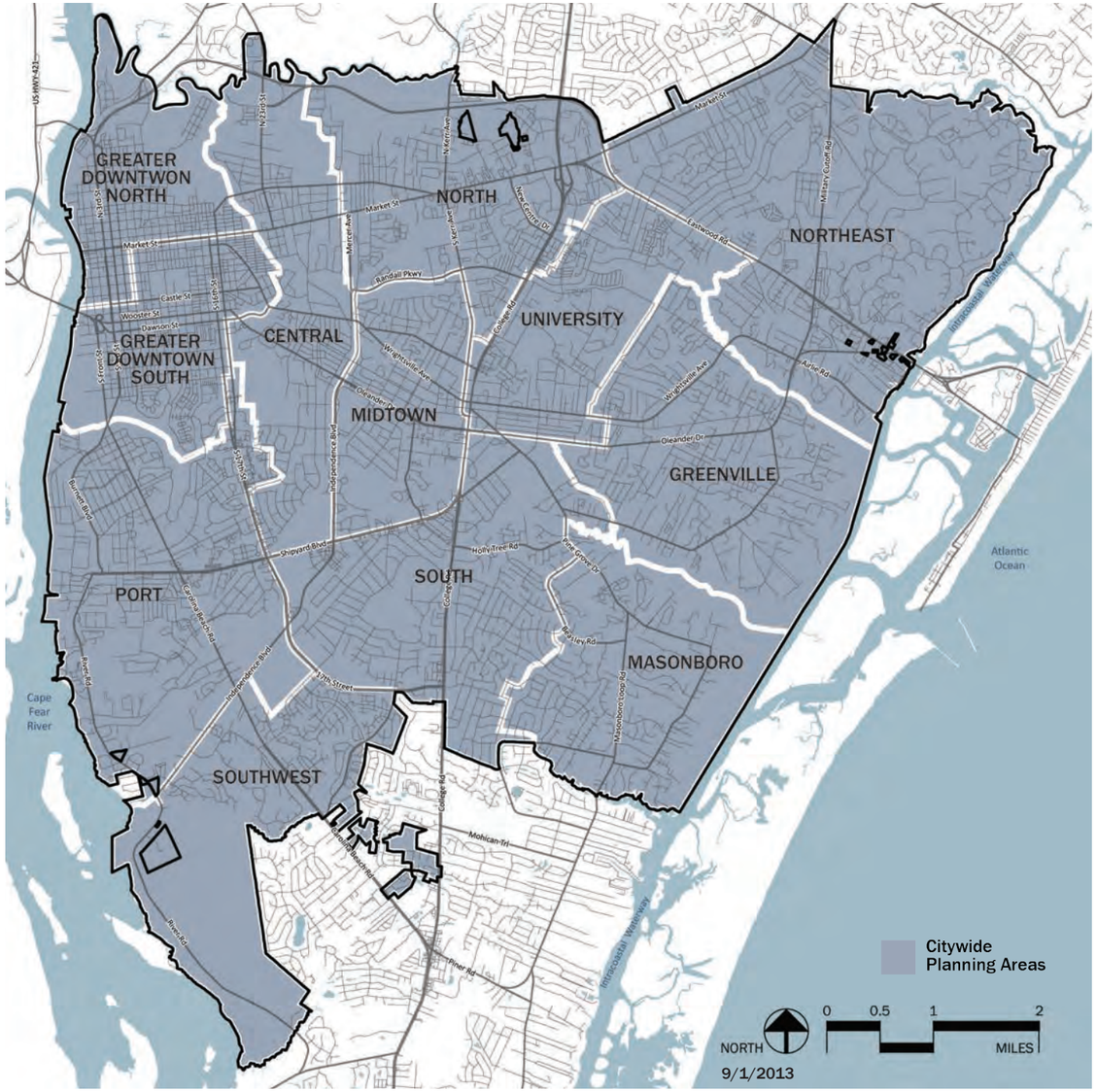


From October 2013 through April 2014, a dozen Neighborhood Planning Area meetings were held across the city. Over 600 citizens participated in these meetings, which provided an opportunity to learn about the comprehensive plan process and to provide input on likes and dislikes about neighborhoods and the city in general. At each meeting, citizens were first presented with information about the history, growth, and development of their neighborhood. Each group was then asked to consider what they liked best about the area (Keep it!), what they considered to be the area's biggest issues (Change it!), and what their big ideas for the area were (Dream it!). Groups were presented with maps for each of the primary topics, Keep it!, Change it!, and Dream it!. Participants worked with the maps and discussed the questions in small groups.




## Top 20 Priorities from the Neighborhood Planning Area Meetings

1. More crosswalks, sidewalks, bike lanes, and bike paths are desired
2. More natural areas, trails, trees, and open spaces are desired
3. Residential character and family atmosphere should be protected
4. More parks and recreation opportunities are needed
5. Greater traffic calming within neighborhoods
6. Reduce crime, code violations, and littering
7. Increase safety with lighting, signage, and additional police patrols
8. Improve traffic flow on major corridors
9. Greater access to groceries
10. Neighborhood schools are valued
11. Streetscape improvements are needed
12. Roadway and intersection improvements are desired
13. More neighborhood retail businesses and mixed use
14. Improved stormwater drainage
15. More public access to water
16. Keep pace with infrastructure improvements and place utilities underground
17. Enhance cultural resources and diversity
18. Entertainment venue is needed
19. Greater access to healthcare and services
20. More community events and activities




To facilitate public input, the city was divided into 12 planning areas, based on similar geographies and development patterns and using major roadways and natural features as boundaries. Within each planning area there are collections of smaller neighborhood areas. Neighborhood areas can be a collection of subdivisions or developments and many include both residential and commercial uses. Community meetings were held for one neighborhood area from each of the 12 planning areas.

At each meeting, citizens were presented with information about the history, growth, and development of their neighborhood and then asked to participate in small group discussions.

**External Resource:**
*Neighborhood Planning Area Data Sheets*

### Getting Involved

Participants at these meetings were asked to engage one another in a three-part mapping and ideas exercise. The results were read back for everyone to hear what their neighbors were saying.

## Top 5 Responses

The following is a summary of the most frequently identified responses for each of the primary topics discussed.

### KEEP IT

1. Parks, natural areas, trails, trees, and open spaces
2. Neighborhood character and family atmosphere
3. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities
4. Recreation opportunities
5. Neighborhood schools/access to groceries, shopping, dining, and entertainment (tied)

### CHANGE IT

1. More crosswalks, sidewalks, bike lanes, and bike paths
2. More traffic calming within neighborhoods
3. Increase safety via improved lighting, signage, and additional police patrols
4. Reduce crime, code violations, and littering
5. Improve stormwater drainage

### DREAM IT

1. More sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian bridges, bike lanes, and trails
2. More parks and recreation opportunities
3. More traffic calming within neighborhoods
4. Increased public access to water
5. Streetscape improvements

### Exercise Results

There was an overwhelming call for more pedestrian and bicycle facilities, parks and recreation, and good neighborhood design.

## Mapping Neighborhood Boundaries

Participants were asked to draw the boundaries of what they consider to be their neighborhood. The results of this exercise will help determine how to structure future small area planning efforts.

**Box Set Cross-Reference:**
*The Growth Factors Report provides an initial map of neighborhood boundaries. These were used in the sample area framework previously described. Many were affirmed during the public outreach process, but many need to be redrawn.*

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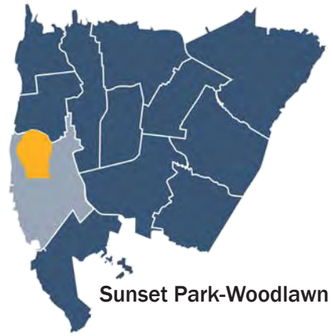
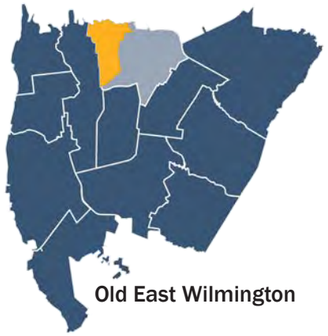
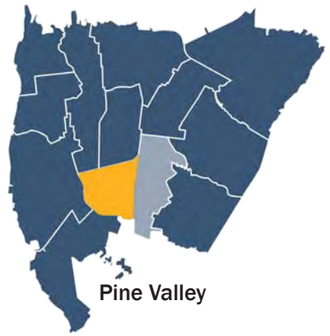
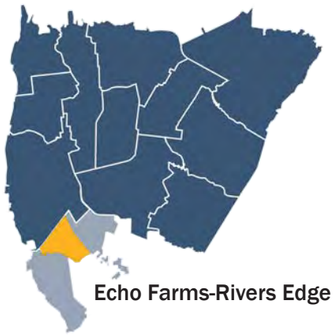
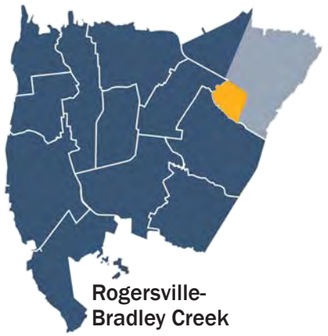


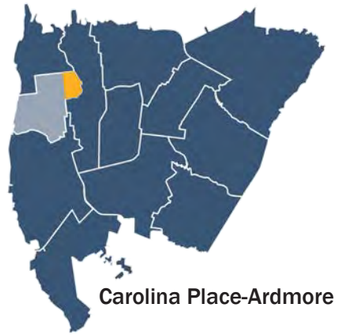



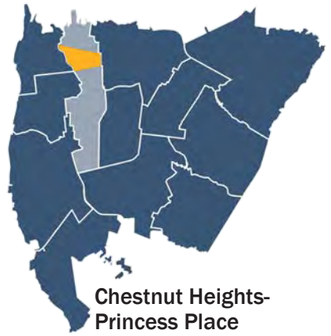


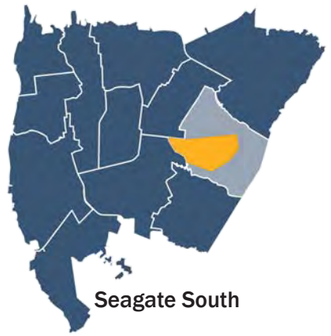




**Sample Areas**
Meetings were held in neighborhoods, one from each of the 12 city-wide planning areas.







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## 1.3 Business & Community Leaders Roundtables

During January, February, and March 2014, the Create Wilmington team met with CEOs, business, and community leaders to gather their feedback on their vision for the future of Wilmington. These community leaders are currently making decisions that are shaping Wilmington today. They were polled as to their ideas about factors that influence the growth and development of the city, and what needs our business community will be facing in the future. Participants were asked to discuss several questions centered around the Growth Factors Report, which helped to initiate the conversation.

### Roundtable Discussion Questions

- As a business and community leader, what is your vision for the future of Wilmington?
- What key elements keep your business here?
- What barriers do you see to expanding your business here or for a new business opening here?
- What are some things the city should do to help spur economic growth?
- What are the major barriers to economic growth in Wilmington?
- What policies directly impact innovation, business development, and results for your business?
- As an employer, what elements do you look for in a place in terms of attracting and retaining employees?

**External Resource:**
*Garner Report*

The themes that emerged from these discussions include regional collaboration, opportunities that come with growth, shared vision for the future, clarity and certainty in development regulations, and quality of life and cost of living. These leaders identified several strengths of Wilmington, including location and climate, quality of life, great potential for growth and opportunity, and a willing and able workforce. Opportunities they identified included having a clean slate in terms of marketing Wilmington, sufficient water and sewer infrastructure to accommodate growth, redevelopment opportunities, and a strong opportunity to grow businesses and the Wilmington "brand."

Our business and community leaders also identified several weaknesses on which Wilmington can improve, including limited job opportunities, lack of integrated neighborhoods (housing types, price-points, and diversity of population), concentration of public housing, disparities in the K-12 schools, high costs of living, and a lack of coordination around economic and community development. Threats, challenges, and other factors the city needs to consider included the need to develop an agreed-upon regional vision with a common path forward, the issue of overcoming trade area demographics that are skewed by the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean, and the need to revise our development regulations, especially now that most opportunities involve redevelopment rather than development of large tracts of vacant land.

## 1.4 Planning on Tap

The week of March 17th, 2014, the Create Wilmington team set out to meet people in the places where they were already most likely to gather, including bars, restaurants, and cafes across the city. Each meeting was hosted by a pair of Steering Committee members, and focused on one of the seven plan themes. Informal discussion about the selected theme was facilitated, with notes recorded by the hosts. Results from the Planning on Tap discussions were sorted and ranked by keyword; several ideas rose to the top as shown at the right.

### Planning on Tap Ideas

1. Bike and pedestrian improvements – more bike lanes and sidewalks, improve existing sidewalks and Cross-city Trail
2. Reinvestment in and redevelopment of neighborhoods and commercial centers
3. Improvements to development regulations/ codes needed

## 1.5 Student and Youth Outreach

### Youth

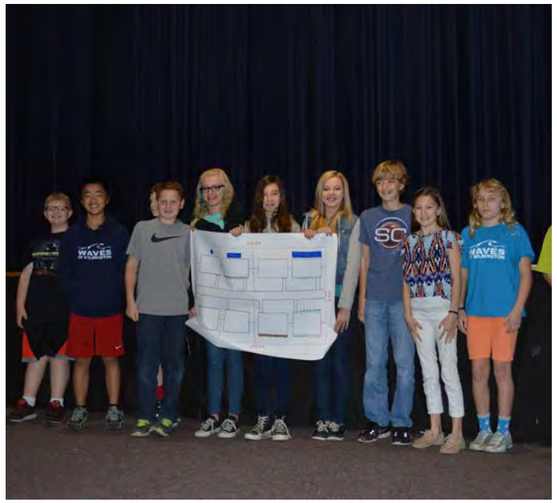
This is a legacy plan and its outcomes will most likely be experienced by the future citizens of Wilmington. The Create Wilmington team visited students in their classrooms to collect their feedback on what makes a good city, as these are the citizens that will be most impacted by the planning we do today, for better or worse. Initially, two classrooms of 6th graders at Roland Grise Middle School were approached for their input. Students were given a brief introduction to planning in general, and then asked about what they think makes a good city, what they like about Wilmington, and what would make Wilmington even better. Because these young citizens are most likely to hold the jobs of the future they were also asked what their ideal job would be and whether they thought they would live in Wilmington or somewhere else.

To make the purpose of the comprehensive plan more real, the Create Wilmington team also left the two classes with a few assignments. They were divided into groups and asked to complete one of three projects: design a park, develop an infill lot, or prioritize the locations of new crosswalks.

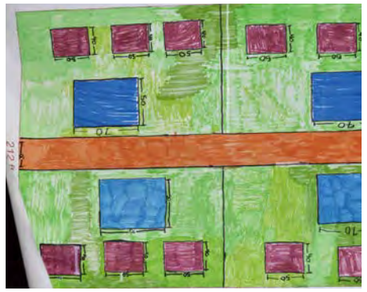
Notably, most of the students said that they did not think they would be living in Wilmington 25 years from now. Reasons given for not living in Wilmington in the future included wanting to live in a bigger city, looking for a different geography (mountains or cooler temperatures), a desire to see the world, and a wish to live in a place with professional sports teams. Only two students said they thought they would be living in Wilmington 25 years from now. Reasons for wanting to remain in Wilmington included staying near the beach and staying near family. Among those students who said they thought they might return to Wilmington in the future, the top reasons given included coming back to Wilmington for retirement or having a beach vacation home here.

## Priorities of 6th Grade Citizens

1. Lots of things to do, entertainment, and recreation opportunities make a city a good place to live
2. Lots of housing choices make a city a good place to live
3. More sidewalks and safer places to ride bikes would make Wilmington even better
4. The many festivals and events around town make Wilmington a good place to live
5. Future careers include: engineer, health care and research, professional athlete, and lawyer



**Design A Park**
Students were given a vacant site, a budget, and a list of park amenities and were asked to design a park. They were asked to stay within budget, explain how people would access the park, and determine what amenities would be included and why. Students designed a park that offered the greatest variety of activities for local residents.



**Develop An Infill Lot**
Students were asked to create a residential site plan on an empty infill lot. To assist the students, some constraints of the city's Land Development Code such as minimum lot area and dimensions, setbacks, driveways, and sidewalks were explained. Students created a residential site plan that included housing types for different income levels.

**Prioritize Crosswalk Locations**
Students were asked to prioritize locations in the vicinity of their school where signalized crosswalks are lacking. Students were given a map of the city, a budget, construction costs, and time constraints. They were then asked to identify locations, stay within the budget, and complete the project on time. Students identified locations for new signalized crosswalks that offered the greatest access to their school and local parks.

**Box Set Cross-Reference:**
*Growth Factors Report*

DRAFT 1/30/15



### Teens

The Create Wilmington team talked with students at Hoggard High School as representative of the teenage demographic. Students were asked what they like about Wilmington, what would make Wilmington better, and what they saw in their futures in terms of where they would be living and what kinds of jobs they would have. Things they would like to see in Wilmington include more entertainment, amusement, and dining options; more sidewalks and safer biking options; better schools; and a better music scene. Things that they like best about Wilmington are being close to the beach, downtown, and recreation opportunities. Many of the students, both at the middle school and high school, viewed Wilmington as a good place to grow up and raise a family; however, most of the students indicated that they did not think they would be living in Wilmington 25 years from now. Many students believe they would not be able to find their ideal job in Wilmington, but many also wanted to live a bigger city and/or explore the world, or they wanted to live somewhere with a different climate or geography. Their future careers include doctors, scientists and researchers, engineers, and policy making.

### College

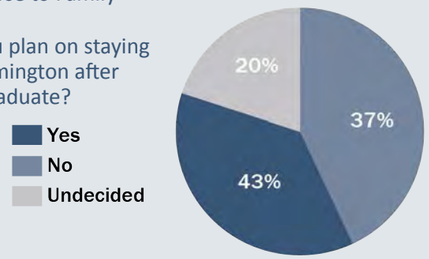
Although meetings were held on campus at both Cape Fear Community College and University of North Carolina – Wilmington, attendance was light at both meetings. To reach more students, an online survey was created. This survey focused on why students chose to come to Wilmington, whether they thought they would stay in Wilmington upon finishing school, and what sorts of jobs and careers they are looking for. Results of the on-line survey are shown to the right.

## College Survey Results

Why did you choose the neighborhood you live in? (Top 5)

1. Affordable
2. Location - Close to work/school/beach
3. Safe/Low Crime
4. School District
5. Close to Family

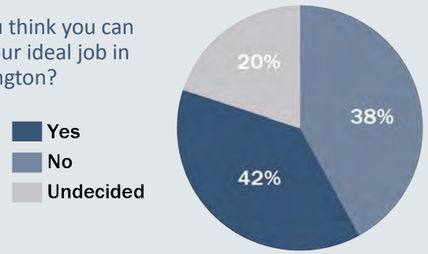
Do you plan on staying in Wilmington after you graduate?




What type of job are you looking for? (Top 5)

1. Medical/Dental Field
2. Teaching
3. Arts & Entertainment
4. Science/Research/Lab
5. Law Enforcement

Do you think you can find your ideal job in Wilmington?




What did you move to Wilmington? (Top 5)

1. Native
2. School
3. Beach
4. Job
5. Family

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## Aging in Place

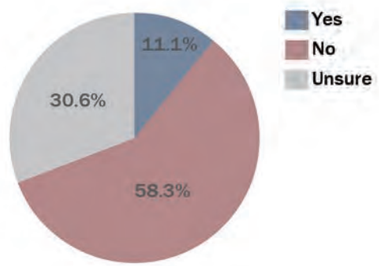
A survey on aging in place revealed that many citizens want to be able to age in their current home or at least in their current neighborhood. Obstacles to this desire included primarily transportation and access limitations. Survey respondents indicated a preference for investments by the city in mobility and transportation, affordable housing, and alternative housing options to help enable citizens to age in place. More than 65% of survey takers rated Wilmington's current public transportation system as below average or poor and more than 53% indicated that mobility options from their current home are poor. More than 57% said they are retired or would like to retire in Wilmington, while 22% said they were unsure where they would retire. Reasons for being unsure about retiring in Wilmington include having many years until retirement, the cost of housing in Wilmington, and questions about mobility and ability to meet their needs upon retirement in Wilmington.

### What is Aging in Place?

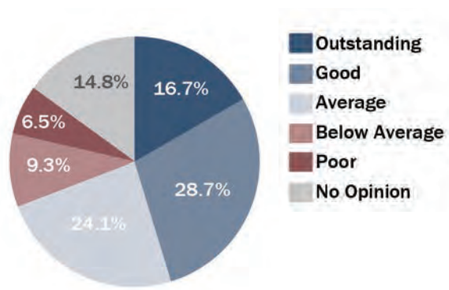
"Aging in place" refers to the ability of a person to live in their residence, for as long as they are able, as they age. To age in place, people need to consider how their home is setup (e.g., stairs, hand rails, wide doorways), how they will access their daily needs (e.g. distance from groceries and shopping), and healthcare (e.g. distance and mobility to doctor's offices, public transit access).

**External Resource:**
*The Maturing of America: Communities Moving Forward for an Aging Population*

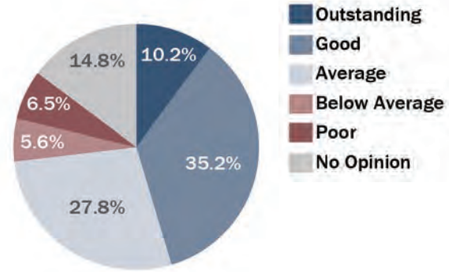
**Aging in Wilmington**
Do you believe that Wilmington is adequately preparing for an aging population?



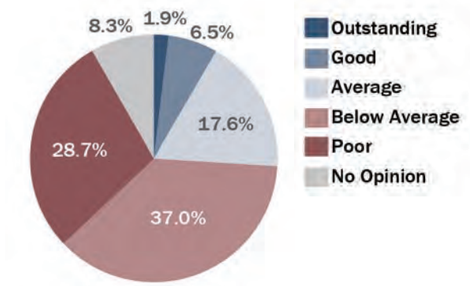

**Quality of Healthcare**
How do you rate quality of healthcare for seniors in Wilmington?



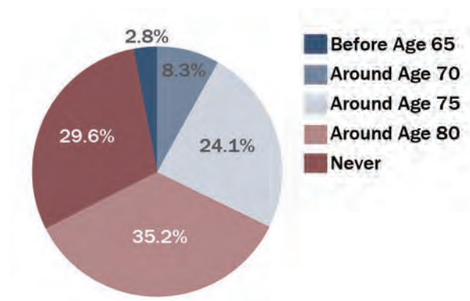

**Access to Healthcare**
How do you rate access to healthcare for seniors in Wilmington?




**Public Transportation**
How do you rate public transportation options within the city?

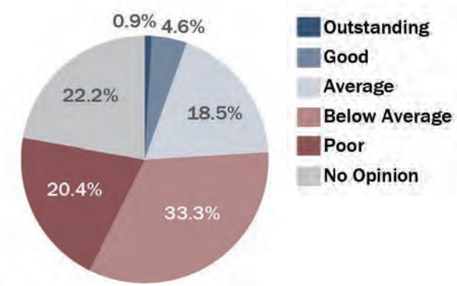



**Driving**
At what age do you believe you will quit driving your own car?

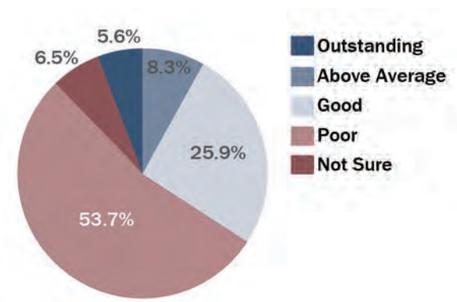



**Future Investments**
Which areas are the most critical for investment by the City of Wilmington in relation to an aging population? ("1" being the most important, "2" being the second most important, and so on.)

**Employment**
How do you rate job options for seniors in Wilmington?




**Mobility**
How do you rate your current mobility options from your home?



## Investing in Place

The American Planning Association conducted a survey in March of 2014 regarding "investing in place" as a mechanism for economic development. The Create Wilmington team recreated the survey in the fall of 2014 to capture the opinions of Wilmingtonians regarding investing in place. This survey revealed that many Wilmingtonians believe that investing in schools, transportation choices, and walkable areas is a better way to grow the economy than traditional approach of recruiting companies. Most respondents would prefer to live in a walkable community, either urban or suburban, rather than in a neighborhood where they are dependent on a car to get around. A majority of respondents (60%) want to be able to stay in their homes as they age, and over half do not feel Wilmington is doing enough to allow residents to age in place. More than 60% of respondents said that having extra space in their home where someone could live with them is at least somewhat important in choosing where to live.

### Place Trends

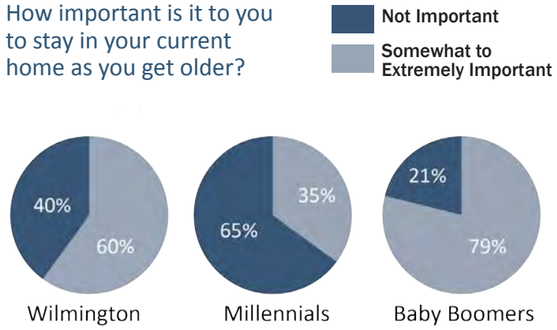
The preferences of Wilmington residents are similar to trends seen across the nation. Wilmington residents want to live in walkable communities, want more transportation options, and want to stay in their homes as they age.

**External Resource:**
*Investing in Place Survey (Wilmington)*

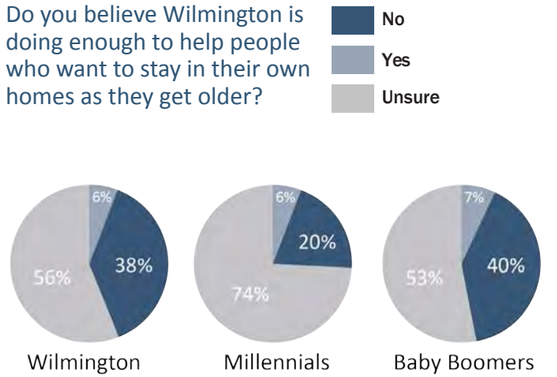
**External Resource:**
*Investing in Place Survey (American Planning Association National Report)*

**Getting Older**

How important is it to you to stay in your current home as you get older?

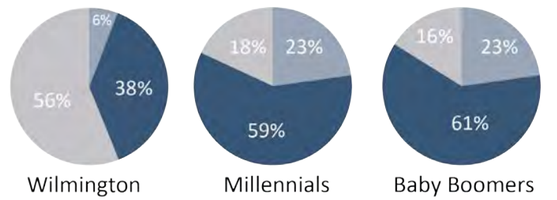



Do you believe Wilmington is doing enough to help people who want to stay in their own homes as they get older?




**Transportation Options**

Do you believe that there are enough non-car transportation options available in Wilmington?






**60%** OF RESPONDENTS HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE IN THE NATIONAL ECONOMY WITH 70% OF MILLENNIALS AND 57% OF BOOMERS BELIEVING THE ECONOMY IS "FUNDAMENTALLY FLAWED."

**50% of Millennials and 59% of Boomers** said the U.S. economy will stay the same or get worse over the next five years.

NEARLY **70%** of Millennials, Baby Boomers, and Gen Xers surveyed see too few current personal economic opportunities. During the next five years, however, 59% of Millennials are **optimistic about personal finances** and 30% of Baby Boomers **expect their local economy to improve**.

**2/3** of all respondents and **67% OF MILLENNIALS** believe investing in schools, transportation choices, and walkable areas is a **BETTER WAY TO GROW THE ECONOMY** than traditional approaches of recruiting companies.

**35% of Millennials and 30% overall are at least somewhat likely to move in the next five years.**

**82%** OF MILLENNIALS | **81%** ACTIVE BOOMERS

WOULD PREFER TO LIVE SOMEDAY IN A WALKABLE COMMUNITY, WHETHER AN URBAN OR SUBURBAN LOCATION.

**Only 18% of Millennials and 19% of Baby Boomers** would prefer living, if they can afford it, in a suburb, an area that requires driving to most places.

## Decline of the Traditional Suburb

Where do you live now and where do you want to live someday if you can afford it?

### A suburb where most people drive to most places:

| | Wilmington | Millennials | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Now | 56% | 44% | 56% |
| Someday | 23% | 18% | 19% |
| Change | - 33% | - 26% | - 37% |

### A suburb with walkable amenities:

| | Wilmington | Millennials | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Now | 27% | 29% | 27% |
| Someday | 44% | 38% | 50% |
| Change | +17% | +9% | +23% |

### An urban area with walkable amenities and access to transit:

| | Wilmington | Millennials | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Now | 17% | 27% | 17% |
| Someday | 33% | 44% | 31% |
| Change | +16% | +17% | +14% |

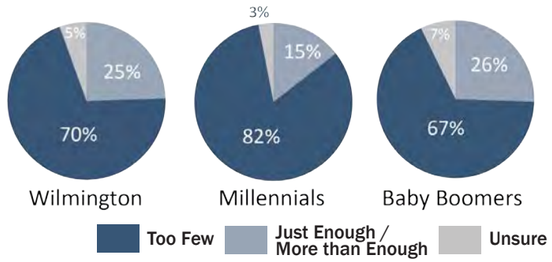
These results indicate that Millennials, Boomers, and city residents overall want to live in more walkable urban places in the future.

**Box Set Cross-Reference:** *Growth Factors Report: Community Pattern Areas*

**Box Set Cross-Reference:** *Growth Strategies Maps*

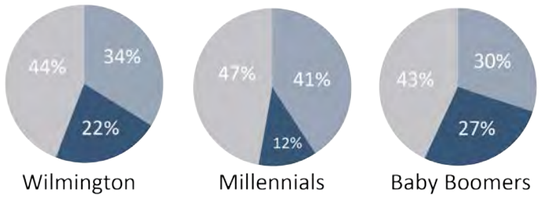
**Economic Opportunity**

When it comes to economic opportunities and financial security for you personally, would you say the local economy offers more than enough, just enough, or too few opportunities?



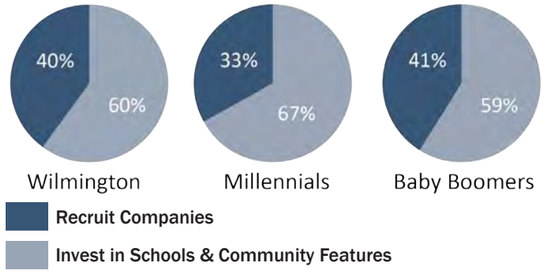

**Local Economic Recovery**

In the next five years, do you expect the local economy to get better, get worse, or stay the same?




**Growing the Local Economy**

Some feel the best way to grow the local economy is to recruit companies to the area. Others feel the best way is to invest in community features, such as local schools, transportation choices, walkable areas, and making the area as attractive as possible. Which is closer to your belief?






## Approximately 62% of respondents cite living expenses as important in choosing where to live.

WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE ONE OVERRIDING FACTOR IN CHOOSING WHERE TO LIVE, RESPONDENTS OVERALL CITED

# QUALITY OF LIFE FEATURES

ahead of local economic health and job prospects.

Majorities of both Millennials **59%** and Baby Boomers **61%** said there are not enough transportation alternatives where they live.

## 37 PERCENT

of respondents say **diversity in people and generations** is an important component of a successful community.

## High-priority Community Preferences: Metro Features (Local)

Which of the following community features are most important to you? (Rank in order of importance with 1 being the most important) (Rank order below indicates results of survey)

1. Major professional of college sports teams
2. Affordable and convenient transportation choices
3. High-speed Internet access
4. Vibrant centers of entertainment and culture
5. Sidewalks, bike lanes, hiking trails, and fitness choices
6. Access to clean energy, renewables, and energy conservation
7. Mix of housing choices
8. Great school system (K-12, colleges, and continuing education)
9. Safe streets

## 1.7 Man on the Street

As part of the Create Wilmington team's effort to reach people who may not participate in traditional public meetings, several short surveys were created, and the team took to the streets to find people where they were already gathering to collect their input.

The first survey asked people what they liked best about Wilmington, what they liked least about Wilmington, and what would make Wilmington even better. The three most common responses to what people like best about Wilmington were the beach, downtown, and the weather. The three most common responses to what people like least about Wilmington were traffic, crime, and lack of public restrooms (downtown). The three most common responses to what would make Wilmington even better were biking and walking facilities, a professional sports team, and an amusement or theme park.

The second survey asked people to identify the best thing about their neighborhood and their big idea for their neighborhood. The most common things people like best about their neighborhoods are location, the feeling and character of their neighborhood, and neighborhood activities. Top "big ideas" include making neighborhoods safer for walking and biking, more recreation opportunities and slower speeds/less traffic through neighborhoods.

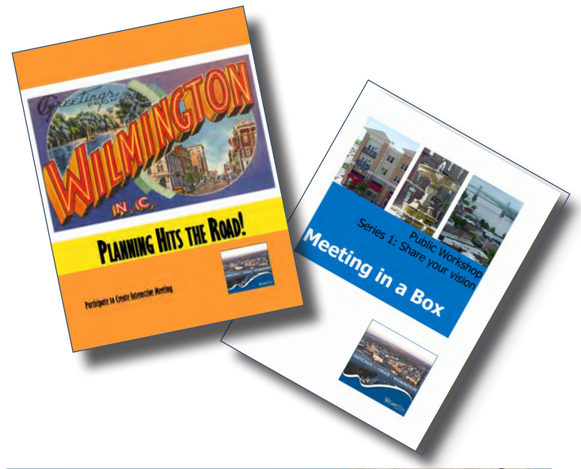
The final survey asked participants about their favorite things to do in Wilmington, what their family's favorite things to do together are, and what family activities/facilities could be added to make Wilmington even better. Favorite activities include outdoor recreation, including swimming, boating, fishing, and tennis, followed closely by enjoying the city's parks, the area beaches, and downtown. The top family activities in Wilmington identified were again, outdoor recreation, the beaches and parks, biking, and exploring downtown. The most common elements that would make Wilmington even better include more bicycle infrastructure, activities for kids and teens, additional parks and parks programming, and additional pools (including an indoor pool) and splash pads.

## 1.8 Meeting in a Box

The Create Wilmington team recognized that not all people feel comfortable participating in the traditional public meeting format or are able to attend. To this end, a "meeting in a box" was created. This box contained all of the materials necessary for a citizen to hold an input meeting with an already-existing group. The outline for conducting a meeting could also be downloaded from www.createwilmington.com, and results could be mailed to or dropped off at the city planning office, or entered online via Survey Monkey. An estimated 25 citizens participated in the meeting in a box process.

Two editions of meeting in a box were available during the plan development process. The first in the series asked participants to consider several questions. Following the group discussion, participants were asked to identify the three items of greatest importance to the group. The second edition of meeting in a box included questions related to a desired vision for the future of Wilmington.

This tool revealed that people value downtown Wilmington, coastal resources, and outdoor recreation. Seen as challenges were the education system, insufficient regional collaboration, and aging infrastructure. Ideas for Wilmington's future included transportation improvements, including an additional river crossing, better options for seniors (walking, biking), reduced traffic congestion, more technology jobs, expansions to the port, and better collaboration between the city and the county.



## 1.9 Connect Wilmington & Social Media

The Create Wilmington team utilized an online public input forum called Connect Wilmington to collect input on a variety of topics. The team posted several questions and asked the community to weigh-in. To participate, citizens had to register with Connect Wilmington, and could then offer their feedback and comment on and "like" the input of others. Participants could also add photos of places they like and suggest ideas of their own.

When asked to describe their vision for the future of Wilmington, participants described a future Wilmington that is clean and has high-quality development, is bicycle and pedestrian friendly, that celebrates and protects natural resources, has a vibrant downtown, and has rail service to Raleigh. When asked to share photos of their favorite places in Wilmington, the Cape Fear River and Memorial Bridge, the Riverwalk, and other downtown features, Greenfield Lake Park and Gardens, water-based recreation, and mixed-use developments in various parts of town were contributed. When asked for solutions to traffic congestion, participants suggested denser development in certain locations, roundabouts to keep traffic flowing, and the extension of Independence Boulevard to Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway. Ideas for protecting Wilmington's natural resources included denser development, the addition of scenic byways, and the concept of treating Wilmington's natural resources as cultural and economic resources.

Throughout the process, 784 people participated via Connect Wilmington and more than 27,770 people viewed the site.

### Key Input

- Add pedestrian bridges over major roadways, including College and Carolina Beach roads.
- Support and implement community gardens
- Clean tech jobs, clean jobs, and technology jobs should be encouraged in Wilmington
- Keep film jobs in Wilmington
- Traffic signals should be better coordinated
- Aesthetic improvements and redevelopment along major corridors are needed
- Reduce parking requirements to help encourage better development patterns
- Allow garage apartments to supplement the housing supply

The team posted several questions, including:

- What is your vision for the future of Wilmington?
- What is one thing that you would like to see happen to make Wilmington better?
- What is something you would like to change about your neighborhood?
- What types of jobs do we need in Wilmington?
- What are your ideas for solving the traffic congestion problems in Wilmington?
- Where are your favorite places to walk in Wilmington?
- What can we do to protect Wilmington's environment and natural resources?
- What parts of town would you like to see redeveloped?
- What can we do to improve workforce housing in Wilmington?

**Document Cross-Reference:**
*Alternative Future Visions*

## 1.10 Other Small Group Meetings & Engagement Tools

**Hillcrest Community**
The Create Wilmington team visited the Hillcrest Community and asked residents to share their ideas for the future of their community and what would make Wilmington a better place to live. Residents want the transit system to be improved to make getting their daily needs easier, they wanted more access to parks and recreational opportunities, and more training for jobs.

**Box Set Cross-Reference:**
*Growth Factors Report: Housing - Public Housing*

**Lunch & Learn and other tools**
Beyond collecting input, the team set out to share information about planning best practices, the current conditions in Wilmington, and other relevant topics of interest. To this end, a series of "lunch and learn" seminars were held, information went out in the city's general newsletter, and the Create Wilmington team utilized social media tools to share information.