CREATE WILMINGTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Foundations Report

Executive Summary

Growth Strategies Maps

Policies

Foundations Report

Growth Factors Report

DRAFT
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.

Electronic readers click here to view or download this document.

(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.

The color of the symbol indicates the type of reference.

This is the location within the document

Cross-Reference Type
Name of Reference
#

The type of reference and its name is provided here.

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

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.

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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

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.
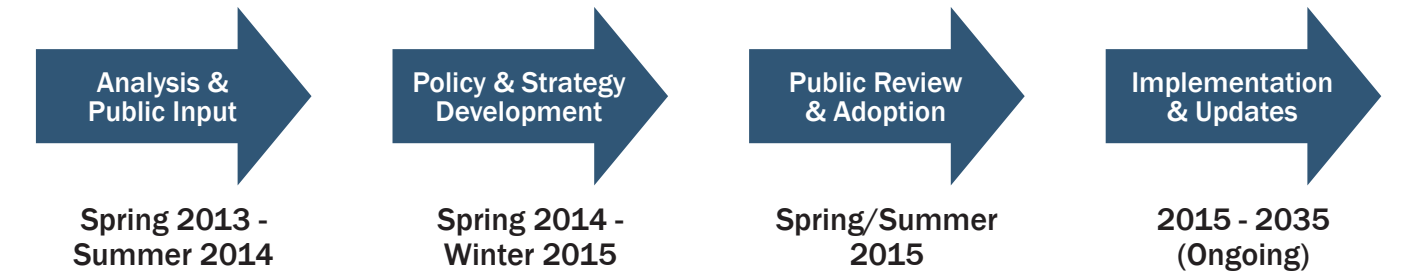
Rapid growth, coupled with outdated growth policies and development regulations present both challenges and opportunities. In 2013, the city began the process of establishing a vision of what kind of city residents want to have 20 to 25 years from now. This multi-year process was to lead to not only 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

Analysis & Public Input	Policy & Strategy Development	Public Review & Adoption	Implementation & Updates
Spring 2013 - Summer 2014	Spring 2014 - Winter 2015	Spring/Summer 2015	2015 - 2035 (Ongoing)

2 Alternative Future Visions (Scenario Planning)

"If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else."
— Yogi Berra

Introduction

Following the Neighborhood Planning Area meetings, citizen input was consolidated and several "alternative future visions" were created to illustrate how Wilmington might grow and change over the next 25 years. At a public launch, citizens were invited to review and weigh-in on these visions. Participants were asked to identify trends from each of the six visions that they were in favor of with a green dot and those that they were not in favor of with a red dot. Following the meeting, the alternative future visions were posted on Connect Wilmington so that citizens could continue to review and evaluate them. The citizen-prioritized trends were incorporated into the Growth Strategies Maps.

Thumbs Up

Thumbs Down

Alternative Future Visions

A series of alternative future visions (scenarios) were developed to identify ways in which the city could grow and redevelop in the future. Each vision represents a potential scenario for future growth and is built around a series of ideas and strategies on how and where to grow. These alternative future visions were not mutually exclusive; participants were asked to identify the ideas and strategies from each alternative that were most important to them and which they believed may be appropriate.

Box Set Cross-Reference:
Growth Strategies Maps
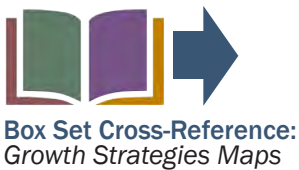
1 Current Trends
This scenario, originally presented as "Business as Usual," focused on the continuation of current development trends. Under this scenario no major changes would be made to development patterns and trends.

2 Urban Centers & Neighborhood Nodes
This scenario focuses on creating and expanding mixed-use centers in already urbanized areas and strengthening existing and planned mixed-use developments.

3 Creating Live-Work Places
This scenario focuses on connecting housing to jobs by creating and expanding residential communities around existing employment centers and creating new employment centers and mixed-use communities.

4 Community Corridors & Main Streets
This scenario focuses on improving the form, function, and aesthetics of roadways and improving connections to adjacent neighborhoods.

5 Transit-oriented Development
This scenario focuses on creating a safe, clean, and reliable transit system and concentrating density around transit stop locations.

6 Neighborhood Transitions
This scenario focuses on protecting the character of the city's unique neighborhoods and identifying appropriate transitions for neighborhoods already experiencing change.

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Alternative Future Visions

Alternative Future Visions

2.1 Current Trends*

Current Development

Vacant Land
Potential Redevelopment
Parks

6/25/2014

NORTH
0   0.5   1   2
MILES

Master Planned Communities

Retail/Commercial

Residential Subdivisions

Multi-family Projects

Office Buildings

Major Themes

Create and develop master-planned projects on remaining large vacant tracts of land.

Develop and redevelop individual vacant or underutilized properties.

Develop vacant and underutilized single-family-zoned sites at 2-3 units per acre.

Develop multi-family projects on vacant or underutilized land around the university and along major road corridors.

* Originally presented as "Business as Usual."

Top 10 Trends Prioritized by the Public

The following are the trends from the "Current Trends" scenario that received the most positive feedback, from both the public launch and comments received online. Trends are ranked in order of priority given. Numbers correspond with map locations on previous page.

1

Develop more office buildings and hotels in downtown.

2

Redevelop Hillcrest public housing similar to Taylor Homes in the Northside.

3 Complete the River Lights master-planned community.

4 Complete the Autumn Hall mixed-use development plan.

5

Develop large vacant and underutilized tracts as stand- alone multi-family projects.

6

Complete the development of the Love Grove neighborhood.

7

Continue with current development pattern on Carolina Beach Road.

8

Create master-planned communities on remaining large tracts of land.
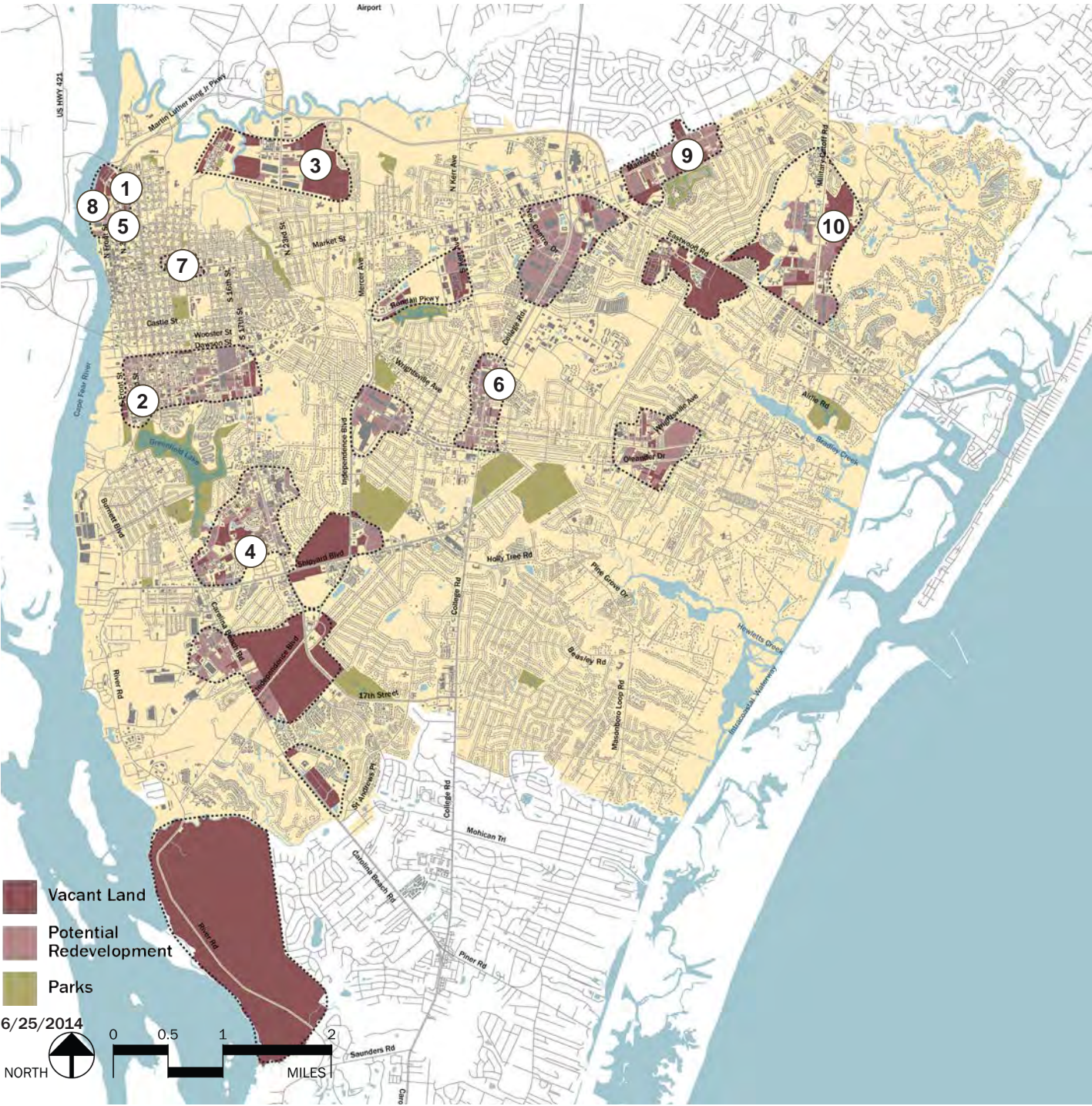
9

Develop cluster subdivisions on remaining large vacant or underutilized tracts of land in residentially-zoned areas.

10

Subdivide individual large single-family parcels for single-family development.

2.2 Creating Live-Work Places

Vacant Land

Potential Redevelopment

Parks

6/25/2014

NORTH 0 0.5 1 2 MILES

Major Themes

| Create new and enhance existing employment centers. | Connect people with jobs and reduce commute times. | Focus on sidewalks, bikeways, and trails. | Create efficient road connections as new development occurs. | Introduce a mix of housing types to provide affordable options. |

Top 10 Trends Prioritized by the Public

The following are the trends from the "Creating Live-Work Places" scenario that received the most positive feedback, from both the public launch and comments received online. Trends are ranked in order of priority given. Numbers correspond with map locations on previous page.

1 Foster the development of arts-based entrepreneurship in the Brooklyn Arts District and in the area surrounding the former Coca-Cola bottling facility. Encourage live-work building types and affordable studio spaces.

2 Encourage more creative, technology-based and light manufacturing start-ups in the Southside industrial area.

3 Develop the area adjacent to the North 23rd Street employment corridor in a well-connected and coordinated way so that residential areas are within a short drive or bike ride to employment. Create a film-based mixed-use district.

4 Develop medium-density housing around New Hanover Regional Medical Center; ensure walkability.

5 Provide housing for Cape Fear Community College students within walking distance to campus.

6 Use the K-mart parking lot, the UNCW Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and nearby vacant land to create a mixed-use academic village, giving UNCW an urban center.

7 Encourage redevelopment of the former Coca-Cola bottling facility as an employment incubator, with special emphasis on job training for nearby residents.

8 Build more offices and employment uses in the Northern Riverfront.

9 Develop housing, retail and good sidewalks along Market Street; make connections to employment area.

10 Connect streets to create a walkable urban grid structure. Connect offices with housing and retail.

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Alternative Future Visions

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Alternative Future Visions

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1
2
3

2.3 Transit-oriented Development

Potential Transit Types

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
Bus lines that operate in dedicated travel lanes and rights-of-way with platforms and off-board fare collection at transit stops and bus priority at major intersections.
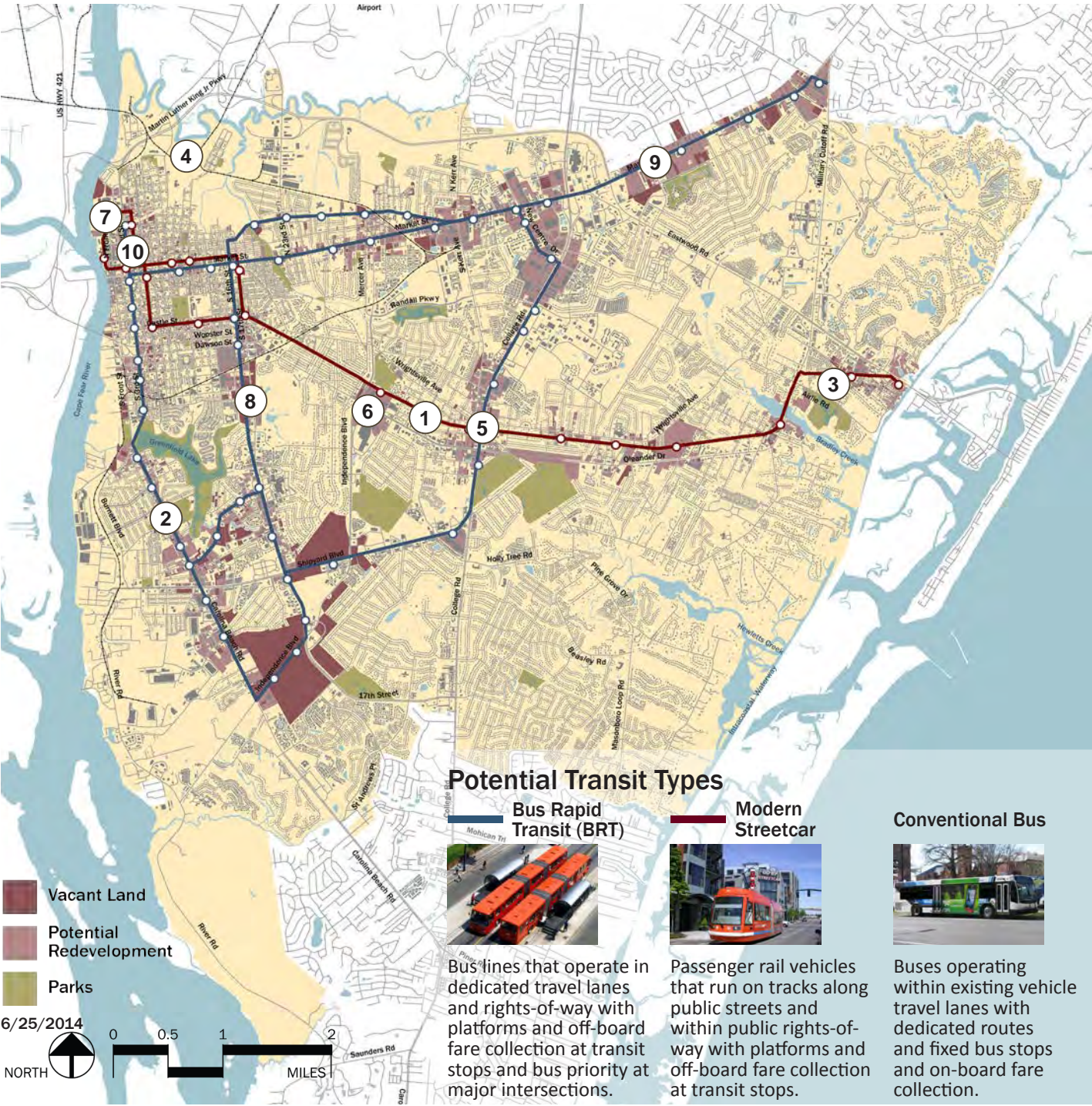
Modern Streetcar
Passenger rail vehicles that run on tracks along public streets and within public rights-of-way with platforms and off-board fare collection at transit stops.

Conventional Bus
Buses operating within existing vehicle travel lanes with dedicated routes and fixed bus stops and on-board fare collection.

Vacant Land

Potential Redevelopment

Parks

6/25/2014

NORTH

0   0.5   1   2
MILES

Major Themes

| Reduce traffic congestion by creating a safe, clean, and reliable public transit system. | Reestablish the historic streetcar line from downtown to the beach. | Make transit stop locations safe and inviting places. | Focus density around transit stop locations. | Make our public transit system a source of pride for the community. |

Top 10 Trends Prioritized by the Public

The following are the trends from the "Transit-oriented Development" scenario that received the most positive feedback, from both the public launch and comments received online. Trends are ranked in order of priority given. Numbers correspond with map locations on previous page.

1

Bring back the historic streetcar line from Downtown to Wrightsville Beach. Run alongside River to the Sea Bikeway and existing public right-of-way.

2

Provide comfortable places to wait for transit with protection from the weather.

3

Redevelop the Galleria with a mix of housing, employment and retail. Create a welcoming public space at the transit stop.

4

Utilize existing rail rights-of-way to establish a light rail system that connects major destinations across the city.
- Citizen Idea

5

Pedestrian bridges in high-density/high-traffic locations.
- Citizen Idea

6

Upgrade Hanover Center and Independence Mall to accommodate transit. Add housing and a sidewalk network.

7

Use electric-powered buses in the downtown core.
- Citizen Idea

8

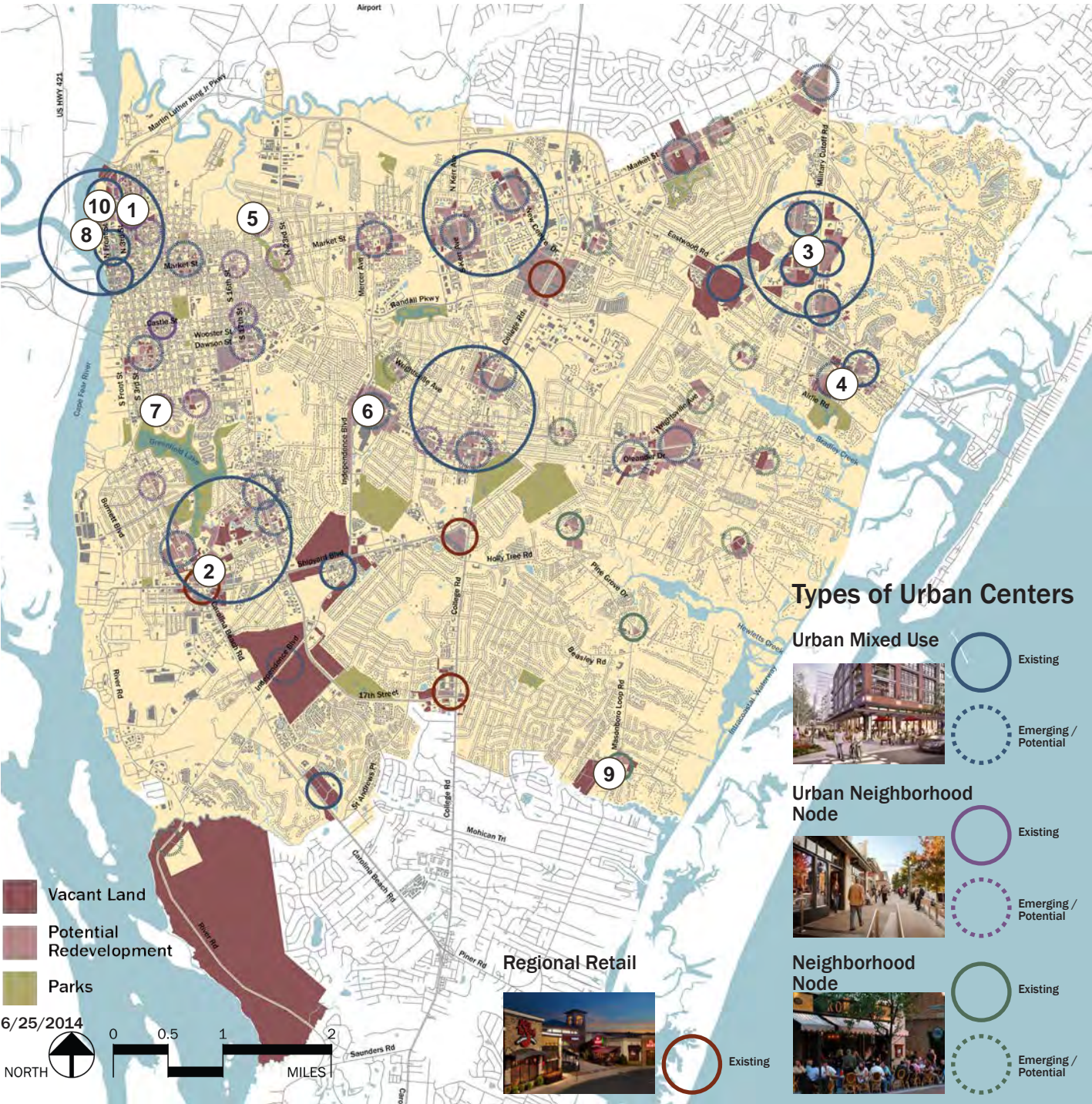Create safe, walkable urban places close to transit stops.

9

Dedicate automobile lane to high-speed buses on Market Street and reduce travel lanes in each direction.

10

Create a series of high-to-medium density transit nodes downtown with tall mixed-use buildings in the North Riverfront.

2.4 Urban Centers & Neighborhood Nodes

Types of Urban Centers

Urban Mixed Use

Existing

Emerging / Potential

Urban Neighborhood Node

Existing

Emerging / Potential

Neighborhood Node

Existing

Emerging / Potential

Regional Retail

Existing

Vacant Land

Potential Redevelopment

Parks

6/25/2014

NORTH

0   0.5   1   2

MILES

Major Themes

| Concentrate investment, vertical orientation of buildings, and densities around focal points. | Focus on walking and biking infrastructure. | Create active retail environments. | Increase access to goods and services to adjacent neighborhoods. | Promote infill of large surface parking lots. |

Top 10 Trends Prioritized by the Public

The following are the trends from the "Urban Centers & Neighborhood Nodes" scenario that received the most positive feedback, from both the public launch and comments received online. Trends are ranked in order of priority given. Numbers correspond with map locations on previous page.

1

Develop true vertical mixed-use buildings with ground floor retail.

2

Develop a high-density, walkable, mixed-use district surrounding New Hanover Regional Medical Center

3

Build on the momentum of existing town centers. Focus on making better connections and infill development.

4

Redevelop the Galleria as a pedestrian-focused, mixed-use development with restaurants, retail, and various types of housing.

5

Create small urban centers with services for nearby residents.

6

Fill the surface parking lots of Independence Mall with buildings.

7

Develop a center with industrial aesthetics; mix new and old buildings.

8
Foster a collection of urban centers, places, and neighborhoods in the downtown core with their own identities and primary functions. Update the downtown master plan and create small area plans for each downtown center.
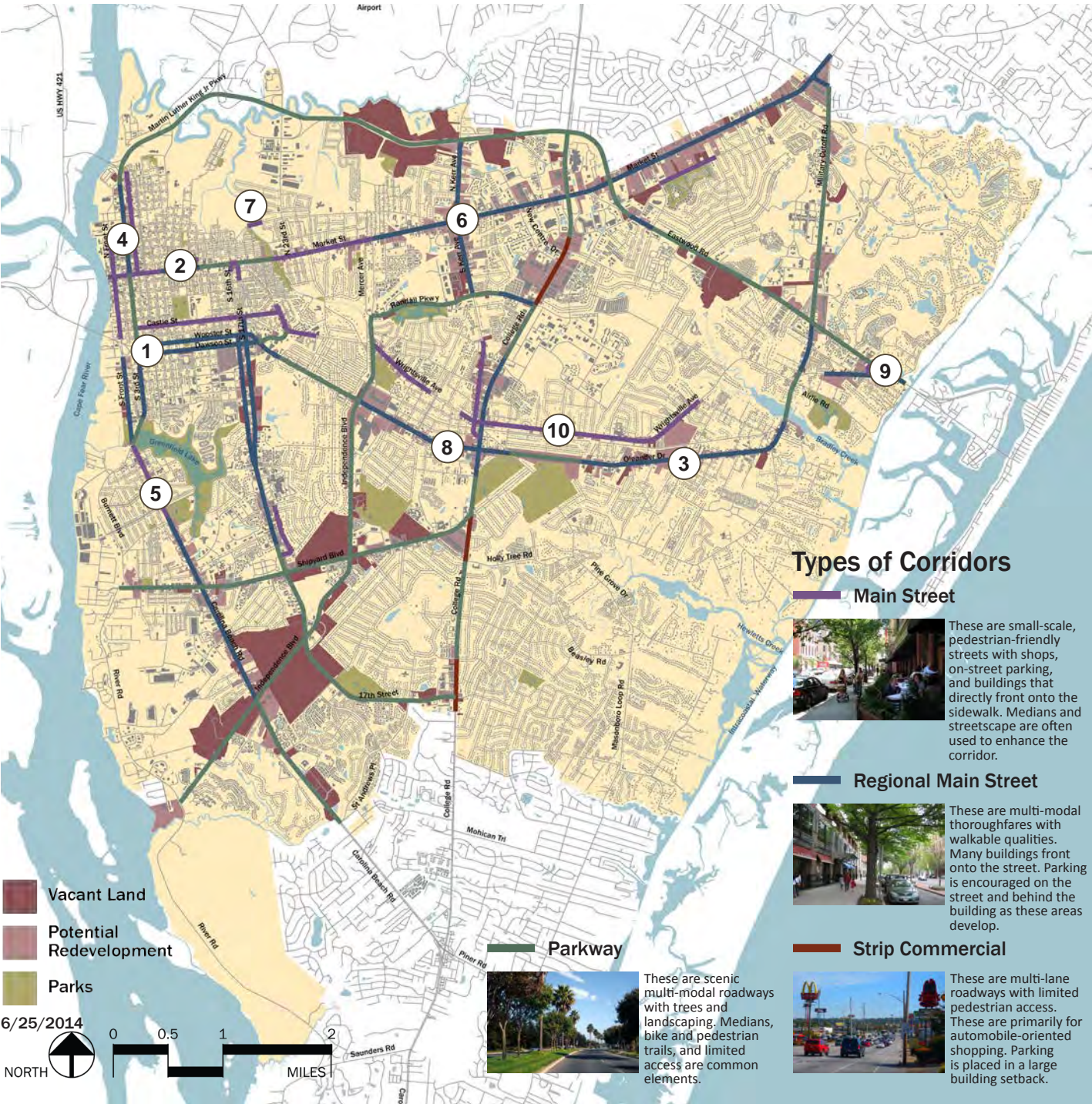
9
Focus new development around existing neighborhood nodes; prioritize sidewalk connections.

10

Introduce big-box and chain retail with context-sensitive development.

2.5 Community Corridors

Types of Corridors

Main Street

These are small-scale, pedestrian-friendly streets with shops, on-street parking, and buildings that directly front onto the sidewalk. Medians and streetscape are often used to enhance the corridor.

Regional Main Street

These are multi-modal thoroughfares with walkable qualities. Many buildings front onto the street. Parking is encouraged on the street and behind the building as these areas develop.

Parkway

These are scenic multi-modal roadways with trees and landscaping. Medians, bike and pedestrian trails, and limited access are common elements.

Strip Commercial

These are multi-lane roadways with limited pedestrian access. These are primarily for automobile-oriented shopping. Parking is placed in a large building setback.

Vacant Land

Potential Redevelopment

Parks

6/25/2014

NORTH   0   0.5   1   2   MILES

Major Themes

| Create corridors that are unique public spaces. | Focus development along roadways, not in adjacent neighborhoods. | Improve safety and function by controlling driveways and street intersections. | Provide sidewalks, bikeways, and trails to adjacent neighborhoods. | Continue dependency on automobile travel with some improved bus service. |

Top 10 Trends Prioritized by the Public

The following are the trends from the "Community Corridors" scenario that received the most positive feedback, from both the public launch and comments received online. Trends are ranked in order of priority given. Numbers correspond with map locations on previous page.

1
Encourage mixed-use development at the gateways of Dawson/Wooster at 3rd Street and at 17th Street.

2
Redevelop areas along Market and Princess streets between 8th and 12th streets.

3
Redevelop vacant shopping centers and strip malls along Oleander Drive between Hawthorne Drive and Greenville Loop Road.

4
Create vertical mixed-use corridors in the heart of downtown.

5
Revitalize the commercial area along Carolina Beach Road at Sunset Park as a neighborhood-scale main street. Introduce new development with ground-floor retail, restore older storefront buildings, and enhance the streetscape.

6
Implement the recommendations of the Market Street Corridor Study.

7
Revitalize the small commercial area at Princess Place Drive and 21st Street as a neighborhood-scale main street. Introduce new development with ground-floor retail, restore older storefront buildings, and enhance the streetscape.

8
Infill setback areas along portions of Oleander Drive and College Road near their intersection.
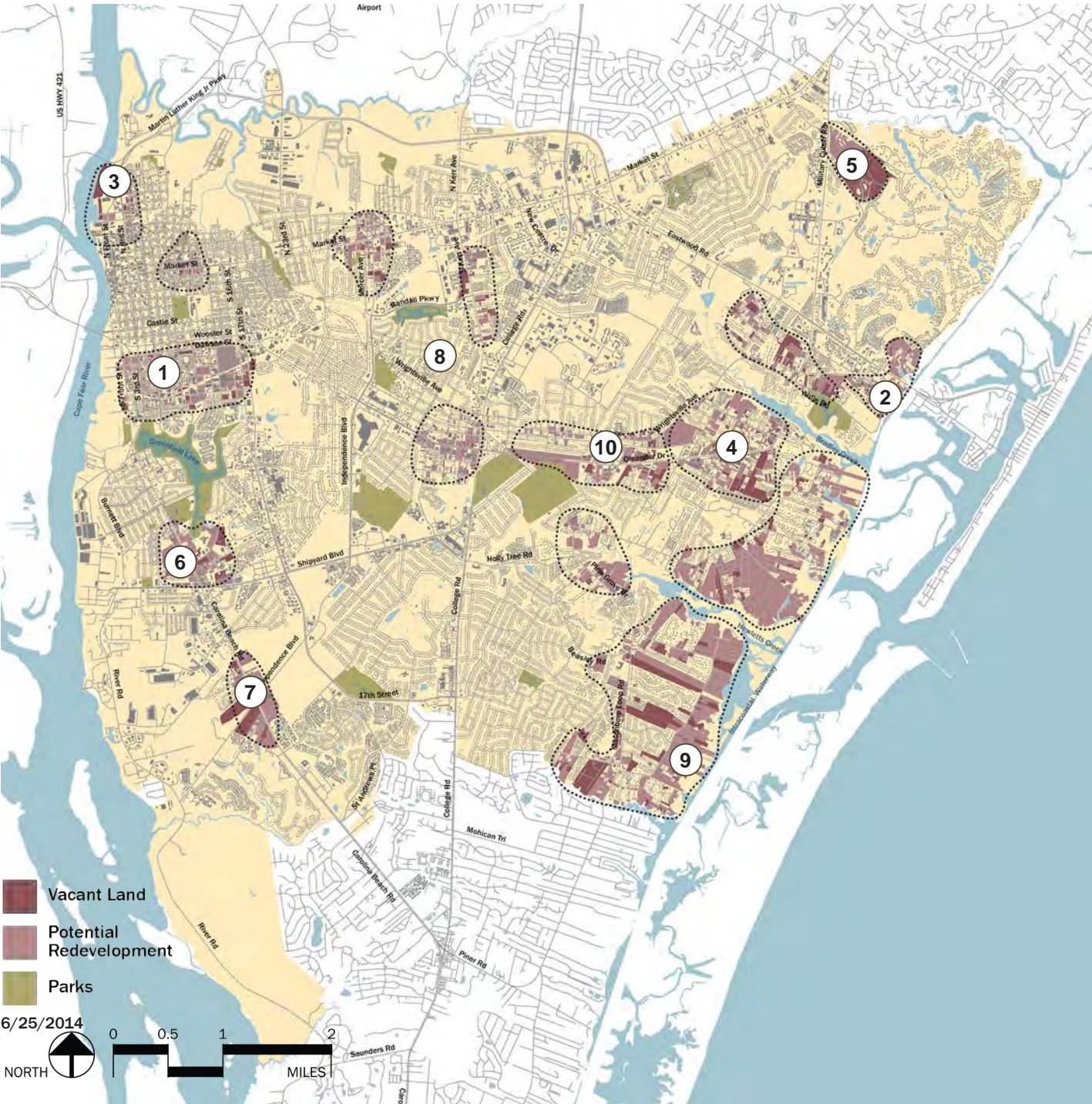
9
Redevelop Pavilion Place as a pedestrian-focused main street, connecting new uses at Lumina Commons and Wrightsville Avenue.

10
Reinforce the neighborhood-scale main street along Wrightsville Avenue. Concentrate parking behind buildings.

2.6 Neighborhood Transitions

Vacant Land

Potential Redevelopment

Parks

6/25/2014

NORTH

0   0.5   1   2
MILES

Major Themes

| Combine underutilized lots to create connected, coordinated developments. | Focus on accessory housing. | Create softened transitions between commercial and residential areas. | Introduce a variety of housing types. | Establish neighborhood conservation districts with guidelines for infill and redevelopment. |

Top 10 Trends Prioritized by the Public

The following are the trends from the "Neighborhood Transitions" scenario that received the most positive feedback, from both the public launch and comments received online. Trends are ranked in order of priority given. Numbers correspond with map locations on previous page.

1

Identify and create incentives for the conversion of old industrial buildings to new employment and housing uses.

2

Develop a high-density urban center along the intracoastal waterway.

3

Create a coordinated master plan for the northern riverfront area that considers transitions to Brooklyn Arts District and Cape Fear Community College.

6

Redevelop the Starway Flea Market. Create roadway connections from Carolina Beach Road to adjacent neighborhoods. Make a smooth transition from high to low densities.

5

Develop and redevelop with multi-family housing (areas north of Old MacCumber Station Road). Establish bike and pedestrian connections to surrounding area.

4

Establish the architectural character of transitioning neighborhoods and use design guidelines to ensure compatibility.

7

Develop and redevelop parcels with single-family homes and connect housing to employment.

8

Accessory Dwelling Unit (Backyard Cottage)

Courtyard Cottages

Townhomes

Allow for additional housing types such as backyard cottages, courtyard cottages, and townhomes within established residential areas throughout the city.

9

Combine lots to create a sensible block structure as opposed to disconnected street segments. Create walkable waterfront villages.

10

Allow for conversion of single-family homes to non-residential uses and create bike and pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods.