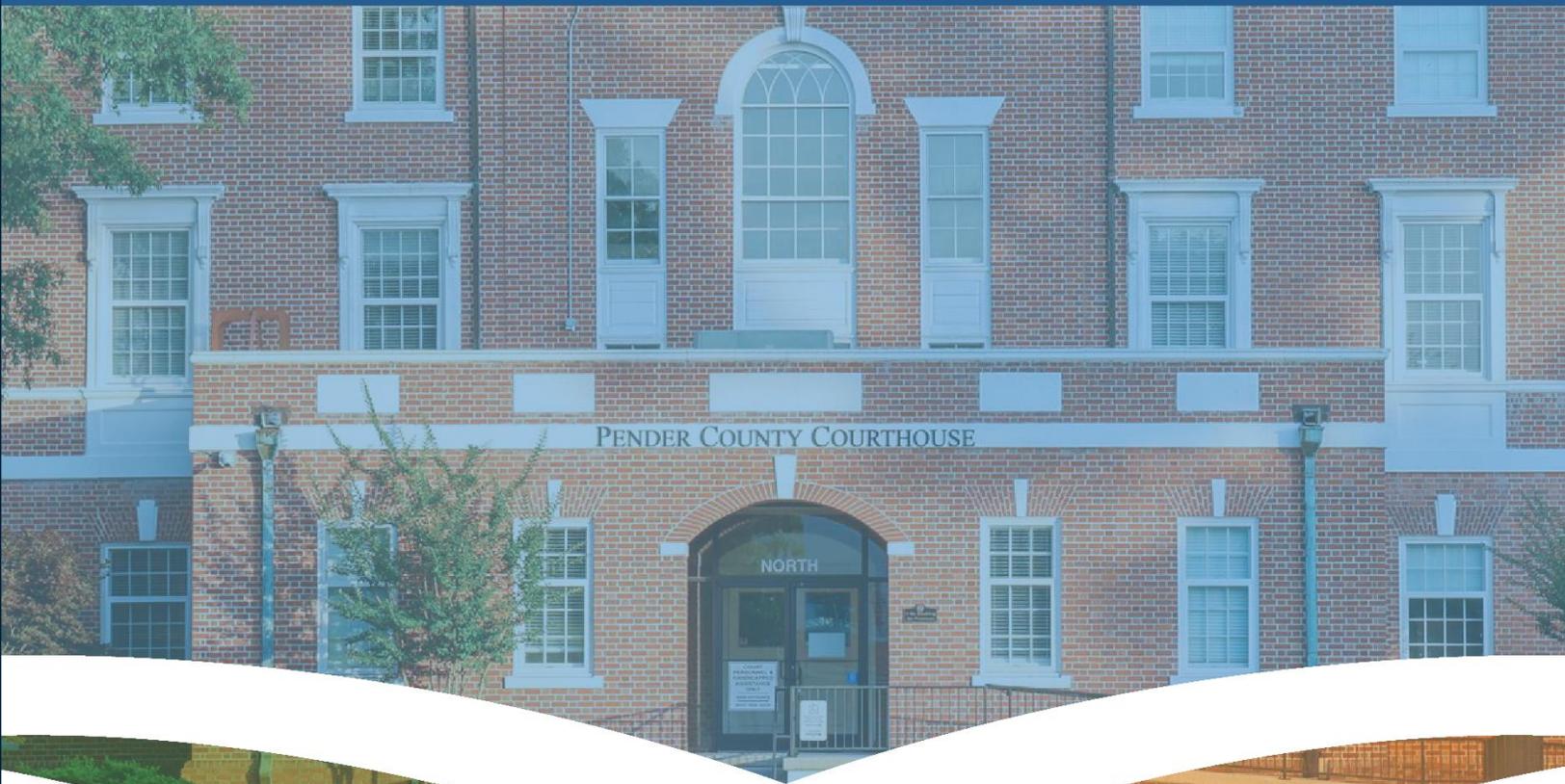


IMAGINE PENDER 2050

COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

Adopted November 3, 2025



IMAGINE PENDER

2050

**COMPREHENSIVE
LAND USE PLAN**

**ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
PENDER COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
ADOPTING THE IMAGINE PENDER 2050 COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE
PLAN**

WHEREAS, from April 2024 through October 2025, Pender County drafted a Comprehensive Land Use Plan with the assistance of Clarion Associates; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan is intended to provide policy guidance for future decisions regarding the growth and development of the County and comply with North Carolina General Statute 160D-501; and

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan was recommended for approval by the County's Planning Board in September 2025; and

WHEREAS, at a duly advertised meeting compliant with the notice requirements of North Carolina General Statute 160D-601, the Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on the draft Comprehensive Land Use Plan on October 6, 2025; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED THAT the Board of Commissioners, in a meeting duly noticed and assembled hereby adopts the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, effective immediately.

Adopted this 3rd day of November 2025.

PENDER COUNTY



VICE Chair, Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:



County Clerk

SEAL:



Acknowledgments

The Pender County Planning & Community Development team would like to extend our gratitude to all those who participated in or contributed to the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Pender County Commissioners

W. Randy Burton, Chairman (District 2)
Brent Springer, Vice-Chairman (District 5)
Brad George (District 1)
Jerry Groves (District 3)
Jimmy T. Tate, Ed.D. (District 4)

Pender County Planning Board

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Margaret Mosca
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Imagine Pender 2050 Steering Committee

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



Pender County is a rapidly growing county in southeastern North Carolina that is shaped by its unique natural resources, agricultural lands, and economic opportunities. It is home to pristine beaches, game lands, and environmentally important water bodies, such as the Black River, Northeast Cape Fear River, Intracoastal Waterway, and Atlantic Ocean. Apart from these environmental assets, popular attractions include the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center and the Moores Creek National Battlefield. Community businesses and partnerships with cross-jurisdictional organizations like the Greater Topsail Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism and Wilmington Business Development advance economic development efforts in the area while ensuring conservation of important agricultural lands.

The County has experienced significant growth since the last Comprehensive Land Use Plan was adopted in 2018. Development in Pender County is representative of what is happening throughout much of coastal North Carolina, where traditionally rural, agrarian communities are experiencing growth pressure and rapid land use change. This growth has resulted in increased demands on the school system and transportation network as well as the need for more public infrastructure and recreational opportunities to serve new families and households. Over the coming decades, Pender County leaders will be continuously confronted with land use decisions that impact community members and business owners alike. This plan provides a framework for guiding County elected officials, citizens, administrators, and staff through those decisions.



WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN?

A comprehensive land use plan is a long-term policy guide that expresses the values and aspirations of a community. It is the broadest public policy document a community can create for its future physical development, created from the input of community members, businesses, the Plan Steering Committee, the Planning Board, and the Board of County Commissioners. It includes a set of **Vision Themes** about the community's aspirations for the future; **Goals** to express desired outcomes for each of the plan topics; **Policies** to guide decision-making; and implementation **Actions** to achieve the Goals. The Plan is a tool to help prepare for and manage change while engaging and analyzing the impacts on existing residents and businesses.

The Plan should be used by County leaders, staff, community members, private landowners, and developers as the basis for evaluating land development decisions and capital investment opportunities in alignment with the long-term community vision. Overall, the Plan seeks to convey community-based values that set the framework for guiding land

use and development decisions.

The Plan is not a legally binding document, but it can serve as a foundation for budgeting decisions, zoning ordinance updates, infrastructure investments, and more. The Future Land Use Map, its associated land use categories, and the related policy guidance provide a roadmap for change in Pender County (see [Chapter 3 for the Future Land Use Map](#) and [Chapter 4 for the Goals and Policies](#)). Imagine Pender 2050 serves to meet the requirements of the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) and the state's requirements to administer zoning (NCGS 160D). For more information on these regulations, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

Assuming responsibility for the future is the first step in encouraging quality development that will help to ensure Pender County's long-term value as a place that fosters a safe, healthy, and vibrant community. Having a plan improves the County's ability to create more livable communities with significant environmental, ecological, social, recreational, and economic benefits. To that end, this Plan's Goals and Policies seek to provide a balance of private and public interests in a coordinated, cooperative, and fair manner.



ABOUT THE IMAGINE PENDER 2050 PROCESS

Set out in five phases, the process for developing the Plan first identified the new issues and opportunities that are different from the last comprehensive plan (Pender 2.0); evaluated existing conditions, trends, and future planning influences; drafted the Plan for community review; and finally, secured CAMA Plan certification and formal adoption by the Board of County Commissioners. This Plan was developed over a 20-month period that included several opportunities for community members to engage in the planning process. Eight Steering Committee meetings were held to guide development of the Plan. Ten community meetings were held throughout the county during Community Engagement Window #1 and five community meetings were held during Community Engagement Window #2. The Planning Board and the Board of County Commissioners were updated throughout the project.

Development of the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan required a detailed understanding of community aspirations, existing conditions, and current policy and planning influences. The Imagine Pender 2050 project team developed the following resources during this process. To make this document more easily navigable, these resources are available for download as standalone documents on the Pender County Planning & Community Development website. These documents are:

- **Community Policy Profile:** This report, developed in Phase 2, summarizes land use policy guidance from Pender County plans and other policy documents. The report contains brief descriptions and highlights the key policy topics addressed in each plan or policy document.
- **Fact Book:** Developed in Phase 3, the Fact Book provides a snapshot of existing conditions and projects future trends that provide a technical baseline for developing the Plan.



- **Planning Influences Report:** This report summarizes a locational analysis, sociodemographic dynamics, real estate market information, and economic opportunities.
- **Community Engagement Window #1 Summary Report:** This document provides a summary of the activities, objectives, and outcomes of Community Engagement Window #1, held during the fall of 2024.
- **New Issues and Opportunities Report:** This report identifies new issues and opportunities based on vision and policy themes generated from stakeholder interviews, Steering Committee discussions, and inputs received during public engagement.
- **Land Use Alternative Report:** This document shares information about the baseline and alternative land use and development scenarios prepared as part of Phase 4. It included an assessment of potential growth outcomes and was utilized in the preparation of the Future Land Use Map.
- **Community Engagement Window #2 Summary Report:** This document provides a summary of the activities, objectives, and outcomes of Community Engagement Window #2, held during the spring of 2025 to review the draft Plan.

HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

The Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan sets out policy guidance for land use decisions related to development proposals, conservation and preservation efforts, and other Pender County land use initiatives and programs. The policy guidance for the Imagine Pender 2050 Plan is organized through four components. These four components are described below:

- **Vision Themes** are the highest level of plan framework intended to express the ideal aspirations of the Plan.
- **Goals** express the desired outcomes related to each **planning topic**.



See a word in the body of the plan identified in **orange, bold text**? Check out the [Glossary in Appendix A](#) for a definition of the word.

- **Policies** are statements of commitment and direction toward achieving the Goals and describe positions to inform decision-making by the County.
- **Actions** identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies.



CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY VISION

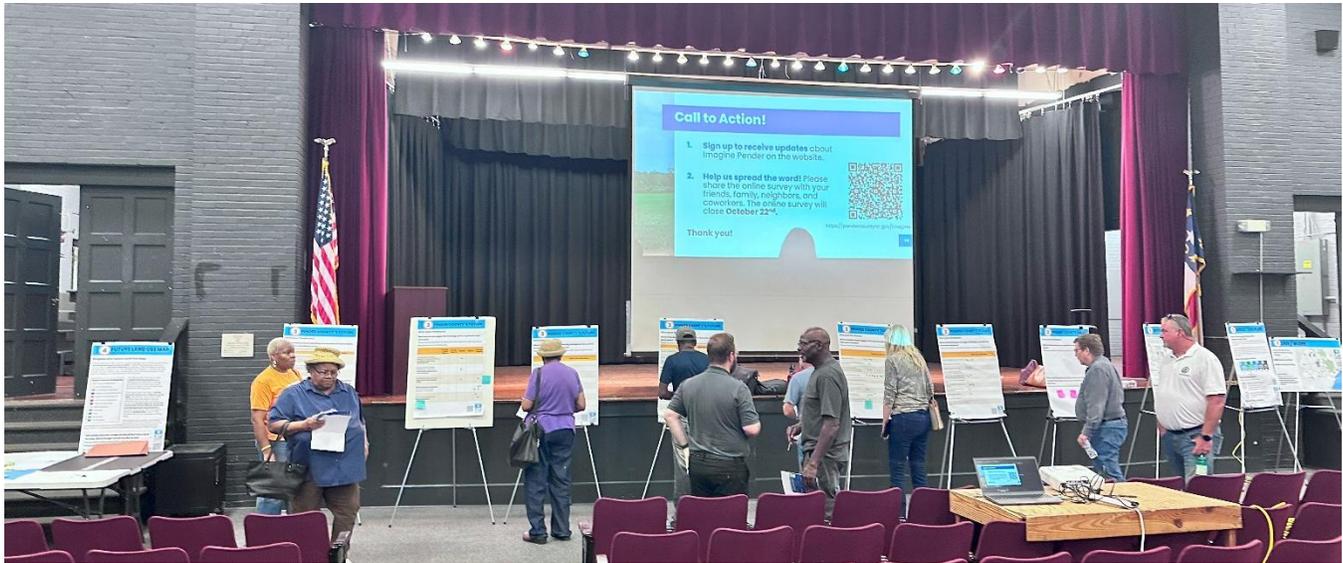


This chapter provides an overview of the community engagement efforts undertaken during the Imagine Pender 2050 comprehensive planning process and presents the first component of the plan framework, the Vision Themes. These Vision Themes serve as the guiding principles of the Plan.

Pender County is a unique place with diverse interests, ideas, and communities. Ensuring the new Comprehensive Land Use Plan reflects county-wide and area-specific priorities required extensive community input. This is why the planning process for Imagine Pender 2050 was shaped by community feedback; to build a strong foundation for land use planning to envision the next twenty-five years. Through the entire community engagement process, a broad representation of the County's residents provided their feedback to help shape the future of Pender County. Beginning in June 2024 at the North Carolina Blueberry Festival in Burgaw, the project team spent a year publicizing the Plan and collecting information, thoughts, comments, visions, and feedback from over 1,600 residents of the County.

Building a thorough and unified community vision through the engagement process was accomplished by working with community members from all walks of life. By inviting open dialogue and encouraging honest conversation, the Imagine Pender 2050 project team gained a sense of how community members felt regarding the current state of the County and what the most important issues are when imagining Pender County in 2050.





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Each member of the Pender County community is impacted in some way by land use decisions. The Imagine Pender 2050 comprehensive planning process provided a critical opportunity to shape the community's future and drive real action. The process focused on gathering the opinions of community members, elected officials, appointed officials, and various stakeholders by engaging with them on land use planning trends and influences so that they can make informed decisions about the County's future.

Community input is the foundation for the Plan's policy direction, and public feedback was documented throughout the project. The Imagine Pender 2050 planning process provided several key opportunities for public engagement.

Stakeholder Interviews

In Phase 1 of the project, community stakeholders were interviewed to learn more about long-range issues and opportunities that the Plan should address. This included Pender County staff, partner agencies, appointed officials, and elected officials. Information gathered at these meetings was then explored further to guide the direction of the Plan's development.

Imagine Pender 2050 Steering Committee

The Pender County Board of Commissioners appointed a resident-based steering committee to work with the project team and serve in an advisory role for development of the Plan. Comprised of 13 members, this Committee met throughout the project to

review work products and advise the project team on community engagement efforts. The Steering Committee was instrumental in helping to prepare a balanced plan that addresses the challenges and aspirations of the community.

Community Engagement Window #1

The first Community Engagement Window (CEW#1) was held in the fall of 2024. Pender County Planning & Community Development staff facilitated ten community meetings, conducted outreach at 15 different events, spoke with community groups and partners, and hosted an online survey over the course of seven weeks. This phase of engagement asked community members to identify aspirations for Pender County to be realized by the year 2050, which led to the vision and goals for the Plan. A total of 1,410 surveys were received and 177 people attended the in-person community meetings. Key takeaways from CEW#1 included the following:

- Participants want to see a more balanced approach to development that takes into consideration infrastructure, utilities, and services needed to serve existing and future development.
- Participants value the rural character, agricultural lands, and environmental assets of Pender County



- Participants frequently identified challenges with stormwater, flooding, and traffic.
- Participants want to see investments in accessible health services, **public transportation** (such as buses), environmental protection, and public amenities.

The Imagine Pender 2050 planning process included three engagement objectives: engagement satisfaction, representative engagement, and increased engagement. For increased engagement, the goals were to exceed the engagement totals from Pender 2.0, including the survey responses received at that time (1,374) and in person attendance (155). Both goals were achieved in CEW#1.

Community Engagement Window #2

The second Community Engagement Window (CEW#2) was held in the spring of 2025. Pender County Planning & Community Development staff facilitated five community meetings seeking feedback from the community regarding the draft Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. An online survey was also available from April 28 through June 6, 2025. This phase of engagement involved sharing the draft Plan with the public and asking community members to confirm the policy guidance included in the Plan. A total of 271 surveys were received and

approximately 128 people attended the in-person community meetings. Key takeaways from CEW#2 included the following:

- Participants strongly supported the Vision Themes as drafted.
- When asked to rank all nine Goals, the following were among the most highly ranked:
 - Sustainable and Managed Growth
 - Support Agricultural and Working Lands
 - Expanded Economic Opportunities
 - Environmental Conservation and Resilience
- Participants were either neutral about or supported the planning guidance shown in the Future Land Use Map and categories.
- Similar to CEW#1, participants wanted to see a more balanced approach to development that takes into consideration adequate infrastructure, utilities, and services.
- Similar to CEW#1, participants emphasized how they value the rural character, agricultural lands, and environmental assets of Pender County.
- Similar to CEW#1, participants emphasized challenges with stormwater, flooding, and traffic.

For more detailed information on the public participation process and the engagement objectives, please see the CEW#1 Summary Report and the CEW#2

Summary Report, available on the Pender County Planning & Community Development website.



COMMUNITY VISION THEMES

Built upon community feedback, the Vision Themes provide aspirational and guiding direction for the future of Pender County. Through the Imagine Pender 2050 community Vision Themes, land use planning and decision-making in the county will:

Coordinate Growth, Preservation, Conservation, and Infrastructure

Coordinate and support a balance of new residential and non-residential development in strategic growth areas, protect rural character and agricultural businesses outside of **growth areas**, and conserve sensitive and important natural areas. Support the provision of public **infrastructure** (roads, schools, parks, water, and wastewater) to adequately serve development in identified growth areas, while also addressing community needs related to health services, emergency services, and law enforcement.

Support Pender County's Fiscal Health

Secure a more fiscally sustainable future that reduces the tax burden of homeowners by leveraging the County's geographic position in the region to create new opportunities for the development and expansion of businesses and jobs in Pender County.

Maintain a High Quality of Life

Provide a high quality of life for residents and workers by proactively planning for **public services** and facilities (green space, parks, and historical, cultural, and recreational assets) that keep pace with the community's growth and development and efficiently leverage existing infrastructure and public resources.

CHAPTER 3

FUTURE LAND USE

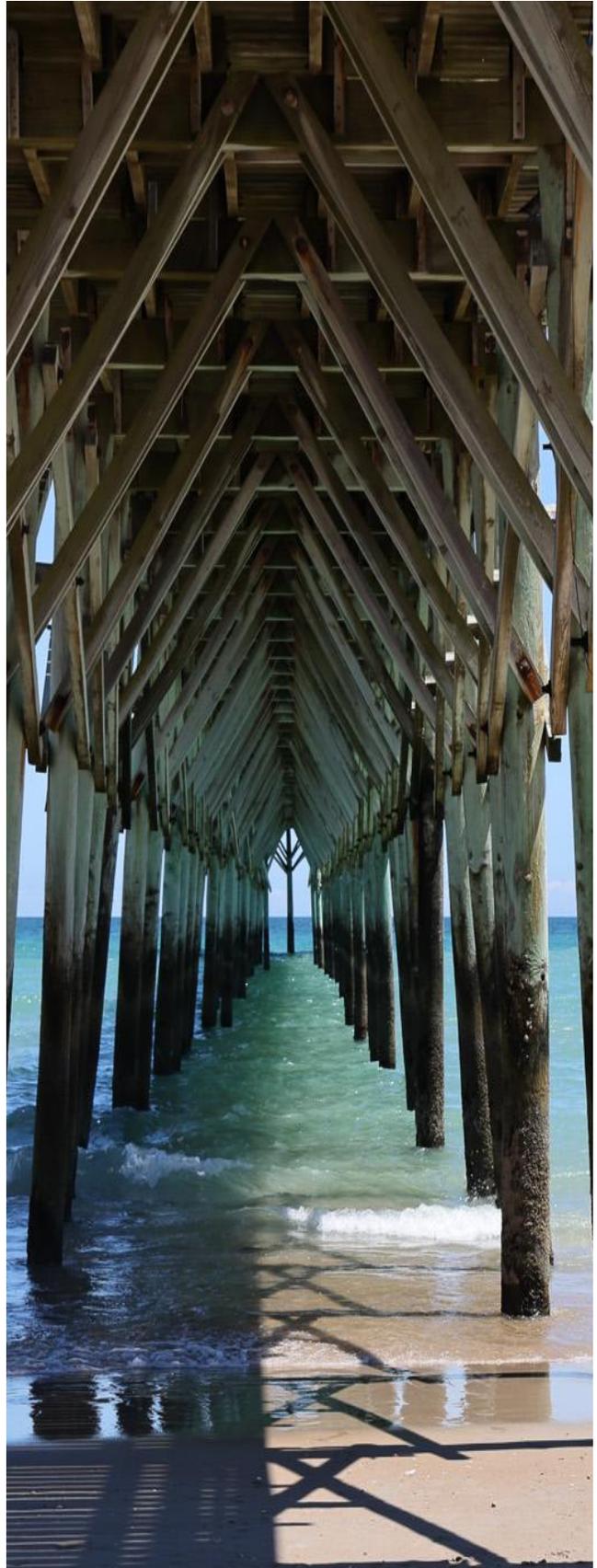


The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and Categories, together with the Policies of this Plan, serve as the framework for guiding coordinated and sustainable land use decisions in Pender County. The Plan should also be used to inform decisions related to future infrastructure investment, zoning, preservation of natural and rural areas, and steering future economic development opportunities. The Map is not only a critical part of the Plan, but is also legally required to be adopted and reasonably maintained by the County.

The Categories are the descriptive component of the guidance, while the FLUM is the spatial component and identifies where the categories are located. The placement of the Categories was determined by a combination of public input, existing conditions, this Plan's Vision Themes and Goals, market forces, and existing and planned infrastructure. This thoughtful process ensures that the FLUM reflects both current realities and future aspirations of the County.

The FLUM also identifies the municipalities in Pender County and their planning jurisdictions (which includes town or village limits and unincorporated extraterritorial jurisdiction, or ETJ). These municipalities have their own land use and zoning authority, and therefore the County's Plan does not apply Future Land Use Categories to those jurisdictions.

The FLUM guidance is also a broad statement of how growth and change in the County is intended to occur. When landowners look to invest in Pender County, they are encouraged to refer to this Plan.



THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP



How was the Future Land Use Map Developed?

Guided by the themes from public and stakeholder engagement, the Imagine Pender 2050 project team conducted multiple work sessions to develop the land use framework for the County. During this phase of the process, the team modeled a hypothetical future land use alternative for unincorporated Pender County to compare a new FLUM to the previously adopted Pender 2.0 FLUM.

The hypothetical land use alternative was a starting point for discussions with staff and the Steering Committee on changes to the FLUM. The project team then leveraged feedback from the Steering Committee and the public to prepare the preferred Future Land Use Map. For more information on the alternative map, please see the Land Use Alternative Report on the Pender County Planning & Community Development Department website.

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The following chapter provide descriptions of each Future Land Use Category. These descriptions include an outline of the character, pattern, intent, and characteristics of each Category, including the primary uses, secondary uses, discouraged uses, infrastructure, residential density, transportation needs, character and placemaking, and parking. The purpose is to illustrate the desired development type and features within each Future Land Use Category.

How to Use the Future Land Use Map and Future Land Use Categories

This chapter should be referenced when considering land use, infrastructure, and development related decisions, and policy implementation. The Future Land Use Map should be amended if significant changes occur. This will aid in consistency with changes to the County's official Zoning Map.

The color that identifies the Future Land Use Category on the Future Land Use Map is also provided on the page containing the narrative and development guidelines.

The following are key terms used to describe the Future Land Use Category characteristics:

- **Primary Uses:** The dominant land uses that serve as the focus of the Future Land Use Category and inform the character of an area.
- **Secondary Uses:** The supporting and complementary land uses that are compatible with the preferred use but not the primary focus of the area. When a project is proposed to include a secondary use, Pender County staff, the Planning Board, and the Board of County Commissioners should evaluate whether the project aligns with the intent for the Future Land Use Category and the surrounding area. Identifying the primary and secondary uses for each Future Land Use Category provides flexibility for new construction and redevelopment to be guided by market factors, while also achieving a level of understanding for the character of the area. Criteria for evaluating proposed secondary uses may include:
 - Considering the overall character of the area where the project is proposed and not just the project site.
 - Will the proposed design of the secondary use align with the intent of the Future Land Use Category, and will it adhere to the characteristics of that Category.
- **Discouraged Uses:** Land uses that are inconsistent with the desired development pattern within the Future

Land Use Category.

- **Residential Density:** On average, the number of housing units per acre that are envisioned for the Future Land Use Category. For example, two single-family homes on a one-acre parcel results in a density of two dwelling units per acre. Within this Plan, the residential density is calculated using gross density, rather than net density.
- **Infrastructure to Serve Development:** The form of water or wastewater service that is provided within the Future Land Use Category. This typically includes private well and septic within rural areas and centralized water and wastewater service within suburban and **mixed-use** areas.
- **Character and Placemaking:** Identifies the applicable and preferred types of development character and placemaking designs that should be provided in the Future Land Use Category. These elements are important in establishing a sense of

community identity and are intended to enhance the social and cultural aspects of an area to improve quality of life for residents and visitors.

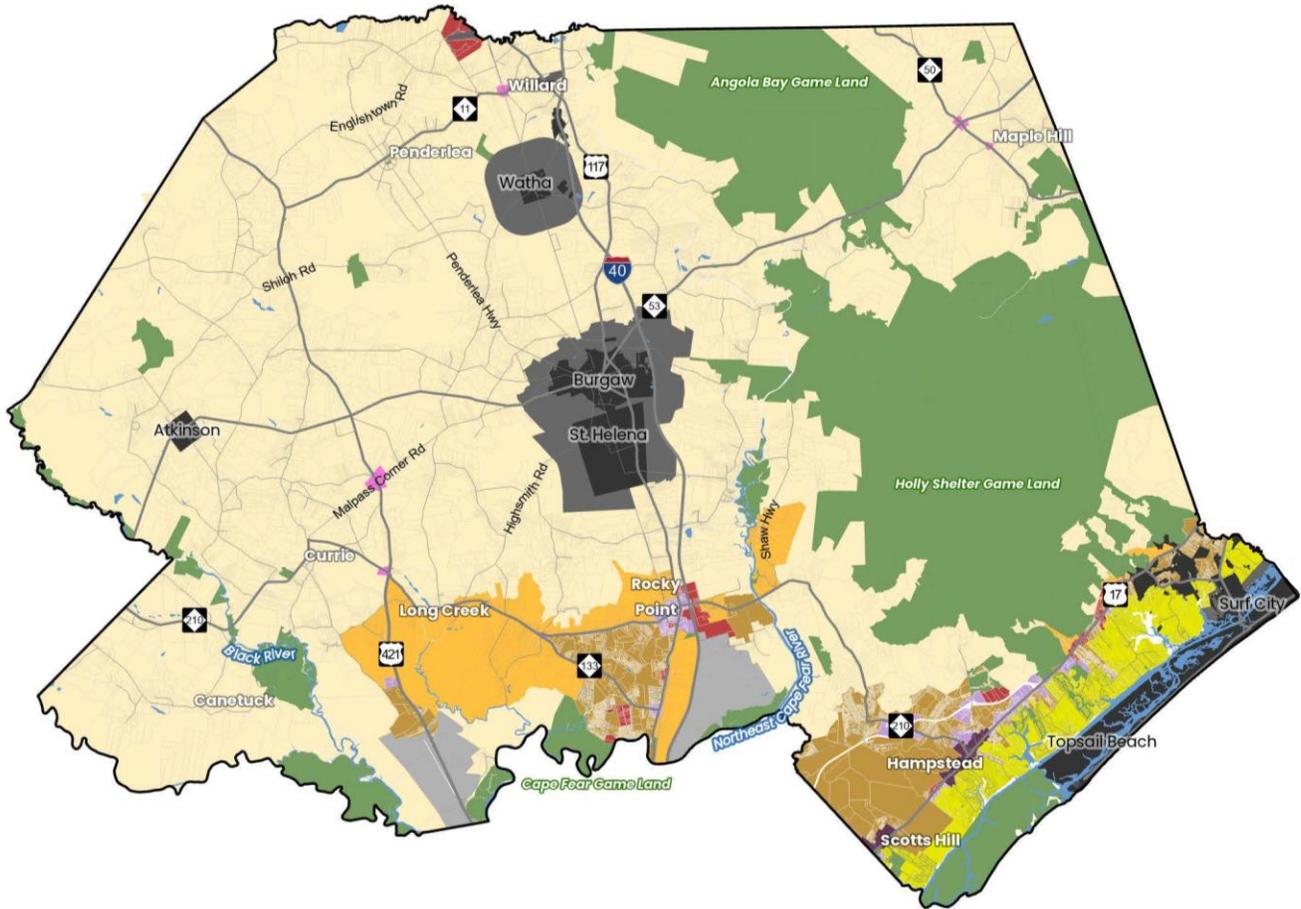
- **Transportation:** Identifies the desired transportation infrastructure for the types of development in the Future Land Use Category, including automobile, pedestrian, cyclist, and transit.
- **Parking:** Identifies the types of parking to be provided in the Future Land Use Category and its preferred scale, design, access, material surfacing, and orientation. These guidelines can foster the overall operational and social functionality of a place and can make a place feel more welcoming for the community.



Legislative Context

SL 2024-57, passed by the North Carolina General Assembly on December 11, 2024, established limitations on the ability of a local government to “down-zone” property. Therefore, any property owner of currently zoned Planned Development (PD) parcels has the option to choose between the Future Land Use Category identified in either the Pender 2.0 Comprehensive Land Use Plan or the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP



Future Land Use Categories

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Coastal Neighborhood (CN) | Regional Center (RC) | Municipality |
| Conservation & Recreation (CR) | Residential Neighborhood (RN) | Extraterritorial Jurisdiction |
| Industry & Commerce (IC) | Rural Agricultural (RA) | |
| Heavy Commercial (HC) | Rural Crossroads (RX) | |
| Neighborhood Center (NC) | Rural Neighborhood (RU) | |



CONSERVATION & RECREATION (CR)

Description

The Conservation and Recreation Category denotes areas that are identified to support the conservation of natural resources, promote recreational opportunities, and foster environmental access and education. This Category includes lands owned by federal, state, or county government (e.g., Holly Shelter Game Land, Angola Bay Game Land, Cape Fear Game Land), as well as lands for which a conservation easement applies that significantly restricts future development. This Category also includes the County's public park sites and areas used for private recreation, including golf courses that are part of existing developments.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

Land within this Category should continue to be preserved and conserved for recreational and conservation use by future generations. Lands currently held in conservation are intended to be maintained in a natural state with limited development to support nature-based recreational uses. These lands also serve as resources for the public through environmental education opportunities, natural aesthetic qualities, wildlife habitat, and stormwater drainage.

Public parks owned and operated by the County are included in this Category, as are golf courses that are part of an existing development. Lands that become permanently protected through conservation easements, acquisition by state or federal government agencies, or properties acquired through flood buyout programs should be added to this Category. Sites that are identified as historically or culturally significant may also be suitable for this Category.

Development in this Category is generally discouraged unless it is intended to support public access, recreational, or educational opportunities.

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural lands• Conservation lands• Parks and recreation facilities
SECONDARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active and passive recreation uses (such as nature trails and greenways)• Nature-based educational uses that have limited environmental impact (such as a nature center)
DISCOURAGED USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-residential development unless listed as Secondary Use• Residential development
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private well and septic systems
RESIDENTIAL DENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not appropriate for new residential uses
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian and Cyclist: nature trails and multi-use paths
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small surface lots to serve educational and recreational uses, preferably with natural surfaces or pervious materials

RURAL AGRICULTURAL (RA)

Description

Rural Agricultural is the predominate Future Land Use Category as it encompasses nearly 60% of the land area in Pender County. These are lands with a mix of agricultural uses, low-density residential uses, and limited rural commercial uses. These lands support and protect the agricultural heritage of the County.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

Rural Agricultural areas are intended to maintain the rural character and agricultural lands valued by the community. These areas are an essential part of the County's economy and agricultural heritage. Preservation of prime farmland soils for the continued prosperity of farming and forestry operations should be prioritized.

Traditional, rural, large-lot subdivisions or clustered conservation subdivisions that permanently protect open space are appropriate forms of development. Conservation subdivisions are preferred in areas with significant floodplain, wetlands, or other environmentally sensitive areas. Limited non-residential uses may be accommodated where appropriately located to provide services, amenities, and employment to rural residents. Rural event venues and agritourism uses that preserve the rural character of the area are also encouraged.

The residential development pattern is intended to be low-density, typically one dwelling unit an acre or less. Expansion of centralized water and sewer systems within this Future Land Use Category is discouraged unless it is necessary to protect public health when existing systems fail.

RURAL AGRICULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES

- Agriculture, farms, and forestry
- Single-family detached homes
- Manufactured homes

SECONDARY USES

- Agritourism
- Agricultural support services
- Individual rural-scale businesses
- Duplexes allowed on lots greater than one acre

DISCOURAGED USES

- Multifamily residential

INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT

- Private well and septic systems

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

- 1 unit/acre or less

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

- Pedestrian and Cyclist: multi-use paths

PARKING

- Small surface lots to serve non-residential uses, preferably using pervious surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff
- Homes are served by private driveways

RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD (RN)

Description

Rural Neighborhoods provide a transition in intensity from rural to suburban densities and uses. These lands are generally located on the fringe of medium density residential uses in the southern part of the County or within existing low-density residential developments.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

Rural Neighborhoods provide an alternative to the lowest density Rural Agricultural areas and allow for rural-style development on smaller lots. Conventional subdivisions or clustered conservation subdivisions that permanently protect open space are appropriate forms of development. Conservation subdivisions are preferred in areas with significant floodplain, wetlands, or other environmentally sensitive areas. **Incremental density** housing is supported where appropriately located.

Rural Neighborhoods are generally located near intersections of larger rural roads and state highways that can or do already serve the surrounding community with commercial uses. Limited non-residential uses, such as neighborhood-scale commercial, retail, and service businesses, are supported in these areas at key road intersections and should be designed to reduce impacts on adjacent residential neighborhoods. Centralized water and sewer service is generally not available in these areas. The residential development pattern is intended to be low-density, typically two dwelling units an acre or less.

RURAL NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES

- Single-family detached homes
- Manufactured homes

SECONDARY USES

- **Incremental density** residential uses: duplex or triplex
- Limited non-residential uses, such as rural-scale commercial retail and service businesses at crossroad intersections
- Civic and institutional uses

DISCOURAGED USES

- Multifamily residential uses
- Industrial uses

INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT

- Private well and septic systems

RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

- 2 units/acre

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

- Pedestrian and Cyclist: multi-use paths
- Cyclist: paved roadway shoulder

PARKING

- Small surface lots to serve non-residential uses, preferably using pervious surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff
- Homes are served by private driveways

RURAL CROSSROADS (RC)

Description

Rural Crossroads support and encourage clustering non-residential uses at key roadway intersections in rural areas. Rural Crossroads identifies areas where opportunities for rural centers for commerce and **place-based economic development** fit within the context of the rural community. These areas are located at key intersections and corridors to provide exposure and access to goods and services.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

Rural Crossroads are intended to be centers of activity in rural areas and allow for non-residential uses that provide services and amenities to residents and rural businesses. Individual businesses should have a smaller building footprint and generally be no more than 15,000 square feet in size.

While not suburban in character, these Rural Crossroads can be designed to support customers being able to park their car once and walk to adjacent commercial establishments that may share a parking lot. Secondary uses of heavier commercial establishments with outdoor storage should be designed to reduce impacts on neighboring businesses. Natural buffers should be provided between non-residential uses and nearby residential properties.

RURAL CROSSROADS CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighborhood-scale commercial (such as markets, retail, and restaurants)• Community-based institutions, community centers, clinics, and institutional uses
SECONDARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heavy commercial uses that support agricultural industries• Small-scale lodging (inn, bed and breakfast)• Single-family homes
DISCOURAGED USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multifamily residential uses• Industrial development
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private well and septic systems
RESIDENTIAL DENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 units/acre
CHARACTER AND PLACEMAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Courtyards, tree-lined walking paths, multi-use paths
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian: walking paths between parking areas and retail uses, multi-use paths• Cyclist: multi-use paths, paved roadway shoulder
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small surface lots to serve commercial uses, preferably using pervious surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff• Homes are served by private driveways

COASTAL NEIGHBORHOOD (CN)

Description

The Coastal Neighborhood category provides unique single-family housing options near natural coastal habitats. Coastal Neighborhood areas are located east of the US Highway 17 corridor and are generally within close proximity to estuarine waters. Much of the area within this Category includes established neighborhoods with a low to medium density development pattern. Low-impact development methods are encouraged for new development to reduce stormwater runoff impacts and support adjacent coastal surface water quality.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

Supporting the County's coastal character and natural habitat is a top priority for Pender County residents. Conventional subdivisions or clustered conservation subdivisions that permanently protect open space are appropriate forms of development. Unencumbered access to public trust coastal waters and maximum development setback from the shoreline is highly encouraged. Tree preservation and mitigation is encouraged as a means of preserving coastal habitats. Dedication of park space for public water access or as a means for the public to enjoy the natural coastal habitat is desired.

The residential development pattern is three units per acre or less. The primary form of development will be single family detached homes, but **incremental density**, such as duplexes, may also be appropriate. Smaller-scale, water-based commercial uses may be appropriate in some locations as well.

COASTAL NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single-family detached homes
SECONDARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water-based recreation uses• Incremental density: Duplexes• Appropriately scaled water-based commercial uses
DISCOURAGED USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multifamily residential uses• Most commercial and office uses• Industrial uses
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centralized water and wastewater
RESIDENTIAL DENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 units/acre
CHARACTER AND PLACEMAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural parks, tree-lined walking paths, multi-use paths, and public water access
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian: 5-foot sidewalks, multi-use paths• Cyclist: protected bike lanes and multi-use paths
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homes are served by private driveways• Small surface lots to serve commercial uses, preferably using pervious surfaces to reduce stormwater runoff

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD (RN)

Description

The Residential Neighborhood Category supports the growing population by establishing medium-density residential uses, including single-family (detached and attached) and **incremental density** integrated with limited non-residential, neighborhood-scale uses. This Category is vital to supporting Pender County's growing population by strategically locating residential development in areas that will not create conflicts with existing neighborhoods. The Residential Neighborhood areas were determined by their proximity to services that support a mixture of development types and are found in the southern and eastern portions of the County.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

Suburban scale residential neighborhoods that provide access, including bicycle and pedestrian access, to nearby amenities are appropriate forms of development. Townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes are suitable where compatible with adjacent properties or as part of a master planned community. Conventional subdivisions or clustered conservation subdivisions that permanently protect open space are also appropriate forms of development. Well-integrated, neighborhood-scale commercial and office uses are appropriate at key locations, particularly where accessible to area residents by foot. Automobile and bicycle/pedestrian connectivity between neighborhoods, both existing and developing, is required.

Age-restricted retirement housing is encouraged as a secondary use in order to facilitate increased housing and care options for families and seniors that are close to community services and facilities. Similarly, assisted living centers and convalescent homes can also be expected in the Residential Neighborhood Category.

The residential development pattern is three to six units per acre. The Residential Neighborhood Category is identified as a growth area, and as such, developments should be served by centralized water and sewer.

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single-family homes• Incremental density: townhomes, duplex, triplex, and quadplex
SECONDARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age-restricted retirement housing, assisted living centers, and convalescent homes• Small nodes of neighborhood-scale commercial or office uses• Neighborhood-scale institutional uses such as community centers or civic uses
DISCOURAGED USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multifamily residential (more than 6 dwellings in a building)• Industrial uses• Storage facilities
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centralized water and wastewater
RESIDENTIAL DENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-6 units/acre
CHARACTER AND PLACEMAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks, tree-lined streets with sidewalks, and multi-use paths• Plazas and courtyards in non-residential areas
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian: 5-foot sidewalks, multi-use paths, and signalized pedestrian crosswalks• Cyclist: protected bike lanes and multi-use paths
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homes are often served by private driveways or alley parking• Nonresidential parking should be located to the side or rear of buildings, encourage shared parking, connect parking to buildings with sidewalks, and include bicycle parking

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER (NC)

Description

The Neighborhood Center Category is primarily dedicated to non-residential uses that provide services, employment, entertainment, and amenities to area residents. This Category allows for a mix of medium- to high-density residential development that is integrated with non-residential uses.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

Development within this Category can provide a mixture of uses in a horizontal or vertical format and provide integrated architectural designs, human-scale signage, and multimodal connectivity between uses. Ideally, these uses are located in close proximity, allowing customers to access businesses and services by using sidewalks and paths from nearby housing. The area is encouraged to be designed to support customers' ability to park their car once and walk to adjacent commercial establishments that may share a parking lot. While mixed-use development is encouraged, single use developments that contribute toward an integrated land use pattern of appropriate commercial, office, civic, and residential uses are appropriate.

Land use and development within this Category is closely coordinated with existing and planned roadway transportation networks, while encouraging bicycle and pedestrian access from nearby neighborhoods. New developments in the Neighborhood Center Category should be designed as much as possible to reduce the number of driveways on the primary access road. Streetscaping should be considered in coordination with NCDOT and may involve right-of-way encroachment and tri-party agreements. Development in this category should use architectural features, reduced setbacks, and incremental transitions between uses of varying intensity.

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commercial uses, including neighborhood scale retail, restaurant, and office establishments• Small-scale multifamily (5-10 units per building)• Incremental density: townhomes, duplex, triplex, and quadplex
SECONDARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single-family detached• Local or regional institutional uses• Vertical mixed-use with residential or office above ground-floor commercial or office of up to 2-3 stories
DISCOURAGED USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low-density residential uses• Industrial uses• Storage facilities
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centralized water and wastewater
RESIDENTIAL DENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 7-10 units/acre
CHARACTER AND PLACEMAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plazas, courtyards, and tree-lined streets with wide sidewalks
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian: wide sidewalks, signalized pedestrian crosswalks, and multi-use paths• Cyclist: protected bike lanes and multi-use paths
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nonresidential and multifamily parking should be located to the side or rear of buildings, encourage shared parking, and connect parking to buildings with sidewalks• On-street parking integrated with streetscaping elements is also appropriate• Homes are often served by private driveways or alley parking• Bicycle parking

REGIONAL CENTER (RC)

Description

The Regional Center Category supports commercial, office, and higher density residential uses that provide housing choices, shopping, and employment opportunities in strategic locations in the eastern part of the County. The Regional Center Category is intended to support regional commerce to increase retail, office, and entertainment opportunities in the County and support a balanced tax base.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

The Regional Center Category supports and encourages the provision of a mixture of residential and non-residential uses in a walkable format. Commercial and office uses are the primary form of development, and when residential development occurs, higher density development is appropriate to support a variety of housing choices. A mixture of uses is desired to allow customers to access businesses and services by using sidewalks and paths from nearby housing or to park once and walk to adjacent businesses, services, public spaces, and community centers.

A well-connected street grid that provides a framework for future, denser, and walkable development is highly encouraged in this area. New developments in the Regional Center Category should be designed to reduce the number of driveways on the primary access road. Streetscaping should be considered in coordination with NCDOT and may involve right-of-way encroachment and tri-party agreements. Development in this category should use architectural features, reduced setbacks, and incremental transitions between uses of varying intensity.

REGIONAL CENTER CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commercial retail including restaurants, shopping, and entertainment• Office uses such as corporate headquarters, hospital, or medical facilities, and small businesses• Higher-density residential, such as townhomes and multifamily apartments• Vertical mixed-use with residential above ground-floor commercial or office of up to 3-4 stories
SECONDARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hotels• Incremental density: townhomes, duplex, triplex, and quadplex• Local or regional institutional uses such as community centers and civic or educational institutions
DISCOURAGED USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single-family detached housing• Establishments requiring large surface parking lots located in front of buildings• Industrial uses• Storage facilities
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centralized water and wastewater
RESIDENTIAL DENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12-15 units/acre
CHARACTER AND PLACEMAKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plazas, courtyards, and tree-lined streets with sidewalks• When required, stormwater ponds should be integrated as a part of an amenity or public park
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian: wide sidewalks, signalized pedestrian crosswalks, and multi-use paths• Cyclist: protected bike lanes, multi-use paths• Transit: Park and ride facilities, bus shelters
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grid street pattern that supports on-street parking• Surface parking lots should be located to side or rear of buildings and dispersed across the development and not clustered in one large lot• Tree-lined sidewalks should link parking to buildings and to adjacent sites• Bicycle parking

HEAVY COMMERCIAL (HC)

Description

The Heavy Commercial Category is designated to support more intensive commercial opportunities in appropriate locations and foster local entrepreneurship. Similar to Industry & Commerce, Heavy Commercial areas focus on providing locations for more job opportunities within Pender County. These developments support both the immediate community and the region at large by allowing residents and property owners to utilize their properties in ways that are not possible in typical urban or suburban environments.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

These areas are intended for development of flex or warehouse space, heavy commercial uses that require outdoor storage yards, artisanal and light manufacturing, or office employment uses to foster small and local businesses. Small businesses or trades that require warehouse space or showroom locations but do not necessarily need storefronts with road frontage are encouraged. When uses with outdoor elements, such as boat and RV storage or equipment rental are located along arterial roads, setbacks and buffers should be increased to reduce the visual impact to drivers. Development in this Category should provide adequate transitions to adjacent lower intensity uses, such as residential and commercial uses, in the form of vegetated buffers, landscaping, setbacks, and limited building heights.

HEAVY COMMERCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heavy commercial uses such as landscaping businesses, heavy equipment rental, machine shops, and other similar uses• Smaller scale artisanal manufacturing businesses• Warehousing and trade showrooms• Business and wholesale suppliers• Storage facilities
SECONDARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restaurants and caterers• Office uses• Convenience retail and gas station uses
DISCOURAGED USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Residential uses
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centralized water and wastewater
RESIDENTIAL DENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not appropriate for new residential uses
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian: 5-foot sidewalks and multi-use paths• Cyclist: protected bike lanes and multi-use paths
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parking should be located to the side or rear of development, as feasible, and should encourage shared parking and connect parking to buildings with sidewalks• Bicycle parking

INDUSTRY & COMMERCE (IC)

Description

The Industry & Commerce Category is created to support large scale, non-residential development. These areas focus on providing job opportunities at both a local and regional scale. Industry & Commerce uses are vital for the sustained fiscal health of the County, including a more balanced tax base. These areas also support Pender County's economic role in the region and are accordingly located in strategic areas and key transportation corridors, such as along the border of New Hanover County on US Highway 421 and along Interstate 40 in Rocky Point.

Character, Intent, and Development Pattern

These areas are intended to accommodate development of industrial, flex, or warehouse space, or office employment uses to attract and retain high-quality employers. Development within this Category should be designed to utilize landscaping and tree buffers at their road frontages to reduce the visual impacts from roadways. Providing adequate transitions to adjacent lower intensity uses, such as residential and commercial uses, in the form of vegetated buffers, landscaping, setbacks, and appropriate building heights is required. Targeted commuter transportation options should be considered, such as on-demand micro-transit or commuter-oriented fixed route shuttles from population centers in the County to these areas.

INDUSTRY & COMMERCE CHARACTERISTICS

PRIMARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industrial uses (manufacturing and assembly, research and development, warehousing)
SECONDARY USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited commercial or retail uses that serve the industrial development• Heavy commercial establishments
DISCOURAGED USES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Residential uses
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SERVE DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centralized water and wastewater
RESIDENTIAL DENSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not appropriate for new residential uses
TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pedestrian: 5-foot sidewalks to connect buildings and multi-use paths• Cyclist: protected bike lanes, multi-use paths• Transit: on-demand micro transit, commuter-oriented fixed route service, and bus shelters
PARKING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parking should be located to the side or rear of development, as feasible, and should encourage shared parking and connect parking to buildings with sidewalks• Bicycle parking

CHAPTER 4

GOALS AND POLICIES



The County has identified community priorities as a set of **Vision Themes, Goals, Policies,** and **Actions** to act as guidelines for growth, development, and conservation for the next 25 years. These statements reflect the comments, feedback, and priorities of the community that were received during the planning process as described in [Chapter 2](#). The Plan identifies nine overarching Goals, which are introduced in this chapter. Each Goal is accompanied by Policies, objectives, and sub-policies that act as statements of values and priorities of the community. These policies are not legally-binding, but should serve as a foundation for budgeting decisions, unified development ordinance updates, infrastructure investments, and more. The nine Goals in this Plan are as follows:

1. Sustainable and Managed Growth
2. Planned Public Facilities and Services
3. Expanded Economic Opportunities
4. Attainable Housing Choices
5. Supported Agricultural and Working Lands
6. Safe and Efficient Transportation
7. Environmental Conservation and Resilience
8. Community Unity and Civic Engagement
9. Enhanced Quality of Life and Community Health

Each Goal, Policy, and Action in the next two chapters all relate back to one or more of the Vision Themes that were introduced in [Chapter 2](#). This chapter provides the Goals and Policies, while the Actions, which are more specific, direct tasks that help move towards plan implementation, and are discussed in [Chapter 5](#).



SUSTAINABLE AND MANAGED GROWTH

Pender County will guide the location and intensity of growth by aligning land use planning and utility expansion that is anticipated for the next 25 years. The County will encourage more intensive development in strategic growth areas, while preserving and protecting important natural assets, rural character, and agricultural lands. This approach is desired to reduce the burden on transportation, infrastructure, and stormwater systems due to growth.

POLICY 1.1. Balanced Approach to Land Use

Objective 1.1: Pender County shall guide appropriate land use decisions related to growth and conservation using the Future Land Use Map and associated policy guidance in the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The County shall support development in growth areas where the necessary infrastructure – roads, water, sewer, broadband/wireless communication, electricity, and schools – is readily available, planned, or can be most cost effectively provided and extended to serve existing and future development.

1.1.A. Growth Areas

The County will support a growth pattern that focuses on accommodating and supporting future growth by encouraging strategically placed high and low-density residential development, mixed-use development, and commercial development. Lands most suitable for development that require centralized

infrastructure service (Coastal Neighborhood, Neighborhood Center, Residential Neighborhood, Regional Center, Industry & Commerce, Heavy Commercial) should be leveraged to maximize opportunities for meeting housing, economic development, and government fiscal sustainability objectives.

1.1.B. Conservation, Agricultural, and Working Lands

Pender County will support low-density residential and compatible commercial development in rural areas to preserve agricultural and environmental lands and maintain rural character.

1.1.C. Regulations for New Development

The County shall require all development to adhere to the land use regulations set forth in the County's Unified Development Ordinance. Accordingly, the County shall utilize any and all zoning and subdivision procedures, allowed per North Carolina General Statutes, to preserve the unique

characteristics of Pender County. This may include – but shall not be limited to – overlay districts, cluster development requirements, density incentives, open space allocation, tree preservation, school site reservation, reservation of sites for public and recreational facilities, conditional zoning, and other tools as may be necessary.

1.1.D. Compatible Development

The County supports new commercial and multifamily developments that blend with surrounding neighborhoods and limit traffic, noise, light, and other infrastructure impacts on existing residential uses, as well as sufficiently address stormwater runoff.

1.1.E. Development Review

The County supports an efficient, transparent, and predictable development review and approval process that includes consideration of hazards and infrastructure impacts.

POLICY 1.2. Infrastructure Carrying Capacity and Coordination

Objective 1.2: Pender County will ensure that the location, capacity, and provision of public infrastructure systems are consistent with the Future Land Use Map and the Sustainable and Managed Growth Goal. The intent of this policy is to support coordination with utility providers, capital improvement planning, and regional partners to meet housing, economic development, and preservation goals.

1.2.A. Coordination between Pender County Planning and Public Utilities

The County shall develop a process for coordinating the provision of water and sewer infrastructure by Pender County Utilities in the strategic growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Map and Water and Wastewater Master Plans.

1.2.B. Utility Master Planning

The County should consider updating the Water Master Plan and the Wastewater Master Plan (2006). Also, consider formalizing a long-range strategy with Pender County Utilities to develop a tiered growth map, identifying current areas of water and wastewater service and areas that align with the Future Land Use Map and plans for infrastructure extension in the short-, medium-, and long-term horizon (i.e. 5, 15, and 25 years).

1.2.C. Coordination on Current Infrastructure Needs

The County shall develop a process to identify and address current infrastructure gaps, in coordination with Pender County Planning and Community Development, Pender County Schools, Pender County Utilities, the Board of County Commissioners, and others, as necessary.

1.2.D. Capital Improvement Planning

Following adoption of this Plan, the County shall develop a process for coordinating capital improvement planning with the implementation of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. When considering the locations of new public or community water or wastewater facilities the County will consult the Future Land Use Map, particularly the location for growth areas, to guide capital investment decisions and evaluate infrastructure and service needs (such as fire and emergency services).

1.2.E. Regional Coordination

The County shall continue to seek opportunities for regional cooperation and coordination of land use and capital infrastructure planning with neighboring counties and municipalities to maximize service delivery, while minimizing duplication of infrastructure and services.

1.2.F. Support of Economic Development

The County shall continue to consider expanding public water and wastewater

systems to serve priority nonresidential and economic development areas when fiscally sustainable and compatible with the Future Land Use Map. This may apply to all areas that serve existing commercial and industrial uses that have inadequate or degraded service levels or environmental concerns with onsite systems.

1.2.G. Package Treatment Plants

The County discourages new private package wastewater treatment plants, unless it can be demonstrated that their use is consistent with the development pattern described on the Future Land Use Map and expansion of centralized sewer is unlikely in the near future.

1.2.H. Wastewater Treatment within Growth Areas

The County, with coordination between the Planning & Community Development Department and Pender County Utilities, shall only allow the development of private **wastewater treatment facilities** within the growth areas identified on the Future Land Use Map and where the expansion of centralized public or private sewer services is not feasible at the time of development. The County will continue to require a consistency review with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Wastewater Master Plan for construction or expansion of private wastewater systems.

POLICY 1.3. Water Supply Coordination

Objective 1.3: Pender County will seek to provide adequate water supply to accommodate growth, support economic development, and protect natural assets. The intent of this policy is to manage the water supply through watershed regulations, water conservation programs, water supply expansion efforts, and adequate fire protection.

1.3.A. Watershed Quality Protection

The County will continue to seek ways to protect water quality, including through water supply watershed regulations and the Watershed Districts as identified in the Unified Development Ordinance.

1.3.B. Water Supply Expansion

The County will evaluate ways to expand the water supply to improve drinking water quality. This could include:

- Modifying the water purchase agreement with the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority to meet estimated growing demand.
- Maintaining the current Interbasin Transfer Certificates to allow for expansion of the potable water supply to additional areas of the County.
- Investing in capital projects that establish new water sources and result in improved drinking water

quality.

1.3.C. Maintaining Adequate Fire Protection

The County will continue to ensure that adequate water pressure is available to meet fire suppression needs and to keep pace with the demands of the growing seasonal population where public water is provided. Adequate fire protection needs will be coordinated with efforts to align capital improvement planning and the implementation of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

POLICY 1.4. Consistency with NC General Statute

Objective 1.4: This Plan was written to consistently apply planning and zoning provisions of the North Carolina General Statutes (G.S. 160.D). Any future updates to G.S. 160.D should be reviewed and this Plan should be updated to comply with state law.

1.4.A. Downzoning Limitations

Per G.S. 160D-601(d), none of the policies or Future Land Use designations included in this Plan shall have the effect of downzoning a property in Pender County's planning and zoning jurisdiction without the consent of property owners. Residential densities for properties that are zoned Planned Development (PD) as of the date of the adoption of this Plan will retain the future land use category previously adopted as part of the Pender

2.0 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. If the State of NC repeals or modifies 160D-601(d), this policy will be changed to comply with the revised statute.

1.4.B. Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) Permitting Process

No policies in this Plan nor future land use designations or descriptions are more restrictive than those contained in the North Carolina Administrative Code (NCAC) for the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA). Accordingly, permits should continue to be issued based solely on the requirements of the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management (NCDCM) and NCAC Title 15A, Chapter 07: Coastal Management.

SUSTAINABLE AND MANAGED GROWTH ACTIONS

The following Actions, summarized below, identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies. For more information on these Actions, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

- 1.** Annually Review the Future Land Use Map
- 2.** Update the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to Align with the Plan
- 3.** Consider Density Bonuses for Conserving Land
- 4.** Prepare Small Area Plans
- 5.** Consider Procedural Changes to Development Review
- 6.** Explore Urban Design Guidelines
- 7.** Allow Multifamily Developments in Certain Zoning Districts By-Right
- 8.** Establish a Committee of County Departments Involved in Growth and Development
- 9.** Evaluate Water Quality
- 10.** Study Additional Sources for Potable Drinking Water
- 11.** Establish a Wellhead Protection Plan
- 12.** Test Private Drinking Water Wells
- 13.** Prepare a Cost of Land Use Fiscal Impact Analysis
- 14.** Implement Water and Wastewater Management Actions

PLANNED PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

Support the development of adequate public facilities and services to meet community needs in alignment with land use planning. Improve public safety, health, and quality of life, by aligning long-term land use planning and capital investments to support schools, broadband service, and parks and recreation.

POLICY 2.1. Public Waterway Access

Objective 2.1: Maximize public access to the public trust waters of the coastal region for residents and visitors.

2.1.A. Collaboration to Enhance Public Waterway Access

The County supports efforts to work with local groups and state and federal agencies to secure and maintain public waterway access points throughout the County for all residents and visitors. The County will consider any state or federal financial assistance that may be available to increase the inventory of public waterway access. The County also supports the preservation and maintenance of areas that have traditionally and historically been used for public access.

2.1.B. Public Waterway Access Amenities

The County supports the facilitation of state and federal funding of piers or other amenities for crabbing, fishing, or public

estuarine access. In coordination with efforts to support conservation easements, utilize conservation easements with public access considerations to increase access to public trust waters.

Public Water Access & State Law

North Carolinians and visitors to the state have traditionally had “the right to navigate, swim, hunt, fish and enjoy all recreational activities in the watercourses of the State and the right to freely use and enjoy the State’s ocean and estuarine beaches and public access to the beaches” (NC Gen. Stat. § 1-45.1). The Coastal Resources Commission requires comprehensive plans to include policy guidance related



2.1.C. Waterfront Land Acquisition

The County will encourage the State of North Carolina and area local governments to diligently pursue the acquisition and development of waterfront properties for public use, particularly regarding boating access and along the Intracoastal Waterway.

2.1.D. Boating Access

The County will continue to work with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission Boating Infrastructure Program or similar programs to identify and acquire land for public boat ramps and ancillary parking facilities for public trust waters.

2.1.E. Public Trust Waters Navigation

The County opposes any land use which interferes with the public right to navigate or utilize existing access to any public trust waters.

2.1.F. ADA Accessibility

The County supports the provision of public water access sites that are accessible to people with disabilities. The County may seek funding to enhance facilities to improve accessibility for public water access sites.

2.1.G. Dredging

The County will continue to work with the Army Corps of Engineers and any other State and Federal agencies to ensure continued dredging and maintenance of

channels and rivers as needed to keep these facilities open to navigation while protecting the environmental integrity of the waterways in question.

POLICY 2.2. Parks and Recreation

Objective 2.2: Pender County will support community health and quality of life for residents and visitors through the provision of well-maintained, appropriately located parks, recreation, greenways, trails, and open spaces. The intent of this policy is to support parks and recreation through long-range planning efforts, the development of regional parks and community centers, continued maintenance and funding, and co-location of amenities.

2.2.A. Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The County shall coordinate the development of, and maintenance for, recreational amenities with the Pender County Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This includes improving connectivity for bicycle and pedestrian facilities with schools, parks, and existing amenities within local municipalities.

2.2.B. Regional Parks and Community Centers

The County shall support the expansion, development, and continued maintenance of community centers and

large regional parks as primary recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

2.2.C. Maintenance, Funding, and Resources for Parks and Recreation

The County shall establish a maintenance division within the Parks and Recreation Department. The County shall allocate increased funding and resources for the enhancement and maintenance of existing and future parks and recreation facilities.

2.2.D. Co-Location of Parks and Recreation with Schools

The County shall continue to support the shared use of school facilities for recreational opportunities and community activities. The County shall coordinate with the Pender County Board of Education and partner with civic groups to co-locate parks and recreation sites on or adjacent to school property, as appropriate.

2.2.E. Game Lands

The County encourages the continued partnership with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission for appropriate usage of the state game lands for recreational opportunities.

2.2.F. Intergovernmental Coordination for Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

In coordination with the Safe and Connected Transportation Goal, evaluate ways to create more greenways and consider the development of a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan. Continue to use the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to apply for grants and projects that can foster more recreational opportunities through greenways and trails.

2.2.G. Recreational Lands

The County encourages and supports expansion and preservation of recreational lands, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas along the coast, riparian areas, and within floodplains. Coordinate with regional partners (such as Wilmington Business Development, municipalities, tourism development authorities, local chambers of commerce, New Hanover County, and Jacksonville Onslow Economic Development) to include recreational opportunities in tourism and economic development efforts.

POLICY 2.3. Community Recreation and Open Space Benefits in New Development

Objective 2.3: Where possible, Pender County will require new developments to provide community recreation opportunities in the form of open space or parks and recreation facilities. The intent of this policy is to support regulations, development agreements, or other programs to create additional community recreational benefits in coordination with Pender County’s goals for growth.

2.3.A. Development Agreements

The County may consider development agreements as a means to meet community recreation and open space goals (in accordance with NCGS 160D).

2.3.B. Locating Open Space

Where possible, the County shall require development plans to locate open space and amenities adjacent to other open space areas, County parks facilities, or state, federal, or other protected lands to maximize connectivity.

2.3.C. Recreation Facilities and Recreation Standards

The County shall continue to enforce regulations requiring the construction of appropriate recreational amenities for applicable developments. The County shall continue to ensure that the Unified Development Ordinance regulations

clearly define recreation standards, which include reasonable and quantifiable areas for facilities or fees-in-lieu.

2.3.D. Passive Recreation

Prioritize the proportion of open space dedicated to passive recreation to support resilience and preserve habitat and environmentally sensitive areas.

2.3.E. Upland Recreation Facilities

The County shall ensure that required open spaces as part of new development will include usable upland areas that can support passive or active recreation opportunities.

POLICY 2.4. Planning for Schools

Objective 2.4: Pender County will strive to provide exceptional schooling and award-winning service to Pender County’s growing school-age population. The intent of this policy is to support Pender County Schools by fostering regional cooperation, long-range planning, co-location of facilities, and land acquisition for schools.

2.4.A. Regional Cooperation

The County supports regional cooperation for all local governments, including the Technical Review Committee, to advise public school officials of pending developments and population trends so that they may adequately plan for school capacity needs.

2.4.B. Long-Range Planning for Schools

The County supports long-range planning for the school system to establish future enrollment figures, capital improvement needs, and funding constraints. This includes coordination between the Pender County Planning & Community Development Department and Pender County Schools facilities planners to adequately plan for future public school enrollment needs.

2.4.C. School Land Acquisition

The County encourages local government collaboration in identifying and acquiring land for new schools and to support long-range planning for co-locating other public facilities, such as parks and libraries, on or near school sites.

2.4.D. School Site Coordination with Development

The County will evaluate methods to support adequate school capacity in coordination with growth and development in Pender County. The County may consider conditional approvals and development agreements to allow for the dedication or reservation of land for school sites in the development approval process.

2.4.E. Support of State Legislation

The County will consider supporting the enactment of new state legislation, such as allowing for impact fees or an

adequate public facilities provision, to ensure that the public infrastructure services and facilities, such as schools, keeps pace with new development.

POLICY 2.5. Broadband Internet

Objective 2.5: The County shall coordinate with internet service providers (ISPs) and other similar entities to enhance broadband internet coverage in areas that are currently underserved.

2.5.A. Underserved Areas

The County shall continue to support the expansion and enhancement of broadband internet coverage, including closing gaps in remaining underserved areas. This includes supporting funding efforts to expand broadband service from state, federal and private partners.

POLICY 2.6. Coordinating Natural Resource Conservation with Public Facilities and Services

Objective 2.6: The County seeks to maximize opportunities to benefit public safety, health, and well-being by encouraging green infrastructure, soils and septic tank suitability, and public infrastructure system coordination with Areas of Environmental Concern.

2.6.A. Green Infrastructure Plan

Consider developing and integrating a **green infrastructure** plan and coordinating the plan with open space requirements and capital improvement planning.

2.6.B. Soils and Septic Tank Suitability

To promote community health and safety, and to protect the natural environment, the County will require that all septic tanks be in compliance with State Health regulations as administered by the Pender County Health Department.

2.6.C. Areas of Environmental Concern

Ensure that public infrastructure systems are sized, located, and managed so the quality and productivity of Areas of Environmental Concern (AECs) and other fragile areas are protected or restored.

PLANNED PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES ACTIONS

The following Actions, summarized below, identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies. For more information on these Actions, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

- 1.** Update Active, Passive, and Recreational Open Space Regulations
- 2.** Pursue Funding for Beach and Waterfront Access
- 3.** Update the 1993 Waterfront Access Plan
- 4.** Create Incentives for Public Trust Waters Access
- 5.** Create a Fund for Waterfront Capital Investments
- 6.** Implement Waterfront Access and Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Capital Planning
- 7.** Develop Plan for Public Boat Ramps
- 8.** Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Planning
- 9.** Evaluate Parks and Recreation Capital Projects to Balance Revenue Generation
- 10.** Plan for Expanding Athletic Fields and Programming
- 11.** Create a Schedule and Process for Updating Required Recreational

Units

- 12.** Create a Parks and Recreation Maintenance Policy
- 13.** Evaluate Opportunities to Increase Parks and Recreation Funding and Revenue Generation
- 14.** Coordinate with the School System to Plan for School Capital Needs
- 15.** Create a Formal Process for Assessing Impacts of New Developments on School Capacity
- 16.** Establish School Capacity Thresholds
- 17.** Establish School Site Reservation Policy
- 18.** Address Gaps in Broadband Access
- 19.** Green Infrastructure Practices

EXPANDED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Expand economic opportunities in industrial, commercial, and mixed-use development where transportation networks and utilities exist or are planned to support the creation of jobs and assist in balancing the tax base. Harness the potential of cultural and historic resources found across the County to support tourism.

POLICY 3.1. Expand Economic Development Opportunities

Objective 3.1: Pender County will maximize economic development opportunities and balance the tax base by implementing the vision set out in the Future Land Use Map. The intent of this policy is to increase opportunities for industrial and commercial development, economic partnerships, and redevelopment.

3.1.A. Primary Corridors and Nodes

Convert residentially zoned land to industrial or commercial in primary corridors (e.g., US Hwy 421 and in Rocky Point) where market potential for employment development is strong and where infrastructure exists, including roads, or extension of water or sewer is planned. Future nodes of nonresidential development should concentrate around key intersections where access to services exists.

3.1.B. Economic Partnerships

Continue to partner with Wilmington Business Development, municipalities, local chambers of commerce, and Jacksonville Onslow Economic Development to assist in marketing industrial projects.

3.1.C. Mixed-use Development

The County encourages mixed-use development at varying intensities in accordance with the specified Future Land Use Categories.

3.1.D. Redevelopment

Encourage the re-use or redevelopment of vacant buildings.

3.1.E. Brownfield Redevelopment

Support the recruitment of clean industries to existing brownfield sites in Pender County. Explore grant opportunities to mitigate brownfield sites.

3.1.F. Expand Pender Commerce Park

As limited spaces are available for new business development, the County will

explore opportunities to replicate the success of the Pender Commerce Park.

3.1.G. Regional Development Projects

Encourage and support industrial and commercial economic development projects for job growth in Pender County.

3.1.H. Commercial Waterfront Development

The County supports carefully developed commercial locations with waterfront access as a means to increase access to public trust areas and to support the tourism industry. Waterfront access should prioritize the preservation or addition of trees and limit impacts to the natural environment.

3.1.I. Office and Employment Centers

The County supports and incentivizes the development of large-scale office and employment centers to increase the number of jobs located within the County. In coordination with the Expanded Economic Opportunities Goal, seek opportunities to encourage and support small business owners.

POLICY 3.2. Key Industries and Tourism

Objective 3.2: Pender County will support key industries and tourism to improve economic development opportunities and promote a balanced tax base. The intent of this policy is to support and enhance the local air service, maritime-related industries, tourism, regional development, and entrepreneurship.

3.2.A. Air Service

Support investment in Wallace-Pender Airport to increase air service.

3.2.B. Maritime Industries

The County supports ongoing efforts to retain and enhance maritime-related industries. The County shall ensure land use regulations do not create barriers to commercial fishing, aquaculture, recreation, marine biotechnology, and coastal tourism.

3.2.C. Agriculture and Forestry

The County supports ongoing efforts to support agriculture and forestry industries.

3.2.D. Extractive Uses

Extractive uses, such as sand mines, are to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, depending on factors such as surrounding population density, groundwater concerns, and other environmental factors.

3.2.E. Tourism

The County supports development that promotes Pender County as a tourist and recreational destination. The County intends for such development to protect and preserve the natural environment and support public waterway access. The County shall strive to protect and enhance natural habitats, agricultural heritage, tree preservation, and surface water quality as an effective method for continued expansion of tourism-related industries and jobs.

3.2.F. Regional Development Projects

Encourage and support industrial and commercial economic development projects for job growth in Pender County.

3.2.G. Supporting Small Businesses and Entrepreneurship

The County will seek opportunities to encourage local entrepreneurs and small business owners to grow the locally based commercial sector. The County will support community entrepreneurship or business incubator opportunities in partnership with Cape Fear Community College, the Small Business Development Technology Center (SBDTC), and other local economic development agencies or organizations.

3.2.H. Investing in the Workforce

Partner with educational facilities to provide opportunities for training in targeted industries and promote

educational opportunities for workforce development.

3.2.I. Historical and Cultural Resources

The County will support the preservation of unique historical and cultural resources with support from the NC State Historic Preservation Office and Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina. Develop partnerships with tourism industries to create historic districts or overlays, and to preserve historical and cultural resources as development occurs.

3.2.J. Agritourism

The County shall continue to support agritourism opportunities as a means of promoting the rural and agricultural heritage of the County.

EXPANDED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES ACTIONS

The following Actions, summarized below, identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies. For more information on these Actions, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

- 1.** Identify Sites for North Carolina Department of Commerce Site Certification
- 2.** Support Economic Development Recruitment and Expansion
- 3.** Collaborate with Wallace to Support Economic Expansion Near Airport
- 4.** Identify Marine Biotech and Related Economic Development Opportunities
- 5.** Protect Historic Properties
- 6.** Implement Historic and Cultural Preservation Efforts
- 7.** Support Small Business Entrepreneurship
- 8.** Support Tourism Development Organizations

ATTAINABLE HOUSING CHOICES

Support the development of housing choices in strategic growth areas that provide new options for existing and future residents of Pender County.

POLICY 4.1. Coordinate Housing Development with Infrastructure

Objective 4.1: Pender County will provide opportunities for a variety of neighborhood and housing types across the County as guided by the Future Land Use Map.

4.1.A. Rural Housing

The County shall support low-density, single-family housing development pattern that is prevalent throughout the County (Rural Agriculture and Rural Neighborhood). Use of private wells and septic systems is appropriate for these areas. The use of private **package treatment plants** or expansion of centralized sewer service outside of growth areas identified on the Future Land Use Map is discouraged.

4.1.B. Clustered Housing

Conservation and the preservation of rural character in exchange for smaller lot sizes is appropriate within the rural areas of the County. Clustered housing options that support the permanent protection of natural lands and open space for habitat are encouraged. This option is preferred

particularly for sites with environmentally sensitive areas along rivers, creeks, and in floodplains. Private community systems are appropriate for delivering water and wastewater service to these developments if public utilities are not available.

4.1.C. Suburban Housing

Focus conventional suburban scale housing neighborhoods (up to three units per acre in Coastal Neighborhood or up to six units per acre in Residential Neighborhood) in growth areas in the southern and eastern portions of the County. These areas should be supported by centralized water and sewer service.

4.1.D. Mixed-Use and Higher Density Housing

The County encourages a development pattern of higher density housing mixed with commercial uses in areas supported by infrastructure and transportation systems. These areas are identified on the Future Land Use Map as the Neighborhood Center and Regional Center Categories.

POLICY 4.2. Strategic Housing Choices

Objective 4.2: Pender County supports development of new housing choices in strategic growth areas supported by public infrastructure. The intent of this policy is to support the development of housing options needed by the local workforce, particularly as housing prices continue to escalate. This policy supports economic development efforts by creating attainable housing choices for the workforce. It supports the development of new types of housing that are compatible with the existing character found in Pender County (rural, suburban, coastal, etc.).

4.2.A. Middle Income Housing Options

Support **“missing middle” housing** such as small lot single-family housing, patio homes, townhomes, cottage courts, and small scale multifamily (2-4 units) that are designed to blend in with the character of nearby neighborhoods. These choices are appropriate to consider in areas where supporting infrastructure exists.

4.2.B. Short Term Rentals

The County will evaluate ways to balance owner-occupied housing with vacation or short-term rentals. Short-term rental properties reduce the stock of permanent, year-round housing available to residents of Pender County, leaving them with fewer housing choices.

4.2.C. Accessory Dwelling Units

Continue to support and permit Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Explore ways to relax regulation of ADUs, as they can be an attainable housing option.

4.2.D. Manufactured Housing

Continue to permit new manufactured housing, as it is an important contributor to affordable housing options in Pender County. If redevelopment of an existing manufactured home park is proposed, it should be replaced with new manufactured housing units. If replacement of units isn't feasible, these parks should be redeveloped into other affordable housing options, such as tiny home parks or duplexes. This option allows for the improvement and reinvestment in these parks, while still providing attainable housing choices.

4.2.E. Workforce Housing

Explore opportunities to partner with public and non-profit entities to support workforce housing to provide more housing options for Pender County's critical workforce members (teachers, fire fighters, police officers, service industry workers, etc.). This may include partnering with external organizations to support workforce housing development projects in growth areas or modifying existing policies to encourage workforce housing, such as waiving development fees or providing housing density bonuses. Workforce housing should be prioritized in

communities near services, amenities, and employment opportunities.

4.2.F. Opportunity Sites for Attainable Housing

Support the use of tax credit funding to develop attainable housing in Pender County. To incentivize developers seeking opportunity sites for tax credit developments, Pender County will evaluate criteria for housing applications to the North Carolina Housing Finance Authority and align policies and regulations to support these developments.

facilities, and buildings that utilize water conservation systems.

4.3.B. Low-Impact Development for Sustainable Housing

The County encourages low-impact development principles that reduce the impact on the natural environment, adopt impervious coverage thresholds that reduce stormwater runoff, provide access to public trust lands along coastal areas, and preserve and enhance the tree canopy in residential development.

POLICY 4.3. Sustainable and Low-Impact Neighborhood Designs

Objective 4.3: New residential developments within growth areas should support sustainable and low-impact neighborhood design principles that leverage site conditions and provide desired neighborhood amenities.

4.3.A. Sustainable Growth

The County encourages development of sustainable neighborhoods in targeted growth areas that provide sidewalks, neighborhood parks, connectivity to nearby commercial areas through walking paths or trails, **green infrastructure** stormwater management

ATTAINABLE HOUSING CHOICES ACTIONS

The following Actions, summarized below, identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies. For more information on these Actions, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

- 1.** Develop an Updated Housing Needs Assessment and Recommendations
- 2.** Establish a New Coastal Residential Zoning District
- 3.** Remove Barriers to Housing Choices
- 4.** Encourage Use of Housing Choice Voucher Program
- 5.** Consider Zoning Changes to Support Housing Options Near Employment Centers
- 6.** Explore Incentives for Attainable Housing
- 7.** Coordinate with Non-governmental Partners on Housing Security
- 8.** Annually Evaluate Development Regulations to Ensure Alignment with Housing Goals

SUPPORTED AGRICULTURAL AND WORKING LANDS

In partnership with landowners, utilize land use planning tools to support the viability of farming and agricultural businesses, maintain rural character, and preserve farmland and open spaces.

POLICY 5.1. Support Agricultural Land Uses

Objective 5.1: Pender County will guide growth and infrastructure to prioritize the preservation of prime agricultural lands. The intent of this policy is to identify ways to guide land use decisions and implement programs to support a viable agricultural economy.

5.1.A. Farmland Preservation Plan

The County shall continue to support the preservation of agricultural working lands by creating a Farmland Preservation Plan, which can include actions for public education and collaboration with the Cooperative Extension and the USDA.

5.1.B. Voluntary Agricultural Districts and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts

The County shall continue to support the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program and explore an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) program to provide benefits to agricultural properties. This includes

active administration of these programs by the County.

5.1.C. Continue Existing Programs

Maintain existing programs, such as the present use value program and the County's beaver management program, as a means to protect and preserve agriculture and forestry.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts

Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VADs) and **Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts** (EVADs) were authorized by the North Carolina General Assembly in the 1985 Farmland Preservation Enabling Act. These districts help form partnerships between county commissioners, land use planners, and farmers to pass ordinances that encourage the voluntary preservation of farmland and protect land from urban development. VAD and EVAD members may be eligible for farmland preservation funds, present-use tax value assessments, waived water and sewer assessments, and increased protection from nuisance suits.

5.1.D. Cooperative Partnerships

The County shall continue to support collaborative partnerships, such as efforts by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, in the development of innovative farming methods. This could include the development of new and alternative crops and methods, improving the effective use of farmlands, and supporting the use of local crops in local businesses, such as restaurants.

POLICY 5.2. Support for the Rural Economy

Objective 5.2: Pender County will develop and implement strategies to maintain and strengthen the economic viability of agriculture and other components of the rural economy.

5.2.A. Viable Businesses

Pender County will support efforts to preserve existing farming operations and expand agri-business and agritourism opportunities.

5.2.B. Community Collaboration

Promote local farming and its public benefits (such as scenic views, historic landscapes, rural character, and local food supply) through educational programs, local events, and agritourism programs.

5.2.C. Local Food System

Supplement the local rural economy through a strong local food system by encouraging local store and restaurant associations to promote products grown locally in the County. This includes partnering with local institutions such as schools, hospitals, and government offices to ensure that their food options include local products, and through cooperation with regional efforts to promote a regional branded identity that includes agriculture.

SUPPORTED AGRICULTURAL AND WORKING LANDS ACTIONS

The following Actions, summarized below, identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies. For more information on these Actions, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

- 1.** Develop a Farmland Preservation Plan
- 2.** Explore Agritourism Opportunities
- 3.** Support Alternative Farming Methods
- 4.** Expand and Support the Local Food System
- 5.** Invest in Beaver Management Programs
- 6.** Appropriately Regulate Solar Farms

SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION

Provide safe and efficient transportation modes, including vehicular, walking, cycling, and transit, as funding and resources allow.

POLICY 6.1. Transportation Planning

Objective 6.1: Manage the timing, location, and intensity of growth by coordinating transportation improvements with development and ensuring safe and efficient modes of transportation are available to all residents and visitors.

6.1.A. Transportation Safety

The County encourages safety as the primary concern for all transportation-related projects, supporting **Vision Zero** efforts in particular.

6.1.B. Transportation Planning

Provide support for the efficient flow of vehicular traffic through NCDOT roadway projects, connectivity requirements, and implementation of adopted transportation plans.

6.1.C. Hampstead Bypass

The County shall continue to support the completion of the Hampstead Bypass.

6.1.D. Roadway Network

The County should continue to promote a hierarchical, functional transportation

system that prioritizes needed improvements and promotes the traditional arrangement of land use patterns, such as gridded streets, alternative modes of transportation, and increased density to reduce any associated negative impacts to the transportation network.

6.1.E. Connectivity

The County shall continue to enforce connectivity requirements that require new developments, subdivisions, and individual sites to provide vehicular and pedestrian interconnectivity to existing or planned adjacent sites and adjoining developments. Where possible, minimize the development of cul-de-sacs.

6.1.F. Transportation Coordination

Ensure all proposed development is in coordination with existing or planned streets and highways as provided in the UDO, the Pender County Streets Plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

6.1.G. Land Uses and Best Practices

Evaluate ways to adequately address Pender County's transportation needs through land use and transportation

plans and coordination with regional partners.

6.1.H. Collector Street Plan

The County shall continue to support and implement the Pender County Collector Street Plan and, where practicable, encourage the development of a gridded street system when reviewing and approving new development proposals within growth areas.

6.1.I. Road Design Standards

The County shall continue to allow and encourage flexible road design standards and alternative streets, where consistent with minimum NCDOT safety standards, which incorporate low impact development, **Smart Growth** principles, and **Complete Streets**. The County shall continue to require that all private streets be constructed in accordance with the most current NCDOT Subdivision Minimum Construction Standards manual and the NCDOT Guidelines for Drainage Studies and Hydraulic Design.

6.1.J. Enhancement of Entryway Corridors

The County encourages the aesthetic enhancement of entryway corridors and recognizes the important economic, tourism, and community image benefits of attractive roadways that enter the County's planning area. Such entryway corridors should receive priority attention for improved appearance and

development standards, including landscaping, signage, building heights, façade requirements, and tree preservation.

6.1.K. Complete Street Standards

The County should encourage private streets to be constructed as complete streets with traffic calming measures to encourage safety and alternative transportation options.

6.1.L. Regional Coordination

Ensure that Pender County's transportation needs are adequately addressed through the Wilmington MPO and Cape Fear RPO Transportation Improvement Program requests.

POLICY 6.2. Connectivity and Multimodal Transportation Systems

Objective 6.2: Pender County will provide safe opportunities for walking and cycling, while supporting the need for paratransit service and other alternatives to provide viable transportation choices for residents and visitors.

6.2.A. Pedestrian Accessibility

The County shall enforce connectivity standards that require new developments and individual sites to provide vehicular and pedestrian interconnectivity to existing or planned adjacent sites and adjoining developments to increase walkability and encourage multimodal transportation.

6.2.B. Enhance Bicycle and Pedestrian Network

Support strategies to secure the public right of way to enhance the bicycle and pedestrian network in the County, including recommendations from the current Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

6.2.C. Alternative Methods of Mobility

Seek to provide alternative means of transportation to reduce traffic, enhance economic development, offer services to those without use of a vehicle, and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

6.2.D. Rail and Transit

The County shall coordinate with the NCDOT, WMPO, Cape Fear RPO, and local municipalities to encourage alternative forms of transportation including regional rail, paratransit, public transit, and transportation demand measures such as vanpooling and ride sharing to build an intermodal transportation system.

6.2.E. Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

The County shall support efforts to implement the recommendations contained in the Cape Fear Regional Bicycle Plan and the Pender County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

6.2.F. Share the Road

Work with NCDOT to ensure rural highways include shoulders that provide sufficient space for bicyclists and have “share the road” signs to alert drivers.

6.2.G. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities in New Development

The County shall encourage all projects to consider pedestrian and bicycle facilities for inclusion in all road construction, reconstruction, or maintenance projects.

6.2.H. Pender Adult Services Transit

The County shall continue to support paratransit service as a vital resource for the elderly, disabled, and those without access to a personal vehicle.

6.2.I. Public Transit

The County shall support efforts to establish public transit opportunities such as park and ride facilities and on-demand micro transit services.

6.2.J. Commuter Transportation Options

Consider targeted, specific commuter transportation options, such as on-demand micro-transit or commuter-oriented fixed route shuttles from population centers in the County to employment areas.

SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION ACTIONS

The following Actions, summarized below, identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies. For more information on these Actions, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

- 1.** Develop a Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- 2.** Require Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure in New Development
- 3.** Research Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding Opportunities
- 4.** Consider Increasing Development Intensity at Primary Rural Roadway Intersections
- 5.** Provide Updates on the Implementation of the Pender County Streets Plan
- 6.** Address Impacts of New Development on Transportation Systems
- 7.** Coordinate Updates to the Streets Plan with the Future Land Use Map
- 8.** Clarify Connectivity Requirements
- 9.** Consider Stub Street Requirements
- 10.** Update and Maintain the Right-of-Way and “Paper Street” Database
- 11.** Update Private Street Requirements
- 12.** Consider Requiring Public Access for Private Streets
- 13.** Examine Opportunities to Improve Rural Community Transportation
- 14.** Explore Expansion of Paratransit Infrastructure
- 15.** Establish Funding and Maintenance Responsibility for Non-Motorized Transportation Maintenance
- 16.** Consider Establishing a Greenway Facilities Plan
- 17.** Establish a Bicycle and Pedestrian Service Area Map
- 18.** Expand WAVE Micro On-Demand Service
- 19.** Implement the Principles of Vision Zero and Complete Streets

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE

Protect natural resources in environmentally sensitive areas by reducing stormwater, drainage, and floodplain impacts. Maintain and enhance the natural environment and water quality, including conserving barrier islands, wetlands, riparian buffers, habitat corridors, and other environmentally sensitive features for their natural storm protection and ecological value.

POLICY 7.1. Conservation Tools

Objective 7.1: The County supports the preservation of existing conservation lands for educational opportunities, natural aesthetic qualities, wildlife habitat, and stormwater drainage. Development is not supported in these areas. Expansion of conservation lands by private property owners is supported by the County. The intent of this policy is to further enhance the amount of permanently protected and preserved lands in the County through conservation-oriented land use principles.

7.1.A. Low-Impact Development for Conservation

The County supports low-impact development (LID) practices. Such LID practices may include retaining or infiltrating most of the runoff on-site, maximizing the use of permeable surfaces, reducing the amount of impervious coverage, and clustering housing to allow a profitable development

density while maximizing open space and minimizing wildlife habitat fragmentation.

7.1.B. Open Space

The County shall continue to require the designation of open space in accordance with the subdivision of land. In coordination with the Sustainable and Managed Growth and Planned Public Facilities and Services Goals, the County will encourage more open space in development.

7.1.C. Environmental Planning

The County shall include an analysis of environmental conditions during the development review process.

7.1.D. Green Growth Toolbox

Coordinate future development with the concepts of the Green Growth Toolbox. Amend development regulations and processes to incentivize conservation subdivisions, especially in environmentally sensitive areas (such as riverine, wetland, and coastal areas).

7.1.E. Conservation Easements

Achieve preservation of important natural resources and environmental lands by encouraging conservation easements where practicable. Consider the establishment of a formal program to support conservation easements to be facilitated by Pender County.

POLICY 7.2. Sensitive Natural Resources and Water Quality

Objective 7.2: Pender County shall take actions designed to protect, enhance, and restore the surface water quality and sensitive natural resources located in and adjacent to the County’s planning jurisdiction. The intent of this policy is to protect and enhance current surface water quality classifications.

7.2.A. Protect Surface Water Quality

The County shall continue to protect and enhance the water quality of the estuarine and riverine systems.

7.2.B. Point and Nonpoint Source Pollution

The County will evaluate ways to manage nonpoint source runoff associated with new development. Examples could include encouraging and incentivizing low impact development techniques, erosion control measures during development, implementing a tree preservation ordinance, or additional setbacks from sensitive habitat areas. The County will

also address water quality problems associated with point source discharges.

7.2.C. Outstanding Resource Waters

The County shall continue to enforce the use standards outlined in 15A NCAC 07H .0209 (f) for Outstanding Resource Waters, with the intention of protecting unique and special waters of excellent water quality and ecological or recreational significance, as defined by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.

7.2.D. Riparian Buffers

The County supports the preservation or installation of vegetated buffers adjacent to all streams, rivers, marshes, and estuarine waters, with the intent of reducing the flow of nutrients and other contaminants into area surface waters.

POLICY 7.3. Stormwater Management

Objective 7.3: Pender County supports efforts to enhance stormwater protection for existing and planned developments. The intent of this policy is to reduce drainage issues for citizens while also supporting surface water quality throughout the County.

7.3.A. Stormwater Runoff

The County shall continue to enforce the stormwater management requirements contained in the UDO. The County will evaluate ways to improve the stormwater

management regulations to meet or exceed state guidelines.

7.3.B. Stormwater Discharge from County Sources

Where practicable, the County shall eliminate stormwater discharges resulting from County activities. Where elimination is not possible, the County shall mitigate the sources of stormwater discharges to the maximum extent feasible.

7.3.C. Watershed Restoration

Where possible, the County shall encourage protection and enhancement of surface water quality through implementation of Watershed Restoration Plans. High water quality is vital to aquaculture, resident's quality of life, natural character, and overall economic sustainability.

7.3.D. Parking Requirements

The County will consider removing impervious parking minimum requirements, allowing more parking to be pervious or natural surfaces, and retaining parking maximums.

7.3.E. Water Supply Watersheds

The County shall continue to enforce the Water Supply Watershed Overlay Districts in southwest Pender County along the Black River.

POLICY 7.4. Tree Canopy and Wildlife Habitats

Objective 7.4: Support efforts to expand and protect tree canopy throughout the County. Encourage continued protection of wildlife habitats within designated conservation areas and support options for wildlife protection. The intent of this policy is to promote preservation of tree canopy and sensitive wildlife habitat.

7.4.A. Prime Wildlife Habitats

The County shall continue to protect its prime wildlife habitats, where possible, by enforcing the CAMA permitting program, enhanced open space requirements, and encouraging land conservation and cluster subdivisions.

7.4.B. Tree Preservation

The County shall continue to require tree mitigation for significant trees. As part of this effort, the County will provide clear guidance in ordinance provisions on protecting, maintaining, and replacing trees. Best practice for tree protection, such as NC Cooperative Extension's "Protecting and Retaining Trees: A Guide for Municipalities and Counties in North Carolina," should be considered.

7.4.C. Forestry

The County shall continue to support forestry as a means to maintain prime wildlife habitat areas.

7.4.D. Firewise Landscaping Practices

Consider establishing an overlay district within Smoke Awareness Areas or the Wildland-Urban Interface Zone to require Firewise Landscaping practices.

POLICY 7.5. Wetlands

Objective 7.5: The County shall continue to protect wetlands as guided by state and federal regulations. The intent of this policy is to support natural drainage storage and surface water quality.

7.5.A. Protection of Wetlands

The County shall continue to protect freshwater wetlands, marshes, and 404 wetlands within its planning jurisdiction in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

7.5.B. Shellfishing Waters

The County supports and promotes the activities of the State's Shellfish Management Program. The County promotes estuarine water quality through its soil erosion and sedimentation provisions and by supporting the CAMA permitting regulations.

7.5.C. Marsh Damage from Bulkhead Installation

The County strives to minimize damage to existing marshes by maintaining the natural living shoreline instead of bulkhead installation or seawalls, where possible.

7.5.D. Wetland Preservation Incentives

Encourage the preservation of wetland areas by incentivizing conservation easements and conservation subdivisions.

POLICY 7.6. Planning for Resilience

Objective 7.6: The County supports efforts to reduce storm damage and flooding for existing and planned development by enhancing stormwater protection and flood mitigation measures. The intent of this policy is to reduce future losses from flooding and storm damage.

7.6.A. Hazard Mitigation Planning

The County supports proactive hazard mitigation planning and consistency between the Imagine Pender 2050 Plan and the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Pender County will support the eight Goals from the Southeastern NC Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, listed below:

- **7.6.A.1. Mitigation Goal #1:** Work to improve existing local government policies and codes to reduce impacts of natural hazards.
- **7.6.A.2. Mitigation Goal #2:** Design and implement specific mitigation measures to protect vulnerable public and private properties.
- **7.6.A.3. Mitigation Goal #3:** Increase the protection of critical facilities and infrastructure from hazard threats through retrofit projects for existing

facilities and innovative design standards for new facilities.

- **7.6.A.4. Mitigation Goal #4:** Enhance public education programs to promote community awareness of natural hazards and the hazard mitigation techniques available to reduce their impact.
- **7.6.A.5. Mitigation Goal #5:** Improve stormwater management through enhanced local government programs, policies, and practices.
- **7.6.A.6. Mitigation Goal #6:** Enhance each county's storm evacuation procedures through increased intergovernmental coordination between the counties, the participating municipalities, and the State of North Carolina.
- **7.6.A.7. Mitigation Goal #7:** Increase the County's emergency management capabilities through sustained system and technology improvements.
- **7.6.A.8. Mitigation Goal #8:** Promote volunteer involvement in emergency preparedness and response through increased citizen awareness and training activities.

7.6.B. Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

The County shall be proactive in its efforts to minimize damage and threats to public health and safety associated with hurricanes, severe weather, and other hazards and work to implement the Southeastern NC Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

7.6.C. Flood Prone Areas

The County shall permit development in the 100-year flood zones, provided that all new construction and substantial improvements comply strictly with the County's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, which has been adopted in conjunction with the County's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program.

7.6.D. Flood Insurance

The County shall take actions necessary to reduce the cost of flood insurance to property owners by maintaining or improving the current rating within the Community Rating System (CRS).

7.6.E. Enhanced Regulations for Flood Prone Areas

The County will consider increasing regulation of flood prone areas to discourage development in the floodway, and the County will consider enforcing floodplain development requirements in additional flood zones (such as the 500-year flood zone). Evaluate data on recent flooding history for these determinations. These efforts will be coordinated with the Future Land Use Map and related policy guidance to discourage sewer infrastructure in non-growth areas.

7.6.F. Land Acquisition

The County supports grant-funded acquisition of property that is unsuitable for development due to flooding hazards

when such acquisition serves a useful public purpose such as for land preservation, access to public trust areas, or as a community resource.

POLICY 7.7. Hazards

Objective 7.7: Pender County supports efforts to mitigate the impacts of hazards, including high winds, airport hazards, and fire. The County will work to promote public education around hazards.

7.7.A. High Winds

The County supports enforcement of the North Carolina Building Code. The County shall continue to require construction design standards to meet the minimum required wind loads.

7.7.B. Airport Hazards

Pender County strives to reduce the hazards of the Wallace-Pender Airport through implementation of its airport minimum standards ordinance which restricts land uses and building heights in the surrounding vicinity.

7.7.C. Minimize Potential Fire Damage

The County supports controlled burn operations to reduce the risk of damage from wildfire. Firewise Landscaping practices should be required within Smoke Awareness Areas and the **Wildland-Urban Interface Zone**.

7.7.D. Public Education

The County supports provisions to ensure that the public is aware of the risks of different types of natural hazards in order to reduce their personal exposure to those hazards.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE ACTIONS

The following Actions, summarized below, identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies. For more information on these Actions, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

- 1.** Consider Establishing a Conservation Easement Program
- 2.** Develop a Tree Preservation Plan
- 3.** Establish a Formalized Procedure to Evaluate Potential Public Land Acquisition
- 4.** Establish an Overlay for Outstanding Resource Waters
- 5.** Enhance Riparian Buffers
- 6.** Consider Establishing an Engineering Department
- 7.** Enhance Stormwater Management
- 8.** Consider Stormwater Control Requirements Beyond State Minimums
- 9.** Establish a Stormwater and Ditch Maintenance Program
- 10.** Develop Stormwater Master Plans
- 11.** Reduce Stormwater Discharge
- 12.** Develop a Watershed Restoration Plan
- 13.** Explore Water Conservation Programs and Education Efforts
- 14.** Expand Incentives for Low-Impact Development
- 15.** Consider Wildlife Habitat Conservation in Legislative Decisions
- 16.** Consider Expanding the Definition of Environmental Features in the UDO
- 17.** Consider Revising Density Calculations in the UDO
- 18.** Explore Standards to Provide Wildlife Corridors
- 19.** Consider Establishing a Resource Conservation Incentive District
- 20.** Expand Tree Preservation and Mitigation Requirements
- 21.** Remove Tree Survey Exemptions
- 22.** Provide Bulkhead Education
- 23.** Establish a Drainage Improvement Plan
- 24.** Strengthen Floodplain Development Regulations
- 25.** Designate Vulnerable Lands as Environmental Conservation
- 26.** Gather and Share Resilience Data

COMMUNITY UNITY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Continue to engage all members of the community in land use decision-making.

POLICY 8.1. Public Input

Objective 8.1: Pender County will strive to create opportunities for all residents of the County to participate in the planning process.

8.1.A. Public Engagement

Opportunities

The County shall continue to utilize standing committees and boards to involve the public in planning, land use, and community development decisions whenever practicable, and explore new opportunities for public engagement, such as community forums or other planning events.

8.1.B. Communication

The County shall continue to utilize its website, social media, and other methods to keep residents informed of planning and land use decisions.

8.1.C. Required Notice

Continue to exceed minimum statutory requirements for public notice of hearings and land use applications.

COMMUNITY UNITY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS

The following Actions, summarized below, identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies. For more information on these Actions, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

- 1.** Consider Web-Based Tools to Notify the Public of Development Projects
- 2.** Establish a Public Education Program for Natural Hazards
- 3.** Consider Programs such as a Community Planning Academy

ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

Promote a high quality of life for Pender County residents by providing access to key amenities and important public services.

POLICY 9.1. Health in All Policies

Objective 9.1: Pender County will promote a “Health in All Policies” approach and prioritize decision-making in land use planning that improves public health, community well-being, and overall quality of life for community members. Positive health outcomes are interconnected with, and rely on, the other Plan Goals, such as Attainable Housing, Safe and Efficient Transportation, and Sustainable and Managed Growth. The intent of this policy is to improve access to essential services and amenities, improve the natural and built environment, and enhance recreational opportunities.

9.1.A. Health and Human Services

The Pender County Planning & Community Development Department will coordinate with the Health and Human Services Department for ongoing ways to address health priorities, including but not limited to what was identified in the 2022 Community Health Assessment.

9.1.B. Aging in Place

Enhance health services to support the aging population to ensure resident well-being. Identify ways to improve aging-in-place options to ensure that the needs of seniors are met in the community. This could be accomplished through partnerships with non-profit organizations to support housing rehabilitation, home repairs, or modifications for seniors; encouraging more housing options for older adults; or reducing land use regulation barriers for assisted living facilities.

9.1.C. Underserved Communities

Develop an understanding of geographic needs in the community for places that have been underserved in terms of health services, healthy lifestyle choices, and access to recreation. Take steps to improve the built and natural environment in these communities.

POLICY 9.2. Access to Healthcare and Health Resources

Objective 9.2: Pender County will support efforts to improve access to health services and healthy lifestyle choices for community members. The County will seek to improve the built environment to address **social determinants of health**.

9.2.A. Access to Healthcare and Essential Services

Collaborate with local stakeholders and Pender County Health and Human Services to encourage the development of rural health clinics, emergency response facilities and infrastructure, and mobile medical units to ensure access to healthcare in underserved areas. Evaluate the Unified Development Ordinance for any land use regulation barriers to these healthcare facilities.

9.2.B. Access to Telehealth Services

Seek grant funding to boost rural telehealth capacity and access. Coordinate efforts with Policy 2.5 (Broadband Services) with the aim of improving access to telehealth services.

POLICY 9.3. Local Food System and Sustainable Agriculture

Objective 9.3: Promote public health through improving access to healthy, local food options. Strengthen the local food system by promoting agricultural sustainability, enhancing local food access, and supporting local farmers and food producers.

9.3.A. Local Farmers and Food Producers

Support the local food system through agricultural businesses, including small- and mid-scale farms. Coordinate these efforts with the Supported Agricultural and Working Lands Goal and a future Farmland Preservation Plan.

9.3.B. Farmers Market

Create local and regional partnerships to support the establishment of a farmers market program in Pender County, such as with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension.

9.3.C. Local Food Markets

Facilitate the establishment of local food markets, food hubs, and farm-to-table initiatives. Support and prioritize areas that would meet the needs of underserved or low-income communities, including the acceptance of food assistance programs (such as SNAP, WIC, and senior nutrition programs). Prioritize underserved areas where markets could be supported by the local community or

support low-income residents and reduce driving time to grocery stores.

POLICY 9.4. Align Recreation Opportunities and Transportation Investments

Objective 9.4: Provide access to safe and enjoyable activities that improve mental and physical health. Enhance the expansion of the transportation system to include infrastructure for walking, biking, and other forms of non-motorized transportation to align goals between recreation and transportation planning efforts.

9.4.A. Nature-Based Recreation

In coordination with the Environmental Conservation and Resilience Policies, seek to create nature-based recreation opportunities (parks, trails, greenways, blueways, etc.) to advance public health and support physical activity. Nature-based recreation opportunities create co-benefits for public health, environmental protection, and land conservation efforts simultaneously.

9.4.B. Conservation and Recreation

Engage private conservation organizations, such as land trusts, to partner on nature and recreation-based projects to leverage private funding for land conservation in the form of monetary donations and foundation grants.

9.4.C. Public Health Education

In coordination with the Community Unity and Civic Engagement Policies, expand education programs about nature-based recreation.

9.4.D. Greenways and Linear Parks

Advance the expansion and connectivity of greenways and trails throughout the County. Leverage County resources by merging planning efforts between departments for projects that can provide both transportation and active recreation options, such as the construction of connected greenways. Coordinate with other regional or state agencies to connect greenways and trails, including the implementation of the Cape Fear Regional Bicycle Plan.

9.4.E. Underserved Parks and Recreation Areas

Identify underserved areas and work with local and regional partners to provide parks and recreational opportunities in those areas.

9.4.F. Safety in Transportation Systems

Prioritize public health through improving safety outcomes in transportation systems through alignment with the Safe and Efficient Transportation Policies, including **Vision Zero** and **Complete Streets** efforts.

ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH ACTIONS

The following Actions, summarized below, identify specific implementation tasks that the County and its partners will take in the future to realize the Vision Themes, Goals, and Policies. For more information on these Actions, please see [Chapter 5: Implementation](#).

- 1.** Build Community Capacity
- 2.** Identify Grant Funding for Program Support
- 3.** Establish a Farmers Market
- 4.** Create a Local Food Directory
- 5.** Create a Local Food Council
- 6.** Develop Regional Partnerships
- 7.** Develop an Aging Plan
- 8.** Achieve Recreation Goals within Conservation Easements
- 9.** Promote Large County Parks as Community Hubs
- 10.** Increase Accessibility of Food Resources
- 11.** Review and Update the UDO to Strengthen Local Food Systems

FARMLAND CONSERVATION TOOLKIT

Tools for conserving farmland and the agricultural economy are described in this section. This list includes tools that could be utilized in Pender County. Implementing the right tool or collection of tools is an exercise in reviewing effectiveness and balancing resources. It may be the case that additional tools that are not listed here, or that have not yet been created, are a part of a successful program. Tools are organized by how the program operates.

Regulatory tools confer a benefit to the landowner or a restriction on the land that includes formal rules about what can occur on the land, based on County ordinance or State or Federal law. Financial tools convey a specific lessening of tax burden or payment for conserving land. Market-based and economic incentive tools include different business and investment structures that make farmland and agriculture more economically competitive with other alternative land uses.



REGULATORY TOOLS

Farmland Protection Plan

Farmland protection plans are important policy documents that help local governments inventory important farmland, set goals for its protection, and identify strategies for implementation. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services requires a farmland protection plan to include certain elements, such as:

- Existing agricultural activity in the County
- Challenges to continued family farming
- Opportunities for maintaining or enhancing family-owned farms and the local agricultural economy
- Schedule for implementation and the identification of possible funding sources for the long-term support of the plan

Voluntary and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD & EVAD)

The Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts (EVAD) programs provide access to regulatory benefits and programs in

exchange for a conservation agreement to protect the land for active agricultural purposes. Pender County currently has a VAD program.

Both tools must include an agreement to protect the land for at least 10 years. While the VAD designation could be revoked by the landowner during that time and result in the loss of regulatory benefits and programs, farmland placed in an EVAD has an agreement that is irrevocable for

CASE STUDY: IREDELL COUNTY, NC

Iredell County is one of 64 counties in North Carolina with a Farmland Protection Plan approved by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS). The plan is organized around four goals: strengthening farm viability and the agricultural economy, supporting farm operations and the right-to-farm, protecting farmland as a valuable natural resource, and fostering greater recognition and public support for agriculture. The Farmland Protection Plan remains a valuable roadmap to reevaluating conditions in Iredell County.



10 years, with an additional three-year renewal if no notice is given by the landowner to the County. VAD and EVAD designations provide stability and make clear the intent to preserve farmland.

Farmland Preservation Boards

Farmland Preservation Boards administer VAD and EVAD programs. In alignment with state practices for VAD programs, Pender County has a Voluntary Agricultural District Board that reviews and approves applications for Voluntary Agricultural Districts. The board also advises the Board of Commissioners on projects, programs, or issues affecting the agricultural economy or activities within the County that will affect the agricultural districts.

Conservation Subdivisions

Sometimes described as “conservation neighborhoods,” “cluster subdivisions,” or “agrihoods” (a combination of the words “agriculture” and “neighborhood”), conservation subdivisions are a type of development or neighborhood that includes working farmland as an essential part of the design. The specifics of

conservation subdivision development vary. In general, the concept includes clear access to preserved natural habitats or farmland within the community, a prominent working farm or farms on the property, community events and education around the farm areas, and elements of environmental sustainability.

The residential portions of conservation subdivisions are usually designed to have smaller lots than in other developments to allow walking to common, shared neighborhood amenities. Clustering homes allows for the protection of larger swaths of open space.

The farm portion of the conservation subdivision can vary in size. The farmland may be interspersed throughout the community or in a central location. In general, the farm is often garden agriculture or small herds of livestock. The farms can be large enough to provide food to local restaurants or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs within the conservation subdivision but are not operating on the scale of producing commodities for larger markets.



Conservation subdivisions described by promoters as agrihoods are usually marketed as luxury planned communities – agrihoods are a stronger response to preserving land and a rural aesthetic than they are to affordability or the overall retention of agricultural industry in an area. They can be preferable to conventional suburban residential subdivisions where maintaining an agricultural presence and rural character is desirable, and their agricultural and open space component can be positioned as a buffer that reduces conflicts between other farmland and residences.

Cluster Development

Cluster subdivisions differ from conventional suburban residential development by allowing smaller lot sizes in residential areas of development than would be otherwise available in exchange for protecting a larger percentage of open space within the project. Like all conservation subdivisions, both the smaller lot areas and the preservation area are together a part of the cluster development.

Reducing the development areas via smaller lot sizes allows a developer to use less roadway area and requires less extension of infrastructure than required for a conventional subdivision, allowing for more land to be preserved. Cluster subdivisions can include open space preservation requirements. The open space can include working lands and farming operations.

Best Practices

North Carolina State University published a Conservation Subdivision Handbook with best practices and ideas for implementation. It describes how, in addition to preserving agricultural land, conservation subdivisions can lead to higher home values, reduced infrastructure cost, benefits to wildlife, and stormwater management improvements. Over half of North Carolina counties have ordinances that support this tool in some form.

FINANCIAL TOOLS

Present-Use Value Taxation Program

The Present-Use Value program is a voluntary state program that has allowed protection of certain agricultural land, horticultural land, and forestland since 1974 by allowing it to be appraised at its present use value, rather than the market value. Present-use value measures the ability to produce income on the land. Market value measures the estimated sales price of a property if it were voluntarily sold. The tool maintains the viability of working lands (agricultural land, horticultural land, and forestland) by protecting them from being taxed at the value they might hold if subdivided for a residential neighborhood or other use.

For the purposes of the Present-Use Value Program:

- **Agricultural land** is actively engaged in the commercial production or growing of crops, plants, or animals (e.g., soybeans, grains, tobacco, cotton, peanuts, corn, horses, and cattle).
- **Horticultural land** is actively engaged in commercial production or growing fruits, vegetables,

nursery products, or floral products. (e.g., apples, peaches, strawberries, pecans, sod, shrubs, greenhouse plants, and evergreens intended for use as Christmas trees).

- **Forestland** is actively engaged in the commercial growing of trees.

Generally, land must satisfy four requirements to be eligible for the program:

- **Ownership type**, defined by the General Assembly but generally owned by an individual, trust, or farm-related business.
- **Size**, including at least one tract that is in active production (10 acres for agriculture, 5 acres for horticulture, or 20 acres for forestland).
- **Income**, with at least one minimum size tract producing an average of at least \$1,000 gross yearly income from agriculture and horticulture over the past three years. Forestland is not subject to this requirement as income is only



generated at harvest after many years.

- **Sound management**, with several options available to satisfy the requirement.

Changes to eligibility are controlled by the state, but the program has remained consistent over time.

Conservation Easements

In general, a conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement applying to a specific parcel of land between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits the uses allowed on the land in order to protect natural areas from development disturbance. Though some easements are designed to keep the land in a natural state for the benefit of ecosystems or wildlife, they can also be tailored to preserve farmland, protecting against building and subdivision. The basic tradeoff is through tax adjustments. In exchange for conserving the land so that it cannot be developed in the future (for example, as a residential subdivision), federal and state tax assessments take

into account the land's appraised value and the reduced development potential. An existing conservation easement is more permanent than use-value taxation. Though, in general, conservation easements are designed to be permanent, the conservation agreements used in VAD and EVAD programs are a form of conservation easement and are revokable over time.

Paid for through the state's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) facilitates a program for the purchase of conservation easements to permanently protect farmland and ranchland from non-farm development through property acquisition. The conservation easements in this program are maintained by non-profit land conservancy organizations.

There are specific requirements for the conservancy organization required by the state, and there are well-established organizations with a history of meeting those requirements. For example, Three Rivers Land Trust holds conservation



easements in 15 counties in central North Carolina.

Purchase of Development Rights Program

A Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program aims to preserve large tracts of land for the protection of agriculture and open space. Additionally, the program can safeguard lands in watershed districts and environmentally sensitive areas. For an agricultural PDR, the program can conserve and protect agricultural lands, maintain sustainable agriculture operations, and promote agricultural heritage and culture.

Other North Carolina counties have active programs, such as:

- Wake County's open space land acquisition and conservation easement program that has protected nearly 2,700 acres.
- Buncombe County's Farmland Preservation program has preserved more than 8,000 acres since 1995.
- These programs are funded through a variety of sources including General

Obligation bonds. Iredell County has designated a PDR program but to date has not secured funding for preservation efforts.

MARKET-BASED & ECONOMIC INCENTIVE

Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)

Real estate investment trusts (REITs) allow individual or institutional investors to invest in large-scale land holdings that produce income and are managed by a trust. Though these exist for many different kinds of real estate, some REITs specialize in agriculture and farmland. They do so through owning and managing the property, which can include hiring the actual farmers that will work the land or leasing the land to farmers. Investors in a REIT expect to earn a return on their investment. As an investment tool there is an incentive to select quality agricultural land, keep it in profitable production, and protect it. While the business model is based on a knowledge of sound farming practice, there is no legal guarantee that land will be maintained within the REIT. For example, REIT land could be leased for wind or solar energy production. Without some other form of legal agreement or guarantee, the property could be sold outright to a willing buyer for another use, such as commercial or residential development.

REITs are a strategy to preserve agricultural land, at least in the short term. While landowners, farmers, or County advocates could recruit a REIT to purchase land in Pender County, there is no feasible way for the County to require one or create one. Agricultural REITs do have a presence in North Carolina. For example, Farmland Partners, which manages nearly 200,000 acres nationwide includes holdings in eastern North Carolina with over 15,000 acres in Beaufort, Currituck, Pamlico, and Pasquotank Counties.

Additional Private Partnerships and Trusts

Additional organizations exist with a primary mission of protecting farmland or securing food systems. The services of these organizations can be critical in keeping productive agricultural land as a viable economic activity. This is a diverse category. It includes entities that provide consulting services to farmers, extend



credit to assist farmers, or that assemble or otherwise make farmland available to new farmers. For example, The Conservation Fund, an organization with a nationwide presence, includes a “Working Farms Fund” that specifically targets at-risk farmland. This fund generates opportunities for the next generation of farmers looking to start work on their own land or for them to purchase the land needed to scale up operations. They target mid-sized farms of 20 to 500 acres, farmers who have leased land, or farmers who have worked in farming operations but have not owned the business themselves. The fund secures land, places appropriate easements, and helps farmers develop business plans. Though this particular program focused on at-risk farmland near Atlanta and Chicago, in 2022, Charlotte became an additional target.

Farm Credit is another private organization with a different model, supporting rural communities and agricultural businesses with consistent credit and financial services. They help a nationwide network of financial institutions that partner with the farmers

or the business directly.

Agritourism

Agritourism is a newer concept, though many aspects of it have existed formally or informally in the past. It consists of commercial activities on traditional farms that invite the public. This includes activities such as pick-your-own (or U-Pick) fields, seasonal corn-mazes and pumpkin patches, and farm tours. It also includes activities that use the rural land as a backdrop, including hosting events or meetings in a barn or open space surrounded by the farm and fields. Agritourism activities are open to creativity, as farms have opened their doors to everything from summer camps and field trips to exercise classes alongside the livestock. Cooking classes or farm dinners can showcase local ingredients from the farm. Agritourism activities can be confined to an individual farm, connected to a trail of sites for visitors in the areas, or associated with an event week or weekend (similar to the farm tour weekends organized by the Carolina Sustainable Farm Association in the Piedmont region).



There are two critical benefits to agritourism. First, it can provide additional income to farms, making farming more profitable and delaying or avoiding the financial pressure to sell the property for development. Second, it invites the broader community to experience the agricultural parts of the County and to

take part in its continued survival. Agritourism helps bridge the disconnect between food production, the grocery store, and the dinner table. Agritourism can also be an attraction to the County as it contributes to the broader range of tourism opportunities.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION



The true value of planning lies in the implementation of the Plan. Developing the Plan was the first step to realizing Pender County's **Vision**; now, setting out a strategy for action is critical to achieving the Plan's **Goals**. A structured approach to implementation with specific **Actions** will ensure that the Goals set out in the previous chapter are achieved. These actions are designed to guide the community's growth in a way that reflects shared values, addresses current challenges, and prepares for future needs.

Implementation involves several key steps. These steps include prioritizing actions based on community needs and available resources, assigning responsible parties, and setting timelines for initiation. An additional aspect of the implementation process is creating mechanisms for monitoring progress and updating the plan as needed. This structured approach helps communities remain adaptive to changing conditions while staying committed to the community's Goals. Finally, continued public engagement and interdepartmental coordination will be essential to achieving successful implementation.

This chapter details the implementation cycle of the Plan, its legal context for implementation, the updating and amending process for the Plan, monitoring and reporting steps, and specific implementation actions the County will take. Each **Action** is tied to a specific **Goal** to guide decision-making based on the community's **Vision** for Pender County. By implementing these Actions, the Plan becomes a working framework that shapes the community's evolution — thoughtfully, responsibly, and in alignment with its Vision.





THE PLANNING CYCLE

Comprehensive land use planning is a continuous cycle. It begins with identifying a long-range vision and developing policy guidance through the land use plan. The County then identifies shorter-term priorities (5-10 years) that support the long-range policy direction through departmental work plans or strategic plans. Using these short-term plans, the County identifies funding priorities through the County’s annual budget and capital improvement plan. The County then implements the funded capital projects and operational initiatives to enact the community’s vision and achieve its goals.

Finally, the County assesses implementation efforts to measure and evaluate progress over time to ensure goals are being achieved. Every 5-10 years, the process begins anew for the next 25 years.

LEGAL CONTEXT

The Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan supports Pender County’s compliance with two important legal requirements in North Carolina: the requirement to adopt a comprehensive plan to enable zoning regulations and the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA).

Compliance with North Carolina Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Zoning Regulations

The comprehensive plan is not a regulatory document – it is a policy document containing non-binding guidance and recommendations. The municipal and county planning and zoning enabling statute (NCGS 160D) requires that local governments adopt a comprehensive plan or land use plan if they have an adopted zoning ordinance. Per the statute, these plans “set goals, policies, and programs intended to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of the jurisdiction” and these plans are to be “reasonably maintained” with occasional updates.

This statute also requires that zoning be “in accordance with a comprehensive plan” and that local government boards include statements of consistency when making decisions on a zoning text or map amendment. If a local government approves a rezoning request that is not consistent with the comprehensive plan, the zoning amendment shall have the effect of also amending the Future Land Use Map in the approved plan, and no additional request or application for a plan amendment shall be required per the statute.

Compliance with Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) Regulations

The North Carolina Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) of 1974 mandates all 20 coastal counties to have a land use plan and requires permits for any development in specially designated areas called Areas of Environmental Concern (AEC). After local adoption and certification from the Coastal Resources Commission, this Plan will serve as the County’s official CAMA land use plan. However, as provided in Policy POLICY 1.4, no policies in this Plan are more restrictive than those contained in the North Carolina Administrative Code (NCAC) for the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA). Accordingly, permits should continue to be issued based solely on the requirements of the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management (NCDCM) and NCAC Title 15A, Chapter 07: Coastal Management, without specific review of the policies or future land use map and its descriptions.

What Qualifies as a CAMA Regulated Development Project?

A CAMA permit must be acquired if a development project meets all the following conditions:

- The project is located within one of the 20 coastal counties of North Carolina;
- The project is defined as “development” by CAMA;

- The project is within, or affects, an Area of Environmental Concern established by the Coastal Resources Commission; and
- The project does not qualify for an exemption.

Besides construction of residential and commercial buildings in an Area of Environmental Concern, "development" also generally includes activities such as dredging or filling coastal wetlands or waters, and construction of marinas, piers, docks, bulkheads, oceanfront structures and roads.

The Coastal Area Management Act (NCGS § 113A-103(5)(a)) defines a development project as: "any activity in a duly designated area of environmental concern involving, requiring or consisting of the construction or enlargement of a structure; excavation; dredging; filling; dumping; removal of clay, silt, sand, gravel or minerals; bulkheading; driving of pilings; clearing or alteration of land as an adjunct of construction; alteration or removal of sand dunes; alteration of the shore, bank or bottom of the Atlantic Ocean or any sound, bay, river, creek, stream, lake or canal."

What is an Area of Environmental Concern (AEC)?

According to the Division of Coastal Management's (DCM) CAMA Handbook for Development, protecting and managing Areas of Environmental

Concern is the basis for the CAMA permitting program. AECs, shown on the map on the next page, are generally areas that are in close proximity to bodies of water, such as the ocean, the Intracoastal Waterway, streams, creeks, marshes, or wetlands.

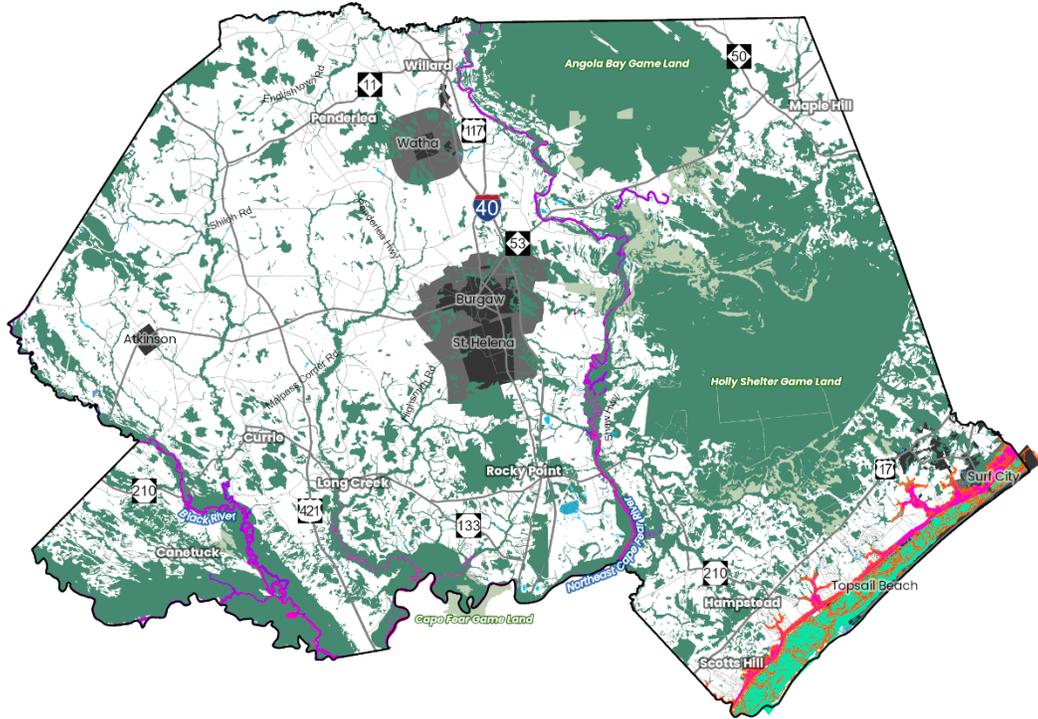
A development project is likely in an AEC if it is:

- In, or on the shore of, navigable waters within the 20 coastal CAMA counties
- On a marsh or wetland
- Within 75 feet of the normal high-water line along an estuarine shoreline
- Near the ocean beach (e.g., within 60'-120')
- Near an inlet
- Within 30 feet of the normal high-water level of areas designated as inland fishing waters by the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Near a public water supply
- Within 575 feet of Outstanding Resource Waters defined by the Environmental Management Commission

For more information on the CAMA Handbook for Development in Coastal North Carolina, and for mitigating steps required during development, please visit the Division of Coastal Management website or contact the Pender County

Planning and Community Development
Department.

WETLANDS AND AREAS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN



Boundaries

- Municipality
- Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- County

Areas of Environmental Concern

- Coastal Wetlands - Areas of Environmental Concern
- 575' Shoreline Area of Environmental Concern for Outstanding Resource Waters

Wetlands

- Freshwater Forested/Shrub and Emergent Wetland
- Freshwater Pond or Lake
- Estuarine and Marine Wetland
- Riverine Wetland



UPDATING & AMENDING THE PLAN

Imagine Pender 2050 presents a vision for the future, intended to guide policy decisions over the next 25 years. A land use plan should remain a relevant living document that continues to represent the priorities of the community and respond to changing conditions over time. To accomplish this, the Plan should be regularly updated and amended.

The Future Land Use Map should also be monitored to identify trends that may justify changes to the Plan's policy direction and map guidance. Regular reviews can include monitoring changes to the Future Land Use Map and prioritization of the recommended Actions from the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Plan with other processes, such as development of the capital improvement plan, departmental work plans, or other planning efforts as applicable.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

Actions for implementation should be reviewed and prioritized annually. Identification of annual priorities shall be

determined as funding permits or as allocated by the Pender County Commissioners. Monitoring and reporting on the Imagine Pender 2050 Plan should be an ongoing process that includes status reports on plan implementation to the public at regular intervals. It is good planning practice to report on implementation every two years and it is the intent that an implementation report will be delivered on a regular schedule to the Pender County Commissioners.

ACTION INVENTORY

Achieving the aspirations of the Plan requires a deliberate focus on implementation. Organized by the Plan's Goals, the following Actions identify the specific steps for advancing the County to achieve its vision. These Actions are both a collection of new implementation items identified through the Imagine Pender 2050 planning process and implementation actions included in other County plans, such as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Each action includes a recommendation for the responsible party or parties to support implementation efforts, which focus on Pender County departments or leadership, but may also include regional or state agencies.

SUSTAINABLE AND MANAGED GROWTH ACTIONS

1. Annually Review the Future Land Use Map

Annually review the Future Land Use Map in concert with new or proposed infrastructure to ensure the desired growth pattern reflects the expansion of new roads, water, sewer, broadband, or schools. Identify geographic areas that may be suitable for an increase or decrease in the relative density associated with coordinated infrastructure plans. This review should include an inventory and analysis of completed or planned collector streets.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

2. Update the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to Align with the Plan

Update the UDO to reflect new policy guidance from the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, including:

- a. Ensure that the UDO reflects the County's new Future Land Use Map. In particular, ensure that mixed-use zoning districts support the intent of the County's Future Land Use Map, allowing for multifamily, commercial, office, and mixed-use development.
- b. Require that new storage facilities not be located along the road frontage. Such facilities should be located behind other development and generally not visible from primary roadways, such as US Highway 17.
- c. Include a new cluster subdivision (also called "conservation subdivision") option allowing an alternative to residential subdivisions that allows for smaller lot sizes in exchange for a permanently protected open space set-aside as part of the project.
- d. Evaluate changes to the UDO to encourage pervious surface options.
- e. Encourage preservation and enhancement of tree canopies and tree preservation.
- f. Review the UDO to reflect Imagine Pender 2050 policies regarding wastewater utilities and treatment plants.
- g. Consider a revision to the UDO to include historic overlays as a means of preserving the character of places of historic significance.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

3. Consider Density Bonuses for Conserving Land

Consider incentives such as a density bonus where it can be demonstrated that a development will perpetually preserve coastal natural resources, prime agricultural

lands, or wildlife habitat areas. Consistency with the NCWRC “Conservation Recommendations for Priority Terrestrial Wildlife Species and Habitats in North Carolina” is recommended. Consider this option in relation to cluster subdivisions. Bonus density provisions should consider the suitability for development across the site.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

4. Prepare Small Area Plans

Consider preparing Small Area Plans for identified growth areas, particularly the areas around the new bypass interchanges, Hampstead, Scotts Hill, and Rocky Point.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

5. Consider Procedural Changes to Development Review

Consider procedural changes to the development review process, including:

- a. Consider providing courtesy notification or review of development near neighboring counties or municipalities. The County can consider providing courtesy notification or review of development applications within a certain limit of neighboring county or municipal limits, especially where it may impact service provision.
- b. Consider rezoning all vacant Planned Development tracts to a base zoning district that is consistent with the Future Land Use Map. Establish an inventory of vacant land zoned Planned Development and monitor the status of these parcels.
- c. Consider revising the County’s Master Development Plan review procedure to only apply to phased development plans. Where unphased development is proposed, the Master Development Plan procedure should be modified to reflect a staff and Technical Review Committee review of a conceptual or schematic plan. Consider revising or removing the Master Development Plan procedure for vacant land within the Planned Development zoning district.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

6. Explore Urban Design Guidelines

Consider establishing urban design guidelines for developments within identified growth areas. Development should have guidelines focused on characteristics such as the location of parking, building height, roadway width, setbacks, open space requirements, pedestrian facilities, public spaces, etc. This effort should be undertaken as part of a publicly-driven planning process, such as a design charette.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

7. Allow Multifamily Developments in Certain Zoning Districts By-Right

Consider updating the UDO to allow multifamily developments as a by-right use in certain zoning districts in accordance with the Future Land Use Map.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

8. Establish A Committee of County Departments Involved in Growth and Development

Create a County-led committee focusing on coordinating growth management and service provision across the County. This committee should include members from the Planning and Community Development Department, Parks and Recreation Department, Pender County Utilities, Pender County Schools, and the County Manager's Office.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office / Multiple Department Collaboration

9. Evaluate Water Quality

In coordination with Pender County Utilities, evaluate programs and studies related to drinking water quality and identify any land use related solutions for implementation. Consider establishing more stringent drinking water quality testing procedures than those mandated by state and federal guidelines to inform users of potential water quality issues. Explore adding a water quality specialist on staff to assist with water quality efforts.

Responsible Party: Pender County Utilities, Planning & Community Development

10. Study Additional Sources for Potable Drinking Water

Consider ways to increase drinking water sources, including conducting a study to explore new alternatives, exploring treatment methods or alternative surface water sources, or the installation of wells and related facilities.

Responsible Party: Pender County Utilities, Planning & Community Development

11. Establish a Wellhead Protection Plan

Establish a wellhead protection plan once all well installations are completed.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Pender County Utilities

12. Test Private Drinking Water Wells

Continue the voluntary program through the Environmental Health Department for testing private drinking water wells for those in need. If testing determines water quality

issues exist, consider prioritizing expansion of centralized service to areas impacted by degraded water quality and educating the public on ways to improve water quality.

Responsible Party: Environmental Health, Pender County Utilities, Planning & Community Development

13. Prepare a Cost of Land Use Fiscal Impact Analysis

Establish a regularly updated Cost of Land Use Fiscal Impact Analysis, in coordination with the Planning & Community Development Department, Pender County Utilities, Pender County Finance Department, and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension. This Analysis should include current information about the cost of government services, such as schools and emergency services personnel, compared to revenues generated by each land use type.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Pender County Utilities, Finance, and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension

14. Implement Water and Wastewater Management Actions

Take action to implement long-range planning efforts for water and wastewater management, including:

- a. Update the 2006 Water and Wastewater Master Plans to address current conditions of private wastewater providers, interbasin transfer requirements, emergency water infrastructure, and provisions for alternative drinking water sources.
- b. Establish estimated future demand for water and wastewater service.
- c. Consider identifying and establishing generalized service area boundaries for the location of public and private water and sewer providers.
- d. Evaluate ways to recruit customers and users to increase demand for the Commerce Park Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) in a manner that does not encourage sprawl.
- e. Continue to support the wastewater service area of the Rocky Point collection system for commercial customers. Conduct an evaluation to allow for the support of residential development that does not encourage sprawl.
- f. Identify policies, thresholds, and procedures for the consolidation and acquisition of private water or wastewater systems should the issue arise in the future.

- g. Collaborate with Environmental Health to evaluate programs or opportunities to provide grant funding to private residences to remediate or replace failing septic systems.
- h. In coordination with utility providers, establish an allocation of wastewater capacity to be dedicated to future residential versus non-residential use.

Responsible Party: Pender County Utilities, Environmental Health, Planning & Community Development, Private Utility Providers

PLANNED PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES ACTIONS

1. Update Active, Passive, and Recreational Open Space Regulations

Evaluate and implement updated open space regulations in the Unified Development Ordinance. Clearly define open space requirements (differentiating between open space used for passive and active recreation) and recreation standards, which include reasonable and quantifiable areas of facilities or fees to be provided. Consider requiring at least 50% of open space for passive recreation in order to support resilience and preservation of habitat and environmentally sensitive areas. Reconsider minimum passive open space requirement where environmental features provide for low-impact recreational activities.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

2. Pursue Funding for Beach and Waterfront Access

Pursue funding to improve beach and waterfront access for eligible projects, such as matching grants for pedestrian access projects from the Division of Coastal Management.

Responsible Party: Parks & Recreation, Planning & Community Development, County Manager's Office, Finance, and Division of Coastal Management

3. Update the 1993 Waterfront Access Plan

Consider updating the 1993 Waterfront Access Plan and procure funding for updating the plan from another source, such as the Division of Coastal Management.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, County Manager's Office, Division of Coastal Management

4. Create Incentives for Public Trust Waters Access

Consider incentives such as a density bonus where a development provides access to public trust waters for County residents. This could be in the form of a permanent access easement or similar agreement. Such a provision may require the dedication of public access easements through extension of right-of-way to high water marks as a means of recreation or a fee-in-lieu for waterfront acquisition. Additional incentives should also be explored.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

5. Create a Fund for Waterfront Capital Investments

Consider establishing a separate capital improvement fund for the construction of waterfront amenities or acquisition of suitable waterfront access locations.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, County Manager's Office, Finance

6. Implement Waterfront Access and Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Capital Planning

Implement capital improvement planning for waterfront access and bicycle and pedestrian amenities, in coordination with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, County Manager's Office, Finance

7. Develop Plan for Public Boat Ramps

In coordination with the Pender County Parks & Recreation Department, develop a plan for public boat ramps. The plan should include the identification of locations suitable for applying for funds for public boat ramps, particularly along coastal waters. Such locations may include Long Creek, Moores Creek, Rockfish Creek, and a Scotts Hill Intracoastal Waterway access. Consider co-location of other appropriate recreational amenities at future boat ramp sites that may create eligibility for multiple grant funding sources.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

8. Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Planning

Prepare a new, updated Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan approximately every five years. Ensure that the updated plan adequately reflects current and future recreation needs. Adopt implementation measures to acquire and develop parks, recreation areas, and open spaces.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

9. Evaluate Parks and Recreation Capital Projects to Balance Revenue Generation

Evaluate future capital improvement projects to include a balance between revenue generating facilities and non-revenue generating facilities.

Responsible Party: Parks & Recreation, County Manager's Office, Finance

10. Plan for Expanding Athletic Fields and Programming

Establish and implement expansion plans for athletic fields and programming at Pender County Parks facilities.

Responsible Party: Parks & Recreation

11. Create a Schedule and Process for Updating Required Recreational Units

Establish a schedule and process to update the recreational unit requirement value so that investment in required recreational amenities keeps up with inflation. Conduct research to evaluate additional programs or methods to support recreational amenities.

- a. Establish an updated monetary value for recreational amenities per dwelling unit to more appropriately allocate fees captured as part of the development approval process.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

12. Create a Parks and Recreation Maintenance Policy

Establish a formal Maintenance Operations Plan and policy.

Responsible Party: Parks & Recreation

13. Evaluate Opportunities to Increase Parks and Recreation Funding and Revenue Generation

Consider increasing spending to bring per capita figures closer to those of the counties in the region and communities of similar populations. Consider increasing revenue generation within the department to bring the cost recovery closer to the state average.

Responsible Party: Parks & Recreation, County Manager's Office, Finance

14. Coordinate with the School System to Plan for School Capital Needs

Establish and continually update a twenty-year plan for Pender County Schools which provides enrollment figures, capital improvement needs, and funding constraints. Ensure that capital improvements to schools adequately address the needs of different areas of the County, including improvements to existing schools to update the facilities to modern standards.

Responsible Party: Pender County Schools

15. Create a Formal Process for Assessing Impacts of New Developments on School Capacity

Consider improved methods for assessing school capacity impacts by new development proposals. This could include establishing a benchmark for an estimated number of students generated per development type (single-family, multifamily, etc.) to identify the impacts of a development on the school system.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Pender County Schools

16. Establish School Capacity Thresholds

Consider establishing school capacity thresholds (80-90%) whereby active capital improvement measures will be initiated to alleviate future overcrowding.

Responsible Party: Pender County Schools, County Manager's Office, Planning & Community Development

17. Establish School Site Reservation Policy

In coordination with the Pender County Board of Education, establish and adopt a policy that sets out guidelines for identifying subdivisions above a certain land area or density that should include a school site to be reserved for future use, including the location and size of each school site that can be used as part of a Conditional Zoning or Development Agreement process. When siting new school locations, especially in the eastern portion of the County, it will be important to ensure Smoke Awareness Areas are evaluated to optimize the use of controlled burning for wildfire reduction and habitat management.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, County Manager's Office, Pender County Schools

18. Address Gaps in Broadband Access

Establish a telecommunications committee to assess the potential for broadband internet access in underserved areas and to act as a point of contact for developers, residents, businesses, and providers. Consider including internet service providers in the Technical Review Committee to support the provision of broadband service in underserved areas where a new development is being proposed.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, County Manager's Office

19. Green Infrastructure Practices

Consider amending the UDO to encourage **green infrastructure** practices as part of development proposals.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

EXPANDED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES ACTIONS

1. Identify Sites for North Carolina Department of Commerce Site Certification

Identify land suitable for the North Carolina Department of Commerce or utility company's Site Certification program.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Wilmington Business Development, Planning & Community Development, Local Chambers of Commerce, Utility Providers, Business and Land Owners

2. Support Economic Development Recruitment and Expansion

Consider committing additional County resources to improve and expand efforts to retain and recruit industries in the Industry and Commerce areas. Conduct a survey of potential industrial sites to coordinate with economic recruitment efforts in collaboration with Wilmington Business Development.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Wilmington Business Development, Planning & Community Development, Utility Providers, Business and Land Owners

3. Collaborate with Wallace to Support Economic Expansion Near Airport

Continue to collaborate with the Town of Wallace to identify opportunities for commercial and industrial expansion in the proximity of the Wallace-Pender Airport.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Wilmington Business Development, Planning & Community Development, Town of Wallace

4. Identify Marine Biotech and Related Economic Development Opportunities

Consider options to partner with the UNCW Center for Marine Science and MARBIONIC to identify opportunities for marine biotech, aquaculture, or uses that would be compatible with coastal tourism.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Marine Biotech and Related Businesses for Coastal Tourism

5. Protect Historic Properties

Seek to designate historically, culturally, or architecturally significant properties through the National Register of Historic Places or local historic programs. Consider prioritizing historically, culturally, or architecturally significant properties for public acquisition or protection.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, Land Owners

6. Implement Historic and Cultural Preservation Efforts

Identify ways to coordinate tourism efforts with historic and cultural preservation efforts, including connections with the Gullah Geechee Corridor.

Responsible Party: Parks & Recreation, Planning & Community Development, National Park Service, Poplar Grove Plantation, Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor and Commission

7. Support Small Business Entrepreneurship

Coordinate with the Small Business Development Technology Center (SBDTC) to support small business and entrepreneurship goals and strategies.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Small Business Development Technology Center

8. Support Tourism Development Organizations

Coordinate with tourism development organizations to support historic preservation, environmental conservation, and identify land use regulation barriers that hinder these efforts.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Wilmington Business Development, Tourism Development Organizations

ATTAINABLE HOUSING CHOICES ACTIONS

1. Develop an Updated Housing Needs Assessment and Recommendations

Develop an updated Housing Needs Assessment for Pender County and identify recommendations for financial tools to provide more attainable housing within the assessment.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Pender County Housing Authority

2. Establish a New Coastal Residential Zoning District

Establish a new Coastal Residential zoning district or overlay district for single-family residential development within close proximity of estuarine or coastal waters. Such a district should incentivize low-impact development (LID), limit impervious surface coverage, require tree preservation and mitigation, and incentivize the allocation of public access to coastal waters.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

3. Remove Barriers to Housing Choices

Evaluate the UDO for barriers to middle income housing, such as single-family houses on small lots, patio homes, cottage courts, townhomes, small multifamily (2-4 units), and accessory dwelling units.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

4. Encourage Use of Housing Choice Voucher Program

Develop a public education program to encourage residents who are looking to rent out their home to utilize the Housing Choice Voucher program through the Pender County Housing Authority.

Responsible Party: Pender County Housing Authority

5. Consider Zoning Changes to Support Housing Options Near Employment Centers

Consider establishing zoning regulations which support a variety of housing options in close proximity to primary employment centers, such as the US Highway 421 corridor and in Rocky Point.

Responsible Party: Pender County Planning & Community Development

6. Explore Incentives for Attainable Housing

Consider incentives, such as a density bonus or dimensional standard flexibility, for development that provides housing for low to moderate income households.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Pender County Housing Authority

7. Coordinate with Non-governmental Partners on Housing Security

Consider partnering with faith-based or non-profit organizations, such as the Pender Long Term Recovery Group, to offer support elements for housing security, including home repair, rental assistance, and homeowner education programs.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Planning & Community Development, Pender County Housing Authority, Local Organizations (such as Pender Long Term Recovery Group)

8. Annually Evaluate Development Regulations to Ensure Alignment with Housing Goals

Conduct an annual review of County housing policy and regulations to determine if modifications to regulations are needed to achieve the County's housing goals.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Pender County Housing Authority

SUPPORTED AGRICULTURAL AND WORKING LANDS ACTIONS

1. Develop a Farmland Preservation Plan

In coordination with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Office, develop a Farmland Preservation Plan. Pursue grant funds available through the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund to complete a Farmland Preservation Plan. During the development of the Farmland Preservation Plan, explore options for the creation of a Prime Agricultural Land overlay district or financial tools designed to protect and preserve agricultural land.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Planning & Community Development, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Office, North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

2. Explore Agritourism Opportunities

Explore ways to encourage agritourism. Ideas may include short-term rental campgrounds and rural event venues.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Office

3. Support Alternative Farming Methods

Consider providing resources to help develop, promote, and support alternative farming methods in identified prime agricultural areas.

Responsible Party: North Carolina Cooperative Extension Office, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pender County Soil & Water

4. Expand and Support the Local Food System

Identify ways for the County to expand the local food system in coordination with the Enhanced Quality of Life and Community Health Goal, including:

- a. Establish partnerships to facilitate a program for farmers markets on County property.
- b. Collaborate with partners (such as North Carolina Cooperative Extension, local Chambers of Commerce, or Tourism Development Authority) to invest in a consumer education campaign that highlights the benefits of buying local produce, beef, poultry, pork, and fish. The County should also inform consumers of the locations where they can purchase these products in Pender County.

Responsible Party: North Carolina Cooperative Extension Office, Planning & Community Development

5. Invest in Beaver Management Programs

Continue investing in programs related to beaver management, including:

- a. Consider developing a public outreach program to educate residents about the potential benefits of the Beaver Management Program.
- b. Develop a map to identify known beaver conflict areas to assist with targeted outreach for the program.

Responsible Party: Pender County Planning & Community Development

6. Appropriately Regulate Solar Farms

Evaluate ways to better regulate solar farms in Pender County, including:

- a. Research planning best practices related to solar farms.
- b. Establish a guidance manual for the siting or installation of solar farms that will address such topics as incentives, prime farmland soils, land clearing, stormwater management and decommissioning. This can be done in coordination with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

Responsible Party: Pender County Planning & Community Development, Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION ACTIONS

1. Develop a Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

Develop a county-wide comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan, including coverage of the WMPO and RPO areas. Continue to implement the network recommendations from the current Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, NCDOT, Cape Fear Council of Governments, Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Cape Fear Rural Transportation Planning Organization

2. Require Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure in New Development

Require the installation of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in new development as outlined in the current Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and a future Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, NCDOT, Cape Fear Council of Governments, Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Cape Fear Rural Transportation Planning Organization

3. Research Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding Opportunities

Explore opportunities to secure funding for bicycle and pedestrian trails. This includes establishing a funding mechanism for maintenance of these trails.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, NCDOT, Cape Fear Council of Governments, Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Cape Fear Rural Transportation Planning Organization

4. Consider Increasing Development Intensity at Primary Rural Roadway Intersections

Consider increasing development intensity and uses at primary rural roadway intersections in accordance with the Future Land Use Map.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

5. Provide Updates on the Implementation of the Pender County Streets Plan

Provide updates to the Planning Board regarding the implementation status of the Streets Plan. Such a report should identify issues and opportunities for improving the existing requirements contained in the UDO, if any.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

6. Address Impacts of New Development on Transportation Systems

Identify ways to address the impacts of new developments on transportation systems with regional partners, including NCDOT, WMPO, RPO, municipalities within the County, and neighboring counties.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, NCDOT, Cape Fear Council of Governments, Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Cape Fear Rural Transportation Planning Organization, Neighboring Counties, Local Municipalities

7. Coordinate Updates to the Streets Plan with the Future Land Use Map

Update the Streets Plan to be consistent with the desired development pattern as shown on the Future Land Use Map.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

8. Clarify Connectivity Requirements

Update the UDO to include provisions clarifying the intent of connectivity requirements to ensure that there is interconnectivity between adjacent developments and future development. This may include requiring roads connecting to existing or future adjacent development to be platted as public right-of-way and prohibiting physical obstructions to connections.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

9. Consider Stub Street Requirements

Consider requiring a stub-out connection where development is adjacent to single-family lots fronting upon thoroughfares or arterial roadways to allow for future connections.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

10. Update and Maintain the Right-of-Way and “Paper Street” Database

Update and continually maintain a database of future right-of-way dedications, “paper streets,” and stub-outs. Research recorded documents to expand the database to include existing paper streets to ensure maximum coordination and connectivity.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

11. Update Private Street Requirements

Update the private street design standards as outlined in the UDO to allow for greater flexibility in design and improved interconnectivity.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

12. Consider Requiring Public Access for Private Streets

Consider requiring all private roads and streets to include an easement to allow for travel on the roadway by the general public to improve interconnectivity between developments. If future development includes access to public facilities or public trust areas, such an easement should be required.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

13. Examine Opportunities to Improve Rural Community Transportation

Explore opportunities to increase the number of transportation services and options in rural communities to link rural residents to jobs, health care, and other local services.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

14. Explore Expansion of Paratransit Infrastructure

Explore the possibility of partnering with Pender Adult Services to coordinate transportation stops and services between PAS-TRAN and WAVE Transit.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Pender Adult Services

15. Establish Funding and Maintenance Responsibility for Non-Motorized Transportation Maintenance

Establish a funding strategy and continuing maintenance policy and program for construction of County sidewalks, greenways, and multi-use paths. Funding and maintenance responsibility shall be under the purview of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

16. Consider Establishing a Greenway Facilities Plan

Consider options to establish a Countywide Greenway Plan. Such a plan will outline priority locations for greenway facilities, funding mechanisms tied to future development, and procedures for maintenance and continued upkeep.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

17. Establish a Bicycle and Pedestrian Service Area Map

Establish a bicycle and pedestrian transportation infrastructure service area map. This map can be used as a resource when allocating funding collected as part of a fee-in-lieu program to install bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

18. Expand WAVE Micro On-Demand Service

Expand WAVE micro on-demand service in Hampstead and Rocky Point.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Planning & Community Development, WAVE Transit, Pender Adult Services

19. Implement the Principles of Vision Zero and Complete Streets

In coordination with the Enhanced Quality of Life and Community Health Actions, identify ways to implement the principles of **Complete Streets** or a **Vision Zero** program to improve health and safety.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, NCDOT, Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE ACTIONS

1. Consider Establishing a Conservation Easement Program

Consider establishing a formal program to support conservation easements facilitated by Pender County. Research examples of other successful programs in North Carolina, such as Wake County or Buncombe County.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

2. Develop a Tree Preservation Plan

Develop a Tree Preservation Plan and update the UDO with clear guidance to protect and retain trees.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

3. Establish a Formalized Procedure to Evaluate Potential Public Land Acquisition

Establish a formalized procedure for evaluating potential public land acquisition projects, which considers wildlife habitat conservation and wildlife corridors.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation,

4. Establish an Overlay for Outstanding Resource Waters

Establish an overlay district for the CAMA 575-foot Outstanding Resource Waters AEC buffer to encourage enhanced mitigation of stormwater runoff, impervious surface limitations, and preservation of tree canopy.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

5. Enhance Riparian Buffers

Consider identifying incentives for new conservation subdivisions whereby riparian buffers are increased in size from the standard 30-foot buffer. Identify strategies to limit land disturbance and tree removal near creeks and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

6. Consider Establishing an Engineering Department

Consider establishing an engineering department within the County government to oversee stormwater management.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Planning & Community Development

7. Enhance Stormwater Management

Explore opportunities to increase the requirements for stormwater management for all types of development. In doing so, the County should adopt stormwater regulations to account for fill (including standalone lots), impervious surface coverage limits, and the designation of a design storm year. Such requirements should identify regulations for the construction phase (i.e., erosion and sedimentation control) and post-construction phase (i.e., stormwater control).

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

8. Consider Stormwater Control Requirements Beyond State Minimums

Consider modifying applicability requirements for stormwater management that are more stringent than those outlined by 15A NCAC 02H .1019, whereby 10,000 square feet of impervious surface or greater than an acre of disturbance triggers stormwater mitigation.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

9. Establish a Stormwater and Ditch Maintenance Program

Consider establishing a stormwater and ditch maintenance program coordinated through an existing or new Pender County department and with the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Pender County Planning & Community Development, NCDOT

10. Develop Stormwater Master Plans

Develop Stormwater Master Plans in specific areas with a principal focus on reduction of stormwater runoff volumes. These areas should be primarily located in older neighborhoods that were constructed prior to established state stormwater rules. Partnerships with regional local governments or agencies may be required.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

11. Reduce Stormwater Discharge

Expand efforts to identify and eliminate stormwater discharges resulting from County building, facilities, convenience centers, new developments, and activities. For example, downspout disconnection to impervious surfaces and the installation of rain gardens can substantially reduce stormwater runoff discharges.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Facilities, Planning & Community Development

12. Develop a Watershed Restoration Plan

Pursue grant funds to assist in developing a Watershed Restoration Plan. An option may be grant funds distributed by the Division of Water Resources to Regional Commissions and Councils of Government to carry out water quality management and planning projects. When developed, ensure that the Watershed Restoration Plan contains the nine minimum elements required to receive EPA Section 319 funds for implementation of capital improvements projects.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, North Carolina Division of Water Resources, Cape Fear Council of Governments

13. Explore Water Conservation Programs and Education Efforts

Research and identify viable water conservation programs and associated public education efforts to implement in Pender County, such as the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services Soil & Water Conservation program, Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP).

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, Pender Soil & Water

14. Expand Incentives for Low-Impact Development

Expand options for implementing incentives for developments that utilize low-impact development (LID) techniques, including reducing impervious surfaces, retaining and infiltrating runoff on-site, and managing the potential impacts of stormwater runoff.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

15. Consider Wildlife Habitat Conservation in Legislative Decisions

Consider requiring all rezoning and conditional zoning applications to be reviewed by staff in relation to the Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat Assessment and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission Habitat Conservation Recommendations.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

16. Consider Expanding the Definition of Environmental Features in the UDO

Consider expanding the definition of “environmental features” in the UDO to include Areas of Environmental Concern (AECs), Significant Natural Heritage Areas (SNHAs), Natural Heritage Element Occurrences (NHEOs), Smoke Awareness Areas, and Prime Farmland soils.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

17. Consider Revising Density Calculations in the UDO

Consider using a density calculation in the UDO that equals the total acreage of the site minus wetlands (as defined under the Clean Water Act Section 404) to ensure consistency in the way density is calculated in the development review process.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

18. Explore Standards to Provide Wildlife Corridors

Consider providing specific standards for the provision of open space to include features such as habitat connectivity and tree preservation. Habitat connectivity should encourage the dedication of large contiguous tracts of land, typically 10 acres at a minimum, with a minimum average width of 500 feet and separation from building activity of at least 350 feet and conservation of natural open space that is at least 300 feet wide between environmental features. This will be encouraged to better ensure that wildlife can travel between core habitats. Where such cannot be reasonably provided, payment of a fee-in-lieu should be provided to the County for the future dedication of park or conservation land that will protect wildlife habitat, while also providing an amenity for the general public and residents of the subject development.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

19. Consider Establishing a Resource Conservation Incentive District

Consider establishing a Resource Conservation Incentive District located in and adjacent to floodplain forests along streams and rivers, and adjacent to and between Game Lands.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

20. Expand Tree Preservation and Mitigation Requirements

Consider expanding the applicable development types – rather than zoning districts – that require tree preservation or mitigation.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

21. Remove Tree Survey Exemptions

Remove the exemption for tree surveys and mitigation in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs), Areas of Environmental Concern (AECs), wetland buffers, and stream buffers.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

22. Provide Bulkhead Education

Consider providing outreach and education to homeowners regarding the impacts failing bulkheads can have on surface waters and a property's exposure to damage.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

23. Establish a Drainage Improvement Plan

Establish a plan that sets forth observation and maintenance of creeks and streams within the County to reduce the impact of future flood events, particularly near culverts under roadways.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

24. Strengthen Floodplain Development Regulations

Annually review the County's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance and consider options for increasing standards for development in flood zones as a means of being proactive in reducing the impact of future flood events.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

25. Designate Vulnerable Lands as Environmental Conservation

Ensure applicable Intracoastal Waterway islands, spoil areas, conservation lands, flood buyout properties, and Game Lands are designated as Environmental Conservation on the County's official zoning map.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

26. Gather and Share Resilience Data

Identify areas of inundation from recent events, such as Hurricane Florence and Hurricane Matthew. Identify data available to support UDO changes in the 100-year, 500-year, or 1000-year floodplains. Investigate opportunities to provide signage for areas that were underwater for those events to promote public education about resilience. Consider collaborations with regional and state partners to identify projected future hazard impacts (at a regional scale) for future preparedness.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Cape Fear Council of Governments, DOT

COMMUNITY UNITY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS

1. Consider Web-Based Tools to Notify the Public of Development Projects

Consider web-based tools to provide public notification of upcoming development projects.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Information Technology Services, Communications Manager

2. Establish a Public Education Program for Natural Hazards

Consider establishing a public education program designed to help inform the public about their exposure to natural hazards and actions they can take to mitigate potential damage to public health, safety, and property from natural disasters. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Ensure the local library and the Pender County website maintains documents about flood insurance, flood protection, floodplain management, and natural and beneficial functions of floodplains. Many documents are available free of charge from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- b. Encourage builders, developers, and architects to become familiar with the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP's) land use and building standards.
- c. Provide local real estate agents with handouts advising potential buyers to investigate flood hazards for the property they are considering purchasing.
- d. Advertise the availability of flood insurance on an annual basis.
- e. Post hazard related information on the County's website and distribute appropriate educational materials using the County's social media outlets.

Responsible Party: Emergency Management, Planning & Community Development

3. Consider Programs such as a Community Planning Academy

Consider innovative programs to engage the public, such as a community planning academy or a civic leadership academy.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Planning & Community Development,

ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH ACTIONS

1. Build Community Capacity

Research ways to build capacity for community health. This could include applying to the federal AmeriCorps VISTA program, which organizes volunteers that commit to a year of service in their chosen community working on community issues.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Community Organizations

2. Identify Grant Funding for Program Support

Identify grant funding to support the development of programs and initiatives identified in the Enhanced Quality of Life and Community Health Policies and Actions.

Responsible Party: County Manager's Office, Planning & Community Development, Finance

3. Establish a Farmers Market

Establish a farmers market program in Pender County to serve both the eastern and western portions of the County.

Responsible Party: North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Pender County Health and Human Services, Non-profit organizations

4. Create a Local Food Directory

Create a directory of local food producers and promote it through the Communications Manager.

Responsible Party: Communications Manager, County Manager's Office, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Health and Human Services

5. Create a Local Food Council

Create a local food council to bring together community stakeholders to assess the local food system, align efforts in the community, monitor progress, and share recommendations with elected officials.

Responsible Party: Communications Manager, County Manager's Office, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Health and Human Services

6. Develop Regional Partnerships

Create connections or develop conversations with other planning departments in North Carolina that prioritize community health in their work, such as the City of Wilson’s Local Food Initiative.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development

7. Develop an Aging Plan

Consider the development of an Aging Plan in coordination with Pender County Health & Human Services or with funding from resources like the AARP Foundation or the Cape Fear Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging. A Master Aging Plan provides comprehensive and coordinated delivery of services to meet the needs, expectations, and contributions of a growing aging population.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Health and Human Services, AARP, Cape Fear Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging

8. Achieve Recreation Goals Within Conservation Easements

Develop a plan to proactively work with landowners and stakeholders to implement County recreational goals and expand public-private partnerships. After the establishment of a conservation easement program, leverage easements to achieve recreation goals.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation

9. Promote Large County Parks as Community Hubs

Promote large County parks as **community hubs** – multi-purpose areas that build social connectedness and community opportunities – especially in rural areas of the County that are lacking community gathering spaces.

Responsible Party: County Manager’s Office, Planning & Community Development, Parks & Recreation, Health and Human Services

10. Increase Accessibility of Food Resources

Partner with local non-profits and other organizations to increase accessibility of healthy food sources to communities in need.

Responsible Party: Local Non-profits, Health and Human Services, Planning & Community Development,

11. Review and Update the UDO to Strengthen Local Food Systems

Review the UDO for any land use regulation barriers to the local food systems.

Responsible Party: Planning & Community Development, North Carolina Cooperative Extension

APPENDICES



APPENDIX A: MATRIX OF REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Required Elements	Page
<p>Organization of the Plan</p> <p>Include a matrix in the land use plan or comprehensive plan that shows the location of the required elements.</p>	137
<p>Community Concerns and Aspirations</p> <p>The purpose of this element is to provide an understanding of the underlying planning needs and desires of the community.</p>	11
<p>Significant Existing and Emerging Conditions</p> <p>Describe the dominant growth-related conditions that influence land use, development, water quality, and other environmental concerns in the planning area.</p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources</p> <p>Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p>Key Issues</p> <p>Describe the land use and development topics most important to the future of the planning area. At a minimum, this description shall include public access, land use compatibility, infrastructure carrying capacity, natural hazard areas, water quality, and may also include local areas of concern as described in Subparagraph (D)(2) (Land Use Plan Management Topics) of the Rule.</p>	<p>5, 11</p> <p>Appendix C: Project Resources</p> <p>Fact Book and New Issues and Opportunities Report</p>
<p>A Community Vision</p> <p>Describe the general physical appearance and form that represents the local government’s plan for the future. Include objectives to be achieved by the plan and identify changes that may be needed to achieve the planning vision.</p>	10, 11
<p>Existing and Emerging Conditions</p> <p>The purpose of this element is to provide a sound factual base necessary to support the land use and development policies included in the plan. Describe the following:</p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources</p> <p>Fact Book</p>
<p>Population, Housing, and Economy</p> <p>Include discussion of the following data and trends:</p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources</p> <p>Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p>Population</p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources</p> <p>Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>

<p><i>Permanent population Growth Trends using Data from the Two Most Recent Decennial Censuses</i></p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p><i>Current Permanent and Seasonal Estimates</i></p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p><i>Key Population Characteristics</i></p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p><i>Age</i></p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p><i>Income</i></p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p><i>Thirty Year Projections of Permanent and Seasonal Population in Five Years Increments</i></p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p>Housing Stock Estimate current housing stock, including permanent and seasonal units, tenure, and types of units (single-family, multifamily, and manufactured).</p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p>Local Economy Describe employment by major sectors and community economic activity.</p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report</p>
<p>Natural Systems Describe the natural features and discuss the environmental conditions of the planning jurisdiction including:</p>	<p>Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book</p>

Natural Features

Appendix C: Project Resources

[Fact Book](#)

<i>Areas of Environmental Concern (AECs)</i>	102; Map -104
<i>Soil characteristics, including limitations for septic tanks, erodibility, and other factors related to development</i>	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report
<i>Environmental Management Commission (EMC) water quality classifications (SC, SB, SA, HQW, and ORW) and related use support designations, and Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) shellfish growing areas and water quality conditions</i>	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book and Planning Influences Report
<i>Flood and other natural hazards</i>	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
<i>Storm surge areas</i>	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
<i>Non-coastal wetlands including forested wetlands, shrub-scrub wetlands, and freshwater marshes</i>	102; Map -104
<i>Water supply watersheds or wellhead protection areas</i>	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
<i>Primary nursery areas</i>	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
<i>Environmentally fragile areas, such as, but not limited to wetlands, natural heritage areas, areas containing endangered species, prime wildlife habitats, or maritime forests</i>	Wetlands and AEC Map - 104 Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
<i>Additional natural features or conditions identified by the local government</i>	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book

Environmental Conditions

<i>Water Quality</i>	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
Status and changes of surface water quality, including impaired streams from the most recent NC Division of Water Resources Basin Planning Branch Reports, Clean Water Act 303(d) List, and other comparable data	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
Current situation and trends on permanent and temporary closures of shellfishing waters as determined by the Report on Sanitary Survey by the Shellfish Sanitation and Recreational Water Quality Section of the NC Division of Marine Fisheries	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
Areas experiencing chronic wastewater treatment system malfunctions	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
Areas with water quality or public health problems related to non-point source pollution	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
<i>Natural Hazards</i>	
Areas subject to recurrent flooding, storm surges, and high winds	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
Areas experiencing significant shoreline erosion as evidenced by the presence of threatened structures or public facilities	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
<i>Natural Resources</i>	
Environmentally fragile areas or areas where resource functions are being impacted as a result of development	Appendix C: Project Resources Fact Book
Valuable natural resource areas that are being impacted or lost as a result of incompatible development. These may include, but are not limited to the following: coastal wetlands, protected open space, and agricultural land	102; Map -104

Existing Land Use and Development

Include a map and descriptions of the following:

Existing Land Use Patterns

Which may include the following categories: residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, public, dedicated open space, vacant, agricultural, and forestry. Land use descriptions shall include estimates of the land area allocated to each land use and characteristics of each land use category.

Appendix C: Project Resources

[Fact Book, Planning Influences Report, and Land Use Alternatives Report](#)

Historic, Cultural, and Scenic Areas

Designated by a state or federal agency or by local government.

Appendix C: Project Resources

[Fact Book](#)

Community Facilities

Evaluate existing and planned capacity, location, and adequacy of community facilities that serve the community's existing and planned population and economic base; that protect important environmental factors such as water quality; and that guide land development in the coastal area. These shall include:

Appendix C: Project Resources

[Fact Book](#)

Public and Private Water Supply and Wastewater Systems

Describe existing public and private systems, including existing condition and capacity. Describe any documented overflows, bypasses, or other problems that may degrade water quality or constitute a threat to public health. Indicate future needs based on population projections. Map existing and planned service areas.

Appendix C: Project Resources

[Fact Book](#)

Transportation Systems

Map the existing and planned multimodal systems and port and airport facilities. Describe any highway segments deemed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) as having unacceptable service levels. Describe highway facilities on the current thoroughfare plan or facilities on the current transportation improvement plan. Describe the impact of existing facilities on land use patterns.

Appendix C: Project Resources

[Fact Book](#)

Stormwater Systems

Describe the existing public stormwater management system. Identify existing drainage problems and water quality issues related to point-source discharges of stormwater runoff.

Appendix C: Project Resources

[Fact Book](#)

Future Land Use	18; Map - 22
This element of the plan is intended to guide the development and use of land in a manner that achieves the goals of the CAMA through local government land use and development policies, including a Future Land Use Map.	
Policies	23
Community Concerns and Aspirations and Existing and Emerging Conditions	46
Shall be considered in the development of local government land use plan policies as required in 7B .0702 (b) and (c).	
Policies	18
Shall be consistent with the goals of the CAMA, shall address the CRC management topics for land use plans, and comply with all state and federal rules.	
Policies	N / A
That exceed use standards and permitting requirements found in Subchapter 7H, State Guidelines for Areas of Environmental Concern, shall be identified in the plan.	
Land Use Plan Management Topics	18
The purposes of the CRC management topics are to ensure that land use plans support the goals of the CAMA, define the CRC's expectations for land use policies, and provide a basis for land use plan review and certification. In addition to the management topics outlined below, plans may also include policies to address local areas of concern. Each management topic includes two components: a management goal and planning objectives.	
Public Access	52
Management Goal	52
<i>Maximize public access to the public trust waters of the coastal region for residents and visitors.</i>	
Planning Objective	52
<i>Implement policies and recommendations that address access needs and opportunities, establish policies for beach areas targeted for nourishment, and assure satisfactory access to public trust waters for all Pender County residents and visitors.</i>	
Land Use Compatibility	46

Management Goal	46
<i>Manage the physical growth and development of Pender County by encouraging more intensive land uses in key locations identified for such growth while preserving and protecting the unique physical character and social assets of the rural heritage and coastal habitat that makes the County a unique place to live.</i>	
Planning Objective	46
<i>Ensure that development and use of resources balances protection of natural resources and agricultural lands with economic development, avoids risks to public health and welfare, and is consistent with the capability of the land.</i>	
Infrastructure Carrying Capacity	48
Management Goal	48, 52
<i>Ensure that public infrastructure systems are sized, located, and managed to provide service to residents and businesses and so the quality and productivity of Areas of Environmental Concern (AECs) and other fragile areas are protected or restored.</i>	
Planning Objective	48, 52
<i>Ensure that the location and capacity of public infrastructure systems are consistent with the County's growth and development goals.</i>	
Natural Hazard Areas	57 to 57; 74
Management Goal	57
<i>Conserve and maintain barrier dunes, beaches, flood plains, coastal wetlands, and other coastal features for their natural storm protection functions and their natural resources giving recognition to public health, safety, and welfare issues.</i>	
Planning Objective	57; 80
<i>The County shall be proactive in its efforts to minimize damage and threats to public health and safety associated with hurricanes, severe weather, and other hazards and work to implement the Southeastern NC Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (2021).</i>	
Water Quality	49; 80

Management Goals	80
<i>Maintain, protect, and where possible enhance the natural environment and water quality in all coastal wetlands, rivers, streams, and estuaries.</i>	
Planning Objective	80
<i>The County shall take actions designed to prevent or control nonpoint source pollution and protect and where possible enhance and restore the water quality and sensitive natural resources located in and adjacent to the County's Planning jurisdiction.</i>	
Future Land Use Map	18; Map - 22
Depict the policies for growth and development, and the desired future patterns of land use and land development with consideration given to natural system constraints and infrastructure. Include designations with descriptions of land uses and development.	
Tools for Managing Development	18, 21, 100
The purpose of this element is to describe the management tools and actions the local government will use to implement the land use plan.	
Guide for land use decision-making	21; 100
Describe the role of the land use plan policies, including the Future Land Use Map, in local decisions regarding land use and development.	
Existing development program	5, 22, 21, 46, 98, 100
Describe the community's existing development management program, including local ordinances, codes, plans, and policies.	
Action plan and implementation schedule	105 to 135
Describe the actions that will be taken by the local government to implement policies that meet the CRC's Management Topic goals and objectives. Specify the fiscal year(s) in which each action is anticipated to start and finish. Describe the specific steps the local government plans to take to implement the policies, including the adoption and amendment of local ordinances, plans, and special projects. The action plan shall be used to prepare the implementation status report for the land use plan.	

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

Centralized water and wastewater: Refers to a water or wastewater system or network that transports water or wastewater from residential or commercial premises to a central treatment or disposal facility. Centralized water or wastewater utilities are publicly or privately provided, such as Pender Utilities or a privately operating business. This is the intended form of utilities provided in growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Map. This does not refer to package treatment plants.

Community hubs: A place, structure, area, or other facility used for and providing religious, fraternal, social, or recreational programs generally open to the public and designed to accommodate and serve significant segments of the community.

Complete Streets: A multimodal approach to roadway design and safety that considers all users of transportation infrastructure, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders.

Incremental density: Slightly increased density of housing that is sensitive to the existing character of the neighborhood.

Green infrastructure: The range of measures that use plant or soil systems, permeable pavement or other permeable surfaces or substrates, stormwater harvest and reuse, or landscaping to store, infiltrate, or evapotranspire stormwater and reduce flows to sewer systems or to surface waters (EPA, Clean Water Act 2019).

Greenways: Corridors of undeveloped land preserved for recreational use or environmental protection.

Growth areas: These areas are identified by the Residential Neighborhood, Neighborhood Center, Regional Center, Heavy Commercial, and Industry & Commerce Future Land Use Categories. Growth areas will generally be served by centralized water and wastewater infrastructure, and are intended to provide denser housing, commercial, and industrial opportunities.

Infrastructure: The facilities and services necessary for a society, community, or economy to function. This can include utilities (such as water and sewer); transportation systems, like streets and roads; communications, such as broadband and wireless; and public facilities, such as fire stations, libraries, parks, and schools. It can also refer to social infrastructure

that support community well-being, like healthcare, community or senior centers, and others.

“Missing middle” housing: A range of house-scale buildings with multiple units, compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes, located in a walkable neighborhood. Types of middle housing include cottage style single-family, townhomes, duplex, triplex, quadplex, apartments, and condominiums.

Mixed-use: A horizontal or vertical mix of non-residential and residential uses within a common development. The term mixed-use is intended to support flexibility for market driven development of compatible land uses. It is also intended to create more sustainable forms of development that reduce vehicle miles traveled, support placemaking and walkability, provide needed entertainment and services to residents, and enhance quality of life.

Package treatment plants: Pre-manufactured treatment facilities used to treat wastewater in small communities or on individual properties as part of a decentralized system.

Place-based economic development: A method of economic development which focuses on leveraging the unique place-based features and assets of a locality.

Planning topic: A specific area or subject of community development. Examples of planning topics include housing, transportation, economic development, and natural resources.

Public services: The institutional systems (education, health care, governance, etc.) that are required to meet the economic, social, and other needs of a community.

Public transportation: Transportation services provided for the public by vehicles such as bus or rail on public ways, using specific routes and schedules, and usually on a fare-paying basis.

Smart growth: An overall approach of development and conservation strategies that can help protect our health and natural environment and make our communities more attractive, economically stronger, and resilient to climate change.

Social determinants of health: The conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and

quality-of-life outcomes and risks. Some examples of social determinants of health are housing, transportation, education, job opportunities, pollution, and social contexts.

Third places: Neutral spaces between work and home that individuals frequent for social connection to their community. These spaces allow community members to interact with each other and can include parks, plazas, coffee shops, and other spaces.

Traditional neighborhoods: Development based on human-scale design with concerns for walkability, increasing density, a mix of uses, and reducing automobile usage. Also referred to as conventional neighborhoods.

Vision Zero: A program or policy effort that aims to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and injuries.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts (EVAD): The Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts (EVAD) provide access to regulatory benefits and programs in exchange for a conservation agreement to protect the land for active agricultural purposes.

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI): The area where homes and communities meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland vegetation that are more vulnerable to wildfires. For more information, see the North Carolina Forest Service – Resist Wildfire site.

Wastewater treatment facilities: Facilities that treat a wide range of wastewater, including industrial and domestic sewage. Wastewater treatment plants operate on a larger scale than other wastewater or sewer options (such as septic tanks and package treatment plants) and can be run by a private wastewater company or public utility, such as Pender County Utilities.

APPENDIX C: PROJECT RESOURCES

Understanding the influences on Pender County's planning elements required a thorough review of the following sources that were incorporated into the development of this Plan. To access these project resources, please see the Pender County Planning & Community Development webpage.

- **Community Policy Profile:** The Community Policy Profile reviews and summarizes plans, assessments, studies, and other important documents whose guidance can help inform the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The report contains brief descriptions and summaries of each of these documents and highlights the key policy topics addressed in the reports.
- **Fact Book:** The Fact Book provides data on existing conditions and projected future trends to provide a common understanding of Pender County at the start of the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Plan process. The Fact Book also served as a resource as the Plan was being developed. New data continually becomes available, such as new Census data and updated development features maintained by the County's staff. This Fact Book freezes the data at a moment in time and is a useful snapshot of County conditions to help inform development of the Plan.
- **Planning Influences Report:** Also included in the Fact Book, the Planning Influences Report provides a market analysis for Pender County, including analyses, findings, and recommendations based on current available market data for demographic, economic, tourism, and real estate factors.
- **New Issues and Opportunities Report:** This report identifies new issues and opportunities based on vision and policy themes generated from stakeholder interviews, Steering Committee discussions, and inputs received through public engagement. The topics outlined in this document served as the foundation for policy discussions with County Staff, the Steering Committee, the Planning Board, and the Board of County Commissioners and guided development of this Plan.
- **Community Engagement Window #1 Summary Report:** This document provides a summary of the activities, objectives, and outcomes of Community Engagement Window #1, held in September and October 2024. Participants were asked about their experience in Pender County today and their vision of the future. Verbatim responses to open-ended questions are provided at the end of the document.

- **Land Use Alternatives Report:** This report provides a summary of the land use alternatives exercise undertaken by the Project Team and Steering Committee prior to the development of the Plan and the Future Land Use Map. The report describes the purpose of the land use alternatives, assumptions and methodology, modeling outcomes, and conclusions.
- **Community Engagement Window #2 Summary Report:** This document provides a summary report of the activities, objectives, and outcomes of Community Engagement Window #2, held from April to June 2025. Participants were presented with a summary of the Vision Themes, Goals, Policies, Actions, and Future Land Use Map, and a complete Plan draft for public review and comment. Feedback from these engagement opportunities was then used to fine-tune certain aspects of the Plan and confirm the direction and outcome of the Plan's components and overarching results.