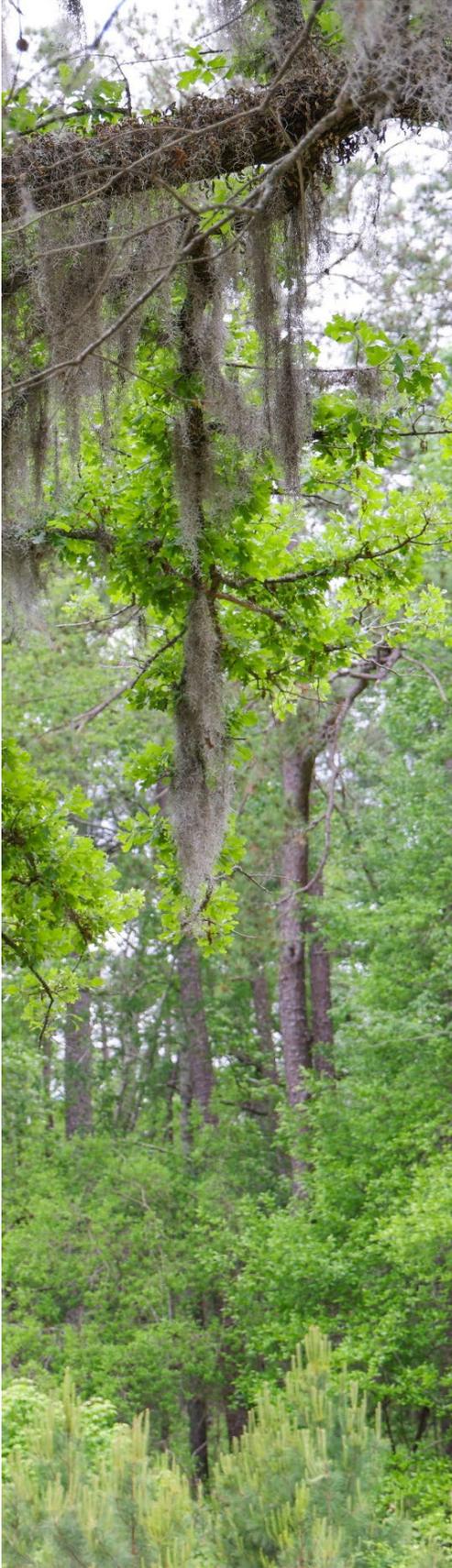


*Pender County  
Strategic Plan  
2025-2030*



**PENDER**  
COUNTY NC  
\*\*\*\*\*





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## LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Dear Pender County Residents,

Growth is all around us. Pender County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state and this means we must be proactive, responsive, and clear about how we'll manage our resources and priorities. The strategic plan you're reading is a critical step toward our future. It lays out our mission, vision, values, and goals for the next five years.

This plan sets a roadmap for Pender County to achieve our goals and reach our vision. The identified strategies will be used to make decisions and assign funding. The individual actions lay out key steps in our way forward.

Thanks to all of you who provided initial input, participated in workgroups, or provided feedback on this plan and made strong suggestions. We hope you see your voice in these pages. Moving forward, we ask you to hold us accountable and make sure we're making decisions in alignment with this plan. And over the long term, we hope that our children and grandchildren will look back on this strategy and see the seeds that helped Pender County become an even more remarkable place to live.

We dedicate this plan to our current and future residents,

Signed,

Commissioner W. Randy Burton, Chair  
Commissioner Brad George, Vice Chair  
Commissioner Jerry Groves  
Commissioner Jimmy Tate, EdD  
Commissioner Brent Springer

## STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

This 5-year Strategic Plan was developed by a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of County department managers with input from the public and employees. Workgroups consisting of employees, the public, and partnering organizations developed the strategies and actions for each goal.

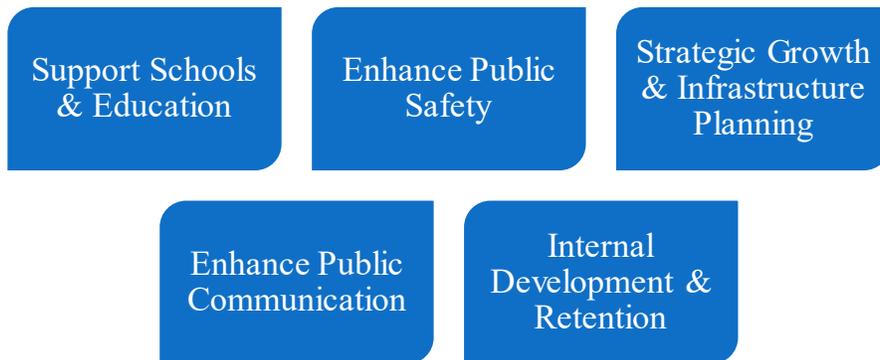
The Strategic Planning process kicked off with a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners and the public in January 2025. The Strategic Planning Committee analyzed mandates and conducted a SWOT analysis with all County departments. From there, strategic issues were identified. The Committee also drafted a mission statement and core values based on feedback from the SWOT analysis. These are described on Page 3.

A public engagement session was opened in April 2025 for the public to provide input on the mission statement, core values, and identified issues and priorities. From more than 600 public responses, five Strategic Goals were identified and prioritized. These goals are detailed beginning on Page 9.

Workgroups comprised of employees, partnering organizations, and the public were formed for each Strategic Goal. There were more than 65 staff, partners, and members of the public involved in these workgroups that identified strategies and actions to achieve each goal. A Values Statement was also drafted during this time.

Another public engagement period was opened in September and October 2025 to gauge whether the public found the strategies and actions for each goal achievable, whether the actions addressed the issue, whether the goal should be considered a budget priority, and which strategy was most important. The values statement was also presented.

From all this input, a draft plan was released for participants of the workgroups, department heads, the Board of County Commissioners, and the public in December 2025.



## Mission

*Pender County is committed to delivering exceptional public service through the responsible stewardship of resources in order to build a safe, healthy, and vibrant community where anyone can thrive.*

## Vision

*A sustainable, growing community that honors its heritage, preserves its natural beauty, and fosters a high quality of life.*

---

### **Community**

*Through collaboration and engagement, we ensure all perspectives are considered, from citizens and community stakeholders to employees and partners, in order to better serve the community.*

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### **Stewardship**

*We embrace our role as stewards of the community's resources and its future. We are committed to sustainability through responsible management of fiscal and local resources, guided by strong policies and procedures, to serve and support the well-being of all residents.*

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### **Transparency**

*We are committed to delivering exceptional services with fairness, consistency, and openness. By ensuring information is clear and accessible, we encourage active participation, empowering our community to help shape the decision-making process.*

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### **Professionalism**

*We maintain accountability and integrity, ensuring responsiveness to our citizens by holding ourselves to the highest standards in order to fulfill community expectations.*

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### **Excellence**

*Through continuous improvement we strive to provide effective public servants and efficient public service. We support each other in being knowledgeable, responsible, and exemplary.*

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## 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN AT-A-GLANCE

Goal	Strategy
 <p><b>Goal 1: Support Schools &amp; Education</b></p>	Support staff supplements, benefits, and additions
	Support planned infrastructure improvements and growth
	Expand the School Resource Officer Division to ensure safer schools
	Assist Pender County Schools in locating additional funding streams
 <p><b>Goal 2: Enhance Public Safety</b></p>	Increase the presence of law enforcement
	Expand hazard education and resources
	Increase the availability/ capabilities of EMS units
	Expand existing Special Teams abilities
	Complete the Emergency Services Merger
 <p><b>Goal 3: Strategic Growth &amp; Infrastructure Planning</b></p>	Implement the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Plan
	Provide adequate staffing and resources to support and manage growth
	Proactive Infrastructure planning
	Actively encourage economic development
 <p><b>Goal 4: Enhance Public Communications</b></p>	Clarify the information provided by being clear and consistent
	Make information more accessible
	Have meaningful interactions with the public
 <p><b>Goal 5: Internal Development &amp; Retention</b></p>	Offer competitive salary, benefits, and learning opportunities
	Improve relationships between management and employees
	Give employees the resources & knowledge they need to grow
	Expand employee recognition



# SUPPORT SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

## GOAL 1: SUPPORT SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

### Goal Statement

Pender County will support schools and education by providing the school system with the resources they need to foster a healthy and safe learning environment.

### Purpose

Over 40% of Pender County's annual budget goes towards education. With the significant growth the County has seen, the school system capacity has been outpaced by the rise in the school-aged population. Pender County has an obligation to provide for the education of its youth. This includes providing adequate facilities and faculty, providing funding for educational programs, and ensuring the safety of students and staff. Failing to provide school resources and facilities of an adequate size and number may hinder student success through large class sizes where students have difficulty in getting the amount of support they need or limiting the types of extracurricular activities students may participate in.

### KEY STRATEGIES

- 1) Support staff supplements, benefits, and additions
- 2) Support planned infrastructure improvements and growth
- 3) Expand the School Resource Officer Division to ensure safer schools
- 4) Assist Pender County Schools in locating additional funding streams



### MILESTONES

1. Identifying and acquiring land for future school sites
2. Matching Per Pupil Spending with surrounding counties



# SUPPORT SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

## Strategy 1: Support Staff Supplements, Benefits, And Additions

### Purpose

Increasing teacher and other staff supplements and providing educational benefits increases the ability to recruit and retain high-caliber staff in Pender County which, in turn, supports student learning.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Schools  
County Manager's Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Per Pupil Spending compared to surrounding counties
- Ratio of counselors, social workers, and other support staff
- Educational reimbursement/compensation amount
- Number of educators completing National Boards
- Teacher Supplement compared to surrounding counties

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. INCREASE PER PUPIL SPENDING

Increase per pupil spending to match or exceed our surrounding counties by increasing incrementally each year, starting at a 3% increase in FY26-27 and moving towards a 5% increase in FY 29-30.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27; continuous

### 2. INCREASE LOCAL SALARY SUPPLEMENT

Increase the local salary supplement to match or exceed the surrounding counties. Our local salary supplement is 10.5% and ranges from \$4,285 to \$6,652. Our surrounding counties have supplement ranges from \$6,200 to \$12,000. The goal is to increase by 1% each year until we reach 15.5% supplement or until we are comparable to our surrounding counties.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27; continuous



# SUPPORT SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

## Strategy 2: Support Planned Infrastructure Improvements & Growth

### Purpose

Students need adequate schools and transportation to be able to focus on academics.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Schools  
County Manager’s Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Percentage of increase in capital fund contribution
- Land acquired for future school sites

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### 1. INCREASE ANNUAL CAPITAL FUND CONTRIBUTION

Increase annual capital fund contribution each year in order to repair, renovate, and provide the necessary maintenance and facility upgrades needed in the school system.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27; continuous

#### 2. ACQUIRE LAND FOR FUTURE SCHOOL SITES

Acquire land for future school sites based on the Facilities Needs Assessment and future developments.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27; continuous



# SUPPORT SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

## Strategy 3: Expand the SRO Division to Ensure Safer Schools

### Purpose

School Resource Officers are vital to ensure our schools are safe. The SRO Division needs resources to provide adequate staffing levels, supervision, and training for their staff.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Sheriff’s Office  
County Manager’s Office  
Pender County Human Resources  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of SROs per HS or per 1,000 students
- Span of control for SRO supervisors
- Hours of training by SRO division

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### 1. MAINTAIN SRO LEVELS

Maintain SRO levels at schools based on a minimum of 2 SROs per High School or 1 SRO per 1,000 students maximum in any level school. Add SRO positions as schools expand or are added.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27; continuous

#### 2. ADD SRO SUPERVISORY STRUCTURE

Add supervisory structure to the SRO division to allow for appropriate supervision and training. Add 2 Sergeants (for a total of 3) and 1 Lieutenant (for a total of 2) over the next 5 years. The current span of control for a supervisor in the SRO division is 1:20. The ideal span of control is 1: 5 to 1:7.

Goal Date: Add 1 Lieutenant FY 26-27

Goal Date: Add 1 Sergeant FY 27-28

Goal Date: Add 1 Sergeant FY 28-29

#### 3. SET A DEDICATED SRO TRAINING BUDGET

Set a dedicated SRO training budget as opposed to being included in the overall Sheriff’s Office budget to ensure SROs are able to train with the specialized equipment used in their daily jobs as well as train for critical incidents.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27; continuous



# SUPPORT SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

## Strategy 4: Assist Pender County Schools in locating funding streams

### Purpose

There are several grants or direct allocations available to school systems for capital outlay or other needs. Locating these funding sources often takes time or joint applications with the county.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Finance  
County Manager's Office  
Pender County Human Resources  
Pender County Schools  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of grant dollars received
- Direct legislative appropriations received

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### 1. ADD A GRANT MANAGER

Add a Grant Manager to county staff to be housed in the Finance Department.

Goal Date: Create position FY 26-27

#### 2. ADVOCATE JOINTLY

Advocate for school needs with state and federal elected officials.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27; continuous



# ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

## GOAL 2: ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

### Goal Statement

Pender County will enhance our public safety capabilities by ensuring enough resources are available, that we are providing education to the public, and that we are providing necessary specialized training to all our first responders.

### Purpose

Pender County is a geographically large county at an increased risk for natural disasters. Due to its size, it is a challenge to ensure enough personnel and resources to provide law enforcement, emergency management, fire, and EMS coverage while maintaining adequate resources for disaster response. Additionally, there are numerous departments and agencies providing public safety services which can lead to inefficiencies in communication and response.

It is important to note that the ongoing Emergency Services Merger will work to address additional items identified through this planning process including: improving interdepartmental communications; recruiting and retaining volunteers; and long-range strategic planning for capital outlay, operations, and staffing.

### KEY STRATEGIES

- 1) Increase the presence of law enforcement
- 2) Expand hazard education and resources
- 3) Increase the availability/ capabilities of EMS units
- 4) Expand existing Special Teams abilities
- 5) Complete the Emergency Services Merger



### MILESTONES

1. Complete the Emergency Services Merger
2. Increase number of EMS transport units
3. Reach desired staffing levels
4. Completion of Community Needs Assessment
5. Completion of long-term Emergency Services plan



# ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

## Strategy 1: Increase the Presence of Law Enforcement

### Purpose

Having an increased law enforcement presence provides peace of mind for citizens, serves as a deterrent, can improve response times, and increases safety for our first responders

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Sheriff's Office  
County Manager's Office  
Pender County Human Resources  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Patrol deputies per shift
- Deputies per population
- Turnover in Sheriff's Office

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. INCREASE PATROL STAFFING

Increase Sheriff's Office patrol staffing to two deputies per area per shift. This can be accomplished by adding an average of one position per shift (4 positions total) per year.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27

Complete by: FY 30-31

### 2. FOCUS ON RETENTION & RECRUITMENT

Improve retention and recruitment by creating a career development ladder within the Sheriff's Office to allow for growth outside of the supervisory chain.

Goal Date: Complete plan Spring 2026

Full Implementation: FY 27-28



# ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

## Strategy 2: Expand Hazard Education & Resources

### Purpose

By providing staff and citizens with education and resources to be more prepared for disasters, we can become a more resilient community.

### Responsible Parties

Pender Emergency Management  
County Manager’s Office  
Pender County Human Resources

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of flood signs
- Staffing to population ratio
- Percentage of population food supply can cover

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. CREATE FLOOD DETOUR MAPS

Create maps of detour routes for routes that are commonly flooded. Provide on the county website as well as paper versions available throughout the county.

Goal Date: Complete Spring 2026; update annually

### 2. FLOOD LEVEL SIGNAGE

Place flood level signs on strategic public properties throughout the County showing prior flood water depths to educate residents.

Goal Date: Begin Summer 2026.

### 3. EXPAND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STAFFING

Expand Emergency Management staffing to mirror growth in the County to match the NC average ratio of 1 EM staff to 20,000 population. This will allow for more public education and preparedness tasks.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27; maintain

### 4. INCREASE FOOD & WATER SUPPLY

Acquire the FEMA recommended food and water supply for 72 hours for 20% of the County’s population. These are freeze-dried meal options with a 15-year shelf-life.

Goal Date: Summer 2029



# ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

## Strategy 3: Increase the Availability & Capabilities of EMS Units

### Purpose

Pender County is a geographically large county with significant variability in population density. Adding transport units will help ensure the entire county has access to EMS transport units with a reasonable response time.

### Responsible Parties

Pender EMS  
Strategic Director  
County Manager's Office

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of transport units
- Percentage of calls transported to New Hanover facilities

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. ADD TRANSPORT UNITS

Add two additional transport units and continue to add units as needed to follow growth and call volume while accounting for the geographical size of the county for response times.

Goal Date: Begin FY 26-27; continue

### 2. ADD RECEIVING CAPABILITIES WITHIN PENDER

Work with Novant Pender Medical Center to add security and the ability to handle more EMS transports to reduce travel time to New Hanover and decrease the amount of time a transport unit is out of service.

Goal Date: Continuous

### 3. INVESTIGATE A COMMUNITY PARAMEDICINE PROGRAM

Investigate the introduction of a Community Paramedicine Program to determine if it would benefit Pender County.

Goal Date: Begin analysis Spring 2027

Complete: Spring 2028



# ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

## Strategy 4: Expand Existing Special Teams Abilities

### Purpose

Pender County has a unique mix of needs for specialized response including agricultural, water, and search and rescue. Expanding the abilities of special teams ensures a swift response within the county without having to wait on another county to respond when every minute counts.

### Responsible Parties

Emergency Services Department  
Fire Marshal's Office  
Fire Departments

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of first responders trained in hazard specific training
- Number of Special Teams members from each department

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### 1. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SPECIALIZED TRAINING

Provide the opportunity for training for agricultural/heavy machinery rescue/ hazard specific training for all departments.

Goal Date: Complete by the end of 2027; continuous

#### 2. EXPAND SPECIAL TEAMS

Create Unified Special Operations Teams consisting of all departments from the County, Towns, and non-profits for a more collaborative response to specialized incidents.

Goal Date: Begin Fall 2026



# ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

## Strategy 5: Complete the Emergency Services Merger

### Purpose

The County is in a period of heavy transition with the Emergency Services Merger and can only move forward with many items to expand and enhance services once the merger is completed.

### Responsible Parties

Emergency Services Department  
Fire Marshal's Office  
County Manager's Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of meetings held
- Completion of Long-term plan
- Completion of Community Risk Assessment

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### 1. CONDUCT MULTI-DISCIPLINARY MEETINGS

Conduct monthly meetings post-merger with all divisions to ensure efficient operation and identify any difficulties in response. These meetings will alternate between discipline-specific and multi-discipline.

Goal Date: Begin Spring 2026

#### 2. CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE LONG-TERM PLAN FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Adopt a comprehensive 5-year plan for Emergency Services to include capital outlay, operations, staffing, and training.

Goal Date: Complete by the end of 2028

#### 3. COMPLETE A FULL COMMUNITY RISK ASSESSMENT

Complete a full Community Risk Assessment to identify hazards, high risk populations, and service demands for Emergency Services.

Goal Date: Begin Fall 2026; complete end of 2028



# STRATEGIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

## GOAL 3: STRATEGIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

### Goal Statement

The County will clarify its direction for development and growth by proactive planning for future infrastructure.

### Purpose

High growth has exceeded the capacity of existing infrastructure such as water, sewer, and communications networks, as well as school and county facilities. Pender County has an obligation to ensure adequate infrastructure exists to support program delivery. Reaching capacity in water, sewer, and communications systems prevents future economic development, limiting opportunities for residents in employment and leisure. Many residents value the existing green space, which is an important feature of this urban-rural county, and do not want to see it further diminished.

### KEY STRATEGIES

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- 1) Implement the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Plan
- 2) Provide adequate staffing and resources to support and manage growth
- 3) Proactive Infrastructure planning
- 4) Actively encourage economic development



### MILESTONES

---

1. Update the Unified Development Ordinance
2. Complete map of infrastructure
3. Create a Water & Sewer Master Plan



# STRATEGIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

## Strategy 1: Implement the Imagine Pender 2050 Comprehensive Plan

### Purpose

---

Implementing the Imagine Pender Comprehensive Plan will set clear guidelines for developers and address concerns for flooding, densities, recreational space, and future infrastructure.

### Responsible Parties

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Pender County Planning  
Pender County Planning Board

### Key Performance Indicators

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- Completion of UDO rewrite

### KEY ACTIVITIES

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#### 1. UPDATE THE EXISTING UDO

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Update the existing UDO with text amendments or updates for immediately pressing items for process improvements.

Goal Date: July 2026

#### 2. CONDUCT A FULL REWRITE OF THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

---

Conduct a full rewrite of the UDO, either in-house or through a consultant, with clear density expectations to guide development, address flood mitigation concerns, and input requirements for recreational space, school construction, and other infrastructure.

Goal Date: Begin Fall 2026

Complete: End of 2028



# STRATEGIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

## Strategy 2: Provide Adequate Staffing & Resources to Support Growth

### Purpose

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Staffing and in-house resources are needed to provide proper oversight of the revision of a UDO, upholding and communicating changes to developers, and acquiring funding for needed infrastructure growth.

### Responsible Parties

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Pender County Planning  
Pender Human Resources  
County Manager's Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

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- Grant dollars received per year related to infrastructure
- Staff positions dedicated to managing growth

### KEY ACTIVITIES

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#### 1. ADD A GRANT MANAGER TO STAFF

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Add a Grant Manager to staff to be housed in the Finance Department.

Goal Date: FY 26-27

#### 2. ADD AN ENGINEER TO STAFF

---

Add an environmental or stormwater engineer to staff to be housed in the Planning Department.

Goal Date: FY 27-28

#### 3. CREATE AN ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

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Create an engineering department to include a Chief Engineer and two staff engineers (environmental, stormwater, or civil). This would absorb the position added in Action Item #2.

Goal Date: Begin FY 27-28

Complete: FY 29-30



# STRATEGIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

## Strategy 3: Proactive Infrastructure Planning

### Purpose

An infrastructure plan consisting of layers to include a water and sewer plan, future school and park locations, fire and EMS stations, public safety radio communications, and private utilities that is based on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) will help inform and guide development as well as land acquisition for future infrastructure.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Planning  
Pender Water & Sewer  
Pender Parks & Recreation  
Pender County Schools  
County Manager's Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Creation of Infrastructure Map
- Acreage acquired for appropriate future uses
- Additional miles of bicycle or pedestrian friendly infrastructure

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### 1. CREATE AN EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE MAP

Create an existing infrastructure map with layers for water and sewer, schools, parks, emergency services stations, public safety radio infrastructure, and private utilities.

Goal Date: Fall 2026

#### 2. CREATE A FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE MAP

Identify locations and create a future infrastructure map with layers for future water and sewer, schools, parks, emergency services stations, public safety radio infrastructure, and private utilities. This will be based on existing or updated facilities and master plans.

Goal Date: Fall 2027

#### 3. CREATE A WATER & SEWER MASTER PLAN

Create a Water & Sewer Master Plan to include funding sources

Goal Date: Fall 2027

#### 4. ACQUIRE LAND FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Acquire land for near-future infrastructure including schools, parks, and emergency services stations. Some will be direct acquisition, and some will be through development.

Goal Date: Begin Spring 2028; as needed

#### 5. PROMOTE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Promote bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure through the UDO, grants, and partnerships with municipalities or other organizations.

Goal Date: Continuous



# STRATEGIC GROWTH & INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

## Strategy 4: Actively Encourage Economic Growth

### Purpose

Economic development brings resources to citizens including commercial businesses, restaurants, and necessary services as well as diversifies the tax base to allow tax rates to remain lower.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Planning  
Pender County Planning Board  
Grant Manager  
County Manager's Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Incentive packages offered
- Number of new commercial businesses

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### 1. IDENTIFY FUTURE COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Identify future commercial corridors based on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

Goal Date: July 2026

#### 2. ENCOURAGE DESIRED DEVELOPMENT

Encourage desired development by making appropriate UDO changes and text amendments. This includes identifying barriers such as reuse and adaptation of existing buildings or creating new zoning districts. Larger changes will be incorporated into the full UDO rewrite.

Goal Date: July 2026

#### 3. INVESTIGATE INCENTIVES FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Investigate incentives for commercial development through state funding, fee waivers, or other methods used by other counties in the area.

Goal Date: Continuous

#### 4. PROMOTE CHANGES TO PRIVATE INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Promote zoning districts, changes to UDO, and incentive packages to commercial brokers to attract desired commercial business.

Goal Date: Continuous



# ENHANCE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

## GOAL 4: ENHANCE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

### Goal Statement

We will improve our communications with the public by providing clear and consistent messaging in many formats and by regularly engaging in two-way communication.

### Purpose

It is a challenge to provide easy access to digestible information for the public on a consistent basis for all functions of County government. There are many missed opportunities for public education and engagement regarding services, processes, and County responsibilities.

### KEY STRATEGIES

- 1) Clarify the information provided by being clear and consistent
- 2) Make information more accessible
- 3) Have meaningful interactions with the public



### MILESTONES

1. Holding regular town hall meetings



# ENHANCE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

## Strategy 1: Clarify the information provided by being clear and consistent

### Purpose

By clarifying the information that is already accessible, we can resolve a great deal of confusion and frustration around county decisions and processes. We want to avoid releasing information that is confusing, unclear, or in conflict with other messaging.

### Responsible Parties

Department Heads  
Communications Manager  
County Manager’s Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of Communications staff

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### 1. STANDARDIZE AGENDA ITEMS

Standardize agenda items for Board of County Commissioners’ meetings so that wording is consistent for similar types of items and so that descriptions provide enough context and information for the general public.

#### 2. PROVIDE CLARITY IN BOARD MEETINGS

Clearly state what is occurring in Board meetings to clarify whether an item is approved, why there is or is not a conflict for a Board member to vote on an item, or why an item that was approved during the budget process is being delayed or denied.

#### 3. PROVIDE TRAINING ON MESSAGING

Provide staff training on the use of branding and consistent messaging to include a manual for reference.

Goal Date: Begin Fall 2026

Full implementation: Summer 2027

#### 4. CREATE GUIDES FOR RECURRING INFORMATION

Create informational videos for FAQ, how-to guides, or important recurring information.

Goal Date: Begin Summer 2026

#### 5. BE PROACTIVE WITH THE MEDIA

Proactively reach out to the media on pressing issues with on-camera interviews with the appropriate staff.

#### 6. PROVIDE APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATIONS STAFF

Add additional Communications staff as the County grows to be able to consistently provide information and messaging.



# ENHANCE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

## Strategy 2: Make Information More Accessible

### Purpose

Making information easier to access provides the public with opportunities to be more educated and informed about their local government and community.

### Responsible Parties

Department Heads  
Communications Manager  
County Manager’s Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Residents enrolled for emergency alerts
- Residents enrolled for monthly newsletter
- Website visits

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. PROVIDE MORE QUALITY INFORMATION ON WEBSITE

Provide more quality information on departmental pages to include FAQs, how-to guides, why certain policies or laws exist, and which appropriate state or federal agency handles a particular issue that is often attributed to the County.

Goal Date: Begin Spring 2026; continuous

### 2. PROVIDE HARD COPIES OF INFORMATION

Provide hard copies of certain information or publications at libraries, senior centers, churches, or community centers.

Goal Date: Begin Spring 2026; evaluate use of hard copies

### 3. CREATE A “HOW TO STAY INFORMED” CAMPAIGN

Create a “How to Stay Informed” campaign utilizing local TV news stations, radio stations, flyers, real estate offices and home builders to reach new residents, as well as social media to reach as many residents as possible to ensure people know how to stay connected through various apps, newsletters, and notification systems.

Goal Date: Begin Fall 2026; complete twice per year



# ENHANCE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

## Strategy 3: Have Meaningful Interactions with the Public

### Purpose

Citizens deserve the opportunity to ask questions and have meaningful conversations with key personnel.

### Responsible Parties

Department Heads  
County Manager’s Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of staff participating in events
- Number of outreach events by departments

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. SCHEDULE TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Schedule Town Hall meetings on the regular Board of County Commissioners annual meeting schedule so the meetings are planned for the year.

Goal Date: Begin Spring 2026

### 2. ATTEND MORE LARGE EVENTS

Have key departments, personnel, and commissioners attend large events to be available to have important conversations with citizens.

Goal Date: Continuous

### 3. PROVIDE MORE ENGAGEMENT WITH LARGE GROUPS

Provide more opportunities for departments or key personnel to visit large groups such as senior centers, civic group meetings, or churches to provide education around a particular subject.

Goal Date: Continuous



# INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT & RETENTION

## GOAL 5: INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT & RETENTION

### Goal Statement

We will improve services for our citizens by becoming a destination county for employees, fostering a work environment with a healthy work-life balance. We can do this through investing in our staff by growing internal development opportunities, giving employees the resources they need, and improving internal communications.

### Purpose

An inability to retain and develop employees can impact the County's capacity to provide core services to citizens while also affecting implementation of internal projects and programs. Internal communication methods can be improved to further increase efficiency and employee experience.

### KEY STRATEGIES

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- 1) Offer competitive salary, benefits, and learning opportunities
- 2) Improve relationships between management and employees
- 3) Give employees the resources & knowledge they need to grow
- 4) Expand employee recognition



### MILESTONES

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1. Holding BOCC work sessions
2. Creation of a supervisory mentor program



# INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT & RETENTION

## Strategy 1: Offer Competitive Salary, Benefits, and Learning Opportunities

### Purpose

Offer competitive salary ranges, benefits, and career growth opportunities to both attract new staff and retain existing staff.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Human Resources  
Pender County Finance  
County Manager's Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Supervisor trainings offered per year
- Mental Health training offered per year

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. CONDUCT WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE WITH ALL DEPARTMENTS

Review all job descriptions. Have both the supervisor and the employee review the descriptions to ensure “added hats” are included in the responsibilities so the position can be properly graded. Conduct internal review of salary ranges for every position based on industry standard, surrounding counties, the education and certifications required, and the difficulty in keeping the position filled. Ensure every department has career development plans for each position class and a career growth ladder if applicable

Goal Date: Implement in FY 26-27

### 2. PROVIDE SUPERVISOR TRAINING

Provide more supervisor training, including training for those aspiring to be supervisors but who are not yet.

Goal Date: Fall 2027

### 3. OFFER MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

Offer mental health training for supervisors and forward-facing positions.

Goal Date: Fall 2027

### 4. PERFORM ANNUAL SALARY AUDITS

Consider additional changes in the surrounding areas when determining the annual COLA and salary changes.

Goal Date: Annually during budget



# INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT & RETENTION

## Strategy 2: Improve Relationships Between Management & Employees

### Purpose

Staff need to be able to convey to management and the Board their responsibilities and the demands of their positions. This helps ensure informed decision-making and helps staff feel that management understands each department's roles and challenges.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Human Resources  
County Manager's Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of HR visits to departments
- Number of CMO visits to departments
- Percentage of supervisory-level interview panels including HR
- Employee satisfaction survey

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. BEGIN SCHEDULED WORK SESSIONS WITH BOCC

Introduce scheduled work sessions with the Board where departments can discuss ongoing projects outside of agenda items

Goal Date: Fall 2026/Spring 2027

### 2. COUNTY MANAGER'S OFFICE TO ATTEND STAFF MEETINGS

CMO members will attend periodic departmental staff meetings to understand more day-to-day activities and challenges

### 3. HR VISITS TO DEPARTMENTS

Continue having Human Resources visit departments to meet staff

### 4. IMPROVE THE SUPERVISORY HIRING PROCESS

Improve the supervisory position hiring process by including HR & staff on interview panels for supervisory positions and ensuring questions are chosen from an approved bank of questions regarding supervisory style and situational questions regarding supervision.

### 5. IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS AROUND CHANGE

Increase or improve the quality of communications surrounding changes in benefits, processes, or policies. Provide summaries of BOCC decisions, department head meetings, and current events that are relevant to all or most staff.



# INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT & RETENTION

## Strategy 3: Give Employees the Resources & Knowledge to Grow

### Purpose

Employees need to know more about County functions, processes, and current events to improve customer service and collaboration between departments.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Human Resources  
Pender County ITS  
Communications Manager  
County Manager’s Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Ratio of HR to employees

### KEY ACTIVITIES

#### 1. IMPROVE THE INTRANET

Improve County Intranet (MyPender) so that it functions more like a website and less like file storage. Organize the files needed in a more intuitive manner and remove obsolete information.

Goal Date: Complete Spring 2027

#### 2. PROVIDE DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION

Create a booklet and video of departmental services. Many employees do not know what services the county does and does not provide. This can also be beneficial for the public.

Goal Date: Complete booklet July 2027; video Dec 2027

#### 3. STRUCTURE DEPARTMENTAL ORIENTATIONS

Have a second day of orientation within the department where new employees can discuss administrative tasks and meet with other staff with whom they will be coordinating.

Goal Date: Begin Summer 2026; Full Summer 2027

#### 4. INCREASE HR STAFFING

Increase Human Resources staff to an industry standard ratio of one (1) HR staff person to 100 employees. This will ensure there are enough HR staff to oversee payroll, FMLA, benefits enrollment, onboarding, worker’s comp, retirement, and other processes).

#### 5. CREATE A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR NEW SUPERVISORS

Create a mentorship program for new supervisors with internal mentors.

Goal Date: Begin Fall 2026; Full Implementation Fall 2027



# INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT & RETENTION

## Strategy 4: Expand Employee Recognition

### Purpose

Employees should be recognized for their hard work, both for performing their routine duties as well as stepping up to fill gaps or working to improve their skills.

### Responsible Parties

Pender County Human Resources  
County Manager's Office  
Board of County Commissioners

### Key Performance Indicators

- Employee Satisfaction Survey

## KEY ACTIVITIES

### 1. RECOGNIZE PART-TIME SERVICE

Recognize part-time years of service for longevity and County functions

Goal Date: Begin Spring 2026

### 2. MAINTAIN INCENTIVES FOR EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATIONS

Maintain reimbursement and step increases for education and certifications to encourage professional development.

### 3. MAKE SERVICE AND RECOGNITION AWARDS MEANINGFUL

Make Service and Recognition Awards meaningful to staff. The Retention & Recruitment Committee should take a more active role in choosing service awards and methods to recognize employees that will feel meaningful.

## BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

This Strategic Plan does not allocate or guarantee funding for any particular goal, strategy, or action. It is a document meant to guide actions and decision-making. Most of the actions identified in this document either have no direct cost or are actions the County would likely undertake without a Strategic Plan. The Plan's purpose is to provide a pathway towards identified goals and priorities.

## MOVING FORWARD

Staff will follow this Strategic Plan for the next 5 years, working towards the goals identified through public input. Dates or priorities may shift during this time and ultimately all decisions on actions will flow through the Board of County Commissioners. Unless it is determined to begin earlier, the next Strategic Planning process will begin in January 2030.

## SUMMARY

All Strategic Plans are a leap of faith. The Pender County 2030 Strategic Plan sets a path towards goals grounded in what we value and what we believe can move us towards success, based on the best information available to us.

This Plan sets a foundation for strategic planning within Pender County in the future. Of course, things don't always go according to plan. In that case, the Pender County Board of Commissioners can return to our core values and to our residents and staff who were instrumental in providing counsel and guidance throughout this process to determine future actions.