

# Introduction

## Plan Basics

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The NorthSide Community Plan is a long-range neighborhood revitalization plan consisting of goals, objectives and action steps for the community's future. This partnership between the NorthSide and the City of Wilmington is the result of more than a year of hard work and perseverance by the NorthSide Steering Committee, residents, business people, elected officials and City staff.

## Plan Boundary

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The plan area is bounded by Smith Creek to the north, Burnt Mill Creek and N. 17<sup>th</sup> Street to the east, Market Street to the south and the Cape Fear River to the west. Residents agreed to this boundary at the first community-wide meeting. See Appendix A for the Plan boundary map.

## Why Create a Plan?

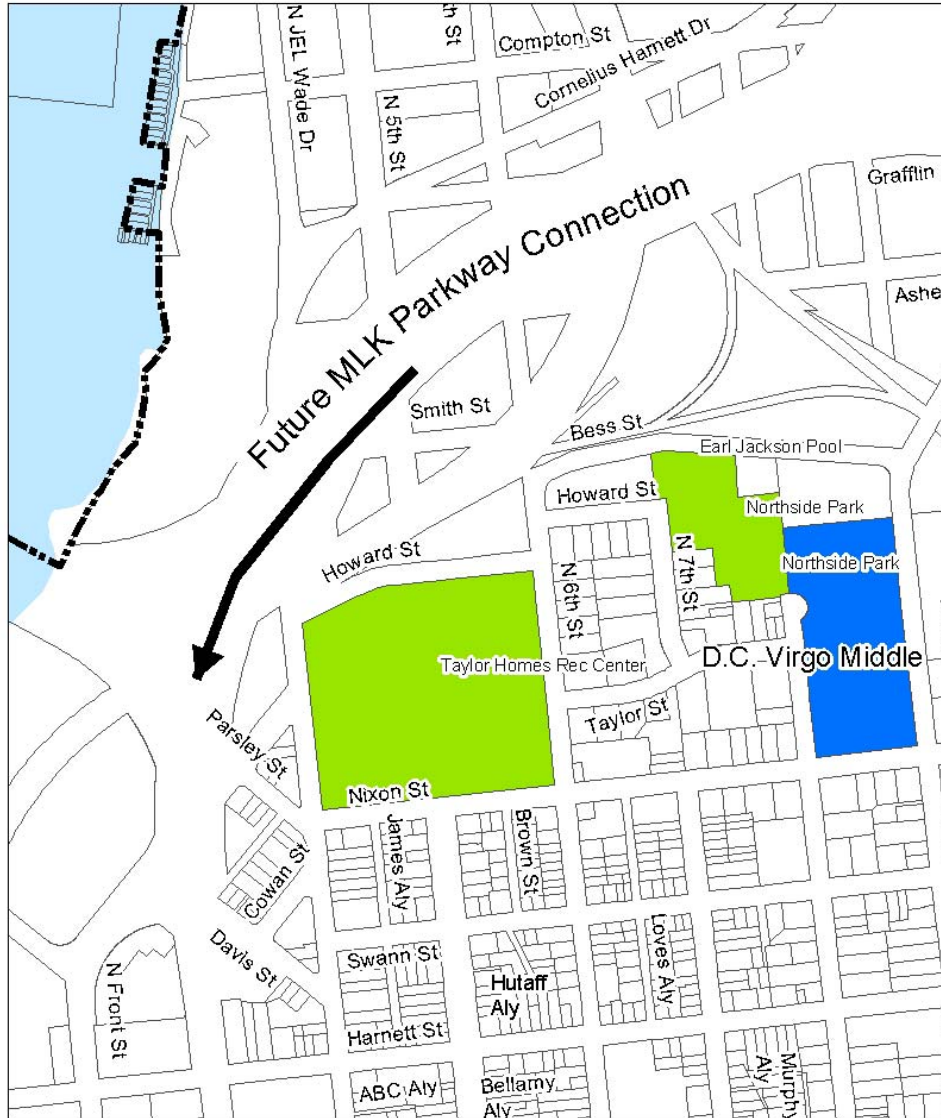
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The NorthSide Community Plan process was initiated by City Council in the spring of 2002, primarily in response to the impact the connection of Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway (MLK) will have on the north side of downtown when completed in 2005. Vehicle trips per day will nearly double from 13,000 to 24,000. Fifteen years later, in 2020, it is projected that the numbers will nearly double again to 42,000 vehicle trips per day. That is more than three times the number of cars traveling in the area today. The MLK Parkway connection will inevitably change the landscape of the north side of downtown.



Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway Construction 2003

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The planning process is an opportunity for residents, property owners and business owners to jointly discuss current issues and the future of their community. The NorthSide Community Plan is a blueprint for action. By setting goals, objectives and action steps, the community created a single vision and identified the steps needed to achieve this vision. This plan organizes the community's ideas into a single document that can be shared with residents, potential community partners, investors and elected officials. The community has developed this plan in preparation for their successful future.

## **Planning Area Basics**

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The NorthSide community consists of inner-city neighborhoods that have not realized the same economic growth that other areas in the City have experienced. The neighborhoods include Brooklyn, Hemenway, Love Grove, and a portion of Carolina Heights. The oldest public housing development in North Carolina, Robert Taylor Homes, is located within the community. Most of the area of NorthSide that is west of N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street and south of Harnett Street has been recognized as historically significant by the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service and is within the Wilmington National Register Historic District. This area is architecturally and historically significant for Wilmington because it depicts the character of a mid-nineteenth to early twentieth-century neighborhood that was home to factory, dock and railroad workers. The terminus of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad established in 1838 was at that time the nucleus of development on the north side of the city's central business district. The railroad tracks, which run from southwest to northeast through the area, are still present but not being utilized and create both obstacles and opportunities for the community.

## **Demographics and Land Use Analysis**

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Demographics are a collection of information that describes the people of a community. This information includes population, income and descriptions of housing. Such data indicates the "health" of a community. Is it growing in terms of people, or are people leaving? Do these citizens have a better quality of life than in the previous ten years? Major "quality of life" indicators such as housing status, income and poverty status were investigated by City staff for the NorthSide community. Several tables of information and a brief summary of each are contained in the following pages.

Table 1 contains population data from both the 1990 and the 2000 U.S. Census. The population change in the NorthSide is compared to the City Proper, New Hanover County and the State of North Carolina. The NorthSide community has grown at a much slower rate, 0.65% annual growth, than other communities.

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**Table 1: Population**

Area	1990	% of Total Population of Larger Area	2000	% of Total Population of Larger Area	Change %-1990 to 2000	Annual Growth %
Northside Community	4,053	7.30%	4,317	5.69%	6.51%	0.65%
Wilmington Proper	55,530	46.17%	75,838	47.31%	36.57%	3.66%
New Hanover County	120,284	1.81%	160,307	1.99%	33.27%	3.33%
State of North Carolina	6,628,637	n/a	8,049,313	n/a	21.43%	2.14%

Source: 2000 US Census STF 3

Table 2, Median Household Income, and Table 3, Poverty Status, gives us information on the financial status of community residents. NorthSide residents increased their household income by 89.68% from 1990 to 2000. While this represents a substantial improvement, NorthSide household incomes are 30% of household incomes as a whole in the City. Poverty Status, Table 3, contains the most telling information since the percentage of families living below poverty level in the NorthSide did not decrease over the 10-year period but instead increased slightly. More than one-third of families in the NorthSide live in poverty.

**Table 2: Median Household Income**

Area	1990	2000	% Increase
Northside Community	\$9,914	\$18,805	89.68%
Wilmington Proper	\$20,609	\$37,526	82.09%
New Hanover County	\$27,320	\$40,172	47.04%
State of North Carolina	\$26,647	\$39,184	47.05%

Source: 2000 US Census STF 3

**Table 3: Poverty Status-Families**

Area	1990			2000		
	Total Number of Families	Number Below Poverty Status	% below Poverty Status	Total Number of Families	Number Below Poverty Status	% below Poverty Status
Northside Community	934	359	38.44%	969	411	42.41%
Wilmington Proper	13,835	2,318	16.8%	17,624	2,340	13.28%
New Hanover County	32,492	3,217	9.90%	42,026	3,507	8.34%
State of North Carolina	1,824,465	179,906	9.86%	2,173,346	196,423	9.04%

Source: 2000 US Census STF 3

Tables 4-7 describe the housing situation. Tables 5 and 6, Housing by Tenure, illustrates the number of people that own their own home. The number of owner-occupied housing decreased very slightly from 1990 to 2000. The City's owner-occupancy as a whole increased slightly.

**Table 4: Median Rent**

Area	1990	2000
Northside Community	\$191	\$325
Wilmington Proper	\$304	\$514
New Hanover County	\$324	n/a
State of North Carolina	\$284	n/a

Source: 2000 US Census STF 3

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**Table 5: Housing by Tenure 1990**

Area	Occupied Housing Units	Owner-Occupied	% to Total	Renter Occupied	% to Total
Northside Community	1,572	630	40.08%	942	55.48%
Wilmington Proper	23,557	11,099	47.12%	12,458	36.26%
New Hanover County	48,139	30,193	62.72%	17,946	26.32%
State of North Carolina	2,517,026	1,711,817	68.01%	805,209	25.71%

*Source: 2000 US Census STF 3*

**Table 6: Housing by Tenure 2000**

Area	Occupied Housing Units	Owner-Occupied	% to Total	Renter Occupied	% to Total
Northside Community	1,698	649	38.22%	1,049	61.78%
Wilmington Proper	34,359	16,702	48.61%	17,657	51.39%
New Hanover County	68,183	44,109	64.69%	24,074	35.31%
State of North Carolina	3,132,013	2,172,355	69.36%	959,658	30.64%

*Source: 2000 US Census STF 3*

**Table 7: Housing Value**

Area	1990	2000
Northside Community	\$33,800	\$61,000
Wilmington Proper	\$63,300	\$147,500
New Hanover County	\$72,000	n/a
State of North Carolina	\$65,800	n/a

*Source: 2000 US Census STF 3*

The above data indicates that the quality of life for NorthSide residents is declining. This is shown by slow population growth and economic and housing statistics that are losing ground to the surrounding community.

## **Community-Based Planning Process**

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The NorthSide Community Plan process informally began in February 2002 at a Town Hall meeting at Warner Temple AME Zion Church on Nixon Street. City Council and City officials learned of the various needs and concerns that residents had for their community. This led to the formation of a NorthSide Citizen Advisory Group.

*Citizen Advisory Group* – The Citizen Advisory Group met once in March and once in April at City Hall to further discuss issues in the community. The March meeting included a bus tour of the NorthSide neighborhoods. The group consisted of approximately 40 community leaders, business leaders and concerned citizens. In May 2002 City Council directed City staff to continue the process and develop a NorthSide Community Plan to guide the future of the NorthSide neighborhoods.

*Ground Rules Committee* – Citizen Advisory Group participants created a Ground Rules Committee in May 2002 to develop a structure for the long-term management of the NorthSide Community Plan process. The group of residents, citizens and business leaders identified ground rules for City Council, the City Planning Division and a NorthSide Steering Committee. The committee recommended a list of more than 30 candidates to be recruited as members of the NorthSide Steering Committee. The group agreed that at least two-thirds of the members should be NorthSide residents. This ensured that NorthSide residents, business owners, church leaders, developers, community activists and service providers were represented on the committee. The committee recruited ten NorthSide Steering Committee members in June 2002 as described below.

*NorthSide Steering Committee* – The committee is made up of key leaders representative of the community. The committee consists of eight residents and business owners from the NorthSide, the Chairman of the Planning Commission and a former resident of the NorthSide. The committee was formed to coordinate and guide the planning process with City staff and to keep it on track toward City Council adoption. The ten-member group first met in June 2002 and continued to meet monthly until June 2003. The committee has maintained their role as the key component in the planning process. The committee assisted staff in compiling all of the public input information from the community meetings into the NorthSide Community Plan document.

*Community Meetings* – Three community meetings have taken place at D.C. Virgo Middle School on Nixon Street in the past year. The purpose of the first meeting held in June 2002 was to learn what vision the residents had for their community's future. Participants initially met in the school auditorium before they were asked to disperse into nine different classrooms to begin the visioning process, since smaller groups

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allow better communication with participants. Participants were asked two questions: “What do you *want* in your community?” and “What do you *not want* in your community?” Each group developed lists with responses to each question. The groups voted on each response to prioritize the issues. See Appendix F for the complete list of responses. The Steering Committee compiled all the responses and developed six common themes to make it easier to understand the issues and focus on developing objectives and action steps. The common themes are:

- Crime Prevention
- Economic Development
- Attractive Community
- Housing
- Community Facilities and Programs
- Transportation



NorthSide Community Plan Meeting at D.C. Virgo Middle School June 2002

The second community meeting in September 2002 was an opportunity for residents to become more involved in the planning process. Work groups were formed to further discuss, refine and address the six themes. Meeting participants were asked to join one of the six theme teams to develop goals, objectives and action steps for each theme. The goals and objectives were written to reflect the responses from the first community meeting.

Theme Team Meetings – The six theme teams met several times in October and November 2002 and also in January and February 2003. These citizen teams, facilitated by staff, were responsible for developing measurable objectives and action steps that can be clearly understood and can feasibly be implemented in the future. The goal of the teams was to assure that anyone who reads the objectives and action steps now, and in the future, clearly understand what is being recommended.

Participants were presented with a draft NorthSide Community Plan document listing the goals, objectives and action steps for the six themes at the third community

meeting, again at D.C. Virgo Middle School, on May 17, 2003. This was the community's opportunity to view and discuss the goals, objectives and action steps developed by the theme teams before the plan is presented to City Council on July 15, 2003. The meeting was a celebration of all of the resident's hard work over the past year. More than 100 people attended the meeting. See Appendix E for the NorthSide Issues map that reflects the objectives and action steps of each theme.



NorthSide Community Plan Meeting May 2003

## **Community Outreach**

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The Outreach Committee was responsible for determining the most effective methods to have meaningful participation during the three community meetings held at D.C. Virgo Middle School. The committee was comprised of community leaders, a City Council member and members of the Steering Committee. Various outreach methods were employed as an effort to reach as many residents and business owners as possible to inform them of the upcoming public community meetings. The outreach methods included direct mail meeting invitations to residents and property owners, public service announcements on the radio, on Government-TV and in three local newspapers, meeting flyers posted throughout the community and in the City Administration Building, meeting announcements at City Council meetings and through word-of-mouth announcements.

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NorthSide Community Plan Outreach Committee April 2003

At the first community meeting in June 2002, nearly 200 people were in attendance. The September 2002 meeting saw a reduction in the number of participants to approximately 60 people. More than 100 people attended the third meeting in May 2003. Overall, the outreach methods used were successful and inclusive in getting the word out to citizens in the NorthSide community about the planning process.

In January 2003, the NorthSide Steering Committee, in conjunction with city staff, mailed 3,450 newsletters to NorthSide residents, property owners and business owners with an update of the NorthSide Community Plan process. In addition to the plan status, the newsletter also included pictures and descriptions of positive results that have already occurred in the community since the planning process began. The purpose of the newsletter was not only to inform citizens of the status of the plan, but also to show how community planning can make a difference in neighborhoods.

The VTA Group, a leadership consultant firm, helped facilitate the involvement and participation of the NorthSide community in the planning process.

## **NorthSide Neighborhood Association**

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The NorthSide Neighborhood Association (NSNA) was formed during the planning process primarily as a result of the initiative of the Attractive Community and Crime Prevention theme teams. Citizens on these teams wanted to form a citizen group to represent and be the voice of the community and assure ongoing ownership of the NorthSide Community Plan. The Association officially formed in March 2003 when citizens elected a Board of Directors consisting of a President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary and Treasurer. The group has adopted a charter and by-laws. The Association's purpose, as stated in the charter, includes ensuring the implementation of the Northside Community Plan. The members of the association are very energetic and dedicated to increasing the quality of life in their community. This group will help to ensure the success of the plan.

The Association's Board of Directors was elected in March 2003 for a two-year term. The board members are: Lewis Green, President; Theresa Walker, Vice-President; Melinda Jackson, Treasurer; Billy Koch, Financial Secretary; and Jim Story, Recording Secretary.



NorthSide Neighborhood Association Meeting May 2003

## **Plan Recognition by the City of Wilmington**

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On July 15, 2003 the Wilmington City Council adopted the NorthSide Community Plan. See Appendix Q for the adopted resolution.

### ***Consistency with the City's Strategic Plan***

According to the Vibrant Neighborhoods section of the Strategic Plan, “the City is committed to maintaining and improving the safety, physical and economic conditions in all neighborhoods paying particular attention to the threatened neighborhoods”. The NorthSide Community Plan is consistent with the Vibrant Neighborhoods Goals in the City's Strategic Plan. See Appendix G for the complete excerpt of the Vibrant Neighborhoods section in the Strategic Plan. The goals include:

- Affordable Housing
- Access to Amenities
- Code Enforcement
- Infrastructure and Beautification

## **Plan Contents**

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The major element of the plan is the listing of the goals, objectives and action steps for each of the six themes. The themes are prioritized by the number of votes each response received at the first community meeting in June 2002. The responses related to Crime Prevention received the highest number of votes. The six themes of the plan are:

- Crime Prevention
- Economic Development
- Attractive Community
- Housing
- Community Facilities and Programs
- Transportation

Another major element is the Plan Implementation Matrix that lists the persons and entities responsible for implementing the action steps and the timeframe within which they are proposed to occur. See Page 8-1 for the Implementation section.

