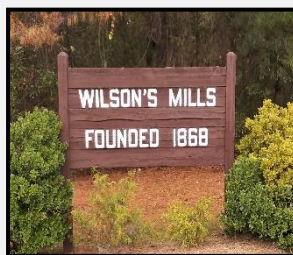


TOWN PLAN 2040

COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE and MASTER PLAN

Adopted: December 16, 2019

Recommended by Planning Board: November 25, 2019



Town of Wilson's Mills, North Carolina

Town of Wilson's Mills
Town Plan 2040
Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan

TOWN OF WILSON'S MILLS

Wilson's Mills Town Hall
100 Railroad Street
Wilson's Mills, NC 27593

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1. WHY PLAN OUR TOWN?

The purpose of the **Town of Wilson's Mills Town Plan 2040 - Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan** ("Town Plan") is to provide information and perspective used to pinpoint and prioritize actions to support a resilient, self-sustaining community. The Town Plan must encourage economic opportunities, while at the same time maintaining the character and resources essential to Wilson's Mills place in a vibrant, growing urban region. An up-to-date plan balancing the changing trends, environmental mandates, and the Town's vision is essential to the success of Wilson's Mills and its inhabitants. Information contained in the Town Plan should serve as the basis for both investment and future development decisions.

Wilson's Mills Town Plan has been designed for regular use by citizens, businesses, investors, leadership, and agencies in making decisions affecting the future of Wilson's Mills. This Town Plan is vital to making informed decisions that will both account for current conditions while maintaining perspective about the future when doing so. A Town Plan is the foundation of almost all capital improvement and growth decisions. ***Adoption of Town Plan 2040 is not the end; it is a consensus on where to begin!***

1.1 About Town Planning

Long-term planning for the future of a community is vitally important. One tool to guide the future of a community is the planning process and adoption of a comprehensive land use plan. Part of a comprehensive land use plan is designed to provide an overview of a community's existing conditions and physical development. The main function of the plan is to serve as a guide to a community's future development policy. The goals of a comprehensive land use plan aim to:

- involve the community in developing a long-term vision,
- address what should be maintained or changed in the future in order to achieve that vision,
- identify future land uses in an overall community-wide context,
- identify and prioritize needed future infrastructure improvement aimed at supporting the vision, and
- provide implementation guidance as to the private and public investment strategies to realize the vision.

Part of the on-going planning process is monitoring the plan's progress as a fluid document that should be bi-annually (every other year) refined and updated to reflect progress achieved and changing conditions. ***Planning is an ongoing process!***

1.2 Official State Policy

The State of North Carolina requires local governments in NC General Statute 160D, effective January 1, 2021, to adopt a plan to be eligible for certain funding, powers and authority. The plan is to be used as an assurance to the public that local decisions are made with a perspective on the future implications of pending decisions, and to affirm that public accountability and fiscal responsibility are considered as part of the decision-making process.

Decisions made about public spending and growth can often appear centered around individuals involved and how they may benefit. When governing board decisions adhere to an adopted plan, those individual interests are balanced with others affected by the outcome of decisions, which include citizens, property owners, and businesses.

1.3 Statutory Reference

Town of Wilson's Mills Town Plan 2040 - Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan shall serve as the adopted plan pursuant to §N.C.G.S. 160A-383 in the planning and regulation of development prior to January 1, 2021; thereafter pursuant to §N.C.G.S. 160D.

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2. ABOUT WILSON’S MILLS

2.1 Town of Wilson’s Mills’ Vision Statement

Wilson’s Mills vision is to be a strong community that values its history and small town feel while embracing growth to become a vibrant place that offers a variety of quality opportunities for residents of all ages to live, work, shop, play and actively participate in our community.

2.2 Town of Wilson’s Mills’ Background

2.2.1 Location

The Town of Wilson’s Mills, North Carolina is in east-central Johnston County, between the towns of Clayton and Selma. The county seat is Smithfield. The Town encompasses 3.7 square miles of land and is bordered to the south and east by the Neuse River. Wilson’s Mills is located 3.5 miles southwest of I-40 and 7 miles northwest of I-95 via US-70 (future I-42). Johnston Regional Airport is located less than 1.5 miles southwest of the Town of Wilson’s Mills.

To the east, nearby Johnston Community College offers a wide variety of lectures, concerts, and exhibits. Wilson’s Mills is located between two general hospitals; Johnston Health is located six miles south of the town limits in Smithfield while Johnston Health Clayton is located 8.5 miles northwest in Clayton.

The Town lies approximately 30 miles southeast of Raleigh and the Research Triangle Park area. Wilson’s Mills is located within the Raleigh, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area which the U.S. Census Bureau estimated had a population of 1.3 million in 2017. Wilson’s Mills is also included in the larger geographic boundary of the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, NC Combined Statistical Area (CSA), which had an established population of 2.2 million in 2017 as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. The region’s population has increased significantly in recent decades and is projected to continue. The Triangle region consistently ranks in the top ten among American cities’ and regions’ projected population growth within the next 20 to 30 years.

2.2.2 History

Wilson’s Mills was initially established in 1868 in order to bring electricity to the mills surrounding the railroad. Wilson’s Mills was named after the family of John Marshall Wilson who started a gristmill to mill grain and operated a cotton gin. The town was chartered on August 2, 1996.

3. COMMUNITY PROFILE

The development of a Town Plan first requires that identification and analysis of certain key growth factors be performed. The intent of the analysis is to ensure that policies contained in the Town Plan address current problems, trends, and issues facing the community, including the immediate area. The key growth factors included for analysis are discussed in several subject areas within the Town Plan. Collectively, these key growth factors summarize past and present conditions, while providing the essential yardsticks for estimating future conditions.

Figures from the U.S. Census Bureau *2013-2017 American Community Survey* were used in several instances in developing the Community Profile for the Town of Wilson's Mills, as detailed in this section. Given the growth and change experienced in Wilson's Mills since the most recent (2010) decennial U.S. Census Bureau was administered, the *American Community Survey* is considered to be the most reliable and up-to-date source of demographic data available at the local level. While the Survey relies upon a variety of demographic and economic indicators and estimating models to derive its numbers (as opposed to the citizen surveys and actual headcounts used by the Census), it is nonetheless considered to be the best source of this data when comparable Census data becomes old and out of date.

3.1 Population

3.1.1 Population Growth

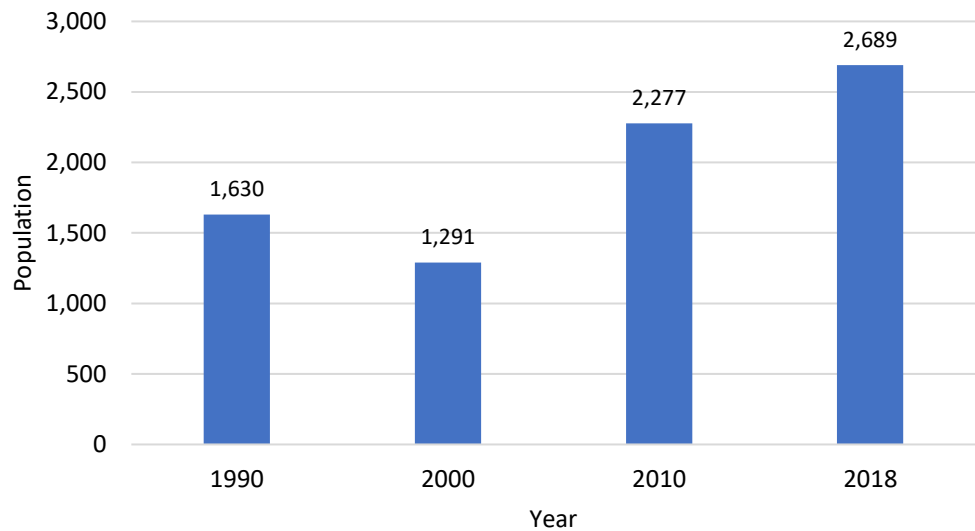
U.S. Census Bureau *American Community Survey* estimated the population in 2018 was 2,689 persons. The North Carolina Office of Budget and Management estimated a similar population estimate in 2017 of 2,648 persons. Section 3.1 provides figures within the Town of Wilson's Mills town limits using U.S. Census Bureau figures.

Table 3.1.1.A: Town of Wilson's Mills Population Estimates and Growth Rates

Year	Town of Wilson's Mills Population	Wilson's Mills Population Annual Increases/Decreases	Between Years
1990	1,630		
2000	1,291	-2%	1990-2000
2010	2,277	8%	2000-2010
2018	2,689	2%	2010-2018

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 3.1.1.A: Town of Wilson’s Mills Population (1990-2018)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The population of Wilson’s Mills declined between 1990 to 2000 and then steadily grew since 2000 as illustrated in Table 3.1.1A and Figure 3.1.1.A. Table 3.1.1.B presents the percentage of Wilson’s Mills population to the total population of Johnston County.

Table 3.1.1.B: Town of Wilson’s Mills to Johnston County Population Comparison

Year	Wilson’s Mills	Johnston County	Wilson’s Mills’ Population to Johnston County’s Population
1990	1,630	81,306	2.0%
2000	1,291	121,965	1.1%
2010	2,277	168,878	1.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The population estimates for each year between 2010 to 2018 have been estimated annually by the U.S. Census Bureau. As illustrated in Table 3.1.1.C and Figure 3.1.1.B, the overall trend indicates an average growth rate of 2.14%.

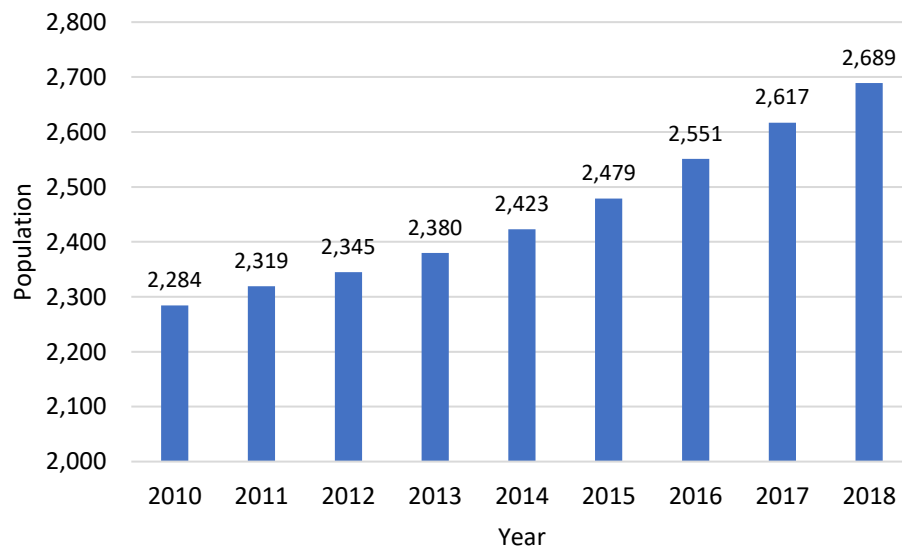
Table 3.1.1.C: Town of Wilson's Mills Population - Annual U.S. Census Bureau Estimates and Growth Rates

Year	Population	Growth Rates
2010	2,284	
2011	2,319	1.53%
2012	2,345	1.12%
2013	2,380	1.49%
2014	2,423	1.81%
2015	2,479	2.31%
2016	2,551	2.90%
2017	2,617	2.59%
2018	2,689	2.75%
	Average Growth Rate	2.14%

Note: Annual estimates illustrated in this table were based on the date of July 1. The 2010 population estimate of 2,277, as shown in Figure 3.1.1.A and Table 3.1.1.B, was from the date of April 1, 2010 as reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's decennial estimate.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates

Figure 3.1.1.B: Town of Wilson's Mills Population - Annual U.S. Census Bureau Estimates



Note: Annual estimates illustrated in this figure were based on the date of July 1. The 2010 population estimate of 2,277, as shown in Figure 3.1.1.A and Table 3.1.1.B, was from the date of April 1, 2010 as reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's decennial estimate.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates

3.1.2 Population Projections

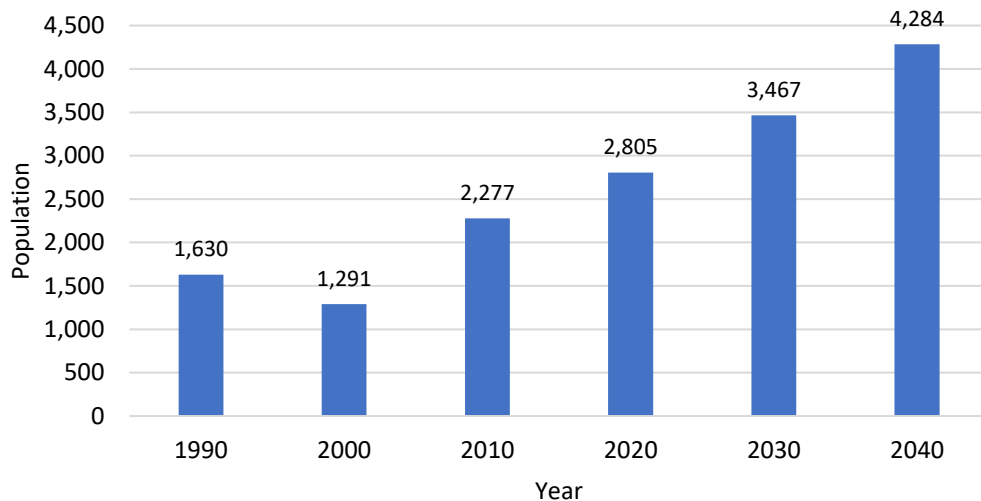
The average 2010-2018 growth rate of 2.14% was applied to the 2018 U.S. Census Bureau's estimate of 2,689 for subsequent years through 2040. Assuming this average growth rate will be sustained through 2040, the 2019 population for Wilson's Mills is estimated as 2,747 in people and projected to be 3,467 in 2030 and approximately 4,284 people in 2040, as illustrated in Table 3.1.2 and Figure 3.1.2. Rapid growth in the region, not reflected by growth models, may exceed the projections. Currently (2019-2020) the 1,072 lots being developed within the Town indicates a faster growth rate.

Table 3.1.2: Town of Wilson's Mills Population - 2018 Estimate and 2040 Projection

Year	Population Estimates & Projections
2018	2,689
2030	3,467
2040	4,284

Source: Year 2018, U.S. Census Bureau, estimate for July 1, 2018

Figure 3.1.2: Town of Wilson's Mills Population Estimates (1990-2010) and Projections (2040)



Source: Years 1990-2010, U.S. Census Bureau

For years 2020-2040, a 2.14% growth rate was applied to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 population estimate for subsequent years to calculate population projections.

3.1.3 Diversity

Figures from the U.S. Census Bureau shown in Table 3.1.3.A indicate 65% of residents are White, 31% are African American, 1% are American Indian and Alaska Native alone, 0.7% are Asian, while no native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander residents were reported. Citizens of other origins or mixed race represented 67% of Wilson's Mills' population in 2017.

Table 3.1.3.A: Town of Wilson's Mills Population by Race Alone

Race or Ethnicity	Percent Total Population
White	65%
African American	31%
American Indian and Alaska Native	1%
Asian	0.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0%
Some Other Race	7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey, Margin of error creates a total over 100%

Figures from the *American Community Survey* shown in Table 3.1.3.B indicate most citizens (67%) in Wilson's Mills are not Hispanic or Latino while 33% of citizens are Hispanic or Latino.

Table 3.1.3.B: Town of Wilson's Mills Population by Hispanic or Latino Not Hispanic or Latino

Race or Ethnicity	Percent Total Population
Not Hispanic or Latino	67%
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	33%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.1.4 Age Groups

"Median age" is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as the measure that divides the age distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median value and one-half of the cases falling above the median value. As of the U.S. Census Bureau 2013-2017 American Community Survey, the median age of the estimated 2,504 Wilson's Mills residents was 27.9 years. As presented in Table 3.1.4, the age groups with the largest numbers are the 25-34 (14.2% of total) and 35-44 (12.7% of total) age ranges. There are 779 child-aged residents (31.1% of total) between 0-14 years compared to 460 residents age 55 and above (18.3% of total) within Wilson's Mills.

Table 3.1.4: Town of Wilson's Mills Population by Age in 2017

Age	Population	Percentage of Total Population
0-4	262	10.5%
5-9	246	9.8%
10-14	271	10.8%
15-19	158	6.3%
20-24	230	9.2%
25-34	356	14.2%
35-44	317	12.7%
45-54	204	8.1%
55-59	184	7.3%
60-64	111	4.4%
65-74	120	4.8%
75-84	41	1.6%
85 and older	4	0.2%
TOTAL	2,504	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.2 Housing

3.2.1 Homeownership

In 2017, there were 718 households in Wilson's Mills. The average household size was 3.49 people. Families made up 85% percent of the households. When compared with Johnston County as a whole, the Town of Wilson's Mills has a slightly lower percentage of owner-occupied housing units. When compared with the State of North Carolina, the Town of Wilson's Mills has a higher percentage of owner-occupied housing units.

Table 3.2.1.A: Homeownership Rates

Jurisdiction	% of Owner Occupied Units
Town of Wilson's Mills	72%
Johnston County	74%
State of North Carolina	65%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

Table 3.2.1.B illustrates housing values in Wilson's Mills; the greatest number of units within the Town falls between \$100,000 to \$149,999 which represents 45.6% of all homes.

Table 3.2.1.B: Town of Wilson's Mills Housing Values

House Value	Number of Structures	% Structures
Less than \$50,000	15	3.0%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	163	32.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	226	45.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	52	10.5%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	40	8.0%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	0	0%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	0	0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

The U.S. Census Bureau's reported median housing value in 2017 for Wilson's Mills was \$111,600; this figure is significantly lower than Johnston County's median housing value of \$150,700.

3.2.2 Housing Stock

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 28.2% of all residential structures in the Town of Wilson's Mills have been built since 1999.

Table 3.2.2: Town of Wilson's Mills Housing Structures by Age

Year Built	Number Structures	Percent Structures
2010 or later (7 years)	25	3.3%
2000-2009 (10 years)	189	24.9%
1980-1999 (20 years)	409	53.8%
1960-1979 (20 years)	94	12.4%
1940-1959 (20 years)	34	4.5%
1939 or earlier	9	1.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.2.3 Housing Types

As of 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 66.7% of Wilson's Mills housing types are site-built single family units. Mobile homes account for 30.8% of Wilson's Mills housing units. Only 2.5% of Wilson's Mill housing types are multi-family units.

Table 3.2.2: Town of Wilson's Mills Housing Types

Housing Types	%
Single Family (Site Built)	66.7%
Mobile Homes	30.8%
Multi-family	2.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.3 Economy

3.3.1 Household Income

Household income calculations consist of the income of all individuals aged 16 years and older in the household. When analyzing the distribution of household income in the Town

of Wilson’s Mills, most households fall into the \$35,000-\$49,999 income range (28.8%), followed by the \$50,000-\$74,999 (17.8%) and \$25,000 -\$34,999 (14.6%) range. Refer to Table 3.3.1.

Median household income divides the household income distribution with one-half of the cases falling below the median and one-half of the cases falling above the median. For households, the median income is based on the distribution of the total number of households, including those with no income. The median household income in the Town of Wilson’s Mills is \$43,558 per year.

Table 3.3.1: Town of Wilson’s Mills Household Income by Range – 2013-2017

Income Range	Households	% of Total Population
<\$10,000	24	3.3%
\$10,000-\$14,999	39	5.4%
\$15,000-\$24,999	73	10.2%
\$25,000-\$34,999	105	14.6%
\$35,000-\$49,999	207	28.8%
\$50,000-\$74,999	128	17.8%
\$75,000-\$99,999	96	13.4%
\$100,000-\$149,999	36	5.0%
\$150,000-\$199,999	5	0.7%
\$200,000 or more	5	0.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.3.2 Per Capita Income

Per capita income is the “mean income” for every man, woman, and child in a geographic area. It is derived by dividing the total income of a group by the total population in that group. As compared to Johnston County as well as to the State of North Carolina, the Town of Wilson’s Mills falls below both in terms of median household income and per capita income.

Table 3.3.2: Per Capita Income Comparison

Jurisdiction	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
Town of Wilson’s Mills	\$43,702	\$15,124
Johnston County	\$54,610	\$24,872
State of North Carolina	\$50,320	\$28,123

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.3.3 Poverty Rates

The Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in “poverty”. When a family’s threshold exceeds its income, then the family and its members are in “poverty”. Poverty thresholds are updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. The poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include things such as capital gains or non-cash benefits such as food stamps. Since “poverty” is determined by the circumstances of individual families (e.g., family size, income thresholds and income), there is no single “poverty rate” for an entire jurisdiction or geographic area.

As Table 3.3.3 illustrates, the rate of individual poverty in the Town of Wilson's Mills is higher than for Johnston County and for the State of North Carolina. The rate of poverty of families in the Town of Wilson's Mills (*nearly a third of families*) is lower than for Johnston County and higher than for the State of North Carolina.

Table 3.3.3: Poverty Level Comparison

Jurisdiction	% of Individuals under Poverty Level	% of Families under Poverty Level
Town of Wilson's Mills	18.2%	32.7%
Johnston County	16.7%	35.3%
State of North Carolina	14.7%	28.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.4 Education

3.4.1 Education Levels of Adults

Of Wilson's Mills residents 25 years and older, 72% of residents have a least a high school education or equivalent. A lower percentage of Wilson's Mills residents have graduated with bachelor's and graduate degrees than residents in Johnston County and the State.

Table 3.4.1: Educational Attainment Comparison for Population Aged 25 and Over

Educational Attainment	Town of Wilson's Mills	Johnston County	State of North Carolina
% Without High School Diploma	28%	14%	13%
% High School Graduate or Higher:	72%	86%	87%
• % High School Graduate or GED	27%	29%	26%
• % With Some College through Associate Degree	35%	35%	31%
• % Bachelor's Degree	9%	16%	19%
• % Graduate Degree	1%	6%	11%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.4.2 Public Schools

The Town of Wilson's Mills is served by the Johnston County School District, which is a county-wide district. The Town of Wilson's Mills and its residents are located within the attendance boundaries of the following Johnston County schools:

- Wilson's Mills Elementary School is located at 4654 Wilson's Mills Road in Wilson's Mills. It offers grades pre-kindergarten through grade 5
- Smithfield Middle School is located at 1455 Buffalo Road, southeast of Wilson's Mills in Smithfield. It offers grades 6 through 8
- Smithfield-Selma High School is located at 700 E. Booker Dairy Road, south of Wilson's Mills in Smithfield. It offers grades 9 through 12.

3.4.3 Colleges and Universities

Johnston Community College (JCC) is a public community college located in Smithfield. JCC offers continuing education programs in basic skills; business/industry/work related; computer related; health and emergency services; personal enrichment/safety and small business.

Wake Technical Community College's Northern campus opened in 2007 in Raleigh. The college offers many university transfer classes along with Workforce Continuing Education classes, Certified Nursing Assistant, Human Resources Development, and a Corporate Business Division. This campus is located 28 miles from Wilson's Mills.

Louisburg College is a two-year private college that officially opened in 1857 and touts itself as the oldest two-year college in the nation, having evolved from the Franklin Male Academy chartered in 1787. It is in Louisburg, located 42 miles from Wilson's Mills. This institution offers curricula including humanities, mathematics, business and social sciences, and provides the ability to transfer credits to many public and private colleges.

North Carolina State University (NC State) is located in Raleigh, 25 miles from Wilson's Mills. It is a public university and part of the University of North Carolina system. With enrollment of 34,000 students, it is the largest in the state university system from an enrollment perspective.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC Chapel Hill) is located in Chapel Hill, 60 miles from Wilson's Mills. The first public university in North Carolina, it opened its doors to students in 1795, making it one of the three oldest public universities in the U.S.

Duke University is located in Durham, 64 miles from Wilson's Mills. It is the only private university of the three schools comprising "the Triangle", having been founded by the Methodists and Quakers in 1838. The renowned Duke Chapel is located on the Durham campus.

3.5 Workforce

3.5.1 Employment

As presented in Table 3.5.1, the largest number of the Town's citizens in the workforce (aged 16+) are employed in the Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance occupations (266 people, or 26% of the 1,031-member workforce). This category is composed of farming, fishing, and forestry; construction and extraction; and installation, maintenance, and repair occupations. The second most numerous categories are Sales and Office occupations (228 people, or 22%). This category is composed of sales, office and administrative support.

Table 3.5.1: Occupations for Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over, 2013-2017

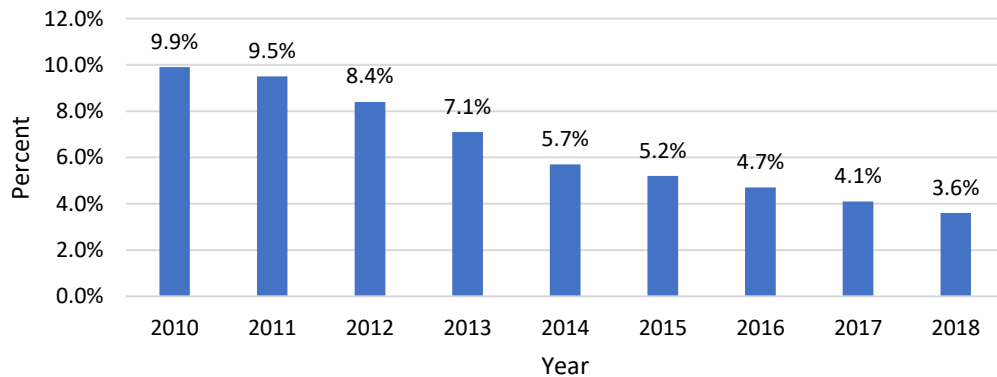
Occupation	Number	%
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations	266	26%
Sales and Office Occupations	228	22%
Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations	193	19%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	177	17%
Service Occupations	167	16%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.5.2 Unemployment

Unemployment rates in Johnston County have shown a steady downward trend from 9.9% in 2010 to 3.6% in 2018. These improvements demonstrate that the County has managed to rebound from the recession. No labor statistics specifically for Wilson's Mills are available.

Table 3.5.2: Unemployment in Johnston County, 2010-2018



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

3.5.3 Commuting Patterns

For 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 53% of workers who reside in Johnston County commute to work outside of Johnston County. Most citizens in the workforce (77%) drive their personal vehicles to work. However, a significant percentage of workers (16%) carpool, while an additional two percent (2%) of the workforce works from home, with no need for regular employment transportation.

Table 3.5.3: Town of Wilson's Mills Methods of Transportation

Transportation Method	% of All Workers
Drive Alone	77%
Carpool	16%
Public Transportation	1%
Walk	0%
Work at Home	2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

3.6 Future Trends Projection - *How does Wilson's Mills prepare?*

Recognizing trends and how market dynamics can and do change will enable Wilson's Mills to position itself as a welcoming community for multiple generations looking at buying or renting a home, starting or growing a business, and finding Wilson's Mills a good place to visit. This approach to planning reinforces the community's desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate, while aging community members will choose to remain. A vibrant and sustainable community is one where both the new and existing home markets are attractive to future generations and allow for aging members of the community to remain in the community by offering a variety of housing products near jobs, services and events.

According to contemporary real estate experts, the "50+" real estate market is changing. In these next few years, Generation X (those born between the years 1964 and 1977) will be joining the Boomers (born between 1946 and 1963) and Matures (between 1927 and 1945), making serving the age 50+ market both a challenging puzzle as well as an opportunity for both communities and the real estate industry itself.

A recent insightful online posting on RISmedia.com (a real estate trade site) states: "For the **Mature** buyers, those born between the years 1927 and 1945, the decision to move can be an emotional and complicated process. The sense of obligation to the family home may be a burden and a comfort at the same time." The posting goes on to state: "**Baby Boomers** are savvy home buyers. They approach the transaction with high expectations and confidence. They consider the home a reflection of their lifestyle, so image and status are important. Whether they are downsizing, upsizing, or purchasing a second home, vacation home, or investment property, they know what they want and how to tell you about it." And finally, the post states: "Newbies to the 50+ group, **Generation X** stands out because of their strong need for independence and practical yet cautious approach. They take on the responsibility of gathering information and rely strongly on facts and documentation. They ask a lot of questions and don't want to get burned. They expect their home to complement their lifestyle and not the other way around."

Preparations to embrace current and projected trends are a partnership of land development and real estate industries with local government leadership. New housing construction should address gaps in the market product offering; therefore, land development specifications appearing in the Town's ordinances must be adequate to accommodate these trends. Replacing the town's antiquated zoning ordinance, adding specifications for land development which creates new streets and supporting infrastructure, and maintaining quality control over the implementation of these standards must be prioritized to protect property rights of all parties while creating common-sense opportunities that don't setup for failures in the future.

As with the housing markets, ever changing trends in consumption, product development, technology and generational shifts in personal choices/values must be considered when making decisions about commercial and other non-residential growth. This approach to planning reinforces the community's desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate, while aging members will choose to remain. A community, where traditional values accompany craftsmanship must embrace the presence of technology in everyday life, commerce, and business. Innovation is an ever-increasing component of the economy at all levels; therefore, it must be considered in the formation of growth policy serving these innovators if we are to adapt and survive global influence on everyday life. *(Also see Sections 6 and 8 of this document).*

4. NATURAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

4.1 Natural Resources

4.1.1 Water Resources

Water resources provide both recreational and life sustaining resources for Wilson's Mills and the region. Wilson's Mills is located within the Neuse River basin. This expansive basin originates in Person and Orange counties, flowing from the Piedmont to the outer Coastal Plain. This basin is more than 6,200 square miles, including both land and open water. The river is essentially freshwater from its headwaters to New Bern, where it broadens and assumes estuarine characteristics.

The Town of Wilson's Mills is located west of the Neuse River, and local streams, ditches, and storm drainage ultimately discharge to the Neuse River. The Town has several unnamed tributaries that are USGS "blue line" streams that are buffered, meaning that restrictions exist for how close structures are located or construction activities can take place to the stream. The largest regional water resources include Falls Lake located east of Durham.

4.1.1.1 Water Sports

Outdoor water sport opportunities are available in the Neuse River, as well as at Falls Lake which is located within an hour's drive north between Wake Forest and Durham. *Also see section 6.5.2 of this document for additional information.*

4.1.1.2 Water Supply

The Town of Wilson's Mills obtains its water from Johnston County Public Utilities Department. The source of the public water supply is the Neuse River. The water treatment facility is located on Clearwater Drive in Wilson's Mills. Water is stored in elevated towers located on US-70 (future I-42) between Wilson's Mills and Clayton.

Wilson's Mills is within the Neuse River basin. The Neuse River begins at the confluence of the Flat and Eno Rivers near Durham, N.C. The rivers generally flow southeast and ultimately empty into the southern end of Pamlico Sound. The majority of Wilson's Mill's is designated a watershed water supply WS-IV Protected Area, while a smaller area is designated WS-IV Critical Area. The North Carolina Water Supply Watershed Protection Program requires local governments to adopt and enforce ordinances and watershed maps that meet or exceed the Water Supply Watershed Protection Program requirements to implement development controls within designated watershed areas that will preserve and enhance the quality of the State's drinking water supply.

In May 2019, Johnston County Public Utilities Department issued a Request for Qualifications from qualified consultants to conduct a comprehensive Long Term Water Supply Plan. The Plan will evaluate the County's 30-year water supply needs and determine the best path to meeting those needs.

4.1.2 Land Resources and Geography

The Town's topography ranges from gently sloping to slopes of approximately 8 percent, with elevations ranging from 140 feet to 260 feet above sea level. This level topography

historically supported agricultural activity which is also suitable for future residential and commercial land development. The majority of soil types are considered native to the Coastal Plain Region. According to the Soil Survey of Johnston County (1994), the predominant soils in the Wilson's Mills area consist of Appling-Marlboro, Goldsboro, Marlboro, Norfolk, Rains, and Toisnot.

4.1.2.1 Agricultural

According to The Heritage Center of Johnston County, after the introduction of Eli Whitney's gin in Johnston County around 1804, cotton gradually became Johnston County's leading crop. Corn was also produced for market. Before the 1850s poor roads leading to distant markets were a deterrent to commercial farming. Construction of the 223-mile North Carolina Railroad in 1854 placed Johnston County within the prosperous Piedmont Crescent between Goldsboro and Charlotte and meant an eventual shift from subsistence farming to market-driven agriculture. In addition to boosting cotton and grain productions, the railroad spurred growth in the turpentine and lumber industries and gave rise to towns at Princeton, Pine Level, Selma, and Clayton as well as a thriving industrial village at Wilson's Mills.

The Town of Wilson's Mills was established in 1868 in order to bring electricity to mills surrounding the railroad. Wilson's Mills was named after the family of John Marshall Wilson whom started a gristmill to mill grain and operated a cotton gin.

4.1.2.2 Recreation

Currently, the Town of Wilson's Mills does not have a Parks and Recreation Department but does own and maintain the Wilson's Mills Community Park, which will have rugby and multi-use fields in the very near future. The park currently features a playground, horseshow pits, a volleyball court with high school specs, and a picnic shelter, which is available to rent for events also.

The Town hosts several events throughout the year at the Community Park including the Pumpkin Festival, Community Day, and the Easter Egg Hunt. Additionally, the Town host a Christmas Parade and tree lighting ceremony.

The Town of Wilson's Mills Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), dated December 2009, identified strategic areas where the Town wants to begin sidewalk construction. The phased plan generally starts around the Town Hall and moves outward to residential communities. In the 2009 CIP, The Town identified approximately 37,500 linear feet of sidewalks to be constructed with a year 2009 estimated construction cost of \$2,500,000.

Johnston County's website maintains a list of parks and recreation services in the area. The Town of Selma located six miles south has seven parks, while the Town of Clayton, nine miles to the north, has public parks including a community center. Section 4.2.1 of this document offers additional information about recreational facilities, and Section 6.5.2 of this document offers additional information about recreation as a component of the local economy.

4.1.2.3 Transportation Facilities

The Johnston Regional Airport (JNX) is located less than a mile and a half from the Town of Wilson's Mills at 3149 Swift Creek Road, Smithfield. JNX is owned and operated by the Johnston County Airport Authority and serves corporate, military, and general aviation aircraft. The JNX Airport is located 34 miles southeast of the Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU). JNX serves the greater Raleigh metropolitan area providing access to numerous Piedmont and eastern North Carolina destinations with access to I-40 and I-95.

The transportation network serving the Town of Wilson's Mills consists mainly of US-70 (future I-42) which transects Wilson's Mills from the Northwest to Southeast. US-70 (future I-42) serves as a major north-south commuter route to the Triangle area. US-70 (future I-42), one of the primary east-west corridors across eastern North Carolina, is a major connection between Raleigh, Smithfield, Goldsboro, Kinston, Havelock and the Port of Morehead City. US-70 (future I-42) is heavily used for moving freight, and is just a few miles south of the North Carolina Global TransPark. As reported by NCDOT, traffic volumes vary along the corridor but are highest around Clayton and Goldsboro. The US-70 (future I-42) Corridor plays an important role as part of the National Highway System and the Strategic Highway Network. It's also a North Carolina Strategic Transportation Corridor and is an important link to and from rural areas. NCDOT is working to improve passenger and freight movement along the corridor from Raleigh to the state Port of Morehead City. Several improvement projects along the corridor are either being studied, in development or under construction. As described on NCDOT's Project Summaries, TIP #W-5600, is an NCDOT project with widenings and improvements along US-70 (future I-42) from Swift Creek Road (S.R. 1501) and Wilson's Mills Road (S.R. 1919). The project includes new interchanges with Swift Creek Road and Wilson's Mills Road.

North Carolina Railroad Company (NCRR) owns the rail line that runs through Wilson's Mills' town limits. As reported in the 2017 Southwest Area Study (SEAS) prepared for the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), the NCRR Company owns and manages this 317-mile corridor extending from the Port of Morehead City to Charlotte. Norfolk Southern operates the rail line along the corridor through an operating and maintenance agreement. The freight rail network in North Carolina provides services to ports, power plants, mines, military installations, and industries including, but not limited to, agriculture, forestry, plastics, furniture, food products, and chemicals. Freight railroads support jobs for about 2,600 railroad employees in the state. The 2010 NCRR Commuter Rail Ridership and Market Study identified a commuter rail service along the NCRR rail between Wilson's Mills and Durham as the best portion of the Greensboro-Goldsboro corridor. The 2017 SEAS Study referenced the Wilson's Mills-Durham commuter rail findings from the 2010 NCRR and emphasized the importance of a close collaboration with nearby bus service.

The Town of Wilson's Mills currently does not include designated bicycle facilities nor bike lanes within the Town limits. The Mountains-to-Sea Trail route, begins in Murphy, NC and finishes in Manteo, NC. It serves as the main artery of the North Carolina bicycle route system, bisecting the state west to east. It travels through Asheville, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Durham, and Raleigh. The route currently passes through the Town of

Wilson's Mills along Powhatan Road and is planned to eventually be routed through the Wilson's Mills area along the Neuse River.

Although there are currently no existing sidewalks, crosswalks, nor greenway trails within the Town of Wilson's Mills, several residential subdivisions recently approved for construction will install sidewalks as required. The new unified development ordinance (UDO) will continue to require sidewalk installation as new developments are constructed. The Town of Wilson's Mills Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), dated December 2009, identified strategic areas where the Town wants to begin sidewalk construction. The phased plan generally starts around the Town Hall and moves outward to residential communities. In the 2009 CIP, The Town identified approximately 37,500 linear feet of sidewalks to be constructed with a year 2009 estimated construction cost of \$2,500,000. See section 7.2 of this document for additional information.

4.1.2.4 Growth

Wilson's Mills is located within the Triangle region of North Carolina, which contains the cities of Raleigh and Durham and the Town of Chapel Hill. The region is consistently ranked as one of the best places in the US in which to live, most recently by *US News and World Report* which ranked it 13th. The region's population has increased significantly, as people gravitate to the three major educational institutions in the area (NC State, University of North Carolina and Duke University) for the educational and employment opportunities they offer. The Triangle region consistently scores in the top ten among American cities' and regions' projected population growth within the next 20 to 30 years.

In April 2018, the U.S. Census Bureau released a report, New Census Bureau Estimates Show Counties in the South and West Lead Nation in Population Growth, listing statistics of the fastest growth of metropolitan statistical areas (MSA's). Of the 390 MSA's, the report ranked the 10th largest numeric growth of MSA's in the country. Of the 10 ranked MSA's, the Raleigh MSA was listed as number 10. The Raleigh MSA had a population estimate of 1,130,488 people in 2010 and a population estimate of 1,362,540 people in 2018 which is an annual growth rate of 2.56%.

On June 28, 2018, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) published, CONNECT 2045, the Research Triangle Region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The CAMPO plan provided a 2013 population estimate of 1,150,000 and a 2045 population projection of 2,070,000 which is an annual growth rate of 2.5%.

Past regional growth has mostly spurred development activity beyond the Town's limits, however, Wilson's Mills is geographically poised to be impacted by (and to potentially take advantage of) this regional growth within the next decade. As an "exurban" community (defined as a community located immediately beyond a metro area's current growth and development patterns) with a significant percentage of its land area undeveloped, the Town has recently received a strong influx of residential subdivision applications due to its appeal to prospective residents, businesses, and real estate developers anxious to accommodate the metro population growth. Section 3.1.2 provides projected populations of approximately 3,467 in 2030 and 4,284 people in 2040 which is based on an annual growth rate trend of 2.14%.

4.2 Cultural Resources

4.2.1 Parks and Recreation, Outdoor Adventure and Community Outreach

Currently, the Town of Wilson's Mills does not have a Parks and Recreation Department but does own and maintain the Wilson's Mills Community Park, which will have rugby and multi-use fields in the very near future. The park currently features a playground, horseshow pits, a volleyball court with high school specs, and a picnic shelter, which is available to rent for events also.

The Town hosts several events throughout the year at the Community Park including the Pumpkin Festival, Community Day, and the Easter Egg Hunt. Additionally, the Town host a Christmas Parade and tree lighting ceremony.

The Town also sponsors the Silver Stars Program which is for adults ages 55 and over. They meet 2 times a month and participate in a variety of activities and outings.

4.3 Historic Resources

4.3.1 Heritage Preservation and Tourism

A review of the database of the National Register of Historic Places for Johnston County did not report any listed historic resources within the Town of Wilson's Mills. There are 35 listed historic properties within Johnston County, many of which are within a 30 minute drive of Wilson's Mills.

Johnston County features many historic resources of its rural heritage and is home to several historic buildings dating from the 18th and early 19th centuries. The Heritage Center in Johnston County (6 miles from Wilson's Mills) provides historic education services to Johnston County's residents and visitors. The Heritage Center's collection includes printed materials, microfilm collections, and electronic searchable databases that store county records. The county also houses important museums such as the Ava Gardner Museum in Smithfield (5 miles from Wilson's Mills), the Tobacco Farm Life Museum in Kenly (10 miles from Wilson's Mills), the Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site (25 miles from Wilson's Mills), and the Benson Museum of Local History (20 miles from Wilson's Mills). The oldest business in Johnston County is Atkinson's Mill, established in 1757 (12 Miles from Wilson's Mills). The mill continues operation on the Little River with its original earthen dam.



Tobacco Farm Life Museum in Kenly, Photo Credit: Museum's website



Atkinson's Milling Company in Selma, Photo Credit: Our State Magazine, February 2019

4.3.1.1 Downtown Wilson's Mills

Wilson's Mills currently does not have what would be considered a downtown district. The area citizens may refer to as the community's downtown is generally located between Main Street and Wilson's Mills Road from north to south, but the area lacks the number and concentration of buildings typically necessary to create an identifiable downtown core of commerce, civic and social activity. This area is bisected by the North Carolina Railroad Company (NCRR) railroad tracks. The area referred to as downtown does not

contain any structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Town of Wilson's Mills currently has a historic preservation committee, but it has been inactive for years and should consider reactivating an appointed historic preservation committee active in the past.

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5. VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY - BUSINESSES, CITIZENS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Determining what is important to a community is critical. The information gathered through various forms of community participation will establish the foundation of the plan. The voice of Wilson's Mills was sought by the techniques described below. This information, when summarized and ranked in order of popularity, provides the "value statements" about Wilson's Mills. These statements provide the foundation for the preparation of goals and objectives. From these goals and objectives, the team crafted draft strategies refined for Wilson's Mills' needs by its elected leadership.

5.1 Community Participation – *What does our community want?*

Community participation for the initial planning process in the Summer of 2019 was a blend of three different, but integral, approaches for comprehensive outreach. First, the planning team performed a series of stakeholder interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of 'likes', 'dislikes', 'wishes', and 'fears' in the community, as well as identify top priorities for the Town's progression toward the future. Secondly, a group presentation with input exercises was conducted. An online survey was also available which was advertised through the Town's website, social media, the Town's phone auto-calling system named Blackboard, and printed flyers and postcards.

Eighteen (18) business stakeholders were interviewed, 21 citizens participated in the public input session on June 10, and 22 people responded to an online survey for a total of 61 people contributing their input in the community participation phase. The following sections highlight the process, results and opportunities for action.

5.1.1 Stakeholder Interviews – *How these were performed and why so extensive!*

Extensive business stakeholder interviews are a great addition to any community engagement process because they give detailed insight into the opinions and perspectives of many members of a community. What makes this process unique for Wilson's Mills is that, due to the size of Wilson's Mills, almost every business was interviewed as part of this process. A random sample of business owners would have been too small to gain valuable information; so, each member of the business community could be reached was interviewed, on a one-to-one basis, to fully flush out the main content to be highlighted in Wilson's Mills' plan for the future.

This outreach process spread goodwill throughout the Wilson's Mills community early in the process enabling word-of-mouth advertising for this initiative and better community participation to support the Town Plan. These interviews focused on the community and did not obtain proprietary information about the businesses.

While attempts to reach all businesses were made, there are likely several home-based or e-commerce businesses that were not identifiable. Most of the interviews were conducted within the places of business. During the endeavor, the interviewers gained a more comprehensive understanding of people's attitudes, as well as, the physical characteristics and local context of the community layout, conditions of infrastructure, and numerous other valuable insights of Wilson's Mills. The interviews increased

awareness of the Town's commitment to become more deliberate in future decisions affecting businesses, citizens and visitors.

5.1.2 Summary Results of Interviews, Survey, and Public Input Session – *What our community said!*

Since interviews were conducted in person, the survey questions were not distributed ahead of the interview, improving the spontaneity and therefore the quality of the results. The results obtained were “first impressions”, including both the passion and emotion often shared when meeting face to face.

The interview responses were categorized and grouped separately for each of the six questions asked:

1. Do you reside within the Town of Wilson's Mills?
2. What do you like about Wilson's Mills (present)?
3. What do you dislike about Wilson's Mills (present)?
4. What wishes do you have for Wilson's Mills (future)?
5. What fears do you have for Wilson's Mills (future)?
6. What should be the #1 priority for Wilson's Mills moving forward?

The number and percentages of responses to each of the five questions from interviews, surveys and the public input session are provided below.

	Questions	Face to Face Interview Responses	Online Survey Responses	Public Input Session Responses (21 people attended)	Total Responses
1.	What do you like about Wilson's Mills?	18 (35%)	21 (41%)	12 (24%)	51
2.	What do you dislike about Wilson's Mills?	18 (38%)	22 (46%)	8 (16%)	48
3.	What wishes do you have for Wilson's Mills?	18 (37%)	22 (45%)	9 (18%)	49
4.	What fears do you have for Wilson's Mills?	18 (42%)	20 (46%)	5 (12%)	43
5.	What should be the #1 priority for Wilson's Mills moving forward?	18 (41%)	21 (48%)	5 (11%)	44

The responses were then cataloged for ranking purposes enabling the results to be summarized graphically. The following pages illustrate the responses in order of their respective frequency rankings.

This interview process had an additional benefit of determining whether the proprietors of the businesses interviewed were Town residents. The planning team determined that of the eighteen businesses interviewed, five are residents of the Town, while the remaining thirteen interviewed were not. This determination is critically important to note, since many businesses may often have as much or more invested in a town as an average resident. Since these individuals are not residents and therefore are ineligible to vote in the local municipal elections, this process offered an opportunity for the business community's voice to be heard in greater numbers than may be represented by either local member-supported business organizations, or by election results.

The six questions were also available through an online survey the Town prepared and monitored. A total of 22 people completed the online survey over a period of two weeks when it was available on the Town's website.

The following summary of priorities and charts illustrate responses to the remaining five survey interview questions from the interviews, online surveys and June 10 public input session.

The rankings indicate **'Plan for Growth'** (16%) as the 1st priority. This answer was consistently emphasized by related answers to other survey questions. A related response to the question, 'What do you like about Wilson's Mills?', was *'Good Location'* (5%). A related response to the question, 'What do you dislike about Wilson's Mills?', was *'Opposition to Growth'* (10%). Responses to the question, 'What wishes do you have for Wilson's Mills?', were *'Growth'* (16%) and *'Limited Growth'* (10%). Related responses given to the question, 'What fears do you have for Wilson's Mills?', were *'Poor Growth'* (11%), *'Too Much Commercial Growth'* (11%), *'Uncontrolled Growth'* (11%) and *'Stop Growing'* (8%).

The rankings indicate **'Safety'** (10%) as the 2nd priority. This category will also have the response **'Law Enforcement Staffing'** grouped under the **'Safety'** (which received 6% of the response) category hereafter since they strongly relate to one another. This answer was reinforced by another answer to the same question which was *'Address Drug Activity'* (2%). This answer was consistently reinforced by related answers to other survey questions. A related response to the question, 'What do you like about Wilson's Mills?', was *'Low Crime'* (3%). Related responses given to the question, 'What wishes do you have for Wilson's Mills?', were *'Streetlights'* (4%), *'Continues to be a Safe Place'* (4%), and *'Sidewalks'* (2%). The top response, given as 11% of answers to the question, 'What fears do you have for Wilson's Mills?', was *'Crime'*.

The 3rd ranking priority tied between the following five answers:

- ***‘Law Enforcement Staffing’*** (6%) (This response was combined with ***‘Safety’***)
- ***‘Retain Our Character’*** (6%)
- ***‘New Local School Facilities’***
- ***‘Strong Parks and Recreation’***
- ***‘Strong Zoning Regulations for Board Decisions’*** (6%)

The rankings indicate ***‘Retain Our Character’*** (6%) as one of five answers tied for the 3rd priority. A related response, given at 33%, which was the #1 answer to the question ‘What do you like about Wilson’s Mills?’, was *‘Small Town’*. Other responses related answers to the ‘like’ question were *‘Rural Feel’* (12%), *‘Country and Diversity’* (2%) and *‘Sense of Community’* (2%). A related response to the question, ‘What fears do you have for Wilson’s Mills?’, was *‘Loss of Small Town Appeal’* (11%).

‘New Local School Facilities’ (6%) as a tied 3rd priority was consistently reiterated by related answers to other survey questions. A related response to the question, ‘What do you dislike about Wilson’s Mills?’, was *‘Not Enough School Options’* (4%). Related responses to the question, ‘What wishes do you have for Wilson’s Mills?’ were *‘Future Generations Considerations’* (2%), *‘Improve Schools’* (2%), and *‘Our Own Middle and High School’* (2%). A related response to the question, ‘What fears do you have for Wilson’s Mills?’, was *‘Outgrow Our Schools.’* (3%).

‘Strong Parks and Recreation’ (6%) as a tied 3rd priority was consistently emphasized by related answers to other survey questions. A related response to the question, ‘What do you dislike about Wilson’s Mills?’, was *‘Nothing to Do’* (2%). Related responses to the question, ‘What wishes do you have for Wilson’s Mills?’, were *‘More Town-Sponsored Events’* (4%), *‘Use Ballfields More’* (4%), *‘Future Generations Considerations’* (2%), and *‘More Youth Activities’* (2%).

‘Strong Zoning Regulations for Board Decisions’ (6%) as a tied 3rd priority was consistently affirmed by related answers to other survey questions. The 2nd highest related response, given at 10% of answers to the question, ‘What do you dislike about Wilson’s Mills?’, was *‘Opposition to Growth’*. Related responses to the question, ‘What wishes do you have for Wilson’s Mills?’, were *‘Closer Retail, Restaurants, and Grocery Stores’* (22%), *‘Growth’* (16%), *‘Limited Growth’* (10%), *‘Streetlights’* (4%), *‘Future Generations Considerations’* (3%), *‘New Downtown/Place’* (3%), *‘Smart Infrastructure Planning’* (2%), *‘Sidewalks’* (2%) and *‘Water and Sewer’* (2%).

Related responses to the question ‘What fears do you have for Wilson’s Mills?’, were *‘Poor Growth’* (11%), *‘Loss of Small Town Appeal’* (11%), *‘Stop Growing’* (8%), *‘Too Much Commercial Growth’* (11%), *‘Increased Traffic and Not Planning First’* (5%) and *‘Uncontrolled Growth’* (11%).

The 4th ranking priority was tied between the seven answers listed, each representing 4% of total responses to the question, *‘What should be the #1 priority for Wilson’s Mills moving forward?’*

- ***‘Complete the Sewer Project’***
- ***‘Control Our Budget’***
- ***‘Don’t Know’***
- ***‘Family Oriented Community’***
- ***‘Leadership’***
- ***‘New Town Center and Town Hall’***
- ***‘Timely Completion of Highway Improvements’***

The following four answers from the 4th priority list of 7 tied answers were considered most relevant to town planning for further analysis in producing a ranking.

- ***‘Complete the Sewer Project’***
- ***‘Family Oriented Community’***
- ***‘New Town Center and Town Hall’***
- ***‘Timely Completion of Highway Improvements’***

‘Complete the Sewer Project’ (4%) as a tied 4th priority was consistently affirmed by related answers to other survey questions. A related response to the question, *‘What do you like about Wilson’s Mills?’*, was *‘Sewer Upgrade’* (2%). A related response to the question, *‘What do you dislike about Wilson’s Mills?’*, was *‘Not Enough Restaurants’* (8%) (connection is restaurants are dependent on sewer service). Other answers to the question, *‘What do you dislike about Wilson’s Mills?’* related to the *‘Complete the Sewer Project’* include *‘Financial Impact on Infrastructure’* (2%), *‘Lack of Sewer in Our Subdivision’* (2%), and *‘Slow Sewage Road Construction’* (2%). Related responses to the question, *‘What wishes do you have for Wilson’s Mills?’* were *‘Smart Infrastructure Planning’* (2%) and *‘Water and Sewer’* (2%).

The rankings indicate ***‘Family Oriented Community’*** (4%) as a tied 4th priority was consistently affirmed by related answers to other survey questions. This answer was consistently reiterated by related answers to other survey questions. Related responses, all given as 2% of answers to the question, *‘What wishes do you have for Wilson’s Mills?’*, were *‘Future Generations Considerations’*, *‘Junior Citizens Building’*, *‘More Youth Activities’*, *‘Our Own Middle and High School’*. A related response to the question, *‘What fears do you have for Wilson’s Mills?’*, was *‘Outgrow Our Schools’* (3%).

‘New Town Center and Town Hall’ (4%) as a tied 4th priority was consistently affirmed by related answers to other survey questions. Related responses to the question, *‘What do you dislike about Wilson’s Mills?’*, were *‘Not Enough Restaurants’* (8%), *‘No Retail’* (6%), and *‘Nothing to Do’* (2%). A related response which was the top answer to the question, *‘What wishes to you have for Wilson’s Mills?’* was *‘Closer Retail, Restaurants, and Grocery Stores’* (22%) while another related answer was *‘New Downtown/Place’* (2%).

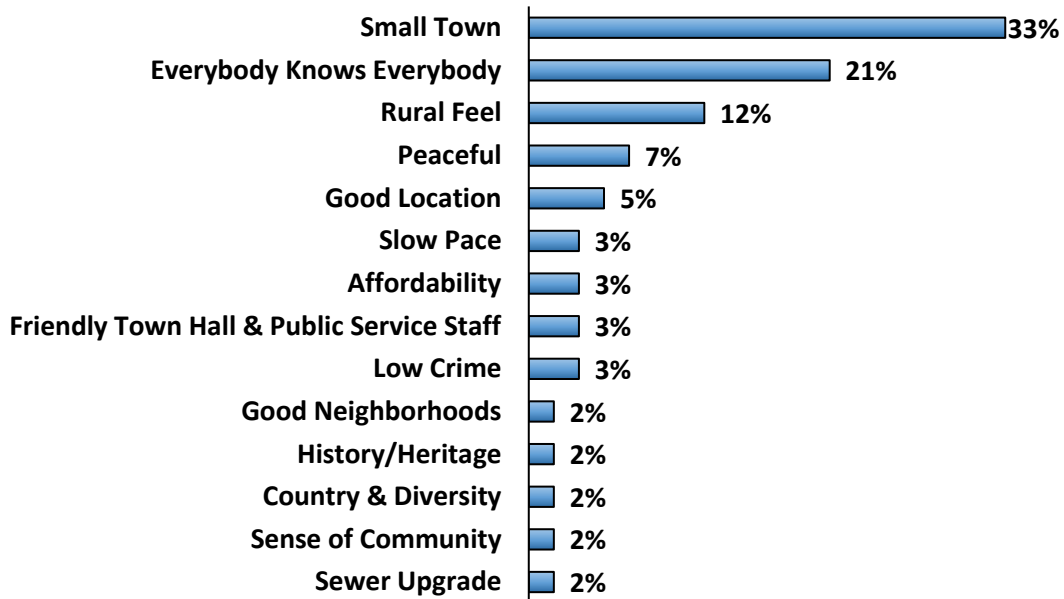
‘Timely Completion of Highway Improvements’ (4%) as a tied 4th priority was consistently affirmed by related answers to other survey questions. A related response to the

question, *'What do you like about Wilson's Mills?'*, was *'Good Location'* (5%). A related response to the question, *'What do you dislike about Wilson's Mills?'*, was *'Traffic'* (8%). A related response to the question, *'What wishes do you have for Wilson's Mills?'*, was *'Smart Infrastructure Planning'* (2%). Related responses to the question, *'What fears do you have for Wilson's Mills?'*, were *'Expansion of US-70'* (5%), *'Increased Traffic and Not Planning First'* (5%), and *'Roadways that Hurt Our Town'* (8%).

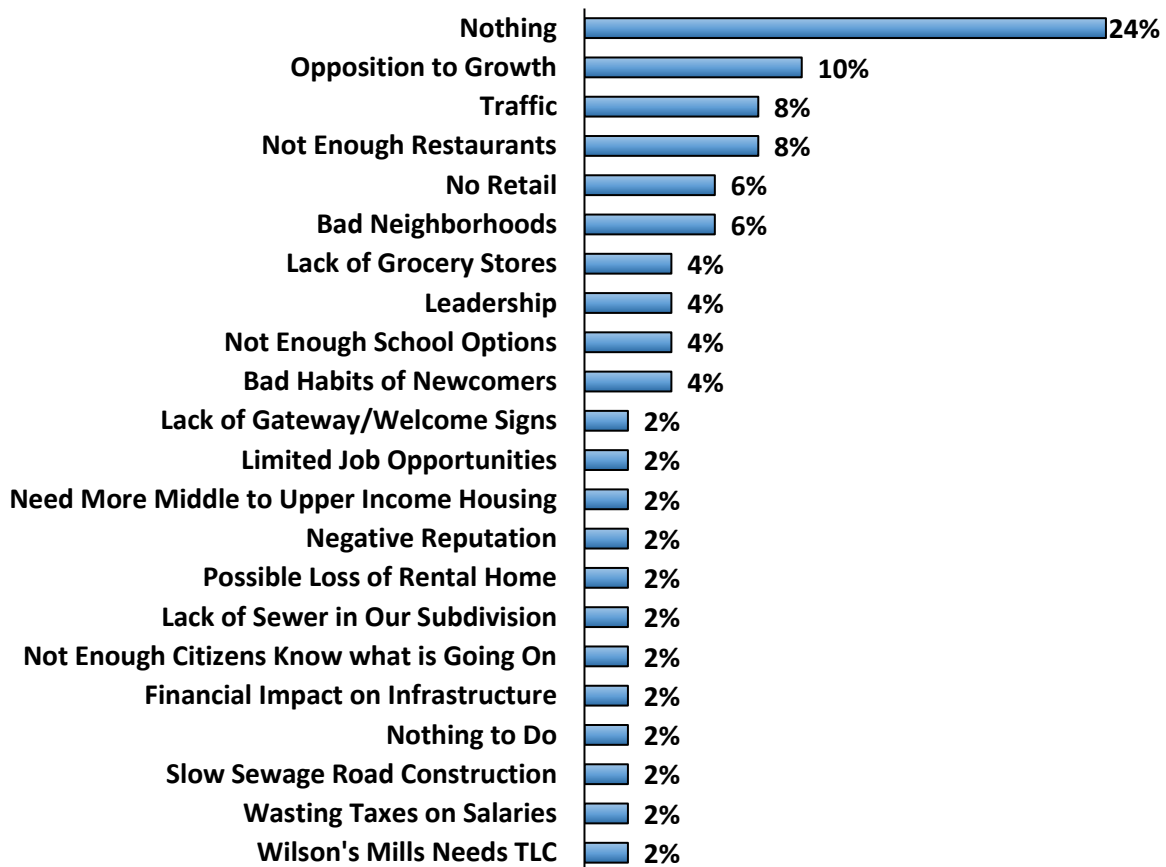
Final Rankings of Priorities. Since survey results produced four ties for the 4th ranked priority based on the question, *'What should be the #1 priority for Wilson's Mills moving forward'* it , it was necessary to add percentages of each of the top ranked and tied priorities to percentages of their related answers throughout the four other survey questions in order to develop a meaningful final ranking of priorities. After combining the top and tied answers with their related answers, the following topics and their total sum of percentages from all five survey questions fall into the following ten ranked priorities. The Town Plan 2040 responds to each of these 10 priorities in section 5.2. The new unified development ordinance (UDO), being prepared at the time of adoption of this plan, will also address these priorities.

1. ***'Strong Zoning Regulations for Board Decisions'*** (137%)
2. ***'Plan for Growth'*** (98%)
3. ***'Retain Our Character'*** (66%)
4. ***'New Town Center and Town Hall'*** (44%)
5. ***'Safety'*** (Includes *'Law Enforcement Staffing'*) (42%)
6. ***'Timely Completion of Highway Improvements'*** (37%)
7. ***'Complete the Sewer Project'*** (24%)
8. ***'Strong Parks and Recreation'*** (20%)
9. ***'New Local School Facilities'*** (19%)
10. ***'Family Oriented Community'*** (15%)

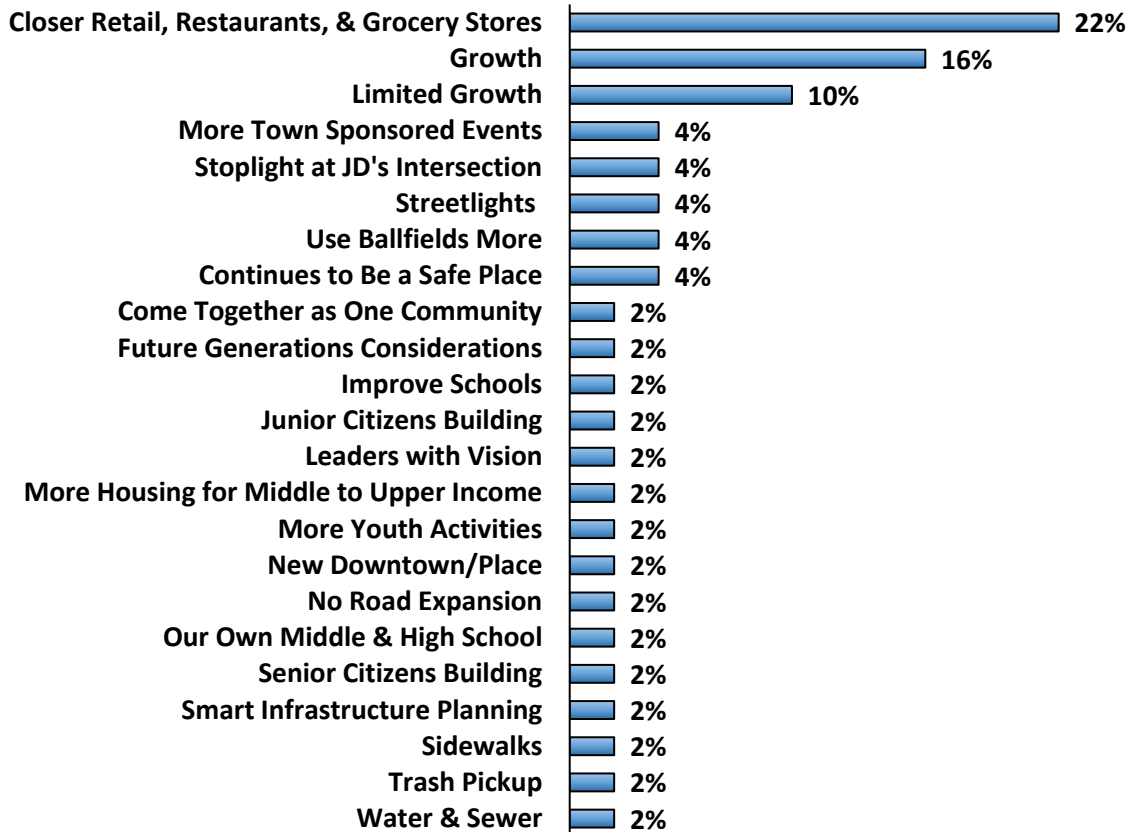
What do you like about Wilson's Mills?



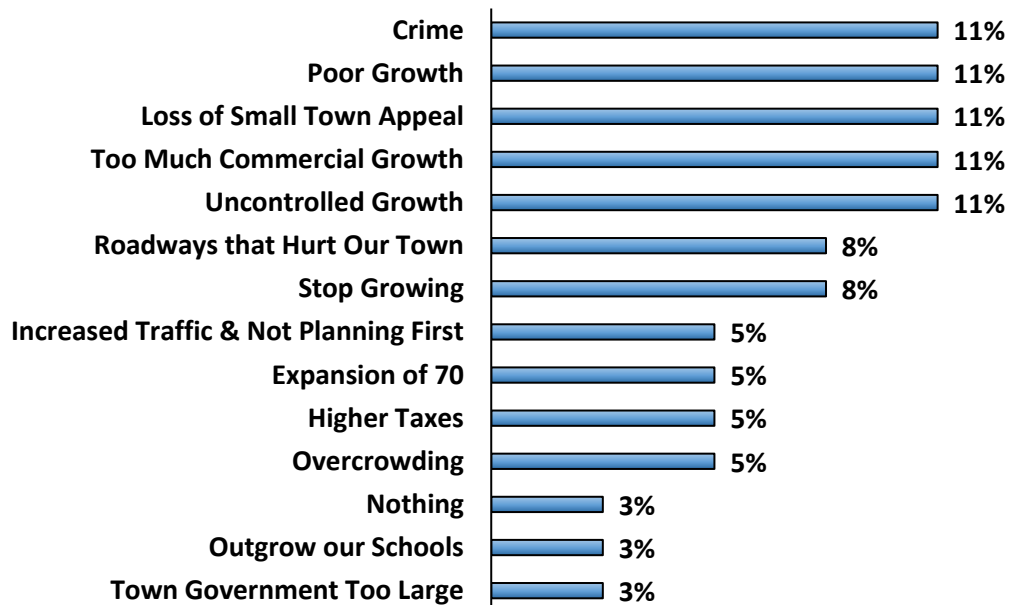
What do you dislike about Wilson's Mills?



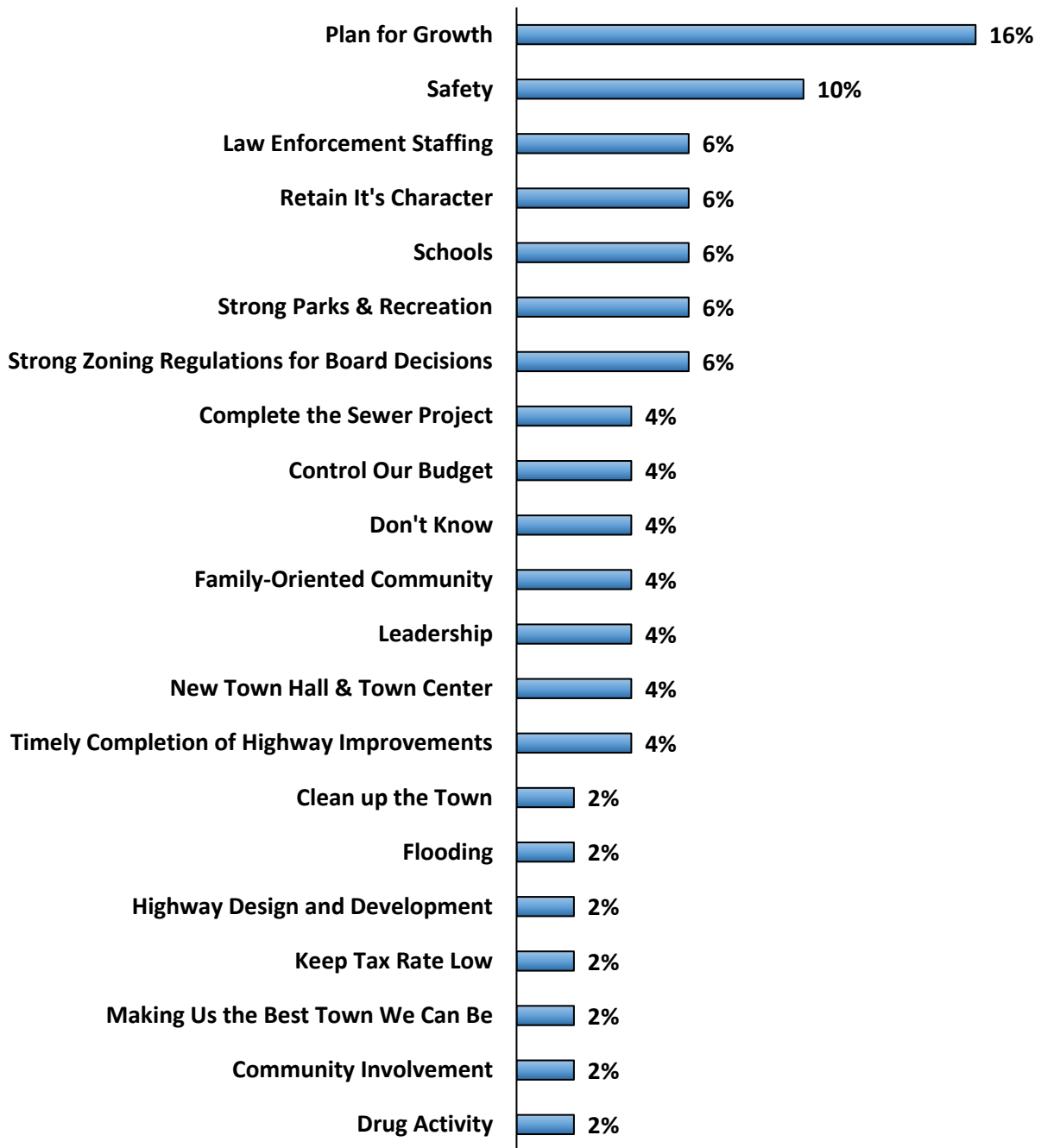
What wishes do you have for Wilson's Mills?



What fears do you have for Wilson's Mills?



What should be the #1 priority for Wilson's Mills moving forward?

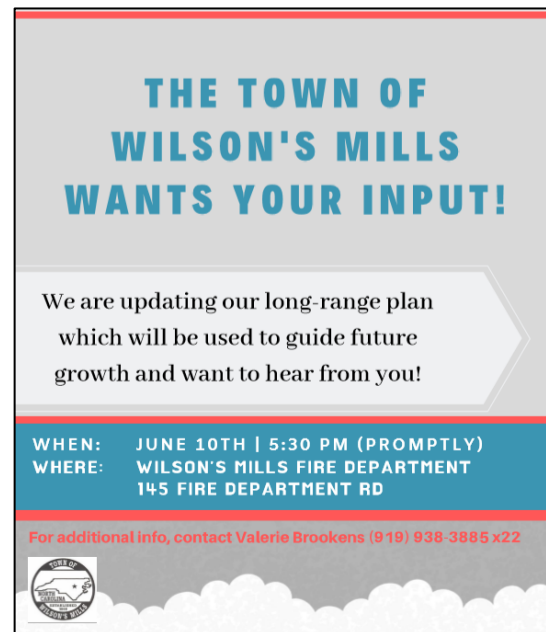
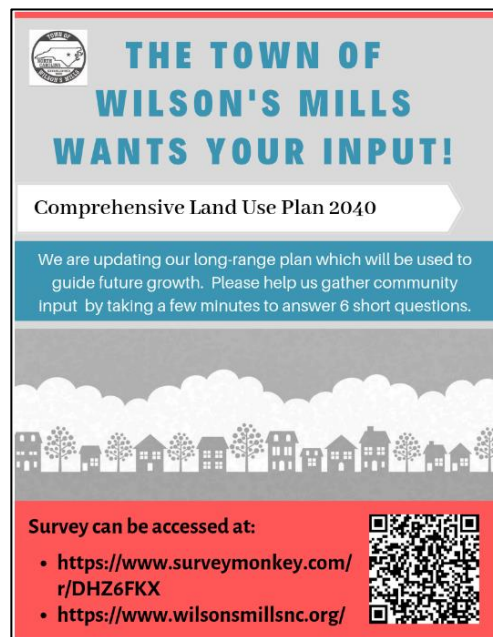


5.1.3 Community Meetings

Group exercises were conducted during an advertised public work session on June 10, 2019 in order to introduce the planning process and to seek first impressions about the community's present and future. The Town of Wilson's Mills staff conducted the following activities to solicit community input and attendance at the June 10 public work session:

- Advertised the online survey and public works session on the Town's website homepage and Planning Department page;
- Notified residents through the Blackboard Connect Service (This service is a town-to-resident notification system that allows the Town to send personalized voice messages to residents and business. The system has a list of 300 people);
- Prepared meeting flyers and postcards (pictured below) that were available at Town Hall and shared with the Planning Board and a senior group; post cards were also handed out at the June 10 public work session.

A total of 21 citizens attended the June 10 work session. The input from these participants is included in the summary data in section 5.1.2 to illustrate the responses to the five (5) survey interview questions.



What do you dislike about Wilson's Mills?

Part 1 WILSON'S MILLS JUNE 10, 2019

LIKE
GOOD NEIGHBORHOODS
QUIET
SEWER UPGRADE
RURAL NATURE
HISTORY / HERITAGE
SLOW PACE
ATMOSPHERE
COUNTRY DIVERSITY
HOMETOWN
LOCATION
AFFORDABILITY
LAID BACK

PG 2 DISLIKE

TRAFFIC

BAD HABITS OF NEWCOMERS

NEGATIVE REPUTATION

LACK OF GATEWAY/HELLO SIGN

ANTI-GROWTH ATTITUDE

LTO ~~NO~~ JOB OPPORTUNITIES

NOT ENOUGH SCHOOL OPTIONS

" "

ROADS

What wishes do you have for Wilson's Mills?

What fears do you have for Wilson's Mills?

pg 3

WISH

CONTROLLED GROWTH
FUTURE GENERATIONS CONSIDERATIONS
MORE YOUTH ACTIVITIES
PLACE FUTURE GENERATIONS
WANT TO LIVE/LEGACY
NEWTOWN HALL
NEW DOWNTOWN/PLACE
SENIOR CITIZENS BUILDING
JUNIOR CITIZENS PLACE
WILSON'S MILLS COMMUNITY PARK -
ADDED REC FACILITIES

Page 4

FEAR

OVERCROWDING
UNCONTROLLED GROWTH
OUT OF CONTROL TAXES
OUTGROW OUR SCHOOLS
TOO MUCH CHANGE

What should be the #1 priority for Wilson's Mills moving forward?

PG 5

PRIORITY # 1

CONTROL OUR BUDGET

PUBLIC SAFETY

KEEP TAX RATE LOW

SMALL TOWN IDENTITY

HIGHWAY DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT

5.1.4 Social Media Platform

Social media applications (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) have become commonplace. Ninety percent of Millennials (adults born between 1982 and 1998) use social media on a regular basis, along with 77% of adults born between 1966 and 1981. Baby Boomers' use of social media has tripled since the year 2010, and 35% of those aged 65 and older report using social media regularly.¹ Social media has revolutionized the way we communicate with each other (just as the telephone once did) and has become a vital means of interaction between individuals, organizations, and communities.

Local governments are using social media for outreach to constituents, for transparency in their operations, and to increase citizen participation. Common uses of social media include crime prevention and police assistance, emergency alerts and severe weather updates, local activities and event registrations, construction updates and road closings, advertising job openings, public service announcements, and announcements of Town Council and advisory board meetings. However, local governments increasingly find social media to be more than just a means of disseminating information, and see it to help staff, citizen advisory groups and elected officials make better decisions, broaden community engagement and improve public discourse, and ultimately to increase trust in government.²

The Town of Wilson's Mills has a social media coordinator who assisted in using the Town's automated town-to-resident notification platform, Blackboard Connect Service, to facilitate community participation. During preparation of the Town Plan 2010, the website address for the online survey was sent to citizens through the Blackboard Connect Service. The survey address, documents, meeting announcements, and other information were also posted by the social media coordinator on the Town's website.

After adoption, the Town can use social media to build support for implementation of the Town Plan 2040. As a tool for citizen engagement, the Town's social media platform can help the *Wilson's Mills Town Plan 2040 Comprehensive Land Use and Master Plan* remain fresh and in the forefront of this dialogue, becoming a 'living' document to help Wilson's Mills achieve its goals.

5.1.4.1 Strategy: Develop a Consolidated Social Media Platform

Below are near-term action steps the Town of Wilson's Mills can take to expand its social media platform and widen its digital footprint. The [International City Management Association](#) has a wealth of resources to assist the Town in this endeavor.

1. ***Continue to update and expand social media.*** The Town has a social media coordinator devoted to the Town's platform, including the official website. The social media coordinator works closely with all Town departments to provide current information to the public. Following are the most immediate priority tasks recommended for the Town's social media coordinator.

¹ Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/>

² Institute for Local Government, <http://www.ca-ilg.org/social-media-strategies>

- a. ***Complete the Town website and fill in missing content.*** Update outdated and missing content throughout the website, especially in key areas.
- b. ***Improve search engine optimization and functionality.*** The Town website could be better optimized for what users are searching for through some keyword optimization and better use of alternative text tags in the images. This would also improve the accessibility of the site. The only terms yielding search results are those found in existing headings and content.
- c. ***Open new social media applications as soon as possible.*** The Town should consider adding a link on the Town's website homepage to the Town's Facebook account, and consider opening Twitter and Instagram accounts as soon as possible. Even if posts are infrequent in the beginning, opening accounts now would ensure that the Town can claim the appropriate and authorized 'handles' (e.g., @townofWilson'sMillsnc, etc.) and create topical and relevant hashtags (e.g. #visitWilson'sMillsnc, etc.)

5.2 Goals-Objectives-Strategies

The objectives and strategies appearing under each goal appear in priority rankings based upon the number of public comments. These may be pursued as deemed appropriate by the Town, its citizens and businesses.

5.2.1 Goal 1: ***ADOPT STRONG ZONING STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR BOARD DECISIONS!***

5.2.1.1 Objective 1: ***Establish a predictable development review process.***

Strategy 1: Adopt Required Review Procedures. Adopt required review procedures and standards and specifications for development in an updated Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

5.2.1.2 Objective 2: ***Ensure quality development within the Town of Wilson's Mills.***

Strategy 1: Establish zoning districts and standards consistent with this Town Plan 2040.

5.2.2 Goal 2: ***PLAN FOR GROWTH!***

5.2.2.1 Objective 1: ***Harness the imminent southward expansion of the Triangle while managing growth within Wilson's Mills.***

Strategy 1: Encourage development first in areas where existing infrastructure and convenient proximity to Town services are already provided. The first wave of the Triangle's expanding business market into Wilson's Mills will be directed, through

application of the future land use plan and zoning map, to areas where utilities and services are already provided.

Strategy 2: ***Apply standards of the new UDO to assure quality growth.*** The new unified development ordinance (UDO) being prepared at the time of adoption of this plan will address the community's priorities to manage growth to assure safety and quality.

5.2.2 Objective 2: Have a good plan and ordinances so projects achieve the mission of the plan.

Strategy 1: ***Adopt Town Plan 2040 to establish Wilson's Mills as a successful community and a partner in the future growth and re-development of the area.*** Establishing a clear vision and the action steps to achieve the goals established by the Town is the first task toward a bright future. (See section 8.5 of this document.)

Strategy 2: ***Prepare and adopt new UDO establishing standards and specifications for new development and re-development consistent with Town Plan 2040.*** The replacement of antiquated ordinances with relevant modern development standards will establish Wilson's Mills as a leader in east-central North Carolina in proactively seeking to refresh itself into a 21st century community. (See section 8.5 of this document.)

5.2.3 Goal 3: RETAIN OUR CHARACTER!

5.2.3.1 Objective 1: Preserve the small town appeal of Wilson's Mills while encouraging compatible business growth through development of revised development standards and specifications.

Strategy 1: ***Create a Main Street District (MS) through zoning standards and specifications with architectural design standards and specifications and development incentives designed to allow existing business to grow and encourage compatible new development.*** Careful consideration will go into the preparation of design standards and specifications that reinforce the small town feel through an understanding of architectural and urban design principles that direct the placement and massing of structures. Attention will be also given to what may be considered the public realm, typically composed of streets, sidewalks, and civic spaces to help guide the Town's decision-making of details when investing in light posts, outside furniture, landscaping and sidewalk surfaces.

Strategy 2: ***Give attention during preparation of the new Main Street District (MS) to address development standards of adjacent properties and streets.*** As the new Main Street increases in development interest and popularity as a destination for commerce, entertainment and civic events, it is important to allow adjacent areas to have the option to transition to new uses that may offer supportive roles through the service sector, such as professional offices, while remaining compatible to adjacent residential uses. This transition also helps add to the number of employees and the private-sector clients who may become frequent patrons of restaurants and businesses along Main Street. Dismissive planning of support areas to Main Streets inadvertently restricts the primary destination streets from maximizing their potential in retaining the community-cherished

small town feel. The UDO can provide flexibility to allow access for parking, deliveries and other utilitarian functions at mid-blocks as illustrated in the Town Center Concept Plan (see Figure 8.4.2.1).

Strategy 3: *Have the Town consider adaptive reuse of historic structures for public uses before designing new structures.* There may be existing historic structures contributing to the small town feel of Wilson’s Mills that are in need of significant reinvestment beyond the current property owner’s abilities to provide. As opportunities arise, the Town will explore whether such historic structures may be repurposed into a government use.

Strategy 4: *Have the Town consider context-sensitive designs when it is time for Town-owned buildings to be constructed so that designs reinforce the small town feel.* The architectural style of publicly owned buildings has historically provided inspiration for privately developed buildings which often mimicked many design elements to create a cohesive sense of place. Large investments by the Town of Wilson’s Mills for a new town hall and other civic buildings can positively or negatively have a domino effect on the designs of private-sector investments in land development. To successfully respond to the community’s desire to retain a small town atmosphere, the Town must dedicate resources to design structures which emulate enduring qualities expressed by the community. An example of this principal was the design for the Town of Edenton, North Carolina’s new Police Headquarters building. Its design was inspired by the Town’s historic cotton mill and although it served a large governmental function, the building blended in well with the surrounding historic neighborhood and instantly created a sense of pride for the Town and area residents.

Strategy 5: *Incorporate a sense of small town ambiance in public infrastructure.* The details within the public realm of a town can be as important as the privately-owned buildings themselves for maintaining a tangible small town look. When the Town of Wilson’s Mills is tasked with selecting sidewalks, outside furniture, utility posts and even landscaping, the Town should have a pre-selected palette of elements from which to order that are in harmony with the small town ambiance.

5.2.4 Goal 4: PLAN A NEW TOWN CENTER AND TOWN HALL!

5.2.4.1 Objective 1: Pursue the relocation of Town Hall, the Police Station , the U.S. Post Office, and other public uses into the new core of the future town center.

Strategy 1: *Obtain property for key public uses within the designated future town center.*

5.2.4.2 Objective 2: Adopt standards and specifications and take actions that attract new businesses within the future town center with higher development and code enforcement standards to assure quality development.

Strategy 1: *Ensure the new UDO encourages investment in the future town center of Wilson’s Mills.* The UDO will integrate architectural design standards and enhanced

enforcement requirements. Also see section 8.5.1 of this document for additional information.

Strategy 2: *Improve way-finding throughout the Town to enhance the visitor experience.* Local directional signage will help guide the visitor to the concentration of shopping, services, accommodations, and food/beverage businesses in Wilson's Mills. (Also see sections 6.8.2.2 of this document for additional information.)

Strategy 3: *Attract motorists from the future Interstate Highway 42 and US Highway US-70 (future I-42) into Wilson's Mills and future town center.* Use "Logo Board" advertising to attract travelers to local businesses. Provide clear concise information on special signage designed specifically to capture attention of non-local travelers.

5.2.4.3 Objective 3: Support existing businesses and encourage additional businesses outside the future town center that complement and not compete with the future town center.

Strategy 1: *Ensure Town standards and specifications encourage growth and expansion of businesses.* The Town will write the new UDO to 1) identify different commercial zoning districts with 2) varying permitted uses and development standards.

Strategy 2: *Create a vehicle-based services and repair district to allow for clustering of such services.* The new unified development ordinance (UDO) being prepared at the time of adoption of this plan will establish a unique district. The proposed "Vehicle Services and Repair District" or VSR, will establish standards and specifications for addressing the concerns experienced with business establishments which are vehicle-based service, motor vehicle repair, and storage of disabled motor vehicles. This district should be used in strategic locations as these existing or new businesses serving these needs seek additional space. This strategy is intended to turn a perceived problem into an opportunity for Wilson's Mills' businesses serving local citizen needs.

5.2.4.4 Objective 4: Foster growth in local-craft businesses.

Strategy 1: *Adopt UDO standards and specifications that respond to challenges associated with expanding and attracting local-craft businesses.* Restaurants, artisan specialty shops, and entrepreneurs producing products high in craftsmanship within proximity to each other will generate interest and establish Wilson's Mills as a destination. Ensure the UDO acknowledges the fiscal challenges a start-up business would have if required to develop property under the same conventional standards and specifications as a national retailer regarding minimum lot area, building setbacks, parking and other site development standards. Adopt standards and specifications that allow conversions of existing structures into new uses, encourage shared parking, and provides flexibility in building setbacks to respond to unique lot dimensions. Adopt administrative review procedures sensitive to challenges faced by local craft businesses to improve their successful start-up in Wilson's Mills.

5.2.4.5 Objective 5: Identify shared parking opportunities for businesses

Strategy 1: *Provide standards and specifications in the new UDO that encourage shared parking in the Main Street District (MS) for businesses that have different hours of parking demands.* The land area and cost to develop parking is a large cost of land development that could be reduced if shared parking is allowed. To help fulfill the concept of rear alleys in the MS zoning district, provide standards that allow businesses to provide rear parking as well as allowing shared parking with other businesses of complementary hours will be recommended.

5.2.5 Goal 5: IMPROVE SAFETY!

5.2.5.1 Objective 1: The Town of Wilson’s Mills will explore ways to receive training in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and apply CPTED concepts to Town-owned properties.

Strategy 1: *The Planning and Zoning and Police Departments will collaborate to seek funding to receive CPTED training.* CPTED is the intentional design of the physical environment in ways that reduce or remove identifiable crime risks. *CPTED concepts are composed of: natural surveillance (increases visibility); natural access control (controls access); and territorial reinforcement (promotes a sense of ownership).*

5.2.5.2 Objective 2: The Planning and Zoning and Police Departments will apply principles of CPTED, after receiving training, to their areas of authority to help reduce crime.

Strategy 1: *Planning and Zoning Department staff will promote the use of CPTED concepts while reviewing site plans of new development.*

Strategy 2: *Staff will promote the use of CPTED concepts by performing reviews of town-owned property and generating a prioritized list of retrofit projects, and complete them as funding allows.*

Strategy 3: *Police Department staff will offer property surveys to homeowners and businesses; and provide recommendations for making changes to bring their property into compliance with CPTED concepts.*

5.2.6 Goal 6: ENSURE TIMELY COMPLETION OF HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS!

5.2.6.1 Objective 1: Separate heavy truck traffic traveling and accessing US-70 (future I-42) from the future town center street system.

Strategy 1: *Identify alternatives to separate the flow of motorists accessing the town and the future town center area from heavy truck traffic along US-70 and into the industrial area.* Establishing a clear alternative route for heavy truck traffic will avoid conflicts with other motorists. This may entail crossing the railroad in an alternative

location; this may be too costly. Consideration for traffic safety and impacts on neighborhoods must be given the highest priority in meeting this objective.

5.2.6.2 Objective 2: Assure traffic safety at existing and future intersections with US-70 (future I-42).

Strategy 1: ***Continue participation with the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) to facilitate regional highway planning, design and schedules beneficial to Wilson's Mills.*** Maintaining a continuous presence in the CAMPO regional transportation planning organization to participate in project and schedule decisions while collaborating with other jurisdictions sharing the US-70 (future I-42) corridor will ensure the Town's voice is heard. As upgrades and enhancements to US-70 as a major thoroughfare and eventually into I-42 are considered, the Town's input into such decisions will make a difference to the safety of its citizens and the traveling public, as well as on local commerce.

5.2.6.3 Objective 3: Provide safe and attractive pedestrian amenities in Wilson's Mills future town center and throughout the Town.

Strategy 1: ***Install bump-out curbing at intersections to calm traffic, reduce length of pedestrian crossings, and provide shade and landscape opportunities.*** To ensure pedestrian safety and enhance convenience for future town center employees and patrons, the Town will plan projects to provide pedestrian safety. Installing pedestrian crossings at intersections and adding streetscape enhancements such as plantings and landscaping will improve the pedestrian environment along a new network of streets in the future town center.

Strategy 2: ***Plan access behind businesses in the future town center to provide safe, convenient and attractive access for employees and visitors.*** Pursue design options to provide rear service alleys with parking, lighting, sidewalks, and landscaping pedestrian/service running parallel to a new Main Street. These functional and visual enhancements will create an intimate pedestrian-oriented corridor experience that interconnects with a traditional street network, while establishing a pedestrian experience unique to the region. *(See the Town Center Concept for illustrative concepts of this proposal.*

Strategy 3: ***Develop a plan for sidewalks, bikeways, and other alternative forms of access throughout the Town.***

5.2.7 Goal 7: REMAIN COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING THE WASTEWATER MASTER PLAN!

5.2.7.1 Objective 1: Provide comprehensive wastewater services through the Town in an environmentally responsible way.

Strategy 1: ***Continue installation of wastewater lines and facility upgrades as programmed in the Town's budget.***

5.2.8 Goal 8: PURSUE STRONG PARKS AND RECREATION!

5.2.8.1 Objective 1: Develop a park plan for the Town of Wilson's Mills.

Strategy 1: *Explore available sites for future Town parks.*

5.2.8.2 Objective 2: Explore hiring a Parks and Recreation staff to initiate a new Parks and Recreation Department.

Strategy 1: *Explore properties the Town could acquire to construct public plazas for community events. Through the development process, new park sites and amenities could be coordinated for operation by the Town. Utilizing new property tax revenues can partially fund these positions as development occurs.*

5.2.8.3 Objective 3: Encourage community events co-hosted by Wilson's Mills businesses and the Town.

Strategy 1: *Provide businesses with Town support staff and resources to attract residents and visitors to Wilson's Mills for events to increase pride in the community and raise exposure to local businesses.*

5.2.8.4 Objective 4: Plan for the development of outdoor civic event spaces.

Strategy 1: *Explore properties the Town could acquire to construct public plazas for community events. The concept plan for the Town Center - Core Area Plan provides concepts of where civic spaces could be developed for community-wide events to enhance local pride, offering engaging social gatherings, share local talent and attract town center visitors.*

5.2.8.5 Objective 5: Program the installation of cohesive placing-making elements throughout the future town center to help achieve synergy among future town center businesses.

Strategy 1: *As the future town center and businesses develop, program the installation of furnishings to create a sense of place in Wilson's Mills' future town center. Seek funding and invest in civic spaces and streetscape furnishings to define a destination with restaurants, specialty shops, and services.*

5.2.9 Goal 9: IDENTIFY FUTURE SCHOOLS SITES IN WILSON'S MILLS!

5.2.9.1 Objective 1: Identify sites for middle and/or high schools in Wilson's Mills while reviewing development proposals and growth trends.

Strategy 1: *Coordinate with the Johnston County Board of Education to explore where schools may be suitable for development within the Town limits that would mutually accommodate students residing in the County and within the Town.*

Strategy 2: *Work with Johnston County Board of Education to analyze whether a new middle and high school developed in Wilson's Mills could reduce or eventually eliminate the cost and burden of busing students.*

5.2.10 Goal 10: FOSTER A FAMILY ORIENTED COMMUNITY!

5.2.10.1 Objective 1: Identify which barriers currently exist in Wilson's Mills that inhibit it from being a more family friendly community.

Strategy 1: *Identify whether the following barriers exist in Wilson's Mills that inadvertently inhibit it from being family oriented: lack of affordable housing; exclusionary and single-use zoning; insensitive urban design; property tax too high; lack of services; lack of quality education; and crime.*

5.2.10.2 Objective 2: Continue to support housing at affordable prices.

Strategy 1: *Continue to offer practices within the Town's ability to foster development of housing at affordable prices.*

5.2.10.3 Objective 3: Ensure the zoning map and UDO advance interests of families in the approval process of siting child care facilities.

Strategy 1: *Review the zoning map to ascertain if zoning districts where child care facilities are allowed are convenient to neighborhoods and employers.*

Strategy 2: *Ensure the UDO's approval process for child care facilities balances convenience to families while ensuring compatibility to surrounding land uses.*

5.2.10.4 Objective 4: Identify opportunities to add parks as the number of neighborhoods grow.

Strategy 1: *Explore properties the Town could acquire to construct public parks.*

Strategy 2: *Identify opportunities for new development to provide parks in their plans.*

5.2.10.5 Objective 5: Pedestrian Pathways.

Strategy 1: *Require developers construct sidewalks in new neighborhoods and commercial developments.*

Strategy 2: *Review and update the 2009 sidewalk master plan so the town may start budgeting toward building a sidewalk system connecting existing and future neighborhoods to schools and town amenities.*

5.2.10.6 Objective 6: Safe Neighborhoods.

Strategy 1: *Identify and continue practices that consistently achieve low crime rates throughout Wilson's Mills neighborhoods.*

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6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town of Wilson's Mills, North Carolina is in east-central Johnston County, between the towns of Clayton and Selma. The county seat is Smithfield which is located 4.4 miles to the south. Wilson's Mills is one of eleven incorporated municipalities in Johnston County.

The Town is located approximately 30 miles southeast of Raleigh and the Research Triangle Park area. Wilson's Mills is located within the Raleigh, NC Metropolitan Statistical Area which the U.S. Census Bureau estimated had a population of 1.3 million in 2017. Wilson's Mills is also included in the larger geographic boundary of the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, NC Combined Statistical Area (CSA), which had a population estimate of 2.2 million in 2017 as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. The region's population has increased significantly in recent decades and is projected to continue. The Triangle region consistently scores in the top ten among American cities' and regions' projected population growth within the next 20 to 30 years. Wilson's Mills is located 3.5 miles southwest of I-40 and 7 miles northwest of I-95 via US-70 (future I-42).

Wilson's Mills was initially established in 1868 to bring electricity to mills surrounding the railroad. The strategic location of Wilson's Mills is strong with transportation and utility infrastructure to support growth as part of the Triangle region.

6.1 Why Focus on Economic Development

Economic development is critical to a community for two reasons: 1) to provide an employment and income base for the community; and 2) to enable a community's leadership to maintain the lowest reasonable rates for its utility rate payers and taxpayers.

Effective economic development starts with the latter. Prudent management procedures for the efficient and effective operations of both utility enterprises and tax revenue systems will ensure that all money due to both the Town and the County is collected. Effective collection allows leadership to establish and maintain the lowest responsible rates for all rate payers and taxpayers.

6.1.1 Utility Rates

Achieving low utility rates for customers of the Johnston County system always begins with proper maintenance and operations of utilities while carefully managing the expansion of such systems. Maintenance of existing systems should emphasize quality control to eliminate leaks, account for water and wastewater usage, and avoid contamination. Placing an emphasis on these important factors will provide one way of improving the return on the investment by both the Town and the County for rate payers.

Another important approach to improving the return on public investment is to carefully manage the growth and expansion of the system. Extensions should be prudently studied and examined to determine the effective advantages to the current rate payers of such expansion and ensure sound decision making. Extensions without annexation may increase utility revenue, but at the same time may expose the rate payer, and taxpayer, to financial obligations while the benefactor of the extension shares little or no risk in the cost of the extension. Exceptions should only be considered when public health is at risk and annexation is not eligible; therefore, obtaining a voluntary petition for annexation to be held until eligibility is attained can protect the Town, its rate payers and taxpayers.

A third important factor in increasing the return on the public's investment in the utility enterprises is to encourage infill development and redevelopment. Improving under-developed and under-utilized areas of existing development within the Town can increase the return on investment in existing infrastructure and contribute greatly to reducing utility and property tax rates.

6.1.2 Property Tax Strategy and Other Taxes Collected

The maintenance of low property (ad valorem) tax rates always begins with the prudent and effective management of reporting and collecting the other revenue sources towns receive in order to reduce reliance on property taxes. Emphasis on effective data reporting enables the retrieval of several types of taxes already paid by our citizens and businesses every day that can easily be overlooked in the absence of effective reporting practices.

The Utility Franchise Tax is a tax on utility billings collected by electric, gas, telecommunications and cable television companies that is distributed back to the Town by the respective utility. If the utility companies do not have current information reflecting the Town's boundaries, then inaccurate reporting to the State by the utility company results in reduced distributions to the Town by the State.

Another tax already paid by the taxpayer daily is the State tax on motor vehicle fuels, commonly known as the Powell Bill. The state distributes this tax to towns based upon a combination of population and street mileage maintained by the town. As towns' street networks grow by accepting new subdivision streets for maintenance, the Powell Bill data reporting must keep pace. Immediately upon completion of new streets, the Town should update its Powell Bill information during the next reporting cycle, so the Town begins bringing that revenue, already paid by the taxpayer, back to Wilson's Mills to increase the funding available for maintenance. A new street may retrieve significant revenues over time before any repair cost are experienced.

State sales tax distributions to the Town are controlled by the County. The sales taxes collected and redistributed within a county may return to the Town by either population or property valuation-based formulas - determined in North Carolina by the local County Commissioners. This system is a counter-productive system in that counties often compete with towns for growth so they may keep a larger share of sales tax distributions to be shared locally. The only effective role a town may have in successfully growing its recovery of the sales tax collected by local businesses is through the careful management of the utility enterprises. Provision of stormwater, potable water, and sanitary sewer has a profound effect on the location of businesses; and towns that manage their systems with an emphasis on return on investment can improve their share of local sales tax recovered by supporting growth within the boundaries of the town.

Property taxes are the major source of local discretionary funding for routine services such as recreation, sanitation, public safety and administration. Maximizing the recovery of the taxes already collected by the state can reduce the level of taxation required of property owners.

6.1.3 Jobs and Economic Base

The economic base of a community is the collective group of business activities that bring money into the Town by providing a product or service. The category of “Natural resources, construction, and maintenance” occupations has been the top sector in recent years bringing money into Wilson’s Mills, followed by “sales and office occupations.” The non-basic sectors including commercial development (driven by residential development) are typically that part of the local economy providing services and products sought by the basic sector workers and others, such as the dry cleaners, pharmacy, grocery store and repair service businesses. When “travel and tourism” is part of the economic base, many businesses serve both purposes; restaurants are a good example because they serve both local and non-local customers routinely. “Hotels and other hospitality” businesses can serve both the tourism and corporate sector of our future economic base.

The economic base establishes a true purpose for the community. The jobs created by the basic sector businesses are the obvious direct benefit of the economic base. Jobs are critical because much of the impact of the economic base depends on how well money is distributed throughout the community, and jobs are the primary method of distribution. Automation often tends to allow economic activity to skim over the surface of a community and not have as deep an impact. One way to maximize a positive economic impact of the local economic base sector business community is to establish local relationships with companies and enterprises to provide as much local support and local resources as possible to increase distributions of wealth locally.

Increases in the value of local properties by infill development and redevelopment of under-utilized areas help lower property taxes for all taxpayers, further improving the local return on the investments made in existing infrastructure (*see Section 6.1.2 of this document*).

6.2 Current Economic Profile - Conventional Sectors

6.2.1 Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance

The largest number of the Town’s citizens in the workforce are employed in the “Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance” occupations, making up 26% of the workforce. This category is composed: of farming, fishing, and forestry; construction and extraction; and installation, maintenance, and repair occupations. The second most numerous categories are “Sales and Office” occupations, making up 22% of the workforce. This category is composed of sales, office and administrative support. (*See Table 3.5.1 in section 3 of this document*)

These occupation groups are all commercial in nature and show that the commercial sector is not only the key to Wilson’s Mills’ success, but these sectors will flourish when given the proper business climate and innovative options to attract attention. The updating of local zoning standards and specifications, as discussed in section 8, will improve the business community’s options for innovative development.

A healthy commercial services sector is critical to supporting strong industry; therefore, practical standards and specifications such as zoning rules and non-residential property maintenance codes must be administered to support the sector. Standards and

specifications must be updated to protect property rights while preserving natural resources and establishing reasonable standards for enhancing the appearance of all new development and redevelopment. Equally important to updating the Wilson's Mills development ordinances is professional administration to ensure equal and fair treatment to all Wilson's Mills' businesses and citizens. Proper implementation will enhance these industries and occupations, allowing them to become more prosperous.

6.2.2 Manufacturing

Manufacturing has been important to Wilson's Mills' historic growth. While most of the local manufacturing remains just outside the municipal limits, these businesses represent a vital sector in Wilson's Mills' area economy providing jobs to many residents. *(See Table 3.5.1 in section 3 of this document for data within the corporate limits)*

6.3 Importance of the Infrastructure Networks

Infrastructure, including water, sewer, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, high-speed internet, roads, railroads, and airports make up the core infrastructure for a community. These networks often seem unrelated; however, lack of coordination between these unique systems can result in poor decisions regarding land use development.

Municipal utilities such as water, stormwater, sewer, streets, sidewalks and greenways generally represent most hard structure utilities. These utilities generally are based upon the network of streets and roads.

Non-municipal services such as electric, telecommunications, natural gas and broad-band fiber generally utilize flexible conduits for their conveyances. These service providers are typically located within or adjacent to public street and road right-of-way and therefore utilize much of the same network for distribution.

Coordination among these various service providers, as well as other governmental counterparts such as the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Johnston County and other providers, is also vital to efficient operations of Wilson's Mills' utilities and public works functions. Conducting periodic meetings to review planned improvements and proposed developments by private development interests can often improve the level of service to all of Wilson's Mills' businesses and citizens by identifying opportunities for cost savings through coordination. Inclusion of representatives of these various agencies on a local technical review committee coordinated by the Town's professional planning department will reduce costs to Wilson's Mills rate and taxpayers.

Examples of cooperative initiatives may include provision of services for manufacturing facilities, where dual feed electrical supply, water, sewer, and a host of other functions can be coordinated ahead of time to ensure appropriate capacity is provided and corridor limitations are foreseen. Projects to consider should be evaluated based on merit to the Town's utility rate and taxpayers.

6.4 Existing Business Retention and Expansion

Wilson's Mills is ideally located to grow its commercial services sector. Diverse businesses including resilient job creators, specialty markets, professional services, health professionals, and

food and beverage establishments supplemented by small industry, craftsmanship, and artistic endeavors (both for-profit and non-profit) will be required if Wilson's Mills is to refresh its local purpose in the region. Without this emphasis we risk becoming dependent on franchise and chain business enterprises with limited long-term commitment to the community.

6.5 Tourism, Travel and Hospitality

Projects that enhance the tourism experience in Wilson's Mills should be considered and programmed into capital budgets over time to stimulate a continuation of new investment (both public and private) for the ever-changing tourism based industry.

6.5.1 Heritage Tourism

Heritage Tourism is defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as "traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic, and natural resources." It is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism and hospitality industry overall, and a major focus of the [State of North Carolina's tourism promotion](#) efforts.

Opportunities for the growth of Heritage Tourism include businesses that provide support services for artists and craftspeople. Such businesses include tool and musical instrument repair, wholesale, retail, and distribution of specialty materials used in the creative arts (weaving, basket-making, blacksmithing, pottery, woodworking, etc.), and services provided to residents and tourists such as demonstrations, guided tours, private lessons, and programming for public institutions and private and non-profit entities.

6.5.2 Recreation and Parks/Eco-Tourism

Wilson's Mills is conveniently located near the following recreational amenities.

The Buffalo Creek Greenway is a three-mile trail that travels along the Spring Branch to the Neuse River Walk at Smithfield Commons, as part of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail with ten-foot wide path for hikers, runners, and bikers. The Greenway Trail is located five miles south of Wilson's Mills.

The Clayton River Walk is a four-mile trail which is part of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail and connects to Clayton's Sam's Branch Greenway Trail. The trail is eight miles from Wilson's Mills.

The Clemmons Educational State Forest includes trails and exhibits that pass through a mix of pine and hardwood vegetation. This managed forest offers a pleasant rolling terrain highlighted by streams and rock outcroppings where visitors may hike and picnic. The forest is located nine miles northwest of Wilson's Mills.

The Legend Park Mountain Bike Trail provides beginner to advanced rides along an 8-mile multi-directional bike trail including rock gardens, boulders, jumps, and bridges. The Trail is located within nine miles northwest of Wilson's Mills.

The Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center is a 2,800 acre outdoor classroom with 25 miles of unpaved roads and trails for horseback riding, mountain biking, bird watching,

long-distance hiking, no-trace camping and fishing. The Center is located 20 miles south of Wilson's Mills.

Sam's Branch Greenway Trail is at the trailhead entrance to the Clayton Greenway is located along the Neuse River and is available for hiking and biking. The Trail is located seven miles north of Wilson's Mills.

The Smithfield Town Commons is located along the Neuse River Walk in Smithfield's historic Town Commons. Nature watching, fishing, picnicking and boat launching are available. Town Commons is located 5 miles south of Wilson's Mills.

Larger recreational amenities within the Triangle region are located within a half hour to one hour drive from Wilson's Mills. The [Neuse River Greenway Trail](#), [Falls Lake State Park](#), [William B. Umstead State Park](#), and other nearby natural areas offer about one hundred miles of trails, from easy to moderately challenging. The [Mountains-to-Sea Trail](#) segment 11B, which starts at Falls Lake Dam and ends at [Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center](#) provides 68.5 miles of easy trails. Additional recreational amenities within the Triangle region include [Hill Ridge Farms](#), [JC Raulston Arboretum](#), [Lake Crabtree County Park](#), [North Carolina Museum of Art Park](#), E. Carroll Joyner Park, Flaherty Park Community Center, Blue Jay Point County Park and Fantasy Lake Scuba Park.

6.5.2.1 Automobile Touring (Motoring/Automobiling)

Opportunities include support for growth and expansion of existing business serving the motoring tourist with overnight and seasonal housing accommodations, base camp facilities, extended vehicle parking, outfitters, outpatient medical services, automotive services/repairs, and food/beverage services located within proximity to one another.

6.5.2.2 Bicycling and Hiking

Wilson's Mills is conveniently located near the following bicycling and hiking recreational amenities in Johnston County as detailed in section 6.5.2.

- The Buffalo Creek Greenway in Smithfield
- The Clayton River Walk in Clayton
- The Clemmons Educational State Forest in Clayton
- The Legend Park Mountain Bike Trail in Clayton
- The Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center in Four Oak
- Sam's Branch Greenway Trail in Clayton
- The Neuse River Walk in Smithfield

Additional bicycling and hiking amenities within the Triangle region include the Neuse River Greenway Trail, Falls Lake State Park, William B. Umstead State Park, and other nearby natural areas offer about one hundred miles of trails. The Mountains-to-Sea Trail

segment 11B, which starts at Falls Lake Dam and ends at Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center provides 68.5 miles of easy trails.

6.5.2.3 Camping

The Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center, located in southeastern Johnston County, is a 2,800 acre outdoor classroom has no-trace camping. The center is approximately 20 miles south of Wilson's Mills at 6601 Devil's Racetrack Road in Four Oak.

Larger campgrounds vary from primitive to fully supported with convenience and sanitary hook-ups. Current public locations include [Falls Lake State Recreation Area](#), located within one hour from Wilson's Mills and [William B. Umstead](#) State Park, located approximately 30 minutes from Wilson's Mills.

6.5.2.4 Equestrian Trails (Horseback Riding)

The Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center has trails for horseback riding.

The William B. Umstead State Park has 13 miles of trails and the [American Tobacco Trail](#) has around 11 miles of trails.

6.5.2.5 Angling (Fishing)

The Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center, located in southeastern Johnston County, offers five ponds plus access to the Neuse River and Hannah and Mill creeks for recreational fishing. Two of the ponds are stocked with fish. Fishing platforms are available as well as electric powered motor boats and bank fishing.

Falls Lake State Recreation area offers 12,000 acres of water to fish by boat, Beaverdam access, or pier. Almost an hour drive away is Jordan Lake State Recreation area. Jordan Lake offers 14,000 acres and nine access points to fish by boat, by pier, and shoreline access. Bass and crappie are what is mostly found by anglers at Jordan Lake. Between these two locations 26,000 acres of water are available for fishing.

6.5.2.6 Agritourism

Following is a list of agritourism opportunities near the Town of Wilson's Mills.

The Atkinson's Old Grist Mill, built in 1757, is the only water powered grist mill operating in a four county area. The cornmeal is stone ground and is noted for its quality. The Mill is located at 95 Atkinson Mill Road in Selma.

The Banks Miniature Horse Farm is home to miniature horses. The farm is located at 145 Peele Road in Clayton.

Creekside Farm grows blueberries and blackberries providing pick-your-own service. The farm is located at 300 Pine Tree Road in Selma.

Smith's Nursery and Strawberry Farm grows produce and fruits, offers hayrides, includes a maze and special events. The nursery and farm are located at 443 Sanders Road in Benson.

The Tobacco Farm Life Museum is a 6,000 square foot exhibit gallery with displays of farm life artifacts, including a hands-on children's exhibit. A restored farmstead depicts rural life circa the Great Depression. The Museum is located at 709 N. Church Street in Kenly.

6.6 Manufacturing

Leadership boards of local government, both municipal and county, traditionally feel an obligation to emphasize traditional manufacturing; however, traditional manufacturing may only be a small part of the future economy of Wilson's Mills and most other small towns.

Technological innovation and globalism are fueling transformational change in both our cultural and business environments. An increasingly mobile workforce is utilizing digital, web-based technology – the ubiquitous 'mobile app' – that enables a business owner or employee to work from anywhere. Many jobs are no longer tied to a specific location. Anyone with a Smartphone and an idea can become an entrepreneur.

Opportunities for Wilson's Mills in this new economic realm are directly related to the 'quality of place' issues that are explored throughout this Town Plan, particularly tourism, crafts, and other natural resource-based sectors described elsewhere in this Plan. When employers, innovators and entrepreneurs can choose to live and work anywhere, it is quality of place – in addition to the basics of infrastructure and support services – that is often the deciding factor.

Wilson's Mills has the attributes to successfully compete in this age of global commerce. The Town can glean from other proven economic development strategies and build its foundation by retaining young talent and attracting innovators from the greater region and around the country.

Traditional manufacturing blends traditional manufacturing with forward thinking values of naturally sourced and locally produced materials to produce tangible goods for a value added industry.

While these traditional opportunities do exist, Wilson's Mills must recognize there are also pitfalls to placing all hope on 'traditional industry' – a sector that may inevitably employ humans to manage facilities that are designed for a specific level and duration of productivity. The reality is that smaller facilities are often the disposable ones. Larger facilities require a larger investment and typically are considered long-term commitments.

In this context, Wilson's Mills must recognize its place in the region and the country. The reality for Wilson's Mills will require support for a "rural community plan". Recognizing these realities and our need to look at new kinds of economies, such as the GIG Economy, the app-based economy and the shared economy, Wilson's Mills can and will meet the future.

6.6.1 Economic Transformation

As stated above, technological innovation and globalism are fueling transformational change in the cultural and business environment. An increasingly mobile workforce is utilizing digital, web-based technology – the ubiquitous 'mobile app' – that enables a business owner or employee to work from anywhere. Jobs are no longer tied to a specific location. Anyone with a Smartphone and an idea can become an entrepreneur.

Opportunities for Wilson’s Mills in this new economic realm are directly related to the ‘quality of place’ issues that are explored throughout this Plan, while recognizing tourism, crafts, and other natural resource-based sectors. When employers, innovators and entrepreneurs can choose to live and work anywhere, it is quality of place – in addition to the basics of infrastructure and support services – that is often the deciding factor.

Wilson’s Mills has the attributes to successfully compete in this age of global commerce. The Town can glean from other proven economic development strategies and build its foundation by retaining young talent and attracting innovators from the greater region and around the country.

6.6.1.1 APP Based Economy

The ‘app-based’ economy isn’t just creating a new digital platform for freelance work. It is spawning a host of new economic activity. For example, more than a million ‘makers’ sell jewelry, clothing, craft supplies and tools, and all manner of home goods and accessories through the online marketplace

6.6.1.2 SHARING (or SHARED) Economy

The well-known lodging website [Airbnb](#) and similar accommodation platforms such as [Love Home Swap](#) and [onefinestay](#) have close to a million ‘hosts’ in nearly 200 countries. [Uber](#) and [Lyft](#), two other mainstays in the emergent realm of ‘crowd-based capitalism’, are transforming how we think about transportation. Uber, which started with four people around a desk and two cars on the streets of San Francisco, is a global phenomenon, serving over six continents with well over 1,000,000 drivers.

6.6.1.3 GIG Economy

The GIG economy is part of a shifting cultural and business environment fueled by technological innovation and globalism. An increasingly mobile workforce is utilizing digital, web-based technology that enables employees to work from anywhere, so that jobs are no longer tied to a specific location. Companies such as Uber, Lyft, and AirBnB are examples of this emergent realm.

The workforce of this new ‘gig’ economy largely consists of freelance ‘independent contractors’ who can select among temporary jobs, referred to as ‘[gigs](#)’ (hence the term), and short-term projects from anywhere in the world. Likewise, employers can select the best individuals for specific projects from a ‘global’ labor pool and are no longer confined to any given area.

Opportunities for Wilson’s Mills in the GIG Economy are directly related to the speed and quality of digital connectivity and the ‘quality of place’ issues that are explored throughout this Plan.

6.7 Economic Development Opportunities

Several opportunities exist for Wilson’s Mills to re-establish a strong economic base. The following topics focus on first steps for advancing in the ‘21st Century’.

6.7.1 Innovation Districts

Innovation Districts are an outgrowth of the culture and technology driving today's economic transformation. Instead of focusing economic development efforts on isolated campuses or business parks, Innovation Districts focus on clustering start-ups and incubators in compact, amenity-rich areas (i.e., walkable downtowns, mixed use districts, etc.) where a mix of entrepreneurs work in collaborative spaces and share knowledge and resources (a staple of the 'Shared Economy'). Existing incentive programs would be paired with a partnership of 'innovation cultivators' – the companies, organizations, and other groups that support the growth of individuals, firms, and their ideas. They include incubators, small business and technology development centers, community colleges, local high schools, job training firms and others advancing specific skill sets for the innovation-driven economy. The initial focus should be a future downtown 'cluster' of businesses utilizing available properties, beginning with development of a single 'innovation space', or business incubator.

6.7.2 Home-based Businesses

Technological innovations make it imperative to re-examine and update zoning provisions that limit or prohibit work at home. The Town should analyze the content and impact of existing standards and specifications with an attitude toward implementation and enforcement that encourages entrepreneurship, creativity, and individual expression while protecting neighborhood residential character.

6.7.3 Small Business Incubator

The Town should explore the necessary public-private partnerships and funding sources to plan and develop business incubators in both available manufacturing space and future town center. The incubator's mission would be to recruit, develop, and stimulate entrepreneurial talent in the region in order to foster economic growth, strengthen and diversify the local economy, and create new jobs. For example, a partnership-funded non-profit organization would lease (or own) a building that provides support services such as high-speed broadband internet, utilities, reception, and security, along with amenities like audio-visual equipment, conference rooms, and distance-learning capability. A collaborative effort with the community college could offer support systems such as business plan and marketing strategy development, technical assistance, funding proposal preparation, and more.

6.7.4 Collaboration and Regional Partners

Economic development has been a major element of regional initiatives in recent years. All contain a host of economic development strategies to achieve the goals of job creation, talent retention, and entrepreneurship. The Town should take a leadership role in implementing those strategies that will help the community benefit from its world-class natural and cultural resources by tapping the technological potential of the 21st century economy, opening Wilson's Mills and the region to the global marketplace.

The IRS tax code encourages long-term, private capital to invest in eligible low-income rural and urban communities, called Opportunity Zones, across the United States. The primary corporate limits of the Town of Wilson's Mills and the ETJ are located entirely within a designated [Opportunity Zone](#).

6.8 Economic Development *ACTION ITEMS!*

The economic development opportunities Wilson's Mills enjoys clearly fit into three categories. These are described as "Immediate", "Programmable" and "Opportunity".

6.8.1 Immediate Action Items:

The following immediate action items should be prioritized to accomplish in earnest. These items are intended to begin producing immediate results and improve the personality of Wilson's Mills as a community addressing its goals.

6.8.1.1 Eliminate obstacles to the goals set by the Town in this plan.

Clearly identify opportunities and obstacles within local zoning policies to encourage a destination area located within the new town center catalyst area. Ensure walkable options for visitors requiring flexible alternatives. Establish clear signage standards to alleviate clutter and establish fairness among businesses. Establish opportunistic standards for business types in manufacturing, commercial service, and home-based business sectors to stimulate opportunity while establishing specifications for development to protect these investments, neighborhoods and the environment as mutual benefactors. Standards and specifications must be evaluated to support additional action items below.

6.8.1.2 Promote Wilson's Mills as a "base camp" for travelers.

Promotion of Wilson's Mills as a host community and base camp for individuals and groups seeking access to a variety of food/beverage choices will clearly set Wilson's Mills apart from other communities catering to these visitors.

6.8.1.3 Promote Wilson's Mills as a location for modern manufacturing mated with a rural adventure lifestyle.

Promote Wilson's Mills as a community for entrepreneurs of forward-thinking business enterprises seeking both a rural community and adventure lifestyle setting near urban amenities.

6.8.2 Programmable Action items:

The following programmable action items should be assigned to specific teams or departments to develop the ways and means to accomplish the tasks.

6.8.2.1 Install local way-finding signage.

Local directional signage will help guide the visitor to the concentration of automotive services, motorcycle services, accommodations, and food/beverage businesses in Wilson's Mills.

6.8.2.2 Establish partnerships

Resources for collaboration and support of economic development initiatives are not always consolidated into one neat package. The resources in North Carolina flow into communities and regions through multiple agencies. Organizing strategic interagency partnerships and participating in effective ways often becomes cumbersome; therefore, identifying the best partnerships and managing effective relationships among those partnerships should be a defined responsibility of either the Town Administrator or Town Planning and Zoning Administrator.

The Town should explore the necessary public-private partnerships and funding sources to plan and develop business incubators in both the future town center catalyst area and available manufacturing space. *(Also see sections 6.7.3 and 6.7.4 of this document for additional information.)*

6.8.3 Opportunity Based Action items:

The following opportunity-based action items will require continuous planning and forethought to recognize opportunities to act.

6.8.3.1 Support growth and expansion of eco-tourism businesses.

Support for growth and expansion of both existing and new businesses serving the motoring tourist with overnight and seasonal housing accommodations, RV camping, base camp facilities, extended vehicle parking, outfitters, outpatient medical services, automotive services/repairs, and food/beverage services located within close proximity to one another.

6.8.3.2 Establish criteria for financial participation in opportunities to expand the job and property tax base through strategic expansion of infrastructure.

Establish clear criteria for expansion of infrastructure (broadband, stormwater, potable water and sewer systems) based upon measurable benefits and a “return on investment” business model. Criteria should also include contingency factors for public health and welfare needs when potable water and sanitary sewer needs are critical.

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7. INFRASTRUCTURE

7.1 Water and Sewer Utility Systems

The Town of Wilson's Mills obtains its water and sewer services from the Johnston County Public Utilities Department. The information contained in this section is sourced from the **Johnston County 2030 Comprehensive Plan**, adopted March 2, 2009, **The Town of Wilson's Mills Capital Improvements Plan**, dated December 2009, and various Johnston County Public Utilities Department documents cited.

7.1.1 Water Supply

Growth rates in Johnston County present a challenge to providing utility services in the county and the Public Utilities Department has taken steps to ensure consistent service provisions. In 1997, the county adopted a water conservation ordinance to address periodic water shortages by authorizing several mandatory and voluntary water conservation measures.

7.1.1.1 Water Supply Action Steps

The County is taking several steps to plan for future water supply needs. In April 2019, Wilson's Mills Water District/Johnston County Public Utilities issued a request for bids for construction of approximately 13,000 linear feet of a 24-inch water transmission main from the Johnston County Water Treatment Plant to the existing Wilson's Mills elevated water storage tank located on Wilson's Mills Road, including jack and bores below Fire Department Road, Main Street, Uzzle's Pond Road, and the North Carolina Railroad.

In May 2019, Johnston County Public Utilities Department issued a Request for Qualifications from qualified consultants to conduct a comprehensive Long Term Water Supply Plan. The Plan will evaluate the County's 30-year water supply needs and determine the best path to meeting those needs.

In May 2019, Johnston County Public Utilities Department issued a Request for Qualifications from qualified consultants to conduct a comprehensive America's Water Infrastructure Act Risk and Resiliency Assessment and Emergency Response Plan. The intent of the study is to meet the requirements of the 2019 America's Water Infrastructure Act by completing the Risk and Resiliency Assessment and the subsequent Emergency Response Plan. The evaluation will be based on a comprehensive review of the County's water source intake on the Neuse River, the treatment plan in Wilson's Mills and the countywide conveyance system.

7.1.2 Sewer Service

The Central Johnston County Regional Wastewater Facilities collects and treats wastewater from Wilson's Mills and other municipalities. The treatment plant is located on North 2nd Street in Smithfield. The Johnston County Public Utilities Department observes special state-mandated rules for discharging into the Neuse River, a nutrient-impaired water body. Since the late 1990s, Johnston County has taken water quality improvement measures to reduce levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in the Neuse River, even as the population it serves has grown. Failing septic systems caused mostly by poor soil permeability has been a major issue in Wilson's Mills.

7.1.2.1 Waste-water Treatment Action Steps

In May 2019, Johnston County Public Utilities Department issued a Request for Qualifications from consulting firms to provide engineering services related to the Timothy G. Broome Water Treatment Plant Efficiency Project. Johnston County is interested in entering engineering services for contract for design, contract administration, construction administration, and construction upgrades at the County's Water Treatment Plant adjacent to the Wilson's Mills town limits.

7.2 Transportation Network

Recognizing trends and how peoples' preferences can and do change over time will enable Wilson's Mills to position itself as a welcoming community for multiple generations into the future. This approach to planning reinforces the community's desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate and remain, while aging members will choose to age in place. This can be achieved by creating and sustaining a transportation system that is successful in meeting both the existing and anticipated needs of a diverse community that multiple generations will find attractive by including transportation options and choices that are safe, attractive and convenient.

One of the most common components of the transportation network and most visible characteristics of a neighborhood is the *street*, often taken for granted even though it can change everything about a neighborhood. The street strongly influences how people behave in their community. The following questions are presented to stimulate thoughts about neighborhood streets as an example of how important this simple concept is.

- Does the street have room to pass another car?
- Does the street have room for a visitor or emergency vehicle to park in front of a home or business?
- Does the street feature ditches or curbing for drainage?
- Does the street include sidewalks along its route?

The answers to these questions clearly define the character of the neighborhood, *for example*: neighborhood streets lined with ditches for storm-water conveyance will cause people to walk in the street just to visit a neighbor, or they may even give cause for residents to choose to drive a block away to visit that neighbor. By contrast, neighborhood streets containing curbing with sidewalks set back from the curb encourage people to spend time outside to walk or play together. Streets designed properly provide a place to learn to skate or ride a bike. The street with sidewalks becomes the neighborhood's central gathering place, where multiple generations of citizens associate in many ways. The properly designed street will change the characteristics of human behavior and contribute to improved and healthy lifestyles. How many times have you heard concerns about kids not getting enough exercise? Well, maybe our streets have not helped much with that problem. We can do better. We can improve the quality of neighborhoods in many ways.

Beyond the neighborhood street is a network of collector streets, often called arterials. These collector streets or arterials connect the neighborhood streets to the thoroughfares and highways that bring us all together. Streets also provide our principal connections to other modes such as airports and railroads. The following information about our transportation network and the

actions we can take locally to improve how this network serves Wilson's Mills' citizens and businesses will provide the foundation for many decisions facing the Town.

7.2.1 Roads and Highways

The transportation network serving the Town of Wilson's Mills consists mainly of US-70 (future I-42) which transects Wilson's Mills from the Northwest to Southeast. US-70 (future I-42) serves as a major north-south commuter route to the Triangle area. US-70 (future I-42), one of the primary east-west corridors across eastern North Carolina, is a major connection between Raleigh, Smithfield, Goldsboro, Kinston, Havelock and the Port of Morehead City. US-70 (future I-42) is heavily used for moving freight, and is just a few miles south of the North Carolina Global TransPark. As reported by NCDOT, traffic volumes vary along the corridor but are highest around Clayton and Goldsboro. The US-70 (future I-42) Corridor plays an important role as part of the National Highway System and the Strategic Highway Network. It's also a North Carolina Strategic Transportation Corridor and is an important link to and from rural areas. NCDOT is working to improve passenger and freight movement along the Corridor from Raleigh to the state Port of Morehead City. Several improvement projects along the corridor are either being studied, in development or under construction. As described on NCDOT's Project Summaries, TIP #W-5600, is an NCDOT project with widenings and improvements along US-70 (future I-42) from Swift Creek Road (S.R. 1501) and Wilson's Mills Road (S.R. 1919). The project includes new interchanges with Swift Creek Road and Wilson's Mills Road.

7.2.1.1 Road and Highway Specific Action Items

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) developed and adopted the *2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)* to serve as a blueprint for transportation-related projects needed during the next 30 years.

Among a list of past studies listed in the MTP is the Southeast Area Study. The Study evaluated the dependence of local commuters on regional routes such as I-40, NC 95, US-70 (future I-42), NC 42, NC 540, and NC 50, coupled with increasing development pressures in southeast Wake and northwest Johnston Counties. Recommended initiatives addressed strategic improvements to regionally significant corridors, provision of increased transit/fixed guideway services, and more sustainable development patterns.

Among a list of future small area plans listed in the MTP is the Southeast Area Study. CAMPO anticipates beginning the update of the Southeast Area Study during FY 2021 to inform future MTP updates. This study will cover the municipalities of Knightdale, Wendell, Zebulon, Archer Lodge, Clayton, and Garner. Surrounding areas in Johnston and Wake Counties will also be included. The study will examine growth forecasts in the area, and develop a long-range and interim list of multi-modal transportation improvement priorities for the subarea described.

Among a list of recommended plans and studies listed in the MTP is the NC 42 / US-70 Business Corridors. The NC 42 corridor in Johnston County is collocated with US-70 business and Lombard Street corridors through the Town of Clayton. Analysis conducted during the 2016 Southeast Area Study identified the network benefits to re-locating a portion of NC 42 around the existing congested corridor using the Ranch Road and US-

70/Clayton Bypass corridors. The existing corridor would be designated as NC 42 business.

7.2.2 Railways

North Carolina Railroad Company (NCRR) owns the rail line that runs through Wilson's Mills' town limits. As reported in the 2017 Southwest Area Study (SEAS), prepared for the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), the NCRR Company owns and manages this 317-mile corridor extending from the Port of Morehead City to Charlotte. Norfolk Southern operates along the corridor through an operating and maintenance agreement. The freight rail network in North Carolina provides services to ports, power plants, mines, military installations, and industries including, but not limited to, agriculture, forestry, plastics, furniture, food products, and chemicals. Freight railroads support jobs for about 2,600 railroad employees in the state.

7.2.2.1 Railway Specific Action Items

While the *State Rail Plan* is not a financial or capital plan, it does provide a blueprint for potential future rail investments and priorities through 2040.

7.2.3 Aviation

The Johnston Regional Airport (JNX) is located less than a mile and a half from the Town of Wilson's Mills in Smithfield. JNX is owned and operated by the Johnston County Airport Authority and serves corporate, military, and general aviation aircraft. The JNX Airport is located 34 miles southeast of the Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU). JNX serves the greater Raleigh metropolitan area providing access to numerous Piedmont and eastern North Carolina destinations with access to I-40 and I-95.

The Airport is home to the Johnston County Economic Development Department, aviation-related businesses, Duke Life Flight, several corporate aircraft, and recreational aviators. The airport has a 5,500' x 100' runway with a newly constructed terminal building providing state-of-the-art amenities for patrons in a modern aeronautic environment.

7.2.3.1 Aviation Specific Action Items

The Town of Wilson's Mills will continue to cooperate with the County regarding planning assistance associated with the Johnston Regional Airport.

7.2.4 Bicycle and Pedestrian

7.2.4.1 Bicycle Facilities

The Town of Wilson's Mills currently does not include designated bicycle facilities nor bike lanes within the Town limits. Wilson's Mills is located approximately 30 miles south of greenway trails in the City of Raleigh. The Mountains-to-Sea Trail route, begins in Murphy, NC and finishes in Manteo, NC. It serves as the main artery of the North Carolina bicycle route system, bisecting the state west to east. It travels through Asheville, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Durham, and Raleigh. The route currently passes through the Town of Wilson's Mills along Powhatan Road and is planned to eventually be routed through the Wilson's Mills area along the Neuse River.

7.2.4.2 Pedestrian Facilities

The Town of Wilson's Mills currently does not include any sidewalks within the Town limits. As such, most all intersections throughout the Town limits do not include marked crosswalks or pedestrian cross signals.

7.2.4.3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Specific Action Items

Establish specifications for adequate street construction by developers for both bicycle and pedestrian safety. (See sections 7.2.4.1, 7.2.4.2 and 8.5.1 of this document.)

Designating a greenway route to serve the Wilson's Mills community will improve Wilson's Mills image nationally as we strive toward national recognition as an age-friendly and inclusive community for all ages seeking barrier free environments.

7.2.5 Transit Service

Between years 2015 and 2017, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) developed the Southwest Area Study (SEAS) to define the area's strategy to accommodate existing and future travel needs. The Southeast Area Study includes portions of both Wake and Johnston Counties and 11 municipalities including Wilson's Mills. High growth rates, coupled with the desire to preserve the character of the southeast area, resulted in a need to identify a unified vision and comprehensive transportation strategy. Recommendations during this study include a bus route between downtown Raleigh and Wilson's Mills with 60-minute headways and a circulator route between Garner and Clayton with 30-minute headways. The bus route between downtown Raleigh and Wilson's Mills would complement previous recommendations as an extension of proposed intra-city transit routes connecting to downtown Raleigh.

The transit recommendations outlined as part of the SEAS are supported by an expanded system of park and ride locations. These sites are proximate to the southeast area's projected higher density locations and provide easy access to the regional roadway network. The recommended locations of these park-and-ride lots include one in Wilson's Mills at the intersection of Main Street (SR 1910) and Wilson's Mills Road (SR 1913).

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8. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

8.1 Analysis of Existing Land Use and Development Patterns – *Where to Begin!*

Wilson's Mills is not unlike many other small towns in the Carolinas in that it experienced much of its transformation during the post-World War II era when the industrial expansion led to better paying jobs and when increased automobile ownership enhanced individual mobility, while the inter-city and intra-city highway network was greatly expanded. The dramatic impact of this combination on American cities and towns was not foreseen and the problems associated with rapidly changing communities that followed led to long periods of decline in their once-vibrant core downtown areas.

US-70 (future I-42) industrial/commercial area is larger than any other commercial/industrial area of the Town and as such, includes the most number of employees. The majority of the remainder of the property includes low-density neighborhoods, an elementary school, a restaurant, civic/public service buildings, gas stations and a few businesses developed somewhat in isolation from other buildings. Wilson's Mills currently does not have what would be considered a downtown district. The area citizens may refer to as the community's downtown is generally located between Main Street and Wilson's Mills Road from north to south, but the area lacks the number and concentration of buildings typically necessary to create an identifiable downtown core of commerce, civic and social activity. This area is bisected by the North Carolina Railroad Company (NCRR) railroad tracks.

8.2 The Plan - *What do we want our community to be? How do we get there?*

8.2.1 Housing Growth

Recognizing trends and how market dynamics can and do change will enable Wilson's Mills to position itself as a welcoming community for multiple generations looking at buying or renting a home. This approach to planning reinforces the community's desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate, while aging members will choose to remain. A community where both the new and existing home markets are attractive to future generations and allow for aging members of the community to remain in the community by offering a variety of housing products.

According to contemporary real estate experts, the "50+" real estate market is changing. In the next few years, Generation X will be joining the Boomers and Matures; serving the 50+ market will become a challenging puzzle for both communities and the real estate industry.

8.2.2 Commercial/non-residential Growth

As with the housing markets, ever changing trends in consumption, product development, technology and generational shifts in personal choices/values must be considered when making decisions about commercial and other non-residential growth. This approach to planning reinforces the community's desire to create a place where younger people will desire to locate, while aging members will choose to remain. A community, where traditional values accompany craftsmanship must embrace the presence of technology in everyday life, commerce, and business.

In order to grow commercial and non-residential offerings a community must create opportunities for success. The first step is to promote interest in both residents and visitors alike. By increasing the presence of people in commercial setting, the critical mass necessary for businesses to sustain themselves will ensure vibrancy as the tourism visitors flow into and through the community. To accomplish this, the local zoning ordinance in existence at the time of this plan adoption, must be repealed and replaced with development standards and specifications to promote refreshing internal growth.

8.3 Existing Land Use Issues – *Recognizing the Problems of our Past*

A plan, any plan, is only as good as the community's commitment to implement. While implementation strategies vary widely depending on the specific goals and objectives, many strategies will often include some form of incentive, motivation, criteria, or specifications for new growth, development and construction. Throughout various sections of this document there are descriptions of incentives and motivations offering opportunities for success; however, a plan can fail when the criteria and specifications are inconsistent with the plan. The following subsections describe the challenges Wilson's Mills faces with policies in effect at the time of adoption of this plan. The discussion continues in sections 8.4 and 8.5 of this document with insight on recommended new approaches to refreshing Wilson's Mills' economy and stimulating investment in Wilson's Mills' future. These recommended policy changes are designed to achieve the goals, objectives, and successes noted and illustrated in this plan.

As a prelude to the discussion, Jonathan Coppage, a visiting senior fellow at the 'R Street Institute' researching urbanism and civil society posted an article challenging leadership to re-think how we administer and regulate development. The following excerpts are from his article posted by the American Planning Association October 20, 2016.

“Establishing by-right development and streamlining local permitting processes will allow developers to respond nimbly to market demands and will relieve the “guilty until proven innocent” status of new building development, which depresses construction starts across the country by [delaying and inhibiting](#) housing projects. What’s more, adopting leaner codes would remove obstacles to the countless smaller developers and would-be builders who want to invest in strengthening their local communities, but currently can’t afford to navigate the vast regulatory burdens and uncertain futures awaiting anyone who tries to build in America today. Trulia economist Ralph McLaughlin [found](#) that these regulatory delays may have an even bigger impact on housing production than zoning restrictions.”

“Main Street-style development — the “storefront on the first floor, apartments rented out above” style that forms the core of any older town’s historic center — is a residential building form that uses first-floor commercial space to serve community members and enliven a neighborhood. This low-rise density helps prop up the balance sheets of towns responsible for running utilities all the way out to suburban developments, as former city planner and engineer Charles Marohn [has repeatedly demonstrated](#). It also keeps a constant set of the “eyes on the street” that Jane Jacobs identified as necessary for safe streets; renters keep an ear out for burglars after business hours and shopkeepers keep the same at bay during the day. It is, in other words, the core of any successful town-building.”

8.3.1 Utility Policies at the Time of Plan Adoption

The Town of Wilson's Mills obtains its water and sewer services from the Johnston County Public Utilities Department. Public water and sewer systems often provide the stimulus or "plant the seeds" for growth. Growth that is simply chasing utilities will result in higher rates for all rate payers and the resulting inefficiencies in other services will drive up taxes. The most effective way to keep tax and utility rates lower, increase the return on investment of the existing systems, and provide adequate revenue for the operations and maintenance of these systems is to be very deliberate in the extension of utilities. For the most part, the Future Land Use Plan has been developed to focus redevelopment and new development of sufficient densities in areas where utilities already exist or are already programmed to be extended.

8.3.2 Land Development and Construction Ordinances at the Time of Plan Adoption

"Land development" includes the installation of infrastructure as the first step toward new building construction. This phase of a project involves land planning that leads to civil engineering to establish the layout of roads and buildings. The criteria or specifications included in these ordinances should accomplish some basic objectives including:

- Ensure the purchaser or owner receives a safe and reliable building product,
- Ensure the state and federal mandates are satisfied to avoid penalties, and
- Ensure the result does not increase the burden on other tax and utility rate payers without deliberate determination that such increases are for the overall benefit of the community.

The following sections describe how ordinances in effect at the time of plan adoption are counter-productive to the objective set forth in this document. A recommended approach to replace these policies and ordinances is described in section 8.5 of this document.

8.3.2.1 Zoning Code

The current zoning code, *Wilson's Mills Development Ordinance (WMDO)*, establishing criteria and specifications for new and existing development, evolved over time from an early state model ordinance. The State encouraged the adoption of their model to help communities begin their introduction into managing growth for the long-term benefit of the community. The intention was that local governments would continue to modernize these policies, and this would yield desired results from state shared funding (grants and loans) the State was providing to local governments. The State's mistake was to accept zoning as a substitute for a town plan.

These ordinances were flawed from the onset because of some basic assumptions about important issues. In short, these policies did little to manage growth, but in fact have led many communities to "paint by numbers" in administering growth, development and construction. Local governments began to lead new growth with zoning rather than preparing a plan based upon what a community desired to become as it matured. This approach is the cause of animosity toward zoning. The role of the zoning ordinance should have been to ensure consistent criteria and specifications as new growth and development occurred.

The existing WMDO establishes a pyramid of uses in the districts moving upward toward the presumed greatest use - the single-family home. This approach watered down business investments and lead to sporadic patterns where businesses are not in the least protected from the pressures of the single-family home-owner.

Mixed-use development, as it is commonly referred to today, can be and often is very beneficial when the location works, and the criteria and specifications are deliberate. However, the mixes of uses in the mid-twentieth century zoning pyramid to be effective in improving many towns when they omitted a critical step - the preparation of a master or area plan. And, “failing to plan is planning to fail” as many communities can now attest.

This approach can work well provided there is a commitment to areas where the investment in infrastructure has already been made. Growth beyond these areas only encourages abandonment while increasing cost to Wilson’s Mills’ tax and utility rate payers.

Policies that promote success of neighborhoods, businesses and civic uses alike are far more desirable to all persons involved who care about the future of the community and the preservation of the investments made by property owners in the community. This approach respects property rights in balance. The rights of the subject property owner, and the rights of the adjacent or nearby property owner such that all parties are treated respectfully. When some property owners lose for another one to gain, the development decision must not be particularly beneficial to the community. *(Also see section 8.5.1 of this document for additional information.)*

The new unified development ordinance (UDO), being prepared at the time of adoption of this plan, will address these objectives. Replacing the town’s antiquated zoning ordinance, adding specifications for land development which creates new streets and supporting infrastructure, and maintaining quality control over the implementation of these standards must be prioritized to protect property rights of all parties while creating common-sense opportunities that avoid growth and development failures in the future.

8.3.2.2 Subdivision Ordinance

As of the time this plan was prepared, specifications for the extension of streets and utilities to serve newly created lots exist in the Subdivision Ordinance; however, a new unified development ordinance, described in section 8.5 below, will be completed following plan adoption. The adoption of new standards will establish cost saving measures for the tax and utility rate payer for all new subdivisions. When new streets are built properly, they last longer and are far less costly to maintain. These new streets must also be reported to the NCDOT upon completion to ensure the local share of the fuel tax collected from every motorist when they purchase fuel, will be returned to the Town. When these fuel taxes are returned each year, they can do more for the older streets where repairs may be warranted.

Subdivision criteria and specifications also improve utility performance and reduce cost to serve all rate payers. By establishing specific criteria for the location of lines we can reduce confusion and improve the effectiveness of future maintenance and repairs. Each utility is designated a specific location in or near the street.

8.3.2.3 Building Code

The Building Inspections Department of Johnston County administers issuance of building permits and within the Town of Wilson's Mills town limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) using the North Carolina Building Code.

8.3.2.4 Floodplain Management

Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance regulates development that would occur within a floodplain. While this ordinance is in place, it mainly covers building specifications like elevation, and public infrastructure, such as sewers. The existing ordinance does not adequately address land use in floodplains. This ordinance is mandatory in order to be eligible for the National Flood Insurance Program administered by the federal government.

The Town of Wilson's Mills Capital Improvements Plan, dated December 2009, summarized flood prone areas. The first area is a ditch located behind properties that front the north side of Main Street in a residential area. The second is near Antler drive. This area had an old farm pond that was filled in. The surrounding properties have experienced problems since the pond was filled. The final area is a blue line stream between Southerland Road and Country Valley Place. The stream sometimes spills over its banks, causing flooding to surrounding properties.

8.3.2.5 Storm-water Management and Watershed Protection

The Wilson's Mills Watershed Protection Ordinance applies to particular areas established by mandate of the State of North Carolina. It was adopted to address land uses and use specifications, (i.e. lot size, coverage, etc.), and stream buffers within these sensitive areas.

8.4 Future Land Use – *Where We're Going Next!*

The exciting aspects of this plan are not captured by the issues we've faced or the problems we believe we have, but the opportunities we have before us. The opportunities to build upon our previous successes are the greatest asset the businesses and citizens of Wilson's Mills possess. This plan recognizes those attributes, identifies the community stakeholders' goals, and crafts a vision of our future. Along with the actions we must undertake to achieve the goals stated in this document, this plan provides the foundation for systematic decision-making by businesses, citizens, prospective investors in our community, and leadership at various levels.

Simply stated, the key to our success is to increase the population of the community by reasonable numbers in order to increase the economic activity to a level that will support the services we desire. The three groups to focus our energy on are as follows:

- Retain our young adults by creating the home-town they dream about.
- Attract newcomers by offering the dynamic small-town feel they seek.
- Encourage opportunities for our citizens to age-in-place through local options for senior living.

Creating an attractive atmosphere in Wilson's Mills will contribute toward our efforts to attract young adults to return, to come home when they seek that long-term location to settle into. These same investments will attract the newcomers seeking a special small-town atmosphere

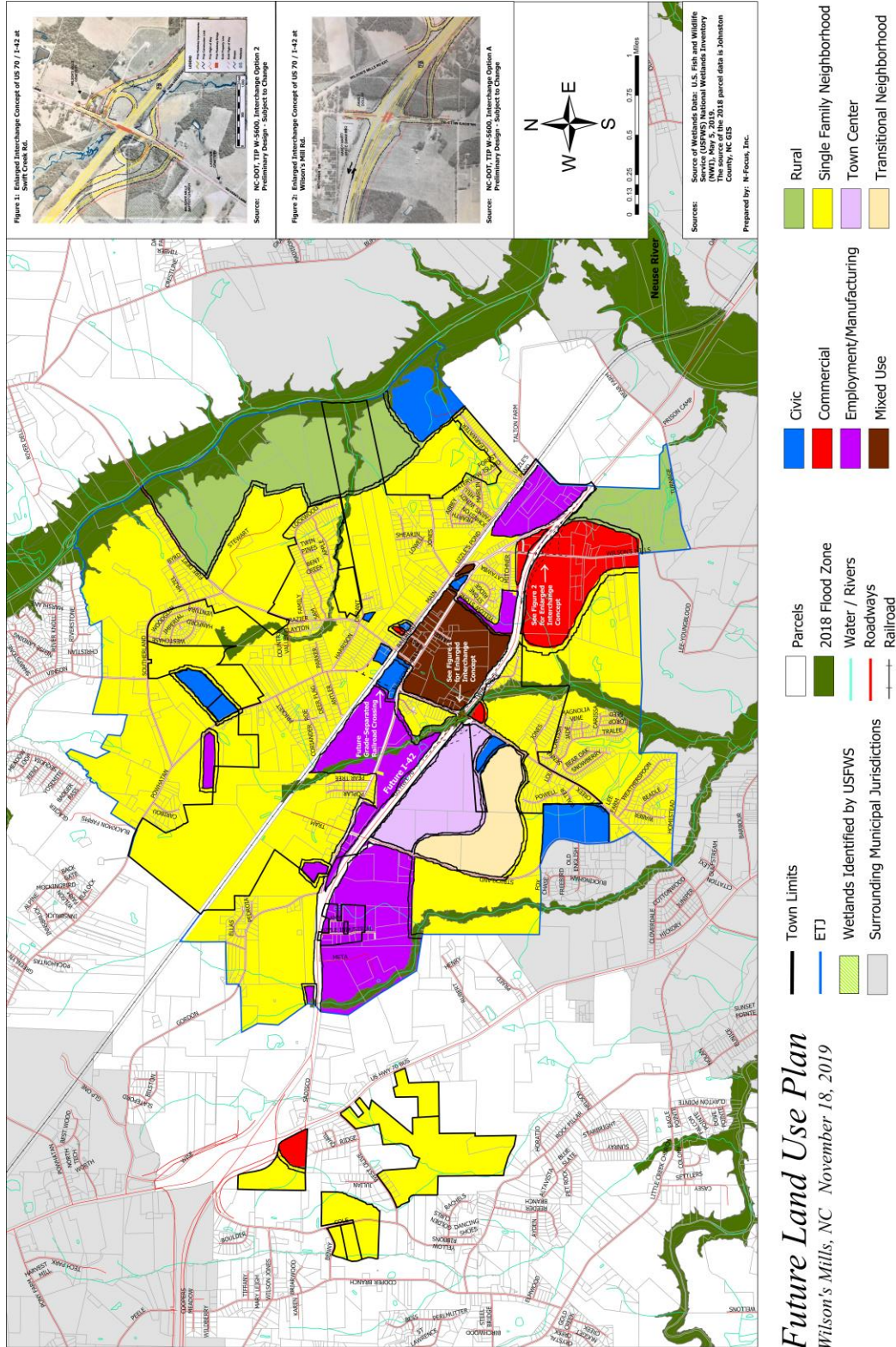
with lifestyle opportunities they find attractive. When a community feels good about itself it shows and that will become its greatest attribute in attracting visitors who just want to be a part of it all. That's what successful towns do, they become special by taking deliberate steps toward that goal and they reap the rewards when they do it well.

The following "steps" provide guidance for implementing the recommendations of this plan. While they are not rigid in their order, their importance is unwavering to the future success of Wilson's Mills in the 21st century.

8.4.1 Step 1: Refresh Wilson's Mills by Developing Underutilized Areas "Close-in" First

Focusing attention on strategic locations to reignite interest to create a new town center and enhance existing commercial development can boost investment by re-thinking development in the corridors. Incentives to refresh and redevelop strategic sites in existing underutilized locations where existing infrastructure and location dynamics combine to support successful new investments will reinforce property values within these strategically important locations. The **Future Land Use Plan** appearing in figure 8.4.1 depicts a pattern of development to accommodate a combination of residential, non-residential and mixed-use growth and redevelopment. The map serves as the overall plan to guide decisions about future infrastructure investments and other public services for Wilson's Mills' future growth. ***Zoning changes are required by North Carolina statute to be made based upon both reasonableness and consistency with this plan.***

Figure 8.4.1 ***Future Land Use Plan***



Future Land Use Plan
Wilson's Mills, NC November 18, 2019

8.4.2 Step 2: Catalyst Area

This Town Plan 2040 presents a concept plan for a new town center and civic presence that will invigorate Wilson's Mills with purpose, human presence and economic vitality. This area, shown in Figure 8.4.2.1 ***Town Center Core – Catalyst Area***, is vital to jump-starting the local economy in various ways. This catalyst area should be the subject of subsequent development concept planning as soon as possible to provide site specific ideas and guidance to property owners, developers, businesses, citizens and leadership.

8.4.2.1 Town Center Core – Catalyst Area

The town center area will become the heart of Wilson's Mills. As with most living things the heart is the most vital organ and communities are no different, their vitality often depends on the strength of the heart or core area.

As this area is developed, it will connect to surrounding existing and future neighborhoods with a balance of pedestrian and vehicular oriented infrastructure. This characteristic offers ease of somewhat more dense development without substantially altering the landscape through mass grading, while reducing costs of living at an elevation safely out of harm's way when impending flood waters rise.

Thoughtful planning to identify opportunities and illustrate concepts citizens and property owners may find feasible will provide a foundation for creative projects that will benefit the community while meeting the goals of growing the business community and improving the offerings in Wilson's Mills.

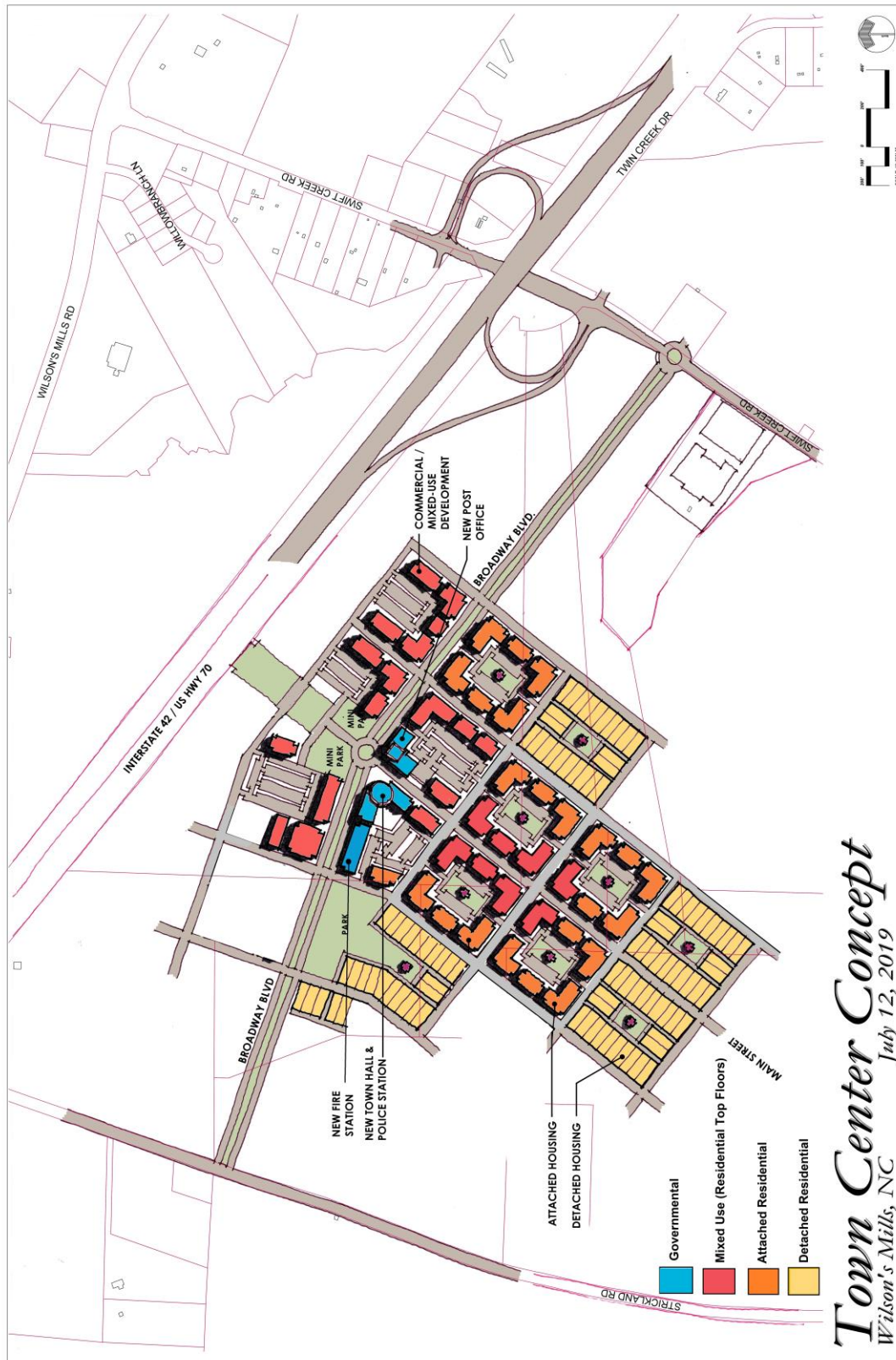


The design ideas represented in the Catalyst Area - Town Center Core in figure 8.4.2.1 will:

- Increase the number of people living in and around the core to create a lively atmosphere.
- Encourage multi-story development to take advantage of existing infrastructure and neighborhood patterns.
- Create a destination for commerce, government, and community by attracting residents and visitors for weekday business and evening and weekend community events.



Figure 8.4.2.1 ***Catalyst Area - Town Center Core***



8.4.3 Preservation and Conservation Areas

Given Wilson's Mills' role in local governance in east-central Johnston County, our most effective tools for preservation and conservation are the moderation of growth and expansion of our municipal services and the policies governing expansion of the systems we operate. By working together with our counterparts at the county level we can stimulate investments where warranted and discourage investments in areas that will not be good for either Wilson's Mills or Johnston County. This approach leaves these lands completely under the control of their elected Johnston County officials. The only time Wilson's Mills officials will be involved is when the topic of municipal service levels is explored.

8.4.4 Future Growth beyond the Town Limits

The outward expansion and growth of Wilson's Mills must be guided by a combination of this plan and the information gathered when examining specific development plans and proposals in the future. This plan identifies known and projected growth areas on figure 8.4.4 **Wilson's Mills Growth Opportunities** to provide guidance to the businesses, citizens, Wilson's Mills leadership, and others seeking to make important financial and/or policy decisions.

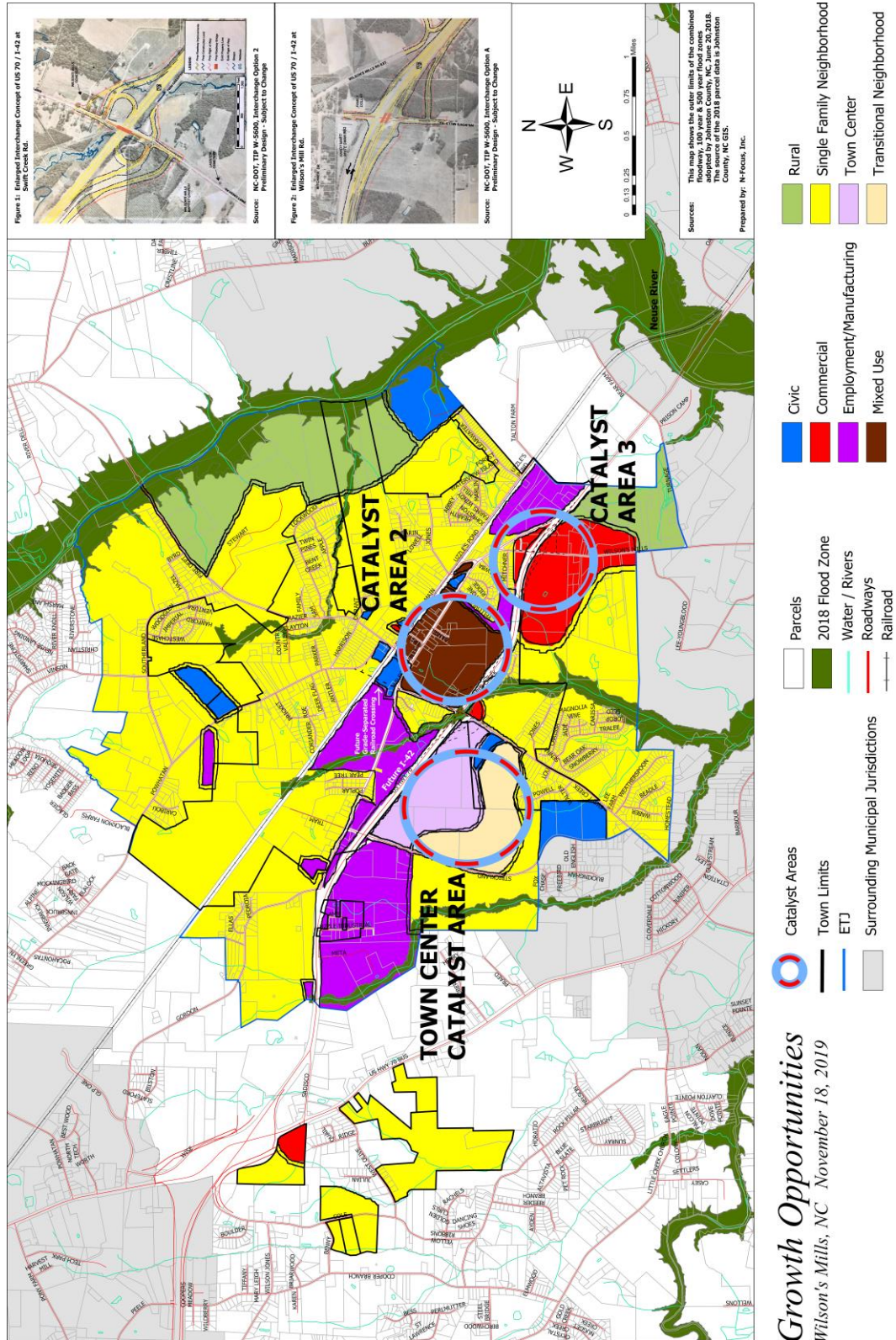
When considering growth and development proposals outside Wilson's Mills' municipal limits, priority must first be given to the existing businesses and citizens, utility rate payers and property taxpayers. The following questions should be made a part of the formal consideration of request for annexation and extension of services, whether publicly or privately funded:

- Will the project contribute to the overall wellbeing of Wilson's Mills' business and citizen well-being?
- Will the project contribute to the reduction of cost overall for services to current rate payers on the system?
- Will the project avoid the obligation of debt by the rate payer or taxpayer generated revenues in order to serve the project?

When these questions are answered by a resounding "yes", the project is likely worthy of further consideration; however, if not, the project should be avoided.

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Figure 8.4.4 *Wilson's Mills Growth Opportunities*



8.5 Re-thinking Wilson's Mill's Zoning - A Common Sense Approach!

8.5.1 Planning, Zoning and Development – The Town 'Plans and Specs'

The traditional approach to land development ordinances in North Carolina was to adopt several different ordinances with individual topics based in the enabling legislation of the State. However, today provisions have been made to combine these varied ordinances into a single or unified development ordinance or UDO as they are commonly known. The UDO approach brings everything into one, albeit lengthy, ordinance with the benefits of consolidation eliminating the confusion over administration and procedure for the business or citizen undertaking a project. No longer would the applicant need to research separate ordinances to compile the criteria and specifications for their project. The exceptions to this consolidation or unification remain the building code governing structural, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical standards plus certain state and federal mandates governing the environment.

Given the status of the Town's existing ordinances relating to growth and development, particularly following the 2013 and 2015 legislative sessions in North Carolina, the Town has contracted to prepare a new UDO consistent with this plan. The new UDO is being prepared nearly simultaneously with the preparation of this Town Plan 2040 both of which are scheduled to be completed in the early fall of 2019.

Adoption of the new UDO will accomplish two primary objectives: to modernize the Town's criteria and specifications to meet current statutory requirements, and to make certain the criteria and specifications are designed to help Wilson's Mills thrive once again.

This approach emphasizes the adopted plan and then seeks to achieve the goals of the plan. Tying the Town Plan to the UDO not only achieves statutory compliance but transforms the role of zoning from regulatory in nature into more of a set of criteria and specifications.

This '*plans and specs*' approach to town building improves the relationship of the Town with its businesses and citizens by establishing objectives, then administering the UDO to simply achieve those objectives. By using common sense policies to encourage re-use and reinvestment in Wilson's Mills, the Town can reduce tax and utility rates as the plan is implemented. This approach benefits all Wilson's Mills' businesses and citizens.

An article posted online at [RISMedia Daily e-News written by Suzanne De Vita](#) on November 3, 2016 discussing a report from the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) and PwC's, "[Emerging Trends in Real Estate® 2017](#)," analyzes trends-to-come in both the U.S and Canada housing markets. Ten "gateway" markets, as defined in the report—those with both a diverse economy and "niche" neighborhoods—will stand above the rest (It should be noted that the Raleigh-Durham market has been identified as the number 7 "gateway" market in the nation). The report highlights the importance of practical zoning standards and specifications to meet the needs in today's real estate market. Ms. Vita writes: "*Both on the investor side and the user side of the market, optionality—not just one use, not just one user, not just one user profile—may be gaining favor as a way to navigate the cross-*

currents of volatile markets,” the report’s authors state. “Optionality from a user standpoint allows for the adjustment of space needs to vary in terms of size, location, and use on an as-needed basis.”

The trends discussed in the report point to a need for communities to be very deliberate in how they establish development related standards and specifications, including how they implement such non-conventional approaches to stimulating investment in the community.

As described in section 8.3.1.1 of this document, today’s businesses seek “hot spots” for business location. This clustering of complementary businesses (i.e. shopping, dining, etc.) draws potential customers to locations where their interests or needs can be met. Location economists call this agglomeration. The benefit of agglomeration to the customer is both improved choices and typically better pricing of goods and services. A simple example of this phenomenon can be seen in a portion of downtown Wilson’s Mills, where several personal services establishments (salons and barbershops) are located within proximity of one another.

The best remedy for Wilson’s Mills’ existing underutilized commercial areas is to encourage re-use and re-development through new zoning criteria and specifications. This approach can work well provided there is a commitment to areas where the investment in infrastructure has already been made. Once the Town has reinvigorated these areas, then growth beyond the current Town Limits should be studied to determine benefits for the Town’s businesses and citizens.

Policies that promote the success of neighborhoods, businesses and civic uses alike are far more desirable to all persons involved; promote a more viable future of the community; and preserve the investments made by property owners in the community. This approach respects property rights in balance: the rights of one property owner, the rights of the adjacent or nearby property owner(s), and the interests town-wide linked to a vibrant community.

Black’s Law Dictionary defines ‘property rights’ as ***“The rights given to the person or persons who have a right to own the property through purchase or bequest. These are basic rights in any society though absolute right for a property is rare in any society.”***

Law Dictionary: [What is PROPERTY RIGHTS? Definition of PROPERTY RIGHTS \(Black’s Law Dictionary\)](#)

In North Carolina, and in most states, municipalities are created for the provision of services to the benefit of its businesses, citizens and property owners. The decision to reside in close proximity with others and to share in the provision of beneficial services provided by an organized local government defines the purpose of municipalities: ‘to facilitate mutual benefits to those choosing to reside within a municipality’. Therefore, municipalities inherently seek to balance property rights for the mutual benefit of those affected by the actions of the individual. This compromise on the absoluteness of property rights is therefore an understanding that rules may be enacted for the benefit of the greater community. Simply stated, when adjacent property owners must lose something of value to them for another property owner to gain, then an action or decision by that individual must not be particularly beneficial to the community. These

assumptions of mutual benefit, the foundation of a municipality or community, are the basis for the establishment of rules governing development and the up-keep of properties within a municipality.

The challenge becomes how well a community balances those rules with the protections of individual property rights, rather than to unreasonably suppress them.

A balanced and fair approach to the establishment of rules, standards and specifications must be the norm, not the exception. Focusing on the goals of the community rather than restricting a community out of fear or unwarranted bias must become the established culture and philosophy when making policy. The replacement of the current ordinances governing land development with professionally administered innovative policies instills trust and support for the municipality while creating greater opportunity.

First and foremost, in the effort to invigorate Wilson's Mills is the approach to new housing construction. This plan, and the new UDO, should address gaps in housing market product offerings and land development specifications appearing in the Town's ordinances. The new provisions must be adequate to accommodate these trends. Replacing the Town's antiquated zoning ordinance, adding specifications for land development (which creates new streets and supporting infrastructure), and maintaining quality control over the implementation of these standards, will be the priority. This approach will protect property rights of all parties while creating common-sense opportunities that avoid growth and development failures in the future. *(Also see section 8.2.1 of this document for additional information.)*

The Town's current water and sewer utility service areas that already extend beyond the Town Limits will require clear policies on connections to avoid falling victim to decisions that do not benefit property tax and utility rate payers. While the UDO will not apply to any property outside the Town Limits and the Town's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), it will apply to property voluntarily annexed into the Town to gain access to those utilities. In areas where voluntary annexation petitions would not be eligible at the time a request for connection is made, the Town should still obtain a petition by the property owner, binding on future owners, allowing the Town to proceed with annexation when the statutory criteria are met. *(See sections 8.3.1 and 8.5.4 of this document.)*

The following descriptions of districts or zones the new UDO should establish describe the character of the various neighborhoods and non-residential parts of Wilson's Mills. These new districts should replace all existing districts and be accompanied by opportunity-driven district standards: opportunities for both growth and preservation of natural areas.

Careful consideration must be given when crafting the criteria and specifications for development to avoid as much non-conformity or "grandfathering" as possible. While some properties may not avoid a non-conforming (grandfather clause) status, it is very important to make as much existing development compliant as reasonably possible. This attempt should not be misguided into making fundamentally poor choices in drafting the UDO, nor should it fail to recognize the role of property maintenance rules.

8.5.1.1 Agriculture District

The Agriculture District (AG) is established to protect lands used for agricultural production, agricultural based businesses and related activities. Farm land is a defining element of Wilson's Mills' traditional identity and the protection of these lands aids in preserving the character of the Town until such time as new development is preferred by the Town. Listed uses are limited, with an emphasis on uses that are agricultural in nature. Development density is very low to encourage preservation of agricultural lands while discouraging large lot residential subdivision type development and excessive septic system utility. The Agriculture District can also be used to preserve open spaces.

8.5.1.2 Single Family Residential Districts

The Single-Family Residential Districts (SFR-1, SFR-2 and SFR-3) provide for the completion of existing residential neighborhoods and the development of new residential neighborhoods. Allowed building/lot types in the Single-Family Districts are Detached House. Listed uses are restricted to Single-Family, including duplex (two-family), homes and their accessory uses. Neighborhoods in these districts are the dominant land use in Wilson's Mills and are a major element in defining the character of the community. Standards for the Single-Family Residential Districts promote that new development maintains the character of the community. The Single-Family Residential Districts permit the completion and conformity of conventional residential subdivisions already existing or approved in sketch plan form by the Town of Wilson's Mills prior to the effective date of the regulations.

8.5.1.3 Residential Main Street Transition District

The Residential Main Street Transition District (RMST) provides for the completion of residential neighborhoods in the residential area(s) surrounding the Main Street and contiguous Civic Districts through in-fill development. The intent of this district is to recognize that gradual transformation of existing development to high quality mixed density residential development is needed to support the central core of the Town. Higher density residential development allows a greater number of households to walk or bike, thus supporting businesses while reducing the parking demand and providing environmental and health benefits. Allowed building/lot types in these districts are the Detached House, Attached House, and Multi-family Building. Streets in the Residential Main Street Transition District should be interconnected, with streets and sidewalks providing a connection from Wilson's Mills' Main Street and other mixed-use districts to the Single-Family Residential districts surrounding these neighborhoods. A range of housing types is encouraged. Criteria for the mix of building types establishes compatibility.

8.5.1.4 Main Street District

The Main Street District (MS) provides for new development, revitalization, reuse, and infill development in Wilson's Mills' core downtown. A broad array of uses is listed to enable the needs of residents and visitors to be met. Allowed building/lot types in this district are Urban Workplace, Shop-front, Detached House, Attached House, Multi-family Building, and Civic Building. The development pattern seeks to integrate shops, restaurants, services, work places, civic, educational, and higher density housing in a compact, pedestrian-oriented environment. The Main Street District serves as the hub of the surrounding neighborhoods and of the broader community. The Main Street

District may be expanded over time to meet the needs of the growing community for downtown facilities and services. Expansion of the Main Street District shall be contiguous and not separated from the primary district area.

8.5.1.5 Civic District

The Civic District (CIV) provides a location for educational, medical, governmental, religious, and other institutional uses. Large developments in the Civic District are encouraged to provide a master plan to the Town. Institutional uses in the Civic District are required to provide pedestrian connections on their campuses and, to the extent possible, develop an internal street system with structures fronting on the streets. Parking should not be the dominant visible element of the campuses developed for institutional uses. Providing a unique district for civic uses will establish uniform standards.

8.5.1.6 Mixed Use Districts

The Mixed-Use Districts (MU-1 and MU-2) are established to provide opportunities for both compatible and sustainable re-development where underutilized commercial properties already exist as well as infill sites where site specific land planning of new development creates opportunities for businesses and various housing designs sharing community amenities and enhancements. Existing auto-oriented street, lot, and building designs can create uncomfortable pedestrian environments; however, with careful site planning these areas will allow a greater number of residents to walk or bike to businesses and services with an interconnected network of streets and sidewalks. Allowed building/lot types are Highway Commercial, Urban Workplace, Shop-front, Detached House, Attached House, and Multi-family. Dominant uses in this district are residential, retail and office. The Mixed-Use Districts are expected to serve Wilson's Mills residents as well as persons who travel from surrounding communities. The development pattern in this district acknowledges the role of the automobile, with parking and access provided to promote safety for the motoring public. Development standards in the Mixed-Use Districts promote the creation of a pleasant pedestrian-friendly auto-oriented environment while enabling a compatible transition to uses in adjacent neighborhood districts.

8.5.1.7 US Highway 70 Commercial District

The US Highway 70 Commercial District (C-70) is established to provide opportunities for compatible and sustainable development along the US 70 corridor. Development standards in the US Highway 70 Commercial District acknowledge that the automobile is the primary mode of transportation. Development and design standards encourage pedestrian scale development along a secondary street network serving larger projects. Goals of the US Highway 70 Commercial District include providing a pleasant environment for motorists, a safe environment for pedestrians along the secondary network of streets and pedestrian facilities; promoting the safety of motorists and pedestrians; and preserving the capacity of the transportation network outside the core area as shown in the adopted Town Plan. Uses in this district include commercial goods and services, employment, and some limited industrial. Allowed building/lot types include Highway Commercial, Urban Workplace, and Shop-front.

8.5.1.8 Corporate Park District

The Corporate Park (CP) is established to provide opportunities for compatible and sustainable development within the employment centers of Wilson's Mills. Development standards in the Corporate Park (CP) District acknowledge that the automobile is the primary mode of transportation. Development and design standards encourage pedestrian scale development along a secondary street network serving larger projects. Goals of the Corporate Park (CP) District include providing a pleasant environment for motorists, a safe environment for pedestrians along the secondary network of streets and pedestrian facilities; promoting the safety of motorists and pedestrians; and preserving the capacity of the transportation network outside the core area as shown in the adopted Town Plan. Uses in this district include office complexes, and limited commercial goods and services. Allowed building/lot types include Highway Commercial, Urban Workplace, and Shop-front.

8.5.1.9 Vehicle Service and Repair District

The Vehicle Service and Repair District (VSR) is established to provide locations for specific uses that, due to their unique characteristics and importance to the community, and the traveling public, require different criteria and specifications than typical commercial development. Development standards in the Vehicle Service and Repair District acknowledge that the automobile is the primary mode of transportation in suburban communities and there is a vital need for such businesses to be located in close proximity to one another. Uses within the Vehicle Service and Repair District are buffered from adjacent uses. The dominant uses in this district are vehicle oriented and/or dependent and include vehicle-based services, vehicle repair shops and disabled vehicle storage areas. The Vehicle Service and Repair District is reserved for uses which require broad maneuvering spaces and avoid pedestrian interaction with potentially hazardous conditions. Goals of the Vehicle Service and Repair District include providing a pleasant environment for motorists, a safe environment for pedestrians along the network of streets and pedestrian facilities; promoting the safety of motorists and pedestrians; and preserving the capacity of Main Street and it's interconnecting network of streets outside the core area as shown in the adopted Town Plan. Uses in this district include heavy commercial goods and services for motor vehicles, and some limited industrial. Allowed building/lot type is Highway Commercial.

8.5.1.10 Industrial District

The Industrial District (IND) is established to provide locations for industrial uses that, due to the scale of the buildings and/or the nature of the use, cannot be integrated into the community. Uses within the Industrial District are buffered from adjacent uses. The dominant uses in this district are manufacturing and warehouse storage. Small scale manufacturing and storage that is compatible with less intensive uses can and should be located in other non-residential or mixed use districts. The Industrial District is reserved for uses which require very large buildings and/or large parking and loading facilities.

8.5.1.11 Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay District

The Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay District (TNDO) provides for the development of new neighborhoods and the revitalization or extension of existing neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are structured upon a fine network of interconnecting pedestrian oriented streets and other public spaces. Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND's) provide a mixture of housing types and prices,

prominently sited civic or community building(s), stores/offices/workplaces, and churches to provide a balanced mix of activities. A Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) has a recognizable center and clearly defined edges; optimum size is a quarter mile from center to edge. A TND is urban in form, is typically an extension of the existing developed area of the Town and has an overall residential density of up to eleven (11) dwelling units per acre. TND districts should have a significant portion of land dedicated to improved open spaces, and reserve un-improved open spaces where environmentally sensitive areas are located.

8.5.1.12 Scenic Corridor District

The Scenic Corridor Overlay District (SCO) is established to protect the pastoral scenes and open spaces that provide a sense of arrival for residents and visitors traveling the major entrance roads and gateways to the Town. The pastoral scenes and undeveloped property along the entrance roads and gateways contribute significantly to Wilson's Mills' community character and sense of place. The Scenic Corridor Overlay District provides development options for the owners of the property abutting the entrance roads and gateways. The goal of this district is to protect the scenic value of the corridors through a mix of incentives and development standards. The standards will preserve the suburban character of the Town by maintaining the sense of a suburban corridor in an urban environment; provide an aesthetically appealing experience for those traveling the corridor; provide multi-modal transportation options for travel; and promote a safe transportation corridor for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

8.5.1.13 Heavy Industry Overlay District

The Heavy Industry Overlay District (HIO) is established to protect all environments from the negative impacts of certain activities and types of development. It is the intent of this district to provide and permit certain public and private heavy industrial uses and facilities that incorporate hazardous materials and/or scientific technology, including wholesale, distribution, storage, processing, manufacturing and production. However, it is required that industries in this district take all necessary actions including but not limited to installation of apparatus and technological equipment available to prevent negative impacts on the environment and the community from the emissions of smoke, dust, fumes, noise and vibrations and other activities and/or products resulting from such hazardous industrial activities in accordance with federal, state and local regulations.

8.5.2 Development Agreements

Accommodating current and projected trends require a partnership of land development and real estate industries with local government leadership. Shifts in social values, particularly among different age groups, indicate a strong propensity to consume goods and services in vastly different ways than prior years. In order to meet the expectations of what consumers' desire, land development will need to change the way it has been functioning since the 1970's. No longer do people rely solely upon the personal automobile for their daily needs. Today, generations young and old are finding new means of sharing within their daily lives as described in sections 3.6, 6.4 and 8.2 of this document. Therefore, local governments must find new ways to manage growth that is inclusive of a diverse and expectant population, development agreements are a new tool for local governments that many find effective in accomplishing new concepts.

Development agreements are a relatively new addition to the local government toolbox that has been recently modified to improve the way development specifications are established for a property. Having been authorized by the North Carolina legislature over a decade ago for the purpose of addressing larger phased developments and the need to hold entitlement to land development approvals for extended periods of time, the development agreement has opened a new avenue to creative design and town building. Section 19 of Session Law 2015-246 amended the statutes to remove the minimum size and maximum term of agreements. The changes effectively opened the window of opportunity just in time to create enormous flexibility in how new land development projects could be structured.

Today, development agreements offer a developer, landowner and the Town the ability to structure common sense approaches to projects that protect property rights and enable effective approvals and administration of projects when all sides agree. Ideally, the development agreement will not be used unwisely by local governments but will be utilized to offer higher degrees of trust. Trust, in the form of stability, eliminates concern that changes in elected local leadership will impact how a project progresses from start to finish.

The development agreement cannot substitute standards and specifications for development but can offer two substantial benefits: it can establish opportunities for participation by the local government and it can freeze zoning standards in place for the life of the agreement.

8.5.3 Ordinance Administration

The administration of the new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) consistent with this plan must be performed by experienced professionals to ensure protection of the rights of businesses and citizens. Such fair and unbiased administration must be proactive and seek to help these businesses and citizens achieve the successes they may seek that are consistent with both the adopted Town Plan and the UDO.

Proactive administration includes:

- Assisting businesses and citizens inquiring about their proposal and how their ideas fit into the comprehensive plan.
- Ensuring all inquiries enjoy all the privileges of the UDO.
- Providing accurate and prompt information to enable the business or citizen to rely on the information in making very important decisions.
- Identifying invalid permits and determining how to administer.
- Identifying non-conforming uses (showing on map), sending letters to describe how property rights will be preserved and limits on changes to the non-conforming use.
- Meeting with Johnston County Building Inspections department to establish protocol for future projects.
- Preparing a guide on the “Table of Permitted Uses” to describe 1) why so extensive, 2) why include unwanted uses, and 3) how to use.
- Providing customer service functions to include Town of Wilson’s Mills’ Planning and Zoning Administrator administering final Certificate of Occupancy (CO)

following all inspections by appropriate Town staff and County Building Inspections.

8.5.4 Water and Sewer Utility Extension and Service Policy

The Town's current infrastructure service areas that already extend beyond the Town Limits will require clear policies on connections to avoid falling victim to decisions that do not benefit property tax and utility rate payers. Updating these extension and service policies should clarify both requirements and incentives for property owners. *(See section 8.3.1 and 8.5.1 of this document.)*

Johnston County and the Town of Wilson's Mills' current sewer and water extension practices for new development require that access to these utilities be dependent upon the development site being incorporated within the Town limits. Therefore, any and all proposed development within Wilson's Mills' extraterritorial jurisdiction requiring water and sewer access must be accompanied by a petition for voluntary annexation.

While the Wilson's Mills' Development Ordinance (UDO) will not apply to any property outside the Town's jurisdiction, it will apply to property annexed into the Town to gain access to those utilities. In areas where voluntary annexation petitions would not be eligible at the time a request for connection is made, the Town should still require a petition by the property owner that is binding on future owners allowing the Town to proceed with annexation when the statutory criteria is met.

8.5.5 Stormwater Utility – An Innovative Alternative to Reduce Development Costs

Another way to improve the financial attractiveness of Wilson's Mills for new investment seizes an opportunity still in its infancy among municipalities. This approach should be considered when and if the need is deemed either beneficial to the community or mandated by the State and/or federal agencies responsible for water quality. Under State and federal stormwater rules emerging across North Carolina, local governments are often tasked with either requiring new development to install stormwater facilities (BMP's) or requiring existing property owners of larger development to begin retrofitting stormwater BMP's in areas that were developed prior to certain years, or both. These rules promulgated by the State and federal agencies mandate local governments to restore natural pre-development flow conditions measured in both quality and quantity when new development is approved. These requirements are very costly and often impact development feasibility in significant ways.

An innovative new alternative to these expansive (and expensive) development requirements is to approach this mandate with a new municipal utility service created in part to finance the installation and maintenance of the required retrofits and to meet the needs of both new development and re-development with common-sense solutions. With a public utility, developers can not only enjoy reduced costs up front, but localities can enjoy enhanced tax base resulting in lower taxes throughout the jurisdiction when compared to the impact upon the pattern of development the traditional alternative of individual on-site BMP's create.

A Municipal Stormwater Management (MSM) Utility comprehensively addresses the stormwater management needs for local governments by providing such services as a

municipal function. If new development projects can utilize a municipal system, the cost of development can be reduced dramatically. Traditional on-site stormwater facilities are costly and consume a certain amount of land area that may be better suited for something other than a basin, constructed wetland, or rain garden. By centralizing the treatment of municipal non-point source pollution, the taxpayers' risk and exposure can be reduced, while offering reduced up-front cost to the developer. This logical approach stems from the fact that the ultimate responsibility for all new development resides with the local government issuing the permits for the new construction.

An MSM District in Wilson's Mills could ultimately collect a fee from owners within the service area of an MSM District on an annual basis to address ongoing debt service, operations and maintenance. The fee funds both local and regional programs designed to protect and manage water quality and quantity by controlling the level of pollutants in stormwater runoff, and the quantity and rate of stormwater received and conveyed by structural and natural stormwater and drainage systems of all types. Properties not located within the MSM District would not be subject to the fee.

The activities funded by the utility's collections include repair and replacement of BMP's, drainage improvements in various neighborhoods, and as a portion of the funding mechanism for "complete streets" renovations relating to town-owned streets and roadways.

The improvements in the Municipal Stormwater Management District will reduce upland flooding events, improve drainage in the Main Street area, and address density-related corridor concerns. Targeting site-specific projects with an eye toward containing costs, addressing overall drainage improvements in a regional manner, these devices will replace outdated or malfunctioning engineered devices associated with Main Street businesses. Replacing them with regional BMP's will holistically addresses the stormwater-related nutrient management goals set forth in State and federal rules while creating new opportunities to develop infill projects in the core area.

Relocation of BMP facilities away from the built-environment and creating regional, efficient public amenities reduces cost by concentrating the facilities into centralized single locations in each sub-basin. Maintenance expenses are decreased by reducing the number of sites the Town staff will have to monitor. BMP performance is enhanced during low-flow conditions, and the actual sites where the devices are installed can anchor parks as a water amenity.

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9. BLUEPRINT FOR WILSON’S MILLS - SUMMARY AND PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Summary

The responsibility to implement this plan lies with the Town of Wilson’s Mills’ Town Council. Through its leadership, this plan will serve as the blueprint for refreshing revitalizing growth. The core area of Wilson’s Mills will be strengthened, opportunity for economic success will be established, and the foundation for decision making will be provided.

The tasks associated with implementation will require a steady long-term focus on achieving goals. To identify and prioritize the many tasks associated with implementation of this plan, the following table illustrates which steps to take when, and who should be responsible. These tasks are accompanied by a range of costs for overall budgeting. Seeking partnerships to share in the risk and the reward of joint ventures will improve the success and reduce the cost to the businesses and citizens of Wilson’s Mills.

9.2 Actions to Implement Town Plan 2040

The information appearing in the Action Items Table 9.2 ***Blueprint for Wilson’s Mills: Actions to Implement Town Plan 2040*** provides a quick reference guide format for the ultimate prioritization of the actions and recommendations of this plan.