**Introduction**

Camden County is a historically rural community situated in North Eastern North Carolina. Camden has a unique unified government, with no charter municipalities. The three communities of Camden, South Mills, and Shiloh, are separated geographically from the Virginia border down to the Albemarle Sound. Camden residents enjoy the quiet nature, small town feel, and high quality of life amenities. Residents are drawn to its ideal location, great schools, and affordable housing stock. These are some of the reasons why Camden has been one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina in recent years.

Despite the many attractive things about Camden County, it is not without its share of challenges. All of the new growth has put a burden on government services to the point where leaders were forced to slow growth in order to maintain essential services. The county’s economy has been structured around agriculture and as a bedroom community for jobs outside of Camden. The County lacks manufacturing, industry, and retail commercial establishments. The county tax base is limited to mostly property taxes due to a lack of sales tax receipts. Citizens and their elected leaders are very resistant to raising taxes to maintain or expand services. When a proposed regional landfill was halted by the General Assembly, Camden County was left without the millions in fees and income it would produce. Around the same time it was announced that Camden County was a target for the very unpopular, Navy Outlying Landing Field, citizens were forced to take action.

Camden County sought assistance from the NC Department of Commerce, and was accepted into the 21st Century Community Initiative. The program works with economically challenged counties to develop a strategic economic development plan, while also receiving preferential grant assistance from certain funding sources. Camden County committed fully to the planning process, creating a committee of residents to help identify economic and community development issues and develop goals and objectives to address these challenges. Over the course of two years, the 21st Century Community Steering Committee, met twice a month to work on the plan. At the same time, the group brought in partners, worked with elected officials, and initiated side projects on their own to kick-start the economic transformation.

This document is the result of the commitment of many Camden County residents, elected leaders, business people, government employees, and other stakeholders. The strategic economic development plan does not attempt to completely reflect every aspect of Camden County’s economy; rather it is the beginning of the continual process of economic and community development that strives to improve the financial situation and overall quality of life of the residents of Camden County.

**Program Overview**

In 2001, in response to a series of business and industry closures, and the loss of thousands of jobs in the manufacturing and textile industries, the North Carolina Department of Commerce initiated the 21st Century Communities program. With this initiative, the department has positively impacted the economies of some of the state’s most challenged communities, and helped jump start their economic development planning efforts. The program established creative partnerships that help direct human and financial resources, and provide technical assistance to targeted communities that support the development of broad-based and comprehensive economic development plans and initiatives.

The department identifies communities that are experiencing economic sustainability challenges and helps them move forward in today’s global economy. The program pledges the full support of the Department of Commerce, its available programs and resources to ensure success at the local level. The 21st Century Communities program is based on the premise that:

* Economic development success comes from investing in education and a skilled workforce, attractive and prepared communities, and an exceptional business climate.
* Targeting counties that are economically challenged but have local leaders committed to making progress will yield the greatest results.
* Building upon the strengths of each county is essential in the formation of economic development strategies.

Since its start, the 21st Century Communities Program has worked with a total of 30 counties across the state. Because each county is unique and faces a different set of challenges, the 21st Century Communities process is adapted to fit the specific needs of the client counties. That process includes:

* Conducting a complete assessment of the local economy
* Meeting with local leaders to identify areas of greatest concern
* Assessing economic development assets such as available building sites and vacant facilities
* Identifying infrastructure needs
* Developing a comprehensive economic development plan
* Coordinating available resources to maximize impact

**Participants**

The 21st Century Community initiative relies on local citizens to participate in the preparation of a strategic economic development plan. It is their intimate knowledge of the community and committed participation that ensures a successful strategic plan creation, adoption, and implementation. The role of the 21st Century Community Planner is to serve as a coordinator, compiler, researcher, and general catalyst for a community to come together and create a long term planning document that will help guide economic development for years to come. A strong local point of contact is necessary to serve as a link to the 21st Century Planner and the local community. The local point of contact oversees the project within the county by helping put together the steering committee, setting up the meetings, compiling meeting notes, and carrying out specific research and side projects that the committee may suggest.

Camden County’s 21st Century Community Program Local Point of Contact is Dan Porter. Mr. Porter serves as Camden County’s Planning Director and has years of experience with economic and community development issues, programs, and organizations. Dan Porter’s work with the 21st Century Community Initiative is a key component of any future success that may come of this planning effort.

Another important component of the 21st Century Community Initiative is the Steering Committee, which is comprised of local citizens from within Camden County. These citizens come together to form an ad hoc planning committee to oversee the development of the 21st Century Community Strategic Plan. Organizers strive to create a diverse Steering Committee that represents a wide array of County residents. Participants typically represent different towns or areas of the County, as well as a good mix of male and female and ethnic diversity. Steering Committee members also come from different professional backgrounds such as; business leaders, non-profit groups, government officials, as well average residents not affiliated with any other organized interest group.

Camden County 21st Century Community Steering Committee Members:

* Sean Robey, Owner Hyman and Robey
* Terri Griffin, Assistant Vice President First Citizens Bank
* Penny Leary-Smith, Director Dismal Swamp Visitor Center
* Tom White, Camden Branch Manager, Bank of Currituck
* Janice Hassell, Realtor
* Maria Garcia, Executive Director Northeast CDC
* William Nuckols, Business Owner
* Mark Gregory, Owner Tark and Associates
* Dan Moore, Physician
* Mark Powell, NC Cooperative Extension
* Jason Weeks, Director, Currituck Parks & Recreation Dept.
* Craig Cary, Chairman South Mills Water Association
* Ron Melchiorre, Superintendent Camden County School System

A 21st Century Community Steering Committee meets monthly to discuss economic and community development issues and to come up with ideas and projects that will positively impact their local community. Their thoughts are captured, summarized, and distributed to the entire committee for comment after each meeting. The Steering Committee first discusses general economic and community development issues within their community through planning exercises such as a SWOT analysis, visioning, and prioritization. Out of these monthly meetings a set of issue areas are identified, and then broad goals are created and specific objectives and action items are outlined. The 21st Century Community Steering Committees has the freedom to adapt the process to suit their particular counties needs, and some bring in outside partners and initiate spin off projects as needed.

In the case of Camden County’s Steering Committee, several outside partners were brought in to contribute to the overall economic development effort. Generally these partners are somehow affiliated with ongoing economic and community development projects taking place in the County. Camden County’s 21st Century Steering Committee brought in several partner agencies to assist with the creation of the overall plan. Jennifer Palestrant, president of the Elizabeth City Area Chamber of Commerce, which also represents Pasquotank and Camden Counties, brought considerable knowledge and resources to the discussions and efforts of the committee. Sandra Sawyer, with the Northeast Workforce Development Board, attended several meetings to help make the committee aware of specific programs that her agency oversees that may assist businesses and individuals in Camden County. Randy Kraniac, owner of Albemarle Propane, located in Camden County, was not originally on the Steering Committee. However, as a concerned business owner, he became interested in the Camden County’s efforts to promote and enhance the existing business community. Mr. Kraniac attended many meetings and contributed his perspective to the proceedings.

Another important group of people that helped craft the 21st Century Community Strategic Plan was the Camden County Commissioners. Members of the Steering Committee felt that members of the County Commission should be invited to the planning meetings in order to get their input and perspective, as well as to help build a level of buy-in to the strategic plan. Three different members of the Commission attended meetings and helped inform the group of county efforts that might affect economic and community development efforts. Commissioners Phil Faison, Michael McLain, and Sandy Duckwalls, were a tremendous asset to the committees discussions.

**Reconnaissance Visit**

The Reconnaissance Visit is the formal start of the 21st Century Communities commitment to the selected community. The reconnaissance visit consists of a tour of the county, two days of interviews with members of the community, as well as a kick-off reception to celebrate the start of the 21st Century Community process. The purpose of the reconnaissance visit is to gather important information about the County’s economic and community development conditions. This information is used to guide the strategic planning process and focus on issues that residents identify as important.

Camden County’s reconnaissance visit took place on June 19th and 20th, 2008. The reconnaissance team consisted of 14 Department of Commerce Staff from various divisions. The 21st Century Community recon team for Camden County were:

* Cleveland Simpson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce
* Gloria Nance-Sims, Director Division of Community Assistance
* Mark Roberts, Director 21st Century Community Program
* Jack Newman, Assistant Director of Community Assistance
* Myra Beatty, Division of Workforce Development
* Gail McDonald, Small Business Ombudsman
* Charlie Thompson, Community Development Block Grant Program
* Lee Padrick, Chief Planner, DCA North East Regional Office
* Brad Hufford, DCA North East Regional Office, 21st CC Planner
* Chuck Halsall, Senior Planner DCA North East Regional Office
* Terria Baynor, DCA North East Regional Office
* Debra Hawkins, DCA North East Regional Office
* Trey Smith, DCA North East Regional Office
* Erin Crawford, Intern Policy Research Division

During the two day reconnaissance visit, Department of Commerce staff conducted 35 interviews with Camden County residents. The Recon Team interviewed elected officials, business owners, county staff, non-profit leaders, and average citizens to provide their confidential thoughts about a variety of topics. Each resident were asked a series of 46 questions about economic and community development in Camden County. Interview responses were recorded and later summarized to get a baseline on the current conditions within Camden County.

Responses to the questionnaire yielded a wealth of information on Camden County. The full recon visit questionnaire summary is located in the appendix of this report. A few select questionnaire responses illustrate the consensus of those interviewed.

Q. What do you consider to be your community’s greatest strength(s)?

* + Good School System
  + Location (Hampton Roads, Elizabeth City, Tidewater, Beaches)
  + Quality of Life
  + Sense of Community
  + Rural Nature

Q. What do you consider to be the major obstacle(s) in your community?

* + Lack of Infrastructure
  + Previous Leaders Resistant To Growth
  + Lack of Industry and Commercial Growth
  + Residents Resistant to Change
  + Tax Base (Residential Only)

Q. What businesses would you like to see in Camden County?

* Grocery Store
* Restaurants
* Pharmacy
* Eco-tourism Outfitters
* Hotel
* Manufacturing
* Medical Facilities

Q. What Quality of Life Amenities Exist in Camden County?

* + Water
  + Natural Resources
  + Rural Atmosphere
  + Location
  + Parks and Recreation
  + Dismal Swamp
  + Beaches
  + Sense of Community
  + Quiet
  + Open Spaces
  + Safety
  + Schools

Q. What is the most pressing problem facing Camden County today?

* Infrastructure
* Lack of Tax Base
* County Revenue
* Money for Schools
* Managed Growth
* Leadership
* OLF

Q. What is your vision for Camden County in the next 10 years?

* New Business
* Managed Residential Growth
* Economic Development
* High Quality of Life
* Good Education System
* Preserve Rural Lifestyle
* Infrastructure
* Lodging Facilities

These responses from Camden residents helped focus the Steering Committee’s attention on what issues to address in the strategic plan. The questionnaire findings were only part of the data that was collected prior to the start of the steering committee meetings.

**Economic Indicators**

Each county selected to participate in the 21st Century Communities Initiative, are assigned a staff person from the Department of Commerce’s Policy, Research, and Strategic Planning Division. That staff person is responsible for gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing data about the county economies. Anna Lea, was the Policy and Research staff member assigned to Camden County, and her report pulls data from a variety of sources. The important economic indicators she identified for Camden County were; population, educational attainment, labor force, occupational mix, industry analysis, and technology availability. Her report compares Camden County against neighboring counties in the region as well as the North Carolina average. These economic indicators provide the steering committee with current statistics that will guide the creation of the strategic economic development plan, and help tailor the program to the specific needs of the participating community.

A summary of the key findings for each economic indicator will be provided here, however the full economic indicator report can be found in the appendix.

**Population**

* Camden County experienced the highest growth rate (37.8%) among comparison counties.
* Between 2000 and 2007, Camden County experienced a significant increase in population from people migrating into the county from other regions of North Carolina, southern Virginia, and the United States.

**Educational Attainment**

* Camden County’s dropout rate (2.61%) was the lowest among comparison counties and better than the state average (5.24%) for the 2006-2007 academic year.
* With 34 percent of its 25+ population having attained a high school diploma or equivalent in 2000, Camden County outperformed the state average (28.4%).

**Labor Force**

* Camden County’s employment growth (40.8%) and its labor force growth (44%) were the highest among comparison regions.
* Camden County’s residents tend to commute to their places of work in contiguous counties rather than work in jobs located in Camden County.

**Occupational Mix**

* In Camden County, the occupation with the most number of employees pays an average annual wage of $19,240, only $3,000 more than the lowest average wage in the county.
* Between 2002 and 2007, jobs in managerial, professional, and technical occupations grew by 77.6 percent in Camden County.

**Industry Analysis**

* Nearly 50 percent of Camden County’s employment is concentrated in three industry sectors: Retail Trade, Construction and Agriculture.
* Construction and Health Services\* are the only sectors that increased as a share of total employment. (\* Although Health Services has grown as a percentage of employment of Camden residents, that number reflects only those residents who travel outside of the county, as no medical facilities currently exist within Camden County)

**Technology Availability**

* Since 2000, Camden County received two grants from the state of North Carolina’s E-NC Authority to fund public internet access and local education channels (“Public Engagement Grant” of $5000 and an “e-Communities Planning Grant” grant of $10,000).
* 74.6% of Camden County households have cable modem internet access. 61.7% of these households have DSL/High-Speed internet access.

**Mission Statement**

At the start of the planning process, Camden County’s Steering Committee were asked to reflect on their overall goal for the 21st Century Community program. Each committee member put forth different ideas on why they volunteered to serve on the committee, and what they hoped to accomplish overall. These individual goals were distilled down to the common elements to create a mission statement for the committee. A mission statement provides a clear explanation of the group’s essential purpose, and focuses the work ahead of them. The mission statement for Camden County’s 21st Century Community Steering Committee is:

*To develop a sustainable economic development plan that promotes targeted business and industry growth in an effort to create jobs, increase revenue through a diversified tax base and enhance the quality of life in Camden County.*

**SWOT Analysis**

The Camden County 21st Century Community Steering Committee was asked to conduct a SWOT Analysis of the county. SWOT analysis is a planning exercise designed to look objectively at a community’s internal strengths and weaknesses as well as any external opportunities and threats. By studying these characteristics, and planning accordingly, a community can maximize the positives and minimize the negatives.

**Strengths**

Camden County has many strengths that could be harnessed for future economic development. An initial picture of these strengths was developed from conversations with county commissioners and staff, reconnaissance questionnaires, visits to the county, background research and steering committee input. Strengths will be listed and a brief explanation will be provided.

* *Location-* Camden County’s location in Northeastern North Carolina is a great advantage. Proximity to the popular beaches of the Outer Banks, Elizabeth City, and the Hampton Roads area of Virginia are all assets that can be leveraged in the future.
* *Population Growth-* Camden County has been one of the fastest growing Counties in North Carolina over the past several years. The 2007 US Census estimate puts the total population at 9,490 which is a 3% change since the previous year. Although the population is still small compared to the other 100 counties, Camden’s growth was the 11th largest change in the state. The influx of new residents, many from across the Virginia border, could serve as a future workforce, or could attract new business to the County.
* *Quality of Life-* Camden County residents enjoy a high quality of life for a number of reasons. A quite rural setting, nearby bodies of water, outdoor sports, affordable housing, good schools, and small town feel are some of the notable qualities. Recent economic development literature puts quality of life as an important feature that companies and workers are looking for when considering relocation. High quality of life also is important in attracting tourists and retirees to a particular location.
* *Good Schools-* Camden County Public Schools is a tremendous asset for the County. In many measures of educational attainment, Camden County outperforms its neighbors. Families are attracted to live in Camden County to take advantage of the good schools. Graduates often go on to College or Universities, and some receive technical training at the new Cam-Tech High School and enter the workforce right away. Residents feel that the facilities, teachers, and resources, all contribute to a great public school system. Quality education is one of the essential elements to positive economic development.
* *Other Strengths-* Agriculture is still an important part of the nation’s economy and abundant land and good soils will keep Camden competitive. The Dismal Swamp Canal State Park designation is a strength because it protects an important historical and ecological asset that could attract tourists to the County. Abundant, developable land is another strength that other counties do not have. The nature of residential development in Camden County is restrained through various control measures that limit scattershot housing, protects agricultural land, and clusters development around existing population centers.

**Weakness**

Weaknesses are internal aspects that affect a community in a negative way. Weaknesses can be overcome only by fully understanding the issue and developing a plan of attack. Camden County has several weaknesses that need to be addressed in order to improve the economic development.

* *Lack of Infrastructure-* Infrastructure is considered the framework that Economic Development is built upon. The term infrastructure generally refers to things such as transportation facilities (roads, railroad lines, airport, and water port/dock) water and sewer utilities, electric capacity, industry ready buildings Camden County has limited water and sewer capability. Without adequate infrastructure, especially water and sewer, Camden will be unable to attract industrial manufacturing companies, or service and retail businesses.
* *Limited tax base-* Due to the lack of manufacturing and other business establishments, Camden County collects minimal sales tax. Therefore the majority of County income comes from property taxes, resulting in a tax base that is limited and undiversified. Other counties enjoy substantial income from sales taxes, and are able to keep property taxes lower as a result. However in Camden County, the only option for additional county income is an increase in property taxes, an unpopular option all around.
* *Lack of Amenities-* Camden County residents are forced to travel to neighboring communities to enjoy some of the more basic amenities that other communities take for granted. These amenities include; medical facilities, entertainment options, shopping opportunities, grocery stores and restaurants. This is not only a problem for current residents; it also hampers future economic development from perspective businesses who may be considering relocation.
* *Other weaknesses-* The tremendous population growth that has taken place has not been capitalized on. Longtime residents are fearful of change, and want to protect the community they have known. Newcomers are not as involved in the community and are not contributing as much to the volunteer base. The county’s leadership is in the difficult position of dealing with unprecedented growth while protecting the quality of life. Some feel that the county could be more open to growth and actively recruit new industry.

**Opportunities**

Opportunities are outside developments that could have a positive effect on the community. Opportunities are more difficult to plan for because they involve the actions of outside forces, and are often time sensitive. Camden County faces several opportunities that relate to economic and community development

* *Development interest-* Camden County has seen a tremendous amount of residential growth in recent years. Housing developers are attracted to Camden due to cheap land prices, good schools, and location. Several large scale developments are in the works pending approval by the planning board and county commissioners. County government has sought to harness the power of these developments while protecting current obligations through an adequate facilities ordinance. Clearly there is a lot of interest in Camden County from the development community, which could be harnessed for the benefit of all Camden residents.
* *Outdoor Sports-* Nationally there is a growing trend in both the tourism and recreation field related to outdoor sports. Outdoor recreation such as canoeing, kayaking, bird watching, camping and hiking are all growing in popularity. Tourists are spending more and more on these activities each year. Camden County has a great opportunity to capitalize on these trends by promoting its unique asset, the Dismal Swamp State Park. Camden County is already strong in traditional outdoor sports such as hunting and fishing. However boating is underutilized as an asset in Camden County.
* *Agriculture-* The traditional economy of Camden County has long been based on agriculture. Although there has been a lot of turmoil, consolidation, and diminished crop values, agriculture is still an important part of the American economy. In some communities, agriculture is growing as an industry due to new crops, value added production, bio-technology, and ethanol related developments. Camden County is strategically located in close proximity to populated areas, with good soil and climate. As the nature of agriculture changes, Camden is primed to benefit from its agricultural base.
* *Defense Industry-* The defense industry is a growing industry classification that could be an opportunity for Camden County. Nearby, Xe Services, formerly Blackwater USA, is a leader in this field, whose business model is evolving to focus on new opportunities. The state of North Carolina is committed to promoting defense related industry in the state, capitalizing on the many military installations located here. Proximity to the Hampton Roads Naval bases, the Elizabeth City Coast Guard base and Xe, illustrate the prime location that Camden County is in. The aviation and aerospace sector is an emerging industry in the region that could provide spill over opportunities in Camden Count.
* *Other Opportunities-* Green, sustainable industry is a hot buzzword for national and state politicians alike. However the current energy crisis and climate change has pushed green industry to the forefront. Camden County is already the site of a study group looking at the feasibility of a green industry park.

**Threats**

Threats are outside developments that could have a negative impact on a community. Threats are usually outside the control of a community, but still important to consider when planning for the future. It is important to consider what affect any perceived threats may have and try to lessen the impact if the threats do materialize.

* *OLF-* Camden County faces a large threat in the form of a proposed Outlying Landing Field. The OLF would cause substantial harm to the quiet quality of life enjoyed by residents. The County’s tax base would be impacted from the loss of thousands of acres. The OLF could also hinder residential growth as people would want to avoid living close to the jet noise. County leaders realize the importance of the threat and have taken decisive steps to fight the Navy. Although there is still a long time before any final decision is made, the OLF is a clear threat to the County.
* *Economic Downturn-* The national economic recession is a threat that will impact Camden County in a number of ways. The subprime mortgage fiasco and the collapse of lending institutions have already slowed residential growth through a lack of new construction and the availability of home loans. Also the economic downturn will affect business and industry meaning no new factories, and few expansion possibilities. State and federal government will also feel the effects which will result in fewer grant opportunities, and diminished programs. Camden County needs all of these partners to participate in order to develop economically.
* *Other Threats-* Environmental degradation could threaten Camden County. The rich agricultural land and natural water bodies are a positive asset for Camden County, however both are sensitive to environmental impacts. Rapid development, pollution, and extreme weather could hurt these assets and threaten the quality of life and economic development of Camden County.

**Preliminary Recommendations**

**Economic Development**

*Water and Sewer Infrastructure-* Camden County should focus most of its economic development efforts on the necessary steps of creating the water and sewer infrastructure in and around planned growth areas. This includes the necessary studies and engineering work, securing funding, and physical installation of a water and sewer system. Without the basic water and sewer infrastructure Camden will be unable to attract any industry or other large employer. Although large capital projects such as this require a lot of money and can take years to complete, water and sewer is so important it should be a key component of Camden County’s Economic Development planning.

*Economic Development Advisory Board-* Although already partnering with larger entities such as the Albemarle region and Elizabeth City/Pasquotank County, Camden County should create a board to specifically work on Economic Development related topics. Hiring a full time economic developer is probably not an option for Camden County, however a special advisory board made up of elected officials, business leaders, and concerned citizens could do a lot to get the ball rolling. This group could serve as the main point of contact for economic development inquiries, serve as boosters for the county, work on long-term economic development objectives, and serve as a liaison between businesses and the County Commissioners. Creating such a board would signal that the County is serious about economic development and provide interested citizens with a means to work on a significant community problem.

*Develop Tourism Industry-* Many communities across the state and nation are focusing efforts on attracting visitors and developing their tourism industry. Camden County has potential to do the same due to its prime location, natural resources, and available water features. The recent designation of the Dismal Swamp State Park is a tremendous asset in this area, which could be the focus for additional development. Focused effort could create opportunities for canoe and kayak outfitters, camp grounds, fishing guides, hunting lodges, and restaurant and hotel operators.

*Market County-* The County should develop a comprehensive marketing plan intended to attract various economic development audiences. This includes site selection industrial development, tourists, retirees, and smaller retail and service businesses. Compiling relevant data and communicating to these specific audiences could help in attracting them to Camden County.

**Community Development**

*Community Center-* Camden County has been working with a class of East Carolina University students to develop a comprehensive parks and recreation plan along with a site specific plan for a community center. The community center would be multi-use and would house a gymnasium, classrooms, and additional community resources. The Community Center would help unite a county that is geographically divided and provide much needed recreation opportunities.

*Newsletter-* One of the issues that came up in conversations with Camden residents was a lack of knowledge of community events. In the past there was a community newsletter that focused specifically on Camden County. This newsletter could be used for a variety of community development purposes, including meeting notification, discussion of issues facing the community, advertising for the existing businesses, and also as a common forum for communication in the county.

*Improve Medical Facilities-* Access to medical care is an important aspect of community development. Residents are forced to travel long distances to visit the doctor or dentist. Creating a medical center that is conveniently located would help improve the quality of life in Camden County. Related to this are emergency services such as fire and rescue.

*Continued Educational Improvement-* The County school system is one of the community development bright spots for Camden County. County schools do a great job of serving the needs of the community. However continued improvements are always needed when it comes to education. New programs, technology, curricula, and teachers are needed to maintain the high level of service. Funding for these as well as facility expansion should be a community development focus in the coming years.

**Issue Identification**

Camden County’s 21st Century Community Steering Committee, met twice monthly to discuss economic and community development issues. Through these conversations, the group achieved a better understanding of the assets and challenges facing Camden County. Steering Committee members began to see the overall problem and break it down into smaller components. The Committee identified four broad issue areas that would be the focus of planning efforts. These issue areas are: county government policies that affect business, improving the county’s economic development products, marketing and communication of the county, and developing the county’s eco-tourism industry.

When the planning process began, there was the perception that Camden County leaders did not want to see economic development. This perception may have been partially true, but was caused by realities facing Camden County. The county has few businesses, specifically a lack of retail establishments. Therefore the county’s tax base is comprised mostly of property tax income, without significant sales tax receipts. When population growth and residential development began to occur more heavily in Camden County, it put a stress on governmental services, and the budget in general. Residents and elected officials alike resisted increasing property taxes to create more county income. A subdivision moratorium imposed on the county temporarily halted the explosive residential growth. County Commissioners were forced to implement measures designed to limit the economic impact to the county from new residential development, specifically expensive water tap fees, and an adequate facilities ordinance. The rural geography of the county limits the population density that retail businesses look for in expansion locations. Therefore business growth in Camden County has been significantly limited due to these conditions. The Steering Committee, felt that county government policies needed to be addressed in order to foster future economic development.

Another important issue area that the Steering Committee felt needed to be included in the planning effort was improving the economic development products available in Camden County. The county’s economic history was based primarily on agriculture and jobs outside the county. Northeastern North Carolina historically has not had a large amount of industry and manufacturing due to a number of reasons. Lack of infrastructure, distance to markets, un-skilled labor force, and lack of capital investment, have all hindered economic development in the region. In Camden County there has not been a concerted effort to promote economic development at the local level. The Steering Committee worked to understand the available assets and opportunities that currently exist in the county and they felt that improving the economic development products available would have lasting affects in Camden County. The committee realized that economic development doesn’t just happen, without dedicated effort.

Marketing and Communication is another issue area that the Steering Committee saw as important to the overall economic development plan. The first issue area focused on removing barriers to economic development, and the second on increasing economic development initiatives. Marketing and Communication supports both of these efforts. Getting the message out about the many great things about Camden County is the next step in the process of economic development. The message should be tailored to the target audience whether they are current residents, perspective newcomers, investors, site selection consultants, entrepreneurs, tourists, or anyone seeking information on Camden County.

One of Camden County’s biggest assets is the quality of life that residents enjoy. Quality of Life can be defined any number of ways, but in Camden County it means a quiet, natural, rural setting with abundant outdoor opportunities. This same quality of life that local residents enjoy can be used to attract visitors and tourists to the area. Camden County has a large number of assets that leaves it well positioned to capitalize on these opportunities. Abundant open space, clean environment, close by water bodies, large variety of outdoor sporting activities, the Dismal Swamp, and proximity to urbanized population centers, make Camden County very attractive to eco-tourists. Eco-tourism is a growing industry that evolves every year. Eco-tourism has low environmental impact, and does not require significant investment, or training. The Steering Committee felt that a concerted effort should take place to enhance and promote this growing industry.

Camden County’s 21st Century Community Steering Committee identified these four issue areas that they felt would improve the economic development prospects in their community. The committee explored these topics in depth and drilled down to develop a set of concrete goals that would help address each of the issue areas. For each goal several sub-objectives were also identified with specific action items spelled out to achieve the stated objective. In order to aid in the implementation, for each objective a responsible party and expected timeframe were identified. These strategic plan elements will be discussed in detail.

**Goals and Objectives**

Camden County’s 21st Century Community Steering Committee met twice a month to examine the issues and develop strategies to improve economic development in the county.

**Issue: County Government Policies that effect Business**

**Goal A:** *To create a business friendly environment in Camden County*

**Objective 1:** To review and revise development approval processes to reduce up front private investment of time and money for planning and engineering, while still obtaining critical project information and private commitments needed for approval decisions.

**Action:** -Consider adopting Conditional zoning regulations.

-Review UDO regarding delegation of administrative approval authority.

**Responsible Party:** County Commissioners, Planning Department, Planning Board, Business Community

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Objective 2:** To develop and maintain a database of existing and new Camden businesses, as well as those that made inquiries but selected another location.

**Action:**-Consider establishing a low cost business licensing system.

-Keep record of all development inquiries.

**Responsible Party:** Planning Department, Chamber of Commerce, Business Community

**Timeframe:** Completed, Ongoing

**Objective 3:** To develop and maintain a database of development sites, with an understanding of the owner’s specific interests and timetable for development.

**Action:**-Identify key development sites and prepare alternative development objectives.

-Meet individually with each property owner to discuss county’s and owner’s development interest*.*

**Responsible Party:** Planning Department, Landowners, Developers, EDC

**Timeframe:** Completed, Ongoing

**Objective 4:** To prepare a plan and map showing where business could locate based on water/sewer infrastructure as well as land use plan. Create a map of areas where businesses could locate. Have on hand to show developers and business community to market Camden County.

**Action:**-Prepare and approve land use plan and policies guiding development toward existing and planned infrastructure.

-Prepare and adopt master development plans for 1) US 17 corridor 2) US 158 community core; 3) US 158 “short cut” corridor; 4) NC 34 corridor; 5) Old Swamp Road corridor.

**Responsible Party:** Planning Department, Public Works Department

**Timeframe:** Short Term

**Objective 5:** To establish and fund economic development incentives that fairly supports both business recruitment and expansion of existing business.

**Action:** *-*Consider county subsidies to water & sewer fund for connection fees to these public systems.

-Design and fund a grant program for capital improvements and job creation.

**Responsible Party:** EDC, Planning Department, County Commission, Finance Department

**Timeframe:** Short Term

**Goal B:** *To engage elected officials in order to foster economic development in Camden County.*

**Objective 1:** To research and package information to show the relationship between the number and density of housing needed to support commercial business development.

**Action:**Contact a variety of business types to obtain information regarding their criteria for new locations, and prepare a comparative report.

**Responsible Party:** EDC, Northeast Commission, NC Dept. of Commerce, Business and Industry

**Timeframe**: Mid Term

**Objective 2:** To foster and encourage creative public/private approaches to overcome obstacles and requirements.

**Action:** -Establish a Camden County Economic Development Commission with members from both the public and private sector.

-Prepare and present periodic reports to the County Commission on economic development progress, proposals, and initiatives.

**Responsible Party:** County Commissioners, Outside Agencies, Private Sector

**Timeframe**: Completed, Ongoing

**Objective 3:** To build consensus with the County Commissioners so they have a level of buy-in with the strategic economic development plan.

**Action:** Prepare, present, and obtain Commission approval of a strategic plan for economic development.

**Responsible Party:** 21st Century Community Steering Committee, County Commissioners

**Timeframe**: Short Term

**Objective 4:** To actively work with economic development partners including organizations, agencies, and other municipalities that would support economic development efforts in Camden County (ex. NC Dept. of Commerce, Albemarle EDC, Rural Center, Golden LEAF, UNC School of Government, etc…)

**Action:** -Keep resource agencies aware of economic development progress and needs.

-Utilize funding and technical assistance resources of state, federal, and other appropriate agencies.

-Invite agency representatives to present periodic reports to the ECDC and the County Commission

**Responsible Party:** Camden County EDC, ED Groups and Agencies, Albemarle Region Members

**Timeframe**: Ongoing

**Goal C*:*** *To coordinate land use policies that promote economic and community development while protecting the quality of life in Camden County.*

**Objective 1:** To develop policies and regulations limiting driveways on key roads, and encouraging road connectivity and alternative transportation modes in community core and other clustered development.

**Action:**Review and revise list of key roads and criteria for driveways, including use of shared drives.

**Responsible Party:** Planning Department, Planning Board, County Commissioners

**Timeframe**: Mid Term

**Objective 2:** To review and revise land use plan to include possible new town center development, mixed use districts, higher residential density, and neighborhood commercial.

**Responsible Party:** Planning Department, Planning Board, County Commissioners

**Timeframe**: Mid Term

**Objective 3:** To support and promote planned commercial and residential growth as defined by smart growth, commercial hub and town core concepts.

**Action:**-Review and revise land use/comprehensive plan to reflect development trends, and expansion of water and sewer systems.

-Revise UDO to encourage higher density development in areas served by public sewer.

-Revise sewer connection policies to allow residential connections to sewer system where higher density development promotes economic development.

**Responsible Party:** Planning Department, Planning Board, County Commissioners

**Timeframe**: Long Term

**Objective 4:** To prepare a plan and map showing where business could locate based on water/sewer infrastructure as well as land use plan. Create a map of areas where businesses could locate. Have on hand to show developers and business community to market Camden County.

**Action:**Prepare a county wide comprehensive plan.

**Responsible Party:** Planning Department, Planning Board, County Commission, Land Owners

**Timeframe:** Short Term

**Issue: To improve the economic development products available in Camden County**

**Goal A:** *To develop the economic development infrastructure within Camden County.*

**Objective 1:** To expand water/sewer infrastructure in key geographic growth areas.

**Action:**Complete water/sewer master plan in conjunction with land use plans.

**Responsible Party:** County Commission, County Government Depts., Funding Sources

**Timeframe:** Short Term, Ongoing

**Objective 2:** To expand broad band internet capabilities throughout the county through public/private partnerships.

**Action:**-Support regional efforts to create a not for profit “middle mile” fiber optic transmission network.

-Design and build water and sewer infrastructure to include conduit provisions for future fiber optic distribution.

-Partner with private providers to support distribution of “last mile” transmission throughout developing areas of the county.

**Responsible Party:** County Commissioners, Telecom Companies, ENC Authority, State Agencies

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Objective 3:** To study future needs in relation to transportation infrastructure including roadways, waterways, railroads, and air transport.

**Action:**-Obtain permission from the Army Corps of Engineers to use the South Mills Barge Site bulkhead for private industrial development of adjacent property.

-Include transportation element in comprehensive plan to include evaluation of future needs of NC 343, Old Swamp Road, Hwy 34, and Sandy Hook road.

-Support widening of US 158 from Belcross to Barco.

-Support ongoing efforts to federal funding to maintain Dismal Swamp Canal.

-Regulate driveway cuts on main arterial roads, and require connectivity between developments.

**Responsible Party:** Planning Department, NC Dept. of Transportation

**Timeframe:** Long Term

**Goal B*:*** *To assist existing businesses within Camden County.*

**Objective 1:** To monitor and communicate with existing businesses about their needs to prevent them from going out of business.

**Action:**-Maintain a business directory of businesses located in the county.

-Promote periodic promotional and networking events for businesses.

-Develop and maintain an economic development web site with current news and interactive communication tools.

-Prepare and distribute an annual report to the Board of Commissioners and the business community about the County’s economic development progress.

**Responsible Party:** Chamber of Commerce, Camden County EDC, County Government Depts. **Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Objective 2:** To seek out new value added business or industry clusters that enhance existing businesses.

**Action:**Recruit and support agri-businesses and eco tourism related businesses.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County EDC, NC Dept. of Commerce, Northeast Partnership

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Objective 3:** Assist existing businesses with projects that will help them grow (ex. hire more people, expand locations, new machinery, etc…)

**Responsible Party:** Chamber of Commerce, Camden County EDC, County Gov’t, Planning Dept.

**Timeframe:** Short Term

**Goal C*:*** *To recruit businesses to locate in Camden County*

**Objective 1:** To prepare and implement targeted recruitment of specific business types:

* Day Care facilities / After School Programs
* Hotels or other accommodations for tourists and visitors
* Medical Facilities
* Assisted living facilities
* Grocery Store
* Agri-business
* Retail businesses

**Responsible Party:** Camden County EDC, Planning Dept., NC Dept. of Commerce, Northeast Partnership, Chamber of Commerce,

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Objective 2:** To prioritize business recruitment efforts including targeting Elizabeth City and Virginia businesses that could expand in Camden County.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County EDC, Planning Dept. NC Dept. of Commerce, North East Partnership, Chamber of Commerce

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Objective 3:** To work with industrial recruitment partners to market the County’s available industrial sites such as the Albemarle EDC, Northeast Commission, and the NC Dept. of Commerce.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County EDC, Planning Dept. NC Dept. of Commerce, North East Partnership, Chamber of Commerce

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Objective 4:** To create a high quality workforce that will address the needs of 21st Century Businesses (Basic, Technical, Computer and Soft Skills)

**Responsible Party:** Camden County School System, College of the Albemarle, ECSU, EDC Board

**Timeframe:** Long Term

**Goal D*:*** *To develop a green industrial park in Camden County*

**Objective 1:** To prepare a comprehensive master plan for the future development of the Green Business Park.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County EDC, Engineering Firm, Consultants

**Timeframe:** Short Term

**Objective 2:** To create a governing body that will oversee the creation and operation of the Green Business Park.

**Responsible Party:** County Commissioners, Camden County EDC,

**Timeframe:** Short Term

**Objective 3:** To seek out and secure funds for the creation and operation of the Green Business Park through grant sources and the NC General Assembly.

**Responsible Party:** County Commissioners, Camden County EDC, General Assembly, Funding Sources

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Objective 4:** To promote and market the Green Park to possible industrial tenants.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County EDC, North East Partnership, NC Dept. of Commerce

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Goal E*:*** *To create an organization or body responsible for sustained Economic Development in Camden County.*

**Objective 1:** To create an Economic Development point person (department or committee) that would be the first point of contact for business in the county, separate from the planning department, to help navigate the permitting process, have the knowledge and authority to negotiate with businesses to meet their needs, and act at the speed of business.

**Action:** -Develop job description and competitive pay scale.

-Submit funding proposal to Board of Commissioners.

**Responsible Party:** County Commissioners, Camden County EDC

**Timeframe:** Short Term

**Objective 2:** To seek out grant and loan funding sources for business development and make information available to eligible businesses.

**Action:**-Post state information on County economic development web site regarding available state and federal assistance programs.

-Provide technical assistance to businesses applying for assistance programs.

-Approve resolutions of support for applications for assistance programs.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County EDC, College of the Albemarle Small Business Center

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Objective 3:** To establish a sustainable business to promote ad support economic and community development in Camden County.

**Responsible Party:** County Commissioners, Camden County EDC

**Timeframe:** Short Term

**Objective 4:** To implement the 21st Century Community Strategic Economic Development Plan and to periodically review and update the plan.

**Responsible Party:** County Commissioners, 21st CC Steering Committee, Camden County EDC

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Goal F*:***  *To engage in community development projects that support economic development and enhance the quality of life in Camden County.*

**Objective 1:** Promote affordable housing for residents and the future workforce of Camden County.

**Action:** -Permit higher density residential development where serve by public sewer.

-Reduce or eliminate school impact fees.

**Responsible Party:** Community Development Corporations, Planning Dept., Non-profit groups

**Timeframe:** Long Term

**Objective 2:** Support further development of parks and recreation in Camden County (ex. Parks and Rec. Dept., Walking trails, Community Center/Gymnasium, public water access, etc…)

**Action***:*  -Design, plan and fund construction and operations of a county community/recreation center.

-Design, plan and seek funding for improved and additional access to North River and Pasquotank River.

-Create additional parks and recreation facilities in the northern and southern portions of the county.

**Responsible Party:** County Commissioners, Citizens, Parks and Recreation Department

**Timeframe:** Long Term

**Objective 3:** Support the development of affordable and high quality child care facilities and after school programs.

**Action:** Integrate child care and senior programs to “family” approach to enhancing both programs.

**Responsible Party:** Northeastern Community Development Corporation, Partnership for Children

**Timeframe:** Long Term

**Objective 4:** Support facilities and programs for senior citizens in Camden County.

**Action:**Include facilities and programs into new community/recreation center.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County Senior Center, Area Agency on Aging, Health Dept.

**Timeframe:** Long Term

**Objective 5:** Maintain the high quality school system and facilities of Camden County Public Schools.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County Public School System

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Issue: Marketing and Communication about Economic and Community Development in Camden County.**

**Goal A*:*** *Create a unified marketing plan for Camden County that targets specific audiences.*

**Objective 1:** To consolidate and coordinate a variety of viewpoints regarding economic development into a single vision that the community will support.

**Action:**Obtain professional assistance in developing a comprehensive branding and marketing strategy.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County EDC, County Commissioners, Private Consultants

**Timeframe:**Short Term

**Objective 2:** To develop and maintain an economic development web page in the county web site.

**Responsible Party:** County Information Technology Staff, Camden County EDC

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Goal B*:*** *Improve communication between Camden County Government and the county citizens.*

**Objective 1:** To establish a regular periodic newsletter of development and governmental activities.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County Government Staff

**Timeframe:** Long Term

**Objective 2:** Provide regular updates to the Camden County Government website.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County Government Staff, Information Technology Person

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Objective 3:** Provide regular updates on the local public access television station.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County Government Staff

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Issue:** **Developing the eco-tourism economy in Camden County**

**Goal A:** *Promote and enhance the eco-tourism assets that already exist in Camden County*

**Objective 1:** Establish a bike route connection between the Virginia and North Carolina Dismal Swamp Bike Trail.

**Action:** -Execute a memorandum of understanding with Chesapeake to coordinate efforts to connect the trails.

-Enlist support of state and federal elected officials for approvals and funding assistance.

-Submit project for approval on the NCDOT District Transportation Improvement Program.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County Parks and Recreation Dept., Dismal Swamp State Park

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Objective 2:** To support eco-tourism in the southern part of the county through improving boat access to the river, and trail systems in the state owned preserve area.

**Action:** -Submit application to CAMA and Fish & Wildlife Agency to fund improvements to Crooked Creek, and to North River.

-Submit application to CAMA and Fish & Wildlife Agency to fund trail and improvements to landing and canoe access from North River campground.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County Parks and Recreation Dept., Dismal Swamp State Park, NC Wildlife Officer

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Objective 3:** To establish development strategies in the following product areas:

* Eco-Tourism (DSSP, Welcome Center, Bike Trails, Natural Resources, Passive Recreation, Rivers, Active Recreation)
* Sports- Parks
* Quality of Life – Culture
* Agriculture – Festival, Products, Markets, Fishing.

**Responsible Party:** Camden County 21st CC Steering Committee, Camden County EDC

**Timeframe:** Mid Term

**Steering Committee Accomplishments**

Camden County’s 21st Century Community Steering Committee were a proactive group when it came to kick starting economic and community development. The committee realized that the planning process would take many months before a final report would be completed. The group felt that they could start to implement certain projects now, while at the same time continuing the strategic planning discussions. Toward the end of regular meetings, the steering committee was asked to reflect on these accomplishments and list what had been achieved to date.

* *Interest in Economic Development-* The Committee felt that before the 21st Century Community Initiative began, there was not a lot of economic development taking place in the county. They felt that the program had created a certain momentum behind future efforts.
* *Coordination from 21st CC Staff-* Committee members felt that the 21st Century Community program gave the county some guidance and a level of coordination within the county.
* *Professional Networking-* Committee members represented a wide variety of interests within Camden County. The twice monthly meetings provided an avenue for Camden business interests to come together and discuss issues and developments.
* *Engaging Outside Community Partners-* There was the perception that Camden County had been somewhat isolated within the region. Committee members felt that in the future there would be more willingness to seek out collaborative partnerships with others in the region.
* *Commissioner Buy-in-* Through interviews and discussions the perception existed that previous County Commissions were not supportive of economic development efforts. Steering committee members sought to get more buy-in from current County leaders. Commissioners were invited to attend 21st Century Community planning meetings, and several became active participants in the committee.
* *Improved Communication-* In the past a weekly newsletter kept the community informed of what was going on in the County. Some felt that county residents are not always informed about local government actions. Using the county’s website to make announcements has improved communication in Camden.
* *Business After-Hours-* Camden County had never hosted a Business After-Hours event for the Elizabeth City, Pasquotank, and Camden Chamber of Commerce. With the assistance of Chamber President, Jennifer Palestrant, and donations from members of the steering committee, one was organized for June 16th, 2009. Randy Kraniak hosted the event at his business, Albemarle Propane. The event was well attended and featured several County Commissioners doing the cooking. The Business After-hours event was a good step toward uniting the business community in Camden County.
* *Grants Funding-* Prior to the start of the 21st Century Community Program, Camden County had not been as proactive in seeking grant funds as other communities. With the initial award of a Community Assistance Initiative Grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation, Camden began to seek out additional grants and assistance to help fund economic and community development projects. Camden applied for and received several grants from the NC Rural Center, and others.
* *Water and Sewer Master Plan-* Camden County recognized that lack of infrastructure was a major priority in spurring future economic development, and they began to make plans for the future. Camden began working with an engineering firm, to develop a water and sewer master plan that will address future needs in the County.
* *Green Park Master Plan-* Prior to the start of the 21st Century Community Initiative, Camden County worked with UNC-Chapel Hill on a feasibility study for a Green Industry Commerce Park. This plan was jumpstarted by the award of close to $2 Million from Golden LEAF to run water and sewer lines up to the proposed site of the Green Park. Camden County sought funds and assistance to create a master plan for the project.
* *Inventory of Available Development Sites-* A number of land parcels and buildings had been for sale in Camden County, yet there was little effort to package and promote these assets for economic development purposes. Camden County’s Planning Staff decided to compile a list and record all relevant information about these properties to create an inventory of development sites. This list is now available on the County’s website.
* *County Business Incentive Fund-* Due to the lack of economic development interest among County leaders, there was very little expenditure for economic development purposes. Current County Commissioners took the initiative to create a special line item in the budget that would provide funds for business recruitment. These funds would be used as an incentive for business relocation or expansion, provided certain conditions are met.
* *Business Directory-* The Steering Committee, felt that more should be done to promote the existing businesses in Camden County. Due to the spread out geography of the County, these businesses are not located within close proximity of one another. The Planning Department and the Steering Committee got together to compile information about every business and organization in the County. This data was compiled to create the first business directory for Camden County. The business directory was published online and in bound copies, and is now a valuable resource to residents, visitors, and the businesses featured.
* *Economic Development Commission-* Prior to the 21st Century Communities Initiative, Camden County was a member of the Albemarle Economic Development Commission. Some leaders and members of the business community felt that they did not see much return on their investment. Camden leaders decided to create their own Economic Development Commission, and took steps to create the framework for the organization. Funds were set aside, by-laws were created, and members were appointed to create the Camden County Economic Development Commission. The board now meets monthly to plan the Green Commerce Park and promote economic development in the county.

**Implementation**

It is clear from the list of steering committee accomplishments that Camden County has already shown a commitment to implement many of the recommendations in the strategic plan. The hard work and dedication of the steering committee has been carried over to the newly formed Camden County Economic Development Commission. The EDC, has the full backing of the County Commission, and are supported in their efforts by the various County Governmental Departments. Camden’s Business Community has been energized with this momentum and hopefully the citizens of Camden County will benefit from the effort. There appears to be a core group of advocates for continued economic and community development progress.

This progress will require the support of collaborative partners from within Camden and also from outside the county. Being a small rural county, the local government does not have all of the staff and resources needed to implement every recommendation in the strategic plan. There are projects that are beyond the capabilities of the County alone, therefore they will need to seek out partners who can assist to implement these recommendations. The County should engage all of the available economic and development partners including regional partners such as the Northeast Economic Development Partnership, The Elizabeth City Pasquotank Camden Chamber of Commerce, and the Albemarle Commission, Elizabeth City State University, College of the Albemarle, and others. The County should take full advantage of state wide resources such as the NC Department of Commerce, The Rural Economic Development Center, Workforce Development Boards, Small Business Technology Development Center, ENC Authority, and other agencies working on economic and community development. Federal Agencies such as the US Department of Agriculture, the Economic Development Agency, and others also have offices in the state. Camden County should take advantage of these partners and resources and seek their collaboration on implementing these economic development strategies.

Camden County has limited budget funds to devote to economic and community development efforts. Therefore, Camden should actively seek out financial assistance in the form of grants, loans and bonds. There are many different funding mechanisms and schemes designed for all types of economic and community development projects. Grant making agencies and private foundations such as Community Development Block Grants, the Golden LEAF Foundation, the Rural Center, and the Commerce Finance Center offer funding to Counties like Camden. County leaders may have to go beyond general fund allocations and turn to debt financing for larger projects. The office of State Treasurer, Municipal Bond Councils, and Consultants can assist the County when pursuing financing of development projects. Camden County should also explore direct allocation of funds from the NC General Assembly, or the US Congress. Camden should work with their state and federal elected delegation to pursue these funding avenues.

In order to implement these policy recommendations, Camden County should partner with other counties and municipalities and work regionally to realize shared economic development goals. Working collaboratively with neighboring communities has shown to be a successful model in other parts of the state. In the western part of the state, counties form working relationships with each other, apply for grants together, and initiate region wide projects that benefit the whole area. This strategy should be explored in Camden County, where there is a history of collaboration fighting the OLF. Camden’s neighbors share many of the same assets and challenges, so seeking ways to work together should be a preferred option. To do this Camden should start communicating with regional partners regularly, such as the Roanoke River Valley Mayors Association, which meets monthly to share information and build relationships. Camden’s future is directly linked to the rest of Northeastern North Carolina so collaboration should be a priority.

Camden County’s 21st Century Community Strategic Economic Development Plan should serve as a framework to begin the process of growing the economy. Camden County has already begun to implement some of the suggestions, notably the creation of the Economic Development Commission. That body will be tasked with building of off the work of the steering committee, and adding to this document. They should review this plan regularly, to note what progress has been made, and where more work can be done. The board should prioritize the goals and objectives to create a work plan for the organization. Finally the board should continue the strategic planning process with regular sessions to build off of this plan and update the document periodically.

**Appendix**

**Reconnaissance Visit Questionnaire Summary**

**SECTION A**

**Strengths and Weaknesses, Recent Events, Future Trends:**

1. What do you consider to be your community’s greatest strength(s)?

Strength is:

(i.e. location, tourism, workforce, education)

* Good Schools/Education System (12)
* Location (Close to Hampton Roads, Beaches, RTP, Tidewater) (11)
* Quality of Life (10)
* Sense of Community (6)
* Rural Nature (6)
* People (5)
* Open Space (4)
* Quiet/low key (2)
* Geography/Natural Resources (2)
* Others Comments: Homes, Military Families, Beauty, Strong Leadership, Unified County, Traditional Values, Water, Planning Department, Controlled Centered Growth

1. What do you consider to be the major obstacle(s) in your community?

* Lack of Infrastructure (Water and Sewer) (15)
* County Government Leaders Resist Growth (High Impact Fees, No Incentives, Commission, Manager, Planning Dept. No vision, Good-Old-Boy, Insulated Decision Making, etc..) (14)
* Lack of Industry and Commercial Growth (11)
* Residents Resistant to Change, Growth, Newcomers (7)
* Tax Base (Residential only, Too High) (5)
* Other Comments: County Sectionalism, Military Families not engaged in community, Soils don’t support septic tanks, Schools almost at capacity, lack of law enforcement/fire/rescue, Need to look at mixed zoning, high real estate prices, bedroom community image, need to make better use of water asthetics

1. Has anything occurred in the area recently that affects the overall economy? If so, what?

* Fear of the Outlying Landing Field (OLF) (16)
* Ford Plant Layoffs (6)
* Housing Market Slowdown (6)
* Not getting the Proposed Landfill (4)
* Cost of Fuel (3)
* Military Changes/relocation of aircraft carrier (2)
* Tax revaluations (2)
* Proposed Green Industrial Park (2)
* Other Comments: Blackwater Reputation, Overcrowding Schools, Dismal Swamp State Park designation, No retail businesses, Economy tied to neighboring counties, overpaid for new high school property, not working with developers who are willing to pay for infrastructure, Enacted Impact Fees, National Economic slowdown

1. Do you see a continuing decline of traditional industries in your county, such as manufacturing and/or agriculture? Y N

If so, how is your county prepared to adjust?

* Yes, continued decline (14)
* No, agriculture is ok (13)
* NA, no industry to decline (7)
* Other Comments: small farms decline while large farms ok, bedroom community needs new mindset, county doesn’t care about agriculture, new agriculture products, county is grabbing at anything to pay bills, agriculture decline due to land being sold for developments, leaders just now realizing change in order to sustain economy, mom and pop and home based businesses only, Moratorium and Impact Fees helped slow decline of agriculture, difference between leaders goals, agriculture will decline with OLF, higher land costs equal decline in agriculture

1. What type industries (i.e. wood products, plastics, textiles) does the county currently have?

* Agriculture (15)
* No industry (11)
* Blackwater (7)
* Construction/Housing Development (3)
* Education system (3)
* Independent Small Business (2)
* Commercial Fishermen (2)
* Other Comments: bedroom community, some tourism, concrete/asphalt, saw mill, some marina or water based industry, South Mills IGA, Laundromat needed,

1. Are you aware of any new businesses in the area?

* None (11)
* Small Business/Home Based (7)
* Strip Center (2)
* Zero’s Subs (2)
* Cement Plant (2)
* Other Comments: Tracks Restaurant, Coffee Shop, Florist, Insurance Office, Todd’s Duck-Thru, Pharmacy, Service related, Pharmacy/Medical Office Planed, Retail will come with sewer, Farm Markets, Something in Belcross, Commercial development will go in Camden Business Park because its zoned as Highway Commercial

1. If you could add three businesses or services to your community, what would they be and why?
2. Type \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Type \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Type \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(i.e. Retail, specific: Target)

* Grocery Store (22) – Convenience, Jobs, Anchor, less driving, taxes
* Restaurants (10) – Convenience, Fast Food, residential growth, taxes
* Pharmacy (8) – Convenience, there is none, jobs,
* Eco-Tourism/Outfitter (5) – Canoe and Kayak rental,
* Hotel (5) – Vacationers, Dismal Swamp State Park,
* Manufacturing (5) – Jobs, Tax Base
* Medical Facilities (4) – No Doctors, Dentists, Nurses. Have to drive long distance
* Retail (3) – Shopping Center, Big Box
* School Facilities (3) – Technology, Bigger, Amenities like Pool and Track
* Hotel (2) – Dismal Swamp, Tourists
* Daycare (2)
* Automobile Plant (2) – Jobs, Taxes, Toyota
* Green Business (2) – low impact to environment
* Other Comments: Library, Movie Theater, Community Park, Boat Building, Hardware Store, RV Supply and repair, Agriculture, Auto Parts Store, Technical/Computer Services, Community Center, No Landfill, Trash Removal, Golf, Car Dealership, Clothing, Building Supply, Electronics.

1. What would be the one major objective you would do to improve the economic development potential of your county?

* Water and Sewer Infrastructure (21)
* Leadership (8) – Good ol’boy network, vision, diverse viewpoints, mesh old and new, transparency, educate elected officials, more cooperation with elected and employed officials
* New Businesses (5) – Improve tax base beyond residential, keep dollars in Camden Co.
* Marketing (4) – Economic Development Director + resources, sell yourself, higher profile
* Internet (3)
* Incentive Package (2) – Tax breaks
* Other Comments: Cell Towers, Moratoriums & Adequate Facilities Ord./Impact Fees, Clean Industry, First Class Education, Cultural Things to do, work with developers because minimum lot sizes too large and attract only large developments

**Infrastructure:**

1. Are there any water issues, including supply or water quality etc.? Y N

If so, what are they?

* No (15)
* Supply OK (5) – expanded plant,
* Need to unify separate water systems (5) – inefficiencies, one public one private,
* Supply not OK (5) – Some areas of county not enough water
* Quality OK (3) –
* Quality not OK (2) – Corrosive properties
* Storm Water Management an issue (2)
* Other Comments: No sewer hinders development, Garbage pick-up wanted, Wells cheaper

1. Are there transportation issues in your county? Y N

If so, what are they?

* No (9) – No Explanation
* Need to Widen Highway 158 (9) – Mixed blessing, detriment to high school
* No Public Transportation (6) – Needed
* Public Transportation Available (5) – ICPTA, Call Reserve, Seniors, Regional Health Dept.
* Yes (4) – No Explanation
* Need to Widen Highway 343 (4)
* Traffic a problem (4) –
* Car needed (3) – County too far spread out, private car only option
* Improved Highways needed (3) – General Quality
* Other Comments: Taxi, Park & Ride Van, One Road N&S One Road E&W, Bicycle Path Improvements needed, Coordinate with Parks & Recreation, Roads in good Shape, Down the line yes currently no

1. Are there other community improvement needs or issues in your county that relate to economic development?

* Water and Sewer Infrastructure (11) – Tap up fee up from $15 to $35, system ends ½ mile from prime building areas, limits business attraction, biggest issue
* School Improvements (5) – Physical Expansion, need for financial education,
* Emergency Service Improvements (4) – Fire Department
* No improvements needed (3)
* Community Center (2) – Kids and Senior Activities
* More Homes needed (2) – attract commercial business, attractive
* Rail System (2) – Improve Industry Development, Distribution
* Other Comments: Eco-tourism, Outdoor Sports, Inn/Hotel, Need Economic Development Board utilize retirees resources, Welcome Center on 17 Northern County, More Transparency in County Government, Need Action Plan for Industrial Development, Blackwater largest boom, Link existing business on the county web site, More access to Public Trust Waterways, Develop plan for youth to stay in Camden County, Cable TV and Internet may be a problem, OLF- Negative, Green Park Development- Positive, Need to re-define North Eastern North Carolina.

1. Does the county have adequate highway access? Y N

* Yes (17)
* No (6)
* Need to Widen Highway 158 (3)
* Other Comments: Lack of turnoffs from highway hinder development, Only 17 Bypass, Most County roads narrow and need to be widened, Route 17 an asset but need more interchanges connecting to 17, Highway 343 should become 4 lane, new lane from Moyock to South Mills could lead to industrial park

1. Does county have an economic development website?

Or other county website?

**Website: www.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* County website (7) – <http://www.camdencountync.gov/>
* No Economic Development Website (2)
* Not aware of one (2)
* [www.discoverec.com](http://www.discoverec.com)
* Albemarle Commission’s Website

**Workforce:**

1. Do you think the county workforce has the education and/or skills that potential employers are seeking or will seek in the future? Y N

If not, what education, training or skills are most needed?

* Yes (22)
* Good School System (6) – Education system great, high quality, college ready
* Ready for College (4) – Most kids go to college after graduation
* No (4) – No explanation
* Children Do Not Return (3) – After Graduation move out of area
* Partnerships with Community College and ECSU (3)
* Need Accounting/Financial Skills (3)
* Need Soft Skills (2)
* CamTech (2) – Vocational/Technical Training, Good Job
* Need Administrative Skills (2)
* Need Management Skills (2)
* Residents work in EC or VA (2) – 95%, Professionals
* Manufacturing Skills adequate (2) – layoffs from Ford, trade labor pool adequate
* Unfamiliar with job link career center / Workforce Development Board (2)
* Other Comments: Good Internet skills, Need Basic Reading and writing skills, On the job training programs, School overcrowding an issue, Trained for entry level min. wage jobs, Good program in healthcare services, Need boat building courses, retail (convenience store skills), Hi-Tech Park in Pasquotank most people from VA, Need vocational skills like welders and high end mechanics, Need Aviation related training, What or who does county want to attract? Spill over from EC or VA?

**Environment, Partnerships and Quality of Life:**

1. In your opinion, what if any, are the special quality of life amenities for current residents and for inducement for economic development? (i.e. climate, location, natural features, historic sites, recreational opportunities, festivals and events, or cultural attractions)

* Water (15) – Rivers, lakes, watersports, fishing, sailing, need more public access/boats
* Natural Resources (9) – Need to capitalize, natural landscape, geography, environment
* Rural Atmosphere (8) – Setting
* Location (6) – Close to EC, VA (Hampton Roads, Norfolk, Airport), RDU,
* Parks and Recreation (6) – School sports, ball fields, programs
* Dismal Swamp (5) – State Park, Historic, Paddlers
* Beaches Proximity (5) – OBX, Resorts
* Sense of Community (5) – Small town atmosphere, close knit, friendly people
* Quiet (4) – Peaceful, Tranquil
* Open Spaces (4) – Undeveloped land, available for development, cheap
* Safety (4) – Low Crime, No Urban Issues
* Schools (4) – Good Education System, Center of Community Life, Sports
* History (3) – Needs to be promoted, Dismal Swamp, Shiloh site
* Climate (3) – Weather, protected from storms hurricanes, mild,
* Beauty (3) – Scenic
* Lack of Sense of Place (3) – No community Center, Downtown, Festival, events,
* Other Comments: Bikes/kayaking in Northern Camden Co., Need health and emergency services fire protection, Paddle 4 the Border, Annual MLK March, Military Retirees

1. Are there adequate parks, public waterfront access, recreation, and entertainment opportunities for residents of all age and groups?

* Not Enough (13)
* Not Enough Public Water Access (8) – Need more boat ramps, waterfront parks
* Boat Access OK (6) –
* Baseball/Softball Fields (4) – Good
* Yes, Adequate (4)
* Bike Trails (4)
* Hunting and Fishing (4) – Big pastime
* Other Comments: Need more family entertainment opportunities, small park on causeway, entertainment in EC or VA, New Arts council no commitment from Camden County, Nothing for people without children, no place to gather, no public swimming pool, need to develop adult leagues, high school athletic fields are heavily used, create a central park along the river to host festivals, theater is needed for music venues plays, need movie theater, Great Dismal Park, not much for kids, development has walking trails- ball field, no entertainment in county, community park has been expanded, working on some improvements, no theaters or malls

1. What do you think would improve the quality of life in your community?

* Shopping Amenities (9) – Restaurants, Bookstore, Supermarket
* Quality of Life Good (5)
* No Growth (5) – More people causes QoL to go down, will destroy community, maintain,
* Recreation Activities (4) – Entertainment
* Infrastructure (3)
* Services (3) – Improve, Expand Public and Private
* Jobs (3) – Better, Higher Paying, More options
* Partner with surrounding communities (2)
* Need parks in northern and southern parts of county (2)
* Other comments: More family events, community center (pool), area designated as downtown, gathering spot, public transportation, place to exercise, more diverse community, free internet access, health services, keep out OLF, more citizen input on county development, develop a vision and stick with it, activities for people age 55+ (golf), Mixed use development with homes, grocery store, shops, restaurants, entertainment.

1. How are elected officials perceived? Does this differ in various areas of the county and/or in individual towns?

* Divided depending on geography (9) – Old Camden vs. South Mills Newcomers, depends
* Elected officials Positive Image (7) – Generally OK, Competent, do the best they can,
* Not receptive to growth (6) – No ED, status quo, moratorium/sewer, turn away business
* Partisan (4) – Split based on Political party (2 Dems, 2 Reps, 1 Indy)
* Old Boys Network (4) – Worthington/Farabees/Jennings, may not be justified, insular
* Infighting among council (2) – Chair resigned, unnecessary, don’t get along, Overall C-
* Need more education (2) – Uninformed, not receptive to all view points
* Becoming more receptive to ED (2) – Landfill, more pro-development
* Too Conservative (2)
* Other Comments: People generally complain, spend money on wrong areas not infrastructure, Special Interest, do not act on advice of employees/planning board/BoA, county focused on same goals, inspectors and officials need more personality, planning dept is good but lacks funds to implement ideas, people tend to know each other, Reactionary Board,

1. Are there major differences of opinion between specific groups of residents (e.g. old-young, rich-poor, white-black-Hispanic-native American, towns-rural areas)? If so, describe.

* Long term Residents vs. Newcomers (14) – Northerners, Newcomers want managed growth and ED, 50/50, transplants, 5 generations, long timers reluctant to change, different minsets,
* No Racial Tension (11) – Not aware, mostly white, minority mod income, pay for MLK fest
* Wealth Divisions (3) – haves/have nots, wealthy North Camden ($) vs. South Camden (~~$~~)
* Old vs. Young (3) – old don’t want change, preserve way of life
* Hispanic Population Growing (2) – 10%
* Shiloh vs. South Mills (2)
* Not enough Affordable Housing (2) - hurt African Americans
* Other Comments: Vietnamese Population, Problem with Racial relations, leaders want higher class of new residents, older generation impacted by reevaluation/inflation/taxes, 25% black, 10% Minority, Jet Base in NC

1. Are there any negative feelings? If so, what can be done to build positive relations between citizens, government, business, and local governments?

* Clear Communication Needed (7) – all the facts,
* Public Forums Needed (5) – bring community into process, feedback
* Need More Transparency in Government (5) – No backdoor deals, open decision making
* No Negative Feelings (5)
* Need Education (3) – Misinformation, Enlightenment on issues
* Diversity needed (3) – need training for elected officials, need right person to lead,
* County Newsletter (3) – Used to have 2-3 page, local newspaper to advertise meetings
* Native vs. Newcomer Divide (3) – threatened by change
* Truthfulness in Government (2) – Trust
* Other Comments: Negative Feelings exist, local cable station but no personnel, 21st Century Program, Landfill was big issue, recent community development initiatives brought citizens together (Landfill, OLF, Grant proposals) Family practice on HWY 158, making strides, 8am meeting is a problem keeps people out, trying to develop housing area, community center to gather, good working relationship with county, business friendly positive cooperation

**Health and Child Care, Education and Crime:**

What is the most pressing health issue (i.e. nutrition, wellness, screenings, education) facing the community? Are there programs in place to prevent or otherwise address these issues?

Lack of Healthcare Facilities (6) – No doctors/nurses/dentists, travel to EC, VA, ECU, access

Education (5) – Prevention, wellness screenings,

Obesity (5)

Cancer (5) – Southern part of county.

Emergency Services (3) – Ambulance, Fire/Rescue, long response times

Transportation (2) – low income no transportation need assistance

Social Workers (2) – Need more

Senior Center (2) – Need program, lunches

Other Comments: Need drug store in medical village, new parks and rec. dept., new school system committee to improve nutrition, smoke from Hyde County Fires, Social Security Funds do not come back from state, people not seeking healthcare, affordability, Health Department programs available, do not know, none

Are there an adequate number of health care facilities, doctors, nurses, and dentists in your community?

* No (17) – Need a hospital, no doctors/nurses
* Doctor’s Office (10) – Satellite office in Medical Park, Health Department
* Nearby Medical facilities (9) – Dependent on EC, Chesapeake, specialists, regionally
* No Dentists (4)
* Other Comments: Mental Health, Don’t know

Are there adequate child care facilities in your community? Y N

Affordable child care facilities? Y N

Adequate child care facilities (11)

Not Adequate Child Care Facilities (9)

Affordable Child Care (11)

Not Affordable (2)

Northeastern Child Development Center (3)

Waiting List (3)

Unsure (3)

Other Comments: Need after school program, one or two facilities, mainly for low income

How is the local education (K – Comm. College) system? Are new programs or facilities needed to address specific deficiencies? Is there an adequate supply of qualified teachers?

* Great Education System (26) – Good support, K-12, Outstanding, Excellent
* Teachers Highly Qualified (8) – Personal interest in students, competitive pay, loyal,
* High School Expansion (8) – Overcrowding, $32 Million, New HS needed, pop. Growth
* College of the Albemarle (4) – Good Resource, bringing back sports program, close
* CamTech (3) – Technical HS, success, needs more money
* Elizabeth City State University (3) good resource, close
* Other Comments: Need more vocational/technical programs(Agri, Auto Shop, Machine Welding), Need more dropout Prevention (COA GED biggest County HS), Need more hands on laboratory Equipment, New Primary School, Need to address special needs kids, Need additional funding, Good Special needs teachers, public library needed,

**General/Wrap Up:**

1. Are there any other comments that you would like to make about economic development in your county?

* Need Business and Industry (4)
* Need Water and Sewer Infrastructure (3)
* Other Comments: Maximize benefits of Coast Guard Base, Connect People (Communication), Hurricane Preparedness, County Commissioners need guidance, Address the crime problem, County needs to actively enforce their ordinances, most grants tied to job creation (Catch 22- No industry), OLF takes land out of tax base, Needs to hire Economic Development Director, Tourism should be division within ED, Camden great community with potential by expanding economy and citizen participation, County government/police seem to work against/harass citizens, Start at home plate, Be Deliberate, Fit into County Plans, Don’t get County into bind, Planning Dept. struggles with government to get plan in place, Many want to hold back development, Need businesses to get housing, need to be open to growth, Need to get County Commissioners involved,

**SECTION B**

## Questions for Business Owners or Plant Managers:

1. How long has your company been located here? \_\_\_\_\_\_ Yrs.

* 14 Years (2)
* 11 Years (2)
* 10 Years (2)
* Other Comments: 30,16,6,5,2

1. What factors helped the company to locate here? (i.e. labor force, incentives, locations, etc.)

* Location (3) – Central, Hampton Roads
* Comments: Good Roads, Water (boating) access, Quality of Life, Schools, Rural Atmosphere, Started in EC in 1988, Came to Camden in 1998, Market, Personal (property next to mother), Affordable housing, In Home Business, Demographics (Close to Military Bases, Camden Council was more willing to approve purchase

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce?

Strengths

* Education Levels (3)
* Other Comments: Quality of Life, Good Caliber of People, Good Work Ethic, do not require high skill levels

Weakness

* Workforce comes from outside Camden (2)
* Other Comments: No Entertainment to keep young professionals, lack of education generally specifically in trade fields, bad work ethic, no motivation, need to adapt to changing times, Ford plant closure, $40/hr salaries not available, not much in Camden so people leave, Limited number of applicants,

1. What difficulties has your company experienced operating in this location – permitting, supply issues etc.?

* Permitting Process (4) – Building Inspector hard to work with , County Gov. Hard to work with, Permitting difficult, Slow process because never been done learning curve (Mixed Use)
* Supply limited (4) – Services and Goods can’t get there, spend $100 Million,
* No Problem (2)
* Other Comments: Local CAMA reps are great, Good freight access, Limited Computer, Limited applicants from Camden Co., Use company as stepping stone, No places to eat lunch,

1. What improvements would you suggest for the county economic development program?

* Improve Infrastructure (3) – Water & Sewer on main arteries (158/17), transportation
* Develop an Economic Development Program (2) – include Tourism
* Other Comments: Make County Government easier to work with go overboard, pressure developers to bring business with them when they come.

1. What improvements would you suggest to better prepare the future workforce?

* Specific Skill Training (4) – Trades, Hands on, Contractors regarding process and regulations
* Adult Education (3) – Community College (COA)
* Other Comments: Schools good computer training, tried to recruit staff from University,

**SECTION C**

**Questions for Local Municipality and County Officials and Workers**

**Strengths and Weaknesses, Future Trends, Economic Development, Infrastructure:**

1. What positive features should be the county’s focus in the coming years?

* Business Attraction/Economic Development (4)
* Education (2)
* Infrastructure (2) – Sewer
* Eco-Tourism (2)
* Other Comments: Location (VA), Zoning, OLF, law/traffic enforcement, Hire an ED Director, improve treatment from County re: customer service, unified planning effort, rural setting, available land, natural resources, Dismal Swamp State Park

1. Are there wastewater and/or sewer issues in the county?

If so, what are they? Is there available capacity for new industrial expansion?

* Need to expand capacity (5)
* Other Comments: Need to address Stormwater, Possibility of light expansion (schools and courthouse), Waste water building own plant onsite

1. Do you have a transportation plan? Y N

* Not aware of a plan (10)
* Other Comments: One in the works, Currently follow NCDOT’s Plan

1. What is the level of fiber optic telecommunications infrastructure in the county? Is high-speed internet access available? Does the County use the internet to communicate with citizens and economic development initiatives?

* High Speed Internet Available (8)
* Not available everywhere (6)
* Quality not good (2) – cable capacity overloaded
* Mediacom not good (2) – bad customer service, no choice
* Other Comments: Cable Television service horrible, county website difficult to use not updated, County does not use webpage for communication, Mediacom affordable

1. What is your county or town doing to actively promote economic development and what successes have you had as a result of these efforts?

* Member Albemarle Commission (5) – representative with Pas, EC, Camden
* Limited results from membership (3) – 10-12 years $6K /year, nothing new
* Other Comments: county may not know what to do best way, Waste Industries fell through, OLF keep out, Need feasibility study for business park in northern part of county, efforts not well received in districts, county relies on state resources no investment from county, no ED Director in Camden, currently trying,

1. What part do the towns play in the county’s economic growth?

* Growth of population Centers (3) – South Mills, Focus growth around residential centers
* Other Comments: There are no towns, except for parking fire trucks, need more uniformity, citizens need to embrace and support new business (grocery store)

1. Does your county have a local “inducement” resource (land/labor/capital) that would be an incentive to an industry/company considering a location decision?

* No inducements available (9) – Have tried in the past,
* Other comments: Industrial Park but no water/sewer, have land and labor, should consider tax incentives, County doing all it can.

1. Is there affordable housing for all income groups? If not, what can be done?

Upper Income (14) yes (1)no Retirement (6) yes (7) no

Middle Income (10 )y es (5)no Assisted Living (2) yes (8) no

Lower Income (3) yes (12) no Needed/Missing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Need more Lower Income (5)
* Need more Middle Income (4)
* Need more Assisted (4)
* Need more Retirement (3)
* Other Comments: Land High=$170-180 houses, $10,280 impact fee for bldg permit, stay away from condos/apartments, reluctance to develop housing economically does not carry tax burden, need apartment duplex multifamily housing

1. What is the status of land use planning/controls in your community? Do you feel any changes/enhancements are needed?

* Land Use Plan is Good (4) – County ahead in this area, Adopted, Needs update
* Lot Size Requirements too restrictive (2) – 5 acre minimum in General Use District, anti-dev.
* Other Comments: Camden Plantation offered to pay $1.5 Million county needs to accept, 1500 expensive homes are good, County fairly restrictive limits some development, New land use controls feature Smart Growth strategies and new Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance recently passed, development needs to be targeted, quality land use plan voted down by commissioners, need to be more creative, core districts smaller, 9 families own 70% of the land and they don’t want change

1. Do government agencies and community organizations work together on programs with similar goals?

* Good Cooperation (5) – Smaller Groups, few organizations
* Bad Cooperation (3) – Not in large groups,
* Not Sure (3)
* Sometimes (2) – Depends in the issue to get people involved
* Other Comments: No incentive for cooperation, OLF private citizens group and county working together, Northeast Community Development primarily promotes EC, regional cooperation between EC and Pasquotank

**Camden County Supplement**

1. What is the most pressing problem facing Camden County today?

* Infrastructure (11) – Water/Sewer, Roads
* Lack of Tax Base (8) – No Industry or Commercial, Only Residential
* County Revenue (7) – Lack of Money in County Budget, Can’t Burrow, bankrupt
* Money for Schools (5) – Expansion, Improvements
* Managed Growth (3) – Planning, Controls, etc…
* Leadership (3) – Vision, balance ED and commercial with Community Development
* OLF (2)
* Other Comments: Funds for Matching Grants, ED, Politics, No growth, county won’t approve subdivisions, money to attract business, residential growth leading to higher taxes,

1. What are the three most important capital improvement needs for Camden County?

* Infrastructure (30) – Need County Water/Sewer Everywhere
* Schools (15) –
* Roads (4)
* County Office Complex (4)
* Community Center (3)
* Industry (2)
* Other Comments: Parks, Affordable Housing, Incentives for ED, Plan for the Future, Impact Fees, Better Managed Government, Commerce Park,

1. What is your vision for Camden County in the next 5 years? 10 years?

* New Businesses (13) – Shopping, Grocery, Entertainment, HWY Cooridors, Services
* Managed Residential Growth (11) – Cluster around pop. Centers, higher density, mixed use
* Economic Development (6) – Industry, Jobs
* High Quality of Life (6) – Preserved, Small Town Appeal
* Good Education System (5) – New High School, Expansion
* Preserve Rural Lifestyle (5) – Open Space, Promote Agriculture, value added agri-industy
* Infrastructure (4) – Water/Sewer
* Lodging Facilities (4) – Hotel, Bed & Breakfast
* Downtown Development (3) – Center of Community, Higher density, Walkable, gazebo/café
* Balance of interests (3) – Residential/Agriculture/Industry/Business
* Affordable Housing (2)
* Other Comments: Niche Markets, New County Complex, Community Center, Hwy 158 needs corridor overlay, Shiloh will be a village, NC 343 widened, No Change, eco-tourist cluster around the Dismal Swamp, bike trails expanded, Hwy 158 widened, growth to offset the tax burden, bridge to OBX 25 minutes away, Need more roads, won’t recognize county in 10 years, maybe higher taxes, better local government, changed mentality, more community events, opportunities for children other than farming, more friendly, county to become a leader learn from other’s mistakes

1. What are your views on the following local developments? Strongly Unfavorable, Unfavorable, Neutral, Favorable, Strongly Favorable.
   1. Outlying Landing Field (OLF)- SU-25, U-2, N-4, F-0, SF-1
   2. Green Industrial Park (Sustainable Industries)- SU-1, U-1, N-2, F-12, SU-15
   3. Camden Plantation- SU-1, U-3, N-5, F-12, SF-9
   4. Parks and Recreation Department- SU-0, U-0, N-4, F-15, SF-10

* Other Comments: OLF takes prime Farm Land, Camden Plantation burden the schools, P&R need aggressive visionary director, Don’t fully understand Green Park, Green Park useless until water and sewer, P&R needs more funding, P&R few jobs, Camden Plantation too high density

1. How could the County improve its communication and outreach to local citizens?

* Newsletter (11) – Advertise Meetings, Inform the Public,
* Cable Channel (9) – No staff, needs $, televise meetings, advertise jobs, P&R schedule
* Website (9) – Need regular updates, revamp to make it more user friendly
* Public Forums (4) – Educate the public, Allow Citizen Input, Open
* County Commission Meeting Time (2) – Evenings allow more attendance
* Other Comments: No Choices, Co. avoids communication don’t want people to object or attend meetings, More transparency needed for county business, Direct Mail, More coverage in local media, Fire County Manager, Work with Community Groups, Not sure if citizens are interested, elected officials should be proactive, go through County Manager, currently advertise through HOA, Churches, Flyers etc.., Recycle same people on committees- good old boy network, County had good communication

**Appendix B**

**Economic Indicators**

**Indicator 1: Population**

**Key Findings**

* Camden County experienced the highest growth rate (37.8%) among comparison counties.
* Between 2000 and 2007, Camden County experienced a significant increase in population from people migrating into the county from other regions of North Carolina, southern Virginia, and the United States.

**Indicator Overview**

Changes in population characteristics have social and economic implications that influence business location decisions and infrastructure demands. Population growth is considered an indication of economic opportunity as people often move to regions where there are jobs.[[1]](#footnote-1) Population growth can be attributed to two factors: natural increase and net migration. Positive natural increases result from a greater number of births than deaths for a region. Positive net migration results when more people migrate into a region from other parts of the U.S., than migrate out.

**How Does Camden County Perform?**

Between 2000 and 2007, Camden County recorded a population growth rate of 37.8 percent, the highest growth rate among comparison counties, the North East Regional Economic Development Partnership (18.5%) and the state as a whole (12.6%) [1-C]. All comparison counties experienced positive population growth during this time period, but only Currituck County (31.7%) and Camden County (37.8%) grew by more than thirty percent. While the growth rate for Camden is high, the actual increase in residents was somewhat small (2,605) when compared to comparison counties. Camden County currently ranks 97th out of 100 counties, with a total population of 9,271. The positive population growth noted for Camden County and all of its contiguous counties, suggests a trend of population expansion in the Northeast region as a whole.

*US Census Bureau*

Between 2000 and 2006, the population growth of different age groups[[2]](#footnote-2) in Camden County varied. Camden County experienced a significant increase in the number of 20-34 year old residents and a decline in both the 0-19 and 35-44 categories [1-C]. The significant increase in the 20-34 age group, along with decreases in the 0-19 and 35-44 age brackets may suggest that Camden County is attractive from a land availability or first-time home ownership perspective, but lacks resources or conveniences for families with children. The stability of Camden County’s 45-59 and 60 plus age groups between 2000 and 2006, and the nearing retirement of the “Baby Boomer” population could impact the available working-age population in the county.

*U.S. Census Bureau*

Camden County’s population experienced substantial growth between 2000 and 2007, the majority due to people moving in from other countries, states and nearby counties (positive net migration). Between 2000 and 2007, Camden County’s population increased by 2,620 individuals, of which 91.1% is attributable to positive net migration [1-C]. Camden County has a very small percentage of population increase due to natural causes indicating their population increase is largely attributable to outside population moving into the county. Gates County is the only county in the area to exceed Camden’s percentage increase of in-migrants. Of all counties and regions measured by Natural Migration and Natural Increase, only Pasquotank County, NC, Suffolk City, VA and Chesapeake City, VA experienced significant population growth by natural increase. Opposite from all other comparison regions, the majority of growth occurring in the Chesapeake area was due to natural population increase, not net in-migration. In general, two possible explanations for the significant increase in population due to in-migration in the rural North Carolina counties are: 1) the lower cost of living and abundant availability of land, and 2) the recent increase in the Hispanic population in North Carolina.

*U.S. Census Bureau*

**What does this mean for Camden County Economic Development?**

The relationship between economic development and positive population growth is strong. Camden County’s positive population growth due to net migration can lead to increased standard of living if employment opportunities remain available. In order to meet the needs of the expanding population in Camden County, economic development professionals will need to continue their focus on the infrastructure of the county (i.e. schools, water and sewer systems, utilities, roads, etc) and strategic workforce planning in order to supply facilities to train workers and supply labor to the developing economy.

**Indicator 2: Educational Attainment**

**Key Findings**

* Camden County’s dropout rate (2.61%) was the lowest among comparison counties and better than the state average (5.24%) for the 2006-2007 academic year.
* With 34 percent of its 25+ population having attained a high school diploma or equivalent in 2000, Camden County outperformed the state average (28.4%).

**Indicator Overview**

Education is a key driver of economic prosperity and an important characteristic to both the social and economic quality of a community. An educated population can lead to increased business opportunities and economic success. A steady and successful education system and level of attainment indicate strong ties as a community and opportunity to capitalize upon an educated local work-force. Higher levels of education tend to lead to higher wages, improve a worker’s ability to adapt to changing economic conditions, and are increasingly a prerequisite for employment in knowledge-based industries.

**How does Camden County Perform?**

Camden County’s education system is regarded by locals as highly successful. The county’s high school dropout rate (2.6%) was significantly lower than the state average (5.24%) for the 2006-2007 academic year [2-B]. The drop- out rate for Camden County decreased from a rate of 4.31% in 2000-2001 to become the lowest among comparison counties in 2006-2007, and indication that the county is a leader in education amongst its comparison counties and the overall state average.

*North Carolina Department of Public Instruction*

Camden County also outperforms the state and comparison counties on the percent of high school graduates. In 2000, the latest year data is available, 34% of Camden County’s population has obtained at least a high school diploma (or GED equivalency). The success of the school system in educating the population of Camden County indicates potential future success. The performance of the county exceeds the state level and the levels of its comparison counties. The current strength can only be predicted to continue into the future.

Camden County performed higher than the state average in terms of the percent of the 25+ population having attained a high school degree and the percent having attained an associate’s degree. However, Camden County performs below the state average on two attainment categories important for knowledge-based industries: bachelor’s degrees and graduate or professional degrees. Camden performs consistent with surrounding counties in most educational attainment categories.

**2-B Educational Attainment, by Region, 2000**

**(Percent persons 25 years and older)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **High School Graduate or Equiv.** | **Some College, No Degree** | **Associate's Degree** | **Bachelor's Degree** | **Graduate, Professional or Doctorate Degree(s)** |
| **North Carolina** | **28.4%** | **20.5%** | **6.8%** | **15.3%** | **7.2%** |
| **Camden** | **34.0%** | **24.0%** | **7.9%** | **10.9%** | **5.3%** |
| **Currituck** | **34.4%** | **25.2%** | **4.7%** | **10.2%** | **3.0%** |
| **Gates** | **35.3%** | **19.3%** | **6.3%** | **8.2%** | **2.2%** |
| **Pasquotank** | **30.3%** | **22.4%** | **7.7%** | **11.6%** | **4.8%** |
| **Chesapeake** | **27.8%** | **26.3%** | **6.4%** | **15.9%** | **8.8%** |
| **Suffolk** | **29.6%** | **23.0%** | **6.9%** | **11.7%** | **5.6%** |

*U.S. Census Bureau*

**What does this mean for Camden County Economic Development?**

Economic growth is predicated on the capabilities of a workforce and educational attainment is a fundamental way of measuring these capabilities. Camden County outperforms the state and comparison counties on two key attainment measures: high school dropout rate and percentage of population with a high school degree. Camden County has also recently invested in technical education. CamTech is a new school developed to ensure that students are provided the opportunity to receive computer and technical training before they enter the work force after obtaining a high school diploma. Employers seek locations that produce and harbor a highly educated workforce. Continuing to target investment in education will assist Camden County is producing a well educated local workforce that will lead to success in the development of business and industry in the area.

**Indicator 3: Labor Force**

**Key Findings**

* Camden County’s employment growth (40.8%) and its labor force growth (44%) were the highest among comparison regions.
* Camden County’s residents tend to commute to their places of work in contiguous counties rather than work in jobs located in Camden County.

**Indicator Overview**

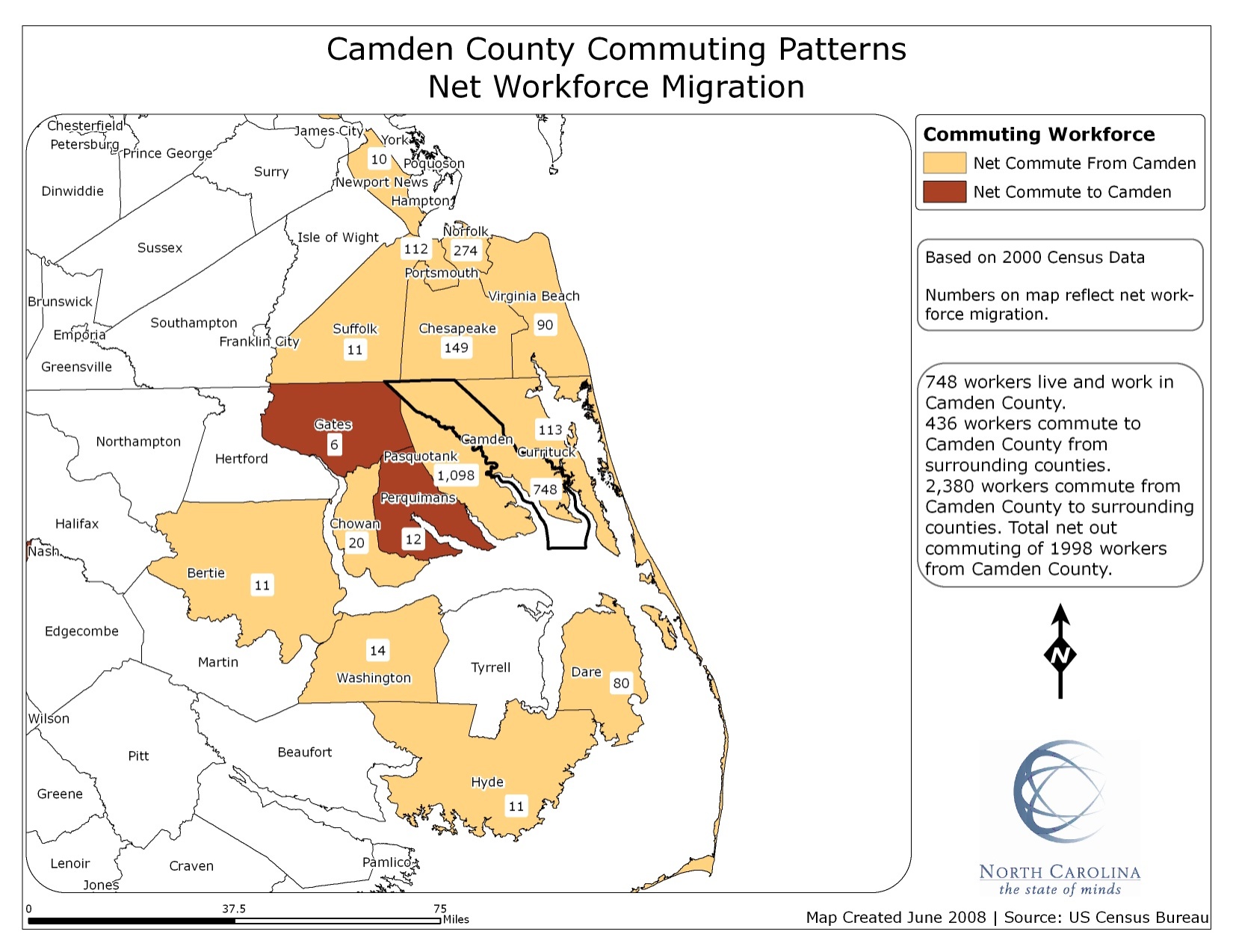
A county’s labor force is defined as the number of people employed plus those seeking employment. Labor force growth can signify a positive economic outlook. It is also typically an indicator of economic expansion and increased production.[[3]](#footnote-3) Labor Force can also be analyzed by examining the commuting patterns of a region’s residents. The degree to which workers commute in and out of a region is an indicator of the strength of a region’s economy and describes the availability of jobs for residents of a region, regardless of the size of its labor force. Commuting patterns also reveal the degree to which a region is economically interdependent with its surrounding geographies. The number of net commuters from a region is derived by subtracting the number of workers commuting to jobs in a region from the number of workers traveling to jobs outside of the same region.

**How does Camden County Perform?**

Between 2000 and 2008, Camden County’s labor force grew by 44 percent, with a corresponding employment growth of 40.8 percent [3-A]. Camden’s growth in both measures exceeded those in all comparison regions. This is particularly impressive considering all comparison regions experienced positive growth in labor force and employment. Camden County’s labor force and employment growth suggests an economic expansion not only for the County, but for the entire region composed of Northeast North Carolina and the tidewater region of Virginia. Camden County’s increasing population should be monitored closely in years to come in order to potentially identify a trend that could indicate a long term increase in economic activity and development for the area.

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Many residents of Camden County commute to bordering counties for additional employment opportunities. Nearby Pasquotank county claims the most Camden County citizens in its work force with a positive net commuting population of 1,098 Camden residents. Virginia also claims commuters from Camden County for their work force. The city of Norfolk has 274 net commuters from Camden while Chesapeake has 149 net commuters. Gates and Perquimans counties have net commuters to Camden county for employment (Gates has 6 net commuters to Camden while Perquimans has 12). Of the entire workforce, only 748 more Camden County residents work within the county than commute to jobs in surrounding regions.



**What Does This Mean For Camden County?**

Camden County has continued to experience a growth in labor force and employment over the past decade. For many Camden County residents, their homes are located within the county while their jobs are located outside of the county borders. Many residents choose to work in nearby Virginia or Elizabeth City, NC where there are abundant factory and white collar jobs. In order to strengthen its economic base, Camden County should continue to focus on economic development strategies or programs that would provide residents with employment opportunities in the county.

**Indicator 4: Occupational Mix**

**Key Findings:**

* In Camden County, the occupation with the most number of employees pays an average annual wage of $19,240, only $3,000 more than the lowest average wage in the county.
* Between 2002 and 2007, jobs in managerial, professional, and technical occupations grew by 77.6 percent in Camden County.

**Indicator Overview:**

Knowledge-based jobs sustain an economy through increases in productivity and wealth. These jobs can also help insulate a region from adverse business events that typically cause economic downturns. Examining a region’s occupational composition can help determine the mix of occupations, including those that are knowledge-based (associated with higher levels of educational attainment). Occupational composition can also explain differences in average wages among regions. Regions with a concentration of higher-paying occupations will exhibit a higher average wage rate.

**How Does Camden County Perform?**

Of the five occupations with the most number of employees (sales, education and training, construction and extraction, office and administrative support, management),[[4]](#footnote-4) only two occupational groups, education and training and management, earn more than $30,000 annually. The majority (564) of the county’s workers are employed in sales and related jobs. These occupations earn an average annual salary of $19,240, approximately $3,000 more than the lowest wage in the county. These low wages and the overall unavailability of high-paying jobs in Camden County, account for the reason many of its citizens travel outside of the county to their places of employment.

*Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc*

On average, education, training, and library occupations pay the highest wages in Camden County, followed by architecture and engineering occupations [4-A][[5]](#footnote-5). Growth in management, professional, and technical occupations often indicates a region’s transition into a knowledge-based economy.[[6]](#footnote-6) Between 2002 and 2007, jobs in managerial, professional, and technical occupations grew by 77.6 percent in Camden County [4-A]. Since 2002, growth of these occupations in Camden County includes construction managers (13), financial specialists (10), and elementary and middle school teachers (78).

*Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc.*

All eight comparison regions added knowledge-based jobs over the five-year period ending in 2007 [4-B]. Camden County experienced the most growth at 77.6 percent[[7]](#footnote-7). However, of the 465 management, professional, and technical related jobs added in the county, 337 of them were education, training, and library occupations, with the remaining 128 jobs spread throughout all other knowledge-based categories. Job losses occurred in farming, forestry, and fishing occupations for every comparison region.

From 2002 to 2007, three of the four counties (including Camden), the Northeast Partnership, and the state experienced significant growth in construction and extraction occupations [4-C]. Key knowledge-based occupations, such as computer and mathematical science and architecture and engineering also grew in the regions surrounding the county. The following table, [4-C] presents the occupational groups experiencing the highest growth rates in each comparison region.

**[4-C] Top Occupational Growth by Comparison Region, 2002-2007**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **North Carolina** | **NE Partnership** | **Camden** | **Currituck** | **Gates** | **Pasquotank** | **Chesapeake** | **Suffolk** |
| **Food preparation and serving** |  |  |  |  |  | 30% | 28% | 47% |
| **Construction and extraction** | 21% | 23% | 87% |  | 71% | 33% |  |  |
| **Computer and mathematical science** |  | 20% |  |  | 45% | 59% | 66% | 39% |
| **Personal care and service** | 22% | 20% |  |  |  |  |  | 34% |
| **Healthcare support** | 23% | 22% |  | 37% | 52% |  |  |  |
| **Architecture and engineering** |  |  | 118% |  | 40% |  | 28% | 30% |
| **Legal** |  |  |  |  |  | 30% |  | 33% |
| **Business and financial operations** | 17% |  |  |  |  |  | 29% |  |
| **Education, training, and library** |  |  | 259% |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Arts, design, sports, entertainmt., media** |  |  | 57% |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Life, physical, and social science** |  | 20% | 38% |  | 55% |  |  |  |
| **Building & grounds cleaning & mainten.** | 20% |  |  | 40% |  |  |  |  |
| **Transportation and material moving** |  |  |  | 44% |  |  |  |  |
| **Sales and related** |  |  |  |  |  |  | 29% |  |
| **Production and related** |  |  |  | 40% |  |  |  |  |
| **Community and social services** |  |  |  | 38% |  |  |  |  |
| **Installation, maintenance, repair** |  |  |  |  |  | 36% |  |  |

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**What does this mean for Camden County Economic Development?**

As the economy of the United States, North Carolina, the Northeast Partnership Region, and Tidewater Virginia transform into knowledge-based economies, Camden County will need to continue to create opportunities for citizens to move into knowledge-intensive occupations. Strategies to accomplish this may include community development efforts such as water, sewer, and other infrastructure improvements to prepare Camden County for industrial growth, or investment in targeted workforce programs. Other strategies could be efforts such as increased science, math, and technology curriculum.

**Indicator 5: Industry Analysis**

**Key Findings**

* Nearly 50 percent of Camden County’s employment is concentrated in three industry sectors: Retail Trade, Construction and Agriculture.
* Construction and Health Services\* are the only sectors that increased as a share of total employment. (\* Although Health Services has grown as a percentage of employment of Camden residents, that number reflects only those residents who travel outside of the county, as no medical facilities currently exist within Camden County)

**Indicator Overview**

Industry employment trends are a significant indicator of an economy’s overall health. Analyzing industries relative to employment size can reveal where a region is vulnerable during an economic downturn. More specifically, high concentrations of employment in cyclical industries (e.g. manufacturing and retail trade) can intensify the magnitude of economic shocks felt in the region versus the state or nation as a whole.

**How Does Camden County Perform?**

Nearly one half of Camden County employment is concentrated in three industry sectors; Retail Trade, Construction and Agriculture Forestry Fishing & Hunting [5-A]. Construction and health care are the only sectors that experienced significant share growth over the five year period ending in 2007. This growth in medical sector employment is largely due to an increase in Camden County residents who travel out of the county for work. Actual medical employment in Camden County has not risen due to a lack of medical facilities in the county. Two sectors remained roughly the same (Transportation & Warehousing, and Real Estate, Rental and Leasing), while ten experienced a decrease. The construction industry was most likely impacted by a correspondingly large increase in the county’s population over the same 5 year period, fueling housing demand. The aging of North Carolina’s population has resulted in an increased demand for health services, though this sector in Camden County remains roughly one tenth the size of the share for the state as a whole.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **5-A Private Industry Employment, by Sector % of Total Employment, 2002 & 2007** | | | | | |
| **NAICS Code** | **Industry Sector** | **North Carolina** | | **Camden County** | |
| **2002** | **2007** | **2002** | **2007** |
| **11** | **Agriculture Forestry Fishing & Hunting** | **1.10%** | **0.95%** | **9.48%** | **8.16%** |
| **21** | **Mining** | **0.13%** | **0.12%** | **\*** | **\*** |
| **22** | **Utilities** | **0.46%** | **0.37%** | **\*** | **\*** |
| **23** | **Construction** | **7.03%** | **7.55%** | **6.59%** | **14.58%** |
| **31** | **Manufacturing** | **20.28%** | **15.68%** | **7.63%** | **4.80%** |
| **42** | **Wholesale Trade** | **5.16%** | **5.36%** | **5.14%** | **2.14%** |
| **44-45** | **Retail Trade** | **13.84%** | **13.57%** | **24.50%** | **24.02%** |
| **48-49** | **Transportation and Warehousing** | **3.46%** | **3.38%** | **1.20%** | **1.22%** |
| **51** | **Information** | **2.48%** | **2.13%** | **5.38%** | **1.97%** |
| **52** | **Finance and Insurance** | **4.32%** | **4.47%** | **2.09%** | **1.27%** |
| **53** | **Real Estate and Rental and Leasing** | **1.56%** | **1.64%** | **1.69%** | **1.68%** |
| **54** | **Professional and Technical Services** | **4.58%** | **5.34%** | **4.82%** | **4.46%** |
| **55** | **Mgmt. of Companies and Enterprises** | **2.03%** | **2.10%** | **0.00%** | **\*** |
| **56** | **Administrative and Waste Services** | **6.76%** | **7.30%** | **7.63%** | **4.34%** |
| **61** | **Educational Services** | **1.35%** | **1.60%** | **\*** | **\*** |
| **62** | **Health Care and Social Assistance** | **11.23%** | **12.90%** | **0.80%** | **1.16%** |
| **71** | **Arts Entertainment and Recreation** | **1.62%** | **1.69%** | **\*** | **\*** |
| **72** | **Accommodation and Food Services** | **9.42%** | **10.27%** | **12.61%** | **3.53%** |
| **81** | **Other Services Ex. Public Admin** | **3.15%** | **3.06%** | **6.67%** | **5.56%** |
| **99** | **Unclassified Establishments** | **0.05%** | **0.51%** | **2.33%** | **1.68%** |
|  | **Total Private Sector Employment** | **3,160,053** | **3,426,126** | **1,245** | **1,728** |
| *Source: NC Employment Security Commission, Q3-2002, Q3-2007, Private Sector Employment,*  ***\**** *Indicates Data Suppression.* | | | | | |

*North Carolina Employment Security Commission*

Camden County experienced a sharp drop off in Federal Government employment since the year 2000 (5-B). The percentage decrease may be a bit misleading as the nominal decrease in federal employment moved from 29 to 17 employees. Growth in private industry, as well as local government, was strong and above the state average. Need sentence that discusses the table below: Camden County Industrial Growth. If you don’t discuss it take it out.

**What does this mean for Camden County Economic Development?**

Camden County has experienced robust overall job growth since the beginning of this decade. Employment in the county is concentrated in three industrial sectors, two of which, Construction and Retail Trade are highly cyclical. This poses a potential threat if the county were to experience an economic downturn. The county could benefit from looking to diversify employment by attracting jobs in industrial sectors that have experienced a decline. Recent industry employment trend should be used to gauge which industries are growing or contracting and to determine resources allocation for infrastructure improvements, incentives and workforce development.

**Indicator 6: Technology Availability**

**Key Findings:**

* Since 2000, Camden County received two grants from the state of North Carolina’s E-NC Authority to fund public internet access and local education channels (“Public Engagement Grant” of $5000 and an “e-Communities Planning Grant” grant of $10,000).
* 74.6% of Camden County households have cable modem internet access. 61.7% of these households have DSL/High-Speed internet access.

**Indicator Overview:**

The availability of technology is essential to future economic development in an area. Local leaders and economic development officials constantly seek ways to diversify local economies and increase wealth. Internet access is an effective tool for accomplishing these goals. Today very few jobs – especially in a knowledge-based economy – can be performed without the use of technology. High-speed Internet and its related applications are needed to support the development of emerging, technology-based sectors. For example, biotechnology and nanotechnology industries are dependent on efficient and reliable technology. Even industries normally not associated with the latest technology and customized software, have become dependent on them. For example, the use of computers ranges from simply printing out maintenance work orders to programming the complex machines that produce hosiery. The Internet is the most used com­munications tool in the business world, thus making Internet access essential for surviving and thriving in our economy.

**How Does Camden County Perform:**

Camden County is on par with its surrounding counties in the general availability of technology, but lacks in public internet access areas. Other counties, such as Pasquotank and Gates, have public access sites for the general public to use on a daily basis while Camden County has no such access area. Digital Literacy Training, an effort to better inform the public about the internet and technology, is also popular in Currituck, Gates and Pasquotank counties. Camden County falls behind all comparison regions with no such program.

Most private households in Camden County receive their telephone and internet access from Direcway and Starband satellites which provide DSL service. The telephone company, Embarq, provides telephone and DSL services to most of the county (80% in South Mills and 54% in Shiloh). There are currently no wireless internet providers in the county. [[8]](#footnote-8)



Camden County showed improvement in high speed internet access from 2002, when measured in 2006. The availability of high speed internet service and cable modems in Camden County is comparable to its contiguous counties. Gates County maintained their low service availability between 2002 and 2006 with less than 50% of their residents gaining access to high speed internet services.

**What Does This Mean for Camden County Economic Development?**

The availability of technology in Camden County could lead to issues with economic development in the future. Communication is an important factor in developing a community and meeting the needs of the citizens while developing an area. An untrained workforce is also an issue for economic development. An educated work force is an increased necessity due to the use of technology in modern industry. Mobile technology is widely available to Camden residents and developers through satellites and cellular phone towers. “Affordable Internet service will provide North Carolinians with increased access to commerce, health care, education and government services. Through the Internet, rural North Carolinians can utilize resources not located in their areas, contact friends and experts, grow their businesses and increase their personal knowledge - while preserving the lifestyle that is an integral part of who they are.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Increased ties between citizens and neighbors, between rural and developed areas and between businesses and communities will help prepare North Carolina for a brighter, more prosperous future. [[10]](#footnote-10)

Industries and employment have become more mobile.

The new definition of “work” is a task that can be accomplished in a wide variety of locations. Jobs have become “location neutral” and work will “travel” to the worker, rather than the worker to work.[[11]](#footnote-11) Many jobs allow for employees to work from the comforts of their own homes by way of efficient internet connections and available phone service. Teleconferencing and other convenient technologies allow for employees to remain connected to their work and employer while working in another area. The availability of technology allows employees to work without commuting to other areas allowing tax dollars and other revenues to remain in their home county. Technology and employment remain dependent on one another as industries become more reliant on the efficiency and knowledge of technical devices. As Camden gains access to technology and education, employees can move towards the concept of highly skilled jobs with higher pay while working in an industrial atmosphere or from their homes.

**APPENDIX C**

**Pictures**

Camden County Business After Hours. July 16th, 2009 Albemarle Propane





*Photo Credit: Elizabeth City Pasquotank Camden Chamber of Commerce*

1. *2008 Economic Index* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Civilian, non-institutionalized [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *2008 Economic Index* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. Top five Camden County Occupations [2007 Employment]: 1) Sales and Related [564], 2) Education, Training and Library occupations [467], 3) Construction and Extraction [365], 4) Office and administrative support [331], 5) Management [271]. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Top Earning Occupations based upon annual employment wages: Education/library training, Architecture/engineering, computer and mathematical science, healthcare practitioners/technical, and management occupations. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *The New Economy Index: Understanding America's Economic Transformation*, published by Progressive Policy Institute's, measures the Country’s transformation towards an economy focused on sustainable economic prosperity. <http://www.neweconomyindex.org/metro/introduction.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Growth seen in Management, Professional, and Technical Occupations [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. E-NC Authority “Internet Infrastructure” North Carolina E-NC Authority Raleigh, NC, <http://www.e-nc.org/mycounty.asp?county=Camden> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. E-NC Authority website [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. E-NC Authority, “Advantages of Internet Service”, E-North Carolina [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. James P. Ware and Charles E. Grantham, “Knowledge Work and Knowledge Workers”, 2007 pg. 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)