

# Camden County

## *2035 Comprehensive Plan*



Public Review Draft  
August 2012



# Acknowledgements

This Camden County Comprehensive Plan was developed under the leadership of the Board of County Commissioners, the guidance of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Technical Committee, and with input from the Planning Board and planning consultants. These community members invested their time and talents to construct the county’s first comprehensive plan. This is a plan for the people of Camden County, by the people of Camden County. While not all citizens that voiced their concerns and aspirations during the planning process are listed here, they are acknowledged for their important and invaluable contribution.

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*Part 1:*

# About the Comprehensive Plan





## PART 1: ABOUT THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Our Comprehensive Plan is a “blueprint” that provides guidance as to where and how Camden County will grow in the next 20 years. It provides direction for shaping future decisions so that we can become the type of community we want to be – one that values its history, environment, and culture, all the while harnessing the new energy and vision of a rural community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Camden County Comprehensive Plan serves to guide the county’s growth and development by addressing three main questions:

***(1) What is the status of the county right now?***

***(2) What is the vision for the county in the future?***

***(3) What needs to happen to achieve that vision?***

This document will provide our elected officials and governing staff with the guidance and direction for achieving our collective community vision. The directives included in this document can guide daily decision-making, development approvals, and capital investment decisions that will shape our county in future years.



## PLANNING PROCESS

### PLAN LEADERSHIP

Our Camden County Comprehensive Plan was developed under the supervision of a Board of County Commissioners Steering Committee.<sup>1</sup> This committee was specifically designed to incorporate a broad array of community interests: business, religious, agriculture, neighborhoods, parks and recreation, public schools, utilities, tourism, Coast Guard, health, ethnic and racial diversity, environment, transportation, and history and culture.

### PLAN DEVELOPMENT

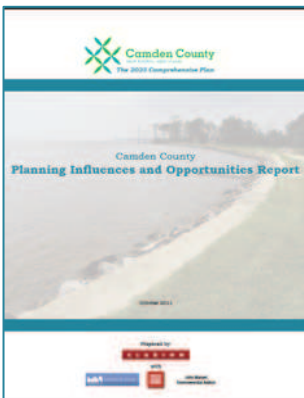
Over the course of a year, this committee met on a regular basis to review and comment on the work of planners, provide policy guidance for the plan, and provide input on the public engagement process. The Steering Committee led the development of the plan through three key phases of development:

1. Identifying Planning Influences and Opportunities
2. Developing a Community Vision
3. Constructing a Policy Framework and Implementation Plan

Several key reports were developed as part of this process:

- \* *Camden County Planning Influences and Opportunities Report*
- \* *Envision Camden County Public Workshop Report*
- \* *Development Capacity and Alternative Development Scenarios Report*
- \* *Draft Plan Framework*

These documents serve as the foundational information for development of the plan and are referenced throughout this document. These can be found on the county's comprehensive plan website page.



<sup>1</sup> Steering Committee membership is listed in the acknowledgements section at the beginning of this plan.

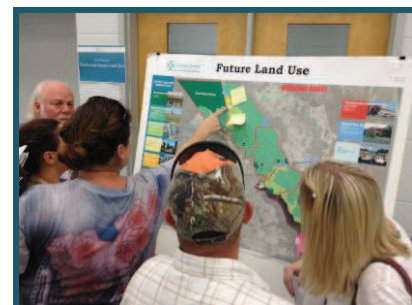
## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Camden County citizens, business proprietors, and property owners were given several opportunities for engaging in development of the plan.

Throughout the planning process, the Camden County website had a prominent link on its homepage to the Comprehensive Plan page. This page provided an overview of the planning effort, meeting summaries, links to reports and studies, and planner contact information.

A public survey was conducted to gauge the interests and concerns of county citizens. This survey provided planners with information specific to transportation concerns, development opportunities, recreational offerings, the county's environment, and the community's vision for the future of Camden County.

Two public workshops were held. The first – *Envision Camden County* - was conducted on November 14, 2011. This workshop provided participants with multiple ways of providing input on the future vision of the county, including an anonymous polling exercise and a group brainstorming session. The second community workshop was held on May 8, 2012. Participants were presented with a draft of the key elements for the plan – the community vision statement, goals, objectives, action strategies, and the future land use plan. Input from this workshop was used to revise the planning framework and develop this comprehensive plan.



## PREVIOUS AND ONGOING PLANNING EFFORTS

Camden County has a local planning history that influenced development of the comprehensive plan. The county has spent time and money investing in public planning efforts to develop strategies for improving economic development, setting a long-term plan for water and wastewater utilities, planning for future transportation infrastructure needs, and developing a strategic plan for development in the US 17 corridor, among others. These planning efforts are outlined in full in the *Camden County Planning Influences and Opportunities Report*, are incorporated here by reference, and are listed below by planning topic.

Land use and environmental planning efforts:

- \* 2005 Advanced Core CAMA Land Use Plan
- \* Smart Growth Scorecard
- \* Camden County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- \* Long Range Water and Sewer Service Plan
- \* CAMA Sea Level Rise Policy

Economic development planning efforts:

- \* Camden County 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Strategic Plan
- \* Camden County / US 17 Corridor Master Plan
- \* Green Industrial Park Feasibility Study

Ongoing Transportation Planning Initiatives

- \* Comprehensive Transportation Plan
- \* Hampton Roads TPO Long Range Transportation Plan
- \* US 17 Great Dismal Swamp Corridor Study

## RELATIONSHIP TO CAMA LAND USE PLAN

Camden County adopted an Advanced Core CAMA Land Use Plan on April 4, 2005. This plan serves two key purposes: to comply with state planning requirements for the CAMA (the Coastal Area Management Act) as certified by the Coastal Resources Commission, and to provide a blueprint plan for land use in the county through a vision, policy framework, future land use plan, and implementation strategies to achieve the county's vision. This plan actually exceeds the basic CAMA requirements and is certified as an "Advanced Core Plan" due to its inclusion of additional sections on hazard mitigation and post-storm recovery plans, future land suitability analyses, stormwater management analyses, village area and corridor studies and plans, and resource conservation management action plan/policies for non-village corridor areas.

The plan sets a vision to:

- ✧ Maintain rural and cultural heritage through protection of natural resources and quality of life
- ✧ Improve infrastructure
- ✧ Expand recreational opportunities
- ✧ Actively pursue industrial and economic development
- ✧ Improve and protect village areas
- ✧ Maintain educational quality

Between 2000-2007, Camden experienced a significant increase in population from migration to the county from other parts of the state, southern Virginia and the nation. This growth has impacted the fiscal health of the community and the demand for a high quality of life through public facilities and services. This comprehensive plan builds on the 2005 CAMA planning effort and focuses on addressing the new trends and conditions that Camden County faces.

Many policies and actions that are listed in the current Camden County CAMA plan are still relevant today. Several of these policies support ongoing federal, state, and local laws, regulations and participating agencies that play a role in development decision-making. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a more strategic set of goals, policies, and actions for the future, while also carrying forward the state mandated critical policies in the CAMA Plan that affect local day-to-day decision making. One of the action steps to implement the plan is an evaluation of the CAMA plan to identify areas in need of modification to make it consistent with this new comprehensive plan.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE**

County zoning regulations consist of both a zoning map and a written ordinance – the *Unified Development Ordinance* - that divides the county into zoning districts, including various residential, commercial, and industrial districts. The zoning regulations describe what type of land use and specific activities are permitted in each district, and also regulate how buildings, signs, parking, and other construction may be placed on a lot. The zoning regulations also provide procedures for re-zoning and other planning activities. The zoning map and zoning regulations provide property owners in Camden County with certain rights to development, while the 2035 Comprehensive Plan provides guidance to decision-makers regarding the future development or use of the property. The Future Land Use Map contained in this plan should be used as a guide for future re-zoning decisions by the county’s Planning Board and Board of Commissioners.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

Concurrently and in coordination with development of this comprehensive plan, Camden County worked with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to develop a Comprehensive Transportation Plan for the county. A Comprehensive Transportation Plan is a multimodal plan that serves current and projected travel demand in the county. Development of the plan considers a number of factors, including population and housing growth, economic conditions, and land use patterns, to develop a safe and effective transportation system. In addition to planning for roadway needs, the Comprehensive Transportation Plan plans for public transportation, rail, bicycles, and pedestrians.

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan process is being administered by the NCDOT in cooperation with the county and local citizens and stakeholders and was initiated more or less concurrently with the Camden County 2035 Comprehensive Plan process. The two planning processes worked together to share ideas, information, and resources. The comprehensive plan Steering Committee also served as the supervising body for development of the Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan will include a series of maps that denote the general locations for future road, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure needs in the county. These serve as a long-term “wish list” to be constructed over time as priorities are identified and funding is available.

The comprehensive plan supports the Comprehensive Transportation Plan by providing policy direction for the development of transportation infrastructure in the

county, with a special focus on the manner that transportation facilities are designed to serve private residential and non-residential developments.







*Part 2:*

# Plan Summary

## PART 2: PLAN SUMMARY

### COMMUNITY VISION

Camden County stands at a pivotal point in the county's history. Opportunities lie ahead and the county is preparing to become a successful rural community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century -- a county with new energy and a new vision.



This new vision is encapsulated in the county's community vision statement. It describes the kind of community that residents, business owners, and leaders want Camden County to be in the future. It describes the hopes and aspirations for the community and provides a concise description of what Camden County will strive to be by the year 2035. The vision statement was developed from community input generated at the Envision Camden County Public Workshop.

### Vision Statement

Camden County will realize its goal to be a community with **“new energy and a new vision”** by embracing and **capitalizing on its assets** – abundant natural resources, a unique rural setting, and a high quality workforce and educational system. Emphasis will be placed on providing a **good quality of life for residents** in a manner that is **fiscally efficient** and that **preserves rural community assets**.

New development will be focused within **targeted core areas** to breathe new life into established county villages and to efficiently use existing and planned infrastructure and public resources. **New housing choices** will be made available to serve families, young professionals, and retirees. **Rural areas will maintain prominence** in the county, and will continue to serve agricultural and forestry production and low density residential development.

**New employment development** will broaden the county's tax base and will be developed within strategic locations to **maximize use of public infrastructure**. Commercial and employment development will provide new goods and services and **valuable employment opportunities** to established residents. New industries will be low impact and will be designed to **protect critical natural resources**. The county will offer opportunities for residents and visitors to explore the natural wonder of Camden County by providing **new hospitality and recreational amenities**.

## Plan Themes, Goals, and Opportunities

Early in the planning process, several themes surfaced that encompassed the key aspirations for the community. These seven key themes help to form the overarching plan framework and community goals for the 2035 Camden County Comprehensive Plan. The themes build on community and stakeholder input collected during the planning process, and they are used to organize the community goals and policy directions contained within the following chapters.

### #1: Planning for Our Future Land Use

*Goal: Camden County's land use pattern will be primarily rural in character with high quality and economically productive development in targeted locations in the core village areas and along main road corridors, which are served by public utilities.*

**Opportunity: Camden Plantation and Camden Town Center** Camden County has the opportunity through developments like Camden Plantation and Camden Town Center to provide a new form of development that maximizes the use of land, utilizes existing infrastructure, provides housing choices, and provides new commercial services to residents. Pursuing this type of development in the core village areas reduces development pressure on other parts of the county, and can help to maintain the rural integrity of the county.

**Figure 1: Camden Plantation - A Model for New Development Pattern in Camden County**



## #2: Preserving and Enhancing Community Character

*Goal: Camden County will enhance its pastoral character by ensuring that new development within targeted development areas is designed to fit the context of core village areas in the manner of an American rural village. Development in areas outside of targeted development locations will continue to be developed at a rural scale and provide opportunities for low and very low density residential development, small-scale rural crossroads commercial development, and working lands operations.*

### Opportunity: New South Mills Small Area Plan

The new South Mills Small Area Plan provides guidance for a new growth pattern for the core village area that builds on the existing framework of the community. The graphic below illustrates a design concept for a new marina in South Mills.



Figure 2: Plan for South Mills Includes Townhouses, Marina, and New Public Spaces

## #3: Building the Local Economy

*Goal: Camden County will have a diverse and balanced economy that provides new business opportunities to employ citizens and provide goods and services, and that will generate new revenues to fund high-quality government facilities and services.*

**Opportunity: Eco-Industrial Park**

The county has invested in site planning and infrastructure improvements to establish the Eco Industrial Park on US 17 (shown in red circle below). This site is one of several sites in the county that are a focus for future economic development efforts.

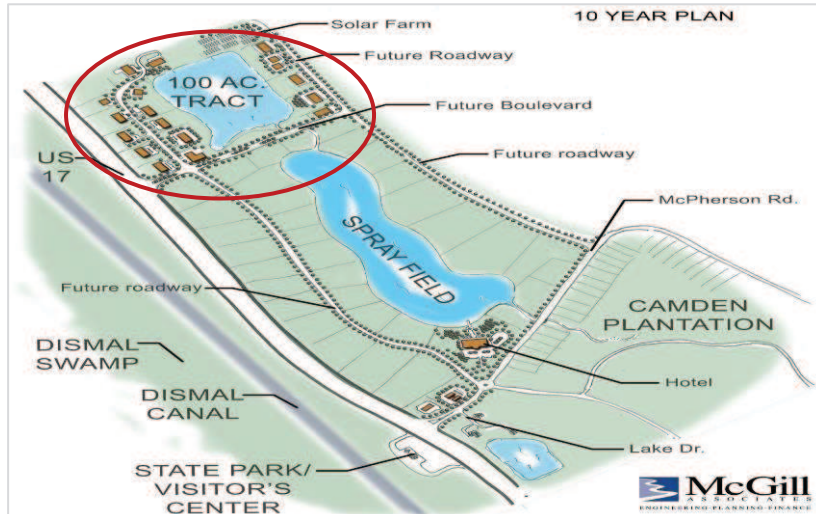


Figure 3: The Eco-Industrial Park will Provide New Opportunities for Industry Growth in Camden County

**#4: Expanding Tourism and Recreation**

*Goal: Camden County will become a destination for outdoor and recreational enthusiasts and will offer recreational amenities and visitor services to support a new tourism economy.*

**Opportunity: Great Dismal Swamp Park Trail and Park Expansion**

The NC Division of State Parks is planning a campground on newly acquired land to the south of the Great Dismal Swamp Park and is working with the county to enhance access to the park. To provide new pedestrian and bike connections to the park, a study is being prepared to create a 3.3 mile trail from the Dismal Swamp State Park Visitors Center to the Virginia state line.



**Figure 4: Expanding the Dismal Swamp Trail and Park Area will Foster New Eco-Tourism Opportunities in Camden County**

## #5: Fostering Mobility, Accessibility, and Safety

*Goal: Camden County will have a transportation system that is coordinated with land use patterns, and that provides an acceptable level-of-service to support economic development and a high quality of life.*

### **Opportunity: Comprehensive Transportation Plan**

The NC Department of Transportation is partnering with Camden County to develop a new Comprehensive Transportation Plan for the county. This plan will identify priorities for long-term future road, bicycle, pedestrian and transit improvements that will expand the county’s system to include non-auto modes of recreational travel and maintain existing capacity. This plan is the first step in accessing state and federal dollars to make these planned improvements a reality.



**Figure 5: The CTP Identifies New Transportation Infrastructure Needs to Preserve Capacity on Existing Rural Roads**

## #6: Conserving Environmental Resources and Working Lands

*Goal: Camden County will preserve and protect natural resources and working lands to maintain the function of natural systems, to continue to provide viable opportunities for agricultural and forestry operations, to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to commune with nature, and provide new economic development opportunities related to eco-tourism, outdoor recreation, and renewable energy sources.*

### **Opportunity: Hale's Lake Wind Farm**

The Hale's Lake Wind Farm project proposes to build 188 large wind turbines on 20,000 acres of air space above open spaces and farmland in northeastern Camden County. These turbines will generate renewable energy that can be sold back to utilities in North Carolina that are under state mandate to purchase 12.5% of energy supply needs from renewable sources. Development of these turbines will provide economic benefit to county landowners, while ensuring that agricultural and open space uses on these lands are maintained for the long-term.



**Figure 6: Proposed Hale's Lake Wind Farm will Protect Rural Lands from Future Development While Providing Economic Benefit to Landowners and County**

## #7: Serving Current and Future Residents

*Goal: Camden County will provide infrastructure and community facilities in a fiscally responsible manner that is consistent with the future land use map, economic development opportunities, and local demand for services.*

### **Opportunity: Public/Private Partnership to Expand Water/Sewer Capacity**

Developments like Camden Plantation offer an opportunity for the county to partner with developers to expand utility infrastructure to better serve future populations in the county. Developers seek certainty for development proposals. Ensuring that adequate public water and sanitary sewer service are available to future residents of new developments is an incentive to assist the county financially to expand and improve infrastructure systems.



**Figure 7: Proposed Large Scale Developments Offer an Opportunity to Expand Utility Infrastructure in Camden County**

## **PRIORITY ACTION STRATEGIES**

Government resources are finite. As such, it is important to select priorities from the array of actions listed in this Plan. The top five priority actions for the county to address in the next five years were selected for their importance in being implemented early on in the implementation process and for their relative cost in relation to other actions. These actions are intended to lay the groundwork for future implementation efforts. These five priority actions are as follows:



- \* Priority #1: Incorporate Comprehensive Plan Evaluation as Part of Future Development Review
- \* Priority #2: Evaluate Need to Update Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) Plan
- \* Priority #3: Identify Public-Private Partnerships to Develop Needed Infrastructure
- \* Priority #4: Identify New Infrastructure Priorities for County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
- \* Priority #5: Develop Action Plan for Updating County's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)





*Part 3:*

## Community Context

## PART 3: COMMUNITY CONTEXT

### BRIEF HISTORY OF CAMDEN COUNTY

Camden was **settled around 1650** or perhaps even earlier by settlers traveling from Virginia that built settlements on both sides of the Pasquotank River. The first major **settlements developed around four creeks** – Raymond’s, Sawyer’s, Areneuse, and Joy’s. Dense undergrowth and swampy bottomlands **made passable roads impossible**, and as a result, these early immigrants mainly traveled to the area by water.

In 1790, General Gregory was appointed by President George Washington to be the first collector of customs for **the Port of Camden** or “Plank Bridge.” This port of entry was on Sawyer’s Creek in the Camden community and was a port of considerable maritime activity, **bringing commercial benefits to the entire community**. Wharves and warehouses dotted the banks of the creek to Murden’s Landing on the Pasquotank River. However, due to the shallow creek and ships of heavier tonnage being built, **the once flourishing trade vanished**. The **port of entry was moved to Elizabeth City** in 1830.

The **Dismal Swamp Canal** was built in the northern end of the county between the years 1793 and 1805. Dirt removed for the Canal was thrown up to form a bed for a toll road which quickly became the route for a stagecoach line between Norfolk and Elizabeth City. Highway 17, the original Ocean Highway, now utilizes this roadbed. Building of the **canal brought economic benefits to Camden and South Mills**, where mills were erected at one of the locks.

**Camden County’s history is built on its rural and agricultural roots**. Today, this community continues to **serve primarily as a rural residential community** that offers a good quality of life in northeastern North Carolina. The **county’s economy is built on serving the local population and visitors** -- key industries in Camden County in 2010 were retail trade, accommodation and food services, real estate and leasing, construction, and administration and waste services.

### GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Camden County is located in northeastern North Carolina and bordered to the north by the state of Virginia, Currituck County to the east, Pasquotank and Gates Counties to the west, and the Albemarle Sound to the south. Although outside the state borders, Camden County’s economy draws from the Hampton Roads region (Norfolk, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach). It is a short drive from the North Carolina Outer Banks, Downtown Norfolk, and Chesapeake, Virginia.

The county consists of approximately 150,557 acres or 242 square miles. No formally incorporated municipalities are located in Camden County. In 2006, the County approved an ordinance via referendum to create a unified government that incorporated the former townships of South Mills, Camden, and Shiloh into the County. These townships comprise the three core community areas: South Mills in the north, Camden in the center of the county, and Shiloh Village near the south end. The Great Dismal Swamp, the largest swamp in the nation, covers the northern section of the County.

The map to below illustrates the location of Camden County within the greater region.

**Map 1: Regional Context Map**



## **REGIONAL ECONOMIC INFLUENCES**

The growth of the greater Hampton Roads metropolitan area has had an increasing impact on Camden County over time, and has the potential to have an even greater impact in the future. Roadway improvements in recent years have reduced travel time from Camden County to core urban centers in the Hampton Roads area including Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Newport News. This greater level of connectivity has increased the opportunities for Camden to grow as a rural bedroom community and as a provider of goods and services to the metro area. At the present time, these growth opportunities are manifested along the US 17 corridor in the northern portion of the county, and include plans for the Eco Industrial Park (EIP) complex.

### **HAMPTON ROADS REGION**

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Camden County may be a rural North Carolina county, but it is closely linked to and invested in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. This region has a strategic location on the mid-Atlantic coast of the United States making it very accessible nationally and internationally. The region's transportation infrastructure is anchored by the large, natural deepwater port – a critical component of regional growth.

Ranked as the eighth-largest metro area in the southeast U.S. and the second-largest metro area between Atlanta and Washington, D.C., Hampton Roads is home to 1.6 million citizens. Because of the large military presence in this area, this workforce is better educated than most, especially in highly skilled specialties. The regional economy is impressive, with a gross product equivalent of most medium sized countries

A critical factor in the future of the regional economy is that it is now less diversified because of investments made over the last several decades in defense and related industries. Economic developers in the region are concerned about the decreasing investments by the U.S. Department of Defense and are calling for a focus on diversification of industries for the region. Opportunities exist in Camden County to be a part of this effort.

### **REGIONAL HOUSING MARKET**

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Housing market trends in the region are also changing. The combined factors of changing demographics and corresponding market demands, an oversupply of single family housing, and the challenges to acquire homeowner financing have resulted in an upswing for housing rental markets and a decline in homeownership. Apartment housing in the Hampton Roads region, which has the highest monthly rental rates in the southeast, have been particularly affected. These factors may result in an upsurge in apartment construction in the region.

While conventional apartment complex developments may not be the most appropriate style of housing for Camden County, there is an opportunity to provide a new form of housing in the county that meets the needs of future residents, particularly seniors, aging baby boomers, and members of Generation Y.

National housing analysts suggest that the future of housing lies in more compact forms of development that mix uses and provide better access to recreational, shopping, and personal and health services. This housing is also expected to have a smaller footprint and be more compact to reduce maintenance and related expenses for maintaining yards and larger units, and to be more tightly weaved into the fabric of neighborhoods to create activity and vibrancy.

## **INFLUENTIAL TRENDS AND CURRENT CONDITIONS**

Documenting existing conditions and long-range projections are essential for identifying shortfalls in public services, documenting opportunities for new development, and planning for capital improvements and future demands for public services. The following influential trends and conditions serve as the base factual information for developing the policy framework contained in this plan. The details of these summary statistics are found in the *Planning Influences and Opportunities Report* available on the county's website, and provided as an appendix to this plan.

To maintain up-to-date information on trends and conditions in the future, Camden County staff will prepare an annual Community Profile that tracks these statistics and identifies changes in trends that may need to be addressed through policy modifications.

### ***Population and Growth***

- 1. Key County Attributes:** Camden County's key attributes that spur growth are its location in the Hampton Roads region, the presence of significant natural resources, housing that is affordable for the county's workforce, a well-educated workforce, and excellent educational offerings. Maintaining these attributes is critical to the future success of the county.
- 2. Healthy Historic Growth Rate:** The county had a very healthy rate of growth over the last decade, even with a 3.5 year moratorium on development initiated to enforce the County's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance. Between 2000 and 2010, Camden County's population increased by 45% to 9,980. The annual average growth rate for that same period was 3.78%.
- 3. Changing Demographics:** The county has a growing population of persons of Hispanic and Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Island decent.

75% of the County’s population is under the age of 54 and approximately half of the population is of age to be in the local workforce.

4. **Growth Expected to Continue at Slower Rate:** The economic downturn beginning in 2007 had an effect locally and the county growth rate decreased in the following years. Growth projections for 2030 show that Camden will continue to experience growth in the coming decades, but is unlikely to maintain the rate of growth seen over the last decade. However, given the uncertainty of local, national, and even global economic forces that affect development potential in Camden County, projections vary based on the methodology employed and the assumptions used. The low and high population projections used during this planning process are included in the table below.

**Table 1: 2030 Population Projections**

Source	2010 Pop	2030 Pop	Change	Annual Average Growth Rate
State Demographer	9,980	11,600	1,620	0.75%
Woods & Poole, Inc.	9,980	13,994	4,014	1.8%

### ***Housing, Employment, and Incomes***

5. **Housing Stock Lacks Diversity:** Approximately 99% of the housing stock in Camden County is either single-family residential detached, manufactured housing units, or modular housing. In keeping with national trends, diverse housing types are likely needed in Camden County to meet the needs of future residents.
6. **Residents Earn Incomes Comparable to Currituck Residents:** During 2005-2009, Camden County had a healthy median household income (\$46,786) that was slightly less than Currituck County. However, a breakdown of household income and benefits by households shows that Camden County had a higher percentage of households earning \$100,000-\$149,999 and the same percentage earning \$150,000-\$199,999. The poverty rate in Camden County was slightly higher in Camden County (7.5%) than that found in Currituck County (6.8%).
7. **Few Options for Employment, but Jobs are Diverse:** The number of employment opportunities in the county is limited. Employment in the county represents approximately half of the jobs needed to employ the



local workforce. There is an opportunity to expand local employment and provide new jobs “close to home.”

### ***The Environment and Agriculture***

- 8. Natural Features are Abundant and Limit Development Potential:** Natural features are significant in Camden County, providing a rich green infrastructure system that limits development potential, but provides opportunities for nature based economic development.
  - 21 out of 24 soil types in the county severely limit the use of septic systems and comprise 98% of the county land area
  - Wetlands comprise 60% of the county land area
  - Floodplains cover 67% of the county land area
  - 26.29% of the county is designated as Significant Natural Heritage Areas that provide habitat to species of concern
- 9. Farming Operations Grew Over Last Decade:** The number of active farms increased between 2000 and 2007. The market value of agricultural products sold from Camden County farms was worth \$28.2 million in 2007.

### ***Transportation***

- 10. Commuting In and Out of County to Work is More Common than Not:** More County residents travel to Pasquotank County to work than stay in Camden County. Non-resident workers hold half of the jobs in Camden County, making cross-county commutes a regular occurrence.
- 11. Transportation Infrastructure Limited to Vehicular Travel:** Camden County’s transportation system is limited in most areas to the road network. Alternative forms of travel, primarily for recreational purposes, may be desired by residents and visitors. A plan to construct a trail from the Dismal Swamp Park Visitors Center to connect to a Virginia trail to the north is being developed.

### ***Public Services***

- 12. Stormwater Management is a Critical Challenge:** Stormwater management in the County is an extremely challenging task. Low topographic relief, high groundwater tables, and poor draining soils limit the ability to employ best management practices and low-impact development techniques in the County.

- 13. Raw Water Supply Needed to Meet Needs of Future Populations:** Potable water in Camden County is provided by two public systems: South Mills Water Association (SMWA) and the South Camden Water and Sewer District (SCWSD). The recently constructed interconnection between the two systems and expansion of the SCWSD addresses current demand, but projections for the future show that more potable water will be needed to serve future water users in the county.
- 14. Wastewater Treatment is another Critical Challenge:** The South Camden Water and Sewer District provides sewer service to the Camden area and recently received a grant to supply portions of the South Mills core village area. New service to South Mills will address the current system from being underloaded, a problem that results in operational problems due to wastewater becoming septic in lines as it travels to the treatment plant. Many more septic systems throughout the county are inadequate and are expected to fail in the future. The *Water and Sewer Master Plan* identifies the need for three localized treatment systems to expand needed service, but capital expenditures are significant and the lack of density likely means this solution may be cost prohibitive.
- 15. Recreation is an Important Part of Economic Development:** Recreational opportunities in Camden County have expanded in recent years. Opportunities exist to expand further and provide a solid base for an eco-tourism industry sector in the county.
- 16. Community Health Planning is Underway:** Community Health Action Plans are being developed to address critical health, lifestyle behavior, and community social issues in Camden County.
- 17. Community Facility Needs Growing:** Several community facilities are identified as needs to meet current service levels. As the county grows, demand for more facilities will likely grow too.



*Part 4:*

# Plan Framework

## PART 4: PLAN FRAMEWORK

### INTRODUCTION

The Camden County Comprehensive Plan Framework consists of the essential elements of the plan that will guide future decision-making by the county. The plan framework includes the county’s vision statement, goals, objectives, and specific action strategies that are all organized by seven community planning themes. These elements work together in a structured hierarchy to describe different levels of community planning guidance:

- \* **Community Vision Statement** – describes the community’s aspirations for Camden County in 2035. This vision statement articulates an end state that the county will strive to achieve in future years.
- \* **Goals** – set out the broad community goals that will help the community achieve the 2035 community vision.
- \* **Objectives** – provide specific policy direction for addressing community goals. They assist in day-to-day decision-making.
- \* **Action Strategies** – provide specific action steps for achieving objectives.



## COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

Camden County will realize its goal to be a community with “**new energy and a new vision**” by embracing and **capitalizing on its assets** – abundant natural resources, a unique rural setting, and a high quality workforce and educational system. Emphasis will be placed on **providing a good quality of life for residents in a manner that is fiscally efficient and that preserves rural community assets.**

New development will be focused within **targeted core areas** to breathe new life into established county villages and to efficiently use existing and planned infrastructure and public resources. **New housing choices** will be made available to serve families, young professionals, and retirees. **Rural areas will maintain prominence in the county, and will continue to serve agricultural and forestry production and low density residential development.**

**New employment development** will broaden the county’s tax base and will be developed within strategic locations to **maximize use of public infrastructure.** Commercial and employment development will provide new goods and services and **valuable employment opportunities** to established residents. New industries will be low impact and will be designed to **protect critical natural resources.** The county will offer opportunities for residents and visitors to explore the natural wonder of Camden County by providing **new hospitality and recreational amenities.**

## PLAN THEMES

Early in the planning process, several themes surfaced that encompassed the key aspirations for the community. These seven key themes help to form the overarching plan framework and community goals for the 2035 Camden County Comprehensive Plan. The themes build on community and stakeholder input collected during the planning process, and they are used to organize the community goals and policy directions contained within the following sections.

The seven community planning themes are:

- \* Planning Our Future Land Use
- \* Preserving and Enhancing Community Character
- \* Building the Local Economy
- \* Expanding Tourism and Recreation
- \* Fostering Mobility, Accessibility, and Safety
- \* Conserving Environmental Resources
- \* Serving Current and Future Residents

## PLANNING OUR FUTURE LAND USE

*Opportunities exist to shape core village areas into vibrant, beautiful village areas that serve local residents and tourists.*



### BACKGROUND

When asked what the most critical issue facing Camden County is, residents resoundingly respond that it is the protection of the county's rural character and the small town experience of its townships. Following that sentiment, residents feel that the public services and amenities in the county need to be enhanced: new commercial shopping is needed to reduce the distance residents have to drive to shop, new employment opportunities are needed so that workers can be employed closer to home and so that the local tax base can be more balanced, and new recreational amenities are needed to serve the county's citizens and to support a growing tourism industry.

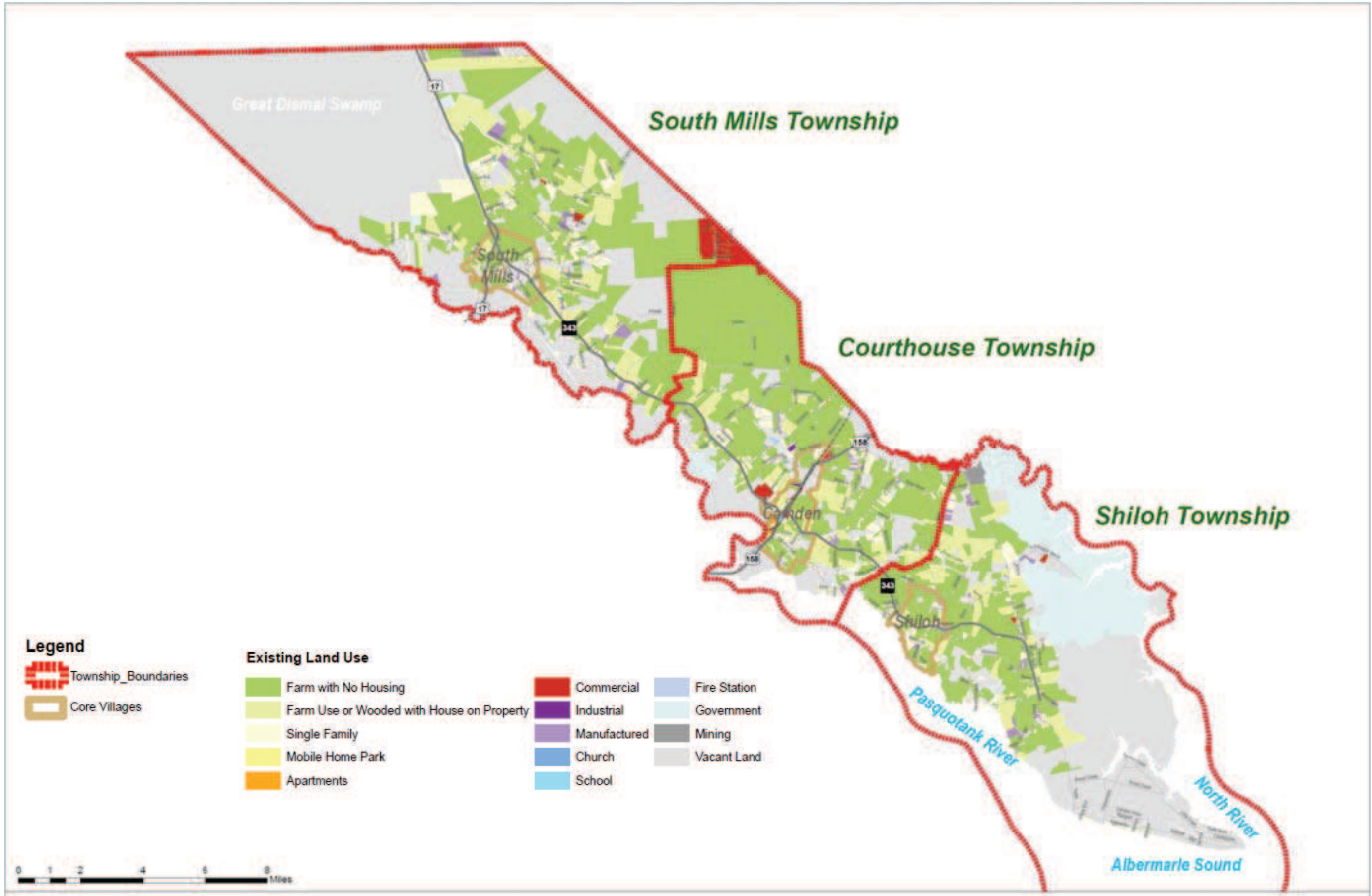
The challenge for Camden County is to balance all of these objectives: the need for more commerce and new public services and facilities, while maintaining the rural character of the county and maintaining a unique sense of place.

Protection of rural areas is important, but also is maintaining the development rights of property owners in the county. The Future Land Use plan set out in this section sets out a strategy for promoting development within the three core village areas of Camden County and maintaining the rural landscape in the outer areas of the county. This plan does not suggest reducing the development rights currently held by landowners, but does foster development in targeted areas and away from agricultural and rural lands.

**Existing Land Use**

The vast majority of land in Camden County is either in a natural state, used for agricultural purposes, or as low-density single family development on lots that are one acre or greater. Development potential, for the majority of county lands, is limited by the presence of wetlands, floodplains, and other areas of environmental concern. The map shown on the following page illustrates the locations of existing development in Camden County.

**Map 2: Existing Land Use**



**Development Regulations**

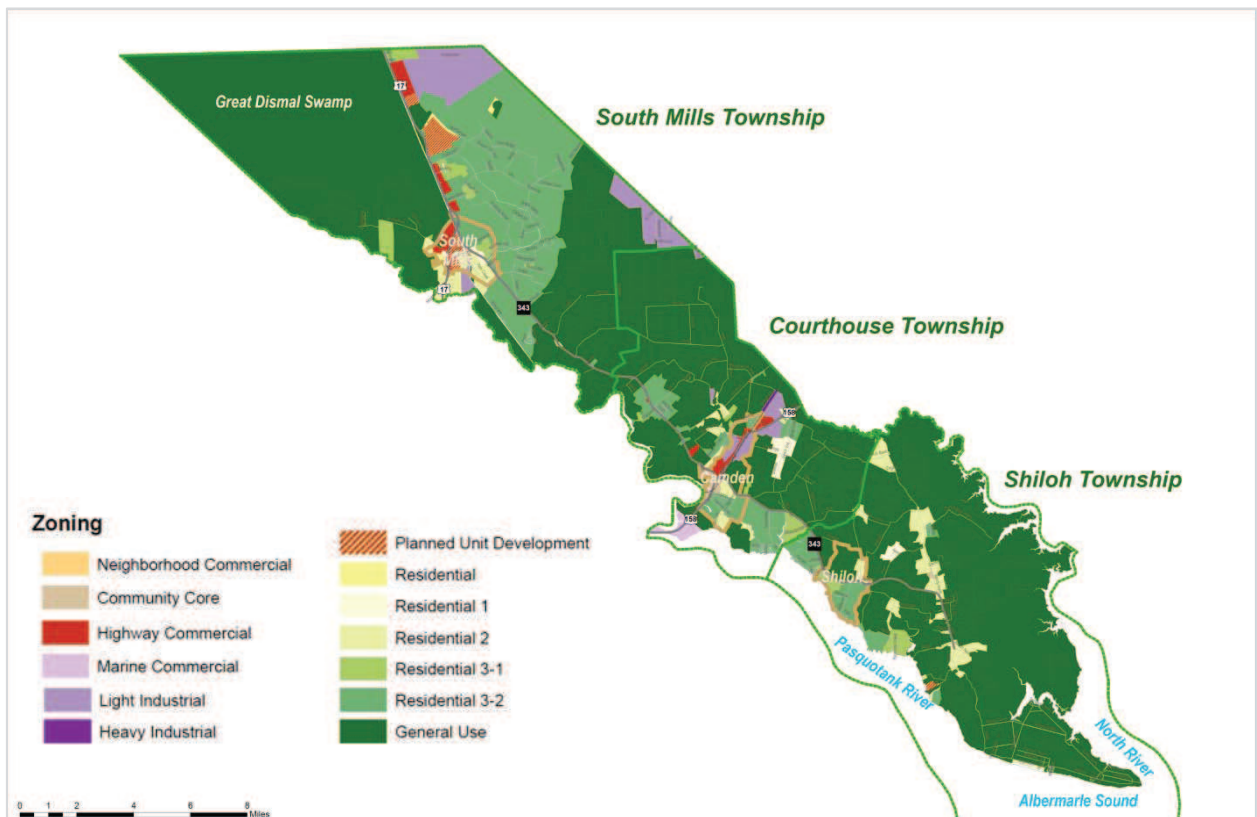
In keeping with existing land use trends, development over the last decade has primarily come in the form of low-density single-family residential homes. As listed shown below, the majority of land in the county is zoned for residential development (94.5%), leaving 5.5% of land to be developed as commercial, employment, industrial uses under current zoning. These districts are defined in detail in the Camden County Unified Development Ordinance that regulates all land development within the County.

**Table 2: Camden County Zoning Districts**

Zoning Districts	Acres	% of Total Acres	Definition
Neighborhood Commercial	0.7	0.0%	Rural commercial outside core village areas
Community Core	392.0	0.3%	Commercial inside core village areas
Highway Commercial	1,434.0	1.0%	Roadside commercial serving motoring public
Marine Commercial	382.0	0.3%	Waterfront and tourist related businesses
Light Industrial	5,893.0	3.9%	Wholesaling, warehouse facilities, light industries
Heavy Industrial	41.0	0.0%	Heavy industries
Planned Unit Development	947.0	0.6%	Multi-use district subject to controls set by BOCC
Residential 1	812.7	0.5%	Low density residential in or near village core areas
Residential 2	4,630.0	3.1%	Moderate density residential near village core areas
Residential 3-1	2,416.9	1.6%	Low density residential in rural area of one or more acres
Residential 3-2	23,386.0	15.5%	Low density residential in rural area of two or more acres
General Use	110,204.0	73.2%	Agriculture and agriculture related uses and associated low density residential
<b>Total</b>	<b>150,539.3</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

*Source: GIS Data from Camden County Planning & Community Development Department, Analyzed by Clarion Associates*

**Map 3: Camden County Zoning Districts**





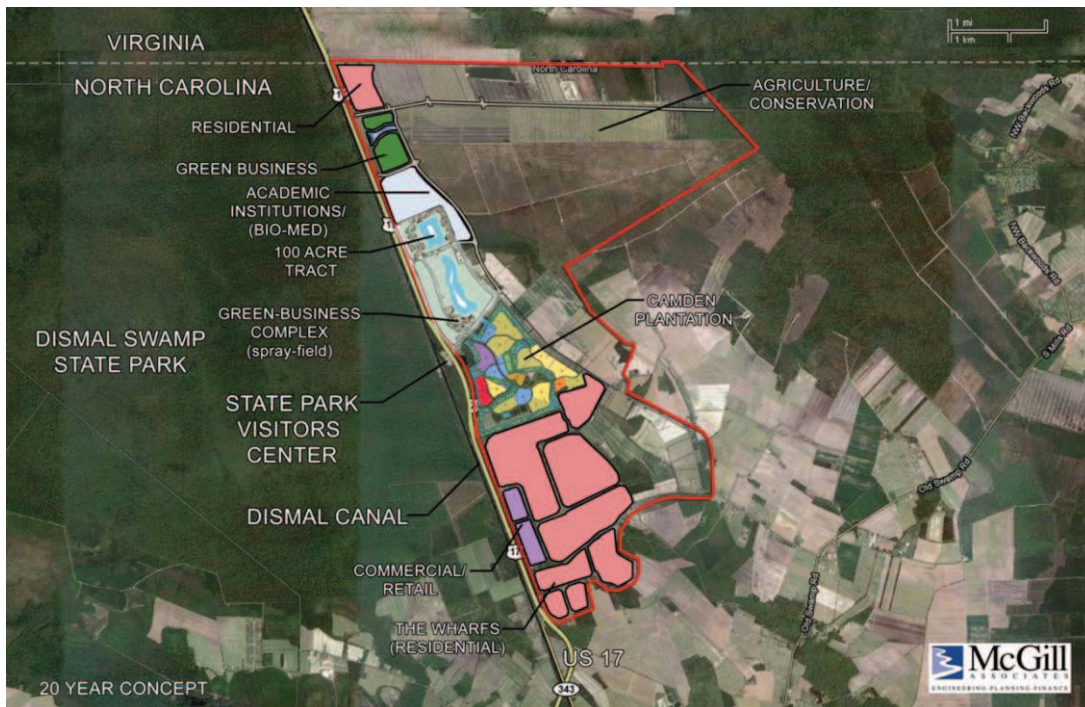
### Development Opportunities

The land use patterns of Camden County will be significantly different from the current development patterns when proposed plans are put into place. Economic development efforts have focused on creating synergy around the northern portion of the county to take advantage of proximity to the Hampton Roads area and connectivity and accessibility provided by U.S. 17. These developments have been strategically designed to maximize the use of existing infrastructure, to offer new housing choices and commercial shopping opportunities, and will provide more recreational opportunities in the form of trails and park spaces for future residents.

### US 17 Corridor Plan – Eco-Industrial Park

Building off the environmental culture of the Great Dismal Swamp (GDS) and the GDS Visitors Center, the plans for this section of the county are focused on developing a green business corridor. The vision includes new green businesses in the Eco Park, new academic / research and development institutions, a green business complex, an expansion of the Dismal Swamp State Park to include a new 90-acre park space for camping and other recreational activities, and a mixed-use development – Camden Plantation – to provide new types and styles of housing in the northern section of the County. It will be important to ensure that future development in this corridor creates an attractive and inviting gateway to Camden County from Virginia. It will also be important to ensure that new development on the east side of U.S. 17 does not negatively impact the Dismal Swamp State Park and the Visitors Center. The figure below illustrates how several proposed developments along the northern end of U.S. 17 near the Virginia border may be developed.

**Figure 8: 20-Year Concept Plan for U.S. 17 Corridor Development**



### ***Camden Plantation***

The Camden Plantation project has been designed as a planned unit development to include a variety of residential options, local serving retail designed in clusters, community facilities, public spaces, and pocket parks – all linked by bike paths and sidewalks as well as local roads. The scope of this project is considerable – 1,700 residential units and 160,000 square feet of new retail to be built out in phases. This development, if built, would change the pattern of development in Camden County and create a new population center at the north end of the county. Important public facility considerations for this project are how and from what source water will be provided to the development, opportunities to tie into the county’s wastewater system, the impact of the project on local schools, and the management of stormwater runoff on high and moderately hazardous soils.

### ***Camden Town Center***

The proposed Camden Town Center project is designed as a mixed-use health services development at the intersection of N.C. 343 and U.S. 158 near the Camden County Courthouse. This project will be an important placemaking component for this crossroads area. Currently, the county’s school, administrative, and courthouse facilities stand alone in this portion of Camden. The project is slated to include four retail/office buildings, three out parcels, related open spaces, parking, and infrastructure. The vision for the project is to provide needed health services to local residents in the form of a pharmacy and a family practice medical office, with supporting retail establishments.

### ***South Mills Small Area Plan***

The ECU Office of Innovation and Economic Development’s Municipal Management and Innovation Initiative has developed a Small Area Plan for South Mills that includes a vision and goals for the South Mills core area. The comprehensive planning effort was coordinated with the South Mills Small Area planning effort to provide support and insight to the process regarding how South Mills plans fit into the larger context of county plans for economic development, capital infrastructure, and land use. The plan calls for the South Mills area to be a “gateway waterfront community” with amenities in the core of South Mills to serve tourists and local recreationalists visiting the Great Dismal Swamp, its system of canals, and potential locally planned bikeways and trails. The plan includes illustrative graphics to highlight key vision components for the area – development of higher density housing, a local marina, all centered around a new public space.

### ***Hale’s Lake Wind Farm***

Invenergy, a renewable energy generator that is based out of Chicago, are in the process to develop the Hale’s Lake Wind Farm project in northeastern Camden County and Currituck County. The project is expected to lease up to 20,000 acres

of air space above open spaces and farmland to develop 188 large wind turbines. These turbines will generate renewable energy that can be sold back to utilities in North Carolina that are under state mandate to purchase 12.5% of energy supply needs from renewable sources.

In July, 2011, the US Navy's ROTH (Relocatable Over the Horizon Radar) Program Office released an unclassified report on the stand-off requirements of wind turbines from ROTH systems. These systems use high frequency radars to identify vessels located in waters beyond the horizon line seen from the continental US for homeland security purposes. One of these systems is located in Chesapeake, Virginia. The report states that wind turbines can have a significant impact on the performance of these radar systems. Once the wind turbine locations for the Hale's Lake project have been determined, a comprehensive analysis will be conducted to determine the potential for impacts on the Chesapeake, VA ROTH system.

### ***Future Growth and Development***

The Future Land Use Map provided later in this chapter is based on population and employment projections for Camden County prepared by Woods and Poole, Inc. Between now and 2030, it is estimated that Camden County will need an additional 925 units of residential development and 165,000 square feet of nonresidential development to accommodate future populations. These calculations take into account the "committed" development that has either secured zoning or has secured development permits, such as Camden Plantation, Town Center, and Wharf's Landing commercial development. To see a full analysis of the population and employment projections, see the *Development Capacity and Alternative Development Scenarios Report*, which is located on the county's comprehensive plan website and included as an appendix to the plan.

Community input gathered during the planning process identified several key land uses that citizens would like to see developed in Camden County in future years:

- \* Grocery store
- \* Medical facilities
- \* Hardware store
- \* Restaurants
- \* Community center / new parks

### ***Future Land Use Analysis***

As evidenced by the 2004 Camden County moratorium on development, it is critical to plan for future development to ensure that adequate public infrastructure is in place to serve new development. A core component of the comprehensive

planning process was the analysis of current land conditions, development suitability, development potential, and alternative development scenarios. These analyses were the basis for developing the Future Land Use Map. They are discussed in the *Development Capacity and Alternative Development Scenarios Report*, which is located on the county’s comprehensive plan website and included as an appendix to the plan. This analysis was organized into four components:

- \* **Step 1: Land Suitability Analysis:** Evaluate the suitability for development in the County
- \* **Step 2: Potential Development Areas** – Identify areas that are available for future development
- \* **Step 3: Development Capacity** – Calculate the capacity for new development under existing development regulations
- \* **Step 4: Alternative Development Scenarios** – Evaluate and compare two future growth scenarios: (1) Status Quo that continues current patterns and (2) Targeted Development that directs growth to certain areas and creates a more compact growth pattern

Steering Committee and community review of the alternative development scenarios provided support for a new development pattern in Camden County. This new pattern directs growth to targeted areas in and around the three core villages: South Mills, Camden, and Shiloh. It utilizes existing infrastructure and sets priorities for future infrastructure extension in the Camden core village area along US 158. The objectives, action strategies, and Future Land Use plan included in the balance of this section were developed from community input on the preferred land use pattern for Camden County in 2035.

### **PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE LAND USE GOAL**

*Camden County’s land use pattern will be primarily rural in character with high quality and economically productive development in targeted locations in the core village areas and along main road corridors, which are served by public utilities.*

### **OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STRATEGIES**

#### ***Objective #1: Promote a Targeted Development Pattern***

Camden County will work with developers to encourage new residential and non-residential development in a manner that is consistent with the county’s Future Land Use Plan. This approach will include the flexibility to consider and explore new opportunities that arise in the future that were not part of discussions when the Future Land Use plan was developed.

**Action Strategy #1: Promote Targeted Development through Rezoning**

Promote targeted development, as identified by the Future Land Use map, through appropriate rezoning and development approvals.

**Action Strategy #2: Evaluate Impacts of Development Outside Targeted Development Areas**

Consider the effect on the targeted development pattern set out in the Future Land Use map when evaluating new development proposals submitted for areas outside targeted development areas; incorporate this evaluation as part of the development review process.

**Action Strategy #3: Support Implementation of the Camden County / US 17 Corridor Master Plan**

Charting a course for attracting and fostering new business development, Camden County will support the implementation of the US 17 Corridor Master Plan in accordance with the objectives and action strategies set out in the Comprehensive Plan.

**Action Strategy #4: Develop a Master Plan for the US 158 Corridor**

Pursue development of a master plan for the US 158 Corridor. This plan should identify particular areas for development, preferred densities and development models that are appropriate given site conditions, existing and planned infrastructure, access to road network, environmental conditions, and development interests. The plan should address both the current 158 corridor and the preferred 158 Alternative being planned by NC DOTs as part of its Strategic Highway Corridor initiative, which will be included in the future Camden County Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

**Action Strategy #5: Maintain Rural Scale Zoning**

Maintain the current very low and low density county zoning to protect rural and environmentally sensitive areas for lands outside of the targeted development areas.

**Action Strategy #6: Provide Public Water and Sewer in Targeted Development Areas**

Support the extension of public water and wastewater service within targeted development areas and discourage extension of these services outside of these areas.

***Objective #2: Reduce Development Impacts on Natural Environment and Working Lands<sup>2</sup>***

See Planning Theme #6: Conserving Environmental Resources and Working Lands for specific objectives.

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<sup>2</sup> Working lands is a term used to describe agricultural, horticultural, and forestry land uses.

### ***Objective #3: Manage Future Growth***

Camden County will continue to comply with state Coastal Management regulations and local policy direction by managing future growth in the county for the purpose of preserving natural and cultural resources, maintaining the rural character of the county, and to ensure the efficient provision of public facilities and services.

#### **Action Strategy #1: Use Smart Growth Scorecard**

Continue to use the Smart Growth scorecard developed for Camden County to evaluate the extent to which development proposals promote a smart growth land use pattern.

#### **Action Strategy #2: Reduce Environmental Impacts**

Continue to comply with NC Division of Coastal Management policies and regulations to protect environmentally sensitive areas, to reduce impacts of developing in the floodplain, and to address hazard mitigation

#### **Action Strategy #3: Discourage Rezoning Low or Least Suitable Lands for More Intense Uses**

Continue to discourage rezoning of land to a higher intensity use that is designated as low or least suitable for development per the Land Use Suitability Analysis.

#### **Action Strategy #4: Evaluate Need to Update CAMA Plan**

Evaluate the need to update the 2005 CAMA Land Use Plan to reflect the vision, goals, objectives, and action strategies of this Comprehensive Plan.

### ***Objective #4: Ensure that New Development has a Positive Impact on the County Budget***

Camden County will evaluate development proposals for their impact on future county budgets, both for county operations and capital improvements to ensure that new development will not have a harmful effect on fiscal resources.

#### **Action Strategy #1: Promote Development Where Public Infrastructure Exists or Is Planned**

Promote a targeted development pattern that focuses development in areas where public infrastructure and facilities are existing or planned, and away from areas where new systems would be needed to service new development.

#### **Action Strategy #2: Develop Fiscal Impact Model for New Developments**

Develop a fiscal impact model to be used to evaluate new development proposals. The model should assess impacts on public water and sewer, public education, public safety (fire, ems, and sheriff), and general government.

**Action Strategy #3: Consider Comprehensive Plan Goals when Drafting CIP**

Consider the goals of the Comprehensive Plan when updating the county’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to ensure that new capital investments promote the goals and objectives of the plan.

**Action Strategy #4: Coordinate Development and Infrastructure Planning**

Given the finite nature of water and wastewater capacity, coordinate development approvals with local utilities to ensure adequate service capacity can be provided to proposed developments, and that long-term land use and infrastructure planning goals are met.

***Objective #5: Provide New Housing Choices***

Camden County will expand its housing stock by providing the opportunity to develop a variety of housing choices for current and future residents: starter housing for young professionals and new families, housing for established families, housing for retirees and empty nesters, and managed care housing for aging seniors.

**Action Strategy #1: Encourage Development of Accessory Apartments**

Encourage the development of by-right accessory dwelling apartments on single-family lots to provide additional housing options.

**Action Strategy #2: New Zoning for Moderate and Higher Density Housing**

Develop and adopt new zoning districts to allow for moderate and higher density residential development within the core village areas as identified on the Future Land Use Plan map. Encourage the use of the Planned Unit Development zoning district for developments proposing higher density mixed-use development.

**Action Strategy #3: New Design Standards for Higher Density Housing**

Develop new design standards for single-family attached and multi-family housing that addresses the siting of buildings, parking, landscaping and buffering between adjacent uses and road frontages, on-site circulation, height and building massing, and exterior lighting.

## **FUTURE LAND USE MAP**

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The Future Land Use Map provides guidance to decision-makers in Camden County regarding the overall pattern of development that should occur in the county, and the appropriate types of land uses and intensity of development that should occur in specific locations. This section is an update to the Future Land Use map and designations included in the 2005 CAMA Advanced Core Plan.

### ***Future Land Use Map – Growth Vision for Community***

This updated Future Land Use map and designations better reflect the current vision for the county. They provide a framework for targeted village-style development within the core village areas, and rural and environmental preservation in all other areas. Of considerable significance, is the infrastructure needed to support this new development. The pattern of development assumes that the extension of public infrastructure, particularly sanitary sewer service, would only occur within the core village areas of South Mills and Courthouse/Camden. This recommendation will limit the intensity of development in other areas – providing a framework for protecting rural character and managing public expenditures.

### ***Purpose of Future Land Use Map***

The Future Land Use map and designations are used during development review to make recommendations and decisions regarding the appropriateness of different aspects of proposed developments. The Future Land Use map and designations provide guidance when making decisions about zoning, site planning, and subdivision approvals by identifying the type of development and preferred densities that should occur in specific areas.

The Future Land Use designations and the Future Land Use map are provided solely with the intention of offering guidance to local decision-makers. This plan does not make formal recommendations to rezone properties to align with these Future Land use designations. Instead the Plan provides support for these Future Land Use designations during a rezoning case evaluation.

The table on the following page summarizes the 11 Future Land Use designations. A map is provided on the following pages that illustrates the locations of these designations. The color coding of the designations matches the map areas.

### ***Future Updates to the Future Land Use Map***

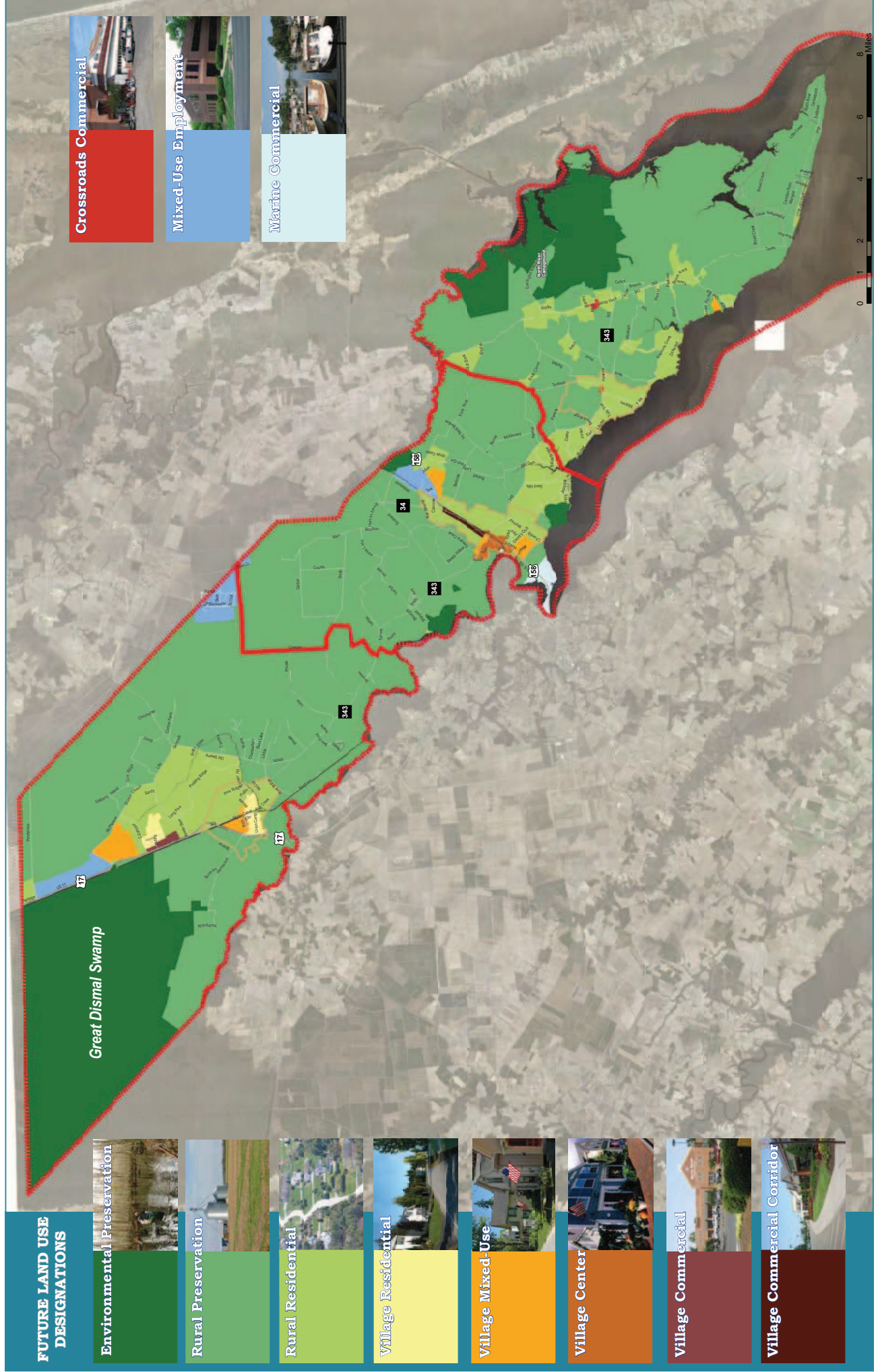
As decisions regarding the location of the proposed US 158 Alternate Route and Northern County Connector being developed under the Camden County Transportation Plan are formalized, these alignments should be placed on the Future Land Use Map. Adjustments to Future Land Use designations may be required to better reflect the desired land uses surrounding the two bypass routes.



Table 3: Future Land Use Designations

Future Land Use Designations			
Future Land Use	Residential Density	Land Uses	Wastewater Service
Environmental Preservation	n/a	Protected lands Dismal Swamp / North River Gamelands	Private wastewater
Rural Preservation	Max 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres	Very low density residential Farms and support uses Forestry and mining Environmentally sensitive lands	Private wastewater
Rural Residential	Max 1 dwelling unit per 1 acre	Low density residential Open space / recreation Public uses	Private wastewater
Village Residential	Max 3 dwelling units per 1 acre	Moderate density residential Open space / recreation Public uses	Public sanitary sewer appropriate
Village Mixed-Use	Range 3-14 dwelling units per 1 acre	Mix of residential uses Neighborhood serving commercial Open space / recreation Public uses	Public sanitary sewer appropriate
Village Center	Predominantly commercial (up to 14 dwelling units per 1 acre)	Village commercial/office Live/work units Public spaces / recreation Public uses	Public sanitary sewer appropriate
Village Commercial	n/a	Community commercial Professional offices Grocery/pharmacy Regional retail Open space/recreation Public uses	Public sanitary sewer appropriate
Village Commercial Corridor	n/a	Community commercial Professional offices Grocery/pharmacy Regional retail Open space/recreation Public uses	Public sanitary sewer appropriate
Crossroads Commercial	n/a	Rural commercial Open space/recreation Public uses	Private wastewater
Mixed-Use Employment	n/a	Business parks Research and development offices Industrial Commercial serving employment uses	Public sanitary sewer appropriate
Marine Commercial	n/a	Marinas Commercial fishing Marina serving retail/commercial	Private wastewater

# Future Land Use





### ***Description***

Contains environmentally sensitive lands, including the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, the Dismal Swamp State Park, the North River Gamelands Preserve, and other permanently protected areas.

### ***Intent***

These areas should be kept in a natural state. Federal, state, and local protections are in place for many parcels with this designation. Development of nature-based recreational uses are appropriate and should emphasize passive recreation and limit impervious surfaces of facilities and infrastructure.

### ***Policies***

- \* Should remain in an undeveloped, natural state, except for the development of nature-based recreational uses.
- \* Areas surrounding environmental preservation areas should consider impacts on these lands. Wooded or vegetated buffers around natural conservation lands are appropriate to reduce the impacts on these lands from noise, traffic, external lighting, and stormwater flows from off-site developments.

### ***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- \* Open space
- \* Recreational facilities, as permitted, and related infrastructure



**Description**

Contains very low density rural residential development, farms, forestry sites, existing mining sites, and environmentally sensitive lands.

**Intent**

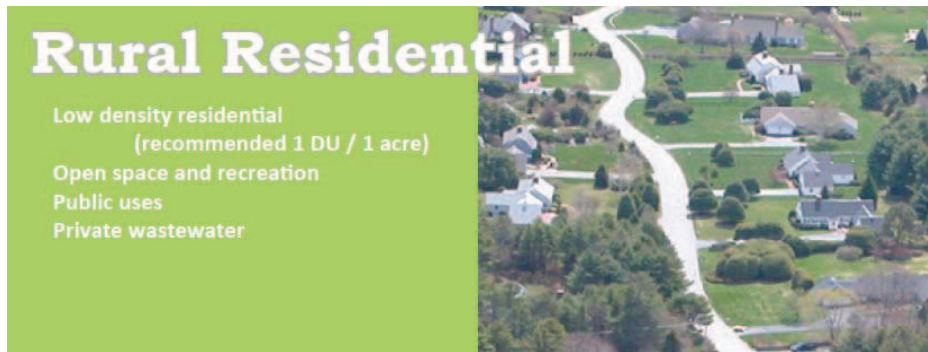
Rural preservation areas promote the continued use of working lands (farms, forestry, and limited existing mining) and protection of environmentally sensitive lands from more intense development. Development should only include very low density residential uses, up to a maximum of one dwelling unit per five acres. This designation assumes that existing zoning will be maintained over time.

**Policies**

- \* Encroachment upon these lands by neighboring development could affect the operations of existing working lands enterprises. Areas surrounding rural preservation areas should consider impacts on these lands, particularly for agricultural operations. All efforts should be made to reduce such conflicts. Wooded or vegetated buffers are appropriate to reduce the impacts on these lands from noise, traffic, external lighting, and stormwater flows.
- \* When developing in areas adjacent to established working lands enterprises, make a concerted effort to address the input of the working lands landowner during the development review process.
- \* The extension of public utilities within rural preservation areas is not recommended.
- \* To the extent possible, development should maintain a wooded corridor along roadways to maintain the rural aesthetic of the county.

**Appropriate Specific Uses**

- \* Very low density residential uses (up to 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres)
- \* Working lands (farms, forestry sites, existing mining operations) and Agricultural support uses
- \* Open space and recreation
- \* Public/institutional uses (schools, places of worship, fire stations, other government facilities)



### ***Description***

Contains rural, low density single family residential development. Densities range from one dwelling unit per two acres to one dwelling unit per acre. Lands with this designation are located in South Mills east of the core village area, along the 158 corridor, south of 343 between the Courthouse/Camden and Shiloh core village areas, and along Sandy Hook Road.

### ***Intent***

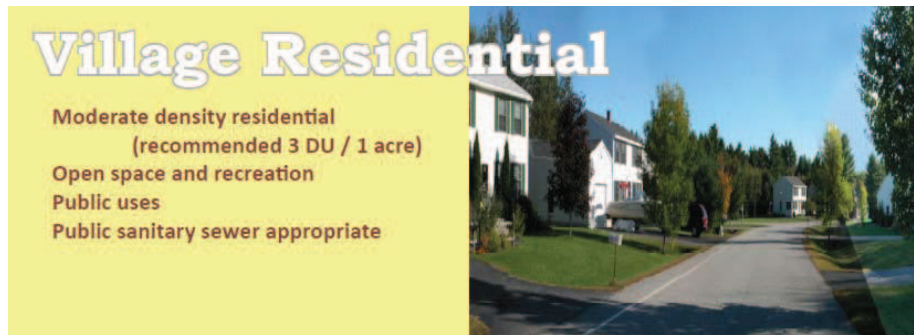
These areas should primarily accommodate rural residential uses. Prime agricultural lands and other working lands are not included within this designation. Rural residential areas serve as a buffer between rural preservation areas and more intense development. This designation assumes that existing zoning will be maintained over time.

### ***Policies***

- ✧ The extension of public utilities within rural residential areas is not recommended.
- ✧ To the extent possible, development should maintain a wooded corridor along roadways to maintain the rural aesthetic of the county.
- ✧ Recreational facilities provided in new residential developments should be designed to provide maximum access to properties in the development and should include passive and active recreational facilities, with emphasis on providing walking and biking trails.
- ✧ Stormwater management best practices should be used when designing residential developments to minimize flows and maintain water quality.

### ***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- ✧ Low density residential uses (up to 1 dwelling unit per acre)
- ✧ Open space and recreation
- ✧ Public/institutional uses (schools, places of worship, fire stations, other government facilities)



### ***Description***

Consists of existing and new residential development opportunities within the South Mills township, including the Wharf's Landing development, and undeveloped lands south of Main Street in the core village area.

### ***Intent***

Village residential uses provide a more moderate scale of neighborhood development focusing on primarily single family detached development. This area could include attached residential uses, such as townhomes, as long as they are designed within the recommended density range. Housing density should not exceed three dwelling units per acre.

### ***Policies***

- \* The extension of public utilities within village residential areas is appropriate.
- \* Linkages should be made to provide vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access between residential developments and proximate commercial and recreational centers.
- \* Recreational facilities provided in new residential developments should be designed to provide maximum access to properties in the development and should include passive and active recreational facilities, with emphasis on providing sidewalks and biking trails.
- \* Stormwater management best practices should be used when designing residential developments to minimize flows and maintain water quality.

### ***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- \* Moderate density residential uses (up to 3 dwelling units per acre)
- \* Open space and recreation
- \* Public/institutional uses (schools, places of worship, fire stations, other government facilities)



### ***Description***

This area includes new opportunities for moderate to higher density mixed-use, including residential, commercial, and recreational uses. It includes Camden Plantation, a proposed planned unit development north of Main Street in the South Mills core village area, development opportunities south of Country Club Road and south of US 158 in Courthouse/Camden, and a proposed planned unit development in Shiloh the township north of One Mill and Riggs Roads.

### ***Intent***

Village Mixed-Use includes future areas for development of more dense residential neighborhoods that provide a diversity of housing types and housing options. Areas include single-family detached units, townhouses, duplexes, condominiums, apartments, senior housing, and other multi-family dwelling units. Housing densities should range from 3-14 dwelling units per acre. Development should fit the context of the most proximate core village area. Appropriate zoning for village mixed-use development includes the Planned Unit Development district.

### ***Policies***

- \* The extension of public utilities within village residential areas in South Mills and Courthouse/Camden is appropriate. The village mixed-use area located in Shiloh is more appropriately serviced using a small package plant than public sanitary sewer.
- \* Linkages should be made to provide vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access between residential developments and proximate commercial and recreational centers.
- \* Recreational facilities provided in new residential developments should be designed to provide maximum access to properties in the development and should include passive and active recreational facilities, with emphasis on providing sidewalks and biking trails.
- \* Stormwater management best practices should be used when designing residential developments to minimize flows and maintain water quality.

### ***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- \* Moderate and higher density residential uses (up to 14 dwelling units per acre)
- \* Neighborhood serving commercial uses (coffee shops, small restaurants, dry cleaners, etc.) and small scale office uses
- \* Grocery or pharmacy
- \* Open space and recreation
- \* Public/institutional uses (schools, places of worship, fire stations, other government facilities)





### **Description**

Contains areas with focused commercial and institutional development in the three core villages: Main Street in South Mills, the corner of US 158 and NC 343 in Courthouse/Camden, and Trotman Road and NC 343 in Shiloh.

### **Intent**

The village center designation is intended to foster development that reinforces the core village areas in Camden County. These locations should be the “heart” of each township area and should provide opportunities for residents to gather, shop, recreate, and receive government services. (See Preserving and Enhancing Community Character Objective #2: Promote Village Style Development for additional information on the intent of each core village area.) The village center may also offer opportunities for live/work units – small residences located within non-residential buildings providing housing to proprietors and others wishing to live close to non-residential amenities. Appropriate zoning for village center development includes the Planned Unit Development district.

### **Policies**

- \* The extension of public utilities within village center areas is appropriate. The village center area located in Shiloh is more appropriately serviced using a small package plant than public sanitary sewer.
- \* Non-residential development in these areas should focus on providing service to residents of the township and to visiting tourists. These are not appropriate locations for larger-scale, regional retail establishments.
- \* Village centers should provide an appropriate pedestrian experience. These areas should provide pedestrian and bicycle amenities to residents and tourists, including public bicycle parking facilities, ample sidewalks with appropriate lighting, and wayfinding signage to orient visitors to points of interests.
- \* Stormwater management best practices should be used when designing developments to minimize flows and maintain water quality. Detention ponds and swales should be designed to be aesthetically pleasing, and to serve as landscaped features and/or public water features.

### ***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- \* Village scale commercial retail, restaurants, and personal service establishments (salons, dry cleaners)
- \* Small professional offices (accountant, attorney, real estate, insurance, etc.)
- \* Moderate and higher density residential uses in live-work units or higher density residential developments (up to 14 dwelling units per acre)
- \* Grocery or pharmacy
- \* Open space and recreation
- \* Public/institutional uses (schools, places of worship, fire stations, other government facilities)



### **Description**

Contains the area planned for commercial development in Wharf's Landing on US 17.

### **Intent**

These areas focus on retail and commercial uses that serve proximate residential neighborhoods and tourists. They are distinct from the village center designation in that they do not serve as the "heart" of the community and do not provide housing, but instead provide access to needed goods and services. Retail areas can have a range of characteristics depending on the township they service. In general, these should provide convenience shopping and include restaurants and smaller specialty retailers. Village commercial is intended to serve a more local and community need, but may include some regional-scale establishments designed to fit within a village context.

### **Policies**

- \* The extension of public utilities within village commercial areas is appropriate.
- \* Non-residential development in these areas should focus on providing service to residents of the township and to visiting tourists. Regional retail establishments that have a larger market area draw that extends outside of the county are also appropriate if they are designed in a manner that upholds the rural character and village-style design aesthetic.
- \* Village commercial areas should be designed in a master planned fashion that consolidates driveway access from major roadways, provides shared parking for establishments, provides safe pedestrian and bicycle access between parking areas and commercial establishments, and provides access to neighboring developments.
- \* To the extent possible, developments should maintain a wooded corridor along major roadways to maintain the rural aesthetic of the county.
- \* Off-premise signage height should be limited to reflect the rural character while also providing adequate advertising opportunities for establishments.

- \* Stormwater management best practices should be used when designing developments to minimize flows and maintain water quality. Detention ponds and swales should be designed to be aesthetically pleasing, and to serve as landscaped features and/or public water features.

***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- \* Village scale commercial retail, restaurants, and personal service establishments
- \* Professional offices
- \* Grocery or pharmacy
- \* Appropriately designed (i.e., village scale) regional retail establishments
- \* Open space and recreation
- \* Public/institutional uses (schools, places of worship, fire stations, other government facilities)



### **Description**

Contains the US 158 corridor from Gumberry up to Belcross.

### **Intent**

These areas focus on retail and commercial uses that serve the greater community and tourists. In general, this area should provide convenience shopping, include restaurants and smaller specialty retailers, small professional offices, and personal service establishments. Village commercial corridor is intended to serve a more local and community need, but may include some regional-scale establishments designed to fit within a village context.

This designation is distinct from the village commercial designation in that it provides guidance for commercial development within a corridor context. Development along the corridor should be located in development nodes or centers, reducing access points onto US 158. Where possible, master planning of multiple developments sites is the preferred method for designing commercial centers to enhance the rural character of the county, consolidate access points onto the highway, ensure accessibility and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists, and provide opportunities to serve future transit along the corridor.

### **Policies**

- \* An overlay district should be prepared for the Village Commercial Corridor designation that provides standards intended to maintain the county's rural character in the corridor, and should include:
  - o Height and design of signage
  - o Wooded or vegetated roadway buffers/setbacks and screening of utility facilities
  - o Standards to consolidate access points and reduce conflict points to enhance safety and improve circulation
  - o Shared parking for individual uses

- To be ready for transit opportunities, encourage commercial property owners to set aside small areas in parking lots for park-and-ride
- Standards to provide safe pedestrian circulation to, and within, commercial developments, including sidewalks, marked crosswalks, and parking lots designed with pedestrian circulation and safety in mind
- \* The extension of public utilities within village commercial corridor areas is appropriate.
- \* Non-residential development in these areas should focus on providing service to residents of the township and to visiting tourists. Regional retail establishments are also appropriate if they are designed in a manner that upholds the rural character and village-style design aesthetic.
- \* Village commercial corridor areas should be designed in a master planned fashion that consolidates driveway access from major roadways, provides shared parking for establishments, and provides safe pedestrian and bicycle access between parking areas and commercial establishments, and provides access to neighboring developments.
- \* To the extent possible, developments should maintain a wooded corridor along major roadways to maintain the rural aesthetic of the county.
- \* Off-premise signage height should be limited to reflect the rural character while also providing adequate advertising opportunities for establishments.
- \* Stormwater management best practices should be used when designing developments to minimize flows and maintain water quality. Detention ponds and swales should be designed to be aesthetically pleasing, and to serve as landscaped features and/or public water features.

### ***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- \* Village scale commercial retail, restaurants, and personal service establishments
- \* Professional offices
- \* Grocery or pharmacy
- \* Appropriately designed (i.e., village scale) regional retail establishments
- \* Open space and recreation
- \* Public/institutional uses (schools, places of worship, fire stations, other government facilities)



### ***Description***

This designation includes a small cluster of commercial development in the Shiloh township on Sandy Hook Road south of Stanley Lane.

### ***Intent***

Crossroads commercial is intended to provide commercial uses that serve proximate rural residences. Crossroads commercial is not typically designed in a master planned fashion, but as singular smaller shops and stores that provide basic goods and services.

### ***Policies***

- ✧ The extension of public utilities within crossroads commercial areas is not appropriate.
- ✧ Non-residential development in these areas should focus on providing service to residents of the township and to visiting tourists. They should be small scale and provide basic goods and services – convenience shopping for the Shiloh township.
- ✧ Crossroads commercial development primarily serves vehicular traffic. Small paths may be designed to connect to adjacent corridor commercial developments to serve bicyclists and pedestrians, or customers wishing to walk between stores.
- ✧ To the extent possible, developments should maintain a wooded corridor along major roadways to maintain the rural aesthetic of the county.
- ✧ Off-premise signage height should be limited to reflect the rural character while also providing adequate advertising opportunities for establishments.
- ✧ Stormwater management best practices should be used when designing developments to minimize flows and maintain water quality.

***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- \* Small, rural scale commercial retail, restaurants, and personal service establishments, such as a general store, non-drive through restaurant, hair salon, or gas station
- \* Open space and recreation
- \* Public/institutional uses (schools, places of worship, fire stations, other government facilities)





### **Description**

Mixed-use employment areas are located primarily along the US 17 corridor north of South Mills core village area, including the new Eco-Industrial Park near the Virginia border, and the area including Camden Business Park and surrounding areas on US 158 in Courthouse/Camden township.

### **Intent**

These areas include a wide range of business, light industrial, office, research and development, and related ancillary uses, such as restaurants and small-scale retail and convenience shopping. They generally take on the appearance of an office development, yet with warehousing capabilities. Mixed-Use Employment centers may take the form of a “campus” in the integration and coordination of uses and quality and character of the development. These areas are prime locations with good access to major road networks and should be reserved for high-return employment generating uses such as office buildings or light manufacturing or warehousing operations. Heavy or light industrial uses are appropriate zoning designations for this development.

### **Policies**

- \* The extension of public utilities within mixed-use employment areas is appropriate.
- \* As feasible, mixed-use employment areas should be designed in a master planned fashion that consolidates driveway access from major roadways, provides shared parking for establishments, and provides safe pedestrian access between parking areas and employment uses.
- \* To the extent possible, developments should maintain a wooded corridor along major roadways to maintain the rural aesthetic of the county.
- \* Off-premise signage height should be limited to reflect the rural character and provide easy orientation to employment destinations.
- \* Stormwater management best practices should be used when designing developments to minimize flows and maintain water quality. Detention ponds and swales should be designed to be aesthetically pleasing, and to serve as landscaped features and/or public water features.

***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- \* Business parks / research and development offices
- \* Light industrial
- \* Heavy industrial
- \* Employment and locally serving retail establishments, such as convenience restaurants



### ***Description***

This designation includes existing marine commercial uses, such as marinas and commercial fishing operations, located along surface waters.

### ***Intent***

These areas provide opportunities for development of boating and other tourist-related businesses located along waterfront locations. This use provides necessary opportunities to access public waters and moor boats, and provides necessary support uses, such as boat gas facilities. In addition, this classification includes existing commercial fishing operations located in southern Camden County.

### ***Policies***

- \* Development should not have an adverse impact on adjacent waters and environmentally sensitive lands.
- \* Marine commercial uses should be designed to minimize impervious surfaces and maintain natural stormwater flows.
- \* To the extent possible, developments should maintain a wooded corridor along major roadways to maintain the rural aesthetic of the county.
- \* Off-premise signage height should be limited to reflect the rural character and provide easy orientation to marine commercial destinations.

### ***Appropriate Specific Uses***

- \* Marinas
- \* Marina serving retail/commercial
- \* Commercial fishing

## PRESERVING AND ENHANCING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

*It is critical to protect and preserve Camden County's unique places and rural, small town environment.*



### BACKGROUND

Camden County is a rural coastal county that is growing due to its proximity to the Hampton Roads region and the quality of life found in the county. The county finds itself at an important part in its history – one where future decisions about growth and development will likely have significant impacts on the character and experience of Camden County.

The county stands in front of great opportunities – to expand upon the development framework in the three core village areas and to promote development of new businesses and industries. The character and design of new buildings are an important consideration for the future of the county.

As seen in communities throughout the United States, the loss of community character occurs one development at a time – new signage, removal of trees, buildings that are out of place with the character of the area – over time the cumulative effects of inappropriate developments reduce the quality of the visual environment and the uniqueness of place. If not managed, development in Camden might look like any other community in America. Because of this threat to the county's unique sense of place, new development should be required to enhance the rural character of Camden County.

### ***Protecting Rural and Historic Character***

While there is much available land in Camden County, current infrastructure limitations (water, sewer, stormwater, transportation) and the presence of environmentally sensitive areas pose challenges for traditional development in most areas of the county. The future of development and economic development may likely be best approached as “building off the County’s existing framework.”

**Figure 9: Example of Unique Historic Property in Camden County**



Possibly more importantly, citizens of Camden County strongly support the preservation of the unique and historic rural character found in the county and want to manage development to better protect these unique places.

### ***Protecting Rural Road Corridors***

Traveling around Camden County, visitors will find that one of the most important qualities of the county’s rural character are its rural roadways. These roadways provide scenic views that are unique to Camden County. Protection of the rural character along roadways will be an important step in not only protecting the rural viewsheds within the county, but also preserving one of its most important economic attributes.

Visitors can go almost anywhere in America to find roads cluttered with commercial strip development and commercial signage. But that is not what attracts vacationers to destinations. Unique, authentic, and tranquil environments are what tourists and outdoor recreators want to visit.

Like resort communities and other destinations around the nation, economic development in Camden County is closely tied to its natural environment and character of development. Fortunately, Camden County has an opportunity to protect its unique road corridors from being blighted by unmanaged development.

**Figure 10: Picturesque Rural Roadway in Camden County**



### ***Developing Core Villages***

Developing hamlets or villages that maintain the rural and bucolic character of Camden and provide locally needed services and provide offerings to tourists is the preferred approach to future development in the county. This approach will address land use compatibility issues, protect environmentally sensitive lands and protect the rural character that is one of the county's largest assets.

**Figure 11: Example of South Mills Village Character**



The New England region of the United States provides many historical examples of hamlet and village style developments that locate residential and non-residential development in close proximity, while maintaining a rural sense of place and character. The following is an examples from Park Avenue in Northpoint, Maine. This residential neighborhood uses density and a specific design palette to create a unique village-style environment.

**Figure 12: Park Avenue in Northport, Maine – 12 dwelling units per acre**



Many of the attributes unique to villages are already located in Camden County. Small scale retail and historic churches are examples of uses that are often found in New England villages and hamlets.

**Figure 13: Historic Church in South Mills Along Canal**



Village “greens” or plazas are a core component of village style development. This example from a community in Tennessee illustrates the benefits that public green spaces can provide to neighboring residential properties.

**Figure 14: Example of Village Green from Tennessee**



The South Mills Small Area Plan includes graphics that illustrate what new public spaces located near a new marina in South Mills might look like. These are the first steps to envisioning village style development in Camden County.

**Figure 15: Example of Village Green Near Marina from South Mills Small Area Plan**





Figure 16: Example of Public Space from South Mills Small Area Plan



## **PRESERVING AND ENHANCING COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL**

*Camden County will preserve and enhance its pastoral character by ensuring that new development within targeted development areas is designed to fit the context of core village areas in the manner of an American rural village. Development in areas outside of targeted development locations will continue to be developed at a rural scale and provide opportunities for low and very density residential development, small-scale rural crossroads commercial development, and working lands operations.*

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STRATEGIES**

### ***Objective #1: Maintain Rural Character***

To ensure the pastoral qualities and experience of Camden County, the county will maintain rural character by ensuring that new development is designed to uphold certain rural characteristics.

#### **Action Strategy #1: Rural Roadway Corridor Overlay District**

Develop an overlay district to apply new standards for developments that occur along main roadways in the county, such as US 17, US 158, NC 343, NC 34, etc. New standards could address roadway buffers to screen development from views along road corridors, protection of tree stands, glare and illumination impacts of exterior lighting on the roadway and adjacent properties, stormwater management, and commercial signage.

#### **Action Strategy #2: Design Guidelines for Rural Development**

Develop Rural Design Guidelines to provide guidance to developers on the characteristics that the county would like to see in new developments. Topics to be addressed could include street network and block formation, recommendations for open spaces and recreational amenities (local parks, bike paths, walking paths), how new developments are sited within the existing development context, building height, and preferred land use. These guidelines would not regulate new development but would instead assist developers with understanding preferred design features for new development.

#### **Action Strategy #3: Evaluate Impacts on Dismal Swamp State Park**

When evaluating development proposals within the vicinity of the Dismal Swamp State Park, consider the impacts on the park and discourage incompatible land uses that would negatively affect park operations and the visitor experience. Conflicts to evaluate could include noise, glare and lighting, reducing wooded buffers around the park, and signage.

### ***Objective #2: Promote Village Style Development***

Camden County will foster the development and redevelopment of its core township areas (South Mills, Camden, and Shiloh) in the form of an American rural

village. The design of each township core will be unique to the existing development framework and vision for the area.

### ***South Mills Village Core Action Strategies***

The South Mills Core Village Area will be redeveloped to serve as the county’s “main street” or downtown village area that will be surrounded by parks, public spaces, and residential neighborhoods. The following action strategies work to achieve this vision for South Mills:

#### **Action Strategy #1: Adoption of South Mills Small Area Plan**

Camden County should provide a formal opportunity for public review of the South Mills Small Area Plan and adopt the final plan.

#### **Action Strategy #2: New Developments with Fit Existing Context**

To ensure that new developments fit within the context of existing development in South Mills, new developments should preserve and respect existing village patterns such as the street network and block length and width in South Mills.

#### **Action Strategy #3: Foster New Commercial Development on Main Street**

Foster the development of new retail and restaurant establishments on Main Street in South Mills through focused economic development efforts. Development opportunities could serve tourists and residents and could include a bed and breakfast, local retailers, restaurants, and recreation oriented businesses serving bicyclists and boaters (i.e., outfitters).

#### **Action Strategy #4: Promote Infill and Redevelopment**

Continue to encourage redevelopment of aging structures and infill development on undeveloped lots in South Mills. New infill and redevelopment should fit the context of the surrounding neighborhood

#### **Action Strategy #5: Advertise Housing Rehabilitation Assistance**

Property owners should be made aware of housing rehabilitation assistance that the county can provide to replace or improve structures, assist with water connection fees, and assist with plumbing.

#### **Action Strategy #6: Develop Strategy to Improve Main Street Streetscape**

Develop a formal capital improvement plan to improve the South Mills main street streetscape. The plan could address the following improvements: obtaining public right-of-way necessary to make improvements, wayfinding signage, street lights, paving, sidewalks, and addressing drainage issues.

#### **Action Strategy #7: Extend South Mills Trail to Core Area**

Extend the South Mills trail into the core village area and connect to the Dismal Swamp Canal and a potential marina.

**Action Strategy #8: Develop Design Guidelines for South Mills Village Development**

Consider development of Village Style Design Guidelines for South Mills to provide guidance to developers on the characteristics that the county would like to see in new developments. Topics to be addressed could include street network and block formation, recommendations for public spaces, how new developments are sited within the existing development context, building height, and preferred land uses. These guidelines would not regulate new development but would instead assist developers with understanding preferred design features for new development.

***Camden Village Core Action Strategies***

The Camden Core Village Area will be redeveloped to serve as the commercial and governmental “heart” of the community. The US 158 Corridor will be the focus for new mixed use, higher density development, and a public gathering space. The following action strategies work to achieve this vision for Camden:

**Action Strategy #1: Pursue Development of a Master Plan for the US 158 Corridor**

This plan should identify particular areas for development, and preferred densities and development models that are appropriate with existing site conditions, existing and planned infrastructure, access to road network, environmental conditions, and development interests. The plan should address both the current 158 corridor and the preferred 158 Alternative being planned by NC DOTs as part of its Strategic Highway Corridor initiative.

**Action Strategy #2: Establish a Plan to Provide Needed Public Sewer Service on US 158**

The county should work with the South Camden Water and Sewer District to develop a formal plan for providing sanitary sewer service to properties along US 158, particularly in targeted development areas as denoted on the Future Land Use map.

**Action Strategy #3: Promote Targeted Commercial Development per the Future Land Use Plan**

Promote the development of new commercial and office establishments on US 158 through focused economic development efforts.

***Shiloh Village Core Action Strategies***

The Shiloh Core Village Area will continue to be developed as the southern crossroads community in Camden. It will continue to serve as a rural hub for small scale commercial development to serve neighboring residences. Development should continue to be developed at a scale that does not require public wastewater service.

**Action Strategy #1: Foster Targeted Commercial Development per the Future Land Use Plan**

Promote the development of new rural commercial establishments on NC 343, per the Future Land Use map, through focused economic development efforts.

**Action Strategy #2: Ensure Appropriate Land Uses and Densities for Development that Don't Require Public Wastewater Service**

Promote rural style development by maintaining rural scale zoning in the Shiloh Township, per the Future Land Use map, and discourage development of wastewater treatment systems in this area.

**Objective #3: Protect Historic and Cultural Community Assets**

Camden County will work to protect historic and cultural community assets through identification of these assets during the development review process.

**Action Strategy #1: Identify Historic and Cultural Assets and Plan for Their Protection**

Identify historical sites and structures during the development review process and develop a requirement to protect / conserve special places, as warranted and feasible

**Action Strategy #2: Create a Comprehensive Map of Historic Sites and Structures**

As sites and structure are identified, document these locations using the county's GIS mapping software to create a comprehensive listing and map of historic sites and structures in Camden County.

**Action Strategy #3: Develop Historic Preservation Society for South Mills**

Consider developing an historic preservation society for South Mills to assist in preservation efforts.

## BUILDING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

*The Eco-Industrial Park is the targeted location for future business development in Camden County.*



### BACKGROUND

Camden County is often thought of as a bedroom community – residents live in Camden because of its tranquil, bucolic environment and slow pace of life, but work elsewhere where a broader array of jobs are available.

Camden County experiences what planners call a “jobs-housing mismatch” – this means that the jobs offered in Camden County do not match the skillsets of its local workforce. Fortunately, the local workforce is highly educated and skilled. There is an opportunity to expand local employment and provide new high paying jobs close to home.

Business development in the county is challenged by three critical factors: environmental constraints, provision of infrastructure, and distance from Hampton Roads. Future economic development initiatives should focus on marketing the county as a unique environment that offers opportunities for business development and a high quality of life for new employers and employees. These initiatives should include not only traditional industries, but also natural resource-based industries, such as recreational outfitters and hospitality services, to serve the burgeoning eco-tourism economy in Camden.

### ***Local Economy***

There are few non-agricultural businesses located in Camden County. The top employers in the county as of 2011 were as follows:

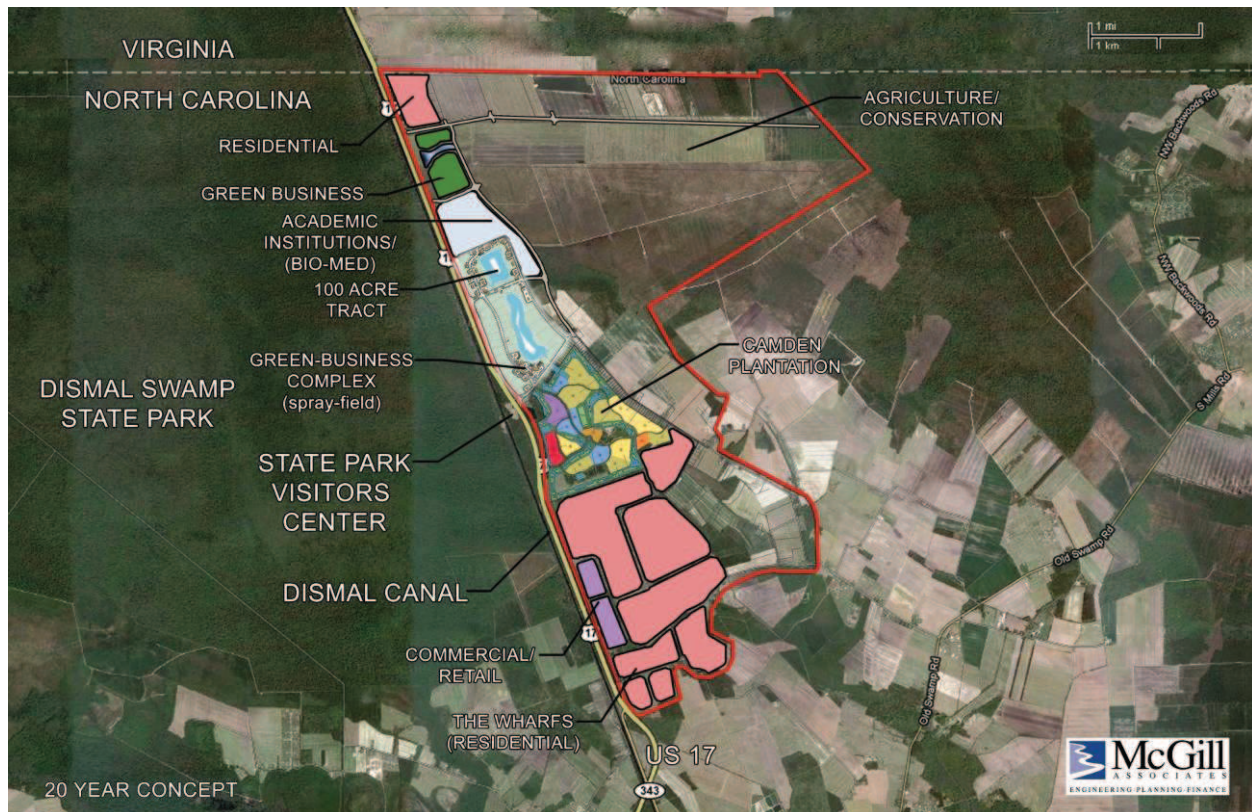
- \* Camden County Board of Education
- \* Rainbow Shops/Emphasis/Ups N Downs
- \* Academi (formerly Blackwater) Lodge and Training Center
- \* Camden County

Camden County's workforce totaled 4,018 in 2010, but during the same time period there were only 2,120 jobs in the county, approximately half of which are held by workers that live outside of the county. The number and type of employment opportunities in the county is limited. Moreover, there is a mismatch of jobs and employees in the county. Data on the types of jobs held by Camden County residents show that the county has a well-educated and highly skilled workforce living locally. An opportunity exists to provide jobs in Camden for the local workforce. There is great economic development potential to recruit hospitality services, ecotourism, recreation, and medical and healthcare services to take advantage of local workforce skillsets.

### ***Economic Development Opportunities***

Opportunities for new industrial and business park development are being targeted to the New Eco Industrial Park focusing on green industries and the surrounding northern section of the U.S. 17 corridor. The US 17 Corridor Master Plan developed by the county articulates the vision for the northern neck of Camden County. As development of this area goes forward, It will be important for the county to distinguish this development from others offered in the region to increase marketability. Creating a "green" image for the county that reflects its natural resources, community experience, and future employment base is one important aspect of differentiating Camden's business development opportunities from other places in the region.

Figure 17: Plan for US 17 Corridor



Other economic development opportunities include development of core village areas, bringing more retail and visitor services to South Mills and Camden. Development of these core village areas is critical to establishing the county as a premier eco-tourism destination in the region. Currently, there are no places for visitors to lodge or shop, and few restaurants in the county. Fostering this type of development that is designed to work within a small, rural village design context is critical to realizing the economic future of the county.

Residents in Camden County have a great desire to have commercial shopping options within a short drive of their homes. A grocery store is at the top of the list of services that residents' desire. Because corporate grocery stores use population and housing statistics to determine their market areas and the demand needed to support a new grocery store, increasing housing densities and therefore increasing the population in targeted development areas will improve the likelihood of recruiting a commercial grocer to the county. The Future Land Use Map and designations support development of a grocery store in Camden County by offering the opportunity to increase residential densities in the core village areas and by denoting locations where commercial development is appropriate.



### **Agriculture**

Agriculture remains an active component of Camden County’s local economy. Shown below, the results from the 2007 U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Census show that the number of farms actually increased in Camden County from 70 in 2002 to 76 in 2007. The total land in farming use is 55,181 acres, approximately 37% of the total land area. The market value of products sold from Camden County farms increased \$8,519,000 from 2002 to 2007.

**Table 4: Agricultural Statistics for Camden County (2007)**

	2002	2007
Number of Farms	70	76
Land in Farms	55,181	
Average Size of Farm	726	
Market Value of Products Sold	\$ 19,713,000	\$ 28,232,000
Crops	\$ 27,911,000	
Livestock	\$ 321,000	

Source: USDA 2007 Census of Agriculture

The majority of the market value of crops sold is attributed to three products: (1) grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and peas, (2) soybeans, and (3) corn. Camden County ranks 12th in the state for production of grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas, 11th in the state for vegetables harvested for sale, and 2nd in the state for potato production. A limited amount of livestock is raised in the county for agricultural production purposes.

Maintaining the viability of agriculture in Camden County preserves this profitable industry and also protects open space and natural areas that are an important component of the county’s rural character.

### **Tourism**

Camden County has a burgeoning tourism industry. Over the past several decades, the economic impact of tourism in the county has grown. According to state estimates, domestic tourism in Camden County generated an economic impact of \$1.71 million in 2010. This was a 6.21% increase from 2009. Travel to and through the county generated a \$0.19 million payroll in 2010. State and local tax revenues from travel to Camden County amounted to \$0.25 million. This represents a \$25.00 tax saving to each county resident.

While the tourism industry in Camden County has been growing in recent years. New focus on eco-tourism, regional recreational offerings for local residents and tourists, and supportive businesses are an important piece of the county’s economic development plan.

### ***Economic Development Challenges***

Many of the factors needed to foster economic development in Camden County are in place: there is land available for development, the county has a well-skilled workforce, and the county is known as a business-friendly community. But there are challenges that must be overcome to achieve the county's goal to foster economic development. The key challenges to capturing new development in Camden County are:

- \* Natural constraints to development (wetlands, floodplains, poor draining soils)
- \* Needed infrastructure (primarily public sewer and increased water supply for the future)
- \* Distance from Hampton Roads Region (Camden County sits on far end of region and many may not be willing to make commute)

The following goal, objective, and action strategies are designed to address these challenges.

### **BUILDING THE LOCAL ECONOMY GOAL**

*Camden County will have a diverse and balanced economy that provides new business opportunities to employ citizens and provide goods and services, and that will generate new revenues to fund high-quality government facilities and services.*

### **OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STRATEGIES**

#### ***Objective #1: Priorities for Economic Development Efforts***

Camden County's economic development efforts shall focus on the following:

- \* Business recruitment for Eco Industrial Park and Camden Business Park
- \* Recruiting a grocery provider or large scale retailer to the county
- \* Recruiting retail and restaurant development to South Mills and Camden core areas
- \* Work with developers of Camden Plantation, Town Center, and Wharf's Landing to foster the successful development of these projects
- \* Fostering development of businesses that provide living wage employment opportunities to county citizens
- \* The county will maintain flexibility when determining priorities as new development and funding opportunities arise

**Action Strategy #1: Identify Employment Opportunities for Local Workforce**

Identify opportunities to provide new employment that aligns with the job skills of local residents.

**Action Strategy #2: Identify Targeted Business Prospects**

Create a targeted list of business prospects for recruitment (industries and businesses within those industries).

**Action Strategy #3: Develop County Marketing Materials and Ensure These Include Non-Traditional Businesses**

Create economic development marketing materials for Camden County and targeted development sites. Include non-traditional businesses in these marketing materials, such as outdoor recreation and hospitality, eco-tourism, agri-businesses, and other related industries.

***Objective #2: Foster Partnerships to Provide Needed Infrastructure for New Development***

Camden County will work with developers to negotiate public-private partnerships to provide needed infrastructure and amenities for new development. This will reduce public expenditures on capital improvements and shorten the development process by ensuring development of needed infrastructure.

**Action Strategy #1: Secure Funding for Infrastructure Improvements and Community Amenities**

Work with developers to secure funding for needed infrastructure improvements within targeted development areas as necessary to foster new development. Such opportunities exist through the North Carolina Rural Center, the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the US Economic Development Assistance program, and other federal, state, and private organizations and enterprises.

***Objective #3: Support Targeted Development***

Camden County will support economic development within targeted development areas through future land use planning, the provision of public infrastructure, and development incentives.

**Action Strategy #1: Consider Providing Development Incentives**

Consider providing incentives for new commercial and mixed use developments located in targeted development areas. Incentives could include a fast track permitting process, flexibility on development standards (parking, landscaping, etc.), potential for bonus density when meeting specific requirements, or waiving water/sewer tap on fees.

**Action Strategy #2: Work with Property Owners to Provide Public Sewer Service in South Mills**

Work with property owners along Main Street in South Mills to encourage tapping onto public sewer service, promoting redevelopment and upgrades to existing facilities.

**Action Strategy #3: Support Rezonings to Higher Intensity Uses in Targeted Development Areas**

Support development of new industries and employment centers through higher intensity zoning in targeted development areas per the Future Land Use map.

***Objective #4: Work to Provide 21<sup>st</sup> Century Telecommunications Service***

Camden County shall work to establish broadband telecommunication service in the county.

**Action Strategy #1: Develop a Plan for the Development and Management of a Local Broadband System**

Work with telecommunication providers to come up with a strategy for bringing high speed broadband service to Camden County.

**Action Strategy #2: Partner with Schools and Businesses to Secure Funding for Broadband Infrastructure**

Develop a regional consortium of interested stakeholders to work collaboratively to develop a funding plan for the establishment of a local broadband network.

***Objective #5: Partner with Regional Economic Development Agencies***

Support and partner with state and regional economic development agencies, such as the Northeastern North Carolina Economic Development Commission, to promote county businesses.

**Action Strategy #1: Foster Ongoing Relationships with Partner Agencies and Organizations**

Camden County should develop ongoing relationships with partner organizations to capitalize on regional marketing opportunities and to market sites and attractions within the regional marketplace.

**Action Strategy #2: Educate Regional and State Partners on Available Development Sites**

Educate regional and state economic development partners on development opportunity sites in Camden County.

## EXPANDING TOURISM AND RECREATION



*An important component of building Camden County's economy is capitalizing on natural resource amenities and recreational opportunities.*

### BACKGROUND

The lives of Camden County's residents have always been shaped by their relationship with the natural environment. This is a unique place - - blending a history of people making a prosperous living off the land with the opportunity to become a regional center for outdoor recreation. The earliest settlements in Camden County were situated along the creeks and rivers, as those provided the easiest and often the only means of travel. For much of the 18th, 19th and even 20th centuries, residents made their living from the land, farming the flat high ground in the center of the county and harvesting timber from the swamps.

Today, polls indicate that a majority of residents want to maintain this rural character. At the same time, residents want more to do in the county in terms of recreation and community activities. These goals can be mutually achieved by preserving, improving access to, and actively promoting key natural areas with an eye toward increasing their use, building a sense of community, and attracting investment in supporting businesses and services. Camden County's natural treasures can be the source of economic development by organizing efforts to market three "Gateways to the Wild" described in this section.

### ***Most Striking Natural Asset - Waterways***

The most striking natural asset in Camden County is its waterways. These include Joyce, Indiantown, and Sawyers Creeks, and the Pasquotank and North Rivers. Largely invisible from the county's highways, these waterways are a world unto themselves that can only be appreciated by boat. The shores are lined with dense forests and marshes that shelter all manner of wildlife; the waters are full of game fish. However, public knowledge and enjoyment of these waterways is limited by a lack of access, publicity, and support services.

Neighboring counties in the Albemarle region are promoting a growing network of "blueways"-- water trails with launch points, camping locations, and points of interest designed for canoeists and kayakers. These are proving to be popular with both local residents and tourists. Camden County could become part of this network by designating specific sections of their rivers as blueways, providing additional access points, and constructing camping platforms at appropriate points.

### ***Dismal Swamp and Canal***

The Dismal Swamp Canal is a unique waterway, hand dug by slaves and used through the Civil War as a major commercial route for freighters and barges travelling between the Chesapeake and Albemarle sounds. Now bypassed by highways and railroads, the canal is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for use by recreational boaters (sailboats and cabin cruisers). It is also the site of the annual Paddle for the Border, an event that attracts hundreds of canoeists and kayakers from throughout the region. However, access to the canal within Camden County is limited to a grass launch platform at the Dismal Swamp Canal Visitors Center. Commercial outfitters are discouraged from using this platform and effectively denied access to the canal. Potentially, much greater use could be made of this canal by negotiating agreements with the Corps of Engineers and NC Department of Transportation for additional access and more liberal use of their existing facilities.

Another great natural resource is the Dismal Swamp itself, 14,000 acres of which lie within Camden County and are protected as part of the Dismal Swamp State Park. The swamp is home to a variety of wildlife and rare plants, and has a storied history as a hideout for escaped slaves and a provider of vast amounts of timber. The state park contains approximately 20 miles of hiking and mountain bike trails. But except for a pontoon bridge across the Dismal Swamp Canal (closed in the evenings), the Camden County portion of the swamp is inaccessible to the public. The Division of State Parks is planning a campground on newly acquired land to the south of the swamp and is eager to work with the county to enhance access to and enjoyment of the park. Among the possibilities the county might pursue are negotiating for use of adjacent private farm roads as part of a larger network of

bike trails, and developing a driving route with designated stops where visitors could learn via signage or electronic media (smartphone, etc.) about specific natural features or historic events.

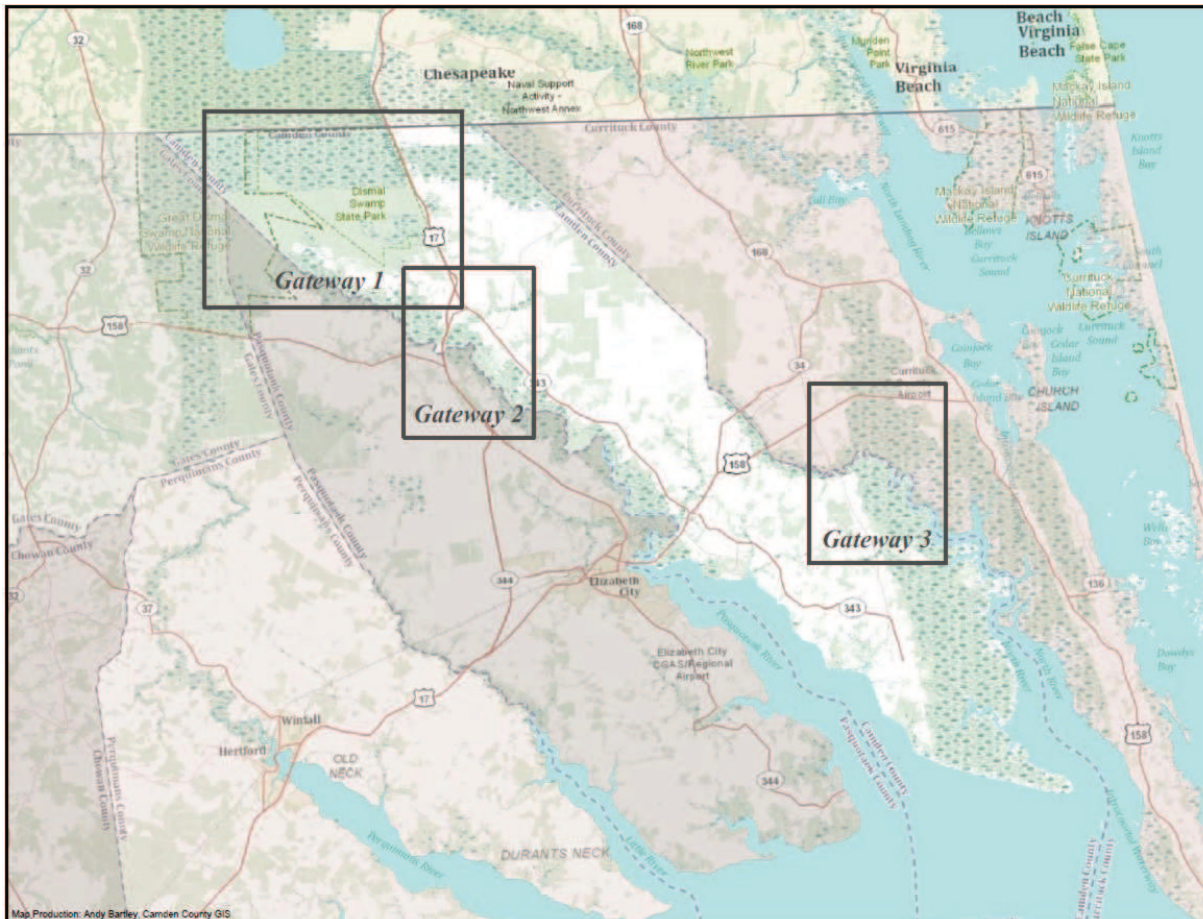
**Recreational Trails**

Paved biking/walking paths are another potential draw for residents of and visitors to Camden County. Currently, the county is in the process of building a bike path bordering the Dismal Swamp Canal from South Mills to the Virginia state line. Studies show that capturing tourist dollars from such paths is enhanced by maximizing the length and variety of the trail, and providing support services such as secure parking, bike rental, restrooms, food, and lodging.

**The Future of Camden County: Gateways to the Wild**

Key to capturing tourist dollars from bikers and boaters is the development of “trail towns” that provide the necessary support services. Three Gateways to the Wild have been identified—one in the north, one in the middle, and one in the southeastern part of the county—to provide access to all of these areas. The *Camden County: Gateway to the Wild* publication provides more detailed information about these three gateway areas.

**Map 5: Camden County Gateways to the Wild**



### ***Gateway #1: The Dismal Swamp State Park, Canal, Welcome Center, and Bike Path***

There are few places in the nation that can boast public access to 20+ miles of bike path, 20+ miles of an historic canal, and access to 100,000 acres of wilderness all from one spot. That is what Camden County has at the intersection of the Dismal Swamp State Park, the Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center, and the Dismal Swamp Canal Hiking and Biking Trail. While each of these is owned and managed by a different entity, the combined resource presents a seamless collection of recreational opportunities.

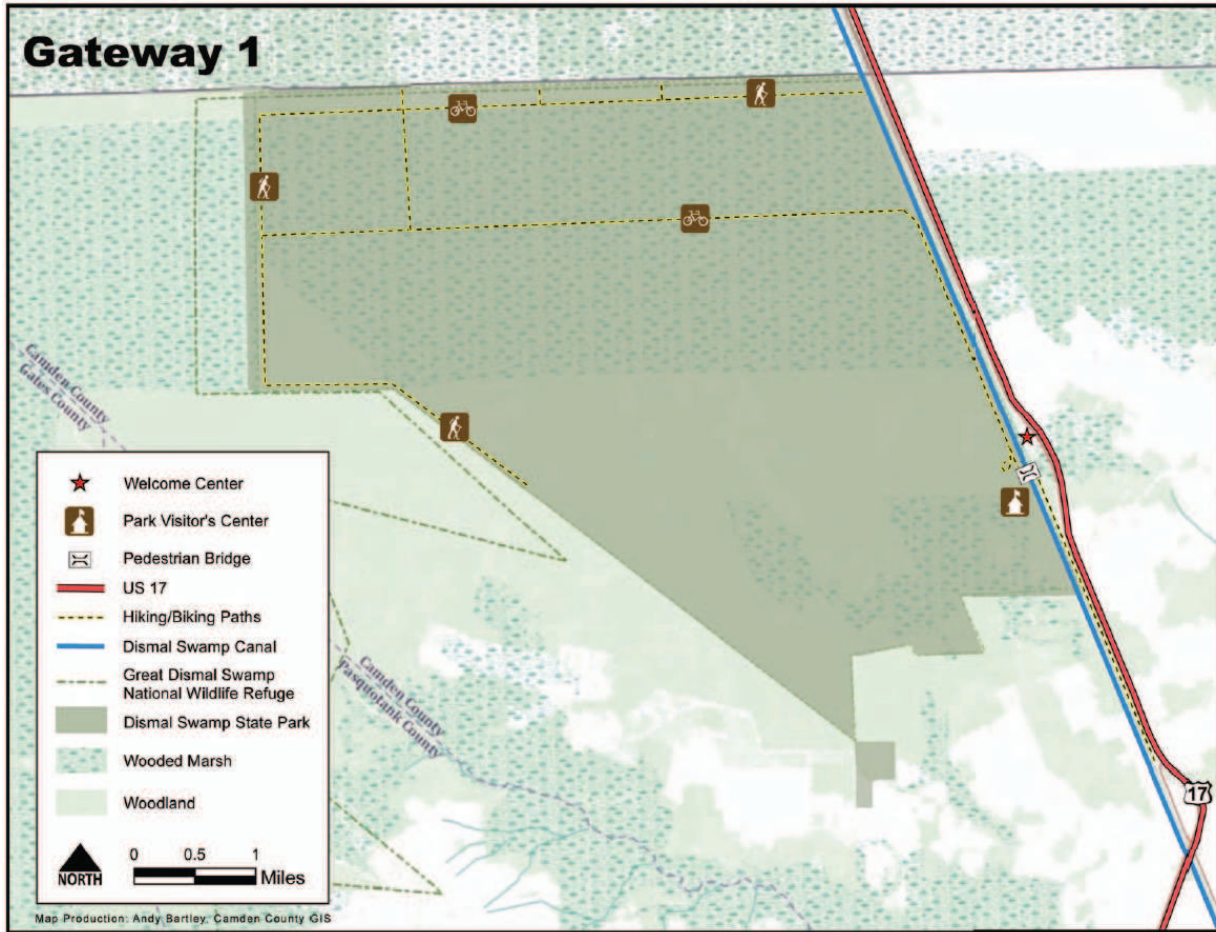
Currently, Camden County has completed 4.5 miles (3 miles paved trail with 1.5 mile 5 foot extension to the South Mills Village along Highway 343.) This connects to another 20 miles of hiking of hiking and biking paths in the State Park. Still incomplete is the 3 mile section running along the canal to the Virginia border. Once this is complete, bikers will have access to another 22 miles of trail running all the way to Chesapeake, VA.

In conjunction with the development of Camden Plantation, County engineers have discussed the construction of a footbridge across US 17 connecting the Plantation with the Bike Trail. This would allow hikers and bikers easy access to retail businesses in that development.

County residents have said they want more community activities. The Friends of the Dismal Swamp State Park is a non-profit group that offers the public a chance to get involved in supporting a tremendous, and largely untapped natural resource. The Friends' mission is to provide educational resources for the Dismal Swamp State Park. They do this by raising money through the sale of products at the Visitors Center, through membership, donations and by sponsoring events ranging from "insect safaris" to the popular "Paddle for the Border." The Friends maintains an active web presence on Facebook through which it advertises events and invites participation and comment.



Map 6: Gateway to the Wild #1



### Gateway #2: The Upper Pasquotank

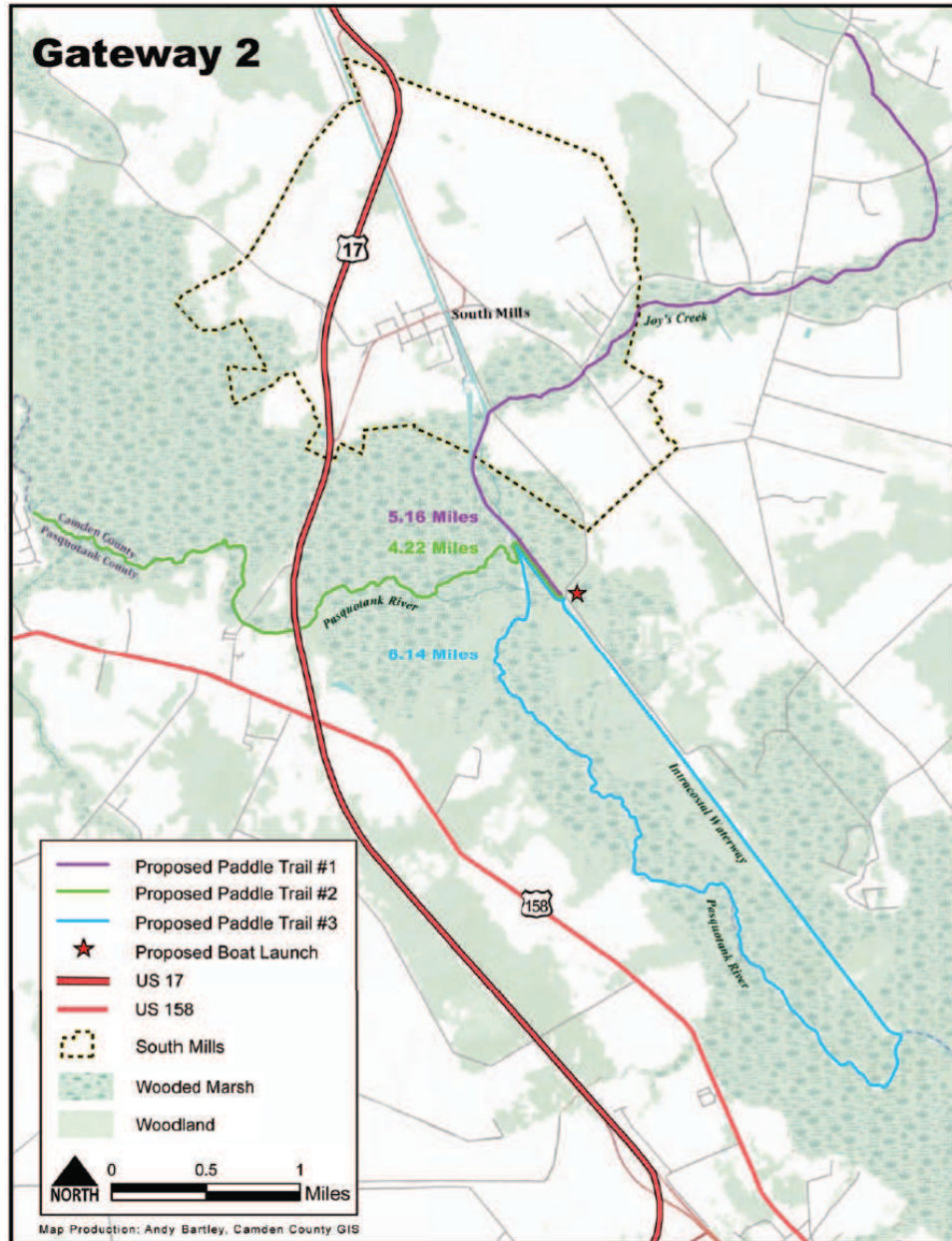
Driving south from the town of South Mills on Bingham Road, one arrives at a bend where the road parallels the Dismal Swamp Canal. The grassy bank here serves as an informal put-in for car-top boats. From this point, one can explore three distinctly different waterways—the Dismal Swamp Canal, the upper Pasquotank River, and Joys Creek.

The Dismal Swamp Canal is wide and straight, perfect for kayakers or rowers in sculls. By connecting with the Pasquotank River, paddlers can do an 8-mile loop heading upstream on the river to a crossover back to the canal and the access on Bingham Road.

A second option is to paddle upstream on the Pasquotank River. This is a winding waterway through a wooded floodplain, best suited for canoes. Depending upon how recently trees have been cleared, the Pasquotank is navigable for approximately 4.5 miles up to its headwaters in the Dismal Swamp.

Just upstream from the Bingham Road access, Joy's Creek flows into the canal. This creek is kept clear of trees by the Joy's Creek Association and is navigable for some 5 miles up to the second Old Swamp Road bridge crossing.

**Map 7: Gateway to the Wild #2**



**Gateway #3: Indiantown Creek/North River**

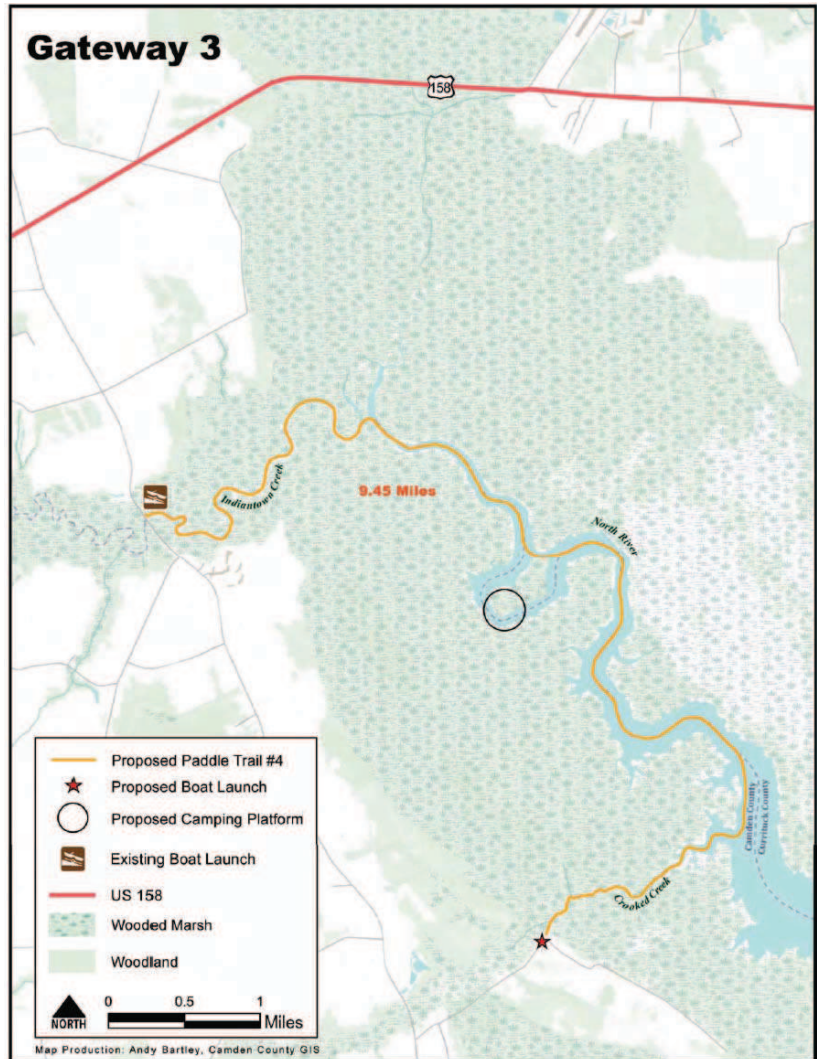
South of US 158, the highway bisecting the center of Camden County, two-lane roads crisscross wide open fields planted in soybeans, rye grass, and corn. Garlington’s Island Road leads from these fields to the edge of a vast swamp bordering the North River and its headwaters on Indiantown Creek. A favorite of local anglers, and listed in the Albemarle Region Canoe Trails System, Indiantown and the North River combine intimate views of an ancient cypress forest with wide open tidal waters.

Indiantown Creek is accessible via a public boat ramp at the bridge crossing on Sandy Hook Road. The North River is accessible via a man-made canal at the end of Garlington’s Island Road. The boat ramp here is privately-owned, but is open to the public free of charge. The county is working with the property owner for improvements to the ramp and parking area.

In the foreseeable future, visitors to the Outer Banks may have the opportunity to take guided kayak tours of Indiantown and the North River. The NC Department of Transportation is considering building a bridge from U.S 158 across the Currituck Sound to NC 12 on the Outer Banks. This which would put eastern Camden County within a 30-minute drive of Corolla, and outfitters there have said they would welcome the opportunity to run tours to Indiantown should the bridge be built. Pending the necessary permitting and funding, the mid-Currituck Bridge could be complete by 2017.

Those exploring Indiantown and the North River will want to stop by the North River Campground located at the end of Garlington’s Island Road. The campground has a gift shop and restaurant and is listed as one of the top 200 RV parks in the country. They may also want to visit the popular Belcross Bakery on U.S. 158 and the Topside Restaurant in Shiloh.

**Map 8: Gateway to the Wild #3**



### ***Existing Parks and Recreation***

In May 2006, Camden took advantage of local natural resources and recreational offerings by establishing a formal Parks and Recreation Department. The department has worked diligently to provide more recreational offerings to area residents – young and old alike. The department worked with students of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at East Carolina University to develop a 2008 Comprehensive System-wide Park and Recreation Access Plan. This plan provides a thorough inventory of park and recreation sites, recreational programs, and other entertainment/leisure offerings in Camden County. The plan identifies need for new parks based on the statewide SCORP evaluation system. Camden County ranks number one in the state for regional park acres accessible to residents; however, it was 88<sup>th</sup> in the state for local park acres and 75<sup>th</sup> in the state for trail miles. Also identified in the plan are opportunities for expanding recreational offerings in Camden that capitalize on the tourism potential found in the Albemarle region: environmental education, outdoor adventure, water activities, hunting and fishing, historic education, special events, sports and tournaments.

Key recreational offerings provided in Camden County include:

- \* Camden Community Park, Treasure Point 4-H Park, Old Trap Community Center, Camden Senior Center (managed by Camden County)
- \* Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and Visitor Center
- \* Great Dismal Swamp State Park and Trail
- \* Proximity to Intracoastal Waterway
- \* North River Gameland (in Camden and Currituck Counties)
- \* Canal and water access at Sawyers Creek and Shiloh Landing

### ***Plans for Dismal Swamp Connector Trail***

A study is being prepared to create a 3.3 mile trail from the Dismal Swamp State Park Visitors Center to the Virginia state line. The current version of the plan calls for a 10 foot wide paved trail that will run proximate to U.S. 17. Cross sections for the current plan include an eight foot buffer from the public right-of-way road pavement, the guard rail, a four foot separation of green space, and then the 10 foot paved trail. This project is estimated to cost \$1.5 million. Site planning solutions are being sought to identify safe ways to connect the trail between the Welcome Center parking lot and the bulkhead for boaters, and to identify opportunities to create passive spaces along the trail to possibly include benches and interpretive signage for observing and learning about the swamp and its heritage.

Virginia has an approved and funded project to extend the existing trail head at Balahak Road up to Deep Creek and the Deep Creek Lake State Park. This project also includes planning for the southern extension of the trail to the North Carolina state line. Design and permits are secured for the southern section and funding is being sought.

## **EXPANDING TOURISM AND RECREATION GOAL**

*Camden County will become a destination for outdoor and recreational enthusiasts and will offer recreational amenities and visitor services to support a new tourism economy.*

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STRATEGIES**

### ***Objective #1: Support Development of Camden’s Gateways to the Wild***

Camden County will provide necessary resources to expand recreational amenities at the three Gateways to the Wild.

#### ***Gateway #1: The Dismal Swamp State Park/Welcome Center/Biking Trail***

##### **Action Strategy #1: Complete Dismal Swamp Hiking/Biking Trail**

Pursue completion of the 3.3-mile stretch of the Dismal Swamp Canal Hiking and Biking Trail to the Virginia border. Completion of this section of trail would provide bikers access to more than 30 miles of trail here and in the State Park.

##### **Action Strategy #2: Provide Complete Signage for Dismal Swamp Amenities**

Request that NC-Department of Transportation provide large signs in both directions of US 17 identifying the exit for the Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center, the Dismal Swamp State Park, and the Dismal Swamp Hiking and Biking Trail. Currently, the existing sign only identifies the Welcome Center. Each of these entities should be identified in prominent, equal-sized lettering.

##### **Action Strategy #3: Reduce Development Impacts on Dismal Swamp State Park**

Ensure that any development along US 17 does not detract from the public’s enjoyment of The Dismal Swamp State Park. Light pollution is a particular problem with development adjacent to natural areas. Require developments adjacent to the park to provide an engineered lighting plan designed to show that lighting will not exceed 0.1 candlepower as measured at the park’s eastern border.

##### **Action Strategy #4: Develop Footbridge Linking Camden Plantation to Future Biking/Hiking Trail**

In conjunction with the Camden Plantation, pursue construction of a footbridge over US 17 between the Plantation and the Dismal Swamp Hiking and Biking Trail. A footbridge will increase the use of the trail and enhance the appeal of the

development by making the state and county recreational resources easily and safely available to the residents and tenants. A footbridge would also encourage a percentage of the trail users to frequent retail businesses in the development. The footbridge could also be used to hang banners publicizing events like the Paddle for the Border.

**Action Strategy #5: Become a “Friend” of the Friends of the Dismal Swamp State Park**

This non-profit group is an excellent vehicle for local citizens and businesses to support the State Park and its adjacent resources. The county should keep abreast of and support the Friend’s many activities by joining the group and/or “friending” it on Facebook.

**Action Strategy #6: Evaluate New Opportunities to Expand Dismal Swamp Connector Trail**

As new developments are designed near the Dismal Swamp State Park, identify opportunities to connect new bicycle and pedestrian trails to the planned Dismal Swamp Connector Trail.

***Gateway #2 (Upper Pasquotank River and Lower Dismal Swamp Canal)***

**Action Strategy #1: Provide Additional Public Access to Beaches, Creeks, and Rivers**

Support development of local eco-tourism and water recreation opportunities in Gateway #2 by providing additional public access points and infrastructure for boaters. Specific priorities for boat access include:

- \* Construct a boat ramp and parking area on Bingham Rd. where it meets the Dismal Swamp Canal below the lock in South Mills. An alternative location would be on the outflow canal below the South Mills Water Treatment Plant. A boat ramp in either of these locations would allow boaters to more easily access Joy’s Creek, the lower Dismal Swamp Canal, and the upper Pasquotank River. An attached park could also serve as a recreation area for South Mills residents.
- \* Construct a camping platform on the Pasquotank River near the confluence with the Dismal Swamp Canal. Such a platform would increase the appeal of this 8-mile “loop” encompassing the river and canal below the Bingham Rd. access.
- \* Purchase or gain permission for the public to use the privately-owned bridge across the Upper Pasquotank at the end of Stafford Rd. in Pasquotank County, and purchase land for a parking area and boat access on the Camden County side of the bridge. This would enhance the use of this waterway, allowing boaters to travel one way down to the Bingham Rd. take-out.

- \* Consider building a boat ramp and parking area at the headwaters of Joy’s Creek, preferably at the northernmost Old Swamp Rd. bridge crossing.

### **Action Strategy #2: Protect Natural Environment in Gateway #2**

Protect the natural and scenic environment of Gateway #2 through the following actions:

- \* Secure a minimum 100 foot easement from land owners along the upper Pasquotank River. Currently, commercial timber is being clear-cut to within 50 feet of the upper Pasquotank. This severely compromises what could otherwise be a scenic stretch of this river. A wider buffer would screen these activities from the river and provide improved wildlife habitat and corridors.
- \* Clear fallen timber along the Upper Pasquotank. Frequent blowdowns make the stretch of river between the Stafford Road and Morgans Corners impassable for boaters.

### **Gateway #3 (Indiantown Creek, Crooked Creek, and the North River)**

#### **Action Strategy #1: Provide Additional Public Access to Beaches, Creeks, and Rivers**

Support development of local eco-tourism and water recreation opportunities in Gateway #3 by providing additional public access points and infrastructure for boaters. Specific priorities for boat access include:

- \* Purchase land for and construct an improved boat ramp and parking area on Crooked Creek at the end of Garlington’s Island Rd. This would provide a public access in Camden County to a stunning network of creeks and rivers including Indiantown Creek and the North River. It would draw business to the North River Campground and its associated restaurant and gift shop, as well as to the café and restaurant at Belcross and Shiloh.
- \* Build a camping platform on Indiantown Creek in the vicinity of Thoroughfare Island. This would enhance the reputation and enjoyment of the 9.5-mile run between the existing boat ramp at Sandy Hook Rd. and the proposed ramp on Garlington’s Island Rd.

#### **Action Strategy #2: Identify and Promote 1000-Year Old Cypress Trees**

Hire an arborist to core date the older cypress trees along the above-mentioned route. Any trees over 1000-years old should be identified by a sign and promoted in county literature and web sites. Any Atlantic white cedar along this route should also be identified.

#### **Action Strategy #3: Encourage Outfitters to Serve Gateway #3**

Should the mid-Currituck Bridge be constructed, encourage outfitters on the northern Outer Banks to run kayak trips to Indiantown Creek/North River from “gateway” at Garlington’s Island Rd. Encourage them to include stops at local businesses (Belcross Bakery, North River Campground) as part of the tour.

***Objective #2: Provide Additional Recreation Facilities for Community Residents***

Camden County will work to secure funding to plan for, design, and construct additional recreational facilities for community residents.

**Action Strategy #1: Plan for New Recreation and Community Center**

Develop a plan and secure funding to construct a new recreation and community center to serve all county residents. Appropriate locations for this facility include the South Mills and Camden core village areas.

**Action Strategy #2: Plan for New South Mills and Shiloh Community Parks**

Develop a plan and secure funding for construction of a community park in South Mills and Shiloh to include ballfields, playground, picnic shelter, and nature trails.

***Objective #3: Capitalize on Natural Assets by Supporting Eco-Tourism and Related Efforts***

Camden County will work to identify and support development of new eco-tourism facilities and programs in the county, including environmental education, outdoor adventure, water activities, hunting and fishing, historic education, special events, sports and tournaments.

**Action Strategy #1: Develop Official Blueways on County Waters**

Work with partners to develop official “blueways” along specific sections of surrounding rivers and to provide access/launch points, and construct camping platforms

**Action Strategy #2: Support Development of Additional Recreational and Educational Amenities at Dismal Swamp State Park**

Encourage development of a network of trails within the new campground, and development of interpretive and educational signage or electronic media in the Dismal Swamp State Park to educate visitors about natural features and historic events.

***Objective #4: Support Development of Commercial Outfitters and Recreation Supporting Businesses***

Camden County will work to foster development of local commercial outfitters within the county.

**Action Strategy #1: Work with Army Corps of Engineers to Provide Dismal Swamp Canal Access to Outfitters**

Work with Army Corps of Engineers and the NC Department of Transportation to provide Dismal Swamp canal access to commercial outfitters.



**Action Strategy #2: Evaluate Development Ordinance to Ensure Outfitters Permitted By-Right**

Evaluate the county’s unified development ordinance standards to ensure that local outfitters are permitted by-right in appropriate areas near river access points.

***Objective #5: New Residential Development to Assist in Development of Recreational Facilities***

Per the county’s zoning ordinance, new residential or mixed use developments located in targeted areas should include recreational amenities. These standards should be improved to require appropriate bicycle and walking paths, and link to adjacent pathways as possible. Developments outside of targeted areas should provide funding assistance to develop public parks and recreational facilities that will serve new developments.

**Action Strategy #1: New Developments in Targeted Development Areas to Include Open Space and Recreational Facilities**

Continue to require open space and recreational facilities as part of residential and mixed use developments for developments within targeted development areas located in South Mills and Camden core village areas.

**Action Strategy #2: Update County Development Standards to Require Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths as Part of New Residential Development**

Update the county’s Unified Development Ordinance to require the development of bicycle and walking paths as a part of residential and mixed use developments of a certain size.

**Action Strategy #3: Consider Pursuing New Requirement for a Payment-in-Lieu of Open Space/Park Development to be the Priority for Development Outside of Targeted Development Areas**

To better use existing resources, consider pursuing a payment-in-lieu of providing open space/parks within new residential developments as an option for developments occurring outside of targeted development. The purpose is to pool these resources to develop larger community-serving parks.

***Objective #6: Partner with Regional Agencies to Further Local Marketing of Eco-Tourism and Recreational Offerings in Camden County***

Camden County will work with the North Carolina Division of Travel and Tourism and regional tourism entities to further local marketing efforts focused on eco-tourism and recreational offerings in the county.

**Action Strategy #1: Identify Potential Regional Eco-Tourism/Recreation Marketing Partners**

Identify regional entities for possible partnership opportunities to further market Camden County eco-tourism and recreational amenities. Cultivate relationships with these organizations.

**Action Strategy #2: Make Marketing Materials More Prominent on County Website**

Provide better visibility of Camden County brochure and other marketing materials on the county website.

## FOSTERING MOBILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND SAFETY



*The future of transportation in Camden County includes not only roads, but also bike paths and walking trails.*

### BACKGROUND

Today's transportation system in Camden County reflects the county's growth and development since the 17th century. Its location just south of the Chesapeake, Virginia metro area, combined with its proximity to the North Carolina coast and on the Albemarle Sound, have shaped the county's roadway network and land use development patterns.

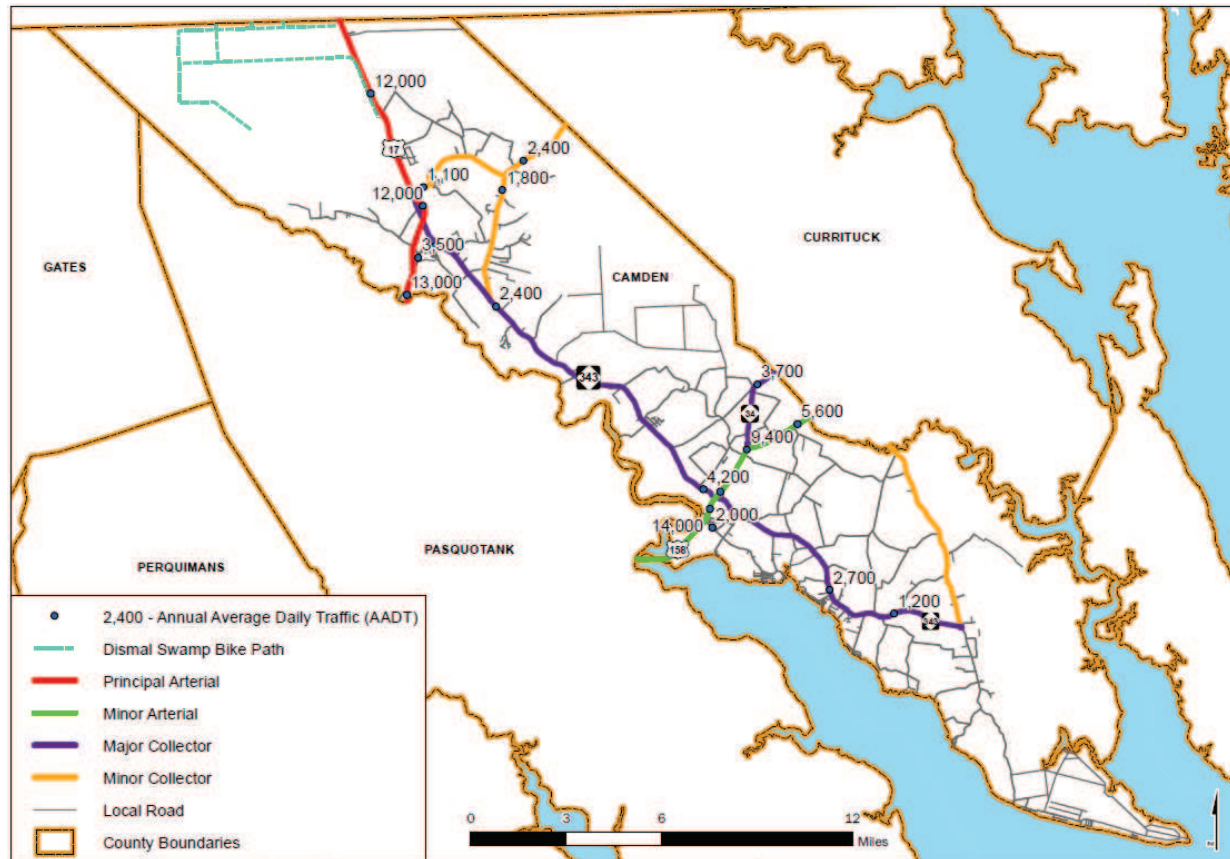
While the road network in Camden County is adequate, the larger transportation network is lacking in alternative modes of transit: bicycle facilities, pedestrian walkways, and opportunities for transit. This means that residents have few opportunities to recreate on foot or by bike safely in the county. It also means that tourists to the area are limited in the ways they can access parts of the county. Over time, this will put a strain on roadways and have a negative impact on eco-tourism or recreational tourism opportunities.

The county is partnering with the NC Department of Transportation to develop a Comprehensive Transportation Plan that will include plans for all modes of transportation. This effort was coordinated with development of this Comprehensive Plan and both plans are supportive of the other.

## ROADWAYS

U.S. 17, in the northern part of the County, is the main connection to the Chesapeake area to the north, running parallel to the Dismal Swamp Canal. U.S. 17 is a four-lane divided highway that carries approximately 12-13,000 vehicles per day (see Figure 13), well below its capacity. Another US highway, U.S. 158, cuts through the central part of the County connecting Currituck and Pasquotank counties, and carries between 5,600 (near the Currituck County border) to 14,000 (near Elizabeth City) vehicles per day. U.S. 158 in Camden County is primarily a two-lane road, with some wider sections with turn pockets or two-way center left turn lanes. N.C. 343 traverses the County from its intersection with U.S. 17 in the northern part of the County heading southeast through the County until its terminus near the Albemarle Sound. N.C. 343 carries between 1,200 and 4,200 vehicles per day, with the highest traffic volumes near the intersection with U.S. 158 in Camden. In general, roadways in the northern and central parts of the County experience higher traffic volumes than the southern part of the County where development is more dispersed.

**Map 9: Existing Transportation Conditions**



Existing Transportation Conditions

### ***BICYCLES AND PEDESTRIANS***

Because of its historically rural transportation network, Camden County lacks a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network. The exception is the Dismal Swamp Bike Path, located in the very northern part of the County west of US 17 (see Figure 13). There are opportunities to extend this path further south into the County and provide additional recreational bicycling opportunities. There are no sidewalks in the County and very limited pedestrian crossing improvements, such as crosswalks, at major intersections.

### ***TRANSIT***

Camden County is not served by a mass transit system. The Inter-County Public Transportation Authority (ICPTA) provides demand-responsive human services transportation throughout the five county area that includes Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Pasquotank and Perquimans counties. ICPTA provides transportation to the general public for medical appointments and for other activities related to daily living. Residents call the ICPTA offices to schedule an appointment.

### ***ONGOING PLANNING INITIATIVES***

Camden County participates in transportation planning at the local and regional levels, and is also impacted by the plans of neighboring jurisdictions. Below are three efforts that have direct and indirect impacts on Camden County's transportation system:

#### ***Comprehensive Transportation Plan***

The County is currently working with the NCDOT to develop a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) for Camden County. The CTP will identify needed roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation improvements to meet existing and future needs. Development of projects will be closely tied to development of the land use plan and associated policies. Projects identified in the CTP will be considered for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program, the primary funding source for major transportation improvements.

#### ***Hampton Roads TPO Long Range Transportation Plan***

Transportation in Camden County is heavily influenced by development and improvements to the north of the County in the Chesapeake/Hampton Roads area of Virginia. The Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) is responsible for transportation planning for the thirteen jurisdictions in Hampton Roads, including the area immediately north of Camden County.

The HRTPO is in the process of completing Navigating the Future: Hampton Roads 2034 Long Range Transportation Plan, an update to its 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. There are no candidate projects in the current draft of the updated LRTP for the area just north of Camden County, with most of the LRTP projects located in the more urbanized metro area. Included in the plan is a

project to widen Dominion Boulevard (US 17) from a two lane highway that runs through Chesapeake to a four-lane roadway from 0.05 miles north of Great Bridge Boulevard to 0.75 miles south of Cedar Road and replace a steel bridge. The distance between the end of this project and the beginning of the existing 4-lane section in Virginia is approximately four miles. The project will provide an unimpeded maritime facility with removal of the existing drawbridge and construction of a fixed-span bridge and will relieve traffic flowing from between North Carolina and Virginia. This project may bring more traffic through northern Camden County.

### ***US 17 Great Dismal Swamp Corridor Study***

The U.S. 17 Great Dismal Swamp Corridor Study was completed in 2004 and was intended to be a master plan to address the economic, environmental and recreational needs of southern Chesapeake in the vicinity of U.S. 17 and the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. The study area for the master plan did not include Camden County, but the improvement plans are clearly related. The study anticipated the relocation and improvement of U.S. 17, which has been completed, and planned for what to do with the old Route 17 roadway and the area around the old and new roads. A major part of the study was the potential conversion of the old Route 17 roadway into a multi-use trail running parallel to the canal; which is all but completed as of summer 2012. Although the relocated U.S. 17 is complete. This trail will be a valuable asset for recreational cyclists.

## **FOSTERING MOBILITY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND SAFETY GOAL**

*Camden County will have a transportation system that is coordinated with land use patterns, and that provides an acceptable level-of-service to support economic development and a high quality of life.*

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STRATEGIES**

### ***Objective #1: Work to Provide Adequate Maintenance of Roads***

As development occurs over time, work with the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the Albemarle Rural Planning Organization to support continued maintenance of roads. This includes addressing roads that serve both commuter traffic and agricultural operations.

### **Action Strategy #1: Identify Priorities for Needed Maintenance and Work with Transportation Agencies to Secure Funding for Improvements**

The county will identify priority roads in need of maintenance and work with NC-Department of Transportation to secure funding for these improvements.

***Objective #2: Support the Development and Implementation of the Camden County Comprehensive Transportation Plan***

The County should continue to work with the North Carolina Department of Transportation on development, adoption, and implementation of the county's Comprehensive Transportation Plan. In particular, the county should continue to investigate alternatives for improved east-west connections through the county to facilitate movement through the county to destinations outside the county and to generally reduce potential congestion and improve roadway safety.

**Action Strategy #1: Place Priority Projects on the County's TIP**

Identify the preferred northern east-west connector and the preferred US 158 Alternate route, and other projects identified in the Comprehensive Transportation Plan and place these projects on the county's Transportation Improvement Program.

**Action Strategy #2: Evaluate Opportunities to Preserve Public Right-of-Way for New Connectors**

Identify local tools for preserving public right-of-way within identified connector routes to ensure successful future development of roads. When finalized, place the corridor alignments for the two connectors on the Camden County Future Land Use map.

***Objective #3: Create Better Connectivity and Accessibility within New Developments***

As new development occurs, the county should work with developers and adjacent property owners to create connections to the development site and internal connections within the site that are efficient and safe. Access to main roadways should be limited to reduce conflicts associated with vehicular turning movements.

**Action Strategy #1: Development of Access and Circulation Standards**

Consider development of access and circulation standards for new commercial and mixed use developments.

***Objective #4: Include Bicycle Amenities within New Developments***

Recreational bicycling opportunities should continue to be developed within the county to promote healthy lifestyles. New developments and areas of redevelopment should provide basic bicycle amenities, such as bicycle parking, and marked routes or designated bicycle lanes to accommodate bicyclists.

**Action Strategy #1: Update Zoning Standards to Include Requirements for Bicycle Amenities in Residential and Non-Residential Developments**

Revise zoning ordinance development standards for new developments within targeted development areas to provide bicycle amenities for both residential and non-residential developments

***Objective #5: Work with Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization to Evaluate Long-Term Transit Opportunities***

Consider working with HRTPO to develop express bus routes along US 17 or vanpool programs to give Camden County residents options for getting to places of work in Virginia.

**Action Strategy #1: Coordinate with HRTPO to Identify Transit Opportunities**

Camden County Planning and Community Development should foster relationships with HRTPO and explore opportunities for future transit service to targeted locations in Camden on US 17 and US 158.



## CONSERVING ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES



*Protecting the county's natural resources provides multiple community benefits: protects against natural disasters, supports eco-tourism efforts, and maintains the unique character of Camden County.*

### BACKGROUND

The unique environmental attributes found in Camden County are beyond noteworthy. They support natural biodiversity, serve as the playground for outdoor recreationalists, and are the backdrop for the county's rural communities. A few key statistics about the county's environmental resources include:

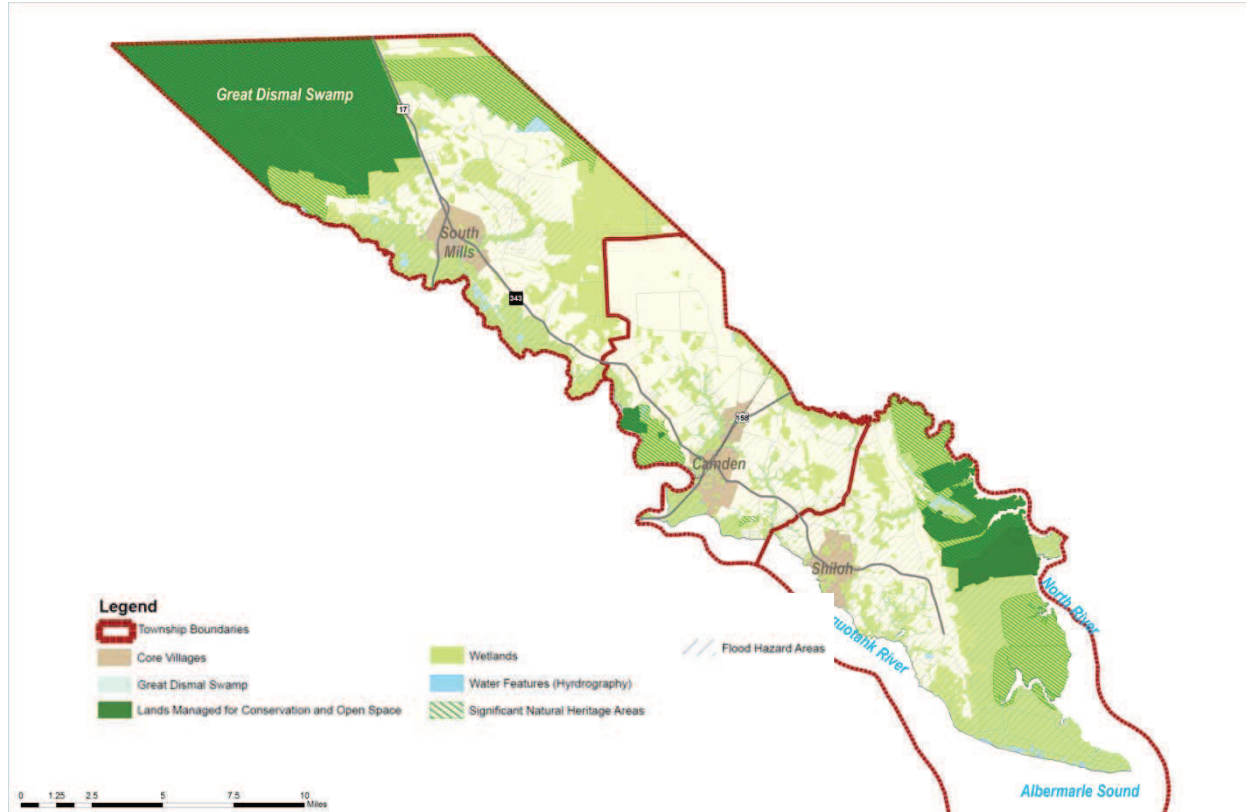
- ✦ The Dismal Swamp is home to between 300-350 black bears, the largest population on the East Coast
- ✦ The cypress forest along Indiantown Creek is listed as a State Natural Area, some of these trees may be older than 1,000 years old
- ✦ The state record yellow perch was caught in Indiantown Creek

Protection of these resources is paramount to achieving other community goals. Eco-tourism and natural resource-based economic development efforts in Camden County rely on the ongoing existence of authentic and unique natural features. Preservation of wetlands and flood prone areas helps to manage stormwater flows and protects developments from flooding. Moreover, residents of the county have come to think of these natural features as the backdrop to their home – a critical component to the rural landscape of Camden County.

**Environmental Context**

Camden County is located in the Albemarle region of the Lower Coastal Plain and the Pasquotank River basin, which is part of the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine system -- the second largest estuarine system in the nation. The county slopes from north to south, never exceeding a 12% slope. Waters in the county drain from the Northwest River through canals leading out of the Great Dismal Swamp and out into the Pasquotank River. The map below illustrates the important environmental areas and features found in Camden County and described below.

**Map 10: Environmental Features**



**Soils**

Twenty-one of the 24 soil types found in Camden County have severe limitations for septic tank usage and the remaining three have moderate limitations but can accommodate conventional septic tank systems. These three soil areas are located in the core village areas and comprise approximately 1.79% of the total area of Camden County, leaving the vast majority of land with soils that can offer limited opportunities for septic systems.

**Wetlands**

Wetlands, lands covered by water or that have water logged soils for long periods during the growing season, comprise over 60% of Camden County’s land area.

Development of federally designated 404 wetlands requires permitting through the Army Corps of Engineers. This fact, coupled with development permitting requirements mandated by the state and administered by the Division of Coastal Management under the Coastal Resources Commission, leaves much of the County's land base subject to development controls from government agencies outside of the County.

### ***Floodplains***

The low elevations, hydric soils, and presence of surface waters collectively create a system of floodplains throughout the County. Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) prepared for Camden County and adopted by the County Board of Commissioners in 2004 estimate that approximately 67% of the County is located in a flood hazard area of either Zone A, Ae, AEFW (floodway), or Shaded X designations. The vast majority of flood hazard areas are the A and AE designations – these designations require mandatory flood insurance be purchased by property owners. A non-encroachment zone, established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, identifies low-lying areas where any new development is almost impossible due to strict requirements. Currently, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the State of North Carolina are conducting flood modeling and may be issuing new floodplain maps within the next year and a half. As feasible, and when new data becomes available, it will be incorporated into plan analyses.

### ***Protected Lands and Natural Heritage Areas***

Portions of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and the Great Dismal Swamp Natural Area are located in Camden County and are designated as protected lands and natural heritage areas. The North River Gameland, the Dismal Swamp Natural Area, Shipyard Landing Natural Area, Whitehall Shores Hardwood Forest, Broad Creek Marshes, and the North River Cypress Forest are also designated protected or natural heritage areas in Camden County. More than 39,000 acres of natural heritage areas lie within Camden County – 26.29% of the total land area of the County.

Listed endangered species that have habitat located within Camden County include the Red Cockaded Woodpecker and the Shortnose Sturgeon. The Bald Eagle and the American Alligator are threatened species. North Carolina lists the Virginia Least Trillium as an endangered species located in Camden County and the Carolina Grasswort as a threatened species.

### ***Composite Environmental Conditions***

According to the 2005 CAMA Plan, state designated fragile areas in coastal North Carolina include coastal wetlands, ocean beaches and shorelines, estuarine waters and shorelines, public trust water, complex natural areas, areas sustaining remnant species, unique geological formations, registered natural landmarks, swamps, prime wildlife habitats, areas of excessive slope, areas of excessive erosion, scenic

points, archeological sites, historical sites, wetlands. In addition, maritime forests and outstanding resource waters are also included but not formally designated by the state. Areas of environmental concern (AEC) for Camden County include estuarine waters, estuarine shores, public trust areas, and coastal wetlands.

These areas were mapped and evaluated as part of the CAMA planning process. A composite map of environmentally sensitive areas was developed to identify three tiers of potential for land development limitations and hazards. These areas of environmental concern were used to develop the Land Use Suitability analysis discussed in Planning Theme #1: Planning for Our Future Land Use of this Comprehensive Plan. They were used to help identify areas that are inappropriate for future development.

## **CONSERVING ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES GOAL**

*Camden County will preserve and protect natural resources and working lands for the maintenance of natural systems, to continue to provide viable opportunities for agricultural and forestry operations, to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to commune with nature, and to provide new economic development opportunities related to eco-tourism and outdoor recreation.*

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STRATEGIES**

### ***Objective #1: Enhance Stormwater Management***

Camden County will improve stormwater (drainage) management to ensure that working lands and residents have high water quality for years to come, and that working lands have adequate irrigation opportunities for farming and forestry operations.

#### **Action Strategy #1: Acquire Public Easements on Drainage Areas in New Developments**

Set new requirements for the acquisition of public easements on drainage areas in new developments to allow for regular maintenance of drainage swales and allow water to properly flow to adjacent properties.

#### **Action Strategy #2: Consider New Methods for Managing Stormwater Near Working Lands**

Seek new methods for managing stormwater on developments located near working lands to ensure the viability and integrity of working lands.

See Stormwater Objectives under Planning Themes #7 "Serving Current and Future Residents."

### ***Objective #2: Protect Agricultural and Forestry Resources***

Camden County will partner with the Camden County Farm Bureau, North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, North Carolina Division of Forest

Resources, the North Carolina Forestry Association, and other partners to protect agricultural and forestry resources.

**Action Strategy #1: Continue Using Best Management Practices**

Continue to encourage agricultural and forestry industries to manage stormwater runoff on working lands by implementing the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s *Agricultural Best Management Practices* and the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources NC Div. of Forest Resources *Forestry Best Management Practices*. Work with partners to update and implement best management practices.

**Action Strategy #2: Consider Adopting New Development Standards for Rural Preservation Areas**

To protect existing farmlands from encroachment by new development, consider adopting new development standards for rural preservation areas. Standards to consider include vegetated or wooded buffers between development and active working lands, acquiring public easements for stormwater drainage areas, and locations for well taps.

**Action Strategy #3: Consider Establishment of Voluntary Agricultural Districts**

To provide additional protection to agricultural operations from encroachment by new development, consider working with agricultural partners to establish voluntary agricultural districts.

**Action Strategy #4: Consider Development of a Farmland Preservation Plan**

To ensure a local food source over time and to ensure the viability of agricultural operations over time, consider working with agricultural partners to develop a local Farmland Preservation Plan

***Objective #3: Manage Land Use Patterns to Protect Environmental Resources and Working Lands***

Camden County will manage land development and land use patterns to ensure protection of critical environmental lands and active agricultural and forestry lands.

**Action Strategy #1: Continue to Limit Development in Environmentally Sensitive Areas**

Continue to limit development in environmentally sensitive areas to large lot, low-density residential, agricultural, forestry, and open space uses. Discourage rezonings to higher intensity uses for areas designated as low or least suitable for development.

**Action Strategy #2: Discourage Provision of Water and Sewer Infrastructure in Least Suitable Areas**

Following the guidance of the Future Land Use Plan map, discourage local utilities from extending public water and sewer service to lands designated as least suitable areas for development.

**Action Strategy #2: Consider Making Conservation Subdivisions a Requirement in the General Use Zoning District**

To protect environmentally significant lands and to discourage fragmentation of natural habitats and natural systems, consider making the current conservation subdivision option mandatory in the General Use zoning district. This requirement would not reduce development yields but would cluster developments and protect larger swaths of open space.

***Objective #4: Protect Critical Resources***

Camden County will evaluate opportunities to strengthen existing critical resource policies and regulations to ensure that areas of environmental concern are protected as new development occurs in the future.

**Action Strategy #1: Consider Updating Open Space Provisions**

Consider updating open space provisions in the Unified Development Ordinance to increase the required percentage of open space protected within new developments. Encourage the use of conservation subdivisions to protect critical resources whenever possible.

**Action Strategy #2: Consider Increasing Water Quality Standards**

Consider establishing performance standards for water quality protection that are more stringent than those required by Coastal Stormwater Rules for SC and C-Swamp waters.

**Action Strategy #3: Consider Establishing a Land Banking Fund for the Acquisition of Critical Lands**

Consider establishing a land banking fund for the acquisition of critical lands that are not suitable for development and for which protection of the upmost importance for health and human safety and for the integrity of natural systems.

***Objective #5: Monitor Progress on Climate Change Research and Policy Development***

Camden County will monitor progress on climate change research and policy development, both at the state and nationally, to identify local tools and policies that can help address long-term climate change impacts.

**Action Strategy #1: Monitor Progress of CAMA's Sea Level Rise Policy**

Continue to stay abreast of North Carolina Division of Coastal Management's Sea Level Rise Policy and requirements for local education on this topic.

**Action Strategy #2: Consider Establishment of New Design Standards for Development in Hazardous Areas**

Consider establishing new design standards for development in high hazard areas to ensure that structures withstand high winds, storm surges, flooding, and other natural disasters prone to the area.

**Action Strategy #3: Consider Development of a Climate Adaptation Plan**

Going beyond hazard mitigation plans, the county should consider development of a Climate Adaptation Plan to address long-term planning needs associated with adaptation to future climate change impacts.

## SERVING CURRENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS

*A significant constraint to new development is the provision of needed infrastructure. The county's economic future is hinged on developing plans to fund and construct these system improvements.*



### BACKGROUND

Camden County prides itself on providing good quality public services and facilities, while also maintaining fiscal health and low taxes. The big challenge facing the county is how best to provide services and facilities to existing and future residents while keeping government debt to a minimum and maintaining a low tax rate. These services and facilities, particularly water and wastewater, are needed to serve future developments – developments that will foster economic prosperity in the county. The county's sanitary sewer system is reaching its capacity and plans to expand the system are necessary for achieving the economic development goals of the county.

Another significant challenge is managing stormwater in the county. Because of the natural environment of the county, stormwater is an issue not only for larger scale developments, but also for individual, residential property owners. Stormwater management districts are being established in Camden County to better manage stormwater issues.

The county's public education system is held in high esteem. When polled, residents respond that supporting education should be the critical focus for future investments and policy initiatives. Also critical are ensuring public safety service (fire protection and Sheriff) as new development occurs in the county.

Maintaining these levels of service over time is critical to establishing a high quality of life for current and future county residents.



### ***Stormwater Management***

Stormwater management is a challenging exercise in North Carolina’s coastal counties, often complicated by low topographic relief, high groundwater tables, and poorly drained soils. Camden County is no exception. In addition, Camden County is included in North Carolina’s 20 coastal counties and as such, is subject to NC Department of Environment and Natural Resource’s coastal stormwater rules, which adds a layer of regulatory complexity to the continually advancing regulatory framework for stormwater management.

The standard of performance for stormwater drainage systems reflected in Camden County’s existing ordinance, requiring retention and release of the runoff from a storm event with a 10-year recurrence interval, is clearly intended to manage the impacts of the quantity of stormwater runoff, rather than water quality. Over and above this requirement, new developments in Camden County are required to meet the standard reflected in the North Carolina Coastal Stormwater Rules for development activities within Coastal Counties. These state rules applicable to Camden County apply only to “high density” developments with built-upon areas greater than 24%. Research by the Center for Watershed Protection has repeatedly shown that significant degradation of receiving water quality can occur when overall imperviousness in a watershed exceeds 10%. In order to achieve substantive water quality protection, the county should consider performance standards more stringent than those currently required by the Coastal Stormwater Rules for SC and C-Swamp waters.

Camden County has not yet been required to become a permitted stormwater system under Phase 2 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Stormwater NPDES (permitting program). However, given that Camden has a unified county government and is becoming increasingly connected to, and impacted by, the larger Hampton Roads metropolitan area, it is possible that the county will be required to become a permitted stormwater discharger in some future phase of the program. As a permitted entity, the county will likely be required to meet the six minimum control measures currently set forth in permits under Phase 2.

Additional considerations for stormwater management are listed in the *Camden County Planning Influences and Opportunities Report*.

### ***Water and Wastewater Service***

The water and wastewater needs of the Eco-Industrial Park along with other growth anticipated along the US 17 corridor and elsewhere in the county, within the context of existing infrastructure gaps and challenges, will require a diligent effort on the county’s part. The *Long-Range Water and Sewer Comprehensive Master Plan* completed by McGill Associates (2010) and recent capital improvement strategies set forth by the county lend significant insights into the infrastructure challenges and opportunities faced by Camden County.

In order to fully understand the implications of future development with regard to water and sewer infrastructure, it is important to have an understanding of the current status and capacities of those utility systems.

### **Water Supply Infrastructure**

As described in greater detail in the *Planning Influences and Opportunities Report*, Camden County is served by two water supply systems. The South Mills Water Association serves approximately 1,200 customers in the northern portion of the County, with an existing ion exchange water treatment plant that has a permitted capacity of 864,000 gallons per day (gpd). However, the shallow aquifer wells that supply raw water for the plant have a limited capacity to produce a sustained yield, and their unreliability reduces the effective capacity of that water supply system to slightly less than the levels of peak demand of approximately 500,000 gpd experienced in recent years.

The southern two thirds of the county are served by the South Camden Water and Sewer District (SCWSD). The SCWSD operates a reverse osmosis (R/O) water treatment plant that serves potable water to approximately 1,500 residential customers. A recent expansion increased the capacity of the treatment plant to 1.44 million gallons per day (MGD). Peak water demands within the SCWSD service area exceeded 0.65 MGD. However, since that time, the District has ceased selling 0.2 MGD to Currituck County, reducing the effective peak demand to approximately 0.45 MGD.

Recent capital improvements have provided for a water line that connects the two systems serving Camden County, so the excess capacity at the SCWSD plant can be used to offset the occasional low yields from the wells used by the South Mills system. Together, the two treatment systems have a reliable production capacity of approximately 1.9 MGD and a combined peak demand of approximately 1.1 MGD, leaving an estimated 0.8 MGD in unused capacity that could be allocated to future growth.

**Table 5: Existing Water System Capacity**

Utility	Water Customers (Residential)	Current System Capacity	Peak Demand	Capacity Available for Future
SMWA	1,200	0.5 MGD	0.65 MGD	-0.15
SCWSD	1,500	1.4 MGD	0.45 MGD	0.95
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,700</b>	<b>1.9 MGD</b>	<b>1.1 MGD</b>	<b>0.8 MGD</b>

It should be noted that the 1.44 MGD capacity of the SCWSD water treatment plant is based on running the two existing treatment trains at full capacity. As the demand on the plant approaches the full capacity, another treatment train will

have to be added in order to provide the necessary redundancy. The current building at the plant will only accommodate the two existing treatment trains, so additional trains will require construction of a new treatment building at the SCWSD site. Additional elevated tanks for treated water storage capacity will also be required, as will new wells to provide sufficient raw water supply.

The recently completed expansion of the SCWSD water treatment plant and the capacity available for allocation there means that new water treatment infrastructure may not be an immediate need. The American Water Works Association estimates average US household water demand at 350 gpd. At that level, the rough estimate of 0.8 MGD in available capacity at the SCWSD facility would support almost 2,300 new households. As new developments are proposed, the county will need to focus on long-range water service needs and identify necessary improvements to continue to provide high quality potable water to current and future residents.

It should also be noted that roughly one third of the county's current households are not connected to either of these public water supply systems, instead relying on private, individual well water or small community water systems.

### ***Sewer and Treatment Infrastructure***

Camden County's sewer and wastewater treatment needs are more pressing than those for water treatment and distribution. The SCWSD operates the only wastewater treatment facility in the county, which is located in South Mills and has a permitted capacity of 100,000 gpd. Current inflows experienced at the plant are in the range of 20,000 – 25,000 gpd. The ongoing grant-funded project to install a sewer collection system and eliminate several failing on-site septic systems in the village of South Mills will generate approximately 35,000 gpd of new inflow to the plant, raising the total inflow levels to approximately 60,000 gpd. The remaining 40,000 gpd that will remain in the system would only support connection of 150 new households at conventional levels of usage.

The *Long-Range Water and Sewer Comprehensive Master Plan* completed by McGill Associates (2010) stated that 0.048 MGD of the plant capacity was already committed to existing or developing residential and business expansion at the time the report was written in 2010. Essentially, the available wastewater treatment capacity in Camden County is already spoken for, and it is likely that current capacity is inadequate to meet near term needs.

In addition, the McGill Report identified three more communities with a combined 270 households in the South Mills vicinity alone, over and above the village itself, that are in immediate need of sewer systems and connection to centralized wastewater treatment to alleviate failing septic systems. Treatment of the combined

wastewater flows from these communities would require an additional 73,000 gpd in treatment capacity.

Due to soils that are not conducive to on-site wastewater systems, several other communities throughout the county have significant rates of septic system failure, but establishing collections systems that reach these communities and tying them to centralized treatment infrastructure is more of a long-range problem in Camden County.

### **Schools**

Camden County Schools is one of the highest performing school districts in the northeastern region of North Carolina and the state. The district serves approximately 1,900 students in grades pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade at five schools:

- \* Grandy Primary School (Pre-K-3)
- \* Camden Intermediate School (4-6)
- \* Camden Middle School (7-8)
- \* Camden High School (9-12)
- \* CamTech High School (9-12)

Four out of five of these schools achieved Adequate Yearly Progress in 2011 and consistently scored well above the state-wide average on their end-of-grade, end-of-course and Vacates tests. The 2010-11 school year ended with an overall 4-year graduate rate of 90.7%, which ranks among the highest in the state.

Due to the growth experienced over the last decade and the projected growth that is expected to occur in the next several years, there is need to construct additional school facilities, particularly a new high school, to maintain a high quality educational experience for the system’s students. Table 15 displays the capacity and enrollment by grade level for the 2010/2011 school year and projections for the 2015/2016 school year. Last year, all schools operated within capacity, except for the County’s high schools, which had need for 26 additional seats. This deficit is expected to continue unless the current school is expanded or a new school is developed.

**Table 6: Capacity and Enrollment for Schools 2010/2011-2015/2016**

School	2010/2011			2015/2016		
	Capacity	Enrollment	Difference	Capacity	Projected Enrollment	Difference
K-5	1,004	856	148	1,004	933	71
Middle	642	480	162	642	474	168
High	565	591	(26)	570	649	(79)
K-12 (Entire System)	2,211	1,927	284	2,216	2,056	160

Source: Camden County Schools

### ***Public Safety (Fire/Rescue and Law Enforcement)***

Camden County is protected by the Camden County Sheriff's Department that operates out of the Camden Courthouse Complex. The department is a partner in a three county jail (Camden, Pasquotank, and Perquimans) with each county contributing to the cost of the facility.

Fire and rescue service is provided by two fire departments and one substation that cover two fire districts: South Mills and Camden-Shiloh. Insurance ratings listed in the 2005 CAMA plan for the two fire districts were on the low side, and may need to be considered as part of this planning process. New development will require adequate fire protection. A new replacement fire station has been constructed in South Mills at Keeter Barn Road and a new replacement fire station is currently under contract in Shiloh.

E-911 service is operated out of the Pasquotank/Camden Central Communication located in Elizabeth City with a satellite operation housed in the Sawyer Creek fire station that is manned from 10 am to 10 pm. The County is served by the Pasquotank / Camden Rescue Squad and the Pasquotank County Ambulance Service.

### ***Utilities and Telecommunications***

#### ***Electric and Natural Gas***

Electric service in Camden County is provided by the Albemarle Rural Electric Co-Op and North Carolina Dominion Power. Natural gas is available along Highway 343 near Camden from the Eastern NC Natural Gas company.

#### ***Telecommunications***

As of 2005, only portions of Camden County had access to dial-up internet service and no broadband service was available. A private initiative is underway to provide broadband service to underserved communities in North Carolina. MCNC is an independent, non-profit organization that employs advanced Internet networking technologies and systems to continuously improve learning and collaboration throughout North Carolina's K-20 education community.

This initiative is labeled the Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative (GLRBI), a coordinated strategy developed by the Office of North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue, the N.C. Office of Economic Recovery & Investment, and e-NC Authority to improve broadband access for businesses and residents in underserved areas. It is expected to be completed by 2013. Once all work is complete, the two rounds of broadband infrastructure have the potential to serve directly, or through MCNC partnerships with private-sector service providers, more than 1,500 community anchor institutions, 180,000 businesses, and reach more than 300,000 underserved families. The northeast route through Elizabeth City and Camden

County is expected to be completed in the summer of 2012 and will cover 273 miles.

### ***Solid Waste***

Solid waste collection in Camden County is provided through three convenience centers located near South Mills, Shiloh, and Camden core areas. The convenience centers have facilities for both waste and recyclable materials. Management of the centers is privatized through Waste Industries. Waste from these sites are hauled to the Pasquotank Solid Waste Transfer Station and then on to the Bertie County Landfill. Curb-side collection service is provided in the county through a private entity for a fee.

Plans for a new landfill in the northern portion of the county were a hot local topic in recent years, and are no longer under discussion. However, the need for a long-term strategy for handling local waste and recycling is still a topic to be addressed.

### **SERVING CURRENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS GOAL**

*Camden County will provide infrastructure and community facilities in a fiscally responsible manner that is consistent with the proposed future land use map, economic development opportunities, and local demand for services.*

### **OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STRATEGIES**

#### ***Public Water and Sewer Objectives***

##### ***Objective #1: Seek out Public-Private Partnerships for Utility Projects***

Camden County will seek to maximize public-private partnerships to fund the expansion of the utility systems that will be needed by new development, and do so with an eye toward identifying opportunities to leverage those efforts to connect existing communities to that infrastructure. This is particularly needed in areas where wastewater collection and treatment systems need to be established to relieve failing septic systems. Continued utilization of available grant programs should also be pursued.

##### **Action Strategy #1: Identify Public-Private Partnership Opportunities**

As new development opportunities arise, explore opportunities for public-private partnerships to provide needed infrastructure improvements

##### ***Objective #2: Establish Formal Policies for Evaluating Utility Allocation***

As water and wastewater capacities are finite without the expansion of systems, Camden County will develop formal policies for evaluating and making decisions on utility allocation. Possible allocation policies could include priority for potential

economic generation, priority for larger projects of a certain size, or first-come-first-serve.

**Action Strategy #1: Work with Utilities to Develop Allocation Policies**

Work with South Mills Water Association (SMWA) and South Camden Water and Sewer Authority (SCWSA) to coordinate efforts to develop formal policies for allocation of public water and sanitary sewer capacity that balances economic development and land use goals

***Objective #3: Promote Land Use Patterns that Efficiently Use Public Water and Sewer Services***

Camden County will promote a land development pattern that efficiently uses existing and planned public water and sewer services and that capitalizes on economic development opportunities.

**Action Strategy #1: Promote a Land Use Pattern that Utilizes Centralized Utility Systems**

Promote and facilitate forms of development that will allow for more centralized and environmentally effective systems that will serve as the backbone for future growth.

**Action Strategy #2: Consider Both Economic Opportunities and the Preferred Land Use Pattern**

Balance the need to assess economic development opportunities when planning for water and sewer capital improvements with the land use pattern outlined in the Future Land Use plan.

**Action Strategy #3: Continue to Ensure Concurrency of Development and Public Facilities**

Use the County's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance to manage growth and ensure that needed infrastructure will be made available to service new development.

**Action Strategy #4: Consider Amending County Policy on Private Sewage Treatment Plants**

To discourage development outside of targeted development areas, consider amending the county policy on private sewage treatment plants. Consider allowing private sewage treatment facilities only in targeted development areas where public sewer service is not available or planned.

***Objective #4: Establish Future Capital Improvement Priorities***

Camden County will work with local utilities, economic developers, and planners to establish priorities for capital improvements.

**Action Strategy #1: Establish Priorities for Future Public Sewer Service**

Formally establish priorities for future public sewer service; potential priorities include:

- \* Country Club area wastewater extension on US 158 (from Upton westward)
- \* Camden Business Park wastewater expansion on US 158 (east of Gumberry)
- \* Eco-Industrial Park additional water wells
- \* South Mills core village wastewater extension (providing full service to area)

***Objective #5: Develop Plan to Address Ongoing Septic Systems Failures***

Camden County will develop a long-term strategy for addressing ongoing septic system failures occurring throughout the county. Possible solutions include enhancing standards for development of new septic systems, extension of public wastewater to failing systems, and development of smaller package treatment plants in strategic locations.

**Action Strategy #1: Develop a Plan to Manage Ongoing Septic System Failures**

Develop a county committee to assess the current and expected trend of septic system failures, and potential solutions for addressing this environmental health risk.

***Objective #6: Identify Opportunities to Implement the Camden County Water and Sewer Master Plan***

Continue to identify potential opportunities to implement the *Camden County Water and Sewer Master Plan*. Of particular consideration is the recommendation for three separate water and sewer service areas, provision of wastewater treatment facility in Camden, and future treatment trains needed at the South Camden Wastewater Treatment Plant in South Mills.

**STORMWATER OBJECTIVES**

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***Objective #1: Continue to Monitor Status of NPDES Phase 2 Compliance***

The National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) is a program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that is administered in North Carolina by the North Carolina Division of Water Quality. Camden County will continue to monitor whether the county has met certain thresholds and will be required to meet the six minimum control measures set forth in permits under NPDES Phase 2.



### ***Objective #2: Consider Establishment of a Stormwater Utility***

As targeted development occurs in Camden County, more urban and conventional systems to capture and treat stormwater runoff may be required, and necessitate allocation of funding for development of stormwater infrastructure and ongoing maintenance. The upfront cost and implementation of stormwater infrastructure should be carried by the development community, but that will not address the needs of long term maintenance. One possible solution to address the need for staff and resources for the ongoing management of stormwater infrastructure could be through the establishment of a stormwater utility. This could be established through a three-pronged approach:

- \* Increase and maintain hydraulic capacity of drainage system through establishment of entities such as drainage districts with dedicated revenue streams for management (e.g., stormwater utility)
- \* Restrict new development outside of targeted development areas to very low densities to minimize increases in stormwater runoff
- \* Implement stringent stormwater detention requirements to ensure that stormwater volumes leaving developed sites do not overwhelm the existing drainage capacity

### ***Objective #3: Acquire Public Easement for Maintenance of Drainage Swales***

Camden County will set out a process for acquiring easements for drainage swales on private property to ensure proper maintenance of drainage areas.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY OBJECTIVES**

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### ***Objective #1: Continue to Provide High Quality Public Safety Services***

Camden County will continue to provide high quality public safety services to county residents in a manner that seeks to balance the goals to provide adequate service and to strive for fiscal efficiency.

### ***Objective #2: Explore Opportunities to Provide Full-Time EMS in Camden***

Continue to work with EMS partners to identify opportunities to provide full-time emergency management services in Camden County.

## **EDUCATION OBJECTIVE**

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### ***Objective #1: Continue to Provide a High Quality Public Education***

Camden County will continue to provide a high quality public education experience to the county's student population. Funding of educational programs will continue to be a high priority for the county.



*Part 5:*  
**Action Plan**

## PART 5: ACTION PLAN

The Board of County Commissioners, the Planning Board, and county staff will use this comprehensive plan as a guide for decisions they make concerning the physical development of Camden County. The Plan will also be used to guide the establishment of priorities for new and expanded community facilities and other public improvements. The Future Land Use Map and corresponding designations will serve as the principal policies for evaluating development proposals and proposed changes in county regulations regarding growth, development, and redevelopment.

### PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS

Given the vision for the future of Camden County that is articulated in this 2035 plan, and the description/analysis of current conditions and strategic objectives, the path to achieving the community's vision begins to come into focus. This chapter offers a specific plan for implementation by identifying priority action items that are in need of attention in the short-term, with initiation within the next five years.

### SECONDARY ACTION ITEMS

The appendix includes a table that lists secondary action items from the Comprehensive Plan. These action items are not as pressing as the priority action items and should be addressed upon completion of the priority action items. During future updates to this plan, priority action items that are completed should be removed from the list and secondary action items should be moved up to the priority list.

### PLAN MONITORING AND AMENDMENT

This comprehensive plan closes with recommendations for continued monitoring of progress and updating of the plan.

## **PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS**

This section outlines the top five priority action items that should be initiated within the next five years.

### **PRIORITY #1: INCORPORATE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN EVALUATION AS PART OF DEVELOPMENT REVIEW**

The Comprehensive Plan is the county’s tool for guiding decisions regarding land use and development. Following adoption of this plan, the county should establish a formal process for including a Comprehensive Plan evaluation as part of the development review process. This evaluation should occur as part of rezoning, subdivision, and site plan approvals, and could be included as part of staff reports on development proposals.

In North Carolina, county zoning enabling statutes have long required that zoning be “in accordance with a comprehensive plan.” Neither the North Carolina statutes nor case law mandate preparation of comprehensive plans, define their elements, or set a mandatory procedure for their adoption. However, the state zoning statutes were amended in 2005 to strengthen the role of adopted plans where they do exist. This law requires that Planning Board review of proposed zoning amendments include written comments on the consistency of the proposed amendment with the Comprehensive Plan and any other relevant plans (such as a small area plan, a corridor plan, or a transportation plan) that have been adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners is also required to adopt a statement on plan consistency before adopting or rejecting any zoning amendment. These written comments are required, but do not limit the board’s discretionary power to adopt or not adopt zoning amendments.

#### ***Entity Responsible for Initiating Action:***

Camden County Planning and Community Development Department

### **PRIORITY #2: EVALUATE NEED TO UPDATE CAMA PLAN**

Camden County is one of 20 coastal communities in North Carolina that are mandated to comply with Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) rules developed by the Coastal Resources Commission (CRC). CAMA requires each county to develop a CAMA Land Use Plan to regulate growth and development for the protection of critical coastal resources. Camden adopted a CAMA Advanced Core Land Use Plan in 2005. The CAMA plan includes a Future Land Use map, a vision, and community goals and policies for guiding development.

This new Comprehensive Plan acts essentially as an update to the 2005 CAMA Land Use Plan; however, a formal review and evaluation of the consistencies between the two plans should be conducted. The county will need to comply with

*Local governments in North Carolina are required to review Comprehensive Plans and make statements of consistency when reviewing new development proposals.*

NC General Statute 15A NCAC 07B .0901 CAMA LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENTS when making recommendations to the Coastal Resources Commission about modifications to the CAMA Plan needed to make it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

***Entity Responsible for Initiating Action:***

Camden County Planning and Community Development Department

**PRIORITY #3: IDENTIFY PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO DEVELOP NEEDED INFRASTRUCTURE**

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Local governments around the nation are faced with having to do more with less because of economic forces and state and federal budget cuts outside of their control. Creativity is needed to be fiscally successful in these economic times. Camden County is in a particularly unique fiscal situation. The majority of development in Camden County is residential. Because there is little commercial development, the amount of business related taxes that can be levied in the county to pay for government expenses is limited. This means that government revenues that fund government services and facilities are primarily made up of private property taxes. Because there is an interest in keeping taxes low for citizens of the county and because government spending increases over time with inflation, new funding sources are needed for the county to move forward with its plans.

Improvements to water and sanitary sewer systems, to transportation infrastructure, and to stormwater management are needed to fully realize the land use vision set out in the Future Land Use Map. In many cases, these improvements must be undertaken before new development can occur. To provide necessary infrastructure needed to service future populations and new development, Camden County should continue to pursue opportunities to partner with private entities to develop infrastructure that is necessary for the success of the local economy.

***Entity Responsible for Initiating Action:***

Camden County Board of County Commissioners

**PRIORITY #4: IDENTIFY NEW INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES FOR CIP**

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Camden County has an established Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This CIP is a planning tool that provides direction and guidance for the county to plan and manage capital and infrastructure assets and expenditures. Specifically, Camden County’s CIP identifies capital projects (e.g., schools, government facilities, parks, etc.) and their anticipated funding sources to assist in the planning and scheduling of finances for projects and the manpower needed to plan, design, and construct the projects. The CIP promotes coordination of capital projects that are from different program areas but are similar in scope or in the same geographical area

*Camden County’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a formal process for establishing community investment priorities, such as schools, parks, and public infrastructure.*

of improvement. CIPs do not designate funding for county operational expenses; that is handled through the county budget. Camden County's CIP is updated annually. To formalize implementation of this plan, the 2013 CIP should identify new infrastructure priorities from those discussed in this plan and incorporate those priorities in the CIP. These infrastructure investments include:

- \* South Mills streetscape improvements
- \* Boating access and infrastructure improvements for Gateways to the Wild (#1, #2, #3)

***Entity Responsible for Initiating Action:***

Camden County Board of County Commissioners

**PRIORITY #5: DEVELOP ACTION PLAN FOR UPDATING UDO**

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The Camden County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) sets out the development regulations that proposed developments must comply with. This UDO contains zoning districts and related development standards that are applicable to properties throughout the county. These districts and standards can be refined to better achieve the future land use set out in this plan and guide development to occur at a scale and intensity that is appropriate for a village context. Key amendments to be made include:

- \* Developing higher density and mixed use zoning classifications for application in the core village areas of Camden and South Mills
- \* Developing a Rural Roadway Corridor overlay that would protect rural scenic views along the county's main roads
- \* Evaluating potential impacts on Dismal Swamp State Park from proximate development and modifying development regulations necessary to protect the park from noise, glare/lighting, and other impacts
- \* Development incentives for higher intensity, mixed-use developments in core village areas
- \* Evaluate UDO to ensure that recreational outfitters are permitted by-right
- \* Standards for bicycle and pedestrian facilities in new developments
- \* Updating open space provisions to include in-lieu fee for projects occurring outside of targeted development areas
- \* Voluntary Agricultural Districts
- \* Conservation Subdivisions a requirement in General Use zoning district

**Entity Responsible for Initiating Action:**

Camden County Planning and Community Development Department

## CATALYST ACTIONS

The true value of comprehensive plans lies in their ability to be actively implemented by the communities that develop them. Building support for implementation of the plan is often best done by initiating smaller projects – “low hanging fruit” projects that provide a foundation for further implementation or have visible and immediate results that garner support for further implementation. The following actions are not necessarily priorities in relation to other action strategies, but they represent the first action for building larger plan implementation efforts. County staff should initiate action on these five catalyst actions within one year of plan adoption.

*Catalyst projects can build support for Comprehensive Plan implementation through visible actions that can have immediate results.*

### **Camden County Planning and Community Development Department**

- \* Adoption of the South Mills Small Area Plan and development of committee to work on implementation of the plan
- \* Continued work to partner with Dismal Swamp State Park to develop trail extension

### **Camden County Tourism Bureau**

- \* Creation of a map and brochure identifying local shoreline public access points and recreational offerings in Camden County to be used to market the county’s eco-tourism amenities regionally

### **Camden County Finance Department**

- \* Continue to seek out additional funding sources for capital improvement projects

### **Camden County Economic Development**

- \* Marketing of Eco Industrial Park

## MONITORING AND UPDATING THE PLAN

### PLAN MONITORING

The county will monitor the implementation of this plan over time to measure the progress in achieving goals, objectives, and actions. This information will provide crucial feedback to the county’s decision-makers regarding the approach to plan implementation on an ongoing basis.

It is recommended that the Planning and Community Development Department be tasked with overseeing plan implementation. Staff from the department will prepare a comprehensive annual report to the Board of County Commissioners on the

status of Plan implementation, focusing on the top five priority action items included in the plan, and any additional initiatives that may be underway. The annual report shall be prepared early each year and ready for presentation to the Board of County Commissioners at their annual work retreat.

### **PLAN UPDATING**

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It is intended that an update of this plan take place at least every five years unless otherwise directed by the Board of County Commissioners to occur sooner. In making a determination of when a plan update should be initiated, a prime consideration is the magnitude of the changes that have occurred in the county since the plan was last updated. For instance, unexpected changes in the economy, the environment, traffic congestion, projected growth, or other issues, may trigger a plan update in less than five years.

When conducting a plan update, Camden County will thoroughly re-evaluate the vision, goals, objectives, and implementation actions of this plan and change or remove those relevant to make the plan effective. A plan update will also include a thorough review of the validity and current quality of all information contained within the plan and should include opportunities for involvement by the public, boards and commissions, elected and appointed officials, staff, and other affected interests.



## APPENDICES

- \* Appendix 1: Community Planning Influences and Opportunities Report
- \* Appendix 2: Camden County Community Profile
- \* Appendix 3: Envision Camden County Public Workshop Report
- \* Appendix 4: Development Capacity and Alternative Development Scenarios Report
- \* Appendix 5: List of County Policies Included in the CAMA Plan Referenced and Acknowledged as Part of the Comprehensive Plan
- \* Appendix 6: Secondary Implementation Action Items