

ENVISION CAMDEN COUNTY PUBLIC WORKSHOPS REPORT







Envision Camden County in 2035...

What words best describe your aspirations for the county?



Summary Report of the Proceedings of Two Public Workshops Conducted November 14, 2011

Prepared for Camden County, North Carolina by Clarion Associates December 2011



ENVISION CAMDEN COUNTY WORKSHOPS

On November 14, 2011, Camden County hosted two public workshops – *Envision Camden County* – to kickoff the process to develop a new comprehensive plan for the county. The purpose of these workshops was to learn more about the concerns, hopes, and aspirations of community members in an effort to create a new community vision for Camden County.

Participants attended one of two sessions – an afternoon and an evening session. In total, approximately 110 attendees came out to the Camden County Middle School. The workshops were divided into two parts: (1) a public open house where participants were given an opportunity to peruse information about existing conditions, planning influences, and planning opportunities in Camden County and participated in passive exercises, and (2) a formal presentation on the planning process and highlights from the Community Planning Influences and Opportunities report, an anonymous keypad polling exercise, and a group discussion exercise.

As shown on the map below, attendees hailed from all over the county. Most attendees live in Camden County, but some only worked or owned property in Camden.







The following summary report of the outcomes of these two workshops is organized by the following public engagement exercises:

- Envision Camden County a passive visioning exercise to learn more about what participants hope Camden County will become in 2035
- Amending the Future Land Use Map a passive exercise to identify changes that should be made to the county's adopted future land use map
- Keypad Polling Exercise An anonymous polling exercise that provides cumulative real time results, this exercise posed questions focused on the type of character Camden is today and should be in the future
- Group Discussion Exercise This group exercise included a mapping component where participants identified key strong and weak places, the heart of the county, and areas for development opportunities
- * Comment Form Responses Participants answered three open-ended questions to capture any additional ideas or concerns not captured in other exercises.

To learn more about the materials presented at the workshop, see the comprehensive plan page on the county's website <u>www.camdencountync.gov</u>

Next Steps

The community input outlined in this report will be used to develop the community vision and the corresponding planning framework for the comprehensive plan. These plan components will be presented in draft form to the public in the spring of 2012.





ENVISION CAMDEN COUNTY

The primary purpose of the workshops was to engage participants in a discussion of what the vision for Camden County should be. This vision sets the groundwork for developing the county's comprehensive plan. Responses ranged from overall descriptions of the character of the county in 2035 to specific amenities that should be developed in the county in the future. To engage participants in this discussion, they were asked to brainstorm answers to the following question.



Ideas for the Future:

- In 2035, I wish to see Camden as a rural, quaint county with very limited development. Those that want city amenities can drive a little further or live where they are offered (Tidewater). Camden has a unique lifestyle that does not need to be destroyed. Encouraging development brings more people, which requires more infrastructure which requires more money. Growth can be limited and controlled to preserve Camden County as the unique county it still is.
- No growth preferred, but believe some will come. Make it desirable with little effect on county as it is today – quality of our life.
- More boating access to the Pasquotank River
- Public Library, internet access, community center, grocery store
- Would love to see new schools, more fire stations, recreation for everyone





- * Restaurant and grocery store in South Mills
- Would like to see laundromat in the area
- County water in South Mills
- Grocery store on 158 Lambs Road vicinity
- * Waterpark, YMCA, community center, entertainment
- Smart growth, not a bedroom community, create a stronger community centralized in South Mills and Courthouse area
- More athletic fields
- Scenic parkways re: Fred Bair
- Playgrounds for young children not at schools
- * Bike path extended to Virginia, wind farm, rebuild Old Swamp Road
- Make us better but don't change us
- High speed internet and sewer line extended up North River Road
- Need grocery store
- * A public library in Camden
- More commercial establishments, restaurants, parks at north end of county, ballfields
- Would like to see a recreational center in this area, tennis court
- Need a shopping center on 158
- Want better mosquito control

So What Does This Tell Us About the Vision for Camden County?

Participants are interested in improving Camden County in a slow and managed way that maintains its uniqueness and rural character. Basic amenities are needed to improve quality of life and reduce the need to travel to surrounding communities for general services – grocery store, commercial and retail establishments, library, parks, trails, boating access, and high speed internet. These new amenities are also critical factors for generating economic development in the county. It will be hard to compete with other communities for new businesses in the 21st century without a basic level of service in the county.

These aspirations for the county are likely attainable – they maintain the underlying structure of the county today and build upon it to allow the county to evolve over time and become a more full service community.





AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP

The county's CAMA Land Use Plan is the current guide used for making decisions about development proposals and related land use controls, such as zoning and development standards. Through the comprehensive planning process, the future land use map will be updated to better reflect current development plans and the physical framework for future development.

Attendees of the two workshops were asked to provide input on the current Future Land Use map and to identify particular places that are in need of change.



Proposed Amendments to Future Land Use Plan Map

- Focus commercial development along major arterials (US 17 and US 158)
- * The county needs to provide incentives for commercial development
- Improve infrastructure to the southern portion of the county (Old Trap area)
- Need to slow down development (no growth) to a crawl
- * Need restaurants along US 158
- Need to keep the rural natural of the county by finding the balance in focusing the placement of both residential and commercial developments that will meet the current needs of residents
- * The county needs a water park to bring in needed taxes





How Will This Input Be Used?

The next phase of planning will focus on the physical aspects of the county and areas where development should be occurring and encouraged. Specifically, planners will be conducting several analyses to identify areas that are most suited for development and areas that are least suited, and then testing out alternative development scenarios to compare and contrast different options that illustrate how the county might look and operate in 20 or more years. This community input will be taken into account when developing these analyses.

From the input provided at these workshops, it appears that there is support for a managed growth approach in Camden County that targets growth to specific areas. One of the big questions that will be addressed through this planning process is how areas not targeted for development should be managed over time. As it stands today, most land in the county has by-right zoning that allows these areas to be developed as residential. Citizens have shown interest in protecting environmentally sensitive lands and agricultural lands from new development. The approach taken to protect these areas is a critical topic to address during this planning process.





KEYPAD POLLING EXERCISE

Attendees participated in a polling exercise to help planners learn more about the aspirations and opinions of community members. Using a keypad polling system, attendees were able to anonymously select answers to twelve questions. The full list of answer choices for each question and a combined report of the results of this exercise for both workshops are included as an appendix to this summary report.

Summary of Keypad Polling Results

- 1. Where are you from? Majority of attendees were from Camden County (82%), or owned property or worked in Camden County (8%)
- 2. How long have you been here? Approximately 1/3 of attendees have lived in Camden County for 50 or more years, 1/3 between 10 and 50 years, and 1/3 have lived in the county for less than 10 years
- **3.** What type of job do you hold? The three top industries employing participants were education/government (33%), real estate development/construction or "other" (16%), and technology/professional services (14%)
- 4. What do you like most about Camden County? Small town environment and slower pace of life was the top selection for participants (31%), followed by rural setting and low density development (22%), and natural features (11%)
- 5. What do you like second most about Camden County? Asking the same question but for the second most liked aspect of the county, respondents' top selection was again small town environment and slower pace of life (26%), followed by access to Hampton Roads area (20%), and then rural setting and low density development (18%)
- 6. What do you like least about Camden County? 36% of respondents selected lack of commercial establishments, followed by lack of employment opportunities (22%)
- 7. What phrase best describes Camden County today? The top selection for respondents was "Tranquil – a place for peaceful living" (28%), followed by "My Hometown – a great place to establish roots and raise a family" (24%), and "Bedroom Community – mostly serves people working elsewhere" (22%)
- What phrase best describes Camden County in the future? Envisioning an improved Camden County, participants top selection was a tie between "Full Service – provides everything you need" and "My Hometown – a great place to establish roots and raise a family" (34%), followed by "Tranquil – a place for peaceful living" (25%)
- 9. Future growth in the county should....Nearly half of respondents think that growth should be targeted to minimize negative impacts on the environment (43%), followed by development being targeted through development of new infrastructure (25%), and managed to efficiently use existing infrastructure (18%)
- 10. Camden County should grow in the following manner...More than half of respondents selected that Camden should "Become More Compact: Higher intensity, more efficient, mixed-use developments in targeted locations" (54%), followed by "Continue Current Trend: Expansion via dispersed, single-use developments" (36%), or "No Opinion" (10%)





- 11. "In considering new development, quality and appearance are more important than the number of units or how intensely they are organized." A majority of respondents strongly agree or agree with this statement (77%), strongly disagree or disagree with this statement (13%), or were neutral (7%)
- 12. If Camden County offered a job for your skill set, would you work here? The majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with this statement (80%), were neutral (8%), or strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement (4%)

So What Does All This Mean?

Residents of Camden County love their community and are willing to establish roots for the long haul. The bucolic setting and slower pace are what bring people to Camden and what keep people calling it home. But there are aspects of Camden that people would like to change – services are needed, especially commercial and retail establishments. Residents are eager to have more employment opportunities locally in Camden County that will shorten their commutes.

In the future, the county should continue to offer a small town culture while also providing new amenities – shopping, recreation, entertainment, and jobs. New development should be focused to protect environmentally sensitive areas. There is some willingness from residents to consider having a more compact pattern of development that uses increased density to focus development in certain areas. What is most critical is that the character of the community and the culture of Camden County not be diminished or significantly changed over time.





GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE

Following the group polling exercises, participants broke up into several small groups to dig a little deeper into some of the topics addressed in the keypad polling questions. Group discussion questions were designed to learn about specific places that are important to the character of Camden County – strong places and places that could be considered the "heart" of the county. And also to learn about the weak places – places that need to be addressed and that leave a negative impression with visitors. They were also asked to select areas that are most suitable for future development. Participants were finally asked to identify the most marketable aspects of the county and to identify specific new services (public or private) that are needed in Camden. The maps that follow show the geographic distribution of these answers.

Question #1: What are the "strongest" places in Camden County?

| Response | Number of Groups with Response |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Great Dismal Swamp / Welcome Center | 10 |
| The Courthouse | 4 |
| South Mills Locks | 3 |
| Topside Restaurant | 3 |
| Bellcross Bakery | 2 |
| Hales Lake / Agriculture | 2 |
| North River Campground | 2 |
| Pasquotank River | 2 |
| Waterfront "Old Trap" / Avery Shores | 2 |
| "Where I live" | 1 |
| Community Park | 1 |
| High School | 1 |
| Senior Center Boardwalk | 1 |
| The 158 corridor | 1 |
| The intersection of 343 / 158 | 1 |
| Treasure Point 4H Camp | 1 |
| Whitehall Shores | 1 |
| Williams Strawberry Farm | 1 |

Question #2: What are the "weakest" places in Camden County?

| Response | Number of Groups with Response |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Camden Point | 3 |
| Intersection of 343 and 158 could be better | 3 |
| 17 North of South Mills | 2 |
| Camden Business Park | 2 |
| Access Improvements to Dismal Swamp Canal | 1 |
| Camden Trash Site | 1 |
| Goose Creek (water backup) | 1 |
| Ivy Neck Road (flooding) | 1 |
| Lambs Road (flooding) | 1 |
| Low income housing | 1 |
| McPherson Road development | 1 |
| Mobile homes on Trotman Rd | 1 |
| South Mills weakened when highway bypassed it | 1 |







Question #3: Where would you say the "heart" of Camden County is?

| Response | Number of Groups with Response |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Courthouse | 8 |
| Intersection of NC 343 and 158 | 6 |
| Community Park | 2 |
| High School | 2 |
| Lambs Marina Restaurant | 2 |
| Belcross Bakery | 1 |
| Dollar General | 1 |
| Eco-Park | 1 |
| J & E Oasis | 1 |
| McBride Church | 1 |
| South Mills | 1 |
| There is none | 1 |
| Topside Restaurant | 1 |
| Track 1 Restaurant | 1 |

Question #4: Where should new development be located in Camden County?

| Response | Number of Groups with Response |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 17 North of South Mills | 7 |
| Commercial development on 158 | 5 |
| Residential development in existing towns | 5 |
| Away from environment | 2 |
| Eco-Park | 2 |
| No growth | 2 |
| Avery Shores | 1 |
| Courthouse | 1 |
| Old Trap | 1 |
| Trailer Park on Trotman | 1 |
| Wind Farm in agricultural land | 1 |







Question #5: If you were going to recruit a business to Camden County, what aspects of the community would you boast?

| Response | Number of Groups with Response |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Transportation accessibility / Location | 5 |
| Limited competition / High demand | 4 |
| Open land | 4 |
| Quality of schools | 4 |
| Skilled workforce | 4 |
| Natural resources | 3 |
| Low tax base | 2 |
| One government | 2 |
| Quality of life | 2 |
| Business Park | 1 |
| Child care | 1 |
| Growing population | 1 |
| Infrastructure (water and sewer) | 1 |
| Lots of churches | 1 |
| Low crime rate | 1 |
| Military presence | 1 |
| State Park improvements | 1 |

Question #6: What types of services are most needed in Camden County?

| Response | Number of Groups with Response |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Grocery store | 7 |
| Restaurants | 7 |
| Medical services | 5 |
| Retail / Shopping center | 4 |
| Water / sewer | 4 |
| Waterfront / beachfront access | 3 |
| Basic transportation | 2 |
| Recreation Center | 2 |
| Senior Assisted Living | 2 |
| Banks | 1 |
| Better cell phone reception | 1 |
| Biking | 1 |
| Community Center | 1 |
| Countywide internet access | 1 |
| Day care | 1 |
| Employment places | 1 |
| Government facilities | 1 |
| Hardware store | 1 |
| Hiking | 1 |
| Jet ski / kayak / boat rental | 1 |
| Laundromat | 1 |
| Library | 1 |
| Motel | 1 |





| Response | Number of Groups with Response |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Movie theatre | 1 |
| Paved roads | 1 |
| Pharmacy | 1 |
| Waste management | 1 |
| Youth activities | 1 |

So What Should We Learn From This Feedback?

Camden County has a solid foundation of amenities and important places that make it unique – the Great Dismal Swamp Visitors Center being the most highly visible place of interest that puts Camden on the map. Camden's location in the Hampton Roads region, its adequate road infrastructure, well skilled workforce and excellent public school system make it a prime location for future businesses.

What is a challenge for Camden County is the lack of availability of "shovel ready" sites to develop in the county and the lower density pattern of development that may limit the potential for retailers and grocery store merchants to locate in the county. Opportunities exist to improve the character of the community in targeted areas and to improve functionality of developments, specifically addressing drainage issues.

There are different ideas about where the heart of Camden County exists – but most respondents felt that the Camden Courthouse and surrounding areas were the symbolic heart of the county. In keeping with recent planning efforts, new development should be targeted to the north US 17 corridor, to the three existing towns, and away from environmentally sensitive areas and agricultural lands.





COMMENT FORM RESPONSES

At the end of the workshops, participants were given an opportunity to provide general feedback on what they learned, heard, and experienced at the workshop. Of particular interest was learning more on the planning influences and planning opportunities for Camden County. Here are the comments that were received.



Question #1: Apart from the Planning Influences presented at this workshop, are there other community factors that will play a significant role in shaping Camden County's future?

- * No more houses until we can pay for our new roads, schools, etc. Not to raise our tax.
- * Further develop programs through the school system to help attract employers and continue to maintain and build Camden's educational capital.







Key Planning Opportunities



Question #2: Other than the six Planning Opportunities highlighted at this workshop, what other opportunities does Camden County have to create a better community for future generations?

- So we can have something wonderful that will bless our country to grow in jobs and money. Not to cost us. Need entertainments, shops, etc.
- * We need better water and sewer systems for ALL residents.
- Target specific "clean" industries to create job opportunities for residents and graduating students. Seek out a major employer (>50 jobs) with higher skilled (wage) jobs.

Question #3: Have an idea that you want to include in the plan? Want to provide a comment on something you saw or heard tonight? Tell us!

- * Like to explore the possibility of overlay district to incorporate navy's northwest annex military influence area that is generally located within South Mills district.
- Want a recreational park or other leisure opportunity that doesn't raise taxes and needs few services. Development should pay for itself and help out with the tax base. This should be located in South Mills.





- * There should be a bike lane built for bikers on 158. Getting to and from, bikers are in danger on 158 and hold up traffic.
- * Government must provide its basics first: water, sewer, and transportation. Then new projects.
- Need a countywide bicycle/walking trail extending from Dismal Swamp Park to Shiloh/Old Trap.



Session Name: Merge 11-21-2011 3-35 PM Created: 11/21/2011 3:35 PM

| 1.) Warm Up Question: Which team do you prefer? | Responses | |
|---|-----------|--------|
| | | |
| ECU | 26 | 25% |
| UNC | 21 | 20.19% |
| NC State | 23 | 22.12% |
| Duke | 10 | 9.62% |
| Other | 24 | 23.08% |
| Totals | 104 | 100% |



| 2.) Do you live in Camden County? | Respon | ises |
|---|--------|--------|
| Yes | 92 | 82.14% |
| No, but I work here | 6 | 5.36% |
| No, but I own property here | 3 | 2.68% |
| No, I live and work elsewhere and don't own p | 11 | 9.82% |
| Totals | 112 | 100% |



| lived here? | Responses | |
|-------------|-----------|--------|
| | | |
| 0-4 years | 18 | 18.56% |
| 5-9 years | 13 | 13.40% |
| 10-19 years | 11 | 11.34% |
| 20-29 years | 12 | 12.37% |
| 30-39 years | 7 | 7.22% |
| 40-49 years | 5 | 5.15% |
| 50+ years | 31 | 31.96% |
| Totals | 97 | 100% |



4.) For those that work outside the county, what is

| your profession? | Respon | ises |
|--|--------|--------|
| Sales | 3 | 4 769/ |
| | - | 4.76% |
| Manufacturing | 3 | 4.76% |
| Military | 5 | 7.94% |
| Government /Education | 21 | 33.33% |
| Medical | 0 | 0% |
| Real estate development / Construction | 10 | 15.87% |
| Technology / Professional Services | 9 | 14.29% |
| Hospitality | 1 | 1.59% |
| Agriculture | 1 | 1.59% |
| Other | 10 | 15.87% |
| Totals | 63 | 100% |



| 5.) What do you like most about Camden County? | Responses | |
|--|-----------|--------|
| | | |
| Rural setting and low density development | 24 | 22.02% |
| Small town environment and slower pace of lif | 34 | 31.19% |
| Natural features – rivers and Dismal Swamp | 12 | 11.01% |
| Access to NC coast | 7 | 6.42% |
| Access to Hampton Roads area | 7 | 6.42% |
| Sense of Community | 9 | 8.26% |
| Affordable Cost of Living | 10 | 9.17% |
| Other | 6 | 5.50% |
| Totals | 109 | 100% |



6.) What do you like second most about Camden

| County? | Responses | |
|---|-----------|--------|
| | | |
| Rural setting and low density development | 19 | 18.10% |
| Small town environment and slower pace of lif | 27 | 25.71% |
| Natural features – rivers and Dismal Swamp | 10 | 9.52% |
| Access to NC coast | 12 | 11.43% |
| Access to Hampton Roads area | 21 | 20% |
| Sense of Community | 4 | 3.81% |
| Affordable Cost of Living | 9 | 8.57% |
| Other | 3 | 2.86% |
| Totals | 105 | 100% |



| 7.) What do you like least about Camden County? | Respon | ses |
|---|--------|--------|
| | | |
| Lack of employment opportunities | 23 | 22.12% |
| Lack of commercial establishments | 37 | 35.58% |
| Lack of housing choices | 2 | 1.92% |
| Few places to walk/bike | 9 | 8.65% |
| Few places to have community gatherings | 12 | 11.54% |
| Other | 21 | 20.19% |
| Totals | 104 | 100% |



8.) Which phrase best describes Camden County

| today? | Responses | |
|---|-----------|--------|
| | | |
| Tranquil – A place for peaceful living | 29 | 27.88% |
| Bedroom community – Mostly serve people worki | 23 | 22.12% |
| Full service – Provides everything you need | 0 | 0% |
| Fragmented – It's a fragmented collection of | 14 | 13.46% |
| My hometown – It's a great place to establish | 25 | 24.04% |
| Not home – It's a great place to live for a w | 9 | 8.65% |
| Other | 4 | 3.85% |
| Totals | 104 | 100% |



9.) Which phrase best describes your hope for Camden

| County in the future? | ty in the future? Responses | |
|---|-----------------------------|--------|
| | | |
| Tranquil – A place for peaceful living | 26 | 24.76% |
| Bedroom community – Mostly serve people worki | 1 | 0.95% |
| Full service – Provides everything you need | 36 | 34.29% |
| Fragmented – It's a fragmented collection of | 1 | 0.95% |
| My hometown – It's a great place to establish | 36 | 34.29% |
| Not home – It's a great place to live for a w | 4 | 3.81% |
| Other | 1 | 0.95% |
| Totals | 105 | 100% |



| 10.) Future growth in Camden County should | Responses | |
|---|-----------|--------|
| | | |
| Be targeted (geographically) to minimize nega | 46 | 42.99% |
| Be driven by the free market | 9 | 8.41% |
| Be managed to most efficiently use existing i | 19 | 17.76% |
| Be targeted through development of new infras | 27 | 25.23% |
| Other | 6 | 5.61% |
| Totals | 107 | 100% |



11.) Camden County should grow in the following

| manner | Responses | |
|---|-----------|--------|
| Continue Current Trend: Expansion via dispers | 38 | 35.85% |
| Become More Compact: Higher intensity, more e | 57 | 53.77% |
| Don't know/no opinion | 11 | 10.38% |
| Totals | 106 | 100% |



12.) "In considering new development, quality and appearance are more important than the number of

| units or how intensely they are organized." | Respon | Responses | |
|---|--------|-----------|--|
| Strongly agree | 48 | 46.60% | |
| Agree | 31 | 30.10% | |
| Neutral | 8 | 7.77% | |
| Disagree | 3 | 2.91% | |
| Strongly disagree | 10 | 9.71% | |
| Don't know / no opinion | 3 | 2.91% | |
| Totals | 103 | 100% | |



13.) If Camden County offered a job for your skill set,

| would you work here? Response | | ises |
|-------------------------------|----|--------|
| | | |
| Strongly agree | 70 | 72.92% |
| Agree | 9 | 9.38% |
| Neutral | 8 | 8.33% |
| Disagree | 3 | 3.12% |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 1.04% |
| Don't know / no opinions | 5 | 5.21% |
| Totals | 96 | 100% |

