



Wendell, North Carolina

Report of Economic Development Assessment June 2019



[date of adoption]



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Section 1. Introduction



The Town of Wendell is experiencing significant change resulting from development activity throughout the community. While primarily residential development has occurred to date, business expansions and construction is increasing resulting in the need to examine how the Town should leverage its attributes and strengths to address the challenges of growth. High performing organizations learn to anticipate and adapt to such change by creating value through service and placemaking. Further, the organization and community are motivated and gain meaning through such strategic planning efforts.

To initiate such a learning process, the Town of Wendell invited the N.C. Main Street & Rural Planning Center to develop an Economic Development Assessment of the Town of Wendell and worked with the community to develop an economic positioning and vision statement. The resulting document will be used to provide guidance in updating the *Town of Wendell Economic Development Strategic Plan*.

The strategic planning efforts started with the collection of demographic and market data and was followed by four engagement sessions. The following engagements were designed to encourage both broad, community-wide interests as well as targeting focused geographic areas and business interests.

Engagements:

Local Work Group Engagement:

The process began with a full morning and early afternoon meeting on February 5, 2019 with a local Work Group, comprised of prominent local business owners, planning and economic development board members, Chamber of Commerce officials, and others. The work group discussed issues facing the Town as well as its attributes and challenges.

Community-wide Engagement / Economic Positioning/Vision:

The second engagement was open to the public at-large and was held on February 12, 2019. About 25 members of the public representing citizens, businesses, and property owners participated in the development of the following economic positioning and vision statement to be used as a focal point in the development of goals, objectives, and actions resulting from the process.

Wendell is a thriving hub of commerce, industry, and recreation. Located just minutes from the state Capital, Wendell offers a small town feel to residents, with direct interstate access for commercial and industrial businesses. The historic downtown is the center of diverse locally-owned shopping, art, dining, and nightlife. Wendell's inclusive communities provide diverse housing, amenities, and civic engagement for all residents.

Downtown Stakeholder Engagement:

The third engagement was held with Downtown stakeholders on February 26, 2019. About 35 business and property owners, investors, and other interested people participated in a facilitated discussion about downtown issues, concerns, attributes, and challenges. Following the discussion, an exercise to review the Land Use Chart for the Downtown Mixed-Use District (DMX) was held.

Wendell Falls Parkway Engagement:

The final engagement, on March 5, 2019, was with property owners of large, vacant parcels along or near Wendell Falls Parkway. Approximately 20 people participated in a facilitated discussion about the area's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. The information received guided the remainder of the meeting regarding potential tools and processes to address impediments to appropriate development.

Implementation:

Through all the public engagements, the community provided significant input regarding economic and community development priorities. Following the descriptions and input from the engagement sessions is the Economic Development Assessment Implementation Plan (implementation plan) that has a time horizon of 12 to 18 months. The implementation plan provides direction for the areas of Community Connectivity, Downtown Development, Business Development, and Promotion/Branding by providing suggested goals, objectives, and actions to be considered in the updated *Town of Wendell Economic Development Strategic Plan*. The goals, objectives, actions, and tasks identified in the plan are defined as follows:

- **GOALS:** are general guidelines that explain what the community wants to achieve. They are usually long-term and represent broad visions for the future.
- **OBJECTIVES:** define strategies or implementation steps to attain identified goals. Objectives are specific and measurable and may have a completion date.
- **ACTIONS:** are a series of steps a community takes to implement a specific objective or strategy.
- **TASKS:** are a list of steps to achieve an action, usually achievable within a one-year time frame. (Note: The plan does not include tasks as these will be developed by the individuals or department responsible for implementing the specific actions).

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Constant evaluation of the goals, objectives, and actions is necessary in order to ensure follow-through on the implementation of the plan. Such efforts ensure that strategic plans remain living documents that are relevant to the community. It is the intent of the Town to use this plan as a guidance tool to inform annual updates to the *Town of Wendell Strategic Plan* and to update the *Economic Development Strategic Plan*. Town staff will work with the Economic Development Committee to set realistic goals and implement innovative strategies against which progress can be measured. The Town will continually monitor progress and communicate progress towards meeting implementation guidelines utilizing the resources available.

In addition to internal efforts to implement the plan, the Town will work with economic development partners such as the *NC Department of Commerce*, *Wake County Economic Development*, *Visit Raleigh*, and other community partners to leverage resources and capacity. The collaboration between Town resources, contracted economic development services, and external partners, the Town will increase accountability to achieve desired outcomes for a diverse, thriving economy while maintaining the small-town charm that drives the quality of life.

Section 2. Local Work Group Engagement



Description

The first public activity in this process was to meet with the Local Work Group, on February 5, 2019 starting at 8:30 am and working through lunch. The Local Work Group, comprised of key community stakeholders and recruited specifically for this meeting, were led through a series of activities facilitated by staff from the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Division of NC Department of Commerce. Specifically, the group identified Community Assets, was presented with a brief economic snapshot of Wendell, and was led through a SWOT Analysis (*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*).

Following lunch, many of the group members, as well as other community stakeholders unable to attend the morning session were interviewed one-on-one for additional information. The results of the Community Asset and SWOT analysis are provided below.

Key Community Assets Identified

Economic

Access to highways
Affordable land
Downtown Wendell
National Register
Historic Districts (2)
Natural Gas line
Wendell Falls
Industrial Park (private)
Industry – Kioti & Vishay

Cultural

Festivals & events
Historic districts & homes tours
Mural Trail
“Oliver”, the largest tobacco
worm depiction in the world

Natural/Recreational

Community Center & Parks
Tarpley’s Mill Pond
Lake Myra
Mystery Lakes
Turnipseed Nature Preserve
Wendell Falls Trails

Community

Council of Churches
Garden Club
Golf carts on the streets!
Masons
Rotary
Historical Society
Woman’s Club

Key Comments from Stakeholders by Category

Strengths	Comments
Community	Charm, people, town personality (small-town friendly)
Downtown	Walker-friendly, building stock, downtown core
Government	Public Works well-managed, visibility of elected officials, works well with County Economic Development
Available land	Land available and for future expansion

Challenges	Comments
Appearance	Properties ignored by landlords; Poor yard maintenance; Downtown residential maintenance
Community	Tensions between residents & local government; Better community engagement is needed
Housing	Rental properties; Lower-end neighborhoods
Amenities	Lack of amenities; More choices/activities needed
Government	Lack of resources, not enough staff; Transition from small town to modern town
Taxes/Utility	Low town taxes can’t afford to do anything; Highest water/sewer rates in the area

Opportunities	Comments
Community	Pull together Downtown, Wendell Falls, Martin Center; Spotlight interesting things people do or make; Promote churches to new residents
Government	Engage more under-utilized organizations (i.e. Chamber) to include more public/private partnerships; Recruit more good people to boards and committees
Promotion	Capitalize on proximity of Raleigh/Zebulon/Knightdale and proximity to Carolina MudCats

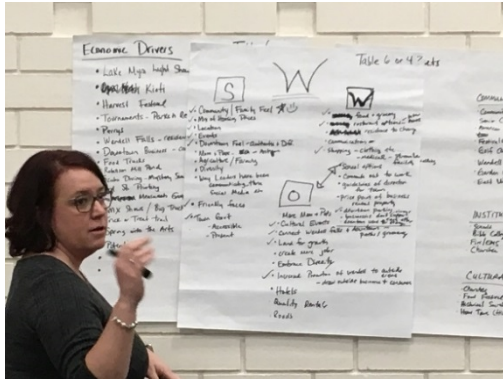
Quality of Life	Comments
Business	Restaurants & Shopping; Encourage businesses to build their business by helping to build their community
Government	Increased board and community training; Ordinances to require buildings to be open for business
Health	Continue to expand the Community Center and parks; Farmers Market

Programs/Svcs	Comments
Government	Town does a good job with programs & services; Streamline current services; Hire someone focused on economic development
Events	Wendell Parks behind on scheduling/announcing/offering track out camps; Lag time updating community events (camps); Instead of saying "no" to growing events, find ways to say "yes."
Recruitment	Hire an economic developer; help fill empty storefronts

Threats	Comments
Business	Wendell Falls business development a threat to downtown businesses
Community	Incorporating everyone (Wendell Falls) into one community; Knightdale & its connection to Wendell Falls
Government	Keeping up with growth
Housing	Affordable housing
Investment	Influence of outside investors
Promotion	New residents doing things outside of town v in-town
Safety	Potential crime growth and business and residential growth increases
Taxes/Utilities	Control of water/sewer by the City of Raleigh

1 Unique Thing	Comments
Downtown	Roads were designed for 4-wagons wide; Golf cart-friendly
Community	Open land instead of an urban setting; Small town charm; notable people

Section 3. Community-Wide Economic Positioning/Vision Engagement



Visioning is the process of developing consensus about what future the community wants, and then deciding what is necessary to achieve it. A community economic positioning/vision statement is one of the elements needed to form a forward-looking strategic framework that provides local government boards/commissions the long-term and comprehensive perspective necessary to make disciplined, tactical and incremental decisions on community issues as they arise.

On February 12, 2019, an Economic Positioning/Vision Engagement was held at Town Hall to identify a community-wide vision of Wendell's economic future. This meeting was open to all residents, business owners, and interested parties. In total, twenty-two (22) Wendell residents and business/property owners participated in the Economic Positioning/Vision Forum. Placed into 4 teams, the participants identified Economic Drivers, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and each team developed an economic positioning/vision statement that was shared with the whole group. From those statements the following is proposed as Wendell's economic positioning/vision statement:

Economic Vision Statement

Wendell is a thriving hub of commerce, industry and recreation. Located just minutes from the state Capital, Wendell offers a small town feel to residents, with direct Interstate access for commercial and industrial corporations. Our historic downtown is the center of diverse locally-owned shopping, art, dining and nightlife. Wendell's inclusive communities provide diverse housing, amenities, and civic engagement for all residents.

Four strategies were developed from this economic positioning/vision statement and from these, an Implementation Plan was developed. The Implementation Plan (contained in Section 6 of this report) represents short-term actions which may be taken to advance the Town towards this desired community vision.

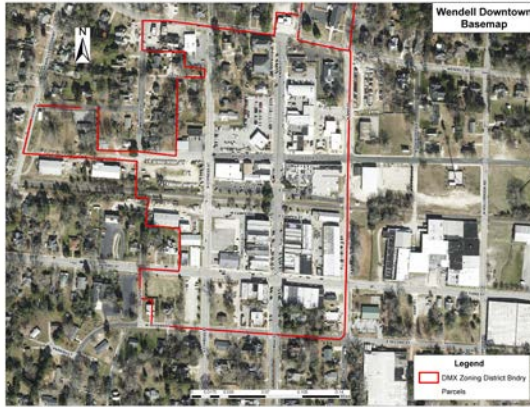
Strategy 1 – Community Connectivity

Strategy 2 – Downtown Development

Strategy 3 – Business Development

Strategy 4 – Promotion/Branding

Section 4. Downtown Stakeholder Engagement



A healthy downtown is essential to a Town's economic, social, and cultural vitality. For this reason, the third public engagement session, held on February 26, 2019, was designed to solicit input specifically from downtown stakeholders. Approximately 35 business and property owners, investors and others participated in a facilitated discussion about downtown issues, concerns, attributes and challenges.

There was also time to review and discuss potential revisions to the Land Use Chart for the Downtown Mixed-Use District (DMX).

The community input received highlighted that there is a strong love for downtown Wendell and a passion to succeed. There seems, however, to be mixed messaging about what area constitutes the "downtown", and how to best move forward to achieve desired changes. The following tables capture the downtown stakeholder input received during the February 26th workshop and have been incorporated into the proposed Implementation Plan actions contained in Section 6 of this report.

DOWNTOWN STRENGTHS	DOWNTOWN WEAKNESSES
People	Parking
Golf cart use	Lack of retail and restaurants (need more)
Pedestrian-friendly	Need more active storefronts
Dog-friendly	Street repairs needed
Business institutions (long term legacy businesses)	Need (commercial buildings) with grease-traps/commercial kitchens to attract more restaurants
Safe	Rents are high for start-up businesses
Events - Artwalk / Christmas / Harvest Fest / etc.	Rents are too low to encourage owner investment
Food trucks	Connectivity of outer areas to Main Street
Clean	Better definition / expand downtown boundaries
Proximity to Raleigh	Consistent streetscape/lighting
Low traffic congestion	Extend business hours/activity
Wayfinding signage	Hard to find information about available businesses/buildings
DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITIES	MISSING BUSINESS TYPES (Downtown)
Building renovations - investment opportunity	Seafood restaurant
Vacant land available for infill	Sit-down restaurants
Upstairs residential / edge/ walkable	Fed-Ex/UPS Store
Job creation/more businesses	Sports bar
Identify parking - establish a parking plan	Anything open on Sunday (expand hours)
Branding - signs, flags, directories)	Dry cleaners
Marketing of downtown - tie to events and sports	Clothing
	Gifts, furniture & retail

KEY DOWNTOWN ASSETS		QUALITIES UNIQUE TO WENDELL
Historic district (feel)	Wi-Fi	Small town charm
Event space/Town Square	Safe	Golf cart friendly
Parking	Town Hall	Mural trail (Tobacco worm)
Feels genuine	Library	Namesake - Oliver Wendell Holmes
Streetscape/hardscape	Police Department	Compact, multi-street downtown
Compact/buildings	Chamber of Commerce	Independent local businesses
Architecture	Niche businesses	Home of UPC Code developer
Park nearby	Weather cam	Healthy design/businesses/active living
Diversity of people and businesses		

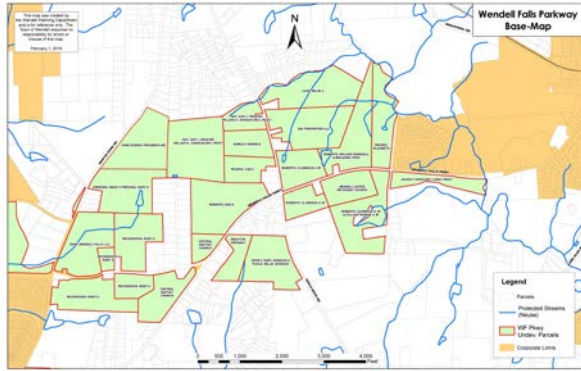
Downtown Mixed-Use District (DMX)

The group discussed some potential changes/revisions to the Land Use Chart for the Downtown Mixed-Use District (DMX). During this discussion, participants highlighted some uses to add, remove, or permit differently within the DMX land use chart to be more consistent with other successful downtown districts.

Participant Recommendations: **Blue** = moved from / to another category
Red = new Use
Purple = question

PERMITTED USES	PERMITTED WITH ADDITIONAL STANDARDS	SPECIAL USES (Requires Board Approval)
ATM Business Support Services Community Service Organization General Retail - 10,000 sf or less Government Services Laundry Services Media Production Medical Services - Doctor Office Personal Services Post Office Professional Services Public Safety Station Restaurant Retail Sales Sidewalk Café/Outdoor seating Studio - Art, Music Theater, Live Performance, Indoor Theater, Movie Upper-floor Residence	Alcoholic Beverage Sales Store Amusements (Entertainment), Indoor Animal Services Banks, Credit Unions, Financial Services Bed & Breakfast Inns Dwelling-Secondary Hotels/Motels/Inns Live-Work Units Micro-Distillery/Micro-Brewery / Micro-Winery Parking Structure (primary use) Transit Station - Passenger	Bar/Tavern/Night Club Billiard/Pool Hall Colleges/Universities Cultural or Community Facility Drive Thru Service Dwelling-Multi Family Apt Gas Station Hospital Manufacturing, Light Manufacturing, Neighborhood Meeting Facilities/ Indoor Event Medical Services - Clinic, Urgent Care Center Metal Products Fabrication, machine or welding shop Nursery/Community Garden Parking Lot (primary use) Recreation Facilities, Indoor Research and development Schools - Vocational/Technical Studio - Dance, Martial Arts Wireless Telecom Facility-Stealth

Section 5. Wendell Falls Parkway Engagement



The final public engagement session was held the evening of March 5, 2019 at the Wendell Community Center and focused on the Wendell Falls Parkway Strategic Corridor. This area is identified within the Town's Strategic Plan as a key growth area which will play a vital role in connecting Downtown Wendell to the Wendell Falls Mixed-Use community. The Town invited owners of large undeveloped properties along Wendell Falls Parkway, between Martin Pond Rd and Downtown Wendell to identify owner's plans for their properties, as well as any obstacles to development

which they had encountered.

There were approximately 20 people in attendance, representing the majority of undeveloped properties along this corridor. Following a welcome and overview provided by Town Staff, MS&RP Planner Bruce Naegelen guided the attendees through an exercise to identify the area's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. Town Manager Collins then led a discussion about potential tools for addressing impediments to development identified by stakeholders present. The tables below contain the input received at the March 5th meeting and has been incorporated into the Implementation Plan Actions contained in Section 6 of this report.

STRENGTHS
Location
Available land
Major road access
Water / sewer capacity
Development interest

OPPORTUNITIES
Quality land for quality prices
Church interests
Coordinated utility expansion
Right-size roads now instead of after a project
Resolve public health water concerns

WEAKNESSES
Gap in utilities
UDO road requirements
Hit or miss rock
Transportation plan requirements
Schools
Parcels "small"
Unclear where to access sewer
Property owner resource limits
Ground water issues
Land use map outdated
Zoning map outdated

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
1. Potential funding for utility extensions for desirable projects (to assist developers)
2. Joint property/town easements for sewer (facilitated through development agreements)
3. System-Health Waterline Extensions (Martin Pond Loop & Possible Eagle Rock Loop)
4. Interest in pro-active water/sewer easements
5. Need for proactive conversation with Raleigh and NCDOT about infrastructure design issues
6. Appropriate/Reasonable valuations of property to make it desirable/easier for developers to buy
7. Possible assessment on developed lots to pay back utility extension costs
8. Potential amendments to Town infrastructure improvement requirements (as development occurs)

Section 6. Wendell Economic Development Assessment Implementation Plan 2019

Economic Positioning/Vision: Wendell is a thriving hub of commerce, industry and recreation. Located just minutes from the state Capital, Wendell offers a small town feel to residents, with direct Interstate access for commercial and industrial corporations. Our historic downtown is the center of diverse locally-owned shopping, art, dining and nightlife. Wendell's inclusive communities provide diverse housing, amenities, and civic engagement for all residents.

Strategy 1 Community Connectivity	Strategy 2 Downtown Development	Strategy 3 Business Development	Strategy 4 Promotion/Branding
The Town of Wendell boundaries are non-contiguous making a “sense of place” difficult especially for new businesses and residents in Martin Center, Wendell Falls and Eagle Rock.	Downtown Wendell has a great looking streetscape, historic buildings, legacy and new retail businesses and a terrific sense of community. It’s missing, however, an organizational structure, strategic goals, plans and someone to help move the needle.	There are several businesses and industrial companies that claim Wendell as “world headquarters” with branches in other locations. Why? The answers may help in developing a strategic recruitment plan with resources to help attract the right businesses/industry to the right section of town.	The branded wayfinding signs are a start with connectivity and promotion of Wendell. A series of existing events in downtown and Wendell Falls helps keep and bring people into town. The Town should build on these efforts with additional events and branding initiatives.
GOAL 1: Create a Town-wide Sense of Place	GOAL 2: Create a Successful and Vibrant Downtown District	GOAL 3: Grow the Local Economy in Wendell	GOAL 4: Make Wendell NC Known Statewide
<p>Objective 1.1 Create visual connections between Downtown, Wendell Falls, Eagle Rock and Martin Center.</p> <p>Action 1.1A: Research towns with similar disconnection characteristics, (i.e. Fuquay-Varina NC “The Link”; and Eden NC) to develop best practices for future actions.</p> <p>Action 1.1B: Use public art and public art best practices to create visual connections throughout town.</p> <p>Action 1.1C: Develop physical connections between the Downtown Core and Wendell Falls Parkway (In line with Goals B-4 and B-9 of the Town Strategic Plan)</p>	<p>Objective 2.1: Develop a framework for a sustainable, non-profit, tax-exempt downtown development organization based on successful downtown revitalization models.</p> <p>Action 2.1A: Research mission/purpose statements and bylaws from no more than 3 successful downtown organizations of similar size towns (i.e. Edenton, Aberdeen, Mt. Airy, Elon & Morehead City). Then develop draft organizational bylaws and mission/purpose statement based on these.</p>	<p>Objective 3.1: Increase the annual sales revenue of locally-owned businesses.</p> <p>Action 3.1A: Develop and implement a <i>Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program</i> - develop a comprehensive program of visitation, assistance and promotion of existing businesses to retain and enhance their abilities to grow and expand; creating additional jobs and economic opportunities.</p> <p>Objective 3.2: Improve appearance of residential & commercial properties.</p> <p>Action 3.2A: Initiate neighborhood workshops to discuss advantages of property appearance. Research and develop a neighborhood “clean up” event/program.</p>	<p>Objective 4.1: Engage in creative and unconventional (guerilla) marketing techniques.</p> <p>Action 4.1A: Start a video promotion series on the proper pronunciation of Wendell and key events and activities in Town.</p> <p>Action 4.1B: Identify places where visitors and residents are likely to take pictures and install a Wendell logo, social media hashtag or Town website address that will be visible in the photo.</p> <p>Objective 4.2: All Town events/promotions should have the purpose of bringing people to town/downtown to generate retail foot traffic.</p>

<p>Objective 1.2: Develop gathering spaces/activities/events throughout town where people from all neighborhoods feel welcome.</p> <p>Action 1.2A: Evaluate the Parks & Recreation Master Plan to identify property and progress plans, to serve as gathering places in currently underserved areas, geared towards the community's various recreational needs.</p> <p>Action 1.2B: Produce a live music concert series alternating between Wendell Falls and Downtown within or adjacent to the commercial areas.</p> <p>Objective 1.3: Facilitate development opportunities along the Wendell Falls Parkway Strategic Corridor.</p> <p>Action 1.3A: Research and develop <i>Potential Solutions</i> identified in <u>Section 5</u> of the <i>Assessment Report</i>.</p>	<p>Objective 2.2: Increase downtown retail and dining options.</p> <p>Action 2.2A: Complete and maintain a building & business inventory with property condition notes.</p> <p>Action 2.2B: Speak with downtown property owners about potential building uses and improvements.</p> <p>Action 2.2C: Promote the Town's Façade Grant Program.</p> <p>Action 2.2D: Update the Town's guide/brochure to assist in the process of opening a new business in Downtown Wendell.</p> <p>Action 2.2E: Facilitate the development of additional downtown gathering spaces, and parking areas for special events.</p> <p>Objective 2.3: Create best regulatory environment downtown for business strengthening and recruitment.</p> <p>Action 2.3A: Review ordinances and incorporate best practices for downtown district, including signage, parking, design, etc.</p> <p>Action 2.3B: Review and revise for most appropriate and desired downtown (DMX) land uses.</p>	<p>Objective 3.3 Provide proper tools for staff and community to make good decisions.</p> <p>Action 3.3A: Review and update the Town's Future Land Use Map and Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>Action 3.3B: Produce a "Development Guide" page on the Town website, with staff contacts listed.</p> <p>Objective 3.4: Provide information about available properties for commercial or residential development.</p> <p>Action 3.4A: Manage <i>Properties Available</i> page on the Town website</p> <p>Action 3.4B: Include links to development process and Town contacts for assistance</p>	<p>Action 4.2A: Review existing events to make sure they create foot traffic for businesses. If not, add event components, with help of merchants, to create foot traffic.</p> <p>Objective 4.2B: Create a cross-promotion culture in downtown.</p> <p>Action: In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, start monthly Wendell business-owner/employee-only networking after hours to meet and learn about other businesses in downtown.</p>
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Appendix 1. Acknowledgements

Rural Planning Team

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Wendell Town Commissioners

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Jon Lutz, Mayor Pro Tem
Jason Joyner, Commissioner

John Boyette, Commissioner
David Myrick, Commissioner
Ben Carroll, Commissioner

The Rural Planning Team would like to thank the **Local Work Group** members who generously gave up a full morning and an early afternoon to work with us through this process:

Ashley Anderson, *Economic Development Board*
Virginia Gray, *Mayor*
Kathleen Henry, *Wake County Economic Development*
Shelley Lesniewicz, *Wendell Chamber of Commerce*
Lee Mabry, *State Employee Credit Union*

Mike Siscianni, *Newland Communities*
Paul White, *Universal Chevrolet*

We would also like to thank all sixty-nine (69) residents, property & business owners and others who were engaged throughout this assessment process.

Ashley Anderson	Derek Ayscue	Joyce Barrow	Ken Barrow
Sid Baynes	Barry Bowling	Erroll Briggerman	Don Brown
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Byron Coates	Judy Compton	Nate Creech	Kathy Dara
Peter Dara	Kelly Dawson	Joe DeLoach	Mike Donnelly
John Freeman	Wade Freeman	Carol Freeman	Bruce Gray
Regina Harmon	Sheree Hedrick	Kathleen Henry	Carol Hinnant
Ray Hinnant	Hannah Hopkins	Wallace Johnson	Larry Johnson
Emma King	Shelley Lesniewicz	Josh Lucy	Suzanne Lucy
Dave Lucy	Bruce Lynch	Jonathan McDonald	Lesia McKenzie
Joe McManus	Brandy Miller	Mark Miller	Annette Pearce
Lisa Pearce	Barry Perry	Virginia Perry	Armaney Peterson
Charles Peterson	Sherry Pino	Joe Pino	Bryan Roberts
Robbie Roberts	Rev. Ed Rose	Thomas Rushing	Andy Skinner
Chris Smith	Ray Smith	Donna Smith	Summer Stafford
Chris Stafford	Claudia Suarez	Leigh Ann Thompson	Phyllis Tipton
Sigurd Westerlund	Paul White	Mike Wrenn	Allison Yeargin
Ben Yeargin			

North Carolina Department of Commerce

www.nccommerce.com

The North Carolina Department of Commerce is the state's lead agency for economic, community and workforce development. The Department works with local, regional, national and international organizations to fulfill its mission to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for all North Carolinians.

Taking a comprehensive approach to economic development, the Department's work reaches many areas. The Department helps people find jobs and employers find and retain a qualified workforce. The Department administers the state's employment security system, supporting workers during career transitions. The Department provides local communities with grants and planning services to spur infrastructure development and economic growth and administers the state's economic incentive programs.

The Department is also responsible for recruiting companies to the state, helping existing North Carolina companies expand, encouraging business start-ups, enabling companies to export, and marketing North Carolina as a business and visitor destination. In October 2014, the Department entered a contract with a new public-private organization, the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (www.edpnc.com) to take the lead in these recruitment and marketing functions.

The Department also publishes data, statistics, information and reports for citizens and policymakers interested in the state's economy.

The Department of Commerce, an executive branch agency of the State of North Carolina, is headquartered in Raleigh.

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center

The *NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center* (MS&RPC) is part of the NC Department of Commerce, the state's lead agency for workforce, community, and economic development. In this capacity, the Center provides downtown revitalization and planning assistance to communities across the state, primarily in economic development planning.

The Center has offices throughout the state, in the West (Asheville and Sylva), Northwest (N. Wilkesboro), the Piedmont (Winston-Salem), Southwest (Albemarle), North Central (Raleigh and Wilson), South Central (Fayetteville) and the East (Washington, Jacksonville, and Wilmington).

Recognizing that economic prosperity is the number one priority in most communities, our experienced staff partners with community leaders to add value to their economic development efforts through a variety of services and assistance.

Whether rural communities are planning future economic expansion, injecting life into existing structures, or developing in an economically challenged area, the MS&RPC staff can help attain those goals through targeted assistance with these services:

- > Economic Development Assessment
- > Strategic Economic Development Planning
- > Implementation Services
- > Local & Regional Market Analysis
- > Small Area Planning for High Impact Areas
- > GIS & Custom Mapping

Appendix 2. Assessment Input

Assets

The following information was recorded from the Local Work Group on February 5, 2019 and the Economic Positioning/Vision Forum on February 12, 2019.

Economic Assets	Cultural Assets	Natural/Recreational
Access to highway	Ages trending younger	Bird watching opportunities
Affordable land	Air BnB	Buffalo Creek
Aubrey & Peedie's Grill (52 years)	Churches	Community Center/Parks & Recreation
Auto industry	Clubs - Historic/Woman's Club	Dance/cheer
Banking	Dog park	Dog Park
Bed & Breakfast	Ethnic food restaurants	Downtown Streetscape
Car Dealerships (Universal & Leith)	Event - Harvest Festival (94 yers)	Frisbee Golf
CSX Spur Line	Event - International Food Festival	Golf Courses
Downtown	Event - Lake Myra Light show	Greenway Master Plan (Wendell Falls to Lake Myra to Downtown)
Farmers Market	Festivals	Lake Myra
Fiber Line along US 64	Food festival	Martial Arts schools
Food	Golf course	Mystery Lakes (quarry)
GrillBillies Barbecue (supply)	Historic	Mystery Scuba Pond
Highways	Historic districts	Old Quarry
Industrial Park -privately owned- Charhouse Dr	Historic home tours	Park
Industry - Kioti & Vishey	International Food Festival	Parks & Recreation ponds
Leith Automotive	Mural trail -Largest Tobacco Worm in the world!	Senior Center
National Register Historic Districts (2)	Mystery Lakes Scuba	Tarpley's Mill Pond (Little River Corridor)
Natural Gas line	National Register (Historic) Districts	Town Park
Perry's Gunshop	Old Hephzibah	Town Square
Property to develop a museum	Special events	Trail system
Retail business	Strong family values	Turnipseed Nature Preserve
Roads	Town square	Wendell Falls Trails
Sewer		Woodland
Third Street Screen printing		
Universal Chevrolet		
Water capacity (from Raleigh)		
Wendell Falls development (residential)		

Institutional	Community	Governmental Assets
Bible College	American Legion	Access to Eastern Regional Center, Zebulon (Social Services)
Churches	Churches	DMV
Churches - Hispanic Community churches	Community Center	East Wake EMS
EMS	Council of Churches	Economic Development Committee
Fire & Rescue	East Wake Education Foundation	Fire Department
Fire/EMS	Festivals	J. Ashley Wall Park
KS Bank	Garden Club	Park and Ride Lot
LGFCU/SECU	George J. Laurer, inventor of Universal Product Code	Police Department
Mechanical Trades Carolina 350 East 4th St	Golf carts on streets	Post office
Only Catholic Church east of Raleigh	Greg Ellis, Oakland Raiders player	Schools
Post Office	Gregory Walcott, actor	Town Hall/City Government
Public Safety Centers	Masons	Vacant land
Schools	Residents - long-term and newer mix	Wake County Library - Wendell
Southeastern Free Will Baptist College	Rotary	Wendell Fire Department
Wedding Chapel (old Catholic church)	Senior Center	Wendell Town Park
	Thursday afternoon Club	
	Wendell Chamber of Commerce	
	Wendell Historical Society	
	Wendell Swim Club	
	Woman's Club	



SWOT Analysis

The following information was recorded during the Local Work Group meeting and Stakeholder interviews on February 5, 2019 at the Wendell Community Center. The input information is in four SWOT categories: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and (outside external) threats.

Strengths	Weaknesses
"Open for Business" philosophy (2)	Balance between modern and historic
Abundant affordable land (4)	Businesses don't support each other
Access to interstate/travel (3)	Commute to work outside of town
Agriculture - farming	Downtown (buildings) used for storage
Beauty of area	Downtown parking (2)
Billboard on US 64	Geographically split town (boundaries)
Business expansions	Government offices are dated and outgrown
Business local: mom & pop stores, antiques, GrillBillies	High water bills
Certified Industrial Site attainment via Wake County	Lack of activities for adults
Communication by town leaders via social media etc.	Lack of amenities & choices (Grocery/shopping/restaurants) (3)
Community Pride and interaction (2)	Lack of communication
Diversity	Lack of direction/guidelines for town
Downtown - authentic, different & intact	Lack of laundry / dry cleaners
Downtown buildings (rehab and new investment)	Lack of leaders/volunteers (community)
Events/Festivals	Lack of organizational capacity
Food trucks	Lack of sidewalks
Friendliness (2)	Limited buildings with restaurant infrastructure
Government - mayor/leadership/staff	Limited water/sewer improvements/expansions
Historic downtown (3)	Local property owners unwilling to sell
Housing is affordable with price mix	Lowest residential tax base (Valuation)
Incentives - Façade grant / Large Business	Need an "AND" not "OR" mentality
Leadership	No annual board training
Local investors	No current Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
Location/Proximity to Raleigh (3)	Non-progressive thinking/resistant to change (2)
Natural Gas	Out-of-area property owners
Natural resources	Plaza de Mexico complex (planning)
Paul White	Price points of commercial rental property
Public safety	Property hoarders
Public transportation = less traffic	Reactive Town Boards
Recreation center & recreation opportunities	Restaurant options - no late-night hours
Sense of Community/small-town charm (3)	School options
Town government: accessible/present & service	Self-esteem issues - lack of ambition/"victim" culture (2)
Transitioning from small town to medium town	Shopping - retail/clothing/medical
Universal Chevrolet expansion	Sidewalk needs
Water/sewer capacity (2)	Transitioning from small town to medium town
Wayfinding signage	Transportation/traffic/mobility
Wendell Falls subdivision - (3rd largest starts in County)	Unmotivated downtown property owners

Opportunities	Threats
Additional festivals/cultural events	Commercial retail market
Advertising (internal/external) (2)	External investment - need more internal (local)
All retail (3)	Housing market cycles
Bridge Wendell Falls with the "traditional" Wendell	Increased construction costs, federal tariffs
Connect Wendell Falls /downtown (paths/greenways)	Lack of local jobs for local people
County - Targeted growth opportunity incentives (20 jobs-\$2m investment)	Mindset of being located in eastern Wake County
Embrace diversity	Misinterpretation of economic development law
Existing cluster industries in Wake County	Not eligible for Golden Leaf funding
Grow smart - learn from other's mistakes	State Laws - including annexations
Growth will drive commercial	State Tier designations (Tier 3)
Highway access	Tight, competitive market
Highway signage	
Hotels (2)	
Job creation	
Kioti Tractor Expansion	
Land for growth	
Natural environment - greenways, outdoor recreation	
Neuse greenway connection	
Outside investment - no past strings	
Parks/trails/greenways	
Proximity to Raleigh	
Public transportation (Additional)	
Housing -develop quality rentals	
Railroad	
Restaurants	
Roads	
Room to grow - growth shifting east	
School system expansions	
Water capacity provided by Raleigh	
Wendell Falls (3)	



Stakeholder Interview Comments

This chart shows the topics stakeholders discussed in the order of the number of times the topics were mentioned, regardless of whether the topic was a strength, weakness, opportunity or threat. There were 9 stakeholder interviews conducted that contained 89 comments.



Stakeholder Questions:

1. What are the Town's strengths?
2. What are the Town's weaknesses?
3. What are opportunities for the Town?
4. What are the threats, from outside of Town, with little to no control of, by the Town?
5. What changes do you think could improve the quality of life in the Town in the next 5 years?
6. What could the Town do to improve its programs and services over the next 5 years?

One Unique Thing About Wendell

The final question each stakeholder was asked: “What is one unique thing about Wendell? What does Wendell have that no other community has?” The responses, in no order of priority:

1. Trees – Tree City award for 35 years
2. Perry’s Gun Shop
3. Business-friendly town board
4. Small town charm, open land instead of an urban setting
5. Notable people
6. An established downtown with roads designed to be “four wagons wide”
7. Golf cart-friendly community
8. Feels like home