



# CENTER CITY A CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Transformation Plan



*Investing in our future through People, Neighborhoods and Housing*

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## Acknowledgments

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### Center City Key Partners

#### (Steering Committee Partner Members/Implementation Partners)

Wilson Housing Authority  
City of Wilson  
Wilson County Department of Social Services  
Wilson County Schools  
Chamber of Commerce  
Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC)  
Wilson Community College  
WilMed Hospital  
St. John's Community Development Corporation  
Upper Coastal Plains Business Development Center  
Wilson Downtown Development Corporation  
301 Forward  
Center City Education Task-force  
Whitfield Resident Advisory Board  
NC Housing Finance Agency  
CICAR  
BB & T  
PNC BANK  
Men's Civic Club  
Five Points Association  
Glenwood Hills Association  
Whitfield Resident Association  
Elvie Street Neighborhood Association  
Washington-Carver Heights Neighborhood Association  
Wilson Education Partnership  
Wilson Medical Center

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# Choice Neighborhood Steering Committee

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Councilman Creech

## City of Wilson Planning Department

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Michelle Brown  
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Dianne Dew  
Alma Ruffin  
Mary Farmer

## Local Church Leaders

Reverend Michael Bell - St. John CDC  
Reverend Victor Baines

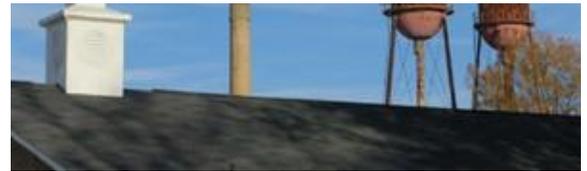
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*The Center City Neighborhood Transformation Plan is the road map to reinvigorate a neighborhood where businesses will grow, students excel and that streets are walkable and safe. It will be a place families and individuals will be proud to call home.*



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# 1. Executive Summary

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## Introduction

The Center City Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan (CCCNTP) reflects the hopes and dreams of Whitfield Homes residents, area neighbors, local businesses, and community leaders to reinvigorate Center City. The primary goal of the CCCNTP is to improve the quality of life through investment in the neighborhood and its people.

The Transformation Plan will establish a vision for the neighborhood grounded by guiding principles that focus the community building efforts to focus on attainable goals. These principles will focus along three main vectors: people, neighborhoods, and housing. Positive outcomes will include improvements in education, home values, home ownership rates, and quality of life. Continued access to job skills training will improve the marketability of neighborhood residents and help improve the rate of job creation.

Investment through public-private partnerships that create small business incubators, incentives for business relocation and investment, and improvements to the community infrastructure will be key to maintaining existing downtown businesses while creating an environment that will help grow the next generation of young entrepreneurs.

These outcomes will be achievable through a phased plan that combines program and project strategies that redefine this neighborhood from a distressed area of Wilson into a thriving diverse neighborhood. The implementation strategy will focus on years 1, 3, 5, and 10. These milestone years will set the stage for the long term investment and rebuilding of the Center City Choice Neighborhood.



Figure 1.1 - Study area

## Study Area

The CCCNTP study area spans from Goldsboro Street in the west, and US 301/Ward Boulevard along the north, east, and south borders. This area includes a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses with a total land area of over 843 acres. A major rail corridor bisects the study area including dividing the Whitfield Homes properties.



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## Recommendations

The scale of the CCCNTP study area is large and contains a varied fabric of development. This variety, while beneficial to future plans, requires an implementation strategy that focuses efforts in meaningful ways. This includes identifying catalytic projects for development that will bring meaningful change within the community. This strategy must also acknowledge that funding sources will be variable and maintain a level of flexibility in how components are delivered while still focusing on a vision for a vibrant future.

The implementation strategy is much like how one builds a house, it is important to start with a strong foundation, build a flexible yet durable structure, and finish with a structure that becomes a home. The power that a strong household has on creating positive emotional outcomes for its members will be a lasting influence on the successful transformation of the neighborhood. The most difficult challenge for any plan is taking the first step.

Through a phased approach, the redevelopment of Center City and Whitfield Homes will occur over a 5-10 year period. Focusing efforts on attainable projects that will serve as catalysts to the surrounding area will aid the leadership team in leveraging the available financial assets.

### Phase I “Laying the foundation.” Years 1-2

Phase I focuses on restoring functionality to the currently underutilized housing within Whitfield Homes. This is key to bringing back population to the area and restore stability to the southwest portion of the site. Key components are below, refer to the Transformation Plan section for a detailed overview.

- Rehabilitate 52 existing units of Whitfield Homes that are uninhabited (alt. is to reconstruct 55 new units)
- Renovate and upgrade the SAY (Save-A-Youth) Center at the old Adams School Building.
- Complete pedestrian and bicycle improvements at Green Street, Pender Street, and Lodge Street to fulfill Safe Routes to School recommendations.
- Consolidate nuisance vacant lots to facilitate quick sales.
- Initiate an adopt-a-lot program that encourages urban farming and community gardens on abandoned lots.

### Phase II “Building the structure.” Years 2-5

Building upon the momentum of Phase I, years 2-4 will focus on infill of vacant lots and redevelopment of existing vacant structures. The primary goal of Phase II is to develop new housing to allow for the relocation of residents from units located within environmentally sensitive areas. The main development thrusts include:

- Develop 55-unit town-home Housing Authority community around new central park. Demolish old units west of railroad.
- Work with private partnerships and chamber of commerce to promote retail development at intersection of Pender and Hines Streets. Target 100 housing authority lofts/walk up units in conjunction with 100-200 mixed income units.
- Complete streetscape improvements along Pender and Hines Streets to foster walk-ability along main thoroughfares.

### **Phase III “Transformation.” Years 5-10**

Building on the successes of Phase I and Phase II, Phase III looks at how to move beyond years 1-5 and begin to truly transform the neighborhood. Through the incremental investment of the earlier phases, development of the Center City Market Village will begin. This project concept would include grocery and retail stores located at the intersection of Hines and Pender Street. Additional Housing Authority town-homes and apartments will be built around the central park and along Pender Street to create a restored neighborhood core. Target final replacement units to maximize WHA managed properties at 255 total units.

### **Partnerships**

The Center City Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan builds upon the existing assets in the area and relies on key partners for a successful execution. The City of Wilson (CW) is well represented in existing programs charged with lifting up the community socially, spiritually, physically, and economically. The largest challenge to date is organizing these efforts and setting a unified direction to focus the resources to generate successful implementations. Using the Transformation Plan as a guide, the three vectors of



*The Wilson Housing Authority Staff played a leadership role throughout the planning process*



people, neighborhood, and housing are assigned to managing groups.

## People

The 301 Forward initiative started from the Wilson Comprehensive Plan. Its members will lead efforts that focus on people. The 301 Forward committee will provide leadership for the implementation of the Center City Transformation plan regarding business development and investment in its people. 301 Forward will help coordinate the efforts of the people oriented groups including Wilson Community College, Save-A-Youth, and the Wilson Renaissance Project.

## Neighborhood

The City of Wilson, under the leadership of the City Council and the City of Wilson Planning and Development Department will focus on the neighborhood aspects. Through policy establishment and continued enforcement, homes that have been abandoned will continue to be secured by the City. Focusing efforts to secure groupings of houses and properties around areas that are stable will be a priority. By focusing restoration of blighted homes around stable areas, the spread of blight can be



*The Wilson Housing Authority Staff played a leadership role throughout the planning process*

thwarted and even reversed by leveraging the strengths of the remaining pockets of stability. Priorities will be placed on improving streetscape along the main thoroughfares to enhance the character and provide safe well lit walkways and bike lanes to connect Whitfield Homes with the rest of Center City.

## **Housing**

The Wilson Housing Authority will serve as primary coordinator for the housing efforts. Through partnerships with non-profits that include Habitat for Humanity, WCIA, and St. John's Community Development Corporation, housing stock will improve through renovations to existing historic properties and infill development of new housing within Center City. The Penders, Hines, and Nash Streets corridors will be focus of these development efforts.

As housing is improved and populations increase, Center City's proximity to downtown and major employment centers will help the neighborhood invigorate itself into a thriving family oriented community.





## 2. Introduction

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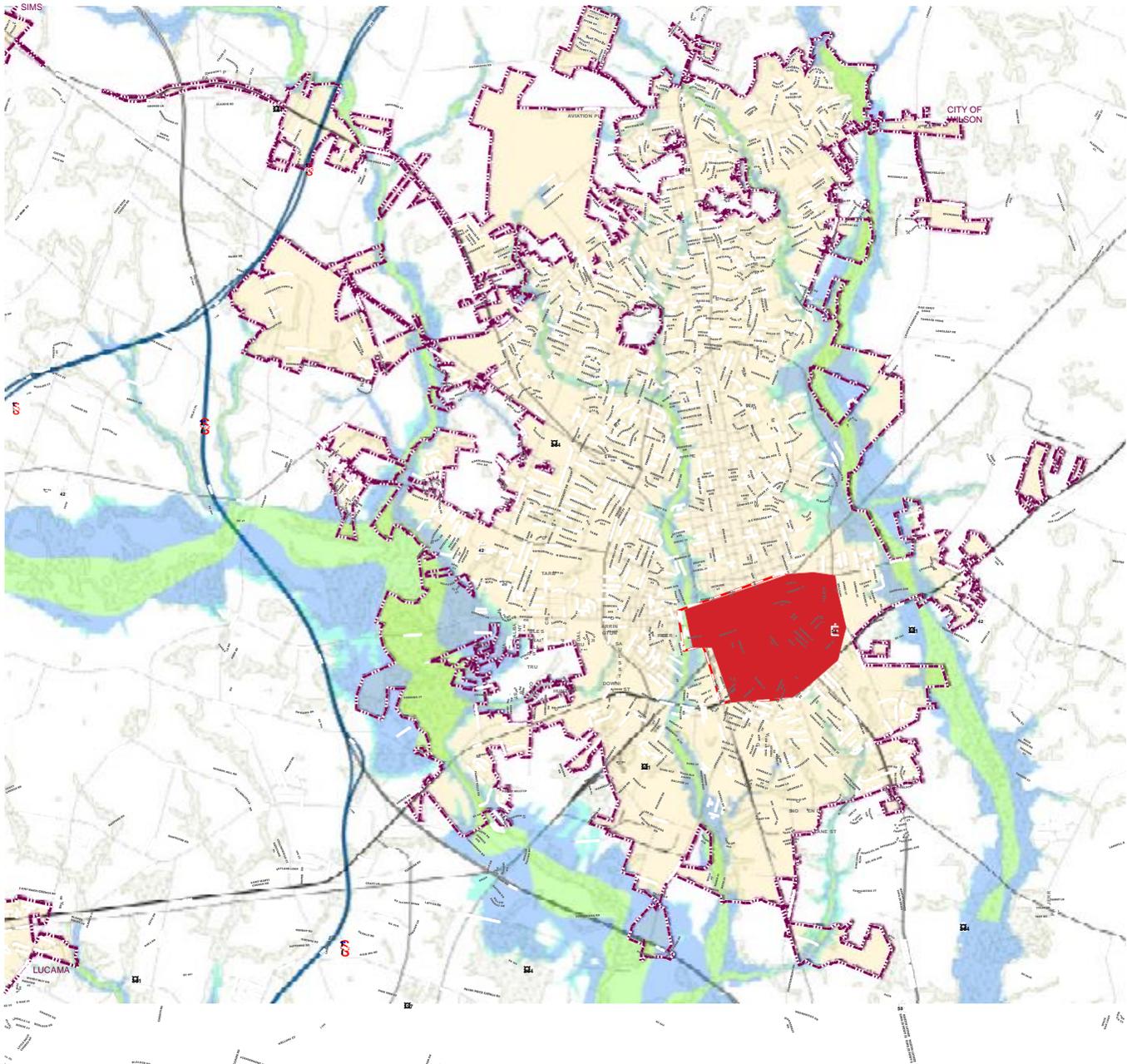


Figure 2.1- Center City shown in relationship to the City of Wilson.

## Project Overview

The Housing Authority of the City of Wilson (WHA) has partnered with the City of Wilson (CW) to develop a Transformation Plan for the Center City neighborhood. Center City encompasses Whitfield Homes, a multi-family residential development maintained by the WHA. Whitfield Homes is the only large multi-family public housing property within the neighborhood. It is geographically isolated from the rest of the community by railroad and major roadways. Center City has a poverty rate of over 50 percent and an unemployment rate of 46 percent. Despite the neighborhood distress, the area has several key assets including new residential and commercial developments, a planned park and greenway that will tie the Whitfield Homes sites to a major new recreational area, the City's Transit Center and Amtrak station, early education center, the Wilson Community College, and the planned Whirligig Park.

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The Choice Neighborhoods planning process will focus on establishing partnerships necessary to lead neighborhood redevelopment, including the development of a financing plan and phasing model. The primary goals will focus on reconnecting Whitfield Homes to downtown; strategies to make community and supportive services more accessible to residents; investing in infrastructure to revitalize and rebuild downtown retail businesses; and establishing a strong early childhood education anchor institution that provides high-quality education to local children.

## What is the Choice Neighborhoods Program?

The Choice Neighborhood Program is operated by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Choice Neighborhoods program supports locally driven strategies to address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public or HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation. Local leaders, residents, and stakeholders, such as public housing authorities, cities, schools, police, business owners, nonprofits, and private developers, come together to create and implement a plan that transforms distressed HUD housing and addresses the challenges in the surrounding neighborhood. The program is designed to catalyze critical improvements in neighborhood assets, including vacant property, housing, services, and schools.

### Choice Neighborhoods is focused on three core goals:

1. **People:** Improve educational outcomes and intergenerational mobility for youth with services and supports delivered directly to youth and their families;
2. **Neighborhood:** Create the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods to offer the kinds of amenities and assets, including safety, good schools, and commercial activity, that are important to families' choices about their community;
3. **Housing:** Replace distressed public and assisted housing with high-quality mixed-income housing that is well-managed and responsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood;

To achieve these core goals, communities must develop a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy, or Transformation Plan. This Transformation Plan will become the guiding document for the revitalization of the public and/or assisted housing units, while simultaneously directing the transformation of the surrounding neighborhood and positive outcomes for families. To successfully implement the Transformation Plan, applicants will need to work with public and private agencies, organizations (including philanthropic organizations), and individuals to gather and leverage resources needed to support the financial sustainability of the plan. These efforts should build community support for and involvement in the development of the plan. Implementation Grants support those communities that have undergone a





Figure 2.2- Choice Neighborhoods are about the interrelationship of people, neighborhood housing to create transformation

comprehensive local planning process and are ready to implement their Transformation Plan to redevelop the neighborhood.

### Motivation

Center City is losing population. With this population loss comes a decline in services and community stability. In contrast to the overall Center City area, downtown Wilson continues to experience incremental improvements through business expansion and investment in public service facilities. However, travel south or east from the downtown and the character of the community changes dramatically. Many of the streets in the study area are blighted. As of May 2014, over 676 vacant lots and 142 abandoned structures have been identified. Over 646 lots have been cleared through lost houses and the razing of old industrial sites. The neighborhood has experienced a loss in population of over 2,200 people and 674 households between 2000 and 2010 per U.S. Census Data. Many factors can be attributed to this decline in population. Through direct surveying, factors including safety, employment, access to services, and quality of the housing stock were evaluated.

While there are numerous park areas provided by the City within the Center City study area, the parks are isolated and not fully connected by walkways. Multiple park sites in the study area are the result

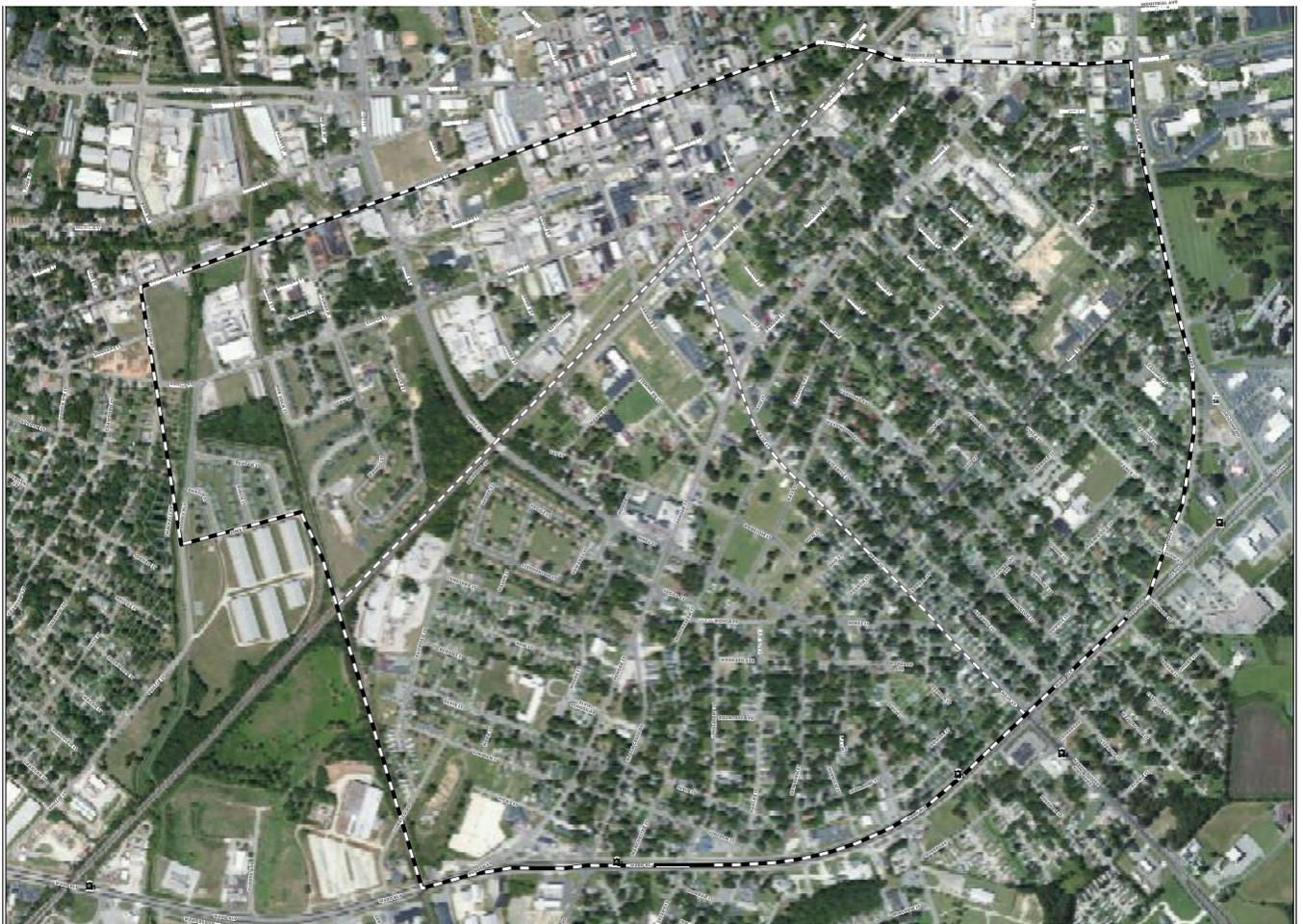


Figure 2.3- Choice Neighborhoods are about the interrelationship of people housing and neighborhood to create transformation

of the City acquiring nuisance homes and razing the sites. As the clearing process is a policy effort to removing blight, the resources necessary for maintaining the newly minted parks and the cleared lots are a continual strain on the City's budget. In addition, the improved park areas are not equally distributed throughout the neighborhood and are not able to be utilized by residents due to safety concerns.

The public transit system is inefficient relative to the transit needs of the residents. This inefficiency is a function of the spatial relationship of services to the populations they serve including Whitfield Homes. Whitfield Homes is a low density development in comparison to other areas of Center City. Improving density and attracting services closer to Center City will allow for better route management of the public transportation system.

Great strides have been made at improving the education system of Wilson County overall but improvements are still needed in terms of graduation rates and perpetuation for advanced skills and higher education. Within Center City, Fike High School serves the neighborhood and is part of the



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Wilson County Public School system. In 2012 the drop out rate was 2.8% compared to a state average of 2.0%. As of 2013, Fike's graduation rate was 81.6%.

The strength of the household is important in maintaining a sustainable community. According to direct survey data, non-married households make up 44.1% of Whitfield Homes and Center City, compared to 27% in Wilson County. Of the total CCCNTP households, over half of the households are living below the federal poverty level with the median income estimated at \$19,716. For renter households an even lower median income of \$15,463 has been measured.

The blend of economic, educational, and social factors can create barriers that prevent Center City residents from thriving. Within Whitfield Homes, the plight of generational poverty is prevalent, with young families joining the parents and extended family within the subsidized housing. The success of the CCCNTP will help residents to overcome these barriers and improve their quality of life.

The CCCNTP is focused on identifying strategies and accompanying goals to transform the neighborhood. Working within People, Neighborhoods, and Housing, the plan will utilize the existing assets of the community and key catalytic projects. These projects will stabilize the neighborhood and encourage private investment over the long term. This will be accomplished through a combination of renovation, replacement, and infill development within the CCCNTP study area.



Figure 2.4- Choice Neighborhoods are about the interrelationship of people, neighborhoods, and housing to create transformation

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## Why Whitfield Homes and Center City?

Center City was developed during the early to mid 1900s. The development pattern is based on a grid pattern of collector streets that orients vehicular travel towards US Highway 301. US 301 is a main connector to US 264 (Future I-495) which links Wilson to the State's capital in Raleigh, NC. This grid based development pattern is key to the future success of the redevelopment strategy.

The existing infrastructure associated with the road network, including sewer and water, is underutilized due to the removed properties. This infrastructure, where still viable, represents an incredible savings during redevelopment activities compared to working within greenfield sites. Reusing this infrastructure will also restore the customer base for the utility services, generating the income necessary to maintain and enhance the existing infrastructure. Long term this reinvestment will increase the value of the neighborhood.

WHA intends to achieve these primary goals:

- Establish partnerships for redevelopment
- Develop a an integrated development strategy and financing plan
- Reconnect Whitfield Homes to downtown
- Devise strategies to make community and supportive services accessible
- Revitalize the neighborhood leading to downtown investment
- Establish a strong early childhood education anchor institution

The gridded street system will also provide a framework to improve transportation. Unlike the western parts of Wilson that have developed in a traditional suburban pattern, Center City can support higher development densities based on the organization of large collector streets that flow north and south and east and west. Restoring neighborhood retail and services along Nash, Pender, and Hines Streets will allow more residents to walk to services or use buses to access these sites.

The Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park is a planned public park and outdoor museum that will display the legacy works of Vollis Simpson. Vollis is a world renowned local artist that is known for his monumental wind-

powered sculptures. This park is part of a long-range plan to increase tourist activity to Center City. While Whitfield Homes is not directly connected to the park, the potential for developing an arts and crafts district is strong and could translate to jobs for the residents.

In spite of much city-led revitalization and several isolated successes, the downtown area has seen significant disinvestment, with vacant lots, empty commercial buildings, tobacco-related warehouses that are no longer in use, a lack of retail services, and declining residential units. The quantity and diversity of shops, stores, restaurants, and activities necessary to support a vibrant neighborhood are not present. The new mixed use activity occurring in eastern downtown Wilson may help encourage redevelopment within Center City, but a larger project is needed to serve as a catalyst for the area.

Northeast of the site, there is a city-designated redevelopment area, Freeman Place, where the area has been cleared, and 80 new first-time home buyer units have recently been built as Phase I. An



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additional eight square blocks have been assembled and cleared and several units of phase 2 are under construction. Through code enforcement and tax sales, the City has also acquired 37 single-family properties scattered within one mile of the Whitfield Homes site for restoration and future habitation.

## Whitfield Homes

The targeted public housing is isolated, severely distressed, and out of character with Center City; it is the only large multi-family property in the area. Whitfield Homes itself is a paradox. It is located close to the central business district in downtown Wilson, yet is isolated in terms of physical connectivity and abrupt changes in land use. Between Whitfield and the revitalized city core is a 25-square block area that is the Downtown Tobacco Revitalization District. More than 60% of this area is either vacant warehouses or vacant parcels. Several entire blocks are cleared. A major highway (Old Raleigh Road) sits just north of the public housing site and acts as a barrier to entry. To the west and east of Whitfield, a third of the lots are vacant or have boarded up or severely dilapidated homes, including many “shotgun” houses in poor condition.

Whitfield Homes and the immediate context has a poverty rate of over 50% of the residents based on 2010 US Census Data. Two-thirds of the working population lacks a high school education or better, compared to 25% citywide. Per the census data and direct surveying, few to none of the residents possess a college degree. Unemployment in this area is 46%. From 1990 to 2000, the population in census tract 8.01 declined by 14% compared to an increase of 12% city-wide, showing active population migration leaving the area. This neighborhood has a high concentration of minorities (77% Black and 19% Latino), more than double the city average.

Center City is served by Fike High School, Vick Elementary, and Daniels Learning Center. Daniels Learning Center is the facility used by Wilson County to teach students that have been removed from traditional schools within the county due to extreme behavior and discipline issues. The location of such a facility within Center City, near Whitfield Homes, places an undue characterization on the overall nature of children within the neighborhood.

## Neighborhood Assets

In spite of the distress in the area, there are numerous neighborhood assets on which to build. Working under the guidance of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, the City has made substantial progress in assembling distressed properties. A large collection of these properties are currently under development in partnership with the Wilson Homebuilders Association. The Tobacco Warehouse District and its many historic buildings represent a major opportunity for the next city-targeted redevelopment area.

Work completed by St. John’s Church Development Corporation, part of the Nash Street Renaissance, demonstrates a strong case for public-private partnerships. Components include a small deli and ice cream shop, providing a safe haven for families to meet and socialize. Advancing similar projects throughout Center City will help lift the neighborhood and Whitfield Homes up.

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## Early Accomplishments

The City of Wilson and its key stakeholders have made significant efforts in improving the Center City neighborhood and Whitfield Homes ahead of the Choice Neighborhood Initiative.

These efforts have included:

- The City acquired and stabilized the Hi-Dollar warehouse.
- A three-tenant commercial building on East Nash Street is undergoing rehabilitation.
- The Wilson Housing Authority has acquired and rehabbed a commercial building to serve as its headquarters.
- The City is preparing to rehab two buildings on Goldsboro Street, as well as the historic Western Auto building.
- The City plans to demolish the Mello Butter Cup facility on Douglas Street.
- In conjunction with developing a HOPE VI plan for Whitfield Homes, the WHA obtained site control of sufficient land for 184 “off-site” replacement units in the neighborhood.

## Neighborhood Assets Include:

- A planned park and greenway that will tie Whitfield Homes to a major new recreational area traversing much of the city.
- The City of Wilson Transit Center, providing local and regional bus access.
- The Amtrak Station, providing in-state and out-of-state train service.
- Reid Street Recreation Center.
- Wilson Community College.
- Norris and Elvie Street Parks.
- The Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park.
- Summerville Academy (early childhood education).
- The Historic Cherry Hotel (vacant), whose owner is willing to work with the WHA and City to redevelop it.

The City’s 2030 Comprehensive Plan targets the US 301 Corridor as a redevelopment area. The City “will promote and encourage the redevelopment of aging commercial corridors, such as Highway 301 and Ward Boulevard between Highway 301 and Tarboro Street, to improve the character of these corridors and adjacent neighborhoods and to elevate the quality of life in these areas.”



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## Planning Team

With a project as expansive as the Transformation Plan, strong leadership is needed to oversee and guide the process. This team also needed to be able to garner public input and support to ensure the transformation is one that embodies the needs and wants of the people in the community. The team was comprised of a Steering Committee, the Wilson Housing Authority, the City of Wilson Planning Department and The Wooten Company.

**Steering Committee.** The City of Wilson is primed for change. Building upon the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, multiple initiatives are underway to improve the downtown core and surrounding areas, including the plans proposed by the CCCNTP. To provide direction for the CCCNTP process, a steering committee was formed that included major community leaders, current residents of the Whitfield Homes properties, and educational leaders from both the school system and community college. The committee leaders from 301 Forward are also key members of the Steering Committee and will be tasked with providing leadership through the implementation of the Transformation Plan. The role of the Steering Committee was to set the direction of the Transformation Plan based on input from the surrounding community and from their own specific expertise in their respective fields.

**The Wilson Housing Authority.** The WHA provided leadership and staff resources for the Transformation Plan. As the managing authority of the housing component, they served as a conduit for the planning team to the existing residents. They led the residents survey process and commissioned the market assessment for housing and economic drivers in the area. The WHA leadership team were active members of the steering committee representing both the people and housing components.

**City of Wilson Planning Department.** The Wilson Planning Department (WP) provided the steering committee with the insights to current and planned development for the Wilson area including Center City. As leaders of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, they also provided information transfer from the input received during the 2030 Comprehensive Plan development process for synthesis and application towards the Transformation Plan. Key members included staff responsible for long range planning, urban design, and policy administration. As part of the Steering Committee, it was also their role to review proposed policy changes that would encourage development, protect and enhance the neighborhood infrastructure, and consider long-range land use changes to further enhance the sustainability of the Center City neighborhood.

**The Wooten Company.** The Wooten Company served as primary planning consultant for the Transformation Plan. Their role was to serve as facilitator for the Planning Team providing expertise in both governance strategies and in physical planning considerations. Project responsibilities included meeting facilitation, public workshops, architectural and community design considerations, and implementation strategies.





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## Overview

In order to develop the CCCNTP, a needs assessment must be completed in order to identify the available neighborhood opportunities and constraints. Opportunities include the existing assets, both physical and programmatic, that sustain the vitality of the Center City neighborhood. Constraints are the existing shortfalls that act as obstacles to allowing the community to thrive. The specific focus of this analysis is to identify obstacles facing residents to find work, access to basic services and healthcare, and to live within a home that is energy efficient and safe. Access to all of these components leads to an improved quality of life through financial stability and will lead to neighborhood transformation by building up the people that will serve as the foundation for this new community vision.

## Data Collection and Methodology

A variety of data sources were utilized for the opportunities and constraints analysis. These sources included 2010 US Census Data for population data, American Fact Finder for demographic data, direct surveys of the residents, and field observations. A third party market assessment was commissioned by the WHA to evaluate the neighborhood in terms of housing; ownership versus rent trends, and commercial vitality. This report was an additional source of data for assessing the opportunities and constraints. Further public input has also been collected from the recently completed 2030 Comprehensive Plan process conducted by the City of Wilson. This year long process focused on the Center City area and immediate surrounding areas to identify city-wide opportunities and constraints.

The strength in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan process and its public input components generated volumes of data and observations that focus on key city-wide issues. This information has led to the formation of several initiatives, including the 301 Forward committee, which have provided insights into commercial development issues facing the surrounding area of the Center City neighborhood.

A direct mail survey was developed by the WHA in conjunction with the Wilson Planning Department (WP). The survey results were included to provide qualifications to the physical analysis and sampled current conditions including housing, space needs for the family, adequacy of community resources, and access to public transit, and quality of life factors including both safety and health.

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GIS data was provided by the City of Wilson and incorporated into a file geodatabase to aid in the asset mapping. The geodatabase also allowed for non-spatial data, such as census information, to be linked to the analysis maps. The physical conditions maps developed within GIS served as a base to assess spatial relationships between the statistics and the neighborhood. To cross check this information, informational review sessions were held with the Steering Committee and at the public charettes.



## The Study Area

The Center City Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan (CCNTP) study area occupies over 843 acres of land that spans from downtown Wilson to US 301. The area is diverse in character with a mixture of industrial, institutional, residential, and commercial areas. The industrial areas are located in the center of the Center City area to make use of the railroad running from southeast to northwest. The scale of the overall study area has been mitigated by creating three focus areas that represent the main zones of Center City as defined by the major transportation corridors or physical barriers. These focus areas were used to generate focused comment on the existing condition by stakeholders and steering committee members.

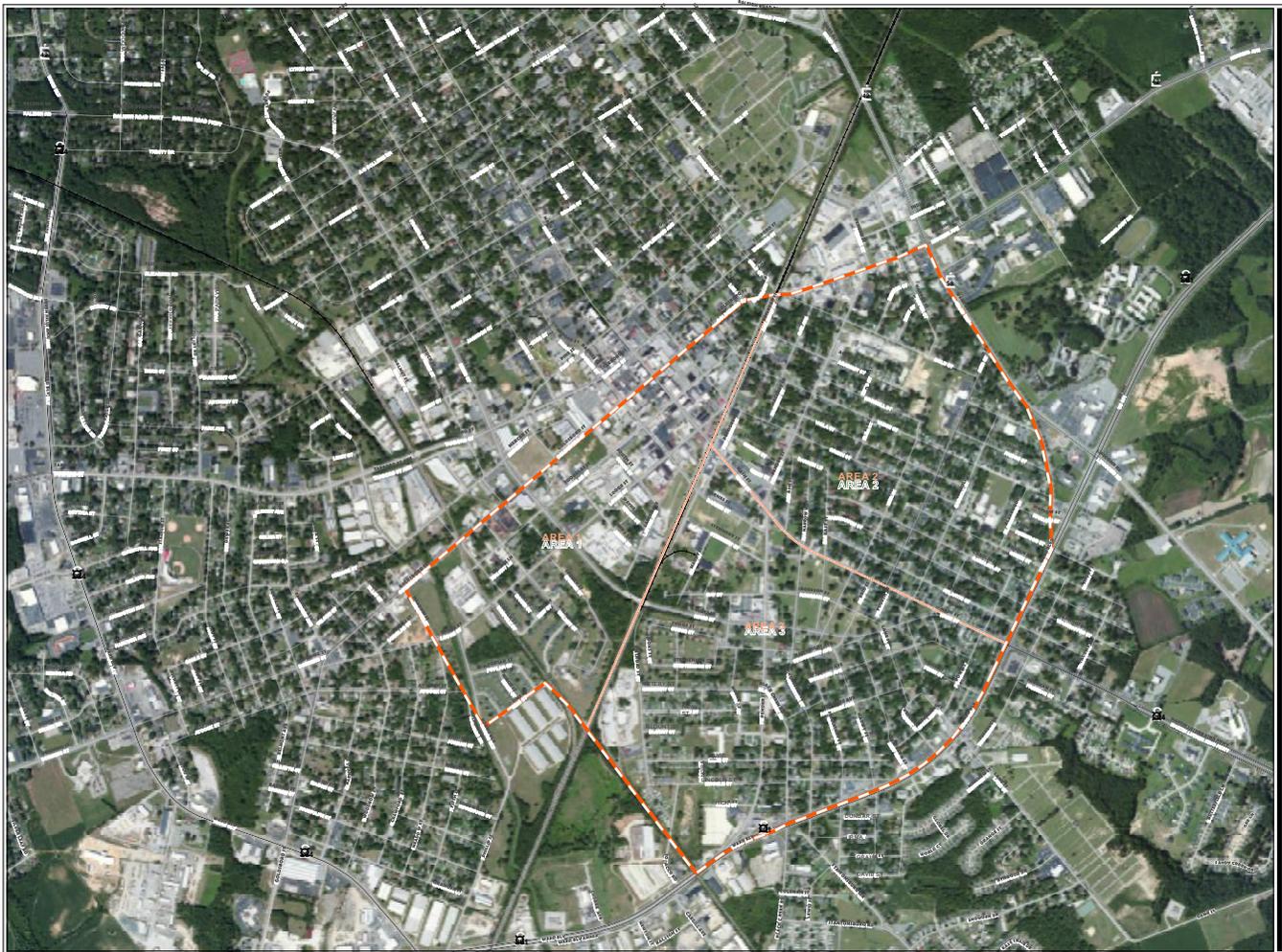


Figure 3.1 - Study area and greater Downtown Wilson.



## The People of Center City

Center City residents are very young with a median age of thirty-one (31) years, with most (88%) of the population falling into the 18-64 years of age group and 53.4% of the population is under the age of 35 (Table 3.1). The median age for Wilson County is thirty-seven (37). Pre-school and school age children comprise 27.8% of the population, while about 11.7% of the population is sixty-five (65) or older. The marriage rate in Center City at 21.3% is significantly lower than in households of Wilson County at 45%. The percent of single-parent Center City households is higher than the county-wide rate of 13.3%.

Table 3.1 - Population make up for Center City compared to Wilson County

Age and Household Type				
Age (2012)	Center City		Wilson County	
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>12,590</b>		<b>82,215</b>	
Under 18	3,497	27.8%	20,304	24.7%
18-34	3,217	25.6%	17,457	21.2%
35-64	4,398	34.9%	32,934	40.1%
65 and over	1,478	11.7%	11,520	14.0%
Median Age	31		37	
Household Type (2010)	Center City		Wilson County	
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>4,693</b>		<b>31,962</b>	
Married with children	496	10.6%	6,122	19.2%
Married without children	504	10.7%	8,264	25.9%
Not married with children	971	20.7%	4,244	13.3%
Not married without children	1,101	23.5%	4,382	13.7%
Householders without children	3,226	68.7%	17,353	54.3%
Householders with children	1,467	31.3%	14,609	45.7%

Source: Preliminary Market Assessment – Center City Study Area

## Population Decline

The population of Center City represents 15% percent of the total county population. The decline in residential properties has followed a -0.6% change in population within the Center City Neighborhood. This poses a significant challenge to maintaining community vitality as the concentration necessary to sustain neighborhood businesses continues to decline.

Table 3.2 - Population data for Center City

Population & Households						
	Center City CNI		Primary Market Area		Wilson County	
<b>Population</b>						
2000 Population	14,847		43,009		73,814	
2010 Population	12,648		42,721		81,234	
2012 Population	12,590		43,298		82,215	
2017 Population	12,445		44,776		84,719	
<b>Population Change 2000-2010</b>						
Total Change	-2,199		-288		7,420	
<b>Annual Change # / %</b>	<b>-220</b>	<b>-1.6%</b>	<b>-29</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Population Change 2010-2012</b>						
Total Change	-58		577		981	
<b>Annual Change # / %</b>	<b>-29</b>	<b>-0.2%</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
<b>Population Change 2012-2017</b>						
Total Change	-145		1,478		2,504	
<b>Annual Change # / %</b>	<b>-29</b>	<b>-0.2%</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
<b>Group Quarters</b>						
2012 Group Quarters	946		1,513		1,578	
<b>Households</b>						
2000 Households	5,367		16,672		28,613	
2010 Households	4,693		17,086		31,962	
2012 Households	4,680		17,367		32,449	
2017 Households	4,649		18,091		33,700	
<b>Household Change 2000-2010</b>						
Total Change	-674		414		3,349	
<b>Annual Change # / %</b>	<b>-67</b>	<b>-1.3%</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>1.1%</b>
<b>Household Change 2010-2012</b>						
Total Change	-13		281		487	
<b>Annual Change # / %</b>	<b>-6</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>0.8%</b>
<b>Household Change 2012-2017</b>						
Total Change	-31		723		1,250	
<b>Annual Change # / %</b>	<b>-6</b>	<b>-0.1%</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>0.8%</b>
2012 Average Household Size	2.49		2.41		2.49	



# Neighborhood

Center City’s legacy as an industrial cluster located at the crossroads of regional transportation systems, both highway and rail, can be seen in the pattern of residential development. As common to many southern industrial towns, residential areas to support factory workers were located in very close proximity. This often driven by the lack of public transportation at the time and the need to have the workers live within walking distance of the factory. As automobile dependency increased over the years, residential areas developed further out from the factories, and populations shifted farther from the core. When the industries shifted away from Wilson, a majority of the industrial sites were abandoned; creating large gaps between the downtown core and the surrounding residential areas. These gaps were not able to be in-filled due to a lack of market demand fueled by a changing economy and the slow decline in the Center City population.

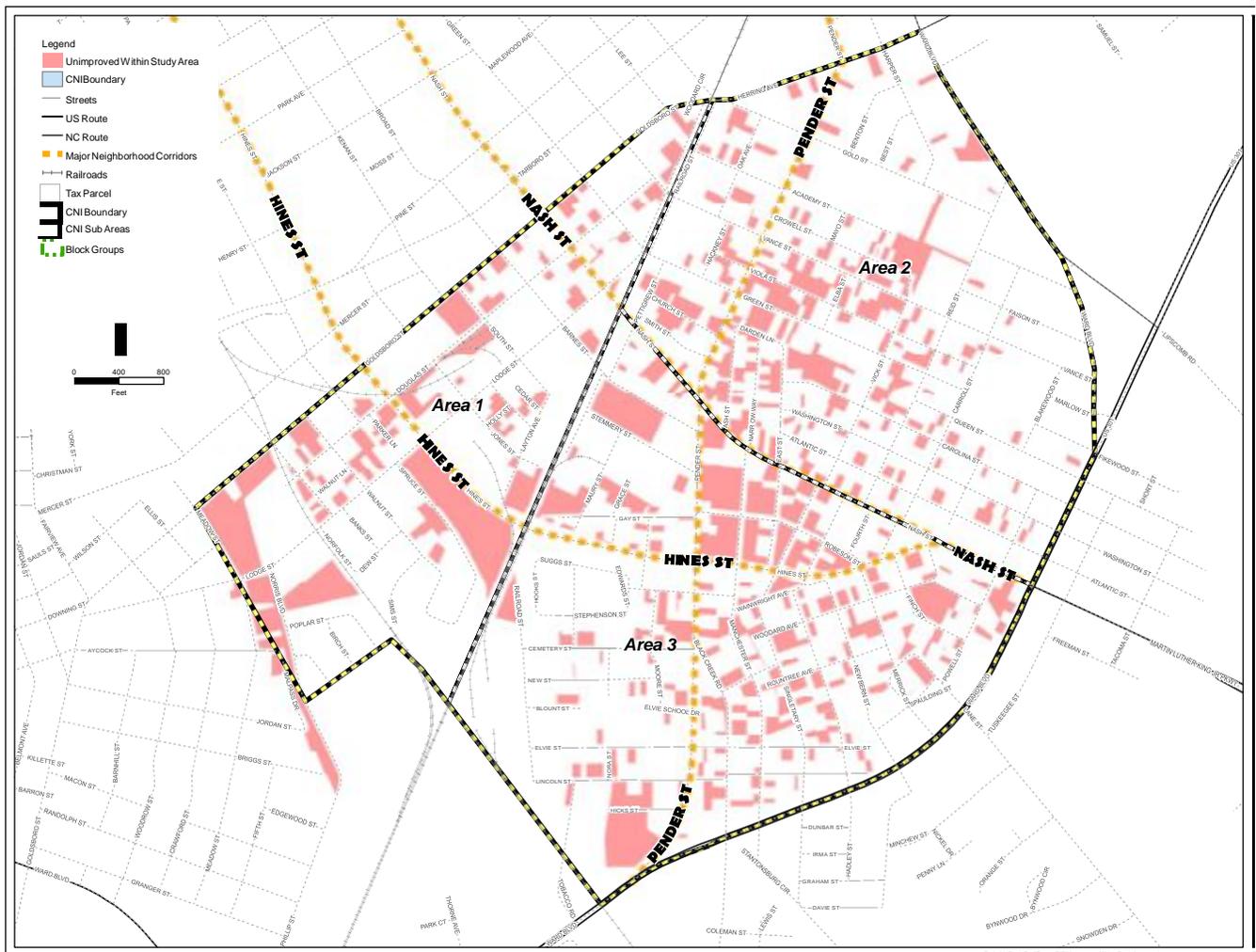


Figure 3.2- Cleared lots within Center City

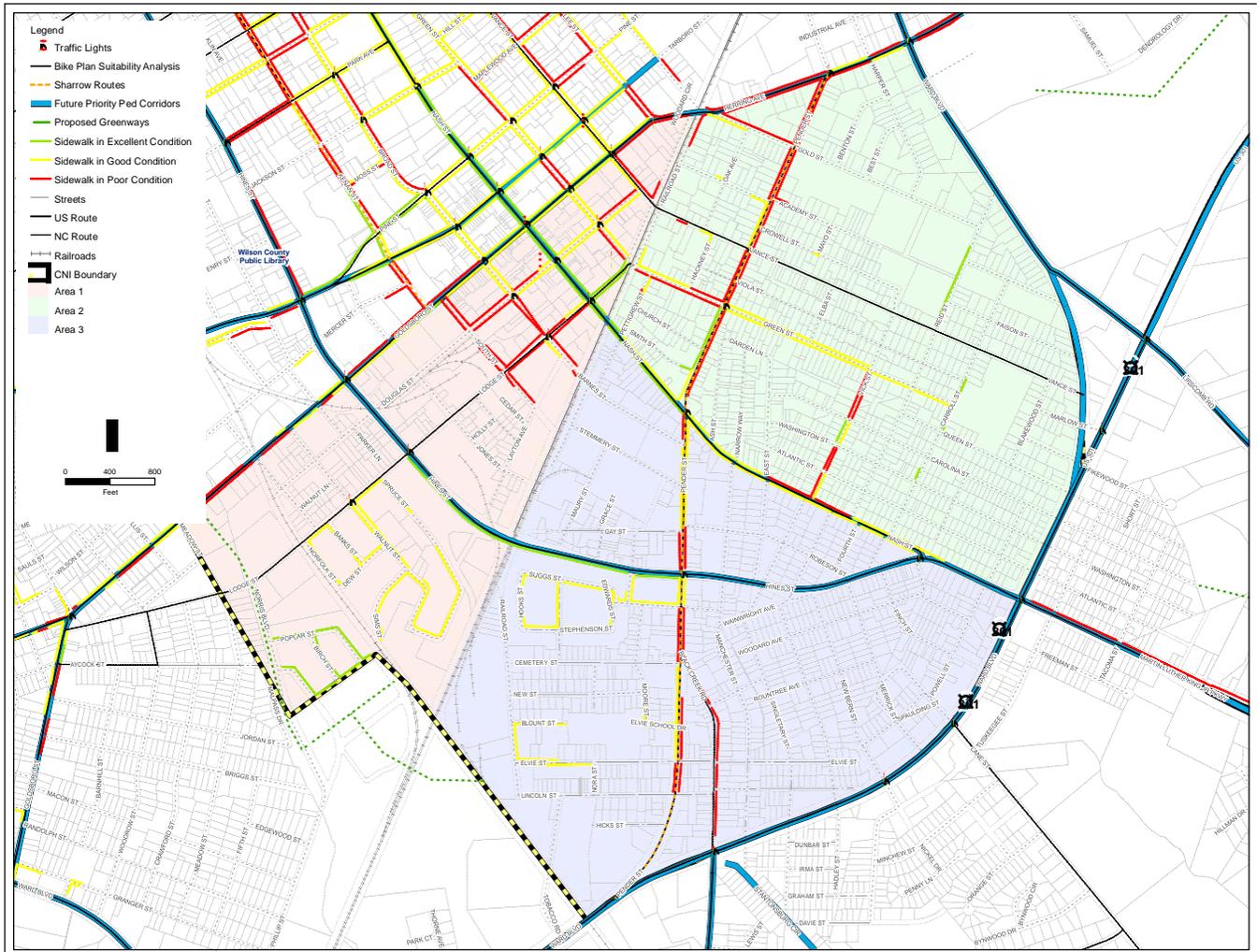


Figure 3.3- Bike and Pedestrian Pathways

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements

This area is medically under-served, and the location has a walk-ability score of only 43 of 100. This is not unexpected due to the history of the Center City neighborhood and its early industrial roots. Before the propensity of automotive travel, roads were narrower with pedestrian paths often forged along the edges of the road beds. As the community developed, the roads were widened and improved often without consideration for sidewalks and bike lanes.

Several initiatives are underway within Wilson to promote bike shares along the major thoroughfares where bike routes have been designated through modified striping. Sidewalk improvement plans have been developed to improve the walk-ability to the elementary school as part of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.





are limited to the extreme perimeter of the neighborhood in isolated pockets. Daycare facilities are located outside of the neighborhood as well. This creates challenges for accessing childcare. If the daycare facilities are not located near the job centers, this creates further challenges for accessing child care.

## Housing

Housing within the Center City neighborhood is predominately single family units. The average home is a 1-2 bedroom house with approximately 900 square feet. This footprint being derived from the initial roots of the neighborhood as living quarters for the workers while laboring at the industrial areas along the rail road. Along Pender Street, there are several significant homes that are of historical significance to the aesthetic of the Center City neighborhood. These homes will need further evaluation for conservation potential.

## Profile of Whitfield Homes

Whitfield Homes is a public housing development operated by the WHA and is the prime site targeted for the Choice Planning Initiative. Whitfield Homes is located close to the central business district in downtown Wilson, yet it is extremely isolated by geographic and social barriers. The overall Whitfield Homes community is bisected by an existing active freight railroad, challenging residents in their connectivity between the east and west halves of Whitfield Homes. Hines Street, a large thoroughfare separates the homes from the remaining residential areas east of the tracts. The decline of the industrial

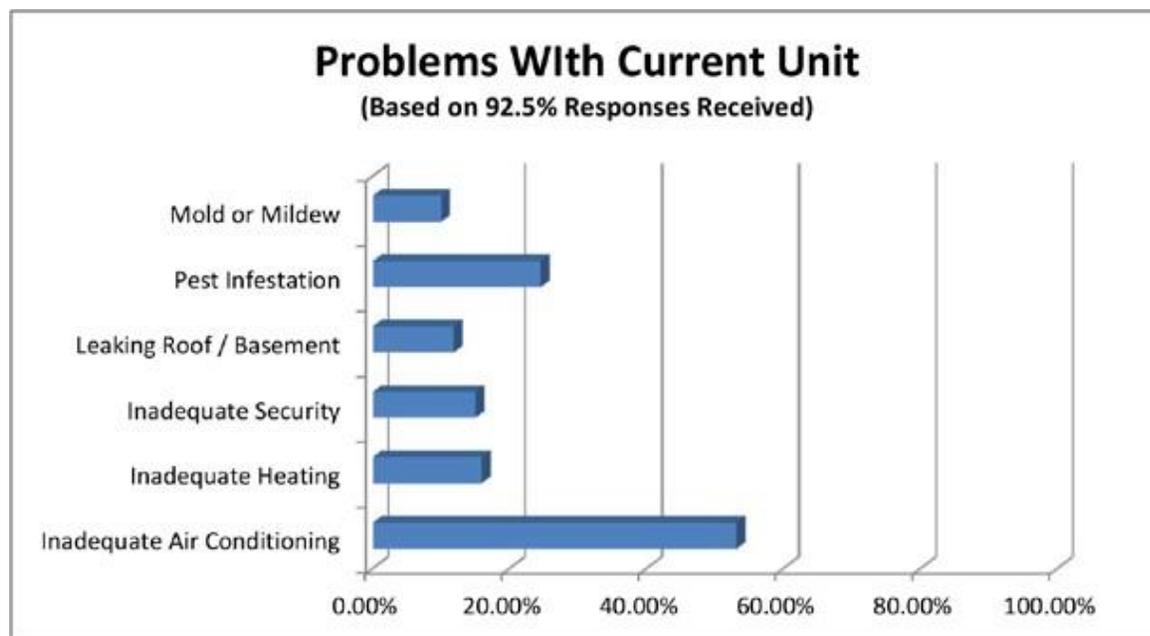


Figure 3.5 - Survey results identifying problems with current Whitfield Homes



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area along the railroad and Hines Street has also created a social barrier as the vacant buildings and land propagate crime and concerns for safety.

In their current state, the western half of Whitfield Homes is severely distressed and out of character with the surrounding industrial context. The eastern half of Whitfield Homes represents the only large multi-family property in Center City.

Over the years, the deterioration in the quality of housing has fueled a decline in the Whitfield Home population. Preliminary Needs Assessments conducted by a licensed professional engineer identified deficiencies that included but are not limited to structural (roofs, foundations, walls, door and windows), building systems (electrical, plumbing, and mechanical), and on-site infrastructure (sewer, drainage, roadways, sidewalks and landscaping). A follow-up survey with residents showed overwhelming concern over the mechanical systems and the general condition of the interior spaces.

The railroad bisects the development forcing residents, including children, to cross the tracks in order to visit the other parts of the development, including the neighborhood network center and the neighborhood elementary school. There are units that are located in a 100-year flood plain, and were damaged during Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

Functional challenges of the development include the lack of off-street parking, except for the limited number of units with handicap accessibility. The streets are narrow and difficult for emergency vehicles to access, especially in light of on-street parking. The site suffers from inadequate stormwater systems which propagates pest problems in the area.

The barracks-style buildings are arrayed throughout the site without regard to front and rear yards. As a result, defensible spaces cannot be identified and protected. This lack of defensible space can result in drug and other criminal activities, and the presence of a criminal element. These multi-family units are isolated from the surrounding neighborhood by building type as well as geographically.

Three schools are serving children from Whitfield Homes and have not met Annual Yearly Progress goals and are thus poor-performing: Vick Elementary, Daniels Learning Center, and Fike High School.

In the US, education is considered the route to jobs, opportunities and prosperity a person will have and what their life outcomes will be. There is a correlation between education attainment and income. People with a high school diploma or less are going to be overrepresented in the low-wage labor market and people with college and professional degrees are going to be overrepresented in the middle to high wage markets. Given this scenario, it is easy to understand why Center City is a distressed community.

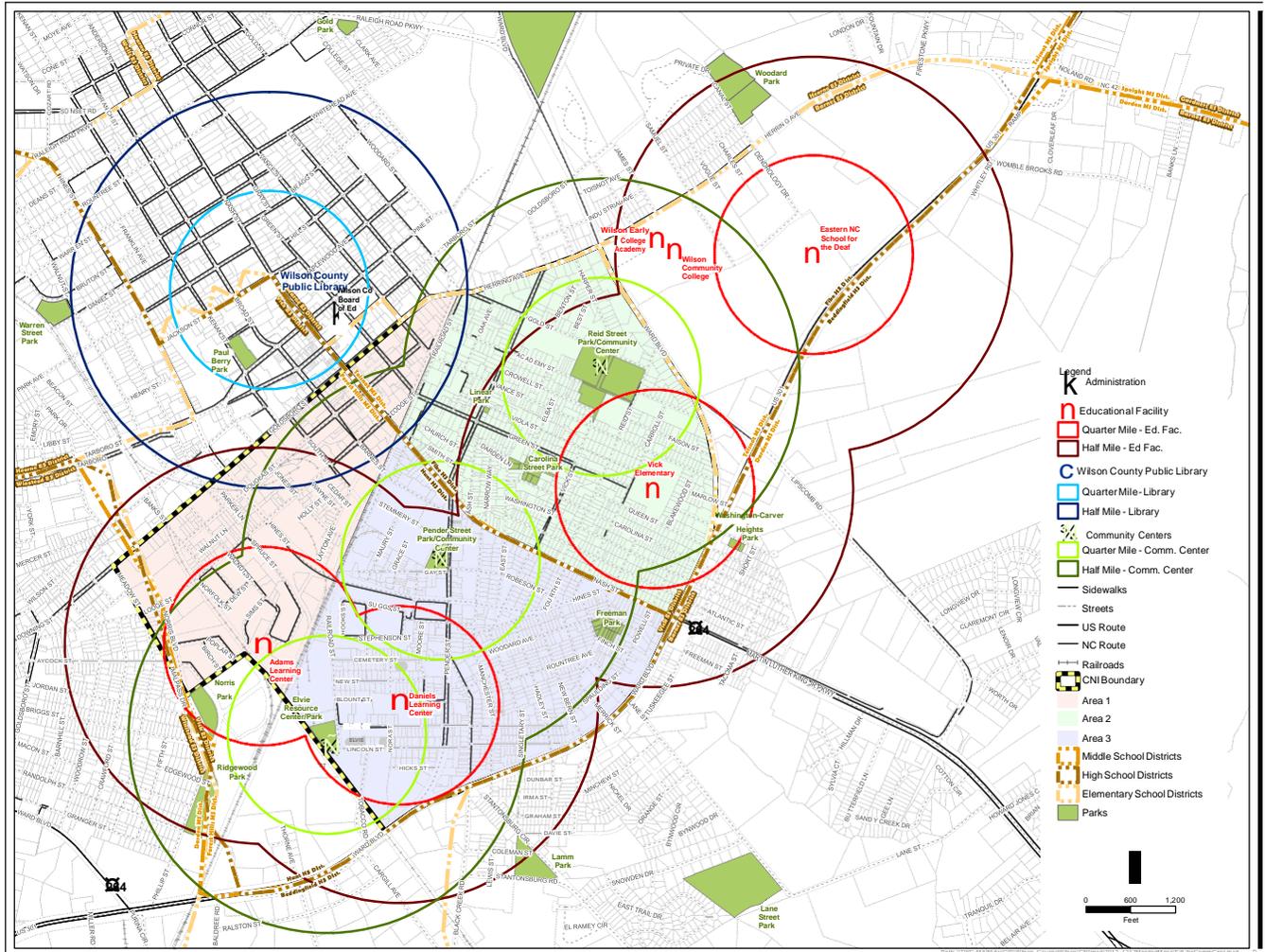


Figure 3.6 - Walking Distance to Education Facilities

## Financial Self-Sufficiency

The income of Center City residents reflects their levels of education attainment. Although the median house income is \$19,716 in Center City, within Whitfield Homes the median household income approximately about \$15,500 annually. Most residents living in Center City not only have low incomes, but they typically fall into the very low and extremely low wage categories. Without advanced training and improvement in their levels of education, most residents across Center City, including Whitfield Homes, will not be able to become financially self-sufficient.

Most importantly, unless the education facilities and quality of programs within Center City are transformed to allow students to thrive and prepare for the professional world, the future generations within Center City will risk following into low-wage jobs. The key to enabling young people to change the course of their



lives is to improve their early learning experiences and the quality of their K-12th grade public schooling, as well as to develop a strong neighborhood-based education infrastructure.

This challenge is daunting considering the low-achieving schools that service students living in Center City. Socioeconomic challenges are faced by children and their families in Center City. For example, district-wide about 17% of the students do not attend school regularly.

To improve the public schools, it will be necessary to complement classroom instruction by bolstering the skills and competencies of the students and by eliminating non-academic barriers to their academic performance.

### Early Learning Programs

Another concern is the low volume of early learning programs accessible to residents within Center City. With the daycare facilities located outside of the core neighborhood, residents have to travel further from home at significant cost for child care. Documentation on scholastic progress notes that children who reach the first grade and are not ready to learn will be at high risk to academic trouble. Children must be involved in structured, high quality early learning activities and programs from birth through entrance into the first grade.

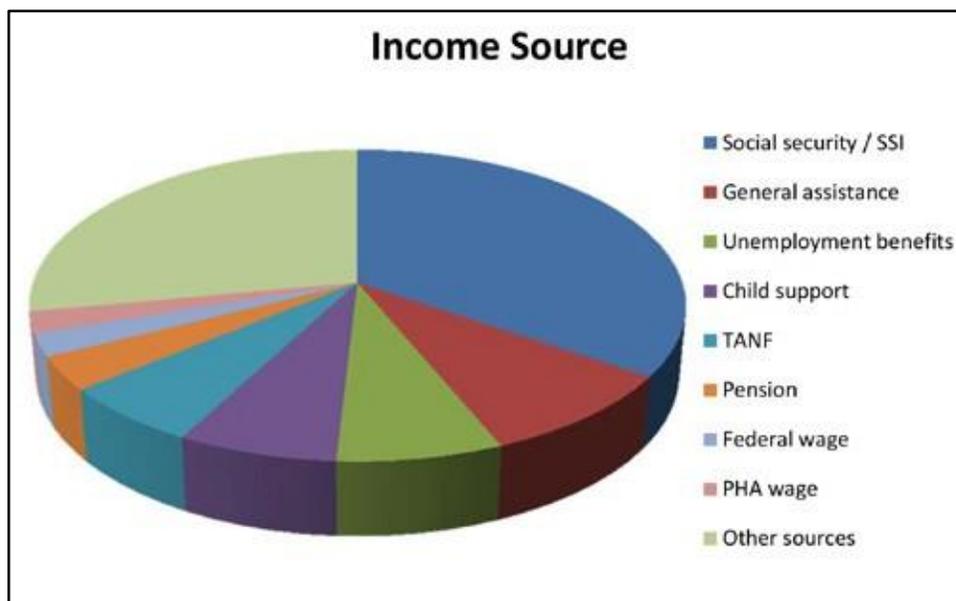


Figure 3.7 - Income sources for Whitfield Homes Residents

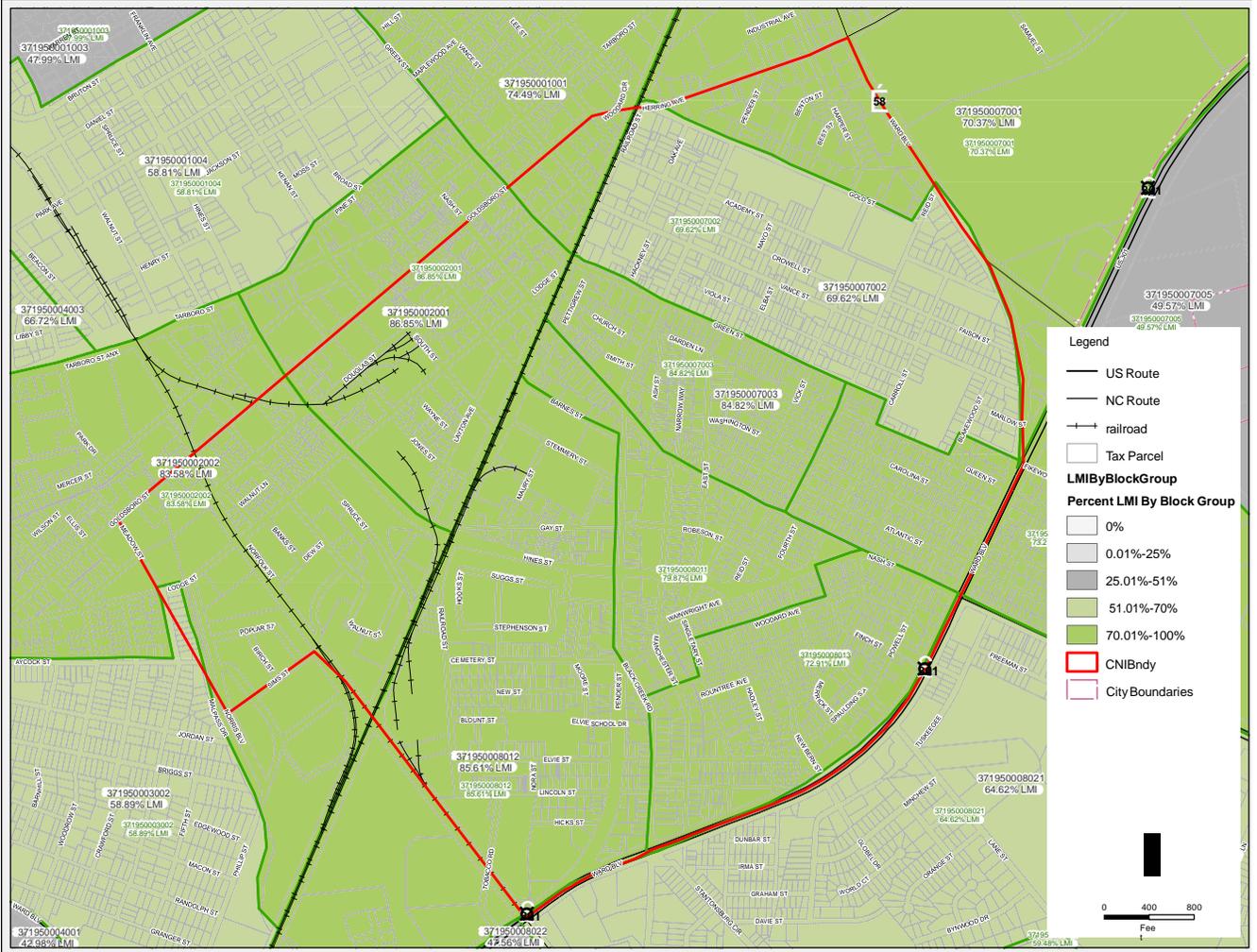


Figure 3.8 - Income levels - Limited Income - the dark green show areas below the income of the surrounding community



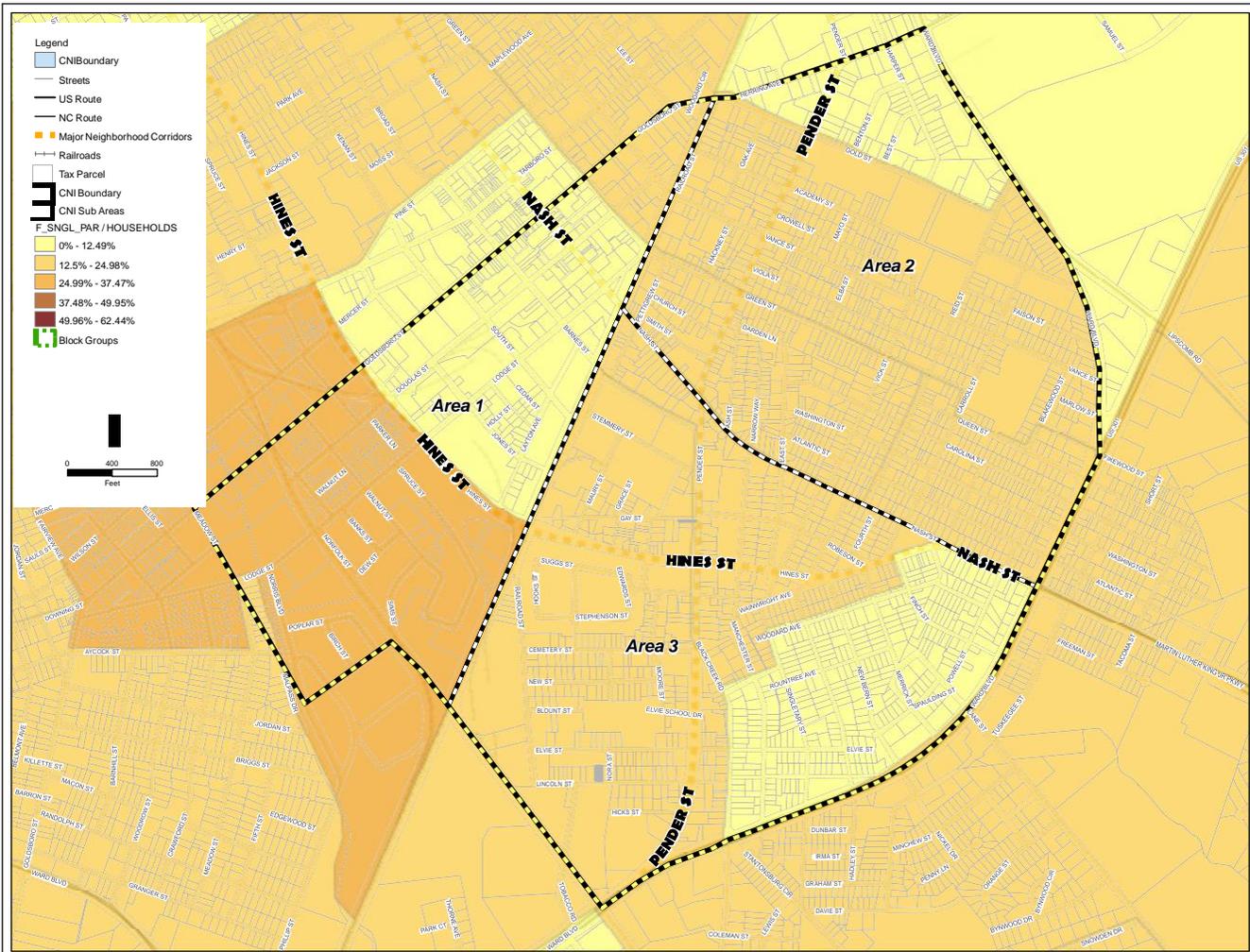


Figure 3.9 - Concentrations of single parent, female led households

## Family Structure

A challenging demographic to overcome is building up support for single-family households within Center City. Based on US 2010 Census Block Group data and direct survey information, over half of the households within Center City are single parent households with 1 or more children. The overall age demographic of Center City is under the age 30 showing a very young and vulnerable population when services are not available. Figure X-X shows the concentration of female led single-family households within the study area. Areas of lighter color within the map also coincide with areas of the least dense housing units due to abandonment of those structures.

### Supportive Service Challenge:

The residents of Center City and those living in Whitfield Homes are confronted with huge obstacles, which stand between them and an improved quality of life. Not only must they grapple with the stress of making ends meet with limited incomes, but also they must contend with finding employment, dealing with health care issues, crime, the challenges of raising their children and managing the instability of their friends and loved ones. To successfully meet these challenges, individuals and families must interact with multiple and complex systems, which often do not take into account competing regulations, goals and deadlines. For individuals and families to survive, they will have to achieve financial self-sufficiency, and bolster the quality of their lives, will need access to high quality supportive service institutions in Center City. Without special assistance, the highest risk individuals and families will need help negotiating the complexity of the supportive service system.

There are multiple supportive service agencies operating in Center City, which does not include the services that are provided for residents of Whitfield. These institutions offer services that fall into the following categories: crisis assistance, employment, health, technical assistance, education, and special populations.

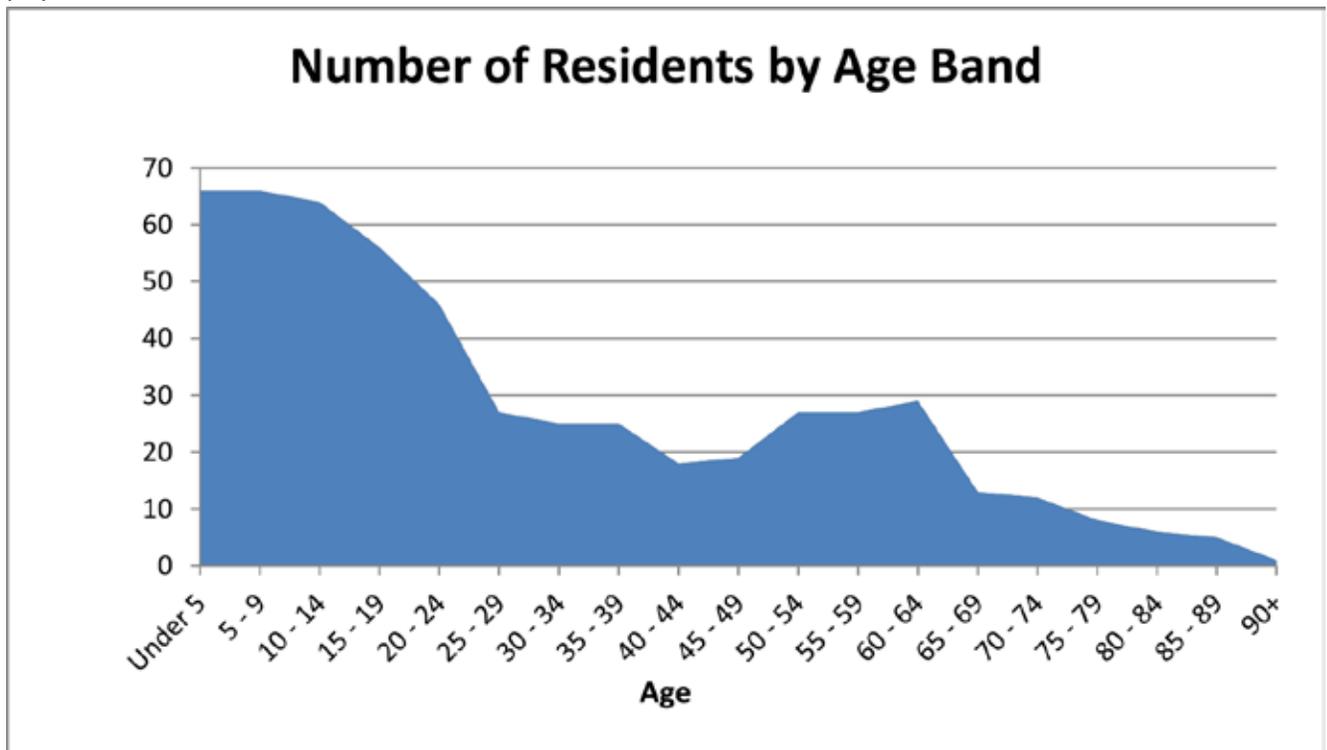


Figure 3.10 - Age breakdown of Center City residents, this is a young population



## Home Ownership

Financial independence is often measured by home ownership. Using the US 2010 Census Block Group data, the majority of the homes within Center City were rented by the occupying households. This trend is atypical to the surrounding context and overall disposition of Wilson County. Refer to the home ownership map, figure 3.11, showing the disparity in home ownership between Center City and the surrounding context.

Financial stability is directly tied to home ownership and needs to be set as a priority goal of the Transformation Plan.

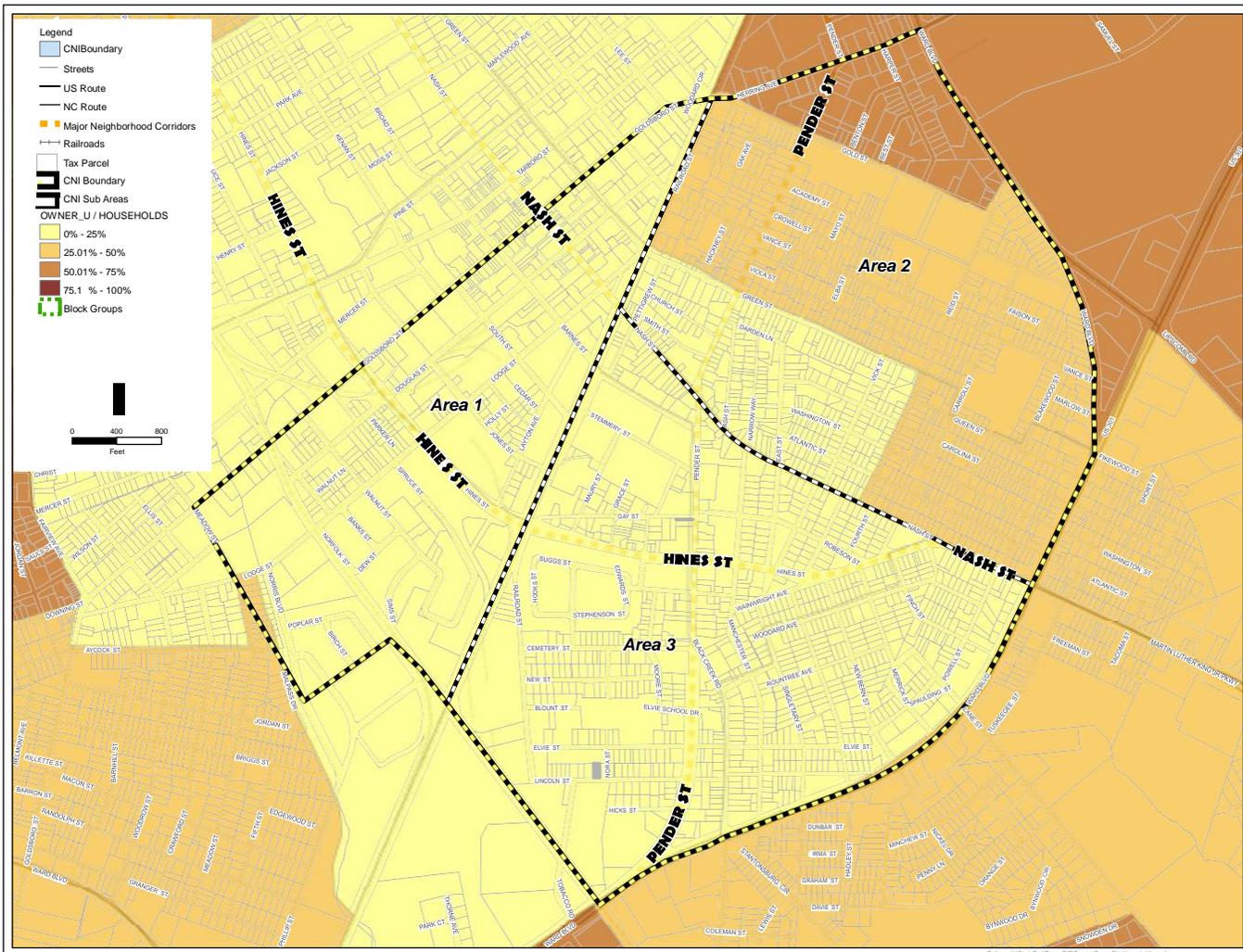


Figure 3.11- Distribution of Home Ownership, note that Center City is predominately a rental community

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Housing aides (service coordinator) are used to connect residents needing help to the appropriate service provider. The system is a virtual one (i.e. like Wilson's) in that there is no dedicated space for intake and follow up. Currently, there is no robust neighborhood service delivery system to get the available services to the residents, especially those living in Whitfield. While there are programs across the city that handle the broader issues of neighborhood crime and violence, Center City has a crime rate above the surrounding community.

## Crime Stats

With consideration to the decline in full time residences within the study area and the overall quantity of abandoned homes within the study area, the incidents of criminal activity are clustered at the intersections of Pender and Nash and at Pender and Hines Streets.

Center City (CC) cannot be transformed into a great place to live, work and raise a family without making it a safe and secure community. To achieve this goal, it will be necessary to interweave strategies for reducing crime with forging high quality youth development programs. The Whitfield Homes is embedded in the larger Center City Neighborhood, but the crime profiles in the two places are somewhat different, although they are both highly interactive.

An examination of the spatial distribution of crime shows that incidents were not evenly distributed across the neighborhood. Crime hot-spots were found in three main areas: vicinity of Viola and Green Street near Vick Elementary, along the railroad tracks south of Hines Street around Whitfield East, and at the east extent of the neighborhood. Reviewing the comparison of the crime hot spot map to the abandoned structures map, there is a direct correlation with two of the areas and the highest concentrations of neighborhood disinvestment. There are notable drop-offs in crime in certain areas of CC closer to downtown. Reviewing the residential data, the downtown areas are less inhabited with exception of a high concentration immediately along Nash Street near the Bus and Train Stations. The remaining areas are at the same average rates as the surrounding county context.

In addition, residents expressed concerns about the relationship between the built environment and safety. In particular, poor lighting was frequently identified as a concern, including apprehensions about young people and juvenile delinquency. The overarching theme behind the survey comments is the widespread fear of potential victimization. This fear caused many people to adjust their daily activities and behaviors. Most residents felt that Whitfield Homes and the larger neighborhood were most unsafe late at night. Consequently, many residents expressed concern about leaving their units in the evening or going into some parts of the housing development or the larger neighborhood after dark. These perceptions of crime, which affected daily life, might also be influenced by the variety of experiences that residents have had with crime.



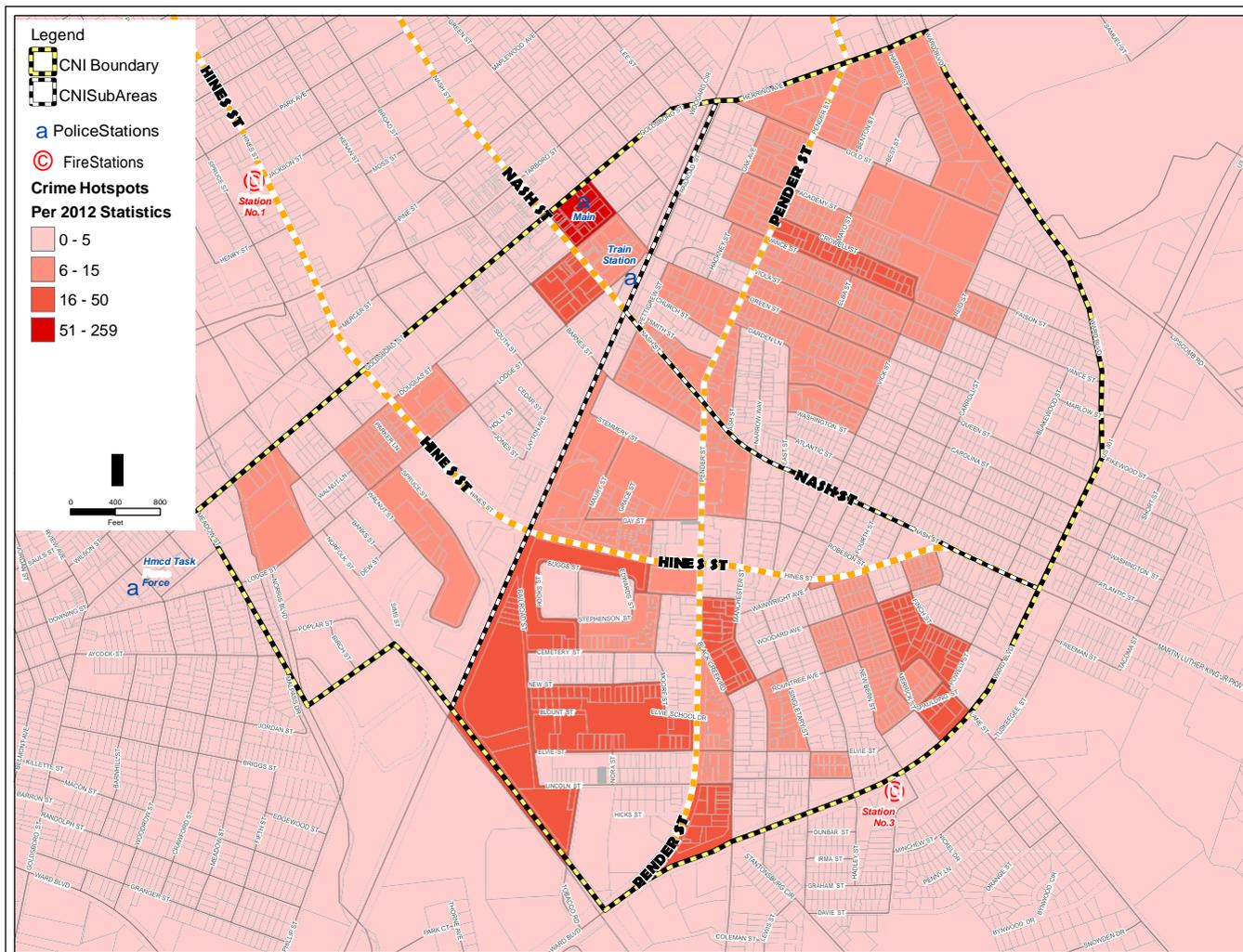


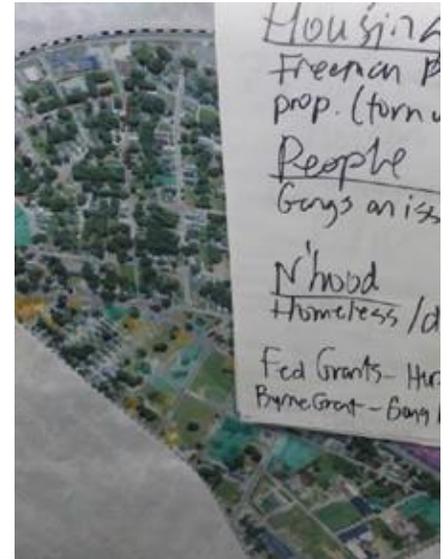
Figure 3.12 -Crime hot-spots based on 2012 Crime Data

## Causes of Crime

Many research studies stress a causal relationship between violent, property and nuisance crimes. The consensus belief is when people cannot obtain jobs and opportunities in the formal economy, they are at high risk for becoming involved in gang life and criminal activities.

Weak neighborhood infrastructure, such as limited youth development programs, may be a major contributor to the high crime rate. For instance, there are neighborhood-based after school programs in the community, and most community centers offer mostly unstructured recreational programs.



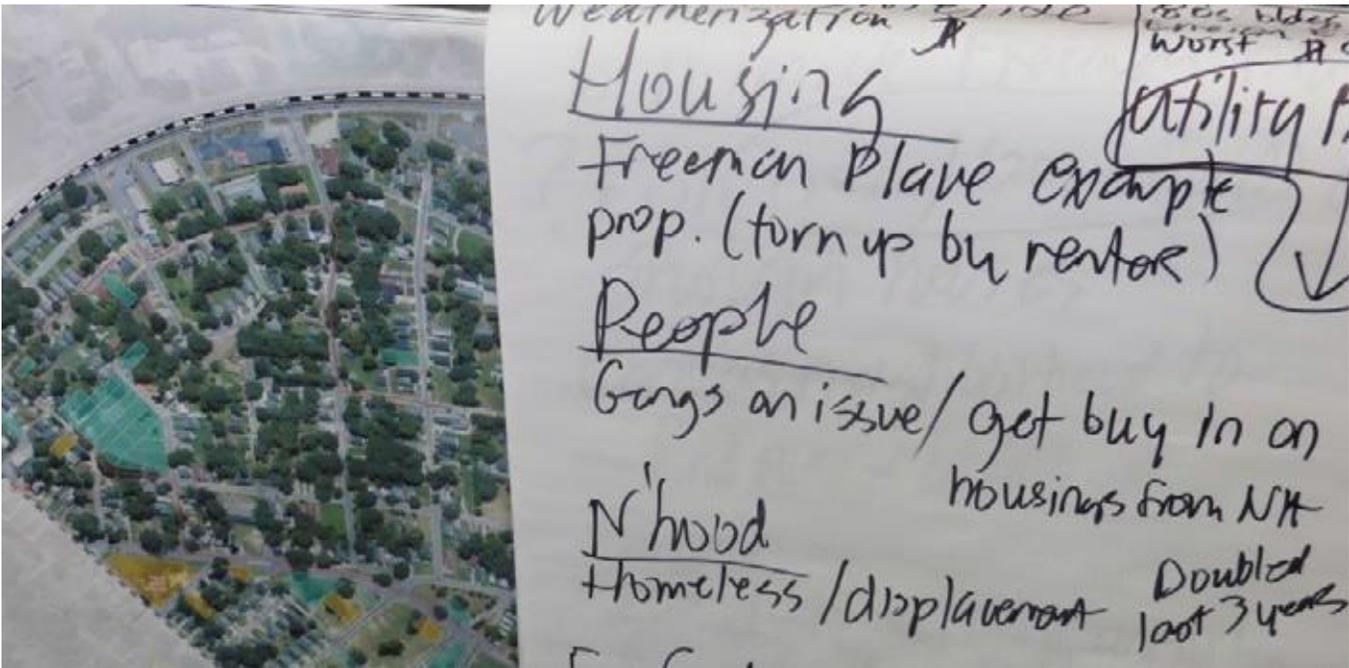


## 4. Community Engagement

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## Public Outreach Strategy

The success of the Center City Transformation Plan depends on the involvement of the people that will live, work, and play within the revitalized neighborhood. Engaging the diverse group of residents and stake-holders required a multi-faceted strategy devised to connect the people with the planning process. This strategy recommended a combination of the following techniques:

- Conducting direct surveys of the residents.
- Leveraging social media outlets to provide planning process updates.
- Newsletters to be distributed with neighborhood school report cards.
- Public charettes to encourage direct participation.
- Educational outreach to provide training to residents on the process of the CNI.
- Public information sessions hosted by City Councilmen that serve the Center City districts.
- City of Wilson Planning Staff assigned to the project for questions regarding neighborhood policies.
- Wilson Housing Authority staff trained in relocation assistance to answer questions about relocation and/or maintaining existing housing.
- Utilization of ongoing Wilson Initiatives to further educate the overall community regarding the Transformation Plan.

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## Direct Survey Whitfield Home Residents - 2013

During the summer of 2013 the Wilson Housing Authority conducted a direct survey of residents within the Wilson Housing Authority Whitfield Homes units. Out of 240 households solicited, 222 responded. This participation represents a 92.5% participation rate for the survey. The survey format was a hard copy form that focused on the following topics:

- Quality of Life
- Quality of Housing
- Quality of Neighborhood

Quality of life questions focused on household size, household composition, existing income rates, educational attainment, health and wellness. Income questions also focused on sources of the income in comparison to expenditures to gauge financial stability within the neighborhood.

Quality of housing questions were directed to the physical condition of Whitfield homes including adequacy of units compared to household size, mechanical systems in regards to heating and air conditioning, cleanliness and condition of living spaces, utility bill perceptions. Exterior space questions included parking and play areas immediately around the homes.

Quality of neighborhood questions were focused on measuring transportation demands and access concerns, public safety concerns from crime, public health concerns from environmental issues, access to employment, access to services such as grocery and pharmacy, access to medical care, and access to schools and childcare.

A full copy of the survey and summary results are included in the appendices.



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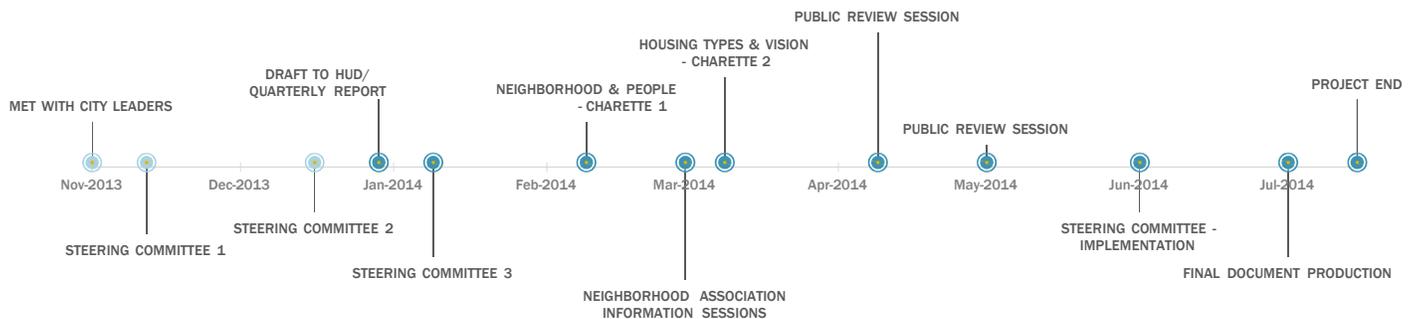
## Transformation Plan Road Map

The initial start for the Transformation Plan was the Fall of 2012. Due to several challenges, the transformation plan time line was extended to accommodate with the Wilson Housing Authority transitioning to new leadership and the selection of the Wooten Company as the planning coordinator. This restart also required a new Steering Committee to be formed as key partners had changed staffing as well.

The planning process relaunched in November 2013. The target completion date remained July 15, 2014 for the plan documentation. To accomplish the necessary public involvement a Transformation Plan Road Map was developed to schedule key project milestones in order to maintain completion of the planning process within the allocated grant time frame. Refer to figure X.X. While truncated, per the goals of the Choice Neighborhood Initiative process, public participation remained pivotal to completing the planning process.

## Transformation Plan Road Map

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Figure 4.1 - Transformation Plan Road Map showing the shortened planning process.

## Public Participation Milestones

### Steering Committee Meeting 1 - November 2013.

This meeting served as the project re-start with community leaders and was tasked with introducing the team members, outlining the key issues within Center City, discuss overall project schedule, and discuss deliverables.

### Steering Committee Meeting 2 - December 2013.

The second steering committee meeting served as a platform to review the observations of the steering committee identified in the first steering committee meeting, outline the strategy for public outreach, discuss leadership needs at the city staff and community leadership level, and identify workshop venues.

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### **Steering Committee Meeting 3 - January 2014**

Meeting 3 discussed the public charette topics, identify roles and needed key stakeholders, and finalize notification plans for inviting the community residents.

### **Charette 1 - February 2014**

Hosted at the Save A Youth Center, formerly Adams School Building, this was the first workshop to orient residents to the Center City Choice Neighborhood Initiative. The charette platform is intended to give residents the opportunity to participate in the planning process in a hands on manner. Planning concepts were not presented, the focus of this work session was to garner public participation and teach residents about the Choice Neighborhood Exhibit.

Participants circulated the auditorium and visited stations that addressed people, neighborhood, or housing. The stations were grouped by category according to the topics of people, neighborhood, and housing. Each station had maps and/or images that related to the topics allowing residents to identify with issues. This input was invaluable to the planning team as it provided a spatial relationship between the issues raised during the direct survey and the Center City neighborhood.

#### **Goals for charette 1:**

- Review and verify neighborhood assets
- Discuss vision for neighborhood in future
- Discuss community issues and identify potential mechanisms for change
- Identify key goals and desired outcomes

#### **Key Participants:**

- Residents
- Community Leaders
- City Leaders
- Steering Committee
- Planning Team
- Pest Prevention Specialists

#### **Outcomes:**

- Over 80 participants attended
- 47 survey cards were collected providing additional feedback and insight
- Attendants received free blood glucose screening and blood pressure checks by the Wilson Health Department.
- The Save a Youth Center provided residents with after school program information
- Residents voiced their concerns regarding housing types, locations of services, and safety issues.



## Wilson Center City CNI - Center City Transformation Plan Workshop Scorecard

### Instructions:

- Attend each station
- Add your input and comments to the maps
- Ask questions
- Respond to the questions for that station below

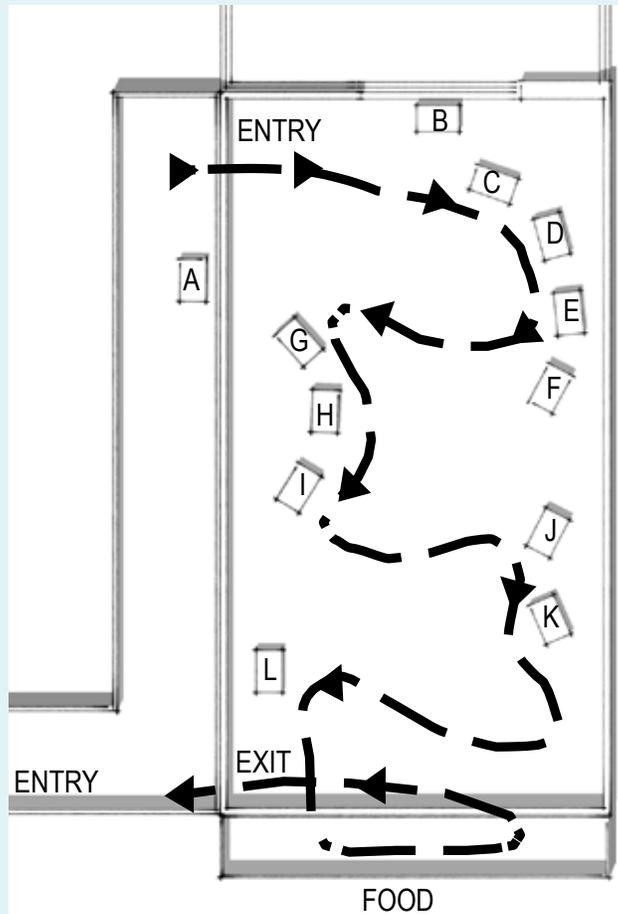
Have Fun!

Visit with your neighbors!

This is your Neighborhood Vision!

### Stations Completed

- \_\_\_ A. Check-in
- \_\_\_ B. Overview of CNI
- \_\_\_ C. People 1
- \_\_\_ D. People 2
- \_\_\_ E. People 3
- \_\_\_ F. People 4
- \_\_\_ G. Neighborhood 1
- \_\_\_ H. Neighborhood 2
- \_\_\_ I. Neighborhood 3
- \_\_\_ J. Housing 1
- \_\_\_ K. Housing 2



### C. People 1

1. Where do you go to doctor? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Where do you go to dentist? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where do you go for prescriptions? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you have health insurance? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How do you get to the doctor? Bus car or walk? \_\_\_\_\_

### D. People 2

6. How many times do you exercise week? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you use parks? Visits per month? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you ride your bike? How far? \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 4.2- Charette 1 scorecard. This score card oriented participants to the charette and also served as a second survey to further identify planning issues within the community.

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## **Web-Survey 1 - Goals and Principles**

Using Survey Monkey, a web based survey platform, a public survey was conducted to evaluate and rank the Goals and Principles for the Center City Neighborhood Transformation plan. The survey contained 12 questions that were based off feedback received during Charette 1.

The final survey participation included 40 people. Participants answered anonymously. The access link was posted on the Facebook feed and directly sent to all members of the steering committee. 22.5% of the respondents lived within Center City, the remainder lived in the surrounding context.

While the participation of residents was a small margin, the intent of the websurvey was to increase the awareness of the Transformation Plan Process and build support from the greater population. The survey results, fully contained in the appendices, show that the community is aligned with the priorities identified by the Whitfield home residents. This alignment is important to aide in breaking down social boundaries and maintaining community support for large scale redevelopment projects that will require community wide support both financially and socially.

**Survey questions were designed to generate discussion between residents and community leaders regarding the primary aspects of people, neighborhood, and housing.**

### **Housing questions focused on:**

- Type of structures, seeking direction between townhome, single family, and apartment style units
- Priorities in features for houses including location, access, and types of spaces
- Ownership vs. rent

### **Neighborhood questions focused on:**

- Location within the community
- Prioritizing neighborhood features including outdoor spaces, parking, and safety
- Gauging preference for transit oriented development
- Questions regarding neighborhood density

### **People questions focused on building upon**



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## **Charette 2 - May 2014.**

Charette 2 served as a platform for updating residents on the progress of the Center City Transformation Plan. The workshop was conducted at the Save a Youth Center in order to maintain neighborhood connectivity. Residents of Whitefield homes can walk to the site from their residential areas.

With over 150 attendees from the neighborhood in addition to City staff and the planning team, the workshop was held as a town hall meeting format. This allowed the consultants to present the progress of the project, review specific concept plans, and host a question and answer session. During the question-and-answer session, residents were allowed to discuss the next steps with Housing Authority Staff, the planning team, and City Officials.

### **Goals:**

- Review neighborhood vision and key catalyst project areas
- Review housing types that are suitable per the market assessment
- Educate residents on opportunities for rent and ownership

### **Participants:**

- Residents
- Wilson Housing Authority
- Planning team
- City staff

### **Outcomes:**

- Plan concepts reviewed
- Residents voiced concerns for specific housing types
- Residents learned the importance of remaining active within the process
- Wilson Housing Authority presented next steps for the Center City Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan

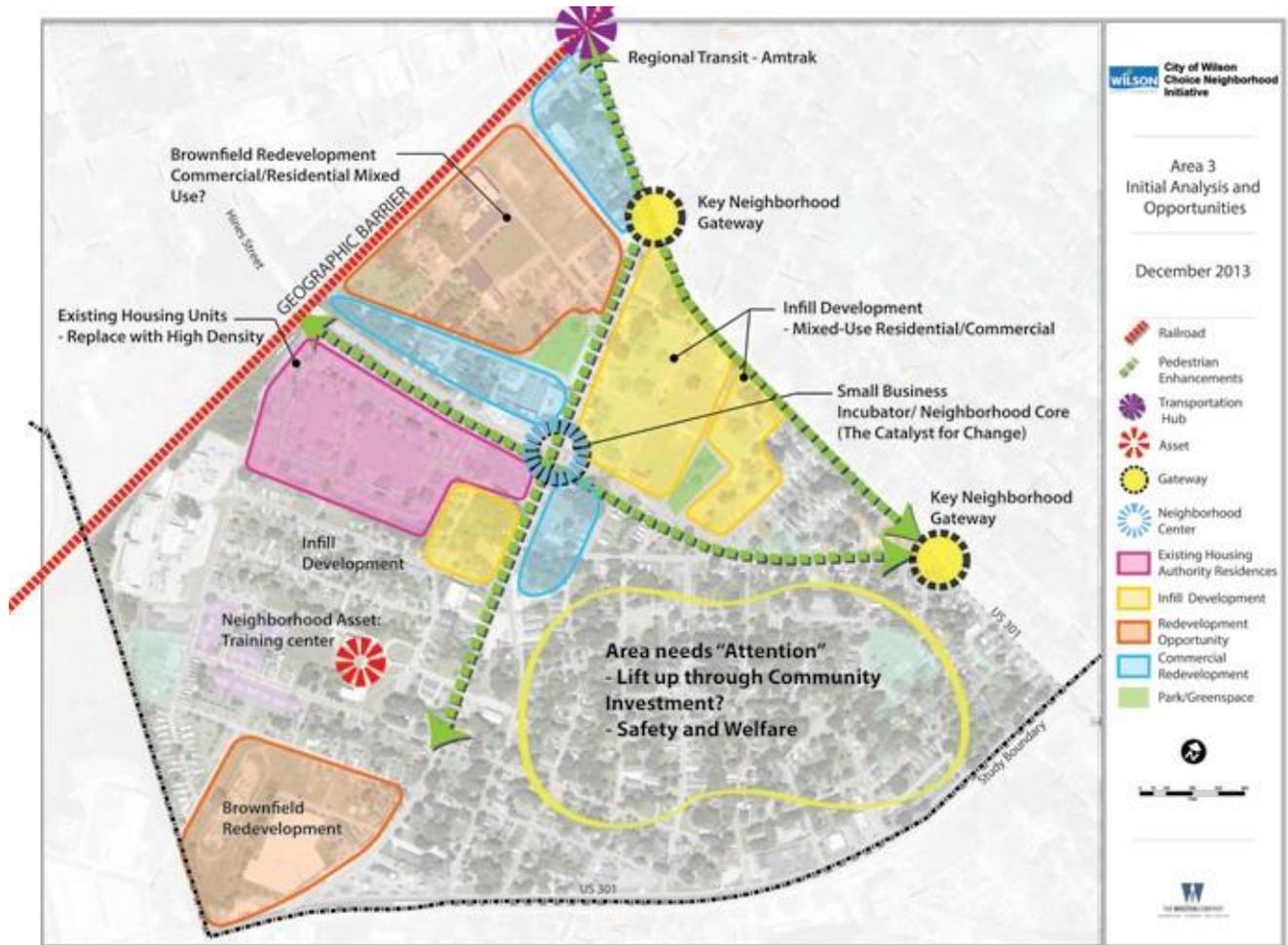


Figure 4.3- Findings from the workshops were captured on diagram maps. These maps served as guides for Transformation Plan strategies. This map shows the southeast corner of the study area.



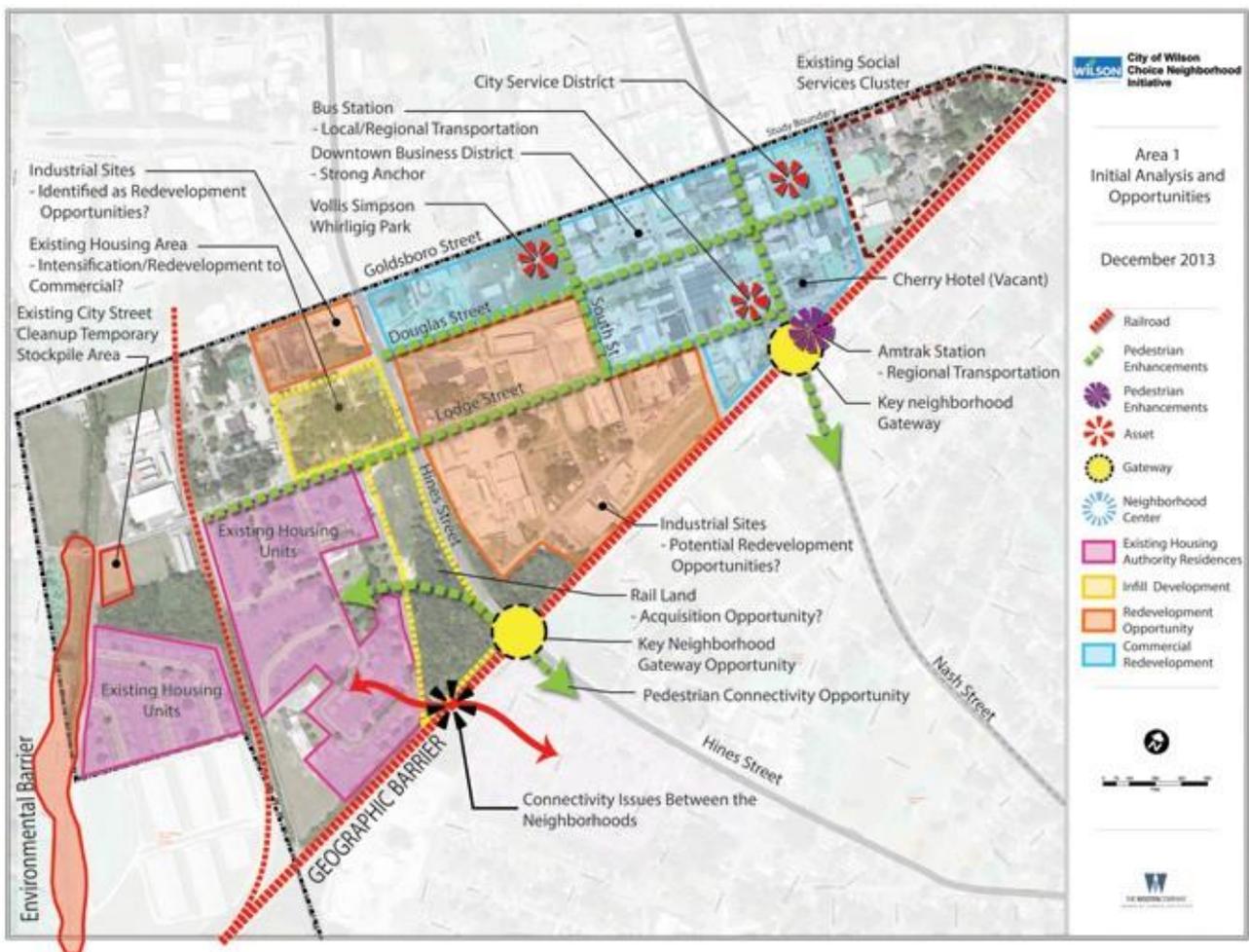


Figure 4.4- This map shows the northern portion of the study area.

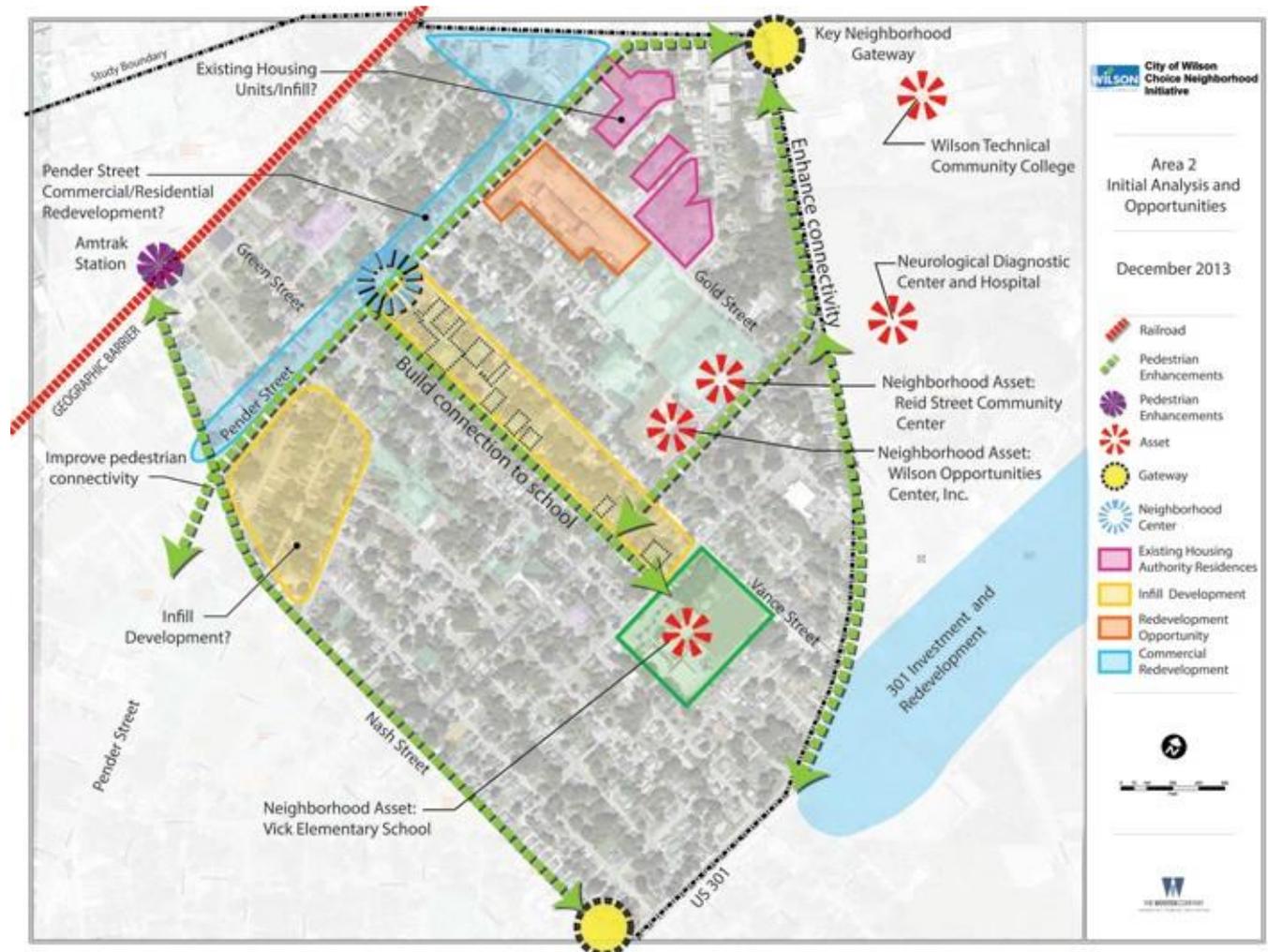


Figure 4.5- This map shows the northeast corner of the study area.



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**Public information sessions - April 2014-May 2014.** The information sessions were held by various Steering Committee members to provide alternative outlets for public involvement for those that either did not attend charette or were not able to voice their input through focused information sessions.

**Goals:**

- Present charette findings
- Provide opportunity for further feedback
- Garner support for preferred housing types
- Update residents on status of transformation plan progress

**Participants:**

- Residents
- Wilson Housing Authority Staff
- City Council
- Planning Commission members
- Steering Committee members

**Steering Committee Meeting 4 - June 2014.** Intent is to review final summary of public involvement work, finalize strategies for implementation, and review final draft of report prior to submission to HUD in July.

**Goals:**

- Review public involvement
- Outline implementation steps moving forward with Transformation Plan
- Review Final Draft information ahead of HUD deadline

**Deliverables**

To ensure compliance with the strict guidelines of the HUD grant, a schedule of deliverables was established between HUD and WHA/Wilson Planning to track progress. These submissions are as follows:

- November 22, 2013 - Table of Contents with Content
- December 30, 2013 - Draft Transformation Plan to HUD
- December 30, 2013 - Quarterly Report to HUD
- March 30, 2013 - Quarterly Report to HUD
- June 30, 2013 - Quarterly Report to HUD
- July 15, 2013 - Final Transformation Plan to HUD

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## Additional Outreach Programs

City of Wilson initiatives that were started with the 2030 Comprehensive Plan were directly related to citizen comments regarding the future of their children in regards to safety, security and the ability to thrive. Several programs are directly related to these comments and include:

- Youth Master Plan - Tasked with identifying needs of children for promoting their well being. The Youth Master Plan committee will play an intricate part of the people strategies.
- Ready by 21 - Tasked with providing choices for teens through higher education, training and job placement as well as volunteering opportunities.
- Communities in Schools - Tying the community back to the schools through enhanced volunteer programs to help students succeed.
- Community Resource Guide/211 number - Services and support contact number to direct citizens to the right support agency

### Key Partners:

- 301 Forward
- Wilson County Schools
- Wilson Chamber of Commerce
- Wilson Community College
- Barton College
- St. Johns Community Development Corporation
- Wilson Public Schools
- Wilson Community Credit Union
- Diversified Opportunities
- JSL Development Center Inc.
- Bridgestone Americas
- Salvation Army/Boys and Girls Club
- Wilson County Partnership for Children/Smart Start
- Imagination Station
- J&L Summerville Academy
- Families in Action
- Upper Coastal Plains
- Opportunities Industrialization Center
- Carolina Family Health Centers





## 5. People Strategies

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### Top issues raised during public engagement:

- Public safety
- Child care before and after school
- Employment with better wages
- Health and wellness (relates to neighborhood concerns)

*Direct surveying reached 220 of 221 occupied homes*

*This represented 507 residents of mixed background, ages, and income.*



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## People Overview

The focus of the Center City Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan is to uplift the people of Center City. While focused on the residents within Whitfield homes initially, programs and policy changes will improve the quality of life for all residents in the area. The mission above all else is to remove the remaining barriers, both perceived and existing, to allow the community members to flourish.

The focus of this section is to discuss the vision for the people of Center City and specifically Whitfield Homes. Using input from the public engagement strategies, the information gathered has been synthesized and formulated into the vision and strategies contained in this section. The success of this project will depend on the commitment of the residents within the community to engage with City leadership, city staff, and the Wilson Housing Authority in meaningful partnerships that will lead Center City towards a new future.

## People Vision

The Comprehensive master plan established a leadership group 301 Forward will serve as the lead agency for implementation of all efforts under “People”. The Choice Neighborhood “People” planning principles are centered on education, safety (crime prevention and awareness), employment, workforce training, financial self-sufficiency, supportive services and health and wellness efforts. These are essential quality-of-life issues that directly impact residents and are fundamental to sustaining the community.

Working with the input of community residents and stakeholders, the Steering Committee through facilitation by the planning consultant, identified a set of goals that are focused on quality-of-life issues:

- Education – Improvement in early education to after-school
- Improve relationship with the City of Wilson Police and County Sheriff department
- Workforce development and job creation
- Supportive services enhancement (healthcare and budget/household finance training)
- Promote and support health and wellness initiatives
- Wilson Community College (on fringe of study area) job training and assist with pilot projects for energy efficiency of homes.

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The CCCNTP will meet these goals through a combination of strong civic leadership and broad community partnerships. Through the public involvement phase, it is clear that the City of Wilson is blessed with an abundance of citizens and businesses devoted to improving the common good. The challenge is uniting these organizations and focusing efforts to create lasting universal changes.

Strategies will need to be adopted that:

- Improve the accessibility of health and wellness services to the residents of Whitfield Homes
- Coordinate the priorities of community service organizations to focus on Center City residents, while maintaining overall community goals.
- Continue to build partnerships with community leaders in education, training, and workforce investment to improve the employability of Whitfield Home and Center City Residents.

## People Needs

The needs assessment is based on a combination of sources. Through the direct surveying of the Whitfield homes tenants. Utilizing the information collected from direct surveys, US Census Data, and the workshops, an analysis of the needs for Center City and Whitfield home residents revealed several key issues:

- Residents were not aware of after school programs available. This may be attributed to geographic separation between the two housing areas for Whitfield homes and location of the SAY center being remote to overall community.
- Residents have difficulty reaching health care services located outside of the neighborhood, depending on bus or car transportation.
- The number of female heads of household/single mother households is disproportionate to the surrounding county. Whitfield homes is over 86.9% women head of household.
- Income within the neighborhood, well below the poverty level, earned through Social Security and government assistance.



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## Goals

Based on the strategies for lifting up the people of Center City, there are 5 primary goals.

### 1. Residents are physically and mentally healthy

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Affordable health care</li><li>• Comprehensive preventative care</li><li>• Wellness training and lifestyle coaching</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced ER visits</li><li>• Reduced child and adult obesity</li><li>• Reduced chronic illness</li></ul> |
|---|---|

### 2. Increased access to employment opportunities

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vocational training access</li><li>• Skilled manufacturing and automation</li><li>• Green infrastructure training</li><li>• Job fair support and resume counseling</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase number of high school graduates</li><li>• Increase % attending higher education</li><li>• Increase % pursuing vocational training</li><li>• Provide job counseling to all Center City residents</li></ul> |
|--|--|

### 3. Strengthen the family units

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family support services</li><li>• Childcare network</li><li>• Big brother/big sister program to provide mentor-ship</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce % teenage pregnancy</li><li>• Reduce % teenage crime rate</li><li>• Increase % of CCCNTP children receiving mentor-ship</li></ul> |
|---|--|

### 4. Increase community building between Center City and greater Wilson

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain city wide festivals celebrating arts, food, and diversity</li><li>• Maintain social network and expand participation</li><li>• Host quarterly summits to share ideas</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase attendance by 15%</li><li>• Increase social media following by 50%</li><li>• Host first summit by February 2015</li></ul> |
|---|--|

### 5. Families can achieve financial stability

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Financial counseling</li><li>• Expanded home ownership program</li><li>• Community investment opportunities (Co-ops)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce % below poverty rate</li><li>• Increase % working</li><li>• Increase % of home ownership</li></ul> |
|--|---|

---

## Integration with Existing Programs and Policies

The goals established by the CCCNTP are ones that are desired by Center City as well as the greater community. Existing policies have been established that begin to foster these, working with city leadership, it will be important to identify the existing programs and identify how to apply these programs to meet the goal or quantify the gaps in coverage. From the gaps, new policies can be established.

The Wilson Housing Authority has played a consistent role in the ongoing care of its residents. Through regular counseling, training opportunities, and family services assistance, WHA has worked towards meeting these goals.

Expanding the role of leadership to include the 301 Forward Committee will strengthen the efforts. The 301 Forward Committee, while focused on bringing positive change to the 301 business corridor, is also focused on community wide economic development. Working under the guidance of the Wilson Comprehensive Plan, 301 Forward is working to implement programs that will train citizens, improve workforce capabilities, and attract new businesses to the Center City area that are vital to improving the financial outlook for the residents.

Wilson Housing Authority has also partnered with the Wilson School Board, Barton College, and the Wilson Community College to improve educational outcomes.

Combine these efforts with those of the Save A Youth Program, Young Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, and there are incredible opportunities available to the youth of Center City.

The challenge will be connecting these youth with these programs in lasting relationships.





# 6. Housing Strategies

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Table 6.1 - Implementation Matrix

Core Principle	Issue	Action Item/Task	Partnership Identified	Responsibility for Implementation	Metric
Housing	Ownership	Increase Job Training/Employment Opportunities to improve financial stability and subsequent home ownership	Wilson Community College & ESC, 301 Forward, North Carolina Housing Finance Association	301 Forward, City of Wilson, Wilson Community College, Wilson Housing Authority, ESC	Employment / Unemployment rates
Housing	Health and Wellness	Existing units are not current and experience mechanical system challenges	Wilson Housing Authority	Wilson Housing Authority	Remodel/Renovation of existing units to current standards
Housing	Health and Wellness	Access to Safe Exterior Recreation Areas	City of Wilson	City of Wilson, WHA	Safer parks near active residential units
Housing	Education	Walk zones are 1.5 miles from school, need to have safe access	Wilson County Schools, City of Wilson	City of Wilson	Implementation of safe schools program as identified in Wilson 2030 Comp Plan, and Safe Routes to School Program
Housing	Health and Wellness	Aging in place	WHA, City of Wilson	Wilson Housing Authority	Assure that adequate resources are available to maintain the aging population through rent assistance and community support
Housing	Health and Wellness	Housing is not sufficient for family size	WHA, HUD, Wilson Development Corporation	Wilson Development?, WHA	Develop new units that are supportive of the family structures while rent/ownership supported



Whitfield Homes has exceeded its service life. At the time of construction, these units represented a step forward in lifting up the community. In today's environment, they are substandard in terms of environmental and spatial provisions.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the guiding vision for the housing within Center City. It presents the overall principle, limitations to replacement costs, and results from the market assessment. The final vision is to replace the Whitfield Homes 1 for 1 while encouraging other developments to be built in conjunction with the Wilson Housing Authority.

## Vision for Housing

The vision for Whitfield homes is to create higher quality housing that maintains affordability and promotes neighborhood revitalization. Home options are to promote the flexibility of today's modern lifestyle accommodating young families, single residents, and aging in place for senior citizens in units that are complimentary to one another.



*Row houses constructed to look like single family homes.  
Private entries are a desire of residents*

Respective of the historic roots of the Center City area, homes should be developed respecting the southern architectural vernacular. The main attributes of the historic homes in the area include:

- Front and back porches
- Open kitchens
- Main circulation corridors that are aligned with windows and doors to promote ventilation
- Large overhangs to shade the building facades from summer sun
- Large windows to make use of daylight and natural ventilation

## Priority Housing Needs

The traditional characteristics of the southern architecture aligns well with the needs expressed by residents. These needs reflect the limitations of the original units that were developed solely with efficiency in mind. The average household occupancy in the area is 2.4 people, with most families consisting of one adult and two kids.

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### Resident demands for new units focused on the following criteria:

- More bedrooms
- Reduced utility bills
- Increased storage
- Better lighting
- Better ventilation
- Central air conditioning and ceiling fans
- Private entries
- Private exterior spaces
- Off street parking
- Exterior storage
- Washing machine and dryer connections

### Housing Principle

Housing needs to address the needs of the neighborhood in terms of form and functionality; new development should respect the southern architectural vernacular that defines the character of Center City to reinforce its legacy.

### Housing Vision

Housing should address the needs of the community in both terms of functionality and form. While the desire for single family home units is emotionally rooted in the image of financial stability, the future housing products within the neighborhood need to be flexible in terms of size, density, and cost. Homes should be durable yet maintain the southern architectural vernacular that is present in the historic areas of Center City.

### Housing Goals

- Refurbish existing housing units to meet modern standards (this is to restore functionality to allow for on-site relocation)
- Develop new single family homes and town homes that are affordable and accessible by the resident population
- Provide housing units that satisfy the demand for rental units to provide flexibility for families building their financial stability
- Develop homes that are appropriate for the aging population to remain within the community



Construction of New Units must meet state limits for construction costs, see table 6.2. These limits will require creative design solutions from the architecture team documenting the final complexion of the replacement units.

## Replacement costs per unit will be utilized as follows

Table 6.2 - Development Cost Limits for State of North Carolina

<b>2013 UNIT TOTAL DEVELOPMENT COST (TDC) LIMITS</b>														
<i>Number of Bedrooms</i>														
	<i>0</i>		<i>1</i>		<i>2</i>		<i>3</i>		<i>4</i>		<i>5</i>		<i>6</i>	
	<i>HCC</i>	<i>TDC</i>												
<b>GREENVILLE</b>														
Detached/Semi-Detached	77,679	135,939	99,391	173,935	114,272	199,975	135,361	236,882	158,934	278,135	173,982	304,468	188,161	329,282
Row House	62,575	109,506	82,444	144,277	97,117	169,955	118,768	207,844	141,435	247,512	156,110	273,193	170,286	298,000
Walkup	56,598	99,047	76,584	134,021	97,311	170,295	127,068	222,368	157,747	276,056	177,539	310,693	197,048	344,833
Elevator	64,099	102,559	89,739	143,582	115,379	184,606	153,838	246,141	192,298	307,676	217,937	348,700	243,577	389,723
<b>RALEIGH</b>														
Detached/Semi-Detached	81,798	143,146	104,661	183,157	120,335	210,586	142,564	249,488	167,396	292,943	183,247	320,682	198,187	346,828
Row House	65,842	115,223	86,760	151,830	102,225	178,893	125,039	218,818	148,915	260,602	164,374	287,654	179,310	313,793
Walkup	59,782	104,618	80,862	141,508	102,734	179,784	134,117	234,705	166,485	291,349	187,359	327,878	207,930	363,877
Elevator	67,826	108,522	94,957	151,931	122,088	195,340	162,783	260,453	203,479	325,567	230,610	368,976	257,740	412,385
<b>WILMINGTON</b>														
Detached/Semi-Detached	82,729	144,776	105,854	185,244	121,719	213,008	144,261	252,456	169,400	296,449	185,448	324,533	200,584	351,021
Row House	66,449	116,286	87,592	153,287	103,272	180,726	126,389	221,181	150,557	263,475	166,206	290,861	181,340	317,345
Walkup	59,272	103,726	80,208	140,364	101,919	178,358	133,091	232,909	165,227	289,147	185,960	325,431	206,398	361,197
Elevator	67,102	107,364	93,943	150,309	120,784	193,255	161,046	257,673	201,307	322,091	228,148	365,037	254,989	407,982
<b>WINSTON-SALEM</b>														
Detached/Semi-Detached	79,918	139,856	102,253	178,942	117,527	205,673	139,064	243,362	163,250	285,687	178,686	312,700	193,205	338,109
Row House	64,760	113,331	85,238	149,166	100,229	175,401	122,387	214,178	145,653	254,893	160,712	281,246	175,224	306,642
Walkup	58,921	103,112	79,806	139,660	101,441	177,522	132,544							

- 1 bedroom walk-up - \$134,021 (1,000 sq. ft.)
- 2 Bedroom walk-up - \$170,295 (1,100-1,200 Sq. Ft.)
- 2 Bedroom row house - \$169,955 (1,200 sq. ft - 1,300 sq. ft)
- 3 Bedroom row house - \$207,844 (1,300 sq. ft - 1,400 sq. ft)

Based on market study results, competitive rental properties in the area are sized at an average of 1,000

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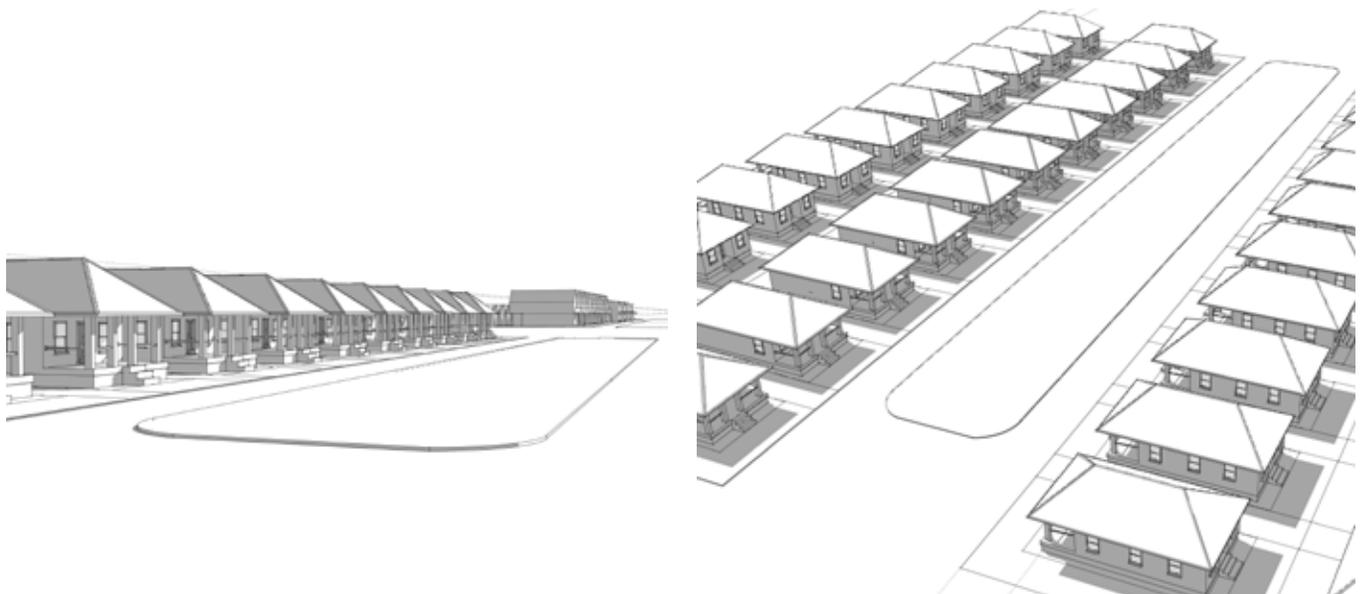
square feet for a two bedroom unit. A typical three bedroom unit will average between 1,100 and 1,200 square feet depending on final complexion. Replacing the Whitfield Home units should focus on creating a blend of 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, and a limited number of 3 bedroom homes. The intent of the 3 bedroom homes are to assist in generational living allowing a family to have a grandparent live with them in lieu of off-site.

## Degrees of Coziness

During the planning process it is clear that there are strong preferences towards specific housing types and styles. Residents expressed strong concern over discussions regarding increasing density, reducing interstitial spaces between structures, and concern over multi-family style housing. These concerns were reduced through the length of the planning process but will require additional outreach and educational sessions to develop a final unit makeup that appeals to the residents while working within cost expectations.

Without the additional density, which borrowing from work by North Carolina State University, could be referred to as coziness, the neighborhood goals expressed will not be fulfilled.

The final architectural composition of the housing units needs to reflect single family characteristics while providing the multifamily role necessary to increase density in Center City.



*Zero lot line concept with single story homes, shown clustered around a central green with rear alley access.*





*Zero lot line concept with two story homes, shown clustered around a central green with rear alley access.*

*Higher density to accommodate mixed income residents. Examples of single family/aging in place units constructed in Durham, NC. These units are flexible in size providing a mix of one and two bedroom units.*



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## Policy Initiatives

- Through land development standards and zoning, facilitate the development of a mix of housing types at different price points to meet the needs of households with different incomes.
- Continue to coordinate efforts with other government entities, such as the Wilson Housing Authority and local affordable housing developers, to seek efforts to develop affordable housing units. An example of this type of partnership is the Freeman Place project.
- Maintain existing single-family homes to provide an appropriate inventory of affordable owner-occupied housing in the City.
- Implement the Housing Improvement Action Strategy Plan for Wilson. The Plan includes strategies for tenant and landlord accountability, improving the housing complaint and enforcement process, providing educational opportunities to tenants and landlords, improving affordable housing ownership, improving safety in neighborhoods, code improvements, and other strategies
- Consider adopting new development standards to limit the conversion of single-family, owner-occupied homes in established neighborhoods to multi-family rental uses.
- Update the zoning ordinance to allow for a mix of housing types within new residential developments, within mixed-use areas, and within Downtown.
- Provide incentives to developers that include a mix of housing types within a single development.
- Amend the City's Zoning Ordinance to provide flexibility to promote the reuse of older buildings in commercial corridors and neighborhood business areas, such as Five Points. Parking reductions should be permitted in order to allow infill development within parking areas.
- Develop a vacant building initiative to increase private investment in vacant buildings in areas such as Five Points, the Highway 301 Corridor, and Downtown.

## Lead Developer

The Wilson Housing Authority will serve as the lead developer in rehabilitating the existing WHA homes. The rehabilitation will focus on repairing structural deficiencies and upgrading the mechanical and plumbing systems to meet energy code standards.

Public/Private partnerships will need to be formed to develop additional home types due to limits that the WHA has regarding total units that they can maintain at a time. A strategy is described within the



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implementation section.

## What does the Transformation Plan mean for existing tenants?

Housing program (including income/unit/tenure mix) strategy for the transformation of housing through rehabilitation, preservation, and/or demolition and replacement of severely distressed housing projects that incorporates energy efficient design principles

Replacement housing plan: strategy for offering a one for one replacement of all public and/or assisted dwelling units of the targeted neighborhood that are to be demolished or disposed.

City of Wilson/Wilson Housing Authority (agencies), per revised Section 104(d) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, will provide for the replacement of all low/moderate-income dwelling units that are demolished or converted to a use other than low/moderate-income housing as a direct result of the use of HUD/CDBG assistance. The residential anti-displacement and relocation assistance plan will include:

**1. One-For-One Replacement Unit Requirement.** All occupied and vacant occupiable low/moderate-income dwelling units demolished or converted to a use other than as low/moderate-income dwelling units as a direct result of activities assisted under HUD/CDBG programs must be replaced with low/moderate-income dwelling units. Substandard but economically repairable units that have been demolished or converted must be replaced under this provision, but more seriously deteriorated units need not be replaced.

- “Vacant Occupiable” or “Suitable for Rehabilitation” means a unit which is no worse than moderate according to the needs gradient scale published in the HUD/CDBG Application Guidelines, may be brought up to N.C. Small Cities



*Higher density single family homes. Examples are 2 and 3 bedroom units in the Raleigh Durham area. These are representative of current market trends. Mixing market rate and affordable units will allow for track developments to occur and improve diversity in ownership and income levels within Center City.*



*Sample floor plan for single bedroom housing unit, could be part of a two story row house or work as part of a larger multifamily unit.*





*Through resident input, it is clear that multi-family products need to allow for private exterior spaces such as front porches and entry ways. Units such as the one on the right, while appreciated for style, were received poorly due to the entry configuration.*

CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Standards for an expenditure of less than \$4,000 in rehabilitation costs, and will have an expected useful life of at least 10 years with routine maintenance upon completion of the rehabilitation. In addition a vacant unit may be classified as “not occupiable” if it has been condemned, is condemnable or otherwise unsuitable for human habitation under the local government’s housing code or redevelopment plan.

- “Low- and Moderate-Income Dwelling Units” (Occupied Units) means a unit that either is occupied by a low- or moderate-income family or rents for an amount that would be affordable to a low- or moderate-income family (i.e., rent and utilities would not exceed 24% of the median income for a family that would occupy the unit without overcrowding).
- “Low- and Moderate-Income Dwelling Units” (Vacant Units) means a unit whose fair market rent would make it affordable to a low- or moderate-income family. If assisted rehabilitation raises the rent of a low/moderate-income unit above the affordable rent level, the unit must be replaced.
- Replacement low/moderate-income dwelling units must be provided within 3 years of the commencement of the demolition or the rehabilitation related to the conversion, and must be:
  - o Located within the same jurisdiction.
  - o Sufficient in number and size to house at least the number of occupants that could have been housed in the units demolished or converted, as determined in accordance with applicable housing occupancy codes.

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o Provided in standard condition. (A substandard unit raised to standard condition will count.)

o Designed to remain low/moderate-income dwelling units for at least 10 years from the date of initial occupancy of the units. (Replacement dwelling units may include public housing and existing housing receiving Section 8 project-based assistance.)

**2. Relocation Assistance.** Agencies will provide relocation assistance to any low/moderate-income household displaced by the demolition of any housing unit or by the conversion of a low/moderate-income dwelling to another use, occurring as a direct result of assisted activities. A person choosing to rent must be offered either (i) a Section 8 housing voucher/certificate (through the housing authority) and referrals to comparable replacement dwelling units where the owner agrees to participate in the Section 8 Program or (ii) cash rental assistance to reduce the rent and utility costs to 30% of his/her income for a 5-year period and appropriate referrals to comparable replacement dwelling units.

**3. Minimize the Displacement of Persons.** Agencies will minimize displacement of persons in every possible case by rehabilitation of the structure. Rehabilitation will focus on energy efficiency to increase housing affordability and sustainability.

## Relocation plan

It is the intent of the City of Wilson/Wilson Housing Authority (agencies) to relocate only those occupants whose dwelling units are unfit for human habitation and beyond the scope of rehabilitation to meet the plans and achieve the aims of the CNI Program. The structures designated for acquisition and demolition will be selected based on dilapidated condition. Where undertaken, acquisition and demolition activities will cause permanent displacement to the occupant. The objectives of agency relocation practices shall:

- Follow the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, as amended.
- Refer the displaced individuals and families to comparable decent, safe and sanitary replacement dwellings.
- Make all eligible payments for moving and related expenses and for replacement housing payments.
- Relocation activities will be conducted in a manner that minimizes hardship to relocatees and promotes confidence in the relocation practices.
- Assure consistent treatment to all displaced occupants.

Agencies will follow all applicable HUD procedures in initiating the relocation process. Only those occupants whose dwelling units are unfit for human habitation and are not feasible to rehabilitate will be



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displaced. Displaced families or individuals will be interviewed to determine replacement housing needs. Comparable replacement housing will be identified and referrals provided for each family or individual displaced. Counseling and advisory services will be provided to occupants, as needed.

A notice explaining the occupant's rights and benefits will be sent to the occupants. A brochure answering many common questions concerning displacement will be included with the notice. Referrals may be considered when the occupants select a replacement home. Because replacement-housing payments are dependent upon the occupant's relocation to a safe, sanitary and decent replacement unit, this fact will be emphasized to the occupant.

Replacement housing benefits will be based upon the displacee occupying a unit comparable to the acquired unit with respect to size, type of neighborhood, and access to employment and public and commercial facilities. No one will be forced to move until and unless they have been given a reasonable choice of safe, sanitary and decent comparable housing units. Everyone will have a minimum of 90 days' notice to vacate after suitable housing has been located and referred.

Upon determination of the replacement unit by the occupant, the responsible agency will inspect the unit to insure that the housing conditions are standard.

After the families and/or individuals occupy the replacement unit, a claim may be filed for moving expenses and replacement housing payments per HUD guidelines/regulations.

The agencies will follow standard, ethical practices in the relocation of individuals and families. If there are any questions or complaints, the responsible agency will solicit the cooperation of all owners/tenants and request an opportunity to discuss them in an effort to satisfy all parties concerned. Complaint procedures provide for:

- Citizens to make comments at any point in the program.
- Should any individual, family, or entity have a complaint concerning relocation, the complaint will be referred to the responsible agency for resolution. If necessary, a meeting to discuss the complaint will be scheduled and a reply will be provided, in writing.
- If a citizen is dissatisfied with the local response, the complaint will be referred to the NC Department of Commerce or HUD, as applicable.

**Affordable housing preservation:** strategy for preserving affordable housing in the neighborhood and other activities necessary to ensure existing residents have access to the benefits of the neighborhood transformation

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**Affirmatively furthering fair housing:** strategy for meeting the applicable fair housing and accessibility requirements, including affirmative marketing, providing meaningful access to programs for persons with limited English proficiency, meeting applicable accessibility standards, and ensuring program activities comply with applicable civil rights requirements.

The City of Wilson/Wilson Housing Authority (Agencies) recognize the need to affirmatively further fair housing within the community. Agencies undertake fair housing activities to inform the public and housing related industries (contractors, lenders, Realtors, appraisers) of the requirement for fair housing. Agencies further fair housing through outreach activities to provide information regarding Federal and State fair housing legislation to inform citizens of fair housing laws and the need for affordable dwellings for low and moderate income households, handicapped persons, and families living within public housing.

Activities to affirmatively further fair housing are undertaken on a quarterly basis. The fair housing program includes activities that have provisions for reaching the visually impaired and ensuring equal opportunity for housing in the community for all persons regardless of income status. Typical activities include:

- Annually reviewing and updating as necessary fair housing plan and complaint procedures
- Posting fair housing marketing materials in agency offices and other public buildings
- Advertising fair housing compliant procedures in local newspaper
- Distributing fair housing materials to local lending institutions, and community and citizen organizations.
- Conducting fair housing workshops regarding Title VIII
- Distributing fair housing materials to local churches, community centers, senior centers, and other outreach organizations
- **Complaint Procedures.** If the agencies should receive a complaint, the following policy is followed:
  - Any person or persons wishing to file a complaint of housing discrimination may do so by informing the agencies of the facts and circumstance of the alleged discriminatory acts or practice.
  - Upon receiving a housing discrimination complaint, the agency receiving the complaint, shall acknowledge the complaint within 10 days in writing and inform the North Carolina Human Relations Commission about the complaint.
  - Agency staff shall offer assistance to the North Carolina Human Relations Commission in the investigation and reconciliation of all housing discrimination complaints which are based on events occurring within the City of Wilson.



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- Agencies publicize at least once per year the TDD# and who to contact with housing discrimination complaints.

## **Market Assessment Rental Assessment**

The demographics of the Center City CNI Area and Primary Market Area reflect the older, established neighborhoods near downtown with a higher renter percentage, low marriage rate, and lower median income.

- Only 21.3 percent of households in the Center City CNI Area are married
- 2012 renter percentages were estimated at 69.6 percent in the Center City CNI Area
- Renters age 62+ at 55.4 percent in the Center City CNI Area
- The overall median income in the Center City CNI Area is only \$19,716
- The median income of renter households is even lower at \$15,463 in the Center City CNI

## **Competitive Rental Environment**

The primary market area's multi-family rental market is performing well with low vacancy rates. Most rental communities near downtown Wilson are affordable including several LIHTC communities. Newer market rate communities are located to the west or north of downtown.

- Among the market rate and LIHTC communities providing vacancy data, 35 of 838 units were reported vacant for a rate of 4.2 percent. The LIHTC communities reported 12 of 384 units vacant for a rate of 3.1 percent.
- The Wilson Housing maintains waiting lists for both its Housing Choice Vouchers and Public Housing Authority units including an average of 95 households on the waiting list for Whitfield Homes.
- The average rent among all surveyed general occupancy communities was \$407 for one bedroom units, \$458 for two bedroom units, and \$517 for three bedroom units.
- Only one community is truly achieving market rents as the rents at Thornberry Park are several hundred dollars above the next highest priced community. The remainder of the surveyed market rate communities off rents comparable with 60 percent and 50 percent LIHTC rents.
- The newest community in the market area is Springbrook, a 38 unit LIHTC community that leased at an average monthly rate of 9.5 units in early 2011.

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## Senior Rental Environment

The market area's senior rental communities are less diverse than general occupancy communities and are limited to affordable communities. Three senior rental communities were identified in the PMA including one LIHTC community and two deeply subsidized communities (one with tax credits).

- The senior LIHTC community reported four of 57 units vacant for a rate of 7.0 percent.
- One of the deeply subsidized communities is 100 percent occupied and the other reported two of 24 units vacant for an 8.3 percent vacancy rate despite a waiting list of 1-2 years.
- The average rent among the senior LIHTC community was \$400 for one bedroom units and \$464 for two bedroom units. With unit sizes of 700 square feet for one bedroom units and 875 square feet for two bedroom units, the rent per square foot was \$0.57 for one bedrooms and \$0.53 for two bedrooms. These averages include units at 50 percent and 60 percent AMI.

## Demand for Affordability

- Significant income qualified renter households exist among the 40 percent – 80 percent income levels in both the Center City Area and Primary Market Area.
- With the inclusion of a minimum income limit, the percentage of income qualified renters
- Above 60 percent is significantly lower within the Center City Area, illustrating the lower income of households.
- The PMA has sufficient income qualified households exist among the 80 percent and 100 percent AMI levels to support market rate, general occupancy, rental housing the Center City CNI Area and the market area has a large number of income-qualified renters at all income levels.
- Among senior renter households, income-qualified households are more heavily weighted toward lower income levels than among total households. Very few senior renter





## 7. Neighborhood Strategies

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Core Principle	Issue	Action Item/Task	Partnership Identified	Responsibility for Implementation	Metric
Neighborhood	Food Desert/ Health Wellness	Develop catalyst project that has mixed use/residential within Center City	City of Wilson, WHA, Wilson Development, HUD	City of Wilson/Private public partnership	Attract a neighborhood grocery and primary services to core of Center City within access to residents.
Neighborhood	Safety	Crime control needed to provide a safe community	City of Wilson, Community Watch, Church groups, WHA	City of Wilson, WHA	Reduce Crime, establish yearly goals and adjust program as needed
Neighborhood	Environmental Safety	Flooding along the existing Whitfield Homes properties	City of Wilson, Army Corp of Engineers, NCDENR, WHA	City of Wilson, WHA	Develop stream restoration/flooding controls to mitigate issues.
Neighborhood	Education	Students in neighborhood are at risk in terms of achievement	Wilson County Schools, City of Wilson	Wilson County Schools	Enhance programs at Vicks Elementary, Daniels Learning Center, Fike High School
Neighborhood	Transportation	Implement improved pedestrian bike lanes and sidewalks per 2030 Comp Plan, Wilson Comprehensive Bicycle Plan, Wilson	City of Wilson, NCDOT	City of Wilson, NCDOT	Set goals to complete improvements along Nash, Hines, and Pender Streets within the next 5 years, begin implementation

Preliminary Neighborhood Implementation Matrix



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## Vision for Center City

The overall vision for Center City is to use the redevelopment of part of Whitfield Homes in conjunction with the leveraging of public/private partnerships to revitalize the neighborhood into a community that can support the needs of the young families that live within the neighborhood. While the immediate need is to focus on restoring the vacant home-sites into a vibrant neighborhood, this can only be done by lifting up the existing residents through better job opportunities, improving their health and wellness through access to services, and improving the safety of the community through additional security and lighting.



## Neighborhood Vision

To revision the neighborhood, a series of public workshops and steering committee meetings were held to assess the existing neighborhood for its strengths and weaknesses. These were recorded in a series of diagrams that served as the basis for identifying key project sites. The diagrams revealed a strong desire to improve the main corridors running through the neighborhood, these are Hines, Pender, and Nash Streets.

The unifying factor of these main corridors is economic decline with multiple vacant lots and abandoned buildings. To restore the existing businesses, more residential units are needed to increase demand. To increase residential units, the neighborhood needs to be made more desirable for prospective home buyers. Homes need to be affordable to the residents, whether renting or owning. The percentage of rent to ownership needs to be improved as well as the strength of the neighborhood will come from those that have a vested interest in it through ownership.



While the need is great, only a phased approach will allow the transformation of the neighborhood to occur. Focusing on key areas within the neighborhood will allow for funding resources and support

agencies to be focused on delivering successful project deliveries that can be used to leverage future project successes.

## Neighborhood Principle

To create a diverse, stable, mixed-income neighborhood in which affordable, sustainable housing is the platform for improving the quality of life of neighborhood residents and the surrounding city.

### Preliminary Goals:

- Reduce neighborhood vacancy rate.
- Eliminate blighting influences that depress property values and have a negative impact on quality of life.
- Improve housing stock – quality and availability.
- Increase percentage of accessible homes.
- Decrease energy consumption/operating costs (rehabilitated and new construction housing).
- Increase home ownership.

### Preliminary Outcomes and Metrics:

- Maintain one to one replacement of public housing units.
- Target rental housing program to families at 50% or below Average Market Index.
- Ensure all new construction homes are energy efficient; incorporate energy efficiency measures in all housing rehabilitation.
- Provide minimum 10% accessible housing units.
- Provide fully accessible amenities (parking, playgrounds, etc.).
- Reduce neighborhood vacancy rate by 5% through infill/reuse of vacant lots.
- Increase homeownership by 5%.

### Key Neighborhood Projects:

- Redevelopment of the old factory sites between Nash and Hines Streets into multi-family housing.
- Develop a business incubator to encourage small businesses/startups to locate in Center City, building upon the strengths of downtown.
- Complete pedestrian and bike improvements to make the streets more livable for residents.



- 
- Develop Mixed Use project at intersection of Hines and Pender to encourage the location of a neighborhood grocery that can provide green groceries and fresh dairy.

### Key Neighborhood Policies:

- Economic development district along Pender and Nash Streets.
- Community watch to improve safety and build community trust.
- Public transportation subsidies to increase ridership.
- Safe havens programs for children and teens after school.

### Neighborhood Concepts

The historic fabric of Center City is rooted in the early life of the city as an industrial community located at a transit crossroads. Housing was created within a dense grid to support the warehouses and tobacco markets located in downtown. This resulted in narrow parcels with limited depths and roadways that were sized to a population that predominately walked to work with limited vehicular traffic.

Using the parcel sizes available, the vision for the neighborhood is to develop a higher density residential base. Using a southern architectural vernacular that is reminiscent of the craftsman style homes located around Elvie Street, the CCCNTP recommends the development of small single-family homes and town-homes. By using a smaller lot setback for single family home sites and encouraging row houses that net higher density, the frontages along Hines, Pender, and Nash could be transformed into a vibrant walkable neighborhood. Combine the density with traffic calming techniques, reduced road widths to allow for bike lanes and on-street parking, and increased sidewalk widths with tree planting will

### Key Redevelopment Criteria

- Pedestrian safe zones.
- Bike lanes.
- On-street/Off-street parking.
- Park and Open Spaces located in areas that are able to be observed by homeowners and main thoroughfares.
- Dense housing units - combination multifamily and single family.
- Mixed use development along main street frontages - retail ground floor, housing upper floors.



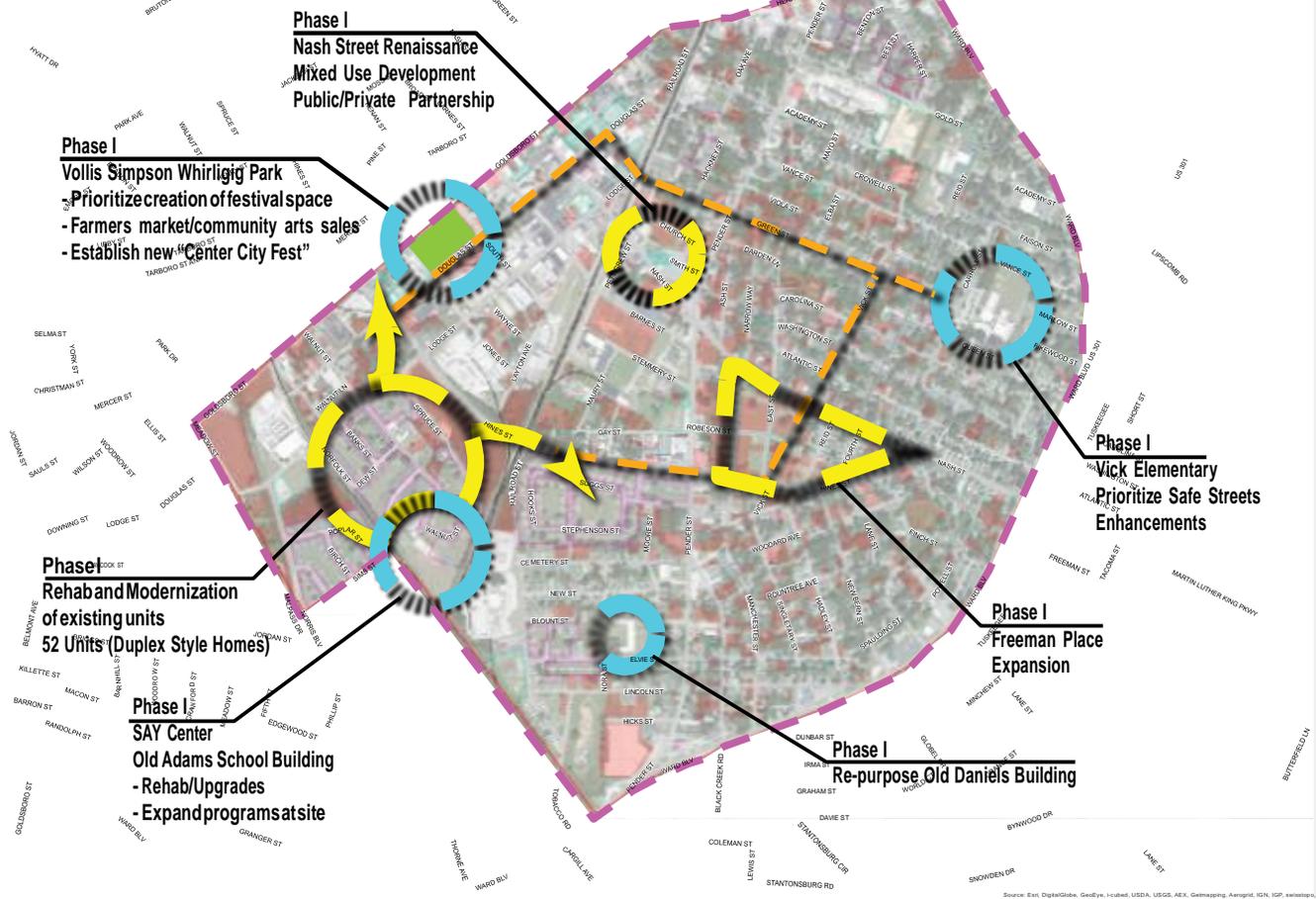
## Phased Development Approach

The implementation strategy is much like how one builds a house, it is important to start with a strong foundation, build a flexible yet durable structure, and finish with a structure that becomes a home. The most difficult challenge for any plan is taking the first step.

Through a phased approach, the redevelopment of Center City and Whitfield Homes will occur over a 5-10 year period. Focusing efforts on attainable projects that will serve as catalysts to the surrounding area will aide the leadership team in leveraging the available financial assets.



# Laying the foundation

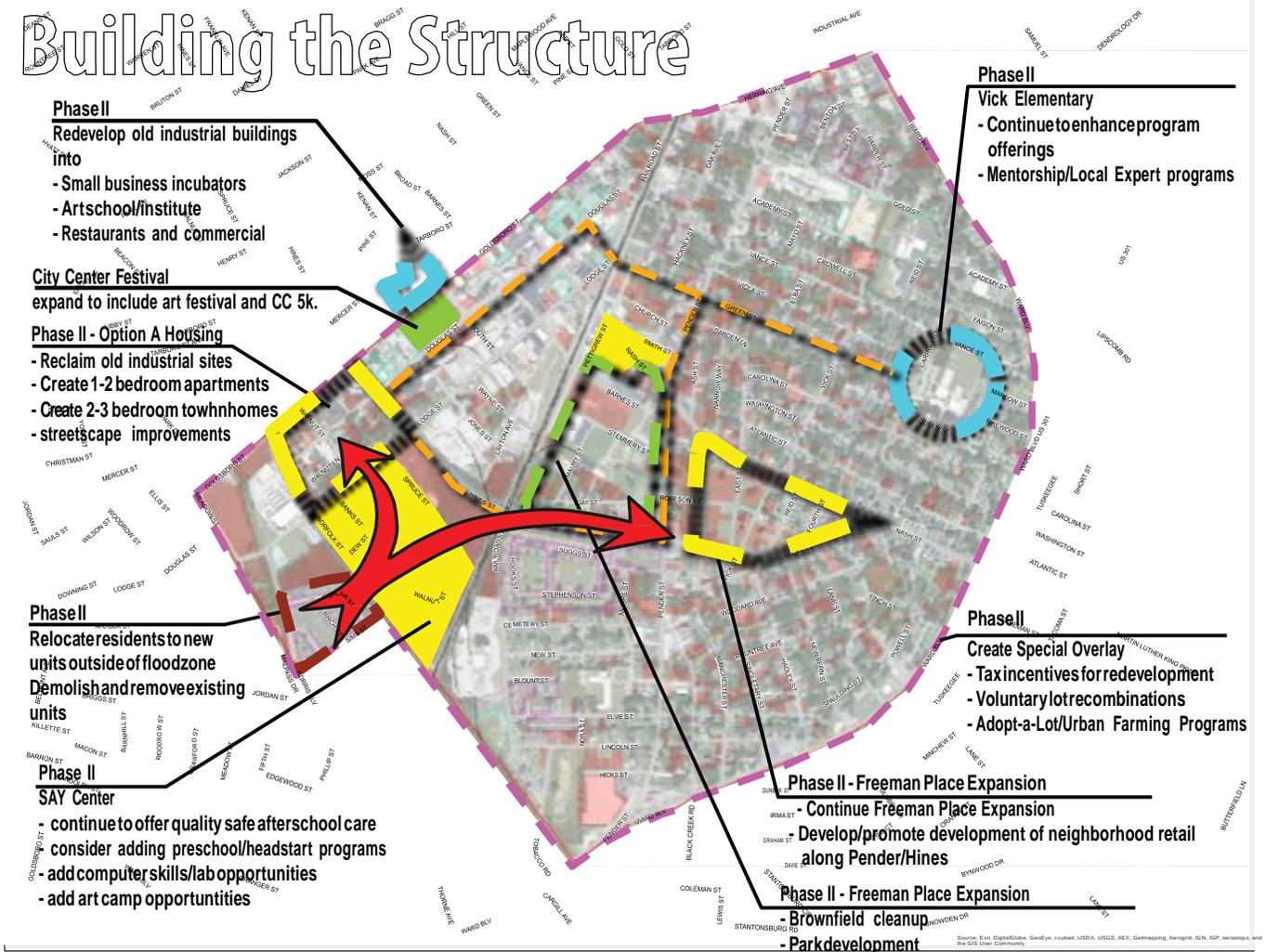


## Phase I "Laying the foundation." Years 1-2

Phase I focuses on restoring functionality to the currently underutilized housing within Whitfield Homes. This is key to bringing back population to the area and restoring stability to the southwest portion of the site. Key components are below:

- Rehabilitate 52 existing units of Whitfield Homes that are uninhabited at Lodge Street. (if implementation money is secured, begin development of town)
- Renovate and upgrade the SAY (Save-A-Youth) Center.
- Complete pedestrian and bicycle improvements at Green Street, Pender Street, Lodge Street.
- Consolidate nuisance vacant lots to facilitate quick sales.
- Initiate an adopt-a-lot program that encourages urban farming and community gardens on abandoned lots.

# Building the Structure



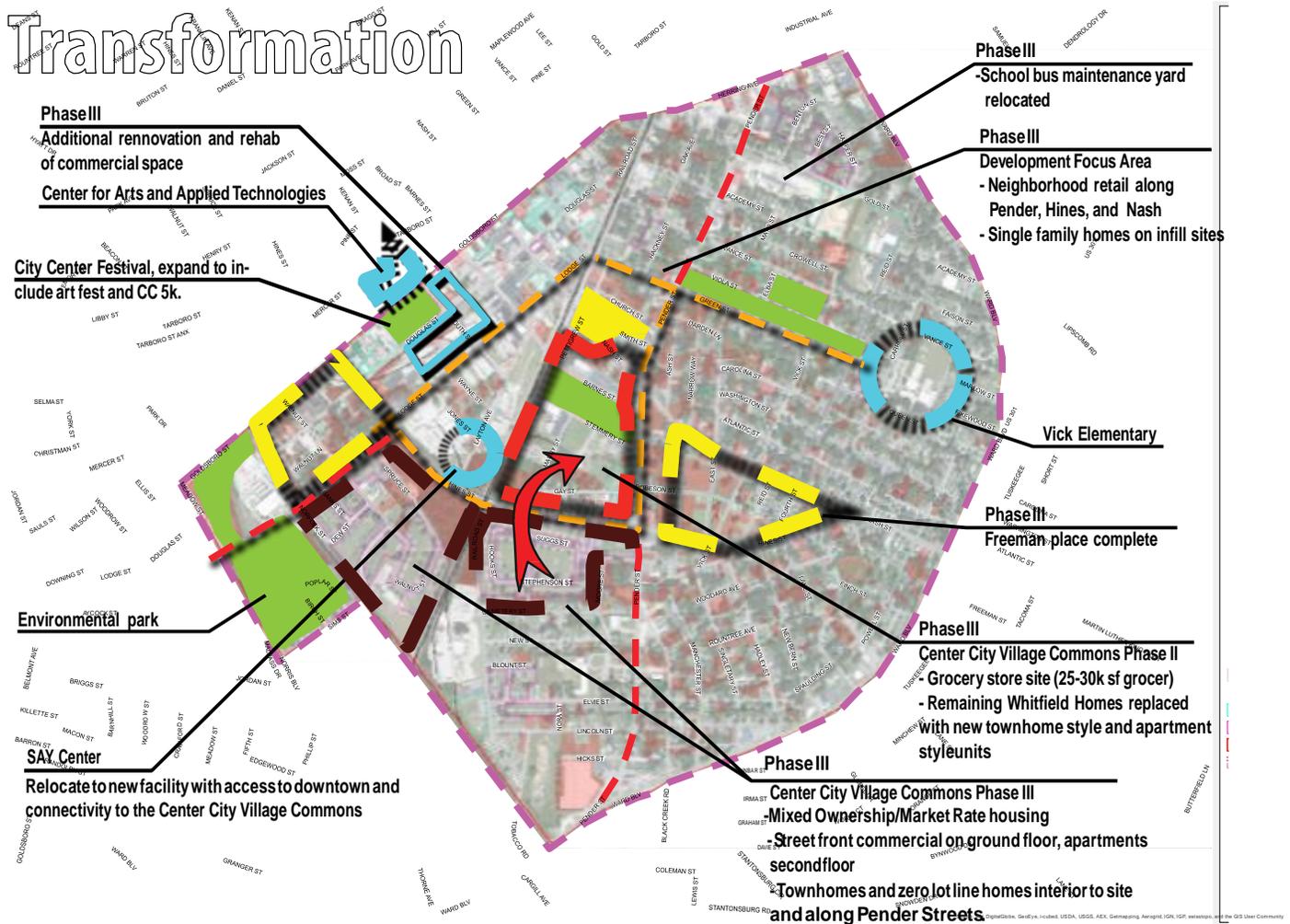
## Phase II “Building the structure.” Years 2-5

Building upon the momentum of Phase I, years 2-4 will focus on infill of vacant lots and redevelopment of existing vacant structures. The primary goal of Phase 2 is to develop new housing to allow for the relocation of residents from units located within environmentally sensitive areas. The main development thrusts include:

- 108-unit town-home community for Housing Authority around new central park.
- Work with private partnerships and chamber of commerce to promote retail development at intersection of Pender and Hines.
- Complete streetscape improvements along Pender and Hines Streets to foster walk-ability along main thoroughfares to the school.
- Continue development of Freeman Place single family homes.



# Transformation



## Phase III “Transformation.” Years 5-10

Building on the successes of Phase I and Phase II, Phase III looks at how to move beyond years 1-5 and begin to truly transform the neighborhood. Through the incremental investment of the earlier phases, development of the Center City Market Village will begin. This project concept would include grocery and retail stores located at the intersection of Hines and Pender Street. Additional Housing Authority town homes and apartments will be built around the central park and along Pender Street to create a restored neighborhood core.



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## Sustainability Requirement

Planning Grant recipients must become eligible to secure Stage 1 Conditional Approval of all or a portion of the neighborhood targeted in their Transformation Plan for LEED for Neighborhood Development from the United States Green Building Council. Transformation Plan recommendations must show evidence that the project(s) for Center City will pursue Stage 1 certification for LEED-ND. The CCCNTP planning process is not required to secure certification to fulfill the Choice Neighborhoods Program Requirements. Projects funded for implementation must comply with LEED standards.



## Neighborhood Sustainability Goals

Sustainability is the combination of building practices and planning strategies focused on reducing energy usage, improving public health and wellbeing, and creating opportunities to protect and restore the natural environment through smarter growth. The most prevalent measurement for sustainability is the LEED rating system. With the scale of a project like Center City, it is important to consider both building specific criteria as well as community wide issues regarding the LEED rating system. Successfully certifying a project is not an automatic guarantee that a neighborhood will be more livable, however the criteria do improve the livability of the neighborhood and its built environment.

Understanding the criteria and how to apply them to the neighborhood and to the individual building projects is key to the success of renewing Center City. The following categories are based from the LEED rating system:

**Storm drainage.** Consistent with North Carolina’s emphasis on water quality, all proposed developments will consider provisions for the detention and treatment of storm water run-off through the use of storm water detention ponds, rain gardens and bio-retention ponds and the natural terrain slope. Strategies to consider include green roofs, rain gardens, underground detention facilities for harvesting rainwater for building systems and landscape irrigation of common areas.

**Solar orientation & daylighting.** For multi-family and commercial construction, building widths should set to maximize the potential of bringing light to the interior spaces. Homes should be oriented to maximize natural daylighting where possible, with windows on the southern exposures and large overhangs or other solar shades to mitigate periods of glare.

**Community connectivity.** Sustainable design encourages pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. Bike lanes should be incorporated where possible along main roads to facilitate cross neighborhood travel.

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Sidewalks should be added to all main roadways and connectors. The LEED rating system takes into account the ability of a project to make the connections outlined above.

Community connectivity also relates to access to public transportation. Community residents should have access to 2 or more bus lines within 1/4 mile of their home in order to have adequate access. This criteria drives the need for a more dense development than currently present. Understanding the balance between the desires for private outdoor spaces and separation between residences while maintaining this density is an important consideration for the Transformation Plan.

**Natural area preservation.** The reuse of existing vacant land will promote the preservation of the remaining natural areas within Wilson County by focusing development to areas previously impacted. Areas that are not selected for development should be considered for natural habitat restoration and storm water mitigation. In regard to the LEED rating system, these techniques contribute to providing open space and protecting/restoring native habitat points.

**Public open spaces.** There are a number of existing parks and green spaces located within Center City that can contribute to maintaining public health and wellness. In their current state, these areas are not fully realized as amenities to the community. Restoring these areas or relocating the open space amenities to areas that are more suitable, should be considered; relocation may allow for buildings to be located in more desirable commercial areas while allowing green spaces to be provided to the remaining residential areas. The LEED rating system encourages the maximization of open space.

**Heat island effect.** Parking lots and building rooftops are the two primary sources of heat island effect. Light colored roofing systems, materials having a solar reflective index (SRI) of 78 or higher, should be considered as means to mitigate the effect from buildings. Metal roofing is a great example of a high SRI index roof material that is keeping with the surrounding context. Walkways and trails should be constructed using light colored paving materials to reduce the heat island effect at the pedestrian level; material colors are proposed to fall within the minimum SRI of 29. In areas where surface parking lots are utilized, the heat island effect will be reduced through the planting of shade trees within interior landscape islands and the surrounding perimeters.

**Energy reduction.** Relative to total cost impact, this is probably the most important aspect of a sustainable planning approach. Homes need to be designed and built utilizing the latest energy saving techniques that are at the same time within project budgets. Improvements should include high efficiency heating and cooling systems, improved insulated windows and doors, better insulation, reflective roofing material, and renewable building materials. Multi-family and commercial mixed use should also consider photo-voltaic systems where appropriate to further shave off electrical demand.

**Native plants.** The plant palette for the neighborhood and infill development should be predominately



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native and or locally adapted plants. The use of native and locally adapted plants will require less irrigation and reduce the amount of maintenance required to maintain plant health due to the plants adaptability to the local climate and host of potential pests. This strategy also provides habitat for wildlife through additional food sources and shelter.

**Rain water harvesting.** A combination of storm water detention ponds and underground cisterns should be considered on the neighborhood scale to collect rain water from rooftops, and pavements. The collected water can then be distributed to offset water requirements for landscaping and even building systems used in the commercial and institutional buildings.

**LED Lighting.** Another technique to reduce energy consumption and lower energy cost is using LED light systems. The benefits to LED lights are long life span, low power usage, multiple color options; an added benefit is LED light units do not contain mercury as found in Compact Fluorescent lights. We recommend that LED fixtures be utilized throughout the buildings and site applications.

**Safety.** While LEED does not directly look at safety as a sustainable strategy, in the long term redevelopment of Center City, it is a necessary component. Safety needs to be addressed from both a policy standpoint and active interventions by Wilson Police and neighborhood support groups through education, training, support, and counseling. Only when Safety is improved among all of the other aspects will the neighborhood return to being viable and sustainable.

**Universal Design.** Implementation of all new development plans will be in compliance with all applicable building codes and requirements for accessibility.



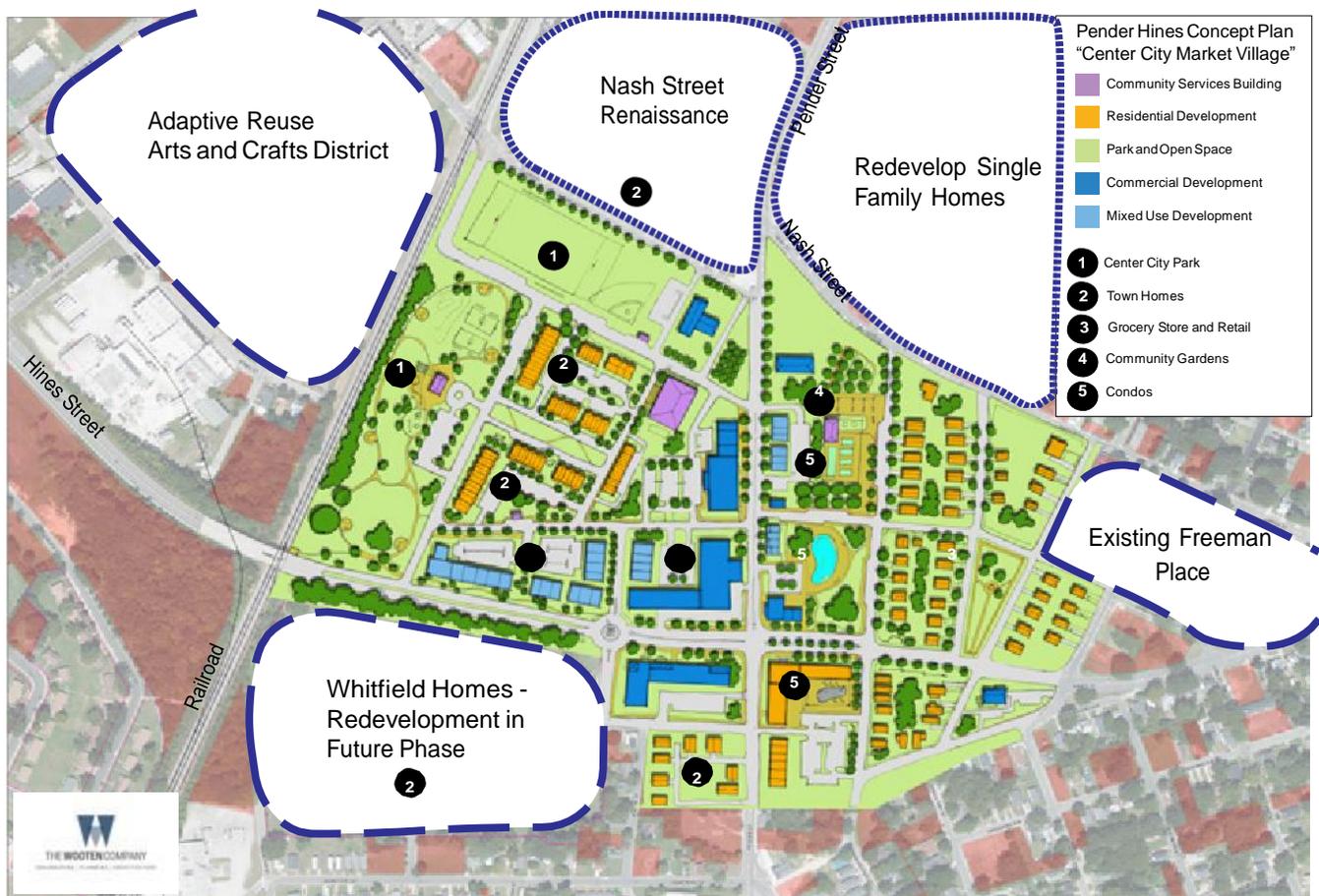
## Intersection of Hines and Pender Streets - Existing Condition

Whitfield Homes is located along the frontage of Hines Street, shaded purple in aerial below. The current units are duplex homes with parking on-street. Two large areas of open space were provided during development of the homes, but it is isolated to the interior of the development, limiting the functionality of these amenity areas by the overall community and making policing difficult due to poor site lines.



## Intersection of Hines and Pender Streets - Concept plan

Building upon the strength of the Hines/Pender street intersection, redevelopment of the existing vacant lots and a small portion of Whitfields Homes East would allow for the opportunity to create a high density intersection that combines row houses and multi-family units with a revitalized commercial infrastructure. Focusing the development efforts to this corner is vital to rebrand Center City as a vibrant neighborhood. Visibility of such a project is important as its success would not just be in creating physical units but also in generating energy about the neighborhood that could spread north and south along the Pender Street Corridor and east and west along Hines Street. The quantity of city owned vacant land would serve as a potential incentive for development as it is shovel ready with utilities already available.



## Center City Park

### Pender Hines Concept Plan "Center City Market Village"

- Community Services Building
- Residential Development
- Park and Open Space
- Commercial Development
- Mixed Use Development

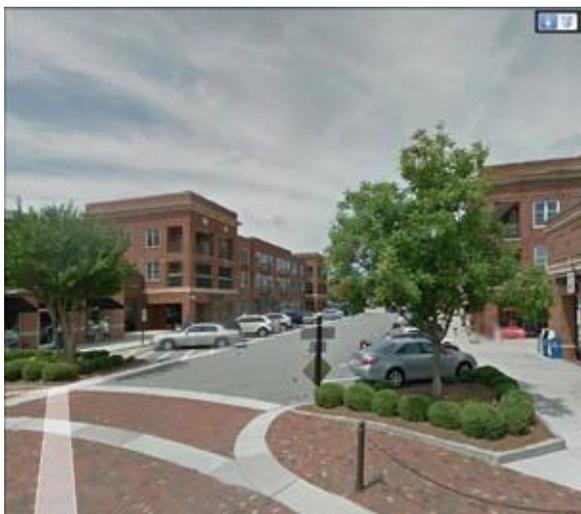
**1** Center City Park

**2** Town Homes

**3** Grocery Store and Retail

**4** Community Gardens

**5** Condos



*Mixed use concept*

Phase I of the Center City Village utilizes city owned property to develop a townhouse community that overlooks a central green space and is adjacent to a new City Park. Apartments/Condo residences would be developed along Hines Street above ground floor retail.

The White's Tire center in this concept would be converted into a neighborhood grocery co-op, providing Center City residents with access to fresh produce and groceries.

The park, redeveloping a brownfield site, will provide needed active recreation space in the form of basketball courts, fitness trail and playground. This greenspace will also serve as a buffer between the residential area and the rail road tracks.



## Community Garden



The Center City Village concept also envisions how the neighborhood can be transformed to support the ongoing success of Freeman Place. These single family homes, the next phase currently selling, are being developed for low income and first time home buyers. Potential buyers participate in finance counseling during the application process.

The configuration of the property for Freeman Place includes allocations for public open spaces. This concept shows the integration of a rain garden and a community garden within the buffer zone. A sculpture garden is located to the right of the plan.

Community retail would front Pender with residential on second floor.

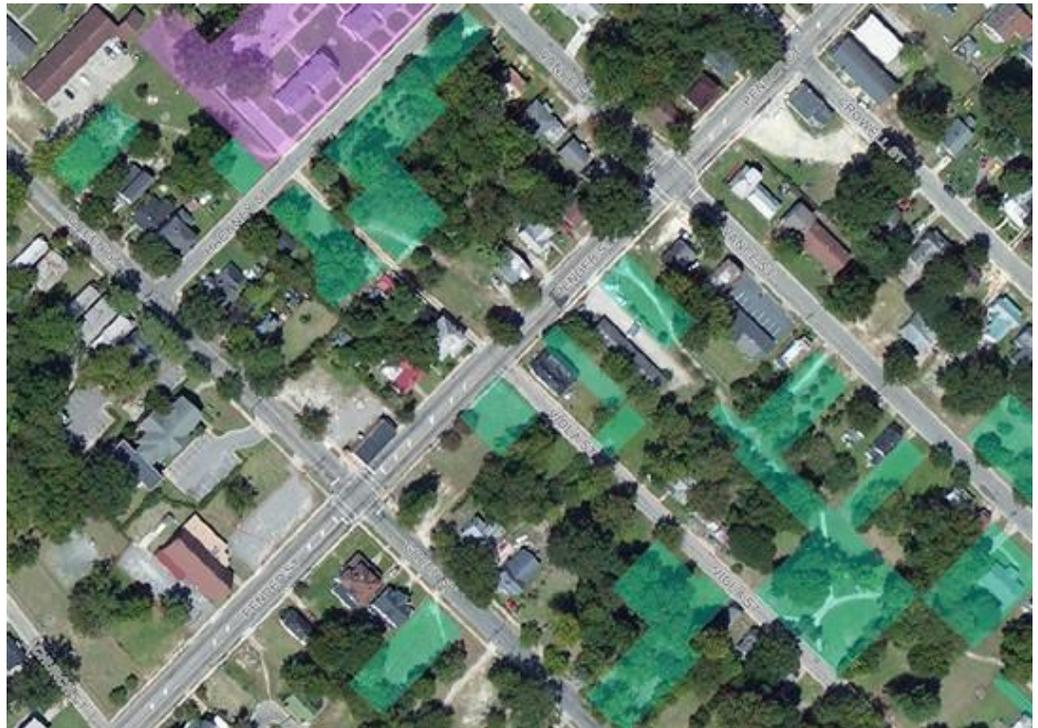


*Neighborhood grocery*

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## Intersection of Pender and Green Streets - Existing Condition

The vicinity surrounding Green Street and Pender Street is an area of concern. Due to the large amount of city owned land, the teal color in the aerial, the overall fabric of the neighborhood has been worn thread-bare. Green Street is the main walkway from Pender Street to the Elementary School, however the sidewalks beyond Pender and Green are lacking in continuity. The crime statistics show that this area has a higher volume than normal of crime due likely to the quantity of vacant home-sites.



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## Intersection of Pender and Green Streets - Concept plan

The vicinity around Pender and Green Streets is an area of possibility for regenerating the heart of the neighborhood. With the close proximity to the school, and the importance of Pender Street as a cross connection between Nash and Hines Streets, this area could serve as a catalyst project to revision the residential aspects of Center City through denser home sites that are integrated with street front neighborhood shops. The surrounding density, once restored would be adequate to support the neighborhood shops and even a small neighborhood pharmacy/clinic. The vitality of the church programs for supporting residents in this area would provide new home owners and tenants with additional avenues of support beyond those of the City of Wilson and the Wilson Housing Authority.



*Row house character - single-family elevations, but multi-family cost efficiencies and density*



### Pender Street

Preliminary street cross section. By reducing the travel lanes, it may be possible to re-incorporate on-street parking and bike lanes within the existing street Right of Way. Additional improvements would be to increase the width of the street setback to allow for wider sidewalks, street tree plantings, and areas for outdoor businesses and restaurants. Community building is about creating the spaces that encourage impromptu meetings, a safe walkable streetscape will encourage this kind of social activity.



### Perspective of preliminary street view with row houses, Pender Street looking north.

On-street parking and sidewalks are accommodated through the redevelopment of the existing right of way and establishing larger street yards to accommodate the missing width.



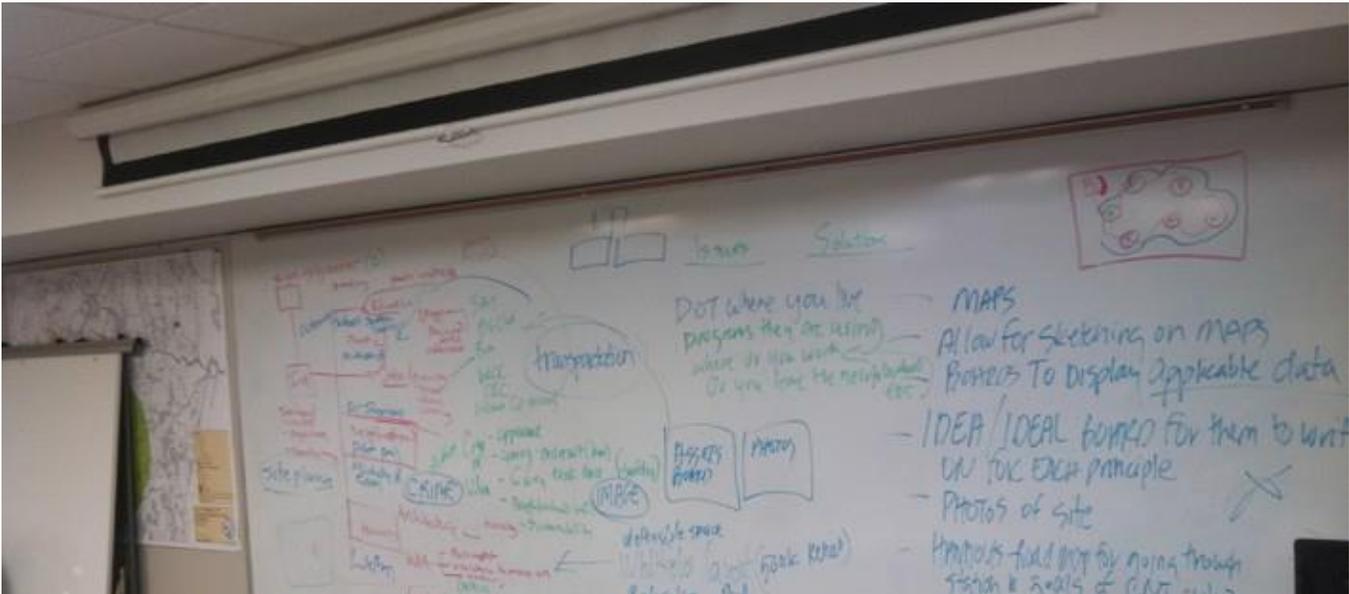


# 8. Implementation

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## Implementation Overview

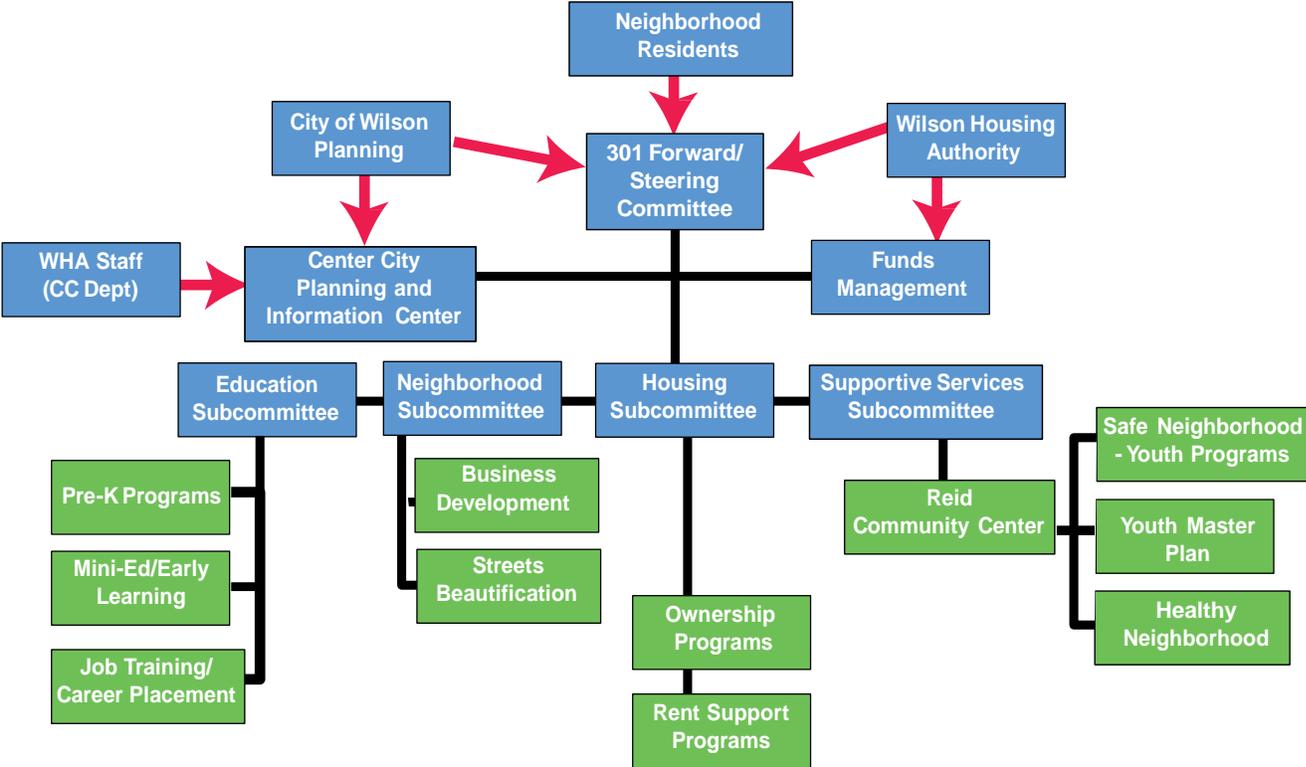
The Center City Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan (CCCNTP) will be fulfilled through partnerships. The CCCNTP will need leadership to oversee neighborhood improvements, coordinate City policies and programs, provide outreach to neighborhood residents and stakeholders, and continue securing and managing the funding necessary.

A CCCNTP core leadership team is recommended to continuously monitor this project. This team will need representatives from the City, the Wilson Housing Authority, school board, health board, and residences. While the incorporation of this board will need to be reviewed by the City Council, it is recommended that these members are appointed for 2 year terms to provide continuity of leadership for the CCCNTP that coordinates with the project milestones. This CCCNTP Leadership Team will serve as the overall guiding board for development within the Center City.

The Wilson Housing Authority will serve as the developer for overseeing the renovation and replacement of the Whitfield Housing. This role will require additional staff within the WHA that can serve as day-to-day operations manager for all CCCNTP activities regarding housing.

The City of Wilson Planning and Development Services department will lead the neighborhood transformation efforts. The staff within the CWPDS currently oversee the community development projects funded through the Community Development Block Grant program and other similar activities. The expertise the staff possess in facilitation and serving as stewards for the long range vision of the Transformation Plan will be vital to project success.

# Governance Structure - Preliminary



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## Neighborhood Implementation

The Center City Neighborhood transformation, while focused on the Whitfield Homes properties, is about lifting up the entire community to achieve social and economic sustainability. Without a strong and robust infrastructure to support the cultural and social needs of its citizens, Center City will continue to decline.

The primary neighborhood focus projects include:

- **Finish Freeman Place**, a single family home development located within Center City. Homes are purchased by eligible residents through a mortgage assistance program and included financial counseling. Funding will continue to come through mixed sources
- **Volis Simpson Whirligig Park**. This signature downtown park will serve as an arts and crafts beacon for the region. The park will lift up Center City and serve as the home for a new downtown farmer's market. It will also host festivals celebrating the culture and diversity of Center City.
- **Wilson Community College Sustainability Innovation Center**. This concept, branded from a workshop with local leaders, looks at celebrating the sustainable construction and site development practices through a demonstration project within Center City. Solving the need for housing while improving on environmental conditions will be the theme. Project will provide training in green infrastructure technologies and construction techniques through the Community College.
- **Farm to Table Incubator**. Using the assets of large post tobacco boom warehouses as a foundation, this incubator would be located within Center City near Volis Simpson Park. The vision of this incubator is to build on North Carolina's growing industry surrounding high quality organic and artisan foods that are cooked and packaged locally for local consumption. This incubator would provide culinary training, business and marketing skills, and finance management for students.
- **Pender Street, Nash Street, Hines Street Corridor Improvements** will work towards restoring neighborhood identity through reduced road cross sections. These reductions will allow for on-street parking, streetscape enhancements, and the opportunity to install green infrastructure.
- **Nash Street Renaissance Project**. Form partnership with St. Johns Community Development Corporation to complete the construction of a mixed use development that includes a small green grocery, daycare facility, and housing units. Small successes will be key to maintaining the drive to larger development goals.

The City of Wilson and the Wilson Housing Authority have made significant steps ahead of the grant

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process.

## City of Wilson Initiatives

- 2030 Comprehensive Plan directs community wide development efforts to promote a sustainable economy through smart land use strategies. This plan identifies major strategies for improving pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation corridors throughout Wilson.
- City of Wilson/Wilson Department of Education Safe Routes for Schools master plan provides a complete inventory of the road network within Center City. It identifies the key routes that should be prioritized to receive pedestrian facility improvements.
- City of Wilson is a Gigabit City, providing community wide ultra high-speed broadband internet access. This access is extended to Whitfield homes through Century Link and the Housing Authority. Wireless access is provided within the community centers.
- Downtown revitalization efforts have included enhance streetscapes along Main Street and Nash, focusing on restoring the central business district to its historical success.
- Freeman Place is a redevelopment success story for the City of Wilson and the WCIA. Freeman Place was originally conceived by key leaders and businessmen within Wilson to reverse blight along the Hines Street Corridor. Located around the historic Round House, Freeman place is a City controlled assemblage of land that was recombined from early 1900s era “shotgun house” lots to make lots suitable for constructing modern single family homes ranging from 1000-1300 square feet. The first phase has sold out and new work is underway.

## Wilson Housing Authority Initiatives

While focused on improving the housing conditions, the Wilson Housing Authority is seeking Emergency Safety and Security Grant funding to enhance lighting and security within the Whitfield Neighborhoods. This application was initiated as part of the feedback from residents during the public workshop phase of the project.

## Funding Strategies

The City of Wilson and the Wilson Housing Authority are aggressively pursuing funding through multiple sources to implement neighborhood change. While the Choice Neighborhood Initiative Implementation grant will provide a much needed infusion of funding, catalyze the housing changes, fulfilling the focus strategies of reducing blight and restoring former brown-field sites will require



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additional assistance. The following list is an initial representation of the opportunities available. As projects are prioritized by the leadership team, grant applications will be submitted.

#### **EPA Brown-fields Grant:**

In January 2014, the City of Wilson Planning Division applied for an EPA Brown-fields Grant: 2014 Revolving Loan Fund. This grant was approved in June of 2014 and will provide loans to developers up to \$1 million dollars for the cleanup and redevelopment of brown-fields. The Revolving Loan Fund involves a cooperative agreement with the City of Greenville.

**Application:** The EPA program is a loan that will facilitate development of former brown-field sites. The target for redevelopment is the large area of land between Pender and the railroad. The area immediately adjacent to the tracks was a site of an old industrial plant. In the long range vision for Center City, this area is recommended to be transformed into a central park that provides needed recreation fields and a consolidated playground area.

#### **US Department of Transportation TIGER Funds**

The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER Discretionary Grant program, provides a unique opportunity for the DOT to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve critical national objectives. Since 2009, Congress has dedicated more than \$4.1 billion for six rounds to fund projects that have a significant impact on the Nation, a region or a metropolitan area. Applicants must detail the benefits their project would deliver for five long-term outcomes: safety, economic competitiveness, state of good repair, livability and environmental sustainability.

**Application:** Renovation and improvements of the key transportation corridors along Pender Street, Hines Street, and the US 301 Corridor. Focus on “road diets” that improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to promote community connectivity.

#### **Safe Routes for Schools program**

The Safe Routes for School program is funded through the US Department of Transportation. This program is administrated through the state level to promote the planning and development of safe pedestrian and bicycle paths to neighborhood schools.

**Application:** Use grant assistance to widen Viola and Green Streets through right of way re-allocation. Reconstruct Pender, Hines, and Nash Streets to pedestrian scaled corridors with medians, streetscapes, and amenity spaces.

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### **EPA Community Action for Renewed Environment (CARE) grant**

The U.S. EPA CARE Cooperative Agreement Request for Proposals (RFP) supports community-based partnerships to reduce pollution at the local level. Eligible applicants include county and local governments, tribes, non-profit organizations, and universities.

Application: Restoration of brownfield sites, environmental restoration of habitat and greenspace, and mitigation of storm water runoff are key candidates. With the relocation of the Whitfield Homes units within the flood plain, the creation of an environmental park will allow for storm water to be collected from the urban core and treated to improve downstream water quality. Additional opportunities include the central park proposed as part of the new village core. This park is on a former brownfields site.

### **DOT Transportation Enhancement Activities**

The Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Enhancement (TE) activities offer funding opportunities to help expand transportation choices and enhance the transportation experience through 12 eligible TE activities related to surface transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and safety programs, scenic and historic highway programs, landscaping and scenic beautification, historic preservation, and environmental mitigation. These activities could include green to mitigate the impacts of stormwater runoff.

### **HUD Community Development Block Grant Program**

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is a flexible program that works to ensure decent affordable housing, provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses. CDBG-financed projects could incorporate green infrastructure into their design and construction. Chicago, for example, has used CDBG to put a new green roof on its historic Cultural Center.

### **HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program supports metropolitan and multi-jurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of: (1) economic competitiveness and revitalization; (2) social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; (3) energy use and climate change; and (4) public health and environmental impact.

Application: While the CCCNTP focuses on Wilson, the City itself is actively engaged in regional



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initiatives with its peer cities including Greenville. The Sustainable Communities grant would allow for a regional planning effort to be developed that examines the needs of larger community, Encouraging investment in this coastal region will benefit Center City with improving job markets, access to higher wages, and long term community viability through coordinated development efforts.

### **Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grants**

PARTF Grants focus on building recreational facilities for challenged communities. Program funds are awarded to communities to develop fitness trails, recreation fields, playgrounds, and splashpads among other components. The goal is to improve healthy outcomes through diverse outdoor experiences.

**Application:** There are three key park projects within Center City. The first is to complete Volis Simpson Park. This is a destination park that will serve as a location for events, festivals, farmers markets, and serve as the new home for the renowned whirligig sculptures. This park is also located within the future arts and crafts district of downtown Wilson, an area that will be vital to improving the economic stability of the community. The second park is the new large community park proposed as part of the new village core. This park will provide needed recreation fields and large open spaces to allow for football, soccer, and even softball and baseball. The current field locations are outside of the community and isolated from use by the residents. This park, located to provide high visibility for safety and security, will also serve as a green buffer between the new housing and existing railroad. A community center, picnic shelters, and splash pad would also be potentially funded through PARTF. The final park is the environmental park located at the old Whitfield homes site. This would be a passive recreation area with fitness trails and interpretive exhibits.

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## Housing Implementation

Whitfield Homes is small in size providing just over 257 residences. These units are primarily duplex units built in the early 1950s-1960s. 52 of the units have been offline due to deteriorating mechanical and structural elements. While initially focusing on restoring the full operating capacity of Whitfield Homes through renovations and replacement units, the overall housing goals look towards improving the quality of choice throughout Center City. In conjunction with neighborhood infrastructure projects, the CCCNTP Leadership Team, City of Wilson, and Wilson Housing Authority will continue to focus redevelopment efforts to the main corridors within the neighborhood. These development efforts will be completed through partnerships and seek to bring a mix of single family, town home, and apartments to the neighborhood key to restoring the neighborhood's capacity for supporting local businesses, services, and schools. Programs that encourage homeowner rehab will be established to promote the preservation and restoration of historically significant properties key to maintaining the character of the Center City neighborhood. Working with local non-profit developers, infill housing projects will continue to provide affordable single family homes that will attract young families, artists, and entrepreneurs back to the area.

Wilson has a large stock of vacant, develop-able land. Maintaining clear conduits for non-profits to acquire these properties and redevelop into housing stock is vital. As part of the neighborhood implementation strategy, lots need to be combined where necessary to meet the needs of the current marketplace, specifically recombining the smallest lots to support 1000-1200 square foot single family homes. A database is recommended to be established that will provide real time access for developers

### **Preliminary Success:**

Based on the adoption of the Transformation Plan, the Wilson Housing Authority Board has granted the WHA Demolition Authorization. This authorization allows for the renovation or removal of the Whitfield homes pending the establishment of qualified replacement facilities. This approval allows for the WHA staff to move quickly upon the receipt of implementation funds and begin construction of new modernized homes.

## DOE Weatherization and Intergovernmental Program

The Department of Energy's Weatherization and Intergovernmental Program provides grants, technical assistance, and information tools to states, local governments, community action agencies,



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utilities, Indian tribes, and overseas U.S. territories for their energy programs. The program could be used to encourage green infrastructure, such as green roofs, as part of the weatherization process.

**Application:** Renovating and updating the Adams School building, Daniels Learning Center, and the Elvie Community Center. These vital facilities contribute to the social infrastructure of the neighborhood and require modernization to make them supportive future program requirements.

## People Implementation

Rebuilding the quality of life for Center City residents will not be accomplished overnight. It will require the commitment of partnerships that can react to the needs of residents and address health, education, job training, and safety.

- 2020 Youth Vision Master Plan, an initiative launched concurrently with the CCCNTP, will provide recommendations and establish metrics necessary to monitor the improvement of youth outcomes within the City of Wilson and surrounding county. Initial programs include expanding pre-K support, establishing additional after school opportunities through Save-a-Youth, and the Spot.
- Wilson Community College will be a vital member of the CCCNTP providing higher education, after school tutoring, teaching resources for Vick elementary, and vocational training to improve workforce capabilities. Early success has included direct shuttles from within Center City to the community college for classes. In addition, the community college is providing pilot training and night classes at the community development center within Whitfield Homes.
- The Wilson Housing Authority invests in its residents. Ongoing success includes partnerships with the Community College and local non-profits to provide family building classes, provide economic counseling, and job placement assistance. In addition, the housing authority works with residents to maintain safe zones for the children of the community. The Wilson Housing Authority is strengthening its partnership with the Save-A-Youth program located at the Adams building within the Whitfield Homes neighborhood through potential joint grant applications and building renovation programs.
- The Wilson Health Department provides accessible health care for physical and mental illnesses. Expanding access to these services will require improvements in transportation as well as location of the service center. Currently facilities are

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maintained in downtown near the central business district, this location is central to the study area but is outside of walking distance to the residents of Center City. Opportunities for Saturday clinics within the Whitfield homes community or at a new service center located near the proposed village core would improve accessibility for residents.

## Data Management and Tracking

The key to any long term planning and implementation project is maintaining an accurate accounting of successes and failures. Without data management, it will not be possible to adjust program policies or spending priorities to ensure project metrics can be met appropriately. As part of the implementation funds, the CCCNTP leadership team will need to seek a consultant partner for the development and management of a CCCNTP centralized data management system.

This data management system should be designed to allow for the integration of physical development, policy expenditures, and job creation metrics. These metrics will be compared to the tracking of improvements in residents income, job attainment and retention, health, and educational improvements. Gathering this data will allow for comparisons with other City of Wilson initiatives as well as educational outcome improvements through programs developed by the Wilson Board of Education.

This monitoring will require a full time liaison to ensure that reporting is being generated by the responsible groups. This staff member, working within the City of Wilson Planning Department, will also serve as a communications officer to provide real time feedback to residents about progress being made through social media platforms.

## Community Building and Future Engagement

The City of Wilson has endured a long history of prosperity and strife. The recent economic downturn has rekindled the perceptions of social barriers amongst Center City residents. They have watched the neighborhood businesses close down and move out of Center City. Health and safety are a constant concern for Whitfield Homes residents. Past planning projects have not led to implementation. Overcoming these emotional and socio-economic barriers requires a strong community building strategy.

Community building needs to continue throughout the CCCNTP implementation phase. The changes proposed are long term. While physical projects are tangible, social and economic improvements are often subtle and require long term commitments. The strongest asset for community building is strong community leadership and maintaining an open dialogue.



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The key components for community outreach are:

- Maintain the CCCNTP Core Leadership Team. This team, noted in the overview, is a continuation of the Steering committee. It will be this team's responsibility to ensure that project goals are being met in a timely and cost effective manor by the City of Wilson and the Wilson Housing Authority. It will also be the team's responsibility to ensure that marketing, branding, and fundraising efforts are maintained.
- Whitfield Homes Tenant Association. The WHA will help the Whitfield Residents establish a tenants association. This association will provide the residents of Whitfield homes with a leadership group made up of their peers that can serve as a consistent interface between City leaders, WHA staff. The association will focus on prioritizing community needs as they arise, address issues related to crime and public safety, and coordinate community pride days. The community pride days will focus on small scale beautification and site enhancement projects. By having residents actively participate in the maintenance and upkeep of their community, it is hoped that a sense of pride is restored and even a sense of ownership may even be developed. Through pride of this place, the CCCNTP will succeed. Without this emotional connection, any improvements will fall by the wayside.
- Maintain the social media campaign - The CCCNTP Information Officer, working as the lead to manage and maintain progress reports for the CCCNTP implementation projects, will also be responsible for regularly updating the social media feeds. These feeds will continue to prove invaluable for providing the community with notifications, discussions of key issues, and maintaining transparency for the process. In addition to social media, a formal CCCNTP web portal is recommended to allow for all project newsletters, project reports, and project schedules to be posted.
- Hold regular CCCNTP summits within the community. These summits will provide town hall style meetings for residents to meet with the City staff, City leadership, and Wilson Housing Authority staff for bi-annual updates regarding major capital improvement projects, new and emerging issues, and to foster community building through the sharing of ideas and values in a collaborative environment.





## Appendix A- Market Assessment





## Appendix B - Direct Survey





## Appendix C - Web Survey

