

Over the last few months, we've all had the opportunity to reflect upon our business goals and recalibrate our priorities. In Brunswick County, we've used this time to plan for our next phase of growth ... and we invite you to do the same.

Along with a low cost of living, our pristine beaches, proximity to Wilmington and ample career opportunities continue to attract talent to our area. In fact, Brunswick has been named the fastest growing county in North Carolina for the tenth year in a row, and we show no signs of slowing down. And yet, there's still plenty of room to expand.

Not only is Brunswick home to plenty of space ripe for development, but the county boasts two 1,000+ acre megasites that are turnkey opportunities waiting for your expansion or relocation. Both parcels have been North Carolina Certified, which reduces the risks associated with development through a rigorous pre-qualification process. Both sites adjoin a major highway with direct connections to I-40 and I-95—two interstates that stretch across the eastern seaboard and beyond. A CSX main rail line is located adjacent to the Mid-Atlantic Industrial Rail Park with direct access to the Port of Wilmington.

From advanced manufacturing to alternative energy, refrigerated transport to warehousing and logistics, there's a place for you here. Our impressive infrastructure connects you to sea, sky, road and rail. Brunswick is minutes from port facilities, international and regional airports, cross-country highways that put you within a day's drive of some of the United States' largest cities, and a robust rail system. Plus, you'll enjoy access to the raw materials, climate and natural resources that are unique to the Southeastern coast.

If you're looking to lower your business taxes and costs of operation, decrease the congestion you encounter during your daily commute and improve your quality of life, consider a move to Brunswick County. Our area is ideally positioned to help you connect to the global economy with the lifestyle you want and the resources you need to jumpstart your next phase of growth.

If you'd like to learn more about possibilities to relocate or expand, please don't hesitate to reach out for more information. We're here to help power your bottom line and open doors to new business potential.

Sincerest regards,

William S. Early

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Powered for growth at
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GO WITH THE FLOW

Coastal communities continue to welcome tourists despite the unprecedented challenges of coronavirus.

The Outer Banks' narrow and winding N.C. Highway 12 begins its Currituck County leg in Corolla and exits 18-and-a-half miles south near Southern Shores and Wright Memorial Bridge. Most summers, the county welcomes about 500,000 tourists during the 10-week busy season. In 2018, visitor spending brought in about \$234.2 million to the county, a 5.6% increase from a year earlier, ranking No. 23 in the state.

With safer-at-home guidelines and an executive order requiring masks in public places, Currituck County and other officials along the N.C. shoreline anticipated a massive slump in activity this summer because of COVID-19.

But coastal destinations have remained tourist hot spots despite the pandemic restrictions, and planned economic development — from multiuse neighborhoods to industrial parks — is continuing to move forward at a rapid pace.

"This has turned out to be a phenomenal year, probably the best in a decade. [Tourists] did cancel their reservations back in March, but as time went on with people being stuck at home, they wanted to get out," says Larry Lombardi, economic development director of Currituck County. "[Highway] 12 is jammed. It's one way in and one way out, and we have a good possibility of passing last year's numbers."


The 85 miles of shoreline that define the 11-city Crystal Coast is home to about 20 vacation rental companies and more than 100 independent restaurants that are all quickly learning to adapt, says Jim Browder, executive director of the Crystal Coast Tourism Development Authority.

"I don't think we're ever going to see normal again. I think it's going to be a good late summer and fall," he says. "The bookings are strong going into August and September. Is it going to be enough to offset the losses of the [spring months]?"

I can't say that it will be. But we're fortunate that our residents support local businesses."

Tourism brought nearly \$613 million to New Hanover County in 2018. While lodging restrictions at Wrightsville, Carolina and Kure beaches were lifted by Memorial Day, inland attractions such as museums and performing-arts venues cling to virtual options. Outdoor hot spots such as Wilmington's Battleship North Carolina and Fort Fisher State Historic Site in Kure Beach are open for outdoor exhibits, though indoor sites and museums remain closed.

"Lifting lodging restrictions as summer kicked off will most certainly help to increase occupancy," says Connie Nelson, public information director of the Wilmington and Beaches Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Another thing in our favor is that we have wide open spaces and are within driving distance of strong in-state



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GONE
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WELCOME TO DONE.

Think fast. Thirty-one-minutes-pedestal-to-pedestal for a dual move. Our uncongested port and efficient gate turns have made us the port with the fastest turn times on the East Coast. Add three neo-Panamax cranes, our strategic location, customized logistical solutions, and readily available berths and storage areas for container, bulk, breakbulk and ro-ro operations, and it's goods delivered, job done and mission accomplished. See how we're never done helping you discover the power of DONE.

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Beyond fast: Improvements bring even greater capabilities to NC Ports.



The North Carolina State Ports Authority offers crane and truck gate productivity rates that are among the highest on the East Coast. And beyond speed, new developments continue to expand our capabilities. As part of a comprehensive, \$200-million expansion plan, recent improvements at the Port of Wilmington are ready to bring an even higher level of personalized service, efficiency and capacity to customers.

New neo-Panamax cranes. In 2018 and 2019, we welcomed three neo-Panamax cranes to the Port of Wilmington. With an operating height of more than 150 feet, these cranes are taller and have a longer outreach, allowing them to accommodate the loading and unloading needs of ultra-large container vessels.

Berth renovation. Another landside development at the Port of Wilmington is berth renovation. By creating 2,600 contiguous feet of container berth space, we can now service two ultra-large container vessels simultaneously for faster, more efficient operations.

Turning basin expansion. A renovation to our turning basin at the Port of Wilmington allows 14,000 TEU and larger ocean vessels to safely and efficiently turn around in the harbor. We're also working with federal partners on necessary navigational

harbor enhancements that will enable the Port of Wilmington to better accommodate deep-draft container vessels.

Refrigerated container yard expansion. Cold storage is heating up, too. Completed in April 2020, the Port of Wilmington's expanded refrigerated container yard boosts the port's on-terminal refrigerated container plugs from 235 to 775. Beyond this initial expansion, a second phase will increase the location's capacity to more than 1,000 plugs.

Large-scale capabilities meet personalized service. With quick turn times and excellent connections to highway and rail infrastructure, the Port of Wilmington is a model of efficiency. In addition, we have another advantage: Our port is often less congested than many in the region, which can mean quicker operations and less red tape. Finally, customized service means that whatever problem you have, we'll work hard to find a solution.

Ready to handle your logistics needs.

These latest improvements are just the beginning. Beyond greater speed, efficiency and capacity, we continue to develop our capabilities as our customers' needs evolve. Ready to grow your business now and into the future? Give us a call at 800-218-3454.

markets. While we are hopeful that the summer season will continue to be strong on the coast, it is too soon to predict how the summer will end up or what will be the overall COVID-era impact. For now, we have projected a 34% revenue shortfall for the CVB's 2020-21 budget, which is funded solely by a portion of room occupancy tax collections."

To help businesses prosper, the city of Wilmington adopted Downtown Alive, a collaboration between the city of Wilmington, the Downtown Business Alliance of Wilmington, Cool Wilmington and Wilmington Downtown Inc. Streets near the waterfront will close to evening vehicle traffic Thursdays through Sundays until Labor Day to allow restaurants to expand outdoor seating, and businesses use display racks and serve food within the four-block area.

In late June, 130 local small businesses were awarded \$10,000 each through New Hanover County's Small Business Economic Incentive Grant Program to help with COVID-19 adjustments to their daily operations. About 800 businesses applied for grants, including restaurants, bars, retail outlets and salons, medical offices and machine shops.



Downtown Alive in Wilmington closes local streets for four days a week to allow 11 restaurants to offer social-distanced outdoor seating. The initiative allows businesses to operate safely under pandemic conditions.

Higher education also is adapting. The 661-acre UNC Wilmington campus is preparing for fall by implementing social distancing procedures in classrooms, labs, libraries, residence halls, dining areas and competition sites. Face coverings will be required and made available in classrooms and labs, and selective testing and contact tracing will be in place, according to Chancellor Jose Sartarelli.

"The community and the university have continued to collaborate on many fronts and will continue to do so in the fall," he says, adding that faculty and staff have gone "beyond the call of duty" to provide students with the best-possible environment.

"Many functions and programs have been cancelled and will be cancelled but at the same time, new ones will be offered," he says. "For example, an on-campus drive-in cinema. Research has been reduced significantly, and only now are we starting to authorize faculty to go back to their labs. International programs were all cancelled starting with spring and summer ones. Some plans are still in place for late fall."

EXPLOSIVE GROWTH

While coronavirus concerns are mandating innovation in educational needs and business operations during a rush of vacation spending, other areas — industry prospects, new housing growth — also are defining summer along the coast.

Brunswick County has experienced significant growth over the last 12 years, and "this trend is not anticipated to change," says Bill Early, executive director of Brunswick Business & Industry Development, which has two industrial parks of more than 1,000 acres ready for occupancy. "Our [proximity] to Interstate 140, I-40 and I-95 puts us in a central location on the East Coast to supply markets north-to-south and east-to-west. With continued growth and improvements taking place at the Port of Wilmington, Brunswick County is ideally situated to support international trade from both an import and export perspective. In essence, Brunswick County is the gateway to the world."

Brunswick BID promotes multiple sites, including warehouse buildings and proposed industrial lands.

With Brunswick County adding nearly 32,000 residents over the last decade, "it is imperative that we strive to bring employment opportunities to our growing numbers," Early says. "Our focus is on higher-paying manufacturing and distribution jobs. Those companies requiring heavy infrastructure will be more inclined to focus on the northern area, while companies not requiring natural gas and rail service may explore options in the central and southern sections of the county."

In the northernmost part of the state, Lombardi says coastline projects and inland activity are redesigning Currituck County. The College of the Albemarle Currituck's Aviation Systems Technology programs appeal to students who "may want to stay or come back home to the local industries available to them," he says. Nearby manufacturing jobs create a need for residential areas in the northern pocket of the county. Housing demand in Moyock is high, with 20 to 25 permits per

month, and home lots near the Pamlico Sound are selling rapidly. "People are buying [home] lots, maybe in anticipation of the new bridge," Lombardi says. "And actually, it's a good time to build a home. Even with COVID-19, it hasn't stopped. It's crazy. I think it's going to get crazier. People from the North drive through Moyock to get to the Wright Memorial Bridge, and a lot of them are looking to get away from big cities and, for the most part, we're rural. Chesapeake, Norfolk and Virginia Beach are less than an hour away."

To accommodate the influx in new residents and tourists, planning for a mixed-use residential, commercial and entertainment destination is on the way. The phased construction of Currituck Station will be on 3,000 acres in Moyock and will include trails, open space, housing and retail. At least one Fortune 500 retailer has plans to set up shop at the development. A Unified Development Ordinance was approved in June to lay out plans for the development after land is rezoned from agricultural.

"It's planned for 30 years, but it could be fully built in 10, who knows?" Lombardi says. "People want to see some type of employment and commercial services up there instead of across the state line. We'll be able to offer a variety of housing that attracts all ages — young, middle-aged, older."

Construction on the new Mid-Currituck Bridge near Corolla has been rescheduled for summer 2021 because of N.C. Department of Transportation budget woes due to the pandemic. The \$491 million, two-segment 7-mile toll road connector will provide a northern link to the mainland as well as a two-lane route over Maple Swamp. The bridge will also improve evacuation flow during hurricanes and storms.

"I was speaking to a guy from Kitty Hawk, and he says anything [residential that's] \$750,000 and under is selling like crazy," Lombardi says. "It's mostly northerners coming down here from New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Maryland, Virginia. We have more than 1,700 housing lots, residential lots, projected over the next five to 10 years with developments

already in the planning stages that have been approved and are on the books."

One of Lombardi's key focuses is linking county manufacturing to Dominion Energy's offshore wind project supply chain. Its wind farm, currently under construction about 27 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach, Va., is a vital economic development resource for the community.

The company has pledged 4,000 new jobs over the next decade with median pay for wind turbine technicians of \$54,370.

With a growing population and more than 3,200 skilled veterans living in Currituck County, "we have a trained workforce," Lombardi says. "We have people who work in ship repair in Norfolk,



College of The Albemarle's Aviation Systems Technology programs, available at its Currituck campus, offers training for an Aircraft Mechanic's Certificate with airframe and powerplant maintenance diplomas.



Currituck Station is planned for 3,000 acres in Moyock and will include trails, open space, housing and retail.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ALLIANCE

RENDERING COURTESY OF CURRITUCK STATION'S PATTERN BOOK

but we also have smaller companies that are second-level contractors for the shipyards. So we're looking for our fair share."

TOUTING TOURISM

To the south, Crystal Coast communities are seeing an influx in visitor spending from tourists around the country.

"As early as mid-May, we were seeing visitors from Maine," Browder says. "The bulk of our business comes from North Carolina, but that I-95 corridor is really strong. Rental homes are doing very well in terms of pace. On a percentage basis, we're dominated by vacation rentals instead of hotels, because a lot of people would rather rent a house — especially if it's a family — and have that isolation."

September's crowd-drawing events include the Arts & Crafts Fall Show in Beaufort and the North Carolina Seafood Festival in Morehead City.

City officials are taking it one day at a time, according to Browder. "Some events can be done with social distancing. I think from a tourism standpoint, people are being optimistic. I don't think any place is going to open the floodgates and not protect themselves and their staff."

In Brunswick, Early says he is in the final stage of creating a "refresh" for Brunswick BID's website. "Our messaging will focus on being a prime location to provide the business amenities that a company needs to be successful with talent, transportation and infrastructure while providing the lifestyle that corporate America seeks," he says. His group's Mid-Atlantic Industrial Rail Park and International Logistics Park, both on U.S.



The Cape Fear River, which flows through Wilmington, is part of the Intracoastal Waterway, the East Coast passageway for recreational and small shipping boats.

Routes 74 and 76, are ready for occupancy. Mid-Atlantic is a CSX Select Site, and the International location is eligible for the N.C. Department of Commerce's designated Tier 1 incentives because part of the land is in Columbus County.

"While [they] are prime megasite locations within Brunswick County, we look at development potential throughout the entire county," he says. "Target industries for Brunswick County include significant rail and heavy infrastructure manufacturing companies, warehousing and logistics, food processing and marine trades."

But visitor traffic is vital. And summer has brought a healthy dose of traffic to Brunswick County and its beaches.

"We're going to operate from an optimistic standpoint," Browder says. "Looking into the fall months, I think we'll

see more of a normal situation. We'll be looking at protecting people, but each festival scheduled hopes to have a steady crowd. It will be nice to see more places open."

With the coast less than an eight hour drive from most northeastern states, many Northerners are opting to hop in their cars for a getaway rather than in a plane during the pandemic.

"There's no issue of social distancing on the beach, the nicer homes have pools and there's delivery services for groceries," Lombardi says. "People are coming out of the woodwork. And when it rains, they go to the shops and buy their knick-knacks. We're looking good. We're very blessed, and we're very fortunate." ■

— Kathy Blake is a freelance writer from Eastern North Carolina.

200,000 SKILLED WORKERS
15,000 STUDENTS IN TECHNICAL PROGRAMS
AND A COMMUNITY WITH OPEN ARMS



In Brunswick County, you'll find the talent you need and the coastal lifestyle you crave. Whether working remotely or in the office, this is the place to establish your business. Just south of Wilmington, Brunswick has been named the fastest growing county in North Carolina for 10 years running. Here, you'll find a diverse talent pool, customizable training programs and a pipeline of graduates looking for their next opportunity. If you're ready to bid on Brunswick, our business and industry development team can help you plan for future success.



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Their DREAMS

bring out our best



It takes more than just experience and expertise to be named the region's only Best Children's Hospital. It takes complete dedication from every pediatrician, specialist and care team member throughout our network. That's why this year we've been ranked in more specialties than ever. Because we're not just inspired by children's dreams, we're committed to helping them come true.

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