

# Scotland Neck, North Carolina

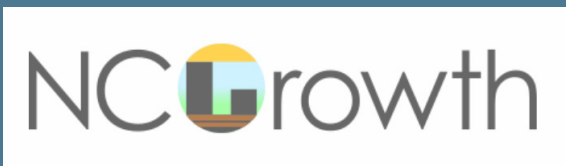
*CPNI Workshop Report  
May 7-8, 2018*





## ABOUT CPNI

CPNI is an independent research institution focused on the construction industry and founded by the Construction Professional Network of North Carolina (CPN), a non-profit membership organization. The mission of the Institute is to identify key issues related to industry performance, economic development, and the betterment of CPN members and the communities they serve. Through workshops in communities across North Carolina, members of CPN leverage their expertise to consult with local government and community leaders on redevelopment strategies for their town. Learn more at [www.cpni-nc.org](http://www.cpni-nc.org)



## ABOUT NCGROWTH

NCGrowth is an EDA University Center at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill that helps businesses and communities create good jobs and equitable opportunities through applied research and technical assistance. With a passionate staff and a dynamic pool of graduate student analysts, we partner with businesses, communities, governments and other organizations to tackle outcome-based economic development and entrepreneurship projects. Learn more at [www.ncgrowth.unc.edu](http://www.ncgrowth.unc.edu)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CPNI held a two-day workshop in Scotland Neck, NC on May 17 and 18, 2018. During the workshop, CPNI and NCGrowth met with Town officials and community stakeholders to assess the built assets and economic conditions of the Town. In addition to visiting buildings of interest, workshop participants identified key issue areas and brainstormed potential strategies for the Town moving forward. The workshop centered around five topics:

- > Downtown Revitalization
- > Building Improvements
- > Streetscape Improvements and Placemaking Strategies
- > Marketing and Branding
- > Community Engagement

## WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Town officials and community stakeholders in attendance included:

- Eddie Braxton, Mayor
- Elsie Barnes, Scotland Neck Education and Recreation Foundation
- Adrian Bryant, Student
- Dusty Sprouts, Pastor
- Joe Williams, Retired Business Owner
- Brenda Mills, Librarian
- Thomas McDowell, McDowell's Pharmacy
- Joe McDowell, McDowell's Pharmacy
- Claude Anthony
- Charles Suit, Town Commissioner
- James Douglas, Town Commissioner
- Pete Davis, Retiree
- Sammy Alexander, Retiree
- Becky Alexander, Retiree
- Steve Ellis
- Nancy Dempsey, Town Admin/Clerk
- Nancy Winslow, Keller Williams Realty
- Susan Littke, Retiree
- Terry Littke, Retiree
- Brent Lubbock, Sylvan Heights Bird Park

CPNI team consisted of the following members:

- Jim Schenck, Conner Gwyn Schenck PLLC
- Aaron Frederiksen, Balfour Beatty Construction
- Sara Downing, Shiel Sexton Company Inc
- Jeanine Bachtel, UNC-Charlotte
- Jen Weaver, Intertek-PSI
- Pat Fogleman, CPNI
- Peyton Fairbank, HICAPS, Inc
- Ian Patrick, Biloba Architecture
- Randy Benson, CDS at Duke University
- Carolyn Fryberger, NCGrowth
- Lucia Constantine, NCGrowth



Community meeting at Sylvan Heights Bird Park

# DOWNTOWN ASSESSMENT

Much of the downtown area is dotted with abandoned storefronts that are either boarded up or used as storage facilities. Deteriorated buildings represent a potential liability for the town because they could cause harm to adjacent buildings if they collapsed. There are a few viable businesses including a bank, post office, pharmacy, barbershop, beauty shop, consignment store, and a handful of restaurants and sweepstakes establishments which draw some foot traffic and pedestrian activity to downtown.

Furthermore, the downtown lacks discernible “gateways” and/or clear delineation. The streetscape is defined by parking in the middle of the street, wide sidewalks, and the absence of traffic lights. As part of Highway 258, Main Street is highly trafficked by long haul trucks and trailers. Pedestrian crossings are not clearly marked and somewhat unsafe.

Despite these challenges, the downtown has potential to recover some of its former vibrancy and vitality.



Main Street in Scotland Neck; Biggs Building (left) and McDowell's Pharmacy (right)

## Community Assets

- Unique parking situation downtown
- Several anchor businesses including McDowell's Pharmacy, La Casetta Restaurant
- Scotland Neck Inn provides accommodations for visitors
- Sylvan Heights Bird Park draws visitors from across the state
- A library that serves as a community center and provides programming
- Strong showing of longtime residents & business owners who are invested in the future of the town
- Opportunities for outdoor recreation including fishing, boating, and hunting

## Community Challenges

- Distressed properties downtown with absentee owners
- Closure of businesses downtown
- Proliferation of sweepstakes businesses downtown
- Lack of density and destinations downtown
- Underutilized vacant lots between buildings
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Substandard housing



Flamingos at Sylvan Heights Bird Park

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## > Downtown Revitalization

- Create a comprehensive downtown plan
- Conduct a parcel analysis of downtown that includes information on land use, property ownership, utilization, and building/land value
- Identify buildings that should be condemned and conduct assessments to understand the feasibility of renovation and rehabilitation
- Designate a downtown district, consider creating a commercial overlay district
- Review and rethink zoning ordinances to prevent neglect of buildings downtown and to exercise control over business mix

## > Streetscape Improvements and Place-making Strategies

- Activate and transform vacant lots into outdoor community spaces
- Host events (e.g., farmer’s markets, craft fair, outdoor movies, Sylvan Heights bird demo) in vacant lots
- Work with local groups to fill vacant storefronts with pop-up shops and art installations
- Install planters in parking islands
- Plant more trees and shrubs in downtown corridor
- Paint murals highlighting community assets (e.g., Sylvan Heights Bird Park) and history
- Organize a community trash day to take discards to landfill



Proposed area for downtown district designation



Downtown streetscape in Scotland Neck



Vacant lots on Main Street

## > Building Improvements

Several buildings downtown were identified as potential sites for adaptive reuse. Furthermore, the CPNI team recommends the Town repair roofs, stop water intrusion, and shore up walls for a number of buildings along Main Street.



### **110 E 10th St**

The historic bank building was built in the early 1900s and functioned as a bank and later as law offices. It is currently owned by a man in Raleigh. In its current state, the building is severely distressed and represents a potential safety hazard. Before investing in this property, the CPNI team recommends the Town:

- Update condition assessment of building
- Get a renovation estimate
- Determine a use for the building



### **1000 Main St**

The Biggs building has been occupied by several businesses in the past decade. While not without issues, this building would be easier to recover and would be an attractive location for a restaurant or business.

- Update condition assessment of building
- Get a renovation estimate



### **315 E 9th St**

The old hosiery mill is currently owned and occupied by Ventosa Kennels, a law enforcement canine kennel that trains dogs from across the country. The business has plans to redevelop the mill as temporary housing for visiting trainers and handlers.

## > Marketing and Branding



Current welcome sign for Scotland Neck

- Develop a vision statement for the Town that leverages the bird park and create a brand that reflects that vision
- Develop and implement a marketing strategy for the Town
- Improve Town gateways to create a sense of place
- Consider hanging banners with Town logo along Main Street

## > Community Engagement



Participatory visioning process in Fairbanks, AK  
Source: PPS

- Host participatory design workshops for residents to give input on how to utilize vacant lots
- Strengthen partnership with East Carolina University to recruit volunteers
- Host community meetings in different spaces in Town (e.g., Scotland Neck Inn, Airboss, etc.)
- Solicit donations/sponsorships from local companies to improve downtown

## NEXT STEPS

### 1. Merge existing subcommittee into one steering committee focused on downtown revitalization

Scotland Neck currently has four committees working toward improving the Town. However, there is very little collaboration or coordination among them. Creating one steering committee, led by a town volunteer and composed of up to ten people, can enhance communication and effectiveness. This committee will spearhead many of the recommendations listed above.

### 2. Solicit an RFP for downtown streetscape master plan/pedestrian plan

A private planning firm or governmental agency like NCDOT can conduct assessments of existing infrastructure and provide recommendations on streetscape improvements. Using community input, they will create a plan that can guide Town priorities for the next several years.

### 3. Focus on projects that are manageable.

Given the limited budget and capacity of the Town, establishing well-defined goals and feasible timelines is critical to achieving success.



Downtown Streetscape

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Organizations

- [Citizens' Institute on Rural Design \(CIRD\)](#): Works with communities with populations of 50,000 or less, and offers annual competitive funding to as many as six small towns or rural communities to host a two-and-a-half day community design workshop. The community receives additional support through webinars, conference calls, and web-based resources.
- [National Complete Streets Coalition](#): Provides resources and technical assistance for localities interested in the development and implementation of Complete Streets.
- [NC American Society of Landscape Architects](#): This professional association of landscape architects in North Carolina might be useful in identifying a firm to create a streetscape design.
- [NC Chapter of American Planning Association](#): This professional association of planners might be useful in identifying a firm to create a master plan.
- [NC DOT Complete Streets](#): The N.C. Department of Transportation adopted a "Complete Streets" policy in July 2009. In 2018, they will deliver a series of workshops across the state to engage transportation professionals, policy makers, community organizations, advocates, and other stakeholders to promote complete streets implementation.
- [NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center](#): As part of the NC Department of Commerce, the Center works to stimulate economic development within the context of historic preservation, using a comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization.
- [North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office](#): The office provides a variety of technical preservation services to the public and to government agencies, including coordination of tax credits for rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- [Project for Public Spaces \(PPS\)](#): A nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities. They have extensive web resources as well as examples of successful placemaking projects that can serve as inspiration for Scotland Neck.

## Recommended Reading

- Melissa Kramer, [Framework for Creating a Smart Growth Economic Development Strategy: A Tool for Small Cities and Towns](#). Office of Sustainable Communities, Smart Growth Program, 2016.
- Tyler Mulligan, "[Maintenance of vacant or neglected commercial buildings: options for NC local governments](#)" CED SOG (blog), March, 20, 2018.