

# Scope of Work: New Bern Avenue Corridor Study

## INTRODUCTION

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New Bern Avenue is one of Raleigh's four gateway corridors leading into downtown Raleigh and is one of the highest transit ridership routes on the Capital Area Transit system. Connecting downtown with rapidly growing eastern Wake County and with quick access to I-440/US 64 Bypass, the corridor is positioned as a primary regional connector with the potential to support multi-modal transit options. Not only is New Bern Avenue the primary eastern gateway connection to the city's heart, the corridor has been identified as a target area for economic development in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. In addition to economic development, the corridor offers opportunities for housing redevelopment, streetscape and infrastructure improvements, and multi-modal transit improvements.

The corridor study area generally includes properties within a 100-150 foot swath on either side of New Bern Avenue (between Swain Street to the west and Crabtree Creek to the east), Edenton Street (between Swain Street to the west and St. Augustine Avenue to the east) and those within the Wake Medical Center campus. The Norfolk-Southern railway and Capital Area Greenway along Crabtree Creek form the eastern boundary of the study area. Most of the properties along the corridor are privately owned, which limits the opportunities for major public intervention measures. Key agencies like the NCDOT Division of Motor Vehicles, Wake Medical Center, and Wake County Health & Human Services have major interests within the study area as do numerous residents, business and property owners.

This study will serve as a first step in providing an inventory of existing conditions in the area and an analysis of that base information. In addition, it will facilitate extensive public participation opportunities that will lead to partnerships for implementation of recommended actions. The primary goal will be to reestablish New Bern Avenue as a vibrant gateway corridor into the city with a focus on improving public safety, improving the overall appearance of the corridor, jump-starting economic development initiatives, and coordinating multi-modal transportation options. The study will guide the evaluation of current land use classifications for New Bern Avenue to ensure consistency with the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and develop a conceptual streetscape improvement plan. The identification of realistic, short- and long-term implementable recommendations is the intended outcome of the study.

The New Bern Avenue Corridor Study will be broken into three subareas along the corridor as well as three client groups:

- Subarea 1: Swain Street to Raleigh Boulevard (North Central and South Central CACs). This sub area also includes Edenton from Swain Street to St. Augustine's Avenue.

- Subarea 2: Raleigh Boulevard to Peartree Lane/Donald Ross Drive (East CAC and Enloe High School)
- Subarea 3: Peartree Lane/Donald Ross Drive to Crabtree Creek (East CAC and WakeMed Campus)

### **Key issues for each of the subareas**

#### **Subarea 1: Swain Street to Raleigh Boulevard**

- Establish a cultural identity;
- Improve public safety (sidewalks, crosswalks, accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles);
- Streetscape improvements;
- Commercial services; and
- Housing redevelopment.

#### **Subarea 2: Raleigh Boulevard to Peartree Lane/Donald Ross Drive**

- Improve public safety (sidewalks, crosswalks, accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles);
- Streetscape improvements;
- Economic development; and
- Housing redevelopment.

#### **Subarea 3: Peartree Lane/Donald Ross Drive to Crabtree Creek**

- Improve public safety (sidewalks, crosswalks, accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles);
- Streetscape improvements;
- Transit center location options to serve the WakeMed campus; and
- Commercial services.

### **Current Conditions**

New Bern Avenue is classified as a secondary arterial in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, a designation intended to serve predominantly locally-generated traffic. The roadway provides access not only to adjacent land, but also serves to distribute traffic from thoroughfares and collector streets. New Bern is heavily travelled with an average Annual Daily Traffic that varies from 11,000 vehicles per day near Swain Street to 24,000 vehicles per day near Sunnybrook Road. New Bern is on the State Highway System and is maintained by the NC Department of Transportation. The City of Raleigh has included a widening project for New Bern Avenue from Poole Road to Sunnybrook Road in the Capital Improvements Program with design funding starting in the 2013-14 fiscal year.

The roadway design and character varies along the corridor which generally correlates to the three distinct subareas created for this study. Subarea 1 from Swain Street to Raleigh Boulevard has a more urban residential character from Swain Street to Tarboro Road with buildings close to the street and a street section that includes on-street parking, street trees behind the curb, and sidewalks. The corridor splits into a one-way pair in this area which includes New Bern Avenue flowing east and Edenton Street flowing west. This section is predominately residential with some residential structures converted to office use. Along the north side of the corridor is the College Park/Idlewild neighborhood, once a thriving working-class community that currently is recovering from a period of blight. East of Tarboro Road to Raleigh Boulevard the roadway takes on a median divided multilane design with commercial land uses oriented to vehicular traffic with multiple driveways, parking lots, and inadequate pedestrian facilities and landscaping. This commercial area is in need of economic stimulus as well as appearance improvements both on private property and within the right-of-way. Vacant and underutilized properties along this section of New Bern, as well as in the study area, offer redevelopment opportunities for targeted economic development.

Subarea 2 from Raleigh Boulevard to Peartree Lane/Donald Ross Drive is much more open and suburban in character with deep building setbacks from the roadway, large lots, wide-block widths, and extensive landscaping in the median. There are no sidewalks or curb and gutter along this section and roadside swells handle runoff. This subarea is predominantly residential with an aging Longview Shopping Center on the south side at King Charles Drive. In recent years the grocery store and pharmacy have moved out so vacancy rates are high. The King Charles Neighborhood Plan and associated zoning have helped to stabilize the neighborhood on the north side of the corridor and the Raleigh Country Club golf course on the south side of the corridor provides an attractive open space and recreation opportunity for members. A National Historic District designation is currently under review for the Longview Gardens Historic District. The district includes the King Charles neighborhood, properties along Longview Drive, Raleigh Country Club & a number of properties to the south of New Bern Avenue between King Charles Road and Donald Ross Drive. If designated a National Historic District, this area would benefit from additional historic district tax credits to foster redevelopment.

Subarea 3 extends from Peartree Lane/Donald Ross Drive to Crabtree Creek and the area is heavily influenced by the major campus facilities of WakeMed Health & Hospital system and Wake County Human Services. The WakeMed flagship facility at the Raleigh Campus houses more than 800 beds, more than 870 medical staff members and over 6,200 employees. Wake County Human Services provides social services, public health, mental health, job training, child support and housing services at multiple facilities in the immediate area. Medical offices and pharmacies dominate the road frontage with multifamily housing in close proximity. New Bern continues through this area as a median divided multilane pavement section with few sidewalks. The study area east boundary is Crabtree Creek which

has an extensive and largely undeveloped floodplain. The Capital Area Greenway terminates at Milburnie Road which is one-eighth of a mile from New Bern Avenue and the WakeMed campus.

Public transportation is currently available in the form of CAT bus Route 15 –WakeMed Center which operates along New Bern Avenue and around the WakeMed campus at 15-minute peak service and 30-minute off-peak service headways. The route has consistently been one of the highest performing routes system wide, both in terms of ridership and farebox recovery. In 2010, ridership averaged approximately 1,925 weekday daily passenger trips. The 2009 farebox recovery ratio was reported at 37 percent, the highest recovery rate within the CAT system.

## Opportunities

Older planning efforts along the New Bern corridor focused primarily on guiding neighborhood revitalization efforts and land use decisions namely, the New Bern Edenton Area Plan and Redevelopment Plan, Old East Raleigh Area Plan, King Charles Neighborhood Plan, and the College Park/Idlewild Neighborhood Plan. While a few of these plans are likely outdated, the prior analysis and recommendations will provide a good context to guide the scope of the new corridor study. An effort to not reinvent the wheel, but rather to build upon the actions and recommendations of the previous studies is a more effective approach. An audit of the various action items and recommendations indicates the following opportunities within the study area:

- Proposed multi-modal corridors such as New Bern are targeted for a higher level of transit service by enhanced bus, express bus, and/or streetcar. Designated a Secondary Arterial, it is planned to eventually carry three lanes of traffic in each direction. It has also been designated for bicycle improvements in the City's Bicycle Master Plan. Providing enhanced mobility options by connecting bike trails, extending greenways, creating interconnected sidewalk systems, and offering transit options increases the accessibility and usability of the properties along the Corridor.
- The New Bern corridor has access to the regional freeway system via routes I-440 and US-64 and can thus serve as the regional access portal for transit services into downtown Raleigh, offering viable, clean alternatives to the auto that would have energy, environment, economy, and quality of life improvements for the users, the City and the region.
- There is significant under-utilized real estate value along the corridor due to its location along a gateway corridor and its proximity to downtown. Based on the level of transit services provided, development intensities are expected to be higher, parking requirements to be lower, with a greater emphasis on shared parking. Pedestrian amenities within developments along transit corridors should be built to higher level. Allowing and planning for affordable and mixed-income housing, completing healthy, green rehab on existing, deteriorating housing stock promotes economic, cultural and social identity for the corridor.

- Concentrating growth in the WakeMed Center area and redevelopment along the College Park area can both preserve open space and reduce infrastructure costs. Higher densities and mixed land uses enhance the feasibility of walking, cycling, and public transit as alternatives.
- As remnants of influence from previous streetscape plans, sections of the corridor illustrate good streetscape features like sidewalks, bus stops and pedestrian amenities while maintenance has been neglected and other sections lack improvements. This provides an opportunity to develop a detailed unifying streetscape plan for the entire corridor section to address streetscape improvements, enhance pedestrian amenities and corridor appearance.

## SCOPE OF WORK

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The proposed scope will include: public workshops to receive input for drafting the scope of work, a site visit for subarea 1, inventory and analysis, public participation and visioning, plan preparation and refinement, and adoption. The planning participants should understand the following:

- The process will engage the public, merchants, and property owners.
- The plan will focus primarily on “public intervention.” In other words, what the City can do to intervene on private property. Public intervention is typically limited to capital investment, redevelopment of city-owned land, zoning, and incentives such as façade grant money, and tax credits.
- The study will also focus on the “public realm.” In other words, public property and the public right of way (streets, sidewalks, medians, and traffic islands).
- The plan will focus on recommendations that can realistically be carried forward.
- Capital improvements funds are scarce. The City Council allocates capital improvement funds annually. There are approximately 24 streetscape projects that are waiting for funding.

## Phase 1: Project Scoping

### Task 1.1: Internal Meeting with Stakeholders

Planning Staff will convene meetings with the North Central CAC, South Central CAC, East CAC and WakeMed to identify issues and opportunities for the study area. This information will assist the Planning Department in drafting the scope of work. The Planning Department will present the draft Scope of Work for feedback before it is finalized.

**Task 1.2: North Central CAC site visit**

Stakeholders from the North Central CAC will undertake a walkthrough along New Bern Avenue and Edenton Street between Tarboro Road and Raleigh Boulevard to point out issues and concerns to the Planning Department. This walkthrough occurred on a Saturday in June 2010.

**Task 1.3: Revised Scope of Work**

The Planning Department will present the scope of work to the stakeholders for feedback. Based on the stakeholder input, a revised scope of work will be finalized and published and shall serve as the scope for the remainder of the project. The scope of work will include a map of the study area with segments of the study area delineated.

*Meetings: Initial meetings with North Central CAC, South Central CAC, East CAC and WakeMed to determine issues and opportunities. A second round of meetings with CACs and WakeMed to obtain feedback from the Scope of Work. A walkthrough with the North Central CAC.*

*Deliverables: Refined scope and boundary of the study area*

**Phase 2: Inventory and Analysis**

The Inventory and Analysis phase is intended to provide the factual and analytical basis for the remainder of the planning effort. It is informed by the scoping process, but can be assumed to cover the major physical systems comprising the corridor. Sources for the inventory will be existing maps, plans and studies; historical and cultural organizations; and interviews with officials at NCDOT; Capital Area Transit, Triangle Transit, Wake County property records.

**Task 2.1: Transportation Conditions**

Traffic count and accident statistics will be compiled for the corridor. Transit data will include ridership, the locations of all Triangle Transit and CAT stops. Roadway cross sections, sidewalk conditions and location and width of crosswalks will be inventoried.

**Task 2.2: Infrastructure**

Maps of water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure will be prepared. The narrative will discuss any known deficiencies as well as planned or needed projects.

**Task 2.3: Economic and Market Analysis**

A snapshot of recent and current market conditions will be prepared. These will include an analysis of 2008 property valuations, a review of recent transaction data, and summaries of recent development activity.

**Task 2.4: Physical Condition of Existing Uses**

An inventory of existing land uses will be prepared and the condition of properties will be inventoried and photographed. Staff also will photograph and document the condition of landscaping and street trees along the corridor.

**Task 2.5: Soft Site Analysis**

Using a combination of property data and field surveys, “soft sites” within the study will be identified. Soft sites are properties likely to be profitably redeveloped through private sector initiative. They include under built sites, vacant sites, and sites occupied by vacant and/or deteriorated buildings. Soft sites may persist for considerable periods of time if market conditions are not sufficiently favorable to spur redevelopment.

**Task 2.6: Urban Design Inventory**

Staff at the Urban Design Center will produce a qualitative assessment of urban design features in the study area, including public realm features, landscaping, views and vistas, public art, and built environmental characteristics.

**Task 2.7: Cultural and Historic Resources**

Staff will work with the Historic Preservation staff in the Planning Department to gather historic and cultural resources along the corridor.

**Task 2.8: Briefing Book**

Staff will prepare a book of background information on the study area. The book will include information outlined in 2.1 through 2.7 (above) as well as base maps and general information about the corridor and the project. The book also will include a summary of the issues and opportunities.

**Task 2.8: Public Workshop**

A workshop will be held for the three subareas to present the results of the detailed inventory and the issues and opportunities report. A presentation and question and answer session will be followed by a series of breakout groups by subarea where participants can discuss potential improvements and solutions for the corridor. Base maps will be available for sketching. The large group will reconvene and breakout group representatives will report out their recommendations.

*Meetings: Two working group meetings to refine the inventory; one public workshop to brainstorm options and approaches.*

*Deliverables: Issues and Opportunities report*

## **Phase 3: Options**

Coming off the public workshop, Planning staff will use the input obtained from the stakeholders to begin working on a set of proposed solutions for the corridor. Three categories of solutions are anticipated: (1) short-term, low-cost actions; (2) mid-term changes; and (3) expensive, long-term undertakings.

### **Task 3.1: Land Use Scenarios**

Using the currently adopted Future Land Use designations as a point of departure, more detailed land use scenarios will be developed for the study area. These will include redevelopment scenarios for the soft sites identified in Task 2.5. The scenarios will address use mix, proposed building heights, and parking policy. Build-out estimates of the scenarios will be prepared, in terms of numbers of units and square feet of commercial.

### **Task 3.2: Transportation Improvements**

A package of roadway improvements and transit enhancements will be prepared based on revised travel demand estimates from the land use scenarios. The transportation options will address the following goals:

- Resolve unsafe or substandard conditions at intersections and interchanges;
- Facilitate pedestrian movement along and across the corridor; and
- Improve transit service and facilities.

### **Task 3.3: Open Space, Public Realm, and Cultural Identify**

New Bern Avenue has a few public spaces along its length in the form of medians and other left-over pieces of right-of-way (Poole/Edenton/New Bern intersection). These public spaces can improve the appearance of the corridor. This task will explore options for public realm enhancements such as open space, public art and cultural markers.

### **Task 3.4: Implementation Options**

In concert with the development of the land use, transportation and public realm options, a suite of implementation tools will also be explored to ensure that the proposed regulations and public investments are feasible. For example, what zoning tools will likely be available to implement the land use vision? What sources of funding might be available to offset the costs of transportation investments and public realm improvements, including value capture?



**Task 3.5: Public Workshop and Input**

A public workshop will be held to present the various options to the community. The options will be presented as three groupings consisting of minimal, moderate, and maximal intervention. Small group discussions will be supplemented by survey forms to gather input on which of the three groupings has the most support, and whether specific elements of each grouping need modification. Based on input received at the public workshop, a preferred land use scenario and set of public improvements will be developed for the final report.

*Meetings: Two working group meetings, one to brainstorm the options, one to review the results of the public workshop; one governmental stakeholder meeting to present draft options, and one public workshop*

*Deliverables: Maps, drawings, PowerPoint presentation*

**Phase 4: Recommendations and Report**

The final phase of the project will result in a detailed report summarizing all the work and findings from the prior three phases. The report will contain the detailed recommendations, including the following items:

- A list of transportation projects;
- A conceptual streetscape plan;
- A cultural resource plan;
- Identification of capital projects;
- Zoning recommendations; and
- Related Comprehensive Plan amendments, including changes to the Future Land Use Map, Arterial, Thoroughfare and Collector Streets map and Future Transit Services map.

The final report will be presented to the City Council for approval. The Council may refer the report to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation. As the report is not a formal policy plan, a public hearing is not anticipated. The specific Comprehensive Plan amendments and any future City-initiated rezoning would go through the normal public hearing process, however.

**PROJECT STAFFING**

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The Department of City Planning is the lead agency on the project. This study will require a full complement of City staff resources to complete on schedule.

## City Planning Staff

Project Director:	Martin Stankus
Project Manager:	Dhanya Sandeep
Communications and	Janet Nunez (Coordinator)
Public Participation:	Trisha Hasch (Advisor)
Planning support:	James Brantley (East CAC), Alysia Bailey-Taylor (WakeMed), Elizabeth Alley (North Central CAC), Carter Pettibone (South Central CAC)
GIS support:	Stan Wingo, Carter Pettibone
Urban Design:	Grant Meacci, Roberta Fox, Elizabeth Alley, Trisha Hasch
Historic Districts:	Martha Hobbs
Graphics Layout:	Frank Holyfield
Web Support:	Aaron Sheppard

## Inter-Agency Working Group

Transportation:	Eric Iamb, Fleming El-Amin, Jennifer Baldwin, Mike Kennon, Jed Niffenegger
Transit:	David Eatman
Public Utilities:	Robert Massengill, Danny Lassiter
Stormwater Utility:	Scott Bryant
Parks & Recreation:	Ivan Dickey, Sally Thigpen, Vic Lebsock
Wake County:	Bryan Coates, Sharon Patterson
Police:	Jeffrey Naylor

## PROJECT TIMELINE

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A full year is proposed to complete the study, from project initiation to delivery of a draft report to the City Council and Planning Commission.

1. Project Scoping	2 months
2. Inventory and Analysis	4 months
3. Options	4 months
4. Final Report	2 months