



Town of Norwood Workshop

CPNI & NCGrowth

6/30/21



ABOUT CPNI

The Construction Professionals Network Institute, Inc. (CPNI) is a non-profit initiative focusing on construction industry-related projects and community service throughout the State of North Carolina. CPNI volunteers its members' design and construction industry expertise as a catalyst to empower communities across North Carolina to improve their physical and economic environment. CPNI offers the comprehensive professional and technical expertise of its membership and collaborating partners in the form of workshops tailored to assist communities and engage local governments and community leaders to facilitate discussions and efforts toward redevelopment strategy, community engagement, visioning, and financial considerations.

Learn more at www.cpni-nc.org.

ABOUT NCGrowth

NCGrowth-SmartUp is an award-winning applied economic development university center with a goal of directly addressing inequality, poverty, underemployment and other factors that keep people and communities from reaching their greatest potential. NCGrowth's team includes expert staff across the Carolinas, academic advisors from multiple universities and hundreds of local partners. Together we are transforming communities by (1) providing technical support to promising businesses so they can grow, hire more people, and create wealth; (2) helping towns/counties/tribes create robust local economies with equitable opportunities for residents; and (3) providing policymakers across the U.S. the tools to learn how to achieve success. Learn more at ncgrowth.unc.edu.

NCGrowth-SmartUp is part of CREATE, an economic development research center at the UNC Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise working to tackle the problem of severe and increasing wealth inequality by generating shared economic prosperity through a combination of research, data analytics, homegrown interventions and policy development. Learn more at createprosperity.unc.edu.

This work is supported by the Economic Development Administration and the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise.



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Candice Lowder, Director – Stanly County Economic Development

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Chris Miller, Editor – Stanly News and Press

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Linda Campbell, Mayor – Town of Norwood

Linn Misenheimer, Downtown Business Owner – Town of Norwood

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Santora Bowling, Director of Community Affairs – Michelin Tire of Norwood
Scott Howard, Town Administrator – Town of Norwood
Sean Griffin, Local Youth Minister – Memorial Baptist Church of Norwood
Senator Hudson Staff Member – NC State Legislature
Shields Blackwell, Citizen – Town of Norwood
Walter Davis, Planning and Zoning Member – Town of Norwood
Wayne Sasser, House Representative – Stanly County
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William Holmes, Assistant Secretary – NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources



Executive Summary

CPNI and NCGrowth worked with the Town of Norwood to conduct a two-day workshop. The goal of the workshop was to identify potential strategies for the future growth and economic development of Norwood. The workshop was attended by the CPNI and NCGrowth team, local elected and government officials, town residents, and other stakeholders. Conversations focused on Norwood's economic goals, strengths, challenges, and more specifically downtown revitalization. Based on these conversations, CPNI and NCGrowth produced several recommendations which are summarized in this report. The report overviews the workshop, discusses relevant plans, provides some brief economic and demographic data, and details several recommendations and considerations to help Norwood meet its goals. A set of resources and references are available in the appendix.

The report is organized as follows:

- I. Introduction
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Introduction

The Town of Norwood is located about an hour east of Charlotte, NC. It borders Lake Tillery and the Pee Dee River, downstream of the Yadkin River. Norwood's economy is largely reliant on retail trade services, especially those oriented around automobiles. Norwood is currently experiencing increased development interest, both downtown and at the shores of Lake Tillery. This has pushed Norwood to engage in more intentional planning for the future.

CPNI and NCGrowth conducted a two-day workshop with the Town of Norwood on April 29 and 30, 2021. The workshop focused on discussing a shared vision for the future of Norwood and identifying a set of recommendations to facilitate this growth. NCGrowth already presented a pre-workshop memo that provided workshop facilitators and participants with a summary of Norwood's existing economic plans, as well as background information on the demographic, economic, and social situation in Norwood. This report will summarize the discussion at the workshop and include the workshop agenda, existing plans in Norwood, additional demographic and economic data, a recap of the town tour, and a set of proposed recommendations.

Workshop Overview

The April workshop focused largely on envisioning the Town's future and potential economic development strategies the Town could employ. Most of the conversation focused on the community's desire for future growth, ways to promote and market the community, preservation of the "small town-rural character," and high-level planning considerations.

The workshop was held over two days on April 29 and 30, 2021. The CPNI and NCGrowth team participated in a town tour, travelling to several lakeshore neighborhoods on Lake Tillery. The team was shown the site of the new utility service installation and the site of a proposed multi-use development, as well as several existing subdivisions on the lake. The team also visited an abandoned agriculture site, the "Brick Yard," and existing neighborhood south of the railway.

After the town tour, the CPNI and NCGrowth team gathered with community members for the background portion of the workshop. During this session, residents responded to questions from the workshop team regarding the history and existing conditions of Norwood. Residents reflected on the significance of Lake Tillery for Norwood and Stanly County. They also discussed the history of Norwood as one of the prominent cities in Stanly County and its history as a mill town where people could work, live, and play.

After discussing the history of Norwood, residents discussed a vision for the future. As with many towns, residents felt the tension of preserving what exists and building for the future. Overall, residents expressed optimism for the future. As mentioned earlier, there is recent start-up business activity occurring downtown, which has given a vision of future growth for existing residents. There appears to be excitement and cohesion about the recent downtown

improvements, which has moved residents to rally around ideas such as beautification through downtown murals and cleanup efforts. Significant initiatives include:

- Farmers Market/Norwood Town Square Concept Master Plan
- Campbell/Pee Dee Ave Round-A-Bout
- Town of Norwood Comprehensive Transportation Plan
- Town of Norwood Updated Zoning Ordinance (in-process)
- Stanly County Land-Use Plan and Transportation Plan Concepts
- Carolina Trail Master Plan (Trail Head at Darrell Almond Park)
- Town of Norwood Pedestrian Plan

Residents also discussed potential barriers to building a vibrant community. In general, residents reflected the need to “connect the dots,” suggesting Norwood has many assets that simply need to be organized. For example, Norwood has a well-renowned school system, but students are often not connected to opportunities within Norwood, pushing students to move elsewhere after graduating to meet their needs. Further, residents suggested there is a perception outside of Norwood that the Town does not facilitate business activity. This perception is combatted by the recent business openings and new leadership, but is a dynamic Norwood officials should be aware of.

The second day of the workshop focused on identifying goals and strategies for managing the future growth and vision of Norwood. Topics covered included developing a comprehensive plan, employing marketing and beautification efforts around downtown, connecting to Lake Tillery, and identifying the entryway or official “gateway” to Norwood. The CPNI Team also focused on potential built assets that can facilitate future growth.

Workshop Agenda

Town of Norwood Workshop Agenda

Day One: Thursday, April 29, 2020

1. **Town Tour:** 11:00 am to 12:00 pm
2. **Lunch:** 12:00 pm to 12:45 pm
3. **Introductions:** 1:00 pm to 1:15 pm
 - a. Norwood Attendees
 - b. CPNI & NCGrowth Team
4. **Virtual Town Tour and Town Summary** 1:15 pm to 2:00 pm
 - a. Google Earth
 - b. Aerial Photographs
 - c. Maps
5. **Overview Summary** 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm
 - a. History and Culture
 - b. Physical Character (Environmental, Topography, Landscape, Utilities, Transportation)
 - c. Buildings-Structural Evaluation
 - d. Demographics
 - e. Market and Economic Conditions
 - f. Land Use and Property Ownership
 - g. Existing Planning and Zoning Documents

Town of Norwood Workshop Agenda

- i. Allowable Uses
 - ii. Site Design
 - iii. Street Cross-Sections
 - h. Regulatory Process
6. **Break** 3:00 pm to 3:15 pm
 7. **Case Study** – 3:15 pm to 4:00 pm

Day Two: Friday, April 30, 2020

1. **Visioning:** 9:00 am to 10:30 am
 - a. Assets
 - b. Goals and aspirations
 - c. Opportunities and Challenges
 - d. CPNI only
 - i. Program Development
 - ii. Resources
 - iii. Partners
 - iv. Project Delivery/Contracts
 - v. Procurement
 - vi. Budget
 - vii. Priorities/Schedule/Phasing
2. **Break:** 10:30 am to 10:45 am
3. **Recommendations:** 10:45 am to 12:00 pm

Existing Town Plans

This section will provide an overview of the relevant plans in Norwood, including any existing land use plans and existing plans for development. This section begins with a brief overview of the Stanly County Land Use Plan and Master Recreation Plan. Then, we will describe existing projects occurring within Norwood.

The Stanly County Land Use Plan was last updated in 2010 and provides a vision for development for the entire county.¹ This plan is administered by Stanly County elected officials and is meant to cast a vision for land use policy in the County. It contains contextual information about development patterns and existing assets in the County, being known as a

¹ Stanly County Land Use Plan, <https://www.stanlycountync.gov/wp-content/uploads/WebPDFs/Departments/PlanningZoning/2010%20Land%20Use%20Plan.pdf>

place with prominent natural resources, the rise of tourism as an important industry, and development pressures caused by the continued expansion of the Charlotte Metropolitan Region.

Stanly County also has a Master Recreation Plan that outlines existing assets and identifies future needs to promote outdoor recreation.² This plan has a section for each municipality within Stanly County. Interestingly, the plan described Norwood as *formerly* the Gateway to Lake Tillery. As this plan was completed in 2014, it suggests a perception that there is not public access to the lake, something some Norwood residents are currently looking to address. The plan includes feedback from residents, who expressed public access to the lake as a priority, as well as more bicycle trails, walking trails, and outdoor playgrounds.

Currently, plans are being developed for a multi-use project and residential neighborhood on Lake Tillery, that is intended to promote public access to the beach, commercial activity, including a marina and restaurant, and a residential neighborhood. The developer for this project is already in conversation with town leaders about the project and is engaging the community during the development of site plans. Visions for the project include completing a land swap, enabling the Town to acquire land better positioned to serve as a gateway to the lake, and a trail connecting Lake Tillery Park to downtown Norwood. While no plans have been finalized, local officials should continue to work with the developer to ensure the project meets the community's needs and promotes sustainability. As the development is occurring on the lake, care should be taken to promote environmental sustainability and protections.

Norwood has informal plans to increase and capitalize on downtown being the prominent destination place in Norwood. Some components of achieving that are to beautify downtown, including using artwork and murals to uplift existing buildings, cleaning the frontage on vacant buildings, promoting downtown open space, and supporting new business growth. Norwood has already seen the benefit of the initial phases of this project. The Town is also in the process of installing a water system enabling them to share water with Union County, which will provide additional revenue to the area to support future infrastructure work.

Other plans in development include:

- Phase 2, Edgewater, and existing neighborhood,
- Eagle Point redevelopment plans,

² Stanly County Master Recreation Plan, <https://www.stanlycountync.gov/wp-content/uploads/WebPDFs/Departments/PlanningZoning/MasterRecreationPlan.pdf>

- June Berry: Potential annexation and Farm to Table Agritourism opportunities,
- Fork Farm: Regional/National World Class Equestrian and Sportsman Facility “for sale” offering potential development opportunities,
- Water Transfer Project between Norwood, Stanly, and Union Counties (the largest such project in North Carolina at this time),
- Town of Norwood Water Treatment Plan renovation (treatment is exclusive to the Town of Norwood thus maintaining capacity for future development),
- \$2.2 Million Mill Hill Sewer Repair and Maintenance,
- Lake and CBD Police Patrol: increasing law enforcement resources,
- Public Arts Program through a grant from VisitStanly.com for murals, street art, signage, and wayfinding.



One of Norwood’s 4 ribbon cuttings in April 2021.

Demographic and Economic Data



This section will overview demographic and economic information for the Town of Norwood. More information is included in the pre-workshop memo produced by NCGrowth. That report includes several key indicators that provide context to existing trends in Norwood, such as a higher than average unemployment rate, a significant presence of retail trade businesses, a more racially and ethnically diverse region when compared to Stanly County, and a median income around \$44,000. The remainder of this section will focus on geographic trends to provide context for where people live and their quality of life.

Figure 1 provides context about where most people in Norwood live. The majority of Norwood residents live in the west and southeast portions of the Town. For the most part, the highest population block groups are closer to downtown Norwood, suggesting an opportunity to connect residents to downtown business activity. This map does not show the railway that runs through Norwood, which largely serves as a dividing line to the western portion of Norwood. It will be important to consider how to connect the western portion of Norwood to downtown despite the existing railway.

Figure 1: Population in Norwood (American Community Survey)

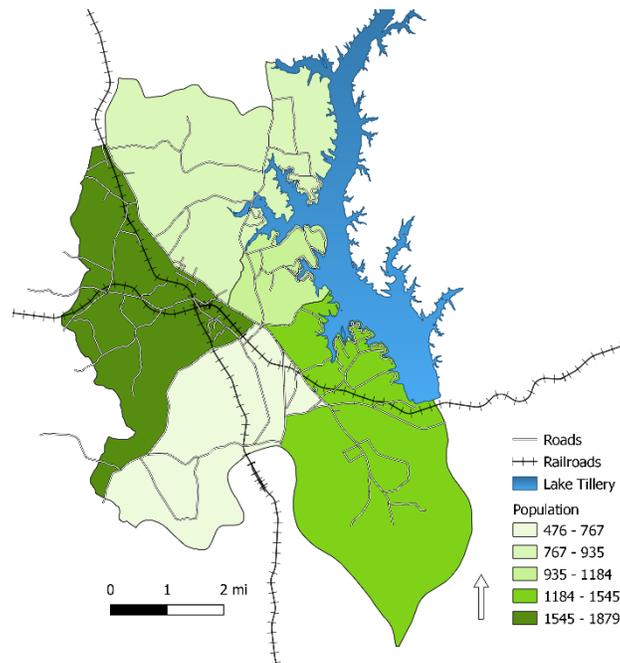


Figure 2 provides context about the demographic composition of Norwood from a geographic perspective. The map indicates that the block groups closest to downtown have higher Black and Asian populations than other block groups. Further, the western portion of Norwood is majority Black and Asian, with 55% of the population identifying as either Black, Asian, or multi-racial. As mentioned earlier, the railway largely separates the western portion of Norwood, which in many towns is a historic remnant of segregation. Many towns have similar segregation and development patterns due to past policy decisions, and Norwood is well positioned to restructure past development patterns to encourage more integrated neighborhoods and a more racially equitable and integrated community. This is also related to economic opportunities, as this portion of Norwood has higher poverty rates than the rest of the Town (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Demographics by Block Group in Norwood (ACS)

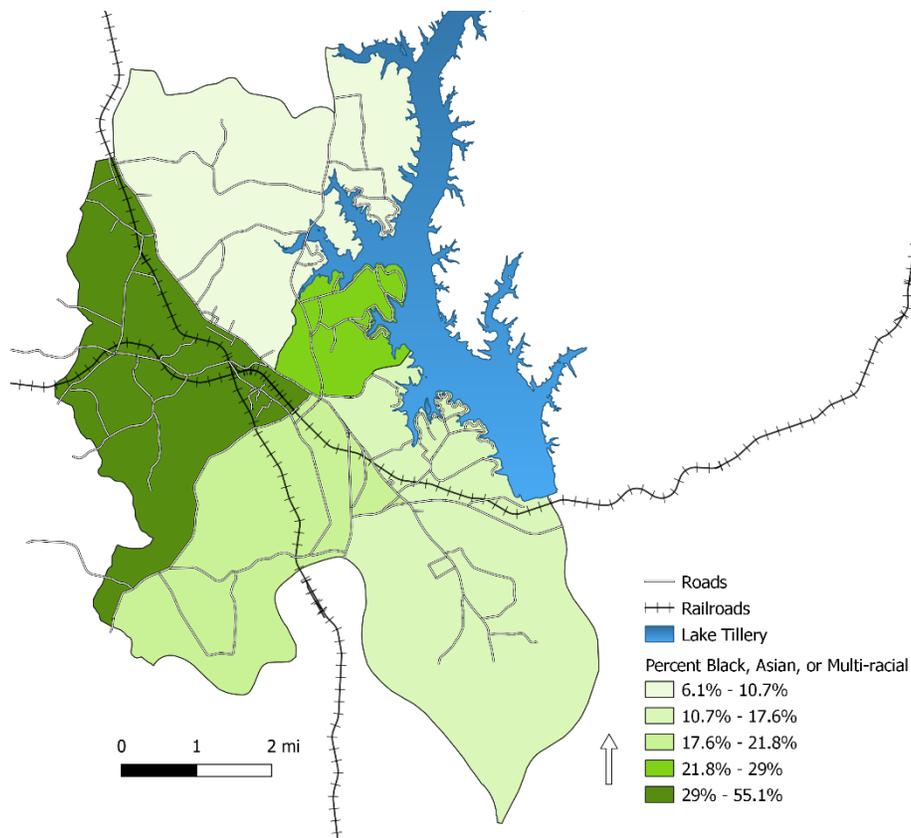
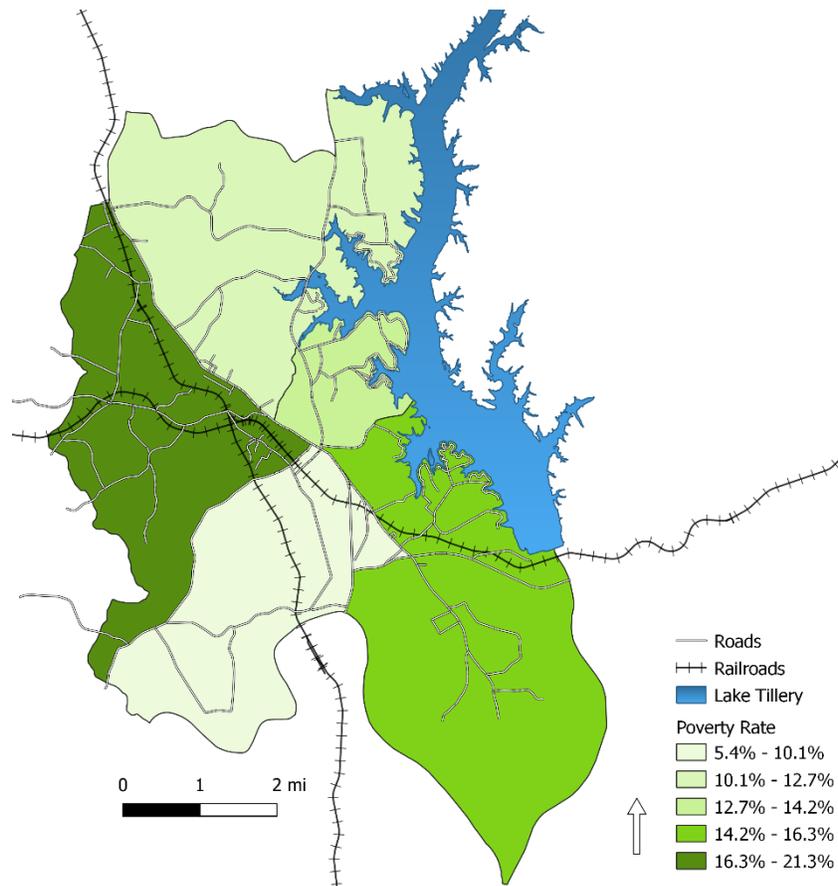


Figure 3: Poverty Rate by Block Group in Norwood (ACS)



The highest rates of poverty in Norwood correspond with the block groups with the largest Black, Asian, and multi-racial populations. The block groups with the lowest poverty rates are in the southern portion of Norwood and on the northern portion next to Lake Tillery. Notably, the southeastern part of Norwood also has high poverty rates, which is somewhat surprising given the proximity to the lake shore property (Figure 3). It is likely that there are wealthier neighborhoods next to the lake, but less wealthy ones south of the lake. Norwood officials and residents should investigate this, as more granular public data is unavailable.

Town Tour

The CPNI and NCGrowth team participated in a town tour before the workshop began. During this tour, the team visited several subdivisions on Lake Tillery, the site of the new water pipeline project, the proposed multi-use development on Lake Tillery, the historic Form Farm, an abandoned agriculture site (the Brick Yard), and downtown Norwood. The workshop also identified the old water plant “for use by Artists in Residency,” and the former and the former C&A (Collins and Aikman) site at the gateway to Norwood as a potential mixed use (Retail, Office, Residential, and Cultural) utilizing Historic Tax Credits.

Recommendations

Considerations

1) Consider zoning, overlay districts, land use plans, comprehensive plans.

Comprehensive planning is a prominent way for municipalities to reflect on past development, demographic, and economic trends, and to cast a vision for the future. Comprehensive plans (as well as land use plans) are policy documents that provide guidance on what actions a community should take to meet its goals.³ These policies inform any rules and regulations, such as zoning laws, that a municipality enacts. Comprehensive plans can include:

- Planning strategies
- Zoning
- Overlay districts
- Land-use plans
- Historic districts
- Illustrative central business district plans (CDBs)

Starting in July 2021, an updated comprehensive plan is now required to enforce zoning regulations in North Carolina. New legislation, known as Chapter 160D, defines land use law in the state.⁴ Under this legislation, local governments are required to update their zoning and development regulations, including unified development ordinances, by July 1, 2021 to remain in compliance. Further, local governments need to have an updated comprehensive plan or land use plan by July 1, 2022. Meeting these deadlines ensures local governments can enforce zoning laws.

While comprehensive planning is a prominent tool, it can also be a resource intensive process, requiring significant staff time and/or outside consultants. There are organizations who can help small towns complete their comprehensive plans, such as the PlanNC initiative out of the UNC School of Government. PlanNC is organizing several service providers to help small towns complete new comprehensive plans to remain in compliance.

Developing a comprehensive plan is one way for Norwood to plan for the future. Comprehensive plans require community input and provide an opportunity to engage in intentional conversation with the community. Even if Norwood chooses not to pursue a

³ Comprehensive plans and land use plans are often used interchangeably. The potential difference is that comprehensive plans are broader in scope, focusing on all areas of city administration, including schools, economies, etc. Land use plans may be more focused on land use in scope.

⁴ "Chapter 160D: A New Land Use Law for North Carolina," accessed May 19, 2021, /resources/microsites/planning-and-development-regulation/ch-160d-2019.

comprehensive plan, the town should engage in a visioning process for the future of the town to build a shared vision for the future.

While comprehensive plans and land use plans set the policy direction of development patterns, zoning laws enforce that development. Zoning codifies the development regulations of an area by establishing a legal framework around development. Within zoning regulations are overlay districts. These districts are defined by a geographic boundary and provide additional zoning considerations in addition to existing regulations. For example, overlay districts often occur near sensitive bodies of water to promote environmental protection, but they can also be used to define a downtown district and allow for different types of development not typically allowable under standard zoning laws.

While some worry that zoning creates unnecessary regulations, zoning has the benefit of ensuring the community has control over how development occurs. Without zoning, developers can develop however they desire, assuming they are following other rules and regulations. With zoning, communities determine what they want their town to look like and establish a means by which developers meet that need. Zoning is one tool Norwood can use to pursue intentional growth that meets the needs and desires of the community.

2) Begin the process of intentional planning.

Norwood is in a good position to plan for the future before significant development occurs. Many towns experience periods of intense development before having planned for that development, which often leads to inequitable outcomes and produces more problems than the town can address at once. Norwood is experiencing a period of increased development interest but is currently positioned to intentionally prepare for that development. There are several issues to address when planning for this growth.

A) Embed equity from the beginning

Approximately 27% of Norwood's population identifies as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and, as mentioned earlier, many BIPOC identifying individuals live in the western portion of Norwood, which coincides with higher poverty rates. Since Norwood is relatively ahead in addressing its development trends, now is an ideal time to embed an equity approach to decision-making. Many towns fall into the trap of neglecting certain communities, particularly those who are less resourced and able to engage in government planning efforts. Including lower resourced individuals takes more effort and time, but results in a better process overall. Further, low-income communities and BIPOC communities may understandably have a mistrust of government due to past wrong doings, so local officials will likely need to take special effort to build trust within those communities.

A current promising trend in Norwood is the number of BIPOC-owned businesses in the downtown district. There are already three BIPOC-owned businesses downtown, which is proportional to the BIPOC population. Norwood should continue to promote this trend and help to support BIPOC-owned businesses to remain open and weather future economic shocks.

B) Prioritize a diverse housing stock

A common problem facing large and small towns alike is the intersection of wages and housing affordability. Often, residents are unable to work and live in the same town. This is frequently due to a combination of low-wage work and a lack of affordable housing. The consequence of this mismatch is that residents will either commute in or out of Norwood for work. For residents commuting in, their property tax dollars are exiting Norwood. For those commuting out, their sales tax dollars are being spent elsewhere. In other words, there is an economic case for ensuring residents can live and work in Norwood.

Additionally, promoting a diverse housing stock enables the community to grow in an inclusive way, ensuring no one is excluded from Norwood due to the cost of housing. This not only improves people's quality of life, but also promotes community cohesion, as residents feel welcome and have a stake in the future of Norwood.

C) Plan for the potential of gentrification

Samuel Stein describes gentrification as the process of investment, disinvestment, and reinvestment in neighborhoods.⁵ Essentially, neighborhoods that gentrify undergo a sequence of being built, being neglected for some period of time, and then having developers come in to buy cheap property and improve it for a large profit. This is a trend often discussed in urban areas. However, it occurs in small towns and rural areas as well.

As Norwood witnesses a period of investment from several developers, the Town is in a position to contemplate what parts of town may be lacking attention from the development community and ensure they benefit from this development as well. This could take the form of creating set-aside funds that are used for discrete programs, such as sidewalk development and upkeep or home improvement assistance. These funds can come from commitments from developers who want to build in Norwood, ensuring their projects benefit the entire community. No matter the strategy, Norwood should be aware of the process of gentrification and plan for how to address it ahead of time.

⁵ Stein, Samuel. *Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2019.

D) Be flexible for emerging trends, such as the proliferation of remote work

As many workers begin transitioning out of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated stay-at-home measures, there are likely to be emerging trends that can benefit Norwood. One trend already anticipated is the continued proliferation of remote work. Many households moved to more rural areas during the pandemic since they were no longer required to go into the office. Norwood could encourage remote workers to move to the area by providing office or co-working space for professionals who may appreciate the natural environment and thus want to live outside of large cities. Norwood should further remain flexible for other trends that arise as we transition out of the pandemic.

Actions

1) Beautify downtown

A significant portion of the workshop centered around the recent progress in developing downtown Norwood and potential avenues for building on this momentum, especially by beautifying downtown. Several steps to beautify the downtown space were identified in the workshop, including:

- 1) Clean around existing buildings,
- 2) Leverage local artists to paint murals downtown,
- 3) Establish a sense of arrival to Norwood,
- 4) Use streetscaping to promote walkability, natural assets, and open space, and
- 5) Consider using historic tax credits to preserve existing buildings,
- 6) Invest in Wayfinding to help visitors navigate the town and identify assets.

Clean around existing buildings

One source of low-hanging fruit to beautify downtown is to focus on cleaning the space around currently vacant buildings. This work can be leveraged towards building community around shared assets, by encouraging volunteer efforts to help clean around vacant buildings. This would position these buildings to be further improved with murals or other improvements, and potentially bring attention to existing buildings that can be reinvested in.

Leverage local artists to paint murals downtown

A common way that towns promote vibrant downtown space is by leveraging local artists to produce murals and street paintings to enhance and complement the existing built space. Local art can exemplify the culture of a town and can highlight the history of a place. Norwood should identify key pieces of history and culture to promote through downtown art, including the proximity to Lake Tillery. Further, Norwood should ensure the artwork reflects the entire

community, particularly, recognizing the history of BIPOC individuals in Norwood and indigenous tribes who may have once inhabited the space.

Establish a sense of arrival to Norwood

Another topic discussed at the workshop was regarding the entrance to Norwood, particularly, identifying how residents know they have arrived in Norwood. Depending on how people enter Norwood this answer may vary, but the focus here is to draw visitor's attention as they enter Norwood, encouraging them to stop and enjoy the downtown space and learn about the other amenities. One way to accomplish this is to focus on improving and updating existing signs to ensure they catch the eye of incoming traffic.

Use streetscaping to promote walkability, natural assets, and open space

Downtown areas can provide shared space for individuals to gather and spend significant time shopping, dining, and enjoying outdoor amenities. As Norwood develops the downtown area, it should focus on ensuring the area is connected by sidewalks so people can either navigate the area. Norwood should also extend the sidewalks to connect nearby neighborhoods to downtown to encourage residents to walk or bike from their homes. Further, encouraging natural assets, such as street trees, and open space can make the downtown area a vibrant space that provides a balance of natural and architectural beauty. Parks and open space will help drive people downtown and help keep people downtown once they arrive.

Consider using historic tax credits to preserve existing buildings

A common way that small towns leverage built assets is by applying for historic tax credits for older buildings. This a way to preserve history as well as to encourage investment and upkeep in important built structures. Norwood could pursue this avenue to foster a transition for some of these buildings into renewed spaces for community assets. It is also important to recognize that there is evidence to suggest that using historic tax credits can lead to gentrification and displacement due to the increased investment into properties pricing people out of their neighborhoods.⁶ Norwood should consult this research if pursuing historic tax credits and design the program in a way to benefit existing residents.

⁶ Brian J. McCabe, "Protecting Neighborhoods or Priming Them for Gentrification? Historic Preservation, Housing, and Neighborhood Change," *Housing Policy Debate* 29, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 181–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2018.1506391>.

2) Focus on homegrown business growth

Building sustainable local economies is often best accomplished by focusing on the existing assets of a town. Sometimes, towns and cities can fall into the trap of attempting to attract large companies to locate nearby, bringing flashy jobs numbers and dollars invested. While there are cases of this type of growth being successful, they frequently are not as sustainable as promoting locally grown small businesses. Local businesses often play a major role in their communities, compared to larger organizations who may not have a stake in the community. To promote homegrown business growth, Norwood should focus on the following strategies:

- 1) Hire an economic development manager to promote business and workforce development in the Town,
- 2) Provide incentives to encourage people to start businesses,
- 3) Remove barriers for people looking to start businesses,
- 4) Develop a business starter guide,
- 5) Establish local supply chains, especially with local food,
- 6) Establish Artist in Residency associated with UNC System and Private System Art Schools (NC School of Art, UNC-C, NC A&T, NC State, UNC-CH, etc.) and State and regional art museums (Bechtler, Mint, Gantt, NC Museum of Art, Ackland Art Museum, Reynolda House of American Art).

Hire an economic development manager to promote business and workforce development in the Town

As Norwood grows, it is likely to become increasingly challenging to manage the various aspects of fostering growth and a good quality of life. Oftentimes, small towns have individuals who play several roles, or hold two or more job positions. Furthermore, towns and cities are often understaffed, responding to hiring needs reactively rather than proactively. Norwood should consider getting ahead of the curve on this front by hiring an economic development manager. Such a role can facilitate the growth of downtown, including fostering business startup opportunities, and can build a workforce development pipeline to connect existing residents to job opportunities.

Provide incentives and startup assistance to encourage people to start businesses

One of the key aspects of starting a business is access to capital. Local governments can provide different types of assistance to encourage new business activity, including offering incentives. Incentives can take an array of forms, including training new workers to meet the business' employment needs, offering tax abatements, or providing funds for building maintenance. Incentives are also an avenue for encouraging certain policy goals, such as paying living wages and providing benefits to employees.

Remove barriers for people looking to start businesses

This recommendation is largely an extension of the previous one, but with a broader focus. While access to capital is one key aspect of starting a business, there could be other impediments preventing people from starting businesses. For example, zoning laws can sometimes prevent people from starting a business in their home, or may be difficult to find or navigate. While there are some businesses that are certainly inappropriate in residential communities (e.g. industrial sites), this can also be an impediment to people who provide professional services, such as childcare or legal services, who have skills, but cannot afford rental space. Norwood should work with the community to identify existing barriers to starting a business and build new structures to remove those barriers.

Develop a business starter guide

Starting a business is often easier than individuals expect, but knowing what resources are available and how to get started can be challenging. NCGrowth has worked with several towns to develop business starter guides that overview the steps to starting a new business and promotes local and regional resources to help entrepreneurs connect to necessities early in the process. Such a resource can further enhance the recent small business growth in Norwood.

Establish local supply chains, especially with local food

A common way communities can establish homegrown development is by building out supply chains around existing businesses. This helps circulate dollars in the community, ensuring business spending occurs within the region, rather than leaking out to neighboring areas. A prominent example that has become more widespread is in local food chains. Local foods have gained prominence in recent years, with more restaurants promoting farm-to-table services. As Norwood is well-positioned near agricultural land, there is an opportunity to build partnerships between local restaurants and farmers to build out this network, especially with the nearby livestock market as a prominent asset. Further, some public school systems have partnered with nearby farmers to bring fresh food to schools.

3) Establish public access to the lake

Efforts have already begun to ensure public access to Lake Tillery. Continuing to promote this will build the Town's brand as the "Gateway to Lake Tillery" and promote the area as a tourist destination. Solidifying public access is necessary in order to legitimize this branding. As there is development interest in Lake Tillery, Norwood should leverage this to acquire public access to the lake, either by garnering public land or by establishing public space that is privately owned. Norwood could consider providing density increases or other incentives to ensure this happens.

Connecting Norwood to the lake will also provide a space of communal gathering, where residents can enjoy shared outdoor recreational activities. This could be space for social events or family gatherings, especially for residents who otherwise would be unable to access the lake. Outdoor activity has been shown to have physical and mental health benefits, so promoting public access to the lake benefits a higher quality of life.

Norwood should also consider how to connect downtown and surrounding neighborhoods to the lake. Some low-hanging fruit would be to construct walking and biking trails that connect to public access points on the lake. This would provide an amenity for residents as well as attract tourists to the region. Another possibility is developing trails that allow for golf cart traffic as several nearby residents already have golf carts. Peachtree City, GA has significant multi-use trails that allow for golf cart usage.⁷ This helps get cars off the road and also provides a lower cost form of transportation for people with lower incomes. Norwood could consider a similar approach to encourage travel between the lake and downtown.

4) Market Norwood

A prominent theme of the workshop was the need to build the Norwood brand and market the Town to potential visitors. To do so, Norwood should consider the following tasks:

- 1) Establish an online social media presence,
- 2) Build the “Gateway to Lake Tillery” brand, and
- 3) Market downtown businesses to establish downtown as the place to be before and after visiting the lake.

Establish an online social media presence

While social media is not a silver bullet, it is a prominent way to promote local attractions. Establishing a presence on prominent social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, can leverage Norwood’s existing assets by making users aware of events and amenities in the region. Simply having a page can promote Norwood, but the power of social media is enhanced by using the paid advertising feature. Social media pages can boost posts or run ads for as little as five dollars a day. These posts can be targeted to a particular geographic region as well to build a targeted audience. For example, Norwood could spend a modest amount promoting Lake Tillery to people in Charlotte and the Piedmont-Triad in an effort to attract them to the region. Promoting other activities in the area will enhance the effectiveness of these advertising efforts.

⁷ <https://www.peachtree-city.org/1187/Multi-Use-Path-System>

Build the “Gateway to Lake Tillery” Brand

As mentioned earlier, the Stanly County Master Recreation Plan describes Norwood as *once* being known as the “Gateway to Lake Tillery.” Some efforts have already begun to re-establish this reputation, such as promoting the brand on Town vehicles and on the Town website. Norwood should continue to lean into this effort and find other ways to raise this brand by integrating it into their social media and advertising efforts.

Market downtown businesses to establish downtown as the place to be before and after visiting the lake

Not only should Norwood look to market the presence of the lake, but it should also focus on promoting downtown businesses. The recent business activity occurring downtown enhances the experience of visiting Norwood and provides a natural avenue for visitors to find other ways to spend time and money in Norwood. Norwood can accomplish this by promoting local businesses on social media. A great example of this can be found in Durham, where the organization Discover Durham promotes local businesses and other events through social media. Another way Norwood can accomplish this is by providing signage and pamphlets at the entry to Lake Tillery pointing people to the downtown businesses or running special promotions for downtown businesses. By doing so, Norwood will establish downtown as the place to visit before and after enjoying the lake.

5) Develop a working group of residents to guide the future growth of Norwood

As Norwood experiences growth and increased development interest, it will become increasingly important to engage community members in guiding that growth. One prominent way to engage community members early on is to form a working group of residents to guide future development. This could include creating a set of priorities that serve as guidelines for how Norwood should grow. The group could also work closely with the community or with developers to ensure the community’s desires are met. Ultimately, the Town can provide tasks deemed necessary to a working group and should ensure the working group is representative of the overall population. If Norwood wants to invest more robust resources into a downtown organization, they can consider forming a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose responsibility is to facilitate the growth and economic health of downtown Norwood.

Buildings to Leverage

This section will overview potential buildings to leverage for economic development efforts, including the former water plant, the vacant warehouse on Main Street, and the mill housing across from the warehouse.

Former Water Plant



The former water plant is currently vacant and was discussed as a potential site to encourage start-up artisans during the workshop. This space could serve as a type of incubator to encourage artists to experiment as they develop their business ventures. The town could partner with local schools and universities to connect students from art programs to free working space. Since there currently are no formal artisan groups, Norwood will need to build a solid foundation before moving forward. Further, Norwood should conduct a feasibility assessment before committing to such a venture to ensure its long-term viability.

Vacant warehouse and mill housing

On the north end of Main Street there is a vacant warehouse with several mill houses across the street, serving as a potential location for mixed-used development and a historic district. The characteristics of the warehouse make it a potential candidate for



mixed-use development, leveraging the benefits of residential and commercial space. Mixed-use development of this sort should engage input from the community to ensure it provides community benefits. Mixed-use projects can also be a source of public space and civic services.



In addition to the warehouse, there are several mill houses across the street that were likely where workers of the former mill once lived. Because of the historic nature of these homes, this location could possibly be the source of historic tax credits. However, Norwood should navigate this intentionally, ensuring to account for unintended consequences, as historic designation has the potential to spur gentrification, as discussed earlier. Regardless, Norwood could leverage these homes as naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) to promote affordability within Norwood.

Conclusion

The Town of Norwood is well-positioned to intentionally grow in a way that promotes what already exists in the town while also bringing a better quality of life to residents. Norwood will need to prioritize the various considerations in this report. It is perhaps worth focusing on the downtown area given the existing momentum, but immediately after, Norwood should ensure to focus on a holistic vision of the community, ensuring the entire community receives thoughtful attention.

Resources

Professional Organizations	Contact	Additional Information
Urban Land Institute	https://uli.org/	
American Institute of Architects	https://www.aia.org/	
American Society of Landscape Architects	https://www.asla.org/	
American Planning Association	https://www.planning.org/	
American Institute of Certified Planners	https://www.planning.org/aicp/	
American Society of Civil Engineers	https://www.asce.org/	
American Council of Engineering Companies of North Carolina	https://www.acecnc.org/	

Non-Profit, State, and University Organizations	Contact	Additional Information
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office	http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/	
League of Historic American Theatres	www.lhat.org	
UNCG Center for Community-Engaged Design	https://iarc.uncg.edu/cc-ed/nc-main-street/	
Project for Public Spaces	https://www.pps.org/	A non-profit 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.
Development Finance Initiative	https://dfi.sog.unc.edu/	DFI partners with local governments to attract private investment for transformative projects by providing specialized finance and development expertise. They are a good organization to engage in transforming sites that are owned by the city. They charge a fee for service and offer pro-bono assistance through classes.

N.C. State University College of Design	Meg Calkins, FASLA mecalkin@ncsu.edu , 919-515-8342	Professor and Head of the Department of Landscape Architecture
UNCC College of Arts & Architecture	Deborah Ryan, ASLA deryan@uncc.edu , 704-687-0123	Professor of Architecture and Urban Design, Director of the Master of Urban Design Program

Potential Funding Sources	Contact	Additional Comments
Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grants	https://www.ncparks.gov/more-about-us/parks-recreation-trust-fund/parks-and-recreation-trust-fund	-Funding Cycle: Applications due in May, granted in August -Award Amount: Maximum \$500,000, the applicant must match 50% of the total cost of the project -Project Types Funded: Local governments can apply to acquire land for parks and build recreational facilities for use by the public.
Resourceful Communities	https://www.conservationfund.org/our-work/resourceful-communities/our-approach	Creating New Economies Fund (CNEF) provides small grants for innovative triple bottom line projects. Grants average \$8,000-\$12,000, with a maximum award of \$15,000. Funding has supported a variety of projects, including: eco-tourism, sustainable agriculture, youth leadership development, alternative energy, and more.
EPA Grants for Recreation Economy for Rural Communities	https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities	Assistance program to help rural communities revitalize Main Streets through outdoor recreation
American Trails Resource Directory	https://www.americantrails.org/resource-library/directory	Information and resources on all aspects of trail development, education, and outreach
Rural Development Assistance Grant	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services	Program assistance is provided in many ways, including direct or guaranteed loans, grants, technical assistance, research, and educational materials.
Department of Transportation (DoT) Planning Grant Initiative	https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pag	Funding Cycle: Call for Proposals in August; Deadline in

	es/Planning-Grant-Initiative.aspx	November; Decisions in February Project Types: Annual matching grant program to encourage municipalities to develop comprehensive bicycle plans and pedestrian plans.
Transportation Alternatives (T.A.) Funds	https://trade.railstotrails.org/index ; State DoT TA Coordinator, Johanna I. Cockburn (919) 707-2601; jcockburn@ncdot.gov	Federal government funds for projects that expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment. Eligible projects include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, safe routes for non-drivers, and historic preservation.

Community Projects	Contact	Additional Comments
Z. Smith Reynolds (ZSR) Community Progress Fund	https://www.zsr.org/community-progress	- Funding Cycle: Letters of Intent accepted starting Oct. 1; Selected proposals receive an invitation to submit a full application in February; Grant decisions made in May - Award Amount: \$20,000 - \$30,000 per year for one or two years -Project Types: Short-term funding for projects with community momentum; primarily for organizations serving people of color that are in areas of N.C. with limited philanthropic resources
Historic Preservation Fund Grants	https://www.nps.gov/preservation-grants/index.html	Provides information on competitive grants related to historic preservation

Economic Development	Contact	Additional Comments
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<p>NC Department of Commerce – Downtown Development and Site Development funds – Main Street Solutions Fund</p>	<p>https://www.nccommerce.com/grants-incentives/downtown-development-funds</p>	<p>-Funding Cycle: Announced in May -Award Amount: Up to \$200,000 -Project Types: Economic development planning assistance to designated micropolitans in Tier 2 and 3 counties to activate North Carolina Main Street communities; retaining and creating jobs in association with small business</p>
<p>Main Street Solutions Fund</p>	<p>Dan Becker, Main Street Grants Administrator, dan.becker@nccommerce.com, 919-814-4668</p>	<p>-Economic development planning assistance available for Main Street Communities and micropolitans located in Tier 2 and 3 counties -Funding Cycle: Announced in May -Program goals are to: Provide direct financial benefits to small businesses. Spur local investment in association with small business. Retain and create jobs in association with small business. -Awards up to \$200,000 to local government</p>
<p>Economic Development Assistance Program</p>	<p>https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=306735</p>	<p>-Funding Cycle: Ongoing -Not eligible for non-profits with a 501 (c)(3) status -Requirements: A feasibility study establishing the presence of a critical mass of support factors, entrepreneurial demand for use, and community support for the facility; A Pro-forma demonstrating financial capacity to operate the facility and reach a</p>



		<p>positive cash flow within a reasonable period; and</p> <p>A management plan for the operation of the facility that at a minimum address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tenant selection policy; -Tenant lease agreement terms; -Business assistance policy (identify sources of assistance); -Tenant records review policy; -Tenant graduation policy; and -Management oversight of incubator operations.
Bank of America Community Reinvestment Grant	https://about.bankofamerica.com/en-us/global-impact/charitable-foundation-funding.html#fbid=rITIB8jBKxj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Provides grants related to the needs of individuals and families and grants related to the needs of the community by addressing economic development and social progress -Applications accepted 6/1/2020-6/26/2020
NCGrowth's Incubator Guide	<p>Jess Wilkinson, Economic Development Manager</p> <p>Jessica_Wilkinson@kenan-flagler.unc.edu</p> <p>919-843-3282</p>	<p>NCGrowth is developing a comprehensive incubator guide to help communities determine the feasibility of business incubators in their communities. This guide provides case studies, resources, and examples of alternatives to incubators.</p>

Real Estate Development	Contact	Additional Comments
<p><u>North Carolina Department of Commerce Building Reuse Program</u></p>	<p>https://www.nccommerce.com/grants-incentives/building-or-site-funds/building-reuse</p> <p>Hazel Edmond, Building Reuse Program, 919-814-4659, hazel.edmond@nccommerce.com</p>	<p>Available for renovating vacant buildings or renovating and expanding buildings occupied by companies operating in N.C. for at least the last 12 months</p>
<p><u>Economic Development Partnerships of N.C.</u></p>	<p>https://edpnc.com/</p>	



UNC's School of Government Guide to Opportunity Zones	https://dfi.sog.unc.edu/projects/opportunity-zones/	
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