



# Town of Pembroke, NC

Construction Professionals Network Institute:  
Workshop Summary

April 6 – 7, 2016



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## ***Workshop Participants***

The CPNI Team worked with the following Pembroke leaders:

- Tyler Thomas: Manager, Town of Pembroke
- Gregory Cummings: Director, Robeson County Industrial Economic Development Commission
- Channing Jones: Mayor Pro Tem, Town of Pembroke Councilman and Vice President, Workforce Development, Robeson Community College
- Jonathan Locklear: Vice President, Locklear, Locklear, and Jacobs PLLC
- Stewart Thomas: Interim Dean and Associate Professor, School of Business, UNC Pembroke
- Nick Arena: Director, Master of Business Administration Program, UNC Pembroke
- Christine Bell: Executive in Residence for Internships, UNC Pembroke
- James Hardin: Executive Director, Lumbee Regional Development Association (LRDA)
- Allan Folks: Executive Director, Carolina Commerce & Technology Center (COMtech)
- Aaron Thomas: President & CEO, METCON

The CPNI Team for the Town of Pembroke workshop included the following members:

- Jeanine Bachtel: UNC Charlotte
- Jim Schenck: Conner Gwyn Schenck PLLC, Raleigh
- Janet Brooks: Clark Nexsen, Charlotte
- Chuck Cardwell: SKA Consulting Engineers, Charlotte
- Pat Fogelman: Construction Professionals Network Institute (CPNI) & Construction Professionals Network (CPN) of NC, Greensboro
- Carolyn Fryberger: NCGrowth, Kenan Institute, UNC Chapel Hill
- Ron Leeper: President, R. J. Leeper Construction, Charlotte
- Fred Patrick: UNC Greensboro (Retired)
- Andy Penry: Penry | Reimann PLLC, Raleigh
- James Schenck: Connor Gwyn Schenck PLLC, Raleigh
- Dorothy Vick: UNC Charlotte
- Giselle Adamson: UNC Pembroke (Intern)

## **Session One: Overview of Town and Discussion of Town Goals (04/06/16)**

### **Discussion Regarding the Current State of Pembroke & Town Statistics**

- The Town of Pembroke is centrally located in Robeson County in Southeastern North Carolina. It is approximately seven miles east of Highway 74 and Interstate 95. Pembroke is 25 miles from the Fort Bragg Army Base.
- Pembroke is the tribal seat of the state-recognized Lumbee Indian Tribe.
  - The Tribe has about 21 districts spread throughout different counties in North Carolina.
- Pembroke is the home of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNC Pembroke) and is one of the most culturally diverse universities among the 17 schools that comprise the University of North Carolina System.
  - There are approximately 100 international students currently studying at UNC Pembroke.
- Pembroke is the fastest growing Town in the County.
  - The Town has a population of approximately 3,000 people within the Town limits and roughly 70,000 people within a five-mile radius.
  - The University student population is approximately 6,300. About half of the students live on campus while many are commuters. There is a major need for additional off-campus student housing as the Town is not equipped to house the growing number of students attending UNC Pembroke
- The occupancy rate is currently 94-95%.
  - Arrowpoint Acres is a \$6 million, multi-family housing development owned by the Lumbee Indian Tribe to help create more multifamily housing and draw new residents to the Town.
- Pembroke has the highest rate of poverty in North Carolina. Robeson County is labelled a Tier 1 County, which categorizes it as an economically distressed County. One of the challenges the Town faces is the limited amount of employment opportunities available for its residents.
- The Town owns and maintains its own water



and sewage.

- The infrastructure is 40 to 50 years old, located beneath the downtown area and is in need of repairs due to infiltration.
- The Town has cable and internet service. Time Warner Cable and Blue Wave Cable are the providers.
- The NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) developed a plan in 2010 to redo Odom Street which includes a pedestrian, bicycle, and greenway plan.

### Discussion of Town Assets

- Pembroke has 3 major gas lines.
- The Lumbee River is one mile south of downtown (area of opportunity to utilize recreational benefits of the River).
  - *Strike at the Wind* is an outdoor musical drama that was performed regularly at the recreational center near the River. The play told the true story of the Lowry War as well as the local history. However, the play is no longer being performed. The Town is considering reopening the play to highlight the Native American Heritage of the Town and to create more activities for residents and students.
- Pembroke has a great hospital system and urgent care center as well as a Veteran Affairs Outpatient Clinic.
- The University increases diversity and brings students from all over the world to Pembroke.
  - UNC Pembroke received multiple grants to help build the Entrepreneurship Incubator in historical downtown Pembroke. The incubator encourages small business development in Pembroke.
- The Town has a tourism board that promotes festivals and hosts Town events about every two months. Pembroke also has four large parades each year and an annual Lumbee Homecoming which draws about 30-40 thousand people into Town.
- The Town has a large water aquifer that will help support residential growth and industry development growth of residential development and industry.
- There is an abundance of major fiber optic lines in Pembroke. The Town is unsure of how they will take advantage of this particular asset.
- Current industry clusters:
  - Agriculture



- Manufacturing
- Textiles
- Healthcare
- Pembroke is home to one of the largest True Value hardware stores in the country.



**Pictured: Members of the CPNI team at the local True Value hardware store**

### Challenges Identified During the Town Tour

- Third Street:
  - The downtown area has been neglected. Storefronts are aesthetically unappealing. Multiple downtown properties/businesses need to be renovated. A majority of them are vacant and have the windows boarded up.
  - It is not pedestrian friendly. The street is a major thoroughfare and is heavily congested with no cross walks for pedestrians.
- Poor lighting and the lack of walkways deters students from visiting the downtown area.
- Two rail lines run through Pembroke, CSX “A” north-south line and CSX “SE” east-



west line. The railroad divides the Town from the University which creates a barrier between the two entities. The North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) 1.5 mile Pembroke Rail Connector aims to fix the connector problem which will allow trains to switch lines and bypass Pembroke

- This should reduce the number of freight trains through Pembroke, but with the tracks still in use and in place, it still poses a barrier with an inefficient and unsafe route between the University and the Town.
- The Town has limited recreational draws for any age group.
  - Due to the lack of recreational opportunities available to the students, the Town and the University struggle with keeping the students in Town during breaks and on the weekends. The Town is assessing this issue and hopes to add a strip mall and movie theater in the near future.
  - A study conducted with UNC Pembroke students revealed that they would be more inclined to stay in Town on the weekends if there were more social activities they could engage in.
- Residents are limited to mostly fast food dining facilities in Town and must travel into Lumberton for restaurant dining.
  - The Town is planning to build an Applebee's restaurant in order to encourage residents to dine in Pembroke.
- Competition with Lumberton for shopping and recreational activities:
  - There are very few retail assets within the Town. The nearest mall is in Lumberton. Residents regularly travel outside of Pembroke for retail purchases and the majority of purchases are made in Lumberton.
- There is a major need for additional off-campus student housing as the Town is not equipped to house the growing number of students attending UNC Pembroke.
- A majority of the University's staff does not reside in Pembroke. The Town has addressed this as a challenge and plans to focus on incentivizing University staff members to reside in the area.
- The water and sewer infrastructure is 40 to 50 years old and located underneath the pavement in the downtown area. It is in need of repairs due to infiltration.

#### Discussion of Town Goals and Master Plan

- The Town wants to make the downtown area a "hub" of activity to entice families and UNC Pembroke students to spend more time in the area.
- Town programs:
  - Downtown Revitalization Master Plan

- InnovateNC: A cross-city learning collaborative program that is currently aiding with the downtown revitalization Master Plan
- The focus area for the Master Plan is Main Street and Third Street (downtown)
- The Town received a \$100,000 grant for their downtown revitalization. They have \$50,000 to use for the design in the Master Plan.
- Town leaders want to keep up appearances of the buildings in the downtown area. Many buildings are dilapidated and pose safety hazards that require immediate attention.
- Connectivity between downtown, the University and businesses is also a factor the Town hopes to improve upon.
- The Town is building a 30 acre solar farm
- The Villages of Hunter's Run, Phase 1 of a four-phase, \$77 million mixed-use development, will include a multifamily housing development that will introduce one and two townhomes, a retail strip mall, and a movie theater to the Town of Pembroke.
- The Town wants to focus on preserving historical buildings, if possible, during revitalization.



**Pictured: Tour of local engineering company, Locklear, Locklear & Jacob**

## **Session Two: In-depth Discussion Regarding Pembroke's Master Plan for Downtown Revitalization and Town Programs (04/07/16)**

- Major partners helping with the Master Plan:
  - UNC Pembroke
  - Carolina Commerce & Technology Center (COMtech)

- Lumbee Regional Development Association (LRDA)
- Town of Pembroke
- The Lumbee Tribe
- (CPNI Question) What made you choose Third and Main Streets for the Master Plan?
  - It is the most concerning area in Town.
  - The money that was received through grants has to be used to revitalize the downtown area.
  - Although most of the property located on both Third and Main Streets are in deplorable conditions, the Master Plan seeks to preserve and renovate these buildings to maintain their historical significance.
- (CPNI Question) What is the mission of InnovateNC?
  - InnovateNC is a program that seeks to spread innovation beyond the RTP area
  - Pembroke was one of 7 cities selected by the program, and the only rural area selected.
- (CPNI Question) Did you all identify what certain industries you want to bring into this area?
  - They looked at their current industry clusters such as agriculture, manufacturing, textiles, and healthcare.
  - Their plan is to look beyond the current major industries and focus on emerging industries such as renewable energy through solar power and waste energy.
- (CPN Question) What was UNC Pembroke's interest in building the Incubator?
  - The Incubator hopes to bridge the gap between the Town and the University by drawing more students into the downtown area.
  - UNC Pembroke hopes to boost economic development in the area by providing small businesses with access to the Town's resources as well as business expertise.



- The University received a few grants to aid with the construction of the Entrepreneurship Incubator.

### Challenges with the Master Plan

- Incentivizing the community and its leaders to spend money to revitalize the downtown area.
- Motivating building owners to fix up their storefronts.
- Encouraging new businesses to relocate to the Pembroke downtown area.
- The Master Plan does not cover the central business district.

### **Session Three: CPNI Suggestions and Observations (04/06/16)**

- The first step is to identify the person who will be leading the effort of revitalizing the Town of Pembroke. Finding the person(s) with the most passion is vital to the success of the revitalization mission.
- Seek out other grant opportunities:
  - Speak with the Kenan Center about possible grant opportunities and evaluate all possibilities by prioritizing grant pursuits.
  - Utilize outstanding \$50,000 for a grant writer or the Master Plan.
  - Take advantage of Robeson Community College or UNC Pembroke and seek grant writing assistance.
  - Consider looking into American Waterway Grants.
  - Look into Duke Energy grant/funding to address the poor lighting issues in the Town. Funding can be used to provide much needed lighting to the downtown area.
  - Consider participating in the Downtown Associate Community Program to secure downtown revitalization technical assistance services.
- Increase the collaborative effort with UNC Pembroke
  - Evaluate the UNC Pembroke campus survey results from 2010 to get a better understanding of the students' needs from the community.
  - Work with the UNC Pembroke Foundation to form a partnership. This will allow the Town and University to address the acquisition of interested properties for joint use and economic development. Additionally, it will allow the Town and University to gain control of the downtown properties and prevent undesirable businesses from obtaining ownership of prominent properties.
  - Utilize the students to research the Town's history and the historical value of the buildings in the downtown area. The history of the campus is well documented; however, the historical value of most of the Town's buildings is unknown.
  - Consider joint planning of events between the Town and the University. This will help integrate the students into the downtown area. The Town will need to

provide potential benefits to the University to gain their support. Capitalize on the diversity of the community (International presence)

- Improve connectivity between the University and the Town
  - Creating bike lanes and walkways will allow students to travel from the main campus to the Incubator, the downtown area, and the future retail stores proposed in the plan for the Hunter's Run housing development.
  - Coordinate with UNC Pembroke on their Master Plan updates and efforts currently underway with a design team.
  - Share Town of Pembroke's Master Plan with University Administration and Foundation.
  - Installing bike racks throughout downtown and the Incubator will encourage more residents to ride into Town.
  - The Town needs to address the lack of sidewalks in Town, which is potentially reducing the amount of foot traffic in the Town.
  - Public transit will improve accessibility to downtown and its surrounding areas.
  - Consider another through street from downtown to the University as Third Street is handling too much. Consider Fourth or Fifth Street as an option.
- Pembroke is extremely close to the South Carolina state line. It would benefit UNC Pembroke and the Town if they considered offering in-state tuition to South Carolina students. UNC Pembroke should research this option to see if it is a possibility. Senate Bill 873 could make this a possibility.
- It would also be helpful to develop a list of the buildings within the designated area and identify the owners of the buildings and land.
- There are no visible signs indicating that you are in downtown Pembroke. Put in a request to NCDOT to provide signage for downtown off of major routes.

The Master Plan should include the following:

- Through community charrettes, decide what you want the Town to be. Involve the Town management and Council, Tribal entities, University, the Chamber, Tourism Board, COMtech, and all other stakeholders. The meeting(s) should be led by a neutral, unbiased facilitator.
- The Master Plan needs to take an incremental approach. Start by identifying what can be done immediately with available funds. Develop phases for the plan and execute them accordingly. The following is the approach suggested by the CPN team:
  - First Year:
    - Master plan should be completed;
    - Facade improvements on street front properties should be completed.
    - Create zoning overlay districts in downtown to preserve existing buildings from demolition.

- Apply for Downtown Associate Community Program (2017 or 2019)
- 2 - 3 Years:
  - Build sidewalks, bike lanes, and safe crosswalks
  - Consider roundabouts for calming traffic
  - Improve directional and Town signage
  - Identify and evaluate the unoccupied buildings and the potential for untapped community business needs.
  - Main Street needs to be more defined. It is difficult to distinguish between the road and the designated parking area. Parking area should be easily identified with visible signage.
  - Consider revising the color scheme of Third Street. The colors are currently monotone.
  - Address the empty lots in downtown area.
  - Consider creating a community garden with the help of the UNC Pembroke Sustainability Program and University students.
  - Plan on revitalizing the *Strike at the Wind* play to create more social events for the Town and students.
  - Utilize natural assets such as the Lumbee River to increase social activity. Consider revitalizing the area around the River to include bike trails, rentals, park sites, picnic areas, etc.
  - Determine a viable solution for connecting the Town and University to the River.
  - The Town once had the Riverside Golf Club, but it closed down when State funding was stopped. The Master Plan should consider revitalizing the Course. This will help keep residents in Town and dissuade them from going to surrounding cities to play golf.
  - The University has fraternities and sororities. The Town should utilize these students for community service.
  - The Town should consider having a historic museum in the Town of Pembroke rather than on the UNC Pembroke campus. The goal is to bring more traffic into the downtown area.



Despite the obvious challenges the Town faces as it continues its efforts to revitalize the Downtown area, the CPNI Team agrees there are several opportunities that the Town can

capitalize on now. Revitalizing the Town will require Pembroke leadership to develop and implement a community strategic plan that incorporates the Downtown Master Plan recommendations along with a timeline for the proposed improvements together with available funds and resources. The Town needs to obtain support for the plan from the Community, UNC Pembroke, and all interested constituents in the area. Receiving this support and commitment will demonstrate to the Pembroke community that leadership is serious about the revitalization of the Downtown area and creating a destination that people will want to experience.

CPNI would like to shadow the Town's efforts in revitalizing the Downtown area by conducting at least two (2) follow-up meetings per year, with the Town leadership, to determine the status of your commitment.

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