

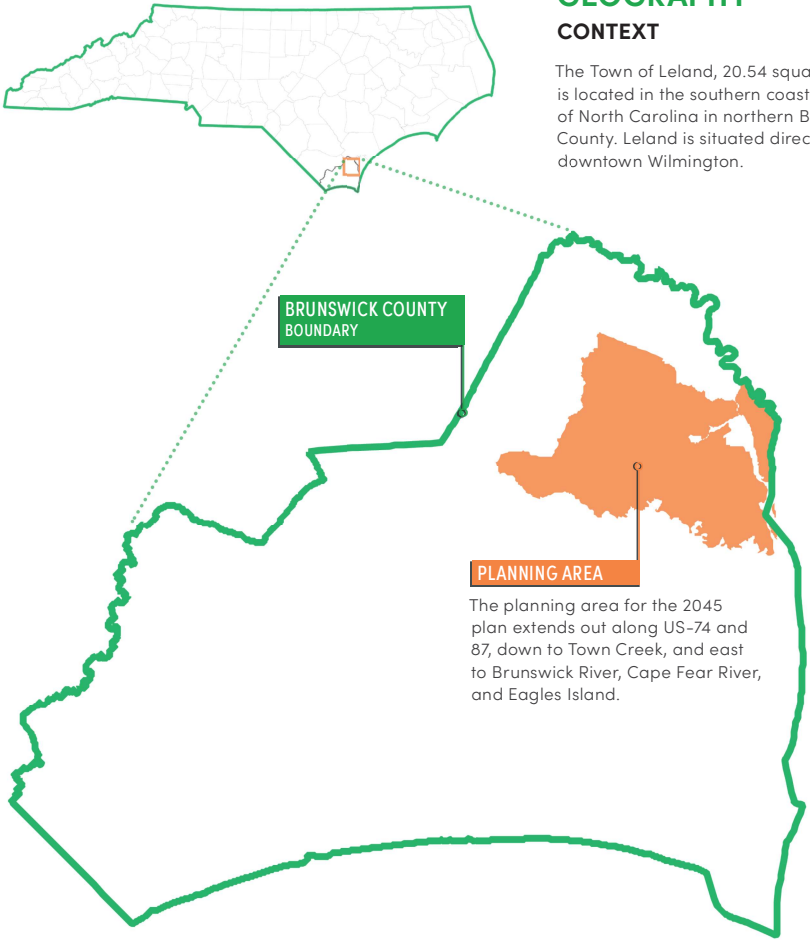
Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the plan, how to use this document, a summary of previous plans and the community process that informed this plan, as well as the vision statement, goals, and plan themes that shape the document.

OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

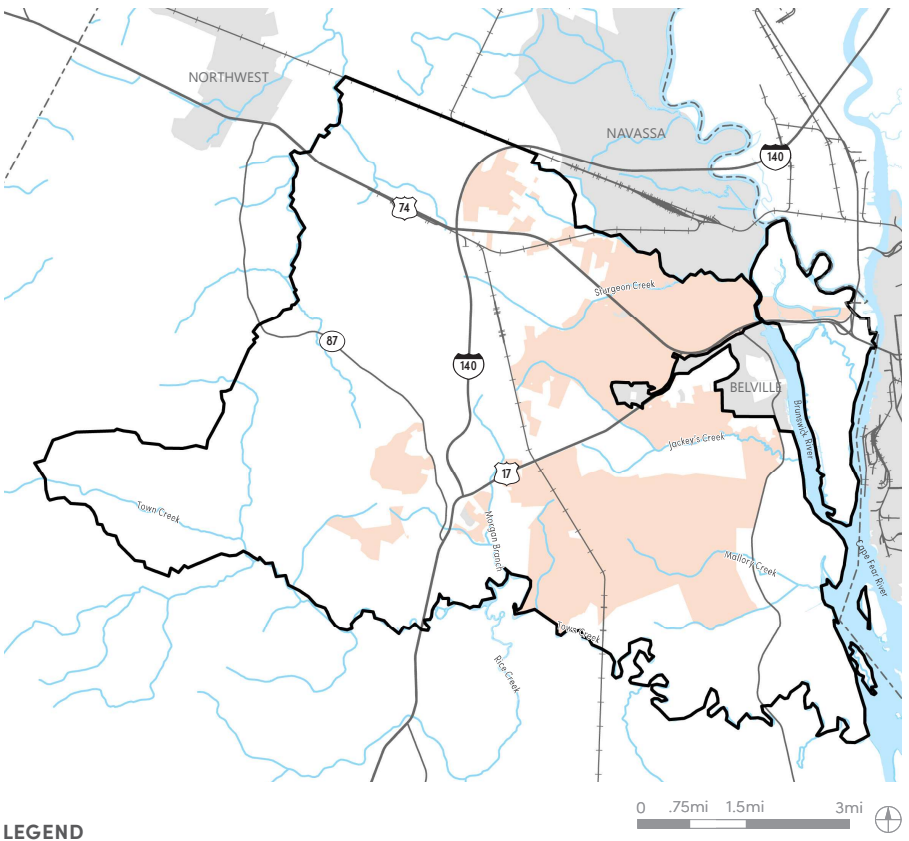
GEOGRAPHY CONTEXT

The Town of Leland, 20.54 square miles, is located in the southern coastal plain of North Carolina in northern Brunswick County. Leland is situated directly west of downtown Wilmington.



The planning area for the 2045 plan extends out along US-74 and 87, down to Town Creek, and east to Brunswick River, Cape Fear River, and Eagles Island.

MAP 1: CONTEXT MAP



- LEGEND**
- COUNTY BOUNDARY
 - 2045 PLANNING AREA BOUNDARY
 - TOWN OF LELAND BOUNDARY
 - MUNICIPALITIES
 - MAJOR WATER BODIES
 - STREAMS
 - RAILROAD
 - ROADS

Map Source: Design Workshop, existing conditions from Town of Leland GIS and ESRI

THE LELAND 2045 COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

The Leland 2045 Comprehensive Plan (“Leland 2045”) is a planning document that outlines goals, policies, and implementation strategies that were developed through a robust public engagement process. The purpose of the Leland 2045 Comprehensive Plan is to enable Leland officials and citizens to anticipate and constructively respond to growth and change, and to encourage the development of safe and healthy, built and natural environments that create opportunities for all.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

- 1. Integrate existing plans and initiatives into a community-wide vision for the future**
- 2. Create a resource to inform policy decisions**
- 3. Set priorities and responsibilities for land use planning and community development**
- 4. Outline specific goals and strategies to achieve the plan’s vision**
- 5. Align Strategic Plans, Capital Improvement Plans (CIP), Budgets, and Department Action Plans**
- 6. Help Leland staff, leadership, and officials initiate tasks and make decisions**
- 7. Outline a strategic and manageable process to accommodate growth and expansion**

WHY IS THE PLAN NEEDED?

Leland 2045 is needed to link together existing and forward-looking planning with future efforts and investments to ensure that Leland grows and expands toward a community-derived vision rather than in a way that detracts from those things that make it a special place to live. This linkage will facilitate sustainable growth; create a unique sense of place and character that is Leland’s own; foster a high quality of life and sense of community; protect Leland’s unique landscape and access to nature; and expand economic opportunities for all. When acted on, Leland 2045 will enable the Town to continue to build a place that attracts people to live, create, do business, and recreate here for generations.

WHAT DOES THE PLAN INCLUDE?

Leland 2045 provides a vision, goals, strategies, and actions derived through a collaborative community-based planning process. It includes Implementation and Action Planning, which allows for Town departments, leadership, private sector interests, and citizens to hold each other accountable to act in

harmony. It brings focus and priority to the capital investment, human capacity, collaboration, and shared commitment that is needed for the Town to realize its vision and manage its growth toward an even more viable and sustainable future.

Consistent with The Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA), Leland 2045 consists of five elements that analyze existing and emerging conditions, determine future growth, and project future land uses, and also includes tools to guide future development within Leland’s existing boundaries and areas that may become part of the Town. Because of the unique approach undertaken by the Town in the adoption of Leland 2045, the standard elements of CAMA are not always segregated into individual chapters. Rather, they are packaged into integrative themes that better articulate Leland’s priorities for achieving economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Each of the principles, strategies, and actions included in this document are important for the Town to achieve its vision. In that sense, Leland 2045 is a living document that needs to be worked with and updated regularly. To be effective, the plan needs to influence the actions of the Town’s departments and encourage collaboration and cooperation between them.

Leland 2045 should be used as a reference tool that is referred to often and regularly and should be the impetus for the ongoing decisions and focus of the Town’s internal and external interactions.

Leland 2045 is a step toward the future of the Town, where vision is articulated, themes are established, strategies are identified, and action items are defined. It lays the framework for future action, but purposefully does not resolve all its goals, principles, and strategies.

The plan describes actions in terms of immediate activities that begin with adoption of the plan and are typically completed or realized within the first year; short-term activities that start within one to three years of the plan’s adoption; mid-term activities that begin three to ten years after the plan’s adoption; and long-term activities that extend beyond ten years and may overlap into the next comprehensive plan effort.

REFERENCE TO OTHER PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

The Leland 2045 Comprehensive Plan integrates existing plans that were created to advance the quality of Leland's growth. Each plan was analyzed to determine the key actions that are ongoing, and those that are completed, to avoid unnecessary duplication or confusion amongst the plans. Several key action items remain important for Leland to continue to work on:

LAND USE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Pursue the implementation of the Gateway Infill Plan
- Encourage infill development

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Leverage the Cape Fear region's economic role in the global economy
- Nurture existing industries to create a diversified economy
- Grow the job base in Leland with development patterns that have a high General Fund contribution per acre
- Position Leland as an important partner for both residential and office support for this technical cluster in the Cape Fear region
- Provide knowledge to encourage redevelopment of the Gateway District as a town center and to develop the US HWY 17 corridor as an economic development hub
- Seek to reduce the number of people who must commute out of Leland for work every day
- Promote business and strengthen tourism

ENVIRONMENTAL, OPEN SPACE, & RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

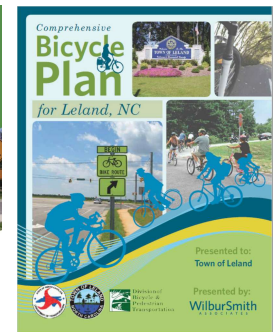
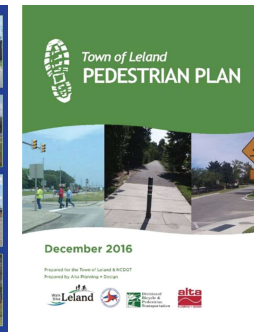
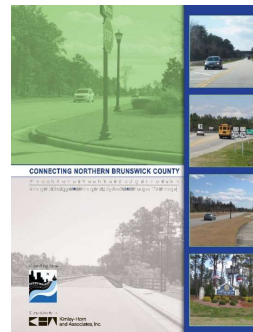
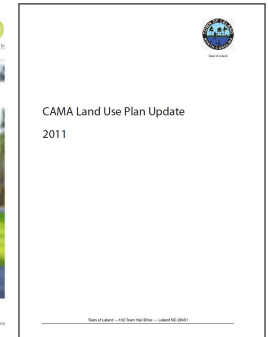
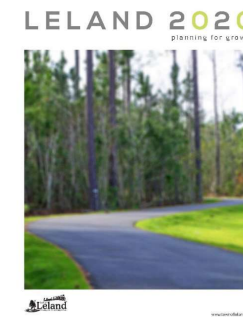
- Increase environmental buffers around sensitive waterways
- Limit development within the 100-year floodplain
- Expand open space requirements and define park requirements

TRANSPORTATION

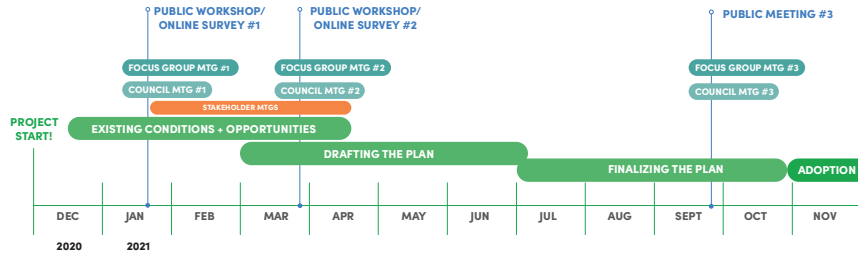
- Implement the recommendations of the Collector Street Plan
- Pursue complete streets designs for all new streets
- Continue to improve connectivity
- Implement traffic management and traffic calming techniques

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN

- Plan for and implement bike and pedestrian infrastructure
- Become designated as a Walk-Friendly Community
- Integrate bicycle facilities into all new developments and roadway planning, design and construction projects
- Encourage walkable, compact neighborhood forms that increase quality of life, and access to Leland's rich natural resources



SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROCESS



ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

The plan was prepared during the Covid-19 pandemic, which required a combination of social distancing and virtual community workshops. Regardless of these obstacles, it was shaped around a continuous and multi-faceted cycle of input with stakeholders and the public, designed to aggregate feedback from a diverse group of voices within the Town. Over the course of the plan's development, there were multiple opportunities for the public to provide input, voice concerns, and comment on and shape in-progress plan materials.

FOCUS GROUP, PLANNING BOARD, AND TOWN COUNCIL

The consultants and planning staff met with the Focus Group, Planning Board, and Town Council to solicit feedback throughout the process and during the development of the draft plan.

WEB AND MEDIA PRESENCE

The comprehensive plan was developed alongside a 24/7 web presence via the Town website that allowed free and open access to key plan documents as well as a platform for the public to interface with and react to the plan's development. The plan was advertised and reported on in a variety of local media, including press releases, email, and the Town's social media platforms.

PUBLIC ONLINE SURVEYS

The plan was influenced by two online public surveys. The surveys evaluated citizen satisfaction with existing Town services and qualities and offered a glimpse into public preferences for prioritizing future investment.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Two virtual public workshops were conducted with the community. The first focused on framing the background of the plan, vision, and themes. The second focused on growth scenarios. Both virtual meetings offered the community the chance to share ideas and priorities through live polling and through live chat function.

A third public community meeting was held in Town Hall, where exhibit boards were set up to reveal the draft Future Land Use Map (FLUM), focal area maps, and plan vision and themes that were shaped by the first two meetings.

All workshop recordings and exhibit materials were published online and translated into a user-friendly format for viewers to navigate and respond to survey questions or provide comments at their own pace.



Figure 2: Advertising the plan website via a moveable road sign proved to be an effective strategy in reaching communities across Leland and boosting engagement.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT HUB

Throughout the planning process, a physical engagement "hub" was set up in Town Hall for community members to schedule time to view presentation



Figure 1: Photos from the final community meeting where exhibit boards revealed the draft Future Land Use Map (FLUM), focal area maps, and plan vision and themes.

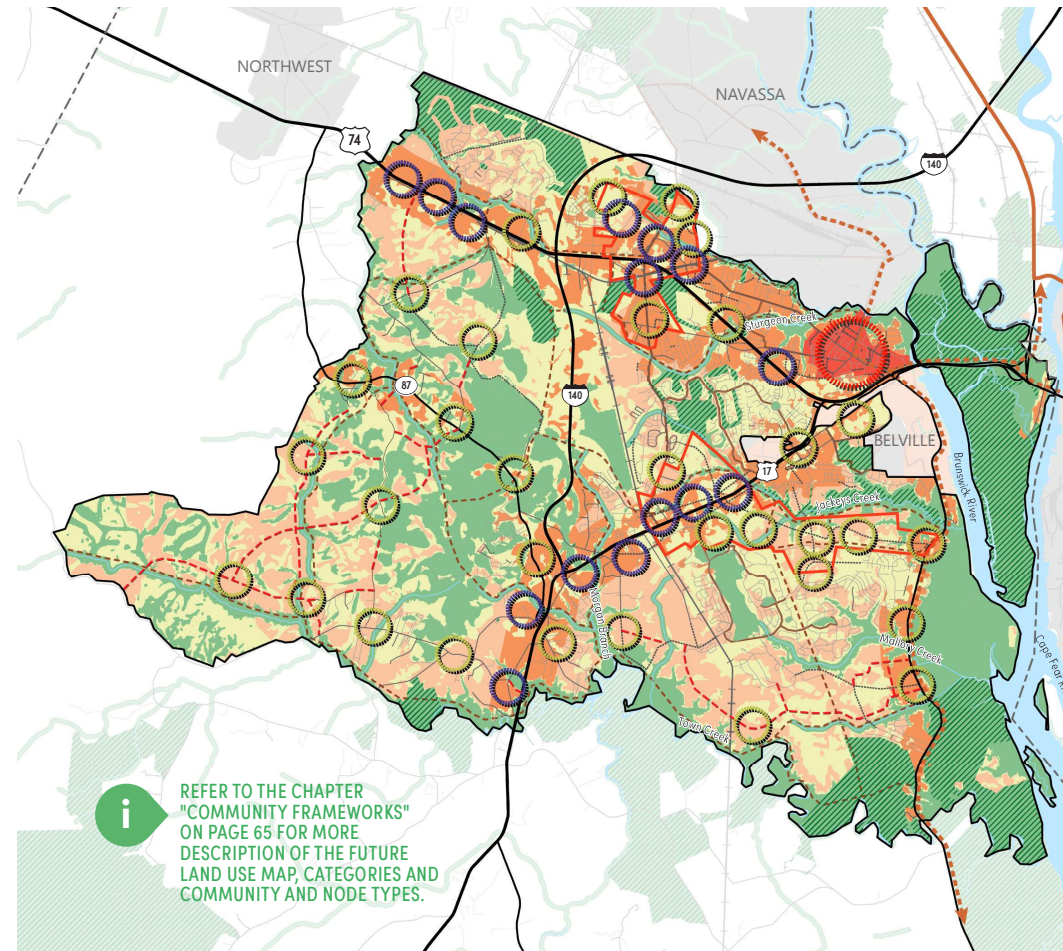
FUTURE VISION, GOALS, AND PLAN THEMES

LELAND 2045 VISION

Leland is prosperous, inclusive, and resilient. It is a healthy, safe, equitable, and accessible community built upon our strong values for the natural environment; inclusivity; walking and biking; social, economic, and physical connectivity; the quality of our neighborhoods; access to services, facilities, and places to gather; and the unique image and sense of place we have nurtured together as a community.

CRITICAL GOALS OF THE PLAN

1. Leland has a high quality of life shared by all residents
2. Leland promotes a sense of belonging, inclusivity, fairness, and equity
3. Leland values and protects natural and cultural resources
4. Leland has principled and sustainable economic growth
5. Leland has accessible community facilities, parks, schools, and open spaces
6. Leland has high-quality neighborhoods with diverse housing opportunities
7. Leland is attractive to people of all income levels, life stages, and personal abilities
8. Leland has high levels of social, environmental, economic, and cultural connectivity
9. Leland has safety, security, health, and wellbeing for all its citizens
10. Leland has identifiable, central gathering places that bring us together
11. Leland uses smart, progressive planning that anticipates and stays ahead of growth



MAP 2: FUTURE LAND USE MAP (FLUM)

LEGEND

- EXISTING ROADS
- - - POSSIBLE FUTURE ROADWAY CONNECTIONS
- PROPOSED COLLECTOR ROADS (FROM COLLECTOR PLAN)
- EXISTING TRAILS
- EXISTING REGIONAL TRAILS
- - - TRAILS (INCLUDES ALREADY PLANNED)
- NEIGHBORHOOD NODE
- VILLAGE NODE
- URBAN CENTER NODE
- FOCAL AREA
- FUTURE GULLAH GEECHEE HERITAGE TRAIL

FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

- ▨ ALREADY PROTECTED/MANAGED AREAS (NCNHP)
- IDEAL CONSERVATION/PRESERVATION AREAS
- NATURAL RESOURCE ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL
- MODERATE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL
- HIGH DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL
- GATEWAY DISTRICT

Leland is a town that has prospered by responding to growth opportunities within current Town boundaries and through expansion of Town boundaries. Its growth has responded to the real estate market's opportunities and has generally been accommodated in large Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) that focus primarily on the active retiree. These developments, along with Leland's cost of living, provide an amenity-based community that is attractive to the older demographic moving into the region because of lifestyle choices, weather, amenities, and cost of living. Joining that growth is more traffic congestion, more pressures on the natural environment, more demands for services, and a feeling of separation between residents that have historically lived in Leland and residents that are relatively new to the Town. There is a growing sense that Leland must define and establish a vision of its sense of place and character before accelerated growth overruns the opportunity to do so.

Efforts have been made to consider the importance of income and racial diversity, connectivity, gathering, and an identifiable sense of place for Leland. Vision statements from previous plans, the Gateway Infill Plan, the Flexcode, the street connectivity plan, and other measures were adopted to manage suburban sprawl, protect the natural environment, promote place-based development, create a central gathering place, and establish the networks that connect people to each other and to the Town's amenities.

Creating a collaborative vision and committing to an organized and holistic strategic plan for growth and expansion based on The Town's core values is a bold step the Leland 2045 plan takes. Leland 2045 considers that accelerated growth will continue, and that Leland will expand its boundaries to accommodate and benefit from projected growth.

The questions that this plan poses and focuses on answering are:

“In what form, location, and character will this expansion take place?”

“How will it support and strengthen our values?”

“What additional efforts have to be made to ensure that we achieve our vision and honor our values?”

“How can we best accommodate growth while also creating a place that will be economically and environmentally sustainable and resilient for generations to come?”

With this plan, and the ongoing work that flows from it, Leland can continue to be a leader within the region on how to plan optimistically for growth while also protecting the very reasons why Leland and the region are such an attractive and desirable place to live. This plan considers that the hallmarks of great and lasting places include protecting the natural assets that define it, promoting cultural and economic diversity, ensuring inclusion, and establishing the physical and social infrastructure and frameworks that enable people to share, prosper, gather,

work, recreate, walk, bike, and connect freely with one another. It is from these hallmarks that Leland has committed itself to achieving and from which its sense of place and identity is defined.

PLAN THEMES

A comprehensive plan is guided by a compelling vision that is reflective of what the community aspires to become. The American Planning Association (APA) in its Sustaining Places Initiative describes themes that can work collaboratively to advance economy, society, culture and the environment. Through collaboration with planning staff, the community, and the Leland 2045 Focus Group, these were adapted and refined to the following six themes:



Photo credit: Design Workshop



HIGHLY VALUED AND PROTECTED NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES



AN INCLUSIVE, SUPPORTED, HEALTHY, SAFE, AND EDUCATED COMMUNITY



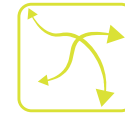
LIVABLE, DIVERSE, AND CONNECTED NEIGHBORHOODS THAT ACCOMMODATE GROWTH



INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS COMMUNITY LIFE



A RESILIENT AND STABLE ECONOMY



AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN A COOPERATIVE REGION