

# SECTION 3

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

This section of the Plan provides a general overview of the Southeastern NC Region. It consists of the following four subsections:

- ◆ 3.1 Geography and the Environment
- ◆ 3.2 Population and Demographics
- ◆ 3.3 Housing, Infrastructure, and Land Use
- ◆ 3.4 Employment and Industry

### 3.1 GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Southeastern NC Region is located in the Southeastern Coastal Plain of North Carolina. **Figure 3.1** below provides a map of the region. Elevations throughout the four counties range from approximately sea level to roughly 75 feet above sea level within the northern and western portions of the region. The land surfaces throughout the region are nearly level to gently sloping. Drainage throughout the majority of the region flows to the Cape Fear River. Western Brunswick County drains to the Waccamaw River while the western portions of Pender County drain to the Black River. The Black River is one of only two rivers in the Nation considered pollution-free. The primary river in Onslow County is the New River which begins and ends in the County.

The total land area of each of the participating counties is presented in **Table 3.1**.

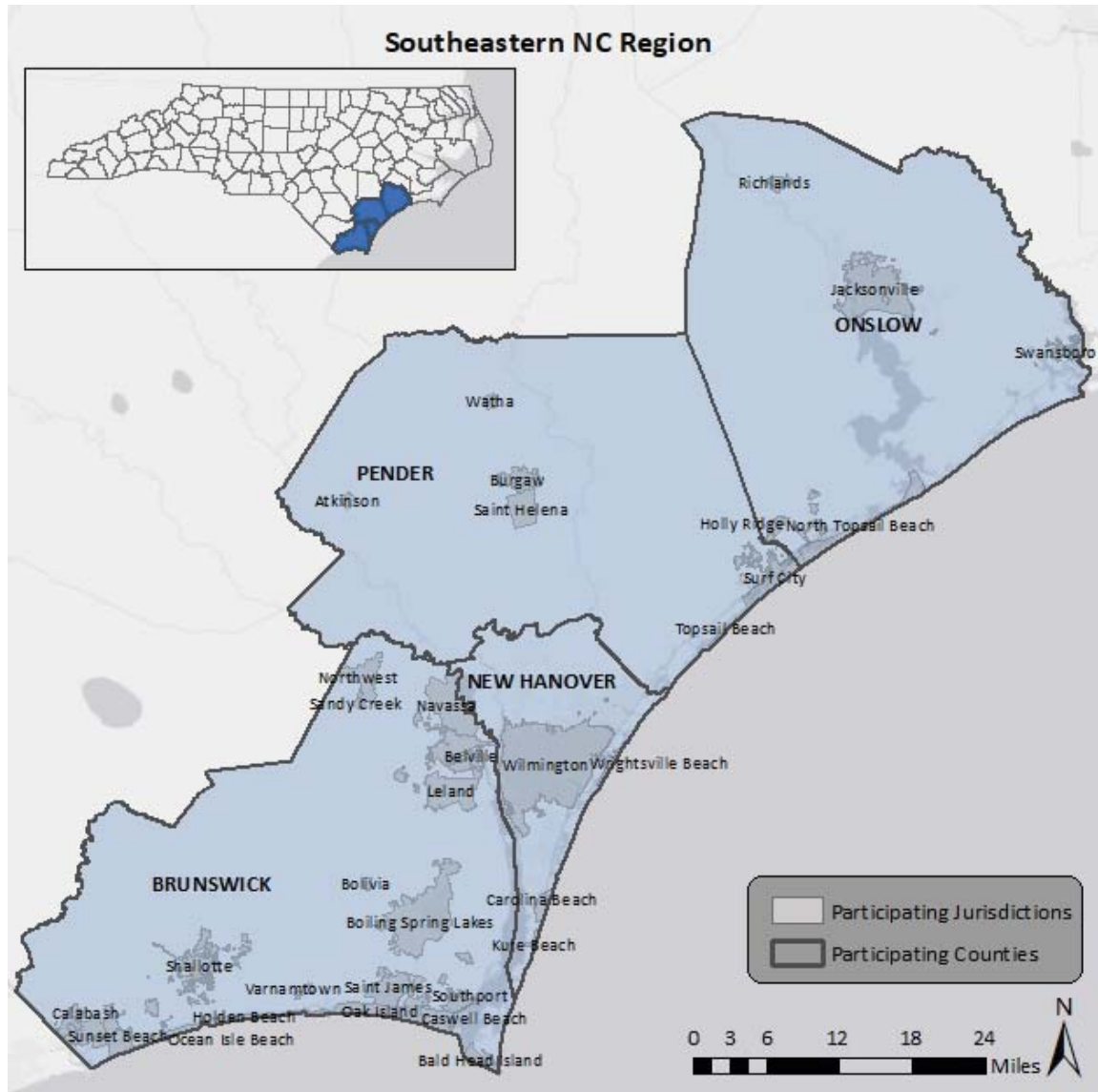
**TABLE 3.1: TOTAL LAND AREAS OF PARTICIPATING COUNTIES**

County	Total Land Area (Square Miles)
Brunswick County	893.7
New Hanover County	220.3
Onslow County	815.9
Pender County	882.0

*Source: US Census Bureau*

The Southeastern NC Region gets an average of 55 inches of precipitation per year. Snowfall average is less than 2 inches for the region. On average, there are 215 sunny days per year in the Region. The July high temperature is around 90 degrees Fahrenheit. The January low temperature is 33 degrees Fahrenheit.

**FIGURE 3.1: SOUTHEASTERN NC REGION ORIENTATION MAP**



### 3.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Population estimates as of 2019 put the population of the Southeastern NC Region at 638,291. The region has been experiencing rapid growth over the past decade. The regional population density is delineated on **Figure 3.2** and a table with population counts is found in **Table 3.2**.

FIGURE 3.2: POPULATION DENSITY

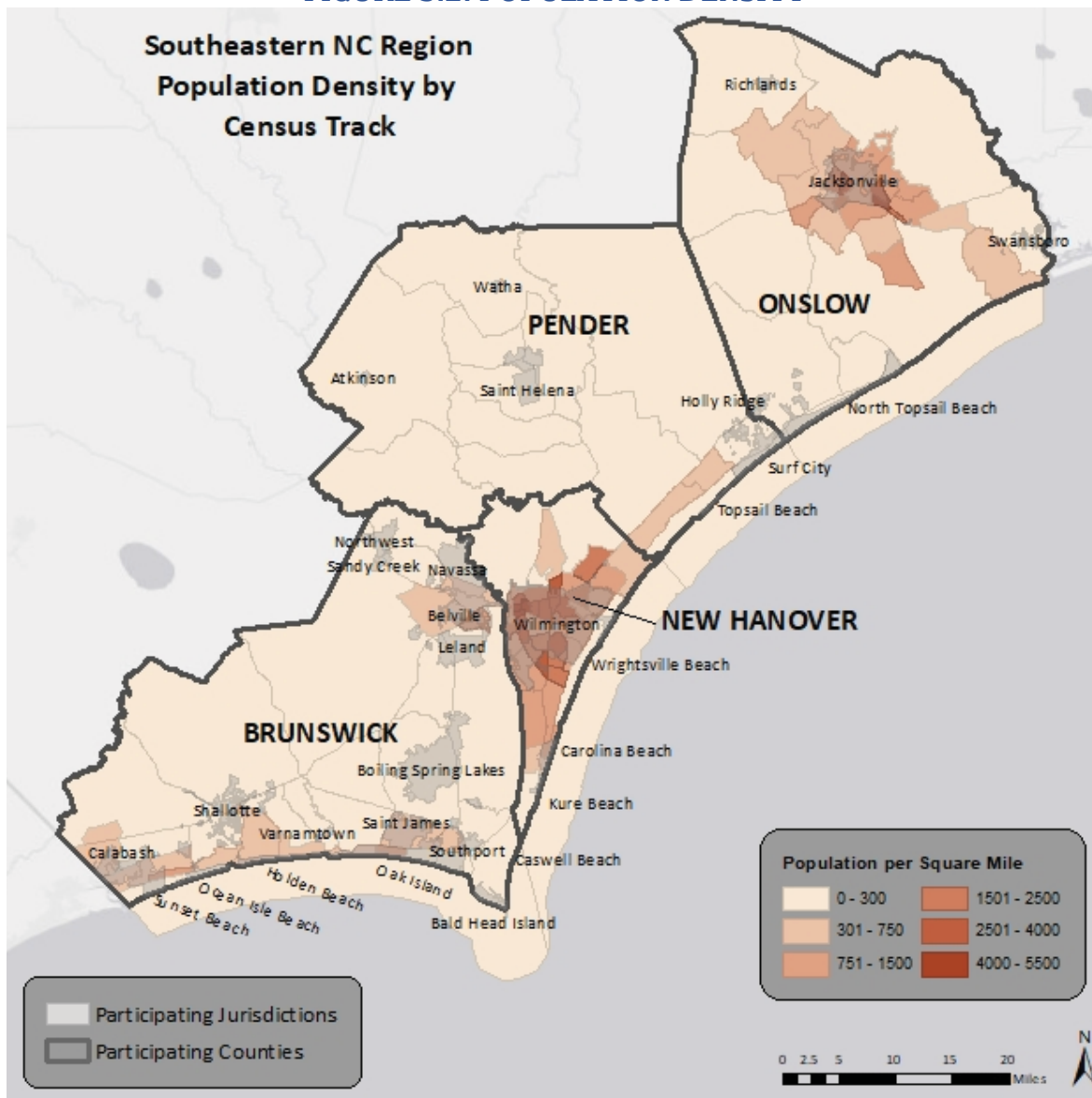


TABLE 3.2: POPULATION COUNTS FOR PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

Jurisdiction	2010 Census Population	2013 Population Estimate	2016 Population Estimate	2019 Population Estimate	% Change 2010-2019
Brunswick County	107,431	114,992	126,304	142,820	33%
New Hanover County	202,667	212,921	224,809	234,473	16%
Onslow County	177,772	192,354	192,314	197,938	11%
Pender County	52,217	54,779	58,771	63,060	21%

Source: US Census Bureau, NC Office of State Budget and Management

Based on the 2010 Census and 2018 estimates, the median age of residents of the participating counties ranges from 39.1 to 42.9 years. The racial characteristics of the participating counties are presented in

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**Table 3.3.** Generally, whites make up the majority of the population in the region accounting for over 75 percent of the population.

**TABLE 3.3: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPATING COUNTIES**

Jurisdiction	White, percent (2018)	Black or African American, percent (2018)	American Indian or Alaska Native, percent (2018)	Asian, percent (2018)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Percent (2018)	Some other race, percent (2018)	Two or more races, percent (2018)
<b>Brunswick County</b>	83.7%	10.3%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	2.6%	2.2%
<b>New Hanover County</b>	81.0%	14.0%	0.2%	1.3%	0.1%	1.1%	2.1%
<b>Onslow County</b>	74.5%	14.2%	0.5%	2.1%	0.2%	2.0%	6.4%
<b>Pender County</b>	76.9%	14.9%	0.3%	0.5%	0.1%	4.7%	2.7%

\*Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories

Source: US Census Bureau

## 3.3 HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND LAND USE

### 3.3.1 Housing

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2017 there were an estimated 305,221 housing units in the Southeastern NC Region, the majority of which are single family homes or mobile homes. Housing information for the four participating counties is presented in **Table 3.4**. As shown in the table, New Hanover County has a higher number of housing units compared to the other counties. Pender County has the least.

**TABLE 3.4: HOUSING DATA FOR PARTICIPATING JURISDICTIONS**

Location	Total Housing Units (2017)	Units Built 2010 or later	% Building Stock built Post-2010
<b>Brunswick County</b>	<b>92,284</b>	<b>12,779</b>	<b>13.8%</b>
Bald Head Island	1,200	38	3.2%
Belville	909	15	1.7%
Boiling Spring Lakes	1,434	89	6.2%
Bolivia	83	-	0.0%
Calabash	1,535	52	3.4%
Carolina Shores	2,532	111	4.4%
Holden Beach	2,525	36	1.4%
Leland	8,041	1,322	16.4%
Navassa	747	24	3.2%
Northwest	394	9	2.3%
Oak Island	9,001	228	2.5%
Ocean Isle Beach	3,409	402	11.7%
Sandy Creek	109	8	7.3%
Shalotte	2,076	79	3.8%
Southport	1,907	162	8.5%
St. James	2,978	656	22.0%
Sunset Beach	5,157	242	4.7%
Varnamtown	296	-	0.0%

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Location	Total Housing Units (2017)	Units Built 2010 or later	% Building Stock built Post-2010
Unincorporated Area	47,951	9,306	19.4%
<b>New Hanover County</b>	<b>107,369</b>	<b>4,319</b>	<b>4.0%</b>
Carolina Beach	5,744	143	2.5%
Kure Beach	2,185	80	3.7%
Wilmington	57,147	2,013	3.5%
Wrightsville	2,826	-	0.0%
Unincorporated Area	39,467	2,083	5.3%
<b>Onslow County</b>	<b>77,453</b>	<b>11,151</b>	<b>14.4%</b>
Holly Ridge	1,196	438	36.6%
Jacksonville	23,717	3,409	14.4%
North Topsail Beach	2,571	60	2.3%
Richlands	853	258	30.2%
Swansboro	1,562	200	12.8%
Unincorporated Area	47,554	6,786	14.3%
<b>Pender County</b>	<b>28,115</b>	<b>1,547</b>	<b>5.5%</b>
Atkinson	143	-	0.0%
Burgaw	1,348	-	0.0%
St. Helena	194	2	1.0%
Surf City	3,780	302	8.0%
Topsail Beach	1,295	34	2.6%
Watha	104	2	1.9%
Unincorporated Area	21,251	1,207	5.7%
<b>Southeastern NC Regional Total</b>	<b>305,221</b>	<b>29,796</b>	<b>9.7%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau

### 3.3.2 Infrastructure

#### Transportation

Key transportation routes through the Region include US 421 running north-south through Pender/New Hanover Counties, Interstate 40 running north-south from Wilmington to Raleigh, and US 76 extending from western North Carolina to Wilmington. The primary north-south route through the counties is US Highway 17. Highway 24 in Onslow County is a primary east-west route. CSX Transportation provides service running north-south from Raleigh and east-west from Charlotte to the Wilmington terminus. The CSX western route connects to the federal rail line serving the Sunny Point Ocean Terminal in Brunswick County. The Wilmington International Airport (ILM) or the Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU) are the primary providers of air transportation service.

#### Utilities

Electrical power in the Southeastern NC Region is provided by Duke Energy Progress and several electricity cooperatives. The electricity cooperatives servicing the region include Brunswick Electric, Jones-Onslow Electric Membership Cooperation (JOEMC), and Four County Electric Membership.

Water and sewer services are provided by many of the towns in the Southeastern NC Region as well as by Onslow Water and Sewer Authority (ONWASA), Pender County Utilities (PCU), which are county-wide water providers, and Cape Fear Utility Authority which provides service in New Hanover County. Although parts of the region require the use of wells and septic systems, much of the region is covered under either municipal or county providers.

### ***Community Facilities***

There are a number of public buildings and community facilities located throughout the Southeastern NC Region. According to the data collected for the vulnerability assessment (Section 6.4.1), there are 217 fire/EMS stations, 47 police stations, and 123 public schools located within the study area.

There are 305 medical care facilities located in the Southeastern NC Region, including hospitals, nursing homes, hospice care, and rehabilitation facilities. The largest is New Hanover Regional Medical Center, a 769-bed hospital located in Wilmington. Other hospitals in the region include Cape Fear Hospital, Onslow Memorial Hospital, Navy Medical Center Camp Lejeune, J. Arthur Doshier Memorial Hospital, Pender Memorial Hospital, and Brunswick Community Hospital.

In addition to its beaches, the Southeastern NC Region contains numerous local parks and recreation areas, including Brunswick Nature Park, Airlie Gardens, New River Waterfront Park, Hammocks Beach State Park, and Millers Pond Park. These facilities offer recreational opportunities to area residents and many visitors each year.

### **3.3.3 Land Use**

Land use in the Southeastern NC region varies across each county. A large portion of the development in the Region is found in the area surrounding Wilmington and Jacksonville, and along the coastline, where development takes advantage of the region's numerous beaches.

As shown in **Figure 3.1** above, there are many unincorporated areas located throughout the study area which cover a great deal of the region's land area. Most of the region's population comes from incorporated communities. The incorporated areas are also where many businesses, commercial uses, and institutional uses are located. Land uses in the balance of the study area generally consist of residential and commercial development in the municipal areas with agricultural uses in the more rural areas.

While population growth and development in the region remains relatively steady, growth that is occurring is well-managed by the participating jurisdictions. The Capability Assessment found in Section 7 provides an overview of the land use tools that are in place in each jurisdiction. Local land use (and associated regulations) is further discussed in the Capability Assessment as well.

## **3.4 EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRY**

The early modern economy in the Southeastern NC Region was built around agricultural industries such as wheat, sweet potatoes, dairy, cotton, and textiles. Like many other towns in North Carolina, the jurisdictions in the Southeastern NC Region have focused recent economic development efforts on cultural and recreational tourism.

According to the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division, in 2018, Brunswick County had a labor force of 50,144 workers. As of 2015, the top five employers in Brunswick County were the Brunswick County Board of Education, Progress Energy, County of Brunswick, Wal-Mart Associates, and Food Lion. In 2019, the unemployment rate was 4.6 compared to the State rate of 3.9.

New Hanover County had a labor force of 116,493 workers as of 2018. As of 2015, the top five employers in New Hanover County were the New Hanover Regional Medical Center, New Hanover County School

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System, UNC-Wilmington, PPD Development, and the County of New Hanover and the unemployment rate was 3.0 compared to the State rate of 3.9.

Onslow County had an average annual employment of 61,301 workers as of 2018. As of 2015, the top five employers in Onslow County were the Department of Defense, Onslow County Board of Education, Marine Corps Community Services, Wal-Mart Associates, and the County of Onslow. The unemployment rate was 4.0 compared to the State rate of 3.9.

Pender County had an average annual employment of 27,107 workers as of 2018. As of 2015, the top five employers in Pender County were Pender County Board of Education, Pender County, NC Department of Public Safety, Pender Memorial Hospital, and LL Building Products and the unemployment rate was 3.4 compared to the State rate of 3.9.