

*We can do hard things.*

*-Sister Susan W. Tanner*

## CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Organization	9
Design	16
Promotion	20
Economic Revitalization	23
Summary	29
Getting Started	31
Monitoring & Evaluation	34
Resources	34

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THANK YOU:

Resource team members wish to express our sincere thanks for welcoming us into your community. The enthusiasm, talent, skills and resourcefulness that went into this unique approach to community “vitalization” will serve the village well as it moves ahead to implement the recommendations and projects in this plan.



# INTRODUCTION

## ***The Goal***

The purpose of the resource team visit was to assess Ocracoke Island's assets and existing community revitalization efforts underway in Ocracoke village, with particular focus on job retention, supplemental income generation, and small business support within the fishing industry and eco- and cultural heritage tourism. The goal of this report is to offer a holistic plan of community work that will support existing programs and projects already in place that are working to maintain and enhance a vibrant local economy that retains the heritage, character and quality of life on Ocracoke Island.

## ***The Team***

Sara Mirabilio, NC Sea Grant Extension Program  
Lauren Hermley, NC Department of Cultural Resources  
Betsy DeCampo, Carteret Community College  
Trey Smith, Division of Community Planning, NC Department of Commerce  
Jimmy Johnson, Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program  
Karen Amspacher, Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & Heritage Center  
Lee Nichols, Division of Community Planning, NC Department of Commerce  
Steve Moler, NC Division of Parks and Recreation  
Susan Sachs, Starfire Consulting and The Conservation Fund's Resourceful Communities Program  
Steve Lambert, Albemarle Commission

## ***The Approach***

Saltwater Connections is a program of community development work enabled through an Economic Innovations Grant from the NC Rural Center. The project's geographic focus area of the grant is the unincorporated communities along the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway, which originates at Whalebone Junction (Nags Head) and stretches south to the North River in the village of Bettie in Carteret County. The Saltwater Connections resource team approach to growing sustainable communities is modeled after Handmade in America's Small Town Revitalization Program, an asset-based economic development project in western North Carolina. The Handmade model is an adaptation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Four Point Approach®. The points of focus for the Main Street program are: organization, design, promotion and economic revitalization. The goal for this community vitalization process is to leverage assets, whether cultural, natural, historic architectural or human, in order to build a complete community vitalization plan.

Organization focuses on the social structure, functions and responsibilities of a community's leadership. The idea is that community organizations, including nonprofits, churches, business owners, community leaders, and elected officials all work together in concert, with shared goals to add value to each others' efforts and to limit or eliminate duplication of effort and competition for services and resources. In a community like Ocracoke, organization is critical to help coordinate, and add value to, existing efforts; and enable broader communication and collaboration that will help make future efforts even more effective. An organized community, focused on shared goals and striving for the same outcome, is generally a successful one.

Design shapes human interaction with the physical environment. The envisioning, three dimensional layout, and engineering of transportation, buildings, and other infrastructure determine which places are most and least accessible, to whom, and for what purposes. It shapes how we interact with the natural environment, and how we interact with one another as a society. It can make places more or less safe for human use. Design is partly about visual appearance. Effective design can create an inviting environment for visitors and residents. Streetscapes, signage, building facades and traffic patterns are examples of design aspects that help to create an inviting place. Appropriate design can help a community recognize and retain its sense of place, or its identity. Having a recognizable place-based identity can unify a community, making it stronger economically, and improving the quality of life for residents. The team tried to think deeply about what kind of place the people we heard from wanted to live and work in, and how to mobilize local resources to establish priorities and make any changes.

Promotion of a community's strengths attracts visitors and investment to an area, as well as reinforcing community pride and strengthening local participation. A concerted effort allowing local residents to map out their community's assets, including natural, historical and cultural will help pinpoint what attractions to highlight to draw in visitors and new residents, as well as to identify sectors where there is room for growth for new business investment. Ocracoke's tourism economy depends on promotion of the island's assets and strengths to the outside world. It is equally important for village leaders to promote future efforts internally, within the village, to ensure that year-round residents and seasonal residents understand, support and are engaged in sustaining and strengthening the community character that defines Ocracoke.

Economic Revitalization begins with an assessment of the current and potential economic drivers and trends in a community, recognizing both strengths and challenges. The approach used by the resource team is focused on asset-based economic development, which builds on the natural, cultural, historic, and built strengths of a community or village, including the leadership. It has a strong entrepreneurial focus, with an emphasis on sustaining and creating jobs and small businesses that are tied to "place" and cannot be outsourced. The goal of this segment is to strengthen existing businesses and the current economic base, while diversifying and expanding the economy for a sustainable future for the Outer Banks villages.

Over the past thirty years, the Main Street movement has transformed the way community members think about the vitalization and management of their neighborhoods and business districts. This initiative has been designed to adapt those principles and proven successes to the villages along the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway.



The Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center received an Innovative Economic Innovations Grant from the NC Rural Center in June of 2011. Referred to as the Saltwater Connections Community Development Project, the process of vitalization has had as one preliminary step a community assessment visit by an interdisciplinary resource team. It was decided that the 21 byway communities in the Saltwater Connections Project would be organized into four separate geographical areas with the understanding that these geographical locations all have individual needs, ideas and available resources, and these communities share a common culture and history, similar geography, shared issues, challenges and strengths. This report focuses on the island and village of Ocracoke. The remaining villages of Rodanthe, Waves, Salvo, and Avon; Buxton, Frisco, and Hatteras and Down East Carteret County are addressed in separate reports.

The assessment process for each village begins with resource team members listening to residents, business owners and government agency representatives talk about challenges and opportunities. The team toured the village, interviewing local people and then gathered additional input through a day-long, facilitated community meeting on November 15<sup>th</sup> to better understand local needs and conditions. The Ocracoke Resource Team visit was designed to provide the community with an opportunity to comment and engage in facilitated dialogue about key issues and opportunities on the island. While the team members visited some sites on Ocracoke, the majority of the visit focused on a town meeting-type gathering that was open to the public and publicized as such in advance of the meeting.

This meeting was preceded by two facilitated community meetings in 2011. In March 2011 island nonprofits gathered to share current programs and projects, learn more about what other organizations are doing, and organize their work into 4 areas; arts and culture, infrastructure, economic and community service. In May 2011, villagers met to prepare for the resource team visit as well as to organize to support the work of Courtney Pickett, an intern from Duke University who would be conducting individual interviews during the summer. A third meeting was held in the late spring to discuss options for sustainable agriculture and food security on the island.

The results of the individual interviews conducted by Courtney Pickett were shared at a dinner meeting on November 14<sup>th</sup>. Her findings were presented in terms of interview themes. She identified 2 key issues: 1) conflicting attitudes/opinions and the lack of community consensus regarding land use vs. property owner rights and the desperate need for planning vs. the strong desire for individual rights and 2) the desire for a unified voice to express Ocracoke's needs and the lack of unity and inability to come to consensus, agree, or even compromise on issues that threaten Ocracoke. Approximately 30 people attended the facilitated meeting, with group discussions focused in three general areas: 1) infrastructure and capacity building, 2) sustainable economic development and 3) health. Information shared and issues raised are reflected in this report in sections on organization, design, promotion and economic revitalization.

This draft report reflects the issues; concerns and hopes for the future that were heard by resource team members, and lays the foundation for future initiatives by recommending actions might leverage existing local assets, and integrate local values. The goal is to build on existing, and establish new, long-term partnerships to support residents in revitalizing their economies, and

preserving the unique character and sense of place that defines Ocracoke. Local leaders have completed some projects in each area already and are working toward completion of others. This document is a first step, serving as a road map for the future. Like any map, it will evolve as the community implements projects and programs, and as changing times require changes in priorities.

Moving into the future, Resource Team members and Saltwater Connections affiliates will provide on-going assistance to islanders as recommendations are prioritized and implemented. Annual review, analysis and adjustment of these initial recommendations will be necessary to keep it current and relevant to times and conditions. This report and the work plans that come out of it are living documents that are intended to change and grow.

### **The Place**

Ocracoke Island has an abundance of assets that make the area a unique spot along the North Carolina coast. It has a deep, storied culture with strong ties to the region, the land and the water. Mapping of cultural, ecological and livelihood assets has been undertaken by local residents, and can be viewed at:

<http://www.opengreenmap.org/greenmap/ocracoke>

Ocracoke Island is a barrier island along the coast of North Carolina, part of the Outer Banks. The island is 16 miles long and a half mile wide. Most of the land on Ocracoke is federally owned and managed by the U.S. National Park Service and is part of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, America's first national seashore. Residents on Ocracoke live in

Ocracoke Village which is located along a small harbor called Silver Lake. The remote island can only be reached by private boat



Ocracoke Island, with the exception of the Village, is federally owned and managed by the U.S. National Park Service and is a protected wildlife area that cannot be developed. The island is 16 miles long and a half mile wide. Eighty Five percent (85%) of the land on Ocracoke belongs to the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Ocracoke Village is nestled around a snug harbor called Silver Lake. Travelers get to Ocracoke by state Ferry, Ocracoke Island Airport, or private boat.



or plane, or by riding one of the state operated ferries. The State Ferry System operates terminals at Cedar Island, Swan Quarter and Hatteras, shuttling passengers to Ocracoke several times a day. The ferry schedule can be found at:

<http://www.ncdot.gov/travel/ferryroutes/#0>

Ocracoke Village is an unincorporated community that is under the jurisdiction of Hyde County. Ocracoke is a separate township within Hyde County and has its own representative on Hyde County's Board of Commissioners. The significant physical separation from the mainland – a 2 ½ hour ferry ride – functionally excludes Ocracoke from receiving essential government services that are provided on the mainland. The physical isolation that defines island life has created a long-standing culture of independence and self-sufficiency; in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, this has translated into "O'cockers" organizing themselves around issue areas in order to address community needs. The large number of non-profit groups on the island is a testament to the civic participation on Ocracoke.

### **History and Character**

Ocracoke Inlet became an official port of entry to Bath Town in 1715; Ocracoke village, originally mapped as Pilot Town, was officially settled around 1743 by British government workers assigned the duty of piloting vessels through the strategically important inlet (Stick 1958, Payne 1985). Both Ocracoke and Portsmouth, the largest towns of the period, served as gateway outposts for trade to mainland communities. The practice of "lightering," or transferring cargo to shallow draft boats, enabled goods to be shipped across Pamlico Sound to river towns such as Washington, New Bern, or Edenton (Dunbar 1956). Lightering made smuggling easier, as it enabled pilots to offload goods in small settlements, thereby "avoiding payment of customs at one of the ports" (ibid:45).

Piracy became prevalent off the North Carolina coast in the early 1700s, reaching its heyday with the exploits of Edward Teach who was known as "Blackbeard". Teach enjoyed the seclusion of North Carolina's islands, estuaries and rivers. In November of 1718 two British warships engaged Teach's crew in battle at Ocracoke Inlet on November 22, 1718; the subsequent death of Blackbeard marked the end of piracy's short-lived golden age in North Carolina (Stick 1958).

Despite the legend that Ocracoke and other Banks communities were settled by castaways, cutthroats, pirates and wreckers, the island's first settlers were vessel pilots, fishermen and stockmen from the mainland. The earliest recorded mention of livestock on the Banks was a 1710 petition to settle stock near Ocracoke Inlet; the island was owned by Richard Sanderson of Perquimans County who bequeathed "Ye Island of Ocrecock, with all the stock of horses, sheep, cattle, and hoggs" to his son in 1733 (Dunbar 1956:38). By 1722 much of the Outer Banks had been granted to or claimed by noblemen, squatters, ranchers and investors.

By 1860 the village of Ocracoke was able to support several grocers and carpenters. Although the majority of men remained seafarers, more and more had begun fishing for a living, and some worked for the U.S. Life-Saving Service. In the later 1800s wealthy mainland families began fleeing the marshy tidewater to summer on the island, and guided hunting and fishing trips



gained popularity as vacations. The development of steam power had diminished Ocracoke's importance as a port, and islanders adapted their skills to the changing economy. After World War II, a growing middle class found its way to Ocracoke. The Navy had paved the first road and deepened Cockle Creek, which was then given its current name Silver Lake. More changes took place in the second half of the 20th century than at any other time in the island's history. The Cape Hatteras National Seashore, established in 1953, included most of Ocracoke Island except for the village around the lake on the southern end of the island. Today tourism dominates the economy, and each year the number of visitors increases (ocracokeguide.com)

### **Economy**

The most common industries in which township residents worked from 2005-2009 (city-data.com) were: accommodation & food services (50%); arts, entertainment & recreation (30%); and educational services (19%). Currently, during the winter, the island's main employers are construction (which has suffered severe downturns since 2008), the NC Department of Transportation (particularly the Ferry Division), and the businesses that support the small year-round population.

Commercial fishing, once a primary source of income for many islanders, has declined in recent decades, yet is showing signs of improvement thanks to the collaborative efforts of island fishermen to save their one remaining fish house and aggressively market local seafood to island restaurants and visitors. In fact, Ocracoke – unlike Hatteras Island and Down East – has experienced an increase in dockside seafood values, from \$461,044 in 2005 to \$758,965 in 2010 (NCDMF 2011). In 2006, facing the potential sale and loss of the last working fish house in the village, fishermen formed the Ocracoke Working Watermen's Association (OWWA) under the non-profit umbrella of the Ocracoke Foundation. The watermen and the Foundation partnered with Hyde County to obtain grants to secure a long-term lease and refurbish the fish house, as well as pursue their mission of educating the public about commercial fishing and the benefits of eating local seafood.

The Ocracoke Fish House project has gained national attention as a model for addressing one of the two critical issues facing the seafood industry today; loss of waterfront access, with the second issue being environmental regulations. Both of these issues disproportionately impact small commercial fishing operations such as are found on Ocracoke, but with a lot of hard work the fish house operation has sustained livelihoods for commercial fishers. OWWA has a for-profit subsidiary called the Ocracoke Seafood Company that operates a retail seafood shop and to sells product to off-island wholesalers. "Ocracoke Fresh" is the local seafood brand, a sister initiative to Carteret Catch, Brunswick Catch, and Outer Banks Catch. As of 2010, according to the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, 59 Ocracoke residents had active commercial fishing licenses.

Tourism is the main economic engine of Ocracoke, causing the year round population to more than triple during the summer months. Visitors are attracted to the island's pristine natural beach, quaint village community, and remote location. The lack of franchise businesses is seen by most visitors as a significant attraction and an important "quality of life" component to their visit. Most of the businesses are mom and pop operations that bring on additional help during the summer months to help with the influx of customers.



As with many tourism economies, the year-round population has shifted significantly in the past decade, as summer workers – especially Hispanic workers and their families – settle and become year-round residents. According to the 2000 US Census, the population of Ocracoke was 769 with 15 Hispanic residents; in the 2010 Census, those numbers increased to a year-round population of 912, with 181 Hispanic residents. This is an important demographic shift that has been acknowledged by business owners, school officials, nonprofits and others as one that must be addressed in order to continue to strengthen the economy while ensuring a high quality of life for all island residents

### ***Resource Team Recommendations***

The following recommendations are ideas derived from, and built-upon, challenges and opportunities described by the public to the resource team during their visit in November 2011 as well as individual interviews conducted over the summer. During the site visit and meeting, the team heard individuals describe project efforts and larger initiatives that have been implemented. The recommendations are organized below according to themes and do not represent a priority ranking. The team will ask the community to rank their priorities for future development activities and to organize and volunteer to participate on standing working groups. These recommendations represent a starting point designed to provide the community with several achievable goals. As the community groups begin to work toward the completion of these suggested initiatives, those tasked with the completion of these goals should closely review this list and adapt the list as appropriate. Suggested projects can be added or removed as the standing working groups deem appropriate. This is a local effort and should closely reflect local needs and desires.



# ORGANIZATION

“You can definitely get things done a lot better when you’re working together and not against each other.”

Ocracoke Resident

Organization is a social process that builds consensus and cooperation by creating partnerships among the various individuals and groups with a stake in the success of Ocracoke Island. Longstanding community development experience elsewhere demonstrates that coordination of public, nonprofit, and business efforts tends to provide the most benefit, rather than centralization by any one sector. When diverse stakeholders work toward shared goals and share responsibility for accomplishments, the result is more effective management and advocacy for the village. Active volunteers, working in collaboration with businesses, nonprofits and public sector partners representing a broad cross section of the community, can ensure that a balanced range of perspectives are incorporated.

The Resource Team got a chance to hear presentations and have open discussion with various community groups and non-profit organizations. The Team learned that Ocracoke has had to self-organize to accomplish community goals since there is no local government entity on the island. Hyde County governmental institutions are located on the mainland and, in recent years, County agencies and officials have improved communications and are demonstrating support for working more closely with the Village to address public needs. This is an important trend and relationship to be cultivated, in order to optimize the flow of public resources to, and investments in improvements on Ocracoke. Certain state and federal grant funding, such as Community Development Block Grants, are only available to government entities, making a public-private partnership important in order to effectively meet the needs of the community.

Building local community capacity through the development of nonprofits has benefited Ocracoke by focusing on the island’s natural and human assets and community residents, and allowing residents to directly contribute to the improvement of their own community. The challenge lies in the fact that there are over 30 nonprofit entities pursuing a wide range of activities, projects and programs with limited resources and considerable need. Moving forward, it will be important to strengthen the communication and coordination of efforts across these community-based groups.

Organization is both the most critical, and, in some ways, the least visible of the four Main Street components. It is therefore easy to overlook or avoid. Organization largely determines *who* will implement the recommendations in this report; so it is an essential step for planning, funding and making improvements a reality. Organization requires thoughtful participation by a diverse group of community leaders who can fully represent and engage the island’s residents for the long term. It requires strategic thinking based on core values such as cooperation, inclusiveness, and mutual learning.

**Recommendation: Coordinate non-profit community efforts in order to effectively manage roles and responsibilities**

Ocracoke Island has tremendous community capacity exemplified by the large number of non-profit organizations and community groups that address a myriad of community needs. Ocracoke citizens have had to organize themselves into these associations due to the fact that they are unincorporated and lack local governmental structure and funding. These organizations provide essential services that augment those provided by the county, state, and federal government. The non-profit efforts in Ocracoke could be better coordinated to maximize efficiencies and eliminate duplication of effort. An effort has taken place to bring all the non-profits to the table to examine their organizational missions, structures, and roles and responsibilities. Interviews with these stakeholders need to be completed so their work can be organized into grids and analyzed. Once this effort is completed, the non-profit service delivery on Ocracoke can be coordinated so that groups can work collaboratively on issues of mutual importance.

Coordination of non-profit efforts on Ocracoke will require organizing beyond the interviews and meetings, to ensure that a “structure” for collaboration is put in place for the long term. This will allow for more focused fundraising effort to clearly identify sources of funds and to possibly tap into the philanthropy of seasonal homeowners who have a vested interest in the Ocracoke community. Non-profit groups on the island may want to engage in building organizational capacity through participation of Board and staff members in training programs that increase management effectiveness, better coordinate volunteer efforts, increase fundraising, create clear work plans and improve evaluation.

One route to successful implementation of the recommendations in this report is the creation of a broad-based community coalition to develop and coordinate a highly collaborative plan that engages all local nonprofits and, as appropriate, business and local government. To be effective, this group needs to be inclusive, rather than exclusive and alert to a full spectrum of interests. It would require a transparent but nimble governing structure to ensure that: 1) lines of communication are open; 2) broad and diverse interests and efforts are adequately represented; 3) decisions are made collaboratively and informed by appropriate knowledge bases and deliberation; 4) resources are mobilized to implement decisions; and 5) value is added to the efforts of each individual group; and 6) short-term successes are achieved in order to maintain focus and enthusiasm for longer-term projects.

Initially, it is recommended that an implementation steering group be formed to oversee and guide progress on report implementation. Examples of activities the implementation steering group may take on include, but are not limited to:

- Raising funds and hiring paid staff to assist partners in implementing the strategic plan;
- Helping nonprofits and other partner organizations raise funds to implement priority projects; and
- Provide staff support to the standing working groups in reviewing, funding, implementing, updating and evaluating their plans.

All of the communities along the Scenic Byway visited by the Saltwater Connections resource team may want to consider an umbrella nonprofit organization patterned after a community development corporation that would allow for shared regional perspectives and partnering opportunities on challenging community issues. It could be structured so that each cluster of communities would have its own goals but provide an overall administrative umbrella for funding, collaboration and oversight. A regional entity could be formed to address shared needs, issues and opportunities. A regional umbrella organization's role might be to provide support for initiatives where opportunities and challenges are best addressed through a regional approach. Optimally, the nonprofit would be staffed, or have staffing as a goal. While staffing requires significant fundraising, skilled staff can provide valuable continuity, support, and a consistent focus on securing funds for project implementation; the regional entity should explore the potential for funding from local governments to address the public needs in each of the three Counties (Dare, Hyde and Carteret). It may also be useful to consult with the NC Rural Economic Development Center guidebook *Living on the Margins* for guidelines on planning for job creation, education and youth engagement, as noted in the Resource Section at the end of this report.

***Recommendation: Work with elected officials and County agencies to partner on implementing recommendations***

County agency staff and Ocracoke's representative to the County Commission can play an important role in helping to access financial resources and other support to implement the recommendations in this report. As the community nonprofit steering group is formed, consider creating an ex officio, non-voting position that includes the Ocracoke representative to the County Commission and one County agency staff position, such as the county manager or planner / economic developer. Inclusion of key personnel and active involvement in implementing the recommendations in this report and other Ocracoke efforts will improve the understanding and communications between the island and the mainland.

***Recommendation: Create an Ocracoke Housing Authority to address affordable housing issue***

Residents identified affordable housing as a strong need in Ocracoke Village. Community members shared the following challenge associated with this issue - essential workforce such as teachers, police, EMS, childcare and seasonal employees cannot afford to rent property in the community due to limited availability of units as well as high vacation rental prices. The creation of an Ocracoke Housing Authority could generate solutions to this need by identifying property that could be converted into affordable housing, applying for funds to develop housing stock and coordinating opportunities where other creative solutions to the issue could be explored and pursued. The Resource Team heard about several options for converting property into multi-unity efficiency style apartments that could help add to the affordable housing stock. Explore creative approaches to affordable housing, such as recent investments by the State Employees Credit Union in partnering with County governments to build affordable rental housing for teachers and other County employees in Hertford and Dare Counties, including workforce housing on Hatteras Island.

***Recommendation: Assign existing community groups to implement the strategic plan based on their alignment with the four approaches (Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring)***

Standing working groups targeting particular focus areas are of great importance to the overall success of the vitalization effort. While community development is in many ways a decentralized process, in many ways, focused working groups can facilitate coordination across the range of efforts, and link motivated people with appropriate resources. These groups should be made up of volunteers who are willing to participate and work toward the completion of goals identified in this plan, as well as future endeavors. Volunteers on the working groups should have an interest, and optimally some experience, in the focus areas. Aligning existing nonprofits and County appointed boards that have particular areas of focus and expertise with working group focus might be useful. For example, local builders and artisans might be a good fit for the design working group and there are a number of nonprofits on the island focusing on the arts and creative efforts. To fairly represent and be accountable to the larger community it is important that each working group include a mix of people, spanning age, gender, ethnicity and economic status, and including both long-time island residents and relative newcomers. It is also important to maintain transparent and inclusive decision-making processes, and work actively at outreach to community members who may not have time to take on formalized working group roles but have equally valid ideas about the island's future.

In order to ensure transparency and coordination, the organization working group needs to include representatives from each of the other working groups. As detailed below, all working groups should attend to issues of diversity and inclusion, to ensure consideration of alternative perspectives, and creative, holistic approaches to problem solving. Extra effort should be given to reach out to residents who are not currently engaged in community projects in order to increase community participation levels, and also to eliminate the burden to those community members who are overcommitted.

***Recommendation: Improve emergency service provision by building a new fire house***

The Resource Team heard about the many challenges associated with the effort to build a new fire house for Ocracoke Island. A new structure is needed to service the growing population of Ocracoke and equipment updates such as a new ladder truck and new fire hoses are needed. The new fire station could serve a variety of functions by including a kitchen and space for community events.

Funding for the new station and how those funds are generated is a contentious, ongoing issue between the Volunteer Fire Department and the Ocracoke Sanitary District Board. Recent efforts to implement a special tax to fund the construction of the new fire house failed. In the interest of public safety for life-long, year round and seasonal residents as well as visitors, a solution to how to fund this much needed service should be resolved as soon as possible. Funding alternatives as well as other tax levying options need to be explored. These two organizations may want to consider professional mediation to resolve their differences and agree on funding for this important public safety service. Hyde County may consider facilitating a meeting between the Volunteer Fire Department, Ocracoke Sanitary District, and other key stakeholders in order to overcome this issue.

**Recommendation: Develop a community funding plan to build the financial and human capacity of non-profit organizations**

The plan should be targeted to include traditional sources of funding, including local, state, and federal grants; foundation support from community, family, corporate and other foundations; and individual and major donor fundraising to support streamlined collaborative nonprofit alignment with broad community interest areas. Once the program of work has been developed, the implementation steering group should develop a funding/financing plan for priority projects, including projected cost estimates and potential funding sources. The steering group members should meet with potential funding partners, share the project concept, and begin cultivating relationships with funders as education is provided about priority projects and their implementation. Potential funding partners may include: Hyde County Tourism Development for tourism-related projects and programs; Hyde County Emergency Management or NC Division of Emergency Management for acquisition of hurricane-impacted properties that may be used for beach access; US Department of Agriculture Rural Development Community Facilities program; the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund for a community center; and the National Park Foundation for priority projects that are aligned with US National Park Service priorities. Community foundations typically have donor-advised funds that target specific interests. Therefore meetings with the community foundation representatives to share the vitalization plan and proposed initiatives to identify potential links to donors' interests are recommended.

Fundraising is about cultivating relationships with funders and providing organizational capacity to provide timely delivery on proposed activities, goals and objectives. Existing funding sources can be used to leverage additional funding by carrying out the grant obligations, providing prompt reports, inviting funders to visit the projects during and on completion of the activities, and publicizing the supporters/funders who that made the project possible.

The funding plan should be reviewed and updated annually, along with the program of work. All funding, regardless of its source – public agencies, family or corporate foundations, individual donors or citizen groups – should be widely publicized, celebrated and appropriate appreciation expressed to each funder. When community members demonstrate a strong commitment by to help themselves funders are eager to provide financial support and be aligned with projects that have wide community support. Sharing these numbers with the volunteers encourages continued involvement and builds momentum to continue raising funds to move the larger effort forward.

The fundraising plan should address grant writing and management capacity building. Effective non-profit and community development fundraising requires a unique skill set. Locating sources of funds, data collection, writing effective proposals, program implementation and regular monitoring and reporting are all necessary skills for any grant-supported organization. Communities should foster this essential skill set by obtaining technical assistance and training to become effective grant writers. Resources include; The N.C. Center for Non-Profits (<http://www.ncnonprofits.org/>), Philanthropy Journal (<http://www.philanthropyjournal.org/>), Duke University's certificate program in non-profit management (<http://learnmore.duke.edu/nonprofit/>), East Carolina University's Office of Engagement, Innovation and Economic Development ([http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/oeied/nonprofit\\_professionals.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-admin/oeied/nonprofit_professionals.cfm)), and The Conservation Fund's Resourceful Communities Program (<http://www.resourcefulcommunities.org/>).



***Recommendation: Develop fundraising effort to tap the philanthropy of seasonal homeowners and visitors to Ocracoke***

Full time residents of Ocracoke commit a lot of resources, both volunteer time and financial, to the upkeep and betterment of Ocracoke Island. This level of financial commitment must be met by seasonal homeowners and the substantial number of visitors who come to Ocracoke during the summer months. These “part-time Ocracoker’s” share a love of place as year round residents evidenced by the fact that they return year after year. Seasonal homeowners and visitors represent a huge untapped resource of funds to support existing community projects. Characteristics of a typical second home owner include high wealth and being likely to donate to charities in the communities where they live. A two-pronged effort should be initiated to 1) educate second home owners and visitors about the needs of the community and 2) provide convenient means for them to donate (possibly a Friends of Ocracoke fund) while they are on Ocracoke . For example, a community needs pamphlet could be distributed to vacation home renters, or donation stations could be placed at popular summer gathering spots.

***Recommendation: Create an Ocracoke Parks and Recreation Board***

Currently there are no facilities for the youth sports activities for year round residents and summer recreation on Ocracoke. While a group on the island has been identifying potential property for a recreational field, their work needs to be formally recognized. In addition, funding for the acquisition of recreational property is usually through government entities. Therefore, the Hyde County Board of Commissioners must make formal appointments to a local board. That board could then receive training from the NC Division of Parks and Recreation to get the members oriented to their duties and responsibilities and pursue funding from sources such as the NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. Land acquisition of a site should be the group’s number one priority. The compelling example of the Raptors youth baseball team who won the local championship without even having a field to play or practice on is a compelling story with potential to raise considerable funding for this project. This project could be easily tied to healthy active communities funding opportunities.

***Recommendation: Create opportunities for children, youth, and young adults to engage in community activities***

Ocracoke youth lost a tremendous resource when funding was eliminated for a teen enrichment program at the school. Children, teens and young adults are a tremendous resource in all communities. Resources Team members heard about the importance of this program and the desire to reconstitute it. Alternate funding for this program needs to be explored as well as other ways to engage Ocracoke’s youth. The NC Rural Center recently announced special funding support and future training programs to help communities more effectively engage young people in collaborative community improvement efforts; more information on the New Generation Initiative can be found at <http://www.ncruralcenter.org>.

It is not uncommon for teens and young adults to feel disengaged from community decision making. Resource Team members heard that there was a desire from and for young adults to come together regularly to discuss issues they have in common. This effort may



be facilitated by providing child care so that young parents could be free to attend such a meeting. Community organizations should make a special effort to seek out new membership and volunteers from among the island's teens and young adults.

***Recommendation: Create opportunities to engage Hispanic population***

Ocracoke's Hispanic population has grown tremendously in the last few years. Hispanic families make up an important part of the seasonal workforce, live on the island year round and are involved in the local school system comprising about a third of the school-aged population. Hispanic representation is limited in community organizations and non-profits. Focused effort should be initiated and created to engage the Hispanic community and understand their unique issues and what barriers exist that prevent them from participating in existing community groups. Working to make public meetings accessible by distributing flyers in Spanish, and providing translation services will help to break down language barriers. Engaging Hispanic residents in sharing of cultural traditions (O'Cocker, Hispanic, other) in community dinners, music festivals and other events can provide for a platform for dialogue and fun. Models of working with the Hispanic community from inland rural communities could provide guidance as to how to address this population. Special care should be taken about how information is gathered with sensitivity to cultural norms in the Hispanic community as well as legal residency issues. A graduate student, Brian Pompeii, has been on the island studying the socio-economic aspects of Ocracoke's Hispanic population. His report may help inform this effort and spell out concrete opportunities to address this issue.



# DESIGN

“This area takes people back to long ago, a time before.”

Daphne Bennick

Ocracoke Village is a unique community that is shaped by its isolated location, island geography and community character that has evolved over the years. Ocracoke is a walkable community with a development pattern that has been shaped by its isolation and strong community spirit. The village retains many of its historic homes and buildings, narrow streets with “traffic calming” features such as overhanging trees, independent family-run businesses, community gathering spots, the fish house and the working waterfront. These places are helping to retain the “sense of place” and cultural integrity that were critical to the successful designation of the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway.

There are many design-related efforts currently underway, including wayfinding signage being developed by the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway, initiatives to preserve historic structures, storm impacts on NC-12 and other transportation issues. The island has retained the places, land uses, buildings and other design components that define the island’s unique character. These assets include (but are not limited to):

- Locally owned, small businesses and family-friendly neighborhoods;
- A landscape dominated by coastal lands and water that are part of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, keeping much of Ocracoke Island relatively intact; and
- A history and culture that have been kept alive in the stories and historic structures and passed on by long-time residents.

## **Recommendation: Engage visitors and community members in a campaign to save the *Community Square***

The Community Square revitalization project can provide an opportunity for visitors, and seasonal and year-round residents to rally in support of preserving a critical component of the community landscape. The Ocracoke Foundation has worked for several years to purchase the Community Square buildings to protect the historic structures from development pressures. The Foundation’s goal is to redevelop the site to create small businesses and provide the community with a central gathering place while retaining the architectural integrity and sense of place created by this central working waterfront. Thanks to the commitment of the Ocracoke Foundation planning for this project is well underway. Now the resulting business and redevelopment plan documents should be used to share the project vision with residents and property owners; and implement comprehensive fundraising efforts to acquire the property, complete preservation and renovations efforts and provide for long-term sustainability of the project. Recommendations include providing organizational and financial infrastructure to support the redevelopment that will help facilitate a community-based success with the Community Square Project.



It is also recommended to engage the County government in the planning process in order to leverage access to funding resources that may be available for infrastructure improvements, building reuse and restoration, and other proposed adaptive re-uses of the property. Several of the stated goals of the Community Square Project overlap with the recommendations of the Saltwater Connection initiative. Shared goals include historic preservation, small business development, improved water access, community kitchen facilities, and preserving the working waterfront. Saltwater Connections will welcome the opportunity to collaborate with and support the Community Square project to move the effort forward.

**Recommendation: Create Public Restroom Facilities**

Easy access to public restrooms is critical to a positive visitor experience. In order to accommodate the thousands of tourists and day-trippers who visit Ocracoke during the busy season it is recommended that the Ocracoke Civic and Business Association join forces with property owners and community groups to sponsor public restroom facilities and to ensure the necessary supervision of facility maintenance for the long term. This addition to community infrastructure would be an effort to be more accommodating to visitors and residents alike. Occupancy tax revenues would be a likely and appropriate source of funding for the project.

Identifying possible locations for the facilities is a good first step. The facilities should be designed to be attractive, and also sturdy enough to withstand weather on the island.



*Existing restrooms on the waterfront*

**Recommendation: Increase funding and other resources to protect, promote and restore historic structures on the island**

The Ocracoke Preservation Society (OPS) should work with County officials to update the Ocracoke Development Ordinance to protect historic structures. It is also recommended to work with county officials about the creation of historically sensitive zoning regulations, and the creation of a “demolition delay ordinance” needs to be reinforced by illustrating the impact that the built environment has on visitors’ aesthetic perceptions and experiences. Ocracoke’s appearance is a major contributor to drawing visitation. The destruction of contributing structures undermines the expected aesthetic and will ultimately reduce the built landscape and destroy the uniqueness of Ocracoke.

The OPS should consider identifying additional funding mechanisms to preserve historic structures. Various methods may be utilized to increase retention of historically contributing structures. One of the most powerful tools is Historic Preservation Tax Credits. Repair and restoration of historic structures that are privately owned can yield substantial state and federal tax credits that may be used over 1 to 5 years. This benefit can cut the overall cost of construction on such structures by up to 30%. By creating covenants on historic



structures, vested community members can insure the retention of structure within the community extending beyond their ownership of the structure.

**Recommendation: Increase public awareness of historic structures and preservation efforts on the island**

The OPS should design uniform plaques to identify historic structures. There needs to be greater visibility of the historic structure plaques within the community and increased Interpretation associated with plaques. This could include the creation of a historic structures map and scavenger hunt for children, or a kiosk dedicated to the structures. OPS might approach the National Park Service to request assistance in developing and improving interpretive signs and displays.

Ocracoke Preservation Society can help educate home owners about techniques and resources available regarding historic preservation. The Resource Team recommends creating a program to increase property owner familiarity with restorative techniques and methods appropriate for dealing with the deterioration of structures in a sensitive manner. The goal would be to impact community members' misperceptions about historic structure maintenance and supposed cost. For example, there is a widely held belief that replacement of windows and doors increases energy efficiency and reduces energy costs. Classes on building conservation would increase public awareness and provide knowledge and resource information about how to follow historic preservation practices. Increased familiarity with restorative practices would improve property holders' abilities to make repairs that they might think they are incapable of and ultimately decrease the cost of maintaining their properties. On the national level, Preserve America works to educate and promote historic preservation (<http://www.preserveamerica.gov/>). On the state level, Preservation North Carolina (<http://www.presnc.org/>) has resources available to purchase historical structures. Edgecombe Community College offers a Historic Preservation Trades Program to instruct people about the hands on aspects of historic preservation ([http://www.edgecombe.edu/historic\\_pres/historic\\_pres\\_main.htm](http://www.edgecombe.edu/historic_pres/historic_pres_main.htm)).



**Recommendation: Increase public awareness of natural resource protection efforts on the island**

During 2011, Courtney Pickett, a graduate student from Duke University, interviewed island residents to document local perceptions about “sense of place.” Springer’s Point was especially important to the majority of interviewees as a place to be preserved. The



design work group should explore strategies and funding resources that can be tapped to ensure that natural areas that are at risk of being lost to development are preserved in their natural for use by residents, visitors and future generations.

***Recommendation: Increase public water access***

The Creek (Silver Lake) has played an instrumental role in the development of the community and could offer tremendous interpretive possibilities if there was greater public access. The current initiative being proposed by the Ocracoke Foundation, Inc. to ensure public access via the “Community Square” may play a valuable and powerful role in increasing public access to the waterfront and increase the interpretive capacity to illustrate the importance of the Creek within the community. A study should be completed to identify other areas where public water access might be an option. Grant programs are available to purchase easements and build public piers or docking facilities, such as the Division of Coastal Management (<http://www.nccoastalmanagement.net/Access/about.html>)

***Recommendation: Conduct a hydrologic study to address the standing water issue***

Standing water caused by storm water runoff that cannot drain properly is a major issue on Ocracoke. The water causes a number of problems and issues including: safety concerns, road damage, inability to access parking lots and mosquito infestation. The Resource Team recommends strong advocacy for a study of the island’s hydrology by NC Department of Transportation to identify and prioritize problem areas and offer infrastructure and design solutions. Environmentally friendly storm water management options could be implemented to hold and treat storm water before it drains into Silver Lake. A comprehensive storm water management plan would address improper storm water drainage infrastructure.

***Recommendation: Explore transportation alternatives for residents and visitors and participate in long term planning***

When the summer months bring in thousands of visitors to Ocracoke, the roads are clogged with motor vehicles. Traffic is a major concern for residents and diminishes the visitor experience. Efforts should be made to reduce vehicle traffic and take cars off of the streets. Some possible solutions would be to add parking spaces, have a tram or trolley to shuttle visitors around the island and encourage walking and bicycle travel. Multi-use paths along the Scenic By-way can help achieve this goal.

Ocracoke is heavily dependent on the state-funded ferry system to bring goods and visitors to the island. The Resource Team strongly encourages Ocracoke to request participation in any discussion about the future of Highway 12 and the State Ferry Division. There is periodic discussion about instituting a charge for the Hatteras Ferry and increasing the ferry toll for the Cedar Island Ferry. It would benefit Ocracoke to have consensus on ferry tolls and to advocate vigorously for that position to impact this non-local decision making that will have a large impact on Ocracoke’s future.



## PROMOTION

“It’s not supposed to be like Disneyland.

Ocracoke Resident

Ocracoke is already a well-known destination for vacationers seeking pristine beaches. In 2007 Dr. Beach (<http://www.drbeach.org/>), an international beach rating service, named Ocracoke as the number one beach in the country. Ocracoke’s brand is strong among beachgoers because there is so much more to Ocracoke than a simple stretch of coastline. Ocracoke Island would benefit from a fresh branding campaign, one that promoted the rich quality of life that the island offers. The quaint nature of Ocracoke Village with its narrow paths, historic homes and friendly mom and pop businesses, offer visitors and residents a unique experience that is a big part of the reason visitors return year after year. The natural environment and development pattern present great opportunities for walking and bicycling. The rich fishing tradition and functioning fish house support several high quality seafood restaurants; and visitors enjoy knowing their fish was caught fresh that day. A thriving art and music scene enrich the experience and appeal to residents and visitors alike.

Ocracoke has a strong community spirit and abundant assets that need to be supported with additional resources. Several efforts are underway to develop projects that retain the unique and historic nature of Ocracoke. These new efforts need to be coordinated by community-based organizations; and could be supported by Saltwater Connections and promoted alongside existing assets. Ocracoke offers visitors a one of a kind experience and every effort should be made to retain the unique nature of the community.

For these reasons, the promotion working group will want to work with tourism agencies, local businesses, and other public and non-profit partners to develop and to promote festivals, events and other community activities. The visitors who will treat the island well and will be happy spending their money here are visitors who appreciate and respect the uniqueness of the place and its people.

### **Recommendation: Provide a series of kiosks to showcase the island’s attractions**

The Resource Team recommends that a series of kiosks be placed in areas of high-volume foot traffic and at attractions along NC 12. Kiosks could provide a map, explaining the significance of the current location and noting locations of other island attractions. In addition to local artists, carpenters could contribute to the construction and design of the kiosks. Currently, a grant application has been submitted by the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway committee to support planning, designing, fabricating and installing interpretive signage throughout the Byway. A decision on this application is expected mid 2012. Kiosks would be designed to tie into any wayfinding signage in order to provide visitors with a unified look and assist them locate assets.



**Recommendation: Design and install wayfinding signage identifying island assets**

“Wayfinding” is a series of signs and/or kiosks strategically located throughout a community to help visitors identify and find local points of interest. Some of the more common examples of wayfinding can be found in historical areas or districts. The signs are usually uniform in design (similar size, shape and color) and placed or located in a visible location, so sites can be found easily and enjoyed. Wayfinding is another area where local artists’ talents can be utilized and showcased. The public should have a say in which community assets are promoted through the signage. Community input into the wayfinding project being undertaken by the Outer Banks National Scenic Byway will be encouraged with the hope that Ocracoke will build on the “wayfinding” system to help facilitate easy access to its most popular sites.

**Recommendation: Create a marketing plan for Ocracoke Island**

Community members expressed a desire to identify what types of people would be interested in visiting Ocracoke and how best to attract a greater number of visitors especially during the shoulder seasons. A professional marketing plan is needed to identify community assets and areas of interest and create a plan for best marketing practices for targeted visitor populations. Special attention should be given to promoting shoulder season visits. A marketing analysis for the entire eastern North Carolina region was completed in 2011, and may provide information helpful to Ocracoke (<http://www.ncnortheast.info/news/pdfs/Hanbury%20Marketing%20Assessment%20Report.pdf>). Partners include; The Northeast Commission (<http://www.ncnortheast.info/Default.asp>) which promotes travel and tourism as part of their mission. One of their initiatives is a regional tourism website (<http://visitncne.com/>), East Carolina University’s Center for Sustainable Tourism (<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/sustainabletourism/index.cfm>), and the NC Department of Commerce have domestic and international marketing divisions to assist communities with attracting visitors (<http://www.nccommerce.com/tourism/>).

The Outer Banks National Scenic Byway will be creating a marketing plan to promote the Outer Banks and all 21 unincorporated communities. Ocracoke has a tremendous opportunity to participate in the marketing effort and promote itself as the centerpiece of the Scenic Byway, collaborating with Hatteras Island and the Down East communities that make up the northern and southern gateways. Similar to the HandMade in America strategy that focused on small communities working together to provide a regional visitor experience, rather than competing against each other, a shared marketing strategy will provide the foundation for regional collaboration between the unincorporated communities that lie along the Scenic Byway. The Saltwater Connections project’s goals are to foster this sort of regional collaboration and to help communities leverage their common assets to collectively address challenges. Finding the unique niche that would attract visitors to the Scenic Byway’s communities would require input from marketing professionals.



***Recommendation: Promote Ocracoke Island to visitors during the shoulder season***

Ocracoke Island is already flooded with visitors during the peak vacation months of the summer. So much so that it is unclear how many more visitors the island could comfortably support during that time. In order to extend the economic benefit of visitors, efforts should be undertaken to extend the traditional summer tourist season into the shoulder season (the months that bookend the peak summer months). This could be accomplished by identifying unique visitor experiences that occur during those months and marketing them to targeted perspective visitor populations. One possibility is the creation of special events or festivals held during the non-peak months that could give visitors a reason to come during the off-season. This would greatly benefit the hotels, restaurants, and other businesses that cater to tourists.

***Recommendation: Promote Ocracoke businesses at the NPS Visitor Information Center***

The National Park Service operates the Ocracoke Island Visitor's Center. The small building is located on the seashore's southern edge in Ocracoke village at the end of Highway 12 where the road enters the ferry terminal. The Visitor Center is focused primarily on informing visitors about the Cape Hatteras National Seashore offerings and also houses the off-road permitting office. The structure is located in a prime location to welcome visitors onto the island. The Resource Team recommends working with the Park Service to expand the information provided to visitors to focus more on promoting Ocracoke private business interests. Information could be included about Ocracoke accommodations, businesses, restaurants, services, activities and attractions. The structure could feature displays for marketing materials, brochures and pamphlets.

***Recommendation: Promote Ocracoke Cultural Assets***

Ocracoke has a thriving cultural arts scene that could be promoted to attract visitors as well as new residents. Ocracoke has several musicians who perform throughout the summer at restaurants that cater to tourists and during the off-season at community fundraisers and events. Ocracoke based groups record at the local recording studio and sell their CD's at local shops, bringing increased economic benefits to the community through the arts.

Ocracoke is also home to a significant number of visual artists such as photographers, painters, and potters who sell their art in local galleries and gift shops throughout the island. Collaborative promotions would benefit Ocracoke artists greatly through online galleries and shared marketing initiatives. All of these arts assets need to be promoted collectively to leverage the economic benefit and help sustain these efforts

The creation of an Ocracoke arts guide, including information on music series or local gallery events would help visitors locate places to appreciate the arts while on Ocracoke. Building on already established events and programs such as Ocracoke Festival and Ocracoke Opry, Ocracoke artists can continue to expand the opportunities for artist (and art enthusiasts) to increase benefit from off-season events, programs and initiatives such as the Ocracoke School. A careful look at other arts communities would provide



important insight and relevant ideas as to ways to develop and grow the long-term economic value of the cultural arts in this community.

“Commercial fishing is the most prevalent connection to the water on a local basis.”

Ocracoke Resident

## ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

Fulfilling livelihoods and sustainable economies require more than a few paychecks. It is critical that the right people are matched with the right opportunities, to maximize human potential. For this reason, the economic revitalization working group should focus on two broad areas: 1) strengthening existing businesses, and 2) supporting and recruiting new businesses – including “home-grown” business start-ups by local entrepreneurs – to strengthen and diversify the economy on the island. Given the extraordinary natural resources and relatively undeveloped coastal environment, the working group should work to emphasize sustainable business practices, green jobs and the creation of higher-quality jobs with livable wages and benefits.

To strengthen and diversify the economic base beyond tourism, it is recommended that the economic revitalization working group work closely with existing businesses and with county, regional and state economic development agencies. Examples of the latter include the Greater Hyde County Chamber of Commerce, the Beaufort County Community College Small Business Center, The Albemarle Commission and the Northeast Economic Development Commission. Additionally, a sustainable approach to economic revitalization includes partnerships with schools, organizations interested in training and workforce development and offices working with youth and young adults. It is important to create quality jobs *and* encourage economic and social entrepreneurship among young people in order for the community to retain its long-term character.

### **STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES**

Residents expressed a strong desire to keep locally-owned small businesses part of the island economy. This is a true marketing asset. Strengthening existing businesses is a sound economic development strategy for a variety of reasons, particularly because it is easier and more cost efficient to help existing businesses expand and create new jobs than it is to recruit new industries.

**Recommendation: Diversify the economy by creating a tourism development plan around “immersion” tourism and educational activities, especially related to natural resources and history**

Ocracoke’s NC Center for the Advancement of Teaching has provided a model for unique island immersion experiences. Similar to the teachers’ experiences through NCCAT seminars, visitors could participate in a fishing trip, speak with members of commercial fishing families about the challenges they face, and learn about the ecology of the area through the eyes of watermen. Other immersion activities, such as some that are already offered through the Ocracoke School could involve boat building, waterfowl





hunting, traditional navigation methods, and the history of local shipwrecks. As the Ocracoke School has already learned, year-round experiences with homegrown arts and music are of particular interest to the cultural traveler. Culinary tourism has room for growth where visitors could be introduced to wild harvested foods and different preparation methods in cooking classes, promotional materials, waterfront venues, restaurants, and food markets. Building on lessons learned from NCCAT and Ocracoke School could open new opportunities for shoulder and off-season income for local residents.

One of these target audiences, ElderHostel, Inc., is a national organization that is dedicated to lifelong learning for retirees and seniors. Their subsidiary, Road Scholar, offers more than 7,000 educational tours in all 50 states and 150 countries. The promotion working group should work closely with the Chamber of Commerce and NCCAT to develop and implement strategies that promote Ocracoke Island to target audiences and to cultivate these new relationships to diversify the economy.

Ocracoke could also explore the possibilities of volunteer tourism where a growing number of baby-boomers are looking for meaningful tourism experiences where they can learn and contribute to volunteer efforts in interesting communities such as Ocracoke. Volunteerism is a growing market, where travelers undertake voluntary service on trail-building, for example, as a local immersion experience, usually combined with recreational and social activities. This could be an excellent source for community projects needing extra hands.

The Park Service has local ethno-history materials for interpretive heritage tours at [http://www.nps.gov/ethnography/research/docs/caha\\_ethno\\_v2.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/ethnography/research/docs/caha_ethno_v2.pdf) (p. 417+). Ideas might be found in the Southern Oral History Project, and Park Service ethnohistory interviews archived at the Outer Banks History Center in Manteo. The North Carolina Arts Council ([www.ncarts.org](http://www.ncarts.org)), Handmade in America ([www.handmadeinamerica.org/](http://www.handmadeinamerica.org/)), and the NC Folklife Institute (<http://www.ncfolk.org>) are additional sources of information and unique tourism development ideas. Other ideas and funding leads for education and stewardship programs are available through the National Estuarine Research Reserve system, the federal partner of the North Carolina Coastal Reserve. The federal program exists partly for the purpose of exchanging ideas among coastal professionals around the U.S.



To be effective, these efforts should integrate local voices and expertise. Local students can help collect oral histories, take photos, and design displays. Airbnb.com is an internet service matching travelers directly with local accommodations offered by private individuals, from simple rooms to family homes.

**Recommendation: Foster innovation in markets for local seafood through focused networking with the Hatteras, Hyde Co, Down East and the mainland agricultural communities**

On the North Carolina coast and elsewhere in the United States, the sustainability of fisheries and small boat fishing communities may rely on raising ex-vessel prices received by fishermen. When fish are marketed as global commodities, the industry gets stuck in a race to the bottom. In that intensely competitive market, fish are caught and sold at the lowest possible price for the largest possible volume, and become interchangeable with product harvested and processed half a world away, using methods that incur environmental and social damage. Alternative marketing strategies have emerged in Alaska, North Carolina, New England, and elsewhere to counter this destructive trend. Cooperatives and non-profits can raise the quality of product purchased by consumers, increase public awareness of economic, social, and ecological differences among seafood products, boost profits for seafood harvesters and dealers, increase market incentives for sustainable fishing practices, and may even help influence marine resource policy to become more adaptive to local change. North Carolina has spearheaded alternative marketing efforts and several models have emerged elsewhere some linking suppliers to regional food systems.

For example, some groups are working with schools, hospitals, and other organizations that provide meals and information to average consumers. They help ensure that local people get healthy food, and those local producers, processors, and distributors have strong markets. This approach has also changed the way consumers think about what they eat, and how it affects their health and the environment. To be successful with this approach, communication, cooperation, and innovation across the economic spectrum are imperative.

Along these lines, work at the regional level has been initiated over the past several years. Hatteras has begun involving school children in seafood education. Down East NC fish marketing cooperatives have been very successful. More focused efforts might engage island fishermen and fishhouses in conversation with groups such as Walking Fish and Core Sound Seafood, successfully CSF (Community Supported Fisheries) businesses now delivering from the coast to inland urban areas. While competition could be inherent to marketing efforts, it is conceivable that new start ups could support and strengthen one another, incubating new ideas, alliances, and collective learning. A collaborative approach may be possible if a cooperative business model is adopted that includes small scale processing or an integrated local distribution system. It is important that such efforts not be perceived as displacing existing dealers and processors, but rather, collaborating with them from the



beginning to ensure a broad base of support, and an economic model that can be sustained over time with the capacity to evolve and adapt to changing economic and environmental circumstances.

Ocracoke began this process in 2006 when the community was threatened with the loss of the last fish house. The Ocracoke Working Watermen's Association (<http://www.ocracokewatermen.org/>) was created to purchase the fish house and promote the economic sustainability of the island's commercial fishing industry. The OWWA has been a successful model that other communities seek to emulate to protect the livelihood of their fishermen. The fish house now operates as the Ocracoke Seafood Company (<http://www.ocracokeseafood.com>), marketing fresh local seafood and selling to several local restaurants. The Resource Team seeks ways to support the work of both the OWWA and Ocracoke Seafood Company. The Resource Team sees a tremendous opportunity for partnering with the other Saltwater Connection communities to work together regionally to promote local seafood on a larger scale. By working with the other Catch Groups through the newly formed NC Catch, Ocracoke can leverage the marketing dollars and have a greater impact than by working alone.

***Recommendation: Increase small business support for Ocracoke businesses***

Ocracoke has a strong tradition of entrepreneurship and small business ownership. Small businesses on Ocracoke have weathered storms and off- season slow downs, but support is needed to help them sustain themselves and thrive. Ocracoke businesses need the small business support organizations usually offered through local community colleges. However, the remoteness of Ocracoke Island and the fact that Hyde County does not have a community college, resources for small business education are impossible through present systems. Saltwater Connections is working through Carteret Community College administrative staff to provide services to Ocracoke through an interagency agreement between Beaufort Community College (the institution designated to serve Ocracoke to offer training and classes on specific business topics such as accounting, tax requirements, social media marketing and other business needs. The Ocracoke Civic and Business Society could organize networking events would also help the local small business community communicate and overcome obstacles. Good Work ([www.goodwork.org](http://www.goodwork.org)) is a nonprofit organization that provides traditional and innovative small business support to rural entrepreneurs.

***SUPPORT AND RECRUIT NEW YEAR-ROUND BUSINESSES***

New business development and recruitment should include a mix of new start-ups that are locally owned and managed with new or existing businesses that relocate to Ocracoke from other areas. It will be important to work with the range of agencies and other community and economic development entities to identify, recruit and/or support businesses that will help to strengthen and diversify the economy on the island. Quality of life is a large part of the decision-making process that draws business into an area, as well as an appropriate labor pool, available infrastructure, institutional support and consumer base to sustain the businesses.



***Recommendation: Initiate broadband wireless capability for the entire village***

Free wireless internet would be an attractive draw for new businesses and could help existing businesses grow by allowing island visitors to extend their stay if they can telecommute to work. Actively marketing the option to telecommute could attract new visitors (and potential full or part-time residents) who need to work for a few hours or days during their stay. Other benefits of wireless internet include making this service available to low income families who cannot afford home internet, and to school students who do not have access at home. Improved access to WiFi would thus benefit a broad spectrum of islanders.

Broadband wireless technology would help to diversify the local economy and encourage e-commerce, and tele-commuting opportunities. If high speed, dependable, and low cost internet infrastructure is in place Ocracoke could better support individuals and entrepreneurs who could expand their business or operate completely online. Ocracoke's quality of life would attract individuals to relocate to the island if there was an opportunity to still work from home within their current positions or industries.

***Recommendation: Create home health and Hospice services on Ocracoke***

Resource Team members heard that there is a need for more health services for elderly residents on the island. A large percentage of Ocracoke residents are retirees and senior citizens. This creates a need for businesses and health services that can cater to aging populations. There also is the opportunity for assisted living facilities so the population can age on the island and not be forced to relocate as their health deteriorates. Further research on the needs of the aging should be explored and resources for meeting those needs identified.

***Recommendation: Explore the possibility for academic or scientific facilities on Ocracoke***

Due to the unique location and geography of Ocracoke it is well positioned to attract academic or scientific research facilities. Examples include facilities that study marine life, oceanographic data collection or weather stations. These knowledge based jobs are high paying, and year round. Possibilities also include the construction of new buildings or structures to house the work of the institutes. Local examples include the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching on Ocracoke and East Carolina University's Field Station for Coastal Studies at Mattamuskeet. Other examples include the UNC Coastal Studies Institute in Manteo, and the Duke Marine Lab and NOAA's Center for Coastal Fisheries and Habitat Research in Beaufort.

***Recommendation: Create a commercial kitchen to support value added local food products***

A commercial kitchen facility could help local citizens create new businesses based around local seafood and other value-added food products. A shared use commercial kitchen would allow residents to develop food products that could be packaged and marketed to visitors or shipped off-island. The kitchen should have modern inspected equipment that would meet USDA, FDA, and local health



department standards. The kitchen could also help to preserve local culinary traditions. A local example to follow is the Hyde Davis Ventures commercial kitchen located on the mainland in Hyde County.

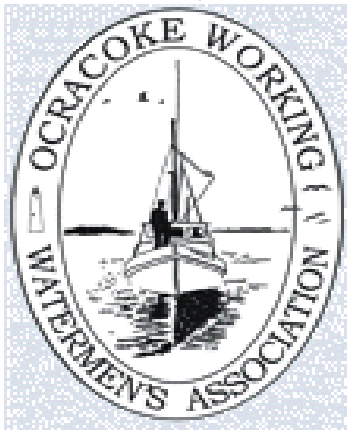
**Recommendation: Explore value-added products for local seafood and seafood processing waste**

Value-added seafood products present an opportunity to increase profit margins. Examples might include a filleting and processing facility that could tap into the increased demand for local seafood, and a production facility where specialty foods, such as canned seafood chowders and stews or frozen fish cakes could be produced, packed, stored and shipped. The economic revitalization working group should research the feasibility of value-added production on the island, including development of a commercial grade, shared-use community kitchen.

Seafood processing waste, such as fish carcasses and scraps present another income-generating opportunity. Commercial fishermen might explore how this processing by-product can be converted into non-edible products like certified organic plant fertilizer. Similar to many of the aforementioned recommendations, the economic revitalization working group should research other coastal fishing communities for economic development projects and niches that are not being currently utilized on the island.

**Recommendation: Support Ocracoke Working Watermen’s Association to maintain working waterfront areas and seafood landing areas**

The value of maintaining working waterfronts cannot be overstated. When working waterfronts convert to recreational and residential uses, a few people garner windfall profits, but the longer term monetary value to the wider community is reduced, in terms of tax revenue and jobs. A seafood dealer creates a direct economic impact by selling seafood that he/she buys from local fishermen. A



portion of the sales goes toward paying fishermen, as well as the dealer’s overhead and employee wages. An economic ripple effect, a multiplier, occurs as fishing dollars are reinvested in the business or in goods and services such as fuel, groceries, insurance and boat repairs. The impact on the local economy is significant, as well. Because fishing families live locally, fishing income is distributed locally -- spent on homes, food, clothing, supplies, and services. Local benefits are reaped repeatedly as money is spent and re-circulated in the local economy.

Ocracoke is fortunate that watermen had the foresight and ingenuity to form a non-profit and save their one remaining fish house. However, vessel berths, landing facilities, and shore side services are severely limited, however. Residents should seek state legislation that authorizes voluntary working waterfront conservation easements, creating a NC Seafood Development and Working Waterfront Preservation Trust Fund structured similarly to that for farmlands in GS 106-744. The NC Waterfront Access Study recommended this action in its 2007 report to the General Assembly. This legislation

would position the island and the state to benefit should federal working waterfront protection legislation be enacted. Waterfront



ownership and management options also exist for public, non-profit, or cooperative entities. Working waterfronts also present opportunities for heritage or occupational tourism, as noted earlier in this report.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are derived from what the public told us during our visit in November of 2011, and also reflect the Resource Teams outside perspectives as well as meetings held earlier in 2011 to prepare the community for the Saltwater Connections Resource Team visit. During the visit, the Team toured island attractions and listened at the community meeting as individuals shared their impressions of various projects and initiatives that have been implemented in their community and their ideas about next steps and needs on the island. The Team’s recommendations are ranked according to themes **not** priority. The next step in this process is for Team members to ask the communities to rank their priorities for future projects and activities. These recommendations represent a starting point, designed to provide Ocracoke with several achievable goals within the four areas of the Main Street approach. As the community working groups begin to act towards the completion of these suggested projects, those groups tasked with the completion of community priorities may wish to use this list as a guide and adapt it as appropriate. Suggested projects can be added or removed as the standing working groups deem appropriate. This is a local effort and should closely reflect local needs and preferences.

Recommendation	Time Frame	Partners
<b>Organization</b>		
Coordinate non-profit community efforts in order to effectively manage roles and responsibilities		
Work with elected officials and County agencies to partner on implementing recommendations		
Create an Ocracoke Housing Authority to address affordable housing issue		
Assign existing community groups to implement the strategic plan based on their alignment with the four approaches (Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring)		
Improve emergency service provision by building a new fire house		
Develop a community funding plan to build the financial and human capacity of non-profit organizations		



Develop fundraising effort to tap the philanthropy of seasonal homeowners and visitors to Ocracoke		
Create an Ocracoke Parks and Recreation Board		
Create opportunities for children, youth, and young adults to engage in community activities		
Create opportunities to engage Hispanic population		
<b>Design</b>		
Engage visitors and community members in a campaign to save the <i>Community Square</i>		
Create Public Restroom Facilities		
Increase funding and other resources to protect, promote and restore historic structures on the island		
Increase public awareness of historic structures and preservation efforts on the island		
Increase public awareness of natural resource protection efforts on the island		
Increase public water access		
Conduct a hydrologic study to address the standing water issue		
Explore transportation alternatives for residents and visitors and participate in long term planning		
<b>Promotion</b>		
Provide a series of kiosks to showcase the island's attractions		
Design and install wayfinding signage identifying island assets		
Create a marketing plan for Ocracoke Island		
Promote Ocracoke Island to visitors during the shoulder season		
Promote Ocracoke businesses at the NPS Visitor Information Center		
Promote Ocracoke Cultural Assets		



<b>Economic Revitalization</b>		
Diversify the economy by creating a tourism development plan around “immersion” tourism and educational activities, especially related to natural resources and history		
Foster innovation in markets for local seafood through focused networking with the Hatteras, Hyde Co, Down East and the mainland agricultural communities		
Increase small business support for Ocracoke businesses		
Initiate broadband wireless capability for the entire village		
Create home health and Hospice services on Ocracoke		
Explore the possibility for academic or scientific facilities on Ocracoke		
Create a commercial kitchen to support value added local food products		
Explore value-added products for local seafood and seafood processing waste		
Support Ocracoke Working Watermen’s Association to maintain working waterfront areas and seafood landing areas		

## GETTING STARTED

Coastal residents understand fully that “all things are connected” – for example, tourism development, a vibrant local economy, strong businesses, and water access are all inextricably linked. In addition to the four focus areas of the Main Street Approach, eight principles will guide plan development to foster the best chance for success. These include –

- Comprehensive – progress should be made in all four areas
- Incremental – start with small, easier projects and work up to the more challenging initiatives.
- Self-help – maintain community involvement and commitment in each on-the-ground activity.
- Partnerships – each group has a role to play and working together engages everyone’s strengths.
- Capitalize on existing assets – make the most of the natural, historical, cultural and human resources in each community.
- Quality – the number of community improvements is less important than the impact of each activity on residents and visitors alike.



Change – carefully plan your initial projects to have successes early on that will help shift public perceptions and practices in support of change.

Implementation – it is better to see a few projects through to completion than to start multiple initiatives that come up short due to resource limitations

Changes in the organization, business, promotion and built environment in the village of Ocracoke need to balance resources with potential impact. Some changes will occur faster due to interest, funds and timing. As a guide, specific projects on the island should be:

**DOABLE:** Projects should be undertaken with a clear understanding of the resources and capacity to complete them. Focus limited resources on small-scale projects with big impact. Choose projects that allow community members to contribute their skills and expertise.

**VISIBLE:** Choose projects that are easily seen by many and in prominent locations. Timing is key – it is important that action is taken soon after recommendations are made.

**AFFORDABLE:** Projects should respect the limited resources of the village. The selection and design of projects should balance the costs with the potential impacts.

**FLEXIBLE:** Instead of projects focusing or supporting one type of activity, they should be designed to be flexible enough to support a range of activities, planned and unplanned.

**INCLUSIVE:** The design, planning and construction of projects should actively engage members of the community as well as visitors to build ownership into the process. Newer and longer term residents must be fully involved. Projects should be designed in a way that will be children-, youth-, and young-adult-friendly.

**TRAINING:** As projects roll out, make an effort to build and enhance the skill set of community members throughout the process.

**APPROPRIATE:** Projects should respond to the feedback received from community members, stakeholders and the planning and design professionals that worked together to generate this report.

**SUSTAINABLE:** Projects should respond to the natural environment. Local materials and contractors should be used wherever possible to ensure that the economic impact of the projects remain, for the most part, local.

Some basic things to keep in mind as you move forward:

## **Attitudes**

- Be authentic – remember who you are, and what’s important to the community
- Build on your assets
- Build your strengths by addressing your weaknesses
- Be patient
- Listen to the community, and to each other
- Find win-win solutions
- Cultivate your funders and partners

## **Actions**

- Work hard
- Work together
- Plan and organize well
- Work the plan, but remember that the plan is a living document that can be adapted to changing circumstances.
- Get the whole community involved, especially the naysayers
- Feed the volunteers – people who eat together work together better

## **Communications and Manners**

- Tell your story – in newsletters, newspapers, and in person
- Thank your volunteers, funders, and investors – many times and many ways
- Keep the community informed

## **Celebrate your successes**

- Continue to cultivate your funders and partners
- Evaluation
- Evaluate quantitatively (how much) – and qualitatively (how good)
- Learn from your mistakes, and your successes
- Take pictures – before, during, and after
- Take stock of what you have accomplished – write it down
- Let the community know what they have accomplished collectively, through direct and indirect support
- Remember you can accomplish anything if you don’t mind who gets the credit
- Ask the community what they think



## MONITORING & EVALUATION

Constant evaluation of the recommendations in this plan, via regular review sessions with the organization working group, is critical to ensuring that the plan remains viable, a living document. You will need to monitor how well you are furthering the Four Point Approach and how successful you are at managing projects, meeting deadlines, communicating internally as well as to multiple external audiences, and utilizing the resources available continually to determine progress.

Remember, this plan is a living document used to prioritize the needs of the community and outline recommendations. The value of the plan lies with the ability of the organizational body to set realistic goals — and implement innovative strategies — against which progress can be measured. It also allows the community to measure the ongoing product. Implementation, evaluation and modification should be continuous in order for the plan to remain relevant, responsive and proactive. This strategic effort will provide greater accountability representing an organization-wide approach to preserving and enhancing the quality of life your very special community enjoys.

## RESOURCES

The following are just a few organizations, resources, and programs that the resource team has found useful for purposes similar to those discussed in this report.

### ***Human Capacity –***

#### ***Living on the Margins – A Guidebook Connecting Individuals with Opportunities***

This NC Rural Economic Development Center publication walks community groups through a planning process with step-by-step exercises to create actionable plans for job creation, educational opportunities, and youth engagement:

[www.ncruralcenter.org/publications.html](http://www.ncruralcenter.org/publications.html)

#### **Sustainable Communities**

Developing more sustainable communities is important to our national goals of strengthening our economy, creating good jobs now while providing a foundation for lasting prosperity, using energy more efficiently to secure energy independence, and protecting our natural environment and human health. Three federal agencies came together to create the Partnership for Sustainable Communities



to help places around the country develop in more environmentally and economically sustainable ways.  
[www.sustainablecommunities.gov/toolsKeyResources.html](http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/toolsKeyResources.html)

### **AmeriCorps**

Part of any community development effort is cultivating human resources in addition to monetary. More than \$3.4 million in federal grants are available for North Carolina non-profits and government agencies to recruit AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps volunteers assist non-profits and government agencies with providing tutoring, mentoring, disaster services, environmental stewardship, education on healthy futures, and job training and placement. The N.C. Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service coordinates the grants. Grant applications are due to the N.C. Volunteer Commission by noon on Friday, March 16, 2012. Application forms are available on the N.C. Volunteer Commission's website at: [www.volunteernc.org](http://www.volunteernc.org), or by calling 919-715-3470 or 1-800-820-4483.

### **Volunteers for Peace**

Bringing outside volunteers can help attract new energy to a project, and can bring the fresh perspective of seeing one's own community through the eyes of others. The non-profit organization Volunteers for Peace facilitates the placement of international and national volunteers for this purpose. Most are college-aged and unskilled, but they bring high energy and enthusiasm. In the past they have assisted projects such as festivals and fundraising events; construction and renovation; historic preservation; environmental conservation and education; and working with children, elderly, disabled, or disadvantaged groups. More information is at: [www.vfp.org/join-us/host-a-project](http://www.vfp.org/join-us/host-a-project)

### **East Carolina University**

ECU has experts in relevant areas such as regional planning, hazards response, development of natural resource economies, education, sustainable tourism, and social services. Many resources can be accessed by developing collaborative research and outreach relationships with appropriate faculty. Finding the right folks, however, can be harder. First stops for hazards response expertise might include the ECU Geography Department, Renaissance Computing Institute, and Center for Natural Hazards Research. General planning expertise is also based in the Urban and Regional Planning Program, housed within the Geography Department. The Geography Department also has expertise in natural resource economies and sustainable tourism. The College of Education, Center Sustainable Tourism, and School of Social Work might also offer helpful resources. [www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/geog/index.cfm](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/geog/index.cfm), [www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/plan/](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/plan/), [www.ecu.edu/renci/](http://www.ecu.edu/renci/), [www.ecu.edu/hazards/](http://www.ecu.edu/hazards/), [www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/sustainabletourism/](http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/sustainabletourism/), [www.ecu.edu/che/socw/](http://www.ecu.edu/che/socw/)

### **Penobscot East Resource Center**

Penobscot East works in an area similar in many ways to the Outer Banks, on issues relevant to this report. Their mission is to support sustainable coastal communities in rural eastern Maine. Their primary target is small boat fishing operations, but their model is also useful in a broader sense. They actively work toward public participation in resource management decision making, community-based innovations in fisheries management and seafood markets, collaborative research, and resource stewardship

education. Among their programs is the Community Fisheries Action Roundtable, as noted above, which offers knowledge and training to encourage resource stewardship through public participation in government decision processes.

[www.penobscoteast.org/default.asp](http://www.penobscoteast.org/default.asp)

### **Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance**

Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance offers a somewhat different model for grassroots involvement in natural resource decision making, again focused on the fishing industry. They conduct targeted advocacy campaigns to mobilize support for small businesses in natural resource management, and they support seafood market innovations. This group mainly works in the Northeast, but also has strong contacts here. Their focus is more on mobilizing regional support for regional and federal level advocacy, whereas Penobscot East organizes at the local level and targets mostly state and regional issues. <http://namanet.org/>

### **Island Institute Leadership Training**

The Island Leaders Program serves those currently in leadership positions – as well as island residents who want to make a greater commitment to their communities – with skill-building and networking opportunities, linking leaders across Maine’s archipelago to discuss and address island issues.

### **Preserving Coastal Heritage Video**

The link provided is for a video about Down East and Hatteras Island fishing communities that was featured at the NC Rural Economic Development Center 2010 Rural Partners Forum in Raleigh:

[www.yousendit.com/transfer.php?action=batch\\_download&send\\_id=981070217&email=f93396b06712c33f1c2e116e04c65383](http://www.yousendit.com/transfer.php?action=batch_download&send_id=981070217&email=f93396b06712c33f1c2e116e04c65383)

### **US National Park Service’s ethnohistory report**

[www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/caha/caha\\_ethno\\_v1.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/caha/caha_ethno_v1.pdf)

### **House Museums Info**

There are a number of online resources for local and “house museums,” including some provided by the National Trust for Historic Preservation ([www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)); and OldHouses.com ([www.oldhouses.com](http://www.oldhouses.com)).

### **North Carolina Handmade in America**

Handmade in America offers resources for crafters, artists, apprentices, schoolteachers. Their website has search functions for customers to find craftspeople and their products. They promote handcrafts by facilitating market connections.

[www.handmadeinamerica.org/](http://www.handmadeinamerica.org/)

### **North Carolina Folklife Institute**



The Folklife Institute supports programs and projects that recognize, document, and present traditional culture, including oral histories. They sometimes offer training in documentary filmmaking. Their website hosts travel itineraries and has links to other resources. [www.ncfolk.org](http://www.ncfolk.org)

### **North Carolina Paddle Trails Association**

The Paddle Association promotes paddling in North Carolina, including trail maps and event announcements, and links to outfitters and guides. [www.ncpaddletrails.com](http://www.ncpaddletrails.com)

### **UNC School of Government Community Economic Development Program**

Provides public officials with training, research, and assistance that support local efforts to create jobs and wealth, expand the tax base, and maintain vibrant communities. [www.sog.unc.edu/programs/cednc](http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/cednc) Published the booklet *Small Town Big Ideas: Case Studies in Small Town Community Economic Development* [www.sog.unc.edu/programs/cednc/stbi/pdfs/stbi\\_final.pdf](http://www.sog.unc.edu/programs/cednc/stbi/pdfs/stbi_final.pdf)

### **NC Department of Cultural Resources**

The Department of Cultural Resources has staff with expertise in the arts, crafts, education, historic architecture, archaeology, etc.: [www.ncdcr.gov/](http://www.ncdcr.gov/)

**UNC School of Government Public Dispute Resolution Assistance** – The School can help evaluate options for addressing a public issue, and assist parties in productively resolving their disputes. Individual concerns about situations of mistrust, high emotions, and how to negotiate/problem-solve more effectively can be addressed confidentially.. Contact: Dr. John B. Stephens, Coordinator, Public Dispute Resolution Program, School of Government, Campus Box 3330, Knapp-Sanders Building, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3330 phone - (919) 962-5190 <http://www.sog.unc.edu/node/540>

## ***Financial Capacity –***

### **Habitat for Humanity**

Around the country, Habitat has helped tens of thousands of partner families (through sweat equity) move into simple, decent, affordable houses. To help even more, part of Habitat's responsibility includes advocacy and public awareness with local and state elected officials. Habitat supports a national Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The HTF would be a new source of revenue to assist in the production of new affordable housing and the rehabilitation of existing housing. As a bonus, Habitat offers a disaster response, which is bonus to an island highly prone to hurricane impacts. [www.habitat.com](http://www.habitat.com)

### **The Duke Endowment ~ Rural Church Program**

Over the years, the United Methodist Church has played a pivotal role in dozens of North Carolina's rural districts, where the local church is the center of weekly worship, baptisms, weddings, funerals and community events, as well as home to food pantries and



centers for child and elder care. Through our grants for rural churches, the Endowment seeks to help build facilities that support community service, and help churches explore sustainable building practices that can meet spiritual needs and economic realities. [www.dukeendowment.org/grants/grants-overview](http://www.dukeendowment.org/grants/grants-overview)

### **Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation**

The Foundation provides grants for environmental, community development and pre-collegiate education projects and organizations. Hawley Truax is the environmental program officer and Tracey Greene-Dorsett is the community development program officer. Their next deadline is February 1, 2012. The first step is to contact the program officer and request a meeting; it is good to bring a one- or two-page description of the project and what problems it is designed to address. [www.zsr.org](http://www.zsr.org)

### **National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant Program**

Through the Our Town program, the Endowment provides a limited number of grants, ranging from \$25,000 to \$150,000, for creative “placemaking” projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and help transform them into lively, beautiful and sustainable places with the arts at their core. Applications are due on March 1, 2012. [www.nea.gov/grants/apply/ourtown/index.html](http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/ourtown/index.html)

### **Self-Help Credit Union**

This community development financial institution provides loans for business and economic development purposes, particularly to borrowers that are higher-risk or not understood by traditional lenders. [www.self-help.org](http://www.self-help.org)

### **Airbnb.com**

Airbnb is an internet service matching travelers directly with local accommodations offered by private individuals, from simple rooms to family homes. [www.airbnb.com/](http://www.airbnb.com/)

### **The Conservation Fund’s Natural Capital Investment Fund**

This investment fund is a community development financial institution that provides loans and technical assistance to natural resource-based businesses, which often have a hard time getting loans from traditional lenders. The loan range typically is from \$50,000 to \$250,000 and Rick Larson (rlarson@conservationfund.org) heads up the N.C. lending. [www.ncifund.org](http://www.ncifund.org)

### **The Conservation Fund’s ShadeFund**

This web-based, micro-loan program for natural resource-based businesses subsidiary of The Conservation Fund also is spearheaded by Rick Larson, but the loans typically range from \$5,000 to \$35,000. A resource-based organization can contact Enrique Perez (eperez@conservationfund.org) to see about being a field partner, which does not cost anything. The entity merely agrees to refer natural resource-based small businesses to them, and then the organization is listed as a partner on their website. [www.shadefund.org](http://www.shadefund.org)



### **NOAA's Small Business Innovation Research Phase I 2012**

The US Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) plans to seek proposals from small business firms for participation in Phase I of the Fiscal Year 2012 NOAA Small Business Innovation Research Program. The purpose of Phase I of the SBIR program is for firms to conduct research and development which will allow the Government to determine the scientific or technical merit and feasibility of concepts, ideas and quality of performance as a prerequisite for further Government support which may follow in Phase II of the program. The following are the NOAA, Research and Development topics available for Phase I: Climate Adaption and Mitigation, Weather-Ready Nation, Healthy Oceans, Resilient Coastal Communities and Economies.

The 2012 proposal deadline is February 1.

[https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&tab=core&id=fada14ff631c75636708234c986f3c3b&\\_cvview=0](https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&tab=core&id=fada14ff631c75636708234c986f3c3b&_cvview=0)

### **US Department of Agriculture Rural Development Program**

The US Department of Agriculture has a wide range of grant and loan programs, including the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program that is administered by the electric membership cooperatives and provides (some) grant dollars and (more) low-interest loan dollars for buildings and other capital improvements. They also have funding for community economic development, small business loans and loan guarantees, housing, job creation, and also, a small business innovation research grant program. To find out more about these programs, contact the local electric co-op or the regional USDA RD person. [www.rurdev.usda.gov/nc/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nc/)

### **US Economic Development Administration**

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) provides federal funds on a dollar-for-dollar match basis for buildings and other bricks-and-mortar improvements that will create jobs. These are very competitive, and it would probably be good to talk with the County economic developer about these programs, as it would strengthen a proposal to do it in partnership with the County and/or the Council of Governments. They even have a Global Climate Change Mitigation Incentive Fund program that provides funding if your building is LEED certified, uses alternative energy, etc. The EDA requires letters documenting that jobs will be created; the contact person is Robin Cooley, the program officer for North Carolina and South Carolina, and her office is in Columbia, SC. Her email address is [cooley@eda.doc.gov](mailto:cooley@eda.doc.gov). For general information visit: [www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/Programs.xml](http://www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/Programs.xml)

### **US Economic Development Administration Supplemental Disaster Relief**

The EDA intends to award investments in regions experiencing severe economic distress as a result of severe storms and flooding that occurred between March and May 2010. Under this announcement, EDA solicits applications for Economic Adjustment Assistance investments under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended. Through the Economic Adjustment Assistance program (CFDA No. 11.307), winning applicants will utilize EDA's flexible set of program tools to develop and implement on a regional basis long-term economic redevelopment strategies for certain disaster-impacted regions in the U.S. The deadline appears to be on a rolling term until March 9, 2014.

[www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=cjtRTKTG4p1qTDLskLn3YLyW7F8TzRkB06vY0b0Sn8SVJhynLJK!-102435184?oppld=69933&mode=VIEW](http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=cjtRTKTG4p1qTDLskLn3YLyW7F8TzRkB06vY0b0Sn8SVJhynLJK!-102435184?oppld=69933&mode=VIEW)

### **North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation Trust Fund**

The Fund provides dollar-for-dollar matching grants to local governments for parks and recreational projects to serve the public. A group would have to partner and submit the application through Dare County. Their maximum grant is \$500,000, and the money can be used for land acquisition or capital improvements like buildings, boardwalks, piers, signage, parking areas, restroom facilities, etc. The 2012 submittal deadline is January 31, and a first step is to contact the eastern field representative and introduce them to the project, while also contacting the County Parks and Recreation folks to see if they are already planning to submit grant requests for other projects. [www.ncparks.gov/About/grants/partf\\_main.php](http://www.ncparks.gov/About/grants/partf_main.php)

### **North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center**

The Rural Center has a variety of grant and loan programs, particularly the Economic Innovation grants program and the Capital Access Program, which is designed to encourage banks to invest in riskier or non-traditional loans; and they provide micro-loans. They also recently announced a special youth initiative that has a range of programs to engage young adults in entrepreneurship, and community-based planning and project implementation. [www.ncruralcenter.org](http://www.ncruralcenter.org)

### **Outer Banks Community Development Corporation**

The Outer Banks Community Development Corporation (CDC) offers housing counseling services, and development and governmental support assistance to Dare and surrounding counties. [www.obx-cdc.org](http://www.obx-cdc.org)

### **A. J. Fletcher Foundation**

There are some foundations that provide capacity-building support, including this Foundation. Unfortunately, it is not making any grants in 2012. Looking to the future, this is a program that could help hire staff for community efforts. In the meantime, one thing community leaders should definitely do is keep track of the cash and in-kind contributions of volunteers' time and any other support received from lawyers, real estate agents, etc. The dollar amount of those in-kind contributions will demonstrate strong community support for the project, which will give a competitive advantage over groups that do not have strong community support. [www.ajf.org](http://www.ajf.org)

### **Golden LEAF Foundation**

Golden LEAF's mission is to promote the social welfare of North Carolina's citizens and to receive and distribute funds for economic impact assistance to economically affected or tobacco-dependent regions of North Carolina. <http://goldenleaf.org/>

### **N. C. Center for Non-Profits**

Their mission is to enrich North Carolina's communities and economy through a strong nonprofit sector and nonprofit voice. The Center serves as an information center on effective practices in nonprofit organizations, a statewide network for nonprofit board and staff members, and an advocate for the nonprofit sector as a whole. The Center's goals are to: assist nonprofits to achieve their vital missions through an array of services to help them be ethical, results-oriented, collaborative, adaptive, sustainable, and in legal

compliance; advocate on public policy issues that affect the ability of all nonprofits to address their communities' needs; and educate the public on the impact and value of the nonprofit sector for the people of North Carolina. They help nonprofits to save money and time so their funds can go further; lead and manage their organizations effectively; spread innovations; support each other; prevent burnout; collaborate as appropriate; and unite to serve North Carolina better. They serve nonprofits board members and staff who work in all kinds of positions. In addition, they collaborate with other local, state, and national organizations that assist nonprofits. <http://www.ncnonprofits.org/>

### **Philanthropy Journal**

The Philanthropy Journal is an independent voice and champion for nonprofits and their supporters. Through a daily website and free, weekly email bulletin they deliver nonprofit news, resources, announcements and job listings. <http://www.philanthropyjournal.org/>

### **NC State University Institute for Nonprofits**

The Institute for Nonprofit Research, Education and Engagement is a multidisciplinary center devoted to strengthening the capacity of nonprofit organizations and nonprofit leadership through research, education and engagement. They focus on North Carolina and beyond as a laboratory for research. They are a center of expertise, a host of a collaborative community of scholars and practitioners, and a convener and connector for the sharing of campus and community resources to facilitate research-informed policies and practices. <http://nonprofit.chass.ncsu.edu/>