



SWISS BEAR

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

DOWNTOWN NEW BERN MASTER PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	Page 2
II. Project Objectives.....	Page 3
III. Scope of Work	Page 4
1. Assessment & Analysis.....	Page 4
2. Stakeholder Engagement & Community Outreach.....	Page 4
3. Redevelopment & Revitalization Strategies.....	Page 4
4. Urban Design & Aesthetic Improvements.....	Page 4
5. Implementation & Action Plan.....	Page 4
IV. Deliverables.....	Page 5
V. Proposal Requirements.....	Page 5
VI. Evaluation Criteria.....	Page 5
VII. Proposed Timeline	Page 6
VIII. Submission Information.....	Page 6
IX. Resources	
1. Master Plan Primary Focus Areas.....	Page 7
2. Growth Corridors/Subdistricts	Page 10
3. Greater Five Points Transformation Plan	Page 12

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

Notice is hereby given that Swiss Bear, Inc. located at 316 S. Front Street, New Bern, NC 28560, is seeking submissions from highly qualified consulting firms or teams to assist with a Downtown Master Plan. Proposals should be submitted as a comprehensive document or package and demonstrate the ability and intent to complete the required Scope of Work. The firm or team's current and prior experience shall be relevant to community planning, downtown revitalization, transportation, market and economic analysis, urban design and demonstrate effective public outreach and quality products. The selected consultant will be required to comply with applicable laws, requirements, and regulations governing this funding.

INTRODUCTION

The City of New Bern (City) was founded in 1710 and is the county seat of Craven County, North Carolina. Located at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers, New Bern is the second-oldest colonial town in North Carolina and has long served as a center of commerce, government, and culture in the region. Today, the City is home to approximately 34,000 residents representing a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures, and professions. New Bern's historic downtown, waterfront setting, and vibrant small-business community make it a significant economic and cultural destination for eastern North Carolina.

Downtown New Bern serves as the heart and economic driver of the community, offering a unique mix of historic architecture, locally owned retail shops, restaurants, professional services, cultural attractions, and residential uses. The district plays a critical role in supporting tourism, small business development, and community events that attract residents and visitors throughout the year.

Swiss Bear, Inc., the nonprofit downtown development organization for New Bern, was established in 1979 and works in partnership with the City of New Bern, downtown businesses and residents, property owners, and community stakeholders to support the continued vitality of the downtown district. As a designated Main Street community through the North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center and Main Street America, Downtown New Bern follows a preservation-based economic development approach that emphasizes historic preservation, business development and opportunity, and placemaking.

The vision for Downtown New Bern is to maintain a vibrant, walkable historic district where residents and visitors can live, work, shop, dine, and gather. The continued success of downtown will be supported by a balanced mix of retail, dining, professional services, cultural amenities, and residential opportunities that reflect the character and heritage of the city. Downtown will remain a welcoming, pedestrian-oriented environment that celebrates its rich history, distinctive architecture, waterfront setting, and strong sense of community.

Over the past several decades, Downtown New Bern has experienced significant investment in historic preservation, small business growth, and public events that contribute to its identity as a regional destination. However, like many historic downtown districts, New Bern faces evolving challenges and opportunities related to economic development, housing demand, transportation, resiliency, and public space improvements.

The development of a new Downtown Master Plan will provide a strategic framework to guide future growth, investment, and revitalization efforts within the downtown district. The plan will help identify opportunities to strengthen economic development, enhance public spaces, support downtown housing, improve connectivity and accessibility, and preserve the historic character that makes Downtown New Bern unique. By engaging community stakeholders and identifying catalytic redevelopment opportunities, the Downtown Master Plan will establish a shared vision and actionable strategies for the continued success of Downtown New Bern over the next decade and beyond.

II. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the Downtown Master Plan include:

- Establishing a clear vision and strategic direction for continued downtown development
- Identifying opportunities for revitalization, adaptive reuse, infill development, and geographic growth through the primary corridors
- Promoting a vibrant and inclusive downtown environment through design, policy, and programming
- Encouraging investment and economic development while preserving New Bern's historic character
- Enhancing accessibility, connectivity, and pedestrian experiences
- Incorporate physical design and planning solutions that recognize the relevant link to the historic, cultural, diversity and environmental context of the community
- Incorporate action plans that aim to steer future growth into areas where adequate infrastructure already exists and take advantage of currently underutilized and/or vacant properties, parking areas, etc.
- Address improvements to public infrastructure
- Promote beautification of the downtown business district with an array of improvements
- Evaluation and assessment of existing Downtown boundaries and recommend potential geographic expansion, adjustments and character districts
- Provide direction on opportunities and recommendations to incentivize upper story residential, attract mixed-use development, and create family-friendly experiences
- Identify opportunities to better activate, enhance and improve public access to the city's waterfront along the Neuse and Trent Rivers.
- Identify market gaps and opportunities for new businesses and attractions that would strengthen downtown's economic mix, including retail, dining, entertainment, cultural experiences, and family-friendly destinations.

III. SCOPE OF WORK

It is the expectation of Swiss Bear, Inc. that the selected Consultant will fully lead the process to develop a Downtown Master Plan to address the key topic areas discussed in Section 2. The consultant shall provide professional planning and design services that include, but are not limited to, the following components:

1. Assessment & Analysis

- Evaluate existing conditions, including land use, infrastructure, circulation, and building conditions.
- Conduct an accessibility analysis to identify barriers and opportunities for improvement.
- Review existing plans, zoning regulations, and development policies relevant to downtown.

2. Stakeholder Engagement & Community Outreach

- Design and facilitate stakeholder surveys, public workshops, and focus group discussions with Swiss Bear's assistance.
- Engage downtown property owners, residents, businesses, and community organizations under Swiss Bear's guidance.
- Summarize community priorities and integrate them into the plan's goals and strategies.

3. Redevelopment & Revitalization Strategies

- Identify redevelopment opportunities, catalytic sites, and investment priorities.
- Recommend programs and incentives to promote continued downtown development and geographical growth.
- Develop policies to address abandoned and neglected non-residential properties.
- Provide phased projects and achievable short-, mid-, and long-term goals.

4. Urban Design & Aesthetic Improvements

- Propose design concepts for streetscapes, open spaces, and public art.
- Recommend architectural and design guidelines to enhance downtown's visual appeal.
- Incorporate sustainable and inclusive design principles for the existing streetscape and gateway opportunities.
- Provide connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists in neighboring areas

5. Implementation & Action Plan

- Provide a prioritized implementation matrix, including estimated costs, funding sources, and responsible parties.
- Identify partnerships, grant opportunities, and strategies for maintaining long-term momentum.

IV. DELIVERABLES

The consultant shall provide the following deliverables:

- Comprehensive Downtown Master Plan document (digital and print-ready formats).
- Executive summary and presentation materials for the Board of Aldermen and other stakeholder meetings.
- Public engagement summary report.
- GIS maps, high-quality conceptual renderings for priority concepts, and visual concepts illustrating key recommendations.

V. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Proposals should include the following information:

- Cover Letter introducing the firm and outlining interest in the project.
- Project Understanding and Approach describing how the consultant will meet project goals.
- Proposed Scope and Work Plan detailing tasks, milestones, and deliverables.
- Project Team and Proposals, including resumes and relevant experience.
- Schedule with key milestones and anticipated completion date.
- Cost Proposal with itemized fees and estimated expenses.
- References from at least three comparable municipal projects.

Swiss Bear, Inc. reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, waive informalities, and select the proposal deemed most advantageous to Swiss Bear, Inc.

VI. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated understanding of project goals and community needs.
- Experience with downtown planning, urban design, and economic revitalization.
- Quality of proposed approach, methodology, and deliverables.
- Proposals and experience of project personnel.
- Proven success in stakeholder engagement and implementation planning.
- Cost competitiveness and overall value.

VII. PROPOSED TIMELINE

The schedule, as listed below, is Swiss Bear Inc.'s intended course of action for this project. Swiss Bear, Inc. will follow the schedule to the extent possible; however, Swiss Bear, Inc. reserves the right to change both the sequence and timing if deemed necessary.

Issue RFP: July 22, 2026

Deadline for Questions: August 20, 2026, no later than 4:00 pm EST

Response Deadline: September 4, 2026, no later than 4:00 pm EST

Evaluation of Responses: September 8-18, 2026

Interviews: September 28 - October 9, 2026

Anticipated Award Date: October 16, 2026

Project Kick-Off: Mid-November 2026

VIII. SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Submission Deadline: Friday, September 4, 2026 at 4:00 PM (local time)

Submit Proposals To:

Swiss Bear, Inc.

Attn: Karen Sullivan, Executive Director

316 S. Front Street

New Bern, NC 28560

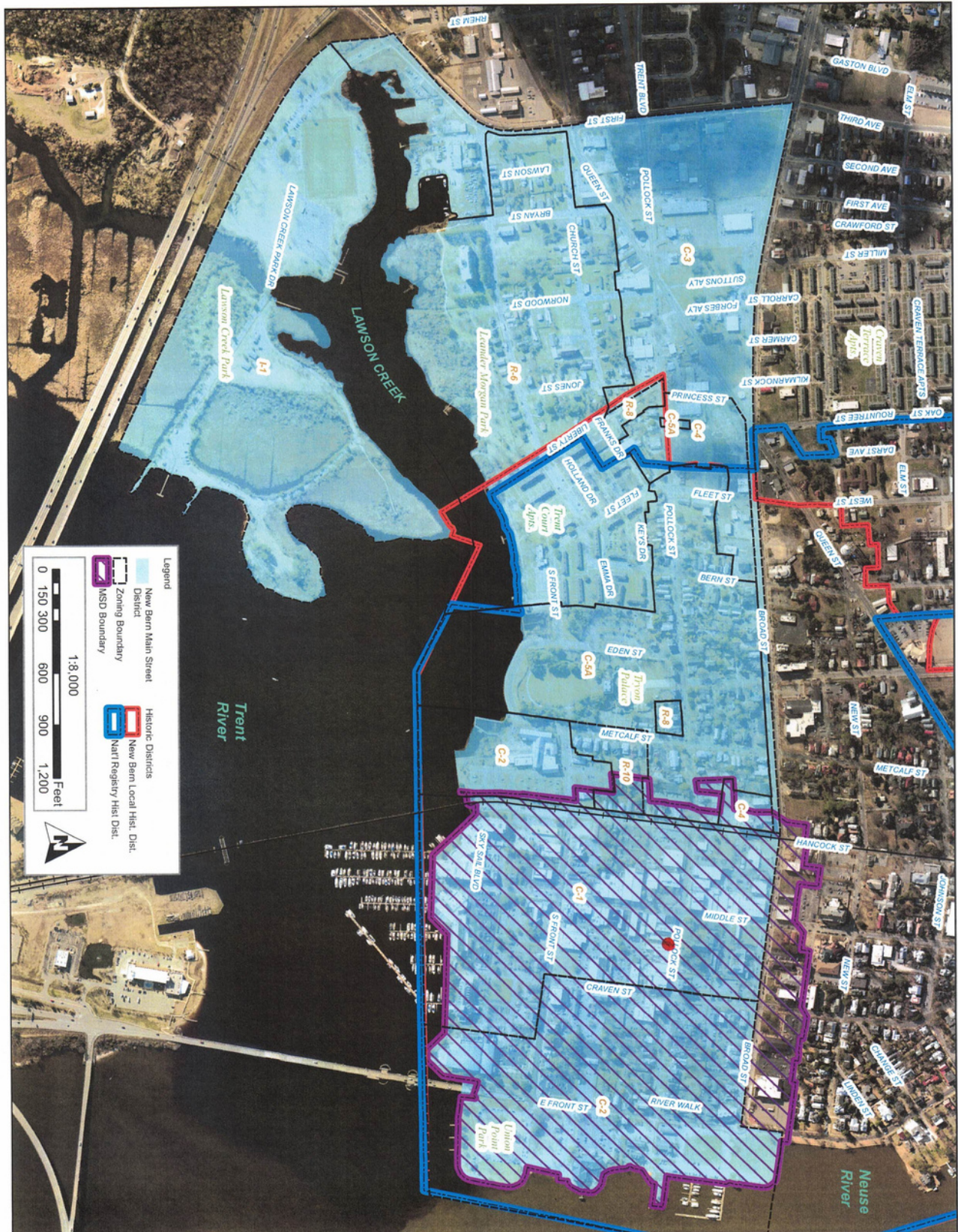
Email: director@swissbear.org

Phone: 252-772-1102

Late or incomplete proposals will not be considered.

IX. RESOURCES

1. Master Plan Primary Focus Areas:



Map of Downtown New Bern's Main Street Footprint

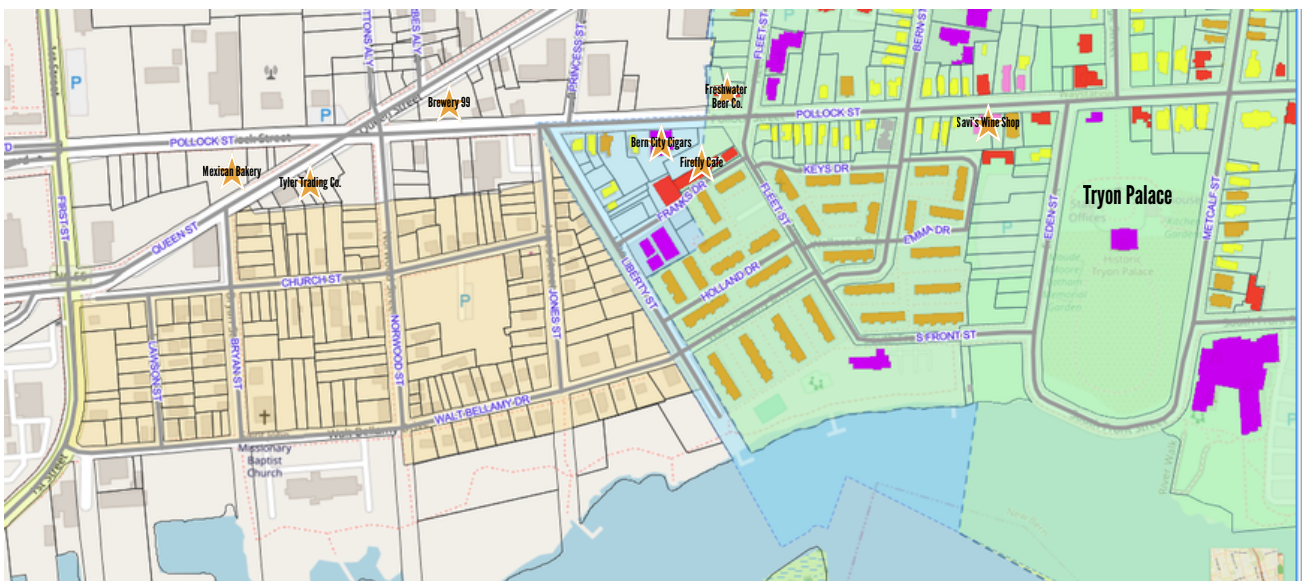
Master Plan Primary Focus Areas:

Pollock Street Corridor

The Pollock Street corridor serves as one of the primary gateways into Downtown New Bern, connecting residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and visitors to the city's historic core. As a major entrance to downtown, the corridor plays a critical role in shaping first impressions and influencing how residents and visitors experience the city. While portions of the corridor have seen investment in recent years, there is significant opportunity to enhance its appearance, improve safety and connectivity, and encourage new economic activity along its length.

The Five Points area, located along the Pollock Street corridor, is a historic neighborhood with deep cultural significance and tremendous redevelopment potential. Ongoing revitalization efforts, including the Greater Five Points Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, provide a unique opportunity to coordinate investments that improve housing, support local businesses, create inviting public spaces, and strengthen neighborhood connections to downtown. By building upon these initiatives, the corridor can become a vibrant mixed-use destination that celebrates the area's history while creating new opportunities for residents and entrepreneurs.

Strengthening the Pollock Street corridor will improve connectivity between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, encourage private investment, and reinforce the economic vitality of the entire downtown district. By creating an attractive, walkable, and economically active gateway, New Bern can leverage the corridor as both a community asset and a catalyst for long-term revitalization that benefits the Five Points neighborhood and the city as a whole.



Master Plan Primary Focus Areas:

Main Street Central Business District

While strategic investment in gateway corridors and surrounding neighborhoods will strengthen Downtown New Bern as a whole, the historic commercial core remains the heart of the city's economy, culture, and identity. Centered along Middle Street, Craven Street, Broad Street, and the surrounding blocks, the primary business district serves as the region's premier destination for shopping, dining, entertainment, tourism, and community events. Continued investment in this area is essential to maintaining its role as the economic engine of downtown and ensuring its long-term competitiveness.

As consumer expectations, business needs, and development trends continue to evolve, the Downtown Master Plan should identify strategies to support existing businesses, attract new investment, and enhance the overall visitor and resident experience.

Enhancing connections between the commercial core and surrounding districts will create a more cohesive downtown experience that encourages visitors to explore beyond a single destination while increasing economic activity throughout the district.

Maintaining a strong, thriving primary business district is fundamental to the success of Downtown New Bern. By continuing to invest in its historic core while fostering growth in adjacent neighborhoods and corridors, we can create a unified vision that supports economic vitality, preserves the city's unique character, and positions downtown for sustained success over the coming decades.



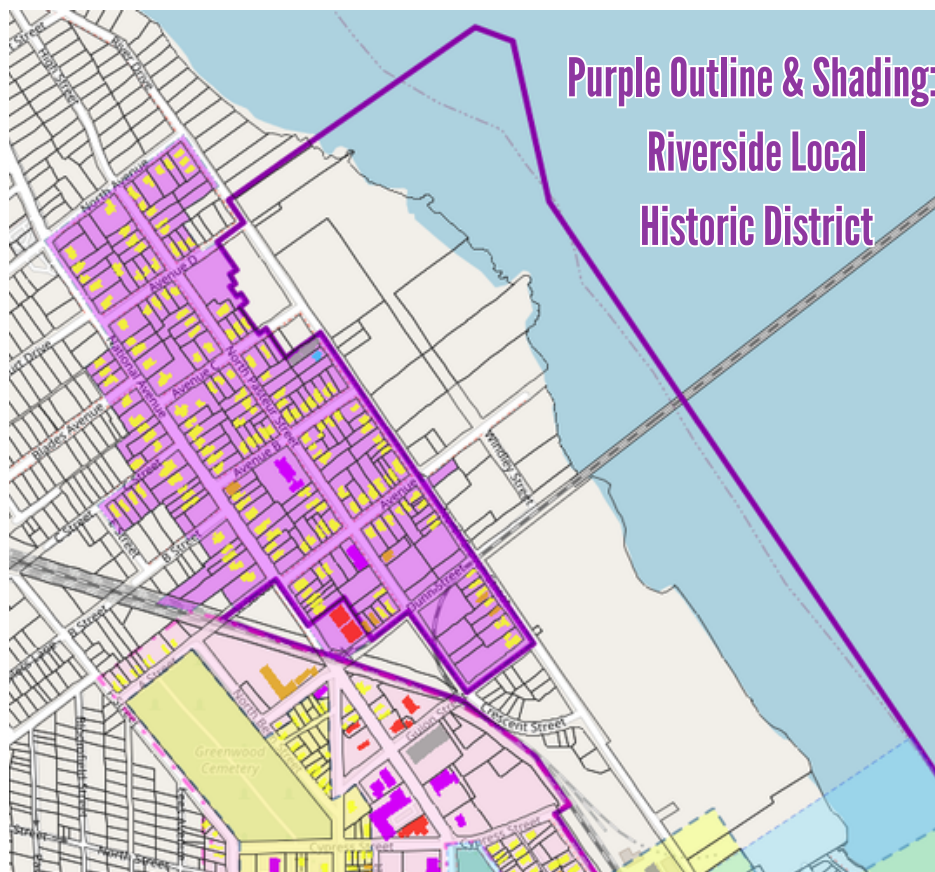
2. Growth Corridors/Subdistricts

Riverside

The Riverside Community is one of New Bern's oldest historically African American neighborhoods, located just west of downtown along the Neuse River. Established during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Riverside became home to generations of families, skilled tradespeople, educators, and business owners who helped shape the city's cultural and economic history. The neighborhood's churches, community organizations, and historic homes continue to reflect its strong sense of identity, resilience, and community pride.

Today, Riverside remains a primarily residential neighborhood with a mix of historic and newer homes. While the neighborhood benefits from its central location and rich heritage, it also faces challenges common to many older communities, including aging housing stock, infrastructure needs, vacant properties, and limited neighborhood-serving commercial services. Riverside has also experienced significant impacts from flooding during major storms such as Hurricanes Matthew and Florence, highlighting the need for continued investment in resilience and infrastructure.

Riverside has become an important focus for revitalization efforts aimed at preserving its historic character while improving quality of life for residents. Public and private investments in housing rehabilitation, streetscape improvements, neighborhood beautification, and community engagement could help lay the foundation for long-term growth.



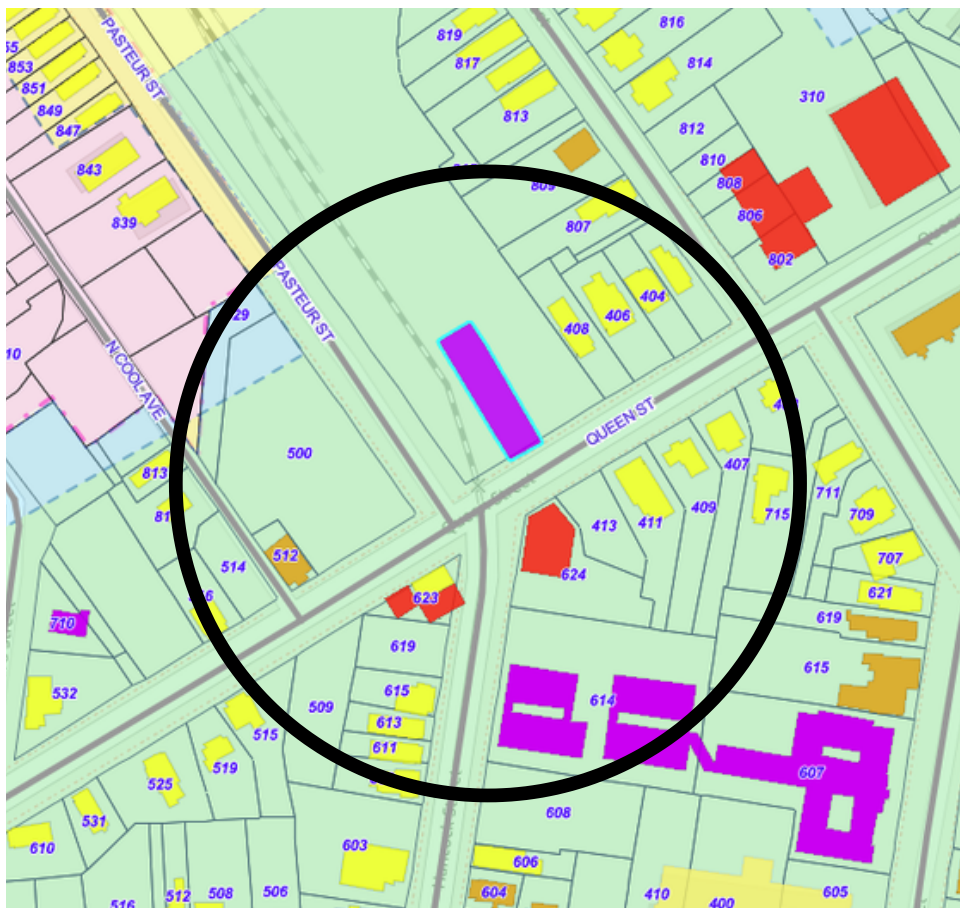
2. Growth Corridors/Subdistricts (Continued)

Queen Street Corridor

The Queen Street corridor represents one of Downtown New Bern's most promising opportunities for catalytic redevelopment. Anchored by historic assets such as the Pinnix, the former Train Depot, and the King & Lasso Cigar Lounge currently being developed, the area is beginning to emerge as a destination that blends history, culture, and entrepreneurship.

With strategic public and private investment, the Queen Street area has the potential to become a vibrant mixed-use district featuring restored historic buildings, locally owned restaurants and retail, entertainment venues, offices, housing, and enhanced public spaces. Streetscape improvements, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, wayfinding, public art, and adaptive reuse of historic properties can encourage additional redevelopment while preserving the corridor's unique character and heritage.

The continued revitalization of Queen Street would not only expand Downtown New Bern's economic footprint but also create new opportunities for small business growth, tourism, and private investment. As redevelopment builds upon existing momentum, the corridor can serve as a bridge between downtown, nearby residential neighborhoods, and other revitalization initiatives, contributing to a more connected, walkable, and economically resilient city.



3. Greater Five Points Transformation Plan

The Greater Five Points Transformation Plan is a long-term revitalization strategy for New Bern's Greater Five Points neighborhood. Developed through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, the plan focuses on improving housing, supporting residents, enhancing neighborhood amenities, and creating economic opportunities while preserving the area's rich history and character.

The Greater Five Points Transformation Plan is a community-driven roadmap designed to create a vibrant, equitable, and connected neighborhood where current residents can thrive. The plan was developed with extensive input from residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations, local government, and community stakeholders.

The plan is organized around three core areas:

People

- Improve quality of life through education, workforce development, healthcare access, and supportive services.
- Expand opportunities for youth, families, and seniors.
- Increase access to job training, financial literacy, and homeownership resources.
- Strengthen partnerships between schools, service providers, and community organizations.

Housing

- Replace aging public housing with high-quality, mixed-income housing.
- Preserve affordable housing while encouraging new residential investment.
- Improve housing choices that allow residents to remain in the neighborhood throughout different stages of life.
- Reduce concentrated poverty by creating a diverse housing mix.

Neighborhood

- Improve parks, streetscapes, sidewalks, lighting, and public spaces.
- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between Five Points, downtown New Bern, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Support small businesses and attract new commercial investment.
- Increase public safety through environmental design improvements and community engagement.
- Celebrate the neighborhood's cultural heritage and historic significance.

3. Greater Five Points Transformation Plan (Continued)

The Transformation Plan seeks to:

- Create safe, attractive neighborhoods.
- Stimulate economic development and entrepreneurship.
- Improve educational and employment outcomes.
- Expand affordable and workforce housing.
- Encourage private investment alongside public funding.
- Build stronger connections between residents, downtown, healthcare facilities, schools, and employment centers.

Community Investment Priorities

- Redevelopment of public housing sites.
- New mixed-use and mixed-income development.
- Streetscape and infrastructure improvements.
- Park and recreational enhancements.
- Transportation and mobility improvements.
- Support for neighborhood-serving retail and services.
- Resident leadership and community engagement initiatives.

Long-Term Vision

The ultimate vision is for Greater Five Points to become a healthy, inclusive, economically vibrant neighborhood where longtime residents can remain, new families are welcomed, local businesses prosper, and the area's unique history and identity are preserved.

Website: <https://choicenewbern.com/>

Supporting Documents: [Summary of GFP Transformation Plan PDF](#)