

# SECTION 3

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

This section of the Plan provides a general overview of Wake County and its participating municipalities. It consists of the following four subsections:

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

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### 3.1 GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Wake County is located in the eastern portion of the Piedmont of North Carolina. For the purposes of this plan, Wake County includes the Town of Apex, Town of Cary, Town of Fuquay-Varina, Town of Garner, Town of Holly Springs, Town of Knightdale, Town of Morrisville, City of Raleigh, Town of Rolesville, Town of Wake Forest, Town of Wendell, Town of Zebulon, and all unincorporated areas within the county. An orientation map is provided as **Figure 3.1**.

Wake County is best known as being home of the capital of North Carolina, Raleigh, and is home to a number of government agencies and functions. Many state agencies are located in Wake County as are many federal agencies.

Wake County is also known as one of three counties that comprise the Research Triangle metropolitan region, so named for the Research Triangle Park (RTP) which encompasses the three major metropolitan areas of Chapel-Hill, Durham, and Raleigh. Each of these metropolitan areas is home to a major research university (UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke, and NC State University, respectively) and RTP draws on these universities for its workforce. The Research Triangle Park is a hub of high-tech and biotech research and is a defining feature of the economy in Wake County.

Wake County is a popular tourist destination, especially for tourists from around the state who often come to learn about the state's history. In addition, Wake County and its municipalities are consistently ranked as some of the top places to live in the country which has led to significant population growth over the last 30 to 50 years.

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

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

County	Total Land Area
<b>WAKE COUNTY</b>	<b>834 square miles</b>
Apex	15 square miles
Cary	54 square miles
Fuquay-Varina	12 square miles

<b>County</b>	<b>Total Land Area</b>
Garner	15 square miles
Holly Springs	15 square miles
Knightdale	6 square miles
Morrisville	8 square miles
Raleigh	142 square miles
Rolesville	4 square miles
Wake Forest	14 square miles
Wendell	5 square miles
Zebulon	4 square miles

*Source: US Census Bureau*

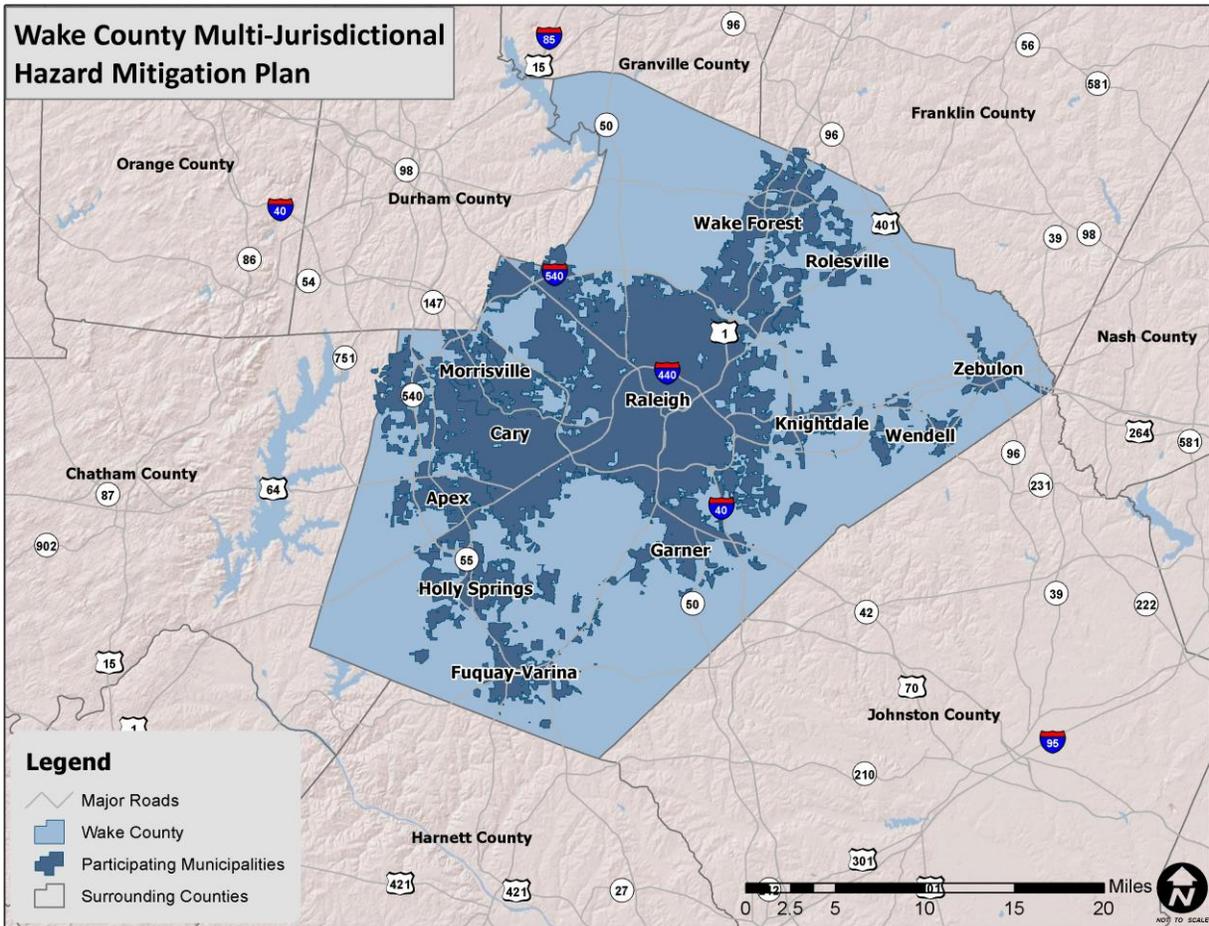
Wake County enjoys a moderate climate that is characterized by mild winters and hot, humid summers. In general, the spring months are marked by unpredictable weather and changes can occur rapidly with sunny skies yielding to severe thunderstorms in just a few hours. From March through May, temperatures have an average high in the low to mid 70s°F with lows in the 50s°F. Typically, the weather is milder by late March and warm by late April.

In the summer, afternoon showers and thunderstorms are common and average temperatures increase with afternoon highs reaching the 90s in July and August. These months are also the most common for rain in Wake County.

September through mid-November is typified by clear skies and cooler weather that alternates between warm days and cool nights. Highs and lows are usually similar to those experienced in the spring, with November days cooling off considerably.

Winter in Wake County is generally moderate but extremes do occur. High temperatures are usually in the lower 50s°F and winter lows are usually at or just below freezing. Snow is most common during January and February.

FIGURE 3.1: WAKE COUNTY ORIENTATION MAP



### 3.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Raleigh is the largest participating municipal jurisdiction by area and it also has the largest population. Between 2000 and 2010, the majority of participating jurisdictions experienced population growth, sometimes doubling or tripling in size. Rolesville had the highest county growth rate at around 317%. Population counts from the US Census Bureau for 1990, 2000, and 2010 for each of the participating jurisdictions are presented in **Table 3.2**.

**TABLE 3.2: POPULATION COUNTS FOR PARTICIPATING JURISDICTIONS**

Jurisdiction	1990 Census Population	2000 Census Population	2010 Census Population	% Change 2000-2010
<b>WAKE COUNTY</b>	<b>423,380</b>	<b>627,846</b>	<b>900,993</b>	<b>43.51%</b>
Apex	4,968	20,212	37,476	85.41%
Cary	43,858	94,536	135,234	43.05%
Fuquay-Varina	4,562	7,898	17,937	127.11%
Garner	14,967	17,575	25,745	46.49%
Holly Springs	908	9,192	24,661	168.29%

Jurisdiction	1990 Census Population	2000 Census Population	2010 Census Population	% Change 2000-2010
Knightdale	1,884	5,958	11,401	91.36%
Morrisville	1,022	5,208	18,576	256.68%
Raleigh	207,951	276,093	403,892	46.29%
Rolesville	572	907	3,786	317.42%
Wake Forest	5,769	12,588	30,117	139.25%
Wendell	2,822	4,247	5,845	37.63%
Zebulon	3,173	4,046	4,433	9.57%

Note: The total population of Cary, Raleigh, and Wake Forest includes population residing in adjacent counties.

Source: US Census Bureau

Based on the 2010 Census, the median age of residents of in Wake County is 35.3. The racial characteristics of the participating jurisdictions are presented in **Table 3.3**. Generally, whites make up the majority of the population in the county accounting for over 65 percent of the population in overall. However, several jurisdictions have much higher minority populations than others including Garner, Knightdale, Morrisville, Raleigh, Wendell, and Zebulon.

**TABLE 3.3: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPATING JURISDICTIONS**

Jurisdiction	White Persons, Percent (2010)	Black Persons, Percent (2010)	American Indian or Alaska Native, Percent (2010)	Other Race, Percent (2010)	Persons of Hispanic Origin, Percent (2010)*
<b>WAKE COUNTY</b>	<b>66.3%</b>	<b>20.7%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
Apex	79.5%	7.6%	0.3%	12.6%	7.1%
Cary	73.1%	8.0%	0.4%	18.5%	7.2%
Fuquay-Varina	72.3%	19.7%	0.6%	7.4%	9.1%
Garner	57.8%	32.9%	0.5%	8.8%	9.3%
Holly Springs	79.8%	12.6%	0.4%	7.2%	5.8%
Knightdale	50.0%	38.3%	0.6%	11.1%	11.4%
Morrisville	54.0%	12.9%	0.4%	32.7%	5.5%
Raleigh	57.5%	29.3%	0.5%	12.7%	10.6%
Rolesville	74.1%	17.8%	0.4%	7.7%	6.1%
Wake Forest	77.3%	15.3%	0.4%	7.0%	5.1%
Wendell	58.1%	30.2%	0.8%	10.9%	10.5%
Zebulon	47.3%	38.6%	0.5%	13.6%	14.3%

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

Source: US Census Bureau

### 3.3 HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND LAND USE

#### 3.3.1 Housing

According to the 2010 US Census, there were 371,836 housing units in Wake County, the majority of which are single family homes or mobile homes. Housing information for the thirteen participating

jurisdictions is presented in **Table 3.4**. As shown in the table, there is a moderate range in the percentage of vacant housing across the jurisdictions.

**TABLE 3.4: HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS**

Jurisdiction	Housing Units (2000)	Housing Units (2010)	Vacant Units, Percent (2010)	Median Home Value (2007-2011)
<b>WAKE COUNTY</b>	<b>258,953</b>	<b>371,836</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>\$230,400</b>
Apex	8,028	13,922	5.0%	\$258,500
Cary	36,863	55,303	6.4%	\$302,500
Fuquay-Varina	3,375	7,325	8.6%	\$192,700
Garner	7,252	10,993	7.2%	\$168,300
Holly Springs	3,642	8,658	5.9%	\$236,700
Knightdale	2,352	4,723	10.5%	\$170,900
Morrisville	3,210	8,357	8.6%	\$266,600
Raleigh	120,699	176,124	7.5%	\$208,000
Rolesville	384	1,341	7.8%	\$246,200
Wake Forest	5,091	11,370	7.5%	\$255,500
Wendell	1,785	2,430	6.6%	\$132,600
Zebulon	1,661	1,862	11.1%	\$110,400

Source: US Census Bureau

### 3.3.2 Infrastructure

#### Transportation

There are several major roadways that cross Wake County. The most prominent is Interstate 40 which runs through the county on an east-west track. It has two spurs that more or less encompass the city of Raleigh and provide access to many of the outlying municipalities. In conjunction with I-40, I-440 makes up the “Beltline” that encircles most of central Raleigh. Meanwhile, I-540/NC-540 is a partly completed loop that is outside the beltline that currently connects many of the northern and western municipalities. In addition to the Interstate, there are many major highways that traverse the county. Federal highways of note are US-1, US-64, US-264, US-70, and US-401, while state highways in the county include NC-39, NC-42, NC-50, NC-54, NC-55, NC-96, NC-98, and NC-231.

In terms of other transportation services, Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU) is one of the largest airports in the state and serves more than 35 international and domestic locations and over 9 million passengers a year. Wake County is also home to two Amtrak railway facilities, located in Raleigh and Cary. The Triangle Transit authority operates a bus system that connects Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel-Hill and there are also several intra-county bus lines that provide service between Wake County municipalities.

#### Utilities

Electrical power in Wake County is provided by two entities and Duke Energy and Wake Electric Membership Corporation with Duke Energy providing service to a majority of the county. Water and sewer service is provided by two main entities as well: The City of Raleigh Public Utilities and Western Wake Partners. Natural gas is provided by PSNC Energy.

### **Community Facilities**

There are a number of public buildings and community facilities located throughout Wake County. According to the data collected for the vulnerability assessment (Section 6.4.1), there are 81 fire stations, 38 police stations, and 158 public schools located within the study area.

Three major hospitals are located in Wake County: Rex Hospital, WakeMed, and Duke Raleigh. WakeMed also operates several satellite locations throughout the county.

Wake County is also home to several parks, including three state parks: Falls Lake State Recreation Area, William B. Umstead State Park, and Jordan Lake State Recreation Area. There are also a number of county and municipal parks located throughout the jurisdictions, including the American Tobacco Trail which is a rails to trails project that is open to a wide variety of non-motorized uses.

### **3.3.3 Land Use**

Much of Wake County is developed and relatively urbanized. However, there are some areas that are more sparsely developed, sometimes due to the conservation of land. As shown in **Figure 3.1** above, there are many incorporated municipalities located throughout the study area, and these areas are where the region's population is generally concentrated. The incorporated areas are also where many businesses, commercial uses, and institutional uses are located. Land uses in the balance of the study area consist of a variety of types of residential, commercial, industrial, government, and recreational uses. Local land use and associated regulations are further discussed in *Section 7: Capability Assessment*.

## **3.4 EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRY**

The early modern economy Wake County was built around agriculture and government, as the state capital of Raleigh was established in 1793. Since that time, much of the growth and economic well-being of the county has been linked to the county's status as a hub of government. While the county's position as home to the state capital remains important, in recent decades, the county's economic focus has shifted towards the fields of information technology and health care. The Research Triangle Park, located between Raleigh and Durham, is home to more than 160 companies that employ more than 50,000 people.

According to the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, in 2012 (the last full year with data available), Wake County had an average annual employment of 453,415 workers. The Retail Trade industry employed 11.4% of the County's workforce followed by Health Care and Social Assistance (10.5%); Professional and Technical Services (9.3%); and Accommodation and Food Services (9.2%). In 2012, the projected median household income was \$60,412 compared to \$42,941 for the state of North Carolina in 2011 (2012 numbers were not available).