

# **A Process for Rural Sustainability: Lessons from Williamston, North Carolina**



AUDUBON  
INTERNATIONAL

---

HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE ENVIRONMENT



# Who is Audubon International?

---

*“We envision our communities becoming more sustainable through good stewardship of the natural environment where people live, work, and recreate.”*

- Audubon International, incorporated as The Audubon Society of New York State, Inc., in 1987 from one of the first state Audubon Societies.
- Audubon International’s education, training, and certification programs are delivered throughout the United States and worldwide.
- The natural environment isn’t confined to nature preserves, parks, and protected land. With over 60% of the land in the US privately-owned, environmental stewardship must come from private property owners, managers and developers.
- In more than two dozen countries on five continents, Audubon International members are cleaning up streams, protecting common and endangered wildlife, restoring wetlands, conserving water and energy, and educating communities about the value of good environmental stewardship.

# Are you the bird people?

- Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program- 20 years of Golf in 2011
- Working with properties led to helping developers, surrounding neighborhoods, and whole communities
- *It's going to be built, why not provide education and guidance on how to be more sustainable?*

## **Starts with People & Places**

Town & City Leaders  
Mixed-Use Private Communities  
Neighborhood Leaders  
Large-Scale Destination Resorts  
Community Planners



# Green, Sustainable, Smart, Audubon





# Getting to sustainability: What you need

- Long-Term Plan
- Issue-Specific Planning
- Sense of Place
- “Sustainability Portfolio”
- Verification: Indicators



# Parameters: Focus Areas & Indicators

---

1. Agriculture
2. Economic Development/Tourism
3. Education
4. Environmental issues
5. Governance
6. Public Health
7. Housing
8. Open Space and Land Use
9. Planning, Zoning, Building and Development
10. Population
11. Public Safety and Emergency Management
12. Recreation
13. Resource Use (water, energy, waste)
14. Volunteerism and Civic Engagement
15. Transportation



## Three groupings

- Economic
- Social
- Environmental

# SCP: Stages of Involvement

---

STAGE ONE: Assessment (6 months- 1 year)

Community Outreach, Education, and Involvement



STAGE TWO: Planning (1 year)

*Sustainable* Strategic Planning



STAGE THREE: Implementation (20 year plan)

Implementing and Tracking the Strategic Plan

# The Process in Practice: Williamston, NC

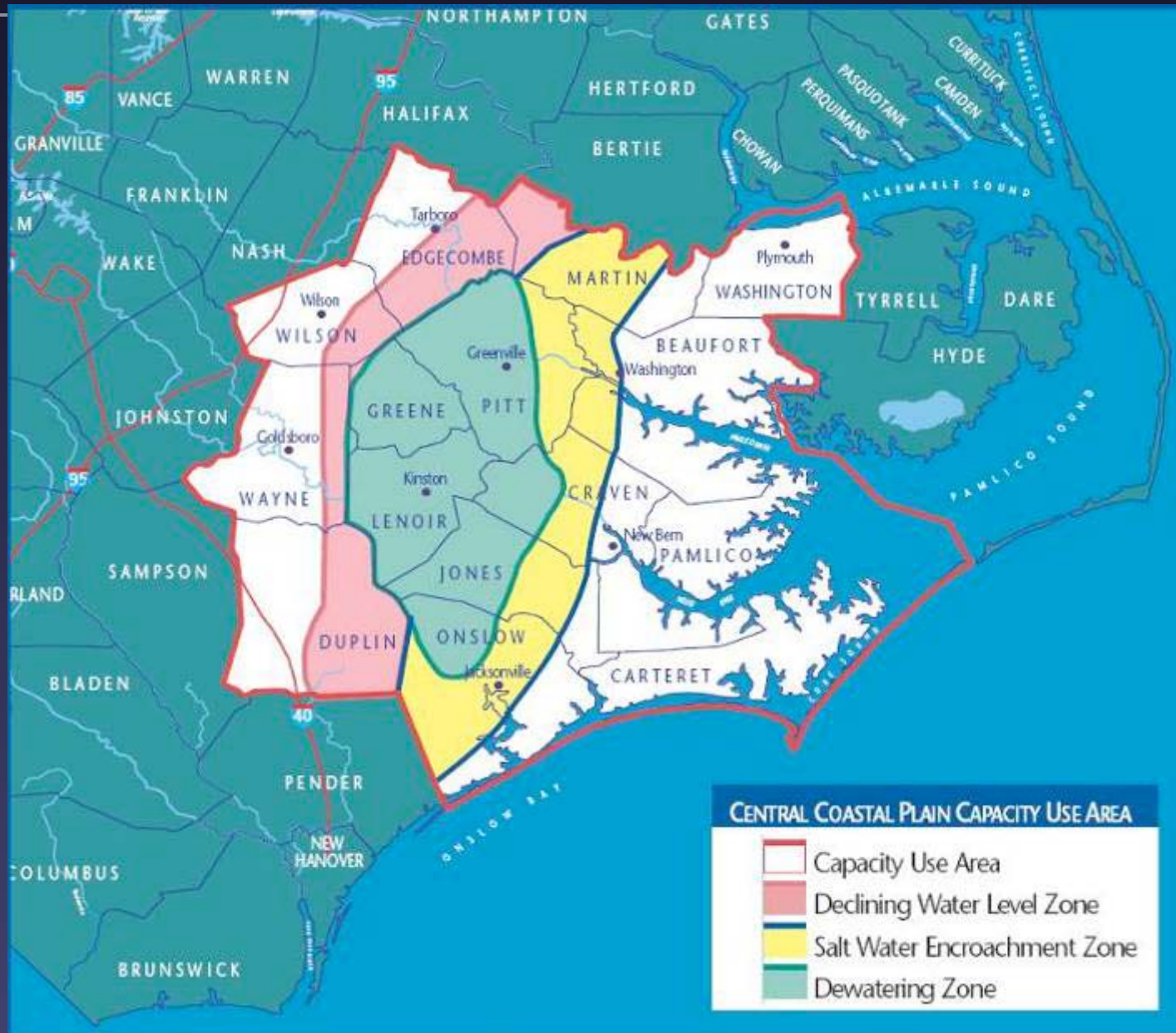
## Motivating Factors:

- Economic
- Agriculture and Preservation of Rural Heritage
- Natural Resources
  - Roanoke River
  - Forests and Open Space
  - Water!
- Population Challenges (Pop: 6,000)
  - De-population
  - Out-migration





# Issue Specific Planning



# Defining a Sense of Place



## Assets:

- *Agricultural and Rural Heritage*
- *History*
- *Natural Resources*
- *Family Values/ Religion*

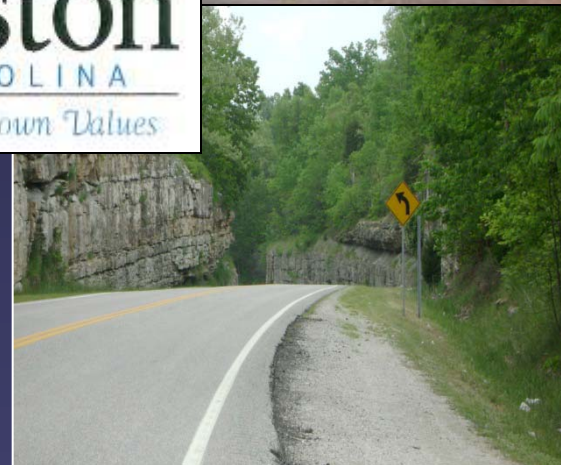
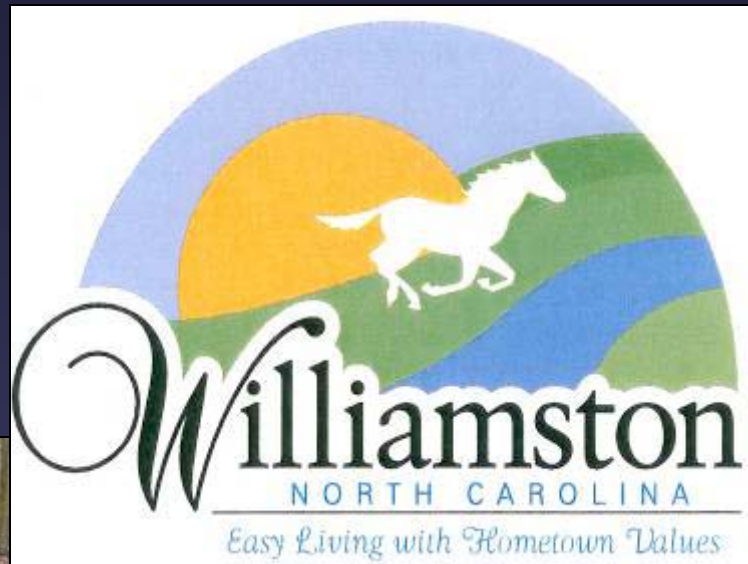




# Portfolio: Throwing everything into one room

## *Taking Inventory and Assigning Roles:*

- *Businesses*
- *Civic groups*
- *Churches*
- *Special Interests*
- *County entities*
- *Elected Officials*



# Verifying Progress: Goals

---

- Choosing *reachable* targets for community defined goals.
- Establishing short-, mid-, and long-term timelines
- Determining parties responsible for reporting and monitoring
- Collecting information on a predetermined regular basis
- Publicizing Progress
- Continual Auditing

# Verifying Progress: Indicators

Audubon International's Sustainable Communities Program  
Program Member:  
Doc Title: Sustainability Indicators

## Assumptions:

1. Sustainable Communities Program focus areas considered not applicable to MEMBER have been omitted.
2. Certification will be determined by MEMBER attainment of or progress toward the *desired outcome* for each indicator.
3. For most indicators, 2008 will be the first year of measurement, and will serve as the baseline against which future years will be measured.
4. Unless otherwise specified, the desired outcome for each indicator (for future years in relation to the 2008 baseline) is a trend of "stable or increasing." Exceptions will be noted parenthetically with the indicator.

Sustainability Focus Area	Focus Area Sub-Category	Goal	Policies/Practices	Indicators
Agriculture	Food sourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximize purchase of locally-grown produce, meats, cheese, etc.</li> <li>Support local economy</li> <li>Provide healthy food choices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase food from local and regional farmers</li> <li>Establish Chef's herb garden for MEMBER</li> <li>Participate in LOCAL Fresh Food Network</li> <li>Emphasize local and organic foods at all events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dollar amount of local produce purchased for food services</li> <li>Dollar amount of organic produce purchased</li> </ul>
	Rural settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain the "look and feel" of MEMBER region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require new construction to conform to architectural design guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of buildings meeting architectural design review guidelines</li> <li>Photo inventory of completed buildings</li> <li>% occupancy in lodging</li> <li>Tourism rates</li> </ul>
Economy	Economic development & tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make MEMBER an economically successful and sustainable enterprise</li> <li>Have a net positive effect on <i>greater economy of the REGION</i></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MEMBER certification score under Audubon Greenleaf Hotel Program</li> <li>Number of dining establishments Green Restaurant Association certified (Y/N)</li> </ul>
	Hospitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have dining and lodging incorporate "green" principles into construction, management, operation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MEMBER pursues eco-rating via Audubon Greenleaf Eco-Rating Program for Hotels</li> <li>Doing business certification via Green Restaurant Association</li> <li>Publish sustainability-related articles in internal company newsletter</li> <li>Conduct regular training sessions on various topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MEMBER certification score under Audubon Greenleaf Hotel Program</li> <li>Number of dining establishments Green Restaurant Association certified (Y/N)</li> <li># employees who have taken AI's Treasuring Home Pledge</li> <li># articles published/internal newsletter</li> <li># training sessions held</li> <li>Average or cumulative attendance at training sessions</li> </ul>
Education	Employee engagement and education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foster buy-in from employees for MEMBER sustainability efforts</li> <li>Improve education and awareness regarding issues and efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In coordination with others establish environmental education center</li> <li>Offer eco-tours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># hours offered</li> <li>Avg. hotel tour attendance</li> <li># Treasuring Home Pledges submitted</li> </ul>
	Guest engagement and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise guest awareness about MEMBER sustainability efforts</li> <li>Actively engage guests in participation</li> </ul>		

Reporting Chart DRAFT

rested)

county farmer with a

Support local farmers and local farmers' markets	In past years, the county received legislative funding for a farmer's market. This facility was constructed; however, its use as a farmer's market is limited because in our rural county many people have access to garden plots on family farms. Agriculture is our heritage; therefore, many residents either own farms or have access to them through family and friends.  Furthermore, the farmers in our area are large scale tobacco farmers and they have not been interested in vegetable farming. The Cooperative Extension Service is attempting to advance the concept of a farmer's market, but it has had limited success.	Extension Service				produce business selling locally grown products. There are also three on-farm strawberry markets that sell fresh strawberries and other farm products.
Encourage local restaurants to buy from local farmers	There is not a locally grown food supply at this time.	The Cooperative Extension Service	N	.01	0-5	Restaurants are buying locally grown fruits and vegetables as they are available from local farmers.
Develop a farmland preservation program to permanently protect working farms	Presently, there is not a perceived need for a farmland preservation program since our county population density is among the lowest in the state.	The Cooperative Extension Service	N	DK	10-20	Farmland preservation is being advanced by the county tax structure which assesses farm taxes at 50% of the normal tax rate.



Audubon International's  
Green Community  
Handbook





# Process for Change: Lessons

---

## Failures for Change

1. Fail to create sense of urgency
2. No guiding coalition
3. Underestimate the power of vision
4. Under-communicate the vision

## Success

- Rally: sense of place
- Catalysts: partnerships
- Sell 'Sustainability' differently
- Over beer, BBQ, or Bible

# Process for Change: Lessons

---

## Failures for Change

5. Obstacles block the vision

6. Failing to create short-term wins

7. Declaring victory too soon

8. Not anchoring in the culture

## Success

Sustainability: A meaning

Celebrate success

*Sustainability Indicators*

Steering Committee  
(Gov't and Community)



# New Eco- Education Model

---

AWARENESS  
& UNDERSTANDING leads to  
APPRECIATION leads to  
ACTION

ACTION First! Leads to  
APPRECIATION leads to  
AWARENESS & UNDERSTANDING

# Sustainable Small Communities: Lessons for Change

---

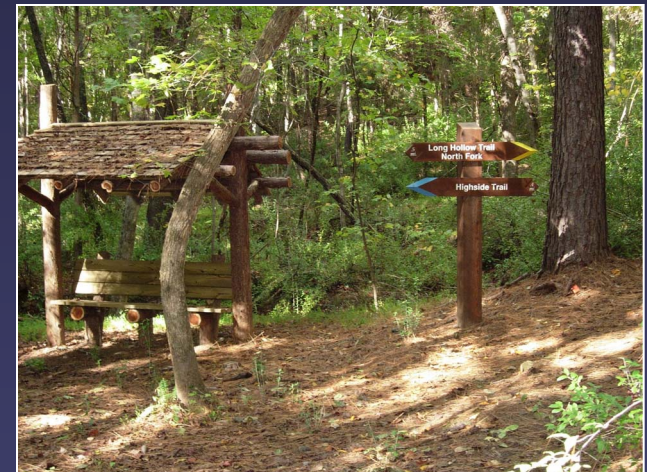
**Lead with the environment: Sense of Place**  
**Connect with and educate people right away**

**ID & create catalysts, role models, and leaders**

**Identify partners: Distribute tasks for the plan**

**Start simple, celebrate, and build complexity**

**Create long-term commitment: Plan & Indicators**



Audubon International's  
Sustainable Communities Program  
Suzi Zakowski, Manager  
46 Rarick Road  
Selkirk, NY 12158  
518-767-9051 x.124  
[szakowski@auduboninternational.org](mailto:szakowski@auduboninternational.org)

AUDUBON  
INTERNATIONAL

