



## **Strategic Plan**

# **Situation Report Executive Summary**



**April 2022**



## Demographic Trends and Issues

Kannapolis is growing, diversifying, becoming younger (and at the same time older), gaining more wealth and becoming more educated. Much of this is due to in-migration of new residents.

- Our strong population growth is driven by **in-migration** and growth in **minority populations**.
- **Hispanics/Latinos** represent a 255% increase from 2000 to 2020 to 8,500 residents.
- **In-Migration** is driving local population growth and is likely to remain the primary and potentially **ONLY** source of growth in the coming years.
- **Single parent families** have grown to make up 32% of all households.
- Strong growth is occurring at both ends of the spectrum, **under age 18 and age 60-64**.
- Kannapolis is **significantly younger** than both of its counties and the State. This has an implication on issues like youth recreation programs, childcare, and before/after school programming.
- The growth in **baby boomer retirements** points to opportunities for these individuals to volunteer and become more engaged in the community, but also to the need to adapt our infrastructure and programs for an aging population.
- 42% of our population is **not “from here”** and was born outside of North Carolina.
- **Educational attainment has increased** as more people move into Kannapolis.
- Our median **income has increased** by 50% over the last 20 years.
- Our **poverty rate** was 14.5% in 2019, but is higher for children and minorities, and could be higher as a result of COVID.
- **Housing costs** have increased significantly, and rental units make up a larger proportion of our housing stock (40% vs, 32% in 2000). In some communities, entire subdivisions of single-family houses are being built as rental units.
- Kannapolis residents are **commuting farther for work** than before, still largely along the I-85 corridor to Concord and Charlotte.
- Charlotte (27%) and Concord (18%) represent the largest concentration of **Kannapolis residents’ workplaces**. 9% live and work in Kannapolis. The remainder work all across the region and state.



## Economic Trends and Issues

The current and future economic prosperity of Kannapolis is tied to many external influences including the nation, state, and regional economic growth. North Carolina and the Charlotte region consistently rank at the top of rapidly growing places with strong pro-business climates.

From a local perspective Cabarrus and Rowan counties are both in a strong position with recent major private investment announcements such as Eli Lilly, Red Bull, and Macy’s.

In addition to the regional impacts, Kannapolis' specific economic future will be tied to the next phases of the NCRC and Downtown, several major speculative industrial projects including Overlook 85, Metro63 and Lakeshore Corporate, as well as continued residential and commercial growth.

Challenges will include workforce skills and availability, lagging entrepreneurial development, and sewer treatment capacity.

- **Workforce shortage** will remain an ongoing issue for at least two generations due to Covid impacts, baby boomer retirements, declining fertility rates, declining life expectancy, and foreign immigration-limiting policies. 64% of unemployed men in the 35-year-old range have a criminal record. Second-chance hiring programs are extremely important tools. Women are strongly outpacing men in earning degrees, but also continue to bear the uncompensated jobs of parenting and caregiving for an elderly person, making working even more difficult.
- There is a projected need for 400,000 more workers with **postsecondary degree or credentials** by 2030 in North Carolina.
- Cabarrus County is **under-represented** in manufacturing, technology, and professional services jobs.
- Cabarrus County could be in a situation where workers are **commuting IN for low-wage positions** due to lack of affordability; and residents **commuting OUT for higher wage positions** due to current industry make-up.
- Demand for **warehousing and distributions centers** will likely increase as online shopping continues to grow and companies are increasing inventory to guard against supply chain shortages.
- Downtowns will become more focused on **entertainment, amenities, place-making/experiential** rather than shopping due to continued growth in e-commerce.
- The rise of **pop-up/ghost kitchens** is due to a reliance of food delivery services.
- We continue to transition from traditional media/advertisement/network television to **online social media/streaming services/e-commerce**, affecting the way our citizens consume information, develop social networks, and seek entertainment.
- Major economic development announcements locally and statewide will create **demand for skilled workers and housing**.
- More local and regional focus on **entrepreneurship and innovation** has resulted in new programs and investments. However, more Kannapolis residents need to take advantage of these offerings.
- With continued technology adoption in areas such as cloud computing, big data, security & encryption, artificial intelligence, and automation, an estimated 50% of all **employees will need reskilling**. Also, while jobs are still identified by skills, soft skills like an agile learning mindset, resiliency and adaptiveness, and the ability to collaborate play a bigger role in success.
- Back Office, Hospitality, Personal Services, Logistics, and Manufacturing/Production occupations show the highest risk of **automation** for the Charlotte region. Most are those requiring no formal education or those requiring a high school diploma. Examples include computerized ordering at restaurants or check-in at hotels, customer service chatbots, autonomous trucking, inventory management.
- In addition to workforce training effects, **technology** will continue to affect the way we work and live. Examples include use of drones for delivery service, vertical farms in urban areas and incorporation of the metaverse in our everyday experiences.

- **The Covid-19 pandemic** has had profound impacts on our economy, workforce, and has accelerated technological changes that were already underway. Many of these changes are here to stay.
- **Remote work is here to stay.** An estimated 37% of desks will remain empty. This may present opportunities for small and mid-sized cities to capture this workforce as they have flexibility to choose their location.



## Growth & Development Trends and Issues

There are several areas of development activity in Kannapolis that will set our growth trajectory for the next decade. The City's ability to influence the quality and nature of development and job creation through our development ordinances and sewer allocation policy, and our public investments will determine what our community looks like in the next 20 years.

- Our **tax base has grown** by an average of 5.16% annually over the last 10 years. The projected \$10.5 million increase in property tax revenue over the next four years translates to about \$100 million in borrowing capacity.
- The **NCRC** is at a point of transition in ownership, which could result in a change in its development trajectory, and the City needs to play an active role in guiding its future. Despite the City's significant investment, it is currently unclear how much of a presence the **U.S. Performance Center** will have in Kannapolis.
- **Downtown** revitalization has been extraordinarily successful, with more development coming. Along with that will come additional growing pains, including parking management and communication.
- The City is extending utilities for **Kannapolis Crossing**, which is expected to bring as much as \$400 million in new development investment to the City.
- **Kannapolis Parkway** near Afton Ridge has experienced significant development, with more to come in the future. Traffic management and the type/quality of development will need to be monitored with future development. An extension of the Parkway, the new Highway 3 design will change the development potential along that corridor.
- **Dale Earnhardt Blvd** is expected to see mixed-use development and additional multifamily. Increased traffic congestion, noise, and safety are concerns for nearby residents as this area develops.
- The **Lane Street interchange** is experiencing significant change with new industrial and commercial development. The traffic to this area is likely going to drive additional development and change the character of the corridor.
- As an older commercial corridor, **Cannon Boulevard** has functioned as a major thoroughfare and the city's primary commercial corridor for the majority of the past 50 years. The City has worked on a corridor plan that looks at how the corridor will evolve as redevelopment occurs.
- The **Midway and North Kannapolis** commercial areas represent both a potential threat to the progress Downtown (if nothing is done to change course) and a potential opportunity to expand upon the Downtown successes (with a proactive approach).



## Infrastructure Trends and Issues

Underlying the City's continued growth and economic prosperity is the ability to maintain and enhance infrastructure. Our aging infrastructure has a backlog of maintenance needs, in addition to new infrastructure that will be needed to support future growth. Transit is another important aspect of infrastructure and the ability to get our workforce to places of employment.

- City has sufficient **drinking water** for growth needs through 2035. However, an expansion of Albemarle's Tuckertown Water Treatment Plant will be necessary to maximize the water purchases by Concord and Kannapolis.
- City needs to complete the interconnection with the City of Charlotte to utilize **Catawba River Basin IBT** allocation to supplement western growth area water needs.
- The **sewer treatment capacity limitations** for the Rocky River Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant have resulted in the need to carefully allocate treatment capacity for the foreseeable future, in line with the City's adopted policy. Finding the balance of allocation to various development types will be an ongoing challenge.
- A recent **Water Main** inventory and modeling exercise recommends a replacement of a water main when the main has reached end of life based on an estimated life expectancy of either 75, 60, or 50 years depending on the main's pipe material. The model suggests that we currently have a **backlog of \$49.2 million** worth of mains that are at or past their estimated life expectancy. To maintain our network the model currently suggests investing \$3 million per year.
- A similar **Water Hydrant** modeling exercise recommends a replacement when the hydrant has reached end of life based on an estimated life expectancy of 30 years. The model suggests that we currently have a **backlog of \$7.5 million** worth of hydrants that are at or past their estimated life expectancy. To maintain our network the model currently suggests investing \$100,000 per year, to improve the overall service state of our network the model suggests investing \$150,000 per year.
- A **Sewer Main** model recommends a replacement of the sewer main when the main has reached end of life based on an estimated life expectancy of either 75 or 50 years based on the main's pipe material. The model suggests that we currently have a **backlog of \$172.7 million** worth of mains that are at or past their estimated life expectancy. To maintain our network the model currently suggests investing \$3.5 million per year.
- A **Street Pavement** model suggests that we currently have a **backlog of nearly \$70 million** worth of work that needs to be performed. To maintain our network at its current state the model suggests investing \$1 million per year. To improve the overall state of our network, the model suggests investing \$1.5 million per year to increase the overall condition rating from a 45 to a 53 (based on 100-point scale) within a 30-year period.
- The City has attempted to proactively address **stormwater issues** and should continue to make stormwater a priority to manage and facilitate growth. In order to do this, a comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan that establishes priorities and identifies capital needs is needed. Future funding for stormwater improvements may need to include targeted assessments where the benefitting property owners help pay for the specific projects.

- The **Speedway Landfill** current expected life is 10-years and upon reaching its capacity we will have to transfer waste to other facilities that have capacity. This will most likely involve transfer stations, handling, and transportation costs, all at a significantly higher cost than we enjoy today.
- **Recycling contamination** continues to be a challenge with some loads rejected at Charlotte materials recovery facility (MRF) resulting in fines and increased processing cost. Continued education is the key to solving this problem.
- Ten major **NCDOT transportation projects** are in the pipeline locally in Kannapolis.
- Expansion of **Amtrak service** could enhance commuter options between Raleigh and Charlotte. **Daily Commuter Rail** into Charlotte could be a possibility building on these existing services.
- The **CK Rider** system served 436,000 riders in 2019. Current transit challenges are the need for extended service hours, more frequent service, more fixed route service, and increased demand response service area.



## Environmental Trends and Issues

While not as tangible as job creation or infrastructure expansion, our City's environmental well-being is an important indicator of the overall health of the community. It is clear that with continued rapid growth impacts on the air we breathe, the water we drink and the landscape we see will occur.

Federal Phase II stormwater regulations have forced the City to pay more attention to point source water degradation. A stormwater fee charged to residential and business property owners helps fund these efforts. Likewise, federal air quality non-attainment laws have the lingering potential to impact future road building. Federal CMAQ funding has helped improve traffic congestion, thus alleviating some level of air pollution. Clearly the rapid advance of electric vehicles will have the largest positive impact on our local air quality.

One issue that has become far more of a priority for City Council is the visual attractiveness of the City. Beautification projects and more robust litter clean-up efforts are on the immediate horizon.

- **Air quality** will be an ongoing issue due to increased urbanization, increased development, and growing population, employment, and trucking activity.
- **Stream quality** will be an ongoing issue due to increased urbanization, increased development, and illicit discharges.
- **Litter** is an ongoing issue due to increased population and traffic and limited resources for regular clean up.
- The United Nations **Climate Change** report just issued in 2022 presents a dire warning: without immediate and deep emissions reductions across all sectors, limiting global warming to 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit is beyond reach. Increased heatwaves, droughts, and floods are affecting millions of people across the globe, causing food and water insecurity, and causing significant loss of life, biodiversity, and infrastructure.





## Social, Housing, & Health Trends and Issues

In the world of municipal government, social and health issues are often viewed as “somebody else’s problem.” With North Carolina’s local government structure that is often legally and operationally accurate. Cities don’t often spend time and money on solving these problems. Notable exceptions are housing issues, public safety services and promotion of active living of its citizens. Additionally, topics such as racial equity, mental health and substance abuse, education and early childhood services impact the livability, well-being, and cohesiveness of our City. All of these challenges have solutions that will come through partnerships with both counties, non-profits, school systems and others.

- Access to affordable **early childhood education** is an economic development issue in terms of allowing parents to work and in terms of child welfare and development. Cabarrus County has established an Early Childhood Task Force to work towards some of these issues.
- Kannapolis has a wide range of neighborhoods and housing types. There are some **older neighborhoods** (and a few not-so-old neighborhoods) that have experienced disinvestment and deterioration.
- **Housing affordability** has become a significant issue, with rents and home prices out of reach for those earning less than 80% of area median income. About 4,700 Kannapolis households were cost burdened with housing in the 2014-2018 timeframe – this represents the affordable housing units needed in the community. Nearly 2,000 households in Kannapolis are extremely low income; they can afford less than \$663/month in housing costs.
- **Homelessness** is an issue that needs to be addressed. In 2000, the Cabarrus County Homelessness Task Force estimated 200 to 300 units of emergency and transitional housing needed; that number has likely grown due to population growth and the rapid rise in housing costs.
- **Racial disparities** are evident in Kannapolis when it comes to income, poverty, housing, educational attainment, health, and ultimately, economic mobility.
- **Mental health** is a significant need in the region, with suicide, substance abuse, and opioid overdoses still being a concern. Cabarrus County established a Mental Health Advisory Board/Task Force to address some of these issues, including starting a regional behavioral health crisis service center.
- An estimated 12% of Kannapolis residents have a **disability**, with the largest population being senior citizens aged 65 and over. However, the proportion of school-aged children aged 5-17 with a disability as well as adults aged 18-34 has ticked up.
- The City’s **Discover a Healthy Life** brand has gained traction in both wellness programs and economic development efforts. The City offers a variety of Parks & Recreation events and programs to serve our residents.
- As the City grows, we will need to consider more parks & recreational programming for our **youth and senior citizens**.

- The City has many **arts, entertainment, cultural, and tourism** assets to provide to residents and visitors. However, the City still needs more and a variety of restaurant and social/entertainment establishments for residents and visitors.
- Kannapolis students are served by three **public school systems** that include twelve elementary schools, five middle schools, and five high schools that serve students within Kannapolis boundaries. With increased competition from charter schools, the local school systems have begun to offer magnet programs and academies to allow students to specialize in certain focus areas. The development of these programs is an important selling point for economic development.



## Community Safety Trends and Issues

- Two **replacement Fire Stations** have been constructed in the past two years. Two existing stations are currently undergoing renovations.
- Two new **Fire Stations** (east and west) are on the radar, as is a **Joint Emergency Services Training Center** (partnership with Cabarrus County and the City of Concord).
- Kannapolis is still considered a **safe city** and is ranked 15<sup>th</sup> out of 50 safest cities in North Carolina. **Vacancies** continue to remain high for the Police Department.
- **New age of police services** will focus on diversity of the department, social and mental health focus, significant technological advancements, and “real” community policing.



## City Government Trends and Issues

- The City of Kannapolis currently maintains a total full-time workforce of 373 employees and more than 100 permanent and seasonal part-time employees.
- The **average age** of the current employees is 39.
- The employee team **age distribution** is almost evenly split between those 40 and under (56%) and those over 40 (44%).
- The **average tenure** of the current employees is 8.38 years.
- The **Fire Department** has a much higher tenured employee base (26% with 16+ years of service) than the employee base as a whole (17%).
- Only 30 employees in the entire organization currently have 21 or more **years of service**.
- A City Council Planning Retreat in 2018 concluded with **employee retention and recruitment** being the number one priority of the City Council. Since that time the nearly a dozen new employee benefits and operating improvements have been implemented.



- From FY 22 through FY 25 an additional 51 **new positions** are needed to maintain the current levels of service. These additions to the workforce have an estimated \$3 million annual budget impact when fully implemented.
- From FY 22 through FY 25 an estimated \$12.3 million in funding for **capital outlay** is needed. It is highly unlikely that all of this can be funded in a few short years, but this is the outstanding need. This includes 82 replacement vehicles and pieces of machinery such as: police cruisers, crew trucks, fire engines, mowers, trailers.
- The most daunting **challenges to maintaining current levels of service** include: a) Turnover (esp. police officers and with construction maintenance workers), b) Recruitment (in some departments), c) Labor shortages, d) new Commercial Driving License (CDL) training requirements, e) Employees needing technology training, f) Improved internal communications; g) Enhance Inclusivity in the decision making process h) employee mental health/work-life balance/social well-being, i) the "Great Reshuffle" (totally rethinking the workplace and work experience); j) Pending retirements/succession planning; k) Increased wages; l) Increased reliability on technology, j) Increased demand of police services (mental health calls, civil issues).
- The **General Fund revenues** have increased on average 5% from FY 14 to FY 23 and are conservatively projected to grow by 4% each year for FY 24 to FY 26.
- **Sales Tax** collections continue to be a strong source of revenue for the City, but it can be volatile as it is contingent on the economy. Sales tax collections are projected to double in a 10-year window (FY 14 to FY 24). This revenue stream has increased on average by 7% from FY 14 to FY 23. 7% annual growth rate is also projected for future fiscal years FY 24 to FY 26.
- The major rating agencies (Moody's and S&P) indicate that the City's **financial position** of Kannapolis is very strong with several key contributing attributes: very good cash balances, strong economy and tax base, stable revenue and expenditures, strong liquidity. A few concerns of note: above average debt burden and below average median family income at 78.4% of the nation as a whole.
- There is a potential **void in future active, positive leadership** in the City as many of the current elected officials may conclude their service to the City in the next several years.
- Kannapolis may not have as many formal opportunities for **citizen service** as similar communities, but engagement opportunities need to be developed in informal settings when appropriate