

# WAKE COUNTY

## 2017 Legislative Update



Wake County's population is growing rapidly, and with that growth comes new needs, which require policy and budgetary attention. While **public education** continues to be one of our highest priorities, **clean drinking water** and **transportation investments** are becoming increasingly important as we work hard to effectively serve our diverse citizenry.



# GROWTH AND DEMOGRAPHICS

## → Consider Wake County's growth

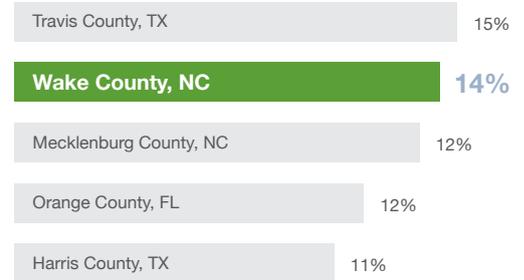
More than one million people live in Wake County today. Based on our current growth, we will reach two million residents around 2055.

On average, Wake County nets 64 new people every day. Of those, 43 people move here, and 21 people are born here. That equals about 23,000 new residents each year.

Between 2010 and 2015, Wake County's population increase was the highest of all counties in North Carolina. It was the second fastest-growing county in the nation among counties with more than one million residents.

## ▼ 5 Fastest Growing Counties, with ≥ 1 million residents, July 1, 2015

County growth rate, 2010-2015



Based on U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 Population Estimates

# CLEAN DRINKING WATER

## → Prevent the relaxation of environmental regulations for water supplies

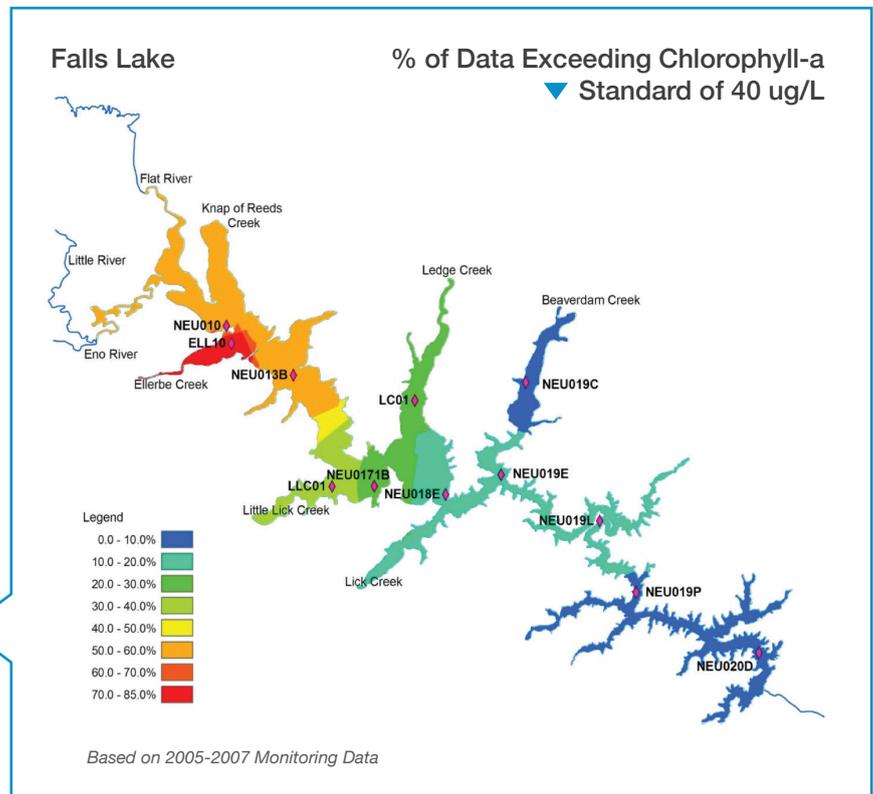
Water is the number one priority of the Wake County region over the next 50 years. Right now, we are the only region in the state that does not have an identified 50-year water supply. Our current water supply is classified as impaired, and we are the fastest-growing region in the state.

Any increased pressures on our drinking water supplies should be opposed.

Local governments need flexibility to establish strategies to prevent pollution of our drinking water. Wake County established an effective long-term strategy to protect water quality in 1984 that is tailored to its water supply. A key component is a requirement for vegetative buffers around water supplies that is more restrictive than state requirements. The local regulations have been proven effective in limiting water pollution.

This map of Falls Lake shows the presence of Chlorophyll-a, an indicator of potential high levels of nutrients from fertilizers, septic systems, sewage water treatment plants and urban run-off.

While all areas show excess levels, note that the lowest levels occur in the lower part of Falls Lake, located in Wake County. This demonstrates a link between effective local buffer rules and drinking water quality.



# EDUCATION FUNDING

## → Increase state funding to ensure student success

Our strong school system is one of the many reasons people choose to call Wake County home. The Wake County Public School System is the largest in the state with an average daily enrollment of nearly 160,000 students. The student population has almost tripled since 1980, and more than 9,000 additional children are expected in our classrooms by 2020.

However, Wake County ranks near the bottom of the list in state per pupil funding. Despite increasing school funding at the county level to \$2,574 per student, more state funding is needed to help WCPSS prepare our children for a successful future.

## Per Pupil State Expenditure, Including Child Nutrition, from 2015-2016 ▼

County	State Spending Per Pupil	State Spending By Rank
Wake	\$5,349.09	108 of 115
Hyde	\$12,723.04	1 of 115



# MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

## → Address gaps in mental health and substance abuse care

From 2012 to 2015, Wake County saw a 111 percent increase in involuntary commitments for behavioral health treatment and a 55 percent increase in suicidal thoughts. During that same period, the death rate for heroin overdoses nearly quadrupled, and the death rate for prescription opioid overdoses doubled.

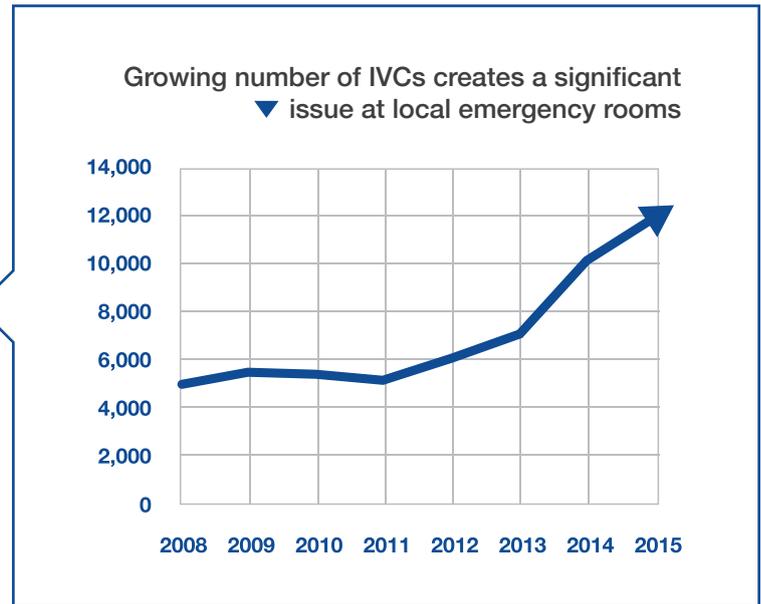
Wake County leaders continue to identify and address the gaps in the community's mental health and substance abuse system of care in partnership with Alliance Behavioral Healthcare. While Wake County is grateful for the capital funds for mental health facilities that were included in the 2017 state budget, Alliance's budget was reduced by \$17 million, creating further challenges for Wake County.

We are in need of additional recurring state appropriations for mental health facilities and services. State funding stability is necessary to continue drug courts, treatment for incarcerated individuals, school-based programs, supportive housing and other evidence-based best practices.

## → Dedicate funding for community paramedicine

High numbers of involuntary commitments put a strain on Wake County hospital emergency departments, which at times have to divert patients in need of care due to overcapacity issues.

Wake County's innovative community paramedicine program helps relieve that strain using Advanced Practice Paramedics. The APPs respond alongside ambulances to mental health and



substance abuse crisis calls. If the patient does not need medical care requiring a visit to the emergency department, the ambulance returns to service, and the APP stays with the patient to coordinate transportation and entry into a mental health treatment facility. This delivers better patient care at lower costs.

A dedicated revenue source should be identified for community paramedicine efforts, and Medicaid reimbursement for EMS behavioral health transport to crisis centers should be supported.

Home to the state capital, Wake County is one of the fastest growing areas in the nation and the second-most populous county in the state, with more than one million residents. Wake County has received national and international rankings and accolades from publications such as Money, Fortune and Time magazines as being one of the best places to live, work and play.

## Wake County Board of Commissioners

<b>Sig Hutchinson, Chair</b>	District 1
<b>Matt Calabria, Vice Chair</b>	District 2
<b>John Burns</b>	District 7
<b>Greg Ford</b>	District 6
<b>Jessica Holmes</b>	District 3
<b>Erv Portman</b>	District 4
<b>James West</b>	District 5