



ANNUAL REPORT

2000

Wake County



In 2000, Wake County forged ahead with a number of initiatives that will have lasting impact on the quality of this community and its citizens' lives.

Progress through.....

Service

Planning for the Future

Financial Accountability

New Facilities



We began the year by sailing through the Y2K computer uncertainty with no problems, helped citizens through the worst snowstorm in a century, adopted a seven-year capital plan that will provide for schools and other County facility needs, and ended the year on a plus note with a successful bond referendum for schools, criminal justice facilities and open space.

As we move into the new millennium, Wake County is poised to meet the many challenges of providing local government services to residents and businesses, whether those challenges are in the areas of solid waste disposal, public health services, environmental stewardship, emergency medical response, or recreation or library services.

In 2000, the County accomplished much, laying the groundwork for continued excellent customer service and for future success.

Progress through..... *Service:*

Snowed in, snowed under and snowed out!!! Wake County emergency response crews worked around-the-clock to help people through the worst snowstorm in 100 years in January. The **Emergency Operations Center** responded to calls for assistance by helping people get to dialysis and other medical needs, and opened emergency shelters when an ice storm caused power outages.

Wake County is the only county in North Carolina where people with HIV/AIDS can get access to a wide range of services all at the same place, with the opening of "**Under One Roof.**" A partnership between AIDS Services Carolina, the Hospital Alliance for Community Health and Human Services, Under One Roof is the place where HIV/AIDS clients can access available services and accomplish tasks. The facility offers programs and information ranging from treatment to a food pantry to counseling services. Under One Roof is one of only a few models nationwide, and the only one in North Carolina, which coordinates and consolidates HIV/AIDS services.

On July 1, Wake County assumed management responsibility for the homeless shelter from the City of Raleigh. Human Services has partnered with Urban Ministries of Raleigh to operate the shelter, called the **South Wilmington Street Center**. The center provides emergency housing for about 300 men each night and meals for about 525 each day. For the first time, the shelter and Human Services staff are providing counseling, substance abuse treatment and job training services to the men to help end the cycle of homelessness. The Ark Shelter of Urban Ministries has been converted into a women's shelter.



In September, Gov. Hunt released the second annual **Work First Report Card** which measures each County's key performance indicators of the state's welfare reform program. Wake County's Work First Program was recognized for exceeding the state's goal for assisting Work First participants obtain employment. In addition, Wake County demonstrated positive results by meeting the goals for:

- Reducing the number of families on Welfare
- Keeping families off Welfare after going to work
- Increasing Child Support Collections for Work First families

Through its new **Resource Team**, Human Services has integrated myriad services to help children from abusive or neglectful homes. The Team provides a centralized point of access for foster care placements, residential treatment and intensive mental health services for children. For example, if a young child needing foster care placement has experienced the effects of domestic violence, the Resource Team will simultaneously arrange a placement and an assessment by Child Mental health professionals for potential rapid intervention and treatment.

Wide-A-Wake

Human Services hosts third annual Wide-A-Wake Forum, attended by more than 400 community leaders, to forge partnerships to support families and children.

Yates Mill

The millpond at Historic Yates Mill County Park is reestablished, restoring this area to its natural beauty and adding significant historic and environmental value to the County's open space preservation efforts.



Historic Oak View

Historic Oak View holds exhibit on 50 "Notable North Carolinians," featuring artifacts from the Wright Brothers' plane and the Queen Anne's Revenge (Blackbeard the Pirate's ship) to Carl Sandburg's Pulitzer Prize for poetry and items belonging to James K Polk, Richard Petty, Billy Graham, Gifford Pinchot, Sugar Ray Leonard and the Delaney Sisters.

Progress through.....*Collaboration:*

The **Growth Management Task Force** got off to a solid start in September, when elected leaders from around Wake County began an historic opportunity to work together on growth issues that will make a tremendous difference to current and future Wake County citizens and businesses. The task force is expected to continue its work over the next 18 months, with the goal of producing a growth management plan for Wake County. The Board of Commissioners initiated the task force, after determining that Wake County needs to take a leadership role on growth by partnering with municipalities and schools, the private sector, and non-profit agencies. The Board invited two elected officials and one alternate from the County, the 12 municipalities, and Wake County Public Schools to participate. The task force is considered significant because it is the first to be composed of all elected officials. They, as the policy makers, have the most influence in setting comprehensive policies about growth and directions for growth management plans.

Commissioners authorized Wake County staff to initiate regular meetings between the managers of all municipalities and the schools superintendent to explore the various services that are provided throughout the County, and find ways to improve those services. The **Municipal-County Service Review Committee's** work could result in recommendations that would provide the same level of service at a reduced cost, provide a higher level of service at the same or lower cost, or clarify and focus roles and responsibilities.



A groundbreaking ceremony for the new **IMAX Theater** at Exploris brought dreams of larger-than-life documentaries and films to come. The County and City of Raleigh are helping to pay for the new theater in downtown Raleigh with an Interlocal Agreement that uses Room Occupancy and Prepared Food and Beverage Tax revenues to help boost tourism. This is Phase II of the popular global-experience museum Exploris, and includes additional exhibit space, a restaurant and the 271-seat 3-D IMAX Theater project. The new theater should be open to the public by mid-2001.

Through **Interlocal Agreements** with the City of Raleigh, Wake County also is providing funds from lodging and food and beverage taxes for the Capital Area Soccer Park, Raleigh's BTI Performing Arts Center, the historic Yates Mill Park and the American Tobacco Trail.

Human Services and the Triangle United Way formed a partnership to address the needs of middle-school youth (ages 10-14) initially with three communities, resulting in the **Apex Initiative**, the **East Wake Youth Initiative**, and the **Fuquay-Varina Middle School Initiative**. Funds are designed to support community organizations in developing broad-based, comprehensive programs for middle-school youth during non-school hours when teens often get in the most trouble.

Human Services, Wake County Public Schools and 50 Wake County families and their Fuquay-Varina community members launched a model project to turn around poor educational performance among their children. This unique approach, called **Partnership for Educational Success**, unites the county's human and academic service networks, and places the selected families and their neighbors in the driver's seat. That means family members identify what they believe are the problems related to their children's poor educational performance, and are able to engage the services they need from the School System, Human Services and an entire wealth of community organizations and individuals to find the solutions. The services might range from tutoring to after-school activities to medical/psychological treatment to regular visits from a neighbor or minister and more.

VOTING

The Board of Elections buzzed with activity during the year, creating **28 new precincts**, adding **32,000 voters** and processing more than **18,000 name, address and/or other changes to registered voters' information**. In the three weeks before the **November 7 election**, elections staff was deluged with citizens taking advantage of the new "No Excuse Absentee Voting," handling **21,405 voters** at three sites, as well as **5,968 absentee votes** by mail.

	November 1996 election	November 2000 election
Registered voters	334,050	411,052 (of these, 275,112 voted)
Precincts	124	169

Water Line

Commissioners appropriate \$4 million from the Water/Wastewater Reserve and Water and Sewer Fund for Fuquay-Varina and Holly Springs to build a regional water line project with Harnett County. The towns are to repay the County over five years.



Homeless Shelter

Wake County assumes responsibility for the homeless shelter on South Wilmington Street in Raleigh, which houses 300 men at night.

Under One Roof

A one-stop service center offers persons with HIV/AIDS support services ranging counseling to food assistance to computer access. This center is the only one of its kind in North Carolina.



Progress through

Financial Accountability:

On November 7, Wake County citizens showed overwhelming support for and confidence in their future by approving three **bond referenda**, including \$500 million for school construction and renovations, \$20 million for new criminal justice facilities, and \$15 million for open space acquisition. The bonds will provide for 14 new schools (eight elementary, two middle, one high and one special/optional) over the next four years, and renovations and improvements to 96 existing schools, helping to accommodate 3,000 new students each year and reduce the need for portable classrooms. No tax increase will be needed to repay the capital costs.

In November, the County, City of Raleigh and Town of Cary began a new initiative by jointly awarding **banking services** for core services, procurement card and disbursement outsourcing to Wachovia Bank and retail lockbox and wholesale lockbox to First Union National Bank. The three governments worked together on the proposal to use their combined purchasing power to obtain lower transaction pricing for banking services. The combined annual savings for Raleigh, Cary and Wake County are estimated at \$50,000. All municipalities in Wake County will have the opportunity to participate in the contract.

The County maintained its **triple-A ratings** by Moody's (since 1973), Standard & Poor's (since 1983) and Fitch (our first rating), the three largest bond rating agencies in the country. The reason this is important is because it saves us money when we borrow money. By way of example, in January 2000, we sold \$24 million of general obligation bonds for schools at lower interest rates, allowing us to save \$1,654,990 over the life of these bonds. The lower interest rates we were able to obtain were a direct result of the excellent bond ratings.

The fiscal 2000-01 budget contained no tax rate increase and added \$18.7 million for schools funding, with the total amount dedicated to schools at \$280.6 million (of this, the operating budget is \$162.6 million, an increase of \$13.2 million from the previous year). The \$564.3-million budget has a revenue-neutral tax rate of 56.4 cents per \$100 of valuation, adjusted downward from 73 cents, to offset the effects of revaluation. The County added eight new staff positions, including four environmental health inspectors to help meet growing demand for restaurant inspections.

In August, the County received the Government Finance Officers' Association Award for the fiscal 1999 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. This is the 16th consecutive year the County has received this award for **excellence in financial reporting**.

Property Values

The Revenue Department successfully finished an exhaustive project to reassess the property value of every parcel in the County, updating values that were last changed in 1992. Values increased an average of 43% countywide, reflecting our robust growth and healthy economy. During the 2000 Revaluation Project, although the County had

70,000 more parcels to assess this year than in 1992, the percentage of appeals was lower, as was the percentage of total value adjusted. Also, the number of appeals to the state is less than half the number last time. Finally, by

taking advantage of technology, the cost of evaluation per parcel was less than in 1992. The final tally showed that the County's 235,000 parcels of property are worth \$46 billion, an increase from \$21 billion in 1992.

Total Appeals

	2000	1992
Total parcels	235,000	165,500
Total appeals	19,937	18,975
Percent appealed	8.4%	11.5%

Total Value Adjusted

	2000	1992
Total tax base	\$46 billion	\$21 billion
Adjusted in appeals	\$750 million	\$630 million
Percent adjusted	1.6%	3.0%

Capital Needs

Commissioners approve a \$1.3-billion, seven-year capital improvements program that will provide for the County's school construction needs and other County facilities without a tax increase to repay the capital costs.



Resource Center

The new Wake Housing Resource Center provides a one-stop shop to help people find affordable housing and support services. Operated by Human Services' staff, the Center boasts more than 20 partnering agencies and private businesses, provides consumers with valuable housing information, and makes referrals to appropriate resources.



Healthy Children

Human Services' public health staff contribute to Wake County's record rate of having 91 percent of our 2-year-old children age-appropriately immunized by the year 2000.

Progress through.....

Environmental Stewardship:

The historic **Yates Mill County Park** saw considerable progress over the year. With funding from Wake County and state grants, the millpond was re-established. In May, the wooden waterwheel was returned to its original location, where it stands ready to generate hydropower for the mill. The mill's timber frame was completed in July. The millstones have been redressed and are ready to grind grain. Private fundraising efforts by Yates Mill Associates have raised more than \$600,000 for the mill restoration. County and other funding is being used to develop the 565-acre park, which is a joint effort of Wake County, North Carolina State University, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, and Yates Mill Associates.

The **open space program** made funds available, through a grant application process, to the Town of Cary (\$250,000), City of Raleigh (\$200,000) and the Town of Wake Forest (\$20,000) to further their open space plans and programs. The County's open space program will accelerate over the next several years, with voter approval in November of \$15 million in general obligation bonds to be used for open space acquisition. The County intends to use the funds in partnership with municipalities and non-profits to purchase land that is primarily geared toward protecting water quality.

A pedestrian bridge is under construction on the **American Tobacco Trail**, a nature and greenway in the western part of Wake County. The 23-mile trail is in the early stages of development. As proposed, it will span portions of Durham, Chatham and western Wake County, and will be available for recreational uses by walkers, runners, bicyclists and equestrians. Wake County is building the bridge and making trail improvements with a \$50,000 grant from the State of North Carolina.

In the area of **solid waste management**, the County acted on a number of fronts to encourage recycling: we established a double tipping fee to reduce the amount of corrugated cardboard in the landfills and to encourage additional recycling of the cardboard. In August, the Board adopted a Construction and Demolition (C & D) Debris Surcharge Ordinance that establishes a surcharge at the North Wake Landfill if more than 10% of a load is comprised of C & D debris. The intent is to discourage landfilling of C & D debris, and encourage it to be taken to a landfill established specifically for that purpose. The County also is making compost bins available to citizens at cost, in hopes of encouraging backyard waste recycling as much as possible.



The County's plans for a **new landfill** were put on hold when the state Department of Environment and Natural Resources rescinded a permit it had earlier granted to the County to develop a landfill. The County is confident that the site, near Holly Springs, remains the most suitable site for this landfill and that landfilling is the most economical method for disposing of this area's solid waste at the current time, and is pursuing the permit in court.



Little River Reservoir

Progress continued on the proposed Little River Reservoir, which will provide a regional park and drinking water for eastern Wake County one day. In 2000, about 105 acres were purchased, bringing the total to 1,163 acres.



Libraries Mark Centennial

Wake County Public Libraries observe their Centennial throughout the year, holding special events and observances they move toward their 100th anniversary

on January 24, 2001. The Libraries kicked off a Library Trust Fund fundraiser in 2000, as part of Centennial festivities, to help ensure quality service at Wake County Public Libraries for another 100 years and beyond.

Adoptions Increase

Wake County reduces its children in foster care by 13%, thanks to increased adoptions.

Progress through..... *Planning for the Future:*

In August, Commissioners adopted a seven-year **capital improvements program** for the County. This allows us to have a long-term plan and long-term financing mechanism for capital projects, so we can better plan ahead for our needs. The plan totals \$1.3 billion over seven years, with nearly \$1.1 billion dedicated to schools and \$2512 million to County projects including parks and libraries, affordable housing, homeless shelter, a new jail, technology upgrades and maintenance, two new regional centers for County services, public safety needs and water/wastewater projects such as Little River Reservoir. (It should be noted that the Schools Plan 2000 is a four-year plan that sets out capital needs totaling \$550 million through June 2004, yet our capital plan spans seven years.) While more detailed plans for schools are not yet available for the years 2005 through 2007, our seven-year CIP essentially provides additional funding for those years without a tax increase. This is because the County is now paying less in cash for capital projects, and assuming more debt. Although there is a higher risk with more debt, we believe that not meeting the capital infrastructure and other capital needs poses a larger risk to the long-term prosperity of the community. Additionally, if we continue to forego capital spending, operating and future capital costs will be higher in the long run.

Commissioners amended the Land Use Plan to include the East Raleigh/ Knightdale and the Southeast Wake County Land Use Plans.

Progress through..... *Facilities:*

Construction is well underway on the **Hammond Road Detention Facility**. The current phase is focusing on infrastructure, including widening the east lane of Hammond Road and construction of a site access road, water, sewer, storm drainage and partial site clearing. The next phases will be mostly funded by the \$20-million general obligation bond – authorized by voters in November – to add 664 beds to the detention facility, thus alleviating overcrowding in the Public Safety Center. Over the next 15-20 years, the County will continue to expand the new facility, based on need, and could eventually add another 1,500 detention beds.

With grants from Wake County Smart Start and the Town of Fuquay-Varina, Wake County is helping to renovate the old Fuquay-Varina Consolidated School as part of a **neighborhood revitalization effort** and to increase daycare options.

A great deal of progress was made in the area of **affordable housing**. In October, commissioners approved the issuance of \$10,075,000 in multi-family revenue bonds by the Housing Authority of Wake County to finance a low- and moderate-income housing development in Raleigh. The Walnut Ridge Apartment project will consist of 180 units on a 13.6-acre site at 1620 Sunnybrook Road. The Wake County Affordable Housing program also made loans of \$280,000 to Episcopal Housing Ministry Inc. to develop 82 townhouses in Apex, \$280,000 to Habitat for Humanity of Wake County to build 28 single-family homes in Raleigh, and \$140,000 to DHIC Inc. to build 68 single-family homes in Raleigh. In addition, the County's Housing



Division helped 44 families purchase their first homes, and repaired the homes of 19 families through its Downpayment and Housing Rehabilitation Loan programs.

Property Reassessed

The County completed an exhaustive re-evaluation of all real property. Since 1992, property values in Wake County rose an average of 43%, reflecting the robust economy and strong growth in this region.

Healing Place Opens

This new center is provides comprehensive, long-term substance abuse services to men over the age of 18. Commissioners pledged \$1 million to The

Healing Place, to match pledges from Wake Medical Center, the ABC Board and private donors. The non-profit agency is located on the Dorothea Dix campus.

Growth Management

Elected leaders from around the County begin historic opportunity to work together on growth issues as part of the Growth Management Task Force.



At your place, on your time!

What's new on-line? The County progressed in its quest to find ways to make it easier for citizens and businesses to do business with us. Some new additions in this area:

- marriage licenses
- real estate information
- all register of deeds information
- inspections permit applications are
- swimming pool applications are
- payment of taxes by credit card over the telephone

The use of credit card payments for taxes has grown tremendously in the last year. This service is provided as a convenience for property owners to pay their taxes quickly and easily. The full impact of this service is quite far-reaching. Wake County's use of technology results in this scenario for its citizens:

Let's say a citizen goes to the state vehicle registration office to renew his car tag sticker. The tag office clerk, on accessing the state DMV data systems, informs the citizen that the registration has been "blocked" for failure to pay the property tax on that vehicle last year.

***In other NC counties:** The citizen would leave the tag office, go to the county tax collector's office (if opened), pay the back tax due, obtain a paper receipt as proof of payment, return to the tag office (if opened) and renew his vehicle tag. If the tag office and the county tax collector's offices are located in different office buildings or different cities, the process may involve significant travel, time and expense, or a wait for the mail.*

***In Wake County:** The citizen steps aside, dials the Wake County Revenue Office on his cell phone (or other telephone) and uses the optional fee-based, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) credit card payment service to pay the delinquent tax. He then steps back into line at the tag office to renew the vehicle tag. Both the County and the state data systems are updated on the spot in "real time."*

This software was developed under a true public/private partnership at no cost to Wake County. The County maintains the technical infrastructure needed to operate the system, and the service provider assumes all credit card operating costs.

More than \$2.2 million in taxes was paid in calendar year 2000 by taxpayers opting for the telephone credit card service, which operates 24 hours a day. When the service started in March 1999, we took in \$30,000 worth of tax payments; in December 2000, that amount had jumped to \$543,000, just for the one month. The telephone payment system's daily business is the equivalent of one full-time staff person.



IMAX To Come

Construction begins on the IMAX Theater, which will provide a 3-D educational experience for the enjoyment of citizens of all ages.

PRO-Familia

Through its new program, PRO-Familia, Human Services' case workers are helping low-income, non-English-speaking Latino families who are eligible to find work in the United States by providing assistance with housing, transportation, health care, mental health or substance abuse treatment, child care, legal problems, family support systems, education and language.

Bonds for Building

A successful bond referendum in November will allow us to move forward on several fronts, after voters authorized the issuance of general obligation bonds for school construction, criminal justice facilities and open space preservation.

Wake County 2000 Annual Report



Wake County adopted this new logo in 2000, to provide a corporate identity for the County and to replace the numerous existing logos in the various departments. The new logo uses the colors of cobalt and copper to signify sky and land, and its design brings to mind paths for parks and greenways, and the healing paths of human services programs. The design also conveys the idea of a flag, to signify government, with a star representing Wake County's standards of excellence, as well as its status as the state's capital county.

Wake County Board of Commissioners



Betty Lou Ward,
Chairman



Michael Weeks,
Vice Chair

Gwen Reynolds
Clerk to the Board

Michael R. Ferrell
County Attorney

2000



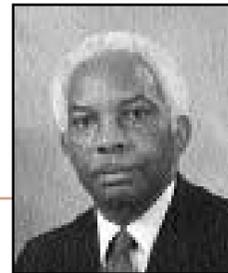
Yevonne Brannon



Linda Coleman



Herb Council



Vernon Malone



Betty Mangum

The Changing of the Guard



Richard Y. Stevens, after 30 years of public service in North Carolina state and local government, retired as Wake County Manager on June 30, 2000. Stevens joined the County as assistant manager in 1980, and had been manager since 1984. During his tenure, the County's population doubled from about 300,000 in 1980 to more than 610,000 now.

In a letter to the Board of Commissioners, Stevens said that after considerable thought and reflection, he felt this was the right time for him to make this change, both personally and for Wake County.

"We have the best professional staff and leadership team that we have ever had. They are up to the challenges that lie ahead for Wake County," he said. "I am confident that Wake County will continue to prosper so long as it takes the steps necessary to continue to maintain the quality of life that we all enjoy."

Stevens was the County's third manager since the County-Manager form of government was implemented in 1965. He has long contributed his services to public education and non-profit organizations, such as museums and community groups. He also has held leadership positions with the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees and other UNC-related associations and boards.

Stevens received the 2000 National Public Service Award, which recognizes career-long, outstanding public service. The award is sponsored jointly by the American Society for Public Administration and the National Academy of Public Administration.



David Cooke, the County's deputy manager since September 1996, took over as the County's new manager on August 1. Commissioners' Chair Betty Lou Ward said the 40-year-old Cooke emerged as the best choice to lead the County organization during this challenging time of rapid growth and change, tight budgets and increasing needs for services.

"David brings us the energetic, creative approach we need during these challenging times," she said. "His high professional standards and business-like approach to local government will serve us well as we work toward providing better and more efficient services, meeting the demands of growth, and maintaining a competitive and skilled workforce."

While deputy manager, Cooke took the lead on various projects such as planning for regional water and sewer needs, emergency medical services, affordable housing, fire services, environmental services, and budget and capital strategies.

He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in public policy analysis from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1982 and a Master of Public Administration degree, also from UNC-Chapel Hill, in 1984. He also attended the Senior Executive Institute at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia in July 1995.

Before coming to Wake County, his previous experience includes 11 years with the City of Charlotte, where he started in the budget office as an analyst and later served as the city's Internal Consulting Manager.