

Town of Vass  
Comprehensive Land Use Plan  
2022



*A door on Seaboard Street*

*Vass welcomes you home to a rural lifestyle with locally driven businesses and forward-looking emphasis on convenience and connectivity with the flavor of an easy-going small town.*

Adopted: June 15, 2022  
Amended: July 8, 2024

### Amendments

July 8, 2024	Amendments to add more specific information to the list of goals in Section 4.

## Acknowledgements

### **Board of Commissioners**

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Commissioner George Blackwell, Jr.  
Commissioner Kris Kosem  
Commissioner Emily Oldham

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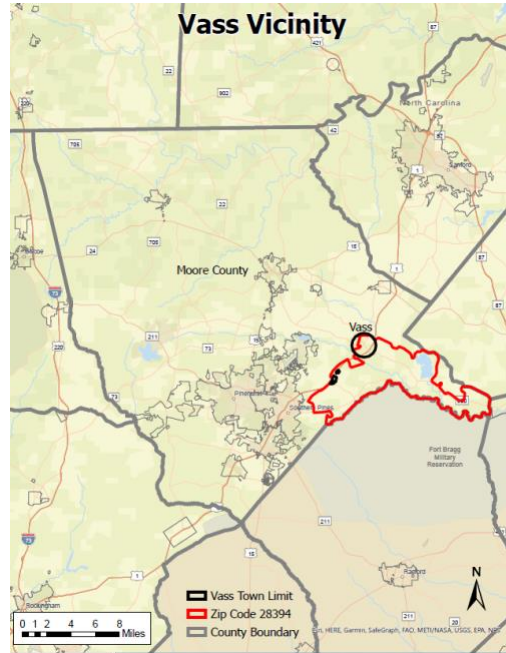
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## Section 1 Existing Conditions

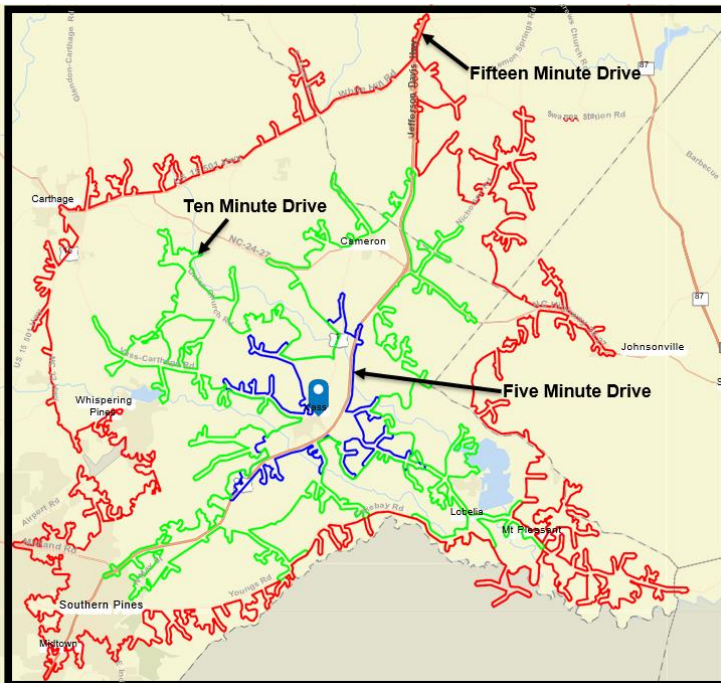
Vass is in Moore County, it is located due north of bustling Southern Pines, northeast of residential Whispering Pines, south of antique shopper's delight of Cameron, less than 15-minute drive from the county seat of Carthage, and equally close to the golf capitol of Pinehurst.

Situated in the Sandhills of North Carolina, Vass is in the central part of the state and is an easy commute to Ft. Bragg (20 minutes) or a 40-minute drive to Wake County, making it an ideal place to live and play, in spite of limited work choices in the immediate vicinity.

The heart and center of Vass was once part of the main throughfare of US highway 1 that runs from Florida to Maine. This two-lane highway was bypassed by the four-lane US highway 1 in 2005. The bypass is prime for development with the overflow of expansion from southern Moore County. Vass has jurisdiction over some parts of the highway, much of which is via voluntary satellite annexations. A key issue for this highway is to ensure that development is appropriate so that it continues to serve as a quick-paced thoroughfare. Additionally, it is important to draw in a fair amount of this traffic off the bypass to enjoy all Vass has to offer.



Source: *The Town of Vass CERRI Report*



Source: *The Town of Vass CERRI Report*

The original land use plan was developed in 2002 and then was updated in 2010 by the North Carolina Division of Community Assistance. This Plan was intended to be reviewed and updated every few years.

A comprehensive plan sets forth goals, policies, and programs intended to guide the present and future physical, social, and economic development of the jurisdiction. The Plan may be amended from time to time, especially given the rate at which Vass changes and grows, though this Plan is meant to serve as a guide and vision for the next twenty years.

## 1.1 Community Input

In fall of 2021, Vass was awarded a chance to participate in the Community Economic Recovery & Resiliency Initiative (CERRI). CERRI is a program that resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic in which the NC Department of Commerce provided a staff member to evaluate the existing economic situation for the Town, and with a volunteer group of community members, came up with a plan of action to enhance the vitality of the Town. Due to the timing, volunteer commitment, and overlap of processes with updating this Land Use Plan, we decided to re-direct the Land Use Committee and fold the effort into the CERRI workgroup.

The CERRI process involved several community engagement aspects, including key stakeholder interviews, SWOT analysis from the work group members, and a local business survey. As of Spring 2022, the work group's efforts have already led to the formation of a local Business Association. Town of Vass CERRI Report is referenced throughout this document and can additionally be referred to for economic-specific data and goals.

Additionally, staff worked with a Land Use Plan committee, met with most Board of Commissioners individually for their input, held several discussions with the Planning Board, and the Town hosted an ice cream social and event at the Town Park for community input on the Town's Park and this Land Use Plan.

At the first Land Use Plan committee meeting, the committee gave input on areas of the most concern in Vass. These were clearly: 1 – downtown 2 – residential areas and 3 – the town park. These are the key focus areas of this Plan.

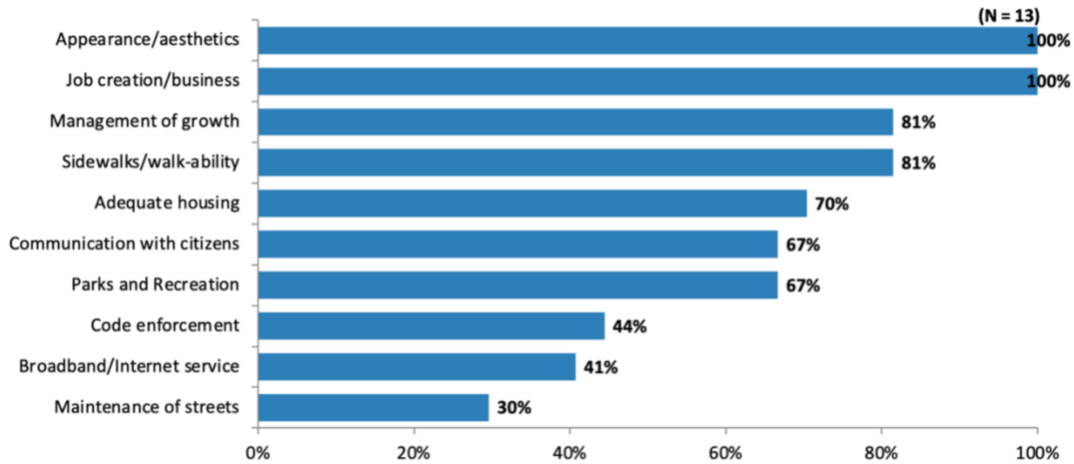


*Mural on US 1 Business*

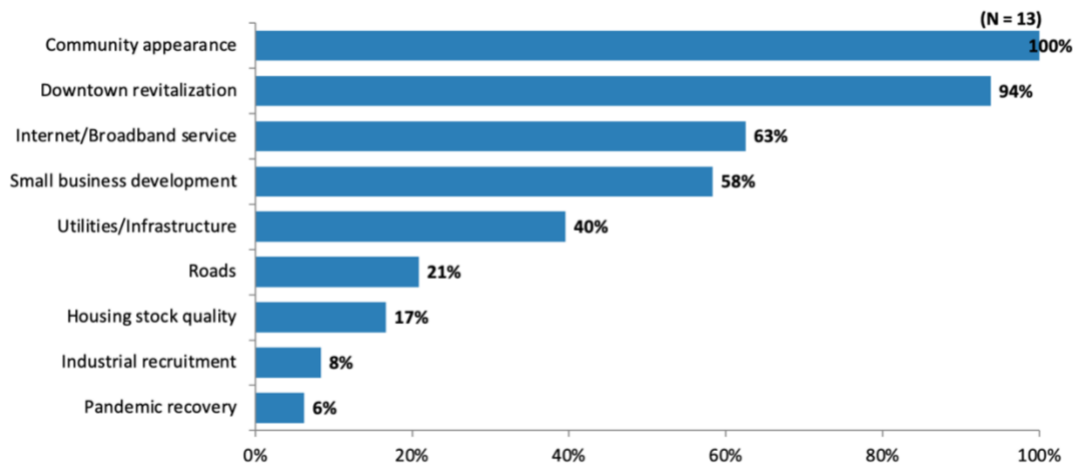
The results of the various community input were as follows:

**Key Stakeholder Survey:** Grace Lawrence interviewed 13 individuals identified by the group as being key members of the community.

**What are the most important issues facing Vass? (Please Rank your Top 5 issues. Rank 1 is most important and Rank 5 is least important).**

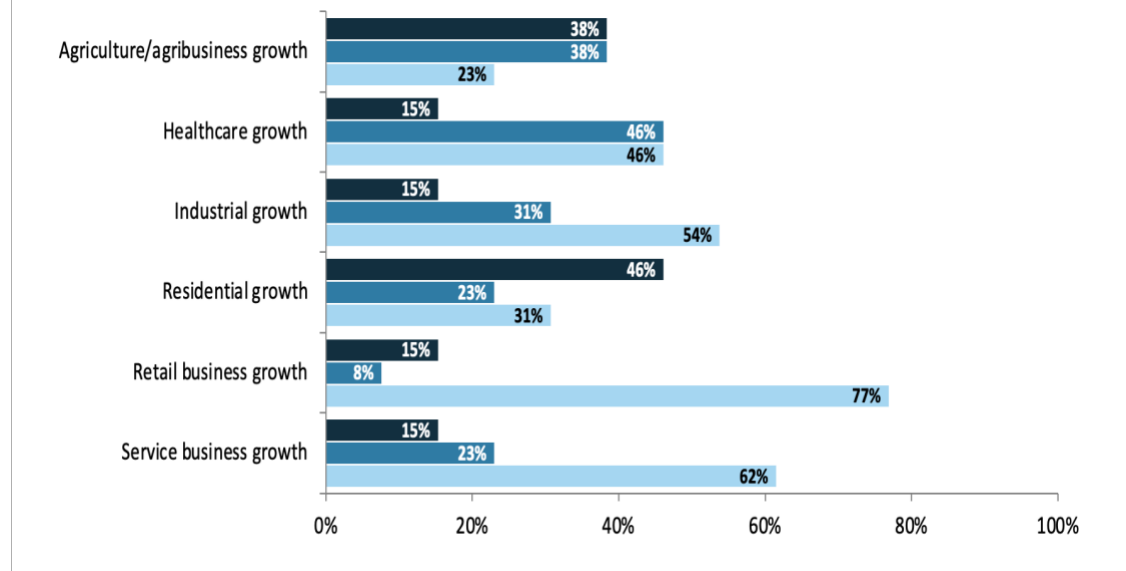


**What economic issues should the Town focus on for the next 5 to 10 years? Please rank your TOP 5 issues. Rank 1 is most important, Rank 2 is next most important, and so on.**





*Please rate what type of economic growth you would like to see in the next 10-20 years by choosing the answer that best reflects your opinion:*



At the Community Input Event held in April 2022, participants were given 5 Vass bucks to “spend” as they wished in 7 categories. They could choose to spend it all in one category or spread it out as they would like.

The following is a list of the items available for “spending” and the total amount given:

- Sidewalks and trails (\$19)
- Park (\$13)
- Road maintenance (\$12) *repairs and paving* note: 2 people also asked if this can include ditches
- Economic development (\$9) *revitalize existing buildings and support new businesses*
- Code enforcement (\$8) *unkempt properties*
- Zoning (\$4) *small area plans, update ordinances*
- Other (\$2) written comments: Improving and increasing the police force within town limits and green space



1.2 SWOT Analysis Table – The information within is taken in part from CERRI questionnaire, the 2010 Land Use Plan, and staff input.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Location (Convenient to Raleigh, Ft. Bragg, Pinehurst, to mountains and beach, etc.)	Walkability (few sidewalks and not enough shoulder to walk on side on many of the streets)
US 1 highway and Hwy 690	No clear identity
Quick commute time to larger communities	Poor outward appearance; unkempt properties
Military community	lack of affordable housing
Rural and convenient to surrounding community's amenities	Dilapidated buildings and houses
Climate	Small Tax Base
Residential growth - current and potential future	Lack of Employment Opportunities
Locally-owned businesses	Sewer needs to be extended
Small Town Appeal	Road maintenance
Potential	drainage issues
Schools – proximity and	little retail shopping and few entertainment options
Low crime rate	Not much to offer for young people
	lack of citizen participation
	Few medical services
	quality of development
	Accessibility
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
New grocery store	Other communities draw people away from Vass
Vacant buildings downtown	Not drawing many travelers off US 1 bypass
Lodging	Vass is not a stop along the railroad
Programs for youth and older population	Businesses not allowed elsewhere are coming to Vass
Residential and commercial growth	Few job opportunities for young adults
Annexation expanding corporate limits	Housing is not affordable for longtime residents
Expand connectivity via sidewalks and trails	Moore County water and sewer is not addressing needs in a timely fashion
Healthcare facilities	Wet areas; inadequate drainage
Higher density i.e., multifamily housing	No road ways to southern Moore County other than US 1 and Holly Street, which often floods
Connect/preserve to the farm community	Rapid growth
Improve/widen Hwy 690	Lack of recreational programs
Add another exit off US Hwy 1	Police presence
Streetscape improvements	
gateway/wayfinding signage	
Military adjacent or other industry opportunities	

Based on the SWOT analysis, the Town of Vass has several strengths and opportunities to help reach future goals. The ideal location and opportunity for commercial and residential growth allows the Town to grow comfortably while maintaining small town charm. Vass has had some opportunities to expand the corporate limits with commercial growth on US Highway 1 bypass and this helps grow the tax base of the Town.

Weaknesses and threats also need to be considered and luckily many can be addressed. There needs to be continued effort to bring travelers off the bypass into the heart of Vass and to add and improve amenities for citizens as the budget allows.

### 1.3 Demographics and Data

According to the US Census Bureau, Vass had a population of 720 in 2010 and grew 33.75% to 963 residents in 2020.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER	Vass	NC	US
Less than 9th grade	2.0%	4.5%	5.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	7.5%	7.7%	6.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	25.6%	25.7%	27.0%
Some college, no degree	28.6%	21.2%	20.4%
Associate degree	14.3%	9.7%	8.5%
Bachelor's degree	18.1%	20.0%	19.8%
Graduate or professional degree	3.8%	11.3%	12.4%
High school graduate or higher	90.5%	87.7%	88%
Bachelor's degree or higher	22.0%	31.3%	32.1%

*Educational Attainment Zip Code Source: US Census ACS Survey 2019*

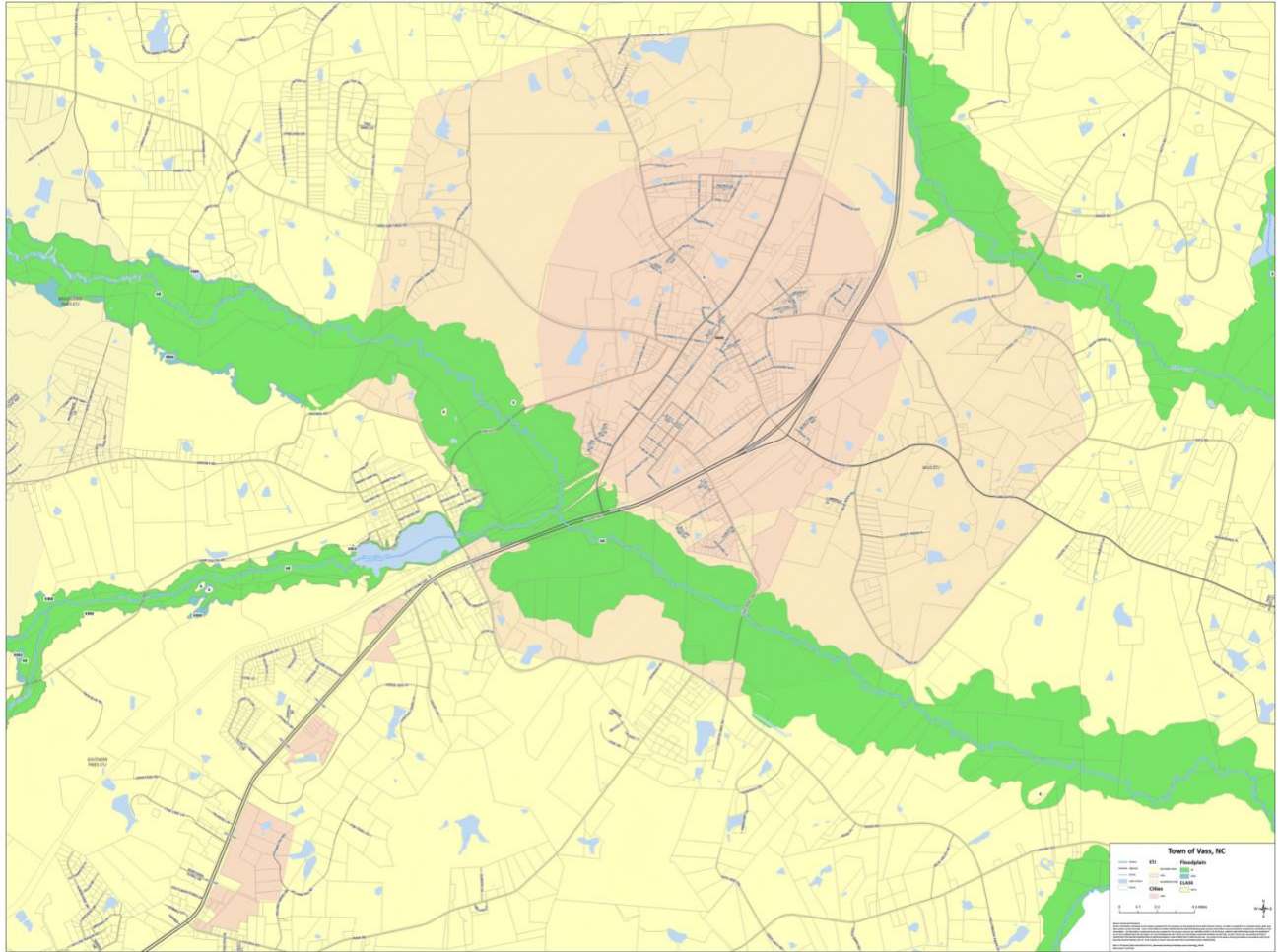
### 1.4 Environment

Vass is entirely in the Cape Fear River Basin watershed, a WS-III category meaning that waters and streams are protected water supplies. This watershed overlay protects the bodies of water in the community and in the areas downstream. The North Carolina General Assembly set forth Water Supply Watershed Protection Act in 1989 to reduce stormwater runoff in these watersheds, in order to maintain high water quality. The watershed protection overlay limits the density of development. All single-family lots are limited to a minimum density of 20,000 square feet, although lot size may be reduced in subdivisions if shared open space is set aside. All non-residential and multi-family development is limited to 24% impervious surface coverage, unless allotted a Special Intensity Allocation of up to 70% that the Board may give to 10% of each watershed area, with the exception of the area of town that is within a critical area.

A portion of Vass is within a Critical Area Watershed which is the ½ mile surrounding the water supply intake. These areas are more limited in that residential development is one unit per 40,000 sq ft and all other development is limited to 12% impervious surface.

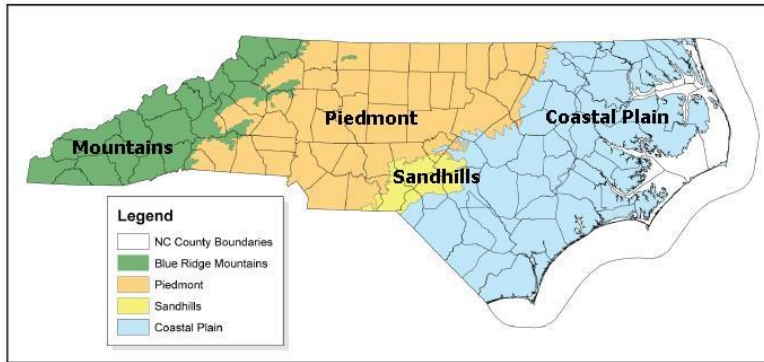
Since the entirety of Vass is in a Watershed Protection Area, any development disturbing more than an acre of land must obtain stormwater permits from the State office of the Department of Environmental Quality.

**Map of Floodplain, watershed, and water sources**



*Source: Moore County GIS*

More than 30 plant and animal species associated with the longleaf pine ecosystem are listed as threatened or endangered, and many of these species require interactions with the longleaf pine and with frequent low-intensity fires. The most famous endangered species of the Carolina Sandhills is probably the red-cockaded woodpecker, which prefers to excavate nesting and roosting cavities in living trees of longleaf pine that are 80–120 years old.



Source: NC Wildlife Commission

According to the NC Wildlife Commission, “A landscape framework using widely accepted ecoregion boundaries helps conservation planning efforts by grouping habitats into areas that share common landscape settings and patterns. These settings and patterns are influenced by climate, soils, land surface form, and natural vegetation. They are often used for organizing, interpreting and reporting information about land-use dynamics.

The Sandhills are the southwestern portion of the upper Coastal Plain ecoregion and are geologically a former coast line. The distinctive geomorphology of the Sandhills is from predominantly sandy soils formed of Cretaceous-age marine sands and, in some places, clays that are capped by Tertiary-age sands deposited over Piedmont metamorphic rocks. The landscape has rolling hills and native vegetation includes many rare plants.”

Landscaping standards are currently required for new commercial development only and the reference to the types of trees is to a source that is outdated. It is important that we promote the use of native or xeriscape trees that are best suited for the Vass ecosystem.

## Section 2 Planning for the Future

The following vision statement was adopted by the CERRI group in 2022:

*Vass welcomes you home to a rural lifestyle with locally driven businesses and forward-looking emphasis on convenience and connectivity with the flavor of an easy-going small town.*

The work group wanted to capture the small-town charm, the embracing of military families and general growth, and the idyllic location.

### 2.1 Growth

Vass will likely continue to expand its corporate limits over time, through voluntary annexations, along US Hwy 1 south toward Youngs Road. Additionally, it’s possible that the Town could grow north toward Cameron, eastward toward Bragg and less likely to grow westward toward Carthage, aside from land in the ETJ.

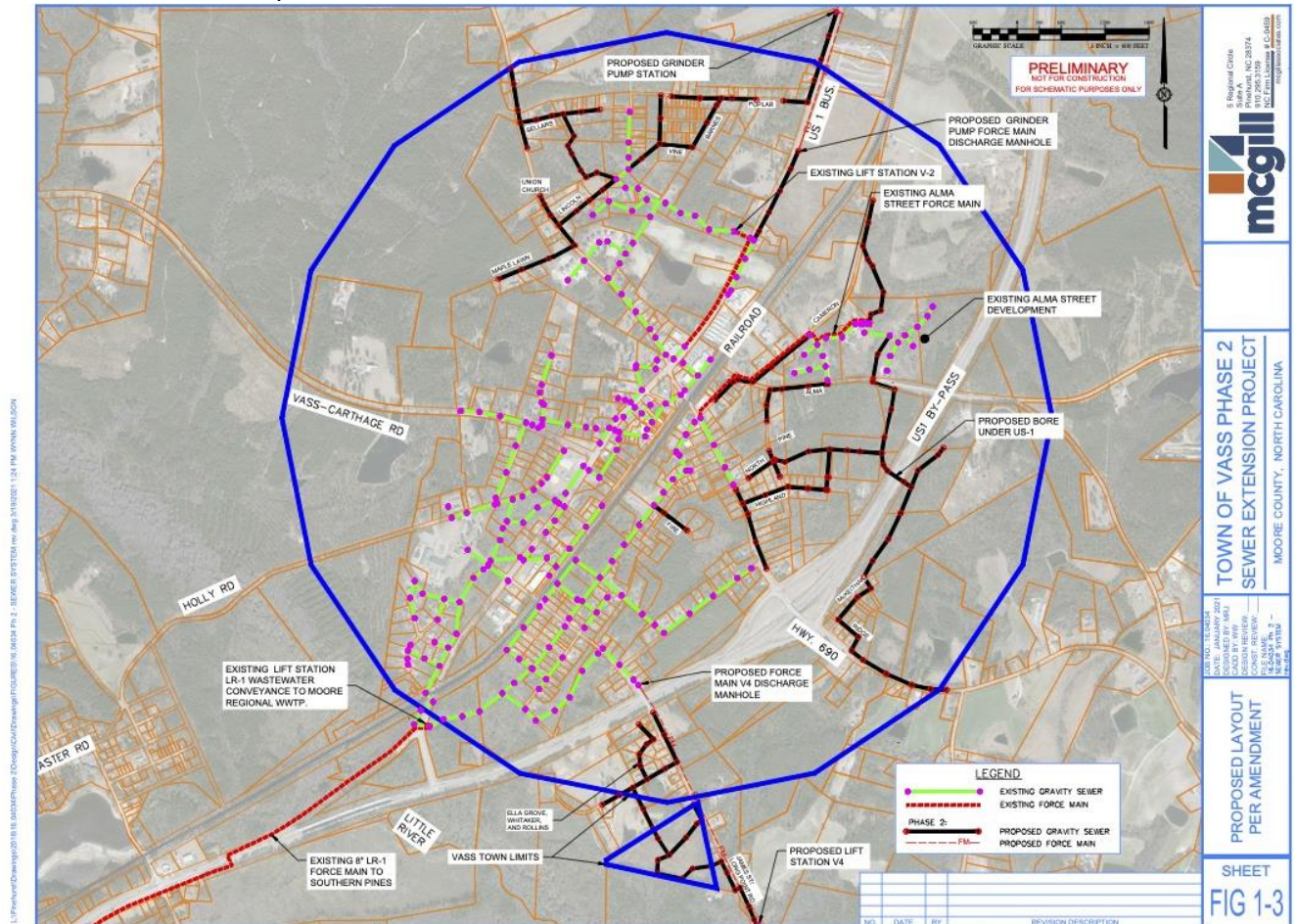


## 2.2 Infrastructure

### Water and Sewer

The water and sewer systems are owned by Moore County. Vass has had a need for sewer extension for many years and with a joint effort of Vass receiving CDBG grant and Moore County getting a USDA loan, both were granted in 2018. The components of this project have been in the works for many years and is slated to begin in Spring of 2022.

Sewer extension project map is below. Note that sewer was added to two communities that are not shown on this map: Camellia Phase III off Alma Street and Winder Station off Main Street.



Source: McGill & Associates

The water system is owned by Moore County. The fire flow is not at the ideal rate as many lines in Vass are older so high pressure can cause the lines to break. Annually, the county budgets to replace these older lines. New developments are required to upgrade the system up to and into the development as needed for adequate water and sewer.

## **Streets and Roads**

The existing DOT-maintained thoroughfares of US 1 bypass and business and Hwy 690, Vass-Carthage Road, and Union Church Road are key roads to ensure quick commute times.

Several town platted rights of way remain as public unimproved streets including: Magnolia Street, Barnes Avenue, Vine Street, part of Poplar Lane, Scott Ave, and parts of Front Street and Brewer Ave. Since these all have platted lots, it is likely that a private entity will eventually improve them or the Town may do this in the future if budget allows.

The Town receives approximately \$29,000 in Powell bill funds annually. This amount is inadequate to maintain the town streets to their best quality. The Town needs to ensure that new streets are in excellent condition when taken over by so that newer streets are not an expensive burden to maintain sooner than older streets in town.

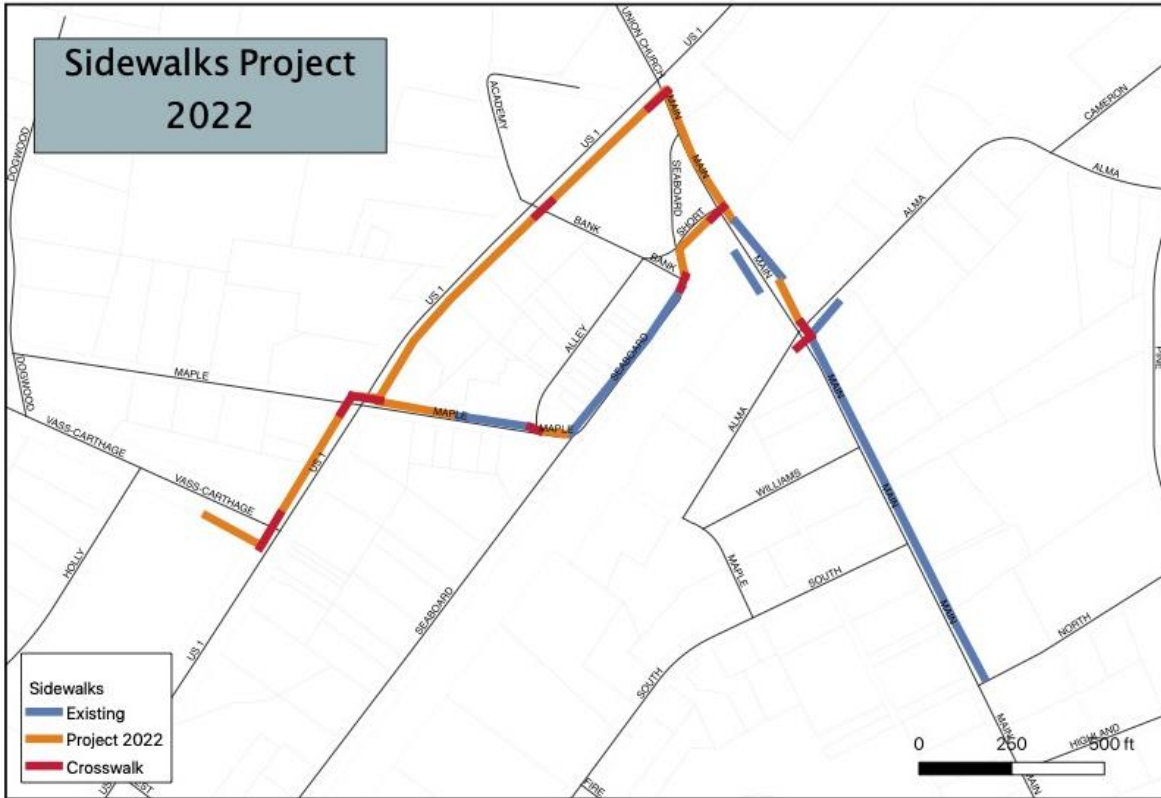
Along with maintaining road surfaces is the need to improve drainage in many parts of Vass.

### [2.3 Walkability](#)

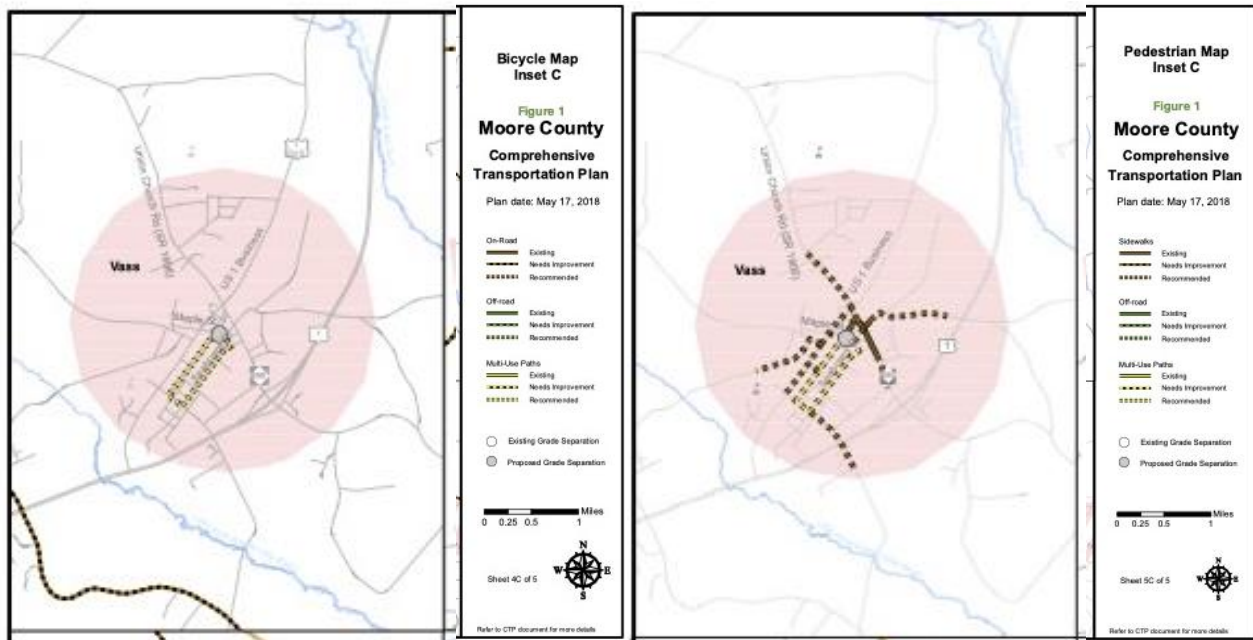
Walking is the key component that allowed humans to disperse about the entire globe. It is clearly evident that walking improves our health and improves the quality of life. Residents and visitors will enjoy and connect more fully with the surrounding environment when it is easily accessible by foot. Multi-use paths are beneficial and critical. Accessibility for wheelchairs, strollers, and all people should be considered.

Sidewalks and trails are a resounding request of citizens. It is important that the Town plan ahead for connections throughout town to be ready to apply for grant opportunities and other funding to expand sidewalks as often as budget allows. Creating a Bike and Pedestrian Plan would be beneficial for directing these efforts to connect open space, parks, residential, and business areas.

In late 2021, the Town was given state funds to install more sidewalks in the downtown area. The following map shows the approximate location and crosswalks for these proposed funds.



Source: Town of Vass



Source: Moore County Comprehensive Transportation Plan



## 2.4 Parks and Recreation

Outdoor spaces are of utmost importance; this was clearly evident during the covid-19 pandemic, when we collectively even more greatly realized how important outdoor spaces were of utmost importance. More time spent outdoors and being active is best for an overall healthy population.

Sandy Ramey Keith Park was built in 1978 and is comprised of a basketball court, an under-utilized tennis court, a playground area, concession stand, and a baseball field. In 2001, the town adopted a Parks Master Plan that would include both physical improvements and renovations to their existing recreational area.

The Master Plan’s overall goal for the park is to:

- *Provide and maintain a park viable for supporting a year round basis i.e., basketball, softball, volleyball, picnicking, walking trail, concerts, etc.*
- *Organize/support/expand events and programs that would benefit and enrich the citizens of Vass*

The renovation items in the Park Master Plan include:

<b>Parks Master Plan Goal</b>	<b>Progress/Completion</b>
Construction of handicap accessible bathrooms in the concession area	
Construction of baseball and softball throwing area	
Placement of additional playground equipment	two structures were added
Purchasing additional benches for dugout areas	
Purchasing additional bleachers	
Construction of volleyball courts	
Construction of ½ mile walking trail within the park	
Increase landscaping	
Removal of old tennis courts to use space for additional parking	

A through-line in community input at Board of Commissioner meetings, surveys, and the community event at the park indicates that an update to the Master Park Plan is necessary to guide staff and the Board of Commissioners on an end-goal vision for the main town park. It is a huge asset to the Town and instead of piece-meal action, a comprehensive goal with a timeline and budget is imperative. The following are goals that arose from the various input meetings; however, they may be addressed with a Park Master Plan:



*1 Commissioners Blackwell and Oldham getting community input for the Town Park in April 2022.*

<b>Sandy Ramey Keith Park</b>
Update/Create new Master Parks Plan
Install a Walking Trail in/around the park
New fence - existing one is rusty
Formalize parking
New bathrooms or whole new building
New bleachers
Sidewalks to the park(s)
Crosswalk from downtown
Parks and Recreation offerings (sports and classes)

In addition to the main park (Sandy Ramey Keith Park), it is important to address that ideally there will be additional park options in the future. There is town-owned property that serves as a Memorial Garden currently. Community members are able to purchase bricks in honor or memory of a loved one. This area is meant to provide a sanctuary for town residents to visit and reflect on memories. Improvements could be made to this program as the cost of engraving bricks has increased and the landscaping can be given more attention.

Additionally, there may be further opportunities to provide open space and park land for the community. Most new developments include open space area for the residents of that community and there are areas of Vass that are in conservation easements. With the small-town nature of Vass and the desire to keep parts of it as conservation land, it would be nice to have connecting trails/sidewalks to the different neighborhoods and open space.

## 2.5 Community Events

The shared community satisfaction is evident with each community event. Parades, community yard sales, seasonal and holiday celebrations are all met with support of the citizens of Vass and a fair number of visitors. Successful events help build community pride and draw interest for repeat visitors. Community events are essential to continue and be expanded upon as the town continues to grow.

## 2.6 Transportation

Vass is in a great position regarding transportation corridors. There is direct commute to the triangle by travelling north on Us 1 and to the larger job offerings in southern Moore County. Additionally, NC 690 is a busy, but direct route to Ft. Bragg and Fayetteville.

### **NCDOT Roads**

The 2020 Moore County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) created by NC DOT includes some state streets slated for improvements that affect Vass and also contains some fundamental areas for bike and pedestrian paths. Within this Plan is the 2018 Moore County

CTP Highway Proposals. NC 690 from US 1 to Cumberland County is on the list for modernization project including turn lanes where needed, straightening of curves, and intersection improvements (re: TIP Project R-5824).

**Gateways** into Town are a chance to give a good first impression of what folks can expect to find in Vass. There are some current concerns about the first impressions into Town. It would also be prudent for the Town to consider these key entry points and the permitted uses and zoning. From these entry points, it is also essential that visitors are clearly led to the heart of Vass, the downtown and older commercial area. This may be achieved with wayfinding signage.

In the committee and public input meetings, speeding/too high of a speed limit on US 1 business as you come into downtown was discussed. Often times, speed limit is reduced as you come into a downtown. This helps people slow down and notice what there is to offer. If desired, the Vass Board of Commissioners can adopt a resolution requesting NCDOT to reduce the speed limit. NCDOT will conduct a speed study to determine if a lower speed is generally followed and if so, will reduce the speed. Update that in May 2022, the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution to request that NCDOT consider a reduction in speed limit along US 1 business within the totality of the town limits.

**Crosswalks and pedestrian crossings** were also identified as an impediment to pedestrian modality. For NCDOT roads, the Town can request cross walks. NCDOT will only install if both sides of the street have accessible sidewalks. This is a low-cost request that DOT generally will place on their schedule. Further, if the Town would also like a pedestrian signal at a traffic light, if the accessible sidewalks and crosswalks are in place, they may consider requests for pedestrian signals. There is little funding currently, but Vass should consider seeking DOT funds for sidewalks, cross walks, bike lanes, and pedestrian crossings when possible.

**US 1 bypass** is considered an expressway and such new businesses are encouraged/required to have shared driveways and turn lanes. Otherwise, this thoroughfare may become bogged down if it continues to grow with entrances to each business. The local DOT office reviews all new driveway applications.

### **Complete streets**

As defined by National Complete Streets Coalition, *“Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities must be able to safely move along and across a complete street.”*

In some rural parts of Vass, with any road maintenance and re-paving a widening of shoulders could be a consideration in lieu of sidewalks.

In 2022, the Town was given the opportunity to have a student at UNC-Chapel Hill in the masters for Public Administration program that has a particular interest in trees to develop a Street Tree/Urban Forestry Plan for the Town of Vass. Once adopted, this will give the Town a playbook of appropriate tree types with climate and maintenance requirements considered.

The **CSX Railroad** cuts through the middle of Vass. This can be an asset. Unfortunately, there is no longer a stop in Vass, but it is not outside of the realm of possibility that

Other means of travel include the **Moore County Airport** which is less than 15 minutes away, but does not currently include commercial flights. Vass is less than an hour drive to Raleigh-Durham (RDU) Airport which is a major airport.

## 2.7 Commercial areas

### **Downtown**

Vass is a special place. The downtown area can be definitely described as Seaboard Street to Us 1 Hwy to include Alley Street, Bank Street, and E Maple Street. Ideally, downtown needs to be fully defined geographically.

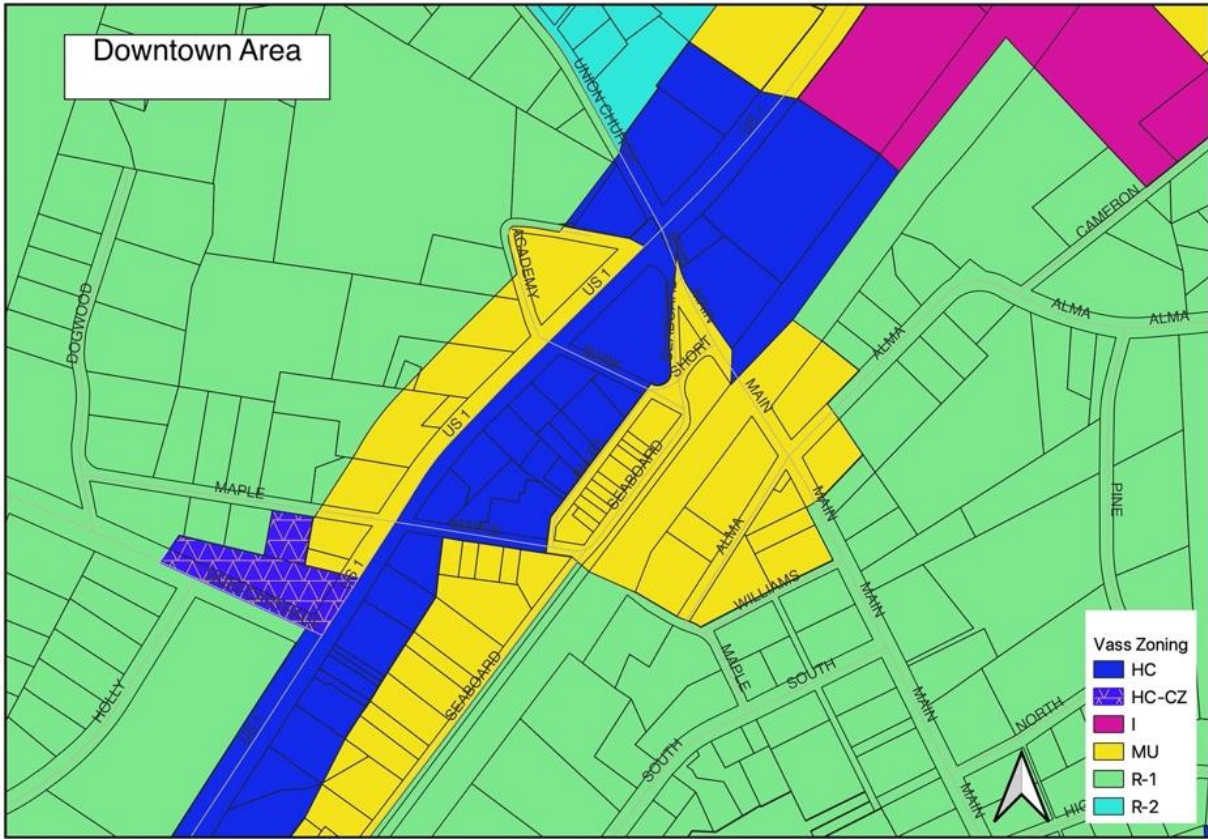
There is potential for the currently vacant buildings on Seaboard Street to bring vibrancy to the area. There are many historic structures that could be rehabilitated. The downtown currently includes several retail and professional services, as well as a county-operated library and the post office. Eventually, parking and trash receptacles will be needed in the downtown business area.



*Local Bee Store owner,  
Calvin Terry, Sr.*

### **Improvements**

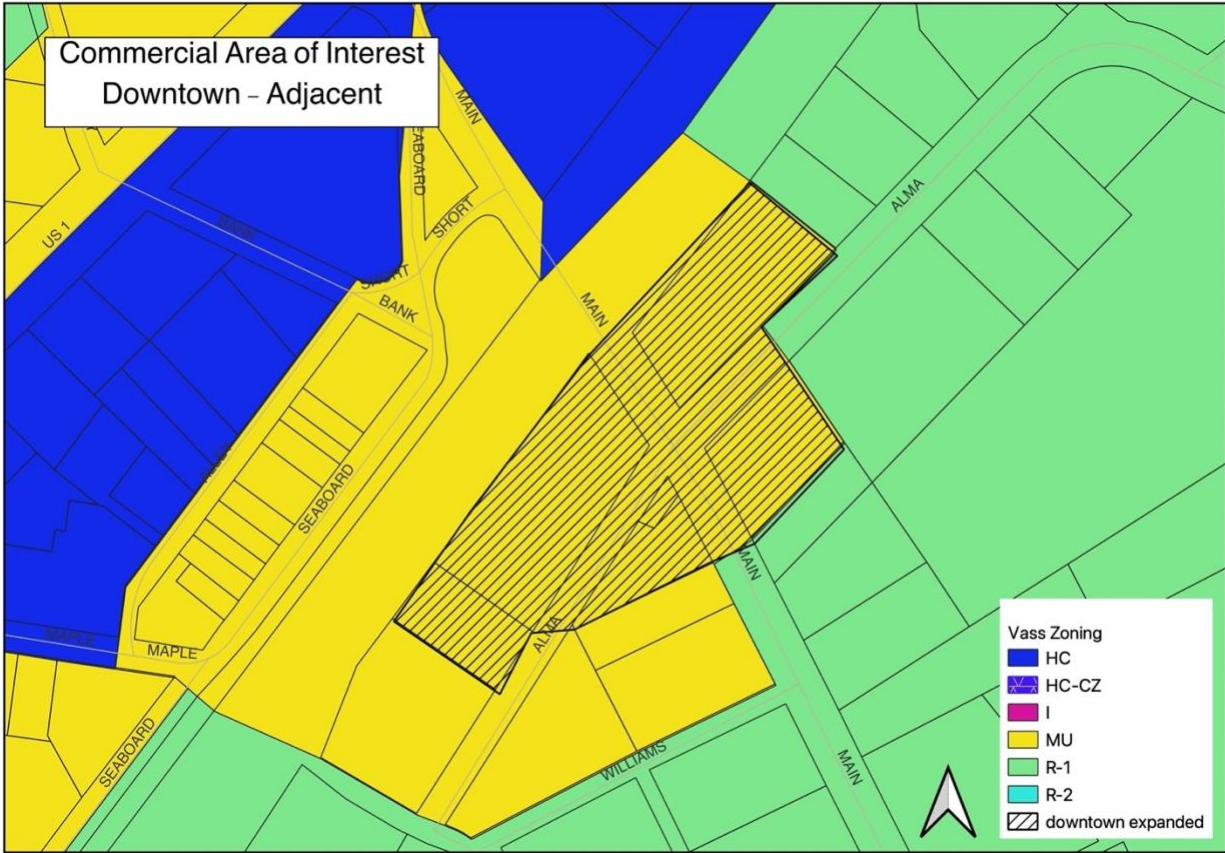
In addition to the upkeep and revitalization of the existing buildings in the downtown area, more connectivity to the other business areas and residences is key. There are numerous streetscape improvements that could enhance the visual appeal: the sidewalk interface with the parking, the awnings covering the sidewalks, improvement and the addition of more trash receptacles, additional public parking, decorative lighting, and landscaping by way of street trees, flower beds, and planters with seasonal attractions.



Main Street shops

Adjacent to downtown, or possibly considered as part of downtown, but on the other side of the train tracks is an iconic area of Vass. This intersection of current and potential commercial businesses is key in that they draw people in to visit those businesses and it is a short distance to make more than one stop by vehicle or on foot.





**US 1**



*La Chilanguita Tienda on US 1 Business 1*

US 1 Business contains a mix of commercial and residential, though most is zoned commercial. There is currently a section of business 1 that is zoned Industrial on the north side of Main Street. There are several retail and service establishments, interspersed with residential homes. Several properties may be redeveloped as well.

In 2021 the old Mill on US Hwy 1 business caught on fire and from what the property owner has shared, the building is unsalvageable. The building was being used as a palette storage facility. It does not currently sound like it can be preserved.



*Old Mill on US 1 Business 1*

The table of permitted uses allowed by zoning district in the Zoning Ordinance should be evaluated to ensure that the desired uses are allowed in each business district as there are several vacant business buildings that may be redeveloped.

US Highway 1 bypass is a 4-lane interstate that is a key area for current and future growth. The Town of Vass has had several satellite annexations within the last 15 years and this is the main area for commercial growth with the easy access for travelers on US 1. Vass is currently in a position where potential development would like to be annexed for the zoning regulations – as the county has corridor standards and for police protection.

There is potential for additional commercial node at the intersection of Hwy 1 and Hwy 690. Vass has only one exit ramp off the bypass and this area could provide the biggest draw off the bypass to show visitors that Vass is worth the stop. The western side of the exit ramp is currently zoned commercial, but has some access hurdles, but the eastern side is currently zoned residential. This area may be studied or marked as an area to consider a higher density residential or commercial use.

## 2.8 Workforce

### **Industrial Areas**

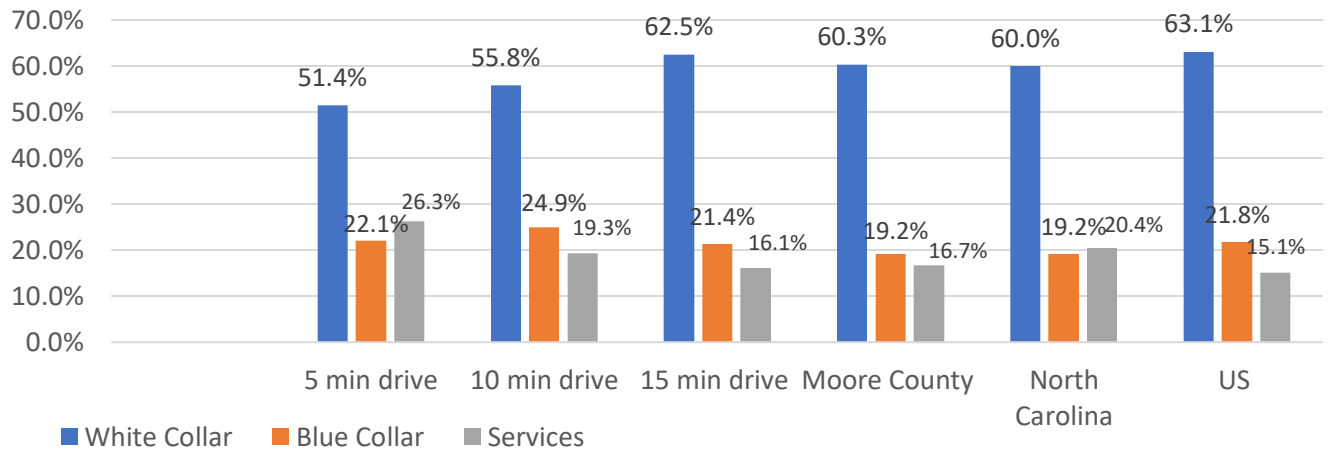
Currently, there is very little industrial-zoned areas and within this zone is a Timber Yard and a mini-storage facility. There is potential that Vass is prime for more light industrial development if the community chooses to pursue it and to expand the industrial zone. US 1 bypass and Us 1 business provide the highest probability as industrial uses need adequate water, sewer, and transportation access. In regard to transportation access, US 1 bypass is a great resource. It is also ideal that there is a railroad in the middle of town, although there is currently no stop in Vass. Also, there would be some concerns if there was heavy freight traffic on business US 1. If the right industries are interested in locating along US 1 business, there is potential for a spur line off the railway and also for an exit off the bypass at Crane's Creek Road.

### **Other Workforce Opportunities**

Other than industrial-zoned areas, the number one employer for Vass residents seem to be military.



### Civilian Labor Force

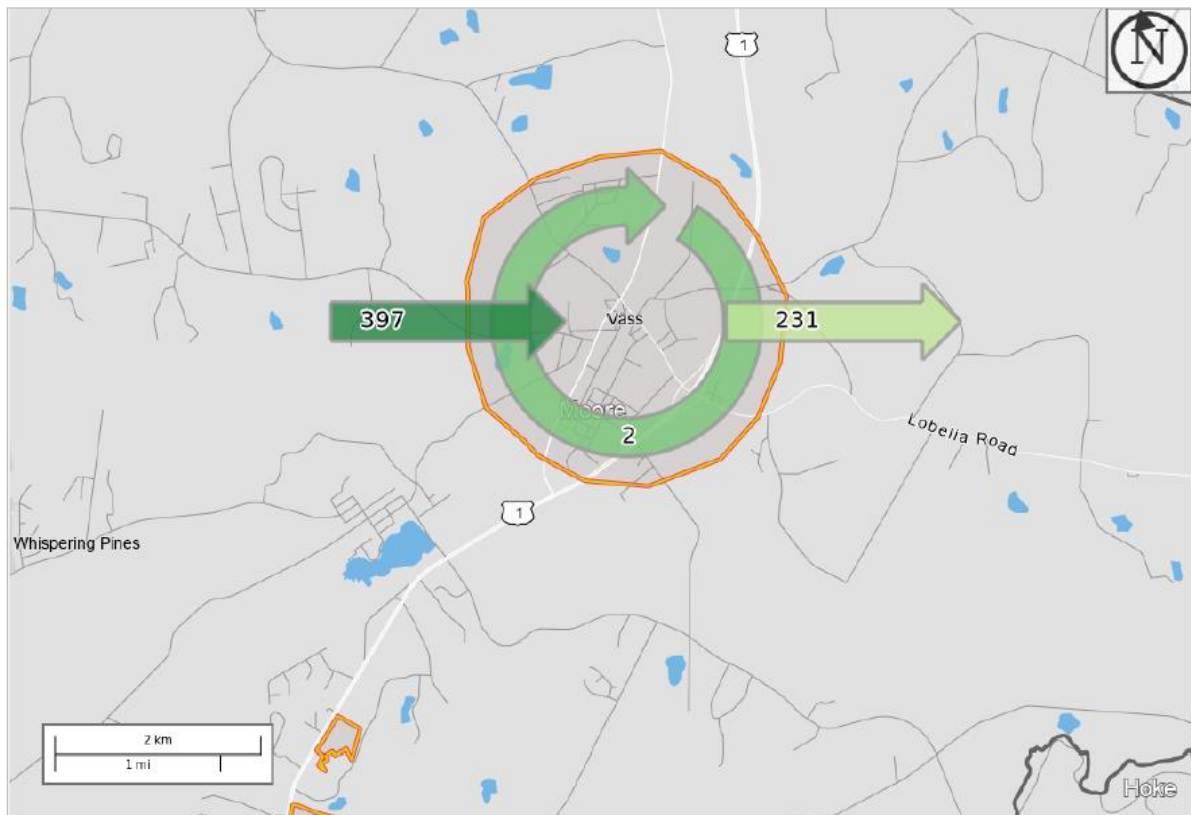


Source: NC Department of Commerce

### All Jobs for All Workers in 2019

Created by the U.S. Census Bureau's OnTheMap <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov> on 01/20/2022

Inflow/Outflow Counts of All Jobs for Selection Area in 2019  
All Workers



## Economy Overview

<b>5,908</b> Population (2020) Population grew by 1,031 over the last 5 years and is projected to grow by 585 over the next 5 years.	<b>1,521</b> Total Regional Employment Jobs grew by 135 over the last 5 years and are projected to grow by 21 over the next 5 years.	<b>\$46.9K</b> Avg. Earnings Per Job (2020) Regional average earnings per job are \$27.3K below the national average earnings of \$74.2K per job.
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\*Note: This is for Vass zip code, not corporate limits

Source: NC Department of Commerce

### 2.9 Residential Development

In terms of housing, Vass mostly consists of single-family houses; multi-family options are limited.

There is a lack of affordable housing stock. As Vass becomes a hot spot for new residential developments, the price point for homes (due to rising land costs) continues to rise.

Code enforcement is identified as something that residents would like more effort by the Town.

If pressure for more subdivisions continues in the county, there should be clear outlines of areas for farmland and conservation versus areas for denser development. Vass could consider reviewing the zoning and ordinances to encourage multi-family or close to the town's center.



*Historic Tate property on Vass-Carthage Road*

**Cluster/conservation Subdivisions.** A current trend, due to land cost is the rise of cluster developments. This allows the same density for a tract of land to be reduced for per unit lot size in exchange for leaving open space. This allowance has the benefits of preserving open space and providing each community with its own space to commune. That said, there are some suggestions for the current requirements. Mainly, the space preserved may include wet areas, but it should also be feature assets that the community will want to enjoy; not just stormwater ponds. The space ideally will also have parts that are attractive and can be used. While cluster subdivisions can be desirable for somewhat more affordable price points and to conserve open space, we need to ensure that the conservation part of this equation is not left out.

As discussed in the town streets section, as new developments come in and request that the Town take over the streets, Vass needs to ensure that the roads are adequately installed and that they are in excellent condition from the outset. The Town's subdivision ordinance currently requires that new streets meet NCDOT standards, but should consider including clearer expectations.

## 2.10 Town Services

The Town currently contracts with Republic Services for trash collection. Recycling is not available at this time. The closest County land fill is less than 5 minutes away on Cranes Creek Rd. **Yard debris** is picked up from the curbside seasonally from May through October.

Community input includes that they would like more presence of the **police** department. Vass overall has a low crime rate. 24-hour police coverage is ideal for the size of Vass now. As Vass continues to grow, the police force will need to grow. Getting back in accord with the Governor's Highway Safety Program is important to be able to apply for and be approved for grants to utilize the Community Service program for non-violent offenders to pick up litter, equipment maintenance, and building maintenance.

## Section 3 Future Land Use

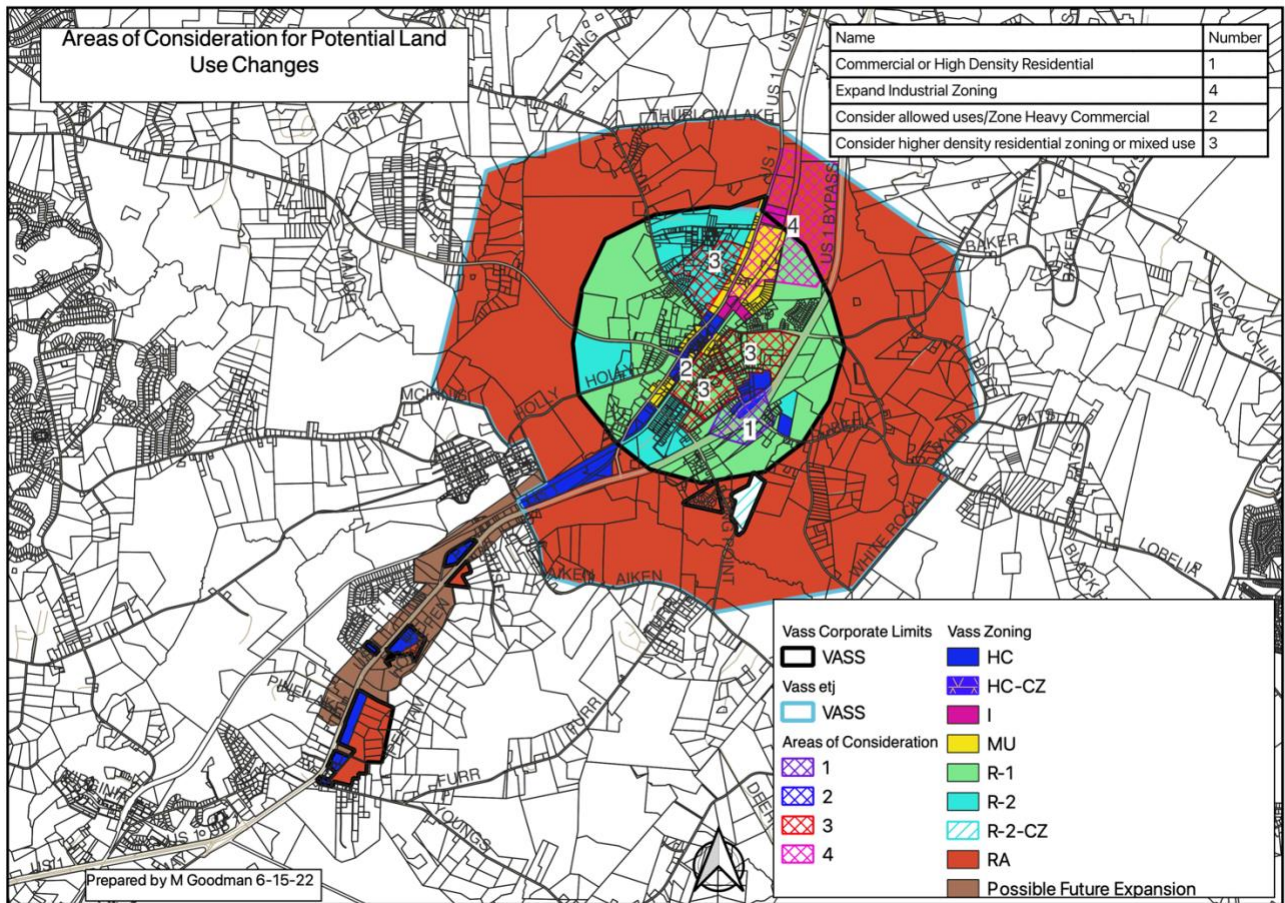
Areas identified for zoning updates include:

1. The property on the four corners off the intersection of US highway 1 and Hwy 690. This area provides for the highest potential for commercial growth and/or high density residential to serve both the citizens of Vass and travelers. It is a key area in order to draw travelers from the bypass in to Town. This area should be considered for rezoning to Heavy Commercial (the northwest corner is already zoned this), Mixed Use, or a residential use that allows multi-family (R-2). The property owners of this area should be brought in to discuss their desires for the future of this property.
2. Review the zoning and/or the uses allowed on Seaboard Street. As the main strip of downtown, it is surprising that zoned Mixed Use does not allow for several uses that would be assumed for the heart of downtown. This street could either be rezoned to Heavy Commercial or the uses allowed in Mixed Use could be
3. Increase density and potentially allow for some mixed uses in the area in close proximity to the heart of Vass/the downtown area.
4. Potentially could expand Industrial Zoning on the north side of US 1 business along the railroad tracks. This would potentially need to involve input from DOT for another exit off US 1 bypass around Crane's Creek.



*Seaboard Street - potential expansion*





**Areas with highest potential for change/growth:**

1. Downtown
2. Exit ramps
3. US 1 bypass
4. US 1 business – north of downtown:
5. US 1 business – south of downtown: this area is mostly developed, but there lies potential in redevelopment and infill, including the old hosiery mill at 3737 US Hwy 1 that was damaged beyond repair in a fire in 2021. The property owner shared the information that this structure will eventually be demolished. It is not currently believed that it can be preserved.
6. Hwy 690
7. Residential development

## Section 4 Goals

This plan considers the existing conditions in Vass and addresses areas of concerns. This Plan should give elected officials, community members, and town staff a picture of the focus areas. To narrow down the focus areas, this Plan identifies a series of goals that identify what is desired and objectives are the actions to take to achieve the goals. This is not meant to be a static list, rather completed and evaluated periodically.

### **1. Improve the visual appeal of the Town of Vass.**

- 1.1 Improve the entrances to Town in order to set a good first impression. The first step to do this could be creating a gateway plan.
- 1.2 Evaluate allowed uses, zoning, and design standards for the entry points into town.
- 1.3 Administer code enforcement for derelict properties and dilapidated structures.
- 1.4 Encourage road side community pick up days or adopt-a-highway programs.
- 1.5 Encourage rehabilitation of commercial areas by considering use of economic incentives and considering increasing standards for public-facing areas.
- 1.6 Consider moving maintenance facility from its current location in order to have this property to accommodate an expansion of the downtown area or support pedestrian related mixed use (i.e., Rawlings Rd)
- 1.7 Consider highway corridor standards (zoning overlay) for US 1 bypass and possibly for US 1 business.
- 1.8 Revitalize older neighborhoods, when possible, with roadway improvements, including street trees and sidewalks.
- 1.9 Review landscaping requirements for new commercial and redevelopment areas to ensure it is adequate and clearly reflects the eco-system of the Sandhills;
- 1.10 Consider streetscape improvements: street trees, striping updates where needed, etc.

### **2. Have well-connected areas of town.**

- 2.1 Create a Pedestrian Plan with highest emphasis on sidewalks and also consider greenways and trails.
- 2.2 When possible, budget and apply for grants for sidewalks to connect all areas of town.
- 2.3 Maintain and improve existing roads throughout town and seek additional funding beyond Powell Bill when possible.
- 2.4 Clarify standards for accepting new streets by updating the Zoning Ordinance to include clear expectations and standards and having a process to ensure the road quality.
- 2.5 Update subdivision ordinances to reflect the types of residential development the Board would like to encourage.

### **3. An active, engaged community for all ages.**

- 3.1 Plan and host multiple community events each year.

- 3.2 Create and adopt a Master Pedestrian Plan for sidewalks, trails, and greenways.
- 3.3 Continue to improve and expand public open spaces and parks.
- 3.4 Update/Create new Master Parks Plan.
- 3.5 Install a Walking Trail in/around the park.
- 3.6 Create and expand Parks and Recreation offerings (sports and classes)
- 3.7 Install a sidewalk to connect the park to downtown area and to Vass LakeView Elementary School.
- 3.8 Install cross walks and pedestrian crossings at intersections for visibility and safety.
- 3.9 Add more usable community green spaces.
- 3.10 Consider fee in lieu of payments for new developments to pay for the development and expansion of parks and recreation facilities.

#### **4. Vibrant commercial areas**

- 4.1 45 mph too high on Business US Hwy 1 - persuade DOT to lower speed limit
- 4.2 Geographically define what area is considered “downtown”

#### **5. Ensure that regulations that are consistent with the Town’s vision**

- 5.1 Consider expanding industrial zoning district
- 5.2 Consider mechanisms to increase affordable housing options, for example: Rezone areas to allow for higher density residential from center of town outward
- 5.3 Review zoning of Seaboard Street to ensure the zoning spells out what the future land use goals are for this area.
- 5.4 Rezone commercial/ mixed use/high density residential along exit ramp
- 5.5 Ensure that the Zoning Ordinance reflects the desires of the town and the future growth and redevelopment of Vass.
- 5.6 Amend ordinances as needed to address changes in circumstances to accommodate new uses or situations that arise and are not clearly covered by existing ordinances.
- 5.7 Modify ordinances to be more understandable and user-friendly; consider moving toward form-based code.

#### **4.1 Review**

This plan shall serve as a guide in making future text and map amendments. It serves as a layout of what the citizen and boards collectively decided were the important factors for the future of Vass. This plan intends to guide the Town for the next 20 years, but may be amended from time to time. Dependent upon the growth of the Town, the overall economy, and the voice of the citizens may indicate that this plan be updated sooner.

It is important that this document continue to be reviewed by the Planning Board, an appointed stakeholder group or Land Use Plan committee, the public, staff, and the elected officials. With this periodic review, recommendations to Plan amendments may be made, but also there should be monitoring of performance measurements of the goals laid out in this Plan.

## 4.2 Wrap up

Vass is a community with a welcoming atmosphere and lots of potential for orderly growth. While Vass currently lacks a cohesive sense of community, this is something that can be resolved. While there are many lifelong residents, there is a growing population of military families that are often not in Vass for the long-haul as their work will eventually take them away again. Many of the adjacent communities have a very well-defined image that leaves Vass with a mix of many things: it is neither a golf or horse community, it is not defined by antiques or one key industry. However, this can be an asset. Defining the community's vision is important, but not being known for a single element can be a strength if correctly harnessed.