

**Northampton County:  
Implementing Disaster Resilience:  
Priority Funding Areas & Project Plans**

February 2024



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This report was created using information shared by representatives from Northampton County during the *Preparing for Disaster Resiliency* workshop on October 18th, 2023. This information was compiled and analyzed by the facilitation team, staffed by Working Landscapes and Croatan Institute.

Working Landscapes is a non-profit organization based in Warrenton, North Carolina that advances sustainable livelihoods in rural places through regional economy building. Our staff has over three decades of combined experience in community engagement across North Carolina, and the world.

Croatan Institute is a nonprofit research and action institute whose mission is to build social equity and ecological resilience by leveraging finance to create pathways to a just economy.

This report is intentionally designed to be brief, practical, and to the point. It does not reiterate the many pages of demographic, social, historical, and other details contained in the many previous reports and plans because that information is available in abundance across those documents.

**Digging into Data for Priority Funding:**

The *Preparing for Disaster Resilience* workshops introduced participants to the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#), a mapping tool created by the President’s Council on Environmental Quality to understand where communities that are most vulnerable to climate impacts are located across the country. This data tool tracks the “burden threshold,” or overall vulnerability of a community, across eight categories:

- Modeled climate impacts (like the modeled agricultural and flooding loss);
- Energy costs and energy-production pollution;
- Housing costs and characteristics (like the presence of lead paint, or the lack of indoor plumbing);
- Legacy pollution (like proximity to former land mines, or superfund sites);
- Transportation access and transportation-pollution;
- Wastewater contamination risks; and
- Employment opportunities.

Using these categories, as well as social factors such as race, educational attainment, and income level, this tool determines the overall vulnerability of a community. If the community meets a threshold for at least one of the burden categories above, the mapping tool identifies the community as “**disadvantaged**.” Through President Biden’s [Justice40 Initiative](#), communities that have been identified as disadvantaged are eligible for a variety of benefits when it comes to applying for and receiving federal grants, including reduced or waived matching requirements, or being placed in a pool earmarked for only disadvantaged communities.

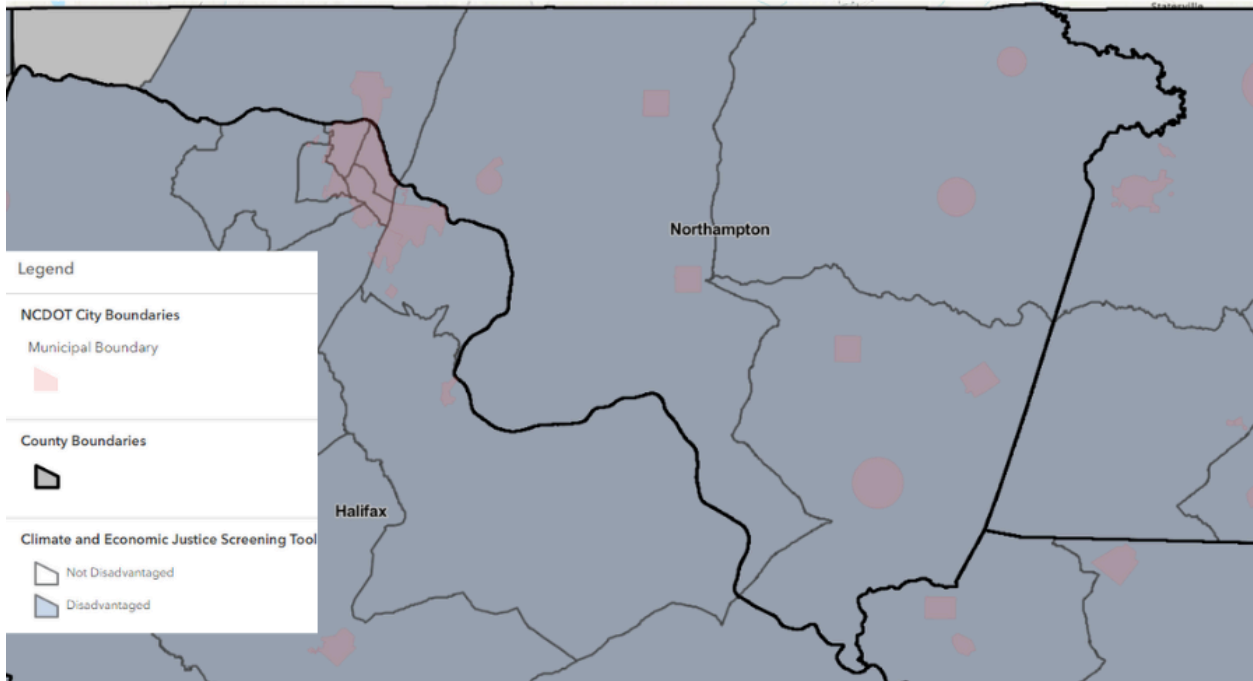
Census tracts are a geographic designation used by the US Census and other federal government data collection programs to understand various statistical measures. Because this mapping tool uses Census tracts as its basis for providing information on a community’s disadvantaged status, the data below provides an estimated representation of your municipality and may not match the data you have collected.

Because of historic and present inequities, some Census tracts within larger municipalities and counties may be disadvantaged, while others are not. For Northampton County, the following Census tracts have been identified as disadvantaged:

Census Tract Name	Disadvantaged?	Most Vulnerable To:
37131920200	Yes	Climate change impacts; energy costs; health impacts; transportation barriers
37131920100	Yes	Energy costs; health impacts
37131920300	Yes	Energy costs; health impacts; Transportation barriers

37131920401	Yes	Climate change impacts; energy costs; health impacts; transportation barriers
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**Map of Disadvantaged Communities in Your Area:**



For more information on this mapping tool, including how this information is determined, please see **Appendix A**. For more information on Northampton County’s climate impacts, see the attached information in **Appendix B**.

### ***Prioritizing Your Community's Top Resiliency Needs:***

In addition to the climate impacts and vulnerabilities described by mapping tool, every community has its own unique given set of strengths and weaknesses. These strengths and weaknesses should be considered when brainstorming new ideas or implementing projects. As Northampton County continues to increase its resilience to disasters through implementing new projects and programs, leadership and stakeholders should consider the following:

#### **What will help Northampton County when implementing disaster resilience projects?**

- Bringing together the small, diverse communities that care for one another and works together, and recognize this place as home
- Emphasizing its strong agricultural past and present, including being home to the headquarters of largest peanut producer in the United States, Severn Peanut Company (a division of Meherrin Agricultural & Chemical Company)
- Centering the wealth of knowledge present within older populations
- Maintaining its public services, including schools and libraries

#### **What should Northampton County be aware of when implementing disaster resilience projects?**

- Monitoring and mitigating flooding concerns, particularly in low-lying land with poor drainage
- Recognizing transportation barriers to accessing amenities and workforce opportunities
- Addressing health concerns related to mold and mildew in residential and commercial spaces

During the workshop, leadership from Northampton County were asked to share and reflect on the current projects, programs or services that are being provided to the community, as well as potential projects, programs, or services that are desired. The project ideas that were shared from Northampton County were:

- Increasing communication capacity through the distribution of CodeRED locators
- Purchasing needed equipment for emergency management to use during disasters
  - Drone Search and Safety training
  - Naloxone & Blood Infusion in EMS vehicles
- Incorporating more natural features, wooded areas, and green infrastructure solutions in economic development projects
- Building a resilience-focused recreation and wellness center with public green spaces for community gathering

***Your Top Disaster Resilience Concern:***

During the small-group conversation, the facilitators also helped the Town of Conetoe identify one particular project the leadership who participated would be interested in exploring more, which was: **Building a resilience-focused recreation and wellness center with public green spaces for community gathering.**

Building a resilience-focused recreation and wellness center in Northampton County would take great strides towards increasing the overall resilience of the county. Across the United States, communities are also working to expand the work of their disaster shelters to provide year-round programming that works to build community-wide resilience. In some places, these shelters have become rebranded as “Community Resilience Centers” or “Resilience Hubs.” Depending on the location of the shelters (and the current activities that take place there during non-disaster times), they can provide educational programming for both children and adults, including offering job training for first responders or other resilient-workforce needs.

In terms of building amenities, resilience centers can also be used as “cooling centers” during the summer months, where residents who do not have access to air conditioning can go to stay cool. Some resilience centers in other parts of the country have also provided residents with access to free or low-cost broadband and small storage facilities. Finally, many resilience centers have also been retrofitted with solar panels and more efficient appliances and system upgrades, to reduce the electrical usage.

### ***What's Next?***

This report is designed to begin or, for some community members and leaders, perhaps continue a conversation around how to respond and prepare your community's residents and infrastructure for future disasters. As for what's next, we recommend engaging in five next steps:

1. Read this report – if you're reading this step, you've already accomplished this!;
2. Connect with the facilitation team
3. Share internally with government representatives, such as commissioners and relevant staff to discuss.
  - a. Helpful guiding questions for this discussion are: "Does this report accurately cover our most pressing disaster resilience concerns?" and "Are there other pressing concerns or projects that need to be considered for further development?"
4. Connect with the facilitation team, Working Landscapes and Croatan Institute, for a 30-minute Zoom or phone call to gain additional clarification about this report and strategize about next steps.
  - a. The deadline to schedule a follow-up call is the end of business on **Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>**.
  - b. To contact, email [jenni@workinglandscapesnc.org](mailto:jenni@workinglandscapesnc.org) or call **252-257-0205 (ext. 5)**
5. After your call, **five** member governments who act quickly will be offered the opportunity to engage more deeply with the facilitation team until **April 30**, when our contract ends.
6. Continue to stay engaged with the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments's planning projects and offerings. Although this contract ends in April, the COG remains committed to helping your community advance its planning goals.

This follow-up call will also be an opportunity for communities to learn more about funding opportunities relevant to their disaster resilience goals, as well as ideas on future collaborations with communities nearby.

Finally, we thank you for your time in participating in this work, and for recognizing the need to prepare your community for future disasters.