

Town of Bayboro

Profile

The county seat of Pamlico County, Bayboro was incorporated in 1881. It sits at the headwaters of the Bay River, which empties into the nutrient-sensitive Pamlico Sound. The Pamlico County Courthouse takes center stage in the four-block downtown area. From there, the town stretches out along a narrow corridor of N.C. 55 and N.C. 304. The population numbers 713.

Never wealthy, Bayboro has suffered with the decline of the traditional fishing industry. What had been a working waterfront fell into disrepair. In response, the town purchased an old fish house property a decade ago and created a public park with a boardwalk and access to the river. Work continues to further enhance the waterfront area as the town also plans improvements to downtown, such as burying utility lines and installing sidewalks. Those utility lines include high-speed cable along N.C. 55, but elsewhere in town, Internet access is limited to dial-up service. Water and sewer service are provided by the county and a district sewerage authority.

In tier 2 Pamlico County, the unemployment rate runs to 4.5 percent, with a 15 percent poverty rate. A new countywide entrepreneurship program seeks to create homegrown jobs. In Bayboro itself, the Pamlico Correctional Institute, which opened in 1998, provides 200 jobs, and at least one small fish house serves a few trawlers that still ply the local waters.

Community issues

Pamlico County, like much of coastal North Carolina, is experiencing tremendous residential development. Bayboro has yet to benefit from that boom. Its economy has been stagnant with little or no private sector job creation. The traditional seafood industry has dwindled, and the state's widening of N.C. 55 consumed several business properties, leaving stark gaps in the town's main commercial corridor. The prospects for growth are complicated by boundaries that either abut neighboring municipalities or are separated from them by only a short distance. In addition, nontaxable state and local properties – courthouse, school office, community college, prison – consume a quarter of the town's 1.5 square miles.

Opportunities

Through NC STEP, Bayboro will undertake a long-term strategic planning process that represents all segments of the town and includes the wider Pamlico County community. By including neighboring municipalities and the county, it hopes to stimulate a regional planning process and ensure that its own plan will be compatible with that regional vision for development. It also seeks to incorporate training for local leaders as an ongoing element of municipal government and to plan for the creation of a town manager's position.

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