

HighLevel Summary

The **OTown Strategic Plan Framework** is actionoriented, organized by focus areas, objectives, and initiatives. It largely relates to operations, communication, infrastructure, and economic development.

The **Comprehensive Plan**, by contrast, is broad, policyfocused, and includes vision, goals, data analysis, longrange development principles, environmental resilience, and regulatory alignment.

Because their purposes differ, several **planning, regulatory, environmental, and growth-management topics** covered extensively in the Comprehensive Plan do not appear in the Strategic Plan.

Gaps Identified in the Strategic Plan

Below are the major gaps, grouped for clarity.

1. Land Use, Growth Planning & Development Regulation

The Comprehensive Plan dedicates extensive content to guiding growth, land use, zoning-related principles, and development practices. The Strategic Plan does **not** address these.

Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- Procedures for **reviewing and updating ordinances**, including Growth Management Ordinance updates.
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- Adoption or use of “**Smart Growth Principles**”, such as compact design, mixed uses, walkable neighborhoods, or directing development toward existing neighborhoods.
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- Use of **overlay districts** (historic areas, waterfront, harbor) or sensitivearea planning tools.
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- Policies and actions relating to **future landuse patterns**, urban form, or desired development characteristics (density, housing mix, commercial expansion zones).

Gap Summary:

The Strategic Plan is missing a landuse policy framework entirely. However, that is not the purpose of the Strategic Plan.

2. Waterfront, Harbor & Maritime Development Planning (Detailed)

The Comprehensive Plan provides granular goals, recommendations, and actions for waterfront access, harbor planning, boardwalk expansion, fishing, and maritime economic support.

Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- Creation of a **harbor/waterfront master plan** with visual depictions.
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- Plans to expand **public water access**, maintain streetend access points, preserve water vistas, and develop a continuous **boardwalk**.
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- Balancing commercial vs. recreational fishing interests.
[\[Official_C...rch_5_2024 | PDF\]](#)
- Preservation/rehabilitation of historic maritime buildings and structures.
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- Partnerships for maritime heritage and waterfrontspecific business development.

Gap Summary:

Strategic Plan mentions economic development broadly but lacks specific waterfront/harbor actions. The Strategic Plan is developed to provide a high level overview and does not need to include the specific items identified int the Comprehensive Plan.

3. Environmental Resilience, Hazard Mitigation & Climate Adaptation

The Comprehensive Plan dedicates extensive content to hazard mitigation, resiliency, living shorelines, storm vulnerabilities, and environmental change impacts.

Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- Longterm planning for **sea-level rise**, storm surge, wind/flood risk, and environmental vulnerabilities.
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- Promotion of **living shorelines** over hardened stabilization.
[\[Official_C...rch_5_2024 | PDF\]](#)
- Programs informing buyers about **storm-related risks** via REALTORS®.
[\[Official_C...rch_5_2024 | PDF\]](#)
- Coordination with environmental organizations for waterfront resiliency projects.
- Long-term hazard mitigation principles embedded in planning, zoning, and development decisions.

The Strategic Plan includes emergency management steps (MOUs, communication strategy), but **not the long-term resilience or environmental adaptation components**.

Gap Summary:

Operational emergency preparedness is present, but the deeper resilience planning required by the Comprehensive Plan is missing. The deeper resilience planning is not intended to be included for the Strategic Plan.

4. Transportation, Parking, and Mobility Planning

The Comprehensive Plan includes detailed transportation goals: bicycle plan updates, sidewalk replacement, creation of multimodal lanes, NCDOT partnerships, parking planning, circulation patterns.

Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- Bicycle/pedestrian plan updates.
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- Sidewalk repair/replacement programs.
- Transportation and parking master plan.
- Multimodal (walking, biking, boating) integration across the town.
- Partnerships with NCDOT for safer alternative transportation corridors.

The Strategic Plan only lightly references parks/rec programs and communication—not mobility or circulation.

Gap Summary:

No mobility or transportation planning appears in the Strategic Plan and should not be part of a higher level strategic plan for the town.

5. Parks, Recreation & Public Space Development (Detailed)

The Strategic Plan includes public workshops on parks, but the Comprehensive Plan goes further.

Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- A **comprehensive recreational plan** updated regularly.
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- Requirements to **reserve park/recreation space** in future developments or annexations.
- Youth-oriented park planning (specific locations identified in Comprehensive Plan).
- Interconnected trail/path systems linking parks, commercial areas, neighborhoods.

Gap Summary:

Strategic Plan mentions parks, but not the long-term or regulatory portions of recreation planning. This is intentional as the Strategic Plan considers the high level, strategic goals for the town.

6. Public Works, Utilities, Infrastructure Management (Specific & Technical)

The Strategic Plan covers utilities in one section, but the Comprehensive Plan goes much deeper.

Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- ADA Transition Plan creation and implementation.
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- Water quality improvement plan.
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- Capital improvement planning aligned with population projections.
- BMP (Best Management Practices) requirements for facilities.
- Regular updates to preparedness and recovery manuals.
- Detailed training needs for staff handling infrastructure maintenance.

Gap Summary:

Strategic Plan mentions utilities and compliance but excludes several critical infrastructure planning components. This is purposefully done as the Strategic Plan is intended to be at a high level.

7. Community Identity, Historical Preservation & Cultural Elements

The Strategic Plan includes values and some identity statements but lacks the actionable preservation items contained in the Comprehensive Plan.

Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- Preservation/rehabilitation of historic structures.
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- Partnerships with museum and historical organizations.
- Guidelines for “front porch” architectural character.
- Efforts to maintain small-town neighborhood identity via development rules.

Gap Summary:

Cultural/historical preservation is lightly addressed at the values level but not operationalized.

8. Use of Data for Decision-Making (Demographics, Trends, Census)

The Comprehensive Plan includes 30+ pages of demographic, socio-economic, and environmental data that inform policy.

Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- No use of Census/ACS data or population/flooding trends to shape initiatives.
- No tie between demographic changes and service planning.
- No projections for infrastructure demands.

Gap Summary:

Strategic Plan is not data-informed and lacks the analytical foundation found in the Comprehensive Plan. This is intentional as this is not the purpose of the Strategic Plan.

9. Alignment With State Statute (NC G.S. 160D)

The Comprehensive Plan explicitly aligns with requirements for zoning support, development regulation, and citizen engagement.

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Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- No reference to statutory obligations or how Strategic Plan actions align with required planning processes.
- No mention of zoning implications or regulatory consistency.

Gap Summary:

Strategic Plan is operational, but lacks required statutory planning connections. This is intentional, as the Strategic Plan is a high level document.

10. Citizen Engagement & Governance Continuity (Advanced)

Although the Strategic Plan improves communication, it does not meet the depth of citizen-engagement expectations in the Comprehensive Plan.

Missing Strategic Plan Elements:

- Procedures ensuring public input in rulemaking or major planning decisions.
- Coordination with county entities for economic development, infrastructure, transportation, and flood resilience.
- Participation in county leadership meetings.
- Requirement to compare official plans and resolve inconsistencies.

Gap Summary:

Strategic Plan focuses on communication but not structured governance or intergovernmental coordination. This is intentional as the Strategic Plan is focused on the high level framework for the Town.
