



LOCAL • A3

Antique automobile show



SPORTS • B1

UNCW survives scare to reach CAA final



# StarNews



Sunday, March 6, 2016

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TODAY MON TUE  
 61°/38° 67°/45° 75°/51°  
 Complete forecast, B10

## LOCAL



### Political signs dot the landscape

In hues of red, white and blue — and a few other colors — political signs have appeared on road signs and lawns ahead of the March 15 primary. **A2**

## NATION



### Legal marijuana cuts into profits of drug cartels

Legal marijuana may be doing at least one thing that a decades-long drug war couldn't: taking a bite out of Mexican drug cartels' profits. **A26**

## LIFE

### Cure spring fever with getaways

It's the time of year when spring bulbs aren't the only ones ready to burst forth. **C1**

## BUSINESS

### 2 projects start filming

After several months of all quiet on the film front, local film crew members will dust off their cameras Monday for the start of production on TNT's drama series "Good Behavior." History's military drama series "Six" begins production Thursday. **D1**

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## CONTACT US

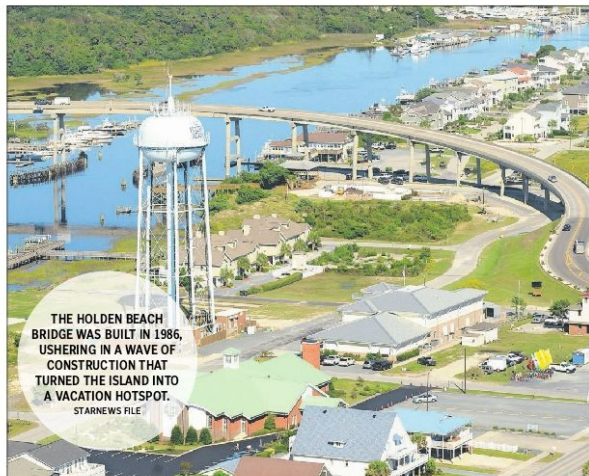
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Volume 149, Issue 144



## BRUNSWICK BOOM: ABOUT THIS SERIES

Brunswick County is one of the fastest growing counties in one of the country's fastest growing states. Throughout the year, this occasional series will look how this rapid growth is changing life in the county and affecting the lives of its residents.



THE HOLDEN BEACH BRIDGE WAS BUILT IN 1986, USHERING IN A WAVE OF CONSTRUCTION THAT TURNED THE ISLAND INTO A VACATION HOTSPOT. STARNEWS FILE

# County of change

Growth is generally accepted as a good thing, but how has it altered Brunswick County?

By Adam Wagner | StarNews Staff

The first time Ouida Hewett went to Holden Beach from her childhood home in Supply, she went by mule cart and didn't pass more than 10 houses on Holden Beach Road.

"We went across the waterway in low water," she said, "and we went to the beach, and my dad was fishing there."

At that time, in the 1930s, Holden Beach had no buildings other than fish shacks, Hewett said. A few homes were built after World War II, up to "20-some" when Hurricane Hazel passed through in 1954 to devastate them and much of the rest of the Brunswick County coast.

1954 also featured the opening of the first bridge to Holden Beach, a turntable bridge. In 1986, a new high-rise bridge replaced that structure, and the areas now a vacation hot spot.

Holden Beach's growth is similar to the rest of Brunswick County's. For much of the 20th Century, several natives said, "rural" was the most apt term for the area. The roads were predominantly dirt, the neighbors

### Population

2016: 124,668  
 2011: 110,312  
 2006: 93,756  
 1991: 52,823  
 1976: 34,500  
 — Census

### Population 65 and over

2016: 29,710  
 2006: 18,125  
 1991: 7,802  
 1976: 3,473  
 — via NC OSBM

### Median age

2014: 49.2 (estimate)  
 2010: 47.4  
 2000: 42.2  
 1990: 37.2  
 1980: 30.5  
 1970: 26.4  
 — Census

SEE BOOM, A5

## GOP CAMPAIGN

# Cruz picks up wins

By Nancy Benac and Roxana Hegeman  
 The Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. — Ted Cruz claimed an easy victory in Kansas, and Republicans said he won Maine in Saturday's four-state round of Republican voting, fresh evidence that there's no quick end in sight to the fractious GOP race for president.

Kansas Democrats gave Bernie Sanders a win, as voters in three states chose between the Vermont senator and Hillary Clinton.

"God bless Kansas," Cruz declared during a rally in Idaho, which votes in three

SEE GOP, A7

## NEW HANOVER COUNTY

# Attacks mark race for county board

March 15 vote to narrow GOP field from 7 to 3 candidates

By Hunter Ingram  
 StarNews Staff

NEW HANOVER COUNTY - The race for a seat on the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners will be whittled down to three GOP candidates when voters take to the polls March 15.

Seven Republicans are vying for three spots in the general election in November, running opposite Democratic candidates Jonathan Barfield, who currently sits on the board; Julia Boseman, who is a former county commissioner; and Nelson Beaulieu.

On the GOP primary ballot will be board chairwoman Beth Dawson, Derrick Hickey, John Babb and Campbell Dodd. Commissioner Woody White,

SEE BOARD, A15

## More inside

Learn more about the seven Republican candidates running for the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners and see where they stand on the issues. **A14-15**

**BOOM**  
From Page A1

homes and people than ever before, bringing both boons — such as a larger tax base and the critical mass to bring larger attractions — and headaches, including clogged transportation arteries and flooding.

“Living expenses and climate are the major reasons,” Bill Sue, a longtime county commissioner, said of the growth. “People retire, they’re on fixed income and they’re going to keep on coming. But the question is, are you going to keep the infrastructure to support them?”

**The natives**

When Sue was born in Leland in 1934, his father used a heifer cow to pay the doctor who delivered him.

For much of Sue’s boyhood, the only road that was paved was U.S. 74-76, a route now known as Old Village Road. The family didn’t even have a car until 1948, Sue said, and that one was ruined soon after because his father didn’t know to put antifreeze in it during the winter.

After bouncing around the country for much of the middle part of the century, Sue returned to the area in 1969, initially moving to Wilmington.

“People told me not to move to Brunswick County because the schools weren’t any good,” he said, waving to the land around his house on Sue Circle and adding, “Well, I’d already purchased this piece of property.”

Soon after returning to Southeastern North Carolina, Sue cleared the land off of Village Road, creating a drainage ditch by detonating dynamite.

When Sue finished building his house in 1970, it was one of 11,729 housing units in the county, according to state statistics. By 2010, the county had 77,482 total housing units.

Explaining why he chose to return to Brunswick at the time, Sue said, “This is home.”

Another person born in Brunswick who came back after a stint away is Kelly Holden, who operates Holden Brothers Farm Market in Shallotte. Holden graduated from Shallotte High School in 1968, one member of, coincidentally enough, a class of 68 people.

“It was just rural,” Holden said of the county. “That’s the best way to describe it.”

In 1974, after some time in the U.S. Navy, Holden returned to his family’s 400-acre farming operation. Shortly after, his father had a heart attack and Holden took charge, phasing out tobacco — once one of Brunswick’s most common crops.

Instead of tobacco, Holden and his brother began to grow vegetables, opening their farmers market at 5600 Ocean Highway West.

“We’ve been able to take advantage of that,” Holden said. “There’s plenty of farmers looking for an alternative, but with us, the location, just up the road we’ve got Ocean Ridge and we’ve got scores of subdivisions everywhere.”

Holden and Sue are a pair of the 1,321 people who moved into their Brunswick County homes between 1970 and 1979, according to Census data. An additional 925 people moved into their homes in 1969 or earlier, meaning only 4.7 percent of Brunswick County residents moved into their homes before 1980.

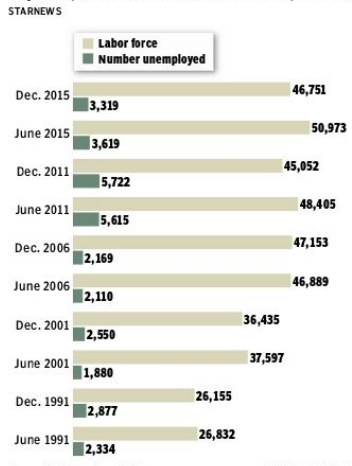
Of the county’s 47,600 householders, 34,021 have moved into their units since 2000, a total of 61.5 percent.

“I’m an endangered species in Brunswick County,” Sue said. “I’m a native.”

Holden watched long-time residents and



Kelly Holden, co-owner of Holden Brothers Farm Market, cultivates a field for spring planting on the farm in Shallotte. The farm has been in the family since 1756. MATT BORN/STARNEWS



Source: NC Department of Commerce GATEHOUSE MEDIA

newcomers clash while he served on the county’s board of commissioners from 1988 to 1992. The locals, he said, thought they were already operating under strict ordinances, while the county’s newer residents wanted to see tighter restrictions.

While Holden believes many of those tensions have eased, he said, “It’s a different season now than it was when I was growing up.”

**The newcomers**

Bob Patey and Gary Ostby are emblematic of one type of newcomer: The residents of the north who came to Brunswick County in an attempt to get away from cold temperatures and high taxes.

“There’s only three choices,” Patey said. “There’s Wilmington, there’s Charleston and then there’s Savannah, because not everybody wants to go to the elephant graveyard known as Florida.”

Ostby, who moved to Brunswick Forest from Michigan in 2013, echoed Patey’s sentiment.

“We’ve got the beach, we’ve got the mild climate,” Ostby said. “We didn’t want to go to Florida because of the summer, and we didn’t want to go to Florida because we know how much of their population is aging and really shouldn’t be on the road.”

Brunswick county’s population 65 and over has climbed by more than 11,000 people in the past 10 years, up to nearly 30,000 people, according to state data.

Still, the county’s total population over that same period has grown by about 31,000 people — it’s up to nearly 125,000 people from

about 94,000 in 2006. That means about 20,000 new residents are not senior citizens.

Chris Britt and his family make up four of those 20,000 people. Britt and his wife moved to Waterford from Wilmington in April 2006.

“Part of the reason we moved out there was for the land,” he said. “At the time, it was real estate at its peak, and when we started looking in Wilmington versus Leland, we could buy more house in Leland for the land that we wanted.”

When the couple moved, though, they found that many of the offerings they were used to in Wilmington weren’t yet available across the Cape Fear River.

“In 2006, there was no Wal-Mart, no Harris Teeter, there was nothing,” Britt said. “There were no restaurants. I remember the first restaurant that popped up was Arby’s.”

At one point, after the couple had two young daughters, they looked at how the neighborhood was developing around them — namely at the number of retirees moving into the area — and decided it might be better to return to Wilmington, even going as far as listing their house.

Still, the move didn’t work out, and now the neighborhood has shifted around them.

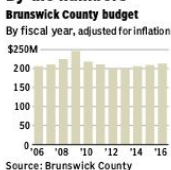
“As the area grows, there’s tons of families now,” Britt said, adding that a normal weekend consists of hanging out in the backyard with their neighbors who also have kids.

In other Brunswick County neighborhoods, the older nature is celebrated. The Brunswick County Newcomers Club,



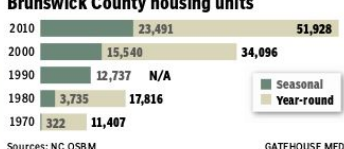
Kelly Holden, co-owner of Holden Brothers Farm Market, gets in a tractor on Tuesday while working on the farm in Shallotte. MATT BORN/STARNEWS

**By the numbers**



Source: Brunswick County GATEHOUSE MEDIA

**Brunswick County housing units**



Source: NC OSBM GATEHOUSE MEDIA

for which Patey serves as second vice president, has about 450 members, with strong contingents from states such as Connecticut, New Jersey and New York.

“It’s a lot like your freshman year in college all over again,” Patey said. “You’re meeting people who are all in the same situation and quite honestly you’re looking for things to do and people to meet.”

**Growing pains**

Brunswick’s newest residents have, at times, left the county struggling to cope with all of their demands.

Perhaps the most obvious way this plays out is the traffic situation on U.S. 17-74-76 every morning and evening.

Since 2003, according to N.C. Department of Transportation data, U.S. 17-74-76 west of Village Road has added more than 20,000 cars per day. In 2003, the area recorded 42,000 trips, a number that reached 66,000 by 2007 and has basically stayed there.

Britt and his family drive on the Causeway every morning and evening.

“We leave early enough in the morning where it doesn’t bother us, but coming home at 5:30, it’s a pain,” Britt said.

Ongoing construction

on U.S. 74-76, expected to wrap up late in 2016, is meant to clear some of the road’s choke points, while the completion of the I-140 Wilmington Bypass is still expected to be completed in late 2017.

The construction that many want to see, though — a new crossing of the Cape Fear River — has not been funded. The project is estimated to cost between \$950 million and \$1 billion.

A draft environmental document for the crossing is projected to be completed in spring of 2017, with a final document being completed in summer of 2018.

Even after the DOT picks a route for the potential crossing, though, the project has not been funded, and the DOT project will take at least five years to complete the new bridge.

Sue, the long-time commissioner, questions whether the coastal county will ever have the political sway to push the project through. He points to statistics that project the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge will have more than 70,000 cars, even when I-140 is completed and with the hypothetical new bridge complete.

“I’ll be gone by then, I won’t sweat it,” Sue said. “But people fight it and fight it. They’ve just got short-range vision.”

Ostby, for his part, bought

in for the long term when he and his wife purchased their Brunswick Forest home.

Since then, though, they’ve seen proposed plans for more homes to be built behind their Leeway Drive property, plans Ostby is concerned could exacerbate flooding in the area.

“Since the place was built,” Ostby said, “we’ve put in a lot more roofs, a lot more driveways, a lot more patios.”

Brunswick Forest isn’t the only area where residents are concerned about flooding. Ostby, in fact, didn’t buy in Brunswick Plantation because he and his wife visited after a heavy rain and decided it wasn’t for them.

In October, Carolina Shores and Calabash saw significant flooding when rains dumped nearly 20 inches of rain on the area, also causing U.S. 133 and a portion of U.S. 17 to close.

“There’s a lot of places that, if they’re only designing to a 10-year event, are going to be in real trouble,” Ostby said. “The town of Leland is struggling to figure out all these things that they’re being asked to handle.”

The same could be said about Brunswick County as a whole.

—Contact Adam Wagner at 910-343-2389 or via email at Adam.Wagner@StarNewsOnline.com.