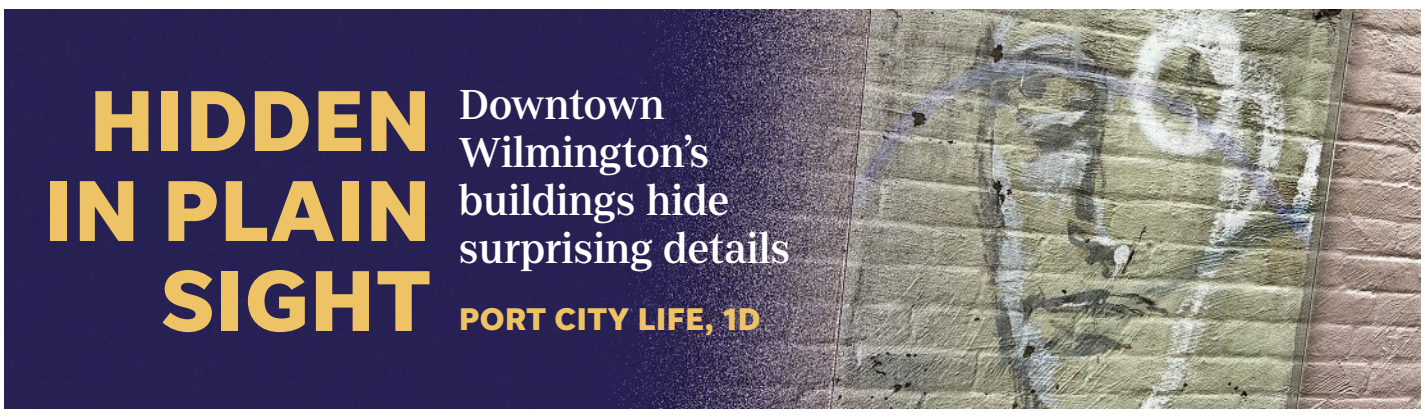



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WEEKEND




# Homeless population continues to rise

## County has invested $80M in last decade

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Despite New Hanover County's investment of millions of dollars in housing services over the past decade, homelessness continues to rise across the Cape Fear region.

County housing spending has been in the spotlight since last summer, when the Board of Commissioners pulled out of an annual $3 million commitment to workforce housing that secured over $100 million in private investments over the three previous years. The dissolution of the county's Workforce Housing Advisory Committee followed soon after.

New Hanover has provided or administered a total of $80,125,598 over the past decade, according to a summary of county housing and homeless-related support. The figure includes funding for a variety of affordable housing developments, as well as millions in relief allocations and nonprofit organization funding.

Still, homelessness in the Cape Fear has steadily climbed in the same time period. The area's homeless population has increased nearly 57% since 2016, according to data from the Cape Fear Homeless Continuum of Care.

### Cape Fear homelessness on the rise

Across New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender counties, the Cape Fear Homeless Continuum of Care's 2026 point-in-time count noted 610 people experiencing homelessness in 2026, up from 506 last year. In 2016, the figure was 389. Notably, the overall population of the Wilmington Metropolitan Area has also doubled over the past decade.

The organization notes that the point-in-time count, conducted each year in January, is not a definitive total number of people experiencing homelessness, but offers a representative sample of the area's homeless population.

New Hanover made up 92% of the homeless population, while Brunswick accounted for 4.2% and Pender held 3.8%. Approximately 53% of the counted residents were sheltered in either emergency or transitional housing. The remaining 47% were

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