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A TRIANGLE RELOCATION GUIDE

Wilmington ↠ Raleigh

What changes, what stays the same, and what to expect when you trade the Cape Fear coast for the Triangle.

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01 Leaving the Coast for the Triangle

Not every move goes toward the water. For as many Raleigh-area buyers heading to Wilmington, there's a steady counter-flow — Cape Fear residents moving inland toward the Triangle for a bigger job market, stronger income growth, and a shot at building more equity, faster.

Some are chasing a promotion or a career change that only exists near Research Triangle Park. Others want their kids in a larger, more resourced school district. Some are simply done rebuilding storm shutters every hurricane season.

The Triangle isn't a downgrade from coastal living — it trades beach access for job density, income growth, and six distinct towns with their own character, from Wake Forest's small-town feel to Cary's master-planned polish. This guide walks through what changes, what stays the same, and what to expect at each step.

02 Homes & Neighborhoods

DBRE's Wake County footprint covers six towns, each with its own character — worth a closer look individually before deciding where to land.

Wake Forest

Where DBRE's Wake County expansion is anchored — small-town character a bit removed from Raleigh's pace, with strong family resources and a historic downtown core.

Cary

The Triangle's most established master-planned community — think Preston, MacGregor Downs, and Lochmere — generally $450,000 and up, with West Cary's newer construction popular with tech and biotech professionals.

Raleigh

Spans the widest range, from in-town bungalows to new construction on the outskirts, with ZIP-level pricing that varies enormously by proximity to downtown and the research corridor.

Apex

Long known for its own historic downtown and small-town feel, having absorbed significant new growth while holding onto that character.

Morrisville

Sits closest to Research Triangle Park and RDU, drawing heavily from the tech and biotech workforce that commutes into the Park daily.

Holly Springs

Newer construction and some of the more accessible price points in the county, with fast-growing family-oriented neighborhoods.

As with Wilmington, school assignments and exact pricing are address-specific even within the same town — always confirm using Wake County Public School System's official locator.

03 Location & Convenience

Airport. Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU) is a major hub with direct flights across the country and several international routes — a significant step up from ILM's regional service.

Medical care. The Triangle is anchored by three major systems — WakeMed, Duke Health, and UNC Health — along with Rex Healthcare, giving far more specialist density than the Cape Fear coast.

Schools. Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) is one of the largest districts in the country, serving all six of DBRE's Wake County towns.

Property taxes. Wake County's rate is 53.71 cents per $100 of assessed value for FY 2026–2027, with each municipality adding its own rate on top — the City of Raleigh's is 35.50 cents per $100.

Getting settled. Utilities, permits, and local services run through whichever municipality you land in.

04 Wilmington vs. Raleigh, By the Numbers

The two markets have been drifting apart. As of September 2026, Wilmington's median sale price rose 4.6% year-over-year while Wake County's fell roughly 2% over the same period — a reversal from the years when Triangle prices consistently outran the coast.

Metric	Wilmington	Raleigh / Wake County
Median home sale price	$423,000 (Wilmington MSA, Sept 2026, +4.6% YoY)	~$480,000–$485,000 (Wake County, mid-2026, roughly −2% YoY)
Airport	ILM (regional)	RDU (major hub)
Combined property tax rate (in-city)	~30.6¢/$100 (county) + 28.25¢/$100 (Wilmington city)	~53.71¢/$100 (county) + 35.50¢/$100 (Raleigh city)
Job market breadth	Tourism, healthcare, port/logistics, growing film industry	Tech, biotech, research, government, finance
Hurricane / flood exposure	Meaningful — budget for it	Low

−2.1%

Wake County's median sale price fell roughly 2.1% year-over-year as of September 2026, while Wilmington's rose 4.6% — the two markets are moving in opposite directions, and proceeds from a coastal home now often go comparably or further inland.

For Wilmington-area sellers, the practical read: Wake County's median has stayed well above Wilmington's even with the recent dip, so proceeds from a coastal home typically buy comparably or go further inland — especially outside Cary and in-town Raleigh.

05 Why Wilmington-Area Buyers Choose Raleigh

Job Market Depth

Research Triangle Park, three major research universities, and a deep tech and biotech employer base.

Income Growth

Wake County's median income runs well above Wilmington's, showing up directly in long-term earning potential.

School District Scale

WCPSS's size brings more specialized programs, more school choice, and more resources.

Storm-Risk Relief

Leaving hurricane season, flood zones, and rising coastal insurance costs behind.

06 Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Is Raleigh more expensive than Wilmington?

Wake County's median has historically run above Wilmington's, though the gap has narrowed as Wilmington prices climbed and Wake County's eased slightly through 2026.

Q. Will my Wilmington-area equity go further in the Triangle?

Cary and in-town Raleigh tend to cost as much as or more than comparable Wilmington-area homes; Wake Forest, Apex, Holly Springs, and parts of Morrisville are often more accessible.

Q. How do I time selling on the coast against buying inland?

Most cross-market moves work best with a coordinated timeline — pre-positioning on the buy side so you're ready once your coastal home goes under contract.

Q. What's the biggest adjustment moving away from the coast?

Most buyers point to the airport (RDU vs. ILM) as a genuine upgrade, and losing beach access as the main tradeoff.

Q. Do I need a different agent on each end of the move?

Not necessarily. DBRE is primarily rooted in the Wilmington/Cape Fear market and has built an advisor-led presence across Wake County.

Ready to Make the Move?

Let's talk through your timeline, your Wilmington-area equity, and the Wake County town that fits.

Contact Dana Blanks Real Estate®

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DBRE is a boutique luxury virtual brokerage rooted in nearly two decades on the Wilmington/Cape Fear coast and now building an advisor-led presence across Wake Forest, Cary, Raleigh, Apex, Morrisville, and Holly Springs. That dual footprint means one advisor team can help you sell on the coast and buy in the Triangle, rather than coordinating two separate agents who've never spoken.

SOURCES

- Cape Fear REALTORS®, Wilmington MSA Market Report (September 2026)
- zillow.com — Wake County, NC Housing Market
- wake.gov — Wake County 2026 Property Tax Bills
- virtuance.com — Raleigh & Wake County property tax rates, 2025–2026

- As-of October 2026. Wilmington's figure is sourced from Cape Fear REALTORS®; Wake County's is directional, pulled from general market reporting. Ask Dana for a current CMA for any specific neighborhood or price point.