

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN



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Executive Summary

Stokes County is rich in natural assets that attract visitors, businesses, and new residents. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are “rediscovering” small, rural places like Stokes County to visit and stay. From Hanging Rock State Park to the Dan River to charming small towns, Stokes County has tremendous opportunity to capitalize on natural resources for jobs and economic growth.

Stokes County Economic Development launched this planning process to bring innovation to its already strong program of work. The Economic Development Department has focused on business recruitment and tourism development. This action plan adds business retention and expansion, as well as deeper support for small businesses and entrepreneurs to the program of work.



The planning process sought input from a wide range of community leaders, elected officials, and businesses. It included a SWOT Analysis, economic profile, business survey, and benchmarking with similar counties. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis revealed strengths in outdoor recreation, quality of life, available land, affordable housing, and an available workforce. The challenges Stokes County faces in economic development include lack of broadband infrastructure, transportation access, countywide infrastructure, and the small scale of the business base. The most significant opportunities for economic development are tourism, expanding infrastructure for business development, small business and entrepreneur development, retaining retail leakage, and investing in education. The threats Stokes County faces are not unique, as most are faced by similar rural counties: population decline, lack of broadband infrastructure, and threats to natural resources.

The Stokes County Economic Development Action Plan has six goals aimed to diversify and expand the business base to provide quality jobs and attract visitors and new residents.

- ⦿ Business Retention and Expansion
- ⦿ Small Business and Entrepreneur Development
- ⦿ Recreation Development
- ⦿ Internal and External Marketing
- ⦿ Sites, Buildings, and Infrastructure
- ⦿ Organizational Development

The key to implementation of the Action Plan is strategic investment of resources into program activities, staffing, and capital improvement projects. It will be important to leverage local funds with grants and state and federal funds. Stokes County has already taken steps in the direction of funding broadband and recreational assets. With local leadership support and targeted public investments, Stokes County will continue to grow.

Economic Development Action Plan

With strategic investments to capitalize on assets, Stokes County can expand the business base, attract more visitors, and create quality jobs. The economic development program can be expanded to help more businesses startup and more to expand through new initiatives in business retention and expansion, small busines development, and entrepreneurship. These programs should be undergirded with site and building development, investments in infrastructure, and marketing and promotion. Expanding the economic development program will take more resources, staff, and partnerships with local and regional agencies.

Stokes County Economic Development Program of Work

Business Retention and Expansion

- **Proactive assessment and support**
- **Positive business climate**
- **Networking, advocacy, and partnerships**

Small Business and Entrepreneur Development

- **Develop startup culture**
- **Targeted incentive support**
- **Update and enhance website information**

Recreation Development

- **Recreation division or department**
- **Invest in assets and infrastructure of recreation**

Internal and External Marketing

- **Website updates**
- **Virtual meeting technologies**
- **Internal marketing**

Sites, Buildings, and Infrastructure

- **Identify, develop, and promote sites and buildings**
- **Make strategic infrastructure investments, including broadband**

Organizational Development

- **Broaden the economic development department to include recreation**
- **Invest in the economic development organization**
- **Broadened leadership engagement**
- **Communicate and measure progress**

Business Retention and Expansion

Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) is an important economic development program component, some would argue the most important. Research has shown that existing businesses represent 70 - 80% of new investment and job creation in a community. The Stoke County business survey shows that 42% plan to expand at their current location. (Appendix C)

A strong BRE program returns investment to the community in a number of ways. BRE programs are less costly than business recruitment programs; decision-makers are local and partners in economic growth; and a strong BRE program supports business recruitment through peer-to-peer marketing. Business retention and expansion is the foundation of a comprehensive economic development program upon which other strategies are built.

Most BRE programs focus on industry, large employers, and manufacturers in general. Stokes County has a diverse economic base; therefore, the its BRE program should branch outside the manufacturing box and reach "gazelles," or smaller growth companies.

The pandemic has changed the way BRE is carried out in the near-term. One of the foundational cornerstones of a BRE program is visiting with companies to assess their expansion potential, identify hurdles, and build relationships. Some companies are allowing visitors now, but others are not. Thus, short-term actions should be altered to meet the needs of business.

GOALS of the BRE Program

- Retain existing businesses
- Facilitate growth and expansion
- Enhance the business climate
- Strengthen the community partnership with business

Getting Started with BRE

1. Do your homework – establish a database
2. Establish BRE Team, team training, resource directory
3. Develop a BRE survey
4. Create a target list of companies and prioritize
5. Create a confidentiality policy
6. Develop the follow up methodology
7. Launch the program
8. Follow up, follow up, follow up

Develop a Business Database

Stokes County EDC should make the **development of a business database** a priority. The database is needed for regular communication and surveying. Start with the largest employers in the county, add the largest taxpayers and utility customers for local water and sewer services. Then add the Chamber's database. Add to this by using a subscription to a service like Dun & Bradstreet or ReferenceUSA, which is available through nclive.org.

Leverage the BRE Team

Stokes County Economic Development already has a BRE Team. It includes the chamber, utility providers, local governments, planning departments, NC DOT, Forsyth Technical Community College, and others who support business expansion and development. Consider adding representatives from Forsyth Tech's Winston-Salem programs, such as their Small Business Center to provide links to additional resources for Stokes businesses. Organize a meeting of this team to inform them of the launch of the new BRE Program and ask for their ongoing support including participating in BRE visits as needed. Emphasize confidentiality and how follow up on issues will take place.

Establish a Business Survey System

- Surveying Online – Use this method in the near term as companies may limit outside visitors during the pandemic. Surveys are used to gather information from a broad brush of businesses at a single point in time.
 - A good use of a survey is to gauge how businesses are recovering from the pandemic.
 - Another good use of an online survey is to gauge trends in business satisfaction with the Stokes County business climate.
- Surveying during Business Visits – Develop a survey instrument to be used when meeting with companies. An example is in Appendix D. The survey is used to gather baseline data in the beginning and used to identify business trends later.
 - We recommend a staff person regularly visit with local businesses to conduct the survey.
 - If an in-person visit is not an option at some companies right now, set up a virtual or telephone meeting.

42% of
businesses
surveyed
plan to expand

Establish a Business Visitation Program

Develop a list of companies targeted for the BRE effort. Include:

- All manufacturers (of any size)
- Other companies employing more than 10 people (no matter which business sector)
- Companies in key sectors like tourism
- Gazelles and smaller companies with growth potential
- Entrepreneurs, even if they are a one-person company
- At-risk companies

The database of companies should include the company name, contact information and a primary and secondary contact for the BRE program.

Prioritize Visits - Prioritize the target company list so that companies with the greatest anticipated need are visited first. Priority companies should include those that are expected to expand, downsize, or have a pressing barrier to maintaining or growing operations. The top 10 largest employers should also be a top priority.

Team Up with Allies for Visits – Communicate with the EDPNC Regional Representative about your BRE goals. Ask her to include your office in her meetings in Stokes County, or at least to provide a post-visit summary if participation is not feasible. Likewise, invite her to key visits that this office makes. Companies want to see a seamless and connected set of resources, not give the same information out to multiple agencies. Identify others making business calls in Stokes County such as the Piedmont Triad Regional Workforce Development Board, Forsyth Tech, NC Industry Expansion Solutions, and ensure a communication pathway to share information on Stokes County businesses.

Introduce the BRE Program - Send an eblast from the EDC to the BRE database. Introduce and describe the BRE program and ask for their support and participation. Promote on the EDC's social media platforms.

Visitation Goals - Establish a goal of visiting or making contact with 2-3 companies a month. This may not sound like a significant time commitment; however, each visit requires preparation and follow up time.

- Post Visit Follow Up - Send a follow-up email note after visits listing actions to be taken and response timeline.

Organize BRE Information - There are computer programs that track existing business visits and the information gathered. Examples are Salesforce, ExecutivePulse (E-Pulse), and Synchronist. Excel, Word, or other cloud tools will also work. Example information to track:

- What has been the schedule of visits to the company?
- When was the last company visit made?
- What information was discussed during the visit?
- What action steps were developed?
- What is the timeline to respond back to the company?
- What referrals to each partner agency were made and when?
- Next steps for the next company visit.

Follow-Up Strategy - The easiest way to sink a new BRE program is not following up on concerns and issues identified during a visit. Develop a system to ensure the EDC and its partners follow up on each action item from a BRE visit.

Visits to Corporate Headquarters - Retention and expansion visits to the corporate headquarters of local companies pays dividends. Often divisions compete for new product lines and expansions.

- During the current environment which restricts travel, reach out to corporate headquarters with e-communications and set up virtual meetings. Good contacts are in the company's facilities and real estate divisions.
- When traveling for economic development resumes, go through local representatives to set appointments. The visit should be focused on showing appreciation for the local operation, soft marketing of why any expansion should come to Stokes County, and building a relationship. Incorporate these visits as EDC staff travel for economic development conferences and business development.

Confidentiality

Similar to business recruitment projects, BRE programs access confidential company information. Existing businesses must be reassured that the EDC will hold information in confidence, sharing information only with other service providers when required.

- Develop a confidentiality policy for EDC staff and share with the County Manager and Board of Commissioners.
- Develop a Non-Disclosure Agreement to be signed by the staff, the company, and any agency receiving confidential information when request by the company.
- Keep all information gathered during visits confidential, sharing critical information with other service providers only after approved by the business.
- During visits, state the EDC's confidentiality policy to companies.
- When engaging another service provider to make a joint visit or to provide follow up services, gain clearance from the company for the service provider's participation.
- Reporting on the BRE program to the county board and other groups should only include the names of companies visited each reporting period and an overview of common issues that face many companies. Reporting should not allow for any one company's issue or problem to be singled out or identified by inference.
- When the need for confidentiality has ended and when the company agrees, publicize the work of the BRE program.

Existing Business Intelligence

- Use Google News Alerts to follow the news of local companies.
- Follow company CEOs/Presidents/Facility Managers on Twitter and LinkedIn.
- Participate in online networking groups (ex: LinkedIn groups) for business sectors most prominent in Stokes County.

Use Data in Policy Formation

Use the information gathered in the BRE Program to influence local policies:

- Regulatory changes
- Land use policy
- Incentive policy

- Regional and state legislative advocacy
- Education and training programs and investments

Business Appreciation

Most BRE programs have a component that recognizes the contribution of businesses in the community. Appreciation and recognition events in the past have ranged from business appreciation banquets to annual golf tournaments to week-long celebrations spotlighting businesses and publicly acknowledging their contributions to the economy and community. During the current times, economic development organizations have held virtual tours, online interviews with company executives, blog/newsletter series spotlighting local companies, etc.

- Organize a Business Appreciation Week – Post-COVID, the week could include business tours, breakfast with the mayor, and other special events, like a ‘Stokes Business Showcase’, for businesses to display their products and services and network with each other and the public. Some EDOs are holding virtual tours now.
- Organize a business tour(s) for community leaders, EDPNC, teachers, existing industry and business, and the media.
- Invite local, regional, and state elected leaders, business and civic leaders, and press.
- Publicity for local companies aids in employee recruitment, raises the image of businesses, and expands citizen support.
- The EDC could present awards during the week for example, small business of the year.
- Have the county issue a proclamation of business appreciation. This act aids in publicity and media coverage of Business and Industry Appreciation Day.
- Develop and place positive stories on social media and in the local newspaper about the week’s events.
- During the pandemic, some of the events could be done with pre-recorded videos, live interviews streamed, and a marketing campaign raising awareness of existing businesses.

Early Warning System

One of the benefits of creating a BRE program is the development of an early warning system. Often local leaders find themselves asking, “Was there anything we should have/could have done to prevent the closing/layoff?” In most cases the answer is no. National business trends cannot be reversed by local policy. However, the answer in a small number of cases is yes. For example, when a company has to choose between closing one of two similar facilities in different cities, it likely will choose to stay in the most supportive city.



- Develop a profile of an at-risk firm. Make sure these firms are included and labeled as such in your business database. Some trends to watch for:
 - Declining sales
 - Declining employment
 - Expansion potential with no more building or land for growth

- Negative trend for product or service
- Changes in ownership
- Contentious labor-management relations
- Changes in regulations that create barriers to expansion
- Structural changes in the economy like the current downsizing of bricks-and-mortar retail
- Increase contacts with at-risk firms to assess assistance needed. Instead of visiting the company annually, increase visits to quarterly, or check in by phone/email regularly.
 - During the start of the pandemic, many EDOs called companies every two weeks to check in.
- Identify the specific factors that are leading to the possibility of a downsizing or closure. Marshall agencies at regional and state levels to help retain the company.
- Make contingency plans for what would happen if the company laid off workers or closed.
 - Assess the marketability of the building.
 - Inventory skill sets of the employees.
 - Determine the impact on local tax and utility revenues.

Supporting Education and Workforce Development

The number one concern of existing businesses is workforce – availability, retention, training, and attraction. The EDC should be a team player and supporter of education and workforce development programs.

- Share employer feedback on skills needed with Stokes County Schools and Forsyth Technical Community College.
 - Based on that feedback, identify where new programs could be developed (e.g. machine technology) and where programs need to be expanded (e.g. welding).
- Work with Stokes County Schools to expand job shadowing, internship, and apprenticeship opportunities by connecting employers with the schools.
- Develop a one-page e-brochure for employers on “How to Engage with Schools.” Post on the website. The brochure can include how to set up a job shadowing day, how to structure an internship, etc.
- Continue engagement with Stokes County Schools, such as the existing career fair.
- Continue serving on committees and boards of workforce development agencies.

Marketing the BRE Program

The newly developed BRE program will benefit from a marketing brochure and prominent placement on the website.

Brochure

- The brochure could be one page, developed in-house or with professional support.
- Content should include goals of the BRE program, services available to local companies, how to contact the EDC, etc.

- Email the brochure in advance of setting appointments, leave it with contacts following calls as a reminder of services, and distribute at local events to generate interest in the program.

Website (see other website upgrade recommendations in the marketing section)

- Update the “Business Information” menu tab on the EDC’s website.
- Change “Starting a Business” to “Start and Grow a Business.” On that page:
 - Describe the BRE Program – Start-up and expansion assistance, visits to building relationships, community appreciation, advocating for a positive business climate, etc.
- Put a “call to action” button on this page that leads to a contact form.
- Add a Business Resources tab under the Business Information menu.
 - Include local, county, regional, and state resources that support businesses. This could be a type of directory, organized by type of need: financing, regulatory assistance, business planning, mentoring, etc.

BRE Public Relations

- Publicize the good things that local companies do throughout the year.
- Electronic newsletter and eblasts are the preferred means of communication by local businesses.
- When adding social media posts to the calendar, include posts about local businesses.
- Feature entrepreneurs and small business owners in media.
- Check out one of our favorite small-town blogs: <https://absolutelyallegghany.com/>. It features people in the community. Stokes County could do something similar but with more of a business focus.
- Follow local companies on social media and re-Tweet, like, and comment on their posts.
- Nominate local companies for regional and statewide business recognition awards such as those given by business associations and regional newspapers and magazines. Such recognition will not only be good for the company, but also good public relations for the community.

Existing Business Recruiters

Existing businesses are the best recruiters in a community. Peer-to-peer contact has proven to be the most effective means of marketing in economic development. Stokes County already has some ambassadors and should continue to turn existing business leaders into an army of recruiters.

- Investigate the app Social Toaster. It is a way for local business recruiters to amplify the EDC’s social media with one click.
- Ask the company if it would be willing to take Stokes County marketing materials to industry trade shows/conferences and share information packets with customers or suppliers that visit the town.
 - During the pandemic, ask if they would share this information through a link on their website under, “Why our company chose Stokes County.”
- During BRE visits, discover those companies that would be good spokespersons for the county.

Providing Value from the BRE Program

Building a Network

- Test interest in online networking with a LinkedIn Group for BRE. Promote signing up in an eblast.
- Host a Business Expo to encourage customer/supplier relationships. This could be part of the Business Appreciation Week of events. Invite the BRE database to networking events with special eblasts focused to the business community.
 - Some communities have hosted virtual expos during the pandemic.

Support Business Development

Stokes County EDC does not provide training services, but its partner the Small Business Center at Forsyth Tech does. Advocate for the following training that businesses say is important:

- Internet marketing
- Sales and marketing in general
- Business planning and management
- Entrepreneurship training

Incentives

Incentive policies should give an advantage to existing businesses over new businesses recruited. The advantage is often in lower thresholds for eligibility and/or increased incentive amount or years of payment.

- Post the incentive policy on the EDC website under the new "Business" section.
- List county and state incentive resources.
- Support the municipalities developing small business incentive grant programs such as façade and building renovation. These are often focused in downtown areas to spark revitalization.

Professional Development for Staff

The EDC staff have many responsibilities, of which BRE is only one. Therefore, we understand that specific training in BRE will be limited. Below are a few recommendations to continue learning about business retention and expansion best practices.

- International Economic Development Council (IEDC) publishes the Business Retention and Expansion Manual that can be purchased from its website, www.ideconline.org. This provides a good background in BRE.
- IEDC also offers professional development courses and webinars in BRE. Webinars are cost effective for a small staff like the EDC.
- Business Retention and Expansion International (www.brei.org) is an international professional association of BRE professionals. It offers specific professional certification in BRE called the Business Retention and Expansion Professional.
- Network with economic development peers across the region to gain ideas and experiences.

Measuring the BRE Program

Below are a few suggested measurements to gauge the outcomes of the BRE program. We think the best measure is a satisfaction survey. Survey businesses once a year and ask a few questions:

- Rate the business climate of Stokes County on a scale of 1 to 5.

- Does Stokes County exceed, meet, or fall short of your expectations as a business location?
- Would you recommend Stokes County as a business location to a colleague?

Example Metrics

- Ratings of the business climate in the community
- Number of businesses expanded
- Number of businesses assisted (type of assistance, value of assistance provided, etc.)
- Number of jobs retained (full time, part-time, contract, seasonal)
- Number of businesses retained
- Businesses remaining and growing in the region following a risk of departure or closure
- Past utilization of and satisfaction with local business assistance programs
- Relocation of supplier or customers

Small Business and Entrepreneurship

The majority of Stokes County businesses are small businesses. There is tremendous opportunity to support startups and foster the growth and development of small businesses. The current chaotic economic times will create openings for new businesses to spring up.

Small Business and Entrepreneurship Priorities

- Update and enhance information on the website
- Targeted incentive support
- Foster the startup culture

Expand the Economic Development Program to include Proactive Small Business and Entrepreneur Development Strategies

- Update the "Starting a Business" webpage. Shift from heavy narrative to resource links, succinct information, e-materials, and infographics.
 - Organize information on the page with How to Get Started, How-To Kits, Financing, and Resource Links.
 - Under the How to Get Started section, create and link to a PDF that lists the step-by-step process to start a business in Stokes County beginning with resources to develop a business plan, where to find financing, and how to apply for permits.
 - Under the How-To Kits section, create a series of e-brochures on how to start common businesses in Stokes County – How to Start a Restaurant, How to Start a Bed and Breakfast, How to Start a Retail Store, How to Start an Art Gallery, How to Start a Food Truck Business, etc.

- Financing links can include connections to local incentives/grants, Small Business Administration information, and venture and angel capital firms in the Piedmont Triad.
 - Under a Resources links section, add a short (a couple of sentences) description of local and regional small business resources – Forsyth Tech Small Business Center and two local resources: SBTDC at Winston-Salem State University. Do not forget to add the EDC office as a resource.
- Update the Stokes County incentive policy to include a Small Business Development Grant. This incentive could be a grant up to \$5,000 for any small business investing \$250,000 or more in real property improvements and/or personal property and creating jobs (e.g. five jobs). The grant could help restaurants, lodging establishments, retailers, and other small business development to support the tourism economy. Limitations such as locally owned and completion of investment before a grant is paid could be applied.
- Develop a cooperative marketing grant for businesses. The grant could be up to a \$500, 50/50 matching grant to be applied to external marketing of Stokes County. For example, if a tourism related business is advertising in *Our State* magazine, the grant would pay up to 50% or \$500 of an ad. Stipulations could include that the ad include a common statement/logo/phrase like “Visit Stokes County, NC”, only one grant per business per year, and be placed in a pre-approved list of outlets that align with Stokes County’s marketing plan.
- Fostering the startup culture in Stokes County can be accomplished through building out the ecosystem.
 - Work with Stokes County Schools to develop a Youth Entrepreneurship Program. Surry County Schools (in partnership with Mt. Airy and Elkin City School System) has a good model to follow. Students are assigned a mentor to help them develop a business plan for a competition. The winner receives \$5,000.
 - Support the Chamber of Commerce in developing a countywide business plan competition. Stokes County EDC can be a partial funder of the program and assist the chamber with promotion and organization of the competition. Templates for business plan competitions can be found across the state. Most include a panel of business owners to vet the submission and a package of cash and in-kind services to the winner.
 - Junior Achievement of Central NC is another ally for raising awareness of entrepreneurship in the schools. Explore the possibility of adding JA programming in the school system.
- Promote entrepreneurship to raise awareness of startup opportunities and resources.
 - Promote the Small Business Center programs by including in eblasts and social media.
 - Promote the chamber small business events through social media.
 - Develop a marketing campaign for the “how-to” kits described above that leads off with something like – Ready to Start Your Own Business in Stokes County?

83% of
 Stokes County
 businesses have
 less than 10
 employees

- Use retail leakage data to help small businesses expand.
- Begin exploration of a business incubator/entrepreneurship hub for Stokes County.
 - Learn more about CoSquare in Caswell County or VentureAsheboro in Randolph County. Visit the Floyd Innovation Center in Floyd, VA. Follow the progress in Moore County to develop an entrepreneurship hub.
 - Begin investigating grant opportunities through the U.S. Economic Development Administration of U.S. Department of Agriculture to fund a feasibility study (Moore County recently received a feasibility study grant from US EDA).
 - Be on the lookout for a building that could be used as an incubator. Good candidates are buildings in good condition with an open, flexible floor plan, strategic location, and preferably could be donated or owned by a nonprofit or public entity.
- Support the Stokes County 2035 plan recommendations for downtown and streetscape enhancements.

Recreation Development

Two of Stokes County's top three employment sectors support tourism – retail trade and accommodation and food service. Hanging Rock State Park broke visitor records in 2020. The natural assets of the county support growing and nurturing the tourism economy. As more people “discover” the outdoors, Stokes County is poised to attract not only day-trippers but also people coming for weekend getaways and longer stays.

A recreation division or department could advocate for and leverage municipal amenity development such as the Connect Danbury plan. It can also connect county plans, such as the Dan River Recreation and Stewardship Plan, to municipal plans.

Recreation Development Priorities

- Recreation division or department
- Invest in assets and infrastructure of recreation

Create a Recreation Division or Department

- A new recreation division or department could be a stand-alone department; however, broadening the economic development department to include recreation will provide synergies with the overall economic development strategy.
 - Develop a program of work for the new division/department to ensure it aligns with economic and tourism development goals.
 - Include the Recreation Director in the Stokes County Marketing Coalition to ensure alignment in marketing recreation events and programs.
- Implement the 2010 Moratock Park Master Plan recommendation that Stokes County ultimately hire a full-time parks director.
- Implement the Stokes Count 2035 recommendations for trail development – Mountains-to-Sea, mountain bike, and greenways.
- Charge the recreation department with identifying and securing grants for recreation infrastructure development:
 - River access
 - Engaging wayfinding to publicize and orient visitors and others to recreation assets
 - Trail expansion and connectivity, including interpretive trails
 - Camping facilities including yurts, cabins, and other unique lodging facilities
 - Day use facilities such as picnic shelters, restrooms, amphitheaters
- The department can also seek grant and funding for wayfinding signage to recreation destinations and assets.
- Support the efforts to expand and market the 'scenic byway' which will bring more visitors to Stokes County.

- The recreation department will also lead program development for residents by coordinating existing programming of the YMCA, Coop Extension and Arts Council, as well as develop new programming. Recreational programming could include additional league sports, community wellness programs like yoga, senior health, and fitness programs, and partnerships with Stokes County employers to engage the workforce in wellness initiatives.
- This new division/department can lead further development of Moratock Park as called for in the 2010 Moratock Park Master Plan: amphitheater, adventure playground, disc golf, ball field lights, Farmers' Market pavilion, paddle access improvements, upland trails and vistas, secondary signage, and outdoor classroom.
- Work with the NC Department of Transportation to plan for, fund, and construct bike lanes in the most popular and dangerous areas for cyclists

Moratock Park

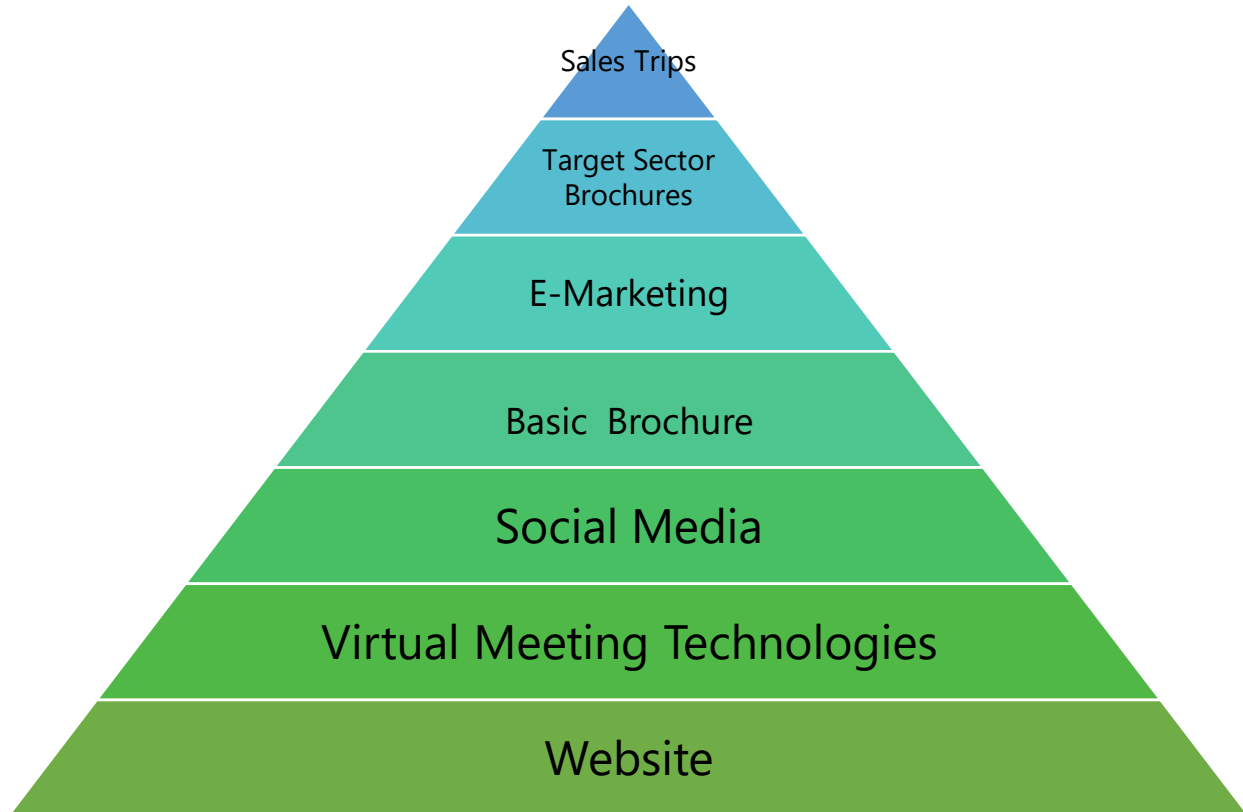


Internal and External Marketing

Marketing is a key function of the economic development program. External marketing attracts businesses, visitors, and new residents, while internal marketing builds consensus for strategic county investments to support economic development.

If you were to think of marketing as a pyramid, the foundation is the website. After that, spend funds on virtual meeting technologies. Virtual engagement is here to stay, so economic development organizations need to be really good at it. Social media is not expensive, but it is time consuming. Next, we recommend spending funds on an electronic general brochure. E-marketing techniques, including eblasts, e-newsletters, blogs, etc., is another level up the pyramid. At the top is in-person sales trips, trade shows, special marketing events, and visiting consultants. This is the last area of marketing we recommend for Stokes County. It is expensive with a higher cost to return ratio.

Internal and External Marketing Priorities



Marketing Plan

- Develop a written, annual marketing plan that can be shared with strategic partners. This will allow them to find synergies with their marketing efforts, thereby amplifying the marketing work of Stokes County Economic Development.
 - Include radio, print, and digital media schedule.
 - Share progress on accomplishing the plan with the county and municipalities.
- Organize a quarterly meeting of all organizations that market Stokes County to make sure the marketing message is consistent and that resources are being leveraged, not duplicated. This could be called the Stokes County Marketing Coalition. The Coalition can develop an overall Stokes County marketing plan by combining all of the members' marketing plans for the year. This will show, in one place, the comprehensive marketing efforts of Stokes County.

Amplify and Enhance the External Marketing Message

Websites are the most important way to communicate to an external audience. The Stokes County economic development website should contain information and messages to a wide range of diverse audiences – new businesses, existing businesses, entrepreneurs, visitors, potential new residents, stakeholders, etc. We recommend updating the look similar to the HangingRock.com site.

Websites are the most effective marketing technique in economic development

- Create a new website for economic development. The current website is outdated and needs an overhaul. The HangingRock.com site is a good example of a visually pleasing, information-filled site. Some best practices to include in the new site:
 - Less narrative and more images, video, infographics, and data.
 - The new videos on the home page are a great addition. Lure site visitors into clicking on the videos with engaging thumbnail images.
 - Main menu bar selections of Business, Living, Visiting, Resources, and About are a few ideas.
 - The Business section can include sites, buildings, incentives, workforce training, starting a business, business directory, economic and workforce data, etc.
 - The Living section would include demographic data and education information, as well as links to realtors, health care, municipal links, and other quality of life amenities.
 - The Visiting section will be an overview of things like “eat, stay, play, shop,” which then link to HangingRock.com, other tourism sites, Facebook pages, and other social media.
 - The Resources page could be similar to the current Links page.
 - Keep the news page current, along with connections to social media platforms with current information.

- Invest in virtual meeting technologies such as quality cameras, microphones, and meeting platforms. Ensure staff is trained to lead virtual meetings using screen share, annotation, and presenting sites using GIS.
- Invest in drone videos of sites to “show” sites virtually.
- Shift the marketing outlets during the pandemic.
 - Pull back on billboards as fewer people are commuting. Invest more in digital media.
 - Continue to increase social media marketing.
 - Consider reviewing investments in print media as younger audiences are much less likely to receive print media. Stokes County’s outdoor recreation focus is skewed to a younger audience.
- Create a professional photo library.
 - Engage a professional photographer to take photos of people working in businesses, recreating, shopping, dining, and enjoying amenities.
 - House the photos in a cloud photo library.
 - Provide access to allies like the Chamber.
 - Allow use of photos to cooperative marketing partners
- Market Stokes County recreation assets with Pilot Mountain and Surry County recreation assets. Consider a joint brochure or cross marketing on each other’s websites.
- Advocate for an occupancy tax to increase funding for tourism. Occupancy taxes are paid by visitors, so they are often used to fund tourism related marketing.
- As funding expands, add information on Stokes County’s target sectors to the website and develop e-brochures for each. We recommend dropping Distribution and Logistics from the target list due to the lack of inventory of large acreage sites for distribution centers, and officially add tourism to the list.
 - Advanced manufacturing
 - Medical devices
 - Professional services
 - Tourism

Turn the Internal Market into Champions and Ambassadors

- Create and maintain a local blog, housed on the new website. Absolutely Alleghany is mentioned above as a great example: <https://absolutelyalleghany.com/>. Eblast out the blog posts to a database of Stokes County stakeholders and citizens.
- Ask businesses and partners like the chamber to link to the new EDC website when launched.
- Write a periodic guest column for the local newspapers. The first one can be about getting started with implementation of the new strategic plan.
- Make quarterly update presentations to town and city councils and monthly update presentations to county commissioners.
- Develop a standard presentation on Stokes County economic development and offer to give to civic and nonprofit organizations.

Sites, Buildings, and Infrastructure

The overwhelming majority of businesses want or prefer an existing building, at 82%. The remaining 18% want a qualified, shovel-ready site. Stokes County lacks in both qualified sites and buildings inventory. The county also lacks in several areas of infrastructure – water, sewer, and broadband. This is the most important, and most costly, investment needed for economic development.

Site, Building, and Infrastructure Priorities

- Identify, develop, and promote sites and buildings
- Make strategic infrastructure investments, including broadband

Support Infrastructure Development

- The number one public investment Stokes County can make is in broadband. Without expansions of broadband, the county will not be able to attract businesses or people. Stokes County is well aware of this need and is making investments in expansion.
- Facilitate a work session of all municipalities and the county to identify infrastructure needs and grant opportunities in each municipality. This will allow the county to advocate for those needs, support the grant applications, and align with county investments.

Identify and Develop Sites

- Working with each municipality and the county, develop an inventory of publicly owned land not currently being used. Often cities and counties own land that is prime for development. From this inventory, conduct a review and assessment of parcels that could be ideal for business and residential. These parcels can be marketed to developers and businesses. Also be on the lookout for parcels that would be ideal for amenity development such as parks (even small pocket parks), trailheads, river access, etc.
- Review the land owned by large businesses. Sometimes companies own far more land than they will need to develop. The excess land could be parceled off and marketed to another business.
- Inventory and promote vacant and underutilized properties. These could be former industrial sites, vacant buildings, and properties used for a less than ideal purpose (i.e., a warehouse in a retail area).
- Support the work the City of King has done to identify and promote business development sites by filing in and expanding a business park area. The study for the city also identified two other areas for development.
- Follow up on the 2013 Action Plan for Recruitment:
 - The study identified the Holder Site as a top priority and also recommended pursuing the Moore Road Property.
 - Sites in the Walnut Cove area were identified for smaller, lighter industrial uses.

- Identify small, infill sites with infrastructure in municipalities. These could be a few acres and suitable for small businesses.
 - Create an inventory, posted to the website, of small industrial and commercial sites ideal for startup and small businesses.
- Set a goal of certifying one site a year through the NC Department of Commerce Certified Sites Program. Completing due diligence on sites lowers risk, thereby making the sites more attractive to prospects.
 - In addition to the due diligence steps listed in the Stokes County 2035 plan, add a wetlands identification review.

Increase the Inventory of Available Buildings

- Maintain updated building inventory information by networking with realtors and reviewing listings on services like LoopNet.
 - Go beyond industrial properties typically listed with EDPNC. Maintain an inventory of small buildings suitable for startups and small businesses. This could include downtown properties.
- Identify leasable space not currently in use in existing facilities. Survey existing businesses to determine if they have unused manufacturing or distribution space they are willing to lease.
- Investigate potential spec building partnerships with developers. There are good examples of spec building public-private partnerships across North Carolina. Some avenues to explore:
 - NC Electric Membership Cooperative have a zero-interest loan fund that can be accessed for spec buildings.
 - Catawba County has a successful model of bringing together landowners, builders, municipalities, and the county to form a partnership to develop a spec building.
 - Transylvania County used an expanding existing business as the anchor tenant of a multi-tenant spec building. The existing business expansion included new job creation that was leveraged for grant funding (Golden LEAF) for the building.

Organizational Development

It is recommended that Stokes County Economic Development update its mission to reflect the full scope of work of the department, expand staff and funding to adequately implement the Action Plan, and broaden leadership engagement.

A starting place is updating the name of the department. We recommend renaming to the **Stokes County Economic, Tourism, and Recreation Department**.

Organizational Development Priorities

- Broaden the economic development department to include recreation
- Invest in the economic development organization
- Broaden leadership engagement
- Communicate and measure progress

Broaden the Economic Development Department to Include Recreation

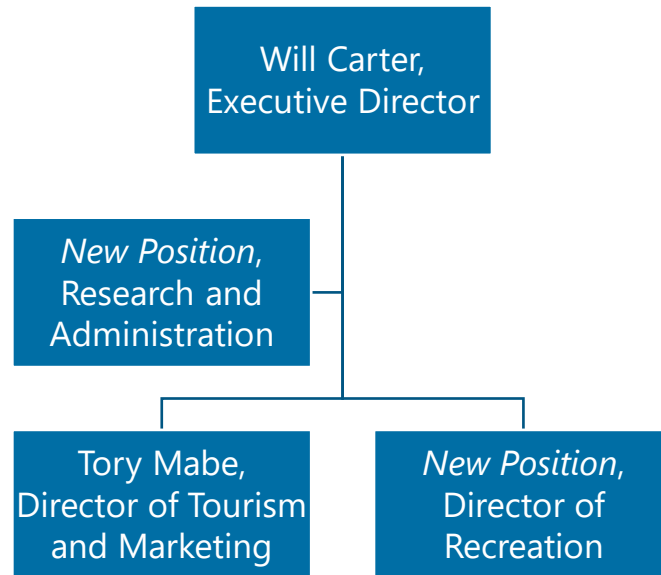
In Stokes County, tourism and recreation are integral to the overall economic development strategy. Folding recreation development into the department to have a common vision, work plan, and budget will ensure that resources are deployed efficiently. One example is in marketing where promoting tourism is also promoting recreation which, in turn, raises awareness of Stokes County as an ideal place to start a business.



Adequately Resource the Economic, Tourism, and Recreation Development Department to Implement the Strategic Plan

Expand the economic development department to include a new position for recreation development (2022) and another position for research and administration (2023). The research and administration position will develop data analytics for small business development, maintain site/building inventory, maintain databases for e-communications, keep current demographic and economic data, and

administrative tasks to support the department. The new recreation position will lead identifying grants for recreation asset and program development as well as oversee programs.



Advisory Board

Create a business advisory board to broaden support of the economic development program. The board will be advisors with no fiduciary or governance responsibilities. The board can be a mix of county council appointments and businesses leaders selected by the board (initial group selected by the director). An example is a seven-member board with three appointments from the county council and four members elected/selected from the business community. The group can help with internal marketing, BRE events, and networking, as well as provide business input into the economic development program.

Nonprofit Economic Development Corporation

Many county economic development departments have a related nonprofit economic development corporation. Nonprofit corporations are used in economic development to fast-track services for recruitment projects such as a quick-turnaround site plan, develop property in public-private partnerships, raise funds from foundations and the private sector, and support marketing. The nonprofit is more nimble and responsive than local government, giving flexibility to the economic development staff.

Communicating and Measuring Progress

- Create a dashboard on the economic development website of a few metrics that indicate the progress of economic development.
 - Number of visitors
 - Amount of visitor spending

- Job growth or unemployment rate
- Average county wage

Include this dashboard in e-communications with internal stakeholders and make them a part of presentations to local governments.

- In addition to the dashboard, track other metrics for the EDC to use in program development and tracking.
 - Active Projects (size, industry, lead source, location, etc.)
 - Missed Recruitment Opportunities
 - BRE Visits
 - Existing Business Expansions and Retention Projects
 - Tourism statistics such as expenditures, employment, payroll, sales tax, etc.
 - Community Support Assistance
 - Marketing Contacts – eblast opens, website analytics (clicks and page views), shares, likes, etc.
 - Analytics from website and social media platforms

Implementation Guide

The Implementation Guide on the next page is a recommendation on how the Economic Development Department, with adequate funding, can approach the strategic plan. The implementation schedule recognizes the small staff size and limited resources of the department.

Additional resources are recommended to implement the strategic plan. Below are some example budget implications of action steps.

- ⊙ New website - \$5,000 - \$25,000, depending upon level of staff support, plus \$1,000/year for updates
- ⊙ Virtual meeting technology hardware and platforms - \$1,000
- ⊙ Increased Marketing (videos, drone footage, etc.) - \$7,500/year
- ⊙ Certifying an industrial site - \$25,000
- ⊙ Business Appreciation Events - \$1,000/year
- ⊙ New brochures (BRE, employer/schools engagement) - \$500- \$1,500 each depending upon level of staff support
- ⊙ Cooperative Marketing Grant Program = \$5,000/year
- ⊙ Photo Library - \$5,000+
- ⊙ Youth Entrepreneurship Competition = \$5,000
- ⊙ Research and Administration Position = \$68,000 including benefits cost
- ⊙ Recreation Department = \$175,000+

We recommend a \$55,000 annual increase to Economic Development budget in year 1, not including recreation department/division cost. In years 2-5, we recommend a total of \$120,000 a year including the new research and administration position but not including recreation department/division cost.

Stokes County Economic Development Action Plan Implementation Guideline

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Years 4-5
Business Retention & Expansion	Business Database Establish BRE Team Business Survey System Early Warning System Marketing BRE Program Visitation Program	Business Appreciation Events Expand Job Shadowing, Internships, Apprenticeships Employer Brochure on Engaging with Schools	Ongoing Visitation, Surveying, and Marketing of BRE Program Ongoing Business/Education Feedback	Ongoing Visitation, Surveying, and Marketing of BRE Program Ongoing Business/Education Feedback
Small Business and Entrepreneur Development	Update Website with SB/E Info.	Update Incentive Policy to Support SB/E Cooperative Marketing Grant Program	Building out the Ecosystem- Youth Programs and Business Plan Competition	Explore Incubator Facility
Recreation Development	Create Recreation Division/Department	Invest in Recreation Destinations, Facilities Expand Recreation Programming	Invest in Recreation Destinations, Facilities Expand Recreation Programming	Invest in Recreation Destinations, Facilities Expand Recreation Programming
Internal & External Marketing	Marketing Plan Development New Website Virtual Meeting Technologies Internal Marketing	Professional Photo Library Website Enhancements of Target Sectors Internal Marketing	Website Updates Internal Marketing	Website Updates Internal Marketing
Sites, Buildings, and Infrastructure	Prioritize Infrastructure Investments Review of Publicly-Owned Properties Review of Excess Business-Owned Acreage Certify One Site A Year	Inventory Vacant and Underutilized Properties Inventory Infill Sites Certify One Site A Year	Identify Acreage for a New Business Park Certify One Site A Year	Continue Development Planning and Investments Certify One Site A Year
Organizational Development	Broaden Economic Development Department to Include Recreation Strategic Plan Funding Metrics	Strategic Plan Funding Economic Development Advisory Board Metrics	Strategic Plan Funding Nonprofit Economic Development Corporation Metrics	Strategic Plan Funding Metrics

Appendix A: SWOT Analysis

Stokes County has many assets that support economic development. Many of those assets support outdoor recreation-related tourism such as the state park, river, cycling, and a local recreation park. Other assets support education like the Forsyth Tech campus. Weaknesses that are addressed with economic development strategies include the lack of broadband to support business growth, transportation access within and connecting to the county, lack of water and sewer infrastructure, and a small industry base for jobs. Stokes County has many opportunities on the horizon just waiting to be captured. Developing a tourism infrastructure that draws visitors for more than a day, such as lodging and destinations, is one example. A business park to attract better paying jobs, retaining young people and out-commuters, and boosting marketing are a few of the other opportunities. Finally, threats to Stokes County's future growth are similar to threats faced by many small, rural counties.

Strengths

- Hanging Rock State Park
- Outdoor recreation
- Workforce
- Forsyth Tech & Public Schools
- Quality of life
- Land available
- Proximity to the Triad
- Affordable housing

Weaknesses

- Lack of broadband
- Transportation access
- Lack of infrastructure to support outdoor recreation
- Not private sector employers
- Small local market
- Difficulty retaining young people

Opportunities

- Capture day-trippers for overnight stays
- Business opportunities related to tourism
- Infrastructure
- Retain out-commuters
- Capture retail leakage
- County recreation department
- Boost marketing to attract more tourists and businesses
- Broadband to attract remote workers
- Business park development
- Recreation trails
- Invest in higher education

Threats

- Decline of the agricultural economy
- Environmental threats to natural resources
- Continuing population decline
- Not extending broadband to support technologies of today and tomorrow

Strengths

- Hanging Rock State Park
- Outdoor recreation – Dan River, Moratock Park, cycling routes
- Workforce – availability, work ethic
- Forsyth Technical Community College campus
- Stokes County Schools
- Quality of life – safe, small towns
- Low cost of living compared to other Triad communities
- Land available for business development
- Proximity to the Triad, Winston-Salem
- Affordable housing

Weaknesses

- Lack of broadband across the county, some areas have no internet
- Lack of business associations and networks
- Transportation access
- Lack of infrastructure to support outdoor recreation – parking, boat launch, outfitters, lodging
- Not enough major private sector employers to retain youth
- Very small local market for businesses
- Difficulty retaining young people, attracting young professionals and working age people
- Lack of commercial and industry development and a low tax rate means a greater share of the tax burden falls on residents

Opportunities

- Capture day-trippers for overnight stays – lodging, camping, destination attractions
- Business opportunities related to tourism
- Infrastructure - sewer extension in the Pinnacle area, water and sewer across the county
- Retain out-commuters
- Capture retail leakage
- Cycling lane on Hwy 8 to attract more cycling tours
- County recreation department to focus on outdoor recreation related tourism
- Boost marketing to attract more tourists and businesses
- Broadband to attract remote workers, internet-based business that do not have to rely on the local market
- Business park development to attract companies and jobs to the county
- Recreation trails connecting destinations, downtowns
- Invest in higher education for youth, such as community college scholarships
- More development and job centers in King/US 52 area

Threats

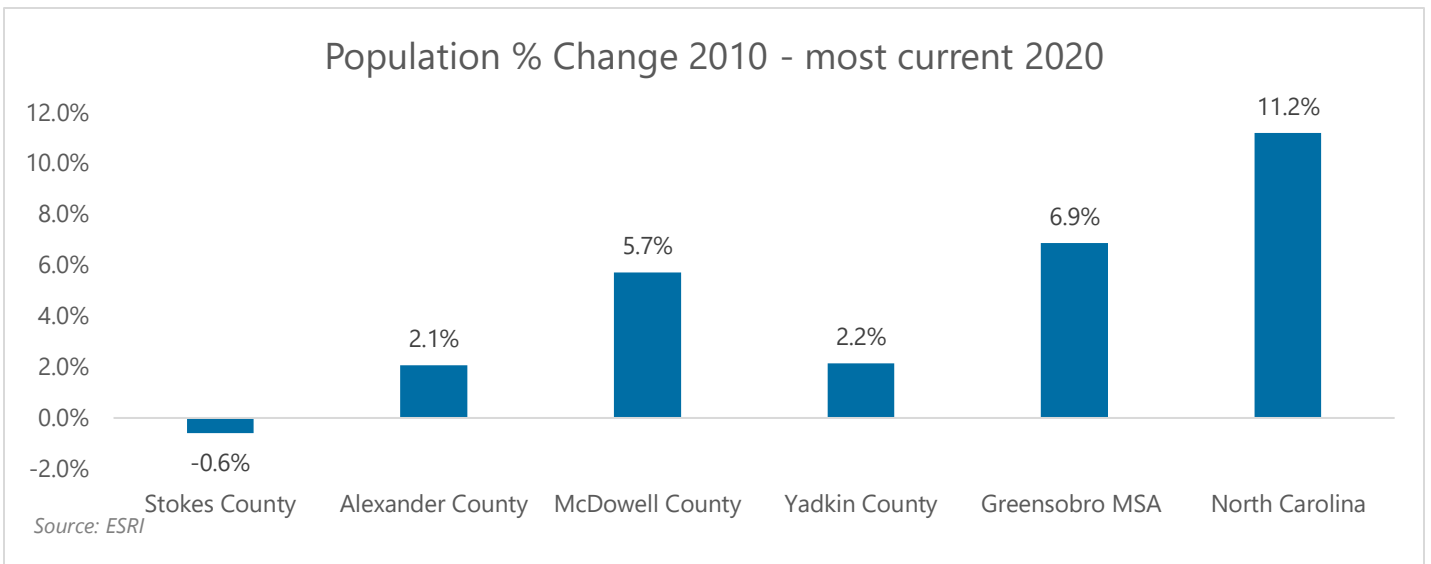
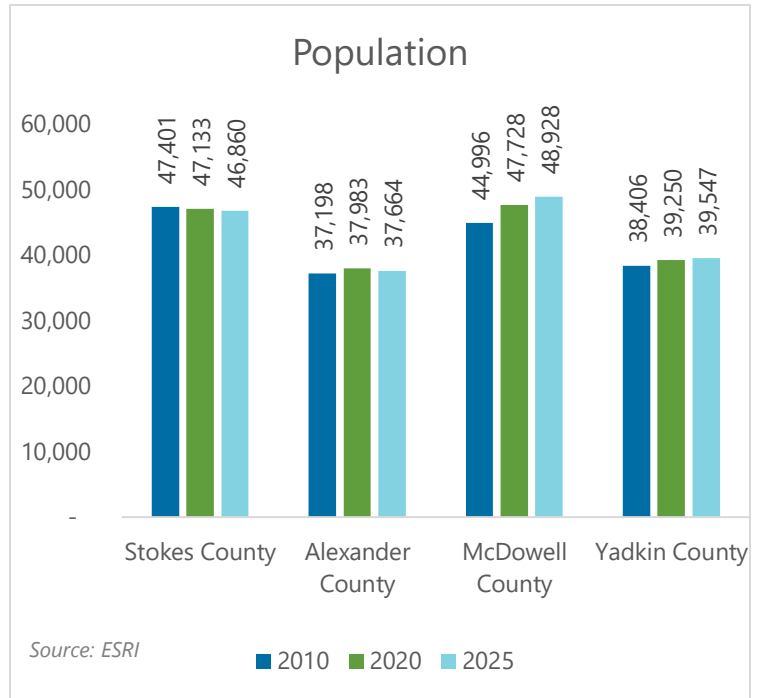
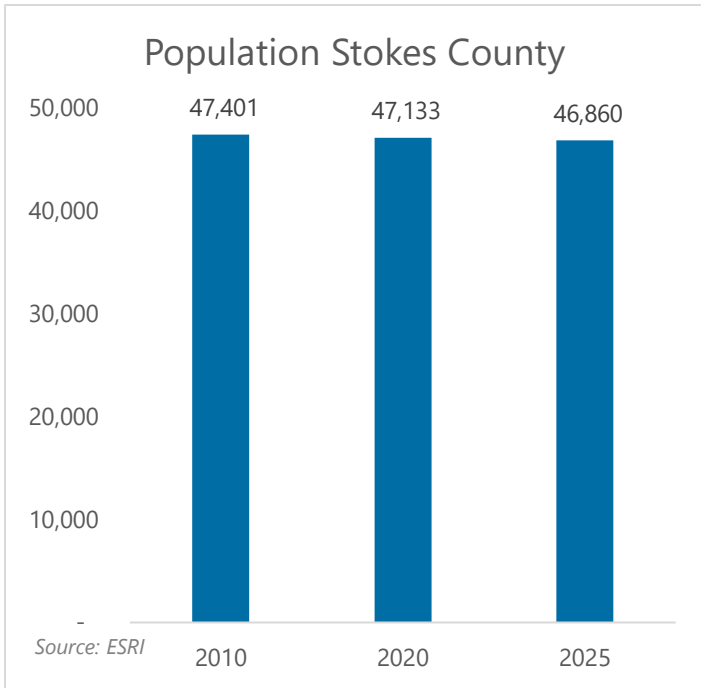
- Decline of the agricultural economy
- Environmental threats to natural resources
- Continuing population decline
- Not extending broadband to support technologies of today and tomorrow

Appendix B: Economic and Demographic Trends

Stokes County's economy has a stable labor force with an unemployment rate less than many surrounding counties. Housing in the county is affordable and income levels compare well with similar communities. Declining population, concentration of lower wage jobs, and income levels lower than the region are a few cautionary flags regarding the economy. Stokes County's economic development program should focus on developing higher wage jobs and retaining and attracting talented workers.

- ⦿ Population is declining while peer counties' population has been growing.
- ⦿ Some working age groups, such as 35-44, are projected to grow, while most working age groups are projected to decline. The median age in Stokes County is 45.7.
- ⦿ Stokes County has seen little change in race and ethnicity in the population while the region and North Carolina have grown more diverse.
- ⦿ More than 84% of Stokes County residents have a high school education or higher. That stands out as higher than Alexander and Yadkin County. ACT scores are much lower than the state and region; however, they are second highest in the comparable counties group, only behind Alexander County.
- ⦿ Per capita and median household income has grown and is higher than the comparable counties group. Per capita income is \$25,119 and median household income is \$48,882.
- ⦿ Homes in Stokes County are very affordable whether you are moving from another location in the Triad or from Alexander, McDowell, and Yadkin Counties.
- ⦿ The labor force had stayed about the same for five years, until COVID. Employment was growing and unemployment declining. Since COVID, the unemployment rate jumped from 3.6% to a current rate of 7%.
- ⦿ Unemployment claims peaked in April with 1,922 claims. Continuing unemployment claims were at 1,852 in June. 120 employees have been temporarily laid off.
- ⦿ The major employment sectors are Retail, Education, Accommodation and Food Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance. These sectors are also among the lowest paying sectors in the county. The largest employers are Stokes County Schools, Stokes County, Wieland Copper Products (although a layoff has been announced), and Wal-Mart.
- ⦿ Retail sales have been strong at over \$258M. Monthly sales starting in January of this year show some decline by stand at about 86% of last January's sales.
- ⦿ More than half of the county's workforce enjoys a short commute to work, less than 30 minutes.
- ⦿ Crime rates have declined since 2017 after a slight increase from 2015.
- ⦿ More than 80% of companies in Stokes County have fewer than ten employees. There is a solid base of companies employing 10-99 people.
- ⦿ Travel and tourism expenditures are up, as is payroll.

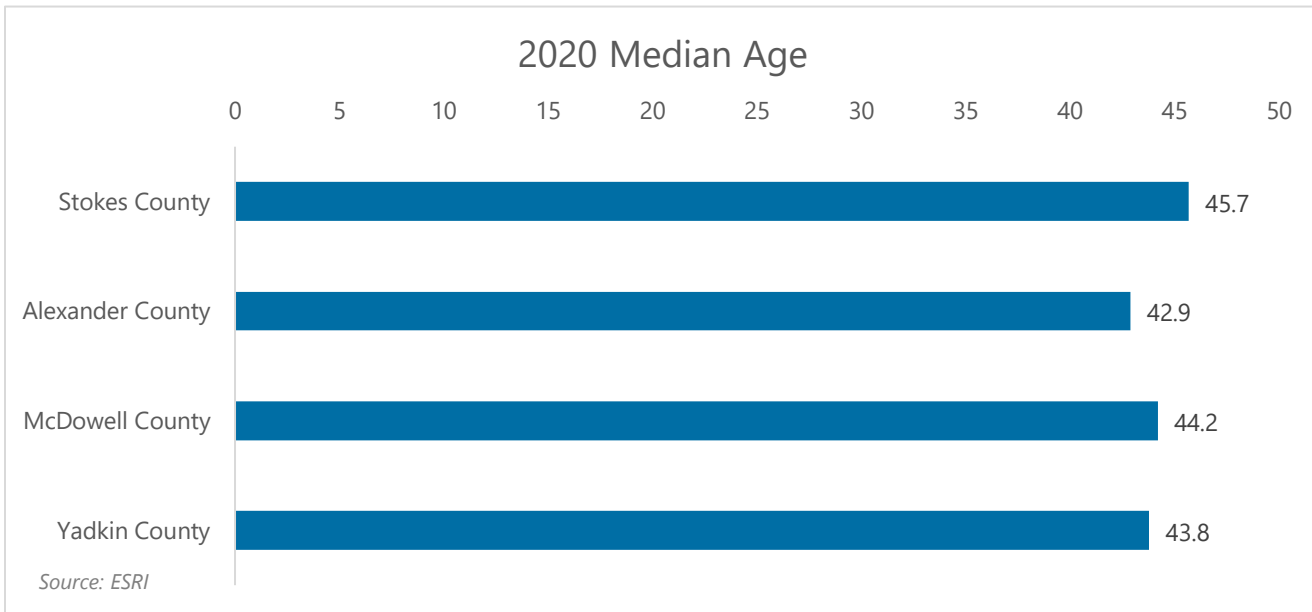
Population



Age

Age Groups	2020	2025	2020	2020
	Stokes County, NC	Stokes County, NC	Greensboro MSA	North Carolina
Total population	47,133	46,860	777,265	10,736,879
Under 5 years	4.6%	4.5%	5.5%	5.9%
5 to 9 years	5.3%	5.0%	5.8%	6.2%
10 to 14 years	5.8%	5.9%	6.0%	6.3%
15 to 24 years	10.0%	9.6%	13.7%	13.0%
25 to 34 years	11.8%	10.4%	13.3%	13.5%
35 to 44 years	11.5%	12.1%	12.3%	12.7%
45 to 54 years	14.6%	13.3%	13.2%	12.9%
55 to 64 years	16.1%	15.8%	13.3%	13.0%
65 to 74 years	12.3%	13.6%	10.0%	10.0%
75 to 84 years	6.0%	7.5%	4.8%	4.7%
85 years and over	2.1%	2.3%	2.0%	1.8%
Median Age	45.7	47.0	39.5	38.9

Source: ESRI

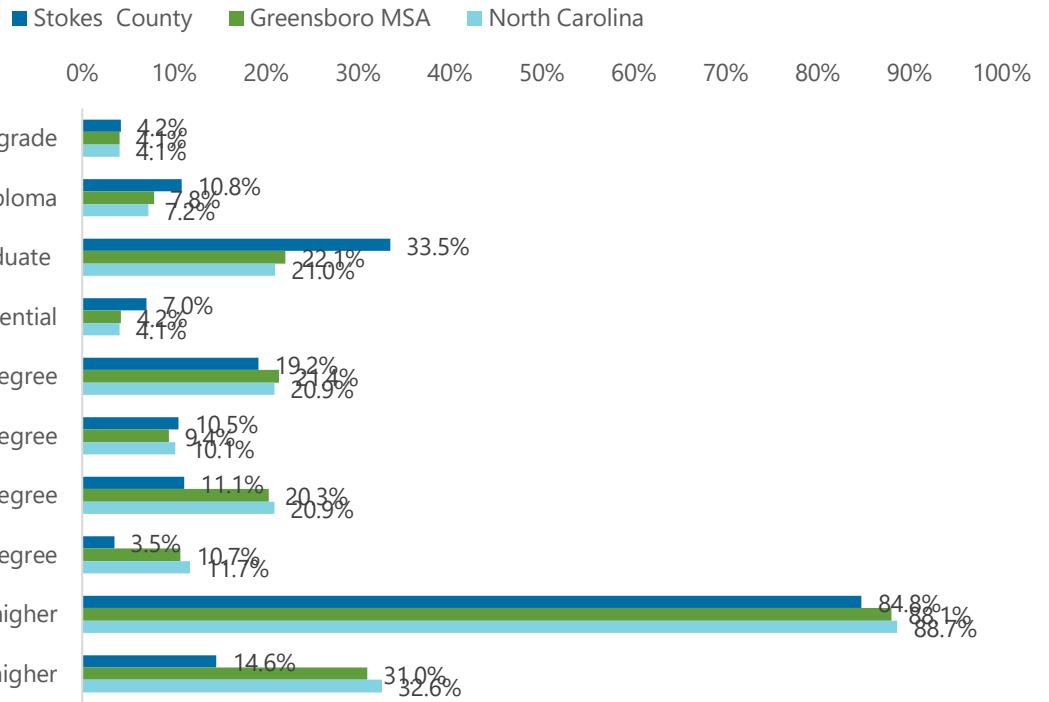


Race

Race %	2002	2025	2020	2020
	Stokes County	Stokes County	Greensboro MSA	North Carolina
White Alone	92.2%	91.8%	60.3%	65.8%
Black Alone	3.9%	3.8%	27.5%	21.7%
American Indian Alone	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%	1.3%
Asian Alone	0.4%	0.5%	4.3%	3.3%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	1.5%	1.7%	4.5%	5.1%
Two or More Races	1.5%	1.7%	2.7%	2.8%
Hispanic Origin	3.2%	3.5%	8.9%	10.0%
Diversity Index	20.0	21.3	63.1	60.5
<i>Source: ESRI</i>				

Education

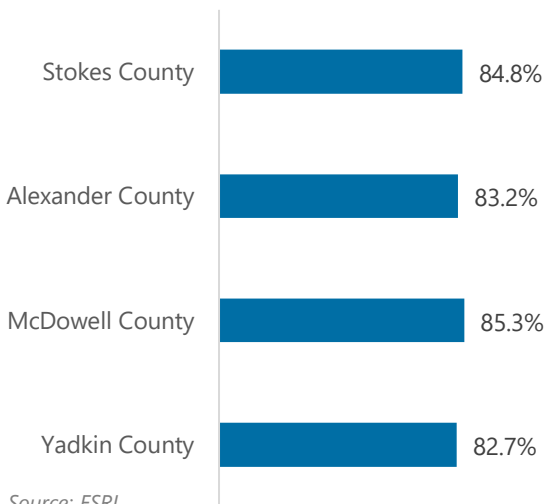
Educational Attainment



Source: ESRI

Percent high school graduate or higher

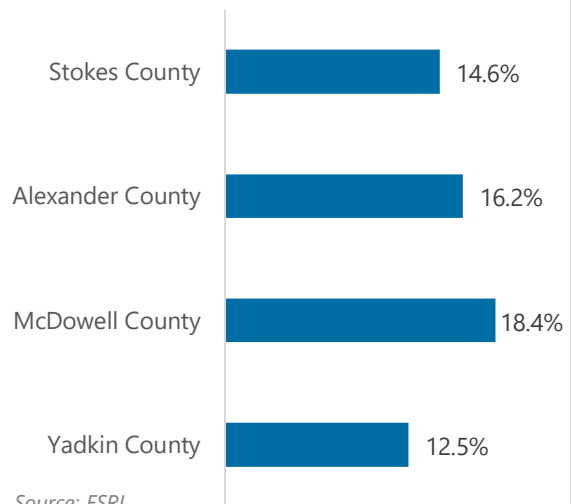
0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%



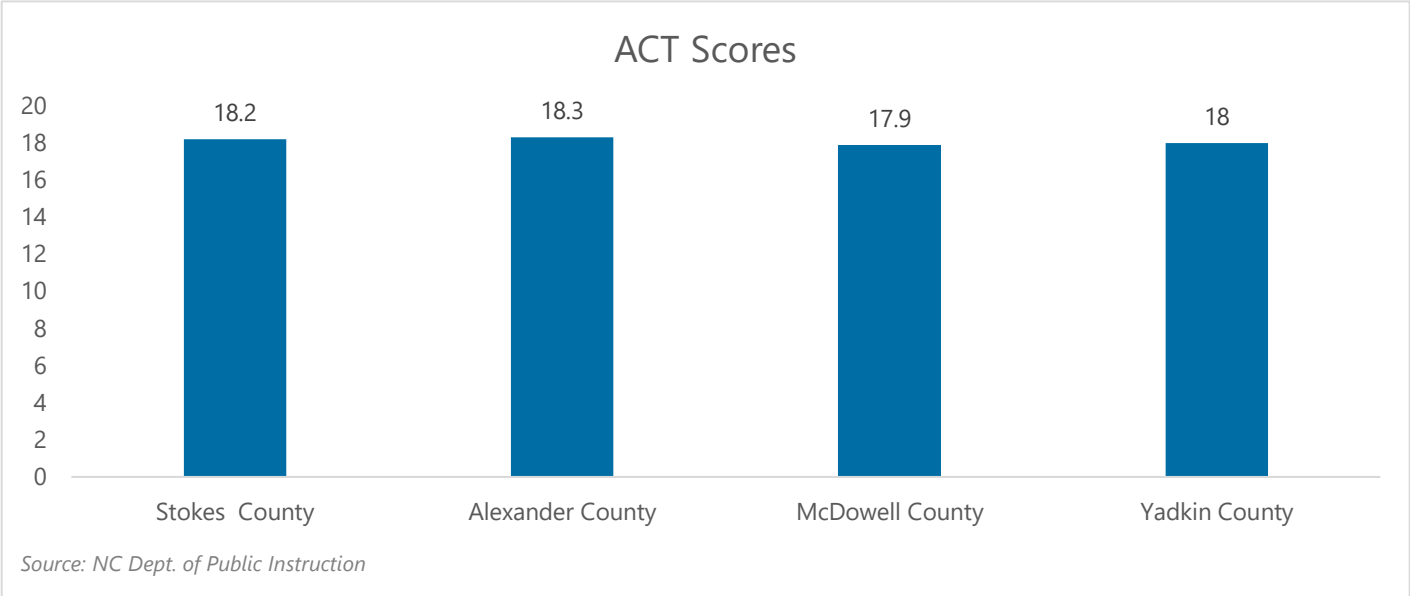
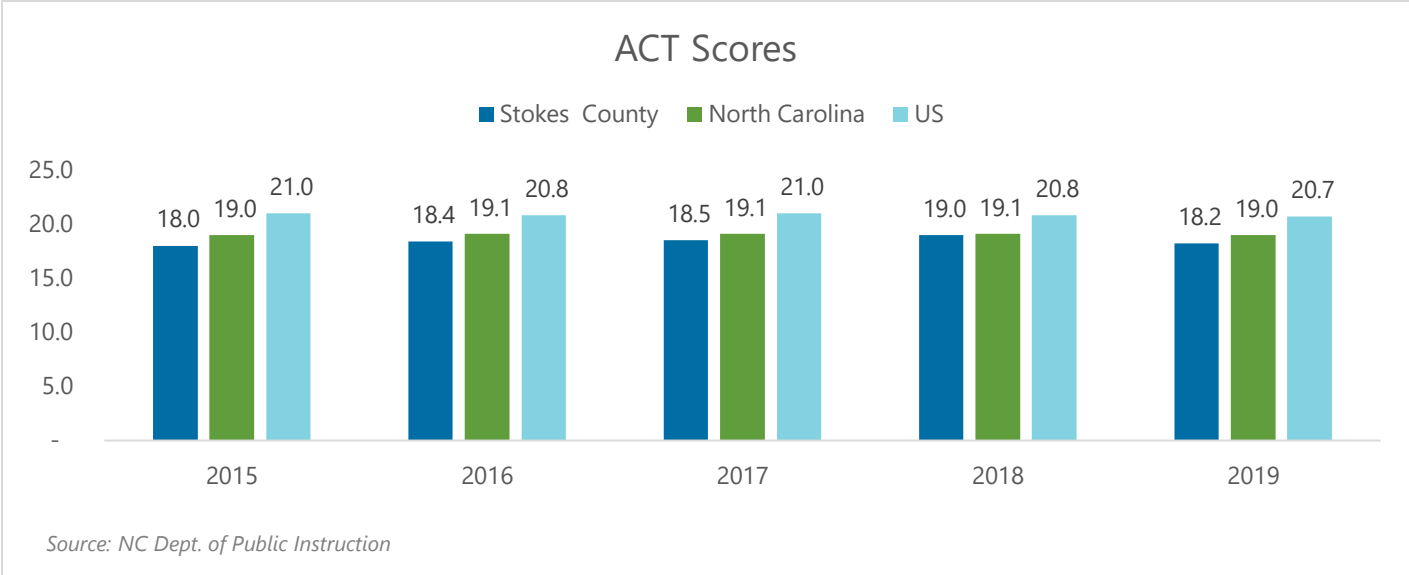
Source: ESRI

Percent bachelor's degree or higher

0% 5% 10% 15% 20%



Source: ESRI



Stokes County Living Wage

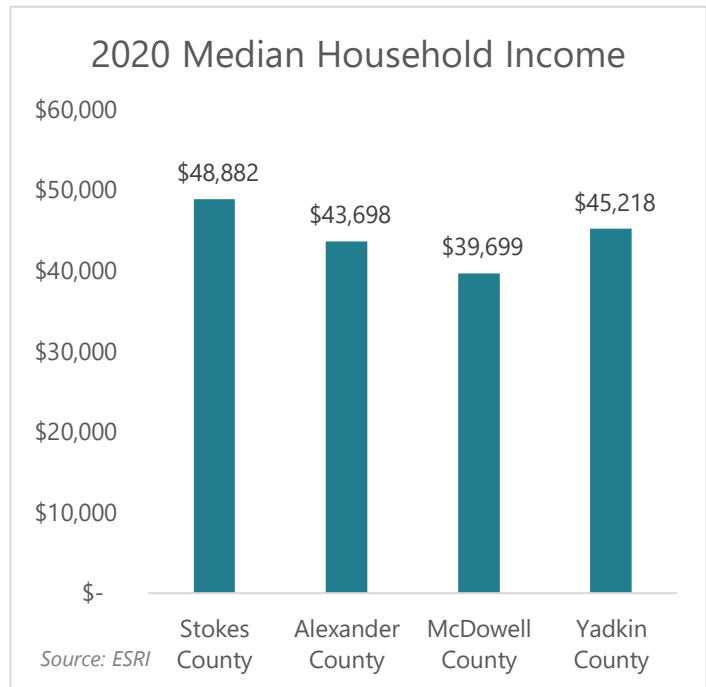
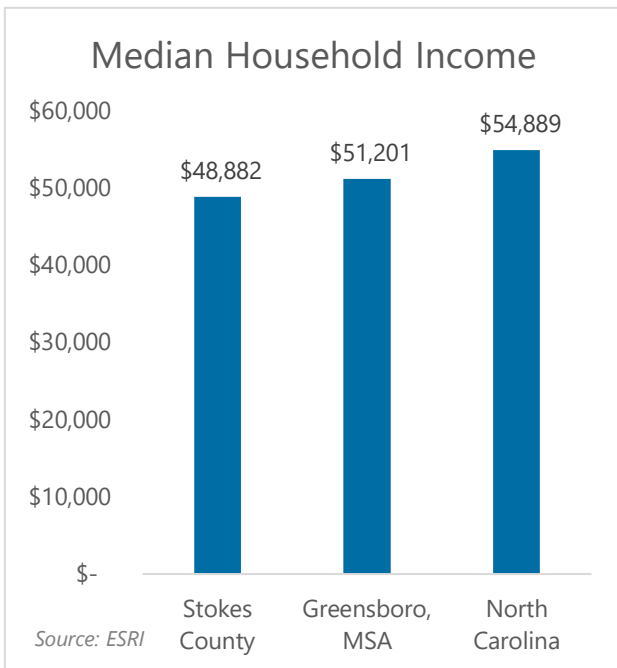
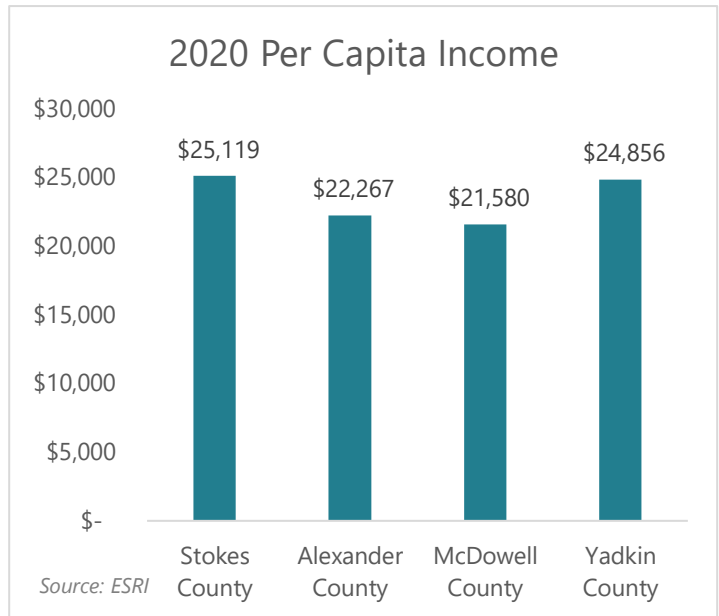
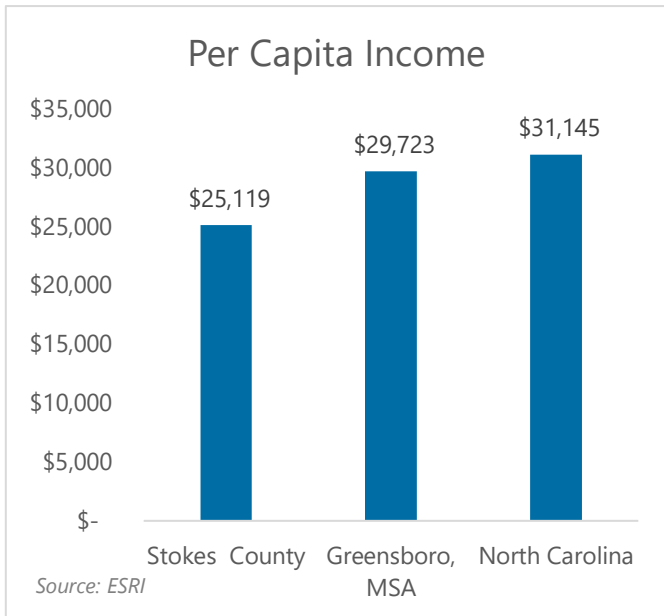
The average weekly wage in Stokes County is \$643.78. The living wage for a two-adult household with two children where one adult works is \$996. In a two-adult household with two children where both adults are working the living wage is \$614.80. Thus, Stokes County should strive to recruit jobs that pay at least \$15.37.

	1 Adult				2 Adults, 1 Working				2 Adults, Both Working			
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Living Wage	\$11.07	\$23.77	\$28.13	\$34.35	\$17.97	\$22.41	\$24.90	\$28.06	\$8.98	\$13.21	\$15.37	\$17.87
Poverty Wage	\$6.00	\$8.13	\$10.25	\$12.38	\$8.13	\$10.25	\$12.38	\$14.50	\$4.06	\$5.13	\$6.19	\$7.25
Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25

The living wage shown is the hourly rate that an individual in a household must earn to support his or herself and their family. The assumption is the sole provider is working full-time (2080 hours per year). The tool provides information for individuals, and households with one or two working adults and zero to three children. In the case of households with two working adults, all values are per working adult, single or in a family unless otherwise noted.

Source: Living Wage Calculator, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Income



Housing

Ownership & Availability

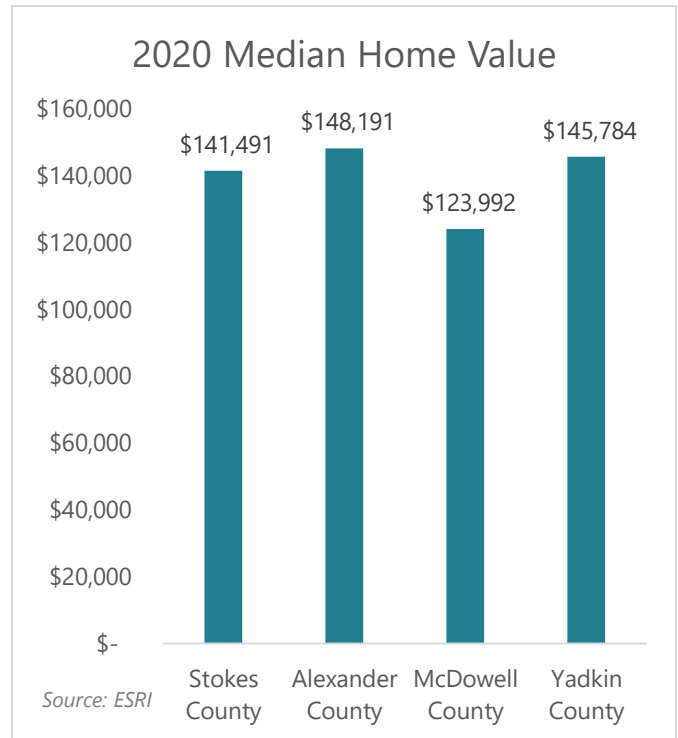
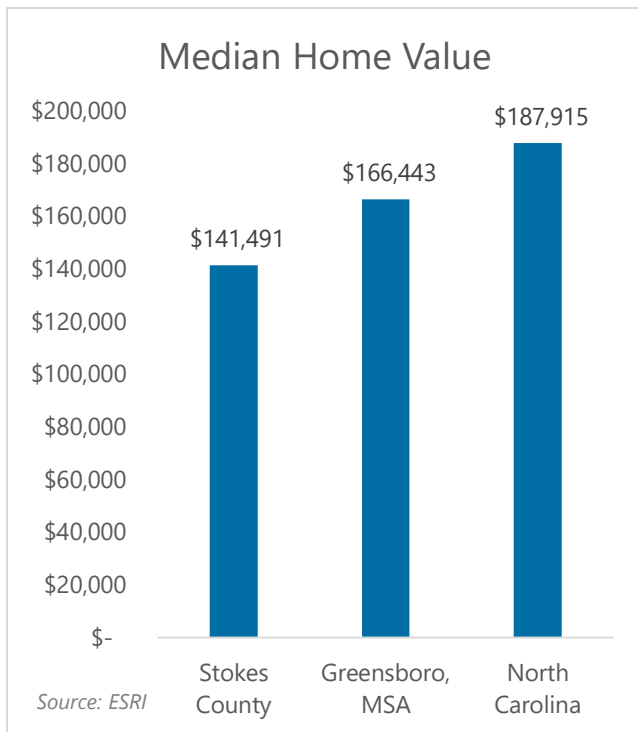
	2020	2025
% of units owner-occupied	64.2%	62.9%
% of units renter-occupied	23.7%	23.2%
% of units vacant	12.1%	13.9%

Affordability

- Housing Affordability Index – 196 (100 is the base and over 100 means more affordable)
- Percent of Income for Mortgage – 12.1%
- Median Contract Rent - \$486

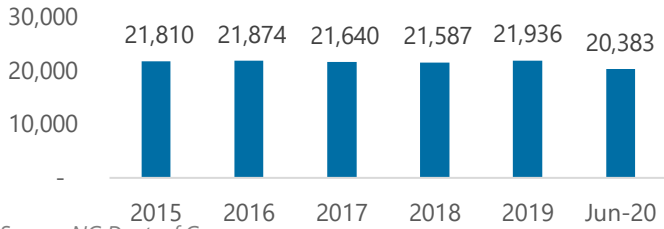
Quality of Housing Stock

- Median Year Structure Built - 1983



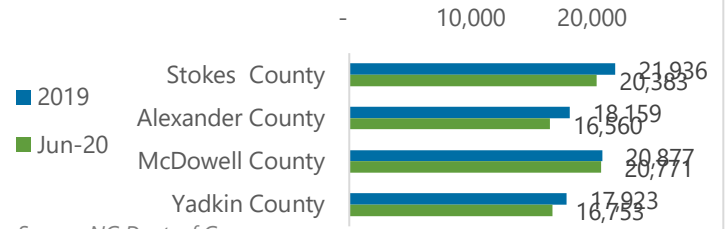
Labor Force

Stokes County Labor Force



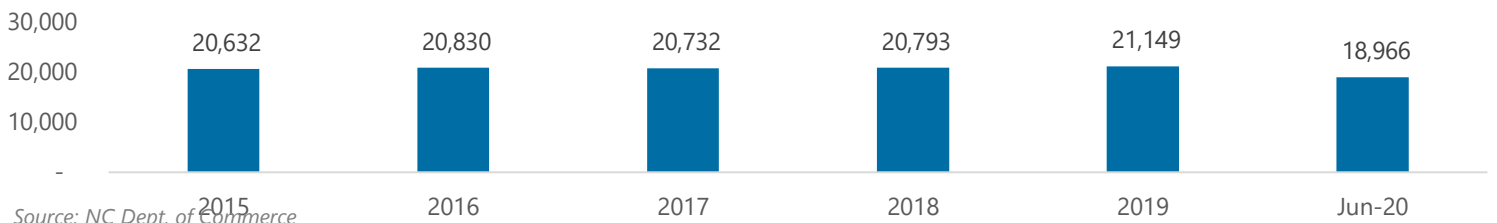
Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

Labor Force



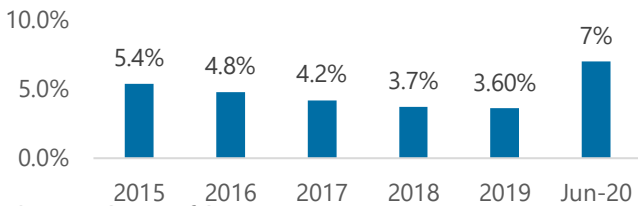
Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

Stokes County Employment



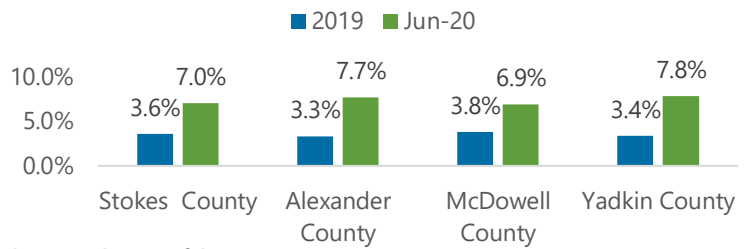
Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

Stokes County Unemployment Rate



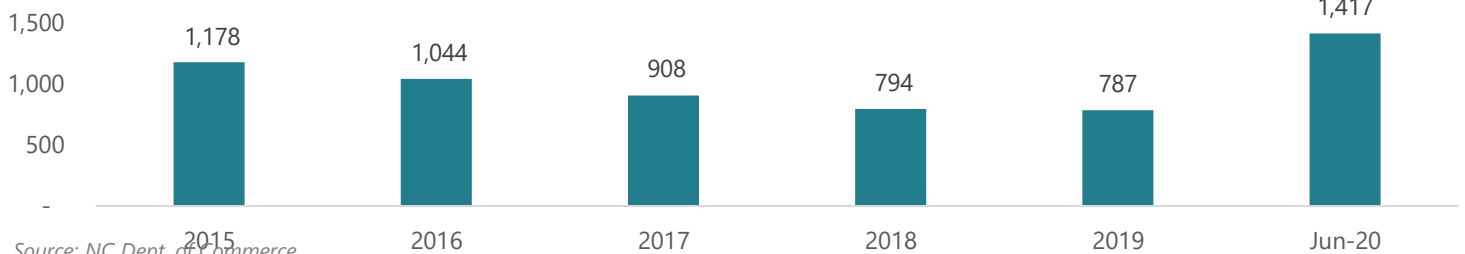
Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

Unemployment Rate

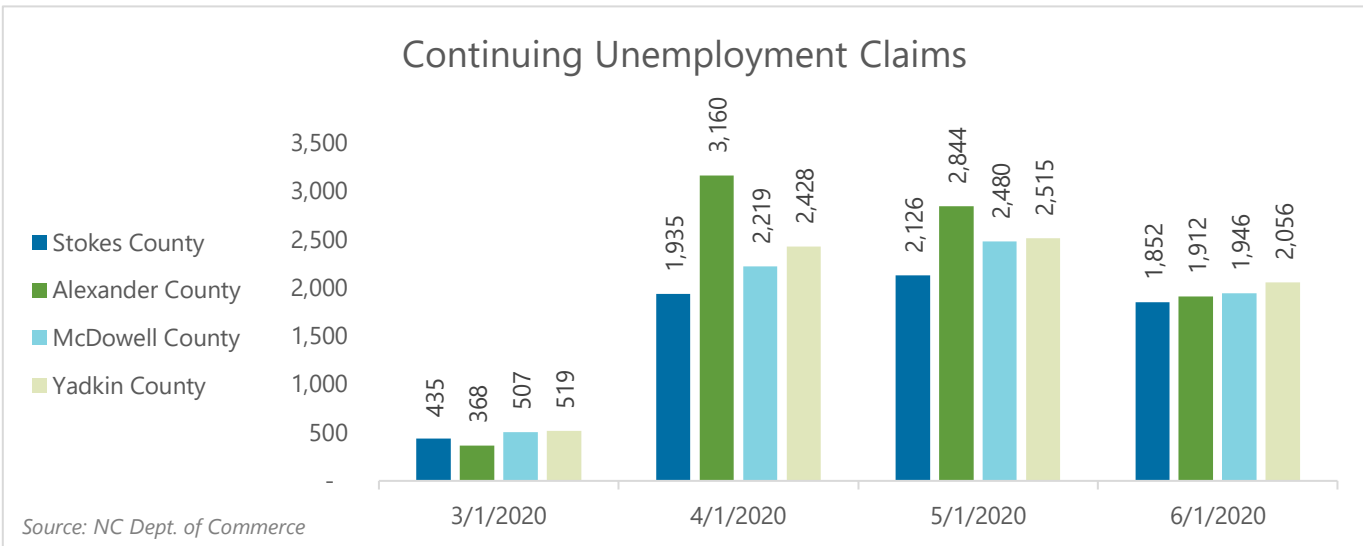
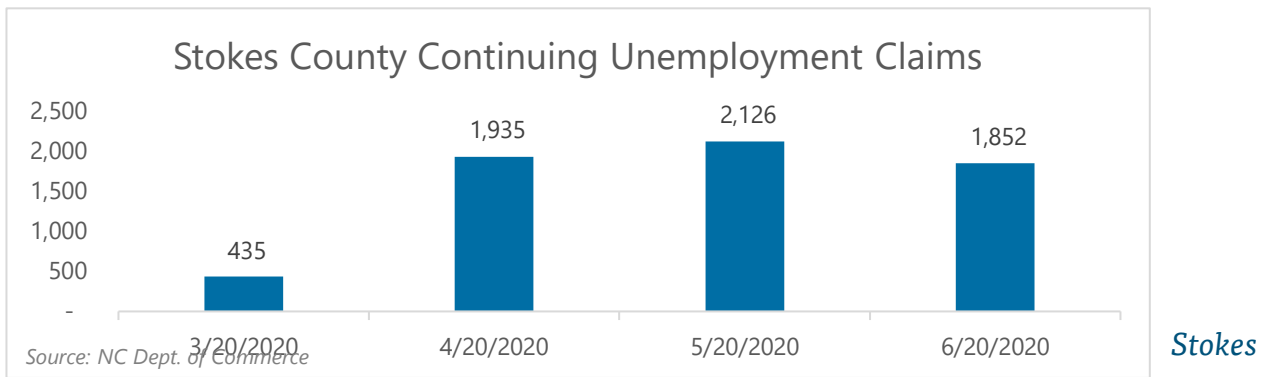
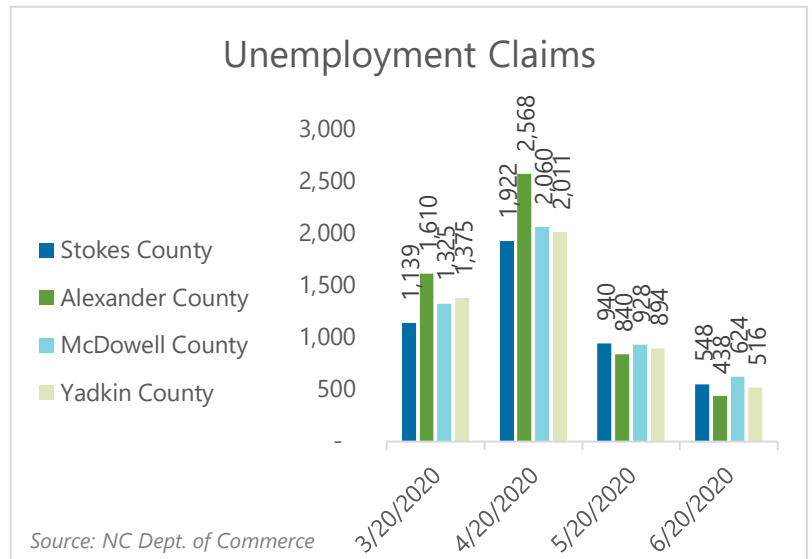
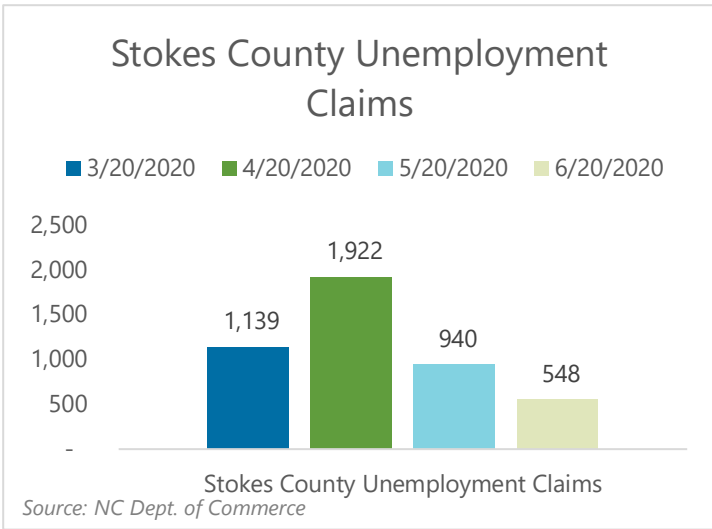


Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

Stokes County, NC Number Unemployed



Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

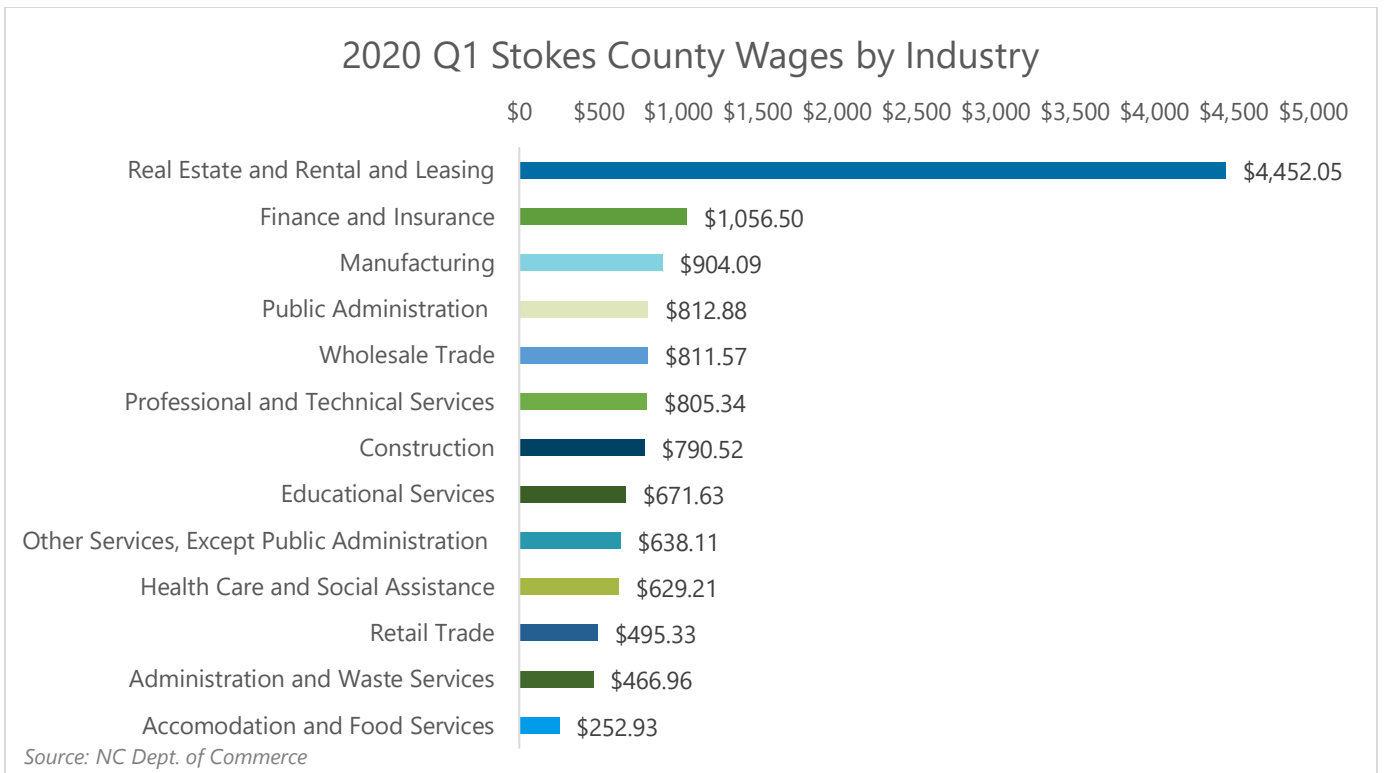
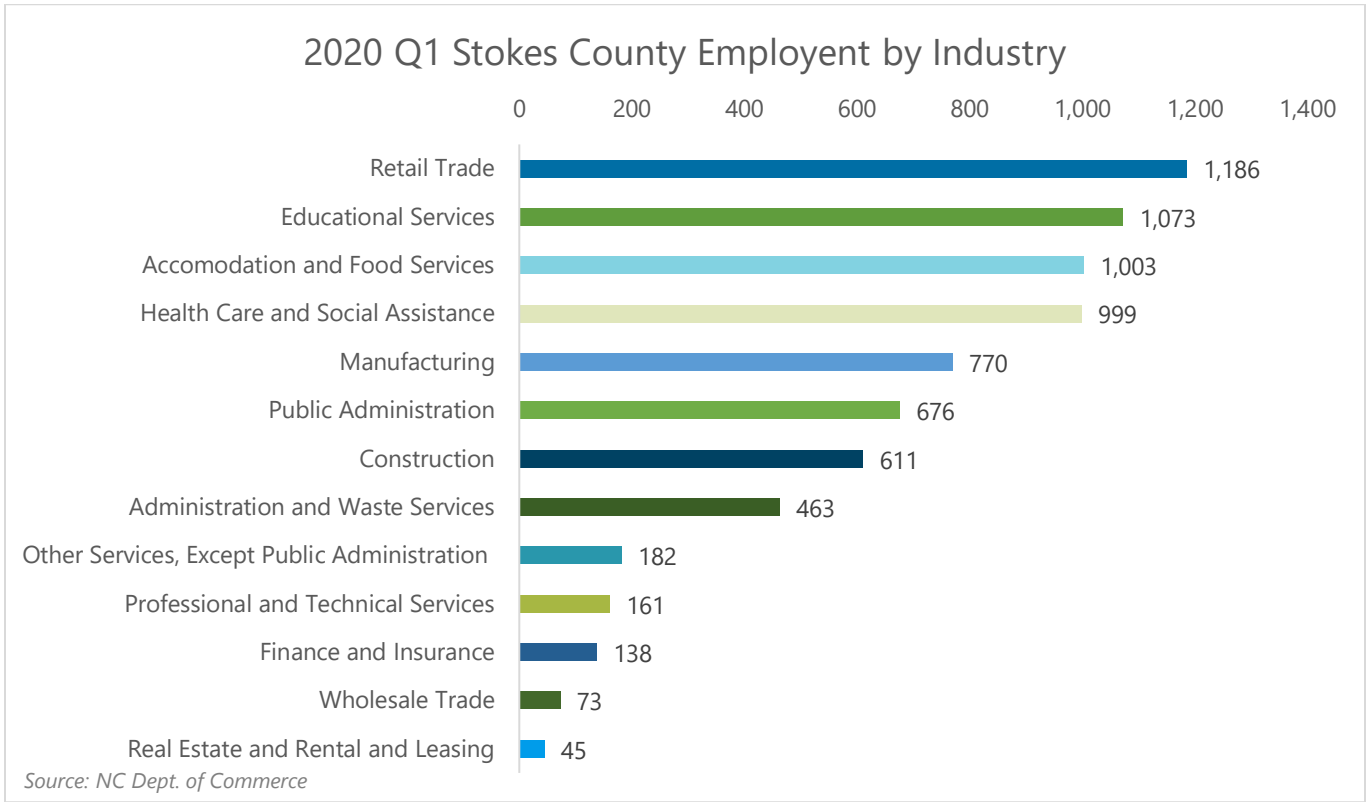


County WARN Notices

1 Permanent Lay Off affecting 120 Employees

Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

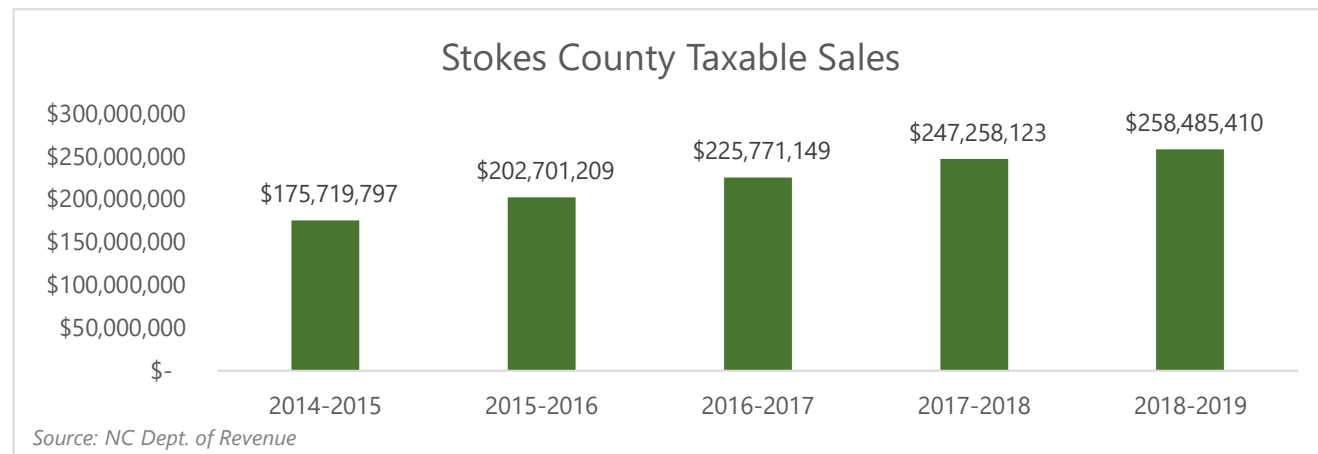
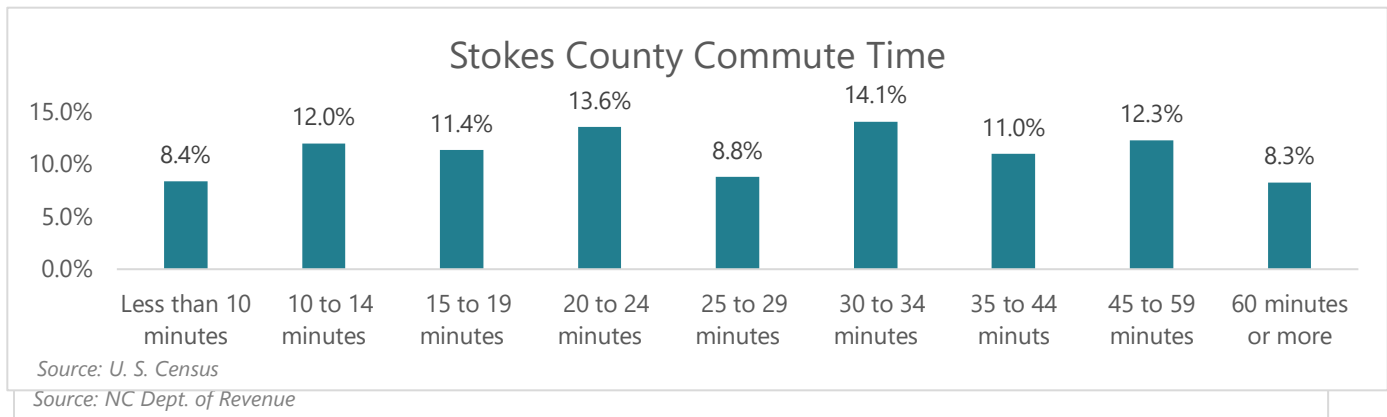
Employment & Wages by Industry



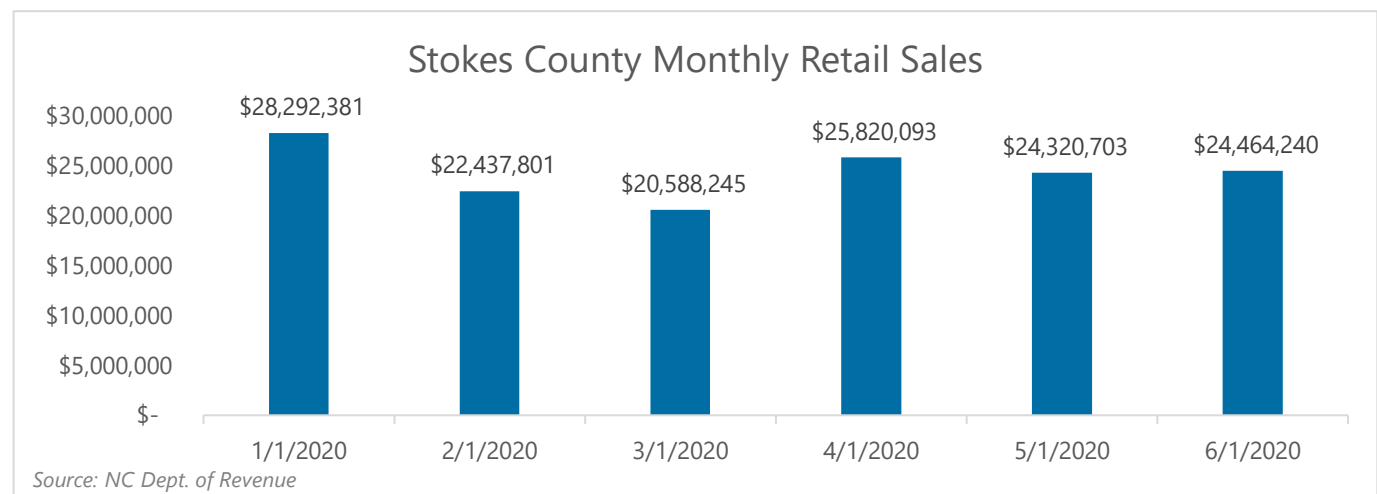
Top Employers

Top 25 Employers - Stokes County			
Rank	Company Name	Industry	Employment Range
1	Stokes County Schools	Educational Services	1000+
2	County of Stokes	Public Administration	250-499
3	Wieland Copper Products LLC	Manufacturing	250-499
4	Wal-Mart Associates Inc.	Retail Trade	250-499
5	Lifebrite Hospital Group of Stokes	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
6	Food Lion	Retail Trade	100-249
7	YMCA Of Northwest North Carolina	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	100-249
8	Defender Services Inc	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	100-249
9	M-6 Contracting Inc	Construction	100-249
10	Autumn Corporation	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
11	City of King	Public Administration	50-99
12	Universal Health Care/King Inc	Health Care and Social Assistance	50-99
13	Parkdale America LLC	Manufacturing	50-99
14	Priddy Manor Assisted Living	Health Care and Social Assistance	50-99
15	McDonalds Restaurant	Accommodation and Food Services	50-99
16	Dairi-O	Accommodation and Food Services	50-99
17	U S Postal Service	Transportation and Warehousing	50-99
18	Walnut Ridge Assisted Living	Health Care and Social Assistance	50-99
19	East Coast Wings +grill	Accommodation and Food Services	50-99
20	Shoreline Healthcare Management LLC	Health Care and Social Assistance	50-99
21	Lowes Foods LLC	Retail Trade	50-99
22	Stewarts Grading and Hauling Inc	Construction	50-99
23	Town & Country Grille LLC	Accommodation and Food Services	50-99
24	Dolgencorp LLC	Retail Trade	50-99
25	Ingles Markets, Inc	Retail Trade	Below 50
Source: NC Department of Commerce (www.nccommerce.com)			

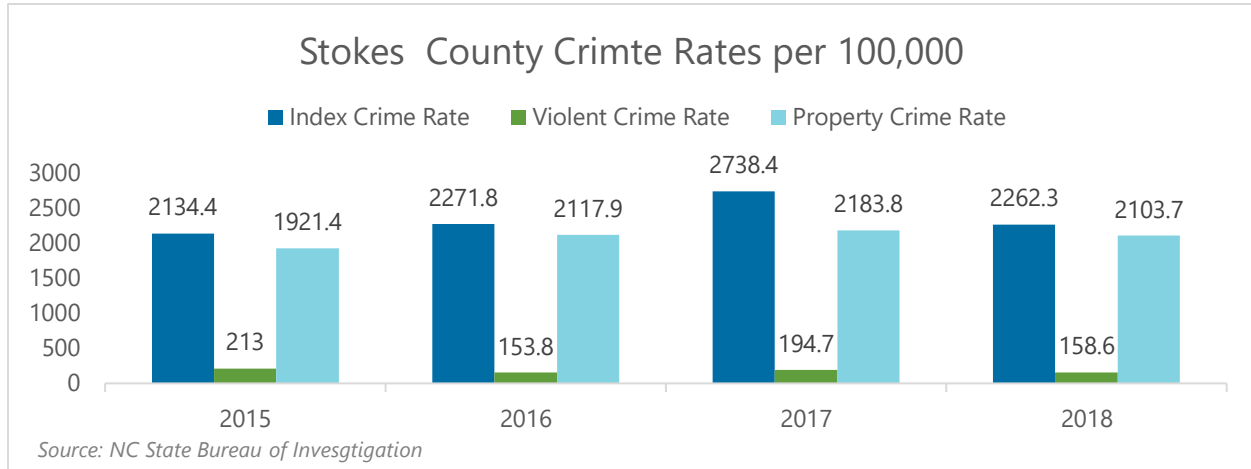
Taxable Retail Sales



Commute Time



Crime Rates

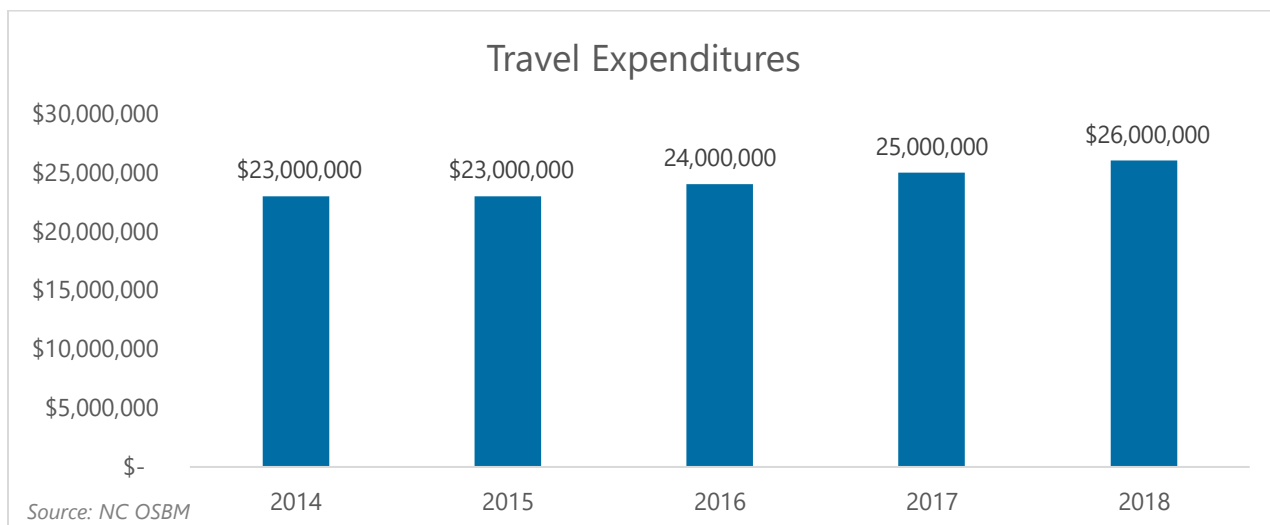


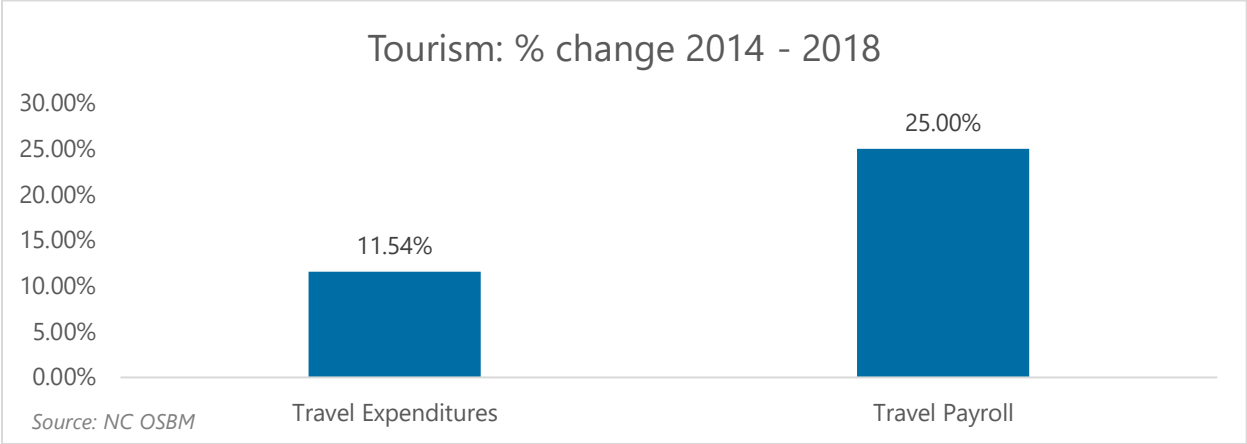
Employment Stages

Stokes County 2015-2019 Employment Stages		
ESTABLISHMENTS	% of Total Establishments	% of Total Jobs
Self-Employed (1)	16.00%	1.80%
Stage 1 (2-9)	67.30%	27.30%
Stage 2 (10-99)	15.40%	44.00%
Stage 3 (100-499)	1.30%	22.70%
Stage 4 (500+)	0.10%	4.30%

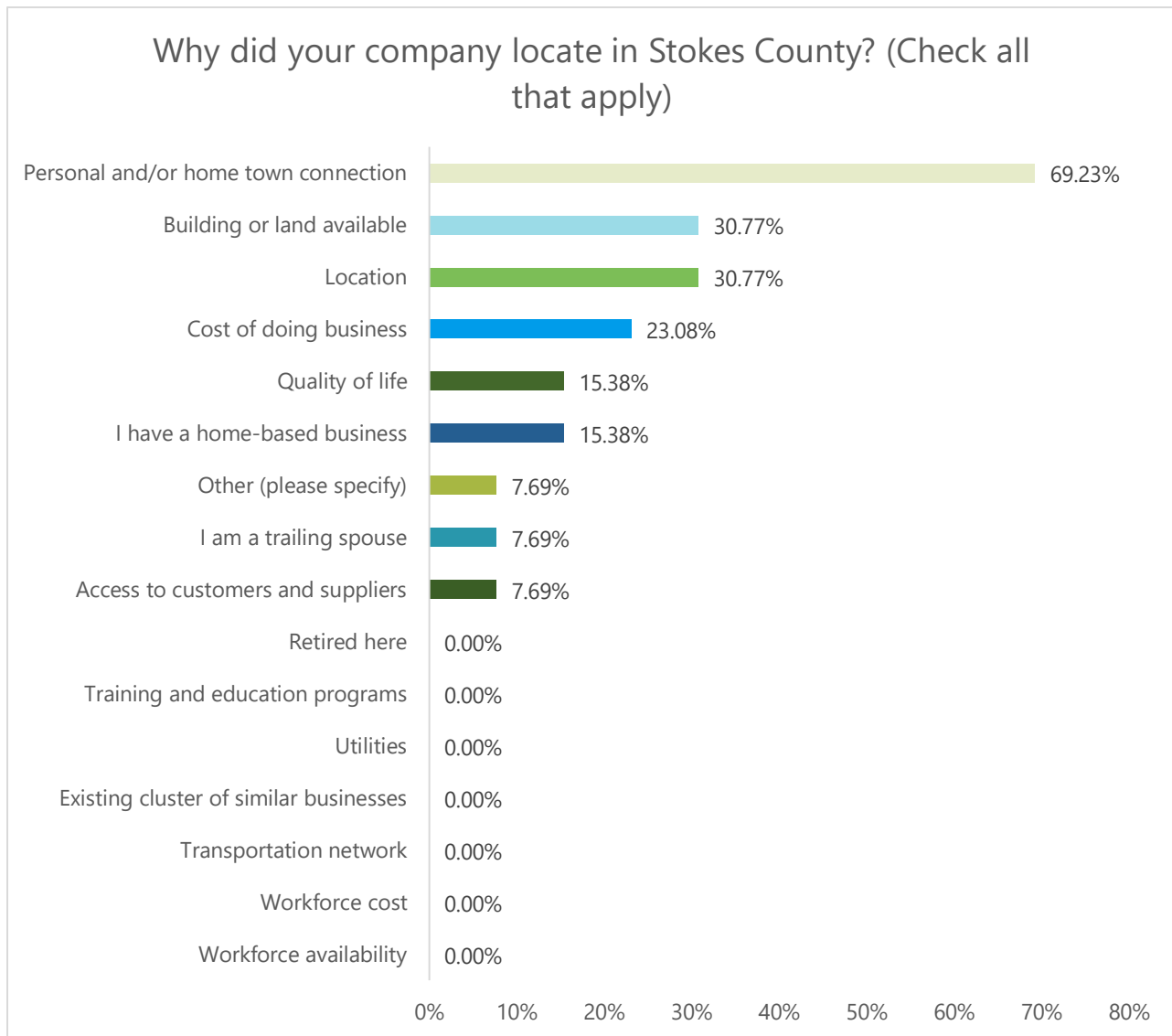
Source: Your Economy Data (www.youreconomy.org)

Travel & Tourism

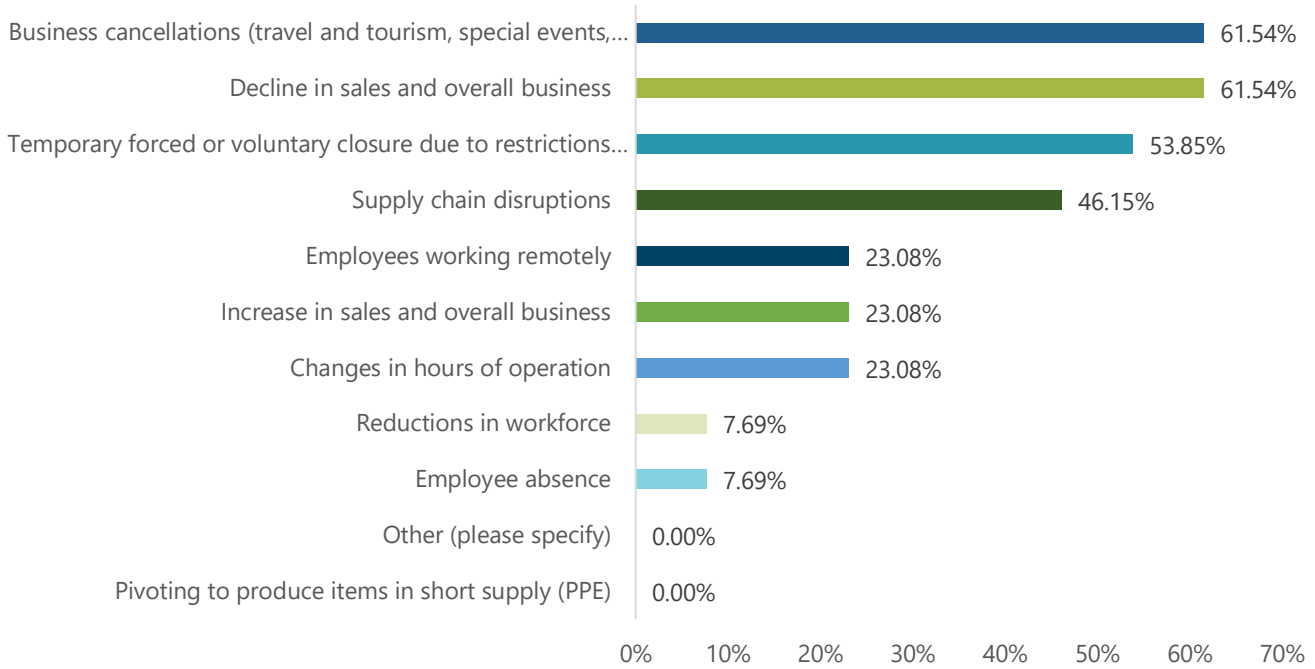




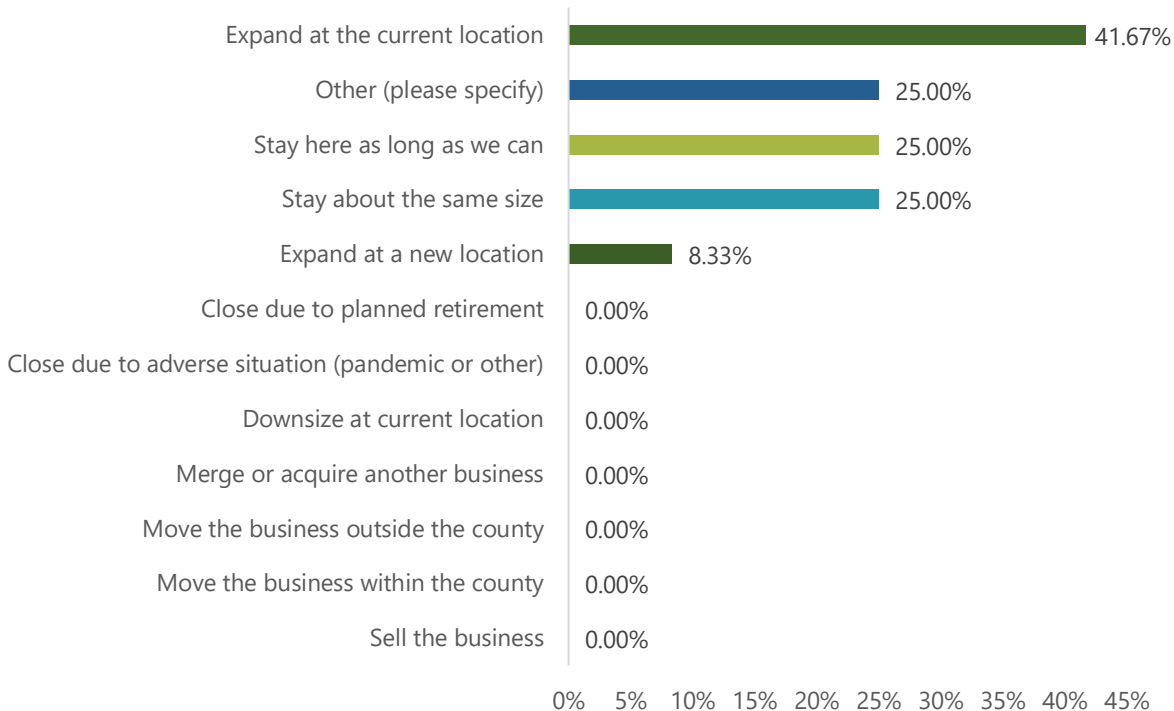
Appendix C: Business Survey Results



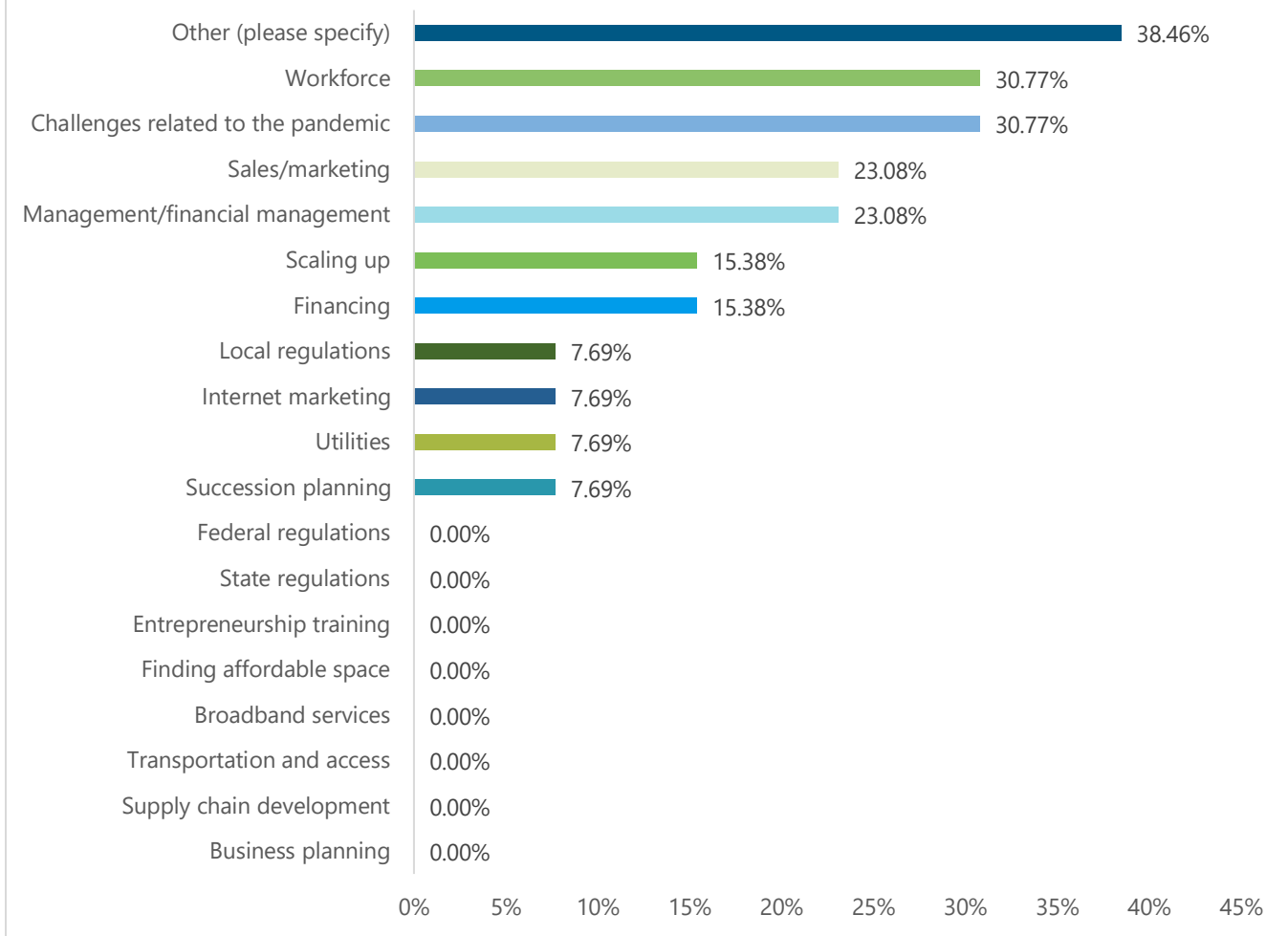
If your business has been affected by COVID-19, let us know how. Choose all that apply.



Is your business currently planning within the next two years to... (Check all that apply)



What are your main challenges to sustaining and growing your business? (Check all that apply)



Other:

- Finding larger office space in Walnut Cove
- Downtown King has no attention given to its appearance including store fronts, sidewalks and vacant lots. Not appealing to visitors.
- Locksmith business is a "needed now" type business
- Weather unpredictable
- Busy as I desire to be with local banks.

What business assistance would have been helpful when you started/expanded your business or would be helpful now?
(Check all that apply)



What can Stokes County do to better support your businesses?

Help with the advertisement

Partner college students with local businesses

Provide information on grants; increase the supply of trained, competent workers

Not sure

Promotion. Participation in events. Land.

Communication between government officials and business owners in their individual areas about what the government could do to help their business.

Unknown

Increase funding of efforts to attract and foster small businesses

Now is a much better climate with our proven record of being a successful business.

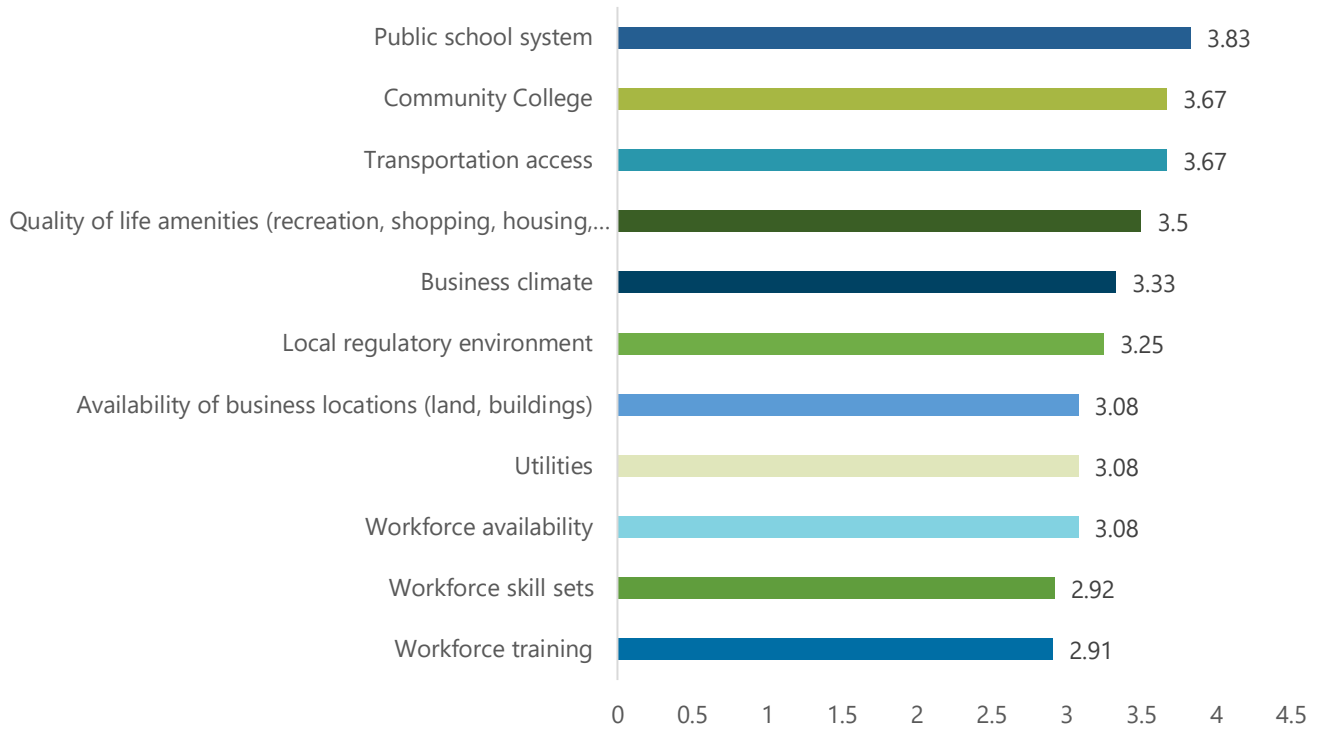
Make taxes paid a better value

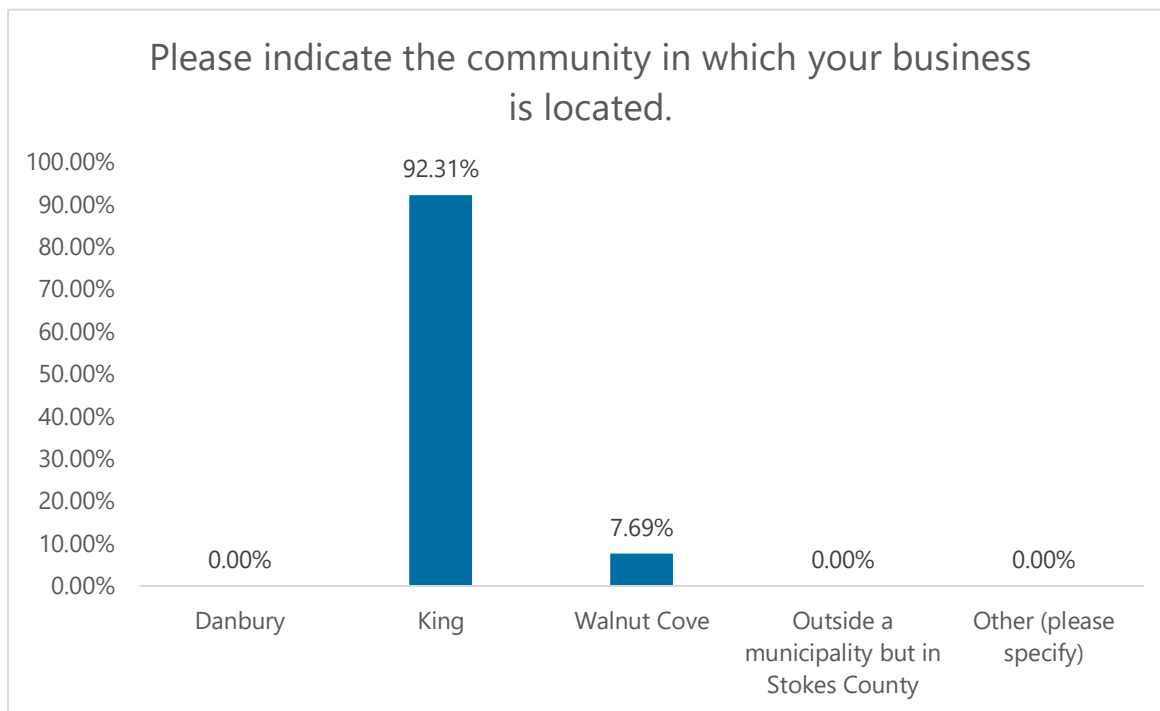
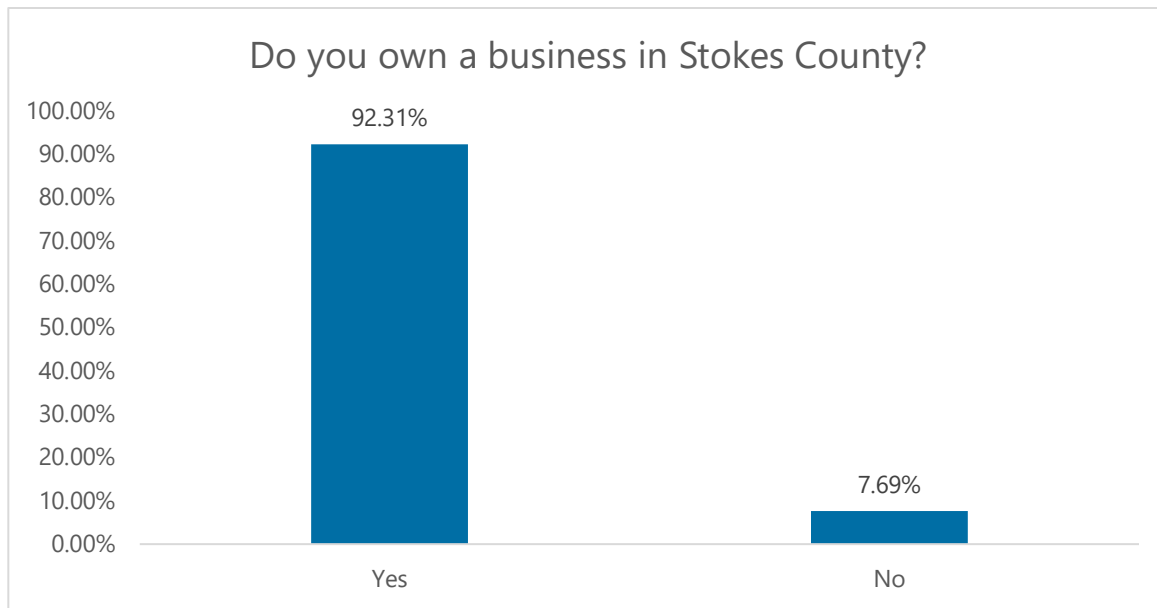
The people in the Stokes County Tax & Appraisal Department have been very helpful to me for many years.

The county and its municipalities should always buy the products and supplies they need from local businesses if the products and supplies are available to be bought from a local business.

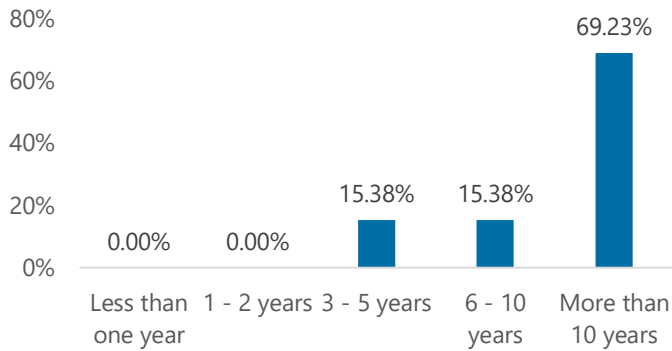
Continued support, monetarily and by attendance to events, meetings, etc.

How satisfied are you with the following in Stokes County?

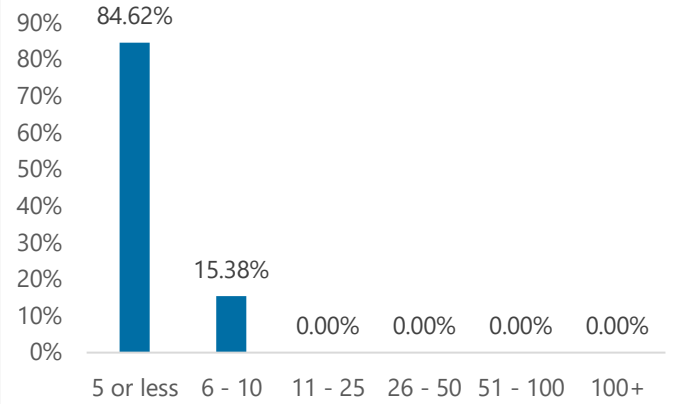




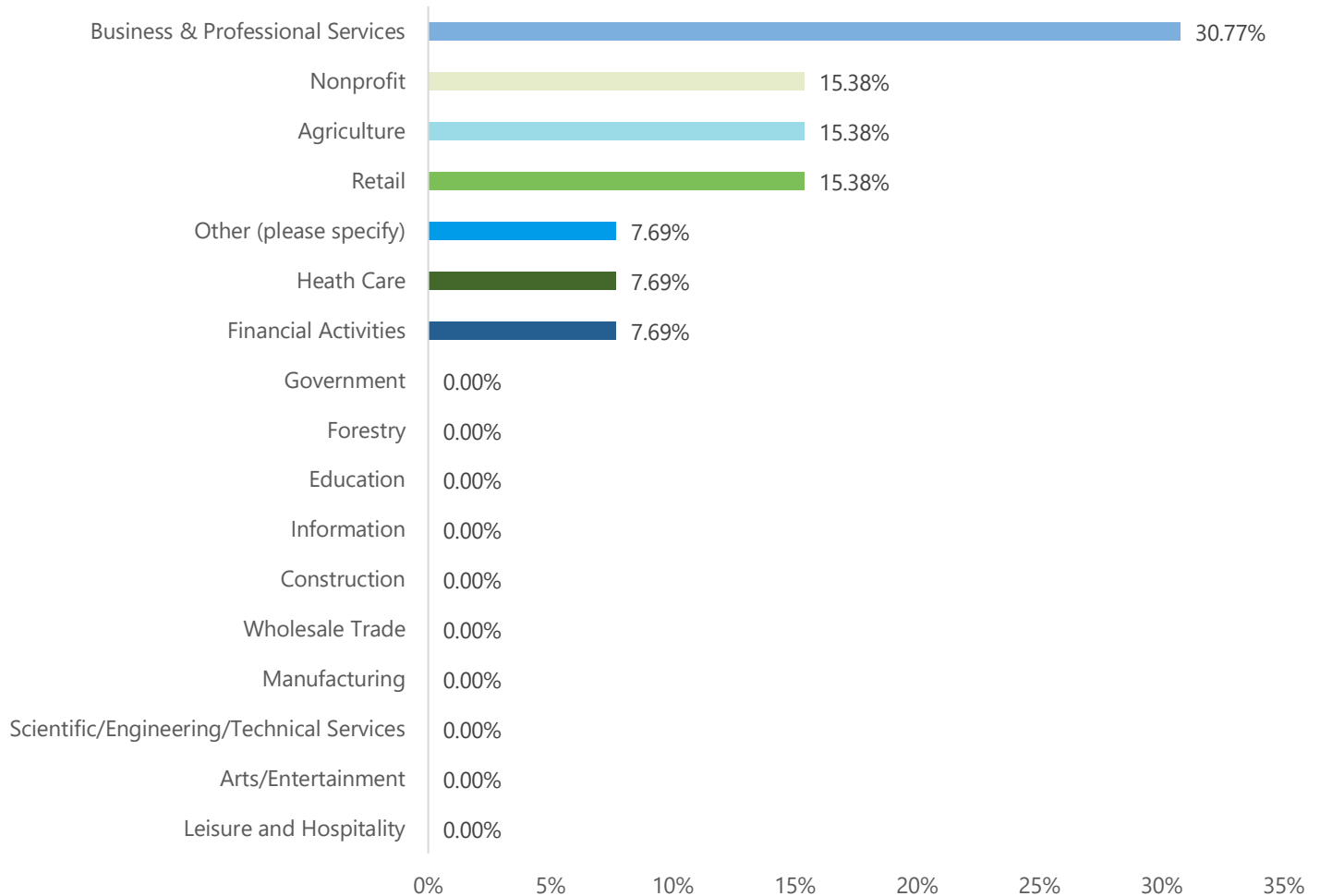
How many years has your business or the business you work for been in operation in Stokes County?



How many employees, full-time equivalents, are employed in your business?



What business sector most closely matches your business or the business you work for?



Appendix D: Example BRE Survey

Company Name

Primary contact(s)

Address

Website

Email of primary contact

Additional contacts

Ownership Structure

Owner?

Location of parent company

Succession plan?

Product/Service

Product/Service made at this location

Product/Service at other locations

New product lines being developed

Where are primary customers?

Are there customers that could be recruited to area?

Export products/services

Where are international customers?

Facility

Building square feet (office/production/warehouse)

Percentage occupied

Year(s) of construction

Acreage

Own or lease? (Lease expiration?)

Is there excess production capacity?

Is there adjacent land available for expansion?

Workforce

Total number of employees

Total number of full-time, part-time and seasonal employees at this location

Description of types of positions (operators, admin, engineers)

Compared to one year ago, is employment up/down (trends from last three years)?

Average age of workforce, percent male/female

Unionized or union activity, name of union

Annual turnover rate

What methods are used for workforce recruitment?

Most difficult positions to hire?

Training

What types of training are conducted?

By whom? In-house/vendor/community college

In what areas does the workforce need additional training

Transportation

Condition of local access roads

Stokes County Economic Development Action Plan

- Condition of major transportation routes
- Safety concerns with transportation routes
- Average daily truck traffic
- Parking concerns

Utilities adequacy now and for future operations

- Water
- Sewer
- Electric
- Natural Gas
- Telecommunications

Regulatory Issues

- Environmental concerns
 - Air permits
 - Storm water permits
 - Waste disposal
 - Deal with hazardous materials
- Department of Revenue, tax regulation
- General concerns of regulatory climate

Financing

- Issues in securing financial capital

Expansion/Contraction Potential

Community Relations

- Local business climate
- Local regulatory climate

Needs help with the following

Follow up steps

Would they be a good candidate to meet with prospective companies?

Would they be a good candidate to be an ambassador?

Study Sponsor and Consultant



Stokes County is located in northwest North Carolina and is considered to be part of the Piedmont Plateau. The county offers stunning scenery and offers the closest mountains to many large population centers in North Carolina (Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Raleigh, Durham and Chapel-Hill.) The county has a rich agricultural heritage and while it embraces this heritage, it is preparing for the future.



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