



KINSTON
NORTH CAROLINA

City of Kinston Economic Development Strategic Plan

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CREATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING, LLC

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Executive Summary

Kinston is a city on the move! As eastern North Carolina has emerged from the effects of the Great Recession, and more recently the destruction in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew, Kinston is positioned to move its economy forward on a number of fronts. An emerging image as a city of the arts, with connectivity to downtown redevelopment, the restaurant scene, and innovative housing options, all give Kinston the stage to tell its story. Additionally, a diversifying local economy and increasing collaborative strategies for business development and job attraction means that the outlook for Kinston's employment profile is strong.

The economic development strategic planning process was sponsored by ElectriCities of N.C., Inc., as a service to its member communities. ElectriCities knows that companies and people invest in communities that invest in themselves. This strategic plan will guide Kinston to make strategic investments that will result in a stronger, more sustainable economy.

The strategic planning process included community engagement, an online survey, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, and economic and demographic research. Kinston's strengths include transportation assets, an emerging arts and "foodie" scene, and availability of industrial and commercial real estate. The weaknesses include low incomes, declining tax base, and low job growth rates.

There are several assets that Kinston has invested in, such as the Farmers' Market, Riverwalk, utility and transportation improvements that show promise. There are also some that may need additional investment and attention.

The strategic plan for Kinston includes recommendations for attracting new jobs, using communications to tell Kinston's story, and strategies for economic diversification, small business development, talent development, and marketing for visitors and tourism.

Executing these strategies, plus leveraging partnerships at county and regional economic development allies, will give Kinston a platform to make progress on job creation and attraction goals.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Summary

GOAL: Gain New Jobs and Investment through Economic Development Attraction, Retention and Expansion

- Strategy: Provide complete information on available commercial and industrial real estate to allies, advisors, and end users.
- Strategy: Implement a Proactive Business Retention and Expansion Program

Goal: Position Kinston for Economic Diversification and Opportunity

- Strategy: Develop and promote career awareness and pathways in health occupations and training programs.
- Strategy: Support and highlight small and growing businesses and entrepreneurship programs to support them.

Goal: Solidify Kinston's Image as an Arts and Culture-Rich Community

- Strategy: Present a consistent image of Kinston as an arts and cultural center.
- Strategy: Invest in placemaking activities to activate the Farmers Market and Riverwalk as signature Kinston places and community gathering spots and points of pride.
- Strategy: Embrace the "foodie" vibe which follows the notable restaurants, breweries, and distilleries in Kinston.

Goal: Increase Marketing and Communications to Share Information and Influence the Image of Kinston

- Strategy: Share information frequently and widely about Kinston public works projects, strategic priorities, and goals.
- Strategy: Plan for external and media communications to share Kinston perspectives in regional dialogue and influence external perceptions of Kinston.

Goal: Leverage Visitors to Kinston

- Strategy: Develop messages and electronic and print materials to extend the stay of visitors coming for specific events, such as dinner at the Chef and the Farmer or a Wood Ducks baseball game.
- Strategy: Build on the branding of Kinston and the arts, raise the visibility of Kinston as a visitor destination.

SWOT Analysis

The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) Analysis was compiled using information from interviews, a community survey, and a community meeting, along with staff and leadership input. In total, approximately 100 people had input into the strategic plan. Please refer to Appendix B for full results of the community survey.

Citizens in Kinston are aware of declining economic conditions as well as emerging assets which can leverage economic action. While there are many changes in the local and regional economy, with a strong network of partners and collaborators Kinston can direct its efforts to capitalize on these assets and opportunities.

Strengths

- Ballpark, Wood Ducks
- Downtown Revitalization
- Global Trans Park
- Neuse River
- Grant Funding
- Lenoir CC
- Industrial Parks

Weaknesses

- Good-paying jobs
- Retail
- People commute to Kinston to work
- Lack of multifamily modern housing
- No Public Transit
- Education
- Unprepared workforce

Opportunities

- US 70 bypass
- Build on assets to extend visitor stays
- Outdoor recreation/River walk/Neuse River
- Workforce training to support art, food & beverage as rising industries
- The river as a development focal point
- Aviation development at GTP

Threats

- US 70 bypass effects
- Real estate values declining; tax rate rising
- Perception on crime
- Population decline
- Work together in ENC or get left behind
- Kinston's negative view of itself

Strengths

Kinston has experienced recent and exciting developments and renovations that are points of pride. The new ballpark and successful Wood Ducks baseball team, and the redevelopment focus downtown with restaurants, hospitality, arts, and breweries have energized Kinston and its residents. There is justifiable optimism about these new and existing strengths and possibilities for leveraging them for economic growth. Kinston also has available properties for further development including downtown storefronts, industrial land, and buildings. Regional interest in the Global TransPark as an economic driver for North Carolina is also growing and will advance Kinston's economic agenda.

Ball Park, Wood Ducks

Downtown Revitalization

Nightlife

Global TransPark

Neuse River

Arts Community/Scene

Leverage Grant Funding

Civil War History

Lenoir Community College

Workforce

Diverse Industry Base

Room to Grow

Ready Industrial Parks

Leadership, Elected Officials

Civic Organizations

Committee of 100

Chamber of Commerce, Lenoir
20/20

Rotary Club/s

Woodmen Water Park

Recreation Programs

Historical Properties

Hospital

Youth Leadership (Kinston Teens)

Chef & the Farmer

Mother Earth Brewing

New Motor Lodge

Stephen Hill

Strong private investors

Strong Non-Profits

Arts Based Economic Development

Reliable Power

Investments in Public Infrastructure

Diverse Industrial Base

Growing Breweries, Distilleries

City staff and council is "pro growth"

Asheville of ENC

Heritage street project

Factory Jobs

Tourism

Available and accessible real
property

Weaknesses

The characteristics Kinston identifies as weaknesses are mostly issues that apply to many smaller southeastern towns and cities that have lost manufacturing jobs and employers due to globalization and production and technology innovations. The need for employment opportunities to attract and retain population and to provide wages that sustain a good quality of life is top of mind. The housing stock is older and does not reflect young people's preferences for multi-family communities with amenities.

Violence	Difficulty investing due to flood-prone areas	Limited shopping choices in Kinston
Need Good-Paying Jobs	Perception of "Nothing to Do"	Education
Need Retail	Growth is not throughout the community – East Kinston is left behind	Outdated workforce skills
People just commute to Kinston	Empty storefronts	Utilities are expensive, electric bills
Lack of multi-family modern housing	Absent property owners	Unprepared workforce
Too much subsidized housing	Downtown buildings are aging and deteriorating	Poor reputation from the past
Lack of grocery stores	Lack of diversity	Not enough job opportunities
Need Community Buy-in	Poverty	Aging water and sewer infrastructure
No Public Transit	Resistance to Change	Disconnected activities, poor communication
No School Choice	Low-Paying Jobs	
Declining tax base		
Abandoned homes		

Opportunities

Investments in downtown have brought Kinston media and tourism attention that is ripe to be leveraged. The “hip and cool” vibe of rehabilitated homes and public art in and adjacent to downtown Kinston are attractive to a young workforce and to potential investors. At the same time, regional action is becoming more palatable and the Wood Ducks are a regional asset based in Kinston. The visitors to the ball park represent a growth market for Kinston, and an opportunity to brand Kinston in a new way. The Neuse River is tied to the city’s history and identity. Using the river as a focal point and marketing tool will reach another segment of the population.

Location in Eastern NC	Transportation routes connect ENC population hubs	Education and Workforce Development
Utility Capacity – water, wastewater, electric	Duke Land	Make a rest area for beach traffic to stop
New wastewater treatment plant	Make the river a development focal point	More regional thinking
Kinston US 70 Bypass	Aviation development at GTP	City and county government cooperation
Build on assets to extend visitor stays	Historic Tax Credit opportunities	Downtown revitalization, properties
Outdoor Recreation/River Walk/Connections to Neuse River	Arts-based food, brew cluster like Asheville	Recruit new businesses
Workforce training to support art and food and brewing as rising industries	Queen Street Diet Project	Leverage affordable housing to attract young people
Regional thinking is making gains – e.g. baseball park	Regional Aviation Initiative	Tourism, Hospitality, Recreation sectors
New Interstates	Growing relationship with Goldsboro and New Bern	Destination shopping and entertainment
	Manufacturing Companies	
	Wood Ducks	

Threats

At times it may seem that Kinston is buffeted by factors beyond its control. Demographic shifts, globalization, and market forces have impacted economic development negatively in significant ways. Some of the old ways, such as downtown department stores, are gone forever. Kinston is aware of these challenges. In some ways, awareness of the challenges ahead may be discouraging as the solutions are not clear and some of the threats and negative trend lines may become overwhelming.

US 70 Bypass effects on Kinston

Real Estate Values Declining; Tax Rates rising

Flooding

Future Storms

Perception on Crime Rate

Population Decline

Concern that Goldsboro, Greenville, etc. do not support GTP- it should be a regional asset

We need to work together in ENC or get left behind

Kinston's negative view of itself

Loss of population and tax base

Cost of living is disproportionately high compared to wages

Perception of Public Safety gaps

Declines in public education and enrollment

Potential for consolidation of elementary schools could disadvantage Kinston

Crime

Low-paying jobs

Lack of job opportunities

High Utility and tax rates

Perception that Kinston is dangerous

Failing to acknowledge the realities of population declines and education declines

People are leaving the area

No strategy for the city

People are not willing to invest

Lack of entertainment

Aging population not being replaced

Poverty

WHAT IS ONE THING THAT KINSTON DOES BETTER THAN OTHER CITIES?



Economic and Demographic Profile

While Kinston's population has been declining, albeit slightly; there has been growth in key younger population groups, such as 15-19 years and 20-24 years. In fact, from 2010 to 2015, the median age in Kinston declined from 43.7 to 43. These are indicators that Kinston's population is trending younger, and that is good news for employers and commercial operations. Another point that stands out is a low cost of housing, which can be viewed as a positive when the housing is attractive to new home buyers, or as a negative if the housing stock is vacant or not well-maintained. In short, Kinston has challenges with economic and demographic trends, but at the same time opportunities to leverage trends in favor of economic growth.

Summary

- ⊙ The 2015 population of Kinston is 21,540. Over the last five years, the population has declined by 0.64%, while the state has seen its population increase.
- ⊙ Kinston has fewer young workers, aged 25 – 54, than the county, region, and state. The median age in the city has decreased from 43.7 to 43 from 2010 to 2015, and is significantly above state median (37.4) and slightly above the county median (42.1).
- ⊙ Kinston is a majority-minority city, with 65% of the population black and 29% white. Lenoir County is 37% black and 51% white, while the state is 65% white and 21% black.
- ⊙ Kinston' population generally has a higher educational attainment than Lenoir County but lags the state significantly in residents with college degrees or graduate or professional degrees.
- ⊙ SAT scores for Lenoir County Schools have declined since 2012. The scores also lag behind North Carolina's scores, which have risen over the same period.
- ⊙ Per capita and median household incomes fall below the state average by about one-third and two-thirds, respectively. Recruiting jobs that pay above the average wage will be important to Kinston to increase income levels.
- ⊙ Homes are more affordable in Kinston and Lenoir County than in the state, making Kinston a good value for home buyers. However, lower home values could indicate a limited inventory of professional and management housing.
- ⊙ The labor force is growing again, a positive sign for business recruitment. The unemployment rate is declining.

Population
decline by
0.64%

SAT
Scores
have
declined

Labor
force
growing

- ⊙ Most people are employed in Manufacturing, Trade, Transportation, and Education and Health Services. The highest paying sectors are Financial Activities, Construction, and Manufacturing. It is important to note that the largest employment sector, Manufacturing, is also one of the highest paying sectors at \$763 a week.
- ⊙ Approximately 82% of all Lenoir County businesses have less than 10 employees, making small business development an important part of the economic development strategy.
- ⊙ Retail sales and collections of sales and use tax increased significantly in 2016 after 3 years of flat growth.
- ⊙ A quality of life feature of Kinston is that more people have a shorter commute than in the county and region. Approximately 51% commute less than 15 minutes.
- ⊙ The tourism industry has seen growth in total expenditures and payroll, but employment has declined slightly.
- ⊙ The index crime rate in Lenoir County decreased in the last measured year.

**Manufacturing --
highest paying sector -
- \$763 per week**

**82% of
businesses have
less than 10
employees**

Economic Development Strategic Plan

Input from interviews, the community survey, and public sessions confirmed that the priority goal for Kinston is more jobs available for residents. With existing assets in industrial land and buildings and regional strategies for attracting manufacturing and logistics employers, Kinston is well positioned to benefit from aggressive action. Layering on top of job-generating strategies is the continued transformation of Kinston's image as a center for arts, food, cool developments, and walkable areas. Amplifying and connecting these new messages will continue to impact Kinston's image and positively impact in-migration and visitors to Kinston. Additional attention to existing visitors and increased efforts in marketing and visitor support will extend the time and resources people spend while in Kinston. These goals and their strategies will work to advance and connect these priorities for the improvement of Kinston and its economy.

The **goals** of the strategic plan are:

- ⊙ Gain new jobs and investment through Economic Development Attraction
- ⊙ Position Kinston for economic diversification and opportunity
- ⊙ Solidify Kinston's image as an arts and culture-rich community
- ⊙ Increase marketing and communications to influence the image of Kinston
- ⊙ Leverage visitors to Kinston

Goal: Gain New Jobs and Investment through Economic Development Attraction, Retention and Expansion

In interviews, the community meeting, and the online survey, adding new jobs was consistently rated as a high priority for investment and resources to reach Kinston's economic goals. Kinston has a strong manufacturing base and a history of supporting production facilities. Therefore, recruiting new manufacturing and assembly employers is a good goal for Kinston to pursue.

Strategy: Provide complete information on available commercial and industrial real estate to allies, advisors, and end users.

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Participate in an inventory of available industrial sites and suitable available buildings. Make sure complete information is available through the Lenoir County EDC, the NC East Region, the NCSE Region, the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, and ElectriCities. Include these priorities on the City of Kinston website, at the least by linking to these partners.
- ⊙ Highlight the most promising industrial properties with allies and stakeholders who may be in a position to recommend them to prospects or users. Include Lenoir County EDC, NC East Region, the NCSE Region, EDPNC, ElectriCities, and other appropriate partners.
- ⊙ Consider a “virtual shell building” on the Highway 70 Industrial Park site which has been certified as a Smart Site by ElectriCities. It is suggested that a building design of 70,000 sf expandable to 100,000 sf+ with high ceilings would provide Kinston with additional modern industrial product to compete for new manufacturing projects.
- ⊙ Establish a database of available properties downtown to facilitate new investment and employment, with a focus on those in corridors the city prioritizes for development. NC East Alliance is working with national developers with interest in downtown and historic properties. Connect with NC East staff and familiarize them with Kinston's priorities and assets.

Strategy: Connect with and leverage the Global TransPark for Kinston's economic growth

Action Steps:

- ⊙ With a new strategic plan for the GTP underway, reach out to the GTP executive director and board and express interest in partnership, communications, and participation
- ⊙ Explore with the GTP leadership the possibility of a Regional Advisory Council for the GTP which could connect the economic development strategies of the neighboring counties and region with that of the GTP. Possible members could include representatives from the cities and counties, and regional partnership with interests that align with the GTP.
- ⊙ With Aviation and Aerospace as regional targets, complete an asset inventory for Kinston of companies in the aviation and aerospace supply chain, training programs supporting aviation and aerospace, and hard assets such as GTP.
- ⊙ Support the sub-regional marketing efforts of the US 70 Aerospace Corridor with Craven and Wayne Counties and the NCSE region.

Strategy: Implement a proactive business retention and expansion program

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Partner with the Lenoir County economic development program to conduct BRE visits to companies inside the city. If the county program does not include small businesses, the city's BRE program should. Set a goal to visit 50 businesses every year.
- ⊙ Through regular visitation, assess companies' potential for expansion and contraction. Maintain information on employment levels, potential new product/service lines, available expansion space, potential ownership changes, etc.
- ⊙ Align the BRE program with the city's key accounts program to target companies that are large utility customers.
- ⊙ Use research gathered in the BRE program to influence city policies. Examples are regulatory process, transportation priorities, amenity development, and infrastructure investments.

Goal: Position Kinston for economic diversification and opportunity

In addition to leveraging Kinston's manufacturing assets and advantages, the community is interested in economic diversification to strengthen other sectors of the local economy. Two targets are healthcare, which is growing and provides employment opportunities at all skill and wage levels, and tourism and hospitality services, which may be attractive to younger residents and workers.

Strategy: Develop and promote career awareness and pathways in health occupations and training programs.

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Promote career potential in health careers including degrees available at Lenoir Community College and East Carolina University, utilizing the new Career Coaches in high schools.
- ⊙ Encourage Kinston employers to engage with public schools and Lenoir Community College in work-based learning for students, focusing first on targets of aviation/aerospace, healthcare, and hospitality/tourism and financial services.
- ⊙ Promote opportunities and careers in hospitality and tourism, identifying relevant degrees and curricula at Lenoir Community College.
- ⊙ Complementing the community's investments in arts, begin to talk about the "creative economy" and opportunities for careers and startups in arts, design, and other creative enterprises.

Strategy: Support and highlight small and growing businesses and entrepreneurship programs to support them.

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Identify and inventory small business and entrepreneurship assets and support programs.
- ⊙ Look for opportunities to partner with and support small business development programs through Lenoir Community College, Chamber of Commerce, etc.

- ⊙ Encourage program providers to partner to provide high-quality training and one-on-one support for small and growing businesses, especially focusing on targeted sectors.

Goal: Solidify Kinston's image as an arts and culture-rich community

Significant public and private resources are being invested in arts and cultural assets for Kinston. Strong community partners such as the Arts Council and the smART Kinston Foundation are working to solidify Kinston's arts credentials, both inside Lenoir County and across North Carolina. This differentiates Kinston in eastern North Carolina and syncs up with current trends.

Strategy Present a consistent image of Kinston as an arts and cultural center.

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Consider a positioning statement for Kinston which includes its aspirations for the arts and culture. Some residents seem skeptical of the arts as a strategy. In order for it to be effective, it has to be widely adopted. Winston-Salem calls itself "the city of arts and innovation." Berea, Kentucky, is known as the "folk arts capital of Kentucky." Adopting and consistently using a phrase about Kinston's arts and culture will train the residents, businesses, and media to tell this story.
- ⊙ Consider "wayfinding" signage highlighting arts assets in downtown Kinston to tell the story to visitors. These could be permanent maps or signs, perhaps located near benches or public spaces.
- ⊙ Enhance the public art walking trail brochure with a mobile app that can be accessed on the go. Consider physical markings on the sidewalks to indicate the trail, or parts of the trail. Test this at a downtown festival or for a trial period to evaluate its effects.
- ⊙ As construction wraps up, consider a striking gateway or entrance way on the Queen Street bridge. With signage, landscaping, lighting, or other means, create a memorable welcome mat to the heart of Kinston.
Develop relationships with TV news and print media and promote events, shows, and accomplishments in the media. While each story pitched may not be picked up, this will pay dividends in educating some of the media on Kinston's priorities, resources, and assets.

Strategy: Invest in placemaking activities to activate the Farmers Market and Riverwalk as signature Kinston places and community gathering spots and points of pride.

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Activate these areas with free community activities and events. Some may be transferred from other locations to invest in these new community assets. Examples could include: yoga, dance, or art classes or demonstrations.
- ⊙ Publicize to city clubs and organizations the opportunity to hold free public events in these spaces.
- ⊙ Consider concert series, cooking demonstrations, pop-up petting zoos, and other fun and family events to brand these assets as part of the community.

Strategy: Embrace the “foodie” vibe which follows the notable restaurants, breweries, and distilleries in Kinston

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Develop visitor materials which aggregate and publicize these assets. Look for ways to cross-market among the restaurants, breweries, and distilleries in order to reach visitors.
- ⊙ Create a support and networking platform for hospitality companies in Kinston, perhaps as part of the Chamber of Commerce.
- ⊙ Consider an annual event modeled after a progressive dinner which highlights the foodie assets of Kinston.
- ⊙ Look for opportunities to cross market with other food and craft beer attractions in the region, eg. Duck Rabbit Brewery, On the Square, Persimmons, 99 Brewery, etc.

Goal: Increase marketing and communications to share information and influence the image of Kinston

The City of Kinston can be a powerful influence over the images and feelings that residents have about their city. While much media and external perceptions of Kinston are outside the city’s control, there are strategies to influence these external messages as well.

Strategy: Share information frequently and widely about Kinston public works projects, strategic priorities, and goals.

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Use the city’s website, a monthly newsletter, utility bill inserts, the “Notify Me” platform, and conventional and social media platforms to inform and update Kinston residents and businesses on public works projects, especially transportation and utility construction which may temporarily inconvenience people or create unsightly worksites. When people understand the gains to be had, they are more tolerant of inconveniences. When people understand the duration of projects, they are more tolerant of their immediate negative impacts.
- ⊙ Use the goals of this Strategic Plan as topics for communications with residents and businesses– consider ‘breakfast with the manager’ (or mayor, or council member) opportunities once a month to brief the community on current goals and upcoming activities.
- ⊙ Use the City of Kinston website to highlight these strategies and ongoing activities. Use photographs to update on construction and maintenance projects.
- ⊙ Consider partnering with the social media platform Nextdoor to connect more intimately with Kinston residents and property owners. More than 2,500 public agencies have joined this platform to communicate around public safety, upcoming events, disaster planning, and providing feedback. More information is at <https://help.nextdoor.com/customer/portal/articles/805355> This platform may offer more interactive, two-way communications than the “Notify Me” platform.

Strategy: Plan for external and media communications to share Kinston perspectives in regional dialogue and influence external perceptions of Kinston

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Building on the strategies and accomplishments from this plan, submit periodic OpEd pieces to *The Kinston Free Press*, authored by the mayor, manager, police chief, etc. Newspapers today are eager to receive content from expert sources on topics of interest to the public. Potential topics could include: activation of the new Farmer's Market space and Riverwalk, impact of arts on the community, increase in tourism activity, economic growth trends and priorities. These placements can be re-purposed with links on the city's website and sharing on social media.
- ⊙ Issue periodic press releases to print and electronic media highlighting activities and accomplishments toward the strategic plan. Invite key media contacts for a "behind the scenes tour" of an event or city facility.
- ⊙ Develop a pool of ready spokespersons who can be available for print or electronic media to provide the city's perspective on topics of interest. These people should be well versed in Kinston's strengths and strategies.

Strategy: Convene appropriate stakeholders to discuss a unified community calendar for Kinston.

- ⊙ Visit Kinston and the Arts Council could be the two primary designers of the community calendar, which could be resident on one website but linked and embedded in others including the Chamber, the City, and even interested commercial establishments such as museums or restaurants.
- ⊙ If the web-based calendar gets traction with public entertainment, arts, and community events, consider expanding it to social media as another way to push events and opportunities out into the Kinston community and toward visitors and residents for neighboring towns and cities.

Goal: Leverage visitors to Kinston

The City of Kinston has numerous attractions bringing visitors to town, and new attractions are being added. Kinston has the opportunity to catch the attention of visitors who come to spend less than one whole day and share with them additional, complementary attractions and activities that can enhance their experience. This type of visitor marketing is different from the initial decision to come to Kinston and includes making connections and cross-marketing within the visitor and hospitality communities of Kinston.

Strategy Develop messages and electronic and print materials to extend the stay of visitors coming to one event, such as dinner at the Chef & the Farmer or a Wood Ducks baseball game.

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Use the city's website and chamber websites to offer extensions to a visit to Kinston. Provide electronic and printed itineraries, and perhaps promotional offers, to visit complementary or nearby attractions. For instance, a public art walking tour for visitors to Chef & the Farmer, or the water park for attendees at baseball games.
- ⊙ Prepare themed itineraries such as "18 hours in Kinston," "Enjoy Kinston on a \$50 budget," or "Kinston with Kids" to share attractions and opportunities for a variety of visitor profiles.

Strategy: Building on the branding of Kinston and the arts, raise the visibility of Kinston as a visitor destination.

Action Steps:

- ⊙ Host media tours for relevant beats or trade publications, for example food writers and publications or arts and culture writers and publications. Begin with arts and culture writers for the Charlotte Observer, News and Observer, Norfolk News.
- ⊙ Make sure Visit NC has current details on visitor, arts, culture events, and attractions in Kinston.
- ⊙ Consider refreshed online visitor information, including mobile apps, which can be accessed and referenced on the go.
- ⊙ Invest funds in participating in VisitNC marketing and media events. There are frequent opportunities to travel to major markets and to host writers and tour operators here in the state. These can be very powerful ways to gain national and international attention and exposure.

Implementation Guide

Kinston's economic development landscape is thick with partners ready to help advance these goals and strategies. Priority action should be given to connecting with allies at county, regional, and state economic development agencies to ensure there are personal relationships in place to facilitate this. Making these connections and communicating clearly Kinston's priorities are the first steps in advancing the wide range of goals addressed in this plan.

1

- Share strategies and resources w/Partners
- Update Commercial and Industrial Property Info
- Inventory priority downtown or historic properties for (re)development
- Outreach to Lenoir ED, NC East & NCSE, EDPNC
- Inventory and connect small business support programs
- Consider a positioning statement reflecting Kinston's arts focus
- Pitch arts, food, and tourism related stories to media

2

- Evaluate a regional advisory committee for GTP including Kinston leadership
- Inventory Aerospace & Aviation assets
- Begin BRE visits to existing employers
- Evaluate Career Pathways in public schools and connect to existing employers
- Consider enhancements to wayfinding signage in downtown Kinston and throughout the city
- Plan events to activate the farmers' market and river walk.
- Develop cross-marketing partners in ENC

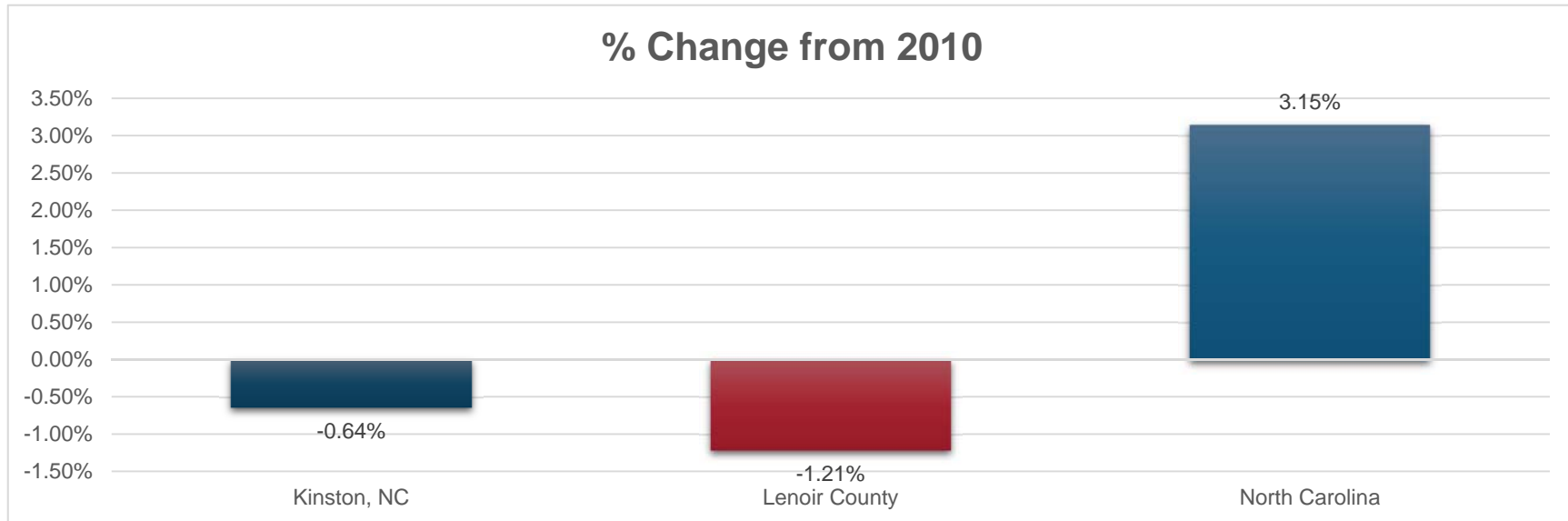
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- Evaluate a virtual shell building
- Participate in county and regional economic development events
- Expand activities at farmers' market and riverwalk
- Unified 'Community Calendar'
- Media tours for food and beverage writers and bloggers
- Periodic 'OpEd's in Kinston Free Press and other NC papers.
- Mobile visitor app

Appendix A: Economic and Demographic Profile

	2010	Most current	% Change 2010 - most current
Kinston, NC	21,677	21,540	-0.64%
Lenoir County	59,495	58,782	-1.21%
Kinston MSA	59,495	58,782	-1.21%
North Carolina	9,535,483	9,845,333	3.15%

Source: www.census.gov



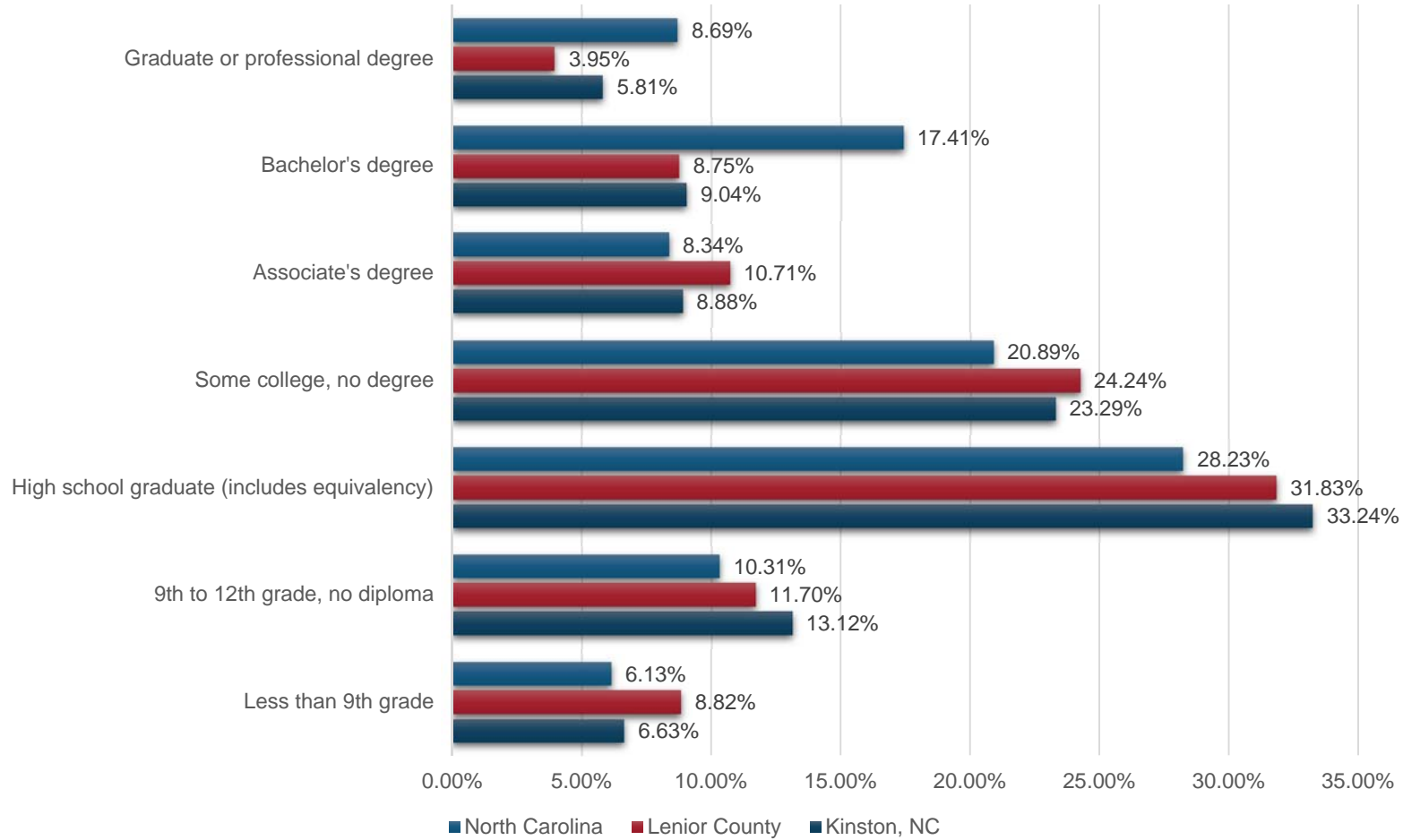
Source: www.census.gov

	Kinston, NC		Lenoir County		Kinston MSA	North Carolina
Age Groups	2010	2015	2010	2015		
Total population	21,677	21,540	59,495	58,782	59,495	9,535,483
Under 5 years	6.6%	6.9%	6.4%	5.9%	6.4%	6.6%
5 to 9 years	6.3%	5.4%	6.4%	6.2%	6.4%	6.7%
10 to 14 years	6.4%	6.1%	6.8%	6.7%	6.8%	6.6%
15 to 19 years	6.7%	7.6%	7.1%	6.8%	7.1%	6.9%
20 to 24 years	5.1%	6.3%	5.5%	5.9%	5.5%	6.9%
25 to 34 years	10.4%	10.3%	11.0%	10.9%	11.0%	13.1%
35 to 44 years	9.9%	9.9%	11.8%	11.7%	11.8%	13.9%
45 to 54 years	15.2%	12.8%	15.4%	14.0%	15.4%	14.4%
55 to 59 years	8.0%	8.8%	7.3%	7.6%	7.3%	6.3%
60 to 64 years	6.9%	7.1%	6.5%	6.8%	6.5%	5.6%
65 to 74 years	8.8%	9.0%	8.7%	9.7%	8.7%	7.3%
75 to 84 years	7.1%	6.7%	5.5%	5.8%	5.5%	4.1%
85 years and over	2.6%	3.1%	1.8%	2.0%	1.8%	1.5%
Median Age	43.7	43	41.0	42.1	41.0	37.4

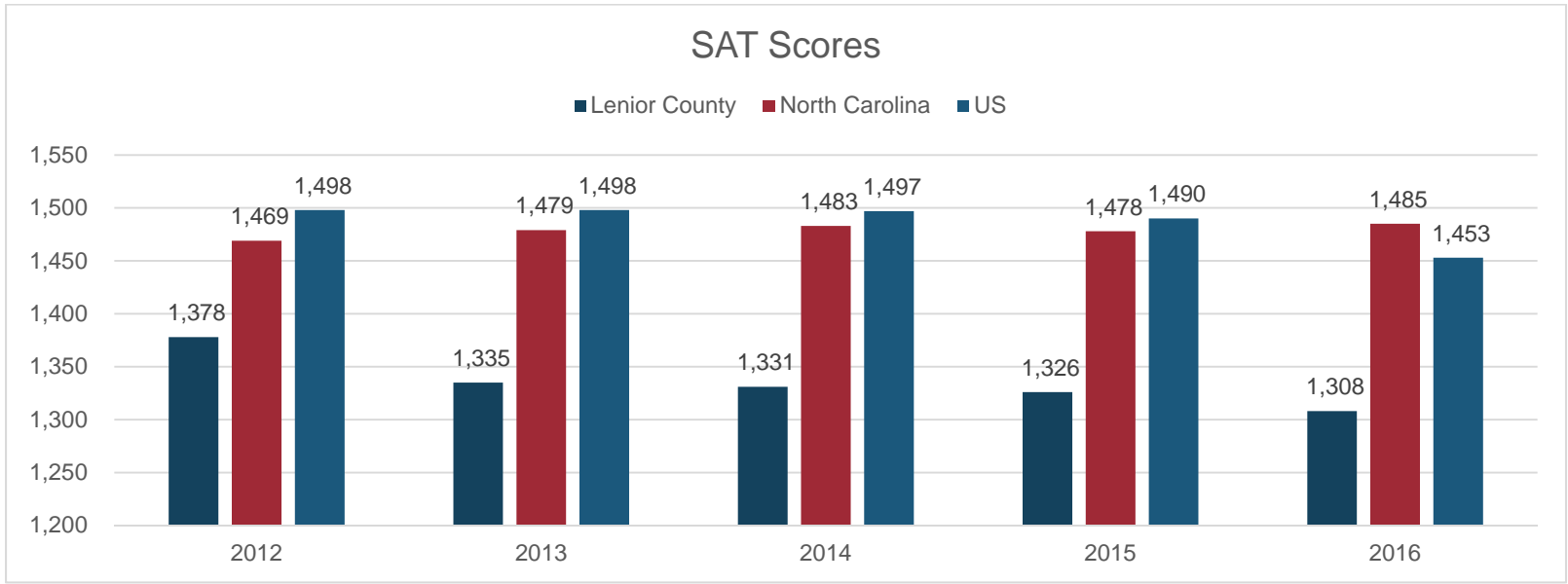
Source: www.census.gov

	Kinston, NC	Lenoir County	Kinston MSA	North Carolina
White Alone	28.9%	51.53%	50.07%	65.27%
Black Alone	64.9%	37.57%	38.06%	21.18%
American Indian Alone	0.4%	0.28%	0.35%	1.14%
Asian Alone	1.0%	0.59%	0.41%	2.17%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%	0.04%	0.08%	0.06%
Some Other Race Alone	0.4%	1.46%	3.62%	0.16%
Two or More Races	1.7%	1.87%	1.24%	1.63%
Hispanic Origin	2.6%	6.65%	6.18%	8.39%

Educational Attainment 25 Years & Older

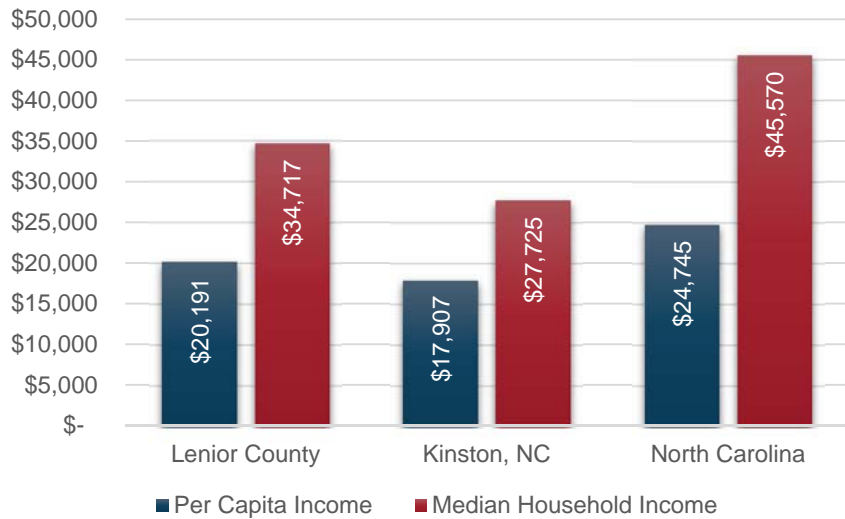


Source: www.census.gov



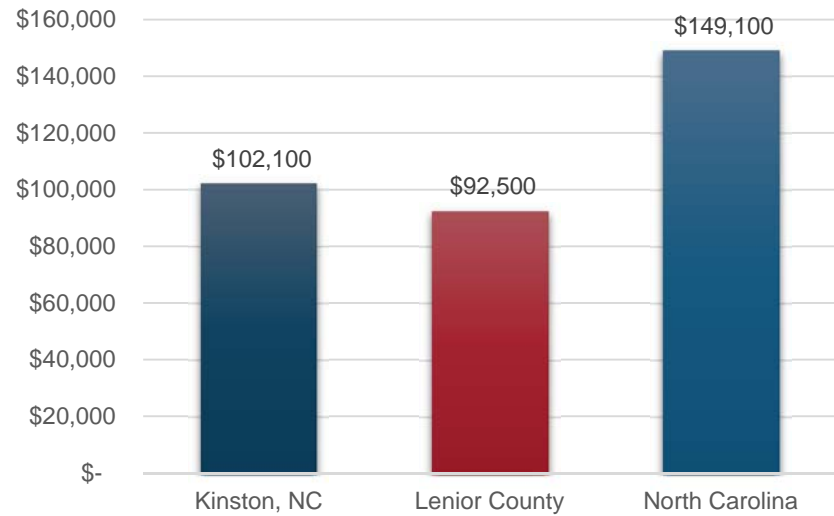
Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (www.dpi.state.nc.us)

2015 Income Data



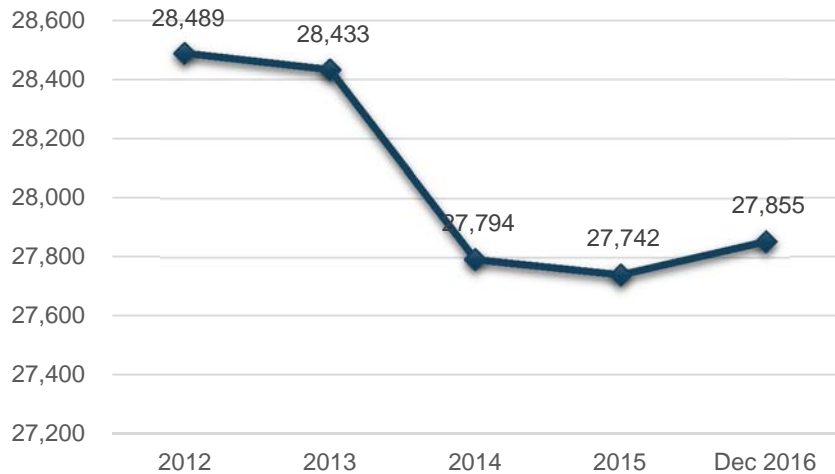
Source: www.census.gov

Median Home Value



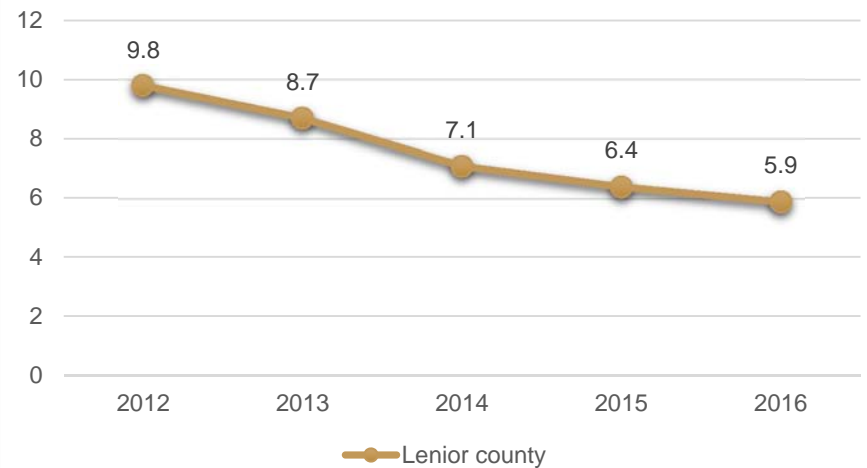
Source: www.census.gov

Lenoir County Labor Force

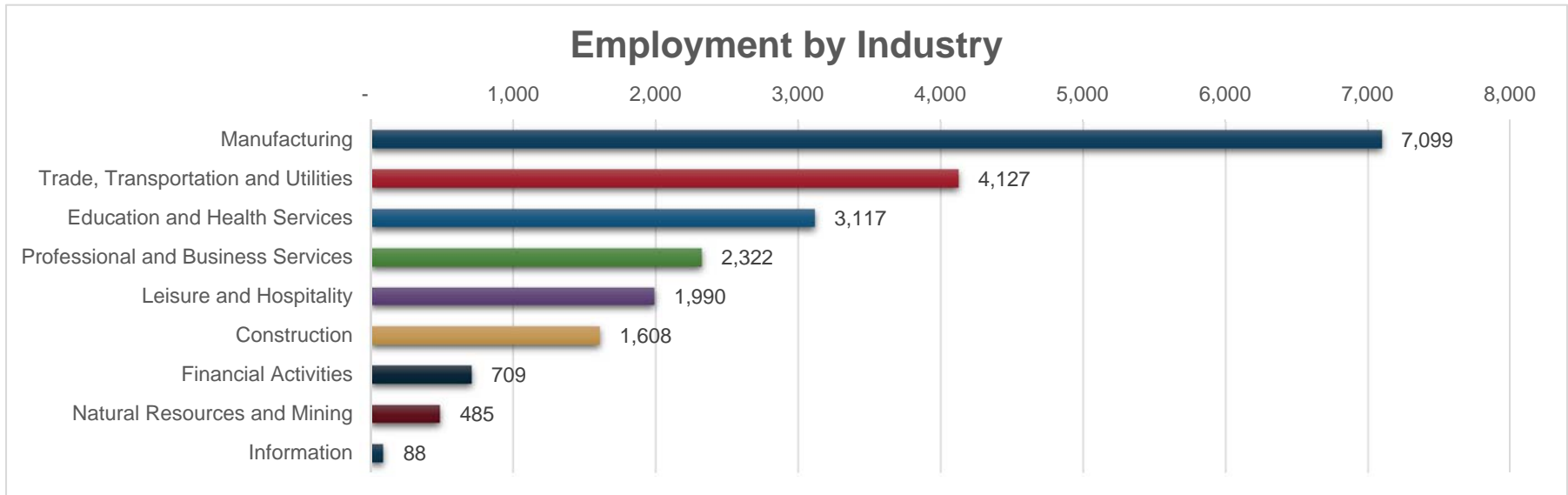


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov)

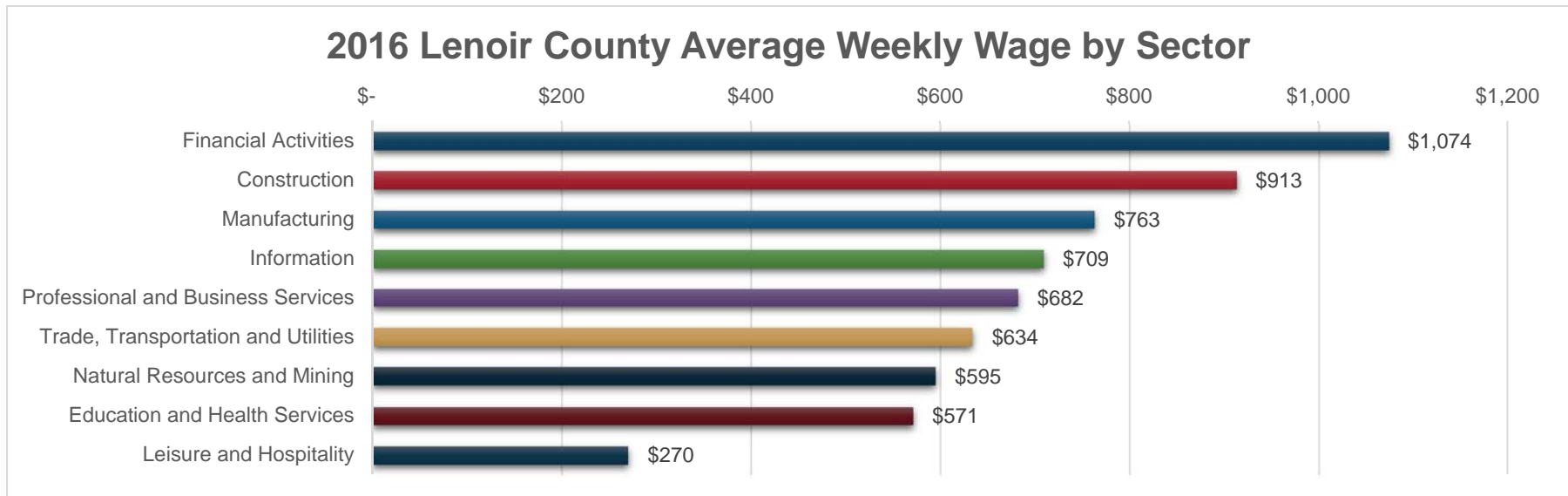
Unemployment Rate



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov)



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov)

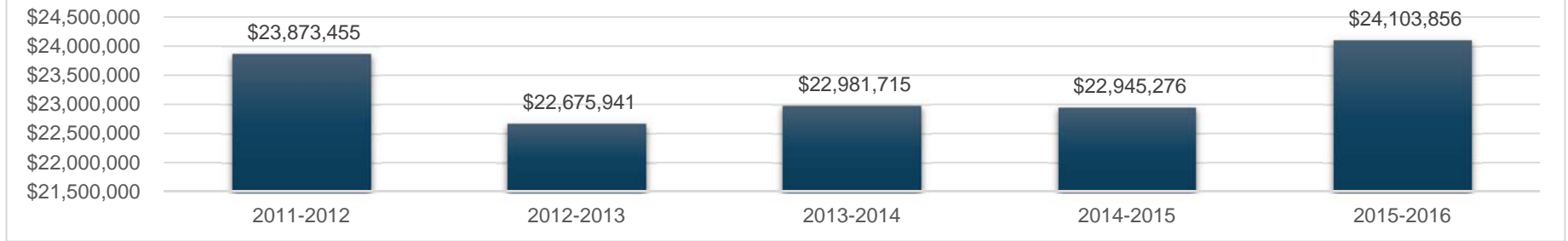


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov)

Rank	Company Name	Industry	Employment Range
1	Sanderson Farms Inc	Manufacturing	1000+
2	NC Dept Of Health & Human Services	Public Administration	1000+
3	Lenoir County Schools	Education & Health Services	1000+
4	Smithfield Foods Inc	Manufacturing	500-999
5	Lenoir Memorial Hospital Inc	Education & Health Services	500-999
6	Spirit Aerosystems	Manufacturing	500-999
7	Aristofraft/Decora/Schrock	Manufacturing	500-999
8	Lenoir County	Public Administration	500-999
9	Electrolux Home Products Inc	Manufacturing	500-999
10	City of Kinston	Public Administration	250-499
11	Lenoir Community College	Education & Health Services	250-499
12	West Pharmaceutical Services Inc	Manufacturing	250-499
13	Crown Equipment Corporation	Manufacturing	250-499
14	Personnel Outsource Solutions Inc	Professional & Business Services	250-499
15	Pwp Industries	Manufacturing	250-499
16	Rha Health Services LLC	Education & Health Services	250-499
17	Advance Security	Professional & Business Services	250-499
18	Wal-Mart Associates Inc	Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	250-499
19	Lenox Corporation	Manufacturing	250-499
20	T & D Solutions LLC	Construction	100-249
21	Associated Materials Inc	Manufacturing	100-249
22	Principle Long Term Care Inc	Education & Health Services	100-249
23	Food Lion	Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	100-249
24	Bojangles Famous Chicken & Biscuits	Leisure & Hospitality	100-249
25	The Mega Force Staffing Group Inc	Professional & Business Services	100-249

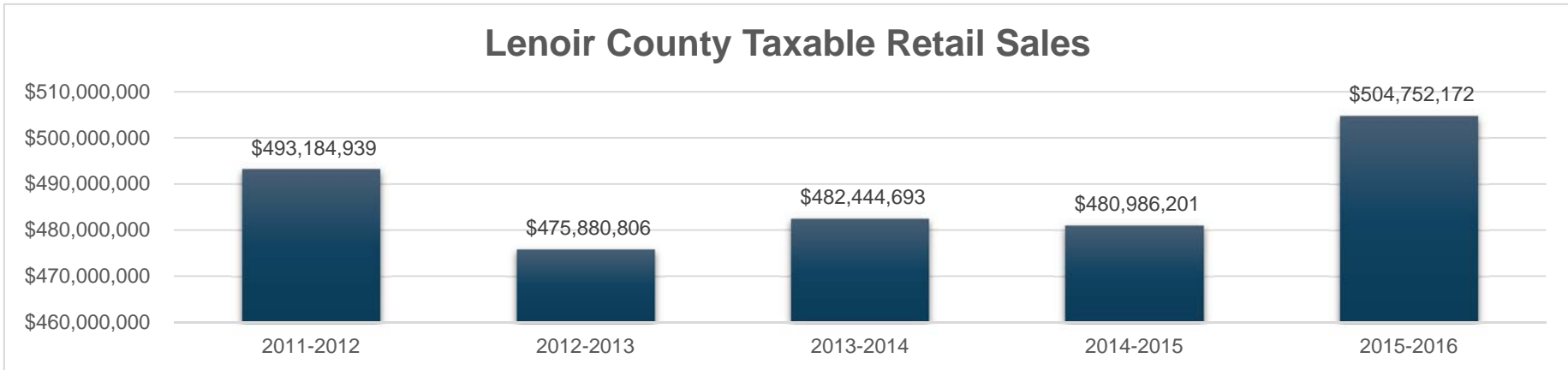
Source: North Carolina Department of Commerce (www.nccommerce.com)

Lenoir County Sales & Use Tax Gross Collections



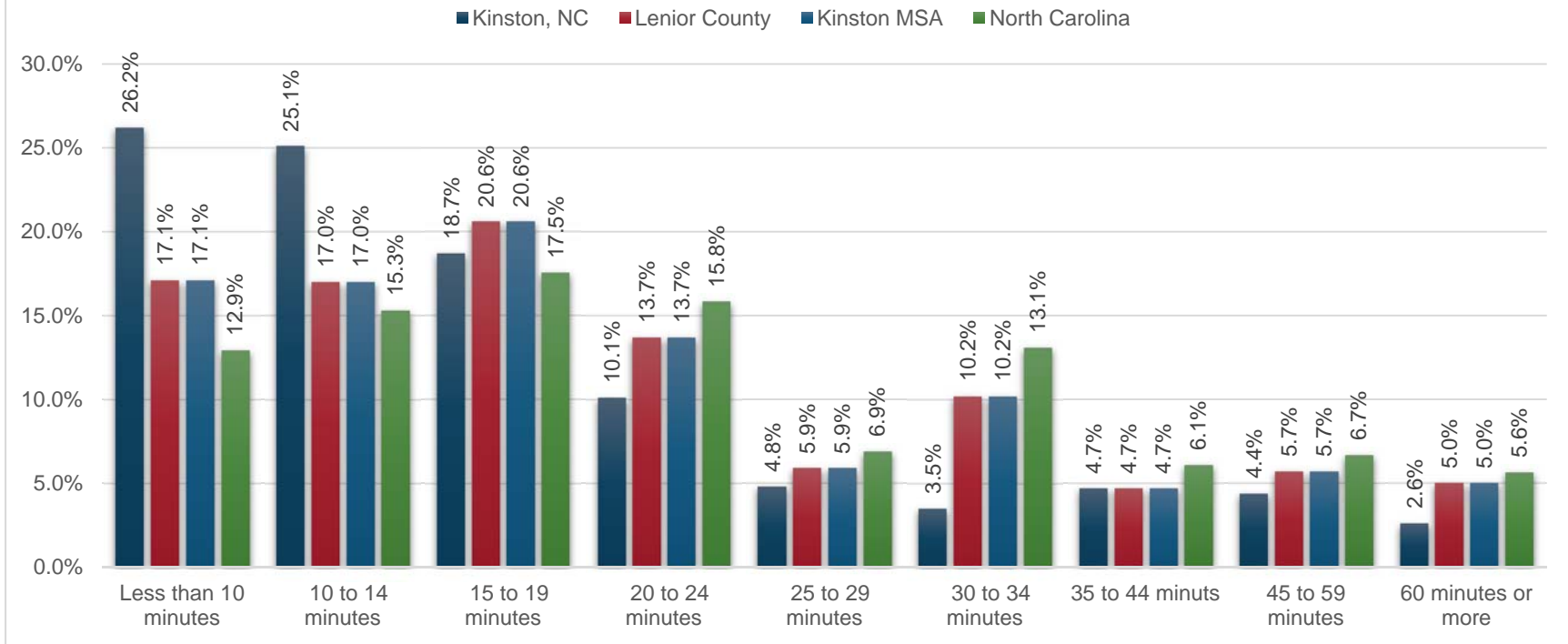
Source: North Carolina Department of Revenue (www.dornrc.com)

Lenoir County Taxable Retail Sales



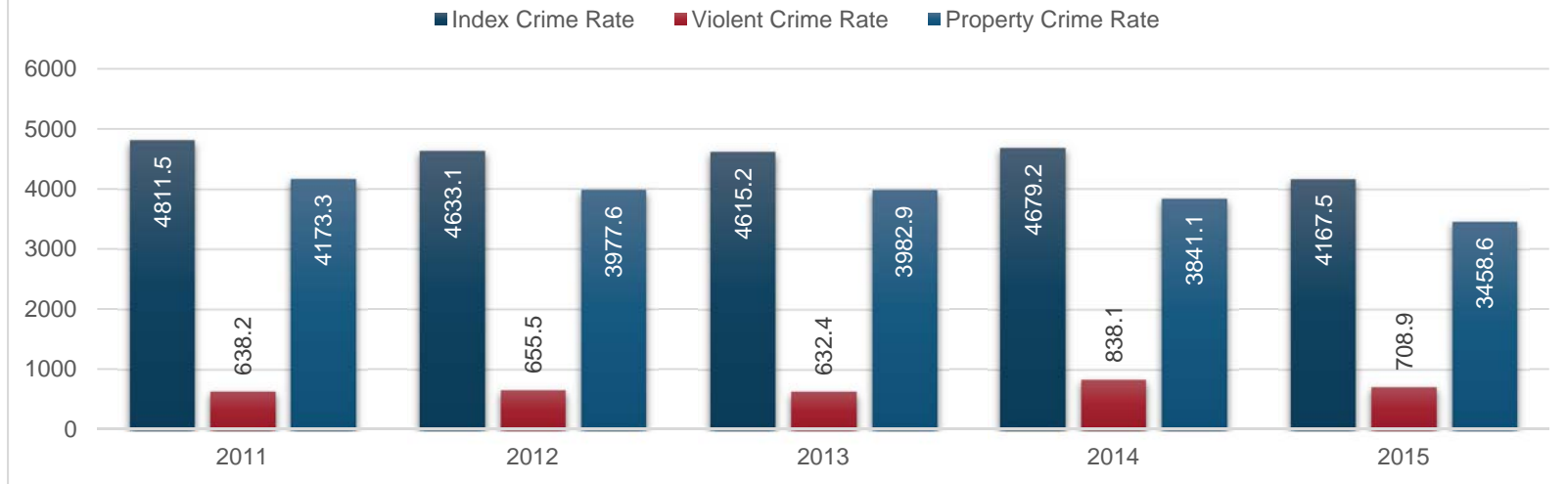
Source: North Carolina Source: Department of Revenue (www.dornrc.com)

Commute



Source: U.S. Census (www.census.gov American Fact Finder/American Community Survey)

Lenoir County Crime Rates Per 100,000



Source: NC Department of Justice

2011-2015 Employment Stages				
ESTABLISHMENTS	2011	% of TOTAL	2015	% of TOTAL
ALL	2,620	100	2,822	100
Self-Employed (1)	394	15	349	12.4
Stage 1 (2-9)	1,747	66.7	1,946	69
Stage 2 (10-99)	438	16.7	477	16.9
Stage 3 (100-499)	38	1.5	46	1.6
Stage 4 (500+)	3	0.1	4	0.1

Source: YourEconomy.Org

2011-2015 Establishment Data		
Gained	2011	2015
Total	2041	2352
Start Ups	65.9%	40.8%
Expansion Start Ups	12.0%	23.3%
Expansions	20.2%	34.7%
Move In	2.0%	1.1%
Lost		
Total	4,574	2,221
Closings	54.6%	85.8%
Contractions	43.6%	11.6%
Move Out	1.8%	2.6%

Source: YourEconomy.Org



Source: NC LINC

Retail Marketing Place Report

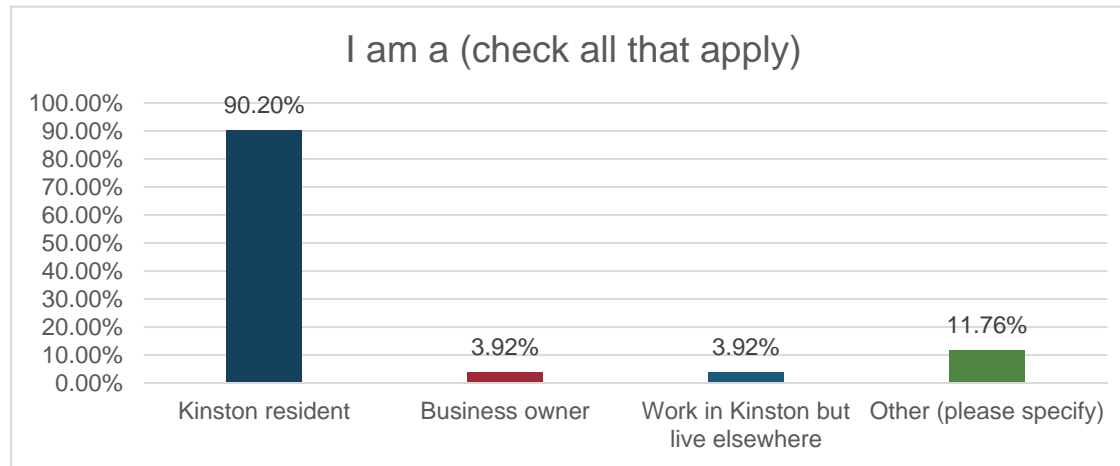
Retail MarketPlace Profile						
Summary Demographics						
2016 Population						21,820
2016 Households						9,354
2016 Median Disposable Income						\$24,968
2016 Per Capita Income						\$18,780
NAICS Industry Summary		Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	44-45,722	\$220,964,769	\$521,807,855	-\$300,843,086	-40.5	271
Total Retail Trade	44-45	\$200,945,060	\$478,758,111	-\$277,813,051	-40.9	208
Total Food & Drink	722	\$20,019,709	\$43,049,744	-\$23,030,035	-36.5	63
NAICS Industry Group		Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	441	\$46,550,925	\$144,474,346	-\$97,923,421	-51.3	31
Automobile Dealers	4411	\$39,307,696	\$127,389,696	-\$88,082,000	-52.8	12
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	4412	\$3,711,462	\$6,170,955	-\$2,459,493	-24.9	4
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	4413	\$3,531,767	\$10,913,695	-\$7,381,928	-51.1	15
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$6,797,182	\$26,277,566	-\$19,480,384	-58.9	15
Furniture Stores	4421	\$4,337,381	\$6,344,524	-\$2,007,143	-18.8	6
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$2,459,801	\$19,933,042	-\$17,473,241	-78.0	9
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$9,005,462	\$8,254,096	\$751,366	4.4	13
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	444	\$12,014,103	\$22,801,087	-\$10,786,984	-31.0	15
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	4441	\$11,104,525	\$22,003,767	-\$10,899,242	-32.9	14
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$909,578	\$797,320	\$112,258	6.6	1
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$37,130,673	\$72,011,337	-\$34,880,664	-32.0	26
Grocery Stores	4451	\$34,273,374	\$68,347,506	-\$34,074,132	-33.2	20
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$1,813,271	\$3,194,803	-\$1,381,532	-27.6	5
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	4453	\$1,044,028	\$469,028	\$575,000	38.0	1
Health & Personal Care Stores	446,4461	\$12,162,189	\$31,943,126	-\$19,780,937	-44.8	23
Gasoline Stations	447,4471	\$14,029,924	\$31,881,427	-\$17,851,503	-38.9	15
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	448	\$8,224,833	\$9,188,518	-\$963,685	-5.5	17
Clothing Stores	4481	\$5,479,703	\$6,700,455	-\$1,220,752	-10.0	12
Shoe Stores	4482	\$1,239,056	\$887,993	\$351,063	16.5	2
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$1,506,074	\$1,600,070	-\$93,996	-3.0	3
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	451	\$4,776,125	\$8,583,443	-\$3,807,318	-28.5	8
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	4511	\$3,959,488	\$7,677,475	-\$3,717,987	-31.9	7
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$816,637	\$905,968	-\$89,331	-5.2	1
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$35,605,700	\$111,686,699	-\$76,080,999	-51.7	16
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$26,688,298	\$96,975,548	-\$70,287,250	-56.8	6
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$8,917,402	\$14,711,151	-\$5,793,749	-24.5	10
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$10,454,146	\$11,656,466	-\$1,202,320	-5.4	29
Florists	4531	\$280,447	\$864,384	-\$583,937	-51.0	4
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	4532	\$1,653,153	\$681,783	\$971,370	41.6	5
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$870,244	\$1,385,501	-\$515,257	-22.8	5
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	4539	\$7,650,302	\$8,724,798	-\$1,074,496	-6.6	15
Nonstore Retailers	454	\$4,193,798	\$0	\$4,193,798	100.0	0
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	4541	\$2,598,784	\$0	\$2,598,784	100.0	0

Vending Machine Operators	4542	\$229,133	\$0	\$229,133	100.0	0
Direct Selling Establishments	4543	\$1,365,881	\$0	\$1,365,881	100.0	0
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	\$20,019,709	\$43,049,744	-\$23,030,035	-36.5	63
Special Food Services	7223	\$179,852	\$370,150	-\$190,298	-34.6	2
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	7224	\$1,266,618	\$549,083	\$717,535	39.5	3
Restaurants/Other Eating Places	7225	\$18,573,239	\$42,130,511	-\$23,557,272	-39	58

Source: Esri and Infogroup. Retail MarketPlace 2016 Release 2. Copyright 2016 Infogroup, Inc. All rights reserved.

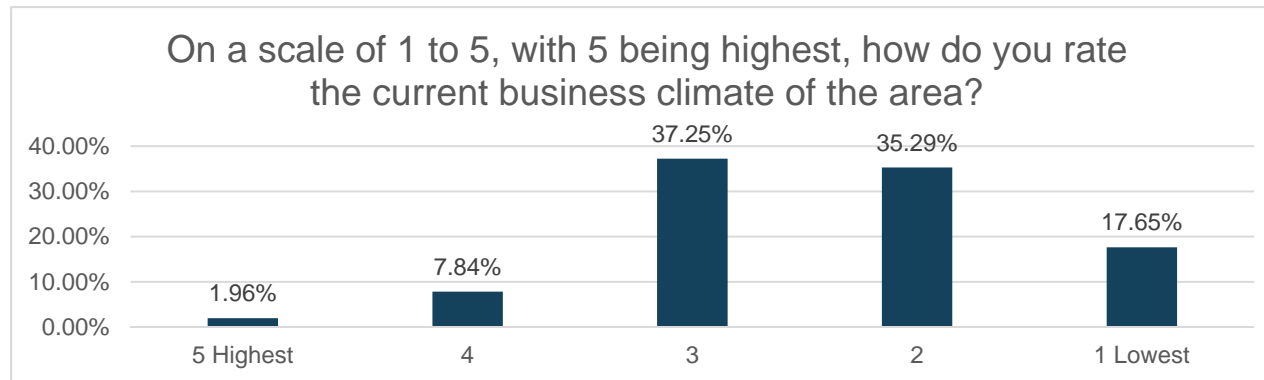
Appendix B: Community Survey

1. I am a (check all that apply)

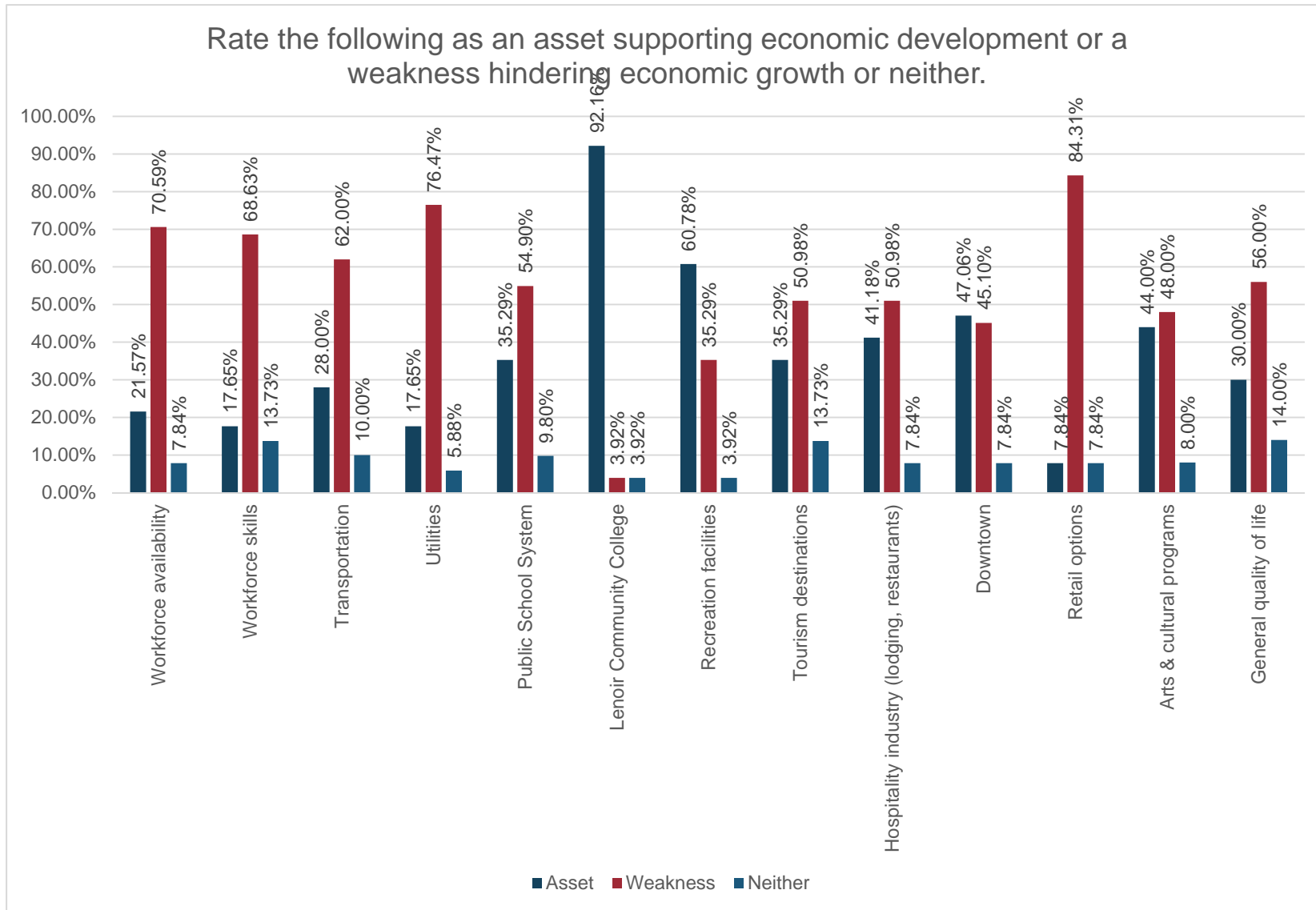


Other (please specify)
Kinston native and moved a year ago
Part of the year
Like most people, from Kinston but would never live there.
Entrepreneur
Live in the county
Lenoir County resident

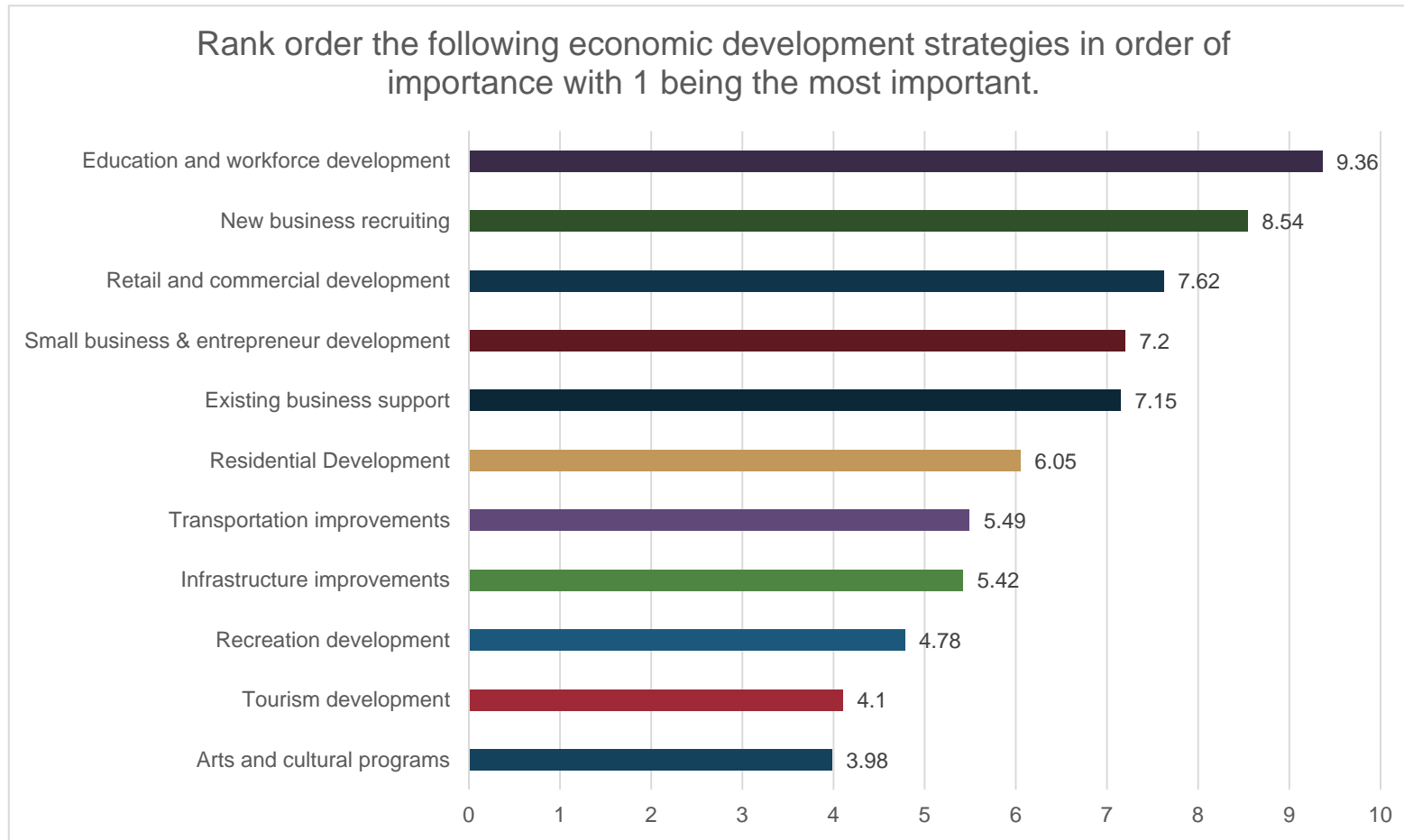
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highest, how do you rate the current business climate of the area?



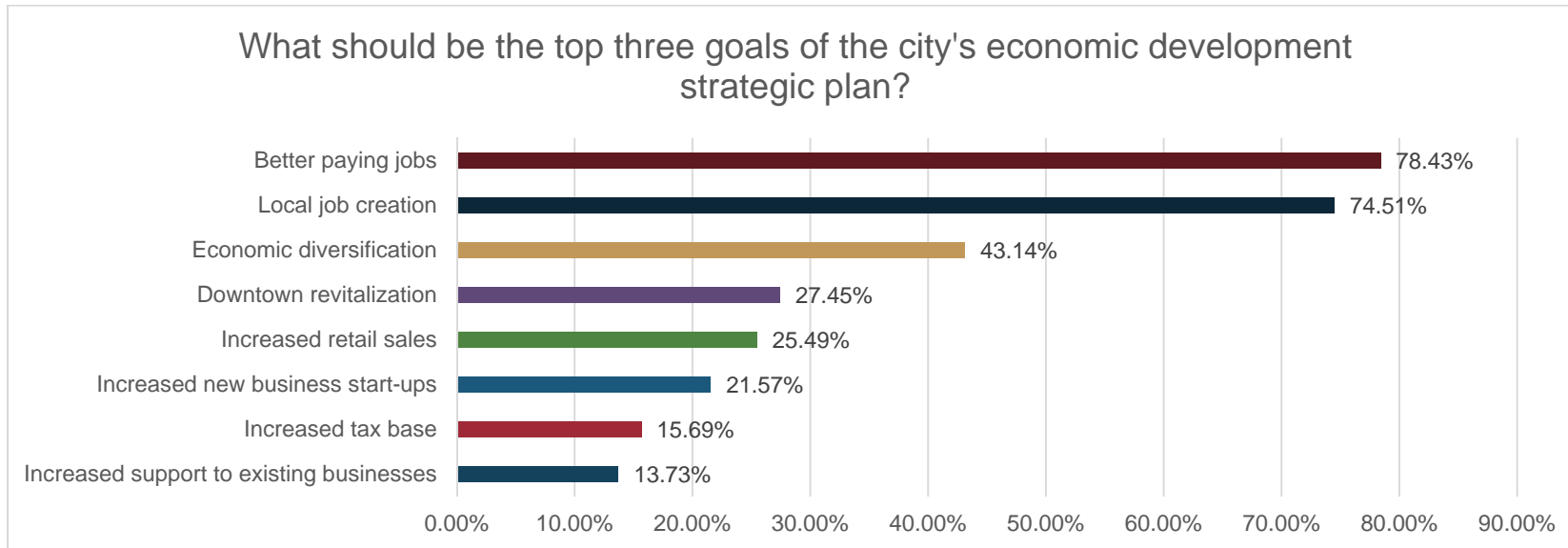
3. Rate the following as an asset supporting economic development or a weakness hindering economic growth or neither.



4. Rank order the following economic development strategies in order of importance with 1 being the most important.

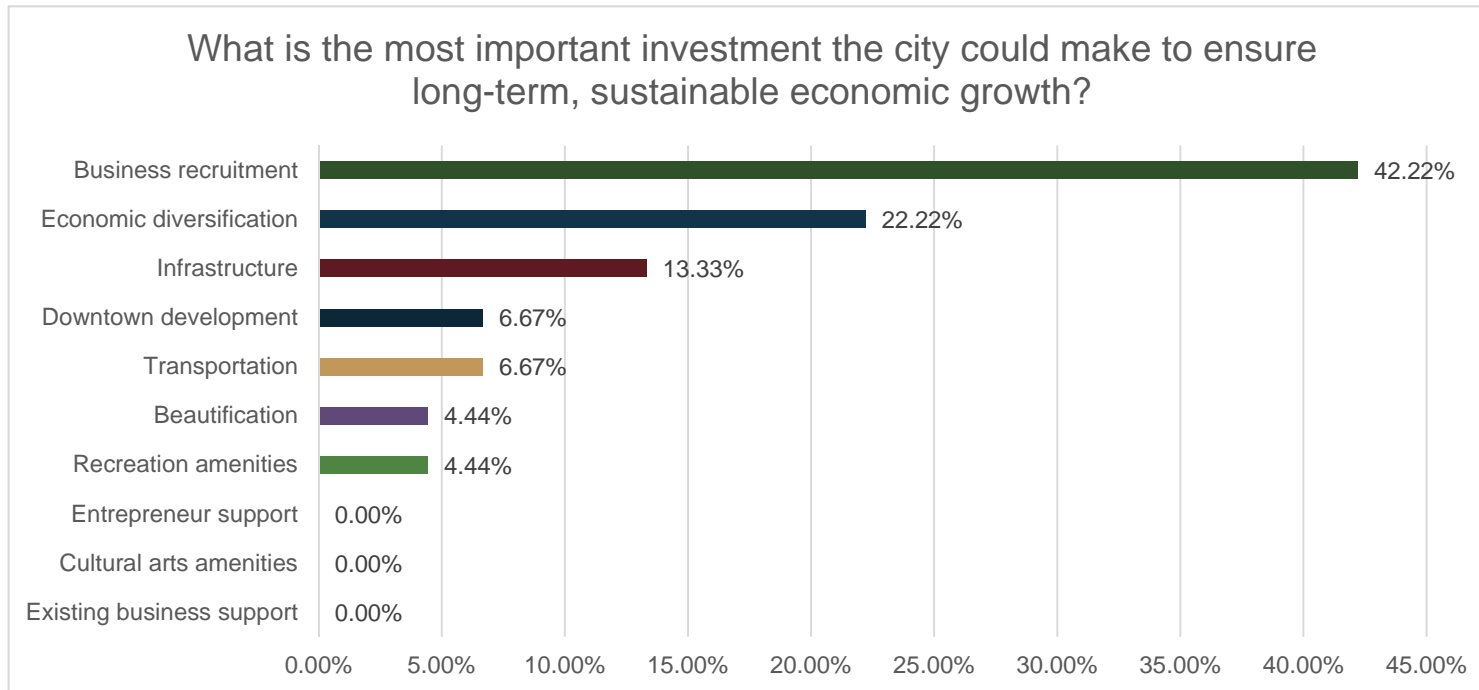


5. What should be the top three goals of the city's economic development strategic plan? CHOOSE THREE.



Other (please specify)
New Restaurants
More places to eat
More Tourism! Higher paying jobs. If people own houses there and they do not keep them up or abandoned houses, FINE THEM! That's how the city would get money! I do NOT blame Hillcrest for doing what they did.
(Survey did not recognize "other" as an answer - Downtown revitalization is not really one of my answers) You do not create jobs or control their pay, unless you are referencing city employees
Lowering utilities bills

6. What is the most important investment the city could make to ensure long-term, sustainable economic growth? CHOOSE ONLY ONE.



Appendix C: Study Sponsor and Consultant



ElectriCities of N.C. Inc. sponsored the Town of Kinston Economic Development Strategic Plan. ElectriCities economic development offers a variety of services to promote NC Public Power communities to businesses and economic developers. We help communities recruit business and industry by providing:

- ⊙ Target Marketing
- ⊙ Marketing/Collateral Assistance
- ⊙ Aerial Photography
- ⊙ Proposals for Prospects/Clients
- ⊙ Advertising Opportunities
- ⊙ Target Sectors
- ⊙ Trade Show Opportunities
- ⊙ Direct Marketing
- ⊙ Retail/Commercial Developments



Creative Economic Development Consulting, LLC, provides strategic planning, product development, organizational development, social media, and economic impact analysis services to communities. Creative EDC is an innovative firm that owns three proprietary programs: Certified Entrepreneurial Community®, CreativeSiteAssessment.com, and Certified Industrial Buildings. Creative EDC supports ElectriCities economic development programs through strategic planning and the Smart Sites initiative.