



Belhaven
North Carolina

Economic Development Strategic Plan

SPONSORED BY: ELECTRICITIES OF N.C., INC.

CREATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING, LLC
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Executive Summary

Belhaven is a beautiful community on the inner banks of the North Carolina coast. With a charming downtown adjoining the waterfront, it has significant opportunity to leverage its location and physical assets to improve access to amenities for residents, attract new residents as well as new, appropriate developments. Especially coming out of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Belhaven is positioned to capture new tourism expenditures from visitors who may stop along their route on the Intercoastal Waterway as well as visitors to the coast and other spots in Eastern North Carolina.

This 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 can guide Belhaven to make strategic investments that will result in a stronger, more sustainable economy.

The strategic planning process included community engagement by way of interviews, community meetings, an online survey, SWOT Analysis, and economic and demographic research. An asset-based approach to strategic planning was used to build goals, strategies, and action steps around the town's assets and future opportunities. The identified strengths include the physical beauty and coastal location, the availability of properties and land for new development, a historic downtown, and an existing restaurant and retail base. The town is challenged by slowing growth rates, periodic flooding, and lack of diverse employment opportunities. Opportunities include waterfront development, building coalitions and connections within the community and county, and capturing more tourism dollars. Threats to this future success include a location away from population centers, lack of shared vision for moving forward, and conflicts between permanent and part-time residents.

The Economic Development Strategic Plan outlines strategies to grow jobs in Belhaven through support for existing business and growth of small businesses and startups; building the community and quality of life through amenities, placemaking and recreation assets; building on tourism assets to increase visitors and capture more economic activity; and supporting workforce development for residents to raise wages and connect residents with the economy. The planning process was started in 2020, right before the COVID-19 pandemic. Long-term economic development will likely not be impacted by the pandemic, as those plans are based on the town's strategic assets. However, short-term strategies will be impacted as the economy emerges from the economic downturn. The economic development goals, strategies, and action steps are summarized on the next page; however, we encourage a full read of this report to understand the context of the strategic plan.

While Belhaven itself is small, the town has a group of citizens and leaders who are passionate about revitalizing the community and have a clear vision for the future. According to Margaret Mead, a small passionate group is all that is needed to change the world.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Summary

Goal: Grow jobs for Belhaven through support for existing business and growth of small businesses and start-ups

- Identify and position available sites and buildings for potential investors or employers
- Identify and prioritize properties for development and redevelopment
- Support entrepreneurship and small business growth
- Connect with existing business to promote growth and investment

Goal: Build Belhaven's sense of community and quality of life with amenities, placemaking, and recreation assets

- Build on a charming and historic waterfront and downtown through redevelopment and placemaking
- Use wayfinding, collaterals, and signage for attractive, cohesive visuals to create sense of place
- Communicate current information to residents as the COVID pandemic winds down
- Tell Belhaven's story. Use multiple media channels to create and distribute positive messages and keep residents informed.
- Increase recreation assets including ball fields, public spaces, network of trails, greenways, and open spaces
- Ensure utility and broadband capacity supports residents and business needs
- Communicate town goals and strategies and measure and publicize progress
- Communicate current information during the COVID pandemic

Goal: Build on tourism assets to increase visitors to Belhaven and capture more economic activity

- Promote overnight lodging opportunities, position Belhaven for investment by niche lodging providers
- Promote waterfront and tourism assets regionally to capture more visitors to Beaufort County and environs
- Include waterfront gateways in visitor promotions and evaluate amenities which might attract and keep boating tourists

Goal: Support workforce development for residents to raise wages and connect residents with the economy

- Ensure Belhaven is represented in career pathways in the region, especially focusing on skilled trades and public safety
- Support pre-K-to-20 educational capacity to meet the workforce needs of the future

SWOT Analysis

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis was developed from meetings, interviews, and a community survey (Appendix B). Altogether, more than 100 people had input into the strategic plan. Citizens see a beautiful, welcoming town with unique assets and potential to attract new residents. They see an opportunity for strengthening community through public spaces and placemaking. Small businesses make up the local economy, and there is room for more of these to open and grow in existing storefronts and sites ready for development. From an outsider's perspective, the consulting team noted an opportunity for collaboration with nearby allies and stakeholders and other local governments in the region. There are weaknesses to overcome to achieve the potential growth. Infrastructure such as broadband is lacking, and recent disagreements have left the civic discourse divided. The town is in a position to plan for investments and initiatives to leverage this potential and capture economic growth.

Strengths

- Quaint, beautiful small town
- Waterfront
- July 4th celebration
- Available properties for development
- Venues for events and tourists
- Marine services for boaters
- Historic downtown
- Attractive retail and restaurants

Weaknesses

- Slow growth, aging population
- Flooding
- Limited job opportunities
- Small population, remote location
- Quality and availability of fiber/internet
- Rising costs of living and development
- Changing expectations for local developers

Opportunities

- Waterfront development
- Rehab downtown properties
- Intercoastal Waterway traffic and tourists
- Wayfinding signage
- Improve gateways
- Connect downtown with other activity areas

Threats

- Small population base
- People do not want change
- Young people move away
- Split in local leadership
- Less than full time residents
- High construction costs

Strengths

Strengths and assets are the foundational building blocks of a sound economic development strategy. Strengths are the reasons why businesses and people locate in a community. Belhaven is fortunate to have many strengths that can be building blocks for economic progress including developable land, buildings ready for redevelopment, and the unique and beautiful setting on the Pungo River. The strengths and opportunities identified for Belhaven are balanced by some weaknesses and threats. There is a compelling foundation for success with engaged and aligned public sector leadership, strategies shared across the community, and significant assets as the foundation.

- ⦿ July 4th celebration brings visitors and is growing
- ⦿ Hurricane response excellence
- ⦿ Good overnight lodging
- ⦿ Available land for development – waterfront and industrial
- ⦿ Good shopping and retail
- ⦿ Available commercial space
- ⦿ River Forest Manor – venue
- ⦿ Good marinas and services for boaters
- ⦿ Good highways - 17, 64, 264
- ⦿ Prison visitors
- ⦿ Strong faith community
- ⦿ Museum
- ⦿ Waterfront recreation
- ⦿ Hunting and fishing tourism
- ⦿ Good and variety of restaurants
- ⦿ Engaged leaders
- ⦿ Good medical care, urgent and emergency
- ⦿ Senior club
- ⦿ Pickle ball facilities and clubs
- ⦿ Recreation fields
- ⦿ Beaufort County Community College

Weaknesses

The challenges and weaknesses that Belhaven faces include population and demographic shifts as well as challenges related to the location and built environment. Many of the weaknesses identified are shared by other smaller towns in eastern North Carolina, and there are plenty of case studies and peer cities to look to for inspiration. While these weaknesses may slow or impede development and growth, there is much that the town can do to create and strengthen the sense of community in Belhaven, making strategic investments that can leverage additional private and public investment as well. These weaknesses form a background to the work of the strategic plan, but do not preclude ambitious action toward shared goals and opportunities.

- ⊙ Flooding issues
- ⊙ Lack of skilled trades
- ⊙ Empty buildings downtown
- ⊙ Lack of retail variety
- ⊙ Lack of public transportation
- ⊙ Divisive issues and competitive spirit among leaders
- ⊙ Need a laundromat
- ⊙ Utilities rates are high and increasing
- ⊙ Income levels are low
- ⊙ Residents are in sub-standard housing
- ⊙ Lack of fiber internet access
- ⊙ Waterfront development is impeded by the Grainery
- ⊙ Young people are leaving
- ⊙ Lack of job opportunities
- ⊙ People don't want to travel far for a job
- ⊙ "It is not easy to open a business here"
- ⊙ Poverty rates
- ⊙ Perceived lack of parking
- ⊙ Loss of employers

Opportunities

Much of the input from citizens and leaders reflected the opportunities related to waterfront and downtown development and increased amenities for residents and visitors. There is clear opportunity for physical development in Belhaven, with several prominent sites ready for redevelopment in key locations. There is also sentiment that the town's investments and strategies should primarily benefit the residents of Belhaven and increase the community spirit and connection there. In addition to public investments and development opportunities, there is space for increased communications and programming to share goals and progress toward those goals with residents and businesses in order to align additional energy toward these plans. The time horizon for some opportunities, such as hotel and lodging development, may be pushed to future years due to the impacts of the pandemic.

- ⦿ Waterfront development
- ⦿ Town-owned waterfront site
- ⦿ Gateways and corridors into town
- ⦿ Fishing and outdoor related tourism
- ⦿ Intercoastal Waterway traffic and tourists
- ⦿ Vacant sites and buildings for development and redevelopment
- ⦿ Former hospital property
- ⦿ "Tell our story"
- ⦿ Recruit a hotel
- ⦿ Connect downtown to other activity areas
- ⦿ Destination restaurants – local restaurant “experience”
- ⦿ Become a destination
- ⦿ Increase access to the waterfront
- ⦿ Prepare for growth – welcome new residents – get them engaged
- ⦿ Rehab downtown properties
- ⦿ Improve vacant storefronts with pop-ups, displays
- ⦿ Parking options to support downtown business
- ⦿ Greenways and bike paths
- ⦿ Improve parking options to support downtown

Threats

Threats are potential obstacles to economic growth. A community should be aware of threats in order to mitigate them. Some threats are external, such as the economic downturn, and some threats are localized. Taking these threats into consideration can help prioritize strategies and allocate resources. Most of the threats voiced by citizens in the survey result from growth and the varied perceptions of optimal growth rates and development patterns. Strong approaches toward managing the effects for strong growth will include a high level of communication to residents as well as collaborative relationships with neighboring communities and the county government.

- ⦿ Small population base
- ⦿ People do not want change
- ⦿ Young people move away
- ⦿ Split in local leadership
- ⦿ Less than full-time residents
- ⦿ High construction costs
- ⦿ People do not understand economic development
- ⦿ Maintenance of older buildings
- ⦿ Increasing poverty
- ⦿ Luxury nature of downtown retail
- ⦿ Lack of long-range infrastructure plans
- ⦿ Impacts of COVID-19

WHAT IS ONE THING BELHAVEN DOES BETTER THAN OTHER CITIES?



Economic Development Strategic Plan

The Belhaven community ranked waterfront development, local job creation, downtown development, and support for business start-ups as the top four economic development strategies. Citizens want to see these strategies improve the quality of life for residents of Belhaven, diversify the local economy by supporting new and growing business, and invest in amenities that will strengthen the sense of community and wellbeing in town. Leadership in the town also prioritized job growth and amenities while also noting that tax-base growth will provide the town with resources to invest and continue these strategies.

The strategic plan includes four goals to meet the vision for Belhaven. The first goal relates to job creation and includes a wide range of -support for existing businesses, as well as attraction and start-up of new businesses. The second goal supports waterfront and downtown development and redevelopment, focusing on strengthening the Belhaven community and increasing amenities for Belhaven residents. The third goal calls out the opportunities for economic growth related to tourism. Finally, there is a goal related to education and workforce development which is vital to the economic support of Belhaven residents.

- ◎ **Grow jobs for Belhaven** through support for existing business and growth of small businesses and start-ups
- ◎ **Build Belhaven's sense of community and quality of life** with amenities, placemaking, and recreation assets
- ◎ **Build on tourism assets to increase visitors to Belhaven** and capture more economic activity
- ◎ **Support workforce development for residents** to raise wages and connect residents with the economy

Goal: Grow jobs for Belhaven through support for existing business and growth of small businesses and start-ups

Local job creation is important to Belhaven. Local jobs mean reduced commute times, increased economic activity, and more local spending. Belhaven is in a position to attract and grow small businesses to existing sites and buildings. Local jobs are a key to the live, work, play culture many communities strive to achieve.

Strategy: Identify and position available sites and buildings for potential investors or employers

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Carefully inventory available sites and buildings for those suitable for investment or new employers -- industrial, commercial, and retail. Include infill, vacant, and under-utilized properties. Also inventory town-owned properties to look for development opportunities.
- ⦿ Maintain a listing of priority available properties and advertise promising examples on the town website.
- ⦿ Consider identifying and preparing space for specific desired purposes e.g., a restaurant.
 - The City of Danville, VA, has purchased key downtown properties and pitched to developers for specific uses like an international restaurant. Morganton, NC, has also participated in public-private partnership redevelopment projects in downtown, including a theater.
 - Use storefront displays to showcase what the building could be. Other towns have made “this could be...” displays for outdoor retailer, restaurant, music shop, etc.
- ⦿ Communicate frequently with Beaufort County EDC to align town business attraction goals and assets with county and other allies.

Strategy: Identify and prioritize properties for development and redevelopment

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Review available downtown properties and prioritize based on location, use, and disposition of the owner.
- ⦿ Consider enacting a vacant building registry ordinance like Columbia, SC, is considering. Buildings vacant for 60 days must be registered. If dilapidated, a plan to upgrade must be submitted. Buildings that remain vacant must re-certify with a fee that increases each year of vacancy. The purpose is to discourage long-term vacancy.
- ⦿ Evaluate a façade grant program for potential expansion or revision in order to leverage public investment.

Strategy: Support entrepreneurship and small business growth

During the economic recovery period, small businesses will need a range of support. Some will need financial and advisory services to remain in business. Others will be in an expansion mode to take advantage of market changes. Near term, focus on retention and support services. As the economy moves into an expansion phase, shift more resources to business growth.

Action Steps:

- ◎ Entrepreneurship is an important strategy during times of high unemployment as it is an alternative for dislocated workers. Develop a “Start a Business in Belhaven” toolkit. Present the toolkit on the town website with links to the county economic development website. The toolkit can include:
 - Regulatory steps for business start-ups
 - Local and regional resources for business planning, market identification, financing, and marketing. Include partners like the Small Business Center and Beaufort County EDC.
- ◎ Once the toolkit is developed, consider a boot camp in partnership with other agencies to support and advance entrepreneurs in their journey from start-up to sustainability.
- ◎ Consider a special package of incentives and support for small businesses. Examples: revolving loan fund, one-year chamber membership, assignment of a start-up ambassador who checks in every month the first year, lower incentive grant matches (like façade grant) for the first couple of years, etc.

Strategy: Connect with existing business to promote growth and investment

Action Steps:

- ◎ Identify “key accounts” – significant existing employers to be monitored. These can be based on location, total employment, utility use, or other criteria. Commit to some level of communication or company visit for each of the key accounts over the course of a year.
- ◎ With the EDC, develop an “at risk” company profile and target these companies for additional BRE support during the recession.
- ◎ Communicate with Beaufort County EDC, regarding BRE surveys or visits to determine the immediate needs of companies to weather the economic downturn.
- ◎ Until a regular visitation program can be established, host “Coffee with the Manager” or “Coffee with the Mayor” once each quarter, inviting major employers and utility accounts for a roundtable discussion which may be preliminary to a visitation program. If it turns out to be popular, continue after the BRE program is established to build relationships.
- ◎ 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.
- ◎ Use feedback gathered in the BRE program to inform town policies. Examples are regulatory process, transportation priorities, amenity development, and infrastructure investments.
- ◎ Coordinate visits with allies such as Beaufort County EDC, ElectriCities, and EDPNC to strengthen those ties and send a message to existing industries of collaboration and joint action.

- ◎ Build connection and community among Belhaven’s major employers with a Business Roundtable. Consider this in partnership or as a town program. The businesses in the group will appreciate the connection and sharing from peers and the town will benefit from hearing the plans and challenges of important employers. In the short-term this could be a LinkedIn Discussion Group.

Goal: Build Belhaven’s sense of community and quality of life with amenities, placemaking, and recreation assets

Once the vibrant economic centers of towns, downtowns in many areas have struggled to find their niche among modern commercial development. Supporting and creating unique shopping, dining, and cultural arts experiences are key. Downtowns are struggling during the pandemic, so a concerted effort to help “Main Street” survive and thrive is needed. As a small town, Belhaven can strengthen the sense of community by investing in and focusing on activities in public spaces. For Belhaven, these will be centered downtown and at the waterfront. A downtown’s visual character can be the heart of a town. With the beauty of the waterfront, this is a special asset for Belhaven to leverage. Expanding access to the waterfront for residents was a theme of the community survey.

Strategy: Build on a charming and historic waterfront and downtown through redevelopment and placemaking

Action Steps:

- ◎ Develop the town-owned lot on the waterfront as a public plaza for community events, to serve as a ‘town square.’ This can become a focal point for community activities and programming, and can be shared with other agencies.
- ◎ Connect significant town locations by greenways and, if possible, blueways.
- ◎ Find opportunities for pop-up recreation, storytelling, classes, and retail to see what sticks. Pop-ups create a flow of people into downtown for unique experiences.
- ◎ Explore opportunities for free Wi-Fi in some public spaces and expand as feasible.
- ◎ Activate parks and common areas with free community activities and events. Some activities may be transferred from other locations to invest in these new community assets. Examples could include yoga, dance, art classes, or demonstrations. Some communities are hosting Food Truck Fridays, where the trucks are spread out along Main Street.

Strategy: Use wayfinding, collaterals, and signage for attractive cohesive visuals to create a sense of place

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Install wayfinding downtown and at town gateways to connect and reinforce the Belhaven brand. Find some inspiration from this blog on wayfinding, which includes much more than traditional signage <http://www.creativeedc.com/whats-your-sign>.
- ⦿ Include information from the NCDOT parking analysis to publicize parking locations and regulations.
- ⦿ Consider walking tours highlighting kids' activities, art, history, etc. Walking tours could be "signed" with symbols on pavement, markers, or a walking trail brochure. Publicize these on the town website with wayfinding signage and with visitor allies.
- ⦿ Engage local artists in wayfinding. They can offer great suggestions on markers, trail signs, and other visuals.

Strategy: Tell Belhaven's story. Use multiple media channels to create and distribute positive messages and keep residents informed

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Expand social media presence, identify influencers who can re-share messages and provide feedback.
- ⦿ Explore partnerships with other stakeholders through an app like Social Toaster, which might contribute posts as well.
- ⦿ Continue to boost social media use and the town website. Popular sites for community development are Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Develop hashtags for the town, for example #LoveBelhaven, #BelhavenBeauty, or #HomeOnTheWater.
- ⦿ Use Instagram to post photos of the town. Photos are important to tourists.
- ⦿ Include an "activity related" Calendar of Events on the website and social media.
- ⦿ Use the goals of the strategic plan as topics for communications with residents – consider "breakfast with the manager" (or mayor, or council member) opportunities once a month to brief attendees on town goals and upcoming activities. These briefings will create communication channels out from the town and may identify new participants for town initiatives.
- ⦿ Consider a monthly newsletter or communication in utility bills that highlights one of the goals or strategies and how it is being advanced in Belhaven. This can be shared on social media as well. Residents want to be informed about priorities and may be more likely to become involved when they are informed. Share positive trends, stories, and accomplishments.
- ⦿ 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 town facility.
- ⦿ Develop a pool of spokespersons who can be available for print or electronic media to provide the town's perspective on the topic of interest. These people should be well versed in the town's strengths and strategies.
- ⦿ Develop a standard presentation or set of statistics on the current trends and development opportunities in Belhaven.
- ⦿ Develop and share talking points with partners about town projects, such as an infrastructure projects, to ensure a clear message.
- ⦿ Consider a weekly automated phone call to inform citizens of events.
- ⦿ Use the town website to communicate the brand and key messages including goals of the strategic plan.

- ⦿ Include a recent news section on the new economic development pages on the town website. Consider the use of webcams to monitor progress of development projects.

Strategy: Increase recreation assets including ball fields, public spaces, network of trails, greenways, and open spaces

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Plan for greenways and trails connecting public spaces in Belhaven.
- ⦿ Evaluate sites for recreation assets such as ball fields.
- ⦿ Develop the town-owned waterfront lot into a “town square” and program with community activities and classes.
- ⦿ Publicize recreation assets and activities on the town website.

Strategy: Ensure utility and broadband capacity supports needs of residents and businesses

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Document broadband and fiber assets in Belhaven and connect with public efforts to expand and strengthen access.

Strategy: Communicate town goals and strategies and measure and publicize progress

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Publish goals and strategies on the town website. As progress is made, include photographs and news stories documenting the milestones. Create a sense of momentum toward shared goals in the Belhaven community.
- ⦿ Make a presentation of the town’s strategic plan to Beaufort County and the Beaufort County EDC so your partners are informed.

Strategy: Communicate current information during the COVID pandemic

During the crisis phase of the pandemic, marketing messages were focused on reinforcing a community’s brand. During the recovery phase, marketing messages are a soft-sell. As the economy moves into the expansion phase, Belhaven should include direct sales messages in marketing.

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Keep current COVID information and resources on the town's website. Example: links to Governor's Executive Orders, NCDHHS guidelines, NCRLA information and programs. Post the town's COVID policies.
- ⦿ Keep a list of businesses that are opening and their restrictions (hours, curbside service, etc.).
- ⦿ Through the local task team, develop a common set of recommendations to share with the public such as "please contact our local businesses for their individual policies" and "we encourage people who are not well to stay home."
- ⦿ Gather frequently asked questions from the task force and post on the COVID resources page.

Goal: Build on tourism assets to increase visitors to Belhaven and capture more economic activity

Belhaven is located in a region with a strong tourism economy. In addition to working to become a destination itself, Belhaven can work collaboratively to capture visitors to other parts of the region.

Strategy: Promote overnight lodging opportunities, position Belhaven for investment by niche lodging providers

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Prepare an overview of Belhaven's current assets and visitor profile for prospective investors or overnight lodging providers. Beaufort County EDC and/or Electricities may be able to assist with market information such as retail sales, traffic counts, and visitor data.
- ⦿ Network with developers of "non-traditional" lodging that may be a good fit for Belhaven. In Rocky Mount, tiny houses are used as a "hotel," in Brevard there is a modern, cabin-style resort, and even yurts are attractive to some travelers.
- ⦿ To capitalize on pandemic effects, consider accommodations for RVs, which have increased in sales and activity since 2020. A modern RV park can be combined with other overnight accommodations to share amenities and provide a pleasing mix of uses.

Strategy: Promote waterfront and tourism assets regionally to capture more visitors to Beaufort County and the environs

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Find a role for the town in supporting and extending the messaging of tourism promotion for Belhaven. Develop relationships in the region and find opportunities to cross-market assets to overnight visitors and day-trippers.
- ⦿ Explore needed facilities for regional fishing and hunting related events.

Strategy: Include waterfront gateways in visitor promotions and evaluate amenities which might attract and keep boating tourists

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Include visitor information at water gateways. Tailor messaging to marine interests. Look for opportunities to partner with other Intercoastal Waterway towns to reach this important tourism segment.

Goal: Support workforce development for residents to raise wages and connect residents with the economy

Providing jobs for Belhaven residents and skills training so that all residents can access the job market was a theme of the responses to the community survey. Increasing connectivity between employers, public schools, workforce development board, and the community college can increase the access to workforce training in Belhaven.

Strategy: Ensure Belhaven is represented in career pathways in the region, especially focusing on skilled trades and public safety

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Connect with Rivers East and Beaufort County Community College to explore partnerships in existing programs.
- ⦿ Encourage more business and community college partnerships for hospitality training.

Strategy: Support Pre-K-to-20 educational capacity to meet the workforce needs of the future

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Explore feasibility for developing a Beaufort County Community College Belhaven campus.
- ⦿ Explore and expand connections between the Town of Belhaven and K-12 to strengthen the relationships and take advantages of opportunities such as library programming and public safety visibility and programming.
- ⦿ Partner with employers, schools, and non-profits to promote connections between students, teachers, and local employers.
- ⦿ Explore the Send a Kid to College program in Kings Mountain. The town provides a place on electric utility bills for citizens to send in donations to a fund that is used for community college scholarships.

Implementation Plan

The strategic plan is designed to be implemented over several years. In the figure below, near-term priorities are listed in #1; mid-term priorities are listed in #2; and longer-term priorities are listed in #3. As resources, opportunities, and challenges change over time, these categories may be adjusted. We recommend staff integrating the strategic plan in an annual program of work and budget planning with input from council and stakeholders.

1

- Communicate goals of plan to partners and residents
- Use website and social media to share goals and progress
- Develop a “Start a Business in Belhaven” toolkit
- Inventory and promote available sites and buildings for Belhaven
- Identify and prioritize properties for development and redevelopment
- Strengthen county-wide collaborations and alignment with Town of Belhaven
- Identify key existing companies for enhanced communications

2

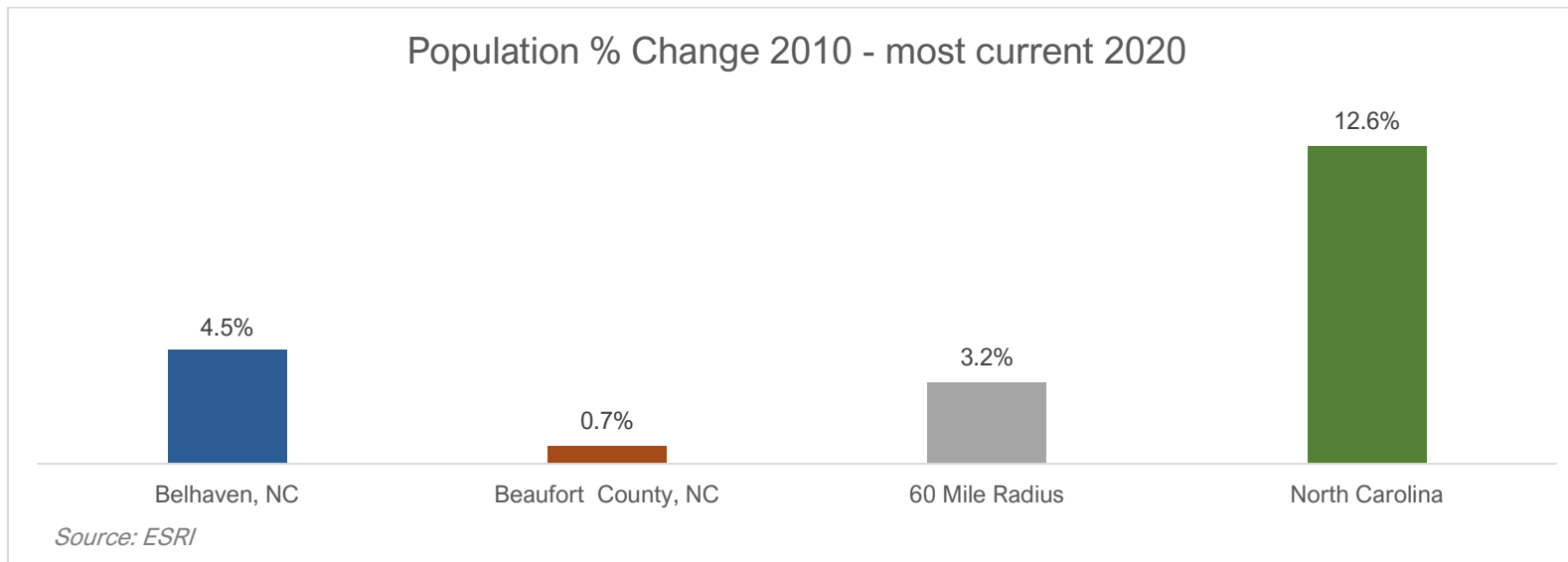
- Expand and strengthen communications and marketing of Belhaven’s priorities and brand
- Expand connectivity of the greenway physically and/or with signage
- Augment town website marketing messages with video, etc.
- Expand town communications; add Instagram, newsletter, etc.
- Collect feedback from existing business to inform town policies and priorities
- Evaluate and improve wayfinding

3

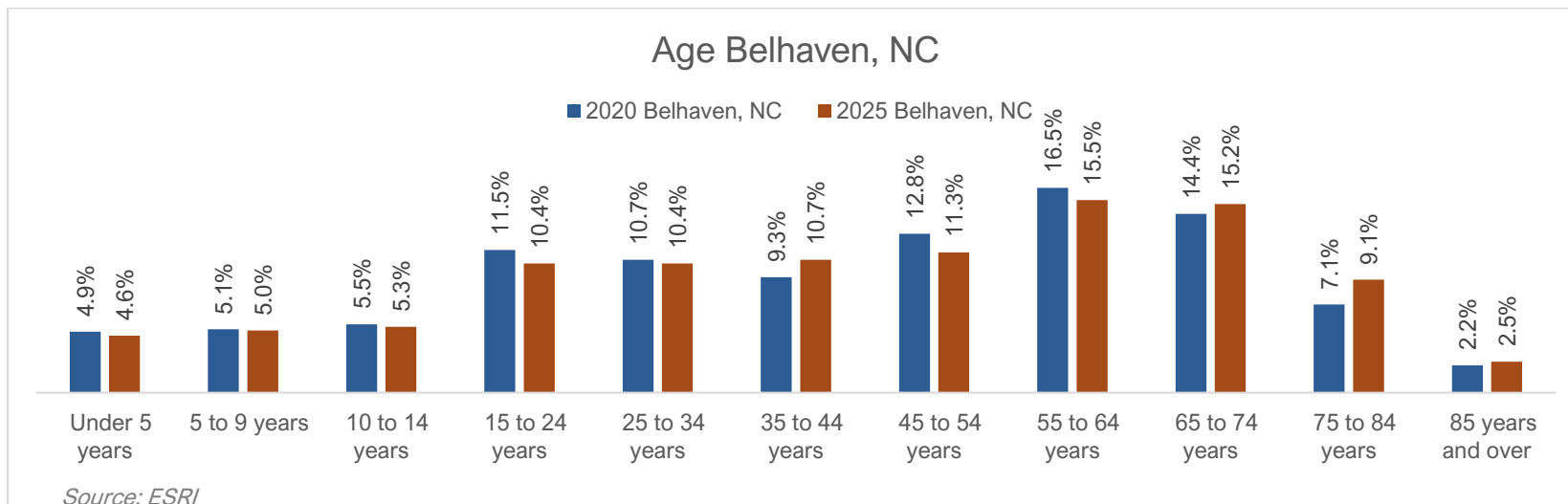
- Consider small business support such as revolving loan fund, programming
- Continue to activate downtown and common areas with area clubs, organizations, activities
- Promote Belhaven leaders as members of county boards and commissions
- Expand social media outreach with influencers
- Welcome new businesses to Belhaven on social media
- Consider vacant building registry program
- Engage in utility and broadband capacity and expansion conversations

Appendix A: Economic and Demographic Profile

Population	2010	2020	2025	% Change 2010 - most current 2020
Belhaven, NC	1,688	1,764	1,772	4.5%
Beaufort County, NC	47,759	48,106	47,914	0.7%
60 Mile Radius	271,549	651,075	659,217	3.2%
North Carolina	9,535,843	10,736,879	1,357,303	12.6%
Source: ESRI				

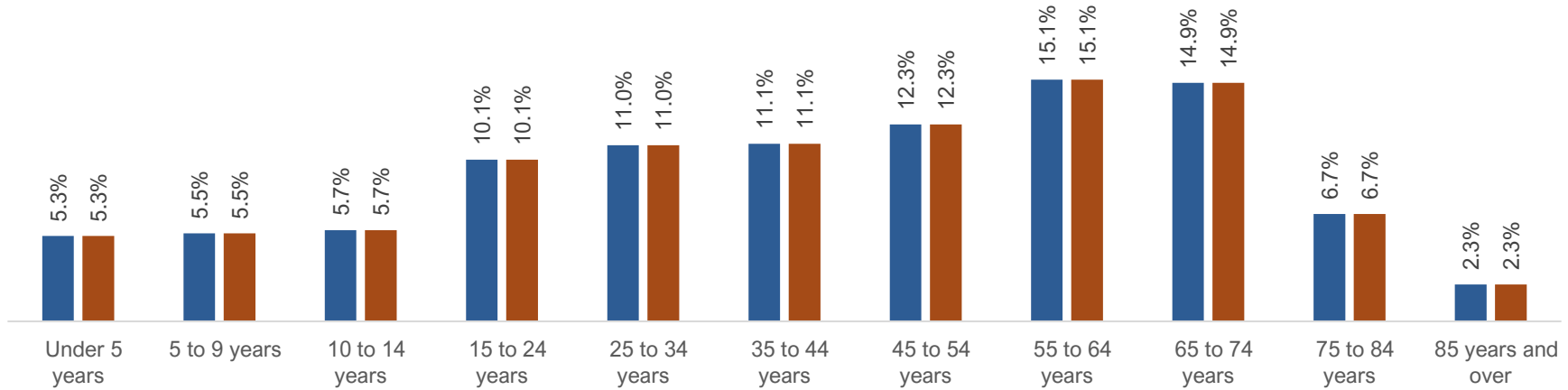


2020 Age % of Population				
Age Groups	Belhaven, NC	Beaufort County, NC	60 Mile Radius	North Carolina
Total population	1,764	48,106	651,075	10,736,879
Under 5 years	4.9%	5.3%	5.9%	6.0%
5 to 9 years	5.1%	5.5%	5.8%	6.2%
10 to 14 years	5.5%	5.7%	5.7%	6.3%
15 to 24 years	11.5%	10.1%	16.9%	13.0%
25 to 34 years	10.7%	11.0%	13.9%	13.5%
35 to 44 years	9.3%	11.1%	11.6%	12.7%
45 to 54 years	12.8%	12.3%	11.5%	12.9%
55 to 64 years	16.5%	15.1%	12.4%	13.0%
65 to 74 years	14.4%	14.9%	9.9%	9.9%
75 to 84 years	7.1%	6.7%	4.6%	4.6%
85 years and over	2.2%	2.3%	1.7%	1.8%
Median Age	47.6	46.2	39.9	38.9
Source: ESRI				



Age Beaufort County, NC

■ 2020 Beaufort County, NC ■ 2025 Beaufort County, NC

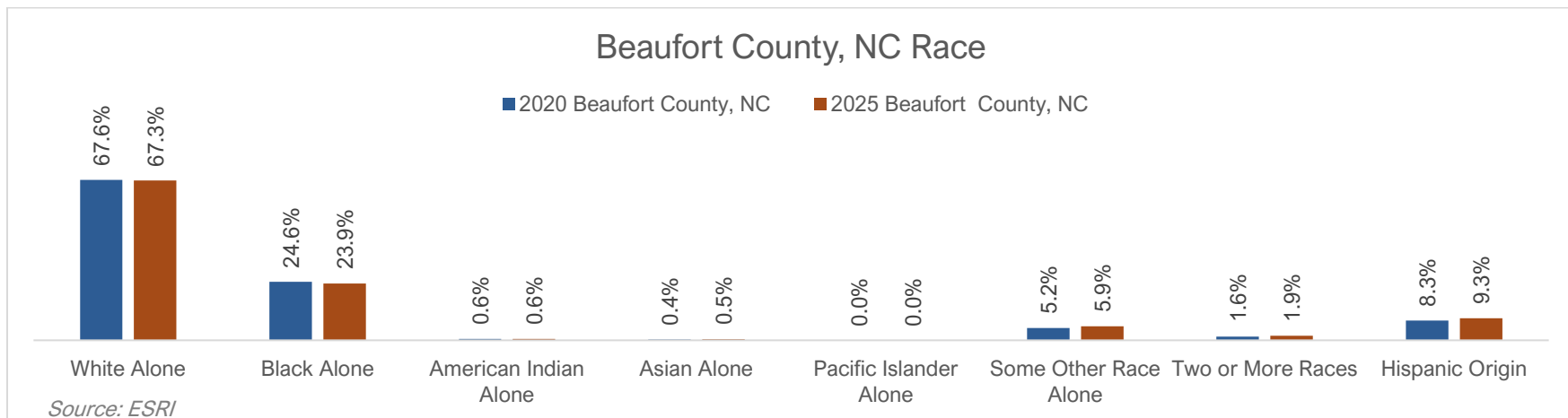
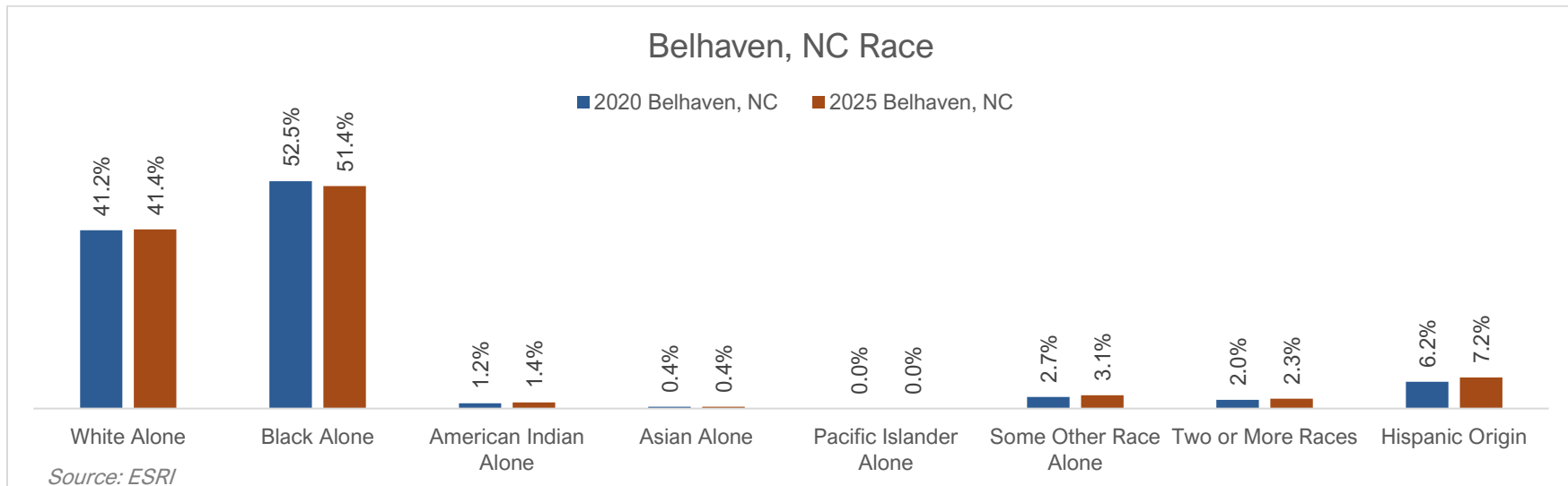


Source: ESRI

2019 Race

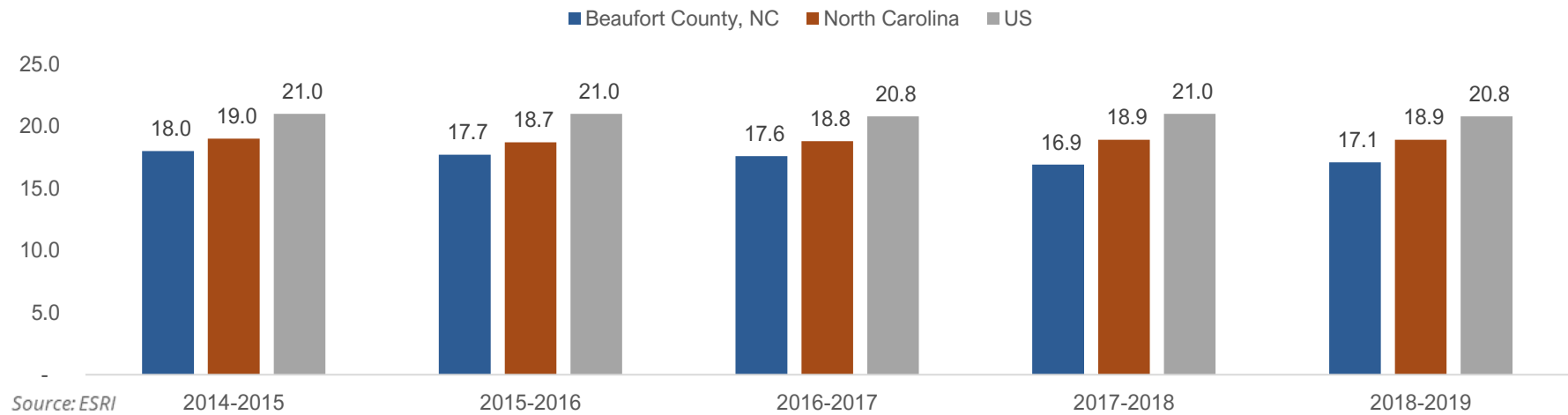
	Belhaven, NC	Beaufort County, NC	60 Mile Radius	North Carolina
White Alone	41.2%	67.6%	57.3%	66.0%
Black Alone	52.5%	24.6%	34.3%	21.7%
American Indian Alone	1.2%	0.6%	0.4%	1.3%
Asian Alone	0.4%	0.4%	1.8%	3.2%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	2.7%	5.2%	3.8%	5.0%
Two or More Races	2.0%	1.6%	2.2%	2.7%
Hispanic Origin	6.2%	8.3%	6.8%	9.8%
Diversity Index	60.7	56.1	61.0	60.1

Source: ESRI



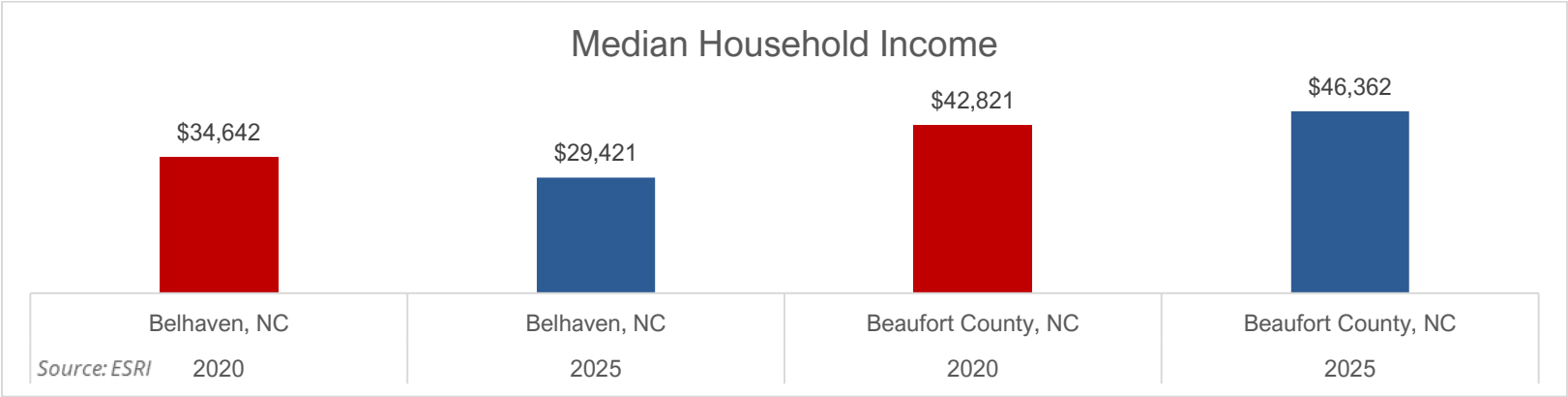
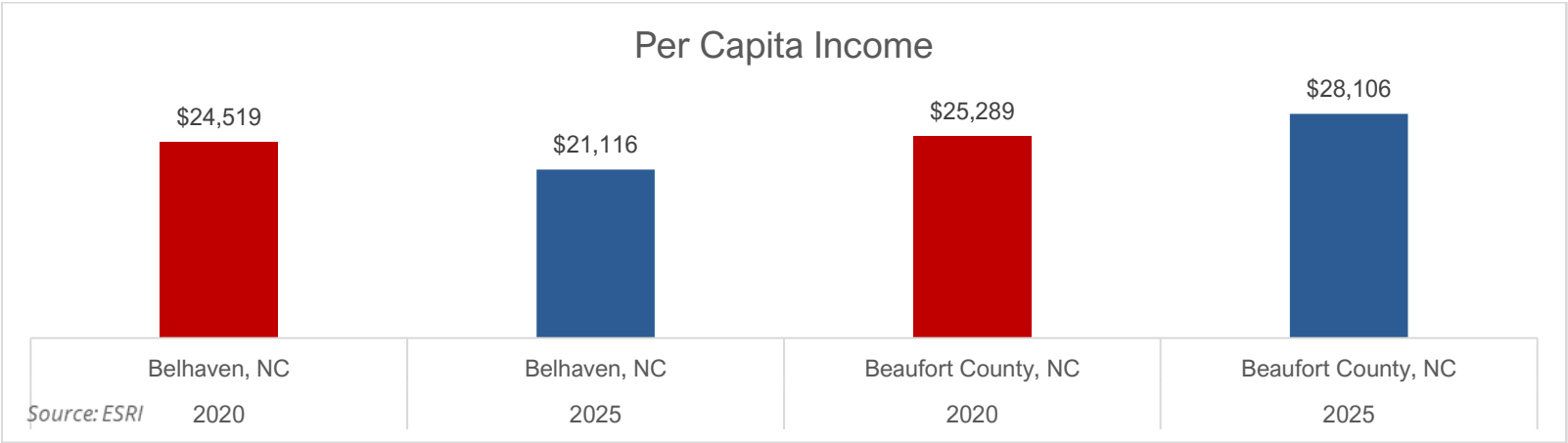
2020 Educational Attainment %				
	Belhaven, NC	Beaufort County, NC	60 Mile Radius	North Carolina
Less than 9th grade	3.9%	3.4%	4.2%	4.1%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	16.7%	7.8%	8.4%	7.2%
High school graduate	33.6%	28.4%	23.3%	21.0%
GED/Alternative Credential	1.6%	4.4%	5.0%	4.1%
Some college, no degree	20.6%	22.7%	23.2%	20.9%
Associate's degree	7.0%	12.2%	11.2%	10.1%
Bachelor's degree	12.4%	13.3%	15.8%	20.9%
Graduate or professional degree	4.2%	7.7%	8.9%	11.7%
Percent high school graduate or higher	79.4%	88.7%	87.4%	88.7%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	16.6%	21.0%	24.7%	32.6%
<i>Source:ESRI</i>				

ACT Scores

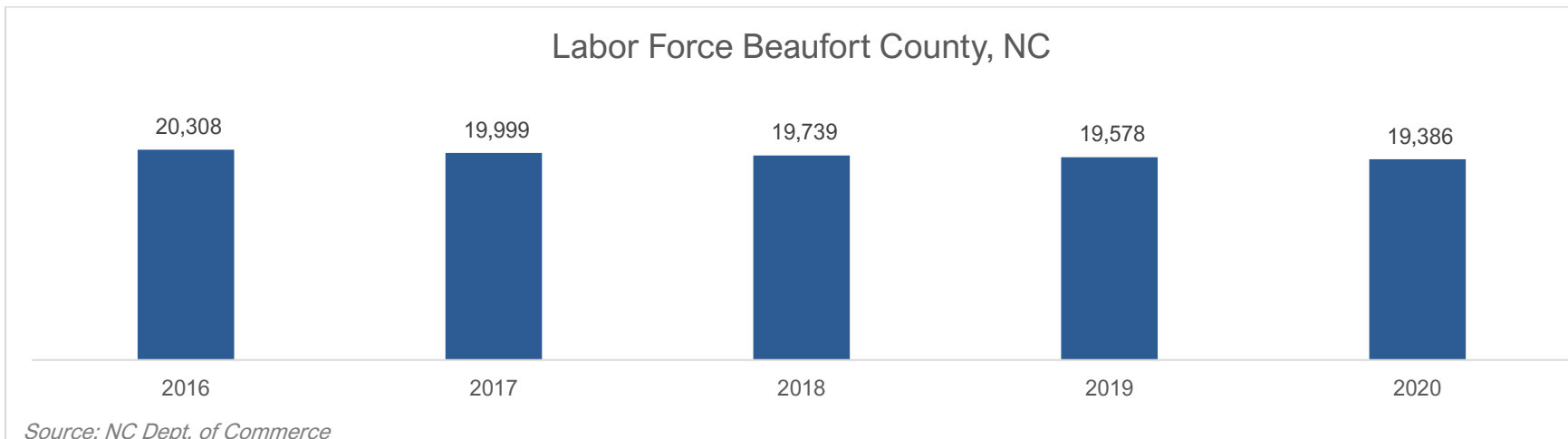
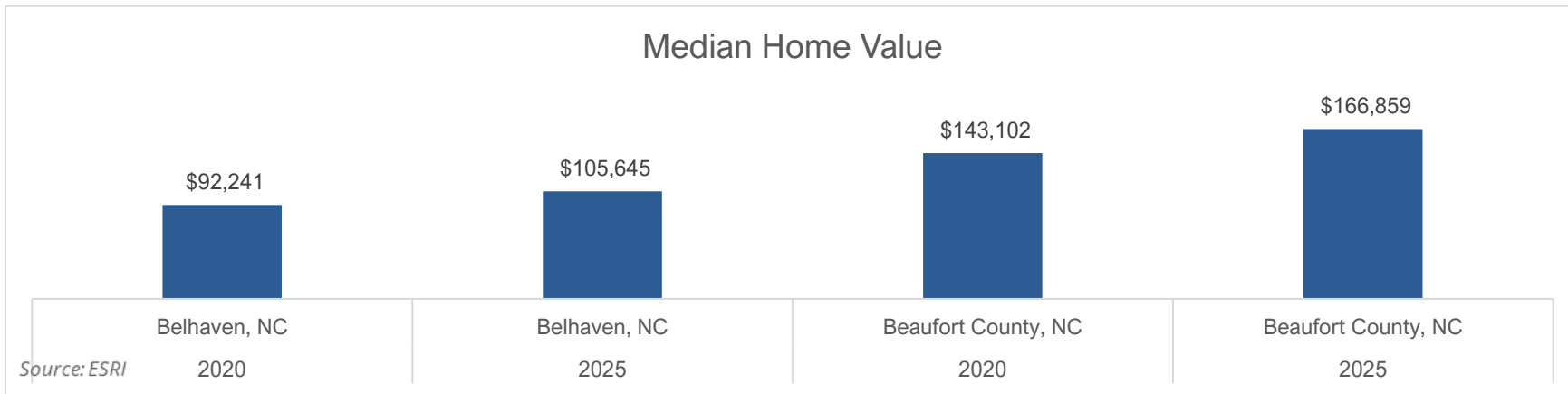


Income 2019

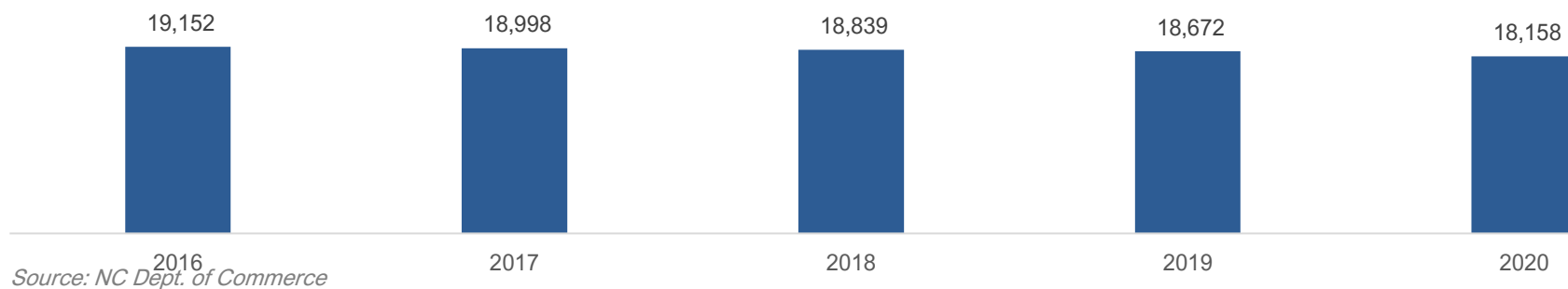
	Belhaven, NC	Beaufort County, NC	60 Mile Radius	North Carolina
Per Capita Income	\$24,519	\$25,289	\$25,303	\$31,145
Median Household Income	\$34,642	\$42,821	\$45,028	\$54,889
Source: ESRI				



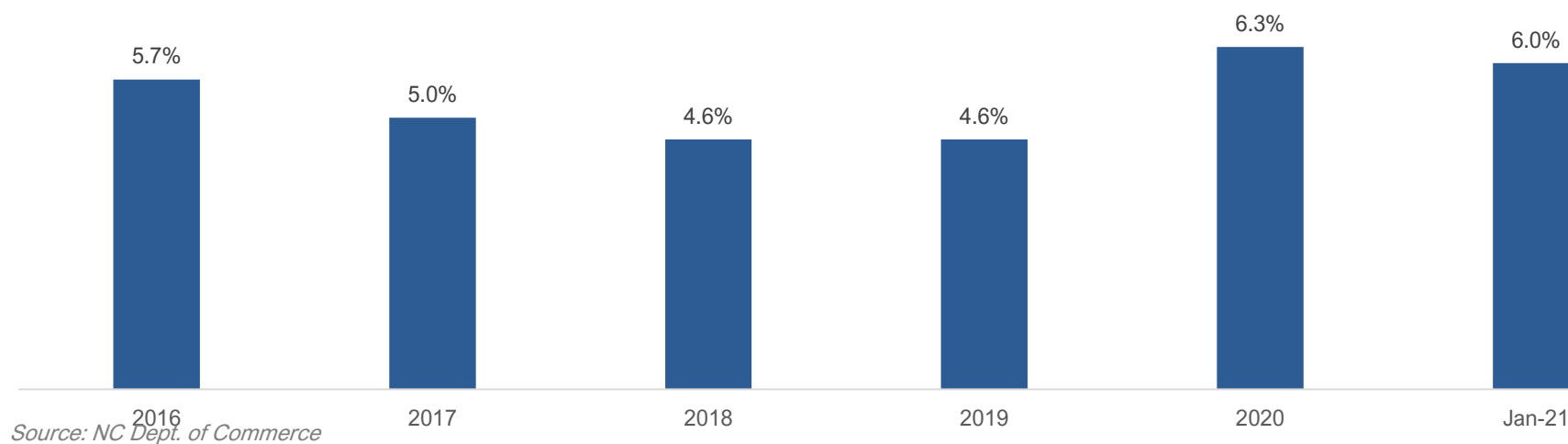
2020				
	Belhaven, NC	Beaufort County, NC	60 Mile Radius	North Carolina
Median Home Value	\$92,241	\$143,102	\$152,568	\$187,915
<i>Source: ESRI</i>				



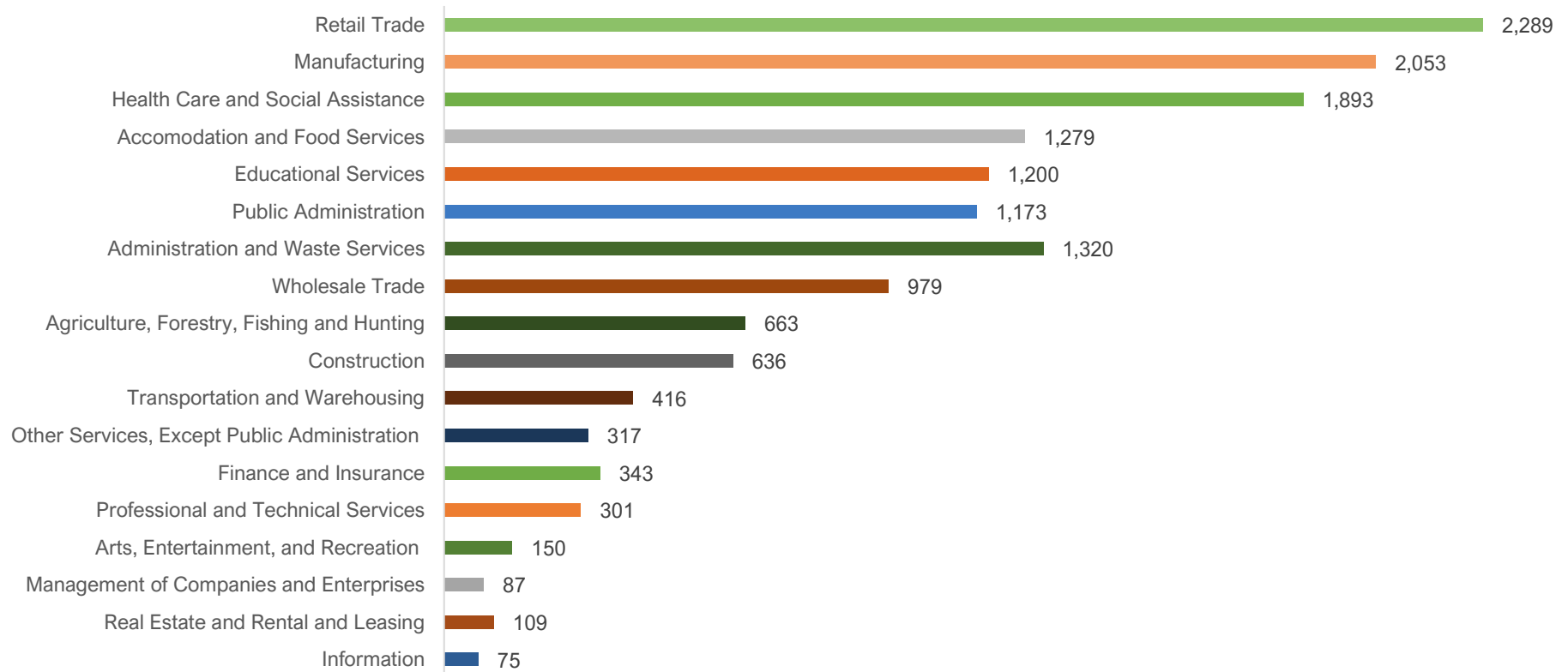
Employment Beaufort County, NC



Unemployment Rate Beaufort County, NC

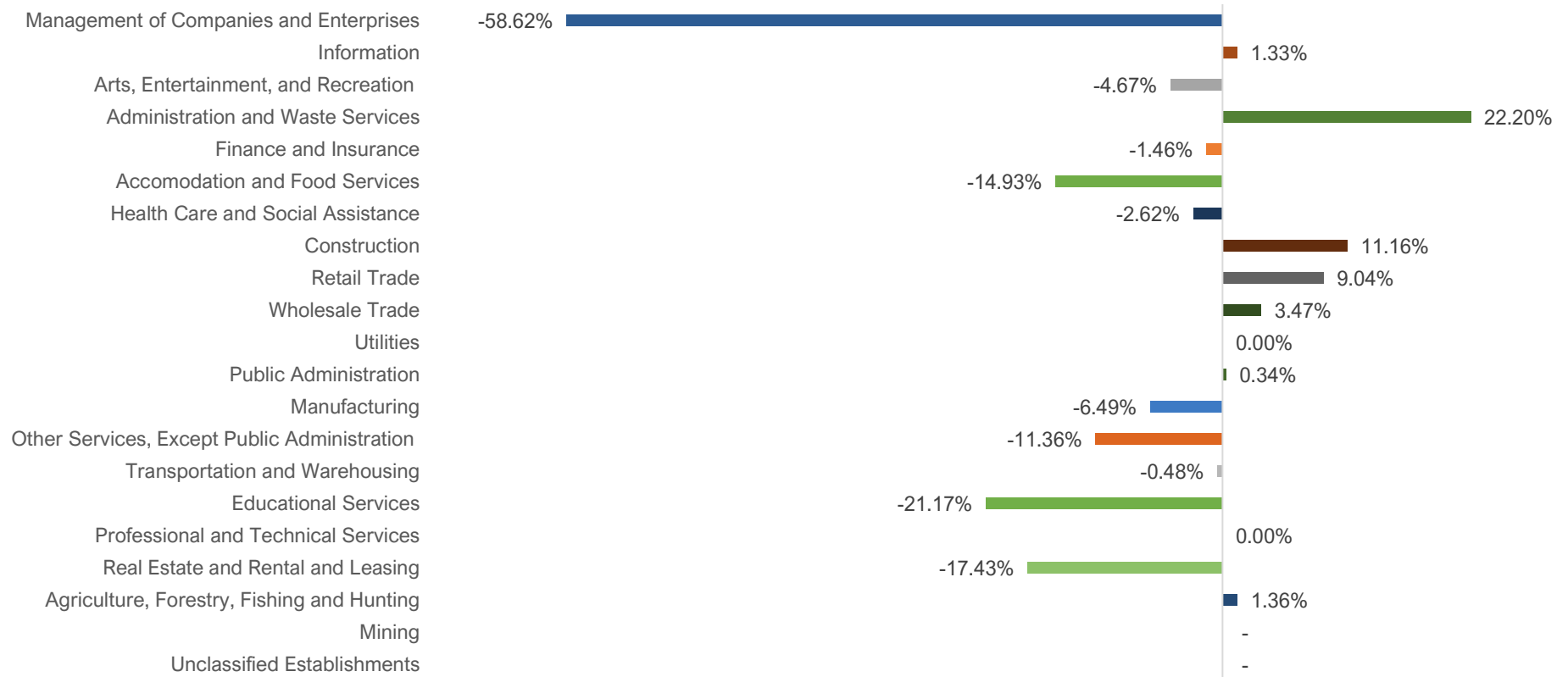


Beaufort County, NC Employment by Industry 2020 Q3



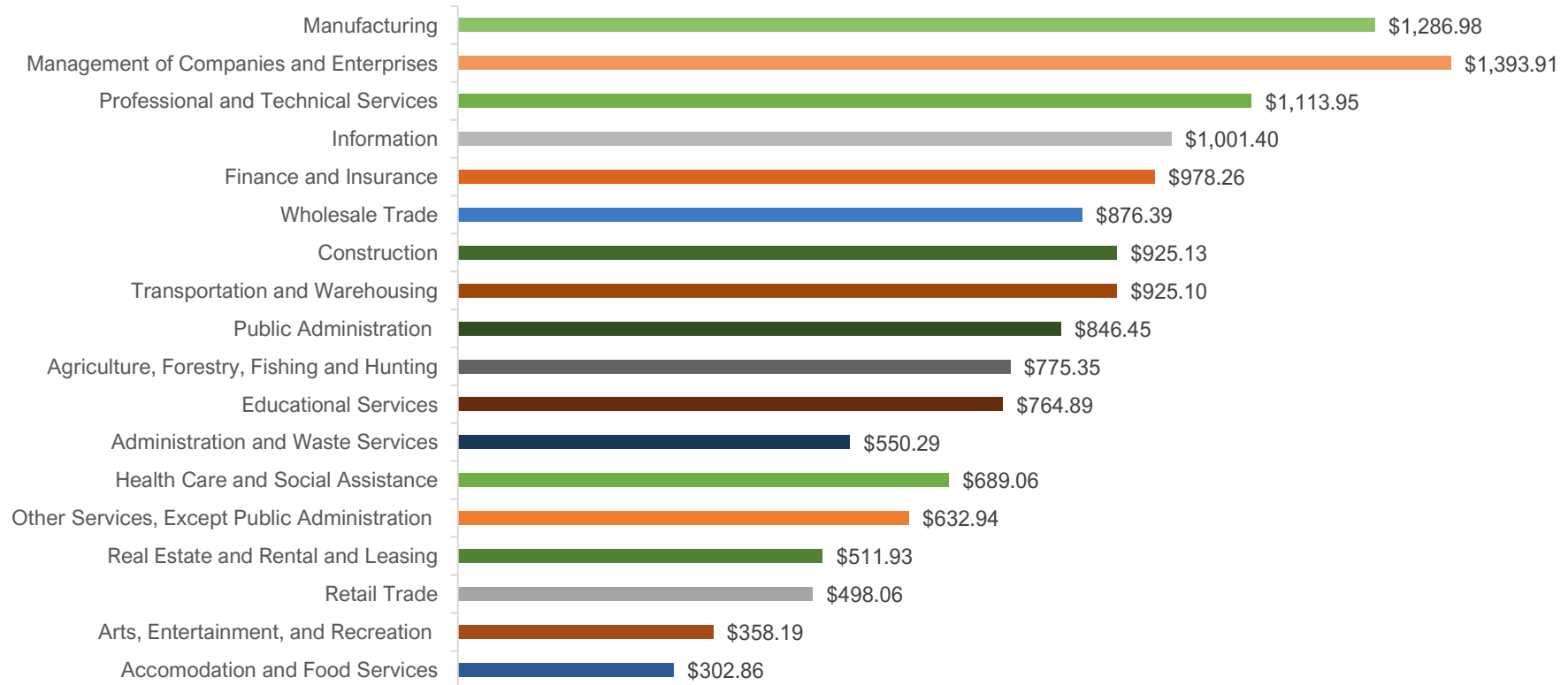
Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

% Change Employment by Industry



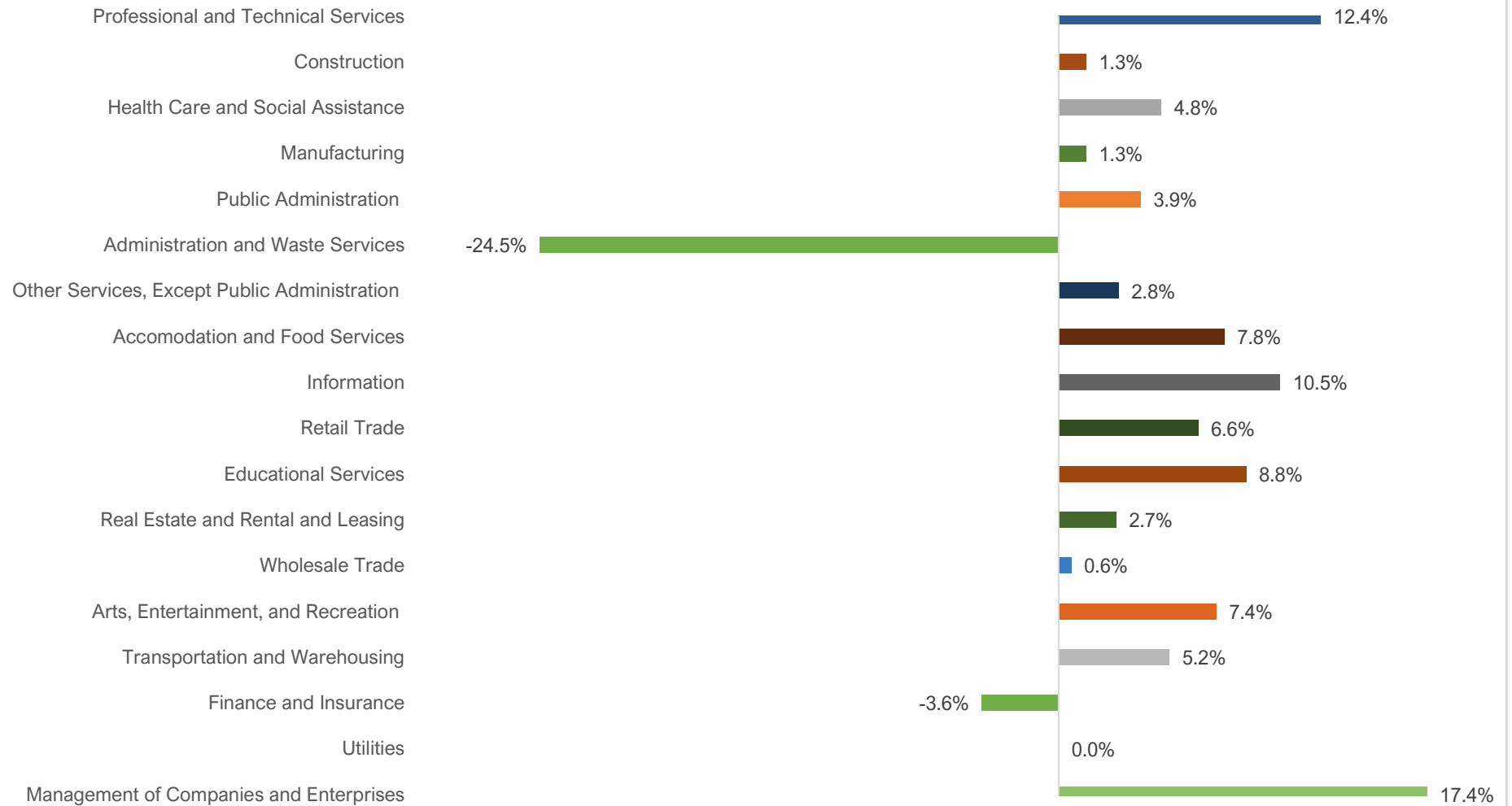
Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

Beaufort County, NC Wages by Industry 2020 Q3



Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

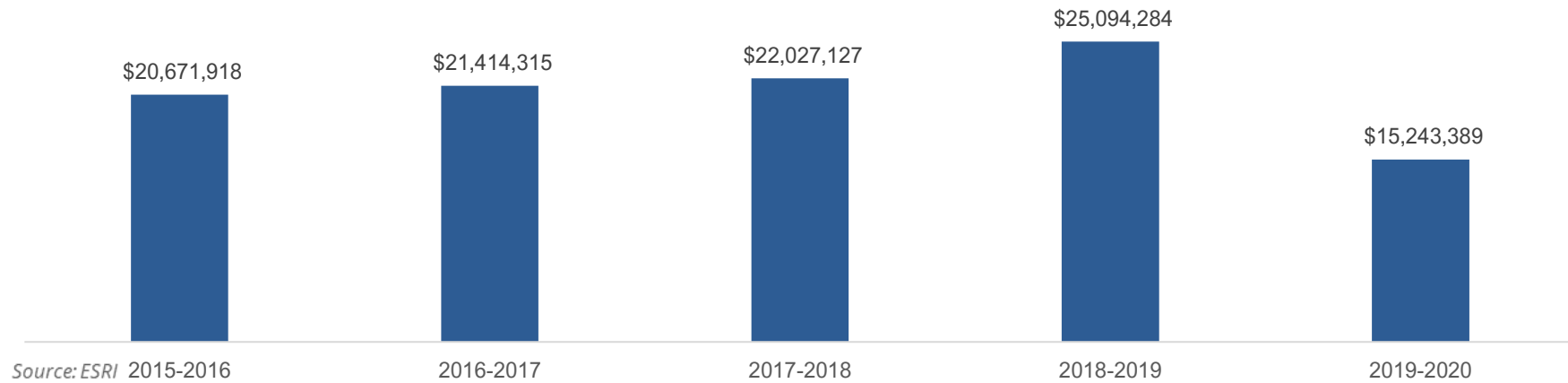
Beaufort County % Change Wages by Industry 2019-2020Q1



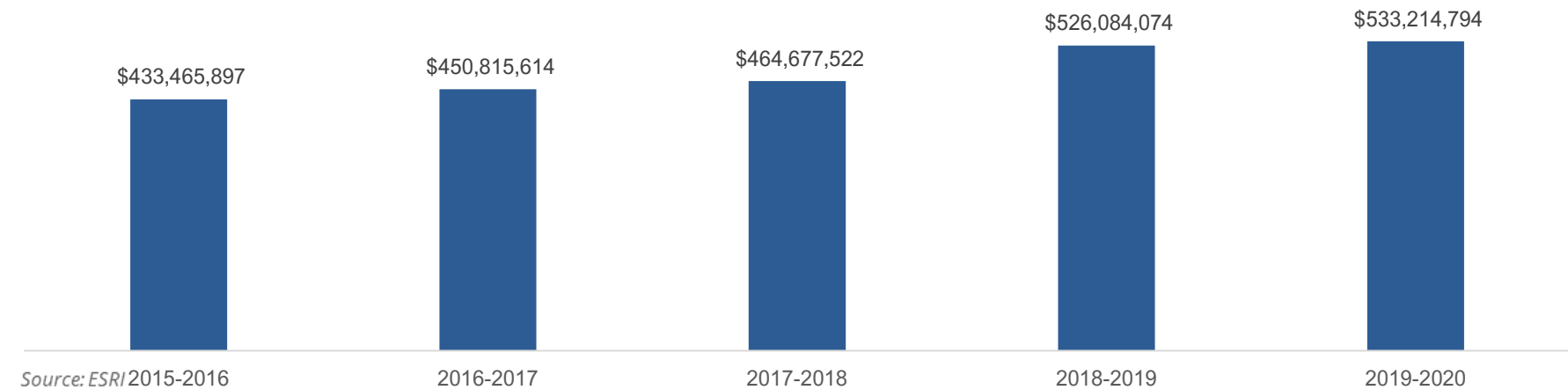
Source: NC Dept. of Commerce

Top 25 Employers - Beaufort County, NC			
Rank	Company Name	Industry	Employment
1	Beaufort County Schools	Educational Services	500-999
2	Nutrien	Manufacturing	500-999
3	Vidant Medical Center	Health Care and Social Assistance	500-999
4	Innovative Employer Solutions Inc	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	250-499
5	County Of Beaufort	Public Administration	250-499
6	Food Lion	Retail Trade	250-499
7	Wal-Mart Associates Inc.	Retail Trade	250-499
8	Beaufort County Community College	Educational Services	250-499
9	City Of Washington	Public Administration	250-499
10	Precisionaire	Wholesale Trade	250-499
11	Rose Acre Farms	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	100-249
12	Iconic Marine Group LLC	Manufacturing	100-249
13	Lowes Home Centers Inc	Retail Trade	100-249
14	Austin Maintenance & Construction	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	100-249
15	Executive Personnel Group LLC	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	100-249
16	Air Filter Service	Manufacturing	100-249
17	Pamlico Air	Wholesale Trade	100-249
18	Professional Staffing Solutions LLC	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	100-249
19	Idx Impressions LLC	Manufacturing	100-249
20	Home Life Care Inc	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
21	Hackney Kidron	Manufacturing	100-249
22	Ridgewood Healthcare LLC	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
23	Principle Long Term Care Inc	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
24	U S Postal Service	Transportation and Warehousing	50-99
25	River City Construction Inc	Construction	50-99
Source: NC Department of Commerce (www.nccommerce.com)			

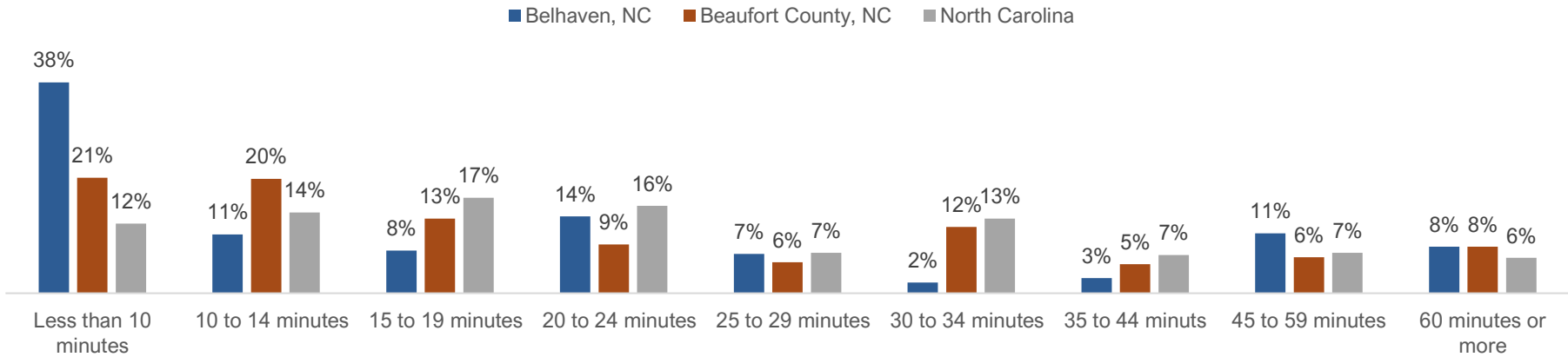
Beaufort County, NC Gross Collections



Beaufort County Taxable Sales

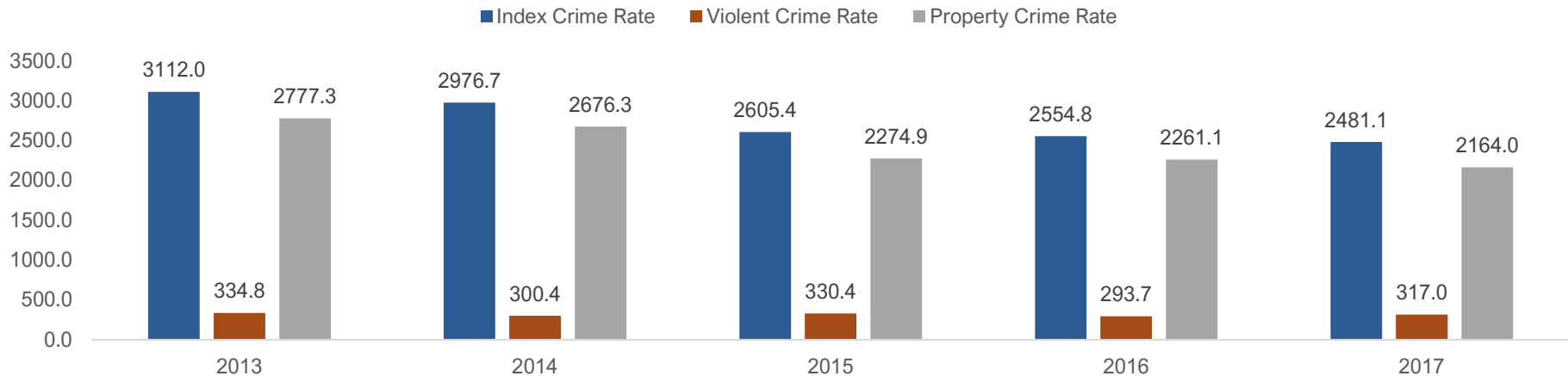


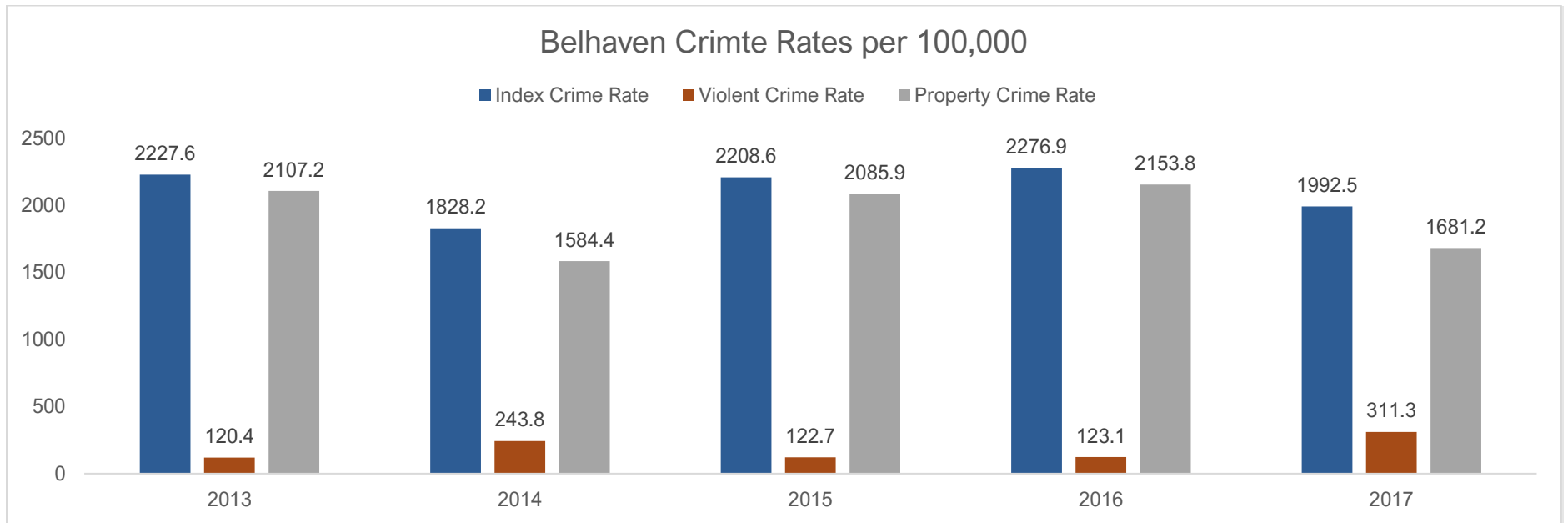
2019 Commute



Source: US Census

Beaufort County Crime Rates per 100,000

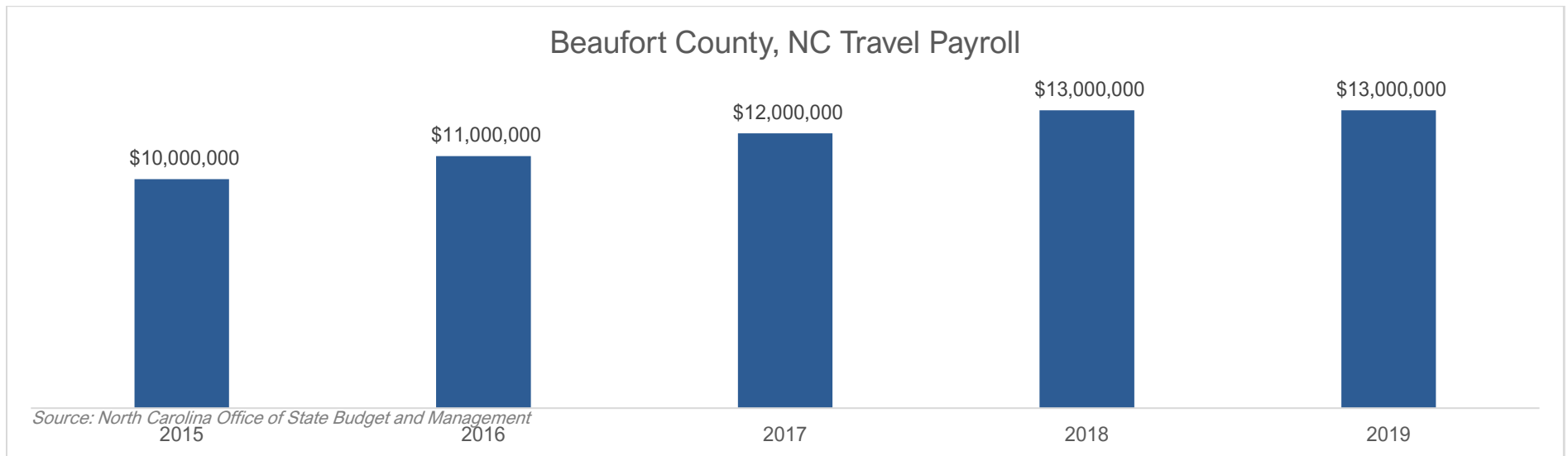
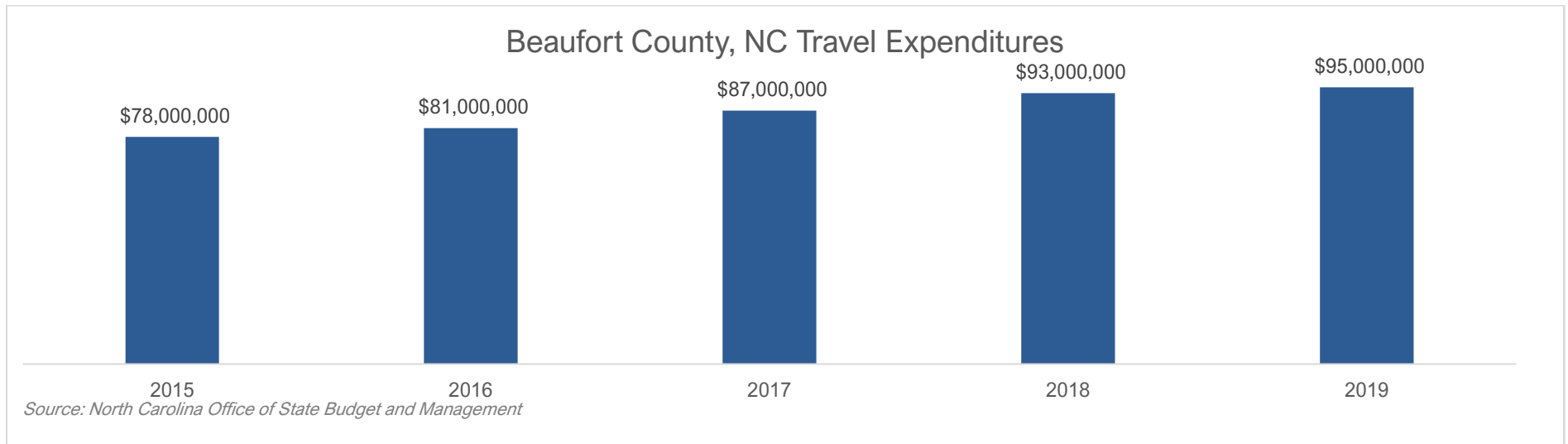




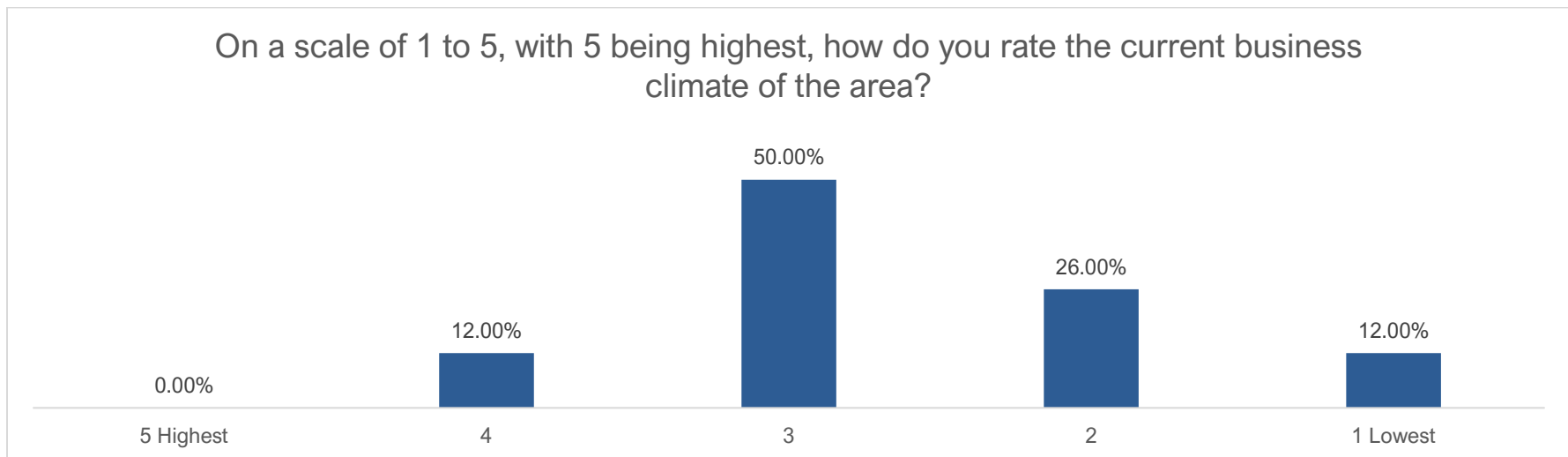
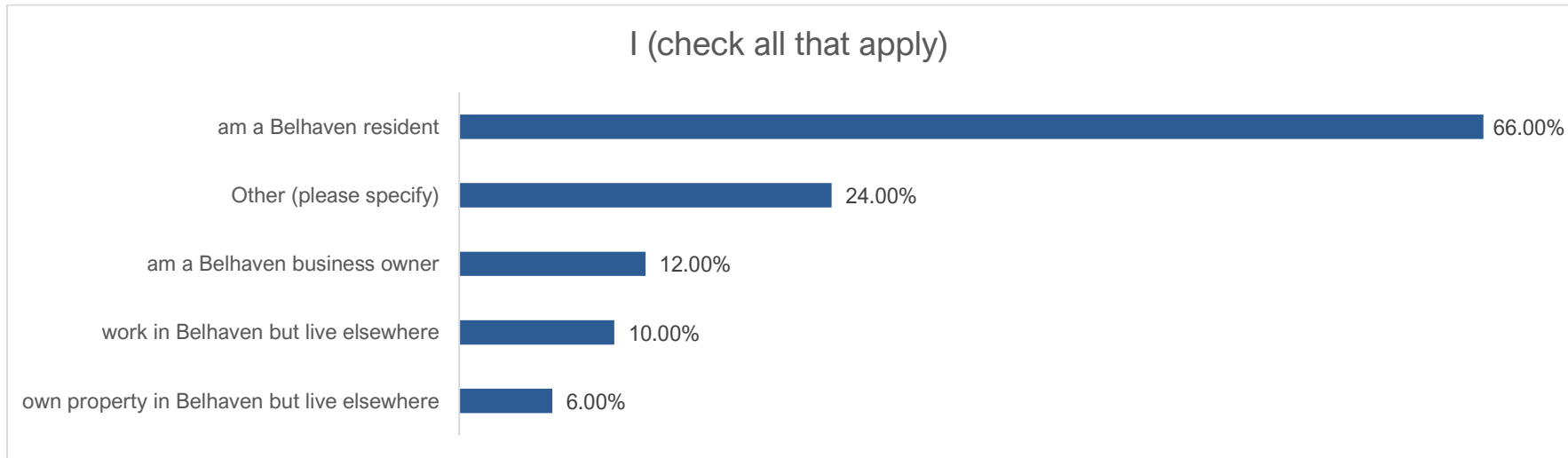
Beaufort County 2015-2019 Employment Stages		
ESTABLISHMENTS	% of Total Establishments	% of Total Jobs
Self-Employed (1)	16.4%	1.8%
Stage 1 (2-9)	66.5%	27.4%
Stage 2 (10-99)	15.7%	40.2%
Stage 3 (100-499)	1.0%	22.8%
Stage 4 (500+)	0.1%	7.7%
Source: Your Economy Data		

ENTERPRISE EMPLOYMENT SIZE	NUMBER OF FIRMS	NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS	EMPLOYMENT
01: Total	993	1,099	13,552
02: <20	755	760	3,053
03: 20-99	90	98	2,879
04: 100-499	33	51	1,195
05: 500+	115	190	6,425
<i>Source: Census.gov</i>			

ENTERPRISE EMPLOYMENT SIZE	NUMBER OF FIRMS	NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS	EMPLOYMENT
01: Total	2,191	2,448	25,315
02: <20	1,774	1,785	6,719
03: 20-99	201	229	5,944
04: 100-499	61	98	3,681
05: 500+	155	336	8,971
<i>Source: Census.gov (This is 2016 data released in May of 2019)</i>			

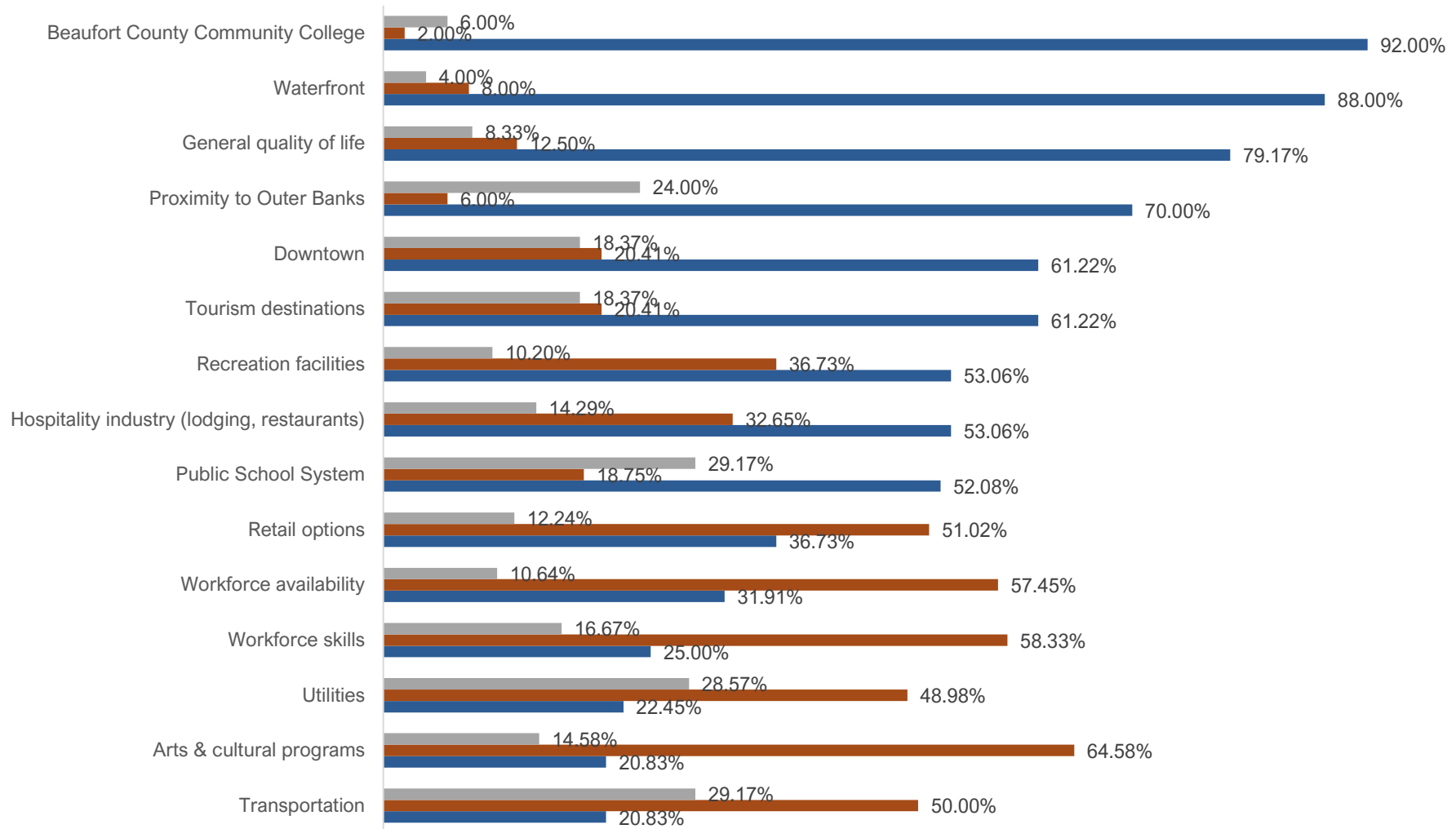


Appendix B: Community Survey



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

■ Neither ■ Weakness ■ Asset



What is Belhaven's most significant asset supporting economic growth?

Responses

Downtown. Restaurants/shops

Workers

Waterfront property

Water access

Location

The water

Peacefulness

The water

Could be a quaint river front community

Available space in town center.

Plenty of available empty buildings

Waterfront

Downtown waterfront

Business

More businesses more residence

Restaurants and friendly environment

A quality way of life

Waterfront

Waterfront

Waterfront

Spoon River

Location and proximity to rivers, sounds, larger towns (Washington, Edenton, New Bern, Greenville)

Downtown boutiques and restaurants but need better hours at lunch time after pandemic is over.

Location, small community, river front

Waterfront

Nothing. Belhaven has fallen off. Our ancestors had more going on back then than we have going on now and we have much more than they ever did.

Waterfront property with public water and sewer capacity

Jobs and quality of life

Waterfront

Sense of community

Appears to have low crime and a beautiful river.

Downtown

Water and quality lifestyle

Land area available for development

waterfront

utility services on most lots

property tax and utilities

Peaceful, quiet community

the water, workforce

WATERFRONT

The Waterfront and small town businesses

Water

Access to the water

What is Belhaven's most significant challenge to economic growth?
Hurricane/flooding and resulting economic hit
Flooding & VIDANT
Failure to launch a growth program that would put Belhaven on the map
Cost of utilities
Flooding
Remoteness
Property for sale is too high & flooding is obstacle
Need businesses to bring people. Need people to bring businesses.
Continuing threat from coronavirus.
Cost of utilities, flooding, and lack of a work force. Not a lot of young people in area.
Poor infrastructure
Distance from dense population centers and lack of specific reason to visit.
Lack of good local jobs
More shops and restaurants, bike or golf cart rentals etc., things for kids to do.
Not enough places to shop nothing to do for kids very boring place to live
Lack of waterfront attractions; lack of tourist housing; lack of variety shopping
Needs a restaurant on the water
Job security
Utility bills
Flooding, lack of industry, lack of non-boating related tourist/visitor attractions.
Medical facilities are critical
Old buildings in downtown owned but not utilized, lack of workforce
It's in the middle of nowhere.
Belhaven needs jobs and amusement to draw people to the area
Flooding
Housing for 18-35 yr old workforce - apartments and small affordable (but decent) houses
No plan which has been followed through
High taxes and utilities
Lack of hotel
Qualified workforce
Community involvement
People and businesses need to be more open to business collaboration.
Not having a hospital. or a hotel
WORKFORCE SKILLS
Lack of available facilities to facilitate growth
Workforce
Workforce. Our young people are leaving the area and our population is aging.

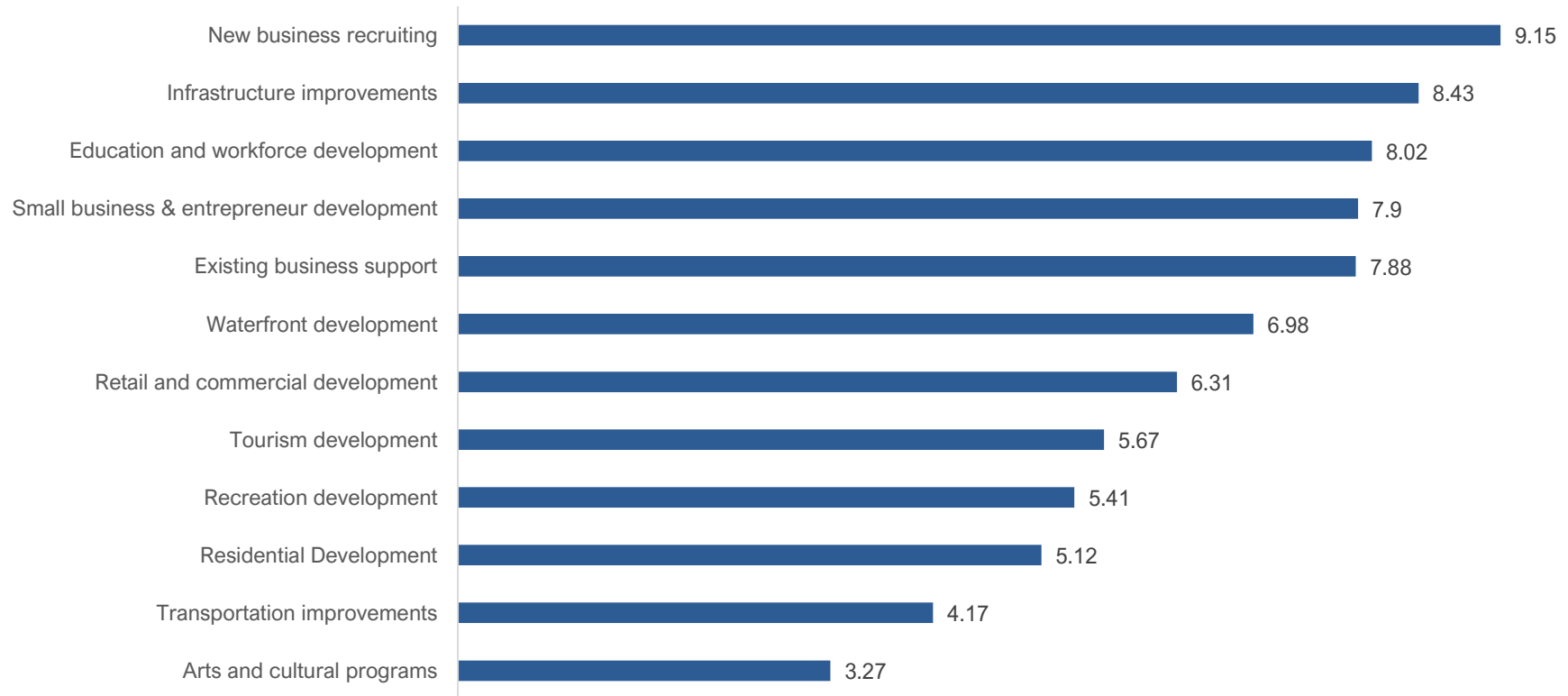
What is Belhaven's most significant opportunity for economic growth?
Oyster farming
Waterfront
Waterfront and tourism
Invest in development
Location and water
Available land and retail locations
Marketing the water access
Water
Location
Waterfront
The large number of people who live nearby; for example the crowd that came to the recent fundraiser for Joey Rose. All those people would come to town, if they had a reason.
All those empty stores around town could be developed into something!
River sport and recreation
Utilization of the waterfront to increase traffic to Belhaven.
Downtown rebuilding
Focus on the whole town not just one area. show that you care for your town and more people will care to come.
Improve aesthetics
Untapped waterfront
Land availability
New Business
Development of the former hospital property
Become a destination
Promoting the Town Dock area as a destination: watching sunsets, attractions such as live music, arts and crafts, etc. Develop more waterfront.
Use of the waterfront; we need to finish the buildings that have been vacant for a while. Naturally, this may not be the time due to the pandemic.

Cheap real estate
Revitalizing, adding, and improving the town is cheaper. Sewer, water, and electric infrastructure might need little work. But, the main facilities are under capacity.
Make Belhaven a place where everyone would love to come
Need some development of water front property and a local golf course built
Get housing, people will come, and money will come, and everything thrives
Tourism
Increased dining with outdoor seating-to be able to enjoy the water views!! Also more open availability. It's very difficult to keep track of which restaurants are open on which days and during which time frames or only half day and then full day another time and so on.
Room for expansion and new influx of successful and talented retirees. Bring fiber optics into all of the town.
Water front
Waterfront development
Hospitality
Fiber optic installation throughout town
More employment opportunities
Water access
4th of July festivities and homecomings
Opening up to new businesses and growth that benefits the diversified populace to retain youth and attract young families.
Location and land
MARKETING BELHAVEN
The Waterfront offers many growth opportunities
Location to water.
Boat building, apartments to house young workers, small shops geared toward tourists (bike shop, ice cream parlor, golf cart rentals, etc.)

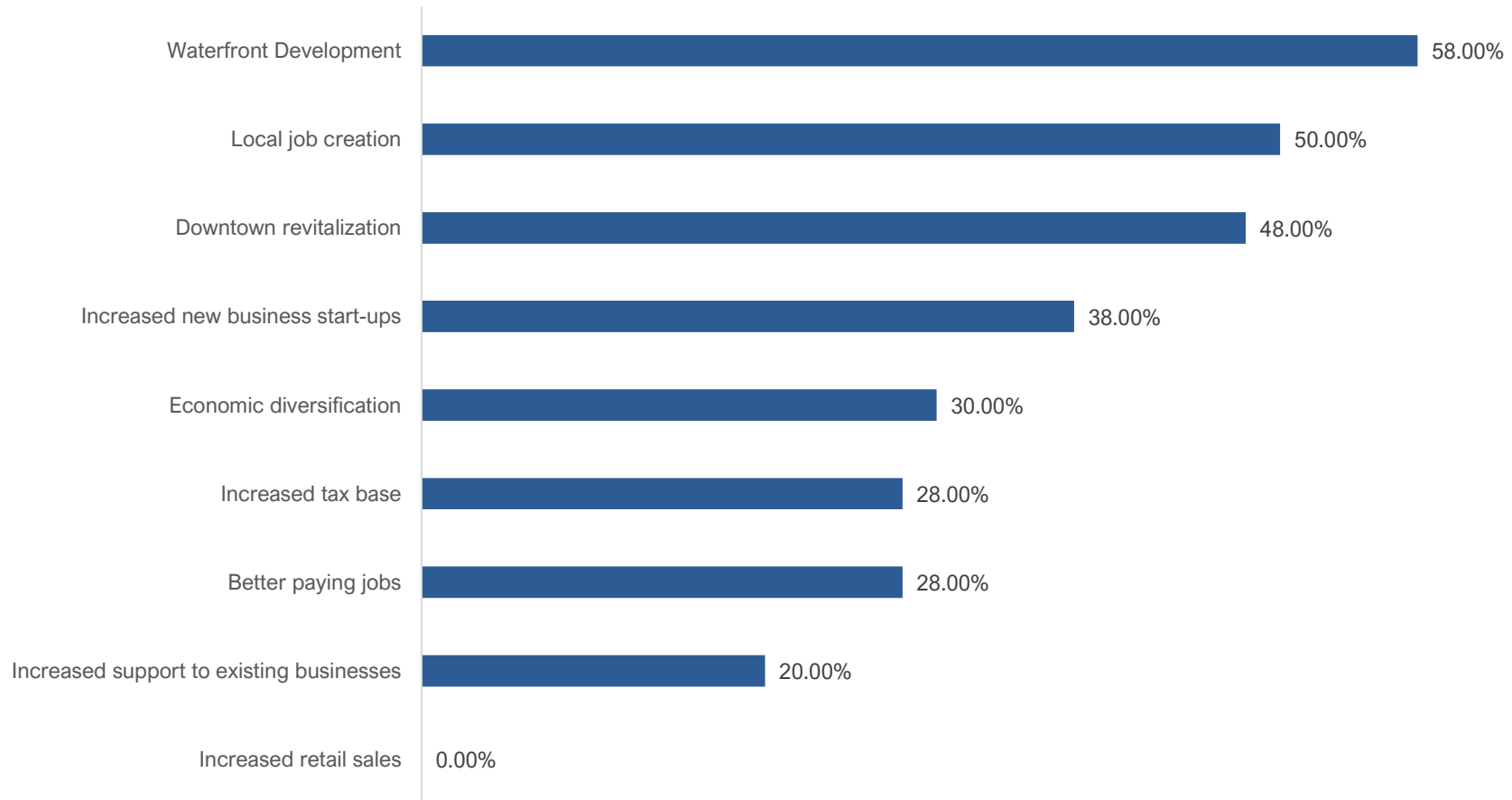
What is the most critical threat to economic growth?
Hurricanes/flooding
Lack of opportunity for young people
staying the way you are
Cost of services compared to surrounding communities. Abandoned houses.
Stores not open on Sundays
Remoteness
Flood area
Taxes
Stagnant economy, even before the coronavirus.
Not enough grant money to help new businesses renovate and get started.
Lack of housing and access to services
Lack of manufacturing base or base that utilizes the benefits of the locations natural resources.
Flooding
Cleaning up the town, nothing for children here, entrances like West Main St need to be cleaned up it does not look or have a welcome feeling very run down.
All stores in Belhaven have high to high prices
Stagnant economy; lack of entrepreneurship
Lack of sufficient jobs
Lack of planning

utility costs
Seasonal flooding, workforce availability, lack of critical infrastructure
Pandemic, hurricane and of course the economy is always the fall out
No workforce, no rental living available
Lack of work force.
Utilities
Flooding
Housing - hard to get employees, and those who work here take their incomes elsewhere where they live
Keeping businesses here, open/supporting and sharing information on current businesses
Lack of employment j
Flooding potential
Flooding potential
Covid 19
Not wanting to implement new business ventures
Aging populace, monopolies, limited focus on restaurants and craft stores that fail to provide sufficient jobs.
Landlords wanting too much rent and the fear of flooding
RIGHT NOW, COVID-19
Derelict buildings and lots located around the town
Flooding in the downtown area

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



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



What is a model city for Belhaven - a place Belhaven would want to emulate?

Responses

Belhaven needs to be unique. The seeds are there for something great downtown and the waterfront.

Viroqua, Wisconsin

Itself but better

Nocatee in Ponte Vedra Florida

Greenville, Kentucky

Essex CT

NagsHead

Edenton

New Bern

Mumbles, Wales, UK but without the steep hills

Charleston, SC

Washington NC

Perrysburg, Ohio

Edenton

Beaufort

Washington; Edenton

Beaufort

Beaufort, NC

Beaufort, NC

Washington, Edenton, New Bern

Southport

Even though Greenville is a bigger city. We need businesses and good health care facilities

New Bern

New Bern, NC

Smaller version of New Bern

Washington NC

New Bern

Belmont NC

Winterville

Burnsville, NC

Beaufort

Greenville NC

Small New England seaport Town

ELIZABETH CITY

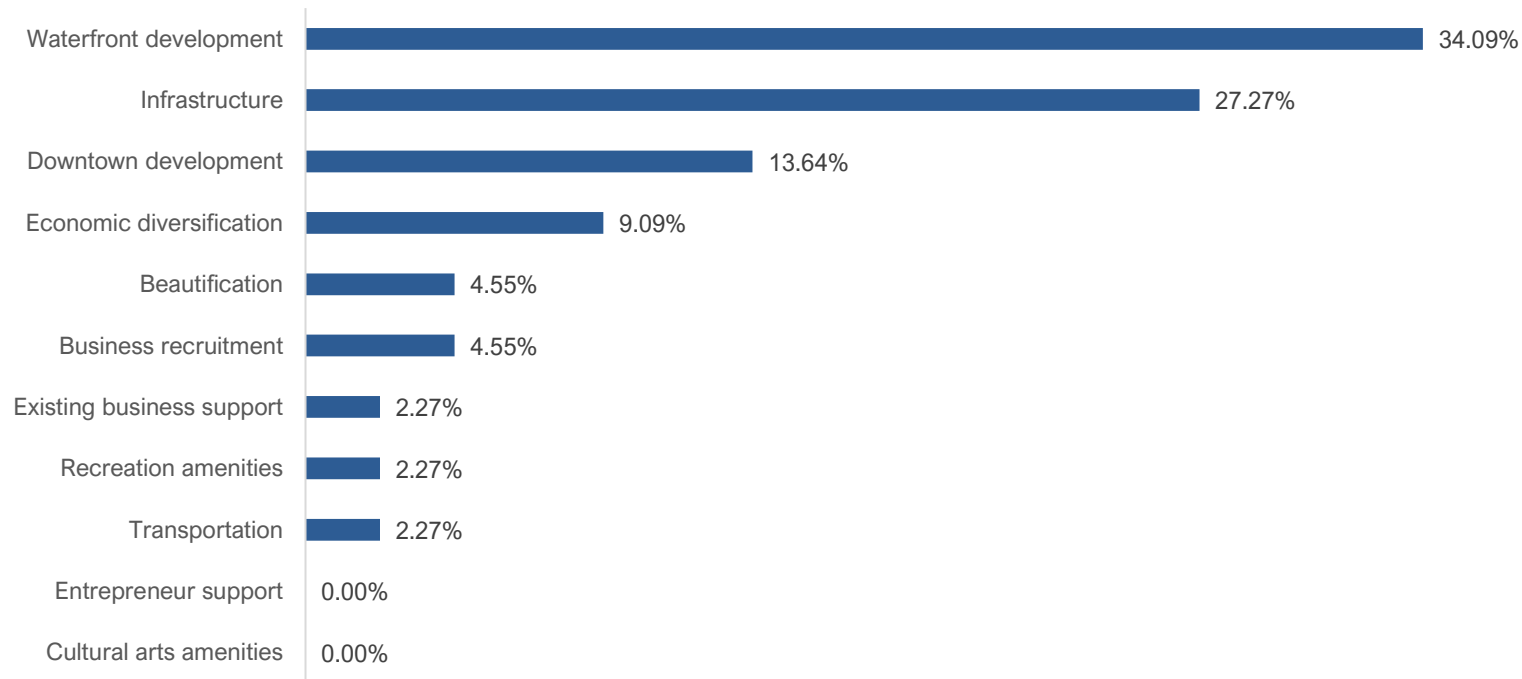
Manteo, North Carolina

Beaufort North Carolina...there was a time that Beaufort looked worse than Belhaven!

What is one thing that Belhaven does better than other towns?
Responses
4th of July!
Emergency services & police department
Band together
Keeps the good old boys in charge.
Celebrations
Fine food choices
Peace, civility and friendliness
Welcome visitors
Friendly people
Fellowship
Great police force and library
Love the small town hospitality
People here are friendly an caring that's about it
Fireworks
Quiet hospitality
Belhaven is a warm friendly town that is very welcoming to others. This town also offers a feeling of safety. Local residents as well as visitors and newcomers can feel relaxed in the hometown environment. In this current era, most people want a town where they and their families can feel the warmth and safety and love of our small town.
Friendly

Strong female leadership in small businesses
Genuine southern hospitality
Restaurants, boutiques, medical(but could be gone in a second)
Friendly and accepting
We get along with each other.
Has capacity for additional water and sewer customers
Relaxed atmosphere
Welcomes visitors
Stick together, usually
Maintains the small town atmosphere.
Friendliness
4th of July celebration
Camaraderie
Friendliness
ICW celebrations
Providing assistance in disasters moments
1950s quiet sleepy peaceful town
The friend little town that people on water or land finds us to be, that why they want to move here.
KEEPING PUBLIC INFORMED BY MULTIPLE CHANNELS
Hospitality
Welcoming visitors

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



What is an outcome you would like to see from the strategic plan?

Responses

Making Belhaven a must-visit town and developing infrastructure that will protect businesses from economic hits from hurricanes every couple of years.

Increase in the recreational & light industry based on access to the waterfront

More money spent in and on Belhaven

Waterfront development and revitalization of the downtown area

Lower utilities in line with Pungo so businesses can return.

Focus on fixing the drainage problems coming into town.

Keeping Belhaven small, remote and peaceful.

Jobs, Real jobs, not just crabs and fish.jobs that pay well and everyone not just the few elite have a chance to work. Jobs that gives everyone a chance to apply for, not because of who your parents are or who you're married too.

Create opportunities for people to flourish

Acting on it.

No more empty store fronts, unity among the community, everyone working together without looking at ethnicity, age. Accept new ideas!

Development of attainable goals

Increased economic (tax base) from development of waterfront.

Improvements that bring more tourism and visitors to Belhaven

More places to eat and shop

Adapting new ideas

Positive high profile marketing and promotion

I'd like to see more jobs and job training for the residents. Many young people leave the area in search of better jobs, homes and the security of a better future. I'd like to see Belhaven offer these young people comparable to other small towns thus sustaining the future prosperity of our town. There is such potential for Belhaven.

Action

Development of the waterfront in a way that benefits the entire town and allows access to all citizens.

Develop Belhaven, highlighting her assets, into a destination, with shops, restaurants, lodging, recreation, and services

Greater emphasis on marketing all of Belhaven's assets: event space at River Forest, restaurants such as Spoon River and the Tavern, shops need more items for men, maximize use of The Market. In general, a broader marketing spectrum.

I would like to see the town and area including homes in the zip code not in town to form a task force, create an economic plan (multi vote on important things). Have people with experience and business acumen. There are lots of people who may want to do something but we need people with some business experience on the committee. don't be afraid to include people who have a Belhaven address but live outside the town. They consider Belhaven their town too.

Revitalize downtown and open a few more businesses other than boutiques and restaurants

A 15 year roadmap with associated yearly goals and budgets that address these goals.

Making Belhaven a better small town equivalent to a bigger city

Getting a golf course built close to Belhaven would drive economic development of water front and downtown

An affordable housing plan and a single database and bulletin board (digital AND actual physical) to post jobs and resumes for local businesses and potential employees

Needs to have a commitment to follow through

Reduced taxes and utility costs, better drainage throughout the town, fiber optics, clean-up of the town so that no trees are leaning into houses (Riverview St.).

Something to improve the infrastructure, cost of utilities to attract new business.

Updated infrastructure, revitalize downtown, and a boutique hotel in downtown area would

Street improvements, drainage improvements and town wide Wi-Fi capabilities.

Clear vision that all town stakeholders can get behind and promote

Population growth

would like to see more recreation and more healthier food establishments, and a walk track to help get people of all ages more involved with exercise.

Influx of new ideas, community-wide involvement to help eliminate the economic residue of segregation and the issues faced by our undereducated, unskilled youth.

Something big happen in our area to create jobs and a hospital for our surrounding area.

A SUSTAINABLE PLAN TO ENHANCE & GROW BELHAVEN

A more vibrant town, retaining its small town feel.

I would like for it to be put in place and followed!

Please make any additional comments here.
Responses
I'm proud to call Belhaven " My town."
See: "The Town That Beat Walmart," Smithsonian Magazine, 1992
The leadership is amazing
The climate of city government should be that they work for the people
Such a great town and location. We owned two properties for three years and loved the small-town feel, the great excitement of Friday nights, eating out in town, boating to the restaurants.
Belhaven's greatest asset is its avoidance of the chaos and degradation plaguing so many other American localities today.
We need jobs where as the residents already here can afford to pay the (light) bill.
Stop the mentality of "we've always done it this way" and "one person tried and it didn't work" or "so and so doesn't like it, so we can't do it."
The town needs to clean up and get people to want to come to Belhaven for a Walmart or McDonald's
Belhaven is an untapped tourist attraction because we lack exciting attraction(s) for anyone other than boaters.
We used to get lots of cultural things here like Air Force Band, etc. by coordinating with Washington.
Nice place to live.
Bring a factory to the area.
Belhaven needs to have the support of its citizens for any project, a finical commitment to fund it for multiple years, and hire qualified persons to get it done
Build up your citizens and they will build up your town.
Thanks to all who are working on this plan!
There are multiple Belhavens. We need policies and programs to draw these diverse and too-often opposing interests together.
Belhaven is a great place to live and in the past it was a town of small business and factories. A place that kids could enjoy swimming, playing sports, a theater, skating rink, and small bowling alley. As a young person growing up in Belhaven it was a pleasure. We had factories where people could work. We need activities, jobs and housing so people that want to make Belhaven their home, something to do and places to stay. We have a diamond in the ruff. But we don't want it to became another place like the beaches, or even Washington. We are a quiet small town with the chance to became a want-to-go spot on North Carolina's map, all we need is a hotel to accommodate travelers and actives that would make them want to stay and enjoy our beautiful town. As a resident of Belhaven for 74 years I have seen it all.
TOWN MANAGER HAS MADE GREAT STRIDES IN IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC AND IS SUPPORTED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL
Thank you for working with Belhaven to make this happen!

Study Sponsor and Consultant



ElectriCities of N.C. Inc. sponsored the Town of Belhaven Economic Development Strategic Plan. ElectriCities' economic development department offers a variety of services to promote NC Public Power communities to businesses and economic developers. It helps 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

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