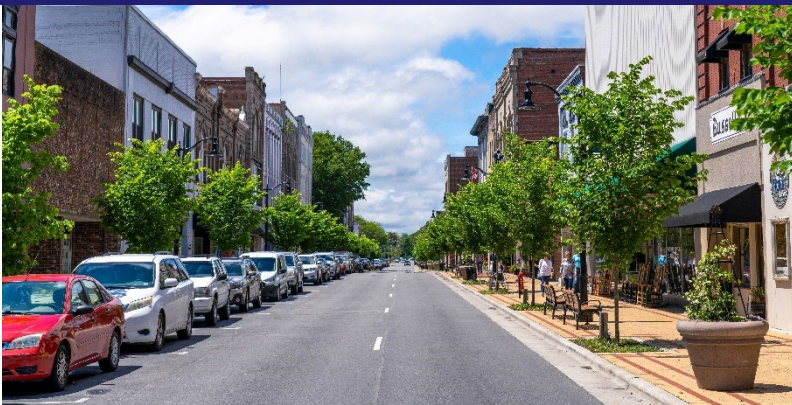




Economic Development Strategic Plan



SPONSORED BY ELECTRICITIES OF N.C., INC.

CREATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING
2023

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Executive Summary

Washington, N.C., is in an advantageous position as a relatively large city on the inner banks of North Carolina, accessible from the Greenville metro area as well as the Triangle and southeastern parts of the state. Thanks to the municipality's natural resources, beauty, and timely investments in amenities like the boardwalk along the Pamlico River and a new streetscape along Main Street, Washington is attractive to visitors and residents. By connecting and aligning with economic development partners such as Beaufort County Economic Development, Washington chambers of commerce, and ElectriCities of N.C., Washington can enhance efforts to support, attract, and start up new businesses in the city. Such efforts will enable other strategic goals including visitor and resident attraction and/or retention talent pipeline expansion.

The economic development strategic planning process was sponsored by ElectriCities of N.C., Inc. as a service to its member communities to spur and support economic growth in these communities. This strategic plan will support Washington's efforts to make strategic investments that will result in a stronger and more sustainable economy.

The strategic planning process included community engagement, a SWOT Analysis, and economic and demographic research. This plan uses an asset-based approach to strategic planning to build goals, strategies, and action steps around Washington's strengths and future opportunities. Washington's strengths include location, waterfront amenities, available land for development, and an attractive downtown. The city's challenges include lack of available housing, slow population growth, and scarce resources for public investment. The city is working to capture opportunities to attract new residents, improve housing development, increase tourism, and expand recreation amenities. Many of the threats identified in the planning process are common to small towns. Based on collected input, Washington residents want to maintain the city's identity as a charming, coastal community.

The goals of this economic development plan build upon strengths to capture opportunities. They also address weaknesses and mitigate threats. Washington's economic development goals focus on supporting and growing business, attracting new residents and visitors, and investing in infrastructure, amenities, placemaking, and marketing.

This planning process has illuminated the possibilities for Washington, including the public investment in the waterfront and downtown. This same energy can be used to support existing businesses, start-ups, and entrepreneurs; grow the talent pipeline; and to further invest in infrastructure that will support population growth and protect existing development. City leaders are committed to ensuring that the community not only grows but grows in a way that maintains the small-town quality of life residents enjoy.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Summary

Goal: Attract, start up, and retain businesses that will provide quality local jobs

- Identify and prepare sites and buildings to house new jobs and companies
- Connect with existing employers to aid in retention of jobs
- Provide support and assistance for entrepreneurs and start-ups

Goal: Leverage placemaking for marketing, visitor attraction, resident attraction and retention

- Increase access and connection to the river for residents and visitors
- Plan for increased recreation and amenities for residents and visitors
- Increase community connectivity through greenways, trails, and gateways

Goal: Grow the talent pipeline

- Market Washington to attract talented workers
- Use youth and young adult programming to retain young talent
- Support and promote Beaufort County Community College programs

Goal: Support growth with infrastructure planning and investment

- Address need for additional and more diverse housing
- Improve access to broadband
- Invest in infrastructure needed to support growth and to protect from natural hazards

SWOT Analysis Summary

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis was developed from steering committee meetings, local interviews, and a community survey (Appendix B). The SWOT Analysis Summary is a compilation of that input. Washington has an impressive collection of strengths and opportunities which were used to form the foundation of strategies to advance economic growth. Weaknesses and threats include resource and infrastructure issues that are addressed in the strategic plan.

Strengths

- Strong parks and recreation programs
- Two historic districts
- Airport
- Small town feel with amenities
- Waterfront
- Boating industry cluster
- Proximity to Greenville
- Beaufort County Community College
- Vibrant downtown
- East Carolina University

Weaknesses

- Housing stock and availability
- Declining population and workforce
- Storm drainage systems
- Capacity of public safety services
- Utility rates are high
- Lack of broadband
- Vacant/abandoned housing
- Lack of desired retail
- Cost of living increasing
- Workforce availability and skills

Opportunities

- Increase visitor traffic
- Leverage the river as an amenity
- Leverage the airport and its visitors
- Expand food and entertainment offerings
- Ecotourism
- Increase walkability and connectivity
- Improve gateways into city
- Leverage East Carolina University
- Attract more residents

Threats

- Global economic downturn
- Lack of local resources
- Fear of change
- Flooding and storm control issues
- Perceived lack of workforce
- COVID-19 impacts

Strengths

Strengths and assets are the foundational building blocks of a sound economic development strategy. Strengths are the reasons why businesses and people choose a community and why visitors travel to a place. Washington has many assets that attract visitors and can leverage others to support business startups and growth and new residents. Civic assets such as committed leadership, people willing to tackle problems, and a strong nonprofit sector bode well for the execution and success of a strategic plan for economic development. The airport, boating industry, and available land for development, plus proximity to the Greenville metro area, position Washington for business attraction and growth.

- ◎ Strong parks and recreation programs
- ◎ Nice dining options
- ◎ Community festivals
- ◎ People willing to tackle problems
- ◎ Two historic districts
- ◎ Diverse options for overnight guests
- ◎ Airport
- ◎ Room to grow
- ◎ Strong nonprofit sector
- ◎ Small-town feel with amenities
- ◎ Diversity
- ◎ Hospitality
- ◎ Waterfront
- ◎ Boating industry cluster
- ◎ Proximity to Greenville
- ◎ River
- ◎ Beaufort County Community College
- ◎ Vibrant downtown
- ◎ East Carolina University

Weaknesses

Every community has gaps and areas for improvement, and it is imperative to account for these when prioritizing strategies for growth. Washington faces some of the same challenges as other eastern North Carolina towns such as infrastructure, housing affordability, and mix of retail offerings. A sound strategic plan addresses gaps while leveraging assets and opportunities.

- ◎ Housing stock and availability
- ◎ Declining population and workforce
- ◎ Storm drainage systems
- ◎ Capacity of public safety services
- ◎ Utility rates are high
- ◎ Lack of broadband
- ◎ Lack of diversity in public positions
- ◎ Vacant and abandoned housing
- ◎ Lack of desired retail
- ◎ Cost of living increasing
- ◎ Workforce availability and skills

Opportunities

Much of the input from citizens and community leaders focused on opportunities, and there was a lot of enthusiasm and excitement for the future, especially coming out of the pandemic. Many of the opportunities will require public investments and prioritizing in the face of many needs. Examples include improving gateways into the community, adding sidewalks and greenways to improve connectivity and public spaces, and addressing infrastructure improvements such as water and sewer capacity and service. There are opportunities to better leverage connections with East Carolina University (ECU) and state and federal representatives which will multiply opportunities for the city. As a larger city in the inner banks of the state, Washington stands out as an economic engine and opportunity to draw from the wider coastal area.

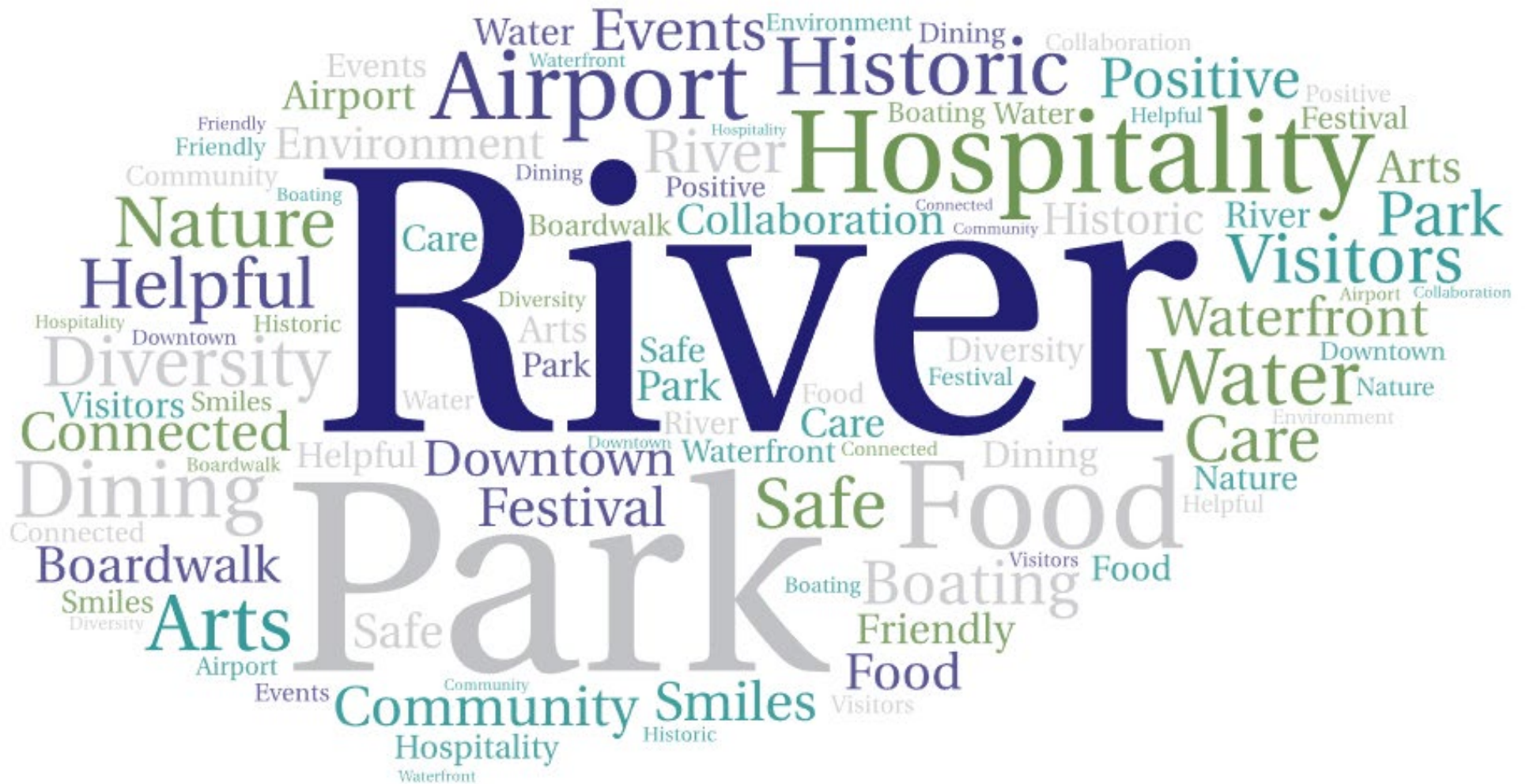
- ⦿ Increase visitor traffic, and encourage longer stays
- ⦿ Leverage the river as an amenity and advantage
- ⦿ Boat storage and services
- ⦿ Water taxi
- ⦿ Leverage the airport and its visitors
- ⦿ Expand food and entertainment offerings
- ⦿ Ecotourism
- ⦿ Increase walkability and connectivity
- ⦿ Improve gateways into city
- ⦿ Strengthen relationships with federal and state legislative partners
- ⦿ Leverage East Carolina University
- ⦿ Attract more residents

Threats

Threats are identified in a SWOT analysis in order to prepare for and mitigate potential risks. The most frequently cited risks are external, such as a global economic downturn and weather-related impacts, and are not necessarily specific to Washington and its economic prospects. This means that the threats would also impact surrounding communities and not put Washington at a competitive disadvantage while dealing with them. The best way to prepare for such threats is to share the issues with citizens and develop internal processes and systems to respond effectively when needed.

- ⦿ Global economic downturn
- ⦿ Lack of local resources to address problems
- ⦿ Fear of change
- ⦿ Flooding and storm control issues
- ⦿ Perceived lack of workforce
- ⦿ COVID-19 impacts

WHAT IS ONE THING WASHINGTON DOES BETTER THAN OTHER CITIES?



Economic Development Strategic Plan

Goal: Attract, start up, and retain businesses that will provide quality local jobs

Strategy: Prepare and promote sites and buildings that are targets for new and growing businesses

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Inventory available sites and buildings for those suitable for investment or new employers -- industrial, commercial, and retail. Include infill, vacant, and under-utilized properties. Inventory city-owned properties to look for development opportunities. Focus on areas and corridors identified for growth such as the 15th Street corridor for commercial growth and Carolina Avenue for redevelopment.
- ⦿ Promote a listing of priority available properties and advertise promising examples on the city website.
- ⦿ Maintain communications and programming connections with Washington Warren Airport as a key economic driver, supporting the airport's 2022 Strategic Plan where possible. For example, include more detailed information on opportunities at the airport on the city website.
- ⦿ Support the planned expansion of the Washington Beaufort County Industrial Park to support new and existing industry needs.
- ⦿ Communicate frequently with Beaufort County EDC to align town business attraction goals and assets with county and other allies. Consider a quarterly Economic Development Update meeting with key city staff, such as Public Works, Planning, and EDC staff to share updates from existing employers, potential for new firms, and status of infrastructure and permit review for key projects.

Strategy: Provide solutions to help existing businesses overcome challenges and offer services that foster growth

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Develop a list of major employers and utility customers to connect with periodically. Priority companies include large employers, fast-growing and at-risk companies, and companies in target sectors such as boating, food processing, and air filtration.
- ⦿ Develop an in-person survey tool to use when city staff meet with or speak to priority companies. Consider connecting with the EDC by using their customer relationship management software (when in place) to stay synchronized on existing employer visits and issues.
- ⦿ Connect with allies to discuss existing employers and participate in their business retention visits when possible, including Beaufort County EDC, ElectriCities, Beaufort County Community College, EDPNC, etc. Agree on protocols for collaboration (e.g., confidentiality)

- ⦿ Consider in-person networking meetings for priority companies. For example, “Meet the Manager” is a popular format to connect companies with contacts in city government. This could be in partnership with the chamber of commerce and/or Beaufort County EDC.

Strategy: Support a start-up and small business culture in Washington

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Add to the Business and the “How do I?” sections of the city website, with information and links to resources for start-up and small businesses.
- ⦿ Look for partnerships – such as the community college’s Small Business Center or Chamber of Commerce -- to develop a “how to start a business” guide for Washington. Guides include a step-by-step process to open a new business.
- ⦿ Look for opportunities to provide sponsorship of small business programming led by allies. In-kind sponsorship could include providing the location. Spotlight small and growing businesses in city communications.
- ⦿ Explore the potential for an entrepreneurship hub that could include incubation, coworking, a shared-use kitchen, or maker space. The U.S. Economic Development Administration often provides grant funding for feasibility studies. A hub like this could consolidate resources from across the county and serve as a focal point for programming.
- ⦿ Review the city’s incentive policy for opportunities to expand support for small businesses.

Strategy: Support quality retail and commercial development

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Promote priority retail and commercial development opportunities on the city website.
- ⦿ Explore technical assistance through ElectriCities’ retail and downtown development initiatives.
- ⦿ Identify and prepare space for specific desired purposes, such as 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, restaurants, music shop, etc.
- ⦿ Through ElectriCities, identify franchise retail opportunities and work with the Small Business Center to identify potential franchise operators.
- ⦿ ElectriCities can provide market information that can be promoted on the city’s website.

Goal: Leverage placemaking for marketing, visitor attraction, resident attraction, and retention

Strategy: Increase access and connection to the river for residents and visitors

Action Steps:

- ☉ Identify ways to connect downtown and the waterfront to other potential development nodes in the city. This can include visual connections (signage, public art) in addition to hardscape like trails.
- ☉ Look for opportunities to increase public access to the river. This is the main attraction for the city and should be shared as widely as feasible.
- ☉ Explore innovative transportation options for visitors who arrive by water. Greer, SC, operates a tram system to help pedestrians navigate downtown, and Johnston County, NC, recently launched its own ride hailing program:
<https://www.bizjournals.com/triangle/news/2023/03/23/johnston-county-ride-hailing-system.html>

Strategy: Plan for increased recreation and amenities for residents and visitors

Action Steps:

- ☉ Continue to include parks, greenways, recreation, and mobility in long range planning for investments in Washington.
- ☉ Consider a new signature amenity for residents to create excitement and affiliation with the city. Examples could include a splashpad, playground improvements, an outdoor stage, or a new park in an under-served area.
- ☉ Plan for new and expanded parks as residential and commercial areas of the city grow, especially to the west.
- ☉ Engage the public for input into parks and recreation plans and desired amenities.

Strategy: Increase community connectivity through greenways, trails, and gateways

Action Steps:

- ☉ Use the city's gateways to orient visitors to town, including areas in addition to downtown and the waterfront. Explore connectivity with other Beaufort County towns through trails, including signage and public art, to create a networked, attractive amenity.
- ☉ Define and publish "walks" through Washington focused on nature, history, points of interest, etc. Include clever markers to make them memorable and unique to Washington.

Goal: Grow the talent pipeline

Strategy: Market Washington to attract talented workers

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Create key messages to market Washington as a place to live with access to employment opportunities in Greenville and eastern North Carolina, and communicate through a comprehensive marketing and communications program, likely with a third party.
- ⦿ Work with residential realtors to promote living in Washington to potential new residents.
- ⦿ Use the airport and other visitor attractions to communicate the positive aspects of living in Washington.
- ⦿ Consider annual events such as a “Welcome Home” reception for new residents to create buzz and raise awareness of the importance of newcomers. Also create events to align town business attraction goals and assets with county and other allies.
- ⦿ Expand social media messages to include lifestyle advantages such as natural and outdoor resources and amenities as well as career opportunities in Washington.
- ⦿ Add a page to the website about “Moving to Washington” with resources and key messages.

Strategy: Support and promote Beaufort County Community College programs

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Expand youth opportunities at the city offices with internships, co-ops, and other work-based learning programs.
- ⦿ Communicate closely with BCCC on in-demand occupations and skills and aligned or needed programs.
- ⦿ Look for opportunities for BCCC to provide short-term or introductory training on in-demand occupations to illustrate the career and skill needs in Washington.
- ⦿ Engage BCCC in entrepreneurship initiatives such as hosting small business classes downtown or having an office location in an incubator or maker space.

Strategy: Use youth and young adult programming to retain young talent

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Consider a youth leadership program to connect youth to city operations. They can assist with existing programming, hold special events for young people and provide advice to city boards and commissions.
- ⦿ Hold information sessions on “How to serve on a board or commission” for young adults and newcomers to plug in to Washington civic life.
- ⦿ Support a “young professionals” group in partnership with an ally such as the chamber of commerce or other council.
- ⦿ Look for opportunities to provide work-based learning options in city programs to create a pathway for employment.

- ⦿ Consider a youth council or “explorers” program housed in the Parks and Recreation department to provide leadership development, community visibility, and connection to the city for youth. The City of Greensboro has a long-standing and active youth council.
<https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/teens/greensboro-youth-council/about-gyc>

Goal: Support growth with infrastructure planning and investment

Strategy: Address the need for additional and more diverse types of housing

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Create a housing market profile and post it to the website for interested developers to use.
- ⦿ Monitor analysis and recommendations from Beaufort County’s Housing Task Force to identify implementation options for Washington.
- ⦿ Track and publicize upcoming housing developments and projects, even those outside the city, to raise awareness of the changes in the housing market that are on the horizon.
- ⦿ Facilitate a wide range of housing development options to address the critical housing needs across eastern North Carolina. There are housing needs in multi-family, senior, and single-family in all price points.
- ⦿ Consider lower city fees for infill residential development where the city has already made an investment in infrastructure.
- ⦿ Explore city investments in infrastructure (road extensions, sidewalks) that will encourage residential development.
- ⦿ Identify underutilized properties that could be converted to housing. Williamsburg, VA, has a good example of an old motel converted to efficiency apartments,. <https://wydaily.com/news/local/2016/03/17/local-news-knights-inn-owner-debuts-apartments-converted-from-motel-rooms/>. Elkin, NC, has a project similar to this as well.
- ⦿ Form partnerships with housing nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity and seek out partnerships such as a health care system developing housing for doctors and nurses and arts groups developing housing for resident artists.
- ⦿ Communicate with developers who have completed residential projects in the region about Washington’s housing needs.

Strategy: Improve access to broadband

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Pursue state and federal grants for expansion of broadband and internet access.
- ⦿ Explore private sector partners that may provide services, especially in developing areas.

Strategy: Invest in infrastructure needed to support growth and to protect from natural hazards

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Evaluate water and sewer capacity and extensions that will be required to support growth and new development and incorporate into capital improvement plans.
- ⦿ Continue proactive stormwater runoff management, including funding for Jack's Creek improvements.
- ⦿ In planning for infrastructure expansion and improvements, look for 'nature-based' options and raise awareness of the need for resiliency across city systems.

Implementation Plan

The strategic plan is designed to be implemented over several years. In the figure below, near-term priorities (typically years one and two) are listed in #1; mid-term priorities (perhaps years three and four) are listed in #2; and longer-term priorities (beyond four years out) 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

- Inventory available sites
- Support Washington Airport strategies for economic growth
- Quarterly briefings with Beaufort EDC
- Continue existing industry visits
- Look for partnerships with small business center, chamber, and other support allies
- Promote priority retail and commercial properties on city website
- Plan for increased public access to the river
- Consider a new signature recreational amenity
- Plan for new and expanded parks and greenways
- Integrate talent attraction messages to marketing/communications
- Work with residential real estate agents to promote living in Washington
- Expand social media messages to include lifestyle messaging
- Expand youth opportunities for internships
- Add housing market profile to website
- Explore funding and partnerships to increase broadband access
- Evaluate water and sewer expansion
- Continue proactive stormwater management

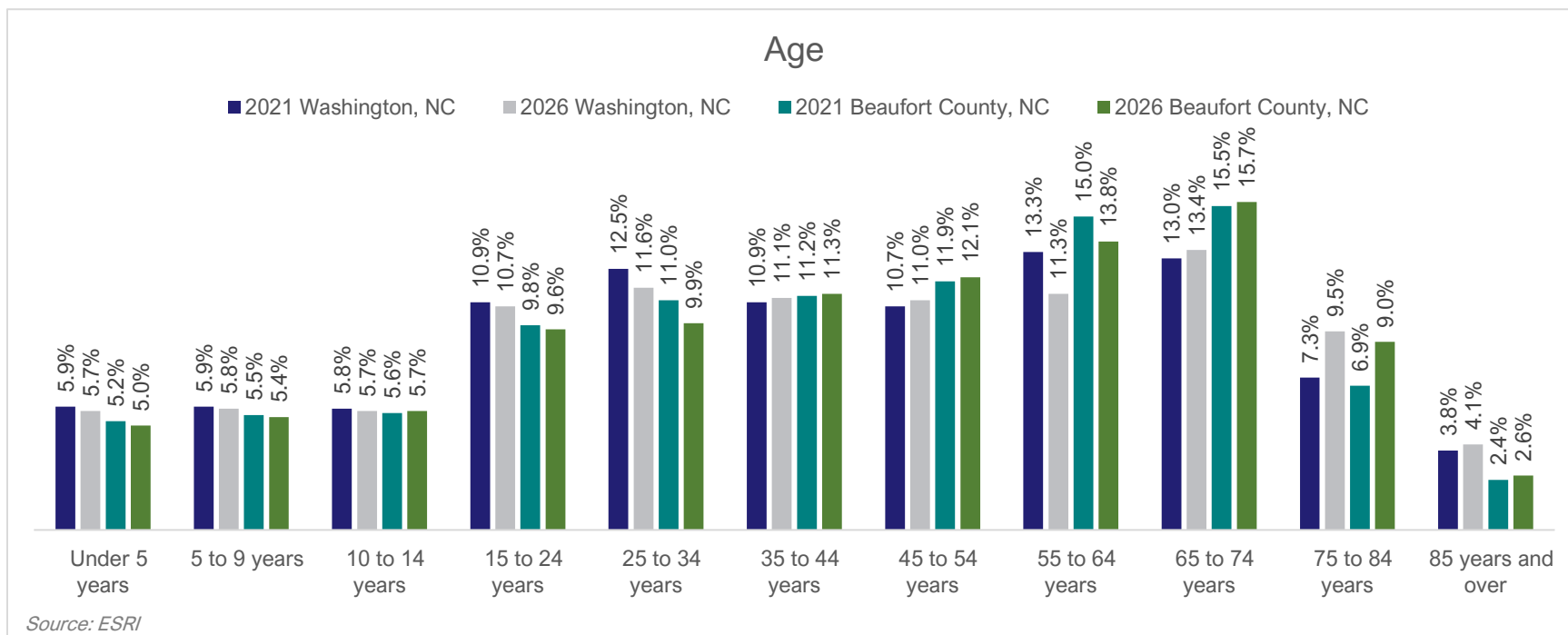
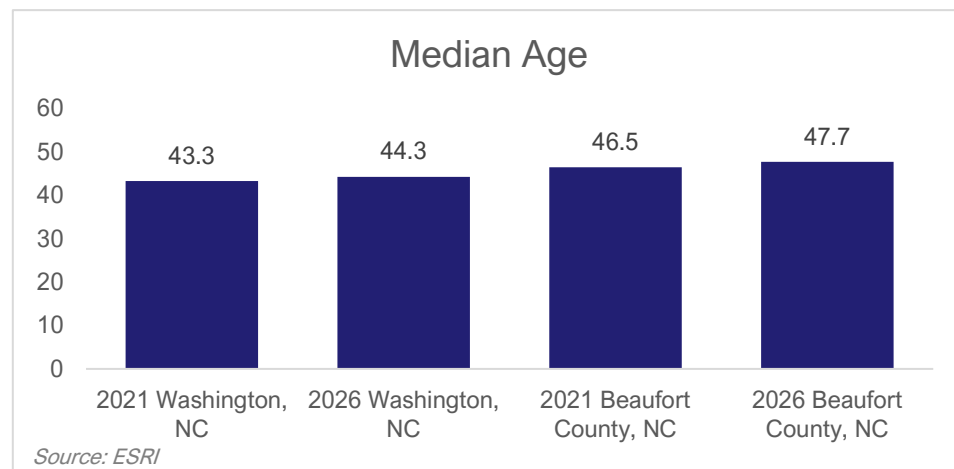
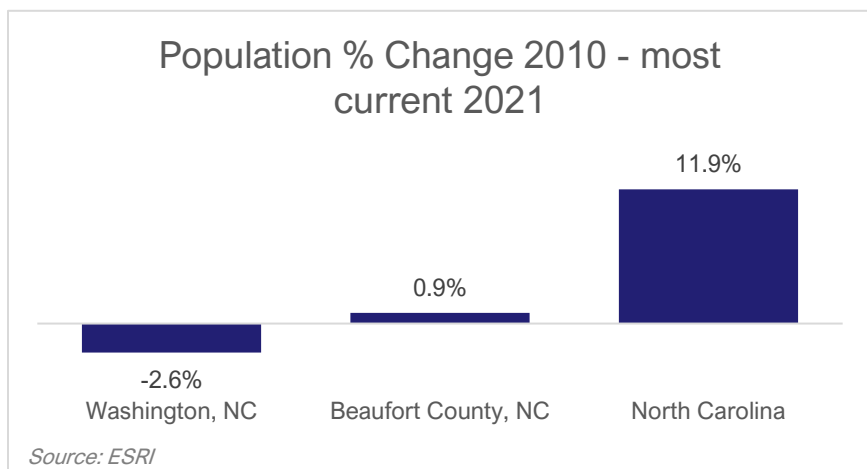
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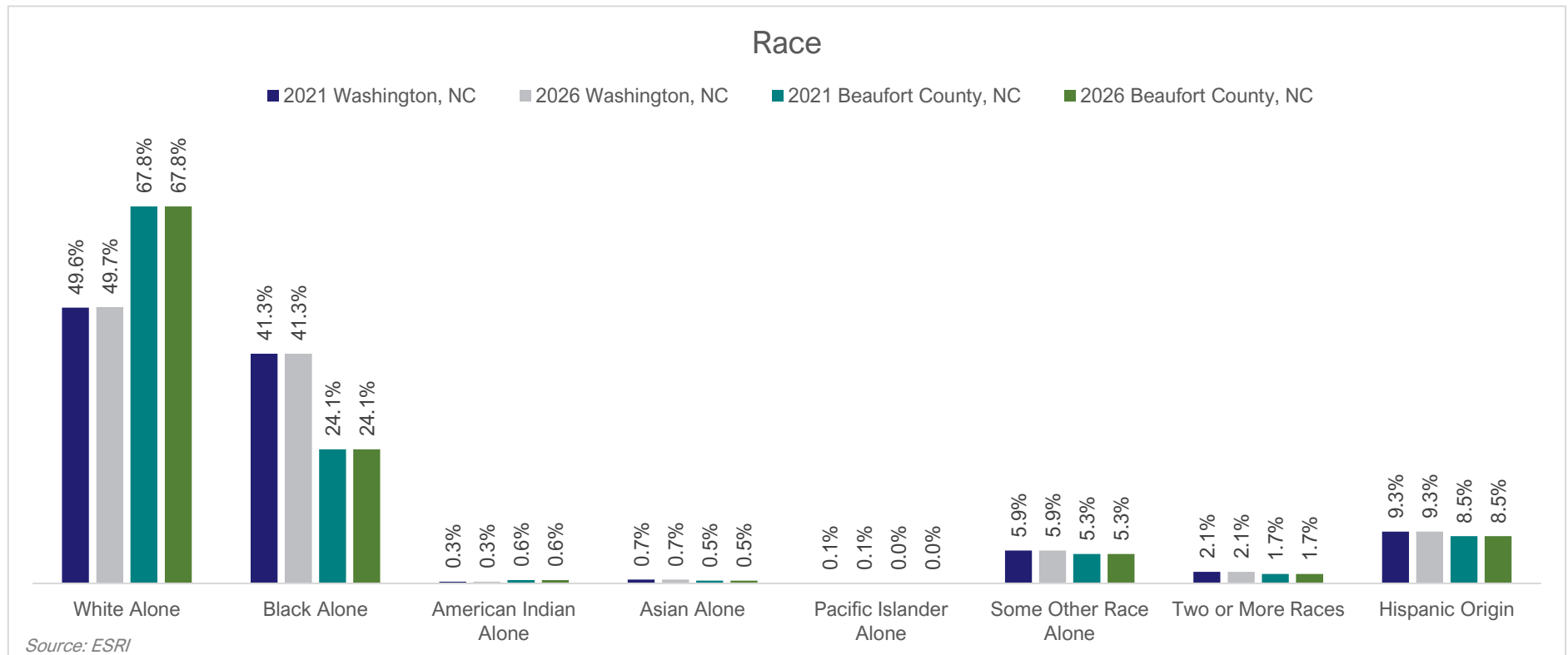
- Develop in-person survey tool for employer visits
- Connect with allies on existing employers
- Hold employer networking meeting
- Add start-up resources to city website
- Identify and prepare space for specific commercial interests
- Explore technical assistance from ElectriCities for retail development
- Explore wayfinding and gateways to connect downtown, waterfront, and other city areas
- Plan for additional greenways, sidewalks, and bike paths
- Define and publish “walks” through Washington
- Use the airport to promote Washington to visitors
- Add a page to the city website on “Moving to Washington”
- Support a young professionals group

3

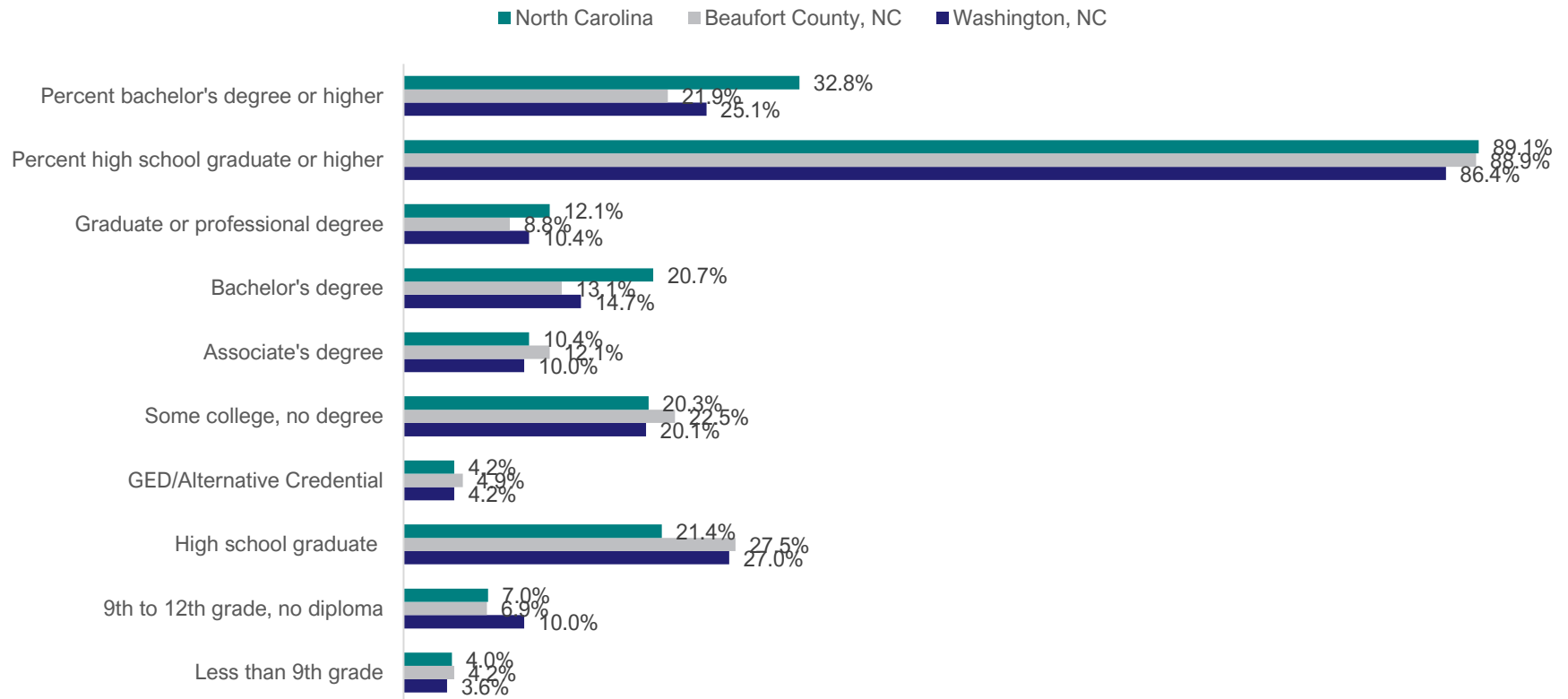
- Explore potential for entrepreneurial hub, co-working, or incubator
- Address transportation for visitors arriving by water
- Explore connectivity to other Beaufort County towns through trails, signage
- Consider annual events such as a “Welcome Home” celebration for newcomers
- Communicate with BCCC on in demand occupations
- Consider a youth leadership program
- Increase work-based learning opportunities at the city
- Review city policies to support residential development
- Communicate with regional residential developers about opportunities in Washington

Appendix A: Economic and Demographic Profile



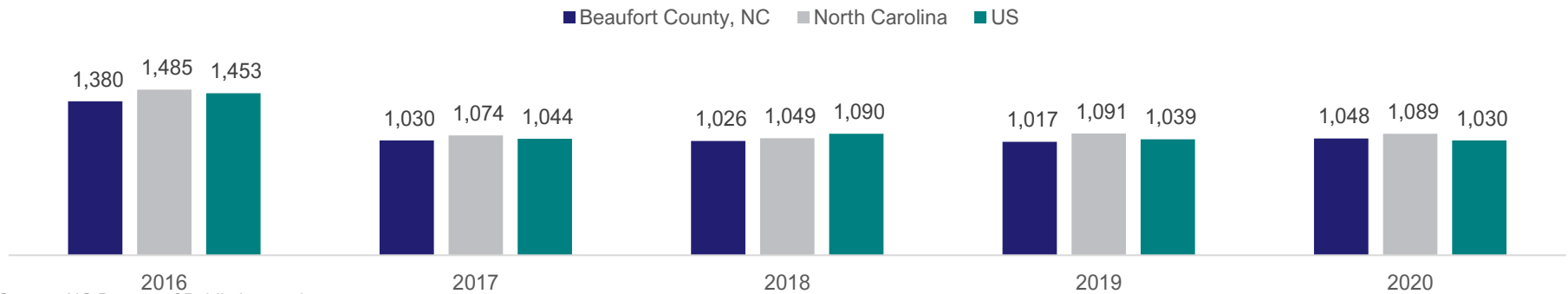


2021 Educational Attainment



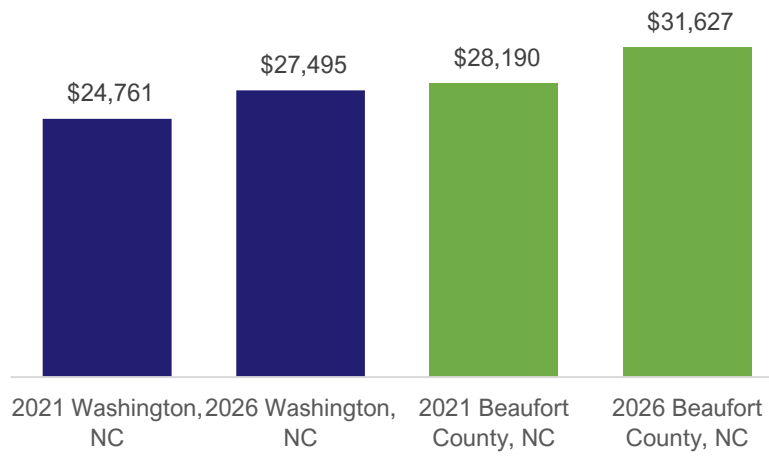
Source: ESRI

SAT Scores



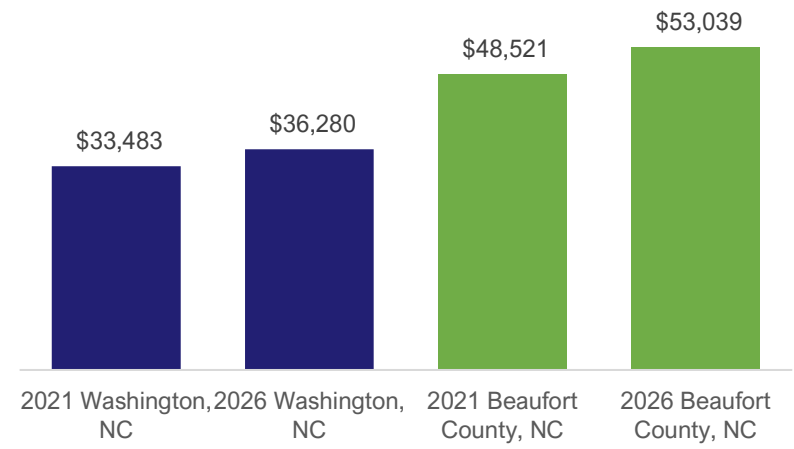
Source: NC Depart. of Public Instruction

Per Capita Income



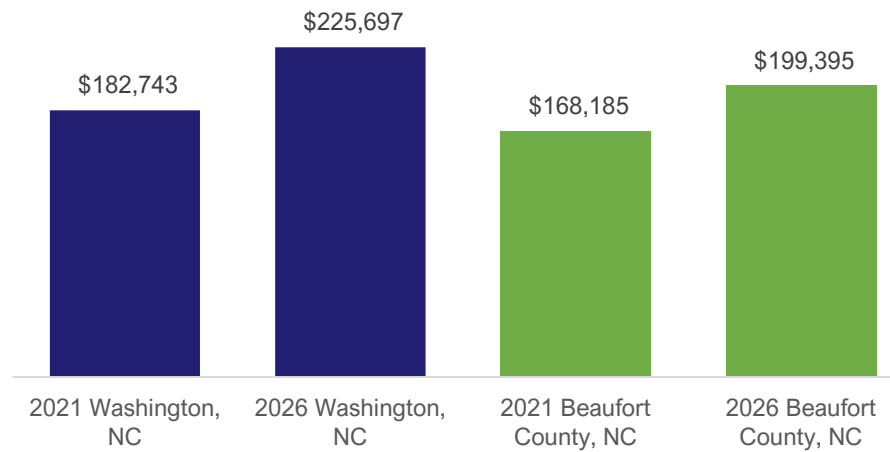
Source: ESRI

Median Household Income



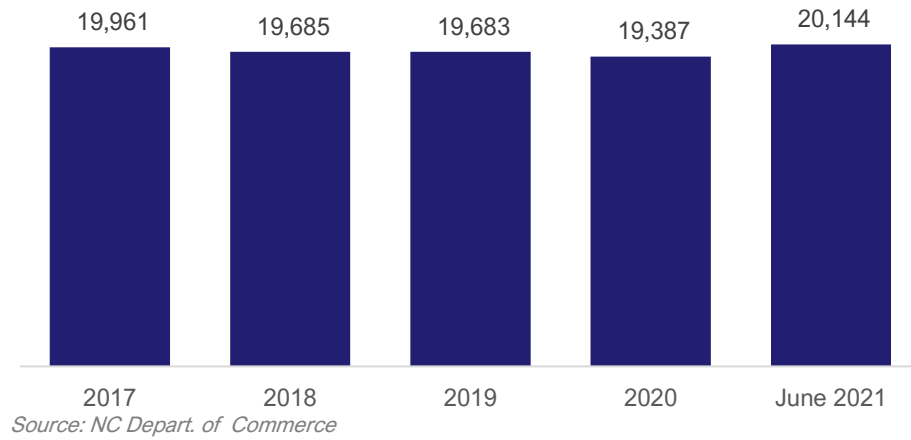
Source: ESRI

Median Home Value

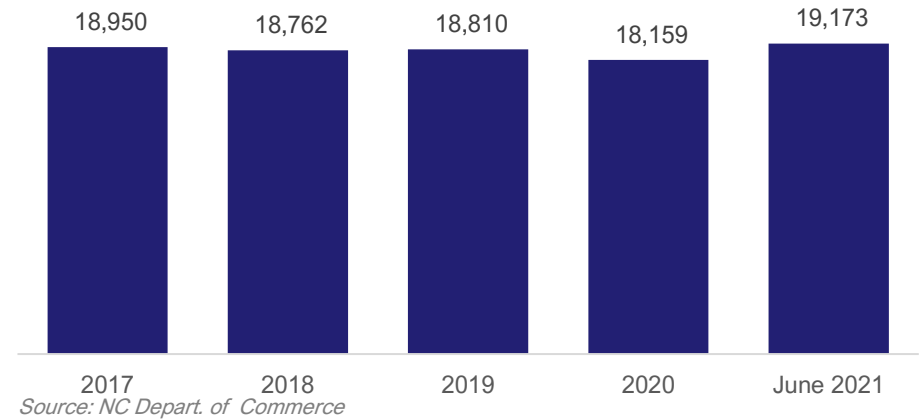


Source: ESRI

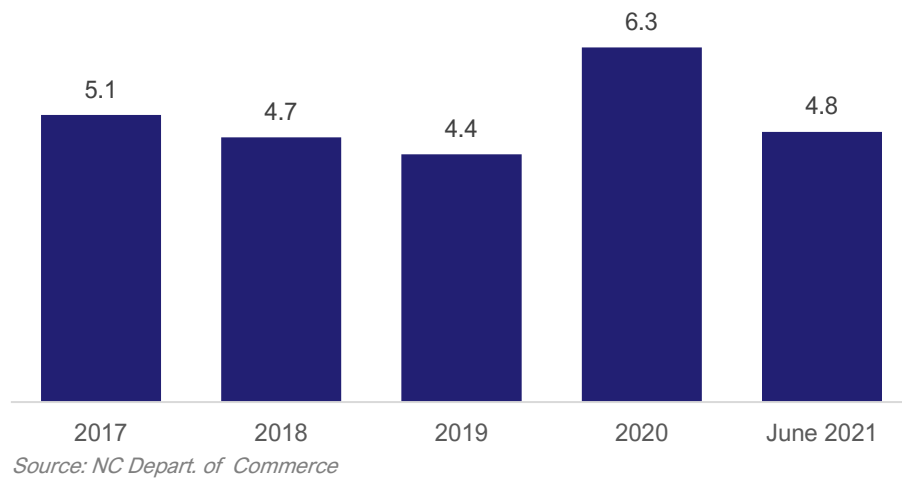
Labor Force Beaufort County, NC



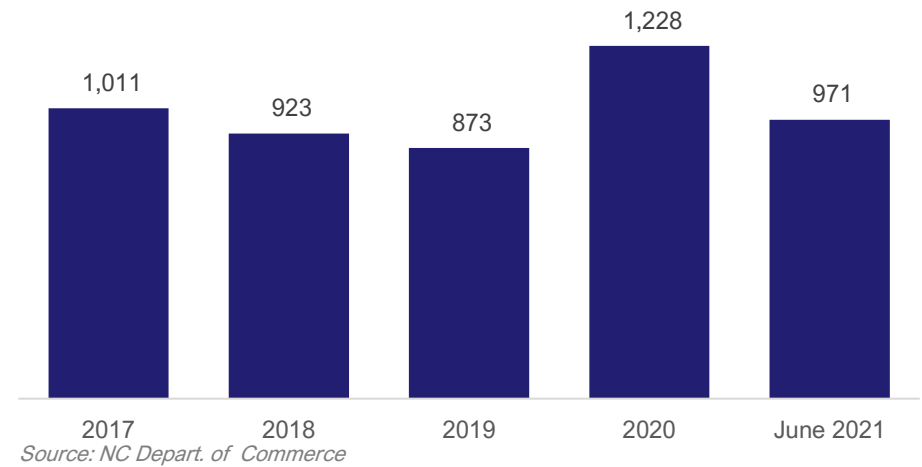
Employment Beaufort County, NC



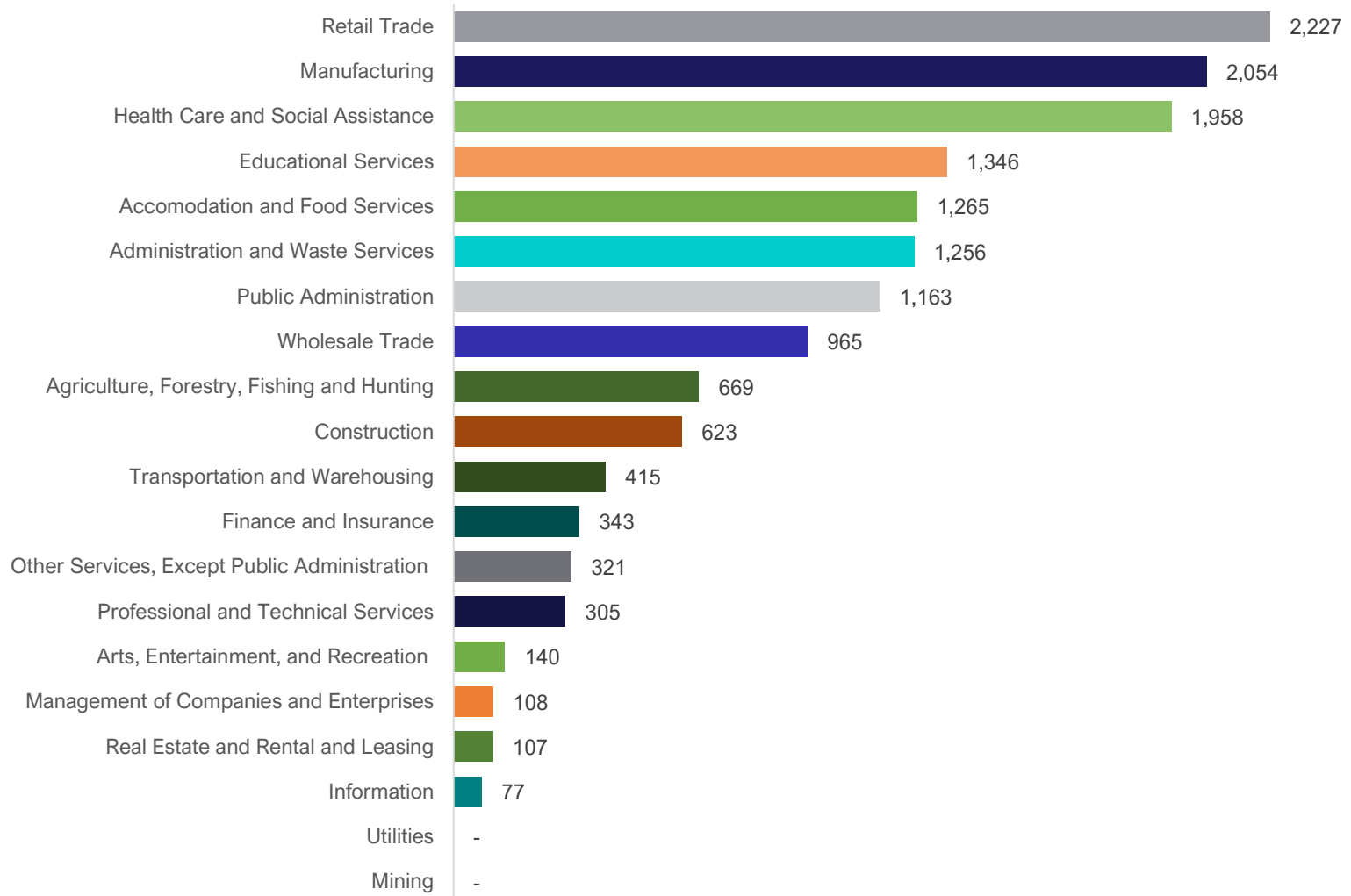
Unemployment Rate Beaufort County, NC



Number Unemployed Beaufort County, NC

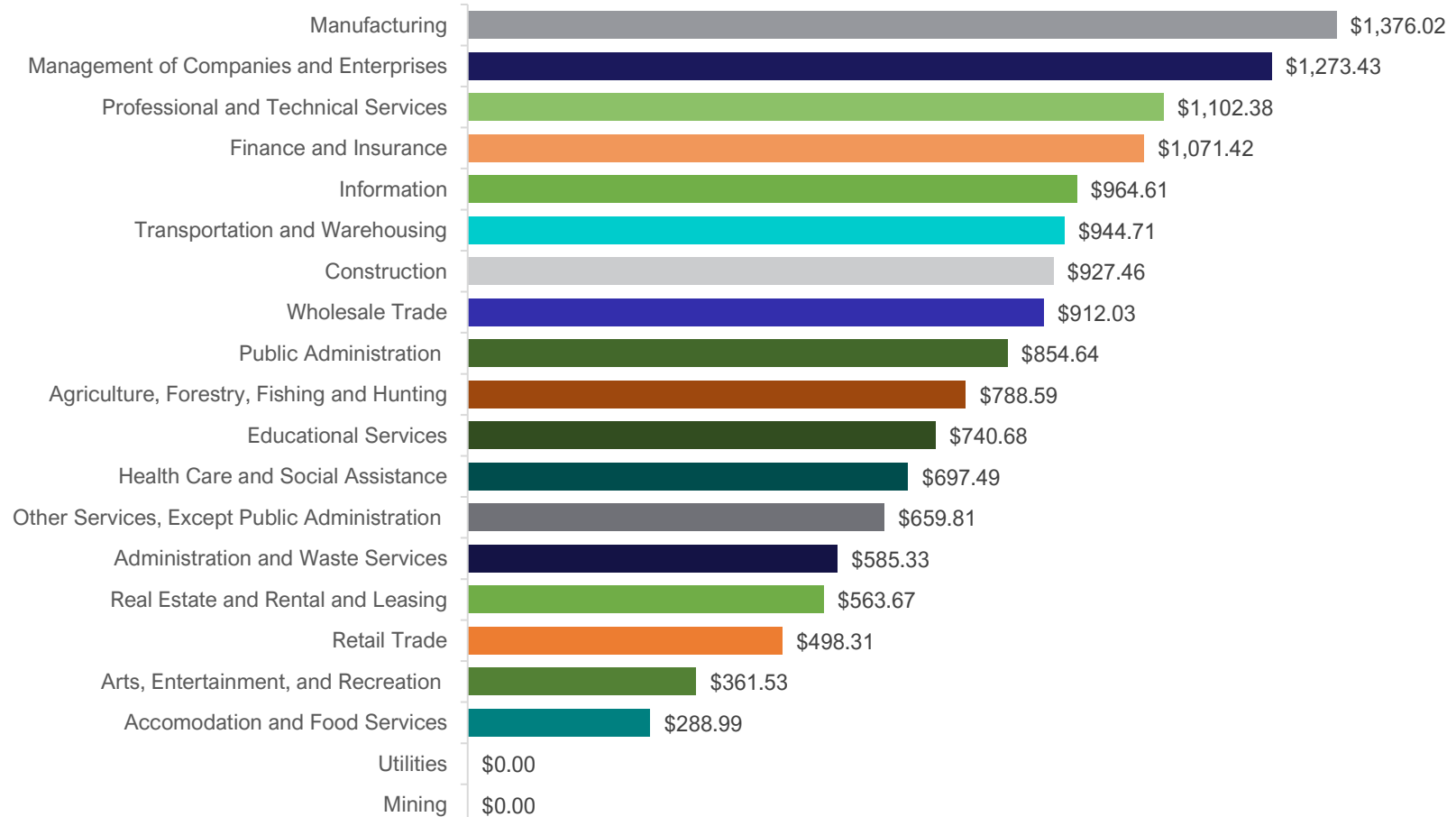


2020 Beaufort County Employment by Industry Sector



Source: NC Depart. of Commerce

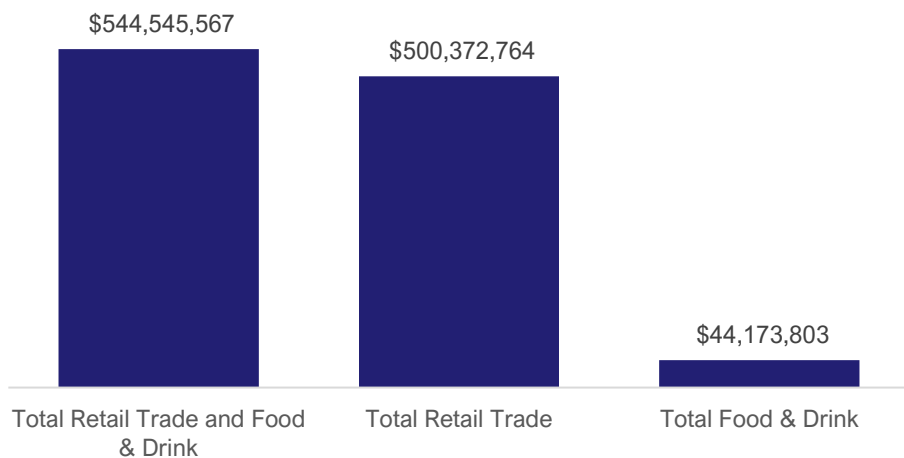
2020 Beaufort County Wages by Industry Sector



Source: NC Depart. of Commerce

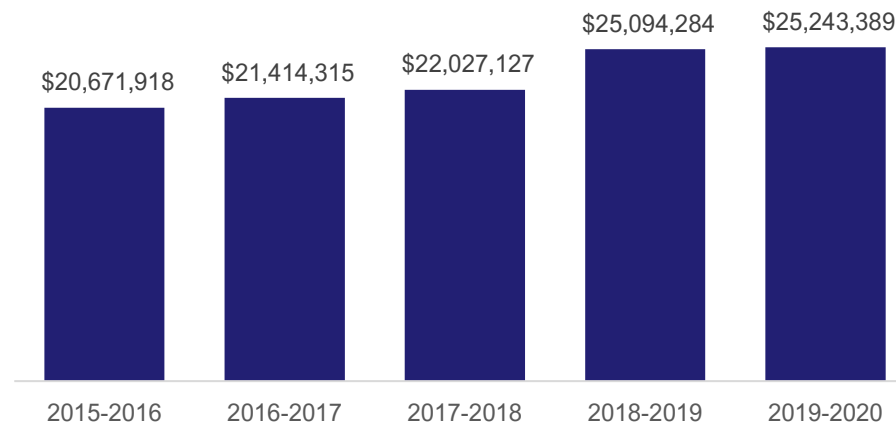
Beaufort County Major Employers			
Rank	Company Name	Industry	Employment Range
1	Beaufort County Schools	Educational Services	500-999
2	Nutrien	Manufacturing	500-999
3	Vidant Medical Center	Health Care and Social Assistance	500-999
4	County Of Beaufort	Public Administration	250-499
5	Innovative Employer Solutions Inc	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	250-499
6	Food Lion	Retail Trade	250-499
7	Wal-Mart Associates Inc.	Retail Trade	250-499
8	City Of Washington	Public Administration	250-499
9	Beaufort County Community College	Educational Services	250-499
10	Precoraire	Wholesale Trade	250-499
11	Rose Acre Farms	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	100-249
12	Iconic Marine Group LLC	Manufacturing	100-249
13	Austin Maintenance & Construction	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	100-249
14	Lowes Home Centers Inc	Retail Trade	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	Idx Impressions LLC	Manufacturing	100-249
18	Professional Staffing Solutions LLC	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	100-249
19	Hackney Kidron	Manufacturing	100-249
20	Home Life Care Inc	Health Care and Social Assistance	100-249
21	Pamlico Air	Wholesale Trade	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	Pas USA Inc	Manufacturing	50-99
25	U S Postal Service	Transportation and Warehousing	50-99

2017 Retail Sales Beaufort County



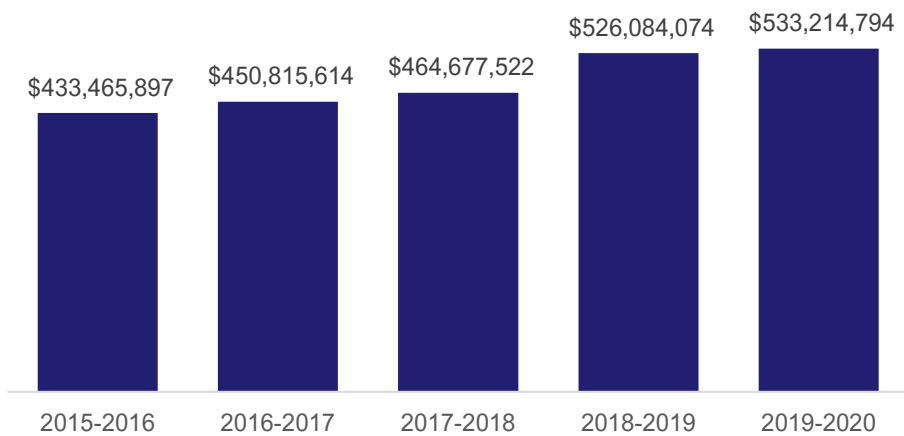
Source: NC Depart. of Revenue

Gross Collections Beaufort County, NC



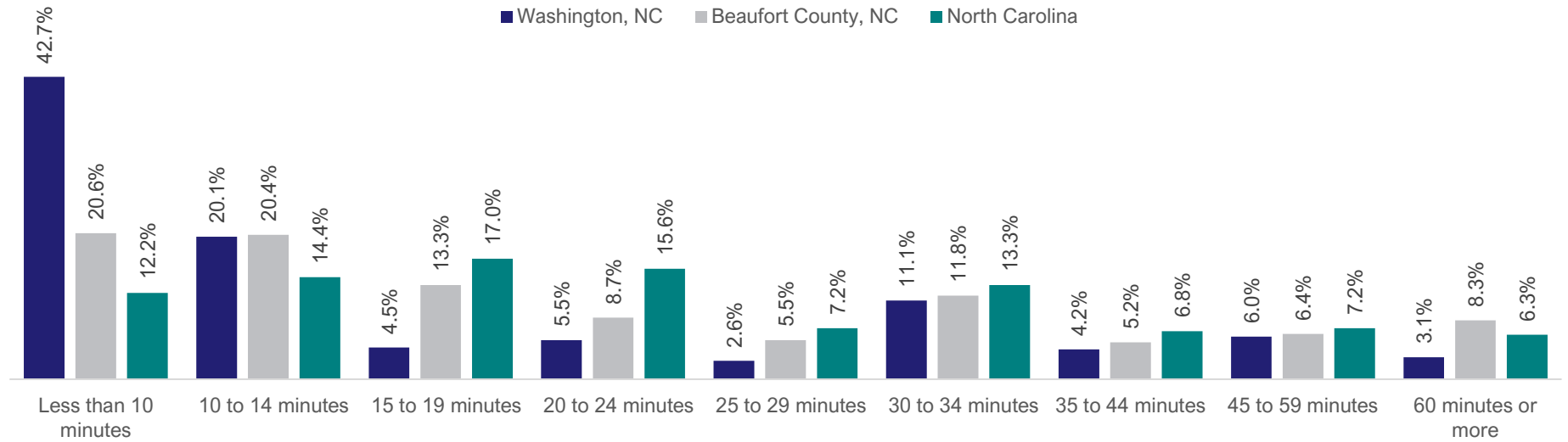
Source: NC Depart. of Revenue

Taxable Sales Beaufort County, NC



Source: NC Depart. of Revenue

2019 Average Commute Time

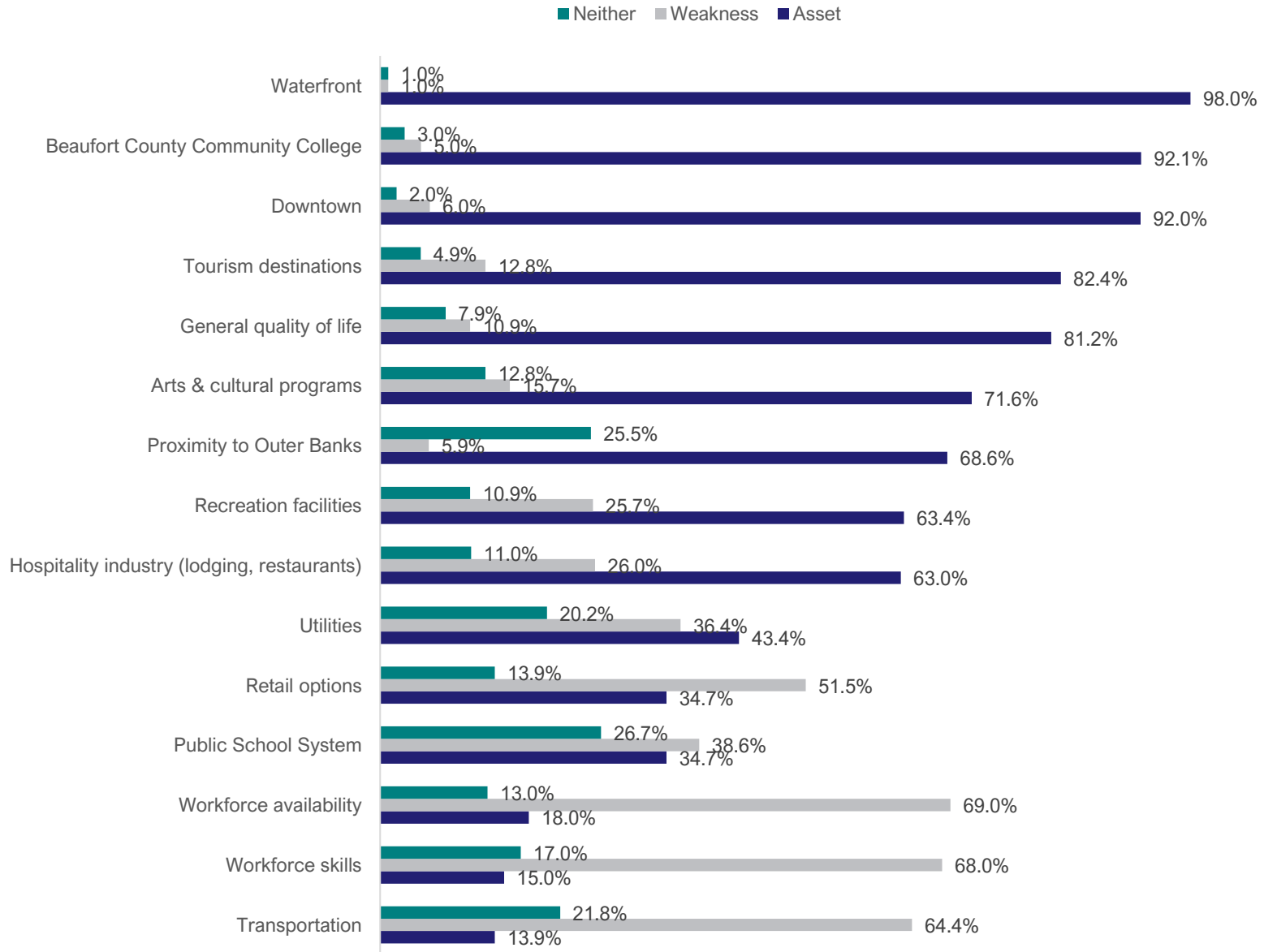


Source: US Census

Appendix B: Community Survey Results



Please rate the following items as either an asset supporting economic development or a weakness hindering economic growth or neither.



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

The river
Waterfront growth with regard to restaurants, but we need waterfront lodging.
Waterfront/downtown area
Local businesses downtown.
It's a great area for business that is not super over priced for downtown areas for renting/buying like other waterfront areas are
Space
River proximity to Greenville
Small town and great place to live
Downtown, waterfront, growing boating industry
Natural environment for retiring
The fact that people still want to open a business here, despite the pushback and severe expense that is dished out by this community.
The downtown waterfront and Main Street and associated arts and cultural activities and dining options.
Arts & Turnage theater
the revitalization of downtown
Community College
Natural resources
Positive attitude and energy towards growth and development.
Council and administrations willing to help new businesses.
Population
Washington's revitalized downtown, beautiful waterfront and quality neighborhoods throughout the city. The beauty of the natural areas here are a huge plus and need to be protected.
Waterfront, but you are using it for a road and parking lot. CLOSE THE ROAD AND USE THE LAND. It is the most valuable asset you have.
Pamlico River & water front facilities for boats
Location on the Pamlico rRver and the quality of life that enables.
Redevelopment of downtown
Investment in the historic downtown/water front
Downtown residential development.
Physical attractiveness - river, clean air
Training and educational opportunities close by with ECU and BCCC.
A healthy Pamlico River and surrounding ecosystem
Historic waterfront town.
Water base commerce, tourism, and investment
A new collaborative spirit that is now there
Proximity between Raleigh and Outer Banks

People. We've attracted residents from other places with more progressive ideals along with time and money to put into our local economy. This has helped build tourism and tax base as well as arts and culture.
Tourism
Low rates on utilities
Having the waterfront here is an asset to Washington. As a business owner, I hear a lot of my customers saying how the waterfront is so beautiful, but I don't hear much about the rest of Washington.
Family friendly waterfront/downtown area
Beautiful natural resources
Beaufort County Community College and, in particular, its Small Business Center
Downtown ambience, friendliness of people
River-focused community provides a work/life cultural story that could be very compelling.
Pamlico river, downtown, historic district, moss project
The downtown and waterfront is booming with new businesses and restaurants! It's awesome to watch! To enhance this atmosphere, more use of the Festival park would be great. Gathering there for concerts/events only promotes community which will continue to drive growth and well-being.
Availability of land to build retail/industry.
Downtown and the arts
A willing work force -- I hope

What is Washington's most significant challenge to economic growth?

Fear of change
Keeping good employees in restaurants!
People stuck in their old ways.
Supporting downtown growth and across the River development looking back to Washington
Workforce/ education
Availability for more than one internet provider. Being able to use someone other than suddenlink would be helpful. Additionally, being open more hours in the evenings and weekends so to have more customers come in.
Lack of vision, fear of change/development
Internet, resistance to change, catering to historic prominent families in area
Lack of skilled workforce
Traffic situation on 15th street
Cost and the fact that the city only focuses on 3 blocks of main street and seems to forget the rest of town.
A general resistance to change among political and civic leaders and a workforce too lacking in education and skill
Workforce and keeping young people from leaving
Stagnant population growth.
Electric costs

High paying jobs
General resistance to change
Providing affordable housing for residents on the lower economic level
Utilities and road network.
Small minded locals, parking, no diversity of retail shops (not necessarily downtown)
Lack of workers and affordable housing
Lack of parking - which will only get worse and become a major inhibitor unless something is done soon
Access to housing, daycare options, and organized recreational facilities.
Infrastructure Utilities and parking
Activity and resources for young professionals. Retainability of our younger population.
Parking, roads, transportation.
Lack of middle-class opportunity (too many jobs weighted either to entry level or upper management)
Availability of commercial space. Warehouses, offices and retail
Housing, lack of shopping for middle class, down town shops prices do not allow those who are lower income to afford shopping
Poor alignment with surrounding economic engines
Lack of transportation options and lack of reliable broadband
City inspections department
Historic commission regulations
Parking and public transportation
The mall needs more stores to shop in.
Labor force and job creation
Saving public access to water front to save "small town" feel and ability for all to enjoy
Parking here downtown is very limited. Some people don't come here when those sort of things are happening.
Cost of utilities services
Uneducated population
Location - northeastern North Carolina is a hard nut to crack in terms of economic development. It is too far from the Research Triangle to benefit from the extraordinary growth there and very isolated.
Further workforce development needed; not a significant commuting population nearby. Outside of retail/tourism, little is visible in terms of economic dev.
Retailers having to compete with amazon and big box stores. lack of lodging downtown or near downtown
Housing and infrastructure
Outdated restaurants and hotels - lack of big vision
Cleanliness at box stores Walmart for example and Workforce
Rehabilitating the empty buildings downtown. Also, the beautiful waterfront is taken up by a parking lot
Lack of reliable internet and younger professionals who live in town.
Lack of sidewalks/alternative transport to shops, locations
Many empty buildings in downtown and struggling businesses

What is Washington's most significant opportunity for economic growth?

Waterfront and events

More things that will pull people in

A variety of good retail stores downtown

Downtown/waterfront

Local businesses/unique shops

Development of both sides of river

Need variety of affordable places to eat and activities downtown

Tourism, hospitality

I think the area in/around the waterfront is the best place for economic growth and the city has done a great job investing in these areas and it continues to affect the areas past 5th street, I hope it continues up Market Street toward 12th

Housing development, becoming a vibrant suburban area

Promoting the town as a tourist destination

Industrial park

Attract outside investment, be open for innovation

Proximity to larger city without being in the larger city

Location

15th street corridor

Tourism and enhancing the same assets that attract tourists will also attract new business.

Arts

Continual development of downtown

Dining near downtown with more variety. A nice Irish pub would do well

Expanding downtown & water taxi

Location

Retirement housing and amenities

Beautiful downtown and waterfront access and welcoming atmosphere.

Boat Building

Supporting all of the neighborhoods in our city with better infrastructure such as sidewalks, bike lanes, safe, attractive and functional roadways. Protective zoning for the neighborhoods need to be adhered to.

Nature based assets.

Tourism as an industry

Upgrading houses located on main thoroughfares, especially on Market St.

Higher paying jobs so people don't have to travel to Greenville and beyond

Increasing safe parking in the downtown area especially at night.

The downtown renovations have been amazing, as well as the new businesses (restaurants, recreational rentals and "gift" shops)

Boating industry

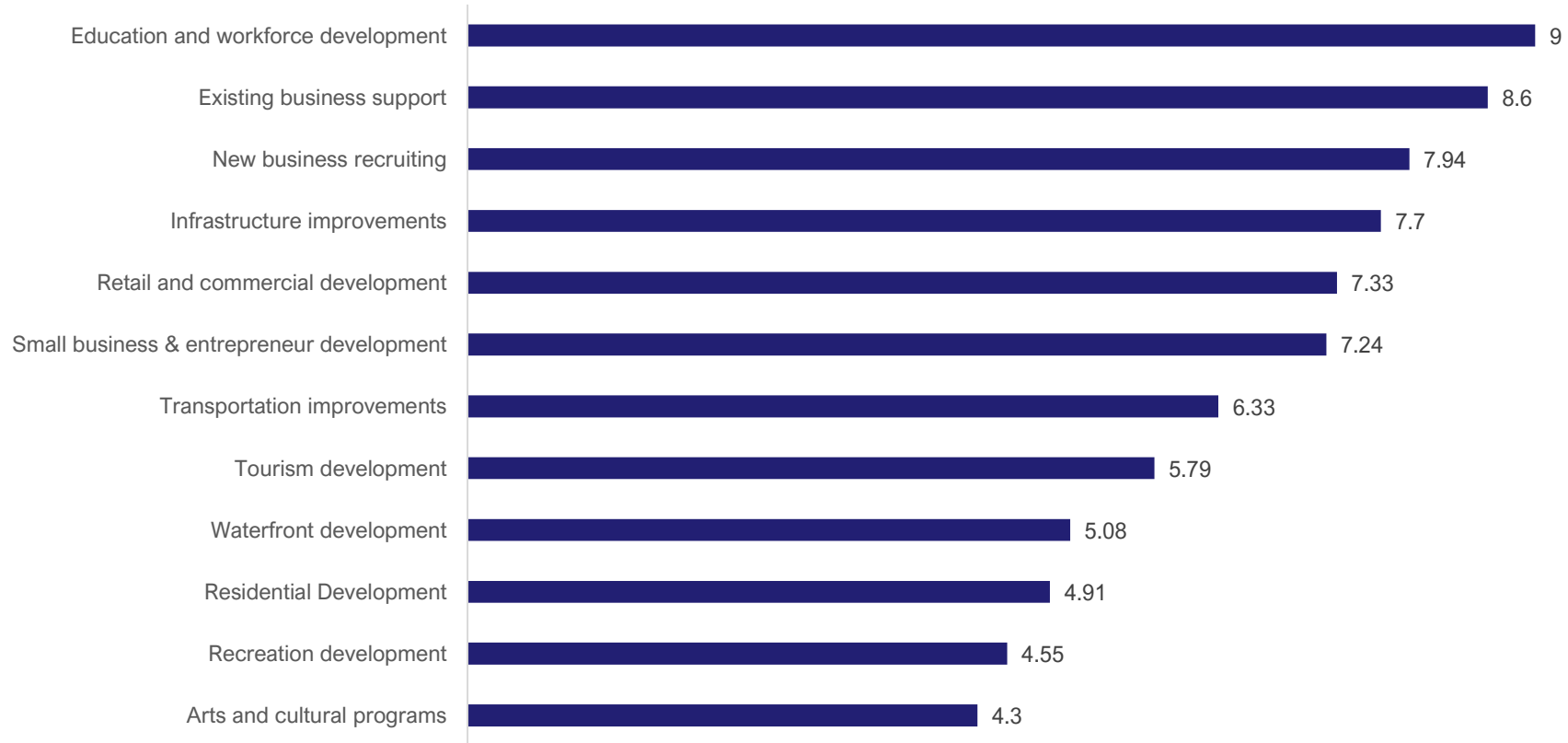
The continued redevelopment of the downtown area
Heritage tourism and eco-tourism
Waterfront development and accessibility.
Middle class jobs and housing
Food/drink/hospitality tourism
Attracting retirees by developing more housing stock and developing more opportunities for small business
Need a large retail option other than Walmart, new restaurants
Partner with Greenville...become the place to live and vacation for those living in Pitt County
The water
Coordination and alignment of efforts with increased collaboration. So many great things going on but little coordination so a lot of duplication of efforts
Airport
To eliminate boarded up buildings
New brewery
More affordable housing.
The waterfront
Eco-tourism
Bars/restaurants
Youth
Tourism
Beauty of the area
Possibly supporting small business incubation. A centralized "we work"-type setting might benefit our workforce
Grocery store competition/variety
Utilize BCCC to train workforce
Tourism seems to have been front and center and remains vital, but incubating small business and startups (light industry, digital, etc.)
Capitalizing on ecotourism, boating, fishing, more restaurants and unique shops, make use of Castle Island as a feature somehow.
Influx of new people
The waterfront and downtown - need to be accessible and affordable by the average person
Better paying jobs
Close proximity to Greenville
Residential housing for professionals and young families.
Capitalize on the 15th street corridor to provide businesses along 15th between Brown St. and Market St.
Continue to build on the momentum of the downtown growth and more outdoor events. Also introducing unique options for transportation like electronic scooters/Segways.
The arts
Downtown, waterfront, tourism, hospitality, arts and entertainment

What is the most critical threat to economic growth?

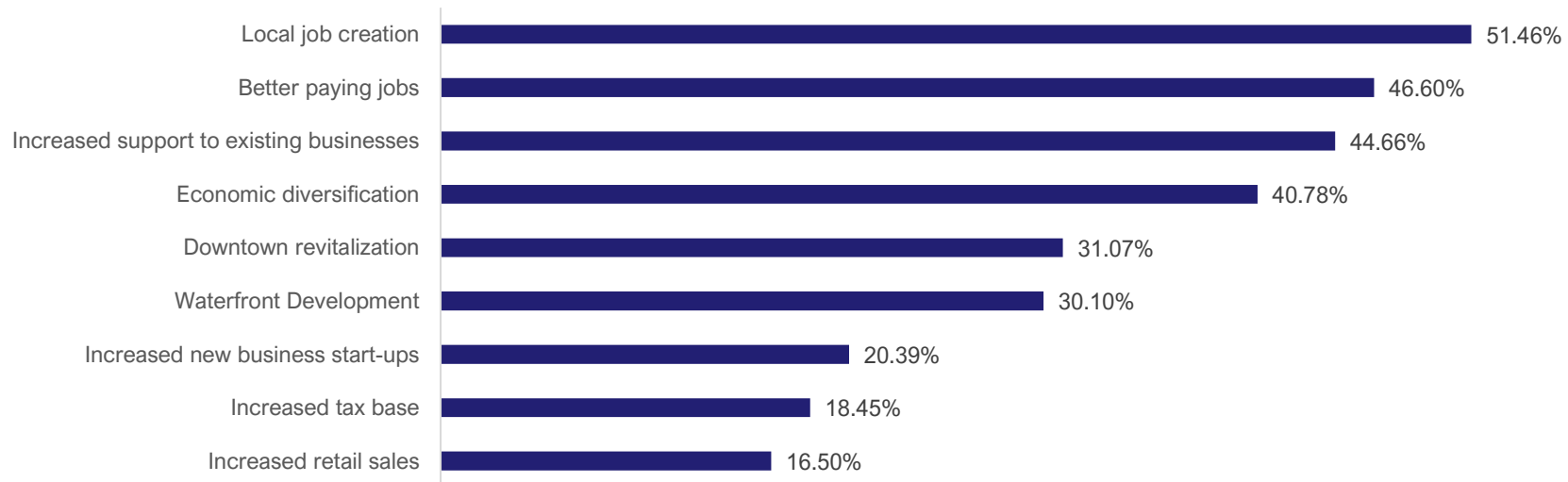
Litter problem and late night noise
Available investments. Availability to attract investment through incentives
Over tourism/over building- not enough workers and takes away from small town vibe.
Infrastructure, internet speeds/pricing
People not being open to other's ideas about what might work
Official who want the status quo
Lack of housing, continued antipathy to new housing
Lack of reliable businesses such as electricians, plumbers, etc. Lack of workforce for retail, lack of higher paying industry opportunities.
City officials not addressing anything outside of historic areas
A lack of visionary leadership among community leaders.
Workforce skills
Groups and certain influential people who try to restrict development or projects that they don't deem appropriate for Washington.
Stagnant population growth and small-town politics.
Lack of support to develop and maintain a workforce in all areas of economic development.
Population not growing
Again, poor planning and oversight of potential businesses.
Flooding and natural disasters
Lack of trained employees
Complacency
Rent has gone out of site and housing prices have gone up terrible
Being too "overpriced" for the local community to support businesses in off seasons of tourism.
Inability to accept change
Affordable housing
Moving too quickly to approve proposed projects without proper research into what these projects will cost the city before the city ever sees a dime of tax revenue
Lack of workforce - Community is geared toward the retirement community and not young couples with children.
Affordable rentals housing for Workforce
people not wanting to work for companies to support them in their growth
Downward trend of the Beaufort County population.
housing for low to middle class families that serve the community
Ignoring environmental health
Lack of foresight in realizing overdevelopment on the river could be a long-term drag on quality of life
Lack of shopping options
Significant portion of the Beaufort County population thinks growth is bad. These people are our greatest risk.
Not enough family restaurants

Both entitled workforce and commissioners lack of vision to support the up-and-coming business owners. Maintaining antiquated regulations that stifle ability to build businesses
Lack of transportation and broadband
Lack of parking & lack of public transportation to bring southside folks to the downtown area
The city of Washington and Beaufort Co. environmental health
Poor school system
No hotel located in the downtown area
Not enough diversity in shopping.
The Harbor Bridge dry stack project approved by the city council that will negatively impact the scenic view and quality of our river, as well as put water quality at risk, and create unsafe conditions for paddlers and kayakers.
Businesses closing early and opening late.
Foolish decisions based on short term goals
Catered towards 40+ demographic
Leaders who see any economic growth as good instead of planned growth which would grow quality as well as quantity
Available workforce 1st - community college is excellent but limited in what it does. Digital infrastructure (NC internet provider laws throttling innovation/competition)
The City inspectors office could be more efficient and accommodating to new businesses and restaurants.
People feel it's hopeless. Resistance to change for the good of the community, not the few who have power and money
Loss of the small town charm
Another recession
Lack of reliable internet connectivity.
Our market/demographic is somewhat fragile. There needs to continue to be a good balance of having restaurants and stores that will serve lower, middle and upper class demographics. Beaufort country people can be fickle, temperamental and obstructive if that balance isn't maintained.
Lack of good public schools, retail, transportation and planned development to attract younger families willing to relocate here to work. Just compare what this town looks like and offers to other NC/SC towns. Money is not allocated to anything but downtown.
Infrastructure, lack of parking downtown, lack of support for tourism and hospitality industries
The young leaving

Rank order the following economic development strategies in order of importance



What should be the top three goals of Washington's economic development strategic plan?



What is a model city for Washington- a place Washington can imitate?

Washington, NC, is the best

Charleston

Greenville SC

Why imitate? We are very ORIGINAL!

New Bern

There is none, let Washington define itself

Holly Springs, NC

New Bern, Wilson, Kinston, Edenton

New Bern, NC, or Lancaster, PA

Duck, NC

Wake Forest

Asheville NC

Keep Washington unique

Not one. Washington needs to focus on its own strengths/weaknesses.

I think we are doing a good job. We need to keep up the good work.

Bend, Oregon

Morehead

New Bern,-at least the downtown area. Our waterfront is better though.

Why imitate one town? There are things to be learned from many.

Beaufort, SC - It has kept it's small-town charm appealing to residents and tourists alike.

Prefer us to set an example as a sustainable community

New Bern, NC, Truckee, CA, Beaufort, NC

Beaufort, NC- they gave their water front to business and it bloomed

Raleigh

Edenton

None, be our own small town don't copy anybody

Morehead or Beaufort, NC

I think Washington is spectacularly incomparable. The imitated not the imitator.

A city NOT to emulate - Beaufort, NC - example of poor planning - lots of tourism but no parking and crowds take away from charm!!

Navassa, Beaufort, SC

Annapolis, MD

Swansboro, New Bern

Washington is unique destination and rather than focus on a model city it should be a model city for other municipalities.

Cary, NC

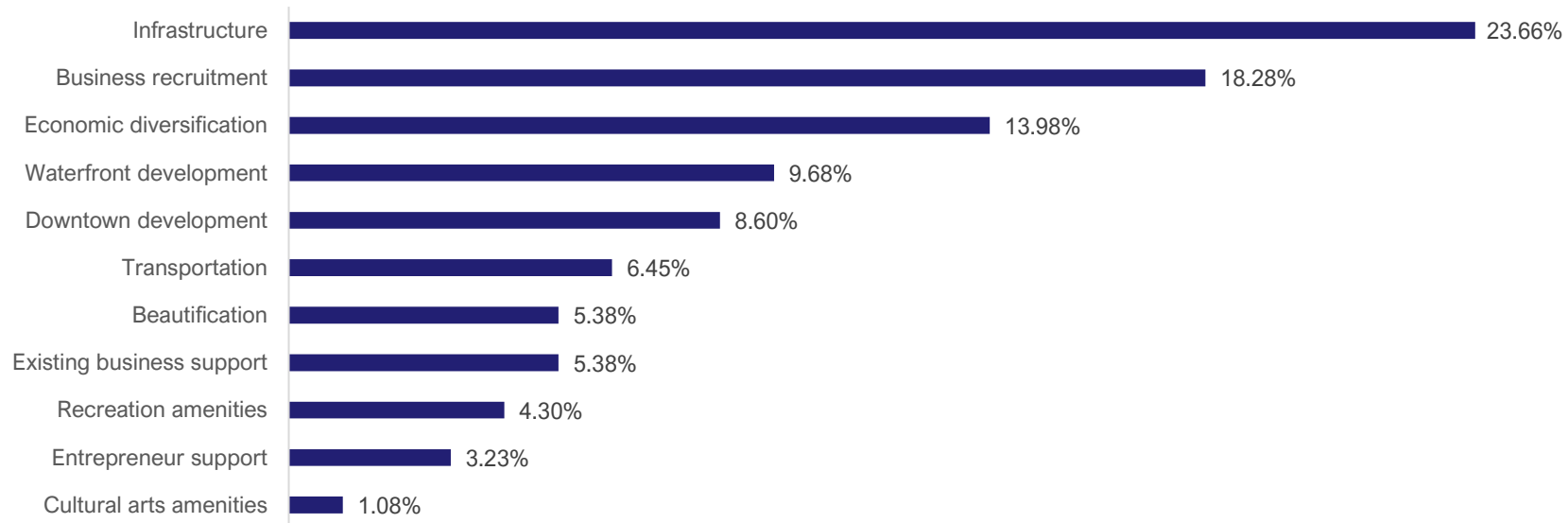
Durham

What is one thing that Washington does better than other towns?

Big smiles and friendly people
Very welcoming and friendly
Be ourselves!
Quaint waterfront
Keeping the small town feel
Assimilates people
Beautiful waterfront development on Stewart parkway
Small/Quaint town feel - leaving natural environment in place
Friendly people
The ability to walk into a govt office and speak to a real person
Markets the quaintness of our small town
It's tourism director and staff does a great job of promoting the city on-line and through earned media
Welcoming Waterfront
public access to the waterfront
Welcomes new businesses.
Resident support for local businesses.
The welcoming smile on the people face
Make things happen
Use of downtown waterfront
welcome to new residents
Manages it financial spending
Friendliness of people/ Welcoming atmosphere
Welcoming
Communicate
I love the quaintness and the willingness of it's people to help one another.
Tourists, especially day trippers
Developing Downtown
We're a welcoming small town - to all, not just tourists. Many residents of other towns, like New Bern and Beaufort, now come here to eat, shop and spend the day or night because they feel their towns now cater primarily to tourists.
Downtown revitalization
Promotes itself
Less expensive than other water front communities
Waterfront accessibility
Downtown and waterfront is better than many towns the same size
Friendliness

Provide access to waterfront in the downtown setting
Downtown update was much needed and has increased flow to Downtown merchants
Has a great leader in the chamber of commerce many good folks who now will speak out- a rising tide floats all ships
Great tourism, gorgeous waterfront
Festivals
Our downtown development
Stay quiet
People are friendly
Maintains small community feel
Share the joy of living here with others.
Developing downtown businesses close to the waterfront
Remembering it's history
Small business - esp restaurants
Friendly. Harbor District is outstanding
Friendliness/welcoming
Acceptance of outsiders
Stays Small
Downtown infrastructure
Hospitality—Washington is a friendly place saturated with people who like to happily enjoy life.
Our new downtown is awesome. Our waterfront and water related activity options are also awesome. Both are bringing people to visit from around the world.
Attract retirees.
The people

What is the most important investment Washington could make to ensure long-term, sustainable economic growth?



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

A cleaner waterfront and downtown we need a Monday am clean up, crew to remove litter from weekend debris
More diversity of eating places and shopping places, plus combining them at the waterfront to the hospital side of town with sidewalks
Not to grow the town more to accommodate more tourists- but support what is here so they can grow and support the community and the tourists.
Revitalize Market Street since main is completed
Better communication within the city, and county
A focus on increasing business support for the downtown area. This will continue to improve around the area of downtown and spread to the rest of the city.
Something that addresses the actual needs Washington has as opposed to theoretical open space bike path nonsense,
New retail businesses, new industrial growth, infrastructure to support.
Infrastructure fixed in outlying city neighborhoods for those of us who pay city taxes and don't have things such as curb and gutter and sidewalks. Recreation facilities to retain families.
A model town that is best in NC.
Investment in the whole city and not just the waterfront/downtown
For Washington to live up to its potential.
Investment in growing the arts as part of economic development
Continued revitalization of the downtown, commitment to affordable and abundant workforce housing
Continued development and better coordination with community college
A well-laid out long-term economic plan.
Get the citizen chance to participate of how the city's growth should be so we can keep Washington's charm with the growth
A commitment to truly open government and engaged communication with our citizens. Lots of talented people here would be willing to help but don't feel consulted.
Create 9 to 10 new perpendicular boat slips capable of handling up to 50ft vessels in the area of the Chamber of Commerce freeing up the end of the existing piers for transient vessels & day visitors to downtown.
Join with the County and build a parking deck in front of the Courthouse.
Companies that build something rather than being a service
Strategy to grow new businesses and expand existing ones.
A sustainable economic base able to resist downturns by Redirection towards tourism as an industry
Continued increase to encourage new businesses and supporting existing businesses & training for new employees for downtown businesses.
Focused strategy to continue growth.
Higher paying jobs, affordable housing
Sustainability of local businesses and increased work ethic and skill set for the workforce.
Improved roads, high speed Internet, professional job opportunities offering good salaries to attract/retain younger people, better grocery stores.

A well thought out, long-term plan. Support existing businesses and provide more parking, which has long been a goal, but has not happened and better infrastructure, residents and tourists will come, shop, eat, play... and everything else will follow.
Affordable public transportation to assist the most impoverished an ability to get to work.
Free broadband city wide
We need a parking deck downtown
Something that takes housing decisions and puts them on paper to the city to quit acting arrogantly and capriciously with landowners
Measurable and sustainable goals that would increase opportunities for local residents and tourism in a balanced manner.
Bigger, better organized and advertised monthly events, May through October. More current popular music events, indoors (Turnage) and in festival park.
That City officials and the populace realize that you cannot sustain a healthy economy without a healthy environment!!
People recognizing that business development needs to be about more than business.
A clear path forward that is FOLLOWED by City staff and elected officials.
A pro-business and pro-development mindset and approach.
Focus on building internally, to have a strong foundation for new incoming business.
Something helpful for all residents, not just wealthy ones. People need sustainable wages, affordable housing and health care, transportation options, access to reliable broadband, etc. In order to be successful. This should be the focus instead of new developments or incentives to big business
It is about time someone develops a public transportation plan!!
A plan which will not be placed on a shelf and not used
Revitalize outer areas of Washington (Belk area) and connect these areas to downtown via better transportation for visitors.
I would like to see a booming tourist attraction such as Tryon palace or a stadium of sorts or an outdoor facility
Transparency on the part of our elected officials. More input from the public, as in public meetings regarding large project.
I would like to see more people visiting Washington, and not just for festivals.
a thriving waterfront community
Make Washington more of a destination rather than a nice spot to stop while passing through.
Laying the foundation so when development occurs it can occur quickly and according to plan.
I'd like to see the electricity go out less often and a more reliable Internet service.
Controlled growth
A more robust economy with better-paying jobs for people who live here.
A safe place for our young people to congregate and fellowship that is affordable to them.
A multi-pronged approach with lots of feedback and input from citizens throughout the process - transparency!!!
A clear view that remains focused on quality of life and the river/recreation culture while strengthening economic diversification & driving tax base to improve all of the city, not just the harbor district.
All the downtown buildings full with a waiting list.
Our waterfront and downtown are refreshed. It is time to move outward to the rest of the city
Stronger business community
New chain restaurants and hotels and stores to draw people to come and stay here and not have to drive to Greenville for every little thing.

Better restaurants with increased local support (we don't need more of the same
Tourism increased, more recreational options for residents, a nice looking and robust downtown
Clean up abandoned homes
Focus on innovation in leveraging the natural resources and geography within economic development plans. Build a community filled with resources and services that will attract residents and visitors.
Increased transportation (bike/walk) options
Scooter share program, more concerts/events downtown and waterfront, TEAR DOWN HOTEL LOUISE(it's a lost cause and it stinks)!!, more affordable boutique hotels/air B&Bs, city should purchase some of the run down old homes on Main and 2nd streets, restore them and turn them into profitable hotels/air B&Bs, ANNUAL 4th of July celebration/parade, parking deck, retail stores open in the evenings on the weekends, music in the streets or monthly event similar to that, a unique trolley-type historical tour, advertise the Turnage more so professional theater companies will come simulate to DPAC
Younger families investing an interest in living here and progression, planning, conservation, and beautification.
Prosperous town with the charm of a small town.
Infrastructure improvements

Please make any additional comments here.

Waterfront and downtown has a big litter problem. Also we spent millions on new green space and no one to maintain and replace the gardens
When towns get so full of visitors, it's no longer a quality destination. No one wants to fight crowds- especially here where most come to relax and enjoy the peaceful waterfront.
Bring lighting and on Market Street from Main to Second street
Too many projects started seem to stall and get abandoned in the remodel stage. Internet is the main utility that is very weak. Walmart and Lowe's are the only options for many many things. Some competitive retail variety is sorely needed. Even a large hardware store would be very desirable to provide some alternative.
Please use our city taxes to add sidewalks, curb and gutter to Northgate. We are a forgotten city area that desperately needs curb and gutter to get this water out of our ditches and front yards. Digging them deeper haphazardly created more problems. We need sidewalks before we have kids and families run over.
The new marina development will ruin our town. Would not like another Moss Landing type development here.
The street scape is beautiful but it's a shame no thought was given to upkeep. That private citizens are paying for upkeep of planters that streets and alleys are messy, actually not enough trash cans. To me those are simple fixes
There's no point in recruiting business if the pay isn't high enough to buy the things that this town wants to be so famous for. This town has to be about more than 3 blocks of main street.
The city council needs to be less restrictive in choosing winners and losers by not allowing certain development, when it complies with all regulations and codes.

Too much small town politics for real improvements to be made.
I love Washington NC and i would love to see it progress always
Washington is a wonderful place to live, learn, and enjoy. Keep up the good work and support economic development for all of our citizens.
Infrastructure or Transportation Improvements: Parking Deck in front of the courthouse.
Review the 2009 Renaissance Plan and make sure we are not overlooking that important document for downtown.
The City has done an excellent job in controlling spending by their policy of not borrowing money
Work in partnership with ECU. We have a great resource that we are not using to its full potential
We need better downtown hotels visitors center. Museum. Access to the water.
Building houses worth 600000.00 will make taxes go up for everyone and only people from up Both can afford them, they retire with above average retirement and move here in hopes of living cheaper, but it doesn't work like that!
Overall quality of life for our residents, not attracting tourists, should be our first consideration. Our location is prime and visitors will continue to come if we constantly strive to maintain and improve. Word of mouth and good reviews when they go home will bring more tourists. On that note, we need more trash bins downtown and on the waterfront.
Focus on growing the young professional community who will raise children here. Make it attractive for them by providing day cares and activities for youth and adults. Keeping retail shops open after 5:00.
Downtown parking and get SOT to redo sidewalks and bike paths from Market down to city Center . Those sidewalks are unsafe and an eyesore
Need to revamp historic district process.
The fact that this survey does not include environmental health questions is short-sighted for Washington's future.
This survey lacks attention to several important components of business development. In addition to ones mentioned, recruiting younger people working remotely could be a meaningful economic asset.
The mindset needs to change at City Hall to a more open minded, progressive look towards the future. We need to increase our population so small businesses have the demand needed of their services in order to thrive.
Need more clean hotel options
Washington needs to pack as many "things" as it can into the downtown business area. It is unique. Not many places have a downtown area on the water. We need more restaurants, places to stay, retail businesses, water access points, ways to enjoy the water, etc. There are hundreds of dying small towns across the nation. We are fortunate to have a lifeline in our river. We need to use it.
There is simply too much concrete on Stewart Parkway, Businesses need to be on the water front. It will inspire and bloom business on Main Street. Washington in 1880 to1930 had economic power on water front and businesses on Main Street supporting that influence. Beaufort NC is the best example
Visitors who arrive by boat cannot easily access anything past downtown. Hard for visitors to shop for basics.
The elected officials need to work harder to be open and effective. If city government works against the will of the citizens, that makes no sense and does not contribute to a healthy community.
The river is our best asset. Don't screw it up. Right now the only public access for family enjoyment is Havens Gardens. Festival Park, the Stewart Pkwy are lovely but regulated.
This town is 95% awesome! Everything else we do is just tweaking that last 5%. It's all good!

Private/public partnerships (workforce development, business incubators, etc.) should be part of the plan. Our tax base is too small to be fully funded publicly, seems to me.

For Washington to be a destination town for tourists, I believe that it's important for the streets and new sidewalks downtown to be kept clean and manicured. Every day- not just before festivals.

Leadership needs to improve communication with our citizens, putting personal agendas and politics aside. While very important to us, we are more than our beautiful downtown, waterfront and historic district.

Downtown has been developed enough. It's just not feasible to shop there - the prices are too high and it's only for tourism. That doesn't serve our city well. We need some community pride and hope for the future. Decent internet. Appeal to a broad range of educated people.

The city of Washington needs to take a harder stance against the slack governance of the County government. The County government does not offer any recreational services nor infrastructure and the residents of Washington are forced to finance the maintenance and development of all facilities without any contribution from the County. Our schools are grossly underfunded and under performing. Most of the economic development within the County is held within the City, exception of the Nutrient plant in Aurora. There is a reluctance to increase taxes but the reality is you get what you pay for so if we as citizens want to have premier facilities and Municipal services we must have council members who are willing (upon staff member recommendations) to increase property taxes.

I've recently heard we currently do not have a City events planner. If this is true, that's not good.

I want Washington to be the arts capital of the Carolinas. And has the most sought after downtown in East Carolina

Adorable housing for senior citizens

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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