

SPRING 2025

DEVELOPMENTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEWS FROM NC PUBLIC POWER

Life Sciences Sector Blooming in North Carolina



In June 2024, Eli Lilly hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony and tour of its drug manufacturing facility in Concord, North Carolina. (Courtesy of The Charlotte Observer)

North Carolina's life sciences industry is thriving. The state's fertile business environment has helped cultivate recent investments from companies such as Johnson & Johnson in Wilson, Novo Nordisk in Clayton, and Eli Lilly in Concord.

According to TEconomy Partners' ["2024 Evidence & Opportunity" report](#), the number of life sciences jobs in North Carolina surged by 23% from 2019 to 2023, outpacing the national growth rate by eight points. During that same period, the number of life sciences business establishments increased by 43%.

To the team at the [North Carolina Biotechnology Center \(NCBiotech\)](#), that growth is all part of the plan, with seeds planted years ago and cultivation continuing. NCBiotech drives life sciences economic development by providing grants for university researchers, loans for emerging companies, and support for workforce development initiatives.

Laura Rowley, NCBiotech's Vice President of Life Sciences Economic Development,

attributes much of the growth to the state's ready workforce, with many companies citing it as a reason for choosing North Carolina. She credits "the longer-term strategy that we've had as a state around our training infrastructure," including significant contributions from partnerships like [NCBioImpact](#).

Starting in 2002 with funds from the nonprofit [Golden LEAF Foundation](#), NCBioImpact training programs include [BTEC](#) at NC State University, [BRITE](#) at NC Central University, the NC Community College System's [BioNetwork](#), and the [PSN](#) at East Carolina University and Pitt Community College.

Golden LEAF's President and CEO, Scott Hamilton, also points to those foundational investments. "The recent biotech and biopharma announcements in North Carolina are a result of the strategic investments that Golden LEAF put into biotech workforce and talent development systems years ago."

A NOTE from Carl

Over the years at ElectriCities, it has become my custom when meeting with prospects to refrain from detailed conversations about public power to stay out of long explanations about the electric industry. There is, however, much to be proud of regarding public power in North Carolina. Government data shows that public power communities have fewer disruptions for shorter periods than our competitors do, while maintaining affordable rates—especially for industrial customers. Should a customer ever experience a disruption, the call for service is placed to friends and neighbors at City or Town Hall, instead of to a distant call center. If you are currently a public power customer, thank you. And if you're not yet a customer, we hope you will give us a try.



Carl Rees, CECD
Manager, Economic and Community Development

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OUR MEMBERS



Golden LEAF prioritizes workforce training initiatives. “Most recently, the Golden LEAF Board of Directors awarded funding to Wilson Community College for a biologics training center in response to Johnson & Johnson locating in Wilson,” Hamilton said.

NCBiotech’s Military Outreach and Veterans Engagement (MOVE) program helps transitioning service members gain foundational knowledge and hands-on experience in biomanufacturing. Rowley said it’s creating tangible pathways between the state’s military community and its life sciences employers.

NCBiotech also coordinates the North Carolina Life Sciences Apprenticeship

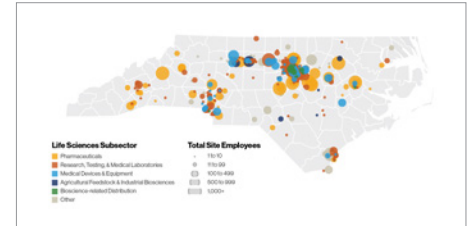
Consortium, which aims to lower barriers for life sciences employers to use apprenticeships as part of their employment strategy.

“A lot of NCBiotech’s work focuses on making connections across and between members of our community,” Rowley said.

NCBiotech’s statewide visibility and collaboration were crucial when Eli Lilly was considering Concord for its second North Carolina manufacturing site. Rowley and her team facilitated connections to support Rowan-Cabarrus Community College as it established the BioWork certificate program critical to meeting Eli Lilly’s needs.

Another crucial piece for Eli Lilly was having reliable electricity at the ready. No problem for Concord, which owns and operates its electric system.

“As a public power community, we were able to respond quickly to Lilly’s unique needs, building a substation and the system redundancy necessary to provide critical, uninterrupted power for their pharmaceutical manufacturing,” said Concord’s City Manager, Lloyd Payne. “Lilly’s \$2 billion investment in Concord is transformative for our local economy by creating 600 jobs and establishing



North Carolina’s life sciences industry spans the state. This image from “2024 Evidence & Opportunity” by TEconomy Partners shows North Carolina’s life sciences company locations by industry subsector and employment level in 2024. Click the map to see a larger version.

our region as a new destination for biotechnology.”

Looking at growth in 2024, Rowley said, “Leading life sciences companies know what North Carolina has to offer, and they’re deciding that this is the best place for them to make significant investments.”

That growth also shows that this is an industry that goes far beyond the Research Triangle. It’s statewide.

With North Carolina’s continuing emphasis on workforce readiness and a competitive business environment, this recent crop of life sciences investments won’t be the last to bloom in the Tar Heel State. ♦

NEW!



For more on how the Golden LEAF Foundation supports economic growth in North Carolina, listen to our podcast featuring CEO Scott Hamilton.



The ElectriCities Economic Development Podcast with Business Facilities Magazine

SOCIAL MEDIA Highlights

Follow our social media channels to keep up with all the ways ElectriCities’ Economic Development team promotes our member communities and the value of public power across the state and the country and around the world.

STAY CONNECTED

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-  @ElectriCitiesNC
-  company/electricitiesnc
-  @ElectriCitiesNC



The collage features four social media posts. The top post shows a group of people standing in front of American and German flags, with a caption: "ElectriCities members meet with GACC South reps in Atlanta." The bottom-left post shows a group of women at a networking event, with a caption: "ElectriCities hosts a networking event for women in public power." The bottom-right post shows a group of people in front of a backdrop that reads "PRODUCTION & PROCESSING EQUIPMENT INTERNATIONAL", with a caption: "ElectriCities members meet with GACC South reps in Atlanta." The bottom-center post shows a group of people in a meeting, with a caption: "ElectriCities hosts a networking event for women in public power."

GOOD TO KNOW

Susan Squires

Director, Beaufort County Economic Development

My favorite movies are:

"Gosford Park" and "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy."

The three things I can't live without are:

My family, cheese, and a first-rate whodunit.

When I welcome a visitor to Washington or Belhaven, I always take them to: The waterfront. It's breathtaking every time and keeps them coming back!

The most memorable place I've visited is:

East Berlin, before the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Finish the sentence:

North Carolina is ... the best of who we are. From compassionate neighbors to its bold business community, North Carolina is where my heart is, and I'm blessed to call it home! ♦

Contact Beaufort County Economic Development at susan.squires@beaufortedc.com or 252-946-3970.



FEATURED SMART SITES

To learn more, visit: <https://www.electricities.com/services/economic-development/smart-sites/>



HERTFORD SMART SITE

Perquimans Marine Industrial Park
Granby Street, Hertford, NC 27944

Available Acreage: 71 subdividable, shovel-ready acres
Lease/Sale Price: Negotiable



MONROE SMART SITE

Prime industrial site in the Charlotte metro area
3012 Mason St., Monroe, NC 28110

Available Acreage: 74 shovel-ready acres
Sale Price: \$50,000/acre



Left: Rendering shows a plan for improvements to downtown buildings in Hobgood, North Carolina. Right: The Town used funds from an ElectriCities Downtown Revitalization Grant to install utility connections and put power lines underground.

Putting the Pieces Together in Downtown Hobgood

Steady effort and a willingness to partner are leading to positive changes in Hobgood, a small public power town in North Carolina.

“There are a lot of things we want to accomplish, but it takes a lot of money and time,” said Sallie Smith, lifelong Hobgood resident and a member of the Town Board and the Hobgood Revitalization and Beautification Committee. She also represents Hobgood on the Board of Commissioners of the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency. “We have people who are willing to donate their time and their services to make the town better.”

For years, that has been the story for this town of around 300. With community help in the early 2000s, Town Administrator at the time, Danny Ellis, led efforts to create a park on Main Street, restoring Hobgood’s train depot, moving a historic church, and adding a fountain.

As Hobgood leaders explore options to further develop the downtown area, including five long-empty buildings across from the park, Thomas Ellis, Danny’s son and the Town Administrator since 2009, has broadened Hobgood’s community outreach.

“You can’t be too proud to ask for help,” he said.

The Town purchased those buildings from their out-of-state owners and, with the help

of North Carolina Rep. Michael Wray in late 2021, secured \$250,000 for revitalization. They spent about \$40,000 to create preliminary designs. They’re holding on to the rest as they consider options that stay true to their vision and their master plan.

A \$10,000 Downtown Revitalization Grant from ElectriCities of North Carolina helped ready the properties for new businesses by providing utility connections and putting power lines underground.

A local resident recently purchased one of the buildings and has plans to create a multiuse business—something that caters to Hobgood Charter School students. The growing K-12 school has about 600 students from Hobgood and neighboring communities. Between teachers, students, parents, and residents, “we could have thousands of people here in this town at any given moment,” Thomas said.

To support those people and drive downtown development, Thomas said, “We’re trying to pull in everybody we possibly can.”

Town leaders are working with various organizations to secure grants and funding, including the North Carolina Department of

Commerce, the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments, and Halifax County’s tourism and economic development teams. They’re also learning from the downtown development success of Statesville, a fellow public power community, and taking advantage of the economic development services and expertise available from ElectriCities of North Carolina.

Along with getting businesses into those downtown buildings, items on Hobgood’s development to-do list include installing new welcome signs (funded mostly by the beautification committee’s fundraising), landscaping and streetscaping on Main Street, and improving housing. Thomas said many teachers would love to live near their work, so any new or renovated housing wouldn’t be on the market long at all.

“Hobgood’s experience in recent years underscores the challenges of revitalization in small-town, rural America, but also the opportunities that come through collaboration and partnership,” said Carl Rees, Manager of Economic & Community Development at ElectriCities. “The people in Hobgood know that economic development is a team sport. I wouldn’t bet against them.”

Developments is a publication of ElectriCities’ Corporate Communications team in coordination with ElectriCities’ Economic Development team.