

FALL 2025

DEVELOPMENTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEWS FROM NC PUBLIC POWER



Cold-Link Logistics brings large-scale cold storage to Lumberton, with a facility spanning more than half of Southeast Crossroads Industrial Park. (Rendering courtesy of the City of Lumberton)

Smart Sites, Strong Power: NC's Winning Formula for Cold Storage

Cold-Link Logistics' decision to build in Lumberton, North Carolina, is more than a marquee win—it's proof that the state's public power communities are built to support the cold storage sector at scale.

With the company's \$85.5 million investment and plans to hire about 125 employees at wages above the county average, Cold-Link Logistics' new cold storage facility in Southeast Crossroads Industrial Park is set to become the largest power consumer in the area, driving economic growth and creating high-quality jobs.

Southeast Crossroads Industrial Park provides a unique combination of assets, including proximity to two major interstates (I-95 and I-74), less than a 90-minute drive to the Port of Wilmington, and an on-site electrical substation with available capacity and redundancy—capabilities that are critical for temperature-controlled operations.

The park is also an ElectriCities-certified Smart Site, which streamlined Cold-Link's development process.

Lumberton's Deputy City Manager, Brandon Love, said the reliable electricity the City could guarantee was a key factor for Cold-

Link Logistics. As a public power community, Lumberton owns and operates its electric system and boasts exceptional reliability, keeping the power on 99.99% of the time.

Along with that, Lumberton City Manager Wayne Horne, said, "Large users like Cold-Link are looking at their ongoing costs to operate, and electricity is a big cost for them." Having that locally controlled electric system means the City could provide a competitive electric rate to support Cold-Link's power demands.

This isn't the only opportunity for cold storage development in North Carolina.

"There are a lot of positive things here to promote future growth," Horne said.

A recent cold storage business development report by economic development consulting firm Hickey Global concluded that cold storage is growing rapidly. The report, which was commissioned by ElectriCities of North Carolina, also noted that cold storage development is decentralizing to encourage resilient cold chain capacity in emerging, strategically located markets.

"Like those in North Carolina," said Barry Matherly, President & CEO of Hickey Global.

A NOTE from Carl

One of the great privileges of working with our 70+ public power communities across North Carolina is the opportunity to witness the incredible creativity and teamwork it takes to bring about economic growth. In this edition, we celebrate three examples of projects and programs, each a winner of our inaugural ElectriCities Economic Development Awards. The real story is that for every award announced, there were other exceptional nominees—and even more great projects and programs that didn't get nominated. For our public power members, we encourage you to nominate your great projects in 2026, and for the rest of our readers, please take some time to check out the great things that are going on in North Carolina public power.



Carl Rees, CECD
Manager, Economic and Community Development

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Cold storage and the cold chain are integral to supporting industries such as food processing, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and biotechnology—all major contributors to North Carolina's economy.

"Because of the industries cold storage supports, it's relatively insulated from recessions," Matherly said. "So, despite the higher costs and complex requirements of cold storage facilities, the overall growth in development activity is expected to continue."

To support that growth and the cold chain overall, [North Carolina State Ports Authority](#) has made several strategic investments to deliver more cold capacity, improve service, and better align with industry expectations, said Aaron Brott, Senior Director for Key Client and Trade Development at North Carolina State Ports Authority.

"If you're looking for a safe, efficient gateway with quick access to major highways and interstates, the [Port of Wilmington](#) offers a truly strategic advantage," he said.

With the cold storage market getting larger and more complex, Brott said more options and solutions are needed to best serve the cold chain overall.

"Given the growth projections, customers can have multiple gateways to optimize their supply chains and mitigate risks," he said.

Beyond supporting the food and beverage industry, Brott said a direct ocean service to northern Europe offers reliable transit times and a cost-effective alternative to airfreight for select medical and life sciences segments. Wilmington has seen increased use across these industries.

When it comes to cold storage, he



More than 1,500 reefer plugs in the Port of Wilmington's refrigerated container yard help ensure that cargo stays at the correct temperature while waiting for transport. (NC Ports)

said, "Thanks to strategic investments made over the past decade, both within and beyond our gates, the Port of Wilmington is well-equipped to support the continued growth of refrigerated imports and exports."

North Carolina provides the location, industries, and logistics to support the cold storage growth cited in the Hickey Global report. Like Lumberton, the state's public power communities offer ready industrial sites, unmatched electricity reliability, and local flexibility to fully support cold storage and the industries that rely on it. ♦

For more on how North Carolina ports are powering the cold chain, listen to our podcast featuring Aaron Brott, Senior Director for Key Client and Trade Development at North Carolina State Ports Authority.



The ElectriCities Economic Development Podcast with *Business Facilities Magazine*

SOCIAL MEDIA

Highlights



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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.



22

2 comments • 1 reposts

Progress continues at the Drexel Rail Park, an ElectriCities-certified Smart Site.



89

6 comments • 3 reposts

Members, site selectors, and development experts connect at ElectriCities' Annual Conference.

GOOD KNOW

My favorite movies are: “The Lord of the Rings” and “The Hobbit” series, “Forrest Gump,” and anything else with Tom Hanks!

The three things I can’t live without are, like the sign in my house says: “Faith. Family. Football.” That about sums it up!

When I welcome a visitor to Apex, I always take them to: Our authentic downtown, one of our unique parks, and if it’s the first Saturday in December, our amazing nighttime Christmas parade!

The most memorable place I’ve visited is: The 9/11 Memorial & Museum in New York City.

Finish the sentence: North Carolina is ... home, and my favorite place to be! ♦

JOANNA HELMS

Economic Development Director
TOWN OF APEX



FEATURED SITES

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



CHERRYVILLE SMART SITE

Industrial Park in Gaston County
W. Academy St. & Lester St., Cherryville, NC
Available Acreage: 42 shovel-ready acres
Sale Price: \$60,000/acre

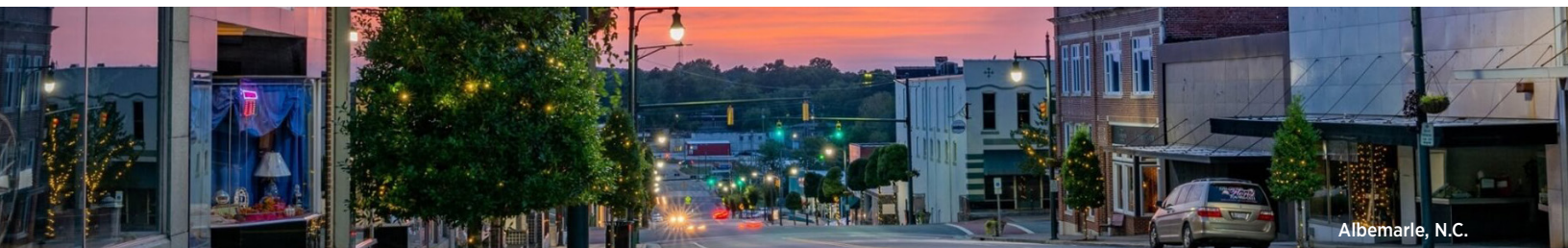


LAURINBURG SMART SITE

Industrial Park in Scotland County
1000 Stewartsville Rd., Laurinburg, NC
Available Acreage: 105 shovel-ready acres
Sale Price: \$12,000/acre

Powering Business Growth in NC Public Power Communities

North Carolina's public power communities are setting new standards for economic development, offering developers and businesses a compelling mix of creativity, collaboration, and future-focused opportunity. ElectriCities' inaugural Economic Excellence Awards spotlight three communities—Albemarle, Lumberton, and Wilson—that are leading the way with innovative programs and partnerships designed to attract investment, foster job creation, and enhance quality of life.



Albemarle, N.C.



ALBEMARLE: Revitalizing Downtown, Energizing Business

Recipient of the **Innovation in Economic Development Award** recognizing community-centered and innovative strategies, initiatives, and programs that advance economic development in public power communities.

The [City of Albemarle](#) stands out as a model for downtown revitalization and adaptive reuse. Through its Downtown Catalyst Grant Program, launched in 2021, Albemarle offers matching grants of up to \$25,000 to support improvements such as façade restoration, code upgrades, and interior renovations. This initiative has already awarded 10 grants totaling \$250,000, leveraging more than \$2.5 million in private investment. The result: new businesses, increased job opportunities, and a vibrant, walkable downtown that preserves historic character while driving economic vitality. Albemarle demonstrates how targeted public investment can unlock private capital and create a thriving environment for entrepreneurs and established businesses alike.



LUMBERTON: Collaborative Impact and Industrial Readiness

Recipient of the **Collaborative Impact in Economic Development Award** recognizing people-centered solutions to economic, community workforce, and infrastructure issues.

[Lumberton's](#) Southeast Crossroads Industrial Park exemplifies the power of public-private collaboration. As an ElectriCities-certified Smart Site, the park has benefited from coordinated infrastructure improvements, including road access, water and sewer extensions, and electric service upgrades. The City led the efforts, partnering with utilities, county government, and regional economic development organizations. These enhancements have made the site highly competitive for industrial prospects, attracting attention from site selectors and paving the way for future private investment and job creation. Lumberton's approach is a blueprint for rural economic development, showing how strategic partnerships can accelerate site readiness and deliver long-term value for businesses seeking growth opportunities in North Carolina.



WILSON: Future-Ready with Clean Energy Innovation

Recipient of the **Horizons in Economic Development Award** celebrating future-focused efforts that ensure economic resiliency, sustainability, and positioning for private investment and quality of life.

[The City of Wilson](#) and [Wilson Energy](#) are at the forefront of sustainable economic development. Their Clean Energy Initiative, in partnership with Carolina Poultry Power, converts poultry litter into biomass-based electricity. This renewable energy facility supports Wilson's strategy to diversify its energy portfolio, reduce carbon emissions, and promote sustainable industrial growth. The project has resulted in a new interconnection to Wilson Energy's grid, boosting electric load growth and grid resilience while supporting job creation and agricultural waste management. Wilson's forward-thinking approach to clean energy and circular economy models positions the community as a leader in sustainability and future-ready strategies.



A WINNING ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESS

"These three communities exemplify the innovation, collaboration, and sustainability that define North Carolina's public power communities," said Roy Jones, ElectriCities CEO. "Their dedication is a win for residents and an inspiration for our entire public power community."

For site selectors and economic developers, Albemarle, Lumberton, and Wilson offer shining examples of how public power communities in North Carolina are creating fertile ground for business investment, growth, and success. ♦

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