

WINTER 2026

# DEVELOPMENTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEWS FROM NC PUBLIC POWER

## Eastern North Carolina's Economic Boom: Insights from Regional Leaders



**Vann Rogerson**

President/CEO,  
NC East Alliance



**Steve Yost**

President,  
North Carolina's Southeast



**Ryan Combs**

Executive Director,  
Research Triangle Regional  
Partnership

Over the past two years, North Carolina has experienced remarkable economic growth, with the eastern third of the state emerging as a standout success story. For their part, public power communities across the east have attracted billions in private investment, fueling expansion in manufacturing, IT, life sciences, and logistics.

With this growing economic momentum, we reached out to economic development leaders in eastern North Carolina to understand what's driving this surge and to hear their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges ahead for the communities they serve.



**Vann Rogerson, President/CEO, NC East Alliance** [NCEastAlliance](http://NCEastAlliance) serves 29 counties in eastern North Carolina, stretching from the I-95 corridor to the Outer Banks and encompassing a diverse mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities.

### GREATEST RECENT ECONOMIC SUCCESSES

We successfully aligned 31 K-12 public school districts and 15 community colleges under a unified STEM East Network, preparing students for in-demand careers in biopharma, aerospace, healthcare, and more. This effort is creating a connected talent pipeline for rural workforce development.

**CHALLENGES** Lack of local capacity and resources, especially in rural communities. With many of our partners stretched thin meeting basic needs, planning for long-term economic growth is difficult.

### SOMETHING PEOPLE MAY NOT KNOW

Eastern North Carolina is home to thousands of high-wage, high-demand jobs in sectors like pharmaceutical manufacturing, aviation, and aerospace. Leading employers like Thermo Fisher Scientific, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Spirit AeroSystems, the Aviation Logistics Center, and Fleet Readiness Center East provide competitive career opportunities, so there's no need to leave the region. *(Continued on Page 2)*

### A NOTE from Carl

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak with North Carolina local government officials about economic development across a variety of communities: small, large, urban, and rural. Despite the unique challenges each setting presents, one principle remains constant: Teamwork is essential for driving successful growth. Leadership may come from regional organizations, such as those featured here, or from local agencies. But in every case, the effectiveness of collaboration determines the outcome. Time and again, visiting executives and consultants remark on the strong partnerships among our economic development teams.

We take pride in these observations, knowing that the figurative sports jerseys our collective team wears read "North Carolina" on the back.



**Carl Rees, CEcD**

Manager, Economic and  
Community Development

❖ **ELECTRICITIES of NC**

**CLICK HERE**

To see a list of  
**OUR MEMBERS**



(Continued from Page 1)



**Steve Yost, President, North Carolina's Southeast** *North Carolina's Southeast is made up of 20 counties in southeastern North Carolina: Anson, Bladen, Brunswick, Craven, Cumberland, Columbus, Duplin, Hoke, Jones, Lenoir, Montgomery, Moore, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland, and Wayne.*

#### GREATEST RECENT ECONOMIC

**SUCESSES** Working with our local EDO partners, we've leveraged two state appropriations totaling \$7.5 million with nearly \$80 million in other funding to support 10 industrial building projects and 24 industrial site development or enhancements projects. We've also broadened our foreign direct investment outreach, resulting in more international opportunities.

**CHALLENGES** Lack of infrastructure and utilities, especially natural gas and sewer, in some pockets of the region.

#### SOMETHING PEOPLE MAY NOT KNOW

The region is home to five military installations: Fort Bragg (Army and Special Forces, including Camp Mackall), Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, Camp Lejeune (Marines, including Marine Corps Air Station New River), Marine Corps AirStation Cherry Point, and Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point.



**Ryan Combs, Executive Director, Research Triangle Regional Partnership** *The Research Triangle Regional Partnership serves 14 counties that surround the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill metro and stretch from Chatham County to the west, Wilson County to the east, Harnett County to the south, and all the way north to the Virginia border.*

#### GREATEST RECENT ECONOMIC

**SUCSESSES** Our greatest success is transforming into a globally recognized hub for innovation, anchored by the Research Triangle Park and fueled by collaboration among top universities, life science and tech companies, and startups that have created a thriving, knowledge-based economy.

#### CHALLENGES

Keeping pace with demand for industrial buildings and sites that can quickly accommodate new and expanding companies.

#### SOMETHING PEOPLE MAY NOT KNOW

The Research Triangle region's success began as a response to economic decline in the 1950s when business, government, and university leaders joined forces to reinvent the area's future through the Research Triangle Park, one of the nation's first purpose-built innovation ecosystems. ♦

For more about North Carolina's recent economic success, listen to our podcast featuring Christopher Chung, CEO of the North Carolina Economic Development Partnership.



**The ElectriCities Economic Development Podcast with Business Facilities Magazine**

# SOCIAL MEDIA

# Highlights



## STAY CONNECTED

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Promoting North Carolina's public power communities to businesses in Spain.



At IBIE, High Point & ElectriCities reps share what's cooking in public power communities.

# GOOD TO KNOW

## TERESA CAMPO

Economic Development Director, City of Monroe

**My favorite movies are:** "Wuthering Heights" (1939) and "Out of Towners" (1970)

**The three things I can't live without are:** My Lord and savior Jesus Christ, my husband and children (family), and good food!

**When I welcome a visitor to Monroe, I always take them to:** Our thriving downtown that embraces our historic culture and has great places to eat and diverse activities. I also take them to or share a treat from A Cause for Tea, a nonprofit teahouse with amazing desserts and hearty dishes.

**The most memorable place I've visited is:** Rome, Italy, where I can eat without gaining weight! The art and history in every inch of Rome are definitely memorable.

**Finish the sentence:** North Carolina is ... where I call home. My mama, papa, mother, sisters, husband, and children all have roots here.



Contact City of Monroe Economic Development  
at 704-282-4526 or [tcampo@monroenc.org](mailto:tcampo@monroenc.org).

## FEATURED BUILDINGS

To learn more, visit: <https://www.electricities.com/econdev/>



### MORGANTON SHELL BUILDING

100,000 sq. ft. building, expandable to 180,000 sq. ft.  
Adjacent to I-40; One hour to Charlotte Douglas International Airport  
Sale Price: \$11 million  
Lease Rate: Negotiable



### ROCKY MOUNT SHELL BUILDING

45,000 sq. ft. building  
32-foot clear height  
2 miles from I-95; One hour from RDU International Airport  
Lease Rate: Available on request

## Building Community, One Business at a Time

*Running a small business demands an extraordinary blend of hard work, creativity, commitment, and risk tolerance.*



*Top & middle:* Business partners Jason Cole and Andi Chadwick opened Twisted Oak American Bar & Grill, downtown Statesville, in December 2013.

*Bottom:* Customers gather in Larema Coffee House's bustling Rocky Mount location.

For North Carolina small business owners Jason Cole, Andi Chadwick, and Kevin McLaughlin, those traits, along with a deep love for community and a desire to create spaces where people come together, have driven them to open multiple thriving businesses in three North Carolina public power communities.

Jason and Andi, business partners, own three restaurants in downtown Statesville: Twisted Oak American Bar & Grill, The Quarter, and Broad Street Burger Co. They're opening a fourth, Gracie Rae's, in early 2026.

Kevin owns Larema Coffee House, with downtown locations in Rocky Mount and Wilson.

For Jason and Andi, opening their first restaurant, Twisted Oak, wasn't just about serving good food. It was about building on lifetime in the area. Jason grew up in Statesville, and Andi has lived there for nearly three decades. Having worked in the restaurant industry for years, they wanted to create something that felt authentic and free from the constraints of franchise operations.

They landed downtown when they saw potential in the spaces available and the City's efforts to revitalize the area with its Downtown Streetscape Beautification Project.

"I think if you ask them, it paid huge dividends," Jason said. "It gave it more of that down-home, postcard feel."

Now, instead of just a few specialty shops, downtown Statesville has a variety of places to enjoy, including Jason and Andi's other restaurants. Each opened as the team's reputation for excellent food and welcoming spaces grew and as interesting downtown spaces became available.

Kevin values connection and community so much he chose "Larema," because it means "my friend" in the Acholi language of Uganda.

"I've always been into bringing people together," he said. "Through studying and working in public administration and community development, it became clear that local business and social capital in particular are so key to a city or community being healthy, livable, and enjoyable for its residents, giving them spaces to connect to one another."

He realized that local business was the perfect way to merge his coexisting dreams of being a city manager and opening a coffee shop. He opened his first Larema in downtown Rocky Mount. He expanded to Wilson a year later to reach more people and continue fostering connections. Downtown locations appealed to him for their historic character and the opportunity to be part of revitalizing those districts.

All three owners faced their share of challenges. For Jason and Andi, moving from franchise operations to independent ownership meant creating new processes from scratch. The challenges of the pandemic also inspired creative solutions, like setting up an online grocery store to help the community and keep staff working.

The pandemic hit just six months after Kevin opened his Rocky Mount shop. Determined not to close, he created a walk-up coffee bar and partnered with other downtown businesses for outdoor events.

Whether it's through food, coffee, or simply a welcoming space, these business owners are united by their commitment to community.

"Building community is something a small business really can do well," Kevin said. "The people you serve are your neighbors often enough, and I think that's a beautiful thing." ♦

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

For information on ElectriCities and economic development, contact Carl Rees at 800-768-7697 ext. 6315 or [crees@electricities.org](mailto:crees@electricities.org). Was this forwarded to you? [Sign up to receive your own copy of Developments.](#)