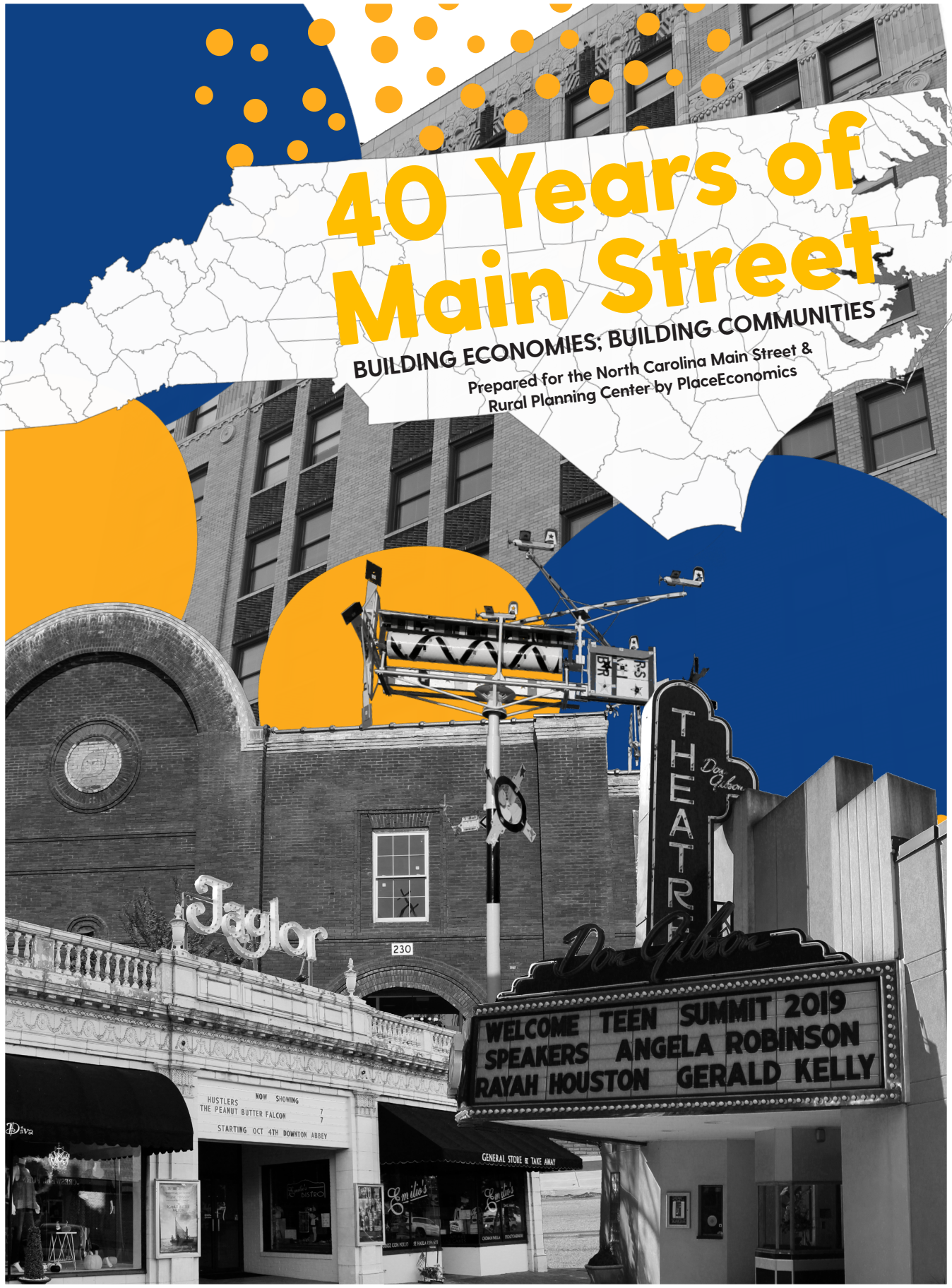
40 Years of Main Street

BUILDING ECONOMIES; BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Prepared for the North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center by PlaceEconomics



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Executive Summary

MAIN STREET IS A 40-YEAR SUCCESS STORY IN NORTH CAROLINA.

Using the historic resources of each community, Main Street has revitalized local economies. Investors gained confidence in downtown. Small businesses opened downtown and others expanded. Town governments invested in streetscapes, sidewalks, and public art. Downtowns once written off as dead have regained their historic role as the heart of the community.

The numbers found in this report demonstrate the quantitative success of Main Street. But something else, maybe even more important, has occurred. Community pride has been restored. However, success is to be measured, Main Street is an incomparable success, and North Carolina Main Street communities are thriving because of it.

Key Findings:

- Over the last 40 years, 113 communities have participated in North Carolina Main Street.
- Since 1980, over $3 billion has been invested in the buildings, infrastructure, and public improvements of North Carolina's Main Street communities. 60% of this has been from the private sector, which has invested more than $1.8 million in downtowns.
- Investment from small communities with population below 20,000 make up 44% of the total share of investment and 51% of private investment.
- North Carolina's Main Street communities have reported a cumulative total of nearly 23,000 net new full-time jobs and over 4,000 net part-time jobs.
- North Carolina Main Street communities have seen 6,503 net new businesses and over 2,500 business expansions.
- Every year for the past decade, Main Street communities have had far more businesses open than close, outperforming both the state and the U.S. on that measure.
- Between 2011 and 2019, Main Streets have logged over 1,006,493 volunteer hours, a cumulative value of nearly $22,816,483 in time and services; 75% of these hours have come from communities with populations below 20,000.
- More than 90% of respondents to an online survey said that Main Street is "very effective or somewhat effective" for increasing community pride.
-

"What people realize is, when you support one of these businesses, you are supporting people who support this community."

Cherie Dori, in-store designer at Vaughn's Jewelry, Edenton

Blount's Mutual Drugs, Edenton

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT of COMMERCE

Anthony M. Copeland

SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

The Main Street program is one of our shining stars here in the Department of Commerce. Time and time again, the program reports significant investment, business start-ups and expansions, and job creation as a direct result of the local Main Street program initiatives. We know that the program works, but this report demonstrates just how significant a healthy, vibrant downtown district is for the greater economy.

The NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center staff spend countless hours engaging with local community leaders on downtown revitalization activities. The technical assistance and training that is offered not only to the community leaders, but also to developers and small businesses, is part of the Main Street success story. They take their knowledge and experience and share it with communities from Murphy to Manteo. As I travel throughout the state, I see firsthand the impact that the Main Street program has had on North Carolina for the past forty years.

Main Street is a true economic development program because it develops an economic engine from the best assets of a community and its downtown district. The success of industrial development is supported by the amenities that are offered in downtown districts, including retail and restaurant development, cultural facilities, governmental and professional services, housing options and small-scale manufacturing.

Since North Carolina began its Main Street program in 1980, more than $3 billion has been invested in our designated Main Street and Small Town Main Street communities. This investment has created a net gain of more than 27,000 jobs and facilitated more than 6,000 building rehabilitations.

The Main Street program is successful because it leverages the vision of the community, the assets of the environment, and the power of local leadership to preserve the historic resources of the community and generate a mix of uses that serve the needs of the citizens. North Carolina is fortunate to have such a strong Main Street program.

Anthony Copeland
Secretary of Commerce

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT of COMMERCE

Kenny Flowers

ASSISTANT SECRETARY
NORTH CAROLINA RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Main Street program, housed in the Rural Economic Development Division at Commerce, provides significant resources and engagement with North Carolina's rural communities in North Carolina. Our division has four strategic priorities:

- Build a strong ecosystem for rural prosperity
- Foster job growth and investment in rural communities
- Develop products and services to enhance community capacity
- Prioritize engagement and collaboration

The NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center staff work directly with community leaders on these priorities. Through strategic economic development planning, Main Street communities focus on strategies that will transform their downtown districts and build an economic ecosystem. Through guidance in historic preservation, building rehabilitation and business development, significant investments are made each year in local Main Street communities.

The Main Street conference, quarterly trainings, regional meetings, and downtown revitalization programs build local knowledge and capacity for project development. Working with other state, federal and nonprofit agencies and programs, the NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center builds a network for downtown revitalization collaboration.

The guidance, programming, educational opportunities and strategic planning services offered through the North Carolina Main Street program are putting rural towns and cities across the state on the path to a strong, healthy economy. This program continues to be a great asset for the Rural Economic Division.

Kenny Flowers
Assistant Secretary for Rural Economic Development

National Main Street Center
a subsidiary of the National Trust *for* Historic Preservation

Patrice Frey

PRESIDENT AND CEO
NATIONAL MAIN STREET CENTER

On behalf of The National Main Street Center, I would like to congratulate the North Carolina Main Street program for their tremendous track record of success as they celebrate their 40th anniversary.

When the Main Street program began 40 years ago, its success hinged on the vision and dedication of a small group statewide programs, including the North Carolina Main Street program, that saw enormous potential in this country's historic downtowns and commercial districts. NC Main Street made what may have seemed like a risky bet – investing in the revitalization of downtowns and historic commercial corridors – especially considering the state of downtowns at the time. Forty years later, the return on that investment is clear (as you'll see in this report, North Carolina Main Street communities have passed $3 billion in investment since 1980). Main Streets across the state are thriving.

The NC Main Street program is a leader in the field, demonstrating the transformative impact of Main Street and serving as a model for other states across the network. I also want to applaud all the North Carolina Main Street directors and volunteers who have worked so hard over the years to make North Carolina's communities great places to work, live, play and visit.

Congratulations again to North Carolina Main Street for this outstanding achievement. I wish you all the best as you celebrate this important milestone and look forward to many more years of success for your program and all the communities you serve.

Patrice Frey
President and CEO
National Main Street Center

The National Main Street Center Inc.
53 West Jackson Blvd, Suite 350 | Chicago, IL 60604
312-610-5613

Earl Scruggs Center, Shelby

Brick and Mortar Downtown, Laurinburg

Introduction

"THE COMMUNITY WE'VE MADE WITH THE BUSINESS OWNERS IS REALLY TIGHT HERE."
"WE'VE BECOME AN EXTENDED FAMILY."
"IT HAS BEEN ABOUT BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS."

If one can sum up what forty years of Main Street in North Carolina represents, perhaps it is found in those quotes from participating communities. Main Street has always been about creating an environment in which investment can occur, and the best investment environments begin with strong and positive relationships. North Carolina Main Street, as it celebrates its 40th year providing guidance to communities across the state, has helped foster the creation of strong and positive relationships among and within its towns. While a community development program, Main Street has also been a program about "developing community."

But there is a second lesson learned over forty years. And that is that change is constant, and it requires vigilant and on-going management. North Carolina, much like the rest of the nation, has seen its share of economic declines, recessions, upheavals in key industries, and financial uncertainty. Main Street communities have not been immune to this impact. Yet the declines have been less severe and the recovery more rapid where there has been on-going downtown management. Managing change has been a mantra for Main Street, and the North Carolina Main Street communities that have maintained their commitment to downtown management have been the beacon that others have looked to for lessons learned, guidance and direction. North Carolina Main Street directors, with the support and leadership of the North Carolina Main Street staff, have made a difference.

When the Main Street program began in North Carolina in 1980, the primary mission was to stop the decline in downtowns by stemming the flow of investment dollars out of the central city. It was a daunting task, seen as unlikely by many. Yet, over time, the investment profile did change and more money started coming back into downtown than was leaving. Today, the mission is more multi-faceted. Part of that mission is still to provide guidance to those who seek to invest in downtown such that their dollars – or programmatic ideas – not only add value, but also leverage greater outcomes that benefit the entire community. But Main Street management has also evolved. For many programs that means being more of a broker of information, a facilitator of conversation, than the central instigator. It still means creating the environment for investment, but now it is more about conducting the orchestra than playing the instruments.

So, as we acknowledge a significant milestone – forty years of Main Street – we must also acknowledge the role that the NC Main Street program itself has played. North Carolina's government has been committed to the principles of Main Street, primarily the principle of "incremental and long term," and has supported this effort through good budget years and lean ones. That commitment to North Carolina's small towns, through what is now the NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center, has yielded great returns. It is a wonderful story and some of that will be highlighted here. But suffice it to say, relationships are still being formed, communities are still managing the change that is the challenge of the 21st century, and the Main Street story is still being written. What will the next forty years bring?

The North Carolina Main Street Story

AS ONE OF THE ORIGINAL SIX DEMONSTRATION STATES FOR THE NATIONAL TRUST'S MAIN STREET PROGRAM, NORTH CAROLINA MAIN STREET HAS BEEN PROVIDING INVALUABLE RESOURCES TO ITS COMMUNITIES SINCE 1980.

North Carolina Main Street is part of a larger movement under the auspices of Main Street America, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This movement, which has demonstrated its value time and again over the past 40 years, "grew out of a recognition that community is only as strong as its core."[1] By providing support, resources, funding, and assistance to downtowns, Main Street America™ has built a network that includes 40 states and more than 1,600 active communities. Being part of this network carries "a special mark of distinction...a seal recognizing that participating programs, organizations, and communities are part of a national movement with a proven track record for celebrating community character, preserving local history, and generating impressive economic returns."[2]

Main Street America communities utilized the Four-Point Approach™, "a time-tested framework for community-driven, comprehensive revitalization,"[3] with a particular focus on the practice of historic preservation. Because every Main Street is different, the flexible Four-Point Approach, which centers around Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization, can be adapted and customized based on any one community's needs. This method has proven to be "one of the most impactful, cost-effective community revitalization models in the country."[4]

The Main Street Approach™ succeeds because it gives people a framework through which they can identify, assess and prioritize problems and opportunities. It requires active community participation - not just from the usual suspects - but from a broad coalition of stakeholders representing property owners, merchants, financiers, civic and cultural leaders, the arts, neighborhoods, and the public/private/non-profit sectors. It brings people together to create a common, shared vision as well as the strategies to achieve that vision over time. Main Street, more than anything, is about citizens working together to create their desired future.

Main Street is also anchored in the economic reality that sustainable development comes from building on a community's true assets. By helping a community identify its core strengths, and those always include its heritage as seen in its physical history, it gives communities a place to focus their investment dollars, both public and private. By highlighting their community's uniqueness, they reinforce, and sometimes create, market opportunities, which lead to new jobs, new businesses and increased value.

Early on, North Carolina recognized the potential for using the Main Street Approach™ as an economic development strategy. As one of the original six demonstration states for the

1 https://www.mainstreet.org/mainstreetamerica/themovement
2 https://www.mainstreet.org/mainstreetamerica/theprograms
3 https://www.mainstreet.org/mainstreetamerica/theapproach
4 Ibid.

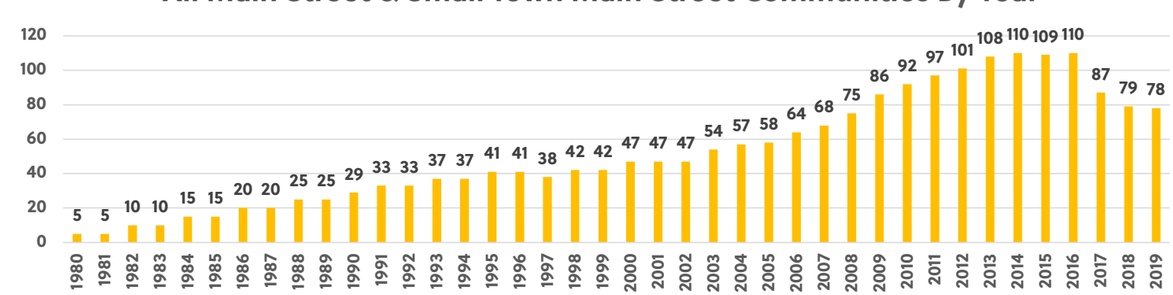
National Trust's Main Street program, North Carolina Main Street has been providing invaluable resources to its communities since 1980. Housed under the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the program staffs six employees who assist Main Street communities across the state with design, planning, staff training, and capacity building.

Over the last 40 years, North Carolina Main Street has provided assistance to 113 designated communities in one capacity or another. All five of the founding North Carolina Main Street communities––New Bern, Salisbury, Shelby, Tarboro, and Washington––are still active Main Street programs today, which is a testament to the program's success and value.

Because North Carolina Main Street is part of the Main Street America network, it follows the organization's accreditation structure, which currently consists of two tiers: Affiliate and Accredited. Affiliate programs are organizations that have demonstrated commitment to comprehensive community revitalization. This level of membership allows communities that are interested in learning about the Main Street model to access the national network's resources, and it allows those organizations that do not yet have the capacity for full designation to begin their revitalization efforts. A Main Street America Accredited program signifies a commitment to comprehensive revitalization, community engagement, and that the community has met basic best practices. This tier describes communities who have fully implemented a Main Street program and meet all 10 criteria of achievement as established by the National Main Street Center. Accreditation standards are slightly more rigorous, requiring an active board of directors, committees, an operating budget, and a program director.

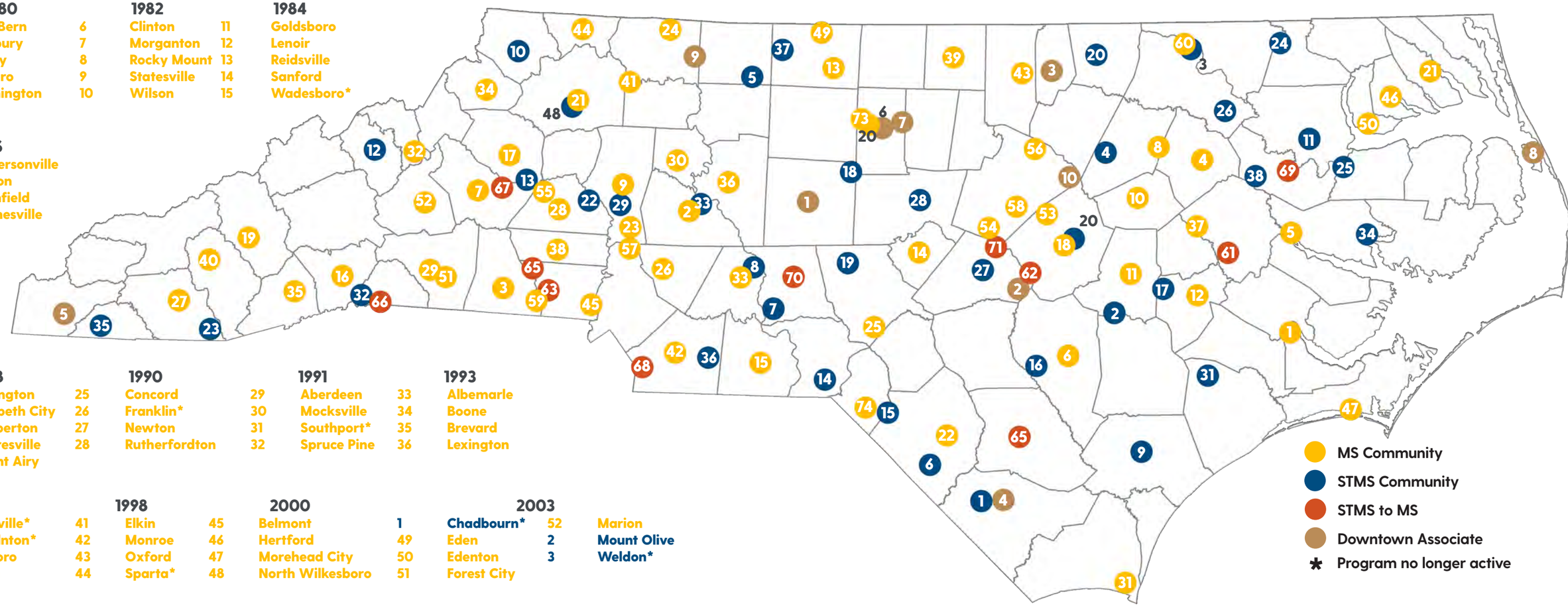
In addition to the Main Street Accredited and Affiliate programs, in 2003, North Carolina also implemented the Small Town Main Street (STMS) program. The program, available first in the eastern part of the state then expanded statewide in 2007, was an initiative aimed at providing services to communities with populations less than 5,000. While still utilizing the Main Street Four-Point Approach, participating communities received two years of concentrated, monthly on-site technical services from NCMS staff.[5] Following the initial two-year period, communities were given the opportunity to continue on in the program, receiving more limited services on an as needed basis, or to pursue a Main Street Accredited or Affiliate certification. Though the STMS program is still in existence, NCMS is no longer expanding the program with new applications.

All Main Street & Small Town Main Street Communities By Year



5 Press release, NC Department of Commerce, https://www.nccommerce.com/news/press-releases/new-nc-small-town-main-street-communities-selected-0

40 Years of North Carolina Main Street Communities



1980
1 New Bern
2 Salisbury
3 Shelby
4 Tarboro
5 Washington

1982
6 Clinton
7 Morganton
8 Rocky Mount
9 Statesville
10 Wilson

1984
11 Goldsboro
12 Lenoir
13 Reidsville
14 Sanford
15 Wadesboro*

1986
16 Hendersonville
17 Kinston
18 Smithfield
19 Waynesville

1988
20 Burlington
21 Elizabeth City
22 Lumberton
23 Mooresville
24 Mount Airy

1990
25 Concord
26 Franklin*
27 Newton
28 Rutherfordton

1991
29 Aberdeen
30 Mocksville
31 Southport*
32 Spruce Pine

1993
33 Albemarle
34 Boone
35 Brevard
36 Lexington

1995
37 Farmville*
38 Lincolnton*
39 Roxboro
40 Sylva

1998
41 Elkin
42 Monroe
43 Oxford
44 Sparta*

2000
45 Belmont
46 Hertford
47 Morehead City
48 North Wilkesboro

2003
1 Chadbourn*
49 Eden
50 Edenton
51 Forest City
52 Marion
2 Mount Olive
3 Weldon*

2004
4 Spring Hope

2005
5 Walnut Cove*

2006
6 Fairmont*
7 Mount Gilead
53 Clayton*
54 Fuquay-Varina
55 Hickory
56 Wake Forest

2007
8 Badin*
9 Burgaw*
10 Windsor*

2008
11 Burnsville*
12 Granite Falls*
13 Hamlet*
14 Maxton*
15 Roseboro
16 West Jefferson

2009
51 Roanoke Rapids
57 Davidson*
58 Garner*
59 Kings Mountain
17 La Grange*
18 Liberty*
19 Robbins*
20 Selma*
21 Wilkesboro

2010
22 Catawba*
23 Highlands*
24 Murfreesboro*
25 Plymouth
26 Scotland Neck*

2011
27 Lillington*
28 Pittsboro
29 Troutman
30 Warrenton

2012
31 Richlands
32 Saluda*
33 Spencer*

2013
34 Belhaven
35 Hayesville
36 Marshville*
37 Mayodan*
38 Robersonville

2015
61 Ayden
62 Benson
63 Bessemer City
64 Cherryville
65 Tryon
66 Valdese
67 Waxhaw
68 Williamston
69 Elizabethtown*

2016
70 Troy

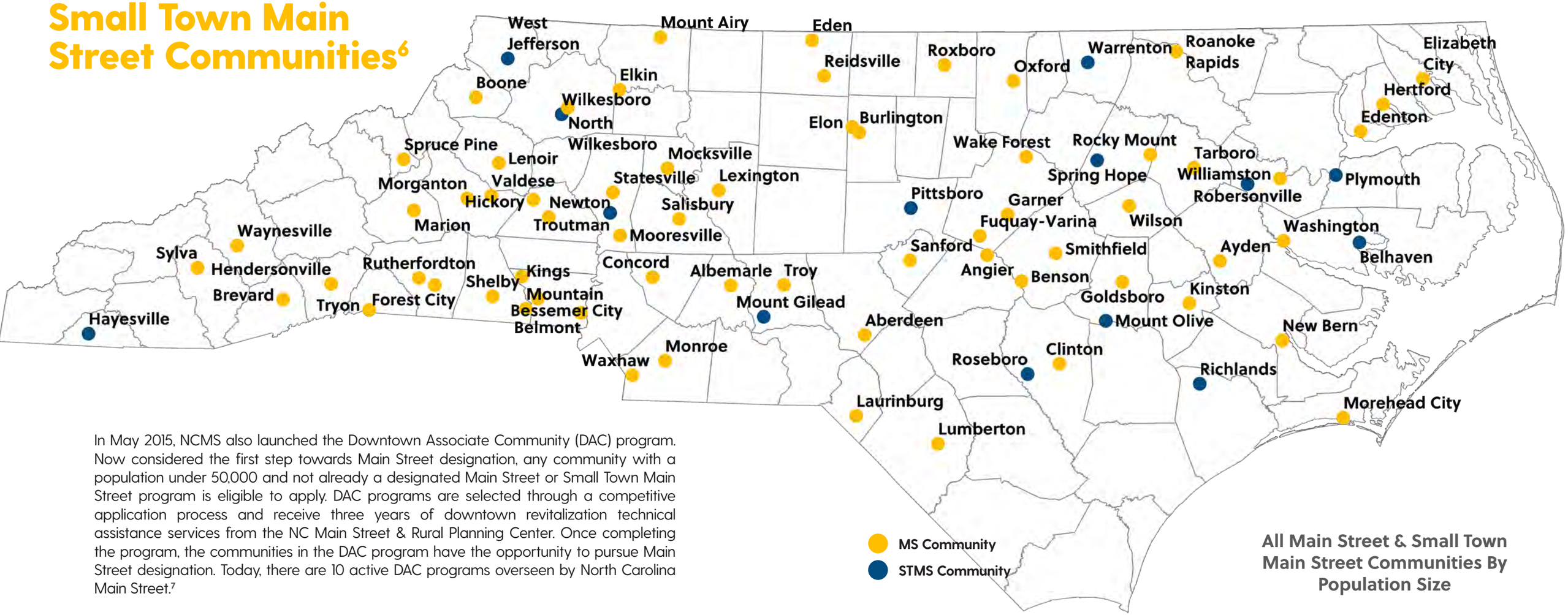
2017
1 Asheboro
2 Dunn
3 Henderson

2018
71 Angier
73 Elon
74 Laurinburg
4 Whiteville

2020
5 Murphy
6 Graham
7 Mebane
8 Manteo
9 Pilot Mountain
10 Zebulon

INTRODUCTION

Active Main Street and Small Town Main Street Communities[6]

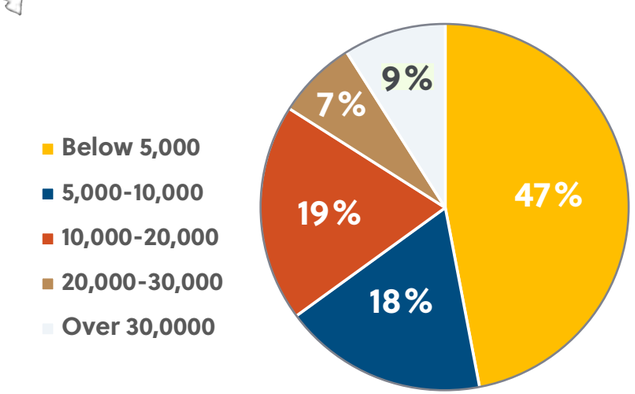


In May 2015, NCMS also launched the Downtown Associate Community (DAC) program. Now considered the first step towards Main Street designation, any community with a population under 50,000 and not already a designated Main Street or Small Town Main Street program is eligible to apply. DAC programs are selected through a competitive application process and receive three years of downtown revitalization technical assistance services from the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. Once completing the program, the communities in the DAC program have the opportunity to pursue Main Street designation. Today, there are 10 active DAC programs overseen by North Carolina Main Street.[7]

North Carolina Main Street currently has 46 Accredited programs and 18 Affiliate programs, as well as 14 active STMS programs overseen by North Carolina Main Street. [8]

Over the course of the last 40 years, North Carolina Main Street has served communities of all sizes. Through their Small Town Main Street program, they have been able to boost the number of towns they serve that have a population of less than 10,000.

All Main Street & Small Town Main Street Communities By Population Size

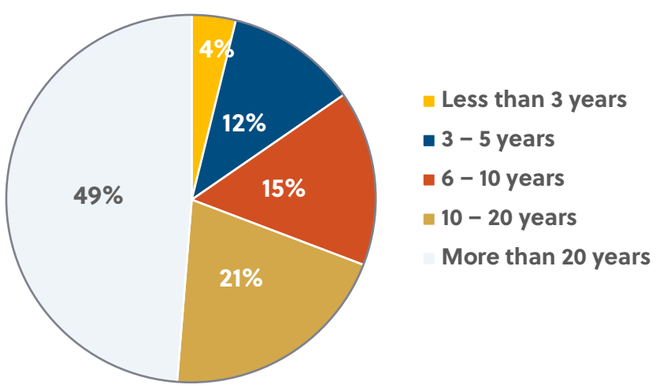


6 Only MS and STMS programs are required to submit annual reports to the state. For this reason, the remainder of this report only represents findings from designated MS or STMS programs over the course of the last 40 years.
7 Downtown Associate communities are not represented in any of the data that is included in this report, with the exception of Henderson and Zebulon, both of which were former Main Street or Small Town Main Street communities.
8 These numbers represent programs through 2019. However, as of 2020, NC Main Street has 48 Accredited programs, 16 Affiliate programs, 14 Small Town Main Street programs, and 10 Downtown Associate communities.

Edenton

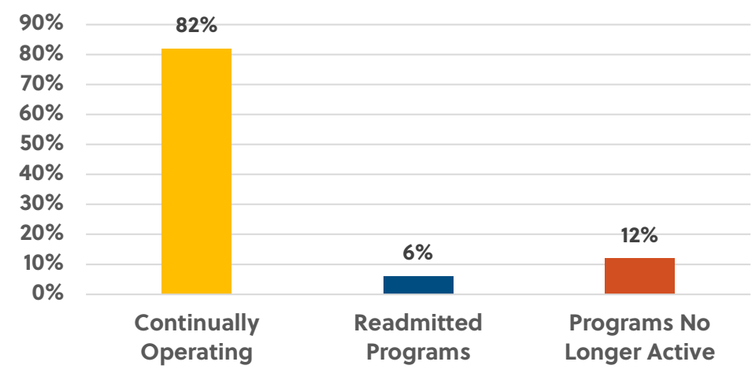
When looking just at the 78 active Main Street and Small Town Main Street programs, it is interesting to note that an impressive 49% have been participating communities for more than 20 years, with another 21% having spent 10-20 years in the network. The longevity of membership is a testament to the value of the North Carolina Main Street Program.

Main Street and Small Town Main Street Active Programs Tenure



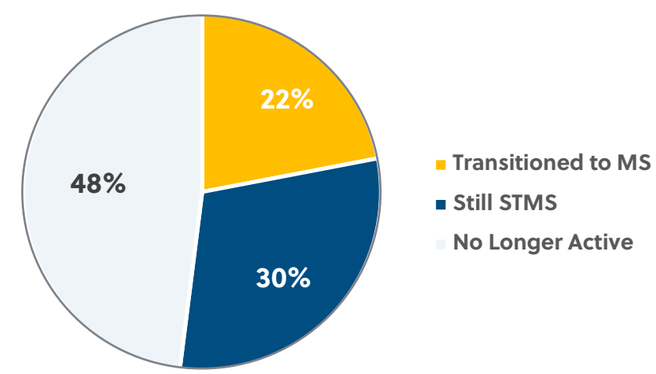
Communities may drop their Main Street designation due to a change in political leadership, a decline in resources that hampers their ability to sustain management, changing community priorities, or other reasons. Yet, it is not unusual for some of those communities to reclaim their designation when circumstances allow. Over the past 40 years, 82% of the North Carolina Main Street programs have been continually operating.[9] Five percent have reclaimed their designation, while 12% dropped their designation and have yet to be readmitted.

Main Street Programs



Since the formation of the Small Town Main Street Program in 2003, a total of 50 communities have been designated STMS. Of those 50 communities, 22% have transitioned into full-fledged Main Street communities. Another 30% have chosen to remain in the STMS program to receive ongoing support from NCMS.

Small Town Main Street



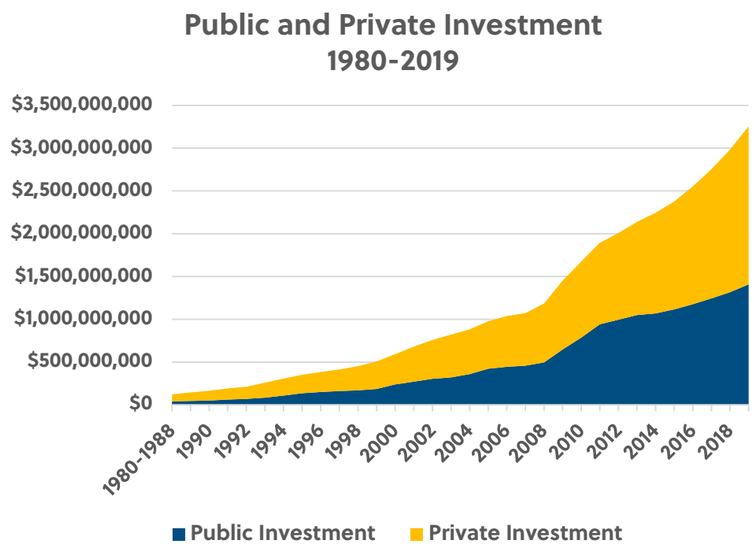
9 This includes those programs that were originally designated Main Street programs, as well as Main Street programs that initially started as Small Town Main Street programs.

Impact Successes

THE MAIN STREET APPROACH HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOL IN NORTH CAROLINA. THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

INVESTMENT

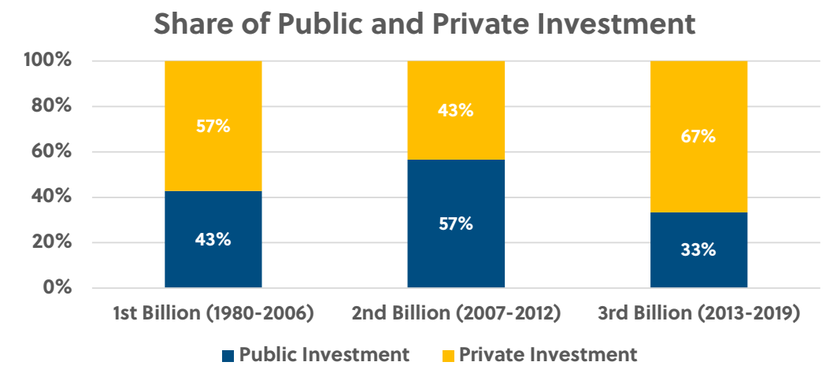
The Main Street Approach has been an important economic development tool for historic preservation in North Carolina. However, this does not mean that it freezes downtowns in time, as the key to a successful Main Street is vibrancy and evolution. Since 1980, over $3 billion has been invested in the buildings, infrastructure, and public improvements of North Carolina's Main Street communities. 60% of this has been from the private sector, which has invested more than $1.8 million in downtowns.



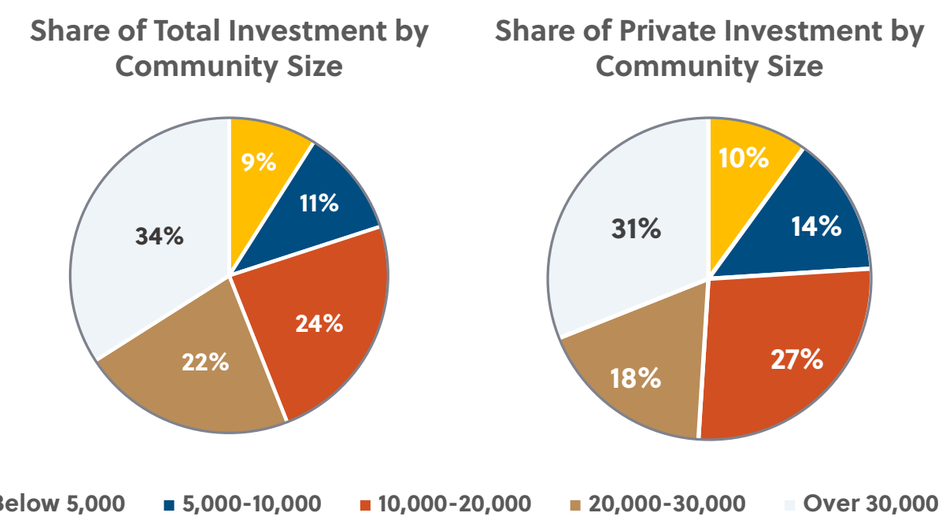
Main Street is a story of public, private and non-profit partnership. Yet the bulk of the investment has always been, and likely will always be, from the public and private sectors. In the establishment years, the communities required the public sector to "seed" projects, either through loan guarantees, small incentives, or through their own needed public improvements. These "seeds" gave confidence to the private sector and led to significant private investment. Subsequently, NC recorded its first billion dollars of public and private investment between 1980 and 2006.

In the early part of the 2000s cities began to better understand the importance of downtown as a tax revenue generator, and this led to strategic infrastructure and other public improvements and investments to leverage private spending. The second billion dollars recorded by NCMS reflects this increased public sector spending and the private sector response between 2007 and 2012.

While increasing their collective public investment, cities and towns further enhanced the investment climate in downtown by updating policies to encourage upper floor use, especially housing; by introducing parking waivers; and by re-thinking regulations to support, rather than discourage, downtown redevelopment. Hence, NCMS saw its third billion dollars of investment between 2013 and 2019. This period was clearly led by private sector spending, as the numbers show.



These investments in downtowns have not only been made in larger cities, like Concord, Rocky Mount, or Burlington. Investment from communities with population below 20,000 make up 44% of the total share of investment and 51% of private investment.



INCENTIVES – A KEY TOOL FOR ADDING VALUE

Early Main Street program efforts were aimed at stopping the loss of investment dollars, and the jobs and businesses they represented. It was acknowledged that the market for downtown development was generally not good, as many goods and services – and customers – had moved to malls and strip centers. If this loss of investment dollars was to be stemmed, and redirected, new tools would be needed to encourage reinvestment in downtown.

Facade improvement programs were among the first strategies employed by Main Street, and their impact and value has been noted in this report. But other tools and strategies were also created. While not every town used every incentive, many of these ideas have been widely employed. In North Carolina, cities and towns have offered incentives to improve the quality of signage available and in some cases remove extraneous signage (clutter). They have also created interior rehabilitation incentives and/or loans to encourage store upfitting, better displays, improved lighting and HVAC.

Some communities developed business assistance programs designed to help established businesses with a host of business management concerns. Others have put in place business recruitment programs and programs to support entrepreneurial interests. Still others established, in cooperation with their financial institutions and local government, revolving loan fund programs to support more extensive (and expensive) building rehabilitation. There have been parking lot landscaping incentives, marketing assistance, residential development incentives, rental assistance programs, and a host of other tools and strategies to encourage specific categories of investment and improvement.

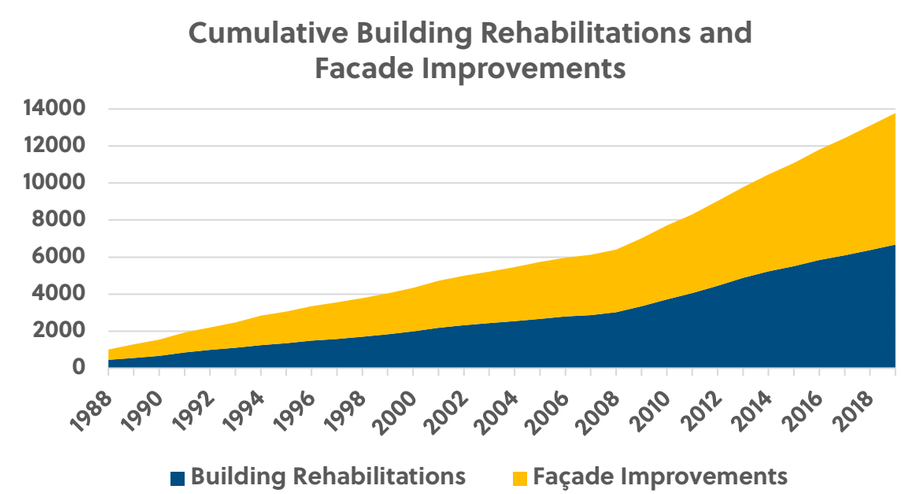
Artesana Ice Cream, Marion

FACADE IMPROVEMENTS AND BUILDING REHABILITATIONS

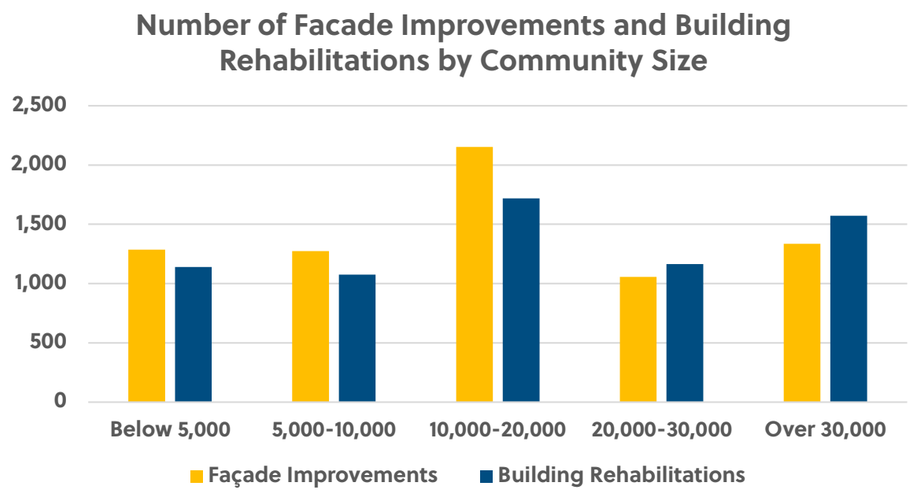
When Main Street began, there was considerable skepticism about the value of downtown revitalization efforts. To counter this, one of the earliest initiatives in almost every Main Street community was (and still is) the creation of a "facade improvement" program. Perhaps the most visible manifestation of Main Street health is the condition of building facades. This building feature serves as an important interface between the public and the activities located within. The condition of facades can change a visitor's impression of the community, and improvements signal a vibrant, thriving downtown. For this reason, making sure that facades are properly maintained and thoughtfully restored is a vital aspect in the overall composition and feel of Main Street. This is why facade improvement incentive programs are typically one of the first steps taken in downtown revitalization. However structured, these programs encourage property owners to invest in their facades, therefore creating a visible impact that something positive is in fact happening. Investment is taking place.

Some have said that the Main Street program is best described as creating an environment where investment can occur. Facade improvements are usually the leading indicators of new investment. As the investment climate improves, the confidence to take on more extensive, and more expensive, building rehabilitation rises. Main Street's incremental nature is best exemplified by this–small, affordable facade improvements lead to more expensive, yet critical, building rehabilitations. Fixing the roof, improving HVAC, creating upper floor housing is not where most programs–or property owners–begin. Yet those substantial building rehab efforts are critical if new business is to be attracted.

In North Carolina, facade improvements make up approximately 52% of the projects taking place on existing buildings in Main Street communities, while the other 48% are building rehabilitation projects.



It is notable that in communities with populations less than 20,000, facade improvements make up a larger share of projects completed than in larger sized communities. This likely is a reflection that in smaller communities, the economic environment for larger investments is less robust than in larger communities. Markets are smaller and business development is less certain, thus the ability to secure funding for more substantial building rehabilitation investment is more difficult. However, as incremental investment (like those made while undertaking facade improvements) continues, the market may improve to support larger rehabilitation expenditures.

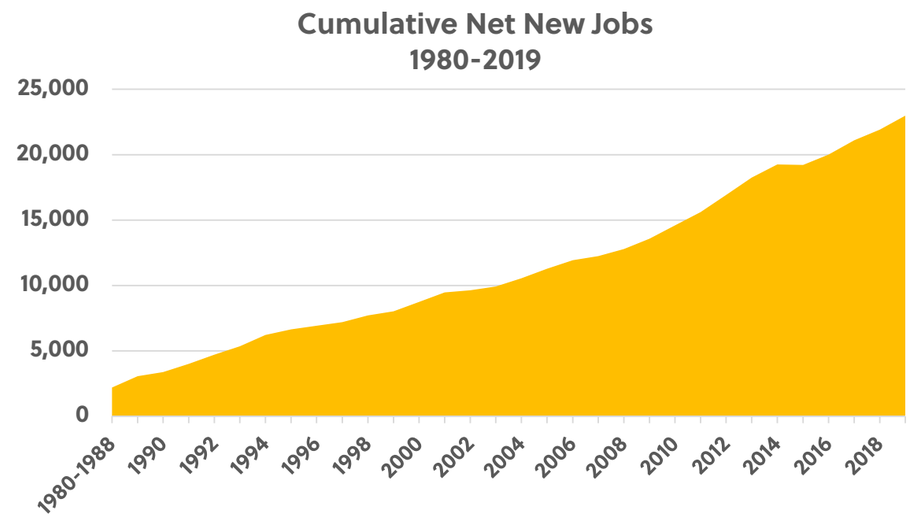


Real estate has become the world's primary source of urban capital accumulation, with 60% of the world's wealth invested in real estate, particularly in large metropolitan areas.[10] North Carolina Main Street supports building owners to invest in their buildings, ensuring that these capital assets continue to provide a source of income.

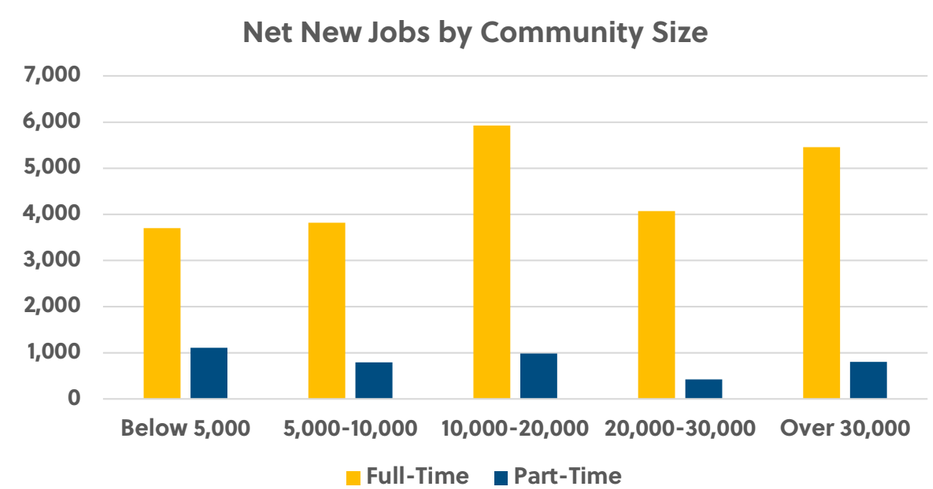
10 Samuel Stein. Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State. ; Downs, Anthony. Niagara of Capital: How global capital has transformed housing and real estate markets. Urban Land Institute, 2007.

NET NEW JOBS

North Carolina Main Street gathers a broad range of statistics from its participating communities to measure change. Believing that "net job creation" was a more accurate depiction of the local economy than just "new jobs," NCMS has asked communities to report not only the new jobs added, but also jobs lost. It is significant that North Carolina's Main Street communities have reported a cumulative total of nearly 23,000 net new full-time jobs and just over 4,000 net part-time jobs.

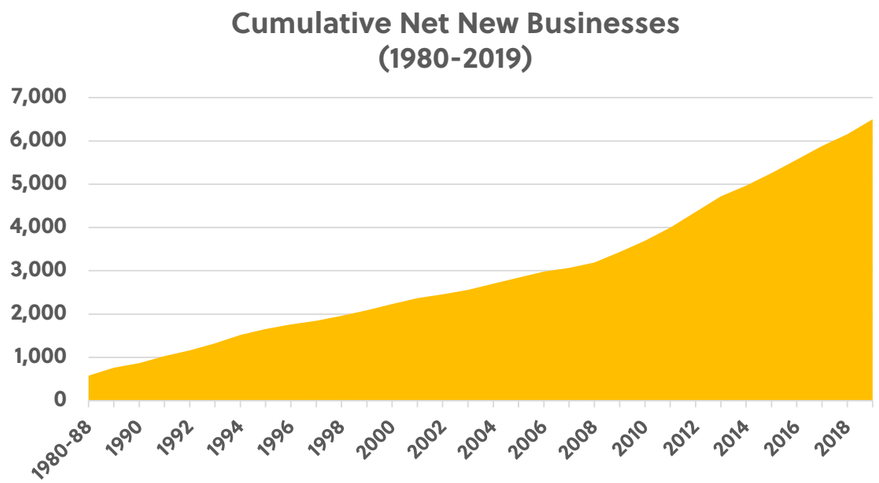


Mid-size communities have seen the highest number of net new full-time jobs (approximately 5,930), while communities with populations below 5,000 have seen the highest number of net new part-time jobs (approximately 1,100).

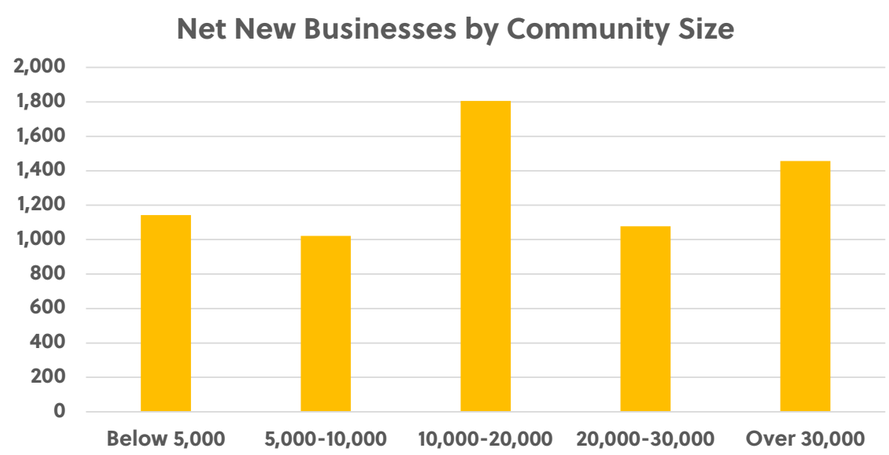


NET NEW BUSINESSES

Likewise, just reporting new business start-ups would not accurately reflect the true status of a local downtown economy. Therefore, NCMS asks its communities to report new businesses and business closings. In total, North Carolina Main Street communities have seen 6,503 net new businesses. Why is this number so large? First, downtowns, with their variety of spaces (size, condition, availability) and often more affordable rents, have proven to be ideal for business start-up. Second, the availability of a Main Street director to help support people in their new business efforts, coupled with incentives, has fueled the creation of new businesses.



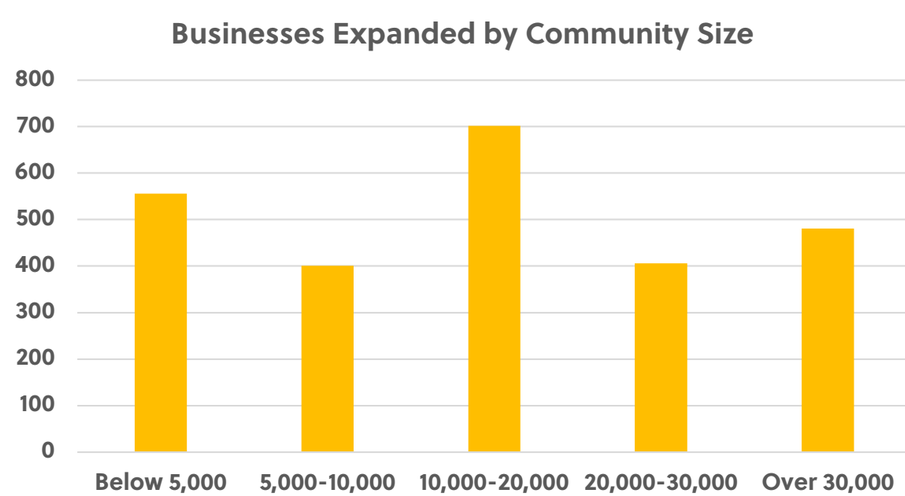
Similar to the net new jobs calculation, mid-size communities see the largest number of net new businesses. While only 19% of the North Carolina Main Street communities are mid-sized (10,000-20,000 people), 28% of net new businesses are reported in these communities. This shows that mid-size communities have been very successful in creating both net new jobs and net new businesses.



Persnickety Books and the Chill Place, Burlington

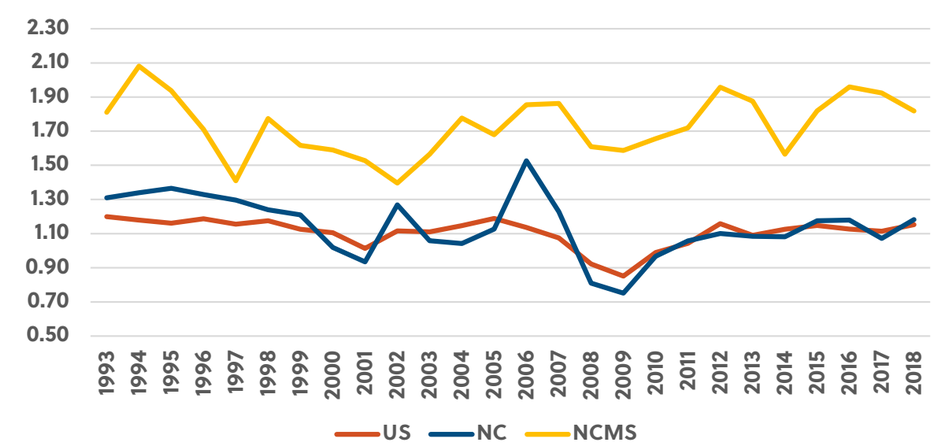
DD Bullwinkel's Outdoors, Brevard

Furthermore, Main Street communities have reported over 2,500 business expansions, most of which have occurred in mid-side communities. Often the prelude to the creation of a new business is the expansion of an existing one to "test the market." And business expansion is a strong sign of a vibrant economy which in itself can help attract new businesses.



OPEN CLOSE RATIO

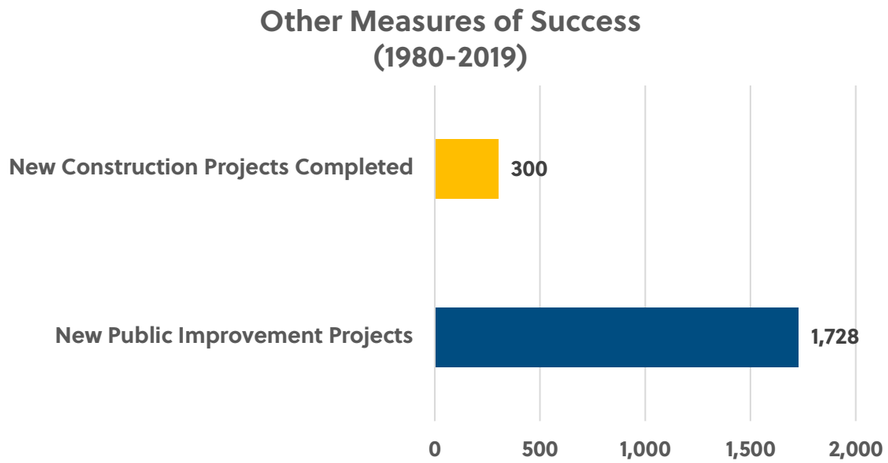
A useful test of local economic health is the relationship between the number of businesses that open vs. those that close, which can be expressed as a ratio. If, for example, over the course of a year one town saw 11 new businesses open but 10 businesses shut their doors, the ratio would be 1.1. The entire US economy was hit hard in the recession, which began in 2007 and officially lasted for 18 months. However, because the recovery was so weak, many parts of the country experienced a prolonged period of recession. That economic downturn was reflected in the open-to-close ratio in both the U.S. and in North Carolina. In 2006, the national open/close ratio was 1.14, meaning 114 business opened for every 100 that closed. By 2009, the ratio was down to .85, meaning only 85 businesses opened for every 100 that closed. The state of North Carolina as a whole fared worse–for three consecutive years, the state saw a more dramatic drop in the open/close ratio than the national average. But Main Street districts? Even in the depths of the recession, more businesses were opening than closing. At the recession's height in 2009, North Carolina Main Street communities had an open/close ratio of 1.59, meaning for every 159 businesses that opened, 100 closed. For every year over the past decade, Main Street communities outperformed both the state and the country on that measure.[11]



11 See Appendix 1 for a full listing of open/close ratios over the last 25 years.

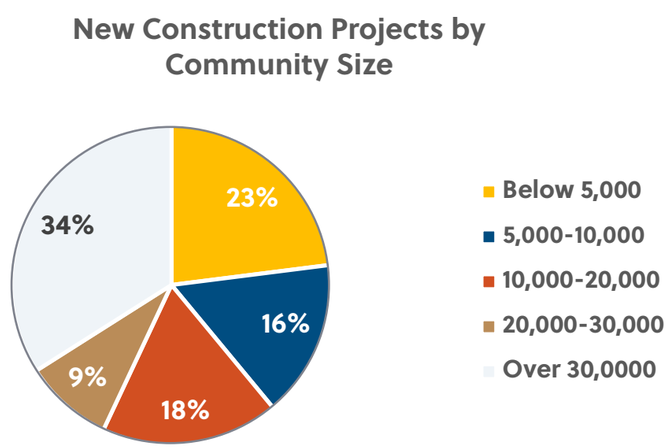
OTHER MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Besides net job and business growth, the North Carolina Main Street Program asks participating communities to report other metrics that help measure success and gauge investment in downtown. Facade improvements and building rehabilitation have already been noted. These types of investment increase the appeal of downtown, priming the market for new construction–an activity that is also considered a good indicator of economic health.



New Construction

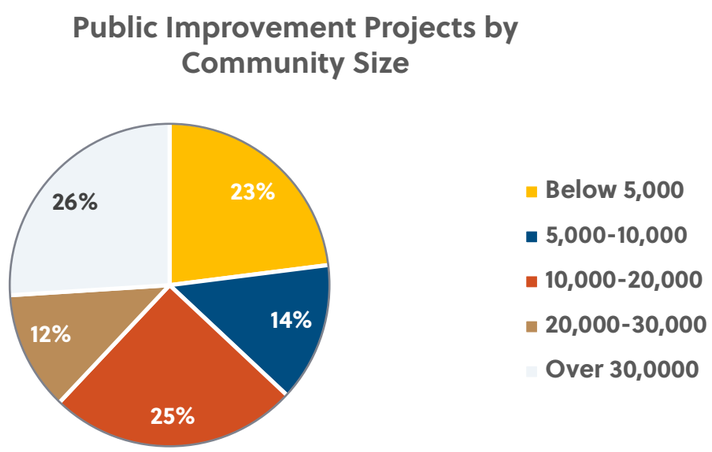
Since 2011, there have been 300 new construction projects reported, 43% of which have taken place in communities with populations over 20,000. Because of their larger size, these cities are more likely to have larger real estate markets, bustling rehabilitation activity, and a robust economic environment that supports new construction and infill.



Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park, Wilson

Public Improvements

Even more significantly, NCMS communities have reported over 1,700 public improvement projects since 2011. These can include activities such as streetscape improvements, receptacle installation, pedestrian safety measures, bike lanes, accessibility ramps, water main improvements, etc. These projects are happening in cities of all sizes–small, medium, and large communities were just as likely to undertake public improvement projects. This is likely due to the fact that public improvement projects vary greatly in size, cost, and complexity. Even a small town can paint bike lanes or crosswalks, while a larger town may do big streetscape projects.

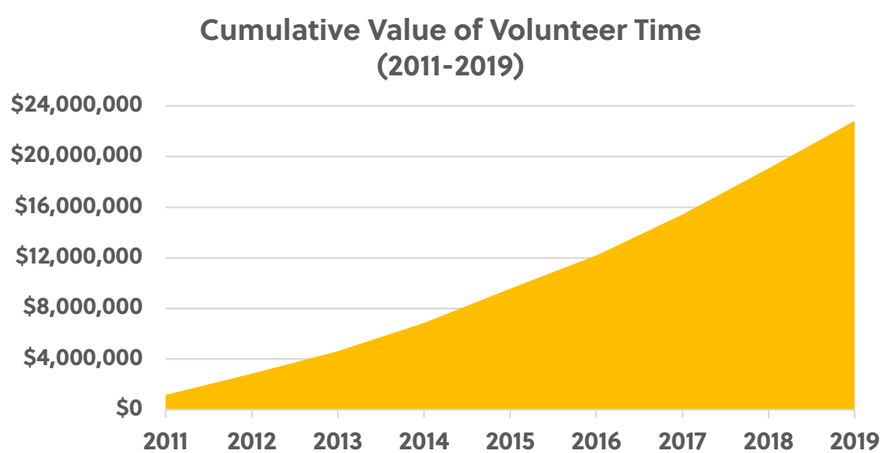


Volunteer Time

In the age of smartphones and big data, feeling connected to your community is even more vital. The Trust for Public Land often cites the concept of "Community Cohesion," the idea that the more webs of human relationships a neighborhood has, the stronger, safer, and more successful it is. Any institution that promotes this kind of community cohesion—whether a club, a school, a political campaign, a religious institution, a co-op—adds value to a neighborhood and, by extension, to the whole city.[12] This is exactly what Main Street does. By bringing in a broad cross-section of the community together to essentially help "revitalize" downtown, they are engaging in community building at its most basic level.

Unlike other forms of economic development, Main Street relies heavily on dedicated volunteers, which inherently builds social cohesion. Whether it's planning the Christmas tree lighting, serving on the design committee, or providing pro bono business support, Main Street provides opportunities for residents to forge connections with one another and invest their time, services, and talents back into their community. Volunteers make up Main Street boards, committees, and task forces, but also plan and run events and festivals, write grant proposals, organize clean-up efforts, lead tours, plant flowers and trees and do a host of other activities that are usually paid for in larger, or more financially solid, cities. North Carolina Main Street communities have documented the number of hours volunteers spent helping the Main Street program. Between 2011 and 2019, Main Street volunteers have logged over 1,006,493 hours.

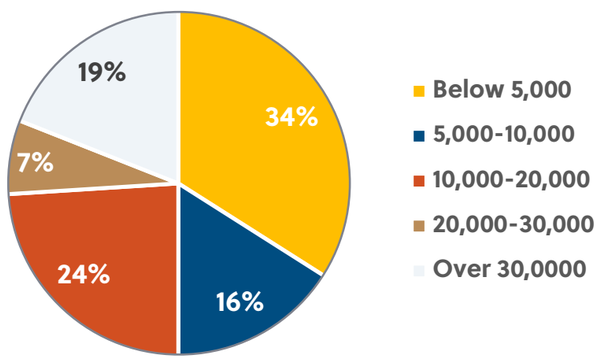
Independent Sector, a national organization focused on nonprofits, projects the dollar value of volunteer time nationally and by state. They note that, for 2019, the estimated value of each volunteer hour in North Carolina was $24.91.[13] After adjusting for inflation,[14] North Carolina Main Street volunteers have contributed a cumulative value of nearly $22,816,483 in time and services to their communities between 2011 and 2019.



12 Trust for Public Land, "Measuring the Economic Value of a City Park System", http://cloud.tpl.org/pubs/ccpe-econ-valueparks-rpt.pdf
13 North Carolina specific, Independent Sector
14 Using annual values from the Independent Sector for the value of volunteer hours from 2011 to 2019.

Captain Mark and Theresa Thesier, Edenton
Photo: Destination Downtown Edenton Facebook

Because smaller towns have fewer resources to hire management, small communities are putting in a considerable share of the total volunteer hours. This "gift of time" is a substantial investment to make their downtowns better.



Cost of an Empty Building

A BUILDING SITTING VACANT MIGHT SEEM LIKE A PROBLEM FOR ONLY THE PROPERTY OWNER. BUT A VACANT BUILDING MEANS THAT A BUSINESS WASN'T OPERATING, PAYCHECKS WERE NOT WRITTEN, SALES TAXES WERE NOT COLLECTED, AND UTILITY BILLS WERE NOT PAID.

A building sitting vacant might seem like a problem for only the property owner. But a vacant building means that a business wasn't operating, paychecks were not written, sales taxes were not collected, and utility bills were not paid. That lack of economic activity is also part of the cost of an empty building. For this analysis, information provided by a survey of Main Street directors was used. On average, the rent in North Carolina Main Street communities is around $8.75 per square foot per year. One of the most common new businesses to open in Main Street communities was a coffee shop. A common size for a coffee shop is 2,500 square feet–roughly the same size of a typical ground floor of a Main Street building.

Using those factors and the typical operating statement of a coffee shop, a reasonable estimate can be made of the "lost opportunity" for the community if just one 2,500 square foot space stays empty for a year.

These are not all of the expenditures that the coffee house proprietor would have made, but many of these directly affect other local businesses. Not only did the landlord not receive rent, but the attorney and the accountant, the insurance agent and the office supply store, the bank and local government, all received less because a relatively small building that could have housed a small business sat empty instead. A vacant building downtown costs everyone.

Receipt for Cost of An Empty Building

Bill to:
The Community
101 Main Street, NC

Receipt # 1010
Due: 1/1/21

DESCRIPTION	COST
Sales not made	$365,000
Rent not collected	$21,875
Dessert purchases from local bakery not made	$18,100
Wages not paid	$96,800
Legal, Accounting, and Professional Services not used	$1,820
Insurance premiums not paid	$3,450
Advertising not purchased	$2,300
Business fees and licenses not secured	$264
Interest and bank charges not paid	$1,150
Office supplies not bought	$460
Motor Vehicle expenses not incurred	$2,825
Telephone and Internet services not used	$1,725
Utilities not paid	$3,450
Sales tax not collected	$25,500

Art by Design Building, Laurinburg

Impacts of Downtown Housing

DOWNTOWN HOUSING HAS IMPACTS BEYOND JUST RENT CHECKS.

Many North Carolina Main Street communities made it a priority to create downtown housing. This has proven to be an effort worth doing. While there is a wide range of monthly rents for a downtown apartment, the average is around $950 per month. This allows property owners to receive revenue from space that may well have sat vacant for years. But the landlord isn't the only one who benefits.

How much buying power does a resident in a downtown apartment unit bring? If that unit is occupied by a couple paying rent of $950 per month, here is what they spend over the course of a year.

Of course, not every dollar that they spend will be spent downtown. Some will be spent on vacation, on the trip to the regional mall, and through online purchases. But downtowns have an opportunity to meet many of the goods and services needs of that couple. So when they lease a downtown apartment, they are not just bringing their rent check; they are bringing considerable purchasing power that has the potential to benefit a wide array of businesses.

Average Annual Expenditures

Rent	$11,400
Food at Home	$3,008
Food away from Home	$2,392
Alcoholic Beverages	$398
Utilities & Public Services except phone	$1,777
Telephone	$991
Personal Services	$263
Housekeeping Supplies	$500
Household Furnishings and Equipment	$1,303
Men's Apparel	$295
Women's Apparel	$514
Footwear	$261
Vehicle related Expenses	$2,181
Health Insurance	$2,213
Medical Services	$571
Drugs	$327
Fees and Admissions	$426
Audio and visual equipment and services	$696
Pets	$447
Personal care products and services	$522
Reading	$63
Education	$809
Tobacco/Smoking Products	$279
Cash Contributions	$1,100
Personal Insurance and Pensions	$4,325
Everything Else	$3,649
Total	**$40,710**

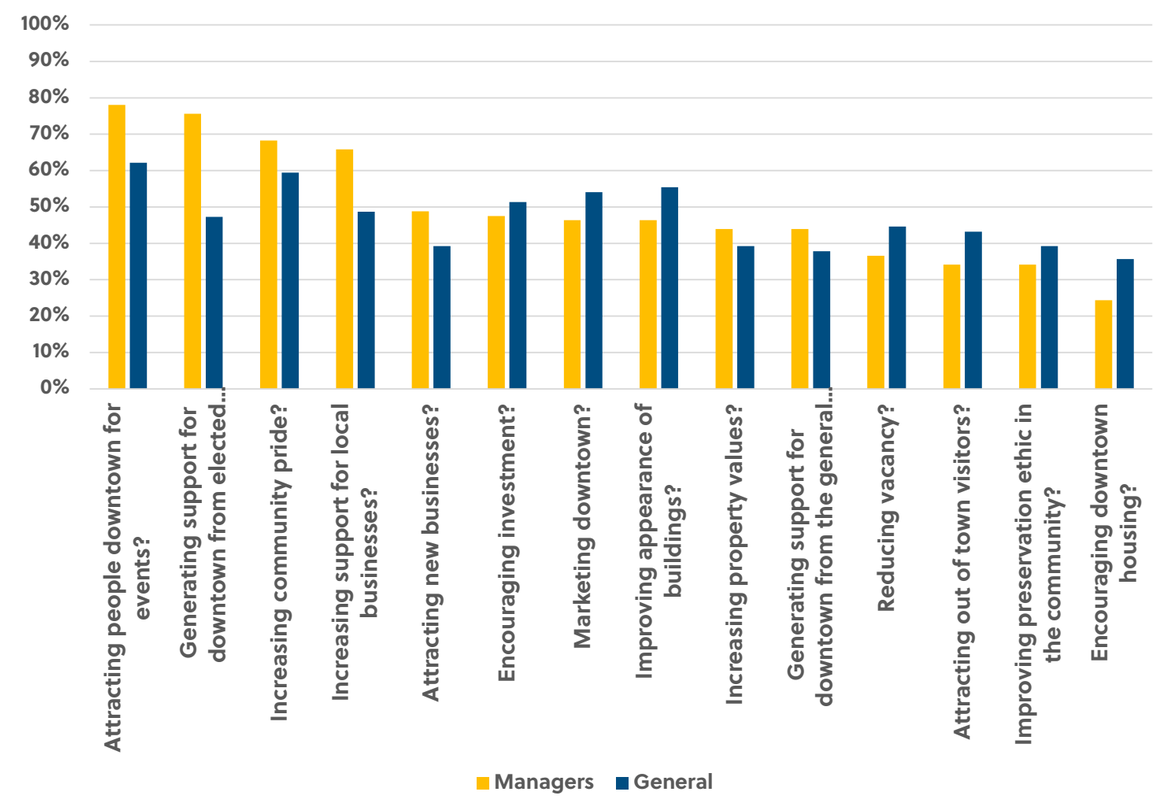
And the survey says....

THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN—COMMITMENT TO MAIN STREET PRINCIPLES IN GENERAL AND INCREMENTALISM IN PARTICULAR PAY LONG TERM DIVIDENDS TO THE COMMUNITY.

As part of this analysis, two online surveys were undertaken. One was of current Main Street directors, and a second, much larger group of people who have attended the annual North Carolina Main Street conference in recent years. That latter group also primarily fell into four categories: local government employee, business owner, Main Street board member, and Main Street committee member.

While some questions were specific to each survey, one was asked of both groups. "How effective has Main Street been in the following:" The graph below shows the percentage of both groups responding, "Very Effective."

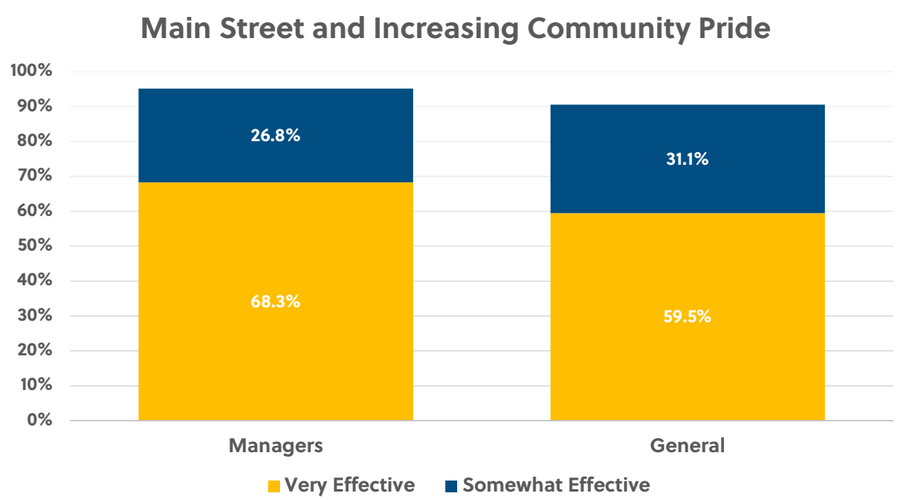
Main Street "Very Effective" in....



What is most notable is both the high level of perceived effectiveness of Main Street overall and the general consistency of the responses of the two groups. Two areas where there is greater spread in the answers is "attracting people downtown for events" and "generating support for downtown from elected officials." In those cases, the Directors perceived a greater effectiveness than did the general respondents. The reason for this is probably the greater familiarity of the Directors of their own workload. For most directors much annual workload is focused on those two areas, but it may be more behind the scenes and less apparent to others in the community.

In other areas the general respondents actually saw Main Street as more effective than did the Directors, including "improving appearance of buildings", "reducing vacancy", and "encouraging downtown housing." All three of these are areas that most Directors have a "we can still do better" attitude, and may not fully appreciate the impact their work is having on the community as a whole.

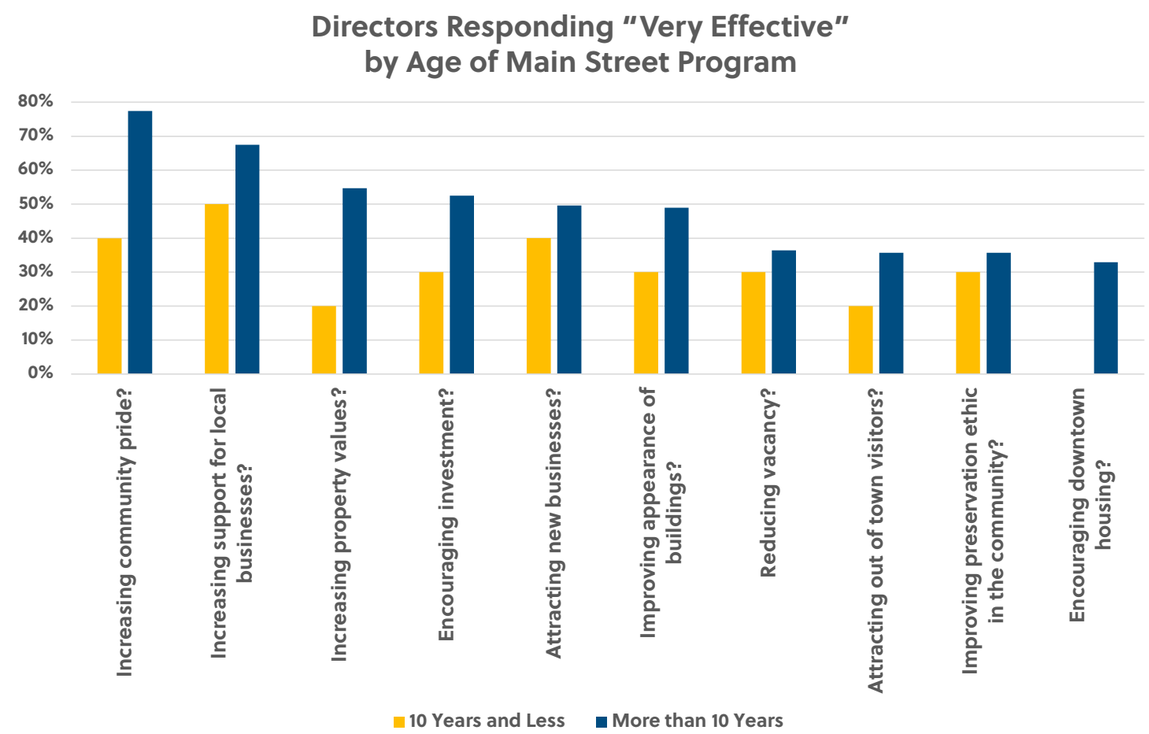
The third striking result of this survey is the impact that Main Street has on community pride. For both groups, when the "Very Effective" is combined with "Somewhat Effective" the responses are more than 90%. Main Street may be an economic development program, but it is having huge impacts on how North Carolina communities feel about themselves.



From the beginning, Main Street has been an incremental program of downtown revitalization – one business, one building, one block at a time. Main Street has never been the "big fix," the "instant answer," or the "overnight success." What Main Street has proven is that consistent, persistent, long-term efforts succeed. Some efforts just take time.

For some types of economic development outcomes – increasing property values, attracting investment, reducing vacancy, encouraging downtown housing – Main Street has to create the economic, political, and physical environment that motivates the private sector to act. So, it is less surprising that longer lived programs will see greater effectiveness in those areas.

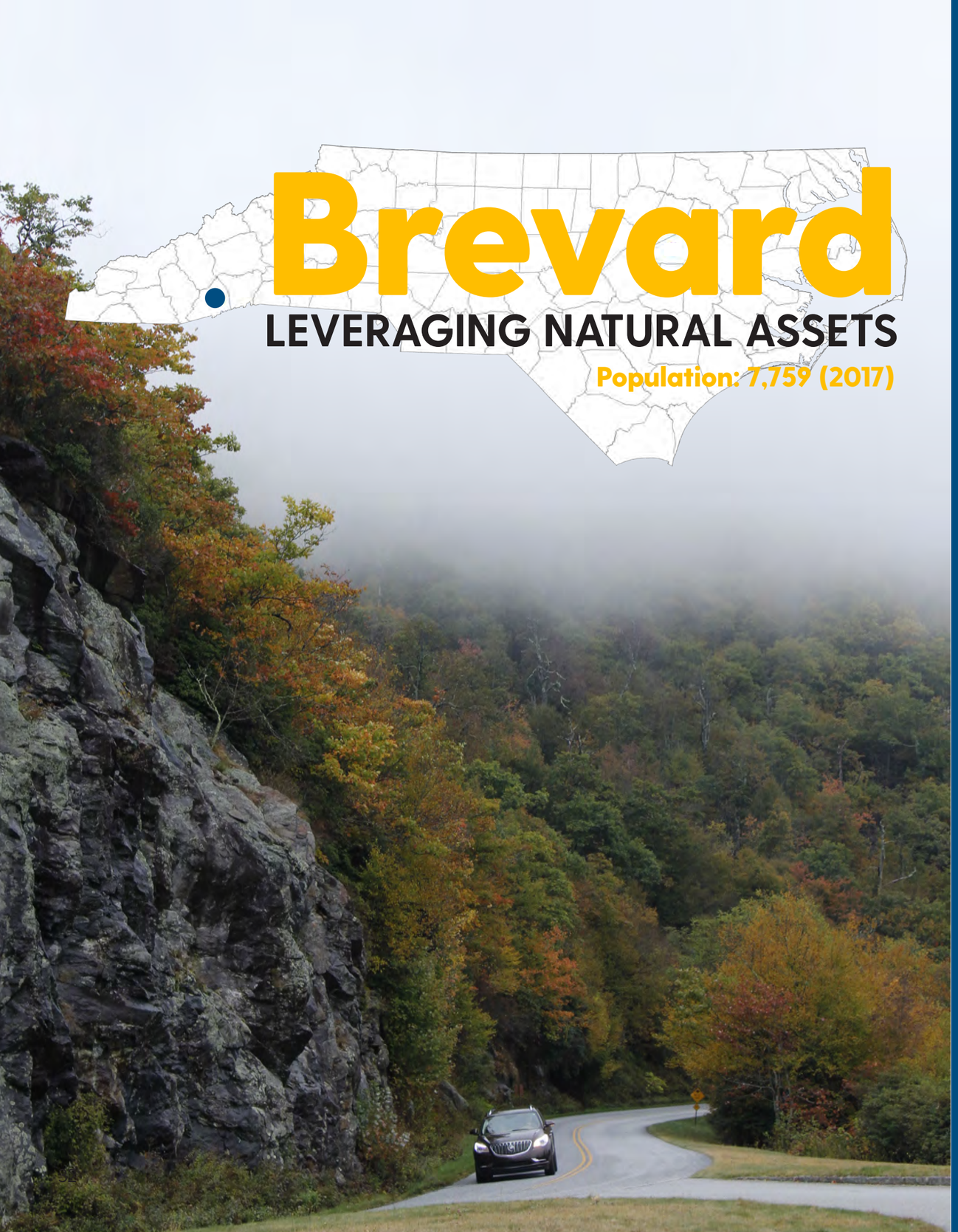
But less tangible results – increasing community pride and support for local businesses, improving the preservation ethic – also get better as Main Street programs mature, evolve, and adapt to the local context.



The good news is: 1) Main Street was right when it made the decision to be an incremental program; and 2) commitment to Main Street principles in general and incrementalism in particular pay long term dividends to the community.

Why Main Street is Successful – It's the Communities

While the cumulative numbers are large and impressive, the success of North Carolina Main Street can really be put into perspective by hearing from the people on the ground. The following is a selection of case studies showcasing communities of a variety of sizes, program tenure, and geography across the state–demonstrating how they leverage Main Street for their community.



Brevard

LEVERAGING NATURAL ASSETS

Population: 7,759 (2017)

since 1993:

$32,041,405
Main Street Investment

140
Net New Businesses

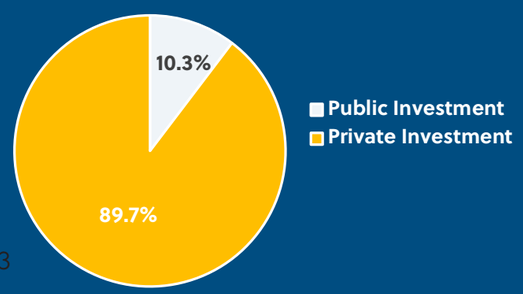
469
Net Full Time Jobs

28.6%
Increase in Number of Housing Units Downtown

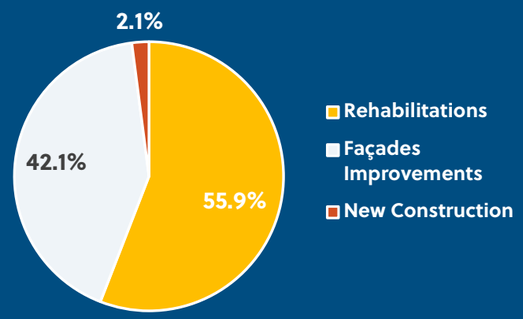
2.3%
Commercial Vacancy

52
Net Part Time Jobs

Main Street Investment



Construction Activities



Land of Waterfalls

Bracken Preserve

Visitors Downtown

Transylvania County, of which Brevard is the county seat, along with neighboring Henderson County have the highest concentration of summer camps in the country. Since at least the 1920's, kids–and their parents–have been arriving from all across the nation to attend these camps and to enjoy the atmosphere and hospitality that this area offers. With both national and state forest lands in the county, and over 50% of the county designated as public land, "Brevard is the center of it all." That has led Heart of Brevard, the city's Main Street organization, to set its primary goal "to establish the downtown as the crossroads to exceptional outdoor recreation with a downtown lined with diverse and independent businesses that support [the] brand as an outdoor adventure community."

Towards that goal, the city has an exciting project underway to solidify the connection between the surrounding nature trails and downtown Brevard. The city is constructing a multi-use depot building, a new structure with architecture inspired by the original railroad depot, that will include restrooms and an open-air multi-use space designed for activities such as picnics, concerts, and small gatherings. The project also includes a continuation of the existing City Greenway, which will connect the current terminus at McLean Road, along Railroad Avenue to Probart Street. This extension is just one piece in the city's larger plan to expand Brevard's bike path and parks system. The ultimate goal is a rails-to-trails system that will utilize the train depot as a space to introduce bikers and hikers from the Estatoe Trail to downtown, encouraging them to go into town for a few hours for a meal or shopping. This larger trail system will connect Brevard to Hendersonville, Laurel Park, Horse Shoe, Etowah, and the Pisgah Forest.

Brevard has built its success by being "an incredibly warm, authentic mountain community that has tons of stuff going on." Some of that "stuff" is in the arts. Brevard has a strong music industry with lots of venues throughout downtown and the internationally known Brevard Music Center. The Center features some of the finest musicians, across all types of music, in the nation. The arts are further on display as seen in the downtown

O.P. Taylor's Toy Store

DD Bullwinkel's Outdoors, Brevard

sculpture trail or in the many local galleries. As the community has grown in visitor traffic, Main Street has moved from destination marketing to destination management.

Downtown is further noted for its excellent farmers' market; its unique local businesses, like DD Bullwinkel's, O.P Taylor's, White Squirrel Shoppe, and the Red Wolf Gallery; and its easily accessible hiking and biking trails. The latest community and economic development effort, the Lumber Yard District, will be linked directly via paved path to the Pisgah National Forest trail system.

Brevard is also becoming known as a "younger retirees" market. These are people who are able to retire early but are still active. Many of them appreciate the easy access to national and state forests lands and the opportunities these outdoor spaces provide. And for some, the final complement to music, an active lifestyle, and good food is Oskar Blues Brewery (OBB). OBB is headquartered in Colorado but came to Brevard in 2013 and since then has been a major contributor to North Carolina's growing reputation for craft beer.

Since becoming a designated Main Street community in 1993, Brevard's mantra, as noted by Mayor Jimmy Harris is, "all you do is the next right thing." That has included projects such as At the Wall, a third floor addition over an old hotel, and a new construction three-story mixed use infill project with parking and a public plaza. Also in the pipeline is Clemson Park, the only city owned property on Main Street, which will redevelop two empty lots and further enhance the downtown for community life, commerce, and as a gateway to the Brevard Music Center, Bracken Preserve, and other community assets. Heart of Brevard will be in the middle of whatever "the next right thing" will be.

"All you can do is the next right thing."
Mayor Jimmy Harris

Mayor Harris at the future Train Depot Site

Burlington

DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE SHARED FACILITIES

Population: 52,813 (2017)

since 1988:

$67,634,287
Main Street Investment

75
Net New Businesses

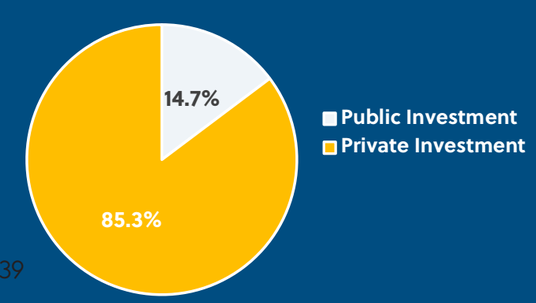
65
Net Full Time Jobs

3.8%
Increase in Number of Housing Units Downtown

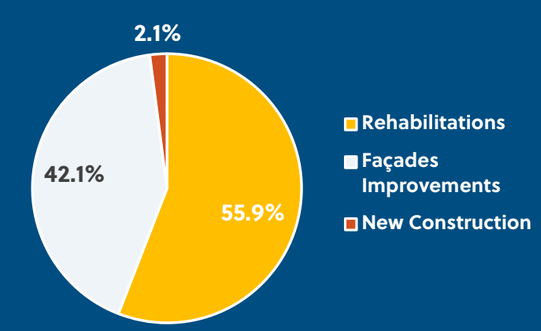
10.4%
Commercial Vacancy

28
Net Part Time Jobs

Main Street Investment



Construction Activities



Love Lock Sculpture

Downtown Mural

Burlington Beer Works

Burlington, North Carolina is a city on the cutting edge of the sharing economy. Entrepreneurs and organizations have recognized the city's innovative approach to shared spaces and are choosing Burlington as their home base. "These shared spaces are the ultimate public-private partnership; these things don't happen without a strong downtown organization, a willing city, a committed developer," said former Main Street director, Jessica Pasión.

One shared space coming to Burlington is a new shared dining space, operating out of what used to be a co-operative grocery store. The new Burlington Food Hall will have 4,000 square feet of restaurant space and an open bar area, 4 food kiosks in the center of the building, and a play area for kids. Food halls are a national trend, much like a food court, but with a focus on unique, locally owned restaurants. Instead of individual tables, the dining area will have family-style dining with big, long, barn-style tables. It was important to the Burlington Downtown Corporation and partners that this be a space that not only allows the community to gather and share food, but also a place for up and coming chefs and restaurant entrepreneurs to test concepts and grow from. Thus, the design also includes a food truck commissary kitchen, so that local food trucks also have a place to prep for the day and make it easier for them to undergo inspection.

As part of this project, the building will be getting an exterior facelift and a fresh new interior. A previous Main Street Solutions grant was given to the former grocery store and has already saved the developers a lot of leg work. "The work done previously thanks to a Main Street grant gave us a huge head start; we couldn't have made this work without it," said Wellsley Robinson, owner of Core Properties LLC. "I realized that the building was an opportunity for me," Robinson said, "something where I could work with the previous owner and the city and Downtown Corporation, and we could try to create the best outcome from the unfortunate closing of Company Shops."

Burlington Beer Works is a co-op brewery and restaurant, the first in the state, "with the aim of securing a shared network of local and regional

"These shared spaces are the ultimate public-private partnership; these things don't happen without a strong downtown organization, a willing city, a committed developer."

Jessica Paison, Executive Director of Downtown Burlington

STEAM Junction

Smitty's

The Chill Place

partnerships made up of farmers, producers, and service professionals." They see part of their mission to be "an engine driving the revitalization of Burlington." Noting that Alamance County has over 300 fast food chains, more per capita than any other county, the owners see a role in mentoring other restaurant people and improving the dining experience for both patrons and staff.

In 2014, Burlington joined participating cities across the country in the Mayor's Maker Challenge and was declared a "Maker City" by City Council. The Mayor's Maker Challenge is a national initiative that calls mayors to action in order to bolster the "maker" movement within their community. A result of this initiative is STEAM Junction, a makerspace in Burlington that provides members with tools, materials, and equipment, such as 3D printers, a CNC router, laser cutter, sewing machines, electronics lab, woodshop, Silhouette vinyl cutters. The makerspace is the passion project of Bennett Harris, who after attending maker fairs around the world, while also designing and assembling "Reinventing Science" kits in his home, was determined to bring that can-do energy to the people of Burlington. Yet it still wasn't clear if a makerspace was viable in Burlington--having a homebase requires money, and that meant building a membership that could pay dues. The question remained whether there were enough "makers" to support such a venture. So before diving into a lease, Bennett invested time into starting the Alamance Makers Guild. He hosted the first ever Burlington Maker Faire, which today attracts over 4,500 people and 100 exhibits.

All of this success made the time right to open a space for the community to make. "Makerspaces are usually built on self-identified makers–artists or engineers. Our audience is everyone else who could use a space like this for their business," said Bennett. Today STEAM Junction provides instruction for all ages through mentoring, workshops, and classes. One of the makers said, "Without this makerspace, I couldn't have a business. I would have to go to Raleigh to get the software and equipment I need. But the network of craftsmen is the most valuable thing–it's an extended family."

Persnickety Bookstore, looking into The Chill Place

Another downtown building that embraces the shared concept allows two businesses to occupy the same space, saving on overhead and creating a unique space. Movil Realty is a company that uses technology to make home buying and selling easier–particularly for millennial and minority buyers–using smart vehicles and a real time app to put buyers, sellers, and agents in contact immediately. Their operation is almost entirely remote, but they needed a space for meetings and client interaction so they opened a coworking space, called The Chill Place, for their realtors. This space can also be utilized by remote workers on a monthly membership basis. Even after opening their coworking space to subscribers, the building was too large for their operation. That's when they partnered with Persnickety Books to fill out the space.

Persnickety is a locally-owned used book store that works with Benevolence Farms and Sustainable Alamance, organizations that help individuals who are working to improve their lives after returning from prison. According to Persnickety's website, "From community events to volunteer opportunities, engaging conversations and monumental occasions, we strive to enhance the bonds that make Burlington the place we love to live." The store is owned by Ian Baltutis, who also serves as the Mayor and Chairman of Promotions for the Burlington Downtown Corporation. When he bought the business in 2019, he realized it was an opportunity to improve lives in Burlington. He reached out to Sustainable Alamance and Benevolence Farms to make plans to employ formerly incarcerated individuals, who will be given part-time jobs at a new off-site processing center. "We want to lead by example in both who we hire, who we trust and how we support and compensate them," Baltutis said.[15]

15 https://www.thetimesnews.com/news/20190215/downtowns-persnickety-books-bought-by-burlington-mayors-family

Edenton

USING PROMOTION TO CHANGE DOWNTOWN

Population: 4,800 (2017)

since 2003:

$14,412,153
Main Street Investment

24
Net New Businesses

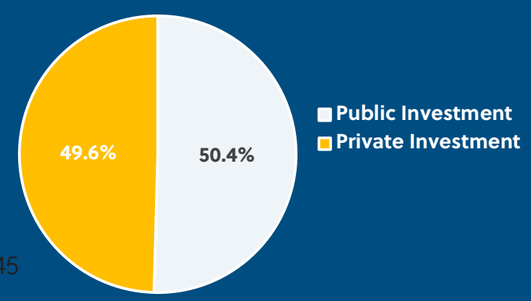
-39
Net Full Time Jobs

66.7%
Increase in Number of Housing Units Downtown

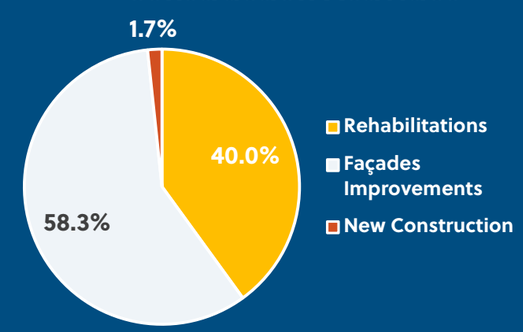
3.6%
Commercial Vacancy

7
Net Part Time Jobs

Main Street Investment



Construction Activities



Local artists rendering of Edenton Coffee House

Commercial Filming

Taylor Theater

Edenton is a town right out of a movie–the folks at the pharmacy know their customers' names, the locally-owned hardware store sells anything and everything, the two-screen movie theater shows movies every night at 7 pm. The local coffee shop has a giant communal table, and all morning people sit down to join that day's discussion, and as they leave, another sits down without a break in the conversation. In many respects, Edenton's downtown has always been stable and healthy--but that's exactly why they decided to pursue Main Street accreditation in 2004. "We wanted to join Main Street because we didn't want to take what we have for granted," said Main Street director Jennifer Harriss.

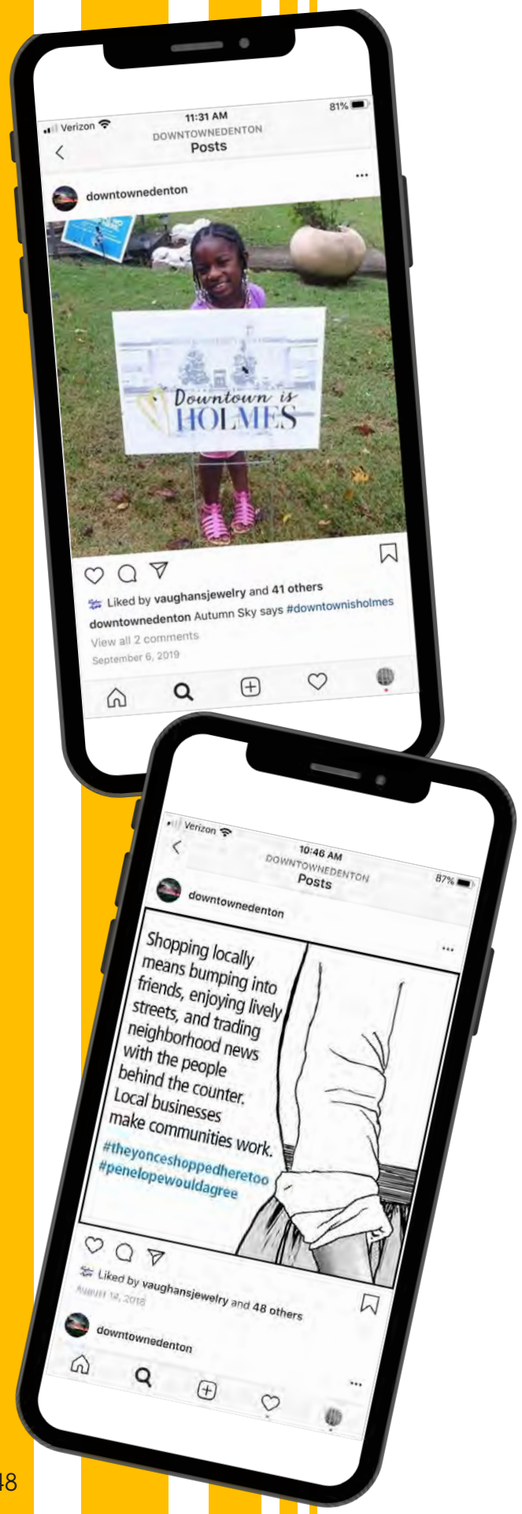
For the last few years, Destination Downtown Edenton (DDE), the town's Main Street organization, has honed its promotional skills and used them not only to raise the profile of downtown, but to raise awareness for important issues in Edenton. Last year, DDE ran a successful advocacy campaign to keep the town's high school from leaving downtown--recognizing that having students downtown plays a large role in its vibrancy and success, and that the students benefit from having a walkable destination after school where they can study and hang out.

Many of Edenton's promotional campaigns focus on keeping dollars local. Recently, DDE has gotten in the business of making promotional videos. DDE partnered with the local movie theater to create two commercials championing downtown. "When you shop at local businesses, your dollar never leaves home, supporting your friends, your neighbors, and your family." That's what one of the commercials tells viewers about shopping on Main Street. The first follows a dollar spent at a local business as it changes hands throughout downtown, going from the pharmacy, to the dance school, to the jewelry store, supporting well-known and beloved institutions downtown. That's what Cherie Dori, the in-store designer at Vaughn's Jewelry, said: "What people realize is, when you support one of these businesses, you are supporting people who support this community." Another commercial, which was given a North Carolina Main Street Award, is titled "Keep Your Dollar Home for the Holidays," and shows

"We wanted to join Main Street because we didn't want to take what we have for granted."

Jennifer Harriss, Executive Director of Destination Downtown Edenton.

Blount's Mutual Drugs, Edenton



a little girl doing her Christmas shopping downtown, carrying her gifts behind her in a little red wagon.

Edenton also initiated a promotional campaign called "Downtown Dollars." Downtown dollars, as the name suggests, are only accepted at downtown businesses. They can only be spent in $5 increments without change, which gives a little extra boost to the stores. They can be bought from the city, but the city often gives them out as prizes. The downtown dollars campaign ties into another popular event put on by DDE– "Wedding Bells." Between February and May, downtown businesses allow you to vote on a betrothed couple whenever you shop. The couple with the most votes wins $1,000 downtown dollars--funneling that money right back to downtown. This promotional campaign has also recently won a North Carolina Main Street Award.

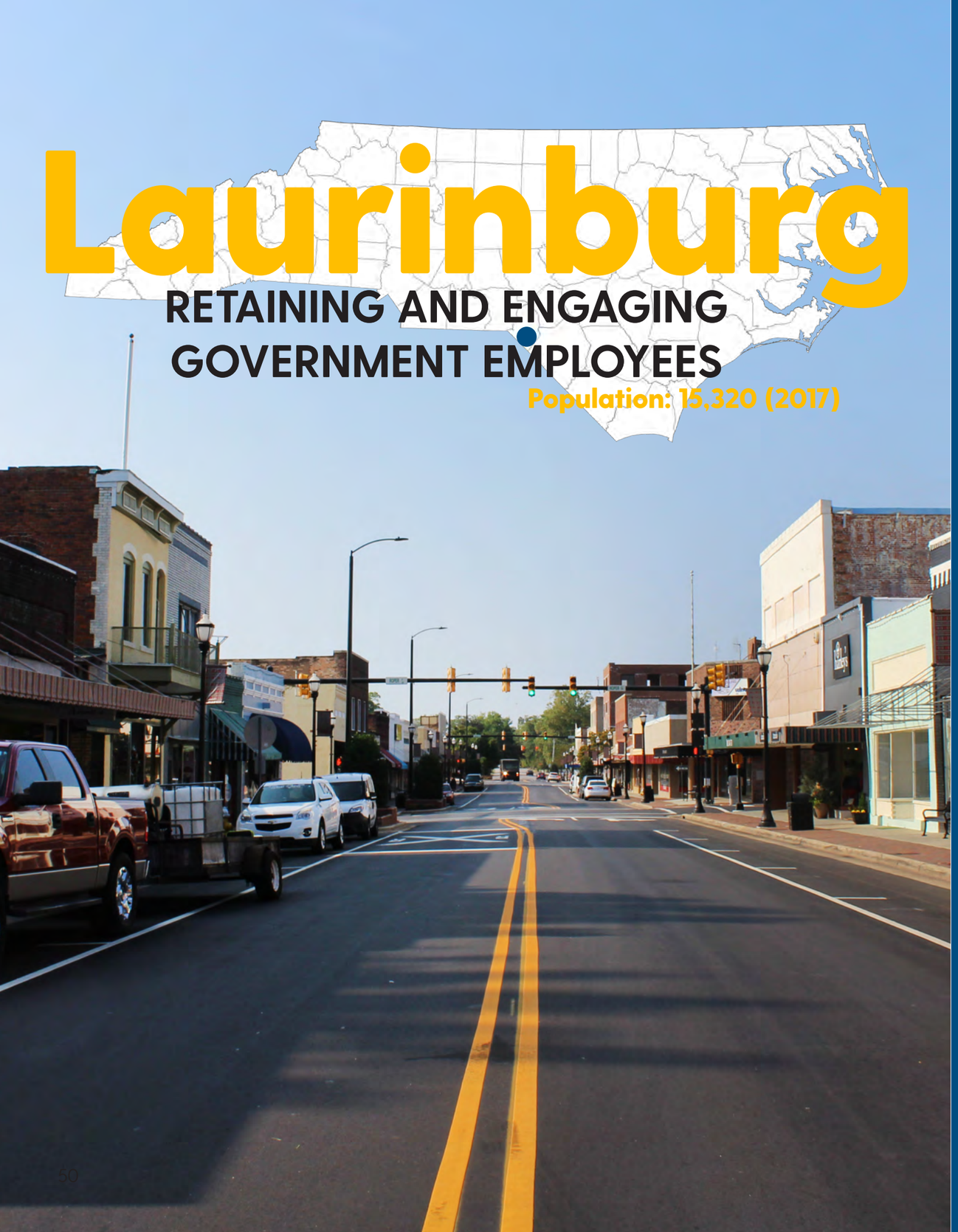
Finally, DDE has executed some fun social media campaigns to highlight women's history in Edenton. An important figure in Edenton's history is Penelope Barker, who led the Women's Tea Party during the American Revolution. 90% of business owners in downtown Edenton are women, so this campaign was a way to celebrate the women powering downtown in the past and the present. By creating hashtags like #steepithere, #itstartedheresokeepithere, and #penelopewouldagree, DDE has leveraged this history to creatively market downtown.

Feathers Boutique

Laurinburg

RETAINING AND ENGAGING GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Population: 15,320 (2017)



since 2019:

$758,792
Main Street Investment

2
Net New Businesses

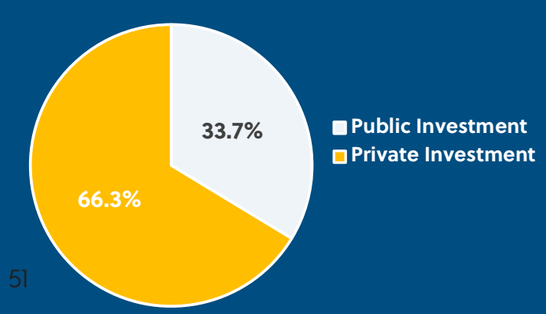
5
Net Full Time Jobs

N/A
Increase in Number of Housing Units Downtown

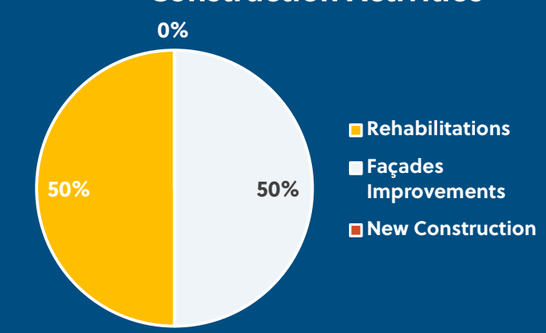
20.9% Commercial Vacancy

1
Net Part Time Jobs

Main Street Investment



Construction Activities



Pass Through Park

Downtown Art Garden

Tis The Season

Since joining Main Street only two short years ago, downtown Laurinburg has seen a renaissance. Francis Willis, longtime business owner, said "I have been downtown 32 years, and I have never seen this much going on. The number of projects, the size of the projects, the festivals. Everyone is so excited." In the very short time that Laurinburg has been in the program, a great number of events have started or moved to downtown, including "Laurinburg after 5," an evening concert series that attracts up to 900 people, and Springfest, a partnership between the Arts Council, Chamber of Commerce, Scotland Memorial Foundation, and Parks and Recreation Department to host a 5k run that ends in a downtown festival. Last year, Kuumba, an African American cultural festival, was held in downtown for the first time in 29 years. Rev. "BJ" Gibson, a member of the African-American Heritage Committee and an organizer of the festival, said of the move to downtown: "We've really upgraded this year – growing with a breath of fresh air."[16] Tyris Jones, also a member of the African-American Heritage Committee said, "We also wanted to bring people downtown and help out the local businesses."

Last, but by no means least, 'Tis the Season is Laurinburg's annual Christmas Festival that brings a tree lighting ceremony, a singing Christmas tree, and an ice skating rink downtown. This year, the festival was awarded a North Carolina Main Street Award of Merit for Best Public Private Partnership because of the extensive community engagement and involvement that made the event so successful. Cynthia Womble, co-director of 'Tis the Season, said, "It really is a community partnership." The organizers also renovated a building downtown to house their Christmas pop-up store, which raises money for the festival. Womble said "We feel so confident in Main Street - we couldn't do it without these guys."

However, Main Street is about more than just flashy events and promotions, and Laurinburg's new Main Street director is well aware. Daniel Walters became the Downtown Development Coordinator and Main Street director when Laurinburg joined the program two years ago, and since then the downtown has seen major building investment–not only from

16 https://www.laurinburgexchange.com/news/29486/kuumba-festival-heats-up-the-downtown

The Weknd Warrior Trade Co.

Red Willow Hair Studio

Photograph by Robert Willett/The News & Observer via AP, printed in Washington Times

private hands, but from the city and county. Neither are afraid to take control of significant properties where neglect is threatening the building's integrity. "We are leading by example," said City Manager Charles Nichols, "our investment makes others more confident in their investments." Recently, the city purchased the old Firestone building, which had been damaged during Hurricane Florence when the old McDougald building fell onto it. The city has also strategically acquired six downtown lots, with the goal to create a vibrant civic space that plays host to many functions and helps spur the continued revitalization of downtown. There is a Main Street pocket park that serves as a passthrough to a rear parking lot that the city has big plans for--this space will become a park and event space.

The Scotland County Economic Development Corporation has also purchased two buildings downtown – the old Art by Design Building and the former Harris Furniture building. Mark Ward with the EDC wants to make these buildings turn-key for the right businesses. Ward said, "My job is industrial recruitment. EDCs don't do retail or downtown. But my job is also recruitment generally, and when I drive employees through here, they have to think it's a place they want to be." Ward felt it was a gesture the EDC needed to make because the buildings were in such a state that no one else would take them on-- "So we chose to buy them and our plans are to repair what needs to be repaired, reconstruct it into a feasible business model like a retail facility to help attract new businesses."

Daniel said, "This Main Street designation shows our partners that we are serious--we have incredible working relationships here in Laurinburg." Those partners include the Scotland County Economic Development Corporation, the City Manager's Office, the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Arts Council, the Scotland County Department of Parks and Recreation, the Scotland County School Board, and local colleges. Scotland County School Board Superintendent Ron Hargrave said it best: "The things that unite us are centered downtown. There are lots of things that separate us these days. Downtown brings citizens together--the more reasons they have to come downtown, the more they interact."

"The things that unite us are downtown."

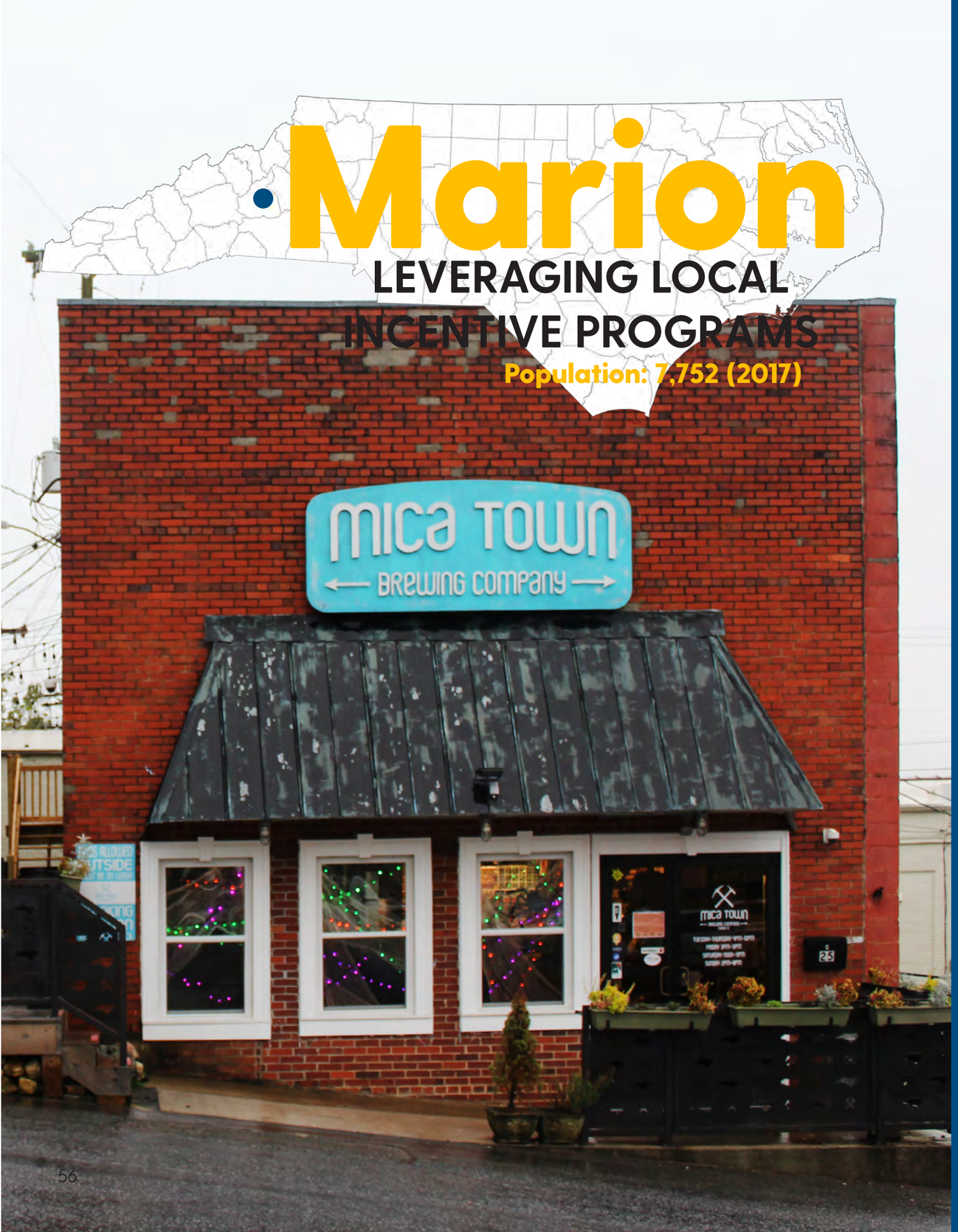
Ron Hargrave , Scotland County School Board Superintendent

Art by Design Building, Laurinburg

Marion

LEVERAGING LOCAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Population: 7,752 (2017)



since 2003:

$19,094,442
Main Street Investment

54
Net New Businesses

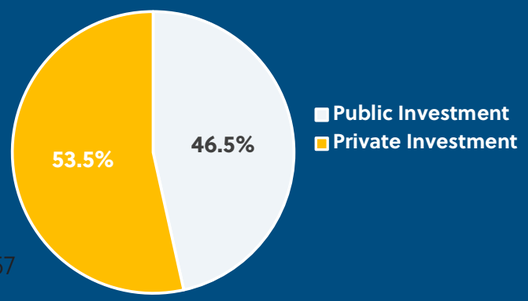
158
Net Full Time Jobs

0.0%
Increase in Number of Housing Units Downtown

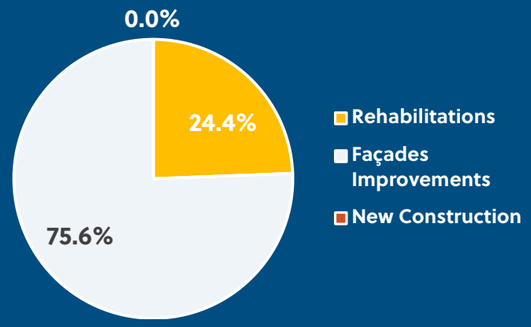
3.1%
Commercial Vacancy

45
Net Part Time Jobs

Main Street Investment



Construction Activities



GEM Session Notes

Turtle Labs

Flavors on Main

Marion entered the NC Main Street program in 2003 but it took a while for their efforts to bear fruit. There were some early successes - the McDowell Arts Council Association (MACA) headquarters on Main Street is especially noteworthy, as is the renovation of the historic train depot by the Railroad Division of the NC Department of Transportation, now the offices for the city's Economic Development/Main Street program. But for each step forward, there seemed to be some steps back as well. A downtown streetscape plan, followed by a directional signage plan, helped focus needed attention on downtown circulation. But the business side of downtown still struggled.

GEM (Growing Entrepreneurial Marion) is an initiative of the City of Marion, through the Economic Development Office, which doubles as the city's Main Street office. It began as a way to stem the loss of businesses in the city's historic core--but what it has become is an engine for churning out new and exciting locally owned business in downtown Marion. The program kicked off in 2016 and consists of a series of 8 training sessions on basic entrepreneurial skills, area demographics, networking, and other logistical and legal points that business owners should know. Guest speakers are brought in from every relevant profession to help participants navigate the many facets of owning and operating a business, including commercial bankers, attorneys, marketing specialists, commercial insurers, and CPAs. The final outcome of the program is an actionable business plan tailored directly to Marion's social and business environment. "Graduates" of the program can apply for $5,000 grants for rental and utility costs if they open up a business in downtown Marion and commit to fully participating in downtown events and being open for a certain number of hours a week.

Each new round of cohorts graduating from the program makes a huge impact on downtown, both tangibly and intangibly. Graduates have gone on to open two breweries, a burrito restaurant, a metal fabrication workshop, a specialty food store, a barcade, a meadery, and a makerspace–and that's just the short list. GEM graduates have also

"The best thing was the connections we made–we graduated as a tight knit small business community with friends that we can share resources with."

Joey Sacco, Turtle Labs

Turtle Labs

Barcade under construction

Marion Makerspace

Mica Town Brewing Company

become building owners and collectively they've completed nearly $50,000 in downtown facade improvements. But the impact is on more than the city's physical appearance, it has impacted the spirit of downtown as well. Freddie Killough, Main Street director and Executive Director of the Marion Economic Development Office, said "We knew we had to grow our own businesses. We were a manufacturing community, so it took a long time to sow the seeds, but now we are reaping the rewards. It's created an incredible energy and camaraderie." Not only have potential business owners completed the program--city staff and public officials have as well. Marion's city planner, Heather Cotton, and Steve Bush, Director of the Chamber of Commerce, also went through the program to better understand the challenges facing new business owners. Boyd Phillips, president of the Marion Business Association, also went through the class, though he's been in business for 18 years. He said the course helped him to refresh his business and marketing plan.

Joey Sacco and Tegan Strautmann are a husband and wife team, and they were two of the earliest graduates of the GEM program. The pair met in college, where they both studied Mechanical Engineering. Upon graduating and realizing that the office life was not for them, they decided to use their passion for making things and create a business in which to perfect their hobby and share it with everyone. When they first came to Marion, they were living out of a bus while they established their business. Today, they operate out of a live-work studio space, which Main Street Marion helped them locate. Their business is called Turtle Labs--a state of the art fabrication workshop from which they design, manufacture, and sell custom metal and woodcut products, everything from signs to jewelry to motorsport parts. Of the GEM program, Joey says "The best thing was the connections we made–we graduated as a tight knit small business community with friends that we can share resources with."

Daniel and Lee Roy Rodriguez, natives of Marion and owners of a restaurant called Burrito Bros, were part of the same cohort. They started their business as a food truck, but the GEM program helped them

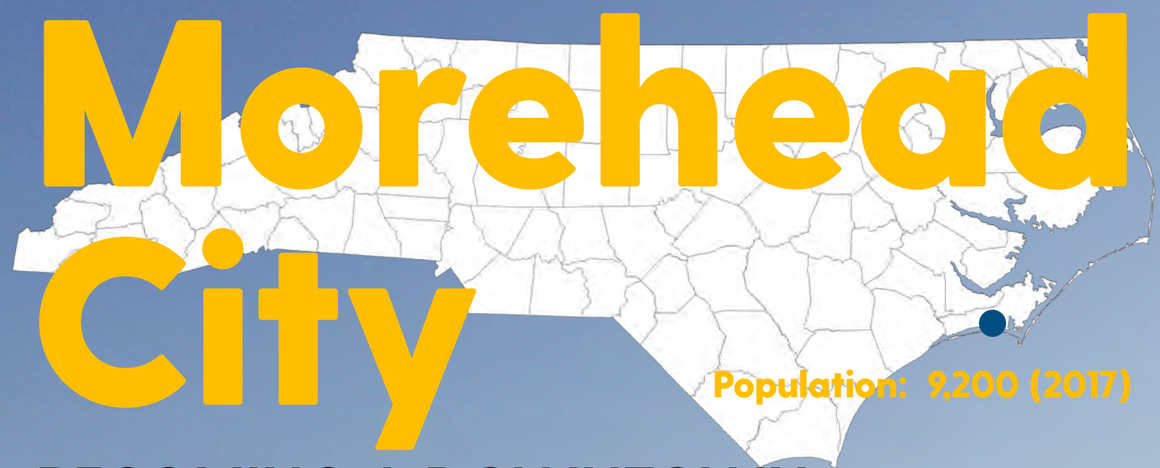
COMMUNITY STUDIES

Burrito Bros

expand to a brick and mortar location downtown. "Before, we were just doing it day by day, with no plan and not really growing," said Daniel. Since leaving the program, their business has grown to employing a team of 12 people, and last year they added a bar and outdoor seating. Daniel remembers when their current building was a skateboard shop that he would frequent as a child, and it makes him happy to see kids skateboarding and hanging out on Main Street again–"I love that people are enjoying the street."

The businesses and the growth that have come about as a direct result of the GEM program has been nothing short of spectacular. And despite a bumpy beginning, Main Street Marion is leading the economic revitalization of downtown.

Morehead City



Population: 9,200 (2017)

BECOMING A DOWNTOWN FOOD, DRINK, AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

since 2000:

$67,896,549
Main Street Investment

31
Net New Businesses

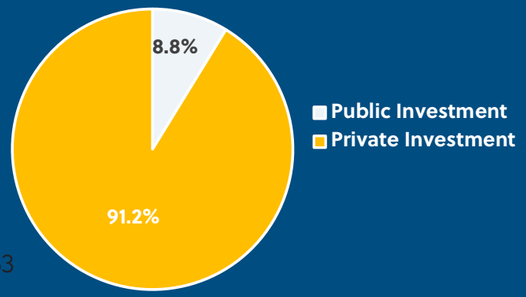
132
Net Full Time Jobs

0.0%
Increase in Number of Housing Units Downtown

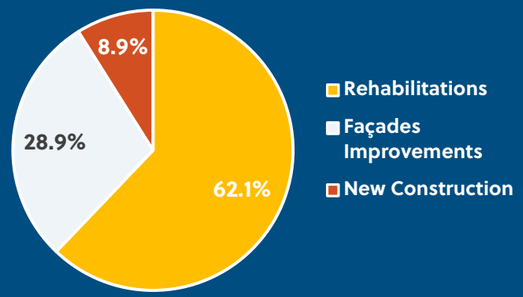
9.6%
Commercial Vacancy

71
Net Part Time Jobs

Main Street Investment



Construction Activities



Promise Land Market

Tight Lines Brewery

For Morehead City, being located on the coast has been a blessing and a curse. The beach has long been one of the city's greatest attractions, and it has blessed the city with a working wharf, freshly caught seafood, and some of the greatest sport fishing in the world. Morehead City's gorgeous waterfront is the backdrop for some of North Carolina's largest festivals, including the Big Rock Fishing Festival, a 62-year tradition, and the North Carolina Seafood Festival, which attracts nearly 200,000 people over three days. However, being so close to the ocean makes it vulnerable to natural disasters. Over the years, these disasters have devastated many local businesses and homes. But out of this wreckage has come a spirit of resiliency and connectedness, something that is deeply ingrained in the town's character. According to local business owner, David Quinn, "When you go through three hurricanes in four years, you learn to take care of each other. And the more connected we are, the better able we are to weather these storms."

The local businesses in Morehead City's Main Street district are truly a manifestation of this spirit. Widely known for their great variety of food, drink, and entertainment options, the businesses of Morehead City contribute not only to the community's economy, but also to the community's wellness and cohesion. Many of the businesses in Morehead City's Main Street district have a nonprofit arm or host regular fundraisers, helping to fulfill a larger mission.

Promise Land Market is one such business. Established in 2013 by David Quinn and Gerhardt Schnibben, the Promise Land Market is a bar/restaurant/general store offering a wide selection of beer and wine, artisanal meats and cheeses, local "Got to Be NC" North Carolina products, and other gourmet specialties. Apart from its many culinary offerings, the folks at Promise Land Market established Diamond City Gala, a nonprofit organization that hosts annual celebrations that commemorate local history, art, and music. Proceeds go towards causes that help the community. In 2019, the Diamond City Gala raised money to rebuild the Carteret Community Theater, which was severely damaged by Hurricane Florence in 2018. The fundraiser featured live music and an auction showcasing the work of local artists.

3D Mural Commissioned by Downtown Morehead City

Sanitary Fish Market and Restaurant, opened 1938

New Waterfront Deck at Sanitary Fish Market and Restaurant

Floyd's 1921

Floyd's 1921 is a well-loved local spot for lunch, dinner, and catering. It is a local favorite not only for the inspired food crafted by an Escoffier chef, but for love of the people who own it. Floyd and Shana Olmstead opened Floyd's in 2005, and they have been mainstays in the community ever since. Floyd is the culinary genius behind the restaurant and a native of Carteret County, but over his 22 career he has cooked all over the country. Located on the north side of Morehead City, it has become an anchor for the side of town without a waterfront view. As an Escoffier chef, Floyd is committed to maintaining great culinary traditions, especially as they pertain to the education and professional training of chefs and apprentices. Floyd participates in an annual dinner series to support the Carteret Community College's Culinary French Exchange Program. During Hurricane Florence, Floyd's 1921 suffered severe damage that put them out of business for 7 months--but the community rallied around them. "Anything that happens to one of us happens to all of us," said Shana, "the whole town reached out, the love and support was unbelievable." Downtown Morehead City has also been helpful in making sure Floyd's remains part of downtown activity—even though Floyd's is located on the north end of downtown, away from the waterfront, their business hasn't suffered. In fact, they are helping to anchor the north side, and expand downtown's reach.

"We've seen an evolution in the function of Main Street and downtown," said Executive Director of Downtown Morehead City (DMC), Lisa Rueh. In the beginning, DMC had to focus on beautification and promotions in order to stimulate activity downtown. "We needed to put feet on the street," she said. DMC provides a matching facade improvement grant for historic storefront rehabilitation, but also for improvements that encourage aesthetic compatibility to facades on non-historic properties. Those early efforts paid off, and today the same activities that DMC initiated to activate downtown are self-sustaining and have a life of their own. For example, DMC commissioned several building and sidewalk murals, only to find that businesses started to put their own murals on their buildings. DMC started Alive at Five, a summer concert series, to make downtown an entertainment destination. Now businesses are hosting their own live music events weekly. After one business receives a facade improvement grant, the business next door spruces up their facade voluntarily.

Crystal Coast Axe Throwing

"Without Downtown Morehead City, we would not be here,"

Kitch Hines, Crystal Coast Axe Throwing

Rueh is really excited that these initiatives have been picked up by the community, which allows her organization to focus on economic vitality. "We are lucky that we can shift our focus away from promotions and business attraction and start taking care of the businesses we have." That doesn't mean Morehead City has stopped attracting new businesses. Crystal Coast Axe Throwing is a company started by Kitch Hines, and the newest entertainment attraction in Morehead City. Kitch works remotely, so he could have brought his concept anywhere, but he was excited by all the activity in Morehead City. When it came time to find a property for his business, DMC was able to help him find a location. "Without Downtown Morehead City, we would not be here," he said. Not only is Morehead City's activity attracting new residents, it is inspiring people to bring new and exciting experiences to downtown.

Shelby

LEVERAGING CULTURAL ASSETS FOR DOWNTOWN

Population: 20,058 (2017)

since 1980:

$87,801,517
Main Street Investment

227
Net New Businesses

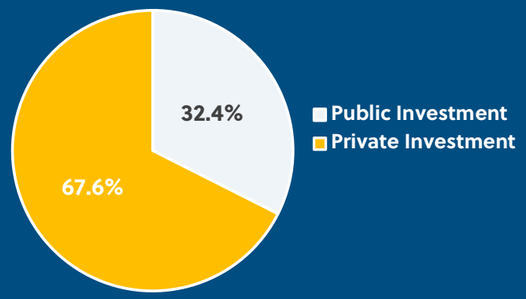
705
Net Full Time Jobs

6.7%
Increase in Number of Housing Units Downtown

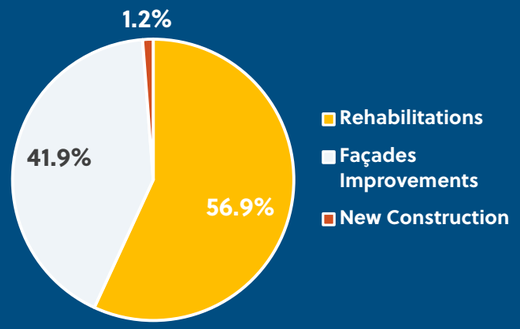
11.7%
Commercial Vacancy

81
Net Part Time Jobs

Main Street Investment



Construction Activities



Shelby Street Art

Earl Scruggs Center

Exhibit inside the Earl Scruggs Center

Designated in 1980, Shelby has the distinction of being one of the founding five North Carolina Main Street communities, and thus one of the first 30 designated nationally. Their consistent participation in the Main Street program over forty years is a testament to both their belief in Main Street and their acceptance of the Main Street principle of "incremental, long term." Their record personifies this. Shelby certainly enjoyed some early success, most notably the rehabilitation of Mason's Square into apartments–one of the first historic tax credit projects to happen in a North Carolina downtown and one of the first to focus on bringing residents back to downtown. Uptown Shelby Association (USA), the Main Street organization, brought renewed attention to their historic county courthouse and introduced festivals to celebrate the area's unique culture and heritage. But Shelby, like so many North Carolina towns, was a victim of the larger economy and the loss of local jobs, specifically in its textile industry. Uptown Shelby struggled to find businesses to fill vacant buildings and investors to take on needed rehabilitations. Yet they persevered. USA invested in developing a center city master plan to give strategic guidance to what could and should be done to stimulate uptown investment. The key take away, according to Mayor Stan Anthony, was, "we need[ed] to do something to leverage these cultural assets."

Fast forward to 2006. Brownie Plaster led an effort to establish Destination Cleveland County (DCC), an all-volunteer group. This group spent two years researching ideas and traveling to cities to see first-hand how other places were capitalizing on history and culture to bring economic energy. As Ms. Plaster noted, "It's the stories of the artifacts that people want to hear. It is not the artifacts." From this came a strategic plan and a goal to raise $5.5 million. Even with the 2008 recession under way, DCC was able to raise $9.5 million. Their first project was the renovation of the State Theater (a former movie house) into the Don Gibson Theatre, completed in 2009, to celebrate native son Don Gibson. The Don Gibson Theatre hosts 30-40 shows a year, offers movies in the summer, and serves as a special events venue.

COMMUNITY STUDIES

Don Gibson Theater

Artists' signatures at Gibson Theater

Newgrass Brewing Co.
Photo: Shelby Star

Pleasant City Pizza

Building on the success and momentum of this project, DCC next took on the Cleveland County Courthouse. With more research and a lot of persuasion, they were able to create the Earl Scruggs Center, a salute to yet another native son. This center attracts an international audience who want to learn about the unique banjo talent of Mr. Scruggs (the Scruggs Style) and hear the stories about his rise from the local textile mill to music fame.

With the opening of the Gibson Theatre and the Scruggs Center, people began to see business opportunities in uptown. "Knowing what was going on with the Gibson Theatre and Scruggs Center gave us more confidence to start a new business," said Roger Holland, co-owner of Newgrass Brewery. While the Shelby Cafe has been an uptown mainstay, the addition of the Lafayette Street Grill and Pub, Pleasant City Woodfire Grill, and ultimately Newgrass Brewery has caused uptown to take on a "place to eat and meet" vibe. David Deer, co-owner with Roger Holland of Newgrass Brewing, was clear about uptown's business strategy today: "You've got to grow the pie before you start cutting it into more pieces." Pleasant City Pizza, a business that has anchored Uptown since 2008, was thrilled when the brewery opened next door. "I saw my business go up by 15% when Newgrass opened," said owner Chris Canoutas. Businesses in Shelby understand that a rising tide lifts all boats–one business' success is great news for the others.

Uptown Shelby is still evolving, as is Uptown Shelby Association. In the beginning, USA had to be the creator, the instigator, and the doer. Today, with more organizations committed to Shelby's economic vitality, USA takes on more partnership roles. "Everybody promotes everybody else" now and USA is able to focus on advocacy and education. In addition, USA's Executive Director and Main Street director, Audrey Whetten, has been pushing the envelope to make USA's events more accessible and relevant to a wider audience in Shelby. This includes expanding more inclusive programming in order to appeal to diverse residents. Uptown Shelby and USA, forty years old and still going strong, both personify the importance of perseverance.

"Everyone helps everyone else here."

Roger Holland. Newgrass Brewing

Newgrass Brewing Co.

Wilson

DEVELOPING PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

Population: 49,237 (2017)

since 1982:

$145,183,372
Main Street Investment

126
Net New Businesses

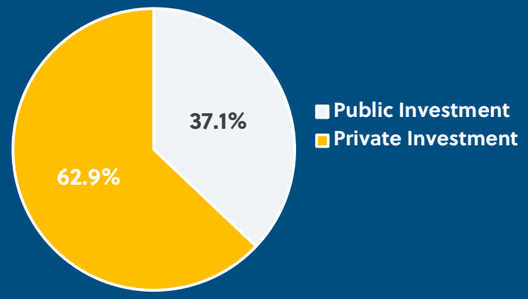
638
Net Full Time Jobs

42.9%
Increase in Number of Housing Units Downtown

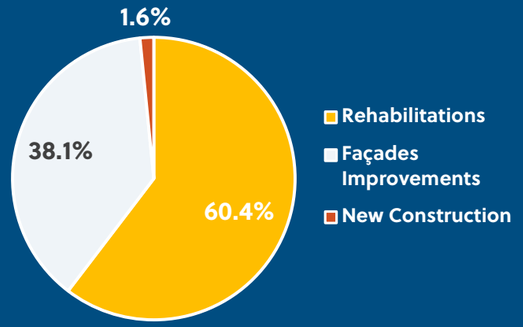
48.4%
Commercial Vacancy

122
Net Part Time Jobs

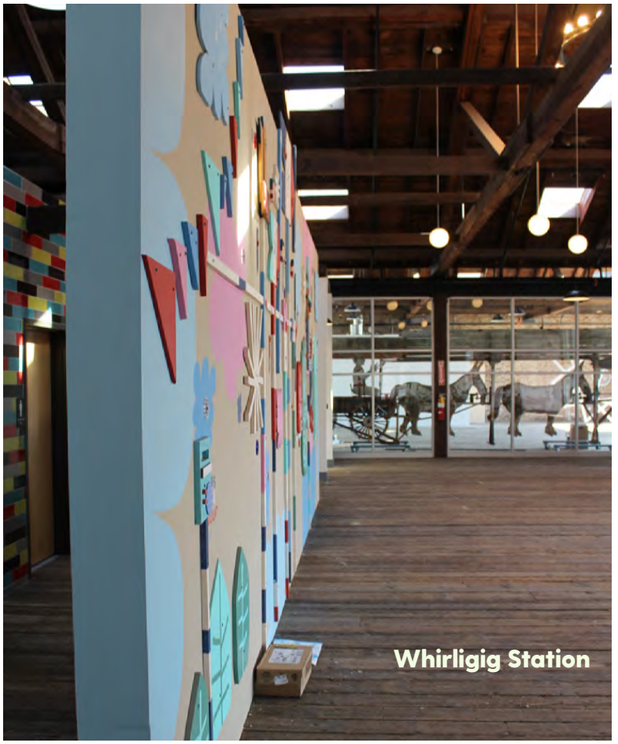
Main Street Investment



Construction Activities



Whirligig Station


Whirligig Station

Whirligig Station

Wilson, North Carolina was once known as the "World's Greatest Tobacco Market." Vast tobacco warehouses used to stretch across the city. Today, one of the last remaining warehouses has been transformed into a brand-new commercial and residential space called Whirligig Station, opposite a monumental field of spinning whirligigs.

A whirligig is a kinetic art sculpture with three distinct points of movement, spinning in all directions. The origin of the whirligig park actually starts 11 miles outside of downtown, in a field locals knew as Acid Park. The whirligigs were created by Vollis Simpson, a man who never called himself an artist, but who had a penchant for industrial salvage. After retiring at the age of 65, he began tinkering with the odd parts he had collected, and soon he was creating enormous windmills on his property. The whirligigs incorporate highway and road signs, HVAC fans, bicycles, ceiling fans, mirrors, stovepipes, I-beams, pipe, textile mill rollers, ball bearings, aluminum sheeting, various woods, steel rods, rings, pans, milkshake mixers and more. For years, the field where Simpson first installed the whirligigs became the county's largest unofficial tourist attraction.

Historic Downtown Wilson (HDW), the resident Main Street organization housed within city government, recognized the whirligigs as more than just a quirky attraction--they imagined them as an engine to kick-start Wilson's revitalization through place- and culture-based redevelopment. In 2011, HDW began fundraising to build the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park, an art based economic development catalyst in downtown Wilson. "At first, no one was sure that art could really grow a community," said Kimberly Van Dyk, Planning & Community Revitalization Director and Main Street director, "so it took a few years to build consensus." The Whirligig Park was conceived with the input of hundreds of Wilson citizens including downtown stakeholders, artists, youth groups, neighborhood associations, and business leaders. Through multiple community meetings, Wilsonians helped contribute to the design and vision for the park as a multifunctional community gathering place. Today the two-acre park features 30 of Vollis Simpson's whirligigs, as well as a central grass amphitheater, a stage, and an open air

"Main Street empowers people to be a part of something grassroots, to be a part of building a citizenry. People see a role for themselves in the city."

Kellianne Davis, Historic Downtown Wilson

Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park

ComForCare

Future Record Store

217 Brew Works

pavilion. The shape of the green space is meant to mimic the pond around which Vollis' whirligigs first stood in Acid Park, and the wide pavilion is meant to echo the rooflines of the surrounding historic tobacco auction warehouses.

The park itself is an incredible achievement by any measure. What's even more incredible is what came after. Following the opening of the Whirligig Park, downtown Wilson saw an explosion of investment, and today HDW expects another $87 million dollars in the pipeline. From the activation and redevelopment of vacant buildings to the creation of new community programming--there is an impressive list of the catalytic impacts rippling out from the park, directly attributable to HDW's efforts there.

One measure of catalytic impact is an uptick in building investment following the principal investment. Across the street from the park, Waukeshaw Development, Inc. began the $12 million conversion of a 60,000-square-foot former tobacco warehouse, complete with 94 unique apartments creatively carved into the wide open center of the space. The apartments began leasing in 2019, and soon a restaurant and a visitor center/museum space will occupy the front of house, looking onto the park. In 2016, a 217 Brew Works opened on the park--the first craft brewery in Wilson County. The building the brewery occupies, once used as a livery stable and carriage house, then later a car dealership, was rehabilitated in 2015 with a new roof, restored facade, and utility infrastructure upgrades. The taproom interior was constructed primarily out of reclaimed bricks and wood, and the original red stable door is now featured at the entrance to the brewery and acts as a bulletin board to the community. One block away from the park, HDW helped to broker the sale and redevelopment of a building that will house three new businesses: a vintage vinyl shop, a bakery, and a pizza place and bar with a patio overlooking the park. The city, through HDW, is unafraid to purchase buildings and wait for the right buyer who will make an impactful investment.

Future Site of GigEast Exchange

More than just building improvements have been catalyzed by the park. HDW has leveraged the park to create civic organizations and innovation centers, by playing off the gig in whirligig. Gig360 is a social organization for community-minded young professionals who are dedicated to sustaining the Whirligig Park, networking with peers, and growing a culture of young living in Wilson County. It is a group of young people that recognize the Whirligig Park and Museum are assets and an integral part of the community. Without a definite source of revenue to support park operations such as insurance, maintenance, and marketing materials, Gig360 members believe it is their responsibility to do their part in helping to ensure the whirligigs keep spinning through fundraising. Gig360 has also taken over an event formerly put on by HDW, a concert series called Downtown Beats.

In 2018, the GiG East Exchange was announced, a technology hub for start-ups, entrepreneurs, and creators. It will also serve as a co-working space and home for other educational and community programming. Ten years ago the city approached various internet providers about providing connectivity to all its residents to help bridge the digital divide, but these companies did not see the financial incentive to invest in Wilson. That was when Wilson developed Greenlight Community Broadband, which provides gigabit, fiber-to-the-home internet service for residents and businesses. Local college campuses, businesses, and more are able to take advantage of the city's fiber optic network. The city has been able to leverage this community amenity and all the excitement surrounding the park to attract new businesses and young professionals.

One major victory for Wilson can also be attributed to the Whirligig Park. BB&T is a nationwide banking branch that started in Wilson in 1872. A few years ago, they were considering moving their headquarters to Charlotte, taking over 600 employees with them. The city manager was able to leverage the Whirligig park and all the positive changes that have followed to convince the bank to keep its headquarters in Wilson. Now the company is investing $35 million dollars in a new facility and bringing 150 new employees to Wilson.

Looking back on the last 10 years, Kellianne Davis, a business specialist with HDW, said, "It's funny to think that we are now a 'best practice' in placemaking and asset-based redevelopment, it means we have to keep innovating and pushing the envelope." Of Main Street, she said, "We love that it positions itself as economic development. The structure empowers people to be a part of something grassroots, to be a part of building a citizenry. People see a role for themselves in the city."

Conclusions

NORTH CAROLINA MAIN STREET'S RECORD REPRESENTS SOME OF THE MOST AMAZING DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NATION OVER THE PAST FORTY YEARS,

North Carolina Main Street was fortunate to be in on the ground floor of the national Main Street movement as one of the six states selected as part of the initial three-year National Main Street Center (NMSC) demonstration program. Through the forty years, NC Main Street has been steady, consistent and persistent. The state program has been thoughtful in its expansion of new programs, conscientious in its support for those who have been designated, and committed to seeing its communities succeed.

The partnership between designated communities and the NC Main Street staff has been a crucial element of the overall success of the program. State Main Street staff have acted as facilitators and guides to the communities while also being advocates for the Main Street Approach™ and educators about the importance of historic preservation as part of a community's economic development strategy. The communities, for their part, have welcomed NCMS support and have been quick to share their stories - both successes and failures - with other communities still trying to understand where to start. This partnership is a big reason that so many towns that enter the program stay with it, and because of that, NC can document over $3.0 billion of new investment since its beginning in 1980.

Any program that can claim forty years of steady effort is noteworthy. But this is about more than longevity. It is about the North Carolina Main Street program and the participating communities that have together embraced the challenge of managing economic change. Their record represents some of the most amazing downtown economic development in the nation over the past forty years, and is worthy of praise.

Smitty's, Burlington

Appendix: Ratio of Businesses Opening to Businesses Closing 1993-2018

	US	NC	NCMS
1993	1.20	1.31	1.81
1994	1.18	1.34	2.08
1995	1.16	1.37	1.94
1996	1.19	1.33	1.71
1997	1.15	1.30	1.41
1998	1.17	1.24	1.77
1999	1.12	1.21	1.62
2000	1.11	1.02	1.59
2001	1.01	0.93	1.53
2002	1.12	1.27	1.40
2003	1.11	1.06	1.57
2004	1.15	1.04	1.78
2005	1.19	1.13	1.68
2006	1.14	1.53	1.85
2007	1.07	1.23	1.86
2008	0.92	0.81	1.61
2009	0.85	0.75	1.59
2010	0.99	0.97	1.66
2011	1.04	1.06	1.72
2012	1.16	1.10	1.96
2013	1.09	1.08	1.88
2014	1.13	1.08	1.57
2015	1.15	1.17	1.82
2016	1.13	1.18	1.96
2017	1.12	1.07	1.92
2018	1.15	1.18	1.82

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank everyone who contributed their resources, knowledge, expertise, and stories to this report. We would especially like to recognize the Main Street managers who generously provided their time and organized our visits.

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Lisa Rueh, Executive Director, Downtown Morehead City
Audrey Whetten, Executive Director, Uptown Shelby
Kimberly Van Dyk, Downtown Development Director, Historic Downtown Wilson

About PlaceEconomics

PlaceEconomics is a private sector firm with over thirty years experience in the thorough and robust analysis of the economic impacts of historic preservation. We conduct studies, surveys, and workshops in cities and states across the country addressing issues of downtown, neighborhood, and commercial district revitalization and the reuse of historic buildings.

This report was prepared and written by Donovan Rypkema, Briana Grosicki, Rodney Swink, Katlyn Cotton, and Alyssa Frystak. Rypkema is principal and founder of PlaceEconomics. Rodney Swink, Senior Associate for Planning and Development, directed the North Carolina Main Street program for 24 years. Grosicki is Director of Research at PlaceEconomics and handled research methodologies and data collection. Cotton is the Director of Marketing and Design at PlaceEconomics and handled graphic design. Frystak is a Research and Data Analyst, and handled data analysis. Editing was done by Alyssa Frystak and Rodney Swink. Site visits were conducted by Rodney Swink and Katlyn Cotton.

40 Years of Main Street

BUILDING ECONOMIES; BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Prepared for the North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center
by PlaceEconomics

NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT of
COMMERCE

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