

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## STRATEGIC PLAN



**PITT COUNTY 2022-2023**

# CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Introduction</b>   | 3  |
| <b>Pitt County Economic Development</b>                                     | 7  |
| <b>Focus Area 1: Built Environment</b>                                      | 9  |
| Goal 1: Facilitate Site, Building, and Infrastructure Development           | 9  |
| Goal 2: Encourage Entrepreneurial Growth                                    | 11 |
| <b>Focus Area 2: Collaborative Opportunities</b>                            | 12 |
| Goal 3: Expand and Enhance Strategic Partnerships                           | 12 |
| <b>Focus Area 3: Meaningful Engagement</b>                                  | 14 |
| Goal 4: Lead Business Retention and Expansion Efforts (BRE) for Pitt County | 14 |
| Goal 5: Lead and Support Outreach Efforts in Pitt County Communities        | 15 |
| Goal 6: Enhance the Visibility of Pitt County Economic Development          | 16 |

# INTRODUCTION

Through economic cycles, changing political landscapes, and catastrophic events, the way that we plan and execute our economic development efforts can provide a stabilizing environment for such challenges and even transform such challenges into opportunities and successes.

Economic development must continue to embrace and adapt to changes, and in order to remain a stable, growing, and thriving economy, we must adjust to significant factors that are providing challenges and opportunities for our future:

- 1 Economic disruptions and trends accelerated by the pandemic;
- 2 Ongoing workforce challenges and social inequities exacerbated by the pandemic;
- 3 Recovery and resiliency opportunities.

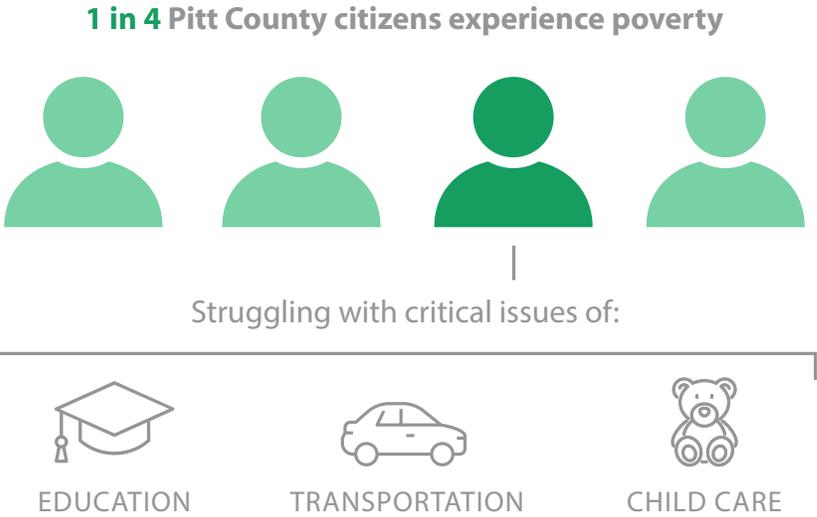
Over the years, Pitt County economic development efforts have focused on three core areas: attraction, retention, and expansion of industrial investment and jobs. Our past program of work was developed and executed with these focus areas in mind, including marketing and recruitment efforts, existing industry support, and quality of life enhancement.

Looking at our strategic plan with a new lens, and in consideration of recent significant economic, social, and environmental changes, challenges, and opportunities, we have concluded that our focus areas, while relevant, focus on outcomes, and not the primary areas that can influence and produce the outcomes. When we focus on our internal strengths and weaknesses, and address Pitt County's needs as well as enhance our assets, we will, in fact, be working toward the outcomes for attraction, retention, and expansion. Therefore, our focus areas will be our people, industries, and communities.

We **ARE** Pitt County. The work that we continue to do facilitates and supports *attraction, retention, and expansion*. This means **A**ttraction of talent, investment, and companies; **R**etention of graduates and industries; and **E**xpansion of business and supporting assets.

- A**ttraction of talent, investment, and companies
- R**etention of graduates and industries
- E**xpansion of business and supporting assets

What we are today is a County and Metropolitan Statistical Area with many enviable educational, healthcare, recreational, and cultural assets as well as a diverse economy supported by a major university, a well-renowned healthcare system, and a diverse mix of industries, including manufacturing, distribution, agriculture, and information technology. We also have challenges, such as persistent poverty for nearly **1 in 4 Pitt County citizens**, with critical issues of education, transportation, and childcare continuing to impede economic mobility, particularly in our rural communities. We also face labor force shortages and a disconnect between available jobs and the skill levels of the available workforce.



What we will **BECOME** is already in progress. This strategic plan will outline a program of work that will align with our partners to serve the people, businesses, and communities of Pitt County. Instead of outcome-based focus areas, we will identify action-based focus areas that address our mission and goals.

**Pitt County will BECOME more prosperous if we focus on the following:**

**B**uilt **E**nvironment + **C**ollaborative **O**pportunities + **M**eaningful **E**ngagement

Pitt County Economic Development proposes the following one-year strategic plan to serve our people, businesses, and communities in order to elevate the economy, quality of life, and status of Pitt County.

For this plan, we will identify key performance indicators with coordinating metrics to effectively gauge and benchmark our progress as well as return on investment. This will illustrate the relationship between our economic development program and services and the economic impact, both qualitative and quantitative, that may result.

This plan was developed through facilitated planning sessions with ECU Professor, Sharon Justice, and Assistant County Manager Sam Croom. The following were taken into consideration as part of the planning process:

# 1 Pitt County Mission, Vision, and Priorities

**MISSION:** The Mission of Pitt County Government is to enhance the health, safety, and well-being of our community by advocating for and providing quality services in a friendly and cost-effective manner.

**VISION:** A Leader in the State; Best in the East

- PRIORITIES:**
1. Education
  2. Public Safety
  3. **Economic Development**
  4. Human Services
  5. Facility and Space Needs
  6. Infrastructure Improvements
  7. Recreational Facilities

# 2 State of North Carolina:

Strategic Economic Development Plan (July, 2021)

**TAGLINE:** First in Talent

**Goal 1:** *Prepare NC's Workforce* for Career and Entrepreneurial Success

**Goal 2:** *Prepare NC's Businesses* for Success for Growing/Attracting a Talented Workforce.

**Goal 3:** *Prepare NC's Communities* to be more Competitive in Attracting Talent/Industry.

# 3 My Future NC:

a cross-sector collaboration between North Carolina leaders in education, business and government.

**MISSION:** *Close the educational attainment gap.*

**METRIC:** 2 million by 2030: NC citizens with high-quality credentials or degree.

# 4

## Pitt County Snapshot:

Demographics and Economy



**Poverty Rate:**  
22.9%  
(14.7% NC, 13.4% US)



**Households with broadband:**  
78%



**Labor Force Participation Rate:**  
63.6% (62% NC, 63.2% US)



**Prime-age labor force Participation Rate (25-54):**  
83.8% (81.7% NC, 82.1% US)



**Per Capital Income:**  
\$27,155 (\$30,783 NC, \$34,103 US)



**Average wage:**  
\$49,164, up 7.4%  
(\$63,393, US up 9%)



**High School Graduation Rate:**  
83% of Pitt County 9th graders complete HS in 4 years or less. (below the suburban county average of 88%)



**Post-secondary education:**  
50% of high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary earn a degree or credential within 6 years (below the suburban county average of 54%)



**7 out of 10 largest taxpayers are existing industries**  
(4 out of 10 largest employers)



**Manufacturing contributes the largest portion of our GDP**  
(\$2.1 B; >24% of GDP)

### Pitt County Tax Rankings in the State:



**Valuation per capita:**  
72 (lower than state average)



**Assessed Valuation:**  
22 (higher than state average)



**Tax Rate per \$100:**  
51



**Tax Levy Per Capita:**  
21

# PITT COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Statement of Purpose

We strive to create a better economic future for Pitt County. Our economic development goals will align with the County's overall Strategic Plan, the State of NC's Economic Development Strategic Plan, and key economic and community partner strategic planning goals in order to create an effective and efficient model for our overall County and regional economic development efforts.

Pitt County Government provides public service, and as a County department, Pitt County Economic Development will serve our communities, industries, and citizens in ways that will elevate our comparative and competitive advantages, strengthen our economic vitality, and enhance opportunities for economic mobility for all citizens.

The purpose of this plan is to create a roadmap to guide programs and activities. This will the Economic Development Department to better anticipate, respond, and evolve with changes affecting the economic success of our residents, communities, and businesses. This plan will provide clear direction and prioritization and measure outputs and outcomes while remaining flexible enough to adjust to changing conditions.

## Mission

Champion vibrant communities, thriving businesses, a prosperous economy, and opportunities for all in Pitt County.

## Vision

Pitt County will become a well-known destination for thriving communities, business growth, and world-class talent.

## Core Values

- **Elevate Economic Prosperity** - Diversity, Sustainability, Innovation
- **Promote Economic Mobility** - Wages, Skills, Opportunities
- **Increase Competitiveness** - Placemaking, Marketing, Branding
- **Enhance Opportunities for all** - Inclusivity, Community Outreach, Rural Growth

## Guiding Principles

We will leverage the County's resources, diverse communities, and range of amenities to create a vibrant destination for people and businesses to thrive. We will accomplish this through:

### RESPONSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE PRACTICES

We will provide public service, transparent operations, and activities that are responsive to identified priorities and needs.

### DATA-DRIVEN OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Programs will be guided by data and metrics to respond to the needs of residents and businesses and maximize operational effectiveness.

### ROLE AS CONVENER AND CATALYST

We are uniquely positioned to act as a catalyst for change through information and innovation as well as a convener to engage others to accomplish goals.

### EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITIES

We will support identified needs and issues of diverse residents and communities to benefit all of the citizens of Pitt County.

### STRATEGIC COLLABORATIONS

We will work to enhance our economic success by encouraging and practicing greater collaboration in the areas identified in this Strategic Plan.

### BUSINESS VITALITY AND DIVERSIFICATION

Strengthen economic resiliency by supporting the success of existing businesses while also diversifying the County's economic base.

### TALENT DEVELOPMENT AND ATTRACTION

We will engage in regional talent development, retention, and attraction efforts to grow and sustain a healthy workforce supporting the County's industries.

### COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

We will enhance collaborative marketing and placemaking efforts to elevate our image, promote competitive attributes, and increase growth opportunities.

# FOCUS AREA 1: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

*With continuous improvement of the places in which people live, work, and recreate, we can lead the County's readiness to accommodate growth.*

## **GOAL 1** Facilitate Site, Building, and Infrastructure Development

### **Objective 1** Participate in Community Planning and Development

#### Strategies

- **Enhance efforts to improve and develop industrial properties**
  - Participate in County's Land Use Planning initiative and work with other partners to identify and prioritize properties for industrial growth
  - Update inventory of properties available for sale or lease
  - Continue development of Farmville Shell Building
  - Explore opportunities for new industrial property for County, public-private, or private ownership, control, or development
  - Prioritize opportunities, with partner input, based on location, available utilities, funding availability, and other risk assessment criteria
- **Identify and leverage financial and technical support opportunities**
  - Identify and evaluate grant and loan opportunities for site, building, and infrastructure development
  - Define internal and external processes for vetting, authorizing, and managing grants/loans
  - Explore use of a consultant or other support services for grant/loan identification, writing, and management
  - Collaborate with partners to identify and leverage opportunities for funding and support

- **Develop a formal plan for continued improvements and development of site and buildings in Pitt County with the Greenville ENC Alliance and other partners**
  - Identify alternative financing, incentive, and partnership scenarios for development
  - Using the location matrix, develop a plan for development, including timing, funding, and size/scope of projects
  - Identify and engage developers that have shell building development programs
  - Collaboratively market Pitt County to site and building developers and investors

## **Objective 2** Support Infrastructure Enhancements and Investments

### **Strategies**

- **Provide ongoing support to infrastructure and development projects**
  - Continue to support the retention and expansion of PGV airport service
  - Continue to support the expansion water and sewer service in southern Pitt County
  - Continue to support existing industry expansion projects through support services and incentives for qualifying projects
- **Support new projects that will increase Pitt County's capacity for growth**
  - Support opportunities for enhanced transportation and broadband access, particularly in rural communities
  - Work with Pitt County Planning, Senior Leadership Team, and Commissioners to identify and vet projects in priority areas identified for ARPA fund allocations, including water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure, community health, and recreational amenities
  - Engage other partners to leverage built environment development and funding opportunities
  - Support new industry recruitment opportunities with site preparation and certification efforts, infrastructure support, and incentives for qualifying projects

- **Update all due diligence and information more than 5 years old for industrial sites**

- Review existing industrial properties' due diligence and determine needs for updates to remain viable for prospects
- Analyze infrastructure deficiencies at existing parks and sites that would eliminate Pitt County for consideration for industrial projects
- Identify programs that could provide potential funding for increased marketability and development opportunities

## **GOAL 2** Encourage Entrepreneurial Growth

### **Objective 3** Assess and Improve Current Entrepreneurial Physical Assets

#### Strategies

- **Identify and anticipate maintenance and upfit needs at the Technology Enterprise Center (TEC)**

- Assess the current facility with Pitt County Engineering, Risk Manager, Buildings and Grounds, and others to develop an ongoing plan and potential costs for maintenance, repair, and renovation of infrastructure and building
- Maintain contact with existing tenants to determine current and emerging needs
- Assess opportunities for alternate uses, such as additional industrial training

- **Assess and define entrepreneurial incubation and acceleration assets**

- Utilize partners, such as ECU Engineering and County resources, to analyze the TEC property, including additional acreage, and its current and potential utilization
- Assess assets in Pitt County with similar and complementary uses for entrepreneurs, such as SEED and Intersect East, to identify any gaps or duplications, and develop a plan to provide a continuum of opportunities for entrepreneurial growth
- Revise the VINES website, in partnership with ECU's Miller School of Entrepreneurship to update all physical assets, resources, and support in Pitt County

# FOCUS AREA 2: COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

*Simply put, seeking out others to work in partnership toward shared goals.*

## **GOAL 3** Expand and Enhance Strategic Partnerships

### **Objective 4** Develop and Enhance Relationships with New and Existing Partners

#### **Strategies**

- **Work with GENCA to develop a plan to provide comprehensive economic development services at their highest level**
  - Plan a facilitated discussion with GENCA, with the new CEO in place, to determine opportunities for stronger collaboration, efficiency, and effectiveness
  - Determine lead, support, and collaborative activities for GENCA and Pitt County Economic Development and identify any gaps not supported by other partners
  - Explore the development of an agreement with GENCA based on discussions
- **Increase outreach to existing partners and develop new partner relations with entities and individuals that support our economic development mission and goals**
  - Serve on relevant local, regional, and State committees and boards
  - Identify, prioritize, and support mission-specific partner initiatives through partnerships, sponsorships, and participation in events
  - Develop a partner network database for Salesforce that includes current contacts, scopes of work, and key initiatives
  - Continue to work with BioPharma Crescent partners to growth the biopharma cluster east of RTP

## **Objective 5** Convene and Support Collaborative Marketing Initiatives

### Strategies

- **Partner with the Convention and Visitors' Bureau on Destination Marketing for Pitt County**
  - Serve on the Destination Marketing Advisory Committee
  - Sponsor events that will elevate the visibility and status of Pitt County
  - Collaborate on marketing initiatives and events to draw visitors to Pitt County
  
- **Identify collaborative marketing opportunities for economic development**
  - Identify opportunities for collaborative marketing with ECU, GENCA, Vidant, PCC and others to showcase location and assets, attract talent, and create more name recognition for the Greenville, NC MSA and Pitt County
  - Continue to partner with Business North Carolina and other key publications, using the collaborative approach to leverage larger, more visible and impactful messaging
  - Continue to partner with EDPNC on their annual cooperative marketing program
  
- **Continue to participate in the BioPharma Crescent marketing collaborative**
  - Work with partner Counties to improve overall branding
  - Develop a revised plan and asset map for marketing and outreach

# FOCUS AREA 3: MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

*Making quality connections that serve to enhance the vitality, success, and diversity in our communities.*

## **GOAL 4** Lead Business Retention and Expansion Efforts (BRE) for Pitt County

### **Objective 6** Lead Outreach Efforts for Pitt County Industries

#### Strategies

- **Create a formalized program of work for Industry Retention and Expansion**
  - Update the existing industries list, adding high technology companies, back office, call centers, agribusiness, and others as determined
  - Utilize Salesforce to communicate customized messages, support resources, and opportunities to industries
  - Create a schedule to connect with each industry on the list, including partners as needed, at least once a year and document interactions, including needs, challenges, successes, opportunities for support and advocacy, and ideas for enhancing our BRE program
  - Provide clear guidelines for support, including lists of programs, resources and contacts, and requirements for local and State incentives
- **Engage partners and industries to enhance, revise, and create resources, support and implement solutions, and enhance BRE programming**
  - Review and analyze trends and other reports for major existing industry sectors
  - Cooperatively develop an anonymous, online wage and benefit survey with relevant resources and support
  - Reinstate and lead the Human Resources managers' group to discuss local talent retention, training, supply chain, and other significant issues for industry
  - Provide customized support, making referrals as needed based on industry needs
  - Develop new programs, as identified through interactions, and distribute pertinent information regularly provide excellent ongoing existing industry support

- **Enhance visibility and marketing of our existing industries**

- Identify industries for success stories, awards, recognitions, and other public relations opportunities
- Develop a revised Industry Appreciation event to coincide with Manufacturing Week (October) and include additional outreach programs, marketing, and events during this time period
- Engage partners to create an ongoing marketing plan to showcase existing industry

## **Objective 7** Support Agribusiness in Pitt County

### Strategies

- **Promote the agricultural industry and agribusiness as a viable and vital contributor to the Pitt County and State economy**

- Analyze the agribusiness industry in NC and Pitt County with relevant partners, such as the Department of Agriculture and the Pitt County Cooperative Extension, and determine areas for support and outreach
- Identify and connect emerging and existing agribusinesses to relevant resources, partners, grants, and opportunities (i.e.: ENC Food Commercialization Center)
- Celebrate and promote successes, milestones, and achievements in the agribusiness industry, such as the Conservation Farm Family of the Year

## **GOAL 5** Lead and Support Outreach Efforts in Pitt County Communities

## **Objective 8** Facilitate Support for Pitt County Municipalities

### Strategies

- **Develop an ongoing dialogue with Pitt County's municipalities to discuss issues and opportunities**

- Provide and connect communities with resources for projects and grants that they may not otherwise be able to obtain on their own
- Identify the unique or collective challenges and opportunities in Pitt County's municipalities
- Develop a protocol for identifying, applying for, and managing external grant opportunities in partnership with municipalities and other partners

## **Objective 9** Support Efforts to Eleviate Impediments to Economic Prosperity

### Strategies

- **Engage on local issues that negatively affect and influence economic prosperity**
  - Assess these issues with partners to determine extent of needs in Pitt County, sources of support, and potential solutions (Barriers to Employment, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Lack of Resources)
  - Leverage resources to provide meaningful support and work toward positive, sustainable change
- **Continue to work with educational partners, industries, and others to address the labor shortage and the skills gap**
  - Host career fairs and other events with partners to connect job seekers, education and training offerings, and career opportunities in local industries
  - Continue to develop and market a continuum of life sciences training and education opportunities and their corresponding local career opportunities in partnership with the NC Biotech Center, ECU, Pitt County Schools, and Pitt Community College
  - Continue to sponsor, fund, and participate in events that address these issues, such as Grow Local, Pitt Community Bulldog Promise Scholarship Program, STEM Girls, and NC Pharmaceutical Services Network Training/Pharma K-12.

## **GOAL 6** Enhance the Visibility of Pitt County Economic Development

## **Objective 10** Build Awareness of Economic Development Efforts and Initiatives

### Strategies

- **Revise the PCED marketing plan**
  - Determine marketing resources, both internally and externally and develop a revised plan for 2022-23 to include outsourcing, if needed
  - Develop a proactive plan to inform the public and other identified audiences regarding economic development topics, projects, and successes
  - Update and upgrade the current PCED website and social media platforms
  - Utilize and supplement PIO resources to develop a more robust marketing presence for Pitt County

- **Promote Pitt County's Competitiveness and Value Proposition for New Investment**

- Develop new recruitment tools to illustrate the value of locating and expanding in Pitt County
- Utilize technology resources to provide data analysis and trends showing Pitt County's growth
- Create an RFI template with pertinent information for all industrial sites, communities, and supporting assets in Pitt County

## **Objective 11** Benchmark, Track, and Distribute Performance Outcomes

### Strategies

- **Implement and fully utilize Salesforce to create relevant reports on progress**

- Track all incentives, projects, grants, leases, sponsorships, and contracts to ensure compliance and provide updates, as needed and requested, on progress and achievements
- Develop a set of Key Performance Indicators and metrics utilizing data and reports from Salesforce and track progress with partners on collaborative projects
- Develop reports, press releases, and presentations for the public, County Leadership Team, County Commissioners, prospects, and partners as needed or upon request



and we will **BECOME** what we **envision** for the **future**.