

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN



PITT COUNTY 2023-2024

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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 accelerated by the pandemic are persistent and ongoing;
- 2 Workforce challenges exacerbated and social inequities widened by the pandemic and are top of mind for the State of North Carolina;
- 3 Recovery and resiliency opportunities are still emerging at the State and Federal levels.

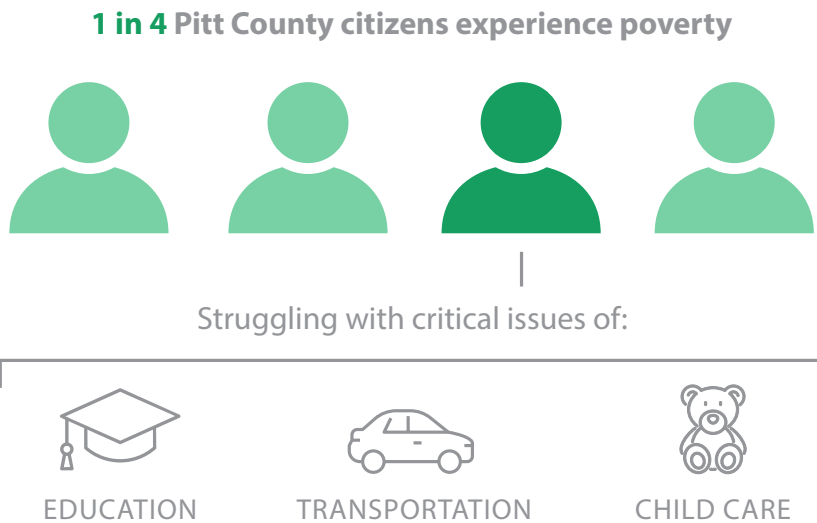
Over the years, Pitt County economic development efforts have focused on three core areas: attraction, retention, and expansion of industrial investment and jobs. Our past program of work was developed and executed with these focus areas in mind, including marketing and recruitment efforts, existing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

Looking at our strategic plan with a new lens, and in consideration of current 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:

Built **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 originally developed in 2022 through facilitated planning sessions with Pitt County Economic Development staff and ECU Professor, Sharon Justice, and with feedback and input from Deputy County Manager Sam Croom. It has been edited for the current year based on staff input. 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.

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Pitt County Snapshot:

Demographics and Economy



Poverty Rate:

22.9% (2022) 20.8% (2023)
(14.0% NC, 12.8% US)



Child Poverty Rate:

25.2% (2020)



Households with Broadband:

87% (2020)



Labor Force Participation Rate:

63.6% (2022) 63.0% (2023) (61.9% NC, 63.2% US)



Prime-age Labor Force Participation Rate (25-54):

83.8% (2022) 84.2% (2023)
(81.9% NC, 82.4% US)



Per Capital Income:

\$27,155 (2022)
\$27,599 (2023)
(\$31,993 NC, \$35,384 US)



Employment Increased

1.7% in the region over
the year ending 2022Q4.



Average Wage:

2022: \$49,164, up 7.4% (\$63,393 US, up 9.0%)
2023: \$52,714, up 4.7% (\$68,838 US, up 5.0%)



Cost of Living:

12% lower than the
national average
(NC is 6.2% lower)



High School Graduation Rate:

85% of Pitt County 9th graders complete HS in 4 years or less.
(Below the suburban county average of 88%; State goal is 95%)

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Pitt County Snapshot:

Demographics and Economy



Post-secondary Education:

52% of high school graduates who enroll in postsecondary earn a degree or credential within 6 years (below the suburban county average of 60%)



Of Individuals 25-64 in Pitt County:
33.8% have a bachelor's degree or higher
(34.3% in the US)



Average Age in Pitt County:
32.7
38.9 in NC and 38.2 in the US



**7 out of 10 Largest Taxpayers
are Existing Industries**
(4 out of 10 largest employers)



**Manufacturing Contributes the
Largest Portion of Our GDP**
(\$1.9; >20.7% of GDP)
The previous two years' numbers show a 1.5% contraction followed by an 8.7% expansion.



The Industry Cluster with the Highest Relative Concentration in Pitt County

Pharmaceuticals with a location quotient (LQ) of 13.04. This sector employs 2341 workers in the County with an average salary of \$70,634.

Pitt County Tax Rankings in the State:



**Valuation Per
Capita:**
74 (lower than
state average)



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



**Tax Rate Per
\$100:**
50



**Tax Levy Per
Capita:**
25

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 road map to guide programs and activities. This will enable 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**
 - Work with Pitt County Planning and other partners to identify and prioritize properties for industrial growth
 - Update and maintain inventory of properties available for sale or lease on a quarterly basis in GIS Planning
 - Continue to explore development and financing opportunities for a shell building at Farmville Corporate Park
 - Explore opportunities for new industrial property for County, public-private, or private ownership, control, or development, including financing and grants
 - Prioritize opportunities, with partner input, based on location, available utilities, funding availability, rail availability, adjacent uses, and other risk assessment criteria
- **Develop and maintain a property data database to accommodate more stringent and time-sensitive client, consultant and RFI requests**
 - Aggregate existing RFI request data for each property to develop a master database
 - Develop and update property flyers with more robust descriptions, such as more advanced utilities availability and capacity information, building characteristics, etc.

- **Identify and leverage financial and technical support opportunities**
 - Identify and evaluate grant and loan opportunities for site, building, and infrastructure for development, recruitment and expansion projects
 - Define internal and external processes for vetting, authorizing, and managing grants/loans for development, recruitment, and expansion projects
 - Identify consultants or other support service providers for grant/loan identification, writing, and management as well as infrastructure improvements, upgrades, and site and building development, incentives, and financing
 - Collaborate with partners to identify and leverage opportunities for funding and support for development, recruitment, and expansion opportunities

- **Continue to develop a 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
 - Develop a plan for development, including timing, funding, and size/scope of projects
 - Identify and engage developers that have shell building and build-to-suit development programs
 - Identify and engage engineering, architectural, consulting, and construction firms interested in the Pitt County market
 - Collaboratively market Pitt County to site and building developers and investors as well as site location consultants and corporate real estate professionals
 - Work with State and local partners to advance the Megasite identified in northern Pitt County, including management of due diligence and State funding
 - Partner with municipalities to develop properties, expand infrastructure, and provide marketing support

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 of water and sewer service in southern Pitt County with financing opportunity identification and administration of grants and due diligence
 - Continue to support existing industry expansion projects through support services, including grant assistance, research, and incentives for qualifying projects
 - Utilize the Retention and Expansion position to gain intelligence on existing industries' physical growth needs and expansion plans
 - Apply for and manage grants, internally or through an external grant administrator, including submissions, coordination of services and reports, and compliance

- **Support new projects that will increase Pitt County's capacity for growth**
 - Support opportunities for enhanced transportation, affordable housing, childcare, broadband access, and desirable amenities, particularly in rural communities
 - Support new industry recruitment opportunities with site preparation, certification efforts, marketing, infrastructure support, and incentives for qualifying projects
 - Identify and begin to develop plans for additional sites in Pitt County aimed at medium and large-scale industries and evaluate locations for utilities, access, workforce, and other key location factors

- **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 or become more 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 a plan and potential costs for maintenance, repair, and renovation of infrastructure and building
 - Maintain contact with existing tenants as future plans for the TEC emerge
 - Assess opportunities for alternate uses with County leadership, such as additional industrial training and/or additional County offices and storage
 - Determine space availability and update documentation
 - With County attorney and other expert guidance, review history, County needs, and legislation to identify a strategy for its highest and best use and any transition plan, if needed

- **Assess and define entrepreneurial incubation and acceleration assets**
 - Assess assets in Pitt County with similar and complementary uses to the TEC, 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
 - Support the continuation of the VINES website, and provide any needed support to the current managers of the site to revise it to reflect current needs, assets, and resources
 - Continue to support entrepreneurial events and programs, such as the ECU Pirate Challenge, the Miller School of Entrepreneurship, the ECU Crisp Center, ECU SBTDC, and the PCC Small Business Center
 - Continue to work with Intersect East developers to advance the project and determine if there are tenants that could benefit from this new facility

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’s leadership and staff to implement our respective strategic plans, including identification of our respective lanes to lead and support comprehensive economic development services at their highest level**
 - Plan regular meetings with GENCA leadership and staff to determine opportunities for continued and stronger collaboration, efficiency, and effectiveness for key initiatives
 - Continue to streamline recruitment processes, including customized materials, presentations, and events, with the VP of Business Recruitment
 - Develop an agreement with GENCA that outlines the services that we have identified and quantified in our donation for 2023-24.
 - Continue to work together on recruitment, product development, and marketing objectives
- **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 grow the biopharma cluster east of RTP

- **Enhance internal communication with County leadership team, Commissioners, elected officials, and the public to promote awareness and support of key economic development drivers, activities, and initiatives**
- **Collaborate with partners on advancing regional and local external marketing to build a brand and expand our visibility**

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, ECU Health, 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

- **Enhance 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 and LinkedIn HR Managers' Group to communicate customized messages, support resources, and opportunities to industries
 - Lead Existing Industry outreach, including monthly goals to connect, utilizing partners as needed, and document interactions, including needs, challenges, successes, and opportunities for support and advocacy
 - Work with partner organizations to identify and document clear guidelines and opportunities 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 existing industry surveys with relevant resources and support
 - Lead the HR 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 initiatives, as identified through interactions and requests, and distribute pertinent information regularly to provide excellent ongoing existing industry support
- Participate on committees and boards as a liaison and advocate for existing industries, such as the ECU CSE3 advisory committee
- Lead and participate in events that directly and indirectly serve existing industries, such as Grow Local, Better Skills Better Jobs Career Fairs, PCC President's Diversity Committee, etc.

Objective 7 Enhance Visibility and Awareness of Our Existing Industries

Strategies

- **Identify industries and work with County PIO and marketing firm to develop success stories, awards, recognitions, and other public relations opportunities**
 - Continue to host the Existing Industry Appreciation event during Manufacturing Week (October) and include additional outreach programs, marketing, and events during this time period with other partners
 - Engage partners to create, implement and execute marketing to increase awareness and appreciation for our local industries
 - Showcase well-known companies, products, people, and brands in marketing materials and identify opportunities to broaden awareness

Objective 8 Lead and Support Recruitment Efforts

Strategies

- **Lead and support project management with GENCA for all leads and prospects from EDPNC and other sources**
 - Develop incentives packages to close deals for new and existing industry projects
 - Develop collateral materials in anticipation of prospect's digital and in-person needs and requests
 - Work collaboratively with GENCA and other partners to respond to RFIs, plan visits and tours, and provide ongoing correspondence to ensure deliverables are being achieved
- **Evaluate leads and prospects with GENCA on a quarterly basis**
 - Analyze trends, such as industry, size and scope, and critical decision factors to determine strategy for recruitment
 - Maintain records and reports on prospect activity in Salesforce with pertinent information and updates from lead source and/or consultant/client

GOAL 5 Lead and Support Outreach Efforts in Pitt County Communities

Objective 9 Facilitate Support for Pitt County Municipalities

Strategies

- **Develop a regular and 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 10 Support Efforts to Alleviate Impediments to Economic Prosperity

Strategies

- **Engage on issues that negatively affect and influence economic prosperity**
 - Assess these issues with partners, including existing industry, 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
 - Utilize NCEDA membership and board position to provide a voice for issues in eastern North Carolina and NC
- **Continue to work with educational partners, industries, and others to address the labor shortage and the skills gap**
- **Sponsor and participate in 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 and Reputation of Pitt County Economic Development

Objective 11 Build Awareness of Economic Development Efforts and Initiatives

Strategies

- **Review and update PCED marketing resources**
 - 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 through County Connection and media distribution on topics of interest such as current rankings, awards, and successes, and economic development trends
 - Seek opportunities to engage with local interest groups, partners, and others, such as speaking engagements, panel discussions, and committee work, to stimulate positive interest and support of our program of work

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

- **Promote our region's assets**
 - Continue to work with the BioPharma Crescent to market our 5-County region for biopharma and life sciences projects
 - Continue to work with GENCA on the Regional Marketing project, funded by the State
 - Identify other opportunities to market regionally, based on geography and/or clusters

Objective 12 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
 - Provide ongoing reports on schedule or upon request to County leadership on existing industry support, prospect activity, active projects, etc.
 - 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
- **Promote Pitt County's competitiveness and value proposition for new investment**
 - Develop new recruitment tools with partners to illustrate the value of locating and expanding in Pitt County
 - Utilize technology resources to provide data analysis and trends
 - Create an RFI template with pertinent information for all industrial sites, communities, and supporting assets in Pitt County
- **Develop a Pitt County incentive policy**
 - Evaluate comparable policies to be used as a template
 - Develop levels of support with County leadership input
 - Review the NC Statutes that outline the County's ability and obligations for providing incentives



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