



# Economic Development Strategic Plan

Sponsored by: *ElectriCities of NC, Inc.*

*Creative Economic Development Consulting*

2022

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# Executive Summary

Apex is a fast-growing community in a high-tech region that is attracting skilled and talented people. Companies and people are attracted to the town's quality of life, transportation access, amenities, and proximity to the greater Raleigh area. Small businesses are flourishing, and entrepreneurs have strong support from the town's LaunchAPEX program. With development and redevelopment projects underway and public investments in infrastructure and recreation, there are many assets and opportunities for growing the employment and tax base of the town. Investing time and resources in spaces for businesses to grow, amenities for residents and visitors, and long-range planning will take Apex's economic development program to the next level and increase the mix of local employment opportunities.

The economic development strategic planning process was sponsored by ElectriCities of N.C., Inc. as a service to its member communities. ElectriCities sponsors projects like this to spur and support economic growth in its communities. This strategic plan will guide the Town of Apex's strategic investments that will result in a stronger, more diverse, and sustainable economy.

The strategic planning process included community engagement, SWOT Analysis, and economic and demographic research. An asset-based approach to strategic planning was used, building goals, strategies, and action steps around Apex's assets and future opportunities. Apex's strengths include a talented workforce, transportation access, infrastructure, amenities, and a growing population. The strategic plan calls for the town to leveraging its small-town quality of life and invest in new tourism and entertainment destinations to attract more visitors. The town's challenges include ensuring there is capacity to meet growth demands, housing availability and affordability, workforce availability, and increasing pressure on transportation infrastructure. One of the strategic plan goals specifically addresses the need to invest in long-range planning to ensure Apex stays ahead of growth.

The strategic plan builds upon the town's strengths and captures opportunities. It also addresses weaknesses and mitigates looming threats. Apex's goals are centered around business retention, attraction, and startups, tourism development, and long-range planning.

- ⦿ Develop and Market Choice Business Locations
- ⦿ Support Startups and Small Business Growth
- ⦿ Implement a Travel and Tourism Development Plan
- ⦿ Community Capacity Keeps Pace with Growth

Business, community, and government leaders want the town to continue to be a great place to raise a family, visit for the weekend, and grow a small business – and they are committed to working together toward that goal. Apex is fortunate to have top-notch professionals in town government and passionate private sector leaders, both willing to invest in the future of Apex.

# Economic Development Strategic Plan

New business recruitment and existing business retention was ranked as the number one economic development strategy by Apex citizens. This was closely followed by small business and entrepreneur development and transportation improvements. Citizens want to see the town invest in projects that will support those strategies: transportation, sites and buildings for businesses, and support for small businesses and entrepreneurs. They want these strategies to result in quality jobs, a diverse economy, new business startups, and increased retail sales. Citizens also want the town to manage the demands of growth so their small-town quality of life can be maintained.

The economic development goals for Apex build upon the town's assets and opportunities and align with citizen input. The goal to develop choice business locations supports business attraction and retention. Small business and entrepreneur development is supported by the second goal. The recommendation to expand the economic development program to include travel and tourism addresses diversification, business startups, and increased retail sales. The fourth goal addresses the need to expand capacity and manage growth to ensure Apex maintains its place as a top place to live in the Triangle.

Fast-growing towns face many challenges that require long-range planning and strategic public investments. This plan will require new investment to reach the results citizens want: local quality jobs, new business startups, economic diversification, and capacity building.

## Town of Apex Economic Development Goals

- ⦿ Develop and Market Choice Business Locations
- ⦿ Support Startups and Small Business Growth
- ⦿ Implement a Travel and Tourism Development Plan
- ⦿ Community Capacity Keeps Pace with Growth



## Goal: Develop & Market Choice Business Locations

With limited land designated for industrial and business development, the Economic Development Department should remain proactive in identifying, controlling, and developing land to create local employment opportunities that will reduce commuting, leverage public investments in infrastructure, and support Apex's live, work, play environment.

**Strategy:** Identify and control sites for suppliers of Vinfast, Toyota, and Wolfspeed and other employers.

### Action Steps:

- Apply to the ElectriCities Site Assist Program, a program that identifies industrial sites in its member communities. The program is funded by ElectriCities.
- Complete the Wake County Site ID program which identifies industrial sites in municipalities in Wake County. This program is funded by Wake County Economic Development.
- Review and assess town and county owned properties for any with industrial development potential.
- Reach out to existing businesses to identify land they own but will not be used for future expansion.
- Evaluate former commercial properties, underutilized, and brownfield sites.
- Explore multi-jurisdictional development partnerships with other municipalities and Wake County.
- Prioritize potential industrial development sites and create a long-range site development strategy to control and complete due diligence on the priority sites.
- Apply to the ElectriCities Smart Sites Program to complete due diligence on sites. (Apex has used this program in the past.)

## Strategy: Continue to work with private developers to develop speculative buildings.

### Action Steps:

- Host tours of industrial sites for private developers to promote development opportunities.
- Prepare conceptual site plans on priority sites to model spec building development. Invest in 3-D and video renderings.
- Create a public-private partnership development program whereby the town supports spec building development on strategic sites. Examples: The town could waive fees, extend infrastructure, delay payment for publicly owned land until the building leases/sells, grade the site with repayment when the building leases/sells, pay interest until the building leases/sells, etc. Catawba County has created successful public-private partnerships for spec building development.

## Strategy: Launch business attraction marketing for sites and buildings.

### Action Steps:

- Host EDPNC staff for an annual visit to Apex to showcase sites, building, existing businesses, coworking spaces, and investments in downtown and the community.
- Continue e-marketing promoting Apex to EDPNC, site consultants, commercial realtors, existing businesses for expansion, and economic development allies.
- Add a special section to the website to recruit suppliers of Vinfast, Toyota, and Wolfspeed. Include competitive advantages and talent data.
- Continue to participate in targeted business attraction events with Wake County, EDPNC, and ElectriCities.
- Continue using social media to promote opportunities in Apex, focusing external marketing on LinkedIn and Twitter.
- Continue business attraction efforts targeted to small businesses and large commercial franchises.



## Goal: Support Startups and Small Business Growth

There is an opportunity to capture the wave of entrepreneurship by expanding the small business and entrepreneurial resources already offered by the town to encourage more startups and small business growth.

**Strategy:** Increase town support of WMBEs.

### **Action Steps:**

- Conduct and implement the findings of a disparity study to increase diversity in town procurement.
  - Research and implement best practices from similar towns.
- Develop a database of WMBE businesses in Apex.
- Through e-communications, promote Triangle events targeted to support WMBEs.
- Make Apex businesses aware of local WMBEs to increase B2B opportunities.
  - Explore partnerships to develop a vendor or information portal.
  - Network WMBEs with Apex's target business sectors.
- Promote LaunchApex to WMBEs.
- Partner with Wake Technical Community College Small Business Center and the Small Business and Technology Development Center to provide programming and technical assistance for WMBE businesses:
  - How to Become a Certified Historically Underutilized Business
  - How to Become a State and Federal Contractor
  - Doing Business with Life Science Companies and other Apex target sectors
  - Tap into State and Federal Bid Sources
  - Tap into Local WMBE Resources
- Ensure Apex WMBEs are aware of business resources through agencies such as the Small Business Center, SBTDC, and Industrial Expansion Solutions.



## Strategy: Create incubator & maker space to compliment coworking space.

### Action Steps:

- Conduct a feasibility study to determine the need/market for incubator and maker space. U.S. EDA has grant funds available to study the feasibility of incubators and maker spaces, as well as grant funds for facility renovation.
- If the feasibility study is positive, determine if an incubator and/or maker space could be co-located with coworking.
- Organize a tour of best practice incubators/maker spaces for town leaders to develop a vision for Apex.
- Host LaunchAPEX programs at the incubator/maker space to activate the space. LaunchAPEX is a signature program of the Economic Development Department that can be used to boost engagement in incubation space.

## Strategy: Small business incentive and financing programs.

### Action Steps:

- Expand the town's incentive policy to support small businesses. See the City of Asheville's [Business Development Grant](#) program where the investment threshold to qualify for incentives starts at \$250,000.
- Apex could also support small business development with building upfit grants. See this example from the [City of Raleigh](#).
- Consider creating a program similar to the City of Morganton's [Small Business Loan Program](#).
- Broaden the façade grant to include architectural services. Example: City of Gastonia [Downtown Economic Incentive](#).
- Wilkes County has a good example [small business grant](#) program.
- Work with financial institutions to support access to capital.

## Strategy: Expand the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program.

### Action Steps:

- Maintain a goal of 500 existing business outreach contacts.
- Set a goal of 50 direct business contacts a year.
- Host two BRE networking events a year to promote B2B.
- Continue small business meetups and downtown stakeholder meetings.
- Target existing businesses with a quarterly/semi-annual e-communication that promotes town resources, resources in the Triangle, B2B opportunities, and local events.
- Develop a new business "welcome packet" (electronic) that lists resources, contacts, and upcoming networking events.
- Add a list of existing business support services (like the location assistance information) to the "Existing Business" webpage.





## Goal: Implement a Travel and Tourism Plan

North Carolina ranks number five in domestic tourism and the Triangle ranks in the top 50 in the nation. Apex has, and is developing, amenities to attract day-trippers and weekend getaways. Expanding the Economic Development Department to include tourism destination development and promotion will take advantage of local, regional, and state assets.

**Strategy:** Recruit a satellite location of a state/regional tourism destination.

### Action Steps:

- Identify a site for a tourism destination. Prioritize sites that leverage town investments in recreation and amenities. Look for opportunities to leverage the “festival district.”
- Create a recruitment packet for a tourism destination. Include market data (traffic count, visitor data, income, retail spending) and public partnership opportunities (town owned property, public investment in parking, nearby expanded recreation amenities).
- Launch a recruitment outreach program to potential partners: state museums, science centers, cultural and arts centers. An example is the Discovery Place in Charlotte expanding to create [Discovery Place Kids](#) in Huntersville. Another example is the Virginia Museum of Natural History creating a satellite location in Waynesboro, VA.

**Strategy:** Recruit tourism infrastructure to boost visitors and economic impact.

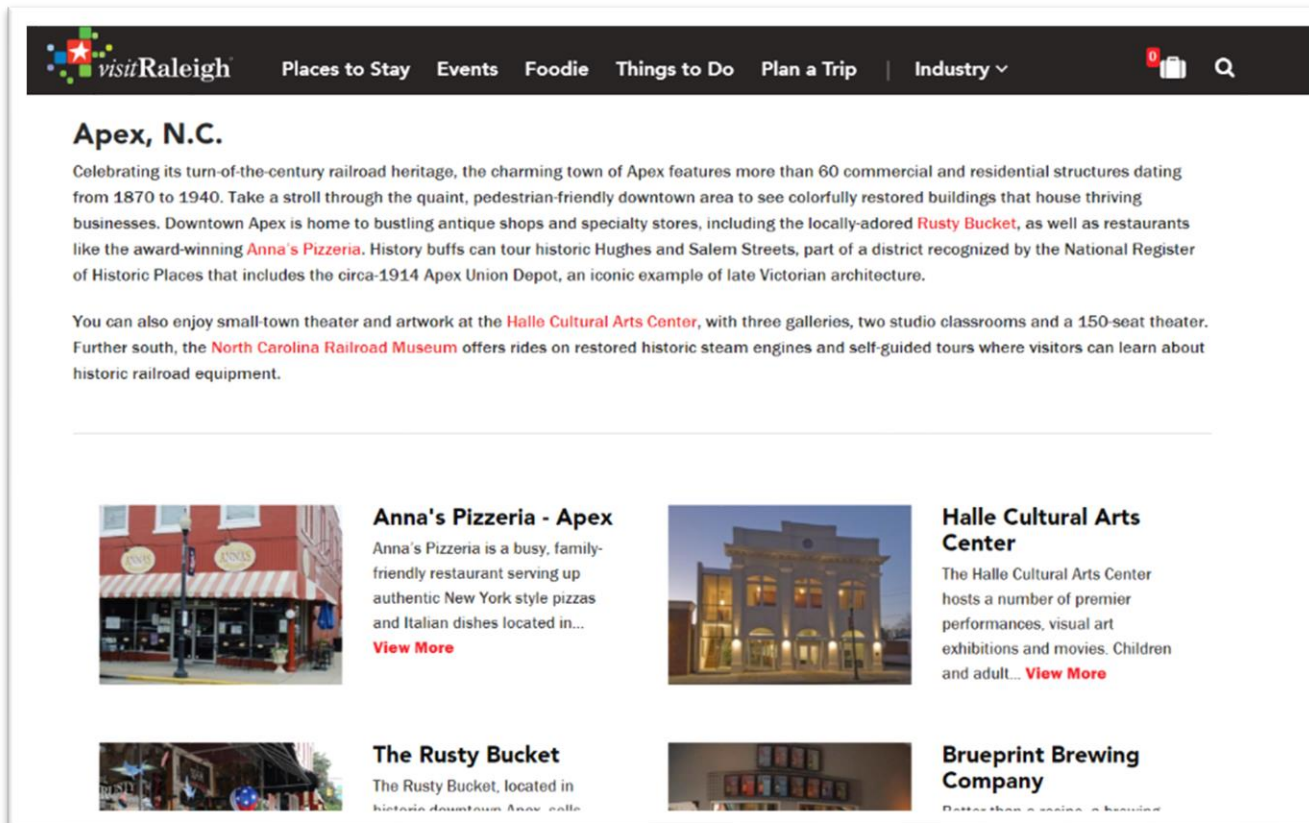
### Action Steps:

- Expand upon the recruitment packet for a tourism destination described above to include a market profile for hotels, restaurants, and retail.
- Include the market profile on the economic development website.
- Launch a marketing campaign to developers of hotels, restaurants, and destination retail. Target developers of establishments in the Triangle to open another location in Apex.
- Partner with regional allies to make sure developers and event planners know about tourism development opportunities in Apex.

## Strategy: Market Apex as a destination in the Triangle for day and multi-day experiences.

### Action Steps:

- Continue to leverage Visit Raleigh (example webpage below) and other regional tourism programs by including Apex “stay, shop, eat, play” information.
- Make sure partners that are promoting the Triangle include Apex events and tourism assets.
- Create day and multi-day itineraries and promote on the website, social media, and share with regional tourism partners.
- Continue the “Love Local” campaign.
- Develop a calendar of events and weekly e-blast of “events of the week.” [Explore Elkin](#) is a community development organization that does a good job promoting events and happenings within the community and region.



**Apex, N.C.**

Celebrating its turn-of-the-century railroad heritage, the charming town of Apex features more than 60 commercial and residential structures dating from 1870 to 1940. Take a stroll through the quaint, pedestrian-friendly downtown area to see colorfully restored buildings that house thriving businesses. Downtown Apex is home to bustling antique shops and specialty stores, including the locally-adored **Rusty Bucket**, as well as restaurants like the award-winning **Anna's Pizzeria**. History buffs can tour historic Hughes and Salem Streets, part of a district recognized by the National Register of Historic Places that includes the circa-1914 Apex Union Depot, an iconic example of late Victorian architecture.

You can also enjoy small-town theater and artwork at the **Halle Cultural Arts Center**, with three galleries, two studio classrooms and a 150-seat theater. Further south, the **North Carolina Railroad Museum** offers rides on restored historic steam engines and self-guided tours where visitors can learn about historic railroad equipment.

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**Anna's Pizzeria - Apex**  
Anna's Pizzeria is a busy, family-friendly restaurant serving up authentic New York style pizzas and Italian dishes located in... [View More](#)

**Halle Cultural Arts Center**  
The Halle Cultural Arts Center hosts a number of premier performances, visual art exhibitions and movies. Children and adult... [View More](#)

**The Rusty Bucket**  
The Rusty Bucket, located in historic downtown Apex, calls...

**Brueprint Brewing Company**  
Downtown Apex is a beautiful...





## Goal: Community Capacity Keeps Pace with Growth

Long-term planning to ensure the town has resources to meet the demands of growth and development are a key concern of citizens. The Economic Development Department's role in long-term planning is critical. The Department is a liaison with the business community, can advocate for public investment, and participate as a key planning partner.

**Strategy:** Continue to invest in long range planning.

**Action Steps:**

- Ensure the Economic Development Department is engaged with the town's long-range planning initiatives to align economic development strategies with the town's development goals. Continue service on town committees leading long range planning.
- Be a liaison between the town and businesses to ensure businesses are engaged in long range planning.
- Report on implementation of the economic development strategic plan to ensure town council is up to date on the goals and strategies of the Economic Development Department.
- Leverage economic development planning resources (ElectriCities, EDPNC, NC Commerce, etc.) to keep the strategic plan updated.
- Stay connected to economic development professionals in other fast-growing municipalities to stay on the leading edge of balancing growth and development.

**Strategy:** Continue to advocate for transportation and passenger rail.

**Action Steps:**

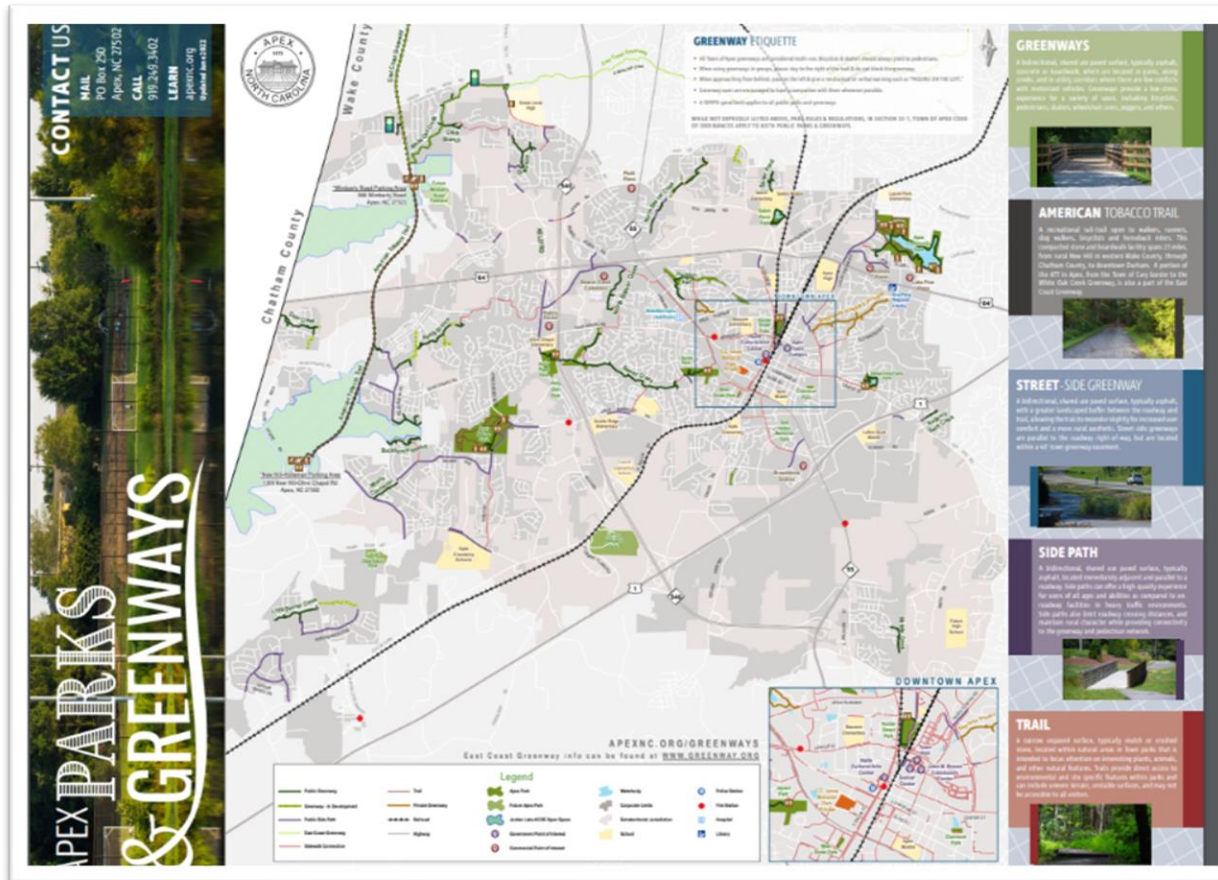
- Be an advocate for transportation improvements that enhances Apex's live, work, play environment.
- Advocate for transportation improvements that assist with business retention, expansion, and attraction.

- Be engaged in local and regional transportation planning initiatives to stay informed, advocate for Apex, and advocate for business needs.

## Strategy: Continue to make investments in streets, sidewalks, and walkability.

### Action Steps:

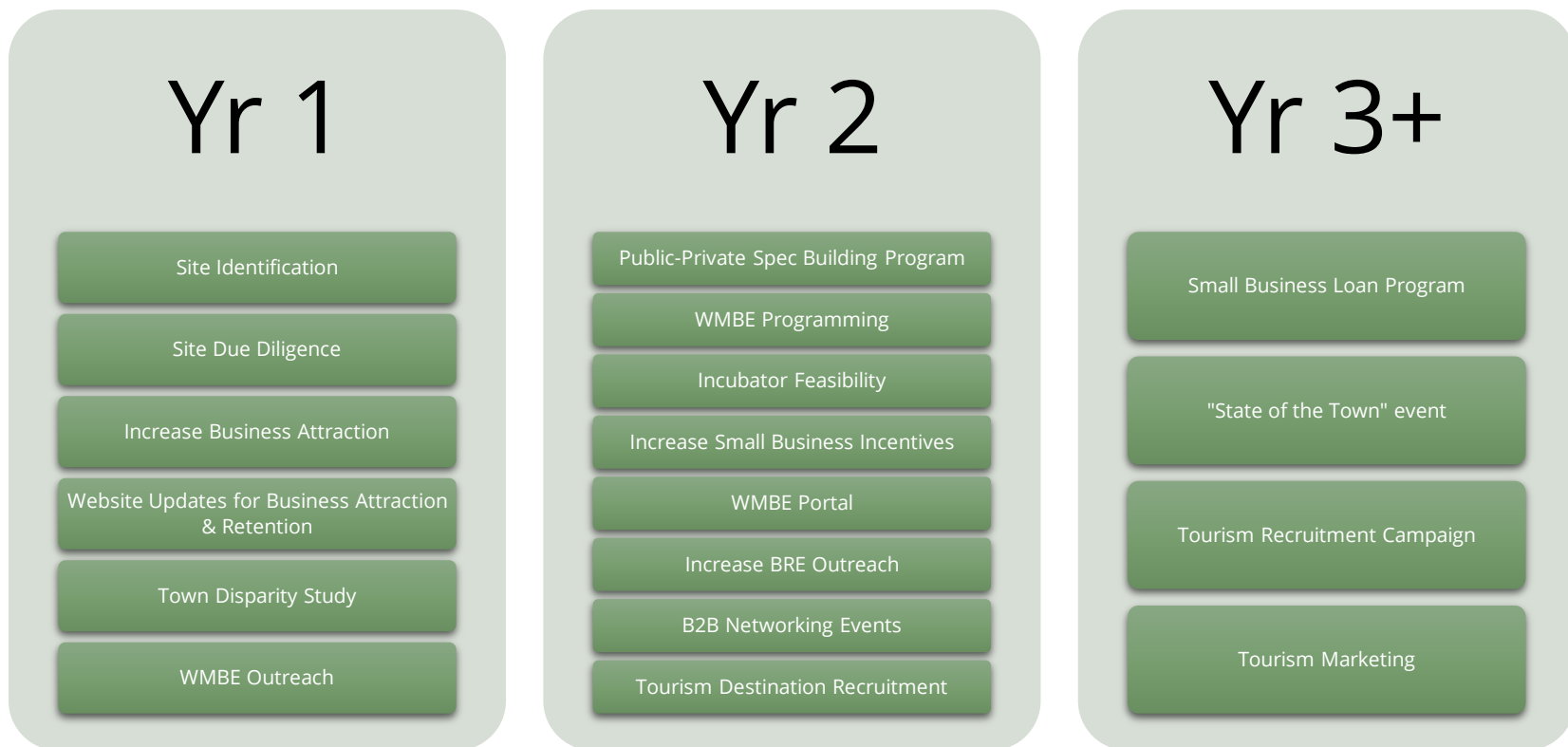
- Support town investments in streets, streetscape, sidewalks, trails, and walkability features to encourage connectivity.
- Include trails and walkability features in business park planning.
- Make developers and business owners aware of town plans for sidewalks, streetscape, trails, etc. so they can incorporate into their development plans.



# Implementation Plan

The Apex Economic Development Strategic Plan is designed to be implemented over three to five years. The implementation priorities below are recommended by the consulting team. Implementation will require new departmental funding for initiatives such as travel and tourism as well as new investments in site control and development. Outside of the Economic Development Department, the town will need to continue to invest in long-range planning and capacity building.

We recommend a regular review and update of the strategic plan and implementation guide. Opportunities arise as market conditions, public policy, and private sector interest change.





# Appendix A: SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis was developed using community input through a workshop, online survey, and interviews and the economic and demographic profile (Appendix B). The soundest economic development strategies are asset based. The economic development strategic plan is built upon strengths and opportunities for the future while addressing weaknesses and mitigating threats.

## Strengths

- Proximity to Jordan Lake, RTP, airport, and universities
- Educated workforce
- Public Schools and Wake Technical Community College
- Utilities including fiber
- Transportation infrastructure and transit
- Apex parks and recreation system, walkability, greenspace
- Growing tax base

## Weaknesses

- Capacity of infrastructure: roads, water, and sewer
- Road congestion
- Land availability and suitability for development
- Housing affordability
- Workforce availability
- Capacity of town staff to keep pace with growth
- Tourism infrastructure such as hotels

## Opportunities

- Leverage parks and recreation for expanded entertainment options
- Big Branch Pump Station (currently in the design stage)
- Downtown social district
- Improved parking awareness and access
- Passenger rail station and transit-oriented development
- New athletic complex opening soon
- Progress on downtown master plan
- Bond for street and sidewalk improvements

## Threats

- Failure to adequately plan for and invest in infrastructure to manage growth
- Failure to preserve land for commercial and industrial development
- Available space for new schools as the town grows
- Perceived concerns about regulatory process for development
- Failure to communicate with citizens and businesses
- Rising cost for infrastructure projects including the and rising cost of NC DOT transportation projects

# Strengths

Strengths and assets are the foundational building blocks of a sound economic development strategy. Strengths are the reasons why businesses and people locate in a community and why visitors travel to a place. Apex has assets that support business startup and growth and are attractive to new residents. Ones that stand out are related to location in the Research Triangle, skilled workforce, schools and universities, and quality of life amenities such as recreation, health care, dining, and shopping. In the survey, citizens noted the quality of life, downtown, and Wake Technical Community College as the top three assets.

- Proximity to Jordan Lake, RTP, airport, and universities
- Educated workforce
- Public Schools and Wake Technical Community College
- Utilities including fiber
- Transportation infrastructure and transit
- Apex parks and recreation system, walkability, greenspace
- Growing tax base
- Strong local business community
- “America’s Biggest Small Town” - quality of life, family-friendly safe, welcoming
- Access to tech industry
- Beautiful and thriving downtown
- Access to great medical care
- Diversity cultural experiences
- Strong residential demand
- Expert and responsive town staff
- New business startups, expansions, and locations (Coca Cola Distribution Center)

# Weaknesses

Apex faces some of the same challenges as other fast-growing towns in metro areas such as managing growth, strain on infrastructure, housing affordability, and preserving land for commercial and industrial development. Unique to Apex is some of the challenges in downtown development. The small footprint of downtown limits development opportunities, puts pressure on development cost, and taxes infrastructure. Apex has been proactively addressing these challenges through smart planning; however, the Triangle Region will continue to be a “hot” market for business and talent attraction. On the citizen survey, entertainment, transportation access, and utility capacity were ranked the lowest.

- Capacity of infrastructure: roads, water, and sewer
- Road congestion
- Land availability and suitability for development
- Housing affordability
- Workforce availability
- Capacity of town staff to keep pace with growth
- Tourism infrastructure such as hotels
- Entertainment options
- Event and large group spaces
- Commercial space affordability
- Bikeability
- Awareness of downtown parking options
- Public transportation
- Limited options for industrial development
- Access to a wider option of retail
- Small downtown footprint limits storefront options



# Opportunity

Much of the input from citizens and community leaders focused on opportunities, expressing a high level of enthusiasm for the future of Apex. Many of the opportunities will help Apex grow in a way that preserves the character of the community. Examples are investing in infrastructure, transportation, and greenway connectivity. There are opportunities to preserve land for commercial and industrial development to ensure the town has revenue to continue to provide a high level of services such as recreation facilities and programs.

- Expanded entertainment options
- Big Branch Pump Station (currently in the design stage)
- Downtown social district
- Improved parking awareness and access
- Passenger rail station and transit-oriented development
- New athletic complex opening soon
- Progress on downtown master plan
- Bond for street and sidewalk improvements
- NC55 widening and access project
- Completing greenway connections including the American Tobacco Trail
- Friendship Station development
- Redevelopment of former industrial and commercial space
- Amphitheater for local musicians
- Communicate the benefits of commercial and industrial development and support of public services

# Threats

Threats are identified in a SWOT analysis in order to mitigate potential risk. Apex's chief threat is a failure to plan for and invest in policies and infrastructure to manage growth so Apex will remain the quality place people love. This includes ensuring all infrastructure grows with the town and preserving land for future development so there is a revenue stream to support public services.

- Failure to adequately plan for and invest in infrastructure to manage growth
- Failure to preserve land for commercial and industrial development
- Available space for new schools as the town grows
- Perceived concerns about regulatory process for development
- Failure to communicate with citizens and businesses
- Rising cost for infrastructure projects including the and rising cost of NC DOT transportation projects
- Competitiveness of neighboring locations
- Affordable housing, especially needs for age 65+ and millennials
- Balance the needs of residential and commercial development
- Losing small town charm
- Outside developers pricing out local business owners
- Losing businesses to lower cost areas

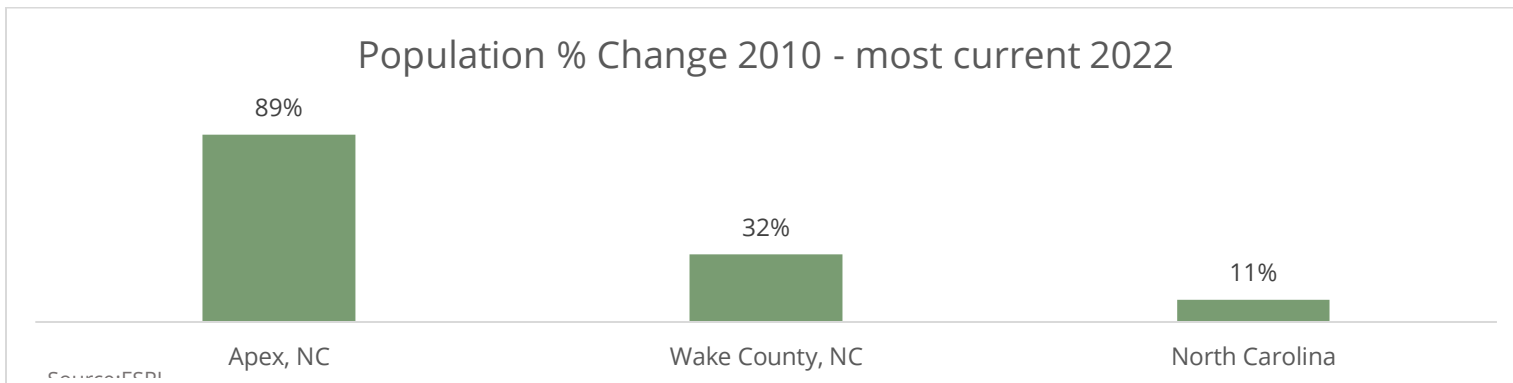
# Appendix B: Economic and Demographic Profile

## Summary

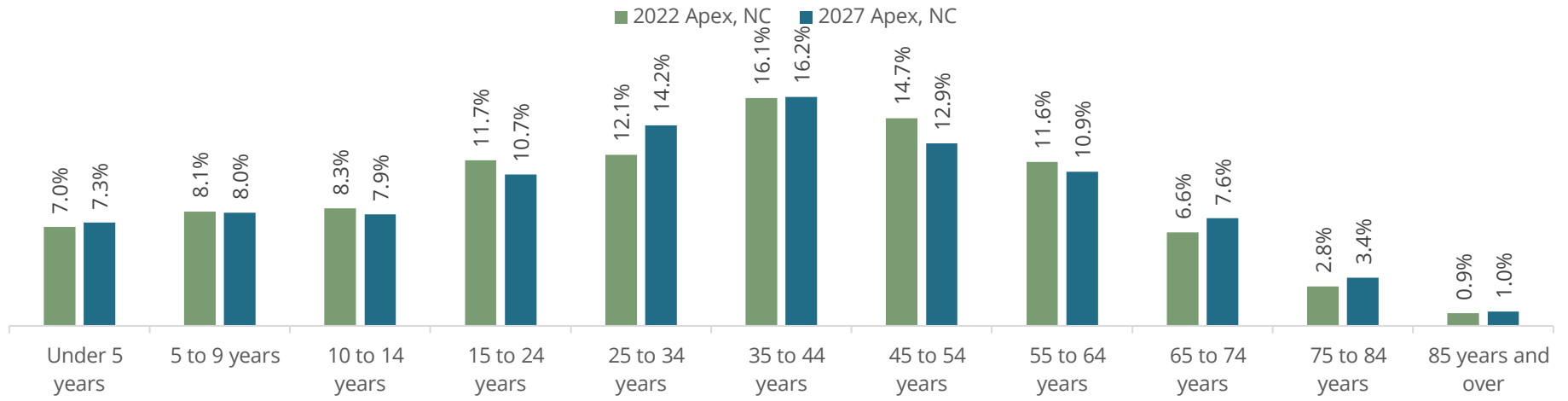
- Fast growing, highly educated population.
- Per capita income 14% higher than the county and 50% higher than the state.
- Homes are more expensive in Apex - \$393,904 median home value.
- Growing county labor force and declining unemployment rate.
- Predominant employment sectors are Professional and Technical Services and Health Care and Social Assistance.
- Fastest growing employment sectors are Mining (although total employment is small) and Information.
- Retail sales are increasing.
- Apex resident commute longer than the average resident in Wake County.
- The crime index rate is declining.
- Travel and tourism expenditures are rebounding after COVID-19.

Population	2010	2022	2027
<b>Apex, NC</b>	39,240	74,200	99,603
<b>Wake County, NC</b>	900,861	1,189,437	1,267,546
<b>North Carolina</b>	9,535,483	10,671,397	10,981,129

Source: ESRI

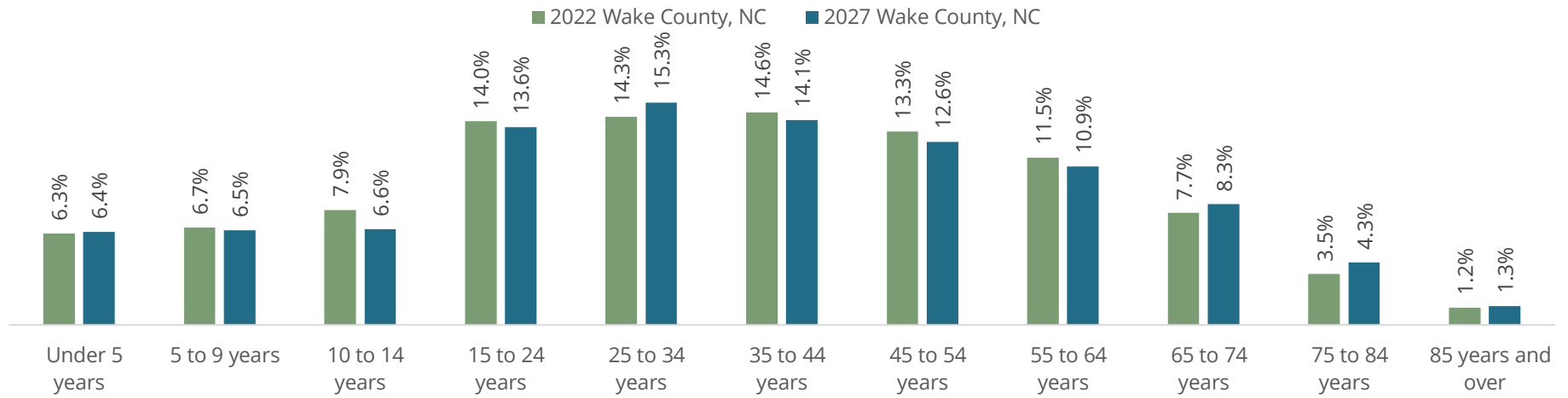


### Age Apex, NC

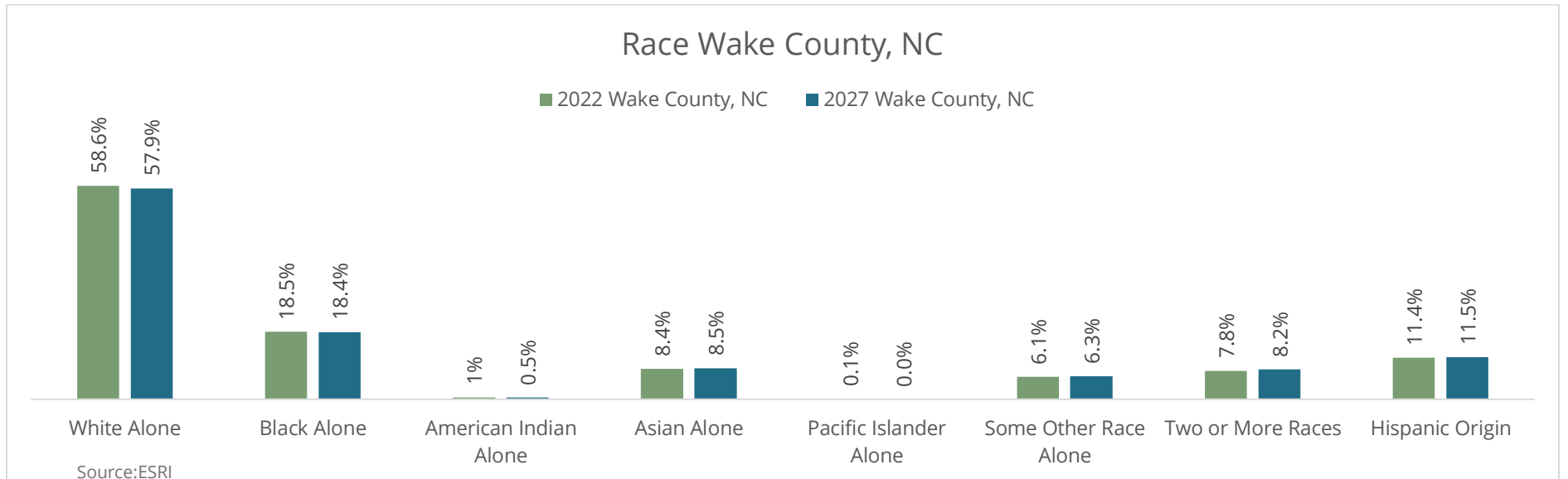
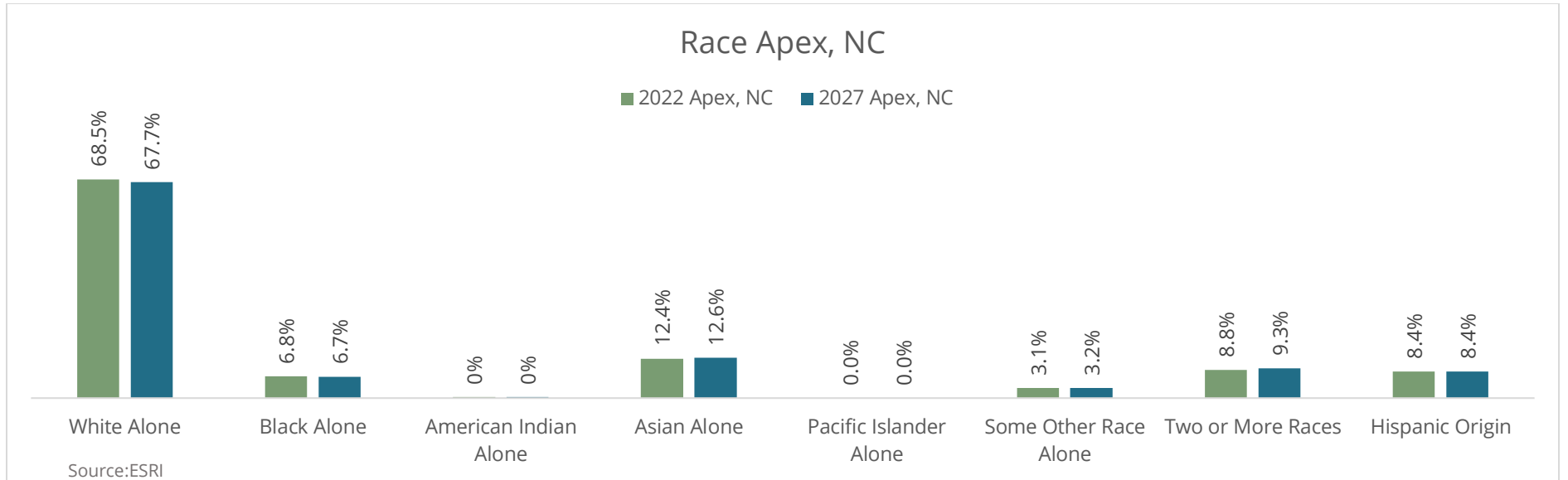


Source:ESRI

### Age Wake County, NC

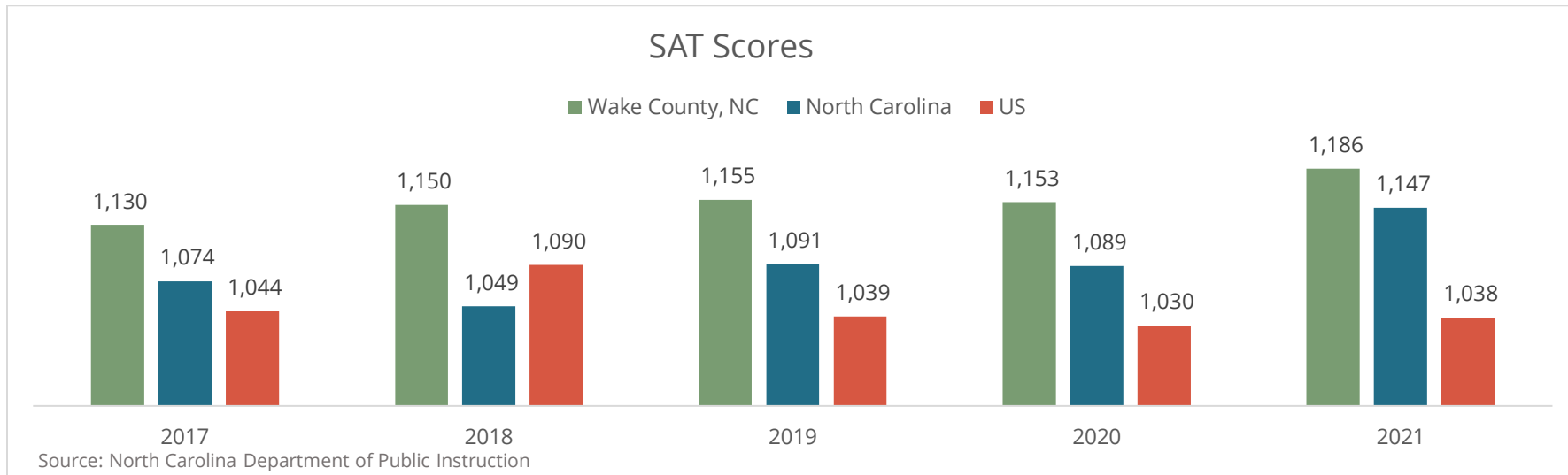


Source:ESRI

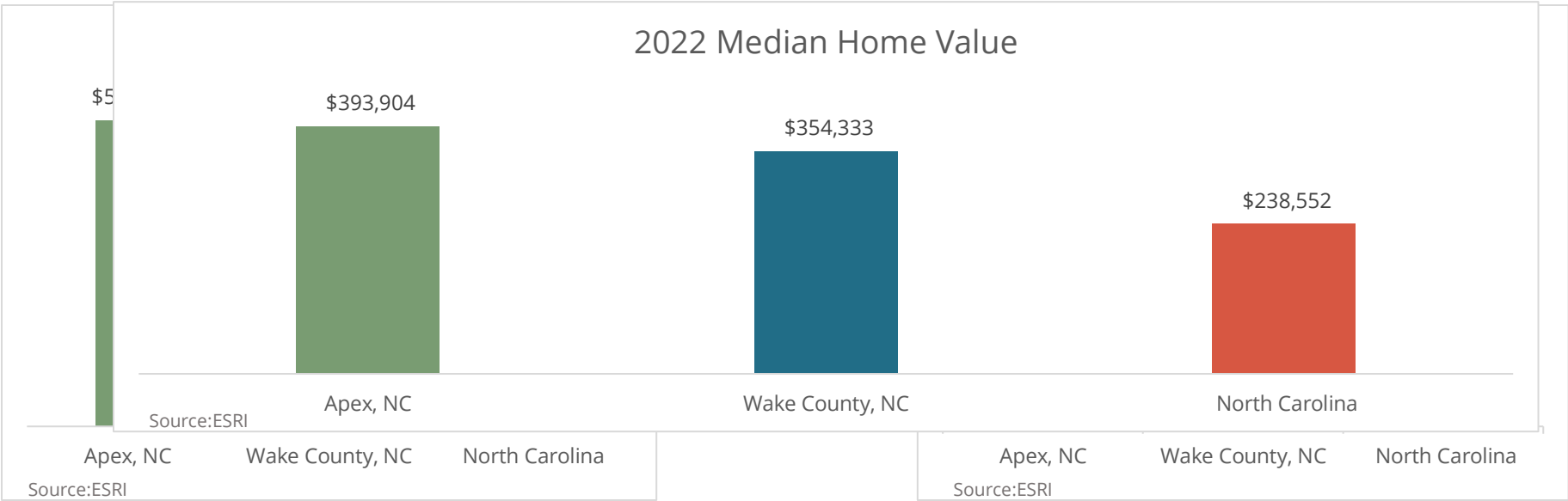


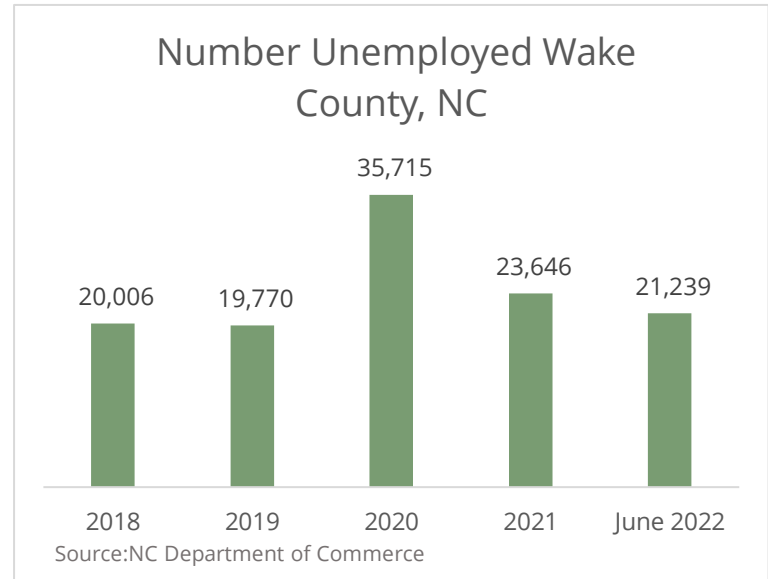
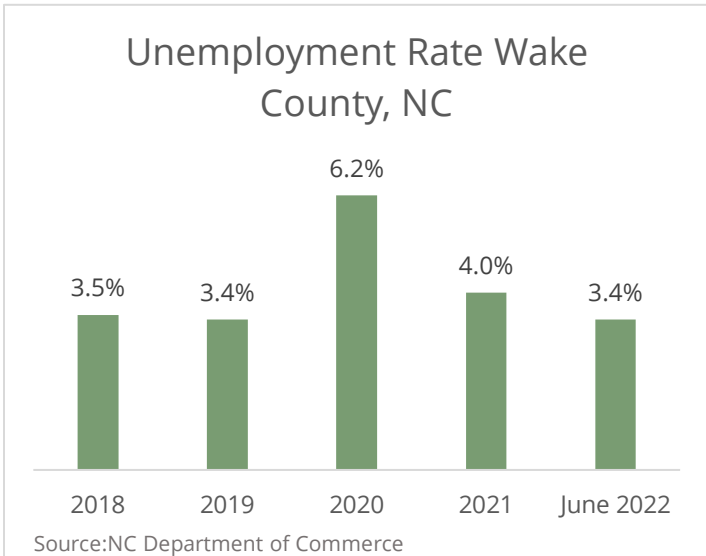
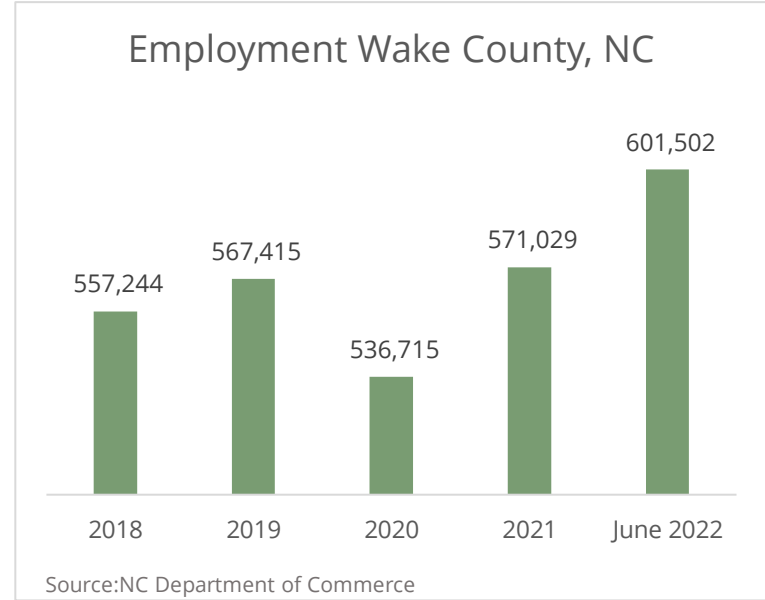
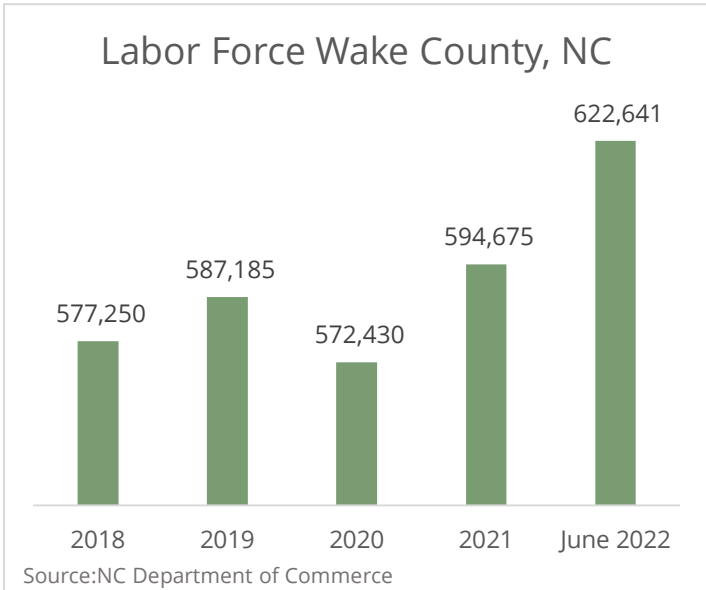
2022 Educational Attainment	Apex, NC	Wake County, NC	North Carolina
Less than 9th grade	1.2%	2.4%	3.5%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	2.2%	3.2%	6.5%
High school graduate	9.2%	12.8%	21.6%
GED/Alternative Credential	1.2%	2.0%	4.2%
Some college, no degree	11.5%	14.6%	18.8%
Associate's degree	9.4%	9.2%	11.3%
Bachelor's degree	38.4%	34.4%	21.6%
Graduate or professional degree	26.8%	21.3%	12.5%
Percent high school graduate or higher	96.5%	94.3%	90.0%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	65.2%	55.7%	34.1%

*Source: ESRI*



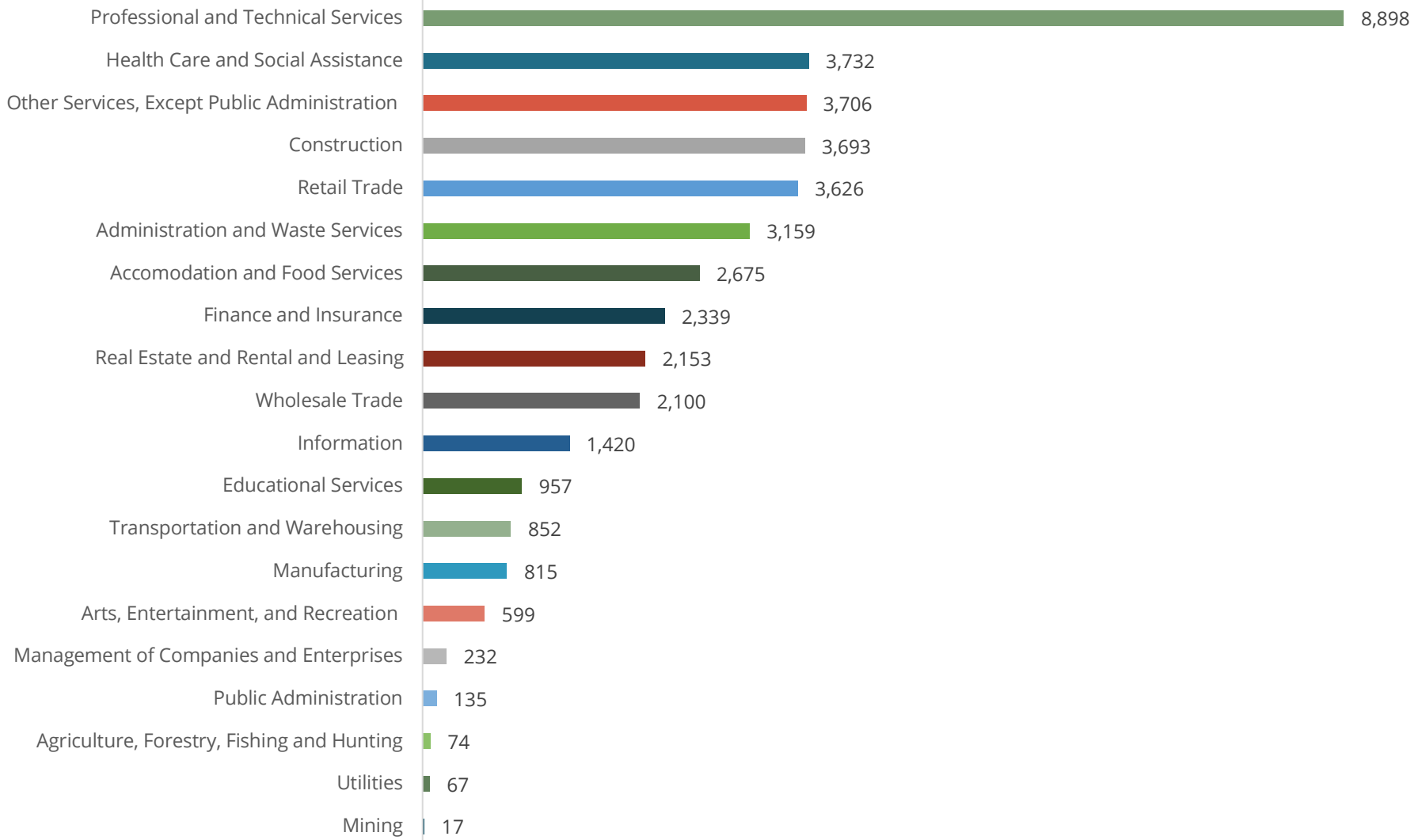
### 2022 Median Home Value





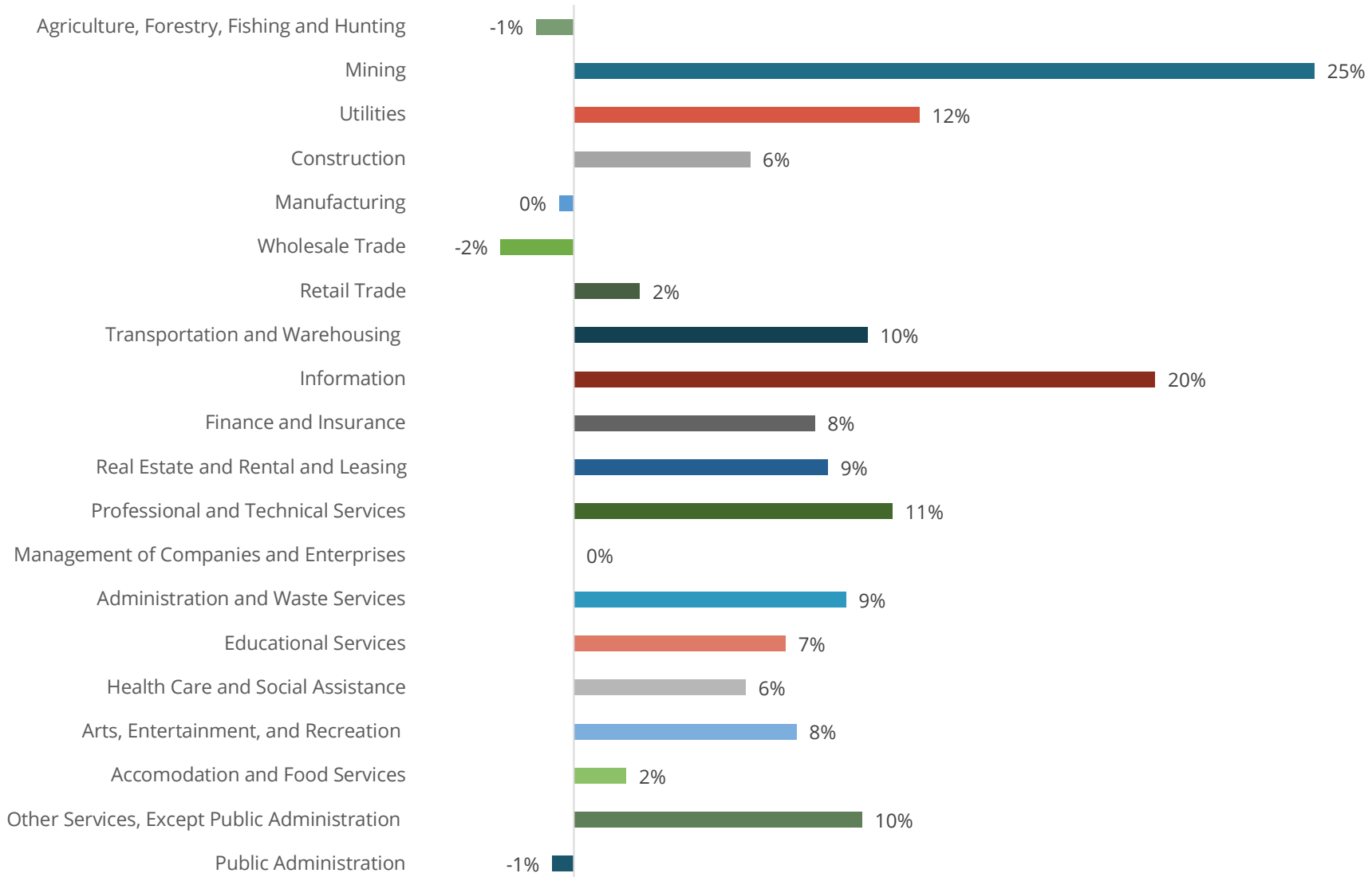


## Employment by Industry Wake County, NC June 2022



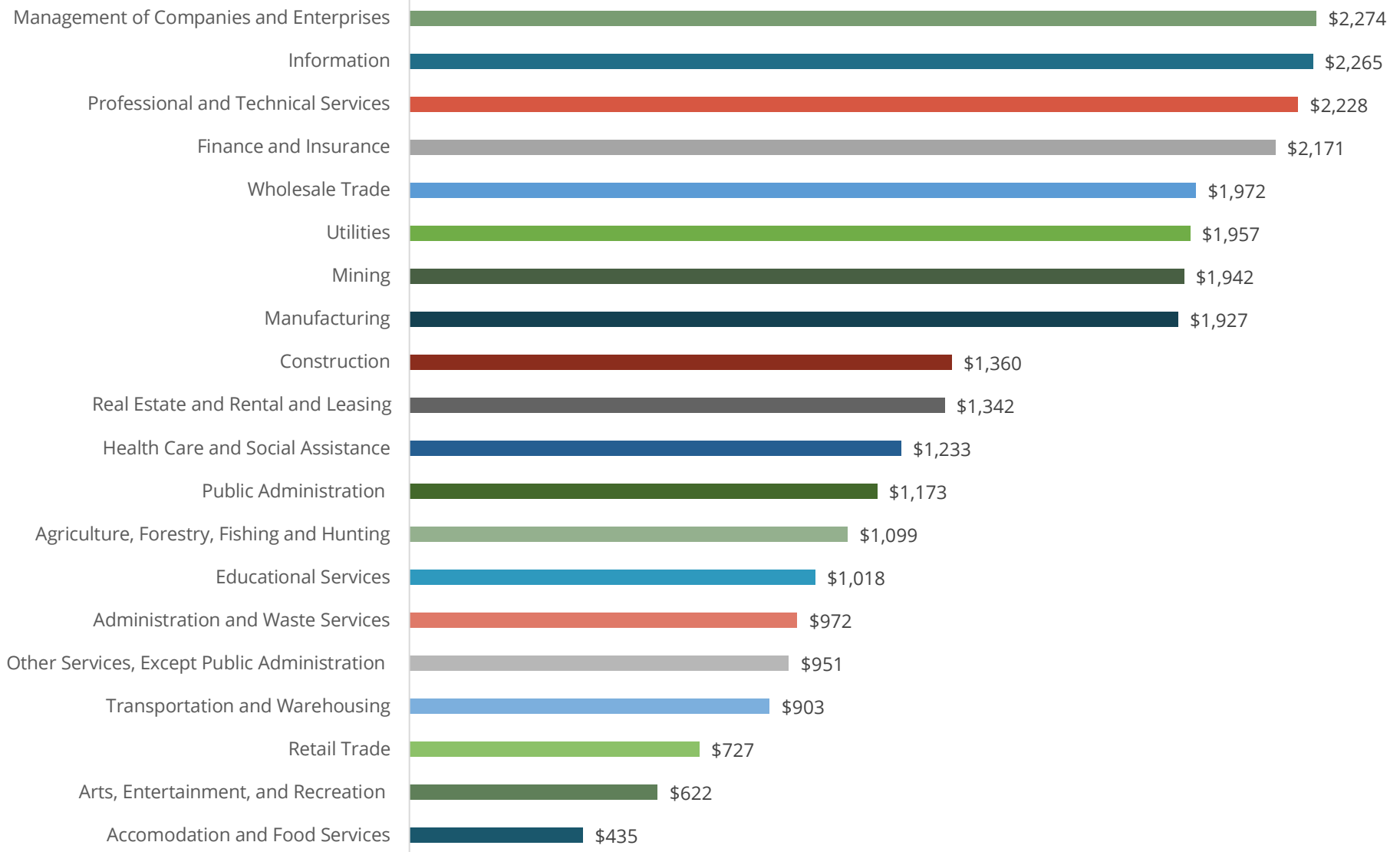
Source: NC Department of Commerce

## 2021 % Change Employment by Industry Wake County, NC



Source: NC Department of Commerce

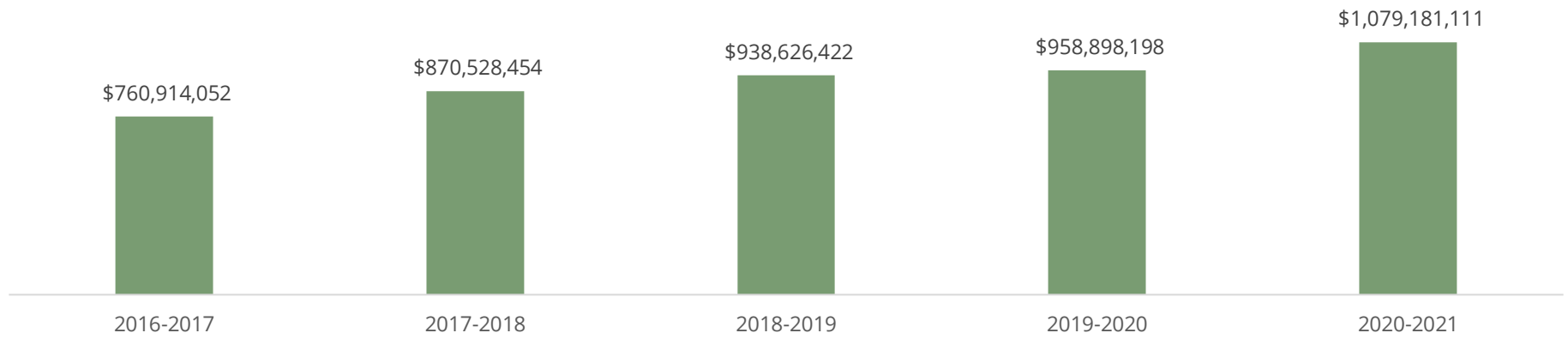
## Wages by Industry Wake County, NC 2021



Source: NC Department of Commerce

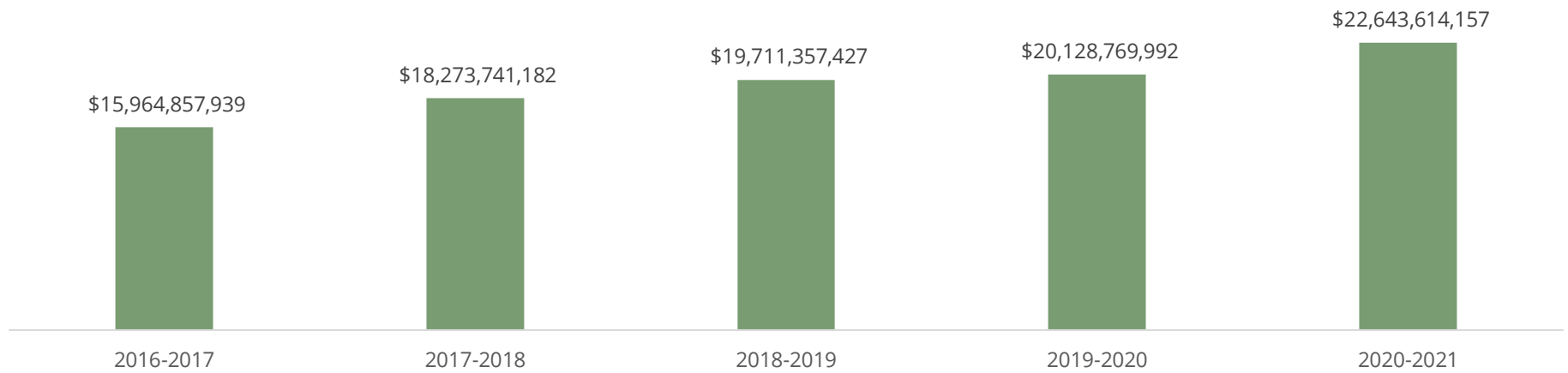
Wake County Top Employers			
Rank	Company Name	Industry	Employment Range
1	Wake County Public School System	Educational Services	1000+
2	NC State University At Raleigh	Educational Services	1000+
3	Wake Med	Health Care and Social Assistance	1000+
4	NC Health	Health Care and Social Assistance	1000+
5	Amazon Fulfillment Services Inc	Transportation and Warehousing	1000+
6	Wal-Mart Associates Inc.	Retail Trade	1000+
7	City Of Raleigh	Public Administration	1000+
8	SAS Institute Inc	Information	1000+
9	County Of Wake	Public Administration	1000+
10	Dept Of Public Safety	Public Administration	1000+
11	State Of Nc Dept Of Health & Human	Public Administration	1000+
12	Harris Teeter	Retail Trade	1000+
13	Red Hat, Inc	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1000+
14	State Of NC Office Of Personnel	Public Administration	1000+
15	State Employees Credit Union Inc	Finance and Insurance	1000+
16	Aerotek Inc	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	1000+
17	Target Stores Division	Retail Trade	1000+
18	U S Postal Service	Transportation and Warehousing	1000+
19	Wake Technical Community College	Educational Services	1000+
20	Food Lion	Retail Trade	1000+
21	Charter Communications LLC	Information	1000+
22	First-Citizens Bank & Trust Company	Finance and Insurance	1000+
23	Lenovo	Manufacturing	1000+
24	United Parcel Service Inc	Transportation and Warehousing	1000+
25	Wells Fargo Bank Na (A Corp)	Finance and Insurance	1000+

### Wake County Gross Collections



Source: NC Department of Revenue

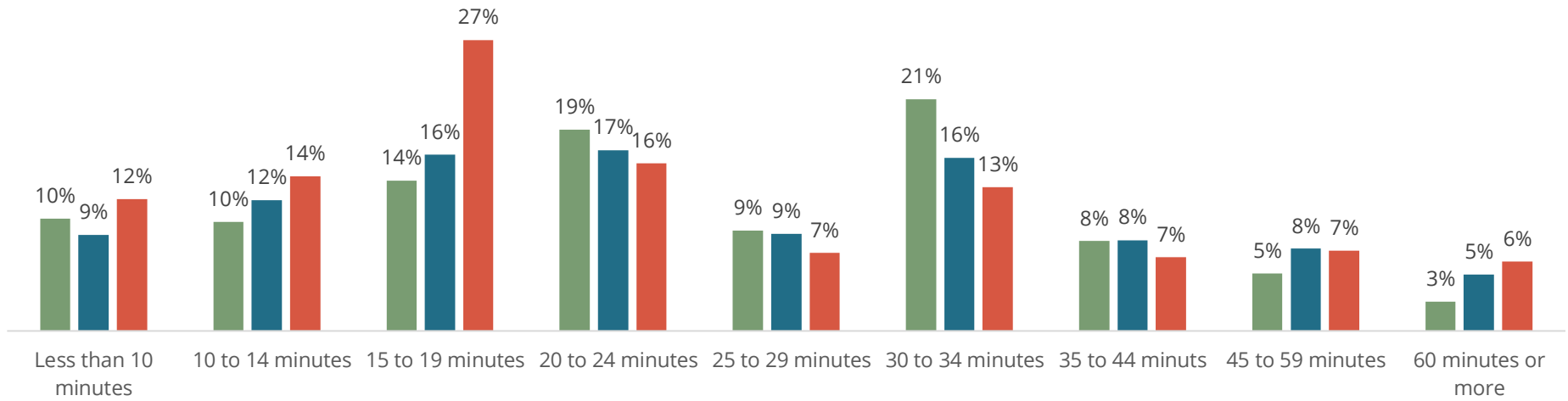
### Wake County Taxable Sales



Source: NC Department of Revenue

## 2020 Commute

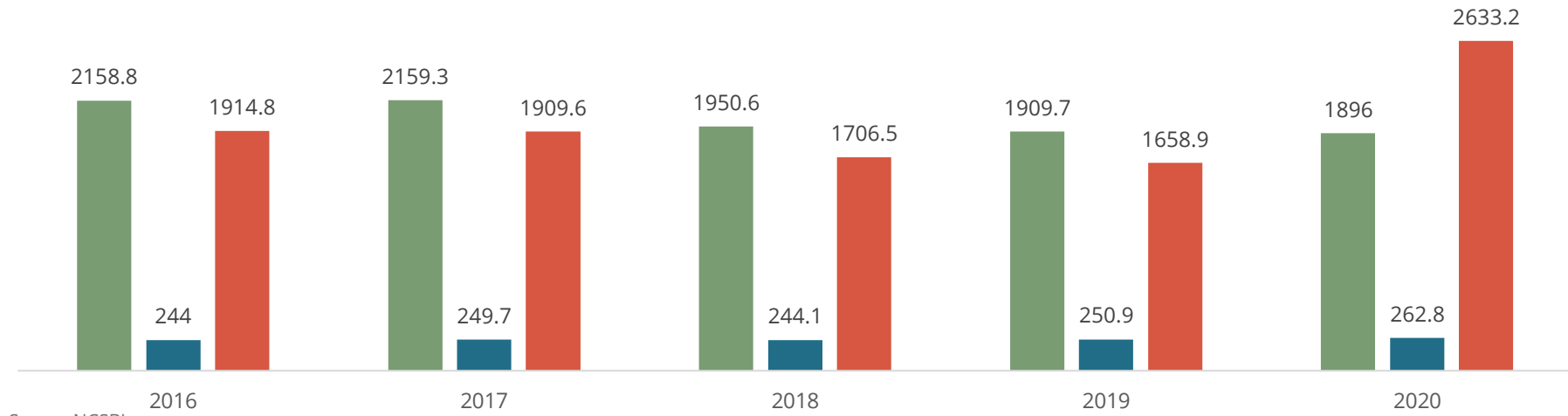
■ Apex, NC   ■ Wake County, NC   ■ North Carolina



Source: US Census

### Wake County Crime Rates per 100,000

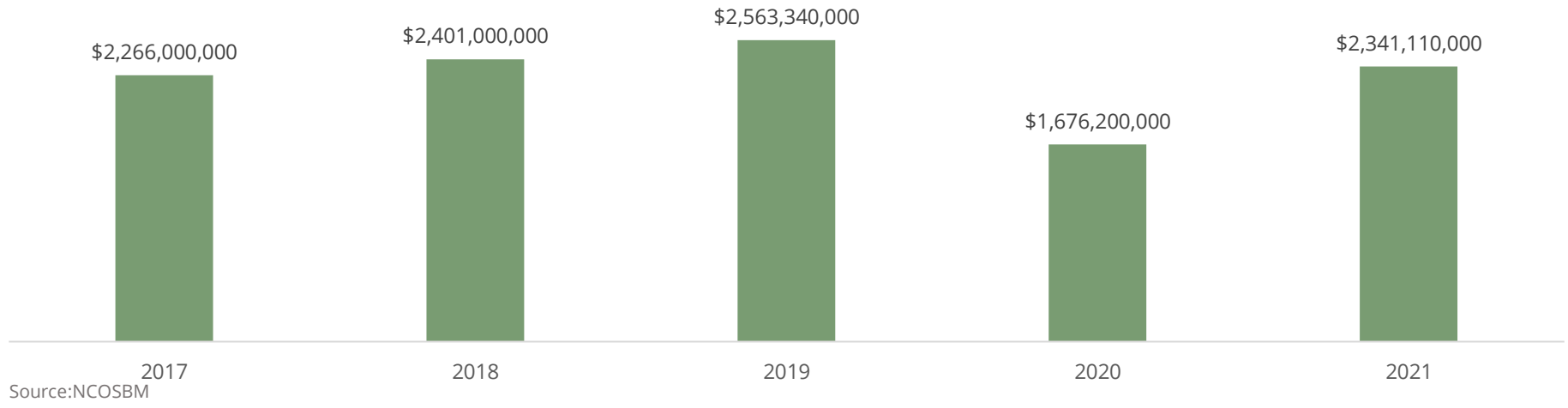
■ Index Crime Rate   ■ Violent Crime Rate   ■ Property Crime Rate



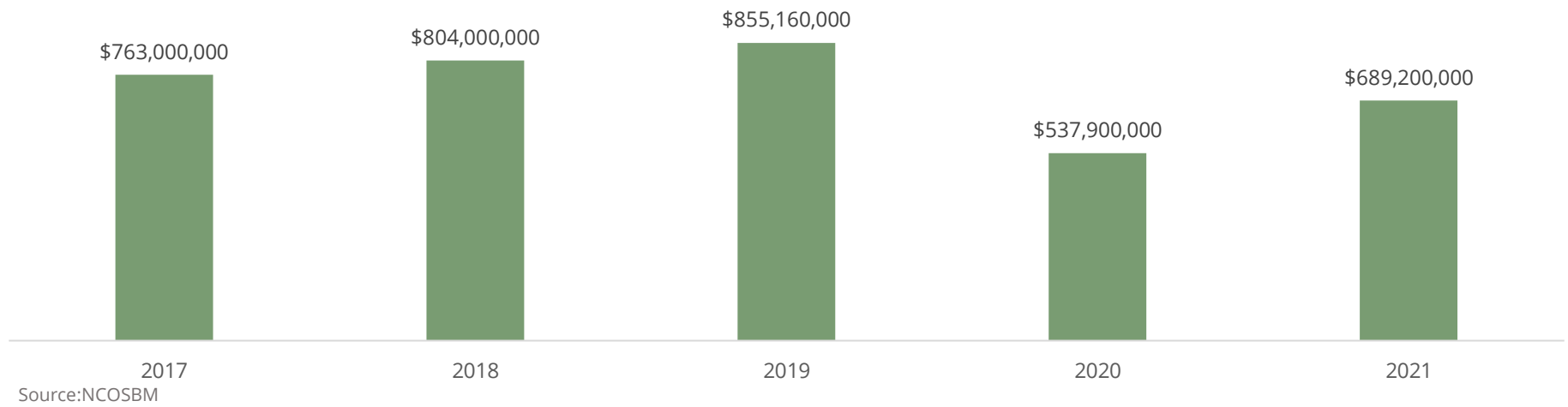
Source: NCSBI



### Wake County Travel Expenditures

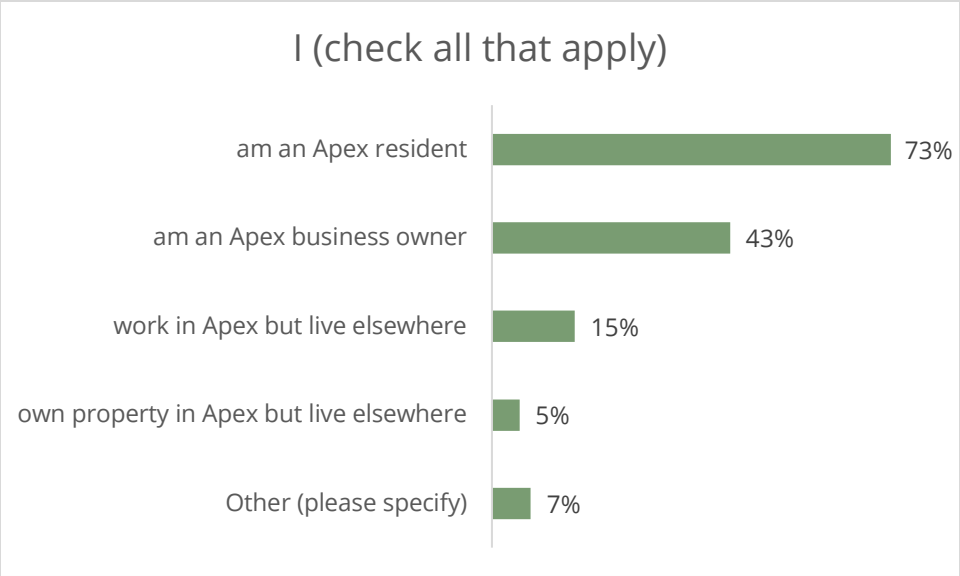


### Wake County Travel Payroll



# Appendix C: Community Survey

An online survey was promoted by the Town of Apex through social media and e-communications. There were 99 responses. Respondents included residents (73%), business owners (43%), and people who work and own property in Apex.

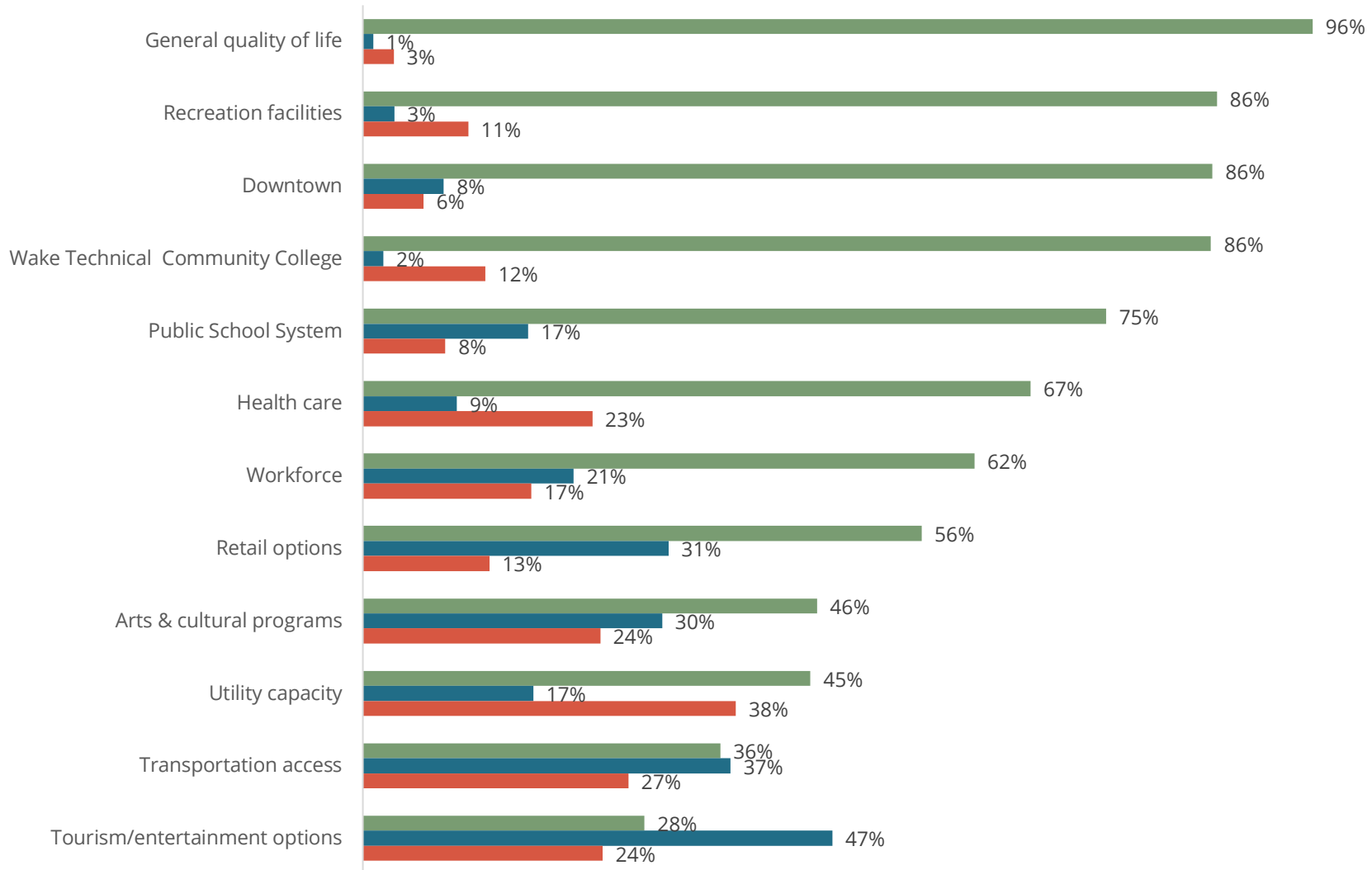


### Other (please specify)

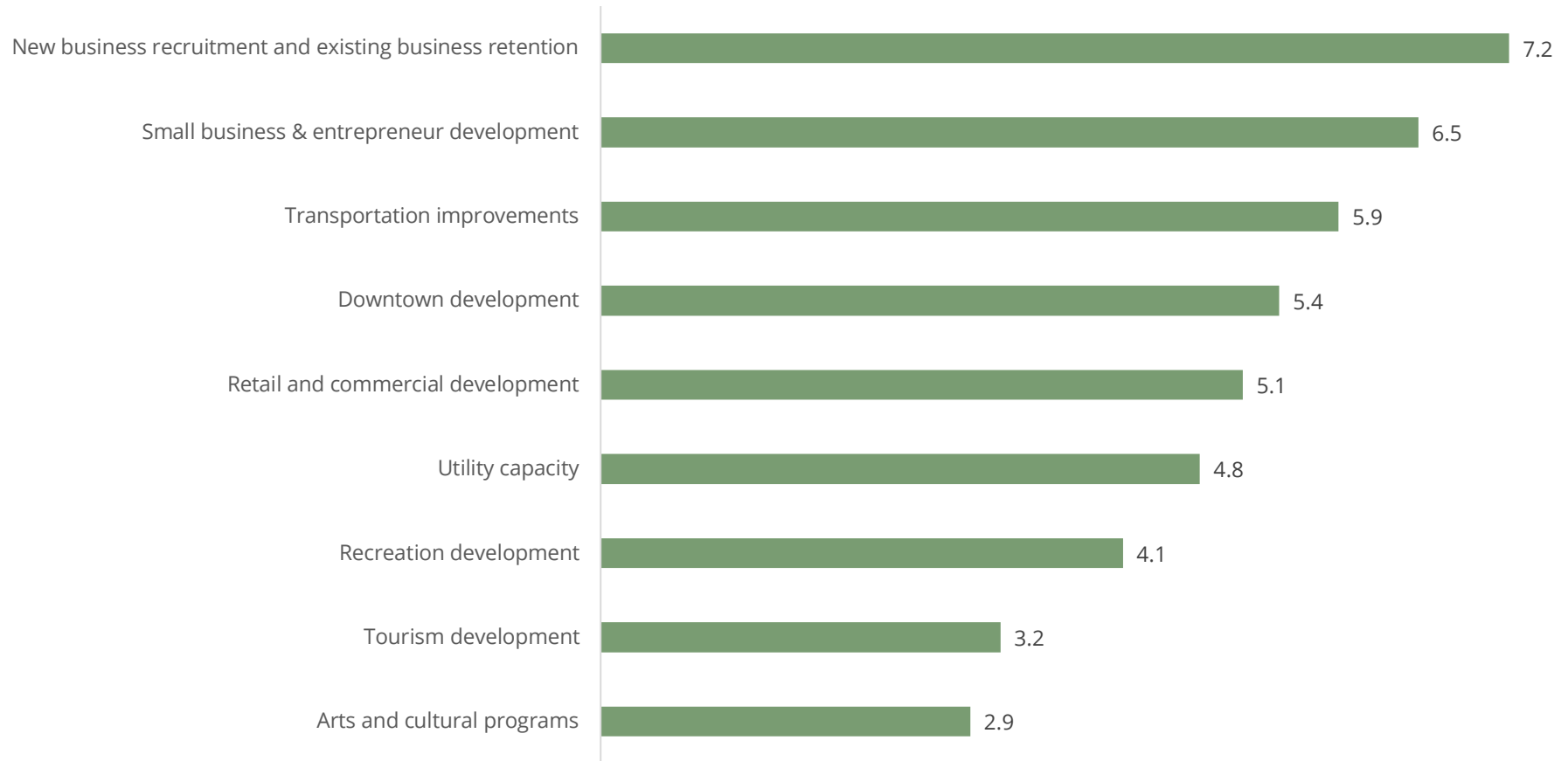
- Own commercial property in Apex
- Work in Downtown Apex
- I live in New Hill, near Apex
- Live and work in Apex (not a business owner)
- Commercial Broker bringing jobs to Apex for 30 years

Please rate the current status of the following items as it relates to economic development and growth in Apex.

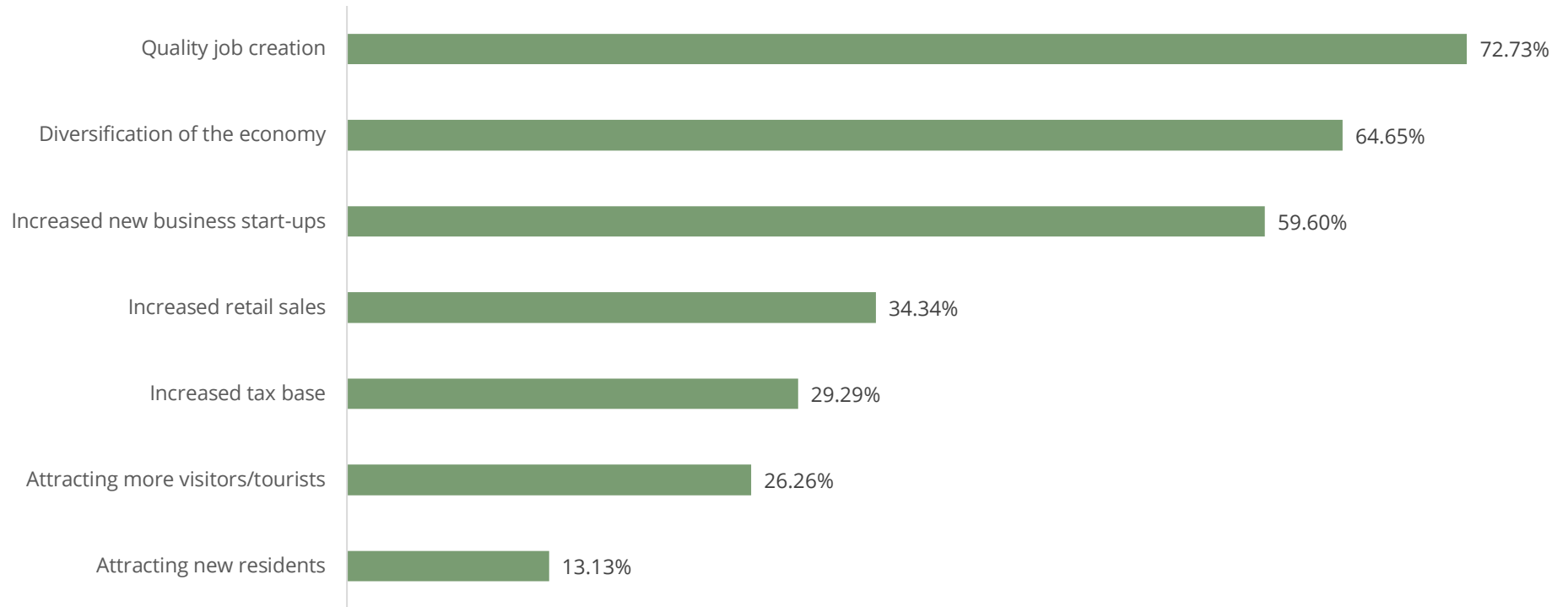
■ Asset ■ Weakness ■ Neither



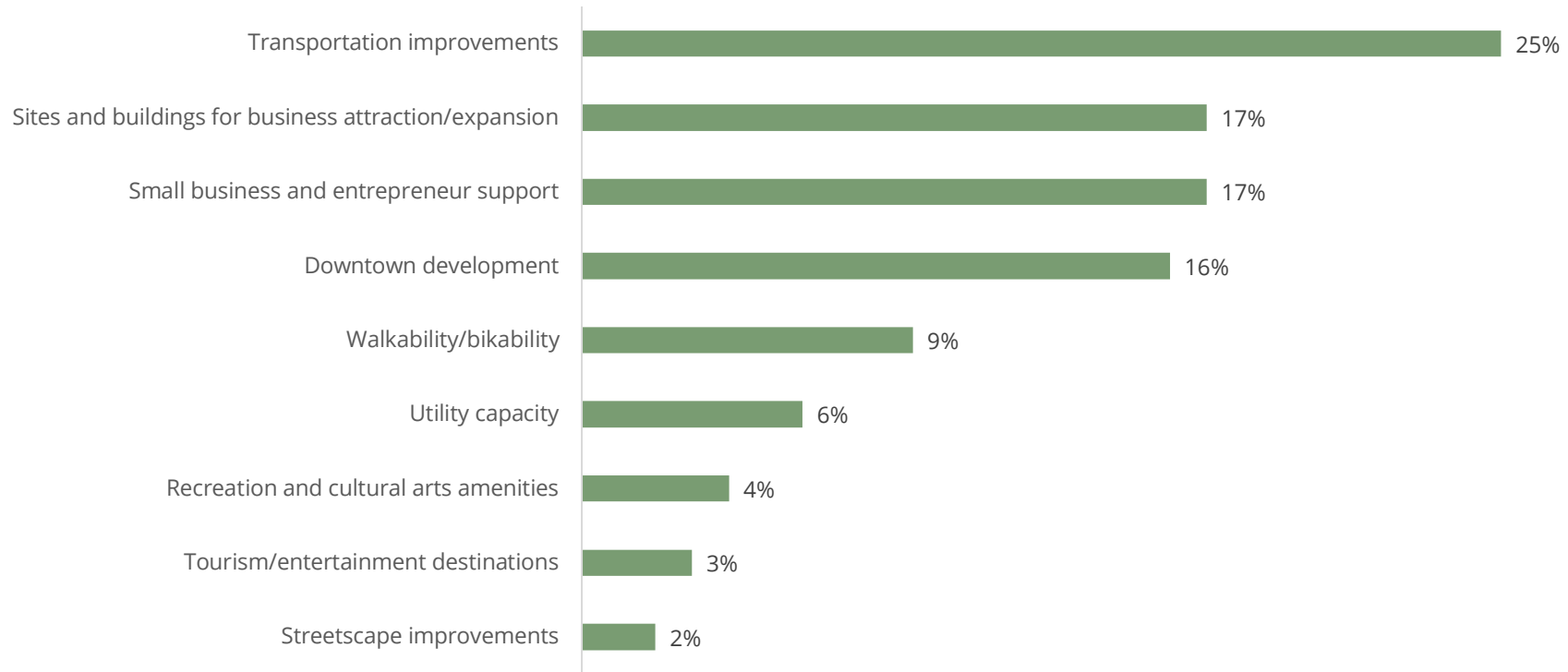
Rank order the following economic development strategies in order of importance with 1 being the most important. Rank with 1 being highest.



What should be the top three goals of Apex's economic development strategic plan?  
CHOOSE THREE.



What is the most important investment Apex could make to ensure long-term, sustainable economic growth? CHOOSE ONLY ONE.



What is a model city for Apex—a place Apex should emulate? (Duplicate responses were merged.)		
Cary	Chapel Hill	Wendell
Holly Springs	Reston, Virginia	Hoover, AL
Ann Arbor Michigan, Ferndale Michigan, or Boulder Colorado	Mountain View, CA	Alexandria, VA
Roswell, GA	Boulder Colorado	Pinehurst & Austin combination
Apex--everyone wants to be us. It's one of the best out there.	Carmel, Indiana	Any downtown that has completed a successful downtown revitalization project
Cary has done a nice job blending work, residential and creating a good quality of life for people. Apex should take what works well and add it to the Apex small town charm.	Small rich towns in the outskirts of big cities that have resisted falling into the trap of overdevelopment and have remained quite happy well-off residential towns.	We should be our own town and not try to be like others. We are different. Let's stay away from the regulations that make it hard to do business in Apex.
Seville, Spain	Apex - continue to forge our own path as a great small town with a great downtown district.	Westerville, OH - small town feel with great parks, retail, and restaurants
Flagstaff, Arizona	Denver	San Francisco
Huntersville/Davidson area	One that responsibly controls its development	NOT Austin TX, go woke go broke
Breckenridge, CO and West Chester, PA.	Beaufort, South Carolina is one of the most charming southern small towns in the US for its rich history and coastal flare.	Any town that prioritizes downtown and walk ability- and walk ability for everyone as possible not just those in a mile radius. Any town that values local businesses and not a bunch of chains and box stores.
Asheville	Highland Falls, NY	Farmington, Michigan
Blowing Rock NC ; Beaufort NC	Niagara on the Lake in Ontario Canada	Boulder, CO Austin, TX
Apex is one of a kind	Cary. Lazy Day, Downtown park. Possible Sports Venue.	Apex should be unique and authentic without modeling another city
Holly Springs or suburbs of Charlotte	Scottsdale, AZ	Laramie, WY
Franklin, TN	Don't copy—keep paving the path as we go!	Austin, TX
Williamsburg, Virginia	Great town in California - Tustin	West Seattle, Fort Collins
Asheville without the homelessness and drug issues	Asheville for its Vibe, Lee County for landing big projects	Apex - we are doing well at being a good town

What is one thing that Apex does better than other cities?

Controlled residential growth

Old town charm

Parks and red facilities are amazing, green spaces. Keeping small town feel, homey, but also allowing slow development naturally

Small town feel but great access

Family oriented. Amazing schools. Lots of people that are social, networking, very connected.

Responsive government functions (and greenways!)

Downtown charm

Downtown Apex is a gem - it stands out for being a great cohesive area that has grown and thrived with new businesses.

Curbside pickup of yard debris.

Networking

I feel like the Mayor is super involved and present.

Community support

Rec amenities

Maintaining Small town feel with increased population

Family friendly, welcoming environment in downtown Apex made up of local small business owners.

Quality of life and knowing who Apex is.

Excellent government services and connection with residents

Community center

Nice to walk downtown and seeing the diversity of folks visiting.

There is great connections between the residents and the town! From first responders to town staff to leadership there is a lot of positive engagement.

Diversification of cultural and types of businesses

Government Service and Responsiveness to Citizens

We have a community feel.

Maintain a small town feel

Safety

Live-ability

We have the best mayor.

Fostering a small town feel.

Transparency and accessibility of government officials

Resident engagement

Having an in house power department.

Good school system with some new schools. Re-creating downtown is nice and separates itself from other towns.

Used to be its family-friendly small town feel, but lately nothing.



Town does a good job at keeping the citizens informed and seeking input on decisions
Citizen involvement.
Owning our own power capabilities
Safety.
Small town feel with lots of amenities
small down feel with a sense of community and support
Confidence in law enforcement
Variety of Programming for Community Events
Quality of Life
Downtown is a hub for activities and socialization
Government services - everything from electricity/waste/water to Parks & Rec, etc., Town of Apex government really seems well funded and well run (versus Raleigh, Durham and Cary.)
Downtown development and attractiveness
Town pride
Making people feel welcome
Keep the small town feel
Parks, Sidewalks, Events, etc. All of which improve Life Balance relationships, but do not necessarily improve Economic Development in a direct way.
Strong town staff
Attracts A Talented Work Force
Honors the small town vibe.
Focus on downtown
We have one helluva mayor!
Allow its citizens an business make decisions for themselves
Town of Apex staff collaboration, work ethic and professionalism
Utilities
downtown area
Great people who work for the Town
Diversity
parks, trails, greenspace
Quality of life
Festivals
We have the very Best Mayor who is superior at communication.
Quality of life
No comparison

Small-town feel
Gives a down home feel with law-abiding families
Deny development because they don't have the infrastructure in place due to the short sightedness of the council
It offers a small town feel with access to other larger communities, best of both worlds
small town feel / access to bigger things surrounding us
preserved its downtown did not have to create one
Steady growth
Trying to keep downtown vibrant
Hold festivals that block the streets
Historic downtown building with diverse businesses.
Understanding the bottle neck
It seems to be trying to provide a clean, safe place to be.
Keep downtown alive
Not sure. No complaints just can't think of something.
Less crime
Low Tax Rates

What is an outcome you would like to see from the strategic plan?
Would like to see a plan that reflects the community and is strategic enough to ensure a successful Apex now and for years to come.
I would like to see more high-end restaurants, entertainment locally, and growth to downtown Apex. Also, we need housing for people in lower income bracket.
Better pedestrian/bike amenities downtown (and connecting neighborhoods to downtown)
Walkability and bikeability to support new townhouse developments, north Salem and Salem St especially linking to Laura Duncan and down to Cary parkway
Improved parking in the downtown area
For the pathway in the pursuit of happiness, dreams and achievements to be uninterrupted and streamlined. Everything trickles down from there. Small business and entrepreneur support is just one spoke in that wheel obviously. But the concept applies to several of the items above.
A focus on methods and strategies for creating an attractive place that benefits everyone (spending effort and money to build demand), vs creating financial incentives that mostly benefit companies (spending effort and money to build supply)
Quality of life ... maintain Apex "charm" ... intelligent growth ...
Plan for Small business and entrepreneur support

A focus on keeping our downtown vibrant and completing the planned downtown update.
More land for business options and less neighborhoods
Chamber members the five LaunchApex Graduates our provided space
I'd love to have the small town feel return. It is so congested and cramped now.
Strategic vision that the people of Apex can understand (the why) and support (vision the outcome of the why)
Downtown expansion and parking
Increased shopping and restaurants for our community. We should have state of the art, not 1985.
Maintaining the family friendly, authentic and historic downtown. We do not need to make it "more European" as has been stated by a town council member. As it is right now is a huge draw for locals, visitors, shoppers, eaters, and more. Independent retailers and restauranteurs have a difficult time competing with chains without the Town putting up additional barriers.
Diversifying our economic options, making sure Apex isn't a bedroom community through site expansions and doubling down on our positives (downtown, quality of life)
Clear communication on vision and priorities
Far better Downtown options with infrastructure and parking.
A thoughtful approach to our future while maintaining our southern history and charm.
Identify a few targeted business recruitment goals. Plans for ensuring infrastructure growth matches community growth. Opportunities to attract diverse businesses.
Sustainable growth plan but also a plan to stabilize the city one growth slows down. You can only build so many houses and business until there is no other place to expand to.
Action (Rapid Implementations)
Be able to attract great businesses like Holly Springs and Cary do. We often find ourselves driving out of Apex for shopping and dining.
Robust citizen input and a time-line
Define Home construction areas for the next 30 years, building appropriate roads/schools an utilities.
Retaining the quality of life and extending it to diverse populations and economic strata.
Include the school situation, talk to resident who have children in these schools (not council, employees) because if you don't have children in these schools, how can you even know about the crowding?
Annual review of progress.
High quality Tech business park and attracting those types of businesses
More large businesses move here.
More types of businesses. I find there are many things we need to drive to Cary or Holly Springs for because Apex doesn't have it. These include businesses that offer swim lessons, cooking classes, specialty medical practices, and recreational facilities.
Prepare some sites to attract major economic development projects like Holly Springs has done.
Keep Apex growing with a strategic plan between business and residential. Grow responsibly.

Apex residents do not want economic diversification, increased tax base, attract new residents, etc. Apex residents want to live in a small town that is not overcrowded (in terms of schools, roads, etc.) And has a nice downtown surrounded by rural/suburban residential. Please stop pretending that current Apex residents want economic development. We want slower smarter growth because the town is being destroyed by over development.
Would like the commission to act on the input from the citizens and not special interest/town councils interest.
Smarter development
Responsible growth and development, not taking away from the small town charm of Apex or it's downtown.
Connecting existing sidewalks that were put in place by community builders but not connected to each other.
Downtown plan completion to attract people to support our small businesses
A strong effort to identify the best locations for economic development sites.
Growth but not too much where it's too crowded
Doing great! Continued attention to growing well and slow.
All businesses matter, all small businesses owners have a place to be and work
Sustainability
Better traffic flow
Ideally, would love to see Apex Grow to offer more retail and entertainment businesses, but do not want Apex to lose the small town charm.
More small business support
Support for the current charm of downtown Apex and well managed growth of industry and housing.
Master plan that includes growth beyond residential that improves traffic flow for all residents.
Rail options in/around Apex
A detailed plan that is communicated to the public.
Business friendly environment
I would like to see Apex become a start-up/small business incubator.
Larger businesses moving into the area
More of a focus on non retail businesses that offer employment opportunities for citizens in and around Apex. A closer working relationship with builders, developers and property owners to attract and retain businesses that will employ Apex residents.
The Town make some effort to get Veridea going.
An expanded budget geared towards to infrastructure to better support Economic development
More opportunities for lower income families. Apex was affordable when I was a first-time homebuyer, now it is out of reach for so many.
Support for developers in completing their approved projects.
Community sports facilities

The town leadership needs to understand that in today's world, "side hustles" and/or small start ups are becoming increasingly common as ways to make additional money for households; residents should feel confident that a rezoning request would be entertained and <b>**thoughtfully**</b> considered
Qualified work force
Well-paying local employment
Revitalization of downtown
Diversity of job opportunity
Balance between growth and quality of life
Focused recruitment of new businesses that are compatible with Apex
Streets and residential streets look like Cary
Small business support and retention. More parking.
Increased public transportation
Roadmap for how the data will be used
More walkable/biking community; expansion of roads to reduce traffic
Clear and exciting objectives that generate enthusiasm for positive change.
Widen the sidewalks on Salem and do the promised streetscape. Make immediate visual improvements to downtown.
Long term business growth and diversification.
Multifamily affordable housing opportunities for ownership and entrepreneurship development of recreational options and investment in youth programs for the teen population
Slow growth
Increased beauty WITH more development (needs to be thoughtful - screw the profit margins of the developers). Better traffic flow
Support local business owners and cut through red tape.
Spend money of expanding sewer and water to areas not served in Apex ETJ and into Chatham County for Commercial/Residential/Industrial development for future annexation and tax base.
A commitment to being the best bedroom community we can be. I do not believe Apex is appealing to large economic entities and Apex does not need them. A focus on being a good place to live (and work remote) with great restaurants, parks, commutes, etc. Leaving the corporate recruiting to Raleigh, RTP, Chatham Park, etc.
Proactive transportation / connectivity plan with progress.
A long-term development plan for the downtown.
Strategies that will be sought and implemented to retain businesses- with strategies for how to support infrastructure necessary for growth projects.
Ways the chamber of commerce could support development issues- seems like the chamber should be the arm that supports, educations, recruits, retains and develops entrepreneurs and small business- not something economic development should have to do. I'd prefer to see ED focus on larger business interest and development projects.

Keep the trees! We would like to see mature green trees as we drive down the road.
Realistic opportunities to grow business
A more cohesive all-inclusive plan looking at ways to add to the downtown so its more than 1 or 2 blocks on 1 street
More walkable and a plan that allows the use of electric vehicles such as golf carts on roads. (look and towns like, holly springs, ocean isle beach, myrtle beach)
Carbon neutral or better decisions. Don't put off this off. e.g. - "We don't need to put the solar panels in the Saunders street parking plan, we can do that somewhere else"
Provide temporary long term small business development area where small business can grow and give them subsidiary to stay in apex
Walkability. Less focus and money on residential building and bringing in new residents and more focus on supporting and growing the current people and businesses, the ones who moved here before it was a "hot" destination and put down roots. Those are the people who deeply care about the success of Apex, cultivate that.
More tourism and greenscape
Apex needs to become a destination city by creating events. Sports, cultural. Steady influx of visitors from outside Apex helps improve Apex business revenues.
More trees, less taxes, less government spending
Proactive Commitment
A thriving town that doesn't feel overcrowded where residents can live, work and play.

Please make any additional comments here. <i>(Some comments were edited to remove names.)</i>
Would love to see Apex create a food truck rodeo where the trucks pay a rental fee to the town and residents can enjoy it year round. It would be in a location the town owns and easily accessible to residents.
I'd like to see roundabouts near downtown to slow traffic and prevent waiting at traffic lights.
Would love to see more sidewalks on side roads please.
It may be less important to decide which of the demographics or issues above are more important than the other and using pooled community resources to provide the tools to appease the masses only delays a bigger math problem down the road. We just need to stop taking away the tools and skills people are bringing to the table when they move here.
Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback!
I also think we need to have more affordable housing within walking distance to downtown - being able to have more families starting out and being part of the community would be good for the long term health and vibrancy of the community.
The phrase "streetery" is the same as "park to dine" just trying to eliminate the negative connotation. But it is the same. Public parking will be used for the exclusive benefit of the restaurants. It is said this will increase restaurant revenue by about 30%. What is not being said, is it will reduce the retail revenues the same amount. There is ample room on the sidewalks for dining and not at the expense of the retail merchants. Additionally, the hours of the restaurants are so reduced, losing the parking for 24 hours

each day for 7 days a week and having restaurants open maybe 4 hours a day for 3-5 days makes no sense. Retail, restaurant, and service businesses have not only existed, but excel because of the close working relationship.

We have changed very rapidly and I'm concerned that we have lost a lot of who we are in the process. I wish we could go back to a time when politics didn't rule every decision that's made here. In the warp speed to take Apex into an "enlightened, progressive" 21st Century, did we over-react and lose parts of our past that were important? We've lost sight of what made us special which was being a very modest, caring community that never felt the need to shout how great a "liberal" community we are to the World. Why was it necessary to label us anything other than a great, inclusive community that embraces people of differing views? I don't think that's true anymore. - Signed, Long time democrat, turned independent whose thinking about moving because I'm no longer welcomed here...

Please keep the trees!! We are worried that one day apex may look more like a suburb of Raleigh, with a lot of concrete and not enough green areas

Stop paying consultants for fixed and preconceived outcome surveys

This town has great quality of life BUT growing too fast could make that life very bad.

It would be nice to have more affordable housing in Apex. Smaller single family homes that first time buyers could afford. Becoming too expensive to live here.

There is very little retail in Western Apex (Friendship/New Hill) and this feels like a missed opportunity.

As I mentioned above, Holly Springs is running laps around us from an Economic Development standpoint. Chatham County is now running laps around us with Vinfast. We are sitting right in the middle of the Holly Springs Life Science projects, RTP, and Vinfast. We are just continuing to build a bedroom community. I was happy to see the Coke bottling project announced. That's a start, but we need to step our game up.

Apex is a nice town and a good place to live and work. Our business can attract white collar workers easier than blue collar workers. Maybe a program can be created to promote manufacturing job opportunities in Apex. I know other manufacturers here have the same issue.

Thanks for taking the time out to hear the citizens voice, it matters but only if you take action on the results.

Apex has dropped the ball on economic development planning and other communities are now far ahead of us. Apex should have been planning for locations for industrial development long ago but seemed to be more interested in housing and commercial development (and that is not necessarily a bad thing since both are needed to grow the economy). Long term land use planning should have been more proactive to reserve key sites for industrial development, specifically in the NC 540, US 64, and US 1 corridors. Instead, our most valuable locations are being turned into new subdivisions and we have lost opportunities. If we are not more proactive in land use planning for economic development we will continue to lose big projects to Holly Springs and if we don't plan better we will lose out to Chatham Park and other areas that are being prepped for economic growth in the region.

Out of state buyers of local buildings, homes and land changing the feel, prices, community and safety for our children to ride bikes downtown, be safe in our schools with over population

Highway 55 through Apex could be improved.

I would like to see a rental over-55 community that is not associated with assisted living.

We have the ability to really grow and have an impact if we stay focused on the fundamentals of what makes the economy grow: namely small businesses.

The town needs to be better at partnering with private sector developers to help bring projects/business to town. Right now many private sector companies steer clear based on the towns history of being extremely difficult to deal with.

Unfortunately, Council governs the outcomes of these projects by either implementing costly restrictions or voting no on plans that the Town planning staff has approved and recommended on their personal agendas!

Do town council members take any professional development or leadership type of courses? They need to up level their game because our mayor is the only one out there putting in the right effort at the right times and places.

There is no commitment to maintain any sort of buffer or open space. Condos are being built without roads being improved or widened. Do we want to become like Northern Virginia?

Thanks for doing this survey; its a very important topic

Too many new homes are ugly with prominent garage sticky out, short driveways leading to large numbers of cars in the roadside that takes away from the curb appeal. Most subdivisions in Cary look at lot nicer than Apex

We need clear communication on downtown apex development. Older businesses need fresh paint to keep up. Fresh murals that are easily seen for arts and culture. Thank you!

I have been a resident of Apex for over 10 years and seen it's rapid growth. While I am proud, happy and excited for the future, I do think the Town of Apex could do better with taking care of the current residents family, community and business needs. We have great universities around that the town can partner with for strategic growth.

As happened in Cary, the effort towards growth/tax base increase has decreased the quality of life and thus the attractiveness of the area.

Leave a legacy - force the developers to make build beautiful spaces/places. They don't have to have a 25% IRR to do well.

If the Council would look more into what is best for Apex, and what is right in their heart, and stop worrying about being re-elected and bowing down to Subdivisions and HOA's we could be a more vibrant community. Unfortunately each council member has their own agendas like, saving trees, storm water ponds for 50 year storms, solar panels for all, but they miss the big picture like finishing the peakway bridge, (which has been on the plans for 30 years), and getting sewer pipes in the ground without forcing the development community to absorb all the cost. The Town will spend money on parks and greenways but misses the boat on infrastructure. That Big Branch Pump station should have been built 10 years ago. Veridea would be a great development, but instead we have a 1,000 acre tree farm paying the highest of any business taxes in Apex. Its all a lack of understanding the development process, which our current council has no understanding of and has no foresight. We have a qualified staff with the Planning Department and Utility Department. Let them do their job, they are the professionals, obviously not our Council members.

It is amazing that we can get on a greenway here in Apex and get to Durham for food / drink; to Cary for food / drink; to Raleigh for food / drink; to Clayton for food / drink -- all without having to ride on roads. Yet, we cannot get to downtown Apex. Our collection of "greenway" paths are like fingernail clippings with no connection. Has anyone looked at the cost differential in putting in wider sidewalks to facilitate bikes and more movement between areas? Why put in standard sidewalks? It would be great to ride via greenway to downtown Apex for a coffee... for a pizza...



#### Kudos on Coca- Cola

We understand that towns need to grow to maintain the residents and gain future residents. too much growth too quickly will increase traffic, result in schools being capped, and increased cost of living. As we continue to grow, don't forget the small business owners. We should support a mixture of small, medium and large businesses.

As a lifelong resident, it saddened me to see the storage complex go up in the middle of town. Rather than making a second downtown district with additional retail & F&B more houses went up. It would have been a great place for a Meadowmont-like area with mixed use spaces. Apex no longer feels like my home or the small town I loved.

Town is allowing sardine, no tree, no water communities to be built ad nauseam. Let's care what the whole town looks like and stop allowing the buildings to design human cubicles.

As a small business, i am getting hard time for the industrial land at reasonable cost. We would like to open manufacturing here in local but as no support from town of apex its hard to stay here. Looking for other county or even state.

I am hopeful that Apex will listen to existing residents and foster those relationships. A lot of tax revenue is generated from existing residents and hopefully Apex will see the importance of growth but growth in the right areas - accessibility through sidewalks/bike paths, landscape/environment protection, downtown development but with a focus on local businesses.

Apex had always had a tremendous opportunity to 'Thrive' simply due to its strategic location and its simply up to Leadership to capture and maximize the opportunity.

# Study Sponsor and Consultant



ElectriCities of N.C. Inc. sponsored the Town of Apex Economic Development Strategic Plan. ElectriCities' economic development department offers a variety of services to promote NC Public Power communities to businesses and economic developers. It helps communities recruit business and industry by providing:

- ⊙ Target Marketing
- ⊙ Marketing/Collateral Assistance
- ⊙ Aerial Photography
- ⊙ Proposals for Prospects/Clients
- ⊙ Advertising Opportunities
- ⊙ Target Sectors
- ⊙ Trade Show Opportunities
- ⊙ Direct Marketing
- ⊙ Retail/Commercial Developments

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