# 2025 Strategic Plan for Economic Development

**Greene County**

**North Carolina**

**"Presented to the Greene County Board of Commissioners"**

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# Acknowledgements

In Greene County, there is great diversity in the economic landscape – rural, agriculture-based, close-knit communities and friendly neighbors as well as unique small businesses, service industry professionals, a growing industrial sector, and a sizeable concentration of government employees. There is also a significant and tangible pride in the quality of life in Greene County and an unmistakable desire for the whole community to progress together. We have tried to reflect those perspectives in this plan.

# Key contacts and plan developers

**GREEN COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

Greene County Board of Commissioners

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Trey Cash – Economic Development Director

Kathy Mooring – Deputy Clerk of the Board

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# Executive summary

**Statement of Project**

Hayes Group Consulting is pleased to submit this Strategic Plan to the Greene County Board of Commissioners and staff. It is understood that the Board will fully review the Plan, make any adjustments, and then formally adopt the Plan to guide the work of economic development for the next three to five years.

Most importantly, this plan (its Vision, Mission, Goals, Strategies, and Actions) is intended to be a "living document." To accomplish this, implementation will require dedicated resources, work, and oversight. After beginning the process in December 2024, Hayes Group Consulting has maintained ongoing interaction with Greene County staff as well as the Economic Development Region management and staff.

**Hayes Group Consulting was tasked with providing the following deliverables:**

- Target Industry Analysis – an assessment of current target industry strategy and a recommendation of adjustments; focusing on existing sectors which further develop a cluster, new industries for which a regional labor supply can be developed and projects that add significantly to the tax base investment and contribute to a higher average wage for Greene County
- Develop a shared vision by performing a macro analysis of current assets and trends in social, technological, economic, ecological, and political aspects of the County; with the goal of recognizing strengths, identifying barriers to success, and providing a draft Vision Statement for approval
- Optimize regionalism as a strategy to strengthen alliances, eliminate duplication, and leverage efforts which lead to further opportunities and shared prosperity
- Enhance leadership and collaboration across community and regional sectors, proposing opportunities for dialogue and shared decision-making, suggesting methods for leadership collaboration and opportunities for mentorships
- Assist in setting priorities focused on high-return strategies
- Suggest benchmarks and metrics to measure success and define results
- Design the Plan to focus specifically on the next 3-5 years
- Develop a Champions Plan to reinforce support in the community

**The following represent our Key Goals, Strategic and Tactical Recommendations:**

**Goals:**

- Greene County will be known for leadership in rural economic development
- Greene County's Economic Development Product, Service Delivery and Marketing will showcase assets, attract investment, and foster civic pride
- Greene County's economic development efforts will build on its strong foundation
- Collaboration with Greene County stakeholders and partners will be a competitive differentiator

- Greene County will accurately measure the impact of its economic development initiatives – ensuring accountability, continuous improvement, and data-driven decision-making

**Strategies in Priority Order:**

**Strategy 1 - Leadership, Organizational Improvement and Stakeholder Engagement**

1. Design more opportunities for internal communication, creative thinking and a shared vision
2. Invest more resources for specific goals
3. Involve key stakeholders and private partners in funding economic development
4. Build leaders for the future

**Strategy 2 - Concentrate Economic Development Activity on These Priorities:**

1. Product Development and Preparedness
2. New Business Recruiting
3. Marketing and Branding
4. Business Retention and Expansion

**Strategy 3 - Target Recruitment Efforts on a Foundation that already has Value, Momentum, and Potential:**

1. Agri-business, Value-added Agriculture Manufacturing and Agriculture Biotechnology
2. Small Advanced Manufacturing in Pharma, Robotics and Automation, Maintenance Repair and Operation (MRO) services
3. Suppliers for Regional Industry Clusters, especially aviation and aerospace
4. Information and Communications
5. Tourism, especially Ag-related Tourism, Outdoor Recreation and Youth Sports

**Strategy 4 - Optimize Regional Partnerships as a Force Multiplier:**

1. Perform a regional Labor Shed Study
2. Utilize key education partners as part of the recruitment team
3. Coordinate with regional and state partners in marketing efforts
4. Create more opportunities to jointly plan infrastructure projects
5. Look to partners and allies for assistance with funding

**Strategy 5 - Foster More Public Private Partnerships (PPP)**

1. Study successful PPP models in North Carolina, seek expert advice
2. Answer two main questions: how will the partnership create economic value for both parties? Will it accelerate and enhance economic development goals and outcomes?
3. Proceed with a carefully thought-out, transparent process

**Strategy 6 - Align the Strategic Plan with Measures of Success (Key Metrics and Benchmarks)**

1. Set budgets and schedules to align with the major goals of the Plan
2. Adopt both macro and micro measures

3. Design a data gathering process, a reporting format, assign responsibility and set accountability meetings schedules

**Strategy 7 – Encourage the Development of Quality-of-Life Amenities by Private Investors and among Community Organizations; support amenities through County planning and budgeting**

1. Support PPPs by incentivizing preferred development activities
2. Encourage schools to open facilities for community use, offer community awards for strong academic performance
3. Launch a micro-grant initiative for local groups; example: local farmer's market
4. Partner with historic preservation or other interested groups to develop a regional identity
5. Consider methods to support availability of quality childcare
6. Identify additional opportunities for Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grants for long range planning of recreation areas

**To summarize, communities that proactively prepare in these areas are far more likely to land transformative projects. Today's economic development marketplace emphasizes speed, certainty, and reduced risk. A successful Greene County must have:**

- Enthusiastic leadership with a long-term commitment to economic development
- A broad group of community stakeholders and leaders aligned with the vision and strategy
- A portfolio of ready-to-go, fully vetted sites and speculative buildings
- Knowledge and data to demonstrate a pool of skilled workers and the ability to train them quickly
- Competitive incentives with unique offerings; an Open for Business mindset
- A quality-of-life report card with mostly "A's and Bs"
- Organizational capacity for professional execution
- Knowledge of your product and your customer; targeted marketing, segmentation and storytelling that stands out in the selection process

# Current issues

The decision to create a new Strategic Plan for Economic Development was driven by the issues Greene County is experiencing, and the macro changes underway that impact economic development in all rural North Carolina counties. Additionally, the previous economic development plan for the County had not been updated since 2010.

Greene County leaders understand that the County is approaching a crossroads. They determined that the County must be proactive in addressing these long-term trends and issues to take advantage of future opportunities:

### Economic Distress

Greene is classified as a Tier 1 county, indicating high economic distress within North Carolina – and ranking the county in the bottom 40% of NC counties. In the Commerce Department's ranking of average weekly wage, Greene County is 86th of 100, with an average wage of $976 per week, despite good employment stability. The statewide average wage is $1,200 per week.

### Low Income & High Poverty

In the most recent figures from NC Association of County Commissioners, median household income for the County is just over $50,900. The statewide average is $69,900. Greene County's poverty rate, at 22% of residents living below the federal poverty line, is 1.5 times the NC average (13.4%) and nearly double the US average (11.2%).

### Educational Attainment and Workforce Training

Only 28.9% of adults aged 25–44 in Greene County hold a postsecondary degree or credential, compared to 58.4% statewide. Just over 12% of adults hold a college bachelor's degree compared to 33.6% statewide. Labor force participation in Greene County is 50.4% compared to 61% statewide. These statistics suggest underemployment, skills gaps and barriers to workforce entry.

### Limited Local Employment

Only 34.7% of Greene County residents work locally, indicating limited job opportunities and significant income leakage. This "bedroom community" pattern—where residents live but don't work or invest locally—poses long-term economic challenges.

### Population Shift and Demographics

Since 1950, Greene County's population has grown just 13.9%, compared to 172% statewide. While rural birth rates are improving, in-migration is still needed for growth in Greene County. The population skews older, with 40% over age 50 - above state (36%) and national (35%) averages.

### Top Employers
Four of the County's five largest employers are public or quasi-public, with the N.C. Department of Adult Corrections as the largest. This reliance on public sector jobs may limit wage growth and hinder economic diversification needed to attract new businesses.

### Tax Base composition
Agricultural property represents approximately 22% of the total ad valorem tax base of Greene County (11.8% statewide); residential property is 44.8% (51.2% statewide) while commercial and industrial property is 33%, an increase of 4.5% in ten years.

### Housing
Greene County's median home age is 42 years—10 years older than the state average—indicating slower development. Older housing can mean higher utility and maintenance costs, reduced market appeal, and slower tax base growth. With new home permits below 1% annually, the housing replacement rate lags the state average.

### Broadband Access
About 79% of households have broadband, but infrastructure still lags urban areas. Through the state's Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) Program, Greene County aims to expand high-speed fiber to 637 homes and businesses—reaching 95% of unserved areas by December 2026, matching the state average for broadband access.

### Healthcare & Quality of Life
With just 4.5 primary care physicians per 10,000 residents and a 75.6-year life expectancy, Greene trails state health averages. Limited access means longer waits and fewer specialists, especially for seniors. While local clinics exist, the nearest major hospital is 30–40 minutes away.

### Leadership and Governance
Greene County has strong alignment among leaders around a shared goal: attracting new business to grow jobs and the tax base. This unity is a major asset—but without a clear action plan, the momentum risks stalling as vision remains undefined.

# Mission and vision

HGC believes the current Mission Statement for Greene County Economic Development Partnership is excellent: purpose-driven, clear and concise, memorable and achievable. Plus, the Mission is focused on the customer (citizens of Greene County) and reflects the values and culture of the organization.

**Current Mission for the Greene County Economic Development Partnership:**

"The Partnership aims to create a thriving economy in Greene County by attracting high-quality jobs and long-term investment."

**Vision:**

HGC recommends a Vision Statement that expresses the organization's ultimate objectives. Vision statements are typically a one-sentence, encouraging, clear and memorable statement that articulate the ultimate future the organization is striving to create, often a Vision Statement is ambitious and transformative, so that, if fully realized, the organization might no longer be needed. For economic development purposes, the goal of the vision statement might be to:



**1. Inspire stakeholders**
From funders and board members to community partners and residents—with a compelling picture of what success looks like.

**2. Unify efforts**
Aligning programs, partnerships, and strategies under a shared long-term aspiration

**3. Guide decision-making**
By serving as a north star when evaluating new opportunities or challenges

A strong vision statement challenges stakeholders to imagine a world where economic barriers are dismantled, communities are thriving, and opportunity is equitable and sustainable. It is not about what the organization does day-to-day...that's the mission's job. The vision is about *why* those efforts matter in the big picture.

*Five Draft Vision Statements and Taglines*

**Rooted in Heritage, Growing Toward Tomorrow**

*Greene County envisions a vibrant and connected rural community that honors its agricultural legacy while fostering thriving neighborhoods, lively town centers, and abundant future-ready opportunities for future generations to live, work, and flourish—right here at home.*

**Redefining Rural Prosperity**

*Greene County is redefining rural prosperity—combining our rich agricultural heritage, strategic open space, and a future-driven community to create fertile ground for bold ideas, thriving enterprises, and long-term economic success for our future generations. (HGC consensus favorite)*

**Our Place, Our Future—Where Business Thrives**

*Greene County is where tradition meets transformation. With pride in our deep roots and wide horizons, we are turning our community into a launch pad for bold enterprise, innovation, and lasting economic growth for generation to come.*

**Cultivating Community, Inspiring Opportunity**

*Guided by tradition and driven by ambition, Greene County aspires to be a place where open land meets open opportunity—supporting local enterprise, nurturing vibrant, close-knit community life, and creating a future that invites our children and grandchildren to stay and thrive.*

**Grounded in Our Place, Investing in our Future**

*In Greene County, open land promotes open opportunity. We are cultivating more than crops – we're cultivating careers, companies, and a climate of progress that honors our rural heritage while inviting bold investment for limitless possibilities that enable our future generations to prosper.*

# The plan: strategies and actions

*Strategy 1 – Leadership, organizational improvement and stakeholder engagement*

This strategy is grounded in the belief that successful economic development begins with strong leadership, coordinated efforts, and active community involvement. It focuses on creating a shared vision across departments, agencies, and partners to ensure everyone is working toward common goals. Strengthening internal capacity—through better communication, collaboration, and investment in staff and systems—lays the foundation for long-term success.

Equally important is the role of external partnerships. By involving private stakeholders, local institutions, and regional allies, the County can align resources and drive collective impact. Through education, open dialogue, and a focus on celebrating progress, the County can build trust and a culture of collaboration that sustains momentum.



**Leadership, communication & collaboration**
Design opportunities for increasing internal communication and creative thinking across the community

**Organizational development and capacity building**
Invest more resources for specific goals

**Stakeholder engagement and resource alignment**
Involve key stakeholders and private partners in funding economic development

**Civic education and community participation**
Educate and engage residents to build future leaders, foster collaboration, and celebrate small wins.

To deepen leadership capacity and build broad-based support, Greene County should develop a Champions Plan. A Champions Plan is a structured approach to identifying, equipping, and activating influential community members who can help carry the vision forward, foster collaboration, and build sustained public engagement. The following is a recommended framework for how Greene County can design and implement a Champions Plan to support its strategic economic development goals.

### *Champions plan for Greene County*

Community champions are the heartbeat of small-town transformation. The development of a group of champions is especially vital for major initiatives because they not only bring their time and treasure, but they also bring trust, local insight, and momentum that outsiders cannot replicate. Their importance becomes especially clear when we consider the distinct ways they contribute to local transformation:

**Trusted connectors**
In tight-knit communities, relationships matter. Champions are often long-time residents who can bridge gaps between local people and external organizations.

**Local knowledge**
They understand the unique needs, strengths, and challenges of their community – small distinctions such as cultural or historical touches.

**Mobilizers of action**
Champions rally volunteers, organize events, and spark participation. Their energy turns ideas into movement.

**Sustainers of change**
Initiatives often fizzle without long-term support. Champions help maintain momentum by celebrating wins and keeping people engaged.

**Voices of the community**
They advocate for their neighbors, ensuring that projects reflect real needs - not just top-down assumptions.

**Build resilience**
Champions strengthen social ties, making communities more adaptable during crises.

**Foster equity**
They help reach marginalized groups and reduce barriers to participation.

**Inspire hope**
Their leadership shows that change is possible, even in places with limited resources.

**Identifying Community Champions**

Look for individuals who naturally step up, connect with others, and care deeply about the community. People who have:

**1** | **Local credibility**
Trusted by neighbors, often involved in local events or groups

**2** | **Empathy and listening skills**
They genuinely care and make others feel heard

**3** | **Initiative**
They take action without waiting to be asked

**4** | **Bridge-builders**
Able to connect diverse groups and foster collaboration

**5** | **Resilience**
They persist through challenges and setbacks

**Training Community Champions**

Once identified, champions need support to grow their impact. Training (in economic development methods and activities) should be practical and tailored to local needs.

**Storytelling & advocacy**: Crafting a compelling narrative, including the ROI, which transforms the abstract goals of the Strategic Plan into a shared mission that inspires and unites. Highlight how this plan will change lives and businesses.
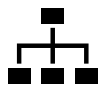
**Community engagement and relationships**: Champions need to know they will have an impact. Hearing that story from a trusted source is key to bring them on board. Decide which leader is best to recruit each champion.

**Leadership & organizing**: Choose the best leader to chair the group; carefully plan events to be impactful and sustain momentum, focus on growth, innovation and investment potential

**Conflict resolution**: Navigating disagreements about the Plan with empathy and respect is a key to a unified effort

**Peer considerations**: Connect champions across business sectors to share information and build cohesion

**Recognition & incentives**: Celebrate their efforts with awards, leadership roles, or access to exclusive opportunities

**Equipping Champions**

Now that your champions know the goals, strategies, actions, and timelines, it's time to take the next steps:



**Toolkit**
provide them with talking points, infographics, sample communications pieces

**Fundraising plan**
Assign champions to lead specific efforts such as event planning, outreach, follow-up (A fundraising consultant may have a specific process which would replace this step.)

**Community alignment**
Position them as leaders and connectors who help keep everyone informed and included. Also use this group as your feedback loop.

**Recognition**
Celebrate at regular check-ins or group huddles.

Empowering a network of champions is a foundational element of leadership development and community engagement. As Greene County prepares to implement this strategic plan, investing in trusted local voices will help bridge vision with action—building trust, accelerating collaboration, and reinforcing alignment across sectors. With champions in place and a clear framework for equipping and supporting them, the County is well-positioned to move from planning to execution.

The following call to action and key activities outline the practical steps Greene County must take to put this strategy into motion and achieve meaningful results.

**Supporting actions for strategy 1: Detailed recommendations**

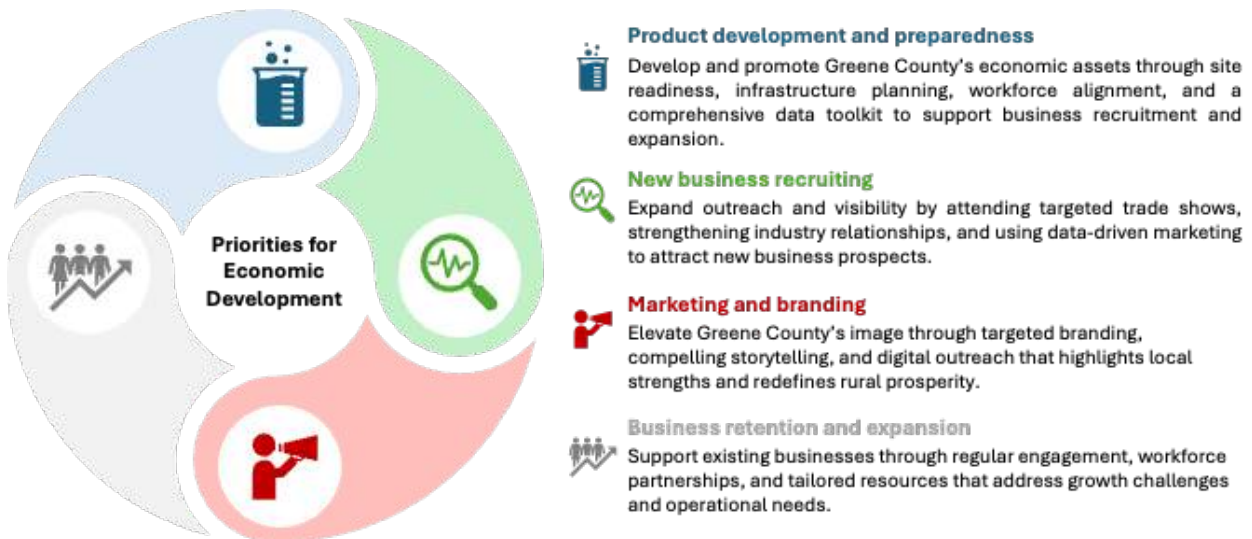| Call to action | Key activities |
|---|---|
| **Design opportunities for increasing internal communication and creative thinking across the community** | • Bi-monthly managers meeting to discuss key initiatives, projects, opportunities, community assessment/feedback/PR, resource management (County Manager, Economic Development Director, Town Managers, Lenoir Community College Training Lead...and as needed, include Planning, water/wastewater lead, NC Department of Transportation engineering lead, electric utility representatives)<br><br>• Semi-annual Greene County leadership meeting focused on Economic Development (County Manager, Economic Development Director, Economic Development Region leader, Commissioners and Town Boards. Consider also Lenoir and Wayne representation, GCEDP Board and Investors/Committee of 100, NCGTP, Community College President and Board representatives, School Board Chair and Superintendent, state and federal leadership, Ag community, Cooperative Extension Director and ECU).<br><br>• Institutionalize collaboration across the community. Collaboration transforms communities and converts challenges into opportunities. Working together provides advantages over a single person, organization, or sector. Local leadership is especially important for collaborations in rural revitalization. |
| **Invest more resources for specific goals** | • Continue to build resources and effort for marketing and travel.<br><br>• Develop a phased plan to hire staff for Business Retention and Expansion activities, grants administration, marketing and communications. |
| **Involve key stakeholders and private partners in funding economic development** | • Develop a 3–5-year plan to raise private funding through the Committee of 100 or appropriate non-profit vehicle.<br><br>• For early adopters, develop methods of inclusive collaboration and regular updates. |
| **Develop opportunities for educating citizens about the economic development process and local government operation; build leaders for the future and focus on collaboration to continue the visioning process; celebrate small wins** | • Host an annual State of Greene County report or similar "Report to the People" focused on Economic Development. Use this meeting as a fundraiser with corporate sponsorships.<br><br>• Create a one-page annual summary of Economic Development activity and benefits mailed out in tax notices.<br><br>• Develop a "Leadership Greene" or "Greene Citizens Academy" to educate interested residents about county and town |

government, history, the local economy and the work of economic development. Consider partnering with Greene County Schools to create a "Young Leaders and Innovators" group to build future capacity.

- Host Community Listening Sessions for residents to share concerns, hopes, and ideas, use surveys, town hall-type sessions, and informal gatherings to gather input, note recurring themes to keep the visioning process on track.

- To engage the entire community in revitalization efforts, leaders and collaborators should leverage small successes to demonstrate the effectiveness of a collaboration to the majority. Work on the "low hanging fruit" issues first. Small wins are important for building trust between partners and overall confidence in the collaborative relationship. In short, nothing succeeds like success.

## *Strategy 2 - Concentrate economic development activity on the following priorities:*

To strengthen its long-term competitiveness, Greene County should adopt a multi-faceted approach to economic development that combines preparation, promotion, outreach, and retention.



**Product development and preparedness**
Develop and promote Greene County's economic assets through site readiness, infrastructure planning, workforce alignment, and a comprehensive data toolkit to support business recruitment and expansion.

**New business recruiting**
Expand outreach and visibility by attending targeted trade shows, strengthening industry relationships, and using data-driven marketing to attract new business prospects.

**Marketing and branding**
Elevate Greene County's image through targeted branding, compelling storytelling, and digital outreach that highlights local strengths and redefines rural prosperity.

**Business retention and expansion**
Support existing businesses through regular engagement, workforce partnerships, and tailored resources that address growth challenges and operational needs.

A critical first step is building a strong foundation for growth by advancing site readiness—completing certification of key properties, developing master plans, and assembling a comprehensive data toolbox that includes utility capacity, transportation access, workforce assets, and quality of life indicators.

These efforts should be paired with a focused strategy for recruiting new businesses through expanded travel, participation in targeted trade shows, and one-on-one engagement with site selectors and industry influencers.

To stand out in a competitive market, Greene County should also invest in a bold marketing and branding campaign that reframes the narrative from distressed to full of potential—emphasizing low operating costs, strong community spirit, and opportunities for rural prosperity.

Meanwhile, supporting the businesses already rooted in the county must remain a priority. A structured business retention and expansion program—backed by workforce partnerships, regular employer engagement, and targeted support for small businesses—can help secure long-term stability while encouraging reinvestment. Together, these strategies form a cohesive framework for growth that positions Greene County to compete, attract, and thrive in today's evolving economic landscape.

## Supporting actions for strategy 2: Detailed recommendations

### Product development and preparedness

To prepare for long-term economic growth, Greene County should prioritize product development and site readiness through a series of coordinated initiatives. This includes completing certification for the Burnette Road site, installing monument signage, developing marketing materials, and formalizing covenants and restrictions.

The County should also gain site control over additional properties, master plan them in coordination with town partners, and prepare a virtual shell building concept with a detailed Gantt chart. As funding permits, due diligence and site readiness assessments should be conducted on future sites.

Supporting infrastructure and policy development is also essential—refining Rural Planning Organization (RPO) road priorities, passing a unified incentives policy, and identifying training and education facility resources. A regional asset list should be developed with supporting maps and data to align with recruitment targets, alongside the completion of a labor study (referenced in Strategy 3).

Greene County should produce a written "Open for Business" guide that includes an industrial project Gantt chart, permitting timelines, zoning and special use processes, utility impact fees, public safety protocols, and training partnerships.

A Project Presentation Team should be assembled and trained, including industry advocates, educators, infrastructure specialists, and permitting professionals.

Finally, a robust data "toolbox" should be compiled with community quality-of-life metrics, annual events, utility capacity maps (water, broadband, electric, gas, rail), manufacturing capabilities, public safety statistics, cost of living comparisons, education data, and short-term rental listings (Airbnb, VRBO, etc.) —providing a complete and compelling case to prospective businesses.

### New business recruiting

To proactively attract new business and investment, Greene County should expand its outreach efforts by increasing the travel budget by 50% over three years and strategically participating in trade shows and industry events. Working closely with partners such as EDPNC, NC Southeast, and the Economic Development Region, the County should create an annual calendar that targets key sectors—such as advanced manufacturing, defense, agribusiness, automation, and foreign investment—with the goal of attending at least one event per sector each year. Suggested events include Industrial Asset Management Council (IAMC), CoreNet, SelectUSA, Site Selector Guild, Association of the United States Army (AUSA), World Agri-tech, and Hannover Messe, among others.

To maximize the impact of these engagements, the County should prepare tailored follow-up data packets and hold regular in-person meetings with EDPNC project managers, NC Biotech developers, and university economic development leaders. A comprehensive and regularly updated database of site selectors—including commercial real estate brokers, corporate real estate managers, and business media—should be developed to support consistent communication.

Marketing efforts should also include industry-specific newsletters, a long-term drip email campaign, and highly creative direct mail pieces with strong calls to action once sites like Burnette Road are available. These combined tactics will help position Greene County in front of the right audiences and elevate its visibility among decision-makers and industry influencers.

### Marketing and branding

To raise visibility and attract targeted investment, Greene County should invest in a bold marketing and branding strategy that emphasizes its unique value proposition—highlighting strong community spirit, low operating costs, natural assets, and potential for cluster development. A 50% increase in the outreach marketing budget over three years is recommended to support these efforts. A county-wide Brand Image and Awareness campaign should be launched, possibly under a unifying theme like "Redefining Rural Prosperity," to reframe Greene County's narrative from one of economic distress to one of opportunity and quality of life.

Marketing efforts should be tailored to specific industry segments—such as Ag-biotech and advanced manufacturing—using social media platforms and direct engagement to craft messages that resonate and respond to feedback. While data remains critical, storytelling should be prioritized to convey the real-life success of local businesses, workforce partnerships, and public-private collaborations. The County should also strengthen its digital presence with updated content on available sites, timelines, and success stories, while developing unique branded materials like "Tips from Trey" virtual tours, mini-documentaries, podcasts, and creative mailers. Lastly, internal marketing should not be overlooked—it is essential to maintain alignment among stakeholders, foster a shared identity, and ensure consistent messaging across all platforms.

**Business retention and expansion**

To support the long-term success of existing businesses, Greene County should implement a proactive and structured Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program. This includes developing a regular system of check-ins using a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool to track business interactions and follow-ups, along with deploying a structured survey or checklist to capture feedback on satisfaction, growth plans, and pain points.

The County should collaborate with Greene County Schools (GCS) and Lenoir Community College (LCC) to conduct workforce-focused visits that help align talent pipelines with employer needs. Regular meetings—monthly or quarterly—with major employers should be held to address issues such as workforce training, school-to-work partnerships (Career and Technical Education, apprenticeships, advisory boards), supplier opportunities, and the local cost of doing business.

To support and encourage small businesses, the County should partner with the college and Chamber of Commerce to develop resources that address succession planning, access to capital, regulatory compliance, market growth, and supply chain diversification. Additionally, peer networks—particularly establishing a local Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) chapter—should be cultivated to foster connection, learning, and mutual support among employers. These actions will help build loyalty, reduce business churn, and strengthen the foundation of Greene County's local economy.

## *Strategy 3 - Focus recruitment efforts on these industry sectors:*

Greene County should focus its recruitment efforts on industry sectors that align with its strengths in workforce, infrastructure, location, and quality of life. These targeted sectors represent areas of competitive advantage, where regional assets and emerging trends intersect to create real opportunities for growth. From value-added agriculture and clean-tech manufacturing to aerospace suppliers, digital infrastructure, and tourism, these industries offer pathways for job creation, economic diversification, and long-term resilience. The following sectors should guide outreach, messaging, and strategic planning efforts as Greene County positions itself for sustainable development.

### Agri-business, Value-added Agriculture Manufacturing and Agriculture Biotechnology

- Research-driven farming, smart farming, crop science
- Organic farming, aquaculture, hydroponics
- Livestock and poultry processing (highly automated)
- Forestry, wood products, urban forestry research, wood-derived biochemicals
- Cold storage, packaging, logistics

### Small Manufacturing in Pharma, Robotics and Automation

- Advanced materials and specialty manufacturing in plastics, composites and metal fabrication
- Ag equipment, machinery and tools
- Clean energy components
- Food processing automation and packaging, especially cellulose
- Biotech such as contract manufacturing/packaging of pharmaceuticals
- MRO services for robotics and automation

### Suppliers for Regional Industries, especially aviation and aerospace

- MRO (especially aviation)
- Logistics management systems (cargo control, inventory management)
- Defense and security (unmanned systems, cyber security, battlefield gear, custom parts)
- Small components (carbon fiber, alloys)
- Testing equipment
- Custodial, prepared foods

### Information and Communications

- Electronic and telecommunications equipment manufacturing
- Wireless components
- Printed Circuit Board manufacturing and assembly
- Server and storage equipment, networking equipment
- Microelectronics packaging
- Advanced materials and nanotechnology
- Anything AI related

### Tourism (Ag-related, outdoor recreation and youth sports

- Eco-tourism and agritourism
- Heritage and cultural tourism
- Sports and Outdoor adventure tourism
- Hospitality and event venues
- eSports and digital competitions, especially STEM integrated and school-based teams

### Logistics, distribution and service centers

- Environmental remediation technologies, clean tech, battery storage
- Healthcare - back office, remote work and tech-enabled services
- Regional warehousing, last mile delivery hub

*Strategy 4 - Optimize regional partnerships and assets as a force multiplier:*

### Perform a Labor Shed Study to include the entire multi-county area

- Get data on demographics, education levels, commuting patterns, economic ties, and labor source maps with size, participation rate, underemployment.

- Employment by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes.

- Education and training assets.

- As a second phase, get an inventory of certifications, degrees and technical skills of existing labor, profiles of regional high school graduates, programs to attract skilled workers, prison labor assessment and potential training program funding for emerging technologies.

### Utilize key education partners as part of the recruitment team

- Gather course data on focused industry training for specific target industries

- Develop a presentation from ECU and/or NCSU on Research & Development capabilities, tech transfer and start-up incubators for your target sectors

- Partner with regional education assets for fam (familiarization) tours, job fairs and student showcases

- Use education partners as assets in BRE work, especially market intelligence, financing trends, career pathways and up-skilling

### Coordinate with regional and state partners in marketing efforts

For low-cost assistance, strategic guidance and shared costs, utilize:

- Visit NC
- NC Main Street
- EDPNC Co-op Marketing
- Hometown Strong

- NCSU Tourism Marketing
- NC IDEA
- NC Commerce

### Jointly plan infrastructure projects

Create more opportunities by:

- Applying to federal grants
- Look for efficiencies and consolidation

**Look to partners and allies for assistance with marketing funding / site development**

- Utility partners
- Railroads
- NC Farm Bureau

- BCBSNC
- Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) or NC State's Rural Revitalization

## *Strategy 5 - Foster more public private partnerships*

**Study successful PPP models**

Greene County should explore proven public-private partnership (PPP) models to support industrial development and revitalization. Examples include Build-Own-Operate (BOO) and Lease-Develop-Operate (LDO) approaches, where private firms finance and operate assets while the County provides land or infrastructure. Other models like public asset redevelopment or co-investment in Innovation & Workforce Hubs offer effective ways to repurpose public land, boost talent pipelines, and attract private capital without relinquishing public ownership.

**Develop a RFQ and selection process**

To ensure fairness and accountability in PPP implementation, Greene County should develop a transparent Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and selection process. A clear framework for identifying, evaluating, and partnering with private developers will build public trust and attract credible, mission-aligned partners.

**Seek grant funding**

The County should actively pursue state and regional grant opportunities to offset infrastructure and site development costs. Potential sources include the NC Department of Commerce Rural Infrastructure Authority, NC Department of Environmental Quality, NC Land and Water Fund, Golden LEAF, and NC Main Street. Collaborating with NC Railroad and utility partners can further support planning and execution of development projects.

## *Strategy 6 - Align the strategic plan with measures of success*

| Turn the plan into action | Adopt benchmarks and metrics | Set up a data gathering process |
|---|---|---|
| • Set budgets and schedules to align with the major goals of the Plan.<br><br>• Consider funding initiatives, not just departments.<br><br>• Sequence projects logically. | • Macro and micro and must be tied to a strategy and be measurable (examples are in the Appendix).<br>• Beware of mission creep (setting benchmarks that are someone else's responsibilities) | • Assign a data owner for each strategy and action metric.<br>• Design reporting formats, automate where possible<br>• Visual reporting to management is preferrable.<br>• Schedule data presentations at appropriate meetings. |

## *Strategy 7 – Invest in Quality-of-Life Amenities*

Identify priorities from community surveys and data gathered from activities in Strategy 1

Use public-private partners and leverage grants to build capacity and expertise

Align the County's Capital Improvement Plan with major goals for quality-of-life assets, prioritize projects eligible for grant funding

Update comprehensive planning ordinances and zoning codes to support the addition of amenities to new development projects

# Benchmarks and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The existence of a Strategic Plan is the key determining factor in whether an organization measures performance. Research shows over 80% of organizations that track their performance have a Strategic Plan.

Successful organizations use agreed upon metrics to track performance against goals. "Inspect what you expect" is a management maxim that emphasizes the importance of actively monitoring the outcomes you have set in motion. It is not enough to set goals or delegate tasks – high performing organizations follow up to ensure they are being executed as intended. Expectation of a certain result without inspection leads to underperformance or missed goals.

Management (both business and elected leaders) is instrumental in the development of appropriate benchmarks and metrics. Job creation (and/or retention) and tax base growth are the most common metrics for economic development organizations. There are hurdles to setting metrics. Examples: there may be uncertainty with assigning credit for the creation of specific jobs, especially indirectly generated jobs; economic developers must understand that their efforts are part of a larger team; it takes time and resources to regularly track performance; getting timely and accurate data, and quantifying results can be difficult.

Best practices suggest starting small with a few metrics, having both activity and outcome metrics, creating simple, broadly available dashboards, and getting Board buy-in throughout the development process. Measuring overall success in economic development involves a combination of quantitative and qualitative metrics. Measuring Return on Investment is difficult but can be accomplished by choosing the right metrics that are community-specific and based on the goals and strategies in the Plan.

The following indicators are suggested to help track relevant economic development data over time and assess progress toward the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan.

| KPIs | | Source |
|---|---|---|
| **Job creation** | • Number of new jobs created | *NC Employment Security Commission's Labor and Economic Analysis section* |
| | • Unemployment rate | |
| **Business growth** | • Number of new businesses formed | *NC Secretary of State, NC Commerce Division of* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • Business retention and expansion, jobs saved or added | *Workforce Solutions, Labor and Economic Analysis section* |
| **Economic output** | • Gross Domestic Product (GDP) | *US Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis [BEA], St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank hosts a data platform called FRED (Federal Reserve Economic Data), NC Association of County Commissioners* |
| | • Per capita income | *FRED, NCACC* |
| **Investment and funding** | • Amount of private and public investment | *BEA "GDP by County – gross private domestic investment")* |
| | • Grant and funding acquisition | *NC Office of the State Controller* |
| **Infrastructure development** | • Infrastructure improvements | *NC Office of the State Controller for state contracts* |
| | • Public amenities and services | *Greene County budget, town budgets* |
| **Tax Base Growth** | | *Greene County Tax Administrator* |
| **Average Weekly Wage** | | *NC Commerce* |
| **Retail Sales Tax Collections** | | *NC Department of Revenue (Greene County Finance)* |

To evaluate the effectiveness of each strategy, targeted KPIs have been identified to track progress, guide adjustments, and demonstrate tangible outcomes.

### Strategy 1: Leadership, organizational improvement and stakeholder engagement

- Employee/stakeholder engagement scores
- Program budget versus goal achievement by specific program
- Meeting participation, private dollars raised, satisfaction feedback

### Strategy 2: Concentrate activities on economic development activities priorities

- Available sites and buildings
- Infrastructure spending
- Number of shovel-ready sites, certified sites
- Number of Site Consultants in database, number of contacts
- Inquiries, additional requests for information
- Number of new visits, BRE visits
- Contacts through digital analytics, cost per lead, cost per acquisition
- Earned and unearned media placement
- Open rates for newsletter, communications; responses

### Strategy 3: Target industry sectors

- Number of inquiries from target sector companies
- Number of jobs by cluster, especially agriculture
- Number of contacts by consultant by sector specialty
- Number of outreach contacts to target sector companies

### Strategy 4: Optimize regional partnerships

- Labor Shed study Phase 1 complete
- Labor Shed study Phase 2 complete
- Meeting participation by education partners
- Local marketing dollar versus partner dollars, results, shared data
- Number of MOUs or initiatives with partners
- Grant dollars received with partners

### Strategy 5: Foster PPPs

- Amount of private dollars invested
- Number of RFQs received
- Deals completed, MOUs signed

### Strategy 6: Measure success

- Strategic Plan benchmarks and metrics report submitted to Board of Commissioners and GCEDP Board annually

### Strategy 7: Quality-of-life amenities

- Population growth, property trades, property values, residential building permits
- Tourism statistics
- Number/dollar value of amenity projects including private enterprise
- Education statistics (Graduation rates, school scores, student scores)
- Public engagement, satisfaction surveys, attendance at events
- Crime rate
- Protection of open space
- Downtown Snow Hill vacancy rates, rental rates

# Timeline

| Goals, Strategies and Actions | Y1 | | | | Y2 | | | | Y3 | | | | Future Years | Ongoing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | |
| **Increase communication across community** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bi-monthly managers meetings | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Semi-annual leadership meeting | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | |
| Institutionalize collaboration | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Invest resources for specific ED goals** | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| Build marketing program | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | |
| Add staff for specific goals | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | |
| Involve stakeholders in ED | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| Seek advice from fundraising consultant | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Raise private dollars | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | |
| Decide on GCEDP Board structure | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Educate citizenry on ED** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Host a "State of Greene County" dinner | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| Create an annual ED report | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Develop "Leadership Greene" | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | ✓ | |
| Schedule a "Town Hall" | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Celebrate successes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ |

| Goals, Strategies and Actions | Y1 | | | | Y2 | | | | Y3 | | | | Future Years | Ongoing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | |
| **Product development** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Burnette Rd. Site Certification | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify additional sites, site assessment with engineer | | | | | ▓ | | | ▓ | | | | | | |
| Plan a virtual shell building | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Due diligence on other sites | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | | | | ▓ |
| Incentive Policy passed by all governments | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Outline education and training programs | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a RPO/STIP outline | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a regional asset list | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop an Open for Business outline | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Assemble, review project presentation with team | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **New Business Recruiting** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Build the travel budget | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop travel calendar with partners | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a follow-up template by sector | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Schedule regular check-in meetings with partners | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ |
| Build site consultant database | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ |
| Design electronic communication plan | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Goals, Strategies and Actions | Y1 | | | | Y2 | | | | Y3 | | | | Future Years | Ongoing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | |
| **Marketing and Branding** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop a Brand Image and Awareness plan | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify target industries and customers | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gather success stories | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Increase digital presence | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Increase internal marketing | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ |
| **Business Retention and Expansion** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Decide on a CRM tool and process | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify partners, plan strategy | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop a Major Employers meeting | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | ■ |
| Create an asset list of small business resources | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activate peer groups (plant mgrs., SHRM) | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | ■ |
| **Target Industry Sectors** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify NC experts by target sector | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Schedule monthly visit or online meet to learn particulars | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | ■ |
| Bring experts to Greene County for community education | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | ■ |
| Review target list with utility partners | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Contract for a regional Labor Shed study** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Phase 1 - basic | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Phase 2 - advanced | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | |

| Goals, Strategies and Actions | Y1 | | | | Y2 | | | | Y3 | | | | Future Years | Ongoing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | |
| **Gather data from education partners** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| R&D activity by sector | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Training assets by sector | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Build relationships for presentations, visits and fam tours | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ |
| **Coordinate regional marketing with partners** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Schedule meetings with state partners | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop a peer group for marketing discussions | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Plan joint projects** | | | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ |
| **Seek funding from large-scale partners** | | | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ | ▓ |
| **Develop PPPs for site development and shell buildings** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ▓ |
| Gather the technical and legal knowledge | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Decide on a structure, develop a RFQ and process | | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Find a funding partner, develop a MOU | | | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | |
| Sign a deal, start a building | | | | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | |
| **Develop a chart of benchmarks and metrics for The Plan** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Align budgets and schedules | | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | ▓ |
| Assign a data owner, report format and timelines | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Schedule a report meeting | | | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Develop a list of Quality-of-Life priorities** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hold community meetings to gather input | | | | | | | ▓ | | | | ▓ | | | ▓ |
| Align County CIP (and town CIPs, if possible) with priorities | | | | | | | ▓ | | | | ▓ | | | ▓ |
| Seek grant funding or private funding | | | | | | | ▓ | | | | ▓ | | | ▓ |

# Plan capsule

| Vision: Greene County is redefining rural prosperity | |
|---|---|
| **Investing in the Green County vision** | |
| **Assets** | The Eastern North Carolina Region, with Greene County at its center, contains valuable and developable assets for successful economic development including a superior quality of life environment |
| **Economic leadership** | Provide clear leadership for a County-led plan focused on steady growth; collaborating with regional partners in public and private sectors; building leaders and champions for the future; measuring and reporting progress |
| **Economic positioning** | As an agriculture sector leader, Greene will leverage that foundation of community pride, neighborliness, diligence and innovation – and a "Open for Business" attitude |
| **Workforce** | Assemble data to demonstrate a large regional workforce and build on the existing educational assets for rapid response training |
| **Industry targets** | Build on existing assets in sectors that provide a high return on investment; seeking high growth niche sectors that add to current clusters |
| **Collaboration** | Use Greene County's central location to build regional efforts for development including public-private partnerships for product development, marketing and leadership development |



**LEADERSHIP**
Greene County will be known for leadership in rural economic development

**ACCOUNTABILITY**
Accurately measure the impact of its economic development initiatives—ensuring accountability, continuous improvement, and data-driven decision-making

**VISIBILITY**
Greene County's Economic Development Product, Service Delivery and Marketing will showcase assets, attract investment, and foster civic pride.

**COLLABORATION**
Collaboration with Greene County stakeholders and partners will be a competitive differentiator

**FOUNDATION**
Greene County's economic development efforts will build on its strong foundation

GREENE COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA

# Conclusions

Greene County faces a unique combination of challenges and opportunities—from workforce shortages and infrastructure gaps to rising momentum around regional collaboration and community pride. These realities underscore the urgency of acting with clarity and unity.

Hayes Group Consulting recommends that Greene County be more intentional and collaborative in its approach to economic development. To ensure Greene County isn't just ready – but preferred – for transformative investments, the path forward must be rooted in unity, vision, and bold collaboration.

The Board of Commissioners is uniquely positioned to convene a broad coalition of local leaders, community stakeholders, educators, and industry partners to align behind a shared economic strategy.

By harnessing the county's strengths – from shovel-ready sites to skilled, available talent and an enviable quality of life – and crafting a narrative that signals readiness and ambition, Greene County can rise to meet the demands of a fast-moving, competitive marketplace. The time to prepare is now. With commitment and coordination, Greene County can become the model that will redefine rural prosperity.

# Appendices

*Interview summary*



Greene County: Interview Summary Report
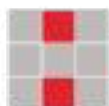
HAYES GROUP CONSULTING
thoughtful leaders

## Executive summary

Over the course of 25 structured interviews with Greene County stakeholders, a clear and cohesive picture emerged of both the county's current assets and its future opportunities. Respondents consistently praised Greene County's infrastructure, strong community leadership, agricultural foundation, and quality of life. These assets form the backbone of a community that values its rural character but is actively seeking growth.

Stakeholders offered a roadmap for progress grounded in five core solution areas: business recruitment, infrastructure and housing readiness, education and workforce development, strategic coordination, and community branding. They also underscored the need to address persistent barriers such as workforce shortages, leadership fragmentation, housing gaps, and broadband limitations—particularly in historically overlooked towns like Hookerton, Walstonburg, and Maury. Comparative examples from nearby counties and cities reinforced the value of site preparedness, tourism promotion, and regional collaboration.

Interviewees also pointed to practical partnership opportunities with institutions like LCC, ECU, NCSU, Visit NC, and the NC Department of Agriculture. A wide range of "outside-the-box" ideas further demonstrated local creativity, including agri-tourism concepts, inmate workforce programs, niche destination marketing, and digital engagement strategies. The findings offer Greene County a strong foundation on which to build a bold, place-based economic development strategy rooted in both realism and optimism.

## Greene County's economic strengths and barriers

### Q1 & 2: Greene County's economic drivers and how to optimize them



- Local industry growth
- Tourism & recreation
- Product development and land use planning
- Marketing and promotion
- Foundational support

The stakeholder interviews reveal a county with a strong foundation and clear aspirations. **Infrastructure** and **community leadership** stood out as Greene County's top perceived strengths, reflecting confidence in its physical readiness and the trustworthiness of its local institutions. **Agriculture** and **Location/Logistics** further highlight the county's traditional economic base and its strategic positioning within Eastern North Carolina. These are supported by mentions of **quality of life** and **recreation**, which suggest Greene is well-positioned to attract new residents and businesses seeking rural charm with access to key markets.

Stakeholders emphasized the importance of growing from within—by supporting existing businesses, expanding agricultural processing, and attracting suppliers. They also saw significant opportunity in better leveraging Greene County's natural and recreational assets, including tourism and youth sports. Many felt the county's strengths are under-promoted and called for a more strategic and visible marketing approach. While less prominent, foundational efforts like site readiness, workforce development, and public-private collaboration were still seen as critical enablers of long-term success.

### Q3: Barriers to economic development

The most frequently cited barriers to economic development in Greene County were **workforce and labor shortages** (9 mentions), along with a lack of **leadership alignment and coordination** across public and private sectors (9). Interviewees also pointed to gaps in **infrastructure and utilities** (7), especially broadband and water/sewer, and the limited supply of **housing** (6) to meet growing demand. Challenges with **funding and investment** (6) and access to **basic amenities** like urgent care and dining (5) were also noted. Several respondents emphasized that **resistance to change** (5) and weaknesses in the **education system** (5) further complicate efforts to retain talent and attract new business.
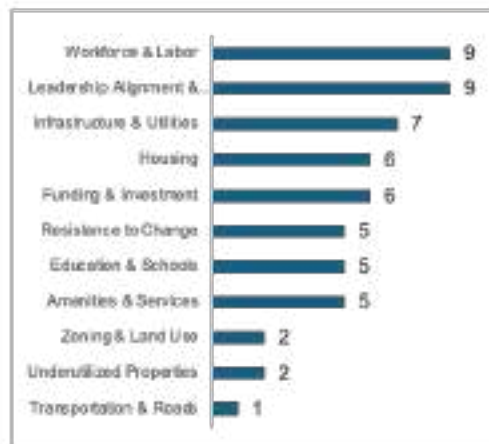
## Greene County's economic strengths and barriers

### Q7: Economic dynamics across Greene County



Stakeholders pointed to clear geographic imbalances, with underinvestment in towns like Hookerton, Walstonburg, and Maury topping the list of concerns. Infrastructure and broadband gaps, rural poverty, and uneven service delivery were seen as barriers to inclusive growth. Respondents also noted weak coordination across jurisdictions and limited regional integration, calling for more intentional investment in historically overlooked areas. Several emphasized that without addressing these localized disparities, even well-designed countywide strategies may fall short of their potential.

### Q4: Overcoming economic development barriers

**Business recruitment and local industry growth**
Attracting new industries, supporting local businesses, and revitalizing underused spaces to stimulate economic activity.

**Infrastructure and housing readiness**
Expanding broadband, utilities, and affordable housing to prepare Greene County for sustainable growth.

**Education and workforce development**
Involves strengthening school-to-career pipelines, technical training, and talent retention strategies.

**Strategic coordination and partnerships**
Encourages alignment across public and private sectors, joint planning efforts, and investment through regional collaboration.

**Community branding and quality of life**
Improve Greene County's image through better storytelling, tourism development, and addressing cultural or perception barriers.

To address economic challenges, stakeholders outlined five priority solutions:
1. **Business recruitment and local industry growth** - paired with support for small businesses and revitalization of vacant sites.
2. **Infrastructure and housing** for unlocking development, particularly in underserved areas.
3. **Education and workforce development** to strengthen local talent pipelines.
4. **Better coordination and regional partnerships** for effective implementation.
5. **Stronger community branding** to promote Greene County's assets.

Across all responses, there was a call to ensure these efforts reach historically overlooked communities.

# Economic diversification and strategic priorities

## Q5: Diversifying Greene County's economy

| Agriculture-based growth | Entrepreneurship and small businesses | Business recruitment | Support for existing industry (BRE) | Tourism and recreation |
|---|---|---|---|---|

When asked how Greene County should diversify its economy, nearly all stakeholders pointed first to **business recruitment**, specifically targeting new industries that align with the county's land, labor, and location advantages. This focus on attraction was consistently paired with support for **existing industries**, with many recommending enhanced BRE programs to retain and grow what's already here. Several interviewees also emphasized the need to **foster entrepreneurship**, suggesting that long-term resilience will require more support for startups, small businesses, and locally owned services. **Agriculture-based growth**, such as food processing or supplier networks, was cited as a strategic opportunity, though less frequently. **Tourism and recreation** were mentioned only once, suggesting these are not widely seen as core economic drivers, but potentially complementary assets.

## Q6: Priorities within the scope of the Strategic Plan

**1**

**Marketing and promotion**
Stronger storytelling, branding, and outreach that highlights local assets and investment potential.

**2**

**Product / Site development**
Shovel-ready sites and improving land readiness through targeted infrastructure upgrades and long-term land use planning.

**3**

**Business recruitment**
Particularly in sectors aligned with local workforce strengths and regional economic trends.

Beyond the top three, several interviewees identified enabling priorities such as **infrastructure and broadband expansion**, **regional coordination through public-private partnerships**, and **workforce development**. These were described as essential for supporting recruitment and long-term growth, even if they weren't framed as the most immediate needs. **Housing** and **entrepreneurship** were mentioned in a few interviews, but typically as secondary goals or emerging areas that depend on the successful execution of higher-priority actions.

# Partnerships, models, and innovation

## Q8: Collaboration opportunities for economic development



Stakeholders identified several categories of potential partners to support Greene County's economic goals. **Educational and workforce institutions** like LCC, ECU, and NCSU were most frequently mentioned as critical for building talent pipelines and retaining youth. Many also emphasized the importance of **regional collaboration** with neighboring counties and stronger coordination among local leaders to align strategies and resources. **State agencies** such as the NC Department of Agriculture and programs like VisitNC were seen as key to boosting visibility and promoting ag-based assets. Others pointed to **innovation hubs** like GTP and the need to engage **private sector actors**—especially developers and business leaders—to help move projects forward.

## Q9: Best practices in the region

When asked which communities Greene County could learn from, stakeholders most often cited **Wilson, Martin, Lenoir,** and **Wayne** counties, along with the towns of **Tarboro** and **Mocksville**. These places were noted for their **site readiness, downtown revitalization, tourism efforts,** and **effective coordination.** Specific examples included **Martin County's TDA, Bladen County's spec site development,** and **Craven County's industry-internship model.** Most references focused on **peer rural counties** that have leveraged local assets through strategic investment and strong partnerships.



## Q10: Thinking outside the box

Stakeholders used this final question to share creative, forward-looking ideas—offering bold, grassroots, and often unconventional suggestions that reflect both Greene County's identity and its untapped potential. These include:

Reviving local agriculture, promoting food-based tourism, and building small business culture rooted in Greene's rural identity.

Niche marketing strategies like festivals, outdoor recreation, and hospitality to position Greene as a regional destination.



Joint investment models, inmate workforce programs, and removing bureaucratic barriers to enable action.

Digital outreach, youth-focused initiatives, and infrastructure to retain remote workers and build community trust.

## Conclusions

1. **Greene County's core assets are widely recognized and valued:** Stakeholders consistently cited infrastructure, agriculture, quality of life, and community leadership as key strengths.

2. **Business recruitment must be matched with internal capacity building:** While attracting new employers remains a top goal, stakeholders emphasized that workforce pipelines, site readiness, and housing must keep pace.

3. **Marketing and storytelling are urgent priorities:** The county's assets are under-promoted; stakeholders want clearer messaging, stronger branding, and more visibility.

4. **Leadership coordination is essential:** Fragmentation among local entities is seen as a major barrier to progress; joint planning and shared accountability are needed.

5. **Disparities between towns must be addressed:** Towns like Hookerton, Walstonburg, and Maury were frequently cited as under-resourced, highlighting the need for place-based investment strategies.

6. **Regional collaboration is a must:** Greene County cannot grow in isolation; stakeholders pointed to surrounding counties and state partners as vital to success.

7. **Higher education and training institutions are key partners:** LCC, ECU, and NCSU were named repeatedly as essential for workforce development and economic innovation.

8. **Tourism and agri-tourism offer untapped potential:** Stakeholders identified niche tourism, local food, and rural experiences as strategic opportunities.

9. **Creative and community-driven ideas are abundant:** From farmers markets to inmate labor models and broadband-based talent retention, residents offered practical, grassroots innovation.

10. **Sustained action and transparency will define success:** Interviewees stressed the need for consistent leadership, open communication, and visible follow-through to maintain momentum and build trust.

## *Quality of life report card summary*

In interviews with Greene County citizens, we asked them to give a report card-style grade for broad quality of life measurements. The report card below is an average of those responses.

| Quality of Life Measures – Greene County | A | B | C | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Education | | | C | |
| 2.  Crime | A | | | |
| 3.  Medical Care | | | C+ | |
| 4.  Accessibility and Transportation | | B- | | |
| 5.  Labor and Employment Opportunities | | | C+ | |
| 6.  Public Open Space and Recreation | A | | | |
| 7.  Arts and Culture | | | C+ | |
| 8.  Historic Preservation | | | C | |
| 9.  Preservation of Environmental Assets | | B | | |
| 10. Goods and Services | | | C+ | |
| 11. Philanthropy and Spirit of Generosity | A | | | |

Below are some representative comments by category:

**Education –**

"Our schools are mostly good but the middle school needs improvement."

"Our high school is not training students for the jobs of the future."

"We're doing the best we can with our resources."

"The community college has great programs and good facilities in Greene County."

"My experience with the college and the school system is they are not very responsive to the needs of business. I could not get my calls returned."

**Crime –** all responses were positive

**Medical Care –**

"We have great local options except for some specialists."

"With ECU Health only a short distance, I think we have very good medical options."

"For families with children, arranging doctor visits out of town can be an issue."

**Accessibility and Transportation –**

"Great connectivity with the rest of eastern NC and Raleigh."

"We need some maintenance work on our major corridors."

"CARTS is a great option but doesn't serve everyone."

"Our secondary roads are not being maintained...and we need some dirt roads paved."

**Labor and Employment Opportunities –**

"There are very few entry level jobs."

"A lot of our people drive out of the county to work."

"We need more higher paying jobs to keep our young people here."

**Public Open Space and Recreation –**

"We've done a super job in this category...but we need a hotel."

"We need more promotion of what we have available for youth."

"We don't promote ourselves."

"Our tennis program is a huge asset."

**Arts and Culture –**

"Aside from what is offered in school, our kids don't have many local options for art or music."

"ECU has a lot of options and opportunities in this category."

**Historic Preservation –**

"We could do a better job of preserving our historic buildings and homes all across the county but especially in downtown Snow Hill."

"The Museum in Snow Hill could be promoted better...it's great."

**Preservation of Environmental Assets –**

"We do a good job...the farm community is trusted to take care of the land."

"Big storms can cause serious drainage problems...we have too many beaver dams."

"We could do a better job taking advantage of our creeks and trails to attract visitors."

**Goods and Services –**

"Everyone was disappointed when Walmart Express left…we need more options."

"If we could get some industry, more people would take a chance on putting a business here."

"People have gotten use to driving out of town for shopping."

**Philanthropy and Spirit of Generosity –**

"We are a very generous community."

"Neighbors help neighbors…and church families help each other."

"Non-profits have a very hard time raising funds here…there are just so many needs."