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Rockingham County Competitive Assessment

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The Rockingham County Competitive Assessment

Executive Summary

Using a conceptual model anchored in recent research on community competitiveness and information culled from a fifteen year survey of several electronic databases, Rockingham County's ability to compete in the new economy is evaluated by assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats inherent in its existing stock of *polity, financial, physical, human, cultural, and social capital*.

The findings suggest strongly that, given its locational advantages and natural attributes, Rockingham County has the opportunity to become a highly attractive place to live and do business. There are, however, major challenges which must be overcome if Rockingham County is to become highly competitive in the 21st century knowledge-based economy.

Leveraging an array of state and local financial incentives as well as investments in the County's education, training, and transportation infrastructure, local officials have experienced a modicum of success in recruiting new industry and retaining some of the long-standing major employers in Rockingham County. But this conventional approach to economic development has done little to eliminate geographical and racial disparities in health and socio-economic wellbeing in Rockingham County. Moreover, sectionalism, the absence of a culture that values education, and political discord over public funding are major deterrents to economic growth and prosperity in Rockingham County.

To propel the county forward in the years ahead, we offer six recommendations, which can be summarized as follows:

Recommendation #1: Develop strategies to rebrand Rockingham County as a sustainable community.

To be competitive in the years ahead, local officials must develop a shared vision for Rockingham County and move beyond the conventional approach to economic development, which focuses largely on industrial recruitment. We recommend that local officials seriously consider developing a shared vision around the theme of sustainability and embrace business development and job creation strategies that fall under the broader rubric of *sustainable community economic development*.

Communities that embrace this broader approach take seriously not only the profit motive (i.e., recruiting companies that are capable of thriving and prospering locally) and environmental considerations (i.e., recruiting companies and supporting homegrown entrepreneurial ventures that create high tech and green jobs that do not adversely impact the natural environment), but also issues of social justice and equity (i.e., striving to build individual and community assets especially for the region's most disenfranchised elements).

Few communities do sustainable community economic development well. But, if the political-will exists, ample tools and resources are available to pursue community economic development through a triple bottom line sustainability lens.

Recommendation #2: Embrace diversity and make talent recruitment a core element of the sustainable community economic development rebranding effort.

Augment efforts to recruit businesses with strategies to recruit people who can help propel the region forward. Immigrants and homegrown talent that moved away and have done well should be the initial targets of this people-based recruitment strategy. Immigrants not only have a strong entrepreneurial orientation—often much stronger than the native-born—they also can be a critical link in developing export marketing opportunities for locally produced goods and services in their home countries. For home grown talent with aging parents and grandparents in the region, now may be an opportune time to consider returning home given that they will likely have elder care responsibilities. Some “home place” migration, as it is called, is already taking place in North Carolina. As with industrial recruitment, local officials should devise incentive packages for immigrant newcomers and home grown returnees to use their creative talents and entrepreneurial acumen to develop viable businesses and sustainable jobs in Rockingham County.

Recommendation #3: Leverage the power, influence, and global reach of the World Wide Web to promote Rockingham County's shared identity and brand in the economic development marketplace.

An effective web-based re-branding and marketing strategy will require all of Rockingham County's websites to be better coordinated and linked with timely, consistent, and up to date information. Government, business, city, tourist, and economic development organizations--all need to come together to create a unified vision of and marketing strategy for

the Rockingham County that is consistent with the triple bottom line principles of sustainability.

Recommendation #4: Re-engineer K-20 education so that the system better equips the current and future workforce with the skills they will need to thrive and prosper in the highly volatile global economy of the 21st century.

Workers, including those who have either experienced or are at substantial risks of economic dislocation, will have to demonstrate greater entrepreneurial acumen in responding to unanticipated economic crises and opportunities in the years ahead. K-20 education leaders in Rockingham County must therefore develop an appreciation of and demonstrate a major commitment to “intellectual entrepreneurship” and develop strategies, initiatives, and multiple delivery channels to address the entrepreneurial education needs of the local population. Creating an entrepreneurial class and culture will reduce the region’s reliance on industrial recruitment as the primary economic development and job creation strategy.

Recommendation # 5: Nurture and grow the local elder care economy.

As Rockingham County’s population continues to age, a diverse array of age-appropriate products and services will be needed to serve the pre-boomers (born before 1945) and boomers (born between 1945 and 1964). Unlimited opportunities exist for entrepreneurs who might be interested in figuring out how to design, build, and/or renovate commercial and residential properties as well as package and label goods and services that cater to the needs, cultural preferences, and consumer purchasing behaviors of Rockingham County’s “greying” population. Local officials will have to create and/or recruit angel and venture capital networks whose investments can jumpstart, nurture, and grow commercially viable businesses in the elder care marketplace.

Recommendation #6: Aggressively pursue regional collaborations—with border counties in North Carolina and Virginia—as a core economic and employment growth strategy.

Piedmont Local Foods, the virtual farmers market covering Rockingham County and five other counties, is a concrete example of the economic development potential of such collaborations. The planned Mega-Center in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, north of Eden, constitutes an excellent opportunity for Rockingham County to engage in cross border

collaboration. The FedEx Hub presents still other opportunities for cross border collaborations with enormous economic development potential, especially up Highway 220 in the northern part of Rockingham County. And local officials also have an opportunity to capitalize on housing developments expanding north from Guilford County—a source of potential property tax revenue for Rockingham County.

Introduction, Critical Background, and Purpose

Research indicates that communities that have proven to be attractive places to live and do business in the 21st century knowledge-based economy possess a distinct set of characteristics. Highly attractive and competitive communities:

- Actively and aggressively pursue strategic alliances with other communities, domestically and especially internationally, with an eye toward developing not only cultural ties but also profit-centered activities that generate revenue and create jobs for the local citizenry.
- Create a regulatory environment that promotes and supports the generation of new community wealth via civic entrepreneurial ventures and innovations that are designed specifically to sustain and enhance the health, viability, and vitality of the community.
- Recognize the need for, and are committed to continuous investment in, a world-class physical infrastructure that connects them to the regional, national, and international economy.
- Invest heavily in their educational system (K-12, community colleges, and four-year institutions) to ensure the availability of education and training programs for their citizens so that they can compete for new economy jobs, thereby enhancing the community's attractiveness to businesses.
- Instill in their citizens, especially their youth, the attitudes, values, and beliefs about education and work that are key to upward mobility in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century.
- Strive to reduce, to the maximum extent possible, geographical, racial and/or ethnic, and class disparities by investing substantial resources in an array of community-building institutions (e.g., the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Boys and Girls Club) that seek to mend the social fabric and provide bridges to education and economic mainstream for their members, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

Under-girding these characteristics are six types of community capital assets — polity, physical, financial, human, cultural, and social — which interact, as specified in Figure 1, to create a healthy, highly competitive community.¹ It is important to note that the absence of any one of these six types of capital can seriously limit the ability of a community to compete in the 21st century marketplace. But, as Figure 1 shows, it is the polity capital (i.e., the local government), which creates the conditions or climate enabling the other five types of capital to drive competitiveness.

In highly competitive communities, government decision-making is agile and flexible, not static or bureaucratic. Assuming the business-equivalent role of managing partner, the local government is prepared — almost on an ad hoc basis — to foster or facilitate networks and linkages among key community stakeholders to build or develop the requisite physical, financial, human, cultural, and social capital to facilitate community economic health and competitiveness.²

¹ For a detailed discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of our model of community competitiveness, see James H. Johnson, Jr., 2002a, “Enhancing the Competitiveness of North Carolina Communities,” *Popular Government*, inter, pp. 6-18; James H. Johnson, Jr., 2002b, U.S. Immigration Reform, Homeland Security, and Global Economic Competitiveness in the Aftermath of the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks,” *North Carolina Journal of International Law and Commercial Regulation*, Vol. 27, pp. 419-464.

² To play this role effectively, the local government in a highly competitive community typically establishes a knowledge management system and data warehouse, which enables it to monitor trends and developments internal and external to the community in real time. For a detailed discussion of the importance of having such a system in place, see Don A. Holbrook, 1995, “Economic Development Facing up to the 21st Century,” IEDN’s Economic Development Intelligence Reports, available at http://iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/edirfacing21st_cent10595.html,accessed March 28,2003; and IEDN, 1996, “Site Selection Trends in the Electronic Era &

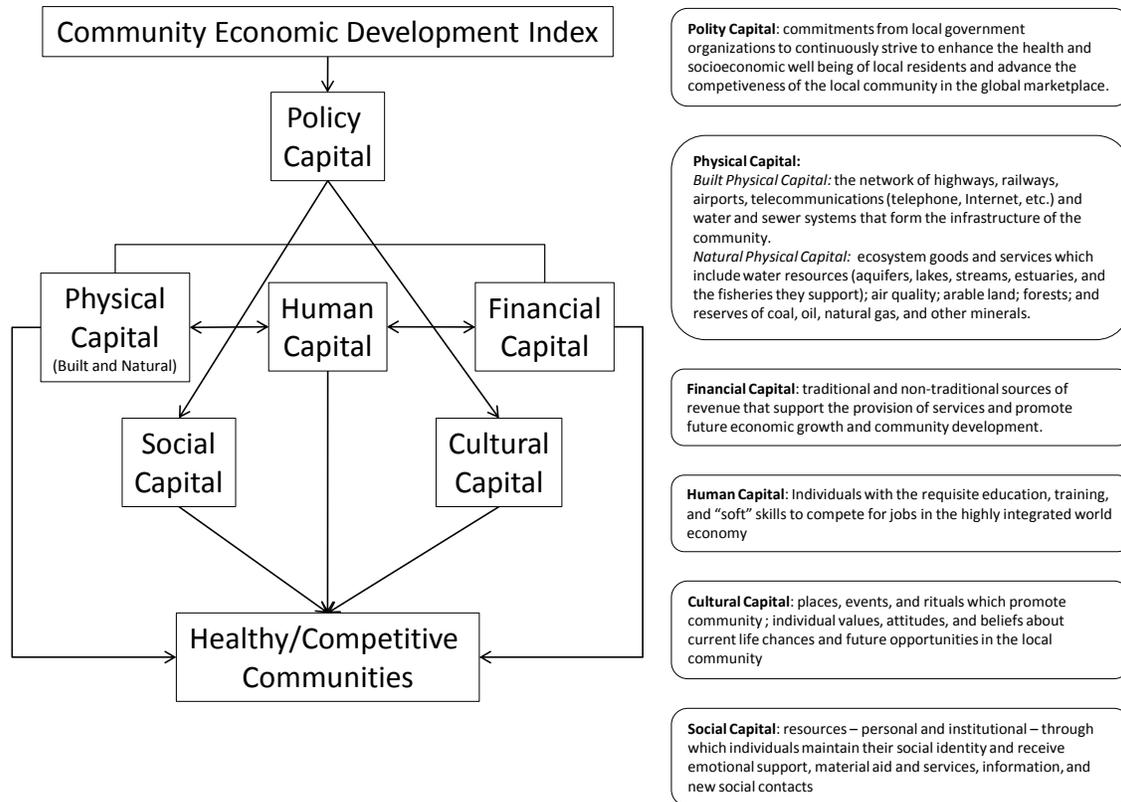
Depending on the nature of the issue, these networks may be industry- or sector-specific, ethnic-based, or regional in composition.³ In some instances, they may involve business leaders who are staunch competitors in the local marketplace. In highly competitive communities, leaders of competing businesses often work together to solve local problems because they recognize that their “coopetition” or “competitive collaboration” will ultimately benefit their respective companies.⁴ In other words, it is a form of enlightened self-interest.

Global Economy.” IEDN’s Economic Intelligence Reports, January, available at <http://iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/janedire.html>, accessed March 27, 2003; IEDN, 2000, “Rural Economic Development Issues for the 21st Century,” IEDN’s Economic Development Reports, January, available at <http://www.iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/FEBEDIRE>, accessed March 28, 2003. Holbrook (1995) and IEDN (1996, 2000).

³ Joel Kotkin, 1998. “Cities Need Leaders ... and Businessmen Are Indispensable,” *The American Enterprise*, September/October, Vol. 9, pp. 24–26+.

⁴ John K. Conlon, and Mellisa Givagnoli, 1998, *The Power of Two*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Figure 1: A Business-oriented Conceptual Model for Enhancing Community Competiveness



Sources: Compiled by authors based on Johnson (2002a).

In the remainder of this report, we use this model to assess the current competitive position of Rockingham County, North Carolina. We begin by describing the methodology employed to operationalize the model. Next, we provide a demographic and socioeconomic profile of Rockingham County, which is followed by a discussion of the results of the competitive assessment. We conclude with a set of conclusions and recommendations for enhancing Rockingham County’s attractiveness as a place to live and do business.

Methodology

To operationalize the model, we conducted a community-level SWOT analysis, which identifies the internal (Strengths and Weaknesses) and external (Opportunities and Threats) forces that shape an area's overall health, economic well-being, and attractiveness as a place to live and do business.^{5,6} As Table 1 shows, such an analysis strives to answer specific questions about the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Table 1: Questions Posed in a Community-Level SWOT Analysis

Strengths
• What does the community do well?
• Does the community have a clear strategic vision?
• Does the community have an entrepreneurial orientation?
• Does the community culture produce a healthy environment in which to live and do business?
Weaknesses
• What could be improved in the community?
• What does the community do poorly?
• Is the community able to finance needed infrastructure?
• Does the community have poor debt or cash flow?
Opportunities
• What favorable circumstances is the community facing?
• What are the interesting trends?
• Is the community positioned to take on those trends?

⁵ IEDN, 2000, "Rural Economic Development Issues for the 21st Century," IEDN's Economic Development Intelligence Reports, available at <http://www.iedn.com/infomation/intelligence/articles/FEBEDIR>, accessed March 28, 2003.

⁶ Holbrook, Don A., 1995, "Economic Development Facing Up to the 21st Century," IEDN's Economic Development Intelligence Reports, available at http://iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/edirfacing21st_cent10595.html, accessed March 28, 2003.

- Is the community advanced in technology?

Threats

- What obstacles does the community face?
- What are the community's competitors doing?
- Are the demographic and economic conditions changing?
- Is technology threatening the community's competitiveness?
- What policies are state and federal lawmakers backing?
- Do the policies affect the community and, if so, how?

Source: Compiled by authors.

To answer these questions for Rockingham County, we engaged in the same type of *community competitiveness intelligence gathering* that a corporate relocation consultant pursues to develop a short list of ideal sites for a client's business relocation or expansion.⁷ That is, we conducted an exhaustive search of publicly-available information using the electronic search engines and research indexes identified in Table 2.

We used Rockingham County and the names of specific towns within the county (e.g., Eden, Madison, Mayodan, Reidsville, Stoneville, Wentworth) as place identifiers and combined this information with an array of search terms culled from prior research on community competitiveness.

The search, which included mainly newspaper and popular articles, technical reports, government documents, and statistical information, spanned a fifteen-year period, 1995 to 2010. The

⁷ IEDN, 1996, "Site Selection Trends in the Electronic Era & Global Economy," IEDN's Economic Development Intelligence Reports, January, available at <http://www.iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/janedir.html>, accessed March 27, 2003.

community-level SWOT results discussed below are based in part on our content analysis of these search results.

Table 2: Gateways and Databases Used in the Research

GATEWAYS	DATABASES
Google.com	All Business Websites
Google.com	General Search Engine
ABI Inform/ProQuest	Periodicals and Newspapers
ProQuest	All Articles
Lexis/Nexis	Academic Universe Statistical Universe Government Periodical Universe

Source: Compiled by authors.

To add depth to the picture of Rockingham County built from the community competitiveness intelligence gathering, we also conducted two phases of qualitative data gathering. First, a cross-section of key community leaders — key informants — were identified and contacted for structured confidential interviews. Second, a group of the key community leaders were brought together for a focus group on the area’s economic conditions and prospects.⁸ This qualitative information adds depth to our assessment of the economic conditions and prospects; provides insights into attitudes, concerns and outlook of these key community leaders; and identifies continuities and discontinuities in the

⁸ A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which groups of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. When conducting a focus group, questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.

information obtained in the community competitiveness intelligence gathering process and the key informant and focus group interviews.

The Rockingham County Landscape

Established in 1785 and named after Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquess of Rockingham,⁹ Rockingham County is located at the northern tip of the Piedmont Triad region with Virginia bordering the county on the north. In addition to Wentworth, the county seat, there are eight other municipalities in Rockingham County: Eden, Reidsville, Madison, Mayodan, Stoneville, Ruffin, Monroeton, and Bethany. Dubbed North Carolina's North Star, Rockingham County is part of the Greensboro-High Point Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Demographic Context

Over the past several decades, North Carolina has been one of the nation's most rapidly growing states. Between 1980 and 2009, for example, the state's population increased by nearly 60% percent while the nation's population grew by only 35%. And since 2000, North Carolina's population has grown almost twice as rapidly (16%) as the U.S. population (8%).

But throughout this period population growth within North Carolina's 100 counties was uneven. While many of the state's urban

⁹ Charles Watson-Wentworth served as British Prime Minister from 1765-1766 and again in 1782. He was popular in America for securing repeal of the Stamp Act and for his efforts to end the Revolutionary War.

and amenity-rich counties experienced rapid population growth, most of the eastern North Carolina counties and some of the central and western North Carolina counties experienced slow-growth, no-growth, and in some instances population decline. Rockingham County falls into this latter category.

Between 2000 and 2009, as Table 3 reveals, Rockingham County experienced an absolute population gain of 235 people — an increase percentagewise (0.3%) which pales in comparison to the statewide population growth rate (16.1%). As Table 3 shows, two of the county’s incorporated places — Mayodan and Reidsville — largely account for this modest growth. All of the other incorporated places experienced population decline during the first decade of the new millennium.

Table 3: Population Change for North Carolina and Rockingham County, NC, 2000-2009

Area	2009 Population	Absolute Change 2000-2009	Percent Change 2000-2009
North Carolina	9,380,884	1,301,501	16.1%
Rockingham County	92,252	253	0.3%
Eden	15,350	-502	-3.2
Madison	2,246	-17	-0.8
Mayodan	2,608	110	4.5
Reidsville	14,723	71	0.5
Stoneville	971	-34	-3.4
Wentworth	2,758	-21	-0.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, December 2009.

Shifts in the population mix largely explain Rockingham County’s slow growth. Between 2000 and 2009, as Table 4 shows, whites and blacks both lost population. But Hispanics and other groups of color grew modestly and in the process, offset the white and black population declines.

Table 4: Rockingham County Population Change by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2000-2009

Race/Ethnicity	2009 Population	Absolute Change 2000-2009	Percent Change 2000-2009
Total	92,252	253	0.3%
Non-Hispanic	87,117	-2,043	-2.3%
White	68,211	-1,900	-2.7%
Black	17,403	-621	-3.4%
AIAN	270	39	16.9%
Asian	438	176	67.2%
NHPI	32	7	28.0%
Two or More Races	763	256	50.5%
Hispanic	5,135	2,296	80.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, December 2009.

Migration was one of the driving forces undergirding Rockingham County’s changing racial and ethnic composition during the first decade of the new millennium (Table 5). Between 2004 and 2008, Rockingham County was a net migration magnet for movers from different states outside of NC (+477), including states in the Northeast (+222), Midwest (+63), South (+94), and the West (+183). But this net in-migration was almost offset by the net outmigration of Rockingham County residents

who moved either to other places within North Carolina (-443) or abroad (-10).

Table 5: Number of Arriving and Departing Migrants, Rockingham County, 2004-2008

Origin/Destination	Arriving Migrants	Departing Migrants	Difference in Number of Arriving & Departing Migrants
Total	6,226	6,202	+24
Same State	3,688	4,131	-443
Different State	2515	2038	+477
Northeast	383	161	+222
Midwest	234	171	+63
South	1153	1059	+94
West	200	17	+183
Abroad	23	33	-10

Source: Internal Revenue Service, Sources of Income Statistics

Partly as a function of this migration, Rockingham County's Hispanic population increased sharply (81% or 2,296) while the non-Hispanic population declined by (-2.3% or -2,043) between 2000 and 2009. Hispanic growth, when combined with the more modest growth of other non-white groups, including American Indians and Alaskan Natives (16.9% or 39), Asians (67.2% or 176), Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (2.8% or 7), and individuals of two or more races (50.5% or 256), offset declines in both the White (-2.7 % or -1,900) and Black (-

3.4% or -621) populations of Rockingham County during this period (Table 4).

Rockingham County’s modest population growth between 2000 and 2009 also was due in large part to significant population losses among 25-44 prime working age individuals (-15.5% or -4,171) and among the population under age 25 (-2.3 % or -650) — the population that would be expected to propel the county forward in the years ahead. Losses among these two age groups were offset by significant increases in the 45-64 boomer population and seniors who were 65 or older — individuals who either have already exited or soon will be exiting the labor market — which again accounts for the modest absolute population growth between 2000 and 2009 (Table 6).

Table 6: Rockingham County Population Change by Age, 2000-2009

Age	2009 Population	Absolute Population Change 2000-2009	Percent Population Change 2000-2009
<25	27,827	-650	-2.3
25-44	22,768	-4,171	-15.5%
45-64	26,905	3,996	17.4%
65+	14,752	1,078	7.9%
Total	92,252	253	0.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, June 2010.

In part as a function of these shifts in the age composition of Rockingham County, increased demands have been placed on the working age population (18-64) to generate the tax revenues to take care

of those who are either too young (<18) or too old (65+) to work. Emblematic of this increased pressure on the working age population, the total dependency ratio (non-working youth and seniors/18-64 population), the old age dependency ratio (65+ population/18-64 population), and ratio of seniors to children under 5 — all increased between 2000 and 2009 — far outpacing the increase in these indicators for the state as a whole (Table 7). Between 2000 and 2009, for example, the old age dependency ratio increased by 8.3%—from 24 to 26 seniors for every 100 working age individuals — compared to a 5.3% increase for the state — from 19 to 20 seniors for every 100 working age individuals.

Table 7: Change in Dependency Ratios, North Carolina and Rockingham County, 2000-2009

North Carolina

Indicator	2000	2009	Percent Change
Total Dependency Ratio	.57	.59	3.5
Old Age Dependency Ratio	.19	.20	5.3
Ratio of Seniors to Children < 5	1.8:1	1.8: 1	0.0

Rockingham County

Indicator	2000	2009	Percent Change
Total Dependency Ratio	.62	.63	1.6
Old Age Dependency Ratio	.24	.26	8.3
Ratio of Seniors to Children < 5	2.4:1	2.7:1	12.5

Source: Compiled by authors from U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, June 2010.

Rockingham County’s dependency ratios increased largely because the over 65 population — primarily a non-income generating population—increased more rapidly than the working age population, which actually declined during this period (-0.7%) (Table 8). In contrast to the decline of Rockingham County’s working age population, the state’s working age population increased by 15% between 2000 and 2009, which partially explains why the state’s dependency ratios are lower than Rockingham County’s.

Table 7: Percent Change in Population by Age, North Carolina and Rockingham County, 2000-2009

Age	North Carolina	Rockingham County
Total	16.1	0.28
< 5	23.0	-1.74
<18	15.8	-2.11
18-64	15.0	-0.66
65+	22.5	7.88
<18 & 65+	16.1	1.79

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, June 2010.

However, it should be noted that some of the newcomers between 2004 and 2008 added considerable value to Rockingham County. For example, the per capita income of arriving migrants from elsewhere in

North Carolina (\$16,836), the Midwest (\$21,720), and abroad (\$13,767) was slightly higher than the per capita income of departing migrants for other destinations within North Carolina (\$16,653), the Midwest (\$15,342), and abroad (\$13,577) (Table 9). With regard to movement between these three areas and Rockingham County, arriving migrants' per capita incomes exceeded departing migrants' per capita incomes by \$183 (same state), \$6,378 (Midwest), and \$190 (abroad) (Table 9). Consumer spending and tax revenues generated by these slightly more well off newcomers in all likelihood will enhance the community's economic vitality.

Table 8: Per Capita Income of Arriving and Departing Migrants, Rockingham County, 2004-2008

Origin/Destination	Arriving income	Departing Income	Difference in Arriving & Departing Income
Total	\$16,806	\$16,769	\$37
Same State	\$16,836	\$16,653	\$183
Different State	\$16,782	\$17,031	\$-249
Northeast	\$17,796	\$21,779	\$-3,983
Midwest	\$21,720	\$15,342	\$6,378
South	\$18,087	\$18,410	\$-323
West	\$15,494	\$20,907	\$-5,413
Abroad	\$13,767	\$13,577	\$190

Source: Internal Revenue Service, Statistics of Income

Economic Context

The increasing demands imposed on the declining working age population by a growing dependent population are further exacerbated by the fact that, in contrast to the state, Rockingham County has not been a major employment or job generator over the past two decades or

so. As Table 10 shows, while the state created close to one million jobs between 1990 and 2007, Rockingham County created only 2,609 jobs during this period.

Table 9: Employment Trends in North Carolina and Rockingham County, 1990-2007

Area	Total jobs Created	Total Jobs Lost	Net Employment Change
North Carolina	6,476,262	5,481,467	994,795
Rockingham County	50,479	47,870	2,609

Source: NETs.

There are three different ways jobs can be created and three different ways jobs can be lost. To illustrate the sources or components of employment change in North Carolina and Rockingham County, we employ here a variation of a standard accounting model used in population demography. The model is as follows:

$$\text{[Firm Births + Firm Expansions + In-Migrating Firms]} - \text{[Firm Deaths + Firm Contractions + Out-migrating Firms]} = \text{Net Employment Change}$$

On the left side of this equation, jobs can be created by newly established firms (firm births), by the growth of existing firms (firm expansions), and by firms moving into an area (in-migrating firms). Jobs can be lost through firm closures (firm deaths), by firm layoffs (firm contractions), and by firms relocating outside an area (out-migrating firms). On the right side of the equation, our measure of net employment change is the difference between the activities that create jobs and those that destroy jobs.

Figure 2 highlights the role these various forces played in employment change in North Carolina between 1990 and 2007. During this period, the North Carolina economy created 6.5 million jobs. Over half of these jobs (57 percent or 3.6 million) were created by newly established firms and 41 percent were created by existing firms that added workers to their payrolls during this period.¹⁰ Firms relocating to North Carolina accounted for only 2 percent (142,000) of newly created jobs.

On the flip side, North Carolina lost 5.5 million jobs between 1990 and 2006. Nearly two-thirds of this job loss (61 percent or 3.4 million jobs) was due to firm deaths. Thirty eight percent of it occurred as a function of firm contractions (2.1 million jobs lost). Out-migrating firms accounted for about 2 percent (75,000) of total job loss during this period.

The difference between the number of jobs created (6.4 million) and the number lost (5.5 million) indicates that North Carolina experienced a net gain of approximately 995,000 jobs between 1990 and 2007. Much of this net job growth (61 percent) came about as a result of firm expansions, which exceeded firm contractions by approximately 578,000 jobs. One third of it was due to firm births which exceed firm deaths by 356,355 jobs. Accounting for 6 percent of net job growth between 1990

¹⁰ The employment due to young firms is much larger. Some of the employment expansion is due to recently founded firms.

and 2007, the number of jobs created by in-migrating firms exceeded the number lost due to the out-migration of firms by 60,362.

Figure 2: Sources of Employment Changes, North Carolina, 1990-2007



Source: NETs.

In Rockingham County, as Figure 3 shows, the sources and direction of employment change were significantly different from the state's experience. Rockingham County created 50,479 jobs between 1990 and 2007. Over half of these jobs (58%) were the result of employment generated by newly created firms (i.e., firm births) and most of the remaining jobs were created through existing firms expanding their workforces (40%).

Unfortunately, most of these newly created jobs were offset by job losses in Rockingham County that totaled 47,870 during this period. A majority of this job loss (66%) was due to firm deaths, that is, firms going

out of business — most likely old line manufacturing operations. About one-third of the job losses (34%) were due to firm contractions, that is, firms reducing their workforces through layoffs — also likely to be old line manufacturing operations.

Rockingham County's modest employment growth during this period (2,609 jobs) was due largely to the fact that the number of jobs created by existing firms expanding their workforce exceeded the number of jobs lost through existing firms reducing their workforce through layoffs.

Given the significant number of jobs created through firm births, it is clear that a strong entrepreneurial culture exists in Rockingham County. But it is also apparent, as evidenced by the large number of jobs lost through firm deaths, that there is probably a high failure rate among newly created firms, which suggests that greater resources must be invested in ensuring the success of entrepreneurial start-ups if the job creation potential of these types of ventures is to be sustained.

It is also clear from these data that local officials have been at best moderately successful in recruiting new firms to Rockingham County. In-migrating firms accounted for only 2% of newly created jobs in Rockingham County between 1990 and 2007.

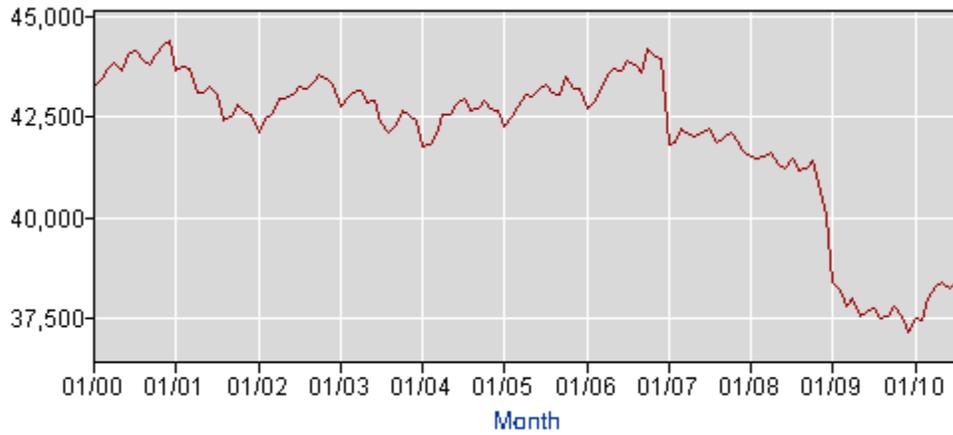
Figure 3: Sources of Employment Change, Rockingham County, 1990-2007



Source: NETs.

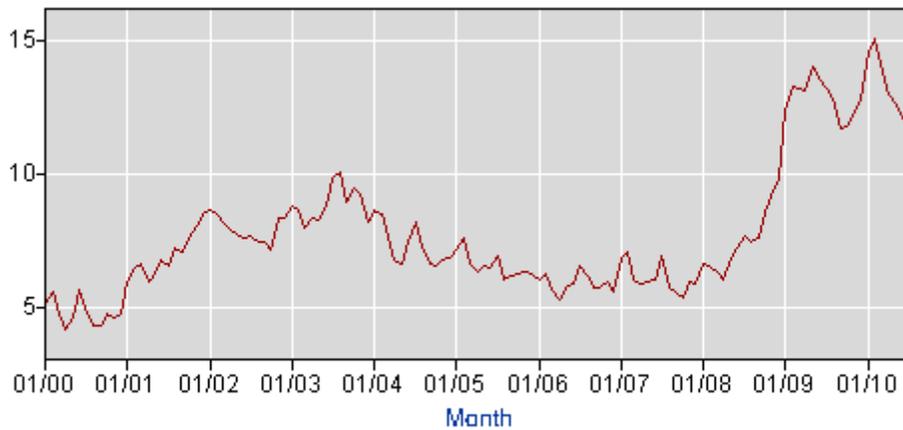
How did these trends impact the Rockingham County workforce? Figures 4 and 5 provide answers to this question—at least for the period 2000-2010. Employment and unemployment trends suggest that Rockingham County’s workforce has been severely affected by both structural (i.e., plant closings and capital flight) and cyclical (i.e., recessions) changes in the U.S. economy.

Figure 4: Employment, Rockingham County, January 2000-August 2010



Source: BLS.

Figure 5: Unemployment Rate, Rockingham County, January 2000-August 2010



Source: BLS.

In 2000, 43,897 people were working and the unemployment rate was 2.8 percent in Rockingham County. In the early part of the decade,

a wave of plant closings — notably Pillowtex and Texfi Industries — led to an increase in the unemployment rate, which reached 8.9% in 2003.¹¹ However, the number of people employed dropped only slightly during this period, in part in all likelihood due to jobs created by new start ups in the area (see Figure 3). Rockingham County's economy recovered, and by 2006, the unemployment rate had dropped to 5.9% with 43,599 people employed (Figure 4 and 5).

With the onset of the recession in 2008, however, the number of jobs began to decline and the unemployment rate began to move up. The situation reached crisis proportions in 2009, when the unemployment rate rose to 12.9%, and the number of employed workers dropped to 37,756, a loss of 5,843 jobs since 2006. In February 2010, the unemployment rate peaked at 15.1% before dropping to 11.4% in July and August 2010.

The State of the Human Condition

Against the backdrop of the demographic and economic trends, we now present baseline information on life conditions and chances in Rockingham County. Here we use a standard and widely-used measure of wellbeing called the Human Development Index (HDI).¹²

¹¹ The effects of these significant job losses received international attention. Eden was cited as a symbol of the decline of factory jobs in small-town American in the British newspaper *The Guardian* in August, 2004.

¹² The Human Development Index has been applied domestically and in international contexts. The American version of HDI was developed by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) using publically available data from the U.S. Census Bureau. ¹² SSRC

Three statistical indices — a health index, an education index, and a living standards index — are combined to create the HDI. The Health Index is based on life expectancy in a state or county relative to high and low benchmarks. The Education Index accounts for both school enrollment and educational attainment, again relative to high and low benchmarks. And the living standards index is measured using earnings relative to high and low benchmarks.

When these three indices are combined to create the HDI, the resulting values range between 0 and 10. An index of 10 signals the highest level of human development and an index of zero signals the lowest level of human development. Rather than having an intuitive meaning, the HDI for a particular area or group is interpreted relative to the corresponding value for other areas or groups.¹³

For our purposes, we calculated the HDI for the state of North Carolina and for Rockingham County. We also calculated the HDI for the white population and the black population in these two geographical areas. Our findings are presented in Tables 11 and 12.¹⁴

calculated the HDI for the 50 states and for a range of racial and ethnic groups. See Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kirsten Lewis, and Eduardo Borges Martins, 2008, The Measure of America: American Human Development Report: 2008-2009, New York: Columbia University Press.

¹³ At the country level, the HDI has been interpreted as the level of economic and social development with markers showing transitions, but this interpretation has not been developed for the American HDI.

¹⁴ Data on earnings and education were taken from the pooled 2006-2008 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Some of the education data were taken from Census 2000. All of the data can be found at www.census.gov. Data on life expectancy during 2006-2008 for the state, for the two counties, and for the white and African American populations were extracted from the North Carolina State Health Statistics (www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/data/lifexpectancy/). The specific

The HDI for the total population of North Carolina (4.60) is below the HDI value for the United States (5.06), suggesting that the state lags the nation in terms of human development.¹⁵ As Table 11 shows, Rockingham County (3.65) lags the state (4.60) in terms of human development. The scores on the indices that make up the HDI provide insights into the magnitude of the differences in the human condition in Rockingham County. Rockingham County scores significantly lower on each element of the HDI. The county's Health Index score is 3.35 compared with the state score of 4.71. Rockingham County has significantly lower values on the Earnings Index (4.50 versus 5.03 for the state) and the Education Index (3.09 versus 4.05 for the state).

Undergirding these geographical disparities are stark racial disparities in the human condition. For the state and Rockingham County, the HDIs for African Americans (3.50 and 2.50, respectively) are substantially lower than the corresponding HDI values for whites (5.18 and 4.03, respectively). All of the component scores for both whites and blacks are lower in Rockingham County than for the corresponding scores for the state. Further, as Table 12 shows, racial differences in the human condition within Rockingham County are substantial. The Earnings Index score for blacks (2.75) in Rockingham County is just over

variables and formulas for each component of the American Human Development Index can be found at www.measureofamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/measureofamerica_methodology.pdf

¹⁵ www.measureofamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/measureofamerica_methodology.pdf

half of the Earnings Index score for whites (5.32). The Health Index for blacks in Rockingham County (2.63) is significantly lower than the health Index score for whites (4.00). Differences in Education Index scores are not as large, but they are significant (Table 12).

Table 10: Human Development Index and Component Indices, North Carolina and Rockingham County

	North Carolina	Rockingham County	Difference
Total			
Human Development Index	4.60	3.65	0.95
Health Index	4.71	3.35	1.35
Earnings Index	5.03	4.50	0.53
Education Index	4.05	3.09	0.96
White			
Human Development Index	5.18	4.03	1.16
Health Index	5.04	4.00	1.04
Earnings Index	5.93	5.32	0.61
Education Index	4.57	2.76	1.81
African American			
Human Development Index	3.50	2.50	0.99
Health Index	3.25	2.63	0.63
Earnings Index	3.57	2.75	0.83
Education Index	3.67	2.14	1.53

Source: compiled by authors.

The HDI values and the values of the components of the HDI highlight strengths and weaknesses in the human condition in Rockingham County when compared with all of North Carolina. While the HDI does not capture all aspects of life and wellbeing, it is widely recognized as a highly reliable method for monitoring and assessing changes in the human conditions in communities and among various demographic groups.

Table 11: Racial Differences in Indicators of the Human Condition in North Carolina and Rockingham County

	White	Black	Difference
Human Development Index	4.03	2.50	1.52
Health Index	4.00	2.63	1.38
Earnings Index	5.32	2.75	2.57
Education Index	2.76	2.14	0.62

Source: compiled by authors.

SWOT Analysis

In order to improve the human condition and compete more effectively in the global marketplace in the years ahead, Rockingham County stakeholders must understand and leverage the area’s comparative advantages based on an analysis of relative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). Below the most significant findings of our SWOT analysis for Rockingham County are presented. A summary of the SWOT findings are provided in Appendix Table A1.

Strengths

Rockingham County's endowment of built and natural physical capital assets constitutes one of the area's major strengths. Abundant resources, sound infrastructure, and a desirable location in the nation's southeast corridor all make Rockingham County a natural choice for business and industry and serve as magnets in the recruitment of new residents.

Geographically Rockingham County is located in the Piedmont region of North Carolina, just south of the Virginia border, within a day's drive of two-thirds of the nation's population and less than 60 miles from the major metropolitan areas of Greensboro-High Point-Winston-Salem and Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill (which includes the Research Triangle Park). Its strategic location and easy access to Interstates 40 and 85 make Rockingham County a major logistical hub in the U.S. economy.

Rockingham County is also traversed by a network of U.S. (220 [future I-73], 158, 311 and 29 [future I-785]) and NC (87, 65, 68, 14, 135, 150, 700, 704 and 770) highways.¹⁶ A major four lane, north/south route from Washington D.C., to Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. Highway 29 (future I-785) links directly to Interstates 40 and 85 in Greensboro, North Carolina.

¹⁶ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/infrastructure.html>

As a consequence of this transportation grid,

- Two-thirds of the U.S. population is within a day's trucking distance of Rockingham County;
- The Federal Express Mid-Atlantic Hub is reachable in less than an hour; and
- The deep-water ports in Wilmington, NC, Morehead City, NC, and Charleston, SC are all easily accessible within a day's drive.

In addition, as a consequence of proximity to the Federal Express Hub in nearby Greensboro and large ocean container vessels available at North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina ports, Rockingham County shippers have relatively easy access to national and international markets. Rockingham County shippers also have access to intermodal rail service through CSX Intermodal and Norfolk Southern Railroads.¹⁷

Rockingham County also has two airports, Shiloh and Warf, which serve the private aircraft market. Located in Stoneville and publically owned, Shiloh Airport is a fixed-based operation with hangar space and a 5,000-foot paved and lighted runway. In 2008, the airport served an average of 66 planes per day.¹⁸ Smaller, privately owned, and located in Reidsville, Wharf Airport offers a partially paved 2,550-foot runway. Other airports in the surrounding area include Blue Ridge Airport, 16

¹⁷ <http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c4social.pdf>

¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rockingham_County_NC_Shiloh_Airport

miles northwest; Danville Regional Airport, 20 miles east; Meadow Brook Field Airport, 23 miles southwest; and Piedmont Triad International Airport, 25 miles southwest. Rockingham County is also served by a helipad located in Eden.

These built physical capital assets have been instrumental in the decision of firms to either locate or expand operations in Rockingham County. Commenting on Meyers Industries' initial decision to build its White Ridge Plastics facility and subsequently to expand operations at the facility in Rockingham County, for example, Max Barton, director of corporate communications and investor relations for the company, said, "The White Ridge facility gives us a strong base from which to efficiently serve our Southern region customers..."¹⁹ He goes on to note that, "The White Ridge Plastics site was chosen for expansion due to its strategic location and size."

Similarly, highlighting some of the business advantages of proximity to the Federal Express Mid-Atlantic Hub at the Piedmont Triad International Airport (GSO), the Greensboro Economic Development Alliance, listed, ". . . the [enhanced] ability to meet higher customer service expectations, have a more ambitious inventory strategy, focus more on supply chain optimization, ship to and from a variety of domestic or worldwide locations and have more shipping flexibility overall." The Alliance goes on to note that, owing to the advantages of

¹⁹ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/news-results.asp?i=1274893040641>

proximity, the business opportunities will increase once the third runway that will serve the FedEx Hub is completed.

In addition to the foregoing network of built physical capital assets, Rockingham County has a diverse array of natural capital assets, including walking trails, two major rivers, 17 public parks, and two state parks. As we show below, these natural capital assets not only enhance the quality of life in the area but also factor heavily in Rockingham County's tourism promotion strategies.

Rockingham County's compliment of polity capital assets, including local governments, economic development organizations, and the three local Chambers of Commerce, also constitute strengths. These entities, individually and collectively, have worked diligently to create a strong and supportive business environment in Rockingham County, promoting in the economic development market place the local workforce, a competitive wage structure, and the county's location in a right-to-work state.

Commenting on the local business milieu and culture, Graham Pervier, president of Rockingham County Partnership for Economic and Tourism Development, the area's economic development and tourism group, said, "Companies in a variety of industries—including Miller Brewing, Ball Corporation, Bridgestone Aircraft Tire, and several tobacco companies—have found what they need in Rockingham County."²⁰

²⁰ <http://www.scexecutive.com/research/greatsites09.pdf>

Reflecting on the job loss of the last decade or so, another community leader noted that jobs did not leave Rockingham County because the local business climate was bad; instead, he asserted, global forces beyond the control of local officials were the major culprits.

Against the backdrop of global competition the Rockingham County Partnership has led efforts to recruit new and retain existing businesses as well as promote tourism in the local area. The partnership's web site (www.ncnorthstar.com) provides detailed information on business opportunities in Rockingham County as well as background and contact information for parties who may be interested in exploring these opportunities.

The Rockingham County Business & Technology Center (RCBTC-www.rockinghambusiness.org/) is another key economic development resource. An arm of the Rockingham County government, RCBTC's mission is "To develop and grow businesses in Rockingham County by bringing together technology and business management."

The Small Business Resource Center at Rockingham County Community College is yet another important resource in the County's economic development tool kit. It mainly supports Rockingham County's small businesses. The Small Business Technology Development Center (SBTDC) is an additional resource; its mission is "to create economic

growth in Rockingham County by supporting business activity through technology applications and managerial support.”²¹

In addition, there are three local Chambers of Commerce — the Eden Chamber of Commerce, the Reidsville Chamber of Commerce, and the Western Rockingham Chamber of Commerce — which sponsor numerous activities and provide a host of benefits for member businesses.

There are other important organizations that also promote economic development in Rockingham County. For example, the Reidsville Area Foundation, a health care conversion philanthropic organization, provides financial support to programs and initiatives which aim to improve the health, wellness, education, and quality of life of Rockingham County citizens.²² Another is the Business Coalition of Rockingham County, “an unincorporated affiliation of economic development professionals in Rockingham County who believe that more positive growth can be achieved through better communication and collaboration.” According to the Coalition’s website (www.businesscoalitionrc.org), its mission is “to promote business growth by providing access to information, technology and relationships through consolidation and coordination of services.”

²¹ <http://www.rockinghambusiness.org/about.htm>

²² <http://www.anniepenncommunitytrust.org/>

Individually and collectively, these entities have pursued a number of strategies to bolster Rockingham County's attractiveness as a place to do business. Six are highlighted here.

First, they have attempted to leverage Rockingham County's built water and waste water treatment infrastructure--investments made to serve the industrial base that fell prey to globalization. With the loss of many factories, local economic development officials "market" this excess water and sewer capacity as a major competitive advantage for businesses to set up operations in Rockingham County.

Second, Rockingham County officials have attempted to strategically develop industrial and business parks as part of its overall economic development plan. While plans are underway to develop other business parks in the county, the following are tenant-ready:

Reidsville Industrial Park is a \$9.1 million, 400-acre development with tracts ranging from 3 to 42 acres. It is located just one mile from U.S. Highway 29 and approximately 35 miles from Piedmont Triad International Airport (GSO) in Greensboro.²³

Watlington Industrial Park in Reidsville is a 222-acre site comprised of eight lots ranging from 2 to 70+ acres, which is located just off U.S. Highway 29 (future I-785) and 35 miles from GSO.^{24,25} However,

²³ <http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c4social.pdf> & <http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c4social.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c4social.pdf>

²⁵ Based on a phone conversation with the economic development office on 10/14/2010. Note that the size of this industrial park may have been reduced by land sales, partially in anticipation of the proposed Horse Park of the South.

recent research suggests that the size and extent of this industrial site may have been reduced by land sales, partially in anticipation of the proposed Horse Park of the South.²⁶

Third, to retain existing firms and to attract new firms to these industrial and business parks as well as elsewhere in Rockingham County, local officials have successfully leveraged state economic development assistance programs, including:

- **One North Carolina Fund** — provides financial assistance, through local governments, to attract business projects that will stimulate economic activity and create new jobs in the state. Companies receive no money up front and must meet job creation and investment performance standards to qualify for grant funds. These grants also require and are contingent upon local matches.²⁷
- **Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG)** — performance-based, qualifying firms receive no up-front money and must meet agreed-on figures for job retention, job creation and average wages to receive grant funds.²⁸
- **Investment Tax Credit** — qualifying companies that purchase machinery and equipment over a certain threshold receive a 7% tax credit.

²⁶ Based on a phone conversation with the economic development office on 10/14/2010

²⁷ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/news-results.asp?i=1271272991071>

²⁸ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/news-results.asp?i=1243457135931>

- **Job Creation Tax Credit** — companies receive a tax credit for each new job created, ranging from \$500 to \$12,500 per job created.
- **Worker Training Tax Credit** — annual credit of \$500 to \$1,000 per employee trained.
- **Research and Development Tax Credit** — credit equal to 5% of R&D expenditures in North Carolina.
- **Business Property Tax Credit** — a 4.5% credit available for purchases of up to \$100,000 in business property per year.

Support from the One North Carolina Fund combined with a local match²⁹ was used, for example, to help Albaad USA Inc expand its AFG Wipes plant in Reidsville. Similarly, a Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) was leveraged to help Loparex LLC expand operations at its Eden plant. In these and related situations, Rockingham County officials have been careful to leverage performance-based grants, that is, requiring firms to meet specific job creation, job retention, and average wage targets in order to receive grant funds.³⁰

Fourth, in addition to its efforts to recruit new and support the expansion of existing businesses, the Rockingham County Partnership for Economic and Tourism Development has attempted to leverage the County's natural capital assets to promote outdoor recreational

²⁹ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/news-results.asp?i=1271272991071>

³⁰ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/news-results.asp?i=1243457135931>

opportunities as an engine of economic and employment growth. Toward this end, the partnership has posted several guides on its website, which highlight a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities in Rockingham County, including boating, camping, swimming, paddling, picnicking and fishing. Additional information includes print guides for the county's numerous lakes (i.e., Lake Reidsville, Belews Lake, Youngs Lake), a guide for canoe and kayak trips on the Mayo and Dan Rivers and a guide of local bike trails. Because of its abundance of big bass, crappie and bream, the 750 acre Lake Reidsville is an especially popular spot for anglers and fishing tournaments.³¹

Rockingham County also has two state parks which are marketed as major tourist attractions:

Mayo River State Park — Established in 2002, this is Rockingham County's first state park, which consists of 1,967 acres along the Mayo River corridor. The Mayo River State Park's interim facility, Mayo Mountain Access, opened to the public on April 1, 2010. Located at the site are a visitor contact station, picnic shelter, 0.5 mile hiking trail (a 1.8 trail is planned), rest rooms, catch and release fish pond, and a maintenance facility.³²

Haw River State Park — This is a relatively new state park, located in Rockingham and Guilford counties. This park, approximately 300 acres, currently has limited recreational

³¹ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/tourism/lakes.html>

³² <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/tourism/rivers.html>

opportunities. Until additional acreage is acquired the park is not open for general public use.³³ Currently, the only park structure is the Summit Environmental Education Center³⁴, which is physically located in Guilford County and serves as a retreat facility and science education field trip destination for both adults and children.³⁵

Fifth, government officials and business leaders are making an effort to pursue sustainable and ‘green’ enterprises, which are environmentally friendly and provide opportunities for cost savings as well as revenue generation. Examples of such endeavors include:

Piedmont Local Foods — a virtual farmer’s market (www.farmersfreshmarket.org) promoting local growers in Rockingham, Stokes, Guilford, Caswell, Surry and Forsyth Counties. Restaurants and other businesses in the Piedmont Triad are able to order fruit, vegetables and other products from participating farmers who then deliver the food either directly to businesses or central locations for pickup. The coalition plans to sell to Marriott hotels in Winston-Salem and Greensboro.³⁶ With about 50 participating farmers, Brenda Sutton, Director of the

³³ <http://www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/hari/main.php>

³⁴ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/tourism/parks.html>

³⁵ http://www.ncparks.gov/Visit/parks/hari/summit_main.php

³⁶ http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/02/22/article/farmers_market_will_debut_online_from_rockingham

Rockingham County Cooperative Extension, said, "This is a great opportunity for farmers to have another option to gain extra revenue during these economic times . . . and . . . will give them a market they haven't seen before."³⁷

Project BizFuel — Started in July 2006, this project looks at how methane that naturally escapes the Rockingham County landfill can be harnessed for economic development purposes. "Early indications show that we have not only good quality of gas, but good quantity of gas," said Mark Wells, executive director of the Rockingham County Business and Technology Center. "It's a very, very neat project. I think this could certainly put Rockingham County on the map." ³⁸ The objective is either to create electricity from the methane or burn it for carbon credits.

The Rockingham County Jail – This new state-of-the art facility features a reflective roof that lessens heat, lights set to motion sensors and timers, and recycled rain water for hand washing usage. These cost saving measures are anticipated to reduce the jail's energy bill by 20%.³⁹

³⁷

http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/feb/24/funding_requests_dominate_commissioners_agenda-ar-272989/

³⁸

http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2008/aug/20/methane_harvesting_project_to_help_improve_rocking-ar-278500/

³⁹ <http://www.myfox8.com/wghp-story-rockingham-jail-100806,0,2846691.story>

Sixth, local economic development officials are also pursuing adaptive reuse and environmental remediation strategies to enhance the attractiveness of Rockingham County as a place to live and do business. For example, three Brownfield sites are in various stages of redevelopment. More specifically, plans are underway to:

- Transform the Fieldcrest Blanket Mill into a mixed-use development, which may include a hotel and conference center, museum, arts and crafts studio, office space, theater, restaurants, retail space, warehousing and open public space in the form of a greenway and park along the river.
- Preserve and reuse the historic and architecturally significant Nantucket textile mill.
- Redevelop the Stoneville Furniture Company site into a light industrial and warehousing complex with flex space, potentially creating in the process at least 200 jobs and greatly improving the tax base; and
- Turn the Varnier Graphics site into a furniture assembly and upholstering facility.⁴⁰

Rockingham County's dedicated pool of mainly semi-skilled labor is another asset. While the collapse of North Carolina's textile and

⁴⁰ <http://www.ncleg.net/documentsites/committees/ERC/2009-2010%20ERC%20Documents/February%2018,%202010/Handouts%20and%20Presentations/Reports/2009-Oct%20Annual%20Report%20Brownfields%20and%20appendix.pdf>

furniture industries left a hole in the state's economy, it also left behind an experienced, committed and disciplined workforce, including 8,000+ manufacturing workers ready to go to work in the county. Albaad USA, Inc., an international wet wipes supplier, cited the quality of the local workforce as part of the reason for its planned Rockingham County expansion: "North Carolina was chosen for this project because of a wealth of talented and skilled labor, good shipping lanes to the East and Midwestern parts of the U.S., accessibility to ports to bring in raw materials and a well-established new aero transportation hub at Piedmont Triad International Airport." said Company CEO Dan Mesika.⁴¹

Rockingham Community College (RCC) has a significant role in educating and re-training the county's labor force to meet the needs of the 21st century. RCC offers an array of degree, continuing education, and custom training programs, including a two year college degree, certification, and diploma curriculum programs.

For students interested in Elementary Education and Criminal Justice RCC offers bachelor degree options through Greensboro College at RCC. Under an articulation agreement with the Department of Nursing, School of Health Sciences, at Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), RCC also offers the Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing on its campus. After either completing requirements for the Associate Degree Nursing Program or obtaining an unrestricted Registered Nurse License,

⁴¹ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/news-results.asp?i=1271272991071>

RCC graduates and other registered nurses in the community will be admitted to the WSSU RN-BSN program.⁴²

In addition to the foregoing degree programs, RCC also offers a host of continuing education programs, including:

New and Expanding Industry Training (NEIT) which develops customized training programs for both newly recruited and existing firms expanding their workforces in the state;⁴³ and

Focused Industrial Training (FIT) which provides customized training and services to workers who need to update their knowledge and skills to keep pace with technical changes in the manufacturing sector.

RCC is also working with the local school system to address the high school dropout problem and to facilitate college access, matriculation, and graduation among vulnerable youth in Rockingham County. Early college high school programs have proven to be highly successful in substantially reducing the dropout problem. Compared to the statewide dropout rate of 4.3%, early college high schools in North Carolina had a combined dropout rate of 0.7% in 2008-09.

Given these results, an Early College High School has been established on the RCC campus, which creates an alternative learning environment with very small class sizes for Rockingham County youth

⁴² http://www.rockinghamcc.edu/pages/elem_education_bs.php

⁴³ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/economics/resources.html>

who are at risk of dropping out of high school. In 2009-10, Rockingham County Early College High School students had a performance composite score of 89 on end of course tests, which was the highest score of any school in the county. Less than a fifth of other high schools in the state score over 80.

In 2008-09, RCC received an “exceptional institution performance” rating from the North Carolina Community College System. The rating is based on the community college system’s Critical Success Factors Report, which examines a variety of performance indicators, such as graduation rates, success of students who go on to four-year universities, and first-time pass rates on licensure exams.⁴⁴ RCC was one of only 11 of the state’s 58 community colleges to receive this honor.

Additional resources in Rockingham County for continued worker training are available through Goodwill Industries. For educational opportunities outside Rockingham County, there are fifteen colleges and universities located within a 60-mile radius.⁴⁵

With regard to building human capital needed to propel Rockingham County forward in the years ahead, the public school system is another asset. In the 2009-2010 school year, 24 of the

44

http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/jul/18/rockingham_community_college_president_announces_r-ar-410922/

⁴⁵ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/education.html>

system's 26 schools (92.3%) made expected growth.⁴⁶ Four were recognized as Schools of Distinction – Bethany Elementary; New Vision School of Math, Science and Technology; Rockingham County High; and Rockingham Early College High School. To qualify as a School of Distinction, 80 to 89 percent of students must test at or above Level III and the school must make expected or high growth.⁴⁷

These improvements may be related — at least in part—to the fact that teacher turn-over has decreased significantly in Rockingham County Schools in recent years, adding stability to the system. Compared to the statewide average of 12%, the teacher turnover rate in Rockingham County Schools was 8% in 2008-09. In the past four years teacher turnover has decreased by almost 4%, moving Rockingham County from 53rd to 12th in the state for teacher retention and first in the state for school systems with 10,000+ student enrollment.⁴⁸

Recent improvements in student performance may also stem from the fact that every classroom in the Rockingham County School System is connected to the Internet,⁴⁹ as compared to 99.3% for the state.⁵⁰ In addition to broadening the educational experiences and enhancing academic outcomes for Rockingham County students, a full complement

⁴⁶<http://www.rock.k12.nc.us/rockingham/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=296488>

⁴⁷ <http://www.rock.k12.nc.us/rockingham/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=296488>

⁴⁸ <http://www.ncascd.com/documents/2010CandidatesforElection.pdf>

⁴⁹<http://www.ncschoolreportcard.org/src/servlet/srcCreatePDF?pLEACode=790&pYear=2008-2009&pDataType=1>

⁵⁰<http://www.ncschoolreportcard.org/src/servlet/srcCreatePDF?pLEACode=790&pYear=2008-2009&pDataType=1>

of wired schools has also proven to be a powerful teacher recruitment and retention tool. Duane Hensley, principal of Bethany Elementary School, said he had recently hired teachers from Guildford County who were amazed at the level of technology displayed in his school's classrooms. Commenting on the educational value of wired schools, he goes on to note that, "Rockingham County can now bring almost any experience in the world into our classrooms on any given day, due to our county's continuous support."⁵¹

Finally, the work of two non-profit organizations, the Rockingham County Education Foundation and Communities in Schools, also contribute to enhanced student performance in Rockingham County. These two organizations work with the public schools to keep children focused on staying in and doing well in school.

Despite Rockingham County's rural location health care accessibility and quality are both high, a major asset for business recruitment and retention. There are two hospitals in Rockingham County, Annie Penn Hospital and Morehead Memorial Hospital. Both offer a wide range of health care services and have excellent reputations.

Annie Penn Hospital is a 110-bed facility in Reidsville, which is part of the Moses Cone Health System. In addition to traditional hospital

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http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2009/jun/24/rockingham_county_residents_oppose_1-cent_property-ar-274814/

services, Annie Penn offers specialty care through a surgery center, a rheumatology clinic, a cancer center, and a sleep center. The hospital also offers advanced cardiology care and treatment through affiliations with LaBauer HeartCare and a Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Program.⁵²

Morehead Memorial is a not-for-profit community hospital located in Eden. It has 108 acute-care beds and 134 long-term care beds. Rated one of the nation's top hospitals in 1994,⁵³ Morehead Memorial has three campuses in Rockingham County:

- The main campus is home to inpatient and outpatient services, the Emergency department, the birthing center, a nursing center, a cancer treatment center, and three physician office buildings.
- The Wright Diagnostic Center houses laboratory and diagnostic imaging, a Wound Healing Center, the Lou McMichael Miracle Breast Imaging Suite, and the Morehead Memorial Hospital Foundation.
- Morehead Physical Rehabilitation conducts functional capacity evaluations and provides physical, occupational, speech and language, and massage therapies.⁵⁴

⁵² <http://www.mosescone.com/body.cfm?id=1859>

⁵³ <https://www.morehead.org/Portal/Main.aspx?tid=246&mtid=1>

⁵⁴ <https://www.morehead.org/Portal/Main.aspx?tid=246&mtid=1>

Located in Wentworth, the Rockingham County Health Department provides a range of basic public health services. It also operates an adult clinic, an asthma clinic, and a child health clinic. In addition, the health department offers dental and pharmacy services.

There is also a Free Clinic in Rockingham County serving the health needs of working uninsured residents. Opened in 1998, the clinic is a private, non-profit organization funded entirely by private donations and charitable trusts. While donations are suggested and encouraged, all services are provided free of charge. The clinic is staffed by 150 professional and non-professional volunteers who, in 2008, served more than 1000 medical and dental patients and filled approximately 4,050 prescriptions while only operating two nights a week.⁵⁵ Currently the clinic has day and evening hours Monday through Thursday.

Rockingham County is also endowed with a rich set of cultural capital assets. Emblematic of Rockingham County's rich historical past, 45 sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places,⁵⁶ including three covered bridges. Rockingham County is home to seven sites on the North Carolina Civil War Trail and a host of historic homes and museums, including: Chinqua-Penn Plantation, a well preserved early 20th century English manor home in Reidsville; the Penn House; the

⁵⁵ <http://freeclinicofrockinghamcounty.org/default.aspx>

⁵⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_Rockingham_County,_North_Carolina

Eden Historical Museum; Governor Reid House; and Madison Dry Goods Museum. The county is also home to Remington Arms, the oldest company in the United States which still makes its original product, and is the oldest continuously operating manufacturer in North America.⁵⁷

With regard to contemporary cultural capital assets, Rockingham County is home to at least ten golf courses, two wineries, numerous walking trails, horse riding centers and farms, two farmers' markets, the Betsy-Jeff Penn 4-H Educational Center, the Eden Drive-In, and numerous arts and crafts studios where handmade items (i.e., pottery, jewelry, paintings, ceramics, furniture, brick sculptures, wood workings and baskets) abound.⁵⁸ In addition, there are over 428 religious and faith-based organizations that provide opportunities for spiritual enrichment, social interaction, and networking.⁵⁹

High school football is a mainstay in Rockingham County's portfolio of cultural capital assets. Owing to the long-running success of one its high school teams, Rockingham County is known as the Football Capital of North Carolina. Reidsville High School has played in 20 North Carolina state championship football games and have earned 15 championships: 1930, 1931, 1932, 1937, 1939, 1940, 1943 (co-champs), 1945, 1950, 1954, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2008 and 2009. In addition, when

⁵⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remington_Arms

⁵⁸ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/tourism/homegrown.html>

⁵⁹ <http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c3profile.pdf>

there was no overall state championship game and the regional championship game was as far as a team could go, Reidsville won three regional titles (1963, 69, 70). At the end of the 2009 season, Reidsville High School was undefeated in 49 games straight, and had won three consecutive State Championships.⁶⁰

Proximity to competitive racing sports is another of Rockingham County's compliment of cultural capital assets. For the racing enthusiast, Rockingham County is twenty miles from the Martinsville Speedway in Martinsville, Virginia and thirty miles from the Virginia International Speedway in Alton, Virginia. For the motorcycling enthusiast, Rockingham County is home to both Rolling Hills Cycle Park and Riverside Raceway Park.

Finally, Rockingham County is also endowed with a rich set of social capital assets, which are leveraged in efforts to promote tourism. Heritage sites are actively promoted and there are a number of annual festivals and events which are designed to attract people to Rockingham County throughout the year. They include: Ribfest, the Charlie Poole Music Festival, the Dan River Boat Race, the Fall Festival, Mayodan's Homecoming Festival, Riverfest, the Rockingham County Folk Festival, the Black Family Day Celebration, and the Heritage Festival.⁶¹

⁶⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rockingham_County,_North_Carolina

⁶¹ <http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c4social.pdf>

In 2009 Eden’s Riverfest attracted approximately 10,000 people. In 2010 attendance increased to an estimated 16,000 to 18,000.⁶² Reflecting Riverfest’s popularity, the Eden Tourism Department reported a 15.3% increase in motel occupancy tax revenue for the 2009-2010 fiscal year, which ended June 30.⁶³

Weaknesses

Many of Rockingham County’s strengths have a countervailing condition — the other side of the coin — which must be considered weaknesses. In addition, there are other weaknesses which were identified in our web-based competitive intelligence gathering and in discussions with community leaders.

One major weakness stems from the long-term effect of economic decline, which has created an atmosphere of pessimism in Rockingham County — a situation exacerbated most recently by the 2007-09 global economic recession. In key informant interviews, community leaders expressed great concern about the future and were unable to define or articulate a clear path to economic success or prosperity. This air of pessimism about the future is not limited to community leaders; it also appears to be pervasive among the local citizenry of Rockingham County,

⁶² <http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/sep/22/record-breaking-year-eden-festival-ar-517462/>

⁶³ <http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/aug/29/eden-motels-experience-influx-ar-477620/>

especially long-term residents who have experienced the decline first hand.

Another of Rockingham County's major weaknesses is the absence of a media source covering the county as a whole. Rockingham County is part of the Greensboro-High Point-Winston Salem media market, but it is clearly on the periphery. While the television station and newspapers do cover events throughout the region, Rockingham County has to compete for television minutes and space in newspapers with events in Guilford and Forsyth as well as other surrounding counties. In our key informant interviews, community leaders reported repeatedly greater difficulty in getting coverage for Rockingham County in the *Greensboro News and Record*. The lack of a county-wide news source also means that there is no common source of information within the county, further limiting the development of a shared identity. Star News (WGSR) provides some regional coverage but focuses largely on sensational news.

Without wide media coverage focusing on Rockingham County, web pages of the county government and each department, the towns, the three Chambers of Commerce, other key economic development organizations (e.g. www.ncnorthstar.com), and the RCC are the face of the county in the economic development marketplace. Therefore, it is imperative that each of these websites be kept current with accurate information and active or live links. They must also be seamlessly linked to one another.

A review of the major web sites for Rockingham County government and Rockingham County business advocates shows deficiencies in these crucial sources of information about the county. Rockingham County has not leveraged the power of the internet to present a clear and unified story about the strengths of the county and opportunities in the county.

Clearly, considerable effort has gone into the design of most of the county's websites, but it is not difficult to find problems with most of them, usually due to dead links and outdated information. We noted the following weaknesses while reviewing web sites representing some of the county's leading organizations:

The Rockingham County Partnership for Economic and Tourism Development web site (www.ncnorthstar.com) offers good information. However, the site contains outdated information, has more-limited economic development news than optimal, and does not have a search feature for general information. While the idea of a joint economic development/tourism web site is unique and attempts to be a 'one stop shop' for the county, the information must be extensive and current in order to be meaningful. The business news portion of the site is very limited. While there were articles dating back to 2006, the business news listing gives no date for articles unless you fully open the link. There is also no search box on the web site to allow users to access archives or search for specific information by keywords. Search features

are a basic tool on most web sites and the lack of one represents a major weakness of this site.

It is also important to keep information up-to-date. An example of outdated information is on the tourism portion of the site. Under the “What to Do” and the “Wine” links, there is a statement indicating that, “Autumn Creek Vineyards is also planning to construct an eight-room inn and special events center in 2008.” A quick visit to the Autumn Creek web site reveals, however, that these ventures were not pursued.

By not keeping information updated, viewers may question the accuracy of all of the site’s information. The web site should also make sure information is complete. The web site omits any information on potential funding sources for business expansions, Brownfield developments or new initiatives for the county. Such local, state and national funding sources have been key in many recent economic development opportunities, yet no links, or even mention, of these options was found on the site.

The Rockingham County government web site (<http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us>) has valuable information but its format is cumbersome. Information is not easily obtainable unless users are willing to look through the extensive listing of all the links. While a new county web site was slated to come online in October 2010, as of this writing the new site is not yet active. While the county web site does include county commissioner notes online, creating a perception of

government transparency, it lacks access to essential online government services such as electronic business permitting. Having this information available online illustrates to outsiders how the government works and demonstrates its attitude and orientation toward business and industry, diversity, and other important issues.

Each of the three local Chambers of Commerce has its own web sites: the Eden Chamber (www.edenchamber.com), the Reidsville Chamber (www.reidsvillechamber.org), and the Western Rockingham Chamber (www.westernrockinghamchamber.com). These Chamber of Commerce web sites vary widely but each chamber only promotes its own activities with little to no coordination or joint promotion with the others. We did note that while the Reidsville Chamber and the Western Rockingham Chamber include a link to the Eden Chamber, we were unable to find a link on the Eden Chamber's site to the other two local chambers.

The Rockingham County Public School site also is inconsistent in terms of the information available on each school's page. While it is helpful that each school has their own site and there is similar formatting on most sites, the ease of accessing the information varies widely. For example, principals are not listed on the home page for each school and some schools' sites are more cumbersome than others in accessing this information. Two examples of this include:

- For Reidsville Middle school, users have to click two additional times once on the school home page to find the principal's name. Unfortunately no email or phone information was provided.
- For Dillard Elementary, users only have to click one time from the school home page to find information on the principal. On this same page there was a direct link to the principal's email as well as a welcome letter from her.

School addresses and phone numbers are provided on each school's home page but not in the same place on each site. Some schools have the information at the top of the web page and for others it is necessary to scroll down to the bottom of the page.

School report cards can also be difficult to find. The district web site does not provide school report card information but does have a "RCS District Profile" which contains some of the information. There is also a link to DPI's general home page. Some schools provide links to their individual report cards but this link is not consistently presented on each school's page.

These poorly maintained web pages send a message to the public that Rockingham County, individual municipalities, and economic groups do not place a high value on maintaining and updating the information communicated to the public on their web site(s). If Rockingham County is to be seen as a highly integrated region, then marketing and economic development officials need to be consistent in

the information they provide regarding the region. Web sites need to be kept up-to-date and there needs to be a coordinated effort amongst all community organizations to create a cohesive, rather than fragmented, picture of the county. If new businesses (and jobs) are to be attracted to Rockingham County, current, timely, accurate, and consistent information should be seamlessly available.

The Rockingham County Partnership and others are making a strong effort to develop a singular economic identity for Rockingham County. But the view of the county from the outside remains fragmented to a large degree. In our key informant and focus group interviews, many community leaders said continued sectionalism is a major deterrent to county-wide economic growth and development. Having three chambers of commerce in a county with only 90,000 residents is a telling indicator of this fragmented identity. This does not mean Rockingham County has to eliminate all of its local community identities. Rather, it underscores the strong need for local community leaders to come together and develop a shared identity which, in turn, can be used to forge a cohesive economic development strategy for Rockingham County. Without a single, shared identity in the economic development marketplace, Rockingham County is not likely to reach its full potential.

Above and beyond continued sectionalism, contentious relations among government entities, economic development organizations, and citizens groups constitute yet another weakness. The Reidsville City

Council's decision not to renew its membership in the Reidsville Chamber of Commerce is an example of political infighting that characterizes local decision-making in Rockingham County. This decision, according to City Council minutes, apparently was based on Council members' view that the Reidsville Chamber had not been supportive of Council decisions, especially in the water and sewer rate increase issue, and in the process had openly cast dispersions on the City. According to Beth Simmons, the Chamber's President, much of the disgruntlement among the council members stemmed from the Chamber's lack of support for the city's decision in April to raise water and sewer rates by 41 percent. Simmons said when the rate increase was discussed earlier, the Chamber had to think about the needs of its more than 300 members, not just the city. ⁶⁴

Conflicts between a local citizens group, The Will of the People, and the Rockingham County Board of Commissioners over how county funds are to be expended is another example of the type of political infighting that serves as a deterrent to business recruitment and expansion in Rockingham County. The Will of the People expresses little faith in the County Commissioners' spending decisions and opposes the use of public funds for many projects.

⁶⁴<http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/sep/08/tensions-run-high-between-reidsville-chamber-city--ar-495774/>

This grass roots community group formed to protest the “recent receipt of outrageous property taxes” after a County Commissioners meeting in 2009.⁶⁵ It mobilized over 1,000 Rockingham County citizens to attend a County Commissioners meeting — a move necessitating a change of venue to a local high school — to protest the rate increase. As a consequence of this turnout and overwhelming opposition to the proposal, the commissioners rescinded the property tax increase.

The Will of the People has also been the major critic of the Horse Park of the South project arguing that no public funds should be used. The group asserts that the county deceptively spent public funds on this project. County and Reidsville funds were used to buy the land where the proposed park would be built. Harold Bass, Chairman of the County Commissioners, addressed some of the questions and concerns on the county web site. He wrote,

The Board of Commissioners believes that the horse park can be a very important economic development project for the county and region, but private funds will have to be secured if the project is to be built. . . . The Board's intent is not to raise property taxes to help build or operate this facility. We simply are not in a financial situation to do so.⁶⁶

⁶⁵<http://www.willofthepeoplerock.com/index-1.html>

⁶⁶ <http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/opinion.htm>

Commissioner Bass also noted that the property will be converted to industrial use if the horse park is not built. This conflict and the tone of this conflict weakens Rockingham County's image as a business friendly community.

In many ways, as noted above, Rockingham County's location offers many competitive advantages. However, in several ways, the county's location is also a weakness, an impediment to economic growth and development.

First, Rockingham County is near to much, but it is central to little. It is both an exurban county — located on the fringe of the Piedmont Triad MSA — and a border county—juxtaposed to Pittsylvania and Henry counties in Virginia. Several community leaders noted that, as an exurban community, Rockingham County does not have the political leverage that Piedmont Triad and other metropolitan counties in North Carolina have in accessing infrastructure and incentive dollars. Similarly, they note that, as a border county, Rockingham has little or no influence on the conditions and actions in the state of Virginia, which uses its tobacco settlement dollars in more innovative ways than North Carolina does to promote economic development.

Second, while in many ways the Rockingham County highway system is, as noted previously, a significant resource, there are also notable weaknesses. Perhaps most importantly, there is no interstate highway in Rockingham County, which is a major deterrent to business

recruitment and expansion. In our key informant interviews, several community leaders noted that businesses look elsewhere when they see that the interstate system does not serve the county. There is also no limited access highway that serves Eden.

Regional transportation issues are another weakness. Although Rockingham County has two small airports, these are general aviation airports with no commercial services. The closest commercial airports are Piedmont-Triad International Airport (thirty minutes travel time) and Raleigh-Durham International Airport (1.5 hours).

Lack of adequate public transportation is also a weakness. There are two public bus lines that run north from Greensboro along U.S. Hwy. 220 and U.S. 29, respectively, but neither fully traverses the county. There is no public transportation that runs east to west. This is a major drawback in helping community members reach employment locations and critical services throughout the county.⁶⁷

These transportation constraints are major drawbacks in a speed-driven and knowledge-intensive economy where the ability to move people, information, goods, and services in a highly efficient and cost-effective manner is the key to competitiveness and attractiveness as a place to live and do business.⁶⁸

As noted previously, unemployment is a serious issue affecting Rockingham County. A look at local commuting patterns shows that the

⁶⁷ www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/tpb/PDF/Rockingham_CTP_Transit_Map.pdf

⁶⁸ www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/tpb/PDF/Rockingham_CTP_Transit_Map.pdf

majority of Rockingham County's labor force travels outside of the county for work. A 2006 review of commuting patterns indicated that 25,739 residents commute out of Rockingham County each day for employment, mainly to Guilford County. Only 18,392 local residents commuted within the county and 10,506 commuters traveled to Rockingham County. These data indicate that most Rockingham County residents are not employed in the county.⁶⁹

Some of the unemployment issues may be affected by the fact that, while Rockingham County has a willing work force, there is a significant mismatch between their skills and the ones required by most businesses today. The transition from working in an old-line textile or tobacco factory to employment in a 21st century advanced manufacturing or service sector firm is difficult. Rockingham Community College and other organizations are working to facilitate the requisite re-training and education, but few business leaders think this is going quickly or smoothly.

In our key informant interviews, many business leaders noted that the transition is made difficult by the old culture of manufacturing. For decades Rockingham County residents could leave school and go straight to work in a factory where pay was reasonably good — and very good in the case of the American Tobacco factory in Reidsville. One community

⁶⁹<http://esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/WorkForceInDepth/WIDReports.aspx>

leader said the community was comfortable with the situation and thus unprepared when the old industrial jobs left Rockingham County.

Nonchalant attitudes toward education, several key informants noted, are one of the lasting effects of the old line manufacturing culture in Rockingham County. In the factories, they noted, education had no obvious economic value, so it was not highly valued. They went on to note that a transition is clearly underway, but suggested that it would take another generation for education to be widely valued.

Despite recent improvements, education remains a major weakness in Rockingham County. In an August 2010 Golden Leaf Foundation meeting, local citizens were asked to prioritize issues or challenges confronting Rockingham County. Education and work force training topped the list, followed by economic development and health care.⁷⁰

Emblematic of the low value assigned to education in the old line manufacturing culture, only 68.9% of Rockingham County residents over age 25 have at least a high school degree, compared to the state rate of 78.1%. Only 10.8% of Rockingham County residents have a Bachelor's degree, compared to 22.5% of the state's residents.⁷¹

⁷⁰ . <http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/aug/22/county-asked-prioritize-ar-465615/>

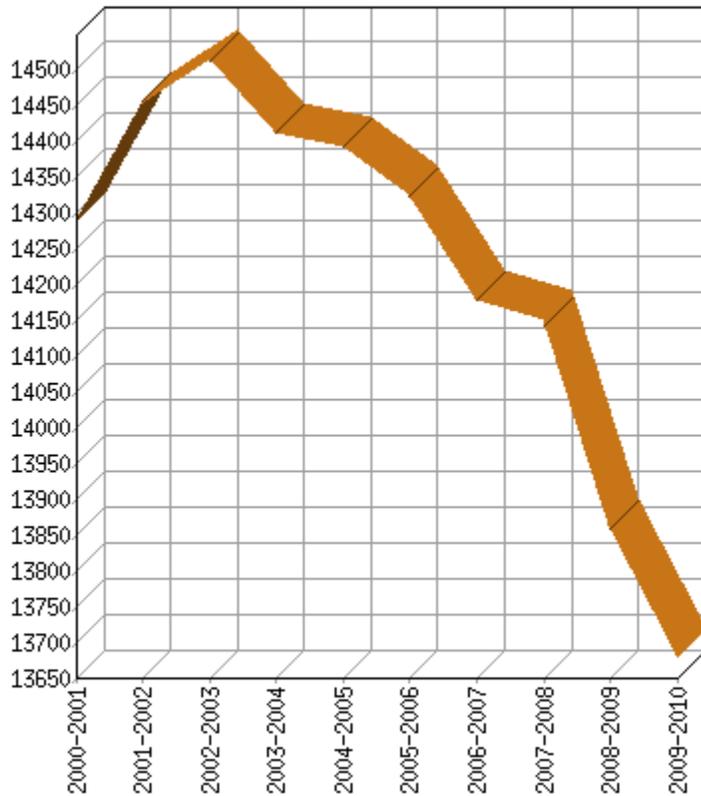
⁷¹<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37157.html>

Above and beyond the low levels of education attainment among the adult population, the Rockingham County School System is grappling with poor test scores and declining enrollments. During the 2008-2009 school year thirteen elementary schools in Rockingham County were designated as Title 1 schools, meaning that they have not met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals for two or more years.⁷² While ABC test scores went up in the 2009-10 school year, AYP scores declined.

In addition to test scores, Rockingham County is also struggling with a drastic decrease in school enrollment, as indicated in Figure 6, which is, in all likelihood, part of the long-term demographic shift that is driven by the lack of economic opportunity in Rockingham County. Young adults raised in Rockingham County are moving elsewhere for jobs and are less likely to return after college. As a result, there are fewer new families formed in the county. Fewer new families results in fewer school-age children.

⁷²http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rockingham_County_Schools

Figure 6: Rockingham County School Enrollment



Source: <http://www.rock.k12.nc.us/18051072484736620/site/default.asp?1805Nav=1&NodeID=805>

Overall Rockingham County students have shown modest improvement on SAT scores, but still fall short of state averages in the composite score and the scores on each component of the test: math, critical reading, and writing (Table 13). Moreover and this too is emblematic of the legacy of the old line manufacturing culture,⁷³ only 56.3% of graduating seniors took the SAT in 2009.⁷⁴

⁷³<http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/sep/15/state-releases-sat-results-rockingham-county-schoo-ar-505297/>

⁷⁴<https://edis.commerce.state.nc.us/docs/countyProfile/NC/37157.pdf>

Table 12: SAT Scores, North Carolina and Rockingham County, 2010

Area	Composite Score	Critical Reading Score	Writing Score	Math Score
North Carolina	1,008	497	477	511
Rockingham County	966	472	457	494

Source: NC School Report Card.

On a per-student basis, according to the 2008–09 school report card, the Rockingham County school district received more state (\$6,094) and federal (\$920) funding than the average or typical North Carolina school district (\$5,653 and \$873, respectively). But Rockingham County contributed less (\$1,816/student) than the average or typical North Carolina county (\$2,130/student) to its schools.⁷⁵ And, as is the case with many school districts, the Rockingham County school system faces budget shortfalls which, combined with declining enrollment and an already lower local financial contribution, makes the district even more susceptible than many of its counterparts to economic downturns.

Potentially exacerbating the struggles of the school system is the relative inexperience of principals in the Rockingham County School System. According to the 2008-2009 district report card, only 12% of the district's principals, compared to 22% of principals statewide, have completed an advanced college degree beyond a master's degree. Moreover, the district does not employ any principals with over 10 years

⁷⁵<http://www.ncschoolreportcard.org/src/distDetails.jsp?pYear=2008-2009&pLEACode=790#srcOfFunds>

of school leadership experience.⁷⁶ A poorly educated workforce and low-performing schools may deter employers looking to expand or relocate to the area and may prompt existing businesses to move out of the region.

In part a reflection of the low levels of education attainment, Rockingham County residents also face significant public health challenges, as was evident in the Human Development Index scores presented earlier. But there are many other indicators.

Among the 100 North Carolina Counties, Rockingham County ranked 92nd in the 2010 County Health Rankings on the health behavior dimension, in large measure due to the population's propensity to engage at a high rate in unhealthy and risky behaviors, as the following statistics illustrate.⁷⁷

- From 2002-2006, one in five women in Rockingham County (20% or 1,090) smoked while pregnant. Statewide, 12.4% of women smoked while pregnant during this period.⁷⁸
- For the period 2004-2007, the average infant mortality rate in Rockingham County (9.3/1000 births) was much higher than the statewide infant mortality rate (8.4/1000 births).⁷⁹

⁷⁶<http://www.ncschoolreportcard.org/src/servlet/srcICreatePDF?pLEACode=790&pYear=2008-2009&pDataType=1>

⁷⁷ <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/north-carolina/rockingham>

⁷⁸http://www.godanriver.com/gdr/news/local/danville_news/article/gloomy_census_figures_in_01_11_08_drb/371/

⁷⁹<http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c7physical.pdf>

- Between 2002 and 2007, the number of reported Chlamydia cases climbed from 57 to 225, the number of syphilis cases increased from 4 to 7, and the number of HIV/AIDS cases increased from 2 to 6.⁸⁰
- In 2007, there were 219 births to teens between the ages of 10 and 19 years of age. Of this total, four of the teens were between the ages of 10 and 14 when they gave birth, 67 were between the ages of 15 and 17, and 146 were either 18 or 19 years old. There were also 60 repeat pregnancies among teens 10-19 in Rockingham County in 2007.⁸¹
- From 2002 to 2006, the low birth weight rate among pregnant women in Rockingham County (9.6%) was higher than the statewide average (9.1%) and significantly higher than the Healthy People 2010 goal (5%).⁸²
- Compared to 63% of all adults in the state, 68% of adults in Rockingham County were overweight or obese in 2008. In 2007, 36% of 12-18 year olds, 28% of 5-11 year olds, and 18% of preschoolers in Rockingham County were overweight or obese.⁸³

⁸⁰<http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c7physical.pdf>

⁸¹<http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c7physical.pdf>

⁸²<http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c7physical.pdf>

⁸³<http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c7physical.pdf>

Making matters worse, significant health disparities exist along racial lines in Rockingham County, especially for men. Tables 14 and 15 highlight these disparities for men and women, respectively.

Table 13: Race and Sex-Specific Age-Adjusted Rates* For Men in Rockingham County: 2002-2006

	Overall Rate*	White Male	Minority Male	Ratio to White	Grade
Septicemia	18.6	18.0	28.7	1.6	C
Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis	21.6	23.4	37.5	1.6	C
Cerebrovascular Disease	72.4	66.5	105.0	1.6	C
Diabetes Mellitus	32.2	29.1	49.9	1.7	C
Prostate Cancer	30.8	24.9	63.0	2.5	D
Homicide	8.7	9.2	38.7	4.2	F
Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	3.5	1.7	19.6	11.5	F

*Rates Per 100,000 Population, Standard = Year 2000 U.S. Population; Source: NC-SCHS, 2008
<http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c11disparity.pdf>

Table 14: Race and Sex-Specific Age-Adjusted Rates* For Women in Rockingham County: 2002-2006

	Overall Rate*	White Women	Minority Women	Ratio to White	Grade
Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis	21.6	16.9	28.8	1.7	C
Diabetes Mellitus	32.2	28.0	47.5	1.7	C
Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	3.5	0.0	8.5	**	**

*Rates Per 100,000 Population, Standard = Year 2000 U.S. Population; Source: NC-SCHS, 2008
<http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c11disparity.pdf>

In the economic development marketplace, such serious health issues and disparities as the foregoing in Rockingham County are typically viewed as surrogate measures of potential health care costs and productivity losses and thus become major obstacles to business recruitment and retention.

One factor contributing to the relatively poor health outcomes in Rockingham County is the shortage of medical providers. A recent study revealed that Rockingham County has 66 primary care doctors for every 100,000 residents, compared with 115 for every 100,000 residents state-

wide.⁸⁴ The county also has a smaller number of nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians’ assistants, and nurse midwives compared to the statewide average.⁸⁵

Paralleling higher levels of unemployment and low-wage jobs is a high prevalence of uninsured citizens. Table 16 shows the number of non-elderly uninsured patients in Rockingham County in 2006.

Table 15: Estimates of Non-Elderly Uninsured in Rockingham County 2006

Area	Children (0-18)			Adults (19-64)			Non-Elderly (0-64)		
	Number	%	Rank	Number	%	Rank	Number	%	Rank
Rockingham County	4,000	13.9	Mid-High	13,000	22.7	Mid-Low	17,000	20	Mid-Low
North Carolina	345,000	11.3		1,232,000	19.5		1,578,000	19.5	

Source: NC Institute of Medicine, 2008

Water quality issues have been identified as a major environmental concern in Rockingham County. Some Eden residents report that they have had water quality issues for the past several years. Speculating on the nature of the problem, Mark Bullins, the city’s Collection and Distribution Superintendent, said that, “most of what we see is isolated and can be pinpointed to an old galvanized line that needs to be replaced, but we have to know if the problem is coming from us, or if it’s

⁸⁴.” http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/07/29/article/rockingham_county_seeks_more_jobs_doctors

⁸⁵<http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/cha09/c10access.pdf>

coming from the customer.”⁸⁶ The main culprit appears to be that the pipes have tuberculation buildup, which is an excess of iron oxide inside the line. Bullins has said cleaning the inside of the line is the best solution. Meanwhile, one Eden resident has said, “I have health issues where I have to watch my iron intake, and this water can’t be good. I don’t even trust it to drink it; I buy bottled water.”⁸⁷

Reidsville residents also have water issues. In June 2010, 8,000 residents were notified that a potentially harmful acid had exceeded acceptable levels in the water supply. In July and December 2009, levels of haloacetic acid (HAA) in Lake Reidsville were measured at .07. The acceptable level is .06. Asserting that it will take 20 to 30 years of drinking water with a HAA byproduct in it to have an increased risk of certain types of cancers, the city of Reidsville reports that the water is safe to drink. Further, Public Works Director Kevin Eason contends that the water problem will be fixed long before it becomes a major health issue. More specifically, he stated that, "In July (2010), we will be looking at adding some additives in the water before it reaches that water plant to take out the organic compounds that are in the water".⁸⁸

⁸⁶. <http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/aug/22/water-still-issue-eden-neighborhood-ar-465593/>

⁸⁷ <http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/aug/22/water-still-issue-eden-neighborhood-ar-465593/>

⁸⁸<http://www.myfox8.com/news/wghp-reidsville-water-quality-100608,0,7422992.story>

The high cost of essential services constitutes a physical capital weakness — a major deterrent to Rockingham County’s competitiveness in the economic development marketplace. As noted above, Rockingham County’s water and waste water systems were designed to serve the industrial demand. But, as manufacturing firms have disappeared, demand has decreased accordingly, leaving towns with excess capacity and forcing them to shift the cost burden to remaining customers.

Deficiencies in cell phone coverage and broadband coverage—two services that are central to economic growth and development in a knowledge-based economy — constitute yet another weakness in Rockingham County. In Wentworth, the county seat, community leaders report that cell coverage is at best spotty. Broadband coverage is incomplete across the county. According to Mark Wells, Executive Director of the Rockingham County Business and Technology Center, around 4,700 households — about a quarter of the County’s households — do not have access to broadband.

Commenting on the lack of broadband access, Kate Campau, a Rockingham County resident, said, "We definitely are being left behind," noting that when the blacktop stops on her road, so does the Internet. She goes on to state that, "It's a pivotal change in our society and it's being treated as a commodity and not as the necessity that it really

should be." And Wells adds, "It really is a limitation to their ability to function in society."⁸⁹

The areas with the largest gaps in coverage are the Bethany community, the northwestern portion of the county, and the N.C. 704 corridor between Wentworth and Madison. Having access to high speed internet has specific economic benefits in that some farmers participating in virtual farmers' markets need fast-speed Internet so they can sell their products online.⁹⁰

Lack of broadband access is likely to remain a challenge for the foreseeable future as the county recently learned that its application for an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act federal broadband stimulus grant was unsuccessful.⁹¹ The county has applied for a grant through the US Department of Agriculture which would cover 75% of the \$4.3 million price tag and are hoping that commercial providers will cover the remaining 25%.⁹² However, one community leader argued that if

⁸⁹

http://www.digtriad.com/news/most_popular/article.aspx?storyid=144688&provider=top

⁹⁰ http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/02/09/article/rockingham_seeks_to_expand_broadband_access

⁹¹ www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/nov/10/rockingham-county-turned-down-bid-broadband-fundin-ar-642073/

⁹² http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/02/09/article/rockingham_seeks_to_expand_broadband_access

broadband expansion was necessary to recruit a large business, it would be quickly built.

Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULUs)— land-uses that are typically perceived to have an adverse affect on property values or otherwise detract from the attractiveness of the community as a place to live and do business — are another weakness. Most notable in this regard are the 15 Brownfield sites identified in Rockingham County.⁹³

Crime and perceptions of crime are continuing problems that must be addressed in order to improve economic development opportunities in Rockingham County. On a scale from one to ten, with ten being the highest, Rockingham County rates as a six in terms of violent crimes. The US Average is four.⁹⁴

Gang activity appears to be on the rise in Rockingham County. According to a 2010 report, 12 gangs are known to be operating in Rockingham County.⁹⁵ Commenting on the gang problem, Mike James, director of Rockingham County's Gang and Forensic Unit said, "It's getting worse. We're so close to Greensboro and Winston-Salem, and we have Danville to the north, and so a lot of the gang activity is starting to

⁹³http://portal.ncdenr.org/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=bc36cebd-0da1-4199-be4c-1044a7f1343c&groupId=38361

⁹⁴http://www.bestplaces.net/county/Rockingham-North_Carolina.aspx

⁹⁵<http://www.ncgccd.org/pdfs/pubs/2010gangreport.pdf>

migrate north and south and we're caught pretty much in the middle of it."⁹⁶

Opportunities

Several areas of opportunity exist to promote and facilitate economic development and diversification in Rockingham County. The opportunities are based largely on the strengths of the community, including an aggressive economic development strategy, available industrial parks, and a pro-business climate, all of which have resulted in numerous planned projects coming to the region that could generate significant revenue and bring additional jobs.

Due to the strengths reviewed above, an opportunity exists for Rockingham County to further improve the physical capital infrastructure which, in turn, would enhance the region's attractiveness as a logistics and distribution center. The future upgrade of U.S. Highway 29 to I-785 would provide Interstate linkage from Rockingham County to I-40 and I-85 in Greensboro, NC. Similarly the future upgrade of Highway 220 to I-73 would bring the highway up to interstate standards and make it easier to reach economic markets. These upgrades are particularly important because these two transportation arteries have been the weakest links in the county's highway system.

⁹⁶http://www.digtriad.com/news/local_state/article.aspx?storyid=145204

The FedEx Mid-Atlantic Hub at Piedmont Triad International Airport, which opened in 2009, creates an important opportunity for economic development officials to facilitate growth in Rockingham County. The planned upgrade of Highway 220 to I-73 is especially important because it will provide an interstate highway link between the FedEx Hub and Rockingham County, reducing what is now a 30-40 minute drive. Development of this key logistical center and the new highway should facilitate growth along the 220/I-73 corridor and elsewhere in Rockingham County.

There is also the opportunity to extend broadband and cell phone coverage across all parts of the county. One advantage of being behind the curve in the dissemination of technology is the opportunity to “leapfrog” to the most current technology available.

An opportunity also exists to coordinate marketing efforts, particularly on area web sites, to highlight all of the county’s capital assets. Government, business, city, tourist and economic development organizations need to come together to create a ‘one stop shop’ for the county for both residents and businesses alike. This means that marketing and economic development officials need to be consistent in the information they provide regarding the region, web sites need to be kept up-to-date, and there needs to be a coordinated effort amongst all community organizations to create a cohesive, rather than fragmented, picture of the county. If new businesses (and jobs) are to be attracted to

Rockingham County, current, timely, accurate, and consistent information should be seamlessly available.

Rockingham County also has the opportunity to increase the presence of Business and Industrial Parks in the community, creating more options for business recruitment and expansion. In addition to the existing industrial parks three additional ones are in various stages of development. The Eden Industrial Park, located in Eden, has a master plan and a paved road with a fence around the property. While there are residential-type utilities to the property, additional investment in utilities and infrastructure are required in order to make services ready for business and industrial use.

Eden also is the site of the proposed MeadowRoad Industrial Park. This site has been graded but as of yet there are no buildings or paved roads. The Park is being actively marketed.⁹⁷

A unique opportunity also exists for Rockingham County to work with economic development officials in Virginia to develop business and industrial parks along the North Carolina-Virginia border. Henry County and Martinsville, Virginia, for example, are working on the Common Wealth Crossing Business Center, which may have an access point in Rockingham County. To date, Rockingham County has not committed any financial resources to the project, but George Lester, president and chief executive officer of The Lester Group, said he thinks Rockingham

⁹⁷ Phone conversation with NC NorthStar Economic Development office on 10/14/2010

County should consider partnering with Virginia officials on this project since the park is on the state line and Rockingham County residents could potentially benefit from job created by firms locating there.⁹⁸

Several community leaders identified opportunities for developing former industrial sites in a variety of ways. Two different community leaders identified how former industrial sites became arts centers or incubators, noting successes in how the arts had revitalized other former industrial towns, providing clients and attracting tourists. Redevelopment of former industrial sites as commercial facilities was also suggested.

Auto racing is another strong arena where more energy and effort can be invested to develop local businesses and jobs. Rockingham County's two cycle parks and its proximity to Virginia race tracks provide not only business development opportunities but also the opportunity to market other attractions. A recent study showed that the Martinsville Speedway, roughly 20 minutes from the Rockingham County line, has two NASCAR races with an annual economic impact of \$170 million. These races also support 2,824 jobs and generate \$13.2 million in state and local tax revenue for the State of Virginia alone.⁹⁹ If North Carolina

⁹⁸ <http://www.martinsvillebulletin.com/article.cfm?ID=25244>

⁹⁹

<http://www.tic.virginia.gov/pdfs/pressreleases/Martinsville%20Speedway%20Race%20Dates.9-7-10.pdf>

communities had been included it is estimated that the economic impact would have been 10-15% larger.¹⁰⁰

A number of redevelopment tools and resources can be leveraged to facilitate future Brownfield redevelopment and adaptive reuse projects in Rockingham County, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Historic Rehabilitation Income Tax Credits, the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC), Façade Incentive Grant Program, the Streetscape Program, North Carolina Main Street, the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program, the Superfund Program and Brownfield Grants. Reusing existing buildings helps to preserve the urban infrastructure and to minimize sprawl. It reduces the overall environmental impact of construction activities and reduces waste. It also helps to preserve a community's historical grounding, particularly if the building is a key community landmark or has high sentimental value.

The proposed Horse Park of the South represents an opportunity to diversify the local economy and create jobs in Rockingham County. At a public meeting in Rockingham County in September 2009, Mike Yoder, an extension horse specialist at North Carolina State University, reported the results of the Equine Economic Impact Study. This study found an annual economic impact of the equine industry of \$1.9 billion, most of which is spent in the state.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ <http://www2.nccommerce.com/eclipsfiles/20467.pdf>

¹⁰¹ http://www.news-record.com/content/2009/09/29/article/study_shows_equine_industry_has_a_solid_kick_19_billion

Above and beyond giving birth to specialized businesses catering to horse owners, the equestrian center may boost the income of hay farmers, florists, innkeepers and restaurants. Further, North Carolina A&T State University proposes to establish an equine research and teaching center at the horse park. Reflecting on the proposed project, State Representative Nelson Cole said, "We really needed something to get business going in Rockingham County, and I think the horse park is something that would benefit everybody. When you talk about owning and working with horses, it entails people from all walks of life."¹⁰²

Supporters of the horse park hope that the impact in Rockingham County will be similar to what happened when a horse park opened in Starkville, Mississippi. Arma Salazar, vice president of tourism for the Greater Starkville Development Partnership, said Starkville "...went from this little dot on the map to now we're actually known for the events that happen here". She notes that money spent by event attendees helps support local merchants and the town. "It's given more business to places that don't have anything to do with horses, like gas stations, dry cleaners, gift stores and bunches of others," Salazar said.¹⁰³

Lee Carter, a Summerfield resident, said he sees the horse park as an economic driver for Rockingham County. "This is an opportunity for this county to have something special that differentiates itself and

¹⁰² <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/news-results.asp?i=1217013848083>

¹⁰³ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/news-results.asp?i=1217013848083>

capitalizes on the horse industry,” he said. He goes on to note that, “The equine industry is known to bring in spendable dollars for hotels and restaurants. I think this is the vehicle we can use to change the perspective of what’s happening in the county.”¹⁰⁴ According to a 2004 Rockingham County Equestrian Center Feasibility Study, the horse park has the potential to impact the local economy by upwards of \$14 million. This was the projected impact before the addition of a large show arena.

And finally, further efforts should be made to promote entrepreneurship. Several Rockingham County initiatives appear to be exploring this opportunity.

Since its opening in August 2009, Market Square in downtown Reidsville has become a popular venue for fresh food and live entertainment. The adjacent Farmer’s Market, which is open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays during the months of April through October, has been particularly popular. Reidsville has made a significant financial investment in its downtown area, which has other businesses taking note. Linda Cook said she and her husband, David Glick, were looking ahead to Market Square’s construction when they opened their Backstreet Buzz coffee shop nearby in 2008. “The revitalization and

¹⁰⁴ http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/apr/17/horse_park_remains_hot_topic-ar-270019/

people working together to draw in folks has really helped us,” Cook said of her Market Street Cafe.¹⁰⁵

Eden has started their own farmer’s market and has attracted more than 15 new businesses in the past two years.¹⁰⁶ Wentworth has also created a new central business district, which includes a year-old Town Hall building, a new shopping center, and a judicial center under construction.¹⁰⁷ Because such efforts create an opportunity to promote small business ownership and community engagement, more of it should be done.

Threats

Several issues threaten the future viability and competitiveness of Rockingham County. The main ones are highlighted below.

As noted above, unemployment is a serious issue for Rockingham County. Rockingham’s unemployment rate was 11.4% in August 2010. While lower than the rate in August 2009 (12.8%), it is still significantly higher than the state rate (9.8%) and the national rate (9.5%).¹⁰⁸ Also, the rate of job loss in Rockingham County (-7.5%) is much greater than

¹⁰⁵http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/08/13/article/to_market_to_market_downtown_reidsville_is_getting_a_boost_from_market_sq

¹⁰⁶http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/07/29/article/rockingham_county_towns_are_getting_spruced_up

¹⁰⁷http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/07/29/article/rockingham_county_towns_are_getting_spruced_up

¹⁰⁸<http://esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/WorkForceInDepth/WIDReports.aspx>

the rate of job loss for the nation (-4.1%).¹⁰⁹ Commenting on this situation, Rockingham County ESC Manager Gordon Allen said, "Rockingham County's lost a lot of jobs since 2001. I think we've actually lost 10,000 jobs. We've not had a lot of job growth. We've placed some jobs, but not at the volume that we lost jobs."¹¹⁰

Elaborating further, the Rockingham County Vice-President of Economic Development Wade Taylor said, "We're going through this economic conversion out of textile, furniture, tobacco, and so it's a long process. We're in the trenches and day by day working on it."¹¹¹ Business closings have been particularly hard the last couple of years. From 2007 through August 2010 there were 28 closings and 7 layoffs which affected approximately 1589 jobs.¹¹² Close to half of these jobs (720) were lost in 2009 when Hanesbrand closed both of its Eden plants.

The threats from high unemployment include:

- The direct loss of salaries and the rippling effects on the local economy.
- Loss of key community players. Many of the large employers who have closed were community institutions who gave generously to the community and were active in local politics. Their departure has left large gaps in these community activities.

¹⁰⁹http://www.bestplaces.net/county/Rockingham-North_Carolina.aspx

¹¹⁰<http://www.myfox8.com/news/wgHP-rockingham-unemployment-100310,0,1021155.story>

¹¹¹<http://www.myfox8.com/news/wgHP-rockingham-unemployment-100310,0,1021155.story>

¹¹²<http://eslmi23.esc.state.nc.us/masslayoff/MLSFrame.asp?contentsFrame=5>

- Devastation to the local tax base as large industrial and commercial employers have closed and local government has faced stiff opposition when proposing property tax increases.
- A palpable sense of despair has set in amongst residents and community leaders alike. When asked what does the county do well, many responded “nothing right now.” Most later amended their reply, but the economic conditions clearly have exacted a toll on the local citizenry.
- A strain on local services. As the tax base has eroded and unemployment has remained high citizens’ reliance on government services has increased.

Education and work force training remain key areas of concern for Rockingham County citizens. In an August 2010 Golden Leaf Foundation meeting, local citizens were asked to prioritize issues they see around the county. Education and work force training topped the list, followed by economic development second and health third. Infrastructure and community development were areas of lesser concern.¹¹³

Failure to address the high utility rate problem is a major threat to the future attractiveness of Rockingham County as a place to live and do

¹¹³. <http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/aug/22/county-asked-prioritize-ar-465615/>

business. The City of Reidsville raised water and sewer utility rates by 41% in April 2010. While this is the first rate increase in 12 years, it came at a time when few in the community could afford it. According to an October 2010 utility rate study by the city of Reidsville's finance director, the average residential user will see his or her water and sewer bill climb from around \$37 per month to slightly more than \$52, based on monthly usage of 3,750 gallons. Water and sewer base charges will double for residential customers, while water and sewer variable charges will increase by 15 percent.

City Manager Kelly Almond said if the measure was not approved the city would be unable to make an anticipated \$418,700 transfer from the water fund to the general fund, thus resulting in a significant revenue shortfall during the upcoming budget year.¹¹⁴ Such increases could have a chilling effect on economic development efforts in the long run and may stifle the re-sale of existing homes and deter new construction.

Racial and gender inequalities also are major threats in Rockingham County. After receiving a complaint last year that Rockingham County Schools did not spend the same amount funding and providing for its girls' softball teams as it did its baseball teams, the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Office mandated the district

¹¹⁴http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/apr/16/reidsville_council_approves_41_percent_water_and_s-ar-270029/

must give girls' teams playing space and facilities equal to those for boys. The district has until 2013 to address this issue.¹¹⁵

The 2007 Action-Oriented Community Diagnosis (AOCD) revealed that African-Americans in Rockingham County perceive widespread discrimination in pay, their ability to get loans, and in the treatment of their children in the local school system. African American residents reported that both administrators and teachers discriminate against African American children, creating in the process a negative learning environment. Community members also believed that schools with predominantly African American enrollment have been passed over for renovations or upgrades.¹¹⁶

In May 2010 KKK recruitment letters were posted on mailboxes in several Reidsville communities. Whether real or intended as a hoax, these flyers send a message that racial hate groups are alive in the community and present an image of racial tension to the business world outside of Rockingham County.

In recent news there is also concern over an incident at the Reidsville Teen Center. A teenager who frequents the center accused the Director and another center employee of making racist comments to center youths. The Assistant Director was subsequently fired but the City Council voted 3-3, along racial lines, regarding the Director's

¹¹⁵<http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/sep/15/rockingham-county-schools-required-enhance-girls-s-ar-505298/>

¹¹⁶<http://unchs13.depts.unc.edu/cdpapers/2208rockingham.pdf>

position. Since the vote was a tie the Director kept his position.¹¹⁷ Whether this controversy weakens the Teen Center and causes division among the city council members remains to be seen.

A Reidsville community leader reported that realtors are engaged in racial steering, telling potential white home buyers that they should buy outside of the Reidsville High School attendance area because the school is majority African American. The leader noted that Reidsville High School has the only international baccalaureate program in the county and has high academic standards.

In addition to racial and gender inequality threats, Rockingham County may also be poised to experience a change in its racial composition. From 2000-2009, as Table 4 indicates, Rockingham County's Hispanic and Asian populations increased by 81% and 67%, respectively. This change represents a demographic shift for which the county needs to prepare. As the county experiences further development, the racial and ethnic composition of Rockingham County is sure to continue to change, presenting a unique set of challenges.

If Rockingham County does not address issues of racial and gender inequality then the apparent inability of the local citizenry to get along could lead to problems in attracting outside business, especially potential international business, to the area. Highly competitive

¹¹⁷http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/jul/20/teen_center_director_will_maintain_position-ar-410884/

communities respond to these types of problems by embracing the diversity and by taking proactive steps to integrate the newcomer population into the fabric of the local community.

Competition from surrounding small towns and jurisdictions for the same employers, residents, and tourists constitutes a significant threat for Rockingham County. Many of these areas, such as South Boston, Martinsville, and Danville, have similar demographics and promote themselves as business friendly environments. All of these areas are reeling from high unemployment, making it a hyper competitive environment in which to attract business and industry.

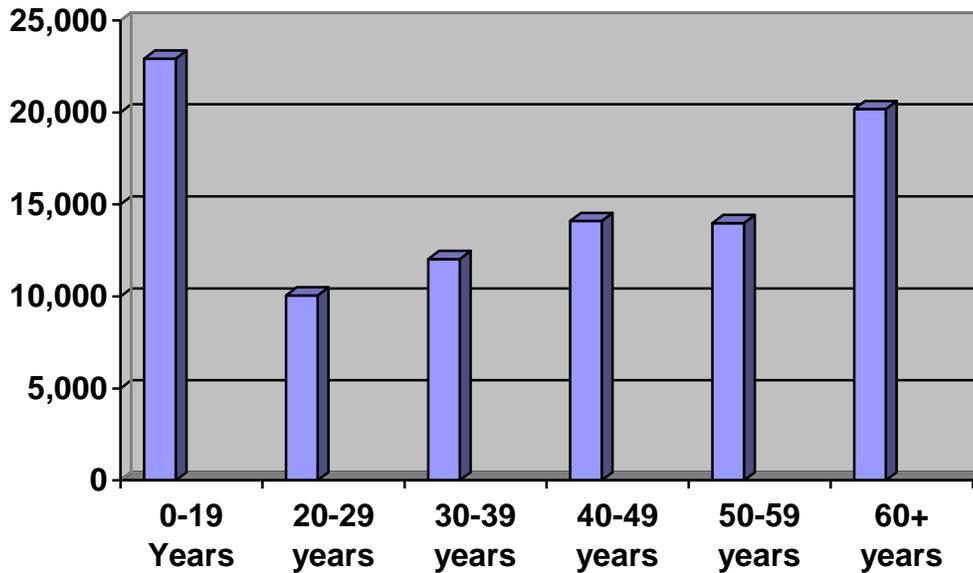
Larger cities in the area, such as Greensboro, Charlotte, Roanoke, and Raleigh/Durham, also pose a threat. These large job centers tend to absorb Rockingham County's most qualified employees, leaving behind a less educated workforce, which makes it difficult for Rockingham County to attract businesses offering high paying, long-term employment — the types of jobs that would improve the economic viability of the county and the region. A case in point is Loparex LLC, a global manufacturer of poly-coated and silicone-coated papers and films, which announced in 2009 that it would be expanding its Eden plant and relocating its U.S. headquarters from Chicago, Illinois to Cary, North Carolina. Eden gained 68 jobs in the plant expansion but the average pay (\$29,796)

paled in comparison to the average salary for the 60 jobs that were part of the headquarters relocation to Cary (\$93,347).¹¹⁸

In general, the Rockingham County population is growing slowly and getting older. As mentioned above, Rockingham County's population remained almost stagnant with a meager 0.3% growth rate between 2000 and 2009. The median resident age is also increasing and the county is at risk of losing population in the age cohorts that typically contribute to economic growth and development: working age (18-64) and prime working age (18-44) individuals. In 2000, the median age in Rockingham County was 39 years. In 2009, the median age had increased modestly to 40 years. For 2014 the median age is projected to be 43 years. Figure 7 shows the 2009 Rockingham County population by age, illustrating that the largest population segments are residents under 20 years and over 60 years, representing the two population segments that contribute the least to the community workforce.

¹¹⁸ <http://www.ncnorthstar.com/about/news-results.asp?i=1243457135931>

Figure 7: Population Distribution by Age for Rockingham County in 2009



Source: <https://edis.commerce.state.nc.us/docs/countyProfile/NC/37157.pdf>

As noted earlier, the low levels of educational attainment that exist in Rockingham County constitute another threat. In 2000, almost a third of the region’s adults age 25 and older had not completed high school. Local officials are making serious and concerted efforts to improve the education and skills of the local population, but it appears that many of the workers being educated locally are leaving the area to pursue careers elsewhere. This phenomenon, known as “brain drain,” can have a severe impact on a community if not recognized and addressed.

In Rockingham County, political infighting constitutes a major threat to future economic growth and development. While The Will of the People has been effective in opposing property tax reassessments and the

Horse Park of the South, many involved in economic development efforts express frustration with what they see as the group's blanket refusal to support public funding of infrastructure projects and even schools. One community leader stated that group members were mainly older people who would rather see schools decline and infrastructure collapse than support any public spending.

These concerns about Rockingham County's polity capital represent an ongoing challenge that must be addressed if the community is to be more competitive in the years ahead. The tension caused by government infighting and distrust of local government by significant elements of the community is certain to be apparent to companies who may be considering business development in Rockingham County. It may also be apparent to individuals and families contemplating a move to the area.

Much of the recent political conflict has centered on the Horse Park of the South. Infrastructure costs and the addition of a large arena have increased the park's price tag from the initial \$6.8 million to \$22 million. As the county has committed not to raise taxes to cover the cost of the park, finding capital to fund and maintain the park is a challenge.

Supporters of the horse park cite the success of similar facilities in Mississippi, South Carolina, Virginia and Kentucky.¹¹⁹ Opponents look at the financial challenges facing the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington,

¹¹⁹ <http://www.co.rockingham.nc.us/equestrian.htm>

Virginia. Katherine Truitt, executive director of the Virginia Horse Center, said “We have events every single weekend and we even have waiting lists, but we just can’t make ends meet. Our operations simply cannot cover our expenses.”¹²⁰ One of the key informants from the county was on a committee to evaluate the fiscal prospects for the Horse Park. He noted that the Lexington Park would have been profitable if it had not purchased a much larger property that was needed. He reported that the mortgage keeps the Lexington Park in the red while operating costs are in the black.

In addressing proponents’ claims that the Horse Park will bring out business for local merchants that extend past the equestrian industry, Katherine Truitt, executive director of the Virginia Horse Center, said, the 24-year-old Virginia horse park generated few related businesses, and that most park visitors shop at Wal-Mart, not locally-owned restaurants and shops.¹²¹ Truitt’s statement seemingly is contradicted by a study from the University of Virginia Center for Economic and Policy Studies. In 2004, according to this study, the Virginia Horse Center had a state-wide economic impact of \$53.3 million and a local economic impact of \$37.3 million while creating 700 jobs.

¹²⁰ http://www2.godanriver.com/news/2010/apr/17/horse_park_remains_hot_topic-ar-270019/

¹²¹ . http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/04/12/article/higher_cost_of_horse_park_angers_foes

Many local citizens, especially residents of Eden, are skeptical about the cost of the horse park. At the April 2010 Commissioners' meeting, shortly after the revised \$22 million cost of the park was released, citizens showed up, some booing and waving signs that read "\$\$Twenty-two Million" and "What part of no don't you understand?".¹²² Thomas Harrington of Eden told county commissioners that he fears they will try to raise taxes on residents if the center can't cover its expenses. "You can always spend this money later," Harrington told commissioners. "But you can't unspend it. So stop it."¹²³ The political division in the community over this issue is clearly a threat to the attractiveness of Rockingham County as a place to do business.

Summary and Conclusions

In this report, we have assessed Rockingham County's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats it faces in the knowledge-intensive and speed driven global economy of the 21st century. Our external, systematic assessment is designed to help Rockingham County officials develop a strategic vision to guide future economic growth and development.

¹²² http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/04/12/article/higher_cost_of_horse_park_angers_foes

¹²³ http://www.news-record.com/content/2010/01/25/article/increased_costs_put_horse_park_s_fate_in_jeopardy

Rockingham County has a long and proud history. The county's industrial base built a solid economy. However, the lack of industrial diversification left the county vulnerable to economic globalization. The loss of jobs in textiles, tobacco and other manufacturing severely weakened the local economy, and lack of diversification put the county in a weak position to compete effectively. The current economic crisis has further weakened the local tax base, heightened the exodus of young adults leaving for better opportunities elsewhere, and exacerbated already deep pessimism among the local citizenry about Rockingham County's future.

Rockingham County has major strengths upon which to build: a willing labor force, a core of committed leaders, strong physical assets including a beautiful environment, and its strategic location. The county also has significant weaknesses that must be addressed. While its' scores on the Human Development Index highlight stark deficits in health, education, and income, perhaps the greatest weakness is the persistence of sectionalism, which creates a negative image of the county in the economic development market place.

However, the planned upgrading of US 220 and US 29 to interstate highways, the development of industrial parks in or near the county, and the ability to leverage accessibility to the FedEx facility at the Piedmont Triad International Airport, to nurture new opportunities in local agriculture, and to grow ventures like the Horse Park of the South — all

constitute major opportunities for diversifying Rockingham County's economic base. Unfortunately, the failure to create a shared vision and a local culture that values population diversity and education, as well as political discord over public funding — all threaten Rockingham County's ability to take advantages of these opportunities.

If Rockingham County is to be globally competitive, substantially greater resources will have to be invested in education, health, and welfare issues, as well as in the rebuilding of the local physical capital asset base. Because prospective firms and residents increasingly are making locational decisions on the basis of quality of life issues, such investments will likely enhance the attractiveness of Rockingham County as a place to live and do business.

Our interviews with key informants in the community — a cross section of community leaders — began with the simple question: What does Rockingham County do well? Almost everyone paused, with many responding initially, "I'm not sure," "I don't know," or most pessimistically, "Nothing." But, in almost every interview, community leaders, upon reflection, began to give very specific detailed responses to what Rockingham County does well. Some contacted us a day or two after the interviews adding to their list.

Rockingham County has been in a difficult economic transition from the textile-tobacco economy to an as-yet-to-be determined economic future. The resilience of the people of Rockingham County, as

exemplified by the willingness of the community leaders to take a difficult look at the current circumstances, is the essential foundation of future economic growth and prosperity.

To propel the County forward, we offer the following six recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Develop strategies to rebrand Rockingham County as a sustainable community.

Leveraging an array of state and local financial incentives as well as investments in the region's education, training, and transportation infrastructure, local officials have experienced moderate success in recruiting new industry and retaining some of the long-standing major employers in Rockingham County. But this conventional approach to economic development has done little to eliminate either racial disparities that exist between the county's whites and non-whites or county-wide disparities in health and socio-economic well-being.

To be competitive in the years ahead, local officials must develop a shared vision for Rockingham County and move beyond the conventional approach to economic development, which focuses largely on industrial recruitment. We recommend that local officials seriously consider developing a common vision around the theme of sustainability and embrace business development and job creation strategies that fall under the broader rubric of *sustainable community economic development*.

Communities that embrace this broader approach take seriously not only the profit motive (i.e., recruiting companies that are capable of thriving and prospering locally) and environmental considerations (i.e., recruiting companies and supporting homegrown entrepreneurial ventures that create high tech and green jobs that do not adversely impact the natural environment), but also issues of social justice and equity (i.e., striving to build individual and community assets especially for the region's most disenfranchised elements). Few communities do sustainable community economic development well. But, if the political-will exists, ample tools and resources are available to pursue community economic development through a triple bottom line sustainability lens.

Recommendation #2: Embrace diversity and make talent recruitment a core element of the sustainable community economic development rebranding effort.

Local officials should augment efforts to recruit plants with strategies to recruit people who can help propel the region forward. Immigrants and homegrown talent that moved away and have done well should be the initial targets of this people-based recruitment strategy. Immigrants not only have a strong entrepreneurial orientation—much stronger than the native-born — they also can be a critical link in developing export marketing opportunities for locally produced goods and services in their home countries. For home grown talent with aging parents and grandparents in the region, now may be an opportune time

to consider returning home given that they will likely have elder care responsibilities. Some “home place” migration, as it is called, is already taking place in North Carolina. As with industrial recruitment, local officials should devise incentive packages for immigrants and home grown talent to return and use their creative talents and entrepreneurial acumen to develop viable businesses and sustainable jobs in Rockingham County.

Recommendation #3: Leverage the power, influence, and global reach of the World Wide Web to promote Rockingham County’s shared identity and brand in the economic development marketplace.

An effective web-based re-branding and marketing strategy will require all of Rockingham County’s websites to be better coordinated and linked with timely, consistent, and up to date information. Government, business, city, tourist, and economic development organizations--all need to come together to create a unified vision of and marketing strategy for Rockingham County that is consistent with the triple bottom line principles of sustainability.

Recommendation #4: Re-engineer K-20 education so that the system better equips the current and future workforce with the skills they will need to thrive and prosper in the highly volatile global economy of the 21st century.

In the years ahead, Rockingham County’s current and future workforce, including those who have either experienced economic dislocations or are at substantial risks of such dislocations, will have to

demonstrate greater entrepreneurial acumen, that is, “a ...willingness to take higher risks for higher rewards and the ability to be agile, resilient, tenacious, and decisive in responding to unanticipated crises and opportunities.”¹²⁴ The region’s entire K-20 education system will have to play a major role in nurturing and growing this local entrepreneurial acumen.

That is, Rockingham County’s education leaders must develop an appreciation of and demonstrate a major commitment to “intellectual entrepreneurship” and design initiatives that: (1) inspire students to become more entrepreneurial, (2) teach them how to be more entrepreneurial, (3) connect them with business and social entrepreneurs to learn directly and gain experience, and (4) create new attitudes, new knowledge, and new business and social ventures.”¹²⁵ Given that many of Rockingham County’s residents affected by economic dislocations will have to return to school to develop or fine tune their entrepreneurial skills, local higher education institutions must also pursue a variety of strategies and delivery mechanisms to address the entrepreneurial education needs of this population.

Creating a local entrepreneurial class and culture would partially reduce the region’s reliance on industrial recruitment as the primary economic development and job creation strategy. Under the leadership of Chancellor Holden Thorp, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

¹²⁴ Johnson and Kasarda, 2010, p. 28.

¹²⁵ Johnson and Kasarda, 2008, p. 29.

has created a strategic roadmap for such an entrepreneurial education and training program.¹²⁶

Recommendation #5: Nurture and grow the local elder care economy.

As Rockingham County’s population continues to age, a diverse array of age-appropriate products and services will be needed to serve the pre-boomers (born before 1945) and boomers (born between 1945 and 1964). Unlimited opportunities exist for entrepreneurs who might be interested in figuring out how to design, build, and/or renovate commercial and residential properties as well as package and label goods and services that cater to the needs, cultural preferences, and consumer purchasing behaviors of Rockingham County’s “greying” population. Local officials will have to create and/or recruit angel and venture capital networks whose investments can jumpstart, nurture, and grow commercially viable businesses in the elder care marketplace.

Recommendation #6: Aggressively pursue regional collaborations—with border counties in North Carolina and Virginia—as a core economic and employment growth strategy.

Piedmont Local Foods, the virtual farmers market covering Rockingham County and five other counties, is a concrete example of the economic development potential of such collaborations. The planned Mega-Center in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, north of Eden, constitutes

¹²⁶ Cherwitz, 2010).

an excellent opportunity for Rockingham County to engage in cross border collaboration. The FedEx Hub presents still other potential cross border collaborations with enormous economic development potential, especially up Highway 220 in the northern part of Rockingham County. And local officials also have an opportunity to capitalize on housing developments expanding north from Guilford County—a source of potential property tax revenue for Rockingham County.

Appendix A

Table A1: SWOT Results for Rockingham County, NC

1. Polity Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Online County Commissioner Meeting Minutes
- ❖ Local Chambers of Commerce
- ❖ Rockingham County Business & Technology Center
- ❖ Rockingham County Partnership for Economic & Tourism Development
- ❖ State & local commitment to attracting new industry to the area and helping them thrive
- ❖ Reidsville received “All American City” award in 2008

Weaknesses

- ❖ Fragmented Approach by Rockingham County and its incorporated towns to present themselves as One United Area
- ❖ Inconsistency and inaccuracy of online available information
- ❖ Online information not kept current and up to date
- ❖ Government fighting with citizens & civic groups
- ❖ Lack of Online County Services

Opportunities

- ❖ Present Cohesive and Unified Information on Rockingham County rather than on Individual Communities
- ❖ Development and Marketing of the Small Business Incubator

- ❖ Addition of Online County Services
- ❖ Public/Private Partnerships

Threats

- ❖ Lack of Diversified workforce
- ❖ Government / Citizen Tension
- ❖ Horse Park of the South

2. Physical Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Numerous Rivers and lakes and access to a wide variety of recreational activities
- ❖ Transportation access via road and rail access to Mid-Atlantic Markets and International Shipping Facilities
- ❖ Area location within a day's drive of 2/3rd of the Nation's Population
- ❖ Industrial Parks
- ❖ Available buildings and land for development
- ❖ Existence of Historic Buildings and Homes
- ❖ A General Aviation Airport and a small private airport which offer services for private and charter planes
- ❖ A public helipad
- ❖ Parks system, walking trails, farmers markets, etc.
- ❖ New jail
- ❖ Strong Agricultural presence allowing for such initiatives as Piedmont Foods & local farmers markets

Weaknesses

- ❖ Aging and inadequate physical infrastructure in some areas (water utilities and abandoned buildings)
- ❖ No Commercial Airport
- ❖ Other local unwanted land-uses (brownfields, abandoned buildings, etc.)
- ❖ Lack of available Broadband internet service to all county residents

Opportunities

- ❖ Capitalize on strategic location by positioning and marketing as a logistics and distribution hub
- ❖ Start of Commercial Air access to the Community
- ❖ Leverage existing low cost building and industrial sites
- ❖ Development of brownfield sites and adaptive reuse opportunities

Threats

- ❖ Inability to maintain some utilities
- ❖ Hospital potentially cutting services to account for increasing number of uninsured and underinsured patients
- ❖ Lack of available Broadband internet service to all county residents

3. Financial Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Close proximity to large racing communities and a strong local racing presence
- ❖ Community Financial Institutions including local bank branches
- ❖ The Rockingham County Partnership for Tourism & Development
- ❖ Lower cost of living as compared with National averages

- ❖ 2009-2010 increase in tourism revenue

Weaknesses

- ❖ Publically owned airport is not self-sustaining
- ❖ Lower Per Capita Personal Income for County Residents

Opportunities

- ❖ Improve access to credit
- ❖ Development of venture Capital Networks
- ❖ Development of Entrepreneurial culture to boost economy and create jobs
- ❖ Economic Development opportunities through such organizations as: One North Carolina Fund, Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) and grants through the US Department of Agriculture
- ❖ Downtown revitalization programs provided by such options as: Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Historic Rehabilitation Income Tax Credits, The New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC), Façade Grants, the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program, the Superfund Program and Brownfield Grants.
- ❖ Horse Park of the South
- ❖ 'Green' efforts such as Biz Fuel
- ❖ Strong Agricultural presence allowing for such initiatives as Piedmont Foods & local farmers markets
- ❖ Race To The Top Funds for school system
- ❖ Golden Leaf Foundation
- ❖ Racing Community

Threats

- ❖ Historic reliance on cyclical and declining industries
- ❖ Lack of diversity in current county industry sectors
- ❖ Economic Downturn
- ❖ State and Federal budget cuts
- ❖ Larger reliance on State and Federal funding for school budget
- ❖ More residents commuting out of county for work than work in the county
- ❖ Horse Park of the South

4. Human Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Tech Prep and Job Ready Programs available through Rockingham County Public Schools
- ❖ Rockingham Community College (RCC) & numerous higher education institutions within 90 miles of the Community
- ❖ Ability to earn Bachelor's degrees from the RCC Campus in either Early Childhood Education or Criminal Justice due to partnership with Greensboro College
- ❖ Rockingham County Business & Technology Center
- ❖ Goodwill Industries
- ❖ Dedicated and Trained Workforce
- ❖ Quality of Life
- ❖ 3 Chambers of Commerce located in the county
- ❖ Pre-school and School Programs such as: Smart Start Rockingham & Communities In Schools
- ❖ Early College High School

- ❖ Special Education Program
- ❖ High Teacher Retention Rates

Weaknesses

- ❖ Significantly lower levels of education
- ❖ Rockingham County K-12 education system
- ❖ Ability to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and school administrators
- ❖ Decline in Aggregate Employment across all Industry Sectors from 2002-2006
- ❖ Lack of any 4-year Post-Secondary Institutions in the County
- ❖ Higher Rates of Unemployment

Opportunities

- ❖ Technology and more training options for the community
- ❖ Promotion of Home Grown Entrepreneurism
- ❖ Increase educational attainment levels to create a skilled workforce
- ❖ North Carolina Main Street
- ❖ Entrepreneurial expansion of Career & Technical Education offerings
- ❖ The Workforce Investment Act

Threats

- ❖ Financial challenges of higher education institutions and most notably the decline in enrollment at Rockingham County Community College
- ❖ Lack of adequate number of health care professionals
- ❖ Inexperienced school principals

- ❖ Area 'Brain Drain'
- ❖ Higher Rates of Unemployment
- ❖ Loss of some local medical services due to fiscal strain placed on them from the large number of uninsured patients in the County
- ❖ General poor health of community children and adults
- ❖ Slow population growth for the county and an older population
- ❖ Potential loss in stimulus money to help support schools & cover budget shortfalls
- ❖ Gender discrimination and racial disparity in schools
- ❖ Increase in gang activity
- ❖ Decreasing public school enrollment

5. Cultural Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Chiqua-Penn Plantation
- ❖ Historic and Cultural Attractions such as 7 sites on the Civil War trail and National Historic Preservation sites
- ❖ Rockingham Theatre and the Theatre Guild of Rockingham County
- ❖ Eden Drive-In
- ❖ Numerous annual festivals and events
- ❖ Strong and active Arts community

Weaknesses

- ❖ High crime rate
- ❖ Racial tensions

Opportunities

- ❖ Residential expansions bringing in a more diverse population
- ❖ Downtown revitalization opportunities offered through such initiatives as: North Carolina Main Street, the Streetscape Program and the Façade Incentive Grant Program
- ❖ Cultural Center
- ❖ Expansion of Arts Community

Threats

- ❖ Gentrification
- ❖ Residential expansions bringing in a more diverse population which could cause racial tension

6. Social Capital

Strengths

- ❖ Numerous Faith-Based Organizations and Civic Organizations
- ❖ Betsy-Jeff Penn 4-H Educational Center
- ❖ Abundant recreational activities, including 17 public parks, numerous walking trails and 2 State parks which allow access to boating, camping, hiking, fishing, etc.
- ❖ Local Wineries
- ❖ 10 Golf Clubs
- ❖ A variety of Country Club options
- ❖ Chinqua-Penn Plantation
- ❖ Farmers Market
- ❖ Market Square

Weaknesses

- ❖ Lack of Community Center(s) for Youth & Seniors
- ❖ Lack of meeting and event facilities

Opportunities

- ❖ Community resources and leadership from colleges and universities
- ❖ More development of programs focused on diversity
- ❖ Community Center(s) for Youth & Seniors

Threats

- ❖ Racial tensions in the community
- ❖ Decrease in funding for parks and recreation programs