



NEWTON

BRILLIANT LEGACY + BRIGHT FUTURE



Economic Development Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

Newton is making strategic investments in placemaking as a strategy to attract new investments, citizens, and visitors. Phase 1 of the Downtown Streetscape and Utility Rehabilitation Project transformed a part of downtown. More improvements like this are on the way. Investments like the downtown streetscape plan are important because people and companies invest in communities that invest in themselves.

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

The strategic planning process included community engagement, SWOT Analysis, and economic and demographic research. An asset-based approach to strategic planning was used, building goals, strategies, and action steps around Newton's assets and future opportunities. Newton's strengths include education, recreation, location, performing and visual arts, and downtown. The city's challenges include housing, slow population growth, lack of quality job growth, and dilapidated housing and buildings. The city is working to capture opportunities to draw people into downtown, improve housing development, increase tourism, and expand recreation. Many of the threats identified are common to small towns. Most importantly, Newton does not want to lose its identity.

Goals of the economic development plan build upon strengths and capture opportunities. They also address weakness and mitigate threats. Newton's goals are centered around business development, investing in infrastructure and amenities, placemaking, and marketing.

- ◎ Thriving Businesses and Entrepreneurs
- ◎ Infrastructure to Support Economic Growth
- ◎ Inventory of Business Space for New and Expanding Businesses
- ◎ A Vibrant Downtown
- ◎ Amenities that will Attract Residents and Tourists
- ◎ Market Newton as a Choice Location for Business, People, and Tourists

We have seen firsthand the progressive thinking in Newton, evidenced by investing in downtown. City leaders are committed to ensuring the community not only grows, but grows in a way that maintains the small-town quality of life residents enjoy. City Council can be confident that the citizens of Newton are supportive of these investments. They showed support for new and existing business development, infrastructure, downtown, and amenities during this study process. It will take citizens, public officials, private leaders, and the nonprofit community all collaborating to ensure Newton has a positive growth trajectory.

Economic Development Strategic Plan

The Newton community ranked supporting new and existing businesses and entrepreneurial start-ups as the number one goal of the economic development program. Citizens want to see new businesses in downtown, places for people to work, and revitalized and redeveloped business corridors. In order to lay the foundation for growth, the community wisely selected infrastructure as the number two priority. Maintaining, improving, and expanding infrastructure is a primary function of local governments and a critical need for business growth. Spaces for businesses to grow, a vibrant downtown, amenities, and marketing are other goals ranked in the economic development program.

Within each goal, citizens ranked priority projects and initiatives. The Hwy 16 corridor should be a development focus of the city, along with downtown. Citizens want the city to facilitate housing development and invest in appearance and beautification. They also want the city to maintain a high level of communications, as was done during the streetscape improvement project. In all, citizens support the city's efforts to invest in projects that spur development and redevelopment.

Newton leaders have proven to be forward-thinking, as evidenced by the Downtown Streetscape and Utility Rehabilitation Project. This strategic plan continues to look ahead, laying the foundation to attract more businesses, citizens, and visitors to the city.

Economic Development Goals

- ◎ Thriving Businesses and Entrepreneurs
- ◎ Infrastructure to Support Economic Growth
- ◎ Inventory of Business Space for New and Expanding Businesses
- ◎ A Vibrant Downtown
- ◎ Amenities that will Attract Residents and Tourists
- ◎ Market Newton as a Choice Location for Business, People, and Tourists



Goal: Thriving Businesses and Entrepreneurs

Strategy: Support new and existing small businesses and entrepreneurial startups

Action Steps:

- ◎ Name a city staff person to serve as the Small Business Liaison. The Liaison will be the point of contact for small business and entrepreneur inquiries to the city, guide the business owner/entrepreneur through the regulatory process, and connect him/her with business resources.
 - Inform Catawba EDC and other partner agencies of the Liaison so the office can make small business and entrepreneur referrals to the city.
 - Train city staff to send all business inquiries to the Liaison as the single-point-of-contact.
 - See the City of Columbus, OH, Small Business Concierge <https://www.columbus.gov/Small-Business/About-Your-Concierge/> as an example program.
- ◎ Using data from the retail leakage report in the appendix, fill in the retail gaps. There are gaps in building materials, garden equipment, shoes, office supplies, sporting goods, and others. There are also gaps in special food restaurants. The information can be used to counsel existing small businesses on areas of inventory expansion and to counsel new business start-ups.
 - Share the information with the Small Business Center at Catawba Valley Community College to share with their customers.
 - Explore the Economic Gardening <https://www.nationalcentreg.org/> concept as a roadmap for how the Liaison can assist businesses. The concept uses research and market data to help companies expand and grow.
 - The Business Advisory Committee can use the information when working with business owners – businesses can expand their inventory to capture leakage.
- ◎ Continue to support ag-related businesses.
 - Include value-added farm products and agri-tourism in the starter kits described on the next page.
 - Include information on the city's website about farm related tourism.

- Promote “agrihood” developments, housing developments centered around community gardens.
- ◎ Seek to establish a microloan program administered by the Business Advisory Committee.
 - Focus on microloans (as little as \$1,000), since there are other loan programs in the region that fund larger projects. As an example, Yadkin County has a successful microloan program that has supported small business start-ups that have grown over time.
 - Mountain BizWorks <https://www.mountainbizworks.org/> has model lending programs and can be a resource.
 - Some organizations seed the loan program with a grant. USDA Rural Development has provided grants in the past.
- ◎ Commit to completing the One-Stop Permitting Process recommended in the 2015 Strategic Growth Plan. See the Chatham County model, which includes a technical review team approach to streamlining the permitting process.
- ◎ Encourage the development of business space for start-ups and solo entrepreneurs.
 - Explore if the Newton Library Branch could be a partner in providing co-work space.
 - Explore if county office buildings in Newton have excess space that could be turned into co-work stations.
- ◎ Market and promote Newton as a small business start-up location.
 - Place “starter-kits” on the website, such as how to start a restaurant, food truck, hair salon, and other popular businesses.
 - Include in the starter kit connections to local training programs for employees and support (example: culinary program for restaurants).
 - Use the Valdese “6 Steps to Doing Business in Valdese” marketing flyer as a template for a general information piece on starting a business in Newton. This is an overview to supplement the detailed information on the “Opening a Business in Newton” information. Post on the website.
- ◎ Incorporate succession planning into the services provided by the Business Advisory Committee.
 - Organize a cadre from the Business Advisory Committee with expertise in management and business planning to serve as mentors to business owners. Survey business owners to inventory who is less than five years from retirement and target them for succession planning support. See this blog for statewide resources: <http://www.creativeedc.com/succession-planning-as-a-bre-tool/>.
 - Utilize the Small Business Technology Development Center to offer seminars on succession planning.
- ◎ Promote the business cooperative ownership model to groups with limited capital interested in starting a business. Burlington Beer Works is a well-known cooperative in Burlington, NC, that started a brewery and restaurant in downtown Burlington as a catalyst for redevelopment.

Strategy: Leverage Catawba County EDC resources for industrial development

Action Steps:

- ◎ Support the EDC’s Existing Business Retention and Expansion program by:
 - Participating in industry visits when appropriate.
 - Sharing utility usage information to aid in identifying at-risk companies.

- Participate in industry appreciate events.
- ☉ Define Newton's value proposition for Catawba County's target sectors: Auto Parts Manufacturing, Food Processing, Advanced Textiles, Data Centers, and International Firms. Value proposition assets discovered during this planning process include:
 - Semi-skilled workforce
 - Access via Hwy 16 to Charlotte and I-85
 - International diversity of population
- ☉ See recommendations below on working with the EDC to develop industrial sites and buildings.



Goal: Infrastructure to Support Economic Growth

Strategy: Invest in infrastructure to support economic growth (water, sewer, electricity, telecommunications, roads)

Action Steps:

- ☉ Continue the Downtown Streetscape and Utility Rehabilitation Project, implementing phases 2 - 5. Phase 1 was funded directly by the city budget. If needed, fund phases 2-5 with a bond referendum as the City of Sanford did. Sanford included downtown streetscape, facilities, and a wide range of quality of life amenities.
- ☉ Complete the Hwy 16 waterline project. This will allow for business growth along the citizen-ranked top priority corridor for development.
- ☉ Continue to invest in water and wastewater treatment plant upgrades to ensure Newton has sufficient capacity for the future.

- ◎ The Newton Streetscape Master Plan & North Newton Master Plan recommends improvements to NC 16/NC 10 to make it easier for people to live in Newton and commute to the Charlotte area. This would be with support from NC DOT.
- ◎ The Hwy 16 corridor was ranked as the highest priority for city development/redevelopment efforts.
 - In cooperation with the county, develop a gateway enhancement plan at the Hwy 16/Bus 16/Dale Earnhardt intersection.
 - Develop a wayfinding signage plan along Hwy 16 inside and outside the city, in cooperation with the county, directing traffic to services in Newton.



Goal: Inventory of Business Space for New and Expanding Businesses

Strategy: Facilitate the development of space for new and expanding businesses in downtown, along commercial corridors, and in industrial areas

Action Steps:

- ◎ The Hwy 16 corridor was ranked as the highest priority for city development/redevelopment efforts.
 - Create an overlay district with specific incentives for vacant building revitalization, beautification, and overall investment. See Asheville's Innovation Districts as an example.
- ◎ With support from Catawba County EDC, identify and rank potential industrial development sites in the city.
 - Create a due diligence plan to assess the development potential of the sites. For those sites that meet eligibility criteria, submit for the ElectriCities' Smart Sites qualification program and then on to the NC Dept. of Commerce Certified Sites Program.
 - Create a conceptual development plan and calculate economic impact (ROI) to determine how much the city should invest in development.

- ◎ Be a strong partner in the county spec building development program. Catawba County EDC has successfully facilitated the development of several spec buildings. Support a spec building in Newton in a similar partnership as the others have been developed.
- ◎ Bus 321 and Hwy 70 were ranked lower priorities for redevelopment by citizens; however, inventory vacant and available commercial space in corridors and keep information updated on the website.



Goal: A Vibrant Downtown

Strategy: Downtown revitalization through redevelopment, infill development, events, and promotion

Action Steps:

- ◎ New business recruitment and development was the #1 priority of citizens in downtown development. Utilize city incentive tools to support business growth.
 - Continue the city façade program.
 - Consider adding other incentive programs that encourage specific, desired investments. Examples include:
 - Columbia, SC, Vacant Building Redevelopment Grant – a matching grant for the redevelopment of vacant buildings
 - Wilson, NC, Pedestrian-Oriented Rent Subsidy – a rent subsidy for downtown businesses that generate foot traffic (note the program was successful for many years but is currently suspended)
 - Hickory has a package of redevelopment grants which includes a matching landscape grant.

- ⦿ Proactively recruit infill retail based on the retail leakage study. Use the information to market to retail establishments in neighboring markets to open a second location in Newton.
- ⦿ Expand the Downtown Streetscape and Utility Rehabilitation Project (#3 priority on citizen survey) to incorporate a larger area of the downtown. The first phase of redevelopment has been very successful and supported by the community.
- ⦿ Residential development is a priority for downtown development. It is addressed below.
- ⦿ Combat blight with code enforcement, supporting the Appearance Commission, and demolition of derelict properties. Community Development Block Grant funds can be used for demolition. Review the City of Shelby policy of funding demolition in each budget year, tackling blight on a consistent basis.
- ⦿ Activate downtown spaces by continuing to hold city events in spaces like the new amphitheater.
- ⦿ Parking was mentioned several times in the citizen survey. If the city hasn't completed a parking study recently, put one on the planning agenda. It is often not a case of too little parking; rather, it is often the case of poor signage directing people to parking. In addition to signage, cities are investing in lighting and safety features to ensure people are comfortable parking off-street, like behind buildings.
 - Consider second floor residential in a review of downtown parking needs.



Goal: Amenities that will Attract Residents and Tourists

Strategy: Invest in amenities, beautification, gateways, and projects that will enhance the community to attract residents and tourists

Action Steps:

- ◎ Overall appearance and beautification were rated as the most important quality of life amenity. Continue to support the work of the Appearance Commission and Code Enforcement.
- ◎ Facilitate a wide range of housing development options. Housing is noted as a critical need by employers trying to recruit new employees to Catawba County. 70% report having had recent issues recruiting and retaining employees due to housing. There are housing needs in multi-family, senior, and single-family.
 - Consider lower tap and other city fees for infill residential development where the city has already made an investment in infrastructure.
 - Explore city investments in infrastructure (road extensions, sidewalks) that will encourage residential development.
 - Investigate adopting a similar incentive program as Morganton's Downtown Housing Improvement Program.
 - Recruit developers who have completed residential projects in the region.
- ◎ Noted above, but important to re-emphasize, is the expansion of the Downtown Streetscape and Utility Rehabilitation Project. It is a key component of the amenities package for Newton to attract housing.
- ◎ Beautify gateways and entrances to the city and seek to develop a visitor center.
 - Seek a partner to develop a visitor center. It could be housed as a satellite chamber of commerce, in the rail museum, inside a small business in downtown, inside the Old Post Office Playhouse, or as a partnership with a nonprofit.
 - Some of the gateway projects should be done in conjunction with the county. Garden clubs and horticulture high school and community college programs could be good partners for design and installation of landscaping.

- ⦿ Incorporate connectivity of greenways, bike trails, and walking paths into the capital improvement plan.
- ⦿ Look for a recreation grant and/or nonprofit partner to participate in the development of a dog park.
- ⦿ Seek a private partner for an RV park development. The city could invest in infrastructure to the site as an inducement. A company with an existing RV park in the region would be a good target.
- ⦿ Seek the Certified Retirement Community designation as a marketing tool.
- ⦿ Activate cultural arts spaces in the city by holding meetings and events in venues such as the Old Post Office Playhouse.
- ⦿ Continue to support the Newton Public Art Commission and projects like the Newton Art for the Public.
 - Expand to include a mural grant program, matching the cost of murals up to a specific amount (similar to façade grants).
 - Consider developing an art “theme” for Newton, like the painted pigs in Lexington or the Hokie birds of Blacksburg, VA. Visuals such as these helps define a brand and image for a city.



Goal: Market Newton as a Choice Location for Business, People, and Tourists

Strategy: Use internal and external marketing strategies to promote Newton

Action Steps:

- ⦿ Update the city website with an economic development page including information on incentives, marketing messages, and progress on the strategic plan.

- Make the drop-down menu under “Business” consistent with the sidebar menu. For example, “Commercial Development” only appears under the sidebar menu but has good information. Move “Opening a Business in Newton” to the main menu drop-down as it has key information.
- Place information on incentives and grant programs on the website.
- Connect to the Catawba County EDC, as that website has a wealth of industrial development information.
- Create marketing flyers for the most marketable commercial/industrial and data center/business parks and post on the website as links on the “Available Properties” page.
 - Break apart retail and commercial spaces from industrial spaces listed.
 - For those properties without a marketing flyer, add some details like square footage and ceiling height.
- Create a basic marketing brief on why a business should consider locating in Newton and post on the “Business” part of the website.
- Add a few business testimonial videos to the “Made in Newton” page.
- Add a statement at the top of the “Fees and Charges” page listing the Small Business Liaison contact.
- ◎ Internal Marketing and Public Relations
 - The city has a Public Information Officer but would benefit from a Marketing and Communications staff position to:
 - Push out marketing messages
 - Connect with and leverage county tourism and economic development marketing programs, events, and messaging.
 - Add a calendar of events to the city website, include events in and around Newton to encourage visitors to day-trip and stay-overnight in Newton.
 - Continue the quarterly mailed newsletter.
 - Citizens say they want communications via social media (#1), city website (#2), and traditional newspaper and news media (#3).
- ◎ Social Media was the #1 answer, by far, to the question about how citizens learn of events, news, and happenings.
 - Facebook and Twitter are current and regularly posted. Instagram is linked to the city’s webpage but needs postings. This is a great way to reach potential tourists and visitors.
 - There are several Newton videos on the YouTube channel linked to the city’s website, but the videos are not directly posted to the website. To increase views, place video links on appropriate pages on the website.
- ◎ Leverage a partnership with Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority.
 - Compile Newton tourism assets as a package and promote daytrip and stay-over itineraries. This could happen under a sub-committee of the Business Advisory Committee focused on tourism and promotion.
 - Target convention groups coming to Hickory with specific Newton information packages.

Implementation Guide

The strategic plan is designed to be implemented over several years. Low-hanging fruit was slotted for Year 1 implementation. Mid-range and longer terms action steps are targeted for Years 2 – 5. We recommend pulling a few action items each year from the plan for integration into the city work plan.

1

- Small Business Liaison
- Use Retail Leakage to develop new businesses
- Support ag-related businesses
- Business space development
- Business starter kits
- Support EDC BRE Program
- Define manufacturing value proposition and communicate
- With EDC, rank industrial sites
- County partnership on spec building
- Continue Downtown Streetscape and Utility Rehab. Program
- Facilitate housing development
- Investigate Certified Retirement Community
- Continue support of public art
- Continue to invest in water and wastewater upgrades
- Maintain social media platforms

2-3

- Use Retail Leakage to develop new businesses
- Microloan program
- One-Stop Permitting
- Business space development
- BAC as mentors
- Support EDC BRE Program
- Special incentives for Hwy 16 corridor
- Expand downtown incentives
- Continue Downtown Streetscape and Utility Rehab. Program
- Review parking in downtown & for second-floor residential
- Facilitate housing development
- Beautify gateways
- Continue trail connectivity
- Seek grant for a dog park
- Continue support of public art
- Complete Hwy 16 waterline project
- Continue to invest in water and wastewater upgrades
- Update website
- Add city marketing and communications position
- Leverage regional tourism agency
- Maintain social media platforms

4-5

- Use Retail Leakage to develop new businesses
- Business space development
- BAC as mentors
- Support EDC BRE Program
- Continue Downtown Streetscape and Utility Rehab. Program
- Facilitate housing development
- Continue trail connectivity
- Seek RV park partner
- Continue support of public art
- Continue to invest in water and wastewater upgrades
- NC 16/10 improvements
- Leverage regional tourism agency
- Maintain social media platforms

Appendix A: SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis is the foundational building block of an asset-based approach to economic development. The SWOT for Newton was developed with input from the Newton Business Advisory Committee, citizens, staff, and consultant assessments. Newton has many assets to leverage. It is a progressive town that is a good place to raise a family. Newton has a wealth of arts and cultural facilities, programs, and organizations. Like many cities, it is struggling with housing and amenity development to attract and retain residents. Dilapidated buildings and housing have spurred the discussion about beautification and investments in appearance. There are many opportunities in the areas of tourism, redevelopment, entertainment, recreation, and housing. Threats that could stall economic progress are common to most cities the size of Newton – loss of large employers and utility customers, being outpaced by other communities, and inability to use annexation for growth. Newton wants to ensure that it maintains its wonderful identity as it grows. The strategic plan aligns with that goal.

Strengths

- Progressive small town
- Good place to raise a family
- Education
- Strong parks and recreation programs
- Strategic location
- Community involvement
- Niche for performing and visual arts
- Accredited Main Street Program

Weaknesses

- Experience and qualifications of workforce
- Affordable housing, subdivisions, more infill
- Utility cost perception
- Stagnate population growth
- Amenities
- Jobs to attract young people
- Financial capacity for public investments
- Number of households in poverty
- Absentee landlords and housing owners

Opportunities

- Multiple entertainment destinations
- Grow arts and arts council programs, events
- Cultural programs to attract families with children
- Tour packages-historic, church architecture, wine, and home tours
- Expand city owned parks and recreation and trail connectivity
- Brownfields planning grant
- Multiuse complex, live, work, play model
- Gateway on Hwy 16
- Development along Hwy 16 – business and residential uses
- Sports complex – ball sports, skating, aquatics

Threats

- Annexation laws
- Loss of large utility customers
- Loss of large employers
- Negativity
- Loss of positive political will
- Investments by other cities outpacing Newton
- Losing identity as the city grows

Strengths

- Progressive small town
- Good place to raise a family
- Education-best public system in Catawba County
- Strong parks and recreation programs
- Strategic location – Charlotte airport, Hwy 16, Interstates 40, 77, and 85, near entertainment areas (Asheville, Winston-Salem, Boone)
- Community involvement, spirit of collaboration to make a difference
- Niche for performing and visual arts
- Accredited Main Street Program
- Charm, history, visual appeal, cool old buildings
- Low crime
- Good city staff and leadership, aligned vision, a political will to grow
- Business friendly, streamlined regulatory process
- Great water resources
- Strategic vision
- In process of redeveloping downtown
- Walkable
- Making infrastructure investments
- City owns utilities
- Railroad authority and depot facility
- Library
- Second level residential development
- Momentum of revitalization
- Retirement community
- Foothills Folk Art Festival
- Success with grants
- Civic organizations
- Churches
- Reunion Week
- The Green Room Community Theater
- United Arts Council of Catawba County
- Catawba Valley Community College, Furniture Academy
- County seat, courthouse location
- Opportunity Zone

Weaknesses

- Experience and qualifications of workforce
- Affordable housing, need subdivisions, more infill
 - #1 out of 15 MSA's in the state in old housing stock, #15 in housing starts
- Utility cost perception
- Stagnate population growth
- Amenities
- Jobs to attract young people
- Financial capacity for public projects/investments
- Number of households in poverty
- Absentee landlords and housing owners of deteriorating, vacant downtown buildings and houses

- Roads
- Water customers
- Private investment in the community
- Loss of high school graduates
- Older, aging population

Opportunities

- Multiple entertainment destinations available
- Grow arts and arts council programs, events, and programming to activate spaces in downtown
- Cultural programs to attract families with children
- Tour packages-historic, church architecture, wine, and home tours
- Expand city-owned parks and recreation and trail connectivity
- Brownfields planning grant
- Multiuse complex, such as Birkdale's live, work, play model
- Gateway of Hwy 16 with signage to pull travelers into the city
- Development along Hwy 16 – business and residential uses
- Re-engage Catawba Valley Community College
- Sports complex – ball sports, skating, aquatics
- Lodging
- Unique restaurants

Threats

- Annexation laws in North Carolina
- Loss of large utility customers
- Loss of large employers
- Negativity
- Loss of positive political will to grow
- Investments by other cities outpacing Newton

- Lack of building sites for business
- Everyone not on board with growth
- Sidewalks
- Overcoming stagnancy
- More internet/telecommunications options

- Develop agriculture sectors such as farm-to-table
- Leverage K-64 program and Catawba Valley Community College
- Downtown building renovation
- Convention center
- The Depot as a destination
- Mixed-use development at IGA location - condos, restaurants, etc.
- Splash pad
- Grocery store
- Uber
- National recognition
- Christmas market destination
- Educating the public on strategic growth
- Engage international community through events

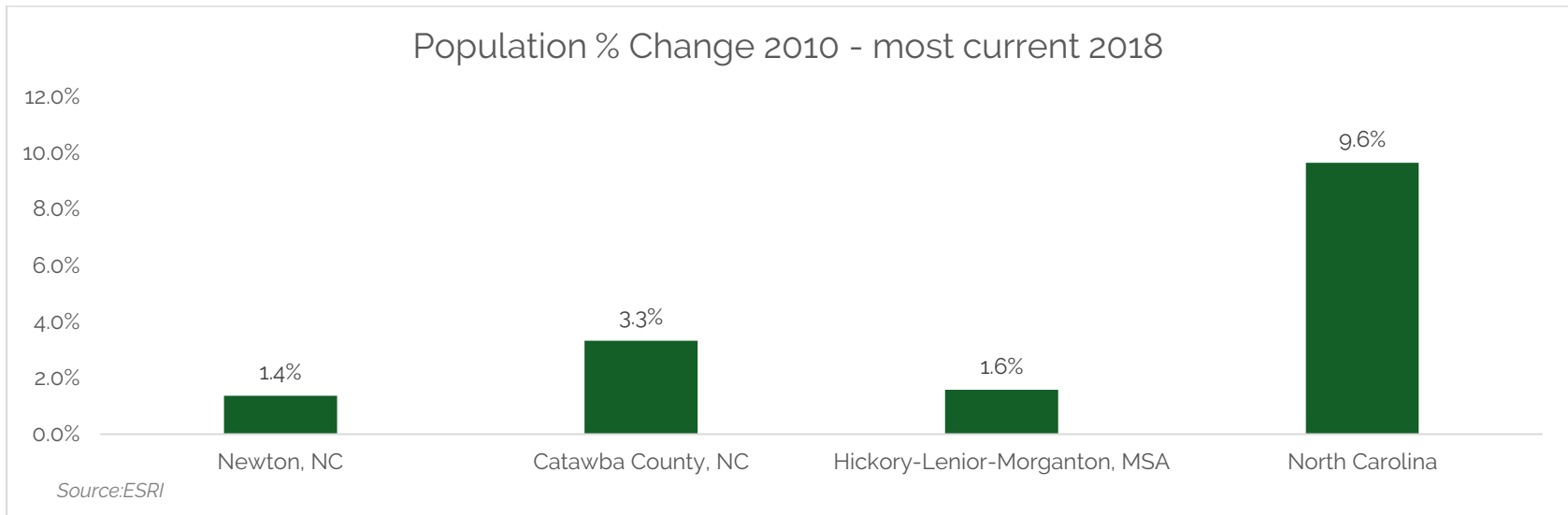
- Losing identity as the city grows
- Another recession
- Lack of control of Reunion Week and overshadowed by political issues
- Legislative changes negatively impacting business and/or the city
- Too much debt

Appendix B: Economic and Demographic Profile

Economic and demographic data show one picture of how Newton is changing. Benchmarking Newton with Catawba County, the Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area, and North Carolina gives context to the data and trends. The Economic Development Strategic Plan address weaknesses found in the research: slow population growth, low quality housing stock, and lagging income levels. It also capitalizes on the strengths uncovered in the data: semi-skilled workforce, concentration in manufacturing, strong small business base, growing tourism economy, and a diverse population.

Summary

- ⦿ Population growth was 1.4% in 2010-2018, slower than the county, region, and state.
- ⦿ Newton has more people under the age of 44, as a percent of population, than the county and region.
- ⦿ The diversity index, 58.8, is higher in Newton. The city is more racially and ethnically diverse than the county and region.
- ⦿ The city has a concentration of semi-skilled workers, denoted by the higher percentage with an associate's degree.
- ⦿ Newton-Conover Schools outperformed the county and Hickory schools in 2018.
- ⦿ Income levels lag all benchmark geographies. Per capita income is \$21,204 and median household income is at \$38,162.
- ⦿ Home values are low in Newton, \$123,953. It is likely an indication of lower quality housing stock.
- ⦿ The Catawba County labor force is growing, and unemployment is declining.
- ⦿ Manufacturing is the largest employment sector in the county and has an average weekly wage of \$881.92. The largest wage sector is Utilities. Other large employment sectors are Health Care and Social Assistance, Accommodation and Food Services, and Administration and Waste Services.
- ⦿ Retail sales remained strong 2017-2018 and are at \$2.4M.
- ⦿ Travel and tourism indicators are all up: employment, payroll, and travel expenditures.
- ⦿ Newton citizens enjoy shorter commute times than the average for Catawba County and the state.
- ⦿ Almost 80% of businesses in Catawba County employ less than 10 people.



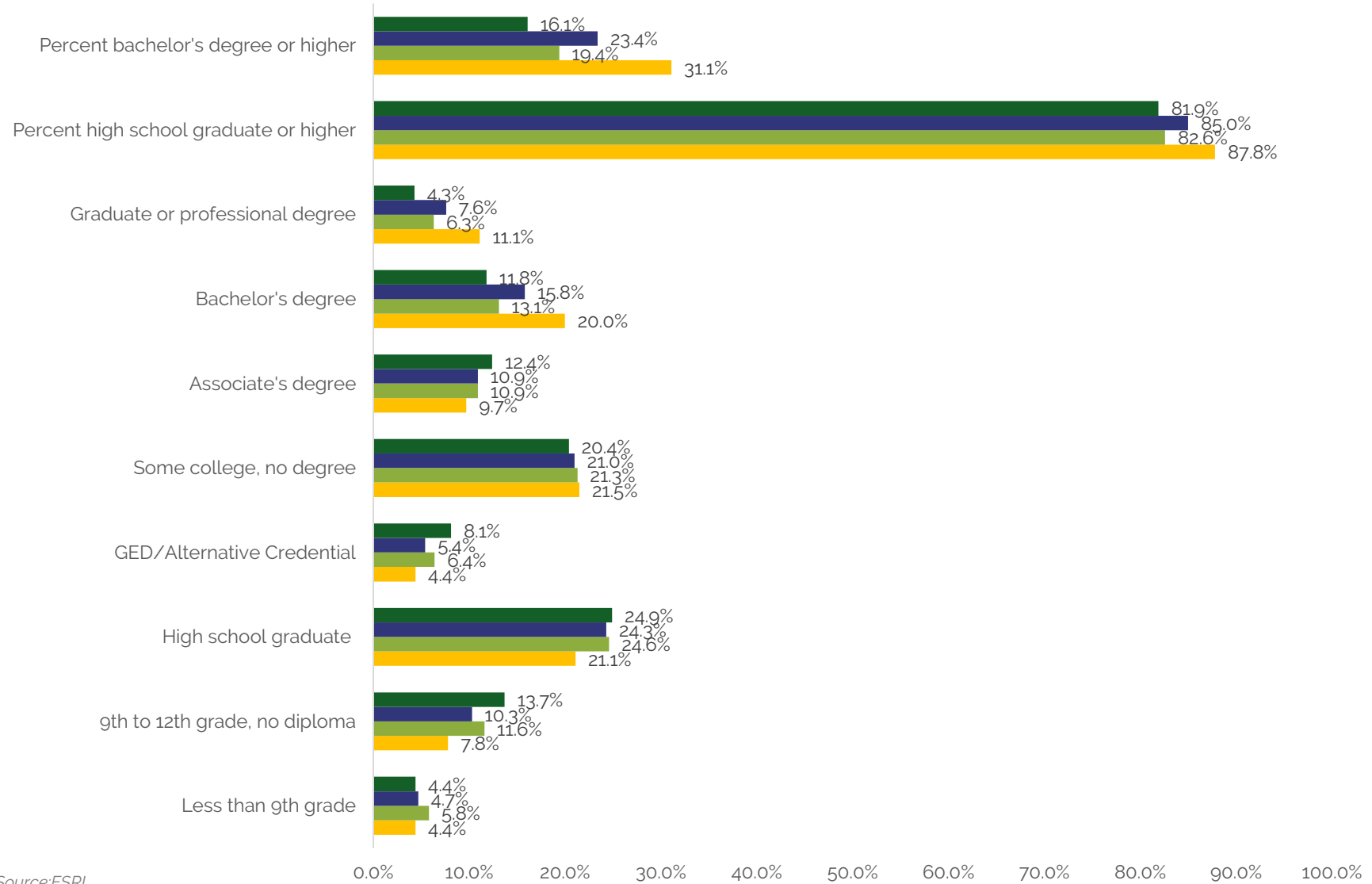
Population	2010	2018	2023	% Change 2010 - most current 2018
Newton, NC	12,968	13,145	13,332	1.4%
Catawba County, NC	154,358	159,483	163,434	3.3%
Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton, MSA	365,497	371,246	376,486	1.6%
North Carolina	9,535,483	10,455,604	11,061,202	9.6%
Source: ESRI				

Age		2018			2023	
Age Groups	Newton, NC	Catawba County, NC	H/L/M MSA	North Carolina	Newton, NC	Catawba County, NC
Total population	13,144	159,483	371,246	10,455,604	13,332	163,434
Under 5 years	6.5%	5.7%	5.4%	6.0%	6.3%	5.5%
5 to 9 years	6.5%	6.1%	5.8%	6.2%	6.4%	5.9%
10 to 14 years	6.4%	6.3%	6.0%	6.3%	6.5%	6.3%
15 to 24 years	11.9%	11.7%	11.5%	13.1%	11.8%	11.4%
25 to 34 years	12.9%	12.1%	12.1%	13.4%	12.4%	11.6%
35 to 44 years	12.8%	12.6%	12.4%	12.8%	12.7%	12.5%
45 to 54 years	13.1%	14.0%	14.1%	13.1%	12.5%	13.1%
55 to 64 years	13.0%	14.1%	14.4%	13.0%	12.7%	13.9%
65 to 74 years	9.9%	10.6%	11.2%	9.7%	11.1%	11.6%
75 to 84 years	4.8%	4.9%	5.3%	4.5%	5.4%	6.1%
85 years and over	2.3%	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%	2.1%	2.0%
Median Age	39.5	41.5	42.5	38.7	40.1	42.5
Source: ESRI						

Race		2018			2023	
	Newton, NC	Catawba County, NC	H/L/M MSA	North Carolina	Newton, NC	Catawba County, NC
White Alone	72.4%	79.4%	83.5%	66.4%	70.1%	77.5%
Black Alone	13.4%	8.7%	6.8%	21.7%	13.6%	8.8%
American Indian Alone	0%	0%	0%	1.3%	0%	0%
Asian Alone	4.2%	4.4%	3.1%	3.0%	4.8%	5.0%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	6.7%	4.8%	4.0%	4.9%	7.8%	5.6%
Two or More Races	2.9%	2.3%	2.1%	2.6%	3.3%	2.6%
Hispanic Origin	14.1%	9.9%	7.6%	9.5%	16.1%	11.2%
Diversity Index	58.8	47.4	39.6	59.6	62.6	51.1
Source: ESRI						

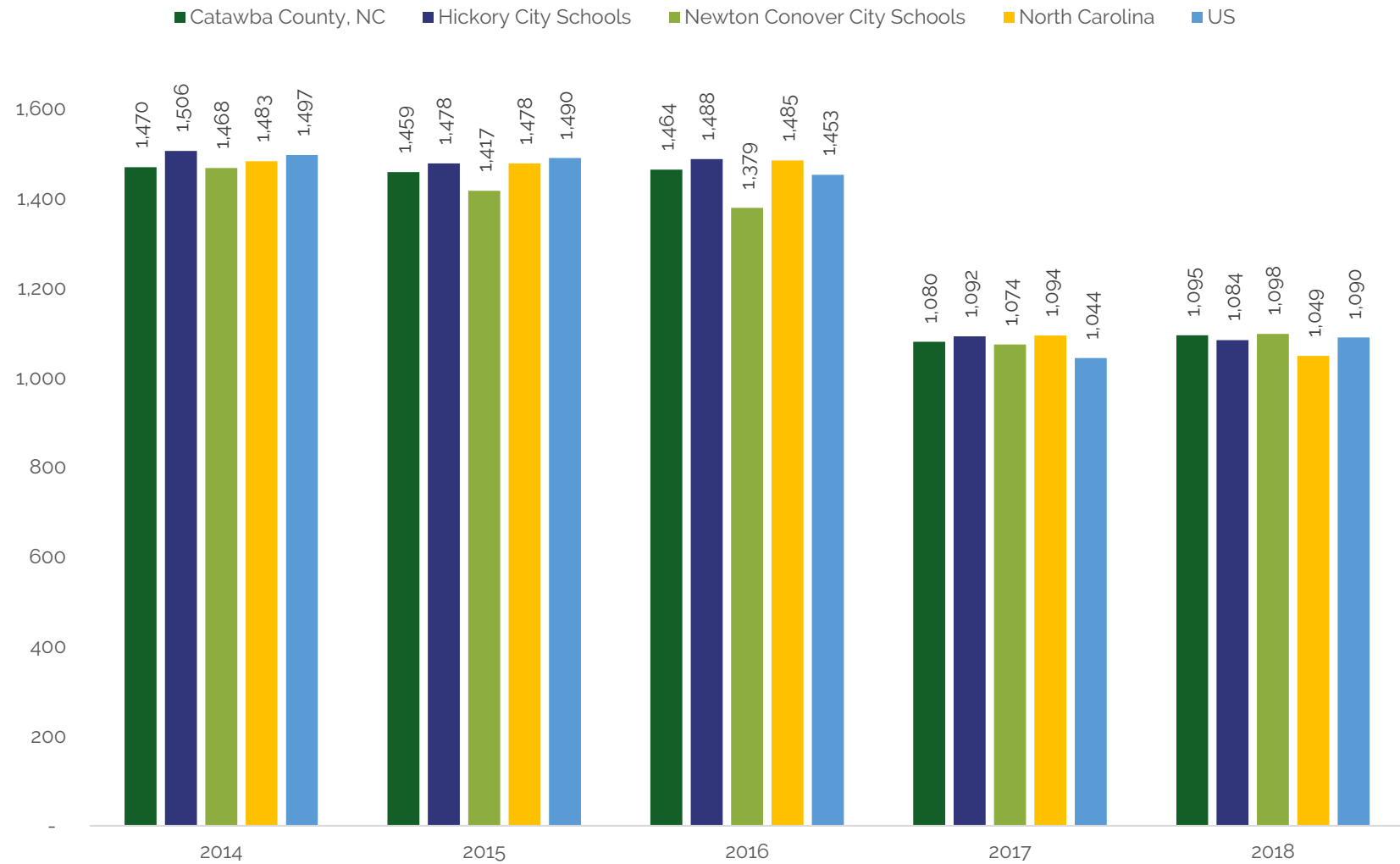
2018 Educational Attainment

■ Newton, NC ■ Catawba County, NC ■ Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA ■ North Carolina

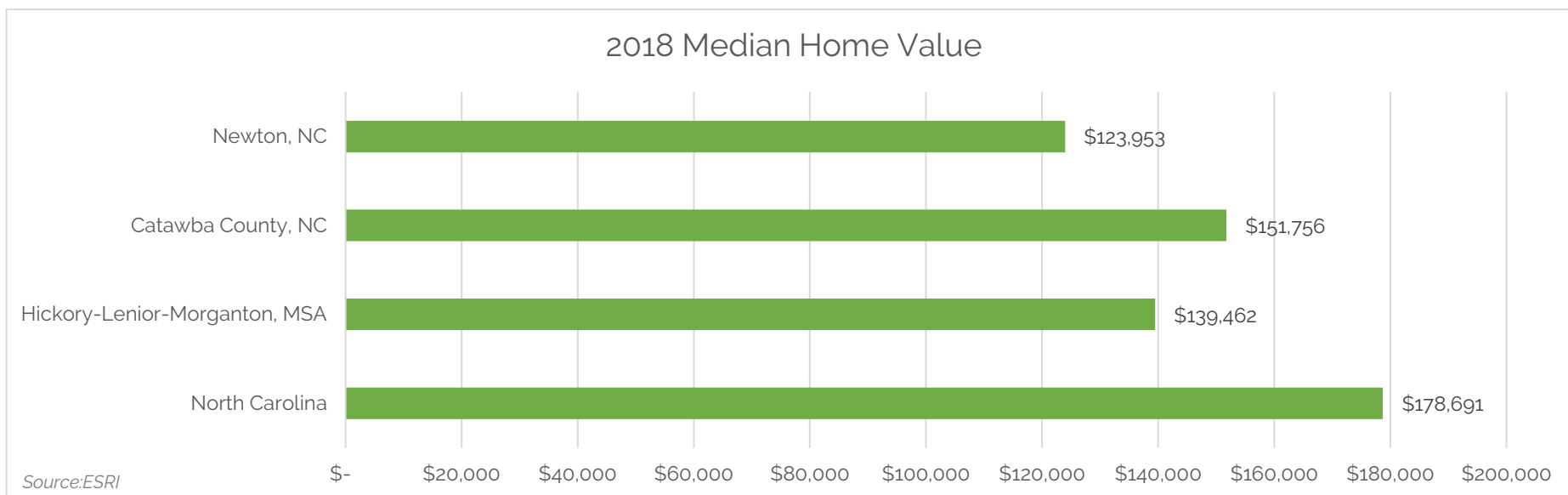
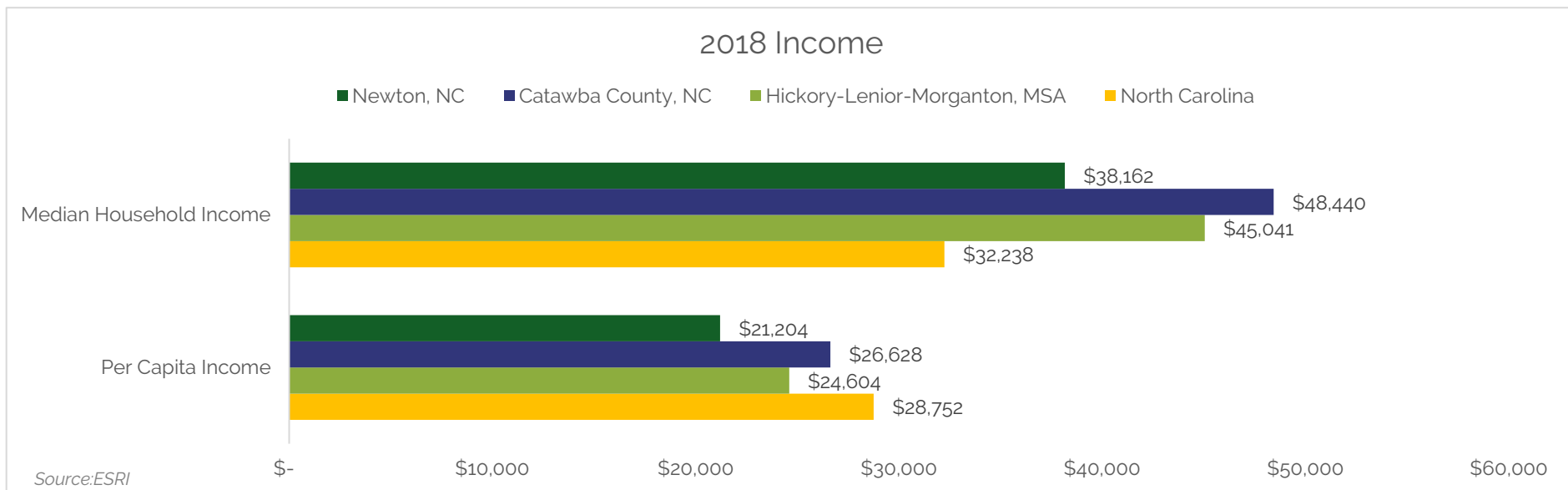


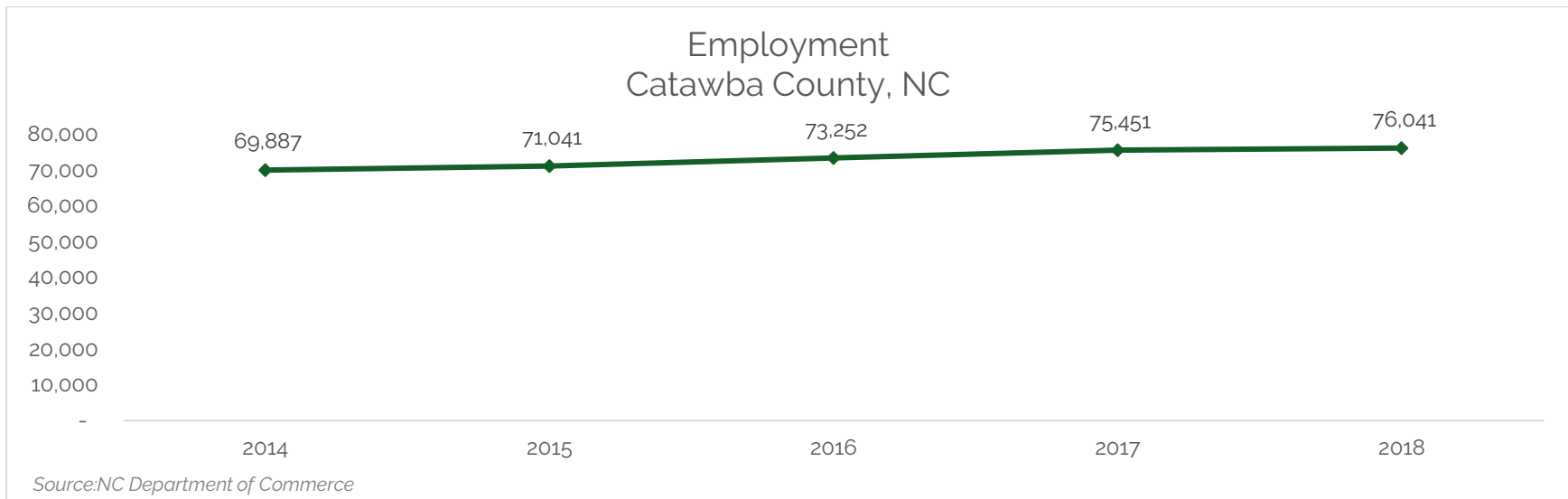
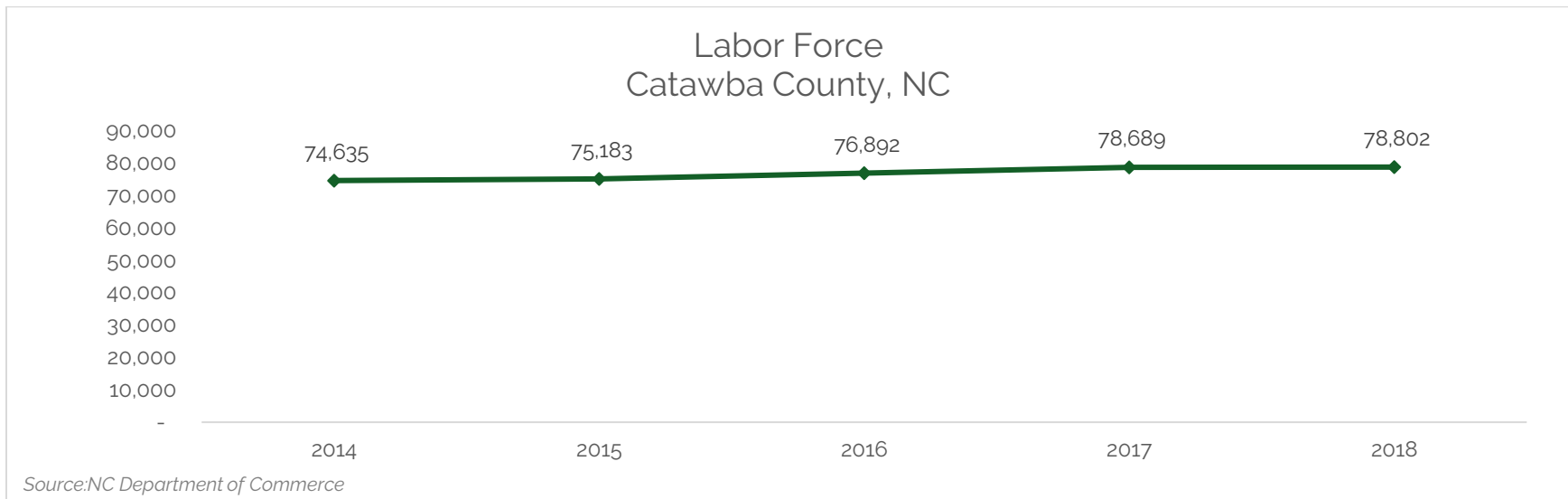
Source: ESRI

SAT Scores

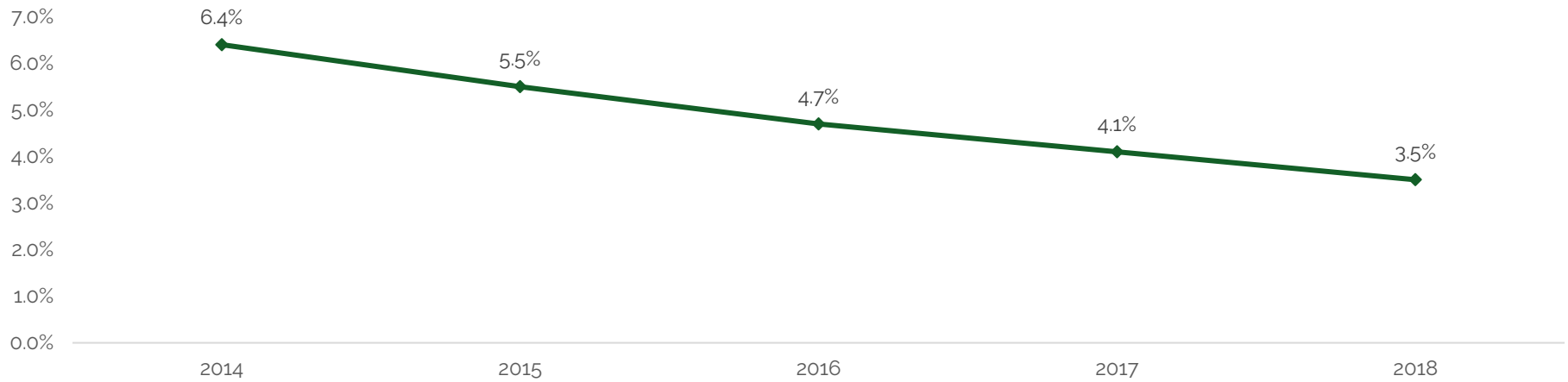


Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction



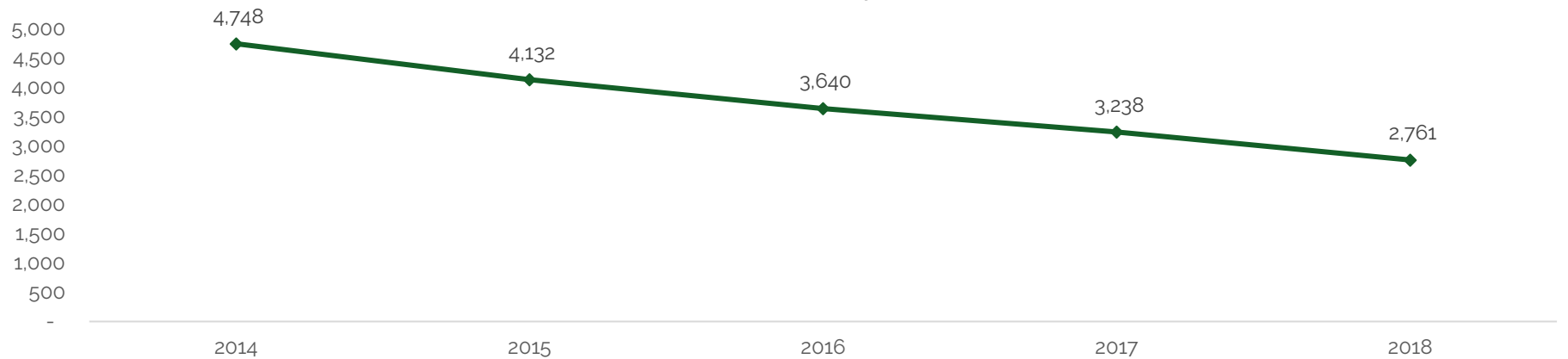


Unemployment Rate
Catawba County, NC



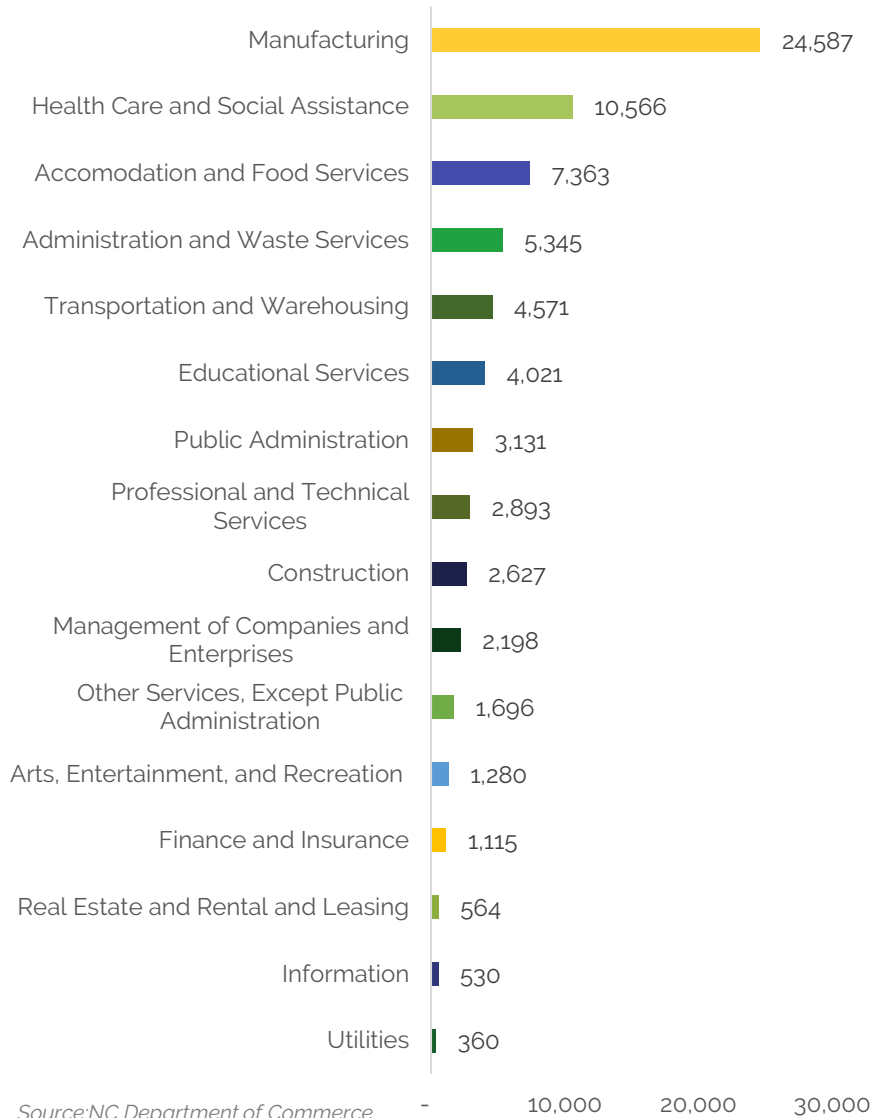
Source: NC Department of Commerce

Number Unemployed
Catawba County, NC

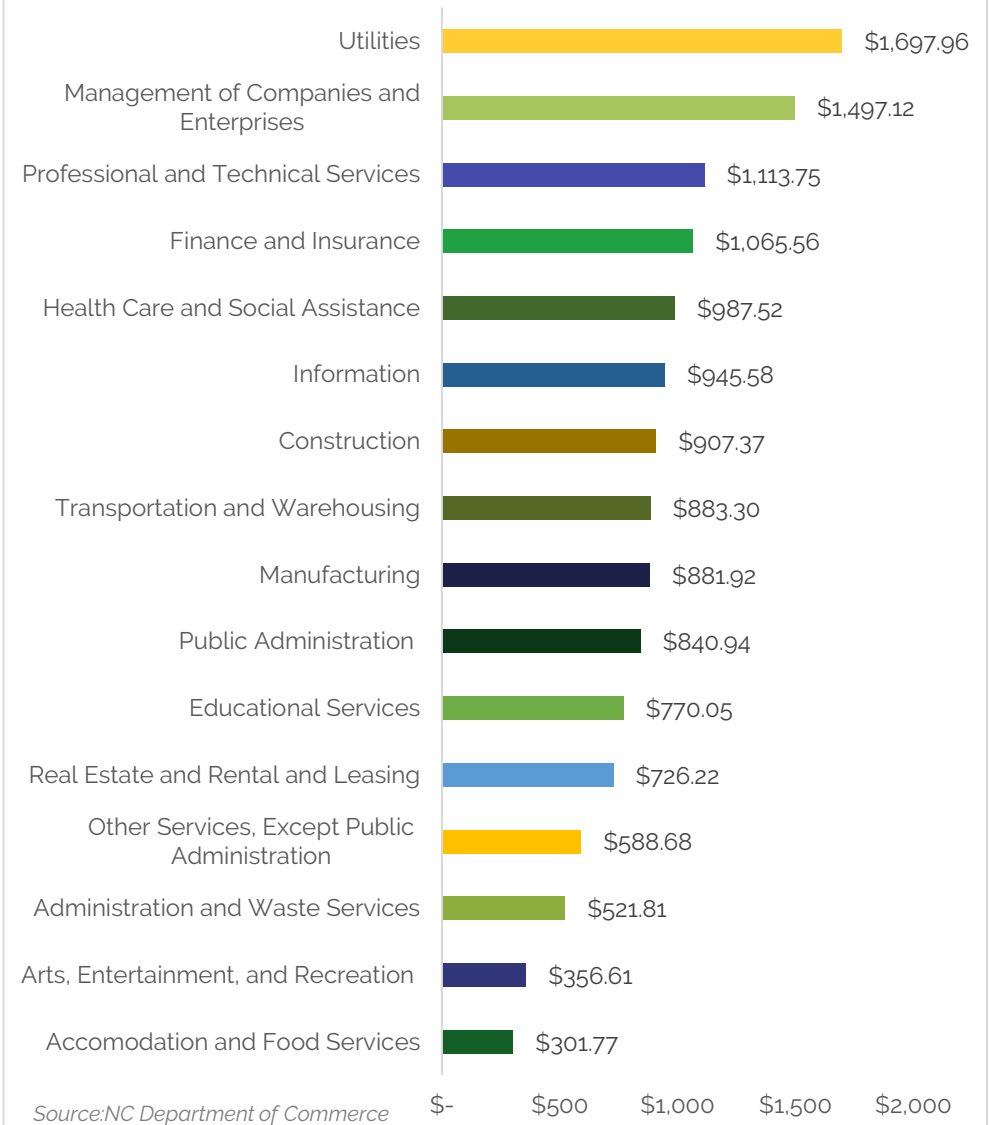


Source: NC Department of Commerce

Employment by Industry Q3 2018 Catawba County



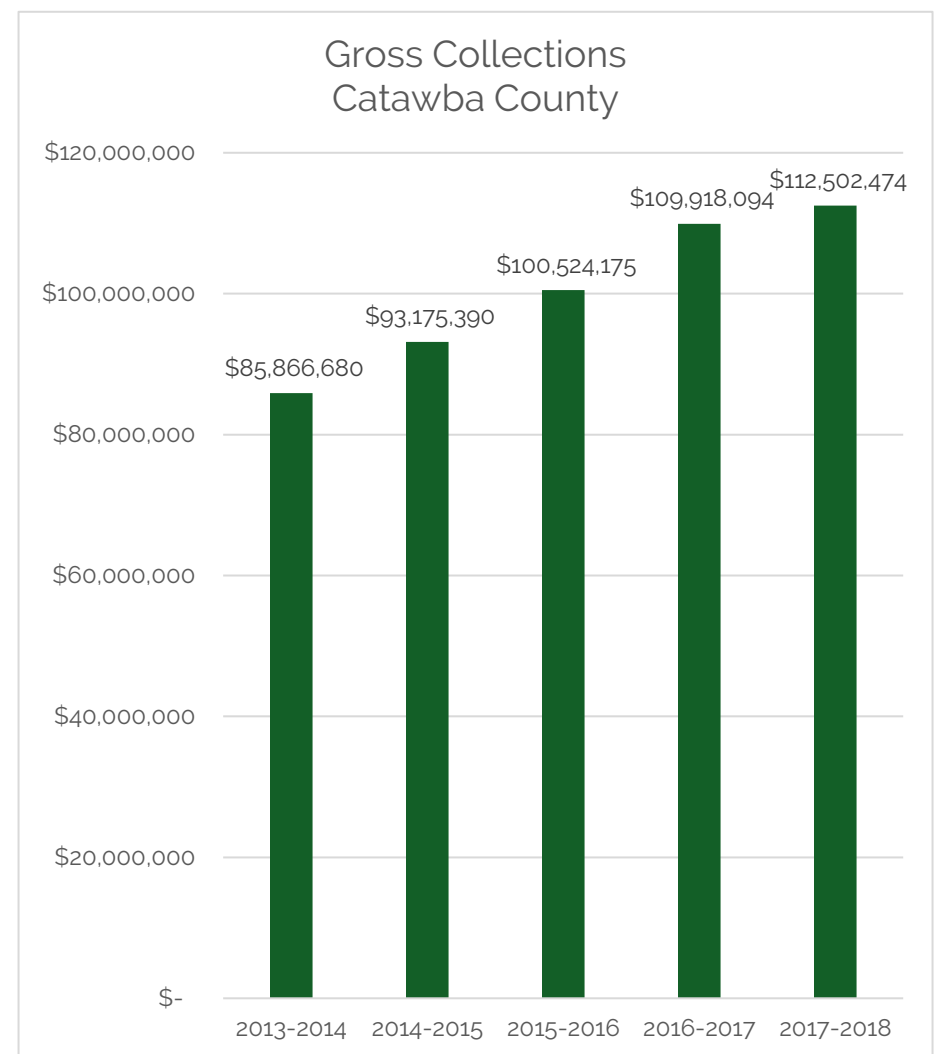
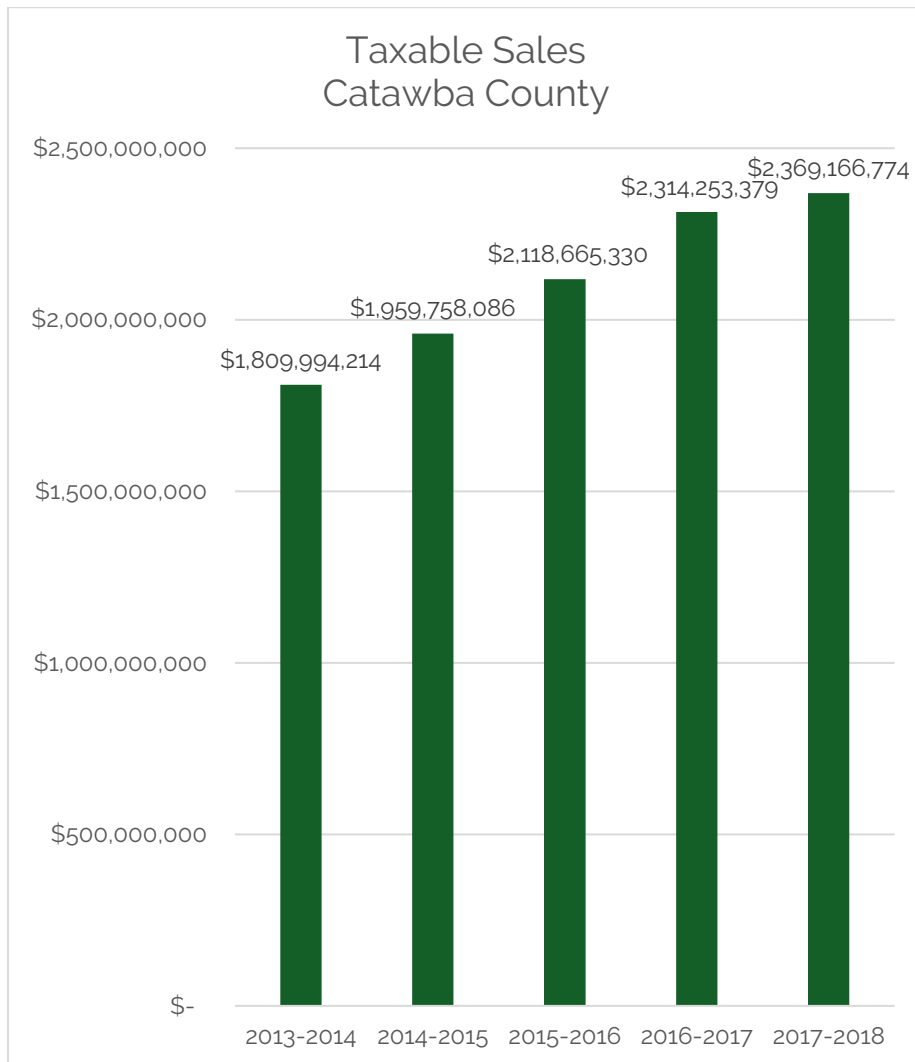
Wages by Industry Q3 2018 Catawba County



Top 25 Employers - Catawba County, NC

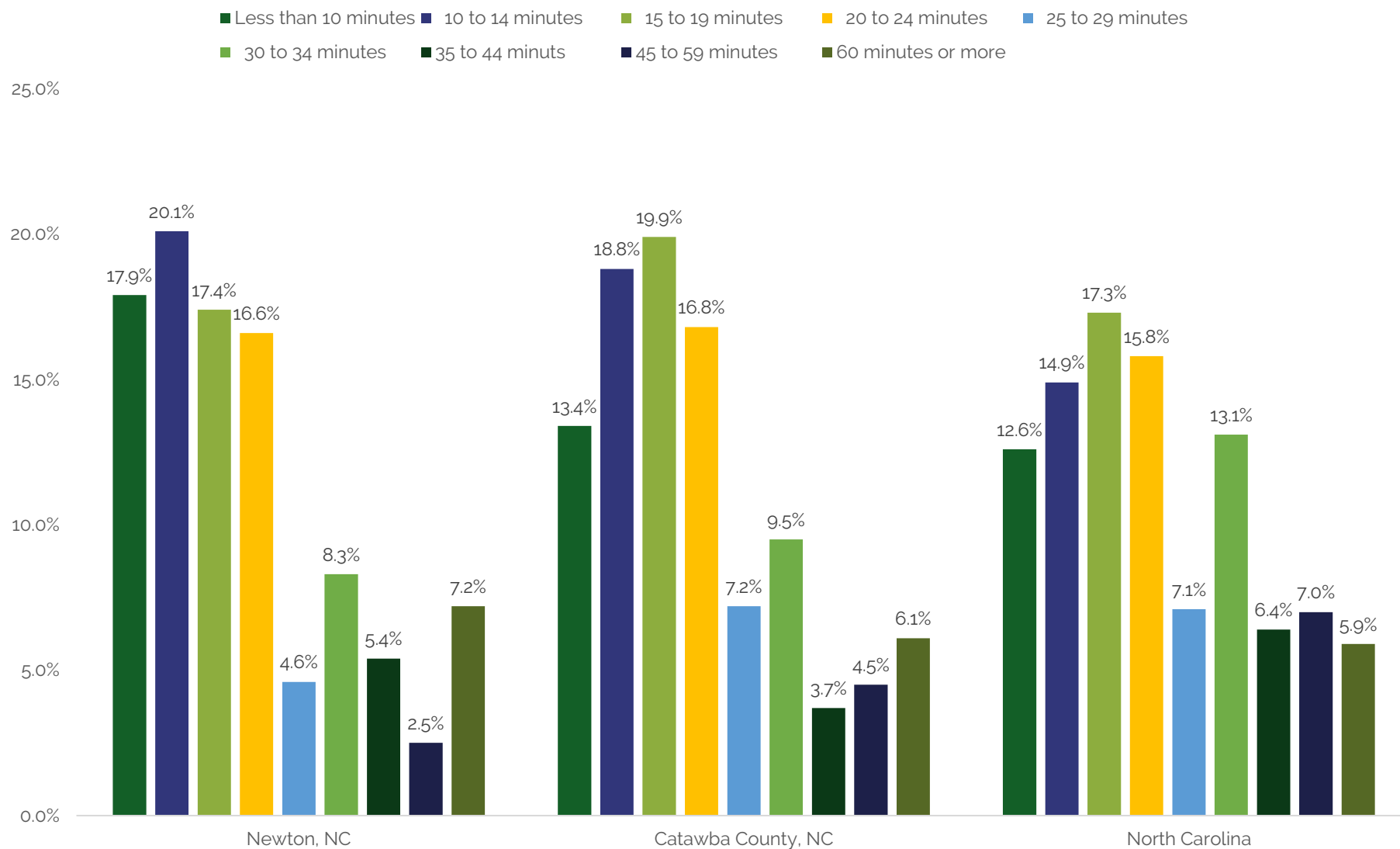
Rank	Company Name	Industry	Employment
1	CATAWBA COUNTY SCHOOLS	Education & Health Services	1000+
2	CATAWBA VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER	Education & Health Services	1000+
3	COMMSCOPE	Manufacturing	1000+
4	CORNING OPTICAL COMMUNICATIONS LLC	Manufacturing	1000+
5	GKN DRIVELINE NEWTON LLC	Manufacturing	1000+
6	HUMAN RESOURCES DEPT	Public Administration	1000+
7	DLP PARTNER FRYE LLC	Education & Health Services	1000+
8	WAL-MART ASSOCIATES INC.	Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	1000+
9	TARGET STORES DIV	Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	500-999
10	CENTURY FURNITURE LLC	Manufacturing	500-999
11	CONGRUITY HR	Professional & Business Services	500-999
12	ACADEMY SPORTS + OUTDOORS	Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	500-999
13	CATAWBA VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE	Education & Health Services	500-999
14	ETHAN ALLEN RETAIL INC	Manufacturing	500-999
15	PIERRE FOODS INC	Manufacturing	500-999
16	MCCREARY MODERN INC	Manufacturing	500-999
17	CITY OF HICKORY	Public Administration	500-999
18	LEE INDUSTRIES INC	Manufacturing	500-999
19	PERFORMANCE FOOD GROUP INC	Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	500-999
20	CARGO TRANSPORTERS INC	Trade, Transportation, & Utilities	500-999
21	BASSETT FURNITURE INDUSTRIES OF NC	Manufacturing	500-999
22	HS MANUFACTURING LLC	Manufacturing	500-999
23	SHERRILL FURNITURE COMPANY (A CORP)	Manufacturing	500-999
24	SHURTAPE TECHNOLOGIES LLC	Manufacturing	500-999
25	HICKORY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Education & Health Services	500-999

Source: NC Department of Commerce



Source: NC Dept. of Revenue

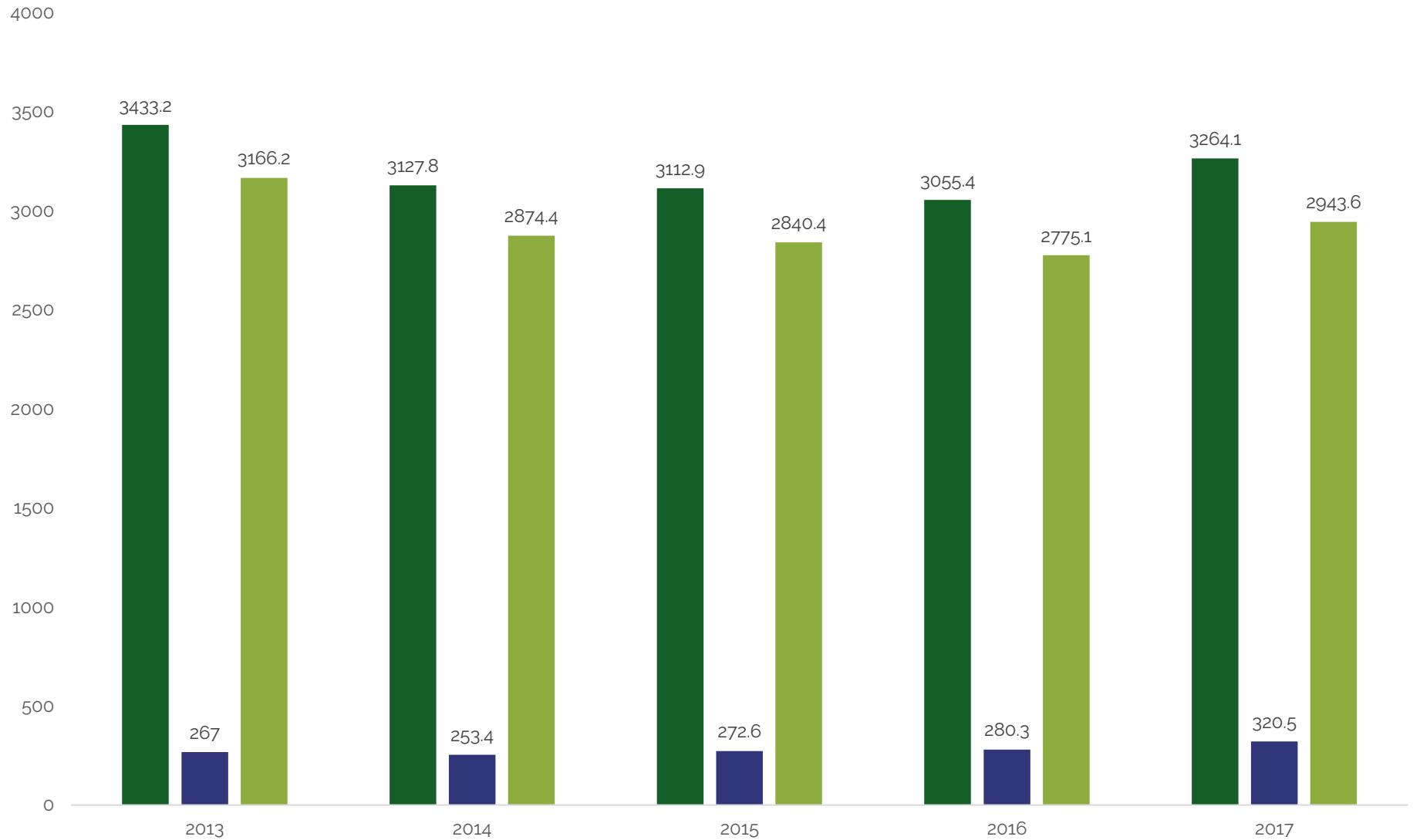
2017 Commute Times



Source: US Census

Catawba County Crime Rates per 100,000

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

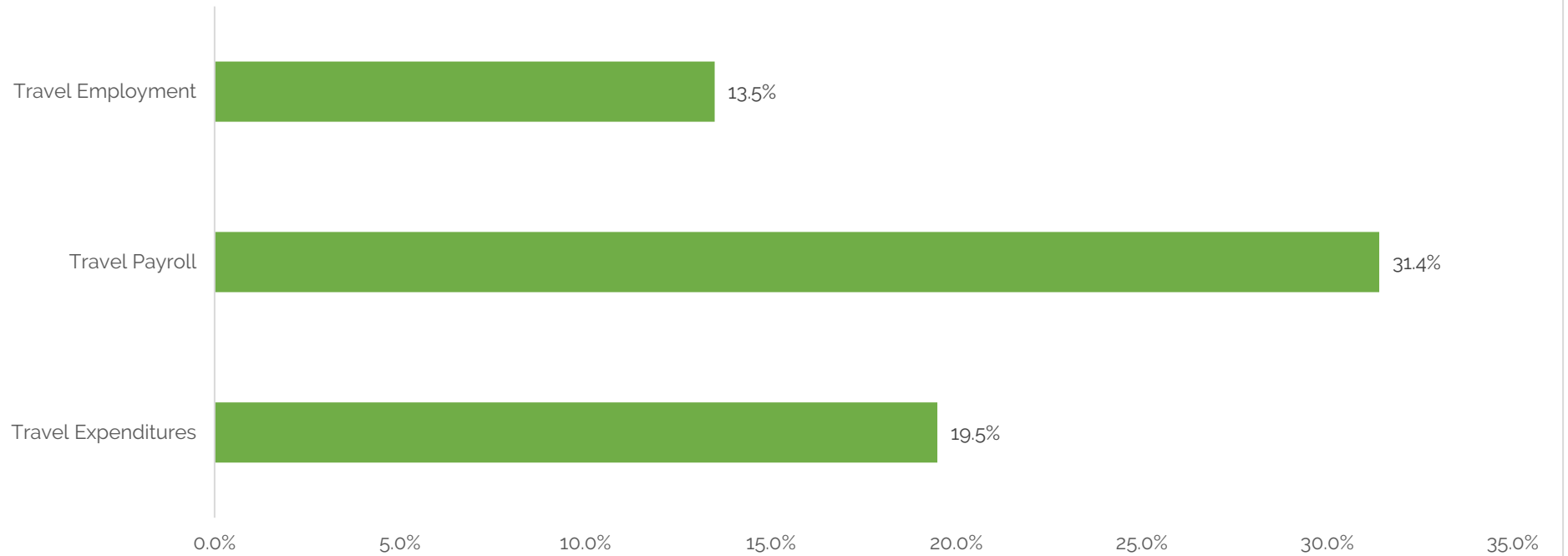


Source: crimereporting.ncsbi.gov

Catawba County 2013-2017 Establishment Data		
Gained	2013	2017
Total	6,728	9,821
Start Ups	38.6%	83.2%
Expansion Start Ups	16.5%	7.2%
Expansions	38.6%	7.3%
Move In	6.3%	2.3%
Lost		
Total	7,368	12,570
Closings	47.2%	82.1%
Contractions	40.4%	17.1%
Move Out	12.4%	0.7%
<i>Source Your Economy Data</i>		

Catawba County 2013-2017 Employment Stages				
ESTABLISHMENTS	2013	% of TOTAL	2017	% of TOTAL
ALL	7,814	100	8,254	100
Self-Employed (1)	1,026	13.1	996	12.1
Stage 1 (2-9)	5,152	65.9	5,550	67.2
Stage 2 (10-99)	1,467	18.8	1552	18.8
Stage 3 (100-499)	148	1.9	136	1.6
Stage 4 (500+)	21	0.3	20	0.2
<i>Source Your Economy Data</i>				

2016-2017 % Change Catawba County Tourism Statistics



Source: data.osbm.state.nc.us

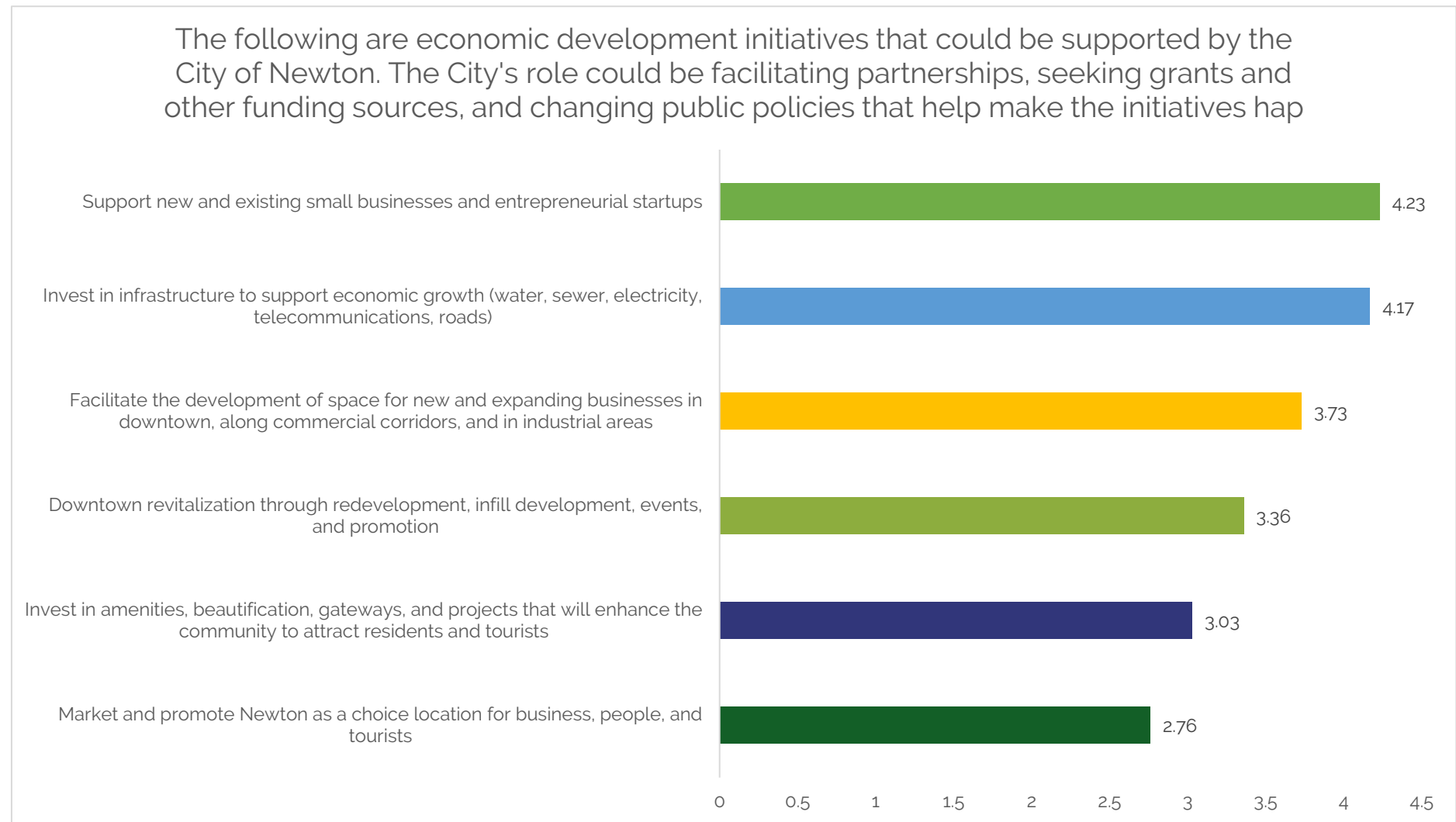
ESRI Retail MarketPlace Report – City of Newton

Summary Demographics						
2018 Population						13,145
2018 Households						5,143
2018 Median Disposable Income						\$31,875
2018 Per Capita Income						\$21,204
2017 Industry Summary	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	44-45,722	\$129,465,392	\$261,370,213	-\$131,904,821	-33.7	121
Total Retail Trade	44-45	\$117,450,424	\$240,958,541	-\$123,508,117	-34.5	89
Total Food & Drink	722	\$12,014,968	\$20,411,672	-\$8,396,704	-25.9	32
2017 Industry Group	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	441	\$25,675,721	\$30,053,138	-\$4,377,417	-7.9	16
Automobile Dealers	4411	\$21,115,622	\$11,723,721	\$9,391,901	28.6	8
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	4412	\$2,074,337	\$6,895,939	-\$4,821,602	-53.8	4
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	4413	\$2,485,762	\$11,433,478	-\$8,947,716	-64.3	4
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$4,357,789	\$16,597,589	-\$12,239,800	-58.4	8
Furniture Stores	4421	\$2,666,156	\$16,065,271	-\$13,399,115	-71.5	7
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$1,691,633	\$532,318	\$1,159,315	52.1	1
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$3,366,492	\$52,958,607	-\$49,592,115	-88.0	4
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	444	\$8,335,250	\$6,204,404	\$2,130,846	14.7	3
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	4441	\$7,796,960	\$6,204,404	\$1,592,556	11.4	3
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$538,290	\$0	\$538,290	100.0	0
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$20,504,453	\$55,520,484	-\$35,016,031	-46.1	14
Grocery Stores	4451	\$19,084,915	\$51,792,735	-\$32,707,820	-46.1	10
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$748,147	\$679,354	\$68,793	4.8	1
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	4453	\$671,391	\$3,048,395	-\$2,377,004	-63.9	3
Health & Personal Care Stores	446,4461	\$7,530,131	\$13,189,919	-\$5,659,788	-27.3	3
Gasoline Stations	447,4471	\$12,928,423	\$35,697,167	-\$22,768,744	-46.8	10
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	448	\$5,286,460	\$8,705,094	-\$3,418,634	-24.4	6
Clothing Stores	4481	\$3,506,392	\$7,591,743	-\$4,085,351	-36.8	4
Shoe Stores	4482	\$849,739	\$0	\$849,739	100.0	0
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$930,329	\$1,113,351	-\$183,022	-9.0	2
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	451	\$3,023,547	\$2,793,905	\$229,642	3.9	3
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	4511	\$2,555,157	\$2,581,886	-\$26,729	-0.5	2
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$468,390	\$212,019	\$256,371	37.7	1
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$19,187,283	\$4,722,112	\$14,465,171	60.5	8
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$13,735,608	\$274,730	\$13,460,878	96.1	1
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$5,451,675	\$4,447,382	\$1,004,293	10.1	7
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$5,229,883	\$14,367,932	-\$9,138,049	-46.6	13
Florists	4531	\$166,488	\$9,577,051	-\$9,410,563	-96.6	5
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	4532	\$1,035,551	\$154,249	\$881,302	74.1	1
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$569,974	\$442,917	\$127,057	12.5	4
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	4539	\$3,457,870	\$4,193,715	-\$735,845	-9.6	3
Nonstore Retailers	454	\$2,024,992	\$148,190	\$1,876,802	86.4	1
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	4541	\$1,401,832	\$0	\$1,401,832	100.0	0
Vending Machine Operators	4542	\$111,420	\$148,190	-\$36,770	-14.2	1
Direct Selling Establishments	4543	\$511,740	\$0	\$511,740	100.0	0
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	\$12,014,968	\$20,411,672	-\$8,396,704	-25.9	32
Special Food Services	7223	\$111,699	\$0	\$111,699	100.0	0
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	7224	\$791,065	\$132,311	\$658,754	71.3	1
Restaurants/Other Eating Places	7225	\$11,112,204	\$20,279,361	-\$9,167,157	-29.2	31

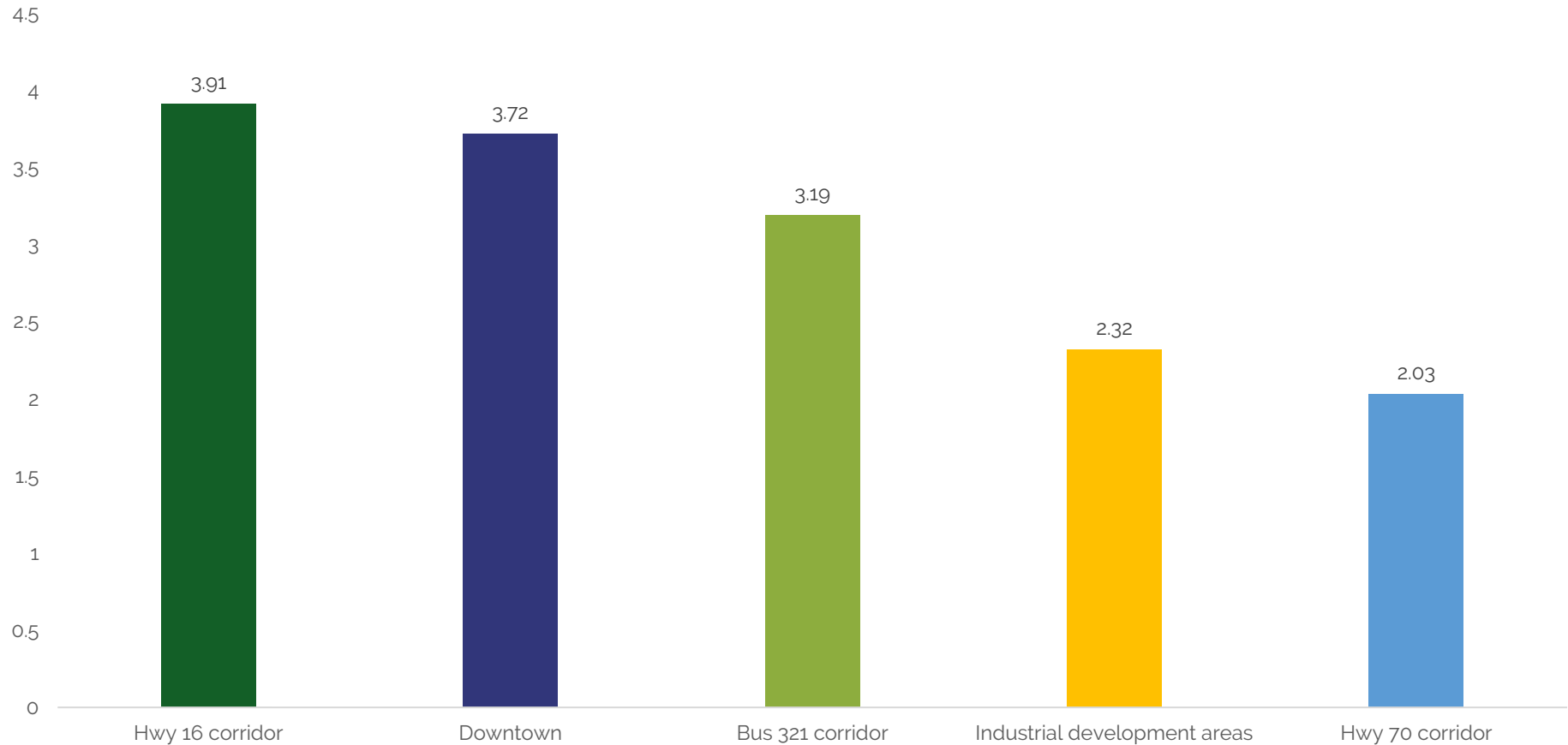
Source: Esri and Infogroup. Esri 2018 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace. Copyright 2018 Esri. Copyright 2017 Infogroup, Inc. All rights reserved.

Appendix C: Survey Results

There were 97 responses to the survey, which was distributed by the city and partner agencies and posted to websites and social media.



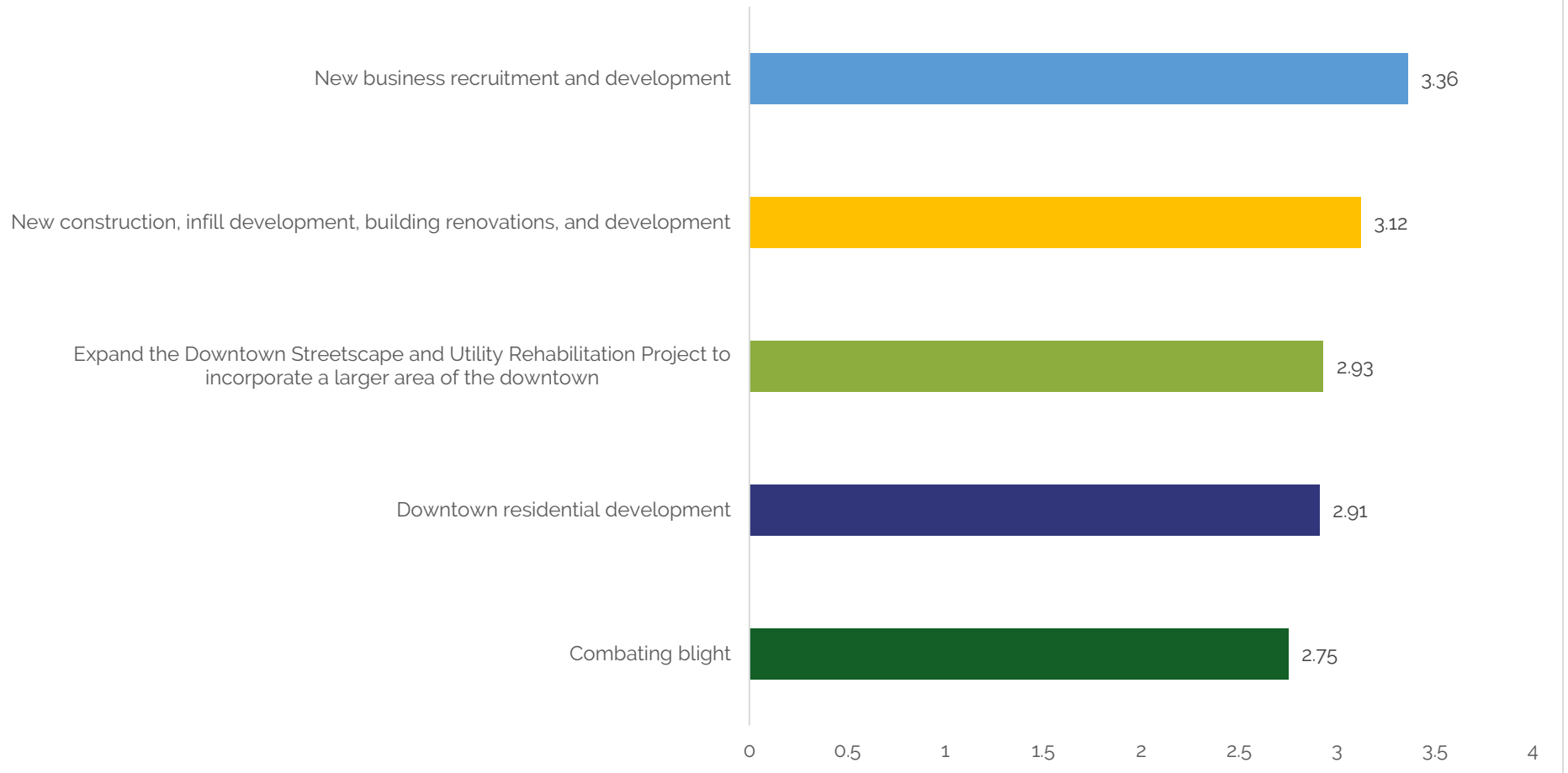
The following are locations in which the City could focus its development efforts. Rank the importance of the areas for development, redevelopment, and infill from 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) to 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT).



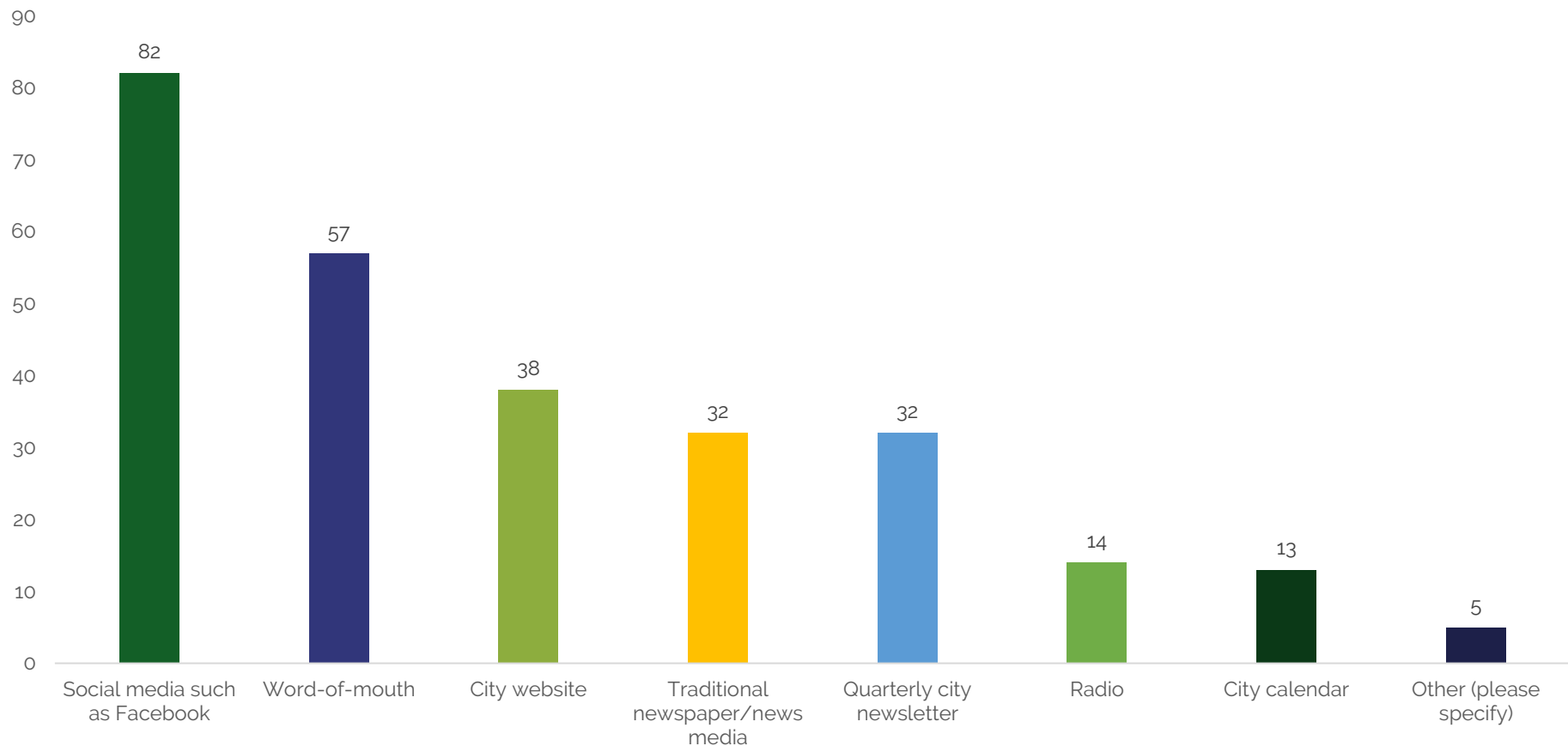
There are several quality of life amenities and beautification programs the City could support. Rank the importance of the following from 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) to 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT).



Rank the importance of the following downtown development initiatives from 1 (MOST IMPORTANT) to 5 (LEAST IMPORTANT).



The City's economic development plan will include internal communications and external marketing recommendations. Tell us how you learn of events, news, and happenings in the City. CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.



Other (please specify)
City council meetings
Attend city council meetings.
See something going on in the downtown area
Email

Thank you for participating in the survey. Please leave any comments for the strategic planning committee here.

Unightly curbs and sidewalks need a lot of work. Pressure washing all the curbs and sidewalks would give the downtown area a much needed clean up, so it won't look like a ghetto.

Keep Newton conservative

Water pressure has been decreased. Noticed not only by myself but others as well. Not good!

Thank you for all you do!

It wasn't a choice, but something needs to be done about the shopping center where Honey's used to be. It looks horrible and is on a main gateway into the city.

This is a beautiful city, with friendly residents. There are several items I feel the committee needs to address. These are based on my experience living in other areas.

Growing an area is great, however people need to be able to afford to live here. It is hard to do so when jobs that pay a wage that you can support your family on are scarce. Housing costs are high. Affordable quality rentals are hard to find. Not everyone can or desires to buy a house.

The area I came from had very high property taxes. People are selling trying to get out. I see a lot of for sale signs in this area. I am told it is due to high property taxes. What good will it do will all these initiatives do if people cannot afford to live here.

The utility deposits and connections fees are astronomical. I was quoted \$430 for multiple utilities. Since the city provides the services, there should only be one deposit with one connection fee.

Also, over regulating people will make an area unattractive. Some regulations are needed, however too many cause people to want to leave. I feel that for a city to grow these areas need to be addressed. If Newton wants to grow, then they need to make it attractive place to live so business will want to come here.

Bringing well known, popular businesses, such as shopping and restaurants, could help bring people in from other cities

I think Newton needs to make the owners of the high-priced buildings update them or tear them down. The small business owners are paying crazy high rent for a dump. When updated, leave rent the same as now. The slum lords have gotten rich enough of the little people of Newton.

Listen to the citizens of Newton instead of what the elected officials want. We elected YOU. We are your boss.

Thanks for all you do.

Would like to know how are golf carts in street legal? I understand the convenience for festivals, but individuals are using golf carts as regular modes of transportation throughout the year and I don't understand how the City of Newton permits it. Common sense indicates that this should be banned, especially due to the lack of safety a golf cart provides for individuals, kids, and pets. And there should not be any special considerate for ANY ONE! Even if they are on the Newton city council or part of the city administration. Not even a grandfather clause. Thank You!

Start Supporting your Small Businesses here in Newton. It seems like you nickel and dime us all the time and you are not very business-friendly!

Keep up the good work.

I'd like to see some emphasis on renovating North Newton.
I think the city could save a lot of money by sending newsletters by email and possibly changing to monthly
Newton is a big place. Focus on the Hwy 16 corridor will give you and bigger footprint than just the corner of Hwy 70 and Bus 321 to courthouse. Helping home values and attracting developers to build communities and amenities.
Keep up the good work!
Upgrade of infrastructure would be nice, so we don't lose electricity just because it is windy. More wheelchair accessibility on the sidewalks and stores. More affordable housing for seniors would be great.
Check out Morganton - The Green way, athletic fields, are amazing - downtown is getting better all the time.
What took you so long to get started on this?
Should build a new Welcome Center on Hwy 16 near corner of Hwy 10.
I would love to participate!
Would love more inclusion of blocks in city-scaping and entrances to city. Nothing linking into town either 16 or 321 says what a great small town. Connecting trails for bikes and walkers is key.
Repair the street
The most needed thing for Newton was never even mentioned! Parking! Newton can spend a gazillion \$\$\$\$ on beautification, new business, etc. BUT IF PEOPLE HAVE NO PLACE TO PARK, they won't come. Does anybody that comes up with these ideas even shop in downtown Newton?? Probably not ~ they can't find a place to park. Spend some of that money to build a parking deck! A multi-level parking deck! Why encourage new business when their customers will have no place to park? It is beyond me why common sense is being overlooked. Give people a place to park & they will come!
A lot of people walk their dogs downtown including me and the new plan for N. College side should include a place for people and dogs to have access to drinking water, possibly in the new little park planned on the corner of A Street and College.
We need the back roads like North Davis Avenue and Gaither roads repaved
Do we have a policy on junk in yards, porches, etc.? We have some sorry looking yards and houses on some of our main streets.
Blight is a big word, didn't know we had spotted plants and mold. "Eye sore" property would have made more sense.
Thank you for all your hard work.
Please focus on building Newton up without damaging businesses. The construction downtown really harmed businesses. The project took way too much time. Therefore, different companies that are timelier should be used in future efforts. Since the project is taking so long, a lot of people laugh about it and it is turning Newton into a joke.
Clean up the garbage that is constantly being dumped on the streets by individuals! Keep Newton a clean and litter free area!
Don't turn Newton into Mooresville or Cornelius, and we need affordable housing.
Do everything you can to bring in new RELEVANT business. New restaurants cannot survive with the current population base downtown.
With the meetings that are held once a month, it's important to reassure that the businesses have one common goal, to make money and grow! It's important to also work together as all small businesses want to make money and grow but to help each other out. There are a lot

of vacant buildings and areas that need to be brought up to code for a business to even think about moving into Newton and some financial assistance would be nice for some of those buildings. Everyone needs to work together for the success of Newton to happen.

Would love to see some events added to the spring and possibly offer some different activities to the summer fun Saturday events. Would be great to have craft show for Spring.

I think the neighborhoods that are close to downtown on the opposite side of the railroad track from the courthouse look very run down. If I was moving into the area, this would be a big turn off for me.

Appendix D: Study Sponsor and Consultant



ElectriCities of N.C. Inc. sponsored the City of Newton Economic Development Strategic Plan. ElectriCities offers a variety of services to promote NC Public Power communities to businesses and economic developers. They help communities recruit business and industry by providing:

- ⊙ Target Marketing
- ⊙ Marketing/Collateral Assistance
- ⊙ Aerial Photography
- ⊙ Proposals for Prospects/Clients
- ⊙ Advertising Opportunities

www.electricities.com

- ⊙ Target Sectors
- ⊙ Trade Show Opportunities
- ⊙ Direct Marketing
- ⊙ Retail/Commercial Developments



Creative Economic Development Consulting, LLC provides strategic planning, product development, organizational development, social media, and economic impact analysis services to communities. Creative EDC is an innovative firm that owns four proprietary programs: Certified Entrepreneurial Community®, CreativeSiteAssessment.com, Certified Industrial Buildings, and CBOSS-Creative Back Office Suite of Services. Creative EDC supports ElectriCities' strategic planning and Smart Sites initiatives. www.creativeedc.com