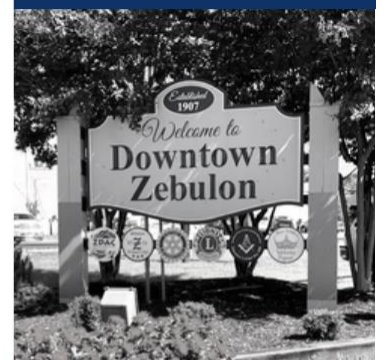
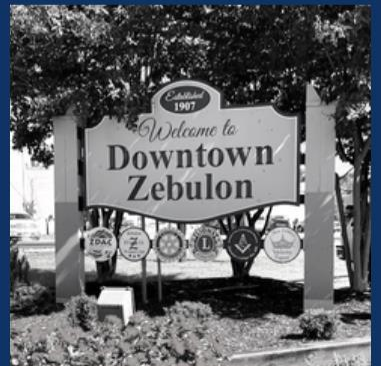
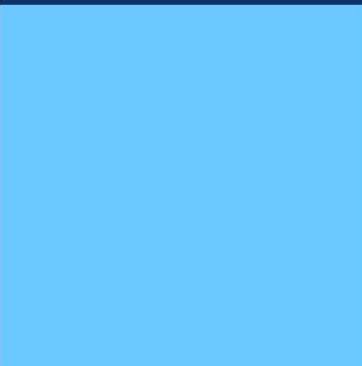
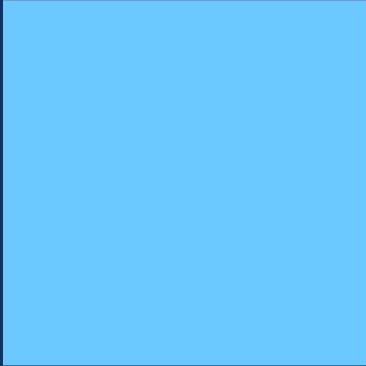


STRATEGIC PLAN



Prepared by Fountainworks & KH Consulting Services, LLC



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Economic Development Strategic Plan was made possible through the efforts of the individuals and groups listed below, as well as 200+ community members whose participation was an essential component of the process.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The Town of Zebulon's ("the Town" or "Zebulon") has completed its first comprehensive economic development strategy, set forth in this plan. The contents of this plan represent the culmination of nearly a year's worth of extensive research and stakeholder involvement. The purpose of the Economic Development Strategic Plan is to articulate a clear vision for Zebulon's economy that includes overarching economic goals, objectives, actions, and measurables to assess progress and determine success.

In recent years, Zebulon has experienced significant population growth; this trend is only expected to continue. With this growth comes the opportunity for strategic investment in our community's assets: our Downtown, our existing businesses, and the recruitment and attraction of new businesses. This strategy comes directly from what we heard from our community and has been tailored to address the Town's unique strengths and challenges. It includes actionable recommendations for fostering a more resilient and inclusive economy that mitigates displacement risks of the historically underserved and vulnerable communities of Zebulon.

Throughout the process, Town leaders remained committed to developing the strategy in partnership with community members. A robust community engagement process—including community cafés, surveys, and workshops—contributed significantly to this final document. The plan pays special attention to how our success and economic growth may impact vulnerable communities of Zebulon and offers best practices to mitigate negative consequences.

Through a comprehensive understanding of community desires and targeted investments in specific industries, the Economic Development Strategic Plan will serve as a blueprint for how Zebulon can unlock economic opportunities that benefit our entire community.

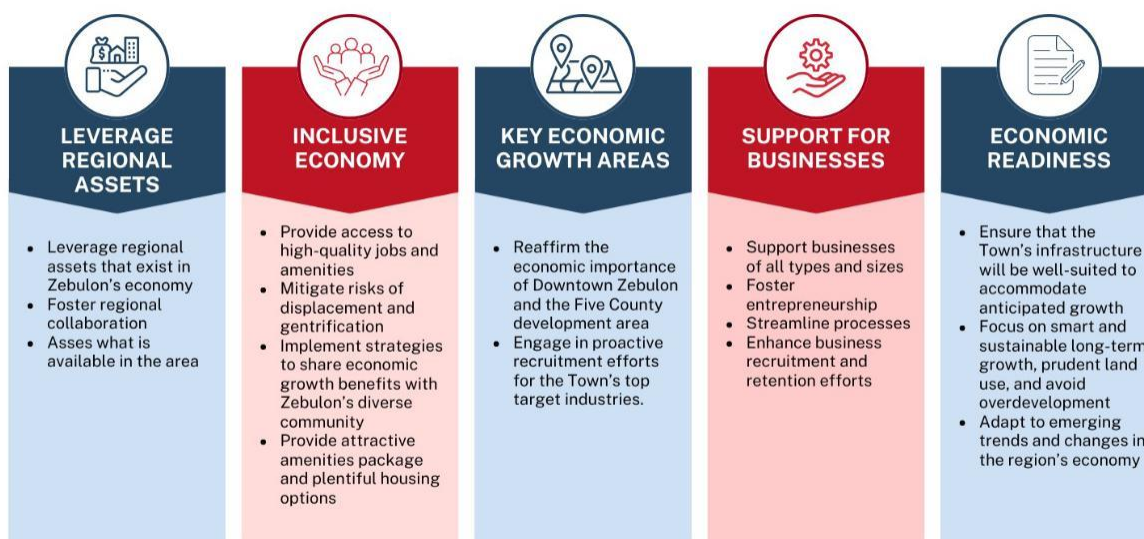
KEY COMPONENTS OF THE PLAN

Our vision sets the foundation for the plan:

Zebulon will foster an inclusive, vibrant, diverse, and sustainable economy.

Zebulon will be a regional player prioritizing intentional and responsible growth while retaining the Town's unique charm and character.

In pursuit of our vision, the Town of Zebulon has developed the following **five focus areas as the core of its economic development strategy**:



Zebulon has identified these five focus areas to guide its economic development work over the next five years. Town staff will work to develop an implementation plan which includes specific actions and measures. More information about these focus areas is available in the next section of the document.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Zebulon is a vibrant, growing community in eastern Wake County, North Carolina. The Town boasts well over a century of rich, diverse history and is known as “The Town of Friendly People.” Chartered in 1907, Zebulon was born from the advancement of the railroad. Investors in the Raleigh and Pamlico Sound Railroad wanted to establish a path through the eastern portion of North Carolina, starting in Raleigh and connecting to Wilson, and the Town of Zebulon was born.

In 2024, Zebulon has completed its first comprehensive economic development strategy, set forth in this plan. The contents of this plan represent the culmination of nearly a year’s worth of extensive research and stakeholder involvement. The purpose of the Economic Development Strategic Plan is to articulate a clear vision for Zebulon’s economy that includes overarching economic goals, objectives, actions, and measurables to assess progress and determine success.

In recent years, Zebulon has experienced significant population growth; this trend is only expected to continue. With residential growth comes the opportunity for strategic investment in our community’s assets: our Downtown, our businesses, and the recruitment and attraction of new businesses. The strategy comes directly from what we heard from our community and has been tailored to address the Town’s unique strengths and challenges. It includes actionable recommendations for fostering a more resilient and inclusive economy that mitigates displacement risks of Zebulon’s historically underserved and vulnerable communities.

Throughout the process, town leaders remained committed to developing the strategy in partnership with community members. A robust community engagement process—including resident cafes, surveys, and workshops—contributed significantly to this final document and guided the creation of the plan’s vision, focus areas, and priorities. The plan is mindful of how our success and economic growth may impact vulnerable communities of Zebulon and offers best practices to mitigate negative consequences.

Through a comprehensive understanding of community desires and targeted investments in specific industries, the Economic Development Strategic Plan will serve as a blueprint for how Zebulon can unlock economic opportunities that benefit our entire community.

PROCESS

The Town worked closely with a team of consultants specifically selected for their economic development, public engagement, and strategic planning expertise. In collaboration with the Town, this team conducted a robust [environmental assessment](#) that included a thorough review and synthesis of existing plans, research on economic development best practices (with specific focus on strategies to mitigate the risks of displacement and gentrification), and a review of data on current and projected growth and development in Wake County and the Eastern part of the Research Triangle Region. The environmental assessment established the economic baseline and market context that serve as the foundation of this plan.

Community input was a critical component of the plan development process. An online survey was conducted, available in both English and Spanish, and received 151 responses. The Town also held three in-person community café events at locations around Zebulon to provide more forums for community members to express their opinions, concerns, and preferences on issues related to economic development.

Following the community cafés, Town staff held a retreat to review the stakeholder engagement findings. They employed human-centered design concepts to inform their analysis of the findings. The Town then convened a community workgroup, comprised of five community leaders, that met virtually to further shape the community input. The community workgroup also developed the vision for the ideal Zebulon economy and established the focus areas for this strategic plan. A staff retreat was then held to refine and finalize the plan. Once the plan is adopted, Town staff will continue developing the implementation plan.

VISION

The vision statement articulates our long-term view of the ideal future of Zebulon's economy. For more information on different components of the vision, see the [Appendix](#).

*Zebulon will foster an inclusive, vibrant, diverse, and sustainable economy.
Zebulon will be a regional player prioritizing intentional and responsible
growth while retaining the Town's unique charm and character.*

FOCUS AREAS

The five focus areas below will guide the Town's economic development work over the next five years. Town staff will work to develop an implementation plan which includes specific actions and measures. These focus areas were developed by the workgroup of community leaders, informed by research, and driven by the community's feedback and direction. The Workgroup members identified top priorities to move each focus area forward. This plan also includes additional priorities that, while not as critical as the top priorities, are nonetheless important objectives. The top priorities guide the Town's economic development staff and offer guidance for where the Town should invest the most time, energy, and resources.



LEVERAGE REGIONAL ASSETS

Zebulon is committed to leveraging regional assets that exist in Zebulon's economy, fostering regional collaboration, and assessing what is available in the area. The priorities in the Leverage Regional Assets focus area aim to harness the Town's robust and diverse workforce and large consumer base to ensure a thriving business ecosystem and help drive innovation. The Leverage Regional Assets focus area also acknowledges that ensuring smart and sustainable growth means *the Town cannot be all things to all people*, especially when some amenities already exist in neighboring communities.

Top Priorities

Maintain and strengthen partnerships with Wake Technical Community College (Wake Tech) and its future Eastern Wake 4.0 Campus for business recruitment, existing industry, and strategies around upskilling the existing labor force in Zebulon.

Collaborate with Wake County and neighboring communities to attract amenities, ensure regional access, and participate in regional economic and workforce development initiatives.

Additional Priority

Utilize State economic development support, such as those items detailed in [First in Talent](#), North Carolina's 2021 Strategic Economic Development Plan.



INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

The Town will cultivate an inclusive economy that provides access to high-quality jobs and amenities while mitigating the risks of displacement and gentrification often associated with increased investment in historically underserved communities. The Inclusive Economy focus area will implement equitable and inclusive strategies to share economic growth benefits with Zebulon's diverse community while providing an attractive amenities package with plentiful housing options for the Town's wide spectrum of residents.

Top Priorities

Mitigate displacement and gentrification by adopting strategies that actively work to ensure that longtime residents are not displaced, priced out, or pushed away from Zebulon. Ensure that everyone benefits from economic growth and the changes that occur due to it.

Ensure a balanced mix of residential development across all price points and housing types (including affordable housing, workforce housing and executive housing) and ensure

Zebulon remains an attractive (but not cheap) place to live.

Additional Priorities

Ensure access to well-paying jobs with expanded career opportunities in and around Zebulon to support workforce development.

Provide access to high-quality amenities such as shopping and entertainment options.

Recognize that Zebulon cannot be all things to all people and that some community assets may not need to be located within the Town itself.



KEY ECONOMIC GROWTH AREAS

Zebulon reaffirms the economic importance of Downtown Zebulon and the Five County development area. Both areas hold historic significance for the community and are ripe for additional economic investment.

Top Priorities

Pursue redevelopment efforts for the Five County development area to be a catalyst for the areas nearby by leveraging its location as a central convergence point that serves Eastern North Carolina and connects directly to the Triangle region.

Enhance walkability, connectivity, and infrastructure, particularly in Downtown Zebulon, to increase accessibility and maintain Zebulon's unique character.

Engage in proactive recruitment efforts for the Town's top target industries (life sciences, food manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing).

Additional Priority

Encourage a robust mix of businesses and preserve and enhance the quality of life and reasons to be in Zebulon's downtown, as outlined in the city's Vision 2030 Strategic Plan.

Address and grow the Town's industrial areas by targeting industries requiring a larger footprint and a more focused marketing strategy such as smart grid and clean technology.s

Improve the marketing and recruitment strategy for new industries in the Industrial

Drive area.



SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

Zebulon is committed to supporting businesses of all types and sizes—new and existing businesses, large industries and small businesses—through fostering entrepreneurship, streamlining processes, and enhancing business recruitment and retention efforts.

Top Priorities

Partner with Wake Tech and establish a Zebulon Launch Program to support local entrepreneurs. Launch programs provide business training, micro-loans, mentorship, and networking opportunities to help early-stage entrepreneurs develop and grow their businesses.

Expand and diversify the Town's tax base beyond the primary tax contributors.

Simplify and streamline interactions with Town staff to create a business-friendly environment.

Additional Priorities

Support entrepreneurial initiatives through partnerships with community stakeholders such as the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program at North Carolina State University.

Adopt a regional approach to business recruitment and retention by tapping into the strengths of existing organizations.

Bring community leaders together to develop a purposeful and intentional strategy for locating businesses.



ECONOMIC READINESS

The Town's infrastructure will be well-suited to accommodate the anticipated growth that is expected to occur in and around Zebulon. This growth will be smart, focused on prudent land use, and will avoid overdevelopment. Economic readiness is critical to ensure that Zebulon's economic efforts are sustainable for long-term growth and allow the Town to remain adaptable to emerging trends and changes in the region's economy.

Top Priorities

Continue efforts to address and alleviate traffic congestion as outlined in the Grow Zebulon Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Maintain, upgrade, and extend all utilities and infrastructure (including water, sewer, and Internet) to ensure sites are ready to receive new businesses while continuing to support existing businesses and residences.

Advocate for transportation improvements such as highway bypasses, rapid bus transit, and mass transit options like passenger rail service.

Develop the Town's land in a prudent manner that acknowledges land as a limited resource and in alignment with the Grow Zebulon Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Avoid overdevelopment and the temptation for Zebulon to be all things to all people.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM OUR COMMUNITY

Planning that does not involve community members in the early stages often fails to gain support from residents when implementation begins. By incorporating community desires into Zebulon's economic development strategy, community members are more inclined to support initiatives.

Below is a summary of what we have learned through extensive community engagement efforts. For more detailed information, see [Appendix](#).

People choose to live in Zebulon because of housing affordability, family ties, quality of life, the local character/charm, and the ability to commute to jobs outside of Zebulon. Residents want **more, and better amenities**. Top requests were full-service **restaurants, grocery stores**, and **entertainment/recreation** options. Additionally, community members noted they want easier access to healthcare services. Many also wish for increased access to educational and training opportunities in Zebulon—including workforce development and entrepreneurship programs.

During our community cafés, residents discussed the need for **improved infrastructure** which can support a thriving community. Examples include public transportation, connectivity via sidewalks and bike paths, and robust utility infrastructure including water, sewer, and Internet.

Community members also emphasized the need for **affordable housing**. They emphasized that housing in Zebulon should not only be affordable but also accessible and of high quality. Residents expressed a desire for greater variety of housing types (55 and older, temporary, accessory dwelling units, etc.) and for policies to be established to prevent relocation due to gentrification. For more information on best practices to mitigate displacement, see the next section as well as the [Environmental Assessment](#).

Priorities for job creation include fostering growth in technology/information technology, the service industry, healthcare, and ensuring jobs offer higher pay and a living wage. These actions contribute to the overall economic prosperity and well-being of Zebulon's residents. Community members want a **greater variety of jobs available** to them and emphasized that jobs should have the opportunity for career advancement.

When thinking about the role the Town can play in addressing the community needs, residents expressed that the Town should try to limit overdevelopment, encourage affordable housing, and seek to limit gentrification. Additionally, the Town can **support businesses** by having a government liaison to act as a “one-stop-shop” resource. Streamlined government processes (such as with permit approval), grants, loans, and tax incentives for start-ups, and **offering easily accessible and well-communicated resources can also serve to bolster businesses’ ability to thrive** in Zebulon.

TARGET INDUSTRIES

As part of the plan development, the Town conducted a comprehensive commercial and industrial assessment. This assessment included an analysis of the Town's current industrial assets, a review of land use allocations, and identification of opportunities that can create sustainable opportunities for job creation and capital investment in Zebulon.

Due to its strengths and existing assets, Zebulon should **primarily focus on the Life Sciences, Food Manufacturing, and Advanced Manufacturing** industries. Secondary target industries, which Wake County is focused on, include SmartGrid/Clean Technology and Headquarters. Wake County Economic Development is recruiting more headquarters to the county, so Zebulon may see the effects of these efforts in the future. Some municipalities within the county are creating clauses within their incentive policies that specifically target Headquarters, which may contribute to opportunities for Zebulon to explore. Recruiting SmartGrid/Clean Technology typically requires a larger footprint and would require a more focused marketing strategy.

The Town should agree to a list of targeted industries and subsequently build out a marketing strategy that tells the story of why Zebulon is an ideal location for businesses. Additionally, if future buildings become available due to the departure of an employer, the Town should conduct strong marketing and recruitment efforts to fill that space with the targeted industries.

Summary of target industry recommendations:

- Increase proactive marketing efforts focusing on Life Sciences, Food Manufacturing, and Advanced Manufacturing

- Develop passive approach with two of Wake County's targeted industries: Smart Grid/Clean Technology and Headquarters

- If buildings become available due to the departure of an employer, conduct strong marketing and recruitment efforts to fill that space with the targeted industries

- Agree to targeted industry list and subsequently build out a marketing strategy that tells the story of why Zebulon is an ideal location for businesses

BEST PRACTICES TO MITIGATE DISPLACEMENT

Research has identified the following best practices to mitigate the impacts of displacement and gentrification. For more information on these practices, see the [Environmental Assessment](#).

To limit general displacement:

Best Practice 1: Community Wealth Building

Supports Zebulon 2030 Strategic Plan's Growing Smart Tactical Action: "Pursue economic development opportunities with our community partners."

Community wealth building (CWB) is an economic development practice that is focused on the residents of a community retaining power and control of assets. CWB heavily relies on regulatory support from public institutions and on capital from private "anchor" institutions. This public-private partnership funds locally owned cooperatives that are staffed by

community members and invests in local real estate to specifically prevent displacement. Anchor institutions are key to this model because of their leverage in the private market. Wake County is home to several potential anchor institutions because it is home to prominent tech companies, universities, and healthcare systems. Examples include IBM and Red Hat, Duke Health Systems, SAS, WakeMed Health and Hospitals, North Carolina State University, and the Research Triangle Institute (RTI).

Best Practice 2: Community Land Trusts

Supports Zebulon 2030 Strategic Plan's Growing Smart Tactical Action: "Plan for appropriate land use to meet transportation and housing needs."

Community land trusts are another effective form of CWB. In their simplest form, community land trusts buy properties and keep them affordable. Community land trusts are nonprofit, community-based organizations whose mission is to provide affordable housing in perpetuity by owning land and leasing it to those who live in houses built on that land. Once the community land trust owns the property, they are able to determine how the land is used and ensures its alignment with community needs and goals. Often homes or other buildings can be built or placed on the owned land. These homes are then sold to individuals at below-market prices, making them more affordable. While many community land trusts focus on affordable housing, they can also serve other community goals. Land can be used for commercial spaces, community centers, urban agriculture, or preserving open spaces (among other uses). They prioritize community needs and goals over private profit, and they are a tool to fight against displacement caused by rising land prices and gentrification.

Best Practice 3: Preservation of Unsubsidized Affordable Housing

Supports Zebulon 2030 Strategic Plan's Growing Smart Tactical Action: "Plan for appropriate land use to meet transportation and housing needs."

The United States' largest supply of affordable housing, or naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH), are homes that are affordable due to their age or condition. It is estimated that 76% of all affordable housing in the United States are NOAH homes. NOAH homes are often not well-maintained (intentionally or unintentionally) and are in areas susceptible to gentrification because of their low cost. Moreover, NOAH renters are often people of color. Therefore, when NOAH properties are sold to development companies and they are refurbished and restored, tenants are either evicted or offered "cash for keys" by the development company to replace them with more affluent tenants.

Local governments can preserve NOAH homes by simply bringing awareness to them. By beginning to identify the current supply of NOAH homes in Zebulon, efforts can be taken to preserve them through other means. For example, leveraging existing partnerships with Wake County and using the existing Community Development Block Grant are steps the Town can take to provide additional assistance to residents in NOAH homes. The Town can also adopt a proactive approach to its building code and minimum housing standards to address homes that are not well-maintained. Retaining a clear picture of the current market ensures that the current supply of affordable homes are naturally maintained.

Local governments can also partner with private developers to offer subsidies, and, in exchange, guarantee that they will keep prices affordable on properties.

Best Practice 4: Targeted Hiring Through Ordinance

Supports Zebulon 2030 Strategic Plan's Growing Smart Tactical Action: "Pursue economic development opportunities with our community partners."

Targeted hiring is an economic development strategy that requires private businesses contracted by a government entity to hire a certain demographic within the local population. Local governments typically establish a minimum percentage that businesses must employ for publicly funded projects. By creating an ordinance, it gives control to the local municipality for the job inclusion of the projects. Moreover, it empowers the community and provides valuable jobs and training to those with unique needs. This practice ensures that jobs are held in the community, and that the local population has opportunities to build wealth.

To minimize commercial gentrification:

Best Practice 1: Store Size Caps

Store size caps limit the square footage and impose building height restrictions. They do not explicitly prohibit corporations from moving in, but size caps are effective at preventing big box stores from moving into areas where small businesses operate. Additionally, they can preserve the culture of a neighborhood by preventing an abnormal increase in scale compared to other businesses in the area. Conversely, large corporations can still adjust the size of their stores to compete with local small businesses. For example, large fast-casual chain restaurants, barber shops, and even big box stores can adjust the sizes of their stores to meet zoning requirements.

Best Practice 2: Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development

The Entrepreneurship and Small Business Center is a free service made available through Wake Technical Community College and Wake County that is funded through local taxes. The LaunchWakeCounty wing of the Center provides entrepreneurs with networking, training, and assistance with acquiring capital in under-resourced communities in Wake County.

Knightdale, Wendell, Morrisville, Apex, Cary, Fuquay-Varina, Garner, Holly Springs, Raleigh, and Rolesville have their own Launch program, but Zebulon does not have that as a resource for its residents (although it is identified as a top priority in this plan). Lastly, this practice supports Zebulon's efforts, as outlined in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, for "Coordinating with educational institutions such as Wake County Technical College, the Wake County Public School System and local private schools to develop entrepreneurial curricula and exposure to real world business situations and opportunities."

Additional Best Practice Notes:

Accessory Dwelling Units are a unique workaround to the housing supply. They allow tenants to build smaller dwellings on their property, and it is allowed by-right in Zebulon, as outlined in the Unified Development Ordinance.

[Land Banking](#) continues to spring up across the nation and is playing an increasingly important role in revitalization efforts in places such as Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and Fulton County, Georgia. Local governments in North Carolina can perform the basic functions of a land bank by cobbling together existing statutory authority. In this way, the local government itself serves as the land bank and performs the major activities of a land bank, which are acquiring and holding troubled properties, stabilizing properties and eliminating encumbrances, and conveying properties to a redeveloper.

[Community Benefits Agreements \(CBAs\)](#) can be a powerful tool for communities to promote equitable development practices that advance housing justice. CBAs are legally binding contracts between coalitions of community-based organizations and developers that shape how local development projects contribute to improving the quality of life of nearby residents. When implemented effectively, CBA processes shift power more evenly to ensure the residents most impacted by development projects have a say in the priorities for the new investments.

[Equity in amenities planning](#) can help mitigate commercial gentrification by identifying areas where residents and businesses may not have access to essential amenities, goods, and services. These amenities, goods, and services include childcare, parks, open space, trails, community facilities, fresh food, healthcare, pharmacies, financial services, and internet service.

[Local economic incentives](#) such as business investment grants can play an important role in supporting local businesses. In the City of Raleigh, for example, these grants are based on new job creation and new ad valorem taxable investments made by companies.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Economic Development Specialist will hold ultimate responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the strategic plan, with coordination and support from the Town Manager. The strategic plan contains priorities within each focus area, and the Town will track progress on these priorities. Our work plan for implementing our strategy will be developed as follows:



Annual Progress Report & Evaluation

The Town Manager will share an annual report with the Board of Commissioners to monitor progress to ensure the desired outcomes and adjust as needed. The Economic Development Specialist will evaluate the results in each focus area annually and will identify new or shifting areas of focus as the Town's circumstances change. Annual progress reports will be shared with the public.

Measures of Success

Indicators of success will be used to track progress and support shared accountability across the organization regarding progress on the various priorities. These indicators will reflect not only the success of the plan's goals but also the community's success as a whole. Below are suggested indicators:

- Growth in dollars of taxable property in the property tax base
- Ratio of combined commercial and industrial taxable property to residential taxable property
- Percent change in property values of identified properties

Property value per acre or square foot of identified properties

Poverty rate

- Percent persons in poverty

- Median household income

Commercial vacancy rate percentage

Industrial vacancy rate percentage

Combined commercial and industrial vacancy rate percentage

Affordable housing

- Number of new affordable housing units constructed

- Number of housing units razed for construction

- Number of building permits issued

Companies & NAICS Descriptions:

Abec: Biological Product (except Diagnostic) Manufacturing

Asterra Labs: Pharmaceutical Preparation Manufacturing

Novozymes North America: Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences (except Nanotechnology and Biotechnology)

TYPES OF OPERATIONS

As we can see from the chart below, Manufacturing is overwhelmingly the largest project type in the Eastern Research Triangle region and as mentioned previously, is represented by these three top industry clusters: **Food, Beverage and Agriculture, Chemicals, Plastics and Rubber and Biopharmaceuticals, Pharmaceuticals & Life Sciences.**

Economic Development Project Type	Sum of Announced Investment (\$)	Sum of Announced Jobs
Manufacturing	366,992,203	1,390
Distribution Warehouse	13,754,176	312
Office	9,281,003	91
Headquarters-Corporate	2,241,000	106
Headquarters-Business	1,800,000	25
Call Center	1,000,000	200

Chart 17; Source: EDPNC

The data also show that the largest amount of jobs in the Manufacturing project type were announced in both Nash (604) and Wilson (445), followed by Edgecombe (229) and Franklin (119) Counties.

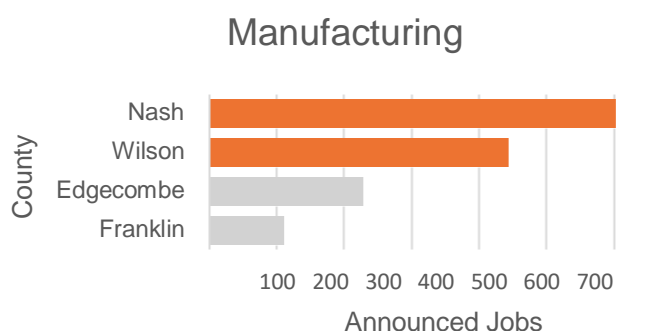


Chart 18; Source: EDPNC

Within the Distribution Warehouse category, Wilson has noticeably higher announced jobs (200) than, it's counterparts Nash, Franklin and Edgecombe, with 78, 34 and 0 jobs, respectively.

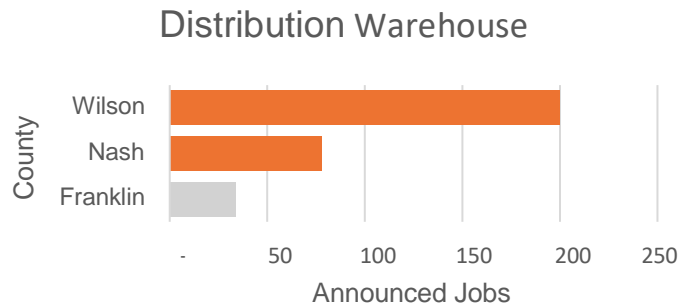


Chart 19; Source: EDPNC

CONCLUSION

This section of the Environmental Assessment provides a comprehensive analysis of the Eastern Triangle Region's economic ecosystems and demographics to help Zebulon better understand the strengths and opportunities within its neighboring markets. The Eastern Triangle Region exhibits a shift from traditional industries to a more diversified and modern economic landscape. Manufacturing, including advanced manufacturing and biopharmaceuticals, plays a significant role in these counties' economies. Collaborations between local governments, workforce development boards, and employers have been instrumental in driving innovation and economic prosperity.

In addition, below are some areas that Zebulon can consider as they continue the process of constructing a comprehensive Economic Development strategy:

Economic Diversification: Counties in the Eastern Triangle Region are actively diversifying their economies away from traditional sectors like tobacco, textiles, and agriculture toward more modern industries, such as advanced manufacturing, biopharmaceuticals, and technology. In addition, each county offers diversity of industries, ranging from manufacturing to healthcare, agribusiness, and finance.

Strong, Growing Industry Clusters: The Eastern Triangle Region has three notable industry clusters with high amounts of new, capital investment and jobs in recent years: food, beverage, and agriculture; chemicals, plastics, and rubber; and biopharmaceuticals, pharmaceuticals, and life sciences. These clusters have seen steady growth and represent potential areas of future exploration for Zebulon.

Manufacturing: Manufacturing overwhelmingly dominates economic development projects in the region, aligned with the top industry clusters. Wilson County can also be noted for its distribution warehouse projects.

Access to Transportation Networks: Many of these counties emphasize their access to reliable transportation networks, including highways and railways. This accessibility is crucial for the distribution of goods and services, making them attractive for manufacturing and distribution industries.

Education, Workforce Development & Collaboration: Consistent with the entire Research Triangle region, the Eastern Triangle Region has prioritized partnerships between local

governments, workforce boards, educational institutions, and employers, ensuring a skilled workforce tailored to the needs of their local industries and providing opportunities for career advancement with their existing populations. These types of collaborations ensure a thriving business ecosystem and help drive innovation.

Demographics: Zebulon has experienced significant and accelerated population growth in recent years and is an outlier in comparison to its neighbors. In addition, Zebulon has a diverse population with a significant presence of Hispanic/Latino and multi-racial communities as well as Black or African American and foreign-born residents, re-emphasizing the need for understanding potential barriers and creating equitable and inclusive strategies that support minority populations. These demographics trend more in line with portions of the Eastern Triangle Region, than with Wake County & Raleigh.

In conclusion, this section of the Environmental Assessment highlights the dynamic economic landscape of the Eastern Triangle Region and underscores the importance of economic diversification, industry clusters, workforce development, and demographic considerations as Zebulon charts its path forward. Embracing these insights will enable Zebulon to develop a robust and inclusive Economic Development strategy that capitalizes on its unique strengths and fosters sustainable growth in alignment with its regional counterparts.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The following commercial and industrial assessment is a component of the Town of Zebulon's year-long process to develop a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, creating an intentional and actionable plan that allows for a healthy economic ecosystem and smart growth for the Town.

One critical component of a healthy economic ecosystem is a diverse and well-rounded tax base – one that is spread between residential, commercial, and industrial activity and investments. Creating a strong and diverse tax base allows a town to manage growth and fund critical projects that can improve the overall quality of life for residents. The Town of Zebulon has already identified and prioritized these components within their Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP), conducted in 2020 and approved in 2021. The CLUP identified several guiding principles, two of which have been identified as especially relevant to this assessment and will remain a strong focus throughout the entirety of Zebulon's Economic Development Strategy. The guiding principles are as follows:

Guiding Principle 3#: Zebulon will be [balanced](#).

Zebulon will seek to be a complete and balanced community as it grows. **From an economic and tax base standpoint, this relates to having both great neighborhoods and living options while also being an attractive host community for major employers and a wide array of small businesses.** Zebulon also must balance the needs of older, established neighborhoods and commercial areas with the necessary management and servicing of growth at its edges.

Guiding Principle #4: Zebulon will be [resilient](#).

The foundation for a resilient community is a diverse local economy that will continue to attract investment and generate jobs over the long term while bolstering the Town's tax base. Zebulon's economic base must also be able to withstand times of recession and avoid over-reliance on one or a few major employers.

To achieve a strategy and vision that incorporates a balanced and resilient community, there is a need to assess and explore the commercial and industrial makeup of Zebulon and identify trends across the region suitable to incorporate into a future strategy. This assessment will analyze Zebulon's current industrial assets, review land use allocations, and better identify opportunities that can create long-term and sustainable opportunities for job creation and capital investment – an area that is critical to the overall health of the economic ecosystem of Zebulon. In addition, the assessment will incorporate insights into mixed use commercial investments and redevelopments

which can maximize space and allow for residential, commercial, and industrial uses all in one. Data on real estate trends across Wake County, as well as targeted industry clusters, will also be incorporated into the overall assessment.

The assessment is divided into the following sections:

- [Town of Zebulon's Commercial and Industrial Landscape](#)
- [Wake County Commercial and Industrial Real Estate Trends](#)
- [Examples of Successful Redevelopments in Wake County](#)

TOWN OF ZEBULON'S COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE

CURRENT ACTIVITY

According to the Zebulon Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the Town was historically known for a heavy concentration of commercial and industrial business activity which has since shifted towards a now majority residential base. This shift towards residential started to ramp up in 2019 and has continued to grow with new housing developments, including subdivisions and multi-family construction. In the 2022 Annual Financial Report, the Mayor confirms this shift, stating: "The composition of the tax base is shifting from a heavily commercial and industrial base to a more residential base with the residential development recently completed and will continue to do so with over 2,000 planned and approved residential development on the way."

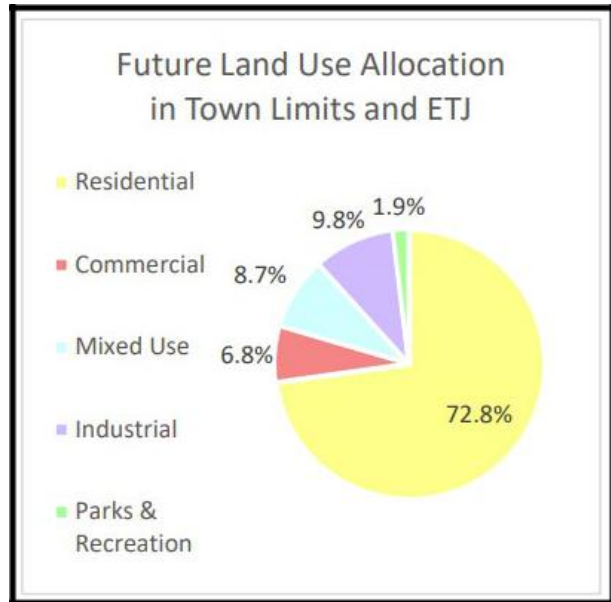
We can get a better understanding of this shift and the makeup of Zebulon more holistically by reviewing the following information provided within the CLUP and specifically the [Future Land Use and Character Map \(FLUC Map\)](#)⁶⁴ which was approved in 2021. The FLUC Map designates land use categories throughout the Town of Zebulon and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). The CLUP also offers several charts to coincide with the Map (listed below and on page 3), which offer snapshots of the acreage and future land use allocation per category.

FUTURE LAND USE ALLOCATION

https://www.townofzebulon.org/sites/default/files/uploads/planning/Maps/02-zebulon_tomorrow_-_map-future_land_use_and_character_adopted_06.07.21.pdf

This pie graph shows the large quantity of residential land use allocations (73% of total) versus areas like commercial (6.8%), mixed use (8.7%) and industrial (9.8%) that could accommodate future long-term established employers, quality job creation, and avenues for increased economic activity.

Naturally, a growing residential population and developments begins to attract commercial assets and service providers that can meet the day-to-day needs of residents and enhance their quality of life. It is clear when driving through the Town and looking at real-time development activity that Zebulon is seeing the effects. According to Zebulon's Interactive Development Map which displays projects going through the Town's development process, in the span of one month (January – February 2024), the Town saw 16



¹Source: Zebulon Comprehensive Land Use Plan

new commercial projects. Examples of some commercial developments on that list are Presto Photo, 7 Eleven Gas Station, Rocket Express Car Wash, Storage Max, and Tractor Supply. In addition, Downtown continues to see growth with new business locations, including the Creative Cup coffee shop, a bagpipe manufacturing company, and existing business expansions and/or revitalization projects, including Norse Brewing which is listed as an active project on the Interactive Development Map as well.

In addition to this commercial activity, which has added benefits to a resident's quality of life, we will pay particular attention in this report to existing employers and the attraction of future employers to Zebulon who can offer Zebulon residents quality, long-term job opportunities while adding growth and diversity to the Town's tax base, further enabling the Town to make investments in parks, public utilities, and all the critical elements of the Zebulon ecosystem that make it a great place to live.

A critical component in retaining and attracting quality employers (company headquarters, research and development facilities, manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing operations, for example) **to Zebulon is being able to offer competitive land sites and existing buildings that can accommodate these types of users.** The following sections will review the Town's land use allocation plan to get a sense of what is available and feasible in Zebulon, as well as the types of land sites and existing buildings that are in high demand for companies looking to expand and/or re-locate in Wake County.

Compiled in the table below (and reflected in the FLUC Map) are 15 categories used to address both land use and character, along with their associated acreage.

Future Land Use and Characteristics Categories

Map Category	Town		Extraterritorial Jurisdiction		Planning Area	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Parks and Recreation	124.7	3.9%	0.0	0.0%	28.2	0.2%
Rural Conservation	0.4	0.0%	194.5	4.1%	4,949.4	36.5%
Rural Residential	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%	4,102.9	30.2%
Suburban Residential	528.1	16.4%	3,367.0	70.6%	4,375.2	32.2%
General Residential	1,278.9	39.8%	290.3	6.1%	0.9	0.0%
Urban Residential	44.3	1.4%	0.8	0.0%	0.0	0.0%
Residential Mix	88.3	2.7%	14.4	0.3%	0.0	0.0%
Suburban Commercial	107.7	3.4%	99.4	2.1%	118.0	0.9%
General Commercial	251.6	7.8%	81.8	1.7%	0.0	0.0%
Stadium Area Mixed Use	47.8	1.5%	284.6	6.0%	0.0	0.0%
Industrial Light	233.5	7.3%	96.6	2.0%	0.0	0.0%
Suburban Business Park	41.4	1.3%	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%
Industrial Heavy	214.2	6.7%	197.2	4.1%	0.0	0.0%
Urban Downtown Core	7.3	0.2%	0.0	0.0%	0.0	0.0%
Urban Downtown Mixed Use	217.0	6.8%	141.3	3.0%	0.0	0.0%

NOTE: Cemeteries account for 0.9% of the area within the town limits (27.7 acres).

Source: Town of Zebulon Comprehensive Land Use Plan

To obtain a closer look at the categories that will most closely align with real estate trends and information presented throughout the rest of this report, we have condensed information from the chart above and offered descriptions of those categories that either currently accommodate or will accommodate uses like office users, industrial users, mixed use developments, long-term established employers, and quality job creation.

Map Category	Town		Extraterritorial Jurisdiction	
	Acres	% of Total	Acres	% of Total
Suburban Commercial	107	3.40%	99.4	2.10%
General Commercial	251.6	7.80%	81.8	1.70%
Stadium Area Mixed Use*	47.8	1.50%	284.6	6.00%
Industrial Light	233.5	7.30%	96.6	2.00%
Suburban Business Park	41.4	1.30%	0	0.00%
Industrial Heavy	214.2	6.70%	197.2	4.10%

Urban Downtown Core*	7.3	0.20%	0	0.00%
Urban Downtown Mixed Use*	217	6.80%	141.3	3.00%

The following section offers definitions on the above categories pulled from the CLUP, as well as current activities and existing companies found within certain categories:

The Suburban Commercial classification involves commercial developments that focus on preserving “green” and open spaces. The suburban commercial character is achieved through preservation of trees or other natural site features, along with generous landscaping and can include commercial retail and service uses, multi-story or small-scale offices, and medical or research and development facilities, as an example.

General Commercial (GC) applies to properties utilized for commercial retail, office, and service purposes, primarily situated along major roadways within the community to ensure high visibility and accessibility. However, it can also include locations catering to smaller-scale and neighborhood-oriented businesses and can include mixed use developments that might incorporate residential components as well. According to the FLUC Map, some of these GC areas fall in central, west and northwest Zebulon with larger areas along the US 264 and Highway 97 intersection, surrounded by plots of land designated for Industrial Heavy uses.

The Industrial Heavy (IH) characteristic is designed to cater to activities that can have a significant impact on neighboring properties, particularly in terms of noise, vibration, light, odor, truck traffic, and operating hours. This encompasses both "light" industrial operations and more impactful "heavy" industrial activities. Depending on the specific standards set forth in development regulations, industrial areas may accommodate a diverse array of uses, spanning from office/warehouse spaces to wholesale operations, product assembly, and manufacturing facilities. According to the FLUC Map, IH sites are concentrated along the US 264 corridor and along the rail line that stretches across the Town of Zebulon from East to Southwest. This includes the Triangle East Business Park, home to existing industries like Nomaco as well as a 47,000 square foot existing building (formerly Vinventions) and several acres of land for future development within the park. The IH designation on the FLUP Map also includes Devil Dog's operations and the Gert Noel Innovation Center across the highway from the Triangle East Business Park.

The Industrial Light characteristics refers to types of operations like warehousing and distribution, light manufacturing, processing/assembly, and flex space (office, lab, and research and development uses combined) that would not have as high of a disturbance on nearby properties when it comes to noise, vibration, odor, truck traffic, etc. Currently included in this category of Industrial Light on the FLUP Map are GSK's operation, US Foods, and the corridor along Old Highway 264 as well as southwest Zebulon.

Urban Downtown Core and Urban Downtown Mixed Use: The Urban Downtown Core designation typically represents the most densely developed section of a community, characterized by extensive building coverage and minimal private development space

allocated for off-street parking and open landscapes. Mixed use developments are prevalent, contributing to a vibrant urban environment. Public plazas and pocket parks offer green spaces for community gatherings and events, sometimes involving street closures. Adjacent to the Urban Downtown Core lies the Urban Downtown Mixed Use area, which exhibits a slightly lesser intensity of mixed use development. This zone serves as a transitional buffer between the bustling downtown core and neighboring areas primarily dedicated to single-family residences or commercial activities. It often hosts complementary businesses and amenities such as professional offices, restaurants, and cultural venues, maintaining a pedestrian-friendly environment. In July 2023, the Town of Zebulon was designated as a **North Carolina Main Street Community**, a title awarded for the Town's dedication to the improvement of the economic wellbeing of the downtown district. Prior to this designation, the Town has spent 3 years participating in programs and receiving specialized support from the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center and the Downtown Associate Community. The Town continues to conduct studies and implement programs that are specific to the revitalization and growth of the Downtown area.⁶⁵

The Stadium Area Mixed Use characteristic, according to the CLUP, is tailored for Five County Stadium and its vicinity, demanding special focus to protect a community asset and identify a high-value use. In addition, there are traffic and noise concerns (for example, concerts, fireworks, and peak arrival and departure traffic flows) that are specific to this area and will be considered for future developments. The stadium is predominantly surrounded by non-residential areas, with the presence of a US Foods distribution facility and a wastewater treatment facility nearby. Specific development opportunities for Five County Stadium are detailed in a 10-page section of the CLUP. The study envisions the area becoming a vibrant destination, characterized by walkability and a blend of hospitality, entertainment, and recreational amenities.

While the residential activity has proven to be a positive for the overall recent growth of the Town and has attracted commercial assets and service providers, it does place emphasis on the need to create a strategic vision and intentional plan for the smaller pockets of mixed use and industrial land use allocations across the Town, ensuring best and highest uses to achieve the goal of a balanced and resilient community. Data provided in the next two sections on real estate trends and redevelopment projects across Wake County will add some perspective into the types of real estate projects that are in high demand for companies looking to expand and/or relocate in Wake County and that would fit within the current CLUP characteristics identified above.

**Although there will be themes identified within this report that can be incorporated into future downtown and Five-County Stadium development considerations, the Urban Downtown Core, Urban Downtown Mixed Use and Stadium Area Mixed Use categories and characteristics have either been studied in the recent past (via the NC Main Street Program or 10-page layout in CLUP) or are in the process of undergoing in-depth analysis in the future.*

<https://www.commerce.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2023/07/10/three-communities-selected-nc-main-street-programs>

WAKE COUNTY COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL REAL ESTATE TRENDS

CAPTURING THE MOMENTUM

The State of North Carolina and the Research Triangle Region have consistently remained a top location for new and expanding businesses and continue to receive national attention as a top state and region for doing business. In 2022 and 2023, North Carolina was ranked the #1 Top State for Business by CNBC and the Raleigh Metropolitan Area was named #3 Best Business Climate in Business Facilities Annual Rankings as well as the #1 Place to Start a Small Business by LendingTree. It is also worth noting that the Research Triangle Region continues to be a resilient location, experiencing growth when other major metropolitan areas have struggled. During the height of the pandemic, Wake County, the largest county in the Research Triangle Region, had historic company announcements, including the location of a future \$1B campus and engineering hub planned by Apple, as well as Fujifilm's announcement to invest \$2B in a manufacturing facility. Both company locations bring with them thousands of new jobs and new, taxable investments to their respective communities that will make positive impacts for decades to come. In addition, developers across the region continue to put their trust in the community's continued growth and economic strength by planning new industrial campuses and redeveloping spaces for better and higher uses.

In addition to the strengths of our market that make companies more attracted to the region – talent, lower operating costs, business friendly governments, access to innovation, etc. – is the ability to offer the right type of real estate products that are being sought by companies seeking new locations or expansion opportunities. Understanding real estate trends and the industry clusters associated with the trends will be important criteria to incorporate into a long-term commercial and industrial real estate strategy for the Town of Zebulon. These criteria can enable the recruitment of new business to the Town, ultimately increasing the Town's ability to create new, quality jobs for its residents and diversifying and growing the Town's tax base through new, capital investments made by those businesses.

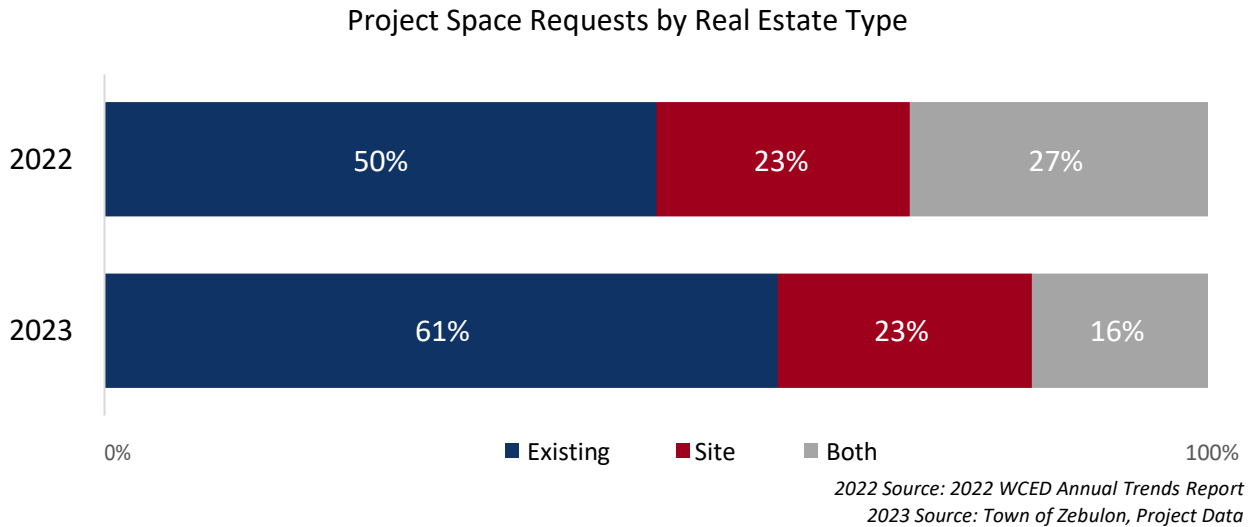
THE DATA

To better understand current real estate trends, the following sections will review Wake County Economic Development's 2022 Annual Trends Report which incorporates data on 150 projects received from January-December 2022. In addition, data provided by the Town of Zebulon will be analyzed for project activity occurring over a 12-month period between February 2023-January 2024. Data from the Town of Zebulon will review 42 projects received that have an Existing Building request of 150,000 square feet or less and projects requesting 25 acres of land or less.

Data from the WCED Annual Trend Report and the Town of Zebulon reflect opportunities represented by businesses who are considering a new location or an expansion of an existing location in Wake County. Most, if not all, of the project activity data reviewed takes into consideration the industry in which the company operates and their real estate requirements (existing buildings vs. sites and more).

Project Space Requests by Real Estate Type

According to the 2022 Annual Report, Existing Buildings represent 50% of all types of real estate requests, with Sites (acres of land zoned for industrial or commercial use) or Both (Existing Buildings & Sites in the same request) representing 27% and 23%, respectively.



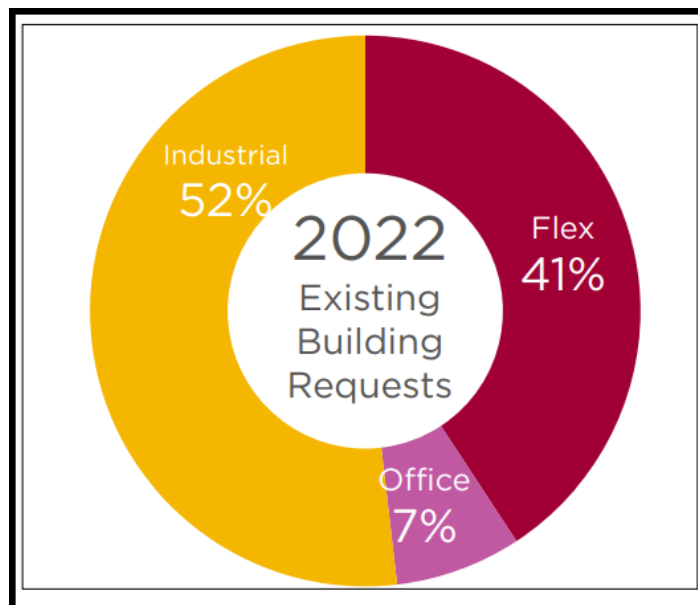
Similarly (although the pool of data is smaller), the 2023 Zebulon project data shows 61% of projects are requesting Existing Buildings, with much smaller percentages reflected for Sites (23%) and Both (16%).

Wake County Economic Development's 2022 report also provides data on project space requests by real estate types dating back to 2017. The data shows that Existing Buildings have been the most popular real estate type for companies who are considering a relocation or expansion. Existing Buildings can offer companies a more efficient method for entering a market, often saving them time and money. Developers have learned ways to offer shell buildings (base structures [walls, ceilings, and floors]) which allow companies the flexibility to up-fit the building in a way that is specific to their processes and industry standards.

Existing Buildings by Property Type

The Annual Report takes it a step further by narrowing in on Existing Building criteria, including the following property type categories requested: **Industrial** (typically includes uses like Manufacturing, Warehouse/Distribution, Assembly, Processing, etc.), **Flex** (typically includes warehouse or manufacturing space, office, and retail/amenities) and **Office**.

2022 Existing Building Requests by Type

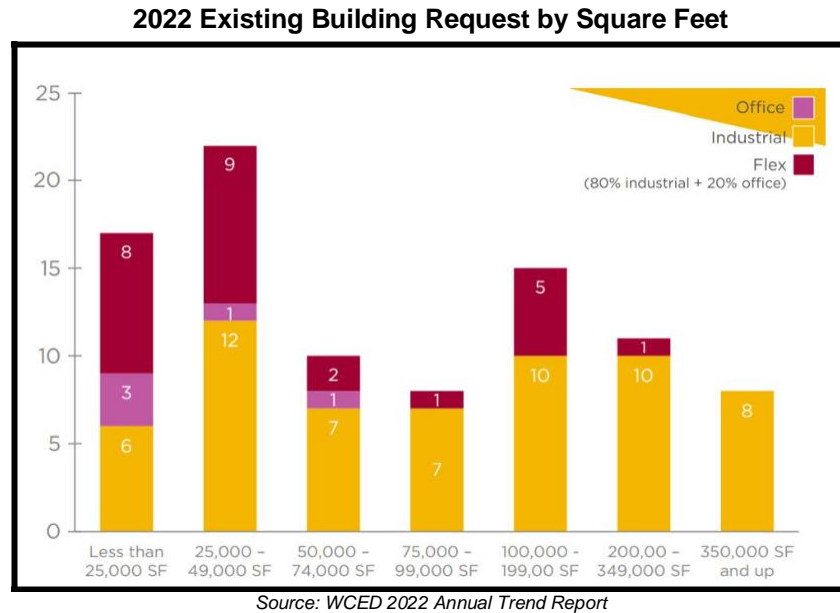


Source: WCED 2022 Annual Trend Report

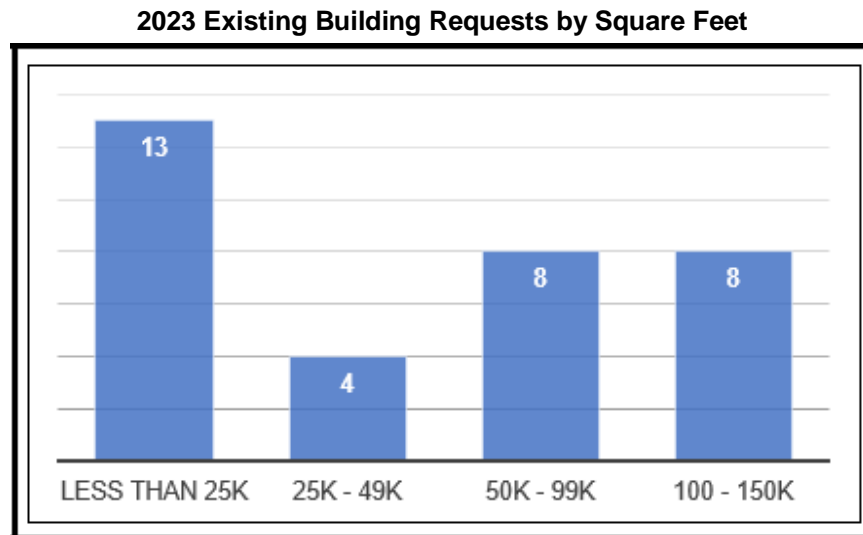
Industrial Buildings have remained the predominant property type for existing building requests since 2017. In 2022, as represented in the chart above, 52% of all Existing Building requests were for industrial buildings. Of note is a consistent share of “Flex” space being requested. Flex is a type of build-out that accommodates industrial uses such as advanced manufacturing, ag-tech, and bio-tech industries, while also incorporating office space, lab space, and increased amenities. In 2022, Flex Space accounted for 41% of all Existing Building requests.

Existing Buildings by Size

The 2022 WCED Annual Report on project activity also showed that the top 3 most requested square footage for existing buildings fell within the following ranges (also depicted in the graph below): 25,000-49,000 square feet, Less than 25,000 square feet, and 100,000-199,000 square feet.



2023 data provided by the Town of Zebulon reflects a similar trend, with 39% of all existing building requests falling within the range of Less than 25,000 square feet and 24% represented by both 50,000-99,000 and 100,000-150,000 square foot requests.



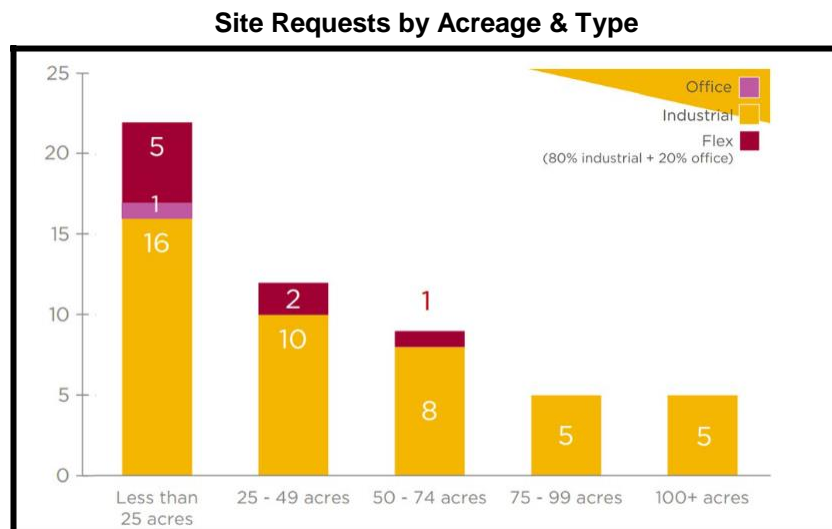
Source: Town of Zebulon, Project Data

As Zebulon continues to refine a strategy for attracting new businesses to the Town, the data presented above on existing buildings, as well as future reports that are published by Wake County Economic Development, will be important criteria to review and utilize when determining the development or redevelopment of buildings. This data will be important to reference and utilize in

meetings with developers and other stakeholders to identify the real estate products for the Town that will be attractive and in-demand for companies exploring the market.

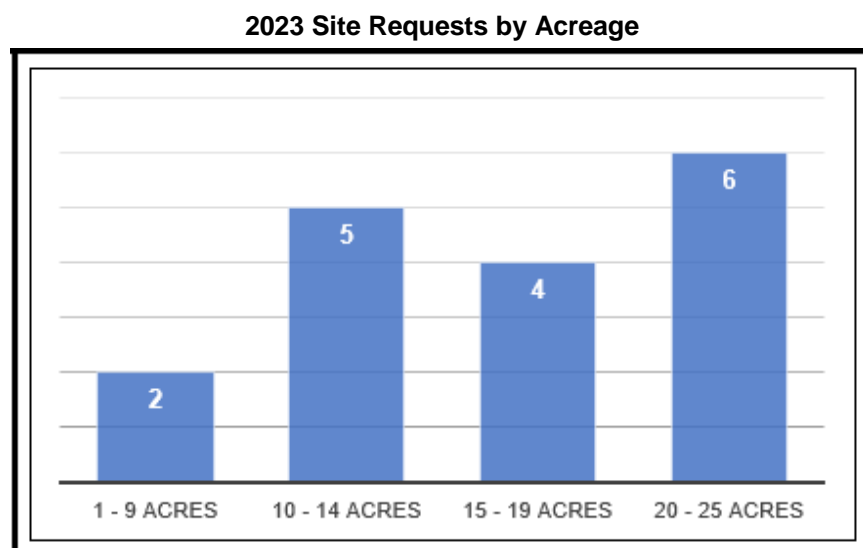
Site Requests

When we shift from existing building requests and analyze site requests from companies who are exploring expansion opportunities, we see from the below chart that the companies represented by these projects are seeking smaller sites (less than 25 acres), accounting for 41% of all site requests in 2022. This is consistent with data from 2021, which showed 57% of all site requests fell within the “Less than 25 acres” category.



Source: 2022 WCED Annual Trend Report

When we review 2023 data from the Town of Zebulon, we see that for all sites requested that were 25 acres or less, there is not a very large differential between each division of acres, apart from requests for “1-9 Acres,” which only represented two project requests.



Source: Town of Zebulon Project Data

While in recent years we have seen a trend in larger sites being requested for emerging industries like electric vehicle manufacturing or large-scale biomanufacturing operations, most companies are still seeking smaller plots of land for high-quality expansion projects. This is good news for the Town of Zebulon, considering the current makeup of available land plots trend towards the “Less than 25 acres” category that we see in the data.

INDUSTRY

While real estate data is important to review, it is also important for the Town to understand the industries associated with the real estate requests. The following 2022 and 2023 charts display data that will be useful in Zebulon’s continued economic development strategy.

The first chart referenced below, “**2022 Industry Types by Real Estate, Investment and Jobs**” is referenced within the WCED 2022 Annual Trends Report and breaks down real estate trends per targeted industry cluster identified by Wake County Economic Development, which include the following:

Advanced Manufacturing
Life Sciences, Biotech
HQs, Shared Services, Call Centers
Software/IT
Smart Grid/CleanTech

According to WCED, although Wake County has a diverse economy, certain industries stand out due to factors such as a highly educated talent pool, innovation, and effective collaboration between academia, government, and industry. Specifically, the industries listed above and in the chart below are identified as Target Industry Clusters within the county. With economic development programs in place and robust industry networks, these sectors provide unique advantages to companies operating within these industries.

2022 Industry Types by Real Estate, Investment and Jobs

By Industry	GEO Average SF Min	GEO Average SF Max	GEO Average Acres Min	GEO Average Acres Max	% Requesting Existing	% Top Request by Property Type and/or Space	Investment (GEO AVG)	Jobs (GEO AVG)
All Projects received with R.E. Requirements (# total industries)	60,000	93,000	19	34	77% request Existing (Both + Existing)	Request Existing Industrial (no flex): 42%	\$ 37 Million	180
Advanced Manufacturing	70,000	110,000	20	36	69% request Existing	Request Existing Industrial Space (no flex): 44%	\$ 43 Million	190
Life Sciences, Biotech	55,000	90,000	25	50	75% request Existing	Request JUST Land: 28%	\$ 120 Million	250
HQs, Shared Services, Call Centers	30,000	55,000	15	27	94% request Existing	Request JUST Class A Office Space: 28%	\$ 35 Million	150
Software/IT	19,000	35,000	10	10	100% request Existing	Request JUST Class A Office Space: 45%	\$10 Million	70
SmartGrid, CleanTech	100,000	200,000	30	70	75% request Existing	Request Existing Industrial Space (no flex): 45%	\$ 43 Million	320

Source: WCED 2022 Annual Trends Report

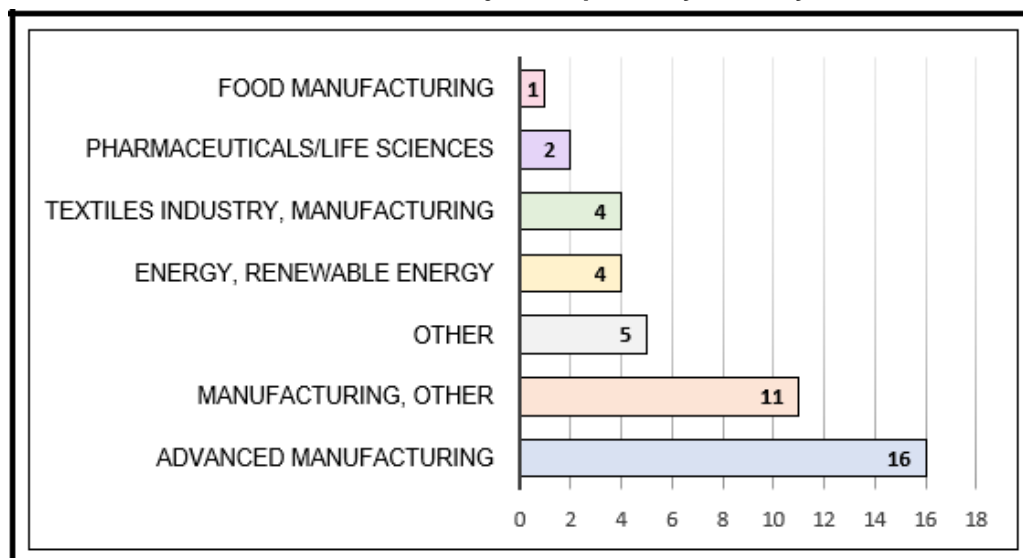
The next two charts are compiled from the 2023 Town of Zebulon project data which, as mentioned in the introduction, includes project data occurring over a 12-month period between February 2023-January 2024. Data from the Town of Zebulon indicates 42 projects received that have an Existing Building request of 150,000 square feet or less and projects requesting 25 acres of land or less. The data provided by Zebulon includes a wider range of industries, including the following additions not referenced in WCED's 2022 report: "Manufacturing, Other", "Energy, Renewable Energy," "Textiles, Manufacturing," and "Food Manufacturing."

2023 Industry Types by Real Estate

Industry	Existing Building	Both	Sites	SF Request (Ave.)	Acreage Request (Ave.)
Advanced Manufacturing	69%	19%	12%	50,000	17
Manufacturing, Other	46%	27%	27%	72,000	13
Other (Call Center, Warehousing/Distribution)	60%	20%	20%	28,000	10
Energy, Renewable Energy	50%	-	50%	30,000	15
Textiles, Manufacturing	75%	-	25%	67,000	20
Pharmaceuticals/Life Sciences	50%	-	50%	75,000	15
Food Manufacturing	100%	-	-	50,000	-

Source: Town of Zebulon Project Data

2023 Number of Project Requests by Industry



Source: Town of Zebulon Project Data

When we consider Zebulon's existing industrial and commercial makeup, while also analyzing property request trends, it would be advantageous for Zebulon to consider data included in the charts above when identifying target industries and associated industrial and commercial strategies that would be of best and highest use for the Town.

For example, consider the following breakdown of the Advanced Manufacturing and Life Sciences industry data:

Advanced Manufacturing

2022:

- 69% requesting Existing Buildings
- Average Building Square Foot Minimum: 70,000
- Average Building Square Foot Maximum: 110,000
- Average Acres Requested: 20 (Minimum); 36 (Maximum)
- Jobs: 190
- Capital Investment: \$43M (2nd highest of all industries)

2023:

- 69% requesting Existing Buildings
- Average Square Feet Requested: 50,000
- Average Acres Requested: 17
- Largest frequency of requests (16 of 43 total projects)

For both years, we see the Advanced Manufacturing industry is predominantly seeking Existing Buildings. We can also gain perspective on the size of the buildings and understand this is already a successful and supported industry within Wake County (as an existing targeted industry) and proves to be an industry that is continuing to seek real estate properties for expansions and new locations (37% of all projects in Zebulon's data were represented by this industry). Based on 2022 data, we can see there are a high number of new job and capital investment opportunities associated with this industry, while not requiring a very large real estate footprint.

According to Wake County Economic Development, there are over 300 companies operating within the Advanced Manufacturing industry in Wake County including GSK, Buhler, ABB, John Deere, Cisco, and more. With more advanced technologies needed to succeed in this industry, Wake County provides specializations in IoT, data analytics, software development, and robotics that allow Advanced Manufacturing companies to have a competitive advantage. In addition, this industry has access to some of the best talent in the nation with educational programs catered towards Manufacturing starting with the K-12 system. This continues to be a healthy and growing industry for Wake County.⁶⁶

Life Sciences

2022:

- 75% requesting Existing Buildings
- Average Building Square Foot Minimum: 55,000
- Average Building Square Foot Maximum: 90,000
- Average Acres Requested: 25 (Minimum); 50 (Maximum)
- Jobs: 250 (2nd highest of all industries)
- Capital Investment: \$120M (highest of all industries)

<https://raleigh-wake.org/target-industries/advanced-manufacturing>

2023:

50% requesting Existing Buildings

Average Square Feet Requested: 75,000

Average Acres Requested: 15

In 2022, 75% of Life Science projects were requesting Existing Buildings. For 2023, in our smaller pool of data, that percentage is at 50%, with the other half requesting an average land plot of 15 acres. The size of existing buildings being requested is comparable to the Advanced Manufacturing industry, with a minimum and maximum average request of 55,000 and 90,000, respectively, in 2022 and an average square footage request of 75,000 for our smaller pool of data in 2023. The Life Sciences sector, on average, has the highest capital investment amount (\$120 million) and the second highest amount of jobs per project (250 average new jobs) in 2022 data.

Although frequency of requests within the 2023 Zebulon data is smaller with only two project requests represented in our data pool, this industry is a legacy industry for the Research Triangle Region and has consistently ranked among the top 5 hubs in the US, competing with major cities like Boston, San Diego, and San Francisco. North Carolina and the Research Triangle Region have been pioneers in this field for over 50 years, starting with the establishment of Research Triangle Park, which has facilitated deliberate and strategic industry growth. In fact, in January 2024, global real estate firm JLL named the Research Triangle Region as the #1 Hub for Biomanufacturing. According to an article published by the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, JLL stated the following as to why they chose the Triangle region in their study:

“As there is more pressure than ever to speed up the drug development process, Raleigh-Durham is uniquely positioned to meet the need. With a rich history of large-scale biomanufacturing in the Research Triangle Park and the market’s outlying counties, a critical mass of workers is present. Research and development from the market’s three tier-one universities has facilitated an emerging lab market. Bridging the gap is a healthy pipeline of pilot manufacturing real estate with plenty of land, a growing talent base and an increasingly favorable business environment to catalyze the entirety of the drug development life cycle.”⁶⁷

The Life Sciences industry has also been a popular target for redevelopment projects across the Triangle which have proven to be successful in the recruitment of life sciences companies. The next section will dive further into those project examples.

<https://www.ncbiotech.org/news/jll-names-research-triangle-nations-top-biomanufacturing-hub>

TARGETED INDUSTRIES

Cultivating a diverse local economy is a goal for Zebulon, and identifying targeted industries for the Town's proactive efforts will help achieve this goal. **We recommend that more proactive marketing efforts focus on Life Sciences, Food Manufacturing, and Advanced Manufacturing.** Data presented in this report and the Environmental Assessment can be used to tell a compelling story as to why companies within these industries would find a supportive and competitive environment by locating in the Town of Zebulon.

In addition, **we recommend a more passive approach with two of Wake County's targeted industries: Smart Grid/CleanTechnology and Headquarters.** While there is more to be gained from focusing resources and efforts on Life Sciences, Food Manufacturing, and Advanced Manufacturing, Zebulon can consider opportunities that are presented from Smart Grid/CleanTechnology and Headquarters projects, while taking into consideration the following information:

Smart Grid/CleanTechnology – typically requires a larger footprint and would require a more focused marketing strategy.

Headquarters – Wake County Economic Development is putting forth effort to recruit more headquarters to the County, so Zebulon may see the effects of this in the future. Some municipalities within the county are creating a clause within their incentive policies that is specifically targeting Headquarters, and this could be low hanging fruit for Zebulon to explore.

Finally, Shared Services/Call Centers and Software/IT industries do not warrant a heavy focus for Zebulon due to the industry's higher demands for traditional office space. These industries are more likely to locate in areas throughout the Triangle that have existing Class A or Class B office buildings.

BEST AND HIGHEST USE OF INVENTORY

As of January 2024, Zebulon has a very small amount of inventory to recruit businesses. Zebulon has small parcels of land that have either been sold to multiple owners or listed for sale. There are not currently viable pieces of property for the Town to individually pursue for future industrial developments. There is one piece of land in the industrial park, and one or two vacant buildings that should be marketed for uses that fall within the target industries. **We recommend any future buildings that become available due to an employer leaving are met with a strong marketing and recruitment strategy to fill the space with the targeted industries that the Town has identified.**

We recommend that Zebulon agree to a targeted industry list and then build out a marketing strategy that tells the story of why Zebulon is an ideal location for business. By promoting this story to stakeholders, partners, and the local developer community, Zebulon can secure interest and buy-in, with the goal that the right investments can be made for building new product or redeveloping buildings and sites that can house future employers. It is essential for Zebulon to

understand the real estate demands of each industry so that developers build the right type of space for future employers and not simply build with the unfortunate outcome of vacant space.

REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT EXAMPLES IN WAKE COUNTY

As we have seen from the real estate data in this report, there is a high demand for existing, industrial, and flex buildings for companies who are looking to relocate or expand their business in Wake County. One way that economic development partners and developers are taking advantage of this demand is through creative redevelopment projects. This section presents examples of those successful projects across the Research Triangle Region that would be advantageous for the Town of Zebulon to explore further as they build their strategy and vision for future commercial and industrial opportunities across the Town.

THE STITCH



Source: Gensler

Former Outlet Mall in Morrisville turned into State-of-the-Art Genetic Testing Facility

In 2019, Equator Capital Management acquired the Morrisville Outlet Mall and revealed its plan to transform the structure into a distinctive office environment named "The Stitch."⁶⁸ The project seamlessly combined repurposing efforts with a goal to enhance facilities through the redevelopment of the Morrisville Outlet Mall. In collaboration with Equator Capital Management and architectural firm Gensler, Kimley-Horn undertook the task of revitalizing both the building and its surroundings. The project's name, "The Stitch," reflects the transparent communal space that effectively "stitches" the entire site together. This shared area fosters a sense of community, collaboration, and innovation. Additionally, a comprehensive indoor and outdoor amenity program

<https://www.gensler.com/projects/the-stitch>

was strategically implemented to optimize leasing and revenue goals for the project.⁶⁹ In April of 2021, Invitae, a leading life sciences genetic testing company, announced plans to open a new facility in Morrisville, North Carolina, using the former outlet mall and “The Stitch” as its base for a state-of-the-art genetic testing facility including lab, warehouse and office space. Invitae's new 175,000 square foot East Coast facility is a state-of-the-art laboratory and production space with advanced features such as heavy mechanical support, extensive cold storage capabilities, uninterruptible power supply, and flexible infrastructure. The design emphasizes ultimate flexibility, allowing easy reconfiguration of equipment to adapt to evolving scientific processes and workflow changes. Incorporating a variable refrigerant flow HVAC system and compressed dry air package, the facility minimizes the need for infrastructure modifications as Invitae's programs evolve. The workspace also prioritizes employee experience with amenities like a coffee bar, café, gym, and courtyards, creating an energetic environment that transforms the former retail mall space.⁷⁰

Previous Use: Outlet Mall

Current Use: Life Sciences, Research & Development, Office Space, Amenity & Recreational Space

Timeline: 2019-2022 (estimate)

Square Footage: 245,000 Square Feet (redeveloped building space); 25 acres

Partners on Project*: Equator Capital Management Group, Kimley Horne, Gensler, 35 North, Invitae

Before

Outlet mall food court prior to transition to flex and warehouse space.



Source: 35° North

After

<https://www.kimley-horn.com/project/rtp-redevelopment-project-the-stitch/>

<https://www.35n.com/insights/how-invitaet-turned-a-former-mall-into-laboratory-production-center/>

Former outlet mall after the transition to Invitae's flex and warehouse space.



Source: 35° North



Source: Worthington Images via ENR



Source: 35° North

THE MIDTOWN BIOCENTER



Source: Arco Design/Build

Former Kroger Grocery Store in Raleigh, Redeveloped into Life Sciences BioCenter

The shopping center, previously featuring a Kroger grocery store at the crossroads of Six Forks Road and Wake Forest Road in Raleigh, NC, has undergone a 14-month redevelopment. It has been transformed into the Midtown BioCenter, encompassing 80,000 square feet for lab and manufacturing space and an additional 20,000 square feet dedicated to offices. Currently, the entire 100,000 square foot site is occupied by Targan, an Ag-Tech company that produces high-speed, automated systems – like vaccine systems – to humanely maximize livestock production without using chemicals or antibiotics⁷¹.

Previous Use: Grocery store

Current Use: Ag-Tech, Life Sciences, Research & Development, Manufacturing.

Timeline: November 2021-December 2022

Square Footage: 100,000 Square Feet (redeveloped building space)

Partners on Project: CBRE | Raleigh, East West Partners, ARCO Design/Build, Redline Design Group, TARGAN (<https://wolfmediausa.com/2022/08/09/news-release-upcoming-midtown-biocenter-fully-leased-to-morrisville-based-life-sciences-company/>)

<https://wraltechwire.com/2023/09/12/life-science-facility-opens-in-old-raleigh-grocery-store/>

Before



Source: Google. Image Capture Date: February 2022

After





Source: Arco Design Build

INQ 1101



Source: LoopNet

Former Sam's Club in Morrisville redeveloped for Class A office space, advanced manufacturing, and life science tenants

In December 2018, Mainstreet acquired a 140,000 square foot building in Morrisville, North Carolina, that was previously a Sam's Club. The company proceeded to rezone the building for office use and completed its full renovation by the summer of 2020. Situated on the outskirts of the Research Triangle Region, Mainstreet intentionally adapted the office space to offer flexibility for life science tenants. As the demand for COVID vaccines surged, the fully leased building was eventually sold at a profit in 2021⁷².

Currently, the space is fully leased to Schneider Electric (65,000 square feet) operating in the Smart Technology/Clean Technology space and Azzur Cleanrooms (75,000 square feet), a life sciences company offering on-demand cleanrooms, advisory and consulting services for early-phase manufacturing⁷³.

Previous Use: Warehouse Club; Retail Store

Current Use: Advanced Manufacturing, Office Space, Life Sciences, Research & Development

Timeline: December 2018-June 2021

Square Footage: 140,000 Square Feet (redeveloped building space)

Partners on Project: Mainstreet Capital Partners, JLL, DRA Advisors

<https://www.mainstreetcapital.com/featuredassets/inq1101>
<https://www.citybiz.co/article/72854/jll-and-mainstreet-capital-partners-close-deal-with-azzur-cleanrooms-on-demand-at-inq-1101/>

Before



Source: JLL

After





Source: LoopNet

RALEIGH IRON WORKS



Source: Raleigh Iron Works

Historic mills and warehouse buildings converted into a mixed use campus.

Raleigh Iron Works, honored with the TCREW Champion Awards Best Redevelopment Project of the year, has successfully converted historic mills and warehouse buildings into a diverse mixed use campus. Spearheaded by the Grubb Ventures team and situated at the crossroads of Five Points, Person Street, and Mordecai neighborhoods in Raleigh, this 200,000 square foot development showcases creative office spaces, retail establishments, and covered parking, all designed with a contemporary industrial flair. Retaining numerous original elements like exposed structures and existing concrete, the project also offers outdoor amenities such as built-in fireplaces, courtyards, and secluded terraces. Adding a touch of whimsy, the unique development includes an adult slide connecting the second floor of the Double Gable Building to the plaza⁷⁴.

Previous Use: Former Peden Street and includes two historic warehouse structures that were re-purposed for modern uses

Current Use: The district includes office, residential, retail, and parking and connects to an adjoined adaptive reuse warehouse project, creating a creative hub near downtown Raleigh

Timeline: 2021-2023

Square Footage: 26-acre site; 116,000 square feet of office and retail space and 83,000 square feet of adaptive reuse of an existing steel production facility and mill and features commercial office and ground-level retail, office space, and covered parking

Partners on Project: Grubb Ventures, Stewart Inc., Jameson Properties, Cline Design Associates, LS3P, S9 Architecture (<https://stewartinc.com/portfolio-post/raleigh-iron-works/>)

GATEWAY PLAZA



Source: Gateway Plaza

Former Winn-Dixie reimaged and redeveloped into retail and office, mixed use space

Gateway Plaza is a revamped retail and creative office undertaking spanning more than 75,000 square feet on the outskirts of downtown Raleigh. The shopping center once anchored by Winn-Dixie has undergone substantial redevelopment to emerge as a focal point for the nearby residential neighborhoods and beyond⁷⁵.

Gateway Plaza is now home to Raleigh Founded co-working space, retail shops, restaurants, breweries, art galleries and more⁷⁶.

Previous Use: Grocery store

Current Use: Office and retail

Timeline: 2017-2019

Square Footage: 75,000 Square Feet

Partners on Project: Loden Properties

<https://northpond.com/portfolio/gateway-plaza/>
<https://www.gatewayplazaraleigh.com/>

INQ 4300

Before / After:



Source: Google; Image Capture: February 2018

Source: CommercialEdge

Abandoned Kmart in Garner, purchased for life science redevelopment

According to the Triangle Business Journal, a former Kmart Super Center in Garner is poised for a transformation into life science space. Florida-based Mainstreet Capital Partners and a fund managed by New York-based DRA Advisors have jointly acquired the property at 4300 Fayetteville Road for \$14.25 million. The 180,017 square foot building, constructed in 1994 on 26.73 acres, was anchored by Kmart until 2013 and currently has an assessed value of \$7.3 million. Mainstreet Capital Partners and DRA Advisors, known for their collaboration in transforming a former Sam's Club into adaptive space INQ 1101 in Morrisville, aim to meet the demand for strategic and innovative lab space in Raleigh with the Garner property, named INQ 4300. The envisioned changes include laboratory and production areas, a revamped building façade, a new roof, and outdoor amenity spaces, with the renovations expected to be completed by the end of the summer. Peter Tonon, a partner at Mainstreet Capital Partners, expressed anticipation for bringing their vision to life.⁷⁷

Previous Use: Grocery store

Current Use: Life Sciences (Laboratory, production, outdoor amenities)

Timeline: December 2021-August 2022 (Shell Completed; ready for tenant upfit)

Square Footage: 180,000 SF

Partners on Project: Mainstreet Capital Partners, DRA Advisors, JLL

https://www.vanderweil.com/sites/default/files/paper_files/2021_former_kmart_reshaped_for_life_sciences.pdf

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ZEBULON

Smaller amounts of land allocations for commercial and industrial uses in the Town of Zebulon will require a targeted and strategic approach to achieve the guiding principles laid out within the Comprehensive Land Use Plan that are focused on being balanced and resilient. Balance will be achieved by having both great neighborhoods and living options, while also being an attractive host community for employers and a wide array of small businesses. Being resilient will be achieved through a diverse local economy that will continue to attract investment and generate jobs over the long term, while bolstering the Town's tax base.

As Zebulon continues to refine a strategy for attracting new business and industry to the Town, the data presented in this report on commercial and industrial real estate trends, as well as future reports that are published by Wake County Economic Development, will be important criteria to review and utilize when determining the development or redevelopment of assets within the Town. This data, along with a clear vision, will need to be communicated to developers and stakeholders who will be partners to the Town in executing commercial and industrial real estate projects that will serve as attractive options for future employers of the Town of Zebulon.

VISION DEVELOPMENT

Vision: *Zebulon will foster an inclusive, vibrant, diverse, and sustainable economy. Zebulon will be a regional player that prioritizes intentional and responsible growth while retaining the Town's unique charm and character.*

The Community Workgroup's shaped insights from the stakeholder engagement findings into the vision statement. The vision components below provide further detail on the meaning of the vision.

Big Town Economy, Small Town Feel

- Smart growth
- Anticipation of future growth (transportation and utility improvements) ○
- Location (central convergence point)
- Retain unique charm and character

Regional Player

- Regional collaboration
 - Attract and retain businesses
 - Recruit new industries
 - Regional economic influence
- Zebulon does not need to be all things to all people

Honoring Town History

Agrarian roots
Rich history

Inclusive, Vibrant, and Diverse

- Mitigate displacement and gentrification
 - Connectivity and walkability
 - Entertainment, full-service restaurants, and shopping
- People of all races, socioeconomic groups, ages, education levels, cultures, and beliefs

Sustainable

Affordable and workforce housing
Executive housing
Balanced mix of residential development
Attractive, but not cheap, place to live

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The Town of Zebulon gathered resident opinions and used those insights to inform this economic development strategic plan. Brief descriptions of the various public engagement activities are shown below, with the full summaries linked to later in the Appendix.

COMMUNITY CAFÉS

Between October and November 2023, the Town held three community cafés where the public could express their opinions, concerns, and preferences on issues related to economic development. Almost 100 community members participated in the three events.

One major theme reflected in the café responses is participants' desire for **community development**, creating assets that benefit the people who live in Zebulon and improving their quality of life. There was an overall preference to make the experience of living in Zebulon better and more complete without the need to commute out of town for amenities such as healthcare and recreation. Another key theme was maintaining the small-town character. Overall themes from the cafés have been summarized below.

Infrastructure

Public Transportation

- ⑩ Interconnecting Zebulon
- ⑩ Connecting Zebulon to the surrounding areas
- ⑩ Creating awareness and accessibility for all communities and abilities
 - Services for the elderly and those with accessibility challenges ○

Roads and Pathways

- ⑩ Reducing traffic in Zebulon
- ⑩ Improved streets
- ⑩ Improved, safe walkability
- ⑩ Sidewalks, bike lanes, and greenways

- Utilities: Water, sewer, electricity, Wi-Fi

More and Better Amenities and Businesses

- Entertainment and Recreation: Youth and family-specific, activity center, arcade, movie theater, skate park, bowling, pool/aquatic center

Healthcare

- ⑩ Primary care and family doctors
- ⑩ Mental health services
- ⑩ Orthodontists and dentists
- ⑩ Physical therapists

Restaurants

- ⑩ More options and variety
- ⑩ Sit-down, not just fast food
- ⑩ Food hall
- Exercise and Sports: YMCA, evening fitness classes, gym, pool, pickleball

Grocery

Butcher, baker, and other specialty shops
Lidl, Publix, and Aldi

Improved Quality of Life

Education and Training

More schools; a high school
Entrepreneurship program
Workforce development
Access to Wake Tech

Housing

Affordable, accessible, and quality
Policies to prevent relocation due to gentrification
More variety (55 and older, temporary, accessory dwelling units, etc.)

More and Better Jobs

- More variety (full-time, entry-level, possibility for advancement, flexible, remote)
- Better pay
- More accessible jobs (public transportation)
- Opportunities for youth employment

Town Support

- Government liaison to act as a “one-stop-shop” resource
- Grants, loans, and tax incentives for start-ups
- Streamlined government processes (like with permit approval)
- Accessible and well-communicated resources and public services

COMMUNITY SURVEY

An online survey was opened to the public to gather information on resident economic development opinions and preferences. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and had a total of 151 responses.

People live in Zebulon for...

- Housing affordability ○
- Family ties
- Quality of life
- Local character/charm
- Ability to commute to jobs outside of Zebulon

People want more...

- Full-service restaurants
- Grocery stores
- Entertainment

Priorities for future growth and development...

- Attainable/affordable housing options

More entertainment options
Developing Downtown

Priorities for jobs...

Technology/Information Technology
Service Industry

- Higher Pay/Living Wage
- Healthcare

How the Town can help...

- Limiting overdevelopment
- Affordable housing
- Affordability and funding
- Avoid gentrification

STAFF DESIGN THINKING RETREAT

In December 2023, a staff design-thinking retreat was held with members of Zebulon town staff, Zebulon community members, and Wake County staff. Participants reviewed the findings of the community cafés, survey, and Environmental Analysis. Participants also engaged in design-thinking to better understand how community members and business interact with the Town on economic development issues and strategize how to improve these interactions.

COMMUNITY WORKGROUP

In February and March 2024, three community workgroup sessions were held with members of Zebulon's economic development space. Workgroup members reviewed the work of the previous community engagement events and use this information to propose and develop the economic development strategic plan's vision, focus areas, and priorities.

COMMUNITY CAFÉS SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Zebulon engaged Fountainworks to help host community cafés where the public could express their opinions, concerns, and preferences on issues related to economic development. Three community cafés were conducted between October and November 2023 with 87 people participating across all three events. This document summarizes the information gathered from the three community cafés to continue to inform and guide the development of the Town's economic development strategic plan. More comprehensive results from each café can be found in their respective reports.

The average participant

- has lived in Zebulon 1-4 years
- was 45 or older
- lives, but does not work in Zebulon

The Town of Zebulon is dedicated to gathering citizen opinions and using them to inform the economic development strategic plan. The qualitative methodology employed promotes engagement and enables us to understand community preferences and concerns.

The demographic data of café participants is summarized below.

How long have you lived in Zebulon?

Less than 1 year	1-4 years	More than 5 years	More than 10 years
3	37	7	24

What is your age?

17 or younger	18-34	35-44	45-64	65 or older
2	6	10	22	22

Do you live and/or work in Zebulon?

Live, but not work	Work, but not live	Live and work	Neither
38	5	15	2

METHODOLOGY

After all café responses were received, Fountainworks staff assigned each response at least one theme. For each question, theme frequency was calculated and used as a measure of public sentiment.

OVERALL THEMES

A major overall theme reflected in the café responses is participants' desire for **community development**, creating assets that benefit the people who live in Zebulon and improving their quality of life. There was an overall preference to make the experience of living in Zebulon better and more complete without the need to commute out of town for amenities such as healthcare and recreation. Another key theme was maintaining the small-town. Overall themes from the cafés have been summarized below.

Infrastructure		
	Public Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interconnecting Zebulon - Connecting Zebulon to the surrounding areas - Creating awareness and accessibility to all communities and abilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Services for the elderly and those with accessibility challenges
	Roads & Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing traffic in Zebulon - Improved, safe walkability - Improved streets - Sidewalks, bike lanes, greenways
	Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water, electric, Wi-Fi, sewage
More and Better Amenities and Businesses		
	Entertainment & Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth- and family-specific - Activity center - Bowling, arcade, movie theater, pool/aquatic center, skate park
	Healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary care and family doctors - Mental health services - Orthodontists and dentists - Physical therapists
	Restaurants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More options & variety - Sit-down, not just fast food - Food hall
	Exercise & Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evening fitness classes - Pool, gym, pickleball, YMCA
		Grocery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Butcher, baker, and other specialty shops - Lidl, Aldi, Publix
Improved Quality of Life		
	Education & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More schools; a high school - Entrepreneurship programs - Workforce development - Access to Wake Tech
	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affordable, accessible, and quality - More variety (55+, temporary, ADUs, etc.) - Policies to prevent relocation due to gentrification
Miscellaneous		
	Town Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government liaison to act as a “one-stop-shop” resource

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grants, loans, and tax incentives for start-ups - Streamlined government processes (like with permit approval) - Accessible and well-communicated resources and public services
Need more and better jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More variety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Full-time, entry-level, possibility for advancement, flexible, remote - Better pay - More accessible jobs (public transportation) - Opportunities for youth employment

More detail on responses is included in the following sections, organized by question. Unless otherwise noted, themes are listed in the order of frequency in which they occurred, beginning with the most common.

BUSINESS

If you were going to start a business in Zebulon, what are some of the factors you would consider?

Infrastructure

Water, sewer, utilities, internet, roads, and the conditions of buildings

Town Support

The community stressed the importance of the Town acting as a resource and ally to new business owners.

- Support in the permit approval process, including who to ask for help
- Loans and grants for start-ups

Educational and Training Opportunities

Skilled labor and education of workforce
Quality of schools

What can the Town do to make Zebulon more attractive for entrepreneurship?

Town support

Entrepreneurship programs and business incentives

- Accessible resources and support in the permitting process

Ease of government processes

- Be business-friendly
- Streamlining and facilitating the permitting process
- A government liaison to act as a “one-stop-shop” and resource for citizens

Funding and Costs

- Grants, tax breaks, subsidies

Quality of life

- A location that attracts people
- Programs for children
- Schools and churches

What businesses are not in Town that you would like to see in town? What do you have to leave Zebulon for?

Entertainment and Recreation

Youth- and family-entertainment were specifically emphasized.

More children's events

Youth/teen center

Bowling alley, arcade, roller skating, movie theater, concert center

Restaurants

Food hall, sit-down options, not just fast food

- More variety (Thai, seafood, vegan, healthy)

Retail

After these three categories, **exercise and sports** and **grocery** were cited at the same rate.

Detailed "Business" responses for these themes can be found in the [appendix](#).

JOBS

At all three cafes, participants unanimously stated that **Zebulon does not have the right kinds of jobs for residents**.

Participants specifically noted:

a **need for higher paying jobs**

a general **lack of businesses** in Zebulon

an overall lack of jobs

"Lots of entry-level, but
not middle-
management or ability

Are these jobs located where people can easily get to them?

People are commuting out of Zebulon for work.

- Some responses noted that some people prefer to live in Zebulon and commute out of town for work
- Others said commuting out of Zebulon was necessary for employment

Lack of businesses and jobs

Inaccessibility

The jobs that are in Zebulon are hard to get to

The need to better interconnect the town

"Zebulon is safe, offers
homes to people
working outside the

Do these jobs meet the community's needs?

The general consensus was **no**.

The community needs

Jobs with higher pay

- **Education and training**
- Better jobs**, generally

Detailed "Jobs" responses for these themes can be found in the [appendix](#).



AMENITIES

Thinking about qualities that make Zebulon a good place to work and run a business, are there amenities that should be improved such as public transportation, roads, housing, healthcare, education, entertainment etc.?

Entertainment was by far the most common response theme.

People want more options

- For children, families, and adults

Activity center

- Like [the Factory](#) in Wake Forest

Movie theater

Bowling

Museums and educational centers

Nightlife



Public transportation

The need for a transit system

Services for the elderly and disabled

Better connections to Raleigh and Durham

More community awareness of public services like GoWake

Healthcare

The need for more healthcare in general with more accessibility

The general lack of all types of health services

Primary care, pharmacies, orthodontics and dentists, physical therapy, mental health, and a local EMS

The next most common themes were, in order:

Road improvement

Sports and recreation

Education and training

Traffic

Detailed “Amenities” responses for these themes can be found in the [appendix](#).

DOWNTOWN

What do you like about Zebulon’s downtown?

The charm was the most common response.

The history

Downtown events

Walkability

Aesthetics

"It has a small-town
feel. Like it's small
enough to walk in one

What would make downtown better than it is today?

Restaurants were the most common theme. ○

More options in general

- Sit-down options as well as more diverse options

There was a general sense that while there was room for updates and improvements to downtown, there was also a desire to **maintain the small-town charm and not over-develop.**

Improving aesthetics

Curb appeal

More trees

Improve building facades

More **entertainment**

Event space

Youth activities

Public music and art

Improving walkability and safety

Safe bike lanes and sidewalks

More lighting

Better access/connection from surrounding bike lanes, greenways, and sidewalks

Safer parking

Traffic calming

Detailed "Downtown" responses for these themes can be found in the [appendix](#).

INCLUSION

Think about the ideas you have generated. If implemented, how might these ideas affect vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

The most common theme was **gentrification**.

- Fear of people being priced out of their homes via higher taxes and having to relocate
The suggestion to proactively create policies to protect underserved people from losing their houses

Job creation

This included comments about how these ideas could lead to a creation of jobs and activities for youth and more generally, more income opportunities, and a higher quality of life.

Community

This process could create both a sense of community and pride in the community and how improved amenities will help the underserved.

"Growth can bring
positive and negative.
Some will have to
relocate."

How might we take steps to ensure this plan is inclusive and takes into account the perspectives, hopes, and concerns of vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

The most common theme in responses was the importance of **serving all communities**. ○

Offering grants to assist communities

○ Ensuring there is good access to amenities and services for vulnerable populations ○

Improving communication with the Hispanic community

○ Creating incentives for vulnerable people and those who serve them (like teachers) in the new developments

The next most common theme proposed a more targeted approach of **supporting the underserved**.

○ Nice and safe subsidized housing

○ Ensure transit stops service all communities, including those with highest needs.

Communication, inclusion, housing, and public transportation were also popular suggestion themes.

Detailed “Inclusion” responses for these themes can be found in the [appendix](#).

ZEBULON IN ONE WORD

As each café conversation ended, participants were asked to write down one word that describes the ideal Zebulon economy. These words are summarized below in graphical representation of word frequency that gives greater prominence to words that appear more often.



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Town of Zebulon sought community input to ensure the economic development strategic plan aligns with the community's priorities. Three community cafés brought 87 participants and their voices into the process. Community development was a consistent theme throughout all cafés, including the desire to make Zebulon into a well-rounded town that can support its citizens without having to travel outside city limits.

In early 2024, a community Workgroup will convene to begin drafting focus areas and key priorities within each focus area. Input from the community cafés will be used as a foundation for this next phase of stakeholder engagement and will ultimately inform the development of the Town's Economic Development Strategic Plan.



CAFÉS APPENDIX

[Participant Demographic Snapshot](#)

[Business Responses](#)

[Jobs Responses](#)

[Amenities Responses](#)

[Downtown Responses](#)

[Inclusion Responses](#)

[Café 1 Summary](#)

[Café 2 Summary](#)

[Café 3 Summary](#)



Participant Demographic Snapshot

	Café 1	Café 2	Café 3	Total
Attendees	40	12	35	87

How long have you lived in Zebulon?

	Café 1	Café 2	Café 3	Total
Less than 1 Year	0	0	3	3
1-4 Years	13	1	23	37
More than 5 years	6	1	0	7
More than 10 years	7	10	7	24
Total	26	12	22	60

What is your age?

	Café 1	Café 2	Café 3	Total
17 or younger	2	0	0	2
18-34	1	1	4	6
35-44	5	0	5	10
45-64	12	3	7	22
65 or older	7	8	7	22
Total	27	12	23	62

Do you live and/or work in Zebulon?

	Café 1	Café 2	Café 3	Total
Live, but not work	19	4	15	38
Work, but not live	0	2	3	5
Live and work	5	6	4	15
Neither	2	0	0	2
Total	26	12	22	60

If you were going to start a business in Zebulon, what are some of the factors you would consider?

Infrastructure		
- Infrastructure	- Water and sewer capacity	- For business: water, internet, electricity
- Infrastructure	- Water & Sewer	- Existing infrastructure (able to move-in)
- Hi-speed internet	- Water Supply/Sewer	
- Amenities	- Infrastructure utilities	
- Infrastructure		

Town Support		
- Can the town be a resource for me as a new business owner	- Partners in community	- Growth plan for downtown Zebulon
	- Process	- Support from town
	- Who to ask for help	
- Approval process	- Grants Loans for start ups	

Educational and Training Opportunities		
- Educational opportunities	- Skilled labor	- Good schools: high schools, community college, etc.
- Education required	- Quality of schools	
- Education of Work force	- Local high school	

What can the Town do to make Zebulon more attractive for entrepreneurship?

Town Support		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incentives - Pre-built retail park - Perks/discounts - Actively seek out businesses to come here -- Not fast food, no gas stations, we need sit down restaurants and retail shops - Offer tax incentives - Promote growth - Be business friendly - Grants - Entrepreneurship Programs (training) - Mentorship programs for entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical Assistance - Solicit specific and targeted businesses - Targeted for wake tech students - Educational outreach/mentor - Accessible resources - Liaison through process - Ease of Access - Offer grants through SBA - Offer grants or subsidies: promote better - Establish relationship with local business owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shared small vendor marketplace for small businesses (share overhead together) - Marketing available business incentives, buildings, and vendor opportunities - Tax breaker - Provide tax credits/incentives that are competitive - Support in permits - Program like Raleigh's NC-score targeted to Zebulon

Ease of Government Processes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Streamlined business approval process - Less difficulty getting permits – takes too long to open up new businesses - Be more tolerable of entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensify incentive commercial growth efforts - Streamlining the process - Remove roadblocks - Better relationship with Raleigh and County - Be business friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bring building permits within town departments - One person government liaison (one-stop shop) - Ease of Access - Support in permits

Funding & Costs		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce cost to buy/rent buildings - Offer tax incentives - Tax breaks - Grants - Offer grants or subsidies: promote better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer grants through SBA - Tax breaker - Shared small vendor marketplace for small businesses (share overhead together) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing available business incentives, buildings, and vendor opportunities - Provide tax credits/incentives that are competitive

Quality of Life

- Location that attracts people	- Quality of life	- Schools, churches, programs for children: Quality of life
- Foot traffic visibility	- Curb appeal	
- Traffic	- Update shopping centers (attractive)	

What businesses are not in Town that you would like to see in town?

What do you have to leave Zebulon for?

Entertainment and Recreation		
- Family Fun Entertainment – Bowling, Skating, Movies	- Entertainment options	- Teen center
- Fitness Center	- Activities for kids, esp. teens	- Craft cocktail lounge with live music (diverse) and nightlife
- Evening entertainment	- Pool	- A visitor’s destination: museum, art space science center
- More children’s events	- Arcade	- Civic center
- Destinations	- YMCA	- Youth activities: bowling
- Bowling Alley	- Roller Skating for kids	- Concert area inside
- Skating Rink	- Entertainment for families	- Roller skating
- Entertainment family friendly	- Youth/teen centers	- Movies
- Entertainment area near mudcats stadium	- Movies	- More craft beer and distilleries
- Baseball-related: (Mudcats spin-off?)	- Bowling	- YMCA
- Theater/event center	- Venue/event room	
- YMCA	- Experience/customer service is different than buying online	

Restaurants		
- Food (not fast food)	- Restaurants	- Diverse restaurant options and sit-down restaurants
- Ice cream shop	- Sit down restaurants	- Craft cocktail lounge with live music (diverse) and nightlife
- Sit down restaurants (sushi/hibachi, American regional ex Chilis TGIF, fresh sandwiches and soup)	- Thai restaurant	- Restaurants with specialized menu
- Restaurants	- Better sit-down restaurants	- Starbucks
- Seafood Restaurant	- Moe	- Food Halls
- Restaurants	- Hibachi	- Large food chain
- Bakery	- Plant based options	
- Ice cream	- Healthy options	
	- Vegan/Plant based restaurants	
	- Sit-down restaurants	

Retail

- Variation of specialty stores	- Bicycle shops	- Retail stores
- More retail shops (clothing, housewares)	- Jewelry, shoe, watch repair	- More retail shopping
- Gift shop	- Gift shop	- Craft shoe center
- Bike shop or athletic type store	- Men's and women's clothing	- Retail shopping
- Shop businesses	- Experience/customer service is different than buying online	- Target
- Beauty Supply Store		- Department stores
- Sporting goods shop		- Fed Ex store
		- More retail in downtown

Sports and Exercise

- Fitness Center	- Gym/exercise/athletic club	- Gyms
- Planet Fitness	- Swimming school	- Indoor/outdoor swimming facility
- Bicycle shops	- YMCA	- More/expanded gym
- Pool	- Wellness center and gym	- YMCA
- YMCA	- Gym	

Grocery

- Aldi	- Butcher	- Supermarkets
- Upscale Grocery Store	- Bakery	- Lidl or Aldi
- Other grocery stores (Publix)	- Grocery stores	- Grocery stores: specialty
	- Bakery	- Upscale Grocery Store

Does Zebulon have the right kinds of jobs for the people who live here?

Why or why not?

Zebulon does not have the right types of jobs		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manufacturing jobs are not doing it today - Job fit here at time – but not now - Too many people moving here. A lot of different skill sets, different salary expectations. Need more variety. - Not right kind of jobs for new demographic - Need: Ofc/sales jobs, Blue collar jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need IT jobs and biotech jobs. - No – not higher paying jobs - No. not enough full-time opportunities - No, we need HR jobs - With more business growth, more jobs will come. The need seems to be more options, not the type of... - Tech options - Stem careers - Human resources jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More service industries - Not enough business to support large growth - Assessment of job needs - Diverse jobs - Need more businesses provide more jobs - It depends: don't expect some to be here - Lots of entry-level but not middle management/ability to grow - Tech options

Need for higher paying jobs		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We need more industry and bigger companies to pay better salaries. - There is a good variety, but not enough and not enough higher paying. - Need more companies that pay well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We don't have the jobs to increase median income. - Jobs aren't high paying enough for people to live here - Need more higher paying jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No – not higher paying jobs - Not enough business to support large growth - Lots of entry-level but not middle management/ability to grow - Not for the income

Lack of businesses		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The businesses aren't here - We need more industry and bigger companies to pay better salaries. - Need more companies that pay well - Poor retail structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incentivize commercial development in entertainment area. - New industrial park? - There is a good variety, but not enough and not enough higher paying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With more business growth, more jobs will come. The need seems to be more options, not the type of... - Need more businesses provide more jobs

Are these jobs located where people can easily get to them?

People are commuting out of Zebulon for work.		
- We travel to Raleigh, Wilson, etc.	- Some people like working in Raleigh and living here	- Jobs are in Wilson, Raleigh, and Rocky Mount
- Lots commute to Raleigh, Rocky Mount, Wilson	- Not here	- Most drive out of Zebulon

Lack of business and jobs	Inaccessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You can't access what's not here. - Not here - Marketing, finance, business type jobs - Diverse jobs (different working environments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not here - Not really - Layout of town needs connected - Jobs are located in the same area... spread it out

Do these jobs meet the community's needs?

Jobs with higher pay		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The jobs we want need to be targeted to higher pay. - No, pay is too low for many jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No, more professional jobs - Need higher paying jobs without commuting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need higher paying jobs - Need more higher income jobs

Education and training		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wake tech can help with training - Internship program/ opportunity for growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On-the-job training - More teachers - Curriculum of Wake Tech connected to our needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More opportunities for young adults: the grocery, target

Thinking about qualities that make Zebulon a good place to work and run a business, are there amenities that should be improved such as public transportation, roads, housing, healthcare, education, entertainment etc.?

Entertainment		
- Banquet center	- Pools, splash pads, parks for kids	- Movies
- Bowling Alley	- Large scale event center	- Skate park
- Movie Theater	- Events center	- Entertainment
- Event Center	- Movie Theater	- Autism services and parks (1 in 35)
- Concert venue	- Family friendly entertainment	- Pickleball courts
- Adult entertainment (diner and theatre)	- Concerts	- Entertainment: skating (ice and roller), bowling, arcade, movies, putt putt, or top golf
- Place for kids and teens entertainment for family (arcade, bowling alley, etc.)	- Something to do without leaving town	- Inside concert auditorium venue
- Movie theater in Wedgewood (carlic) shopping center	- Youth center	- Entertainment for adults not centered around alcohol
- Roller skating/skateboarding facility	- Museum	- Recreation/Entertainment
- Smallish convention center	- Event/civic center	
	- Amphitheater	
	- Family activities	
	- Need entertainment, movie	

Public Transportation		
- Transit system	- Wake County Bus Collector (Wake Tech as a hub)	- Improve public transportation
- Services for elderly/disabled (transportation)	- Bus/transportation	- Access to Wake Tech/transportation
- Keep GoWake SmartRide	- Need more public transit	- Transit / transportation
- Bus station – mass transit	- Rapid transit line for bussing	- Transportation of elderly
- Better connections to Raleigh and Durham	- Improved smart ride	- Transportation for teens to rec center
- Community awareness of public services (GoWake)	- Transportation buses	- Public transportation: bus, train, sidewalks, bikes
- Transportation to Wake Tech	- Bus service	
	- Public transportation	
	- Bird scooters	

Healthcare

- Hospital	- Medical park	- Wake med
- More healthcare	- Pharmacies	- Home health care agency
- Regional medical park	- Family doctors	- Local EMS
- Hospital	- Mental health care	- Doctors
- Healthcare Wendell Falls	- Orthodontics and dentists	- Physical therapy
- Healthcare	- More healthcare with longer open hours	- Health care, medicine
- Physical therapy: 1 for 10,000 people		- Hospital

Road & Traffic Improvement

- Improve roads to help alleviate traffic congestion with all the new houses built and people moving in	- Round about instead of 4 way stops	- Better roads and parking
- Expand/wide roads	- Street lights	- EV charging stations
- Improved roads	- Better roads	- More sidewalks: future could add scooters/bike rentals
- Improved roads	- Better roads	- Round-a-bouts
- Improve roads	- Better roads for less traffic	- Improvement in roads
- Sidewalks to connect each other for bikes/walker	- Address traffic in town and out of town	- Bike lanes
	- Greenway trails to downtown	- Better lights

Sports and Recreation

- Need more evening fitness classes	- Pools, splash pads, parks for kids	- Gym
- Pickle ball	- Dog Park	- Swimming pool
- Public Pool (like Buffalo Road) / Aquatic Center	- Athletic facilities and gaming	- Pickleball courts
- Town Swimming Pool	- Swimming pool	- Zebulon City Park with sports
		- Basketball courts

Education and Training

- Public High School	- A high school	- Advice for entrepreneurs
- High school	- High school	- Education: high school
- Need more schools	- Town internships for next generation	- Access to Wake Tech/transportation
- High school	- High schools	

What do you like about Zebulon's Downtown?

The Charm		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is quaint and personable to shop owners - Quaint - Consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It has a small-town feel, like its small enough to walk in one day. - The charm - Charming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Old fashioned feel - Small town feel - Quaint - Charming - Quaint area

The History	Downtown Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History and growth - Historical homes and building - Historic - History of building - Historic houses - Historic architecture - History 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Town events - Downtown night activity - Rock the block - Spring concert series - Olde Raleigh distillery's event space - Activities and events downtown - There's been more attractions & restaurants

Walkability	Aesthetics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Easy access - Slowly becoming more walkable - Walk and know everyone - Walkable - Walkability - It has a small-town feel, like its small enough to walk in one day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The upkeep - Flower pots - Clean - It's gotten nicer recently - Decorations, aesthetics, plants, signs - Decorations

What would make downtown better than it is today?

Restaurant		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More places to eat and shop - More restaurants - Plant based dining options - Healthy dining options - Coordination of food trucks (rodeo) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - American restaurant/sports bar: wings, burgers, fries, fish - Sit-down diverse dining: Indian, sushi - More restaurants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More sit-down restaurants - More options: sushi, Thai, healthy - More food healthy options - Options not centered on alcohols

Improve aesthetics		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing businesses need to redo or improve façade. Some places look rundown - Facelift! - Make older stores clean and update - Face lift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need more updated/current retail shops. We have a lot of industrial type shops. Need to modernize. - Spice it up/more flare - More trees! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Old buildings that could be restored - Laurels, flowers, murals - Gateway or focal point (roundabout, fountain) - Curb appeal/ beautification

Entertainment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More options for entertainment - Event space (like graduation party, family reunion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well-developed arts district (amphitheater) - Public music and art - Outdoor amphitheater - Skate park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth activities - Family entertainment - Options not centered on alcohols - Boxcar/arcade

Improve Walkability and Safety		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More sidewalks from the housing communities - Bypass around downtown - Easier to get to by bike/walking: paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More pedestrian friendly downtown - Pedestrian friendly: More walkable - Safe walkability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bike lane and transportation to Zeb P +R - Bike shop (good if we get more paths) - More lighting

Think about the ideas you have generated. If implemented, how might these ideas affect vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

Gentrification		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They may have to move - Policies to protect underserved people from losing their house - There'll likely be relocation - Property tax increase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Growth can bring positive/negative; some will have to re-locate - Increase in prices can drive people out via higher taxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gentrification, can mean different things. Don't price people out - Zoning, annexing historic district

Job Creation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It would help provide jobs and more income opportunities - Better transportation, education, and access to services and jobs would provide a higher level of life quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create jobs and activities for youth - Job opportunities - Increase jobs - Offer jobs

Community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pride in the community - A sense of community - Amenities will help the underserved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With variety of all categories comes opportunity for all and needs being met

How might we take steps to ensure this plan is inclusive and takes into account the perspectives, hopes, and concerns of vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

Serve all communities

- Take in the variety of needs from each community
- Surveying the needs, wants, and desires of our diverse population
- Listen to what the citizens are asking for
- Place development meetings in multiple communities
- interpreter (Spanish)
- Prioritize community amenities
- Make sure there's good access to amenities services for vulnerable population
- Better communication with Hispanic community
- offer grants to assist the communities
- Whole family events for kids/museum
- New development include incentive for vulnerable people and for those who support them (like teachers)
- Offset costs for developers and ensure those benefits continue to citizens/purchasers
- Low cost/free events

Support the underserved

- Offer free vouchers for underserved
- Make sure there's good access to amenities services for vulnerable population
- Are transit stops servicing all communities and those with highest need
- Low-income housing
- Sidewalks: Connect existing communities esp. minority ones
- New development include incentive for vulnerable people and for those who support them (like teachers)
- Nice and safe subsidized housing
- Make sure we provide transportation to activities from lower income activities in Zebulon
- Offer grants to assist the communities

Communication

- Community feedback
- community newsletter/newspaper
- provide feedback from all community sessions
- talk to the communities
- make yourself available for questions
- Better communication with Hispanic community
- Do these sessions in lower income areas
- Develop better relations with populations so citizens are more willing to access and use government services (as well as know about them)

Inclusion

- talk to the communities
- interpreter (Spanish)
- Make sure there's good access to amenities services for vulnerable population
- Better communication with Hispanic community
- Work with school systems because they see impacts of diversity
- Improved accessibility: disabilities
- Accessibility: sidewalks, handicap parking, bathrooms
- Do these sessions in lower income areas

Housing		
- Habitat for humanity	- Senior housing	- Low-income housing
- Improve housing affordability	- More 55+ apartments of higher quality	- Nice and safe subsidized housing

Public Transportation		
- Expansion of smart ride program	- Public transportation especially for underserved	- Public transportation and walkability throughout Zebulon
- Make sure we provide transportation to activities from lower income activities in Zebulon	- Are transit stops servicing all communities and those with highest need	- Expansion of smart ride program

COMMUNITY CAFÉ #1 SUMMARY

Monday, October 16, 2023 - 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
East Wake Academy – Zebulon, NC

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the Town of Zebulon Economic Development Strategy Plan Community Café meeting on October 16, 2023. Approximately 40 people attended and enthusiastically participated in the discussion. There was unanimous agreement that Zebulon does not have the right kinds of jobs for the people who live here. Throughout the evening, participants emphasized the Town's need for family friendly entertainment and activities, more job opportunities, and community resources.

Evening Welcome and Overview

Shannon Johnson, Zebulon's Economic Development Specialist, welcomed and thanked the crowd for attending. While guests ate the dinner provided by the Town, Ms. Johnson emphasized the purpose of the meeting is to hear from community members about economic development in Zebulon. A town official gave a brief overview of the economic history of Zebulon. Julie Brenman then introduced the team from Fountainworks including herself, Drew Finley, and Laura Gomez-Nichols. Ms. Brenman explained that Fountainworks is working with the Town of Zebulon to assist in forming an economic development strategic plan.



Attendees

Participants were asked to use sticker dots to answer demographic questions. **At 70%, the vast majority of attendees live but do not work in Zebulon.**



How long have you lived in Zebulon?

Less than one year: 0

1-4 years: 13

More than 5 years: 6

More than 10 years: 7

What is your age?

17 or younger: 2

18-34: 1

35-44: 5

45-64: 12

65 or older: 7

Do you live and/or work in Zebulon?

Live, but do not work: 19

Work, but not live: 0

Live and work: 5

None of the above: 2

A Tour of Zebulon

To begin the evening, the room was asked to imagine giving visitors a tour of Zebulon. Specifically, participants were asked where would you take them? What would you do? And, what do you wish you could take them to /where do you wish you could go? Attendees provided the following responses to these questions:

Where would you take them? ○

Carolina Mudcats

- Little River Park
- Schools
- Downtown
- Church
- Historic District
- Parks

What would you do?

Dinner at Southland Steakhouse

- McLeans
- Fishing at Weaver's Pond
- Devil Dog Manufacturing Corporation

What do you wish you could take them to/where do you wish you could go? ○

Arcade

- Little River Park Center
- Theater – movie and dinner
- Sit-down restaurant
- Outdoor amphitheater ○

Event center

- Aquatic center
- Hotel
- Museum



Participants were particularly eager to provide answers for what they wish they could show a visitor. These answers primarily focused on activities and entertainment. There was widespread agreement on the need for more dining options that were not fast-food.

Group Brainstorms

The evening's attendees sat in groups at six different tables. Each table had a poster with questions in five different topic areas. Ms. Brenman asked the questions from a topic area and gave attendees 10 minutes to brainstorm ideas and record them on the poster.

The topic areas and questions were as follows:

Business

If you were going to start a business in Zebulon, what are some of the factors you would consider?

What can the Town do to make Zebulon more attractive for entrepreneurship?

What businesses are not in Town that you would like to see in town? What do you have to leave Zebulon for?

Jobs

Does Zebulon have the right kinds of jobs for the people who live here? Why or why not?

Are these jobs located where people can easily get to them?

Do these jobs meet the community's needs?

Amenities

Thinking about qualities that make Zebulon a good place to work and run a business, are there amenities that should be improved such as public transportation, roads, housing, healthcare, education, entertainment etc.?

Downtown

What do you like about Zebulon's downtown?

What would make downtown better than it is today?

Inclusion

Think about the ideas you have generated. If implemented, how might these ideas affect vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

How might we take steps to ensure this plan is inclusive and takes into account the perspectives, hopes, and concerns of vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

One word to describe the ideal Zebulon economy, what would it be?

Attendee responses to questions are transcribed on the following pages.

Business Question 1: If you were going to start a business in Zebulon what are some of the factors you would consider?

Competition	Kids, teens	Hi-speed internet
Location (x5)	Income	Easy access to highway
Other businesses	Demographics	Water and sewer capacity
Cost of buildings, rent, utilities	Clientele	Amenities
Cost of upfit	Median Income (x2)	Hotels
Real Estate Cost (Lease)	Diversity	Educational opportunities
An anchor business	Infrastructure (x2)	Perks
Available Real Estate	Condition of buildings	Code
Population	Traffic (x3)	Town ordinance
Age of residents	Need for the area what citizens want and need	Can the town be a resource for me as a new business owner
Foot traffic		

Business Question 2: What can the Town do to make Zebulon more attractive for entrepreneurship?

Streamlined business approval process	Actively seek out businesses to come here
Location that attracts people	Not fast food, no gas stations, we need sit down restaurants and retail shops
Foot traffic visibility	Offer tax incentives
Incentives	Promote growth
Pre-built retail park	Citizens ask other businesses we like to move to Zebulon
Reduce cost to buy/rent buildings	Be more tolerable of entrepreneurship
Less difficulty getting permits – takes too long to open up new businesses	Be business friendly
Perks/discounts	Intensify incentive commercial growth efforts
Tax breaks	Traffic
Technical Assistance	Don't go thru downtown for everything
Solicit specific and targeted businesses	Grants
Targeted for wake tech students	Entrepreneurship Programs (training)

Business Question 3: What businesses are not in Town that you would like to see in town? What do you have to leave Zebulon for?

Pharmacy (CVS)	Other grocery stores (Publix)	Box store
Incubator	Gift shop	Chick-Fil-A
Family Fun Entertainment	Chick fil A	Bed'n'Breakfast
Bowling	Lowe's	Bowling Alley
Skating	Sit down restaurants (sushi/hibachi, American regional ex Chilis TGIF, fresh sandwiches and soup)	Skating Rink
Movies	Bike shop or athletic type store	Seafood Restaurant
Fitness Center	Restaurants	Planet Fitness
Aldi	More children events	Beauty Supply Store
Upscale Grocery Store (x2)	Better and connected sidewalks	Entertainment family friendly
Food (not fast food)	Destinations	Sporting goods shop
Evening entertainment	Shop businesses	Entertainment area near mudcats stadium
Variation of specialty stores	Medical facilities	Bicycle shops
Ice cream shop	Hotel	Youth activity / parks
More retail shops (clothing, housewares)	Carwash	

Jobs Question 1: Does Zebulon have the right kinds of jobs for the people who live here? Why or why not?

The unanimous answer was no. The following comments were included:

The businesses aren't here
 No jobs to speak of
 Most jobs going to Raleigh
 Mfr jobs are not doing it today
 Job fit here at time – but not now
 Too many people moving here. A lot of different skill sets, different salary expectations. Need more variety.
 Not right kind of jobs for new demographic
 Need

- Ofc/sales jobs
- Blue collar jobs

 We don't have the jobs to increase median income.

Poor retail structure.
 We need more industry and bigger companies to pay better salaries.
 Incentivize commercial development in entertainment area.
 Need IT jobs and biotech jobs.
 Increase fiber connection
 Develop existing non-profits
 Career development
 Entrepreneurship development
 Resources
 Human resources jobs
 Public health/public service
 More daycare
 Planning/zoning
 Expand government staff in Zebulon
 Everything is located in Raleigh
 Need more higher paying jobs
 New industrial park?
 Leverage wake tech

Jobs Question 2: Are these jobs located where people can easily get to them?

Five of the six groups said no. The remaining group said, “Yes, for now – but we need to improve infrastructure to keep up with traffic.” The following comments were also included:

They are in other towns not easily accessible for folk without transport
 What is here is easy to get to
 Add a traffic circle
 If Wake tech is training for these areas: EMT, fire, policeman, biotechnology, design and engineering
 ○ Be prepared to take advantage of these skills
 More jobs at the edge of town would be easier to get to
 You can’t access what’s not here.
 Road improvements
 Not here
 We travel to Raleigh, Wilson, etc.

Jobs Question 3: Do these jobs meet the community’s needs?

Five of the six groups said no. The remaining group said, “Yes, we need all these jobs.” The following comments were also included:

We need more variety of businesses. More medium sized and maybe a few more large ones like GSK and JSF
 Currently, no.
 Need to employ residents in Zebulon
 The jobs we have do not meet the community needs.

The jobs we want need to be targeted to higher pay.
 Funding for new business establishment
 What makes the community appealing
 Need higher paying jobs without commuting

Amenities: Thinking about qualities that make Zebulon a good place to work and run a business, are there amenities that should be improved such as public transportation, roads, housing, healthcare, education, entertainment etc.?

Banquet center	Pickle ball	Museum
Roller-skating/skateboarding facility	Public Pool (like Buffalo Road) / Aquatic Center	Community awareness of public services (GoWake)
Bowling Alley	Gaming facility for kids	Hospital
Movie Theater	Transit System	Restaurants
Event Center	Website, social media	Social Media
More retail shopping	Hotels	Zebulon community app
Hospital	Smallish convention center	Events center
Public High School	Need more schools	Add signage to direct
Do not need so many low-end stores (Dollar General, Dollar Tree, Family Dollar)	Need affordable housing, not so many big houses. Need townhome, apartments, 50+ living. More options!	Improve roads to help alleviate traffic congestion with all the new houses built and people moving in
Lodging	Walking trail 3 to 5 miles	Expand/wide roads
Need stores for a middle class	Get places without car	Town Swimming Pool
Pools, splash pads, parks for kids	Regional medical park	Dog Park
Dry cleaners	Keep GoWake SmartRide	Movie Theater
Better connections to Raleigh and Durham	Places to take clients → restaurants, etc.	Need more evening fitness classes
Concert venue	Commercial retail park	Athletic facilities and gaming
Family friendly entertainment	Large scale event center	Concerts
High school	Food hall	Bars
HOA taking ownership sooner	Downtown boutique shops	Something to do without leaving town
More healthcare	Art store	Transportation to Wake Tech
Adult entertainment (diner and theatre)	Services for elderly/disabled (transportation)	Wake County Bus Collector (Wake Tech as a hub)
Hotel	Drive-thru coffee shop	Healthcare Wendell Falls

Place for kids and teens entertainment for family (arcade, bowling alley, etc.)	Movie theater in Wedgewood (Carlic) shopping center	More shopping and sit-down restaurant choices downtown
Bus station – mass transit		

Downtown Question 1: What do you like about Zebulon's downtown?

The upkeep	Consistent
Easy access	The charm
Quaint	Zebulon Community center
It is quaint and personable to shop owners	Town events
We like that it is being revitalized, but we need more shops and restaurants downtown	Location
It has a small-town feel, like its small enough to walk in one day.	Clean
Flower pots	Downtown high activity
Old fashioned feel	Quaint area
Slowly becoming more walkable	Rock the block
Friendly shop owners	Spring concert series
Friendliness, but feels old and outdated	

Downtown Question 2: What would make downtown better than it is today?

More places to eat and shop	Pet grooming
Hours for working families	Expansion/updates of Comm Center
Youth activities	Facelift!
All-inclusive businesses (eat, work, shop, entertain in 1)	New businesses
Family entertainment	Gateway or focal point (roundabout, fountain)
Variety of business	Make older stores clean and update
Upscale business	More parking (event)
Expand downtown district	More options for entertainment
Road bypass for big trucks to keep them from driving through downtown	Senior center – town presence – main street

More lighting	Spice it up/more flare
Need more updated/current retail shops. We have a lot of industrial type shops. Need to modernize.	Existing businesses need to redo or improve façade. Some places look rundown
More sidewalks from the housing communities	Decrease truck traffic
More/bigger parking places/options for downtown events	Well-developed arts district (amphitheater)
More consistent business hours	More pedestrian friendly downtown
Bypass around downtown	Public music and art
Business friendly town government	Public patio seating

Inclusion Question 1: Think about the ideas you have generated. If implemented, how might these ideas affect vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

Resources for all income levels and ages
Pride in the community
Bridging the gaps in our community
A sense of community
Create jobs and activities for youth
It would help provide jobs and more income opportunities
With variety of all categories comes opportunity for all and needs being met
We need to maintain a balance between old and new. We don't want to become a "mini-Raleigh" or "mini-Knightdale". We want businesses that are unique to Zebulon and bring other people here from other towns.
Better transportation, education, and access to services and jobs would provide a higher level of life quality
Job opportunities
Educational resources
Zebulon's black history recognition
They may have to move
Increase jobs
Policies to protect underserved people from losing their house
Property tax increase

Inclusion Question 2: How might we take steps to ensure this plan is inclusive and takes into account the perspectives, hopes and concerns of vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

Take in the variety of needs from each community
Surveying the needs, wants, and desires of our diverse population
Do not discard the things that the town does well. However all new ideas.
Recognize the growth of the new while still considering long term residents
Preserve the present culture and add updates for new residents
Listen to what the citizens are asking for
Preserve the characteristics and personality of town, while maintaining steady growth.
Not making all land available to developers
Place development meetings in multiple communities

We need to keep our “small town vibe” and not totally replace everything we have already

Community feedback

community newsletter/newspaper

provide feedback from all community sessions

more action, not words

Improve parks and recreation

offer free vouchers for underserved

offer grants to assist the communities

talk to the communities

make yourself available for questions

interpreter (Spanish)

Habitat for humanity

Improve housing affordability



One word to describe the ideal Zebulon economy, what would it be?

Care more about the people and their needs than money

Thriving (x2)

Flourishing

Community-fueled

Action

Vibrant

Diversity

Adaptable

Growing (x3)

Diverse (x2)

Growth (x2)

Action

Services

Income

Recession-proof

Diversified

Fluid

More-Competitive

Competitive

Feasible

Leadership

Beneficial



Top Two Ideas For Improving Zebulon's Economy

Each of the six groups was asked to pick the top two ideas their group came up with. These top ideas were written down and placed at the front of the room. Participants were then each given two sticker dots to place next to their favorite two ideas. The following ideas in order of popularity were:

Affordable family friendly entertainment (15 dots)

Youth engage/involve consideration (10 dots)

Draw more business in the appropriate areas (7 dots)

Capitalizing on Benefits of Wake Tech (7 dots)

Employ (businesses) residents locally (7 dots)

Bring in businesses

Leads to jobs support community

Increase amenities for communities. This will benefit businesses, citizens, and economy. Keep money here and bring money here. (5 dots)

Retail shops, restaurants, entertainment, arts, cultural centers

Infrastructure (4 dots)

Roads, utilities, etc.

Higher paying jobs (3 dots)

Retail and Jobs (3 dots)

Zebulon Community App (2 dots)

Diversity (1 dot)

Median Income

Wrap Up

Ms. Johnson thanked the crowd and reiterated the Town's desire to see action and not just a plan. She explained that between April and June of 2024 a plan will come before the Board of Commissioners. Ms. Brenman then wrapped up the session by thanking everyone for their participation. She also reminded the group that there will be two more community cafes following the same structure as this session, one on October 25 and the other on November 9.

COMMUNITY CAFÉ #2 SUMMARY

Monday, October 25, 2023

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Zebulon United Methodist Church
121 W. Gannon Avenue
Zebulon, NC

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the Town of Zebulon Economic Development Strategy Plan Community Café meeting on October 25, 2023. Approximately 12 people attended and participated in the discussion, including several repeat participants from the first Community Café. There was unanimous agreement that Zebulon does not have the right kinds of jobs for the people who live here.

Evening Welcome and Overview

Michael Clark, Zebulon's Planning Director, welcomed and thanked the crowd for attending. While guests ate the dinner provided by the Town, Mr. Clark explained these meetings are meant to better understand the needs and desires of citizens. He went on to say the input provided by citizens will become the blueprint for the economic development division to guide development plans and land use decisions. Joe Moore, Zebulon Town Manager, then gave a brief overview of the economic history of Zebulon. He emphasized the Town's desire to bring in businesses that will serve the citizens and community. Julie Brenman then introduced the team from Fountainworks including herself, Maddie Shea, and Laura Gomez-Nichols. Ms. Brenman explained that Fountainworks is working with the Town of Zebulon to assist in forming an economic development strategic plan.

Evening's Agenda

Ms. Brenman went over the agenda for the evening:

- Welcome and Overview of Café Purpose
- A Tour of Zebulon
- Your Thoughts on Zebulon's Economy, Business, Jobs, Amenities, and Downtown
- Fostering an Inclusive Zebulon Economy
- Top 2 Ideas – Improving Zebulon's Economy
- Wrap Up

Ms. Brenman went on to explain to the participants that this event is not about testifying in front of officials. Rather, the evening is about having a conversation and sharing ideas. She then broke participants into two groups of roughly six people each.

Attendees

Participants were asked to use sticker dots to answer demographic questions.

83% of participants have lived in Zebulon for more than 10 years.

How long have you lived in Zebulon?				
Less than 1 Year	1-4 Years	More than 5 years	More than 10 years	Total
-	1	1	10	12

75% of participants were 65 or older.

What is your age?					
17 or younger	18-34	35-44	45-64	65 or older	Total
-	1	-	3	8	12

50% of participants live and work in Zebulon

Do you live and/or work in Zebulon?			
Live, but not work	Work, but not live	Live and work	Total
4	2	6	12

Welcome!

ZEBULON
North Carolina

BEFORE YOU GET SEATED...
PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUICK QUESTIONS BY PLACING A DOT BELOW
THE ANSWER CHOICE THAT DESCRIBES YOU

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN ZEBULON?

LESS THAN 1 YEAR | 1-4 YEARS | MORE THAN 5 YEARS | MORE THAN 10 YEARS

WHAT IS YOUR AGE?

17 OR YOUNGER | 18-34 | 35-44 | 45-64 | 65 OR OLDER

DO YOU LIVE AND/OR WORK IN ZEBULON?

LIVE, BUT NOT WORK | WORK, BUT NOT LIVE | LIVE AND WORK

NEITHER LIVE, NOR WORK

A Tour of Zebulon

To begin the evening, the room was asked to imagine giving visitors a tour of Zebulon. Specifically, participants were asked where would you take them? What would you do? And, what do you wish you could take them to /where do you wish you could go? Attendees provided the following responses to these questions:

Where would you take them?

- Downtown: feel Zebulon what's going on
- Food lion shopping center, where there are some restaurants
- Mudcat Stadium
- Little River Park
- Whitley Park
- Zebulon Community Park
- Historic School / Town Hall
- Historic Neighborhood and Homes
- Art Murals Sculptures Downtown

What would you do?

- Industrial Park
- US Foods, Phlexo
- Cup of coffee at Creative Cup
- Root Bound – Plant Store
- McLean's
- Old Raleigh Distillery
- Southland Steakhouse
- Fall Line – a bar
- Fishing/ bodies of water

What do you wish you could take them to/where do you wish you could go?

- Bowling
- More restaurants
- Rec football for kids
- Movie
- Kids activities
- More bike paths

Group Brainstorms

The evening's attendees sat in groups at two different tables. Each table had a poster with questions in five different topic areas. Ms. Brenman asked the questions from a topic area and gave attendees 10 minutes to brainstorm ideas and record them on the poster. Ms. Shea and Ms. Gomez-Nichols each sat with one of the tables and helped transcribe their responses.

The topic areas and questions were as follows:

Business

- If you were going to start a business in Zebulon, what are some of the factors you would consider?
- What can the Town do to make Zebulon more attractive for entrepreneurship?
- What businesses are not in Town that you would like to see in town? What do you have to leave Zebulon for?

Jobs

- Does Zebulon have the right kinds of jobs for the people who live here? Why or why not?
- Are these jobs located where people can easily get to them?
- Do these jobs meet the community's needs?

Amenities

- Thinking about qualities that make Zebulon a good place to work and run a business, are there amenities that should be improved such as public transportation, roads, housing, healthcare, education, entertainment etc.?

Downtown

- What do you like about Zebulon's downtown?
- What would make downtown better than it is today?

Inclusion

- Think about the ideas you have generated. If implemented, how might these ideas affect vulnerable and historically underserved communities?
- How might we take steps to ensure this plan is inclusive and takes into account the perspectives, hopes, and concerns of vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

One word to describe the ideal Zebulon economy, what would it be?

Attendee responses to questions are transcribed on the following pages.

Business Question 1: If you were going to start a business in Zebulon what are some of the factors you would consider?

Foot traffic downtown
Location
Water & Sewer
Age of Demographic
Education required
Income of demographic
Accessibility (parking)
Education of Work force
Water Supply/Sewer
Traffic Flow
Workforce
Infrastructure utilities
Possible location
Capital/financial
Find out where the land use
Business plan
Approval process
Any fees or licenses
Partners in community

Business Question 2: What can the Town do to make Zebulon more attractive for entrepreneurship?

Demographic snapshot
 Being able to answer questions
Quality of life
Curb appeal
Schools, churches, programs for children
 Quality of life
Educational outreach/mentor
Accessible resources
Better relationship with Raleigh and County
Streamlining the process
Bring building permits within town departments
Remove roadblocks
One person government liaison (one-stop shop)

Business Question 3: What businesses are not in Town that you would like to see in Town?

Butcher
Baseball-related
 (Mudcats spin-off?)
Jewelry, shoe, watch repair
Restaurants
Gift shop
Men's and women's clothing
Bakery

Ice cream
Experience/customer service is different than buying online
Spa
Grocery stores
Theater/event center
Entertainment options
Activities for kids, esp. teens
Pool
Arcade
YMCA
Gym/exercise/athletic club

At the end of the 10 minutes, Ms. Brenman then asked the room if there were any ideas from the discussion they would like to share. The following answers were given:

Location and availability of water and sewer important to consider when starting a business
Approvals for a business, needing to go to the county – nice to have the permitting more streamlined or having a government support person to help in the permitting process
The need for entertainment options and grocery stores
Activities for teenagers!

Jobs Question 1: Does Zebulon have the right kinds of jobs for the people who live here? Why or why not?

The unanimous answer was no. The following comments were included:

There is a good variety, but not enough and not enough higher paying.
No.
Anywhere but here.
Jobs aren't high paying enough for people to live here
Need more companies that pay well
Have some job possibilities, but not a trained work-force
If Wake Co. land would be available to us
Internet access and quality needs to improve

Jobs Question 2: Are these jobs located where people can easily get to them?

Not really
Lots commute to Raleigh, Rocky Mount, Wilson
Remote work can live anywhere
More jobs want people in person
Transport network dictates what is easy to get to
Some people like working in Raleigh and living here
Jobs are in Wilson, Raleigh, and Rocky Mount
Zebulon is safe, offers homes to people working outside the town

Jobs Question 3: Do these jobs meet the community's needs?

Need higher paying jobs
Broadband access, fiber
On-the-job training
Wake tech can help with training

We don't have land for big industrial park
Don't want to target a single industry
More teachers
We don't have the jobs. We want more

At the end of the 10 minutes, Ms. Brenman again asked the room if there were any ideas or key take aways from the discussion they would like to share. The following answers were given:

We think we have enough water and sewer here
No good internet service
People are in Zebulon because of the location, but jobs are outside
Not a lot of industrial land to bring a big employer
Don't want to target just a single industry want a variety of jobs → infrastructure!
Lot of advantages to Wake Tech locating here
Jobs available to work there
Transportation!

Amenities: Thinking about qualities that make Zebulon a good place to work and run a business, are there amenities that should be improved such as public transportation, roads, housing, healthcare, education, entertainment etc.?

Bus/transportation
Youth center
Museum
Historic building rehabilitation?/preservation
All of the above!
Parking
Healthcare
Physical therapy
1 for 10,000 people
Water and sewer
Improved roads
Event/civic center
High school
Improved roads
Have to leave Zebulon for lots
Staff w/real estate knowledge → preservation
Daycare
Need more public transit
Internet everywhere
Medical park
Upper tier housing
After school care, esp. kids with special needs
Rapid transit line for bussing
Accounting services
More diversity in housing
Attainable
Affordable
Temporary

- Workforce housing
- Multifamily housing
- Emergency housing and other emergency services
- Improved smart ride
- Pharmacies
- Accessory Dwelling Units, make people aware
- A high school
- All of the above
- Address traffic in town and out of town
- Family doctors
- Amphitheater
- Local attorneys

At the end of the ten minutes, participants emphasized the following topics from their discussion:

- Health care! Big time.
- Public transit services
- Daycare
- High School

Downtown Question 1: What do you like about Zebulon's downtown?

- It's gotten nicer recently
- Famous attractions
 - Old Raleigh Distillery
 - Bagpipe place
- There's been more attractions and restaurants
- Unique businesses
- Decorations, aesthetics, plants, signs
- Walk and know everyone
- walkable

Downtown Question 2: What would make downtown better than it is today?

- Adequate parking
- "downtown" buildings
- Curb appeal/beautification
- Parks need updating
- Market



Slower truck traffic



- Longevity of individual businesses
- Clear demarcation
- Rotate downtown parties: Vance Street
- Consistency of business hours
- Taxis, safe rides
- Places to live
 - Mixed use zoning and structures
- Open space to gather
- Wi-fi! Hardwired fiber
- Outdoor amphitheater
- Pedestrian friendly
 - More walkable
- Landscape architecture
- Less big-truck friendly
- Green/eco-friendly
- More trees!

Participants wanted to emphasize the following key take aways from the downtown discussion:

- Walkable
- Everyone knows each other
- Need places to live
- Make it more pedestrian friendly
- More environmentally friendly
- More and better beautification
- Better parking
- Slow the trucks down!

Inclusion Question 1: Think about the ideas you have generated. If implemented, how might these ideas affect vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

- Amenities will help the underserved
- There'll likely be relocation
- Growth can bring positive/negative; some will have to re-locate
- Buildings/land may change; things knocked down and rebuilt
- Increase in prices can drive people out via higher taxes
- Gentrification, can mean different things. Don't price people out

Inclusion Question 2: How might we take steps to ensure this plan is inclusive and takes into account the perspectives, hopes and concerns of vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

- Prioritize community amenities
- Make sure there's good access to amenities services for vulnerable population
- Sidewalks:
 - Connect existing communities esp. minority ones
- Senior housing
- Expansion of smart ride program
- Better communication with Hispanic community
- More 55+ apartments of higher quality
- Work with school systems bc they see impacts of diversity
- Bring quality educations and support them

New development include incentive for vulnerable people and for those who support them (like teachers)

Offset costs for developers and ensure those benefits continue to citizens/purchasers

Develop better relations with populations so citizens are more willing to access and use government services (as well as know about them)

Are transit stops servicing all communities and those with highest need

Resource liaison

Improved accessibility
disabilities

Attendees emphasized the following discussion topics:

Better communication with Hispanic community

Better accessibility in downtown

Transit stops to serve high need communities

Sidewalks

Senior center

Youth center



One word to describe the ideal Zebulon economy, what would it be?

Opportunity
Nurturing
Thriving
Thriving
Connected
Prosperous
Innovative
Community: united
Growth

Top Two Ideas For Improving Zebulon's Economy

Both groups were asked to pick the top two ideas their group came up with. These top ideas were written down and placed at the front of the room. Participants were then each given two sticker dots to place next to their favorite two ideas. The following ideas in order of popularity were:

Economic Development (5 dots)

More businesses and higher paying jobs
Supersite building
More educated workforce

Workforce: job opportunities for residents that reside here (3 dots)

Infrastructure & Utilities (2 dots)

Grocery Store Options/locations (2 dots)

Transportation (2 dots)

Infrastructure (1 dot)

Water and Sewer
Access to infrastructure



Wrap Up

Ms. Brenman told the room that meeting the community's needs is the most important part of the economic development process. She explained that is why these community engagement meetings are one of the first steps. Mr. Clark then explained that the Town and economic development team does not enter the process with preconceived notions, because this process is citizen driven. He emphasized the importance of the community's vision and reminded the room of the multiple upcoming community engagement meetings, including one on land use.

The room was thanked for their time and participation and reminded that the last Community Café will be held in the same location on November 9.

COMMUNITY CAFÉ #3 SUMMARY

Thursday, November 9, 2023
Zebulon United Methodist Church
5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
121 W. Gannon Avenue

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the Town of Zebulon Economic Development Strategy Plan Community Café meeting on November 9, 2023. It was the third and final community engagement event for this stage of the planning process. Approximately 35 people attended and participated in the discussion, including several repeat participants from the first and second Community Cafés.

Evening Welcome and Overview

Joe Moore, Zebulon Town Manager, welcomed and thanked the crowd for attending. While guests ate the dinner provided by the Town, Mr. Clark explained the basic concepts of economic development and community engagement. He then gave a brief overview of the economic history of Zebulon. Shannon Johnson, Zebulon's Economic Development Specialist, then spoke to the evening's participants and thanked them for joining. She said economic development is often done by speaking directly to business and industry, but that this approach does not fit Zebulon's high-growth pattern nor the Town's desire to provide community stability. Ms. Johnson assured the crowd that this process would not create a plan without action. She explained the next steps in the strategic planning process after this round of community engagement cafés focused on creating an industry working group and creating a draft economic development plan. After the draft plan is written, the community will be reconvened for another round of feedback. She emphasized that this process, with its iterative community engagement built in, has been developed to truly include and engage residents.

Warren Miller then introduced the team from Fountainworks including himself, Maddie Shea, and Laura Gomez-Nichols. Mr. Warren explained that Fountainworks is working with the Town of Zebulon to assist in forming an economic development strategic plan and tonight is specifically working to get community input for and help to develop the Town's economic development plan.

Evening's Agenda

Mr. Miller went over the agenda for the evening:

- Welcome and Overview of Café Purpose

- A Tour of Zebulon

- Your Thoughts on Zebulon's Economy, Business, Jobs, Amenities, and Downtown

- Fostering an Inclusive Zebulon Economy

- Top 2 Ideas – Improving Zebulon's Economy

- Wrap Up

Mr. Miller explained it is okay if not everyone agrees with every idea presented. He said what is important is that everyone share their ideas.

Participants were in four groups of roughly six people in each group, with some participants leaving early and some arriving late.

Attendees

Participants were asked to use sticker dots to answer demographic questions.

55% of participants have lived in Zebulon for one to four years.

How long have you lived in Zebulon?	
Less than 1 Year	3
1-4 Years	23
More than 5 years	-
More than 10 years	7
Total	22

61% of participants were 45 or older.

What is your age?	
17 or younger	-
18-34	4
35-44	5
45-64	7
65 or older	7
Total	23

68% of participants live but do not work in Zebulon.

Do you live and/or work in Zebulon?	
Live, but not work	15
Work, but not live	3
Live and work	4

Welcome! ZEBULON North Carolina

BEFORE YOU GET SEATED...
PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUICK QUESTIONS BY PLACING A DOT BELOW THE ANSWER CHOICE THAT DESCRIBES YOU

How long have you lived in Zebulon?

LESS THAN 1 YEAR	1-4 YEARS	MORE THAN 5 YEARS	MORE THAN 10 YEARS
3 dots	23 dots	0 dots	7 dots

What is your age?

17 OR YOUNGER	18-34	35-44	45-64	65 OR OLDER
0 dots	4 dots	5 dots	7 dots	7 dots

Do you live AND/OR work in Zebulon?

LIVE, BUT NOT WORK	WORK, BUT NOT LIVE	LIVE AND WORK
15 dots	3 dots	4 dots

Sticky notes on the left:

- ¿Cuánto tiempo ha vivido en Zebulon?
- ¿Cuáles tu edad?
- ¿Vive y/o trabaja en Zebulon?

A Tour of Zebulon

To begin the evening, the room was asked to imagine giving visitors a tour of Zebulon. Attendees provided the following responses to these questions:

Where would you take your visitors?

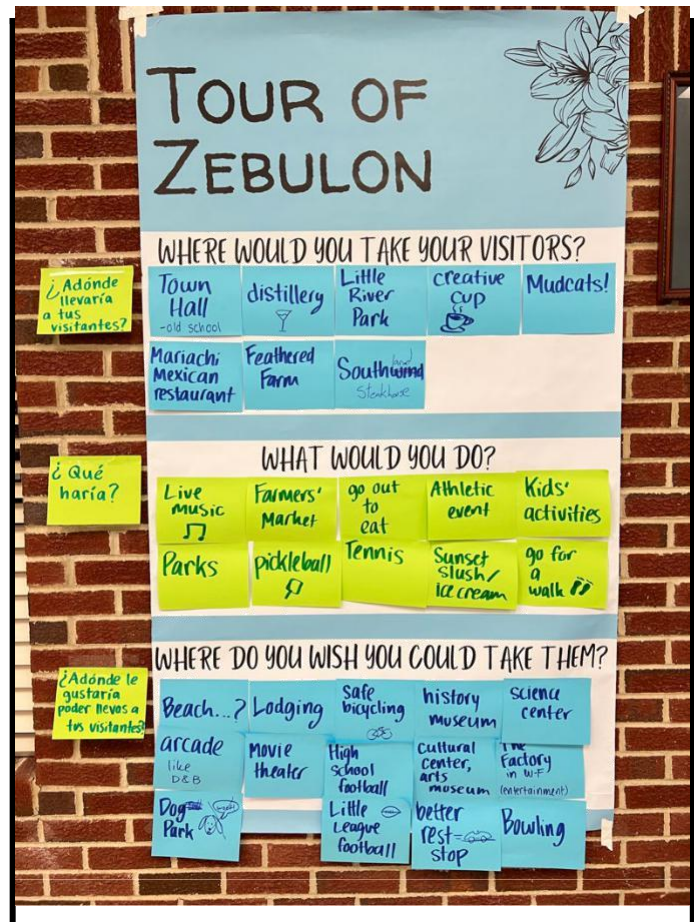
Town Hall
Distillery
Downtown
Little River Park
Creative Cup
Mudcats
Mariachi Mexican Restaurant
The Feathered Farm
Southland Steakhouse

What would you do?

Go out to eat
Go to an athletic event
Live Music
Farmers' Markets
Something for the kids
For a walk
To the park
Tennis and/or Pickleball
Ice cream place: Sunset Slush

Where do you wish you could take them?

The beach
Lodging
Safe bicycling
Science Center
Cultural Center
Arts Museum
History Museum
Arcade
Movie Theatre
Bowling
Event Center
Greenway for walks
High school football game
Little League Football
Like the Factory in Wake Forest, recreational and restaurant – entertainment venue
Dog park



Group Brainstorms

Each group had a poster with questions in five different topic areas. Mr. Miller asked the questions from one topic area at a time and gave attendees 10 minutes to brainstorm ideas and record them on the poster. Ms. Shea and Ms. Gomez-Nichols helped transcribe their responses.

The topic areas and questions were as follows:

Business

If you were going to start a business in Zebulon, what are some of the factors you would consider?

What can the Town do to make Zebulon more attractive for entrepreneurship?

What businesses are not in Town that you would like to see in town? What do you have to leave Zebulon for?

Jobs

Does Zebulon have the right kinds of jobs for the people who live here? Why or why not?

Are these jobs located where people can easily get to them?

Do these jobs meet the community's needs?

Amenities

Thinking about qualities that make Zebulon a good place to work and run a business, are there amenities that should be improved such as public transportation, roads, housing, healthcare, education, entertainment etc.?

Downtown

What do you like about Zebulon's downtown?

What would make downtown better than it is today?

Inclusion

Think about the ideas you have generated. If implemented, how might these ideas affect vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

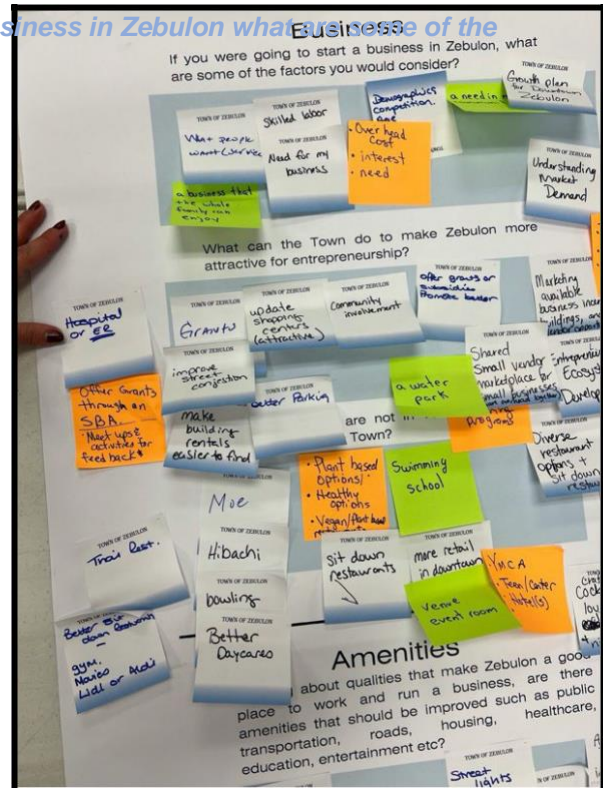
How might we take steps to ensure this plan is inclusive and takes into account the perspectives, hopes, and concerns of vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

One word to describe the ideal Zebulon economy, what would it be?

Attendee responses to questions are transcribed on the following pages.

Business Question 1: If you were going to start a business in Zebulon what factors of the business would you consider?

- Demographics
- Process
- Who to ask for help
- Zoning
- Infrastructure
- Ease of Access
- Grants Loans for start ups
- Marketing
- How well are businesses doing
- What people want (service)
- Skilled labor
- Need for my business
- Demographics competitions age
- Overhead cost
- Interest
- Need
- A need in community
- Growth plan for downtown Zebulon
- Understanding market demand
- A business that the whole family can enjoy
- Places to eat
- Median income
- Traffic
- Quality of housing
- Quality of schools
- Local high school
- Start requiring larger house lots
- Access from roads/infrastructure
- For business: water, internet, electricity
- Household incomes
- Labor market for employees
- Lack of avail bus
- Income demos
- Access by highway
- Support from town
- Existing infrastructure (able to move-in_
- Good schools: high schools, community college, etc.
- Whole family kid friendly spaces within the business
- Demographics
- What need is not met
- Location
- Access to healthcare
- Staffing
- Kids
- Staff



Locations
Entertainment
Value to community

Business Question 2: What can the Town do to make Zebulon more attractive for entrepreneurship?

Infrastructure
Liaison through process
Mentor
Ease of Access
Grants
Improve street congestion
Offer grants through SBA
Meet ups and activities for feedback
Make building rentals easier to find
Better parking
Update shopping centers (attractive)
Community involvement
A water park
Offer grants or subsidies: promote better
Shared small vendor marketplace for small businesses (share overhead together)
Marketing available business incentives, buildings, and vendor opportunities
Entrepreneurship ecosystem development
Programs for teens: mentoring programs
Hospital or ER
Tech options
Product design
Stem opportunities
Tax breaker
Larger residential host
Provide tax credits/incentives that are competitive
Easy and safe walkability between businesses
Better road infrastructure
Establish relationship with local business owners
Strategically placed dog park
Support in permits
Advertise
Communication
Program like Raleigh's NC-score targeted to Zebulon
Mentorship programs for entrepreneurs
Marketing/promotions of new businesses



Business Question 3: What businesses are not in Town that you would like to see in Town?

Dentist

Bakery
 Restaurants
 Hotels
 Supermarkets
 Fed Ex store
 Roller Skating for kids
 Hotels
 Entertainment for families
 Youth/teen centers
 Sit down restaurants
 Thai restaurant
 Better sit-down restaurants
 Gym
 Movies
 Lidl or Aldi
 Moe
 Hibachi
 Bowling
 Better daycares
 Plant based options
 Healthy options
 Vegan/Plant based restaurants
 Sit down restaurants
 Swimming school
 More retail in downtown
 Venue/event room
 YMCA
 Teen center
 Hotel(s)
 Diverse restaurant options and sit-down restaurants
 Wellness center and gym
 Craft cocktail lounge with live music (diverse) and nightlife
 Closer EMS system
 Retail stores
 A visitor's destination: museum, art space science center
 Civic center
 Hotel
 Local EMS
 Grocery stores: specialty
 More retail shopping



[illegible]

Jobs Question 1: Does Zebulon have the right kinds of jobs for the people who live here? Why or why not?

- No
- We are just houses
- Not for the income
- Highways
- Not jobs for teens
- No – not higher paying jobs
- No. not enough full-time opportunities
- No, we need HR jobs
- With more business growth, more jobs will come. The need seems to be more options, not the type of...
- Tech options
- Product design
- Stem careers
- No med
- More service industries
- More attractive neighborhoods
- Not enough business to support large growth
- Assessment of job needs
- Diverse jobs
- Why are people traveling to other towns

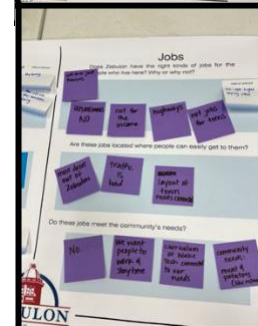
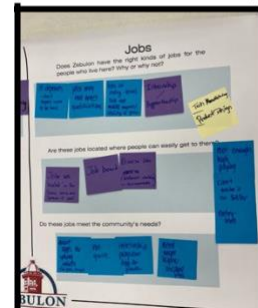
Need more businesses provide more jobs
 It depends: don't expect some to be here
 Jobs may not meet qualifications
 Lots of entry-level but not middle management/ability to grow
 Internship/apprenticeship
 Tech manufacturing
 Product design

Jobs Question 2: Are these jobs located where people can easily get to them?

Most drive out of Zebulon
 Traffic is bad
 Layout of town needs connected
 Transportation for those who need it
 No, I think that you need more advertising
 No, traffic a mess
 Marketing, finance, business type jobs
 Jobs are located in the same area... spread it out
 Job board
 Diverse jobs (different working environments)
 Not enough high paying
 Can't make it on \$9/hr
 Entry-level

Jobs Question 3: Do these jobs meet the community's needs?

No
 We want people to work and stay here
 Curriculum of Wake Tech connected to our needs
 Community needs: meat & potatoes (like restaurants)
 No, more professional jobs
 No, pay is too low for many jobs
 High tech
 Medical
 No! They leave to work in other places!
 More opportunities for young adults: the groc, target
 Not quite
 Internship program/opportunity for growth
 Need more higher income jobs



At the end of the 10 minutes, Mr. Miller asked the room if there were any ideas or key take aways from the discussion they would like to share. The following answers were given:

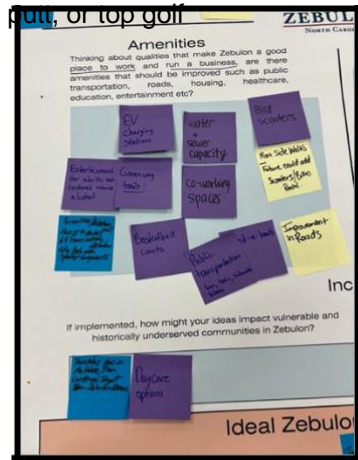
Tech manufacturing
 Medical
 Product design
 Cultural events
 Instead of big industry, community needs

Amenities: Thinking about qualities that make Zebulon a good place to work and run a business, are there amenities that should be improved such as public transportation, roads, housing, healthcare, education, entertainment etc.?

- Mental health care
- Mark areas of town
- Orthodontics and dentists
- High speed internet
- Transportation buses
- More healthcare with longer open hours
- Family activities
- Swimming pool
- Places to shop
- Senior housing
- Bus service
- Round about instead of 4 way stops
- Hospital
- Bike lanes
- Nice grocery store
- Handicap accessibility
- Wake med
- Historical center
- Gym
- Home health care agency
- Sidewalks to connect to each other for bikes/walker
- High school
- Greenway trails to connect to downtown
- Childcare
- Need entertainment, movie
- Town internships for next generation
- Improve roads
- Hotels
- Movies
- Sidewalks
- Skate park
- Ice cream
- Public transportation
- Entertainment
- High schools
- Autism services and parks (1 in 35)
- Street lights
- Improve public transportation
- Better roads
- Parking downtown
- Swimming pool
- Pickleball courts
- High school
- Better roads

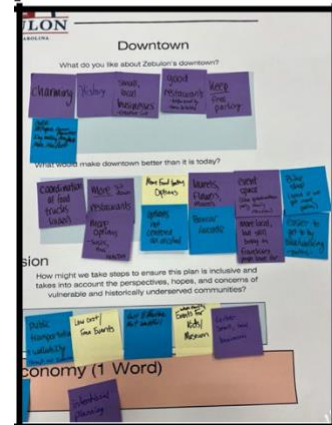
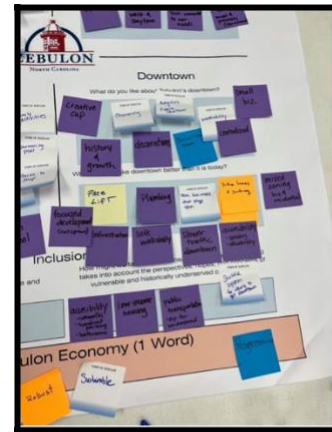


Better lights
 Better walking paths
 Hotels
 Available parking in downtown
 Entertainment: skating (ice and roller), bowling, arcade, movies, putt putt, or top golf
 Advice for entrepreneurs
 Best customer service
 Youth programs
 More guarded and clean parks
 Education: high school
 Access to Wake Tech/transportation
 A place for kids to go that is not "by the bars"
 Transit / transportation
 Transportation of elderly
 Better roads for less traffic
 Local EMS
 Better roads and parking
 Better parks and youth activities
 Transportation for teens to rec center
 Newspaper
 Better communication
 Inside concert auditorium venue
 Doctors
 Physical therapy
 Health care, medicine
 EV charging stations
 Water + sewer capacity
 Bird scooters
 Entertainment for adults not centered around alcohol
 Greenway trails
 Co-working spaces
 More sidewalks: future could add scooters/bike rentals
 Recreation/Entertainment
 Access to (better) 64 from outside
 Zebulon City Park with sports
 Basketball courts
 Public transportation: bus, train, sidewalks, bikes
 Round-a-bouts
 Improvement in roads



Downtown Question 1: What do you like about Zebulon's downtown?

Creative Cup
 Charming
 Activities and events downtown
 Walkability
 Small business
 Centralized
 Small town feel
 Decorations
 History and growth
 Historical homes and building
 Quaint
 Historic
 Skate park
 Creative cup
 Plant store
 History of building
 Historic houses
 Creative cup
 Olde Raleigh distillery's event space
 Historic architecture
 Charming
 History
 Small, local businesses
 Creative cup
 Good restaurants: high quality, farm to table
 Keep free parking



Downtown Question 2: What would make downtown better than it is today?

Face lift
 Plumbing
 More businesses that stay open
 Bike lanes and parking
 Mixed zoning: business and residential
 Focused development (not sprawl)
 Infrastructure
 Safe walkability
 Slower traffic downtown
 Accessibility for seniors and disabilities
 Community garden
 Skate park
 Parking
 More restaurants
 No more bars



Better parking
 Pocket park
 Community garden vegetable
 Children's area
 Better community center
 Plant based dining options
 Healthy dining options
 Shopping options
 Diverse and inclusive
 Art galleries
 History museum
 Cultural center
 Science center
 American restaurant/sports bar: wings, burgers, fries, fish
 Sit-down diverse dining: Indian, sushi
 Size, gender, age inclusive clothing options
 More/better parking
 Bike lane and transportation to Zeb P +R
 More restaurants
 Old buildings that could be restored
 Noise ordinance/control: "live music" that is too loud
 More retail shops
 More noise regulation and well-designed ordinances
 More effective social districting not just allowances
 Coordination of food trucks (rodeo)
 More sit-down restaurants
 More options: sushi, Thai, healthy
 More food healthy options
 Options not centered on alcohols
 Laurels, flowers, murals
 Boxcar/arcade
 Event space (like graduation party, family reunion)
 More local, but still bring in franchises people leave for
 Bike shop (good if we get more paths)
 Easier to get to by bike/walking: paths



Inclusion Question 1: Think about the ideas you have generated. If implemented, how might these ideas affect vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

Positive impact, these are beneficial
 Bad traffic
 Zoning, annexing historic district
 Internships help underserved teens
 Offer jobs
 Give voice
 Better transportation will help people get around
 Easier access to transportation from
 This plan may lift up vulnerable and underserved population

More action and less words!
More opportunities for vulnerable and underserved population
Easier access to more things to do
Town takes ideas in the future plan
Continual input from Zebulon citizens
Daycare options

Inclusion Question 2: How might we take steps to ensure this plan is inclusive and takes into account the perspectives, hopes and concerns of vulnerable and historically underserved communities?

Accessibility: sidewalks, handicap parking, bathrooms
Low-income housing
Public transportation especially for underserved
Shuttle system for elderly to get downtown
Nice and safe subsidized housing
Make sure we provide transportation to activities from lower income activities in Zebulon
Do these sessions in lower income areas
Public transportation and walkability throughout Zebulon
Low cost/free events
Cost effective, not wasteful
Whole family events for kids/museum
Center small, local businesses

One word to describe the ideal Zebulon economy, what would it be?

Progressive
Sustainable
Robust
Thriving
Growing
"wow"
Flexible
Inclusive
Affordable
Diverse
Multi-generational
Diversity
Thriving
Booming
Accessible
Thriving
Growing
Intentional planning
improvable

Top Two Ideas For Improving Zebulon's Economy

Both groups were asked to pick the top ideas their group came up with. These top ideas were written down and placed at the front of the room. Participants were then each given two sticker dots to place next to their favorite two ideas. The following ideas in order of popularity were:

Family entertainment centers/businesses (12 dots)

Medical facilities: mental clinics/24 hours care (7 dots)

Communicate and incentivize growth that aligns with a sense of community that ALL (minority and women-owned businesses) can be proud of. Zebulon should be proactive about defining an identity that can steer future investment instead of investment deciding our identity. (6 dots)

Youth activities and opportunities (4 dots)

Jobs with an opportunity for growth (3 dots)

Public Transportation (3 dots)

Food service and entertainment options (2 dots)

More diversified and charming business: Retail, High tech, hiring employees with wide variety of education (2 dots)

Transportation management (2 dots)

Infrastructure (1 dot)

Child/teen centered; family oriented

Wrap Up

Shannon Johnson then thanked participants for their time and energy. A local businesswoman conducted a raffle for a gift basket. Warren Miller then emphasized Shannon's comments and concluded the meeting.

COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Zebulon engaged Fountainworks to create an online survey to gather information about the public's opinions, concerns, and preferences on issues related to economic development. This document summarizes the information gathered in the online survey.

The survey was offered in English and Spanish. A total of **151 survey responses** were collected between October 31 and December 4, 2023.

The Town of Zebulon is dedicated to gathering community opinions and using them to inform the economic development strategic plan. The qualitative methodology employed promotes engagement and enables us to understand community preferences and concerns.

METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this summary, the English and Spanish results have been summarized together.

All responses were checked for differences by the demographic information provided in Question 7. Any differences discovered have been noted where appropriate.

All written comments and responses have been included in the [appendix](#).

OVERALL SURVEY THEMES

Overall themes from the survey have been summarized in the table below.

People live in Zebulon for	
	Housing affordability Family ties Quality of life Local character/charm Ability to commute to jobs outside of Zebulon
People want more	
	Full-service restaurants Grocery stores Entertainment
Priorities for future growth and development	
	Attainable/Affordable housing options More entertainment options Developing downtown
Priorities for Jobs	
	Tech/IT Service Industry Higher Pay/Living Wage Healthcare
How the Town can Help	
	Limiting over-development Affordable housing Affordability and funding Avoid gentrification

QUESTION 1

Would you like to take this survey in English or Spanish?

¿Te gustaría tomar la encuesta en inglés o español?

148 respondents took the survey in English

3 respondents took the survey in Spanish

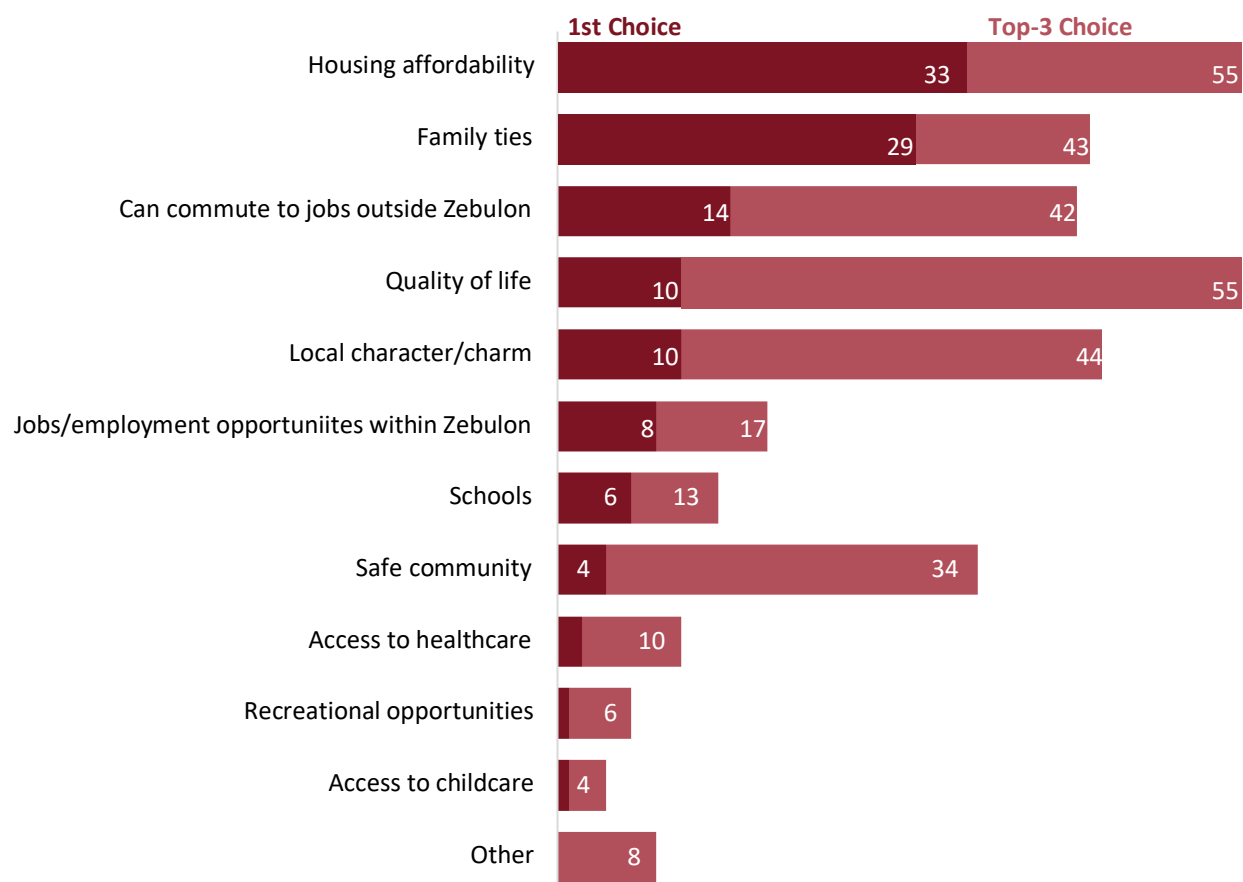
151 total survey responses

QUESTION 2

What are the top 3 reasons you choose to live in the Zebulon area?
Please rank in order of importance (with 1 being the most important).
 (123 responses)

Housing affordability and **family ties** were the two most popular first choices for reasons to stay in Zebulon (highlighted below in burgundy). When looking at the combined first, second, and third choices, **housing affordability** and **quality of life** tied as the most popular answer (highlighted below in lighter red). **Local character/charm** was the third most picked option for a top-three choice, followed very closely by **family ties** and the **ability to commute to jobs outside of Zebulon**.

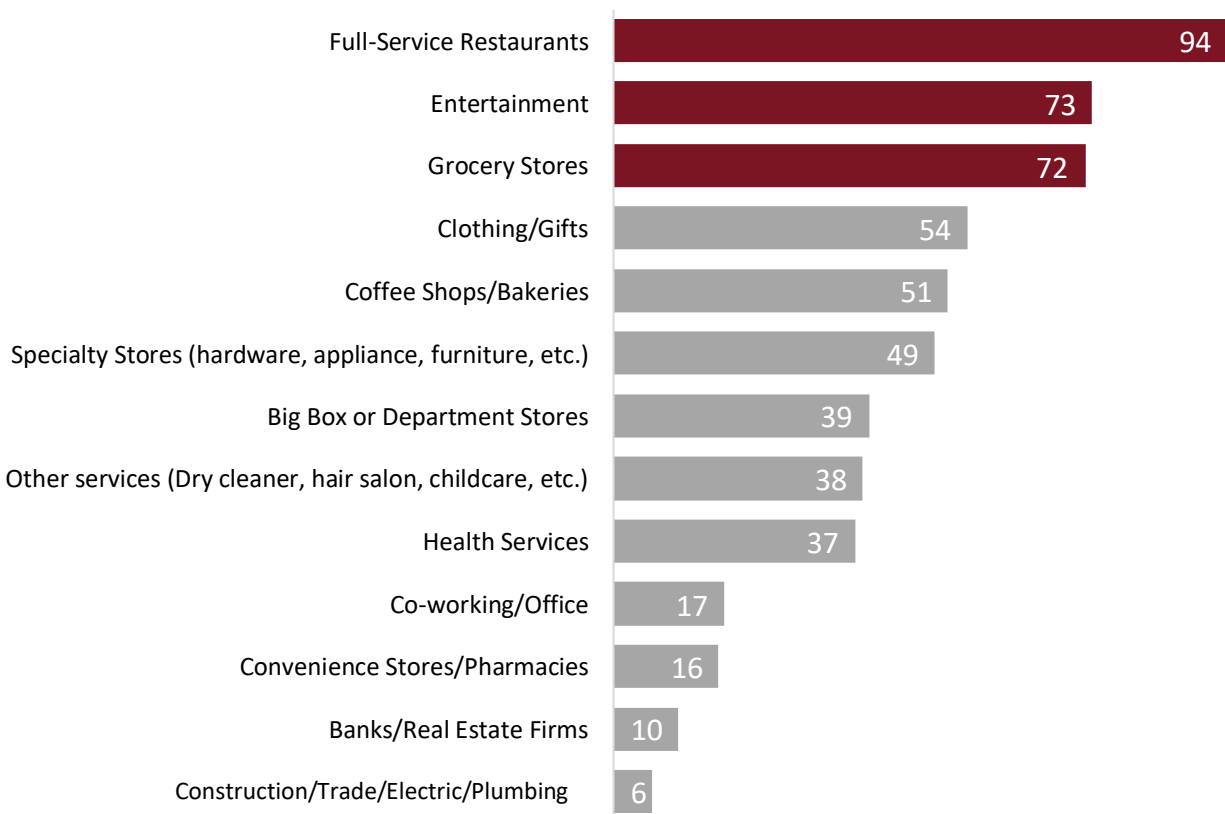
Response rates for each category are shown in the graph below, with burgundy representing the number of times a category was selected as the top priority. Light red represents the total number of times the category was voted first, second, or third choice. The “other” comments can be found in the [appendix](#).



QUESTION 3

What types of businesses or amenities would you like to see (or see more of) in Zebulon? Check all that apply. (125 responses)

Full-service restaurants were the most popular type of business respondents wanted to see in Zebulon. **Grocery stores** and **entertainment** were the next most popular categories. 24 responses were originally marked as “other.” These responses have been categorized and are shown in the chart below. The original responses can be found in the [appendix](#).

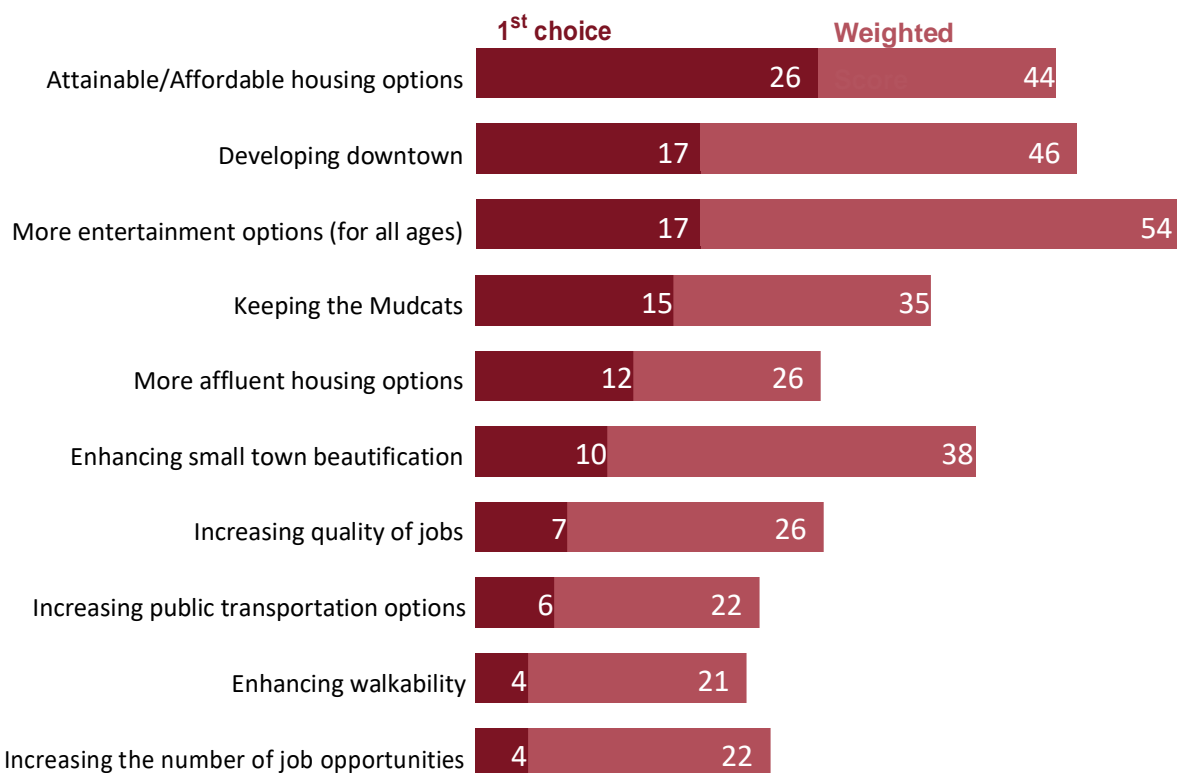


QUESTION 4

What are your top priorities for future growth and development? Please rank your top 5 choices (with 1 being most preferred). (123 responses)

Attainable/Affordable housing options was the most picked 1st choice answer, followed by **more entertainment options** and **developing downtown** at the same rate. Applying a weighted score to include

all top-5 answers, the ranking shifted but the same answers remained in the top-three. **More entertainment options** had the highest weighted score, followed by **developing downtown** and **attainable/affordable housing options**, in that order.



Response rates for each category are shown in the graph above, with burgundy representing the number of times a category was selected as the top priority. Light red represents weighted scores. Additional respondent comments have been added to the [appendix](#).

QUESTION 5

What kind of jobs does Zebulon need? (81 responses)

This question required people write in a response. Responses were categorized according to themes they expressed, with some responses categorized into more than one theme. The most common themes are listed below.

Tech/IT⁷⁸ was the most popular response theme:
 Software development
 Broadband

Themes are hyperlinked to the appendix section with a detailed list of the corresponding responses.

Service industry, Higher pay/Living Wage, and Healthcare appeared at the same rate as the next most popular themes.

Service Industry

- More entertainment
- Restaurants, cafes, specialty food shop servers
- Nail techs

Higher Pay / Living Wage

- “Careers that provide a living wage, rather than low wage customer service positions.”
- “Jobs that offer livable wages and substantial growth and development opportunities for employees. Jobs with flexible work options that offer employees work life balance so that they cannot only be great corporate citizen, but great citizens in the community.”
- Quality, stable, high-paying jobs

Healthcare

- Mental health professionals
- Doctors, nurses, and EMTs
- General health services

A detailed list of all responses can be found in the [appendix](#), as well as a [table](#) of all themes and their frequency.

QUESTION 6

What can the Town do to protect vulnerable residents and businesses from being displaced due to growth and development? (86 responses)

This question also required write-in responses. Responses were categorized according to themes expressed, with some responses categorized into multiple themes. A list of the top four response themes is below, beginning with the most common.

Limiting over-development

- “Stop building.”
- “Keep big box stores out.”
- “Stop building huge housing developments. Keep small-town life.”
- “None of the infrastructure is handling the growth...including emergency services!”

Affordable housing

- Rent control for residential and commercial
- Improve quality, access, and quantity
- Senior homes with other resources and support

Affordability and funding

Grants for small businesses
Make it affordable to open businesses
Home repair grants
Make sure stores that come are affordable

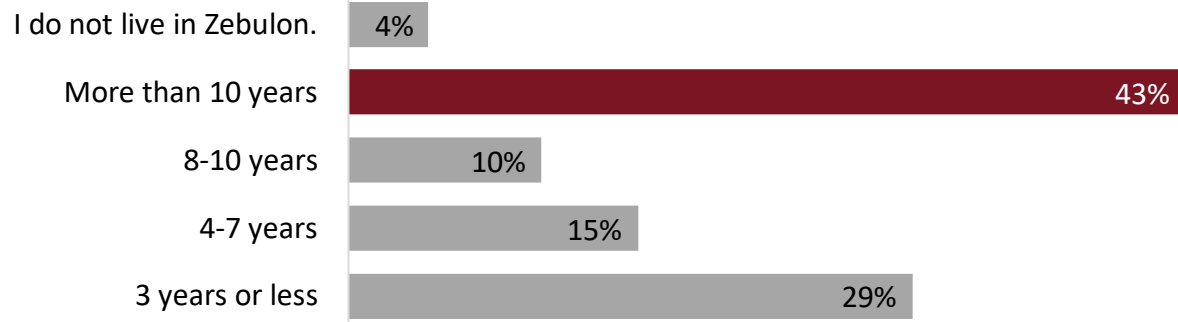
Avoid Gentrification

Support local businesses in order to keep them here
Offer community preservation services
“Encourage growth/development in areas that will not displace current residents/businesses.”

A detailed list of all responses to this question can be found in the [appendix](#), as well as a [table](#) of all themes and their frequency.

QUESTION 7

How long have you lived in Zebulon? (122 responses)

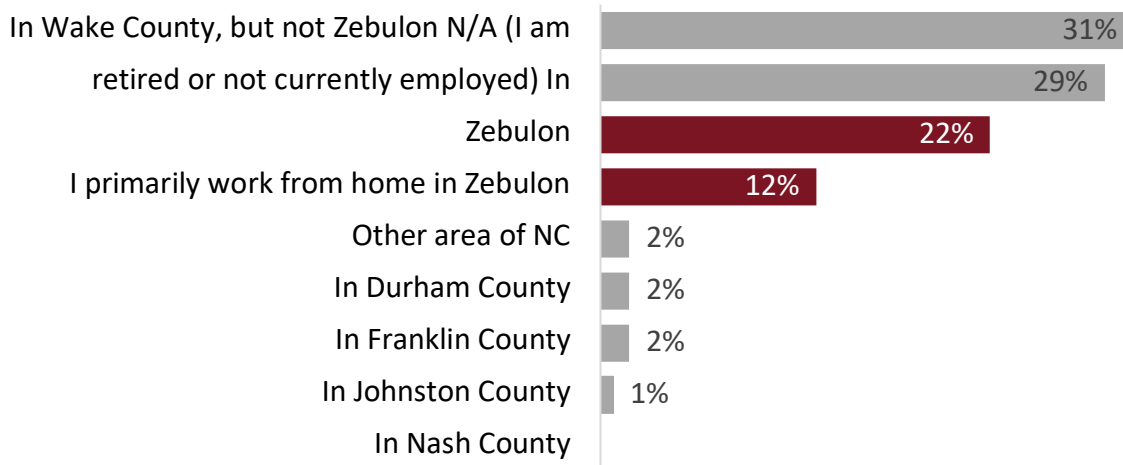


43% of survey respondents have **lived in Zebulon for more than 10 years**.

QUESTION 8

If you work, where is your job primarily located? (121 response)

Even though 96% of survey respondents live in Zebulon, **only 22% currently work in Zebulon** and **12% work from home in Zebulon**.



Notably, 49% of respondents who have lived in Zebulon for 3 years or less work in Wake County but not Zebulon, whereas only 19% of those who have lived in Zebulon for over 10 years do. Additionally, 9% of respondents who have live in Zebulon for 3 years or less chose N/A (I am retired or not currently employed) compared to 33% of those who have lived in Zebulon for over 10 years.

Comments left on this question include:

- "I'm not working here at Zebulon because they don't have many options."
- "Retired, but always worked in Zebulon."

QUESTION 9

Would you like to receive occasional email updates about Zebulon's economic development?

58 respondents answered yes. Their emails have been shared with economic planning department.

SURVEY APPENDIX: OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

"Other" answers to Question 2: Top 3 reasons you chose to live in Zebulon:

- When I moved here 10 years ago
- student at Zebulon middle and live in Rolesville
- student at Zebulon middle but does not live in Zebulon
- Get outside of Wake County but be close

Most everyone in town used to be much friendlier when I was a child. But with so many people coming from up North and Out West and other places, the majority of the residents are no longer as friendly as they used to be because of many of the new people. Many of them have no respect for the people who grew up here or their property and the crime rate has greatly increased. So, it is becoming less friendly and a less desirable place to live by the day.

Zebulon Magnet middle is not a safe school

Lived here all my life

Not everyone drinks alcohol!

“Other” answers to Question 3: What types of businesses or amenities would you like to see in Zebulon?

Entertainment

Senior Center

Museum

Movie theater

Aldi

No more big-box or chain restaurants!!!!!!

Zebulon is already called a bedroom community for Raleigh:-)

Yoga Studio

A Harris Teeter or Publix would be great

nonprofit, community spaces

Hotel

A community skill center where people can learn trades like carpentry, mechanics, etc. also then can get free counseling for people dealing with depression, alcohol, and Drugs.

Parks

Clothing Alteration Business, Jersey Mike's

Fast Food Variety

A hobby store or like a U.S. military shop or Plen store like a model shop

School

Activity Center (ax throwing, bowling)

consignment store like Suzanna's in Rolesville... a thrift "mall" where a large space has smaller vendor spaces (like Suzanna's but less pricey antiques like they have) ... a store full of Made in NC products!

...homemade bread bakery....

More Fast-food options

Unique shops and activities, museums,

Historic museum

working food bank

better education, bookstore

Additional comments from Question 4: What are your top priorities for future growth and development?

Keeping small downtown charm intact

Restaurants!!!!

#1 Traffic & Parking downtown area

More health care options

Add more sidewalk

Fix the pothole

Not allowing housing growth to overpower roadways!

Plen store
 Help improve curb/appeal/façade of downtown residential housing
 Quality job opportunities
 Keeping small town charm.

Response Themes and Frequency from Question 5: What kind of jobs does Zebulon need?

Tech/IT	14
Service Industry (Restaurant, Entertainment, Beauty)	12
Higher Pay/Living wage	12
Healthcare	12
Trades	9
Professional	7
Comment/Complaint	6
Emergency Responder	5
Local/Small business	5
Jobs with advancement potential	5
Office	5
Care Industry	4
Student and Youth Jobs	4
Entry-level	4
More Jobs	4
Manufacturing	4
Research and Development	3
Community-based	3
Corporate	3
Retail	3
Remote / Flexible	2
Transportation	2
I don't know	2
Commute Out for Work	1
Non-manufacturing	1
Skilled labor	1
Government	1
Education	1

Responses to Question 5: What kind of jobs does Zebulon need?

Not sure

Biotech jobs (laboratory and data analysis), jobs that can become a career, accountants (tax preps), middle management jobs

Office

More entertainment, restaurants and other activities for families.

Service industry and local businesses

Trade

Tech/IT

Careers that provide a living wage, rather than low wage customer service positions.

Healthcare

Mental health professionals

MORE POLICE, FIRE AND EMS

People can commute to Raleigh for career opportunities.

Professional

Bigger retailers, restaurants

Tech, restaurants, childcare

Non-manufacturing jobs

Small business

Skilled

Is this honestly a question? For crying out loud. Do better.

I don't know

IT, research and development, life sciences

1. Employment for College & advanced degree candidates

Full-time jobs with good benefits.

Emergency services, paramedics, nurses, general health services jobs, Office jobs, retail, servers.

More local farm jobs

Higher paying jobs-Healthcare for example; Entry level jobs with growth opportunities

Biomedical, transportation services, more small businesses

Remote in shared spaces, community based and/or higher than minimum wage.

Technical

Electrical, tech related and entertainment related.

Health care, Labor skills trades

Healthcare - need a hospital. Office jobs.

Police stations, fire dept, hospitals.

Pothole fixer jobs

Nail techs and Boba Tea shops.

pothole fixer jobs

Jobs for younger people

more trash pickups so we don't throw it in the grass.

More manufacturing jobs that pay more than \$13-\$15 an hour.

Community Service Jobs and Transportation

Doctors, Nurses, and EMTs

Jobs that offer livable wages and substantial growth and development opportunities for employees. Jobs with flexible work options that offer employees work life balance so that they cannot only be great corporate citizen, but great citizens in the community.

Just more as the population is increasing

appropriate job opportunities for youth, jobs providing living wage
 Jobs that enhance individuals' ability to become entrepreneurs/ self-employed.
 Health care, Industry, technology
 Companies that are large enough to need separate Accounts Payable or Accounts Receivable or Payroll
 positions. Possibly in Computer Industry, Telecommunications Industry, Healthcare Industry.
 Zebulon should have more restaurants and bars, as well as activities where parents and children can spend
 time together. The Parks & Recreation programs should be more developed. Zebulon also needs more
 real estate firms and more in-town attorneys.
 Jobs in every category to fit with the diverse public we have here in Zebulon.
 Any types that can fit
 PLEN PILOTS
 for teens and fun jobs
 construction
 bakeries
 healthcare
 More care dealers.
 Manufacturing, technology
 Zebulon needs office jobs so that folks will not have to commute to Raleigh or Durham or Wilson.
 Zebulon needs more jobs for middle class citizens. There are not enough restaurants in the area to offer
 decent serving jobs. It would also be nice to have some corporate companies nearby for those who want
 that kind of job as well.
 Corporate Jobs
 Small Business and entry level
 Tech and manufacturing
 Long term higher paying.
 More Police officers; Firemen; Home Care workers;
 More professional jobs that offer higher pay and benefits.
 we need jobs that require a high school diploma or 2-year degree
 stable decent paying jobs
 Ones whose pay would allow the person to live in Zebulon
 Manufacturing
 Tech / software development
 Diversity is good. I think looking at what the needs and abilities of the population would be a good start.
 Professional
 Warehouse jobs more office jobs too!
 High Tech and Broadband opportunities.
 Tech, electronics, electricity and other trades.
 Medical, tech, entertainment, major chain retail, tailor and shoe repair, government branch-fed, state and
 local
 Mid-managerial, Home health, IT jobs
 Trades
 Quality, stable, high-paying jobs. White Collar
 start building more fast-food places
 Mas escuelas (More schools)

Popular themes to Question 5: What kind of jobs does Zebulon need?

Tech/IT

Tech/IT
 Tech, restaurants, childcare

IT, research and development, life sciences
Technical
Electrical, tech related and entertainment related.
Health care, Industry, technology
Companies that are large enough to need separate Accounts Payable or Accounts Receivable or Payroll positions. Possibly in Computer Industry, Telecommunications Industry, Healthcare Industry.
Manufacturing, technology
Tech and manufacturing
Tech / software development
High Tech and Broadband opportunities.
Tech, electronics, electricity and other trades.
Medical, tech, entertainment, major chain retail, tailor and shoe repair, government branch-fed, state and local
Mid-managerial, Home health, IT jobs

Service Industry

More entertainment, restaurants and other activities for families.
Service industry and local businesses
Bigger retailers, restaurants
Tech, restaurants, childcare
Emergency services, paramedics, nurses, general health services jobs, Office jobs, retail, servers.
Electrical, tech related and entertainment related.
Nail techs and Boba Tea shops.
Zebulon should have more restaurants and bars, as well as activities where parents and children can spend time together. The Parks & Recreation programs should be more developed. Zebulon also needs more real estate firms and more in-town attorneys.
bakeries
Zebulon needs more jobs for middle class citizens. There are not enough restaurants in the area to offer decent serving jobs. It would also be nice to have some corporate companies nearby for those who want that kind of job as well.
Medical, tech, entertainment, major chain retail, tailor and shoe repair, government branch-fed, state and local
start building more fast-food places

Higher Pay / Living Wage

Careers that provide a living wage, rather than low wage customer service positions.
Full-time jobs with good benefits.
Higher paying jobs-Healthcare for example; Entry level jobs with growth opportunities
Remote in shared spaces, community based and/or higher than minimum wage.
More manufacturing jobs that pay more than \$13-\$15 an hour.
Jobs that offer livable wages and substantial growth and development opportunities for employees. Jobs with flexible work options that offer employees work life balance so that they cannot only be great corporate citizen, but great citizens in the community.
appropriate job opportunities for youth, jobs providing living wage
Long term higher paying.
More professional jobs that offer higher pay and benefits.
stable decent paying jobs
Ones whose pay would allow the person to live in Zebulon
Quality, stable, high-paying jobs. White Collar

Healthcare

Healthcare
 Mental health professionals
 Emergency services, paramedics, nurses, general health services jobs, Office jobs, retail, servers.
 Higher paying jobs-Healthcare for example; Entry level jobs with growth opportunities
 Health care, Labor skills trades
 Healthcare - need a hospital. Office jobs.
 Police stations, fire dept, hospitals.
 Doctors, Nurses, and EMTs
 Health care, Industry, technology
 Companies that are large enough to need separate Accounts Payable or Accounts Receivable or Payroll positions. Possibly in Computer Industry, Telecommunications Industry, Healthcare Industry.
 healthcare
 Medical, tech, entertainment, major chain retail, tailor and shoe repair, government branch-fed, state and local

Responses to Question 6: What can the town do to protect vulnerable residents and businesses from being displaced due to growth and development?

Not sure
 Directory of local businesses with website info. Making sure stores that come are affordable.
 Prioritizing local small businesses. Making sure to preserve the history of the town.
 Stop building
 Better infrastructure.
 Get rid of the boozier venues or at least put the road blocks back in place to get the drunk drivers out. How about a special camera that takes the photos of plates like in Raleigh and wake forest to keep our streets safer and those that would do it harm out
 Grandfather laws
 Be more involved
 Reduce vacant landlords who do not live nearby
 I think that the town should research this question and discuss with experts in this field. It's an important issue that should be handled with knowledge and care, rather than a group vote.
 Help them financially
 It's time to limit affordable housing options & being the place Raleigh sends their vulnerable residents. Zebulon is a bedroom community of Raleigh that needs development because Zebulon is the last stop before Wilson or Nashville/Rocky Mount. It needs to be a destination not a dumping ground.
 Keep big box stores out.
 Plan long-term growth instead of as it happens
 Provide more parking
 N/a
 Rent control residential and commercial, affordable housing, grants for small businesses
 Stop building huge housing developments. Keep small town life.
 Stop housing growth. Too many to close together. None of the infrastructure is handling this growth... including emergency services!
 Not issue so many permits. Zebulon is already called a bedroom community for Raleigh:-(
 What can this firm do to develop a better questionnaire?

Include the citizens in conversations. Make sure they are aware of the growth and have the opportunity to weigh in on it. Social media is an easy way to do this but you must remember that many of them don't use social media in that way. For instance, many of them will not be aware of this survey.

STOP raising taxes! Stop raising the pay for commissioners (when you chose to run for office, you knew the pay). Your job is to serve, not earn a living off the taxpayers' back (ie, the Zebulon residents). If you need more income, seek a better paying job or become an entrepreneur.

annex contingent areas and set higher standards consistent with the towns long range planning for project approval

Make sure affordable housing stays in place. Also working to bring a couple big name companies to the area. GSK is good, but a few more would be great. Market it as the RTP of the East.

Focus on fully staffing emergency services and building more roads to relieve the increasing traffic thanks to all the new home construction and population growth. This should be considered when allowing more home constructions.

Ask for their input and ideas like this survey does. Provide more than one option to them when it comes time for development.

Continuing engaging residents in these surveys; Really consider the wants/needs from the residents; Limit the same type of businesses to reduce competition (For example with have 3 pizza restaurants in 1 shopping center.)

limit rezoning for high dollar development

Limit chains/big box to outskirts.

Do a step program to slowly bring up the business. Work an affordable plan. For residence look for grant monies to help for improvements.

Keep taxes low. Encourage growth/development in areas that will not displace current residents/businesses. Use incentives if necessary.

Patrol the city, safety prevention programs.

Fix the traffic situation. It's horrible! Have any of you Zebulon downtown residences have to be in Raleigh by 8 am to work? 264 is nothing but a death trap from Zebulon to Knightdale. Also, Arendell Avenue from Pippin Road to Gannon is outrageous.

get someone to buy the businesses and open them up to save them from closing or being displaced.

Fix potholes

Stop Building so many Bars.

spend more time making those laces sustainable

Avoid building in residential areas

put more time and effort to sustain those places then we can focus on other things.

To be honest I don't know

no se (I don't know)

Zebulon needs to have MORE affordable housing due to the economy being as bad as it is. Many people getting on social media asking about houses to rent. They cannot afford to live in Raleigh. Their jobs are here in Zebulon.

Have better mayors

having stricter laws and more police officers

Create opportunities for outreach and charity for those who migrated to the area from places like Raleigh and Durham looking for affordable housing. Create a way that those who are new to the community can support individuals who are the foundation of the community that they've

been able to move to. Zebulon can be a place where people not only come to invest in themselves and their family, but they also invest in the community.

STOP the huge influx of people. We are native and have contributed to the community for decades and now my own children can't see themselves staying here. That is sad. They grew up in our schools, sports, Scouts and dance but hate what the area is becoming.

Have resources inflated to help the small business owners. Affordable housing for the vulnerable education financial prep and outreach, funding for home preservation and business assistance, jobs opportunities for those underemployed

Provide development for businesses that want to take part in personal and business development courses/training.

More support for existing local businesses to keep them here.

Offer low income &/or currently unemployed residents home repair grants (that don't have to be repaid - possibly from the federal government) for immediate needs that they can't afford to pay for themselves so that they will not be forced to leave their home due to not being able to afford proper upkeep. The way the town used to be, people would get together to help their family, friends, neighbors and fellow church members. Now that kind of thing is mainly through churches or government programs.

The town should not have as a priority to protect vulnerable residents and businesses from being displaced due to growth and development. Barbee Street should be a priority in downtown development. Large and small developers should be encouraged and assisted by the Planning Department, instead of being discouraged, perhaps in exchange for commitment to some affordable housing.

Provide for more access and improve low-income safe housing.

I don't really know how

Maybe volunteer security for parts of town.

making a job

more economy

have better security

I don't know

Hire more people that can't find one.

Ask them what they need.

Make it affordable for folks to open businesses downtown. Give independent business owners an incentive to keep their businesses in Zebulon. Keep the city residential tax low. People are taxed enough by the State and Federal Governments.

already happened... everywhere, not just Zebulon. I think we're past correct planning for growth and development! missed that boat. Affordable housing is extinct

Plan. That's the only way to make sure everyone knows what is happening and why.

Stop building so many homes when our town does not have the infrastructure to support that many people.

Showcase small business section in website and newsletters

Affordable rent and housing

Be respectful. Other business need to be respectful of each other.

Survey areas to identify at risk communities, such as number of evictions for foreclosures in an area; landlords who don't keep up their property but increase rents; home prices increasing

Stop growing the town uncontrollably.

Ensure that traffic congestion is minimized, that more higher priced homes are built (rather than the cheaper ones that are being built now) and that more entertainment opportunities are provided in a safer environment.

not sure

offer community preservation services, like helping develop a land trust or similar program

Stop growing at this rate, stop developers from out-pricing people,

Decent Senior Homes, with convenience to Medical and groceries. Support Shop local Event.

Continue to work with the chamber of commerce to highlight small business owners and their products and services. Support local religious organizations and their outreach to older residents and or residents that may be struggling financially. Maybe the town could create a web presence that pulls together government services with church food banks and non-profits that help battered women etc. to help people searching for help find available resources in the area.

Offer grants to improve and stabilize existing housing inventory. Support owner occupied housing and reduce absent landlord ownerships

Look for grants or other resources to provide support and ways to help make improvements to be successful. I like what the Detective is doing to help with our youth who need a counselor. I think finding support that has a face for the vulnerable in our community. Helping to navigate resources.

Encourage small local businesses. Doing frequent events to get their name out and heard.

Stop the growth

Please no more cookie cutter high density developments like we are seeing now. This will destroy the character and charm of the area if it continues. More developments like Betty Ray use to development. Saddens me to see the kind of development going on here. We have seen what this has done to other towns.

Be more mindful of overdevelopment in areas that has been an intricate part of establishing this town. Property tax stabilization for already established residents on fixed incomes

Disallow utilizing eminent domain. Stop trying to be Cary or Apex. Stop unbridled growth until infrastructure improvements are started. Two lane roads, be it country ones or Gannon Avenue or Shepard School road MUST be widened before the entire town becomes one big, massive traffic snarl. Despite a much denser, heavily populated area than Zebulon, it's easier to get around many places in Raleigh, especially North Raleigh, because the roads were widened in conjunction with the growth, not years (or decades) afterwards.

Leave us alone ~ quit spending money like the Federal government.

I don't know, but this needs to be a priority!

Provide public transit, and access to higher paying jobs. Increase access to equitable housing options. Work with local business to adapt business models to changing client demographics.

Response themes and frequency from Question 6: What can the town do to protect vulnerable residents and businesses from being displaced due to growth and development?

Limit over-development	17
Affordable housing	14
Affordability & Funding	10

Gentrification	8
Comment/Complaint	8
Communication	7
I don't know	7
Traffic Safety	6
Planning and Research	5
Infrastructure	5
Serve the vulnerable.	4
Taxes	4
Town support	4
Laws and Statutes	4
Emergency Responders	4
Preserve small-town	3
Prioritize community needs	3
Create jobs	3
Don't prioritize the vulnerable.	3
Limit alcohol	2
Education and Training	2
Safety and Security	2
Preserve history	2
Better communication	1
Public transportation	1
Non-answer	1
Effort	1
Inclusion	1

Popular themes and responses to Question 6: What can the town do to protect vulnerable residents and businesses from being displaced due to growth and development?

Limit Over-Development

Stop building

Keep big box stores out.

Stop building huge housing developments. Keep small town life.

Stop housing growth. Too many to close together. None of the infrastructure is handling this growth... including emergency services!

Not issue so many permits. Zebulon is already called a bedroom community for Raleigh :-)

Continuing engaging residents in these surveys; Really consider the wants/needs from the residents; Limit the same type of businesses to reduce competition (For example with have 3 pizza restaurants in 1 shopping center.)

limit rezoning for high dollar development

Limit chains/big box to outskirts.

Avoid building in residential areas

STOP the huge influx of people. We are native and have contributed to the community for decades and now my own children can't see themselves staying here. That is sad. They grew up in our schools, sports, Scouts and dance but hate what the area is becoming.

Stop building so many homes when our town does not have the infrastructure to support that many people.

Stop growing the town uncontrollably.

Stop growing at this rate, stop developers from out-pricing people,

Stop the growth

Please no more cookie cutter high density developments like we are seeing now. This will destroy the character and charm of the area if it continues. More developments like Betty Ray use to development. Saddens me to see the kind of development going on here. We have seen what this has done to other towns.

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Property tax stabilization for already established residents on fixed incomes

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Affordable Housing

Rent control residential and commercial, affordable housing, grants for small businesses

Make sure affordable housing stays in place. Also working to bring a couple big name companies to the area. GSK is good, but a few more would be great. Market it as the RTP of the East.

Zebulon needs to have MORE affordable housing due to the economy being as bad as it is. Many people getting on social media asking about houses to rent. They cannot afford to live in Raleigh. Their jobs are here in Zebulon.

Create opportunities for outreach and charity for those who migrated to the area from places like Raleigh and Durham looking for affordable housing. Create a way that those who are new to the community can support individuals who are the foundation of the community that they've been able to move to. Zebulon can be a place where people not only come to invest in themselves and their family, but they also invest in the community.

Have resources inflated to help the small business owners. Affordable housing for the vulnerable

Offer low income &/or currently unemployed residents home repair grants (that don't have to be repaid - possibly from the federal government) for immediate needs that they can't afford to pay for themselves so that they will not be forced to leave their home due to not being able to afford proper upkeep. The way the town used to be, people would get together to help their family, friends, neighbors and fellow church members. Now that kind of thing is mainly through churches or government programs.

The town should not have as a priority to protect vulnerable residents and businesses from being displaced due to growth and development. Barbee Street should be a priority in downtown development. Large and small developers should be encouraged and assisted by the Planning Department, instead of being discouraged, perhaps in exchange for commitment to some affordable housing.

Provide for more access and improve low-income safe housing.

already happened... everywhere, not just Zebulon. I think we're past correct planning for growth and development! missed that boat. Affordable housing is extinct

Affordable rent and housing

Survey areas to identify at risk communities, such as number of evictions for foreclosures in an area; landlords who don't keep up their property but increase rents; home prices increasing

Decent Senior Homes, with convenience to Medical and groceries. Support Shop local Event.
Offer grants to improve and stabilize existing housing inventory. Support owner occupied housing and reduce absent landlord ownerships
Provide public transit, and access to higher paying jobs. Increase access to equitable housing options.
Work with local business to adapt business models to changing client demographics.

Affordability and Funding

Directory of local businesses with website info. Making sure stores that come are affordable. Prioritizing local small businesses. Making sure to preserve the history of the town.
Rent control residential and commercial, affordable housing, grants for small businesses
Do a step program to slowly bring up the business. Work an affordable plan. For residence look for grant monies to help for improvements.
Keep taxes low. Encourage growth/development in areas that will not displace current residents/businesses. Use incentives if necessary.
education financial prep and outreach, funding for home preservation and business assistance, jobs opportunities for those underemployed
Offer low income &/or currently unemployed residents home repair grants (that don't have to be repaid - possibly from the federal government) for immediate needs that they can't afford to pay for themselves so that they will not be forced to leave their home due to not being able to afford proper upkeep. The way the town used to be, people would get together to help their family, friends, neighbors and fellow church members. Now that kind of thing is mainly through churches or government programs.
Make it affordable for folks to open businesses downtown. Give independent business owners an incentive to keep their businesses in Zebulon. Keep the city residential tax low. People are taxed enough by the State and Federal Governments.
Offer grants to improve and stabilize existing housing inventory. Support owner occupied housing and reduce absent landlord ownerships
Look for grants or other resources to provide support and ways to help make improvements to be successful. I like what the Detective is doing to help with our youth who need a counselor. I think finding support that has a face for the vulnerable in our community. Helping to navigate resources.

Gentrification

Keep taxes low. Encourage growth/development in areas that will not displace current residents/businesses. Use incentives if necessary.
get someone to buy the businesses and open them up to save them from closing or being displaced.
spend more time making those places sustainable
put more time and effort to sustain those places then we can focus on other things.
More support for existing local businesses to keep them here.
Offer low income &/or currently unemployed residents home repair grants (that don't have to be repaid - possibly from the federal government) for immediate needs that they can't afford to pay for themselves so that they will not be forced to leave their home due to not being able to afford proper upkeep. The way the town used to be, people would get together to help their family, friends, neighbors and fellow church members. Now that kind of thing is mainly through churches or government programs.
offer community preservation services, like helping develop a land trust or similar program
I don't know, but this needs to be a priority!

STAFF DESIGN THINKING RETREAT SUMMARY

MEETING PURPOSE

The Town of Zebulon convened a retreat with staff and key community stakeholders to review and discuss Phase One of stakeholder engagement efforts and use design-thinking to understand how community members and businesses interact with the Town on economic development issues. The meeting was professionally facilitated by Fountainworks. Comments were captured as the conversation flowed and do not reflect any priority unless otherwise noted.



Objectives:

- Review, recap, and discuss the environmental assessment report
- Present findings from the first phase of stakeholder engagement, including insights from the three community cafés and the community survey
- Envision the next round of stakeholder engagement using journey mapping and design thinking



Meeting Participants:

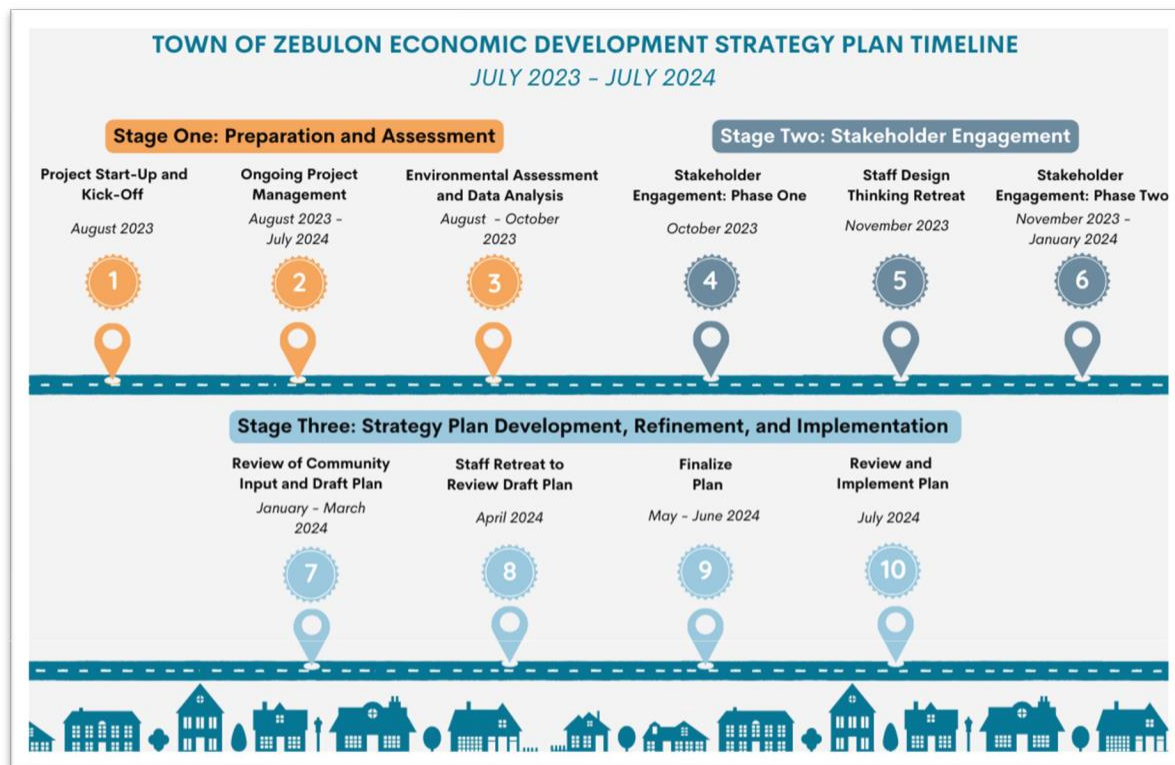
- Shannon Johnson, Town of Zebulon Economic Development Specialist
- Teresa Piner, Downtown Main Street Director
- John Saffold, Zebulon Chamber of Commerce Executive Director
- Brandon McCraney, Olde Raleigh Distillery Owner
- Sam Rauf, Wake County Economic Development Senior Economic Development Manager
- Michael Clark, Town of Zebulon Planning Director
- Julie Brenman, Maddie Shea, and Laura Gomez-Nichols of Fountainworks

AGENDA

Julie walked the group through the meeting's agenda:

- Welcome and Orientation
- Review Phase One of Stakeholder Engagement
- Journey Mapping: Human Centered Design for Economic Development
- Next Steps & Adjourn

Next, a brief overview of the Economic Development Strategic Planning process was given (displayed below). Please note, this timeline has shifted slightly, but is still on target for completion by July 2024.



DOCUMENT REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Maddie gave a brief overview of the Environmental Assessment. A summary of this assessment can be found in the [appendix](#). Laura then gave a brief overview of the findings from the Community Engagement Summary and the Community Survey Summary. The handout for this discussion can be found in the [appendix](#).

Next, participants were split into three groups to discuss each of these three documents. After these small group discussions, each group reported out their key takeaways. Their responses are captured below.

Responses to Environmental Assessment

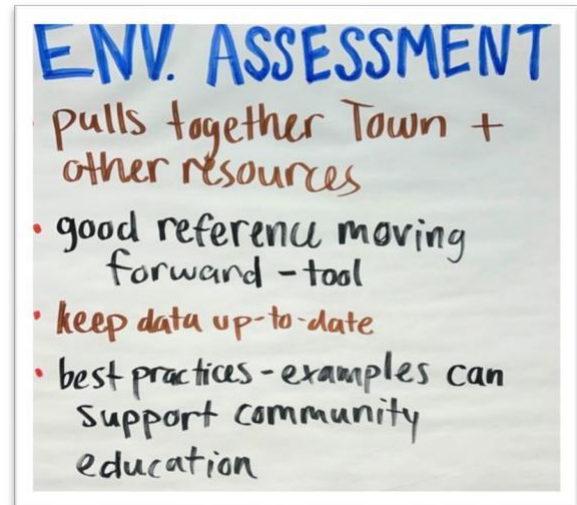
This robust document pulls together Town as well as other resources.

- "I love this document on its own."
- "I want to keep this document at my desk. And so would elected officials and the management team."

It is a good reference/tool moving forward, but the data will need to be kept up-to-date.

The best practices examples can support community education.

- For example, the Town may not take the lead in establishing land trusts, but other entities can.



Responses to Community Survey Summary

Concern that people live here but don't work here and workers might be priced out

- Vibrant small towns eat, live, and work in town.

Opportunity to create vibrant community through partnerships and programs

- Example: Wake Tech

Can we avoid having to play catch-up with transportation?

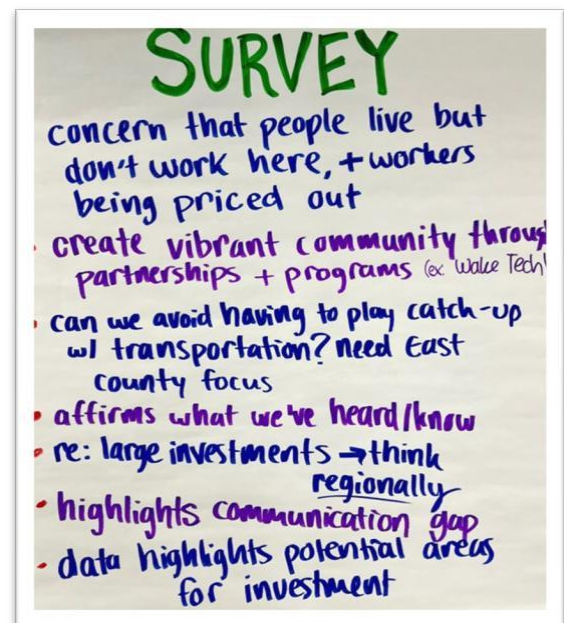
- Regional Transportation Alliance meetings seem focused everywhere but east County.
- It would make sense to focus on connectivity with new Wake Tech as a hub and then creating spokes out to the surrounding communities.

"If you want a strong workforce, you want access to educational institutions."

The Chambers of Commerce are starting to work more regionally.

It makes sense for us to think regionally as far as major investments are concerned (i.e. healthcare and education), but balance this with our need to keep Zebulon identity.

The survey highlights communication gaps. Resources exist, but people don't know about them.



Responses to Community Engagement Summary

No major surprises → good!

Communication gap in regard to existing efforts

It also highlights that many do not know what the Town can vs. cannot do

- The Town is limited to what they can actually do except through coding and zoning.

Data can support prioritization

People younger than 45 are under-represented at the cafés.

- These people tend to be newer residents and residents with younger families. So, we are missing information on their needs, like with youth activities.

Staff is stretched on how to address a growing community's needs with limited resources.

Can see how navigating the various government entities can be confusing

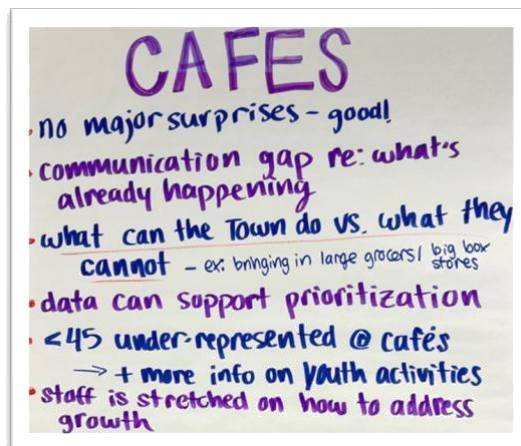
Example: Confusion about signage ordinances and who to ask

There does seem to be a general sense of improvement on these issues, but could be useful to have an individual to help navigate.

If you're starting a business, you don't know what you don't know.

How do we preserve affordable housing while bringing in higher income?

A higher median income would support many of the desires mentioned, such as bringing in larger grocers.



Consistent Themes Across Documents

Affordable housing, but not just a "cheap place to live"

Communication education gaps on:

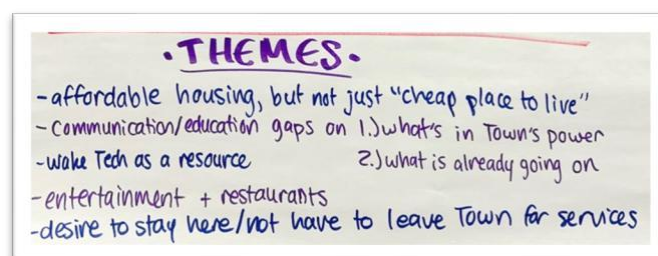
What's in Town's power

What is already going on and available

Wake Tech as a resource

Entertainment and restaurants

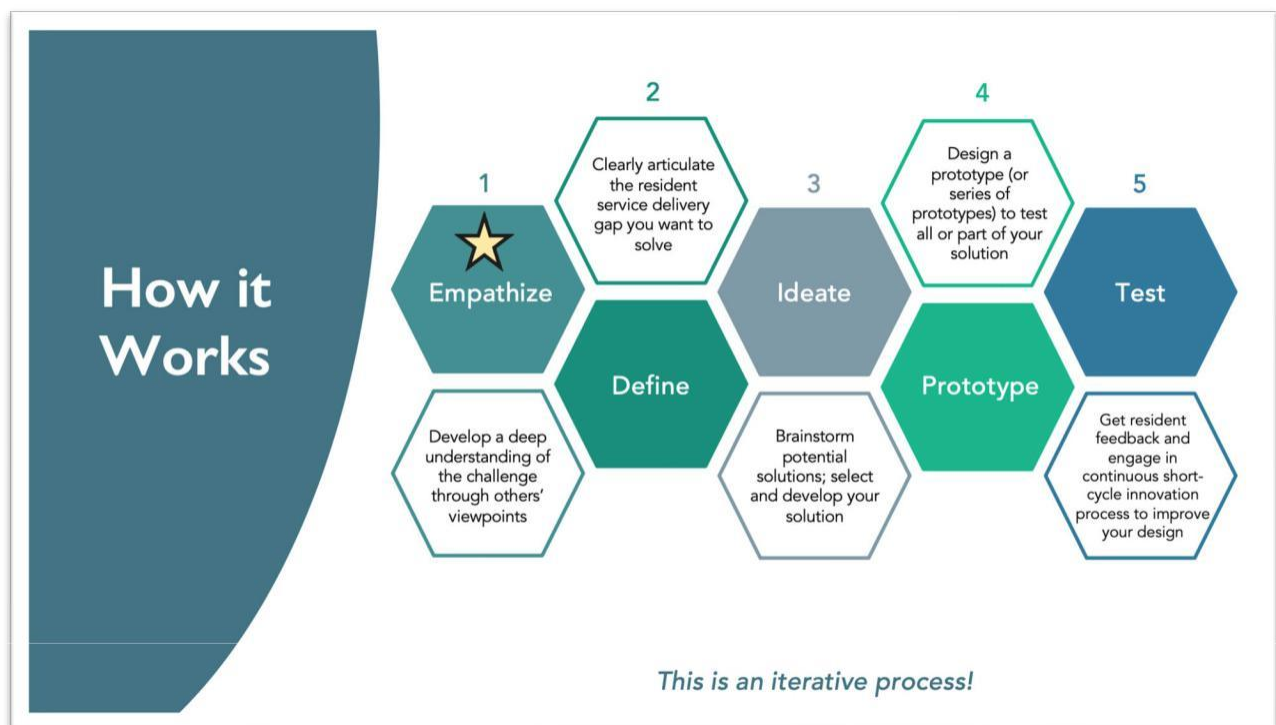
Desire to stay here and not have to leave Town for services



JOURNEY MAPPING: HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

After a short break, Julie walked the group through an introduction to journey mapping and human-centered design thinking. The [slide deck](#) and [handout](#) used can be found in the appendix.

Design Thinking Steps



As part of the empathize stage of design thinking, journey mapping is a useful tool for understanding all of the steps that different stakeholders take throughout a process.

Journey mapping presents the opportunity for participants to step outside of their usual role and see the process through different perspectives.

The idea is to put the user at the center of attention in order to reach solutions that reflect the user's needs.

To better understand what people need in regards to economic development, the remainder of the retreat focused on empathizing. Participants were split into three groups and each group was assigned one of three personas:

Entrepreneur with a new business idea
Existing businessowner
Large corporation

The groups were instructed to assume the role of their persona and walk through the process of an envisioned scenario they may face in Zebulon. Journey maps were then reported back to the group as a whole and a short discussion followed each report. Comments have been captured below.

Entrepreneur with a New Business Idea

Scenario: Hoping to open an antique store downtown in the old Whitley building

Journey:

People see a for sale or for rent sign when they come to town

This might trigger them to call a real estate agent.

Real estate agent might give them bad information, such as saying a certain use is allowed when it is not.

Client gets very mad when they find out.

Client might have to contact a bank depending on lease or mortgage.

Banks says they need zoning verification letter to make sure something is permitted.

Client goes to planning department for verification.

Planning department informs the client of the upgrades they would have to do and all the new forms and processes required.

Planning department puts client in touch with downtown coordinator.

Emotions: Started with excitement, afterward feeling frustration, sadness, anger

Insights and Opportunities

A central location or individual to help a new business navigate through the process would be a huge value-add.

“A new-business GPS”

Not providing all the answers, but providing guidance

Some people are inexperienced, so having the resource is very helpful.

Brandon discussed how difficult and frustrating his experience opening his business downtown was. After reaching a breaking point, he reached out to Michael. He said he should have gone to Michael much sooner.

The Town is often an afterthought as a resource, but it shouldn't be. The group discussed that the Town should be sharing the message “We want you to be successful,” with business owners.

The Town has changed the focus and gotten rid of planners who only said no, but we still have to fix perspective.

Because of the low rents, people with different levels of sophistication and preparedness have ideas for businesses. The Town often has to provide more personalized guidance, compared to other municipalities.

There is an opportunity for the Town to work with realtors about allowed uses.



Existing Businessowner

Scenario: Brandon, who operates a distillery downtown, is trying to connect with residents.

Brandon is trying to figure out how to get folks to come downtown.

- Most of his business and the other successful downtown business does not come from town residents.
- Money comes from out-of-town visitors or global/online

Has to inform partners that this is an issue

Form a cohort of businesses

How to communicate with the public about downtown?

Persona goals: an increase in customers that brings an increase in profit

Insights and opportunities:

Our downtown is experiencing a transition.

A "small business growth series" can bring information about the Town, its demographics, and resources to business owners.

Helping existing businesses to stay and grow is a community priority.

The Chamber has been redeveloping some programs and has introduced a more affordable membership tier. The relationship between the Chamber and the Town supports connections with the business community.

The environmental assessment can also be shared as a resource.



Large Corporation

Scenario: GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Human Resources (HR) leader wants to work on the talent pipeline to get better talent

Journey:

Meet internally with HR team to review current efforts and identify unfilled needs

After internal review, perform a market analysis on those positions.

What is the average wage?

Is occupation growing or declining?

Explore external partnership opportunities

It may be confusing to navigate all the institutions in the area

Implement new programs



Insights and Opportunities:

Having a liaison to the institutions in the area would be very helpful.

This also promotes the Town as a partner.

Thoughts and Reactions to Empathizing and Journey Mapping

We should prioritize clients' perspectives as we develop the plan.

We can implement some ideas quickly, such as a "one-stop-shop" resource or a small business series. These are low-cost entry items that have immediate value.

Recognize the personal investment and frustration of entrepreneurs.

Consider a liaison for housing challenges, promoting proactive measures over reactive responses.

We do not have the staffing to be all things to all people.

How do you build on partnerships and connections to be the navigator but not the service provider?

Our community is asset-rich.

Highlight collaborations such as last year's NCSU/IBM design thinking course focused on the principles of Zebulon's Vision 2030 Strategic Plan.

Address concerns about lack of cohesion among separate entities, such as Zebulon Downtown Arts Council, the business community, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Discuss the need for change to facilitate connections; explore Main Street Program as a catalyst for downtown.

Propose ideas like micro-commercial integration in residential areas and mixed-use zoning to reduce traffic

NEXT STEPS AND WRAP UP

The next steps for the second phase of stakeholder engagement include:

The Economic Development Workgroup will hold three 60-minute virtual sessions to develop and propose vision themes for economic development in the Town of Zebulon.

Draft focus areas and key priorities within each focus area

Fountainworks thanked participants for their time and energy and Shannon adjourned the meeting.

COMMUNITY WORKGROUP MEETING SUMMARIES

MEETING 1

Welcome & Ideal Zebulon Economy in One Word

The Zebulon Economic Development Community Workgroup held its first meeting on Wednesday, February 7, 2024 from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM via Zoom. The meeting was professionally facilitated by Julie Brenman and Drew Finley of Fountainworks, a public sector- focused consulting firm. The Workgroup agreed to the following ground rules for its future meetings:

Everyone participates.

Share the air – allow everyone the opportunity to speak and share their input.

Own the charts – Fountainworks will be recording notes on Mural (a virtual whiteboard tool). Let

Fountainworks know if the notes do not accurately reflect the content of the conversation.

Come prepared and ready to engage.

The meeting began with a round of introductions where Workgroup members were asked to articulate one word that describes what they want the ideal Zebulon economy to look like:

John Saffold – Executive Director, Zebulon Chamber of Commerce ○

One Word: *Potential*

Saffold added that Zebulon will not be underdeveloped.

Hunter Rascoe – Vice President, Design Dimensions

One Word: *Strategic*

Rascoe added that growth is inevitable and the Town needs to be strategic about how it develops.

Anthony Pirrello – Executive Director, East Wake Academy

One Word: *Well-developed*

Pirrello added that the economy must meet the needs of the people who live there and promote positive change in the community.

Shannon Johnson – Economic Development Specialist, Town of Zebulon

One Word: *Robust*

Two Workgroup members were unable to attend, but the meeting was recorded and sent to those unable to attend this meeting.

Where We Are & Where We Are Going

Workgroup members reviewed the work that has been completed so far on the Town's Economic Development Strategy Plan since the project's inception last summer:

An Environmental Assessment was completed in the late Summer/early Fall of 2023.

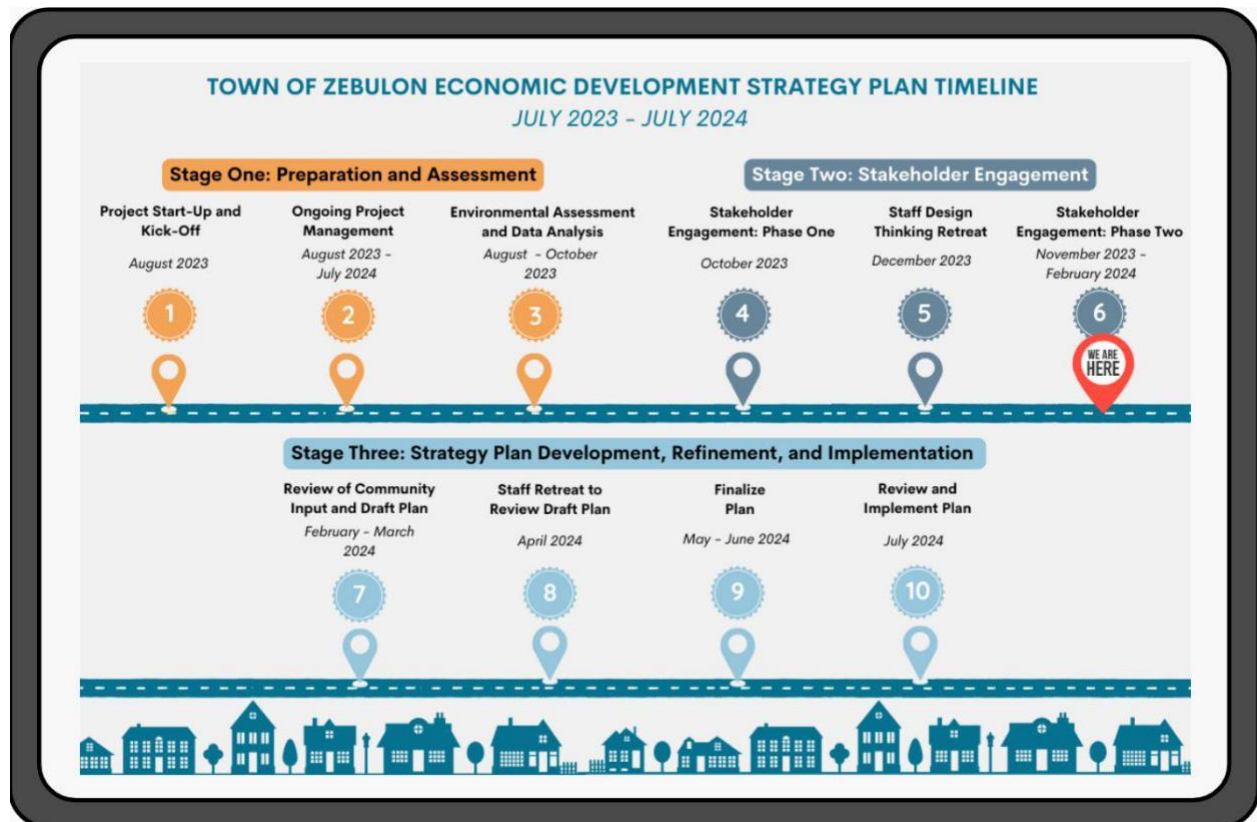
In the Fall of 2023, the Town conducted a community survey that received over 100 responses. The

Town also held three community cafes, which were attended by 87 people. Fountainworks reviewed, analyzed, and presented the findings from these data sources to Town staff.

In December 2023, a design thinking retreat was held with Town staff and economic development partners.

Now, the Town has convened this Workgroup, which will meet three times over the next six weeks.

The graphic below displays the overall project timeline:



Next, the Workgroup reviewed their gameplan for the three meetings:

February 7 Meeting:

The Workgroup will develop a shared understanding of the feedback and input received so far.

The Workgroup will set expectations for its meetings moving forward.

The Workgroup will begin developing themes based on the work completed so far.

February 21 Meeting:

Between meetings, Fountainworks will synthesize the conversation.

Fountainworks will come to this meeting with proposed focus areas.

The Workgroup will conduct visioning for Zebulon's economy.

March 6 Meeting:

The Workgroup will draft priorities under each focus area.

Community Voices: Shaping What We Have Heard

Next, the Workgroup reviewed findings from the Environmental Assessment, Community Survey, and Community Cafes and responded to the questions below.

Were there surprises, or did these findings align with your expectations? ○ The findings aligned with what we have heard and seen.

- We need to ensure that there is follow-up.

Of the information shared, what do you see as the most pressing economic development needs in our community?

Infrastructure

- The design of infrastructure is where it all starts. The most common feedback that we receive is that traffic is a problem and will only become worse.
- A train to Raleigh and back would be ideal to provide mass transit. ○ A bypass for Arendell would be ideal as well.

Downtown

- The design of downtown for living and walking is important. We need to preserve the quality of life and reasons to be in downtown.

Growth Management

- We need to manage expectations for development of amenities such as restaurants and entertainment with the concerns about overdevelopment and gentrification.
- There needs to be a balance – *we cannot be all things to all people*.
- There is land now, but it is a limited resource.
- We need to think regionally.
- We do not want to be a bedroom community.
- A place where people live, play, are educated, and work is a vibrant community

Business Recruitment & Retention

- We need to expand the tax base beyond the primary tax contributors (U.S. Foods, G.S.K. etc.)
- We need to have purpose and intentionality around locating businesses. ○ Follow up is critical!
- Community leaders need to start working together and stop jockeying for positions.

What do you perceive as Zebulon's strengths in terms of economic development?

Partnership Opportunities

- Wake Technical Community College (Wake Tech) is an asset for job force training. ○ We can leverage the complementary businesses to what we already have here.
- The stronger working relationship between the Chamber of Commerce and the Town is an asset.
- We should tap into the strengths of existing organizations.
- We need to leverage the Chamber of Commerce as a resource.

Five County Stadium

- The Five County Stadium is an asset that can be redeveloped with the departure of the Mudcats. Redevelopment could take the form of an entertainment district. The stadium has great highway access and serves as a central convergence point.
- The Five County Stadium is a gateway that serves eastern North Carolina and connects directly with the Triangle.

Town Size & Location

- Zebulon's size is an asset. We are not too big, but we are not too small.

Zebulon's unique location is an asset.

We need to recruit industry and consider the suppliers needed to support those industries.

How can we leverage your expertise to add depth to the existing information? Were there any themes you saw that you would like to expand upon?

We can educate community members on the types of jobs that are here. Some people are not aware of the various jobs that are available to them.

We can leverage various organizations to work together.

The Workgroup then offered their thoughts on what the identity of Zebulon's economy might look like. They reiterated that Zebulon cannot be all things to all people and needs to commit to being one type of community. They noted that the regional approach seems promising and there is a potential for marketing efforts to support that approach. The Workgroup reaffirmed that they do not want Zebulon to just be a bedroom community. They also stated that they want Zebulon to be an affordable (but not cheap) place to live. The desire to be all things to all people has contributed to traffic problems, and a task force could potentially be formed to analyze this issue.

Next Steps

Fountainworks reminded the Workgroup that their ideas will be synthesized and proposed focus areas will be shared in preparation for the next meeting. Workgroup members were also tasked with a short assignment. Fountainworks encouraged them to ask the following question when they are out in the community: *What is the identity you want to see for Zebulon's economy?*

The meeting then adjourned. The next meeting will be held on February 21.

MEETING 2

Welcome, Recap, & the Road Ahead

The Zebulon Economic Development Community Workgroup held its second meeting on Wednesday, February 21, 2024 from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM via Zoom. The meeting was professionally facilitated by Julie Brenman and Drew Finley of Fountainworks, a public sector-focused consulting firm. The Workgroup is comprised of five members, one of whom was unable to attend. Shannon Johnson is the Town's representative on the Workgroup.

The meeting began with a brief review of the one word that Workgroup members articulated that describes what they want the ideal Zebulon economy to look like.

John Saffold – Executive Director, Zebulon Chamber of Commerce ○

One Word: *Potential*

Saffold added that Zebulon will not be underdeveloped.

Anthony Pirrello – Executive Director, East Wake Academy

One Word: *Well-developed*

Pirrello added that the economy must meet the needs of the people who live there and promote positive change in the community.

Jennifer Williams – Board Chair, Zebulon Chamber of Commerce

One Word: *Boastful*

Brian Bullock – Local Developer

One Word: *Deliberate/Intentional*

Bullock noted that follow-up and follow-through are key.

Hunter Rascoe – Vice President, Design Dimensions

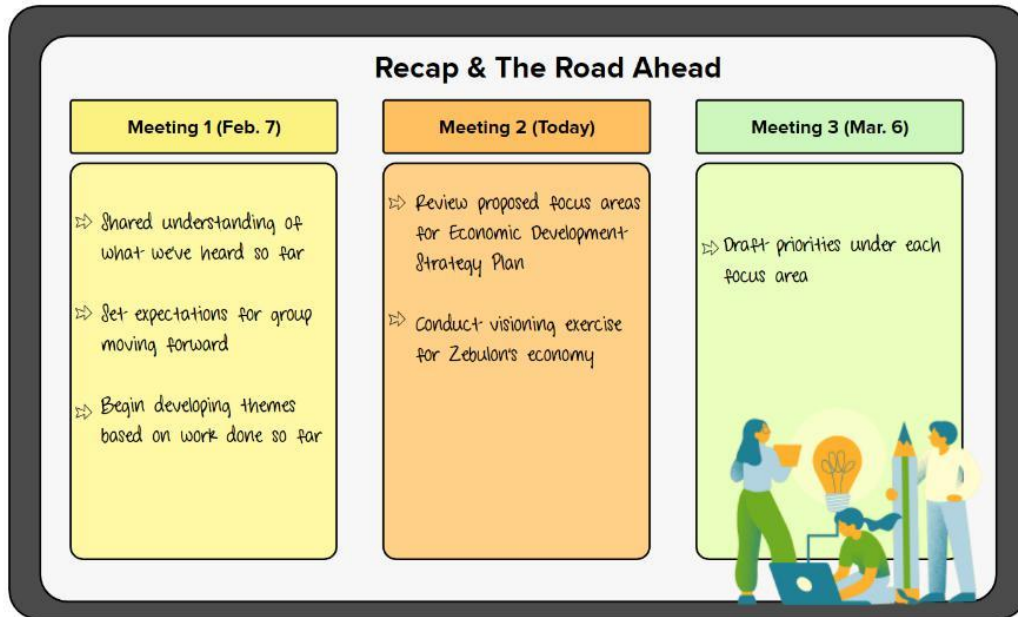
One Word: *Strategic*

Rascoe added that growth is inevitable and the Town needs to be strategic about how it develops.

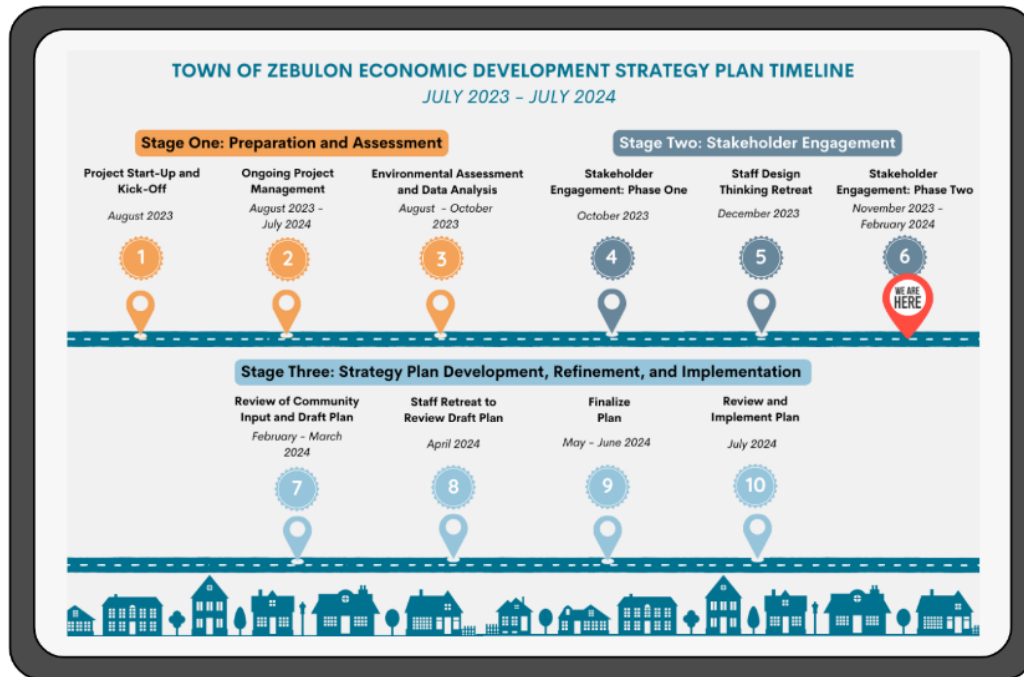
Shannon Johnson – Economic Development Specialist, Town of Zebulon

One Word: *Robust*

The Workgroup then reviewed the work they have accomplished so far and looked ahead to the work that will be completed over the next several weeks:



Workgroup members also briefly acknowledged how their work fits into the bigger picture of the ongoing work that has taken place to develop Zebulon's Economic Development Strategy Plan:



Review of Proposed Focus Areas

The Workgroup's major agenda item was a review and discussion of the proposed focus areas that Fountainworks prepared for the Economic Development Strategy Plan. Fountainworks synthesized the insights from the Workgroup's first meeting and developed five proposed focus areas for the plan based on the Workgroup's direction. These five proposed focus areas, along with a brief description for each, are included below:

Economic Readiness – This focus area affirms that the Town's infrastructure will be well-suited to accommodate the anticipated growth that is expected to occur in and around Zebulon and establishes that this growth will be smart and focused on prudent land use and avoiding overdevelopment.

Infrastructure

- Continue efforts to address and alleviate traffic congestion
- Advocate for transportation improvements such as highway bypasses and mass transit options like passenger rail service
- Maintain a viable water and sewer utility system and extend utility service to growth areas

Smart Growth

- Develop the Town's land in a prudent manner that acknowledges land as a limited resource
- Avoid overdevelopment and the temptation for Zebulon to be all things to all people

Support for Businesses – This focus area is about Zebulon's commitment to supporting businesses of all types and sizes (new and existing businesses, large industries, and small businesses) through fostering entrepreneurship, streamlining processes, and enhancing business recruitment and retention efforts.

Foster Entrepreneurship

- Support entrepreneurial initiatives through partnerships with community stakeholders such as the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program at North Carolina State University

Streamline Processes

Create a business-friendly environment by streamlining processes such as development plan review

Business Recruitment & Retention

Adopt a regional approach to business recruitment and retention by tapping into the strengths of existing organizations

Expand the Town's tax base beyond the Town's primary tax contributors

Bring community leaders together to develop a purposeful and intentional strategy for locating businesses

Key Economic Growth Districts – This focus area highlights two specific districts in Zebulon that are ripe for economic investment: Downtown and the Five County Stadium.

Downtown Zebulon

Preserve and enhance the quality of life and reasons to be in Zebulon's downtown

Five County Stadium

Pursue redevelopment efforts for the Five County Stadium such as an entertainment district

Leverage the Five County Stadium's location as a central convergence point that serves Eastern North Carolina and connects directly to the Triangle region

Inclusive Economy – This focus area is about cultivating an inclusive economy that provides access to high-quality jobs and amenities while mitigating risks of displacement and gentrification.

Access to High-Quality Jobs & Amenities

- Support workforce development in and around Zebulon by ensuring access to well-paying and high-quality jobs with expanded career opportunities
- Provide access to high-quality amenities such as shopping and entertainment
- Recognize that Zebulon cannot be all things to all people and that some community assets may not need to be located within the Town itself

Mitigating Displacement & Gentrification

Adopt strategies that actively work to ensure that longtime residents are not displaced or priced out of Zebulon

Leverage Regional Assets – This focus area puts forth a commitment to leveraging regional assets that exist in Zebulon's economy and acknowledges that the Town cannot be all things to all people.

Wake Technical Community College (Wake Tech)

Maintain and strengthen partnerships with Wake Tech

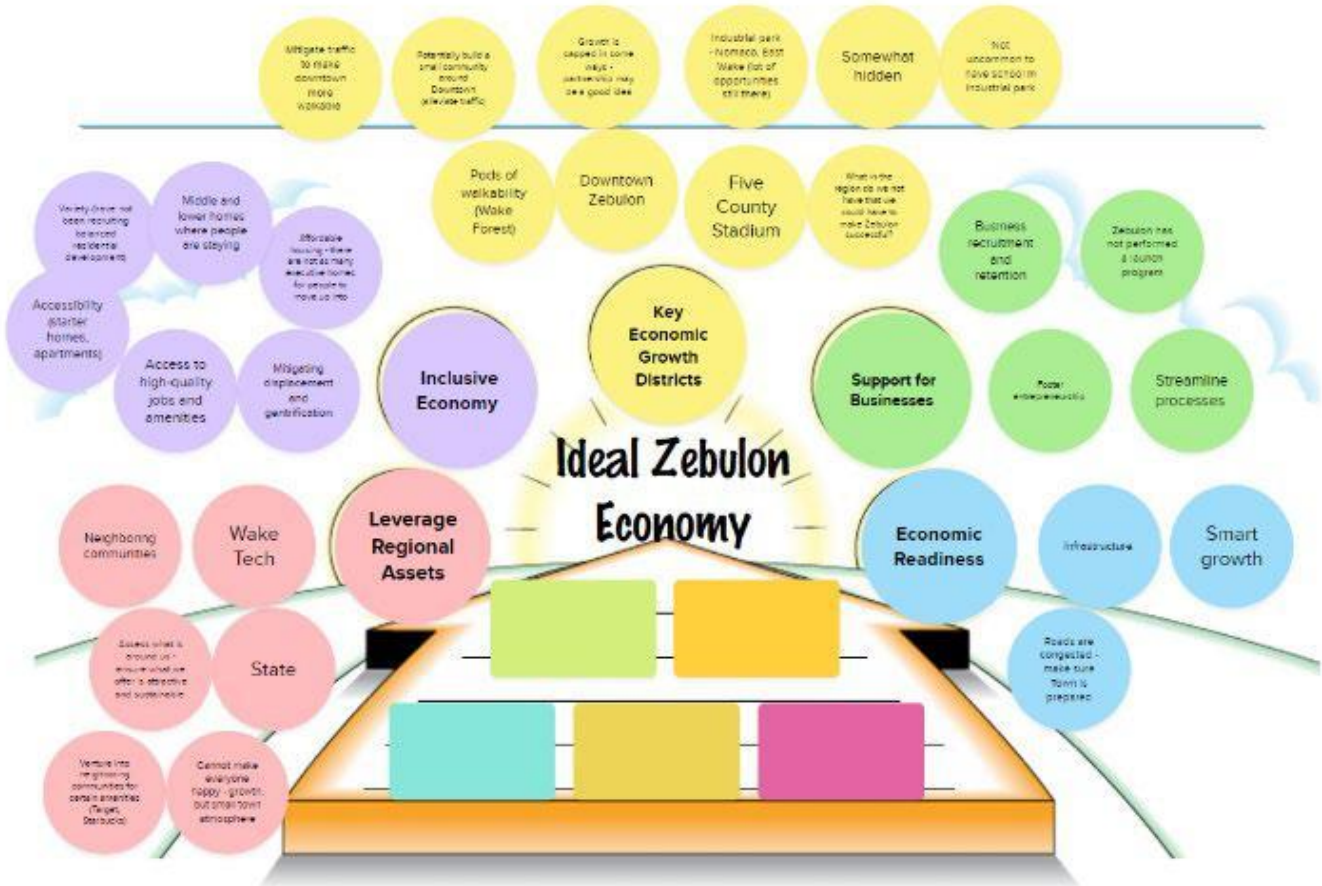
Neighboring Communities

Collaborate with Wake County and neighboring communities to attract amenities and ensure regional access

State Economic Development Support

Utilize economic development support from the State of North Carolina to promote regional economic growth

The image below depicts the graphic recording of the Workgroup's conversation:



The Workgroup discussed each focus area one by one and added more detail to further shape the focus areas. Below are the details the Workgroup added to the proposed focus areas, which is the same content shown in the image above:

Economic Readiness

The roads are congested, so the Town needs to ensure that it continues to work on alleviating traffic congestion to accommodate anticipated future growth.

Support for Businesses

One Workgroup member noted that Zebulon is one of the few municipalities in the area that has not performed a Launch program. Other programs in the region such as [LaunchRALEIGH](#) and [LaunchKNIGHTDALE](#) can serve as potential exemplars for Zebulon to consider.

Key Economic Growth Districts

The question that needs to be considered is as follows: what assets in the region do we not have that would make Zebulon more successful?

There are a lot of opportunities for the industrial park where Nomaco and East Wake Academy are located.

The Town should continue to mitigate traffic to make downtown more walkable.

A small community built around downtown could help to alleviate traffic.

Zebulon should work to create “pods of walkability” similar to those that exist in Wake Forest.

A partnership of some kind may be an effective growth strategy.

Inclusive Economy

Housing is an important topic to include in this focus area.

There needs to be sufficient *affordable housing* and *workforce housing* in Zebulon.

There are not as many executive homes for folks to move into once they are able to afford them. People are staying in middle-tier and lower-tier homes.

Housing *variety* is important. The Town needs to a better job of recruiting balanced residential development.

Housing *accessibility* is important as well. Zebulon needs to have a sufficient number of apartments and starter homes.

Leverage Regional Assets

Zebulon residents may need to venture into neighboring communities for certain amenities such as big box stores and large retailers.

We cannot make everyone happy. We want growth, but we also want to retain our small-town atmosphere.

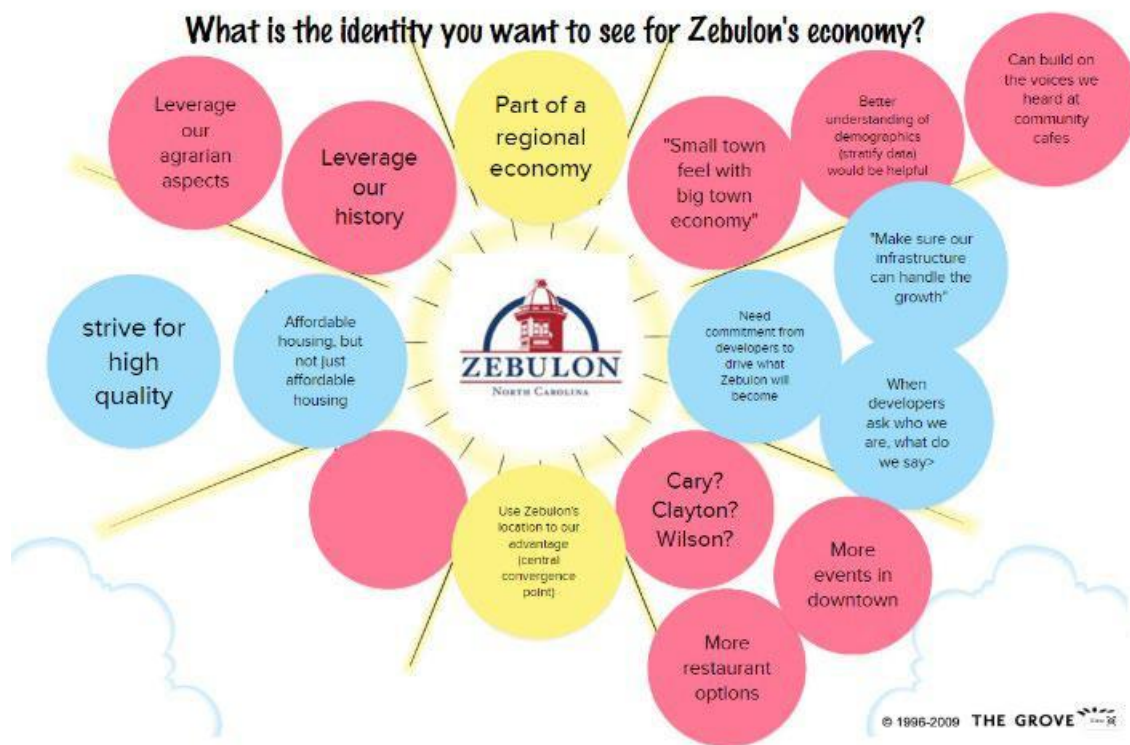
We need to assess what is around us and make sure that what we offer is attractive and sustainable.

Visioning: The Identity of Zebulon’s Economy

The workgroup then conducted a short visioning exercise. This exercise focused on the following question:

What is the identity you want to see for Zebulon’s economy?

The image below displays the highlights from this segment:



The content from the image above is displayed below. Fountainworks grouped this content into three themes:

Future Zebulon Economy

- Zebulon is part of a regional economy.
- Zebulon has a small town feel with a big town economy.
- Zebulon should use its location as a central convergence point to its advantage.

Developing the Identity of Zebulon's Economy

- Zebulon should leverage its history and agrarian roots.
- Zebulon needs a commitment from developers to help drive what the Town will become.
- Community leaders need to think about the following question: when developers ask who we are, what do we say?

The Identity of Zebulon's Economy in Practice

- Zebulon needs more restaurant options and more events in downtown.
- Zebulon needs affordable housing, but not just affordable housing. Zebulon also needs executive housing and a balanced mix of high-quality housing options.

Workgroup members noted that stratifying existing data may help them better understand the viewpoints of various demographic groups. New data that builds on the findings gathered from the community cafés would also be beneficial.

Next Steps & Wrap Up

To conclude the meeting, the Workgroup reviewed next steps:

- The Workgroup's final meeting will be held on March 6.

- Fountainworks will send a summary of this meeting – *Done*

- Fountainworks will create an initial draft of the vision for Zebulon's economy, which the Workgroup will review at its final meeting.

- Fountainworks will draft priorities under each focus areas for the Workgroup to review at its final meeting.

The meeting then adjourned.

MEETING 3

Welcome & Recap

The Zebulon Economic Development Community Workgroup held its third and final meeting on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM via Zoom. The meeting was professionally facilitated by Julie Brenman and Drew Finley of Fountainworks, a public sector-focused consulting firm. The Workgroup is comprised of five members, one of whom was unable to attend. Shannon Johnson is the Town's representative on the Workgroup.

The meeting began with a recap of the Workgroup's focus question:

What is the identity you want to see for Zebulon's economy?

Visioning for Zebulon's Economy

The Workgroup then reviewed two proposed vision statements. After discussion, Workgroup members settled on their preferred vision statement, which is shown below:

Zebulon will foster an inclusive, vibrant, diverse, and sustainable economy. Zebulon will be a regional player that prioritizes intentional and responsible growth while retaining the Town's unique charm and character.

One version of the vision statement included the word "smart" when referring to growth. The Workgroup decided to replace "smart" with "intentional" in an effort to make the vision clearer to the public. The term "smart growth" has a specific meaning in the city planning profession that members of the general public may not necessarily recognize.

Workgroup members offered two additional thoughts when discussing the vision:

- One Workgroup member noted that now is the time for Zebulon to grow in a way that works for the next thirty years, and not just the next thirty days.

- The same Workgroup member noted that including affordable housing within the components of the vision makes sense, but that Zebulon already has a good amount of affordable housing stock right now.

Another Workgroup member asked about how the vision statement fits into the overall plan development process. Fountainworks noted that the vision statement is aspirational and describes a desired future state of affairs. The vision statement is part of the Economic Development Strategy

Plan itself, which will ultimately be presented to the Town Board of Commissioners and available on the Town's website. Town staff will hold a retreat in April and work with Fountainworks to refine the plan. A community storyboard will also be created as an outreach tool that will inform the public about the plan and its purpose. The plan will include an implementation component that will outline an annual reporting process to keep the public informed of the plan's progress.

Shannon Johnson then added some additional detail from the Town's perspective. She stated that the vision statement guides the activities in the plan and helps staff prioritize. If an activity does not align with the vision statement, then it will not be prioritized. This approach allows Town staff to appropriately allocate time and resources towards economic development efforts.

Review Proposed Priorities for Each Focus Area

The Workgroup then reviewed proposed priorities for each of the five focus areas of the plan:



Priorities are included for each focus area. The descriptions below outline each priority for each focus area along with the Workgroup's reflections on these priorities:

Leverage Regional Assets

Collaborate with neighboring communities

One Workgroup member noted that political elements factor into this effort.

Maintain and strengthen partnerships with Wake Tech

Inclusive Economy

Ensure a balanced mix of residential development across all price points

Pursue strategies to mitigate displacement and gentrification

One Workgroup member asked for clarity on what this priority aims to achieve. Fountainworks noted that mitigating displacement and gentrification is about making sure that everyone benefits from economic growth and the changes that occur as a result of it.

Another Workgroup member added that this priority focuses on economic opportunity and economic stability. He noted that the agrarian base of many towns has created vibrant and rich communities that are diverse (not solely in the racial sense of the word). Looking back to look forward is sometimes necessary.

Shannon Johnson observed that mitigating displacement and gentrification is about ensuring that all residents remain part of the Town's growth and are not pushed away from it. The best practices review that took place as part of developing the plan will help the Town learn from communities that have managed growth well and maintained an enduring focus on equity.

Key Economic Growth Districts

Pursue efforts to redevelop the Five County Stadium

A Workgroup member noted that Shannon and the Town's economic development staff need to be able to actively recruit and pursue industries and not simply wait for those industries to come to them.

Another member echoed this point and said that more industries in Zebulon would definitely be ideal.

One Workgroup member noted that this process requires a delicate and intentional approach.

Enhance walkability and connectivity, particularly in Downtown Zebulon

The workgroup asked staff to consider addressing and growing industrial areas as another activity.

Support for Businesses

Establish a Zebulon Launch program.

One Workgroup member noted that Launch programs are about supporting local entrepreneurs and informed the Workgroup that he has a meeting with Shannon Johnson this afternoon to discuss this effort.

The same Workgroup member noted that it is important for local businesses to engage with and respond to surveys they receive.

Expand the Town's tax base beyond the primary tax contributors

Simplify and streamline interactions with Town staff

Economic Readiness

Alleviate traffic congestion

A Workgroup member highlighted that Zebulon Mayor Glenn York currently serves on the Executive Board of the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO). He noted that CAMPO is conducting a micro-transit survey that is focusing on seniors, low-income individuals, and those with disabilities. He added that GoWake, a program

that provides door-to-door shared ride transportation services, received 13,000 points of contact and that 7,000 of those were from Zebulon residents.

Another member added that GoWake is a form of paratransit, which can be described as a type of transportation service that supplements fixed-route mass transit by providing individualized rides without fixed routes or timetables. He noted that partnerships can often come into play with paratransit initiatives and that it is important to make sure that the vulnerable voices in the community are heard.

Maintain and extend water and sewer systems to ensure sites are ready to receive businesses

One Workgroup member emphasized that identifying key parcels is an important element of this process. The Town should ensure that its planning and zoning processes coincide with efforts to extend utilities.

Next Steps

The meeting concluded with a brief review of next steps:

Fountainworks will send a summary of this meeting – *Done*

Fountainworks will use the insights gleaned from the three Workgroup sessions to help shape the Economic Development Strategy Plan.

Fountainworks will work with Town staff to refine and finalize the plan over the next several months.

The meeting then adjourned.