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economic development**

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The EDC Team is growing the commercial and
industrial base throughout Union County.*



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**Did You Know?
Union County Achievements**

#1 county for incoming investment in North Carolina and 39th nationally in 2015

#1 aerospace cluster in North Carolina

Top 5 Boeing supplier site in Southeast

Top 5 in aerospace recruitment, nationwide

Top 10 aerospace cluster in the Southeast

Top 3 county for agri-business in North Carolina

Top 10 “No-Brainer” location for manufacturing

Top 3 best workforces in North Carolina (small market)

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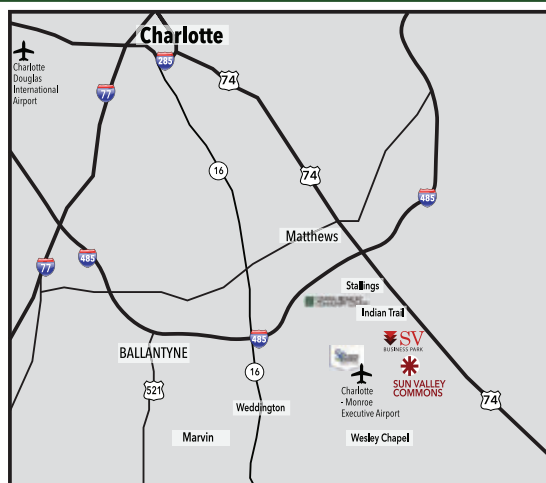
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Aerospace is still king

UNION COUNTY'S MAIN INDUSTRY SEGMENT IS STILL GROWING

Since 2002, Monroe began a targeted recruitment strategy focused on aerospace companies; this initiative has developed into the largest geographic cluster of aerospace companies in the Carolinas. There are 23 aerospace firms in Union County of which 19 are within a mere 7-mile radius. This cluster represents over \$800 million in tax base and nearly 4,500 employees or 26% of Monroe's manufacturing workforce. Today, Union County is seeing companies that were in traditional industries seeking to diversify a portion of their business portfolio into aerospace.

Union County's aerospace cluster continues to be recognized annually as a national leader in aerospace recruitment. Top 5 in Aerospace Recruitment; Top 10 Aerospace Cluster in the Southeast; and #1 Aerospace Cluster in NC are just a few of the accolades that have come as a result of the community's recruitment efforts. This is due to Union County's strategic location on the east coast and the fact that the companies located in Monroe already provide products and service to airframers and engine builders like Boeing, Airbus, Embraer, Bombardier, Rolls Royce,

GE and others across the globe.

The cornerstone of the cluster is ATI Specialty Materials. This company started in Monroe in 1957 and has had a continual stream of investments and innovation to become an international giant in the aerospace world. ATI superalloys, which contain titanium and nickel and other exotics, can be found in virtually every aircraft flying in the world. They have now expanded into the powder production of the nickel-based superalloys and earlier this year announced another \$20 million in investments at their Monroe facilities.

Union County's aerospace firms are among the world's most competitive and successful in the sector. They accomplish this by continually exploring and adopting innovative technologies and embracing partnerships in order to capitalize on new market opportunities. From making fuselage ribs for the Boeing 787 Dreamliner to being a hub for maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO) activities, these companies best represent the capabilities of Union County's labor force.

The Charlotte-Monroe Executive Airport and its International Customs service provides unique capabilities for the

From making fuselage ribs for the Boeing 787 Dreamliner to being a hub for maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO) activities, these companies best represent the capabilities of Union County's labor force.

community to lure the eye of international suppliers and help keep the local firms accessible to their customers.

The aerospace sector in Union County is truly diverse and dynamic. These companies thrive as they serve their customers and they are always looking to identify the next profitable technologies. Whether it be additive manufacturing, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), or commercial space exploration, you can rest assured Union County's aerospace cluster will be at the forefront of these business opportunities, ensuring this key segment of the local economy has a strong tailwind. ■



NC's Top Aerospace Cluster



Union County seeks balance through industrial parks

UNION COUNTY AND THE CITY OF MONROE EMBARK ON NEW INDUSTRIAL PARK PROJECTS

The City of Monroe is a veteran when it comes to the development of industrial property, establishing two Class-A Industrial Parks and four shell buildings since 1995. This product has generated over \$500 million of investment and nearly 2,000 new job opportunities for the City. They took matters into their own hands after attempting to lure private developers to build an industrial park for manufacturer recruitment was taking too long. Now that most of the acreage has been developed, the City is now considering a new industrial park near the soon to be completed Monroe Expressway. The EDC feels that this is a great location to obtain land and begin development near the new roadway. The toll road will be vital to Monroe-Union County Economic Development's goal of increasing its industrial base to include more distribution and logistics operations.

"Monroe's industrial development program is a model for other communities," stated Chris Platé, Executive Director of Monroe-Union County Economic Development. "The program started in 1995 and set the table for the precision manufacturing base that is the core of our Union County economy. Between the City's two industrial parks and four speculative buildings, it has changed the trajectory of this County and the career opportunities for our residents."

Understanding the need to increase the capacity for industrial prospects, Union County's Board of County Commissioners has decided to boldly go into their first industrial park

venture by seeking a partnership with a local land ownership group for a 300+ acre industrial complex just to the east of the Charlotte-Monroe Executive Airport. The necessity for the creation of this park was again spurred by the lack of local private developer activity.

"Union County's first venture in the development of an industrial park is part of the County's attempt to address the on-going concern with the existing imbalance within the residential to commercial tax base," said Chris Platé. "The vision of this park is to provide a variety of industrial products from smaller multi-tenant buildings to large stand-alone corporate manufacturing facilities."

This park will be strategically located near the existing precision manufacturing cluster dominated by medical-related and aerospace companies. A significant portion of the property is already graded flat while the remaining land remains in a pristine state. The County is currently performing its due diligence on the site and will start creating a masterplan to maximize the site's development potential. All utilities will be installed accordingly to support this plan. There will be a large pump station installed to bring ample, reliable sewer to this acreage based on the anticipated sewer demand by the park and surrounding potential users. The park should create a substantial amount of new tax base and job opportunities for the County and keep the community competitive in the Charlotte region and Southeast for years to come. ■



The toll road will be vital to Monroe-Union County Economic Development's goal of increasing its industrial base to include more distribution and logistics operations.





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Union County seeks ‘balanced’ growth

The Union County tax base in the last few decades has been dominated by three sectors: residential, commercial/industrial and agriculture. Today, those sectors remain significant tax base elements, but the scale has become tilted toward residential. In fact, Union County’s residential sector makes up 83% of the entire ad valorem tax base, while Industrial and Commercial properties represent 13% and agriculture

represents 4%. The “textbook” ratio of residential to industrial/commercial is approximately 60/40. The need for 40% industrial/commercial tax base is due to the fact that residential tax base consumes more than it contributes; therefore a county needs the other segments to offset this loss from residential.

Although Union County appears to have progressed beyond the stage to bring our segments back into an ideal equilibrium,

the County is unique. Union County’s residential make-up has a higher average value than most housing stock in counties across the United States. The average home value exceeds \$265,000 as of 2015, while the average home value in NC is under \$180,000. The cost to serve this segment can be very expensive and for Union County, that break-even value of a home is \$327,000. As a result, the 83% of Union County’s tax base (residential) consumes 93% of the ad

valorem tax revenues. For the fiscal year 2015, Union County lost \$14.4 million from the residential segment. While significant, this is still considerably better than a majority of the counties in the country.

The value of the industrial/commercial properties generates a tremendous revenue offset to the loss of residential tax base. While only representing 13% of the tax base, industrial and commercial and retail properties consumed a mere

UNION COUNTY’S ECONOMY



Industrial/commercial zoned property is by far the most valuable land in any jurisdiction and should be treated as such and not as an afterthought or a place for a myriad of disconnected uses. The companies that are located within these zones benefit all the residents of any county by offsetting the residential loss.



6% of the overall tax revenue. Therefore, this differential afforded Union County to generate a net profit of \$28.7 million for this segment.

Industrial/commercial zoned property is by far the most valuable land in any jurisdiction and should be treated as such and not as an afterthought or a place for a myriad of disconnected uses. The companies that are located within these zones benefit all the residents of

any county by offsetting the residential loss. In 2015, this offset for Union County represented a subsidy of approximately \$477 for every residence. In other words, if the homes had to cover their costs, it would necessitate a tax increase of approximately 24.7% on all residential properties. Again, this is significantly better than a majority of the counties in the country.

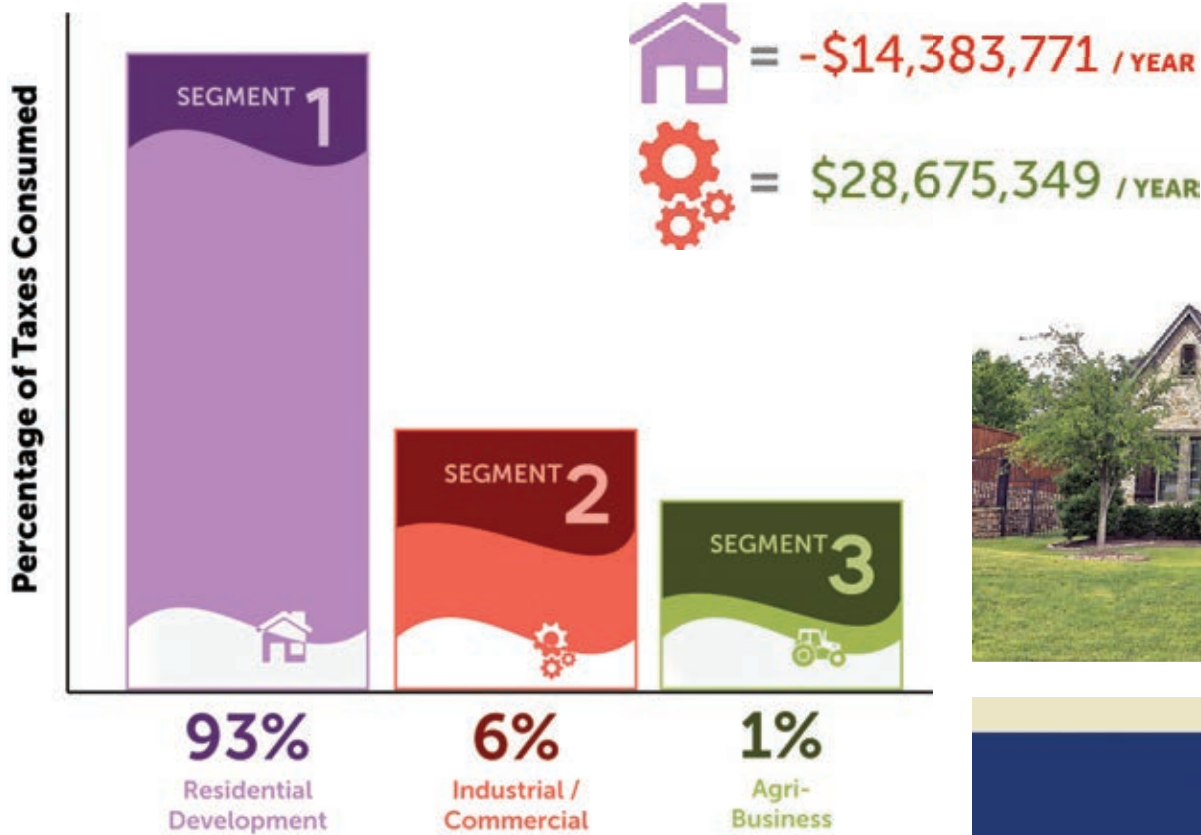
Therefore, Union County is seeking to protect and improve this balance of the

tax base. The county is aware it will most likely never achieve the ideal ratio of 60% residential to 40% industrial/commercial value in their tax base, but it must seek to increase the industrial/commercial percentage over the next 20 years.

Monroe-Union County Economic Development is spearheading an effort to educate citizens and encourage the municipalities and the County to work together to achieve the overall equilibrium

for Union County. Essentially, the goal is to preserve one acre of industrial/commercial property to offset the creation of every two acres of residential. This goal will be difficult to realize fully, but the target will ensure the health and prosperity that makes Union County one of the most desired places to reside and manufacture in the Carolinas.

Wingate University provided the research that is the basis for this article.



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Union County's Manufacturing Industry Economic Impact in 2015

Completed May 2017

Study Sponsored By:

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UNION COUNTY, NC

Population: 235,000+

Industry Assets:

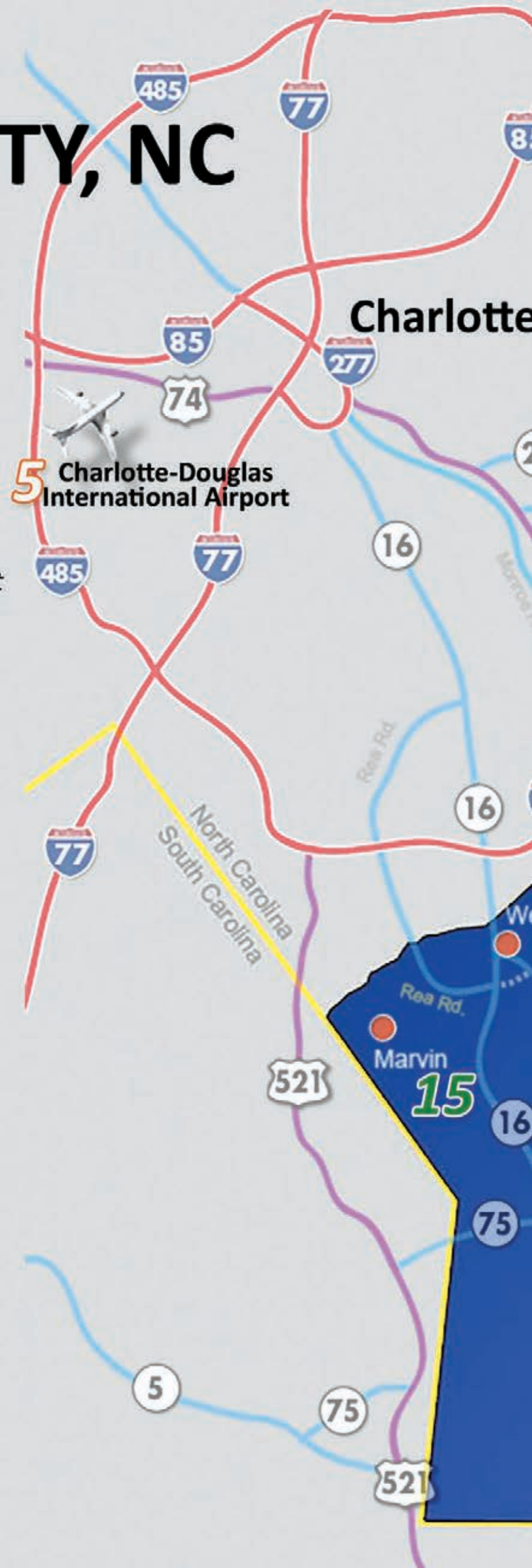
- 1a) *South Piedmont Community College*
- 1b) *SPCC Tyson Center for Technology*
- 2) *Charlotte-Monroe Executive Airport*
- 3) *Wingate University*
- 4) *Union County Ag Center*
- 5) *Charlotte-Douglas International Airport*

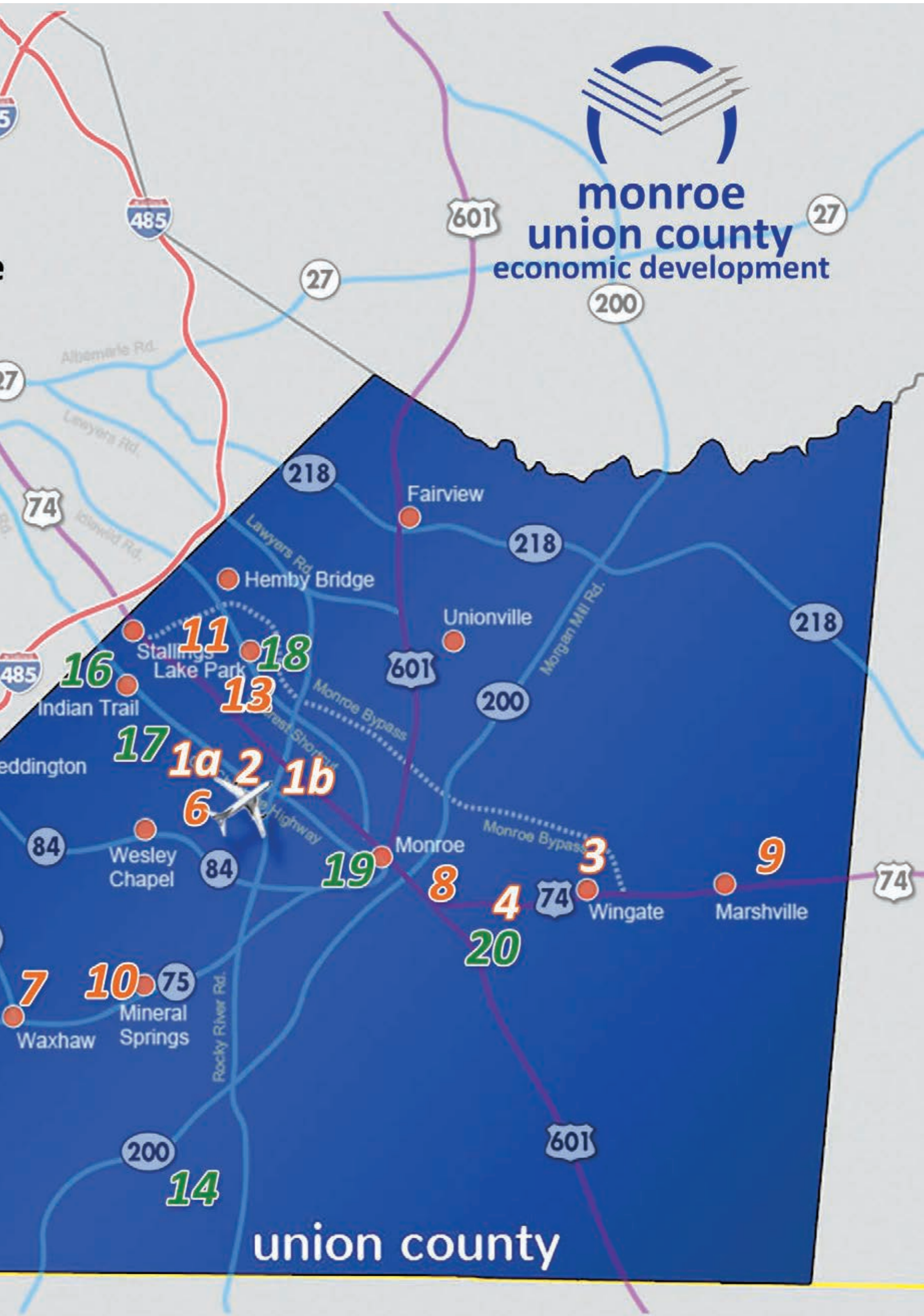
Industrial Parks / Areas:

- 6) *Monroe Corporate Center*
- 7) *Waxhaw Parkway (future)*
- 8) *Goldmine Generations*
- 9) *Sutton Park*
- 10) *Marshville Rail Site*
- 11) *Shannon Farm Site*
- 12) *Old Hickory Park*
- 13) *Industrial Ventures I & II*

Parks:

- 14) *Cane Creek Park*
- 15) *Efird Park*
- 16) *Stallings Park*
- 17) *Chestnut Square Park*
- 18) *Crooked Creek Park*
- 19) *Monroe Aquatics & Fitness Center*
- 20) *Jesse Helms Park*







Tending to their flock

PROVIDING CONSISTENT VALUE TO EXISTING INDUSTRIES

One of the primary functions of the Monroe-Union County Economic Development office is the retention of jobs and investment of existing manufacturers and other types of industries in Union County. This can be achieved in a myriad of ways — primarily through establishing healthy relationships, fostered by assisting with workforce development, municipal issues, grant research and writing, financial issues, B2B connections, utilities and much more. In short, the economic development office acts as a resource to resolve problems and make it easier

for local manufacturers to excel at what they do and to continue bringing jobs and investment to Union County.

During the past several years, the economic development office's existing industry managers have been engaged in helping resolve a wide variety of challenges that can occur. Specific examples that existing industry managers have had a direct role in include some of the following cases:

CAREER READY TESTING

Sourcing a talented and skilled workforce is a constant concern for many

manufacturers, especially with the County unemployment rate sitting at a low 3.2% (April 2018, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis "FRED") and with the Southeast being a hotbed for relocation. In an effort to more efficiently identify competent workers, one Union County manufacturer reached out to the economic development office in the spring of this year to ask for assistance in implementing Career Ready Certification as a preference for potential hires. The Career Ready Certification was developed by ACT, Inc. to help employees gain skills and to help employers make better decisions during the hiring process.



The certification testing examines skill levels in applied mathematics, locating information and reading for information; skill levels are assessed on a one to ten point scale.

Monroe-Union County Economic Development staff connected with the team at South Piedmont Community College (SPCC) and arranged a meeting to review the basic format of the testing and the program with the company's human resources manager. After an insightful discussion, it was quickly decided to bring the management team to SPCC's campus to take the tests themselves in order to




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understand better the value of the tests and what skill levels and qualifications candidates with platinum, gold, silver and bronze certifications bring to the company. With the implementation of this testing as a preference for new hires, this local manufacturer can quickly assess the best applicants to consider for their hiring process.

ENERGY KAIZENS

Energy efficiency is often an overlooked component for cost reduction in the operations of a manufacturing facility. However, implementing an “energy kaizen,” or a philosophy that focuses on continual improvement that reduces wasted energy, can yield significant savings, thereby impacting a company’s bottom line. One such Union County manufacturer did just this over the course of the past few months, initiated with the assistance of Assistant Director Ron Mahle. After receiving a call requesting a resource to assist in energy efficiencies, Ron, with support from community partner organization, Electricities of NC, brought in Bill Hall, a local manufacturing

The economic development office acts as a resource to resolve problems and make it easier for local manufacturers to excel at what they do and to continue bringing jobs and investment to Union County.

expert familiar with running energy audits and kaizens. Under Bill’s guidance, the company pulled together a team that included members from various departments throughout the facility as well as experts from outside agencies.

As part of this event, the company determined the following deliverables:

reduce energy usage; confirm that the facility is on the best available energy rates; develop a plan for energy saving projects and develop a plan for sustainability. The kaizen team, through a comprehensive analysis of energy consumption, identified three primary improvements: lighting upgrades, heat re-circulation equipment and compressed air leak mitigation. After running a cost-benefit analysis, the team determined that these steps, once implemented, could yield the company a total annual savings of nearly \$500,000, or just over 21% from their current energy expenses. Providing assistance such as this case is a key element of the existing industry program to support Union County manufacturers in order to allow them to make their products more efficiently and to continue growing in the community.

GRANTS FOR FACILITY UPGRADES

Although there are grant opportunities available for manufacturing enhancements and efficiencies, the funding can be perplexing to match to a manufacturer’s needs. Companies often face a challenge

in finding the appropriate grant funding that supports the investments required to offset certain capital improvement investments. It is the resources and experience of Monroe-Union County Economic Development staff that can provide the path to aid in this effort.

Ron Mahle works with companies to leverage outside resources to enable these projects to gain corporate approval. One significant program is the Electricities of NC lighting rebate program. It aids in the switching of old lighting fixtures to more modern LED lighting. Companies can potentially recoup up to \$20,000 for upgrading to these more efficient lights, while increasing the light output on the floor and making the working environment safer and more pleasurable for employees.

Leadership of the Monroe-Union County Economic Development Board of Advisors and staff state that their program starts and ends with the maintenance of existing industry and finding ways to provide value that will provide opportunities for these companies to remain competitive on a global stage. ■



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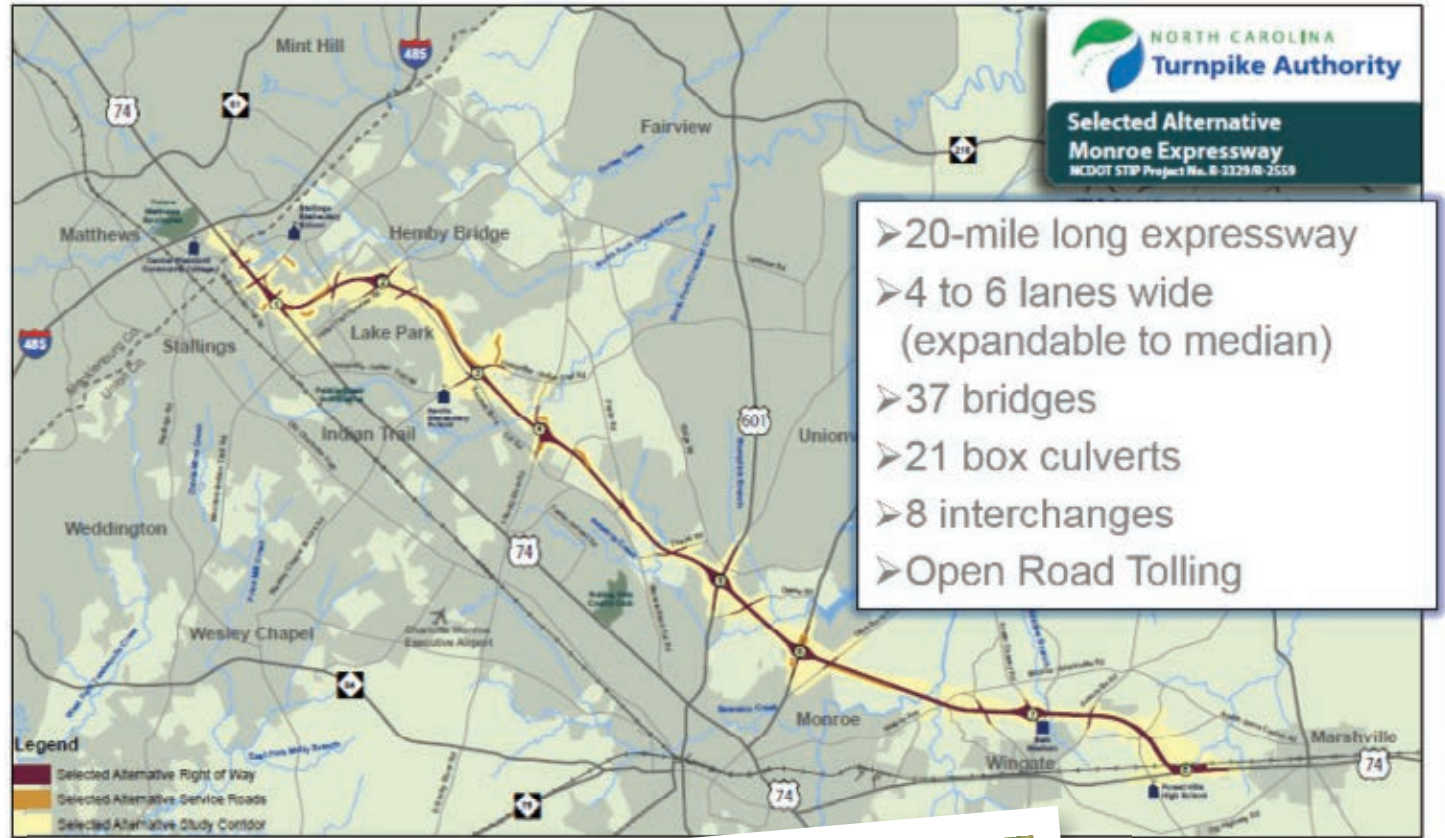
OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND ALONG HIGHLY ANTICIPATED ROADWAY

In November 2018, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) anticipates that the first vehicles will be rolling down the long-awaited Monroe Expressway, streamlining through-traffic across Union County. Previously stymied by lawsuits surrounding environmental concerns, this transformational road is expected to alleviate the high levels of traffic currently clogging U.S. Highway 74 from Stallings to the east side of Monroe and to open up access to Wingate, Marshville and beyond.

Beginning near Mecklenburg County just beyond the interchange with I-485, the Expressway's path extends nearly 20 miles across Union County, terminating just shy of Marshville. With six full interchanges along the road and the two partial interchanges at each end, the road also features 37 bridges and 21 box culverts. The planned interchanges include two in Indian Trail (Indian Trail-Fairview Road and Unionville-Indian Trail Road), three in Monroe (Rocky River Road, U.S. Highway 601 and NC 200) and one just north of Wingate (Austin Chaney Road).

To offset the total estimated cost of \$731 million, tolls will be issued for passage on the road. Users may opt to either receive a mailed bill for traveling the highway or take advantage of lower toll fees by using the NC Quick Pass transponder. The Quick Pass, which is interoperable with the E-Z-Pass,

MONROE EXPRESSWAY



the Peach Pass and the SunPass, will assess charges at an Electronic Collection Toll rate. Decisions regarding how many tolling segments and toll amounts are expected to be finalized by the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Turnpike Authority in the coming months before the Expressway is completed.

This bypass around the western development in Union County is intended to improve mobility and capacity in the U.S. 74 corridor by allowing for high-speed regional travel while maintaining access to properties along the existing U.S. 74. With nearly 20% of traffic on the existing U.S. 74 in the form of commercial traffic and the addition of beach traffic from the north in the summer, the opening of the Expressway will allow this traffic to shift off the existing corridor. Business US 74 can subsequently refocus on providing direct access to local retail, commercial and employment centers. From an economic development perspective, growth can begin to regenerate in these areas and the growth around the Expressway's interchanges provides new opportunities in distribution and logistics. Unique opportunities for which the County has not been able to capitalize on previously.

In preparation for this transformational roadway and the opportunities that will come with its arrival, the County and towns where interchanges are located

This transformational road is expected to alleviate the high levels of traffic currently clogging U.S. Highway .

have been reviewing land use plans with the intent to guide development more cohesively. So too is economic development, in partnership with South Piedmont Community College (SPCC), considering preparation for effects of this development. The Monroe Expressway will provide a unique, never before seen opportunity to capitalize on recruiting distribution and other logistics projects to Union County. In order to develop the appropriate workforce for these new sectors, SPCC is analyzing the potential value in offering new educational tracks to support the future businesses that will find their way to this roadway.

With over thirty years in the making to secure the construction of this road, leaders and citizens alike in Union County are anxious for the completion of the road, and the unique opportunities development around the interchanges may provide.



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Prosperity through a pursuit of precision manufacturing

UNION COUNTY'S CONTINUED SUCCESS RESTS ON ONE OF THE REGION'S STRONGEST MANUFACTURING FOUNDATIONS

A deliberate strategy to recruit and retain precision manufacturing has proven very successful for Union County. Approximately 185 manufacturing firms are employing over 15,000 people in the County. These firms represent manufacturing across a wide variety of sectors including aerospace, machine building, food processing, construction materials, plastics, and medical equipment.

This diversity of manufacturing sectors has enabled the community to avoid the dramatic ride of the business cycle. During the past 20 years, Union County has maintained the lowest average unemployment rate in the entire Charlotte region. When an economic downturn negatively affects one or more sectors, others remain strong and keep the local economy moving forward. This proved true during the last significant recession in that virtually every Union County manufacturer endured, and many generated increased investment and job growth.

"It is a simple fact that healthy companies make stable employers," said Ron Mahle, Assistant Director of Monroe-Union County Economic Development, "We would much rather have a solid, reliable 100-employee manufacturer than one five-times that size who hires and lays-off every two years."

One important reason so many companies in Union County withstand economic cycles so well is that they have long ago adopted continuous improvement and lean manufacturing practices throughout their organizations. Companies maximize productivity and profitability by continually investing

During the past 20 years, Union County has maintained the lowest average unemployment rate in the entire Charlotte region.

in the latest production equipment, manufacturing techniques, and employee training.

The County's diverse manufacturers enjoy a wide menu of support resources that serve to enhance most key functions of the company. Community partners such as South Piedmont Community College offer job-specific skills training. The North Carolina State Industry Expansion Solutions provides in-house analysis and coaching to improve product planning and production. Local utilities, in addition to supplying reliable, competitively-priced electricity, natural gas and water/sewer, perform energy audits that identify ways to become more energy efficient.

Precision based industrial sectors like aerospace have flourished in Union County. ATI Specialty Materials, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, 3M/Scott Safety and UTC Aerospace Systems all are the high flyers in their industry. These companies, along with many others, have performed extensive due diligence on Union County before investing hundreds of millions of dollars. They found that the community's workforce is extremely productive and other costs remain globally competitive.

As a result, the Monroe area has been identified as one of the best locations to manufacture precision aerospace components in the United States.

Besides aerospace, Union County has attracted a bank of industry that is the envy of many communities. From plastics-based manufacturers and medical device manufacturers, like Greiner Bio-One, Charlotte Pipe and Foundry and CEM, to the traditional textile and food processing industry that have transformed into high production, high-quality manufacturing centers; Union County has diversified around precision-based production facilities.

"The success lies within the precision," stated Chris Platé, Executive Director of Monroe-Union County Economic Development. "Our entire recruitment strategy focuses on industrial sectors that rely on precise, high-tolerance manufacturing. These are the types of manufacturing firms that will remain and thrive in the US."

An abundance of smaller manufacturers thrive in the County as well, supplying many of the larger manufacturers throughout the United States and internationally. These manufacturers also play a critical role in the supply chain of Union County companies, allowing for close sourcing, efficiencies and reductions in costs. Finally, the local machine and fabricating shops produce high-quality products that end up in the automotive, aerospace, medical, nuclear, automotive and many other industries.

If past is prologue, the future of Union County manufacturing looks very prosperous.



GETTY IMAGES

The City of Monroe adds retail growth as part of its economic strategy

RETAIL STRATEGIES AND MONROE PARTNER TO EXPAND RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES

There are many critical components which create the special livability that Union County possesses.

As the population has grown exponentially over the past decades, retail locations have followed; however, the level of development in some areas has not kept pace with the levels of disposable income. Although restaurants and shops have materialized, they do not provide the diversity that is being demanded by the residents.

One community has stepped up to drive the diversification of retail it desires. Target, Gander Outdoors, Belk Stores, and many others have significant retail operations in the City of Monroe. The traditional mix of restaurants and

retail space provided in these big box developments has generated a substantial tax base, demonstrating that retail brings much more than just conveniences to the community.

Poplin Place is a significant hub of retail and restaurants. Located across U.S. Highway from Poplin Place is "The Park at Monroe" shopping center. The Park at Monroe is a truly unique concept, blending medical offices and its anchor tenant, the 100,000 square foot Novant Medical Center, along with its nearly 52,000 square feet of retail space for tenants like Starbucks, Olive Garden and Moe's Southwest Grill.

Earlier this year, Monroe consummated a partnership with Retail Strategies,



Inc. and ElectriCities of NC to provide a customized Retail Development Initiative focused on marketing current locations and identifying and assembling land to market to the retail developers and brokerage representatives. Retail Strategies will also maintain the most current retail demographics and marketing materials for Monroe. The ultimate goal is to increase the diversity of retail offerings and the quality of products sold within the community and provide a greater reach and awareness

to enhance the quality of life of Monroe's growing population.

"We are truly excited about taking more control of our retail destiny," stated Monroe Mayor Bobby G. Kilgore. "Our community has continued to prosper and our retail options need to keep pace. This partnership with Retail Strategies will represent our community on the national stage and help provide more restaurants, hotels, and shops for everyone."

The new retail operations could be more "experience focused" and benefit the residents with closer amenities and entertainment options; moreover, Monroe and Union County will realize an increase in its commercial tax base and sales tax revenue.

Union County's best economic development tool

SOUTH PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE IS THE KEY FOR THE FUTURE OF PRECISION MANUFACTURING IN UNION COUNTY

South Piedmont Community College, which serves Union and Anson counties, has prepared thousands of men and women for great careers, both conveniently and affordably. SPCC, North Carolina's newest community college, created in 1999, offers more than 90 credit programs as well as many short-term continuing education opportunities offered year-round. South Piedmont is also a leader in Basic Skills instruction for adults who want to complete high school or improve their reading, writing, math, and communication skills.

South Piedmont is growing — serving 16,750 credit and continuing education students annually. Even as the college grows, extensive hands-on experience and one-on-one instruction remain hallmarks of South Piedmont's approach to learning.

Classes are offered at campuses in Monroe (Old Charlotte Highway Campus), Polkton (L.L. Polk Campus) as well as locations in Wadesboro, Waxhaw and online. The college's Tyson Family Center for Technology in Monroe features state-of-the-art advanced manufacturing and welding labs.

Business and industry across the region recognize South Piedmont as an important ally. The college's on-site customized training programs equip men and women for the high-demand, high-paying careers of today and the future. The availability of a skilled workforce is crucial to any industry looking to expand or locate in the area. By providing trained workers, the region ensures its companies maintain their competitive edge in the global marketplace while ensuring the best employment opportunities for its citizens. South Piedmont's Customized Training Program provides training assistance in support of full-time production and direct customer service positions created in the area, enhancing the growth potential of the companies while simultaneously preparing the workforce with the skills essential to successful employment in emerging industries.

The college's apprenticeship program combines paid on-the-job training with classroom instruction. At the end of two years, a student earns an Associate of Applied Science degree and Journeyman Certification by the NC Department of Labor. This comprehensive skill and knowledge development program at South Piedmont gives students a competitive advantage. Upon graduation, the apprentice will be "work ready" and earning a lucrative starting salary with company benefits. Students completing the program can look forward to great careers such as CNC machinist, electrician, maintenance technician, mold/plastic technician, tool & die-maker, welding fabricator, and more.

SPCC offers dozens of credit programs, many of the two-year associate degree programs, in areas as diverse as healthcare, automotive, mechatronics, agribusiness, basic law enforcement, and more. For

The college's on-site customized training programs equip men and women for the high-demand, high-paying careers of today and the future.

students with the goal of a bachelor's degree, South Piedmont's College Transfer Program parallels the freshman and sophomore years of a four-year college or university degree.

Hundreds of short-term courses, seminars, conferences, and on-site customized training programs are offered year-round by the division of Career Development and Continuing Education. This includes the Small Business Center at South Piedmont Community College, which offers free seminars and counseling for

those looking to learn more about finances, marketing, or the other day-to-day skills needed to start or run a business.

Union County is fortunate to have South Piedmont Community College well-positioned to provide men and women — as well as area businesses — with the critical training needed for success. South Piedmont has been consistently ranked among the top community colleges in the nation because of its success in developing the potential of its students by providing high-quality instruction with personal attention. ■



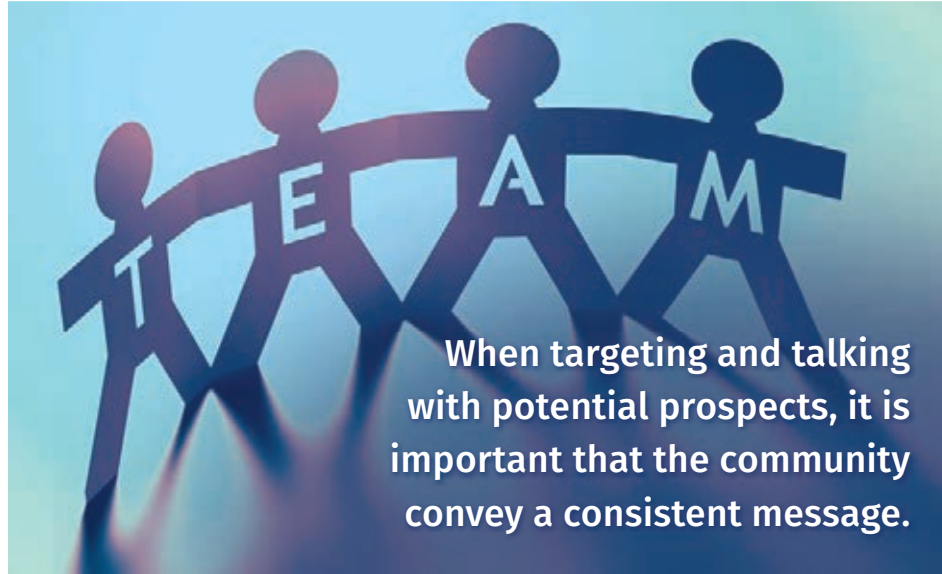
Monroe-Union County economic development organization celebrates fifth anniversary

A MERGER IN 2013 HAS LED TO THE MOST SUCCESSFUL RUN IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN UNION COUNTY HISTORY

In January 2013, Union County and the City of Monroe joined together to form the County's first unified economic development organization. This merger of economic development offices was a result of Jerry Simpson, current Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, working with the late Clark Goodwin, Chairman of the Monroe EDC, to create a structure that satisfied the needs of all parties. Since then the overall positive impact of their vision is indisputable. As a result, the County and City created a larger organization with a more robust budget than the two previous entities had individually. From increased effectiveness and marketing the County with one voice, the combined organization has saved the Union County taxpayers nearly \$2.5 million in duplicated administrative costs over the last five years.

When targeting and talking with potential prospects, it is important that the community convey a consistent message. Since 2013 Union County has had that continuity that provides comfort to both prospective companies, consultants and allies.

"When we are working with a project, their decision-makers know that our office is speaking with the support of our entire community's leadership," stated Chris Platé, Executive Director of Economic Development. "From the incentive grants



When targeting and talking with potential prospects, it is important that the community convey a consistent message.

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to business advocacy, companies trust Union County and its partners are all on the same page and will provide them the best opportunity for long-term business success. The results speak for themselves."

The primary focus of Union County's economic development program is maintaining a strong base of existing industries. These firms represent a significant portion of the County's capital investment and job creation. Workforce development, growth and expansion

services, seeking new grant opportunities and intra-county business connections are just a few of the ways the existing industry team help sustain the local businesses.

Since the merger in 2013, Union County has seen economic development occur throughout all parts of the County. Existing companies are expanding and new companies are locating, adding to the growing commercial tax base by nearly \$500 million in the first five years. Additionally, there is a renewed focus on

new product development, something that had been under-emphasized for years outside of Monroe's successful industrial parks and speculative building programs. In fact, over 300 acres of land have been identified for development by Union County and will be available for development as the County's first industrial park.

From the Village of Marvin to the Town of Marshville, there is incredible diversity throughout Union County, from cultural to economic, each community is unique. The organization's next step is to focus on the new Monroe Expressway and the opportunities this new limited access tollway will generate for the communities along the route. It is especially important to communities like Wingate and Marshville, in that job seekers can get to facilities within these towns and still have great access back to Charlotte and I-485.

Now seeing the advantages of a team that is working as one voice for the county, it is hard to imagine Union County going back to a different structure. The vision of Mr. Simpson and Mr. Goodwin to make a single point of contact for businesses looking to relocate or expand in Union County has exceeded all expectations in its first five years. This success validates these community leaders' decision to create a single economic development organization. ■

union county north carolina

Located to the southeast of Charlotte and adjacent to I-485, Union County is home to as much diversity in one County as there is in the state of North Carolina. The Gateway region of the County, nearest to Charlotte, is a well-developed area, optimally suited for corporate offices and distribution locations. The central portion of the county has developed a strong base in precision manufacturing, most notably in aerospace, and has the state's highest concentration of aerospace companies - 23 companies in a seven mile radius. Agriculture reigns supreme on the eastern side of the County, where production of soybeans, corn and broiler chickens ranks among the highest in North Carolina. These attributes, along with the County's strong workforce development pipeline from the public schools, South Piedmont Community College and Wingate University, combine to make Union County the ideal location for many businesses to call home.

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