

monroe union county economic development

*Adjacent to Charlotte NC USA, Union County
blends a unique quality of life with
Aerospace, Medical and Precision Manufacturing.
The EDC Team is growing the commercial and
industrial base throughout Union County.*



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Union County's arts and entertainment enhancements bring more growth

Downtown Monroe will soon have something new for everyone as city leaders complete significant investments in a new downtown historic theater renovation and the creation of a children's science center, further strengthening the area's quality of life.

Later this year, residents will once again be able to gather at the "Dowd Center Theater," an art modern-style theater built in the 1930s that has sat vacant for nearly three decades. In 2013, the City of Monroe purchased the theater and an adjacent building and is renovating it to return it to use as a location for performing arts, speakers, dance and movies. The theater seats 561 people.

"We believe the theater is going to be a fantastic economic catalyst for downtown and hopefully bring additional retail and maybe residential and corporate uses to downtown," says Pete Hovanec, Communications and Tourism Director for the City of Monroe. "It's very nostalgic. So many people have memories of the theater and are constantly peeking in the windows to see our progress."

The new Dowd Center Theater on Main Street will be city-owned and operated. The city also purchased the building next door to create a pre-function area for events.

"We could have built something newer and cheaper, but the city felt this was a great investment because of the theater's historic value," Hovanec says. "It's creating a lot of buzz. This is a project the city has wanted to do for many years."

Contractors are putting the final touches on the Dowd Center Theater and anticipate an opening in the summer of 2020.

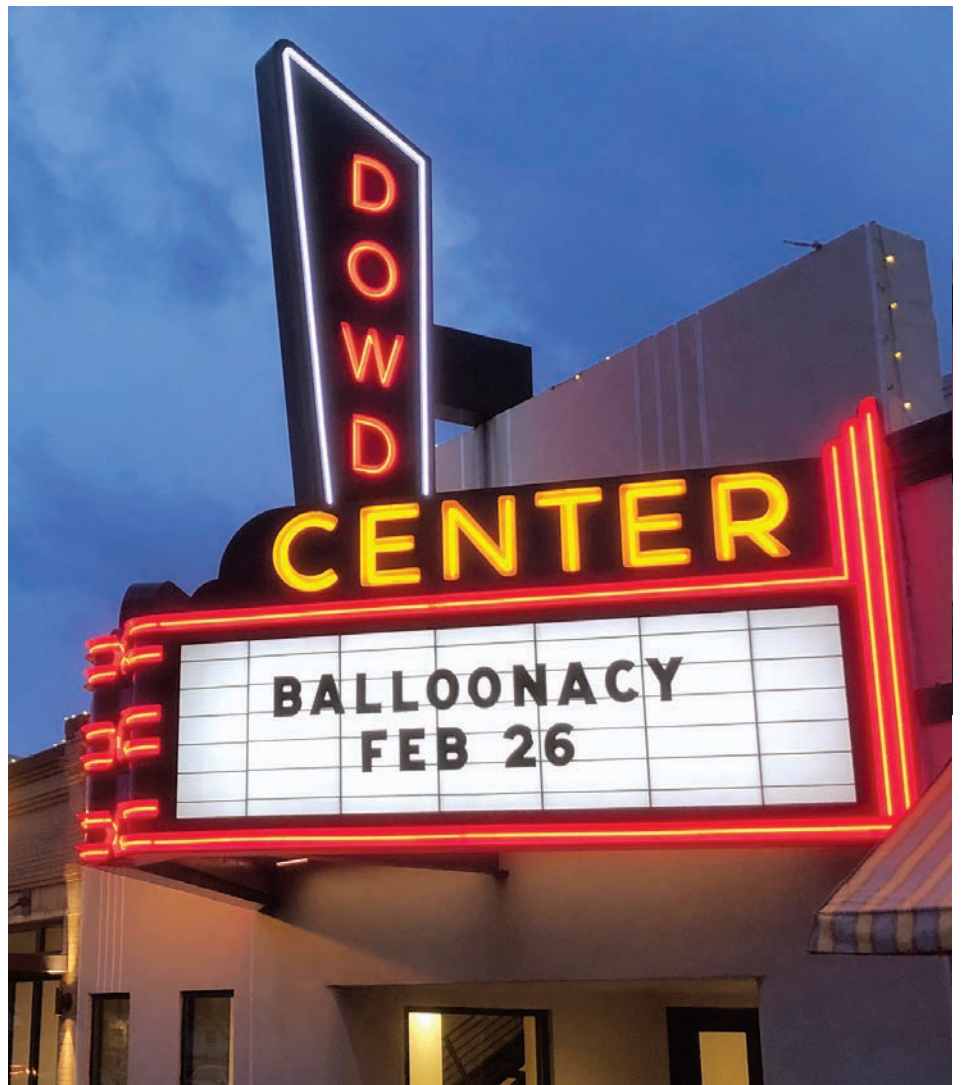
City leaders are also eager to open the Children's Science Center, a hands-on children's learning facility near the downtown public library. The city owns the 20,000-square-foot building and plans to complete construction in the coming months.

The center will focus on a STEM curriculum, teaching science and technology to children of all ages but with an emphasis on children from pre-Kindergarten to 6th grade.

Along with providing hours of entertainment for Union County families near to home, Hovanec says the project will likely spur business activity downtown as families come to the city for a visit and stay to eat at restaurants and shop nearby.

The science center will feature an actual cargo transport plane outside the building where children can learn about history and the science of flight. Inside the center, focus areas will be aerospace, agriculture, manufacturing and medical fields.

These destinations are already providing economic returns to Monroe and Union County as a new Marriott Fairfield Inn and Suites is poised to open to help meet the growing hospitality needs in the region. The new hotel adds the first Marriott flag in Monroe and joins a strong hospitality group that includes Holiday Inn Express, Hampton Inn, Best Western and Quality Inn to name a few as well as unique Airbnb options and Treehouse Vineyards.





Additional development interest in and around Downtown Monroe has been constant as developers recognize the investment city leaders have made. While the theater and science center are more arts and entertainment, a new police station also shows the city's commitment to renovation and revitalization.

"When you take all the money and infrastructure the city is putting into the Downtown area, you are seeing an investment in the future," said Hovanec.

Beyond Downtown Monroe, Union County is known for family fun, as evidenced by the 13th annual Warbirds Over Monroe Air Show coming up in November. "A feature of the show is a restored C-46 Commando owned by the City of Monroe, the only C-46 currently flying in the United States", says Hovanec.

"We've got tens of thousands of people coming from up and down the East Coast and international folks who are just big fans of classic airplanes," he says.

The air show at the Charlotte-Monroe Executive Airport includes 40 or more planes and military reenactments, wing-walkers, paratroopers and a variety of traditional fair food options. The event has grown to become one of the largest tourism events in the Charlotte area with the average attendance around 85,000 over two days.

Just west of Monroe is Waxhaw, a small town with year-round fun.

Waxhaw's historic downtown includes 20 eating and drinking establishments including a local brewery and a wine shop in less than a half-square-mile. There are another 80 businesses, including antique shops and other forms of retail.

Waxhaw considers itself the hub for enjoying dining and social activity along with arts and culture. Their vision seems to be working with high demand for available storefronts. The town has virtually zero commercial vacancy.

As the town adds hospitality businesses, it's adding new residential development. The town's first apartments opened in 2017 in a historic cotton mill. Another 200 new apartments are under construction now and will soon be open to new residents.

In 2018 the American Planning Association recognized Waxhaw as a Great Main Street, one of only two towns recognized in North Carolina. Every day, Waxhaw is becoming a preferred destination for people within the Charlotte Region and beyond.

Monroe-Union County Economic Development believes that a high quality of life not only attracts investment to the county but persuades companies to stay once they are here.

"We talk to companies outside of the area or internationally, and one of the questions they always ask is, 'What is it like to live in Union County?'" says Chris Platé, Executive Director of Economic Development. "What companies have found when they move to Union County is a high quality school system, affordable housing and quality jobs, all of which are really important decision factors to companies looking to relocate." ■



Hargett

1/4s

New investment to come from the ashes of old industry

Monroe will soon see the rebirth of an industrial property at the heart of the Sutton Park industrial area. The former Cooper Tools site, once home to a manufacturer of different hand tools and horseshoes will be sold to the City of Monroe after the nearly 325,000-square-foot building is demolished and grass is seeded over the property. When Monroe gains control of the site, the city will have a fresh 85 acres of prime industrial land to market to companies around the globe.

“Sutton Park has some of the most robust industrial infrastructure of any place in Union County,” says Chris Platé, Executive Director of Monroe-Union County Economic Development. “This property has been seen as a catalyst site for the Sutton Park industrial area, and the acquisition of the site allows the redevelopment of this large industrial zone to move forward and eventually have the feel of a new industrial park with all the capabilities of a well-established industrial center.”

The former Cooper Tools site sits amongst manufacturing titans such as Tyson Foods, ATI Specialty Materials, ASSA ABLOY-Norton Door, Decore-ative Specialties and GM Nameplate as well as dozens of other small to medium manufacturing companies that create a small ecosystem of precision manufacturing.

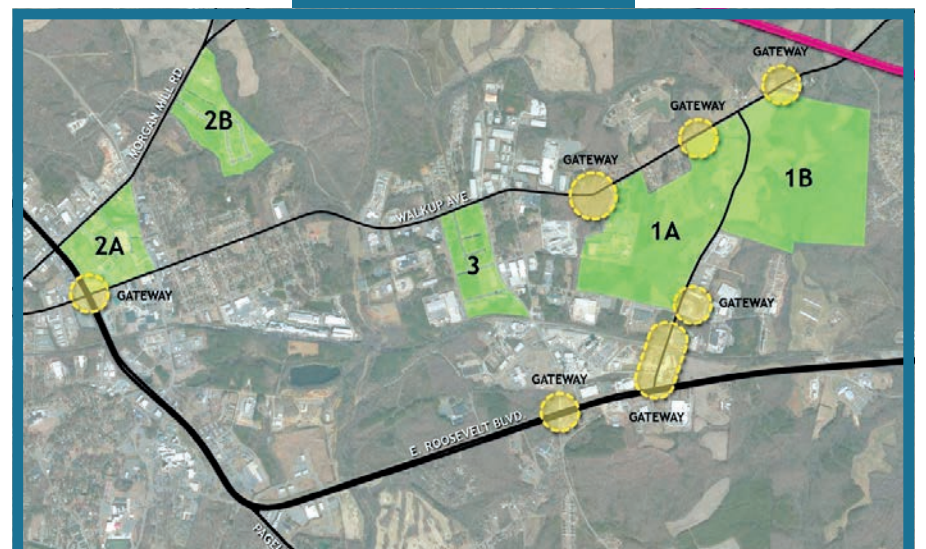
Sutton Park is even home to Ludwig Drums which produces drum kits for musicians like Ringo Starr, Questlove of “The Tonight Show,” John Cowsill of The Beach Boys, Alex Van Halen and many more. There is great diversity in Monroe’s industrial core, but nearly every company there is producing high quality goods with precision and accuracy.

To complete the transaction between the current owner of the former Cooper Tools site and the City of Monroe, the site was placed in the North Carolina Brownfields Program and underwent all the analysis that process requires. The Brownfields Program, managed by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, is designed to help abandoned, idled or underused property reach redevelopment potential by reducing the threat of environmental contamination. By undergoing the Brownfields Program, future tenants and owners of the former Cooper Tools site can feel confident about the condition of the property and where they conduct business.

To market the site, the City of Monroe will utilize the expertise of the team at Monroe-Union County Economic Development. With the buildable acreage at nearly 100%, the EDC’s plan is to split the 85-acre site into multiple parcels, enabling the full utilization of the property for prospective projects. If needed, interior roads can be built to utilize the back portions of the property and maximize the usage of the entire site. The site, if properly planned, should generate a greater tax base than its previous use. At 85 acres, 5-10 companies could occupy the site depending on their facility requirements.

“It’s also very possible this site may attract a larger company that needs the full 85 acres,” says Platé. “While our office would certainly welcome that kind of project, the most likely scenario is a series of projects that could generate between 300,000 and 400,000 square feet of manufacturing space and nearly 500 jobs when complete.”

Regardless of the final configuration, it will not be long before the former Cooper Tools site will be open for business and become a catalyst for redevelopment.



Sutton Park Redevelopment Areas



Union County secures a southern staple



Pimento cheese has been a staple in the Southeast United States for generations. But one brand has just recently exploded onto the scene and is claimed by many to be “the best pimento cheese on the market, period.” That brand is Pawley’s Island Palmetto Cheese, “the pimento cheese with soul,” so says their packaging. And right now, Palmetto Cheese is flying off the shelves at grocery stores all along the East Coast. This brand has also added other varieties to the mix like pimento cheese with jalapeño or bacon and other spreads like chicken salad and buffalo chicken dip. Southerners just can’t get enough.

But behind every great food brand is a great producer. In the case of Pawley’s Island Palmetto Cheese, that producer is Duke Foods. Duke Foods has been around for over 100 years and was founded down in Greenville, SC. What began as a sandwich shop has now turned into an ever expanding food production and co-packing business. And as you may have noticed, the Duke name and sandwich spreads made with mayonnaise is no coincidence. All the way back in 1929, Duke’s founder Eugenia Duke sold her popular mayonnaise recipe to C.F. Sauer who still makes the yellow-labeled mayonnaise to this day.

Today, Duke Foods partners with a variety of great food brands to provide exceptional co-packing capabilities. And just recently, Duke expanded those capabilities to Monroe to meet the demand of the rapidly growing Palmetto Cheese brand.

Duke Foods has opened a 95,000-square-foot facility in the Sutton Park area of Monroe, a large industrial center of Union County. The



expansion will generate millions in new tax revenue while creating numerous new jobs.

“Having a heart for people, it’s a great honor for me to lead Duke Foods where we can impact and develop people to help us serve our clients, community and our brands,” says Duke Foods CEO Andrew Smart.

The building Duke Foods has purchased has been a food manufacturing plant before. “This building, given its age and very specific design, required a unique client,” says Evan Mazingo, New Projects Manager with Monroe-Union County Economic Development. “The amount of care and investment Duke Foods has given that property is incredible. It has truly given the building new life and has been a catalyst for further growth in the area.”

Duke Foods has already begun production of numerous product lines at the Monroe facility, but they have not yet reached full capacity. As the business grows and product lines expand, they expect the facility in Monroe to become a significant plant with regards to its importance to the overall capabilities it provides the company. ■



Union County industries' generosity a provided morale boost



In the wake of uncertain times, Union County companies teamed with Union County leadership to provide much needed medical supplies.

There is no hiding the fact that Covid-19 has been devastating to the economy. Worldwide communities are dealing with rising unemployment, forced closures, supply and demand imbalances, and massive shortages in critical medical supplies. While most companies cannot control the circumstances they are presented with, several manufacturers in Union County have altered portions of their process to manufacture medical masks, hand sanitizer, face shields and bleach. This effort has supplied local hospitals, first-responders, nursing homes and local government with these items which allow them to work safely.

Dream Chasers, a local brewery in Waxhaw, was impacted significantly when North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper issued restaurants and bars to shut down. With lower demand, Dream Chasers took advantage of extra production capacity within their brewing process to mix and bottle hand sanitizer. They produced gallons of sanitizer which were then distributed to organizations who needed it. Another Union County company, Bona, was able to supply bottles full of hand sanitizer which normally hold floor cleaning solution. The smaller containers made for efficient distribution to first responders and health care facilities.

Several other companies like Liquid Ice Corporation and Goulston Technologies did their part to mix hand sanitizer or supply the raw materials needed to make hand sanitizer. Other companies like ATI Specialty Materials and GM Nameplate were



photo JASON E. MICZEK

able to produce face masks for their employees and for other organizations in need. Darnel Inc., which manufactures styrene and pulp-based food packaging, donated significant amounts of to-go boxes to Union County Public Schools. The local school system continued their breakfast and lunch program for students even though schools were not in session. Having food containers donated reduced the cost associated with the free breakfast and lunch program.

Several Union County companies produce essential products for health care use on a normal basis. Greiner Bio-One produces plastic blood injection tubes for storing blood samples. They have remained a critical component of the health care industry throughout this time. Glenmark Pharmaceutical produces a handful of different drugs and injectables. They also have been doing everything they can to keep supplies flowing to critically hit areas around the country.

“We are so thankful for the many companies in Union County which are able to support the community with key supplies,” says Ron Mahle, Assistant Director of Economic Development. “We are also so grateful they are able to keep Union County workers employed while also keeping their health as a top consideration.”

Covid-19 has affected companies in numerous ways. The retail sector across the country was forced to put business on hold. That is except for places like Lowe’s and Home Depot which have seen record sales as more people stay home and complete home-improvement projects.

“Some businesses are seeing higher than normal sales because of many different factors due to the virus. It’s great to see those companies hiring more employees from sectors that weren’t so lucky or businesses that were forced to shut down,” says Mahle. “The situation our country faces has not been felt since the Great Depression, and our business leaders have really stepped up to help people in need.”

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UNION COUNTY, NC

Population: 235,000+

Industry Assets:

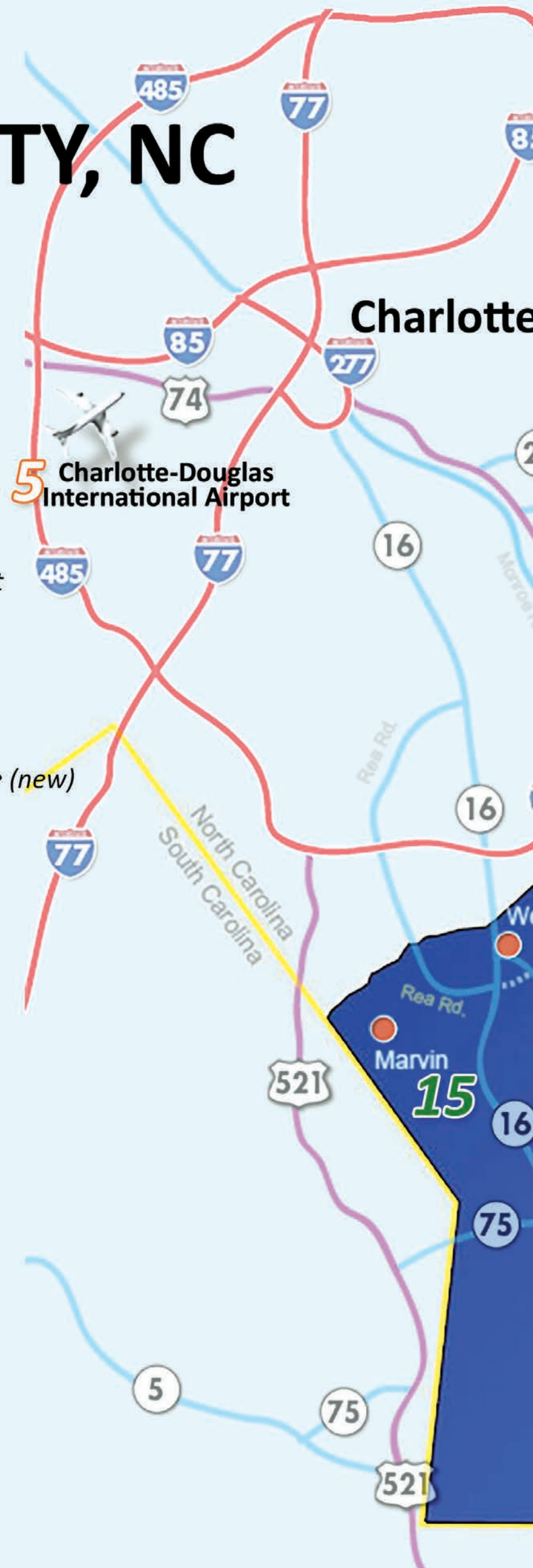
- 1a) *South Piedmont Community College*
- 1b) *SPCC Tyson Center for Technology*
- 2) *Charlotte-Monroe Executive Airport*
- 3) *Wingate University*
- 4) *Union County Ag Center*
- 5) *Charlotte-Douglas International Airport*

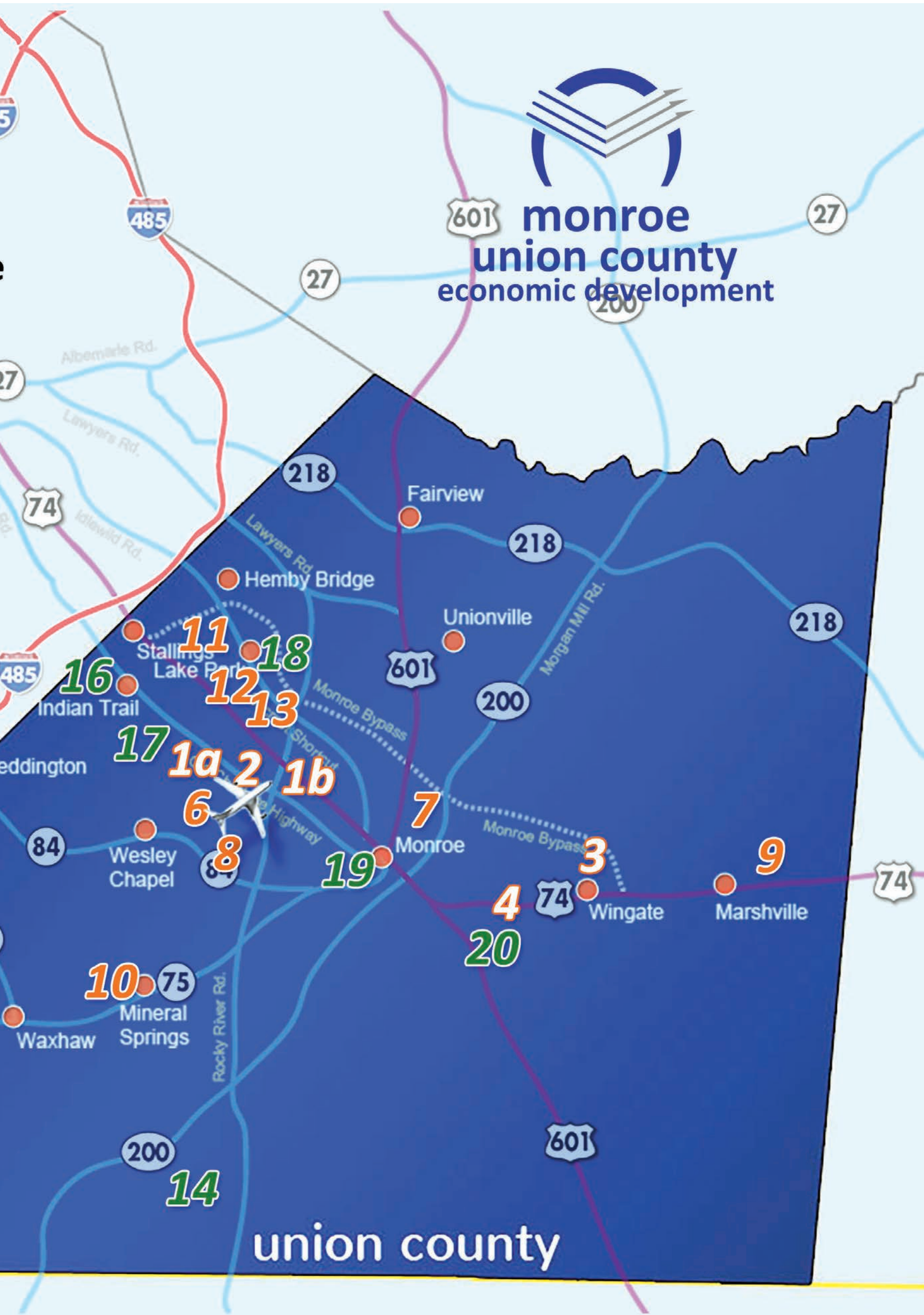
Industrial Parks / Areas:

- 6) *Monroe Corporate Center*
- 7) *Expressway Commerce Park @ Monroe (new)*
- 8) *Union County Industrial Park (new)*
- 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*







One of those companies that continues to enjoy sizable growth is ATI Specialty Materials. The aerospace manufacturing company that specializes in superalloys recently began construction of a new 200,000-square-foot facility.

Local industries lead the way for Union County

Economic development has many facets, but the most recognizable activities can be broken down into two parts: new business recruitment and existing industry retention/expansion. For Monroe-Union County Economic Development, both parts are vitally important for the economic success of Union County. But supporting the companies already located in Union County takes precedent over recruiting from the outside.

“How can we convince a company from Florida or France that Union County is the place to do business if the businesses already here aren’t successful and growing,” says Ron Mahle, who leads the Existing Industry Program for Monroe-Union County Economic Development. “Our biggest selling points on Union County are the success stories of the businesses that have decided to relocate here or have been here for generations.”

The growth of manufacturing in Union County has been steady for decades. Rarely do companies leave, and when they do, it is usually because of outside market forces or company failures, rather than a lack of local support.

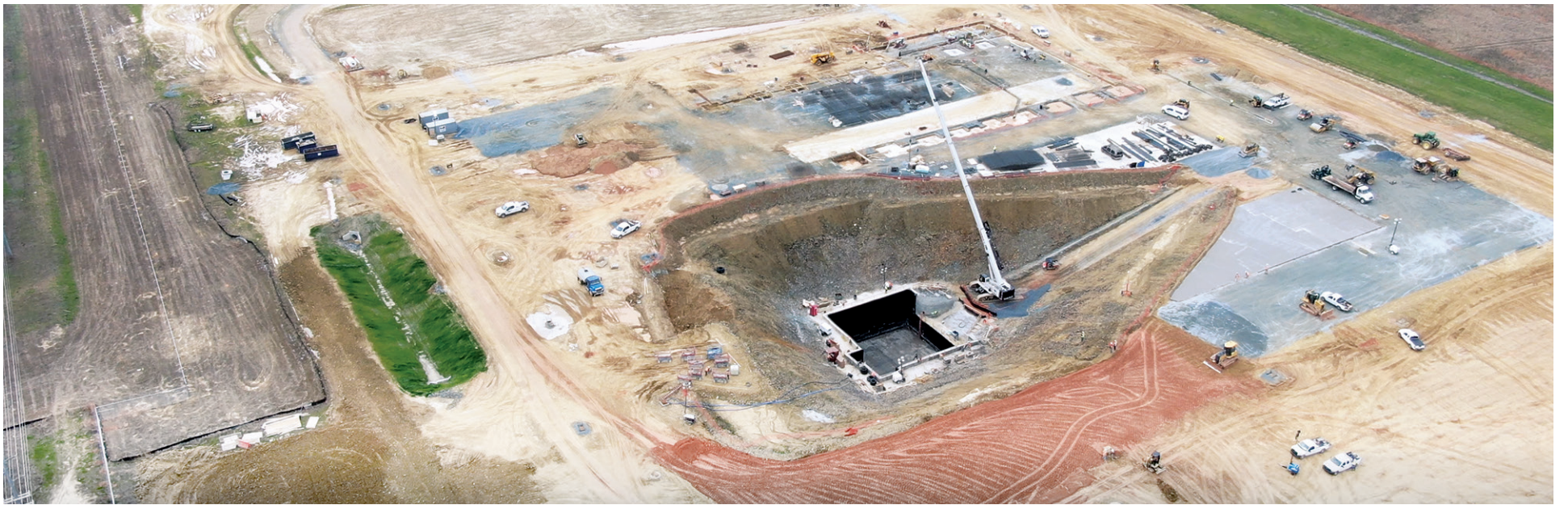
“In my 14 years here, I have seen a few companies leave us. Usually major changes in that particular industry are to blame. The

product being made may have become antiquated, or something as simple as the business owner selling out to a private equity firm seeking a short-term gain,” says Mahle.

While industrial turnover is inevitable, the growth experienced by other local companies has more than made up for the losses. Coming from Cleveland, OH, Mahle has seen a much different environment than where he came from. The majority of the industrial investment has come from the existing industry expanding, resulting in thousands of new jobs. Existing industry growth amounted to \$260 million since July 2018.

One of those companies which continues to enjoy sizable growth is ATI Specialty Materials. The aerospace manufacturing company which specializes in superalloys recently began construction of a new 200,000-square-foot facility. This project will further the capabilities of the company that currently has hundreds of thousands of square feet under roof in Monroe. The project is the second largest economic development announcement in Union County history. Union County was selected for the expansion over several other potential locations.

“ATI could have taken the project anywhere. They are located all across the globe, and any one of those locations could have been



chosen for the expansion,” says Mahle. “We believe that much of the decision came down to the cost of doing business and the support from local leadership, both of which we excel at in Union County and Monroe.”

Even smaller companies in Monroe announced expansions over the last year. One of those companies, Stafford Corrugated Products, is building a new HQ in Union County. The new 50,000-square-foot facility will be more than double the size of their previous location and will even allow for several additional hires. Stafford Corrugated Products supplies the corrugated industry with cutting dies. They were recently highlighted on the Fox Business series “Manufacturing Marvels.”

Collins Aerospace has nearly completed their \$26 million

expansion. The company maintains, repairs and overhauls aerospace equipment and will hire as many as 45 employees as a result of the expansion. The new investment will add capabilities to support MRO for components of the Boeing 787 as the fleet continues to grow and demand for aftermarket support increases. The expansion will grow Collins’ footprint on the site by more than 25 percent from 130,000 square-feet to roughly 164,000 square-feet. The facility which opened in Monroe more than 15 years ago is just another success story of a growing Union County company.

Mahle says several more existing industry expansions are in the works but are not yet available for public announcement. He says these projects speak to the mission of existing industry and economic development as a whole. ■



Union County Chamber
1/4s



Monroe's expressway sees growth

More and more people are using U.S. 74 as a major connector between Charlotte and the N.C. beaches and the ports in Wilmington. This traffic is looking to move quickly through the heart of Union County, and the traffic counts pouring in from the Monroe Expressway make that very clear.

The Monroe Expressway opened in November 2018, delivering the Charlotte region's first toll road and the second of three toll roads in North Carolina. The \$731 million road bypassing the commercial route through Monroe has been more than 20 years in the making. A series of hiccups along the way slowed its approval, but residents, beach goers and local industry have awaited the road's completion for years.

With nearly a year and a half under its belt, the Monroe Expressway's traffic count has more than doubled since the 18-mile bypass around Monroe first opened in late 2018. Some interchanges are seeing as many as 20,000 cars or trucks every weekday on average, a major increase from the early months of the expressway when no interchange averaged more than 10,000 hits a day. Most of the increase in traffic can be attributed to commercial trucks and commuters who have made the Monroe Expressway a part of their daily route. But a spike in traffic during the summer of 2019 confirmed the importance of the road for beach traffic.

The toll road cuts the drive from Marshville to Charlotte by up to

20 minutes by circumventing 27 major intersections on U.S. 74, most of which have stoplights.

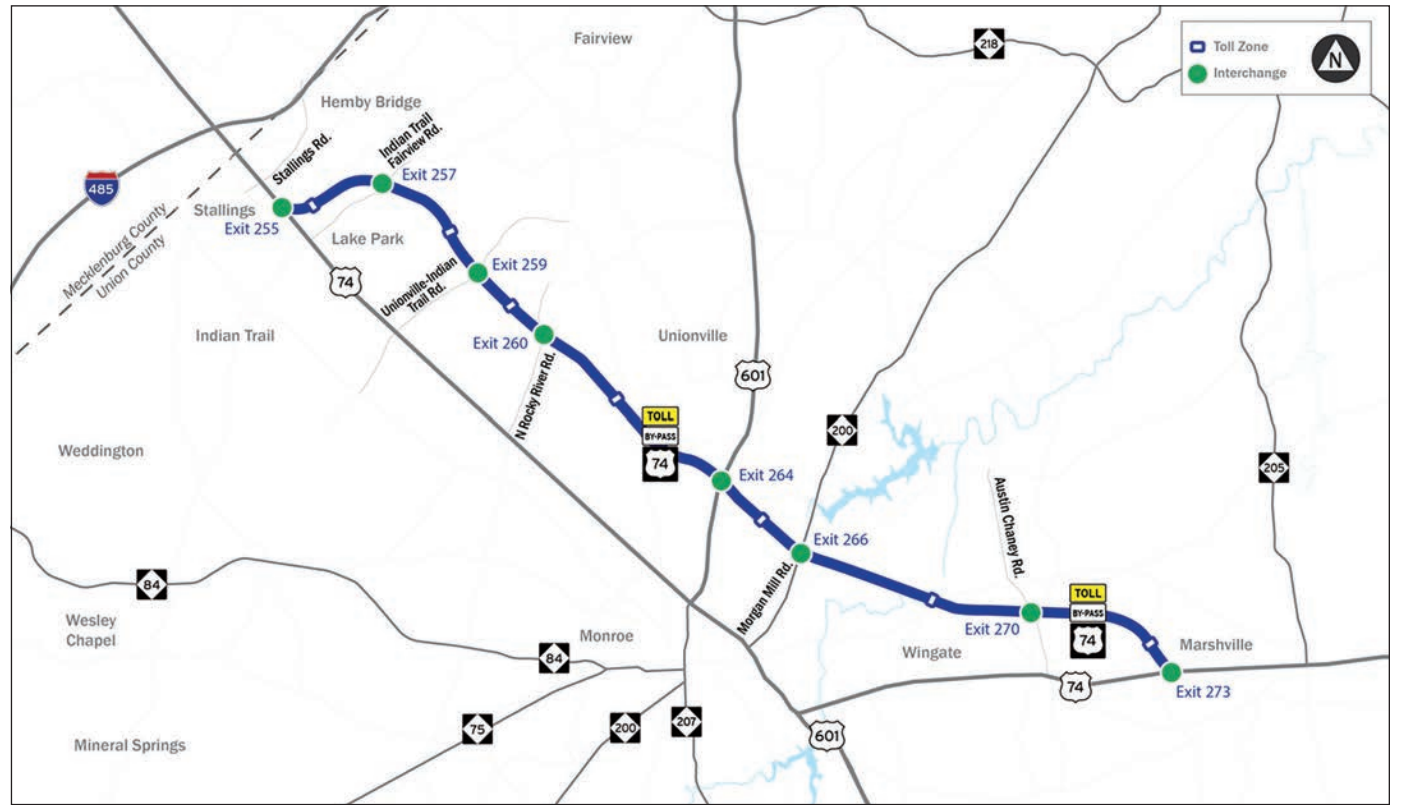
"It has been a tremendous benefit to the area's labor force, particularly those who reside in other counties adjacent to us who can now move more freely," says Monroe Union County Economic Development Executive Director Chris Platé. "For residents traveling throughout our county, it's saving them up to 20 minutes each way to work every day and improving their quality of life."

The Monroe Expressway is about 18 miles in length and runs from Marshville to Stallings. There are six interchanges along the road and two partial interchanges at each end. Tolls are collected electronically, and there are no stop and go tollbooths on the roadway. Even with paid tolls, the cost savings from avoiding stop-and-go traffic along commercial U.S. 74 is apparent for many companies moving trucks through the county.

Bakery Feeds, a manufacturer on the Marshville end of the Monroe Expressway, sends thousands of trucks on the expressway every year. The time and fuel saved by utilizing the faster route more than makes up for the toll expenses.

Employee commutes have also improved. "My quality of life has drastically improved thanks to the expressway," says Todd Shapiro, President of Decore-active Specialties in Monroe. "What used to take up to an hour, my commute on the expressway is now less than 30 minutes." Shapiro also expressed the expressway as a recruiting

“Most of the increase in traffic can be attributed to commercial trucks and commuters who have made the Monroe Expressway as part of their daily route. But a spike in traffic during the summer of 2019 confirmed the importance of the road for beach traffic.”



tool for management positions. “Employees commuting from Charlotte are much more willing to come to Monroe for work when they can bypass the stoplights. The expressway makes recruiting employees living in Mecklenburg County more fruitful.”

“By moving some traffic to the toll road and relieving congestion, U.S. 74 will once again operate as a commercial corridor for shoppers and other local traffic,” says Platé. He believes the bypass will open up more of eastern Union County for development to ease the imbalance between residential, commercial and industrial properties.

Platé hopes to attract logistics companies along the expressway. With the road allowing the county’s quickest access to the Charlotte region and beyond, major freight carriers will find the expressway as a convenient location for warehousing before shipping cargo through the ports on the coast.

Platé also foresees the interchanges undergoing major development in the coming years as gas stations, fast food and residential developments look to take advantage of the new thoroughfare. He believes the expressway’s interchanges will develop in a similar fashion to the exits along major interstates.

The City of Monroe recently purchased 155 acres near the expressway for a new industrial park to take advantage of this new road asset. The hopes are to have the park under development by 2021.

Even education realizes the benefit that the expressway

brings. Wingate University President Dr. Rhett Brown has said the university purchased 100 acres near the expressway, convinced that enrollment will grow more quickly as prospective students have easier access to the campus. Fans traveling to a football game on campus will also appreciate the road’s convenience.

As Union County grows, the need for the Monroe Expressway will grow with it. ■

Union Power
1/4s

LB Smith
1/8h



Chris Platé
executive director

Evan Mozingo
new projects manager

Union County's economic development gets digital

MONROE-UNION COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HAS NEW WINNING STRATEGIES TO MARKET ITSELF TO INDUSTRIES CONSIDERING LOCATING IN THE CHARLOTTE REGION.

Last year, the team launched a new video series called the “REDI Report,” named for a Report of Economic Development Indicators. The monthly video series provides a quick look at emerging new businesses, expansions, new economic development services and the latest economic data.

“We produce a ‘REDI Report’ each month that is a condensed version of the information we share with our board of directors,” says Evan Mozingo, Marketing Specialist for Monroe-Union County Economic Development, who appears in the videos with Executive Director Chris Platé. “We share this information within the video series to expand awareness of the good things happening and expand our reach beyond Union County to other parts of the state and country.”

Mozingo and Platé have improved significantly at filming and editing the monthly “REDI Report,” which is produced entirely in-house. Graphics and animations are all self-created, allowing the team to be more creative and achieve their exact goal for each month’s “REDI Report.” They are also able to craft the reports specifically for distribution through social media channels like YouTube, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Engagement on social media has soared for Monroe-Union County Economic Development since the monthly “REDI Report” began. Much of this growth can be attributed to the modern age of social media where video content reigns supreme. To capture more of this demand, the organization has revamped their weekly “Friday Fact,” now known as the “Fast Friday Facts.” Initially, the “Friday Fact” highlighted a Union County company by sharing a quick fact alongside the company’s logo. The new “Fast Friday Facts” looks to achieve this same purpose but with drone and video footage of the company instead of just a simple logo. “Fast Friday Facts” are shared every Friday on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Tuesday’s weekly post has also been reworked. “Tuesday Topics” are now “Tuesday Trivia,” a weekly trivia question related to Union County’s economy. Local members of the Union County community can answer each week’s question for a chance to win a \$20 gift card while learning more about the economic web that surrounds them. To find the answer, community members are redirected to developunion.com. Higher web traffic gives virtual visitors a greater chance of finding Union County’s economic development website. Since the creation of “Tuesday Trivia” in January of this year, website

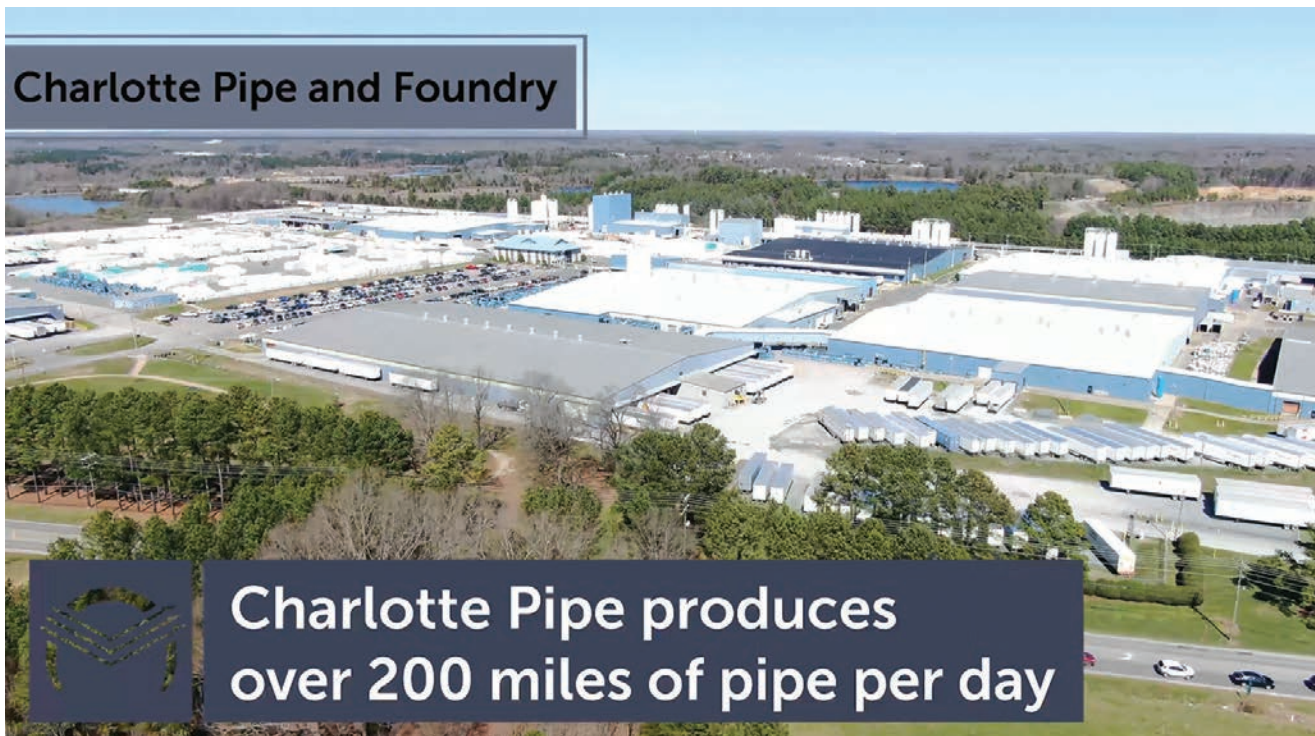
union county
EDGE
economic development
growth enterprise

UNION COUNTY
EDGEcast
an economic development podcast
for Union County, North Carolina



Chris Platé
executive director

Evan Mozingo
new projects manager



Charlotte Pipe and Foundry

Charlotte Pipe produces over 200 miles of pipe per day

traffic has more than doubled.

Another strategy in the works is a new podcast. The podcast, to be named the “Union County EDGEcast” is entitled for the Union County Economic Development Growth Enterprise (or Union County EDGE), a 501c3 nonprofit organization that supports its production. The podcast will act as an interview between Executive Director Chris Platé and an outside ally who works directly with the economic development world. This might include general contractors, real estate brokers, developers and site selectors. Platé hopes to spark worthwhile conversations about what goes on in all parts of economic development and how the local players can work together to improve and enhance the recruitment process.

“Our regional allies are vital to our success as an organization and a community. We rely on them for so many aspects of the economic development process. I am excited to share with our audience their importance in making Union County a preferred location for manufacturing in the region,” says Platé.

The “EDGEcast” podcast is set to begin in June, while the “REDI Report,” “Fast Friday Facts” and Union County Tuesday Trivia are all readily available across all social media platforms.



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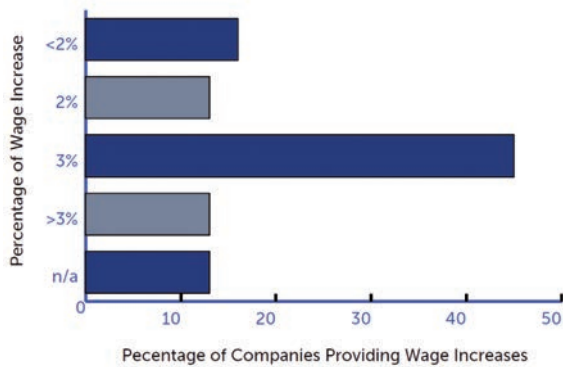
Union County manufacturing wage study demonstrates competitive labor market

**UNION COUNTY
LABORFORCE**
125,003

\$921m
annual manufacturing
wages in Union County

While the true impact of the Covid-19 shutdown will have on wages going forward, Union County's wages prior to the pandemic showed steady or rising wages among Union County's manufacturers. The results of the survey reinforce the perception of manufacturing as a desirable workplace, stable for a long career and positively impacting the County's economy.

Wage Increases (%)



The Monroe-Union County Economic Development's fifth annual wage survey conducted in the fall of 2019 reveals that the average hourly workforce wage rate is \$21.32, nearly identical to the average wage found in the 2018 survey. The average hourly wage is calculated by using a weighted average of skilled and unskilled wage earners among participating companies in Union County.

"That's an indication of the demand for employees within our labor market," says Ron Mahle, Assistant Director of Economic Development for Monroe-Union County Economic Development. "We are encouraged when we see a strong and steady wage rate because those dollars are going directly in Union County residents' pockets. These monies then multiply in the local economy when residents purchase goods and services — from haircuts and meals to cars and appliances."

The annual wage survey is a combined effort between the staff of the Monroe-Union County Economic Development office and local industry. Existing companies confidentially provide data about wages, benefits, employee training needs, employee turnover and other data to provide a snapshot of labor trends that is specific to the local community.

"It provides our Union County industries specific job-type wage information for just Union County," Mahle says. "There are several sources from which you can obtain data, but those sources are regional or national and less accurate for the micro economy. But we believe, with our percentage of respondents including many of the major manufacturing employers in the county, the quality of the data is very strong and very instructive for the companies. It even dives in deeper to include specific wage rates by job type. There are few resources available with that kind of in-depth data."

The survey asks companies to provide wage information by job classification, creating an accurate look at the going rate for a skilled machinist or welder.

"A company can look at the data to see how they compare with the average for job classification in the county," Mahle says. "This helps them go to their corporate headquarters and justify the need to raise the entry-level wage or the wage rate on some of the higher-skilled positions."

Approximately 15,000 people are employed in manufacturing in Union County, which is about 22% of the county's jobs. The majority of those manufacturing jobs are in the City of Monroe. The average non-executive salary is \$61,469, and the average entry-level pay rate is \$13.68. Employees earning the highest wages are in operations management, warehouse management, manufacturing engineering, and buyers and purchasing agents.

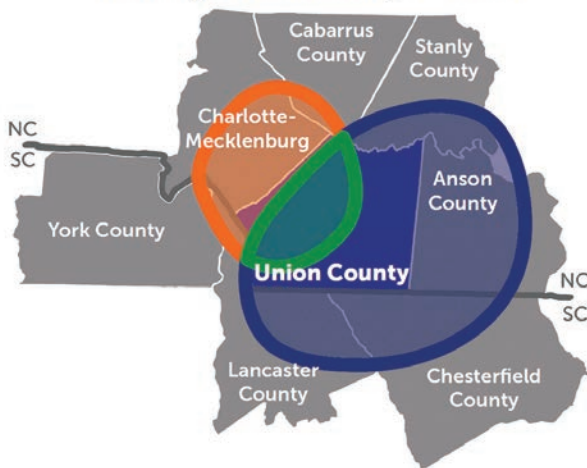
Along with salaries, the survey shows Union County employees are offering generous benefits to attract and retain employees. A full 87% of Union County's manufacturers

offer benefits including 401K and health insurance. More than 80% offer life insurance, dental benefits and vision insurance. Approximately 60% offer wellness benefits.

Mahle says Union County has seen strong wage growth over the past two decades, a result of targeting and successfully recruiting advanced manufacturing to the community bringing higher paying wages for more skilled workers.

Monroe Union County Economic Development is in the early stages of their 2020-2021 wage survey.

Labor Pool of Manufacturing Workforce (Salary and Hourly Pools)



- Salary Pool (\$61,469 - average non-executive salary)
- Hourly Pool (\$13.68- average entry level pay rate)
- Overlap Area

