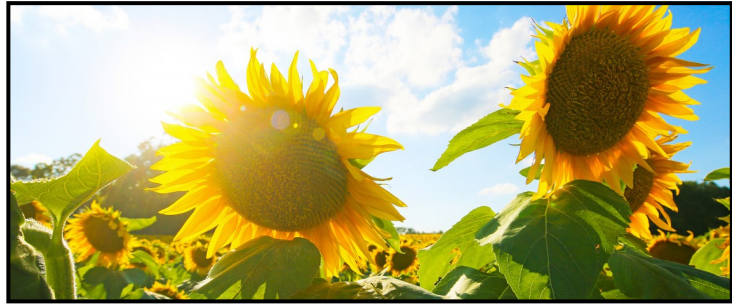




# 2019: The State of Chatham County Report



## New Beginnings: The Future Starts Now



*The MOSAIC is underway in Pittsboro. The development is expected to be the epicenter of Chatham Park.*

**Out of North Carolina's 100 counties, Chatham County is the 4th fastest-growing county at 2.7% behind Brunswick (4.6%), Johnston (3.2%), and Currituck (2.9%).**

*U.S. Census Bureau*

In 2019, the state of Chatham County is strong, resilient and progressive. While the County continues to grow at a rapid pace, it also maintains focus on preserving the rich history and celebrating the diversity that make the community so unique. Chatham County's culture values innovation, hard work and people of all backgrounds making it an ideal place for families and businesses to flourish. The County continuously looks to cultivate competitive employment opportunities and add revenue so people can live and prosper for generations to come.

Chatham County is making great strides through collaboration across its departments and programs. Implementation activities related to the Chatham Comprehensive Plan are well underway countywide. The plan, which focuses on the next 25 years, launched immediate short-term efforts as well as long-term planning initiatives around specific functional areas. As Chatham County embraces new beginnings through the Comp Plan, here is a look back at its many accomplishments – while staying focused on successes of the future. Together, Chatham County will continue to make a difference.

### Chatham Comprehensive Plan Activities Underway

- ◆ The **Chatham County Planning Department** is moving forward with a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) in collaboration with CodeWright Planners LLC. This effort seeks to modernize the county's land development regulations to address issues and recommendations identified in the Chatham Comprehensive Plan while also combining all of the existing land use and development regulations into a single document.
- ◆ **Chatham County Parks & Recreation** completed its Comprehensive Master Plan for parks, recreation programs and trails. Parks & Recreation also initiated specific Park Master Plans for Earl Thompson Park and Southwest Park.
- ◆ **Chatham County Public Utilities** partnered with the towns of Siler City, Pittsboro and Goldston to begin a Countywide Water and Wastewater Comprehensive Master Plan. It was completed in the summer of 2019.



# Education Highlights

## Facilities Projects

Chatham County made significant progress on major school facility projects in FY 2018-19 in the county's Capital Improvement Plan. The County retained its AAA rating from Standard and Poor's and Aa1 bond rating from Moody's Investors Service.

- ◆ Construction work continues at Seaforth High which remains on track to open for the 2021-22 school year.
- ◆ Construction is moving swiftly at the Chatham Health Sciences Center and is expected to be complete in late 2019. Health sciences programming should start January 2020 – specifically Medical Assisting Technologies and Certified Nursing Assistant training.
- ◆ Chatham Grove Elementary School is under construction and is expected to open to students in the fall of 2020. Chatham Grove will be Chatham County's 17<sup>th</sup> school.



*Chatham Grove Elementary School, Pittsboro*

## Chatham County Schools Achievements & Improvements

### Boosting Security

- ◆ Chatham County Schools added four additional School Resource Officers.
- ◆ Safety improvements also included modernizing a number of older classroom doors for stronger ones with smaller windows.
- ◆ Continued regular meetings and planning work with local law enforcement and emergency response agencies have strengthened local partnerships and crisis response planning.
- ◆ Every school in the district received additional door security systems that build upon existing campus access controls further reinforcing campus security.



### Addressing Mental Health

- ◆ Students in grades K-5 will have a research-based curriculum to support social emotional needs.
- ◆ The district added a new social worker and behavior position to increase the level of support for students with mental health needs.
- ◆ The district purchased an at-risk screener for grades K-5 that will help to identify students who are at-risk for mental health and behavioral needs so interventions and supports can be implemented early.
- ◆ A comprehensive anti-bullying curriculum was established in addition to a number of anti-bullying programs and events.

### Technology Upgrades

- ◆ Chatham County Schools secured \$3.7 million dollars in federal and state eRate funding to build 88 miles of fiber optic connectivity between school campuses.
- ◆ The district is also participating in the \$1 Million Project Foundation's cellular hotspot program which provides completely free devices and cellular data to interested high school students beginning in the fall of 2019.

### Chatham County Promise

The Chatham County Board of Commissioners approved Chatham County Promise in December 2018, and the program currently supports more than 160 Chatham County students. All eligible Chatham County residents who graduate from a public high school, private school, or homeschool for the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 will be guaranteed up to two years of free in-state tuition and required fees at Central Carolina Community College.

# Economic Development

## New Jobs & Business Investment

	FY 2017 Actual	FY 2018 Actual	FY 2019 Estimated
Jobs created through expanding existing businesses	58	100	48
Jobs created by new businesses	60	400	87
Jobs created by entrepreneurs and startup businesses	82	50	26
Capital investment by expansion of existing businesses	\$9.68 million	\$10 million	\$24 million
Capital investment by new businesses	\$10.5 million	\$50 million	\$13.5 million



*On the job at Floorazzo, Siler City*

### Entrepreneurship Opportunities

- ◆ Hosted an educational event for entrepreneurs with the Small Business Administration and Chapel Hill SCORE.
- ◆ Participated in 56 pre-application meetings with Chatham County, pre-development meetings with Siler City or scoping/planning meetings with Pittsboro.
- ◆ Three Chatham Loan Fund requests were made and two approved (Central Piedmont Community Action and The Country Bakeress). Two additional businesses are engaged at the time of this report.

### More Details:

#### Growth in Jobs

- ◆ Wilson Brothers Trucking in Bear Creek announced a \$4 million investment and 25 new jobs.
- ◆ Southern Veneer purchased Boise Cascade and is investing \$8 million in the Moncure facility.
- ◆ Brookwood Farms received the 2018 Manufacturing Leadership Award for developing markets from the NC Manufacturing Extension Partnership. The company also plans to expand.
- ◆ Starrlight Mead expanded to a new, larger location in Pittsboro.
- ◆ Floorazzo will expand to a new location in Siler City with plans to create 8 new jobs.

#### Recruiting Businesses

- ◆ Continued working with property owners at Moncure Megasite and Chatham-Siler City Advanced Manufacturing Site on site readiness. The EDC continues to engage with the Carolina Core initiative to promote both sites to leading site consultants across the country.
- ◆ A.D. Tubi USA, an Italian welding company, announced 18 new jobs and \$6 million investment in Siler City. The company was approved for a \$235,000 building reuse grant.
- ◆ Capital Ready Mix Concrete announced a \$5 million investment and 60 jobs in Pittsboro, re-using a former poultry industry building.
- ◆ EG-GILERO will create 60 jobs and invest more than \$4.5 million in an industrial building in Pittsboro. The EDC is working with the company and the Town on a \$300,000 building reuse grant.

# Chatham County Leadership

## Major Changes



**County Manager – Dan LaMontagne, PE**, was appointed as county manager in March 2019 after serving in the interim role since October 2018. LaMontagne previously served as assistant county manager from December 2015 to October 2018. He also served Chatham County in leadership roles with the Public Works, Environmental Quality and Solid Waste Departments.

**Assistant County Manager – Bryan Thompson** became assistant county manager in July 2019. Thompson previously served as town manager for the North Carolina communities of Mount Gilead (2006-2008), Erwin (2008-2013) and Siler City (2013-2019).



**Environmental Quality – Kevin Lindley, PE**, became director of Environmental Quality in October 2018. Lindley came to Chatham County after serving with Orange County for 16 years in various civil engineering roles, including sewer collection, reservoir management, solid waste and landfill oversight.

**Chatham Soil & Water Conservation** – In 2018, Soil Conservation Specialist **Susannah Goldston** was promoted to department head/environmental specialist after the retirement of Henry Outz. Since 2013, Goldston had served as the soil conservationist for the Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District.

**Central Permitting & Inspections – David Camp** became director of Permits & Inspections in February 2019. Camp previously was permit supervisor for 10 years with the Town of Cary's Inspections & Permitting Department. He also owned and managed a consulting company for 20 years that assisted commercial developers and owners with local government approvals for development.

**Economic Development Corporation** – The Economic Development Corporation board appointed **Alyssa Byrd** as president in February 2019. Byrd joined the EDC in 2011 and has assumed roles of increasing responsibility since. Byrd enrolled in Oklahoma University's Economic Development Institute and is pursuing credits towards a Certified Economic Developer designation.

## Chatham County Leadership Academy: Developing Strong Leaders Within

Chatham County honored 34 graduates of its Leadership Academy Class of 2019. This is the largest graduating class in the program's 17-year history. Since its inception in 2002, the leadership development program has produced 322 graduates. The Leadership Academy was developed to help employees gain the skills necessary to effectively manage their jobs while preparing them for expanded responsibilities. It is the only such program in the state where all classes are taught by county employees, many of whom are graduates of the academy. In recent years, employees of the towns and nonprofit partners have also enrolled and graduated.

In Spring 2019, the County launched the *Tier 3 to 1: County 2 County Leadership Initiative*. This program will bring leadership academy course content to our Tier 1 partner counties in Martin, Washington and Bertie.



## Spotlight: Taking Action to Protect the Climate

***Addressing climate change is a top priority in Chatham County, and proactive measures are an important part.***

The Board of Commissioners implemented a sustainable facilities policy, which states that all new County buildings should be designed to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver standards. Newer buildings have been built with heating and cooling systems that are controlled and monitored remotely by a third party contractor to maintain their efficient operation. County facilities staff evaluates on a regular basis the energy usage of all County buildings, looking for ways to reduce energy usage. As building systems are repaired and replaced, new and more efficient systems are installed. In addition to energy conservation, the County has worked on water efficiency as well. All newer buildings have water efficient fixtures that limit the flow rate. Many facilities have tankless hot water systems to provide as-needed hot water. This reduces water waste and only uses electricity when needed.



In January 2019, Chatham County received a Gold designation from the SolSmart program. This program recognizes local governments that are friendly to solar development and have made focused efforts to simplify the process of installing solar panels. The Gold level designation is the highest the program offers. The County is receiving proposals to have solar panels installed on several of its buildings. This project could begin as early as summer 2020.

**Chatham County ranks 37 of the 100 counties in North Carolina for solar energy generation. In addition, Chatham County's per capita solar energy generation is greater than any other county directly adjacent to Chatham County, with exception to Lee County.**  
North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association

### **Solid Waste & Recycling**

Chatham County Solid Waste & Recycling developed an educator's guide for solid waste and recycling. "Don't Waste It" has lesson plans covering many aspects of solid waste, waste reduction, composting and recycling. This guide is being introduced to Chatham County educators throughout the school year and will be available for any educator who is interested.

Chatham County Solid Waste & Recycling secured a grant for Parks and Recreation to purchase outdoor recycling containers for all county parks.



To promote electric vehicles, Chatham County currently owns a Nissan Leaf electric vehicle and is investigating grants to fund installation of charging stations within the county.

### **Soil & Water Conservation**

Chatham Soil & Water Conservation District staff assisted agricultural operations affected by Hurricanes Florence and Michael. Assistance was provided to farmers making claims of crop losses to the NC Department of Agriculture. Agricultural operations in Chatham County have so far received \$380,795.60 in crop loss recovery assistance.

## Big News Leads to Big Impacts in Chatham County



### Visitor Impact

- ◆ Domestic visitors to and within Chatham County spent \$36.9 million in 2018, an increase of 5.4% from 2017.
- ◆ Nine-year trend of consecutive increases in tourism economic impact
- ◆ Two years of double-digit growth
- ◆ Total payroll generated by the tourism industry in Chatham County was \$4.74 million, a 5% increase from 2017.



### Emergency Management

During the 2018 hurricane season Chatham County activated its Emergency Operations Plan in response to Hurricane Florence in September and Hurricane Michael in October. Response and recovery efforts were coordinated from the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which includes representatives from several County departments and partner agencies.

- ◆ The response to Hurricane Florence included sheltering 124 residents and 9 pets, water rescues, staffing the EOC Call Center by Chatham CERT, road closures, flood and damage assessments and other activities.
- ◆ During Florence, Chatham County and other local agencies deployed personnel and equipment through the Statewide Mutual Aid program to Brunswick, Carteret, Moore, New Hanover, Scotland and Wake Counties to support their response efforts.
- ◆ Chatham County was included in Federal disaster declarations for Hurricanes Florence and Michael, providing for Public Assistance (recovery assistance to local governments) and in the case of Hurricane Florence, Individual Assistance (recovery assistance for residents).

### Chatham County CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)

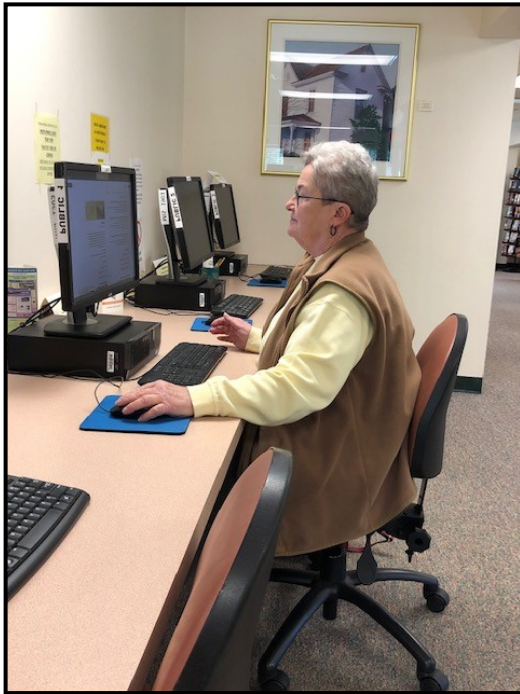
continues to prepare residents, neighborhoods and community groups for emergencies and disasters. During 2018-19 Chatham CERT was the fastest growing CERT organization in North Carolina, with more than 200 on its mailing list, and 36 that have received additional training to support Emergency Management. Classes were held on Hurricane Preparedness, Search & Rescue Support, County Points of Distribution, Law Enforcement Support, FEMA Integration Teams, Emergency Communications and Stop-the-Bleed certification course.

### Sheriff's Office

In June 2019, Chatham County Animal Services transitioned from the Chatham County Health Department to the Chatham County Sheriff's Office. Under the leadership of Kimberly Harman, several key staff were added. Positive impacts include increased contact with the community, improved education and awareness campaigns, enhanced focus on prevention and volunteer efforts, and evaluation of ways to improve after-hours response for animal service needs.



## Highlights from Departments, Offices & Programs



### Libraries

- ◆ Chatham County Libraries provided 846 programs to the community with 15,293 attendees.
- ◆ The Libraries also provided 234 Early Literacy programs, serving 6,357 children ages 0-5.
- ◆ Chatham Community Library offered 32 classes on a wide variety of technology topics; 239 participants learned how to use a computer and navigate the internet, use Microsoft programs such as Word and Excel, collaborate using Google Apps and download free library eBooks through OverDrive.
- ◆ Digital literacy classes help provide community members with the skills they need to apply for jobs, conduct research, and communicate with others in our increasingly wired world.

### Planning

The Chatham County Planning Department is in the process of rezoning properties following a decision by the Board of Commissioners in the fall of 2016 to extend zoning to areas of the county that did not have zoning regulations in place. In June 2018 the first 49 business properties were rezoned, followed by an additional 12 properties in January 2019. The last round of rezoning cases began in the fall of 2019.

### Elections

- ◆ The Chatham County Board of Elections had the highest voter turnout in North Carolina for the midterm general election in November 2018 with a 66.76 % turnout. Out of 54,199 registered voters, 36,182 individuals voted.
- ◆ In February 2019, the Board of Elections increased its staff by hiring a much needed full time Election Specialist Chance Mashburn.
- ◆ The Board of Elections held Poll Worker Recruitment sessions in June 2019, to increase the number of qualified citizens to work on Election Day and at the Early Voting sites in the county. Sixty four people were recruited to serve as Poll Workers for future elections in Chatham County.



### Tax Office

- ◆ The Chatham County Tax Office collected 99.01% of 2018 property taxes.
- ◆ In preparation for the 2021 revaluation that takes effect January 1, 2021, appraisers are visiting all properties within the county. Appraisers are taking measurements and photographing improvements.

### Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Chatham County's geographic information systems (GIS) data portal now features a new application that allows users to see important conservation-related locations as features on county GIS maps. The tool assists several county departments and also helps county advisory boards, developers, property owners, and any groups involved with conservation.

## More Highlights from Departments, Offices & Programs

### Health Department

- ◆ The Chatham Health Alliance, in partnership with the Chatham County Public Health Department and Chatham Hospital, released the 2018 Chatham County Community Assessment in March 2019.
- ◆ The innovative assessment includes a survey from a representative sample of residents, which will continue to provide input in the years to come.
- ◆ Nearly 100 community members and professionals came together in late 2018 to review the data and select three Health Impact Priorities based on the findings: Access to Comprehensive Health Services, Poverty and Obesity.
- ◆ The Chatham Health Alliance has formed subcommittees to develop collaborative strategies to address each priority.
- ◆ The Chatham Health Alliance received three additional years of funding from The Duke Endowment's Healthy People Healthy Carolinas initiative.
- ◆ The grant, which totals \$450,000, supports Alliance development and efforts focused on physical activity and nutrition.
- ◆ It also funds the Alliance Coordinator position, which was filled by Julie Wilkerson in October 2018.



### Department of Social Services

- ◆ 1,700 residents received Disaster Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits totaling \$640,000 after Hurricane Florence. The Disaster SNAP program provides food assistance for residents who are not current recipients of SNAP program and have lost food or suffered storm damage after a natural disaster.
- ◆ More than 450 children and 85 adults in need were sponsored by more than 200 individual and group donors through the Christmas Wishes and Dreams Programs at the Chatham County Department of Social Services.

### Court Programs

#### *Family Violence & Prevention Programs*

- ◆ Chatham County Family Violence and Prevention Services developed a 24/7 crisis hotline to serve survivors in the community.
- ◆ Developed a Hispanic Support Group to serve survivors in Siler City in collaboration with the Siler City Police Department.
- ◆ Increased funding by 50% with a Governor's Crime Commission expansion.

#### *Child Victim Services*

- ◆ Taught all kindergarten classes the abuse prevention program (more than 600 students).
- ◆ Compiled data on 4<sup>th</sup> grade program (taught and tested about 675 students).

#### *Family Visitation Services*

- ◆ The longest continually operating visitation program in NC, and one of just three in the country that have had more than five federal awards.
- ◆ The only program in the state that has all direct service staff that are bilingual, and the only program that does not charge fees.



## More Highlights from Departments, Offices & Programs

### Parks & Recreation

- ◆ Installed shelter and playground equipment at The Park at Briar Chapel
- ◆ Added 3 new instructional programs – Art Class, Jump Rope and Fitness Class



### Affordable Housing

- ◆ The reimbursement fee policy was updated to include rental housing.
- ◆ Hosted a landlord forum and fair housing training
- ◆ Developed the scoring criteria and application process for the Housing Trust Fund
- ◆ The Housing Trust Fund provided support to several initiatives including:
  - ◇ \$120,000 low-interest loans for the development of 44 affordable housing units at the historic Henry Siler School
  - ◇ \$48,400 in reimbursement for the Henry Siler School development
  - ◇ \$9,000 on a critical assessment of fair housing needs in the county
  - ◇ \$13,000 for emergency hotel stays for homeless individuals and families
- ◆ Provided staff support to developers and collaborated with Town of Pittsboro officials and stakeholders for their Low-Income Housing Tax Credit application submission in May 2019 (The project was selected for award in August 2019).



### Cooperative Extension

- ◆ \$94,660 secured in grants, donations, sponsorships, etc. to support programming
- ◆ 35,183 face-to-face contacts
- ◆ 657,814 non face-to-face contacts
- ◆ 190 non-degree credit classes offered
- ◆ 1,561 volunteers gave 6,820 hours valued at \$168,386
- ◆ Chatham County is now home to nine 4-H community clubs, with subject matter related to livestock, equine, shooting sports, S.T.E.M., sewing and homeschool education.

### Council on Aging

Participation in Senior Games/SilverArts increased by 28% over the previous year, ranking Chatham County 2<sup>nd</sup> among the state's 52 local/regional games in percentage growth between 2016-2019.

The Council's volunteer corps assisted 46 senior households with installation of grab bars, ramps, and other important minor home repair and modification projects to help seniors remain living safely at home. They also assisted with other substantial work undertaken by Rebuilding Together of the Triangle.

The Council continued to have success in helping family caregivers keep their loved ones at home. Of the 26 families receiving caregiver respite from the Council during the year, only 3 care recipients faced placement in a long-term care facility.



## Chatham County Awards & Honors

The **Chatham County Public Health Department** received a Local Health Department Recognition Award from the North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation for its efforts to increase immunization rates among young children at the 2018 North Carolina Public Health Association Fall Educational Conference. The award specifically recognized the work of Marsha Andrews, Immunization Tracking Coordinator, and Dorothy Rawleigh, Childcare Health Consultant, and highlighted that Chatham consistently ranks at the top of the state for vaccination rates among young children.

**Chatham County Schools** was recognized by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) for demonstrating outstanding distinction for the district's efforts to provide music education and access to all students. Chatham Central High School was selected by the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) organization as an elite national demonstration site for their efforts to integrate AVID strategies throughout the school.



The **Chatham County Board of Education** received a national first place Magna Award from the North Carolina School Boards Association for their continued leadership supporting Dual Language programming for students.

Niche.com ranked **Central Carolina Community College** as the best North Carolina community college.



For the sixth straight year, **Chatham County** received several top awards from the NC Department of Labor for outstanding safety practices and exceeded the previous year's result. For 2018, Chatham County received 10 Gold Awards and two Silver Awards.

The **Chatham County Finance Department** received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA). This is the 28<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the County received this national recognition.

The **Chatham County Watershed Protection Department** received a statewide award for Best Local Program for Erosion Control (Small Program). Chatham County erosion control staff were noted for their adaptation to rapid growth, their frequent inspections, their enforcement initiatives and an easy-to-navigate website.

The **Chatham County Cooperative Extension** is the 2018 Recipient of the NC Cooperative Extension County Government Partnership Award by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) for outstanding "best practices" partnership between Extension and local government.

The **Chatham County Council on Aging** and **Chatham County** received the Ernest B. Messer Award from the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services in February 2019. This prestigious annual award, named in honor of this former state representative and assistant secretary for aging, recognizes a community that has excelled in addressing the needs of its older citizens.

The Western Center of the **Chatham County Council on Aging** earned re-designation as a "Center of Excellence" from the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services.