



TOWN OF HARRISBURG

2024 Strategic Economic Development Plan

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Executive Summary

ABOUT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Successful economic development is paramount for the long-term sustainability of any dynamic community. Despite common misconceptions, economic development is more than just attracting new investment and new businesses. At its core, it is about supporting existing businesses and cultivating an environment where local businesses can thrive. When your existing business base is supported, it will prosper, grow, and create family-sustaining jobs for residents. When aspiring entrepreneurs feel supported, they're more likely to invest and take the necessary risks to start and grow a business.

High-performing local governments, those committed to local economic development, understand how to provide appropriate resources and services to support local businesses. They facilitate a vibrant economy by investing in infrastructure and providing core services that improve the lives of everyday citizens. They collaborate and coordinate with local and regional partners to ensure that the business community has access to programming, resources, tools, and talent.

Local government must play a role in creating a favorable local economic climate. The private sector, including developers, investors, and business owners, often must collaborate with local, state, and federal agencies. Efficient zoning approvals, streamlined permitting processes, modern infrastructure, safe communities, and customer service-focused government actors enhance the local climate for job creators.

Ultimately, the goal of local economic development should be to facilitate a robust and diverse tax base. A diversified local economy is more resilient in times of uncertainty. A community is at risk if its tax base is overly reliant on one employer or sector. As such, local economic development leaders must diversify their business base by attracting new businesses, supporting existing businesses, and cultivating new entrepreneurs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Harrisburg is growing. The Town of Harrisburg has great potential to become a healthy, robust, equitable, and prosperous local economy. It is one of the fastest-growing communities in North Carolina, and some growth models estimate that the town will reach a population of approximately 30,000 by 2030.

Residents in Harrisburg are highly educated. The high level of educational achievement in Harrisburg and Cabarrus County surpasses that of the rest of North Carolina. A deep talent pool is attractive to existing and potential businesses and investors.

Harrisburg has exceptional access to transportation routes. Harrisburg's proximity to major highways and interstates enables access to regional markets, enhancing opportunities for growth and expansion. This is a key determinant for corporate site selection decision-makers.

The town has limited employment opportunities for residents. Most of the resident workforce travels 30 minutes or more to work in locations outside of Harrisburg.

Harrisburg lacks business development support and the capacity to appropriately address its economic development needs. Informed by the discovery phase of the planning process, there is a perception that an increase in resources, funding, and capacity would better support Harrisburg's economic development efforts.

The town lacks meaningful partnerships with other economic development organizations. The stakeholder engagement findings suggest that Harrisburg would benefit from increased collaboration and coordination with regional and state economic development partners.

Because no formal outreach program exists within the town, many businesses may not be aware of the available resources. Stakeholders have identified gaps in services needed to support the existing business base.

Residents and stakeholders wish to maintain and improve Harrisburg's high quality of life and 'small-town charm.' Stakeholders expressed interest in increasing local entertainment options, retail and shopping amenities, and walkability, particularly in the Town Center. Housing studies, long-term planning initiatives, and infrastructure planning will be helpful in determining the next steps needed to meet those goals.

ABBREVIATED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

TOP PRIORITY STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategy 1:
Invest in Economic Development

Strategy 2:
Focus on Coordination and Collaboration

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA FRAMEWORK

Strategic Focus Area 1: Business Retention and Expansion

Strategy 1.1: Invest resources to support a formal Business Retention and Expansion Outreach (BRE) program.

Strategy 1.2: Consistently analyze and evaluate the business climate in Harrisburg, periodically updating and revising service provision, programmatic offerings, and resources as appropriate.

Strategy 1.3: Incorporate economic resiliency best practices to ensure the Harrisburg business community is prepared to withstand economic disruptions.

Strategic Focus Area 2: Economic Development Marketing and Attraction

Strategy 2.1: Invest resources to develop an economic development marketing and business attraction campaign.

Strategy 2.2: Take intentional steps to ensure Harrisburg has an inventory of suitable facilities and development-ready land to attract new investment.

Strategic Focus Area 3: Entrepreneurial Support and Small Business Development

Strategy 3.1: Formalize a small business support ecosystem in Harrisburg.

Strategy 3.2: Take intentional steps to create more awareness about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial support services in Harrisburg.

Strategic Focus Area 4: Quality of Life and Livability

Strategy 4.1: Incorporate economic development priorities into long-range planning initiatives.

Strategy 4.2: Explore ways to activate space along the Town Center, creating demand for additional retail and commercial amenities.

Introduction

“The Town of Harrisburg is a family-oriented community dedicated to providing quality amenities, increasing connectivity, and supporting the thriving local business environment.”

HARRISBURG, NORTH CAROLINA

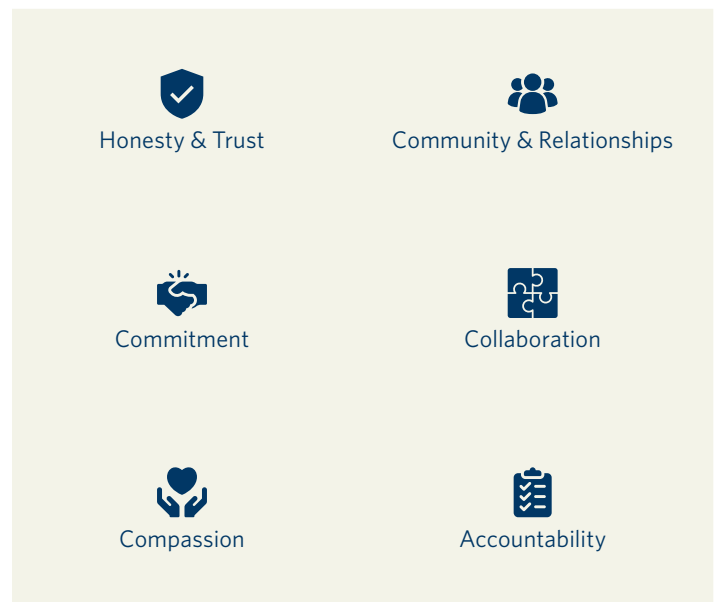
The Town of Harrisburg, North Carolina, was incorporated in 1973 in Cabarrus County, immediately adjacent to Mecklenburg County and within the Charlotte metropolitan region. With a population of approximately 21,000 residents, Harrisburg is one of the fastest-growing communities in North Carolina. Located near the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and the Charlotte Motor Speedway (CMS), Harrisburg is only thirty minutes from Uptown Charlotte. Harrisburg is within five miles of I-485, which connects to I-85 and I-77. In recent years, the area has been attracting primarily residential development. Still, with the completion of I-485, it is becoming increasingly attractive as a destination for commercial and industrial growth and development.







In 2015, Harrisburg was listed as one of the top fifty best places to live in the United States by Money Magazine. Living in Harrisburg, North Carolina, offers a harmonious blend of small-town charm and urban convenience, with one of its notable advantages being its proximity to Charlotte and Concord. Residents enjoy the best of both worlds – the tranquility of suburban life in Harrisburg and easy access to Charlotte and Concord’s vibrant cultural, economic, and entertainment offerings. This valuable location also allows for quick and convenient access to world-class amenities, including an international airport, Interstate 85 and 485, professional sports, cultural events, and a thriving culinary scene, making Harrisburg an ideal choice for those seeking a balanced and enriching lifestyle. In 2023, the Town of Harrisburg celebrated its fiftieth year. Positioned between two of the fastest-growing cities in the country, Charlotte and Concord, Harrisburg has access to higher education institutions, major regional employers, and well-known tourist destinations in the Charlotte region.

Town of Harrisburg Mission

“Together, we enhance our quality of life by collaborating, planning, and investing to create our community of choice.”

Town of Harrisburg Values



 Honesty & Trust	 Community & Relationships
 Commitment	 Collaboration
 Compassion	 Accountability

As the Town of Harrisburg commemorates its fiftieth anniversary, the community is excited to present the 2024 Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP) that will guide economic development efforts for the next five years.

Project Scope

In March 2023, the Town of Harrisburg released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) soliciting the services of a professional consulting firm to complete a Strategic Economic Development Plan. The project aimed to explore existing economic conditions, create an updated SEDP, and outline implementation steps for the next one to five years. TPMA was selected to facilitate the creation of the SEDP in July 2023.

Process & Methodology

TPMA utilized an integrative methodology to develop the town's SEDP. The project comprised four interconnected activities: analysis, engagement, alignment, and action.

The analysis phase of the project involved an extensive and comprehensive review of historical and current planning documents from local, regional, and state resources and a quantitative data scan and analysis. The data scan was used to complete a summary of current economic conditions.

Various stakeholder engagement interviews and in-person focus groups were conducted, ensuring a diverse range of voices were heard. This inclusive approach allowed a broad cross-section of community leaders to contribute to creating the new economic development goals and strategic focus areas presented in this plan. Furthermore, a public survey and public open house were organized, providing opportunities for residents, businesses, and workers to express their views on the identified priorities and proposed strategies.

Lastly, informed by the results of the analysis and alignment phases of the planning process, the project team developed a strategic framework and corresponding tactics for Harrisburg to consider in the short, medium, and long term to achieve a shared vision for Harrisburg's economic future.

Defining a 'Strategic Economic Development Plan'

According to the International Economic Development Council, economic development is defined as "programs, policies, and activities that seek to improve the well-being and quality of life for a community by creating and retaining jobs and providing a stable tax base." More succinctly, "economic development is a revenue strategy for a community, generating additional tax dollars from new business investment." However, one person or entity cannot do this alone. Local economic development practitioners must act as community leaders and collaborate with key stakeholders, including elected officials, workforce development organizations, higher education entities, other civic and community leaders, and the private sector. They must identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the economic ecosystem. Once identified, economic developers and stakeholders can implement strategies to support strengths and opportunities while mitigating weaknesses and threats through the strategic planning process.

An economic development strategic plan can serve as a galvanizing tool, enabling leaders to leverage resources and identify opportunities for collaboration. For the Town of Harrisburg, a Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP) allows a community to envision the future of economic development and to take the appropriate steps to achieve desired outcomes. SEDPs are critical for a prosperous future, long-term economic viability, and a high quality of life for current and future residents.

The following SEDP, customized specifically for Harrisburg, attempts to answer three main questions:

- **Where are we** (What is our current economic base)?
- **Where do we want to go** (What are the opportunities for economic base expansion, and what can we do to share the benefits of economic growth across the Town)?
- **How do we get there** (What is our implementation plan)?

Following a structure outlined by the International Economic Development Council, TPMA and Harrisburg leadership developed a SEDP that provides:

- A realistic appraisal of available assets, challenges, and opportunities through quantitative and qualitative analyses
- Internal assessment of departmental assets and economic development practices
- A list of high-potential priority industry clusters
- A strategic framework for Harrisburg leaders to consider, including goals, strategies, and tactics.

Summary of Key Findings

The following is a presentation of key data points uncovered during the discovery and research phases of the strategic planning process. For a full overview of quantitative findings, please see Appendix A. For a full review of desktop research and historical planning documents, please see Appendix B.

Demographics

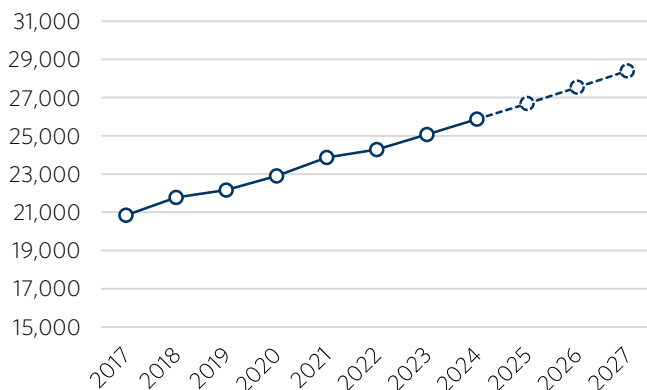
POPULATION

As of 2022, the Town of Harrisburg had an estimated population of 20,653¹. Linear growth models estimate that the town will reach a population of approximately 30,000 by 2030. The Town of Harrisburg has grown at a moderately higher rate than Cabarrus County as a whole, though the trend is forecasted to slow in coming years.

AGE AND SEX

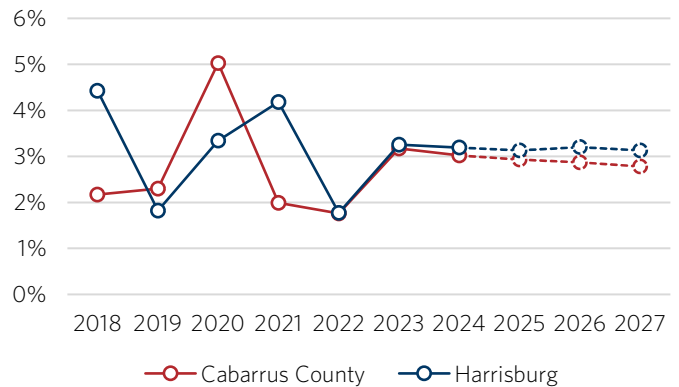
The town of Harrisburg has an ageing population, with disproportionately large populations of people between the ages of 40 and 60. The impacts of an aging population can be found across communities. Housing requirements vary for the aging and elderly, labor shortages appear in industries reliant on an older workforce, and demand for healthcare resources expands, including both labor and facilities. Communities across the country are grappling with this change and how they will adapt to it.

Exhibit 1: Harrisburg Population Projection



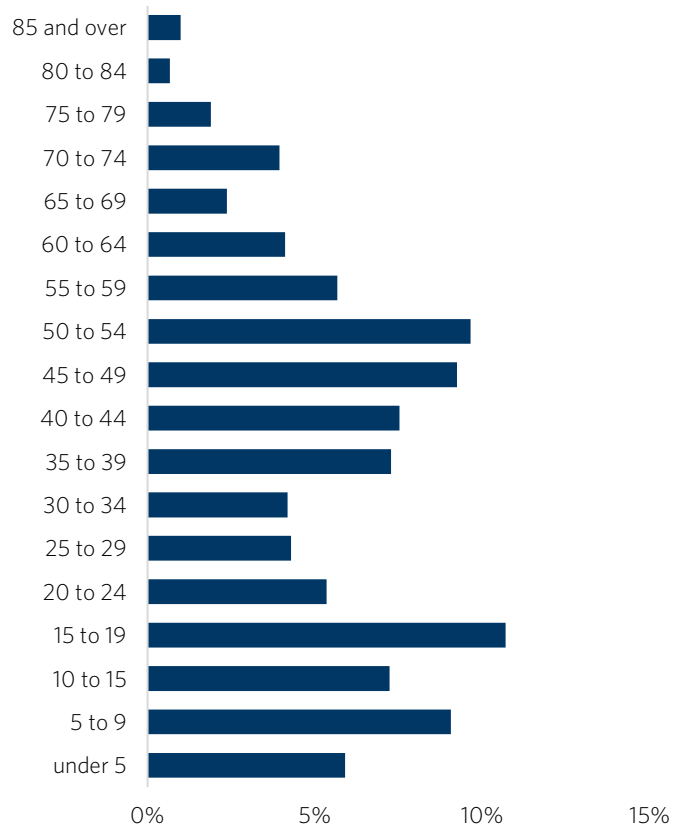
Source: Lightcast Population Projections, 2024

Exhibit 2: Historical and Projected Percent Population Growth Year Over Year 2018-2027



Source: Lightcast Population Projections, 2024

Exhibit 3: Harrisburg Age Distribution, 2022



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

¹ based on actual single-family permits issued, using the U.S. Census person/household multiplier of 3.55 pph

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Harrisburg’s population is approximately 60% white, but the town is slightly more diverse than the county and state. The second and third largest racial demographics are Black and African American (17.6%) and Asian (12.6%) residents.

INCOME AND WAGES

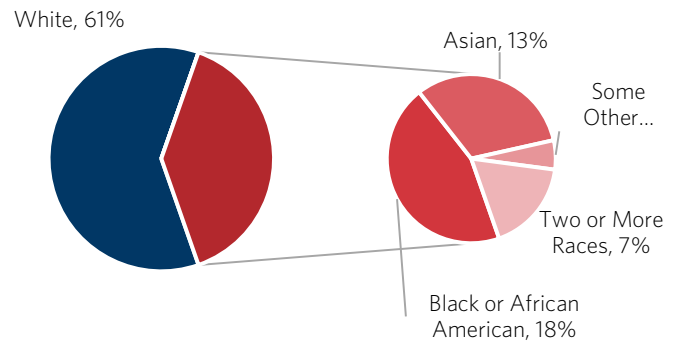
The cost of living in Cabarrus County is approximately 3% lower than the national average²The living wage calculation table demonstrates the hourly wage needed to afford necessities such as housing, groceries, transportation, and childcare. Calculations are based on an annual 2,080 working hours (52 40-hour weeks). In the case of a two-adult household with both adults working, the displayed wage refers to what each adult needs to earn, as opposed to both combined. This data is not meant to be viewed as prescriptive - but rather to demonstrate the income necessary to provide for different household types.

Harrisburg, North Carolina, experienced a consistent increase in income throughout the twelve months of 2022. This rise can be attributed partly to the migration of higher-income individuals from the Northeast but mainly stems from the region’s overall growth.

The median household income in Cabarrus County is \$83,828, and \$134,767 in Harrisburg (more than twice the state median)³. Harrisburg’s income distribution differs significantly from that of the state and county, with nearly 65% of households earning \$100,000 or more and over 20% earning \$200,000 or more. Poverty rates in Harrisburg reflect this, sitting at approximately 3% of the total population, compared with 8% in the county and 13% in the state⁴.

Cabarrus County employs just under 92,000 people, approximately 7,000 of whom are employed in Harrisburg, which makes up 7% of the county’s total employment.

Exhibit 4: Race and Ethnicity



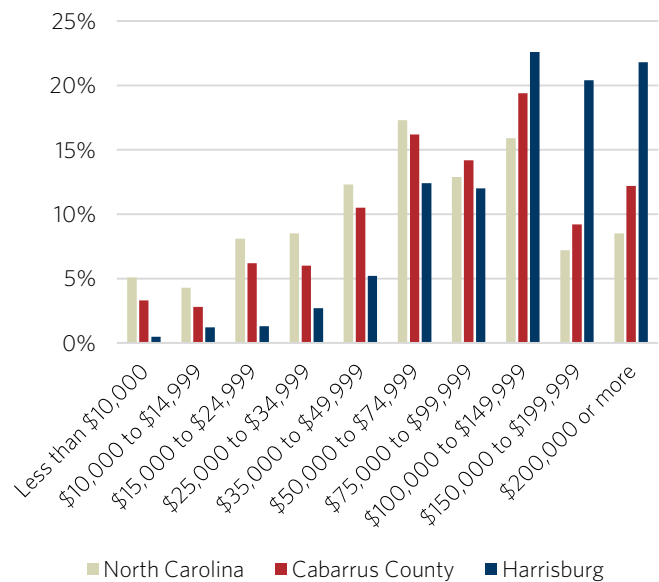
Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

Exhibit 5: Living Wage Calculations for Cabarrus County

	1 Adult	2 Adults (1 Working)	2 Adults (Both Working)
NO CHILDREN	\$18.20	\$28.22	\$14.11
1 CHILD	\$37.05	\$34.68	\$20.47
2 CHILDREN	\$47.93	\$39.66	\$26.08
3 CHILDREN	\$62.95	\$43.96	\$31.36

Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2023

Exhibit 6: Income Distribution in the Past 12 Months; 2022



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

2 Lightcast, 2024
 3 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022
 4 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022

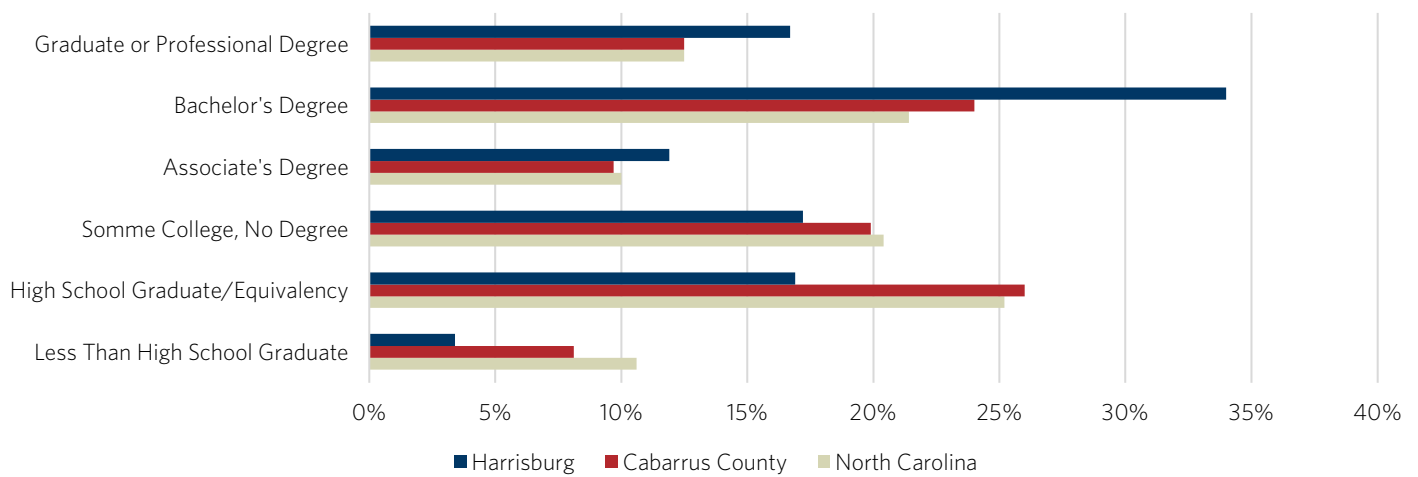
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Residents in Harrisburg are highly educated. Approximately 97% of the population holds a high school diploma or better, and 50% has a bachelor's degree or higher. Harrisburg's high school diploma attainment rate is 7% higher than the state, and the town's bachelor's (or higher) attainment is 17% higher than the state. See the exhibit on educational attainment for further details.

The town is served by the Cabarrus County School District, with two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school within town limits. Rowan-Cabarrus Community College (RCCC) also serves the community, with locations throughout Cabarrus County offering various programs and courses. The University of North Carolina (UNC) Charlotte is also located just 4.5 miles from Harrisburg, serving both the town's residents and the greater Charlotte region.

The high level of educational achievement in Harrisburg and Cabarrus County surpasses that of the rest of North Carolina, resulting in a highly valuable workforce for the Charlotte metro area.

Exhibit 7: Educational Attainment, 2022



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

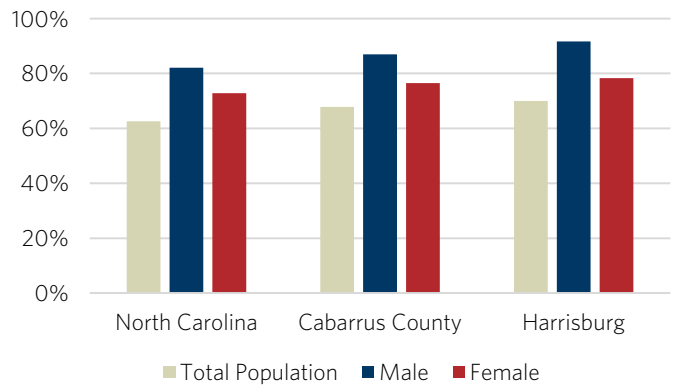
Workforce and Industry

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION TRENDS

Labor Force participation rates in Cabarrus County have consistently been between 4% - 6% higher than the state average, with Harrisburg slightly higher than the county⁵. This remains the case for both men and women, though it is worth noting that the difference between male and female labor force participation is higher in Harrisburg than in the county or state. While the cause for this discrepancy can vary, it is common in wealthier communities where more families can afford for only one parent to work outside the home.

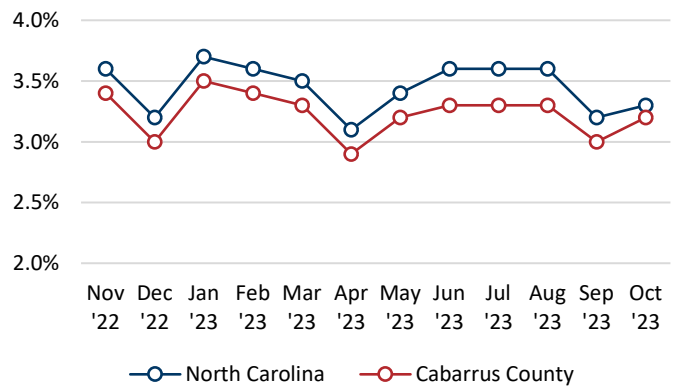
Unemployment in Cabarrus County remained slightly below the state average over the most recently reported 12-month period between November 2022 and October 2023. Unemployment in the county was at a 12-month high in November of 2022 and February of 2023 at 3.4% and reached its lowest point in April of 2023 at 2.9%, averaging 3.3%.

Exhibit 8: Labor Force Participation Rate, Population 16 years and older by sex, 2022



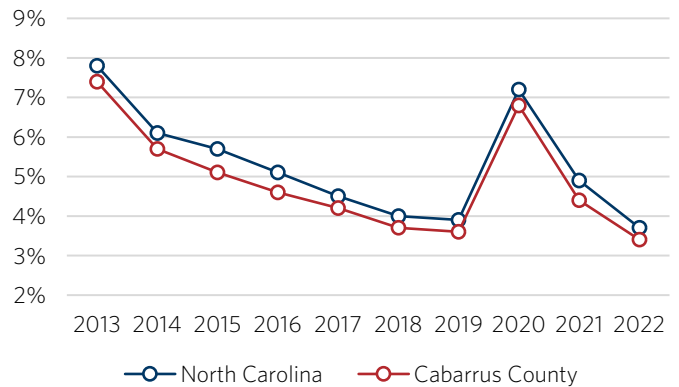
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Exhibit 9: 12-month Unemployment Rate, November 2023-October 2024



Source: NC Department of Commerce LAUS

Exhibit 10: Unemployment Rate Annual Averages, 2013-2022



Source: NC Department of Commerce LAUS

INDUSTRIES AND OCCUPATIONS

The largest industries in Harrisburg (by 3-digit NAICS code) included Food Services and Drinking Places, Local Government, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, and Administrative and Support Services. These industries are also some of the largest contributors to GRP, in addition to Merchant Wholesalers of Nondurable and Durable Goods. Notably, while not currently one of the largest industries, Couriers and Messengers are slated to have the largest growth in the next 5 years⁶. Appendix II provides a more detailed look at the town’s top industries, including employment, growth, employment concentration, and GRP.

Industry Description	Jobs 2022	GRP 2022
FOOD SERVICES AND DRINKING PLACES	919	\$20,472,322
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	790	\$63,549,293
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND TECHNICAL SERVICES	440	\$47,826,930
ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT SERVICES	421	\$28,928,355
MERCHANT WHOLESALERS (NONDURABLE GOODS)	344	\$62,471,945

Source: Lightcast, 2023

The largest occupations in the Town of Harrisburg include Material Moving Workers, Retail Sales Workers, Motor Vehicle Operators, and Cooks and Food Preparation Workers. Material Moving and Cooks and Food Preparation Workers are slated to see the largest growth between 2022 and 2027. Of the top ten occupations in the town, median wages range from \$22,634 (Food and Beverage Serving Workers) to \$93,039 (Computer Occupations), with an average of \$42,405⁷. Appendix A provides a more detailed look at the top occupations in the town, including employment, growth, employment concentration, and median annual wages.

Occupation	Jobs 2022	Median Annual Wages
MATERIAL MOVING WORKERS	672	\$30,667
RETAIL SALES WORKERS	426	\$25,972
MOTOR VEHICLE WORKERS	385	\$36,510
COOKS AND FOOD PREPARATION WORKERS	374	\$32,706

Source: Lightcast 2023





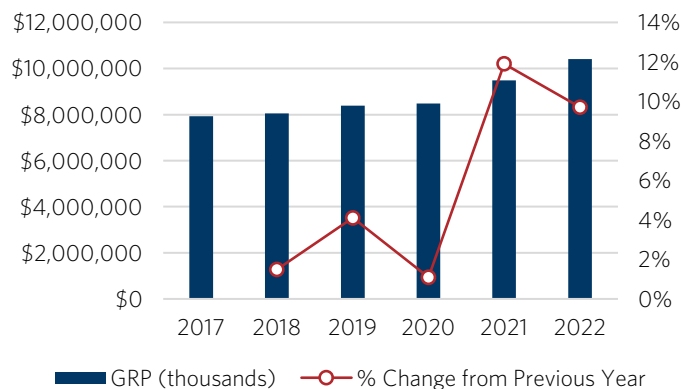
ENTREPRENEURSHIP & INNOVATION

Entrepreneurship and innovation are burgeoning in Harrisburg, North Carolina, as the town experiences growth and economic development. While traditionally known for its suburban charm, Harrisburg has seen an influx of businesses and startups fueled by a supportive community and strategic location within the Charlotte metropolitan area. Local entrepreneurs leverage resources and networking opportunities to establish innovative ventures across various sectors, from technology and healthcare to retail and hospitality. Initiatives such as business incubators, networking events, and mentorship programs foster a culture of entrepreneurship, encouraging individuals to pursue their business ideas and contribute to the local economy. Furthermore, Harrisburg’s proximity to major highways and interstates facilitates access to regional markets, enhancing opportunities for growth and expansion. As entrepreneurship thrives in Harrisburg, the town is poised to become a hub of innovation, driving economic prosperity and community vitality for years.

It is important to note that much of the data related to gross regional product (GRP) and entrepreneurship is collected and reported on a county-level basis. For this reason, the data visualizations below show county data. That being said, the business environment in the county has an enormous impact on businesses operating in the Town of Harrisburg, and using these data points as a reference can help identify key areas to focus the Town’s resources, financial and otherwise.

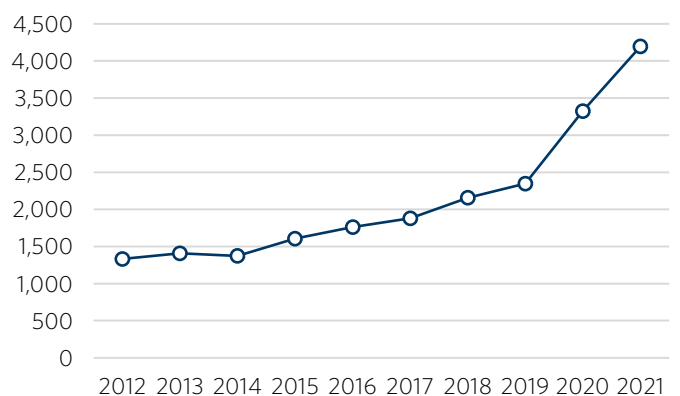
Cabarrus County’s gross domestic product in 2022 reached a 5-year high at \$10.4 billion, making up just under 10% of the GDP for the Charlotte MSA. The county has seen a compound annual growth rate of 5.6% since 2017, slightly below the MSA’s 6.4%⁸.

Exhibit 11: Cabarrus County Annual GRP and % Growth, Current-Year Dollars; 2017-2022



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Exhibit 12: Cabarrus County New Business Applications, 2012-2021



Source: US Department of Commerce

Infrastructure and Key Assets

ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION ASSETS

The Town benefits from a well-connected transportation network of several highways and interstates. Interstate 485 (I-485), known as the Charlotte Outer Loop, encircles the metropolitan area and provides convenient access to Harrisburg via exits like Exit 36 (Rocky River Road) and Exit 33, connecting to Interstate 85 (I-85). I-85 is a major artery running northeast-southwest, passing through Harrisburg and linking it to Charlotte in the southwest and Concord, Salisbury, and beyond in the northeast. U.S. Route 29 (US 29) parallels I-85 and offers an alternative route for travel between Harrisburg and nearby towns and cities. Additionally, North Carolina Highway 49 (NC 49), intersecting with I-485, traverses Harrisburg and facilitates travel to neighboring areas such as Concord and Mount Pleasant.

The Town of Harrisburg has direct access to international and regional airports within a twenty-five-mile radius. Charlotte Douglas International Airport, twenty-five miles from Harrisburg, is considered one of the world's busiest airports. In 2022, the Airports Council International placed Charlotte Douglas as number seven in the United States and worldwide for aircraft movements. In 2023, the airport's air traffic reached over 53,445,770, setting a record-breaking year.⁹ The regional airport, Concord-Padgett Regional Airport, eight miles from Harrisburg, is owned by the City of Concord and mainly used for passenger aviation services.

Town Center

Harrisburg's Main Street and the surrounding area are referred to as the "Town Center." Town Hall is located here. The area is highly walkable and can potentially become a magnet for activity. While this node is easily accessible from Highway 49 or Roberta Road, gateways and wayfinding signs may need to be improved.

Primarily, residential development borders the area to the north and east of the Town Center. The proximity of residential assets is promising for future community engagement here. Additional plans for increasing multimodal transportation connectivity for residents and visitors could further this opportunity.

Currently, many of the buildings in the Town Center are occupied by health and wellness-related businesses. In fact, the road parallel to Main Street in the Town Center is named "Physicians Boulevard."

However, to the west of Town Hall, as Main Street intersects with Roberta Road, one can find cafes and eateries, salons and spas, and various services amongst the optometrists and dentists. For many residents and workers in Harrisburg, this hints at additional possibilities for the area to attract retail, food and beverage, arts and culture, and other complementary businesses. When found with some density in an attractive, walkable area, such businesses can become magnets for casual gatherings.

⁹ Retrieved May 28, 2024, from <https://aci.aero/2023/07/19/aci-world-confirms-top-20-busiest-airports-worldwide/>

Morehead Road

Harrisburg's interests along Morehead Road may be particularly intriguing to potential industries. The corridor runs from Highway 49 through some residential neighborhoods and onto Concord Parkway (Route 29), intersecting at the Charlotte Motor Speedway. To the west of that junction, Harrisburg has additional opportunities.

Available properties here have easy and quick connections to major transportation routes, such as I-85, I-485, Concord Parkway, and Highway 49. An extension of Caldwell Road to Concord Parkway (Route 29) would provide additional and valuable connectivity and access to this development node.

Properties along the Morehead Road corridor, especially those at the western intersection, would be suitable for a variety of developments. An industrial park could provide a unique opportunity for economic diversification and relieve the pressure Harrisburg experiences due to significant reliance on the residential tax base. For this area, Harrisburg may do well to target tech-based businesses. Select manufacturing and distribution might thrive in this area due to the proximity of interstate access. The town might also consider Morehead Road for businesses complementary to the Charlotte Motor Speedway, such as lodging and attractions.

Highway 49

Harrisburg's primary corridor, Highway 49, connects I-485 to and through the town. It provides an enviable fast connection to Charlotte and is often the gateway to the Harrisburg experience. Traveling along the corridor, however, one may not recognize the entrance into town limits. As Harrisburg continues to develop its unique identity, efforts should be made to provide a more distinct marker to promote interest in the community.

Highway 49 has significant traffic, with many motorists utilizing the road as a fast route to their destination. The corridor is home to most of the retail, dining, and service business options in the community. Traffic calming measures could encourage residents, visitors, and passerby travelers to take note of businesses and amenities offered along the route. Adjustments could also be made to draw attention to points of interest, such as improved signage or public art.

Sections of the corridor are in need of revitalization and development. Empty storefronts in out-of-date strip malls could be renovated and repurposed. There are undeveloped lots that could be utilized for business or community amenities. Harrisburg should actively pursue upscaling and developing these properties to attract target industries. Select locations that might be appropriate for distribution or light manufacturing. Overall, the corridor is likely best suited for industries such as business and IT services or tourism-related businesses such as higher-end retailers and restaurants desired by local residents. Additional opportunities could be available in the future with an extension of Caldwell Road to Concord Parkway (Route 29).

Targeted Industry Analysis

In addition to a high-level overview of large and growing industries and occupations in the Town of Harrisburg, the team investigated potential target industries that would serve the town’s larger economic strategic goals in coming years. This analysis included an independent study of the existing businesses and workforce in Harrisburg and the incorporation of the region’s strategic plans and target industries.

To identify potential target industry clusters, the team analyzed the existing industries using 6-digit NAICS codes, applying the following criteria:

- What industries are projected to see growth* between 2022-2027?
- Does the industry have an employment concentration greater than the national average?
- Do average industry earnings meet or exceed the average wage per job?

*Note: projected industry growth is determined via Lightcast projection models, which consider historical changes in employment and national and regional economic trends.

These industries were then organized by industry clusters, divided between traded and local industry clusters. Traded clusters are groups of related industries that serve markets beyond the region, while local clusters consist of industries that primarily serve the local market. Local clusters are prevalent in every area of the country to some degree, regardless of competitive advantages, and a region’s employment often primarily comes from these industries. Since they’re tied to their region, they are likely not exposed to competition from other regions.

Traded Industry Clusters

To further narrow down potential traded industry clusters to target in Harrisburg, industry data for the town was compared to the goals and target industries identified by the Centralina CEDS and Cabarrus County’s Target Industry Analysis. Aligning strategies for the Town of Harrisburg with regional goals and targets helps strengthen tactics and allows for more support from the surrounding region.

After reviewing the priority target industries on both the regional and county levels, the team cross-analyzed the data with those clusters previously identified as potential targets for Harrisburg. The final clusters and the associated strongest sub-industries are outlined below. For a more thorough analysis of the regional target industry research, please see Appendix C.

MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing industries and industry clusters were identified as priorities at both the regional and county levels, and Harrisburg shows strengths in several of these clusters. Biopharmaceuticals is also included here, though it could be listed separately, because the presence in Harrisburg specifically relates to pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Traded Cluster	Sub Industries
VULCANIZED & FIRED MATERIALS	Pressed & Blown Glass & Glassware Manufacturing
DOWNSTREAM METAL PRODUCTS	Fabricated Structural Metal Manufacturing
	Misc. Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing
AUTOMOTIVE	Automobile & Light Duty Motor Vehicle Manufacturing
BIOPHARMACEUTICALS	Pharmaceutical Preparation Manufacturing

DISTRIBUTION AND ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

While not specifically discussed in the Centralina CEDS, this category is highlighted by the county’s strategic plan and supports more than 300 jobs in the town.

Traded Cluster	Sub Industries
DISTRIBUTION AND ELECTRONIC COMMERCE	Photographic Equipment & Supplies Merchant Wholesalers
	Medical, Dental, & Hospital Equipment & Supplies Merchant Wholesalers
	Industrial Machinery & Equipment Merchant Wholesalers
	Printing & Writing Paper Merchant Wholesalers
	Wine & Distilled Alcoholic Beverage Merchant Wholesalers

TOURISM AND ENTERTAINMENT

The Town of Harrisburg also hosts a unique attraction in the county that supports jobs in the tourism industry cluster. While tourism is not discussed as a target industry by the CEDS or county strategic plan, both plans discuss its importance in the region.

Traded Cluster	Sub Industries
HOSPITALITY & TOURISM	Racetracks
PERFORMING ARTS	Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports, & Similar Events Without Facilities

BUSINESS AND IT SERVICES

Information Technology and Financial Services are discussed in detail in the Centralina CEDS and identified as emerging industries by the county strategic plan. While Harrisburg is not rich in employment in this category, the town does host several businesses that provide services in the IT and business services clusters.

Traded Cluster	Sub Industries
BUSINESS SERVICES	Administrative Management & General Management Consulting Services
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & ANALYTICAL INSTRUMENTS	Computer Systems Design Services
MARKETING, DESIGN, & PUBLISHING	Marketing Consulting Services



Local Industry Clusters

As local industry clusters are present to some degree in most communities, targeting individual clusters for growth is primarily a matter of local priorities and interest. Combining the above criteria with input from town leadership and stakeholders resulted in the following target local industry clusters.

Local Cluster	Description
COMMERCIAL SERVICES	This cluster can include professional services, commercial photography, printing, laundry services, building and repair services, and some types of retail.
EDUCATION	This cluster includes public and private schools, job training services, and recreational education, such as fine arts schools or driving education.
FINANCIAL SERVICES	This cluster includes financial services most often utilized by residents, such as local commercial banks and credit unions, tax preparation services, and insurance agencies and brokerages.
FOOD & BEVERAGE PROCESSING & DISTRIBUTION	This cluster includes all local food distribution, including wholesalers, grocery stores and markets, bakeries and other specialty food retailers, and alcoholic beverage sales. It also includes convenience stores and mobile food vendors.
HEALTH SERVICES	Like the previous cluster, health services cover a wide range of industries. These include all healthcare provider offices, hospitals, home and residential care services, funeral homes and crematories, drug stores, and medical equipment distribution.
REAL ESTATE	In addition to traditional real estate agencies and services, this cluster includes general and specialty contractors, developers, and construction services, wholesaling, retailing, and distribution.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholders are individuals, businesses, and organizations that are interested in or can influence the success of the Strategic Economic Development Plan. These stakeholders include those who live, work, and do business in Harrisburg, as well as those who have contextual information and expertise of the economic ecosystem surrounding Harrisburg. The Town of Harrisburg staff and TPMA collaborated to curate a diverse list of over sixty key stakeholders representing government, economic development, transportation and utilities, healthcare, education, business and industry, and community-based organizations.

Various engagements were planned, including leadership interviews, key stakeholder workshops, a public survey, and an open house. Each engagement is summarized below, and a more detailed analysis of each can be found in Appendix B.

Engagement	Purpose	Summary
LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS	Interviews allowed the project team to garner contextual insights into previous economic development strategies, the progress of those initiatives, and the success of prior planning efforts.	After ten interviews with elected officials, business owners, and other community leaders, three themes emerged: lack of business development support, mixed perceptions of the town, and local and regional challenges.
STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP	The workshop allowed key stakeholders to collaborate on the Harrisburg vision for economic development, SWOT analysis to identify stakeholder priorities, and potential challenges and solutions to implement in the strategic plan.	On December 7 - 8, 2023, the Town of Harrisburg held two stakeholder workshops to inform its Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP). In total, twenty-three stakeholders participated in the sessions that focused on developing a vision for the plan, SWOT analysis, and identified challenges and solutions.
PUBLIC SURVEY	The public survey allowed the public to provide insight and feedback on recommended strategies and the community consensus of priorities. It also revealed what strategies needed to be modified to gain public support.	On January 18, 2024, the Town of Harrisburg launched a public survey to inform its Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP). The survey was distributed via press releases, social media, key stakeholder outreach, presentations to community organizations, and word of mouth. It closed on February 2, 2024, with 416 responses submitted.
PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE	The goal of the open house was to gain consensus from the public on proposed strategies and tactics for the Town of Harrisburg to prioritize.	The open house occurred at Town Hall on February 29, 2024, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Participants were asked to use color-coded sticky dots to indicate their agreement with and priority for the proposed focus areas, strategies, and tactics. Additionally, participants were encouraged to utilize sticky notes to provide feedback, resources, insight, or interest in the goals, strategies, and tactics.

Key Themes from Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process and through the various methodologies, several key themes emerged. Those themes are summarized below. A full analysis of stakeholder engagement can be found in Appendix D.



Stakeholders demonstrated some skepticism about local economic development due to a history of economic development strategic plans not being implemented. However, participants also recognized and acknowledged a more consistent effort from the current leadership.



Stakeholders noted a lack of trusting relationships between town leadership and the business community. This lack of trust is derived from feelings of an 'anti-business' stance from previous town leaders, a lack of clear vision, and a perception that local government regulations have hindered business expansion opportunities.



There is a perception among stakeholders that Harrisburg lacks meaningful relationships with regional economic development organizations, hindering the town's ability to collaborate on economic development initiatives.



Additionally, participants were optimistic about the potential to continue activating green space and improving the town's appearance through intentional beautification efforts.



Further, improving the quality of place in Harrisburg was a priority across all stakeholder engagements, including interviews and focus groups, as shown in the community survey results.



Quality of life priorities revealed across all stakeholder engagements included improving traffic flow, enhancing walkability and bikeability, preserving and activating greenspace, activating the Town Center, and improving access to high-speed internet.



Survey results showed that a majority of residents are traveling outside of Harrisburg for work, including a large percentage of workers traveling more than 30 minutes for employment.



Survey participants cited adding restaurant, retail, and recreational amenities as top business development priorities.

Internal Assessment & Framework

Internal Practice Domains

METHODOLOGY

TPMA considered four key factors and numerous industry “best practices” when developing its methodology to conduct an internal assessment of the current state of the Town of Harrisburg’s economic development initiatives. By incorporating “best practices,” the town leadership can address opportunities to improve economic prosperity and leverage strengths and assets in economic development strategies.

Based on the research collected for this study, economic practices fall within four domains:

- department policies and capacity,
- department resources and assets,
- existing programs and services,
- and formal and informal partnerships.

For each of the four domains, we explore best practices that support the evaluation of the Internal Assessment Scorecard.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND CAPACITY

The “Department Policies and Capacity” domain analyzes core internal components focusing on qualitative assets. These components display how sufficiently the town utilizes internal assets.

Best Practice	Key Indicators
LEADERSHIP SUPPORT.	How well are leaders equipped with knowledge, resources, and information on basic Economic Development concepts?
UTILIZATION OF PAST AND CURRENT PLANS.	How has the town implemented past Economic development plans to accomplish set goals? Has the town utilized updated plans to accommodate economic shifts and goal outcomes?
APPLIED PERFORMANCE METRICS.	Does the town monitor and evaluate metrics related to established goals and strategies? Are metrics related to overall programs and services? How are metrics reported internally and externally?
DEFINED VISION AND PURPOSE.	Is there a clear vision and purpose, and how it’s utilized in Town Government support?
ADOPTION OF A “FUTURE-READY” MINDSET.	How knowledgeable are staff in identifying and applying emerging economic development trends?

DEPARTMENT RESOURCES AND ASSETS

“Department Resources and Assets” analyzes core internal components focusing on quantitative assets. These components display how sufficiently the town utilizes internal skills and tangible assets.

Best Practice	Key Indicators
SPECULATIVE REAL ESTATE INVENTORY.	Does the Town of Harrisburg own, lease, or manage real estate or equipment assets?
FINANCIAL RESOURCES.	How diverse are revenue streams and financial assets to support programs and services?
AVAILABLE STAFF CAPACITY AND SKILL SET.	Does staff have dedicated roles, skills, and knowledge to implement economic development practices and goals? How credible are our programs amongst stakeholders?
POLICIES PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.	Are political, legislative, cultural, or environmental policies preventing or hindering economic development? Can the permitting and licensing process be improved for optimal coordination between economic development players?

EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Existing programs and services analyze core external components that focus on the quality and utilization of services. These components display how services benefit target markets adequately.

Best Practice	Key Indicators
CLEARLY DEFINED TARGET INDUSTRIES.	Does the town have defined target industries (supported by economic base data and analysis) that encourage attraction and expansion opportunities in Harrisburg?
EASE OF ACCESS TO CRITICAL INFORMATION.	How accessible are programs and services to stakeholders? Does provide quality, easy-to-read information about Harrisburg and site selection assets?
ACCESS TO CAPITAL.	Does the town provide gap financing or other specialized financing tools for customers?
CLEARLY DEFINED CUSTOMER BASE.	Does the town know the customer base directly benefiting from economic development programs and services?
INCORPORATION OF ECONOMIC RESILIENCY PRACTICE.	Does the town consider economic resiliency practices when developing technical programs and services?
INCORPORATION OF EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES.	Does the town consider a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens to engage diverse groups and businesses of Harrisburg? How aware is town leadership of DEI Economic Development practices?

FORMAL AND INFORMAL PARTNERSHIPS

Formal and informal partnerships analyze core internal and external components that focus on the strength and influence of key partners. These components display how adequately leadership and staff connect with, utilize, and sustain relations with critical economic development partners.

Best Practice	Key Indicators
LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND STATE ALIGNMENT AND COLLABORATION.	How extensively does the town interact with local, regional, and state partners? How is leadership involved with partner activities and events?
VOLUNTEER NETWORK.	Does the town rely on a network of volunteers with dedicated time and skills contributing to the town's vision and goals?
FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS.	Does the town have existing MOAs (Memorandum of Agreement) and other binding agreements? How extensive are formal agreements with partners?
PUBLIC AWARENESS OF DEPARTMENT ROLES IN ED.	Are stakeholders and constituents aware of services and programs and the benefits?



Assessment of Current Practices

METHODOLOGY

The project team conducted a general analysis of the department’s current practices, offered programs, and services and how those are communicated both to internal and external stakeholders.

The analysis continued to compare practices to similar organizations with similar practices, developing a “scorecard” for the town to follow. The scorecard provides a quality rating and improvement system to implement best practices.

SCORECARD

The TPMA team reviewed this report’s “best practices,” “key indicators,” and the Stakeholder Engagement Summary of Findings data analysis and compared them to current practices, past plans, documents, and other information provided by Harrisburg leadership when this report was completed. The scores below reflect a score based on a sliding scale from 1 to 4, 1 being “inactive” to 4 being “progressive.” The score indicates how the town implements standards and best practices from the practice domain sections above.

Scorecard Ranking & Definition

Ranking	Definition
PROGRESSIVE (4)	The town cultivates innovative, “future-ready” practices, tools, and strategies to support and prosper economic development.
PROACTIVE (3)	The town anticipates and plans for changes and economic shifts and builds strategy with key stakeholders and partners.
REACTIVE (2)	The town utilizes tools or resources to support economic development practices, but actions result in little to no advancement of economic development strategy.
INACTIVE (1)	The town practices do not actively reflect tools or resources to support economic development strategy.

Scorecard

Domain	Best Practice	PEED Score
DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND CAPACITY	Leadership support.	2
	Utilization of past and current plans.	1
	Applied performance Metrics.	1
	Defined vision and purpose.	1
	Adoption of a “future-ready” mindset.	2
DEPARTMENT RESOURCES AND ASSETS	Speculative real estate inventory.	1
	Financial resources.	1
	Available staff capacity and skill set.	2
	Policies promoting economic development.	2
EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES	Clearly defined target industries.	1
	Ease of access to critical information.	2
	Access to capital.	1
	Clearly defined customer base.	1
	Incorporation of economic resiliency practice.	1
	Incorporation of equitable economic development practices.	1
FORMAL AND INFORMAL PARTNERSHIPS	Local, regional, and state alignment and collaboration.	1
	Volunteer network.	1
	Formal partnerships.	1
	Public awareness of Department Roles in ED.	1

INTERNAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

In recent years, the Town of Harrisburg leadership and staff have taken aggressive steps to realign community resources and assets to enhance the town's economic prosperity. The leadership has utilized local plans like the 2018 Harrisburg Land Use Plan, 2020 Community Transportation Plan, and the Highway 49 Corridor Plan, among other local and county plans and initiatives. With the "new wave" of town leadership, Harrisburg has been able to critically assess some of the best practices listed above to implement strategies to promote economic development in the town. Although the leadership has taken extensive steps in creating economic development strategies, there are opportunities to strengthen leadership efforts to further the economic prosperity of Harrisburg.

When it comes to Department Policies and Capacity and Resources and Assets domains, these have the greatest opportunity to continue to build on. As mentioned previously, the leadership driving these initiatives is motivated and shows great support in achieving success. They are interested in developing strategies that promote economic growth and look to implement strategies that support an innovative ecosystem. The planning department currently has four full-time staff members but lacks a full-time staff member dedicated to economic development. Additionally, staff are not offered opportunities to enhance their economic development competencies and expertise.

Regarding financial resources, the Town does offer "tax-based incentive grants," but the policies need to be clearer about the intended user and outline the benefits of utilizing the incentives. The town should continue to develop a clear vision and purpose for economic development incentives, with the intentionality of users. Additionally, the town should consider utilizing other gap financing strategies and other partner financing tools to stimulate private investment in Harrisburg. The town should utilize ongoing plans and develop metrics around those identified strategies to unify the vision for economic development.

Harrisburg scores lowest in the Existing Programs and Services and Formal and Informal Partnerships domains. The project team consistently saw concern about the need for more partnerships and a disconnect between the town and key stakeholders.

In terms of marketing the town, the Harrisburg website is easy to navigate and includes modern features. However, because of the department's unclear vision, programs and services offered for a target customer base are vague, and some of the links are broken or simply not linked, hindering the website's accessibility.

Overall, Harrisburg's leadership and stakeholders are motivated and excited to continue driving economic development and implementing strategies that best position the city's future. The strategies presented in this plan address these critical best practices, which Harrisburg leadership should consider prioritizing and implementing within the next five years.

Strategic Economic Development Framework

Top Priority Strategic Recommendations

STRATEGY 1: INVEST IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To compete in the increasingly sophisticated and globally competitive landscape of economic development, communities need a budget that is reflective of their commitment to real economic growth. A demonstrated commitment will ensure Harrisburg has the talent, expertise, and resources to support existing businesses, cultivate new business starts, attract outside investment, and maintain a high quality of life for current and future residents. As such, Harrisburg should dedicate resources to ensure that it can deliver the key functional services of a successful economic development entity:

- **Business Retention and Expansion:** the ability to maintain and expand current business efforts within a community.
- **Business Attraction and Marketing:** the ability to attract businesses to relocate or conduct new business within a community.
- **Entrepreneurial Development:** the ability to encourage, sustain, and support local business entrepreneurs within a community.
- **Quality of Life:** the ability to invest and plan, ensuring economic development is supported by an environment rich in quality-of-life amenities.

Harrisburg leadership should prioritize the following tactics to activate economic development and position the community for future success. Without proper investment, the strategic framework presented later in this plan will be difficult to activate.

- **Tactic 1:** Advocate for a sustainable budget for an official Economic Development Department. A suitable budget for a department of this size will be between \$750,000-\$1,250,0000
- **Tactic 2:** Hire an Economic Development Director. This should be the first official hire for the newly imagined economic development department. A reasonable salary for a qualified Director is between \$100,000-\$125,000 annually.
- **Tactic 3:** Empower the new Economic Development Director to hire a Business Outreach Specialist. A reasonable salary for a qualified Business Outreach Specialist is between \$75,000-\$100,000

STRATEGY 2: FOCUS ON COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

The Town of Harrisburg does not exist in a vacuum. To successfully activate an economic development agenda, Harrisburg leadership must collaborate and increase collaboration with local, regional, state, and federal economic development partners. Throughout this planning process, it became increasingly clear that Harrisburg does not have the relationships, both formal and informal, with the appropriate economic stakeholders across the region. To activate the strategies and tactics outlined in this plan, Harrisburg leadership needs to recognize the importance of collaborating with the multitude of organizations across the region that have the resources, expertise, connections, and access needed to support existing businesses, attract new businesses, and facilitate more small business activity.

- **Tactic 1:** Designate an official economic development representative to appropriate and relevant regional economic development organization's board of directors. Relevant organizations could include:
 - Cabarrus Economic Development Corporation
 - Centralina Economic Development District
 - Centralina Workforce Development Board
- **Tactic 2:** Meet regularly with the Southeast Region representative of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.
- **Tactic 3:** Meet regularly with local, state, and federal elected leaders to ensure these elected representatives are informed of the economic priorities of the community.

Strategic Focus Area Framework

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 1: BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

The core of any economic development strategy should be allocating resources to facilitate local business retention and expansion (BRE) opportunities. From a cost-benefit standpoint, dedicating and deploying resources to existing businesses - those who have planted their proverbial flag in the ground - makes good financial sense. A comprehensive and sophisticated approach to BRE ensures your most committed economic development stakeholders, private businesses, are well-positioned to retain and create more local jobs.



The Challenge:

Although residents and business leaders recognize the current efforts being made by town leadership to maintain relationships with existing businesses, there is currently no formal economic development department within the Town of Harrisburg and no formal business retention and expansion (BRE) outreach program. Efforts could be made to ensure existing businesses have the tools, resources, and connections needed to prosper and grow.



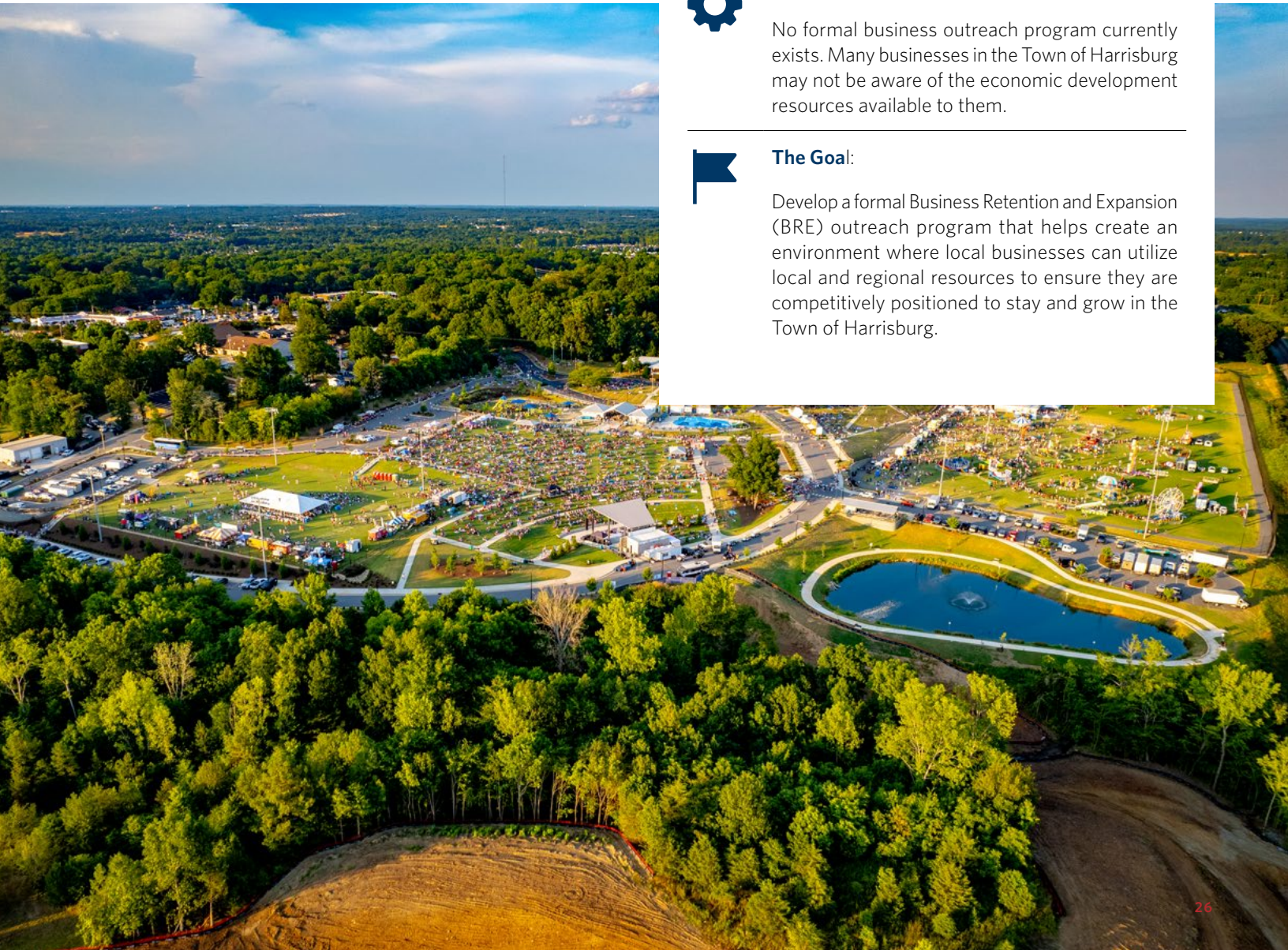
Rationale:

No formal business outreach program currently exists. Many businesses in the Town of Harrisburg may not be aware of the economic development resources available to them.



The Goal:

Develop a formal Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) outreach program that helps create an environment where local businesses can utilize local and regional resources to ensure they are competitively positioned to stay and grow in the Town of Harrisburg.



Strategy 1.1: Invest resources to support a formal Business Retention and Expansion Outreach (BRE) program.

Business Retention and Expansion Outreach (BRE) programs are critical to any economic development ecosystem for various reasons. Successful BRE programs enable communities to maintain an up-to-date picture of the local economy. By visiting companies and conducting business outreach surveys, economic development practitioners are in a unique position to not only assist the individual company but also derive anonymous, aggregated information to better understand local economic trends. This information can be used to inform policy, programs, and resources to better meet the needs of the business community.

Tactic 1.1.1: Develop a staffing plan and economic development department budget to ensure Harrisburg has the human resources to conduct proactive outreach to existing businesses.

Tactic 1.1.2: Meet regularly with town council representatives to communicate the business case for funding to develop and maintain a formal BRE program. To increase transparency and collaboration, consider creating a quarterly or annual report of economic development activities and outcomes to share with the council and other relevant stakeholders. These stakeholders could include other local and regional economic and workforce development organizations.

Tactic 1.1.3: Develop an appropriate job description for the new Economic Development Director. Work with the new director to develop a job description for the Business Outreach Specialist, including annual business outreach goals and objectives.

Tactic 1.1.4: Consider using the identified target industries in this plan to prioritize business outreach activity.

Tactic 1.1.5: Identify funding for adopting a customer relationship management (CRM) system to track business outreach activity, increase communication and collaboration, and identify trends to inform future economic development initiatives.

Tactic 1.1.6: Build relationships with representatives from NCWorks Business Edge network to coordinate business outreach visits to companies on the 'early warning' list, which identifies firms at risk for layoffs or closures.

Tactic 1.1.7: Coordinate with local and regional economic development and workforce development partners to create marketing collateral and digital assets to promote the business retention and expansion program.

Best Practices

Santa Clarita Valley Economic Development Corporation, Business Survey

The SVC EDC conducted a business survey with over 155 local companies in 2022 to assess the business climate and quality of life in the region.

<https://www.scvedc.org/blog/2022-santa-clarita-valley-business-survey>

St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, BRE Initiative

The BRE Initiative links St. Louis companies with government and economic development officials to ensure business owners, leaders, and entrepreneurs know who to contact regarding opportunities or challenges.

<https://stlpartnership.com/businessretentionandexpansion/>

Arlington Economic Development, Arlington Business Appreciation Month coordinated visits

Following two years of virtual engagement with businesses during COVID, Arlington Economic Development (AED) aimed to connect companies with valuable resource partners via BRE visits during Business Appreciation Month.

<https://www.arlingtoneconomicdevelopment.com/News-Resources/Blog/Honoring-the-Business-Community-During-Business-Appreciation-Month>

Resources

Bludot, Economic Development Platform

Bludot is a tailor-made business retention, attraction, and workforce development online platform and customer relations management tool.

<https://www.bludot.io/>

ExecutivePulse, Economic Development Platform

ExecutivePulse is the only Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution built by economic developers for economic developers. The CRM's intuitive design allows users to easily create at-a-glance reports and presentations, optimize their internal and external communication, and track the progress of their initiatives.

<https://www.executivepulse.com/>

Strategy 1.2: Consistently analyze and evaluate the business climate in Harrisburg, periodically updating and revising service provision, programmatic offerings, and resources as appropriate.

Tactic 1.2.1: Consider conducting annual surveys with the business community to better understand the perceived business climate and the awareness and utilization of economic development resources, services, and programs. Address any gaps identified in the annual survey.

Tactic 1.2.2: Collaborate with the regional workforce development board to conduct periodic surveys of the local talent and workforce needs of businesses in Harrisburg. Share this information with local school districts, trade schools, community colleges, and universities to increase synergies between talent development organizations and the private business sector.

Tactic 1.2.3: Work with regional partners to identify funding opportunities to capitalize a Revolving Loan Fund to fill financing gaps for existing businesses looking to make capital investments. Once capitalized, consider using the interest and fees generated from the fund to capitalize a small business grant program.

Tactic 1.2.4: When appropriate, include elected officials at business ribbon cuttings and outreach visits. Use these visits to build strong relationships and gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges small businesses face in Harrisburg.

Tactic 1.2.5: Consider creating a Small Business Committee to meet with Town leadership monthly. The committee should include a diverse mix of businesses across industries, size, scale, and scope. The goal of this committee is to create a more collaborative environment between business leaders, elected officials, and town leadership. The committee should be asked to share opportunities and challenges and identify trends for the town to address.

Tactic 1.2.6: Identify preexisting coalitions of regional economic development partners that meet regularly with the state and federal elected delegation, ensuring partners speak with one voice about Harrisburg's economic development needs.

Strategy 1.3: Incorporate economic resiliency best practices to ensure the Harrisburg business community is prepared to withstand economic disruptions.

Tactic 1.3.1: Develop a Harrisburg Crisis Communication Playbook. The playbook should inform county leaders (including economic development leaders) how to communicate effectively and efficiently with business leaders during an emergency.

Tactic 1.3.2: Consider forming a coalition of service providers tasked with supporting businesses in the event of a significant economic disruption. Develop an asset map and promotion material to ensure companies are aware of available services.

Tactic 1.3.3: Incorporate emergency preparedness questions into business outreach surveys.

Tactic 1.3.4: Collaborate with local resource providers to facilitate opportunities for private businesses to develop business continuity plans.

Tactic 1.3.5: Collaborate with local resource providers to facilitate opportunities for private businesses to develop succession plans.

Best Practices

Greater Memphis Chamber, Small Business Resiliency Playbook

The Small Business Resiliency Playbook is a dynamic, multi-media platform that small businesses can access to utilize the various tools needed to survive during times of uncertainty and emergency.

<https://www.smallbusinessresiliency.com/>

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MARKETING AND ATTRACTION

While business retention and expansion efforts are crucial to the mission of any community, an intentional business attraction strategy should also be designed to attract businesses that can capitalize on local assets and complement the existing business environment. The attraction of new businesses to Harrisburg will diversify the industry mix, add new jobs, and stimulate economic growth. An overreliance on any single industry can place a community in a precarious situation, and an economic disruption, like an extreme weather event or global pandemic, could cause a profound disruption to the local economy. With a sophisticated business attraction strategy, Harrisburg has an opportunity to attract new, growing industries to diversify the industry mix, create a more resilient economy, and ultimately a more prosperous Town of Harrisburg.



The Challenge:

Harrisburg has many desirable assets and competitive advantages, including its proximity to the Charlotte Metro, but national and international site selectors and corporate decision-makers are not aware of the economic development opportunities available for expansion and relocation.



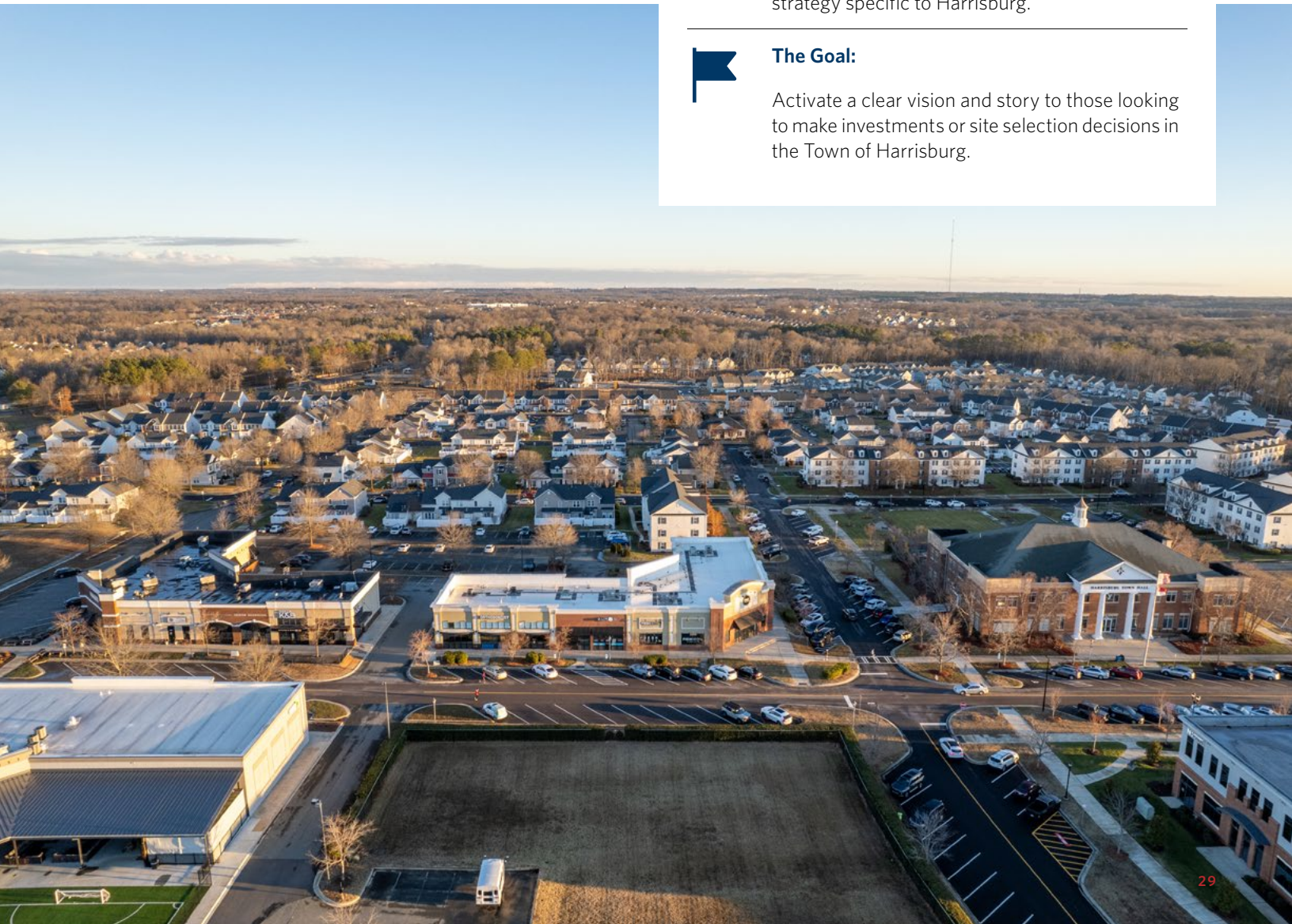
The Rationale:

As it stands today, there is no formal economic development marketing and business attraction strategy specific to Harrisburg.



The Goal:

Activate a clear vision and story to those looking to make investments or site selection decisions in the Town of Harrisburg.



Strategy 2.1: Invest resources to develop an economic development marketing and business attraction campaign.

Tactic 2.1.1: Review and revise (as appropriate) professional service agreements with the Cabarrus County Chamber of Commerce, Cabarrus County Economic Development Corporation, and Centralina Economic Development District to ensure the partnership’s scope includes active marketing of economic development opportunities in Harrisburg.

Tactic 2.1.2: Revise the Economic Development home page on the Town of Harrisburg website. Include key metrics, datasets, competitive advantages, and key contacts on the landing page. Assign a team member to update the page regularly, ensuring up-to-date information for site visitors.

Tactic 2.1.3: Activate Harrisburg social media accounts (including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) to share information about recent economic development wins in Harrisburg.

Tactic 2.1.4: Host annual site familiarization tours in Harrisburg with the Cabarrus County Economic Development Corporation and other economic development partners.

Tactic 2.1.5: Work with appropriate partners to create a Harrisburg Business Ambassador Network to participate in prospective business site visits. Consider partnering with local and regional Chambers of Commerce and other economic development organizations. Private business leaders should be encouraged to advocate for Harrisburg as a desirable investment location.

Tactic 2.1.6: Identify appropriate target industry trade shows and events. Consider collaborating with regional partners to attend and market through these events and communication channels.

Best Practices

Frederick County Chamber of Commerce, Chamber Ambassadors

The Frederick County Chamber of Commerce Ambassador program was designed to create a link between its members and the broader community. These professionals also assist by promoting Frederick County to existing and potential new businesses.

<https://www.frederickchamber.org/ambassadors.html>

Resources

Site Selection Consultant Database

The industry-exclusive Site Selection Consultant Database was designed by an economic developer for economic developers. It contains the names and addresses of over 3,700 people who influence corporate site selection decisions. The contacts include consultants, commercial real estate brokers, real estate services firms, architects, engineers, and more. There is no other product like this in the market for economic development organizations.

<https://siteselectiondatabase.com/>



Strategy 2.2: Take intentional steps to ensure Harrisburg has an inventory of suitable facilities and development-ready land to attract new investment.

Tactic 2.2.1: Consider integrating GIS technology into the Harrisburg website to promote active commercial and industrial listings. Consider creating a Commercial Real-Estate Committee to strengthen collaboration between the town and real estate agents.

Tactic 2.2.2: Reassess Harrisburg’s incentive policies and Façade Improvement Program to better align with the needs of targeted industries. Actively promote the Façade Improvement Program to property owners to facilitate the collective improvement of curb appeal of commercial properties across Harrisburg.

Tactic 2.2.3: Actively promote North Carolina’s Community Development Block Grant and Building Reuse Program to property owners to spur reinvestment and address current commercial vacancies across Harrisburg.

Tactic 2.2.4: Conduct a site readiness assessment across vacant land in Harrisburg. Work closely with public works and utility providers to understand current and future utility needs. Leverage state programs, including the Community Development Block Grant, Economic Development Program, and the Utility Account Program, to address the costs associated with required utility and infrastructure modernization.

Tactic 2.2.5: Work with regional, state, and federal partners to identify funding to capitalize a real estate revolving loan fund. Harrisburg should use the fund to purchase strategic parcels for pre-development and market them to potential industrial or commercial end-users. The self-replenishing pool of money, reliant on interest and property sale, should be utilized to purchase future parcels for continued development.

Tactic 2.2.6: Consider creating an industrial corridor along the planned expansion of Morehead West. Consider amending the zoning ordinance in the area to exclusively include manufacturing, warehouse, and logistic uses. Explore opportunities to incorporate an overlay district, including the potential for a Tax Increment Financing District.

Best Practices

LEAP BLOCK600

The BLOCK600 project highlights how creative redevelopment and reuse can transform blighted, contaminated properties into assets that meet community needs and spur additional transformation.

<http://www.block600lansing.com/>

North Richland Hills Business Improvement & Growth (BIG) Program

The City of North Richland Hills (NRH) Business “Improvement and Growth (BIG) Program was created in 2009 to revitalize mature commercial corridors in the city.

<https://www.nrhed.com/314/Business-Improvement-and-Growth-Program>



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 3: ENTREPRENEURIAL SUPPORT AND SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Entrepreneurship and innovation drive local economies. Realizing that all big businesses were once small, it's important to recognize the importance of supporting and cultivating an environment where risk-takers, innovators, and investors are poised to flourish. A local economy focused on supporting entrepreneurial development is characterized by a multitude of technical service providers willing and able to assist aspiring and new businesses with whatever opportunities or challenges they face as they grow their nascent enterprises. Equally as important, successful communities recognize the importance of fostering a vibrant culture and supportive network, ensuring that these next-generation business owners are surrounded by friends, colleagues, acquaintances, advocates, advisors, investors, and mentors.



The Challenge:

Although town leadership and stakeholders recognize the importance of fostering an environment where small businesses can thrive, there currently exists no cohesive and coordinated ecosystem to provide the necessary resources to support entrepreneurial development in Harrisburg.



The Rationale:

Small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs require wrap-around support resources, technical services, and access to capital to successfully launch and sustain their enterprises. This requires a coordinated network of stakeholders invested in the success of small businesses across Harrisburg.



The Goal:

To develop a coordinated small business support ecosystem that facilitates new business starts, increased investment activity, and job growth.



Strategy 3.1: Formalize a small business support ecosystem in Harrisburg.

Tactic 3.1.1: Collaborate with appropriate partners to develop a series of networking events to help facilitate connections between small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Tactic 3.1.2: Develop a toolkit, including an asset map of local, regional, and state resources, programs, and funding opportunities for small businesses to utilize.

Tactic 3.1.3: Consider creating a Harrisburg Small Business Action Team, consisting of economic development service providers across Harrisburg and the region focused on small business support. Convene the coalition consistently to ensure streamlined service delivery, reduced duplication of efforts, and improved communication.

Tactic 3.1.4: Consider investing in online programs that offer no or low-cost access to critical business and market intelligence for small business owners in Harrisburg.

Tactic 3.1.5: Work with development partners to assess the viability of coworking and collaborative workspaces in the Town Center.

Tactic 3.1.6: Identify and build relationships with regional angel investment networks. Organize meet-and-greet events between angel investors and local small businesses seeking investment capital.

Best Practices

Greater Rochester Enterprise, GRE Economic Gardening Program

The GRE Economic Gardening program is designed to provide sophisticated, tailor-made technical assistance to local companies poised for growth in the Greater Rochester, NY region.

<https://rochesterbiz.com/economic-gardening/>

Resources

SizeUp, Economic Development Platform

SizeUp helps private sector, government, and non-profit organizations better serve their small business customers with the market research and business intelligence they need to succeed.

<https://www.sizeup.com/>



Strategy 3.2: Take intentional steps to create more awareness about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial support services in Harrisburg.

Tactic 3.2.1: Develop and send a “Welcome Packet” to all new businesses in Harrisburg, outlining key contacts, resources, technical service providers, and a calendar of relevant networking opportunities.

Tactic 3.2.2: Partner with local news organizations to highlight small businesses in Harrisburg. Consider sponsoring a “Local Business of the Month” campaign and/or feature small business profiles in local newscasts and on associated social media accounts.

Tactic 3.2.3: Create more opportunities to showcase the small business community in public and civic spaces. Examples could include food truck festivals, craft and artisan fairs, farmers, art shows, and artistic performances.

Tactic 3.2.4: Collaborate with appropriate partners to create annual pitch competitions for aspiring entrepreneurs. Identify funding to support small startup grants to competition winners.

Tactic 3.2.5: Identify and form relationships with local and regional Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs). Facilitate opportunities to connect small business owners with CDFI lenders.

Tactic 3.2.6: Within the regulatory framework outlined by the state of North Carolina, consider revising local government procurement policies - looking for more opportunities to purchase goods and services from local businesses. Set appropriate quotas for local business purchases and review and revise them annually.

Best Practices

Wake Forest Innovation Infrastructure

Wake Forest’s Innovation Infrastructure provides businesses of all sizes with direct pathways to success by creating spaces and resources for growth, access, and more.

<https://www.discoverwakeforest.org/innovation-infrastructure>

Resources

Cabarrus Center

The Cabarrus Entrepreneurship Council was established by Cabarrus Economic Development in 2020 to be an advocate for entrepreneurs in Cabarrus County, working with local and regional partners to create a coordinated system of support. This Council oversees the sustainable operations and programming at the Cabarrus Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

<https://cabarruscenter.com/>

EO Charlotte

The Charlotte Chapter of the Entrepreneurs’ Organization (EO) is the world’s only peer-to-peer community of entrepreneurs. Founded in 1998, EO has entrepreneurs that span all industries in the city. EO Charlotte attracts the people who make things happen. The Charlotte chapter takes pride in creating an environment for entrepreneurs to learn from and inspire each other, leading to tremendous business success and a richer personal life.

<https://www.eocharlotte.org/>

Angel Capital Association

ACA is a professional society of accredited angel investors who make up the world’s most prolific early-stage investment class. The association is the largest professional development organization for angel investors in the world, deploying more than \$650 million in early-stage capital each year.

<https://www.angelcapitalassociation.org/>

U.S. Economic Development Administration, Build to Scale

The Build to Scale Program strengthens regional economies by enabling startups to start and grow through the Venture and Capital challenges. The funding program aims to facilitate access to knowledge, capital, and networks for entrepreneurial innovators to develop products and services using emerging technologies.

<https://www.eda.gov/funding/programs/build-to-scale>

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREA 4: QUALITY OF LIFE AND LIVABILITY

Economic Development must always be balanced with an intentional focus to maintain and improve the quality of life of current residents. Further, a focused effort on facilitating this quality of life can attract new residents, new businesses, and new investments. To accomplish this, Harrisburg should integrate economic development priorities and principles into other long-term planning efforts and ensure the community is leveraging its assets to its fullest potential. This includes creating a strong sense of place in key community nodes, facilitating a healthy housing market, modernizing infrastructure, improving transportation and mobility, and ensuring residents have a diversity of retail, restaurant, and entertainment options.



The Challenge:

Many residents and key stakeholders expressed concern about maintaining and improving Harrisburg's high quality of life and 'small town charm.' Stakeholders expressed a desire for more local entertainment options, local retail and shopping amenities, and improved walkability, particularly in the Town Center.



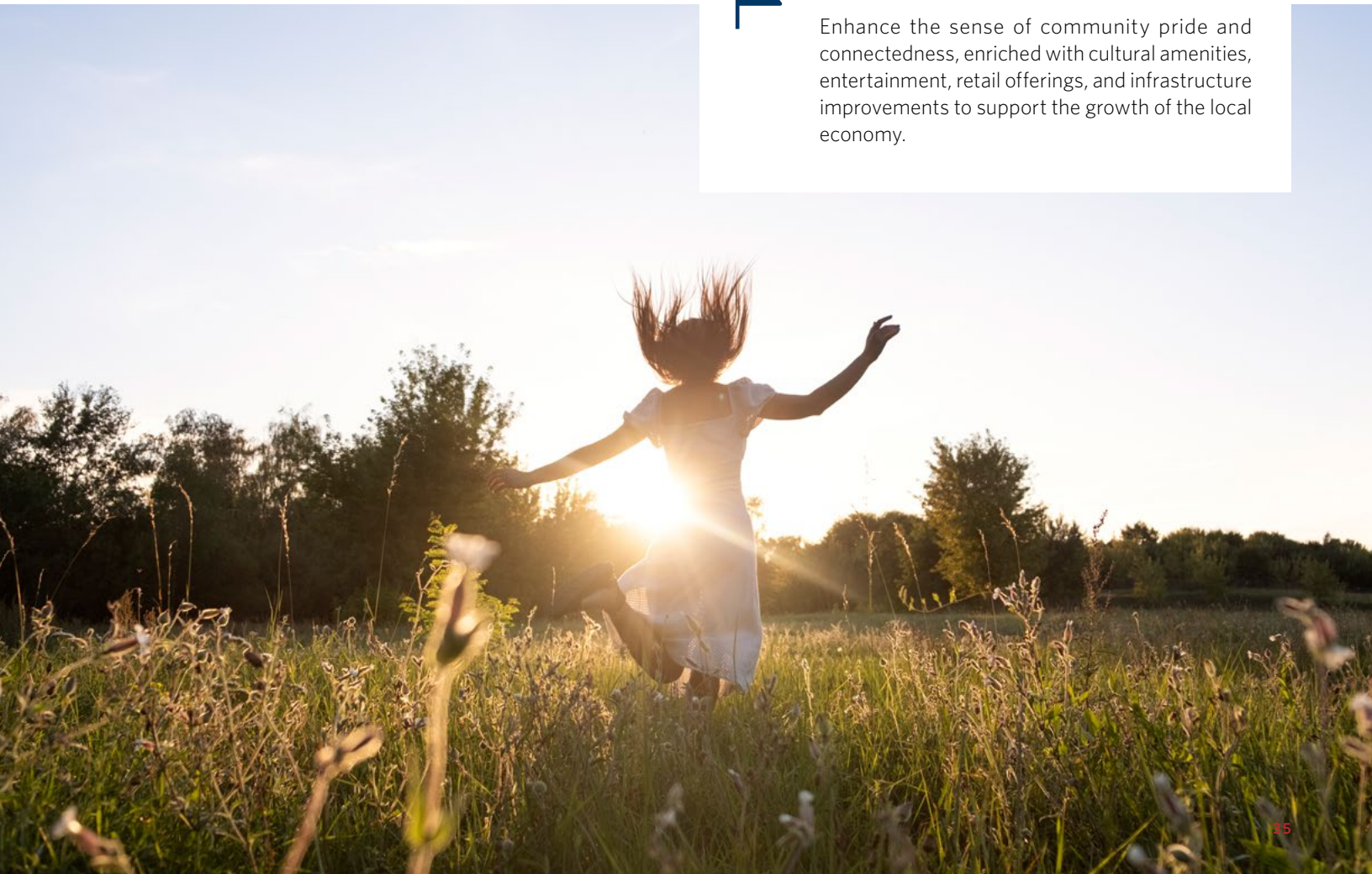
The Rationale:

To maintain Harrisburg's high quality of life, strategic investments must be made in long-term planning, infrastructure modernization, and placemaking initiatives.



The Goal:

Enhance the sense of community pride and connectedness, enriched with cultural amenities, entertainment, retail offerings, and infrastructure improvements to support the growth of the local economy.



Strategy 4.1: Incorporate economic development priorities into long-range planning initiatives.

Tactic 4.1.1: Invite local and regional economic development leaders to participate as stakeholders in all long-term planning initiatives. This ensures economic development priorities and goals are incorporated into complimentary planning processes.

Tactic 4.1.2: Conduct a housing analysis to understand future housing needs to accommodate existing and projected population growth.

Tactic 4.1.3: To meet Harrisburg’s growth demands, review and update zoning regulations to align ordinances with economic development goals.

Tactic 4.1.4: Collaborate with regional economic development leaders and the state and federal elected delegation to identify funding and resources to address water and sewer capacity challenges.

Tactic 4.1.5: Dedicate funding to support professional development for appropriate Harrisburg staff members, specifically economic development training through the State of North Carolina and the International Economic Development Council.

Strategy 4.2: Explore ways to activate space along the Town Center, creating demand for additional retail and commercial amenities.

Tactic 4.2.1: Utilize the Town Center Overly Plan to inform tactical steps to activate the Town Center. Ensure economic development partners are familiar with the priorities outlined in the plan.

Tactic 4.2.2: Explore opportunities to activate Town Center, including street fairs, public art, artisan fairs, small business expos, etc. Activating the space will create vibrancy and vitality and, ultimately, demand, increasing the likelihood of securing retail and commercial tenants in vacant spaces.

Tactic 4.2.3: Collaborate with the Cabarrus Arts Council to commission public art and activate public spaces across the Town Center, featuring local and regional artists and cultural-based businesses.

Tactic 4.2.4: Continue to look for opportunities to create more connectivity to and from the Town Center. Consider transportation and mobility corridors to ease access to the Town Center for automobiles and pedestrians.

Tactic 4.2.5: Conduct a feasibility study to determine the potential for incubation space in the Town Center. Assess the viability of a commercial food incubator or shared space and cost model, reducing barriers for new food-related entrepreneurs and adding culinary amenities to the square.



Appendix

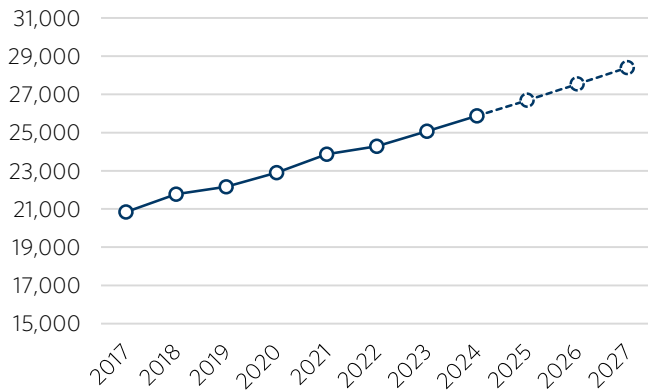
Appendix A: Quantitative Discovery

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Population Growth

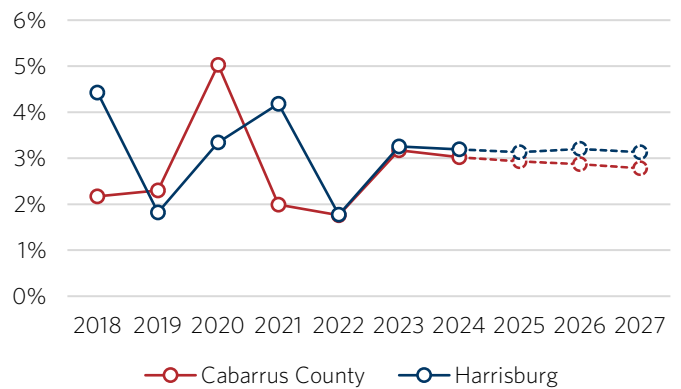
As of 2022, the Town of Harrisburg had an estimated population of 20,653¹⁰. Linear growth models estimate the town will reach a population of approximately 30,000 by 2030. The Town of Harrisburg has grown at a moderately higher rate than Cabarrus County as a whole, though the trend is forecasted to slow in coming years.

Exhibit 13: Population Projection



Source: Lightcast Population Projections, 2024

Exhibit 14: Historical and Projected Percent Population Growth Year Over Year 2018-2027



Source: Lightcast Population Projections, 2024

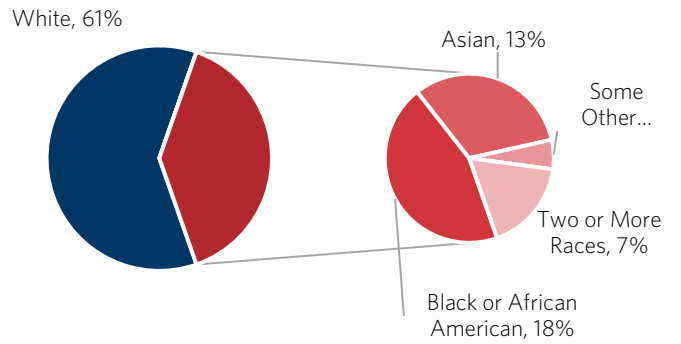
¹⁰ based on actual single-family permits issued, using the U.S. Census person/household multiplier of 3.55 pph

Population Makeup

The average household size in Harrisburg of 3.43 is slightly higher than the county's at 2.92¹¹. As is the case for the United States overall, especially in small cities and towns, the Town of Harrisburg has an aging population, with disproportionately large populations of people between the ages of 40 and 60. The impacts of an aging population can be found across communities. Housing requirements vary for the aging and elderly, labor shortages appear in industries reliant on an older workforce, and demand for healthcare resources expands, including labor and facilities. Communities across the country are grappling with this change and how they will adapt to it.

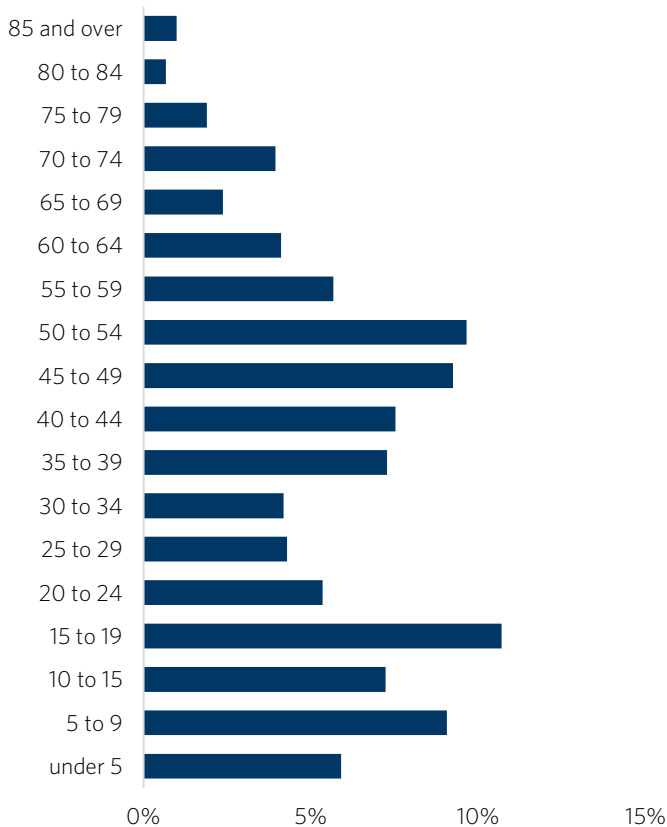
Harrisburg's population is approximately 60% white, but the town is slightly more diverse than the county and state. The second and third largest racial demographics are Black and African American (17.6%) and Asian (12.6%) residents.

Exhibit 16: Race and Ethnicity



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

Exhibit 15: Harrisburg Age Distribution, 2022



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates



Income and Wages

The cost of living in Cabarrus County is approximately 3% lower than the national average¹². The living wage calculation table demonstrates the hourly wage needed to afford basic necessities, such as housing, groceries, transportation, and childcare. Calculations are based on an annual 2,080 working hours (52 40-hour weeks). In the case of a 2-adult household with both adults working, the displayed wage refers to what each adult needs to earn, as opposed to both combined. This data is not meant to be viewed as prescriptive but rather to demonstrate the income necessary for different household types.

The median household income in Cabarrus County is \$83,828, and \$134,767 in Harrisburg (more than twice the state median)¹³. Harrisburg’s income distribution differs significantly from that of the state and county, with nearly 65% of households earning \$100,000 or more and over 20% earning \$200,000 or more. Poverty rates in Harrisburg reflect this, sitting at approximately 3% of the total population, compared with 8% in the county and 13% in the state¹⁴.

Cabarrus County employs just under 92,000 people, approximately 7,000 of whom are employed in Harrisburg, which makes up 7% of the county’s total employment.

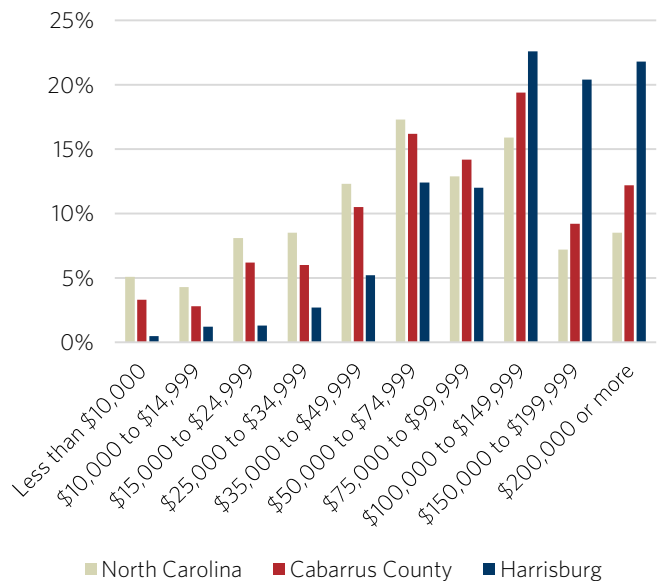
Harrisburg, North Carolina, experienced a consistent increase in income throughout the twelve months of 2022. This rise can be attributed partly to the migration of higher-income individuals from the Northeast but mainly stems from the region’s overall growth.

Exhibit 17: Living Wage Calculations for Cabarrus County

	1 Adult	2 Adults (1 Working)	2 Adults (Both Working)
NO CHILDREN	\$18.20	\$28.22	\$14.11
1 CHILD	\$37.05	\$34.68	\$20.47
2 CHILDREN	\$47.93	\$39.66	\$26.08
3 CHILDREN	\$62.95	\$43.96	\$31.36

Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator, 2023

Exhibit 18: Income Distribution



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

12 Lightcast, 2024
 13 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022
 14 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022

LIVABILITY

Housing Overview

The housing inventory in Harrisburg has been relatively low, with fewer homes available for sale compared to buyer demand. This limited inventory has contributed to competitive bidding situations and faster selling times for properties on the market.

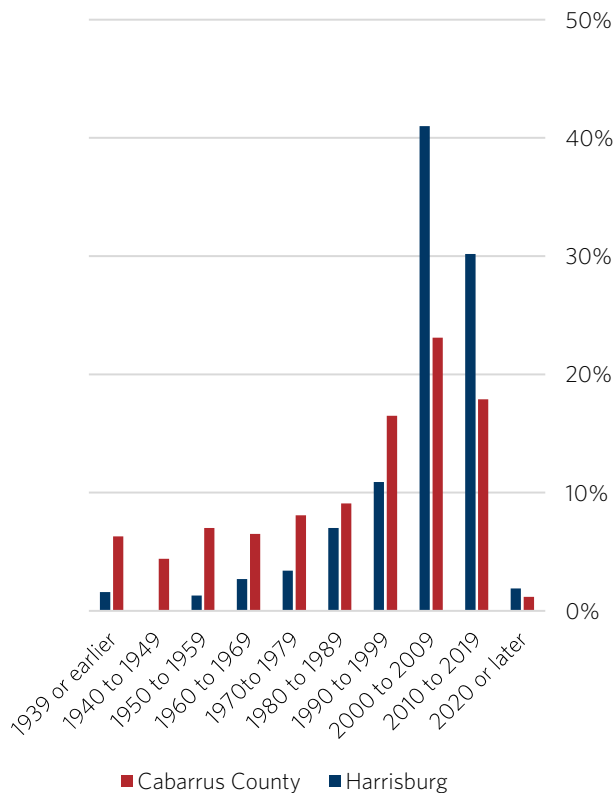
Most housing units in Harrisburg were built after 2000, with only a quarter being built in the 20th century. Comparatively, a little over half of the housing in the county was built pre-2000. Harrisburg has seen significant new construction activity, with several residential developments underway to meet the demand for housing. These new construction projects included single-family homes, townhouses, and apartment complexes, adding to the town's housing supply.

The average number of days homes spent on the market before being sold was approximately 30 days. This relatively short time frame indicated a seller's market, where properties were in high demand and selling quickly.

As of January 2022, the median home price in Harrisburg, NC, was approximately \$330,000¹⁵. However, this figure could vary based on location within the town, the size of the property, and its condition. Over the past year, home values in Harrisburg have appreciated by around 8%. This appreciation rate indicated a healthy and growing real estate market in the area.

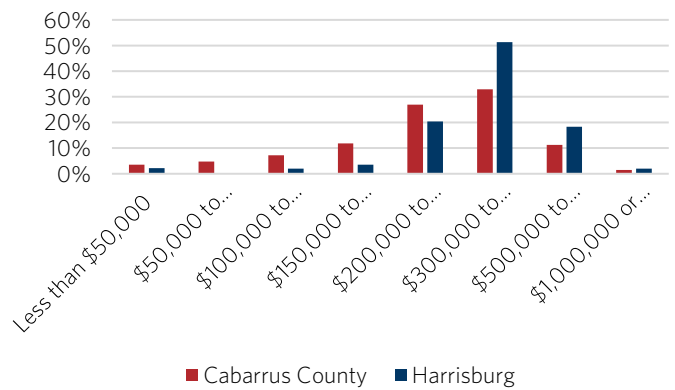
The American Community Survey indicates a notably low homeowner vacancy rate at the county and town levels. However, the county's rental vacancy rate is high. This disparity can significantly impact median housing prices within the county, consequently influencing the overall affordability rate for residents.

Exhibit 19: Housing Units by Year Built



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Exhibit 20: Owner-Occupied Housing Units by Value



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Exhibit 21: Total Units and Occupancy Characteristics, 2022

	Cabarrus County	Harrisburg
TOTAL HOUSING UNITS	88,031	5,780
OCCUPIED UNITS	76,880	5,508
OWNER-OCCUPIED UNITS	56,113	5,005
HOMEOWNER VACANCY RATE	1.1%	.7%
RENTER-OCCUPIED UNITS	20,767	503
RENTAL VACANCY RATE	11.1%	--

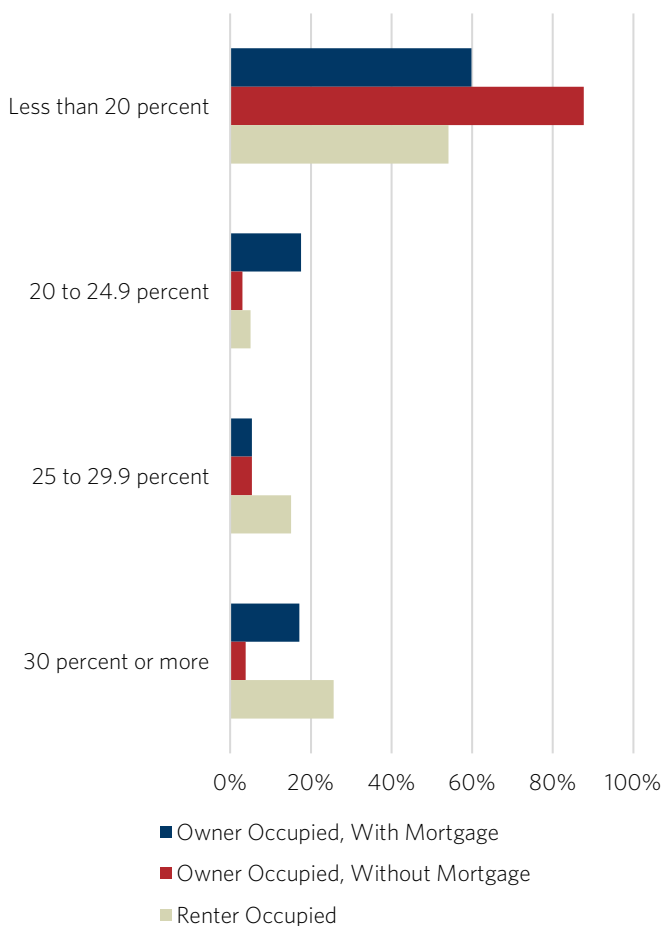
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022

Affordability

While housing in Harrisburg was generally more affordable than in nearby Charlotte, affordability could vary depending on household income and housing preferences. Some residents may have found it challenging to afford homes in certain neighborhoods, while others may have found more affordable options in different parts of the town.

The median monthly housing cost for owners with a mortgage in Harrisburg is \$1,993 and \$512 for owners without. The median price for renters is \$2,093. Renters and homeowners with a mortgage are more likely to be considered cost-burdened, spending 30% or more of their monthly household income on housing costs. Approximately a fifth of these groups in the town would be considered cost-burdened, making sacrifices in other areas of basic necessities to afford housing.

Exhibit 22: Housing Costs as Percentage of Household Income, 2022



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

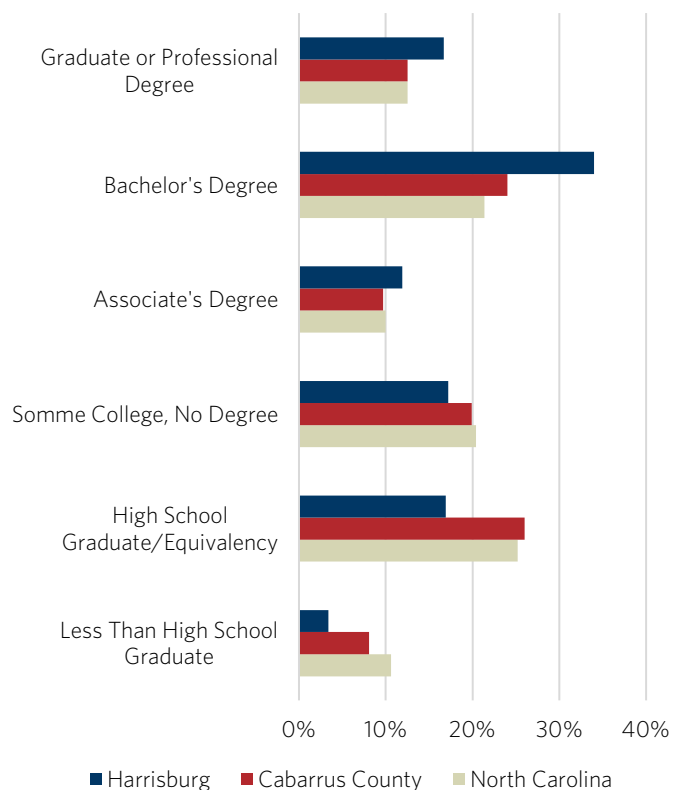
Educational Attainment

Residents in Harrisburg are highly educated. Approximately 97% of the population holds a high school diploma or better, and 50% holds a bachelor's degree or higher. Harrisburg's high school diploma attainment rate is 7% higher than the state, and the town's bachelor's (or higher) attainment is 17% higher than the state. See the exhibit on educational attainment for further details.

The town is served by the Cabarrus County School District, with two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school within town limits. Rowan-Cabarrus Community College (RCCC) also serves the community, with locations throughout Cabarrus County offering various programs and courses. The University of North Carolina (UNC) Charlotte is also located just 4.5 miles from Harrisburg, serving the town's residents and the greater Charlotte region.

The high level of educational achievement in Harrisburg and Cabarrus County surpasses that of the rest of North Carolina, resulting in a highly valuable workforce for the Charlotte metro area.

Exhibit 23: Educational Attainment, 2022



Source: American Community Survey 2022 5-Year Estimates

HARRISBURG LIVABILITY

Harrisburg Walkability Score

Harrisburg faces challenges in becoming a pedestrian-friendly town overall. However, recent initiatives and ongoing projects indicate a concerted effort by the town to enhance its walkability and create a more accessible environment for residents and visitors alike.

Walkability varies across parts of town, and Harrisburg Town Center, though still evolving, shows promise as a mixed-use development that could contribute significantly to walkability in the area. Beyond these hubs, Harrisburg struggles with sprawl, characterized by subdivisions and retail developments spread out over considerable distances. This layout poses challenges for pedestrians, often necessitating reliance on cars for transportation.

Recognizing the importance of improving walkability, Harrisburg has outlined goals and undertaken projects to make the town more pedestrian-friendly. In alignment with these goals, several projects are underway to enhance walkability. These initiatives include building new sidewalks, installing crosswalks to improve pedestrian safety, implementing better lighting for nighttime visibility, and adding bike lanes to promote alternative transportation. The Morehead West Area Plan underscores the town's commitment to this cause, with objectives such as creating local-serving retail spaces, enhancing access to major thoroughfares like NC-49, and developing family-friendly amenities. While these projects are still in their nascent stages, they hold promise for transforming Harrisburg into a more walkable town in the future.

Access to Healthcare Services

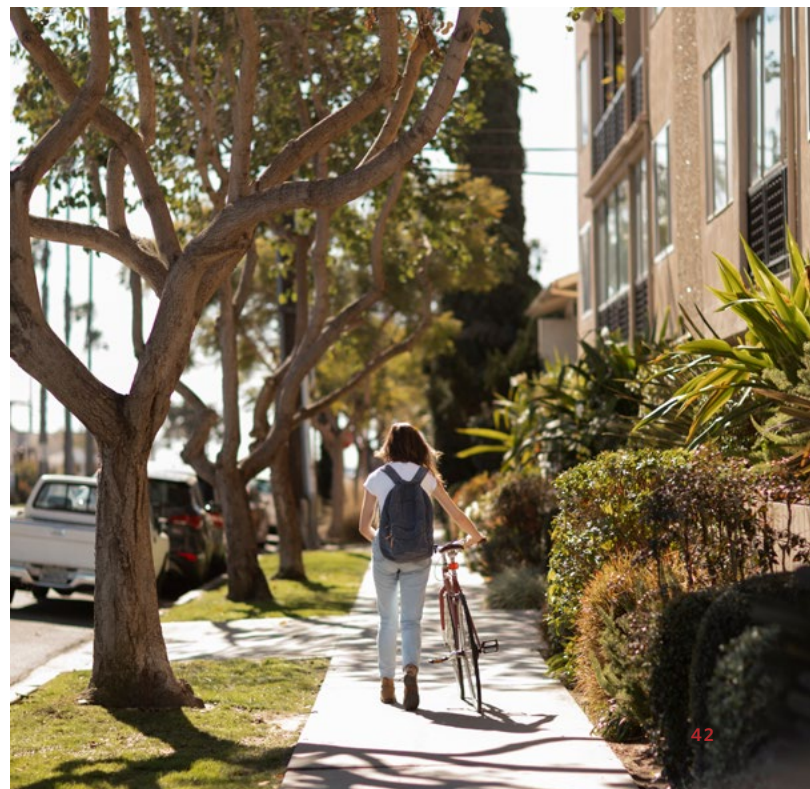
In assessing public health access in Harrisburg, it is crucial to consider residents' ability to access healthcare services. Primary care physicians, clinics, and hospitals are essential in delivering healthcare services to the community. Residents in Harrisburg have access to primary care through various practices, including Harrisburg Family Physicians and Novant Health Harrisburg Family Medicine. Additionally, hospitals such as Atrium Health Cabarrus provide comprehensive healthcare services, ensuring access to specialized care and emergency services. Furthermore, CVS Pharmacy and Walgreens offer medication counseling and essential pharmaceuticals, enhancing residents' access to medications and health products.

Harrisburg and Cabarrus County Crime Rates

Crime rates serve as vital indicators of community safety and well-being, reflecting the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts and socio-economic dynamics. Comprehending crime trends is crucial for implementing targeted interventions and fostering secure neighborhoods. This analysis of crime rates in Harrisburg and Cabarrus County utilizes data from the United States Department of Justice and Data.io to provide insights into crime patterns and their implications for community safety.

Harrisburg maintains relatively low crime rates compared to urban centers. According to data from the Harrisburg Division of the Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office, the crime rate in Harrisburg consistently falls below the national average. As of the latest available statistics, the overall crime rate in Harrisburg stands at approximately 15 crimes per 1,000 residents annually. Property crimes, including theft and burglary, constitute many reported offenses, while violent crimes, such as assault and robbery, remain relatively rare occurrences in the community.

Data from the Cabarrus County Sheriff's Office and the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) indicate a steady decline in criminal activity across the county. The countywide crime rate currently stands at approximately 20 crimes per 1,000 residents annually, reflecting a significant decrease over the past decade.



WORKFORCE TRENDS

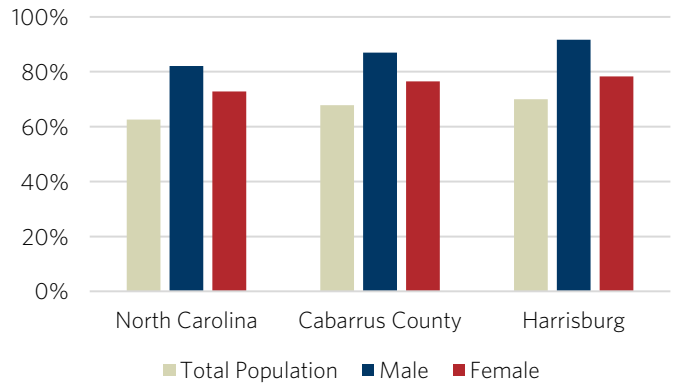
Labor Force Participation Trends

Labor Force participation rates in Cabarrus County have consistently been between 4% - 6% higher than the state average, with Harrisburg slightly higher than the county¹⁶. This remains the case for both men and women, though it is worth noting that the difference between male and female labor force participation is higher in Harrisburg than in the county or state. While the cause for this discrepancy can vary, it is common in wealthier communities where more families can afford for only one parent to work outside the home.

Unemployment in Cabarrus County remained slightly below the state average over the most recently reported 12-month period between November 2022 and October 2023. Unemployment in the county was at a 12-month high in November of 2022 and February of 2023 at 3.4% and reached its lowest point in April of 2023 at 2.9%, averaging 3.3%.

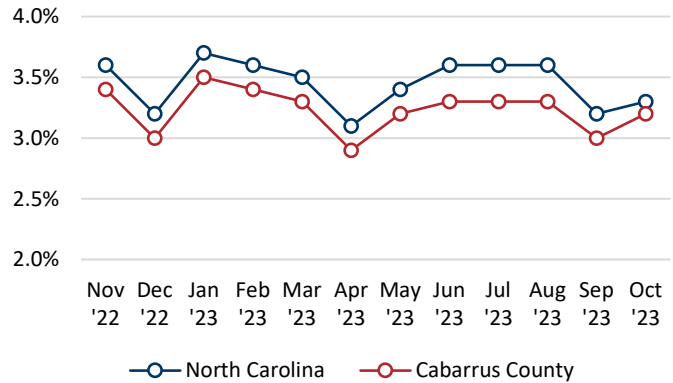
Annual averages for unemployment show a similar trend, with the county consistently demonstrating a slightly lower unemployment rate than the state at large. Unemployment peaked in 2013 with an average of 7.4%, decreasing steadily through 2019. Following a spike in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, both the state and the county have recovered, reaching a 10-year low at 3.7% and 3.4% unemployment, respectively.

Exhibit 24: Labor Force Participation Rate, Population 16 years and older by sex, 2022



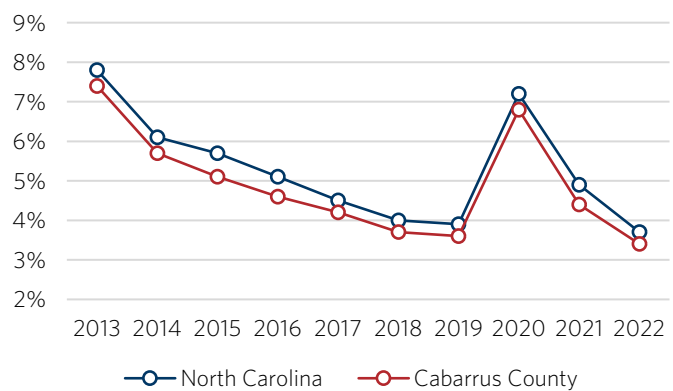
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Exhibit 25: 12-month Unemployment Rate, November 2022-October 2023



Source: NC Department of Commerce LAUS

Exhibit 26: Unemployment Rate Annual Averages, 2013-2022



Source: NC Department of Commerce LAUS

Industries and Occupations

Industry Description	Jobs 2022	GRP 2022
FOOD SERVICES AND DRINKING PLACES	919	\$20,472,322
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	790	\$63,549,293
PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, & TECHNICAL SERVICES	440	\$47,826,930
ADMINISTRATIVE & SUPPORT SERVICES	421	\$28,928,355
MERCHANT WHOLESALERS (NONDURABLE GOODS)	344	\$62,471,945

Source: Lightcast, 2023

The largest industries in Harrisburg (by 3-digit NAICS code) included Food Services and Drinking Places, Local Government, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, and Administrative and Support Services. These industries are also some of the largest contributors to GRP, in addition to Merchant Wholesalers of Nondurable and Durable Goods. Notably, while not currently one of the largest industries, Couriers and Messengers are slated to have the largest growth in the next 5 years¹⁷. For a more detailed look at the top industries in the town, including employment, growth, employment concentration, and GRP, see the Appendix II.

Occupation	Jobs 2022	Median Annual Wages
MATERIAL MOVING WORKERS	672	\$30,667
RETAIL SALES WORKERS	426	\$25,972
MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATORS	385	\$36,510
COOKS AND FOOD PREPARATION WORKERS	374	\$23,706

Source: Lightcast, 2023

The largest occupations in the Town of Harrisburg include Material Moving Workers, Retail Sales Workers, Motor Vehicle Operators, and Cooks and Food Preparation Workers. Material Moving and Cooks and Food Preparation Workers are slated to see the largest growth between 2022 and 2027. Of the top ten occupations in the town, median wages range from \$22,634 (Food and Beverage Serving Workers) to \$93,039 (Computer Occupations), with an average of \$42,405¹⁸. For a more detailed look at the top occupations in the town, including employment, growth, employment concentration, and median annual wages, see the appendix.

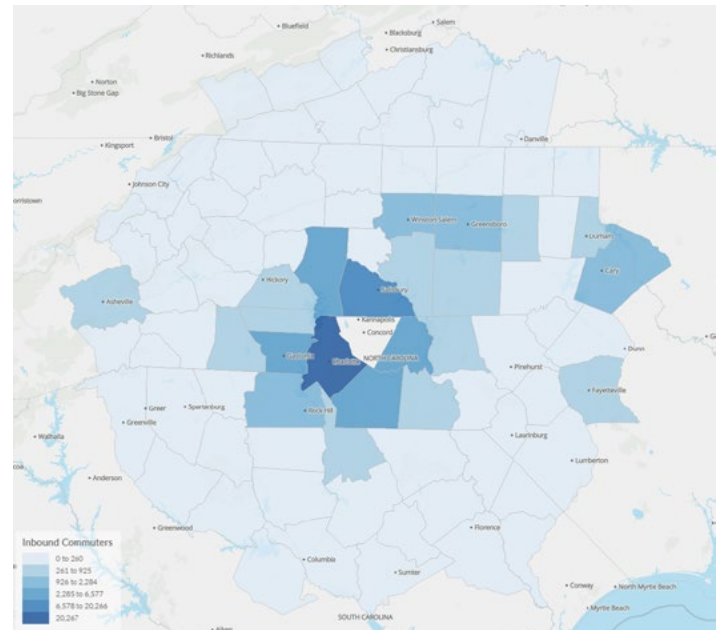
¹⁷ Lightcast
¹⁸ Lightcast

Commuting and Traffic Patterns

Cabarrus County has an average net commuter count of -23,323 commuters, with 53,107 inbound and 76,430 outbound. Mecklenburg County, where Charlotte is located, makes up the largest share of inbound commuters at 20,267, Rowan at 6,578, and Iredell, Stanly, and Union Counties, all about 3,000 each. 44,498, nearly 60% of all outbound commuters, commute into Mecklenburg County, followed by Rowan County at 5,967. Cabarrus County has a net positive commuter count of over 500 in 4 counties: Stanly (1,181), Gaston (1,038), Rowan (610), and Union (501)¹⁹.

The Town of Harrisburg sees 5,644 inbound commuters and 9,358 outbound commuters, for a total net commuter county of -3,714. Like the county, nearly 60% of all outbound commuter's commute to Charlotte. The largest remaining share of outbound commuters commute to other parts of the county, largely Concord and Kannapolis²⁰.

The American Community Survey estimates that approximately 18% of town residents work from home, a 4% higher rate than for the county overall and 6% higher than the state²¹.



¹⁹ Lightcast 2023 Counts
²⁰ Lightcast 2023 Counts
²¹ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022

Access to Major Highways & Interstates

The Town benefits from a well-connected transportation network of several highways and interstates. Interstate 485 (I-485), known as the Charlotte Outer Loop, encircles the metropolitan area and provides convenient access to Harrisburg via exits like Exit 36 (Rocky River Road) and Exit 33, connecting to Interstate 85 (I-85). I-85 is a major artery running northeast-southwest, passing through Harrisburg and linking it to Charlotte in the southwest and Concord, Salisbury, and beyond in the northeast. U.S. Route 29 (US 29) parallels I-85 and offers an alternative route for travel between Harrisburg and nearby towns and cities. Additionally, North Carolina Highway 49 (NC 49), intersecting with I-485, traverses Harrisburg and facilitates travel to neighboring areas such as Concord and Mount Pleasant.

Public Transportation Options

Public transportation options in the Town of Harrisburg are limited compared to larger urban areas, with the primary mode of transportation being private vehicles. However, there are some options available for residents and visitors. The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) operates bus routes throughout the Charlotte metropolitan area, including some routes that connect neighboring towns like Concord to Charlotte. While Harrisburg does not have a dedicated public transit system, residents can access CATS services by driving to nearby park-and-ride facilities or utilizing rideshare options. Additionally, some local organizations may offer shuttle services for specific events or purposes within Harrisburg. However, due to the town's suburban nature and reliance on cars, public transportation options are relatively limited, and most residents rely on private vehicles for their daily commuting needs.



ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

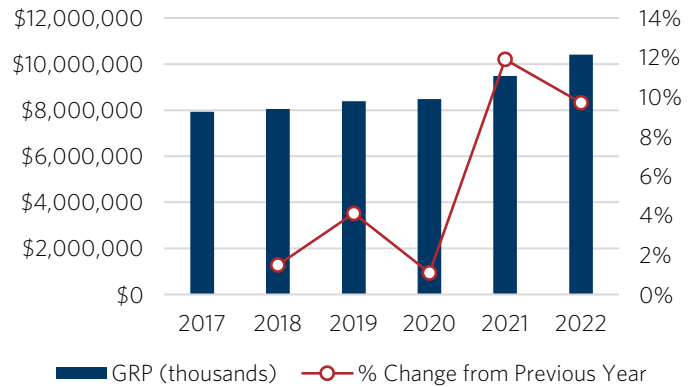
Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Entrepreneurship and innovation are burgeoning in Harrisburg, North Carolina, as the town experiences growth and economic development. While traditionally known for its suburban charm, Harrisburg has seen an influx of businesses and startups fueled by a supportive community and strategic location within the Charlotte metropolitan area. Local entrepreneurs are leveraging resources and networking opportunities to establish innovative ventures across various sectors, from technology and healthcare to retail and hospitality. Initiatives such as business incubators, networking events, and mentorship programs foster a culture of entrepreneurship, encouraging individuals to pursue their business ideas and contribute to the local economy. Furthermore, Harrisburg’s proximity to major highways and interstates facilitates access to regional markets, enhancing opportunities for growth and expansion. As entrepreneurship thrives in Harrisburg, the town is poised to become a hub of innovation, driving economic prosperity and community vitality for years to come.

Cabarrus County’s gross regional product in 2022 reached a 5-year high at \$10.4 billion, making up just under 10% of the GRP for the Charlotte MSA. The county has seen a compound annual growth rate of 5.6% since 2017, slightly below the MSA’s 6.4%²².

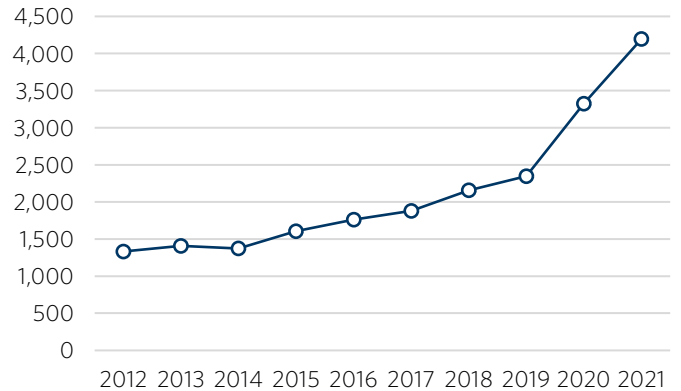
Over 4,000 new business applications were filed in Cabarrus County in 2021, with nearly 14,000 filed in the five-year period from 2017 to 2021. StatsAmerica’s Innovation Intelligence Index ranks the county high in Business Dynamics, indicating a high level of business competitiveness. The county ranks particularly well regarding the ratio of traded sector business establishments. It is made up of 3 innovation input and 2 innovation output indexes. The structure of the index is built up from a large foundation of data to a single headline index.

Exhibit 26: Cabarrus County Annual GRP and % Growth, Current-Year Dollars; 2017-2022



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Exhibit 27: Cabarrus County New Business Applications, 2012-2021



Source: US Department of Commerce

INNOVATION INTELLIGENCE

The Innovation Intelligence Index, developed by Stats America, a partner of the US Economic Development Agency, is a tool created to explore regional characteristics related to innovation and entrepreneurship to help advance economic development strategies. The final index isn't necessarily an indicator of success in a vacuum, but the tool can provide insight into some of the strengths and weaknesses a region demonstrates in innovation creation and development. The index looks at regions at the county and MSA level, so the following results are for Cabarrus County as a whole rather than Harrisburg specifically.

Cabarrus County has an innovation intelligence Index of 135.7, ranked 111 out of 3,110 counties measured. This score puts the county at the 95th percentile, indicating a high relative Innovation Capacity.

Many of the strengths highlighted in the index contributing to high innovation intelligence in the county do not necessarily stem from Harrisburg. However, they represent opportunities for the town to capitalize on, aligning goals and strategies for the town with the greater region. The success of the county and regional economy directly impacts the quality of living for the region's residents, and contributing to the region's overall success only enriches those outcomes.



Inputs

HUMAN CAPITAL AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION	Indicators contributing to this include growth in the prime working-age population and educational attainment, especially bachelor's degrees.
BUSINESS DYNAMICS	Patterns of establishment formation and composition indicate a high level of business competitiveness. Indicators contributing to this include the ratio of traded sector business establishments in all new business formations, and the ratio/rate of new business formations in the county
BUSINESS PROFILE	The relative availability of resources for entrepreneurs and businesses is high in the county. Indicators contributing to this include the change in proprietorship rate (increase in proprietorship over a five-year period) and domestically sourced FDI investment (employment created by new, U.S.-sourced incoming greenfield investment to the working-age population)

Outputs

EMPLOYMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY	Industry performance in Cabarrus County, NC, indicates a high level of positive outcomes from existing economic activity. Indicators contributing to this include latent innovation and industry diversity
ECONOMIC WELLBEING	As measured by residential internet connectivity and income, this area has a moderate standard of living. Indicators contributing to this include a high score in residential internet connectivity, but a more moderate score in compensation, especially in growth in annual wages and per capita income

LOCAL BUSINESS TAX RATES AND INCENTIVES

Property Taxes

The Town of Harrisburg has one of the lowest property tax rates in the county at \$0.41 per \$100 of value. The county's rate of \$0.576 per \$100 of value results in a total property tax rate of \$0.986 per \$100 of value. By comparison, Charlotte's property tax rate is \$0.2741 and Mecklenburg County's is \$0.4831 for a total property tax rate of \$0.7572. While the town's rate is higher than in Charlotte, it does fall below other municipalities in Cabarrus County, like Mt. Pleasant, Concord, and Kannapolis.

Local Incentives

Harrisburg Economic Development Incentive Grant: the goal of the grant focuses on increasing and diversifying the local property tax base, employment opportunities and wage improvements, and business retention and expansion. Eligible uses include taxable projects such as "manufacturing, assembly, fabrication, processing operations, research & development, motorsports facilities, warehouse/distribution, or office/flex buildings."²³ The grant also allows for certain mixed-use projects.

Tax Increment Grant: This program allows developers to fund public infrastructure projects to benefit private development in an area²⁴.

Customized Training Program: Rowan-Cabarrus Community College offers a training program to support economic development efforts encouraged by the state. Programs include education and training opportunities for eligible businesses and industries²⁵.



²³ Harrisburgnc.org <https://www.harrisburgnc.org/DocumentCenter/View/515>

²⁴ Harrisburgnc.org <https://www.harrisburgnc.org/DocumentCenter/View/514>

²⁵ Rowan-Cabarrus Community College <https://www.rccc.edu/corporate/customized-training/>

Appendix B: Document Review Summary

During the SEDP’s Discovery Phase, the project team conducted a document review by examining various historical planning documents and studies. The analysis provided insights into the demographic, social, and economic conditions at the local, regional, and state levels.

Reviewing and analyzing various plans informed the project team of previous and existing economic development-related goals, strategies, and action steps. The analysis ensured the project team did not replicate or duplicate current efforts. This analysis positioned the project team to build upon existing efforts to develop an initial draft of appropriate goals and strategies. The following plans were reviewed:

Plans

- Harrisburg EDSP, 2013
- Market Analysis & ED Implementation Plan, 2015
- Harrisburg Land Use Plan, 2019
- Community Transportation Plan, 2020
- Highway 49 Corridor Plan, 2021
- Cabarrus County EDC Strategic Plan
- Centralina EDD CEDS, 2023
- North Carolina 2023 Economic Development Guide

Public Reports

- Harrisburg Station Study, 2014
- Harrisburg ED Incentive Grant Policy
- Harrisburg TIG Policy
- Harrisburg Façade & Site Improvement Grant Policy
- Cabarrus EDC Community Impact Report, 2022
- Cabarrus EDC Annual Report, 2022
- City of Concord Development Standards and Sewer Allocation Policy

Websites

- Town of Harrisburg
- Town of Harrisburg, Economic Development
- Cabarrus County
- Cabarrus County, Economic Development
- Cabarrus County Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Cabarrus Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Charlotte Regional Business Alliance



KEY FINDINGS

Key findings and themes from the document review include:

Misalignment of Assets and Opportunities

- Previous planning efforts call to support residential needs by developing the Town Center and place-making initiatives to transform the Towns perception of a “bedroom community.”
- Previous planning efforts called for closing the local retail leakage gap by identifying retail targets and supporting “Buy Local” programs.
- The Town of Harrisburg has not accomplished goals outlined in the past plans, such as the 2013 Harrisburg EDSP, the 2015 Market Analysis & Economic Development Implementation Plan, and the 2019 Harrisburg Area Land Use Plan.
- Due to the lack of collaboration outside of Town leadership, previous planning efforts are misaligned with current Cabarrus County and Greater Charlotte Regional Economic Development plans.

Rich in Locational Assets

- Regional assets like the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte Motor Speedway, and the Cabarrus Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship surround the Town of Harrisburg.
- Because the Charlotte Metro Region is growing, the Town is also experiencing rapid population growth, making it urgent to develop the updated SEDP.
- According to the 2015 *Market & Analysis & Economic Development Implementation Plan*, the Town is considered one of the Charlotte region’s wealthiest and most educated communities.
- According to the 2020 *Highway 49 Corridor Plan*, the 49 Corridor is a valued asset as it connects the north-south arterial connecting the City of Charlotte, the Town of Harrisburg, and the City of Concord.

Business Development Needs

- The Town of Harrisburg lacks the dedicated staff to support business development needs. This puts the Town at a disadvantage in implementing Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) and Marketing and Attraction efforts.
- Because there is a limit on water and utility expansions within the county, this hinders business development opportunities in the Town of Harrisburg.
- The Town significantly lacks industry diversity, causing a misalignment of current business stock, past planning recommendations, and regional targeted industries.



Appendix C: Regional Target Industry Analysis

To further narrow down potential traded industry clusters to target in Harrisburg, industry data for the town was compared to the goals and target industries identified by the Centralina CEDS and Cabarrus County's Target Industry Analysis. Aligning strategies for the Town of Harrisburg with regional goals and targets will help strengthen tactics and allow for more support from the surrounding region.

Centralina Target Cluster Opportunity Analysis

The analysis found that five industry clusters continue to be the foundation for the region's economic development strategy:

Advanced Manufacturing

This cluster includes aerospace and defense, advanced materials and packaging, and manufacturing industries such as food and beverage, automotive, machinery, and textiles and apparel.

Information Technology

This cluster includes big data/AI/analytics, cybersecurity, data centers, and software.

Logistics and Distribution

This cluster includes fulfillment centers, supply chain management & consulting, third-party logistics, and warehousing.

Financial Services

This cluster includes back-office operations, banking & insurance, and fintech.

Health

This cluster includes biomedical research, healthcare services and IT, and pharmaceutical & medical device manufacturing.

These industries drive regional growth and global competitiveness. They have a strong growth trajectory and have performed well across the region's counties. The CEDS analysis also noted that they align well with local values that emphasize high growth, healthy wages, and capital investment.

The CEDS went on to note specific strengths demonstrated in different counties in the region. Cabarrus County's highlighted strengths in each of the 5 sectors included:

- **Advanced Manufacturing:** Machinery Manufacturing
- **Information Technology:** data centers
- **Logistics & Distribution:** Third-Part Logistics and Warehousing
- **Financial Services:** Back Office Operations, Banking and Insurance (especially in first ring suburban areas), and an overall high diversity of activity in the sector
- **Health:** Healthcare Services and an overall high diversity of sector diversity

Cabarrus County Strategic Plan

Cabarrus County's Strategic Plan identified two categories of target industries: those that are currently high-performing and those that are emerging and thus potential targets for future growth. The resulting industry clusters are listed below.

Highest Performing Industry Clusters:

- Vulcanized and Fired Materials
- Livestock Processing
- Distribution and E-Commerce
- Paper and Packaging
- Biopharmaceuticals

Emerging Clusters:

- Transportation and Logistics
- Production Tech & Heavy Machinery
- Tech
- Education and Knowledge Creation
- Financial Services

Appendix D: Stakeholder Engagement Overview

Leadership Interviews

The Town of Harrisburg staff and TPMA project team developed a short list of select government, business, and economic development leaders knowledgeable about the community, local industries, trends, plans, and the region’s current economic conditions. From this list, the project team chose ten individuals with whom to conduct interviews. These interviews allowed the project team to garner contextual insights into previous economic development strategies, the progress of those initiatives, and the success of prior planning efforts. Questions were posed to better understand the aspirations of town leadership and critical stakeholders. The project team recorded the interviews and took verbatim notes to eliminate the possibility of bias when reviewing, synthesizing, and using the feedback to inform strategy.

LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS KEY TAKEAWAYS

LACK OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

- Although the Town of Harrisburg has recently approved competitive Economic Development incentives, the business community does not utilize them.
- The business community feels alienated or ignored by Town leadership and limited interactions with the business community.
- Red tape (zoning/ordinances) to business development hinders business expansion opportunities.
- The town lacks the vision for current business development needs.

PERCEPTION OF THE TOWN

- Lingering feelings of “anti-business” rhetoric are still present within the community, but that is evolving with time and updated planning efforts.
- Significant retail, entertainment, and accommodations leakage for residents and visitors.
- Most developments within Town limits are less than twenty years old. The Town has an advantage in terms of land availability, green space, and appearance/aesthetics.
- The town does not offer “affordable” housing options for residents; most housing stock is single-unit homes ranging from \$400-800k. This lack of commitment to attainable housing affects the town and the region.
- Although past planning initiatives have not been successful, leadership recognizes how vital and needed the SEDP is to the community’s economic vitality.

LOCAL & REGIONAL CHALLENGES

- The lack of a regional transit authority hinders regional road/infrastructure improvements. The NCDOT maintains most of North Carolina’s roads.
- The Town of Harrisburg significantly lacks collaboration outside Cabarrus County leadership and stakeholders, causing strained or nonexistent relationships outside of the community.
- Sewer/water infrastructure of the County hinders economic growth County-wide.
- Traffic congestion within the community is becoming a pain point for commuters.

On December 7 - 8, 2023, the Town of Harrisburg held two stakeholder workshops to inform its Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP). Twenty-three stakeholders participated in the sessions. While this summary does not reflect the full extent of the ideas and feedback received, it accurately represents the significant themes that emerged from the workshop.

Visioning

Participants were asked to write their vision for the future of Harrisburg. The most common themes throughout the vision statements were preserving the small-town feel, developing a sense of community, and fostering a thriving business environment. There were recurring themes of job opportunities, small business development, industry attraction and expansion, providing amenities, walkability, maintaining a family-oriented community, and increasing connectivity. From this feedback, the following vision was developed:

“The Town of Harrisburg is a family-oriented community dedicated to providing quality amenities, increasing connectivity, and supporting the thriving local business environment.”

Even though recurring themes exist throughout these statements, a lack of consensus remains, particularly regarding the push-pull between remaining a small town/bedroom community and increasing development in Harrisburg.



SWOT Reflection

Through a series of activities, workshop facilitators asked participants to brainstorm and identify the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. They were also asked to provide feedback on a draft SWOT, discuss points of consensus with their groups, and prioritize.

Responses were categorized and tallied to form the below list of the top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats ranked by participants.

Strengths

- Location
- Transportation access
- Population
- Local schools
- Community

Weaknesses

- Lack of entertainment and retail options
- Leadership challenges
- Traffic congestion
- Lack of utility capacity (water/sewer)
- Lack of infrastructure

Opportunities

- Town Center development
- Entrepreneurship and innovation
- Residential development
- Quality of place
- Green space

Threats

- Lack of consensus for community vision
- Population growth
- Landfill
- Lack of employment opportunities

Additional Emerging Themes

Once stakeholders identified their top priorities, they began brainstorming solutions with a future focus. Participants were asked questions beginning with “How might we?” to serve as a starting point for developing goals. Participants were then asked to form groups and categorize their ideas. Groups used stickers to mark which ideas would be hardest or easiest to enact. Individuals used stickers to vote for their favorite ideas. Ideas proposed through this activity were grouped into 6 focus areas and organized to form the following themes on which to build future goal development.

- Business Retention and Expansion

- Business Attraction

- Quality of Place

- Policies, Ordinances, and Regulations

- Infrastructure

- Workforce & Education

- Vision, Partnerships, and Capacity Building

Overcoming Challenges Exercise

Participants were asked to choose an idea and explore challenges and potential solutions. Two common themes emerged.

Walkability Challenges

There is a lack of space for sidewalks and availability of connecting land. Not all residents would prioritize pedestrian access and safety not viewed as a real concern. There are budget concerns. There is a lack of stakeholder coordination and comprehensive planning.

How to overcome these challenges

Participants suggested conducting a study focused on context-sensitive planning and roads/rights-of-way where walkability is easily plausible. They suggested conducting a community survey to determine the importance of walkability to community members. To finance improved walkability, suggestions were made to apply for grants and set aside an annual budget.

Town Center Development

Challenges

Relationships are strained between local ownership and the town government. There is distrust, and development plans haven’t been aligned with property owners’ vision. Funding and budget constraints are a challenge. Infrastructure needs to be developed. A revised land use plan for the town center needs to be developed.

How to overcome these challenges

Participants suggest mediation with area landowners to open the center up for local (not government) development. They suggest that an investment group could purchase land with an agreed investment from the town. The town will need to find investors willing to buy and secure grants. Participants also suggest direct engagement with new business types.

A more detailed workshop summary was provided to participating stakeholders and the Town of Harrisburg staff.



PUBLIC SURVEY

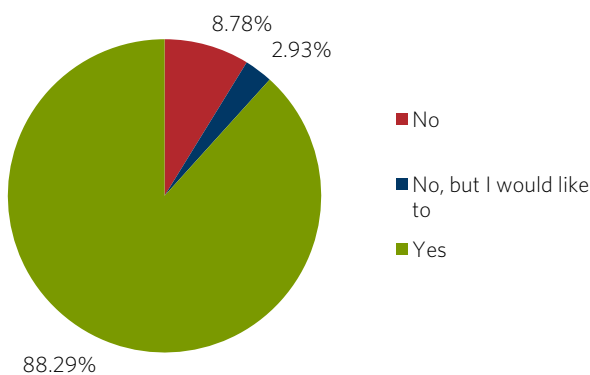
On January 18, 2024, the Town of Harrisburg held a public survey to inform its Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP). The survey was distributed via press releases, social media, key stakeholder outreach, presentations to community organizations, and word of mouth. This summary does not reflect the full extent of the survey results but accurately represents the significant high-level data from the survey.

The survey closed on February 2, 2024, with 416 responses submitted. A summary of survey results follows.

Demographics

Survey participant demographics were a good reflection of the Town of Harrisburg in terms of race and income distribution. Most participants were between the ages of 36-45 and 46-55 for a combined 62% of all submissions. Respondents also skewed female, who made up 53% of respondents, compared to 39% of male participants and 8% who chose not to answer. Most participants reported living in Harrisburg. And of the 12% of participants that don't, 1 in 4 reported that they would like to. Overall, participants satisfactorily represented the basic demographic makeup of Harrisburg.

Do you live in the Town of Harrisburg?



Working and Commuting

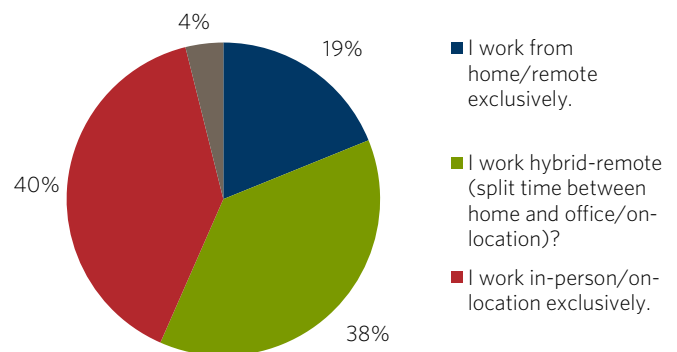
The purpose of this part of the survey was to get a perspective on how residents in the town navigate and perceive Harrisburg in terms of employment. Of the 88% of participants who live in Harrisburg, 22% work in the town, and 60% work outside the town. Approximately 8% of participants who completed the survey neither live nor work in Harrisburg.

Men and women were equally likely to work outside of Harrisburg, with men slightly more likely to work in the town and women significantly more likely to report that they do not work. Remote workers, whether full-time or hybrid, comprised 59% of participants.

Approximately 34% of participants reported traveling 30 minutes or more one-way to work. The commute from Harrisburg to major employers in Charlotte falls within this time range, reflecting the many residents working in or around the city. Similarly, 17% of participants reported spending 30 minutes or less commuting to work, and 19% of respondents reported both living and working in Harrisburg. While these circumstances likely don't accurately describe every participant, they're useful benchmarks to validate how representative the survey data is of the greater population.

Responses to these questions remained largely consistent across demographics, incomes, resident status, and place of work. Notably, non-residents who reported that they would like to live in Harrisburg were more likely to disagree regarding wages supporting the cost of living in Harrisburg, with over 45% responding with a 1 or 2 and less than 10% responding with a 4 or 5.

Work Arrangement



Transportation and Infrastructure

Participants were asked to select their top 4 priorities regarding transportation and infrastructure necessary to promote long-term economic growth in the Town of Harrisburg.

Options included:

Increased walkability/bikeability

Increase public transportation

Improve traffic flow

Slowing traffic around shopping districts

Water and sewer infrastructure repairs/maintenance

Increased water and sewer capacity

High-speed fiber internet connectivity

The overall top three priorities were (1) improving traffic flow, (2) increased walkability/bikeability, and (3) high-speed fiber internet connectivity, each receiving over 250 votes. Public transportation received the fewest votes, at 96, and the remainder fell roughly between 150 and 200. Non-residents had slightly different priorities, prioritizing water and sewer infrastructure repairs over high-speed fiber internet.

Regarding transportation, most participants (65%) agreed that residents could easily travel for basic needs, though participants 65 and older were less likely to agree, with 55% agreeing and 32% disagreeing. Similarly, older participants were more likely to disagree that visitors and residents can easily travel to food and beverage, shopping, or recreational attractions. Regarding travel for work, about half of all participants agreed that workers could easily travel to and from jobs, though non-residents employed in the town were less likely to agree, especially compared to residents employed in the town. 40% of total participants disagreed that current transportation options are meeting the community's needs, with just 16% agreeing, though nearly 40% responded neutrally to this statement.

Quality of Place

Participants were asked to select their top four priorities for improving the quality of life in the Town of Harrisburg and enhancing its reputation as a destination for new business and industry.

Options included:

Affordable housing

Senior housing

More residential options (homes, townhomes, apartments, etc.)

Expanded school system

Childcare options

Healthcare options

Preserved green spaces

Recreation amenities

Arts and entertainment amenities

Improvement of landfill sites

Town beautification

Town center development

Community events

The top 4 priorities overall were (1) town center development, (2) preserved green spaces, (3) recreation amenities, and (4) town beautification, each with over 150 votes. The last selected priorities included childcare options, more residential options, and senior housing, each with 51 or fewer votes. The remaining categories were selected between 50 and 150 times. Non-residents prioritized arts and entertainment amenities over town beautification, as did younger residents.

Survey participants overwhelmingly agreed that it is important for Harrisburg to preserve its small town/bedroom community feel (60%) consistently across demographics and between residents and non-residents. However, participants also agreed that the town needs to keep up with changing economic conditions in the region (63%) and establish a unique identity (70%), which was especially important for participants ages 18-45.

Population Growth

Participants were asked to select the top three challenges regarding population growth within the Charlotte-Harrisburg-Concord region.

Options included:

Population influx (unmanaged population growth)

Insufficient housing stock

Low-wage jobs

Threat to natural resources

Changing cultural landscape/identity

Insufficient infrastructure (roads, water, sidewalks)

Urban sprawl (unrestricted growth)

Inefficient deployment of public services

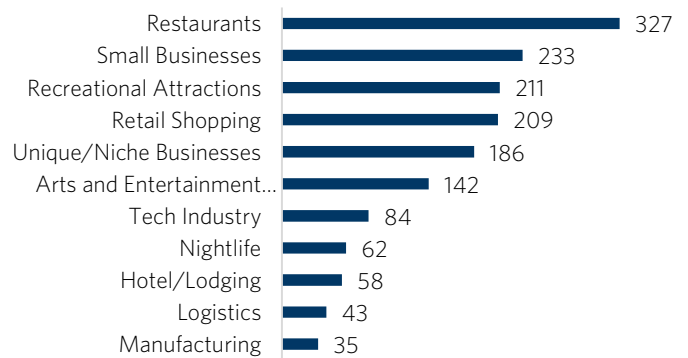
The top 3 challenges identified by participants were (1) insufficient infrastructure, (2) population influx and (3) urban sprawl. While placement between 1 and 2 fluctuated, these rankings remained consistent between residents and non-residents, as well as across age brackets and household incomes. The last selected challenges were low-wage jobs, inefficient deployment of public services, and insufficient housing stock, each selected between 70 and 90 times. The remaining challenges were selected between 100 and 170 times.

Participants were asked if they agreed that the Town of Harrisburg has a specific, unified vision that captures what community members most value about the town and the shared image of what residents want it to become. 44% of participants disagreed, with just over 20% agreeing. Responses across demographics showed a consensus that a disconnect exists between the town's vision and the values of its residents.

Business Development

Participants were asked to select 4 priorities regarding which kinds of businesses they would like to see more of in Harrisburg. The outcomes were as follows:

Participants were asked whether they believe new businesses are growing rapidly in the town and if existing businesses are well supported by the town. Participants agreed that existing businesses are well supported but that new and existing businesses are not growing rapidly. In the same line, when asked if they agreed that Harrisburg is an attractive place for businesses and if it's important for the town to offer incentives to attract new businesses, participants generally agreed on both counts.



Participants who identified themselves as either owning/managing a business in Harrisburg or as interested in starting or locating a business in Harrisburg were asked what resources might be helpful to their business (select all that apply). The results were as follows:

Business networking

Business incubator or coworking space

Town staff member dedicated to business retention and expansion

Entrepreneurship classes, seminars, workshops

Assistance in navigating permitting and other processes

Unsure

Business owners were also asked to respond to the statement "It is easy to do business in Harrisburg" with their level of agreement from 1 - 5. 20% of business owners disagreed (1 or 2), and 45% agreed (4 or 5).

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Before finalizing the strategic framework and implementation plan for the SEDP, the Town of Harrisburg and TPMA hosted a public open house. The event allowed those who live, work, and do business in the area to review and provide feedback on proposed strategies. The open house occurred at Town Hall on February 29, 2024, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. The goal of the open house was to gain consensus from the public on proposed strategies and tactics for the Town of Harrisburg to prioritize. Participants were asked to use color-coded sticky dots to indicate their agreement and priority of the proposed focus areas, strategies, and tactics. Additionally, participants were encouraged to utilize sticky notes to provide feedback, resources, insight, or interest in the goals, strategies, and tactics.

Throughout the event, many participants expressed excitement for the plan and frequently asked how they could be more involved going forward. In general, most participants agreed with the proposed strategies. However, the discrepancies between responses are indicated below.

Full results of the public open house were shared with Harrisburg leadership.





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Empowered Communities.