



# **WILSON CHAMBER** OF COMMERCE

**WILSON'S PREMIER  
BUSINESS NETWORK**

**2021**

**ANNUAL REPORT**



# Wilson Chamber of Commerce - Wilson's Premier Business Network

## OUR MISSION:

Support and advance the interests of the greater Wilson business community by providing networking, advocacy, marketing and education value to our members.

## OUR VISION:

Be the respected, representative voice of the greater Wilson business community, leading efforts to make Wilson a premier destination for business.

## OUR CORE VALUES:

- Providing courteous SERVICE to our members and community
- Preserving TRADITION by building on past successes
- Influencing action through inspiring LEADERSHIP
- Inviting INNOVATION and respecting new ideas
- Establishing TRUST through honesty and reliability
- Exercising LOYALTY by putting our members first

This annual report is produced to summarize the Chamber's program of work, and highlight some of the accomplishments that happened in 2021. We invite you to learn more about us by visiting [wilsonchamber.com](http://wilsonchamber.com) and to support our members who are listed in our print and online directories.



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## Wilson Chamber of Commerce

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## Message from the President

After months of uncertainty, frustration, and confusion pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic, the message we're getting from the Wilson business community is "we're back". From the windows of the Chamber's offices on Nash Street, we're seeing (and hearing) signs of that recovery. The new Truist office is up and occupied. The Wilson Family YMCA is nearing completion. In the next few months, ground will break on a multimillion-dollar mixed use facility with over 200 residential units atop ground floor retail space.

And that's only what is taking place on one city block in historic downtown Wilson.

All across Wilson County, business is booming. Our housing and construction markets are as competitive as they have ever been. "Now Hiring" signs adorn nearly every storefront. The Chamber has held multiple ribbon cutting ceremonies per

month since January, with no signs of that activity slowing down.

So, what is the cause of all this development fervor? For one, we're beginning to see the effects of the pandemic subside. We're cautiously optimistic that public health will continue to improve, along with consumer and employer confidence. Just as encouraging is the fact that Wilson is fast becoming a destination for entrepreneurs and startups. We're earning a reputation as an affordable place for businesses to succeed, with all of the advantages a business would expect in a larger metropolitan area.

The future is bright for the Wilson business community. Your Chamber and its members are ready to lead us there.

Sincerely,

Ryan Simons, President  
Wilson Chamber of Commerce



**Ryan W. Simons,**  
Chamber President  
[rsimons@wilsonncchamber.com](mailto:rsimons@wilsonncchamber.com)

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# 2021 Chamber Staff



**Rebecca Tew**  
Membership Services Manager



**Nikita Allen**  
Finance Manager



**Gretchen Allen**  
Administrative Assistant



**Becky Rose**  
Special Project Assistant



**Herman Batts**  
Facilities Manager



**Lindsay Perry**  
Marketing & Events  
Manager

# 2021 Board of Directors



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**Will Aycock**  
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**Rob Boyette**  
Wilson County

# WILSON AT A GLANCE

## Wilson Tourism Authority

Due to its convenient location along I-95, abundance of traveler amenities and attractions, and close proximity to the growing Research Triangle region, Wilson has become a popular destination for tourism. Domestic visitors to and within Wilson County spent \$132.12 million in 2019, an increase of 3.3% from 2018. The data comes from an annual study commissioned by Visit North Carolina, a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

## Wilson Economic Development Council

The chamber is proud to support the Wilson Economic Development Council, whose mission is to attract and facilitate the expansion of high-quality business and industry resulting in an increased tax base



# WILSON

NORTH CAROLINA

and new jobs for Wilson County.

### BETWEEN JULY 2017 AND JULY 2020:

12 new industries chose to locate in Wilson.

10 industries chose to expand their operations in Wilson.

\$596,910,000 in new industrial investment.

1,396 new jobs created by local industries, resulting in an additional

4,147 jobs created indirectly.

Infrastructure complete at Wilson's newest industrial park: the Campus @ 587.

WEDC staff made 54 marketing visits to promote Wilson across the world.

## Wilson Downtown Development Corporation

The Chamber recognizes the importance of Historic Downtown

Wilson as our commercial core, and supports the Wilson Downtown Development Corporation and their efforts to preserve our commercial legacy.

### DURING THE PAST FISCAL YEAR:

Building rehabilitations: 6

New Construction Projects: 0

Facade Improvements: 9

Housing Units Created: 0

Total residential units in the MSD: 122

Public Improvement Projects: 13

9 net new or expanded businesses created 53 net full-time jobs and 11 part-time jobs.

Total investment: \$57.2 MM (over \$21MM public; over \$36MM private)

2,585 Volunteer Hours, with a value of \$67,158 (Current value of volunteer time in NC is \$25.98/hr; [www.independentsector.org/volun-](http://www.independentsector.org/volun-)



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teer time)

22 Special Events bringing approximately 7,000 people downtown

Note, as there were times in this past FY that we were not able to meet and were not able to have special events, volunteer hours and # of people coming to events, were quite a bit lower than in past years.

Completion of the new home for Wilson County's arts council, Wilson Arts, at 204 Nash Street, creates a 20,000 sq. ft. modern, accessible facility for gallery space, offices, meeting rooms, classrooms, and rehearsal space. The new Gig East Exchange, located at 227 Goldsboro Street is Wilson's only co-working space and hub for innovation in eastern North Carolina. The renovation of 211 Nash Street allowed for North State Consulting, out of Raleigh, to move their headquarters to Wilson. The Whirligig Park opened its Museum and Gift Shop in Whirligig Station at 230 Goldsboro Street. Casita Brewing opened in the building located at 217 South Street and

the 211 & 209 South Street properties are under renovation for a pizza restaurant. The rebirth of the block at Nash, Pine & Broad streets are making headway with the 75,000 sq.ft. YMCA and parking deck well underway. The mixed-use development, called Centro, which will be added to this redevelopment area will feature approximately 11,000 sq. ft. of commercial spaces on the ground floor and approximately 245 apartments on the upper 4 floors. This past December, we were proud to present a new holiday event, Electric Light Fantasy, known as ELF, as a Covid 19 safe, innovative, holiday tradition. This drive-in, laser light show was a wonder for the eyes, held against the backdrop of the Whirligig Park and was sold out for 20 shows over 5 nights. With DOT's help, Goldsboro Street got repaved and the one-way to two way conversion of Tarboro and Pine streets is well underway. There are currently over a dozen property redevelopment projects in the works, as well as various public infrastructure improvement projects.

## Education

Wilson County Schools enrolls nearly 12,000 public school students in 26 schools. Among them are two early college academies whose graduates can earn both high school diplomas and college degrees. Wilson Early College Academy offers accelerated academics in small, learner-centered classes. Wilson Academy of Applied Technology equips students with advanced skills to meet the high-demand needs of industry.

Two charter schools provide unique educational options, and both are growing to accommodate high school enrollment. Sallie B. Howard School for the Arts & Education was recently named a National Blue Ribbon school and prepares over 800 students for careers in the performing arts, science, and humanities. Wilson Preparatory Academy uses a technology-based blended learning concept to prepare students for college.

Among area private schools,

Greenfield School is a non-sectarian independent school that promotes the development of the total student through balanced and challenging college preparatory academics.

## Barton College

Founded in 1902, Barton College is a four-year, private, liberal arts college. The Barton Experience focuses on academic excellence within a wide range of professional and liberal arts programs leading to baccalaureate and graduate degrees, including master's degrees in Nursing, Kinesiology, Criminology and Criminal Justice Sciences, School Administration, and an MBA in Strategic Leadership. Barton celebrates innovation and bold thinking among faculty and staff as the College nurtures bold leadership development among students. Barton offers purposeful internships and practicums in academic disciplines; engaging co-curricular cohorts, including but not limited to: Presidential Fellows, Esports, ArtWorks, and Healthcare+; meaningful international travel and study; research and presentations



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through Day of Scholarship; opportunities to give back through community service; an impressive array of cultural events; and diverse athletic competition among 24 collegiate teams, including the newest addition of Bulldog football.

### Wilson Community College

Wilson Community College is an affordable option to earn an associate degree, transfer credits, certifications, diplomas, and continuing education. WCC also partners with local businesses and industries to provide free customized trainings for their employees.

The Lee Technology Center hosts the Applied Engineering and Automotive Systems Technologies programs. Future renovations are currently being planned on both the Herring Avenue and Lee Technology Center campuses.

### Wilson Medical Center

As a Duke LifePoint Hospital, Wilson Medical Center benefits from resources at both Duke University Health System and LifePoint Health. In early 2020, the hospital opened new Same Day Surgery and Endoscopy Suites, part of an \$80 million renovation currently underway to provide an even greater patient experience. Last year, they opened a new Women's Pavilion which included spacious new rooms and bathrooms for laboring and postpartum mothers, a new Cesarean delivery suite and nursery.



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## What is the Executive Academy?

The Chamber's Executive Academy introduces today's business leaders to the dynamics that make Wilson a unique place to live and work. During the 10 month program, participants get a first-hand account of the issues facing our community. They form lifelong bonds with peers across Wilson's diverse industry sectors. They gain an appreciation for the challenges other professionals face in our market, and become trusted representatives of their organizations in the community.

By the time participants "pass the torch" to the next class, they are more firmly connected, deeply engaged, and better informed leaders who add immense value to their organizations - and to Wilson.

## Who participates?

The Academy is open to any employee of a chamber member in good standing. However, members should understand that the program is a COMMITMENT and an INVESTMENT. Members should only refer employees who have demonstrated leadership potential and represent the very best their organization has to offer, especially those whose career aspirations include a long-term stay in Wilson. Both newcomers and Wilson natives will come away with a better understanding of our community.

Past participants have included CEOs, senior managers, nonprofit executives, superintendents, politicians, and other leaders with significant responsibilities. The reputational success of the Academy is entirely dependent upon recruiting participants who fully embrace the opportunity as a way to grow personally and professionally.

Each class includes NO MORE than 20 participants, selected on a first-come, first-served basis.

"The experience has given me perspective into how much my home town has to offer. To hear stories of success from businesses ... inspired me to want more for Wilson."

Josh Thomas  
Class of 2016

## How is this program different?

The Academy is about more than equipping leaders to succeed in Wilson; it's also about improving the community that enables our organizations to prosper. Each Academy class takes on a community service project designed to leave a lasting, positive impact on Wilson. Many of the projects initiated by past DLW classes continue to benefit our community today.



### Cost:

**\$800**

A non-refundable \$150 deposit must accompany application. Balance due on date of Executive Retreat. Diamond-level Chamber Champions are eligible for one free tuition per class.

### Applications accepted:

**April 1 - May 31**

Applications accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Passing the Torch Reception occurs on a weekday in mid-June. Executive Retreat occurs on a weekday in mid-September. Session days take place monthly during the week.

### Ready to get started or want more information?

Call:  
(252) 237-0165

or visit:  
[wilsonnccchamber.com/pages/ExecutiveAcademy](http://wilsonnccchamber.com/pages/ExecutiveAcademy)

## THE CHAMBER AT A GLANCE



Founded in 1897 as the only local chamber of commerce serving all of Wilson County.

**476**

Number of active members of the Wilson Chamber of Commerce on October 1, 2021. The Chamber saw a net gain of 5 new members over 2020.

**20+**

Types of industries represented in the Chamber. No matter your business type or size, we customize our membership experience to benefit you and your employees.

**1085**

Number of member representatives we engage with regularly. Our membership includes many of Wilson's largest employers. Our contact list is always growing, and so is our reach to prospective clients, customers, and citizens.

**27**

Ribbon Cutting ceremonies held since January, 2021. New businesses to Wilson are joining the Chamber all the time. Our members are among the first to know which businesses have chosen to locate here.

**68**

Networking, advocacy, marketing, and education events hosted by the chamber the past 12 months. Whether it's a small educational seminar, or a business expo with thousands of guests, there are plenty of ways to connect your business with our community.

A 2012 study by the Schapiro Group found that businesses who are members of a local chamber of commerce are:

**29%** more likely to be thought of as using good business practices

**44%** more likely to be thought of favorably by consumers

**63%** more likely to be revisited by a consumer again in the future

## What is the Wilson Leadership Institute?

The Wilson Leadership Institute (WLI) is a rigorous, 18-month course in applied leadership, designed to instruct individuals with demonstrated leadership potential, and deploy them to highly visible public service leadership opportunities in Wilson. Participants are given practical, real-world training in the discipline of public service leadership, and work as a team to address an urgent community need.



The Impact Initiative graduated two classes before being rebranded as the Wilson Leadership Institute in 2019. WLI endeavors to be the authoritative source of leadership talent in Wilson.

Beginning with the initial interview, and continuing throughout the program, coordinators will be assessing the talents and interests of participants. As leadership opportunities emerge to lead on community boards and initiatives, program coordinators will be referring present and past participants that meet those organizational needs.

Created in 2015 as a collaborative project between Wilson Forward, the Wilson Economic Development Council and the Wilson Chamber of Commerce, WLI began as an effort called the Im-



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# ACTION STAFFING GROUP



**Charidy Corbett**, Certified Staffing Professional (CSP) was named President of The Action Group Human Resources Solutions by CEO and Chairman, Tav Gauss. Charidy has over 30 years of experience in the staffing industry. She began her career with The Action Group in 1988, providing administrative support and growing market share. In her current leadership role, Charidy is responsible for overseeing day to day operations, managing special projects, increasing sales, and maintaining relationships. Charidy works alongside her team to identify talent and to create placement opportunities for candidates and clients. She believes in teamwork and an "all hands on deck" approach to successfully meet the needs of our clients, employees and staff. Charidy has two grown children and lives with her husband outside of Nashville, North Carolina.



**Amy Stack** joined The Action Group as Accounting Manager in 2019, bringing 15+ years of experience handling high volume accounts payable processing for large corporations. Amy is accountable to both internal and external customers in providing financial and accounting support for the entire operation. Amy strives to uphold The Action Group's customer-centric culture and she excels in delivering results that boost efficiency in financial reporting and cash flow. She is a hands-on manager with proven skills in analyzing and troubleshooting to help ensure The Action Group's financial health and bottom-line results. Amy and her young family relocated to North Carolina by way of Kansas.



**Michelle Mills** has joined The Action Group HR's team to lead business development and marketing. Michelle comes from the IT industry, having spent her early career in sales and management positions in telecommunications. She later transitioned into the computer hardware and software industry, where she developed and lead channel partnerships and managed an inside sales team. She is tasked with updating and maintaining the company's web presence through content creation and management, and igniting new and existing relationships with clients and candidates. She works out of Raleigh to apply her experience in managing people and projects toward The Action Group's continued success. Michelle has two young daughters and enjoys travelling with them in her Airstream trailer.

## MEET OUR TEAM



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