



## *Market Analysis & Business Development Strategy*

TOWN OF RUTHERFORDTON, NORTH CAROLINA



# ***Market Analysis & Business Development Strategy***

***Town of Rutherfordton,  
North Carolina***

***Prepared by:***

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# 1 Introduction

The Town of Rutherfordton was designated as a North Carolina STEP community in 2012. The Small Town Economic Prosperity (STEP) Program is a state led effort that looks to build capacity for economic development and revitalization in North Carolina's rural communities. Upon joining the program, Rutherfordton appointed a volunteer committee of local leaders and stakeholders to guide the strategic planning process. With assistance from the State, Rutherfordton's STEP team created three subcommittees that are focusing on Business Development, Marketing, and Sense of Place. Each of these subcommittees subsequently created project priorities and strategies for their implementation.

In September of 2013, Rutherfordton and the STEP team hired Arnett Muldrow & Associates to complete a Branding and Marketing Strategy for the community. The plan was one of the key projects identified by the marketing committee and sought to create a consistent marketing platform for the Town, the STEP team, and Rutherford Town Revitalization (RTR) to market and promote the entire Rutherfordton community. The project resulted in:

- A Brand Statement that laid out the market position for the community, its assets, and opportunities for promotion;
- "A Minted Original" tag line that connects to the history of the Bechtel Mint, as well as the authenticity and uniqueness of Rutherfordton and its downtown;
- A Rutherfordton destination logo inspired by the original Bechtel coin image that has been systematically deployed throughout the community;
- The extension of brand graphics with new logos for the Town, RTR, and local events;
- Various marketing collateral strategies such as brochure covers, wayfinding designs, advertisement templates, etc.

This project included a detailed work plan that outlined specific marketing projects, costs (planning and production), phasing, and vendor information. Upon completion of the project, Rutherfordton began implementation including wayfinding, a downtown kiosk, and [www.myrutherfordton.com](http://www.myrutherfordton.com). These efforts are a testament to the hard work of the STEP team, as well as its desire for the successful growth and revitalization of the community.

In an effort to build on and continue this momentum, the Town of Rutherfordton once again secured Arnett Muldrow and Associates to complete this current plan - a comprehensive market analysis and business development strategy for the community.

## 1.1 Plan Elements

- **Comprehensive Market Analysis** – This begins with a market definition study to determine Rutherfordton's true trade areas, followed by detail on growth opportunities within the community based on current market demand.
- **Business Development Strategy** – The market research is followed by a business development work plan for the Town and STEP that focuses on business growth, downtown revitalization, targeted marketing, and implementation.
- **Continued Design Services** – Finally, additional design services were done for the previously completed branding work. This included revisions to the final logo set, coordination with concurrent wayfinding project, and new designs for banners, billboards, and window decals, as well as outputting new designs to the Brand Style Guide.

## 1.2 Background Input

During the initial kickoff, key stakeholders were engaged to discuss the future growth and development of Rutherfordton, as well as opportunities to attract a growing market. This occurred in one-on-one meetings and group sessions with the steering committee, business leaders, partner agencies, development representatives, key destinations, and tourism representatives. Key points from this community input are outlined below. It should be noted that the observations below were conveyed to Arnett Muldrow by stakeholders, some of which had differing viewpoints.

### Assets and Opportunities

- The Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC) was mentioned as the key “low-hanging” market from which Rutherfordton can capitalize. Stakeholders were quick to stress however that it is not the only market that the Town needs to focus on. Key points that were made included:
  - Rutherfordton already has a number of supporting businesses that can support this high-end market. These include the Visual Arts Center Gallery, Kid Senses, dining establishments such as Rumor Has It and Rutherford Thai, Tanner Clothing, and Firehouse Inn, among others.
  - While Rutherfordton may already have this cluster of businesses, there is a need to attract new, complementary businesses.
  - The TIEC will bring outsiders into the community, some of which will choose to live here because of the rural landscape, quality of life, and locational assets of Rutherford County.
  - It is critical however that the town and independent businesses find ways to connect to this market. In particular, Rutherford businesses should coordinate to ensure that hours of operation, schedule of events, dining offerings, and merchandising fits with the timeframe and needs of this equestrian market.
- Rutherfordton has a robust and growing health care industry. Rutherford Regional Healthcare continues to expand and enhance its services for area residents. This is important for economic development with new high wage jobs, but also for the community’s quality of life. This is the type of amenity a potential new business or resident is looking for prior to locating in a community.
- There are three key growth markets for customers for Rutherfordton:
  - Tryon International Equestrian Center – serving patrons with dining, shopping, etc.
  - Lake Lure visitors – providing Lake Lure visitors with dining, shopping, and event activity, particularly for those visitors who stay a week or longer.
  - Regional residents – Within a one-hour drive of downtown Rutherfordton, there is a population of over 1.4 million people. This includes Asheville (55 miles), Spartanburg (35 miles), Hendersonville (39 miles), Greenville (59 miles), and Hickory (53 miles). Each of these urban areas is a quick trip from Rutherfordton, and with effective marketing within the region, could provide patrons for Rutherfordton businesses.
- Downtown Rutherfordton was officially designated a Main Street community in 1990. Since then, Rutherford Town Revitalization and its partners have been systematically working to program, improve, and promote downtown. This has continued with the creation of the

STEP team and its strategic planning efforts. While revitalization is ongoing, downtown Rutherfordton has become an asset and destination for local and regional residents. It is also a prime location for investment. STEP is currently working with the town to improve the Central Street area, but there is an opportunity to do a more comprehensive master plan for all of downtown.

- For more significant economic development such as employment and industry, Rutherfordton's competitive advantages include its high-tech infrastructure, growing healthcare system, quality of schools, and overall quality of life. On the other hand, there are limited undeveloped areas in town that could receive significant new development, whether it is housing, employment, or mixed-use.
- Kid Senses is an incredible asset that is unrivaled within the region. The destination is important not only to Rutherfordton's residents' quality of life, but also to economic development and driving visitor activity.
- There is an opportunity to reach out to other communities to attract new businesses to expand into Rutherfordton.

### **Business Development Challenges**

- While the Equestrian Center is a huge opportunity, it also presents certain challenges:
  - It was stated that many businesses in town are reluctant to embrace the TIEC or perhaps fear the changes it could bring. It is important that all businesses be on the same page in order to maximize the impact of the TIEC.
  - While downtown has certain businesses that will be relevant to the TIEC patrons, the downtown itself needs to be cleaned up. In particular, certain storefronts are in need of maintenance and repair.
  - Each TIEC event will last a week, and the patrons will have a very specific itinerary for competition. Rutherfordton businesses must coordinate their efforts to be open at convenient times and providing merchandising that will be relevant to TIEC participants.
- When recruiting professionals, one disadvantage is that Rutherfordton does not have enough other jobs for that employee's spouse. If that employee is recruited, he or she and spouse may choose to live closer to a more urban market with additional job opportunities.
- It was mentioned that in general, Rutherfordton might not be "business friendly". These comments were directed more at a private sector that is afraid of competition, and lacks general coordination. Also, property ownership and challenges with high rents and lack of maintenance were mentioned.
- Like many peer communities, local business owners are not aware of the business development services that exist in the community such as the Chamber, RTR, and the Small Business Development Center.
- Downtown specific challenges include:
  - Rents may be too high and owners may be pricing space out of the market.
  - As a result, there are too many vacant buildings and spaces in downtown.
  - Parking is a challenge in downtown, primarily with a lack of awareness of public spaces, as well as crowding issues that arise on court days. It was also mentioned that private businesses often use customer parking. Fortunately, the STEP team is working on a parking strategy as part of its larger work plan.

- There are no consistent or convenient hours. Many businesses close at 5 or 5:30 and are not open on the weekends. This means that their primary customer base is not employed or must make special arrangements to patronize the business.
- Regarding residential growth, it was mentioned that Rutherfordton's market is still lagging the region in terms of values, resale, days on market, and new construction. It was also mentioned that there is limited space in town for any significant development.
- Rutherfordton self-image: Several stakeholders felt there was a general sense of negativity in business owners in the community. Business and property owners do not see the need to invest or re-invest, and otherwise do not realize the community's true potential. These people need to be convinced that Rutherfordton should not only become a great place, but that it *deserves* to be a great community.
- Some of this negativity may be lingering from the rivalries of the three communities of Rutherfordton, Spindale, and Forest City.

### **Broad Needs for Rutherfordton**

Stakeholders mentioned numerous businesses and activities that are needed, including:

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| - Restaurants (for locals, TEIC patrons, breakfast & lunch) |                       |
| - Movies and entertainment                                  | - Mid tier plus hotel |
| - Transportation to/from TIEC                               | - Concierge for TIEC  |
| - Microbrewery  | - Bike Shop           |
| - Outdoor outfitter   | - Winery              |
| - Activities/business for younger professionals             | - Specialty Shops     |
| - Incentives to locate businesses downtown                  | - Vacation Rentals    |

## 2 Market Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the market analysis for the Town of Rutherfordton. The market definition section of this report provides a description of the geography of Rutherfordton's customer base, and the individual market studies present specific business recruitment and development opportunities. The data will prove to be useful to Rutherfordton, its partners, as well as to individual businesses and property owners looking to make investments in the community.

### 2.1 Market Definition


The market definition exercise establishes the **true** geography of the retail trade area for Rutherfordton and provides the baseline data for the subsequent analyses. In order for the conclusions to be accurate, it is important that the market analysis reflect the consumer habits within Rutherfordton's trade areas rather than arbitrary study areas such as political boundaries and concentric circles. Therefore, the process began with a zip code survey of customers to determine the market base relevant to Rutherfordton and its businesses. This includes determining its place within the larger region and nearby competitive markets.

**Zip Code Survey of Customers - Rutherfordton, NC**

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions**

1. Simply ask customers, "Were conducting research for the City, can I have your zip code?"
2. For the Rutherfordton 28139 zip code, ask if they live inside or outside of city limits
3. At the end of the week, please write the total number of tallies in the total box to the right.


**arnett muldrow & ASSOCIATES**  
 For more information, contact Aaron Arnett at aaron@arnettmuldrow.com

<b>28139</b> Rutherfordton INSIDE City Limits	Total
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>
<b>28139</b> Rutherfordton OUTSIDE City Limits	Total
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<b>28160</b> Spindale	Total
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<b>28043</b> Forest City	Total
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<b>28756</b> Mill Spring	Total
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<b>28167</b> Union Mills	Total
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<b>28018</b> Bostic	Total
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<b>28746</b> Lake Lure	Total
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<b>28782</b> Tryon	Total
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**Other Zip Codes**      Sample - 29609 31794 27106

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### Survey Participation

Arnett Muldrow enlisted the assistance of area businesses to track consumers. During a one-week period, thirty-four businesses tallied the resident zip codes of their customers.

Each business was provided a form to record zip codes and was asked to keep a log of its customers.

*Figure 1: Zip code survey instrument. Arnett Muldrow & Associates.*



## Zip Code Survey Results

- The survey was held the week of February 6<sup>th</sup> through February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015.
- The thirty-four businesses that participated included a cross section of those in Rutherfordton including:
 

- Restaurant	- Produce	- Personal Care	- Lodging
- Antiques	- General Store	- Museum	- Art Gallery
- Pawn	- Veterinarian	- Automotive	- Utility
- Beverage Store	- Clothing	- Insurance	- Craft
- Hardware	- Interior Design	- Library	- Pharmacy
- 4,518 individual customer businesses were recorded during the survey week, an average of 133 per business.
- These customers came from 177 unique zip codes, 23 unique states, and 4 foreign countries.
- Participating businesses were located in downtown as well as throughout Rutherfordton.

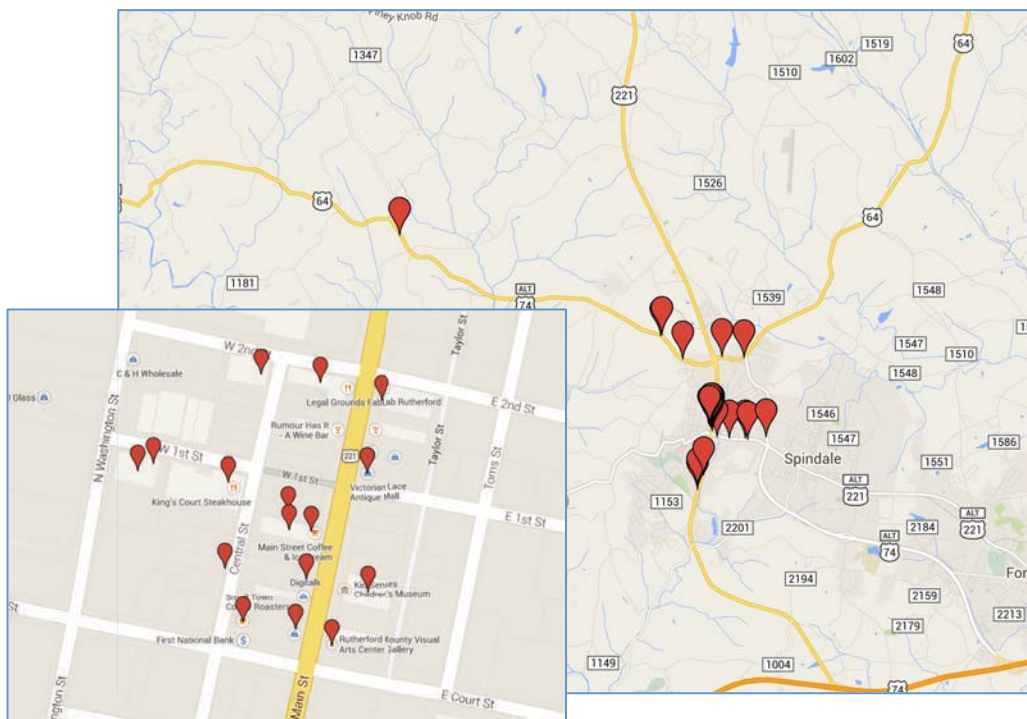


Figure 2: Location of participating businesses with downtown inset. Arnett Muldrow & Associates.

The tables below show the results of the zip code survey as compared to peer communities in which Arnett Muldrow has performed similar analyses. The communities selected are either located near Rutherfordton or are of similar size and character to Rutherfordton. They present a comparison of total unique visitors from different zip codes and different states. It should be noted that the other communities may have had a different number of businesses participate or may have conducted the survey at a different time of year.

In general, communities that have a broad geographic market are shown to the left on the charts (more zip codes and states), and those with a stronger local market base are shown to the right. For the purposes of these charts, Rutherfordton is identified with red bars.

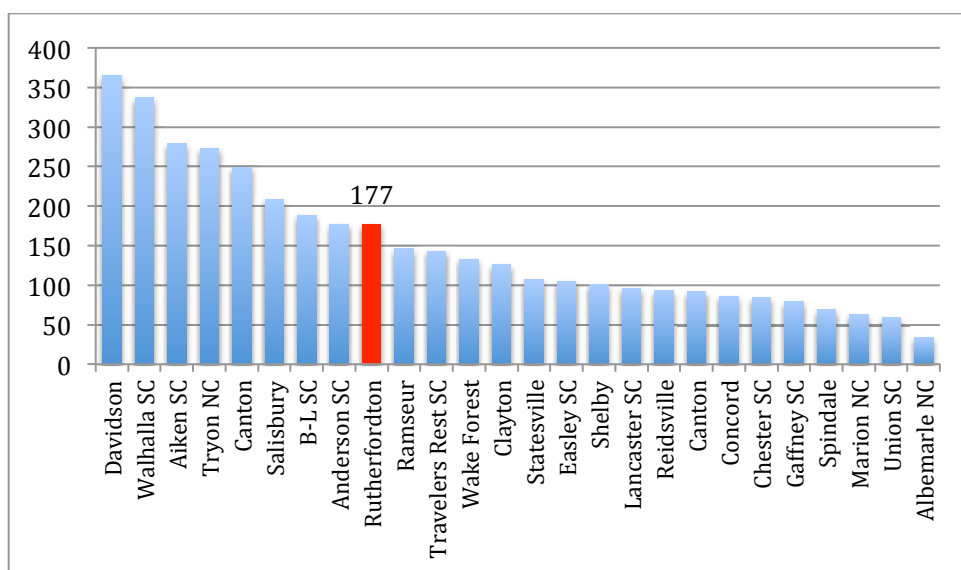


Figure 3: Comparison of unique zip codes recorded during zip code survey.

During the survey week, participating businesses had customers from 177 unique zip codes. The data ranges from 365 in Davidson, NC to just 34 in Albemarle, NC. When compared to peer communities, Rutherfordton is in the upper third suggesting a market that likely pulls from a broader geographic consumer base than many of its peers. Arnett Muldrow has also conducted this survey in Lake Lure, which had 703 unique zip codes representing a significant outlier.

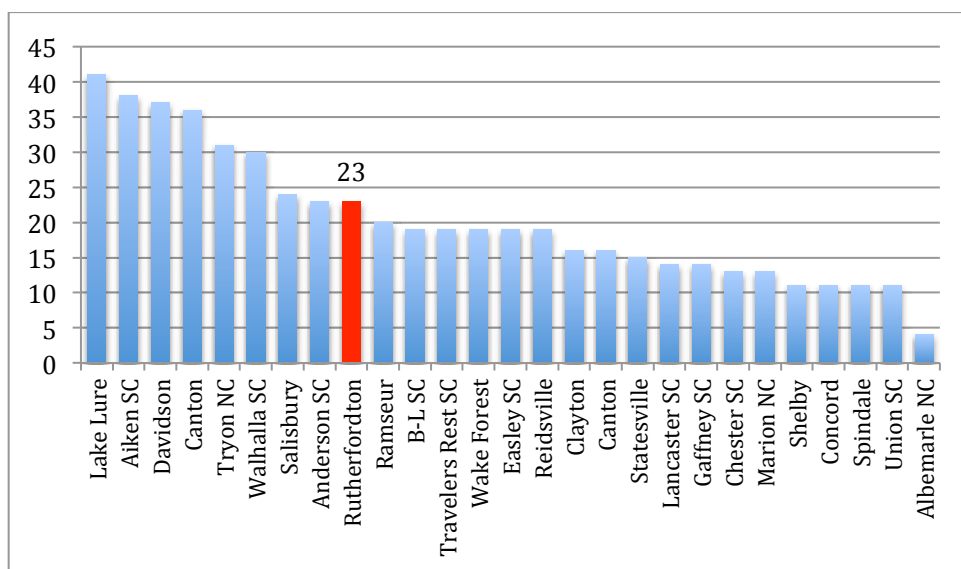


Figure 4: Comparison of unique states recorded during survey period.

Rutherfordton had 23 unique states during the survey week. Again, this is in the upper third of peer communities, and suggests Rutherfordton's has a broad geographic reach, with a respectable visitor market.

It should be noted that this survey was conducted in Rutherfordton at a time where there should be limited to no visitor market. The fact that Rutherfordton still fared well with respect to peer communities suggests that Rutherfordton likely has a healthy overall visitor market. It is recommended that the Town conduct quarterly zip code surveys in order to determine the annual impact of the visitor market to Rutherfordton businesses. This should include conducting the survey at the same businesses during a week where the Tryon International Equestrian Center is having an event.

### Customer Base

The chart below shows Rutherfordton's customer base broken down by customers' place of residence. For the most part, the chart identifies each community based on its zip code. In some cases, it refers to a collection of zip codes ("Rest of NC").

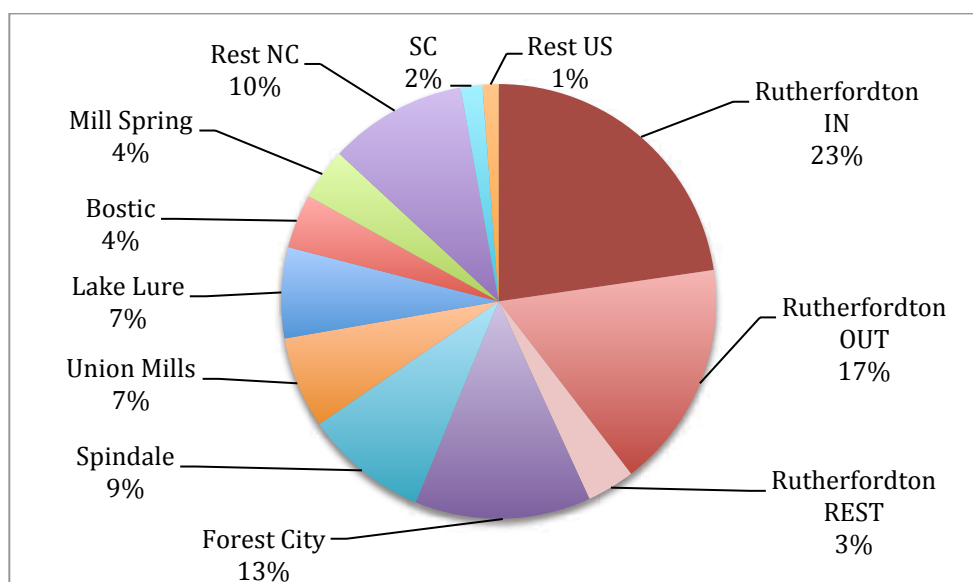


Figure 5: Percentage of Customer Visits – ALL BUSINESSES

- The 28139 zip code covers an area that includes the town limits of Rutherfordton, as well as a larger unincorporated area outside of town. Customers in this zip code were asked whether they live in the town limits of Rutherfordton, or outside of town but still in 28139.
- 23% of all customers live in the town limits of Rutherfordton, and 43% live within the 28139 zip code. All told, 85% of all customers live in Rutherford County. This is somewhat typical in a rural community like Rutherfordton, but also shows that Rutherfordton's bread and butter market is its local citizenry.
- Forest City (28043) and Spindale (28160) were the next largest consumer bases with 13% and 6% respectively.
- 93% of all customers came from Rutherford and its five adjacent counties.

- Therefore, just 7% of customers could be considered visitors from outside of the immediate region. They may be a regional visitor from Charlotte, or a true tourist from Florida.
  - This 7% can be typical of other rural communities, but was less than expected in Rutherfordton.
  - However, it has already been mentioned that the survey was conducted during a time when the visitor base would be limited.
  - Overall, the sheer number of unique states and zips (compared to peer communities) does suggest Rutherfordton has a very healthy visitor market.
  - Finally, it should be noted that the primary purpose of conducting this survey is to determine the local trade areas that are relevant to Rutherfordton businesses. Regardless of when the zip code survey is conducted (winter, summer, fall, etc.), the local trade areas will remain the same.
- Another good indicator for Rutherfordton concerns visitor “browsing”. When a unique zip code shows up in more than on business, that customer is browsing from shop to shop. Even though only 7% of customers during the week were visitors, there was a healthy amount of visitor browsing. A community wants to have an environment and overall business mix that is conducive to visitor browsing.

### Local Market by Business:

The data presented above represent Rutherfordton businesses as a whole. However, individual businesses typically show different trade patterns. The chart below show the Town of Rutherfordton market by individual businesses for each of the thirty-four businesses that participated. The average of all businesses is shown in red.

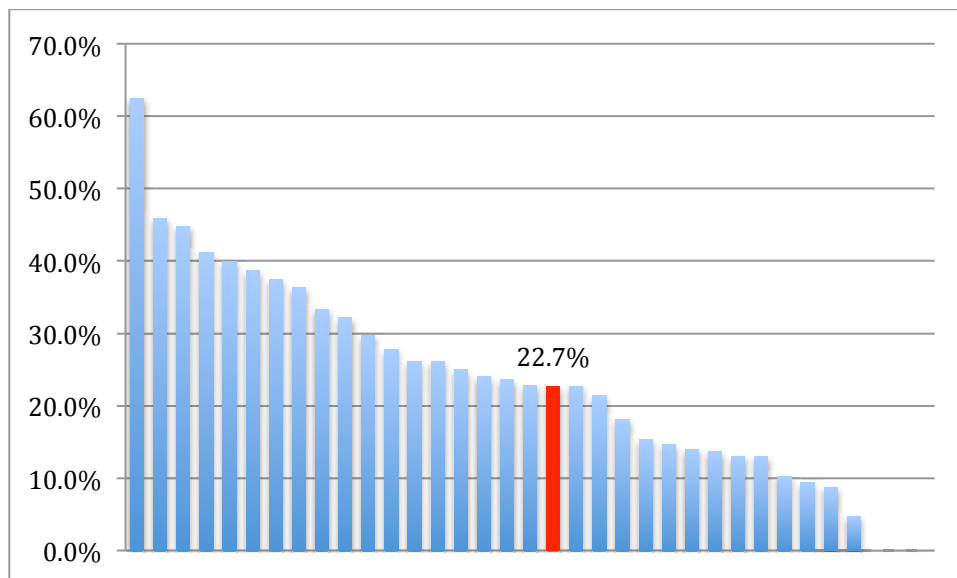


Figure 6: Percent Town of Rutherfordton by Business.

Participating businesses had an average of 22.7% of customers living within the Town of Rutherfordton, ranging from 0% (three businesses) to 62.5% depending on the business.

### Customer Base by Business Type and Business Location

As expected, the customer base for Rutherfordton did vary by location of business (inside or outside of downtown), and business type (restaurant, specialty, personal care, etc.).

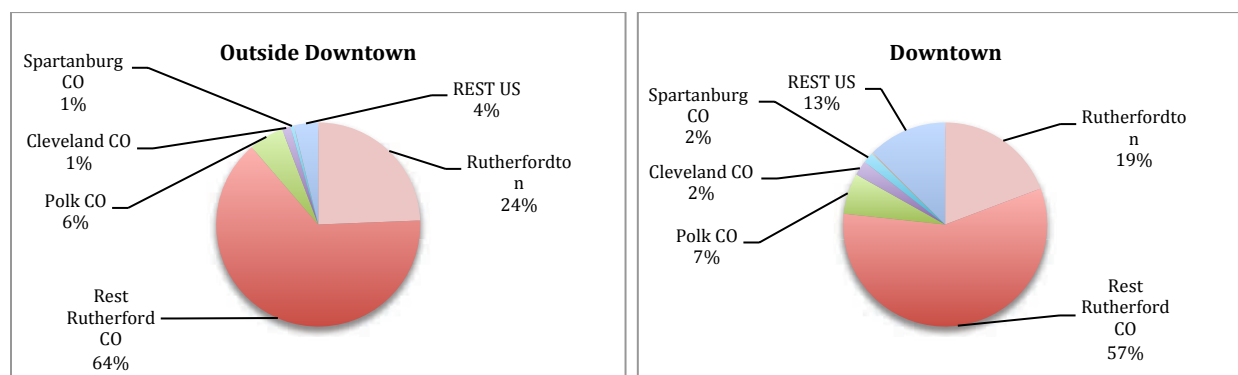


Figure 7: Location of Rutherfordton Customers by LOCATION of Business.

#### Outside of Downtown

- **24% Town of Rutherfordton**
- 88% Rutherford County
- 4% Visitor

#### Downtown

- 19% Rutherfordton
- 76% Rutherford County
- **13% Visitor**

As expected, downtown has a broader overall market than those businesses located outside of downtown. 13% of downtown consumers are visitors that live outside of the six-county region. This points to a healthy mix of businesses in downtown that serve both the residents of Rutherfordton, as well as consumers who live outside of town. The 13% visitor figure is nearly double that of all businesses as a whole.

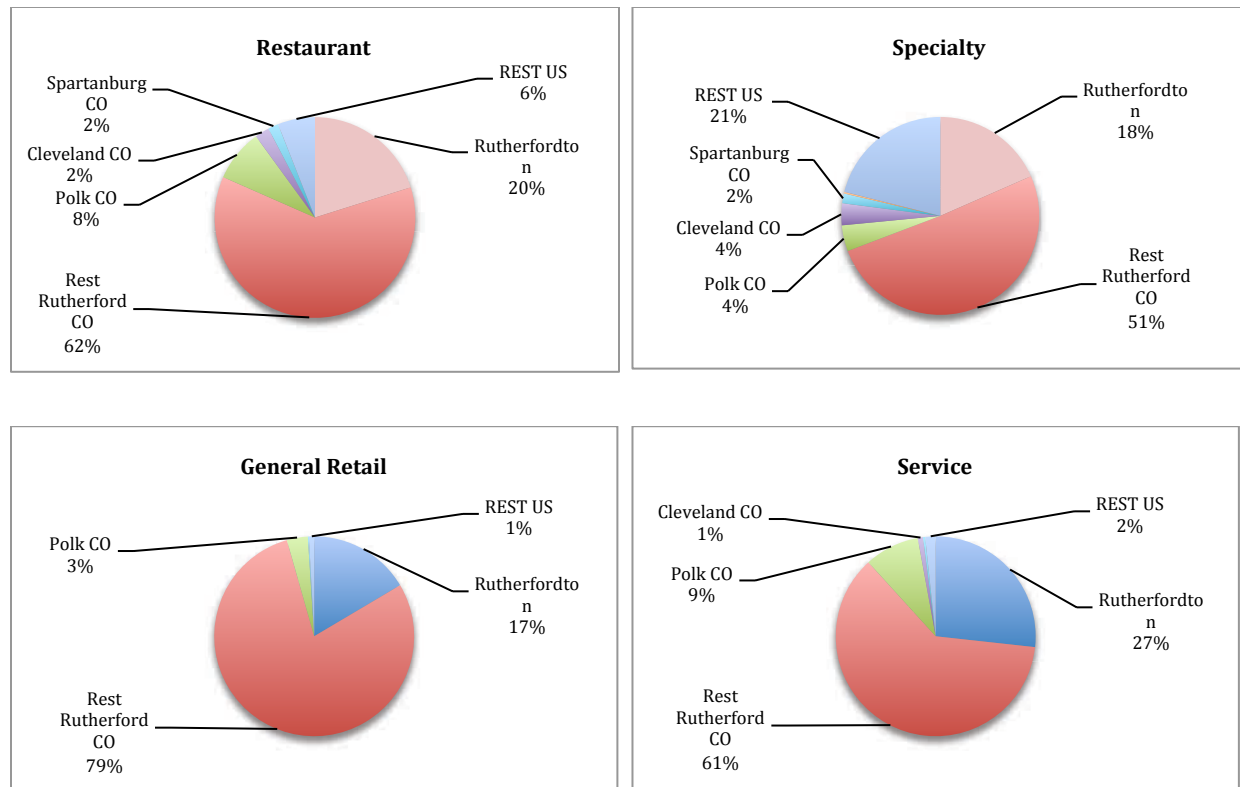


Figure 8: Location of Rutherfordton Customers by TYPE of Business.

### Restaurant

- 20% Town of Rutherfordton
- 82% Rutherford County
- 6% Visitor

### Specialty Retail/Destination

- 18% Rutherfordton
- 69% Rutherford County
- **21% Visitor**

### General Retail

- 17% Town of Rutherfordton
- **96% Rutherford County**
- 4% Visitor

### Service

- **27% Rutherfordton**
- 88% Rutherford County
- 2% Visitor

Overall, specialty retail and destination establishments (clothing, antiques, gallery, museum, etc), have the broadest overall market, whereby a fifth of their customers come from outside of the immediate region. As expected, service and general retail are almost entirely local oriented.

## 2.2 Trade Area Definitions

The data above were presented simply as totals from each individual zip code. However, zip codes vary by geographic area and total population and cannot be analyzed by total visits alone. For example, there were 592 visits from Forest City (28043) and 305 from Lake Lure (28746). This may suggest that Rutherfordton has a deeper penetration into Forest City than Lake Lure. However, the total population of the Forest City zip is nearly ten times that of the population of the Lake Lure zip. Therefore, there is a much deeper penetration into Lake Lure (relative to its population) than Forest City.

In other words, market penetration cannot be determined simply by the total number of visits but by visits in relation to population. The table below shows customer visits per 1,000 residents for each of the highest representative zip codes.

Zip Code	Area	2015 Pop	Visits	Visits/1000 Pop
28167	Union Mills	2,621	308	117.51
28746	Lake Lure	2,897	305	105.28
28139	Rutherfordton	19,134	1949	101.86
28160	Spindale	4,392	416	94.72
28756	Mill Spring	4,558	174	38.17
28018	Bostic	5,363	182	33.94
28043	Forest City	21,195	592	27.93
28782	Tryon	6,237	74	11.86
28114	MOORESBO	7,976	35	4.39
28761	NEBO	8,574	29	3.38
28020	CASAR	2,420	5	2.07
28722	COLUMBUS	7,011	13	1.85
28762	OLD FORT	6,560	9	1.37
28150	SHELBY	27,888	26	0.93
28752	MARION	30,638	22	0.72
29356	LANDRUM	8,422	6	0.71
29322	CAMPOBELLO	9,226	5	0.54
29323	CHESNEE	15,023	8	0.53
28152	SHELBY	25,428	9	0.35
28655	MORGANTON	56,596	18	0.32
28630	GRANITE FALLS	19,851	6	0.30
29349	INMAN	31,263	8	0.26
28052	GASTONIA	34,259	8	0.23
28792	HENDERSONVILLE	33,951	6	0.18
29687	TAYLORS	42,759	5	0.12
28139	Rutherfordton IN	4,204	1025	243.82
28139	Rutherfordton OUT	14,930	763	51.11

Figure 9: Primary and Secondary Trade Areas. Visits per 1,000 population.

Because the number and type of participating businesses vary from community to community, no specific number determines the primary and secondary trade areas. However, when comparing visits per 1,000 population in relation to the time frame in which the survey was conducted, breaks in the visits per 1,000 will begin to emerge. Whenever these breaks become significant, this determines the differences in trade areas.



By this measure, Rutherfordton's **Primary Retail Trade Area (PTA)** is defined as the following four zip codes:

- 28167 Union Mills
- 28746 Lake Lure
- 28139 Rutherfordton
- 28160 Spindale

These zip codes had more than 94 customer visits per 1000 residents. Customers from this zip code represented **66%** of the total visits during the survey period.

Three additional zip codes had more than 27 visits per 1000 residents and made up Rutherfordton's **Secondary Retail Trade Area (STA)**:

- 28756 Mill Spring
- 28018 Bostic
- 28043 Forest City

Customers from these zip codes represented **21%** of the total visits during the survey period.

The map below illustrates the trade areas for Rutherfordton. The primary trade area is shown in orange, and the secondary is shown in purple.

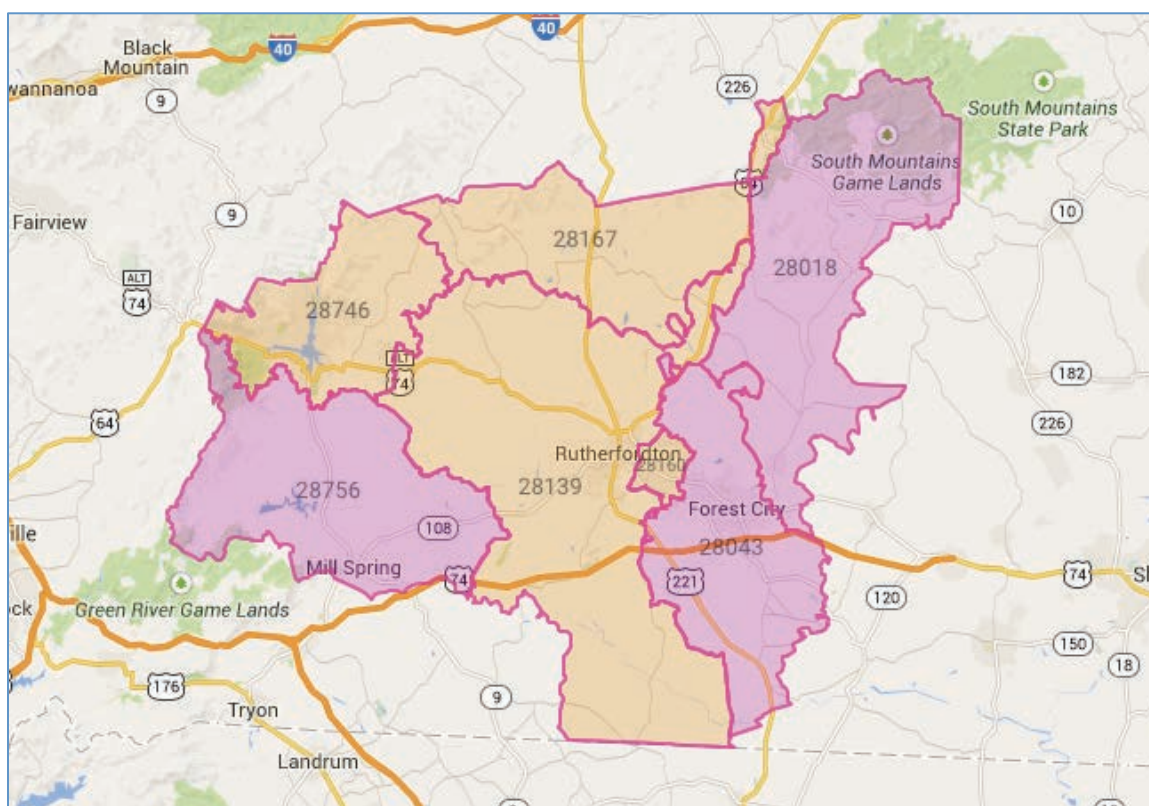


Figure 10: Rutherfordton PTA (orange) and STA (purple) trade areas.



**Market Definition Conclusions:**

- Rutherfordton has a local oriented market. 85% of all customers during the survey week live in Rutherford County.
- Rutherfordton's trade areas include seven total zip codes reaching out to a larger rural region with a population base of approximately 60,160 residents.
- 93% of customers come from the immediate six-county region. A 7% visitor base is relatively low, but the survey was conducted in February when few visitors would be expected.
- Still, Rutherfordton had a very healthy number of unique zip codes, states, and countries compared to its peers who have done this survey. This suggests that the visitor market is likely to be substantial during those times of year when visitor activity is higher.
- Downtown has a much higher visitor market overall than businesses located outside of downtown, while specialty retail has a higher visitor market than other business types.
- Town residents are nearly five times as likely to patronize Rutherfordton businesses than the rest of 28139. This is a fairly large break suggesting that these residents, while within the primary trade area, are doing more shopping outside of Rutherfordton. By the same token, this also shows a captive local market that Rutherfordton businesses can better capitalize.

## 2.3 Retail Market Analysis

Rutherfordton and its commercial offerings serve the market defined in the previous section. The primary and secondary trade areas in particular are the basis for the analysis below. In this section, Rutherfordton's retail market is examined to identify potential opportunities for retail growth through three key studies:

1. A **retail leakage** gap analysis that will look at the primary and secondary trade areas to see how much money is "leaking" from the area to stores in other areas.
2. From this, a **space demand analysis** will be developed to illustrate how much retail space could potentially be brought back into Rutherfordton based on the demand in the market.
3. A **retail shares** analysis that examines performance of retail stores in Rutherfordton's trade areas as a benchmark of the larger regional trade area. This study will seek to determine if there are any retail-clustering opportunities for the community.

### Retail Leakage Analysis

"Retail Leakage" refers to the difference between the retail expenditures by residents living in a particular area and the retail sales produced by the stores located in the same area. If desired products are not available within that area, consumers will travel to other places or use different methods to obtain those products. Consequently, the dollars spent outside the area are said to be "leaking." If a community is a major retail center with a variety of stores, it will be "gaining" rather than "leaking" retail sales. Even large communities may see leakage in certain retail categories.

The data presented below come from Nielsen Claritas, Inc., a national retail marketing service used by town planners, retail and restaurant site planners, and national chains for their market research. Claritas gets its data from a number of sources. Sales expenditures primarily come from the Census for Retail Trade gathered on a county level by the US Census Bureau. Claritas updates the data each year using local trade associations, local sales tax data, wage and employment data, then allocates it block group levels. Overall, the sales data come from the following sources: Census of Retail Trade; Annual Survey of Retail Trade; Claritas Business Facts; Census of Employment and Wages; Sales Tax Reports; and various trade associations.

### Retail Leakage in the Primary and Secondary Trade Areas

For the year 2014,

- Stores in Rutherfordton's primary trade area sold \$349 million in merchandise. Consumers living in Rutherfordton's PTA spent \$465 million. Therefore, Rutherfordton's PTA **leaked \$117 million** in sales last year.
- Stores in Rutherfordton's secondary trade area sold \$374 million in merchandise, while residents in the same area spent \$467 million on merchandise. Therefore, STA **leaked \$93 million** in sales last year.

- This represents a combined trade area leakage of \$210 million
- The Town of Rutherfordton gained \$23 million, indicating that while its trade areas show significant demand, Rutherfordton is pulling in customers from outside of the Town limits.

Leakage translates to opportunity based on current demand, and often suggests key commercial segments for a community to recruit. The table beginning on the following page details the consumer expenditures, retail sales, and inflow/outflow of dollars by individual retail category within the local trade areas.

Opportunity Gap - Retail Stores	Primary Trade Area			Secondary Trade Area		
	(Consumer Expenditures)	(Retail Sales)	Leakage (Inflow)	(Consumer Expenditures)	(Retail Sales)	Leakage (Inflow)
<b>Total Retail Sales Incl Eating and Drinking Places</b>	<b>465,498,477</b>	<b>348,600,213</b>	<b>\$116,898,264</b>	<b>467,484,379</b>	<b>374,440,840</b>	<b>93,043,539</b>
<b>Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers-441</b>	<b>86,024,292</b>	<b>22,534,888</b>	<b>\$63,489,404</b>	<b>84,436,077</b>	<b>83,726,396</b>	<b>709,681</b>
Automotive Dealers-4411	69,229,739	18,228,963	\$51,000,776	68,064,821	77,073,769	-9,008,948
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers-4412	9,997,237	131,534	\$9,865,703	9,721,009	83,181	9,637,828
Automotive Parts/Accsrs, Tire Stores-4413	6,797,316	4,174,391	\$2,622,925	6,650,247	6,569,446	80,801
<b>Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores-442</b>	<b>8,473,367</b>	<b>13,158,352</b>	<b>-\$4,684,985</b>	<b>8,177,381</b>	<b>2,107,136</b>	<b>6,070,245</b>
Furniture Stores-4421	4,386,754	9,415,361	-\$5,028,607	4,216,868	1,085,970	3,130,898
Home Furnishing Stores-4422	4,086,613	3,742,991	\$343,622	3,960,513	1,021,166	2,939,347
<b>Electronics and Appliance Stores-443</b>	<b>7,673,049</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>\$7,673,049</b>	<b>7,576,407</b>	<b>2,001,042</b>	<b>5,575,365</b>
Appliances, TVs, Electronics Stores-44311	6,032,495	0	\$6,032,495	5,968,370	0	5,968,370
Household Appliances Stores-443111	1,110,756	0	\$1,110,756	1,096,713	0	1,096,713
Radio, Television, Electronics Stores-443112	4,921,739	0	\$4,921,739	4,871,657	0	4,871,657
Computer and Software Stores-44312	1,466,208	0	\$1,466,208	1,436,702	2,001,042	-564,340
Camera and Photographic Equipment Stores-44313	174,346	0	\$174,346	171,335	0	171,335
<b>Building Material, Garden Equip Stores -444</b>	<b>48,406,238</b>	<b>20,062,197</b>	<b>\$28,344,041</b>	<b>46,993,120</b>	<b>55,252,432</b>	<b>-8,259,312</b>
Building Material and Supply Dealers-4441	40,841,584	16,307,954	\$24,533,630	39,557,559	46,214,922	-6,657,363
Home Centers-44411	16,483,627	309,143	\$16,174,484	16,022,179	24,344,874	-8,322,695
Paint and Wallpaper Stores-44412	685,629	190,890	\$494,739	650,609	267,246	383,363
Hardware Stores-44413	4,126,989	418,282	\$3,708,707	4,102,597	448,675	3,653,922
Other Building Materials Dealers-44419	19,545,339	15,389,639	\$4,155,700	18,782,174	21,154,127	-2,371,953
Building Materials, Lumberyards-444191	7,282,468	5,755,791	\$1,526,677	7,073,229	7,911,732	-838,503
Lawn, Garden Equipment, Supplies Stores-4442	7,564,654	3,754,243	\$3,810,411	7,435,561	9,037,510	-1,601,949
Outdoor Power Equipment Stores-44421	2,611,627	149,456	\$2,462,171	2,514,608	7,215,533	-4,700,925
Nursery and Garden Centers-44422	4,953,027	3,604,787	\$1,348,240	4,920,953	1,821,977	3,098,976
<b>Food and Beverage Stores-445</b>	<b>61,588,129</b>	<b>152,237,110</b>	<b>-\$90,648,981</b>	<b>63,851,055</b>	<b>46,662,000</b>	<b>17,189,055</b>
Grocery Stores-4451	39,886,849	43,077,813	-\$3,190,964	41,516,574	46,250,427	-4,733,853
Supermarkets, Grocery (Ex Conv) Stores-44511	37,183,908	39,293,826	-\$2,109,918	38,671,974	40,628,329	-1,956,355
Convenience Stores-44512	2,702,941	3,783,987	-\$1,081,046	2,844,600	5,622,098	-2,777,498
Specialty Food Stores-4452	4,769,601	758,160	\$4,011,441	4,993,885	411,573	4,582,312
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores-4453	16,931,679	108,401,137	-\$91,469,458	17,340,596	0	17,340,596

Opportunity Gap - Retail Stores	Primary Trade Area			Secondary Trade Area		
	(Consumer Expenditures)	(Retail Sales)	Leakage (Inflow)	(Consumer Expenditures)	(Retail Sales)	Leakage (Inflow)
<b>Health and Personal Care Stores-446</b>	<b>30,211,249</b>	<b>33,833,671</b>	<b>-\$3,622,422</b>	<b>29,935,235</b>	<b>23,306,835</b>	<b>6,628,400</b>
Pharmacies and Drug Stores-44611	24,400,475	33,670,144	-\$9,269,669	24,189,477	22,891,728	1,297,749
Cosmetics, Beauty Supplies, Perfume Stores	2,149,810	960	\$2,148,850	2,125,263	151,175	1,974,088
Optical Goods Stores-44613	960,812	18,464	\$942,348	936,894	135,179	801,715
Other Health and Personal Care Stores-44619	2,700,152	144,103	\$2,556,049	2,683,601	128,753	2,554,848
<b>Gasoline Stations-447</b>	<b>47,317,773</b>	<b>23,661,909</b>	<b>\$23,655,864</b>	<b>49,073,823</b>	<b>30,345,032</b>	<b>18,728,791</b>
Gasoline Stations With Conv Stores-44711	34,830,404	16,565,376	\$18,265,028	36,242,867	22,921,601	13,321,266
Other Gasoline Stations-44719	12,487,369	7,096,533	\$5,390,836	12,830,956	7,423,431	5,407,525
<b>Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores-448</b>	<b>18,281,747</b>	<b>7,046,461</b>	<b>\$11,235,286</b>	<b>17,995,829</b>	<b>6,935,023</b>	<b>11,060,806</b>
Clothing Stores-4481	9,839,480	6,706,155	\$3,133,325	10,087,894	6,423,874	3,664,020
Men's Clothing Stores-44811	470,168	38,822	\$431,346	473,053	621,149	-148,096
Women's Clothing Stores-44812	2,183,079	1,624,659	\$558,420	2,216,940	457,800	1,759,140
Childrens, Infants Clothing Stores-44813	600,526	0	\$600,526	649,889	0	649,889
Family Clothing Stores-44814	5,292,859	3,508,611	\$1,784,248	5,438,620	3,822,311	1,616,309
Clothing Accessories Stores-44815	426,115	484,270	-\$58,155	431,420	322,847	108,573
Other Clothing Stores-44819	866,733	1,049,793	-\$183,060	877,972	1,199,767	-321,795
Shoe Stores-4482	1,553,460	52,420	\$1,501,040	1,647,653	260,162	1,387,491
Jewelry, Luggage, Leather Goods Stores-4483	6,888,807	287,886	\$6,600,921	6,260,282	250,987	6,009,295
Jewelry Stores-44831	6,108,811	287,886	\$5,820,925	5,471,858	250,987	5,220,871
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores-44832	779,996	0	\$779,996	788,424	0	788,424
<b>Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores-451</b>	<b>7,598,127</b>	<b>440,889</b>	<b>\$7,157,238</b>	<b>7,593,441</b>	<b>863,869</b>	<b>6,729,572</b>
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Inst Stores-4511	6,706,594	379,238	\$6,327,356	6,712,999	664,942	6,048,057
Sporting Goods Stores-45111	3,496,259	116,501	\$3,379,758	3,540,675	380,954	3,159,721
Hobby, Toys and Games Stores-45112	1,874,491	6,389	\$1,868,102	1,876,841	282,504	1,594,337
Sew/Needlework/Piece Goods Stores-45113	659,878	113,458	\$546,420	640,946	0	640,946
Musical Instrument and Supplies Stores-45114	675,966	142,890	\$533,076	654,537	1,484	653,053
Book, Periodical and Music Stores-4512	891,533	61,651	\$829,882	880,442	198,927	681,515
Book Stores and News Dealers-45121	746,131	61,651	\$684,480	737,619	198,927	538,692
Book Stores-451211	637,502	61,651	\$575,851	626,576	198,927	427,649
News Dealers and Newsstands-451212	108,629	0	\$108,629	111,043	0	111,043
Prerecorded Tapes, CDs, Record Stores-45122	145,402	0	\$145,402	142,823	0	142,823

Opportunity Gap - Retail Stores	Primary Trade Area			Secondary Trade Area		
	(Consumer Expenditures)	(Retail Sales)	Leakage (Inflow)	(Consumer Expenditures)	(Retail Sales)	Leakage (Inflow)
<b>General Merchandise Stores-452</b>	<b>52,968,801</b>	<b>36,318,189</b>	<b>\$16,650,612</b>	<b>54,262,972</b>	<b>46,438,019</b>	<b>7,824,953</b>
Department Stores Excl Leased Depts-4521	21,521,698	2,009,899	\$19,511,799	21,971,041	11,975,489	9,995,552
Other General Merchandise Stores-4529	31,447,103	34,308,290	<b>-\$2,861,187</b>	32,291,931	34,462,530	<b>-2,170,599</b>
<b>Miscellaneous Store Retailers-453</b>	<b>12,845,469</b>	<b>6,278,957</b>	<b>\$6,566,512</b>	<b>12,977,878</b>	<b>10,570,051</b>	<b>2,407,827</b>
Florists-4531	460,847	22,956	\$437,891	448,296	23,243	425,053
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores-4532	5,462,451	869,116	\$4,593,335	5,407,925	9,172,828	<b>-3,764,903</b>
Office Supplies and Stationery Stores-45321	2,601,850	63,668	\$2,538,182	2,531,577	8,457,920	<b>-5,926,343</b>
Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores-45322	2,860,601	805,448	\$2,055,153	2,876,348	714,908	2,161,440
Used Merchandise Stores-4533	791,271	32,303	\$758,968	797,123	50,519	746,604
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers-4539	6,130,900	5,354,582	\$776,318	6,324,534	1,323,461	5,001,073
<b>Non-Store Retailers-454</b>	<b>40,001,366</b>	<b>8,282,493</b>	<b>\$31,718,873</b>	<b>40,037,808</b>	<b>29,915,227</b>	<b>10,122,581</b>
<b>Foodservice and Drinking Places-722</b>	<b>44,108,870</b>	<b>24,745,097</b>	<b>\$19,363,773</b>	<b>44,573,353</b>	<b>36,317,778</b>	<b>8,255,575</b>
Full-Service Restaurants-7221	19,752,140	10,307,601	\$9,444,539	19,900,209	15,448,147	4,452,062
Limited-Service Eating Places-7222	17,572,563	6,982,259	\$10,590,304	17,813,654	18,763,062	<b>-949,408</b>
Special Foodservices-7223	4,852,183	7,104,142	<b>-\$2,251,959</b>	4,911,852	0	4,911,852
Drinking Places -Alcoholic Beverages-7224	1,931,984	351,095	\$1,580,889	1,947,638	2,106,569	<b>-158,931</b>
<b>GAFO *</b>	<b>100,457,542</b>	<b>57,833,007</b>	<b>\$42,624,535</b>	<b>101,013,955</b>	<b>67,517,917</b>	<b>33,496,038</b>
General Merchandise Stores-452	52,968,801	36,318,189	\$16,650,612	54,262,972	46,438,019	7,824,953
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores-448	18,281,747	7,046,461	\$11,235,286	17,995,829	6,935,023	11,060,806
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores-442	8,473,367	13,158,352	<b>-\$4,684,985</b>	8,177,381	2,107,136	6,070,245
Electronics and Appliance Stores-443	7,673,049	0	\$7,673,049	7,576,407	2,001,042	5,575,365
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores-451	7,598,127	440,889	\$7,157,238	7,593,441	863,869	6,729,572
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores-4532	5,462,451	869,116	\$4,593,335	5,407,925	9,172,828	<b>-3,764,903</b>

Figure 11: Retail Leakage by Category in Rutherfordton's Primary and Secondary Trade Areas. Source: Claritas, Inc.

### Space Demand Analysis

While there is a certain amount of leakage in specific categories, Rutherfordton cannot reasonably expect to recapture 100% of the sales leaking from its trade areas. Residents will continue to go to Spartanburg, Hendersonville, Asheville and beyond for certain purchases, or buy products online. Therefore, we must use a capture scenario that illustrates the potential for additional retail should some of the lost revenues be captured in the categories where retail leakage exists.

Through strategic recruitment, economic development and marketing, a community can reasonably expect to recapture a certain amount of sales that are leaking out of the area. Typically, a community could capture 20% of leakage from the primary trade area (one in every five dollars) and 10% of the leakage from the secondary trade area (one in every ten dollars).

The table on the following page illustrates the new or expanded retail space that could be supported in Rutherfordton by capturing some of the leaking sales. The table also shows supportable retail space by square footage for individual retail categories. The sales per square foot for retail store types have been obtained from *Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers*, published by ULI.

Retail Stores	20% of PTA Outflow	10% Of STA Outflow	Potential Capture	Sales per SF	Calculated Capture
Selected Retail Categories Below	20,522,625	6,719,868	27,242,493		168,672
Furniture Stores		313,090	313,090	142	2,207
Home Furnishing Stores	68,724	293,935	362,659	168	2,162
Household Appliances Stores	222,151	109,671	331,823	245	1,352
Radio, Television, Electronics Stores	984,348	487,166	1,471,514	207	7,103
Computer and Software Stores	293,242		293,242	207	1,415
Camera and Photographic Equipment Stores	34,869	17,134	52,003	543	96
Building Material and Supply Dealers	4,906,726		4,906,726	142	34,462
Hardware Stores	741,741	365,392	1,107,134	121	9,144
Grocery Stores			0	372	0
Health and Personal Care Stores		662,840	662,840	247	2,680
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	2,247,057	1,106,081	3,353,138	165	20,371
Women's Accessory & Specialty	111,684	175,914	287,598	165	1,747
Shoe Stores	300,208	138,749	438,957	159	2,764
Jewelry Stores	1,164,185	522,087	1,686,272	264	6,389
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	155,999	78,842	234,842	199	1,181
Sporting Goods Stores	675,952	315,972	991,924	153	6,464
Hobby, Toys and Games Stores	373,620	159,434	533,054	146	3,644
Sew/Needlework/Piece Goods Stores	109,284	64,095	173,379	75	2,314
Book Stores	115,170	42,765	157,935	161	980
General Merchandise Stores	3,330,122	782,495	4,112,618	134	30,714
Florists	87,578	42,505	130,084	150	868
Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	411,031	216,144	627,175	169	3,721
Foodservice and Drinking Places	3,872,755	825,558	4,698,312	202	23,302
Drinking Places -Alcoholic Beverages	316,178		316,178	88	3,590

Figure 12: Capture Scenario for Rutherfordton. Sources: Claritas, Inc., Dollars & Cents of Shopping Centers, Arnett Muldrow & Associates.

Based on this scenario table, Rutherfordton's trade areas show demand for up to **168,672 square feet of additional retail space**.



## Retail Shares Analysis

The retail shares analysis compares Rutherfordton's primary trade area businesses as proportion of a larger region. This analysis is used to benchmark selected retail categories to determine if particular retail types are underperforming (representing an opportunity for expansion) or performing exceptionally well (representing an opportunity for clustering related businesses around a certain strength). For the purposes of this study, Rutherfordton's primary trade area the six-county region (Rutherford, Cleveland, Polk, McDowell, Spartanburg, Cherokee).

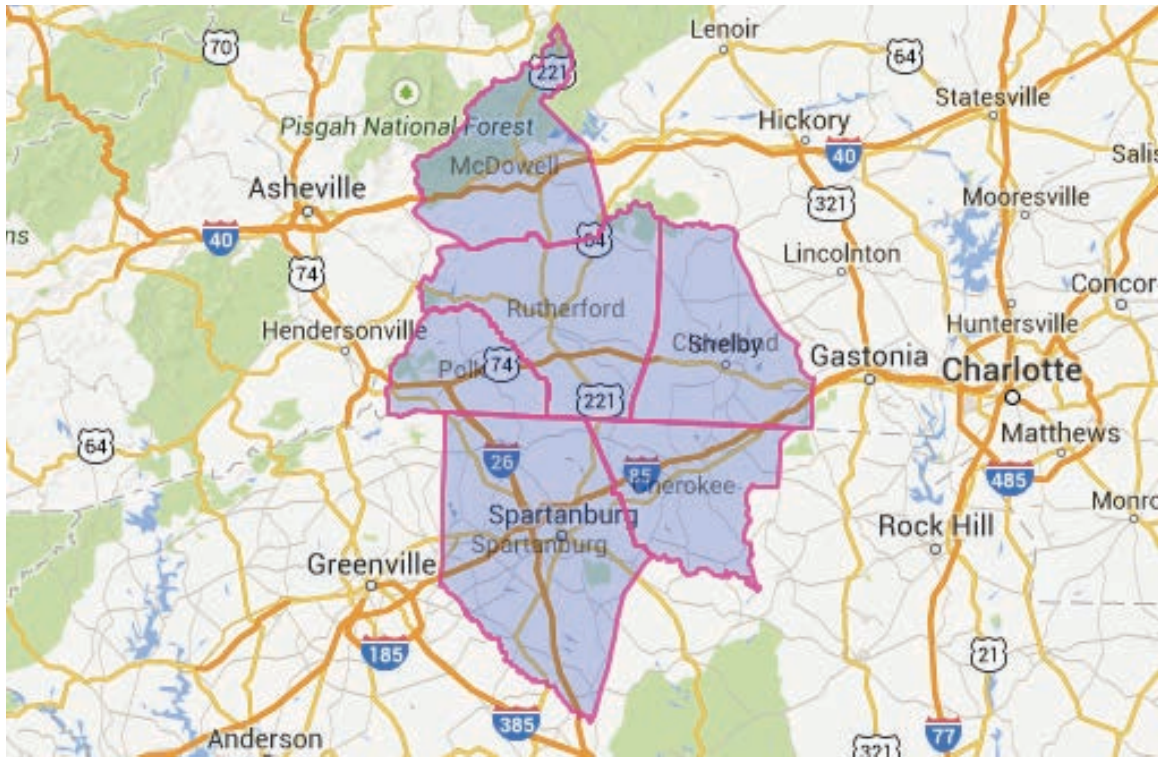


Figure 13: Retail Shares Study Area. Sources: Claritas, Arnett Muldrow & Associates.

The total sales for all businesses in the primary trade area account for a **4.3%** share of all retail within the region shown above.

Any category significantly above the benchmark share of 4.3% in the PTA would represent a clustering opportunity. This means that Rutherfordton has a larger portion of regional retail sales in that category. That particular category is a regional attractor and there may be the potential for expansion in an effort to build a cluster. There may also be a need to market and position the community as a destination for a particular use.

Anything significantly below the benchmark suggests there is a general lack of supply in that category. This would point us back to the retail leakage study to determine if there is enough opportunity to support additional space in Rutherfordton.

Retail Shares Analysis	Sales		Share
	PRIMARY TRADE AREA	6 County	%
<b>Total Retail Sales</b>	348,600,213	8,054,365,093	4.3%
Furniture Stores	9,415,361	65,999,091	14.3%
Home Furnishing Stores	3,742,991	52,160,930	7.2%
Nursery and Garden Centers	3,604,787	63,295,316	5.7%
Specialty Food Stores	758,160	6,516,086	11.6%
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	33,670,144	450,056,639	7.5%
Women's Clothing Stores	1,624,659	17,407,622	9.3%
Clothing Accessories Stores	484,270	5,073,438	9.5%
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	5,354,582	55,282,805	9.7%

Figure 14: Shares Analysis for Primary Trade Area. Source: Claritas, Inc.

The shares study shows a number of business types that are performing well compared to the region. Generally, the ability to build retail clusters is centered on destination based retail, such as restaurants, antiques, furniture, etc. In Rutherfordton, most business above the benchmark are local needs. However, certain destination retail show clustering opportunities including furniture, home furnishings, and women's clothing.

### Retail Pull Factor

Another method to determine an area's competitiveness is by calculating a retail "pull factor". Similar to a retail shares analysis, it is a supply-side study that provides a broader perspective on the relative strength of a community's retail base. Pull Factor is determined simply by dividing Rutherfordton's per capita retail sales by North Carolina's per capita sales. The figures below are based on the most recent sales data from Claritas, Inc, as well as the US Census.

	Total Retail Sales	2015 Population	Per Capita Retail Sales	Pull Factor
North Carolina	\$164,482,850,429	9,993,105	\$16,459.63	n/a
Rutherfordton	\$91,233,952	4,204	\$21,701.70	1.32
PTA	\$348,600,213	29,046	\$12,001.66	0.73
STA	\$374,440,840	31,116	\$12,033.71	0.73
Rutherford CO	\$750,478,012	67,381	\$11,137.83	0.68
Polk CO	\$268,946,296	20,418	\$13,172.02	0.80
Cleveland CO	\$1,223,890,705	97,009	\$12,616.26	0.77
Spartanburg CO	\$3,964,471,500	294,279	\$13,471.81	0.82
Cherokee CO	\$560,939,168	56,067	\$10,004.80	0.61
McDowell CO	\$618,477,827	45,234	\$13,672.85	0.83

Figure 15: Regional Retail Sales Pull Factors. Source: Claritas, US Census.

The data is shown for Rutherfordton and the six-county regional area. A pull factor figure greater than one suggests the area is pulling in sales beyond the customer base that lives within

the respective area. A factor less than one indicates that the community is losing sales to areas outside.

At 1.32, the Town of Rutherfordton is pulling in sales from a larger rural region. However, at .73, both the PTA and STA are not meeting the needs of the residents that live in the area.

Interestingly, all of the surrounding six counties are below one, including Spartanburg, which has a retail market of nearly \$4 billion.

#### **Retail Analysis Conclusions:**

- Rutherfordton lies at the center of a competitive market. Rutherfordton proper had \$348 million in sales in 2014, while the six-county region had over \$8 billion in sales.
- Still, Rutherfordton serves a large rural market with a population of over 60,000 people. This market had a combined leakage in 2014 of \$210 million. This leakage represents opportunities for new commercial growth in Rutherfordton and its trade areas.
- The Town of Rutherfordton has a 1.32 pull factor indicating it is a retail center for the surrounding rural region.
- Overall, there is demand for up to 168,000 square feet of new retail space in Rutherfordton and its trade areas. Any new retail recruited:
  - Should complement the regional retail offerings.
  - Should have effective business plans,
  - Balance local demand with opportunities to grow visitor traffic, particularly as it relates to retirees, equestrian, etc.
- Based on Rutherfordton's existing retail market as well as the offerings within the region, there is demand potential in the following areas:
  - **Restaurants**
    - The PTA & STA are leaking over \$27 million combined.
    - There is demand for up to 23,302 square feet of new restaurants. The majority of this demand is in "full-service" restaurants as opposed to fast food.
    - Understanding a typical independent restaurant can be between 2,500 to 5,000 square feet, this suggests demand for a number of new restaurants.
    - It is important to note that the data presented above are real numbers representing real demand. Of course, any business needs to have a solid business plan, meet the needs of the customer base, and be financially sound. Just because a restaurant may have closed in the past, does not mean there is no demand for new dining.
  - **Building Material & Supply Dealers**
    - There is demand for up to 34,000 square feet of space. The Lowes in Forest City likely serves much of the needs for Rutherfordton residents.
    - Considering a typical Lowes or Home Depot is around 125,000 square feet and larger, Rutherfordton's opportunity likely lies with smaller independents or locally owned building materials operation.
  - **General Merchandising**
    - With a combined trade area leakage of \$24 million, there is demand for up to 30,000 square feet new space.
    - A typical Wal Mart is 220,000 square feet, while Dollar General and similar chains are around 15,000 square feet.

- Rutherfordton's demand would therefore be met by these "dollar-type" operations, or perhaps independents like the existing Green Hill, or Mast-type of general store.
- **Clothing**
  - There is up to 20,000 square feet of demand.
  - Most of this demand in Family & Men's categories.
  - A typical Old Navy is about 16,000 square feet.
  - Based on the shares study, Rutherfordton is performing well in the category of Women's clothing. This is likely due to Tanner, but also presents an opportunity to recruit additional women's clothing stores to create a cluster. This category in particular may support the market that will be created from the TIEC.
- **Hardware Stores**
  - There is demand for 9,000 square feet of hardware store space.
  - As a frame of reference, a typical Ace or True-Value can be up to 15,000 sf.
- **Electronics**
  - There is a combined leakage of \$11 million resulting in about 8,600 square feet of demand.
  - As a comparison, a typical Radio Shack is 5,000 to 10,000 square feet.
- **Specialty** - There is various limited demand for other specialty categories that amounts to about one store per category.
  - Sporting Goods – up to 6,400 square feet
  - Jewelry – up to 6,300 sf
  - Gifts – up to 3,700 sf
  - Hobby & Toys – 3,600 sf
  - Shoes – 2,700 sf
  - Drinking Places – up to 3,400 sf

## 2.4 Demographics and Segmentation

General demographics for the Town of Rutherfordton and its market are shown below. This is followed by a market segmentation report that describes Rutherfordton residents by socioeconomic and life stage characteristics, providing a broader understanding of the Rutherfordton market.

For each of the charts, Rutherfordton is shown in **red**, while the Primary Trade Area and Secondary Trade Areas are shown in **orange** and **purple** respectively.

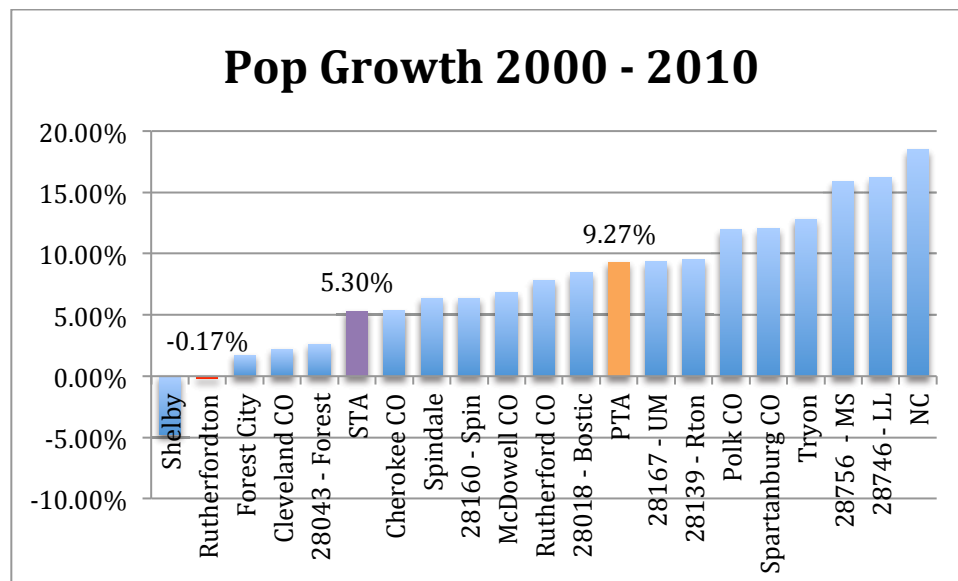


Figure 16: Regional Population Change 2000-2010. Source: US Census.

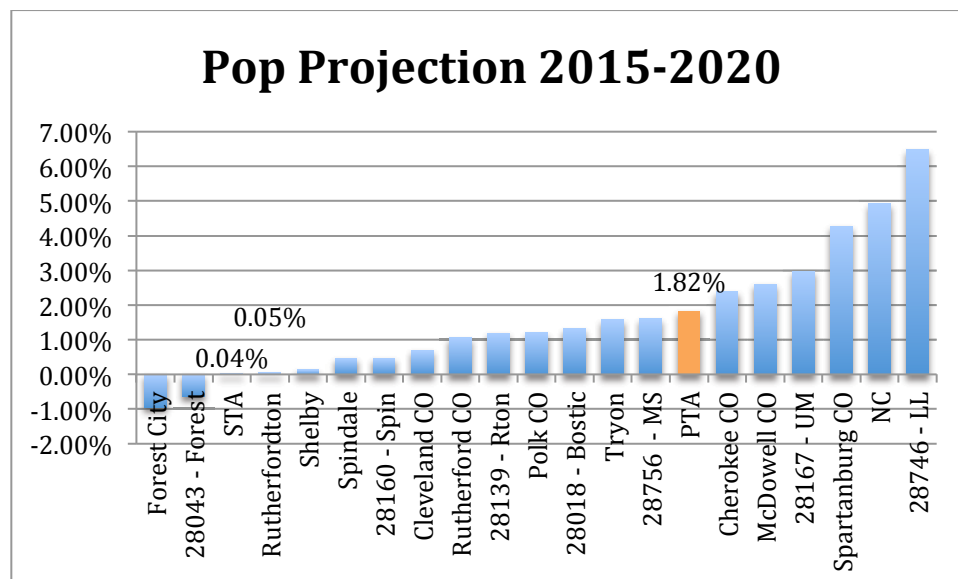


Figure 17: Projected Population Growth 2015-2020. Source: Nielsen Claritas.

- Rutherfordton experienced slight population decline between 2000 and 2010 while both its primary (9.27%) and secondary (5.3%) trade areas grew during the same period. Lake Lure grew the fastest during this time.
- Over the next five years, slower growth is projected, with the PTA growing by 1.82% and the STA and Town of Rutherfordton showing marginal growth.

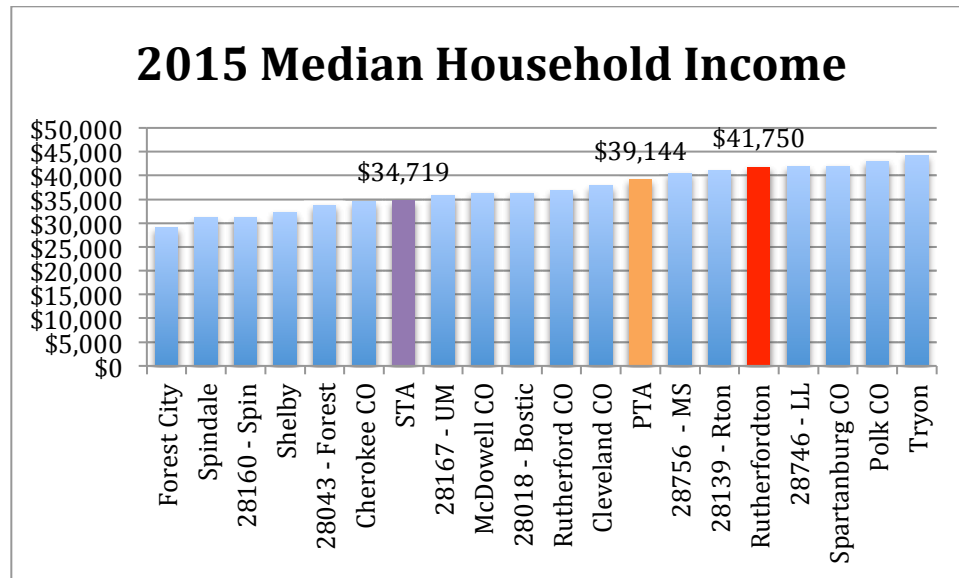


Figure 18: 2015 Regional Median Household Income. Source: Claritas.

- At \$41,750, the Town of Rutherfordton is near the upper end of regional median household income. The PTA (\$39,144) is also in the upper third. Tryon and Polk County have the highest incomes.

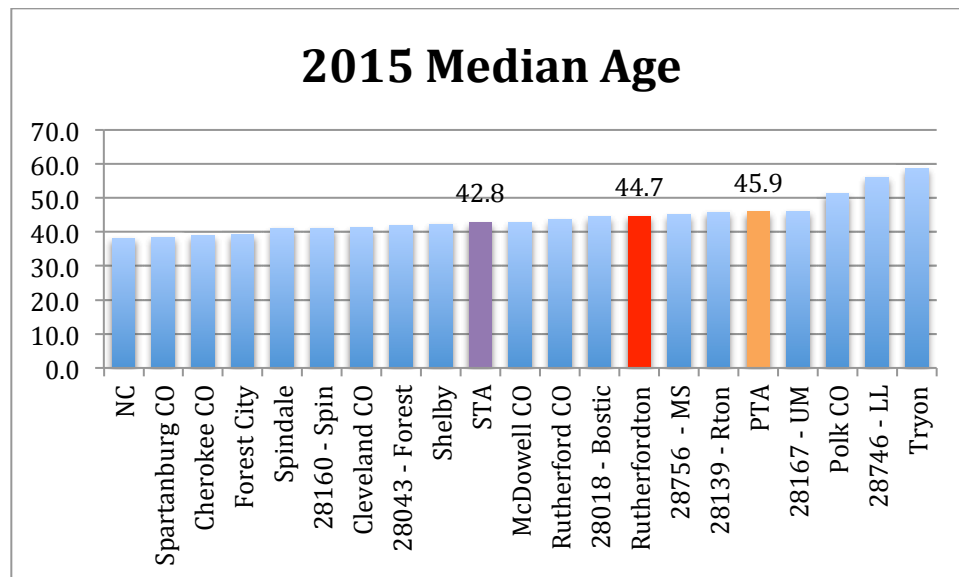


Figure 19: 2015 Regional Median Age. Source: Claritas.

- Like most rural areas, Rutherfordton and its trade areas have a slightly older population. Key retiree areas such as Tryon and Lake Lure are the oldest in the region.

### Market Segmentation for the Primary Trade Area

This analysis breaks down the counts and percentages of social group cluster and will help identify the population based on their demographic groupings including age, gender, income, education, occupation, and ethnic group. Each cluster group will desire specific products.

For this analysis, all data comes from PRIZM NE cluster groups as calculated by Claritas, Inc. The PRIZM cluster groups are centered on four groups of urbanization: Urban, Second Cities Suburbs and Town and Rural.

There are 11,935 households in Rutherfordton's primary trade area. This is classified as 99% Town and Rural and 1% Second Cities. This urbanization is then broken down into social group and life stage categories as shown in the chart below. (Source: Claritas, Inc.)

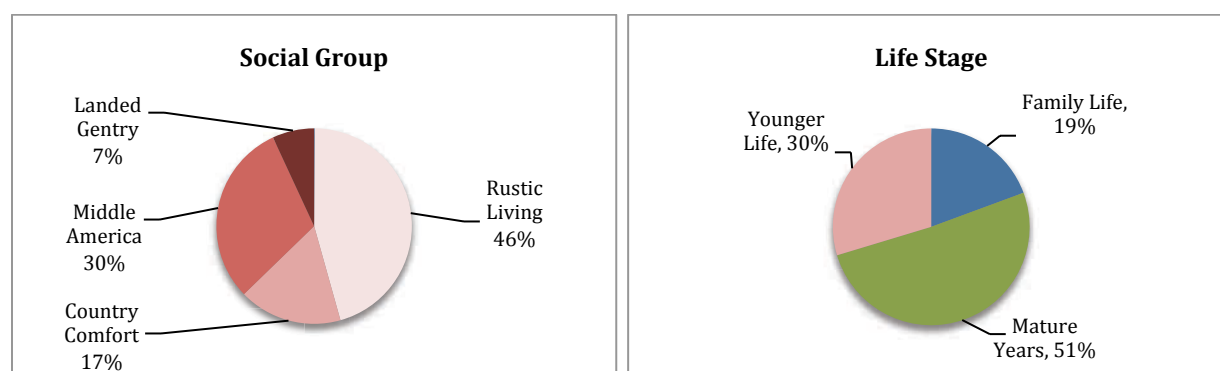


Figure 20: Social Group Segmentation (left) and Life Stage Segmentation (right) for the primary trade area. Source: Claritas, Inc.

Finally, each of these social and life stage groups can be broken down into detailed subcategories as identified in the chart below. The chart represents a breakdown of all the segments in the overall market base in primary trade area.

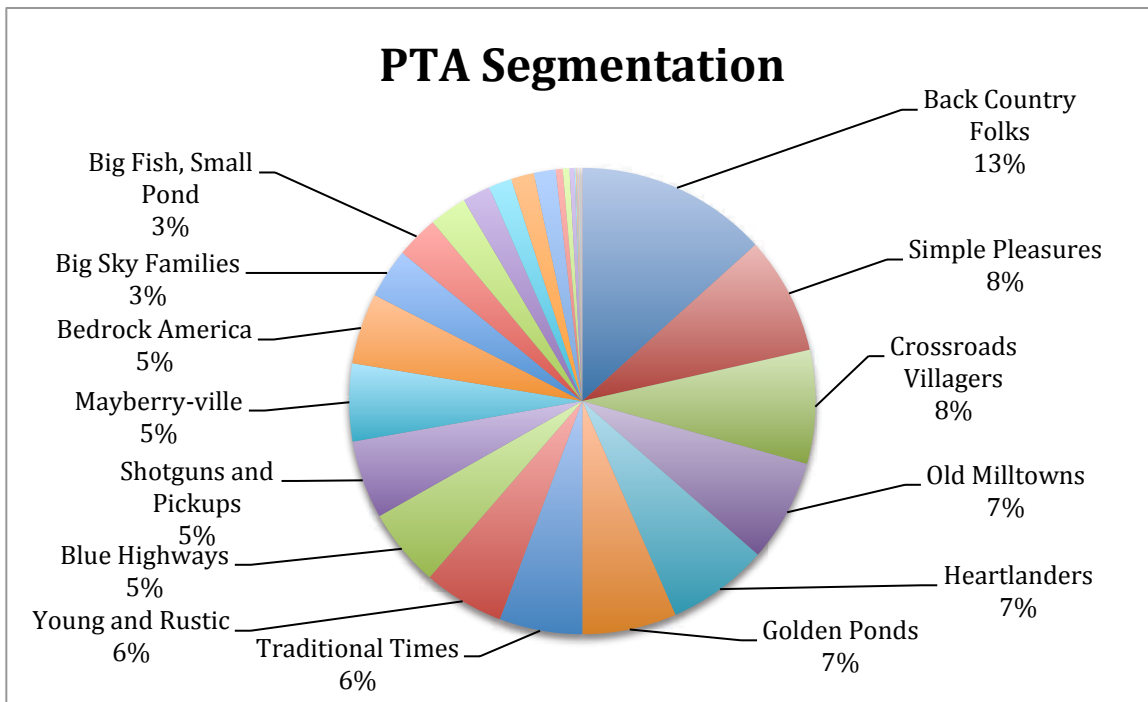


Figure 21: Market Segmentation for primary trade area. Source: Claritas, Inc.

#### Segmentation Observations

The top six segments make up 50% of the market and include:

- Back Country Folks – **13%**
- Simple Pleasures – **8%**
- Crossroads Villagers – **8%**
- Old Milltowns – **7%**
- Heartlanders – **7%**
- Golden Ponds – **7%**

A detailed description of each of these segments is shown below. A description of ALL segments can be found at [www.mybestsegments.com](http://www.mybestsegments.com), a service of Nielsen Claritas, Inc.



## 58 - Back Country Folks

### Downscale Mature Mostly w/o Kids

Strewn among remote farm communities across the nation, Back Country Folks are a long way away from economic paradise. The residents tend to be poor, over 65 years old, and living in older, modest-sized homes and manufactured housing. Typically, life in this segment is a throwback to an earlier era when farming dominated the American landscape.



**Social Group:** 14 - Rustic Living

**Lifestage Group:** 11 - Sustaining Seniors

#### Demographics Traits

- **Urbanicity:** Rural
- **Income:** Downscale
- **Income Producing Assets:** Low
- **Age Ranges:** 65+
- **Presence of Kids:** Mostly w/o Kids
- **Homeownership:** Mostly Owners
- **Employment Levels:** Mostly Retired
- **Education Levels:** High School Grad
- **Ethnic Diversity:** White

#### Lifestyle & Media Traits

- Shop at Tractor Supply Company
- Own recreational vehicle
- Read VFW Magazine
- Watch Bold & Beautiful
- Chevy Colorado

## 38 - Simple Pleasures

### Lower Mid Mature w/o Kids

With many of its residents over 65 years old, Simple Pleasures is mostly a retirement lifestyle: a neighborhood of lower-middle-class singles and couples living in modestly priced homes. Many are high school-educated seniors who held blue-collar jobs before their retirement. And a disproportionate number served in the military, so many residents are members of veterans clubs.



**Social Group:** 13 - Middle America

**Lifestage Group:** 10 - Cautious Couples

#### Demographics Traits

- **Urbanicity:** Town/Rural
- **Income:** Lower Mid
- **Income Producing Assets:** Above Avg
- **Age Ranges:** 65+
- **Presence of Kids:** HH w/o Kids
- **Homeownership:** Mostly Owners
- **Employment Levels:** Mostly Retired
- **Education Levels:** High School Grad
- **Ethnic Diversity:** White

#### Lifestyle & Media Traits

- Shop at JCPenney
- Belong to a civic club
- Read Reader's Digest
- Watch Wheel of Fortune
- GMC Canyon

## 28 - Traditional Times

### Upper Mid Older w/o Kids

Traditional Times is the kind of lifestyle where small-town couples nearing retirement are beginning to enjoy their first empty-nest years. Typically in their fifties and older, these upper-middle-class Americans pursue a kind of granola-and-grits lifestyle. On their coffee tables are magazines with titles like *Country Living* and *Country Home*. But they're big travelers, especially in recreational vehicles and campers.



## 20 - Fast-Track Families

### Upscale Middle Age w/ Kids

With their upscale incomes, numerous children, and spacious homes, Fast-Track Families are in their prime acquisition years. These middle-aged parents have the disposable income and educated sensibility to want the best for their children. They buy the latest technology with impunity: new computers, DVD players, home theater systems, and video games. They take advantage of their rustic locales by camping, boating, and fishing.



## 05 - Country Squires

### Upscale Middle Age w/ Kids

The wealthiest residents in exurban America live in Country Squires, an oasis for affluent Baby Boomers who've fled the city for the charms of small-town living. In their bucolic communities noted for their recently built homes on sprawling properties, the families of executives live in six-figure comfort. Country Squires enjoy country club sports like golf, tennis, and swimming, as well as skiing, boating, and biking.



## 12 - Brite Lites, Li'l City

### Upscale Middle Age w/o Kids

Not all of America's chic sophisticates live in major metros. Brite Lights, Li'l City is a group of well-off, middle-aged couples settled in the nation's satellite cities. Residents of these typical DINK (double income, no kids) households have college educations, well-paying business and professional careers, and swank homes filled with the latest technology.

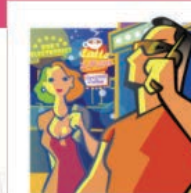


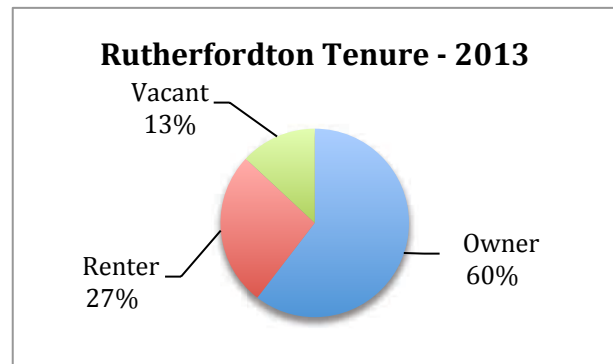
Figure 22: Market Segmentation for primary trade area. Source: Claritas, Inc.

## 2.5 Residential

This section will take a look at a snapshot of the housing market in Rutherfordton.

- The Town of Rutherfordton has a median owner-occupied housing unit value of \$153,399.
- 60.4% of Rutherfordton housing units are owner-occupied while another 26.5% are renters.

Housing Units	2013 ACS	
Occupied	1,755	86.9%
Owner	1,220	60.4%
Renter	535	26.5%
Vacant	264	13.1%
Total	2,019	100%



Unit Value	2032 ACS	
> \$50,000	81	6.64%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	256	20.98%
\$100,000 - \$149,000	121	9.92%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	240	19.67%
\$200,000 - \$299,999	299	24.51%
\$300,000 - \$499,999	191	15.66%
\$500,000 - \$949,999	32	2.62%
\$1,000,000 +	0	0.00%
	1,220	100%

Units in Structure		2013 ACS	
		Housing Units	
		Number	Percent
Single Family	Detached	1,571	77.8%
	Attached	86	4.3%
	Mobile Home	79	3.9%
Duplex	2	20	1.0%
Multifamily	3 to 4	104	5.2%
	5 to 9	147	7.3%
	10 to 19	0	0.0%
	20 or more	12	0.6%
		2,019	100%

Figure 23: Tenure, Price Point, and Type of Housing for the Town of Rutherfordton. Source: US Census.

### 3 Business Development Plan

This section presents a work plan for the Town of Rutherfordton, the Rutherfordton STEP team and their partners to target new investment and foster small business development. The recommendations are based on the ongoing stakeholder input as well as the findings of the comprehensive market analysis. They build off of the marketing recommendations of the previous branding project, while also seeking to create a stronger business environment in the community.

The actions below are based on four core strategic areas that have been identified through community engagement and market research.

- **Business Recruitment & Retention**
- **Downtown Rutherfordton as Destination**
- **Targeted Marketing for Recruitment & Promotion**
- **Partnering to Implement the Plan**

#### 3.1 Business Recruitment & Retention

These recommendations focus specifically on ongoing business recruitment, business support, and entrepreneurial development.

##### First Steps – 2015

- ***Recruit commercial businesses based on quantified potential identified in market analysis:*** This market analysis identifies a number of retail and business needs based on current trade patterns. Rutherfordton has the potential to meet a significant portion the retail demand of its trade areas, with current opportunity showing upwards of 168,000 square feet of commercial space needed in Rutherfordton. Any new business that is recruited should have a solid business plan and complement the offerings within the larger region. Key opportunities include restaurants, building supplies, general merchandise, clothing, and specialty shopping.
- ***Make market research readily available to all existing and potential businesses:*** The market analysis provides data that will be relevant to existing and potential business owners, as well as developers and property owners. The information included in this report should be actively distributed to all interested parties including businesses, realtors, Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce, Isothermal Small Business Development Center, and other business development agencies. The STEP Team in particular should provide this market research to anyone who needs it. For example, a potential business could use this as part of their business plan when they are seeking financing.
- ***Create an available properties database:*** The market analysis provides the data for local demand that would support specific types of businesses. In order to realize this potential, the STEP Business Development Committee and RTR should build an available properties database of all vacant space (not simply entire buildings) in and outside of downtown. It should include key data such as square footage, location, zoning, utilities, price, rental rates, etc. Much like a county economic development authority that promotes individual buildings

or sites, these opportunities should be readily available on the web, in print, but particularly in the hands of local real estate professionals.

- **Create property sheets for key investment sites:** The database of available properties mentioned above can be used to rank key sites with the greatest development potential. These sites can be highlighted on individual property sheets that can be distributed on the web, to area realtors, mailed to target prospects, or included in a business recruitment package.
- **Coordinate small-business development programming:** Work with the Isothermal Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce to connect existing businesses and future entrepreneurs with business development programming and training for business planning, networking, mentoring, and marketing. Most businesses simply don't know these services exist, or the services aren't tailored to the specific needs of the local business owners. The STEP Business Development committee and RTR can serve as the conduit between the business and small business support systems to promote and design training programs.
- **Continue development of STEMulate program:** The STEMulate initiative is an outreach program that looks to educate Rutherford County youth in science, technology, and mathematics. Part education and part workforce development, this effort of the Business Development committee looks to provide a foundation for high tech and innovation in area youth and business. The FabLab business in downtown Rutherfordton was an innovative effort to accomplish this. While the FabLab location no longer exists, similar initiatives should continue to be developed. This could include expanding the STEMulate efforts to include hospitality training in conjunction with the new programming at Isothermal Community College. Hospitality training is particularly important in Rutherfordton as it grows the destination status of downtown, while also trying to tap in to the high-end equestrian market located at the Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC).

### Next Steps – 2016-2017

- **Asset-based recruitment – connecting to the equestrian community:** The market research shows current demand for new business base on the local market, but other potential businesses may arise out of opportunities to tap into a larger market. With the development and event programming at the TIEC, there is a new captive market in Rutherford County. The TIEC will perform all of the heavy lifting to attract these people to the region. Rutherfordton simply needs to provide goods, services, and activities that can attract these equestrian users to downtown.

It is important to note here that this does not mean looking to recruit tack shops and equestrian related business. Vendors at the TIEC will provide all of these needs. Rather, Rutherfordton should look to businesses that can support the equestrian users while they are in the community for a week at a time. This would include a variety of dining options, art galleries, higher end antiques, and specialty shops. The Town and STEP should seek out these potential businesses from within the larger region, help them find locations to start their business, and potentially offer small incentives to help them get started.



- **Asset-based recruitment – creative enterprise:** The Town of Rutherfordton has historically been the cultural hub of the larger rural region. Operations like the Rutherford County Visual Arts Center Gallery are a testament to this. The Town and RTR should seek out creative people and businesses such as art studios/galleries, music store/venue, microbrewery, etc. These types of creative businesses would appeal to locals as well as the users at TIEC. Communities like Waynesville and Salisbury in North Carolina, and Travelers Rest in SC, have targeted such creative businesses, and have built a cluster that has enhanced each town's destination status.
- **Recruit mid-tier hotel:** The Town of Rutherfordton and the NC STEP team should throw their support behind the efforts of the Rutherford County TDA and the Chamber of Commerce to recruit a mid-tier hotel to Rutherfordton. A recent lodging study has shown that the community is losing nearly 2000 nights per year already. This is before the events at the TIEC are accounted for. The TIEC will have its own lodging developed as part of its master plan. Currently, the only mid-tier hotel in the region is the Holiday Inn Express in Forest City, which is consistently booked. The Firehouse Inn and Carriage House B&B provide some relief to the lodging needs, but there is demand for much more.

The partners above should put together a recruitment package that includes data to support need, but also that expresses a desire for a hotel to locate in Rutherfordton. A small delegation of stakeholders (TDA, COC, Hospital, Town) should then identify regional hoteliers (Spartanburg, Hendersonville, Shelby) and approach to gauge interest in investing in a new product in Rutherfordton.

- **Host quarterly business peer workshops where local businesses train each other:** The Business Development committee and RTR should plan quarterly business summits where small businesses gather together to learn from each other. These workshops would be programmed to where a business with a particular skill set would offer a "training" session for other participating businesses on what they have found that works. Topics could include marketing, social media, merchandising, storefront displays, customer tracking, etc. A secondary benefit of this effort would be networking and marketing individual businesses, with each session occurring at the respective business location.
- **Create Guide to Doing Business:** Small business owners and new entrepreneurs often do not understand what they need to do to start a business including registering, permitting, approvals for up fitting space, business licensing, etc. Rutherfordton should create a branded "Guide to Doing Business" which provides a simple checklist of what to do to start a business, as well as contact information for the Town, Chamber, SBDC, etc. This guide would be presented as inserts in a branded folder and include the market research, starting a business checklist, information on customer service, etc. It could be distributed digitally on the various partner websites, or printed and provided to potential new businesses whenever they make their initial inquiry.
- **Identify sites for development both inside and in close proximity to Rutherfordton for commercial and residential growth:** Some stakeholders mentioned that there is limited space in Rutherfordton proper to accommodate any significant development such as a new neighborhood, mixed-use development, or new employer. The Town of Rutherfordton's Community Planning and Development department may look to proactively anticipate areas both inside the town limits that could be receiving areas for new development. This effort would simply be to identify development sites, acquire information, and be ready for when a prospect approaches the community.

**Final Steps – 2018-2020**

- ***Highlight local businesses with cooperative marketing:*** The Marketing Committee of STEP and RTR are promoting the community to bring in customers and new investment. At the end of the day, it is the individual businesses' responsibility to market their business and products. Communities like Rutherfordton with so many independent businesses have found success in pooling private marketing resources to cooperatively promote businesses as a unit. Successful campaigns typically will promote a certain activity or experience such as dining, specialty shopping, or event activity, while highlighting individual businesses.
- ***Update market analysis and refocus recruitment strategies every five years:*** Over time, market opportunities within Rutherfordton will change particularly as its partners focus on business development and recruitment outlined in this plan. It is therefore recommended that the community update the market research every five years, and revisit the recommendations in this plan based on those new findings.
- ***Create incentives for new and existing businesses:*** Rutherfordton has limited resources from which to build incentives, but there are a number of potential enticements that could be created over time, particularly as Rutherfordton's tax base grows. These incentives could be small in scale (\$500 and up) and could include business license abatement, meals tax abatement, marketing assistance, and even rental subsidies. Any incentive should be tied to desired, needed businesses with active business plans.

### 3.2 Downtown Rutherfordton as Destination

A successful downtown is *critical* to development and growth in the community. A vibrant downtown will enhance the quality of life of local residents, help recruit new business and employers, and attract new residents. Through RTR, the Rutherfordton community has worked systematically over the years to revitalize downtown. This includes projects like the Main Street Park, Hilltop Fall Festival and other events, as well as the community master plan completed in 2006.

Downtown revitalization is never finished, so it is important for Rutherfordton to continue its efforts on creating a vibrant downtown, one with quality businesses and activities that is a destination for locals and visitors alike.

#### First Steps – 2015

- ***Recruit business and activities that will bring activity into downtown:*** As mentioned above, events like the Hilltop Festival bring thousands of people into downtown to congregate, be entertained, eat great food, and patronize local business and craftspeople. While in downtown, these people spend money at local businesses and restaurants. Although recruitment of business is important, recruitment of *activity* is most important early on. RTR should consider planning small *recurring* events geared towards locals such as family movie night, alive after five, etc. Programming ongoing activity and recruiting restaurants will bring a vibrancy into downtown that will spill over into additional downtown commerce.
- ***Complete the Central Street project:*** The Central Street project will be the beginning of this renewed vibrancy. It will provide a centralized gathering space connected to Main Street Park and adjacent downtown businesses. The project is currently being planned and will provide a venue for expanded events as well as opportunities for outdoor dining and activity.
- ***Expand responsibilities of Rutherfordton Ambassadors program to help market the Town:*** Similarly, the Marketing Committee is creating a Rutherfordton Ambassadors program. The program will be a community pride and spirit effort that will look to train business owners, employees, and local residents on ways to engage with visitors, customers and residents. These ambassadors will create positive experiences for people to take from Rutherfordton and its downtown. They will share positive stories, foster polite interactions, and direct people to local businesses and activities.

It is recommended that the STEP Team look to expand this ambassador program to include business development. These ambassadors would be well versed on talking points about Rutherfordton's character, economic profile, and business opportunities, and would share Rutherfordton's story whenever participating in any regional discussions.

The team could also scout and visit regional businesses and developers to encourage them to consider investment or expansion opportunities in Rutherfordton. They can then connect these potential investors with those in the community that might provide further assistance.

- ***Create branded gateway signage into downtown:*** The Town is currently working with a consultant to plan for a wayfinding program throughout the community. These programs are typically implemented in phases as funding arises. It is recommended that an early implementation task be installing simple pole-mounted gateway signs at key entrances to



downtown. This would be in addition to updating the sign panels on existing gateways at the various town limits.

- **Create property utilization team – work with downtown property owners to make properties more marketable:** Similar to the ambassador program, the STEP Team should consider creating a committee to focus on property utilization in downtown. This committee would engage property owners in discussions on the utilization of their spaces, including providing marketable rents, encouraging maintenance, determining appropriate uses, and perhaps even determining ways STEP, RTR and their partners can help market vacant spaces. Numerous stakeholders mentioned the proliferation of vacant spaces as well as high rents. This internal communication between the ambassadors of downtown and the property owners is critical.
- **Deploy banners in downtown and throughout community:** One way to create an immediate positive perception of the community is to install banners on light poles throughout downtown and along key corridors. The banners create color and vibrancy in a particular area while also serving as a traffic-calming device. They can be designed to promote the community, key events, or specific destinations.



Figure 24: Branded banner system. Source: Arnett Muldrow & Associates



Figure 25: Downtown banner system with Artwork. Source: Rutherford STEP Team Marketing Committee and Leniece Lane.

## Next Steps – 2016-2017

- **Pursue a comprehensive master plan of Downtown:** As mentioned above, the community master plan was completed in 2006 and the Central Street project is currently in the works. Considering the 2006 vision was created just before the Great Recession, as well as the fact that the plan is almost a decade old, it is now time to update the vision and create a dedicated master plan for downtown. This plan would focus on physical improvements to infrastructure, public spaces, and private development. It should be market-based using this report as a foundation, while also addressing urban design.

Key elements that should be addressed in this plan include but are not limited to:

- Planning for the renovation and new use of the Woodrow Wilson building.
- Improving parking resources including new parking, creating awareness to existing resources, and discouraging owners and employees from parking in prime consumer spaces.
- Creating connections from downtown to the new trail system.
- Identifying areas in downtown to create horse trailer parking.
- Private façade improvements.
- Streetscape and infrastructure enhancements.
- Looking to plan for the “expansion” of downtown, particularly along South Main and 221.

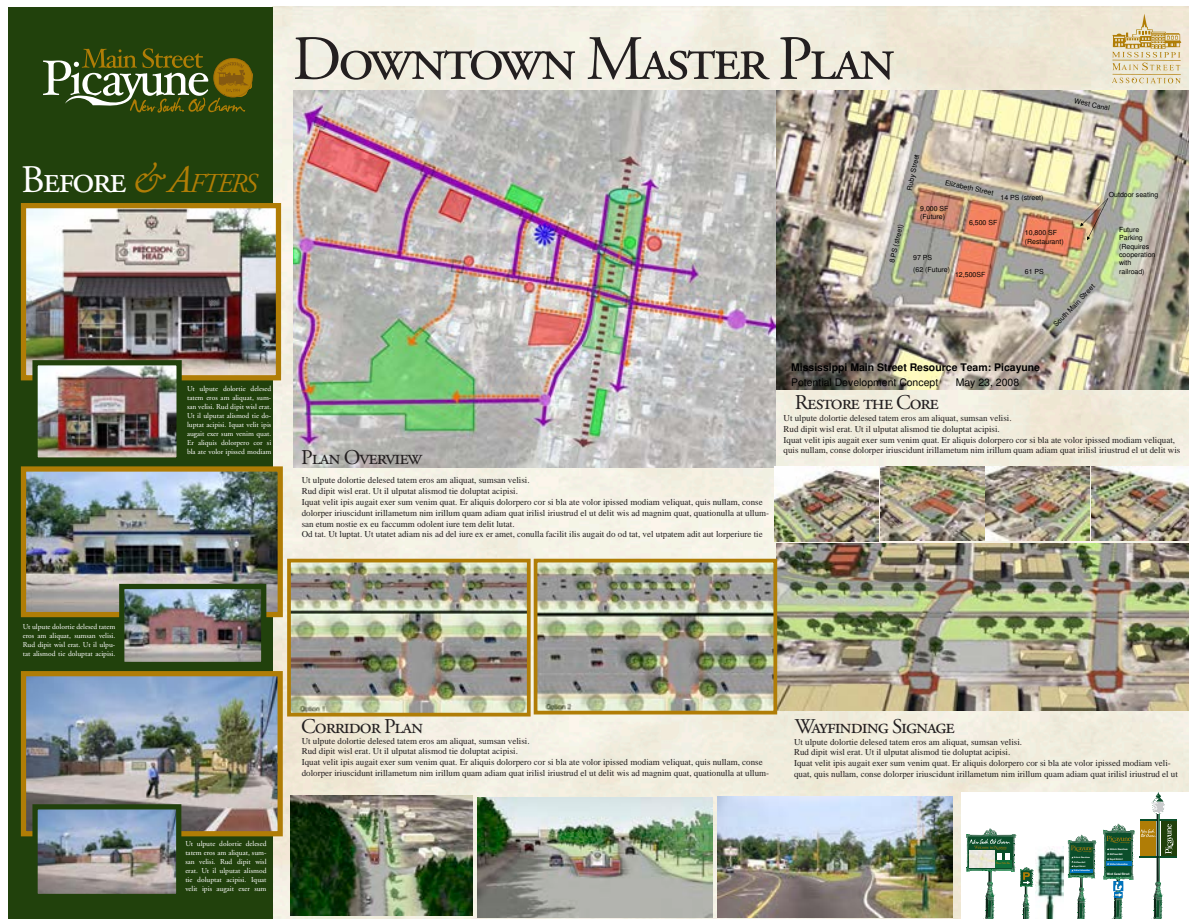


Figure 26: Downtown Master Plan in Picayune Mississippi.

- **Create Farmers Market in Central Street area:** The Central Street area will be an excellent venue for events once complete, and one of the first programs could be reviving the Rutherfordton Farmers Market. A properly managed farmers market will always bring customers and activity into a downtown, even when nearby communities have similar operations. That being noted, it will be important for a new Farmers Market in Rutherfordton to coordinate its with the Rutherford County Farmers Market in Forest City so as not to compete with the participation of area growers or customers. Other communities with similar dynamics to Rutherford County, have a single Farmers Market manager that coordinates multiple markets.
- **Develop places for the younger market:** In order for Rutherfordton to be a sustainable community over time, it needs to be a place where a young professional or family would want to live. Several stakeholders stated a need for places for younger people to gather and connect. This could be a small coffee shop with live music, or regular events such as an Alive After Five gathering with music and drinks. Other communities have had great success in reengaging younger people with similar activities.
- **Inform regional real estate professionals about downtown investment:** Economic development does not occur without marketing and promotion. In the case of downtown Rutherfordton, we cannot assume that area realtors know what properties are available for lease or purchase. The property utilization committee should identify regional real estate professionals (not just those in Rutherfordton) and make sure that they are getting up to date information on investment opportunities in downtown, primarily through the available property database and property sheets.

### Final Steps – 2018-2020

- **Reinstate façade grant program:** Rutherfordton has had downtown façade grant programs in the past. In most communities, these programs may go dormant at times when budgets are tight, only to be reinstated when additional resources or critical needs arise. Upon completion of the downtown master plan, it is recommended that Rutherfordton restart its façade grant program. Portions of funding could come from general funds, the existing municipal services district, or NC Main Street grants.

### 3.3 Targeted Marketing for Recruitment & Promotion

The branding and marketing strategy completed in 2013 provided recommendations for a comprehensive and connected brand for the Rutherfordton community, as well as graphic marketing strategies to promote Rutherfordton as a destination.

The current project includes revisions to the previously approved brand systems as well new deliverables for billboards, banners, and window decals. This section presents strategic recommendations to expand Rutherfordton's market through promoting business recruitment and targeted marketing.

#### First Steps – 2015

- ***Implement the marketing recommendations included in the branding and marketing project previously completed:*** In addition to market position, logo designs, and graphic recommendations, the previously approved branding and marketing plan included a detailed implementation matrix. This contained detail on individual projects, phasing, responsible parties, and estimated costs. The marketing committee and its partners should incorporate the revised marketing graphics and implement the marketing recommendations as previously established. All revised and new graphics are included in the Brand Style Guide and logo resources files.



Figure 27: Final approved brand graphic.

- ***Utilize distinct marketing positions focusing on various target opportunities:*** With community branding, there is no one single message to promote. While connected, the messaging will have different foundations depending on what is being targeted. Whenever Rutherfordton is creating new marketing materials for the community, it should base the general marketing message on the following:
  - ***Market Position for Investment:*** Rutherfordton's marketing message for targeting investment should be positioning Rutherfordton as a small-business friendly community, strategically located near multiple urban areas, with a high tech infrastructure and quaint downtown.
  - ***Market Position for Equestrian Center:*** As mentioned previously, the TIEC will bring the equestrians into the community. Rutherfordton should simply reach out to these users and position the community as a place to provide needs and services while they are here (dining, lodging, shopping, events).



- **Market Position for locals:** A community must *always* market to its local residents. More than any other market, these customers are the easiest to attract, with the highest rate of return. In Rutherfordton's case this should include creating a positive message and promoting Rutherfordton's exceptional quality of life, family friendly environment, and its success stories. Locals must often be reminded of what makes their community a special place.
- **Market Position for regional awareness:** Rutherfordton is fortunate to be located in close proximity to a large population. Its local trade areas include 60,000 people and the six-county region has over 580,000 residents. The TDA will continue to market Rutherfordton to these residents and beyond by bringing awareness to Rutherfordton's destinations, downtown, and events.
- **Market Position for future residents:** Marketing to potential retirees and future residents will be similar to that of marketing to locals. It will focus on quality of life including healthcare, culture, quality of schools, and proximity to urban areas.
- **Create additional local marketing collateral:** Collateral such as house flags, t-shirts, window decals, hats, and shopping bags can instill community pride while making local residents walking ambassadors for the community.





*Figure 28: Additional Marketing Collateral for Locals and Consumers.*

- **Develop “Postcard” digital survey:** The Sense of Place committee is working on a “feedback postcard” to solicit input from visitors to Rutherfordton on their needs as visitors, characteristics of the town that they like, and areas that need improvement. The intent is to create postage-paid, printed postcards for people to fill out and send back to town.

This visitor feedback is important, particularly as the Town and its partners are positioning Rutherfordton as a destination. It will also be key in learning needs of very specific markets such as equestrians. The primary focus of this program is acquiring data rather than creating an additional marketing piece. It is therefore our recommendation that this be a digital survey rather than a printed postcard. A Survey Monkey survey can be created with limited resources, but with maximum expandability and analytics. It could even include different surveys for different markets. The survey would be deployed via email lists from local lodging establishments, social media pages for area businesses, and as QR codes on materials such as the Historic Walking Tour and the downtown kiosk. The only new printed materials could be business card sized pieces with a QR code and links to area destinations. These would be distributed at the various destinations, TDA, Visitor Center, Chamber, and downtown businesses.

Deploying a digital survey such as this would be much more affordable while also providing a wealth of data that a printed postcard would not.

- **Coordinate hours of operation with equestrian events:** In small downtowns with a variety of independent businesses, it is always a challenge to coordinate consistent hours of operation. Many businesses are run by an individual or couple who have their own family time and extra curricular activities. However, the equestrian market at the TIEC is so unique and highly programmed, that it would be critical for businesses to coordinate their hours with the times where the equestrian users will be available.

According to a representative from the TIEC, their patrons will arrive on Wednesday of an event and have shows on Saturdays and Sundays. During the week they will be preparing for the event, and ultimately will be finished on Sunday evenings. Mondays and Tuesdays will be the time where they pack up and return home. In order for Rutherfordton to connect to this market, businesses must be open in the evenings (at least until 6 or later) during the week, as well as Mondays, which will be the key “down time” for the patrons. Not only that, but a cluster of businesses should be open during this time in order to connect. It is recommended that the RTR work with the TDA and downtown businesses to make them aware of the need for a consistent operational schedule for downtown businesses.

- **Grow existing events to include more regional participation from vendors, entertainers:** Unlike equestrians that will be in the area for a limited time, regional residents are a captive market that can patronize Rutherfordton businesses multiple times over the course of the year. An early and creative way to “market” to these regional residents is by growing downtown and community events to include participation from regional vendors and entertainers, not by marketing directly to the regional residents themselves. For example, a local Spartanburg based musician will have a loyal following. If that musician is featured at a downtown Rutherfordton event, it is likely that his or her fans will travel the 40 minutes up the road to listen. Once these people have seen what Rutherfordton is about and have a positive experience in town, they will return.

### Next Steps – 2016-2017

- **Create testimonial ads for key area businesses:** Rutherfordton businesses have located here for various reasons. Whether it is the quaint downtown, workforce, or quality of life, each business has chosen to invest in the Rutherfordton area. As part of its recruitment efforts, Rutherfordton can create testimonial ads for area businesses such as Kid Senses, Timken, Tanner, Tryon International Equestrian Center, etc. to promote the Town as a place to invest.
- **Create a business recruitment package including the market analysis, available properties, testimonials, etc.:** All of the business development marketing materials should be assembled and presented as a business recruitment package. This would include inserts for the market analysis, testimonials, incentive programs, available properties, etc. that would be placed in a branded folder.

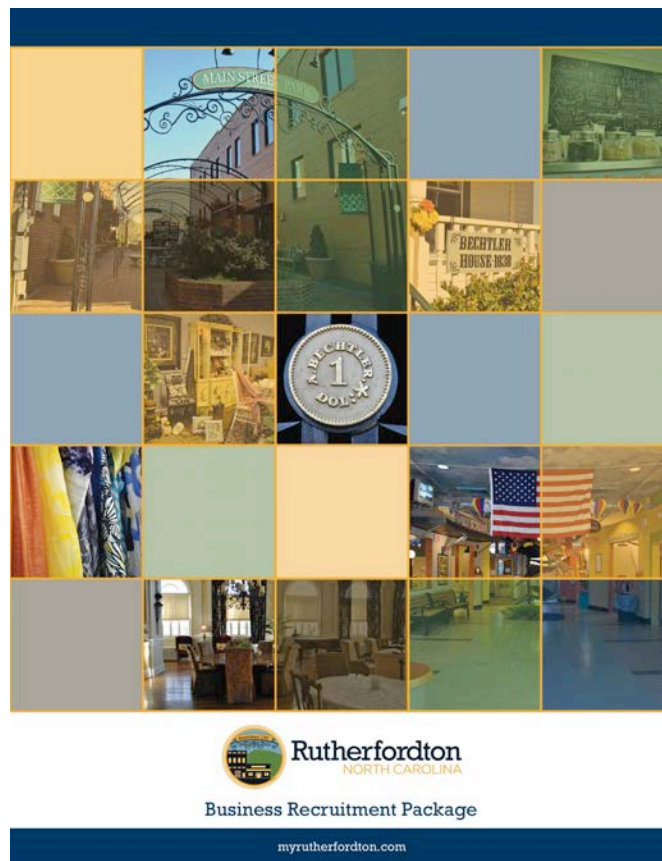


Figure 29: Business recruitment package folder design.

- **Produce “My Rutherfordton” video to present community assets, businesses, community character:** A two-minute video can be produced to present Rutherfordton’s destinations, businesses, activities, and overall quality of life. The content could be distributed on the web, but also placed in local hotel television systems as often found in hotels in destination communities. Similarly, the town could coordinate with the TIEC to place on its website to market to equestrian participants prior to traveling to Rutherfordton.



- **Coordinate with TIEC and hotels for placement of print ads, brochures.** Similarly, the marketing committee can coordinate with the TIEC to place print materials in the center, as well as with local hotels to place in hotel racks.
- **Coordinate Social Media training:** The marketing committee and the business development committee can come together to solicit and outside consultant to coordinate social media training. The training would not be simply how businesses can operate social media, but rather specifically target the equestrian community and inserting Rutherfordton and area businesses in conversations occurring in the equestrian channels. This would include locating and engaging Facebook pages of the various vendors that will frequent the TIEC, finding opportunities to socially engage users before they travel to Rutherfordton, learning how events are marketed in social channels, and piggy backing on those conversations.
- **Host media day on the town with regional media representatives:** The STEP team, in conjunction with the Rutherford County TDA, can host a day on the town where regional media journalists are invited to the community and shown the town. The intent will be to create a positive experience while showcasing the Rutherfordton community, its downtown, destinations, and businesses. Often, these regional media are looking for lifestyle pieces and good stories. Other communities who have done this have essentially secured free advertising for their towns.
- **Mint Rutherfordton Gold Coin:** Produce a two-sided coin promoting Rutherfordton. This could be given away as a memento or even sold in local downtown businesses. The coin itself can be an entry to tell the story about the Bechtel Mint and Rutherfordton's unique history.



Figure 30: Rutherfordton Coin.

- **Create “Welcome to Rutherfordton” package for new residents:** Simply getting the foot in the door with new residents can begin to build a connection between the resident and community. Welcome packages that offer civic, recreation, and business information can be distributed to new residents through cooperation with local realtors, neighborhood associations, and employers. They would be developed in a similar manner to the business recruitment packages mentioned above.

- **Purchase billboard space on Interstate 26 and the nearby urban markets:** Billboards can be an effective way to introduce the community to those who are not familiar with the place. Placing signs in the surrounding urban areas and along I-26 can help create regional awareness, and attract a regional and visitor customer base. Billboards should be graphic-intensive with limited copy, and designed to promote various aspects of the Rutherfordton “experience”.



Figure 31: Branded, Graphic Billboard Examples. Source: Arnett Muldrow & Associates

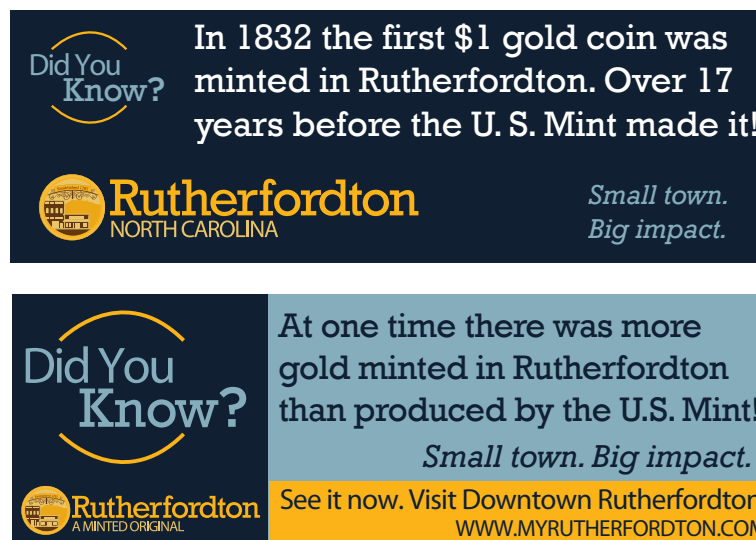


Figure 32: Did You Know – Narrative Billboards. Source: Rutherford STEP Team Marketing Committee and Leniece Lane.

## Final Steps – 2018-2020

- **Coordinate with area destinations to placing articles and advertising in regional print media:** Longer-term strategies will require more financial resources. Initially, lifestyle magazines such as WNC Magazine, Our State, Mountain Xpress, and Charlotte Magazine should be approached to determine if they wish to produce a lifestyle article about Rutherfordton. Topics could include the Bechtel Mill or the Tryon International Equestrian Center. In addition, graphic-based advertisements could be placed in these periodicals. These ads can be quite expensive, so it may be necessary to pool resources among area destinations.



Figure 33: Branded advertisements.

- **Place TV advertising in Asheville, Spartanburg, and Charlotte markets:** Finally, produced television spots promoting quality of life, events, dining, shopping can be purchased in area tv media.

### 3.4 Partnering to Implement the Plan

No community or organization can accomplish a broad based planning effort on its own. Fortunately, there are a number of organizations that play a role in business development and support in the Rutherfordton community. These partners should be on the same page with respect to business development, marketing, planning, and implementation, and particularly each entity's specific roles for pursuing economic growth. These include but are not limited to:

- Town of Rutherfordton
- Rutherfordton Town Revitalization
- Rutherford Co. Chamber of Commerce
- Private Businesses
- STEP Team and its committees
- Rutherford County TDA
- Isothermal Community College SBDC

Each entity should be an active partner in the future business development and promotion of the Rutherfordton Community.

#### First Steps – 2015

- ***Sponsor a business development workshop where all partners come together:*** The first implementation task should be to assemble representatives from Rutherfordton's partners to share the recommendations of this plan. Most of the strategies included here would fall under the care of the Town, STEP, and RTR, but many will need to be accomplished through partnerships. The STEP Team can serve as the host of this meeting, while using the Strategy Board in the next section as the framework from which to assign tasks.
- ***Organize visits to successful communities:*** One of the best ways to learn about successful community revitalization is to visit towns that have had success. The Town of Rutherfordton should coordinate quarterly trips for Town and Business Leadership to visit these communities that have realized their potential. Communities within the region from which Rutherfordton can learn:
  - Hendersonville – Downtown revitalization and physical improvements
  - Waynesville – Building a creative economy
  - Travelers Rest, SC – small town destination planning and business development
  - Aiken, SC – Equestrian community (although quite different from TIEC)
  - Morganton – Downtown programming and activity
  - Marion – Mountain heritage and music
- ***Complete the branded wayfinding system:*** Rutherfordton is working with a consultant to create a branded, hierarchical system of signage will direct visitors and residents to civic, cultural, and recreational resources. The plan will be completed in 2015, and implementation will occur over multiple budget years.
- ***Establish ongoing marketing budget line item:*** Many of recommendations in this plan (as well as the previous branding strategy) relate to market positioning and promotion. Rutherfordton should therefore consider establishing an annual line item for marketing the

Town and positioning it for business development. Short-term marketing strategies identified in this plan are very inexpensive, while longer-term tasks may require more funding. Rutherfordton is fortunate to have a wealth of local creative and technical resources to help implement these recommendations, but placement will have associated costs. Ultimately, the annual marketing budget could range from between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

### Next Steps – 2016-2017

- **Create “A Minted Original” newsletter.** Rutherfordton’s website informs citizens of news items, community events, Town Meetings, etc. The current site is relatively static, and the Town is looking to update its design and function. The town should also consider a quarterly newsletter that utilizes Minted Original brand. The newsletter can be distributed via email, on the town’s website, or in print in local businesses. The purpose would be to update residents on the implementation of the STEP Team’s efforts, but also share positive stories and successes.
- **Establish leadership group targeting young professionals:** A leadership group of young professionals should be established to build capacity and promote civic engagement of Rutherfordton’s younger residents, a demographic that doesn’t often get engaged in civic matters. This group would not only help STEP in the implementation this plan, but also get younger professionals involved directly in the future of the Rutherfordton community.
- **Sponsor community pride initiatives:** Local pride can be built in a number of creative ways. Community gardens build pride of place and create an attractive and functional amenity for residents and members. Some communities have recognition programs for well-kept properties or storefronts. Others have created awards programs whereby a community leader or a local “hero” is recognized at town meetings, with a framed brand statement or other award.
- **Create annual “report card” showing implementation of this plan:** Rather than a full annual report, the STEP Team should create an annual report card that is an executive summary of its accomplishments. It should address the implementation of this plan and other initiatives, while quantifying new investment, increased job figures, and return on investment. The report card should be designed as an additional insert to the business recruitment package.

### Final Steps – 2019-2020

- **Conduct annual business development summits to update, refine this plan:** As this plan and other STEP initiatives are implemented, long-term tasks and business development efforts have the potential to become more complex, while opportunities become greater. It is at this time that the Town, STEP, and their partners should meet to determine what, if any, changes are needed to the business development framework.



## **4 The Strategy Board**

### **Projects and Initiatives**

The attached “Strategy Board” summarizes all of the projects and recommendations included in the business development work plan shown above. The board should be used as a working document for benchmarking and ongoing evaluation of the implementation process. Each recommendation that is presented in brief on the strategy board is supported in detail in this report documentation.

### **Strategies**

Each of the plan strategies is outlined in the strategy board. It is important to remember the ultimate development goals that each project supports. Each of these strategies is linked with one another, but failure to achieve one does not negate the ability to achieve others.

### **Responsibilities**

Individual responsibilities should be assigned to the Town of Rutherfordton, STEP program, RTR, or a partner agency. While an agency may be assigned lead role for implementation, each of these projects should be pursued through partnerships. As the plan progresses, the responsibilities should be reevaluated to determine where roles should change or shift.

### **Time Frames**

The projects are divided into three time frames. The first series of projects are ones that should begin immediately. For the most part, these are simple projects that will be highly visible, have significant impact and should be completed within the plan’s first year. The second set of projects is labeled next step projects. Some of these are more advanced projects while others may be continuations of projects that began during the demonstration period. The last series of recommendations are final steps. There are fewer projects in this list, but over time this category will continue to fill as priorities evolve.

The strategy board and its recommendations represent a “living document.” As time goes by and implementation proceeds, some priorities will shift while new ones will arise. The implementation strategy board should be evaluated periodically, no less than annually. This evaluation process will allow for finished tasks to be indicated on the board, for responsibilities to be shifted between parties, and for time frames to be adjusted for individual projects.

# Town of Rutherfordton, North Carolina – Business Development Plan

The strategies below represent tasks to provide an business development foundation for Rutherfordton. The tasks are presented in four key strategic areas. Each strategy is accompanied by short, medium, and long tasks to meet the larger business development vision.

Strategies	First Steps: 2015	Next Steps: 2016-2017	Final Steps: 2018-2020
Business Recruitment & Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Recruit commercial businesses based on quantified potential identified in market analysis.</li><li>▶ Make market research readily available to all existing and potential businesses.</li><li>▶ Create available properties database.</li><li>▶ Create property sheets to market key investment sites.</li><li>▶ Coordinate with Isothermal SBDC and Rutherford County Chamber to program business support services &amp; training.</li><li>▶ Continue development of STEMulate program.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Asset-based recruitment: Connect to equine community – complementary business.</li><li>▶ Asset-based recruitment: Recruit creative people and businesses such as gallery, music, microbrewery. Complement Visual Arts Center, dining.</li><li>▶ Recruit mid-tier hotel.</li><li>▶ Host quarterly business peer workshops where local businesses train each other.</li><li>▶ Create Guide to doing business for “how to” operate a successful business in Rutherfordton.</li><li>▶ Identify sites for development both inside and in close proximity to Rutherfordton for commercial and residential growth.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Highlight local businesses with cooperative marketing.</li><li>▶ Update comprehensive market analysis and refocus recruitment strategies every five years.</li><li>▶ Create incentives for new and existing businesses such as business license abatement, micro-loans, small grants. Tie incentives to desired, needed businesses with active business plans.</li></ul>
Downtown Rutherfordton as Destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Recruit business and activities that will bring activity into downtown – restaurants, events, etc.</li><li>▶ Complete Central Street project.</li><li>▶ Expand Rutherfordton Ambassadors – recruitment team that focuses on positioning downtown for investment.</li><li>▶ Create branded gateway signage in downtown.</li><li>▶ Create property utilization team – work with downtown property owners to make properties more marketable (rents, maintenance, marketing).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Pursue a comprehensive master plan of Downtown.</li><li>▶ Create Farmers Market in Central Street area. Coordinate with other area markets.</li><li>▶ Develop places for the younger market – coffee shops, entertainment, etc.</li><li>▶ Work with and inform regional real estate professionals as to downtown investment opportunities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Reinstate Façade Grant program.</li></ul>
Targeting Marketing for Recruitment & Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Implement the marketing recommendations included in the branding and marketing strategy project previously completed.</li><li>▶ Utilize distinct marketing positions focusing on:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Investment – small business friendly, locational assets, high tech infrastructure, quaint downtown and quality of life</li><li>◦ Equestrian – Rutherfordton providing needs for patrons</li><li>◦ Locals – quality of life, family, and activity</li><li>◦ New Residents – retirees, quality of life</li><li>◦ Regional Visitors – regional awareness</li></ul></li><li>▶ Create additional local marketing collateral.</li><li>▶ Develop “Postcard” digital survey.</li><li>▶ Coordinate hours of operation with equestrian events.</li><li>▶ Grow events include more regional participation from vendors, entertainers, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Create testimonial ads highlighting local employers and businesses such as Kid Senses, Timken, Tanner, Tryon Equestrian Center, etc.</li><li>▶ Create a business recruitment package including the market analysis, available properties, testimonials, etc.</li><li>▶ Produce My Rutherfordton video to present community assets, businesses, activities, community character.</li><li>▶ Coordinate with Equestrian Center for placement of print ads, brochures.</li><li>▶ Coordinate Social Media training - place Rutherfordton into conversation within equestrian channels.</li><li>▶ Host media day on the town with regional media representatives to showcase Rutherfordton, downtown, destinations, businesses.</li><li>▶ Mint Rutherfordton Gold Coin.</li><li>▶ Create “Welcome to Rutherfordton” package with area/civic information – distribute with local realtors and neighborhood associations.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Place TV advertising in Charlotte, GSP, Asheville media markets.</li><li>▶ Coordinate with area destinations to place advertising in regional print media – Our State, Charlotte Magazine, WNC Magazine, Mountain Xpress etc.</li></ul>
Partnering for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Sponsor a community revitalization summit where all partners come together to determine lead roles in implementation.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Town &amp; STEP – planning, recruitment, infrastructure, marketing</li><li>◦ Rutherford County Chamber – business support &amp; recruitment</li><li>◦ Rutherford County TDA - marketing</li><li>◦ Private Sector – cooperative marketing, recruitment</li></ul></li><li>▶ Organize visits of Town/business leaders to successful communities.</li><li>▶ Complete the branded wayfinding system directing visitors and locals to downtown and area destinations.</li><li>▶ Consider ongoing marketing budget line item.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Create “A Minted Original” newsletter (print/digital) geared towards town residents. Inform of town initiatives, celebrate successes, new businesses.</li><li>▶ Establish Leadership council targeting young professionals and families. Build capacity – civic, business, events, recreation.</li><li>▶ Sponsor community pride initiatives such as community garden, awards program, etc.</li><li>▶ Create annual “report card” showing implementation of this plan, quantifying investment, expanded employment opportunities, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Conduct annual economic development summits to update, refine this plan.</li></ul>