

EST. 1987

Cultivating N.C. Rural Assembly Connectivity Presented by the N.C. Rural Center

Leveraging Broadband to Accelerate Opportunity

2015

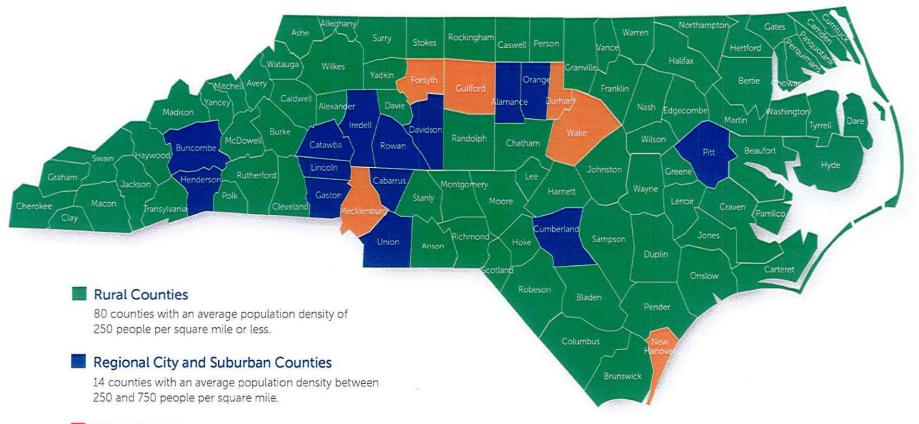
We Listened. We're Here to Serve.



- Serve as the <u>voice</u> for rural North Carolina communities and people
- Connect rural communities to critical resources
- Engage communities and promote inclusive leadership

Re-examining What It Means to be Rural





Urban Counties

6 counties with an average population density that exceeds 750 people per square mile.

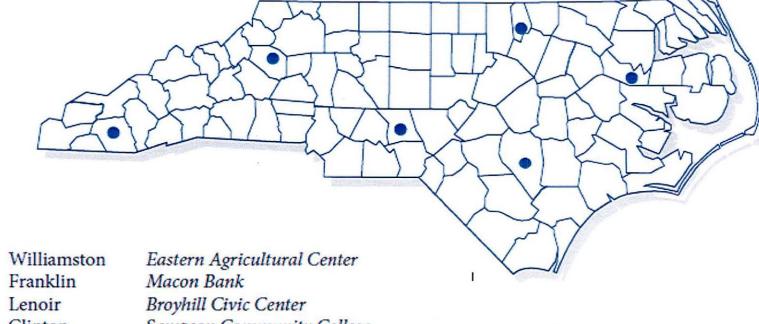
Densities calculated by the Rural Center based on 2014 U.S. Census population estimates.





You talked. We listened.





July 28 July 29 August 4 Clinton August 6 Henderson August 11 Troy

July 21

Sampson Community College Perry Memorial Library Troy Senior Center

339 Participants

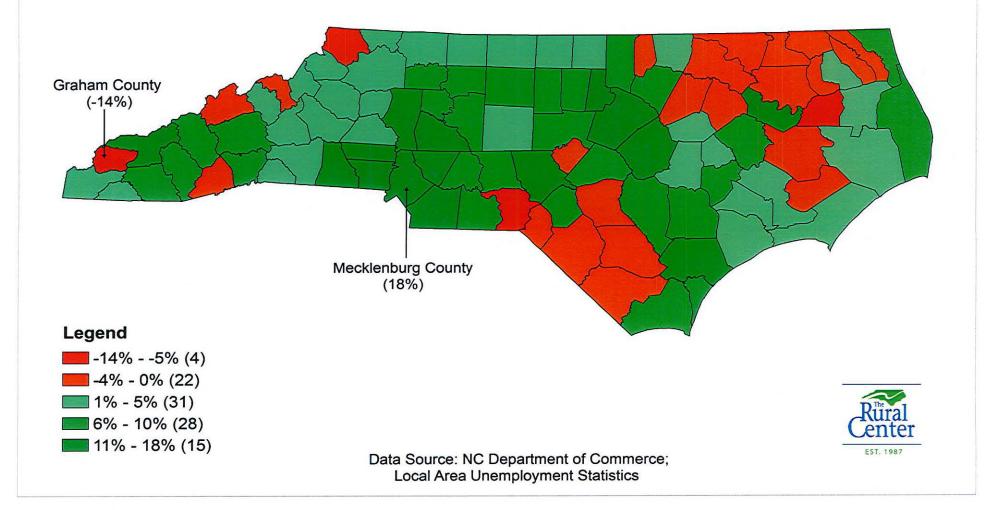


The Rural Context

By the numbers..

Employment Growth – July 2010 to July 2015





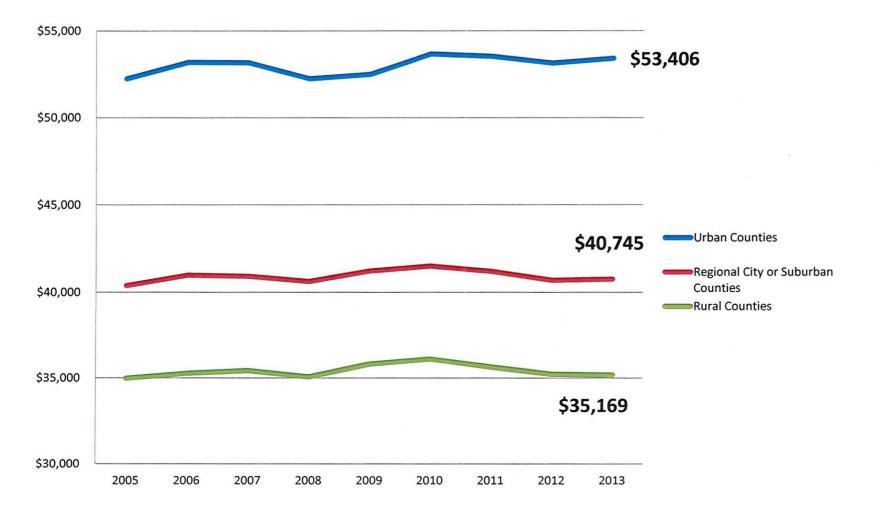
Employment Growth – July 2010 to July 2015



- **13%** employment growth in 6 urban counties
- **9%** in 14 suburban/regional city counties
- 4% in rural counties
- **57%** of total rural employment growth occurred in 10 of the 80 counties
- 26 rural counties had net job loss over the period



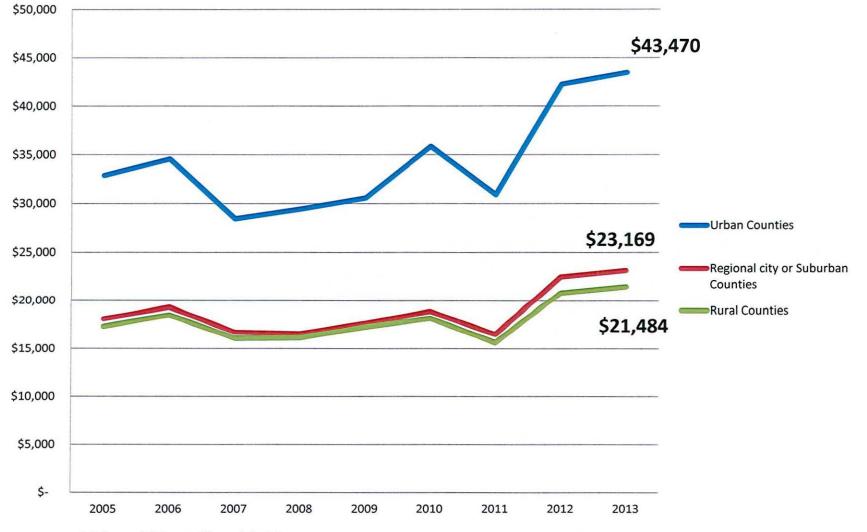
Average Wage & Salary Earnings



Data Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Average Income for Proprietors





Data Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Good News & Strong Assets



- Some uptick in employment growth in past year
- \$10.7 billion Value of Rural Ag Products
- \$1.7 billion Rural Itemized Contributions in 2012



Four Breakout Group Asset Themes

- Local and Regional Economic Assets
- People Assets
- Place Assets
- Infrastructure Assets



Local and Regional Economic Assets

• All of the key observations were cross-cutting issues

Rural enter

Advocacy Meetings Findings

Place Assets

- Strengthen physical assets strong support for Historic Preservation Tax Credit among other tools
- Enhance support of natural resources as a sustainable asset – working landscapes, parks, key funding tools
- Quality public, civic space & institutions that shape community identity
- Place asset leadership

Rural Center

Advocacy Meetings Findings

People Assets

- Need for rural leadership development and engagement
 - Youth
 - Between races, neighboring communities and across regional boundaries
 - Advances the best in rural development practice, creates an appropriate toleration for risk-taking, develops a culture of innovation, collaborates to solve problems
 - Senior citizens
- Housing concerns



Infrastructure Assets

- Water and wastewater
- Roads and transportation
- Natural Gas
- Broadband
- Healthcare sometimes mentioned as "essential" infrastructure



Six Major Cross-Cutting Issues

- Workforce Development and Education
- Partnership and Collaboration
- Rural Health Care
- Rural Broadband
- Small Business Development & Entrepreneurship
- Sufficient and Accessible Funding for Rural Development



Workforce Development & Education

- Early childhood education high importance for children from low wealth households
- Support for K-12 education and STEM education
- Community colleges and higher education must get better at the transitions between HS and colleges
- Workforce development system community colleges are critical "bridging partners" but funding limitations holding us back
- Opportunity to enhance role of community colleges
- Concern regarding inequalities among institutions



Partnership & Collaboration

- Important elements of rural development valued by rural leaders
- Collaboration is fragmented and under-funded tools
- Feelings of isolation in the west & perhaps other regions
- Importance of rural/urban cooperation and collaboration
- Divesting in regional efforts and organizations is hurting rural economic development efforts



Rural Health Care

- Policy innovation in rural NC has high potential –rural/urban/ regional links strengthening even as consolidation occurs
- Concern about rural health metrics and solutions recruitment/retention, Office of Minority Health, VA
- Expansion of Medicaid "essential for the health of low wealth families" and its economic impact
- Linking healthy people to health places walkability, local food
- Opportunities for job growth
- Historic shift from fee for services to payment based on patient outcomes – "accountable care" framework



Rural Broadband

- It is <u>the critical infrastructure need</u>
- Good, diverse models to build upon
- Last mile solutions are complex and difficult to implement
- Need for single-mindedness
- Let's get clear on practical strategies, financing opportunities, anchor institutions



Small Business Development & Entrepreneurship

- Excessive regulation
- Small business and entrepreneurship support and technical assistance
- Linkage between entrepreneurial opportunities and place assets
- We can do more, and we can do better further support to what works



Sufficient and Accessible Funding for Rural Development

- General sense that state is withdrawing support for rural development – schools, housing, regional partnerships, programs, etc.
- Funding applications are too complex and inflexible, and getting more so
- Long-term planning difficult in climate of uncertain funding levels and regulatory environment
- Rural community college support is insufficient
- Lack of awareness of the full impact of federal funding USDA Rural Development, \$1.4 billion annually

What Happens Next?



Additional feedback, prioritization and refinement –

- Jason Gray, Senior Fellow, Research & Policy Email: jgray@ncruralcenter.org Phone: 919-250-4314
- Complete the survey in the October newsletter
- Presented to Rural Center Board of Directors on December 9th for adoption

Cultivating Connectivity

2015 N.C. Rural Assembly

Presented by the N.C. Rural Center

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