

COMMUNITY
SNAPSHOT

West Jefferson, North Carolina

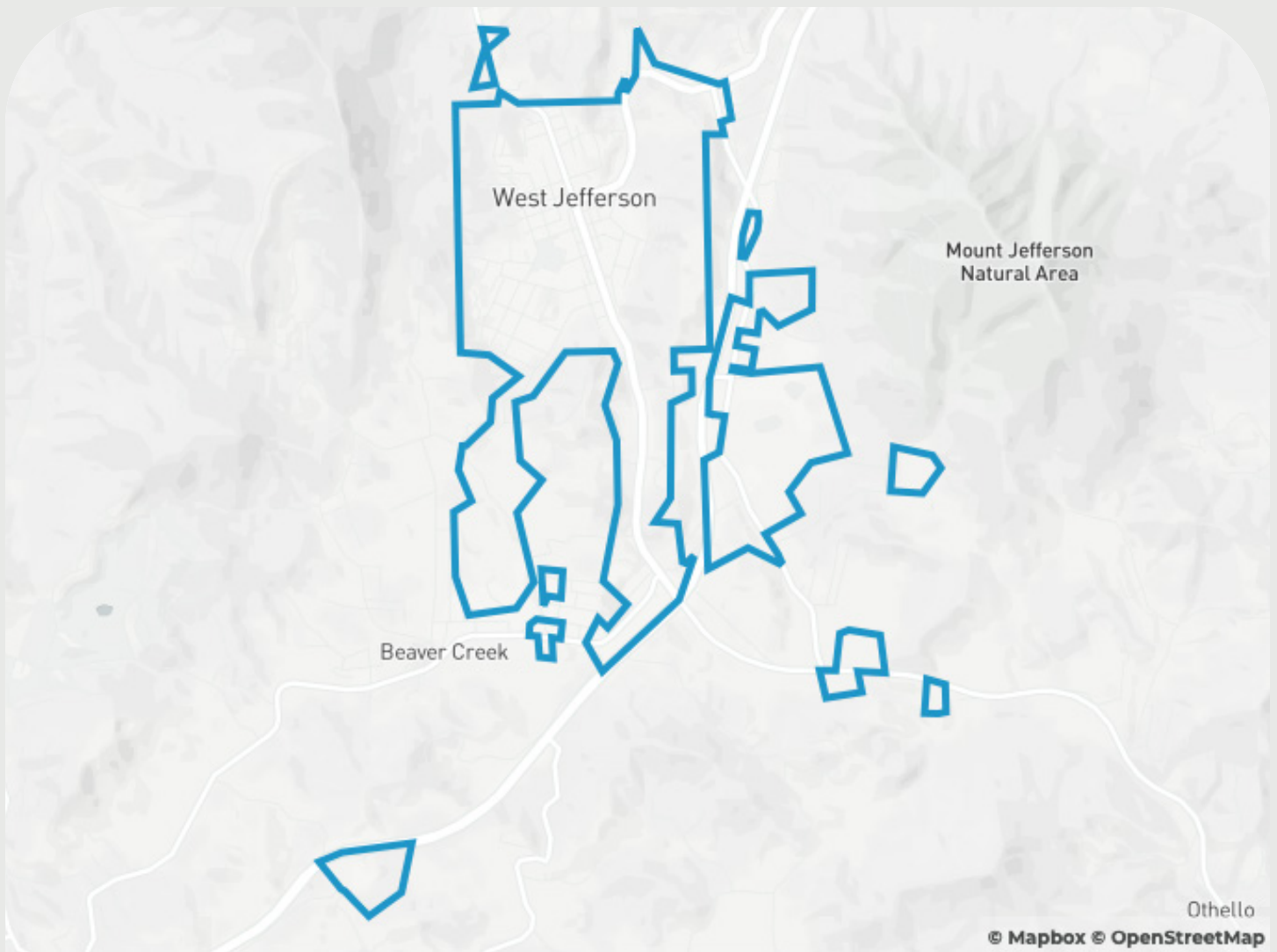
This report was prepared by Atlas Community Studios through the mySidewalk platform. It was compiled to provide background information on the town of West Jefferson and help inform the placemaking project.





History

West Jefferson, located in Ashe County, North Carolina, developed around the Virginia-Carolina Railroad in the early 1900s and was officially incorporated in 1915. It was a major stop along the Northwestern Railroad, also known as 'The Virginia Creeper,' which initially carried lumber and wood products and eventually branched out to include freight delivery as well as passenger services. The early economic development in West Jefferson began with industries like wood and lumber, which encouraged land offices, lumber companies, banks, and other businesses to set up shop. Even when the lumber industry decreased in the 1930s, West Jefferson's growth continued through other industries, such as cheese and tobacco. However, in the 1970s, when the railway usage ended, industries began to decrease in the county and led to an economic decline. In the 1990s, West Jefferson made an active effort to reverse the problem by focusing on tourist-oriented industries and empowering the local art community, which continues to thrive today. West Jefferson's downtown includes vibrant art galleries, shops, restaurants, and antique stores, as well as public art, festivals, and concerts.



Geography

West Jefferson is located in the northwest corner of North Carolina, and is approximately 2.20 square miles or 1408 acres. It is roughly 45 minutes from Wilkesboro, and approximately 2 hours west of the Winston- Salem/Greensboro area and 2 hours north of Charlotte.

Demographics

POPULATION

West Jefferson's population has exponentially **increased** over the last decade or so. From 1990 to 2017, the population increased from 993 to 1,539 (total increase of 546), and is projected to **increase** to 1,933 by 2027.



Total Population

1,539

West Jefferson, NC

26,863

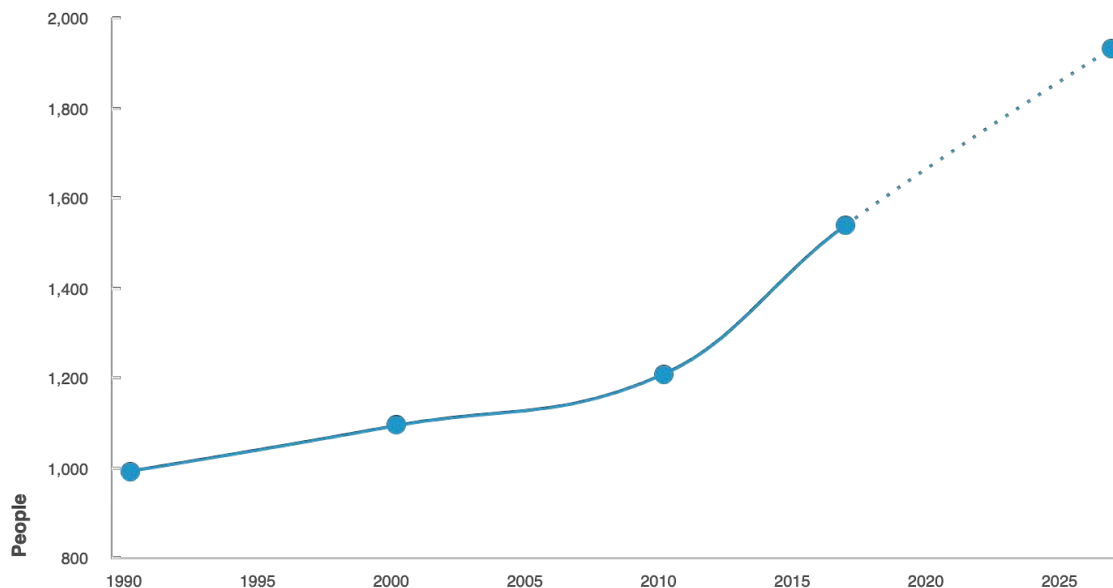
Ashe County, NC

10,264,876

North Carolina

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

West Jefferson's population has steadily increased over the past 30 years



Sources: US Census Bureau; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year



47%
of total population
Males



53%
of total population
Females

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

RACE & ETHNICITY

The City of West Jefferson is a predominately white community—only **13%** of its population are **people of color**.



13%
of total population
People of Color

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

West Jefferson, NC

Race/Ethnicity: White (non-Hispanic)	86.7%
Race/Ethnicity: Two Or More Races Other (non-Hispanic)	1.8%
Race/Ethnicity - Hispanic	4.4%

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

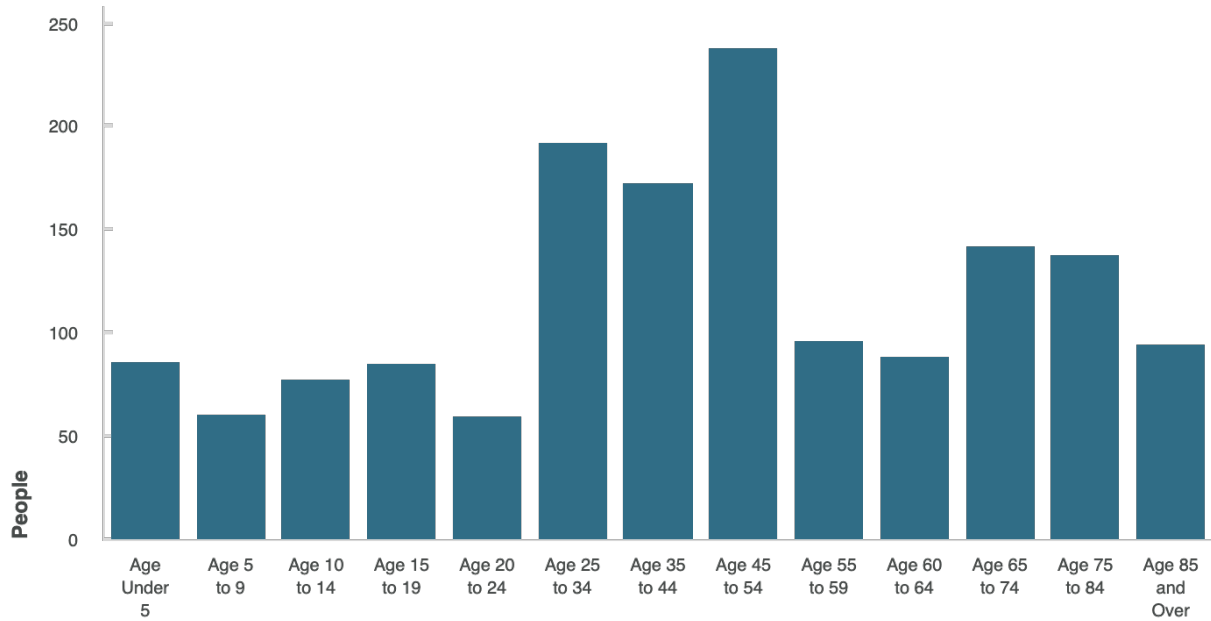
AGE

West Jefferson is a fairly intergenerational city, though seems to skew on the younger side. The median age of residents is a little under 50, and 22% of the population are over 65. In addition to that, as noted in the bar graph, the **largest age groups** in the town are ages **45-54, and 25-34**.

46.3
Years Old
Median Age

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Age Totals



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Children 19%

Population Under Age 18
West Jefferson, NC

22%
Population Under Age 18
North Carolina

23%
Population Under Age 18
United States of America

Seniors 22%

Population Age 65 and Over
West Jefferson, NC

15%
Population Age 65 and Over
North Carolina

15%
Population Age 65 and Over
United States of America

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

HEALTH

When looking at the health of West Jefferson's population, it ranks **lower** in **obesity**, roughly **equivalent** in poor mental health among adults, and slightly **higher** in poor **physical health** among adults than the state of North Carolina. Rural areas in the U.S. tend to lack [equitable access to healthcare](#) and can experience higher rates of overall poor health. It's important to understand the health of the population and how poor health conditions can affect other aspects of life, such as workforce, housing, and education.

Total Population
1,539

West Jefferson, NC

10,264,876

North Carolina

324,697,795

United States of America

Obesity Among Adults
31.4%

West Jefferson, NC

33.3%

North Carolina

30.9%

United States of America

**Poor Physical Health
Among Adults**
14.9%

West Jefferson, NC

13.1%

North Carolina

12.5%

United States of America

**Poor Mental Health
Among Adults**
14.2%

West Jefferson, NC

14.4%

North Carolina

12.7%

United States of America

Sources: CDC BRFSS PLACES 2018; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

DISABILITY

A little over 21% of the Sparta population lives with a disability. 10.5% of that total is between the ages of 18-64.

Population Living with a Disability

21.5%

West Jefferson, NC

13.4%

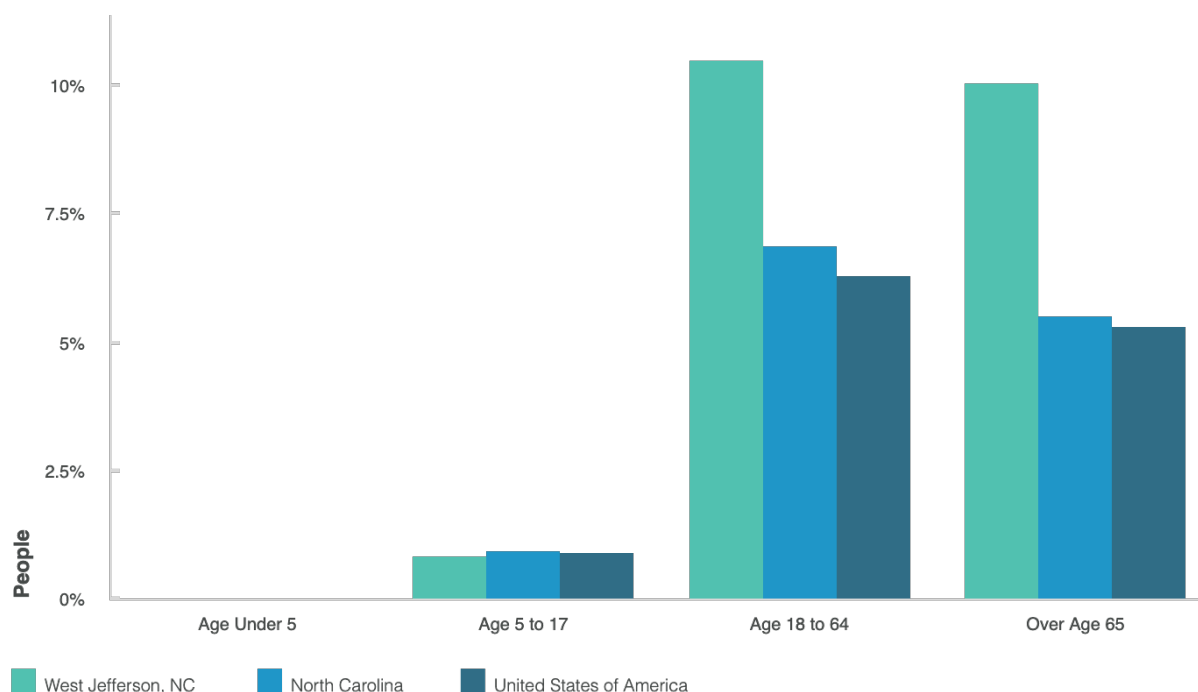
North Carolina

12.6%

United States of America

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Disability by Age



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019



Income

West Jefferson's **Median Household Income** (MHI) is **very low** when compared at the county, state, and national level. Roughly 43% of the population only earns \$25,000 or less per year.

Median Household Income

\$29,417

West Jefferson, NC

\$40,962

Ashe County, NC

\$54,602

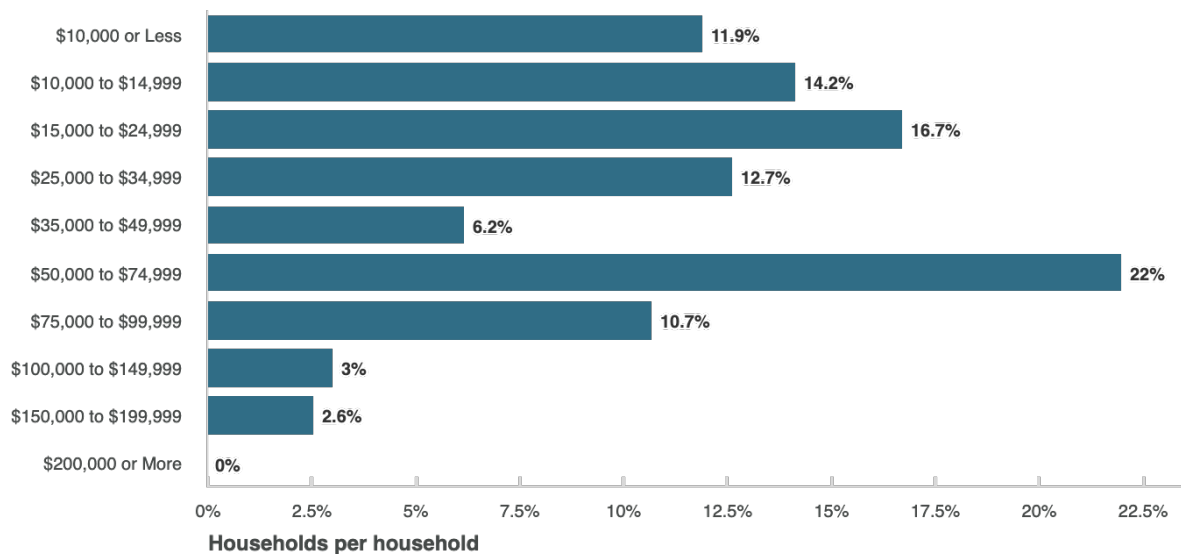
North Carolina

\$62,843

United States of America

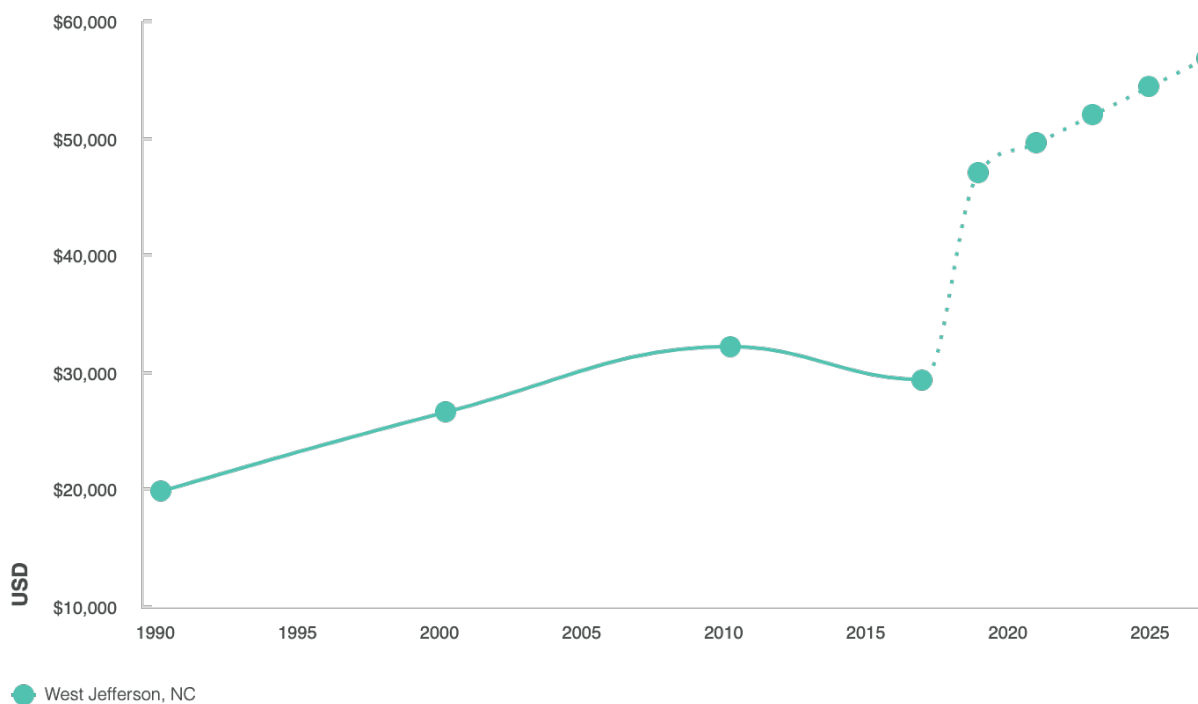
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Household Income



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

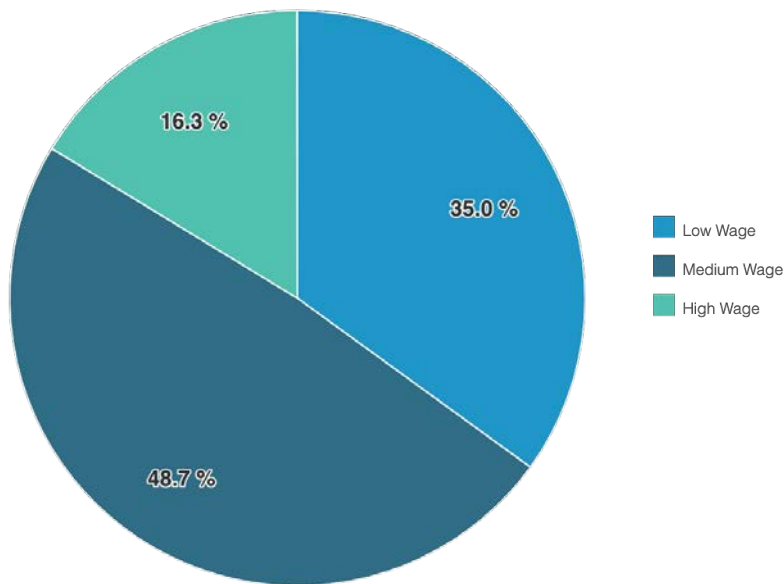
Median Household Income



Sources: US Census Bureau; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year

Roughly [21% of West Jefferson residents](#) live below the poverty level, and 35% of residents work low wage jobs. This is a slight **increase** from 18.9% in 2000. West Jefferson's rate is **increasingly higher** than [Ashe County](#) (14.6%), North Carolina (13.9%) and the U.S. (12.3%).

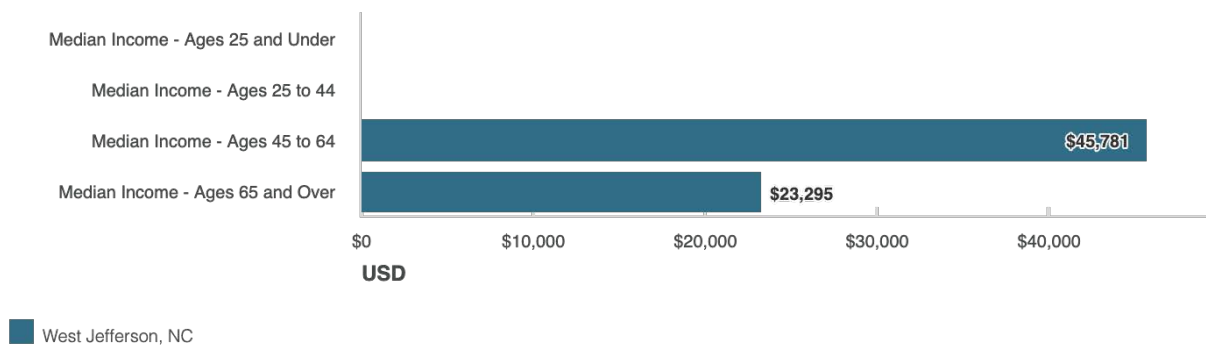
Wage of Workers



Sources: EPA Smart Location Database 2010

Wages typically increase throughout one's lifetime and then might decrease upon retirement age (around 65). Here, we can see that West Jefferson's age 65 and over population earns significantly less than the average income (\$29,500), indicating a **very low-income aging population**.

Median Income by Householder Age



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Employment

93.3%

Total Employment
West Jefferson, NC

6.7%

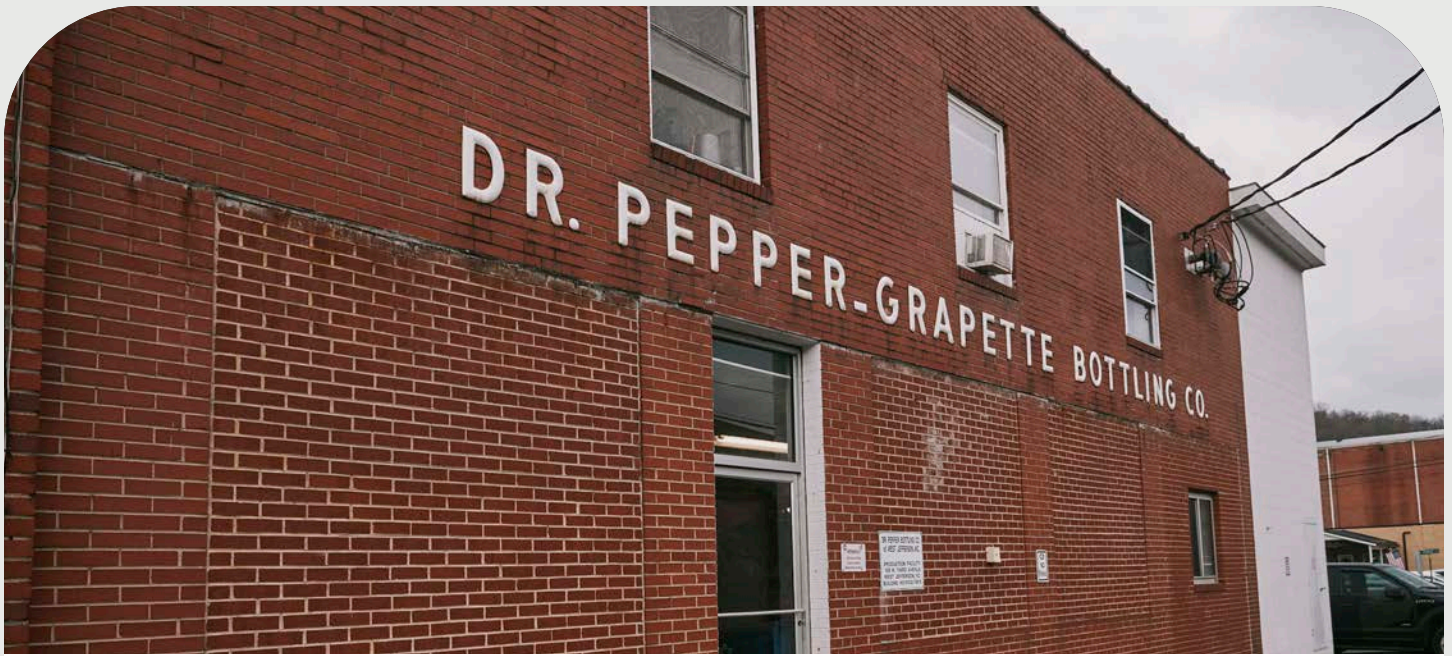
Total Unemployed
West Jefferson, NC

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

West Jefferson, NC

Employment by Occupation: Building, Grounds Cleaning, and Maintenance	11.7%
Employment by Occupation: Sales	8.6%
Employment by Occupation: Farming, Fishing and Forestry	8.2%
Employment by Occupation: Office and Administrative Support	8%
Employment by Occupation: Construction and Extraction	7.9%
Employment by Occupation: Education, Training and Library	7.1%
Employment by Occupation: Production	7%
Employment by Occupation: Transportation	6.2%
Employment by Occupation: Personal Care and Service	6.1%
Employment by Occupation: Management	5.5%
Employment by Occupation: Health Diagnosis and Treating Practitioners	4.2%
Employment by Occupation: Food Preparation and Serving	4.2%
Employment by Occupation: Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	3.5%
Employment by Occupation: Material Moving	3%
Employment by Occupation: Business and Finance	2.7%
Employment by Occupation: Healthcare Support	1.8%
Employment by Occupation: Community and Social Service	1.4%
Employment by Occupation: Health Technologist and Technicians	1.2%
Employment by Occupation: Architecture and Engineering	0.8%
Employment by Occupation: Computer and Mathematical	0.5%
Employment by Occupation: Law Enforcement	0.3%

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019



28%

Percent Change in Number of Jobs

West Jefferson, NC

Sources: LODES Version 7.5 Difference 2018-2008

By reviewing labor engagement data, it can demonstrate who is actively working or looking for work in the community and at what rate. For West Jefferson, over half the labor force is active. Although this is lower than the participation rate for North Carolina and the U.S., it's important to remember that West Jefferson has a significant aging population and that population is most likely not actively working or looking for work, which would attribute to lower participation rates overall.

**Labor Force
Participation Rate
54.6%**

West Jefferson, NC

62.4%

North Carolina

63.4%

United States of America

**Labor Market
Engagement Index
30**

West Jefferson, NC

16

North Carolina

No data

United States of America

**In Labor Force Male
per capita
23.4%**

West Jefferson, NC

26.1%

North Carolina

26.8%

United States of America

**Not in Labor Force Male
per capita
16.4%**

West Jefferson, NC

12.4%

North Carolina

12.3%

United States of America

**In Labor Force Female
per capita
22.5%**

West Jefferson, NC

23.9%

North Carolina

23.9%

United States of America

**Not in Labor Force Female
per capita
21.8%**

West Jefferson, NC

17.7%

North Carolina

17%

United States of America

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

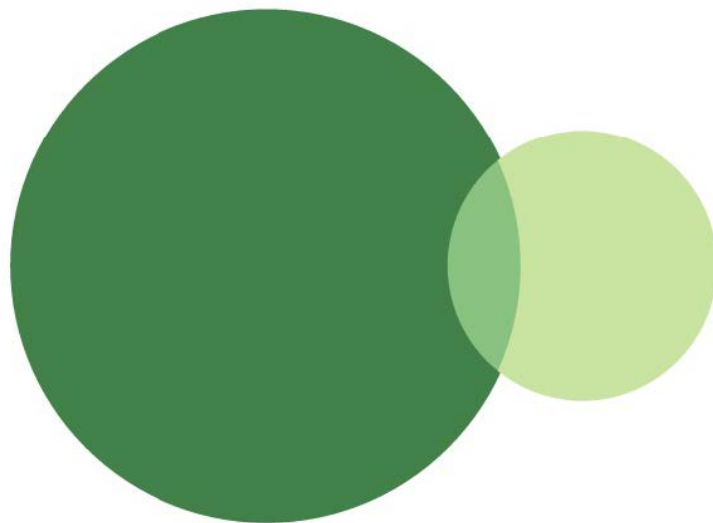
This data also allows to compare participation among genders. It appears that West Jefferson has lower rates of both genders participating in the labor force when compared to a state and national level. Finding employment, especially employment that offers livable wages, can be more difficult in rural areas.

Community services and amenities can also be scarce. A reason for high rates of females who are NOT in the labor force could be due to a lack of available childcare services, and typically, women become the main caretaker. When families have to resort to living on one income, it can increase hardship and affect other areas of their lives.



INFLOW & OUTFLOW

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's [OnTheMap tool](#), in 2018, roughly 124 people both live in and are employed in West Jefferson. 613 people live in West Jefferson, but commute outside for work, and **the majority, 2,571 people**, are employed in West Jefferson, but **commute in from other nearby areas**.



- 2,571 - Employed in Selection Area, Live Outside
- 613 - Live in Selection Area, Employed Outside
- 124 - Employed and Live in Selection Area



Housing

GENERAL

2.2

People

Average Household Size

West Jefferson, NC

2015-2019

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Median Home Value
\$156,700

West Jefferson, NC

2015-2019

\$172,500

North Carolina

2015-2019

\$217,500

United States of America

2015-2019

Median Home Value
\$88,629

West Jefferson, NC

2000

\$108,300

North Carolina

2000

\$111,800

United States of America

2000

Median Home Value
\$179,259

West Jefferson, NC

2010

\$152,700

North Carolina

2010

\$186,200

United States of America

2010

Median Home Value
\$59,459

West Jefferson, NC

1990

\$65,300

North Carolina

1990

\$79,100

United States of America

1990

Sources: US Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2010; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

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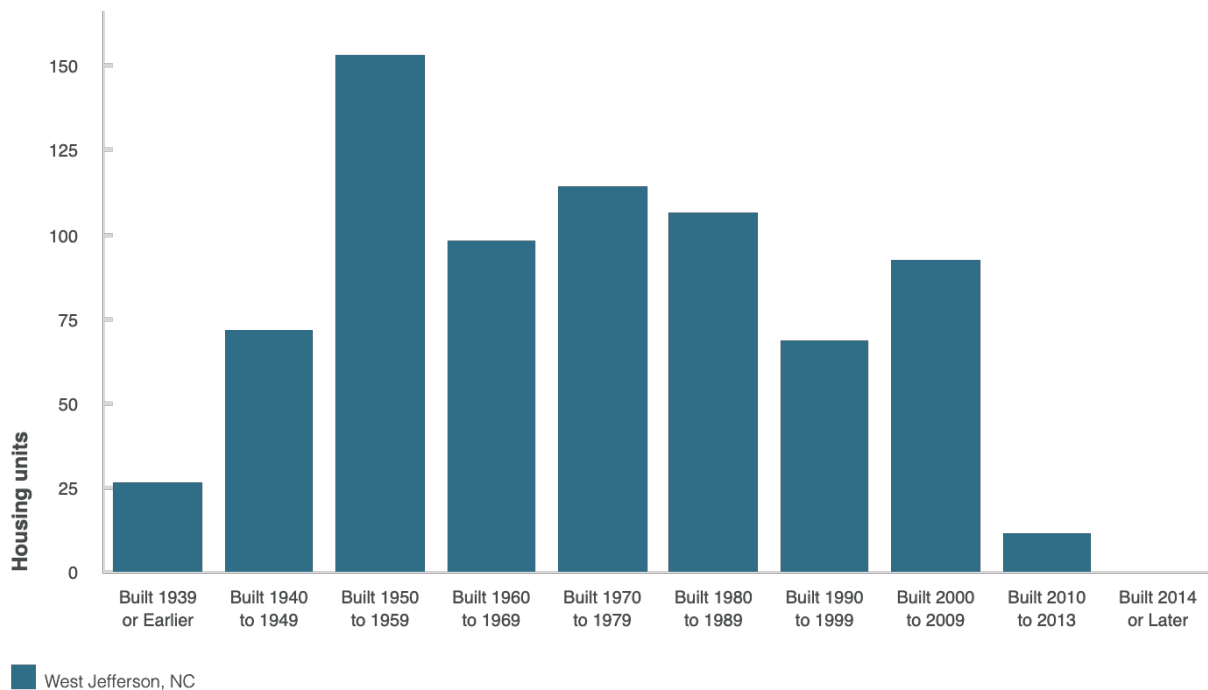
The **median home value** (MHV) in West Jefferson has **exponentially risen** over the last few decades, but has recently decreased in the last decade. From 1990 to 2000, the median home value increased by \$29,170, and from 2000 to 2010, it increased by a whopping \$90,630. This was most likely due to the construction of **93 new houses** built during the same time frame (see chart below).

However, from 2010 to 2019, the **value decreased by \$22,559**. During this time, only 12 new homes were built with the last one being constructed in 2013. In total, **only 14%** of West Jefferson's homes have been built in the past **20 years**, indicating a significant lack of updated homes.

1972 Year Building Age - Median

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

A majority of housing units were built in the 1950's while only 105 units have been built since 2000



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019



HOMEOWNERSHIP VS. RENTING

Over the last few decades (1990-2019), the number of **renter-occupied** housing units has **increased**, while the number of owner-occupied units has decreased. In 1990, 30% of housing units were renter-occupied units in West Jefferson, and 70% were owner-occupied. These numbers have drastically shifted, and by 2019, **57.5% of units were renter-occupied** and 42.5% were owner-occupied.

The owner occupied rate has decreased significantly in the past 10 years

Geography	2015-2019 Owner Occupied Housing Units	2010 Owner Occupied Housing Units	2000 Owner Occupied Housing Units	1990 Owner Occupied Housing Units
West Jefferson, NC	42.5%	67.5%	67.4%	73.1%
North Carolina	65.2%	66.7%	69.4%	68%
United States of America	64%	65.1%	66.2%	64.2%

Sources: US Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2010; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

The renter occupied rate increased by almost 20% in the past 10 years

Geography	2015-2019 Total Renter Occupied Housing Units per occupied housing unit	2010 Total Renter Occupied Housing Units per occupied housing unit	2000 Total Renter Occupied Housing Units per occupied housing unit	1990 Total Renter Occupied Housing Units per occupied housing unit
West Jefferson, NC	57.5%	37.8%	37%	30%
North Carolina	34.8%	33.3%	30.6%	32%
United States of America	36%	34.9%	33.8%	35.8%

Sources: US Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2010; US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

HOUSING UNITS

748

Housing Units

Total Housing Units

85

Housing Units

Vacant Housing Units

663

Occupied Housing Units

**Total Occupied
Housing Units**

230

Occupied Housing Units

**Excessive Housing Costs:
30 Percent or More
of Income**

282

Occupied Housing Units

**Owner Occupied
Housing Units**

75

Occupied Housing Units

**Excessive Owner Housing
Costs: 30 Percent
or More of Income**

381

Occupied Housing Units

**Total Renter
Occupied Housing
Units**

155

Occupied Housing Units

**Excessive Renter
Housing Costs: Gross
Rent 30 Percent or
More of Income**

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Roughly 35% of households in West Jefferson are burdened by housing costs and spending more than **30% of their income** on housing. Within the 33%, households who rent are most affected, roughly **67% of renters** are spending more than **30% of income** on rent, where only 33% of homeowners are burdened by housing costs.

35%

Households

Total Cost Burdened Households

West Jefferson, NC



This section also indicates that there is a **relative number of vacant homes (11.3%)** that could potentially be filled/renovated/demolished in West Jefferson. This could become a focus area for a housing strategy since costs for new housing development have skyrocketed in the past year, and are an unlikely option to provide affordable housing in West Jefferson.

According to the [U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development](#), there are **no current HUD homes for sale** in Ashe County, indicating further need for accessible and affordable housing.

AVERAGE INCOME

\$55,833
Median Income - Owner Occupied
West Jefferson, NC

\$20,438
Median Income - Renter Occupied
West Jefferson, NC

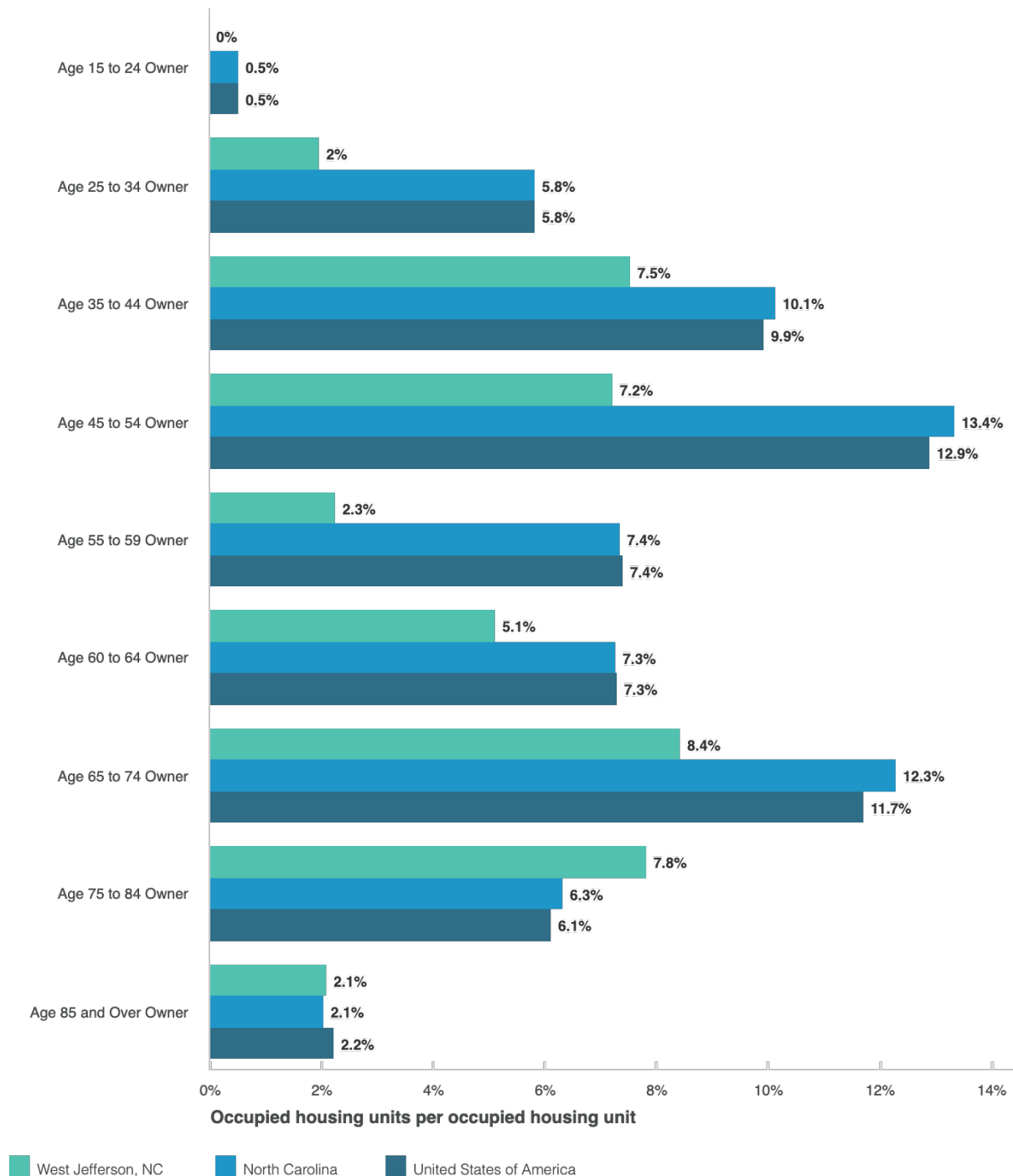
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Although this demonstrates a serious need for more **affordable housing**, both for homeowners and renters, this problem is exacerbated even more for renters when comparing average incomes of the two populations. **Homeowners** in West Jefferson make more than **2.5 times** the amount of income that renters do. The average income of **renters** is also **significantly lower** than the average household income of \$29,417, a gap of **almost \$9,000**.

AGE

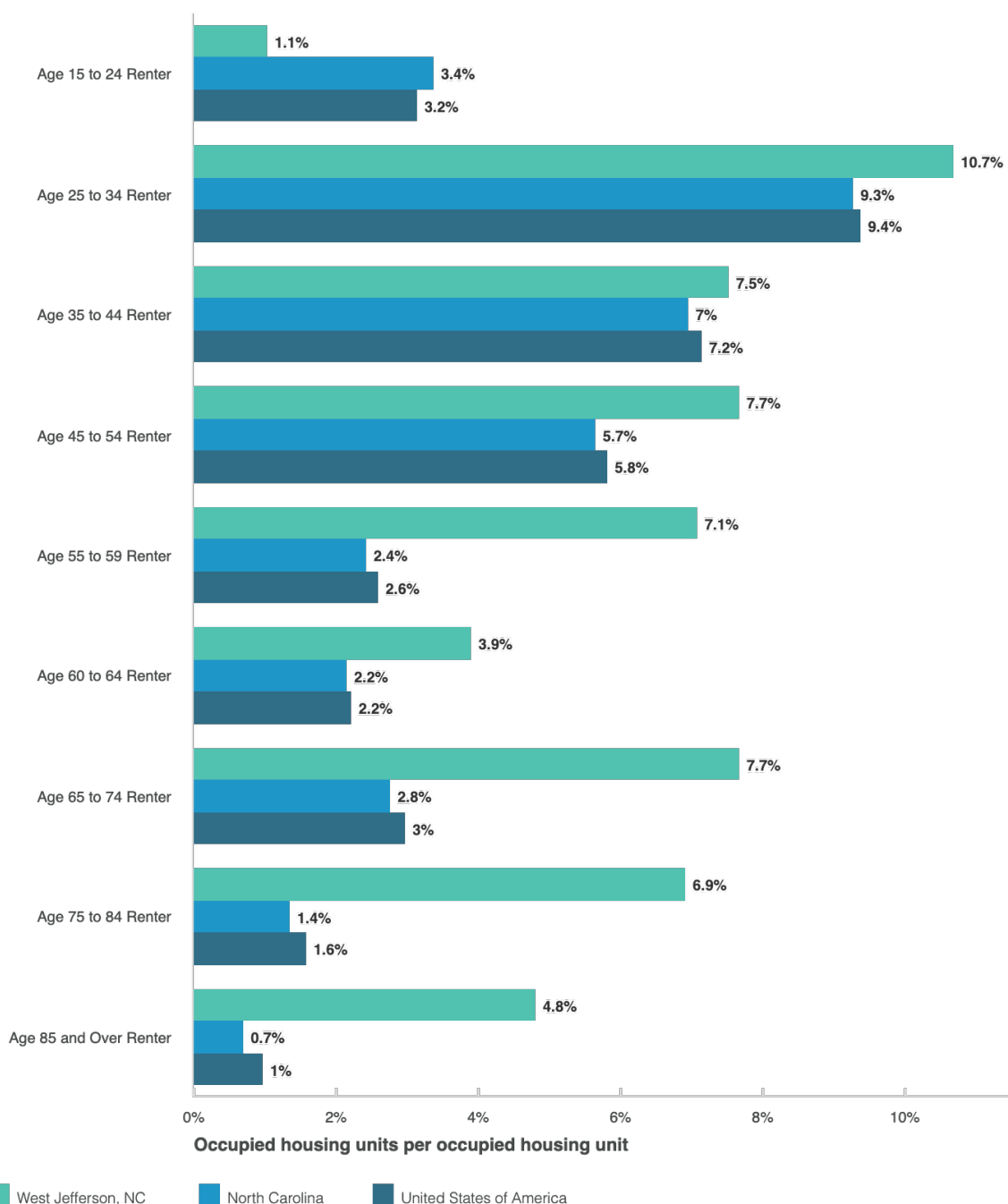
Now we want to breakdown homeownership vs. renting by age to see which age groups could be target populations. Here you can see high homeownership rates among people 45-54 and 65-74.

Owner Occupied housing units by Householder Age

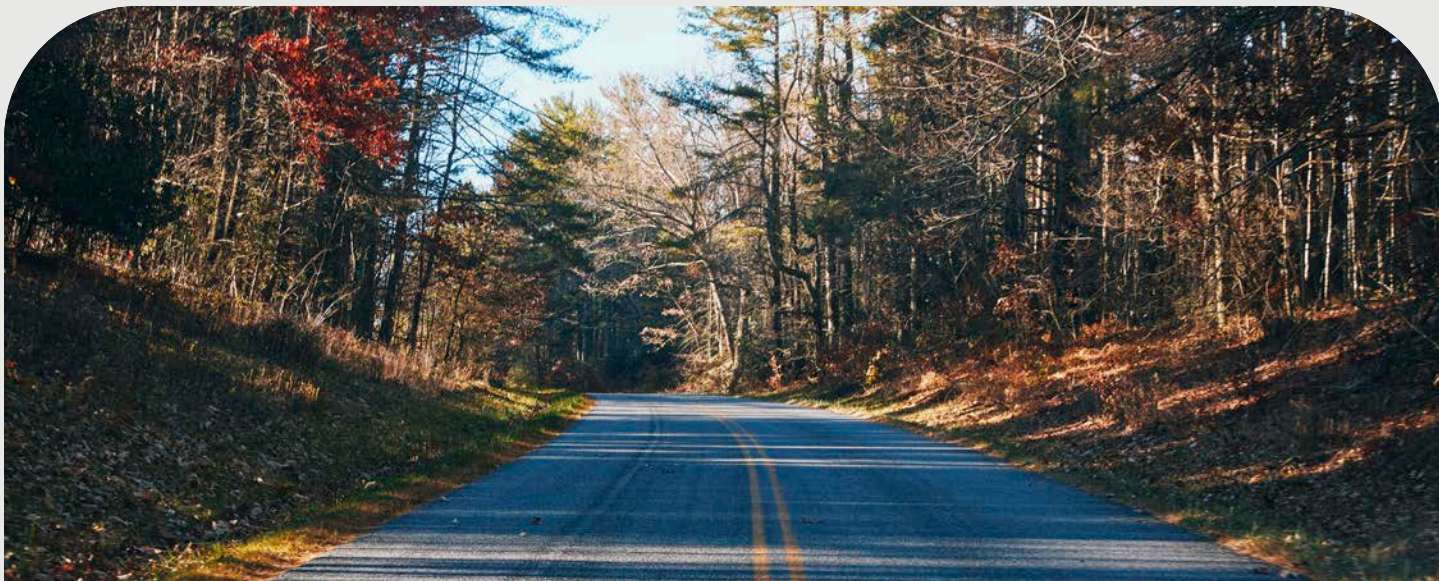


However, when you look at the **57.5% of the population** who **rent** in West Jefferson, **30% are above the age of 55**. This demonstrates a large portion of the renting population is older than your typical population that might be renting (ages 15-34). This goes against comparative rates in North Carolina and the U.S., where renting among these age groups is lower.

Renter Occupied housing units by Householder Age



Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019



VACANCY RATES

West Jefferson has a **somewhat high percentage** of vacant homes, homes that could potentially be sold or rented to current and future residents. Although some of this could be due to the significant migrant population only residing in West Jefferson on a seasonal basis, this indicates **a gap in connecting potential renters/buyers to available homes.**

85
Housing Units
Vacant Housing Units

31
Vacant Housing Units
Vacancy Status: For Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use

9
Vacant Housing Units
Vacancy Status: For Sale

0
Vacant Housing Units
Vacancy Status: For Rent

23
Vacant Housing Units
Vacancy Status: Rented, Not Occupied

14
Vacant Housing Units
Vacancy Status: For Migrant Workers

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

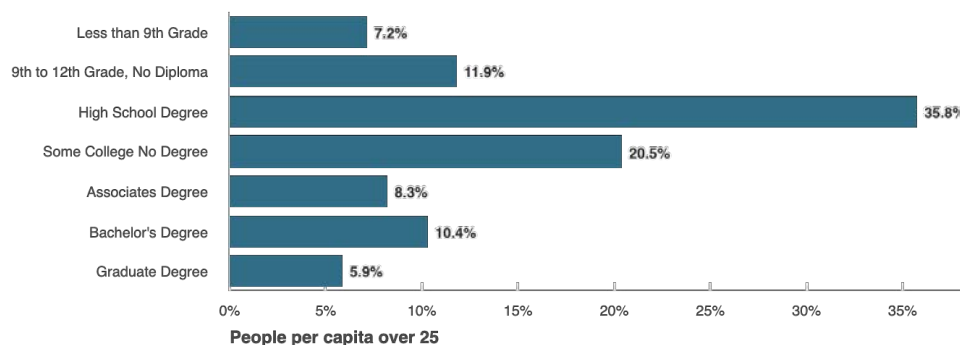


Education

The majority of West Jefferson residents have a high school degree. This number has slowly increased over the last decade, from 32.4% in 1990 to 35.8% in 2019. When looking at the population who has received a high school diploma, the rate stayed above 30% from 1990 - 2000. However, it dropped to 26% in 2010, most likely due to the 2008 recession. Although this number dropped, you also see a significant increase (8.7%) in individuals pursuing some college, but not receiving a degree, topping out at 27.4% in 2010. Currently, 35.8% of individuals receive a high school degree, the highest percentage over the past 30 years.

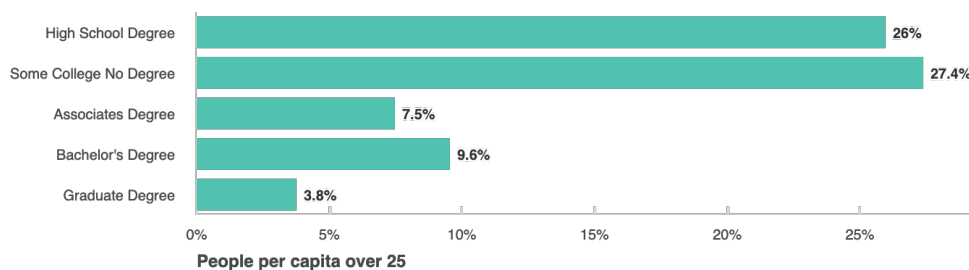
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational Attainment (2015-2019)



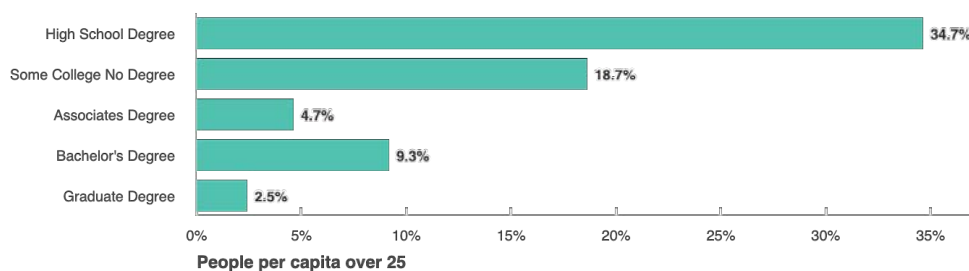
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Educational Attainment (2010)



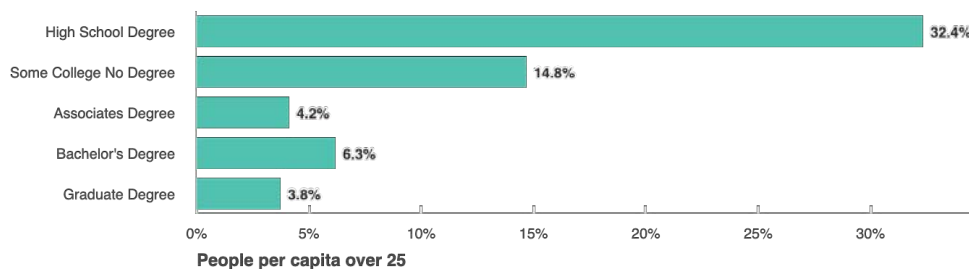
Sources: US Census Bureau 2010

Educational Attainment (2000)



Sources: US Census Bureau 2000

Educational Attainment (1990)



Sources: US Census Bureau 1990

SCHOOLS

Daycare & Preschool

Generations Childhood Development Center: Generations Childhood Development Center is a licensed, intergenerational care facility in West Jefferson. It is operated by Ashe Services for Aging Inc, which is a private non-profit that provides services for senior adults, disabled individuals, and children. They accept children from birth to five years old, though there is a waiting list.

Learning Thru Play Too Child Development Center: Learning Thru Play Too Child Development Center a licensed day care facility in West Jefferson which offers care for up to 140 children, from infants to 12 year olds.

Ashe Support Services Early Learning Center: Ashe Support Services Early Learning Center is a center-based childcare facility that focuses on early childhood education in order to prepare children for the local school system.

Denver Christian Academy Preschool: Denver Christian Academy (DCA) Preschool is located 10 minutes outside of West Jefferson. It is a Christian childcare facility open from 7:30am to 6pm that has programming for children focused on development with dedicated independent and group activities.

Ashe Developmental Day School: Ashe Developmental Day School, located in Jefferson, is a private, non-profit childcare facility serves kids ages 6 weeks to 6 years. Its operating hours are Monday through Friday, 7am to 5:15pm.

Ashe County Head Start Sizemore Center: The Ashe County Head Start Sizemore Center, located in Jefferson, is a small childcare facility with a total capacity of 31 students with ten staff members. It is open Monday through Friday from 8am to 2pm.

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Primary

Westwood Elementary School: Westwood Elementary School, home of the Timberwolves, is an elementary school in West Jefferson, NC. It has roughly 536 students from grades K-6 and a student-teacher ratio of 14:1. The school has eight community partners that help provide materials and services for students and their families. These partners are: Ashe County Public Library, BlueRidge Energy, CarolinaWest Wireless, Skyline Skybest, Hardee's, McDonalds, North Carolina State Parks, and a local radio station, 93.5FM the Farm.

Secondary

Ashe County Middle School: Ashe County Middle School is located in Warrensville, North Carolina, roughly 11 minutes from downtown West Jefferson. It serves students in grades 7 and 8. There are roughly 516 students, with a student-teacher ratio of 14:1.

Ashe County High School: Ashe County High School, located in West Jefferson, serves students in grades 9 through 12. It has approximately 809 students with a student-teacher ratio of 15:1. It serves students in all of Ashe County.

Colleges & Universities

Wilkes Community College (Ashe Campus): Wilkes Community College's main campus is in Wilkesboro, about forty-five minutes from West Jefferson, but it has another campus in West Jefferson. It is a public community college that is a part of the broader North Carolina Community College System, serving people in Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany counties. It offers a wide range of programs from the arts to STEM to business to manufacturing and more. Its average in-state tuition costs before aid is \$14,778.

Appalachian State University: Located about a half hour away in Boone is Appalachia State University, a fouryear public university. Appalachia State offers 150+ undergraduate and graduate programs across a range of study focuses. Its average in-state tuition prior to aid is roughly \$19,715.

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East Tennessee State University: East Tennessee State University is a public research university located in Johnson City, Tennessee, roughly 2 hours from West Jefferson. Its average in-state tuition before aid is \$24,162. There are numerous colleges within the university, ranging in subject from education to nursing to pharmacy to business and technology and more.

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute: Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute (CCC&TI) is a public community college in Hudson, North Carolina. It is located about an hour and fifteen minutes from West Jefferson. Its average in-state tuition prior to aid is \$13,312. It offers associates degrees in a range of subjects, from education to business to STEM to public health. In addition, it also offers vocational and trade programs and certificates regarding topics like HVAC, plumbing, truck driving, upholstery, vehicle safety and emission inspections, welding, and more.

Art Schools & Programs

Florence Art School: The Florence Art School, located in West Jefferson, offers workshops and classes to adults and children of all skill levels in the fine arts and heritage crafts. It has gallery space for current artists to exhibit their work, and is active in sharing opportunities for local artists to get involved in the creative community.

Infrastructure

TRANSPORTATION

Airports

The closest airport is the Ashe County Airport in Jefferson, North Carolina. It is a small, county-owned, public use airport. There is also Wilkes County Airport, located an hour away in Wilkesboro, which is another small, public airport with just one runway, and the Tri-Cities Regional Airport in Blountville, Tennessee, which is two hours away. The nearest international airport is the Piedmont Triad International Airport in Greensboro, which is a little under 2 hours away.

Highways & Interstates

Route 221 runs north-south right through West Jefferson, and there are smaller roads leading into the town such as NC-163, and Highway 194.

MEDICAL CARE

The nearest hospital to West Jefferson is the Ashe Memorial Hospital, which is located in Jefferson. They offer family care, lab and pharmacy services, a birthing center, emergency services, care management, orthopedics, oncology services, and more. Additional medical services in West Jefferson include: Ashe Family Healthcare, Jefferson Specialty Clinic, Women's Health Center, Ashe Pediatrics, and other independent practitioners.

BROADBAND & CELLULAR

West Jefferson, and the larger [Ashe County](#), offers broadband availability to almost every resident in the county. Roughly 99.6% of the population has fiber optic internet access. The only other three counties in the state that provide similar rates of access are Alleghany County, a neighbor to Ashe, Wake County, home to Raleigh, and Mecklenburg County, home to Charlotte.

According to [broadbandnow.com](#), the top residential internet providers in West Jefferson are: CenturyLink, Viasat, HughesNet, SkyBest, and CarolinaWest Wireless, which are available to almost all West Jefferson residents.

76%**Household With Internet Access***West Jefferson, NC***24%****Household Without Internet Access***West Jefferson, NC***79.6%****Household With Computer***West Jefferson, NC***20.4%****Household Without Computer***West Jefferson, NC*

Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

POLICE & FIRE

The Ashe County Sheriff's Office and the West Jefferson Police Department serve the residents of West Jefferson. The Sheriff's Office has about 106 employees and handles domestic violence, evictions, medication disposal, gun permits, sex offenders, as well as community outreach programs. The West Jefferson Police Department has roughly 8 full-time officers, and 2 part-time. The West Jefferson Fire Department, founded in 1928, is a volunteer fire department servicing West Jefferson and the surrounding area. In 2020, a new, \$1.2 million Ashe County Fire & Rescue Association training facility was built in West Jefferson to help train future firefighters and first responders.

BANKS

There are five banks in West Jefferson: LifeStore Bank, First Citizens Bank, Skyline National Bank, First National Bank, State Employees' Credit Union. Other financial institutions include Blue Ridge Rural Land Trust, Applied Financial Services and OneMain Financial.

GROCERY & MARKETS

In West Jefferson, there is a Walmart Supercenter and an Ingles grocery store. There are also smaller markets such as Zyzy's Market and La Tapatia 4, Mexican grocery stores, Bob's Girl Produce, Tim and Sons Seafood, and Art of Oil. In Jefferson, the next town over, there is also a Food Lion.

Environment

AIR QUALITY

According to the CDC, which only tracks county-wide data, Ashe County's ambient concentration of particulate matter in the air is 7.7 micrograms per cubic meter in 2016. This particulate matter includes things like dust, dirt, soot, and smoke. Levels higher than 12 can lead to breathing problems, make asthma and heart conditions worse, and lead to low birth weights ([Source](#)).

WATER QUALITY

The City of West Jefferson published their 2020 Annual Water Report explaining the water quality testing done over the 2019 calendar year, which determined that the water supply in West Jefferson is safe. All water supplies are expected to have some contaminants, whether from plumbing pipes or natural erosion. The contaminants found in West Jefferson's water supply were all well under their respective Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). (You may view this report [here](#)).

NATURAL DISASTERS

West Jefferson has an unsurprisingly low earthquake index of 0.21, and North Carolina's earthquake index falls roughly on the same scale at 0.18. This is a very small index compared to the United State's overall earthquake index, which is 1.81.

In West Jefferson, the tornado index number is roughly 37.36, which is significantly lower than North Carolina's tornado index, which is 115.21. This is just under the United States's tornado index of 136.45. These index values are calculated based on historical weather events ([Source](#)).

In addition to earthquake and tornado measurements, there have, of course, been other natural disasters and major weather events in West Jefferson. Between the years of 1950 and 2010, there were 1,486 thunderstorm events, 859 hail storms, and 414 instances of flooding within 50 miles of West Jefferson ([Source](#)). These were the biggest weather events noted during this time period, however there were other smaller weather events, such as heavy snow, strong winds, tropical storms, and hurricanes.



Art, Culture & Historic Sites

EVENTS

West Jefferson frequently has musical performances and concerts in their public parks, such as the Backstreet Park Concert Series, and local restaurants often host events like trivia and karaoke.

Stomp and Brew Festival: The Stomp and Brew Festival is an annual fall festival that takes place in downtown West Jefferson. It focuses on craft beer, wine, and music by inviting in local brewers and vintners in the region as well as musicians. There are also other features such as a classic car show, craft vendors, and food trucks.

Ashe County Farmers Market: The Ashe County Farmers Market is open every Saturday from 8am to 1pm in West Jefferson. It offers fresh produce, meats, and even artisan products like hand-crafted pottery, woven baskets, quilts, soaps and candles, and more.

HISTORIC SITES, MUSEUMS & ATTRACTIONS

There are no museums in West Jefferson, however, the Museum of Ashe County History is located a few minutes away in Jefferson. The Museum of Ashe County History is a non-profit organization focused on the preservation of the 1904 Ashe County Courthouse. It houses artifacts, documents, and images to share the history of Ashe County.

Other attractions in West Jefferson include:

Ashe County Cheese Store: Started by the Kraft Corporation in 1930, Ashe County Cheese offers cheeses, butters, fudge, ice cream, and even candy. The shop has three big cow art pieces installed in the front, which has become a fixture on West Jefferson's Main Street.

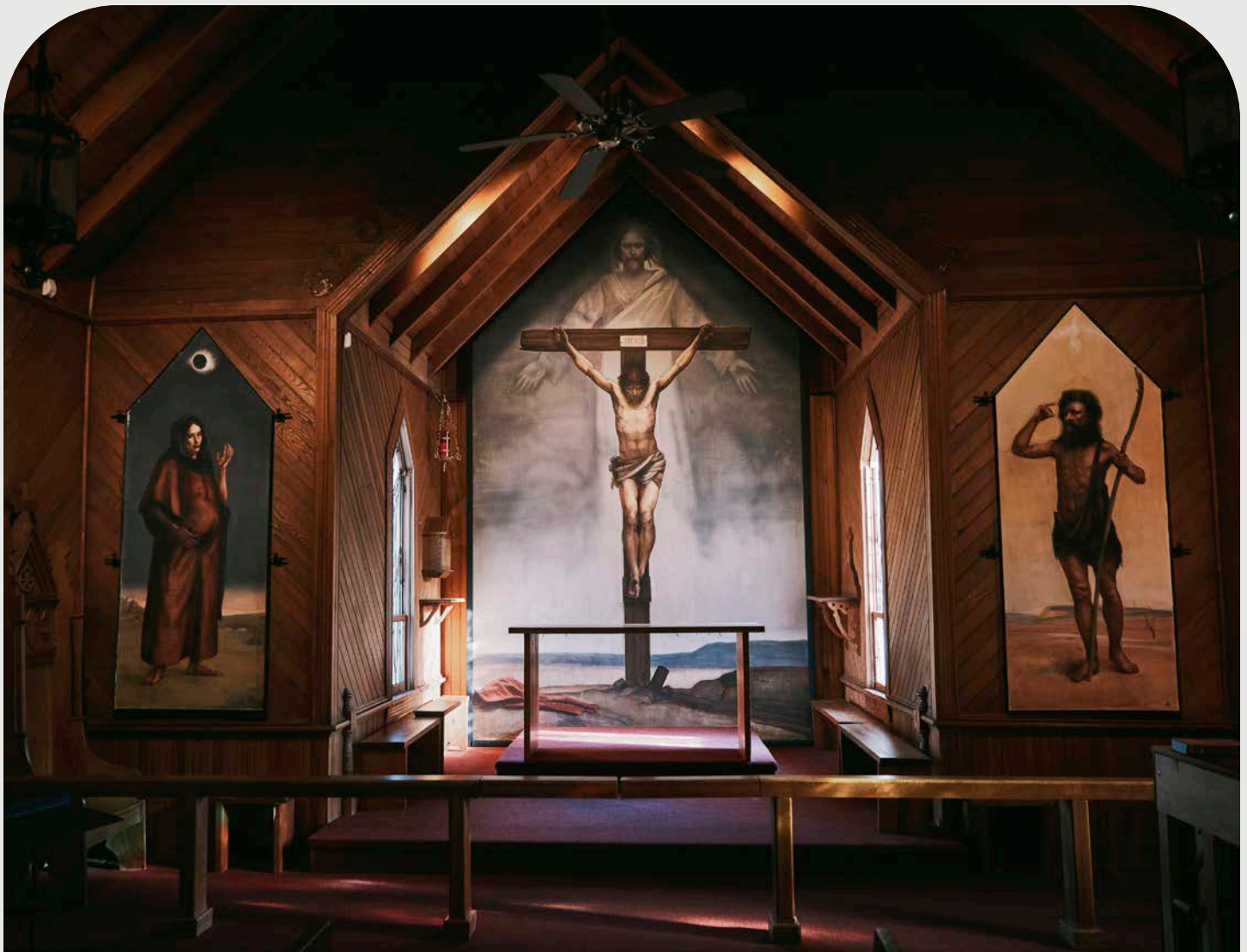
Parkway Theater: Parkway Theater, first opened in 1947, is West Jefferson's movie theater. **Ashe Civic Center:** Located between West Jefferson and Jefferson along Highway 221 is the Ashe Civic Center. This center houses a 282-seat theater and auditorium, which brings in a range of events, from music to theater to dance, and even hosts gallery exhibits.

Ashe Arts Center: Home to the Ashe County Arts Council, the Arts Center hosts changing galleries, a gallery shop, large sculptures, and even is the site of concerts, literary events, meetings, and is the polling place for West Jefferson.

Great Southern Gothic: Great Southern Gothic is an apothecary shop and escape room that offers ghost tours of historic downtown West Jefferson.

PUBLIC ART

Murals: There are twelve murals located in downtown West Jefferson: Gardens of the Sea (2002), Unity in Diversity (2006), Blue Ridge Parkway (2005), Train at Jefferson Station (2005), Spring Wildflowers on Mount Jefferson (1998), Weathered Pines (2003), History of Ashe Through the Ages and Seasons (1996), Wings and Things (2004), New River Traditions (1998), Hayden and Chaco (2004), Somewhere in Ashe (2002), and Cut at Devil's Stairs (2001). You can view the Walking Tour guide [here](#).



Concrete Pedestals: In 2011, after the Town of West Jefferson removed street lights from the downtown as a part of a streetscape improvement initiative, the Arts Council painted each of the concrete pedestals to each streetlight. These pedestals are painted and decorated in elaborate, bright designs from local artists.

LIBRARIES & RESOURCE CENTERS

Ashe County Public Library: The Ashe County Public Library is located in West Jefferson. They offer book rentals, computer and printer use, historic and genealogical research, access to databases like NC Live and Ancestry Library, job support through NCWorks, as well as story time events and activities geared towards children.



Recreation

According to the CDC, which only tracks county-wide data, in 2015, 18% of residents in Ashe County lives within a half a mile of a park. In the state of North Carolina, 23% of the population lives within a half a mile of a park ([Source](#)).

West Jefferson's park system includes Backstreet Park, which hosts the free Summer Concert series on their performing stage as well as other events. Mount Jefferson State Natural Area is a national landmark with hiking trails, picnic grounds, and scenic vistas. The Bowie-Seagraves Municipal Park, also known as West Jefferson Park, is a public park with tennis courts, baseball fields, a large playground, basketball courts, a playground facility, and greenspace.