



Northwest  
North Carolina  
*Sparta & West Jefferson*  
Background  
Assessment

# Acknowledgements

*Acknowledgements*



**Atlas Community Studios would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their support and participation in the strategic planning process:**

## Town of Sparta Steering Committee

Bob Bamberg, Alleghany News	Steve Hall, Educator
Zach Barricklow, Wilkes Community College	Xavier Iglesias, Entrepreneur
Wanda Beck, Wilkes Community College	Mechelle Luffman, County Official
Lisa Bottomley, Alleghany Chamber for Economic Development	April Maines, Alleghany Health
Ricky Brown, Alleghany Chamber for Economic Development	Phoebe Murphy, Student
Bryan Edwards, Alleghany Chamber for Economic Development	Yannia Nordelo, College Student
Rhesa Edwards, Entrepreneur	Caleb Osborne, College Student
Ben Gatton, Sparta United Methodist Church	Tonya Sheets, Entrepreneur
Dayna Guadagno, Resident	Scott Smith, Entrepreneur
Mindy Hall, Realtor	Ryan Wilmoth, Town Manager

## Town of West Jefferson Steering Committee

Judy Bare, Ashe County Farm Bureau	Tom Hartman, Mayor
Chris Barr, Resident	Rev. Michael Lea, First Baptist Church
Rusty Barr, West Jefferson Town Alderman	Todd McNeill, County Commissioner
Alan Briggs, Resident	Dawson Miller, Resident
Graham Caddell, Resident	Madison Osborne, Resident
Rebecca Eldreth, Resident	Brantley Price, City Manager
Derek Green, Resident	Joni Ray, Ashe County Arts Council
Kyle Hall, Resident	Stephen Shoemaker, West Jefferson Town Alderman

## Blue Ridge Energy — Project Sponsor

Crystal Spencer, Director of Marketing

## Local Organizations

Alleghany Chamber for Economic Development  
Alleghany Arts Council  
Ashe County Chamber of Commerce





Letter From: **Town of Sparta and Alleghany Chamber for Economic Development**

The **Town of Sparta** has engaged in a planning process called Creative Placemaking.

WHAT IS CREATIVE PLACEMAKING? Creative Placemaking is a people-centered approach to building strong, vibrant communities. It helps communities achieve economic development and population growth through cultural and entrepreneurial amenities, concepts, and catalytic projects.

We appreciate the participation from the steering committee members who provided their input in meetings and visioning sessions as well as input from a variety of people in our community. Atlas Community Studios, a creative placemaking firm, listened to how people want downtown Sparta to grow for our future. You must have goals and a desired end-result to identify the actions needed to achieve those results. Based on community input, Atlas took these conversations and feedback and designed a plan to have those ideas come to fruition.

Why invest in downtown Sparta? A vibrant downtown signifies a healthy economy in a community and provides economic opportunities for small businesses. We know that small businesses are the backbone of a thriving community. More money is recirculated when spent with locally owned small businesses. Business owners are our neighbors, family, and friends. They sponsor youth sports teams, donate to school carnivals, and have a personal stake in seeing our community thrive and grow. Downtowns help small businesses succeed, while balancing historic preservation with new infill and creating a welcoming district for all to enjoy. With the assistance of Atlas Community Studios, it is our goal to widen the definition of placemaking to address the root problem of population decline by adding housing, childcare, workforce development, and retention of our existing industry and growing from within, to the list of artistic and cultural approaches already included.

This plan is possible because of the many people who gave their time and ideas and shared their vision for Sparta. Thank you to everyone who participated in this planning process. Thank you to the Steering Committee, downtown merchants, and property owners, interested community leaders and citizens, students at Alleghany High School, the arts community, and many more. A special thank you to Blue Ridge Energy for underwriting most of the costs for this project and to the Town of Sparta Council for their support.

This plan is a true example of community-based economic development and placemaking. This plan provides the needed direction to make downtown Sparta an even more vibrant place for the community to gather and a true destination for visitors.

Sincerely yours,

Wes Brinegar, Mayor  
Town of Sparta

Ricky Brown, Chairman

Alleghany Chamber for Economic Development

Tom Hartman, Mayor  
Brantley Price, Town Manager  
Bradley Jordan, Chief of Police  
John B. "Jak" Reeves, Town Attorney



Russell W. Barr, III, Alderman  
Calvin Green, Alderman  
Crystal C. Miller, Alderwoman  
John K. Reeves, Alderman  
Stephen Shoemaker, Alderman

## Town of West Jefferson

*Established 1915*  
*"Prosperity, Growth, Achievement"*

November 23, 2021

The Town of West Jefferson's Creative Placemaking Project which came about by support from Blue Ridge Energy is the result of many meetings, visioning sessions, and input from an array of many people in the community. The Atlas Community Studios, a creative placemaking firm had three points of interest for discussion – Housing, Workforce Development and Key Building Revitalization. After much input, the Atlas Group refined the major points of interest.

The Atlas group found West Jefferson already had a vibrant and walkable downtown, so the group focused on what is needed to improve Housing, Workforce Development and Building Revitalization. Key issues during the discussion were - lack of affordable housing, lack of childcare, and a lack of local contractors in the area to build houses to develop what is known as a 3D Printing Bootcamp program.

The Creative Placemaking project would not have happened without the financial support from Blue Ridge Energy and all the community involvement. Many ideas were discussed during the meetings. Thank you to the steering committee, interested community leaders and citizens that took part in the project.

The plan will continue the Downtown West Jefferson revitalization that has taken place over the past several years to make West Jefferson and Ashe County a better place to live, work and visit for many years to come.

Again, Thank You to all those who participated.

Sincerely,

Tom Hartman  
Mayor-Town of West Jefferson

Post Office Box 490  
Phone: 336-246-3551

01 S. Jefferson Ave.

West Jefferson, NC 28694  
Fax: 336-246-4409

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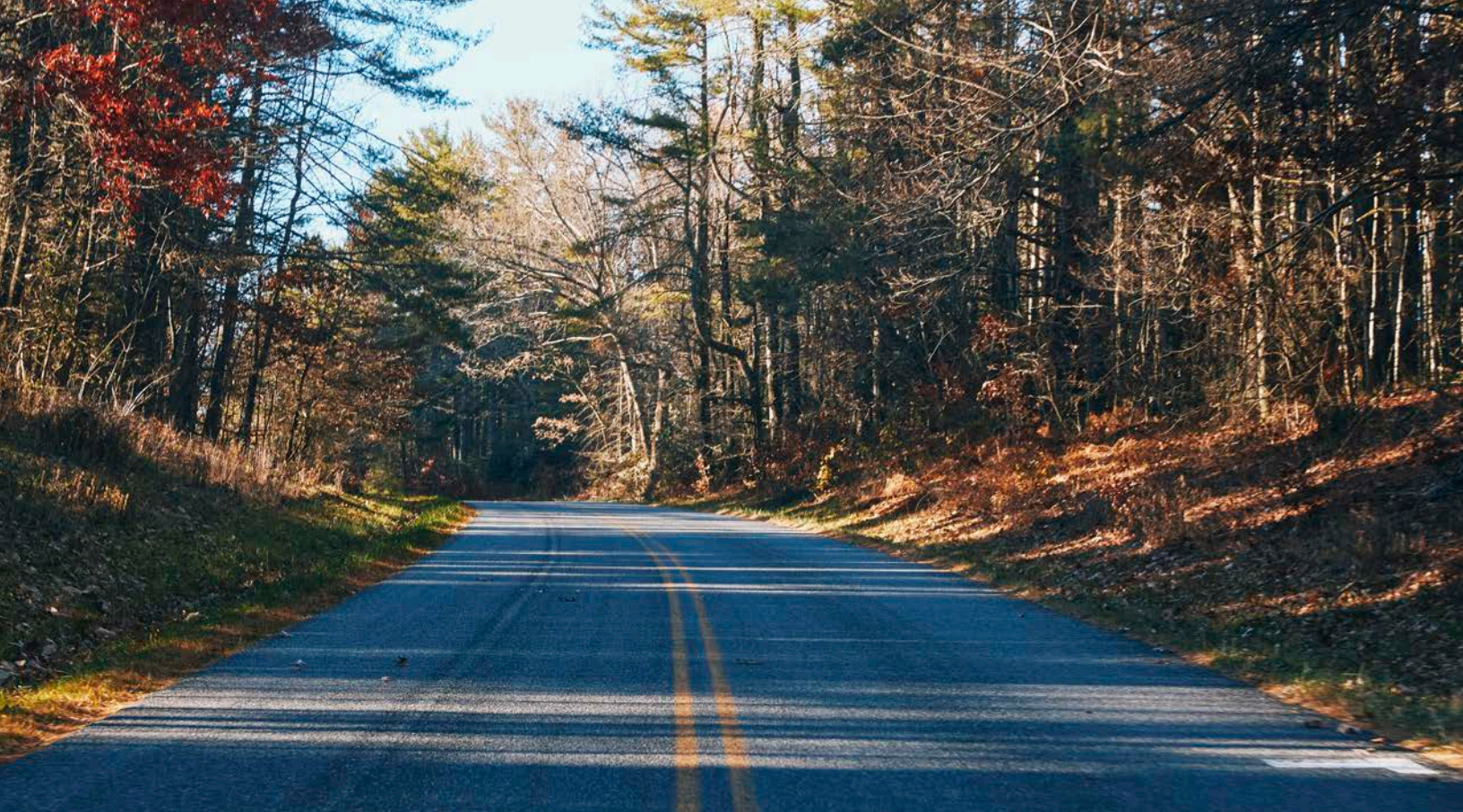




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# Project Purpose

*Project Purpose*

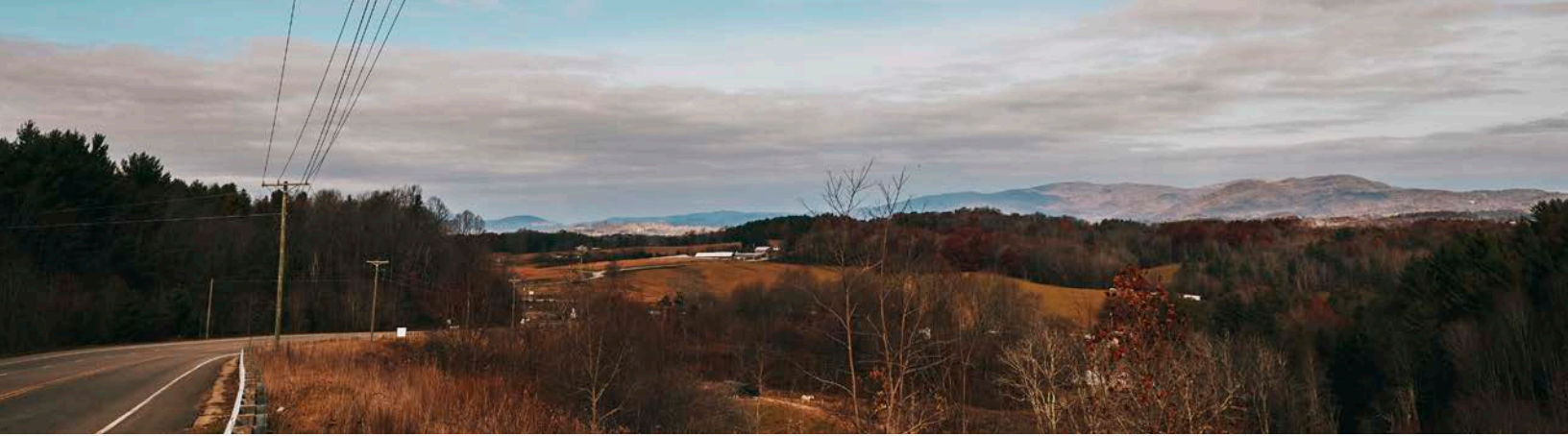


In an effort to support and address critical challenges faced by communities within their region, Blue Ridge Energy sponsored Sparta and West Jefferson, NC to develop a people focused, placemaking action plan in partnership with Atlas Community Studios. This plan focuses on three strategic opportunity areas:

- Housing
- Workforce Development
- Key Building Revitalization

The selected concepts reflect Sparta and West Jefferson's desire for positive growth within their communities while increasing the quality of life for current and future residents.





# Research

*Research*



An in-depth research analysis was conducted to better understand the desires, needs, and current challenges of Sparta and West Jefferson. Atlas Community Studios completed this analysis in three phases, which allowed our team to gain a holistic view of not only the towns but the region and state.

**A variety of input sources were tapped in order to provide a robust analysis for each community.**



**Background Reports**



**Community Visioning**



**Community Survey**



**Site Visits**



**Interviews**



**Focus Groups**

## Phase I: Background Assessment

Our team begins with an initial review of various community indicators, such as demographics, history, education, income status and employment, housing, existing infrastructure, arts/culture and historic sites, and more. Reviews of local and state ordinances/policies, workforce and economic development programs, and current political climates also shine light on current conditions in the area. This information helps shape the **communities' identities**, which will be further researched in Phase II.

Atlas utilized a community data platform, called [mySidewalk](#), to build out each community snapshot report. We reviewed traditional indicators such as demographics, history, education, and infrastructure. However, because this project focused on **Housing, Workforce Development**, and **Key Building Revitalization**, we dove deeper into indicators relating to each of these focus areas (e.g. homeowner vs. renting by age/ economic status, and labor force participation rates). This allowed us to build a strong set of quantitative data that would be used throughout the placemaking process. The snapshot provided an initial look into the communities of Sparta and West Jefferson and we were able to identify certain commonalities, trends, and potential challenges they currently face.

Read the full Community Snapshots for [Sparta](#) and [West Jefferson](#).

## Phase II: Community Visioning

**We rely heavily on public input** and creating space for the community to guide the placemaking process. Once the background assessment is completed, community input is collected to add residents' viewpoints and perspective of their towns. This input is collected through a variety of methods: site visits, public surveys, interviews with engaged residents, and focus groups with targeted populations. Phase II allows for communities' dreams and crazy ideas to come alive and to gauge the public's perception of potential opportunities and existing challenges and barriers.

### *Visioning Sessions*

The first collection of community input was through a virtual visioning session with the steering committees for each community. Using a survey platform called [Poll Everywhere](#), participants submitted anonymous responses while engaging in a dialogue with one another. General questions were asked about each community's assets, challenges, and barriers, such as:

- “What do you love about your community?”
- “What do you wish your community had?”
- “Who are key players in your community that should be involved in this process?”



This same process was conducted with the public. Two public visioning sessions, also conducted virtually using the Poll Everywhere platform, allowed for residents from each community to answer similar questions and provide their perspective and feedback.

Read the Visioning Results [here](#).

### **Public Survey**

For residents that were unable to attend the public visioning sessions, Atlas also launched an online public survey. In order to separate the data, residents were asked to complete their community-specific survey, allowing for an accurate analysis when identifying strategic opportunities. We received **over 200 responses** in total that further curated each community's identity through the perception of its residents and elicited viable opportunities that are seen as avenues to improving the quality of life for current and future residents.

Read the Survey Results for [Sparta](#) and [West Jefferson](#).

### **Site Visits**

Because our process is so community-centric, it is important for Atlas to **experience each community we work with**. While the COVID-19 pandemic limited us to online engagement at the initial start of the project, the Atlas team was able to safely visit both communities in May and October 2021. This provided us time to see the sights, feel the feels, and think creatively about the potential strategic opportunities.

During our first site visit, we wanted to meet with a variety of groups to obtain a better understanding of Sparta and West Jefferson, their identities, and how each community wants to move forward. We held multiple focus groups with a variety of local stakeholders that provided valuable insight to each focus area. We also did extensive tours of each community to familiarize ourselves with existing assets, and current challenges they face.

During our second site visit, the concepts for each focus area were identified and agreed upon, allowing us to meet with individual and group stakeholders that would be very integrated into each concept. Conducting a second site visit also gave our team the opportunity to do more exploring and further identify how to best incorporate these specific concepts into the identity and culture of each community.

### **Focus Groups & Interviews**

Throughout this project, our team conducted **30+ interviews and focus groups** to further engage with local stakeholders. Main street business owners, educational professionals, realtors, local industry employers, students, and arts, music, and cultural



organizations to name a few. By separating discussions into specific groups, we were able to discuss more in-detail specific challenges and barriers, such as the housing needs for local employers and the desire for a shared space among the arts community. Through these conversations, potential opportunities start to emerge that can later be analyzed for viability.

### **Phase III: Research Analysis**

The final phase involves Atlas organizing and analyzing all the quantitative and qualitative data collected from Phase I and II. After reviewing the information, we begin to identify strategic opportunities for the community. These opportunities include ideas presented by community members or trends identified through analyzing the data. Once a list of strategic opportunities is created, testing for viability determines which concepts can truly serve the community and meet its needs. Some questions we asked throughout this process included:

- What does the data tell us?
- Does the data match public perception?
- How do these ideas meet the needs of the community?
- Are the ideas utilizing the community's assets and strengths?
- Who are the key stakeholders in order to achieve success?

Atlas identified key assets and challenges as a result of the research process. These key indicators were crucial in determining viable strategic opportunities that would become the focus of this project. The findings for each community are on the following pages.



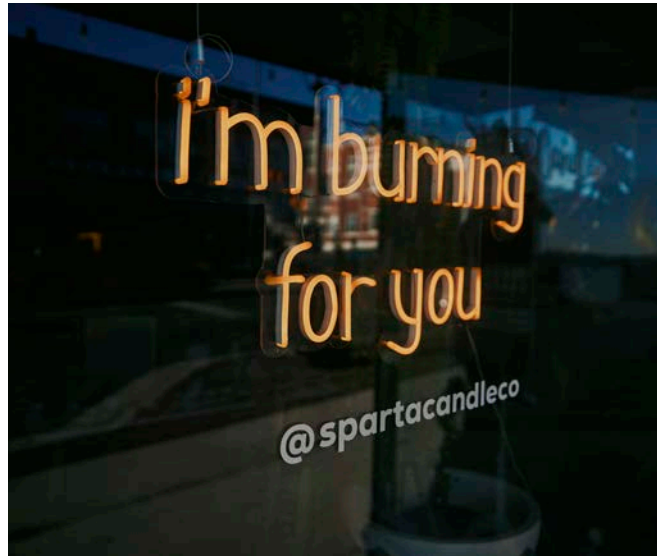
# Sparta

## Key Indicators

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### Assets

**Small Business:** Sparta is a quaint town located in the Northwest corner of North Carolina. They recently completed a downtown streetscape, allowing for a pleasant visit to local shops and restaurants. New businesses, such as [Muddy Creek Cafe](#) and [Sparta Candle Co.](#), are just two businesses we learned about during our site visit to Sparta. Businesses like these have contributed to the entrepreneurial spirit in the community and enhanced Sparta as a tourist destination.



**Outdoor Recreation:** Sparta deems itself the “Heart of the Blue Ridge Parkway” as it sits directly at the halfway point of the Blue Ridge mountain range. Sparta’s accessibility to outdoor amenities also adds to its tourist scene where residents and visitors can hike Bullhead Mountain or kayak along New River. The scenic views and temperate weather are among a variety of reasons that previous visitors of the area have decided to become permanent residents!

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# Sparta

## Key Indicators

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### Assets



**Art, Music & Culture:** There are a number of groups dedicated to the arts, including [Alleghany Writers](#), [Alleghany Arts Council](#), [Alleghany Junior Appalachian Musicians \(JAM\)](#) Program, and more. There are also dedicated community events like [Music on Main](#), [Saturdays in the Park](#) as well as the [Blue Ridge Fiber Festival](#) that provide opportunities for people to enjoy live music by local (and visiting) musicians, as well as experience the fiber arts created by local artisans.

**Fiber Optic Access:** Sparta, and the larger [Alleghany County](#), is only one of few areas in the state of North Carolina that offers broadband availability to almost every resident in the county. Roughly 95.7% of the population has fiber optic internet access. The only other three counties in the state that provide similar rates of access are Ashe County, a neighbor to Alleghany, Wake County, home to Raleigh, and Mecklenburg County, home to Charlotte.



# Sparta

## Key Indicators

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### Challenges



**Housing Availability & Affordability:** Sparta’s housing development boomed in the 1970s and has significantly decreased since then, making the current housing stock very old and outdated. This aging housing stock has contributed to the large amount of blighted/vacant homes throughout the community. With no new builds and an increasing amount of inadequate homes, the homeownership rate has decreased, over 10% in the last decade, to only [57.5% of the population owning their own home](#). Availability and affordability were the top two responses when the [public was asked](#) “What were the major challenges related to housing in Sparta?”. These responses applied to people who were looking to buy AND rent. The renting population is at a more significant disadvantage due to lack of options, especially affordable ones, which resulted in roughly [two-thirds of renters](#) being cost-burdened (paying more than 30% of their income towards housing) because of a [lower median income \(\\$16,700\)](#).

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# Sparta

## Key Indicators

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### Challenges

**Workforce Wages & Opportunity:** Like many rural areas across the country, living costs are rising but an equitable increase in wages or access to higher paying jobs are scarce. Although COVID has disrupted the traditional 9-5 office job and increased the number of people working from home, this flexibility isn't allotted to a large portion of Sparta's population that works in [construction, healthcare, food preparation, retail, and manufacturing](#).

Another limitation to Sparta's workforce is that almost two-thirds of the population's highest level of education is a high school diploma. There is a significant drop off from those that receive a high school diploma (39.5%) to those that receive an Associate's degree (8.3%) or even complete some college but do not receive a degree (15.8%). Therefore, for a population with a limited education, there are fewer options in rural areas, resulting in fewer opportunities and most likely, lower wages.



**Activities for All Ages:** Although Sparta offers a plethora of outdoor activities, residents expressed interest in adding more amenities to the community, specifically family-friendly and youth related activities. Roughly 42% of survey respondents indicated a desire for an indoor/outdoor facility, showing a large need for spaces that can serve a wide range of ages within the community.



# Sparta

## Key Indicators

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### Opportunities

Through this filtering process, final concepts will be identified and presented to the Steering Committees for approval. Through discussions and a voting process, the committee agreed with the following recommendations for each focus area:



#### **Housing**

*Blighted Home Renovation Project*



#### **Workforce Development**

*Construction Bootcamp*



#### **Key Building Revitalization**

*Cultural Center*

Although the scope of work has been identified for this specific project, there were a variety of additional strategic opportunities that Sparta could pursue in order to address the challenges identified. [Read the other opportunities.](#)

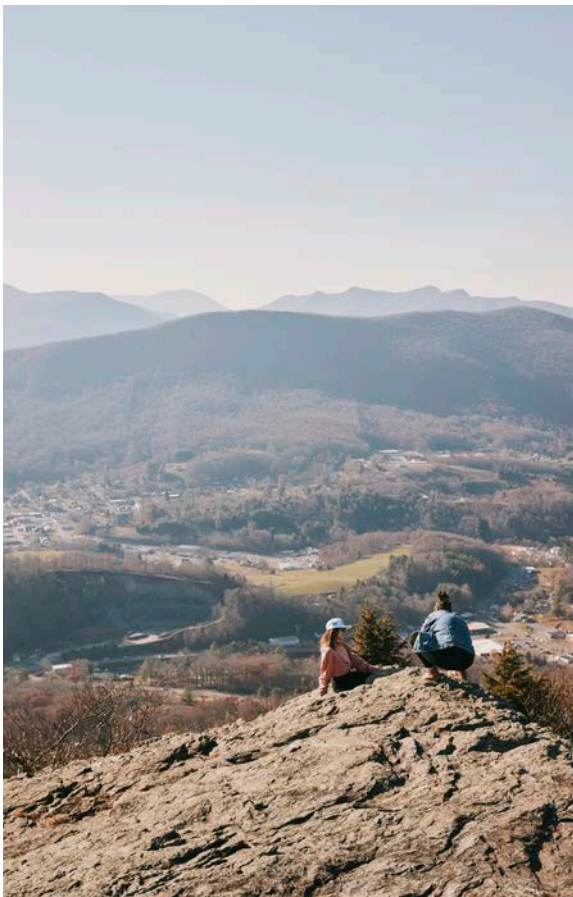
# West Jefferson

## Key Indicators

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### Assets

**Local Gems:** West Jefferson is a bustling town located in Northwest North Carolina. They have fostered a thriving downtown culture that boasts a variety of local shops, restaurants, and breweries, including gems like [Ashe County Cheese](#), [Boondocks Brewing](#), and [Catchlight Gallery](#). Amenities such as these have established West Jefferson as a tourist destination and drawn visitors from throughout the region.



**Outdoor Opportunity:** Because West Jefferson is located in North Carolina's NW region, they are nestled within the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountain range, scenically located at the bottom of [Mount Jefferson State Natural Area](#). This provides ample opportunity for hiking, ranging from .3 to 2 mile-long trails. West Jefferson's location also provides opportunities for individuals to fish along the New River. There are two access points, Highway 221 and Wagoner Road, where people can fish for redbreast sunfish, rock bass, and smallmouth bass.

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# West Jefferson

## *Key Indicators*

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### Assets



**Vibrant Arts District:** West Jefferson has an active arts and culture community and has an established Arts District in its downtown area. The district is home to a number of art galleries, the most well-known is the [Ashe Arts Center](#), which houses a year-round exhibit of work from local and regional artists. There are Gallery Crawls held from June through October that encourage residents to view an array of art mediums throughout the downtown area. West Jefferson also has over 15 murals throughout the downtown that were painted by local artists and reflect on the area's unique history.

**Fiber Optic Access:** 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.

# West Jefferson

## *Key Indicators*

---

### Challenges



**Cost-Burdened Renters:** West Jefferson’s housing development boomed in the 1950s and has significantly decreased since then, making the current housing stock very old and outdated. There has been little activity for new construction homes, mostly due to lower demand and increasing building costs. It was no surprise to see that West Jefferson has a higher rate of population renting their home rather than owning their own home. Roughly 58% of the population rent, an increase of almost 20% from 2010. And unfortunately, renters are severely disadvantaged when it comes to finding affordable housing. More than two-thirds of renters are cost burdened (paying more than 30% of their income towards housing) while earning 2.5 times less in average income than those that own their own home.

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# West Jefferson

## Key Indicators

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### Challenges

**Staffing & Housing:** West Jefferson has a strong manufacturing industry presence, including companies like [General Electric Aviation](#), Dr. Pepper, Grapette Bottling Co., and a number of Christmas tree farmers. However, staffing shortages have hurt many of these companies, whether it's not having any applicants or inconsistent availability with employees. Additionally, COVID has shaken the national workforce and people have realized they do not necessarily want to stay in their jobs that require hard labor and long hours.

Workforce housing was another challenge companies mentioned. For workers that might come from other plants around the country, short-term housing can be difficult to locate, especially if they're interns who are living on a limited stipend/salary.

**Activities for All Ages:** Residents of West Jefferson expressed the need for more family-friendly and youth related activities. The downtown area serves as one option, but survey respondents suggested a need for an indoor/outdoor space that offers more activities for a wide range of ages, both for residents and visitors.



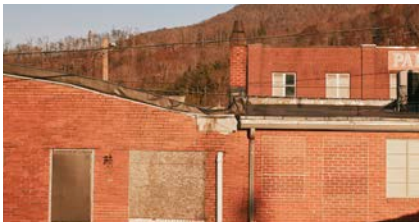
# West Jefferson

## *Key Indicators*

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### Opportunities

Through this filtering process, final concepts will be identified and presented to the Steering Committees for approval. Through discussions and a voting process, the committee agreed with the following recommendations for each focus area:



#### **Housing**

*Comprehensive Housing Strategy*



#### **Workforce Development**

*3D Printing Bootcamp*



#### **Key Building Revitalization**

*Funding Strategy for the Mt. Jefferson  
Child Development Center*

Although the scope of work has been identified for this specific project, there were a variety of additional strategic opportunities that West Jefferson could pursue in order to address the challenges identified. [Read the other opportunities.](#)





# Appendix A:

*Appendix A:*

Sparta Community Snapshot



COMMUNITY  
**SNAPSHOT**

# Sparta, 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 Sparta, NC and help inform the placemaking project.*





# History

Sparta, North Carolina is located in Alleghany County. The land was donated from three local businessmen, one of which was James H. Parks, who suggested the name Sparta after the Greek city-state. Sparta's founding year varies across sources—some say 1859, some say 1866. Other sources say that prior to the name Sparta, the town was called Bower's Store (1825) and then Gap Civil (1846), before it became Sparta.



# Geography

Sparta is located in the northwest corner of North Carolina and is approximately 2.36 square miles, or 1510.4 acres. It is about an hour from Boone and Wilkesboro, NC, and is roughly three hours away from larger cities, such as Charlotte and Raleigh. Sparta serves as the county seat and is the only incorporated town within Alleghany County.



# Demographics

## POPULATION

Sparta's population has **fluctuated** between 1,600 and 1,800 over the last few decades. It dipped from 1,770 (2010) to 1,630 (2017); however, is projected to **increase** back up to around 1,750 **by 2025**.



**Total Population**

**1,630**

*Sparta, NC*

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**11,008**

*Alleghany County, NC*

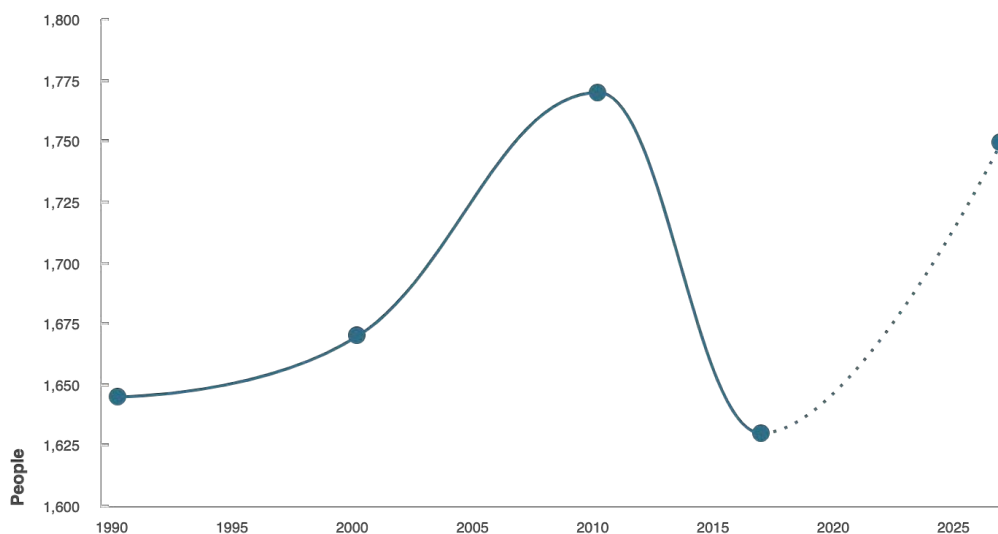
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**10,264,876**

*North Carolina*

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

**Although a slight decline occurred in the past decade, the population is projected to recover over the next 10 years**



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

## GENDER



**50%**  
of total population  
**Males**



**50%**  
of total population  
**Females**

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

## RACE & ETHNICITY

The City of Sparta is a predominately white community—**only 14%** of its population are **people of color**.



**14%**  
of total population  
**People of Color**

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

### Sparta, NC

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Race/Ethnicity: White (non-Hispanic)	85.9%
Race/Ethnicity: Two Or More Races Other (non-Hispanic)	0%
Race/Ethnicity - Hispanic	11.3%

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

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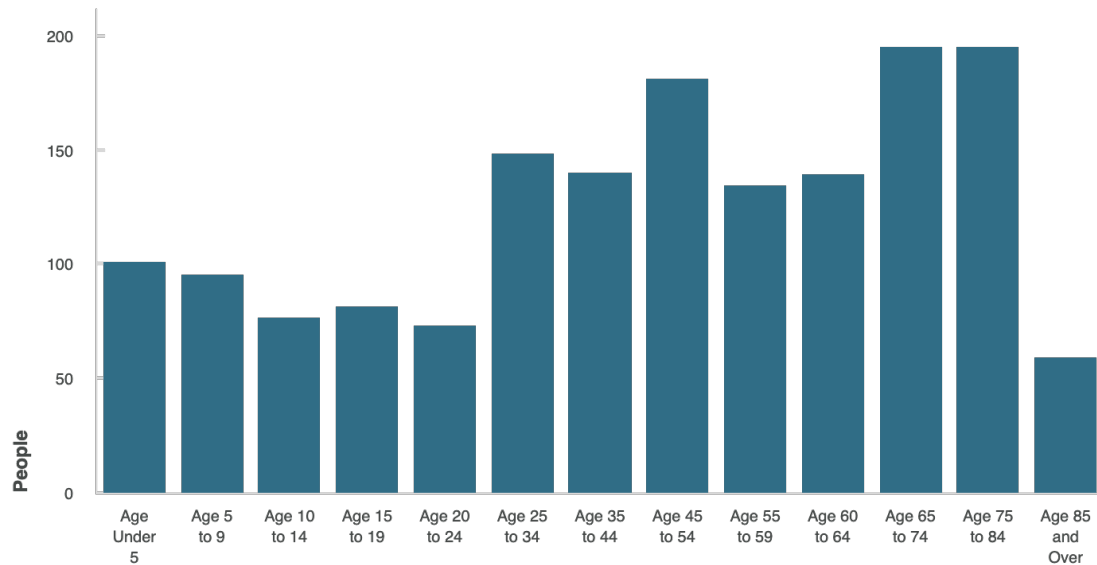


## AGE

Sparta is a fairly intergenerational city, though seems to skew more towards an aging population. The median age of residents is a little under 50, and 23% of the population are over 65. In addition to that, as noted in the bar graph below, the **largest age groups** in the town are **ages 65-74**, and **75-84**.

## 49.2 Years Old Median Age

Age Totals



**Children**  
**19%**  
**Population Under Age 18**  
*Sparta, NC*

**22%**  
**Population Under Age 18**  
*North Carolina*

**23%**  
**Population Under Age 18**  
*United States of America*

**Seniors**  
**23%**  
**Population Age 65 and Over**  
*Sparta, NC*

**15%**  
**Population Age 65 and Over**  
*North Carolina*

**15%**  
**Population Age 65 and Over**  
*United States of America*

# HEALTH

When looking at the health of Sparta's population, it ranks **higher** in **obesity** and **poor physical and mental health** than the state of North Carolina and the U.S. 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 1,630

*Sparta, NC*

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**10,264,876**

*North Carolina*

---

**324,697,795**

*United States of America*

## Obesity Among Adults 37.1%

*Sparta, NC*

---

**33.3%**

*North Carolina*

---

**30.9%**

*United States of America*

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

## Poor Physical Health Among Adults 20.1%

*Sparta, NC*

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**13.1%**

*North Carolina*

---

**12.5%**

*United States of America*

## Poor Mental Health Among Adults 17.4%

*Sparta, NC*

---

**14.4%**

*North Carolina*

---

**12.7%**

*United States of America*

*Sources: CDC BRFSS PLACES 2018*



# DISABILITY

A little under 24% of the Sparta population lives with a disability. **13.2%** of that total is over the **age of 65**. Sparta has a significantly higher rate than the state of North Carolina and the U.S.

## Population Living with a Disability 23.9%

Sparta, NC

13.4%

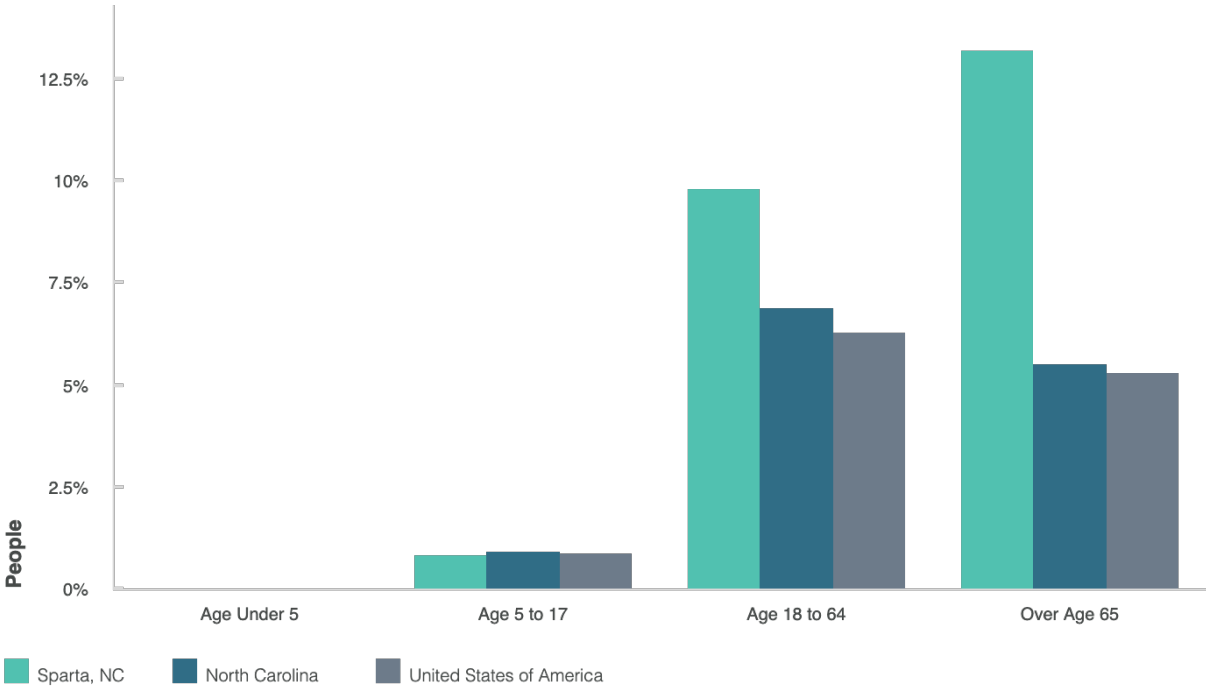
North Carolina

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

Sparta's **Median Household Income** (MHI) is **very low** when compared at the county, state, and national level. Roughly 44% of the population only earn \$25,000 or less per year.

**Median Household Income**  
**\$28,553**

*Sparta, NC*

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**\$37,830**

*Alleghany County*

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**\$54,602**

*North Carolina*

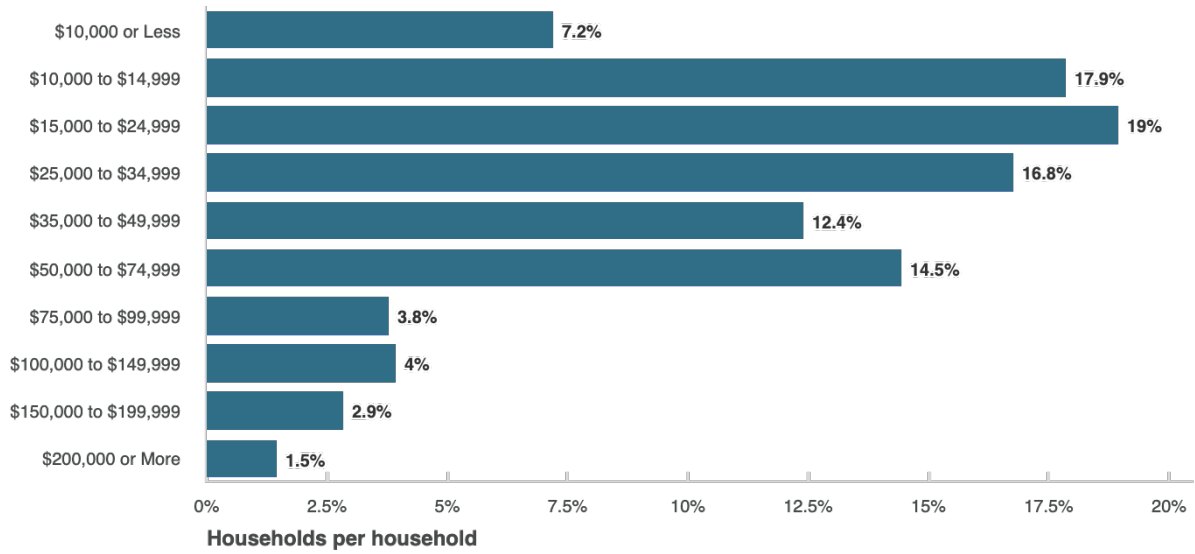
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**\$62,843**

*United States of America*

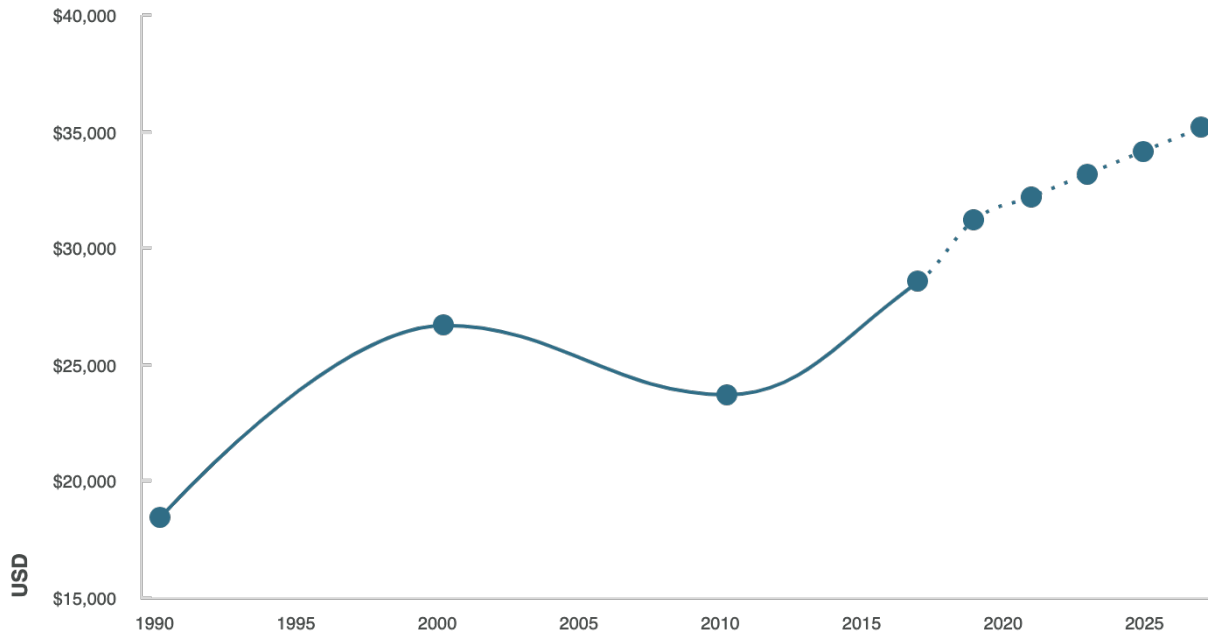
*Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019*

## Household Income



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

## Median Household Income

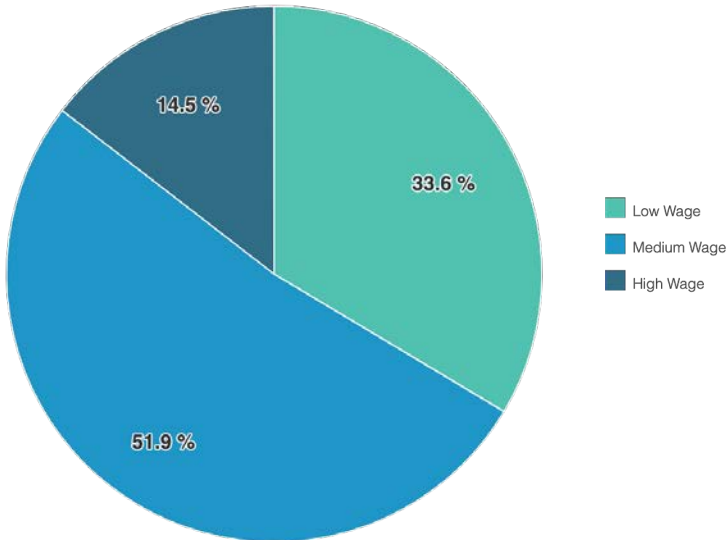


Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019



Roughly [26.9% of Sparta residents](#) live below the poverty level, and 33.6% of residents work low-wage jobs. This is a significant increase from 18.3% in 2000. Sparta's rate is increasingly higher than [Alleghany County](#) (16.9%), North Carolina (13.9%) and the U.S. (12.3%).

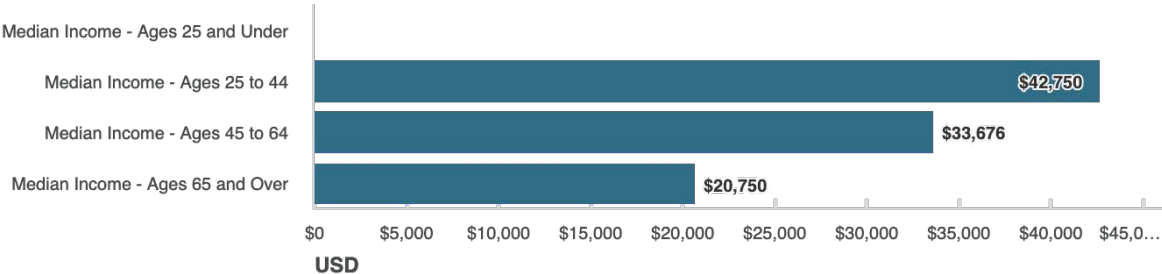
**Wage of Workers**



Sources: EPA Smart Location Database 2010

Wages typically increase throughout one’s lifetime and then might decrease upon retirement age (around 65). However, we see that in Sparta, the peak earning period is between the ages of 25-44, and gradually decreases with age. Individuals ages 65 and over have a lower median income than the total population (\$28k). Considering the two largest age groups in Sparta are over the age of 65, this indicates that Sparta has a **significant aging population that is very low-income.**

**Median Income by Householder Age**



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

# Employment

**98.3%**  
**Total Employed**  
Sparta, NC

**1.7%**  
**Total Unemployed**  
Sparta, NC

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

## Sparta, NC

---

Employment by Occupation: Sales	17.3%
Employment by Occupation: Office and Administrative Support	12.8%
Employment by Occupation: Construction and Extraction	11.1%
Employment by Occupation: Management	8.7%
Employment by Occupation: Food Preparation and Serving	7.1%
Employment by Occupation: Healthcare Support	6.7%
Employment by Occupation: Building, Grounds Cleaning, and Maintenance	5.9%
Employment by Occupation: Transportation	5.6%
Employment by Occupation: Production	5.3%
Employment by Occupation: Education, Training and Library	4.5%
Employment by Occupation: Community and Social Service	3.7%
Employment by Occupation: Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	3.7%
Employment by Occupation: Health Diagnosis and Treating Practitioners	1.9%
Employment by Occupation: Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media	1.7%
Employment by Occupation: Business and Finance	1.5%
Employment by Occupation: Law Enforcement	0.9%
Employment by Occupation: Material Moving	0.9%
Employment by Occupation: Personal Care and Service	0.6%
Employment by Occupation: Farming, Fishing and Forestry	0%

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

**-4.5%**

**Percent Change in Number of Jobs**

*Sparta, 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 Sparta, roughly 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 Sparta has a higher 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**

**49.3%**

*Sparta, NC*

**Labor Market Engagement Index**

**31**

*Sparta, NC*

---

**62.4%**

*North Carolina*

---

**16**

*North Carolina*

---

**63.4%**

*United States of America*

---

**No data**

*United States of America*

**In Labor Force Male per capita**

**21.2%**

*Sparta, NC*

**Not in Labor Force Male per capita**

**17.5%**

*Sparta, NC*

---

**26.1%**

*North Carolina*

---

**12.4%**

*North Carolina*

---

**26.8%**

*United States of America*

---

**12.3%**

*United States of America*





**In Labor Force Female  
per capita  
19.1%**  
*Sparta, NC*

**Not in Labor Force Female  
per capita  
24%**  
*Sparta, NC*

---

**23.9%**  
*North Carolina*

---

**17.7%**  
*North Carolina*

---

**23.9%**  
*United States of America*

---

**17%**  
*United States of America*

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

*\*Labor Market Engagement measures the level of employment, labor force participation, and educational attainment in each neighborhood to describe its local human capital*

*\*\*Higher index scores indicate higher labor force participation and human capital*

This data also allows to compare participation among genders. It appears that Sparta has lower rates of both genders participating in the labor force when compared to a state and national level. Finding employment, especially employment that offer 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.

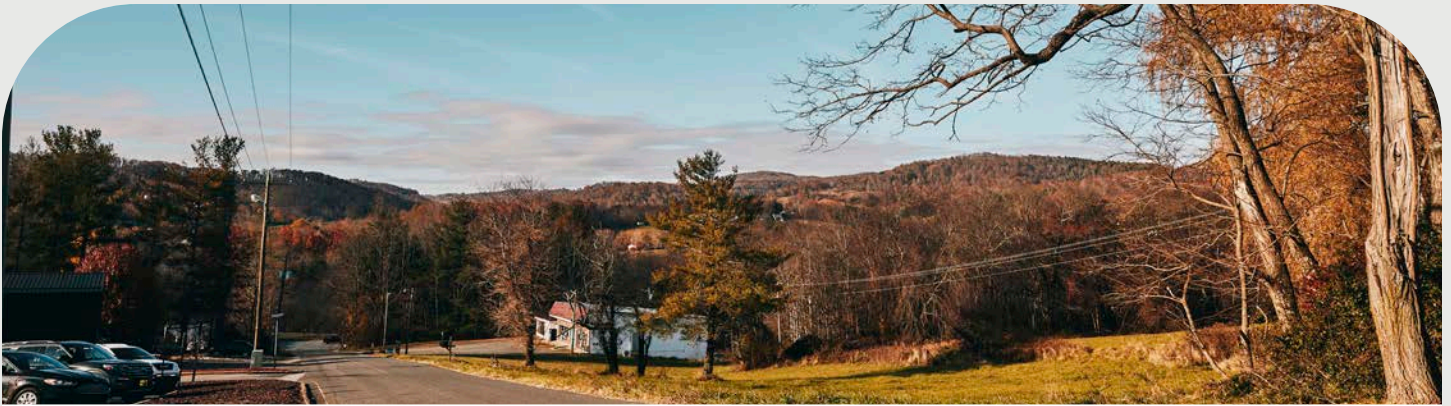
## INFLOW & OUTFLOW

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's OnTheMap tool, in 2018, roughly 163 people both live in and are employed in Sparta. 446 people live in Sparta, but commute outside for work, and the majority, 1,227 people, are employed in Sparta, but commute in from other nearby areas.



## MANUFACTURING DECLINE & PLANT CLOSINGS

Between 2000 and 2010, manufacturing plants in Sparta, such as Bristol Compressors and Martin Marietta Composites, permanently closed. These shutdowns affected job availability in the region -- the Bristol Compressors facility (York International Corp) had 450 jobs which were lost, and Martin Marietta Composites, at its peak, had 120 employees.



# Housing

## GENERAL

**2.1**

### Average Household Size

Sparta, NC

2015-2019

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

### Median Home Value

**\$111,900**

Sparta, NC

2015-2019

### Median Home Value

**\$128,050**

Sparta, NC

2010

---

**\$172,500**

North Carolina

2015-2019

---

**\$152,700**

North Carolina

2010

---

**\$217,500**

United States of America

2015-2019

---

**\$186,200**

United States of America

2010





## Median Home Value \$90,579

Sparta, NC

2000

## Median Home Value \$51,158

Sparta, NC

1990

## \$108,300

North Carolina

2000

## \$65,300

North Carolina

1990

## \$111,800

United States of America

2000

## \$79,100

United States of America

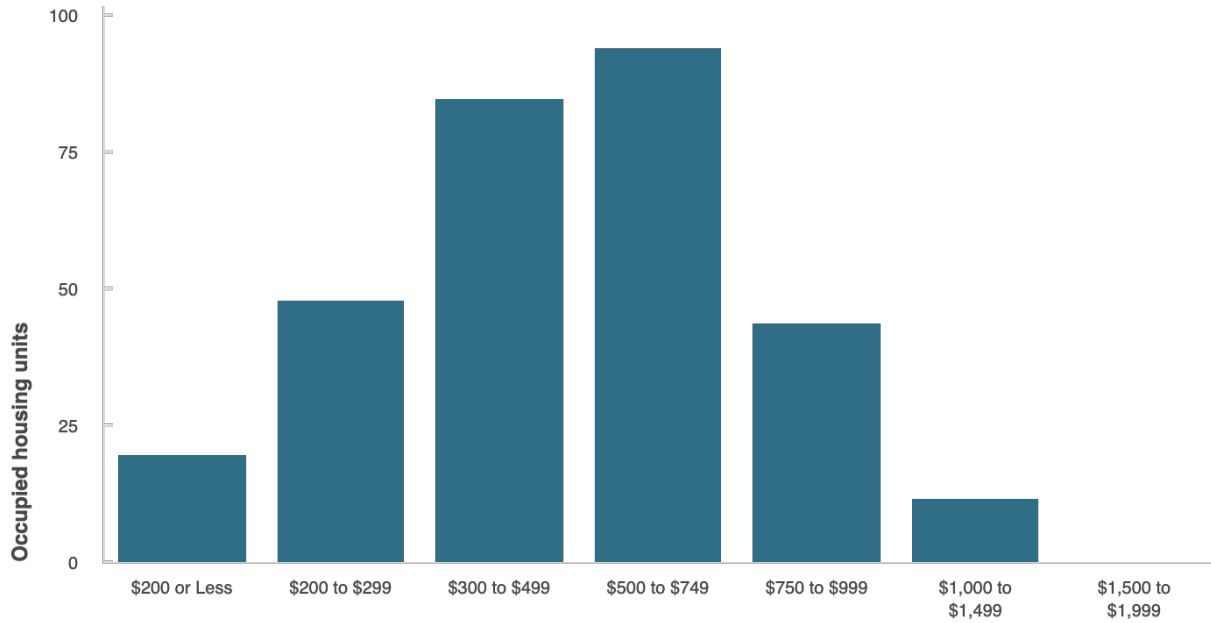
1990

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

The median home value (**MHV**) in Sparta has **steadily risen** over the last few decades, but has decreased in the last decade. From 1990 to 2000, the median home value increased by \$39,421, and from 2000 to 2010, it increased another \$37,471. **51 new homes were built** during this time and could be a factor in why value significantly increased.

However, from 2010 to 2019, the value **decreased by \$16,150**. During this time, only 5 new homes were built, with the last one being constructed in 2013. In total, only **6% of Sparta's homes** have been built in the **past 20 years**, indicating a significant lack of updated homes.

## Monthly Home Rent



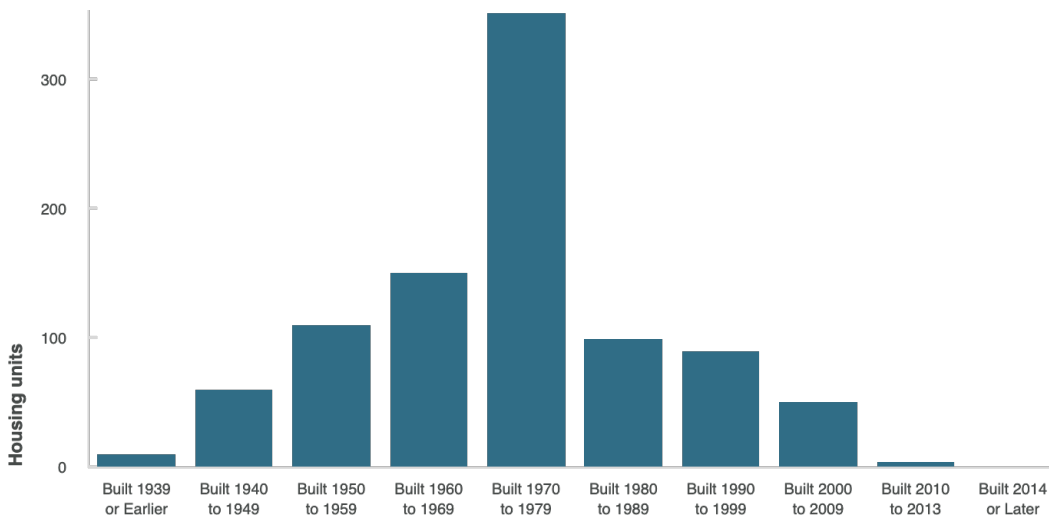
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

## 1974

### Building Age - Median Sparta, NC

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

**A majority of housing units were built in the 1970's while only 56 units have been built since 2000**



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

# HOMEOWNERSHIP VS. RENTING

Over the last few decades (from 1990 to 2019), the number of **renter-occupied** housing units has **increased**, while the number of owner-occupied units has decreased. In 1990, 27.5% of housing units were renter-occupied units in Sparta, and 74.6% were owner-occupied. These numbers gradually shifted, and by 2019, **42.5% of units were renter-occupied and 57.5% were owner-occupied.**

## The owner occupied rate has decreased over the past 30 years

Geography	2015-2019 Owner Occupied Housing Units	2010 Owner Occupied Housing Units	2000 Owner Occupied Housing Units	1990 Owner Occupied Housing Units
Sparta, NC	57.5%	68.1%	71.9%	74.6%
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 has increased over the past 30 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
Sparta, NC	42.5%	36%	32.1%	27.5
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

Continued on the next page >>



## HOUSING UNITS

**934**  
Housing Units  
Total Housing Units

**202**  
Housing Units  
Vacant Housing Units

**732**  
Occupied Housing Units  
Total Occupied  
Housing Units

**239**  
Occupied Housing Units  
Excessive Housing Costs:  
30 Percent or More of Income

**421**  
Occupied Housing Units  
Owner Occupied  
Housing Units

**76**  
Occupied Housing Units  
Excessive Owner Housing  
Costs: 30 Percent or More of  
Income

**311**  
Occupied Housing Units  
Total Renter Occupied  
Housing Units

**163**  
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 33% of households in Sparta 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 **68% of renters** are burdened by housing costs, where only 32% of homeowners are burdened by housing costs.

**33%**  
Total Cost Burdened Households  
Sparta, NC

Sources: US Census ACS 5-year 2015-2019

Note: Cost burden is defined as households spending 30% or more of household income on housing costs.



This section also indicates that there is a **significant number of vacant homes** (21.6%) that could potentially be filled/renovated/demolished in Sparta. This could become a strong focus area since costs for new housing development have skyrocketed in the past year, and are an unlikely option to provide affordable housing in Sparta.

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

### **AVERAGE INCOME**

**\$43,125**  
**Median Income - Owner Occupied**  
*Sparta, NC*

**\$16,676**  
**Median Income - Renter Occupied**  
*Sparta, NC*

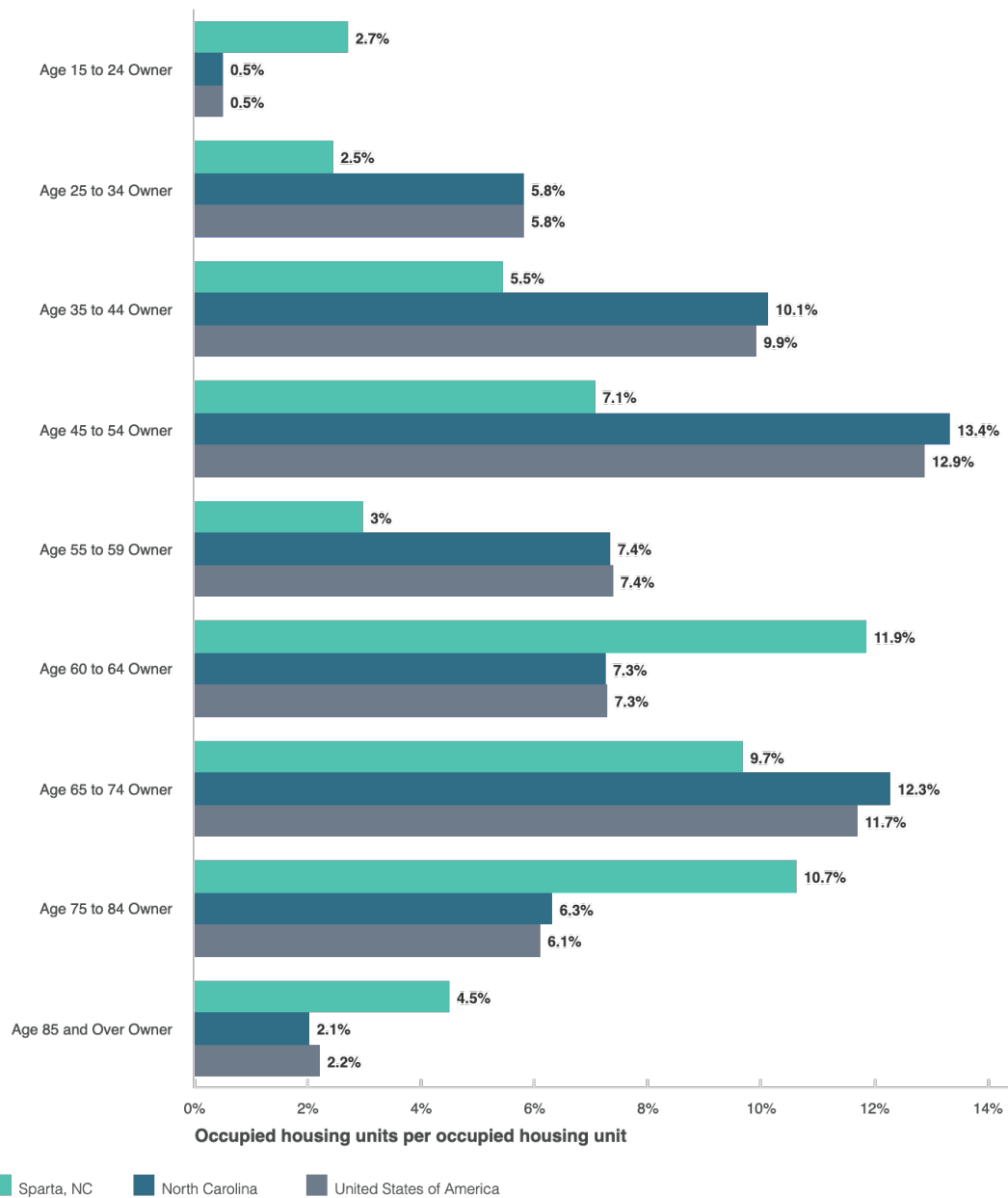
*Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019*

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 Sparta 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 \$28,553, a gap of about **almost \$12,000**.

## 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 60 and older, which is common since aging populations typically no longer have children living at home, have more years as a working professional than younger generations, which in the end, can lead to a higher income.

**Owner Occupied housing units by Householder Age**

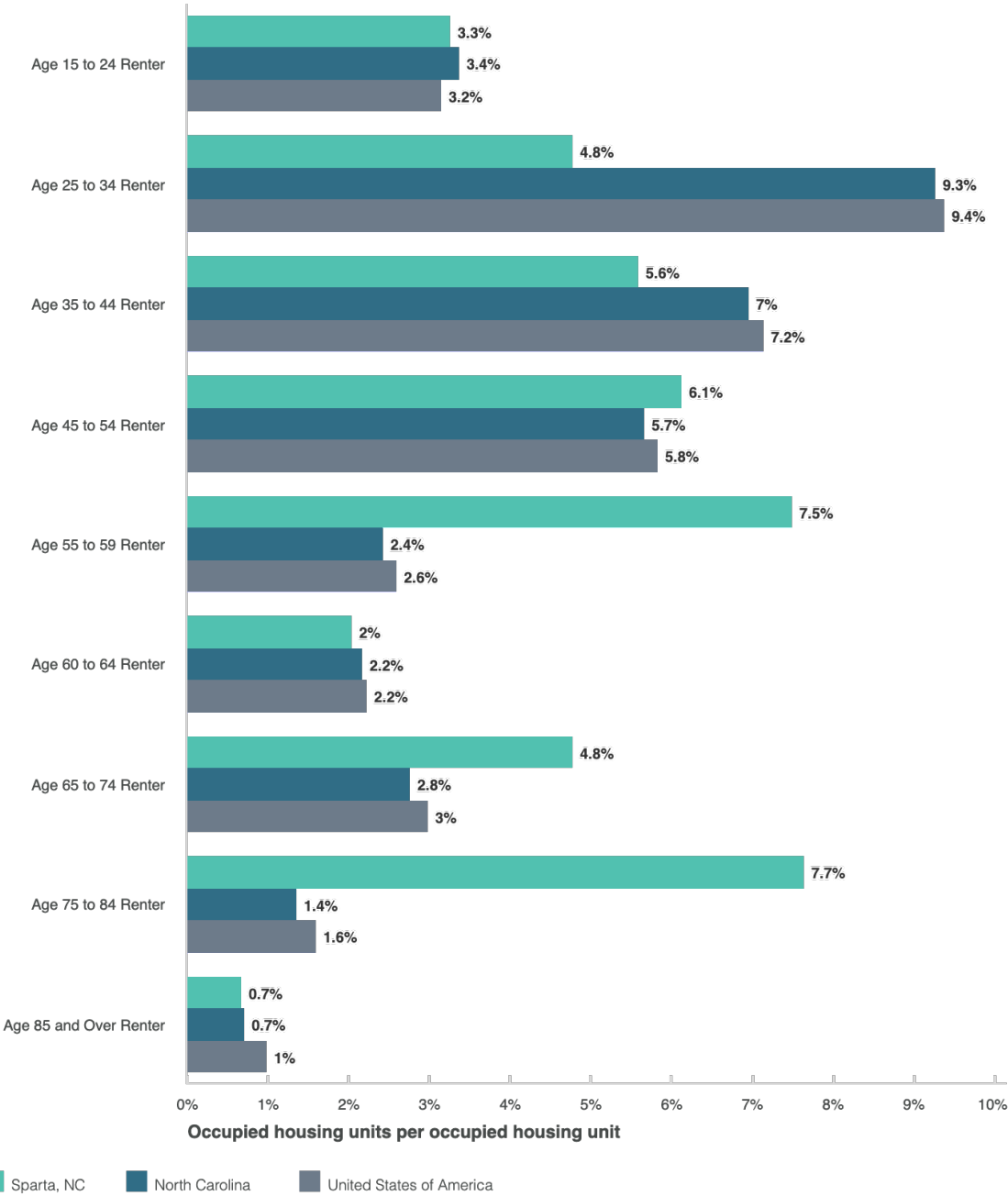


Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019



However, when you look at the **42.5%** of the population who **rent** in Sparta, **53% 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 comparison 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

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

**202**  
Housing Units  
Vacant Housing Units

**63**  
Vacant Housing Units  
Vacancy Status: For  
Seasonal, Recreational,  
or Occasional Use

**52**  
Vacant Housing Units  
Vacancy Status: For  
Sale

**12**  
Vacant Housing Units  
Vacancy Status: Sold,  
Not Occupied

**32**  
Vacant Housing Units  
Vacancy Status:  
For Rent

**0**  
Vacant Housing Units  
Vacancy Status: Rented,  
Not Occupied

**4**  
Vacant Housing Units  
Vacancy Status: For  
Migrant Workers

**39**  
Vacant Housing Units  
Vacancy Status: Other

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

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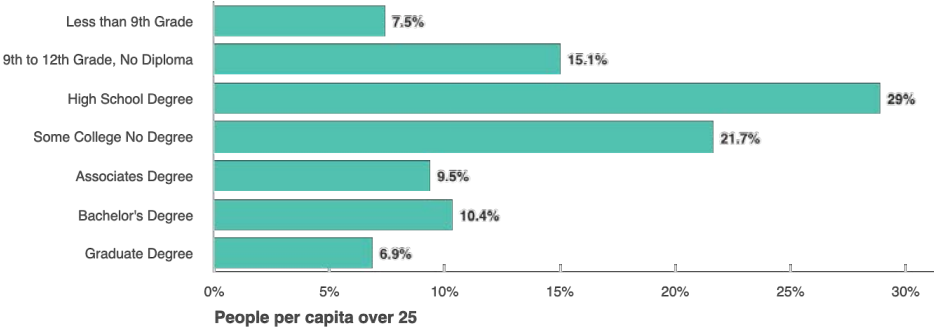


# Education

The majority of Allegheny County residents have a high school degree. The number of individuals who solely hold a high school diploma has slowly increased then slightly decreased over the last few decades, from 26.5% in 1990 to **29% in 2019**. This indicates **more individuals are completing high school** but not necessarily pursuing further education upon graduation.

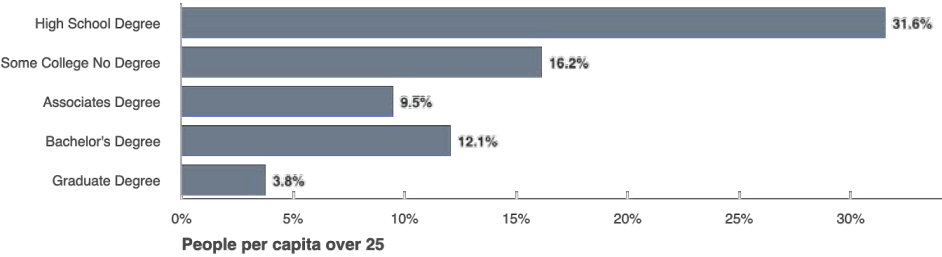
# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

## Educational Attainment (2015-2019)



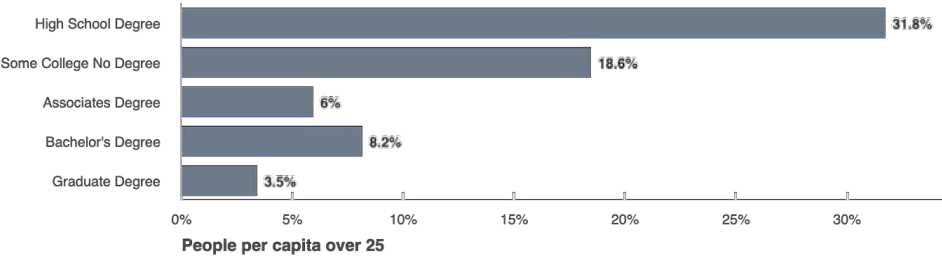
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

## Educational Attainment (2010)



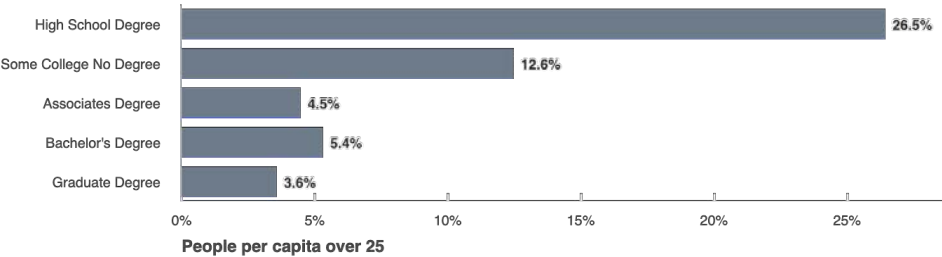
Sources: US Census Bureau 2010

## Educational Attainment (2000)



Sources: US Census Bureau 2000

## Educational Attainment (1990)



Sources: US Census Bureau 1990



## SCHOOLS

The data below indicates poverty levels in relation to educational attainment levels. This is important to review especially since Sparta has a [high poverty rate](#) among its population.

**1,630**  
**Total Population**  
*Sparta, NC*

**408**  
**People Below Poverty Level**  
*Sparta, NC*

**67**  
**Below Poverty Level with Educational Attainment - Less than High School**  
*Sparta, NC*

**121**  
**Below Poverty Level with Educational Attainment - High School Degree**  
*Sparta, NC*

**32**  
**Below Poverty Level with Educational Attainment - Some College or Associate's Degree**  
*Sparta, NC*

**3**  
**Below Poverty Level with Educational Attainment - Bachelor's Degree or Higher Attainment**  
*Sparta, NC*

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

The numbers below indicate that Sparta has a **25% poverty rate**. It is typical to see poverty rates decrease as educational attainment levels increase; however, in Sparta, there are **more individuals below the poverty line with a high school degree** than those that did not graduate from high school. This insight can help shape policy and programming to focus on those two populations and works towards lifting them out of poverty.

*Continued on the next page >>*

## **Preschool**

**Gap Civil Head Start:** Gap Civil Head Start is affiliated with the Blue Ridge Opportunity Commission Head Start program. It is open Monday through Friday from 8am to 2pm. It has two classrooms with a total capacity of 30 kids, and a child to staff ratio of 15:3.

**Sparta Elementary Preschool:** All three elementary schools in Allegheny County provide a preschool option for four-year-olds. It is geared towards educational development with the goal of helping prepare children for kindergarten.

**Ollie's Small World Learning Center:** Ollie's Small World Learning Center is a center-based childcare facility that takes infants through twelve-year-olds. It has a capacity of 71, and according to Care.com, is estimated to cost \$157/week.

**Blue Ridge Developmental Day:** Blue Ridge Developmental Day is a locally owned non-profit offering educational opportunities and programming for newborns to pre-kindergarteners.

**Free Worship Christian Day Care:** Free Worship Christian Day Care offers full- and part-time care for children from 6 weeks to 12-years-old.

## **School District**

The Allegheny County Schools serve students in Sparta through two schools—Sparta School, which teaches PreK through eighth grade, and Allegheny High School, which teaches grades 9-12. In total, Allegheny County Schools enrolls 1,452 students from PreK-12, with a student-teacher ratio of 13:1.

*Continued on the next page >>*



## ***Colleges & Universities***

**Wilkes Community College:** Wilkes Community College's main campus is in Wilkesboro, about a half hour away from Sparta, but it has a secondary location in Sparta. 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.

Other nearby colleges include:

**Surry Community College:** Located roughly 45 minutes away is Surry Community College, a public community college in Dobson, NC. It is also part of the broader North Carolina Community College System, and offers two-year associates degrees, certificates, diplomas, workforce certification, and skills training across a range of subject areas.

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

# 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 in Wilkesboro, which is another small, public airport with just one runway. The closest international airport to Sparta is the Piedmont Triad International Airport in Greensboro, which is roughly 94 miles away.

### *Highways & Interstates*

There are two main roads into Sparta. The first is Route 21, which is the main highway running northwest-southeast through Sparta, and the second is NC-18, which runs northeast-southwest.

## MEDICAL CARE

Alleghany Memorial Hospital is Sparta's community hospital, which offers a range of medical care from primary and emergency care, orthopedics, surgical care, inpatient care, and more.

Additional medical services in Sparta include: High Country Health Care System, Medi Home and Health Hospice, Generations Home Health Agency, Ashe Family Healthcare, Alleghany Pregnancy Center, Alleghany Star Therapy, and Alleghany Co Hospice. There is also the Alleghany Senior Citizens Center and two dentist offices.

*Continued on the next page >>*



## **BROADBAND & CELLULAR**

Sparta, and the larger [Alleghany County](#), is only one of few areas in the state of North Carolina that offers broadband availability to almost every resident in the county. According to broadbandnow.com, the top residential internet providers in Sparta are: Viasat, HughesNet, and Skybest, which are available to almost all Sparta residents.

**73%**  
**Household With Computer**  
*Sparta, NC*

**27%**  
**Household Without Computer**  
*Sparta, NC*

**69%**  
**Household With Internet Access**  
*Sparta, NC*

**31%**  
**Household Without Internet Access**  
*Sparta, NC*

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

## **POLICE & FIRE**

The Alleghany County Sheriff's Office is located in Sparta, and is responsible for courts and corrections and county communications as well as law enforcement—a responsibility it shares with the Sparta Police Department. The Sparta-Alleghany Volunteer Fire Department, located in Sparta, has roughly 30 volunteer firefighters.

## **BANKS**

There are six banking options in Sparta, NC: State Employees Credit Union, BB&T, Skyline National Bank, First Community Bank, First Citizens Bank, and Fifth Third Bank.

## **GROCERY & MARKETS**

The biggest grocery store option in Sparta, NC is Food Lion, which is located right on Route 21. There is also a Family Dollar and Charlies County Store, which have smaller food offerings. In addition, there are two Mexican markets, Las Dos Rosas and Guadalajara Tienda Mexicana.



# Environment

## AIR QUALITY

According to the CDC, which only tracks county-wide data, [Allegheny 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.

## WATER QUALITY

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



## **NATURAL DISASTERS**

Sparta has an unsurprisingly low earthquake index of 0.19, 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 States' overall earthquake index, which is 1.81.

However, in August 2020, a [5.1 earthquake](#) was felt near Sparta, one of the largest to occur in North Carolina. Fortunately, there were no reported injuries or deaths and no widespread damage occurred. The last time an earthquake of that scale hit North Carolina was in 1916.

In Sparta, the tornado index number is roughly 42.87, which is significantly lower than North Carolina's tornado index, which is 115.21. This is just under the United States' tornado index of 136.45. These index values are calculated based on [historical weather events](#).

In addition to earthquake and tornado measurements, there have, of course, been other natural disasters and major weather events in Sparta. Between the years of [1950 and 2010](#), there were 1,251 thunderstorm events, 854 hail storms, and 437 instances of flooding within 50 miles of Sparta. These were the biggest weather events noted during this time period, however there were other smaller weather events, such as heavy snow, strong winds, ice storms, and hurricanes.





# Art, Culture & Historic Sites

## EVENTS

**Alleghany Farmer's Market:** Open Saturday's from 9am to 1pm in Crouse Park, the Alleghany Farmer's Market offers fresh produce as well as baked goods, meat, cheeses, coffee & teas, as well as crafts.

**Mountain Heritage Festival:** Mountain Heritage Festival is an annual event with live music, contests, food vendors, and arts and craft opportunities. It is hosted by the Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce.

**Music on Main:** The first Friday of every month the Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce hosts Music on Main, a concert series with rotating artists hosted right on Main Street in Sparta.

**Saturdays in the Park:** Hosted by the Alleghany County Art Council every Saturday from 6pm-9pm in Crouse Park, Saturdays in the Park offers the opportunity for Sparta residents to enjoy live music.



## HISTORIC SITES MUSEUMS & ATTRACTIONS

**Alleghany Historical Museum:** The Alleghany Historical Museum, located on Main Street in Sparta, showcases the history of Alleghany County. It hosts events each month, inviting in historians and featured community members.

**Sparta Teapot Museum:** The Sparta Teapot Museum closed in 2010, but it was a collection of roughly 6,000 historic and artisan teapots worth \$5 million, owned by the Kamm family. It was set to receive \$500,000 in funding from Congress to renovate, along with other donations from private organizations and grants, to put towards a \$10 million rebuild project. The board of directors hoped that the museum could help Sparta turn to tourism from manufacturing -- in the years leading up to the museum's opening, four of Sparta's five manufacturing plants closed, leaving an estimated 25% of residents without employment. An economic impact study projected that the museum's annual attendance would be approximately 61,000 visitors, bringing in a total of \$7.5 million to the area ([Source](#)). However, despite the projected benefits, this project received a lot of pushback and critique from both politicians and residents.

## 334 Housing Units Building Built 1969 or Earlier - Potentially Eligible for National Register of Historic Places

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

## RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Sparta has a variety of Christian denominations in and around the area. Below is a list of some of the churches (does not include all) within the Sparta city limits:

- St. Frances of Rome Catholic
- Sparta United Methodist Church
- Sparta First Baptist Church
- Sparta Church of God
- Sparta Presbyterian Church
- Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints



## **PUBLIC ART & GALLERIES**

**Art We There Yet? Mural Project:** Art We There Yet? partnered with the Alleghany County Art Council to create a series of murals in and around downtown Sparta—one on the Blue Ridge Parkway by mile marker 229.7, one on 67 West Whitehead Street, and one on the Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) House at 142 3rd Avenue West.

## **LIBRARIES & RESOURCE CENTERS**

**Alleghany County Public Library:** The Alleghany County Public Library is a branch of the Northwest Regional Library. In addition to offering books, the library also has meeting spaces available, and hosts events such as story time readings, webinars and trainings through VAYA Health, a publicly managed care organization, as well as art displays, employment tools through NCWorks, and even mini free libraries at key establishments around town.





# Recreation

According to the CDC, which only tracks county-wide data, in 2015, **19% of residents in Alleghany 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.

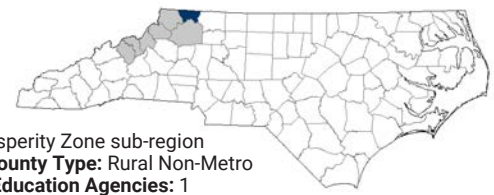
Sparta's main park is Crouse Park, which has trails, basketball and volleyball courts, a playground, and covered pavillions with grills. Many events are hosted in the park, such as live music, the farmer's market, and holiday events. There are other smaller parks in Sparta, such as Veteran's Memorial Park and the A&C Campground, which is just outside of town.

**Appendix:**  
*Alleghany County  
Attainment Profile*



# Alleghany County

NC goal: 2 million by 2030  
2020 County Attainment Profile



Updated: Aug 04 2021

## INTRODUCTION

From birth to career, there are many opportunities to develop strategies and interventions to increase attainment and improve workforce alignment. Below are some key areas and indicators that highlight where interventions may be possible to improve overall educational attainment outcomes.

## COUNTY OVERVIEW

Alleghany County is in the **Boone-Wilkesboro** Prosperity Zone sub-region. It's one of 50 rural non-metro counties in NC.

Overall, 3% of 25-44-year-olds in Alleghany County have earned a master's degree or higher as their highest degree; 9% have a bachelor's degree; 7% have an associate degree; 24% have some college, no degree; 29% have a high school diploma; and 28% have less than a high school diploma.

<b>2018 Population</b>	11,422
<b>2030 Population</b>	11,948
<b>K-12 Students (2019)</b>	
Traditional Schools	1,332
Charter/Private/Home	139
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$39,735
<b>Child Poverty Rate</b>	30%
<b>Households with Broadband</b>	71%

## Building the Foundation: Pre-K to 8

High-quality early learning and strong academic progress in early years helps prepare children for future success.



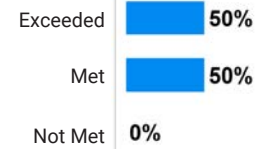
Alleghany County has 4 public schools with performance grades. Of these schools, none were classified as low performing in 2019.

## How students in Alleghany County traditional public schools are currently doing:

To meet state goals, Alleghany County needs:

- **Alleghany County has met the goal for eligible 4-year-olds** enrolled in NC Pre-K program (goal: 75% vs. 81%).
- **190 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in reading (goal: 73% vs. 42%).
- **255 more 3-8 graders** earning college-and-career-ready scores (level 4 or 5) in math (goal: 86% vs. 45%).

## Percent of Alleghany County schools by academic growth status, 2019



## Ready for College & Career

High school completion is a crucial step on the pathway to postsecondary success or the beginnings of a career. Activities that prepare students to navigate the transition to postsecondary include gaining experience in college-level coursework and applying for financial assistance.

To meet state goals, Alleghany County needs:

- **7 more 9th graders** to graduate within four years (goal: 95% vs. 89%).
- **26 more seniors** to complete the FAFSA (goal: 80% vs. 57%).
- **61 more students** to attend school regularly (goal: 11% chronic absenteeism vs. 16%).



**0 students** took at least one AP course (0%) versus 9% of peer counties.



**108 students** participated in Career & College Promise programs (26%) versus 22% of peer counties.

Students in Alleghany County completed **159 Career & Technical Education concentrations** in 2019. The top three CTE concentrations completed include Agricultural, Food, & Natural Resources; Arts, Audio/Video Technology, & Communications; and Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics.

## Postsecondary Access and Success

These metrics capture student progression and educational attainment from high school graduation to postsecondary completion. They indicate relative strengths and weaknesses of Alleghany County at each stage of the postsecondary pipeline.

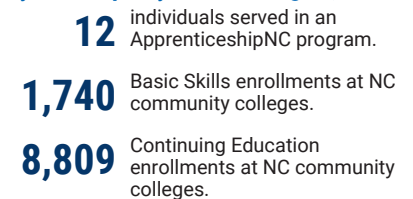


Alleghany County has a student-to-school counselor ratio of 333:1.

Among Alleghany County high school graduates:

- **54% of graduates** enroll in a postsecondary institution within 12 months versus 57% of peer counties.
- **76% of students** who enroll persist to their second year versus 73% of peer counties.
- **51% of students** who enroll earn a degree or credential within 6 years versus 49% of peer counties.

## In your Prosperity Zone sub-region, 2018-19:



## Labor Market Outcomes

Lack of technical skills and lack of education are among the primary reasons why NC employers struggle to fill vacancies. These metrics capture labor market outcomes among recent graduates, the alignment between postsecondary degree production and labor market demand, and future job demands.



12.7% of teens ages 16-19 are not working and not in school versus 8.9% of peer counties.

In your Prosperity Zone sub-region:

Public postsecondary institutions graduate **5,225 students per year**. After 5 years, 70% of 2013 graduates were employed in NC, earning an annual average wage of \$41,744.

72% of postsecondary degrees and credentials conferred by regional institutions are aligned with labor market needs. The top gap is: **Transportation, Distribution & Logistics** (below bachelor's).

There are **84,705 job openings** projected between 2017-2026. The top 3 in demand jobs with median wages of \$50,000 or more are: 1) **Registered Nurses**; 2) **General and Operations Managers**; 3) **First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers**.

## Opportunities for Growth

Compared to rural non-metro counties and the state, these three areas represent the biggest opportunities for Alleghany County to improve future attainment outcomes.



### AP Participation

0% of Alleghany County high school students took at least one Advanced Placement exam, below the rural non-metro county average of 9%.



### Disconnected Youth

13% of Alleghany County youth ages 16-19 are not working and not in school, above the rural non-metro county average of 9%.



### Transition to Postsecondary

54% of Alleghany County seniors enroll in postsecondary within 12 months of graduation, below the rural non-metro county average of 57%.

## Largest postsecondary institutions in your Prosperity Zone sub-region

Institution Name	Undergraduate Enrollments 2017-18	Graduate or Transfer in 8 Years
<b>Total Enrollments</b>	<b>28,661</b>	<b>75%</b>
Appalachian State University	18,135	91%
Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute	4,636	53%
Wilkes Community College	3,416	54%
Mayland Community College	1,455	55%
Lees-McRae College	1,019	66%

**Notes:**

Enrollments reflect degree- or credential-seeking undergraduate enrollments. The graduate or transfer rate is drawn from IPEDS and represents the share of students who either graduate with a degree or credential from the institution or transfer to another institution within 8 years. The 8-year outcome is the only measure that includes information on transfer out. Detailed data guidance is provided at <http://go.unc.edu/countydata>

### Local Cross-Sector Promising Practice: WCC Tuition Free Guarantee MOU

The WCC Tuition-Free Guarantee initiative is an innovative program developed through a unique partnership between Wilkes Community College, Alleghany County Schools and the Alleghany County Educational Foundation. The purpose of this program is to guarantee all students in Alleghany County Schools have access to an Associate Degree from Wilkes Community College tuition-free.

We identified this example of an emerging cross-sector promising practice in partnership with local leaders. If you have additional examples you'd like to share with myFutureNC, please respond to this short survey.

For more information about each indicator, including data sources and methodology, visit:


[dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/](https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-data-and-resources/)

### ABOUT CAROLINA DEMOGRAPHY

Located within the Carolina Population Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, we use data and other available research to help you put a face or a story on the population-level changes facing your community. Our analysts provide a full array of demographic data and research services to inform decision making, evaluation, and policy across North Carolina, where we serve organizations and people in all 100 counties.

 [ncdemography.org](https://ncdemography.org)

 [demography@unc.edu](mailto:demography@unc.edu)

 [@ncdemography](https://twitter.com/ncdemography)

### ABOUT MYFUTURENC

MyFutureNC is a statewide nonprofit organization focused on educational attainment and is the result of cross-sector collaboration between North Carolina leaders in education, business, and government. Our mission is to prepare North Carolina for the future by empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and ensuring our economic viability in a global economy.

 [myfuturenc.org](https://myfuturenc.org)

 [facebook.com/myfuturenc](https://facebook.com/myfuturenc)

 [@myFutureNC](https://twitter.com/myFutureNC)



# Appendix B:

*Appendix B:*

West Jefferson Community Snapshot

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.*

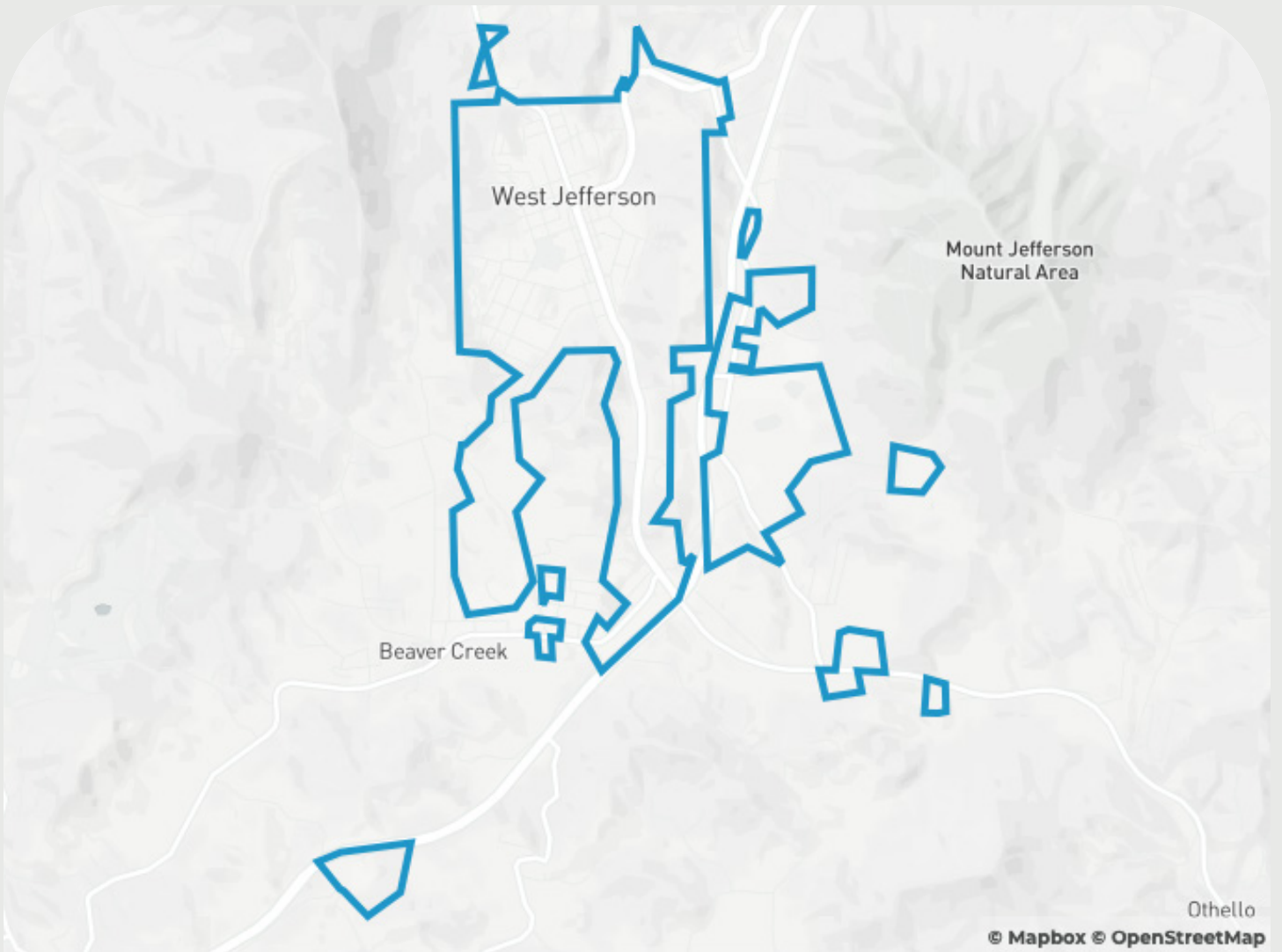






# History

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*

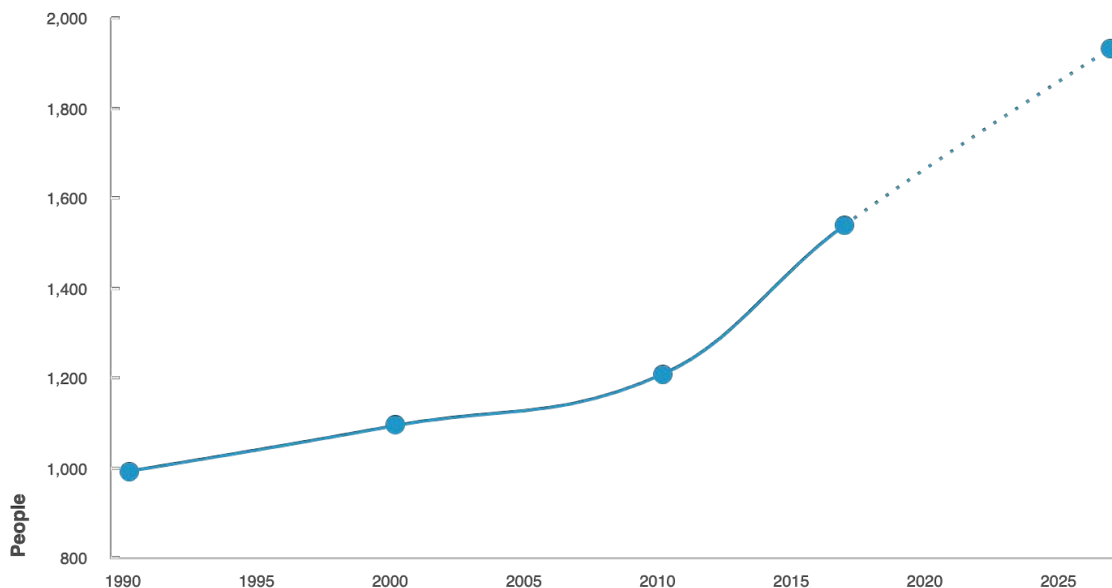
---

**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

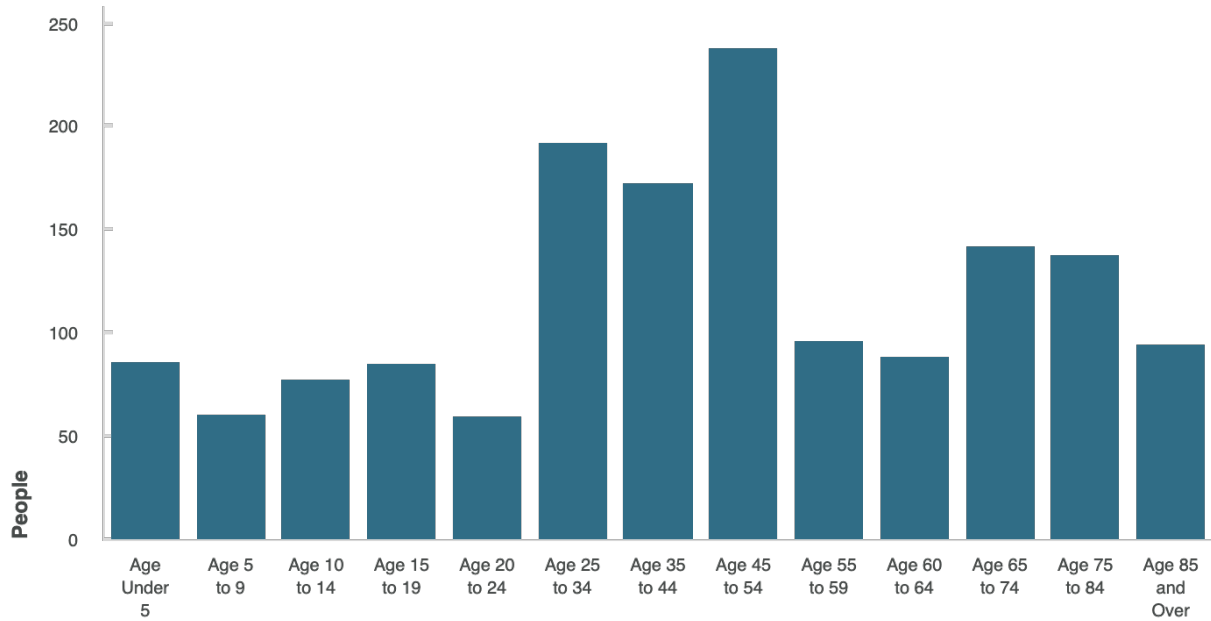
West Jefferson is a fairly intergenerational city, though seems to skew on the younger side. The median age of residents is a little under 50, and 22% of the population are over 65. In addition to that, as noted in the bar graph, the **largest age groups** in the town are ages **45-54, and 25-34**.

**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*

### Seniors

**22%**

**Population Age 65 and Over**

*West Jefferson, NC*

**22%**

**Population Under Age 18**

*North Carolina*

**15%**

**Population Age 65 and Over**

*North Carolina*

**23%**

**Population Under Age 18**

*United States of America*

**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%**

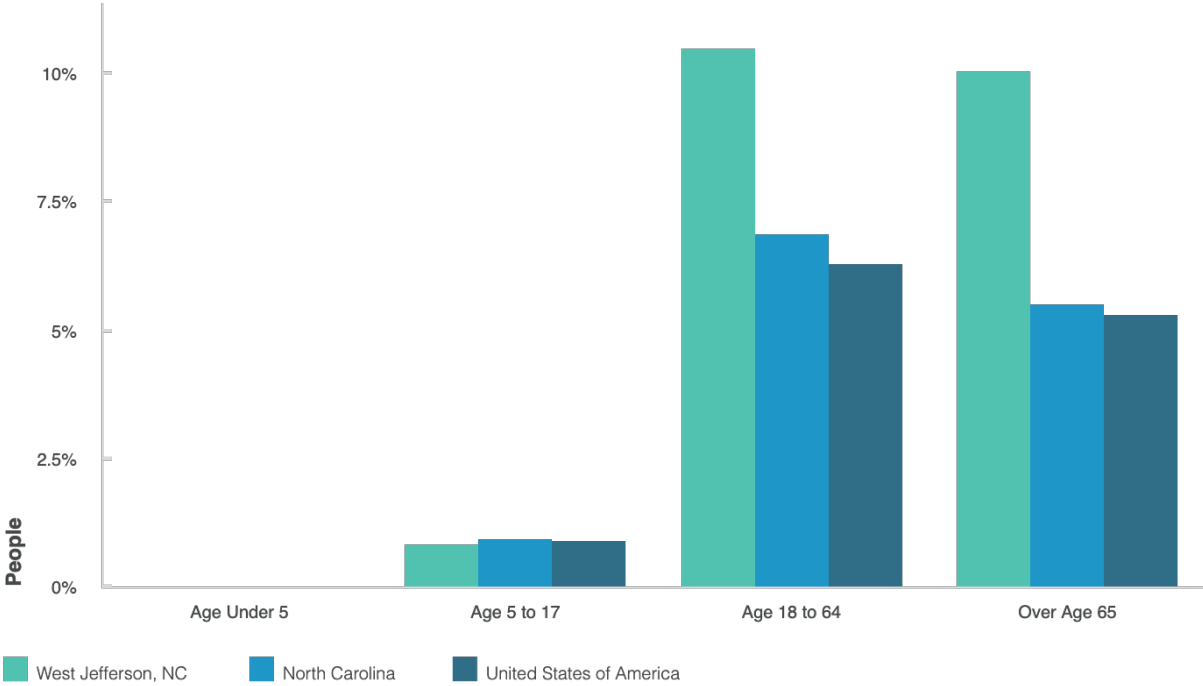
North Carolina

**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*

---

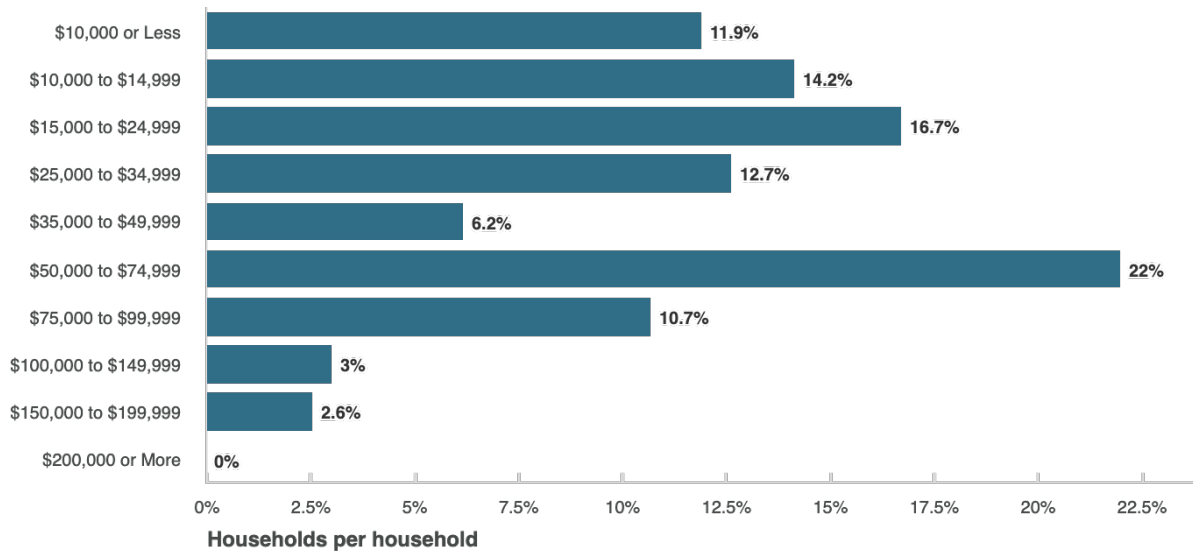
**\$62,843**

*United States of America*

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

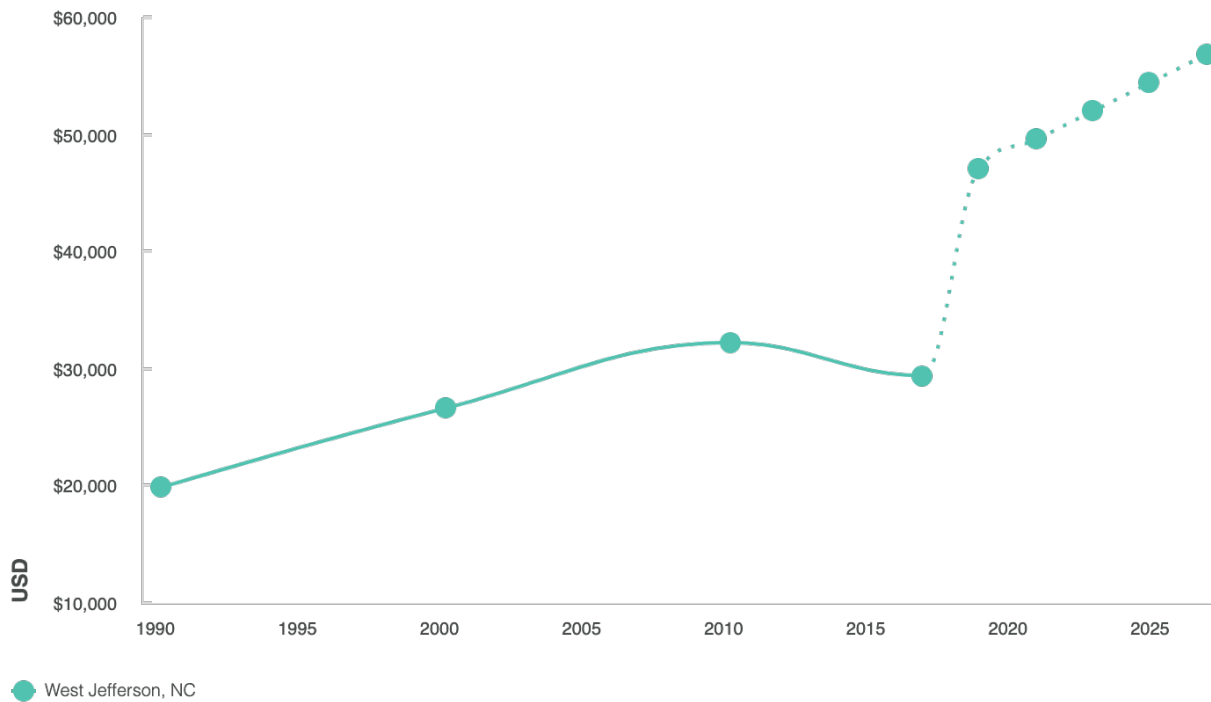


## Household Income



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

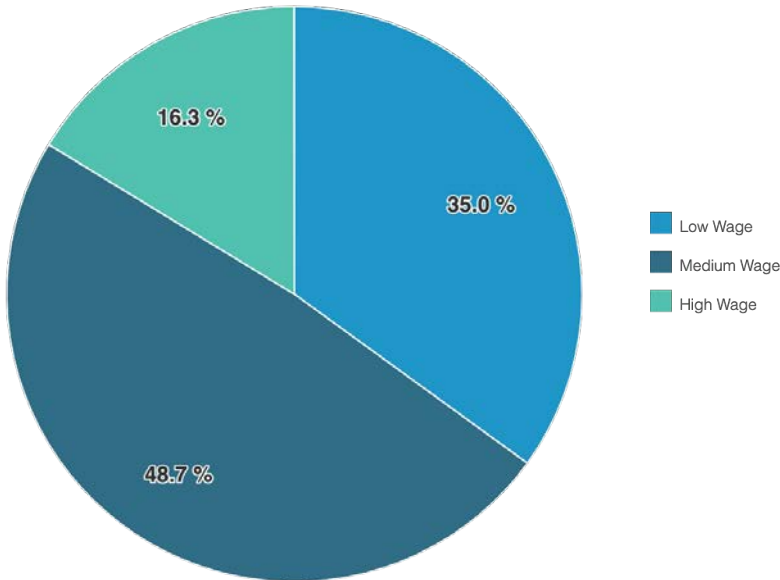
## Median Household Income



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%).

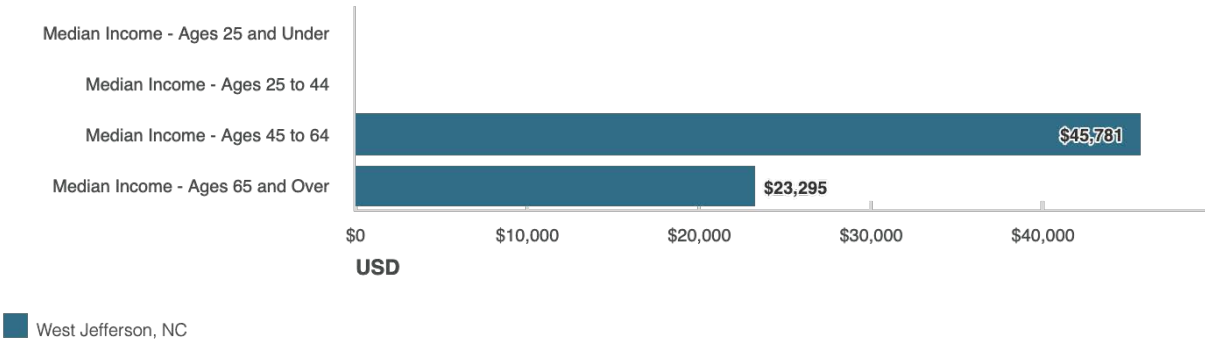
**Wage of Workers**



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*

**Labor Market  
Engagement Index  
30**

*West Jefferson, NC*

---

**62.4%**  
*North Carolina*

---

**16**  
*North Carolina*

---

**63.4%**  
*United States of America*

---

**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*

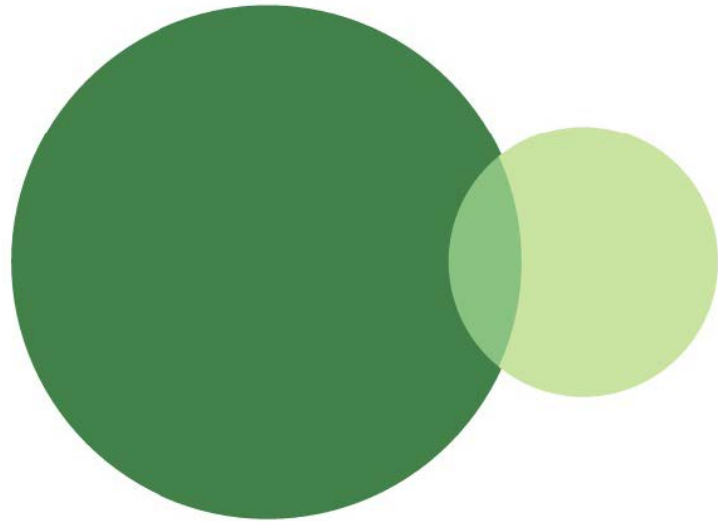
This data also allows to compare participation among genders. It appears that West Jefferson has lower rates of both genders participating in the labor force when compared to a state and national level. Finding employment, especially employment that offers livable wages, can be more difficult in rural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

continued on the next page >>



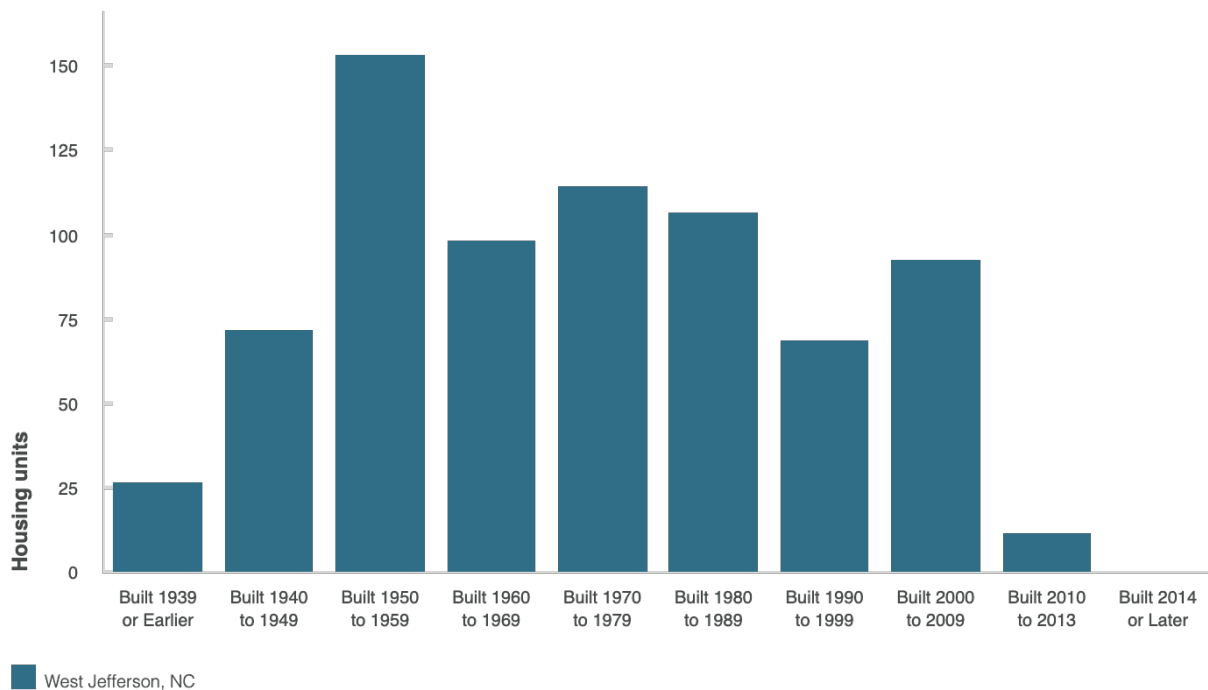
The **median home value** (MHV) in West Jefferson has **exponentially risen** over the last few decades, but has recently decreased in the last decade. From 1990 to 2000, the median home value increased by \$29,170, and from 2000 to 2010, it increased by a whopping \$90,630. This was most likely due 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*

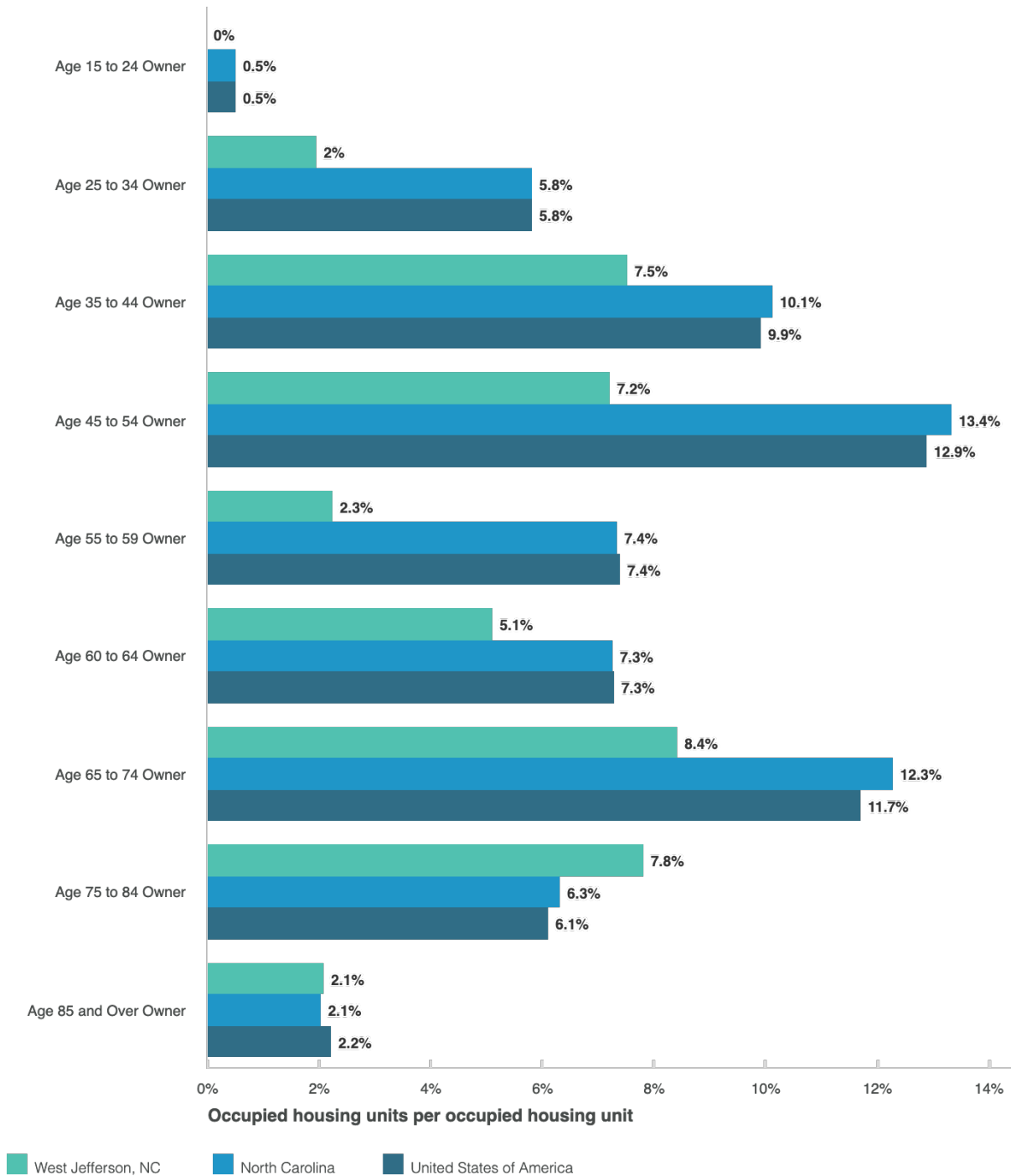
Although this demonstrates a serious need for more **affordable housing**, both for homeowners and renters, this problem is exacerbated even more for renters when comparing average incomes of the two populations. **Homeowners** in West Jefferson make more than **2.5 times** the amount of income that 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

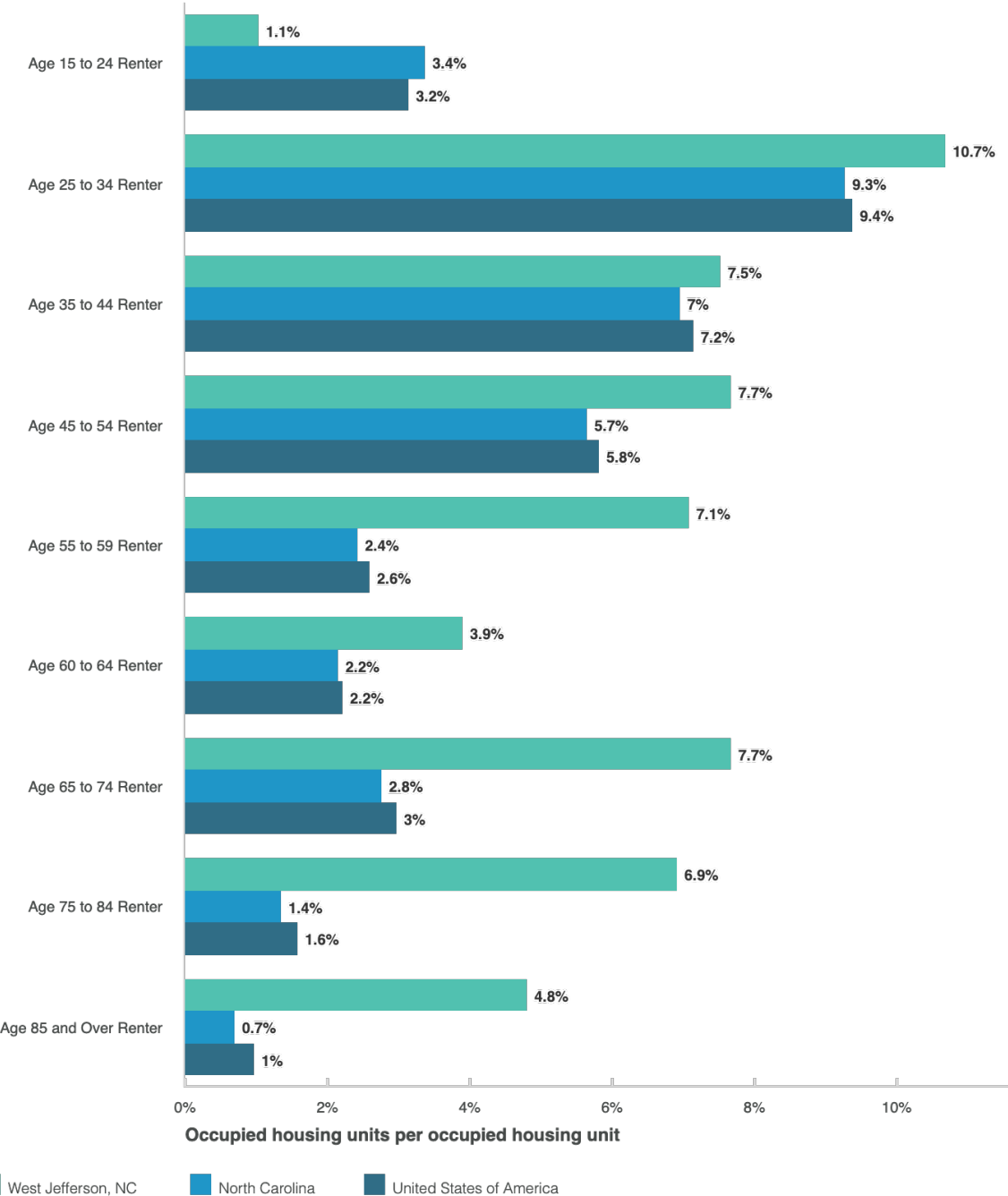
Now we want to breakdown homeownership vs. renting by age to see which age groups could be target populations. Here you can see high homeownership rates among people 45-54 and 65-74.

## Owner Occupied housing units by Householder Age

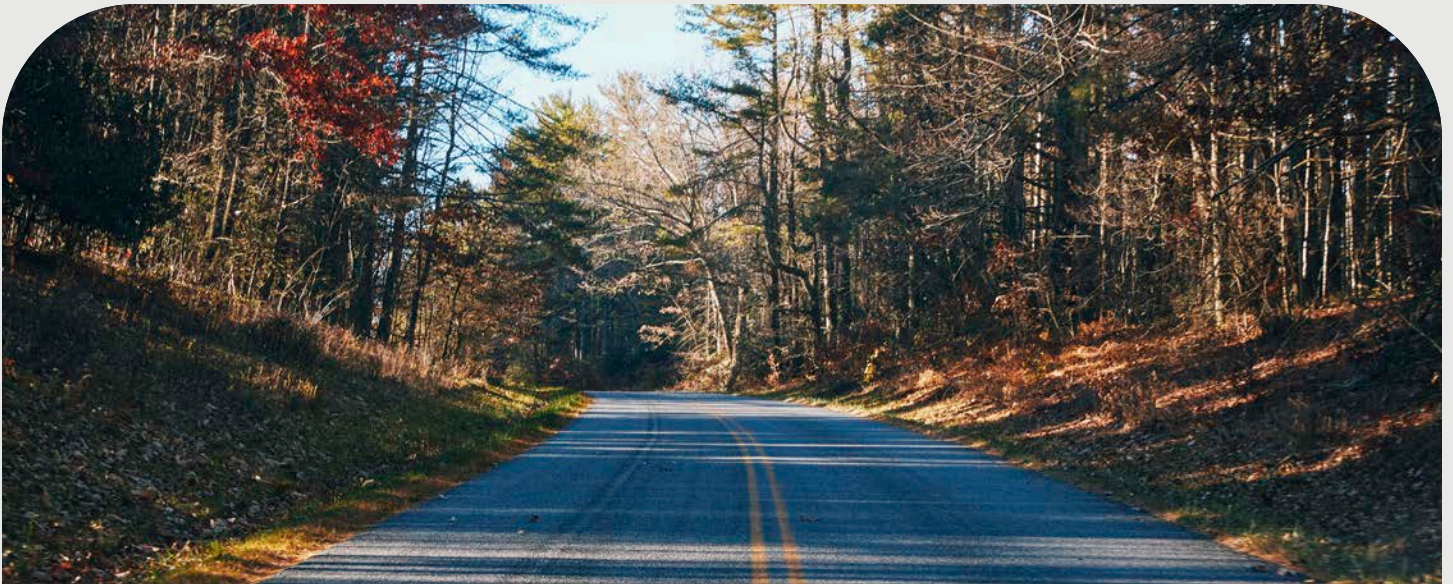


However, when you look at the **57.5% of the population** who **rent** in West Jefferson, **30% are above the age of 55**. This demonstrates a large portion of the renting population is older than your typical population that might be renting (ages 15-34). This goes against comparative rates in North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



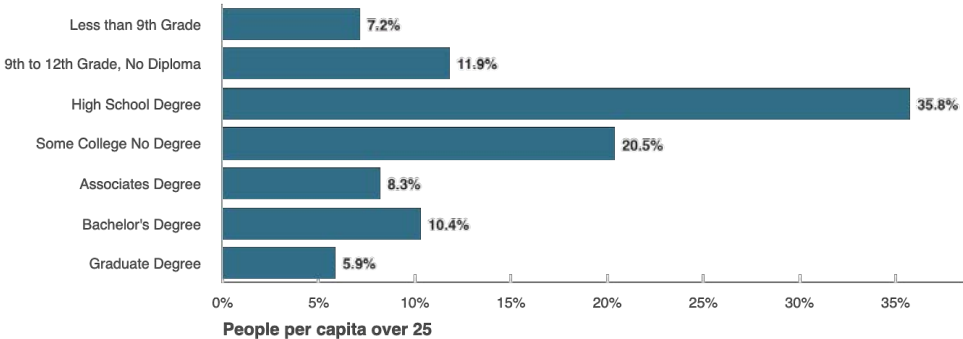
# Education

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.



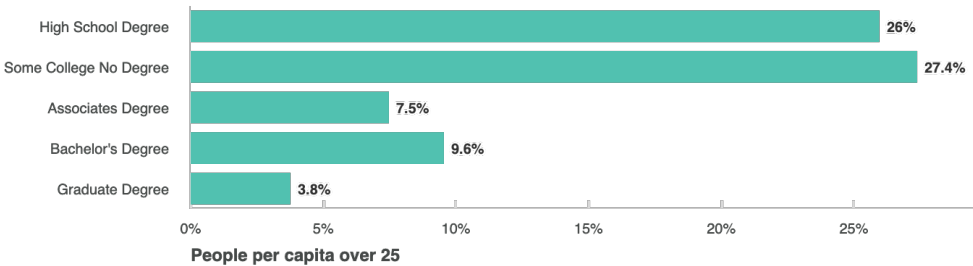
# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

## Educational Attainment (2015-2019)



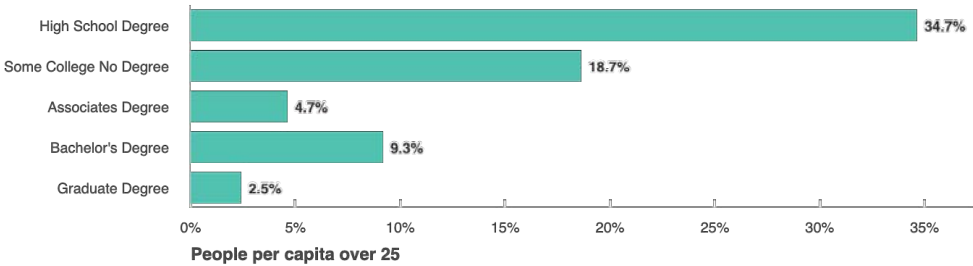
Sources: US Census Bureau ACS 5-year 2015-2019

## Educational Attainment (2010)



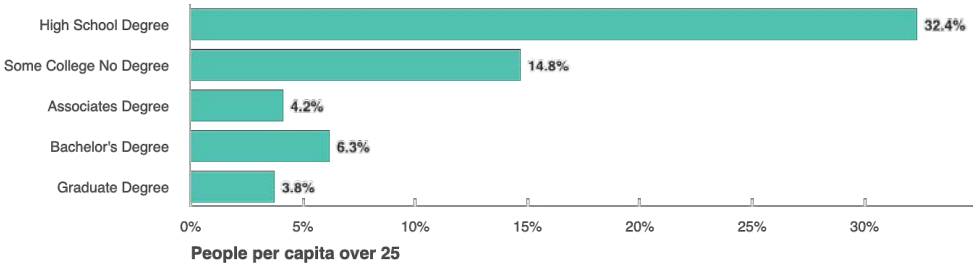
Sources: US Census Bureau 2010

## 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.

*continued on the next page >>*

## **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 Warrentonville, 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 four-year 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.

*continued on the next page >>*



**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.

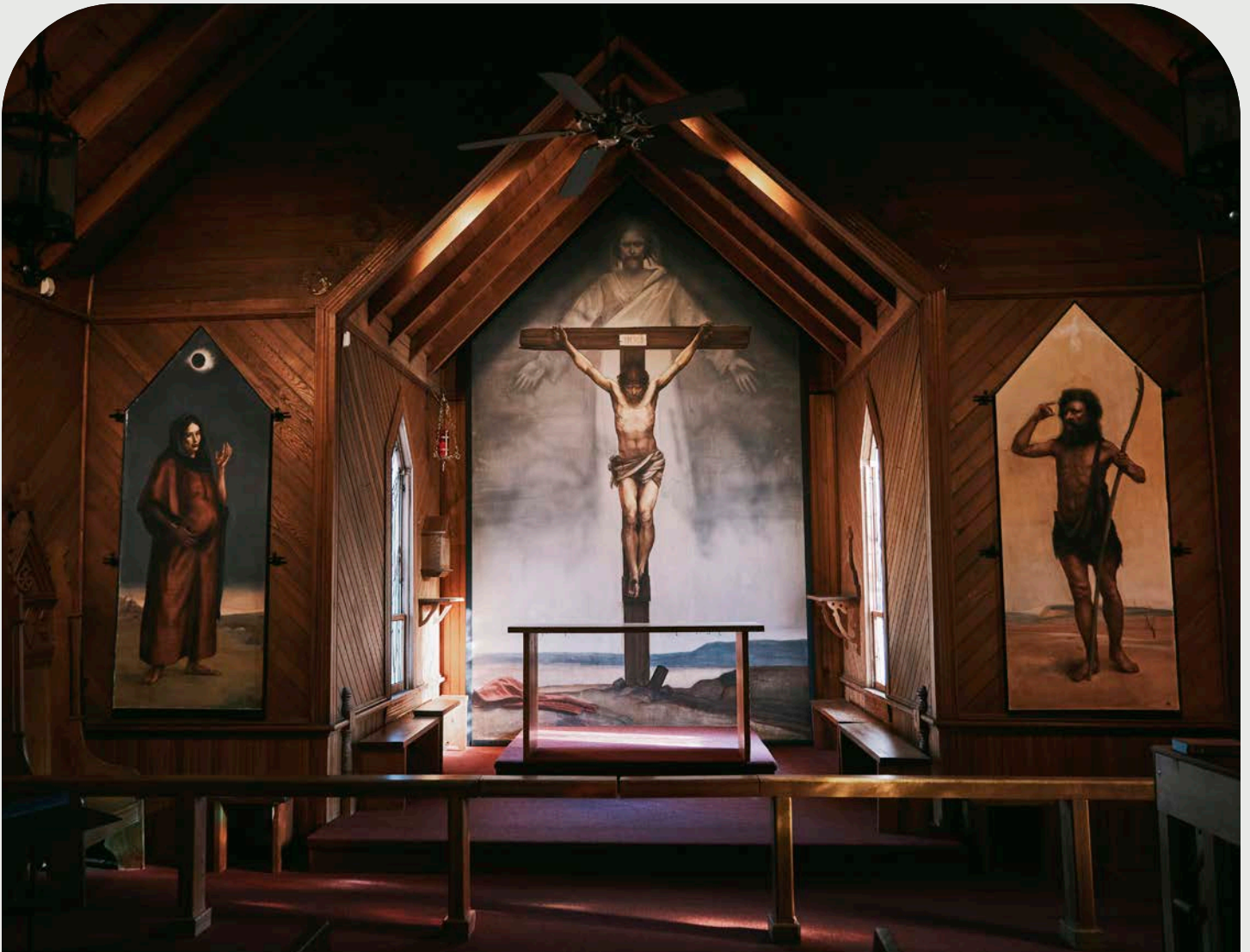
**Parkway Theater:** Parkway Theater, first opened in 1947, is West Jefferson's movie theater. **Ashe Civic Center:** Located between West Jefferson and Jefferson along Highway 221 is the Ashe Civic Center. This center houses a 282-seat theater and auditorium, which brings in a range of events, from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



The background image shows a school campus. In the foreground, there is a tall flagpole with an American flag. Behind it, a brick building is visible, and in the distance, a water tower with a yellow letter 'A' on top. The scene is set against a clear blue sky with some light clouds. The text 'Appendix C:' is overlaid in a purple, outlined font, with 'Appendix C:' written below it in a black, cursive font.

# Appendix C:

*Appendix C:*

Visioning Results



# STEERING COMMITTEE *Visioning*

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**Sparta & West Jefferson,  
North Carolina**

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Describe NW North Carolina's most unique assets	1
Describe the assets NW NC is missing	2
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What incentives do you think would help support new housing development?	4
What type(s) of incentives should be offered and to whom?	4
Who are the local leaders and movers-and-shakers working on these issues?	4
Who should be included in this process that is currently not participating?	4
What are your favorite cultural amenities to frequent in NW NC?	5
What cultural amenities do you enjoy the most when you travel outside of NW NC?	6
What type of programming (ex. art classes, sports, coding academy, etc.) is desired in NW NC?	6
In your opinion, what are the greatest assets of downtown Sparta/West Jefferson?	7
What improvements should be made to enhance the economic and social vitality of downtown Sparta/West Jefferson?	7
Should the NW NC region consider pursuing a historic designation for the downtown area(s)?	8
Should the NW NC region consider offering incentives specifically for downtown revitalization?	8

***note: responses have not been edited for grammar/spelling errors to maintain their integrity.***

## **1. Describe NW North Carolina's most unique assets.**

- The people that provide a sense of community and culture. The beautiful surrounding of the Blue Ridge Mountains and New River.
- I think that NW North Carolina's most unique asset is the people who reside here. I think that there is a feeling of community and togetherness that create a comforting and welcoming atmosphere. I also think that the scenery is a very unique asset. There is a view around almost every corner.
- Live music most nights of the week (pre-pandemic at least!)
- Clean water & air
- NC Fraser fir
- Artisans
- Tons of parks within close driving distance
- Local restaurants
- Slower pace of life
- Friendly folks
- Small rural communities without all of the traffic, easy going lifestyles.
- Bluegrass & old time music tradition (seems like everyone plays an instrument)
- Hospitals
- Schools
- Closeness of community
- Natural beauty: New River, Christmas trees
- Historical properties
- Low cost of living
- Strong sense of community. Beautiful natural landscape
- People! Quality and pace of life!
- Fiber optic internet
- Close community
- It's beauty
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Great place to kive
- Lush, green mountains
- Natural resources, distinctive history and culture strong community
- Cooler temperatures in summer. Mountain View's New River. Low crime rates
- Climate, desirable natural resources
- Beautiful Mountain View's, Rivers
- The people, the mountains, the many outdoor activities, Blue Ridge Parkway
- Trail. Rivers. Mountain. Rural
- Connectivity/broadband with solitude
- Mtns, rivers, music, nature
- Mountains, rivers, trails... solitude

## **2. Describe the assets NW NC is missing.**

- Rec Center
- A gathering place for intergenerational families.
- One asset that NW NC is missing is opportunities for academic and sports-related growth and development. There is hardly any indoor facilities that allow year-round development for student athletes. There are also very little tutoring programs outside of the everyday classroom available for students.
- Fully utilized/developed downtown buildings and nearby housing
- More access points to New River
- Unified master plan (and signage/maps) for parks and trails
- Jobs for our kids to come back to after college
- Airport, hotel, another grocery store option
- Childcare infrastructure.
- Lodging, large outdoor venues
- Jobs for those with postsecondary education
- Telework career pathways (to retain talent and connect it to good-paying jobs)
- Airport is the only thing I miss. I'll drive to go shopping so everything that goes with shopping doesn't come here.
- more public River access
- Jobs!
- Movies, stores with products locals are interested in, Rec center, bike trails
- Ethnic and racial diversity.
- Target
- Early childhood education centers
- Bike trails
- Multi-modal transportation. Better trail connectivity.
- Centralized recreation opportunities for young families.
- Greenway
- Rec Center / Indoor activity center(s) for kids and youth
- Bike trails
- Walking and biking trail
- Movie theater
- Natural and organic food store
- Hotels
- Greenway
- Airport

## **3. What type of housing is most needed in NW NC?**

- Affordable housing for local families and retirement facility for seniors.
- Shelters for the homeless and more senior living communities.



- Tiny homes 6 month wait.
- 55+ community.
- Middle income, apartments, condos
- middle income apartments
- affordable housing for young people
- Apartments, nice.
- Middle income homes in a neighborhood setting
- Affordable options close to town that could be used to attract educators, teleworkers, entrepreneurs
- ANYTHING with a view or on water.
- Starter homes for families and singles
- Affordable small housing (apartments) for people graduating college, entering workforce in the \$40,000-50,000 salary range with student loan debt
- Senior housing, affordable housing for new college grads and incoming young professionals.
- Nice, affordable apartments
- Single and multi-plex apartments
- Affordable, to meet the income of our workforce
- Single family with access to town
- Middle income housing not low income

#### ***4. What do you see as barriers to new housing development?***

- Cost, and the availability of land.
- Financial funding in order to create new housing. Regulations for developing land and community support.
- Health department back log for perk testing
- cost of building/renovating
- Affordability, transportation, large unused buildings. Need walkable senior friendly downtown.
- There is a glut of land/lots
- Cost, availability of in town property
- Funding
- Cost, land availability, investors, shortage of builders, timeframe
- Investors
- No enough contractors. Finding land. Retirement homes drive a lot of housing market.
- Cost and labor shortage
- Reliable Builders
- The national housing market, also a shortage of local contractors
- Skilled labor shortage
- Labor shortages for Builders.
- Investors
- Lack of
- Materials cost
- Builders, construction trades people

#### **5. What incentives do you think would help support new housing development?**

- Support from local governmental agencies.
- Tax credit incentives.
- Sign-on bonuses just like athletes receive
- No upfront costs to buyers, low interest rates, current business incentives package
- More internships in skilled labor
- Intentional apprenticeships for young people with experienced contractors/skilled laborers.
- Support for private investors to connect with Opportunity Zone Financing, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, and Brownfield Grants
- Labor force is the only hindrance I see.
- A new kind of scholarship: give high school graduates seed money and match them with business mentors to support them in starting their own contractor businesses
- Opportunity zone is available
- Turn-key package to encourage solutions for everyone!
- Incentives to rehab commercial property into residential communities and uses.
- Expanding water and sewer service

#### **6. What type(s) of incentives should be offered and to whom?**

- Tax credits to low income families and to geographic areas.

#### **7. Who are the local leaders and movers-and-shakers working on these issues? Groups or individuals.**

- County Commissioners and Town Managers.
- County Commissioners, Board of Education, Town Aldermen, Town Managers, and The Steering Committee.
- Mayor
- Developers
- Major property owners
- Allegheny Chamber for Economic Development will be
- Town manager
- Vannoy
- Whoever “holds the keys” to regulations: County Commissioners, town managers, boards of aldermen, etc.
- This group
- Here
- Realtors
- People with land to sell
- Churches help people find housing

#### **8. Who should be included in this process that is currently not participating?**

- Parks and Recreation, members from the School Board, and local business owners.

- Survey current students to find out their plans, survey those that left and didn't return, why?
- Millenials
- College students who are considering where and what to do next
- High school students. Talk to them about what they actually want and envision for their future. We have to partner with them.
- Folks who moved away and are now considering a return to the community (e.g., young families)
- Vannoy Construction
- Lenders?
- Construction classes at the high school and college

### ***9. What are your favorite cultural amenities to frequent in NW NC?***

- Local galleries, Art Crawls.
- Farmer's Market
- Music in the Todd Park
- The New river, Mount Jefferson, Local restaurants and coffee shops, and local shops in Downtown West Jefferson.
- VRBO
- Fiddler's Convention
- Merle fest is not here.
- car shows
- Parkway Theater
- Downhill skateboard race at Mt. Jefferson.
- Faithfest
- Competitive runs and bike rides
- Brutal 100
- Fiber fest
- Mountain Heritage
- Antique fair
- Art on the Mountain
- Christmas in july
- State Parks
- Barn quilts.
- Merlefest
- Festivals
- Churches of the Frescos
- Music venues
- Crafts, niche farms, art galleries. Restaurants
- Art, specifically pottery gathering. I also love the murals in downtown WJ. The mural walk is a great way to learn about our community's history, see the town, and see great art.
- Musical venues, JAM productions, restaurants, breweries, wineries, Blue Ridge Parkway

- Trails
- Winery's
- Third spaces
- Farmers Market
- Farmers market
- Restaurants and breweries
- Antiques
- Gallery Crawls
- Art stores
- Musical venues

### **10. What cultural amenities do you enjoy the most when you travel outside of NW NC?**

- Facilities that can be enjoyed by all ages.
- Greenway(Boone)
- The beach, outdoor pools, indoor water park facilities, and athletic tournaments.
- Kid cycling-friendly greenways
- Running, cycling, kayaking sporting competitions/events
- Pools, splash pads
- Aquariums
- Travel sports. We have a great location with our ball fields to host more travel sports. Most all of our travel sports teams travel out of the county to do these things. We could host more of these events.
- Interstate 85
- Indoor rec centers for kids, youth, families, adults (ex. Wytheville, VA)
- Theaters, larger music venues, larger parks
- Swimming pool
- Better restaurants, shopping, art museums.
- Barter Theater
- Places to shop and entertainment in general
- Tri athalons, run bike paddle
- Bigger parks with more attractions
- Greenways and biking trails
- Bigger music venues
- Merle fest?

### **11. What type of programming (ex. art classes, sports, coding academy, etc.) is desired in NW NC?**

- Rec Center
- Sport indoor facilities, tutoring programs, basic life skills courses (taxes, managing check books, cooking, etc.), and health and wellness courses.
- YMCA-style complex would be amazing



- STEM programs
- Ymca
- Multi-purpose sports complex
- Small business support
- Construction, builders workshop
- Business and marketing support, web design, social media training
- Coding academy and/or other high-pay, high-growth career pathways that are telework-friendly and allow young talent to remain in the community
- Business incubators, hi-tech training, expanded music and art training.
- Small business administration

**12. In your opinion, what are the greatest assets of downtown Sparta/West Jefferson?**

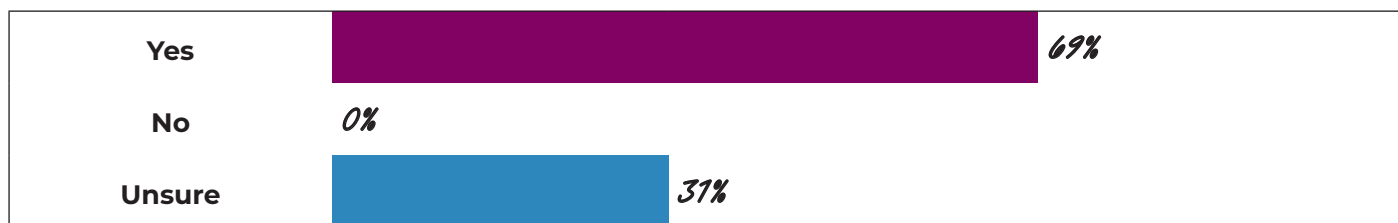
- Local shops and restaurants.
- All of the shops and restaurants as well as the appearance of downtown West Jefferson.

**13. What improvements should be made to enhance the economic and social vitality of downtown Sparta/West Jefferson?**

- Enhancements to buildings before you get into the Downtown area.
- Pop up shop opportunity for local businesses.
- More parking availability, more downtown parades/festivals, more activities for the younger generation such as outdoor music, and more advertising to promote supporting local businesses.
- Jefferson Station should be a HUGE Brewery and eatery
- No
- Businesses and events in the evening
- Consistent operating hours, longer hours
- Renovate Jefferson station
- Extend the streetscape (powerlines underground, sidewalks improved)
- Keep the town open on Sundays
- Sunday shopping. Later hours
- More evening events and opening for people who work full-time day jobs.
- Enhance alley way areas
- Additional parking
- To completely renovate EVERY building and beautify ENTIRE scope of the town
- More parking.
- Focus (maybe incentives) for professional services businesses to locate downtown and provide a consistent clientele for downtown businesses during day/weekdays
- Improvement of store fronts to be more visually appealing
- Wider variety of restaurants and galleries. Expand public art. Build on existing walkability and age friendly designs.

- More parking, benches, landscaping, filling empty buildings and store fronts
- Vacant buildings renovated on Main Street and turned into creative and usable space
- “High traffic” business to draw more people to downtown, renovate storefronts, renovate and fill empty storefronts,
- Walkability to connect parks, farmers market, parks
- restrict large vehicles downtown
- More businesses on main street
- Removed or remodeled vacant downtown buildings
- Old buildings renovated
- Outdoor dining area
- Walking trail
- Renovate old buildings, improve appearances
- Nice second-story apartments
- Parking Deck
- Organized shopping events

**14. Should the NW NC region consider pursuing a historic designation for the downtown area(s)?**



**15. Should the NW NC region consider offering incentives specifically for downtown revitalization?**



# PUBLIC *Visioning*

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**Sparta & West Jefferson,  
North Carolina**

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Describe the assets NW NC is missing	1
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What are reasonable price ranges for housing, including owned homes and rentals?	4
Should NW NC offer incentives to prospective residents?	5
In your opinion, what are NW NC's key industries??	5
Which companies/organizations (public and private) should be involved in this region's comprehensive workforce development strategy?	6
What programs and/or resources are currently available in NW NC, and nearby areas, for individuals seeking job training for high-demand careers?	6
What programs and/or resources should be offered in NW NC for individuals seeking job training for high-demand careers?	7
What types of incentives should be offered to new residents/remote workers to attract them to live and work in the region?	8
What are your favorite cultural amenities to frequent in NW NC?	8
If you could bring any cultural amenities/activities to NW NC, what would they be?	9

***note: responses have not been edited for grammar/spelling errors to maintain their integrity.***



What type of programming (ex. art classes, sports, coding academy, etc.) is desired in NW NC?	10
What improvements should be made to enhance the economic and social vitality of downtown Sparta/West Jefferson?	11
Should Sparta consider pursuing a historic designation for the downtown area?	11
Should West Jefferson consider pursuing a historic designation for the downtown area?	12
Who are the local leaders and movers-and-shakers working on these issues?	12

## **1. Describe NW North Carolina's most unique assets.**

- Antiques
- Small town feel, strong connectivity
- Amphibolite mountains
- You can work from your back porch with our broadband
- Quiet peaceful community.
- Friendly and supportive community
- Strong healthcare industry
- Community relationships
- Close enough to larger areas for those needs
- People friendly
- The people, the scenery, and the sense of community
- Open space, therefore we need to avoid sprawl.
- Great place to live and work
- Blue Ridge Mountains
- Art
- Cultural events
- Natural environment and outdoor activities.
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Outdoor activities
- Lots of nature and outdoor things to do!
- New River
- The people
- Scenic beauty
- Lack of humans, less density and traffic and climate.
- Clean. Beautiful. Tremendous amount of open space for development
- Four distinct seasons
- The people
- Tight knit community
- Blue Ridge Parkway, Trout fishing, outdoor recreation (hiking, river floating etc)
- Relaxed atmosphere
- Responsive local government
- A place where you know your neighbors
- Small town atmosphere

## **2. Describe the assets NW NC is missing.**

- A nice community outdoor swimming pool.
- Winter activities
- Restaurants more than fast food (fine dining, rooftop bars)
- A hiking trail around Sparta and the Little River

- Small theater
- Connecting state and local parks
- Livable wage
- Activities for youth
- Businesses to create jobs and provide services
- Putt putt golf for families of people who visit our four golf courses
- More young professionals
- Affordable housing
- Large space for auditorium gatherings
- More walkable and bikeable
- Jobs for college grads to come back to
- Investors to make all this happen!
- More trails and connectivity
- Total lack of food and retail services
- Greenways along the rivers, civic center, more retail shops, more grocery stores
- Children's and youth areas for indoor activities
- Housing geared towards millennials
- Biking trails
- Airport
- More indoor facilities for student athletes
- Rec Center
- Services
- Greenway
- Amphitheater
- Housing!!
- Greenway
- Bike trails, housing, local youth activities, local young adult activities, more educational opportunities
- More infrastructure
- Affordable housing
- Nice starter homes
- Bike trails
- Good traffic Connectivity between Ashe and Alleghany - roads
- Housing
- Winter activities
- Good 21st century jobs
- Adequate childcare
- Public river accessibility
- Greenways and trails

### 3. What type of housing is most needed in NW NC?

Response	Count
Single Family Homes	11
Multi-family Homes (i.e. apartments)	7
Townhomes	4
Duplexes	1
Subsidized Housing	1
Housing Units for Rent	9
Housing Units for Sale	6
None of the above	0

### 4. What do you see as barriers to new housing development?

- Investors
- Current Landlords don't seem to want to upgrade or fix their current facilities
- Grant funds to assist
- Cost of construction materials
- More financing options
- Cost of building supplies & number of licensed contractors available and willing to do the work in less than two years. The demand for custom homes has filled their calendars.
- Community fear of sprawl
- Cost of materials
- Currently cost of building
- Available contractors
- Community support
- Lack of contractors
- Lack of contractors
- No internal workforce
- Lack of skilled labor to build them
- Investors, land availability close to town
- Contractors
- Transportation options



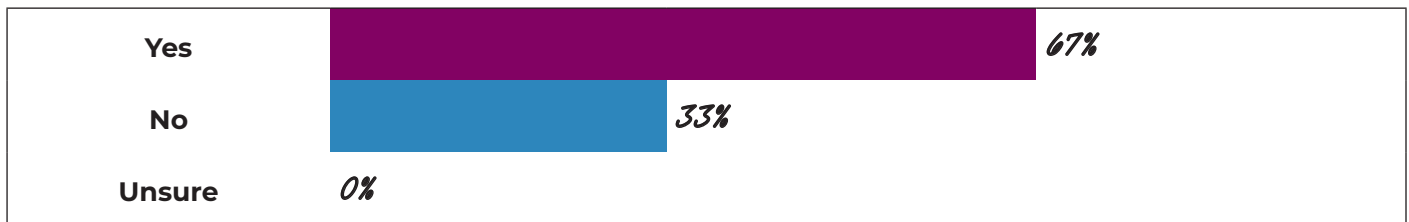
- Community support
- Apparently no developers
- Majority of land is used for agriculture.
- Zoning ordinances
- Unwillingness to sell family land for housing development
- Too risky for local contractors
- Access to capital for building
- Lack of contractors
- Cost of materials

**5. What are reasonable price ranges for housing, including owned homes and rentals? (Ex. Single-family, apartments, condos, etc.)**

- Cash buyers from cities are making it impossible for most locals to compete.
- For those not making high salaries not enough prices and good housing for those people
- No availability
- Price ranges aren't missing, the homes are.
- Rentals are missing
- Every price range is missing right now.
- There is no inventory at all currently
- Rental \$650-\$1200 per month
- Homes: 200k-400k
- Rent \$800 to \$1400
- rent 600-1000/month
- Mobile Home Rental \$400-\$700/mo
- Homes \$135k-\$175k
- Rent - 600-1000
- "Purchase: \$150k-400k
- I think that's a perception question. Looking at wages then calculating affordability is where we need to have some homes priced.
- Rental \$600-\$1000
- \$150,000 for homes
- Rental Home-\$700-\$1100
- Purchase \$150 to \$250k
- 150k -250k
- \$200 to 300 thousand
- Rental \$700-\$1000
- Homes-\$125K-\$250K
- 700-900/ month
- 135-160k
- 300 a month depending on the apartment

- 200-300 seems good for smaller apartments, but in places like Boone they get quite a bit more expensive
- Under 200k starter homes
- Single family under 250 thousand.

**6. Should NW NC offer incentives to prospective residents (ex. down payment assistance, one-time cash payment, student loan repayment)?**



**7. In your opinion, what are NW NC's key industries?**

- Restaurants have closed because of no workers
- Co-ops. BR. Skyline
- Napco, Pioneer Eclipse, Magnolia, School system
- Healthcare is growing
- Education
- Healthcare, Farming, numerous golf courses/country clubs
- Agriculture(i.e. pumpkins, Christmas trees) Pioneer Eclipse, Parkdale, tourism
- Education, tree farms, manufacturing, tourism
- Outdoors and tourism, agriculture
- Manufacturing
- Manufacturing
- Aev
- Outdoor recreation, agriculture and tourism
- Tourism
- Christmas Tree Farms
- Ge aviation
- Farming
- Healthcare
- Alleghany has 2 truss plants
- GE
- AEV
- Vannoy Construction Company.
- IN Alleghany the school system is the major employer
- School system.
- Custom manufacturing

- Agriculture and healthcare
- Agriculture

**8. Which companies/organizations (public and private) should be involved in this region's comprehensive workforce development strategy?**

- Responses
- Dss
- Healthcare, schools, child care
- Wilkes Community College, School Systems, County Commissioners, Town Councils, Area Chambers
- Napco, Magnolia (Parkdale Mills) Atlantic Truss Co., John Millers Truss factory, JB Boyer
- Skyline, blue ridge
- Chambers and Economic Development orgs.
- School system, community college, chamber
- Local Business
- High country council of government
- Schools
- Chamber of commerce, community college, university, tech companies, healthcare industry
- Wilkes Community College
- School Systems
- Healthcare system
- Wilkes community college
- School systems
- Healthcare
- GE
- Local industry
- Post high school assistance programs like Upward Bound
- County government
- Local schools
- Wilkes Community College
- Community College
- Appalachian State University

**9. What programs and/or resources are currently available in NW NC, and nearby areas, for individuals seeking job training for high-demand careers?**

- ASU, WCC
- Wilkes Community College
- Training through WCC and Appalachian State
- Appalachian state university and Wilkes community college
- ASU
- Wilkes Community College

- Wilkes community college
- Early College at Ashe County High School
- OJT?
- High school offers various certifications
- community college
- Community college
- The Community College has trade programs

**10. What programs and/or resources should be offered in NW NC for individuals seeking job training for high-demand careers?**

- Training for skilled laborers
- Incentives for high demand training
- Apprentices in the trades.
- Job-specific training opportunities during high school
- Medical, skilled training
- Mentoring in different areas for young people to know jobs in area
- Healthcare and hi tech.
- Apprenticeships
- Technology
- Apprenticeships
- Skilled trades training
- Medical profession training
- Career Fairs in schools and outside of schools
- Financial assistance for those in apprenticeships
- Strong mentorship program.
- Official apprenticeships.
- Training for childcare workers.



**11. What types of incentives should be offered to new residents/remote workers to attract them to live and work in the region? Choose your top 2.**

Response	Count
Relocation expenses	3
Stipend for housing expenses (mortgage or rent payments)	3
Stipend for student loan payments	10
Discounted or free co-working/office space	2
One-time cash payment (Ex. \$10,000)	3
Start-up capital for a new business (Ex. \$10,000)	4
Other	0
None of the above	1

**12. What are your favorite cultural amenities to frequent in NW NC?**

- School athletic events
- Parks
- Sit on porch and enjoy the evening
- Todd -Music in the park
- Fishing
- Diverse festivals
- The New River
- Downtown West Jefferson
- Ski resorts
- Merle fest
- New river
- Merlefest, Phipps Store, Todd Park music, art galleries
- Outdoor concerts
- Parkway, art studios and galleries, music venues
- Blue Ridge Music Center
- Downtown to eat and socialize
- Festivals
- New River

- Frescoes
- Matthews Museum
- Murals downtown
- The Parkway
- State parks
- Hunt
- Brewery
- Fish
- Civic center
- Parkway
- Wineries
- Walker center
- Choose and cut Christmas trees
- Water falls (unfortunately they are on private land)
- Local restaurants
- Agricultural amenities, like pumpkin patches and choose and cuts
- Live theatre
- Cheese factory
- Music hall
- Brewery
- Fiddlers convention
- Festivals
- Visiting authors
- Parks

***13. If you could bring any cultural amenities/activities to NW NC, what would they be?***

- I can't do everything I want to do now!
- Intergenerational facilities
- Youth activities
- We are surrounded by green. We need large venues
- Community pool
- Campgrounds
- Much needed places for children and youth
- Parks with amenities for families and kids
- Ice and roller skating, amphitheatre, more greenways and parks
- Rec Center
- A place for the youth of Ashe County to safely hang out/have live music
- Larger venues with marketing
- Indoor community center for children and youth
- Sports complex

- Arts, fairs
- Bo's or something like it
- Greenway
- Tea Pot Museum
- Big name concerts
- Greenway
- Greenway. Walking biking trails
- Movie theaters
- Horse riding trails and facilities
- Large Indoor rock climbing facility
- distillery
- Regional minor league sporting teams

***14. What type of programming (ex. art classes, sports, coding academy, etc.) is desired in NW NC?***

- Paddling and fishing
- Agritourism
- Agricultural opportunities even use research farm
- Sports camps, STEM camps, indoor swimming facilities
- Tutoring classes
- Science/technology camps
- arts and crafts classes
- Music camps
- career specific weekend classes for students to explore career options
- Technology camps
- Year around pool access
- Music/cultural camps
- Exercise classes
- Athletic camps
- Sports camps
- league sports for adults as well as youth
- Microsoft certification courses for the community
- coding academy
- How to develop businesses such as guide services
- Regional technology training
- Recreational sports leagues for adults
- A weeklong art retreat
- Better organized youth sports opportunities.
- Classes that develop business and personal finance skills

**15. What improvements should be made to enhance the economic and social vitality of downtown Sparta/West Jefferson?**

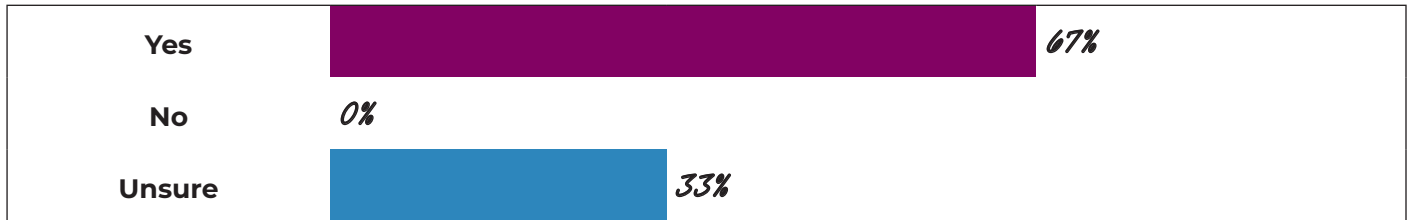
- Tourist mobility (Uber)
- Close down Main St on Saturday nights and have music, like we once did with Music on Main or special shopping events or food trucks
- Use store second floors for housing
- Multiuse building
- Outdoor dining, rooftop restaurants/bars, downtown businesses open later and fill up empty stores, high traffic business added downtown
- flats
- Fldts
- Move lumber mill and Parker Tie warehouses. Turn into a park.
- Frequent festivals
- Jefferson Station
- Fill up the empty store spaces with a lively shopping and eating area.
- Jefferson station renovation
- Parking in downtown Sparta
- Improve external visual appearance of open downtown space
- Renovation of vacant space
- Downtown businesses staying open later
- Outdoor dining
- Stop heavy truck traffic in WJ
- Contemporary planning
- Traditional retail is on the ropes. Need more entertainment, larger museum, one-of-a-kind retail/services
- Something other than another antique store.
- Building renovation and street decoration
- More small shops
- Vacant buildings and properties redevelopment
- WJ: more businesses open after 5:00p.m.
- Store front upgraded
- More variety and longer hours

**16. Should Sparta consider pursuing a historic designation for the downtown area?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>0%</b>




**17. Should West Jefferson consider pursuing a historic designation for the downtown area?**



**18. Who are the local leaders and movers-and-shakers working on these issues? Think of who isn't currently involved and should be.**

- Ashe/Sparta/ Watauga Parks and Recreation
- Alleghany chamber for economic development
- Arts council
- Barry Edwards
- Kathryn Doby at Alleghany Health
- WJ needs to be talking to and including Jefferson
- Jackie Billings, Marsha Wagoner
- Faith communities
- Citizens
- Those involved with children and youth
- Chamber
- Commissioners
- Health systems
- Chamber
- The School Board should be
- County Commissioners and Town Council Members
- Completely unclear
- Town Aldermen
- School administration
- County manager and/or county commissioner
- County government is not involved
- Representatives from Appalachian State University





# Appendix D:

*Appendix D:*

## Public Survey Results



# PUBLIC *Survey* RESULTS

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**Sparta, North Carolina**

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## **Key Building Revitalization**

If you could bring any cultural amenities/activities to Sparta, what would they be?	8
What amenity should be a priority to create/develop in Sparta? For example, a restaurant/brewery, cultural center, daycare, etc.	11
What area(s) of Sparta would be eligible locations for this new amenity?	14

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## **Housing Assessment**

Have you, or someone you personally, know struggled to find appropriate housing in Sparta?	17
What type of housing is most needed in Sparta? Select all that apply.	17
Historically, what are the major challenges related to housing in Sparta?	17
Do you believe Sparta should focus on revitalizing current homes or building new homes?	20

## **Workforce Development Strategy**

In your opinion, what are Sparta's key workforce industries?	20
In order to strengthen workforce development within the region, what should Sparta's top priorities be?	22
Are there any resources for high school students wanting to pursue careers with Sparta's key industries/top employers?	25
Should Sparta create an incentive program for current and/or prospective residents?	25
If you answered "Yes" or "Unsure" to the last question, what incentive(s) do you believe would draw prospective residents and/or support current residents to Sparta?	26
Which companies/organizations (public and private) should be involved in this region's comprehensive workforce development strategy?	26

***note: responses have not been edited for grammar/spelling errors to maintain their integrity.***



**7. If you could describe your current perspective of Sparta as a community in ONE word, how would you describe it?**

- Crossroads.
- Evolving
- Helpful
- Welcoming
- Family
- Family
- Peace
- eclectic
- Beautiful
- Closeness
- Sleepy
- Close-knit
- Needing
- Slow
- Judgemental
- Neighborly
- Mixed
- Loving
- Divided
- Welcoming
- Calm
- Growing
- Fun
- Good
- Bland
- Growing
- Friendly but lacks vibrant business and retail
- Crowded
- Smalltown
- Friendly
- Growing
- Lacking
- Dead
- Divided
- Gem.
- Simple
- Disable
- Hopeful

- Close minded
- Transforming
- Peaceful
- Progressive
- Changing
- Antique
- Dying
- Teamwork
- Neighborly
- Beautiful
- Friendly
- simple
- Peaceful
- Improving
- Closeknit
- Awesome
- Welcoming
- Bottomley's
- Rural
- Cozy
- provincial
- Sweet
- Unwelcoming
- Simple
- Hometown
- Wayward
- Welcome
- tight
- Home
- Quaint
- Home
- Opportunity
- Morphing
- ALIVE
- Heaven. (Really)
- Friendly
- friendly
- Growing
- Lacking
- Friendly

- disjointed
- Connected
- Segmented
- Giving
- Clannish
- Striving
- Town
- Low income
- Friendly
- Quaint
- Home
- Peaceful

**2. If you could describe your long-term vision (25 years from now) for Sparta in ONE word, how would you describe it?**

- Thriving.
- Thriving
- Inclusive
- Positive
- Thriving
- Stagnant
- Togetherness
- hopeful
- Beautiful
- Progressive
- Revitalized
- Unchanged
- Inspired
- Nonjudgmental
- Thriving
- Unsure
- Busy
- Thriving
- Prosperous
- Bigger
- I hope for Sparta to be able to attract tourists tour downtown much like West Jefferson.
- Best
- Better
- Destination
- overgrown

- Vibrant foundation
- The Chamber seems to want it to be a playground for tourists
- Thriving
- Growing
- Better
- Improvement
- Dead
- Forgotten
- Thriving.
- Nostalgia
- Unselfish
- Hopeful
- Diverse
- Thriving
- Vibrant
- Main Street full
- Traditional
- Thriving
- Dead
- Continuity
- Evolving
- Growing
- More artsy
- simple
- Peaceful
- Enclave
- Vibrant
- Hopefully we can keep liberals from infesting this area with their cancel culture, constant drama, and condescending behavior
- Beautiful
- Non-commercial
- Activities
- Growing
- enlightened
- Growth
- Inclusiveness
- Laid back
- Hometown
- Focused
- Updated

- inclusive
- Growth
- Vibrant
- Sustainability
- Retirement
- Diversity
- Destination
- The\_same!
- Thriving
- growing
- home
- Vibrant
- Empowered
- vibrant
- Inclusive
- Cohesive
- Destination
- Thriving
- Thriving
- Remains low key, as is, quiet, off the beaten track, home.
- Thriving
- Progressive
- Prosperous
- Growth
- Busier

### **3. Describe Sparta's most unique assets**

- Natural beauty; rural. Friendly people. Health environment; four seasons. Outdoors activities abound.
- Our small town vibe and our people
- Gorgeous scenery, Christmas trees, warm community
- People, shops, restaurants, New River, housing, population size
- Beautiful landscape, people, friendly, young entrepreneurs
- In the mountains
- The people and it's history.
- it's people - artisans
- Clean air, quiet, the wonderful people that live here.
- Serenity, peaceful, closeness, friendly
- Small town charm
- Isolation
- Location



- Environmental beauty
- Small town feel but still has arts, culture, good food and music
- Nature
- Locally owned business
- Beautiful scenery, great climate, fiber optic, access to larger cities, New River, music. Parkway, low crime
- Views, Parkway, New River
- Community
- Proximity to the BRP, Grayson Highlands, VA Creeper Trail, West Jefferson. Great Downtown area. Red Dog Bistro, Muddy Creek and other great restaurants.
- Small town, friendly
- People
- Proximity to BRP
- locals
- Friendly people
- Natural beauty
- People
- The mountains, music, art
- Rural atmosphere with no heavy traffic
- Maybe the new river? Otherwise it's a piece of work.
- High school football
- The Dr Grabow Pipe Factory
- The Blue Ridge Parkway
- Small mtn community with tons of spirit and talent. The city draws the wisdom from the folks in the county.
- Laid back pace of life
- Fairground
- The people. The landscape.
- Mountain environment
- Grounded in history, determined to survive
- The people and feel of stepping back to a simpler time
- People who live here
- The older folks
- Natural beauty
- Unskilled cheap migrant labor.
- The people
- Non-commercialized business, the beautiful landscape
- Beauty, Caring people, Lots of room to grow economically
- Better dining, fun music
- oldtimers
- Breathtaking beauty, unspoiled, resilient and hardworking people, small town America

- Ability to overcome adversity
- No traffic, great music, friendly people, blue ridge parkway, views , open land
- Beautiful scenery and lack of problems big cities have like riots and gang violence
- Small town with a lot to offer
- It's truly beautiful country. I don't know of any place with more natural beauty. That's being displaced by significant deforestation and chemicals and tidy rows in acres and acres of commercial agriculture.
- Nature's beauty
- Beautiful Landscape ; outdoor fun ; Locally owned shops/restaurants ;
- manageable
- The downtown, mountains and rivers
- It's locations and the beautiful blue ridge mountains — and the parkway
- Locals
- Small Town feel. Friendly people
- New River, Blue Ridge Parkway, thousands of acres of protected games lands and conservation easements that need to be opened to the public for recreation and enjoyment, Bullhead State Natural Area (owned by Stone Mountain State Park) that needs to be opened and trails built for recreation and economic development.
- Scenic beauty, home town feel, arts, music
- the scenic beauty
- Small businesses & its people & location
- People
- Location
- Recreation opportunity
- Peaceful and safe
- Potential
- Bluegrass music and the blue ridge parkway
- The local people
- Natural beauty, friendliness, small town charm
- There is such a vibrant arts community that could put Sparta on the map if the resistance to progress can be set aside and the town allowed to grow in presence in the NW NC area. To do that, there needs to be a way for visitors to be able to do more than "pass-through". We need "heads in beds" so revenue stays in Sparta. Small B&B's are nice but we need a place for more than 5-6 couples at a time.
- Arts, agriculture, high-speed infrastructure, community, delicious food!
- There is a bucolic quality to the county but I think people find a attractive.
- local people and artists , Alleghany co has many points of interest
- BRP, farms, community, festivals, and people striving to make Sparta
- Small town atmosphere. Friendly people
- Size,location,Future opportunities
- outdoor amenities
- Large proportion of Independently owned businesses—restaurants, shops, music halls, breweries, etc.

- That almost everything is locally owned. The restaurants are of the community and serve us. The businesses here are independent and can determine their own best model.
- New River, Blueridge Parkway, artists, Christmas trees, Pumpkins
- View
- It's beauty, the parkway, our rivers, our new Main Street, our unique businesses, our Christmas trees, tranquil surroundings
- Low key, quiet, off the beaten track
- New river
- Small town charm
- Local restaurants
- Room to grow, healthcare, schools, fiber/broadband, mountains and views, near Parkway,
- Caring people

#### **4. If you could bring any cultural amenities/activities to Sparta, what would they be?**

- The "Music on Main" events are very popular. I hope it can return with success.
- Vegetarian restaurant, glassblowing, music venue
- Hispanic and Indigenous peoples samples of culture. And way more inclusivity of LTBTQ community.
- No answer
- More music
- Education
- Outdoor movies
- concert venue/community center with space for children's activities
- None
- Beach music
- Music festivals
- Promotion of mountain heritage (music,food)
- Music, theater, and art classes.
- Walmart
- Child friendly amenities
- A carnival/fair
- Art and music
- A multi purpose Broadway Theater venue, art museum, movie theater, small group workshops that offered adult lectures or learning opportunities that could fluctuate year round. Example: craft skills, learning a foreign language. Painting, wood working, furniture or cabinet refinishing, gardening, landscaping, fly fishing, dancing. A community garden spot for those who are not farmers or landowners but would like to grow fresh vegetables that thrive here..
- More music and art
- Nicer fast food chains, something more for children to do.
- More festivals, live music.
- Symphony twice a year

- Improve library management
- Artist enclave at old Dr Graybow factory
- short track racing/ mud trucks/ go carts beach festival at the fairgrounds
- Arts and music is a natural backbone
- Steakhouse
- More outdoor activities
- Theater and more concerts
- Civic center, trails/greenway close to downtown, sidewalks from downtown to the library, more quality daycares, movie theater
- More activities for kids and homeschool groups
- Movies , shopping
- More diverse dining options
- Live plays and reenactments of current and prior folklore.
- None. Don't try and make it like Raleigh etc.
- Walking trail, better use of fairground area
- More live music jams
- Diversity
- Love the music, food, beverages, and art- keep it going
- A Theater. More musical events
- Continue the music
- There's already a wonderful culture/heritage in Sparta; music, farming and southern hospitality
- Asian/eastern
- Offer choices that are appropriate for the under 60 crowd.
- Jobs, daycares, middle school
- A movie theater/drive in movie theater
- More outdoor activities (such as rope courses, climbing walls, etc.)
- A 200 seat real theater
- "art" movie theater. . . . non-blockbuster movies
- Mountain heritage academy that taught crafts, music, cooking, farming techniques etc.
- Cinema, literary events, bookstore
- More music, art instruction
- Monuments to confederate soldiers, a pregnancy center to help low income pregnant women, wildlife rescue center
- More food!!! Community sports/activity leagues; variety of music; creative experimental art venue (for example a free collective performance space for kids and adults alike to be able to practice art and creative skills, communally, that might not fall into the existing umbrella and spaces.. maybe not bluegrass focused...) (aka the town should buy farmers hardware building, turn the back into apartments and let the front be a creative space that the community turns into what they want it to be.. could have pop up venues, events, etc)
- Working traditional farms, something with Appalachian historical way of life feel.

- Spiral walk, Inclusive attitude for all spiritual beliefs
- Native American / Irish
- dinner theatre
- None
- Pride festivities and mental health awareness
- Antique stores
- Already in place
- Movie theater. Even if it were second run films.
- Roof top bar, winery, fine dining
- more variety of restaurants and more entertainment
- Interactive education Museums, festivals, anything for children and teens. A theater would be amazing or shopping center with clothing stores. We use to have these things so it would be good to see them again.
- A Theater
- More restaurants
- Trail opportunity
- Putt putt (mini golf) , splash pads, laser tag, escape rooms , etc
- Restaurant
- Film, a core arts center
- A central Arts/Cultural facility would be a great way to bring folks to our town. A place where art is not only displayed but produced. Where there could be studios and classrooms for artists to set up and teach with a great deal of collaboration between the various media.
- We moved here during the pandemic, so haven't really gotten to experience all that Sparta has to offer in terms of the music and arts scene. These are things we plan to get involved with, so perhaps I will know more about this in a few months. Right now I'd say I wish for more things (outside/inside) for our children to do.
- More hiking and off-road bicycling trails near town.
- more year round activities for locals and tourist
- more music festivals, heritage festivals, get more people interested in the museum, housing, more apartments, more LOCAL businesses that are open on a regular basis.
- Music and cinema
- Performing arts center
- winery/brewery, fine dining, nightlife
- Art Walk, Running trails, greenway,
- Something to introduce more world culture, geography, and history
- Music festivals
- Real American History
- Any diversity would be great!!!!
- None
- Splash pad for kids



- Something to bring different cultures together whatever that looks like
- Ethnic food
- More use of the fairgrounds, rodeos, fairs and more sporting events like travel teams
- Trees(Christmas trees) on Main Street with benches

**5. What amenity should be a priority to create/develop in Sparta? For example, a restaurant/brewery, cultural center, daycare, etc.**

- Hometown hardware store.
- Music venue with regionally known artists
- A place for teens to do something.
- Outdoor pool and indoor track. More activities for children and families
- Shops
- Better education
- Downtown Apartments/Condos on Main Street.
- agricultural center
- Grocery store
- Steak house, more quality daycare
- Antique stores, breweries
- Brewery; kids recreation center/skating rink; greater access to New River; 4x4 off-road park
- Lodging
- Something for kids to do . Better restaurants
- Walmart
- Activity center for children (arcade, mini-golf, roller skating, things like that)
- Hardware store turned into apartments
- More and better daycares, places for young adults can come together in a safe place and more fun things for younger kids
- First more local health care. One major hold back is the need to go down the mountain for anything of a serious nature. Another grocery store option like an Ingles or Publix. Needs to be more restaurants that are a good night out destination, a donut shop, another microbrewery, maybe a wine bar downtown. A child care center. Something that would draw teens. Culture center as referenced in the previous answer. Another hotel. Maybe a boteque one.
- Cultural Museum open 7 days per week
- Daycares, stores, better fast food, another grocery store, and something year round for children to do! Skating ring, animal rescue center, something!!
- Hotel. Laundromat.
- Cultural center maybe added to museum to be opened everyday
- Update and fill empty buildings with businesses.
- JOBS, anything that creates jobs. Alleghany population is 1/2 of Ashe and 1/5 of Surrey and Wilkes.
- multi purpose indoor arena,
- Restaurant and retail

- Performances at the auditorium
- Good paying jobs
- After school programs
- Trail/greenway
- Homeschool groups and sports
- Grocery store
- More childcare facilities
- More manufacturing jobs
- Civic center to host various activities. Performance Center for drama, plays, and various other activities. Drive in theater for downtown.
- Don't try and make it like Raleigh etc.
- Downtown culture center
- Cultural center
- Cultural center
- Assure infrastructure is sound to support growth in tourism
- More restaurants, activities for children
- Daycare- roller skating?
- Keep Sparta as it was; simple, laidback, friendly. You can go anywhere else if you're not interested in a "down home " lifestyle
- Filling stores on Main Street
- Businesses that don't shut down at 8pm or shut down for months during winter. Not everyone in Sparta is an octogenarian or poor. I'd like things to do locally but I am forced to go to Winston Salem, Greensboro, Hickory, Boone etc for activities, nightlife. Along with me goes my disposable income.
- Jobs, daycares, middle school
- A pool/splash pad or anything for kids/teenagers
- Brewery, nice restaurant, and nice hotels, also nice stores where can buy Mtn attire (esp in Winter)
- A theater
- hiking trails but I suspect that ship has sailed as they sold the land deeded for that
- The shopping choices are very limited. Food lion is always busy, could use a second grocery store. Physicians are limited as well. Most people look for the basics when considering where to live - education, shopping and doctors.
- Cinema, cultural center
- Cultural center for art
- Pregnancy network
- Restaurants
- To lure people in? Outdoor activities, like a water recreation area (no more restaurants... we suck at that). To keep the residents you have? Real jobs with generous living wages.
- Dog park, skating rink (roller and/or ice), mini golf
- Desperate need of Child Care facility ; Event Ctr/Cinema ; More indoor activities for long Winters
- A consistent, cute look for the entire town from city limit to city limit.

- Nothing
- Spaces for young adults to hang out, pottery classes
- Outlet stores
- None
- An anchor retail business like a Mast General Store.
- winery, fine dining
- restaurants
- Grocery stores are a must, we only have one at the moment. It would be great to see more healthy dining restaurants that cater to people with diabetes, gluten allergies, or any food allergy. After school location for teens to be creative, hang out, study, and for mentorship opportunities.
- More affordable housing
- We need “so many things for our youth”. We literally only have the pool that only open half the time...if we don't invest in our youth we are destined to fall away .
- Restaurant/ Daycare/ People to work.
- Cultural center, entertainment, street scenes, affordable housing, apartments
- Again, in order to have a lasting effect on travelers, in conjunction with the Arts Center, a Boutique Hotel needs to be incorporated into the plan.
- Something with children at the core. I'd love a multipurpose family-oriented center. Day care wouldn't be bad, art lessons/STEAM activities would be awesome, with a combination of things to do in summer outside and winter inside.
- Nothing comes to mind.
- after school care that blends homework, the arts, local field trips for our youth.
- cultural center would be interesting. Winery, and housing or studio apartments.
- Spectacular Main Street with a variety of local venues and stores
- Cultural development center
- entertainment venues
- Day care and Indoor activities for kids (climbing wall, ping pong, basketball court)
- Cultural center
- Sporting goods store to support what hopefully will be an ever growing outdoor recreation scene
- Cultural center
- Dog park, would love to see a drive in or small theater of some sort, a miniature golf course... all things for our kids and family but great ways to bring more people here. Also be great if someone could buy Farmers and make it similar to a Mast General store or something else the community could benefit from instead of sitting empty in main street deteriorating and remaining an eyesore
- Athletics for the community
- Mass general store with normal (not income based) apartments over top on Main Street
- Outdoor swimming pool for summer restaurants open on Sundays
- Youth activity center/ for families & kids
- Housing
- Jobs( they should be technology based) to attract young families to stay here.

#### **6. What area(s) of Sparta would be eligible locations for this new amenity? Name the area/building/neighborhood.**

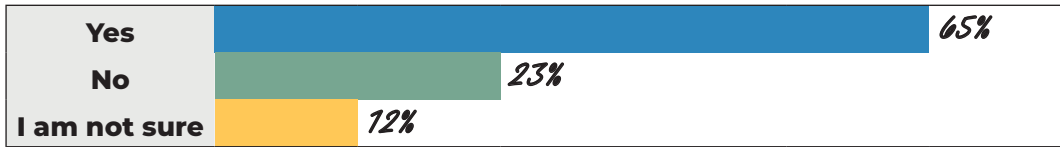
- Sparta School Community auditorium should be used as a music venue, theater venue and community cultural event center.
- Farmers Hardware
- Bowling alley
- Main St, bypass
- Main street
- High school and community college
- At the park or football field
- the fairgrounds is an under-developed jewel. A couple of additional buildings which could be used to expand the agricultural flavor of the area, would go a long way toward attracting more business
- The old Lowes grocery store
- Farmer's Hardware building, empty stores on main
- Main street. Old hardware store in particular
- Downtown
- Old farmers building
- Downtown Sparta, Ennice, Glade Valley
- Downtown
- Need more things near laurel springs and piney creek
- The entry to the town around the bridge area must be improved. It spoils the first image of Sparta as you approach the town. Do something with the property on the Ballpark side of Craves ...the trashed up property with garbage, mattresses in the yard, old vans and tall old white stucco building and house off Southside next to Bledsoe creek and the Little River. What is now an embarrassing eyesore with garbage all over the yard, old vans, a huge flat bed truck always crammed full of garbage year round, old furniture and beer cans, and a fairly new above ground white pipe running from the house across the street dumping who knows what into the creek that feeds into the River...all could be turned into a beautiful restaurant, gallery, boutique hotel or welcome center into Sparta, overlooking both the creek and Little river. Widen Southside and there is a large strip of beautiful property with trees and a natural setting that cries for a place to relax, enjoy the river and it is in close proximity to town.
- Farmer's Hardware
- In Sparta and it's surrounding open lots
- On the main st strip.
- Please work to fill empty store fronts on Main. Attractive displays could fill empty store windows. It would be nice to see every spot welcoming as you walk down the new sidewalks.
- Main and side streets.
- Old Farmers Hardware needs to be utilized and old water tower ( eye sore) needs to be removed
- Farmers hardware building,
- Downtown
- Already there

- Farmer's Hardware building
- Schools
- Near high school or near Crouse Park
- Anywhere. We have nothing here for the kids.
- Old Lowe's building
- Piney creek
- Glade creek
- Sparta
- Roaring gap
- Location would need to definitely located downtown on main Street for full marketing exposure throughout the region.
- None
- Old Farmers Hardware, downtown
- Alleghany jam house!
- Downtown Sparta
- County roads, bridges, river access
- Farmer's Hardware
- Civic center behind subway
- Bring back the Farmers Hardware type store, Smithy's with a diner in the back.
- Main Street
- Main street
- City limits
- Crouse park, the old Farmer's Hardware building
- Old Farmer's Hardware on Main St., Old Sparta Restaurant, land outside of town limits, but near town; Trojan Village has lots of opportunities
- Downtown
- Peachbottom Ridge trail
- Heritage academy could be on a small farm outside the city limits.
- Sturdivant house
- Somewhere near the parkway to draw travelers
- Somewhere downtown
- Refurbish and fill all the empty building before building new ones. Especially the empty farmers hardware building, soap opera building, and others on and surrounding Main Street.
- Any of the river areas, even if it's already a campground. Add pools, and controlled wave pools, controlled rafting experiences, water park kind of feel, a well as quieter, more natural areas to wade, swim, or just observe. Picnic areas, a well as great dining facilities.
- Farmers hardware, Soap Opera (hill for mini golf), Veterans park for fenced Dog park, Crouse Park for spiral walk
- not sure of any available facilities that is not owned by Miles
- The whole town.
- None



- Muddy Creek, Mangum, Beccas, Laconia
- Utilize the Farmers Hardware building
- Bypass
- None
- Former Farmer's Hardware building. But that will cost millions to purchase and remodel. Either the Soap Opera building or the former BP station across the street could be purchased, razed, and a building built for what it would take to purchase and refurbish the former Farmer's Hardware.
- Old Farmers Hardware, at main stop light in Sparta
- Main street
- Trojan Village for a second grocery store, great place for a restaurant is Farmers Hardware as the building is vacant and on Main Street.
- Farmer's Hardware
- Main Street
- Intersection of North Sparta Parkway & Hwy 21 and Hwy 18 North across from Darr St.
- Glade valley, Village park facility, Alexander hall, former blue ridge school facility, former laurel springs school
- There are 9.5 acres fronting Main Street that is zoned commercial and has been for sale for over 10 years. The 4 houses on the Main St frontage are beyond 'adaptive reuse' but a 100 room hotel replacing them, specifically designed to appear as if it had been here since the town was started could provide the lynch pin to other development. The property goes all the way to the back street where new housing...town homes, condos, apartments could be constructed. I can provide more information on this project.
- There is that great large building right on Main St. that is empty! It could be an awesome location for this sort of thing. Also, the location/proximity to Crouse Park is fab--use of the park isn't a bad idea, too.
- Put something in the farmer's hardware building
- old Farmer's Hardware building and the parking lot, Old Lowes Food store, Old Pines Resturant on hwy 21N
- The old Farmers Hardware.
- Main street
- College,library area
- downtown
- Additions to Alleghany Wellness Center and old Farmers store
- Soap opera, old BP area
- Farmers Hardware could house sporting goods and old fashioned country hardware store possibly more.
- Old laurel springs school house
- Farmers Hardware and it's large parking area. Dog park would be great at one of our parks. Soap Opera location for other.
- The county
- Farmers hardware
- Not sure
- Old farmers hardware store
- Any empty buildings, where Soap Opera bldg is, Farmers Hardware
- By offering tax breaks to businesses that will use existing buildings In Alleghany county.

**7. Have you, or someone you personally know, struggled to find appropriate housing in Sparta?**



**8. What type of housing is most needed in Sparta? Select all that apply.**

Single Family Homes	51
Multi-family Homes (i.e. apartments)	44
Townhomes	31
Duplexes	10
Subsidized Housing	17
Housing Units for Rent	56
Housing Units for Sale	28
None of the Above	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>

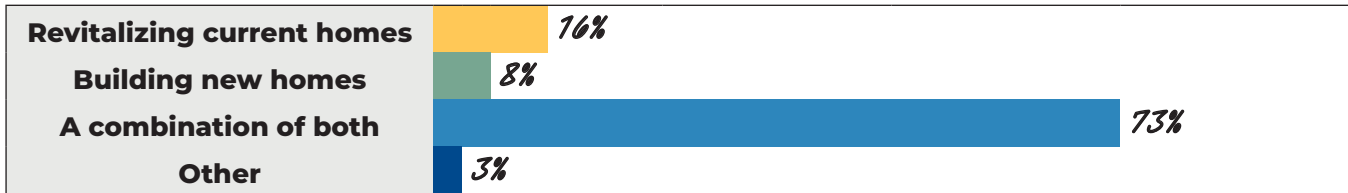
**9. Historically, what are the major challenges related to housing in Sparta?**

- Pricing, affordability.
- Not enough inventory and not enough new homes being built
- Not sure, maybe monetary.
- Not enough for demand
- Inventory
- Rent is too high
- Not enough affordable rentals
- I own my own home, so am only aware of the rental shortage by what I hear
- People won't cheap housing and that is not needed that's what brings communities down.
- Suitable land
- Availability
- None
- Affordable housing. Short term lodging.
- Nothing to buy or rent
- Not available
- Lack of rental opportunities

- Low paying jobs and people unwilling to work to get ahead
- Bad landlords and not enough housing for middle class and lower class families
- No zoning. Helter skelter building, loads of properties in or near town full of rusting junk cars, access to city water, sewer and affordable heating options.
- Availability
- Very old outdated houses
- No rentals, low inventory.
- I live in county, so an not sure about town.
- Spectrum of housing to fit many family needs.
- Jobs to afford housing
- Folks with higher paying jobs have moved to the area, which has driven housing prices up
- Lack of
- Too many non-working tenants
- Available affordable housing
- Finding rental units that are nice but reasonable
- No available homes to rent besides subsidized. Homes for sale are either really big and expensive or very small and old. Nothing inbetween.
- As of this year, everything's selling so fast is locals can't even find a house to rent for a 3 person family.
- No upkeep
- Most rentals are listed with HUD. alot of people do not qualify for HUD.
- Quality of housing.
- Good rentals
- Low income
- Income
- Not enough apartments
- Accessible housing
- Lack of move in ready inventory.
- Refurbishing the abandoned farms & houses
- Quality of HUD homes is not always good.
- Migrant laborers filling trailer parks or renting run down homes turning them into impromptu land fills. It makes the county look like a giant dump.
- Unsure
- Lack of pet friendly housing, lack of housing for the elderly, and rent that is inappropriately high for our region
- Not enough inventory, very outdated houses
- I don't know
- I have no idea
- Finding rentals is very hard. Homes sell quickly
- Confidence that if you build it they will come
- Don't know
- None that I'm aware of

- N/A, Recently moved here
- Very poor wages
- Rentals
- Pricing / Tax
- Don't know.
- People want it for free
- Nothing small for young adults
- No availability for Middle Income families
- Limited market
- Increased cost of housing due to second and retirement home sales and the lack of economic opportunity for locals to afford.
- Either not nice enough, or too expensive
- we either have housing for low income or it's too expensive for middle income working families
- Income. Most people make below the poverty guidelines set by DHHS and rely on HUDD to assist with rental costs. Finding affordable housing that is available for rent can also be difficult.
- Lack of move in ready homes
- Income
- Seasonal worker renters moving in next to home owners and lowering property value
- Availability
- Affordable
- There is no middle ground in pricing. Housing is very often too expensive or too run down.
- In order to keep working folks here, they need housing they can afford that is convenient to town and easy to maintain.
- Again, haven't been here long, but finding a rental post-earthquake and in this housing market has been insane!
- Recently it's been cost. However the fact that there are not enough people needing housing to support a significantly sized development is a historical issue.
- Locals being able to afford to buy home in Alleghany .
- The rent is overpriced, also there aren't many houses/apartments for rent.
- Affordable and accessible
- quality of supply, midrange price level non-existent
- Quality of housing available, variety—rent vs owning a home
- Not enough clean, up-to-date rental homes.
- Lack of affordable inventory for locals
- Tenants with no respect
- Apartment rental is limited
- Too many summer people
- To many low income housing and to few homes for the first time homes buyers
- Affordability and availability
- Low income
- Cost to build vs. wages
- Again , housing that would appeal to young families.

**10. Do you believe Sparta should focus on revitalizing current homes or building new homes?**



**11. In your opinion, what are Sparta's key workforce industries?**

- Parkdale Mills, NAPCO, Pioneer Eclipse, agriculture/Christmas trees.
- Small businesses - trades, artisans, etc.
- Agriculture, Parkdale Mills, Napco
- Pioneer Eclipse, Magnolia, Bottomleys, School system
- Trades
- Agriculture
- Trees
- seems that restaurants are plentiful. Good service is not.
- Farming
- Service, construction, agriculture
- Christmas trees
- Agricultural
- Christmas trees , pumpkins, truss building.
- Tree farms and produce
- I don't know
- Hospital and magnolia
- Factory and fast food
- Agriculture and tourism
- Agriculture and service
- Napco agriculture magnolia
- Tourism, Agriculture.
- Tree farms, schools and public service
- Evergreens, farming, government/schools, services, retail
- Bottomleys
- Magnolia, then Bottomley farms etc
- Not aware of any. Huge need to gain vibrancy
- Agriculture and agriculture support businesses
- Small businesses
- Agriculture, restaurants, medical



- School system and medical
- Restaurants and factory's, agriculture.
- Bottomleys
- Parkdale mills
- Napco
- Pioneer eclipse
- Bottomley farms
- Manufacturing, craftsmen, crafts women, tourist, wineries, and farming.
- There is none. Too many unemployed welfare recipients
- Restaurant, Bottomley
- Landscaping
- Small business,& restaurants
- Agriculture & service industry
- Agriculture, jobs in the service sector, utilities work, real estate, work in trades
- Napco county
- Tourism
- Unskilled laborers/factory staff.
- Nothing of substance. Why is some of that high tax rate we pay not being spent to market the country better? Bring in some tax revenue to lessen the burden on local residents.
- Laborers
- Real estate, education, retail, healthcare
- Farming, Industrial / factory
- I hate to say it but the Bottomleys
- stupid horrible Christmas tree "farms"
- Agriculture, hospitality, factory
- Agriculture and ag related. Construction and land development
- Farming,
- Agriculture
- Christmas Trees, Textiles, NAPCO
- Bottomley's and food service
- Restaurants
- Manufacturing; Farming
- Not sure there are any.
- Ok
- The school system
- Manufacturing
- Tourism
- Agricultural (beef, Christmas trees, produce), Manufacturing (NAPCO, Parkdale Mills, Pioneer Eclipse), Healthcare (Alleghany Hospital, Home Health)
- Hospital, factories, tree farms

- Manufacturing, government and farming
- Agriculture such as the tree farms, small business makes up the majority part of our economy, and Food Lion, fast-food restaurants.
- Textile
- Chemical
- Education
- Agriculture
- Construction , cosmetology, factories
- Napco, Tri-State Components, Park Dale Mills, lots of smaller businesses
- Magnolia, pioneer eclipse, napco, education and medical
- The building trades, hospitality, NAPCO, Parkdale-Textiles, Health Care-especially Elder Care,
- Agriculture, factory work, higher education, and the ability to work virtually or from home.
- Healthcare
- The school system, the hospital, we need more small companies who could employ 20 or more
- Farms, schools, hospital, banks, and small business
- Retail
- I'm not sure
- manufacturing, tourism based occupations, education institutions
- Pioneer Eclipse, Magnolia, School, Hospital
- Small business ownership, trades, agriculture, municipal/county (schools)
- Agriculture, trades, broadband/remote
- Manufacturing
- Trees, pumpkins, it's a great place to do telework!
- Food service
- Food and office labor
- Construction, factories, service jobs
- Bottomley Farms, Truline Truss,
- Farming
- Small manufacturing and farming

**12. In order to strengthen workforce development within the region, what should Sparta's top priorities be?**

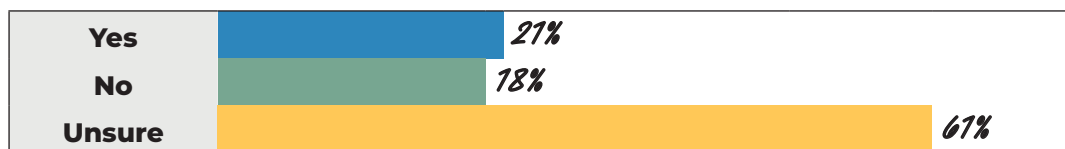
- Vocational classes in the high school and community college; building construction and trades.
- \$15 minimum wage
- Education
- Minimum wage and jobs for teenagers
- Trades, services, arts
- Bring in new organizations
- High School kids
- try to teach the youth a work ethic

- Make the Farmers stronger
- More manufacturers
- Diversity in manufacturing
- Employers that will stay
- Skilled workforce
- Education opportunities as well as industry. Amazon , fed ex , Walmart... all would bring jobs
- Not sure
- Unsure
- Offer new jobs and bring in other business
- Bring in a training school for IT education that offers everything from coding to high level IT Security. You already have fantastic fiber optic internet to support this endeavor. Use it.
- Education and training
- Up pay and benefits
- Try to create more tourism opportunities.
- We need another grocery store to be able to support new industries.
- Develop a base of stores/services to buy local and attract new industries.
- Education expand Wilkes CC campus
- Currently we have more jobs than people, but sadly most of those employers want to pay paupers wages
- Development efforts
- Stop the in flow of meth
- Technical training
- Support for training and internships
- More training for trades with certification and licensing at graduation.
- The children.
- Increase pay and bring new business to area
- Paying living wages.
- Infrastructure, and exposing the city to others outside of NC.
- Quit handing out so much government assistance
- Hire a professional economic development person
- Marketing! And I would like to be a part of it! Joanna L Davis
- Encourage growth
- Evaluate wages
- Vocational education, technology studies
- Stop unemployment payments
- Focus on promoting a simpler way of life than bigger towns & cities; people want a place to go that reminds them of their childhood
- Recruiting outside business
- Jobs that do not involve illegal immigration or serving food in a brown paper bag. There are enough Guatemalans and more than enough fast food induced heart disease in Allegheny County.
- Preserving the youth of the community
- Decrease unemployment, create more jobs in healthcare, create more remote jobs, create opportunities for work based learning, provide a mentor to teach employability skills

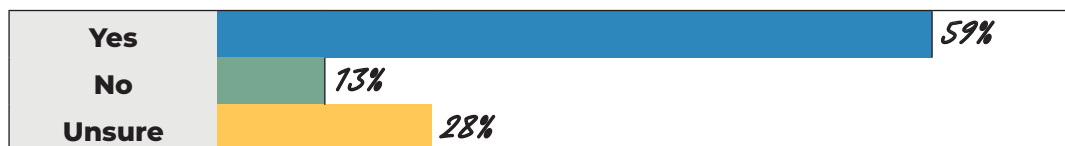
- Need to look for what will bring people to the area long-term to support sustainable economic growth. Consider things such as higher education schools (veterinary school, global health program, etc.). It is IMPERATIVE that this happen in order for real economic sustainability.
- Marketing the internet
- Community center suitable for workers from countries with Zocalos/plazas
- Be more accommodating to industries that want to come to Sparta
- Trade careers like plumber, electrician, machine repair and maintenance.
- New industry
- Preserve and respect the values of the native population. Do not strive to bring in outsiders who disrespect the culture or values of those who have been living here all of our lives. We are by and large a conservative and kind community. We do not want the violence, hatred, race baiting, the far left brings or any of their other baggage.
- Commuter bus, support for current business and employees to ensure long term, capable and reliable workers
- Paying a realistic living wage. Personally, my family is FINE, but the majority are not.
- Be like West Jefferson - more shops, fully open on both weekend days for visitors (ie, don't close up on Saturday at 3pm)
- Jobs
- Better education.
- Retaining younger people
- More resources and support to high school and college bound students
- Trained Educated Work Force
- Tourism
- Mentor programs with the local high school and community college. Pay the students and the businesses a small stipend to allow students to follow workers, managers, bosses, and entrepreneurs around for a defined period and help them understand the priorities of working in that industry. Have the students on a rotation through several businesses. They wouldn't be there to work necessarily, but to observe a local business from all aspects (janitorial to executive) and help them understand their possible roll in that, or similar, business.
- Produce workforce opportunities
- attracting good workers
- Jobs and housing
- Expand the community college
- Focus of affordable housing
- Better pay and treatment for factory workers and a concentration for our youth in vocational training schools
- Bring in more people
- Trades trading, strengthen central source for training and employment opportunities
- Education for all of the above workforce, HOUSING.
- I love the business development center concept. It's awesome that there are so many opportunities right in that one place! I think continuing to build on the strong tech infrastructure could/might grow this area so it's on the map as a place to house more small businesses and tech with a fairly low overhead cost.

- Mentorship programs
- job opportunities that offer onsite training, places to pay a good salary that might support a single parent with 3 kids, jobs that support after school day care for families
- Training
- Shopping options
- Education, access to internet classes
- focused workforce education that aligns with current needs
- Telework for career pathways that allow folks to access living wages while working in this region, Healthcare to manage aging population
- Integrating the immigrant community in other industries besides farming. Continuing education, Business classes, technology education
- Expand on our broadband infrastructure, remote working, call centers, etc
- Home Ec that identifies and teaches credit
- Progression, diversity, people come here for our slow relaxing nostalgic lifestyle... we need to feed that more but ensure there's plenty of work opportunities, places to live, and things for people of all ages to enjoy.
- Non factory jobs; no nepotism
- Training the younger generations and providing better competitive pay
- Bring more jobs to our area
- Full time pay with benefits
- Getting workers here, keeping people here with a living wage
- Attract technology that be maned by students from our community college

**13. Are there any resources for high school students wanting to pursue careers with Sparta's key industries/top employers?**



**14. Should Sparta create an incentive program for current and/or prospective residents?**





**15. If you answered “Yes” or “Unsure” to the last question, what incentive(s) do you believe would draw prospective residents and/or support current residents to Sparta? Choose your top two.**

<b>Relocation expenses</b>	13
<b>Housing Stipend (Rent or Mortgage)</b>	10
<b>Student Debt Repayment</b>	22
<b>Discounted or free co-working/office space</b>	18
<b>One-time cash payment (ex. \$10,000)</b>	8
<b>Start-up capital for a new business (ex. \$10,000)</b>	30
<b>Business Development Advising</b>	13
<b>Recreation Package (free passes/vouchers to state/national parks and outdoor activities)</b>	29
<b>A combination of some of these options</b>	43
<b>Other</b>	5
<b>None of the above</b>	7
<b>Total</b>	198

**16. Which companies/organizations (public and private) should be involved in this region’s comprehensive workforce development strategy?**

- Wilkes Community College, county government, and local employers.
- Question unclear
- The town of Sparta
- Not sure
- WCC, Alleg. Co. Schools, homebuilders assoc., young entrepreneurs - Jennifer Swenk, Brandon Edwards, Katlyn Miller
- All of them
- Do not try to make Sparta any bigger than it is , just focus on what is already there and enhance it's quality's.
- the county commissioners should be left out of it. There seems to be a divide among the commissioners, with a few seeking progress and a few wanting to stay in the 1950's. There needs to be less of a “good ole boy” network around here to allow for progress.
- Any of them that pay taxes
- Government

- Not sure
- County Business Development
- A combination of public and private along with representatives from secondary and post secondary education.
- Walmart, Amazon, fed ex big Corp to encourage them to come to the area
- Unsure
- Unsure
- Unsure
- State, County, City and companies/ businesses which need more employees and or more skilled or educated employees than are currently available locally.
- All industries
- ?
- Unsure. Chamber of commerce?
- Unsure
- Search for talent and experience in the community beyond the typical list of people that serve on boards.
- The top 6-8 employers
- WCC, and AHS, and The Educational Foundation,
- Chamber
- Stop giving people everything and they will want to work. We have jobs here.
- Unknown
- All industry, restaurants, farmers
- County and town government, chamber, school system
- Any
- Bottomleys
- Unsure
- Local successful businesses, seek advise from other successful cities in similar size, local and state politicians. We all need to have skin in the game of success.
- None
- Invite all people that live in Alleghany county. That will help you decide who is willing to step up and make this county what it can accomplish. Things have got to change or we are headed downhill. Be accepting of new ideas.
- The chamber!
- Lowes, mast store, others
- Big business farms, schools, construction
- Wilkes Community College, construction companies
- Be sure private business owners are part of this
- Farmers/landowners, long-time residents, someone who can help keep Sparta authentic & not commercial
- Town, County, county family physicians

- The list of real businesses (non service industry, pruning trees...) in Alleghany County is not large so start with that.
- Unsure
- Alleghany Health, Sparta Candle Company
- Need to really explore sustainable growth areas (not just in farming and factory growth). Need higher income jobs as stated before by looking at bringing higher education to the area, for example. This is the only way some of our key resources are going to survive (such as healthcare). Offer tax breaks for new businesses (both small and large).
- I don't know
- don't know
- Unsure
- Alleghany Writers has proven their ability to raise standards in reading, writing, and critical thinking to improve quality of workforce and community overall.
- Not sure
- Unsure
- Current businesses, serious prospective businesses that fit the community, unemployed or unsatisfied community members, relevant organizations
- All of them!
- Chamber of Commerce, City Council, County Commissioners, Arts Council
- BDC ; County Commissioners ; Wilkes Comm College
- All
- The Chamber
- Wilkes Community College
- Pioneer Eclipse
- County departments
- Alleghany High School, Wilkes Community College and any willing participant business.
- Napco, Magnolia, Alleghany High School, Napco
- area manufacturers, education groups, and local government
- Blue Ridge Development Center, Blue Ridge Electric, Appalachian Helath, Alleghany County Schools, Wilkes Community College, Alleghany Public Library or NWRL (Northwest Regional Library), Alleghany Chamber of Commerce
- Community College
- All industry
- Local Govt
- School system
- Chamber of commerce
- The Chamber of commerce
- Chamber, community college, business associations, hospital, schools, major enoloyers
- Town of Sparta, Chamber, School Board, NAPCO, Parkdale, ARTS Council,
- I'm not sure of any who aren't already involved. I love that you sought public opinion/perception! This is great!

- Schools, county government, community college, all the major employers.
- federal, state and local monies should be used to help bring in people
- Alleghany Chamber, and Town of Sparta
- Chamber and advisory committee
- Chamber, college, schools
- County, Town, Education Institutes (county and community college systems), industries
- Someone/entity that can help guide the process of growth—encouraging smart growth so that a sense of community and authenticity is preserved.
- I don't know
- Skybest, blueridge energy, Wilkes community college, Alleghany high school, Alleghany county government, Town of Sparta government
- GE, Parkdale, NAPCO
- Unsure
- None; it should be the people
- Town, county and private business owners
- Not sure
- Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce
- Chamber, schools, college, Bottomley's, NAPCO, Truss Companies
- Education—state and federal grants to train more people in new technologies to attract more businesses—remote jobs have come to the forefront because of covid

# PUBLIC *Survey* RESULTS

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**West Jefferson, North Carolina**



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***note: responses have not been edited for grammar/spelling errors to maintain their integrity.***

**1. If you could describe your current perspective of West Jefferson as a community in ONE word, how would you describe it?**

- Great
- Unique
- Wonderful
- Intact
- Beautiful
- Invested
- Charming
- unsure.
- Behind
- Divided
- Led
- Family
- Partitioned
- growing
- United
- Friendly
- Caring
- short-sighted
- idyllic
- Energized
- creative
- Vibrant
- Tourist
- nice
- Divided
- Thriving
- Charming
- Welcoming
- Cliques
- Growing
- Beautiful
- Maturing
- Growing
- Fantastic
- Fractured
- Growing
- wholesome
- Lost

- Tourism
- Rural
- Family
- Welcoming
- Energetic
- Becoming
- Tourist town
- Peaceful
- Thriving
- Division
- Tourism
- Lacking
- Touristy
- Friendly
- Touristy
- Vibrant
- Awful
- Touristy
- Vital
- Growing
- Charming
- Growing
- Growing
- Vibrant
- wonderful
- Charming
- Tired
- Quaint
- Quaint
- Welcoming
- Peaceful
- Friendly
- An OK place
- Semi-quiet
- Everchanging
- vibrant
- Growing
- Happening
- Pleasant
- Pleasant

- Friendly
- Welcoming
- Trump-y
- Mayberry
- small
- Tourism
- Quaint
- transitioning
- Growth
- Diverse
- Close
- Tourism
- Friendly
- Outdated
- Vibrant
- Transitional
- Hometown
- Safe

**2. If you could describe your long-term vision (25 years from now) for West Jefferson in ONE word, how would you describe it?**

- Strong
- Consistant
- Thriving
- Flourishing
- Refuge
- Progression
- Prosperous
- more opportunities.
- Behind
- Cohesive
- Thriving
- Family
- Welcoming
- destination
- Prosper
- Expanded
- Amenity driven
- quaint
- destination



- Vibrant
- Transformation
- Active
- Community
- active
- Growing
- Thriving
- Rural
- Amazing
- Quaint
- Booming
- Fantastic
- Balanced (not too many tourists that residents are inconvenienced)
- Thriving
- Responsive
- Prosperous
- Inclusive
- sustainable
- Prosperous
- Flourishing
- Diverse
- Affordable
- Inviting
- Diversity
- A haven for the arts and a distinctive Appalachian Community.
- Pigeon forge
- Nice park along one of our streams with access to fishing and festivals much like Lansing park. snd
- propherous
- United
- Thriving
- Development
- Uncertain
- Safe
- Caring
- Sustainable
- Too many out of towers
- Family
- Central
- small-town
- Destination

- Loving
- Prosperous
- Maintain current vibe and expand/connect to outdoor adventure in county
- crowded
- Inclusive
- Remade
- Thriving
- I don't expect to be alive in 25 years
- Positive
- Growth
- Sustainable
- Still held back by old views/thinking of town leaders
- Bigger
- Busy
- close knit
- Rural
- Better
- Remain pleasant for all ... local and outsiders
- Growth
- Stability
- Diversity
- Mayberry
- small
- Lively
- Destination
- blowing rock
- Potential
- Potential
- Opportunities
- Managed tourism
- Thriving
- Progression
- Progressive
- Thriving
- Community
- Friendly

### ***3. Describe West Jefferson's most unique assets***

- Location, Downtown area, residents
- The businesses that keep the town sustainable bring in local community members

- The People, The Beauty, The Arts, The Businesses
- The people always there for each other Safe
- Friendly, Quaint Town. Reminds me of a Norman Rockwell Painting.
- Wherr tradition of the blue ridge melds with the new
- Small town, relatively safe community. Good place to raise a family, however there is not much for younger people to do in terms of recreation.
- Downtown/ mountains/ Wildlife
- None
- It's a small town in which many grew up, and so many have very strong roots here.
- Natural beauty and charm
- Downtown
- Murals and appreciation for local art, walkable streets, multigenerational stores/businesses, mountain views, community events (rod runs, music on the backstreet, Christmas in July, etc.), cheese plant
- small town charm, not as crowded. New River
- Geography, Accessibility, Cultural, Library, Park, Cheese Plant, Frescoes, Mt. Jefferson State Park, Civic Center, Virginia Creeper
- Community partnerships, arts - music, outdoor activities - hiking, fishing, scenery - - not sure how unique all this is from other mountain towns. I guess being known for Christmas in July is unique. Ashe County Cheese is an asset and unique in its own way too.
- Mountains, rivers, small businesses
- surrounding natural beauty, wealth of musical and artistic talent
- Charming presentation of the arts and culture
- charming and diverse downtown community that continues to evolve through revitalization and renewal, enriched greatly by the visual and musical arts and a strong, community-focused public library and neighboring town park; home to a growing variety of customer-friendly retail shoppes; surrounded by the natural beauty of Mount Jefferson, Paddy Mountain, near the New River and associated outdoor amenities to enjoy all four seasons; and a welcoming and caring faith community throughout the downtown area.
- Arts Council, active business leaders, Florence Center, potential for greater biking, hiking and horse riding center, library (perhaps our greatest asset{}
- Its welcoming attitude shown by businesses and year-round residents, the variety of businesses and activities while staying, as much as possible, true to the town and county's roots.
- I can't identify any "unique assets" but assets that are valuable to the town is music on the back street, farmers market, and the coffee shop.
- mountains.. River
- The scenery
- Art, music, location in the beautiful mountains. Climate. Improving restaurants.
- Mountains and people
- Location, Small Business Commitment, Safe, Welcoming, progressive while respecting the past
- Small

- It's people, local loving, welcoming family oriented people.
- Art and Christmas Trees
- Scenery, hiking, New River, arts, music, road connections, airport, cycling, access to Parkway
- Community oriented
- Public art, galleries, welcoming people, pedestrian friendly, attractive
- The land itself
- Appalachian charm, caring people, community.
- WJ's most unique asset is the people.
- Beauty
- Christmas in July, the Cruise Ins, and the other events that take place in downtown WJ. Also, there is a great feeling of community and everyone being welcome.
- Outdoors...New River, Railroad Grade Road. Friendly people.
- It's people
- Small, warm with a variety of resources
- West Jefferson is home to a diversity of shops, art galleries, antique stores, gourmet foods and tasty restaurants. It is also home to the Ashe County Farmers Market, Ashe County Cheese Plant, Craft Beer Brewery and Wine Shops.
- When I first arrived I was impressed with the public art from murals to statuary. That attention to public spaces and the continuing beautification of the town create a beautiful and unique townscape. I am also impressed by local businesses working together to do things such the October scarecrows. Gallery Crawls, various festivals, and free public concerts constantly invite people into the town.
- Location to nature
- Smallness of overall area.
- frescoes, cheese factory, many small businesses, arts council
- The people
- The embrace of mountain life, the love of good food, and the artisans.
- The atmosphere
- Shops, Murals, Restaurants, nice downtown streets.
- Quiet, small, nature, secluded
- Small town
- Walkable, interesting shops (good balance),
- Is the local people
- West Jefferson is completely unique in that we are a close knit community with a strong sense of commitment to our friends, family and neighbors. West Jefferson has so many residents that have incredible talents. Geographically, West Jefferson is unique in that it is nestled at the base of Mount Jefferson. West Jefferson also has unique ties to historical events. The most important asset is our children and the children in the surrounding area with the majority wanting to raise their families here when they get out of college or can find good jobs.
- Vibrant arts community, attractive appearance, open-mindedness
- Small town with active arts community in beautiful setting

- Climate,
- The people, hard working, true, and loving.
- Location
- Healthy downtown
- small town
- Geographic setting, small town feel to downtown, arts community, blended socio-economic population
- The mountains are great, proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway, lack of urban plan, anything goes.
- Safe, walkable, unique shops, art galleries
- I don't live in West Jefferson. I live in Creston.
- setting in the mountains, small population, agricultural heritage
- Small, peaceful town that supports the local arts, shops, and culinary aspects most people look for in today's world. It has a great Saturday Farmers Market featuring local home grown vegetables, honey, meats and many handmade gift items such as handmade knitted shawls, pottery, wood items, etc. They also have maple syrup tapped from this county. The Friday night art crawls are always a hit with locals and tourists alike. A great place to call home.
- Art Scene
- safe place to live compared to most
- Mount Jefferson
- Wj park with "pocohantis" returned to town
- the art scene, friendly people, volunteer activity and some good restaurants and not TOO touristy yet
- Beautiful surroundings
- Art and commerce
- Climate and scenery
- Climate and scenery
- It's people...
- Beautiful mountains, nearby river, hiking trails, art community, library, weather
- Access to nature, small businesses and restaurants, beautiful down town
- The people
- mtns
- Small town feel with opportunities for tourism
- Small town appeal; shopping/dining (but need more dining options); beautiful park; only cheese plant in NC; love the painted murals and all the beautification that has been done over the past few years
- location
- Businesses, Services, Real Estate and People
- Nature of course, the beautiful mountains, the awesome river, the rural farms, unique shopping experiences.
- Beautiful scenery, thriving downtown, close knit community
- Wide sidewalks and places to sit
- Friendly small town with a lot to offer a wide variety of people
- Beautiful landscapes, small town vibes



- The Arts
- Charming downtown with hometown meets some modern luxuries.
- Variety of shops, restaurants, activities and art for locals and tourists
- Easy walking in town

**4. If you could bring any cultural amenities/activities to West Jefferson, what would they be?**

- Concerts
- Business owners with balls and grit to do what is smart and common sense stuff
- A Performing Arts Theatre like the one in Banner Elk that brings in top performers from around the country
- Festivals
- Scenic Railway.
- Festivals that support the heritage of the area
- More Appalachian Heritage in terms of cultural amenities.
- unsure.
- Housing
- PFLAG meetings, and activities for children and youth to interact away from home.
- River walk/greenway connecting the towns, and a modernized community recreation and fitness center with pool
- More downtown events.
- Something for children, that is inclusive of children in the county (not prohibitive in cost). Maybe a space for cultural arts classes and camps or a space for year long recreation (gym?). Something that gets Ashe County kids excited about where they come from and a good reason to stay or come back after college.
- more focus on outdoor activities focused on river/camping and hiking
- Museum
- Enhanced gym facilities, continued annual skateboard event on Mt. Jefferson, film festivals
- Indigenous appreciation
- flex conference/presentation space
- more festivals
- The mountain setting is viewed as a destination or retreat away from the hustle bustle of urban areas. Because of our established presence of the arts and our popular literary festival, could we build upon that growth to provide creative community spaces or events for writers, songwriters and artists to develop new works and over time schedule performance events to highlight such works.
- More music opportunities, more theater - especially aimed at families an younger children
- A bookstore. More author/book readings, especially on the weekends. More affordable art (painting) experiences for local folks to participate in. Themed festivals (similar to the antique fairs, the automobile cruise-ins) on the Back Street.
- Museums, festivals, inclusive cultural experiences/activities. Not only around Appalachian culture but other cultures that are prominent in our population. Such as Hispanic, African American, ect.

- bike trails
- To include more diversity and cultural appreciation. More festivals and public events would be nice to see.
- Guided hikes.
- Better restaurants and more youth activities
- Kid/Family friendly activities, better shopping options, Child Care, better parking
- Putt Putt
- Interactive museum for children & adults
- Music
- Winter activities, spa,
- YMCA or community center
- Sculpture, amphitheater, street musicians
- Youth and young adult venues to keep people local
- Educational expansion
- This gets tricky. When you start bringing in (or even applying labels) to cultural amenities, you run the risk of changing the very thing you're trying to preserve.
- Target, Home Depot, Clothing stores
- I would love to see more festivals, fairs, or other activities.
- Large indoor fitness center like Watauga has. Continue the VA Creeper trail to Lansing
- YMCA
- Increase musical venues
- Concerts
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- Creeper Trail bike path, more access areas to get in and out of the river
- One of the main things our community needs would be activities and inviting spaces for children and youth. The library has done an excellent job providing such activities, but their efforts should be supporting a greater focus on children and youth. In addition to sports, hiking, and time on the river, I routinely hear parents looking for things for their kids to do throughout the year.

- Outdoor activities
- Maybe more festivals.
- expand arts council
- More businesses that cater to locals instead of tourists. Most people travel out of town for certain activities because they don't have them here or they are too expensive for the general public
- Culture is one of our strongest assets, we need infrastructure/services to catch up.
- Concert Venues,
- Blue grass/ country music fest., Grow Christmas in July back to it's former grandeur. A true, December, Christmas festival.
- Live music
- YMCA, daycares,
- More eateries (though vastly improved), live music in public forum
- It's fine the way it is
- I think it would be incredible to create a maker space shop where individuals, young and old, could go to design and build their ideas. I believe this would be a way to encourage entrepreneurship within our community especially for individuals who do not have the machines or shops to do so. For years now, I have wanted to create a maker space lab in a van or trailer and drive to the different communities within Ashe County to encourage individuals to become inventors, artisans and entrepreneurs. I thought the maker space could also host special events based on ages or interests. It could be that if we had a maker space that there might be a way for the individuals to sell their creations in local businesses. I know this is anonymous but I would love to be involved in helping make this possible so my name is Thelma Kastl. I am an engineering, STEM and robotics teacher. I have taught 6th through college. I have done special interest workshops for daycare through 5th grade. Please reach out to me if I can help in any way. An ideal place for this might be the Jefferson Station.
- An indoor performance space in the downtown, a significant Christmas tree in the downtown, more focus on WJ as a Christmas town during the holiday season.
- outdoor theatre & movies
- Food fest
- A museum or visitor center with information about the people who lived here before the Cherokee, and the Europeans who settled here.
- Community facilities
- I think we are good in this area
- nothing
- Expand on the wonderful history museum, expand the arts community, focus more on sustainability (building on the environmental treasures of the region - not exploiting them), encourage diversity of residents and businesses (too many businesses are dominated by one or two families' interests)
- More forward-thinking leaders at the city and county level.

- Gardening/farming help, cultural center learning about Ashe county and Appalachia heritage, what part the railroad that ran through here has to do with it, learn more about the underground railway (helping slaves escape) that happened here, Christmas tree farming, more arts and craft festivals, carnival with rides for the kids, and a section where you can learn about things not close to here, like the ocean, to make kids want to explore the world. Photo opportunities everywhere with a social media campaign as advertisement to our area.
- Music venues and creative writing
- Greenway/trails, recreation center
- I think it is a great little place as it presently is, but do miss the annual Christmas in July which was shut down due to Covid.
- Dance classes
- More Native American
- Opera
- Mountain crafts being taught to future generations
- more variation in types of music-not just blue grass(ex. classical, rock and blues)
- Active agricultural events
- More diverse activities. Different music, art focused on different cultures. An overall more inclusive place.
- Let it roll on its own
- Let it roll on its own
- Live Music
- better live plays and concerts
- I would love to see a wellness space - like for community yoga, dance, etc. And creative space to share hobbies and skills, like photography, Web design, etc. I would like a space that brings awareness to the diversity and history of Appalachia as well as other cultures. This community is in gneral older, insular, and as I said Trumpy. I have no idea how we get people together to just share ideas and be exposed to different perspectives.
- Art and trade schools
- ski
- larger concert venue (like coyote joes in Charlotte, NC), swimming pool, activities for children and young adults
- Indoor sports practice facility for our youth (our weather hurts our middle school/high school teams during the months of March/April/May, which causes our softball and baseball teams to suffer. With moving up to a 3A conference in the coming school year, we need a facility where our athletes can practice even when the weather is bad)
- Would also love to see more AAU/Travel sports tournaments held here. We have a wonderful outdoor complex at Family Central and I don't feel it's utilized to it's full potential....more people traveling into our county = more people eating at our restaurants, shopping with our local stores, and staying in our hotels, which equals more revenue for our county.
- Outdoor community pool.....PLEASE!!!!!! THERE IS LITERALLY NOTHING FOR OUR YOUTH TO DO IN THE SUMMER, and an outdoor, public pool would be amazing.
- More Childcare options, especially during the summer for working parents.



- A large/nice dog park
- something like blue ridge music theater
- Diverse cultural amenities and more events, activities to offer public and tourists
- IBMA, or another type of bluegrass music event, capitalize on the many great musicians here, i.e, Phipps Store brings visitors and musicians from all over
- I think we already have enough cultural amenities and activities.
- More live theater
- More things to do after 7pm or on Sundays
- We lack any cultural amenities/activities so anything would be good! WJ lacks diversity.
- Downtown yoga
- More live music, art in the park, more activities around the farmers market.
- Community center with small theater for plays, comedy, music, a game room and fitness center
- More Backstreet entertainment in the Backstreet stage area

**5. What amenity should be a priority to create/develop in West Jefferson? For example, a restaurant/brewery, cultural center, daycare, etc.**

- Hotel/Restaurant
- I dont know why we need a daycare( we already have one), or cultural center (what the hell is that) , how about we attract business owners with balls and let them do what they do. Its their job to attract customers not some committee or government? AMERICA..... where the hell is it?
- Italian Restaurant, Other restaurants besides burgers and Fine Dining
- More parking
- Parking Deck
- Day care, local rec center with amenities like a pool, workout gym, rock climbing etc,
- Recreational centers! We don't need anymore breweries, galleries, churches or banks. We need activities for younger generations and places to do those activities. YMCA or a similar recreational facility.
- More food options, more daycares, more housing
- Housing
- Daycares! If we have adequate childcare, the workforce will increase, children will have a jumpstart on education, and parents will have support.
- Community fitness/recreation center with pool
- More things for the kids to do
- Although I don't think we can ever have enough good restaurants, a cultural center where folks from Ashe can work and be connected with visitors could grow a greater mutual respect and appreciation for this place. There's a major disconnect between people from here and visitors, neither of which are going anywhere.
- More restaurant choices, more live music, encourage more businesses to stay open LATER. Stop rolling up the streets at night at 9pm.
- Splash Pad
- cultural center or YMCA
- Mini golf, outdoor theater, walking park at least 1 mile loop
- daycare

- cultural center, daycare, upscale condos
- A cultural center ties in well with the emergence of our arts-focused presence in downtown West Jefferson. While we have the Civic Center for performance events, BRAHM in Blowing Rock is a beautiful structure that is home to a variety of impressive art exhibits and also features ample meeting space for special events, including economic and business development. We have limited meeting/conference space available in the West Jefferson area, and this could be a draw for business and organizational retreats. Revenue generation to support such a facility could also be somewhat challenging.
- daycare and center for teens
- A bookstore.
- Affordable housing, Childcare, inclusive family/youth oriented facilities
- daycare
- A better variety of restaurants/night life. Maybe some more museums and family friendly activities also.
- More food restaurants. Fitness center. Pool
- Restaurant and places for youth/ adults to go and have fun
- Daycare and better parking
- Daycare, activities center for children, YMCA, Public Parking
- Young people need activity, focusing on education & life skills.
- Theater, Costco
- More high quality restaurants, brewery in Jefferson, bigger indoor events facility, high quality gym with swimming pool etc., better quality hotels/spa. MORE PARKING, better trash management
- Homeless shelter
- A cultural plan with appropriate staffing and leadership to tie everything together.
- Housing and rec center
- More indoor winter activities for families shopping such as family appropriate shoe stores
- There are restaurants and the Civic Center already. What about more mom and pop B&Bs in West Jefferson?
- Things for young people. Pool, Putt Putt, Skate park
- As someone who has lived in Ashe for most of my life, I would love to see more recreational attractions, such as a bowling alley, skating rink, arcade, place for young adults to gather, etc. There is nothing for people to do besides go to restaurants.
- Large indoor fitness center
- Affordable housing
- Indoor family recreation
- Creeper Trail bike path
- I love the idea of a cultural center, particularly if it includes fun, educational activities for a variety of ages (children through adults and even seniors). This area has so very much to offer including but not limited to history, natural history, Appalachian culture, music, visual arts, performing arts, and crafts. A place where all of these things can be brought together and offered to both our local community as well as tourists would greatly benefit West Jefferson.
- Rv parks
- Route trucks and dumptrucks, etc. away from Jefferson Ave., keeping them on 221.

- a clothing department store, more housing for the elderly
- Affordable Housing. The rental Market is absolutely disappointing. The majority of locals cannot afford a decent place to live due to increasing rent.
- We need Jefferson Avenue open on Sundays. Additional daycare in WJ specifically would be great as Learning Thru Play has a monopoly.
- Restaurants, Concert areas
- I would like to see us work toward getting a YMCA for our young people. Were talking gym/ rec center for the elderly, courts for B-ball etc. and a pool for our young to learn swimming and a place for swim teams.
- YMCA. Should have sports facilities, a pool, and daycare.
- Daycare
- Music venue
- None
- I would love to say more restaurants but I know the need for daycare services is very high. I know that parents of school aged children are in desperate need of affordable and reliable child care, after school and during the summer. From conversations at local businesses, many parents have expressed concern because they are struggling with child care and COVID created additional challenges in the area.
- A craft center/museum for the Christmas tree industry with photographs of trees that have gone to the White House, information about Fraser firs, maps, etc. (No, I am not part of the tree industry. I just think it's remarkable.)
- amphitheater
- Live theatre
- A day care, not just for pre school, but for school age children also.
- Care for the homeless. There are more homeless people in Ashe County than people realize.
- Multi-use park
- Affordable housing, additional parking
- restaurant
- A quality Appalachian cultural center that partners effectively with the history museum, ASU Appalachian studies department, and the arts community.
- Publix
- Upgraded parks, rock wall climbing, YMCA, trampoline & gymnastics, more for children to want to stay and not move away after high school. Expansion of WCC in Ashe County for learning trades if you can't afford 4 yr college. Better daycare and after-school childcare options. And biggest for adults is more restaurants chain and non chain (not fast food)
- Bigger hospital
- Greenway
- More restaurants
- More for younger people to do...putt putt course, swimming pool, etc.
- Breweries, more non tourist business
- IHOP
- Additional day care centers, more parking, return of stoplights, ice cream store walk-dont walk signs
- I think good day care is always crucial to any working town and there is an ongoing effort to develop the cultural arts center in Lansing, which I hope will succeed. We need a GOOD Italian restaurant and maybe a Thai/Indian restaurant. We have several bar food restaurants.

- Daycare
- Daycare center
- See above
- See above
- Cultural Center
- An excellent Italian restaurant
- Creative space for skills development and cultural exchange
- Culinary trade school
- large resort
- Larger concert venue (like Coyote Joes in Charlotte, NC)
- Indoor sports practice/tournament facility for our youth/athletes....SO NEEDED!!!
- Outdoor Public Pool
- More childcare facilities/options
- Dog Park
- parking
- Restaurants, Shopping Stores, Big Chain Stores
- More restaurants would be good.
- We don't need anymore breweries, restaurants, or shops. We need daycare centers and more affordable housing for families and senior citizens. We also need more activities that cater to our youth and teens.
- More parking!
- Dog park
- More recreational centers for youth is crucial to combatting the many issues with youth in WJ, there is nothing for kids to do!
- Upscale dessert and coffee bar
- Daycare for town employees!
- Affordable daycare, reuse or replacement of jefferson station
- A location for visitors and locals to see photos (from years past), possibly some type of history - either vocal (on tape...press a button) AND/OR a daily tour by some type of vehicle (example is Key West)

**6. What area(s) of West Jefferson would be eligible locations for this new amenity? Name the area/building/neighborhood.**

- 221/163 intersection
- How deep are your pockets..... everything for sell for the right price. I feel a-lot of socialist motives with the structure of these questions
- Performing Arts would be great across the street from movie theatre in the huge furniture store if that came available. We also need a drive in theatre.
- Downtown
- The old tobacco warehouse area
- Lage plot of land off N Jefferson ave just beyond down town
- Old Lowe's Foods, Jefferson Station, Ashemont building, etc

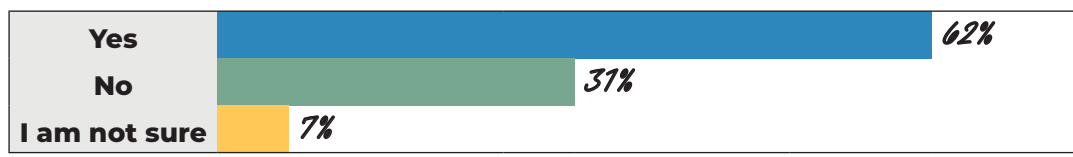
- Jefferson or west jefferson or Glendale springs
- West Jefferson
- Glendale Springs; Warrentsville; Lansing
- Empty lot downtown where the old funeral home was or the empty lot between the Methodist church and library/park
- A bigger Parks and Rec building that is actually focused on the children
- Jefferson Station is a great location and is currently hardly in use. West Jefferson school would also be great if it was renovated.
- old warehouses, vacant businesses downtown
- West Jefferson Park
- Not sure about areas in WJ . . . there are more possibilities in the county at large
- Beaver creek, 163
- Jefferson Station
- West Jefferson condos within a walking distance
- Jefferson Station (areas of that structure) would be ideal and convenient for attendees to explore the downtown area (restaurants, shoppes, galleries).
- area near New River Brewing and over to West Jefferson Elementary
- Downtown West Jefferson, next to Bohemia or next to Sweet and Savory, or on the Back Street near the steps going up to the library. Attaching a bookstore to a coffee shop/restaurant is an excellent draw for visitors and locals.
- Jefferson Station
- between towns
- West Jefferson. Jefferson station.
- Jefferson station.
- Area near the Ford place or Walmart area
- Jefferson Station, Hale's tire (ugly corner), Warehouses on Long Street
- Between Smokey Mtn BBQ and Holiday Inn
- So many great locations in Ashe County. Of course downtown West Jefferson is a perfect place.
- Downtown Park, Hwy 221
- Old Lowe's grocery store (in fact, the whole of that mall), Jefferson Station, consider expanding into Jefferson, junction of 221/163
- Cultural Arts Staff could be housed at Town Hall or at Ashe Arts Center.
- Glendale springs and fleetwood
- The old Lowes Foods building
- When the Hotel completes renovations, that will be one place.
- Around the downtown area
- The huge building that used to be Lowes Foods near Mount Jefferson would be a wonderful place to have an attraction.
- Any place
- Anywhere

- Walmart/Lowe's Hardware area
- Linking the old railroad between West Jefferson and Lansing
- The first thing that comes to mind is Jefferson Station. The second is the old Jefferson School. Were the old hotel not being renovated to become a hotel again, that space would have been excellent. I know there are buildings and spaces that are not being fully utilized in town. Beyond that, there is space between the towns that can be developed for something new and still be walkable from downtown.
- Parking area behind Backstreet where old ugly business sits.
- there are several vacant buildings now
- Jefferson, fleetwood, Glendale springs
- Daycare, somewhere proximal to the residential district.
- South Jefferson Avenue,
- The land area behind the CVS
- Rebuild on family central location.
- Old Lowe's foods building,
- Near library/park
- Leave it like it is
- The old tobacco warehouse next to the public library. By using the old tobacco warehouse facility you could possibly give the daycare teachers and children access to the public library and the park. You could possibly include a maker space in a portion of the facility which allow the daycare access to the maker space encouraging children to be problem solvers and creators.
- Hice Avenue badly needs redevelopment, beginning with a bulldozer! The Jefferson Station development was poorly planned and is completely absent in street appeal, and the industries on the street clearly need to be outside of town in more industry-friendly areas. This area could be prime single-family residential property in a style that reflects the town's history, and could include a community gathering place, such as a pocket park.
- Behind Badger Funeral Home
- One of the existing older buildings
- Jefferson Station. The old Lowe's grocery building and that shopping center at the base of Mount Jefferson. The empty buildings next to Ingles. The old Heilig-Meyers building between the towns.
- Centralized
- Not sure
- Main Street and back street
- The Jefferson Station building, which should be either leveled, and start over, or significantly altered in facade so that it compliments the architecture of the town, rather than acts as an eyesore.
- The old Lowes Foods store.
- The old Lowes building, Mt Jefferson and our other parks, historical buildings that can be bought and refurbished to the time, plaques along the road or hiking trails, old courthouse. Turn the road between Walmart and the old Lowes building into the area for more restaurants and night time activities.
- I don't know
- connect West Jefferson Park with Ashe County Park and/or Lansing Creeper Park
- The new restoration of the Old Hotel Tavern is a great spot for outdoor dining, shopping



- Downtown Jefferson or West Jefferson
- Mt Jefferson Rd.
- Toward jefferson-vacated buildings, also new buildings to be built
- Downtown is the best place but not everything can be right ther. The road between the towns is an option and the Mt Jefferson Rd area has some availability.
- Mount Jefferson , business S 221
- Between the towns in the current learning center.
- Downtown
- The old hotel that is under renovation
- There are a lot of vacant buildings around town. Down town is of course popular. But there are other little buildings and strip mall type areas that may be good to get people to go to. I'm not sure.
- The empty condo building in wj
- lansing
- Old Lowes Foods building at base of Mt Jefferson
- The former/newest Lowe's Food location would be a great indoor sports facility!
- Would love to see a community outdoor pool at Ashe Park or West Jefferson Park (\*The lower ballfields at Ashe Park would be a great location as these fields are hardly used anymore and there's a parking lot with restroom facilities and an old snack bar already there.
- Dog Park at Ashe Park or West Jefferson Park
- near walmart
- Not sure
- Not sure.
- Jefferson Station, old Lowes Foods building
- Downtown West Jefferson
- Ashe County
- There are hundreds, pick one
- No specific location but within walking distance of the historic district.
- It would be great if it could somehow be located adjacent to the library/park
- Jefferson station
- Former furniture factory with its history, a wonderful updated library, a great park in downtown for visitors to use the picnic tables AND an area for children to swing and play! It would be great to find a way to let visitors know about West Jefferson's history with how many jobs were created for locals with the Thomasville Furniture Factory....AND how painful it was locally for having it all sent to another country.

**7. Have you, or someone you personally know, struggled to find appropriate housing in West Jefferson?**



**8. What type of housing is most needed in West Jefferson? Select all that apply.**

<b>Single Family Homes</b>	65
<b>Multi-family Homes (i.e. apartments)</b>	43
<b>Townhomes</b>	35
<b>Duplexes</b>	18
<b>Subsidized Housing</b>	32
<b>Housing Units for Rent</b>	65
<b>Housing Units for Sale</b>	28
<b>None of the Above</b>	5
<b>Total</b>	291

**9. Historically, what are the major challenges related to housing in West Jefferson?**

- Quality/Price
- I dont know if we have ever had one. Get a job, work, and buy a house. Its simple. how about we teach our kids this so that future generations and sustain theirselves and not rely on someone else for a handout. How about we start there.
- Not sure
- Price
- Affordability
- Unknkwn
- Too expensive in relation to the salaries that are paid. Many people are buying properties for 2nd homes or vacation rentals. Land restrictions, county regulations for perc tests and rising lumber costs make it impossible to build. Many homes sit vacant for reasons unknown to me.
- Charge too much for what it is.
- Lack of basic business knowledge and education about what's needed and being more development friendly to those willing to invest and take risks.
- High cost and expensive upkeep of older homes
- Cost!
- People set in their ways and reluctant to change
- Homes are not in the price range of most local folks.
- high prices, lack of single family homes
- Cost, Availability
- not sure about historically, maybe affordability or condition of houses
- Outside money coming in and paying cash
- nice /affordable properties for working professionals

- Affordable housing for young families and young professionals
- the lack of housing (and affordable) for working families and young professionals
- Not much to rent for long term and few opportunities for those with pets; housing for seniors near the library and a small grocery store in town accessible by foot
- Finding location(s) for apartment building. Inability for middle-class income families to find affordable single-family houses for sale. (It seems most construction has been and continues to be geared towards expensive summer homes for higher-income/retired folks.
- Poor quality homes(e: Mold, broken utilities, poor insulation) housing that is affordable for locals, Jobs that pay enough to pay rent or to buy a home.
- nothing nice.. but big \$ prices
- The properties are too expensive and the main rental company is horrible to rent from. They've messed over a majority of the county but people have no option.
- Cost for lower income families and individuals. Tourists and retirees cause prices to increase b
- High prices for small places or run down housing
- Locations that are affordable are dumps and need to be bulldozed.
- Quality of housing versus price of rent
- Cost
- Available Land
- No comment
- Rental housing that's acceptable for lower income individuals. A lot of the cheaper apartments in wj are a disgrace and not up to code
- Lack of availability and affordability
- Pricing
- Median income and the rental price increases in recent years
- As with everywhere else, affordability is a big barrier.
- Rent prices
- There are not enough townhomes and apartments for single individuals or those wanting an apartment. Also, I would love to see more townhomes that are actually affordable.
- Cost of rent
- Affordability
- Enough subsidized housing as well as landlords that will participate with requirements
- Space
- One of the primary things I have seen is simply availability. I hear a lot of people complaining about the cost of housing as well. With so much focus on beautification, one concern is also that housing be aesthetically pleasing while meeting the all of the needs of the inhabitants.
- Short supply of housing
- Lack of flat land
- market changes
- Pricing
- Second homes driving up year round resident cost.

- Outdated Buildings, Conservative mentality not allowing fresh opportunity
- Costs...the average family has been priced out of the housing market. We need good basic homes in the 150,000 range.
- I don't know.
- Price substandard housing rents for way too high, subsidized vouchers are way to low for single individuals
- Supply
- Out of town people
- Availability and affordability have been major problems. After the manufacturing industries left, families struggled to find housing that they could afford. There did not seem to be a high turnover of homes creating difficulties in finding places to buy or rent. This trend of local young adults struggling to find housing has increased with the recent influx of individuals, not from the area, purchasing summer homes/increasing price points of homes available.
- Ashe County's significant natural beauty attracts new housing and residential development to the outlying parts of the county (thinking of newcomers in particular). But many people who came here to enjoy second homes have become attached to the community and would be interested in becoming part of the downtown. There are so many attractive businesses within walking distance.
- Currently the long term rental housing market does not exist
- Second homes sometimes absorb affordable housing for families
- Too expensive for locals.
- Available land
- Not enough. Too expensive for young people
- I am not sure
- Hard to expand housing, without sacrificing the small town charm. Whatever is developed needs to have architectural designs that fit with the town - even lower income housing. And greenspace should be paramount to any further development.
- Lack of inventory.
- Because of covid and in influx of money received for it (especially if you have children), more people are looking to purchase a home. Those that have homes realize the strong market and are selling their home for more than it's really worth and putting renters out. If you can't find a home and still need to rent, you can't find anything.
- Low-income people can't find housing
- income of residents is too low
- Highway 221 is almost complete which makes West Jefferson more accessible for housing. Finding nice level land is also a problem anywhere in the mountains.
- Second homes/vacation homes driving cost of housing up
- Racism
- Cost
- No vacancies
- In the past 15 years, prices have continued to rise and many young people who work here can't afford to buy a home here. Also many people want to live in town but can't find anything for sale.

- Cost, availability
- Lack of investor\]
- ?
- ?
- Limited Availability
- Too many of houses in town now rentals owned by out of town people
- I have only lived here a year so I don't know in detail. Just from my own experience moving here I know that housing prices have increased like across the country, but here as well because it is becoming so popular for tourists and retirees. Rent thus also has increased. And it is more difficult to find rentals or homes for sale.
- Supply
- not enough
- Overpriced due to tourism and migration of retired folks from Florida
- Not enough rental properties; cost of rent; pet-friendly rentals; high cost of land/building
- affordable
- Affordable housing and subsidized programs
- Quantity of available units.
- Housing is too expensive for most families and there are not enough homes/apartments for rent. Most young people cannot afford to purchase a home in our area due to inflated real estate prices brought on by tourists and transplants/retirees moving here from out-of-state. The current climate is ruining any chance for young, native Ashe County residents to remain here and afford to live here.
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- Affordable housing
- Unknown
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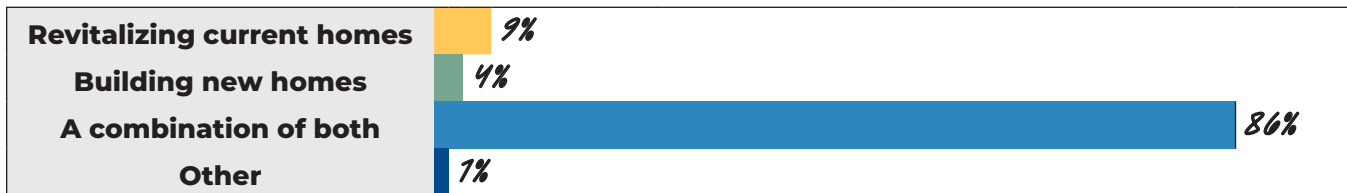
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- Price
- Low inventory
- Availability and affordability
- Affordable housing
- Unknown
- Options for young professionals and affordable options for seniors
- Probably needing more housing within the walking distance of restaurants, stores and post office.

**10. Do you believe West Jefferson should focus on revitalizing current homes or building new homes?**



**11. In your opinion, what are West Jefferson’s key workforce industries?**

- GE
- Look at the big fish. they are there the silent majority that have kept the town alive and tax dollars coming in for years.
- Tree Farms and Chemical Plant
- Construction and Cooperatives
- GE, AEV in Jefferson
- Restaurant, Walmart lowes Aev ge aviation
- AEV is the only stable one. GE used to be, but with recent layoffs, I wouldn’t put faith into them being around long-term. Most people work outside of the county, like myself.
- Aev
- None
- Factories, healthcare, tourism, and construction
- GE, AEV, Agriculture
- Fastfood because there is nothing else
- Tourism and restaurants
- manufacturing, xmas trees, tourism
- Tourism
- GE, local businesses, restaurants
- GE, AEV, state and government jobs
- GE, Mount Jefferson State Park, restaurants
- Ambulance manufacturing, aviation, construction
- GE, AEV, Ashe Memorial, small business, SkyLine, Construction trades
- Hospital, school system, GE aviation, AEV
- AEV, GE Aviation, Ashe Memorial Hospital, Walmart, Ashe County Board of Education
- GE, Restaurants, School system
- not sure we have any
- Restaurants and agriculture
- Hospitality. Construction.
- Christmas trees and factory work

- Retail & Food Service
- Trade
- Emergency Vehicles & Breweries
- GE / AEV / Christmas Tree
- Tourism, AEV, GE,
- Wjpd, skyline, and local businesses and owners in city limits
- Hospitality, retail and small business
- Hospital, GE, AEV, tourism
- Retail and manufacturing
- Tourism
- You got me. Don't know
- restaurants, retail, Skyline, Christmas tree lots
- Manufacturing and tourism
- Service
- Manufacturing
- Restaurants, GE
- My first thought is tourism and service industries. Many entrepreneurs have found a place to set up shop or open restaurants. There are also more visible factories like Leviton but also not so visible options like GE Aviation.
- Service
- Retail, restaurants.
- ambulance company, GE Aviation, Christmas tree industry
- Factories, healthcare, restaurants
- Manufacturing (GE, AEV), hospitality (including food service), tourism (including those who provide goods such as Ashe County Cheese)
- Factories, Blue Ridge Energy
- AEV/Ambulance, Schools, Tourist related/Hospitality. We need more high tech industry like GE.
- GE and food services
- Tourist attractions, restaurants
- Crafts and tourism
- Building
- Within West Jefferson, key workforce industries: GE, BREMCO, Skyline, USPS, Ingles and the Cheese Plant. I would include the AEV facility at the old Hanes/Gates building.
- GE Aviation, AEV, hospitality support (i.e., restaurant workers), Christmas trees
- Service industry
- No comment
- AEV, BREMCO, Skyline, Christmas trees, property upkeep, auto motive mechanics.
- Tourism,some industries
- Local shop owners, GE, AEV, Ashe Hospital, Ashe Co schools
- ambulance companies
- McFarland publishing, GE, Vannoy construction, the collective power of the small businesses
- There really aren't any beside Christmas trees.

- Ambulance conversion, GE, Appalachian State University and Lowes.
- Tourism
- tourism and service industry, agriculture
- American Emergency Vehicles, AEV, General Electric, Ashe Memorial Hospital
- Tourism, farming, restaurants
- Only one is G E Leviton is winding down
- Fast food
- GE and rev in jefferson, sales, fast food
- GE, AEV, the service industry and schools
- Agriculture, AEV, Northwest Ambulance, GE, County
- Aerospace, tourism, soft drinks
- Whatever the private sector offers
- Whatever the private sector offers
- Aev, GE, grocery stores and restaurants
- GE, Hospital, and Leviton
- There are a fair number of retail and restaurants, a fairly large hospital and senior housing facility, a number of real estate businesses, there is some factory work as well
- Agriculture

***12. In order to strengthen workforce development within the region, what should West Jefferson's top priorities be?***

- Town, County & Community College partnership with manufacturing
- Business owners that hire and contribute to the community.
- Attract Corporate Companies
- Getting people to work
- More Industries to come to Ashe County not just West Jefferson
- Bringing in companies that would provide jobs (like Amazon wanted to be here but were shut out)
- Marketing the county as a place for businesses/industries/factories to come and thrive. Offer tax incentives, etc.
- Provide more opportunities for employment at a livable wage.
- Educate the existing workers and then entice them to work for a realistic wage for them and employer.
- As stated before, daycares. Also, revitalization of the economy, including adding stores for locals instead of trendy and artsy stores that are not conducive to local income rates
- Continuing education opportunities and assistance for entrepreneurs
- Developing our youth so they don't fall victim to our drug problem
- Training people from here.
- to embrace the tourism aspect of the economy, and to encourage more entertainment, restaurants and activities and LESS antique /tourist trap shops.
- Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Hospitality
- Community College - strengthening partnership
- Increasing wages

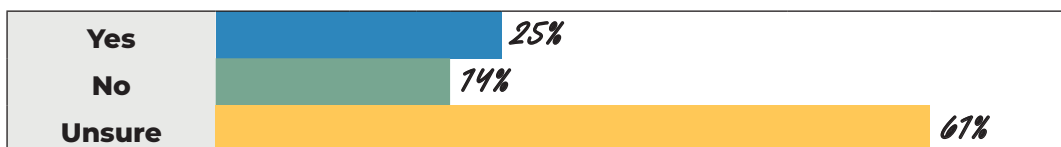
- available childcare options
- Attracting new industry to the new Industrial Park
- Work with business and education sectors to identify ways to develop an employment needs assessment and then create programs to develop a workforce training/recruitment effort to address those needs. We also have to address the housing problem in our area if we are to retain or recruit people to work in this area;
- attract small, specialized electronics and high tech, training for plumbers, electricians, builders, automotive workers
- Education, “a one-stop shopping” publicity for job seekers where job availability could be more easily found, encouraging the Town, Chamber of Commerce, the banks, Leviton, and other large businesses to include some form of outreach to the community college and high school students on their web sites and in the newspaper.
- Bring in more industries that pay a living wage
- Jobs other than Tourism
- Amenities for workers. i. e. Childcare, more diverse job options, better pay, etc.
- Good manufacturing jobs
- More opportunities and better wages
- Providing better training of trade skills
- Education
- Education & housing
- Store Fronts Downtown
- Pay minimum wage everywhere....or more. Publicize. Tell customers....hey, we pay well in WJ so no need to tip so much.
- ?
- Subsidized health care insurance
- Focus on keeping the people local, shop local and live local. These areas are catered more for the wealthy tourist
- Affordable housing and expanded childcare programs
- Niche manufacturing—something that can’t be outsourced or relocated from Ashe to another area. There are a lot of talented crafts people in the area. Apprenticeship programs would be a great way to carry on those traditions.
- Jobs then homes
- More attractions and businesses
- Make people work, train young people with a skill in high school
- Bring in jobs for locals
- Continued development of current manufactures; recruitment of new manufacturing as possible
- Increase minimum wage
- There are segments of the populations that certainly feel the focus should be on factories and other options that provide livable wages to a large number of people. In the current climate, that is harder to do. Certainly inviting industry into the area is important. Likewise, supporting the cultural piece is vital to maintaining a clean, healthy environment that so many people value in West Jefferson.



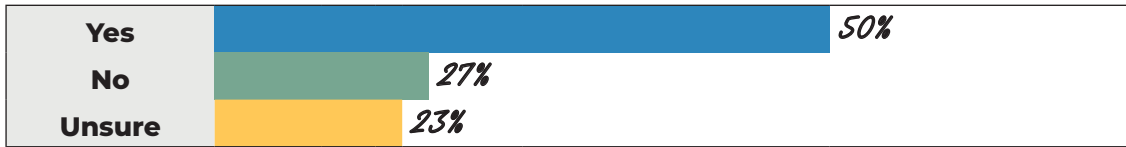
- Investment in public schools
- Get people off subsidies and back to work.
- More technical training opportunities
- Keeping people local. Cater more to the people that live here instead of people just visiting once.
- Retaining HS graduates and bringing home college graduates post-graduation. Utilize thoughtful planning/zoning to retain small town feel while developing the industry that will provide income in lean tourism times.
- Members of the community allowing growth and influx of new business opportunities
- Investment in CTE/Vocational education in the high school and community college from the community. More community investment and cooperation with the high school CTE programs.
- Bring in industry, hold job fairs
- More childcare centers
- Continue development of tree industry, choose/cut
- The local people
- This is a difficult question. Creating career opportunities for individuals to be successful. Most individuals want employment that will give them a house, car, vacations and security.
- Develop a focus on attracting tech-industry businesses that are not necessarily dependent on proximity to airports and interstates; help local industry provide a higher level of workforce training (GE Aviation does this particularly well); develop more affordable housing.
- Training program for potential subcontractors. It is impossible to find electricians,plumbers to work on small jobs
- Bolster community college programs
- Better work place readiness and career technical education.
- Blend of job opportunities
- Connection with WCC and school system, incentives to keep bring young folks here.
- improve and talk up the schools
- Strong education system, including the local community college campus. Opportunities to support small business entrepreneurs, build upon the opportunity provided by recent improvements in access through work on Rt. 221.
- Diversify, diversify, diversity.
- EDUCATION, Expanding community College and make it affordable to learn. Have other things in high school besides CNA and shop-HVAC, computer science & IT, carpentry, electrical, mechanical, marine technician, administrative-legal/medical, law enforcement.
- Education
- Raising wages and providing good education
- Providing a diverse job market for all types of labor skills.
- Focusing on small business incentives especially those focusing on sustainable industries/solar, wind power, etc.
- Jobs that pay well
- Enticing more businesses to open
- Increased wages, paid training programs
- A lot of that depends on what the industries do for their employees, but decent housing is certainly key. This has always been an industrial town, but industry has struggled to stay. We can always use more industry that is committed to the community and the people.

- Labor
- Supporting WCC as the presumptive workforce development agency in the community. Cooperate with towns and counties. This is less a town issue than an overall county issue and it is presumptuous for the town to assume the lead in this area.
- Educating families on the importance of education
- Educating families on the importance of education
- Attract larger companies to come to the area
- Bring in or create niche manufacturing jobs
- This is an aging community - invest in workforce areas that will retain and attract young people, not wealthy retirees who drive the prices of everything up. Technology skills for all ages. More diverse small businesses - there are a lot of things people drive to Boone for that we could have here.
- Improved Education
- education through community college which needs to be expanded
- Making living expenses in this area affordable for locals
- Uncertain
- diversity of workforce
- Workforce development programs
- Manufacturing
- Creating more jobs that are not related to tourism and retail. WJ should be actively trying to draw manufacturing jobs to our area that can sustain residents.
- Training/ education
- Attracting better paying jobs
- Better transportation and better jobs. The industries out here, excluding some of the larger, better paying ones; are horribly low paying, offer no benefits, etc. People out here work like slaves to live in poverty.
- Technical school training.
- Retention of current employees, brining the aldermen & alderwomen up to speed on the long term retention plan for employees, businesses, etc. They need to understand that making a living in West Jefferson is for the good of the entire population. Not just to serve them.
- Training in trades: construction, hvac etc.
- Grant money OR government money to remove the old Thomasville Furniture Factory AND all the environmental cleanup that will be needed.

**13. Are there any resources for high school students wanting to pursue careers with West Jefferson's key industries/top employers?**



**14. Should West Jefferson create an incentive program for current and/or prospective residents?**



**15. If you answered “Yes” or “Unsure” to the last question, what incentive(s) do you believe would draw prospective residents and/or support current residents to West Jefferson? Choose your top two.**

Relocation expenses	15
Housing Stipend (Rent or Mortgage)	24
Student Debt Repayment	24
Discounted or free co-working/office space	16
One-time cash payment (ex. \$10,000)	10
Start-up capital for a new business (ex. \$10,000)	30
Business Development Advising	15
Recreation Package (free passes/vouchers to state/national parks and outdoor activities)	18
A combination of some of these options	32
Other	5
None of the above	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>

**16. Which companies/organizations (public and private) should be involved in this region’s comprehensive workforce development strategy?**

- GE, WCC, WJ Community Partners
- BUSINESS OWNERS!
- Leaders in the community TDA and Chamber
- All
- Automobile Manufacturer
- Any who wish

- Vannoy Construction, Skyline, BREMCO, AEV, GE, Chemi-Con, Wilkes CC, Ashe Schools, Appalachian State University
- Idk.
- N/a
- Vannoy, GE, AEV, churches, schools
- Large manufacturers like GE, Ashe Chamber of Commerce, local government
- All of them. We are a small family town. (Which is why my family moved here) every business, no matter how big or small, should help input on structuring our workforce. I mean, most of our people have to go out of Ashe County for work.
- All of the major businesses in the area (school system, hospital, tree farms, construction, mechanics, plumbers, small businesses, restaurants, parks and rec, etc.) working together with the high school (esp. vocational classes) and WCC to provide area-relevant classes, internships, and apprenticeships.
- most of them!!!
- New Businesses, Wilkes Community College, Vannoy Construction
- Ashe County Public Library
- Local businesses that can't afford to pay good wages
- WCC, Chamber, school system, GE
- County Economic Development, WCC Workforce Development
- Town, County (and EDC), Chamber of Commerce, Industry Representatives, Local businesses challenged with finding adequate staffing, companies based here that employ many individuals with diverse educations/skill sets (LifeStore, SkyLine, Vannoy Construction, Ashe Memorial)
- UNC Chapel Hill faculty, Appstate Business faculty, Baptist Hospital system
- GE Aviation, Ashe Memorial Hospital, Wilkes Community College, Ashe County Chamber of Commerce, Town of West Jefferson, Ashe Co. Public Library,
- Local Government and Apphealthcare Community Health team (they distribute a community needs assessment survey every 3 years)
- construction/park and rec/city managers
- I'm not sure
- Chamber. Tourist development. Town and county planning
- Ashe Memorial Hospital, Tree Farms, Schools and small business owners
- GE, AEV, Boondocks Brewing, Life Store, Lowes
- WJ Business Association
- I believe it should be community driven, local residents should come first. Their voices should be the loudest. This is a beautiful community, with generous people. They should benefit first, they should guide the development.
- Ashe Chamber, TDA, County Government - Commissioner's, WJ Alderman
- GE, AEV, breweries, restaurants, Town of WJ, United Chemicon, airport, schools/college, WJCP representative(s), WJ Small Business Association
- WJ Alderman, let's hear what ideas and support they have. They know what's best for the town, right?
- ASU, WCC, appropriate NC State departments

- Housing authority
- I don't know
- Good question. It's hard to know who is genuine in their efforts and who wants to be involved for financial gain. Whoever is involved should approach activities with a high degree of transparency.
- Sorry. Don't know
- Ashe County Government, West Jefferson town hall, Jefferson town hall, Ashe County public schools
- Employers
- Schools, local companies
- Private citizen opinion; town board/manager
- unsure
- A combination of successful industry, non-profit organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, and local business owners who are active in community development would bring a balanced view to a development strategy. It might also be an interesting exercise to bring in students either from the high school (like those involved with the Chamber's initiative) or WCC students who are based in Ashe simply to hear their views of what is available to keep them in West Jefferson or Ashe County as a whole.
- Greenwood camp ground and vannoy
- All that are in the area.
- current thriving businesses, Chamber of Commerce, industry development persons
- HUD
- Downtown business, manufacturing, local tourism
- All
- YMCA, Schools, Community College, ASU/ECU should be included.
- GE, BREMCO, Skyline
- County and city government NC Works
- Appalachian State, Blue Ridge Electric
- None
- The key industries afore mentioned. Local agencies such as a representative from county commissioners, building inspector, police force, social services and school system. I also think it might be important to include someone from the department of transportation. Local churches and other civic organizations have a direct contact with many individuals and their needs, so possibly someone from that area.
- Representatives from the county's top employers, school system, WCC, arts community, downtown business interests, hospitality and restaurant businesses, local government (town and county); probably others
- not sure
- WCC....
- All of them.
- A diverse group representing a variety of interests
- As many as possible. A wide variety creates more ideas, solutions.

- BBB, town council
- Chamber of Commerce, schools, arts organizations, local civic clubs
- Education (more robust community college offering), better health care.
- GE, local university and community college, farming industry, state/County government, federal government grants for bringing industry in to provide more jobs.
- All
- not sure
- Any that choose to participate
- Any group which focuses on developing a more sustainable and environmentally friendly community. Christmas tree herbicides and pesticides are polluting our water and air.
- All that will engage
- Not sure
- College
- Our town is not in the position to offer incentives to individuals, but they have offered some to the industries themselves and now they should be providing incentives to draw workers here. It doesn't take much to get people here, although many are retired. However, the retired transplants are the majority of our volunteer force, which is strong.
- Manufacturing, agriculture, construction
- WCC, schools, industry (manufacturing, tourism, retail, service) leaders, NCWorks, local governments
- ?
- ?
- It's residents, and local companies already in the area
- Ashe campus of Wilkes Community College and the High County Council of Governments
- Unsure
- Vanoy, GE, AEV, etc
- community college
- Ashe Memorial Hospital, Skyline
- All of them
- government, education, health services, senior/community centers, emergency services
- ESC, Senior Center, WCC, Small Businesses
- All manufacturers.
- GE, Leviton, Wilkes Community College, AEV, Novant, Appalachian State
- All the major employers
- Local businesses
- AEV, GE, the Christmas tree farms, NCWorks, the hospital, Vannoy construction, Ashe county schools, Walmart, the millions of aging centers/rehabs/health orgs
- AEV, hospital, school system, GE.
- All businesses should be allowed to participate.
- Local government to provide monetary solutions to childcare: build, staff and reduced costs to parents
- Create a group of long time WJ residents AND new residents for their opinion AND concern for keeping the "small town" appeal



- in order to retain the friendly neighborhood experience
- Look for ways to demolish the very empty sections of the “old” Thomasville Factory along with having an environmental plan that
- West Jefferson does NOT have to pay for the clearing of ANY environmental “issues” that “they” (government/environmental organizations did not cause!!!!)



# Appendix E:

*Appendix E:*

Sparta's Additional Opportunities

# Sparta

## *Additional Opportunities*

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After completing each phase of the research portion of the project, Atlas identified a variety of strategic opportunities for Sparta to consider. Although the scope of work has been identified for this specific project, Atlas recommends Sparta review the results and recommendations below for future community and economic development projects in order to address some of the challenges identified along the way.

**ADUs/Tiny Home Development:** This concept is not new and has been implemented in communities all over the [U.S.](#), including [North Carolina](#). Tiny homes could be a solution to providing affordable housing within an increasingly unaffordable housing market. These homes could cater to Sparta's young adults who are looking to buy their first home, or the aging population who might want to downsize. Sparta has already taken the first step of approving and adopting an ordinance to allow for this type of housing. Atlas recommends that Sparta further explore this initiative in hopes of increasing housing affordability and availability for current and future residents.

**Central Database for Rental Units:** Many people mentioned that finding available rental units was a challenge when moving to Sparta, especially if you were new to the area. It seemed that many were only able to find available rentals through Facebook groups or word of mouth. It might be in Sparta's best interest to create a centralized location that is more accessible for current and future residents. Here is an example in [Iola, KS](#) that has implemented this idea.

**Business Development Entrepreneurship Program:** Public survey results indicated a need for support among entrepreneurs. When asked about incentives Sparta could offer to current and future residents, respondents named "Start-up capital for a new business" and "Business development advising" as their top two. It's clear that an entrepreneurial spirit exists in Sparta, but to continue to foster that is crucial to sustaining a lively downtown and increasing tourism. The [Blue Ridge Business Development Center](#) could look at additional models and programs around the country that could expand services to help local entrepreneurs.

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**Overnight Accommodations:** Sparta residents expressed the need for additional overnight accommodations, as there are very limited options for out-of-towners to stay. With the desire to increase tourism, it would be in Sparta's best interest to diversify the accommodation options for visitors. A more feasible option to start with is to identify potential Airbnb opportunities, especially since the U.S. saw such an [influx to rural areas](#) during COVID. A larger project idea could be the development of a boutique hotel. Both options provide variety for visitors and can meet the needs of a wider range of individuals.

**Daycare:** Daycare was mentioned in almost all of the focus groups conducted during Site Visit #1 and identified as a top amenity in the public survey results. It is no surprise that many rural areas struggle to provide adequate daycare services while keeping it at an affordable rate. Sparta should determine whether it would be more efficient and effective to increase capacity for existing daycare providers or develop a plan to support an entirely new facility, or both. There are a number of unique models that have worked for other communities, such as a [mobile childcare facility](#), [crowdsourcing childcare](#), or even an intergenerational model like [Generations Ashe](#), which is located just "down the road" in West Jefferson, NC.

**Indoor/Outdoor Facility:** Due to the demand for additional family-friendly amenities, an indoor/outdoor facility was also identified as a top priority for Sparta residents. Residents suggested a pool, recreational center, or dog park to be added to the community. Sparta could separate this concept into two phases: a short-term phase that identifies lower-cost opportunities that could be implemented quickly such as a dog park, and a long-term phase that could focus on development plans and funding for a recreational center.





# Appendix F:

*Appendix F:*

West Jefferson's Additional Opportunities

# West Jefferson

## *Additional Opportunities*

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After completing each phase of the research portion of the project, Atlas identified a variety of strategic opportunities for West Jefferson to consider. Although the scope of work has been identified for this specific project, Atlas recommends West Jefferson review the results and recommendations below for future community and economic development projects in order to address some of the challenges identified along the way.

**Greenway:** Although West Jefferson is situated along the Blue Ridge Parkway, there is a need for more outdoor amenities. Additional activities, such as bike trails, a greenway, RV campgrounds, and rock climbing, can not only draw more residents to outdoor spaces but visitors as well. Neighboring [Wilkes County](#) is currently in the process of developing an [Outdoor Action Plan](#) and could serve as a prime example on how to begin expanding outdoor recreation activities and amenities.

**Indoor/Outdoor Facility:** Roughly 40% of survey respondents chose “Indoor/Outdoor Facility” when asked what amenity should be a priority for West Jefferson. Many of the ideas included an outdoor pool, sports facilities, dog park, and mini golf courses. In order to begin plans for any of these projects, collaboration among community groups is necessary. Although some of these amenities could be provided by one entity, e.g. the City or County government, other amenities might require someone to start a business. In order to encourage business development for amenities that are especially desirable by the community, West Jefferson could offer specific incentives to aid in the development of those ideas.

**Creative Space(s):** Although this idea might fall under the indoor/outdoor facility umbrella, many suggestions regarding a creative space included ideas such as a place for dance classes, yoga classes, photography, and other hobbies or skills that can be shared among the community. West Jefferson could evaluate already existing spaces that could meet the needs for this type of amenity rather than looking at a new build or building restoration.

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**Restaurants:** More restaurants was among the top three choices for what amenity should be a priority for West Jefferson. Although West Jefferson has a variety of restaurants downtown, such as Boondocks Brewing, Black Jack's, New River Brewing, Slice WJ, and Craft Bistro, which provides locals with a wonderful fine dining experience, residents expressed an interest in expanding the types of restaurants available. Italian, Indian, and Thai were cuisines mentioned. West Jefferson might not be able to support these restaurants individually, but the concept of a food hall could be explored. One building could house 2-3 food options where patrons could mix and match their meals, while business owners could cut overhead costs by working in a smaller, shared space.