



Town of Clayton
Town Council Work Session Agenda
Monday, October 6, 2025 at 3:00 PM
Rotary Room, Town Hall
111 E. Second Street

NO WEAPONS ALLOWED INSIDE MEETING ROOM.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGENDA

- a. **POTENTIAL ACTION:** Adopt or Adjust the Agenda

3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- a. 3:00 - 3:45 p.m.
Downtown Stormwater Assessment Update
Presenters: Chris Gallant, Capital Program Manager and Jeff Thompson, Black & Veatch

4. BREAK

- a. 3:45 - 3:50 p.m.

5. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- a. 3:50 - 4:10 p.m.
Utility Bill Redesign Update
Presenter: Ann Game, Revenue & Utility Customer Service Director
- b. 4:10 - 4:35 p.m.
Fire Department 48/96 Work Schedule
Presenter: David Ranes, Fire Chief
- c. 4:35 - 4:50 p.m.
Update to Economic Development Strategic Plan
Presenters: Joe Stallings, Economic Development Director and Consultants
[Update to Economic Development Strategic Plan](#)
- d. 4:50 - 5:00 p.m.
Social District Update
Presenter: Amy Shearin, Community Engagement Coordinator

6. ADJOURNMENT

- a. **POTENTIAL ACTION:** Motion To Adjourn



Town Council Work Session Agenda Cover Sheet

Meeting Date

October 6, 2025

Agenda Location

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Item Title

Update to Economic Development Strategic Plan

Presenter(s)

Staff and consultants will present the updated Economic Development Strategic plan.

Suggested Action

Information Only

Strategic Priorities Alignment



☐ Vibrant Downtown



☐ Desirable Amenities and Spaces



☐ Sustainable Infrastructure



☐ Mobility, Transportation, and Transit



☒ Diversified Economic Development



☐ Community Outreach and Engagement



☐ Public Safety

Public Hearing: No

If Approved, Will Document Require Recordation? No

Does This Item Require a Communication Plan?

☐ Public Hearing (Required by GS)

☐ Newspaper Notice (Required by GS)

☐ Public Forum/Input Session

☐ E-News Distribution

☐ Social Media

☐ Special Mailing

☐ Public Hearing (Not Required by GS)

☐ Newspaper Notice (Not Required by GS)

☐ Press Release

☐ Website

☐ Survey

☐ None Required

Summary

The Economic Development Department has partnered with Creative Economic Development Consulting to update the Town of Clayton's Economic Development Strategic Plan. This updated plan will align the Town's economic development efforts with current market conditions, industry trends, and community priorities. Serving as a roadmap for the next 3 to 5 years, the plan will guide departmental initiatives and support the Town Council's vision for sustainable and strategic economic growth.

Funding Source

N/A

Corresponding Documentation

[Clayton Strat Plan Final Presentation 10 06 25 \(002\)](#)

[Clayton Strategic Plan Final](#)

Submitted By: Joe Stallings, Economic Development

Reviewed By:

Rich Cappola, Town Manager

Heidi Holland, Town Clerk

Approved - Oct 01 2025

Approved - Oct 01 2025



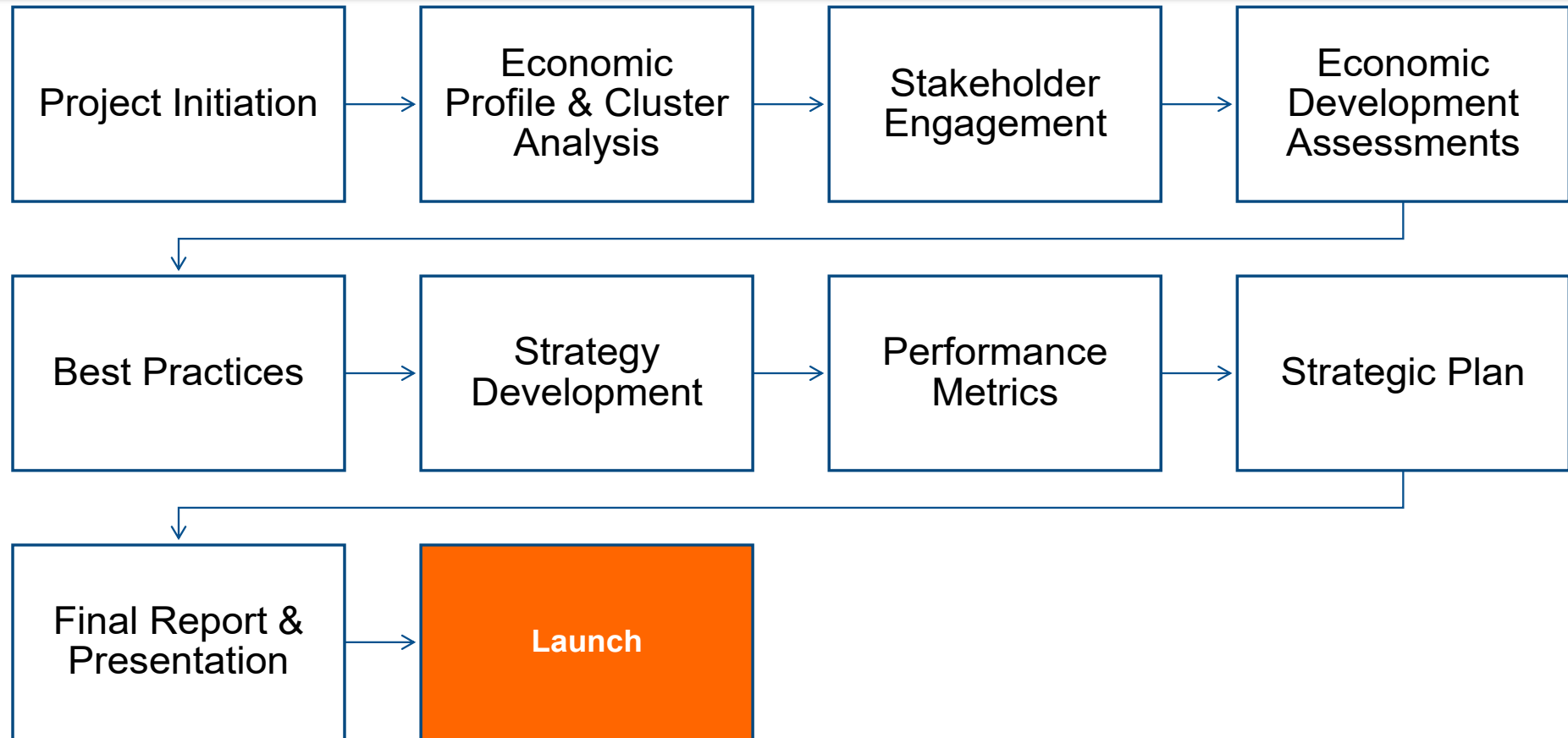
Economic Development Strategic Plan



Steering Committee

- **Mayor Jody McLeod**, Town of Clayton
- **Council Member Ruth Anderson**, Town of Clayton
- **Ed Aldridge**, VP of Business Development, Riverwild and Chairman, Johnston County Economic Development Advisory Board
- **Robert Cupp**, Human Resources Executive-Johnston UNC Health Johnston
- **Danielle Kroeger**, Assoc. VP of Workforce Development and Biotechnology Johnston Community College
- **Jacqueline Lippard**, Sr. Vice President, EXP Commercial
- **Dean Penny**, Project Executive, Craig Davis Properties
- **Dana Wooten**, President & CEO, Clayton Chamber of Commerce

Scope of Work





SWOT Analysis

SWOT

Strengths

- Location; Proximity to the Triangle
- Growing Population Client Base
- Land availability
- Interstate Access:I-40; I-95
- Bio Pharma Companies
- Thriving Downtown
- Small town + access to major metro
- Friendly People
- Small town feel
- Great place to live & raise a family

Weaknesses

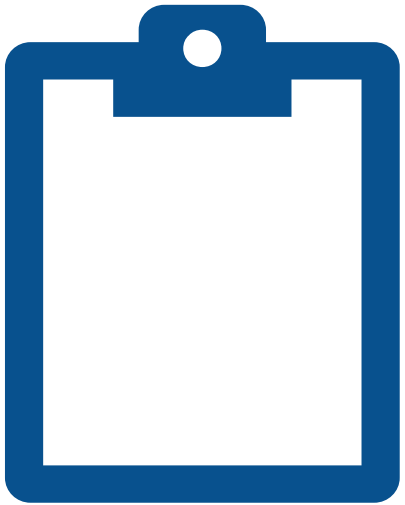
- Local Regulations/ Red Tape
- Water + Sewer Capacity
- Traffic & Roads
- NCRR control (land + access)
- Streamlining Town Processes
- Standardizing land + dev review
- Downtown Closed on Sundays
- Wayfinding & Parking
- Branding & Marketing for Downtown
- Where is Leadership Pipeline?

Opportunities

- Entertainment @ Clayton Center
- ED Dept + Strat Plan
- Biz Community w/ Context + Vision
- Raise local income levels
- Connectivity
- Legacy Leaders
- Small Biz owners + Developers
- Expanded Sewer Capacity '26
- Regionalize Water Source &
- I-540 Completion

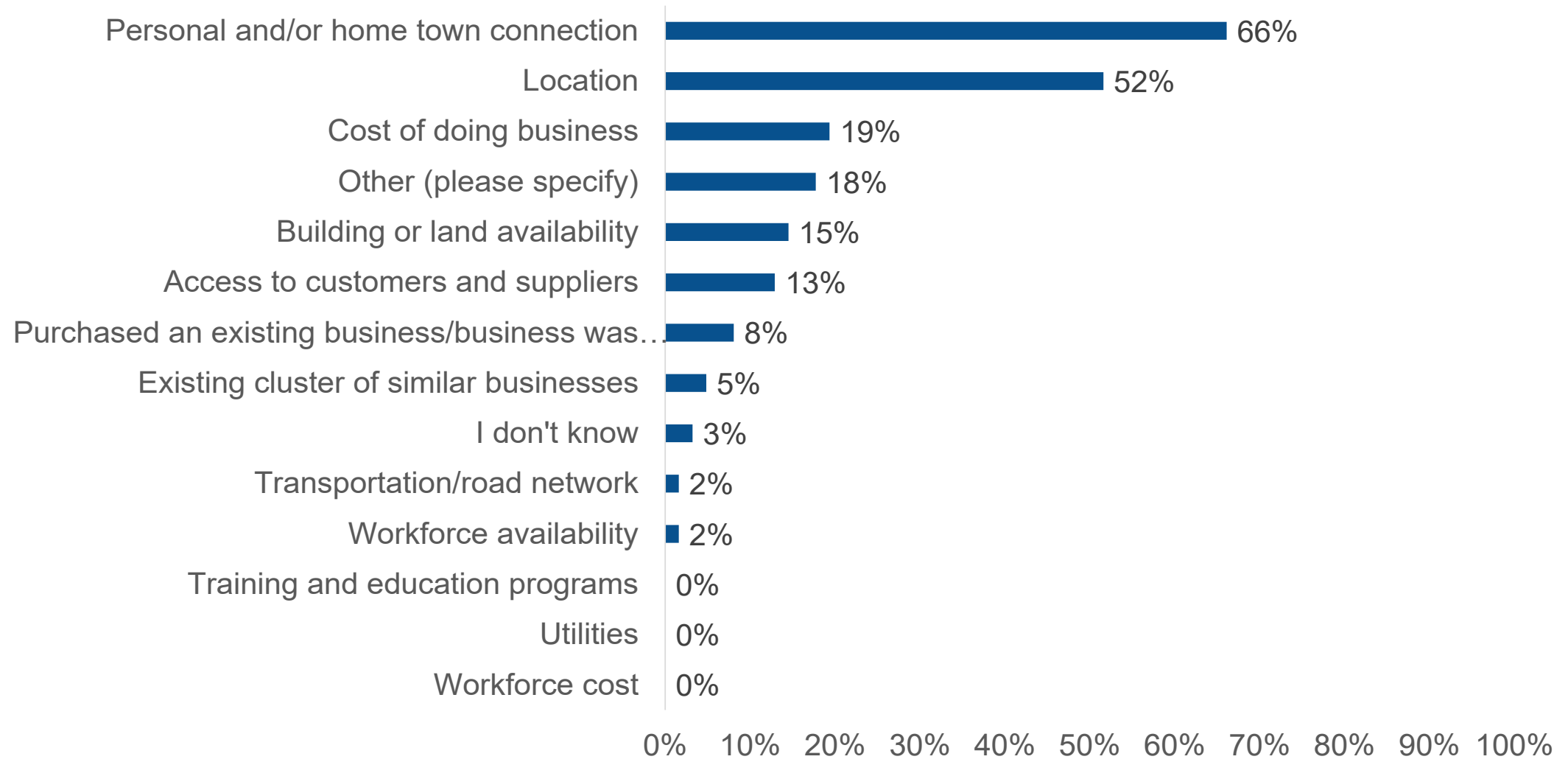
Threats

- Gen Assembly Development Bill #205?
- Political Uncertainty
- Water Capacity
- Property Tax Rates --- Rent
- Workforce - Numbers + Quality
- Adjacent Communities Dev Regs
- Flowers Plantation
- Wilson's Mill dev Competition
- "Reputation"
- Branding

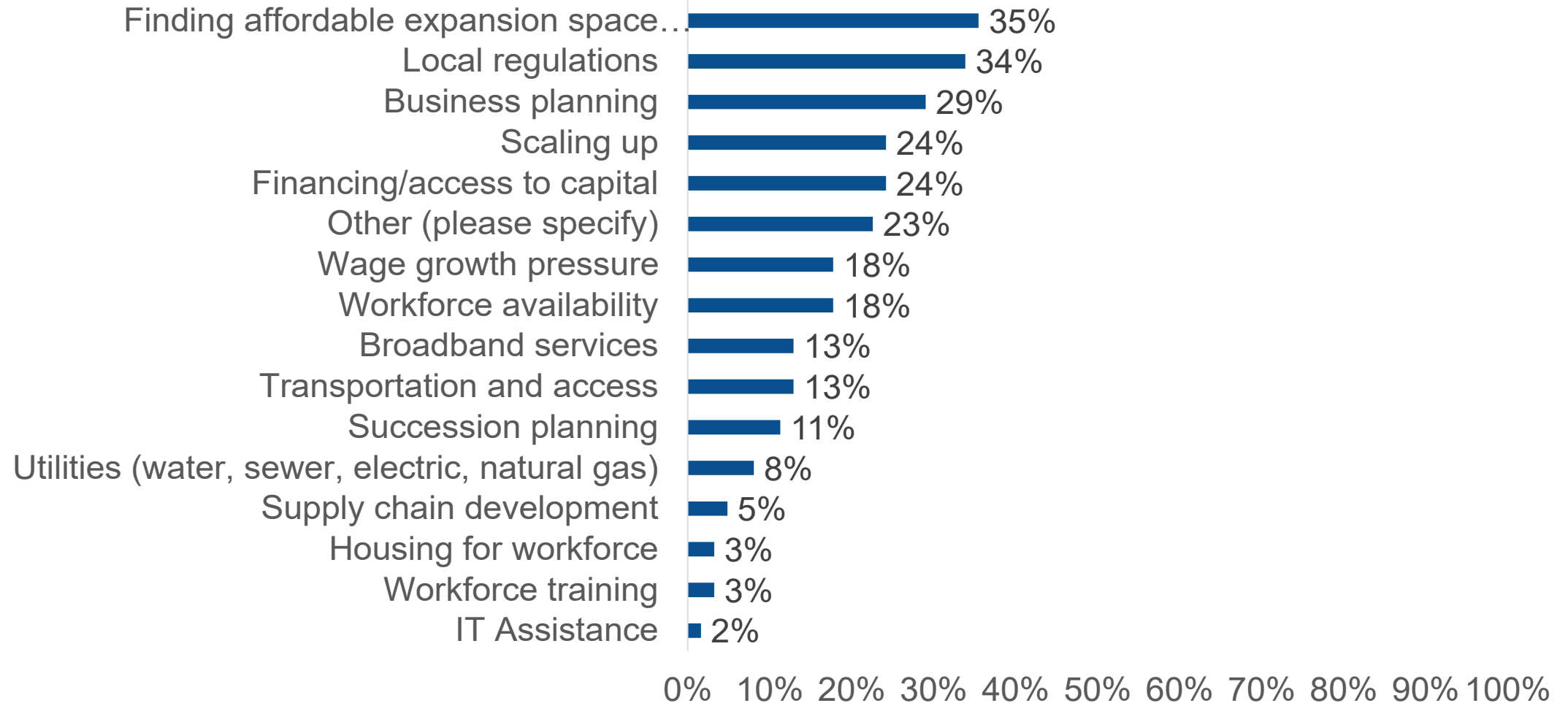


Survey

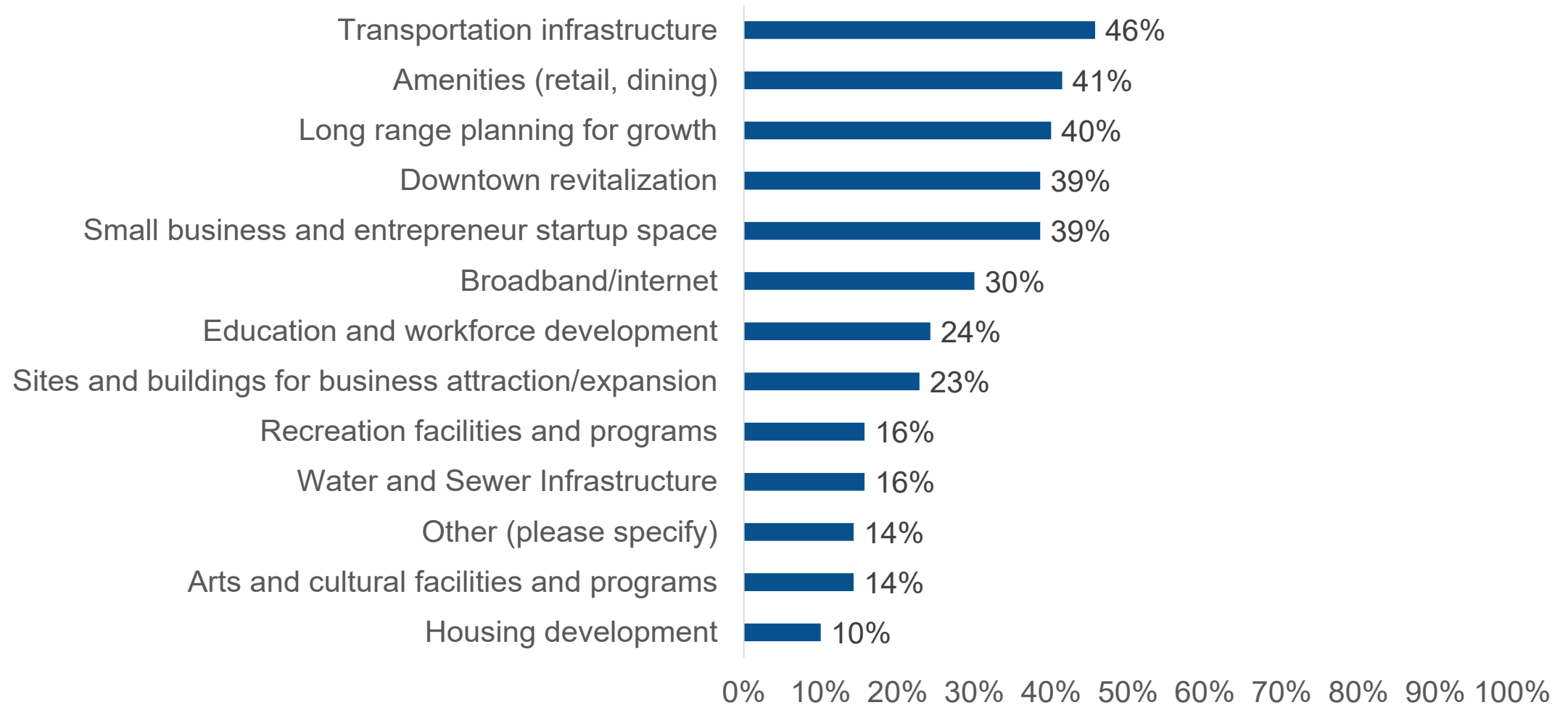
Why did your company locate in Clayton? Choose all that apply.



What are your main challenges to sustaining and growing your business? Choose all that apply.

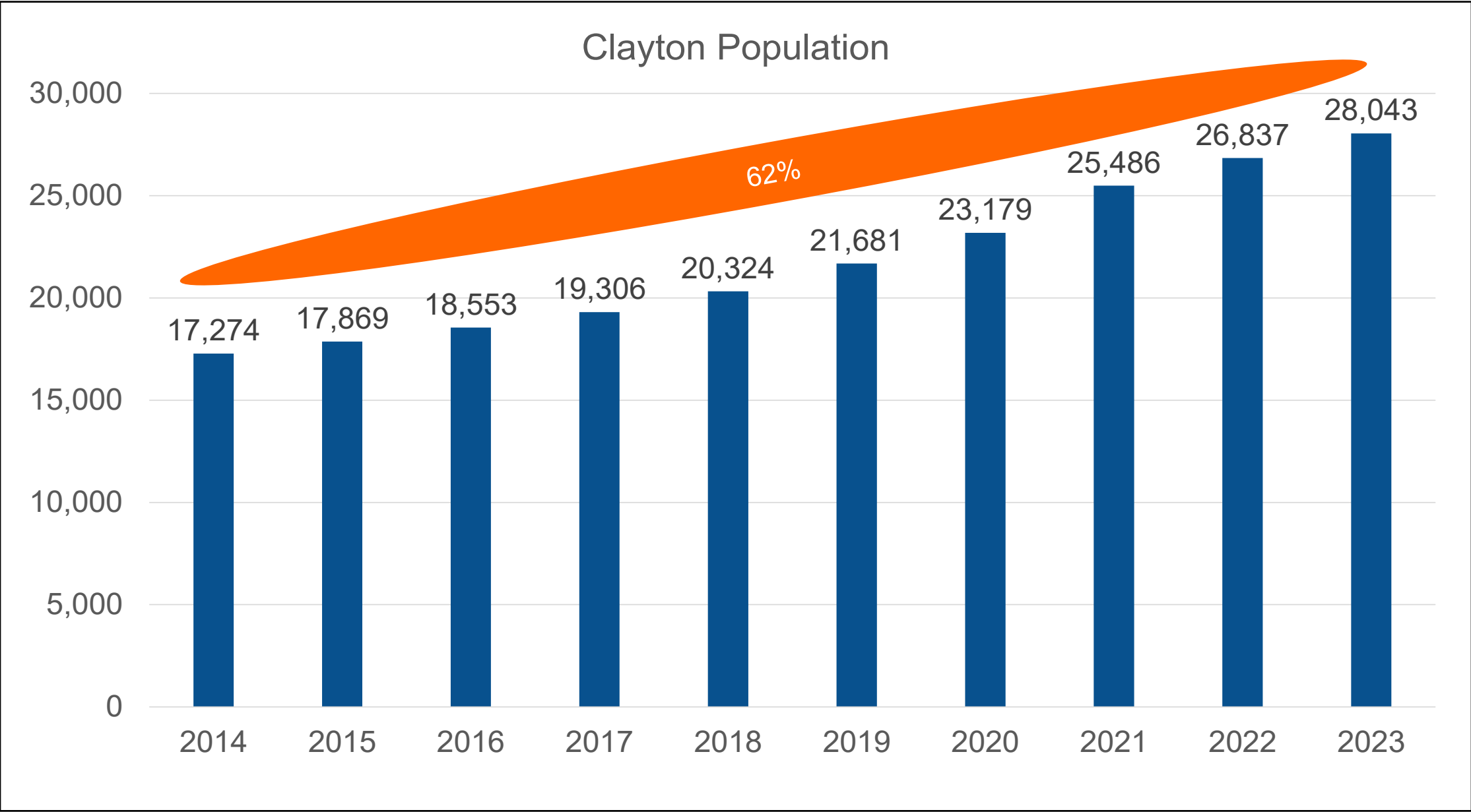


What are the top three most important investments Clayton could make to ensure long-term, sustainable economic growth? CHOOSE THREE.

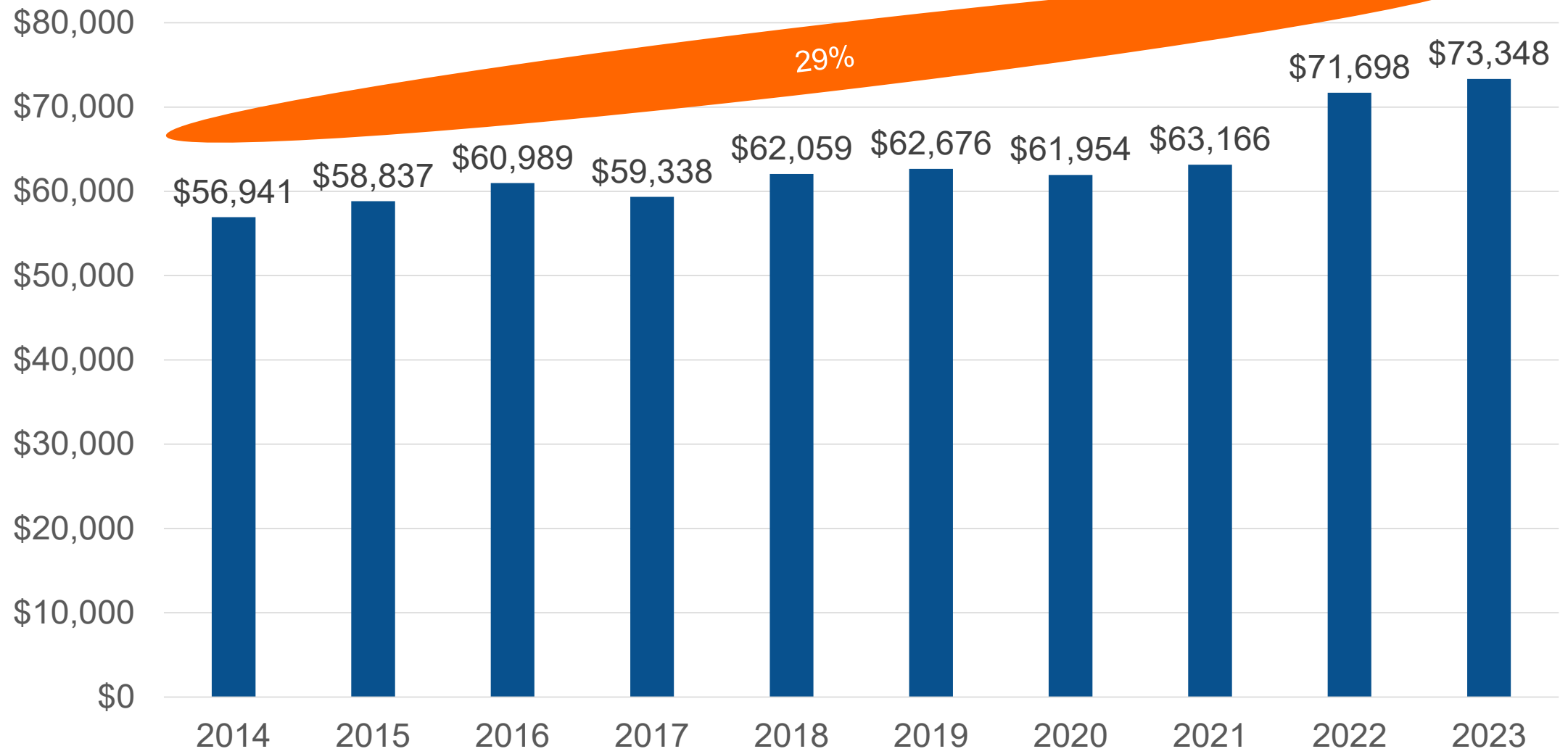




Research

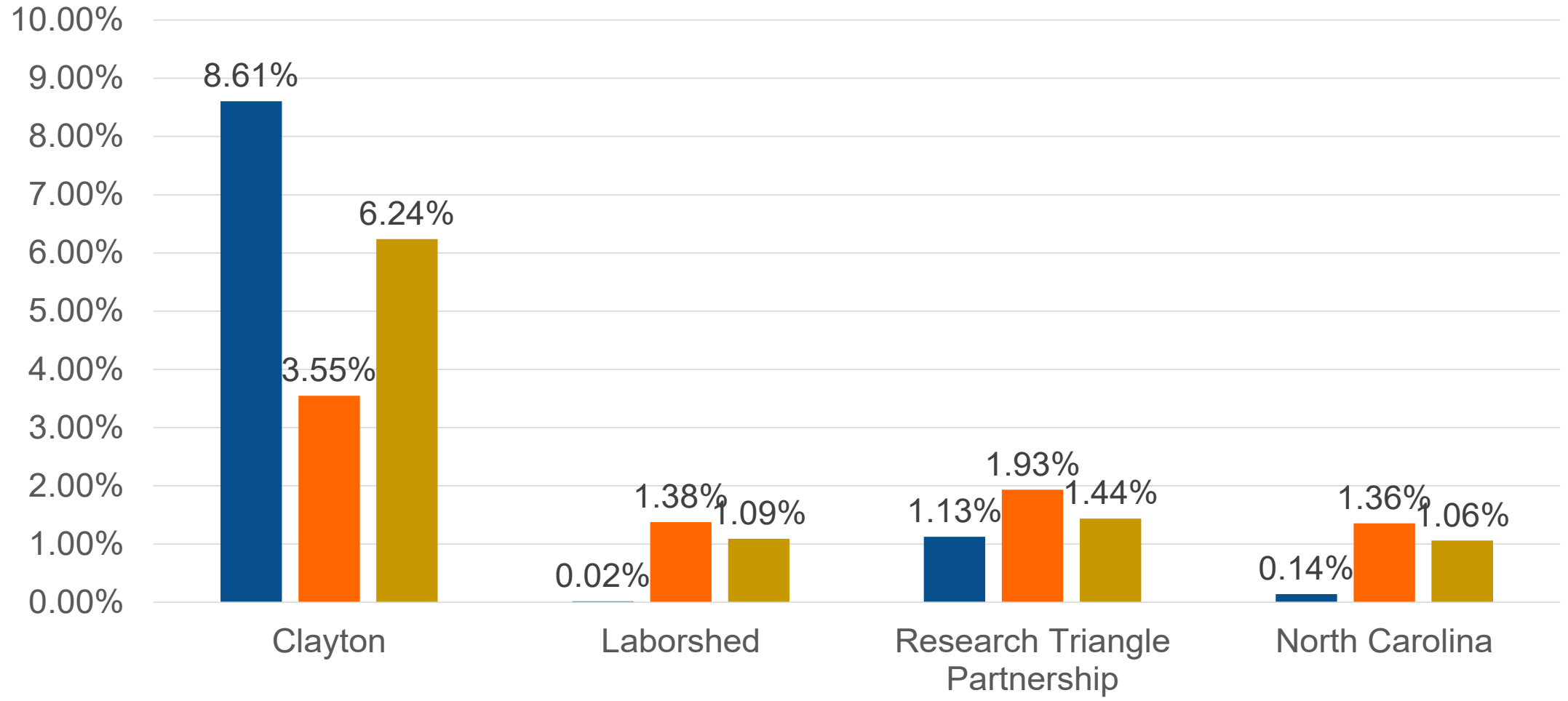


Clayton Median Household Income

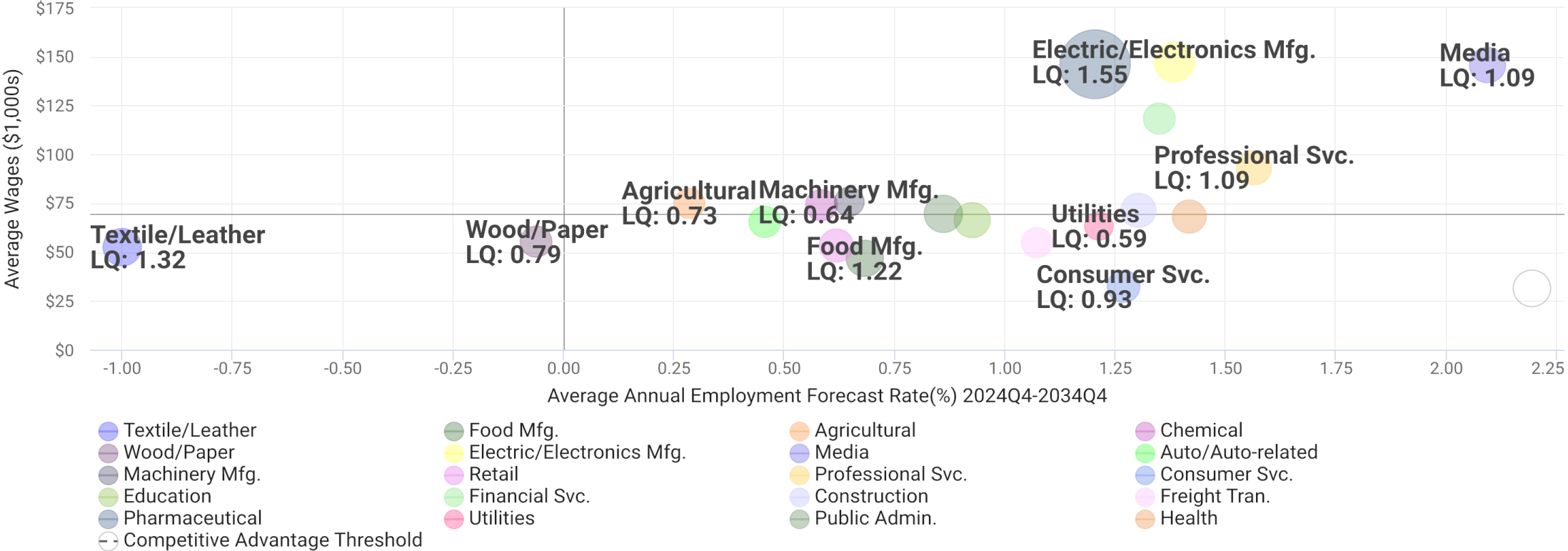


2021-2023 Annual Labor Force Growth

■ 2021 ■ 2022 ■ 2023



Industry Clusters for 60-min Drive of Clayton, NC as of 2024Q4

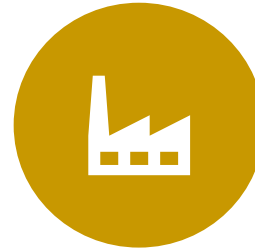


Source: JobsEQ® Data as of 2024Q4

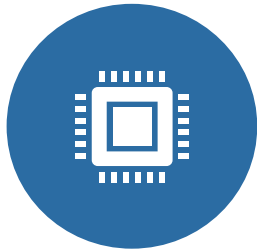
Target Sectors



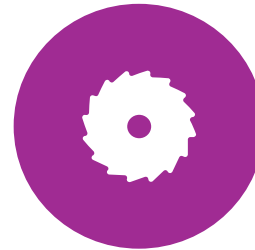
Pharmaceuticals



Machinery
manufacturing



Electric/electronics
manufacturing



Metal and metal
product manufacturing



Goals

Goals



Improve Clayton's competitive position through real estate product and infrastructure development



Attract new industrial, commercial, and retail business to Clayton



Strengthen the economic base through Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) programs



Build Clayton's image and brand through marketing and communication

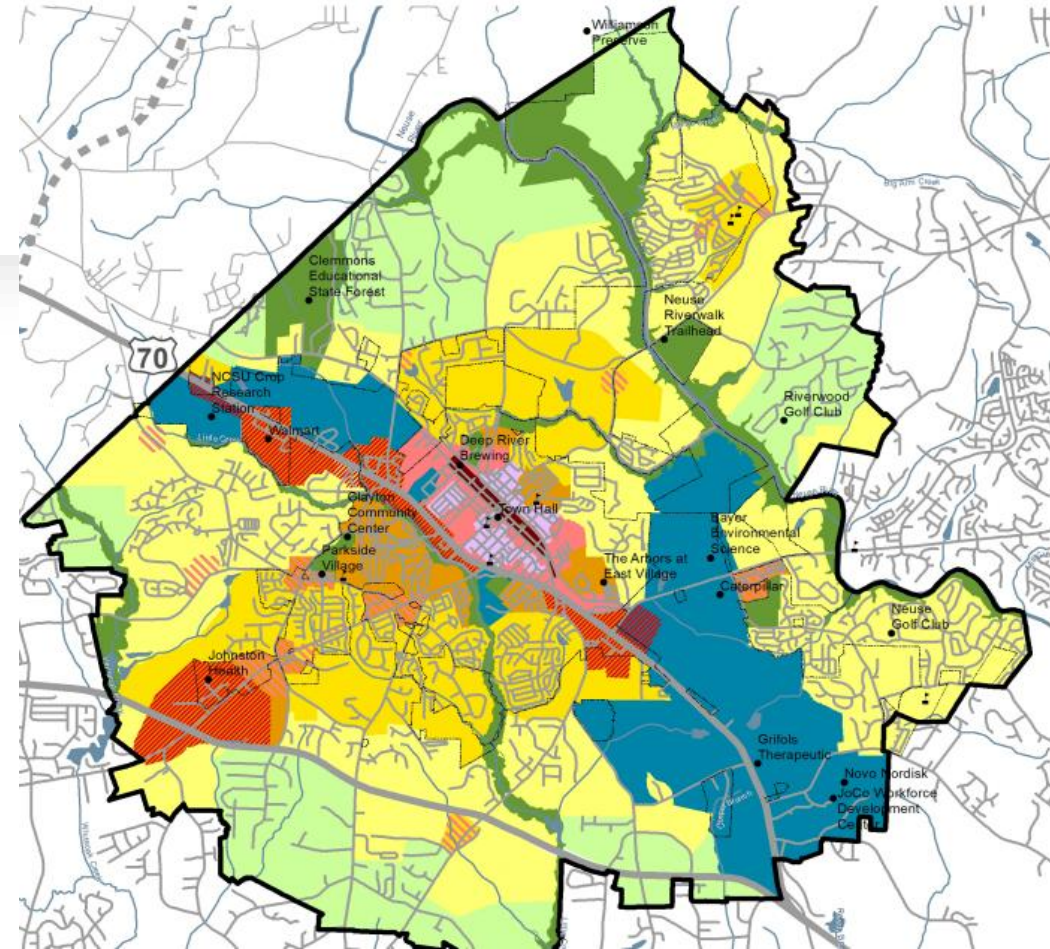


Increase opportunities through intergovernmental

Goal: Improve Clayton's competitive position through real estate product and infrastructure development

Strategies:

- Identify Industrial and Commercial Sites
- Identify existing sites for redevelopment
- Understand the relative 'cost of services' to communicate value
- Shift tax base toward commercial/non-residential
- Include ED perspectives in Town's amenity development



Goal: Attract new industrial, commercial and retail business

Strategies:

- Identify Industrial and Commercial Sites
- Identify target sectors & users matched to sites
- Connect & Communicate with recruitment allies to advance Clayton's goals
 - EDPNC
 - Johnston Co ED
 - ElectriCities
 - Duke Energy



Goal: Strengthen the economic base through Business Retention and Expansion

Strategies:

- Formalize a Business Retention & Expansion program, including scheduled calls on “key accounts”
- Complete an annual survey of Clayton businesses to track trends and identify expansion opportunities
- Connect Clayton business with the town through communications & periodic events



Goal: Build Clayton's image through marketing and communication

Strategies:

- Present, explain and track the strategic plan to keep goals aligned
- Ensure ED goals are understood and applied throughout Town departments
- Increase visibility and messaging aligned with Clayton's preferred image



Goal: Increase opportunities through improved Intergovernmental Relations

Strategies:

- Increase connection and projects with Johnston County –eg ‘clusters of development’
- Increase connection and collaboration with JoCo municipalities to increase economic assets – eg shared revenue industrial site/s
- Identify and secure funding from state and federal sources to advance economic development agenda
- Develop annual priorities for General Assembly and federal representatives



Recommended Dashboard of Program Metrics



Metrics

Implementation

1

Year 1

- Site Inventory & Gap Analysis
- Prioritize sites for redevelopment
- Priority list of sites & buildings
- Refreshed materials on priority sites
- Identify priority industry targets
- Cost of Services Study
- Workforce Roundtable w/JCC
- Internal briefing on economic development goals & strategies
- Develop BRE database & plan
- Refresh Clayton's brand messaging and deploy
- Maintain regular meetings with JoCo ED, EDPNC, other allies
- Establish task force to explore shared revenue site/s
- Scheduled briefings for Town Council and JoCo Commissioners
- Attend priority trade & industry meeting/s

2

Year 2

- Explore site certification programs for priority sites
- Long range product development plan including sites with low-cost investment
- Establish database & outreach plan for consultants and allies
- Enhance online site information with GIS, video and virtual tours
- Deploy and report on Clayton Business Survey
- Launch quarterly enews for Clayton economic development
- Complete site certification of one priority property
- Explore shared revenue model with another entity

3

Year 3+

- Identify site/s for potential additional JCC satellite campus in Clayton
- Identify funding for needed infrastructure for priority sites
- Expand BRE visits to include more small/medium firms
- Confirm joint approach to an industrial or commercial site



Next Steps

- Adopt Plan
- Launch Implementation



Penny Whiteheart

Crystal Morphis, CEcD

creative**edc**.com

reative

economic development consulting



Town of Clayton Economic Development Strategic Plan



2025

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Economic Development Strategic Plan

Clayton is one of the fastest-growing communities in North Carolina, with population growth bringing both opportunity and pressure. A new strategic plan is timely for Clayton's continued success, providing a focused roadmap aligned with the town's goals and priorities. Infrastructure is under strain, while the community also faces competition from nearby towns and other counties. Without a shared vision, Clayton risks being reactive rather than proactive in shaping its future.

Through this strategic planning process, Clayton's leaders identified strengths to build upon, from its skilled workforce and proximity to the Research Triangle, to its industrial base and vibrant downtown. The plan prioritizes opportunities for investment in infrastructure, business retention and recruitment, and messaging and communications, while also addressing challenges such as traffic, land availability, and the need for more amenities to serve residents and employees.

By connecting and aligning local government, businesses, and community partners around a shared vision, this plan positions Clayton to compete for new development, jobs, and investment. With clear goals and measurable results, the town will be prepared to continue its momentum and achieve long-term economic success.

Clayton's strategic plan is organized around five interconnected goals. These goals focus on strengthening Clayton's economic base through business retention and expansion, improving competitiveness with new real estate product and infrastructure development, and attracting new industrial, commercial, and retail businesses. They also emphasize building Clayton's image through targeted communications and expanding opportunities through stronger intergovernmental relations with Johnston County and neighboring municipalities.

This framework for action will ensure that Clayton can retain and grow existing employers, attract new investment, prepare sites and infrastructure for development, and enhance the town's visibility in competitive markets. The goals also recognize that collaboration across jurisdictions and effective storytelling contribute to success. By advancing these five goals, Clayton will strengthen its economy, expand opportunities for residents and businesses, and continue to build a thriving community.

Strategic Plan Goals

- ◆ **Improve Clayton's competitive position through real estate product and infrastructure development**
- ◆ **Attract new industrial, commercial, and retail business to Clayton**
- ◆ **Strengthen the economic base through Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) programs**
- ◆ **Build Clayton's image and brand through marketing and communication**
- ◆ **Increase opportunities through intergovernmental relations**

Goal 1: Improve Clayton's competitive position through real estate product and infrastructure development

Clayton's rapid residential growth has created both opportunities and challenges, underscoring the need to balance the tax base with strong commercial and industrial development. To compete with peer communities in Johnston County and across the Triangle, Clayton must offer modern industrial sites, redevelopment opportunities, and infrastructure that can support business growth. With the town's strategic location near I-40, US 70, and Research Triangle Park, the availability of prepared sites and reliable utilities will position Clayton for success. Advancing this goal ensures that Clayton not only keeps pace with regional growth but also captures the kind of projects that expand the local economy and reduce dependence on residential taxpayers.

Strategy 1 A: Identify industrial and commercial sites to increase the options for new and expanding business in Clayton.

Action Steps:

- Develop a comprehensive site inventory and corresponding gap analysis of existing commercial, retail, and industrial properties and vacant parcels for potential development, including land ownership, zoning, infrastructure readiness, and environmental constraints, to determine the town's priority industrial and commercial parcels. This study found Clayton's relatively low site and building inventory to be a significant weakness for economic development (see Appendix B).
- Engage landowners and developers to explore public-private partnerships (PPPs), including options for land banking, joint infrastructure development, or structured incentives, to bring key parcels to market.
- Work with Johnston County and the NC Railroad Company to evaluate sites with rail access or proximity to major highways (I-40, I-95, I-540), positioning them for regional distribution, manufacturing, or mixed-use employment centers.
- Establish a list of under-utilized or declining commercial properties (e.g., aging strip centers, vacant industrial sites) and explore potential for brownfields funding and development potential.

Strategy 1 B: Understand the relative cost of public services to different types of land use in order to communicate value and guide planning and decisions about development in Clayton.

Action Steps:

- Through internal analysis or an external study, obtain clear data comparing revenues and costs associated with residential, commercial, and industrial land uses.
- Develop user-friendly communications tools (infographics, web dashboards, short video explainers) that clearly show taxpayers and stakeholders how non-residential development offsets the cost of residential growth.

- Use results to inform development policy decisions, such as utility extensions, zoning updates, and fee schedules.

Strategy 1 C: Through planning, marketing and messaging, increase commercial and industrial development in Clayton to shift tax base toward commercial/non-residential uses.

Action Steps:

- Target and recruit high-value commercial anchors (e.g., medical, professional services, advanced manufacturing suppliers) that expand the non-residential base and complement residential growth.
- Focus business attraction on the top clusters in the county: pharmaceuticals, machinery manufacturing, electric/electronics manufacturing, and metal and metal product manufacturing.
- Consider mixed-use development districts that include retail and office components alongside residential to diversify revenues and reduce reliance on housing.
- Work with Johnston County and other utility partners to coordinate infrastructure investments (water, sewer, roads) that unlock sites best suited for non-residential development.
- Monitor and report tax base by development type (e.g., residential/non-residential or industrial, commercial, residential) to track the balance and distribution of development types in Clayton.
- With leadership from the economic development department, the town should explore some guidelines or a framework for evaluating proposed projects for potential public support. This framework could include priority geographic or industry targets. Established guidelines can communicate the town's priorities and goals, without limiting future options. In priority locations, Asheville provides an example of targeted incentives in their Innovation Districts.

Strategy 1 D: To increase the upskilling opportunities for residents and workers in Clayton, support the work of local workforce partners, and facilitate connections with Clayton employers.

Action Steps:

- When the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program is underway, include questions about priority skills or skills gaps in Clayton's workforce. Share these insights with Johnston Community College (JCC) and other local workforce partners.
- Consider opportunities to expand and strengthen the existing Johnston County Workforce Development Center located just outside of Clayton, while also looking for opportunities to bring curriculum programs or CTE programming to another facility that could be established in Clayton.
- As part of the BRE program, understand existing work-based learning programs at Clayton employers and encourage Clayton employers to begin or expand them, especially those that can be connected to JCC.

Strategy 1 E: As the town considers investments and plans for amenities and programming, include the economic development perspective and impacts on business and resident attraction.

Action Steps:

- Establish an internal communications process where the economic development office communicates near-term economic development strategies and projects and links other town projects (e.g., road improvement, greenway development, recreation program expansion) to economic development strategies to make sure other town departments understand their contributions and the linkages between economic development successes and town operations.
- Incorporate workforce attraction messaging (e.g., “live, work, play” amenities) into economic development marketing materials.



Goal 2: Attract new industrial, commercial, and retail business to Clayton.

Clayton's growing population and strategic location within the Triangle make it a prime destination for new business investment. Attracting industrial, commercial, and retail development will diversify the local economy, create jobs, and provide amenities that serve both residents and employers. Clayton is well positioned to capture new projects. By focusing on targeted recruitment, the town can expand its tax base, reduce retail leakage, and bring high-value employers and services closer to home.

Strategy 2 A: Prioritize available industrial and commercial sites.

Action Steps:

- Develop and publicize a priority list of sites based on readiness, infrastructure, and development type, so staff and allies understand Clayton's most competitive properties.
- Identify sites for shovel-ready certifications (ElectriCities Smart Sites, NC Certified Sites, etc.) for top industrial sites.
- Develop site improvement plans for sites needing infrastructure improvements with drawings and cost and time estimates for completion. Explore grant and shared investment opportunities with partners to support these extensions.
- Create one-page prospectus sheets and site packages (maps, zoning, workforce data) for each high-priority site for quick distribution.
- Enhance Clayton's economic development website by linking to interactive maps at the county and adding drone videos and virtual tours of industrial product owned or in partnership with the town.
- Assure that Clayton's available sites and buildings are included in allies' and partners' listings of properties on their websites especially Johnston County Economic Development and the Economic Development Partnership of NC.

Strategy 2 B: Identify target industry sectors and users matched to sites.

Action Steps:

- Identify priority targets for Clayton by industry sector (e.g., advanced manufacturing) and land use (e.g., medical office). This study recommends the following target industrial sectors: pharmaceuticals, machinery manufacturing, electric/electronics manufacturing, and metal and metal product manufacturing. Match these priority targets to existing availability sites and buildings. Share these targets and priorities with developers and economic development allies.
- Develop marketing materials for the website and for tradeshow and industry meetings demonstrating Clayton's support for specific industries and users along with available locations.
- Develop use-case scenarios (e.g., "pharmaceutical expansion site," "electronics manufacturing site") that demonstrate how Clayton's sites align with industry trends.

Action Steps:

- Strategy 2 D: Connect and communicate with recruitment allies about Clayton's goals and priorities to increase and leverage alignment.

Action Steps:

-
- The map displays the Research Triangle region, centered on Raleigh, NC. Major highways are shown in blue, including I-40, I-540, I-70, I-42, I-95, and US-1, US-64, US-501, US-264, US-401, US-421, and NC-701. Key cities are marked with black dots: Durham, Chapel Hill, Raleigh, Pittsboro, Sanford, Benson, Goldsboro, and Wilson. The map highlights the proposed bus route from Raleigh to Clayton, NC, and the future extension to Benson, NC. The route is shown in orange, with a label 'BUS' and 'FUTURE' indicating the proposed and future segments. The map also shows Wake County and Johnston County.

Goal 3: Strengthen the economic base through a formal Business Retention and Expansion Program (BRE)

Clayton's strongest economic assets are the businesses that make up the community. From large employers like Novo Nordisk and Grifols to locally owned small businesses, these firms provide the foundation of the town's economy and quality of life. A proactive retention and expansion strategy will help identify growth opportunities, connect businesses with resources, and address challenges before they become barriers. By establishing partnerships and keeping lines of communication open, Clayton can safeguard jobs, expand its tax base, and build connection with existing and future employers.

Strategy 3 A: Formalize a Business Retention and Expansion program.

Action Steps:

- Develop a BRE protocol and database system to track visits, contacts, and follow-up actions with local businesses. This can be managed with existing software, or a specialized program or platform may be considered.
- Identify 20-50 priority employers for in-person visits each year. Add additional companies to the visit in the rotation over time. Companies should represent target sectors, major employers, at-risk companies, and different geographic areas.
- Establish a structured visitation program, scheduling outreach to a mix of large employers, small businesses, and targeted growth firms each quarter.
- Consider including Clayton partners in appropriate employer meetings to add depth and value for the employer.
- To further connect Clayton employers to the town, consider periodic "Coffee with the Mayor" or "Coffee with the Manager" session for informal discussions and connections.
- Create a confidential feedback channel for businesses to share challenges (e.g., workforce, permitting, infrastructure) and ensure issues are escalated quickly.

Strategy 3 B: Complete an annual or bi-annual survey of Clayton businesses to track trends and identify expansion opportunities.

Action Steps:

- Design and distribute a user-friendly online survey to Clayton businesses, ensuring accessibility and anonymity.
- Use survey data to map industry and workforce trends and identify at-risk businesses and potential expansion projects before they leave the community.
- Share a Business Climate Report annually with town council, businesses, and allies to demonstrate transparency and accountability.
- Cross-reference survey results with state and regional labor market data to spot emerging opportunities or vulnerabilities.

Strategy 3 C: Connect Clayton business with the town through communications and periodic events.

Action Steps:

- Launch a quarterly e-newsletter or business bulletin featuring updates on progress on the strategic plan, infrastructure, programs, and recognition of local business achievements.
- Ensure visibility of Clayton economic development staff, as well as other town staff, at community business events. Consider sponsorships or facility hosting for important partner business events.
- Consider public relations outreach during “Manufacturing Week” or “Economic Development Week” with site visits, recognition events, and social media spotlights.
- Publicize and connect the development community to the “single point of contact” system within town government so businesses know exactly where to go for permitting, infrastructure, or problem-solving assistance.



Goal 4: Build Clayton's economic development image and brand through marketing and communication

As a town competing in a strong region for business investment and residents, Clayton must tell its story clearly and consistently. The town's image and messaging should reflect its strengths and goals. Through intentional marketing, improved messaging, and coordinated outreach, Clayton can raise its profile among its allies, site selectors, developers, and prospective employers.

Strategy 4 A: Present, explain, and track the strategic plan to keep goals aligned.

Action Steps:

- Develop a visual summary that communicates the strategic plan in a concise, accessible format for presentations and public use (it could be the one-page summary that accompanies this plan). Consider sharing some version of this on the economic development department webpage.
- Make short presentations to relevant groups, e.g., Johnston County EDC Board, Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Association, to share the goals and progress of the strategic plan.
- Present annual updates to town council and community stakeholders, reporting progress on goals.
- Integrate quarterly staff updates to keep town employees aware of priorities and reinforce alignment across departments.
- Publish regular reports and summaries in the e-newsletter and on social media highlighting completed milestones.

Strategy 4 B: Ensure economic development goals are understood and applied throughout town departments.

Action Steps:

- Use existing staff and leadership meetings to report on the strategic plan and to reinforce how economic development goals connect to other departments and projects.
- Develop an internal Economic Development toolkit (FAQs, talking points, key stats) that department heads can use when interacting with businesses or residents.
- Encourage interdepartmental participation in business visits or events, so departments hear feedback directly from employers.
- Consider adding an "ED Impact Review" step in major project planning so every department understands how its initiatives support competitiveness and quality of place.

Strategy 4 C: Increase visibility and messaging aligned with Clayton's preferred economic development image.

Action Steps:

- With external marketing support or through informal input from allies and stakeholders, develop and define Clayton's brand narrative pertaining to economic development and weave it consistently into materials. Some things to promote include: adjacent to Wake County, high quality of life, workforce-ready, business-friendly.
- Increase and regularly schedule communications to key economic development allies highlighting Clayton's priority development strategies and assets. Targets include site selectors, developers, and regional partners.
- Establish connections to local and regional media outlets to feature Clayton in stories and interviews focused on growth and opportunity. Identify several spokespersons who can be accessible to media when requests are made and provide them with training and messaging.
- Share success stories such as expansions, new retail openings, workforce completions, or new programs through press releases, social media, and e-newsletters.
- Engage local businesses as brand ambassadors, featuring them in video testimonials and spotlight campaigns.



Goal 5: Increase opportunities through improved intergovernmental relations

Clayton's future growth is closely tied to the policies and investments of Johnston County and its municipal neighbors. Regional collaboration on shared assets such as infrastructure corridors, industrial sites, and workforce training can unlock opportunities that no single community could achieve alone. By strengthening partnerships with Johnston County and nearby towns, Clayton can secure funding, coordinate growth, and enhance its leverage in the Triangle region. This goal ensures that Clayton plays a leading role in shaping a prosperous future for both the town and the broader county.

Strategy 5 A: Increase connection and collaboration on projects with Johnston County to improve county-wide planning and infrastructure deployment.

Action Steps:

- Establish a regular meeting with Johnston County economic development staff to align on target clusters, priority sites, and infrastructure investments.
- Collaborate with the county on cluster-specific marketing materials (e.g., life sciences, advanced manufacturing, logistics) that highlight Clayton's role in the county ecosystem.
- Partner on infrastructure planning studies (transportation, water, sewer, and broadband) to ensure county and town investments reinforce cluster development opportunities.

Strategy 5 B: Increase connection and collaboration with Johnston County municipalities to increase economic assets like industrial sites.

Action Steps:

- Initiate a roundtable of Johnston County municipal leaders to discuss shared opportunities for industrial and commercial development.
- Explore a shared revenue model for one or more industrial/commerce parks, ensuring fair tax revenue distribution among participating jurisdictions.
- Coordinate regional workforce housing and transit initiatives that make it easier for employers and employees to choose Clayton/Johnston County locations.

Strategy 5 C: Communicate consistently and deliberately with Clayton's representatives and allies in the North Carolina General Assembly and the U.S. Congress.

Action Steps:

- Develop and communicate town priorities for policies and funding from the N.C. General Assembly and state government agencies and also for U.S. Congressional action. Share these with local and state-wide allies for additional advocacy on behalf of Clayton.
- Maintain communications with Clayton's state and federal representatives as well as with key committee, General Assembly, and U.S. Congressional leadership.

- Host events in Raleigh and in Clayton for these elected officials and their staff to strengthen relationships and build support for Clayton's assets and priorities.

Strategy 5 D: Identify and secure funding from state and federal sources or other grant programs to advance economic development agenda.

Action Steps:

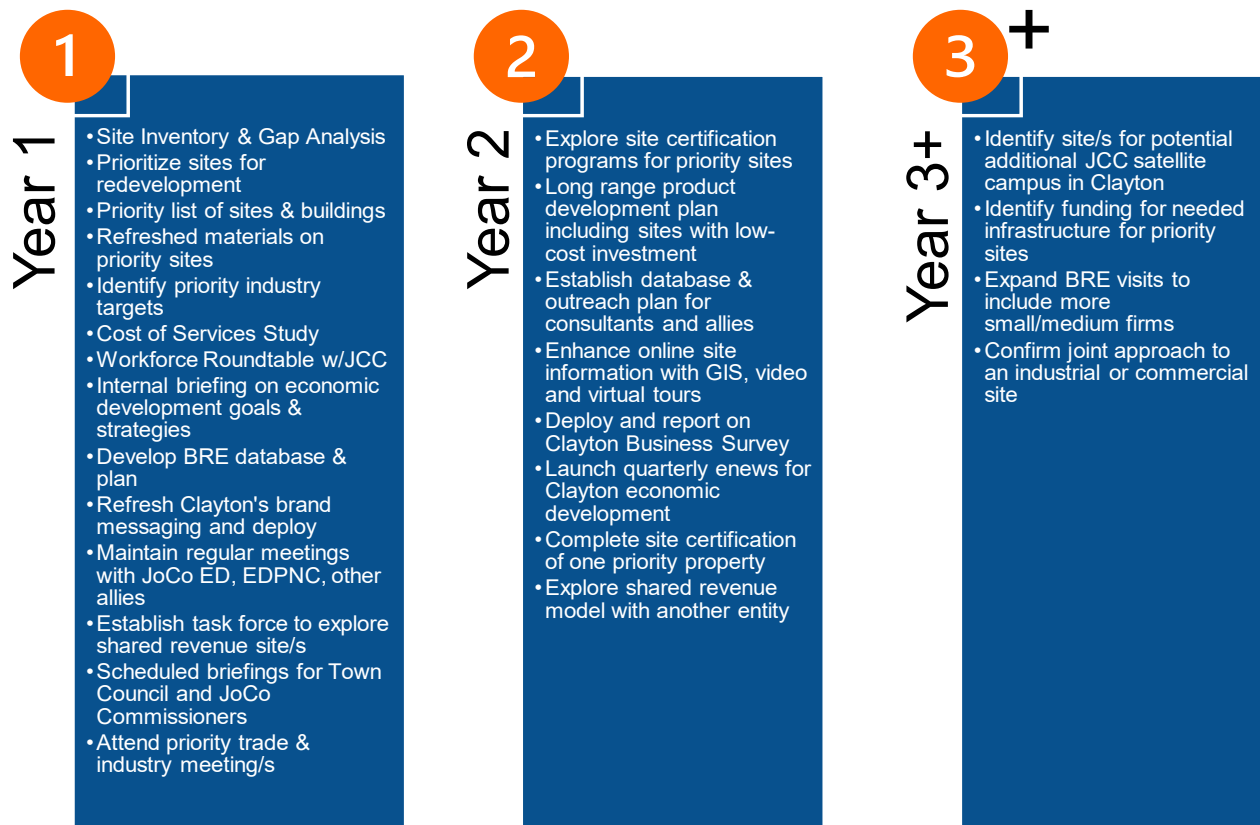
- Monitor grant opportunities from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), Golden LEAF Foundation, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, NC Commerce, and other sources for opportunities to advance Clayton's economic development goals.
- Develop a "shovel-ready project list" (infrastructure extensions, redevelopment projects, and site preparation) with estimated costs to quickly align with funding opportunities.
- Partner with Johnston County and neighboring municipalities to submit joint grant applications, strengthening competitiveness for large-scale awards.



Implementation Guide

Implementing a strategic plan is essential to guiding Clayton's long-term economic growth and resilience. A clear road map ensures that local government, businesses, and community partners are working toward shared priorities, reducing duplication, and making the most of opportunities. By following this plan, Clayton can strengthen its competitiveness, attract and retain jobs, and pursue development that is both inclusive and sustainable—ultimately enhancing the quality of life for residents and securing a stronger economic future.

Below is a recommended timeline to implement major initiatives in the strategic plan. The list is not comprehensive, nor does it include the many ongoing activities of the economic development department. It includes action items that require the most significant financial and people resources, and many will require expanded partnerships and support of allies.



Metrics

We advocate that economic development organizations track three sets of metrics. Program metrics are outcomes of the activities of the economic development program and measure the effectiveness of strategies. These metrics inform strategic planning and resource allocation. Organizational metrics track the overall stability of the organization. These metrics offer an understanding of how effective and efficient the organization is. Community well-being is a measure of the overall health and well-being of a community. Over time, these metrics influence a wide range of public policies.

Example Metrics

The best way to measure results is to align metrics with the strategic plan. There should be metrics for each goal area.



Recommended Dashboard of Program Metrics



Appendix A: SWOT Summary



Clayton, NC, is part of the world-class metro known as the “Research Triangle,” and the city benefits from its proximity to the assets and amenities of the region. Easy access to I-40, I-95, and the newly opened I-540 mean that Clayton residents and employees can move around the region. These assets are part of the reason for the strong population growth and commercial opportunities in Clayton, which have in turn contributed to a strong industrial base, including large bio-pharma companies and a thriving downtown. With all of these advantages, Clayton maintains a small town feel and sense of community that residents want to preserve and newcomers cite as a reason they stay.



Growth and development brings some challenges, such as increasing traffic and road congestion, as well as capacity and distribution systems for water and wastewater treatment, which are cited as current weaknesses. The local development review process and how it compares to competitor towns is a concern in the development community. Relative cost of living and the lack of commercial spaces such as lodging and meeting space may be limiting some business growth. The high concentration of residential uses in Clayton’s tax base contributes to higher service needs and can be balanced with additional commercial and industrial users.



Even with the challenges, there are plentiful opportunities for a community like Clayton, which combines population and development growth with a strong business base and access to metro resources. A new economic development program, working in concert with the county and state, promises to raise Clayton’s visibility with projects considering the area. Leveraging investments in infrastructure like wastewater treatment and ground transportation will provide advantages for the development opportunities in Clayton. Convening and communicating with existing leaders and new ones will amplify Clayton’s efforts and successes.



Other than the threats that rapid growth can bring, Clayton is subject to many levels of uncertainty including global forces in the current, dynamic economy as well as the North Carolina General Assembly’s recent and potential expanded legislation limiting localities’ options for guiding growth and development. Clayton needs to control its reputation through branding and messaging, assuring its outward image matches its internal goals and objectives.

Strengths

- Location; Proximity to the Triangle
- Growing population and client base
- Land availability
- Interstate access:I-40; I-95
- Bio Pharma companies
- Thriving downtown
- Small town + access to major metro
- Sense of Community
- Friendly people
- Small town feel
- Great place to live & raise a family
- Higher education access for labor force
- Strong partners like RTRP & JoCo ED
- Bioworks + NCWorks training

Weaknesses

- Local regulations/ red tape
- Water and sewer capacity
- Traffic congestion and roads
- Standardizing land and development review
- Downtown closed on Sundays
- Wayfinding and parking
- Branding and marketing for downtown
- Leadership pipeline
- Competition with nearby towns that are more responsive
- Need more high paying jobs
- Meeting space
- Lodging in Clayton
- Tax base dependent on residential
- Cost of living is higher than nearby towns and rural areas
- Perception and reputation of Clayton

Opportunities

- Entertainment at Clayton Center
- Strong Economic Development Department and new strategic plan
- Leverage visionary business community
- Raise local income levels
- Increase connectivity
- Strong legacy leaders
- Small business owners + developers
- Expanded sewer capacity in 2026
- Streamlining town processes
- Regionalize water source
- I-540 completion
- Clusters of development across the county
- Eliminate obstacles to development to increase non-residential tax base
- Jurisdiction collaboration, e.g. Wilson's Mills

Threats

- General Assembly limits on development regulations
- Political uncertainty
- Water capacity and predictability
- Property tax rates
- Workforce - numbers and quality
- Adjacent communities' development regulations
- Regional project development competition
- Reputation
- Branding

Appendix B: Sites and Buildings Inventory

Clayton has four industrial sites listed on the state's database, EDPNC.com. One of these is the Clayton Business Park, which has all utilities on site – water, sewer, electric, and natural gas. It is located on Little Creek Church Road and Ranch Road and is in an Opportunity Zone.

Site Name	Acreage	Utilities	Notes
Cornwallis Commons	5.7	Water and sewer on site	Pad-ready site
Tuttle Site	38.46	None on site	For Sale
Clayton Business Park	67	Water, sewer, natural gas on site	Opportunity Zone
Industrial Park on Gordon Rd	328	Power, water, gas on site	Rail access

Source: EDPNC.com

There are nine industrial buildings in the state's database with a Clayton address, but only one, 501 Atkinson Street, is in the town.

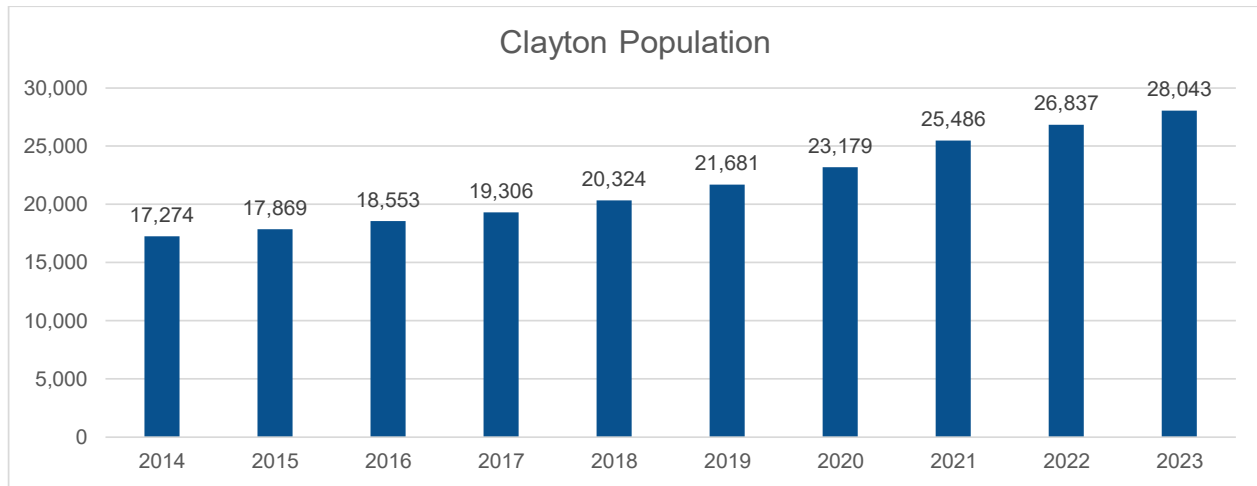
Building Name	SF	Ceiling Height (minimum)	Notes
2585 Hwy 70 Bus	7,674		Flex, office
Avalon Center	19,670	30'	Multi-tenant
7868 US 70 business West	20,800	18'	Flex, warehouse
501 Atkinson	33,276	14'	Office, tech, warehouse
973 Shotwell Road	53,627	20'	
42 West Business Park	125,000	22'	Warehouse
Clayton Logistics Center	235,668	32'	Warehouse
4520 Guy Rd.	236,600	32'	Building in development
Clayton Commerce Center	382,880	32'	Building in development
Crossroads Trade Center	555,240	32'	Building in development

Source: EDPNC.com

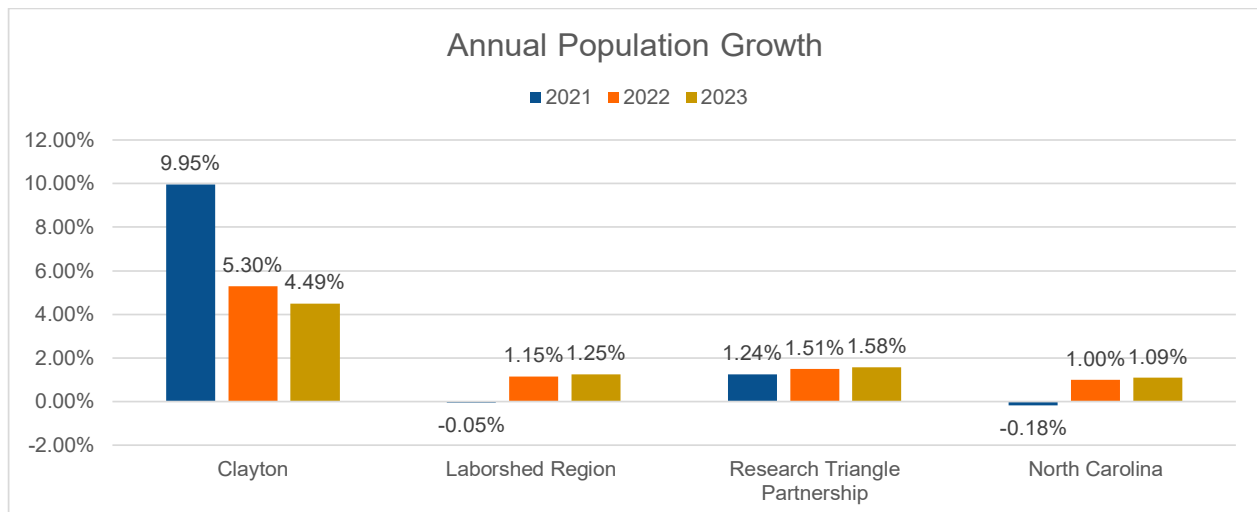
Clayton's industrial product inventory is a weakness. Though there are some significant industrial buildings "on the drawing board," companies today are looking to minimize risk and are on a short timeline. This lack of building inventory means that opportunities to attract new firms to Clayton, or to locate companies that are expanding are reduced. This strategic plan calls for additional investment in industrial product development and partnerships with the private sector to ensure Clayton has the real estate inventory for new and expanding businesses.

Appendix C: Economic and Demographic Data

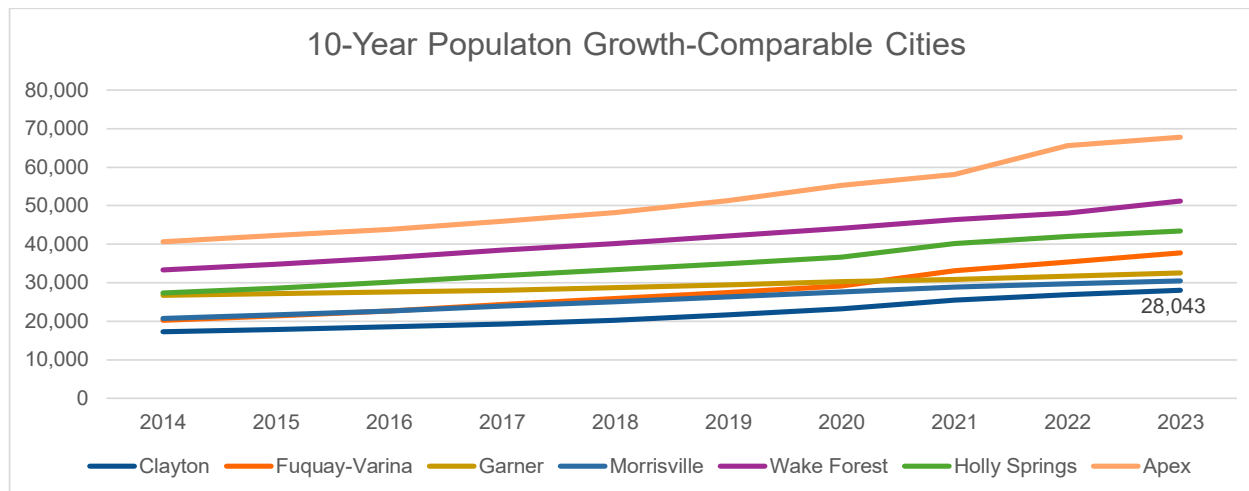
Data were researched for the Town of Clayton, Johnston County, the laborshed (defined as a 60-minute drivetime for Clayton), a group of comparable cities (Fuquay-Varina, Garner, Morrisville, Wake Forest, Holly Springs, and Apex), Research Triangle Regional Partnership, and North Carolina to provide a quantitative view of how Clayton and its economy are changing. The economic and demographic data were used, along with qualitative input and best practices, to form the economic development strategy.



Source: Jobs EQ



Source: Jobs EQ



Source: Jobs EQ

2023 Median Age Comparable Cities

	Clayton	Fuquay-Varina	Garner	Morrisville	Wake Forest	Holly Springs	Apex
2023	32.7	36.3	37.6	34.5	38.8	36.3	36.0

Source: Jobs EQ

2023 Median Age Region and State

	Clayton	Johnston County	Laborshed Region	Research Triangle Partnership	North Carolina
2023	32.7	38.3	37.3	38.1	39.1

Source: Jobs EQ Laborshed Region is a 60 min drivetime from Clayton.

2024 Diversity Index Comparable Cities

Clayton	Fuquay-Varina	Garner	Morrisville	Wake Forest	Holly Springs	Apex
71.0	57.4	73.5	68.2	57.4	52.0	61.0

Source: ESRI

2024 Diversity Index Region and State

Clayton	Johnston County	Laborshed Region	Research Triangle Partnership	North Carolina
71.0	65.3	71.1	70.7	66.3

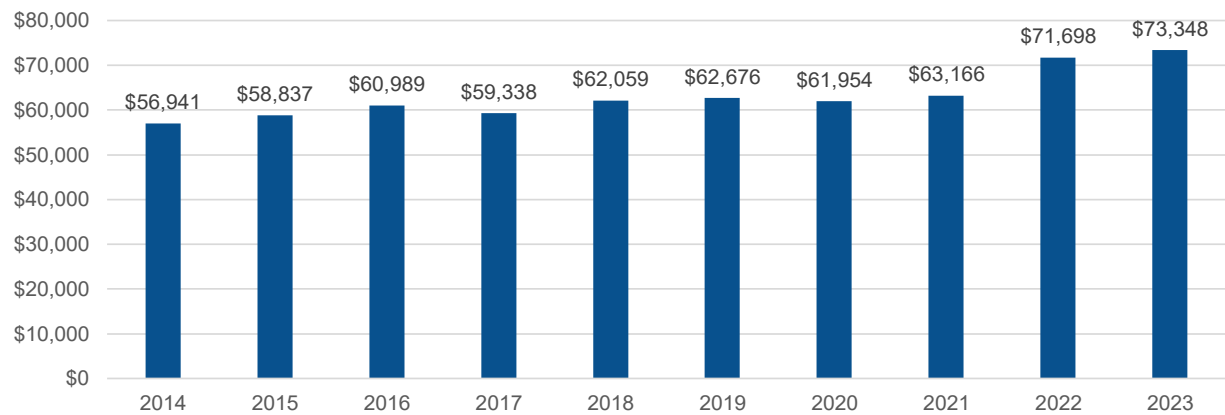
Source: ESRI Laborshed Region is a 60 min drivetime from Clayton.

Clayton 2023 Race & Ethnicity

White	60.2%
Black or African American	27.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.1%
Asian	0.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Some Other Race	5.5%
Two or More Races	6.5%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	13.7%

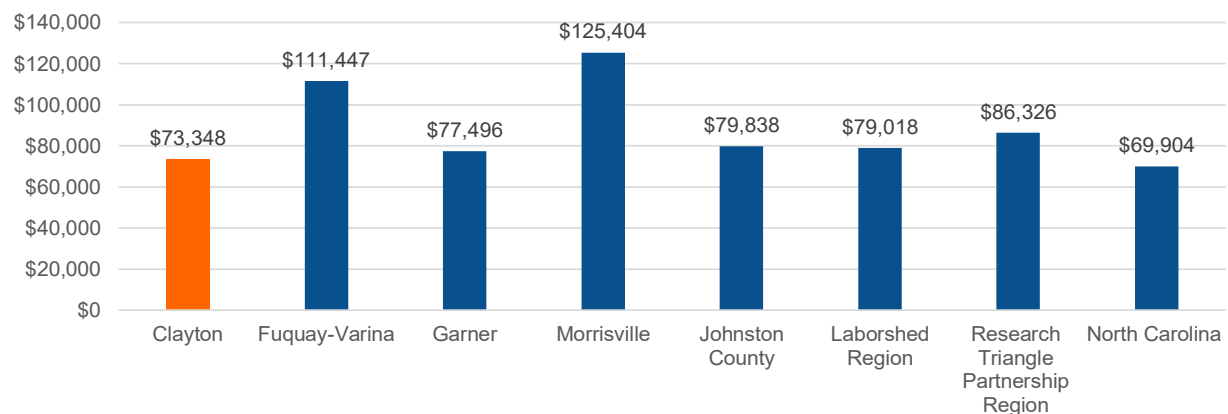
Source: JobsEQ

Clayton Median Household Income

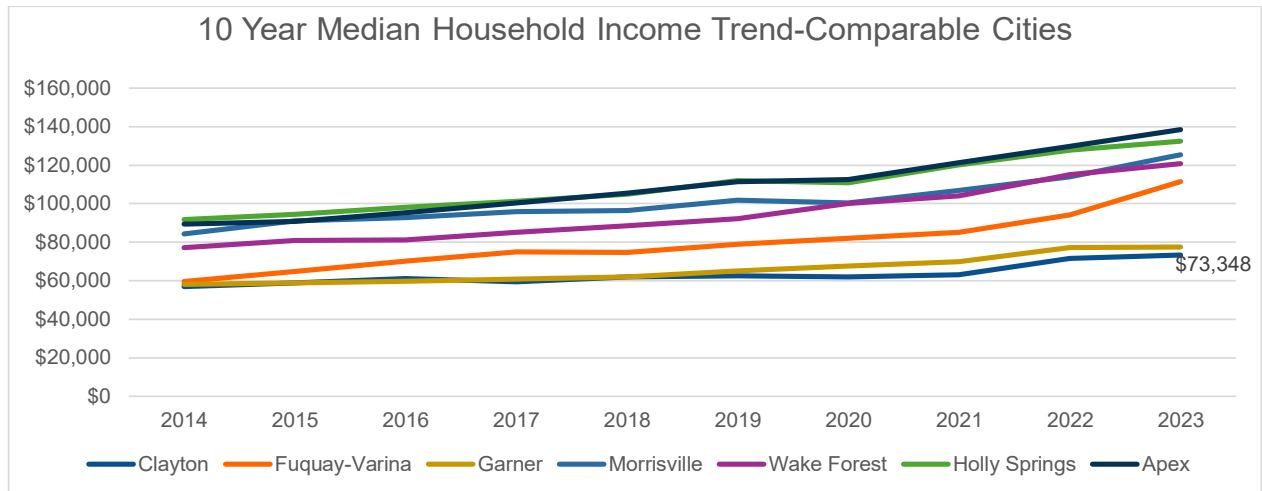


Source: Jobs EQ

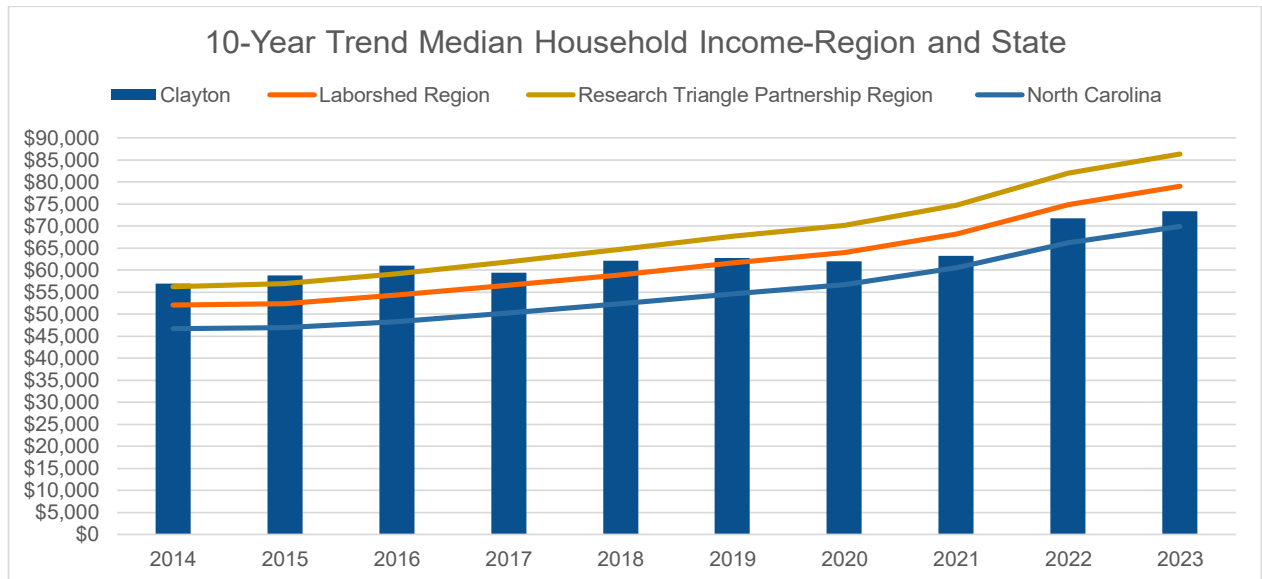
2023 Median Household Income



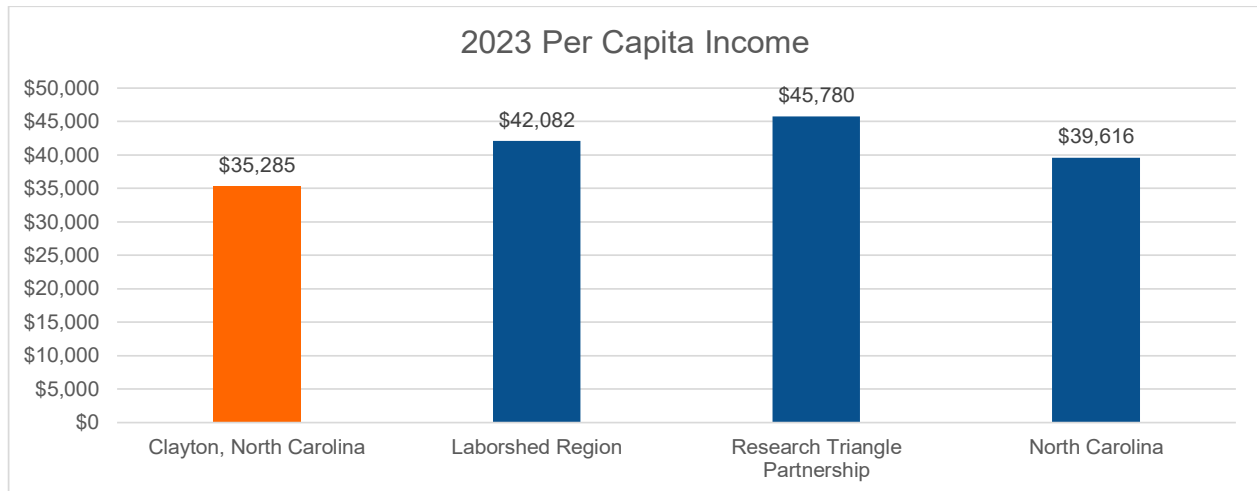
Source: Jobs EQ



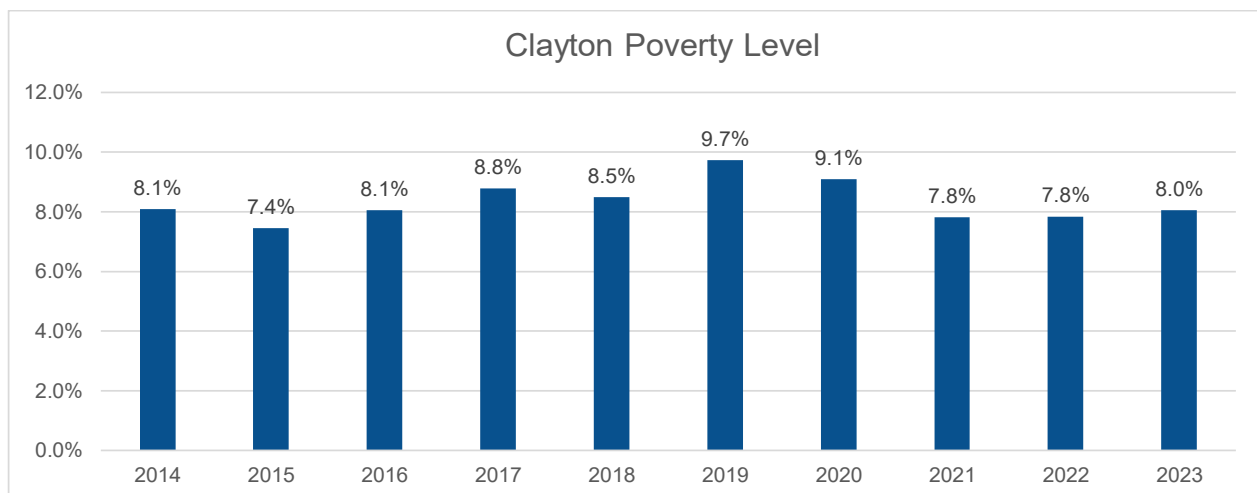
Source: Jobs EQ



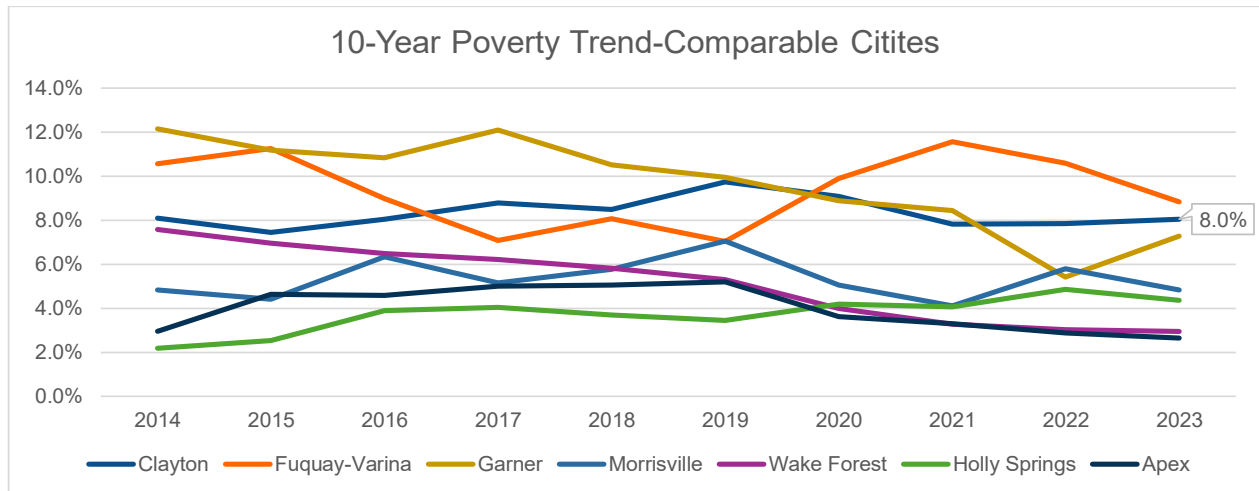
Source: Jobs EQ



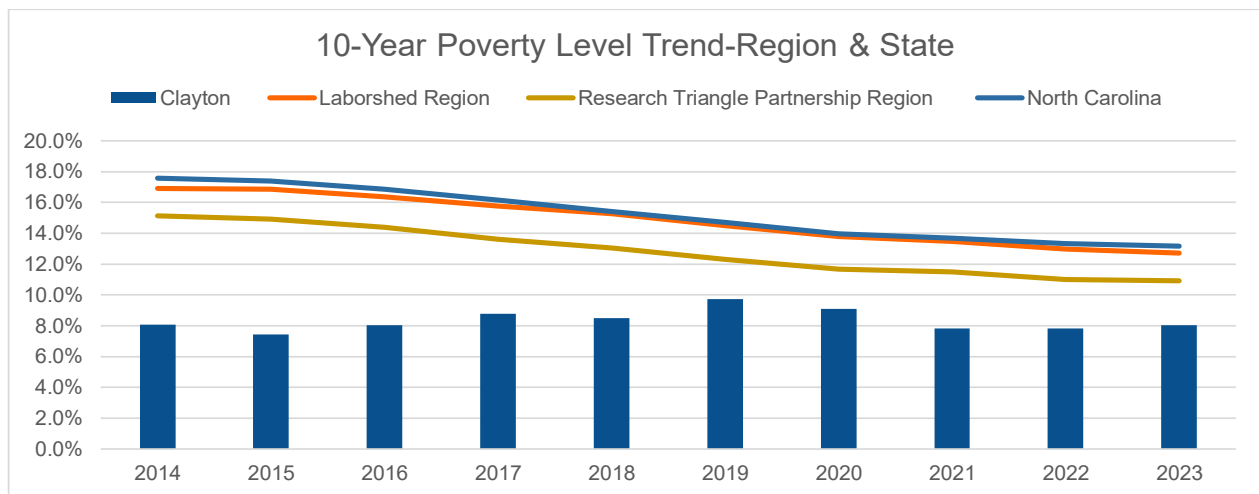
Source: Jobs EQ



Source: Jobs EQ



Source: Jobs EQ



Source: Jobs EQ Laborshed Region is a 60 min drivetime from Clayton.

Clayton 2022 Educational Attainment, Age 25-64

No High School Diploma	5.6%
High School Graduate	22.6%
Some College, No Degree	19.5%
Associate's Degree	12.4%
Bachelor's Degree	27.1%
Postgraduate Degree	12.7%
Source: JobsEQ	

2022 Percent with a High School Degree or Higher - Comparable Cities

Clayton	Fuquay-Varina	Garner	Morrisville	Wake Forest	Holly Springs	Apex
94.4%	97.0%	94.1%	98.7%	96.0%	96.2%	98.1%

Source: JobsEQ

2022 Percent with a High School Degree or Higher - Region and State

Clayton	Johnston County	Laborshed Region	Research Triangle Partnership	North Carolina
94.4%	90.1%	91.3%	91.8%	90.4%

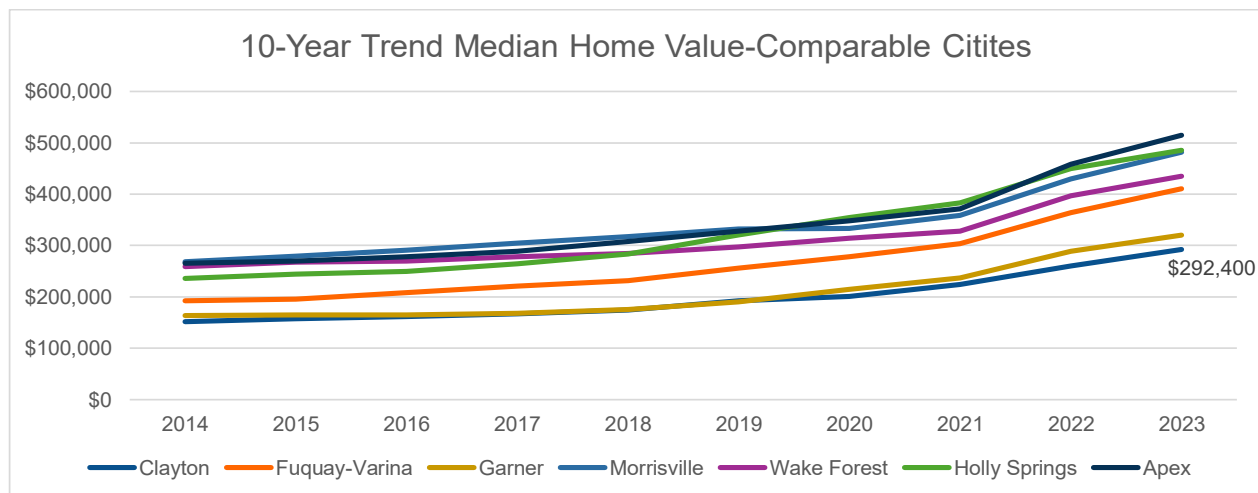
Source: JobsEQ Laborshed Region is a 60 min drivetime from Clayton.

2022 Research Triangle Partnership for Total - All Programs Degrees and Certificates

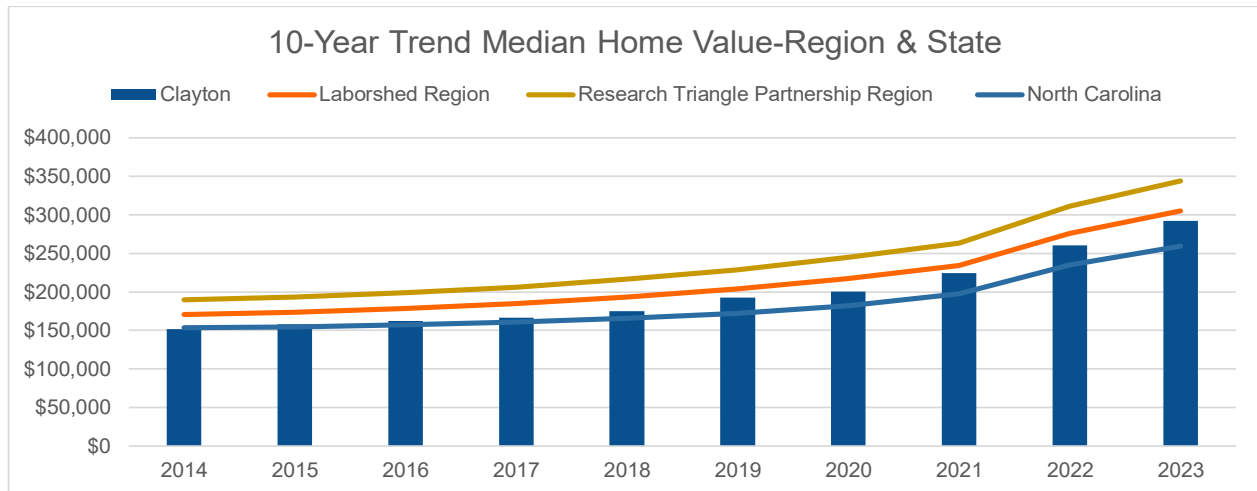
	Certificates and 2yr Awards	4yr Awards	Postgraduate Awards	Total Awards
Business Administration and Management, General	863	1,693	486	3,042
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	2,882	83	13	2,978
Computer Systems Networking and Telecommunications	1,712	0	40	1,752
Computer Science	0	1,133	538	1,671
Biology/Biological Sciences, General	10	1,293	21	1,324
Management Science	112	4	1,161	1,277
Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods, Other	0	0	1,016	1,016
Information Technology	969	36	0	1,005
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	356	631	0	987
Political Science and Government, General	0	728	70	798

Source: JobsEQ

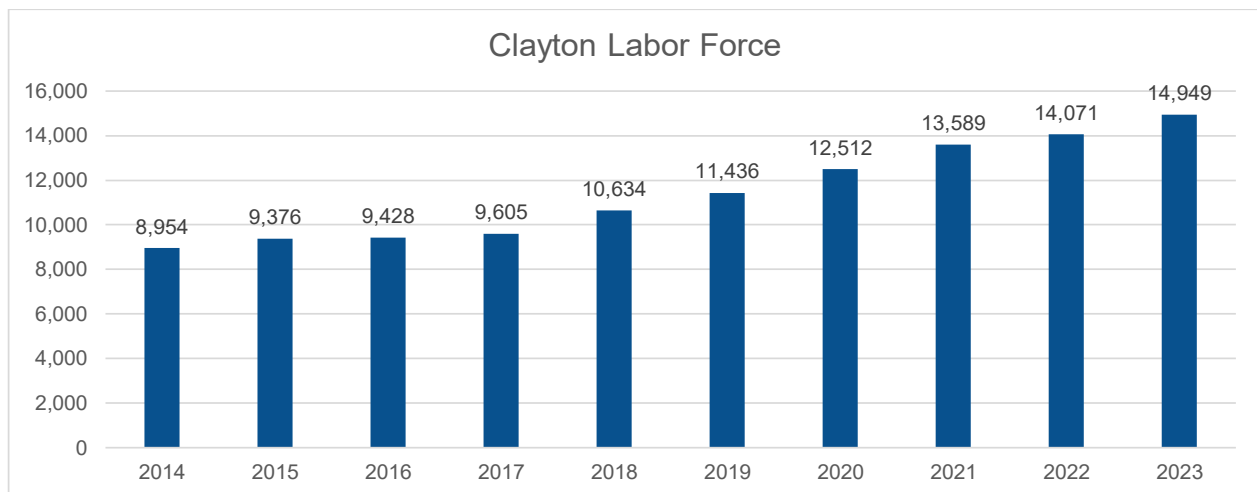
Clayton Housing Profile	
Total Housing Units, 2024	12,525
Projected Units in 2029	14,584
Projected % Increase 2024-29	16.44%
% Occupied	94.90%
% Vacant	5.10%
Owner-Occupied	63.60%
Renter-Occupied	31.30%
Affordability Index	103
Median Monthly Contract Rent	\$1,190
Median Monthly Gross Rent	\$1,372
Median Home Value	\$258,116
Median Age Built	2003
Stock	
1, Detached	71.80%
1, Attached	5.20%
2-9 Units	5.40%
10-19 Units	4.30%
20+ Units	6.50%
Mobile Home, Boat, RV, etc.	6.70%
Homes for Sale	284.00%
Average Sale Time (days)	47
Sources: ESRI, rockethomes.com	



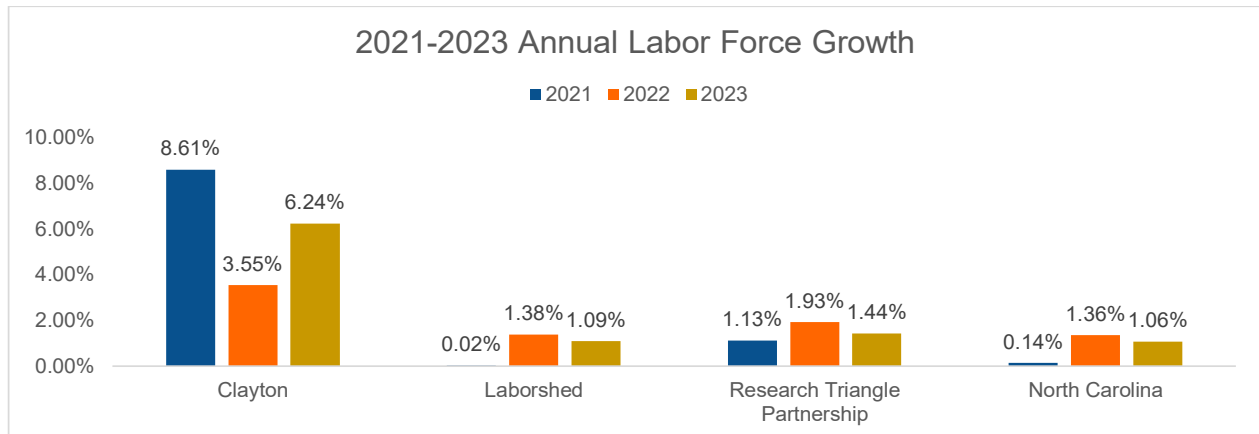
Source: Jobs EQ



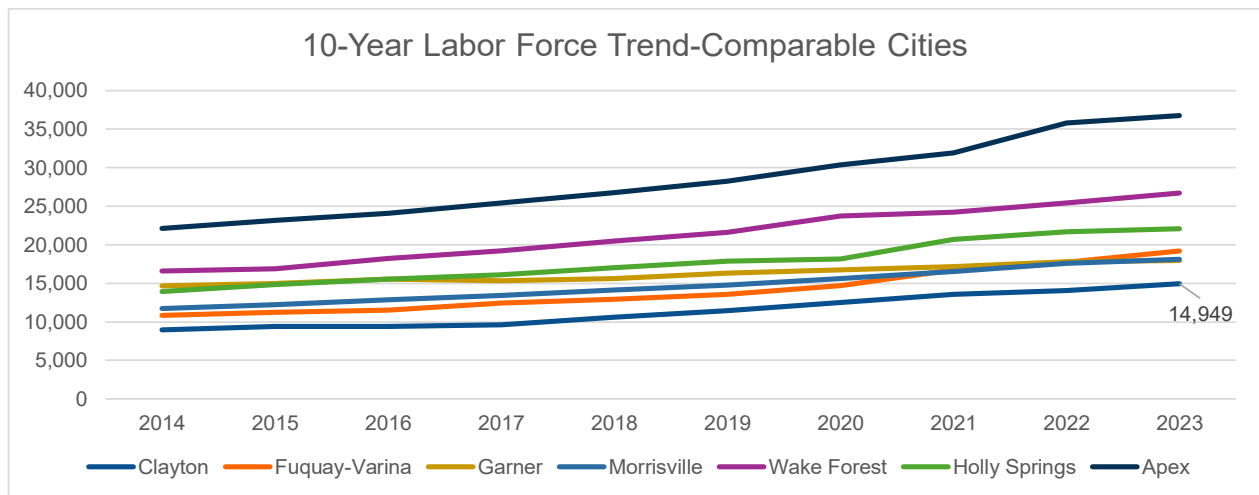
Source: Jobs EQ



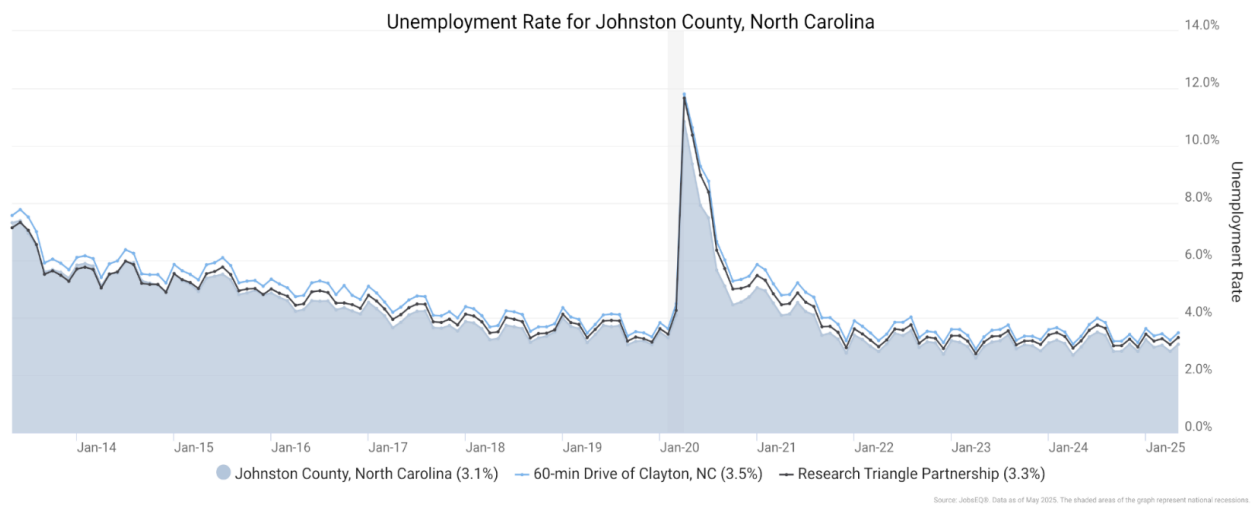
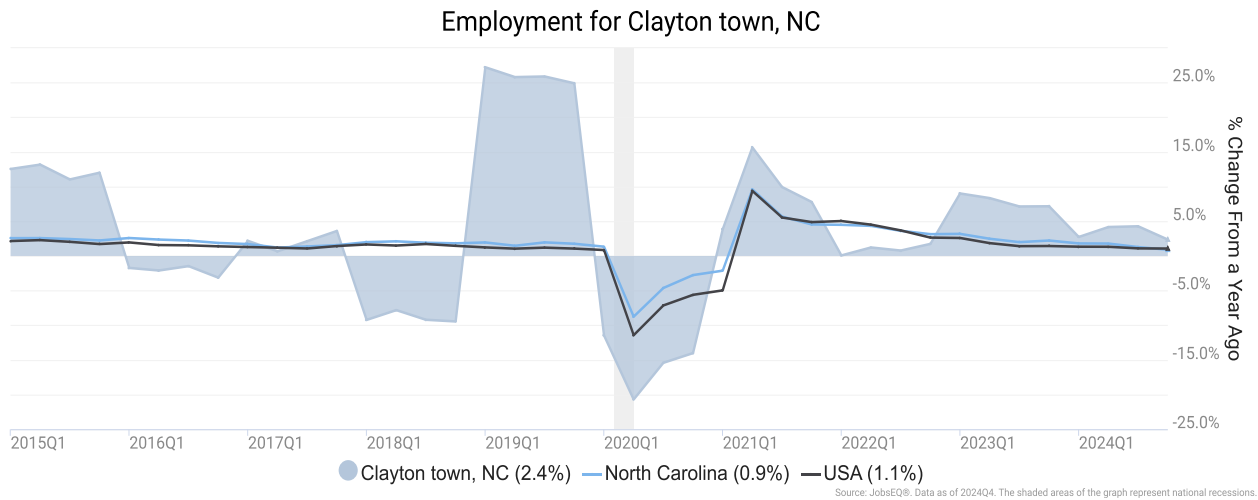
Source: Jobs EQ

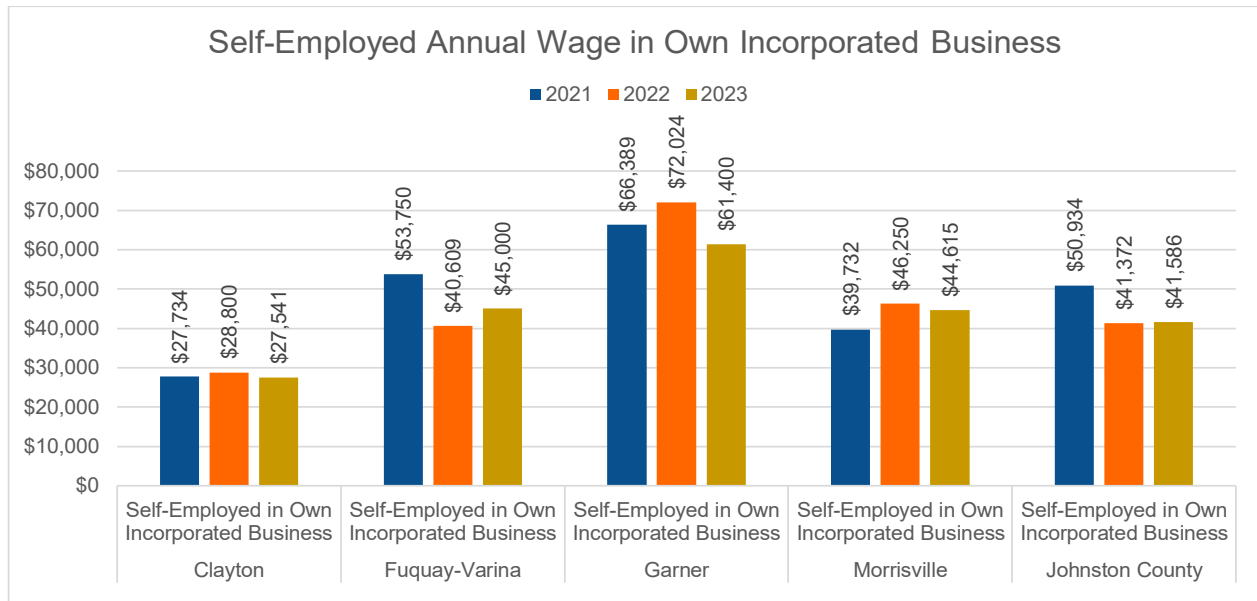


Source: Jobs EQ

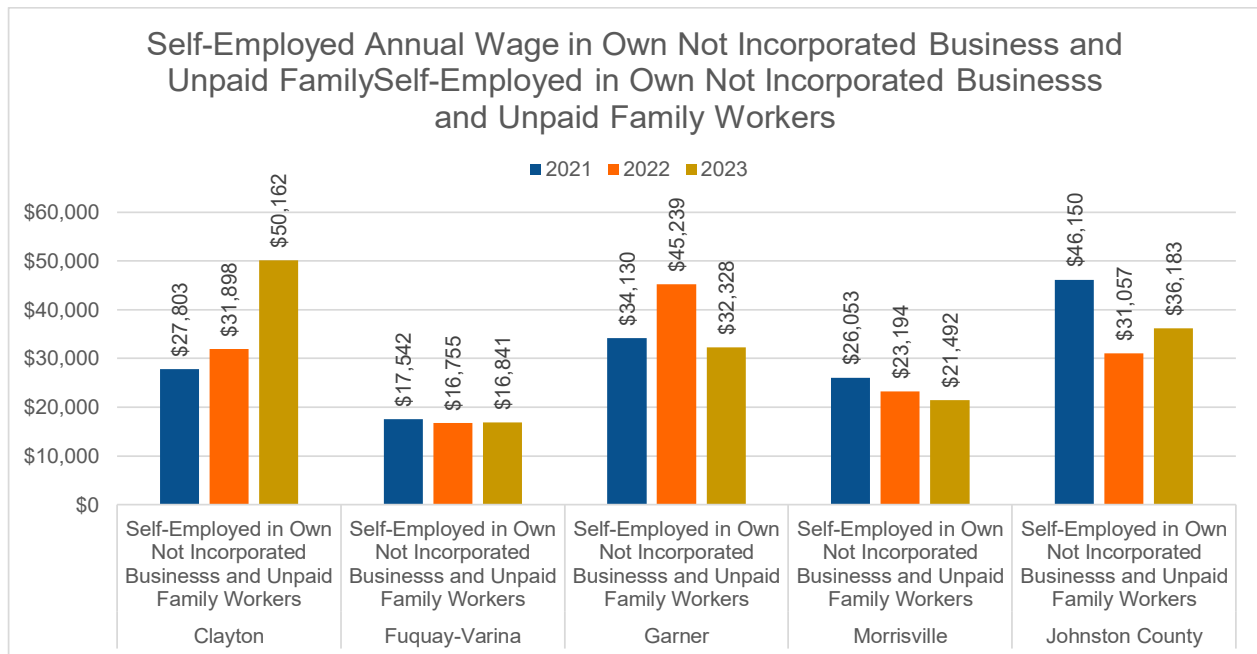


Source: Jobs EQ

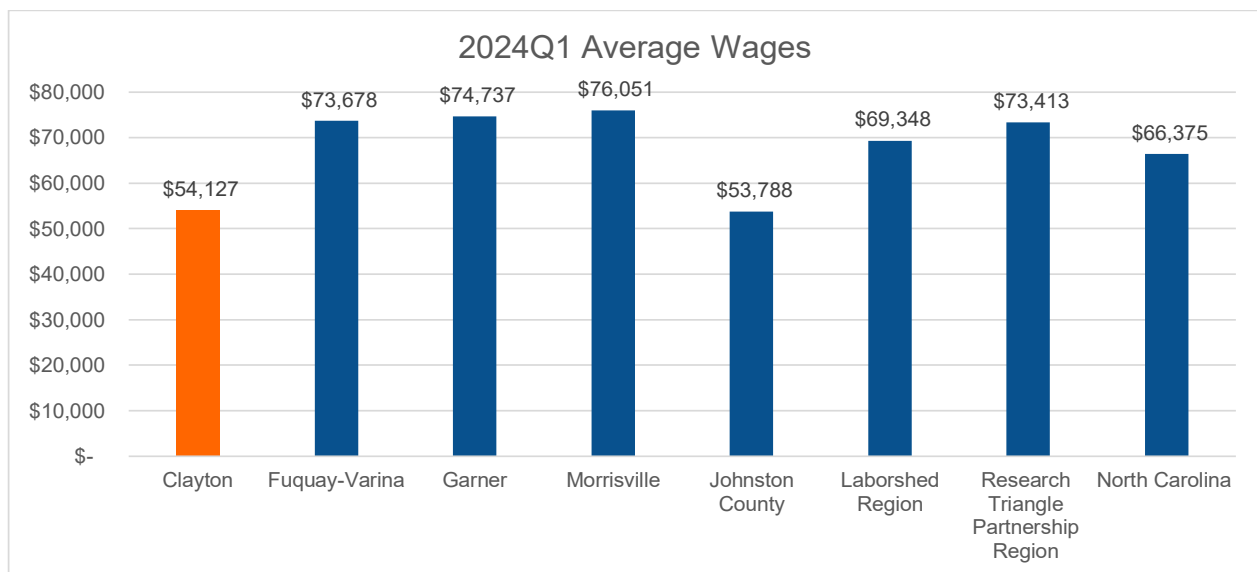
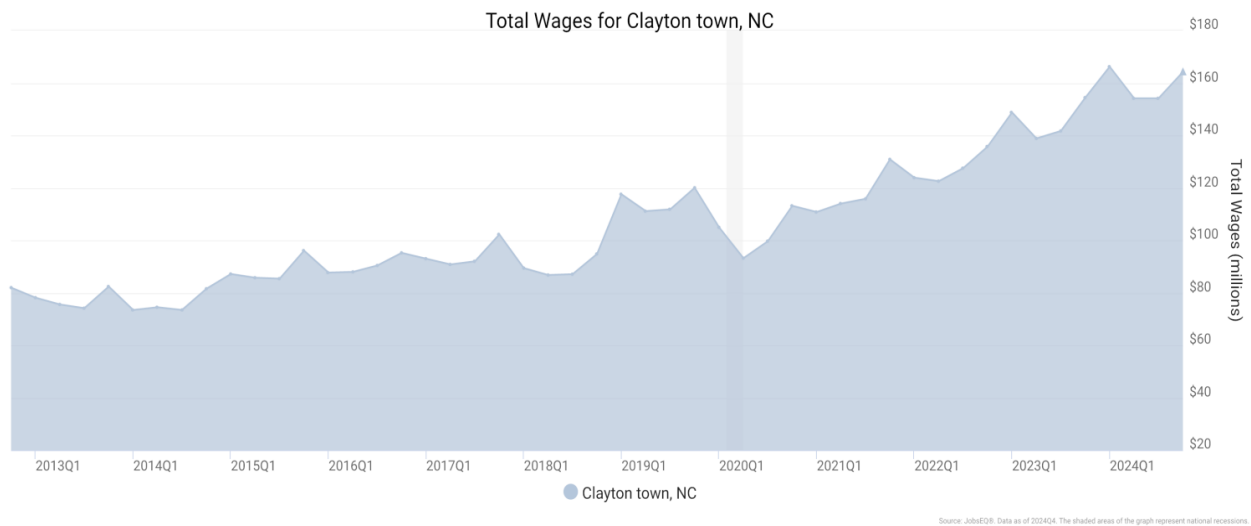




Source: census.gov

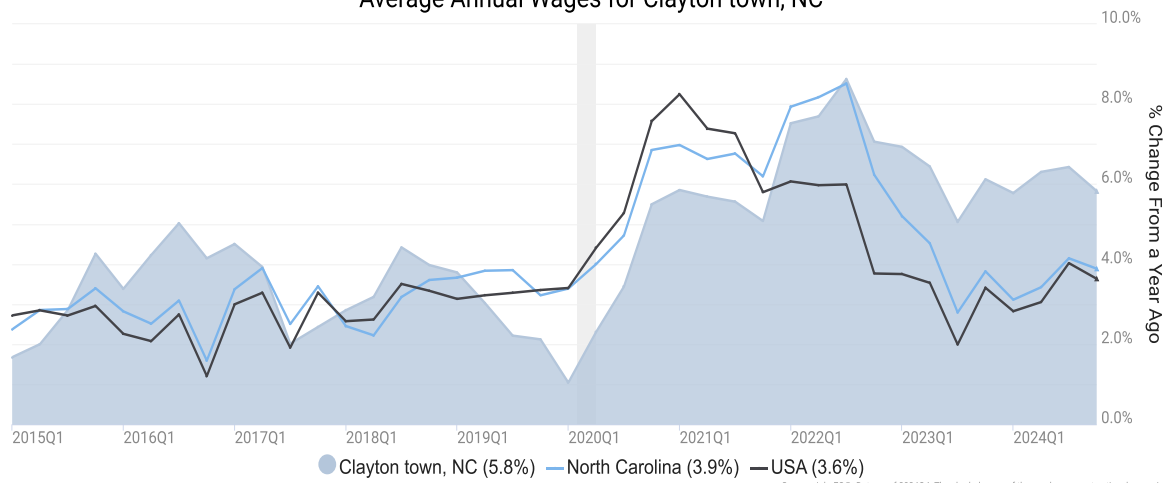


Source: census.gov

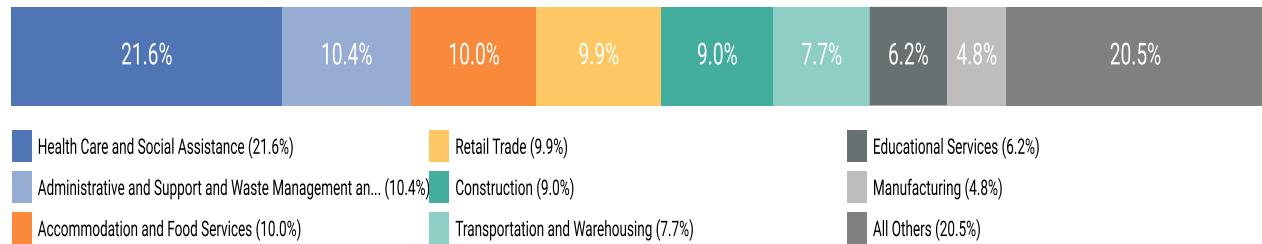


Source: Jobs EQ Laborshed Region is a 60 min drivetime from Clayton.

Average Annual Wages for Clayton town, NC

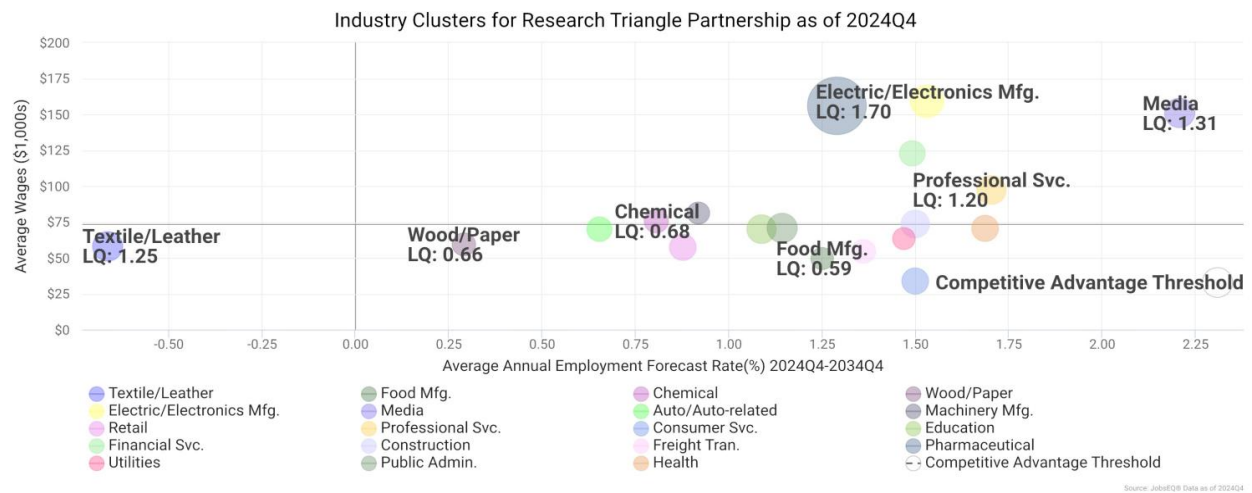
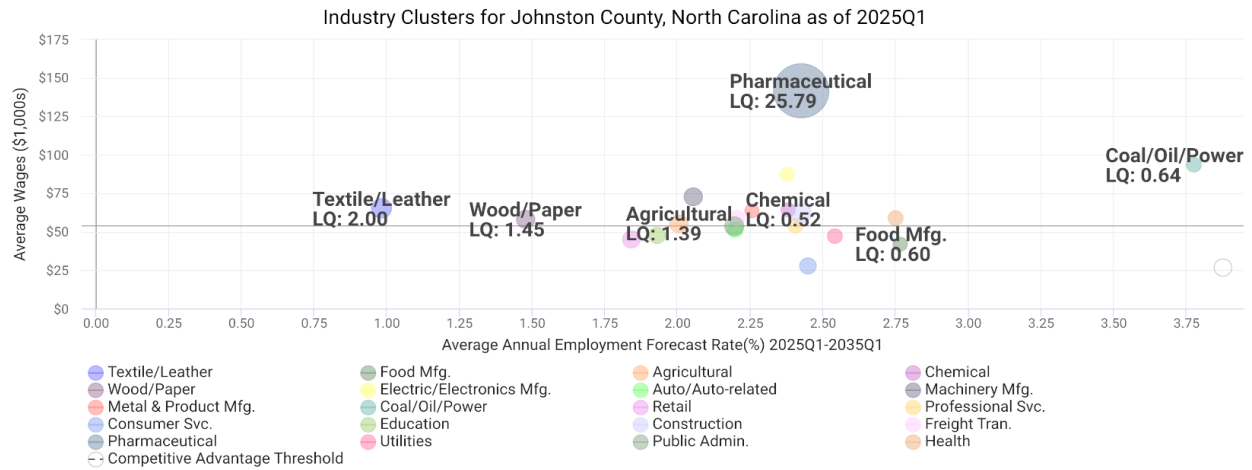


Total Workers for Clayton town, NC by Industry



Source: JobsEQ®
Data as of 2024Q4
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Clusters for Johnston County are presented because of the flow of workers in/out of Clayton.



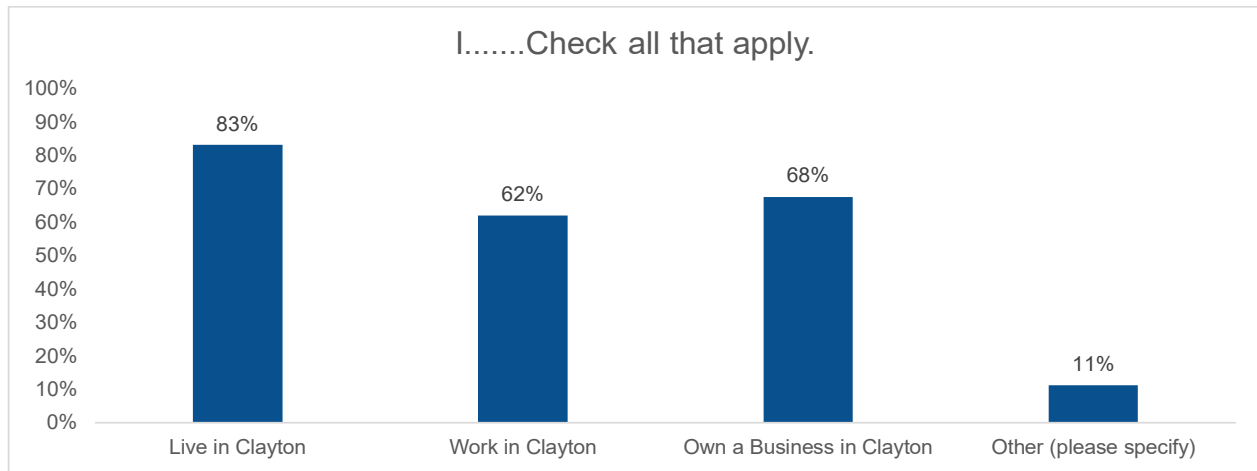
Employment & Wages in Select Occupations - Clayton, NC Q4 2024

SOC	Occupation	Empl	Mean Ann Wages ²	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Empl Change	Ann %
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	1,318	\$39,400	49	4.0%	426	8.1%
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	1,238	\$43,400	46	2.4%	123	2.1%
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	1,214	\$29,800	40	4.2%	13	0.2%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1,102	\$90,500	9	1.1%	367	8.4%
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	972	\$46,100	46	3.3%	28	0.6%
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	703	\$49,700	20	3.4%	174	5.9%
11-0000	Management Occupations	693	\$122,600	16	1.4%	69	2.1%
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	671	\$36,300	15	3.6%	-57	-1.6%
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	643	\$48,000	15	2.0%	-101	-2.9%
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	643	\$36,600	12	2.2%	193	7.4%
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	480	\$81,600	21	2.0%	36	1.6%
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	432	\$55,000	12	2.0%	-4	-0.2%
51-0000	Production Occupations	416	\$45,300	25	3.6%	-652	-17.2%
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	365	\$37,200	19	3.7%	2	0.1%
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	177	\$51,000	9	2.2%	6	0.7%
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	167	\$100,800	11	2.2%	4	0.5%
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	145	\$52,800	4	1.8%	-14	-1.9%
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	142	\$61,900	13	3.2%	-3	-0.5%
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	115	\$86,900	6	1.7%	-67	-8.8%
19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	108	\$83,800	7	2.5%	-88	-11.2%
23-0000	Legal Occupations	43	\$118,300	1	1.3%	-1	-0.3%
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	17	\$37,000	1	5.5%	3	4.1%
00-0000	Total - All Occupations	11,803	\$54,900	n/a	n/a	458	0.8%

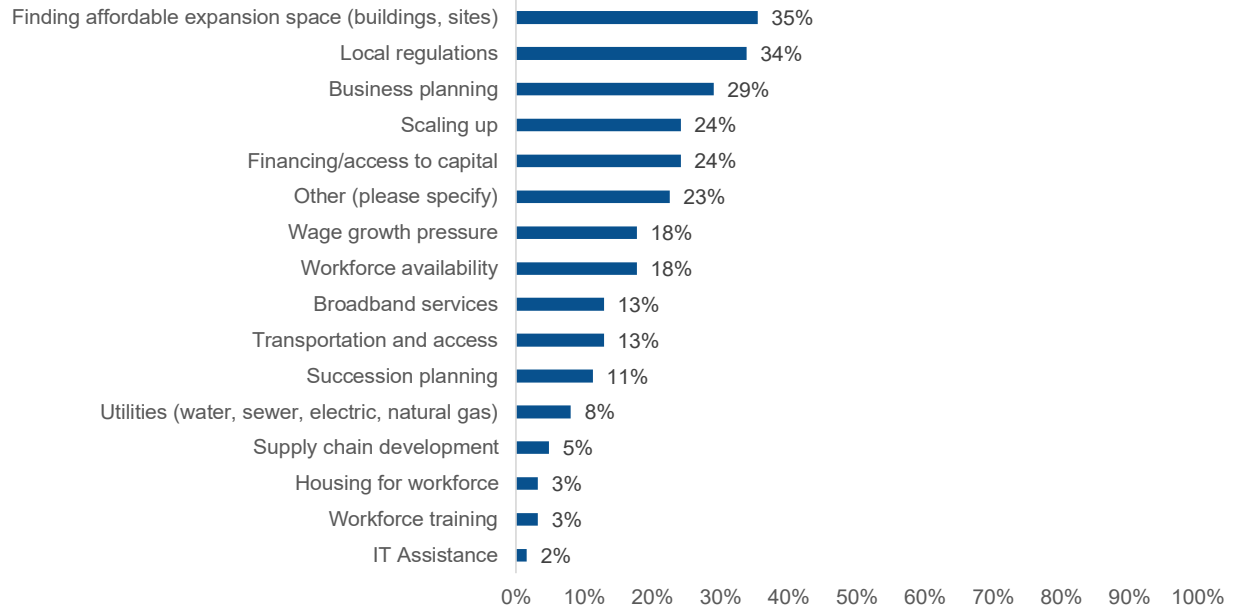
Source: Jobs EQ

Q4 2024 Cost of Living Information			
	Annual Average Salary	Cost of Living Index (Base US)	US Purchasing Power
Clayton	\$54,127	94.5	\$57,270
Fuquay-Varina	\$73,678	97.5	\$75,543
Garner	\$74,737	99.2	\$75,373
Morrisville	\$76,051	99.4	\$76,495
Johnston County	\$53,788	89.9	\$59,852
Clayton 60 min drive time	\$69,348	93.7	\$74,031
Research Triangle Partnership	\$73,413	95.9	\$76,560
North Carolina	\$66,375	94.0	\$70,644
USA	\$73,145	100.0	\$73,145
<i>Source: JobsEQ</i>			

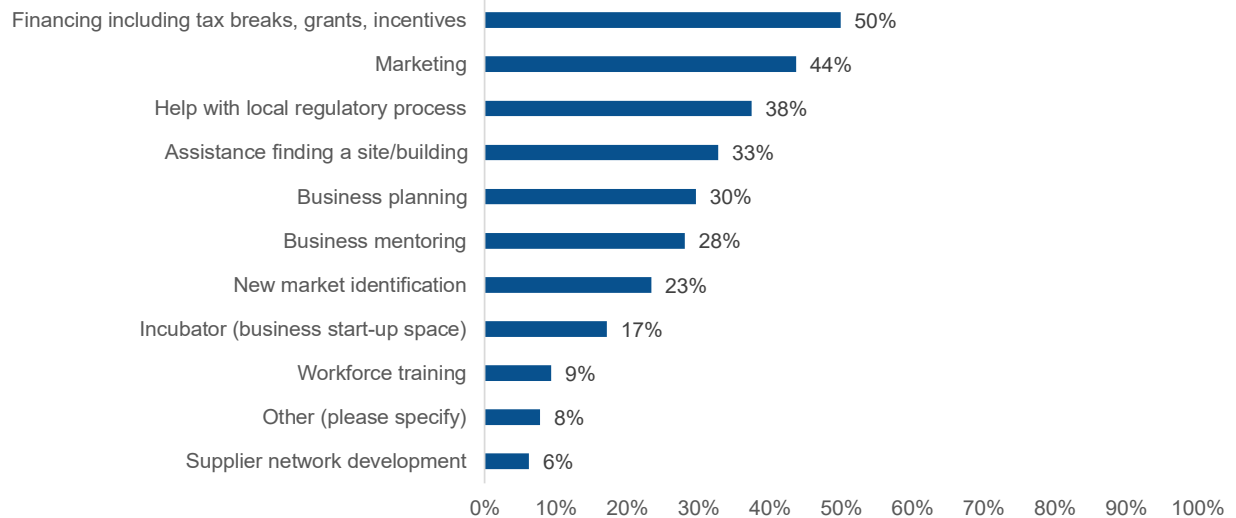
Appendix: D Business Survey Results



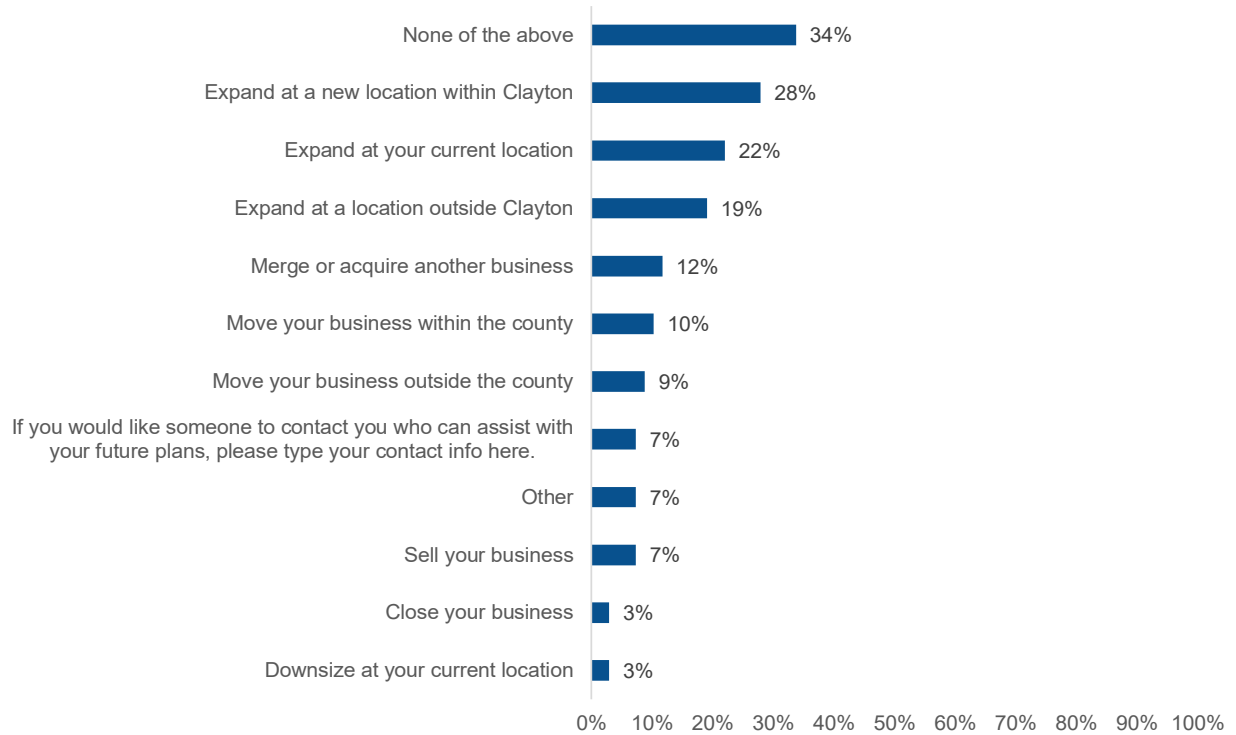
What are your main challenges to sustaining and growing your business? Choose all that apply.



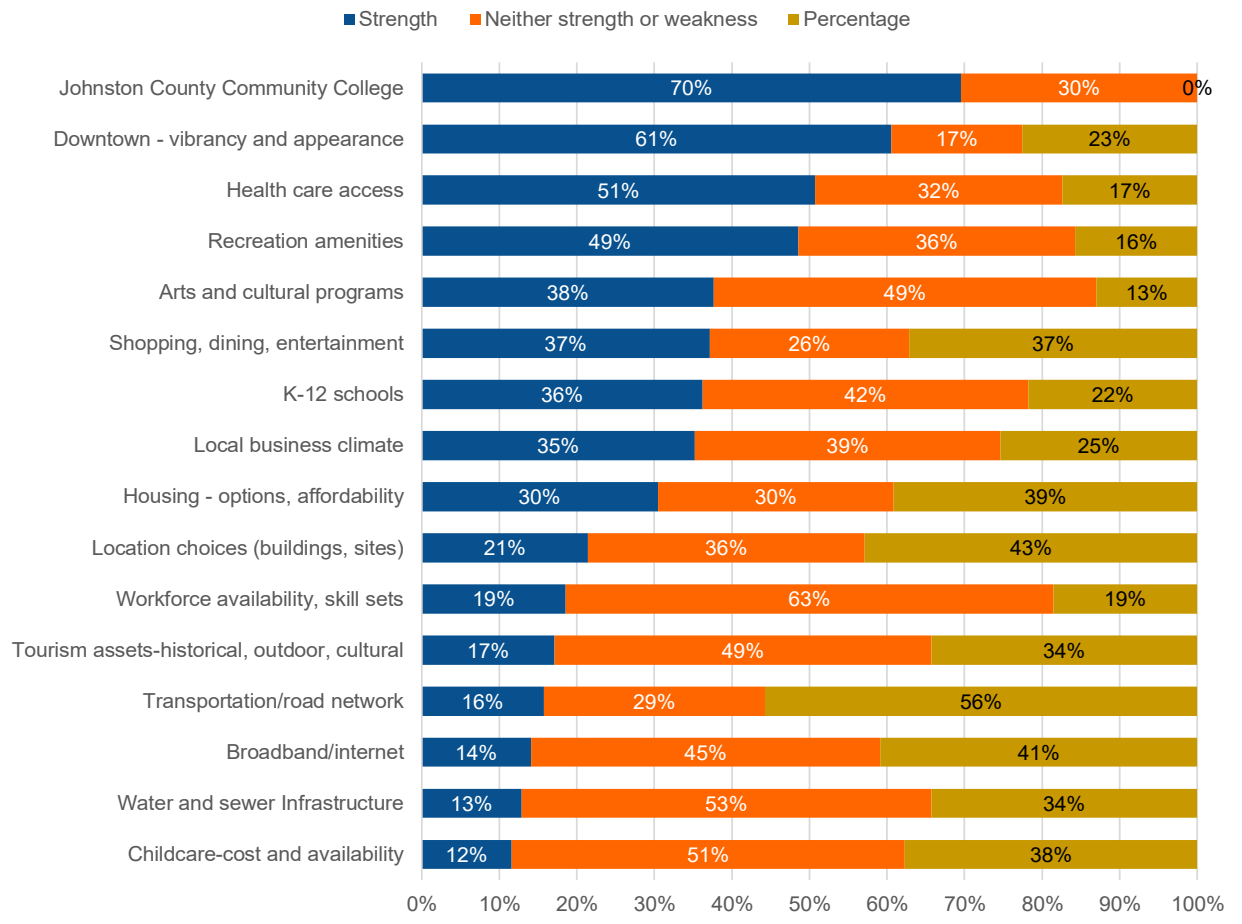
What business assistance would have been helpful when you started your business or that you believe would be helpful to a new business starting in Clayton today? Choose all that apply.



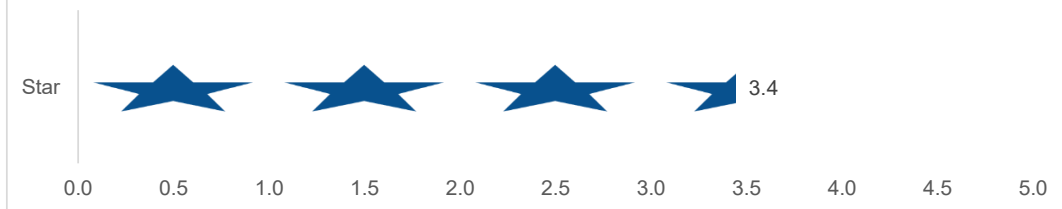
Are you currently planning to... Choose all that apply.



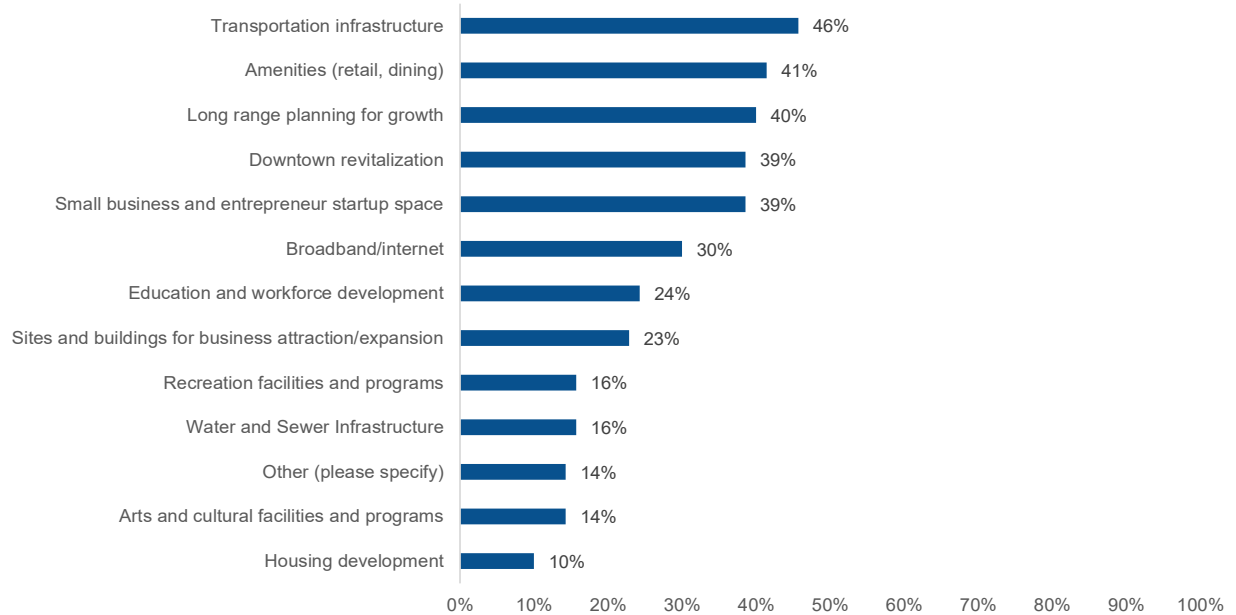
From a business perspective, rate the following as strengths, weaknesses, or neither in Clayton.



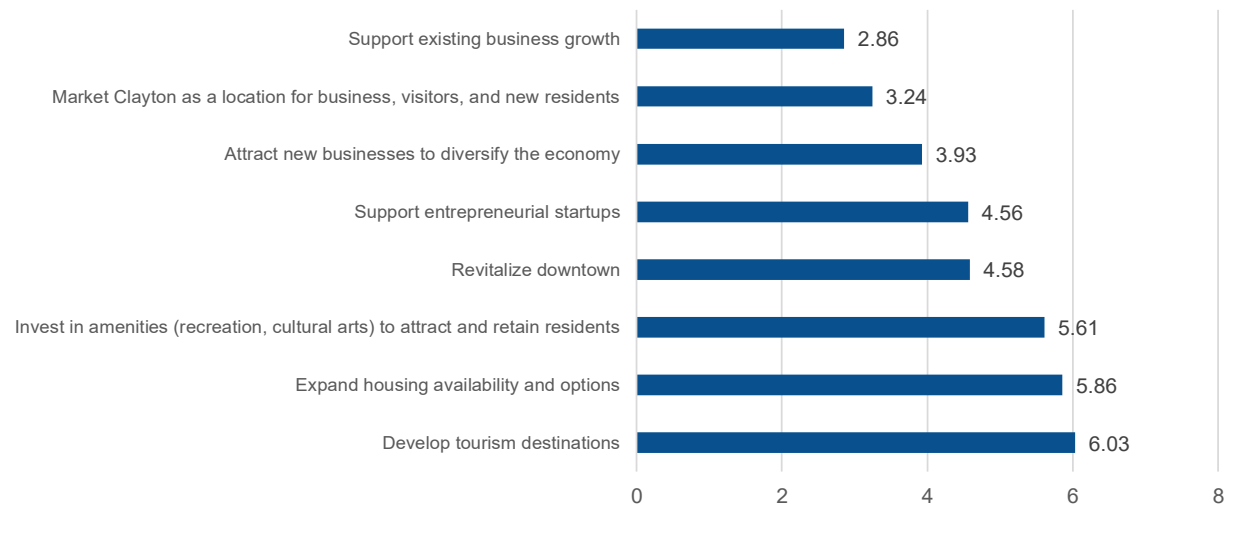
Rate the business-friendliness of Clayton.



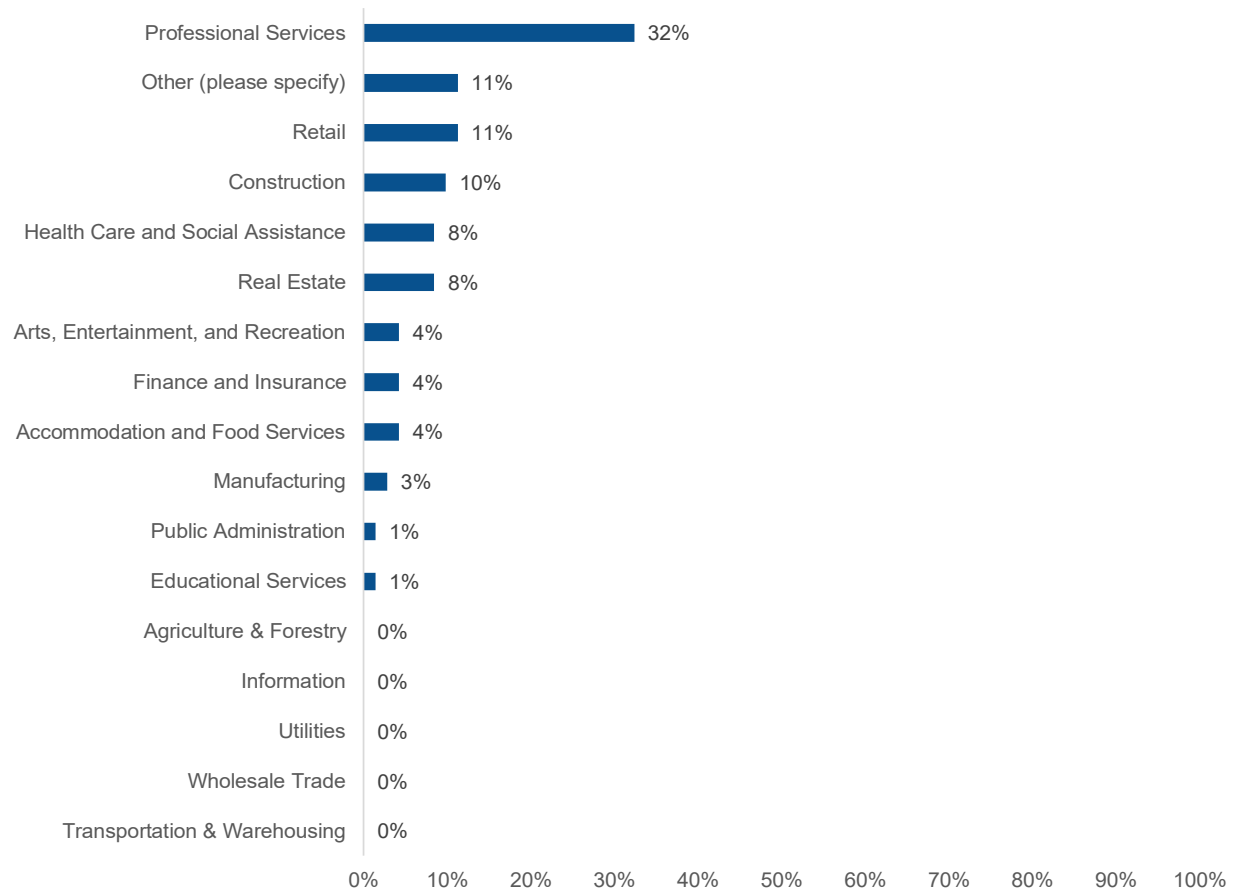
What are the top three most important investments Clayton could make to ensure long-term, sustainable economic growth? CHOOSE THREE.



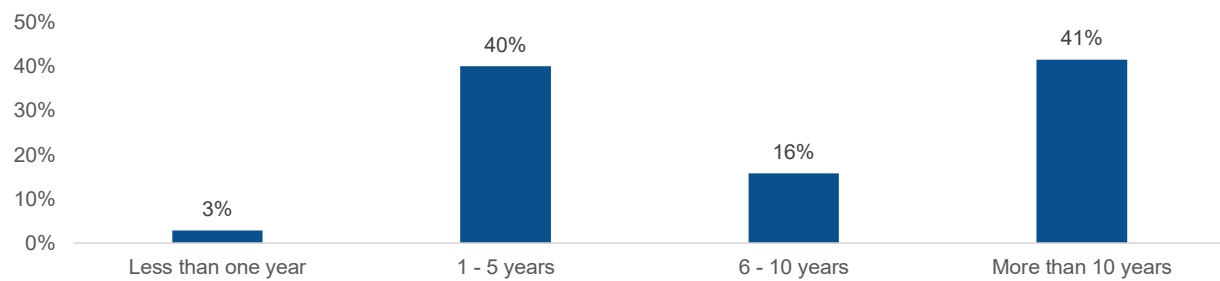
Rank the following economic development strategies with 1 being the highest and 7 being the lowest.

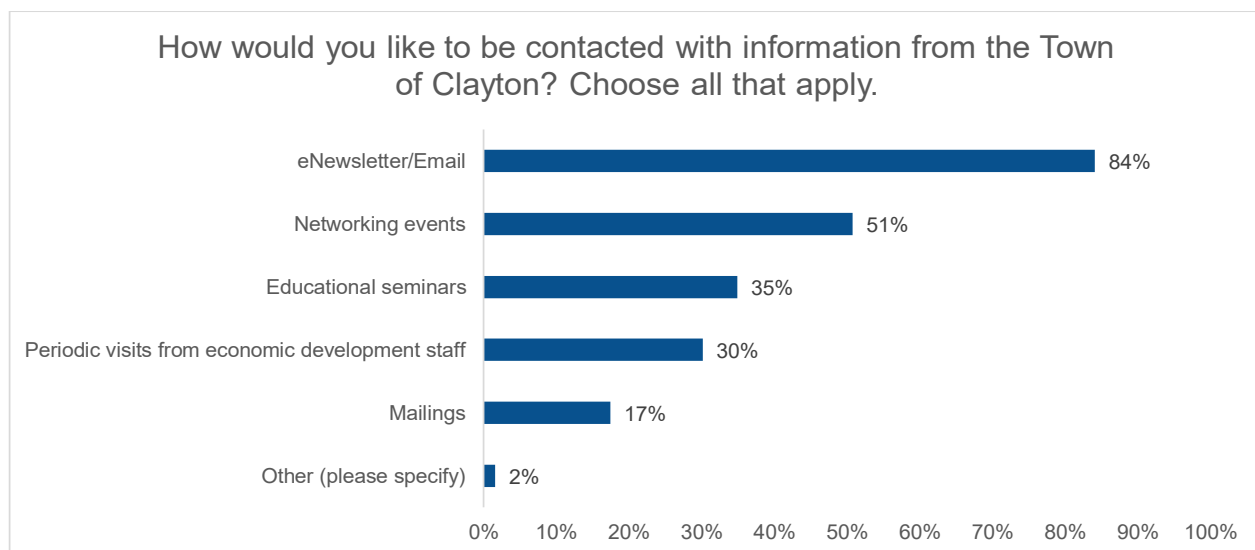
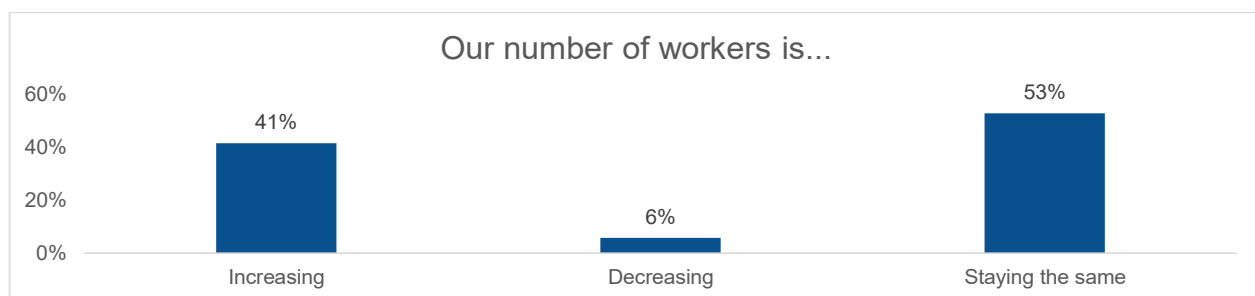
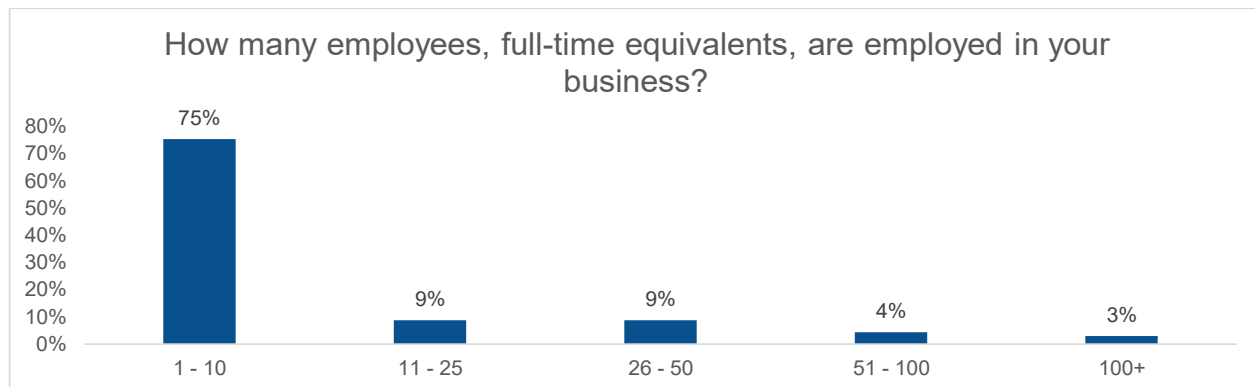


What business sector most closely matches your business?

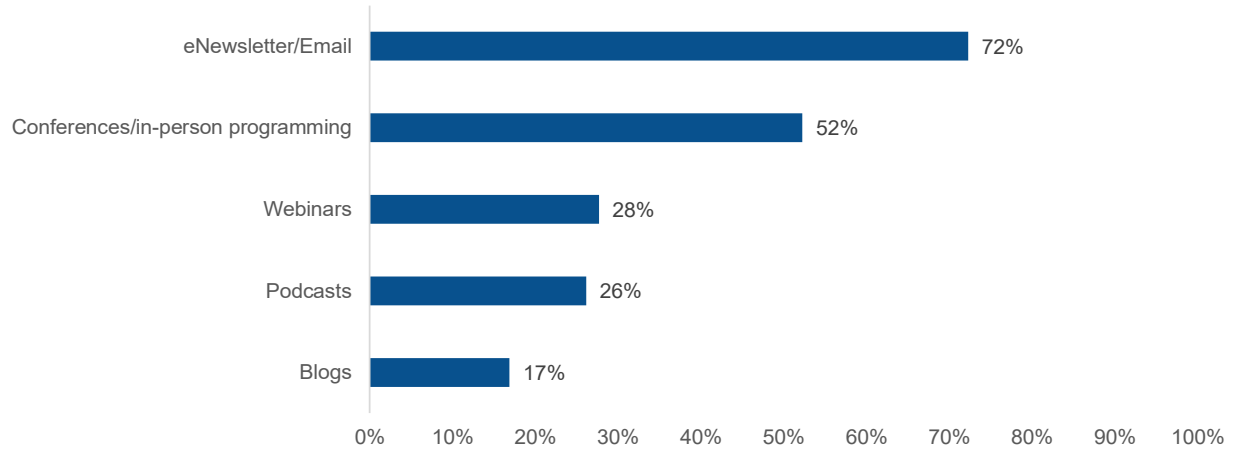


How many years has your business been operating?





What is your preferred method to consume information that can help you grow your business? Choose all that apply.



Clayton Strategic Plan Steering Committee

- **Mayor Jody McLeod**, Town of Clayton
- **Council Member Ruth Anderson**, Town of Clayton
- **Ed Aldridge**, VP of Business Development, Riverwild and Chairman, Johnston County Economic Development Advisory Board
- **Robert Cupp**, Human Resources Executive-JohnstonUNC Health Johnston
- **Danielle Kroeger**, Assoc. VP of Workforce Development and Biotechnology Johnston Community College
- **Jacqueline Lippard**, Sr. Vice President, EXP Commercial
- **Dean Penny**, Project Executive, Craig Davis Properties
- **Dana Wooten**, President & CEO, Clayton Chamber of Commerce

Study Sponsor and Consultant



The [Clayton Economic Development Department](#) leads the town's efforts to attract and retain businesses, support workforce development, and collaborate with local, regional, and state partners to promote economic growth.



[Creative EDC](#) provides strategic planning, product development, organizational development, and economic impact analysis services to communities and companies.