



# 2014: The State of Chatham County

## Exciting Job Growth & Other Economic Trends

The creation of new jobs in Chatham County continues to be headline news that will have a positive ripple effect. The chart below shows the past two years (FY 11-13) compared to the previous two years, based on data provided by the Chatham Economic Development Corporation (EDC). It illustrates the upward trends for job creation, growth in annual payroll and the influx of capital investment by the private sector.

In FY 2013, many new jobs came from the expansion of existing businesses, such as Olympic Steel, Brookwood Farms and Lazar Industries. Major new employers coming to Chatham included Walmart and Piedmont Health SeniorCare.

### POSITIVE INDICATORS

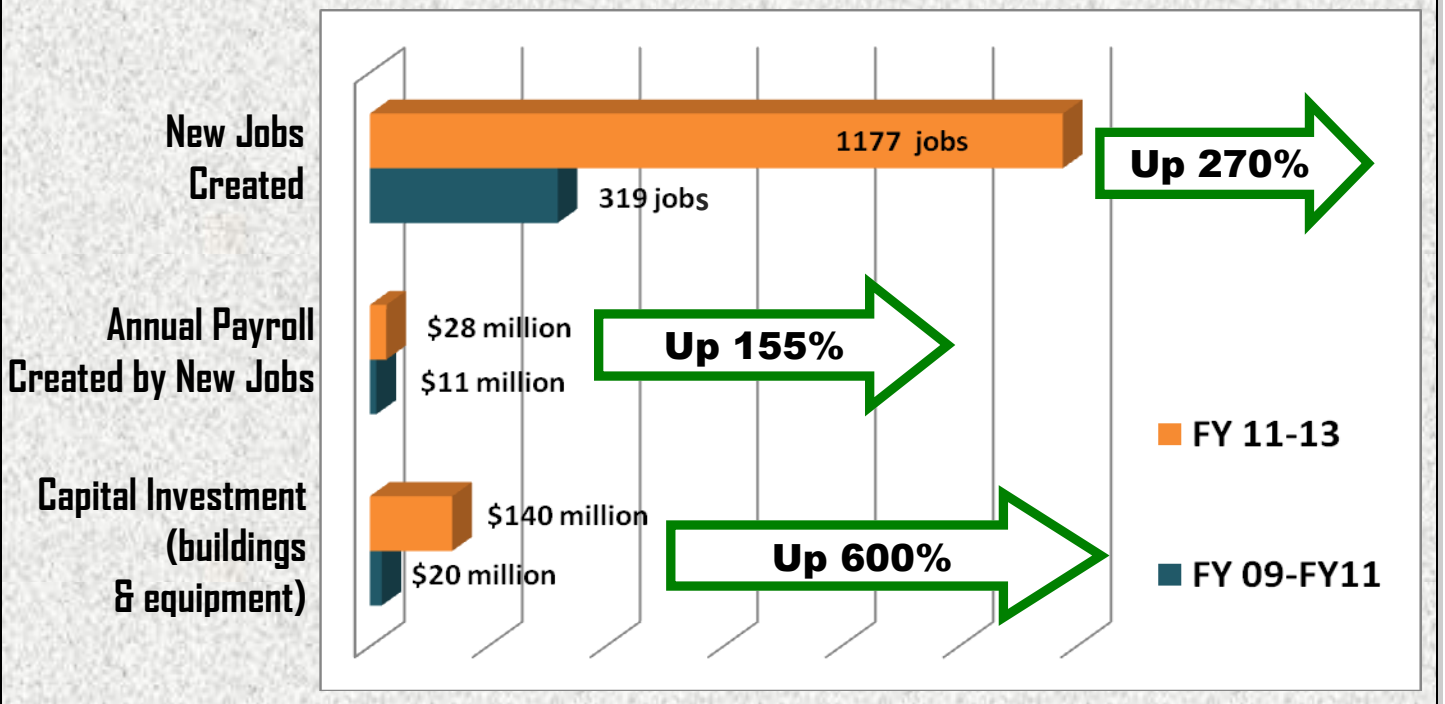
- Mid-Year Optimism:** The report for the first six months of FY 14 exceeds targets, with 368 new jobs created representing \$11.5 million in payroll and \$13.25 million in new capital investments.
- Return on Investment:** The amount of county funding per job created dropped from nearly \$2,500 per job in FY 09 to less than \$500 in FY 13.



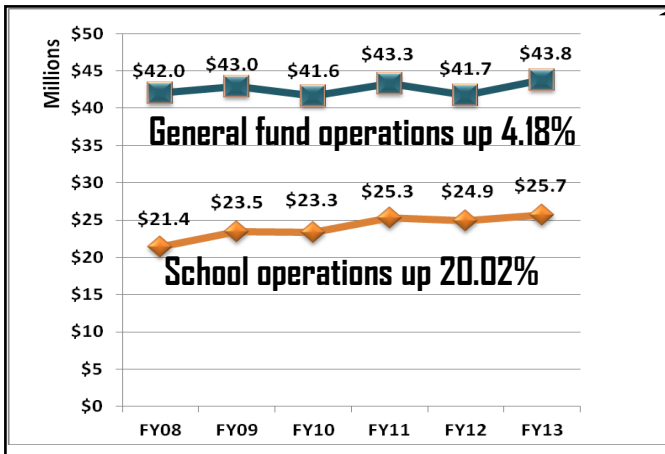
A GRAND REOPENING of the Historic Courthouse on April 20, 2013 proclaimed the return of Chatham's "front porch." See story on page 3.

*Continued on page 2*

### Great News for Jobs and Business Investment: Four-Year History



### Six-Year Spending History for General Fund Operations and School Operations



**General Fund** includes all county operations, except education, debt and enterprise funds (water, solid waste & recycling)  
**School Operations** does NOT include capital expenses. FY11 includes a one-time payment of \$458,000 to charter schools.

## Megasites & Chatham Park Coming

**CHATHAM-RANDOLPH MEGASITE:** Substantial progress has been made to certify the 1,800-acre Chatham-Randolph Megasite located west of Siler City. It would be the first certified megasite in the state. It has been identified as one of the top three candidates in the entire South for an automotive plant.

**MONCURE MEGASITE:** The Moncure megasite, served by CSX railroad, is comprised of 1,049 acres with major road frontage. The site was recently selected for inclusion in the Duke Site Readiness Program. Next steps include assessments for development and master plan for the site.

**CHATHAM PARK:** The proposed world-class Chatham Park development east of Pittsboro will include business/industry, retail, and residential components.

### FY 13 COUNTY BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- 🕒 **No Tax Increases:** The Board of Commissioners has held the property tax rate at 62.19 cents since FY 11.
- 🕒 **School Funding:** In FY 13, the Board of Commissioners increased funding for school current expense by \$714,904 in FY13 to offset state budget cuts. They also increased funding for the supplement for teachers and teachers aids to provide a 2% increase.
- 🕒 **School Facilities:** Projects completed in FY 13:
  - Updated heating and air conditioning systems in all high school gyms;
  - Revised traffic patterns at North Chatham Elementary to improve safety;
  - Completed multi-year bathroom renovations at 10 schools; and
  - Added more restrooms at Chatham Central's softball field as well as at the football fields at Northwood High and Jordan-Matthews High.
- 🕒 **County Employee Compensation:** The budget included partial implementation of a 2008 county pay study that showed most employees' salaries lagging behind surrounding localities by an average of 15%. All employees received at least 2%, while those further below market received considerably more.

### MORE POSITIVE INDICATORS

*(from page 1)*

- 🕒 **Low Unemployment:** Chatham had the lowest unemployment rate in the state in October 2013 at 4.7% and was among the lowest throughout 2013.
- 🕒 **Building Indicators:** For the first half of FY 14, building inspection revenues climbed 21% and excise fees (Register of Deeds) increased 19% over the same period a year ago. Both are welcome signs of recovery.
- 🕒 **Land Use Strategic Plan:** In July, the Board of Commissioners approved a conceptual land use plan developed with the help of the EDC, county planning and GIS staff and town planners. The process also included public input. The next steps will involve developing a related infrastructure plan, educating residents and businesses on the benefits of the adopted plan and getting further input on direction.
- 🕒 **"Most Positive" Audit Report:** The audit firm of Martin Starnes & Associates lauded the county's "most positive" audit report for FY 13. They cited revenue trends, sound capital planning and a healthy fund balance as key factors. Sales tax revenues increased 4% over FY 12 when most other counties reported little or no increase in sales tax revenues.

**Increase Since 2011! ... Hot Off the Press! ... No Tax Increase Since 2011!! ... Hot Off th**

## A Grand Event Celebrated the Return of Chatham's "Front Porch"

April 20, 2013 marked the greatly anticipated Grand Reopening of the Historic Chatham County Courthouse, badly damaged by fire in 2010. More than 1,200 people toured the "grand lady" and visited the new Chatham County Historical Association Museum on the first floor. Hobbs Architects P.A. in Pittsboro served as the architect.

A special ceremony featured a courthouse tribute video sponsored by the Chatham County Bar Association and produced by UNC-TV videographer Mike O'Connell.

Luck Stone Corporation sponsored the repainting of the portrait of the Earl of Chatham that had hung in the courtroom until the fire. Raleigh artist Luana Luconi Winner unveiled the portrait she reproduced from an original painting by William Hoare. See photo at right.

Other event sponsors included Fitch Creations Inc. (Developer of Fearington Village), Walmart, Duke Energy, and Carolina Meadows.

The Board of Commissioners meets regularly in the restored courthouse.



**A PORTRAIT RETURNS:** Luana Luconi Winner (right) reproduced the Earl of Chatham portrait with the help of the NC Museum of Art. Also shown is Commissioner Chairman Walter Petty.

## Updates on Other County Facilities

**AGRI-CONFERENCE CENTER:** On Sept. 16, 2013, the Board of Commissioners approved a schematic design for a new Chatham County Agriculture & Conference Center. It will be built on a site just west of Central Carolina Community College's Pittsboro campus. See design below produced by Hobbs Architects, P.A.

The county set aside funds to pay the debt service on a loan to build the Ag Center, with no tax increase required.

The center will be approximately 32,500 square feet with almost 6,000 square feet of exhibit hall space and a large stage. The west wing will include offices for Cooperative Extension, Soil & Water Conservation and other agriculture-related agencies.

Construction is expected to begin May 2014.

**DETENTION CENTER:** Due to overcrowding and safety concerns with the current jail, Chatham County started

building a detention center just west of Pittsboro. The facility will be completed by early 2015.

**ANNEX BUILDING:** The first phase of an interior renovation of the Courthouse Annex is underway and will provide much-needed space for the Register of Deeds, Tax Office and County Manager's Office.

**WASTE & RECYCLING:** The county initiated plans for a new Waste & Recycling Office on the current site to begin in 2015. Moving the project up three years will save the county more than \$300,000 and will provide a more user-friendly facility for customers.

**JACK DARK CENTER:** The Board of Commissioners voted to name the Backup 911 Center in Siler City in honor of long-time 911 telecommunicator Jack Dark, who passed away unexpectedly on Jan. 3, 2014.



**AGRICULTURE & CONFERENCE CENTER**

## Media Alert!... County Employees Demonstrate Excellence ... Media Alert! ... County Em

### TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS

**INTEGRATED FINANCE & PERSONNEL:** The county is in the process of implementing new software that will serve both finance and personnel functions and will ensure that the county continues to comply with state requirements.

**DATA RECOVERY:** New site recovery software will help the county recover its data systems in a disaster.

**HEALTH PATIENT SYSTEMS:** The Public Health Department implemented a new health patient management system that is compatible with a state database and also can handle Medicaid billing.

**PERMIT TRACKING:** Permitting & Inspections is implementing CityView, an online portal that will allow the public to view the status of permits and inspections and to search activity by address or parcel. Residents can sign up to get notices of particular type of permits. An add-on will allow users with Microsoft Outlook to directly attach emails to the related CityView permits or property. CityView should be ready to use this summer.

## Other Highlights from County Departments & Offices

### LIBRARIES

**ASK A LIBRARIAN:** A chat widget on the library's web pages gives patrons 24/7 access to references services.

**MAGAZINE PORTFOLIO:** The library system subscribed to Zinio to offer unrestricted access to 65 popular magazines.

**LIBRARY PLANNING:** The system won a grant from the State Library of NC to develop a three to five-year plan for programs. The process included public input through a survey and forums.

### PLANNING

**TOWER ORDINANCE:** Planning staff completed a major overhaul of the Telecommunications Tower Ordinance to comply

with state and federal requirements. As requested by county commissioners, amendments also should make it more attractive for wireless vendors to locate towers in Chatham.

**SUBDIVISION REVISIONS:** The department led an effort to successfully revise Subdivision Regulations so that road standards comply with State Fire Marshal requirements.

**HOME REHAB GRANTS:** Staff successfully completed two Community Development Block Grants totaling nearly \$881,000 to help rehabilitate 22 qualified homes.

**ZONING OFFICER AWARD:** Planning employee, Angela Birchett, received the 2013 Member of the Year Award from the NC Association of Zoning Officials.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

**NEW LEADERSHIP:** Layton Long became the county's Health Director on Dec. 2, 2013. He previously served as State Environmental Health Director at the NC Division of Public Health and had led the Davidson County Health Department.

**COMMUNITY GARDENS:** More than 20 employees from eight departments helped launch the first county Community Garden. See photo at left. They also helped Chatham Together! and Communities in Schools start a community garden for young people in Siler City.

**FRESH FOODS MAP:** The department worked with graduate students to develop a map showing all food vendors, highlighting those offering healthy options. The map is at: [www.chathamnc.org/Index.aspx?page=1697](http://www.chathamnc.org/Index.aspx?page=1697)



**COUNTY GARDEN:** The Public Health Department used state Healthy Communities funding to create a community garden next to the Pittsboro clinic. More than 200 pounds of produce from the garden was donated to the CORA food bank in the garden's first year.

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## PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES

**JORDAN LAKE:** Since 2008, Chatham has had stream buffer and stormwater rules that are more stringent than the state's current Jordan Lake Rules, developed to protect the lake's water quality. The lake is classified as "endangered." The county opted to apply some of its water quality protections countywide, not just in the Jordan Lake nutrient control area. Even though the General Assembly delayed compliance with the state's rules for five years, the Board of Commissioners voted in 2012 to continue implementing the county's water quality regulations.

**LOCAL CONTROL:** The Board of Commissioners has advocated for local environmental control, including:

- Urging a legislative committee to recognize the importance of local control of the environment.
- Urging the State Mining & Energy Commission members to reject compulsory pooling as part of any hydraulic fracturing regulations.
- Urging legislators to oppose bills removing or delaying the rules protecting Jordan Lake.

**PHYSICAL FITNESS:** In 2013, the department updated the county's *Physical Activity Resource Guide* and supported Siler City's development of a Pedestrian Master Plan. Several projects addressed obesity prevention, including a partnership that sponsored *Eat a Rainbow Week* in September 2013, which encouraged youth to "eat a rainbow" of fruits and vegetables.

**ACCESS TO INSURANCE:** The department has worked with Social Services and community groups to enroll residents in the Health Insurance Marketplace.

**WORKSHOP:** Environmental Health held a March workshop to help residents better maintain wells and septic systems.

**ANIMAL SHELTER PROGRESS:** The Animal Shelter reported in mid-2013 that the number of animals taken in by the shelter decreased each of the past four years. At the same time, positive outcomes, such as adoptions, have increased. Key factors cited for this improvement were increased low-cost spay-neuter programs, adoption promotion events and partnerships with local rescue groups.

## TRAVEL & TOURISM

**TRIANGLE GROWN:** The Pittsboro-Siler City Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) joined with other CVBs in the region to launch TriangleGrown, a website showcasing the area's visitor-friendly agricultural destinations. Found at [www.trianglegrown.com](http://www.trianglegrown.com), the site makes it easier for people to find farms and food producers.

**MORE VISITORS:** A new statewide report shows that "domestic visitors" spent \$29.47 million in Chatham County during 2012, an increase of 6.3 percent from 2011. This continues a trend of being in the top ten across the state.

**EXPERTISE:** For two years in a row, the CVB's director, Neha Shah, was asked to speak at both the Governor's Conference on Tourism and the NC Energy Conference. Topics were Sustainable Tourism and People First Tourism. Shah has contributed to several tourism textbooks and presented a paper in Canada on rural food entrepreneurs that was published in an academic journal.

## SHERIFF'S OFFICE

**SHERIFF'S AWARDS:** The International Academy of Public Safety (IAPS) selected Sheriff Richard H. Webster as one of its 2013-2014 "Ethical Leadership Award" recipients (see photo below). The presenter said, "Under his command, the Chatham County Sheriff's Office has grown into one of the most recognized law enforcement agencies embodying professionalism, integrity, honesty, and accountability."

United Way of Chatham County presented its 2013 Ormsbee Robinson Award to Sheriff Webster, which honors his long-standing commitment to United Way's mission.

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**ETHICAL LEADERSHIP:** Sheriff Richard Webster (left) received the 2013-2014 Ethical Leadership Award from the International Academy of Public Safety. Presenting the award was Michael W. Gilchrist, Retired Commander, NC State Highway Patrol and Leadership Advisor at the International Academy of Public Safety.

## Extra Extra! ... Low Crime Rate in Chatham! ... Extra Extra! ... Low Crime Rate in Chatham

In September 2013, Sheriff Webster received a service award from the NC Sheriffs' Association for his contributions during ten years of dedicated service as Chatham County Sheriff.

**DETENTION HONOR:** Detention Officer Lee Lester was honored as the Central Regional Detention Officer of the Year for 2013 by the NC Jail Administrators Association for helping save the life of an inmate that went into cardiac arrest. Lester also was honored by Sheriff Webster.

**MEDALS OF VALOR:** In 2013, two officers received Medals of Valor from Sheriff Webster for separate incidents involving potential suicides. Lt. Steve Maynor received the award in September for removing a gun from a man trying to shoot himself. Capt. Roy Allen also was commended for actions in this incident.

In July, Deputy Ronnie Miller received the Medal of Valor for preventing a man from jumping off a bridge.

**LONG-LEAF PINE:** Major Gary L. Blankenship, who retired in July 2013, received the state's highest honor, The Order of the Long Leaf Pine, from Governor Pat McCrory.

**SAFE COMMUNITIES:** Recent statistics from the NC Dept. of Justice show Chatham as the 13<sup>th</sup> safest county in the state. In support of lower crime, the Sheriff's Office reports an all-time high of 42 neighborhoods enrolled in Neighborhood Watch.

**BEST CAR DESIGN:** Publishers of "Law and Order" gave the 2013 Vehicle Design Award for Best Dodge Charger design in the nation to the Chatham County Sheriff's Office. Highly reflective decals, LED lights on all four sides and careful use of color and bold letters were key factors in the award.

### Putting Education to Work

The Board of Commissioners is supporting a new regional partnership, Central Carolina Works, which will place academic and career advisors in all high schools. The goal is to increase the percentage of students taking advantage of a state-funded program that allows students to enroll tuition-free in college credit courses. It helps them jumpstart their college education.

The regional partnership includes Central Carolina Community College, Chatham County Schools and the private sector. A Golden LEAF grant provided startup funds. Chatham County's Board of Commissioners is providing \$50,000 over two years in matching funds.



**4-H YOUTH & LIVESTOCK:** The 4-H program has an established embryology program that brought hands-on learning to 400 students in K-4 classrooms.

### COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

**POULTRY PROCESSING:** Cooperative Extension joined with the Board of Commissioners and the EDC in efforts to bring a new poultry processor to the county. If funding is secured, the plant would provide a market for local contract farmers.

**4-H YOUTH:** 4-H Youth Development piloted a butterfly embryology program in six schools that helped nearly 95% of students improve their science grades at least one letter grade after completing the program.

**HEALTHY HABITS:** The Family & Consumer Science program worked with 146 students in second and third grades to foster healthier eating and physical activity through SNAP-ED. As a result, 100% of parents reported their children eating more fruits and vegetables and drinking more water.

**SPECIALITY FARMS & MARKETS:** Besides ongoing support of the local farmers' markets and small specialty farms, staff offered a new workshop on growing medicinal herbs.

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

**SCOTT HONORED:** Janet Scott, deputy emergency operations director and communication director, was named 2013 Communications Center Leader of the Year by the NC Chapter of the National Emergency Number Association.

**FIRE DISPATCH:** The department is currently working on final steps to implement Emergency Fire Dispatch, which will provide protocols to advise callers on such issues as building collapse, cars trapped in flood waters, elevator failures, gas leaks and many others. It will work in tandem with the existing Emergency Medical Dispatch.