

Economic
Development
Strategic Plan
2025-2027



Table of Contents

Executive Summary..... 1

Economic Development Strategic Plan..... 2

Implementation..... 14

Metrics..... 15

Appendix A: SWOT Analysis..... 16

Appendix B: Workforce & Cluster Analysis..... 18

Appendix C: Business, Investor, and Community Surveys..... 47

Study Sponsor and Consultant 73

Executive Summary

Chester County has made foundational investments in economic development that are paying off. Large industrial sites attracted companies that are creating thousands of jobs and boosting the tax base. Communities are welcoming new residents and visitors. Retail, restaurant, accommodation, and entertainment developers have Chester County in their sights. This strategic plan positions the county to take advantage of these and other opportunities for better paying jobs while at the same time preserving what makes Chester County special.

Chester County has a winning mix of assets, opportunities, and natural advantages to attract businesses and people to invest in the community. One is its location on I-77 between Charlotte and Columbia, and it also has a manufacturing base, natural resources for outdoor recreation, and small-town quality of life that make up a few of the reasons people are moving to the county. Like many rural places, Chester County has challenges with infrastructure, schools, limited resources, and small towns that need investment. Capitalizing on economic development opportunities such as Scout Motors' suppliers, commercial/retail development, workforce upskilling, talent recruitment, and community connections are part of this strategic plan. The SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) identified the main threat as failing to adequately plan for the growth that is and will take place. This strategic plan is one process that addresses the need for long range planning.

The strategic plan is built on the county's assets and is designed to capitalize on Chester County's opportunities while addressing challenges and mitigating threats. The first goal is to attract companies that will provide quality jobs and diversify the economy. Quality jobs will help retain the county's best and brightest young people and enhance the quality of life. Goals around marketing, career awareness, business retention and expansion, and supporting community development initiatives are also part of the strategic plan. The need for the county to invest in infrastructure to meet the demands of growth is woven throughout the plan.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Goals

- Invest in Sites and Buildings to Attract Companies with Quality Jobs
- Market Chester County to Attract Businesses and Talent
- Increase Career Awareness and Job Opportunities for Citizens
- Retain and Expand Existing Businesses
- Support Community and Economic Development Initiatives that Advance Chester County Economic Development's Mission
- Continue to be a Leading Rural Economic Development Organization in South Carolina

Chester County has a history of success in economic development. That success is due, in large part, to strong business leadership support, professional staff, consistent focus on the foundations of product development and marketing, and coalition building. The Chester Development Association sponsorship of this strategic plan is one example of widespread support for the economic development program. Chester County's recent investments in planning, parks, recreation, and tourism is another example of strong support for economic development.

One key data point tells the story of Chester County – **wages are growing at a faster rate** than comparable counties, the laborshed region, the Charlotte region, and the state of South Carolina. After decades of stagnate population growth and lower than average wages, the investments the county has made over many years are paying off. The key now is to capture the full advantage of those investments to ensure prosperity reaches all of Chester County.

Economic Development Strategic Plan

The mission of Chester County Department of Economic Development is to create an environment that encourages new business investment, supports existing business expansion, fosters entrepreneurship, and welcomes visitors which supports public services, opportunities for citizens, prosperity, and quality of life.

Economic Development Strategic Plan Goals

The Chester County Economic Development Strategic Plan comes at an important time for the county. Companies are creating thousands of new jobs; developments are attracting thousands of new residents; and new tourism destinations are offering people more reasons to visit Chester County. These investments create opportunities to provide more quality of life amenities to citizens, and at the same time create a need for comprehensive planning and strategic public investments. For Chester County to grow and maintain its rural, small-town character, Chester County Economic Development will need to work collaboratively and plan deliberately with its partners and allies.

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Goal: Invest in Sites and Buildings to Attract Companies with Quality Jobs

The supply chain for Scout Motors, Inc., located in Blythewood, presents a unique opportunity for Chester County to attract small- to medium-sized advanced manufacturing companies. Communities that have quality, available buildings and shovel-ready sites will be able to capture more of the economic impact from the \$2 billion Scout Motors project and several other large economic development projects in the region.

Infrastructure is key to Chester County's product development strategy. Current limitations on infrastructure must be addressed to keep pace with current and projected growth.

Strategy: Invest in the next generation of industrial sites and buildings.

Action Steps:

- Maintain a current Product Development Plan that lists priority product development initiatives such as due diligence to be performed, site preparation/grading needed, infrastructure upgrades needed, next spec building location, etc. The plan should include cost estimates. The plan could be a 1-2 page concise document that easily communicates CCED's site and building development priorities.
- Strategically invest in public or public-private control and development of an industrial site and/or park. Whereas Chester County has relied on the private sector for industrial site development in the past, growth pressures will drive more land toward residential and commercial development and escalate pricing. Public-private partnerships can preserve land for industrial development.
 - One example is the HWC Site, which the county has already optioned.
 - Organize a leadership tour of Gaston County, NC, as a best-practice community for product development in the Charlotte region.
- Develop a public-private model for spec building development. CCED could invest in land and partner with a private developer to build a spec building. There are loan funds from Santee Cooper through which the county could develop a spec building. There are also private developers in South Carolina who engage in public-private partnerships. A spec building has been a priority for the county's one-cent capital improvement funding in the past and could be re-prioritized in future capital improvement plans.
 - Identify, assess, and prioritize sites for spec buildings, always keeping at least two priority sites identified.
 - Plan to fund/partner with a developer to complete a spec building every two years. Some communities in South Carolina set aside a percentage of new FILOTs for product development. Chester County has such a fund designated for economic development.
 - Complete an economic impact analysis of companies locating in spec buildings to show the full direct, indirect, and induced impacts resulting from investing in the spec building program.
- Develop a grant program for private landowners to complete due diligence. This could be a grant from the CDA to complete a Phase 1 or other due diligence, so sites are more prepared. (Gaston County, NC, developed a program like this.)
- Certify one site/park a year to ensure that Chester County has an inventory of Palmetto Sites, Duke Energy Ready Sites, and other sites with complete due diligence.

Strategy: Advocate for investments in water and wastewater across the county.

Action Steps:

- Participate in Chester County capital improvement and comprehensive planning processes to ensure that infrastructure is being extended to growth areas in the county.
- Organize a tour of other communities that have made significant investments in infrastructure to support economic development.
- Develop “what if” modeling of the economic impact and related capacity needs of infrastructure to spotlight the limitations of current capacity.



Goal: Market Chester County to Attract Businesses and Talent

Chester County has a strong competitive position to attract new companies and talented people. CCED does a great job of telling the “Chester County story.” The marketing strategy recommends refining and refreshing the message and deploying it through communications, public relations, and digital promotions.

Strategy: Market Chester County to attract companies that will boost wages and provide quality job opportunities.

Action Steps:

- Focus the external marketing strategy on:
 - Chester County target clusters: advanced materials, motor vehicles, aerospace, chemicals, electric/electronics (including electric vehicle batteries)
 - Supply chain of existing businesses
 - Scout Motors’ suppliers
 - Telling the story of how Chester County is changing with new residential and commercial development opportunities.
- Update clusters on the website and add competitive position information on each cluster. Include a video testimonial. Develop a downloadable brochure for each cluster.
- Continue to participate in the business attraction programs of I-77 Alliance, Charlotte Regional Business Alliance, SC Department of Commerce (SCDOC), and other allies where there is alignment with Chester County’s target sectors. Plan to attend:
 - Trade shows
 - Marketing events
 - Site Consultant events
 - Regional and national commercial realtor events
 - Visits to existing business headquarters and prospective new companies
 - Lead generation conferences and events
- Host SCDOC for a tour of Chester County’s sites, parks, buildings, and key industries every two years.
- Make an annual presentation to SCDOC on Chester County’s target sectors, competitive advantages, and product availability.
- Increase e-marketing to site consultants, brokers, and regional and state allies. Use a lead generation firm to expand CCED’s database of consultants and brokers. Examples include:
 - Eblasts of announcements as well as new sites and buildings available.
 - Social media posts of industry expansions.
- Invest in a professional photography library to have quality images for external and internal marketing. CCED can share the library with allies, including education partners, through a user agreement that ensures consistency of use.
- Conduct a third-party review of the brand, collaterals, and website every three years to ensure they stay fresh and updated.

Strategy: Market Chester County to attract and retain top talent.

Action Steps:

- Work with I-77 Alliance partners to develop and launch a regional talent attraction marketing strategy. [Move Up](#), an Upstate Alliance initiative, is a good example of a talent attraction strategy that includes promoting lifestyle, careers, skills development, and employment opportunities. Another example from the Charlotte region is [Charlotte's Backyard](#).
- Add more details to the “Lifestyle” section of the website:
 - A relocation guide can be developed in partnership with a relator’s association. The guide should include information on housing, schools, communities, and regional recreation and entertainment.
 - A cost of living calculator to spotlight the lower cost of living than Charlotte.
- Showcase people and their stories in CCED social media. Coordinate messaging and posts with allies such as realtors and employers to elevate the visibility of Chester County and #ChooseChester.
 - Stories of entrepreneurial startups.
 - Profile people who have moved to Chester County.
 - Spotlight young people who finished an education/training program and now work in a Chester County business.
 - See the [Humans of New York](#) as an example of telling people’s stories.



Goal: Increase Career Awareness and Job Opportunities for Citizens

One role of economic development organizations (EDOs) is to be a connector of business and education. Chester County can be that connector by sharing information with businesses about opportunities for training, promoting local job opportunities, and informing educators of in demand skills.

Strategy: Expand education and workforce development opportunities for students, workers, and adult learners.

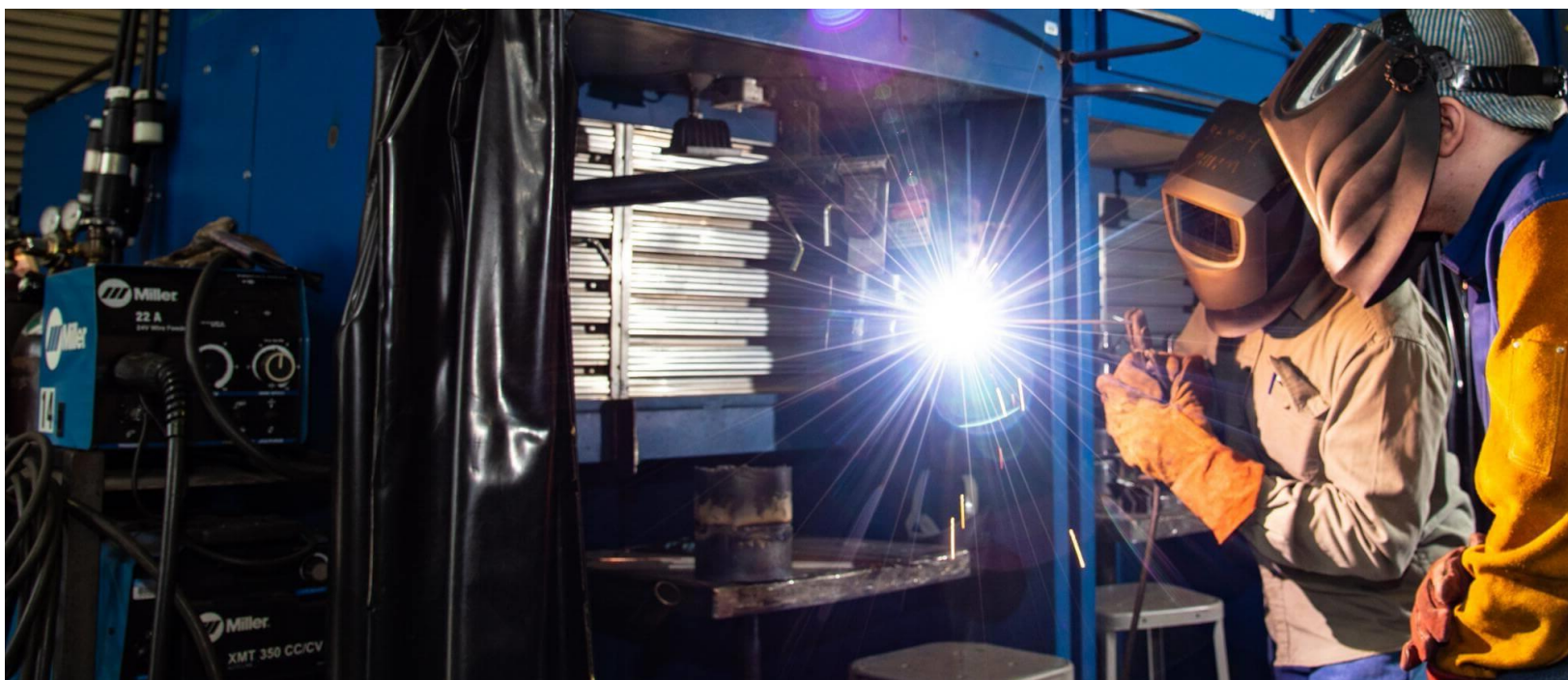
Action Steps:

- Explore forming a coalition similar to [Iredell Ready](#), an initiative designed to help students and residents, K-12 through retirement, identify the opportunities to pursue their individual career pathways and find gainful employment with industry.
- Support increased funding for capital improvement projects of Chester County Schools, technology and equipment investments, and recruitment and retention of teachers.
- Support the development of a “career center” on a site in the Chester Technology Park.
 - Organize a tour of best practice career centers in similar communities.
 - Host an industry and education roundtable to develop a high-level concept for the career center.
 - Provide letters of support to funding agencies/grant applications.
 - Take a lead in identifying companies that may support the center with donations of equipment, technology, and funding.
- Raise awareness about the increase in state funding for apprenticeships and use information from Apprenticeship Carolina to create a “how to start a program” brochure for Chester County.
 - Make apprenticeships a “Lunch and Learn” topic at an industry networking program.
- Promote changes to the state’s incumbent worker training program (E-Zones) that reduce the required length of employment for eligibility and open up funding for soft skills training.
- Lead a coalition to create a Chester County summer work experience program similar to the best practice program in Giles County, VA. The county, businesses, educators, and Goodwill Industries partner to provide high school students summer work experiences in local companies. The county pays a portion of the students’ wages.
- Develop a “Chester County Internship Toolkit” that outlines steps employers can take to create an internship and promote with Chester County Schools, York Tech, and other regional educational institutions. Make the toolkit downloadable from the Workforce section of the website.
- Develop a one-page brochure for teachers on opportunities to connect students and businesses – shadowing, internships, business guest speakers, etc.

Strategy: Raise awareness of Chester County career pathways and job opportunities.

Action Steps:

- Expand career awareness of students, educators, and parents through an aggressive marketing campaign such as [Be Pro Be Proud](#) (which has been in Chester County), CTE opportunities, York Tech training programs, dual enrollment options, work experiences, etc. The “Iredell Ready” example includes marketing and outreach.
- Work with Chester County Schools to develop additional career awareness programs and provide sponsorships. Examples include:
 - Manufacturing Week engagement in schools to get students touring modern manufacturing facilities.
 - Internship matching event.
 - Robotics team/clubs/competitions. This can be done with other types of clubs related to clusters as well.
 - “Employment signing events” similar to sports scholarship signing promotions.
 - Student and educator/administrator tours of businesses and industries across the county.
- Participate in college career fairs, expos, and other career events and encourage local employers to participate as well.



Goal: Retain and Expand Existing Businesses

The majority of new investment and job creation in a community come from existing businesses. In the past, Chester County had a staff position focused on business retention and expansion. This strategic plan advocates for an additional staff position so a renewed focus can be placed on helping local companies overcome hurdles to expansion.

Strategy: Formalize and implement a Business Retention and Expansion Program that builds relationships, identifies and solves hurdles to expansion, and fosters a strong business climate.

Action Steps:

- Develop a comprehensive directory of Chester County industries and businesses.
- Implement a proactive BRE visitation program making retention and expansion visits to large employers, fast-growing companies, and target clusters.
- Deploy an annual existing business survey that gathers information for the BRE program such as in demand skills, topics for lunch-and-learn programs, and future space needs.
- Use a customer relationship management program to track information gathered during business visits to ensure efficient follow up.
- Add a webpage under the “Industry” menu that lists services that CCED provides to existing businesses. This could include a downloadable brochure for the BRE Program that includes.
 - Expansion Assistance
 - Sites & Buildings
 - Education and Workforce Development Connections
 - Grants, Incentives, and Financing Program Support
 - Connections to state programs for export assistance, sustainability, etc.
- Partner with ally organizations to host quarterly or semi-annual networking events. This could be lunch-and-learns featuring a speaker on a topic of importance to industry.
- Organize events to celebrate Manufacturing Week. Example events: Facility tours, social media campaign celebrating manufacturing, manufacturing presentations in schools, networking lunch with keynote on a current manufacturing topic, etc.
- Develop social media campaigns to promote existing businesses in concert with special events such as Manufacturing Week, Small Business Week, Economic Development Week, etc.

Strategy: Produce studies and information that support the growth and expansion of existing businesses.

Action Steps:

- Conduct a wage and benefits survey every three years.
- Develop a business resource list for the website that includes local and state agencies such as the Small Business Development Center, readySC, SustainSC, etc.
- Develop a “B2B” page on the website with a list of companies that have contracting opportunities for local businesses (e.g., maintenance, cleaning, component parts, etc.).
 - Encourage businesses to engage in the state’s B2B program.
- Distribute an e-newsletter to existing businesses. It could contain a business spotlight, upcoming local, regional, and state events for business, and a case study of how CCED supported a local business.
- Gather information on existing businesses’ future utility needs to inform water and wastewater planning.

Goal: Support Community and Economic Development Initiatives that Advance CCED's Mission

For Chester County to capture the full economic benefit of recent large industrial announcements, investments in placemaking, entrepreneurship, housing, entertainment, retail, and commercial development need to be made. It will take leaders from local governments, Chamber of Commerce, recreation and tourism, education, CCED, and businesses collaborating and working together to reach the community's vision.

Strategy: Develop and implement an internal communications plan to connect communities and organizations.

Action Steps:

- Host an annual event – State of the County, Economic Development Summit, CCED Annual Meeting, etc. – that is open to all of Chester County and highlights economic development priorities, spotlights companies, showcases best practices of partners, etc.
- Through a marketing/communications contractor, increase social media activities that promote existing business, events of allies, entrepreneurs, Chester County leaders, and positive news.
- Produce an annual report and quarterly update reports and share with local governments, investors, and the public. This is an example of a [monthly report](#) from Wilkes EDC, NC.
- Host quarterly informal coffee/lunch meetups with municipal and county administrators to keep informed and identify opportunities for collaboration.
 - Have the CDA Chair host regular coffees/meet-ups with elected officials of municipalities and the county. This could be added to the CDA web-based calendar under development.

Strategy: Leverage the Retail Strategies study.

Action Steps:

- Share the Retail Strategies study with the community through an “unveiling” event.
- Create a “landing page” to promote Chester County’s retail market.
- Add large commercial sites to CCED’s online database of available properties.
- Market Chester County to large commercial developers.
- Meet with the Small Business Development Center and strategize on how they can use the information to support entrepreneurs who want to start retail businesses.
- Post information from the study on the website under the “Doing Business” menu on a new page called Retail Development.
- Create a recruitment brochure/package for retail/commercial developers.
- Use data from the study to develop “market profiles” for each community (see below).

Strategy: Partner with the Chamber and other ally organizations to support entrepreneurial startups and small business growth.

Action Steps:

- Promote Chamber, SBDC, and other organizations' events targeted to entrepreneurs and small businesses on social media.
- Jointly host an event on "How to Do Business with Chester County Manufacturers."
- Explore with the Chamber the possibility of conducting a feasibility study for an entrepreneurial facility such as an incubator, cowork space, makerspace, and/or an accelerator. CCED's contribution could be grant writing support, study sponsorship, and connections with business leaders.

Strategy: Partner with local and state organizations to provide market data and information that advance community and economic development initiatives.

Action Steps:

- Develop a 1-2 page "market" or "community" profile for each municipality that includes basic market data. These can be posted on the website and emailed to commercial and residential developers.
- Develop a market area profile/package of information for housing developers that includes a housing profile, approved developments, developments under construction, and projections.
- With research support from the I-77 Alliance, respond to specific market data requests for information from commercial and residential developers.

OUR COMMUNITIES

Chester

Chester, our largest municipality dubbed "Pretty Little City on the Hill," abounds with historic buildings and lore and is home to the annual HILLarity Festival.

Historic District

Covering 250 acres and boasting 475 properties, the Historic District includes the downtown "Hill District" which features modern city amenities with traditional Southern allure.

Great Falls

Great Falls, our second largest city by population and the future home of the Great Falls Whitewater Center, stands apart with large rock outcroppings and its Catawba River setting.

Fort Lawn

Two of our county's busy highways, SC-9 and US-21, converge in our third largest municipality, Fort Lawn, named for one of the town's original settlers, the Forts.

Richburg

Offering large sects of land suitable for industrial growth, Richburg is home to two professional football and baseball players as well as a NASCAR driver.

Lowrys

The historic town of Lowrys features *The People's Free Library of South Carolina*, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Goal: Continue to be a Leading Rural Economic Development Organization in South Carolina

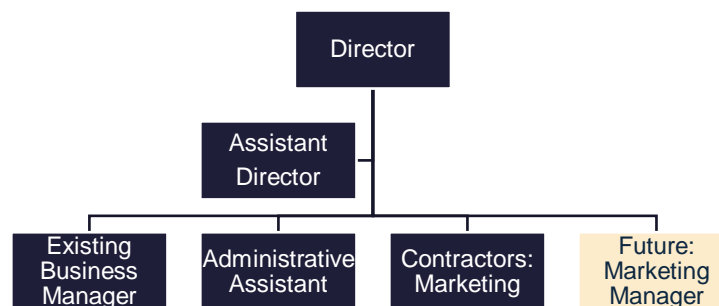
Chester County Economic Development is recognized as a leading rural economic development organization in South Carolina. It won *Trade and Industry Magazine's* 2024 Corporate Investment/Community Input Award, *Business Facilities'* 2023 Deal of the Year Impact and Small EDO of the Year awards, and the International Economic Development Council's Bronze Award for Economic Development Organization of the Year. Over many years, the program has invested in the foundations of product, people, and place. Top-notch professional staff promote the county, identify and pursue development opportunities, and build coalitions of partners to bring more resources to the county.

Strategy: Staff for success.

CCED's staffing model must expand to implement the strategic plan. The recommendations below for additional staff are made along with recommendations to increase public and private funding.

Action Steps:

- Add a staff position to support the BRE Program and investor relations.
- Expand marketing and communications capabilities and capacity through contractors and eventually another position.



- Conduct a compensation and benefits review every 2-3 years to ensure CCED can retain its talented professionals and recruit when new positions open.
- Budget for staff professional development and professional certifications to ensure staff stays on the leading edge of economic development.

Strategy: Fund implementation of the strategic plan.

Action Steps:

- Request the county fund a new existing business manager position to support the capacity needed for strategic plan implementation. This position is urgently needed to support existing businesses and overall implementation of the strategic plan.
- Request the county allocate some or all of the \$500,000 in the economic development fund to jump start implementation of the strategic plan and match 1:1 with funds from the Chester Development Association. The county's economic development account is funded by reserving 4% of the fee-in-lieu payments; thus, allocating it back to economic development creates a performance based funding loop.
- Develop a long-range funding strategy that includes:
 - Increased Chester County commitment to fund additional staff and operations.
 - Increased private sector funding to support marketing, talent attraction, site/building development, and special studies.
 - Complete a private sector fundraising feasibility analysis through an independent third-party.

Projected Public + Private Funding Needed for Implementation Above the Current Budget

2025	2026	2027
\$225,000 Includes Existing Business Position but does not include site control or development.	\$300,000 Includes Existing Business position but does not include spec building construction.	\$400,000 Includes Existing Business position and marketing position.

Strategy: Measure the county's return on investment in economic development.

Action Steps:

- Conduct economic impact analysis of projects to show the direct, indirect, and induced impacts of CCED-led projects.

Strategy: Institutionalize strategic planning in the CCED culture.

Action Steps:

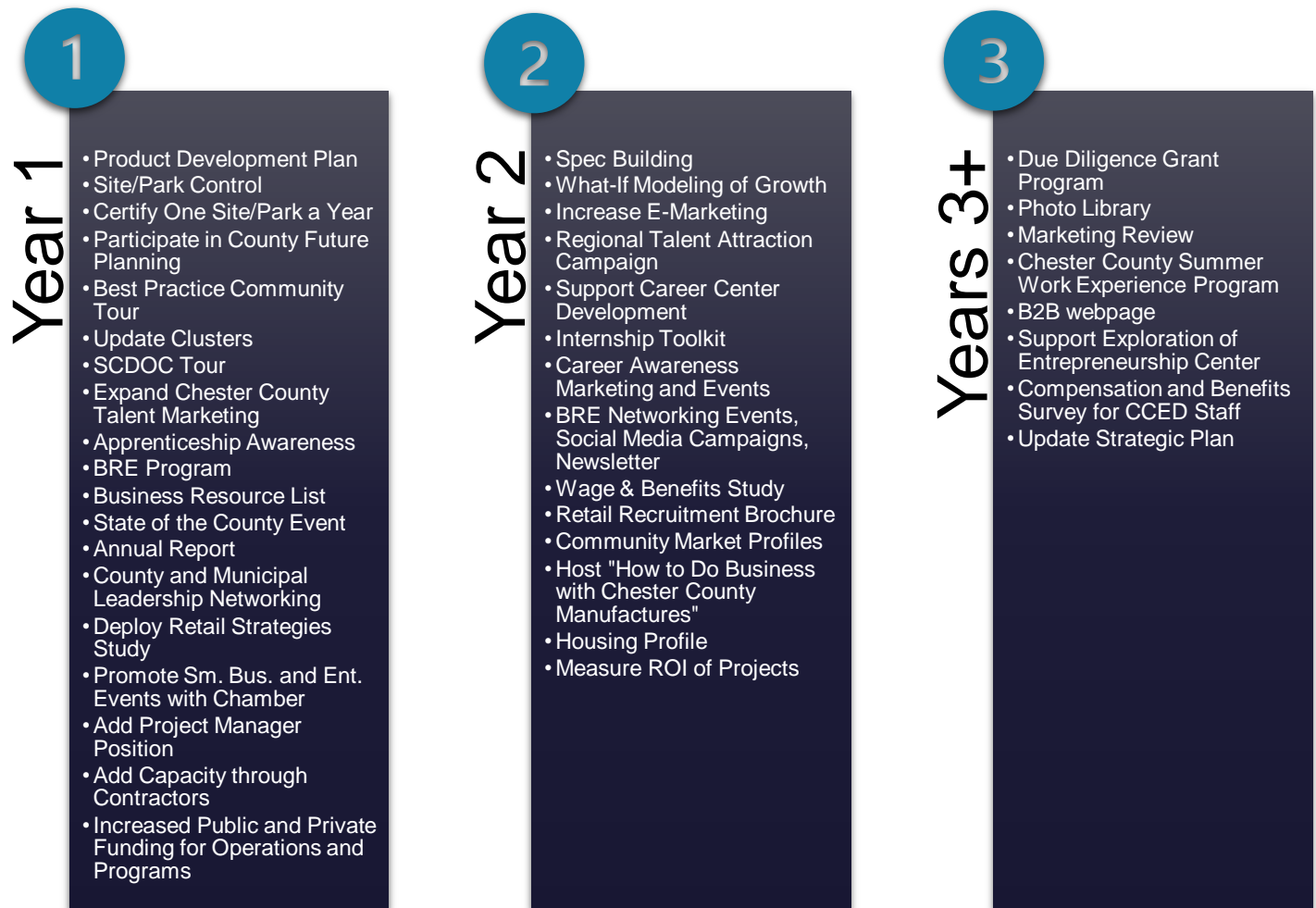
- Review the strategic plan monthly at staff meetings and quarterly at board and county council meetings.
- Publish an annual report that tracks progress of strategic plan implementation.
- Conduct an annual planning retreat to make course corrections to plan as new market information is learned and react to new developments in Chester County.
- Plan for a comprehensive update every 3-5 years.



Implementation

Chester County Economic Development will need strong support from Chester County, Chester Development Association, municipalities, local allies, and regional partners to implement the strategic plan. In addition to ongoing program activities in business attraction, marketing, and product development, there are several new initiatives and programs recommended in this strategic plan. The implementation guide below assumes an increase in public and private funding, allowing CCED to expand existing programs, fund special studies and projects, and contract for services.

Every year, we recommend reviewing the strategic plan for needed updates. This could be done in a planning retreat setting with the Chester Development Association and county leadership. Every three to five years, conduct an update to the strategic plan.



Metrics

There are three types of metrics tracked in economic development. Program metrics measure the activities and outcomes of programs such as the business attraction program. These are used to track the performance of economic development programs and are most useful to a board and governing body. Below is a recommended dashboard for program metrics.

Organizational metrics measure the health of the organization, looking at funding stability and employee and board satisfaction. These are used to understand the sustainability of the organization. Example organizational metrics also include council/elected leader satisfaction, private sector engagement, and employee satisfaction.

Community well-being, or economic health indicators, are measures of how well the community is doing. Data on educational attainment and per capita income are used for these measures. Because economic development programs should impact these indicators over a long period of time, they are not annual measures of the program's success. However, it is still important to track. CCED should track and report data such as population growth, unemployment rate, labor force, wages, new business starts, and building permits and use the data for planning.

CCED Dashboard



Appendix A: SWOT Analysis

Competitive Position

Location

Transportation Network

Growing Labor Market

Affordable Market

Available Sites and Buildings

Quality of Life Amenities

Natural Resources

This SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) summarizes input from stakeholders, elected officials, CDA investors, county residents, local businesses, and allies. An estimated 150+ community leaders participated in the strategic planning process. The strategic plan is built upon the assets and opportunities that Chester County has in place and can augment for economic development progress as well as the weaknesses and threats that need to be recognized and addressed.

Strengths - Chester County is well-positioned with assets and advantages. Its physical location adjacent to the growing Charlotte and Columbia regions and along strong transportation corridors for ground transportation, air, and rail, mean that it will continue to gain attention from developers, companies, and people looking for new locations. There is available land for new development, a strong labor force, and a growing market for goods. Chester has emerging and existing natural resources that contribute to residents' quality of life and attract visitors. Three state parks, two rivers, and whitewater access will advance and preserve the beautiful environment. All of these assets will support and extend the county's strategies for growth.

Weaknesses - Growth often comes with challenges for rural counties, and Chester County's large size and distributed collection of towns has resulted in some capacity issues with infrastructure including secondary roads, water and wastewater, and public school facilities. The unevenly dispersed populations could also contribute to a lack of shared priorities and communications gaps among elected leaders and for residents. A strategic plan is designed to widely communicate priorities and tactics as well as combine and organize action items for execution.

Opportunities - Combined with strong assets, Chester County is brimming with opportunities related to its economic growth and physical development. New investments and development in Great Falls around the whitewater area, along with two rivers and a new state park, will create many opportunities for visitors to spend money in Chester County as well as provide amenities for residents. The strong ground and rail transportation network and relative availability and affordability of industrial land will continue to attract companies with jobs and capital investment. A physically large and growing county also presents opportunities for increased connectivity for everything from pedestrian and recreation assets to communications and storytelling messaging.

Threats - Most identified threats to Chester County are related to the perception of imminent growth and its impact on the rural character and natural beauty of the county. Residents want expanded retail and commercial opportunities and good jobs, but they also want to make sure that the beauty and small town atmosphere are preserved. Gathering community input widely, setting broadly shared priorities for action, and excellent communications will all contribute to the prevention of some of the most often cited perceived threats.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats are listed in the order most often cited in community engagement.

Strengths

- Growth and momentum
- I-77
- Proximity to Charlotte and Columbia
- Access Charlotte-Douglas International Airport
- Dual rail access
- Natural and physical beauty
 - Whitewater, two Rivers
 - Three State parks
- Inventory of industrial sites
- Labor pool
- Leadership for economic development, CCED staff, I-77 Alliance, Chamber, CDA
- Leadership of the county
- York Technical College and Winthrop University
- York Tech Training
- People are welcoming and resilient
- Economic incentive programs
- Duke Energy
- Affordable cost of living compared to neighbors
- Healthcare access
- Community support for small business
- Community activities and culture
- Walkable downtown Chester
- Fire and police services - ISO-2
- Less red tape than larger counties
- Historical properties - significant history
- Beautiful - outdoor recreation
- Diversity – economy and community
- Farming community
- Natural resources -clean water
- Sporting clays, sky diving, amenities, whitewater
- Low energy costs

Weaknesses

- Wastewater capacity and access
- School performance ratings and facilities, perceptions
- Housing availability and cost
- Housing mix e.g., no modern multifamily, lack of 'workforce housing'
- Lack of dense population centers
- Local transportation arteries
- Infrastructure-roads, bridges, sidewalks
- Lack of convenience-retail, amenities, food
- Lack of cultural arts, recreation, restaurants, amenities
- Lack of pedestrian and walkability infrastructure
- Generational poverty
- Retail leakage
- Lack of labor, skilled, entry level
- Lack of trades-skilled labor
- High water and sewer rates
- Lack of existing buildings
- Image and perception
- Aging hospital facilities
- High millage rate
- Impacts of growth on capacity
- Industrial leaders live outside the county
- Violence--crime in general
- Soft skills-skills gap
- Lack of recreation venues
- Water utility capacity and access
- Lack of communications
- Trust-history of corruption
- Lack of trades for commercial jobs
- Intergovernmental meeting needed – lack of unity

Opportunities

- Get people on board with a shared growth plan
- Keep rural character and grow
- Whitewater visitors and business opportunities
- Growing small business, entrepreneurship, and local shopping
- Agriculture and ecotourism
- Retail Strategies contract work
- Increase participation in training programs
- Capture out commuters
- Improve schools to capture Chester county business leaders who live elsewhere, e.g. Lancaster
- Private development of new business park
- Build on outdoor recreation
 - Existing Chester State Park plus future Dearborn State Park
 - Leverage 'blueways' - rivers, fishing and whitewater rafting
- New county staff leaders
 - planning director
 - tourism director
- Tell our story better
- More communication for people and citizens to be engaged
- Scout Motors suppliers
- York Tech career pathways
- Catawba Valley Land Trust
- Find funding source for parks and recreation
- Business incubators
- Promote historic sites
- 30 million people pass the Gateway annually-take advantage of signage
- Landowner cooperation-more sites to market
- Downtown development in Chester and Great Falls
- Vacant property redevelopment in Chester
- Gallo and river access, tasting room for visitors
- Fall school bond supporting new career center
- Trails-tying places/destinations through connectivity
 - Walking and biking trails
 - Carolina Thread Trail
 - Kayak Trail and Branch Trail
 - Rail Trail – Former rail bed
- Battlefield as historic site and scenic river
- Leverage busy clay shooting scene plus skydiving offerings
- Gateway overlay district
- Agri-business development
- Arts and Entertainment District
- New community spaces for connectivity
- Housing types-apartments-market rate-amenities
- Focus on sectors- targeting EV
- City of Chester EV opportunities
- Enterprise Zone-Business Zone development
- Retail development
- Rodman Sports Complex
- Build an amphitheater for public events
- Community theater 'home' and cultural arts
- Learn from neighbors who experienced fast growth
- River destinations – Broad River
- Talented people: tap for leadership and retain
- Upcoming 250th Revolutionary War / Independence anniversary activities
- Chester County Airport opportunities for small aircraft outside Charlotte Douglas glidepath plus hundreds of acres of available property

Threats

- Losing rural character
- Losing or harming natural resources
- Growth outpaces the community
- Lack of school investment
- Elected leaders not making tough decisions
- Wastewater capacity in greater Richburg area, and lack of distribution lines along parts of Hwy 9
- I-77 and other transportation improvements needed but not funded
- Pressures on labor force (Scout Motors)
- Compatible zoning needed
- Negative perception
- Wages to attract talent
- Silo thinking
- Losing community schools
- Overdevelopment and lack of planning
- Power capacity and load requests from industrial prospects
- Overall competition
- County property taxes
- Need to keep change going
- Not setting housing standards
- Continued disintegration of housing
- Historical dysfunction
- Not leaning into new tech
- Slowdown of business interest
- Lack of childcare
- Drugs rampant in population
- Interstate expands access to crime and drugs

Appendix B: Workforce & Cluster Analysis

32,171

Population

87.1%

High School Degree
or Higher

\$50,022

Median HH Income

Manufacturing
Retail
Wholesale
Trade
Top Sectors

3,490

Mfg. Workers

85.9

Cost of Living

Chester County is experiencing new business starts and wage growth and at the same time, struggling to maintain population and provide jobs that will bring the unemployment rate close to the regional and state average.

The population of Chester County has been slightly declining in a region that is experiencing fast growth. The county also has an older population as it has not been able to attract and retain younger workers. New housing developments are anticipated to impact the labor force and age demographics.

Income and wages are growing in the county; however, median household income still lags behind the region and the state. The poverty level has been declining but remains above the region and the state. The new industries recently recruited to Chester County are expected to positively impact the poverty rate as well as income and wage levels.

The labor force has been growing and stands at 14,381. After years of decline, since 2018, the labor force has shown steady growth. However, the unemployment rate remains above the region and the state. More than half of the labor force out-commutes for work. Most work in Manufacturing, Retail, Wholesale Trade, and Health Care and Social Assistance. Top occupations include Production, Transportation and Material Moving, Office and Administrative Support, and Sales.

Chester County has seen an increase in new businesses and startups recently, following national trends. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. saw record new business starts, and the trend has continued.

The agriculture sector is important to Chester County's culture and way of life. Unlike most rural places, the overall acres farmed is increasing, as is the number of operations. There is also growth in crop and animal sales. This could be due to new programs in the county that support large and small farmers.

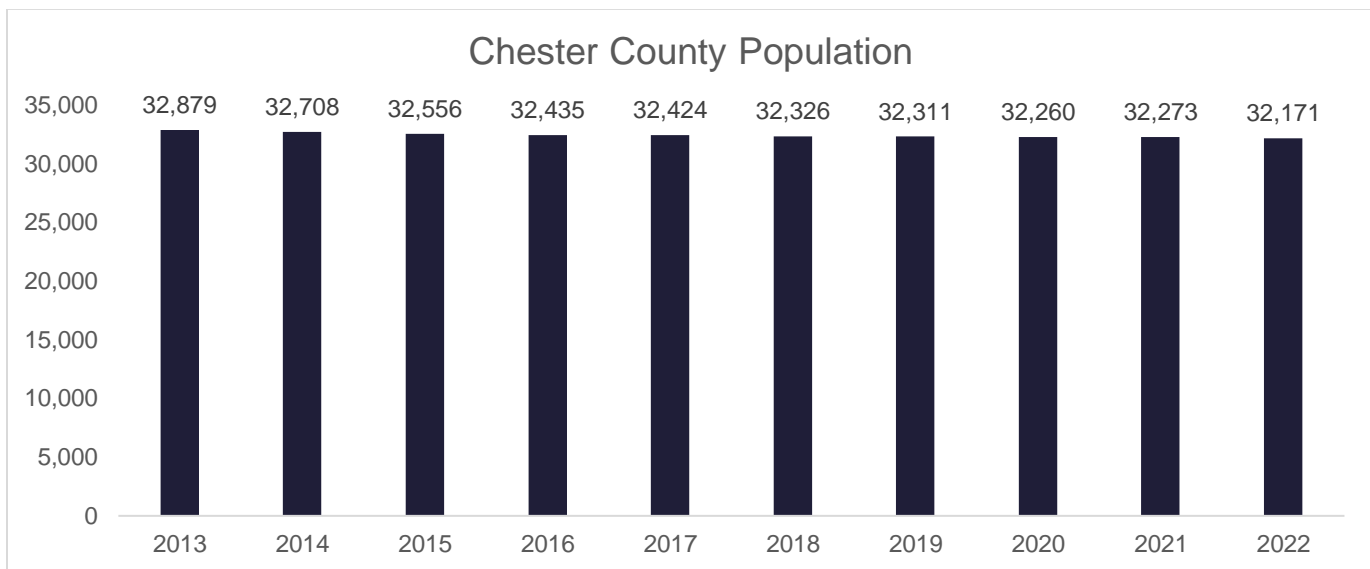
There is an opportunity to grow the retail market in Chester County. Compared to similar communities, retail sales are weak. The county lacks retail destinations, clusters of retail to attract both citizens and people living in nearby communities to shop and dine.

The cost of living index in Chester County is 85.9, less than U.S. average of 100 but in the middle of comparable counties. Housing is affordable as well.

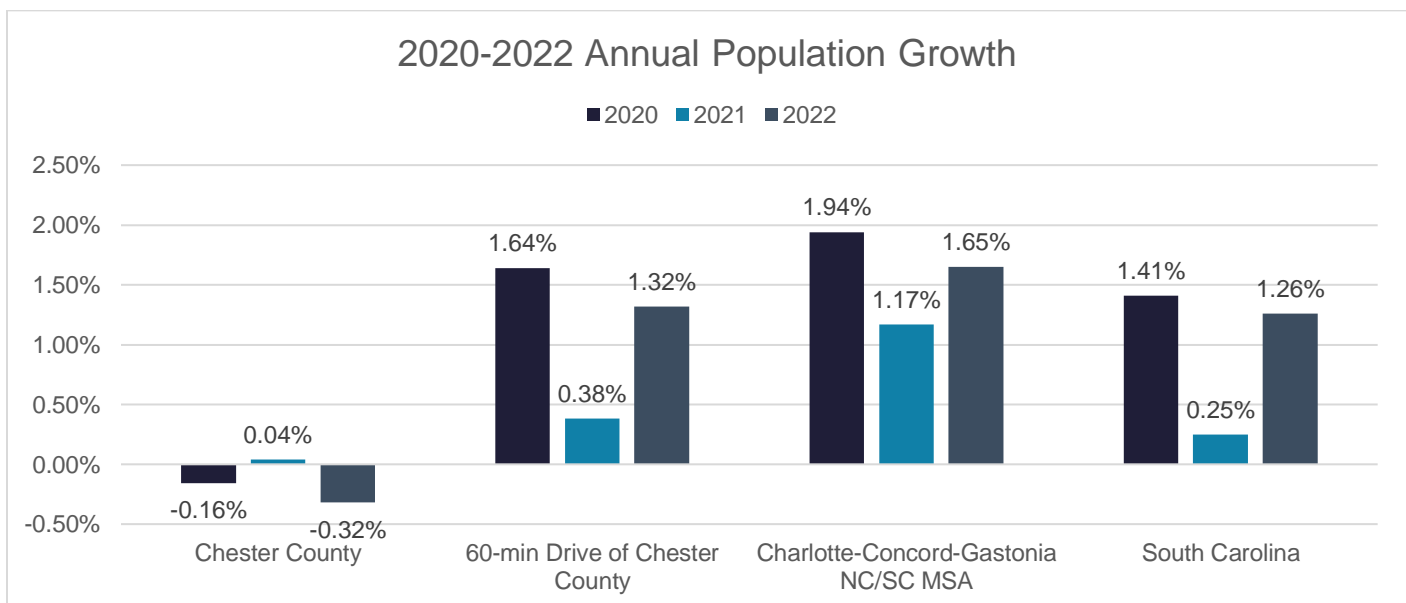
The data were analyzed for Chester County, a laborshed region of a 60-minute commute time from Chester, the metropolitan statistical area of Charlotte, and four comparable counties like Chester County (Chesterfield, Clarendon, Dillon, and Newberry).

Demographics

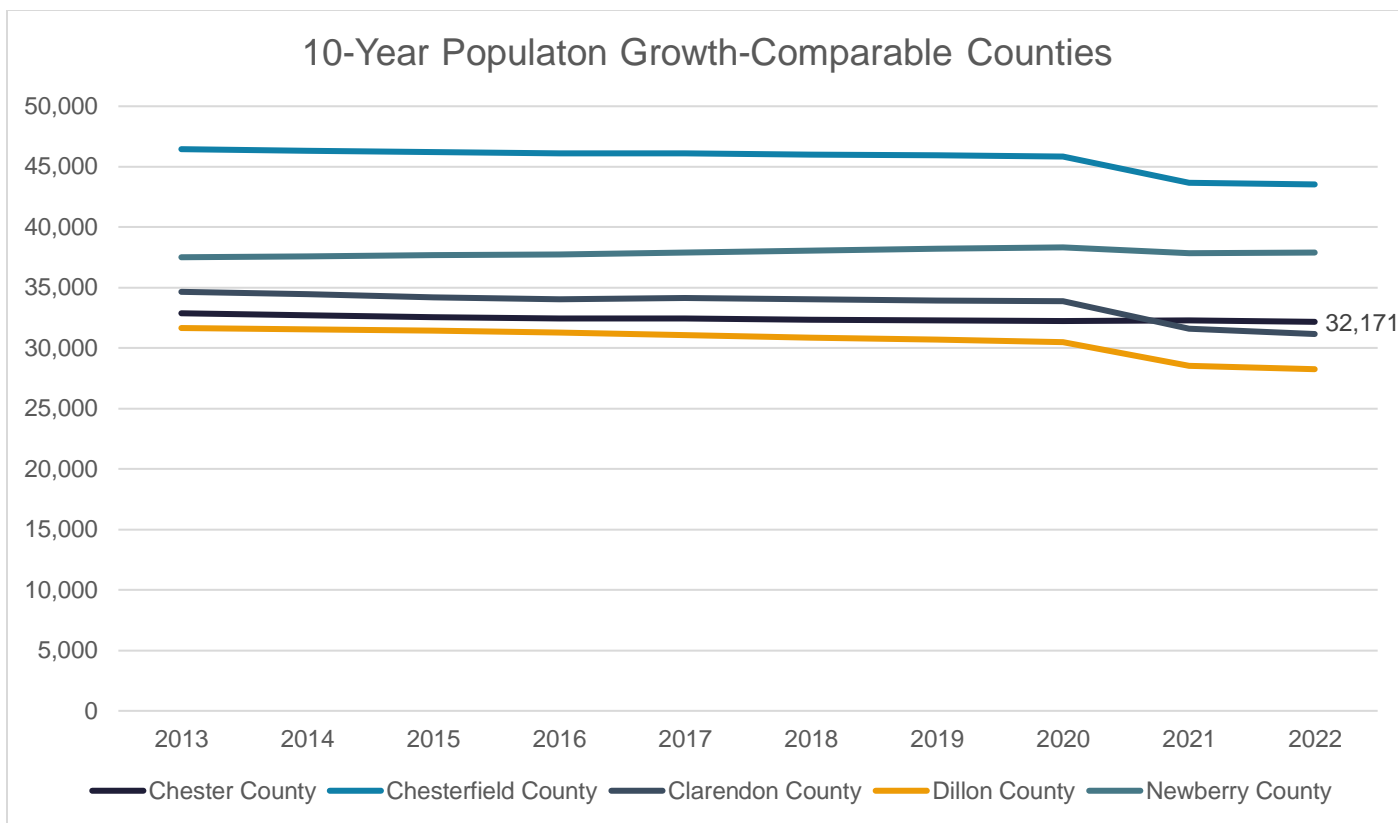
Chester County's population has been slowly declining over the last 10 years, reduced by approximately 700 people. The laborshed, MSA, and state have seen growth over that time period. The fastest growth has been in the Charlotte MSA. When compared to similar counties, Chester County's decline has been smaller than the others which have more significant declines since 2021. Population data lagged a couple of years. The 3,300 new residential units under development will start to show in Chester County's population figures in 2026. Since projections are a logarithm based on past data, it is estimated that projection data will start to change a couple of years after that.



Source: JobsEQ



Source: JobsEQ



Source: JobsEQ

Chester County's median age, 41.8 years, is younger than all comparable counties except Dillon County, but older than the laborshed, MSA, and state.

2022 Median Age							
Chester County	Chesterfield County	Clarendon County	Dillon County	Newberry County	60-min Drive of Chester County	Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia NC/SC MSA	South Carolina
41.8	42.6	45.5	37.5	42.6	37.7	38	40

Source: JobsEQ

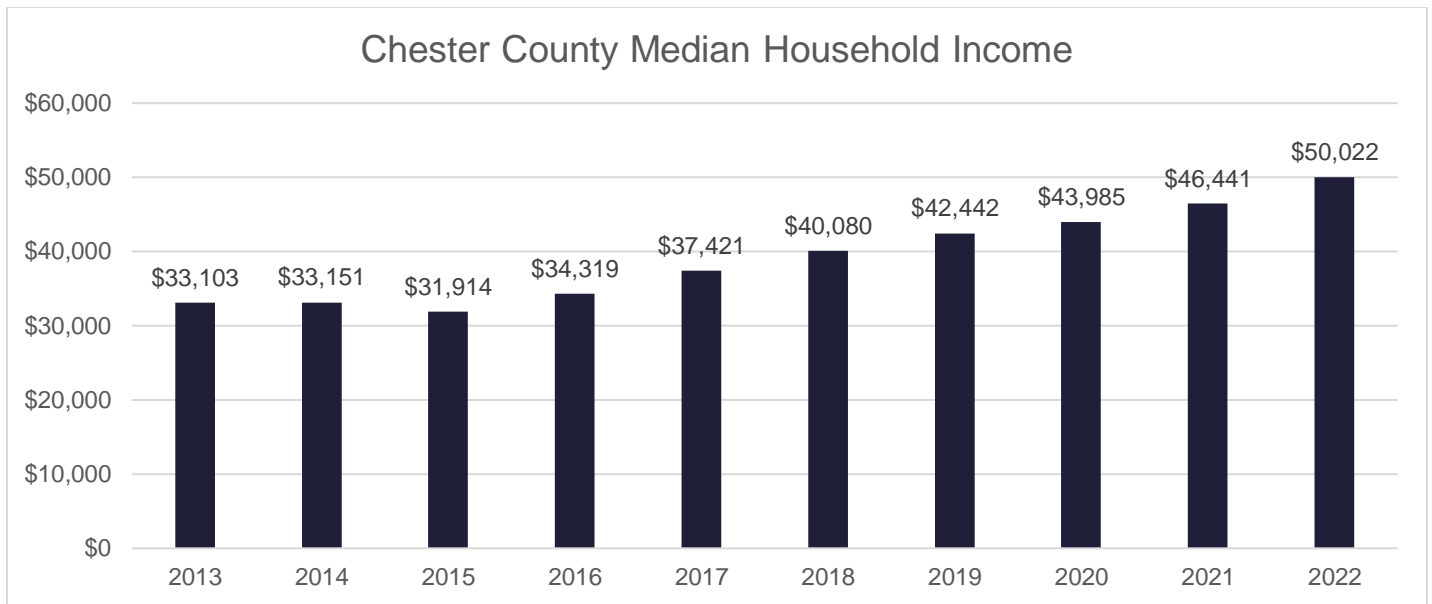
Chester County, at 59.5% White and 36.1% Black, stands out as having the lowest diversity index in the group. The Charlotte MSA is the most diverse, with the laborshed also having a higher diversity index.

2024 Diversity Index							
Chester County	Chesterfield County	Clarendon County	Dillon County	Newberry County	60-min Drive of Chester County	Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia NC/SC MSA	South Carolina
56.9	60.1	58.2	61.4	61.9	68.7	69.2	60.3
Source: ESRI							

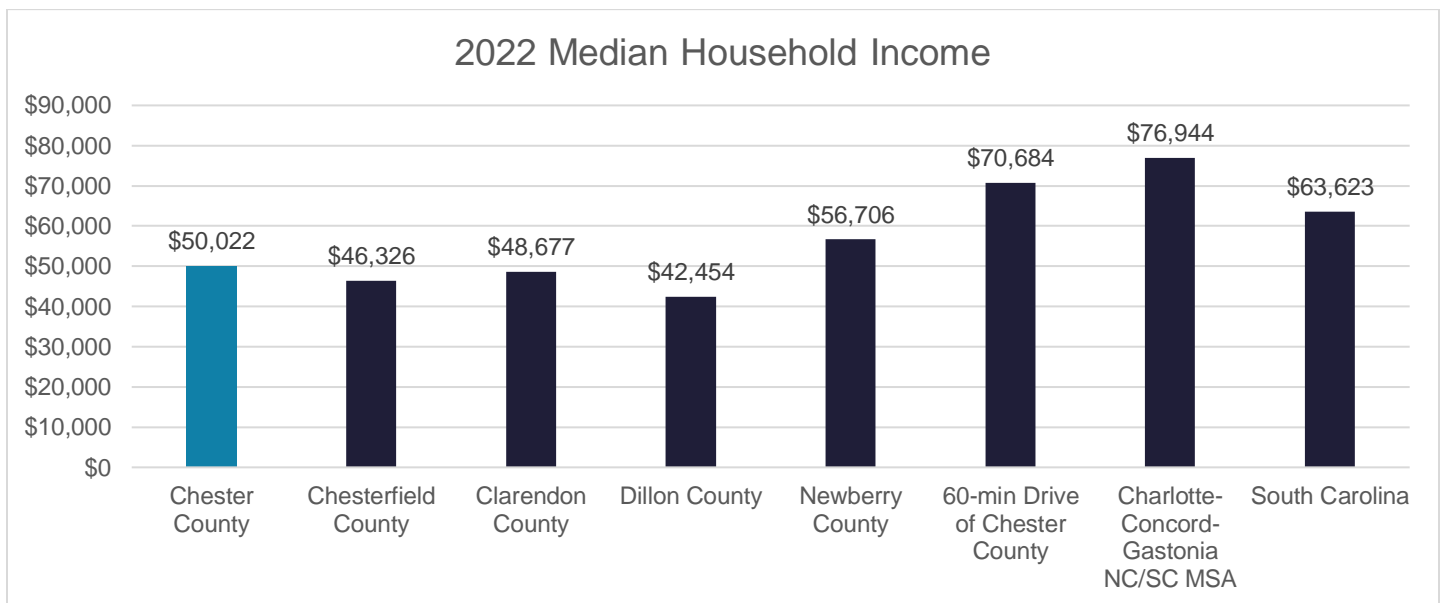
2022 Chester County Race & Ethnicity	
White	59.5%
Black or African American	36.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.3%
Asian	0.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Some Other Race	0.4%
Two or More Races	3.2%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2.4%
Source: JobsEQ	

Income and Poverty

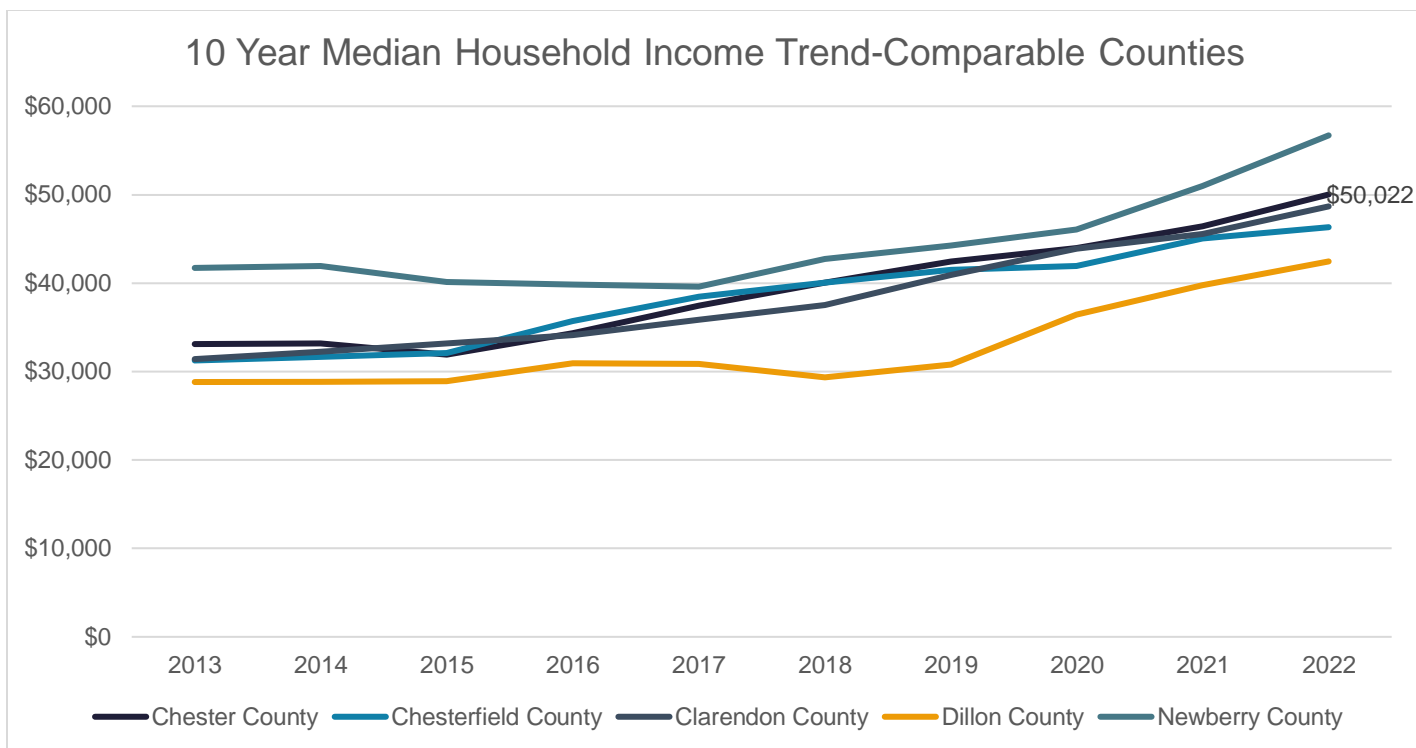
Median household income has grown 51% over the last ten years and is \$50,022. Compared to similar counties, Chester County's median household income is higher than all but Newberry County, but it is lower than the laborshed, region, and state. It lags behind the state by 27% and the laborshed by 41%. All areas have seen increases in median household income in the last few years.



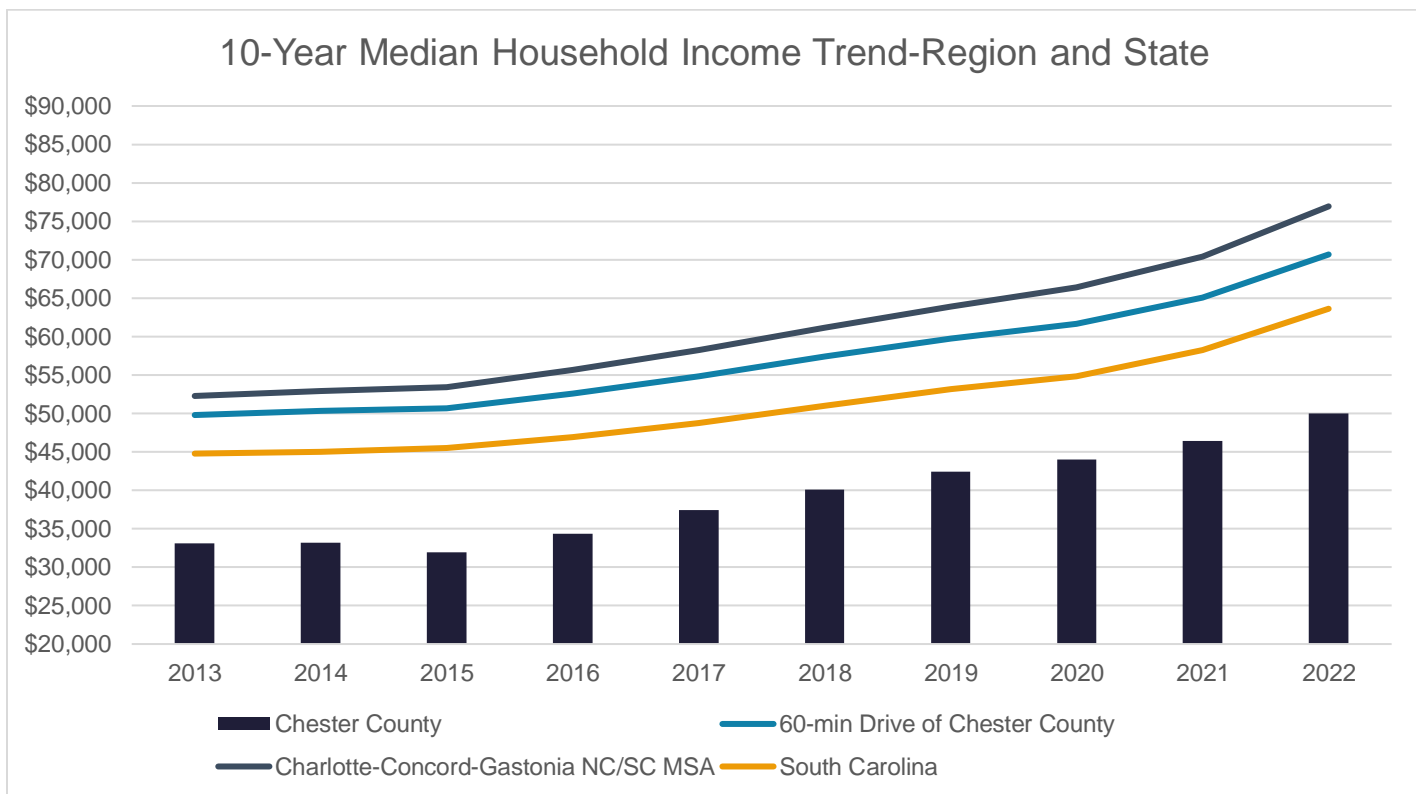
Source: JobsEQ



Source: JobsEQ

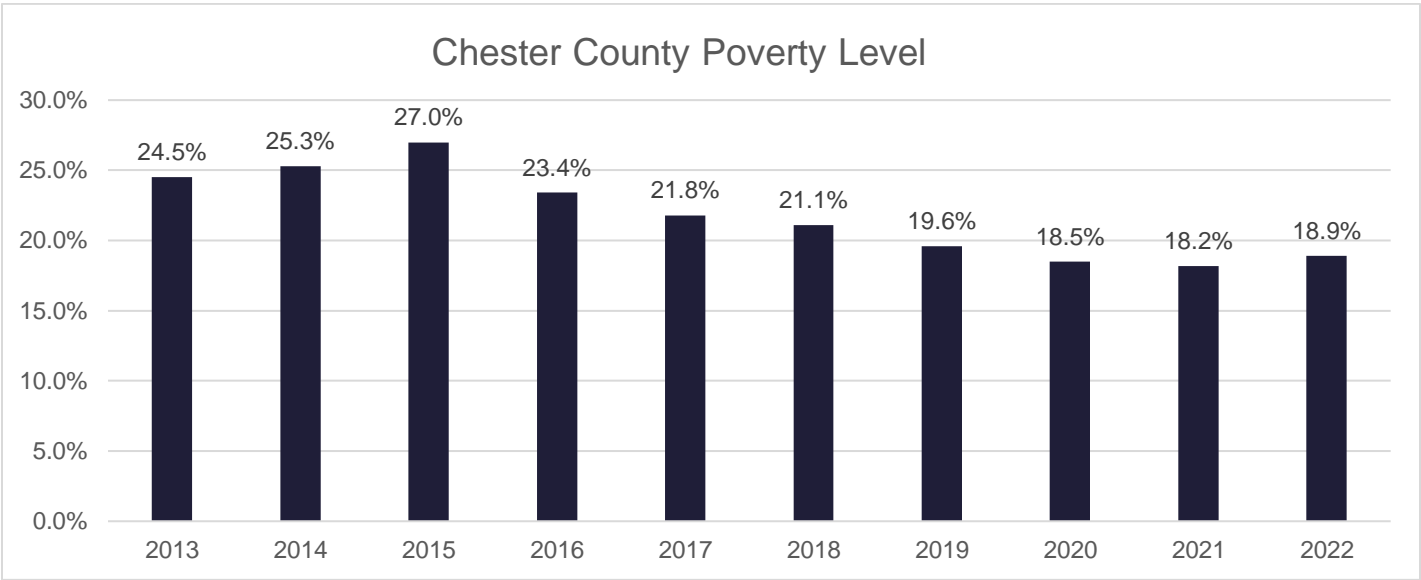


Source: JobsEQ

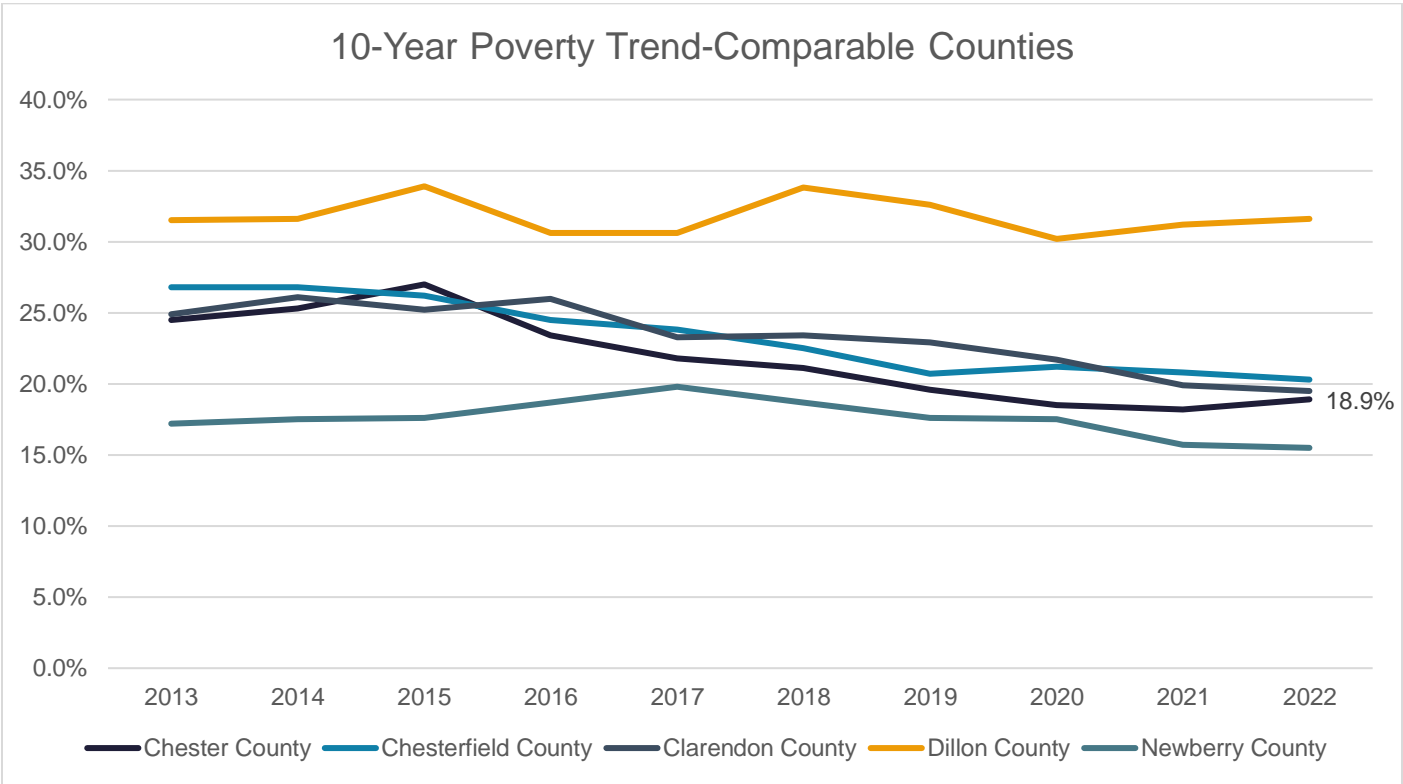


Source: JobsEQ

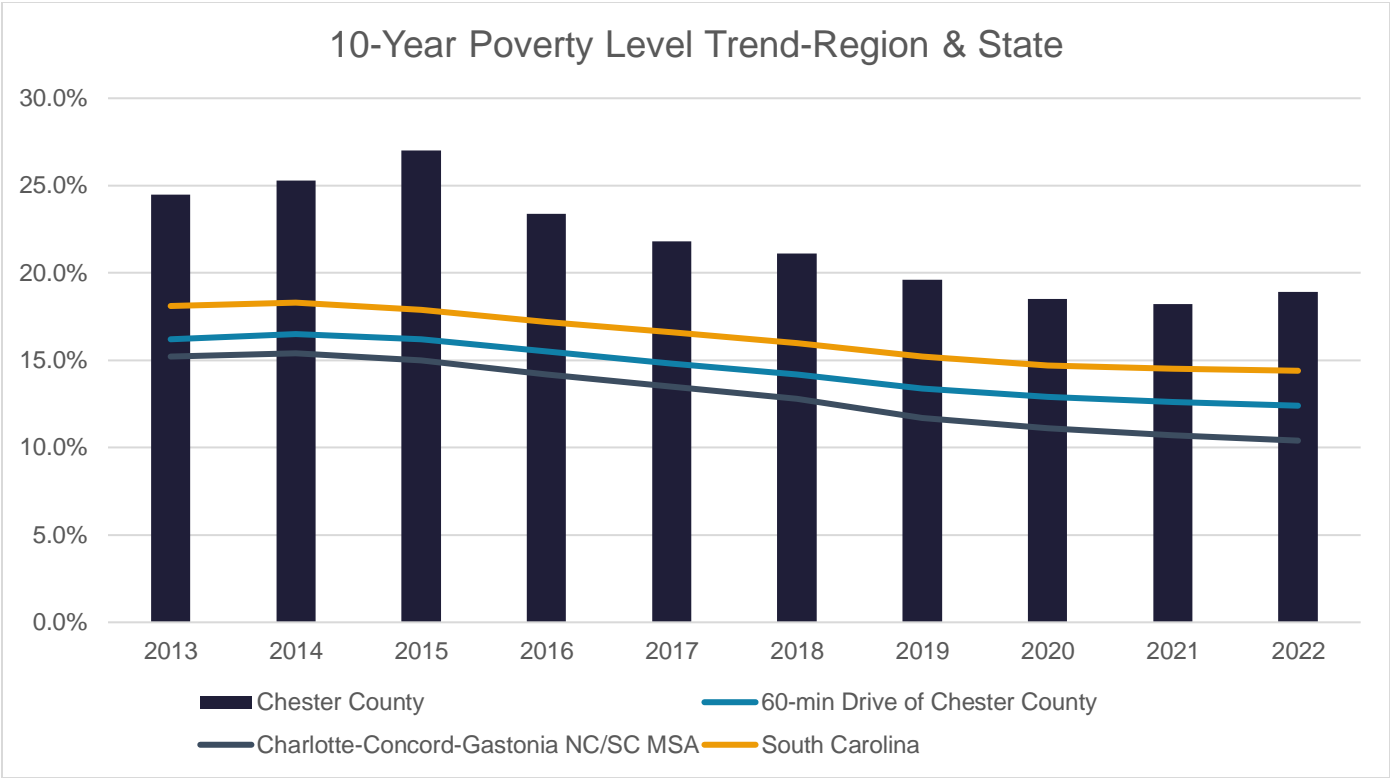
The poverty level in Chester County, 18.9%, has been decreasing since 2015 when it was 27%. It is lower than the comparable counties except for Newberry, but higher than the laborshed, region, and state.



Source: JobsEQ



Source: JobsEQ



Source: JobsEQ

Education

Almost 87.1% of Chester County's population has a high school degree or higher. That is above all of the comparable counties, but lower than the region, laborshed, and state.

2022 Chester County Educational Attainment, Age 25-64	
No High School Diploma	13.0%
High School Graduate	40.3%
Some College, No Degree	21.3%
Associate's Degree	11.0%
Bachelor's Degree	9.2%
Postgraduate Degree	5.3%
Source JobsEQ	

2022 Percent with a High School Degree or Higher							
Chester County	Chesterfield County	Clarendon County	Dillon County	Newberry County	60-min Drive of Chester County	Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia NC/SC MSA	South Carolina
87.1%	83.9%	82.0%	82.6%	86.6%	90.6%	91.0%	90.3%
Source JobsEQ							

There are more than 44,000 students graduating each year in the region from a wide range of colleges, universities, technical and community colleges, and technical schools. The top four-year degree programs are Biology/Biological Sciences, Finance, and Business Administration and Management. The top two-year degrees and certificates are Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies, Biotechnology, and Registered Nurse.

2023 Degrees and Certificates Awarded in 60 Min Drive Time of Chester County, SC					
Title	Certificates and 2yr Awards	4yr Awards	Postgraduate Awards	Total Awards	Total School Enrollment
University of South Carolina-Columbia	12	7,404	2,629	10,045	35,471
University of North Carolina at Charlotte	0	6,656	2,010	8,666	30,448
Central Piedmont Community College	4,083	0	0	4,083	17,208
Gaston College	3,400	0	0	3,400	4,953
Midlands Technical College	1,543	0	0	1,543	8,702
University of South Carolina-Upstate	0	1,187	242	1,429	5,438

York Technical College	1,350	0	0	1,350	3,835
Winthrop University	0	900	356	1,256	5,174
Gardner-Webb University	19	518	598	1,135	3,441
Spartanburg Community College	1,057	0	0	1,057	6,097
Cleveland Community College	1,010	0	0	1,010	2,425
Wingate University	0	528	321	849	3,439
Columbia International University	48	182	450	680	2,338
Queens University of Charlotte	0	414	258	672	2,063
Davidson College	0	556	0	556	1,973
Limestone University	21	425	83	529	1,840
Wofford College	0	517	0	517	1,765
Columbia College	0	219	237	456	1,389
Johnson & Wales University-Charlotte	217	152	0	369	1,262
Converse University	0	191	152	343	1,440
Southeastern Esthetics Institute	339	0	0	339	289
Northeastern Technical College	322	0	0	322	1,717
Belmont Abbey College	0	315	0	315	1,517
Presbyterian College	0	211	84	295	1,231
Newberry College	0	271	0	271	1,242
Benedict College	0	258	7	265	1,908
Southeastern College-Charlotte	265	0	0	265	231
Spartanburg Methodist College	235	26	0	261	1,042
Johnson C Smith University	0	216	25	241	1,166
Carolinas College of Health Sciences	182	36	0	218	473
University of South Carolina-Lancaster	182	0	0	182	1,809
Fortis College-Columbia	170	0	0	170	438
South University-Columbia	29	57	68	154	625
Kenneth Shuler School of Cosmetology-Rock Hill	147	0	0	147	181
Paul Mitchell the School-Gastonia	137	0	0	137	340
Kenneth Shuler School of Cosmetology-Columbia	134	0	0	134	145

Southeastern College-Columbia	125	0	0	125	185
Kenneth Shuler School of Cosmetology-Spartanburg	122	0	0	122	141
Sherman College of Chiropractic	0	0	121	121	394
Aviation Institute of Maintenance-Charlotte	97	0	0	97	180
University of South Carolina-Union	97	0	0	97	1,244
Paul Mitchell the School-Columbia	81	0	0	81	206
Allen University	0	62	14	76	621
Chamberlain University-North Carolina	0	38	0	38	251
Empire Beauty School-Pineville	30	0	0	30	70
Kenneth Shuler School of Cosmetology and Nails-Columbia	27	0	0	27	100
Empire Beauty School-Charlotte	26	0	0	26	64
Charlotte Christian College and Theological Seminary	3	10	12	25	136
LeGrand Institute of Cosmetology Inc	15	0	0	15	32
Clinton College	9	4	0	13	153
DeVry University-North Carolina	0	3	5	8	29
No Grease Barber School	5	0	0	5	13
Total	15,539	21,356	7,672	44,567	
<i>Source: JobsEQ</i>					

2022 Top 10 Four-Year Programs in 60 min Drive Time of Chester County, SC

Title	4yr Awards
Biology/Biological Sciences, General	1,139
Finance, General	1,135
Business Administration and Management, General	1,067
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	1,017
Psychology, General	913
Computer Science	677
Marketing/Marketing Management, General	638
Political Science and Government, General	587
Public Health, General	531
Sport and Fitness Administration/Management	510
<i>Source: JobsEQ</i>	

2022 Top 10 Certificate and 2yr Awards in 60 min Drive Time of Chester County, SC

Title	Certificates and 2yr Awards
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	3,572
Biotechnology	1,158
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	912
Aesthetician/Esthetician and Skin Care Specialist	683
Business Administration and Management, General	664
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	489
Welding Technology/Welder	406
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	377
Information Technology	344
Medical/Clinical Assistant	333
<i>Source: JobsEQ</i>	

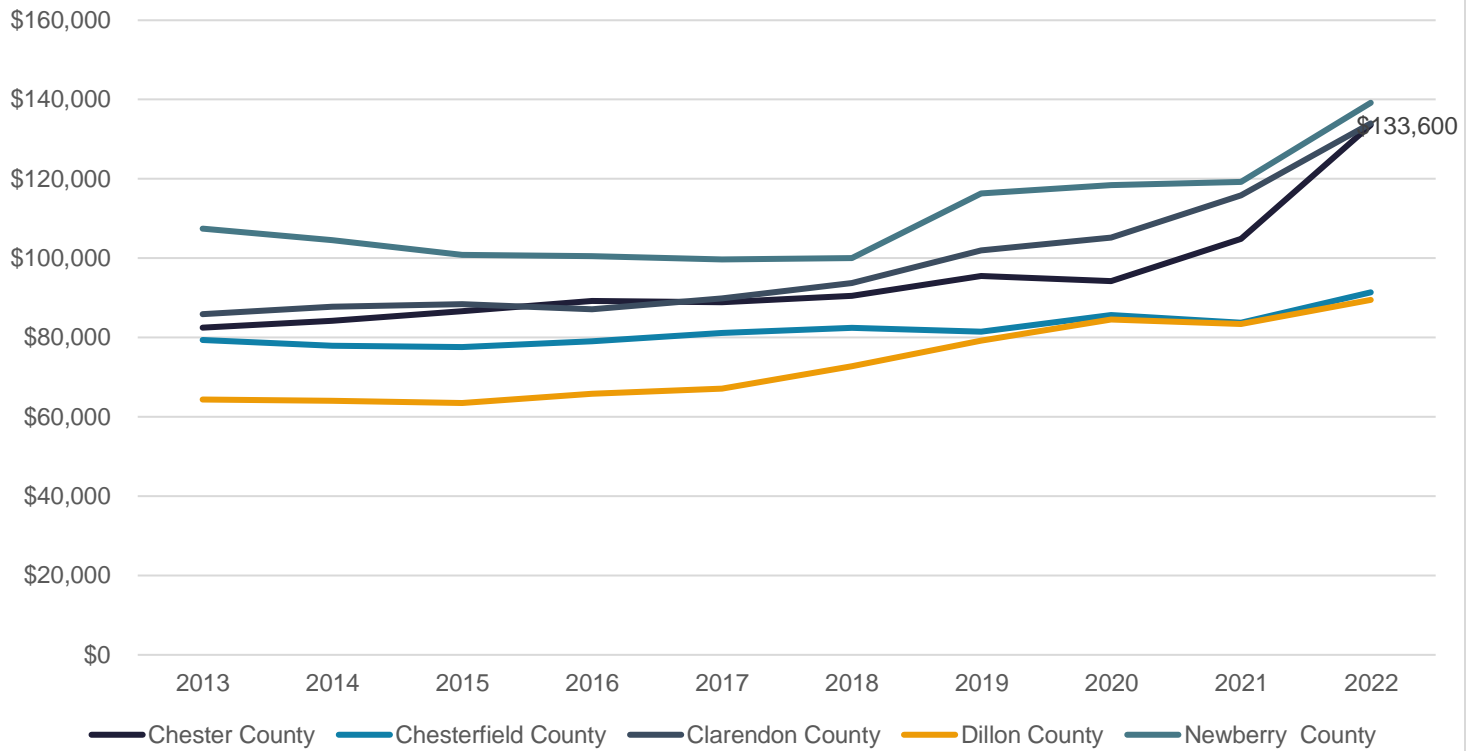
Housing

Most of Chester County's housing stock is single family, owner-occupied. It is an older housing stock, with a median year built of 1978. The median home value is \$165,188 and monthly gross rent is \$831. Chester County has a median home value in the middle of the comparable group and lower than regional and state values. Median home value has been rising more sharply in Chester County than other comparable counties, driven by new developments and pressure on the market from Charlotte.

Housing data are lagged behind the rapid increase of new, approved residential units. There are an estimated 3,300 new residential units approved/permitted in six new developments. Three are selling homes. The average sales price listed on real estate websites is around \$300,000. Canopy Realtor Association recently reported that Chester County's median home price rose faster than any other location in the Charlotte metro. (<https://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/article290233584.html>)

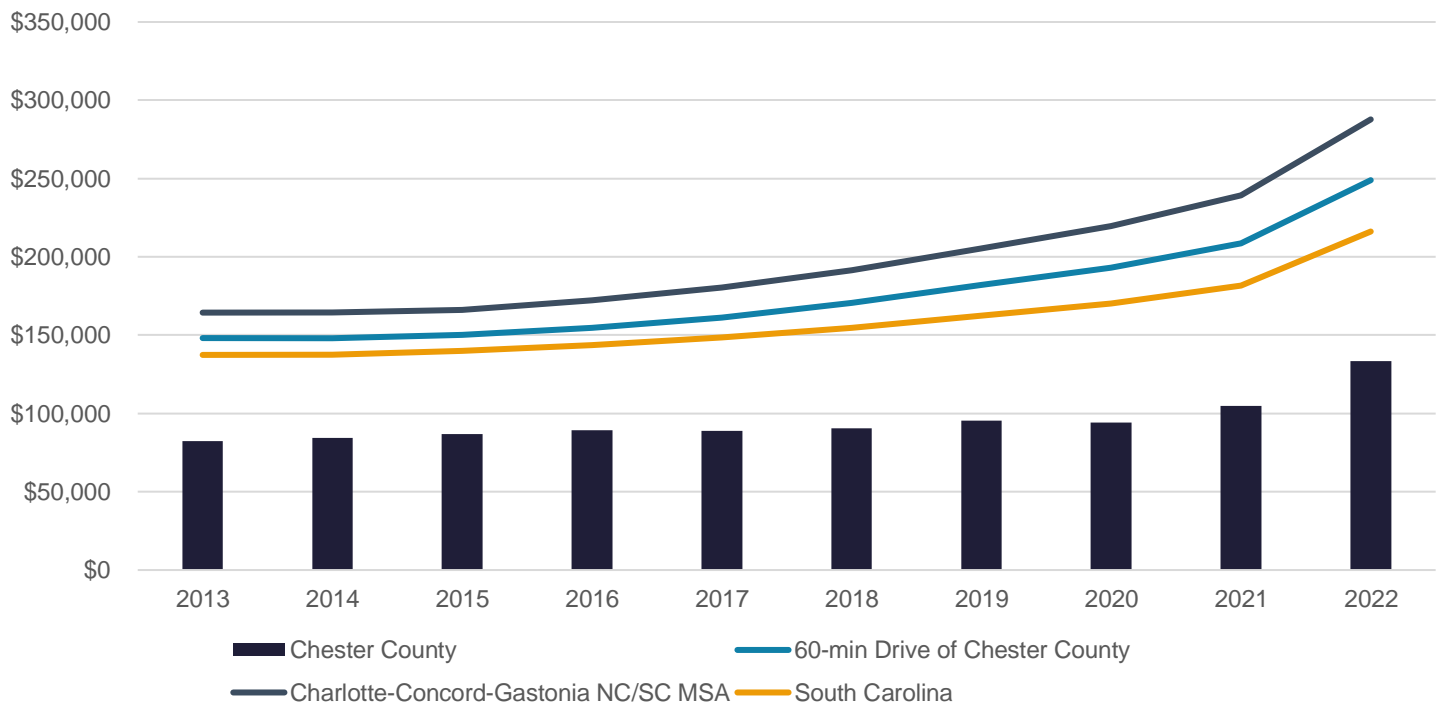
Chester County Housing Profile	
Total Housing Units, 2024	14,633
Projected Units in 2029	14,689* <i>Does not consider 3,300 new homes permitted</i>
Projected % Increase 2024-29	0.38%
% Occupied	88.60%
% Vacant	11.40%
Owner-Occupied	68.40%
Renter-Occupied	28.10%
Affordability Index 2024	139
Median Monthly Contract Rent (2018-2022)	\$574
Median Monthly Gross Rent (2018-2022)	\$831
Median Home Value 2024	\$165,188
Median Age Built (2018-2022)	1978
Stock	
1, Detached	72.00%
1, Attached	0.20%
2-9 Units	3.50%
10-19 Units	0.4%
20+ Units	0.9%
Mobile Home, Boat, RV, etc.	22.90%
Homes for Sale	104
Average Sale Time (days)	78
<i>Source: ESRI</i>	

10-Year Trend Median Home Value-Comparable Counties



Source: JobsEQ

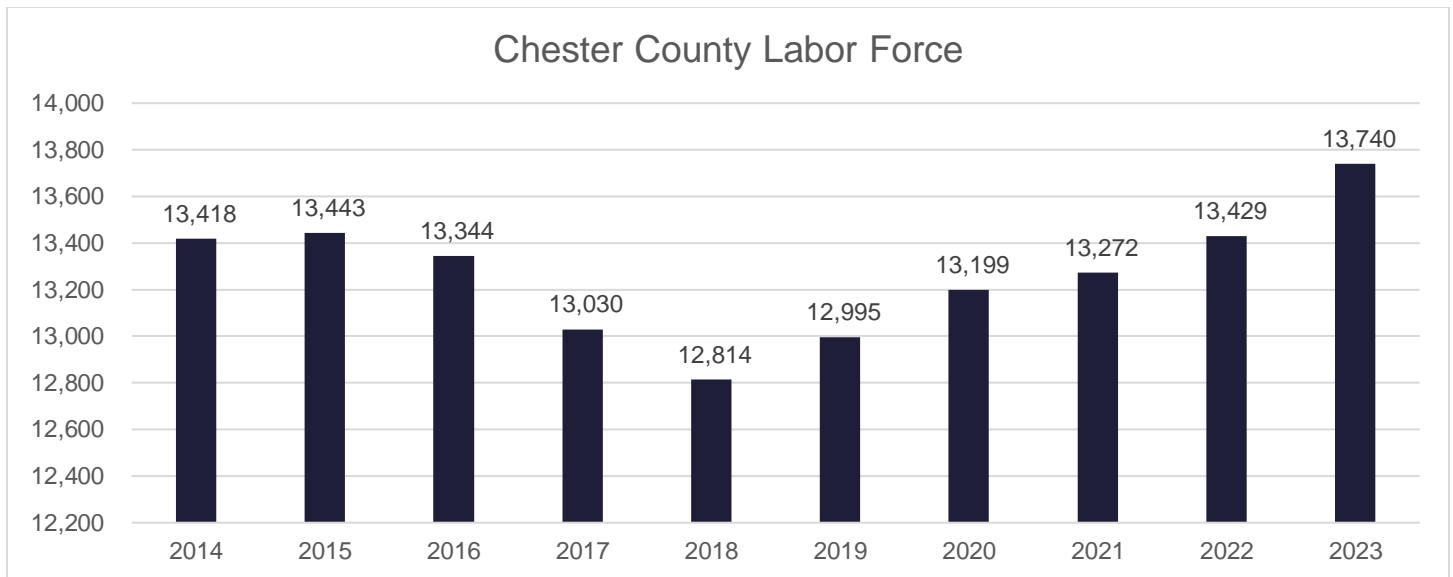
10-Year Trend Median Home Value-Region & State



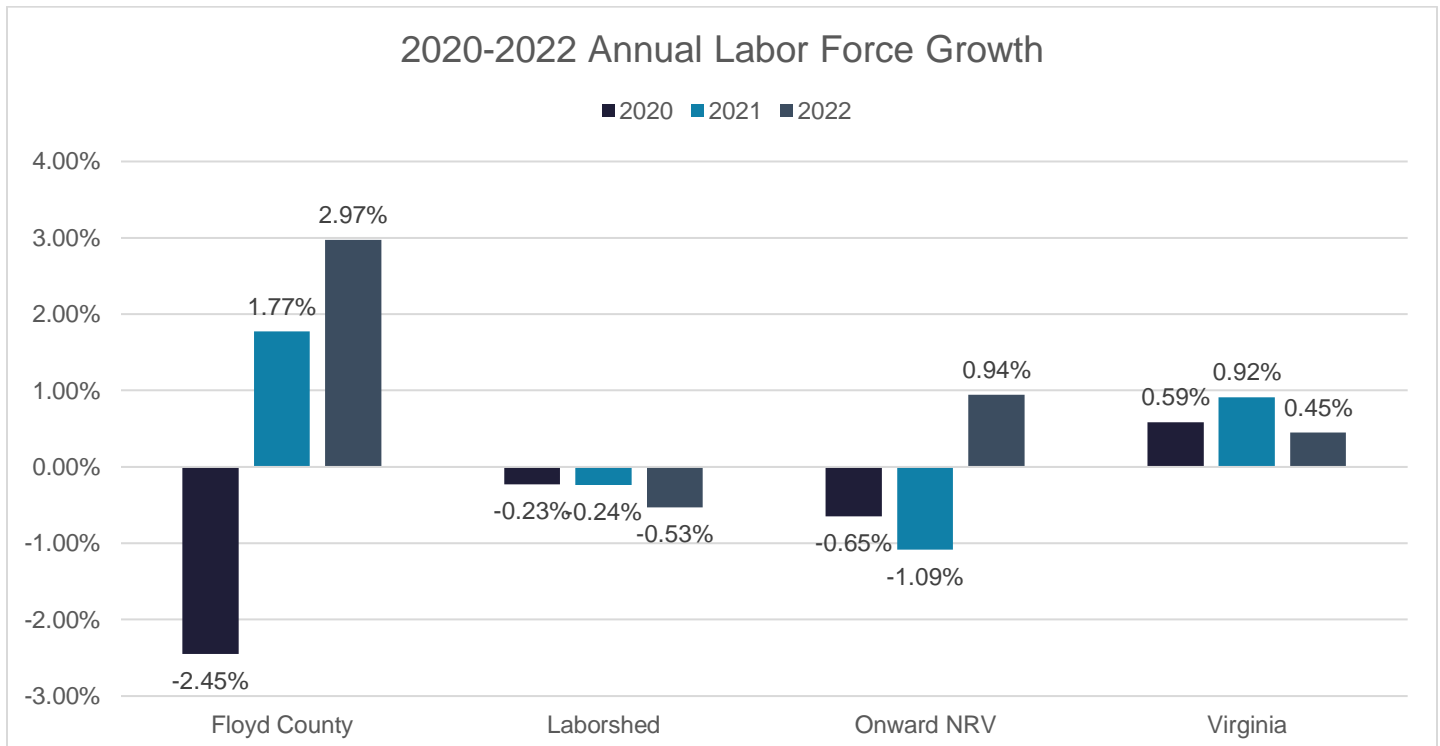
Source: JobsEQ

Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment

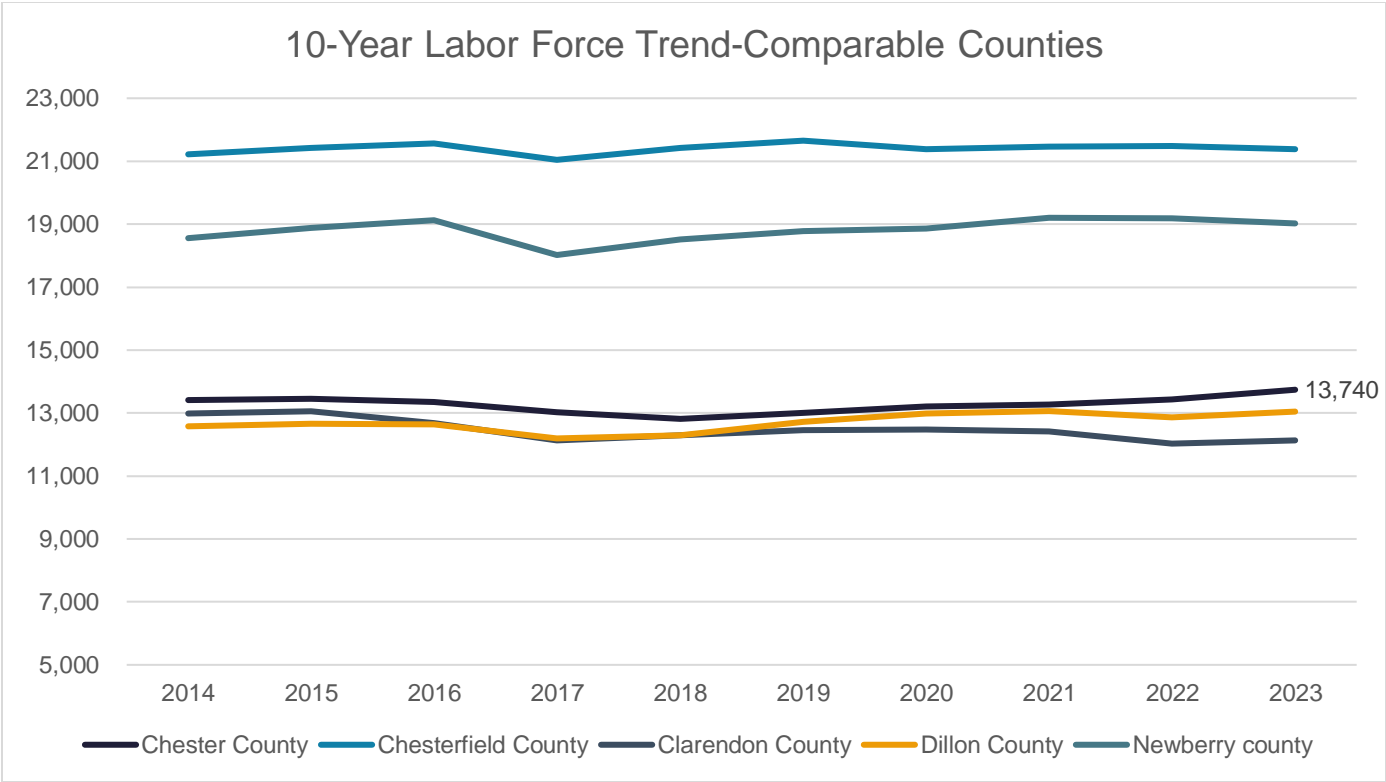
The Chester County labor force is estimated at 14,381 (July 2024). These are people who live in Chester County who are working or seeking work. There are approximately 11,000 (2024 Q1) people employed in the county. More than half of the county's labor force out-commutes for employment, and a few thousand in-commute; thus, there are significantly more people in the labor force than actually work in the county.



Source: JobsEQ

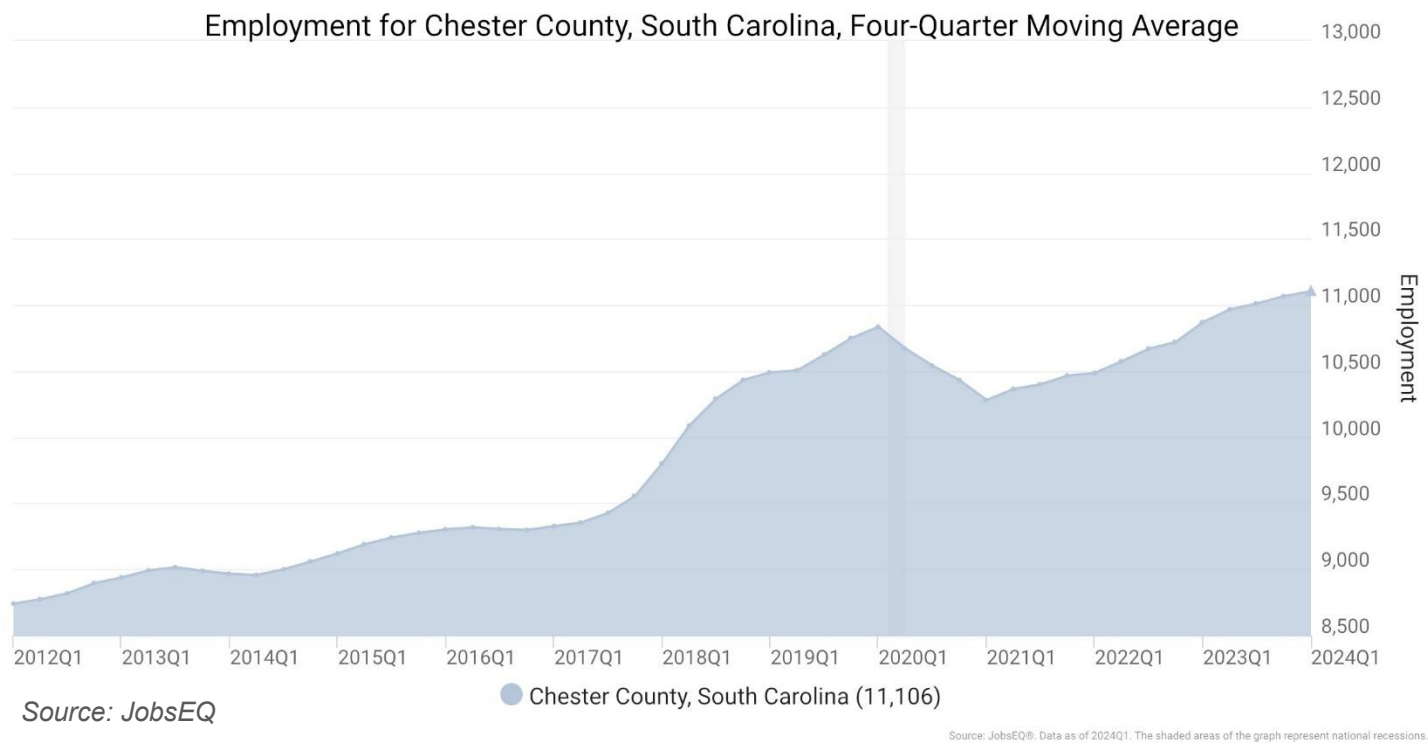


Source: JobsEQ

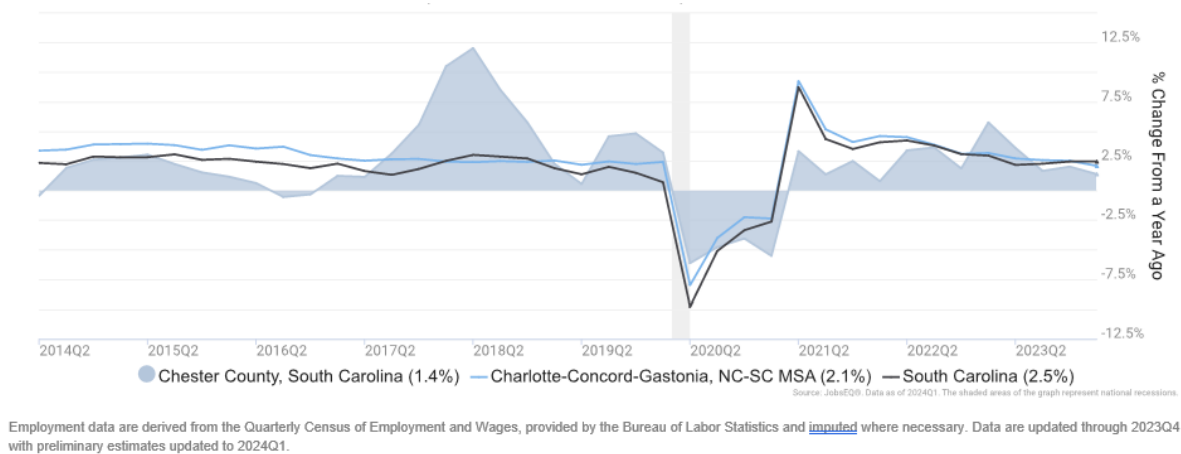


Source: JobsEQ

Employment in the county has been growing slower (1.4%) than the MSA (2.1%) and the state (2.5%). Self-employment in incorporated and unincorporated businesses has been falling, a sign of the strong regional labor market and increasing wages.

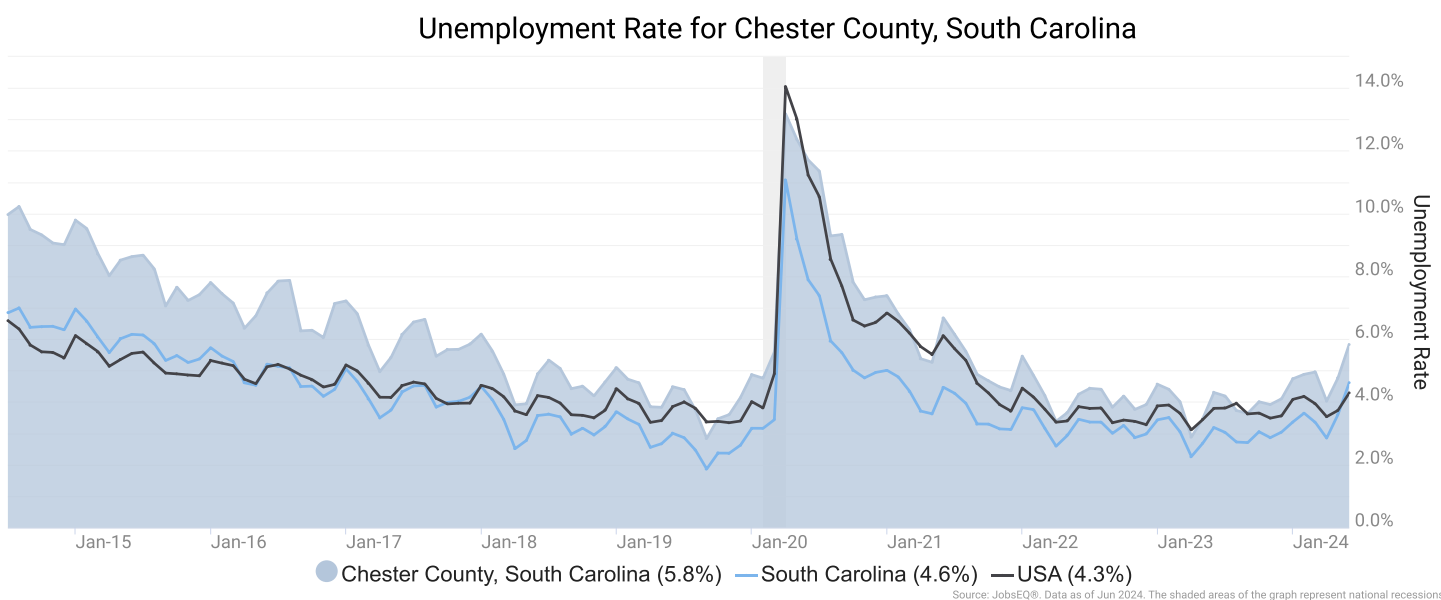
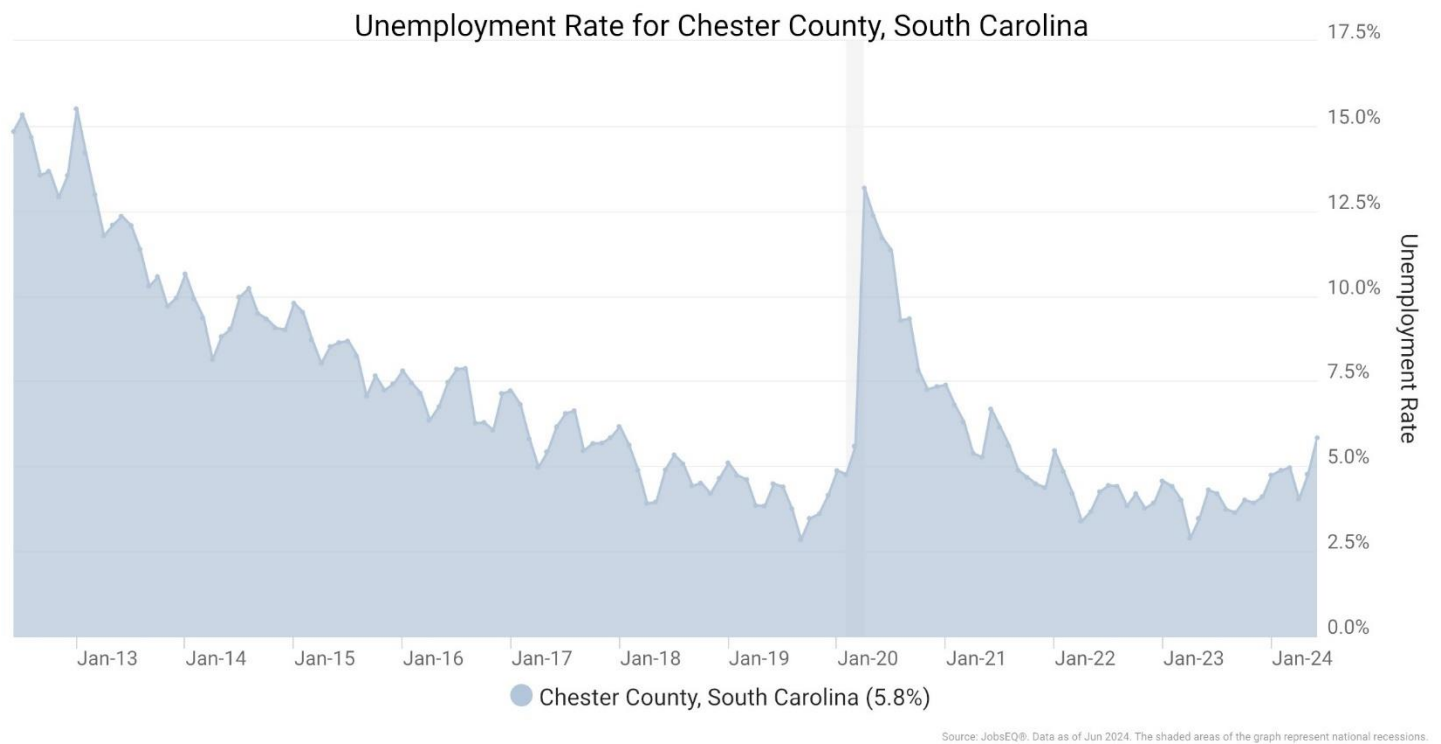


Employment Growth for Chester County, MSA, and State



Source: *JobsEQ*

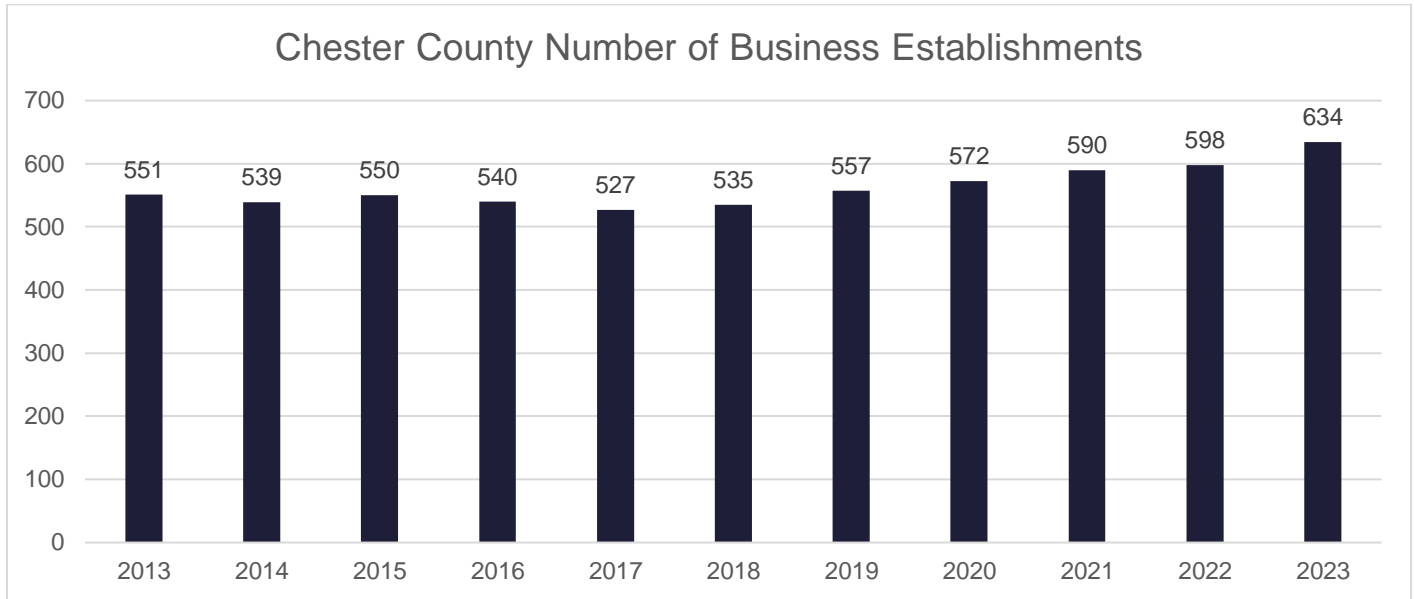
The unemployment rate for Chester County was 5.8% as of June 2024. The state rate was lower than the national rate of 4.3%. Chester County's unemployment has historically been higher than the region and state; although, in recent years, the difference has grown smaller.



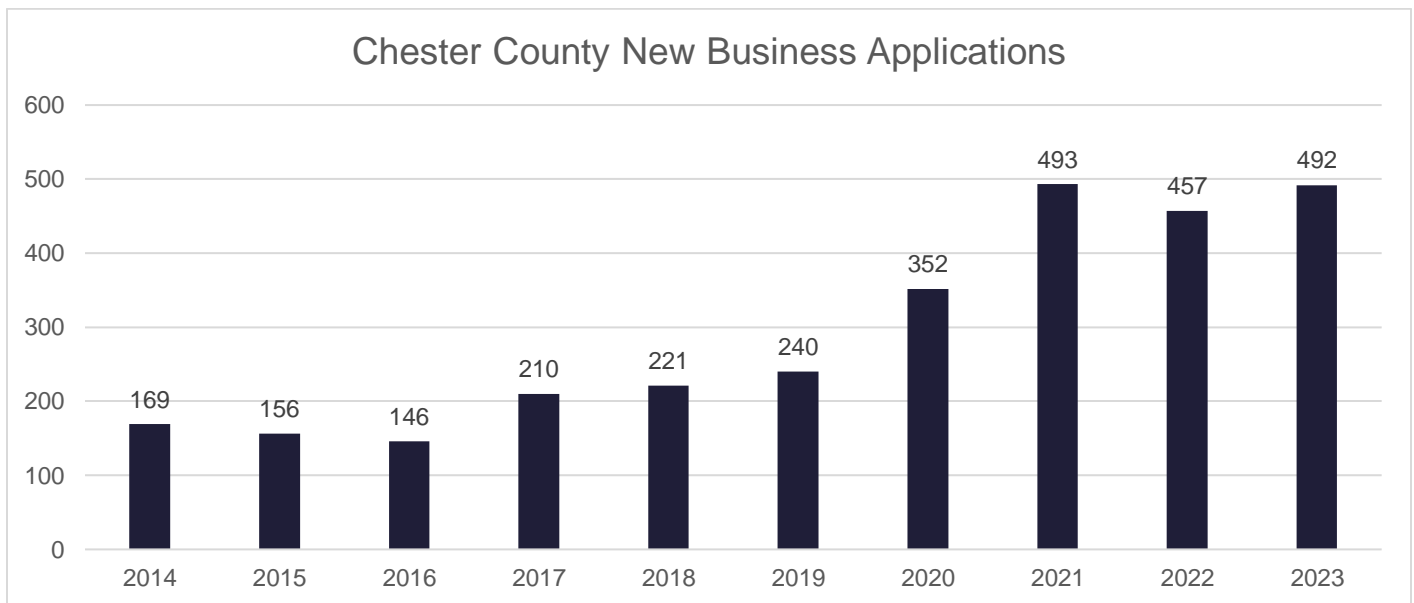
Source: JobsEQ

Business Establishments

Chester County is following national trends with increased new business starts. The federal government tracks new business applications and saw a 40% increase in applications from Chester County 2022-2023. These could be new small businesses supporting the larger manufacturing companies that have recently located in Chester County. Those new businesses have resulted in overall growth in business establishments, some 62 new businesses since 2020.



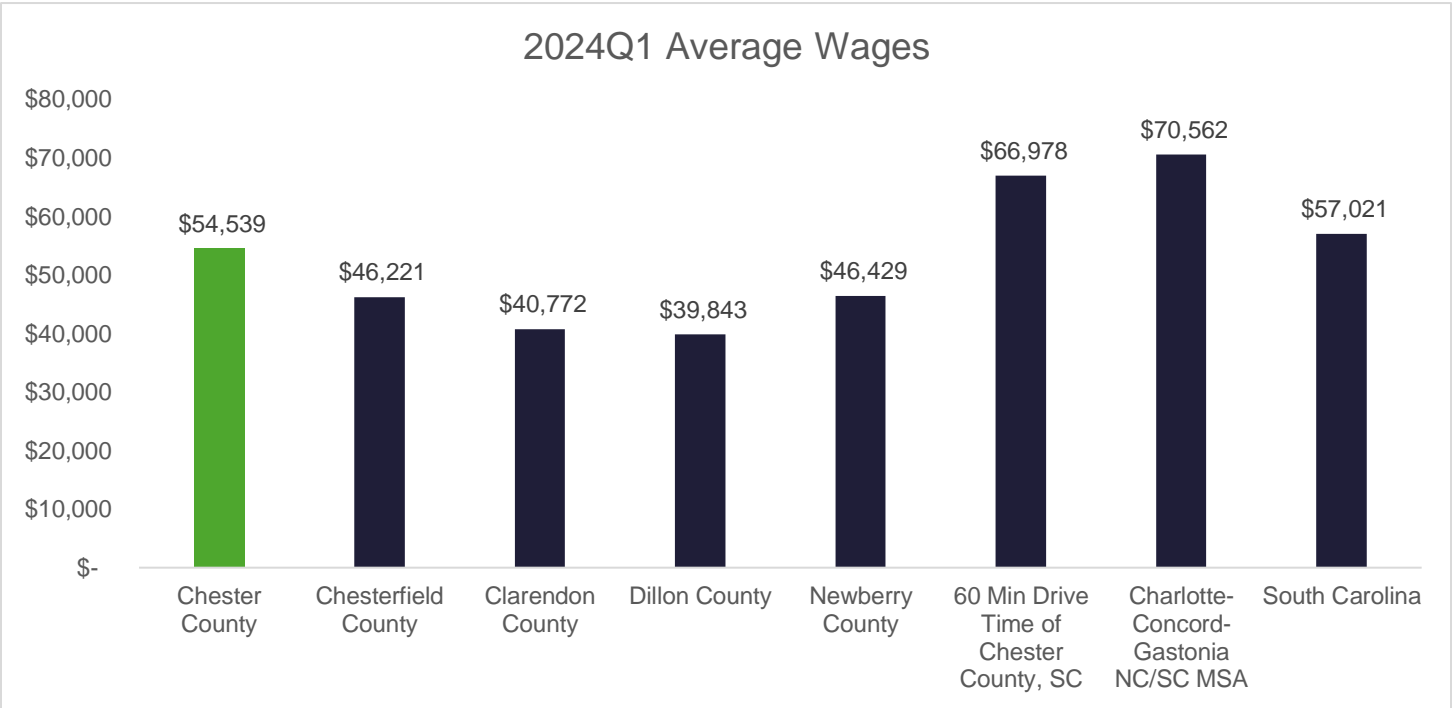
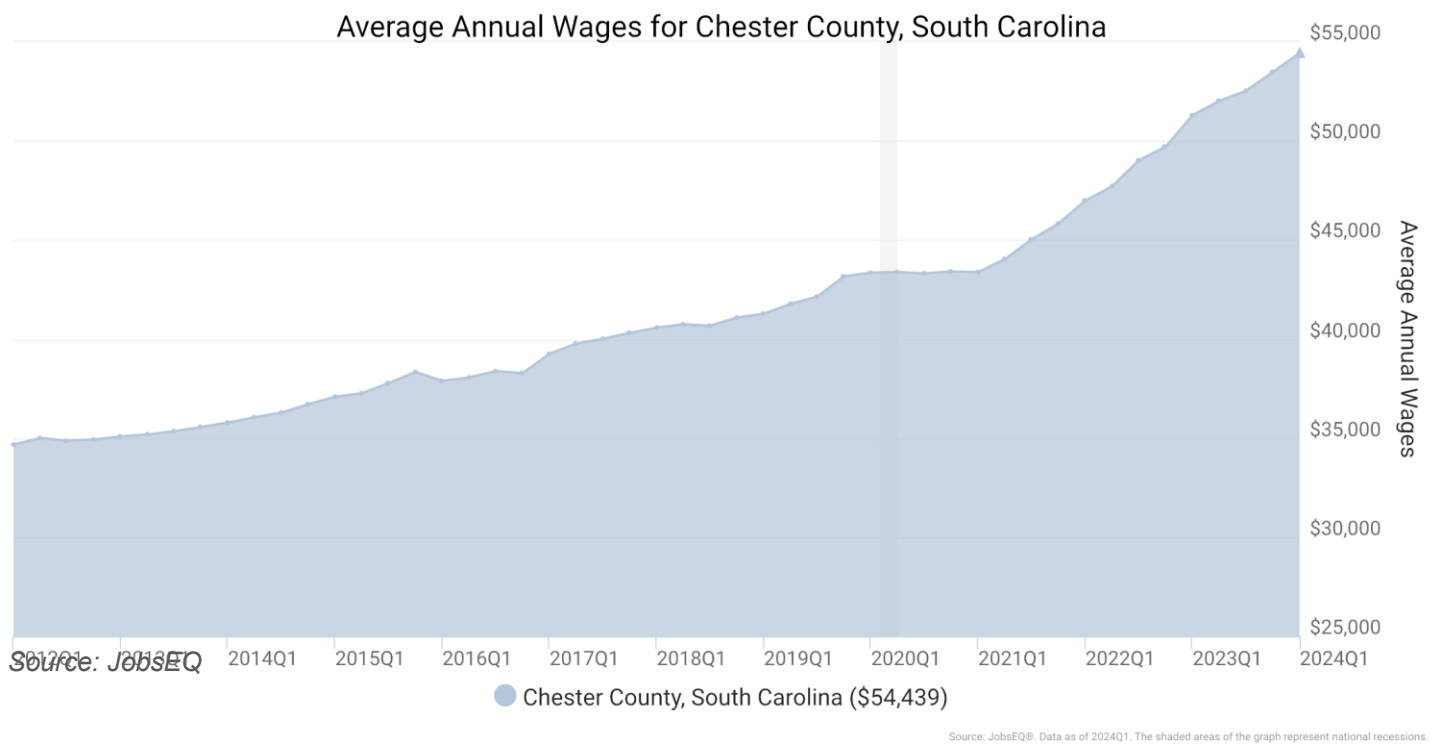
Source: BLS



Source: Census

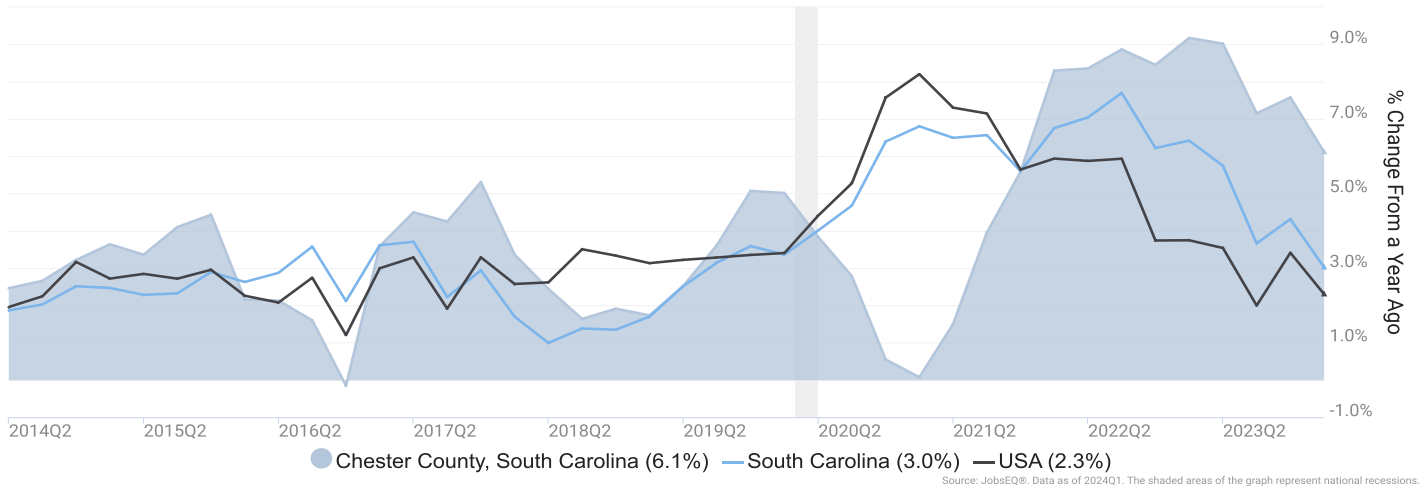
Wages

The average worker in Chester County earned annual wages of \$54,439 as of 2024Q1. Average annual wages per worker increased 6.1% in the region over the preceding four quarters. The average annual wage is the highest of the comparable counties and lower than the laborshed, region, and state. The top wage sectors in Chester County with the highest average wages per worker are Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (\$123,127), Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$95,906), and Information (\$80,441).



Source: JobsEQ

Average Annual Wages for Chester County, South Carolina



Source: JobsEQ

Wage Growth 2022Q1-2024Q1

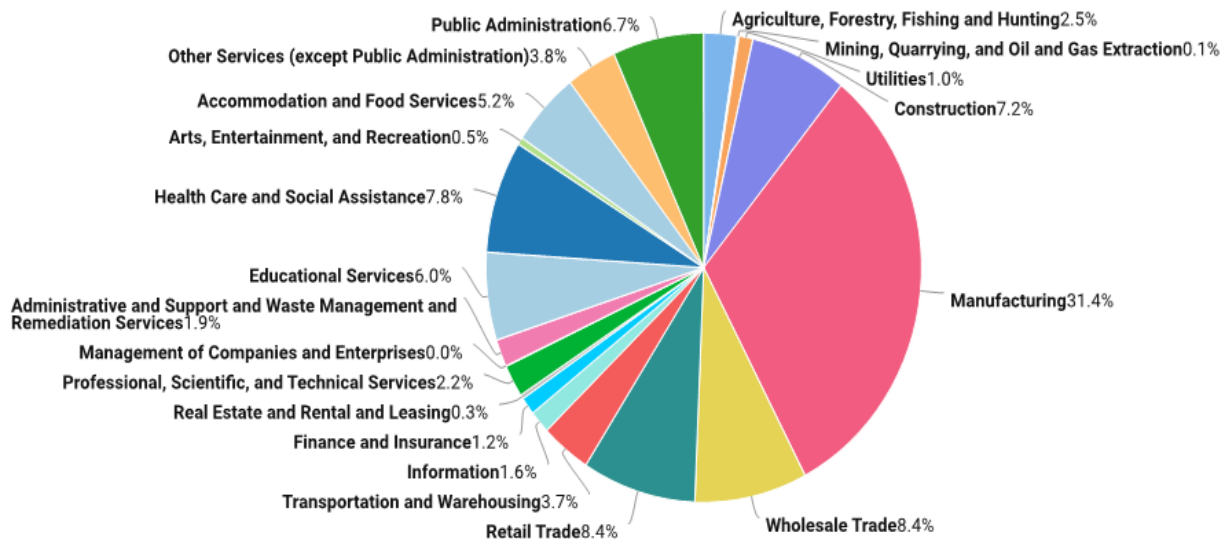
Chester County	16.07%
Chesterfield County	9.33%
Clarendon County	10.87%
Dillon County	9.51%
Newberry County	10.03%
60-Minute Drive Time of Chester County	7.55%
Charlotte MSA	6.26%
South Carolina	9.64%

Source: JobsEQ

Industry Clusters

The largest sector in Chester County is Manufacturing, employing 3,490 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade (938 workers) and Wholesale Trade (929 workers). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Manufacturing (LQ = 3.93), Wholesale Trade (2.22), and Utilities (2.02). These figures are for people who work in Chester County and do not include people who live in Chester County but out-commute.

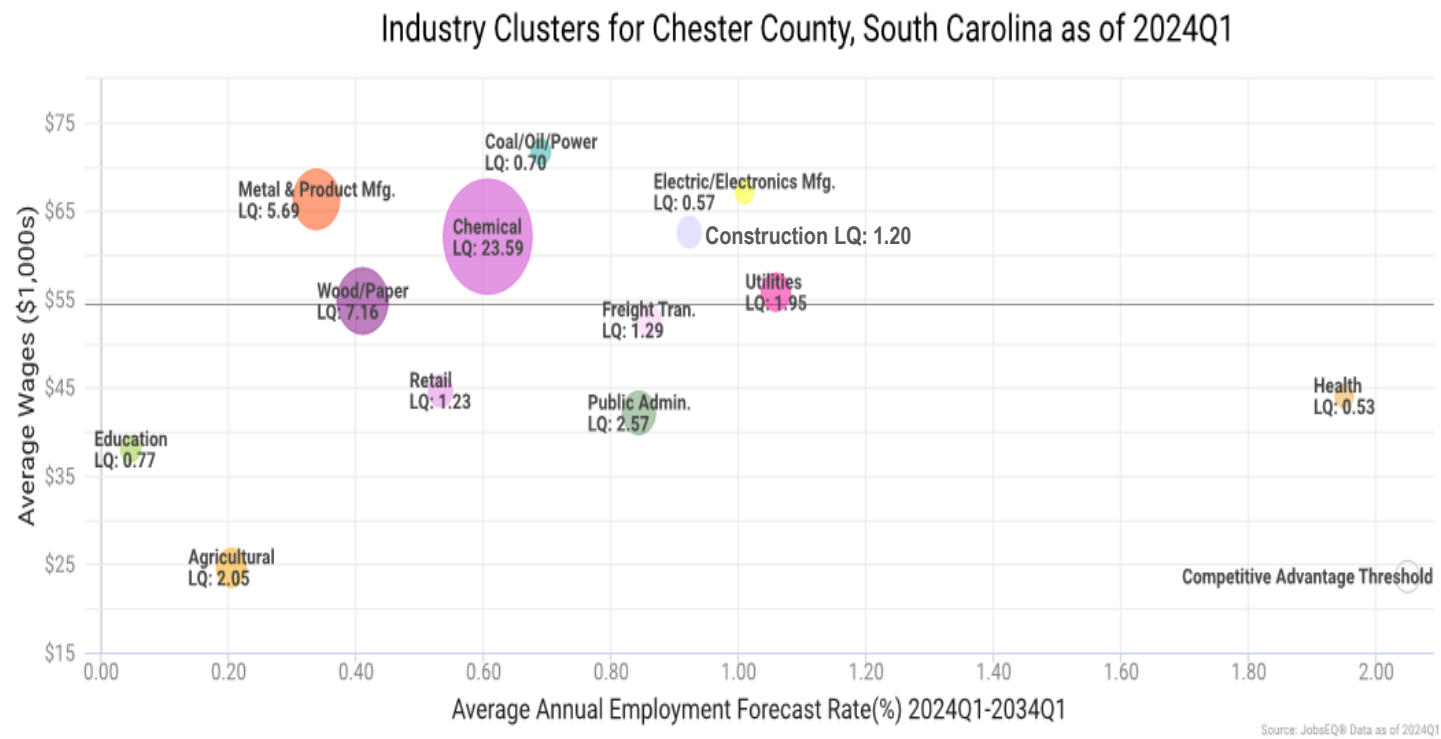
Total Workers for Chester County, South Carolina by Industry



Source: JobsEQ® Data as of 201

Source: JobsEQ

The industry sectors that have high location quotients and above average wages are Electric/Electronics Manufacturing, Utilities, and Construction. Freight Transportation has a LQ of 1.29, but wages are around average for the county.



Source: JobsEQ

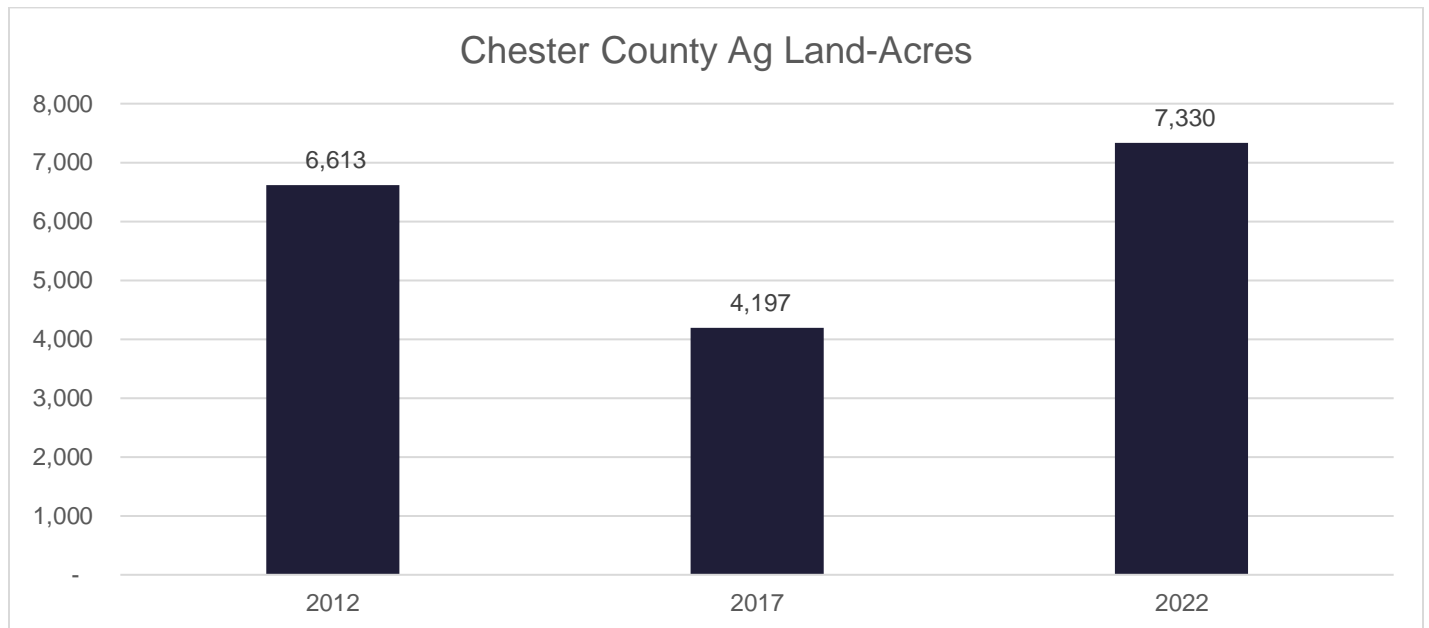
Recommended Target Clusters

Based on target clusters in the region, niches in Chester County, workforce analytics, alignment with infrastructure and product, we recommend that Chester County focus on Advanced Materials, Motor Vehicles, Aerospace, Electric/Electronics, and Chemicals manufacturing.

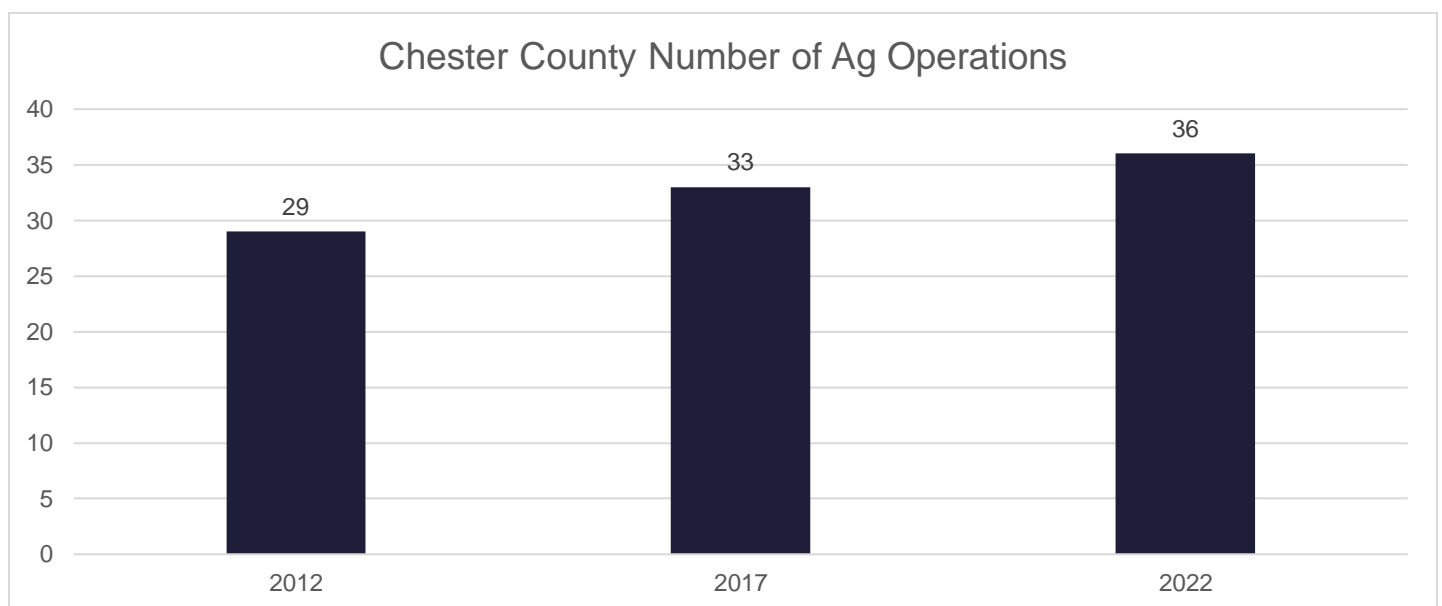
I-77 Alliance Clusters	Charlotte Alliance Clusters	Chester County Top Sectors
Advanced Materials	Advanced Manufacturing	Electric/Electronics
Motor Vehicles	Financial Services	Utilities
Aerospace	IT/Technology	Construction
Corporate + Financial Services	Life Sciences	Chemicals
	Logistics & Distribution	

Agriculture

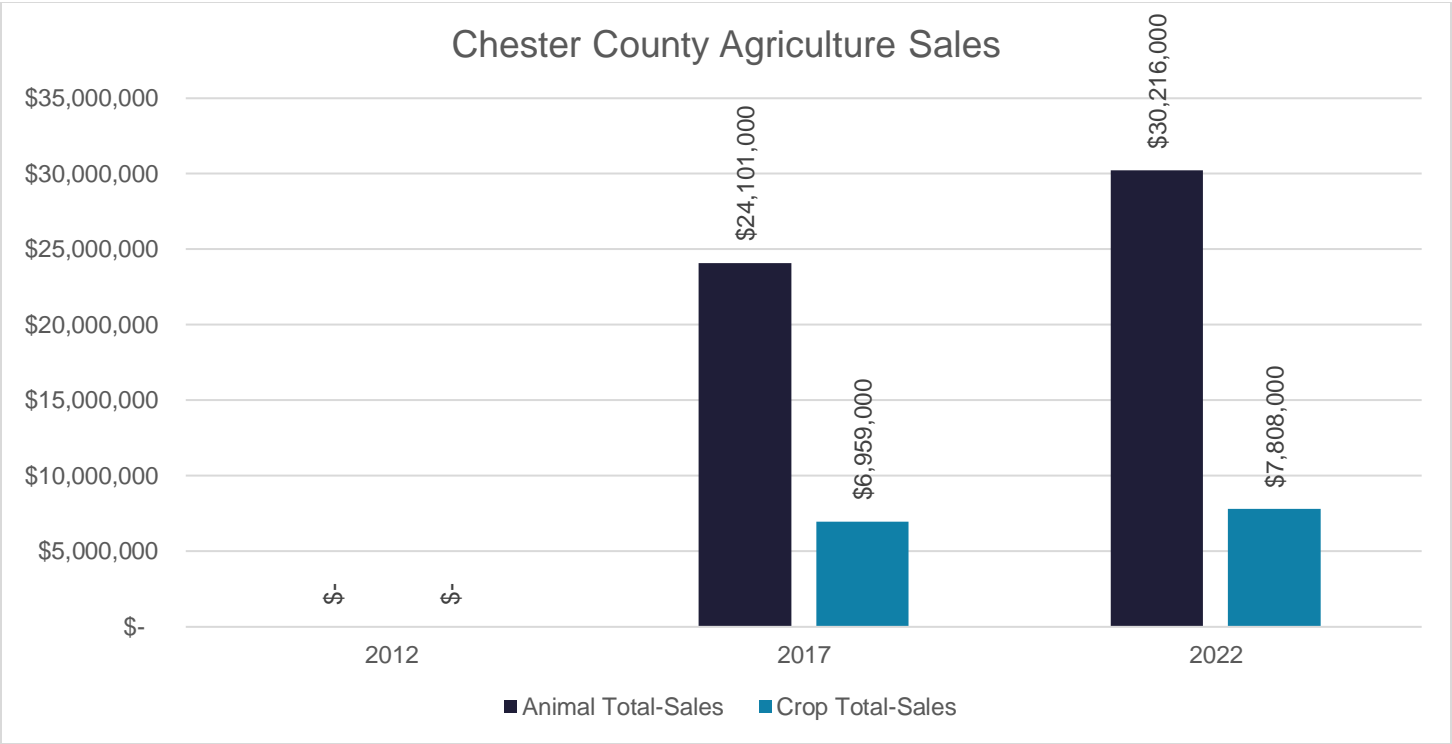
The ag industry is very important to the culture and lifestyle of Chester County. Unlike most communities, the agriculture industry in Chester County has seen increases in the number of acres in agriculture use, number of ag operations, and sales. There has been a 75% increase in the number of acres farmed and a 9% increase in the number of farming operations. There has also been growth in both crop and animal sales.



Source: USDA



Source: USDA



Source: USDA

Occupations

The top occupations by employment in Chester County are Production, Transportation and Material Moving, Office and Administrative Support, and Sales. Management. People working in Management earn the second highest annual wage at \$115,600.

The fastest growing occupations are projected to be Healthcare Support, Healthcare Practitioners, and Community and Social Service. Of these, only Healthcare Practitioners pay above the average annual wage. Other top wage occupations with significant projected employment increases are Architecture and Engineering, Computer and Mathematical, Legal, and Life Sciences.

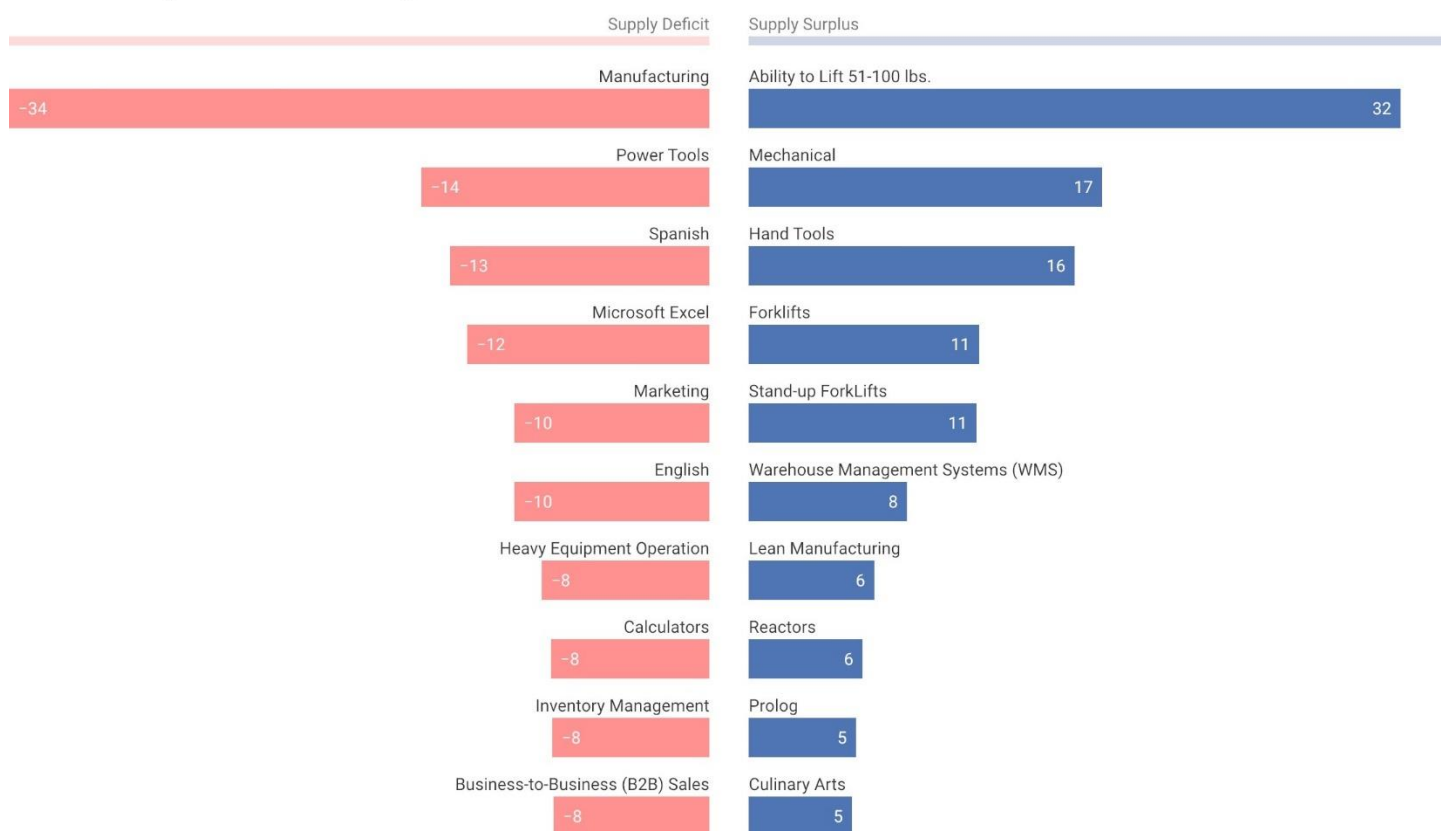
Chester County, South Carolina, 2024Q1 ¹							
SOC	Occupation	Empl	Mean Ann Wages ²	Unempl	Unempl Rate	Empl Change	Ann %
51-0000	Production Occupations	2,081	\$44,500	129	4.80%	23	0.20%
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	1,373	\$39,700	117	5.40%	15	0.20%
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	1,170	\$41,100	45	3.00%	50	0.90%
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	909	\$49,300	56	4.60%	91	2.10%
11-0000	Management Occupations	766	\$115,600	12	1.70%	88	2.50%
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	667	\$44,500	54	5.20%	128	4.30%
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	563	\$28,700	62	5.50%	-14	-0.50%
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	552	\$51,900	22	2.20%	1	0.00%
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	485	\$45,100	10	2.50%	-24	-1.00%
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	406	\$81,000	7	1.50%	87	4.90%
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	363	\$77,300	7	2.70%	53	3.20%
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	249	\$32,300	26	4.80%	-46	-3.30%
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	239	\$79,900	3	2.20%	20	1.80%
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	230	\$37,100	14	3.20%	78	8.60%
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	215	\$51,700	7	2.80%	10	1.00%
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	206	\$32,700	10	3.90%	-20	-1.90%
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	156	\$49,700	2	2.10%	2	0.20%
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	130	\$88,900	2	2.10%	31	5.50%
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	125	\$51,600	3	5.30%	15	2.60%

19-0000	Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	95	\$66,200	2	3.70%	12	2.80%
45-0000	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	77	\$42,900	4	4.40%	17	5.00%
23-0000	Legal Occupations	49	\$117,100	0	n/a	0	0.10%
00-0000	Total - All Occupations	11,106	\$52,300	594	4.10%	614	1.10%
Source: JobsEQ							

Skills gaps are projected in Manufacturing, Power Tools, Microsoft Excel, and Marketing. Spanish also shows up as a top skills gap.

Skill Gaps

Total - All Occupations, Chester County, South Carolina

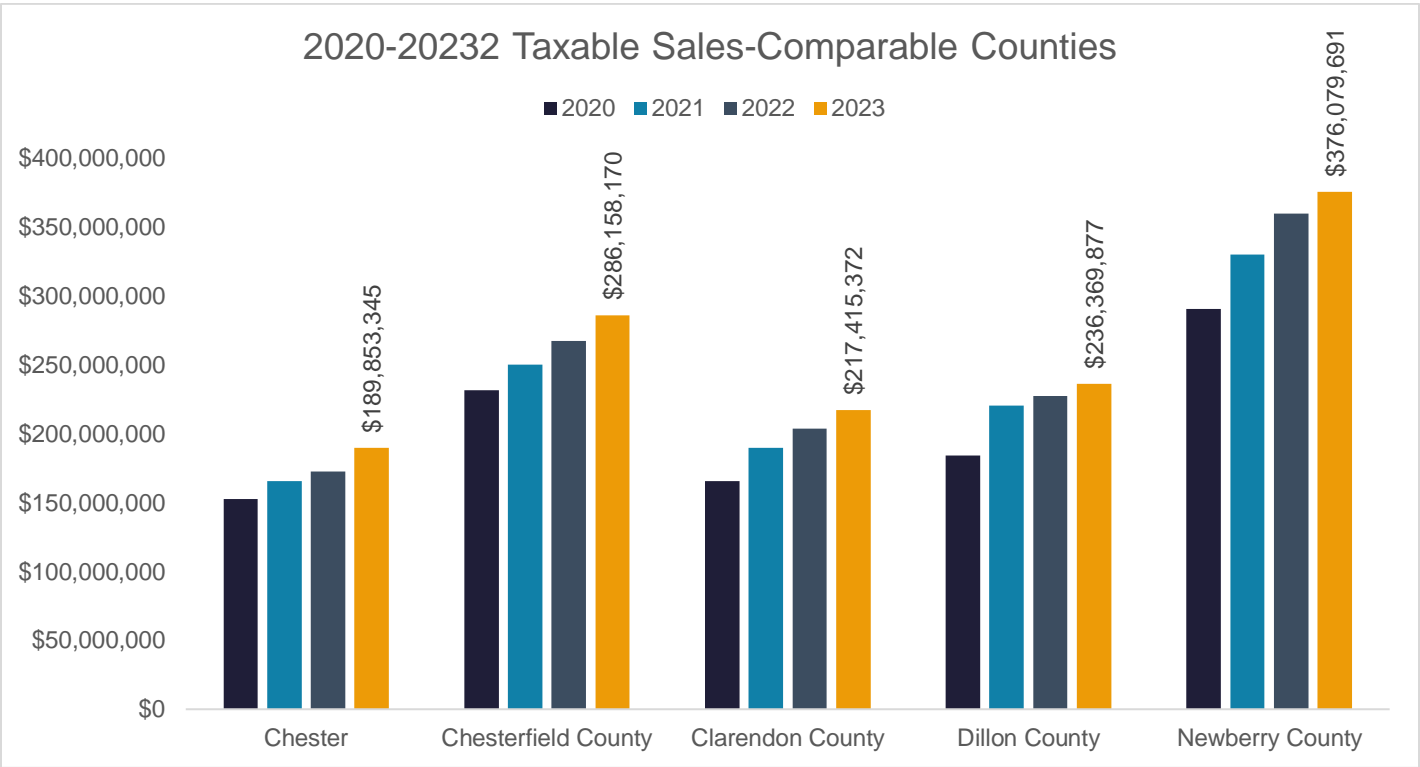


Source: JobsEQ®
Data as of 2024Q1; openings and candidate sample compiled in July 2022

Retail Sales

Retail sales growth in Chester County is similar to the comparable counties, steady growth since 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people “rediscovered” small towns, and the trend has continued. Household income

is higher than most of the counties, yet retail sales are lower signaling potential leakage and indicating an opportunity for retail development.



Source: dor.sc.gov/communications/reports

Cost of Living Index

The cost of living is indexed to 100 as the national average. Chester County’s cost of living, 85.9, is in the middle of the other counties and significantly less than the laborshed (94.5), region (96.1), and state (93.1).

Cost of Living Information

	Annual Average Salary	Cost of Living Index (Base US)	US Purchasing Power
Chester County	\$54,439	85.9	\$63,380
Chesterfield County	\$46,221	83.4	\$55,439
Clarendon County	\$40,772	88.6	\$46,021
Dillon County	\$39,843	83.1	\$47,923
Newberry County	\$46,429	87.3	\$53,159
60 Min Drive Time of Chester County, SC	\$66,978	94.5	\$70,857
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC/SC MSA	\$70,562	96.1	\$56,679
South Carolina	\$57,021	93.1	\$73,394
USA	\$70,857	100	\$70,857
Source: JobsEQ - Economic Overview			

Appendix C: Business, Investor, and Community Surveys

Increased Investment Needed

Infrastructure

Career Awareness

Existing Businesses

Housing

Entrepreneurship

Marketing

Sites and Buildings

The strategic planning process included three online surveys to citizens, CDA investors, and businesses to capture broad input.

The largest survey response was from citizens. Most live in Chester County (89%). They want to see the county invest more resources in building infrastructure, enhancing career awareness, and supporting existing businesses. They also want investments in housing, entrepreneur development, and talent development. To citizens, success is quality schools, economic prosperity and well-paying jobs, and more housing available and affordable.

Most of Chester Development Association investors located in the county because of its location. Their main challenges are workforce availability, utilities, and housing for workers. They want to see CCED invest more resources in infrastructure, marketing, and developing sites and buildings. To this group, success equals well-paying jobs, quality schools, and a thriving business base.

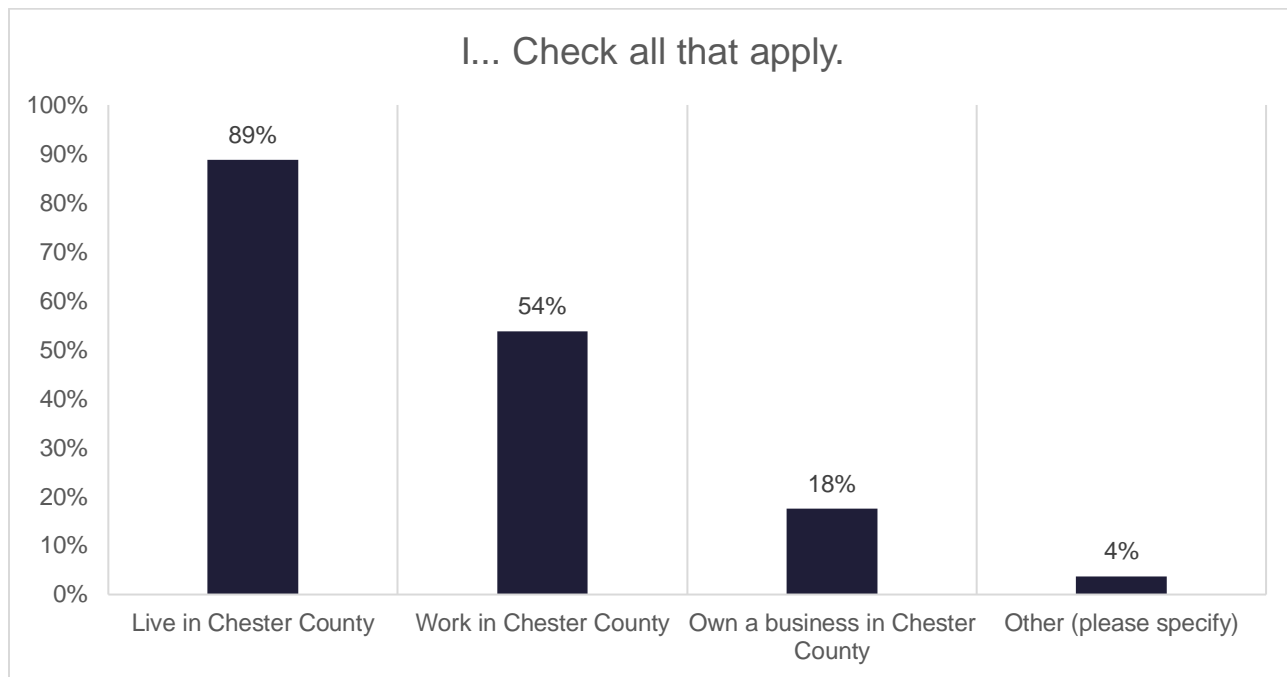
The online business survey only received four responses. For business input into the strategic plan, we relied on the business and investor input sessions and business leaders who attended community input sessions.

The four respondents are small businesses who have operated in Chester County for less than 10 years. They are in Accommodation and Food Services, Construction, Manufacturing, and Government. These businesses located in Chester County because they had a personal or hometown connection, workforce availability and cost, and access to suppliers. They would like assistance with scaling, financing, and better broadband services.

Higher education, transportation network, and workforce training were reported as Chester County's best strengths. Weaknesses noted were quality of life amenities, tourism/entertainment options, and housing options. This group of businesses would like to see Chester County invest more resources in marketing, career awareness, and facilitating the development of business sites, parks and buildings. They also would like to see investments in talent attraction, retention, and development. Small business and entrepreneur startup is another important strategy for this group.

Community Survey Results

The community survey was posted on social media and promoted online and through e-communications. There were 80 responses to the survey.



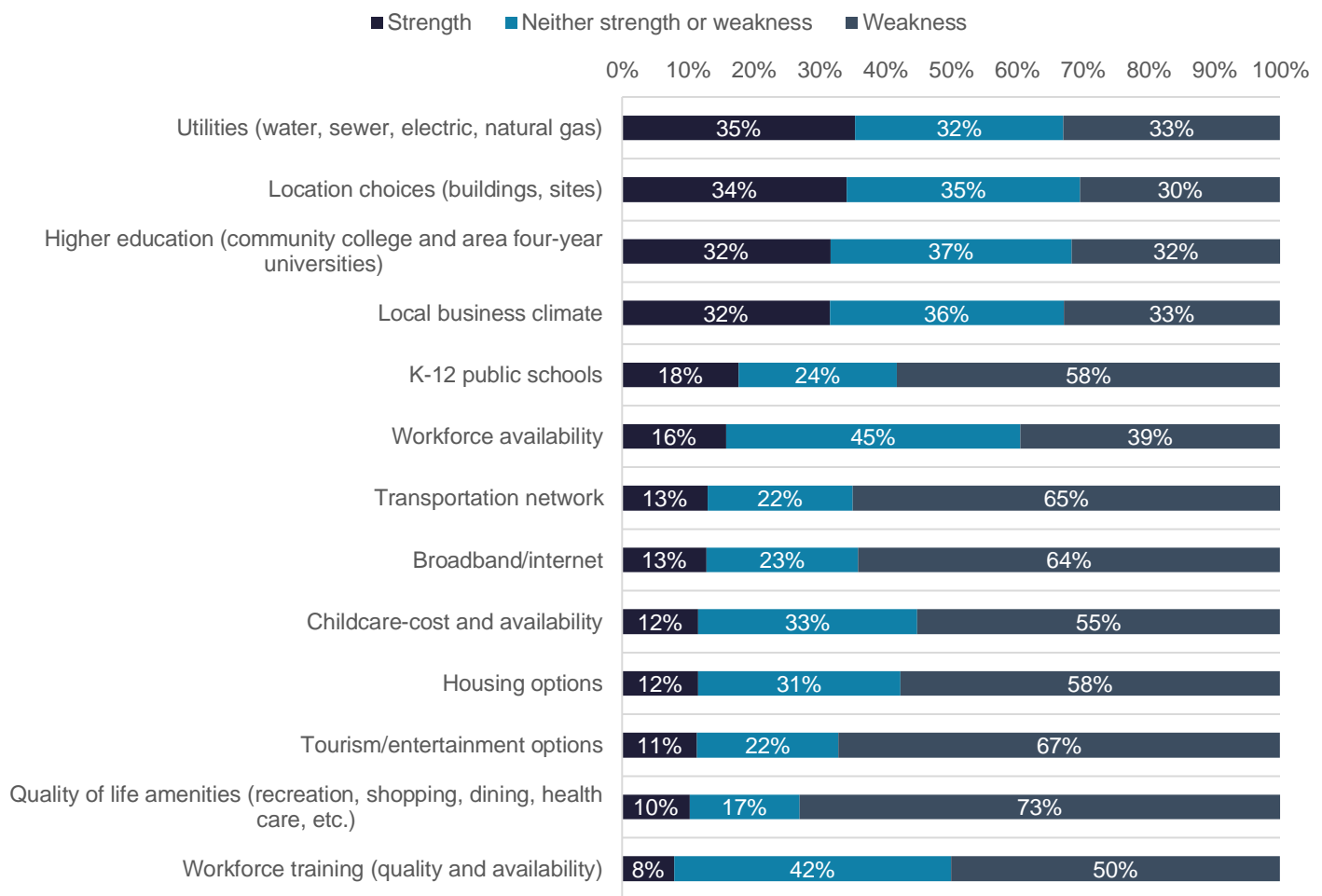
Other (please specify)

Disability

Lead a Non-profit in Chester County

Own a home in Chester County

From a business perspective, rate the following as strengths, weaknesses, or neither for Chester County.



Other (please specify)

Chester County is not supposed to be city living.

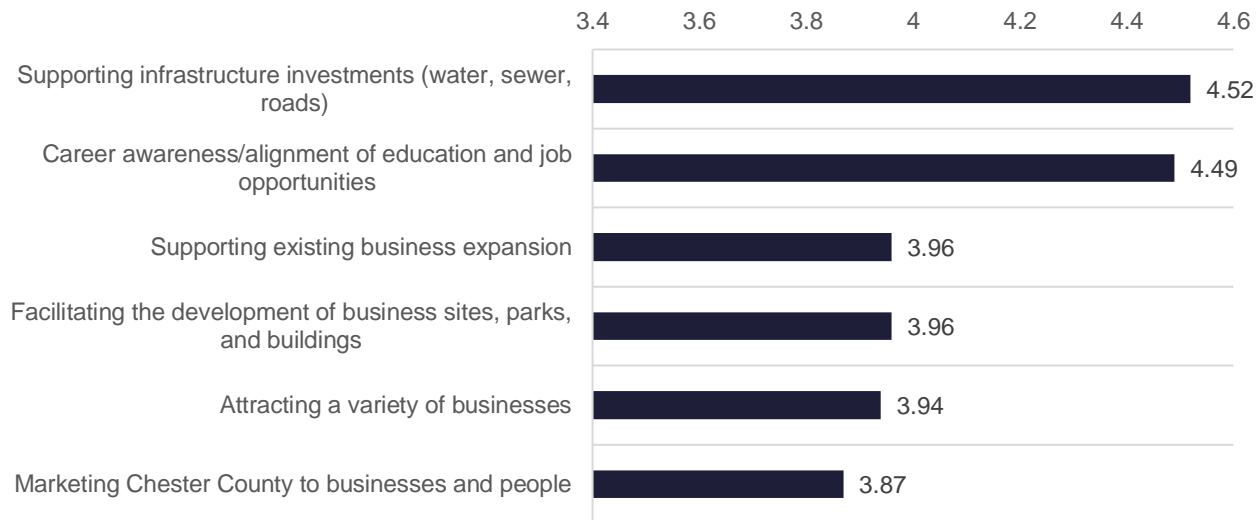
A lot of business buildings are outdated. The K-12 schools in the area are not producing employable workers (work ethic, ability to follow rules/directions). Internet is extremely unreliable, especially from a business point, definitely need a better more reliable option. The bidding process needs to be completely redone with a tier format (local, state, out-of-state). Rec dept needs to actually be over rec, not all these individual leagues that are not 501c and do not operate as a nonprofit. Also there needs to be perks for the small businesses that have been here for years more so than new businesses, highlight the older businesses like is done for the new businesses.

Leave little community alone !!! We like the country !!!!!

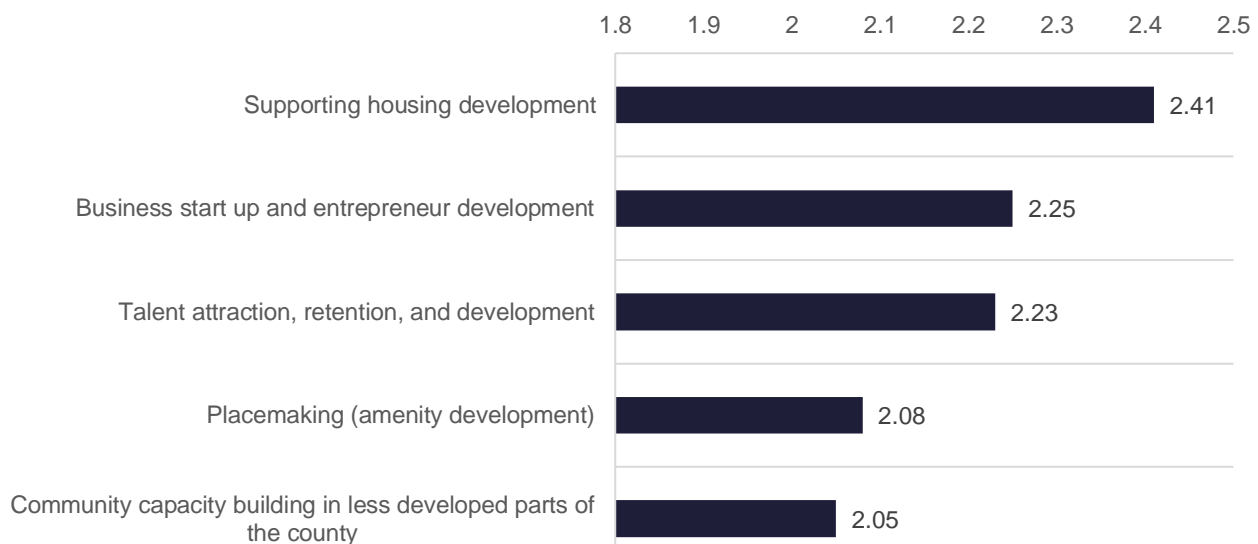
Our schools need more funding from economic development activities. People who work here should live here. We need to improve the quality of our public schools to encourage more workers to move to Chester County.

School buildings are terrible, teachers aren't paid enough to keep good ones.

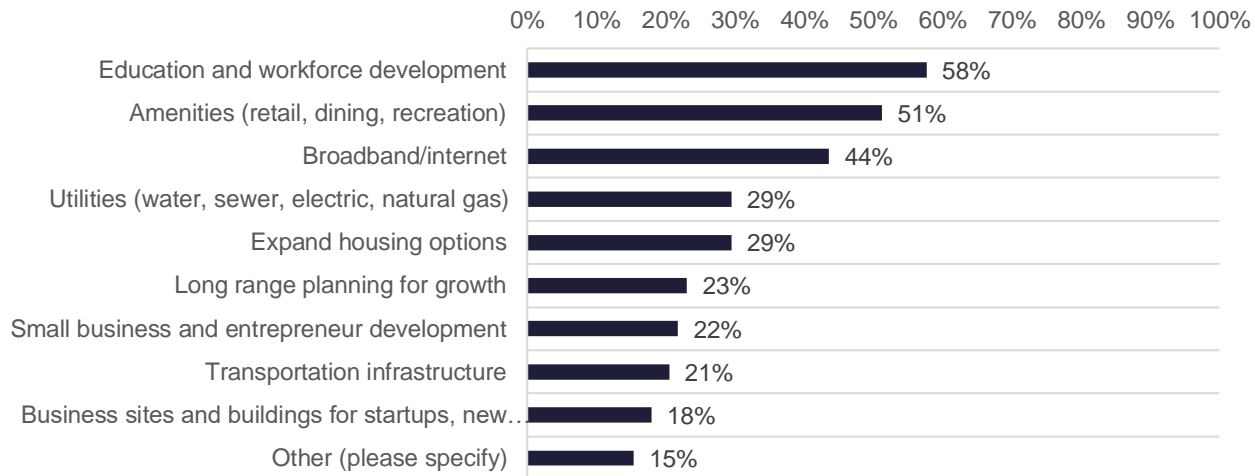
I would like to see Chester County invest more/less resources in these economic development strategies.



I would like to see Chester County invest new resources in...



What is the most important investment Chester County could make to ensure long-term, sustainable economic growth?
CHOOSE THREE.



Other (please specify)

Got to provide things to do that would attract people to come here.

We need to offer educational opportunities to retain residents.

AFFORDABLE housing

Operate like a business instead of the backdoor, who-you-know way that is currently in place

Nothing it is fine as a small country community!!!!!!

We don't want it to grow anymore.

Reduce the cost of property taxes.

Fund Public Schools

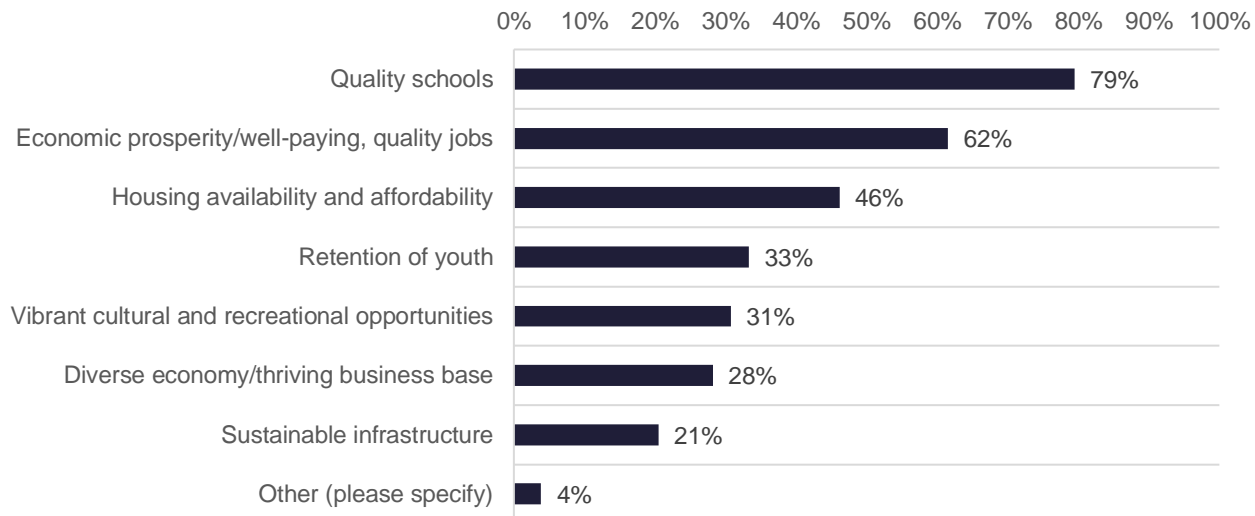
All of these are intertwined

Curb appeal. Demolish derelict structures.

Improve school district administration and school board

Improve the schools/school system, stop taxing businesses to death

What does success look like for Chester County? Choose THREE



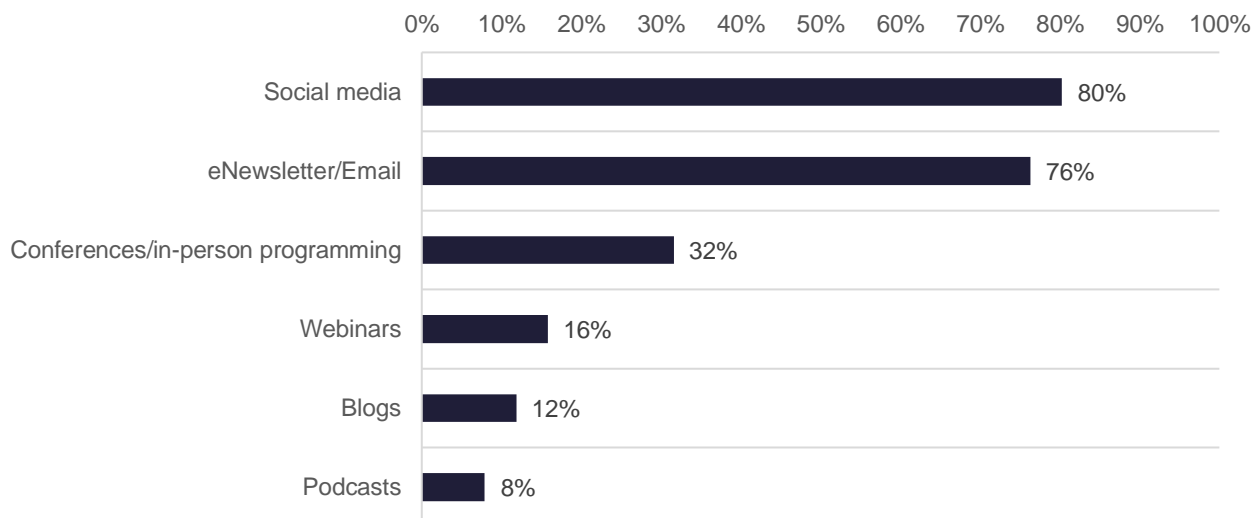
Other (please specify)

Safe places for family and youth entertainment. Not much here to offer.

Staying rural

Stop approving housing developments....the roads, schools, and infrastructure can't support the ones that we already are building.

What is your preferred method to consume information about Chester County? Choose all that apply.



Other (please specify)

Community programs (PACCC, Chamber of Commerce, GOP, etc.)

Talking to my friends and family
Phone
Chester newspaper

Please share any additional information that you believe is important to the strategic planning process.

Chester needs improvement in schools, especially buildings. We don't need to reach for the stars, BUT start building something that can be added onto as needed? It is not fair to high school students to have to go to such an old and outdated school. It would also be beneficial for academic staff and athletic staff at all high schools here to recognize academic talent and athletic talent and provide services and resources to the families to provide these kids opportunities to have colleges recruit them. Maybe hire someone specific for assisting students and their families to help them get noticed by colleges. Chester HAS to provide better high schools if you expect us to grow. Slowly raise taxes and build something that can be added on to as we grow. Do we NEED a performance center? Not right now. We don't have dance studios here, music lessons other than school, gymnastics any other performing groups? That's what can be built later!! We need education achievement, higher test scores, COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE AND RECRUITING ATHLETES need to go up. People need a reason to want to live in Chester, no offense, but having 4 Dollar Generals isn't going to attract anyone. Showing statistics for athletic scholarships and academic scholarships would be something that may draw new residents b/c it would show Chester has good teachers and good coaches & that they help their students get into colleges.

Property taxes are **extremely** high for mid-class families.

Chester has the opportunity to be a model for other counties. Using a diverse inclusive mind set will be an asset in the future strategic planning process. Demographic changes in Chester are inevitable.

Stop building new communities and housing developments.

Stop allowing these huge developments to come in and not having infrastructure in place BEFORE. Utilities cannot handle it; the schools cannot handle it. We need a new internet provider, one who does not have a monopoly and charges insane prices for subpar service. Make it affordable and appealing for the residents who already live here instead of attracting new ones that transplant from out of state with much higher income. That does nothing but drive costs up for the already struggling families who are barely surviving as it is.

Treat each town the same. Equal Amenities. Put more emphasis on getting drugs out of our towns. More recreation and activities for teens **and** kids. Keep them busy. Not all kids do sports. Have to have other outlets. Need to take better care of our elders. There are no community pools, skating rinks, music venues, dances for kids, even basketball courts. We have to do better for our children!!! Better schools!!

Businesses should not get a tax break for 5 years and schools could potentially be so much better with the extra money.

Also the new houses should pay up front for infrastructure (schools, water, sewer). Ex: a new house for \$250,000 should pay at least \$3,000.00.

In Richburg specifically we need an actual grocery store such as ALDIs that has affordable and edible foods. It would greatly help the local economy as well.

Most of the development in the county is in the Lewisville school district. The schools in that area are already over capacity. There are hundreds of houses in that area being built, and people are moving in fast. The utilities, schools, and roads can't handle what is already coming. We need to stop approving housing developments immediately. We also need more programs to keep our youth occupied so that when they are adults, they will be an asset to the businesses that we have already attracted. I've worked maintenance at 3 different plants in Chester over the past 15 years. The main problem I see is that we are producing an uneducated workforce that does not have work ethic. I've traveled to different states, and people at other plants have heard about how our workers don't take pride in their work, and don't have much work ethic. Don't get me wrong, a lot of our people are great to work with, but as time goes on, the quality of employees we produce is declining. I attribute a lot of

that to our youth not having much to do other than drink, do drugs, and other things that board teenagers tend to get into. Idle hands are the devils playground.

Chester County needs increased water/sewer capacity with an effort to secure public funds to increase the capacity. Costs to residents needs to be lowered. Costs to businesses need to be raised and paid for up front by new businesses.

Better marketing opportunities for small businesses is needed.

It is very important to include all local businesses and entrepreneurs and keep them up to date on improvements and work with them to get available resources and programs that would benefit their businesses, and our community, and making sure that they are informed with all benefits.

People will not stay/come into Chester County until the school buildings are improved, the teachers are paid better, and parents get involved.

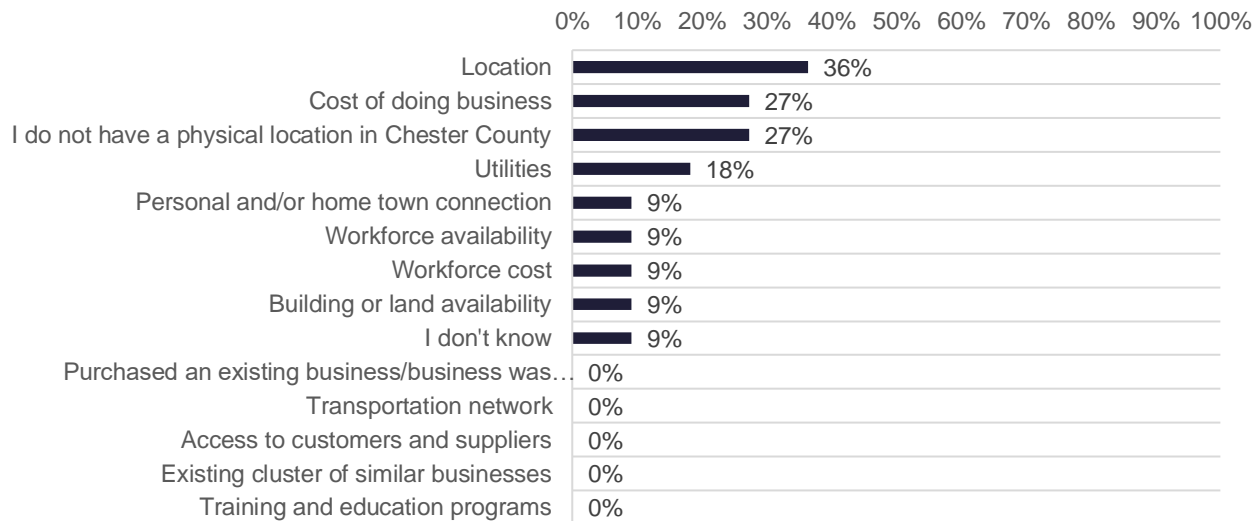
Amenities will follow roof tops. Not going to get that as long as current residents resist new housing.

Transportation is critical to the success of Chester County. More options need to be made available for lower income residents to navigate around the County to ensure their needs can be met.

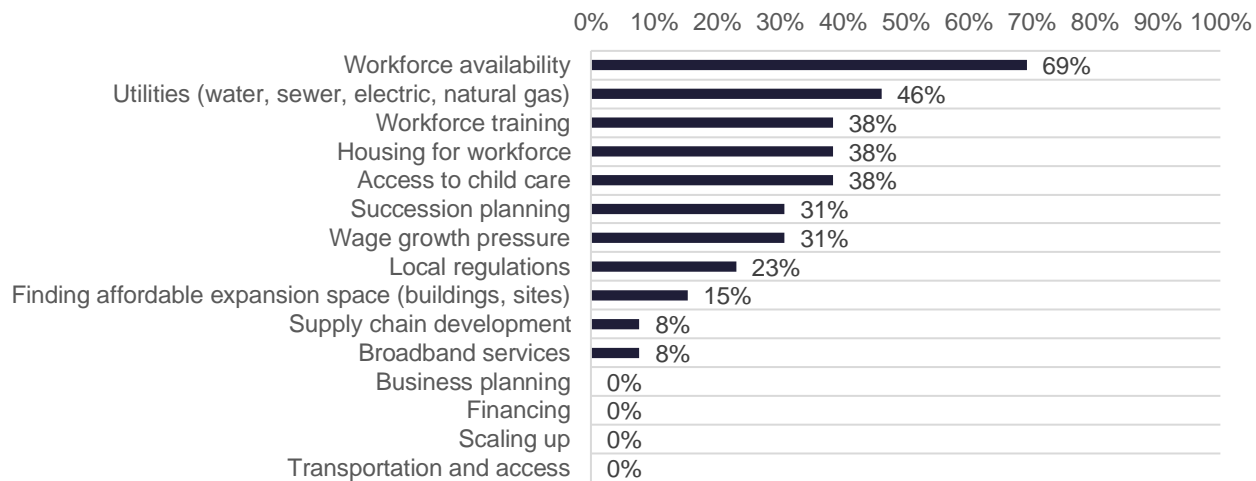
Investor Survey Results

There were 13 responses to the investor survey that was sent to investors in the Chester Development Association.

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



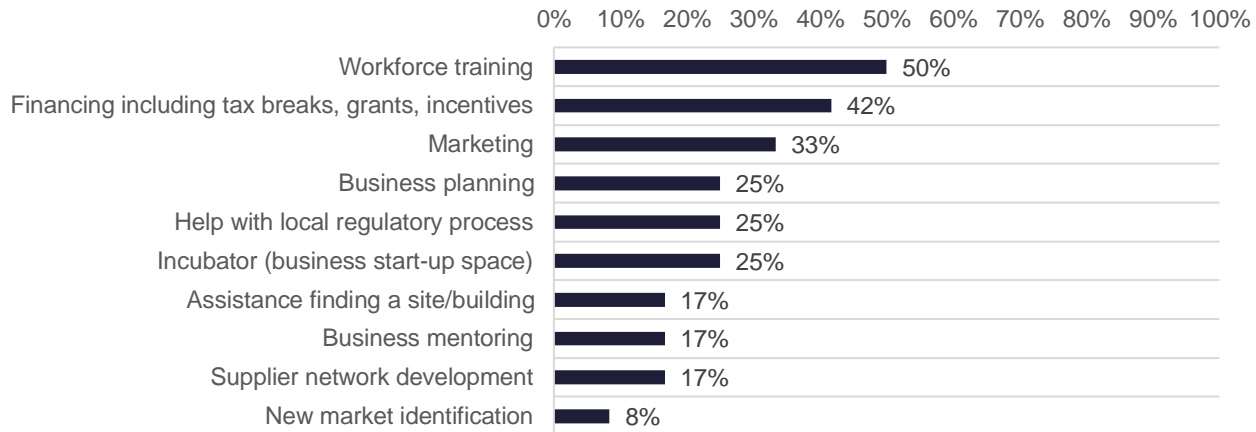
What are your main challenges to sustaining and growing your business, or what challenges do you believe existing businesses in Chester County face? Choose all that apply.



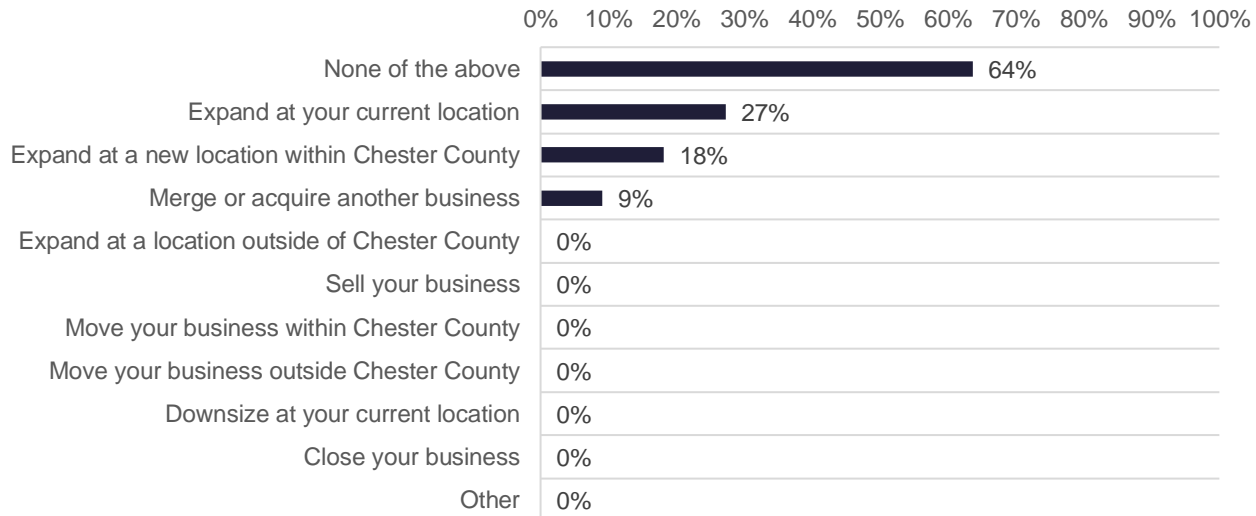
Other (please specify)

Increase in demand, decrease in the public's willingness to allow infrastructure construction

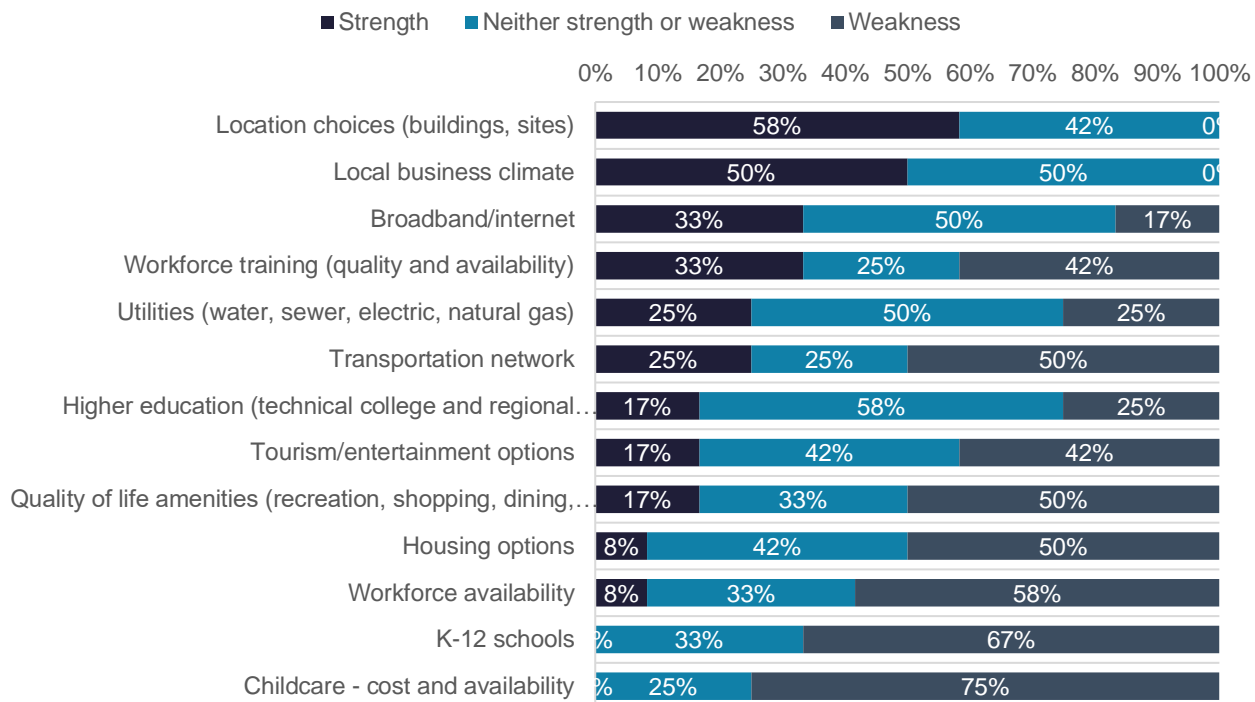
What business assistance would have been helpful when you started your business or that you believe would be helpful to a new business starting in Chester County today?
Choose all that apply.



If you have a business in Chester County, are you currently planning to... Choose all that apply.



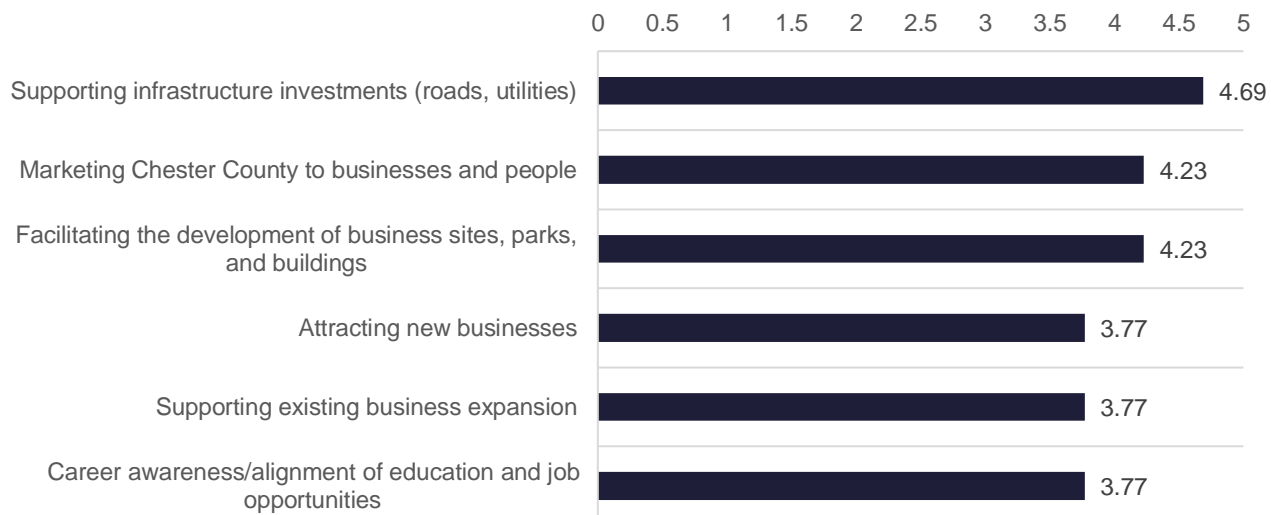
From a business perspective, rate the following as strengths, weaknesses, or neither.



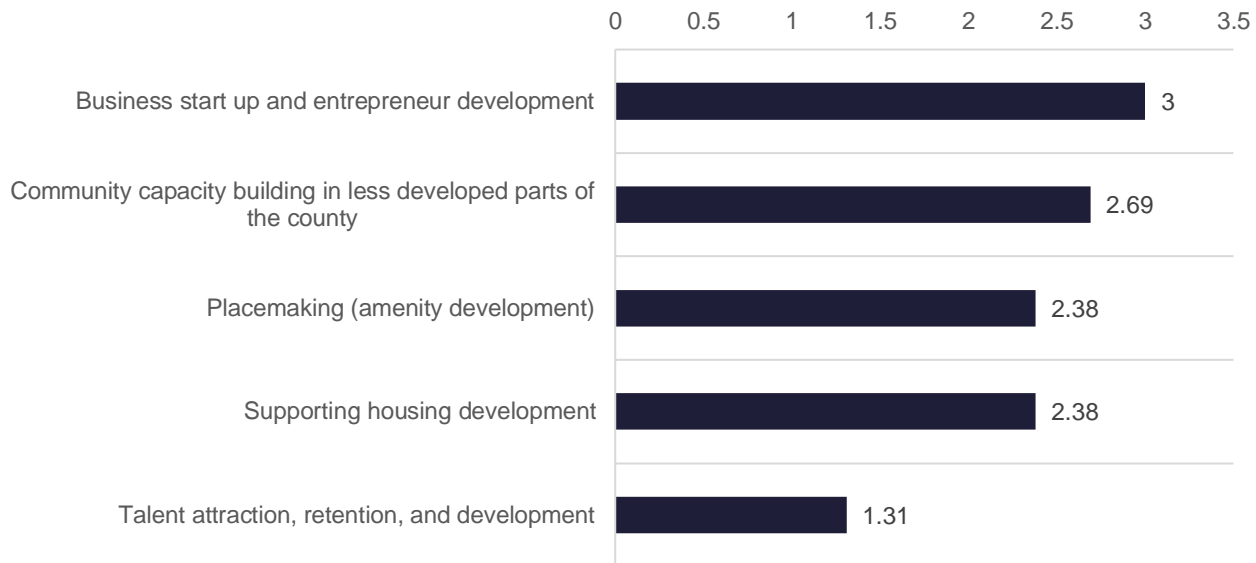
Other (please specify)

Not resident

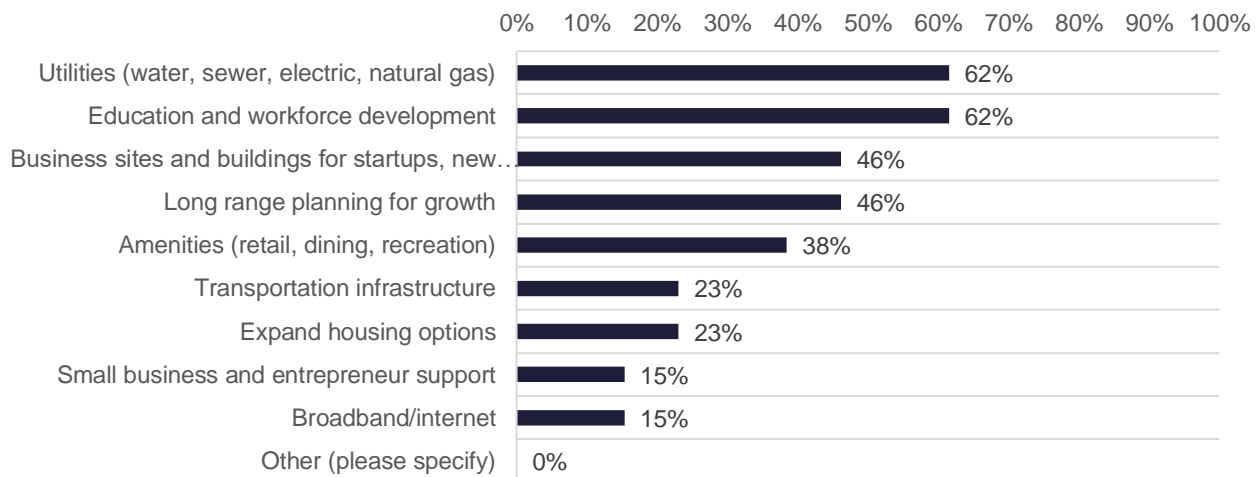
I would like to see Chester County Economic Development invest more/less resources in these programs.



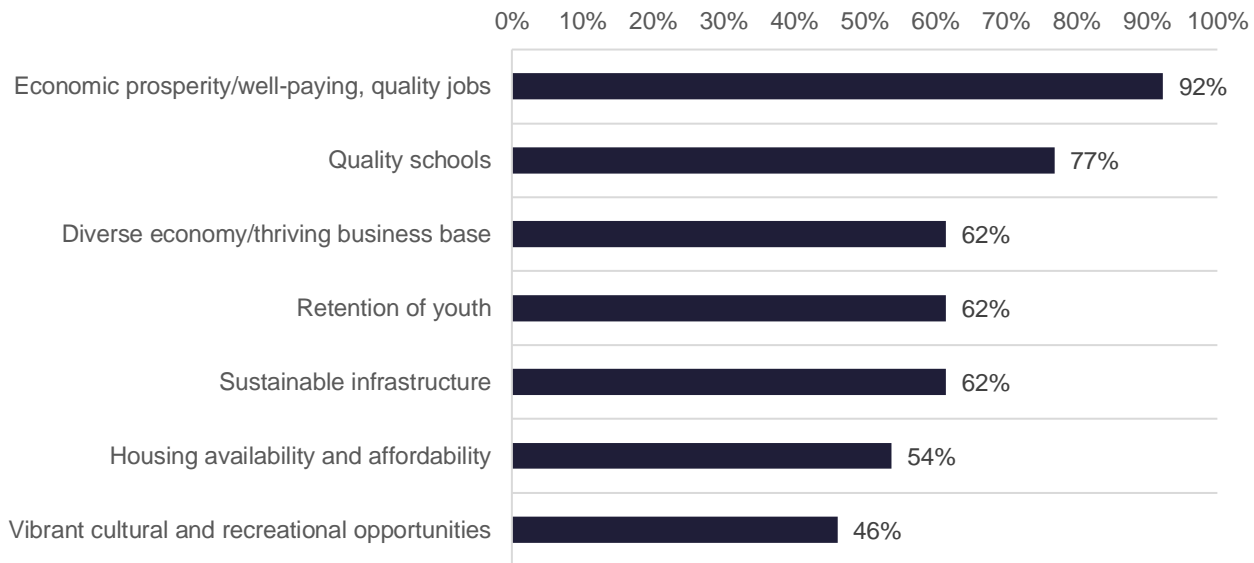
I would like to see Chester County invest new resources in...



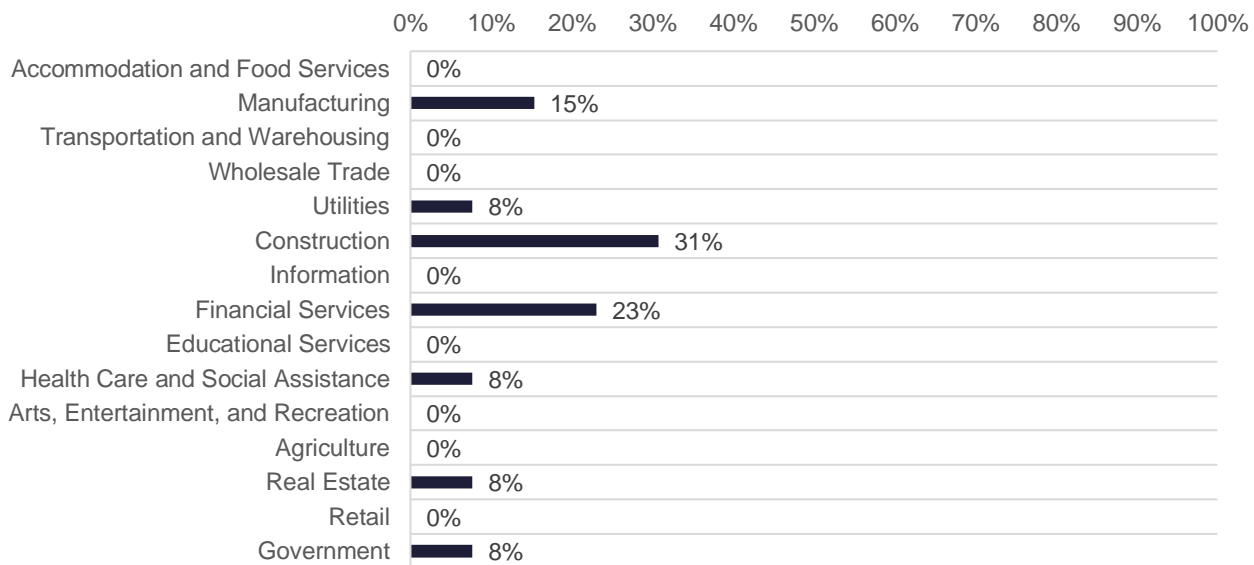
What is the most important investment Chester County could make to ensure long-term, sustainable economic growth? CHOOSE THREE.



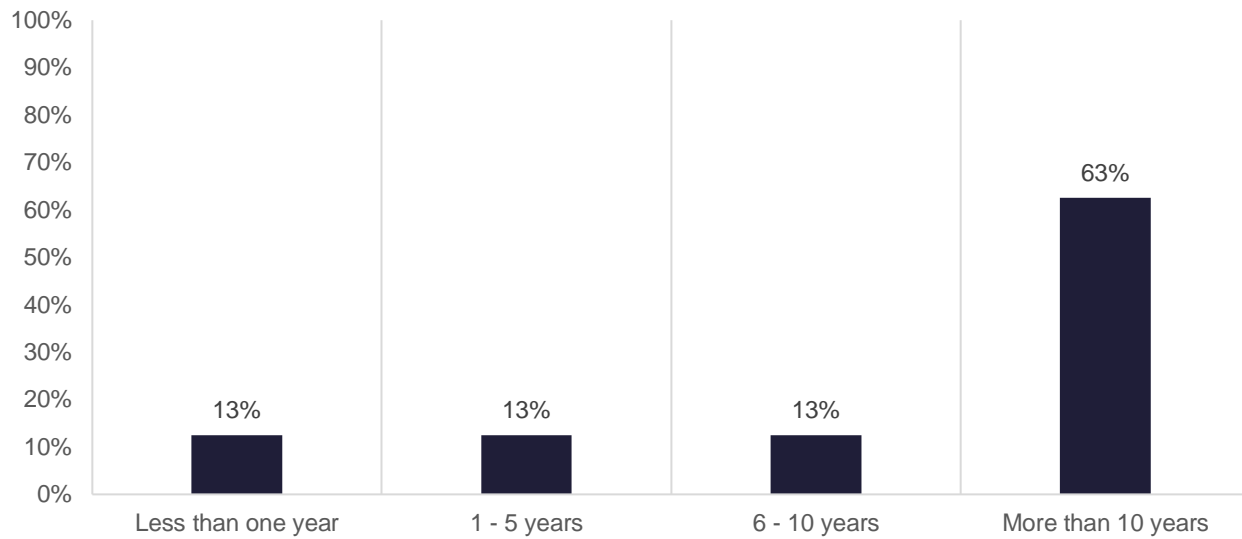
What does success look like for Chester County?



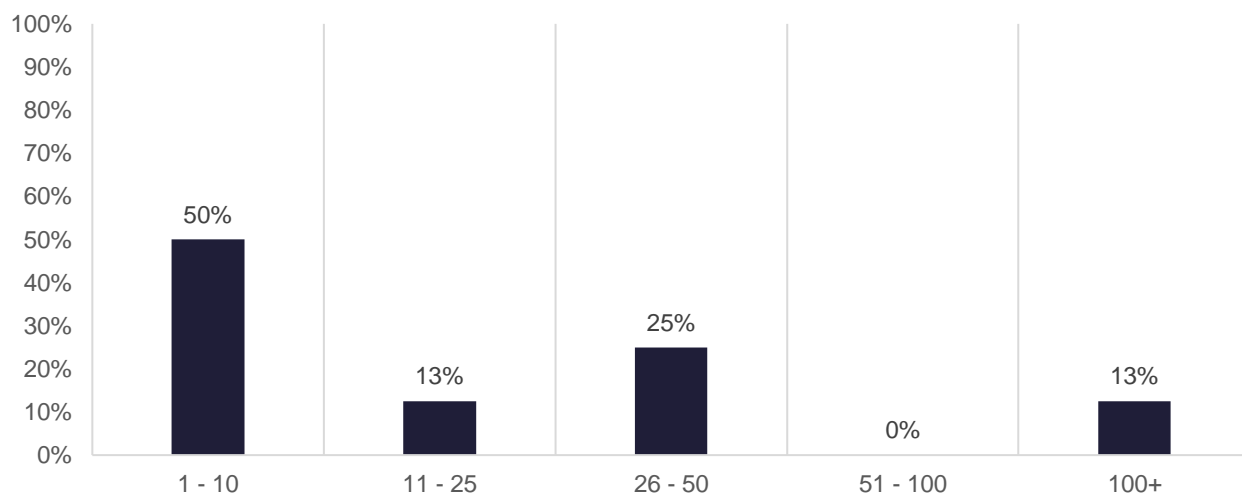
What business sector most closely matches your business?



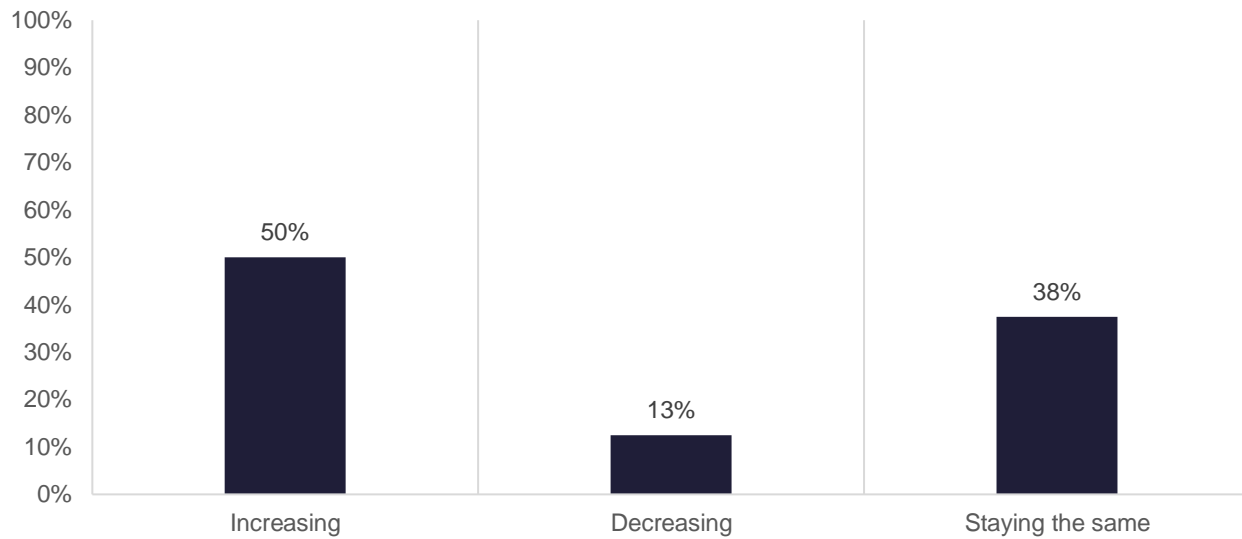
If you have a business located in Chester County, how many years has your business been operational in the county?



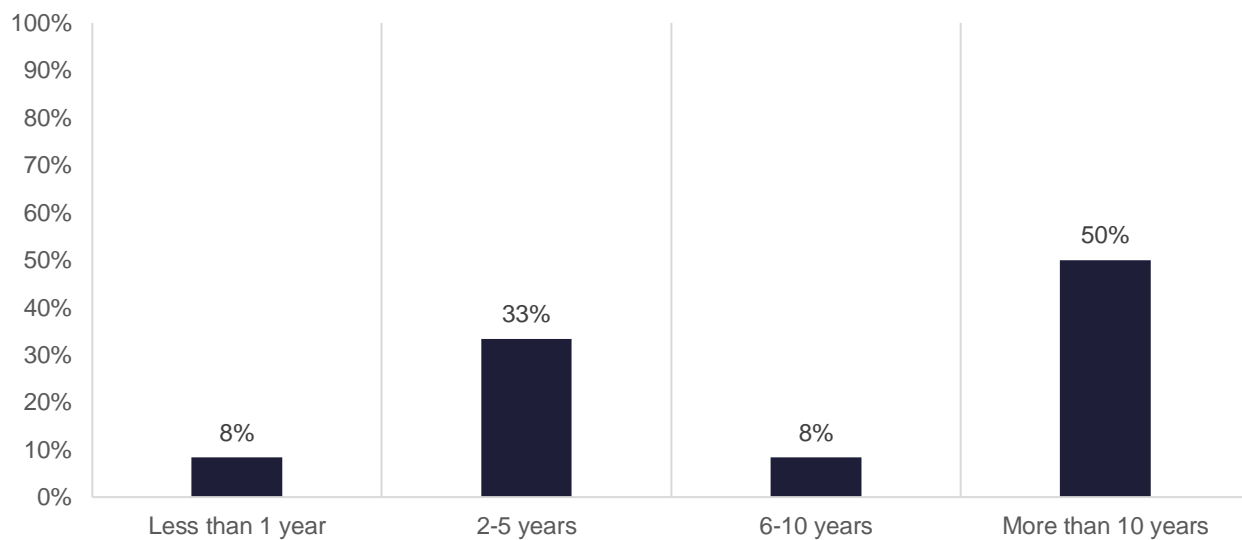
If you have a business in Chester County, how many employees, full-time equivalents, are employed in your business in the county?



If you have a business in Chester County, is your number of workers...



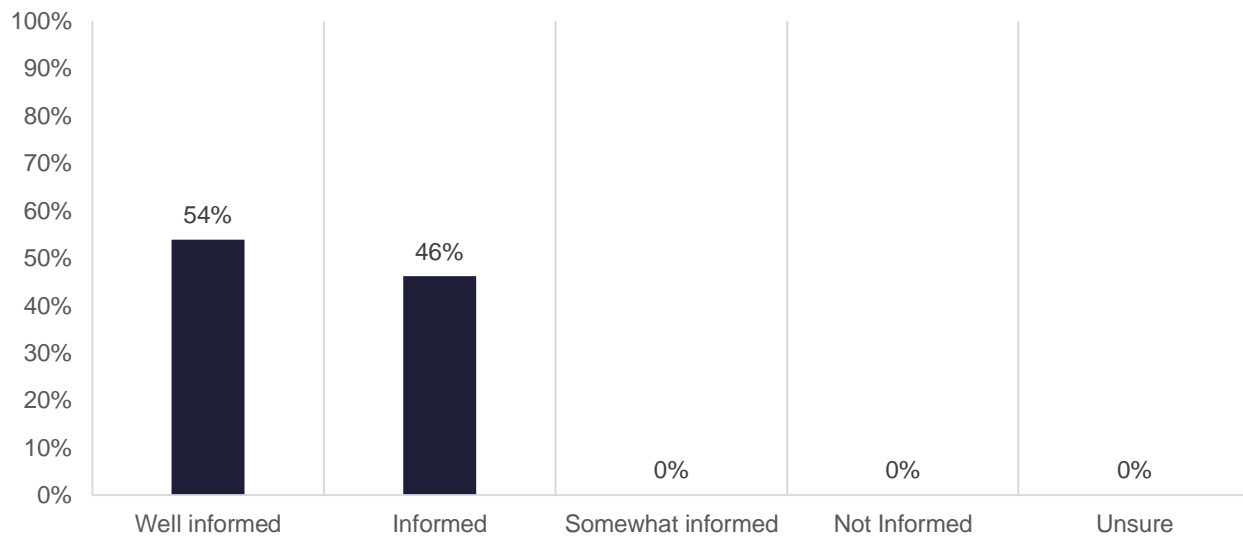
I have been an investor in the Chester Development Association for...



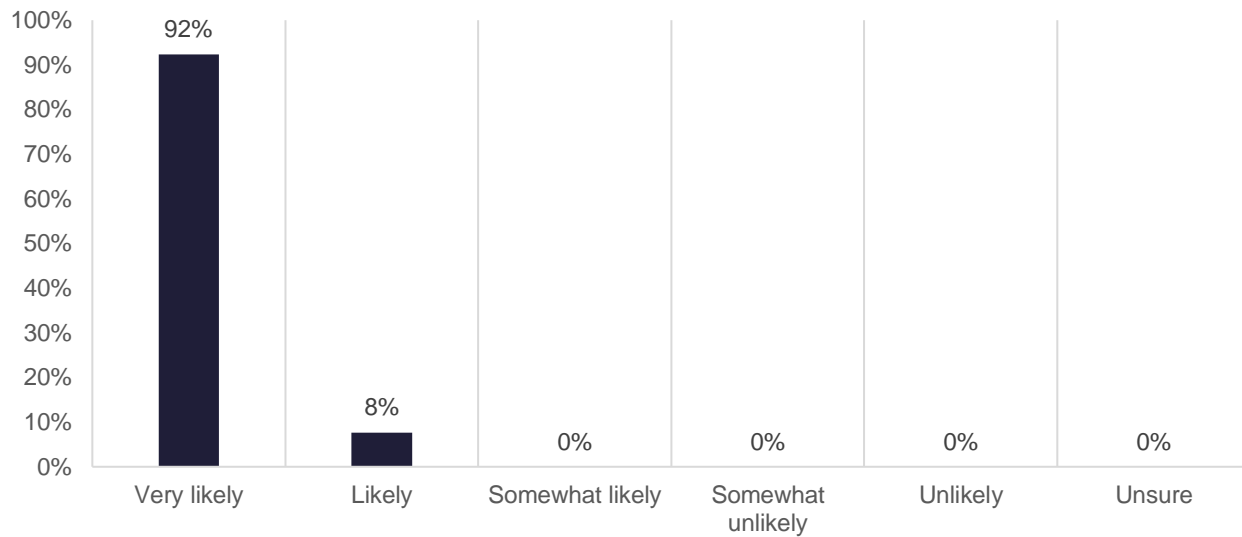
Rate Chester County Economic Development on accomplishing its mission to create an environment that supports new business locations and existing business expansion and retention. 1 star = Low and 5 stars = High.



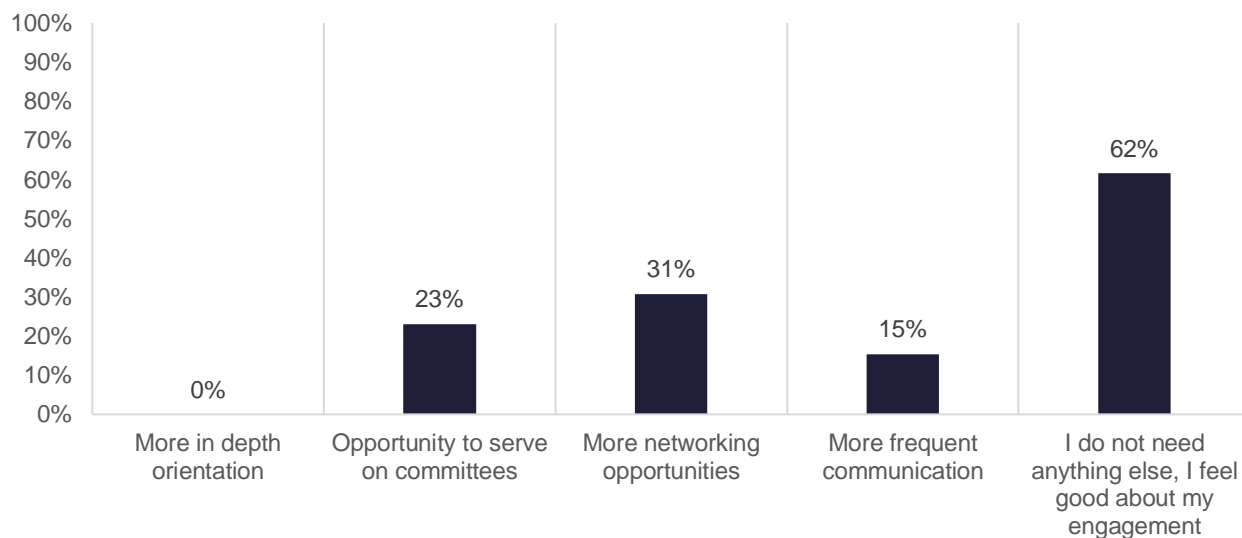
How informed are you about Chester County's accomplishments?



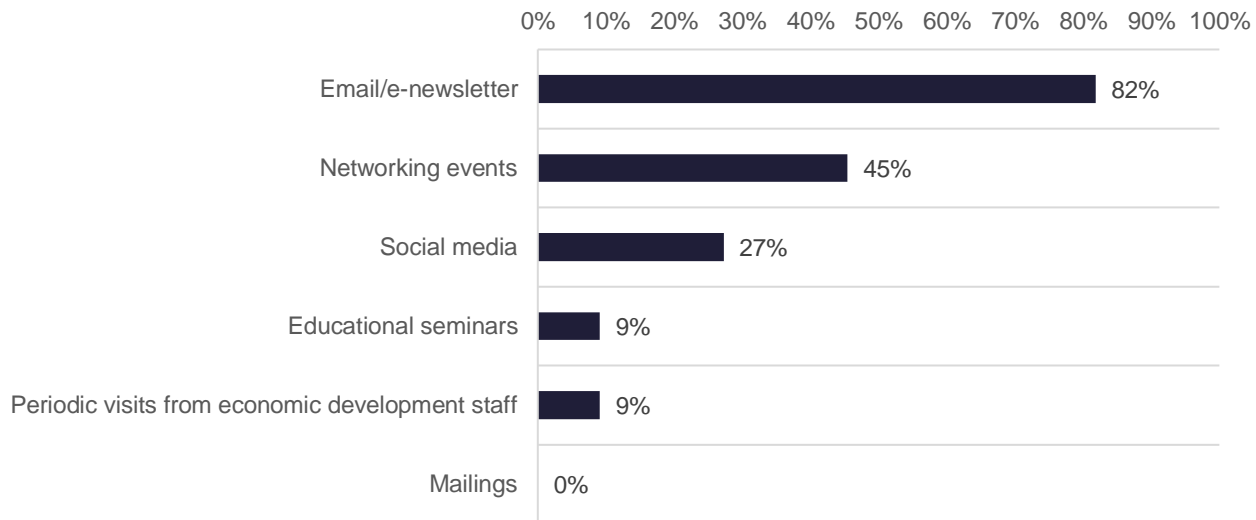
How likely are you to continue your financial investment in the Chester Development Association?



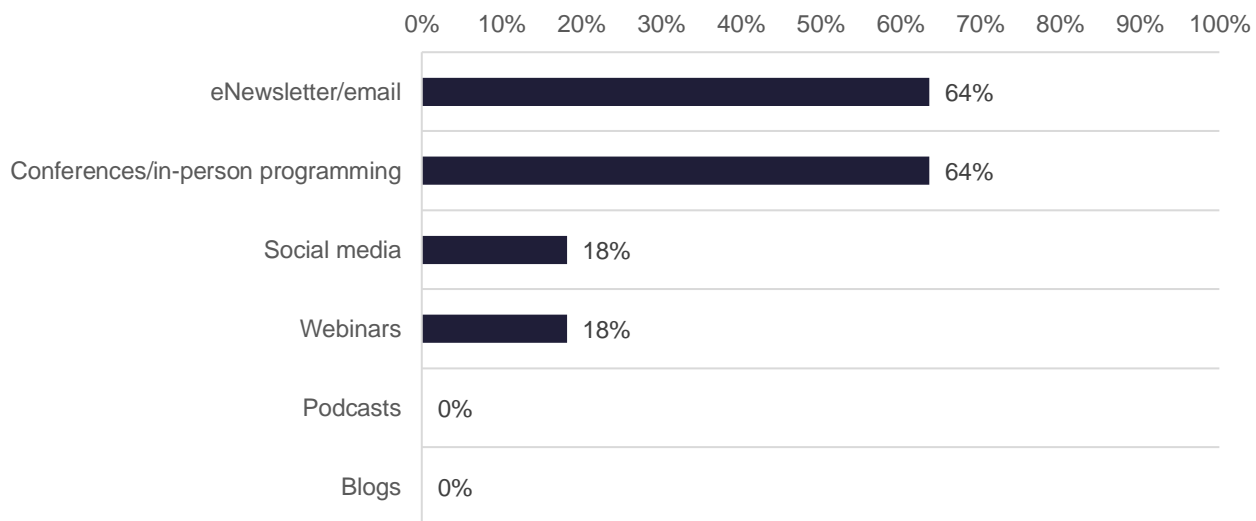
The following would help me be a more engaged investor. Check all that apply



How would you like to be contacted with information from the County? Choose all that apply.

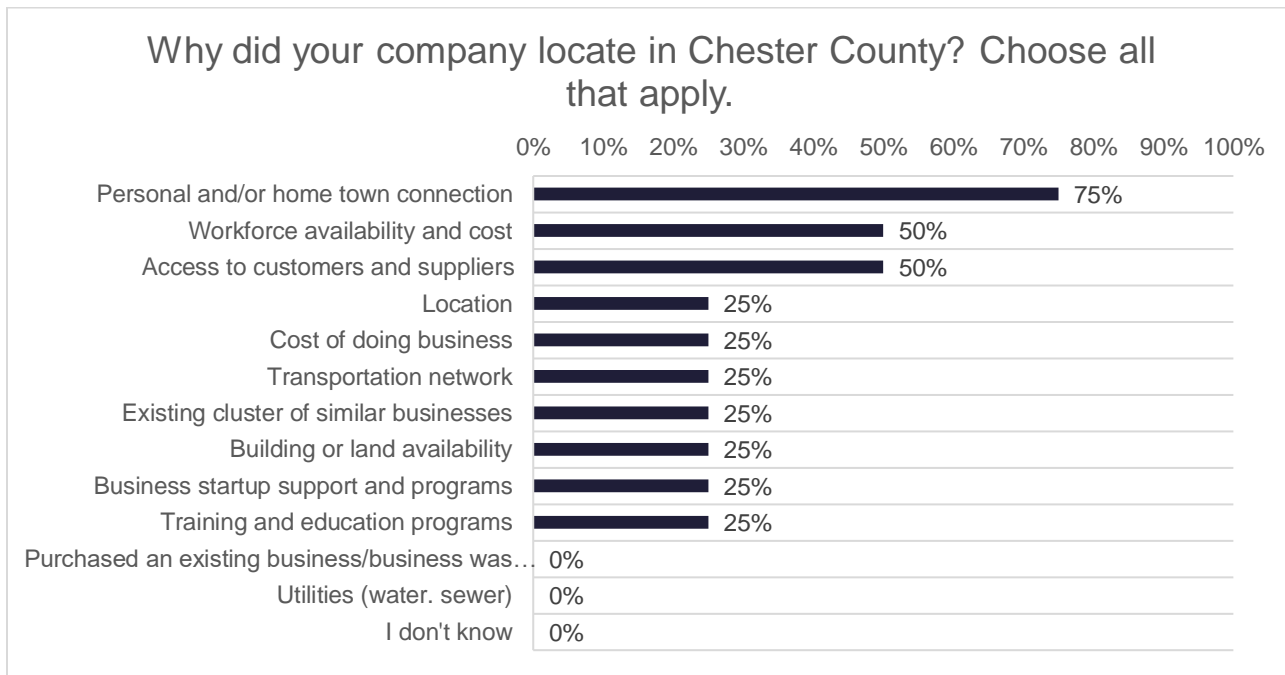


What is your preferred method to consume information that can help you grow your business? Choose all that apply.



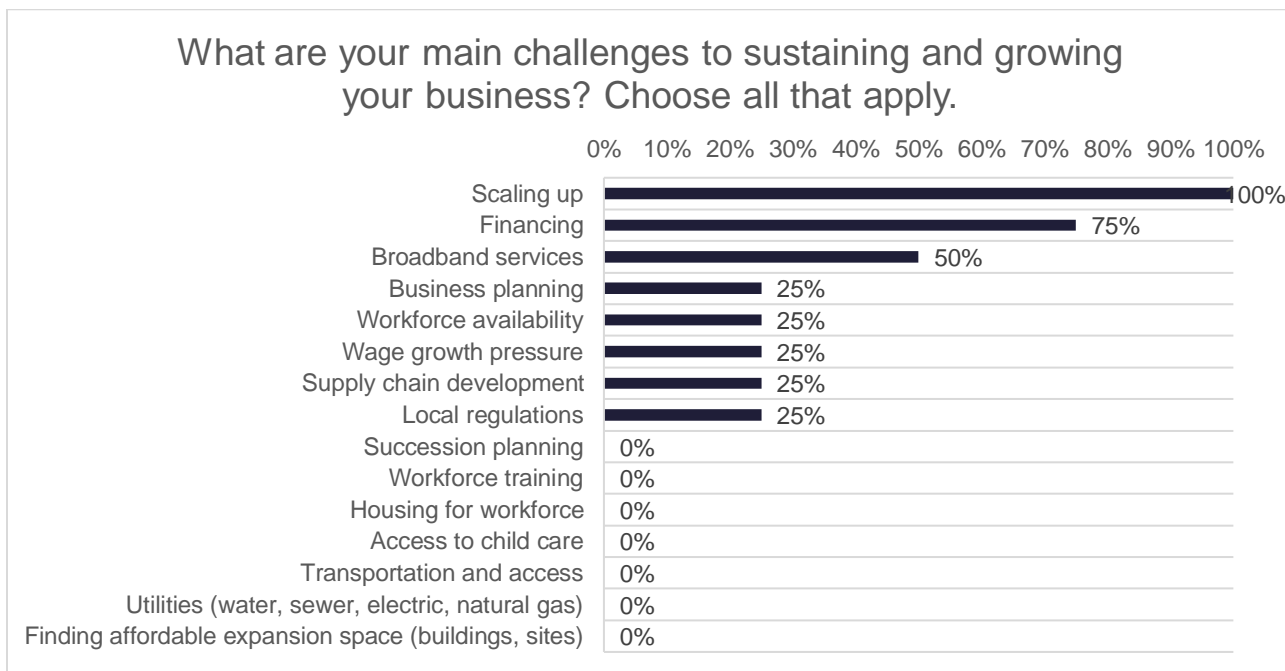
Business Survey Results

There were only four responses to the business survey; thus, these answers were incorporated into input gathered through input sessions and interviews with businesses. One of the recommendations in the strategic plan is to develop a proactive business retention and expansion program which will build relationships with businesses and increase engagement.

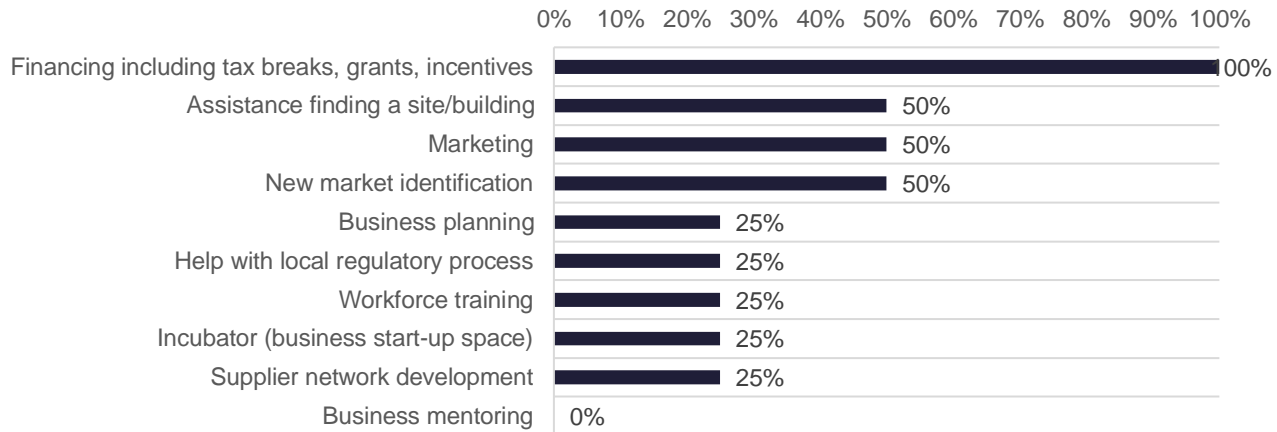


Other (please specify)

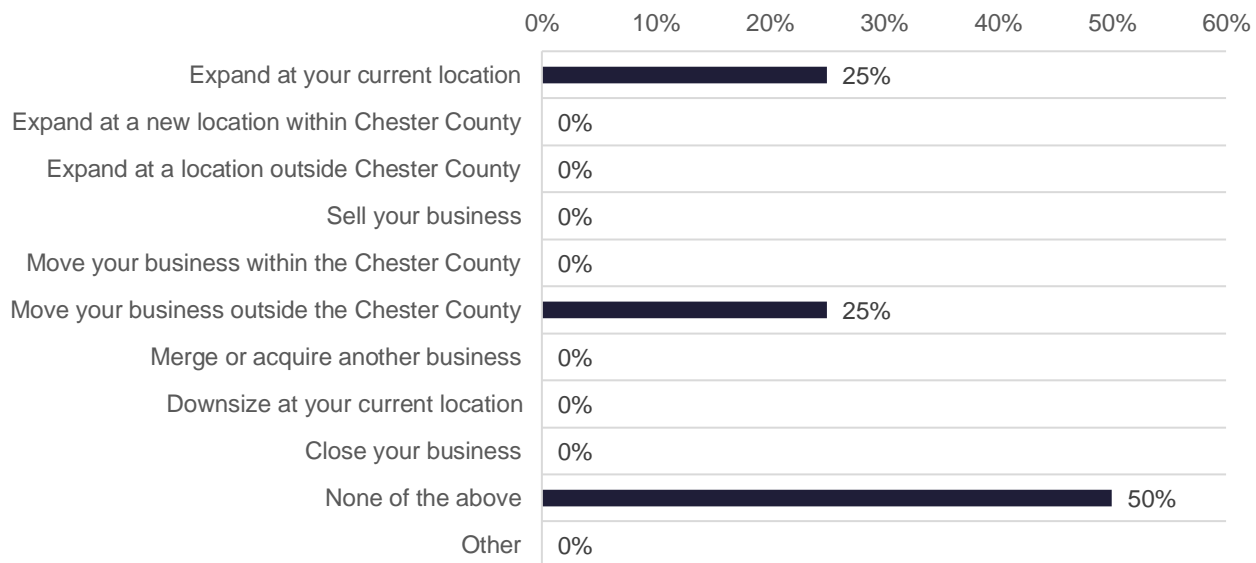
Battery Belt location



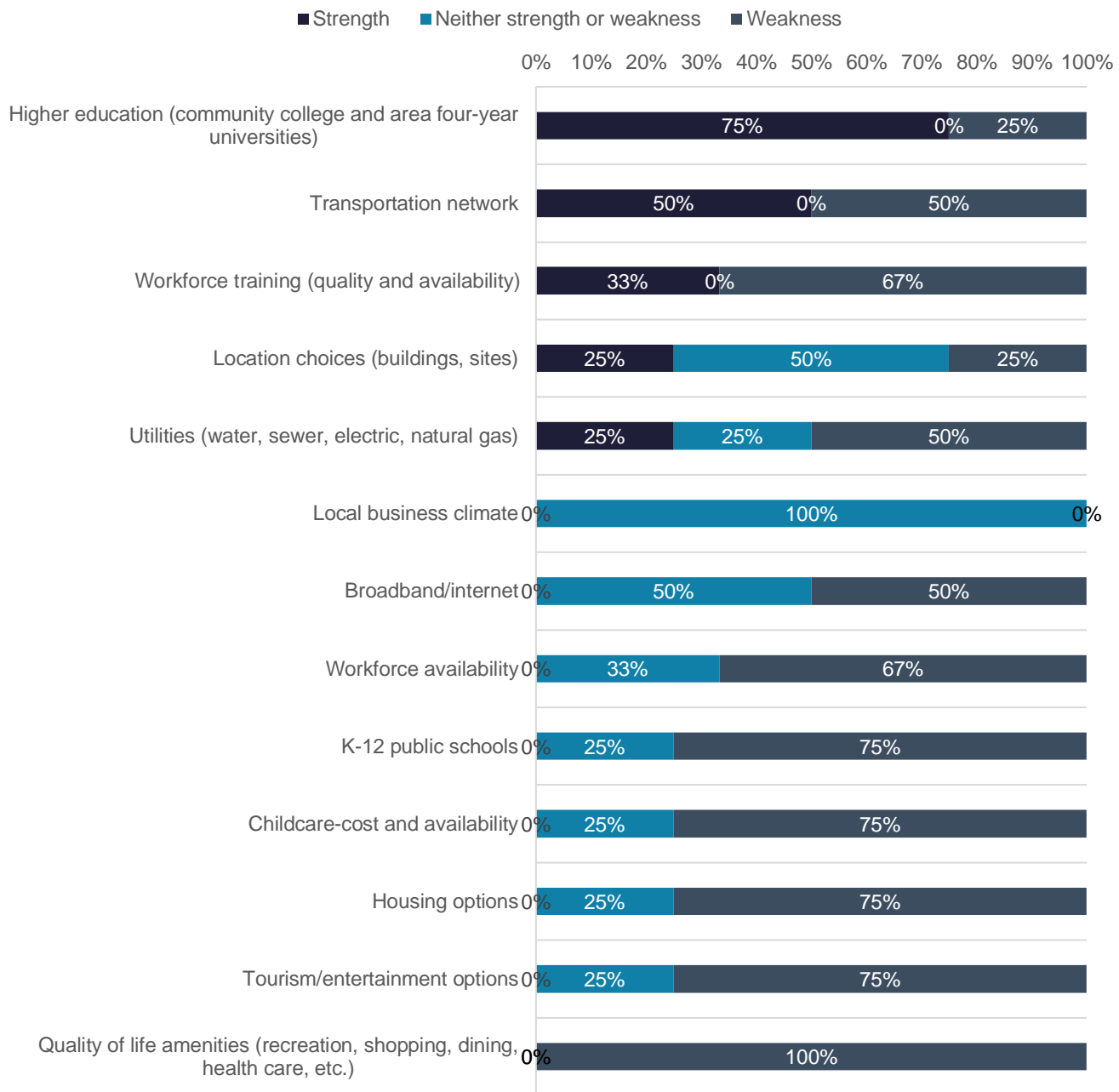
What business assistance would have been helpful when you started your business or that you believe would be helpful to a new business starting in Chester County today?
Choose all that apply.



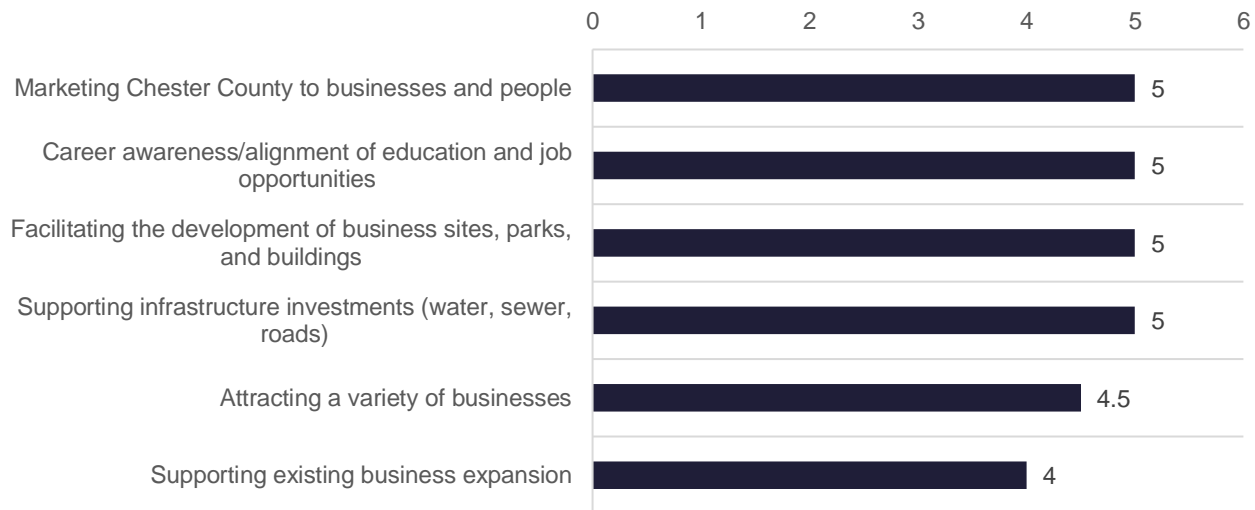
Are you currently planning to... Choose all that apply.



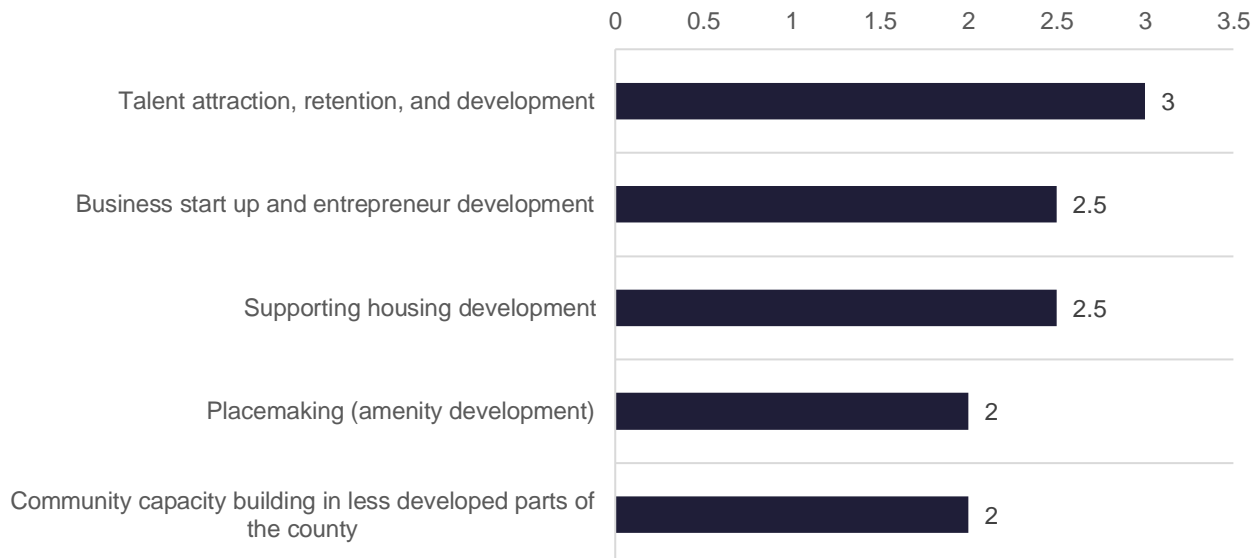
From a business perspective, rate the following as strengths, weaknesses, or neither for Chester County.



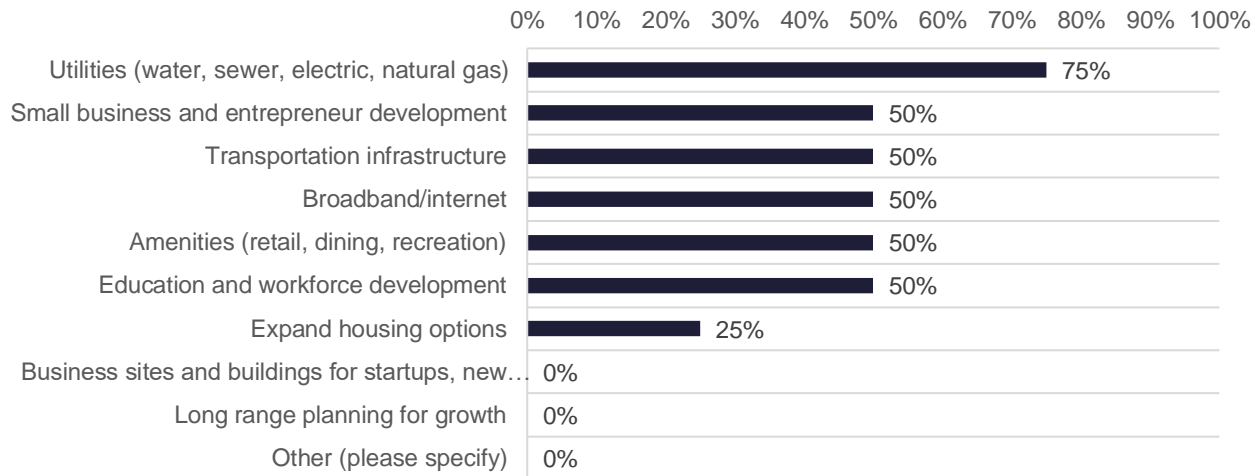
I would like to see Chester County invest more/less resources in these economic development strategies.



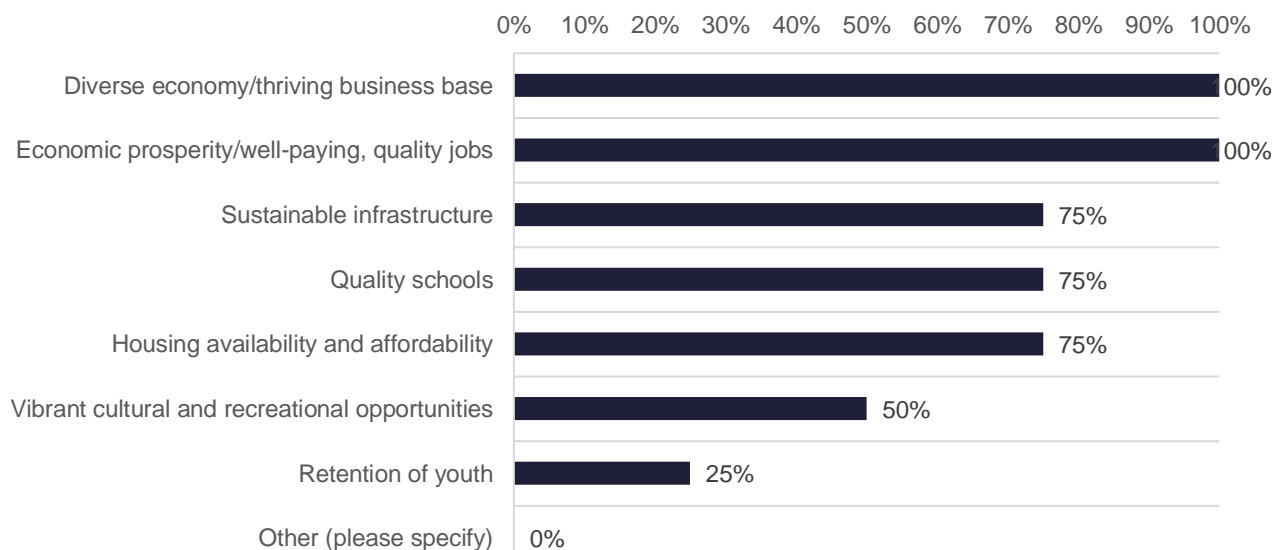
I would like to see Chester County invest new resources in...



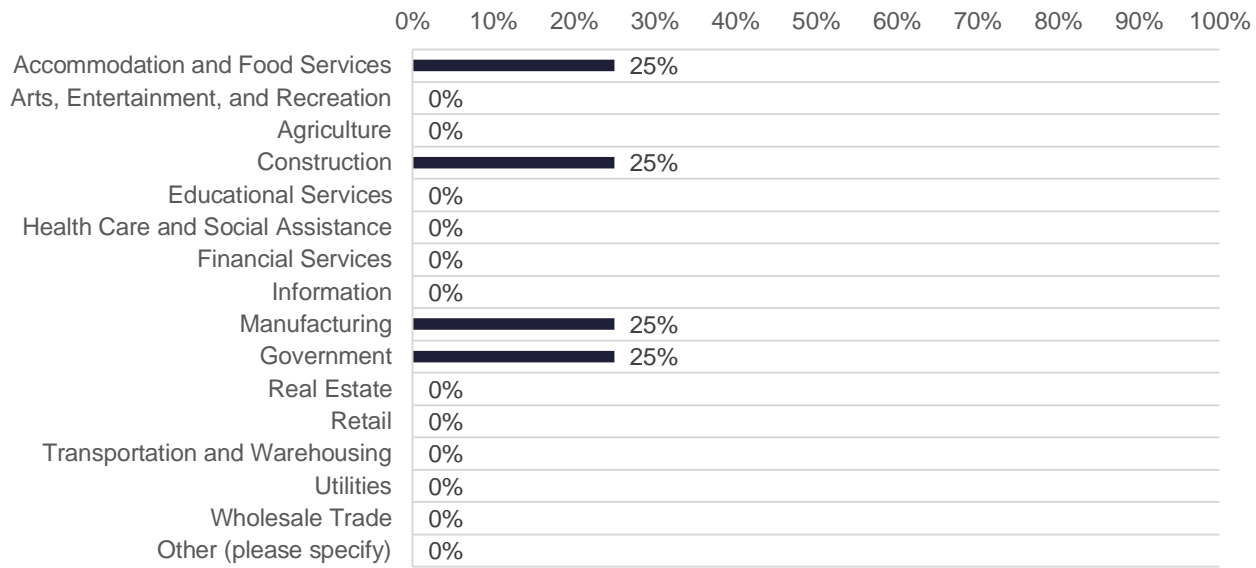
What is the most important investment Chester County could make to ensure long-term, sustainable economic growth?
CHOOSE THREE.



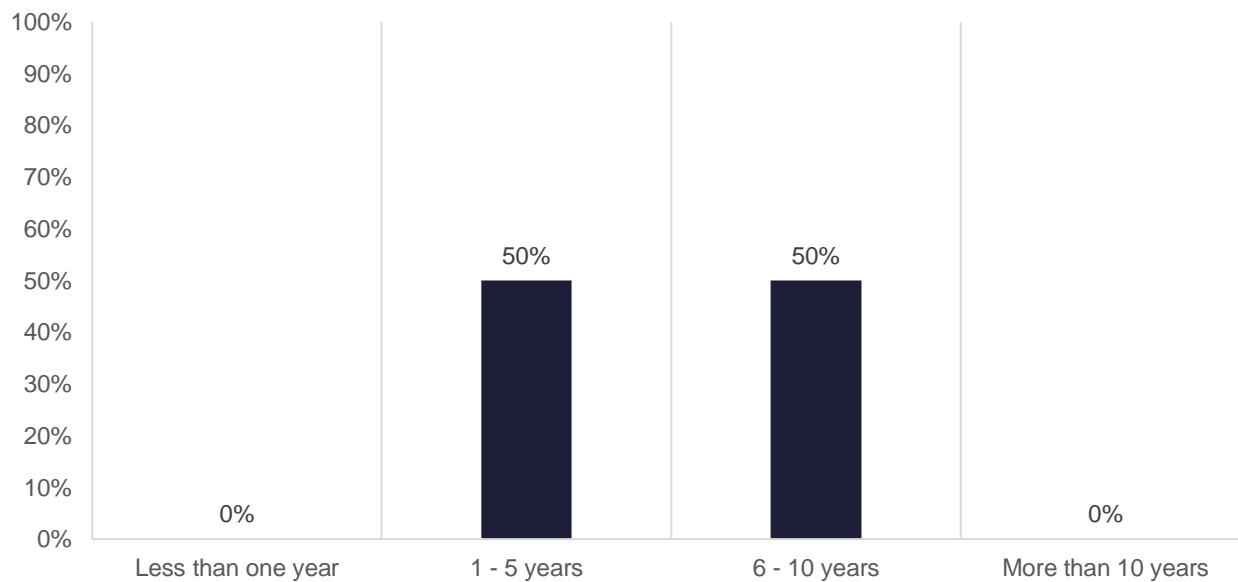
What does success look like for Chester County?



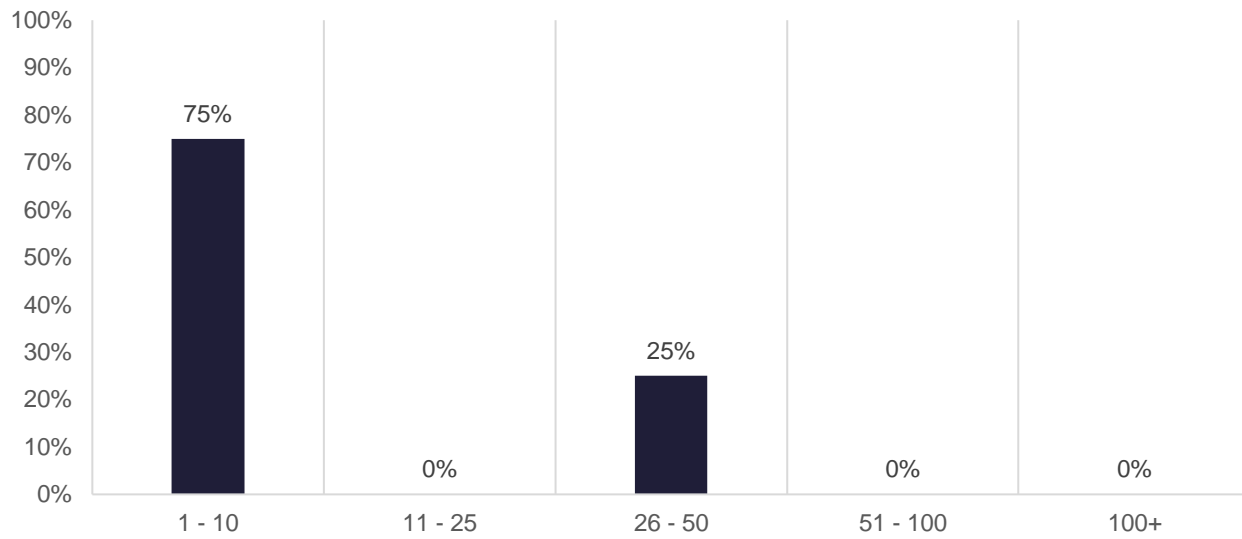
What business sector most closely matches your business?



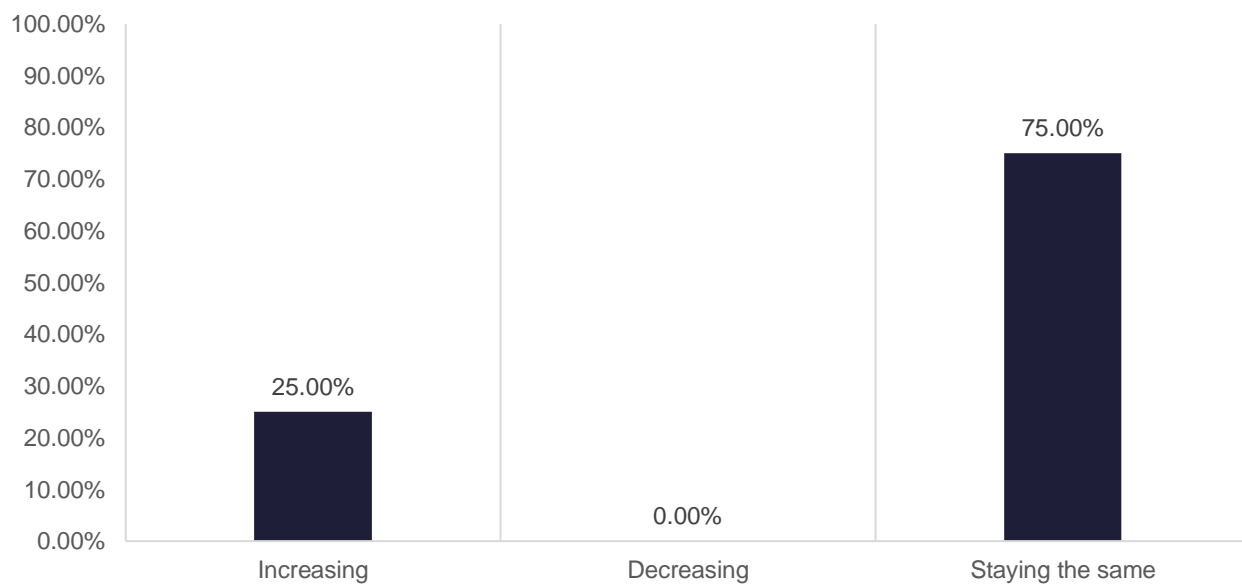
How many years has your business been operating?



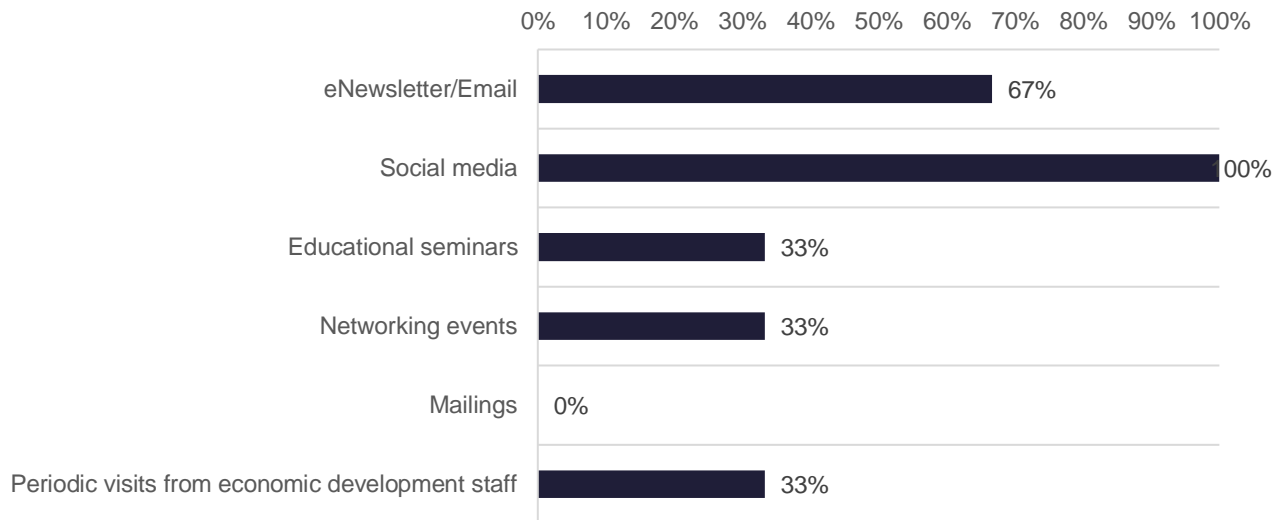
How many employees, full-time equivalents, are employed in your business?



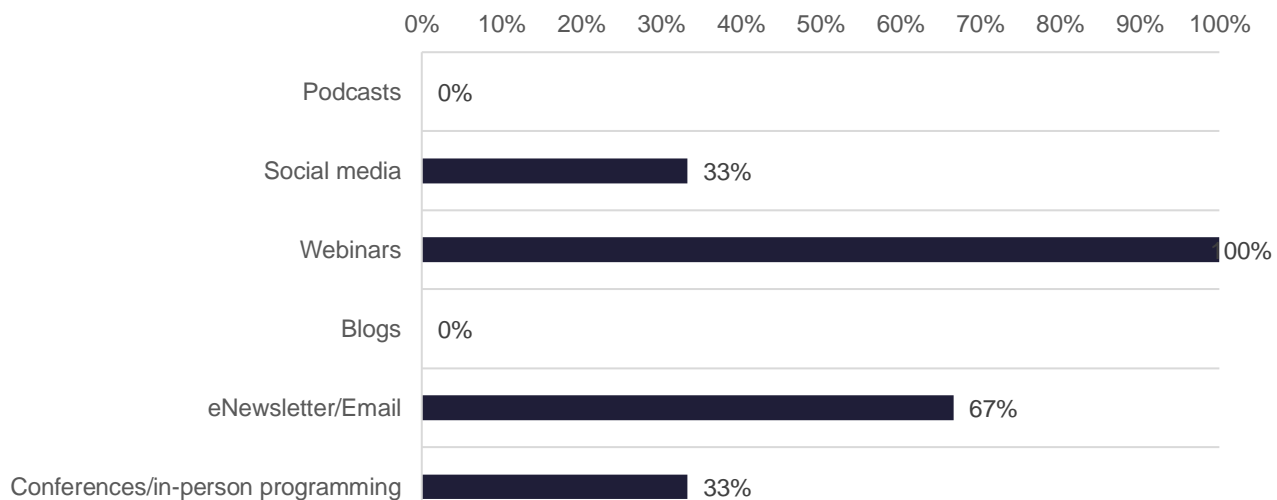
Our number of workers is...



How would you like to be contacted with information from the County? Choose all that apply.



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



Study Sponsor and Consultant



welcomes visitation by others—all of which support the provision of public services and otherwise improves each citizen's prosperity and overall quality of life. <https://choosechester.com/>

The mission of the Chester County Department of Economic Development (CCED) is to create an environment that supports existing industry expansion, encourages new industry investments, fosters entrepreneurialism, and

Chester Development Association

This strategic plan was funded by the Chester Development Association, a nonprofit corporation chartered to develop an economic development strategy, shape the local Chester County economy, and promote and assist in the growth and development of business and industry, including small business.



Creative Economic Development Consulting, LLC, provides strategic planning, product development, organizational development, and economic impact analysis services to communities. Creative EDC is an innovative firm that owns three proprietary programs: Certified Entrepreneurial Community®, CreativeSiteAssessment.com, and Creative Back Office Suite of Services (CBOSS). www.creativeedc.com