



2016 STATE OF THE COUNTY

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**THE NEW
AGRICULTURE &
CONFERENCE
CENTER**
will open later this
fall. See page 10 for
more information
inside.



2,500+ PEOPLE

Current count of residents' voices in the Comprehensive Plan

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

In July 2015, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners approved the development of a countywide **Comprehensive Plan**, which will be a 25-year vision document for the county. The board appointed a Steering Committee, with representation from the towns and other county boards and committees, to help steer the plan's development. An expert consultant is guiding the process, including ways to best engage the public in shaping the plan.

Over the past year, the process has involved substantial community input and coordination with various county and municipal entities. The plan will bring together several existing smaller plans and related policies, with the end goal of creating a unified planning vision. The plan should be completed in a few months.

Visit the plan webpage:

www.chathamnc.org/comprehensiveplan

COUNTYWIDE ZONING

On Nov. 16, 2015, the Board of Commissioners asked staff to present plans for extending residential zoning



Greg Payne (standing), a consultant with Economic Leadership LLC, engages the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee in economic growth issues. Committee Chairman Jim Elza is seated.

classifications to unzoned parts of the county (not including areas controlled by the towns). A public hearing was held in June and the commissioners have approved applying R-1 or R-5 residential zoning to all unzoned areas. Bona fide farms, as defined by state law,

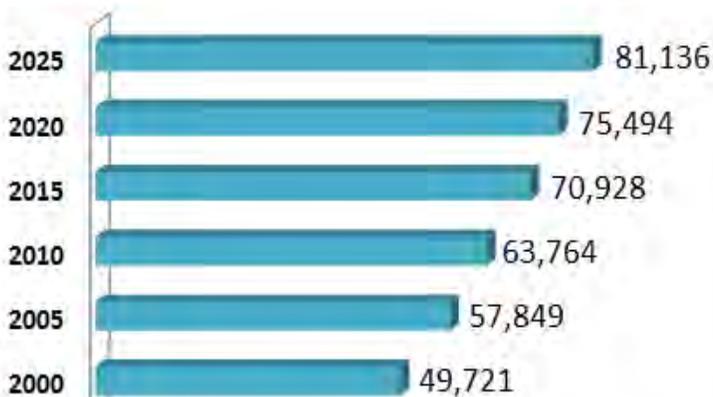
are exempt from zoning regulations. Planning staff will visit businesses located in newly zoned areas and report back to commissioners.

PLAN REVIEW OFFICER SAVINGS

A new **Plan Review Officer** in Central Permitting provided major benefits:

- Reduced by 50% the time required for plan reviews of four commercial facilities by inspectors.
- Conducted 67 small project plan reviews quickly enough that customers received permits on the same day, instead of the usual seven-day period.
- Saved \$7,000 by reconfiguring the building inspector office area instead of relying solely on the work of a private firm.

County Population 2000-2025



Estimate: Up 63.2% in 25-year span

SPOTLIGHT ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Board of Commissioners made affordable housing a top focus for the near future. Commissioners participated in a planning retreat to develop several priorities.

A major outcome has been a partnership with the **Triangle Community Foundation** and **United Way of Chatham County** to offer a pilot grant targeting affordable housing. The grant offered \$30,000 to the successful applicant offering a collaborative approach to addressing affordable housing issues in the county. At least two agencies had to be involved in the application's project. In May 2016, a panel of volunteers from all three grant agencies selected a project called "Land Becoming Home" as the grant recipient.

The County Manager's Office led the way on several other related accomplishments:

- Ensured that affordable housing expertise was included in development of the county's Comprehensive Plan.
- Implemented the commissioners' decision to fund rental deposits through the **Chatham Housing Authority**.
- Helped the Council on Aging retain a graduate student to work on a clearinghouse database for clients needing help rehabilitating their homes.
- Partnered with Rebuilding Together of the Triangle to apply for a USDA grant and NC Housing Finance Agency grant. The grants support the **Urgent Repair Program** and the **Single-Family Rehabilitation Program**.

OIL & GAS MORATORIUM

On August 17, 2015, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners adopted an ordinance imposing a **two-year moratorium** on county approvals for oil and gas development, including hydraulic fracking. The moratorium gives the county time to update relevant land use regulations and ordinances and develop a permitting process for such operations.

COAL ASH UPDATES

Chatham County created and continues to add information to its website to keep people updated on monitoring disposal of coal ash at Brickhaven mine, including posting county air quality testing results. See photo at right. We also started a second web page devoted to Duke Energy's plans to remove coal ash from the now-closed Cape Fear Power Plant water basins.

MORE CONVENIENT RECYCLING

Solid Waste & Recycling continues the transition to a **mixed recycling program**, which will make it easier for residents to recycle since they will not have to separate most items before depositing them. Research shows that mixed recycling actually increases the amount of recycled materials, which leads to more cost savings for the county.



A transport truck dumps coal ash at the Brickhaven disposal site in southeastern Chatham. Photo courtesy of Duke Energy.

News from the Convention & Visitors Bureau

The **Governor's Office** and the **NC Department of Commerce** released the annual statewide tourism spending report, which indicated that Chatham County's "domestic visitors" spent \$31.69 million during 2014, an increase of **nearly three percent since 2013**. This continues a six-year trend of climbing visitor spending in the county.

The **Pittsboro-Siler City Convention & Visitors Bureau**, a countywide organization, won a top Gold Award for 2015 from the Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina for its efforts to market the county as a visitor destination.

\$89.57 MILLION

New private sector capital investment in FY16, up 118% from FY15

CHATHAM-SILER CITY ADVANCED MANUFACTURING (CAM) MEGASITE

The EDC reports that the 1,800-acre CAM megasite northwest of Siler City has been recertified by the NC Department of Commerce as development ready. It remains the largest certified site in the state.

In April 2016, the Board of Commissioners approved an option to purchase up to the entirety of the CAM site if a large manufacturer selects it. The option places the site under public control, which is highly desired by major industries. The option to purchase the site expires June 30, 2017.

Information provided by the Chatham Economic Development Corporation (EDC)

700+ Jobs Coming in FY17: Mountaire Farms

Mountaire Farms will be acquiring the former Townsend poultry processing plant and an adjoining property in Siler City in 2016. Work has begun to renovate and update this facility into a modern state-of-the-art food plant. This expansion will add 700+ jobs and an estimated \$100 million investment.



NEW JOBS HIGHLIGHTS

Brookwood Farms announced a \$2.6 million expansion and 15 new positions to meet growing demands. **Olympic Steel, Boise Cascade** and **Pallet One** added nearly 100 jobs combined.

RETAIL & COMMERCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The **Keith Corporation** continued renovating **North Chatham Village** (formerly Cole Park Plaza). New tenants, McDonald's and Dollar Tree, have opened. Town and Country Hardware is coming soon.

Phase I of **Briar Chapel's** commercial project, **Veranda**, opens this fall and includes eateries, child care, dentist, dermatologist, optometrist and other businesses.

990 new jobs in FY16 (up 603% from FY15)

CHATHAM PARK BEGINS IN PITTSBORO AREA



UNC Health Care recently opened a 25,000-square-foot medical office building. UNC is also building a 10-bed hospice facility slated to open this fall. A 16,000-square-foot office building opened this summer.

Chatham Park selected The Eco Group to develop a commercial phase in Russet Run. It is expected to include a brewery with distribution center and other tenants.

The Eco Group is partnering with EngAGE to build a 125-unit, age-restricted senior complex (see photo) that will feature classrooms on the ground floor and live performance theater.

9,104 STUDENTS

Estimated K-12
enrollment in
Chatham schools by
FY 2020-21

MAJOR EDUCATOR AWARDS

Eric Patin (far left), science teacher at Chatham Central High School, received the NC 2015 Milken Educator Award. The award came with a \$25,000 check and membership in the prestigious Milken Educator Network.

The NC Association for Scholastic Activities named **Dr. Justin Bartholomew** of Northwood High School the 2016 NCASA Principal of the Year. This award recognizes school leaders contributing to the growth of students through participation in scholastic activities. Bartholomew is shown holding his award with Leon Pfeiffer, executive director of NCASA



SCHOOL FACILITIES COMING

Two major K-12 facilities needed to handle the expected student enrollment are moving forward as part of the county's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY 2017-23.

- **New High School:** A new high school in the northeast will hold 1,000 students initially and can be expanded to 1,200 students. The school board is currently looking for land. It is expected to open in 2020-21.
- **New Elementary School:** A new elementary school, also in northeast Chatham is moving forward too. The school likely would not be ready until FY 2019-20.

CCCC HEALTH SCIENCES BUILDING

The CIP includes plans to begin construction of a 46,000-square-foot health science education facility for Central Carolina Community College to offer studies in health sciences. It will help meet the local demand medical professionals. It will be built on 15-501 near Briar Chapel. It will also house a one-stop voting site. The building should be completed in FY 2018-19.

JOINT SCHOOL & BUS GARAGE

This new facility opened in FY 2015-16 serves as the main garage for both the school system and county vehicles. The school system operates the garage with financial support from the county. It is the only such shared facility in the state. See photo below provided by Chatham County Schools.

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

Chatham County Schools partnered with Central Carolina Community College to launch the **School of Science and Engineering** for 30 rising ninth graders. Enrollees can earn a high school diploma and an Associate's Degree at no cost. The Associate's Degree credits may be transferred within the UNC system.



200 GRADS

The county's Leadership Academy for employees reached 200 graduates in 2015 (now at 237)

TRANSITIONS

Upon the Oct. 31, 2015 retirement of **Charlie Horne**, who served as county manager for nearly 20 years, the Board of Commissioners promoted **Renee Paschal** (photo below) to county manager. Paschal had been assistant county manager since 1996. She has 27 years of experience in local government.

A few weeks later, Paschal announced that **Vicki McConnell** would be Deputy County Manager, while retaining the role as Finance Officer. McConnell has worked with the county for 40 years. Paschal also promoted **Dan LaMontagne** to Assistant County Manager. He had previously been the Director of Environmental Quality and still oversees Public Works.



Richard Webster retired as sheriff in May 2016. The Board of Commissioners appointed **Mike Roberson** to serve Sheriff (shown at right taking the oath of office with his wife Annette). Roberson is a Chatham County native and previously worked as a paramedic and firefighter before transitioning to law enforcement. Roberson has over 24 years in law enforcement, including 14 years in the Chatham County Sheriff's Office. In other changes, Sheriff Roberson promoted **Tracy Kelly** and **Charles Gardner** to the rank of Major.



AAA BOND RATING

In June 2015, Standard & Poor's Rating Service reaffirmed Chatham County's **AAA bond rating** for general obligation bonds, the highest rating available. Chatham is, by far, the smallest county in the state to earn a AAA rating. Typically, the counties earning AAA are much larger.

BUDGET & FINANCE AWARDS

The Finance Office once again has earned the top award from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), a nationwide organization, for meeting its highest standards for the county's comprehensive 2014-15 audit report. It has won the award every year since 1989. The County Manager's Office won GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the fourth time in the past five years. The award means that the county's budget presentation for FY 2015-16 met "the highest principles of governmental budgeting."

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY MILESTONE

In August 2015, the county hosted the 13th graduating ceremony for its **Leadership Academy**. The award-winning program reached a milestone of **200 graduates**. The academy helps employees gain the skills necessary to effectively manage their jobs and prepares them for expanded responsibilities.

ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT CONVENIENCE

In July 2015, the **Register of Deeds Office** began the process of accepting electronic uploads of document so that people can file them remotely. They also initiated the Electronic Birth Registration System, which allows people to search and obtain copies of birth records from 1972 forward. This means that many people do not have to go to their county of birth to get certified birth records.

The **County Manager's Office** and **MIS** are implementing **Seamless.gov**, a new online form system that will make it easier for residents to complete, submit and track the progress of forms and applications.

**11,500
HOURS**

Time that volunteers gave the Chatham County Council on Aging in FY 2016



HEALTH DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

*The NC Association of Local Health Directors honored **Health Director Layton Long** (left) as the 2016 Health Director of the Year at its annual awards event on Jan. 20, 2016. Layton, who joined the county in 2013, has spent 27+ years working to improve public health across the state. In Chatham, he has been instrumental in several key initiatives, including tobacco use reduction, an updated animal services ordinance, and the formation of the Chatham Health Alliance.*

MAJOR HEALTH GRANT

Chatham Public Health joined with **Chatham Hospital** to secure a three-year \$450,000 grant from **The Duke Endowment** for its Chatham Health Alliance. This grant will help the Alliance build community partnerships focused on the leading health issues affecting county residents. The Health Alliance has earned kudos across the state for its community partnerships and strategic focus on priority health issues.

HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

The Health Department developed a stronger partnership with **Piedmont Health Services** to broaden services to the community. They are jointly targeting diabetes management and breast and cervical cancer support. They are piloting an evidence-based practice, **“Exercise is Medicine,”** to increase physical activity.

150+ NEGLECTED ANIMALS RESCUED

More than 150 animals were removed from a Chatham County property for their safety and protection. **Chatham County Animal Services** worked closely with the Sheriff’s Office as well as national and local groups for this large-scale animal rescue.

TOBACCO-FREE CAMPUS

Based on the recommendation of the Board of Health, with the support of the Board of County Commissioners, all county government grounds became **tobacco-free** on March 1, 2016. The policy aims to protect people from the harmful effects of tobacco use and encourage tobacco users to quit. **Quitsmart** classes also have helped many employees and residents stop using tobacco.



COUNCIL ON AGING GRANTS

Chatham County Council on Aging was one of just five applicants to receive a **Triangle Community Foundation Innovation Award**. The \$20,650 grant allowed the Council to launch its **“SAY YES! Initiative,”** designed to engage the faith community and their youth in addressing senior housing needing minor repairs. County funding also supports this program.

The Council also raised \$114,000 in various private grants to supplement its overall funding for core services and upgrades to its facilities. A grant of \$10,000 from **Meals on Wheels America**, supported by the **Home Depot Foundation**, will help make minor home repairs for older veterans.

SPOTLIGHT ON FOSTER FAMILIES & CHILDREN

The Department of Social Services launched the **Resource Parenting Curriculum**, a pilot program aimed at helping Chatham's foster families deal with the trauma and violence that many foster children have faced. It is one of several programs focused on mental health needs of foster children. The program will be expanded to more foster families and additional types of classes. *See photo below.*

Social Services also collaborated with Community Care of NC and the NC Pediatric Society to implement the **Fostering Health Initiative** to give high-risk foster children access to comprehensive health care.

Foster kids age 13-21 in the **LINKS Program** had a busy year taking part in activities that teach independent living skills. A key goal is helping them see the benefits of community college as a path for the future.



HIGHLIGHTS OF HELPING SENIORS

The Chatham County Council on Aging had several major achievements this year:

- With the help of many volunteers and funding from the county, Carolina Meadows, and Galloway Ridge, the Council completed several physical improvements to its two **Senior Centers** to make them safer and more suitable for senior participants.
- The Council helped plan and promote an **NC MedAssist** event to provide free over-the-counter medications to more than 400 participants.



SENIOR GAMES SET RECORD: *The Council on Aging worked hard to enlist more Senior Games participants. Efforts paid off, with an increase of 34%, compared to 2015. Shown above are three archery competitors.*

- The Council increased its volunteer corps to 250 people offering more than **11,500 hours of service**. One volunteer, **Mindy Brown**, received one of United Way's Outstanding Volunteer Awards for her work with Meals-on-Wheels.

NEWS FROM COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

4-H ON THE MOVE: Cooperative Extension reports that four new 4-H Youth Development programs got started in FY 2015-16, for a total of nine countywide. 4-H continues its partnership with the schools to enhance learning through the study of livestock and butterfly life cycles.

POLLINATOR TOURISM: The office has expanded its pollinator demonstration garden at Chatham Mills, frequently visited by tour groups and educational programs. With the growing national interest in healthy bee populations, Chatham has seen growth in "Pollinator Tourism" and interest in beekeeping. Chatham's Cooperative Extension leads the way in our region, offering six Beekeeping Schools since 2005 for 500+ beekeepers.

NUTRITION AS ART: The Family & Consumer Science Program offered Nutrition as an Art for childcare providers in our region. This train-the-trainer program offers educational materials to help providers serve healthier snacks and promote more physical activities for kids.

87,773
CALLS

This represents calls dispatched by 911 to responders in FY 2016, up 26% from FY 2011

EMERGENCY FIRE DISPATCH

The 911 Center met the requirements for **Emergency Fire Dispatch**, which will help improve fire department ratings. This, in turn, helps lower homeowners' insurance premiums. The 911 Center is already nationally certified for Emergency Medical Dispatch and expects to be certified for Fire Dispatch this year.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Emergency Operations continued efforts to implement **NexGen** technology, which will help more accurately locate cell phone callers and will allow callers to contact 9-1-1 using text and video.

TRACKING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Emergency Operations worked with the Council on Aging, Social Services and other groups to create a software database of vulnerable residents who may need special assistance in emergencies.

SHERIFF'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Over the past year, the Sheriff's Office enhanced its community outreach:

- New **Facebook** page reaches thousands each week.
- **Nextdoor** system helps officers share information with Community Watchdog groups.
- Officers provided 4,107 hours of community services in FY 2016.
- Deputies mentored Drivers' Education students in all three high schools.
- **Major Charles Gardner** presented classes to high school students on how to properly interact with law enforcement. He also offered safety classes to churches around the county.

DEPUTIES RECOGNIZED

Just two months on the job, **Deputy Will Cockman** (shown below right with retired Sheriff Richard Webster) saved the life of an inmate found unconscious and not breathing. In April 2016, he received the Sheriff's Life Saving Award.

Major Charles Gardner received the West Chatham NAACP Humanitarian Service Award for helping people throughout the county and inspiring the spirit of sacrifice in others.



STORMREADY

Emergency Operations completed work required to be certified as **StormReady** through the National Weather Service. The process requires the county to verify how well it stays on top of dangerous weather, how quickly the public is alerted and how effectively responders are mobilized.

SHERIFF'S COST SAVINGS

Video Arraignments: The Sheriff's Office installed equipment allowing arraignments via video transmission, which eliminates a six-mile trip each way to the Judicial Center. This is a major savings of both staff time and transportation costs.

Food Purchasing: The addition of a kitchen manager for the Detention Center has reduced pricing for food by as much as 50%.

10,000
Sq Ft

Total flexible space
for events in the
Agriculture &
Conference Center



PARK AT BRIAR CHAPEL

A grand opening for the new Park at Briar Chapel was held on Sept. 18, 2015. The park features softball fields, soccer field, multipurpose/football field, and a building with restrooms and concessions. More facilities will be added as funding is available.

NEW AGRICULTURE & CONFERENCE CENTER

Construction of the new **Agriculture & Conference Center** continued as staff began preparations for opening the new facility in the fall of 2016. The center will fill a major void in the county by providing large flexible space for a wide range of events.

A meeting coordinator has been hired and policies are in place for booking events. The **Pittsboro-Siler City Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB)** worked with other county staff to develop policies and rental agreements, implement event management software and create marketing materials, social media. The CVB is in charge of promoting the facility.

The center will have approximately **10,000 square feet** of flexible event space, much of it designed to be divided into smaller spaces, if needed. The spacious lobby area can host receptions, exhibits and other activities. A large outdoor area also is available for events. The photo above shows the exhibition hall under construction.

The facility will also contain offices for Cooperative Extension, Soil & Water Conservation, Forestry Service and other agricultural agencies.

To find out more, visit www.facebook.com/ChathamMeetings. To get information on booking the center, call 919-545-8393 or email larilee.isley@chathamnc.org

SOLID WASTE & RECYCLING OFFICE

A new Solid Waste & Recycling Main Office has saved on energy costs. New scales were placed closer to the customer drop-off point, a timesaver for those hauling waste and recyclables.



WREN MEMORIAL LIBRARY underwent major interior and exterior renovations, with funding support from the Town of Siler City. The changes have created a more welcoming environment for library users and more space for community programs and gatherings. The renovations included new storage and an updated meeting room with a wireless audio-visual system provided by the county.