



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2025

# MAKING THINGS BETTER

For more than a century, Lee County and Sanford's economic prosperity has been built on a foundation of making. This was true in 1925 when Sanford's Edwards Railway Motor Car Company shipped ten of its twin-engine models to the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad at a price equivalent to \$450K each in today's dollars.

And this is still true in 2025, when Lee County's largest employer, Caterpillar, celebrated its first century of making by inviting key customers and company leaders to its Sanford, NC, facility where Caterpillar's 299D3 XE Compact Track Loader, is officially one of "The Coolest Things Made in North Carolina!"

When SAGA shares Sanford and Lee County's story with site selectors and prospective new large employers, we focus on this proud history of making, but with an important twist; we don't just make things in Sanford and Lee County, we make things better.

And how does SAGA make things better?

SAGA doesn't build water and wastewater infrastructure, generate electricity, or design and build manufacturing facilities. SAGA doesn't pave roads, develop biomanufacturing curricula, or supervise middle school STEM Labs. SAGA doesn't manufacture bricks, or life-saving medicines or cosmetics or fishing rods or the world's finest building construction products. But SAGA's robust array of public and private partners, investors and members do all these things, and they do them far better than the competition.

What SAGA adds to the mix is powerful collaborative leadership. We engage the best and brightest minds among our public and private sector partners. We strategically identify and target complementary new businesses that will enhance the business environment for existing businesses and offer new and better career opportunities for all our citizens. We form consensus around a shared vision for positive economic growth, and we focus everyone's energy on making that vision a reality.

Whether buggies, bricks, beauty or biologics, we don't just make it, we make it better in Sanford and Lee County. And with your continued engagement with SAGA, we will make our next century even better and more prosperous than the last.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Randolph, CEO



Photo courtesy of Lee County Libraries

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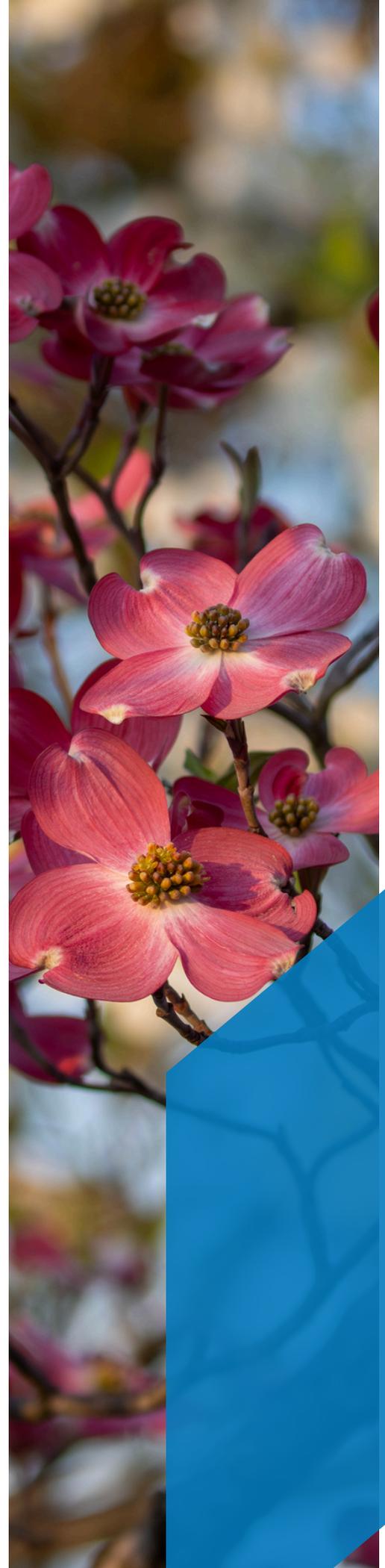
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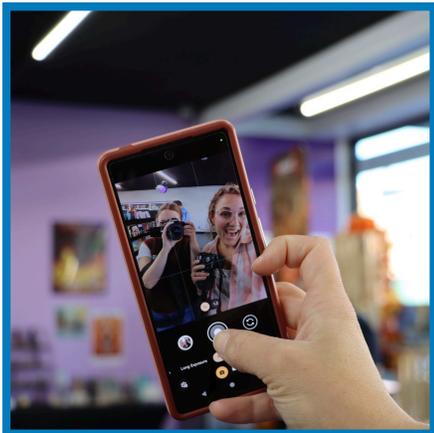


# MARKET LEE COUNTY

Strong relationships are the foundation of successful economic development. This year, we deepened ties with key industry influencers, from site selectors and industrial real estate brokers to project managers at the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC). We engaged directly through top-tier global gatherings like the Industrial Asset Management Council (IAMC) meetings and the Site Selectors Guild Annual Conference, and welcomed EDPNC project managers to Sanford and Lee County for firsthand tours of our community's assets. Our Shell Building was advertised in several prestigious national economic development publications and through direct mailings to site selection professionals, keeping Sanford and Lee County top-of-mind for future projects.

## 2024 - 2025 Marketing Events

- Industrial Asset Management Council (IAMC) Fall Meeting (Quebec)
- IAMC Consultant Dinner
- Carolina Core Housing Summit
- NC Rural Economic Summit
- NCEDA Fall Conference
- Piedmont Triad State of the Region
- SEUS Japan Conference
- TBJ Corridors of Opportunity Lee County
- NCEDA Networking Lunch
- Area Development Consultant Connect (Miami)
- RTA Annual Meeting
- Carolina Core EDPNC Reception
- NCEDA Spring Consultant Conference
- Site Selectors Guild Annual Meeting (Sacramento)
- IAMC Spring Conference (Orlando)
- Research Triangle Regional Partnership Consultant Mission
- RTRP State of the Region
- Select USA Conference (Washington, DC)
- East Carolina University Pharmaceutical Conference
- Carolina Core Consultant Lunch
- NCEDA Annual Meeting
- BIO International Conference (Boston)



The Sanford Area Growth Alliance received excellent media coverage at the regional and local level, including:



This fiscal year, the Shell Building was featured in major economic development publications including:

- AREA DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE
- BUSINESS NC MAGAZINE
- SITE SELECTION MAGAZINE



**900+**  
New LinkedIn Followers (FY 2024 - 2025)

**250+**  
New Instagram Followers (FY 2024 - 2025)

**74%**  
Increase in Chamber Digest Click Through Rates (CTR)

**67%**  
Increase in Instagram Reach (FY 2024 - 2025)

**Social Media Features**

Over the past two years, the Sanford Area Growth Alliance has used our growing social media pages to promote our top-tier Chamber Members (Investor, Chairman, Corporate, and Collaborator levels), Chamber Events, economic development wins, and more. Some of this year's features included:

- Kyowa Kirin's new office opening in Historic Downtown Sanford
- Neil's Apparel & Accents Ribbon Cutting
- BETA's new electric aircraft charging port at Raleigh Exec.



# NEW BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

It is no secret that the most efficient way to expand the local property tax base and reduce the tax burden on individual residents is through the targeted recruitment of modern advanced manufacturing operations.

**The \$530M investment announced in 2024 by Kyowa Kirin is roughly equivalent to 1500 new homes valued at \$350K each.** The public services demanded by Kyowa Kirin are a fraction of those demanded by residential developments, which allows the property taxes generated by Kyowa Kirin's investment to be allocated broadly for the benefit of the entire community.

SAGA competes daily on behalf of Lee County and the City of Sanford with hundreds of other communities for these projects and the dramatic economic benefits they represent. Success of this highly competitive endeavor relies on strong partnerships with a wide array of public and private sector partners.

SAGA's consistent, sustained, long-term marketing and communications strategy have been a critical factor in the **doubling of Lee County's tax base since 2014-2015, from \$4.9B to more than \$9.9B in the current budget year.**



**143**  
Requests for Information (RFIs) received

**83**  
RFIs responses submitted

**51**  
Foreign-based RFIs

**10**  
Client visits

\*\*\* During the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year

## TOP INDUSTRY SECTORS REQUESTING SITE INFORMATION: 2024 - 2025 FISCAL YEAR

Food and Beverage Manufacturing

Battery Manufacturing and Components  
AND

Pharmaceuticals and Life Sciences

Sustainable Energy Components  
Manufacturing and Assembly

Electrical Component Manufacturing

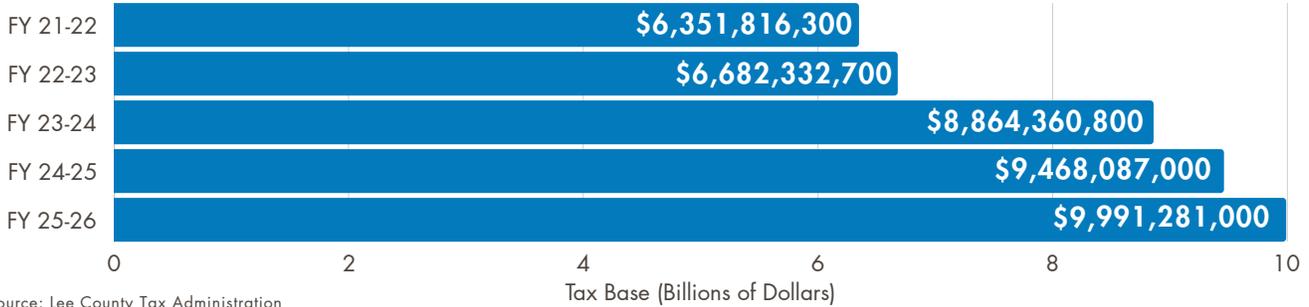
Industrial Machinery Manufacturing  
AND

Construction and Building Materials  
Manufacturing



# RETAIN & EXPAND EXISTING INDUSTRY

## Lee County Tax Base



Lee County's four largest industrial employers represent **10.66%** of the total tax base for 2025.



Cashion Rods was able to secure a Building Reuse Grant with the support of SAGA's Business Retention & Expansion program. SAGA works closely with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) to connect local businesses with resources that support their expansion needs. In partnership with the City of Sanford and Cashion Rods, SAGA actively supported and managed the grant-funded project. The grant assisted Cashion Rods in the upfit of an existing facility, establishing a new, larger home for their manufacturing operations. This investment not only strengthens Cashion's operations but also creates new employment opportunities for our community. Other local businesses that have benefited from Building Reuse Grants with SAGA's support include Seal-It and Caterpillar.



# CONNECTING COMPANIES TO COMMUNITY: HUMAN FACTOR

In partnership with our local chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and sponsored by Adcock Real Estate Services, SAGA's Business Retention and Expansion Director, Crystal Gaddy, created Human Factor—a quarterly professional development series for HR professionals and key department leaders.

Quarterly sessions rotate through 4 key areas:

- **Session 1: Link to the Pipeline – Fall 2024** | North Carolina State University, Campbell University, and Central Carolina Community College shared opportunities for workforce support in industry, including internships, campus career fairs, and industry-focused projects and services.
- **Session 2: Trending – Winter 2025** | Workforce development experts and Lee County education leaders highlighted the importance of staying ahead of workforce dynamics and demonstrated how companies can collaborate with local schools to strengthen the future talent pipeline.
- **Session 3: Community Engagement – Spring 2025** | HR partners explored strategies to increase employee engagement and community impact through presentations from Lee County nonprofits like the Stevens Center.
- **Session 4: Best Practices Tour – Summer 2025** | Coty opened their doors for facility tour designed to foster conversation and share best practices in safety and employee recognition among local employers. Tours sites rotate annually. Astellas was the first host site in 2024.

Ultimately, the Human Factor is not just a program - It is a philosophy. Businesses that embrace it understand that their people are their greatest asset, and by fostering retention, engagement, safety, and workforce development, they create a more resilient path forward for both their organization and the community.



## WORK. PLAY. LIVE. LEE!

SAGA shines a youthful light on Sanford and Lee County by welcoming interns both local and new to North Carolina through NC State University's IES RuralWorks! program.

Launched in 2024, the program connects students interning with Lee County companies to a full-day tour showcasing everything the community has to offer. Interns experience the community's heritage and culture, local dining, recreational opportunities, and diverse housing options, often more affordable than what they've seen elsewhere. With approximately 27% of Lee County's employment in manufacturing, compared to the national average of 8.5%, the program also emphasizes the county's strong industrial base. Facility tours and guided driving tours give students a firsthand look at the wide array of manufacturers, businesses, and entrepreneurial opportunities available here.

The success of Work. Play. Live. Lee! in 2024 carried into summer 2025, when Cashion Rods and Caterpillar hosted tours showcasing the diversity and strength of manufacturing in Lee County. The impact was immediate. Pfizer and Coty soon connected with SAGA to sign up their interns for the experience. For the second full immersion tour of the year, Pentair and Mertek opened their facilities and welcomed more of the future workforce to Lee County.



Regular BRE sessions and continued communication are vital to a company's success. This is true not only during times of growth, but also throughout periods of challenge or transition. Through consistent meetings and a strong working relationship, SAGA supported Hydro Tube Enterprises in its recent expansion plan. Navigating zoning and permitting can be complex, and SAGA's assistance enabled the company to remain focused on its core operations. The expansion includes a 47,900-square-foot addition of warehouse and office space, a critical step in Hydro Tube's ongoing growth.

BRE is just as important when companies face difficulties. When SAGA was notified of the pending closure of Parkdale Mills in Sanford, SAGA BRE activities moved quickly, meeting with the on-site HR manager. Together, they connected affected employees with area companies who were actively hiring. These efforts helped many experienced, reliable workers transition into new opportunities. As the company shared: "More than 60% of our staff are already working [with new employers], many of whom are thanks to your contacts."

SAGA's ability to support local businesses depends on the relationships we cultivate. Ongoing communication and trust form the foundation for timely, effective assistance that helps our local industries adapt, grow, and thrive.



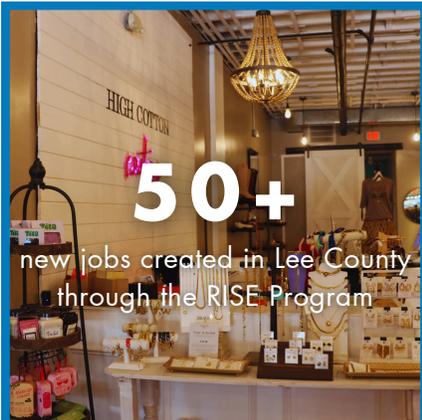
# CHAMPION SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH & EXPANSION

The award-winning RISE program, conducted in partnership with Central Carolina Community College’s Small Business Center and Downtown Sanford, Inc., is designed to empower aspiring entrepreneurs with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to launch successful local businesses in Sanford. Through interactive sessions, participants explore key business concepts, practical strategies, and real-world challenges to prepare for long-term success in a competitive market. The program culminates in a pitch presentation, where each participant shares their business plan with a panel of local business leaders. One standout entrepreneur is awarded a \$5,000 grant to help bring their vision to life. This year, two award winners received grants to help start their new businesses.



16

2025 Spring RISE Program graduates



50+

new jobs created in Lee County through the RISE Program



21

local businesses operated by past RISE Participants

In response to feedback gathered through a Chamber member survey, SAGA launched a four-session *Social Media Master Class Series* to support small business owners with essential marketing tools and strategies. Facilitated by our Communications Coordinator, Campbell Wheby, these monthly sessions provided practical guidance tailored to the real needs of our local business community.



For over 25 years, *Leadership Sanford* has cultivated a diverse pipeline of creative, informed leaders dedicated to shaping the future of our community. This year’s 16 participants had the opportunity to tour local industries, network with our community’s leaders, delve into city and county government affairs, and strengthen their connections with each other on an out-of-town retreat. Whether you’re an employer, nonprofit leader, or an individual eager to make a difference, *Leadership Sanford* offers a pathway to lasting impact, developing the leaders our community needs for tomorrow.

*Chamber Children's Business Fair:* On Saturday, October 12, 2024, the Chamber's 4th Children's Business Fair welcomed 20 young entrepreneurs to downtown Sanford. Held alongside the Sanford Farmers' Market, the free event drew hundreds of visitors who came to support local youth and their businesses.

Thanks to its continued success, the fair has become an annual tradition led by the Sanford Area Growth Alliance. We're excited to host the next fair on Saturday, October 11, 2025, and continue fostering Lee County's future business leaders.



**600+**  
Children's Business Fair attendees

**100**  
2025 Regional Career and Resource Fair Job Seekers

**27**  
Networking Events Held

**12**  
Teams Participating in the 2024 Chamber Clays Tournament



**Enhancing, Supporting, & Advocating**

Our Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Program's 16 Ambassadors volunteered more than 350 hours at Chamber events such as AM Buzz, Business After Hours, Public Policy Luncheons, Chamber Clays, etc.

**Ribbon Cuttings**

This fiscal year, SAGA welcomed 30 new businesses or secondary locations to the community.



SAGA is committed to fostering the next generation of leaders, innovators and makers in Sanford, Broadway and Lee County, working closely with our partners at Lee County Schools (LCS), Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) and other local educational institutions to create clear pathways to meaningful careers here at home. To that end, SAGA’s BRE Director, Crystal Gaddy, and Chamber Director, Susan Gomez, serve on the LCS Strategic Plan Committee and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Board. Lee County Schools included local leaders and SAGA stakeholders in their strategic planning process during a SAGA Public Policy Luncheon. SAGA also continues to lobby the NC General Assembly for critical funding to complete the E. Eugene Moore Center.

**7,165** Unduplicated Annual Enrollment - CCCC (2024 - 2025)



**8,971** Month 1 Membership - LCS (2024 - 2025)



SAGA’s Chamber Members donated 100 bags of supplies to teachers beginning their careers at Lee County Schools.

Thank you to our Chamber Member Businesses for donating, and thank you to our Chamber Ambassadors for helping us assemble the bags!



Our staff continued to foster our strong partnership with Central Carolina Community College through initiatives like our biannual Industry Leaders Breakfasts, forging direct connections between site leaders and workforce training programs, and our first-annual Career and Resource Fair. Held on October 29th at the E. Eugene Moore Center, the event brought together 30 employers and nearly 100 jobseekers and students, creating meaningful career connections and opportunities.

# ADVOCACY FOR QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVES

On November 22, 2024, our community celebrated a major milestone in the Lee County New Main Library Project with an official groundbreaking at the Bragg Street site. Lee County officials, Library staff and other key stakeholders gathered to mark the launch of this transformative project. Over the past year, construction on the building's exterior has made significant progress, driven by the skilled teams at Samet and Sanford Contractors and brought to life through a visionary design by Vines Architecture. Scheduled to open in Spring 2026, the new Main Library will offer a wide range of modern amenities, including:

- A Makerspace for creativity and innovation
- AV Program Room with greenscreen for media projects
- Large multipurpose space with seating for 200 +
- Updated children's section including a sensory play area designed for discovery and fun



The Groundbreaking for the Lee County Athletic Park in November 2023 marked the beginning of an exciting journey for Sanford Contractors and Lee County Government to create a premier outdoor destination for our community. After nearly two years of dedicated work and collaboration, the result is a stunning facility that truly embodies why Lee County is a wonderful place to live, work, and play. The park features a wide range of amenities designed to serve residents of all ages, including four baseball and softball fields, six multipurpose fields, destination playgrounds for children ages 2 to 12, a scenic nature walking trail, gathering spaces, a food truck area, modern locker rooms, and men's, women's, and family restrooms. The Grand Opening of Lee County Athletic Park on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 marks a new chapter of community engagement, health and recreation for local residents and visitors alike.



Photo: Anna Kelly, Sanford Contractors, Inc.

# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT



Sanford and Lee County remain well-positioned for economic development thanks to a robust inventory of industrial parks and our ongoing shell building program. Over the past year, market demand for industrial product has grown significantly, with projects requiring larger sites and greater utility capacity.

## POWER INFRASTRUCTURE:

Reliable and high-quality power remains essential to attracting and retaining industry in Sanford and Lee County. To meet growing demand, Duke Energy is upgrading one of the region's main transmission lines, enhancing both capacity and reliability to better serve new industrial, commercial, and residential developments. Central Electric Membership Corporation is also investing in system upgrades and proactive maintenance to ensure dependable service for its members. Together, Duke Energy and Central Electric remain vital partners in supporting the community's continued growth and economic success.



Photo: Corinn Tucker, Central Electric Membership Corp.

## WATER AND SEWER:

Adequate water and sewer service is equally essential for growth. TriRiver Water is in the midst of a major upgrade to its water treatment plant, significantly expanding system capacity. This project will ensure Sanford and Lee County remain competitive for projects with high water and sewer demands.



# INDUSTRIAL PARKS:



## Central Carolina Enterprise Park (CCEP)

Central Carolina Enterprise Park remains a cornerstone of our industrial growth strategy. As a North Carolina certified site, it offers a premier location for industrial development, strategically positioned between Atlanta and Washington, D.C., and within close proximity to RDU International Airport and the Research Triangle region. Shell Building #3 continues to generate strong interest, with multiple projects including it on their shortlist of potential locations. Looking ahead, the addition of Central Carolina Enterprise Park II will ensure a robust supply of prime industrial sites to support growth for years to come.



## Helix Innovation Park at the Brickyard

At Helix Innovation Park, utility infrastructure is well underway to serve anchor tenant Kyowa Kirin and future occupants. This advanced manufacturing park will provide exceptional utility access and modern amenities for new businesses.

In July, Kyowa Kirin celebrated their “Topping Out” ceremony. This symbolic moment marked the placement of the final steel beam, completing the structural frame of the building, and marking an important milestone in this half billion-dollar project.



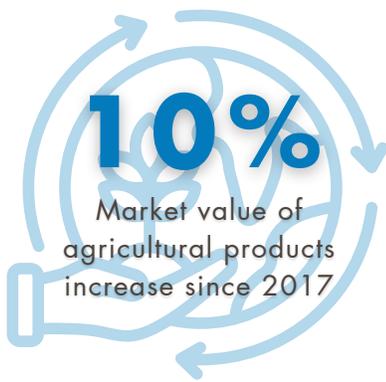
## Regional Crossroads Park

Regional Crossroads Park stands as a premier Class-A industrial development encompassing more than 600 acres in Sanford, NC. The park offers opportunities for up to 3 million sq. ft. of industrial space, with building options ranging from 99,000 sq. ft. to over 1.5 million sq. ft. The park provides exceptional accessibility and convenient links to seaports, airports, and intermodal facilities. Their first tenant, Stier Supply, is a 100,000 sq. ft. facility that marks the beginning of development on more than 630 acres west of Raleigh Exec. Jetport.



# SUPPORT AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

This year, the Lee County Board of Commissioners acknowledged the importance of preserving our community’s agricultural heritage by adopting a new conservation easement policy and updating the Farmland Preservation Ordinance. The new Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Fund reinvests deferred taxes from land converted out of agricultural use to help fund conservation easements, allowing landowners to preserve farmland while maintaining ownership. The updated ordinance also expands eligibility for the Voluntary and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District programs, now including farms under five acres. SAGA’s CEO, Jimmy Randolph, played an active part in the steering committee established by the County to craft this important policy.



The City of Sanford’s Pilgrim’s Agricultural Marketplace is a remarkable story of community collaboration. Originally conceived by leaders from Lee County Cooperative Extension and Downtown Sanford, Inc., and catalyzed by an initial financial investment from Pilgrim’s, the City’s latest investment in the heart of Downtown Sanford will provide a vibrant marketplace and showcase for our rich agricultural heritage for decades to come. Upon opening in spring of 2026, the Marketplace will serve as the permanent home of the Sanford Farmer’s Market. The space will include year-round educational programming, a dedicated event stage, and a state-of-the-art commercial kitchen available to local restaurants and vendors, bringing new opportunities for learning, entrepreneurship, and connection to the heart of our city.

**\$60,064,000**  
Total ag. products sold (up 10% from 2017)

**1,000**  
Average of Sanford Farmers Market attendees each weekend

**264**  
Number of farms in Lee County (up 6% from 2017)

**133**  
New and beginning farmers (up 8% from 2017)

Photo: Jacalyn McAlister; Downtown Sanford, Inc.; Data from 2017 and 2022 US AG Census

# MEET THE STAFF



**JIMMY RANDOLPH**  
**CEO**

Small Business Champion; Proven Community Builder, and Sustainable Development Thought Leader



**TODD TUCKER**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

30 years of Economic Development experience in North Carolina



**SUSAN GOMEZ**  
**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DIRECTOR**

Passionate community leader and Sanford resident of 26 years



**SHINITA WILLIAMS**  
**Membership Services and Data Research**

Sanford native with a decade of Real Estate expertise prior to joining the SAGA team



**CRYSTAL GADDY**  
**BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION DIRECTOR**

Sanford native with years of Manufacturing and Life Science experience



**CAMPBELL WHEBY**  
**COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR**

Sanford native with a background in outreach; expert in Digital Marketing



# SAGA INVESTORS

We gratefully acknowledge the generous financial investment and strategic engagement from SAGA's private sector investors and stakeholders. Thank you!

- Adcock Real Estate Services
- CAPTRUST
- Cargo Control USA
- Carolina Commercial Contractors, LLC
- Carter Bank & Trust
- Caterpillar Inc.
- Central Carolina Enterprise Park, LLC
- Central Carolina Hospital
- Central Electric Membership Corporation
- Cherokee Investment Group
- Community Properties, Inc.
- DMJPS PLLC
- Dominion Energy
- Dossenbach's Finer Furniture & Mattress Center
- Duke Energy
- Enterprise Holdings
- First Bank
- First Citizens Bank
- FirstHealth of the Carolinas
- Forge Investment Group
- Grace Christian School
- Gross Farms
- Helix Ventures LLC
- Lee & Associates
- Lee County Farm Bureau
- Lee Iron & Metal Company, Inc.
- Lee-Moore Capital Company
- Mertek Solutions, Inc.
- Pilgrim's
- Progressive Contracting Company, Inc.
- REAP Holdings, LLC
- Samet Corporation
- Sanford Contractors Inc.
- Sanford Honda
- Sanford Law Group
- Scott Hadley
- Static Control Components, Inc.
- Steel & Pipe Corporation
- STI Polymer, Inc.
- Trinity Capital
- Truist
- West Financial Strategies, Inc.
- Wilkinson Chevrolet Buick GMC
- Wilson, Reives & Doran PLLC

# CHAMBER CHAMPIONS

We acknowledge the members of our Chamber Advisory Board and thank them for the time they dedicate to enhance our programs and events as well as the shared expertise that adds to the growth and success of our Chamber and its membership.

David Foster, Chair

Margaret Robertson, E.D. and Workforce Chair

David Morse, Membership Chair

Josh Payne, Business and Community Advancement Chair

Joshua Barnes

Roberto Montero

Linda Berryman

Laura Powers

Kelley Dubois

Karen Stanley

Gus Gomez

Ed Strickland

Courtney Holcomb

Clinton Weaver

Cindy White

*Thank you to all the businesses who invest in Lee County and the future of businesses in our community.*

## CHAIRMAN LEVEL MEMBERS



A Duke LifePoint Hospital



Duke LifePoint Physician Practices





Thank you to our leadership for your support and continued engagement. Your vision and critical guidance have an impact that will last for generations to come. Together we envision a thriving economic community here in Lee County.

*Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025*

*Officers*

- Richard Oldham, Chair
- Chet Mann, Vice Chair
- Bill Wilson, Secretary
- Drew Haddock, Treasurer
- Jimmy Keen, Past Chair

*Executive Members*

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Donald Andrews | Carter Keller  |
| Kirk Bradley   | Donnie Oldham  |
| David Foster   | Jerry Pedley   |
| Tina Gross     | Rebecca Salmon |
| Kirk Smith     |                |

*Board Members*

- |                  |                      |                  |                    |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Jody Albright    | Alan Dossenbach      | Joni Martin      | Dave Santoemma     |
| Todd Baker       | Dr. Chris Dossenbach | Steve Malloy     | Darren Steadman    |
| Barbara Brothers | Dr. Jim Foster       | Charles Mellette | Hunter Stewart     |
| Byron Buckels    | John Godfrey         | Lisa Minter      | Dr. Bill Stone     |
| Joe Clancy       | Dehra Green          | April Montgomery | Kirk Smith         |
| Dr. Lisa Chapman | Hal Hegwer           | Ella Pantaleon   | Ray Trapp          |
| Ollie Cotterell  | Bob Heuts            | Julian Philpott  | Rich Trogdon       |
| Tom Darden       | Brian McRae          | Jay Rapp         | Sherry-Lynn Womack |

Bob Joyce, Director Emeritus

