



# SANFORD

AREA GROWTH ALLIANCE

Economic Development • Chamber of Commerce

2020

ANNUAL  
REPORT





## The Power of Partnership

For ten years, the Sanford Area Growth Alliance (SAGA) has led the effort to expand the economy of Sanford, Broadway and Lee County and increase the prosperity of all our residents. Originally conceived more than 15 years ago by a committee of innovative private citizens under the auspices of the “Second Century Project,” the economic impacts of this exceptional community partnership have far exceeded the expectations of its founders.

An effort that began as a branding, awareness and marketing campaign to tout our “well-centered” community evolved to encompass a new non-profit entity, a comprehensive economic development strategy, and an ambitious, results-oriented Program of Work. Funded by both public and private stakeholders and executed by a professional staff with dozens of committed volunteers, SAGA’s work is focused on achieving strategic objectives in nine key program areas, all of which drive or directly support positive economic growth.

A well-conceived and carefully implemented strategic plan is a years-long journey, not a destination, and SAGA’s stakeholders understand that. Carefully tracking and analyzing results are critical components of long-term success, and each year, SAGA prepares an Annual Report documenting the impact of its efforts. Recent annual reports have reflected steady increases in the ad valorem tax base, sales tax revenues, average wages and new residential construction.

Those positive trends have accelerated in 2024, and this year’s report endeavors not only to share the basic numbers, but also to present a montage of quotes and images that illuminate the day-to-day effort and activity underpinning the organization’s phenomenal success. In these pages, you’ll see and hear from key stakeholders and revisit some of the year’s most memorable events.

We also take a moment to amplify the news of Kyowa Kirin’s decision to invest up to \$530M to construct the company’s first North American manufacturing facility at Helix Innovation Park at the Brickyard. This is literally a really big deal for our community, the single largest capital investment by a new business in Sanford and Lee County’s history, and well worth celebrating, as are the dozens of smaller but no less significant wins achieved day in and day out through SAGA’s ambitious and effectively executed Program of Work.

Kudos and thank you for your contributions to this extraordinary community partnership. As SAGA stakeholders, partners and investors, we each own our fair measure of SAGA’s success. And as Sanford, Lee County and Broadway residents, we and our families will reap the benefits of the thriving community we’re building together for decades to come.

With Great Pride and Sincere Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy Randolph". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Jimmy Randolph  
CEO

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# Marketing Lee County Through Media New and Old

Over the past fiscal year, the Sanford Area Growth Alliance has put a modern twist on our marketing of Lee County, our member businesses, and ourselves by dramatically improving our online presence, simultaneously expanding our audience and articulating our community vision more clearly through updated branding, graphics, and content.

We've enhanced our storytelling by strongly promoting our Chamber Members, sharing success stories from our events, providing more timely project updates to community stakeholders, and actively highlighting the best places to Work, Live, and Play in Sanford and Lee County.

## Email

SAGA staff has completely revamped the look and feel of our weekly email updates, and subscribers have taken notice. The addition of bright new graphics, banners, interactive polls, and hyperlinks has boosted our open rate to unprecedented levels.

### Since January:

- Over 80,000 people have opened our emails, up 36% from the previous year.

## Social Media

SAGA is now connecting with local stakeholders, critical allies and potential new businesses around the globe via multiple social media channels.

### Since January of 2024:

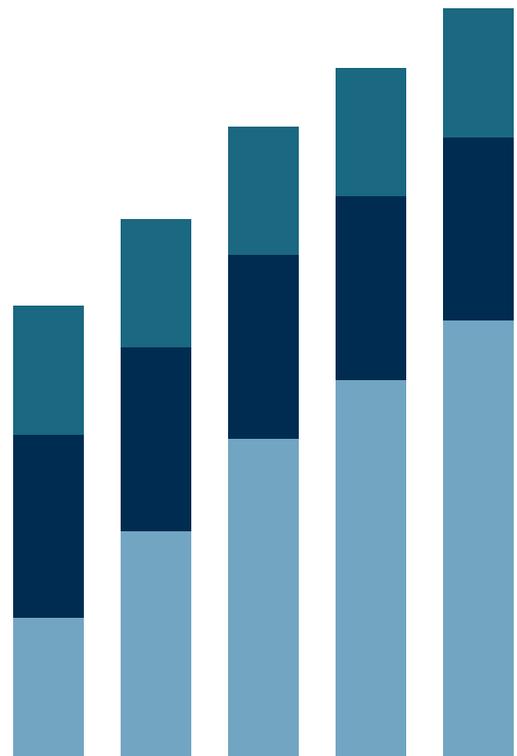
- SAGA's Instagram reach is up 203%.
- Our Facebook channel reached over 2,000 followers, the largest following the page has ever had!
- LinkedIn views are up over 100%, with hundreds of new followers over the course of a few months.

## Member Value Add: Social Media Classes

For businesses wanting to improve their social media presence, SAGA's Communications Coordinator, Campbell Wheby, is hosting a series of Social Media Master Classes for Instagram, Facebook, graphic design software, and more.

Topics include:

- Using Canva to design graphics
- Using Meta and Instagram Analytics
- Creating reels
- ...and more to come.



### Traditional Media

While SAGA's online presence has become a formidable marketing tool, traditional print and other media channels are still important. Ongoing efforts include:

- Radio: Live SAGA updates on WWGP 95.1 FM and 1050 AM weekly
- Collateral: Business After Hours events postcards, RISE and Chamber Membership Flyers
- Window Clings: RISE and Chamber Member window clings in member businesses
- Promotional Banners: SAGA banners in Raleigh Executive Jet Port
- Local Magazines: Lee County Living + FYI Magazine informative articles, membership directories



Earned features and paid advertising in the following publications broadened SAGA's reach to both regional and global audiences this year:

- The Rant
- The Sanford Herald
- WRAL
- WTVD
- Business NC
- Site Selection Magazine
- Business Facilities Magazine
- Triangle Business Journal



## Event Marketing

Economic Development Director, Todd Tucker, leads SAGA's ambitious annual face-to-face marketing efforts in partnership with multiple allied organizations like the Economic Development Partnership of NC (EDPNC), Research Triangle Regional Partnership (RTRP), Carolina Core, North Carolina Economic Development Association (NCEDA) and NC Biotech Center.



This year's in-person marketing efforts by Todd and SAGA CEO

Jimmy Randolph included:

- TBJ Corridors of Opportunity – Lee County – August 24 (Local Showcase)
- EDPNC Chicago Consultant Lunch – September 19 (Site Consultant Connections)
- Central Carolina Enterprise Park Shell Building #3 Open House – October 6 (Local Showcase)
- RTRP EU Delegation Reception – November 14 (Global Connections)
- UNC Economic Development Working Group Presentation – November 29 (Local Showcase)
- RTRP EDPNC European Representatives Dinner – December 4 (Global Connections)
- RTRP Atlanta Consultant Event – December 11 (Site Consultant Connections)
- RTRP German Ambassador Reception – January 18 (Global Connections)
- TBJ Economic Outlook – January 24 (Regional Partners)
- Carolina Core Greenville Consultant Event – February 1 (Site Consultant Connections)
- RTRP Consultant Fly In – February 12 (Local Site Consultant Visits)
- RTRP SKEMA w/ French American Chamber Reception – February 21 (Global Connections)
- Carolina Core New York Consultant Event – March 19-21 (Site Consultant Connections)
- Site Selectors Guild Annual Conference Nashville – April 4 (Site Consultant Connections)
- EDPNC Dallas Consultant Lunch – April 16 (Site Consultant Connections)
- Carolina Core Moving Economy Forward Breakfast – April 24 (Regional Partners)
- RTRP State of the Region Event – May 2 (Regional Partners)
- International Bio Show – June 3-6 (Global Connections)
- EDPNC US Open Event – June 14-17 (Site Consultant Connections)
- EDPNC Select USA Event – June 24-26 (Global Connections)



## Recruiting New Business

Since its inception, SAGA's primary mission has been to increase the prosperity of all Lee County residents. Our most effective mechanism for achieving this mission has been the recruitment of new companies, the generation of more and better career opportunities, dramatic tax base expansion, and significant ripple effects elevating the entire local economy.

SAGA has built strong relationships between the public and private sector, collaborating to enhance the economic prosperity of all through intentional, responsible and sustainable growth. Our partners say it best.

## Partner Perspectives

### Local Government

Mayor Rebecca Wyhof Salmon says our community's economic development success is due to the strength of the partnerships forged by SAGA. She says, "SAGA's dedicated team represents our community's strengths and pulls the right players into the room...to showcase our community to companies who are interested in locating here. SAGA is the linchpin part of business recruitment. In terms of expanding our tax base, we need SAGA." SAGA connects employers with Sanford's dynamic workforce, giving Sanfordians the "first crack" at great jobs, ensuring everyone can be successful.

### Major Private-Sector Employer

Brad Mickey, Executive Director, Manufacturing and Operations Site Head for Astellas Gene Therapies, says Astellas has been "nothing but happy" with their interactions with SAGA. "Working with SAGA, it's easy to see that they take pride in what they do." He believes in the importance of SAGA's Economic Development sector as an industry partner because "they're trying to grow a wonderful area... they've been understanding as we work through the challenges of opening a new site and working through local regulations..."



**Former SAGA Board Chair and Business Owner**

April Montgomery has resided in Sanford for two decades. She has raised three children in Lee County, worked in Lee County, and owns a business in Lee County. April sees the importance of having SAGA in our community and how professional economic development is essential to responsible growth. Her and her husband's business focuses on real estate investment and the rehabilitation of older properties. She says SAGA has improved her business because SAGA has created a more vibrant Downtown, with a constant stream of tenants and foot traffic that helps her renters thrive as well as brings in new services for her tenants. April believes that professional economic development is "identifying what your community is good at, identifying what your potential is, and going out and finding partnerships that will serve your community well. The relationships that last are when one party sees value in the other. I think you need professional economic development to be able to meet with the entities that are looking for locations or expansion and determine if as a community will be a good match."

**Major SAGA Investor**

Dave Santoemma, CEO of Central Carolina Hospital, is new to the SAGA team, but has already seen the value of our program of work during his brief time at the hospital. "Something that was evident to me early on is how successful they have been at bringing jobs to Lee County," says Santoemma. He says what SAGA does is essential to the success of our local healthcare system and other similar entities. "I think we are in a good position to take advantage of the growth and success in our community... as SAGA brings jobs here, the hospital can lean on that success. That's why it's important for us to partner; SAGA's success is our success."

- Lee County's tax base increased to \$8,864,360,800. It increased by \$2,182,028,100 or 32.65% from last year.
- Lee County average wage\* - \$51,683 a 4.05% increase from last year.

*\*Source: NC Dept of Commerce*

TAX BASE	
FY 20-21	\$ 5,923,707,300
FY 21-22	\$6,351,816,300
FY 22-23	\$6,682,332,700
FY 23-24	\$8,864,360,800
FY 24-25	\$9,468,087,000

AVERAGE WAGE IN LEE COUNTY	
2019	\$41567
2020	\$41784
2021	\$42516
2022	\$45743
2023	\$49670
2024	\$51683

*Source: Lee County Tax Administration*

## Ready Sites and Buildings

In the highly competitive world of local economic development, quality inventory of shovel-ready, certified sites and buildings is essential to success. SAGA has worked with Sanford and Lee County and a variety of utility partners and private developers to prepare a diverse array of ready sites and a much-emulated shell building program. This inventory allows us to successfully compete with much larger and wealthier communities for potential projects brought to us by our state-level partners.

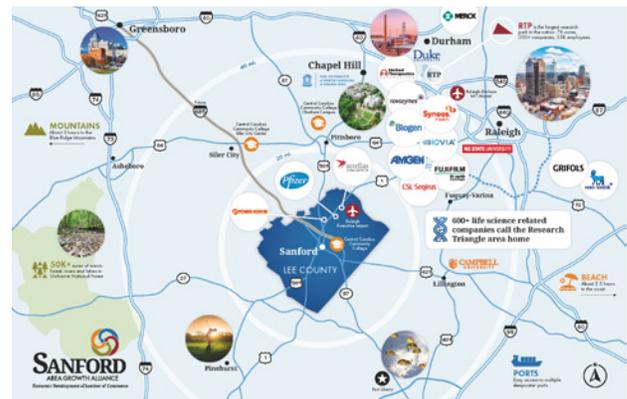
### Between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024:

- 143 Request for Information (RFI) responses
- 86 RFIs submitted for consideration
- 37 Shell Building RFI submissions
- 16 in-person client visits



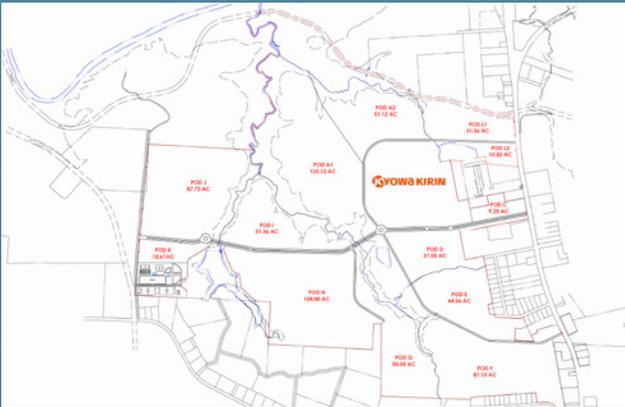
### Central Carolina Enterprise Park and CCEP Shell Building #3

Conceived and developed by a group of local investors in partnership with Sanford and Lee County, Central Carolina Enterprise Park (CCEP) boasts the most-ready industrial sites in Lee County. Its much-emulated Shell Building Program has already generated nearly \$400M in announced new capital investment with two shell buildings and two build-to-suit projects, and a third 117,000 square foot shell building is now ready for upfit in the Park. Quality-built by Samet Corporation and served by abundant water, sewer, natural gas, and electricity on an 18+ acre site, Shell Building #3 qualifies SAGA to submit valid responses for site selection projects that require a building. With easy access to four-lane US Highway 1, and a labor force of 800,000 people within a 45-minute drive, CCEP and Shell Building #3 are critical components of SAGA's current business recruiting and marketing efforts.



### Helix Innovation Park at the Brickyard

Purpose built for advanced manufacturing, life sciences and large-scale economic development projects, 895-acre Helix Innovation Park (HIP) at the Brickyard is Sanford and Lee County's largest industrial park. Assembled and entitled by Helix Ventures and the Trustwell Group in 2022, the Park offers build-to-suit and purchase options on pods ranging in size from 10 acres to more than 150 acres. In February of 2024, Kyowa Kirin announced that it had chosen Sanford, Lee County and HIP at the Brickyard for its first US biologics manufacturing facility. The company will construct a 171,000 square foot facility on approximately 72 acres in the Park. After Kyowa Kirin's purchase, HIP at the Brickyard still has more than 800 acres of prime industrial acreage remaining, qualifying SAGA to submit responses for site selection projects requiring larger lots than CCEP can accommodate.



### Regional Crossroads Park

Located just off the US Highway 1 interchange at Farrell Road, and adjacent to Raleigh Executive Jetport, the 650-acre Regional Crossroads Park, developed by Trinity Capital Partners, can accommodate projects of up to 250 acres in size, with the potential for up to 3 million square feet of Class A industrial space. Offering a variety of deal structures, including substantial build-to-suit capabilities, the developers are actively partnering with SAGA to market the Park and identify appropriate end-users. The site has access to rail and could be attractive to tenants needing immediate access to a general aviation airport like Raleigh Exec, further diversifying Lee County's inventory of available sites and qualifying SAGA to compete for site selection projects with highly specific logistics needs.



TriRiver Water was created following the merger of the City of Sanford and the Town of Pittsboro water and wastewater services. The new TriRiver Water name and logo represent the three rivers that meet in the Cape Fear River Basin, where they become the raw water source for the region. With the combined water services resources from the merger, TriRiver Water is able to efficiently serve a growing customer base while also making necessary infrastructure improvements to meet regional water and wastewater needs for years to come. Future plans as part of the Town of Pittsboro and City of Sanford water and wastewater services collaboration include expanding water capacity from 12 million to 30 million gallons per day to serve the growing region.

Learn more at [tririverwater.com](https://tririverwater.com).

## A Perfect Fit – Kyowa Kirin

The effort required to successfully win a site selection contest has never been greater than it is today. Kyowa Kirin's investment of up to \$530 million is the largest single new business recruiting "win" in our community's long history of economic development success. SAGA's recent successful recruitment of Kyowa Kirin and its new, state-of-the-art biologics drug substance manufacturing facility is an excellent case study in what it takes to succeed in today's hyper-competitive global site selection processes.

Before investing the hundreds of millions of dollars required to establish a major manufacturing facility in a new location, successful companies carefully evaluate dozens of risk factors, methodically narrowing the list of potential sites from hundreds to dozens to perhaps three or four short-listed sites in the preferred geographic region. Short-listed sites generally all have good dirt, ready access to vital infrastructure, a robust talent pipeline and reliable transportation networks, as well as a competitive cost structure. So how is a short list ultimately reduced to the final chosen site?

Executive Vice President of Supply Chain Operations Kyowa Kirin North America Paul Testa, M.S., M.B.A., states, “As we embarked on our journey to expand our global manufacturing presence in North America, we sought to find a community that embodies our values of teamwork, trust, and commitment to enhancing lives. We found these values in Sanford. Since our first meetings here, we have been embraced with hospitality, warmth, and an enthusiastic reception to our plans to build a state-of-the-art biologics manufacturing facility at Helix Innovation Park at the Brickyard. SAGA has been an invaluable partner in facilitating our needs, from connecting us with local resources to introducing us to civic, community, and industry leaders as well as academic partners who will be instrumental to our collective success. The knowledge, counsel, and support from SAGA has given us a strong start and has enabled us to become a valued member of the Sanford community even before we have begun to build our facility. Many thanks to SAGA for its focus on growing a strong, engaged, and prosperous community.”

Over the course of many months and a half-dozen virtual and in-person site visits, face-to-face conversations with Mayor Rebecca Salmon, Dr. Lisa Chapman, the Helix Team and other key members of the SAGA recruiting team solidified Kyowa Kirin’s decision to invest up to \$530 million in Sanford and Lee County. While other communities offered comparable answers to many of the key criteria listed above, SAGA’s team effectively conveyed the sense of harmony and teamwork which is an integral part of Kyowa Kirin’s long-standing culture of success.

In that spirit of harmony and teamwork, SAGA’s BRE Manager, Crystal Gaddy, is working daily with Kyowa Kirin’s growing Sanford team, nourishing the roots of a partnership that will ensure many decades of success for this newest contributor to Sanford and Lee County’s proud manufacturing heritage.



Among the community assets which will support Kyowa Kirin’s team in the first phase of their Sanford transition is CCC’s Biotechnology Training Center, located at the E. Eugene Moore Manufacturing and Biotech Solutions Center on the Lee Main Campus.

The 9,908 square foot building was designed with input from local bio-manufacturing employers and includes two BioWork laboratories, a general use laboratory, lab preparation space, a clean room, two equipment laboratories, lab storage, and four offices.



# Retaining and Expanding Existing Industry

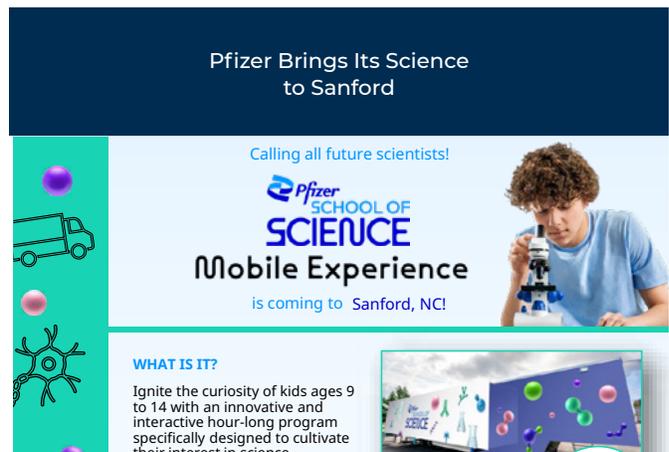
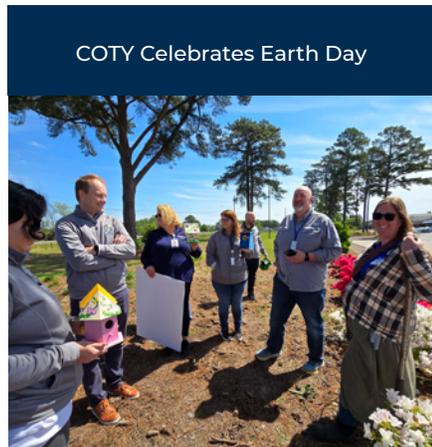
Business retention and expansion is a fundamental part of economic development. With approximately 80% of all new investment and job creation generated by existing industries, it is critical to provide the support necessary to ensure the health and growth of local companies. Ensuring accessibility for businesses to resources and a favorable business climate drives job creation, economic stability, and community prosperity.

SAGA’s commitment to the success of existing businesses is reflected in its creation of a full-time Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Manager. In her first year in the role, Crystal Gaddy has solidified the connections between key business leaders and the robust business support network available through SAGA and the Chamber.

***Her approach is grounded in three foundational principles: Recognition, Relationships, and Roots.***

## SAGA Provides Recognition

Showcasing business efforts and success fosters a positive relationship between business owners and the community. This recognition celebrates current operations and encourages further growth and investment. It also increases visibility, attracts new customers, and inspires potential partnerships.



EMPLOYMENT RANGE	COMPANIES IN THE RANGE
250-499	9
100-249	8
500-999	2
1000+	2
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>

Lee County is home to 21 private sector employers with 100 or more employees, most of them in manufacturing, and their impact on the community extends far beyond just property taxes and employee payroll. SAGA works with each of them to increase community engagement and amplify their impact on the community’s overall quality of life.

**SAGA Fosters Relationships**

Strong relationships build trust and open lines of communication, which are essential for understanding and addressing the needs of existing employers. Through individual face-to-face meetings and larger group gatherings around topics of common concern, SAGA’s BRE program has strengthened existing relationships and built new ones. This results in greater collaboration with industry on community projects, economic initiatives, and problem solving. This informal support network complements the existing programs of the Chamber and provides businesses with resources, advice, and advocacy when needed.

SAGA’s prompt follow-up on immediate concerns and periodic check-in sessions with existing employers are key to maintaining trust and provide vital two-way conduits for communication when needed by Sanford and Lee County leaders or other public entities.

SAGA Hosts Industry Leaders Breakfast to Explore Use of AI in Manufacturing



SAGA Facilitates “Human Factor Series” at Central Carolina Hospital



SAGA Coordinates Rodeco Volunteer Engagement with Warren Williams School



SAGA, Mertek and Lee County Businesses Participate in Campbell University Engineering Career Fair



### SAGA Understands Roots

Understanding the roots of a business helps identify the key factors that contribute to its longevity and success. By targeting the root causes of business challenges, SAGA's BRE program can provide more effective support. Growth and expansion are investments in the community based on a forecast of success with strong foundations of strategic planning, market analysis, and a supportive local environment. Businesses with deep roots and support within a community are more likely to contribute to local economic stability and resilience, as they have a vested interest in the community's success.

SAGA's stronger relationships and deepened understanding of existing industry needs generated a wide array of significant impacts this year:

### Workforce Development

**National Manufacturing Day** - More than 500 students from a four-county region explored potential careers with more than thirty area manufacturers at Lee County's Annual Manufacturing Day Event hosted by CCCC at the E. Eugene Moore Manufacturing and Biotech Solutions Center.

**Engineering Internships** - SAGA and NC State's Rural Internship Program joined forces to give 11 NC State College of Engineering interns a tour of Sanford and Lee County's diverse manufacturing culture, showing them how they can **WORK, PLAY, LIVE, LEE!** Crystal Gaddy, alongside retired Economic Developer Bob Joyce, provided historical background and highlighted Sanford's success in attracting manufacturing giants like Caterpillar, Inc. and Pfizer. They wove a compelling narrative about the industries that have thrived in Sanford, a trend that has continued since Sanford's inception due to its advantageous workforce, geography, and community support.

**Apprenticeships** - Caterpillar's award-winning apprenticeship program has garnered national attention for Lee County and SAGA. "We want to see very successful companies like Caterpillar grow even more, so being able to partner with Central Carolina Community College and with the Lee County School System and a successful business... we are just proud to have a seat at the table," says Dr. Chris Dossenbach, Superintendent of Lee County Schools.



NC State Engineering Students Tour Local Industry



CAT Capitalizes on Local Apprenticeships

### Business to Business Connections

SAGA coordinated a “Source Local” event at Wind Solutions, LLC which showcased local supplier capabilities for engineers from other large Lee County employers and potential customers.



### Industry Expansions

Bharat Forge Aluminum, USA added an additional 149K square feet to its existing facility, bringing it closer to fulfilling its total announced hiring and investment goals in Sanford and Lee County.

Caterpillar Sanford purchased and completed an upfit of an existing industrial building, with the purchase of real estate, machinery, and equipment of up to **\$56,000,000**.



## Championing Small Business Growth and Expansion

SAGA's Chamber Division supports Lee County's economic development mission in many ways. Its power derives from a broad and diverse community of experienced individuals and the collective strength in numbers of the entire business community. Chamber membership dues fund a variety of programs such as Leadership Sanford and RISE, as well as premier networking events like AM Buzz, and the Chamber's Public Policy Luncheon is the community's number one forum for discussion of public policy issues impacting the business community.



### John Ramsperger on PPL and the Chamber as “Voice of Business”

One of the first things John Ramsperger did when he became a Sanfordian was join the Chamber of Commerce. Twenty-five years later, John is still a dedicated Chamber member who greets every event attendee with a smile and a coy introduction (“John Ramsperger: Owner of Sanford Real Estate and All-Around Swell Guy”).

John is a familiar face around town for many reasons, but he cites the Chamber as being one of his main sources of connection to our community and its residents. “I put a lot into it, but I get even more out of it.” John’s connections with other business owners and Chamber Members inform his long-standing role as emcee of the Chamber’s monthly Public Policy Luncheon and make him and the Chamber more effective advocates for businesses of every size.



### Kelly Hazen Klug on AM Buzz and the Power of Connection

Kelly Hazen Klug, now Grants Director at Central Carolina Community College, started her tenure with the Chamber of Commerce 18 years ago as a small business owner.

Prior to moving to Sanford, she knew that getting involved with the Chamber would be a gateway into community involvement. After giving Bob Joyce a call about potential opportunities, she stayed, serving on various Boards, representing the Chamber as an Ambassador and chairing the Chamber Board, helping ease the organization’s transition to SAGA, and ultimately pioneering one of the Chamber’s signature events, AM Buzz.

To this day, you can find Kelly sipping her coffee bright and early, asking event attendees incredibly creative discussion questions (some she comes up with based on research regarding the business hosting the event, some she finds online, and some she creates on the spot). Kelly credits the connections she made through the Chamber with cementing her former consulting business’ place in Sanford, and those connections continue to benefit her in her current role.



**Margaret Murchison on A Lifetime of Chamber Involvement**

Margaret Murchison is a pillar of civic engagement in Sanford, Broadway, and Lee County. Whether you have heard her voice over the radio waves of WFJA/WWGP or seen her at the meeting of a local non-profit board, you know Margaret and the heart she has for our town. A stalwart of the Chamber and its support for small businesses, Margaret was a vocal leader and faithful participant in Chamber events long before SAGA became what it is today. Her involvement was spurred by former Chamber leader and community giant, Hal Siler, who shared business news on her radio programs, sometimes even “providing enough material for five or six news stories” at a time.

Since then, Margaret’s participation has not wavered. She believes that the Chamber and SAGA are such valuable assets to Sanford that people “find themselves putting aside time for Chamber events” once they attend them. Margaret believes that AM Buzz and Public Policy Luncheons give a voice to those who formerly believed that change cannot be accomplished within our community, thus spurring them to further their involvement to other boards, committees, and community service projects.



## Chamber Involvement by the Numbers

Chamber Membership

511

Ambassador Hours

301

Ribbon Cuttings

23

Total Events

51



## Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders

A sound, strategic plan is important to successful economic development, but without highly motivated, visionary leadership, SAGA could never have achieved its current level of success. Good leaders are essential in bringing positive change to their respective communities, and SAGA is committed to educating and developing the leaders of tomorrow today.

### Leadership Sanford

Leadership Sanford is a rigorous 10-month program led by Chamber Director Susan Gomez. Each monthly session features subject matter experts representing every sector of business and community life. Participants tour various local businesses and facilities, explore their individual leadership styles, and foster camaraderie through team-building activities and shared meals. Program highlights include an overnight Leadership Retreat and a formal graduation ceremony.

Our 2023-2024 Leadership Sanford Cohort has gone above and beyond in their involvement in the program, their enthusiasm to learn, and in the way they represent Sanford and Lee County.

#### Successful graduates included:

- Paola Adame, Business Strategy Manager at Pfizer
- Crystal Gaddy, Business Retention & Expansion Manager at Sanford Area Growth Alliance
- Courtney Holcomb, HR Manager at Bharat Forge
- Chrishinda Horton, Owner and Broker of Horton Realty
- Emily Jordan, Customer Service Representative at Raleigh Executive Jetport
- Joshua Lucas, Quality Assurance Senior Associate at Pfizer
- Yahaira Matos, Complex HR Manager at Pilgrims
- Garrison Ogdenski, Owner of GO Electric
- Ricky Secor, Director of Federal Programs for Lee County Schools
- Ed Strickland, Owner and President of Deep River Sporting Clays and Shooting School
- Todd Tucker, Economic Development Director at Sanford Area Growth Alliance
- Wallie Tyler, Site Health, Safety & Environmental Manager at Pfizer

## Membership Has Its Privileges

Formal leadership training has great value, but there is no substitute for the lessons learned while operating your own small business. Sanford, Broadway, and Lee County are home to hundreds of successful small businesses, and the Chamber is proud to promote, celebrate, and bolster their work! This year, dozens of Chamber Members at the Collaborator, Corporate, and Chairman levels have been featured in Member Spotlights, social media posts highlighting their businesses.

In addition to Member Spotlights, Chamber Members have been celebrated online through Chamber visits, RISE features, National Celebrations, and more.

These posts have generated significant response via multiple platforms.

- A Toda Madre's 1-Year Anniversary reel received over 2,000 views on Instagram
- Brick City Boba's reel feature garnered 1,586 views on Instagram
- Carolina Commercial Contractors' Home2Suites and Fire Station Construction post received about 4,500 impressions on Facebook.



## Entrepreneurial Development

SAGA recognizes the critical importance of supporting home-grown talent and encouraging innovation among existing businesses to cultivate a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem. Ongoing SAGA programs such as RISE and the Chamber Children's Business Fair are designed to educate and empower individual entrepreneurs while gradually building the foundation for a fully-fledged entrepreneurial community.



### Real Investments in Sanford Entrepreneurs (RISE Program)

RISE, or Real Investments in Sanford Entrepreneurs, began in 2020 with a partnership between the SAGA, Central Carolina Community College Small Business Center, and Downtown Sanford Inc. The goal of RISE is to guide participants along their journey of owning and operating small businesses that fill gaps in Sanford and Lee County while also filling vacant storefronts. This free program has contributed significantly to growth in Downtown Sanford and Jonesboro. The curriculum covers topics from taxes and insurance to marketing and creating a solid business plan, with two winners receiving grants for lease payments in a vacant Downtown space at the end of the nine-week program. The Spring 2024 Grant Recipients, Sheena Morrill and Michelle Bujnowski, have already opened their businesses in Lee County.

Sheena Morrill's business, Channeled Energies, now occupies a previously vacant space in Historic Downtown Jonesboro. She was encouraged by the "enthusiasm" of instructors in the program, and her biggest takeaway was learning to identify future customers and market her business to the ideal client. Within weeks of opening, she was booked for months ahead.





Michelle Bujnowski said RISE made learning about the daunting process of bookkeeping “exciting” and straightforward. Networking with other aspiring entrepreneurs was also a highly valuable part of the program.

Including this year’s winners, the RISE program has spawned 21 successful business start-ups, and more than 50 new local jobs have been created through the program.

**Did you know the following businesses are RISE participants?**



**Children’s Business Fair**

On Saturday, October 21, 2023, SAGA hosted the fourth annual Chamber Children’s Business Fair. The event generated a record level of participation with 28 young entrepreneurs, 11 of those returning from previous years, and over 600 patrons in attendance.

Based on a model developed by Acton Academy and the Acton School of Business, the Business Fair provides a fun, exciting and supportive venue for young Lee County residents to flex their entrepreneurial muscles. Prior to the Fair, Lee County’s aspiring young business owners must create a product or service, build a brand identity, and develop a marketing strategy. Then, on a cold October morning in Downtown Sanford, these budding entrepreneurs opened their businesses for the one-day marketplace and competed with dozens of other start-ups to earn customers and cash.

The Chamber’s Children’s Business Fair has grown each year, and it is now a well-established component of our entrepreneurial education efforts. Mark your calendars now for your chance to support our talented and business-savvy young entrepreneurs at our next Children’s Business Fair on Saturday, October 12, 2024.



## Agricultural Development

In the eyes of some rural farmers, economic development doesn't often balance industry with agriculture. According to County Extension Director Bill Stone, SAGA's collaboration with the Lee County Cooperative Extension and other similar groups proves that, in our community, the opposite is true.

"I'm am grateful to [CEO Jimmy Randolph] and the SAGA team for looking for ways to engage agriculture," says Dr. Stone. "I think we have developed how to advance and expand our partnership... as we get into more in-depth conversations about land use in Lee County and farmland preservation, I think we're also understanding how agriculture and Economic Development are not at odds. We can figure out how we can more effectively maintain what makes this county so special."

Dr. Stone is correct. While traditional commercial ag production, agri-tourism and a nascent AgTech industry sector contribute directly and significantly to Lee County's tax base and GDP, collaborative initiatives like the Sanford Agricultural Marketplace and Bee City USA affiliation greatly enhance our quality of place.



### Agricultural Marketplace

SAGA worked with Pilgrim's, Lee County Cooperative Extension, DSI, Inc., the City of Sanford, and Lee County to launch the Downtown Agricultural Marketplace initiative that will soon take its place as a hub of local food and other ag-related activity in Sanford's Historic Downtown. This initiative was inspired by the dramatic growth of Sanford's Farmer's Market, which attracts over 1,000 visitors each weekend.

The Market space will also include:

- A shared use commercial kitchen
- Classrooms for educational programming
- Outdoor gathering areas
- A performance space



### Bee City USA

In October of 2023, the City of Sanford was deemed a Bee City USA Affiliate for its work in preserving area pollinators. As part of this initiative, the City has installed bee hives at the Sanford Municipal Center. On May 4th of this year, area residents joined City staff, Lee County Master Gardeners, beekeepers, and other volunteers for a Pollinator Field Day, where they could observe the progress of the hives and learn more about the ecology of native pollinators, honeybees, and native plants. In addition to the critical importance of pollinators to successful agricultural production, SAGA's stakeholders understand the importance of environmental conservation, which also matters to prospective residents and businesses alike.



## Quality of Life

### Investing in Ourselves

SAGA continues to support and advocate for investment in community amenities, several of which have seen significant progress this year. Projects like the Lee County Athletic Park and the new Lee County Library not only add weight to SAGA's recruiting pitch for new large employers, but these amenities significantly enhance the quality of life for existing residents and their families.

### The New Lee County Library

The Lee County Library is a \$24 million project to be built adjacent to OT Sloan Park. The building is set to begin construction soon and to open in late 2025. The 33,400 square foot space will be home to:

- A large multi-purpose room
- Makerspace/STEAM lab
- Meeting and study rooms
- A large children's area complete with a dedicated programming room
- A teen area with gaming and study spaces
- Display spaces for local art and library materials





### Lee County Athletic Park

Lee County staff and other community leaders celebrated the groundbreaking for the Lee County Athletic Park in December, and construction is proceeding well ahead of schedule, with an anticipated opening in summer of 2025.

LCAP will be home to:

- Three 225-foot youth baseball fields
- A full-sized baseball field
- Two full size synthetic turf multi use fields
- Walking trails

### Increasing Public Awareness

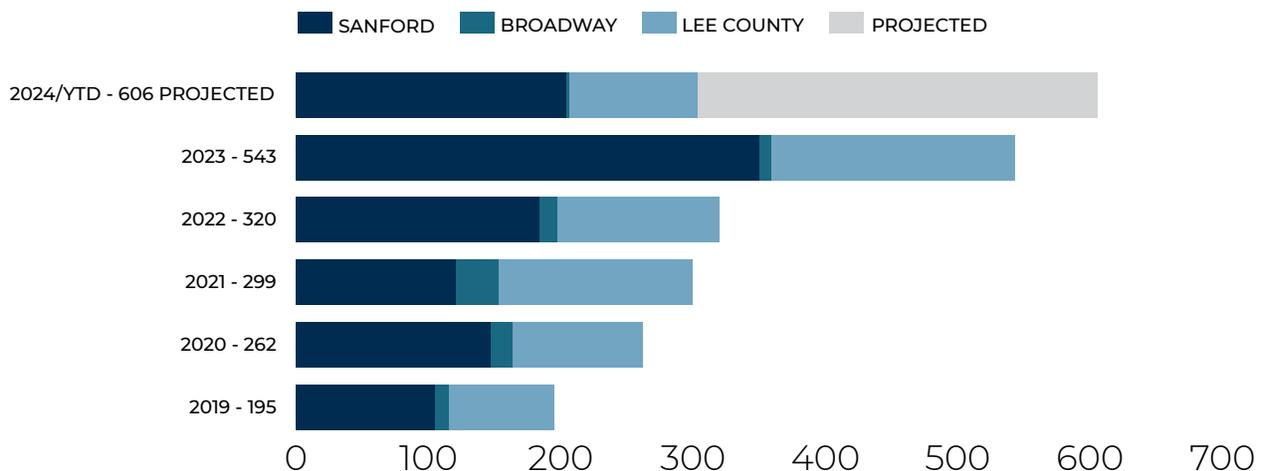
SAGA’s ever-expanding reach on all our social media channels allows us to promote these enhancements farther and wider than ever before, increasing residents’ awareness of publicly funded community amenities and promoting Chamber member businesses alike.

#### Some of our most popular posts this year featured:

- Pickleball action at OT Sloan and Kiwanis Children’s Park
- Tour of Lee County’s myriad local parks conducted by SJ Gaddy, son of our Business Retention and Expansion Manager, Crystal Gaddy
- A “Cookie Crawl,” celebrating National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day by sampling the treats at Chamber Member restaurants and bakeries.

## Residential Development

Affordable housing across the entire family income spectrum is integral to every community’s quality of life, and SAGA’s public and private stakeholders have actively worked to address this critical aspect of our community infrastructure. Single family residential construction starts are a key metric, and they continue to trend strongly in a positive direction:



## SAGA INVESTORS

We gratefully acknowledge the generous financial investment and strategic engagement from our private sector investors and stakeholders, as well as Lee County, the City of Sanford, and the Town of Broadway.

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 Leadership

**Our organization would not be complete without our Chamber Board and Members**

Thank you to the following members of our Chamber Advisory Board for the time they spend advancing our mission.

**Margaret Robertson, Chair**  
**David Foster, Vice Chair**

**Brenda Aguirre**  
**Linda Berryman**  
**Kelly Dubois**  
**Gus Gomez**  
**Amanda Jurisich**

**Roberto Montero**  
**David Morse**  
**Ryan Murphy**  
**Josh Payne**  
**Laura Powers**

**Karen Stanley**  
**Sarah Staut**  
**Ed Strickland**  
**Clinton Weaver**  
**Cindy White**

Thank you to all of our Chamber Member Businesses for their work in Lee County and beyond.

## Chairman Level Members



# SAGA Board of Directors

## Officers

**Jimmy Keen\* Chair**

**Richard Oldham\* Vice Chair**

**Bill Wilson\* Secretary**

**Charlie Welborn\* Treasurer**

**April Montgomery\* Immediate Past Chair**

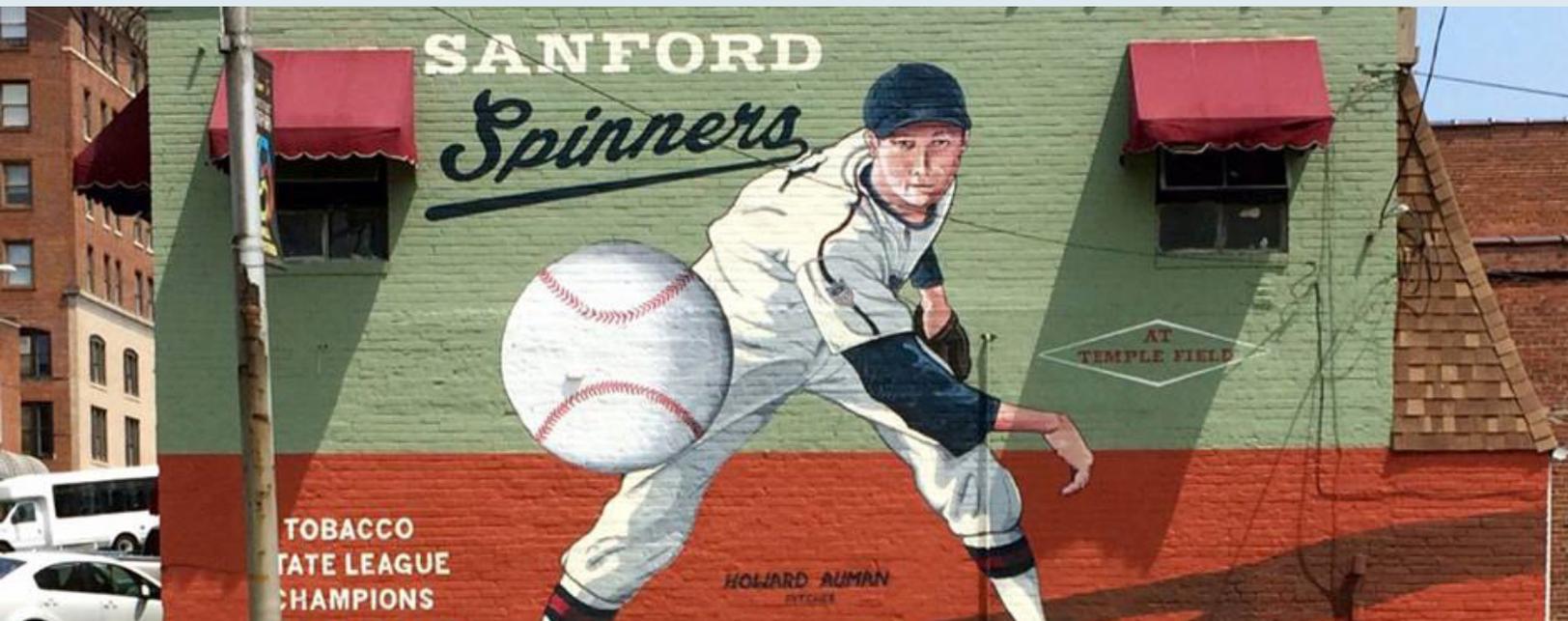
Jody Albright  
 Donald Andrews\*  
 Todd Baker  
 Kirk Bradley\*  
 Barbara Brothers\*\*  
 Byron Buckels  
 Bill Carver\*  
 Lisa Chapman\*\*  
 Joe Clancy  
 Ollie Cotterell  
 Tom Darden  
 Eric Davidson\*\*  
 Alan Dossenbach  
 Chris Dossenbach\*\*  
 Jim Foster

John Godfrey\*\*  
 Tina Gross\*  
 Scott Hadley  
 Hal Hegwer\*\*  
 Bob Heuts\*\*  
 Jimmy Keen\*  
 Carter Keller\*  
 Steve Malloy  
 Chet Mann  
 Joni Martin  
 Brian McRae  
 Charles Mellette  
 Lisa Minter\*\*  
 April Montgomery\*  
 Richard Oldham\*

Donnie Oldham\*  
 Ella Pantaleon  
 Jerry Pedley\*  
 Julian Philpott  
 Jay Rapp  
 Margaret Robertson\*  
 Rebecca Salmon\*  
 Dave Santoemma  
 Kirk Smith\*  
 Bill Stone\*\*  
 Ray Trapp  
 Rich Trogdon  
 Charlie Welborn\*  
 Bill Wilson\*

*\*Executive Committee*

*\*\* Ex-officio Member*





## Meet The Team



**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 25 years



**Shinita Williams**  
**Membership Services and Data Research**

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



**Crystal Gaddy**  
**Business Retention and Expansion Director**

Sanford native with years of Manufacturing and Life Science experience



**Campbell Wheby**  
**Communications Coordinator**

Sanford native and expert in Digital Marketing

**Kudos to SAGA's award-winning and recently retired Economic Development Director, Bob Joyce. Bob will forever be a part of SAGA's legacy of positive economic growth.**