

ANNUAL REPORT 2026



AEROPLANE VIEW OF SANFORD, N.C. 1926



Train Passing By Moore Street 1933



Depot School Field Trip 1956



Lee Brick Company 1988



Frontier Spinning 2001


SANFORD
AREA GROWTH ALLIANCE
Economic Development • Chamber of Commerce

**A PORTFOLIO
OF PROGRESS**

A PORTFOLIO OF PROGRESS

Dear **SAGA** Community,

Each year, for nearly thirty years, the annual Leadership Sanford program has begun with a deep dive into local history at the Railroad House Museum. The theme of the day is simple: The lessons of the past are a vital asset for leaders seeking to successfully navigate the challenges of the future.

Each Leadership participant receives a copy of the pictorial history of Sanford and Lee County authored by local historians Jimmy Haire and W.W. Seymour Jr. That book, which tells the century-long story of a thriving regional center of commerce, employment and community using images from vintage postcards and historical photos, served as inspiration for SAGA's 2026 Annual Report: A Portfolio of Progress. And what a Portfolio it is! In the twelve years since SAGA formally launched its visionary economic development program, this exceptional community partnership has yielded phenomenal results.

The private sector has announced more than 3 billion dollars in new capital investment and created nearly 4000 new jobs, average wages have increased by more than 50%, and Lee County's tax base has doubled since 2016. The commercial, retail and residential sectors have grown dramatically as well. Local sales tax revenues have more than doubled, and record numbers of quality residential units are currently under construction around Lee County.

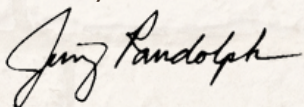
The far-reaching effects of a dynamic and growing local economy are reflected in rising property values, which, along with the expanded tax base, yield lower property tax rates for city and county residents. In fact, the combined city/county property tax rate has declined by more than \$0.20 since 2018. Even while lowering tax rates, local leaders and area residents have leveraged the community's strong financial position to make generational investments in ourselves. Lee County Athletic Park, Pilgrim's Sanford Agricultural Marketplace, and the new Lee County Library Main Branch dramatically enhance the quality of place for residents, while attracting thousands of visitors and new customers for local small businesses.

With all these positive metrics, it might be tempting to relax our efforts for a bit, but the visionary community leaders who founded SAGA remember the lessons of the past. They remember the days of rising tax rates, 14% unemployment, and hundreds of lost jobs annually. They remember the days when the phones weren't ringing, industrial buildings stood empty and dozens of houses were languishing in the MLS listings.

Those leaders understand that vibrant, successful, livable communities must continue to grow in order to thrive, and they also understand that sustaining positive growth requires tireless and never-ending effort. In other words, the work of SAGA is never done.

Years of foresight and deliberate, strategic effort by SAGA stakeholders, investors and staff have brought us to this moment. This is the growth we envisioned, the growth we planned and prepared for. Meaningful collaboration, long-term planning, innovative thinking and strategic reinvestment are the hallmarks of our community's recent success, and with your continued partnership and investment, our mutual portfolio of progress will continue to grow.

Sincerely,

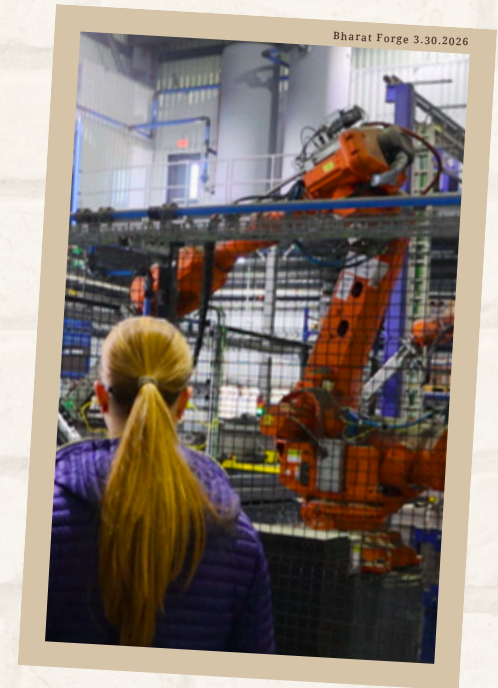


Jimmy Randolph, CEO



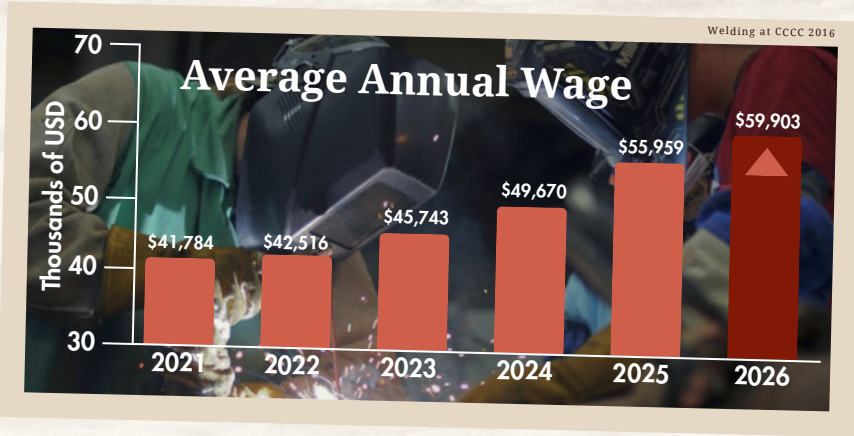
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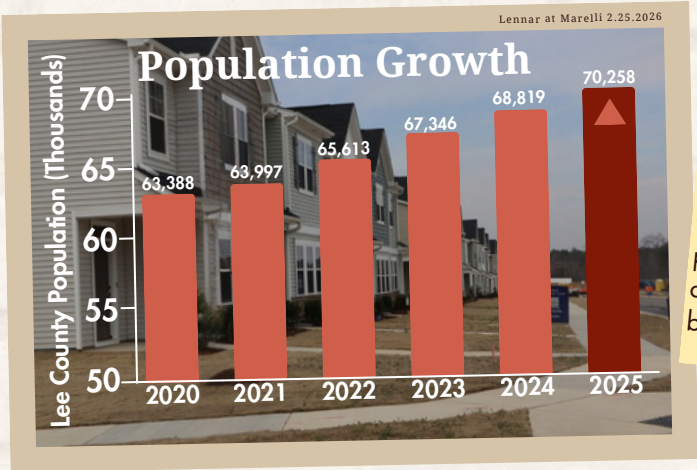
GROWING STRONGER

Sanford, Broadway, and Lee County continue to improve on key metrics of economic strength; metrics that reflect a higher quality of life for residents, more prosperity for businesses, and a more fiscally sound local government.



60
Consecutive
Months Under
4.5%
Unemployment

**Longest
Recorded
Streak in
Lee
County
History**



Fun Fact

The combined City and County property tax rate has fallen 21¢ per \$100 since 2019, driven by strong new business investment.

Recent Major Investments

Investor	Investment (\$)	New Jobs
KALYANI	\$179 million	460 Jobs
astellas	\$109 million	210 Jobs
STIER SUPPLY COMPANY	\$12.8 million	40 Jobs
Liberty TIRE RECYCLING	\$12 million	30 Jobs
Gyowa KIRIN NORTH AMERICA	\$530 million	102 Jobs
Pfizer	\$500 million	300 Jobs
CAT	\$71 million	40+ Jobs
STERIS	\$600 million	335+ Jobs

\$2.014 Billion Total Investment

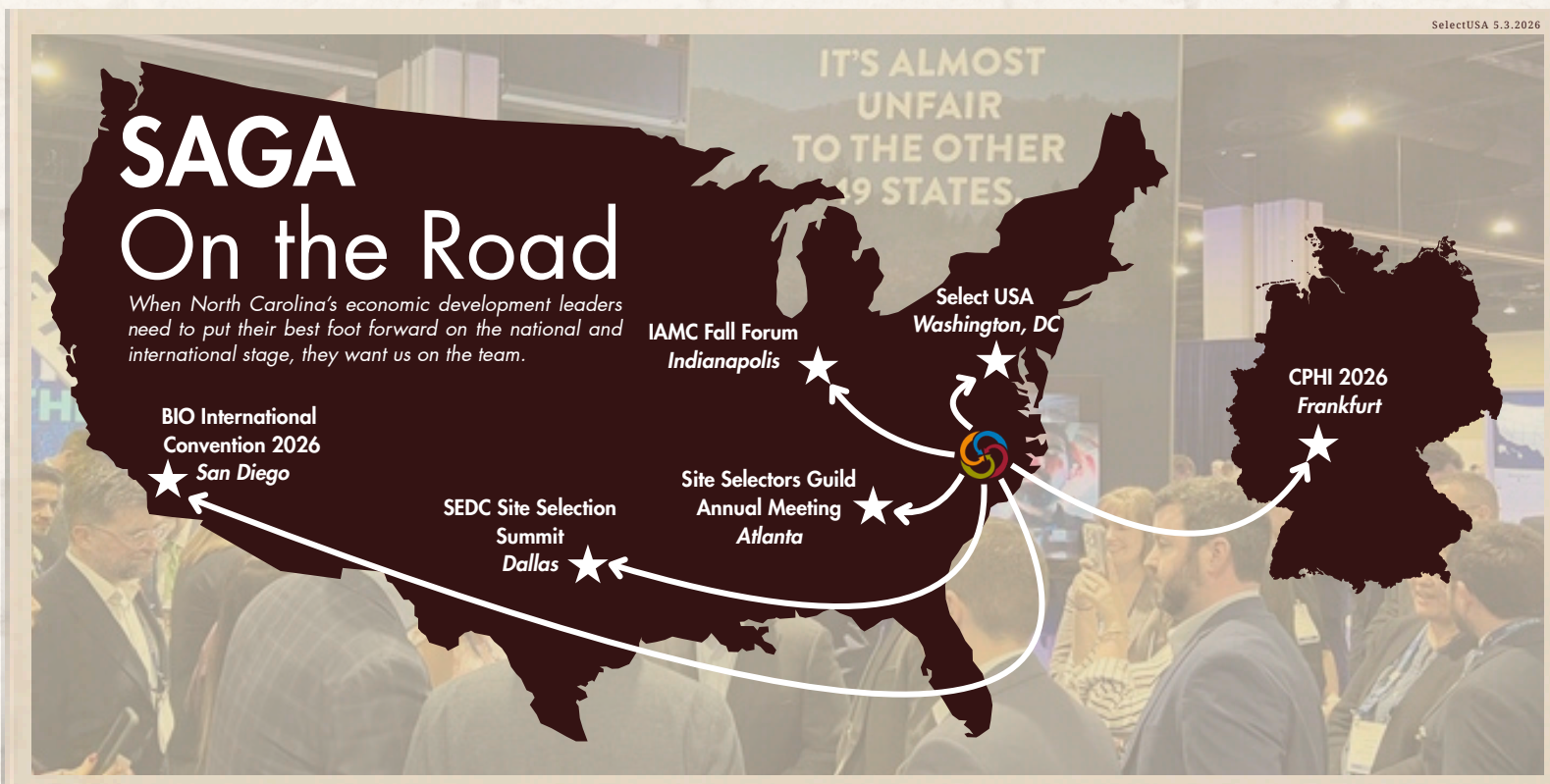
1,517 Total New Jobs

MARKETING LEE COUNTY

Relationships and connections are critical to success in economic development. Sanford and Lee County are among the best places in the world for companies to grow – but they won't know that unless we tell them. In order to market our community successfully around the globe, SAGA cultivates relationships with site selectors, industry representatives, state and federal officials, and C-suite executives from target sector companies.

2025-2026 Marketing Events

- JLL Broker Tour of Sanford and Lee County
- RTA Transportation Lunch
- EDPNC Project Manager Sanford and Lee County Tour
- Berkshire Hathaway Broker Meeting and Sanford and Lee County tour
- RTA Annual Retreat
- JLL Triangle Market Meeting
- NC Rural Summit
- RTRP Swiss Delegation Visit with Governor Stein
- NC Carolina Core Triangle Broker Lunch
- EDPNC 100 Event
- Business NC Magazine Business Forecast Event
- Carolina Core EDPNC Reception
- NCEDA Spring Conference
- Area Development Consultant Conference
- Premiere NC Consultant Event



NEW INDUSTRY RECRUITMENT

When industrial investors are looking for their next big opportunity, they often have the whole world to choose from. Which is why it's remarkable that so many of them are choosing Sanford and Lee County. We're not just getting the occasional win; we're competing successfully and consistently with much larger urban centers for major projects. Our area's strong manufacturing and biopharma talent pipelines, business-friendly environment, comparatively low costs, ready sites, and network of collaborative partners make it a business destination on par with anywhere in the state or the nation.



A Record-Setting Investment in Our Community



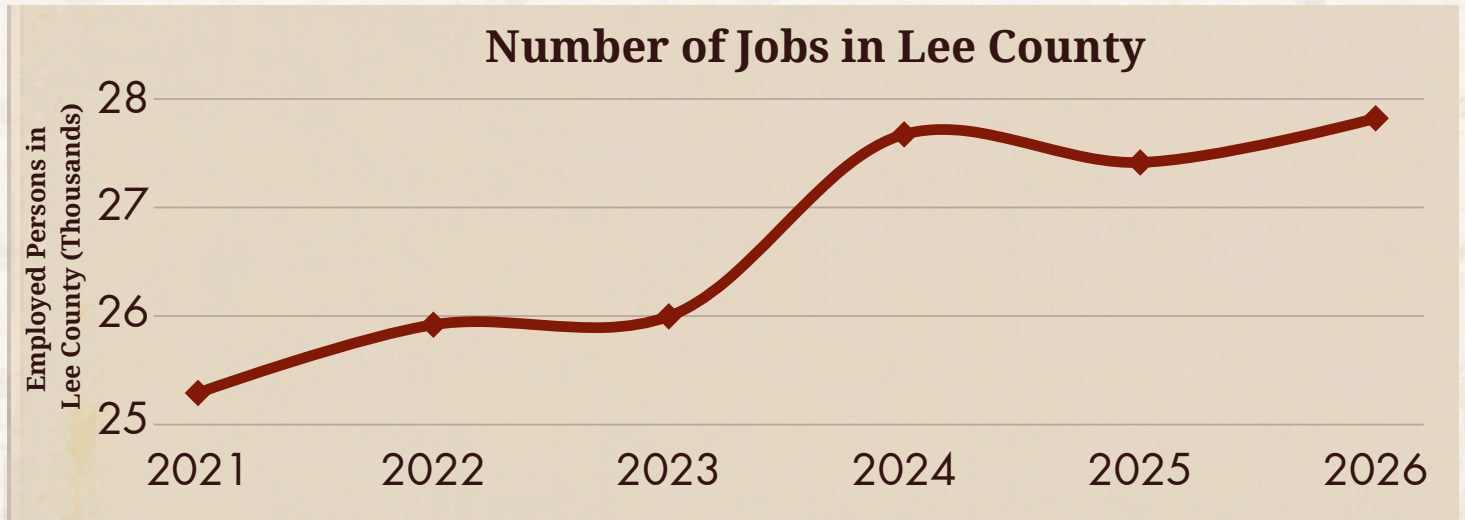
STERIS

This August, global healthcare company STERIS announced plans for a new **\$600 million+** investment in Sanford and Lee County to create their next-generation Chemistries Manufacturing Center of Excellence. Their new campus will be responsible for the manufacturing, research & development, warehousing, and distribution of their cutting edge healthcare products, and will create over **335 jobs** with an average salary well above the Lee County median. Expected to be completed by 2030, this project is the largest SAGA has ever recruited to our community.

Sitting at the intersection of advanced manufacturing and life sciences, this project is a perfect fit for our community. Further, it's proof that Sanford and Lee County are being recognized in the industry as a place to succeed, thanks to our strong workforce, quality of life, proximity to the Research Triangle, and business friendly environment.

RETENTION & EXPANSION

New business relocations to Sanford and Lee County are only part of the picture of our area's growing prosperity. Nationally, more than 70% of a community's economic growth comes from the success and expansion of existing industries and businesses. It's our goal to ensure that every business in Sanford and Lee County has the tools they need to grow, succeed, and thrive.



Hydro Tube Enterprises broke ground on a new 40,000 square foot expansion, one of the latest members to choose Sanford for the next chapter in the life of their business.

Cashion Fishing Rods, last year's SAGA small Industry of the Year winner, continued to capitalize on their recent expansion, including being nominated by the NC Chamber for the 2026 "Coolest Thing Made in NC" Award.



RETENTION & EXPANSION

Gross Farms Corn Maze 2023



Agriculture is Sanford and Lee County's oldest industry, but development is making the sale of farmland an increasingly attractive proposition. That's why SAGA supported the creation of the **Lee County Farmland Preservation and Protection Program**, giving farmers a new option to preserve their land and receive compensation for its development value while maintaining full ownership. The program expands farmers' choices, helping them protect their legacy and support the next generation. Several farms have already taken advantage of the program to preserve and grow their businesses, proof that farming has a future in our community.

When **Pfizer** wanted to add a coffee shop to their facility for their employees, they could have easily gone with a national chain. But SAGA is always looking for new ways to help our local businesses and industries work together. We helped connect them with a local option, and today, Pfizer employees can enjoy a cup of the same **Family Grounds** they'll find on Wicker Street.

Family Grounds 2026



Kyowa Kirin Facility Rendering 2024



Kyowa Kirin continues the buildout of their first North American manufacturing facility at Helix Innovation Park at the Brickyard, with operations planned to begin in 2027. While not yet producing groundbreaking new medicines in our community, they've already begun making themselves a valuable partner through their investments in the new Library, the CCCC Biotech Building, and more.

Work, Play, Live, Lee!

Many talented students work in our community as interns, but some may commute in to only see the inside of their employer's facilities. SAGA's **Work, Play, Live, Lee!** program takes these interns out of the office on tours of Sanford, Broadway, and Lee County, showing them our amenities, businesses, job opportunities, and much more affordable cost of living compared to the Triangle. This year, we took interns from Pfizer, Coty, and Campbell students on tours, and many walked away with a better understanding of what Sanford and Lee County have to offer as a place to live, not just a place to work. Some are now considering our community as a place to live long term - showing how this program makes sure that, when our community gets new talent, it has every reason to want to stay.

Work, Play, Live, Lee! Tour 3.30.2026



SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURS

There are few things as satisfying as the local business success story: someone taking a leap of faith, starting their own enterprise, and finding success from their own hard work and initiative. Supporting entrepreneurship in our community means helping to make sure that the next generation of local business leaders have every opportunity to chase their ambitions and thrive, lifting our whole community in the process.



2025 RISE Cohort Graduation

The eight-class **RISE Program** is designed to help entrepreneurs launch local businesses in Sanford. Participants learn about concepts, practices, and tools to increase their chances for success in the competitive commercial environment. At the end of the program, each participant introduces their business plan to a committee of business professionals, with one participant selected and awarded a \$5,000 grant to help start their business concept. This year, SAGA and its partners at CCCC and Downtown Sanford, Inc. celebrated the graduation of the ninth RISE cohort.

77

Entrepreneur
Graduates

24

New
Businesses

94

Local
Jobs

The annual **Children's Business Fair** gives our next generation of entrepreneurs the chance to showcase their creativity, develop their skills, and experience what it takes to run a business and succeed in selling to the public.



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Not only does SAGA speak on behalf of its Investor businesses in Sanford, Broadway, and Lee County, it also makes sure that those businesses have the opportunity to speak to each other. Throughout the year, we host a variety of events designed to bring our members and partners together, facilitating the conversations and relationships that enhance our local business environment and strengthen the business community.

Industry Leaders Breakfast 4.23.2026



Industry Leaders Breakfast

Our twice-yearly gathering with key leaders in our local businesses and major employers, the **Industry Leaders Breakfast** is an opportunity to learn more about what's happening in our community that impacts them and convey to SAGA the needs and concerns shaping their work today.

Chamber Clays 11.14.2025



50 Chamber Clays Competitors

Chamber Clays

At SAGA, we enjoy bucking the trend of golf tournaments with our **Chamber Clays Championship** at Deep River Sporting Clays, testing how good our community is at a very different sort of shot. Congratulations to our three winners this year: Best Team B&R Hauling, Best Male Shooter Matthew Sparks, and Best Female Shooter Suzie Mireles.

AM Buzz 3.19.2026



20 Monthly Networking Events

Monthly Networking Events

There's no better way to get to know the members of our business community than by meeting them face-to-face in a casual atmosphere. Our once-monthly **AM Buzz** and **Business After Hours** create opportunities for our Investors to gather before or after work to catch up and learn about what's going on in our community.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Exploring the Human Factor

A quarterly session, in partnership with the Central Carolina Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and sponsored by Adcock Real Estate, **Human Factor** gives our local Human Resource professionals insight into opportunities and best practices for engagement between businesses and the community.



Best Practices

A behind-the-scenes look at how COTY approaches worker safety and accident prevention, letting our other employers benefit from the lessons learned by one of our largest industries.

Trending

A deep dive into the workforce trends in our area, and how to better tap into pipelines to build the next generation of workers.

Community Engagement

Exploring how local employers can more closely connect to charitable nonprofit organizations to make a difference in our community.

Link to the Pipeline

Bringing local universities and community colleges together to understand the opportunities for closer collaboration with our employers.

Public Policy Luncheon

Our monthly **Public Policy Luncheon** is an opportunity for our community to engage with elected officials, nonprofit leaders, public servants, and SAGA itself to gain insight on the challenges facing our community from the people working to address them.



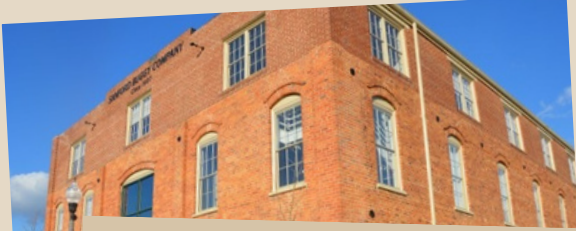
For more than a quarter century, **Leadership Sanford** has connected aspiring leaders in our community with the people, businesses, and organizations that make our community work, all while growing their own leadership skills. This year, 14 leaders graduated from the program, ready to leave their mark on nonprofits, businesses, and elected offices in our area.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

SAGA's work wouldn't be possible without the investment, engagement, and leadership of local government officials and staff. The innovative public-private collaboration between Lee County, the City of Sanford, the Town of Broadway, and the local business community is a model that has proven successful, and is now being emulated by others.



Buggy Building 2026



Buggy Building 1907

Open For Business



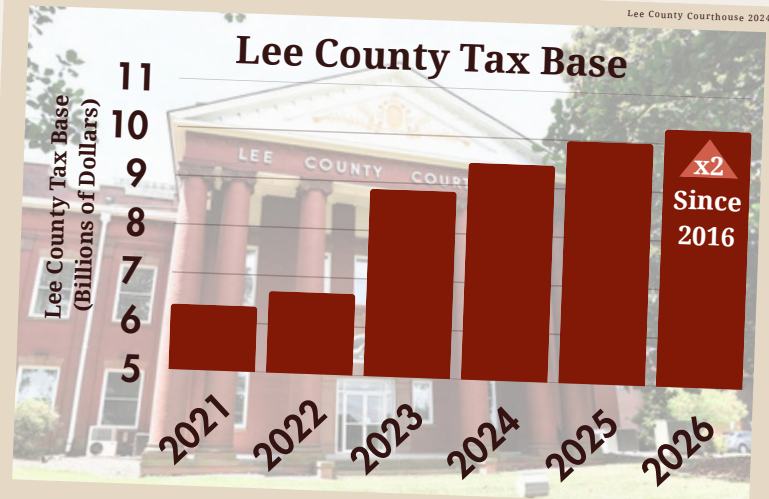
"Open for business" isn't just a motto for our leaders; it's a challenge to find new ways to make doing business in our community easier and more accessible for everyone. For example, the City and Council together established the Buggy Building in downtown Sanford as the one-stop-shop for anyone looking to start a business, from permitting to inspections to economic development services. More than a hundred years after it was built, thanks to our forward-thinking elected officials, the Buggy Building is still keeping Sanford and Lee County on the move.

Sanford City Hall 2025

Incentivizing Success

Our community is today competing successfully with our nation's largest urban centers to attract investment, thanks to our strong workforce development pipelines, high quality of life, business friendly environment, and proximity to the Research Triangle. But helping us seal the deal are our City and County leaders who recognize the value of incentives as investments in community growth. In the past year alone, incentives were critical to bringing STERIS to Sanford and jumpstarting the Riverbirch revitalization.

Lee County Courthouse 2024



EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

One of our most valuable assets as a community for attracting investment and encouraging prosperity is our workforce. Well-trained and experienced in a variety of fields, our workers are key to keeping our businesses and industries running. Supporting them is an educational and training infrastructure that is constantly growing, expanding, and adapting to the needs of tomorrow's workforce, today.



Lee County Schools saw dramatic improvement during the 2025-2026 school year, going from **5** state-designated underperforming schools to **0**. Only 24 of North Carolina's 115 school districts have no underperforming schools, putting Lee County Schools in elite company as they work to prepare our community's next generation.



More at Moore

Central Carolina Community College's **E. Eugene Moore Manufacturing and Biotech Solutions Center** took a step forward this year with the opening of their new Biotechnology Building, offering a real clean-room environment for students to learn in. Sponsored by Kyowa Kirin and with design input from Pfizer and Astellas, this new asset is a boon for our existing industry, incoming students, and potential investors alike. As more local industries invest in the Moore Center, we look forward to seeing it take shape as Central North Carolina's premier training hub.



It's not just our public educational institutions who are helping to build the workforce of tomorrow; our employers similarly recognize the need to take an active role in talent development. Sanford Contractors, through their **Construction Academy** program, is helping to build the next generation of construction workers by exposing high school students to the construction industry. This program doesn't just award community college credit and come with a salary - it helps students learn every facet of the industry and make an informed decision about their future.

QUALITY OF LIFE

The core “why” of SAGA is to make life better in Sanford and Lee County. That’s not something that happens overnight; it takes years of improving economic conditions and consistent investment to visibly improve a community. But this year, several projects long in the making came to fruition, making a real difference in the lives of our residents.

Pilgrim’s Sanford Agricultural Marketplace

Pilgrim's Sanford Agricultural Marketplace Ribbon Cutting 3.25.2026



The new home of the Sanford Farmer’s Market, the **Pilgrim’s Sanford Agricultural Marketplace** is a generational investment in our agricultural community. Since its opening in March, it’s brought our community’s farmers and consumers closer and created a surge in interest in eating local. When its commercial kitchen opens later this year, it’ll also provide new opportunities for local food entrepreneurs to create our community’s next local delicacy.

Lee County Athletic Park

Lee County Athletic Park 2026



Lee County Main Library

Lee County Main Library Ribbon Cutting 5.2.2026



With more than 33,000 square feet of space and room for more than 100,000 volumes, the new **Lee County Main Library** includes meeting rooms, historical archives, electronic media, and a Kyowa Kirin-sponsored maker space. Opened in May, it has already proven an invaluable hub for community education and wellbeing.

Sanford Depot

Sanford Depot Ribbon Cutting 5.18.2026



One of the oldest buildings in Sanford, the **Sanford Depot** is a direct link to the city’s origins as a railroad town. Renovations completed this May have transformed this historic structure into Visit Sanford’s new visitor center, continuing its legacy as the first stop for many in our community.

RETAIL RENAISSANCE

Riverbirch

Revitalization: On Target

Riverbirch Shopping Center is one of Sanford's most important commercial hubs, which is why its decline in recent years was especially problematic. SAGA teamed up with our partners at the City and County to incentivize this innovative redevelopment project. Today, Riverbirch is being revitalized by CASTO, and will bring Target to Sanford alongside a host of other retailers when it reopens in 2027. With demolition complete and construction underway, the future of Riverbirch looks very bright thanks to our partners and investors.

Coming Soon!

Just as Sanford's industry and residential developments have expanded in recent years, so too have our retail offerings. More people and more investment in Lee County mean more dollars spent in shops, restaurants, service providers, and more. Local retailers and national chains are both taking notice, and investing in a consumer economy they see as a promising bet for the future.



Fun Fact

The number of restaurants in Lee County has grown by more than 65% since 2020, climbing to 137 today (not including food trucks!)

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

SAGA is a powerful force for good in Sanford and Lee County, and that can reach far beyond our usual business recruitment and support efforts. Throughout the year, we had several opportunities to make direct contributions to the wellbeing of the community around us.



Many smaller communities struggle to attract and retain talented teachers. That's why SAGA partners with Lee County Schools each year to provide welcome bags stuffed with school supplies, coupons, gifts, and more for our new teachers. This year, more than 25 SAGA Investors donated gifts, showing well-deserved appreciation for our new educators.



In celebration of Lee County Ag Week, SAGA joined volunteers from SafetyKleen, Central Carolina Hospital, Pentair, Kyowa Kirin, and Gildan at the Lee County Cooperative Extension in April for morning of gardening, landscaping, and giving back.



MEET THE TEAM



Jimmy Randolph
CEO

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



Todd Tucker
*Economic Development
Director*

31 years of Economic
Development experience in
North Carolina



Susan Gomez
*Chamber of Commerce
Director*

Passionate community leader
and Sanford resident of 27
years



Shinita Williams
*Membership Services &
Data Research*

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



Crystal Gaddy
*Business Retention &
Expansion Director*

Sanford native with years of
Manufacturing and Life
Science experience



Spencer Ballus
*Communications
Coordinator*

North Carolina native with
experience in national
development nonprofits

OUR INVESTORS

Platinum

CENTRAL CAROLINA
HOSPITAL

A Duke LifePoint Hospital



Diamond



Gold

Central Carolina
Enterprise Park

Cherokee
Investment Group

Community
Properties, Inc.

FIRST BANK



Silver



Bronze

CAPTRUST ♦ Caterpillar Inc. ♦ Central Electric Membership Corporation ♦ Enbridge ♦ COTY, Inc. ♦ Dossenbach's Finer Furniture and Mattress Center ♦ Fidelity Bank ♦ Green Garden Landscaping ♦ Lee & Associates ♦ Mungo Homes ♦ Myrick Construction, Inc. ♦ Progressive Contracting Company, Inc. ♦ REAP Holdings, LLC ♦ Trinity Capital

Corporate

Applied Graphics, Inc. ♦ Ascend Leadership Academy ♦ Astellas Gene Therapies ♦ Bricks & Minifigs Sanford ♦ Broadwind Industrial Solutions ♦ Carolina Comfort Air ♦ Carolina Trace Country Club, Inc. ♦ Charles R. Underwood, Inc. ♦ Clayton Homes of Sanford ♦ Crist Realty Inc. ♦ Dogwood State Bank ♦ Downtown Sanford, Inc. ♦ Elite Storage ♦ First Citizens Bank ♦ First National Bank ♦ FirstHealth - Moore Regional Hospital ♦ Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc. ♦ Gildan ♦ Harrington Marketplace, LLC ♦ John Hiester Automotive ♦ Martin Marietta ♦ Medicine Park Pharmacy ♦ Moen, Inc. ♦ NAI Tri Properties ♦ Neil's Apparel & Accents ♦ Pentair Aquatic Systems ♦ Raleigh Winwater ♦ Raven Forge Games ♦ Rocky Top Catering ♦ ROYCO Real Estate ♦ Sanford Real Estate ♦ Sanford Tourism Development Authority ♦ Sanford Turf and Irrigation ♦ Smith Douglas Homes ♦ Static Control Components, Inc. ♦ The Insurance Center ♦ Tyson Foods, Inc. ♦ Well Centered Wellness ♦ Wright Group Real Estate

OUR LEADERSHIP

Thank you to our dedicated leadership team, who volunteers their time to help support SAGA and to work for a brighter future for Sanford, Broadway, and Lee County.

Fiscal Year 2025-2026

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Vice Chair

Chet Mann

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Jimmy Keen

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Donald Andrews
Kirk Bradley

David Foster
Tina Gross

Carter Keller
Donnie Oldham

Jerry Pedley
Rebecca Salmon

Kirk Smith

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April Montgomery
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Julian Philpott
Jay Rapp

Dave Santoemma
Darren Steadman
Sara Stephens
Hunter Stewart
Dr. Bill Stone
Rich Trogdon
Sherry Lynn Womack
Wil Wilkinson

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Adela Costelow
Samuel Gaskins
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Cindy Howenstein
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Partick Pallatto
Elvis Person

Laura Powers
Estherose Rogers
Frances Stickland
Cindy White

Pilgrim's Sanford Agricultural Marketplace Ribbon Cutting 3.25.2026



Sanford Depot Ribbon Cutting 5.18.2026



Lee County Main Library Ribbon Cutting 5.2.2026



Kyowa Kirin 5.8.2026



Aerial View Sanford, N.C. 2026



Train Passing by Chatham Street 5.4.2026



Stay Connected
With SAGA!

