

2025-2026



WAKE FOREST DOWNTOWN
919-435-9427
WAKEFORESTDOWNTOWN.COM

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Commercial property

VISION/MISSION/GOALS

DOWNTOWN IMPACT REPORT

VISION

Downtown Wake Forest is a walkable destination for locally owned retail, dining, and entrepreneurship for northern Wake County and surrounding communities; the hub of signature quality-of-life events that bring the community together; and the crossroads where historic character, arts, and culture are actively experienced and celebrated, shaping our regional identity.

MISSION

Wake Forest Downtown, Inc. strengthens connections between businesses, residents, and visitors by serving as a trusted community resource. Through collaboration with the Town of Wake Forest, local businesses, and community partners, we preserve downtown's historic character and charm while welcoming thoughtful growth and new development. We promote a vibrant, welcoming downtown that supports thriving local businesses, meaningful experiences, and long-term community vitality.

STRATEGIES > GOALS

1. Walkable destination for locally owned retail, dining, and entrepreneurship. > Increase foot traffic downtown and small business occupancy.
2. Hub of signature quality-of-life events that bring the community together. > Evaluate and enhance events through collaboration and inclusive programming.
3. Crossroads where historic character, arts, and culture are actively experienced and celebrated. > Diversify arts, cultural offerings, and integrate historic character as appropriate.

Public Parking Spots **984**

Commercial Parcels **153**

Parcel Owners **76**
Commercial property

1st Floor Storefronts **65**
*Utilized for Food & Beverage,
Retail or Personal Services*

Residential Units **290**

Food & Beverage **24**

Retail **26**

Vacancy rate **7%**

Property Value Increase **61%**
*Based on MSD Tax Value from
2021-2026*

MSD Tax Rate* **\$.14**
*Assessed per \$100 of
property value*

The Wake Forest Board of Commissioners voted to decrease the MSD rate to \$.13 effective July 1, 2026.



INVESTMENT STATS

2025-2026

PUBLIC

\$9,443,274

PRIVATE

\$25,584,885

2 FACADE
IMPROVEMENT
GRANTS

4 BUILDING
IMPROVEMENTS

7 NET NEW
BUSINESSES

54 NET GAIN JOBS

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

\$31K VOLUNTEER
VALUE

899 VOLUNTEER
HOURS

“After moving to North Carolina for grad school and bouncing around the Triangle for 10 years, I’m so glad to have settled down in Wake Forest. My husband and I wanted to start volunteering in our new town, and we’ve been able to do that here. Working with Wake Forest Downtown, Inc. has been such a fun way for me to meet new people, give back to my community, and feel invested in my adopted hometown.” - Erin Scholz, Board Member and Events Committee Chair

SPONSORS

WFD received \$35,500 in annual sponsorships for 2026. The generous contributions and support of these businesses has enabled us to implement initiatives that enhance the quality of life in downtown through events, marketing, public art initiatives and more. If you are interested in being a sponsor for 2027 please visit wakeforestdowntown.com.

Thank You to our Sponsors



WHEEL STOP ART

This initiative adds creativity and vibrancy to Downtown through partnerships with local organizations that help bring each unique design to life. These installations can be found in various parking lots including the Center for Active Aging, The Cotton Company, Town Hall, and the Wake Forest Chamber of Commerce.



COMMUNITY

PROFILE 2025-2026

POPULATION
61,987

HOUSEHOLDS
19,928

MEDIAN HH INCOME
\$120,777

MEDIAN AGE
39 YEARS

DIGITAL IMPACT

FACEBOOK REACH
15,735

INSTAGRAM REACH
7,804

WFD incorporated the second installment of YarnSplosure in spring 2026, featuring crocheted and knitted flowers installed on some of the railings along S. White Street. A local high school knitting club and our community partners at The Knotty Sheep, the WF Woman’s Club, and the WF Center for Active Aging helped us create the beautiful flowers in this installation, transforming everyday spaces into something welcoming and vibrant.

DOWNTOWN



wake forest

HELPING BUSINESSES THRIVE

- Downtown Dollars
- Facade Grants
- Marketing
- Resources & Training

PROJECTS COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY

- Miller Park Improvements - Phase 1 Complete
- Residential (Magnolia Trace) - N. White St.
- Transportation Study
- Wayfinding Signage

DOWNTOWN EVENTS & COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS GRANT

Wake Forest Downtown, Inc. (WFD) introduced a new grant this year to help support and incentivize downtown businesses. The Downtown Events & Collaborative Programs Grant encourages collaboration among at least three downtown businesses to create engaging events and programs that bring residents and visitors together. Eligible activities may include arts programs, family-focused events, retail-focused events, pop-up markets, scavenger hunts, seasonal celebrations and support local initiatives. Approved businesses may receive up to \$500 per event in reimbursement for eligible promotional and event-related expenses, helping strengthen small businesses while fostering community connection and supporting a vibrant, welcoming downtown.

PROMOTING DOWNTOWN



- Advertising
- Annual Events
 - Forest Fest
 - Friday Night on White
 - Spirits of Wake Forest
 - Wake Forest Cares
 - Holiday Kickoff
 - Lighting of Wake Forest
- Downtown Dollar Giveaways
- Downtown engagement for merchant events
 - Goodies for Goblins
 - Holiday Open House
- Media Exposure
- Merchant Mingles
- Print Marketing
- Social Media Marketing and Promotions

“Downtown Wake Forest is where our community connects and comes to life. We are a walkable destination where local businesses thrive, vibrant events bring people together, and history, arts, and culture create meaningful experiences that build community pride, drive economic vitality, and inspire continued investment in our future.”

Jennifer Herbert, MSARP, HREDFP
Downtown Development Director



DESIGNATIONS

- AARP Age Friendly Community
- Main Street America Accredited
- National Register of Historic Places
- Purple Heart Community
- Tree City USA Community

NC Main Street is a Main Street America™ Coordinating Program. As a Main Street America™ Coordinating Program, NC Main Street is part a powerful, grassroots network consisting of over 40 Coordinating Programs and over 1,600 neighborhoods and communities across the country committed to creating high-quality places and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development.



THE RESULTS ARE IN...

Each year in July, North Carolina Main Street communities report the impact of their work to the North Carolina Department of Commerce. Main Street is the most impactful downtown economic development program in the state of North Carolina.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE INVESTMENT

\$6.6B **\$514M**
1980-2026 2025-2026

NET NEW BUSINESSES

8,836 **318**
1980-2026 2025-2026

NET NEW JOBS

41,997 **2,467**
1980-2026 2025-2026

BUILDINGS REHABILITATED

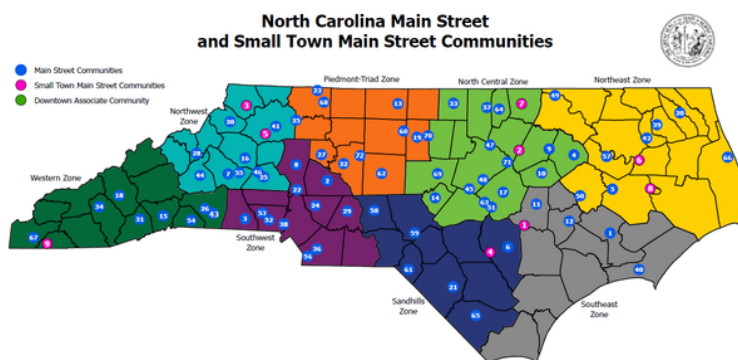
8,718 **297**
1980-2026 2025-2026

FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

9,798 **358**
1980-2026 2025-2026

VOLUNTEER HOURS

94,693 **\$3.3M**
2025-2026 Time Value



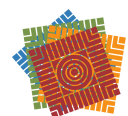
LEARN ABOUT NC MAIN STREET

ncmainstreetandplanning.com

commerce.nc.gov/main-street-program

VISIT THE MAIN-TO-MAIN TRAIL

maintomaintrail.com



North Carolina
MAIN STREET

