

Profile of the City

The City of Wilson, incorporated in 1849, and located on the eastern seaboard along Interstate 95, is the largest municipality in Wilson County and serves as the county seat. The City has a population of almost 50,000 and covers a land area of nearly 32 square miles.

The City levies a property tax on the appraised value of real property and certain tangible personal property located within its boundaries as authorized by state statute. The County also levies a property tax on property within the City's corporate limits and is the only other entity empowered to do so. The City is permitted by state statute to broaden its corporate boundaries by annexation.



The City of Wilson operates under the Council-Manager form of government. The Council is the policy-making and legislative body of City government and consists of a Mayor and seven Council members. City Council members are elected from districts while the Mayor is elected at-large.

The Mayor and Council members serve four-year staggered terms. The Mayor is the presiding officer of the Council and votes only in case of a tie. A Mayor Pro-Tempore is selected by the Council from its members.

The City Manager and the City Attorney are appointed by the Council. The City Manager is the Chief Executive Officer of the City and is accountable for carrying out the policies and ordinances of the Council and for administering the day-to-day operations of the City through appointed department directors and staff members.

The City provides a full range of services to its citizens including police and fire protection, transportation, sanitation, cultural and recreational activities, housing and community development programs, water, wastewater, and storm water utilities, and land use and development services. In addition, the City owns and operates electric and natural gas distribution systems and broadband services.

Excellence in Action

Wilson remains competitive with their electric rates and the City continues to operate an efficient public electric system. Wilson benefited locally from the \$1.2 billion sale of minority interest in several power plants in 2016 that reduced NCEMPA's debt by more than 70 percent. Wilson Energy received RP3 Diamond level designation from the American Public Power Association signifying that the electric utility has met 98-100% of the criteria for providing reliable and safe electric service. Wilson Energy also received the SOAR Gold designation from the American Public Gas Association acknowledging our commitment to exceptional system integrity, improvements, safety, and workforce development.

Greenlight is the City's state-of-the-art, fiber-to-the-premise system providing customers with data, voice, and video services. Since its inception in 2008, Greenlight has steadily grown enrollment and the momentum continues to this day with more than 13,400 customers. Greenlight was the first service provider in the state to offer Gigabit Fiber-to-the-Home service making Wilson a North Carolina Gigabit City. Greenlight used a \$1.2 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration to expand services into the surrounding towns of Black Creek, Lucama, Saratoga and Stantonsburg. The grant, part of the CARES Act, required a \$300,000 match from the City.

Wilson Fire/Rescue Services has retained its designation of a Class 1 insurance rating for the City of Wilson. This rating validates that the department provides residents, visitors, and the business community with industry-leading fire protection and emergency services.

Wilson's Police Department (WPD) maintains a national accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. WPD has been accredited since 1987, as the 2nd law enforcement agency in North

Carolina and the 47th agency nationwide to achieve accredited status. There are only 5% of law enforcement agencies nationally who have received accreditation status.

Wilson Parks and Recreation is nationally accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation (CAPRA) demonstrating the achievement of standards of quality operations, management, and high level of service to the community. There are 216 CAPRA accredited agencies in the United States. Only 1.9% of parks and recreation agencies are accredited with Wilson Parks and Recreation among this elite group.

The City's Inspection Department maintained their ranking for residential, commercial, and industrial construction of a 3. This moves Wilson to among the top 15% of communities for residential inspections and the top 10% for commercial inspections. The favorable rating could result in lower insurance cost for property owners.

Wilson' Financial Services department has received the Government Finance Officers Association's (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for 34 consecutive years. There are about 7 North Carolina governments with this distinction of 34+ years. Wilson is among 20 out of approximately 2,700 recipient North Carolina governments with the distinction of 37+ year. This award recognizes budgets that meet stringent guidelines and excel as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide, and communications tool. Financial Services also received the GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 37 consecutive years. This is the highest honor awarded for governmental agencies that go beyond minimum reporting requirements of generally accepted accounting principles to demonstrate a commitment to reporting transparency and financial accountability.



Wilson continues to expand its focus on innovation and economic development following a two-year participation in InnovateNC. The outcome of this workgroup is a concentration on developing an inclusive entrepreneurial economy, while at the same time, retaining a rich community character and building on local assets, including the community owned Greenlight gigabit network. A direct result of Wilson's participation in InnovateNC, was a plan to establish an innovation hub in the City. The Gig East Exchange offers flexible and affordable co-working spaces with programs geared toward helping entrepreneurs establish a viable business. Rural Innovation Strategies supports Wilson's Gig East Exchange with on-site and videoconference support and offers templates and written materials to support the shared environment.

Choosing Wilson

Location

The City is strategically situated with access to all major regional, national, as well as, international markets. It is conveniently located along Interstate 95, halfway between New York and Florida; approximately 475 miles from New York City and 240 miles from Washington, D.C. The City is served by U.S. highways 264 and 301 and North Carolina highways 42 and 58. Interstate 795 connects Wilson to the City of Goldsboro and on to I-40 south, enhancing access to the seaports at Wilmington and Morehead City, North Carolina. U.S. 264 provides the City with an interstate grade highway (I-587) connecting Greenville and the Research Triangle Park.

Education

Wilson students are served by Wilson County Schools, a public-school district that encompasses twelve elementary schools, five middle schools, three traditional high schools, a learning center and WAAT, the Wilson Academy of Applied Technology, an early college program affiliated with Wilson Community College. Students are enrolled in a

five-year program that culminates with both high school diplomas and associate degrees. \$20 million in State and County funding was provided for the construction of the WAAT program at Wilson Community College's Lee Technology Center. The district is part of a countywide system that is a shared responsibility between the County and the State; therefore, the City has no financial responsibility for the public education system. There are several private schools in the area providing basic education similar to the public-school system. The City of Wilson has two charter schools funded by the County and State; both the Sallie B. Howard School for the Arts and Sciences and Wilson Preparatory Academy are approved as K-12 schools. The Sallie B. Howard School was a recipient of the National Blue-Ribbon School award and is now a recipient of a 2024 national Elementary and Secondary Education Act Distinguished Schools Award for excellence in serving students with disabilities. The award recognizes the school's emphasis on positive educational advances and outstanding student academic achievements.

The city is home to two colleges serving thousands of students of all ages and stages of their careers. Wilson Community College (WCC) serves Wilson and neighboring counties in eastern North Carolina but also attracts students from throughout the region. Founded in 1958, WCC is one of the oldest institutions in the 58-college North Carolina Community College System. WCC offers over 100 degree, diploma, certificate, and short-term training programs. Each year, WCC serves around 7,000 individuals through courses, training programs, and seminars. This includes high school students taking college courses, traditional college students, continuing education learners, workforce trainees, Small Business Center clients, and seminar attendees. Additionally, the College is home to two early colleges: Wilson Early College Academy and Wilson Academy of Applied Technology, providing high school students with a head start on higher education.

In 2023, state representatives set aside \$30 million for WCC to build a biotechnology workforce training center. The center, set to open in June 2026, will be located next to the Campus at 587 corporate park. The Golden Leaf Foundation has also awarded WCC \$13 million to buy training equipment for the center.



Founded in 1902 as Atlantic Christian College, Barton College is a four-year, private, liberal arts college that is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Barton offers 36 graduate and undergraduate degrees, six pre-professional programs for undergraduates and six graduate Master degree programs. Barton College's Elementary Education Lateral-Entry Program was developed with input from curriculum experts and provides lateral-entry teachers with the skills to become operational as soon as possible. The total program is designed to address the North Carolina

Professional Teaching Standards and the North Carolina Teacher Education Specialty Area Standards in Elementary Education. The 2023 academic community included 1163 undergraduate and 96 graduate students as well as 54 full-time faculty members. The student/faculty ratio is 14 to 1 with an average class size of 17. Barton continues to be ranked by U.S. News & World Report as one of the top ten Best Regional Colleges in the South, for its Innovation, Undergraduate Teaching, and Social Mobility. Barton has also earned a spot in the Princeton Review as Best in the Southeast. Barton currently supports more than 20 athletic teams in NCAA Division II and is part of the Conference Carolinas. Truist Stadium and a synthetic turf field, Electric Supply Company Field, are new additions to the campus and are being used by the lacrosse and soccer teams and the football program.

Also located in Wilson is the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf (ENCSD), which provides specialized instruction to students ages 5-21 who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind. ENCSD, established in 1964 to serve students from North Carolina's 53 eastern counties, now operates on a 54-acre campus. The school is a day/residential facility operated by the Office of Educational Services in the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, and all services provided are free of charge to students and their families. The high school has an emphasis on independent living skills, career awareness and preparedness training, but many students follow college prep and tech prep tracks.

ENCSD is dually accredited by the Conference of Educational Administrators Serving the Deaf and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Health Care

Extensive medical services are available throughout the City. The City and County residents are served by several health care providers including DLP Wilson Medical Center, the Wilson County Health Department, the Wilson Community Health Center, Trillium Health Resources, and the Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center. In addition, numerous physicians, dentists, and other professional practitioners have offices in Wilson.

Established in 1964, DLP Wilson Medical Center, a private, not-for-profit organization, serves a five-county region with over 125,000 people. Driven with organizational values including respect, integrity, great teamwork, honesty, and trust, DLP Wilson Medical Center offers a continuum of services through a 294 licensed-bed hospital, a 90-bed nursing care and rehabilitation center, home care and hospice care company, child care center and healthcare foundation. The hospital has also earned The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval and the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association's Heart-Check mark for advanced certification for primary stroke centers.

An \$82 million renovation project is underway that will reduce the number of beds to 178 to make way for larger patient rooms, larger and more accessible bathrooms, and areas near patient rooms for staff to sit and work closer with the patients. Upgrades have been completed in the intensive care unit, labor and delivery area and the nursery as well as the inpatient behavioral and mental health unit. With an average patient population of 85 to 100, administrators forecast the 154 medical/surgical rooms will be more than enough to support the area needs. More than 100 active physicians serve on the hospital's medical staff and over 95 percent are board-certified, representing 28 specialties. The medical center employs nearly 850 full-time, part-time and contract staff members.



The Wilson County Health Department and Trillium Health Resources provide service to those who struggle with substance abuse, mental health, and intellectual and developmental disabilities with a full range of health and mental health services. These include a comprehensive home health nursing program and specialized clinical services offered through the County health department. Trillium Health Resources, a local management entity, works with people needing services and their families, as well as other healthcare professionals to find solutions for the prevention and treatment of behavioral health disorders. Trillium Health Resources staff links individuals and families to services and supports helping them to live successfully in their communities through a provider network offering a full range of counseling, education, diagnosis, and treatment services.

The Wilson Community Health Center is operated by Carolina Family Health Centers, Inc. of Wilson. Services are open to all Wilson County residents and include Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Family Practice, Oral Health, and Behavioral Health care and treatment. Wilson Community Health Center also operates a dispensing Pharmacy, available to all registered patients. The Center accepts Medicaid, Medicare and most Commercial Insurance Plans. Charges are income-based for those who are uninsured. Carolina Family Health Centers, Inc. also operates CFHC Dental Center and Harvest Family Health Center in nearby Elm City, both of which serve Wilson residents. In addition to the Wilson location, the group also operates facilities in Nash and Edgecombe Counties. Carolina Family Health Centers has recently received a \$5 million gift from Yield Giving. The unexpected gift will be used to further the Center's mission of increasing access to health care. The Center is also the recipient of a two-year, \$1.1 million federal grant from the Health and Human Services Administration. The grant will be used to expand the Center's behavioral health services to make mental health and substance disorder treatment a part of their primary care.

The Longleaf Neuro-Medical Treatment Center (formerly the North Carolina Special Care Center) is a State-owned multi-purpose facility situated on 40 acres within the City. The center is a 233-bed long-term care facility that includes a 40-bed unit for the treatment of individuals with Alzheimer's. The center employs more than 250 staff that provides both intermediate and skilled level of care to patients who are not able to be placed in traditional nursing care facilities due to psychiatric diagnosis and/or atypical physical circumstances.

Healthcare services are also available through ECU Health Healthplex-Wilson which opened a \$14 million, 30,000-square-foot facility that employs about 60 people, including 15 doctors. The facility offers primary, specialty and after-hours immediate care as well as onsite laboratory, diagnostic, imaging, and pharmacy services. ECU Health System has received nearly \$900,000 from the Federal Communications Commission to purchase remote patient monitoring systems.

Transportation

The City, along with other area local governments, is a co-owner of the Rocky Mount-Wilson Airport, a regional airport centrally located between the two cities. The airport has a 7,100-foot-long runway and serves thousands of general aviation aircraft operations each year. The airport completed a \$14.8 million upgrade to the runway and taxiway system. Among recent upgrade, the airport was awarded nearly \$500,000 from the N.C. Board of Transportation to remove an old fuel farm and upgraded it with a new computerized, self-serve fuel farm with two 8,000-gallon tanks that are open around the clock. A \$3.5 million grant from the NC Department of Transportation was used to fund the construction of 23 new T-hangers. Over the next several years, the airport will receive \$295,000 from the Infrastructure and Jobs Act.

Additionally, the City owns and operates the Wilson Industrial Air Center located within the City's boundaries. Constructed as a World War II training facility, this airport provides all services usually associated with a general aviation airport. It has three 4,500-foot runways used extensively by industrial, commercial, governmental, medical, law enforcement, military, and recreational aircraft. The airport often serves blimps enroute to or from major sporting events on the East Coast. The airport provides a courtesy vehicle to enable those flying into the airport easy access in carrying out their business needs.

Wilson has easy access to Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU), a major commercial airport which sits on 5,000 acres of land in Wake County, approximately 55 miles west of the City. RDU is home to 19 air carriers with more than 400 daily flights. The airport served nearly 15.5 million people in 2024.

The CSX Railroad and Carolina Coastal Railway provide rail freight service for the city and surrounding area. Wilson



is located along CSX's main north-south corridor on the East Coast; as many as 40 trains pass through the city on a daily basis. Passenger service for Wilson (WLN) is provided by Amtrak's Carolinian and Palmetto lines. During 2024 Amtrak reported annual revenue of more than \$4.3 million dollars with an annual ridership of more than 72,000. \$750,000 in renovations have been completed to restore the century-old, 378-foot canopy at the station. The station has been renamed as the G. K. Butterfield Train Station in honor of the former Congressman's many years of service to Wilson and the state.

Amtrak also invested \$4 million to improve the station's accessibility. The improvements included additional lights, guardrails and signs along the platform, a hazard warning system to alert the blind and visually impaired of the platform's edge, and better access to parking spaces and the bus station. The city is also served by the Greyhound bus company and a cab company operating about 20 taxis.

The City transitioned from a mass transit public transportation system to RIDE; an on-demand micro transit ride share service that is funded in part by multiple grants. The curb-to-curb service features smaller, handicapped accessible vehicles that are dispatched only upon request. The service offers a more efficient transportation option while having less of an impact on the environment. RIDE received an America’s Transportation Award for “Best Use of Innovation and Technology” from the Southeastern Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Requests for RIDE service now average about 4,500 per week.

Economic Evolution

Once widely known as the World’s Greatest Tobacco Market, Wilson enjoys a diverse economy today, including a healthy mix of agriculture, manufacturing, commercial, and service businesses.

Wilson is the birthplace of Branch Banking and Trust Corporation (BB&T), which merged with Atlanta-based Sun Trust to become Truist Financial Corporation, now head-quartered in Charlotte. With combined assets of \$535 billion, the new company is a top-10 U.S. commercial bank. The bank continues to be Wilson County’s largest employer with approximately 2,200 people working in various areas of the financial service industry.

A \$35 million, 95,000-square-foot office building replaced the BB&T towers that were demolished in December 2020. The property where the towers once stood is a redevelopment project in the downtown area including the new Truist building, a \$16 million, 700-space public parking deck, YMCA, and Centro at Pine-Nash. Centro is a \$100 million mixed-use, residential, and retail commercial building that includes 240 residential units and ground level retail spaces. NSV Development has also announced plans to build two dozen townhomes next to the new Truist building.



In December 2023, another transformational historic downtown project was approved. The project includes a \$74 million outdoor sports and recreation facility that will be leased to the Wilson Warbirds, an affiliate Minor League Baseball team of the Milwaukee Brewers. The stadium will have 3,500 fixed seats and standing room only positions resulting in total capacity of 4,500. The venue will include ballpark club and banquet facilities for 250 guests, 10-12 suites, kid’s play area, and variety of group sales and gathering areas. In addition to Minor League baseball games, the facility will support outdoor concerts, other sporting events, festivals and community events. Stadium construction has begun in preparation with baseball’s opening day in 2026. The project also includes a minimum private investment of \$212 million that includes multi-family residential units, townhomes, hotel, and retail space. The project is expected to be completed in phases with initial portions complete in early 2026 and various portions completed over time through 2031.



Industrial Growth and Development

Manufacturing is the largest sector of the Wilson economy employing 6,976 workers. From July 2017 to July 2021, 12 new manufacturing companies located in Wilson and 11 existing industries expanded in Wilson. These companies invested \$623.9 million in real estate and equipment and created 1,410 new jobs and 4,218 indirect new jobs.

Bridgestone Americas has operated a plant in Wilson since 1974 and employs around 1,900 people making more than 32,000 radial tires for cars and light trucks each day. It is the largest passenger tire facility in the Americas. Bridgestone is in the fifth year of its 10-year, \$344 million expansion. The continued expansion will allow Bridgestone to meet market demands and invest in newer more efficient technology. Total tire production is expected to grow to 35,000 per day and sixteen new jobs will be added as the expansion is completed.

Fresenius Kabi has completed the \$286 million expansion of its facility. The company which specializes in medicines and technologies for infusion, transfusions and clinical nutrition employs 445 people.

Ajax Metal Solutions, a metal working company, purchased a 23,400 square foot building with plans to invest \$4 million and employ 20 people during the startup phase.

HandCraft Healthcare Linen & Uniform Specialist purchased shell building #7 in the Wilson Corporate Park and recently completed a \$16 million upfit of the facility. The company will employ around 150 people with an average salary between \$15 and \$18 per hour.

Three hemp facilities have located in Wilson. United Tobacco Company has invested \$2.5 million to expand its facility and will add 7 jobs for CBD oil extraction. Criticality, LLC has opened a facility to process industrial hemp and plans to invest \$17.2 million in the facility and create 88 jobs. Averix Bio LLC has opened a 200,000 square foot facility for industrial hemp research and extraction. The company is in the process of obtaining its pharmaceutical grade certification to manufacture and distribute API ingredients that are derived from industrial hemp.

Mann+Hummel Air Filtration has expanded its Wilson facility. The \$4 million investment added a clean room for micro-electronics and pharmaceutical grade products. The expansion creates 100 jobs.

ABEC Inc, a manufacturer of single-use disposable containers used in pharmaceuticals and bioscience products, is opening a manufacturing facility at the Wilson Corporate Park. The company is set to invest \$11 million in a 50,000-square-foot shell building at the park. The facility will bring 251 jobs.

Believer Meats is near completion on a 200,000-square-foot production facility in the Wilson Corporate Park. The \$123 million facility will create 100 new jobs and will be the Israel-based company's first large-scale US site for lab-grown meat.

Carolina Poultry Power Rg2 recently began operations at their Wilson facility. The company converts poultry waste into electricity. The facility expects to produce 184 million kilowatt-hours each year that will provide power to an estimated 16,000 homes.

IDEXX Laboratories has announced plans to build a production facility in the Wilson Corporate Park. IDEXX produces software, diagnostics and other products for use in veterinary medicine. The company plans to invest \$145 million in the site which will bring 275 new jobs with an average salary of more than \$65,800.

Reckitt Benckiser Health, the United Kingdom based maker of Mucinex, has announced plans to bring 289 jobs to Wilson when it opens a new production facility. The nearly \$146 million facility pays an average salary of more than \$80,000 per year.

Johnson & Johnson has announced plans to invest \$2 billion in a production facility to be built on 175 acres in the Wilson Corporate Park. The facility, which will manufacture drugs from living cells, is expected to bring 420 jobs with an average salary of \$108,823 per year.

A new 100,400-square-foot shell building in the Wilson Corporate Park, the eighth, is complete and is being marketed by the Wilson Economic Development Council. Infrastructure in the Wilson Corporate Park is complete. Water, Sewer, Natural Gas, Electric, Fiber and Storm water Management Systems are available to all sites in the Park. Where practical, all systems have been looped, making it one of the more attractive parks in North Carolina.

The City and County participated in the development of the second corporate park, the Campus at 587, an 830-acre corporate park, which is located adjacent to the interchange of U.S. 264 (I-587) and N.C. 58. FedEx has completed the construction of a \$25 million, 259,000 square foot distribution center in the new corporate park. The facility is expected to bring 200 jobs to the area.



Schott Pharma announced in March 2024 that it will invest \$371 million in a refillable syringe manufacturing facility at this corporate park and add 401 jobs. Groundbreaking is expected by the end of 2026.

There are eight solar farms located throughout the City and County. These farms are part of a growing trend toward renewable energy that will reduce our dependence on petroleum and coal reserves. They generate income for landowners from properties that had previously been underdeveloped. Wilson Energy will benefit from this new technology. GCL New Energy, the builder of the solar sites, paid \$1.4 million in upgrades to the electric grid. Six of the solar farms are designed to produce up to 10 megawatts of power and the remaining two will produce up to 5 megawatts of power. The farms are expected to generate an estimated \$400,000 in revenue for Wilson energy.

Other major manufacturing employers include Collins Aerospace Systems, Smithfield Foods, Merck, Novartis, and Linamar Corporation. The largest non-manufacturing employers include Wilson County, City of Wilson, Wilson Medical Center, Wilson County Schools and Wilson Community College.

The City's various investments in infrastructure have made the community very competitive on a national scale. The Wilson Economic Development Council, with considerable input from the City and County, continues to actively market Wilson throughout North and South America and Europe

Wilson County is located in two Foreign Trade Zones. This will provide money saving benefits for companies in the county that import and export goods to and from other countries. Inclusion in a foreign trade zone means that companies are not required to pay customs duties until the product leaves the zone; increasing their cash flow.

Retail/Restaurant Growth and Development

Heritage Crossing Shopping Center, a 100-acre shopping hub is the largest active retail development within the City. It includes major tenants such as Target, Belk, Marshalls, Ross, Ulta Beauty, PetSmart, Best Buy, Five Below, Harris Teeter Grocery, Olive Garden, Sleepy's, Panera Bread, and Burlington.

New businesses continue to come to Wilson. Regional and national chains such as Outback, Royal Farms, Wawa, and 7-Eleven, Pop Shelf and Tru by Hilton now call Wilson home. New locally owned businesses include AmeriMex, a boba tea shop, The Club, an indoor golf simulation facility, The Harriss, a short-term rental, apartment and retail development.

The Heritage Corner Shopping Center is a proposed 170,000 square-foot strip that will include both restaurant and retail spaces. It has three outparcels completed with 7-Eleven, Firestone Service Center, and Culver's Restaurant.

1158 Place, a new housing complex that will front Heritage Corner Shopping Center will include 111 single-family, detached homes and 133 townhomes. Development has also begun on a new apartment complex located behind Heritage Crossing Shopping Center. The Carolinian will bring 264 new apartment units to the area.



The Wilson Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC), funded by a tax district, works to promote the City's core as a walkable district with scenic and historic buildings, state-of-the-art businesses, and is in close proximity to a top-notch educational area. Downtown revitalization now includes an 1888 era Victorian house that is serving as the City's administrative offices. Downtown Wilson includes a social district which allows for customers to buy alcoholic beverages at an approved business and then take the beverage into other participating businesses. WDDC offers a Gig in the Park concert series, which attracts thousands of people to hear a variety of bands. WDDC supports a downtown farmers' market, which opened in 2010 and now attracts hundreds of shoppers every Saturday morning throughout the late spring

and summer months. The holiday season continues to draw visitors to the downtown area to see the LED lighting in the trees that line the streets. Visits to Santa's village, carriage rides, and ice skating have also proven to be popular attractions.

Whirligig Station is the largest to date redevelopment project (\$12 million) in downtown history which transformed a 64,000-square-foot former tobacco warehouse into a site that offers a combination of 94 loft apartments, retail and office space and the Whirligig Park welcome center. The renovations included adding an upper level to the interior of the warehouse which has expanded the property to 85,000-square feet. The developer sited the City's progressive plans for the Whirligig Park as a major factor in their decision to redevelop the property. Concrete pavers, a seating wall, lighting, whirligig base work, landscaping, irrigation, signage, and other accessories have all been added to supplement the park.



Pender Crossing is a \$12 million, 48-unit affordable workforce housing development to be built along Pender Street, Nash Street, and Hines Street. It is funded by \$1.2 million in low income tax credits and to be developed by Woda Cooper Companies, Inc. The development will be comprised of three 3-story buildings with one, two, and three-

bedroom units. Amenities include a community building with multipurpose space, laundry facility, fitness center and computer room. Exterior amenities will include a playground and a covered picnic area with table and grills.

Planning / Business Development

The City is home to the Upper Coastal Plains Council of Governments (UCPCOG). The UCPCOG is one of seventeen multi-county planning and development regions in the State. The UCPCOG includes a small business incubator, which targets the counties within the UCPCOG, and is housed in the downtown business district.

The City has been a major participant in a countywide strategic planning process known as Wilson Forward. The original commitment brought together local leaders in government, business, industry, education, and health care, as well as citizens to assist in projecting where the City and Wilson County is heading. The purpose of this process was to develop a plan and set goals with clear approaches to achieving those goals. The key, as with all strategic plans will be in implementing the strategies outlined in the plan.

Wilson Forward helped shape the City's creation of "Wilson Growing Together: The 2030 Comprehensive Plan." City staff worked with hundreds of citizens, business and educational leaders, and others from November 2008 through April 2010 to develop ideas for how the Wilson community should develop over the next 20 years. The comprehensive plan sets out 51 goals for Wilson, including a revitalized downtown; stronger neighborhoods; an enhanced transportation system; and improved partnerships between the City and Wilson County, Barton College, Wilson Community College and Wilson Forward. The City Council unanimously approved the 2030 Comprehensive Plan in April 2010. Discussions during the 2030 plan's development directly led to the development of the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park, the City's brownfields program, traffic improvements around Barton College and other initiatives. The 2043 Comprehensive Plan has been approved by City Council and will focus on intentional growth, connecting people and places, fostering vibrant neighborhoods, promoting economic prosperity, creating active and thriving communities and conserving green spaces. The 2043 Comprehensive Plan calls for a tiered three-year and five-year goal system with the addition of ongoing goals as resources become available.

Wilson Forward has received multiple grants from its corporate sponsors such as: Bridgestone Americas, Merck, and DLP Wilson Medical Center. Recent grants include \$200,000 from the Healthcare Foundation of Wilson to address adolescent pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, obesity, and STDs. The sponsorship, as well as continued leadership and participation of these corporations are important as Wilson Forward looks to expand upon their three initiatives: The Youth Master Plan, Beyond 21, and the Impact initiative. The Youth Master Plan is a partnership with Wilson County Schools that seeks to improve the future of our youth as they address safety, wellness, workforce development, K-12 education and out-of-school time. Beyond 21 will address the needs of adults. Groups have been formed to study unemployment and underemployment, talent retention and attraction, community leadership and civic engagement, health and wellness, elderly and aging population, and entrepreneurship in the Wilson area. The Impact Initiative is a collaborative effort with the Wilson Chamber of Commerce and Wilson Economic Development Council to offer leadership training and is designed to identify, train and deploy people with an interest in area leadership roles, including political office and service on boards or committees.

The City of Wilson participates in the EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program, which aids in the redevelopment of property that is abandoned, idle, or underused with actual or perceived environmental contamination. These funds including a recent EPA grant of \$500,000 to support additional cleanup activities for petroleum and other hazardous substances. When loans are repaid, the loan amount is returned into the fund and loaned out to other borrowers, providing an ongoing source of capital to Wilson.

Work has been completed on the US 301 corridor revitalization project with improvements to intersections, landscaping, crosswalks, sidewalks, drainage, and walking paths. The improvements were paid for by a \$10 million Federal Transportation Investment Generation Economic Recovery or TIGER grant awarded to the City. The NC Department of Transportation allocated \$6.5 million, to go along with an additional \$3 million provided by the City, and as well as an agreement for the City to perform some of the work, which provides for transportation-related needs, environmental, quality-of-life, and economic improvements for the area to encourage new investment and development. The improvements stretch along US 301 from Lipscomb Road to Black Creek Road. The bulk of the

money was used on roadway, shoulder, and curb and gutter infrastructure improvements. The City was awarded \$1.5 million in federal aid to help in the revitalization of Wilson along the 301 corridor.

City Council purchased the former Wilson Mall. The City is working on plans to redevelop the 45-acre site; part of which will be used for a new Hominy Swamp Stormwater Park.

Recreation and Tourism

The City offers various recreational and cultural opportunities for its citizens. Two large community centers and two smaller neighborhood centers are owned and operated by the City. These centers target recreation for all ages and feature both outdoor and indoor athletic areas as well as areas for social events, fitness programs, instructional, and various arts and crafts activities. The two larger centers have swimming facilities. \$1.9 million in upgrades has begun for the Reid Street Community Center. The planned upgrades include a new pool deck, a shade structure, two new outdoor basketball courts with a shelter in the middle, a hard-surface walking track, two new playgrounds, and new fencing around the current athletic field.



In the last decade, tourism spending in Wilson County has increased by nearly 58% to an all-time high of more than \$132 million dollars. This increase is attributed to the numerous facilities and events in the County. The J. Burt Gillette Athletic Complex regularly attracts regional, state, and even national sports events to the City. Since 2005, the J. Burt Gillette Athletic Complex has brought in approximately \$44–\$49 million tourism dollars. On average, the yearly amount of tourism dollars generated by the complex is about \$4.49 million. The complex includes eight lighted, regulation soccer fields, six with natural grass and two artificial turf fields. A

pavilion area with a shade structure, improved drainage and irrigation systems, sponsorship signage, and new lighting have also been added to the soccer complex which plays host to several large events each year, bringing in nearly 600 teams, 9,000 players and 18,000 spectators.

In addition to soccer, the complex is also home to a Little League facility that has gained the standing as a superior, well-run facility for hosting various tournaments. It has four lighted fields, including a showcase field that features a stadium that seats over 450 people. Funding for these upgrades was made possible by an increased occupancy tax of rental accommodations approved for Wilson County.



The complex is also home to the Truist Noah's Arc All Children's Playground, which is one of the few playgrounds



in eastern North Carolina that is designed to be used by children of all abilities, including those who use wheelchairs or other aids. A \$276,500 memorial donation from the family of Cannon Hinnant was used to fund a complete renovation of the playground, which included new shade sails, artificial turf, picnic tables, umbrellas, and a slider equipped to hold a wheelchair. Thanks to an additional \$100,000 donation from the family, construction has been completed at the new Miracle Field, which is specifically suited to provide children with intellectual and physical disabilities a place to play baseball. In addition to the playground and ball field, a 3,000-square foot All-Children's Splash Pad, which was

funded by a \$412,109 PARTF grant from the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and a City match of \$300,000, has been added to the site.

A \$5 million, 26-court pickleball facility has been added at the complex. The facility has eight covered pickleball courts, sixteen open-air pickleball courts, a shelter, bathrooms, office, walking trail and concession stand. Other additions include areas for shuffleboard, bocce, horseshoes, and croquet. The facility will be the first of its kind in the state and is expected to draw players and tournaments from across the area.

Tourism plays a fundamental role in economic growth. Wilson County consistently experiences significant growth in travel and tourism as the City's recreation sports programs, Whirligig Festival, and events such as Eyes on Main Street continue to bring people to the area. Wilson not only garners visitors from North Carolina, but also from other states in the US as well as from other countries. Come See Wilson is an app created specifically to identify areas of interest for both visitors and newcomers. Links on the app provide access to websites and directions to local businesses, restaurants, and hotels as well as information on upcoming events and weather. Six touch screen kiosks, similar to the app, have also been placed in some of the most popular destinations such as the J. Burt Gillette Athletic Complex and the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park.

The City owns and operates 28 various park and picnic areas. Other facilities include four lakes and reservoirs, a rose garden, tennis courts, an 18-hole golf course, and nine miles of walking/nature trails. It features a long-time favorite, the miniature train at the Recreation Center now draws riders as the Christmas Train of Lights. Decorations, music, Christmas cookies and hot chocolate promote the holiday spirit. The nonprofit program is funded by donations from the community and area businesses.

The Greater Wilson Rotary Park features outdoor pickle ball courts with three courts for the public to enjoy. It also has two multi-purpose sport fields. Additionally, the park includes an ADA accessible picnic shelter that can accommodate up to 40 people and has an ADA accessible ½ mile lighted trail that surrounds the park.



Work is completed on the first phase of the Hominy Creek Greenway, Wilson's first significant greenway. Flooding from Hurricane Matthew required the redesign of the pump station and the relocation of a recreation area. Improvements at Wiggins Mill include a boat ramp and docks, a shelter, walking trail, fishing dock, and parking lot which is currently ongoing. Wilson has received a \$950,000 grant from RAISE, Rebuild American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity, to conduct a feasibility and design plan to continue the greenway for nearly 4 miles along NC 42 to US 301. The City of Wilson will use more than \$7 million from The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 to develop flood control along the Hominy Creek Swamp which currently does not have a stormwater collection system.



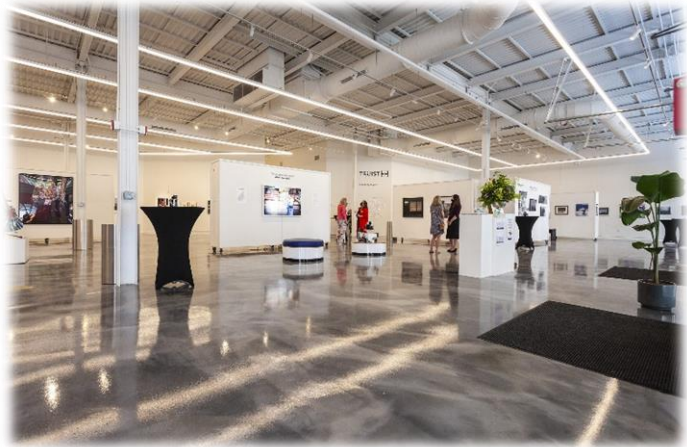
Lake Wilson Park features a 2-mile walking trail around Lake Wilson with a bridge connecting the two sides of the lake, paved parking, bathroom facilities, boat launch, paddle sports, disc golf, and picnic tables. The trail and bridge, which cost almost \$263,000, was funded in part by a \$50,000 grant from the Merck Foundation. Wilson was awarded \$1,150,000 to continue improvements of Lake Wilson from the 2023 Appropriations Act.

A 4-acre dog park added at Toisnot Park continues to be a draw for pet families. The park features separate areas for small and large dogs as well as shaded areas and obstacles

for play. Future plans for this park include the construction of a trail to connect Toisnot and Gillette parks.

Fleming Stadium, a historic baseball stadium, which once hosted baseball greats such as Ted Williams, Richie Ashburn, and Carl Yastrzemski, now serves as the home of the Wilson Tobs, a member of a summer college baseball league. The North Carolina Baseball Museum operates year-round at Fleming Stadium. The museum includes memorabilia from many of North Carolina's minor league baseball teams, both past and present, plus items from native North Carolinians who have been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Wilson Arts occupies a \$2.1 million renovated 20,000 square-foot space that houses art galleries, performing arts studios, and other programs. Wilson City Council matched a \$500,000 BB&T pledge to go along with \$600,000 that was set aside for Wilson Arts. Additional funding came from individual donors and grants from the Blue Bell Foundation and the Robert P. Holding Foundation. The new space houses a 5,000 square-foot exhibition area, a gift shop, spaces for classes, and a catering kitchen. Wilson Arts also leases the Boykin Center for Performing Arts from the City. The facility is a restored Vaudeville theater, which seats 650 and is the site of numerous plays and concerts each year. Wilson Arts received a \$150,000 grant from NEA as part of the American Rescue Plan. The money will be distributed in the community to eligible recipients to fund operations, marketing, and promotional efforts.



International photographer, Jerome Perlinghi of Wilson, annually presents Eyes on Main Street, a photo festival that reflects “main streets” from around the world. It features 100 large-scale photographs displayed along Nash Street and surrounding streets. Several of the exhibiting photographers attend the festival and offer workshops. There is live music and free workshops for children. The festival runs from early May to Labor Day. For their work, Jerome and Rosa De Perlinghi received a Gertrud S. Caraway Award of Merit from Preservation of North Carolina. The award is given in recognition to individuals or organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to historic preservation.

Imagination Station is a non-profit children's interactive science museum located in the downtown area. The mission of the museum is to create, develop, and operate an exciting and fun science-learning center for eastern North Carolina. The museum is housed in the historic Wilson Federal Courthouse and U.S. Post Office building that was constructed in 1928. It provides visitors with a quality science experience, and offers over 200 hands-on exhibits. One floor of the museum houses the N.C. Museum of the Coastal Plain.

The Oliver Nestus Freeman Round House Museum features artifacts that depict the culture and contributions of African-Americans in the Wilson community. Freeman, a stonemason, built the house in 1946. The house was restored and relocated to its current location in 2001. A \$100,000 allocation from the City was added to \$239,000 that had already been raised by museum volunteers for a 2,000 square-foot expansion of exhibit space. The new space allows for exhibits on education, medicine, athletics, government, arts, and an area dedicated to local organizations and churches. \$500,000 from the Consolidated Appropriations Act will be used to add a community room and additional museum space.



The City of Wilson has a dynamic group of future leaders that are a part of the Wilson Youth Council (WYC), one of 30 youth councils in the state that focuses on leadership development through community service. The group works on about 50 projects per year while donating more than 5,000 hours to community service. This group of more than 100 teens learns decision-making skills and teamwork as they volunteer in their communities. Teen members represent

almost every high school in Wilson including public, private, charter, early college academies, and home schooled. WYC has received state level awards, including the “NC Most Outstanding Youth Council of the Year” for 2024, 2015, 2014, 2012 and 2008. The council also received the scrapbook award for 2024 and individual members also brought home awards for “Best Volunteer”, “Most Active Council Member” and the “Growth Award”. Previous state recognitions include the “NC Member of the Year” for 2015 and 2012, and the “Most Diverse Council” for 2012. In 2015, they were also recognized with the “Service Project of the Year” for their work with the Young Athletes program at Special Olympics and the NC Whirligig Festival.

The North Carolina Whirligig Festival is Wilson’s award-winning tribute to the work of local folk artist Vollis Simpson and his whirligigs, the State’s official folk art. The festival, which began in 2004, is held in the downtown area adjacent to the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park that opened in November 2017 and displays 30 of the artist’s colossal, wind-powered, kinetic creations. The Whirligig Festival is a two-day event that attracts an average of 40,000 people to the downtown area. It features music, dance, contests, a Whirli-Kidz Zone, the 5K Whirli-Run, and vendor spaces for local artists, food vendors and non-profit organizations. It also supports arts and culture in the Wilson area and provides scholarships for children to attend the Wilson Whirligig Festival Summer Camp.



The whirligigs were already considered the region’s top tourist attraction when they were on display in a farm field outside the city limits; now the park has become an important cultural attraction for visitors on both a statewide and national level.

The Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park and Museum was approved as a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt non-profit organization. Funding for the revitalization of the whirligigs was provided by local businesses and private donations. A 4,000 square foot multipurpose shelter was added along South Street. The open-air shelter is the home of the Wilson Farmers & Artisan Market and can also be used for numerous outdoor activities. The revitalization of the downtown area, the restoration of the

whirligigs, and the 25 jobs created by the work, have been included as a case study in a book by the National Endowment for the Arts, “How to Do Creative Placemaking.” The park has also won state and national acclaim from the American Planning Association as it was awarded the Great Places People’s Choice Award for 2019.

COMMUNITY FACTS AND STATISTICS

Miscellaneous Statistical Information

(Information as of June 30, 2024)

(*As of February 2025)

Year Established

Wilson	1849
Wilson County	1855

Size (square miles)

Wilson	32.0
Wilson County	373.0

Climate per US Climate Data

Average Annual High Temperature	72.0F
Average Annual Low Temperature	50.1F
Average Annual Rainfall (inches)	47.04
Average Annual Snowfall (inches)	1.0

Police Protection

Number of Stations	1
Number of Substations	7
Number of Police Personnel (Sworn)*	110

Fire Protection

Number of Stations	5
Number of Fire Personnel (Sworn)*	85
ISO Rating	1

Culture & Recreation

Parks	28
Park Acreage	454

Other Recreational Facilities

Wedgewood Public Golf Course	187 acres
Recreational reservoirs (number)	4
Recreational reservoirs (water acreage)	3,000

Street

Miles of Streets	239
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Electric

Number of Consumers	37,521
Average Daily Usage	3,137,695 KWH
Miles of Distribution Lines*	1,369

Gas

Number of Consumers	13,633
Average Daily Usage	4,085,806 cu. ft.
Miles of Distribution Lines*	411

Water

Number of Consumers	23,561
Average Daily Usage	8.61 MGD
Miles of Distribution Lines*	407

Sewer

Average Daily Flow	7.49 MGD
Miles of Distribution Lines*	360

Sanitation

Annual Refuse Collected	39,974 tons
Annual Recyclables Collected	10,001 tons
Yard waste/leaf collection	45,442 tons

Public Transportation

On demand rideshare service	20 minivans
Ridership	228,833

Broadband

Number of Consumers	13,023
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Stormwater Management

Miles of drainage cleaned	16.52
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COMMUNITY FACTS AND STATISTICS

Demographic Information

(Information is based on U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce; City of Wilson, Wilson Economic Development Council
(Unless otherwise indicated)

Population (2024 US Census Estimates)

City of Wilson	47,740
Wilson County	79,958

Median Household Income (2023 projection by US Census) \$47,294

Housing Occupancy (2023 projection by US Census)

Total Housing Units	37,524
Homeownership Rate	59.1%

Age (2024 projection by NC Dept. of Commerce)

Percent

Under 19	25.5
19-24	6.8
25-54	36.8
55-64	13.1
Over 65 years	17.8

Education Attainment (2023 US Census Estimates)

High School Graduate or Equivalency Bachelor's Degree or Higher	84.4 22.8
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Race (2023 US Census Estimates)

Percent

White/Caucasian	36.3
Black/African-American	49.2
Asian	1.3
Hispanic	11.3

Sex (2023 US Census Estimates)

Percent

Female	53.5
Male	46.5



COMMUNITY FACTS AND STATISTICS

Economic Information

Tax Rates

Tax Valuation – 2025-2026 (est.) - City	\$6,639,297,680
2025-2026 Tax Rate/\$100 Valuation	
City	.525
County	.595

Wilson County Employment by Industry (2023)

Sector

Construction	3,103
Manufacturing	7,503
Wholesale Trade	1,302
Retail Trade	4,040
Transportation and Warehousing	946
Information	173
Finance and Insurance	1,790
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	306
Professional and Technical Services	930
Administrative and Waste Services	1,714
Educational Services	2,329
Health Care and Social Assistance	4,531
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	284
Accommodation and Food Services	3,142
Other Services (Ex. Public Administration)	774
Public Administration	2,183

Source: Department of Commerce – Website

Major Employers in Wilson City

Name of Business	Employment Range	Business Type
Truist (formerly BB&T)	2,200	Financial Activities
Wilson County Schools	1,500	Education
Collins (formerly UTC) Aerospace Systems	1,100	Manufacturing
NC Dept. of Health & Human Resources	917	Public Administration
Wilson Medical Center	900	Health Care
City of Wilson	764	Public Administration
County of Wilson	752	Public Administration
Smithfield Packaged Meats Corp.	670	Manufacturing
Alliance One	500	Manufacturing
Fresenius Kabi	400	Manufacturing

Source: Wilson Economic Development Council, Wilson Times, and Employer Reporting. Reports may include full-time, part-time, contract and seasonal employment numbers, which may vary.