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**BUSINESS IN HOKE COUNTY**

# 401 CORRIDOR



**PULSE**



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Construction is underway on a housing complex along U.S. 401. With 4 lanes, and now other infrastructure improvements, the highway continues to attract growth.

# Without Highway 401, where would Hoke be?

**Without Highway 401, where would Hoke County be today?**  
 With Highway 401, where will Hoke County go tomorrow?

The four lanes of Highway 401 that span the 22.6 miles between the Raeford city limit and the Cumberland/Fayetteville line have become the lifeline of Hoke

County. Ever since the highway was widened to four lanes in the early 1990s, the road has served as the major connector between Hoke County and the rest of the world – a direct line to Fayetteville and, from Fayetteville, to Interstate 95 and points throughout the state and beyond.

Commuters travel it daily, many of them military members going from their homes in Hoke to their jobs on Fort Bragg. FedEx trucks roll along it on the way to the shipping hub. Ambulances rush past on it, sirens wailing as they hurry to get patients to the emergency rooms at Hoke County’s two hospitals.

The highway is known to Hoke residents as the fastest way to get around the eastern part of the county (except, perhaps, at rush hour). However, for economic developers and local elected officials, Highway 401 has held special significance for

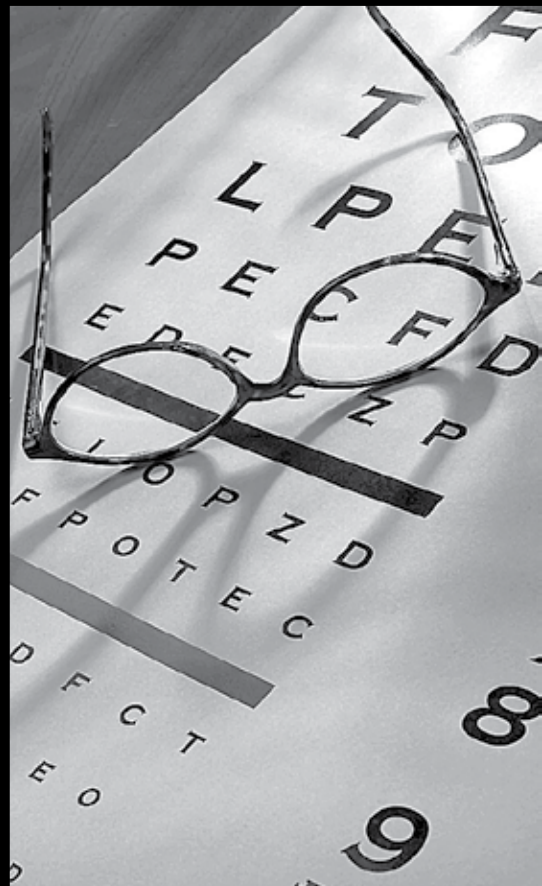
the last decade: a major highway in close proximity to the population boom at Fort Bragg, a corridor for trade and industry as well as travel, the artery that could bring prosperity into Hoke – or the vein that could see missed opportunities leave for another location.

The Highway 401 corridor, as the road and the property around it is known to developers, is the hottest property in Hoke County today. Both Cape Fear Valley and FirstHealth of the Carolinas chose to build on the highway. The corridor has become an entity of its own, given the highest priority with regards to expanding utilities service and marketed to companies as a destination for future success.

In the 2016 issue of the Pulse, we look at what the Highway 401 corridor is, what it means to Hoke County, and where it could eventually take us.

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In a way Walmart started it all.

# From the year 2000, it's been about the 401 corridor

*What's so special about a development corridor? What sets it apart and makes it a viable part of a community's future growth? Hoke County Economic Development Director Don Porter talks about the Highway 401 corridor, why it matters, and what's still to come for all of Hoke.*

**W**hat exactly is a development corridor, anyway?

"A corridor is a section of your county that is designated for a certain purpose," according to economic development director Don Porter.

"In this case, we're talking about our 401 corridor, that's from a standpoint of business. The good thing about that corridor is going back as far as the 2000 census, that corridor has always been identified by the state, the Census Bureau really, as among the fastest-growing corridors in the state of North Carolina and I don't think that's changed since 2000," he said.

Hoke County's Highway 401 corridor has seen the benefits of both long-range planning and the convergence of a number of factors both in and outside of the county. Ever since the United States Army took a large chunk of the northern part of the county for the Fort Bragg military reservation in the early 1900s, Hoke has been closely tied to the base and the neighboring city of Fayetteville. For many years, Raeford residents have spoken of the two cities "growing together" with businesses and housing springing up in the miles between them.

When BRAC happened, it seemed something long prophesied was coming to pass. The close proximity to Fort Bragg and Fayetteville put Hoke County – especially the 401 corridor – in the bulls-eye for rapid development.

"It's sitting right there at Fort Bragg. Fort Bragg is in that corridor when you're looking north. I don't see that changing any time soon," he said.

Up until now, the greatest amount of growth has been in residential housing, spurring concerns from some residents that Hoke County was in danger of becoming a bedroom community for Fayetteville. A lower tax rate than surrounding areas and lots of available property helped spur a housing boom along the 401 corridor.

That can be a good thing, because commercial development, especially retail stores and restaurants, wants to locate in communities where there are enough customers to support those businesses. When Hoke officials made a bid to get Walmart to locate here about 15 years ago, the county lost out because of its lower population; the Walmart went to Gillis Hill.

A handful of years later, after

BRAC, Walmart reconsidered and built its second store on the Highway 401 corridor, this time in Hoke County.

The same is going to be true of other businesses, Porter said.

"In due time, it could be two years, three years, five years I'm sure, the commercial piece is going to catch up with the residential piece," he said. "Obviously, our wastewater treatment plant is going to play a major part in that."

## Planning for the future

Even before BRAC, county leaders saw the potential for growth and development in the 401 corridor. It was about 15 years ago that county leaders started seriously discussing the potential for construction along the corridor, Porter said. It was one necessary piece of encouraging business in eastern Hoke County.

"We saw something for the greater good. We didn't know when it would happen," he said.

A designated corridor is treated differently than other parts of a community. It's something that Porter and other county officials can use to market the county to companies that are looking for a place to open their doors.

"First of all, the geographic advantage of it, where it's situated, and the infrastructure. That's the bottom line," he said.

Looking back at the early days of development of the corridor, it was the FedEx shipping hub that kick-started the growth before BRAC

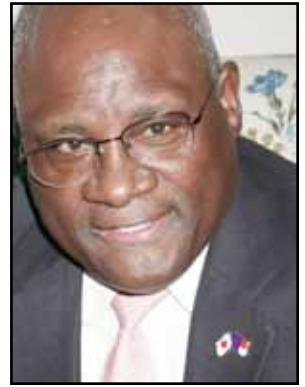
even began. It was FedEx that first got Hoke leaders looking at putting in a sewer line along the corridor, both for the sake of that company and for what they hoped would be future development.

"We ended up doing the right thing," Porter said. "Now that those two hospitals have been built out there, now that they're doing well, you're going to see more, see new ground being broken."

Porter said there are companies interested in moving to Hoke, but none of the projects are at a point that he can announce them. There's a lot of secrecy surrounding upcoming development because the companies don't like word to get out about their business plans before they make a final decision.

Porter said he can disclose that there's at least one more shopping center planning to build on Highway 401 in the near future, in addition to the shopping center already under development near Stone Gables apartments.

However, it's not just about new construction, but about what companies actually open in those buildings, Porter said.



Don Porter

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## Two shopping centers likely in corridor

The Highway 401 corridor will get at least one, and more likely two, new shopping centers in the near future, with one already in progress near the Stone Gables apartments close to the intersection of Highway 401 and Pittman Grove Church Road.

In December, the Hoke County commissioners approved a permit for a new 16-unit shopping center that has two restaurants and a clothing store already confirmed as tenants, according to the developer. Township Developers, LLC of Pembroke plans to build a 22,400-square-foot shopping center on a 3.36-acre parcel of property.

The plans have space for 16 stores, but it's a "flex" building and the space can be changed during the development process to suit the new possible tenants' needs.

It's too early to say exactly what stores will locate in the

building, and construction isn't in full swing yet at the site.

Hoke residents will also get a second shopping center in the Highway 401 corridor sometime in the next months, with economic development officials able to confirm that at least one more developer is working on bringing that project to the commission for permit approval.

The shopping center's developers will have to submit more detailed plans as they get closer to beginning construction. Retail companies and restaurants often do not announce their plans far in advance of opening a new storefront, so it may be some time before residents learn what new offerings Hoke will be getting.

The project will be completed by Metcon, a company based out of Pembroke that has worked on multiple major projects in Hoke County and throughout the region.

## Porter

"We don't just want shopping centers...you want a nice shopping center, you want a shopping center with stuff in it that you're going to be proud and glad to spend your money on here in Hoke County, and not have to go further out to buy," he said. "We have to make sure our data is up to date. You can't just have a celebration because someone wants to put a shopping center in. You celebrate when you see the names of the stores that are coming. In due time, I think we're going to see some upscale restaurants out there."

The economic development director predicted that, before Hoke sees upscale dining options, more fast food chains are likely to pop up.

"People don't like to hear this, but I think you'll see a little bit more of what's over on this end of 401 like McDonald's, something down there, but you have to start somewhere," Porter said.

For the county to attract nice restaurants and businesses, the best thing people can do is continue to support the existing shops, he said.

As for his own focus for marketing the 401 corridor and the rest of Hoke County, it's time to return to the classroom and crunch some numbers.

### What comes next?

"We have got to go back now and look at all of our data," Porter said.

For the last decade, Hoke's rapid expansion has changed its demographics dramatically. The population nearly doubled in a short time. In order to attract them, officials need to know accurate demographic

information about Hoke County.

Companies looking for a new place to call home look closely at factors like population size, average level of education, median income and other figures, Porter said. Providing that information in an easily accessible way can make a big difference.

"When they make their decision to come here, they're going to make sure they can make a profit. Therefore, we have to make sure that our data's right from the standpoint of our websites, to make sure people can go on there and check it out to make sure exactly what's here," he said.

Fortunately, Hoke's unemployment, median income and other numbers have been improving over the last two decades, Porter said. There's one aspect, however, that still needs work: the workforce itself.

"The two long poles in the tent were incentives and buildings and sites. Well, nowadays, that order of priority has flipped. The most important thing now is workforce development. We need smart people, educated, trained...there is a gap between the jobs and the skills that we have versus ones that we need," Porter said. "That has to be the focus. When they come in the area, they want to know what the education levels are. Everybody doesn't need a four-year degree, but they do need some certification skills and that's where we're going now."

Hoke has access to "one of the best community colleges in the state" in Sandhills Community Col-  
(Continued on page 6)

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# Beans Gone Wild's business plan:

What makes the Highway 401 corridor a good place for businesses to open their doors? One local family is planning to start their first venture in the Walmart shopping center at the corner of Highway 401 and Club Pond Road, where many other businesses including a gym, tax office and hair salon have al-

ready moved in. For the McPhauls, it really was all about location, location, location.

**B**eans Gone Wild" is an eye-catching name for a coffee shop, and that's exactly what the McPhaul family of Raeford is counting on – along with

heavy foot traffic, a wide variety of coffees and entertainment offerings – to help make their new venture a success.

The new coffee shop, set to open in late February or early March, is the brainchild of Shontavia McPhaul, a college student, mother and Hoke County High School graduate. McPhaul conceived the idea last year and for the last five months has worked with her family to put together a business plan full of excitement and lots of caffeine.

How does she manage to juggle opening her own business while being a mom and student?

"God," she said with a laugh.

While Beans Gone Wild is a new venture, it's a concept that McPhaul and her sister, Vontavia McPhaul, said will hopefully fill a long-standing need in the community. Having grown up in Hoke County, she said, it was hard as a youth to find

anything fun to do locally without going to nearby Fayetteville. A coffee shop can be a welcoming place for people of all ages to hang out and enjoy some peace and quiet, or socialize with their friends.

"I always wanted a coffee lounge and we have nothing like that her. We don't have any kind of lounge for the youth," McPhaul said.

**Why the corridor?**

When she was looking for a location to open up her first business, it was proximity to a large number of people that was the deciding factor in McPhaul's decision to rent space in the shopping center on Highway 401.

"(We looked for) a place where a lot of people would be and that's the perfect spot. There are thousands of people who go to Walmart every day; they ride right past us. That's perfect," she said. "And then we

## Porter

(Continued from page 5)

lege, and the college's partnerships with economic development efforts and local companies has been – and will continue to be – an important factor, Porter said.

"We have to keep them at the forefront," he said. "If you don't have a quality workforce, that can send them to another community, that and a lack of infrastructure."

Bringing new companies and jobs to Hoke County is a big part of his work. Maintaining good relationships with existing industries is, too, as losing companies means losing jobs. Fortunately that hasn't been much of an issue, with one notable exception, Porter said.

"When you look at our industry, we've been able to maintain (existing companies)...the only gutshot we've had was House of Raeford, and if you talk to the right people around here, I don't think that would surprise a lot of folks. We're so thankful for all they did all those years, but we have a real gem in Butterball," he said. "We always want new industry because that's

new tax revenue to help the ones that are here, but if we spend all our time trying to catch that one big fish and all your existing industries are going out the back door, you're not doing too well."

The future of eastern Hoke County is still unfolding, but what about the rest of the county? Will western Hoke County ever see the same benefits of growth that the eastern side has experienced?

It's a long-term goal, Porter said.

"I'm 70 years old. I don't know if I'll see it while I'm here, but we would like to see the same type of growth on the western side. Just because folks don't see that emphasis on it doesn't mean that we're not thinking about it or that we don't want to see the same growth (there)," he said.

In the end, economic development is a community-wide effort, Porter said.

"I'm the guy that may be the face of the organization, and my economic development board and our local elected officials, all of us may be the ones that (are visible)...at the end of the day, (it's) all of us."



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# excitement and caffeine

have the gym right there beside us.”

McPhaul envisions the shop as a stop for people after the gym, or a meet-up location for teens after school and on weekends, or a place where people traveling to work along Highway 401 can stop in the mornings and grab some coffee and a homemade pastry.

Beans Gone Wild will have something for everyone, she said.

“We want people to come and relax and read. We’ll have a place for kids, for everybody, for college students. We’ll have live music and poetry, that’s going to be offered Friday and Saturday nights,” McPhaul said.

A polished wooden stage sits at the ready in the middle of the shop, ready and waiting for musicians, poets and other artists to come and perform. Comfortable couches, tables and chairs line the walls, making a cozy and inviting space.

The coffee shop will be staffed by a barista and will offer a wide variety of drinks and snacks, some of which will be unique to the business.

“We’re going to have coffee from all over the world, we’re going to have our own house blend, and different pastries, smoothies... something to cater to everybody, healthy drinks. We do want to sell oatmeal in the mornings,” McPhaul said.

The shop will hopefully be a draw to keep people in Hoke County. There aren’t many local options for people looking for a place to spend some time in a casual environment, especially for young people, McPhaul said.

“We have nothing here for our youth, you have to go to Fayetteville for everything, and we wanted to have a place here where our people can come without having to venture outside the city,” she said.

## New development

It took months of research and hard work to bring Beans Gone Wild from concept to reality. In the last weeks of February, the family was hard at work uncapping drink syrup bottles and preparing the coffee-making equipment ahead of the grand opening.

There wasn’t anything in particular that proved to be a roadblock to progressing toward opening their new business, but the permitting process did turn out to be complicated and time-consuming.

“It was a lot more tedious than we thought; it was not as straightforward as we wanted it to be,” McPhaul said.

“But nothing too difficult,” she added.

The family plans to run the shop

*“There are thousands of people who go to Walmart every day; they ride right past us. That’s perfect.”* – Shontavia McPhaul, owner of Beans Gone Wild coffee shop

themselves, at least at first.

“As we grow, we might have to hire outside, but right now, we’re fully staffed,” McPhaul said.

While they’re still working on opening the first storefront, the Beans Gone Wild name brand could eventually be serving customers in more than one location. They hope to eventually branch out with other stores.

What advice would McPhaul offer to others who hope to open their own business?

“Be it before you see it. You have to envision it before it comes true,” she said.


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The McPhaul family has been hard at work getting the new coffee shop ready to open.



The polished wooden counter in Beans Gone Wild was made by hand and will be serving customers soon.

# For LREMC, moving to corridor was logical step

*The Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation has about 14,000 customers in Hoke County, many of them in eastern Hoke. When it came time to consider building a new customer service center, the company's leadership didn't hesitate to break ground on a site in the Highway 401 corridor. LREMC's experience as a (non-profit) business is one example of how residential growth can influence commercial growth, and why the 401 corridor is an attractive place for companies to build.*

**S**andy Grove Middle was the first LEED-certified school in Hoke County, but Lumbee River EMC's new local headquarters will go down in the history books as the first LEED Platinum net-positive utility structure in the entire United States.

From the solar panels on the roof and in a nearby field to the geothermal heating and cooling system, the \$6.9 million investment was constructed not only to provide service for customers but also to be a living laboratory. But the main reason LREMC officials decided to close their other two locations in Hoke County and shift a lot of resources to the new facility was because of the draw of the Highway 401 corridor, and how the county's growth has impacted the company's business.

Previously, the work crews that installed and maintained power lines for the county were based

in Red Springs, according to company marketing and economic development director Walter White. The line crews were coming into eastern Hoke more and more to install lines in new subdivisions in the area, and also returned to perform maintenance or replace lines taken down in storms.

Eventually, it became clear that it would be easier to have them stationed in the area, White said.

"It's kind of a central location in the middle of everything that's going on," he said.

If the environmentally friendly setup sounds familiar, it's because the same company that worked to engineer Sandy Grove Middle's cutting-edge technology also worked to build the LREMC facility. Like the middle school, the new LREMC building is also an opportunity for people to learn about new energy technology.

"This is a building that we use not only to provide service to our membership, but also an opportunity to provide some educational opportunities to folks about various technologies," White said.

The building itself is designed with self-dimming lights and a wifi-enabled technology conference center that allows workers in the field to perform teleconferencing with people in the office to more quickly diagnosed and fix problems. The building also has redundant energy systems including natural gas and typical electric service so that in the event of a storm, the company will



The new North Center on Highway 401 celebrated its open house last week. The facility represents a \$6.9 million investment for the company.

have power to help keep customers' lights on, too.

"We do a little bit of everything from here. We do new construction,

we do maintenance, we respond to outages from here. Everything that we do from our corporate office in Red Springs, we do from this facil-



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ity,” White said.

The facility has a warehouse attached that stores equipment like replacement transformers and other

Shining a light

LREMC has been around since 1940 and actually got its start in Hoke County. The cooperative has about 51,900 customers total in several counties in the region. Its headquarters is still in Red Springs, with other offices in Laurinburg, Lumberton and Fairmont.

LREMC doesn't produce its own energy. Like other cooperatives, it buys its energy from a larger producer – in this case, Duke Energy.

The cooperative members own LREMC. That means the business can operate in a different way, with a focus on reinvesting into the community, White said.

LREMC works to be active in the community. The cooperative was able to provide over \$1 million in USDA funding for the county's sewer expansion project, helping to bring a different kind of utility

service than the one it typically provides to Hoke County. County officials hope that the expanded sewer and wastewater treatment plant will help bring more economic development to Hoke in the near future.

In return, that's good for LREMC, White said.

“From an economic development standpoint, we try to stay in touch with our communities we serve. Obviously if the community grows, we grow,” he said.

“It's real rewarding being able to see the quality of life for everybody in Hoke County raising up as a result of our activities, knowing people are able to get off failing septic systems and things like that, providing quality drinking water to people who might not have had it before. It also provides the ability for economic development, for jobs to appear and things like that, so this is all great from a company standpoint.”

Right now the cooperative is working with Puppy Creek Fire Department to help the department

get a new ladder truck to provide fire protection to the new, taller buildings in the eastern part of the county.

“That saves the people in our area about \$750,000 a year in home insurance, having the quality of fire protection we have through that fire department,” White said.

All things considered, the fu-

ture is bright for LREMC in Hoke County. The cooperative just celebrated its 75th anniversary last year, and plans to stay going strong for many more years to come.

“We started out providing service in a very rural (area), it was farmers and farmhouses, and obviously now we're serving the 401 corridor,” White said.



The new facility has some cutting-edge technology including solar panels and geothermal heating and cooling.

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# Why is sewer service so important?

*Many people don't realize utility development is closely connected to economic development, until a municipality begins work on its own wastewater treatment plant and discussion begins on where to put the lines so they will offer the greatest benefit to businesses and homes. The Hoke County Board of Commissioners worked for the better part of a decade to get approval and financing and finally complete construction on the county's new wastewater treatment plant. The facility got up and running late last year under contract with Envirolink, a utilities management company.*

**W**hen the Hoke County Board of Commissioners lifted the first shovelfuls of dirt at the site near Rockfish Creek destined to become the county's first wastewater treatment plant, it was the beginning of

the end of a long road blocked at times by bureaucratic red tape and funding difficulties.

Commissioners worked on the \$18 million sewer project for more than six years before they were able to dig their ceremonial shovels into the ground to kick off the construction project in August 2014, with the hopes that providing sewer service to more parts of the county would encourage further growth, especially commercial and industrial expansion. The county's new treatment plant started operating in late 2015 and today is online with plenty of capacity to provide service.

But why is sewer service so important to economic development? And what is its relationship to the Highway 401 corridor?

#### A long process

Principal engineer Adam Kiker



Now open: the wastewater treatment plant.

of LKC Engineering, based in Aberdeen, has worked with the county for the last three years on planning and overseeing the construction of the wastewater treatment plant and sewer lines.

"Our firm was hired in 2013 to provide construction management and construction services for what the county calls the Phase 1B sewer project, which is just a fancy name for it, the wastewater treatment plant and the regional sewer collection system to serve that corridor," Kiker said.

The county started working toward the wastewater plant almost a decade ago now, shortly after the growth from the Base Realignment and Closure Act started making its presence known in the eastern part of the county. Officials wanted to deal with what was coming and plan for the future needs, at a time when most of the homes and businesses were forced to use septic systems.

"It was a combination of reacting to and planning for what was going on in that part of Hoke County, it wasn't just the 401 corridor, and they put this project together. It was controlling their own destiny with this sewer system and the benefit of owning and operating a treatment plant, and they began to formulate a project of this size," Kiker said.

The wastewater treatment plant the commissioners approved is able to process about 1.5 million gallons of wastewater a day, and the expansion added over 10 miles of sewer line to the county's existing infrastructure.

There were a few hurdles – common for projects like this one, Kiker said – but in the end, the county got its new treatment plant. From an engineering viewpoint, the facility is strong and built to last and also expandable if the county outgrows its capacity in the future, he said.

#### Relationship to development

Hoke and Raeford officials have repeatedly expressed their hopes that expanded utilities service will attract new development, especially commercial and industrial development, in the county. Building the new treatment plant has certainly put Hoke in position to benefit from that, Kiker said.

"I think most folks will agree that strong water and infrastructure is a foundation for economic growth," he said. "In our opinion, Hoke County is well poised to attract businesses along that corridor. They have the utilities available. I think that the highway infrastructure is strong in that area, and it's not too far from Fayetteville's airports." *(Continued on page 12)*

## ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS



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The waste treatment plant, on Ellis Road in Arabia.

## Why is sewer service so important?

(Continued from page 11)

There's also access to natural gas and railway service in the area, key things that industries like, Kiker said.

Two of the county's first and largest customers for the new system are the FirstHealth and Cape Fear Valley Hoke hospitals, both located in the heart of the Highway 401 corridor.

"Specifically to the 401 corridor, just from a utilities standpoint, I think that the county recognized what was coming and the county also had the foresight to recognize that Hoke County is not an urban county...however, there was no denying that that part, the northeastern corner of the county, was going to become an urban corridor," Kiker said.

Predicting the growth to come, county leaders designated the corridor part of an "urban services area." An urban services area is defined as "areas in and around existing communities which are most suitable for urban development and capable of being provided with a full range of urban services. The urban service area boundaries represent the outer limits of planned urban growth over a long-term period," according to the Capital Area Regional Planning company.

The commissioners felt that having hundreds, if not thousands, of homes and businesses building in the area and putting in septic tanks for each new development was not the best possible outcome, Kiker said.

A big reason for that is that providing utility services in an area is a big draw for economic development. Companies that are looking

to locate to an area – whether it's a restaurant, shopping center, professional office building, or other type of business – have to have access to utilities. Being able to hook on to a municipality's sewer service is an easy way to add a checkmark on the list of reasons to choose a certain location to open a new business or construct a housing development.

"As businesses have come and as they continue to come, sewer is close by," Kiker said.

### A unique, but familiar, situation

Hoke County is unique in its explosive growth, which for several years had it at the top of the list of fastest-growing counties not only in North Carolina but also in the entire United States.

"The type of growth that Hoke County has experienced is not very common, especially in what was for years a predominantly rural county," Kiker said.

Some cities in the areas of Mecklenburg and Wake counties have experienced tremendous growth over the last decade, too, but it wasn't spurred by a single event that drove the population up at a rapid pace.

Investing in the infrastructure to support an urban services area could have positives for the environment, too.

"It's an area of Hoke County where they intend to have more urban services. They would like to prevent private septic systems from going in. There's lots of environmental benefits to that, and land planning benefits to having public sewer," Kiker said. "They wanted that area of Hoke County to have stronger public infrastructure."

Now, the plant is fully operational and has been up and running since October 2015. The commissioners added a last-minute design change to the plant that pushed its construction time over by a few months, in the hopes that the addition will save the county money further down the line. The engineering company was able to use about \$800,000 in grant money left over in the contingency fund, so that the county didn't end up having to return the unused funds to the grantor,

to pay for the belt press.

"As the community grows, it will save the county considerable dollars every year in operational costs," Kiker said.

The system is built with additional expansion in mind further down the road, and for many people in eastern Hoke County who are still on septic tanks, the question is now where additional sewer lines will go, and when they'll be added.

The wastewater plant is the first piece of the puzzle, Kiker said.

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## Hoke hospitals anchor growth

After years of planning, court battles and finally construction, Hoke County finally has its long-awaited hospitals.

Cape Fear Valley Health's Hoke hospital at the Health Pavilion opened in 2015 and this month celebrates its one-year anniversary of providing emergency services and inpatient care to Hoke residents. The facility's outpatient offices have been providing everything from primary care to pharmacy services for much longer.

While the 24-hour emergency room and 48-bed inpatient section is open, one part of the hospital is still a work in progress. The labor and delivery floor has yet to open due to difficulties in finding the right staff members to provide care to new mothers and their infants.

FirstHealth of the Carolinas' Hoke County campus hospital opened in October 2013, and besides emergency treatment and inpatient care, it also offers a wide variety of outpatient services. From a wound care center and primary doctors' offices to an operating room for routine surgeries, the hospital is able to help keep Hoke residents healthy.

Economic development officials predict that additional private healthcare offices will begin to build new facilities in the area around the hospitals. Cape Fear Orthopedics and Rainbow Pediatrics are two of the businesses that have moved into the Sky Center office building next to the Paraclete XP wind tunnel, and a dentist's office is planning to build a new center in the vicinity, too, officials reported.

## Butterball: A new turkey in town

Lossing the House of Raeford's operations in Hoke County was what county economic developer Don Porter described as a "gut shot" to the local economy. The slaughterhouse, which closed in 2013, and then the further processing plant, which closed in late 2014, provided nearly 1,500 jobs to people in Hoke and surrounding counties for decades before the company decided to restructure its operations and begin focusing on producing chickens instead of turkeys.

However, a new poultry giant stepped up to the table in 2015.

The Butterball company bought the further processing plant in February of last year, and immediately set to work renovating the facility. The company initially announced plans to invest about \$26 million into the plant and create about 350 jobs but, later in the year, revised those numbers upward.

"When all is said and done on this first phase, and I will tell you it is a first phase, we will have put close to \$55 million into this facility," Butterball Chief Operations Officer Joe Nally said in November 2015.

The company decided to add additional processing lines to the local facility, which also meant more new jobs for the area. Eventually, the plant will provide between 500 and 600 jobs.

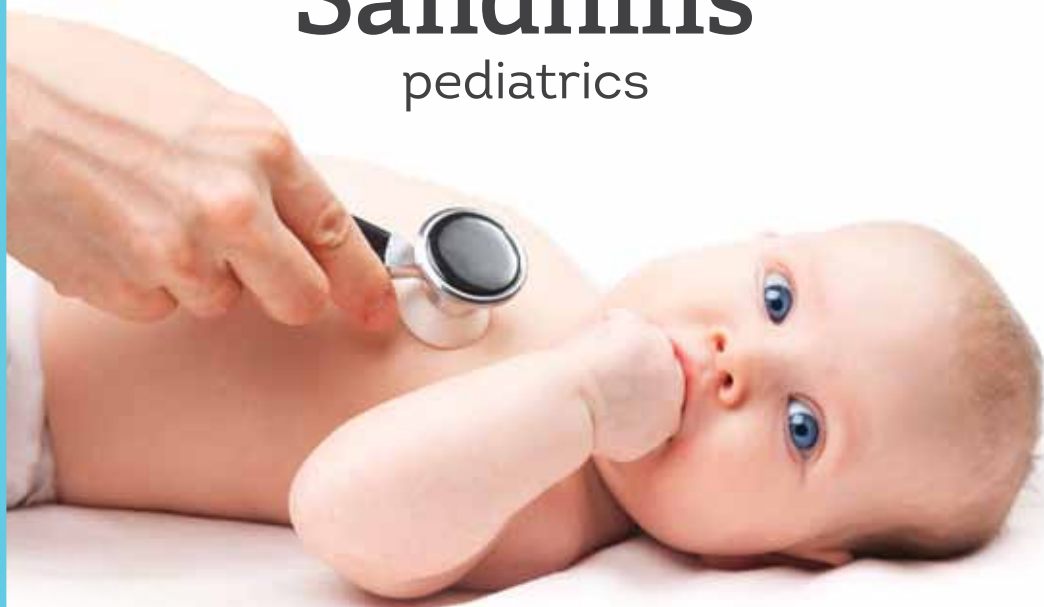
The company also signed on as a major sponsor of the first-annual North Carolina Poultry Festival, held in September 2015 – the evolved version of the former North Carolina Turkey Festival.

The company made such a positive impact in the community when it moved in that the Lumbee River EMC presented Butterball with an award for its dedication, even though it has been operating the plant in Hoke County for less than a year.



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Tyton Biofuels bought the plant two years ago and operated it for a few months before halting production.

## Biofuel plant once again goes dark

When the Tyton energy company based out of Danville, Virginia bought North Carolina's first ethanol plant in 2014 for a fraction of its original cost to build, the company announced plans to work with Cross Creek Seed to develop a strain of nicotine-free tobacco to use as a feed stock to make biofuel products.

While that's still a project in development, the company invested money and manpower into getting the facility up and running again, eventually restarting biofuel production several months ago using the typical corn feedstock that its predecessor, Clean Burn Fuels, worked with.

However, in January the company ran into some of the same issues that the original plant owner experienced. High natural gas prices, high corn prices and low gasoline

prices – and a bad year for local corn farmers – added up to financial difficulties, and Tyton Biofuels laid off about half its staff and idled the plant.

It's not a permanent closure, however, according to plant manager Richard Brehm. The company does plan to restart production at some point in the future and may be able to hire back some of its staff.

"We deeply regret the necessity of taking this action. We hope that we may be able to return to normal operations in the near term at which time we will consider reemploying Raeford staff that are being laid off should they be available," Brehm wrote in a letter to employees in January. "We continue to believe in the long term potential for the Raeford facility and the economic potential for ethanol in North Carolina."

## Useful local phone numbers

Dial 911 for emergencies  
Hoke County Government Offices: 875-8751  
Raeford Government Offices: 875-8161  
Hoke County Sheriff's Office: 875-5111  
Raeford Police Department: 875-4251  
Hoke County Public Schools:

875-4106  
Parks and Recreation: 875-4035  
Hoke County Public Library: 875-2502  
Senior Services: 875-8588  
FirstHealth Center for Health and Fitness: 904-7400  
Hoke Area Transportation Service: 875-8696

## Raeford Eye Clinic marks 30 years

Optometrist Dr. Tom Inman and his staff at Raeford Eye Clinic have been providing eye care for Hoke County residents for many years and in 2016 will celebrate a milestone anniversary.

Inman has worked as an optometrist for almost 35 years now, and he founded the local clinic in 1986. He and his staff have now been in business providing exams, glasses and eye health care services for three decades.

Raeford Eye Clinic first got its start in a small office that originally belonged to Dr. Bob Townsend. Over the years, the clinic has

expanded its services and clientele enough that Inman had to move to a much larger space on Main Street in Raeford.

The practice sees more than 40 people per day and can address a wide range of ailments, including monitoring for glaucoma and providing glasses or contact lenses for people with vision trouble.



Optometrist Dr. Tom Inman and optician Suzanne Balfour work with advanced technology to diagnose eye problems.

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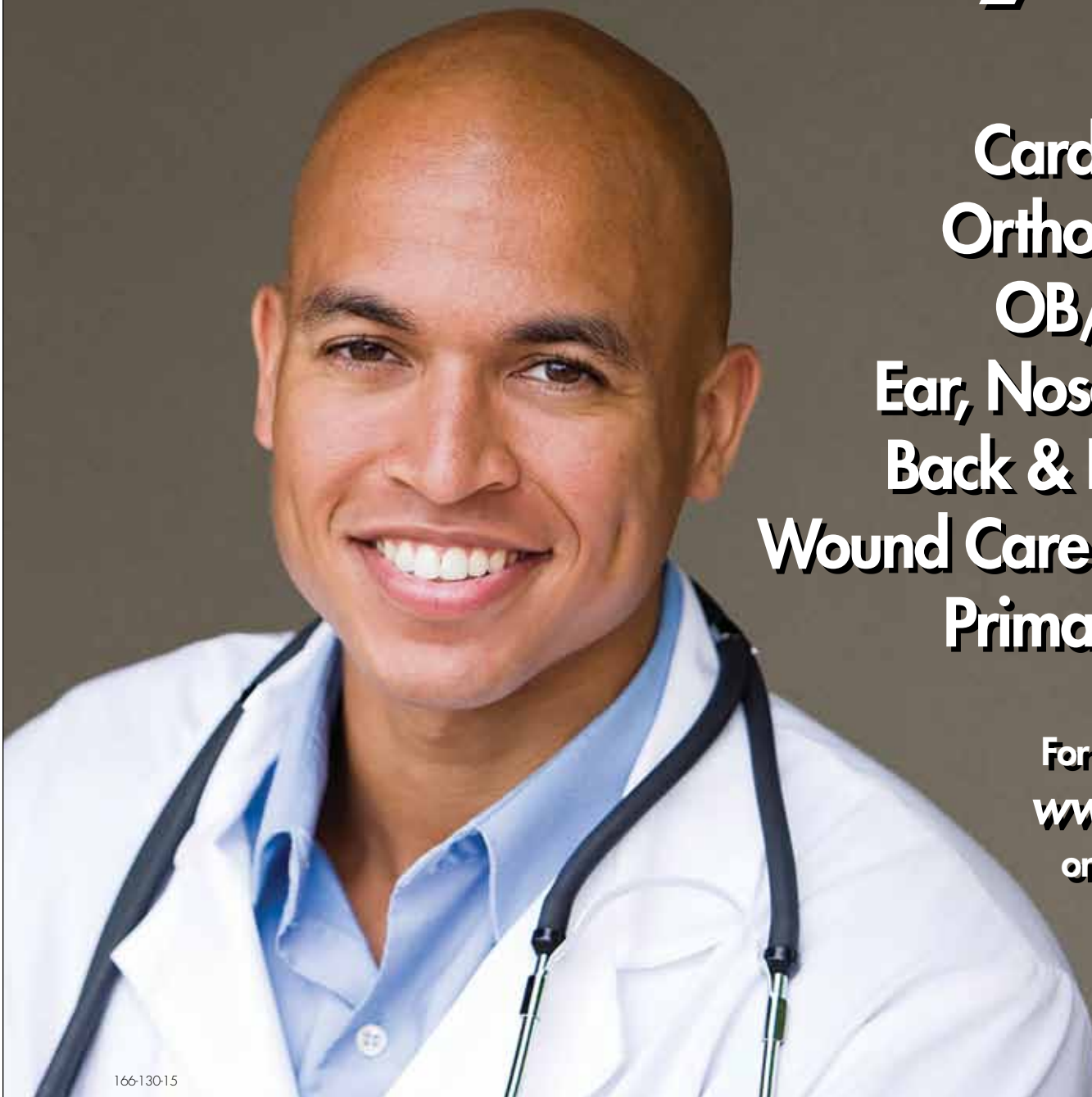
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Aberdeen Coca Cola	Dept. of Corrections	Hoke County Native Americans	New Beginnings Praise & Worship	Rockfish Outdoor Center
Affairs of the Family	Dialysis Care of Hoke County	Hoke County Offices	News Journal	Sandhills Behavioral Center
Alpla Inc	Don Steed Elementary School	Hoke County Parks & Recreations	Norris Storage Bldg./ Carports	Sandhills Community College
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Ardmore Apartments	J. E. Dunn Construction	Hoke County Public Library	Omni Sourcce	Sand Hoke Early College
Autumn Care	East Hoke Middle School	Hoke County Rescue Squad	Open Arms Retirement Center	Sandy Grove Elementary School
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