

Town of Maxton

North Carolina



Economic Development Strategic Five-Year Plan 2019-2024



For the Town of Maxton by the
North Carolina Department of Commerce
Rural Economic Development Division
NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center



NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE
RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

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Town of Maxton

Town of Maxton

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Citizens, business people, Project Committee, Town Planning and Zoning Board, Town Board of Commissioners, Kate Bordeaux, and Town staff.

Planning Assistance



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Section 1. Plan Project Summary Overview

This Plan will give the Town Board of Commissioners guidance for Town economic development improvement. The focus of the Plan is to direct improvements for the Town. The plan has recommended actions to promote economic development.

Elected officials have an opportunity to carry out goals and actions outlined in this Plan in Section 6. The officials should direct and work with Town staff, the Planning and Zoning Board and possibly an appointed Plan Action Committee. Implementing the Plan actions will improve the Town long term conditions.

This Five-Year Plan identifies issues and impacts, as well as addresses Town economic development with the following:

Maxton – Economic Development Strategic Five-Year Plan

- **Vision** – Section 2
- **Brief Town development overview** – Section 3
- **Situation** – Section 4
- **Assessment** – Section 5
- **Recommended plan actions** – Section 6
- **Plan: review, adoption, monitoring** – Section 7

Town of Maxton, North Carolina – Economic Development Strategic Five-Year Plan



Downtown historic Maxton looking north along North Patterson Street.

The North Carolina Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division - NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center was invited to assist the Town of Maxton develop an Economic Development Strategic Five-Year Plan. The Town Board of Commissioners appointed a Project Plan Committee made up of engaged citizens and business people to oversee the development of this Plan. Comments and input were recorded from the Committee and the public about the plan vision, strengths, and opportunities. Input was gathered from a public meeting and a general economic development survey questionnaire. Out of this process, goals and recommended actions were developed for the Plan.

Towards the conclusion of the Plan creation process, the Planning and Zoning Board reviewed the Plan and it was then reviewed by the Town Board of Commissioners. Comments were folded into the Plan by Town staff. After this, Town Commissioners adopted the Plan.



The newer Walgreens drug store and older commercial development along Martin Luther King Jr. Highway looking east.



Commercial development along Martin Luther King Jr. highway looking west.



The Piggly Wiggly grocery store on South Patterson Street.

Section 2. Vision

Maxton is a vibrant community with a cohesive economic and social base that contributes to the lives of the families and individuals here. This is achieved through improved economic and social opportunities for all. It is based upon rebuilding the vitality and strength of Maxton's historical character as well as developing social pillars relevant to Maxton's pursuit of success during the next five years.



The above vision statement was taken from the Maxton NC Step Economic Plan (2006) and revised by the Project Committee and Staff for this Plan.

Section 3. Brief Town Development Overview

The Town of Maxton is in the northwest part of rural Robeson County and in the southeast part of Scotland County. The town had a population of approximately 2,538 people in 2017. The town has a historical grid pattern with some more recent strip commercial development along Patterson Street (Highway 71) and Martin Luther King, Jr. Highway (Business Highway 74). The older downtown section of the town on North Patterson Street has a mixture of one-and-two story commercial buildings that abut sidewalks and the street. Many of the buildings in the historic downtown are underused or vacant. The town has a mixture of residential, commercial, and a limited amount of industrial development.

Retail businesses in Maxton include Food Lion, Piggly Wiggly, Walgreens, restaurants (e.g. Hardee’s), variety stores (e.g. Dollar General and Family Dollar), three gas stations and convenience stores, one bank, three doctor’s offices, and a variety of other commercial and office services. Away from Patterson Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Highway are residential neighborhoods. North of Graham Street is a historical residential neighborhood with some of the homes dating to approximately a century ago in age. Two miles north of Town is the large Campbell Soup plant. Three miles to the northwest is the local regional Laurinburg-Maxton Airport. Interstate 74 is north of Town and transverses northwest - southeast. The CSX operated railroad goes through town but does not have a town stop.

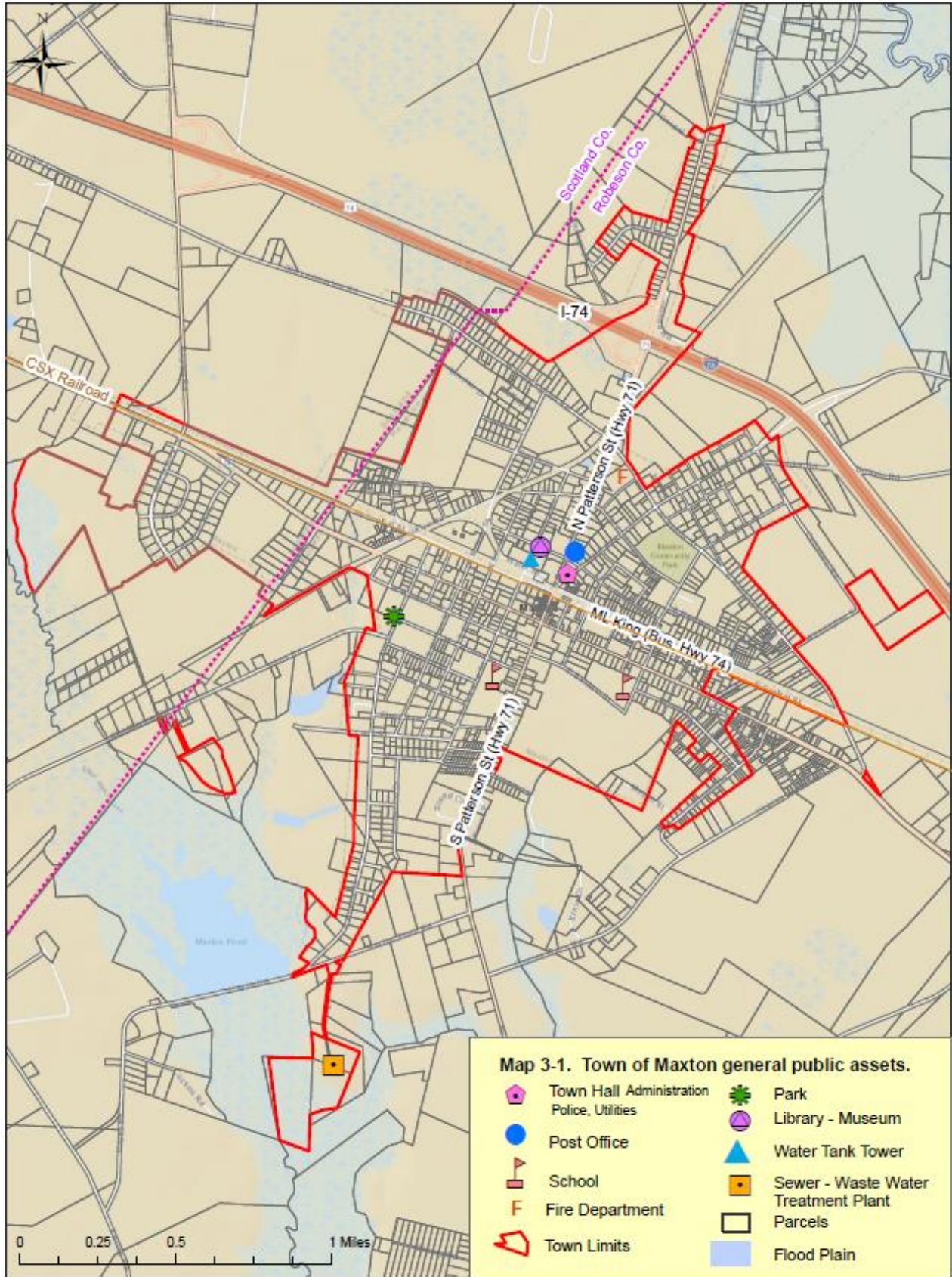


Map 3-1 shows the Town of Maxton and its general assets. These assets are public and consist of the following.

Town of Maxton Public Assets (Map 3-1)

- Town Hall, Administration, Police, Public Utilities
- Queheel Volunteer Fire Department
- U.S. Post Office
- Public schools: R.B. Dean Elementary and Townsend Middle
- Beacham Park
- Gilbert Patterson Library and Museum
- Water tank tower
- Sewage waste water treatment plant

Note: Emergency medical ambulance services are in Laurinburg and Pembroke.



Section 4. Situation

This section of the Plan contains demographics, traffic counts, jobs and employment type, and a retail service economic assessment for the Town.

Information in this Section

- Population
- Age
- Households
- Occupancy – vacancy
- Housing value
- Working occupation
- Unemployment
- Income
- Traffic counts
- Jobs – Inflow and Outflow
- Town – Retail Service Economic Assessment

Population

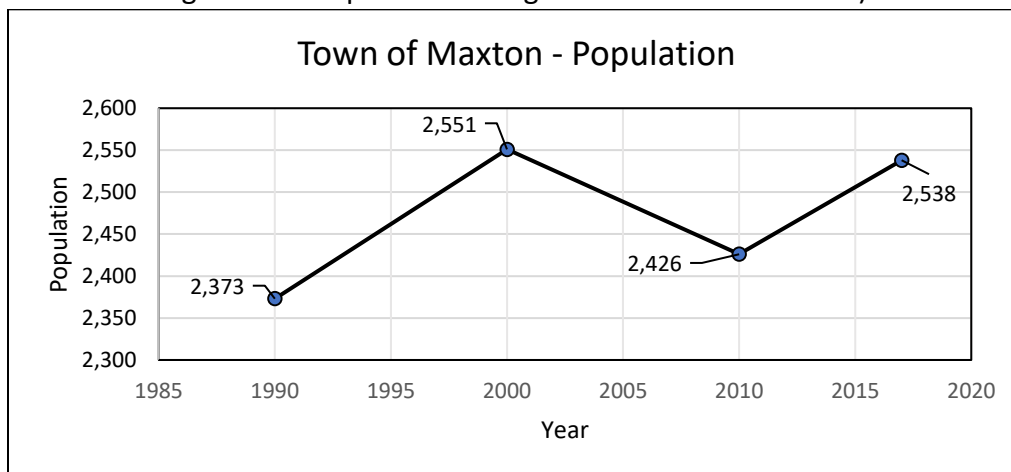
The Town of Maxton population amount slightly fluctuated from 1990 to 2017 and overall increased by 165 people (Table 4-1 and Figure 4-1). The 2017 population was 2,538.

Table 4-1. Maxton population changes.

Year	1990	2000	2010	2017
Population	2,373	2,551	2,426	2,538

U.S. Census Data

Figure 4-1. Population change in the Town of Maxton).



U.S. Census Data

The population growth from 1990 to 2017 in the regional four-county area (Table 4-2, and Figure 4-2) shows that Robeson County grew 28% over the last 27 years. The other three nearby counties grew at these rates: Hoke 130%, Scotland 5%, and Cumberland 18%. Hoke’s rapid growth rate is attributed to the Ft. Bragg base growth close by.

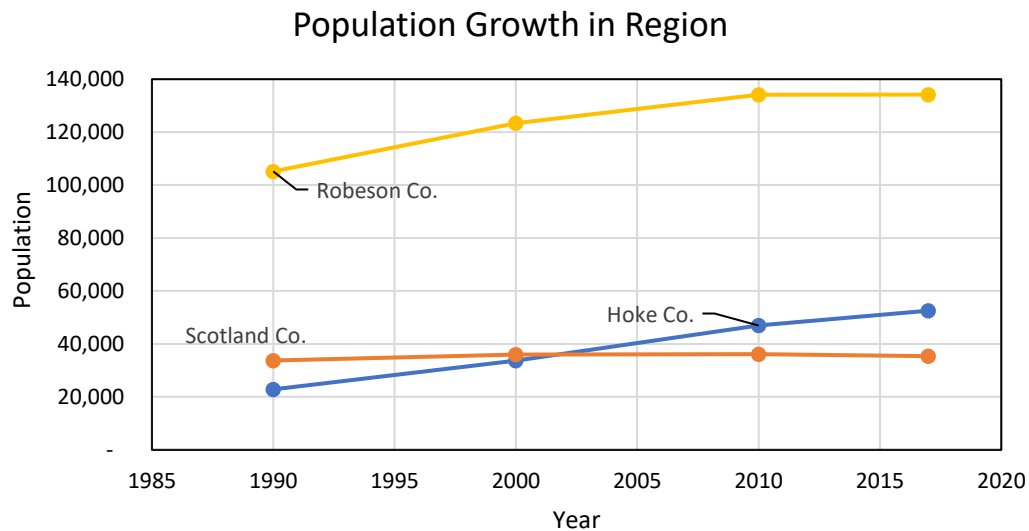
Table 4-2. Regional population growth of counties.

Counties	Hoke	Scotland	Cumberland	Robeson
1990 - 2017	130%	5%	18%	28%
Growth / year	4.8%	0.2%	0.7%	1.0%

U.S. Census Data

During the same 27 years’ period Robeson County added approximately 29,000 new residents.

Figure 4-2. Population growth in Robeson County and surrounding counties.



U. S. Census Data

Age

The census data in Table 4-3 shows that Maxton’s population has become older, as the median age increased 4.4 years from 2000 to 2017. This is likely an indication of young adults moving out of Maxton for employment opportunities.

Table 4-3. Town of Maxton median age

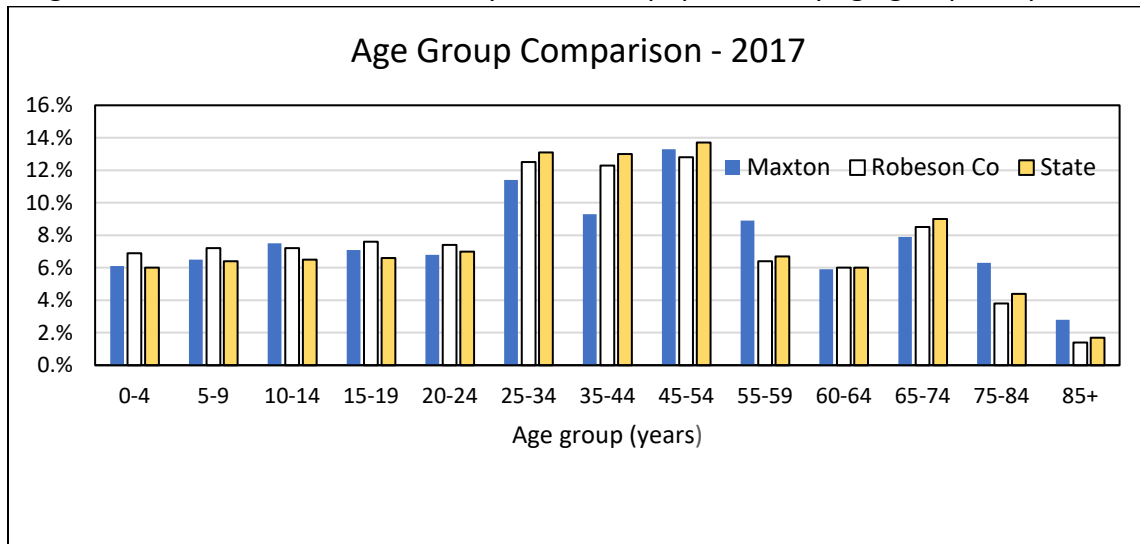
Maxton	2000	2010	2017	Change in age (2000-2017)
Age (years)	34.4	37.3	38.8	4.4

U.S. Census Data

Town of Maxton, North Carolina – Economic Development Strategic Five-Year Plan

A census age group comparison is shown in Figure 4-3 for Maxton, Robeson County and the State. Maxton, compared to the County and the State, has roughly the same percentage of young persons (those below 24 years old). The town generally has a lower percentage of young adults and middle age people (25 to 54 years old), compared to the County and State. The town generally has more older age persons (those 55 -59 years old and 75 and above) compared to the County and State. The town has about the same persons 60-64 years old as the County and State, and fewer in the 65 to 74 age category.

Figure 4-3. Maxton, Robeson County, and State population by age group comparison.



U.S. Census Data

Households

In 1990, Maxton had 826 households and, by 2017, it had increase to 1,025 households. (Table 4-4). From 1990 to 2017, the number of households increased by 199.

Table 4-4. Maxton number of households.

Maxton	1990	2000	2010	2017
Households	826	985	980	1,025

U.S. Census Data

From 1990 to 2017, the number of housing units in Maxton (Table 4-5) grew by 141 units, or an average increase of approximately 5 new units per year.

Table 4-5. Maxton housing unit growth.

Town of Maxton	1990	2000	2010	2017
Number of housing units	998	1,073	1,117	1,139

U.S. Census Data

Occupancy - vacancy

Maxton housing occupancy in 2017 (Table 4-6) was 82.5%, which was somewhat lower than Robeson County, Scotland County and the State. Similarly, the town vacancy was somewhat higher than the two counties and the State.

Table 4-6. Housing occupancy and vacancy comparison – 2017.

	Occupancy	Vacancy
Town of Maxton	82.5%	17.5%
Robeson County	87.1%	12.9%
Scotland County	86.9%	13.1%
North Carolina	85.7%	14.3%

U.S. Census Data

Housing value

The cost of housing in 2017 (Table 4-7) shows that Maxton was slightly higher than Robeson County and lower than Scotland County. Maxton housing cost was significantly lower and more affordable than Cumberland County and Hoke County related to the Fayetteville metro area.

Table 4-7. Comparison of median value of owner-occupied housing units – 2017.

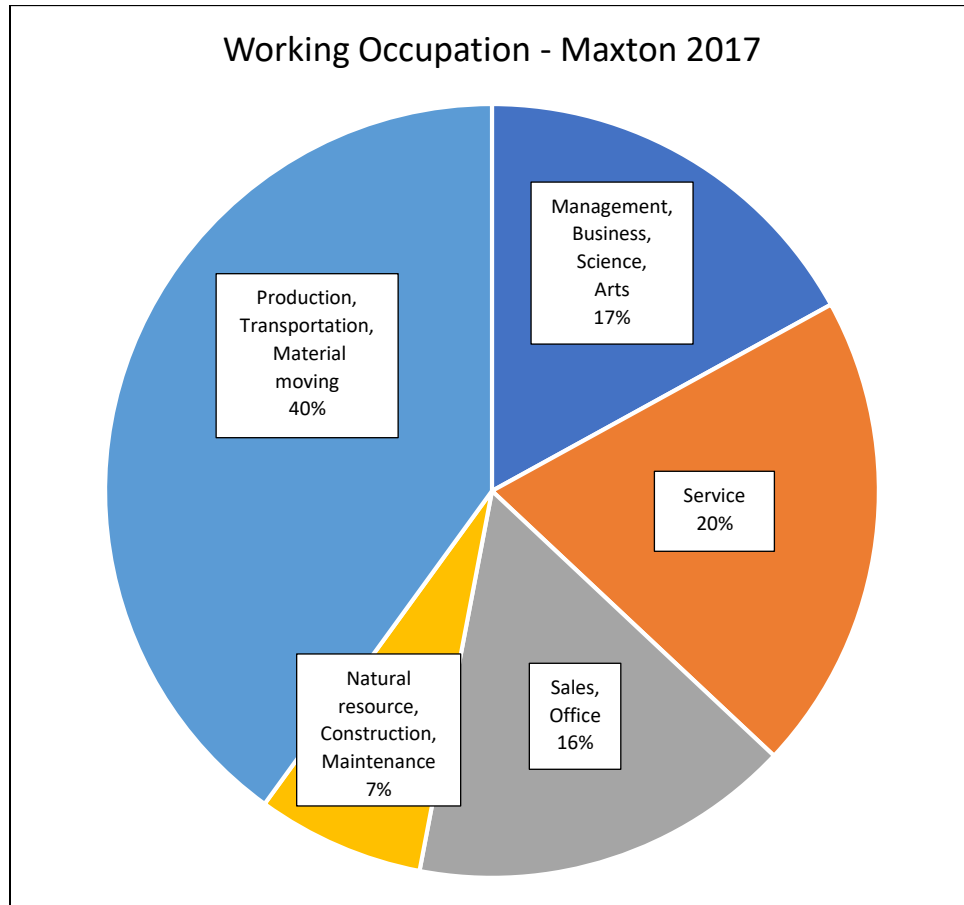
	Maxton	Cumberland Co.	Hoke Co.	Robeson Co.	Scotland Co.
Median house value	\$75,300	\$131,200	\$137,700	\$72,100	\$85,200

U.S. Census Data

Working occupation

Worker occupation in Maxton is shown in the following pie-chart (Figure 4-4). Management, business, science and arts account for 17% of worker occupation, service 20%, sales and office 16%, natural resource, construction and maintenance 7%, and production, transportation and material moving at 40%.

Figure 4-4. Worker occupation in Maxton – 2017.



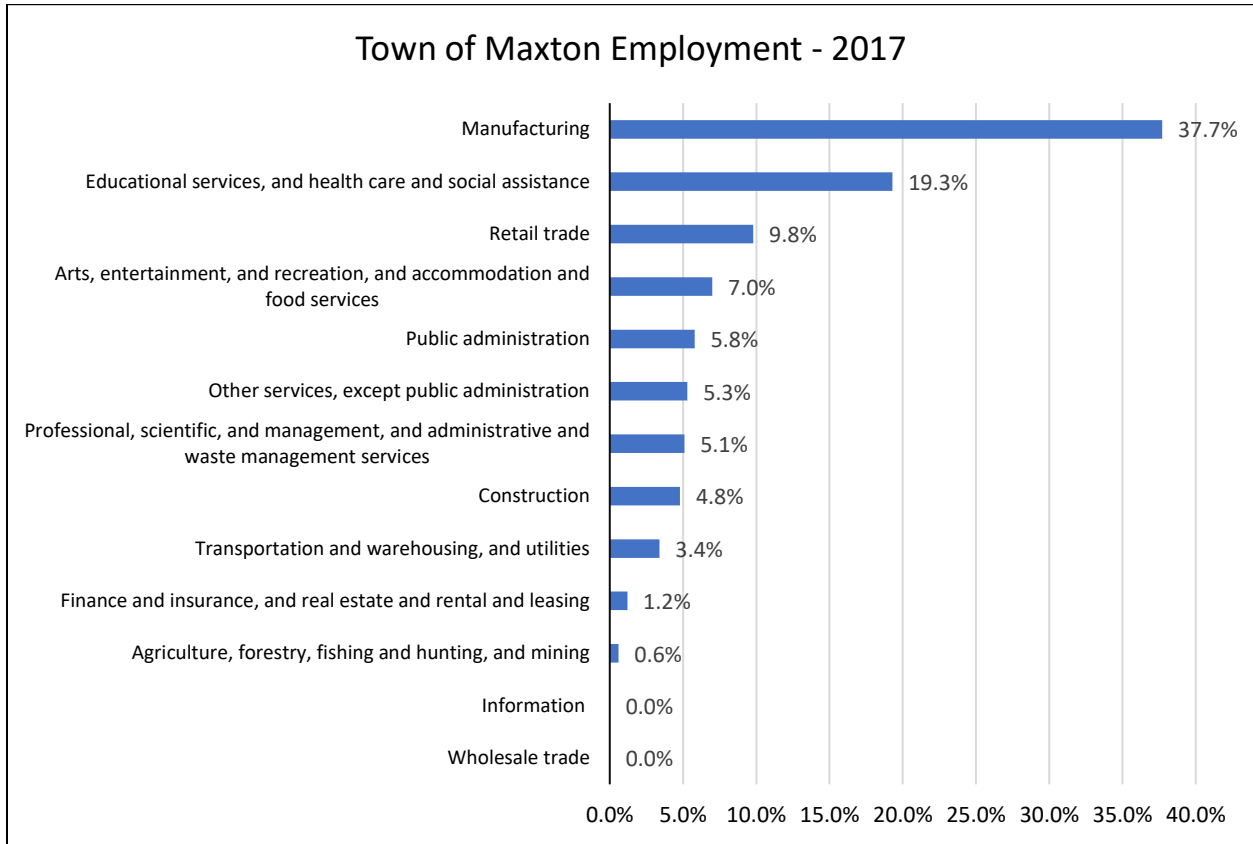
U.S. Census Data – American Community Survey

The following Figure 4-5 shows categories of Maxton civilian employed population 16 years and over for 2017.

The **top three fields of employment in Maxton** are:

1. Manufacturing
2. Educational services, health care, social assistance
3. Retail trade

Figure 4-5. Town of Maxton civilian employed population 16 years and over – 2017.



U.S. Census Data – American Fact Finder.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate for Robeson County was 6.0% and Scotland County was 7.9% in February 2019. Maxton is located on the border of these two counties. These two County rates were somewhat higher than the neighboring counties (Table 4-8). The four area counties shown in the table had higher unemployment rates than the State which was 3.9%.

Table 4-8. Unemployment rates – February 2019.

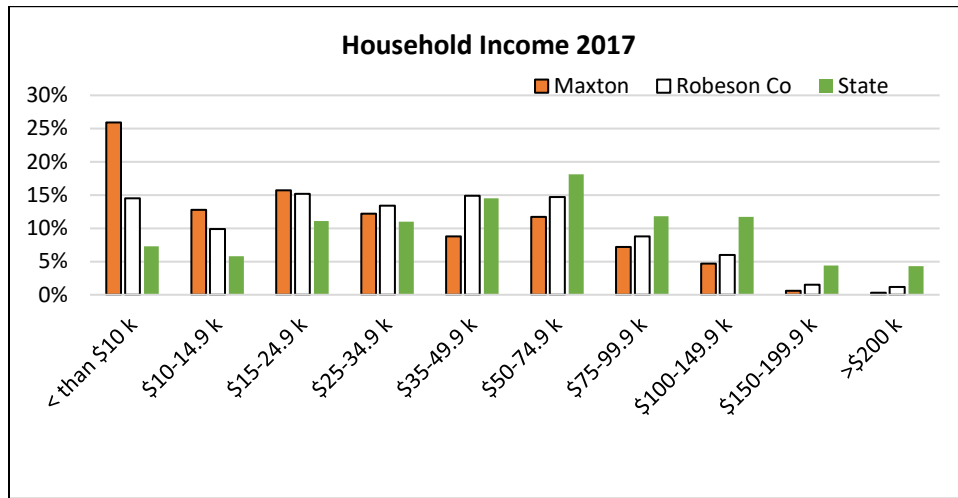
	Cumberland Co.	Hoke Co.	Robeson Co.	Scotland Co.	North Carolina
Unemployment rate	5.4%	5.3%	6.0%	7.9%	3.9%

N.C. Department of Commerce

Income

As shown in Figure 4-6, Maxton has more households with incomes less than \$35,000 compared to the State. The town has fewer households with incomes above \$35,000 in all the brackets when compared to the State.

Figure 4-6. Maxton household income \$ income distribution – 2017.



U.S. Census Data

Traffic Counts

Traffic counts show that most main roads in Maxton (Figure 4-7) have an approximate range of up to 6,000 vehicle trips per day in 2019. There is a pattern of more traffic road trips in the range of 9,000 to 14,000 in the north part of town near I-74 and north side of Town where the Food Lion is located along North Patterson Street.

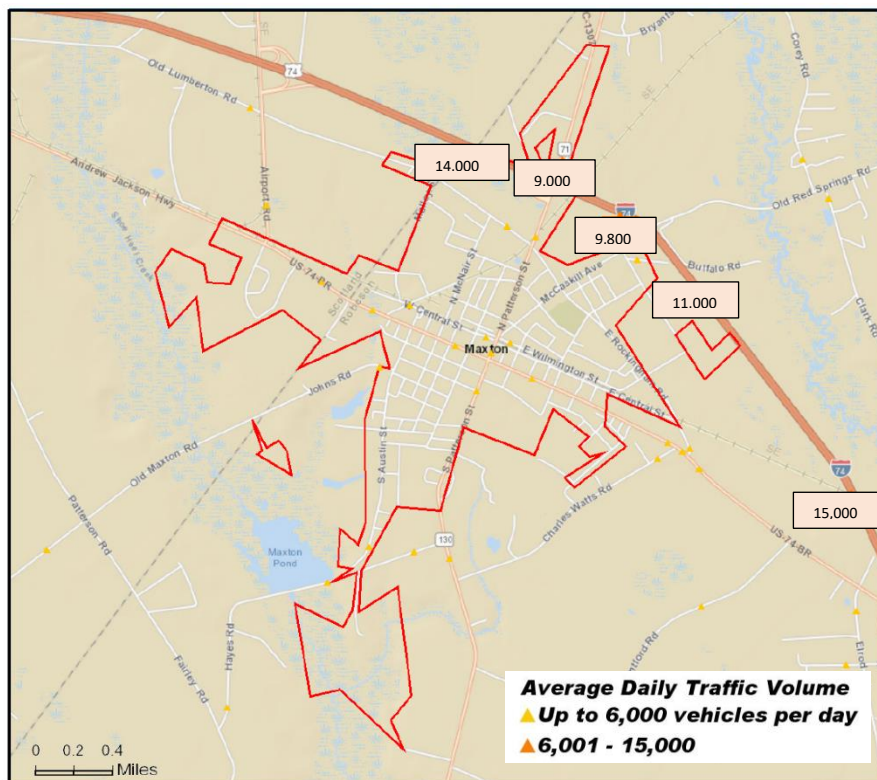


Figure 4-7: Maxton Traffic Count Map -Vehicle Trips per Day – NC Access ESRI – 2019.

Jobs – Inflow and Outflow

The following Figure 4-8 map shows a 2015 jobs analysis with inflow and outflow where: 579 persons were employed in Maxton and commuted in from outside the town for work; 653 persons lived in Maxton and commuted outside the town for work; and 26 people were employed and lived in Maxton.

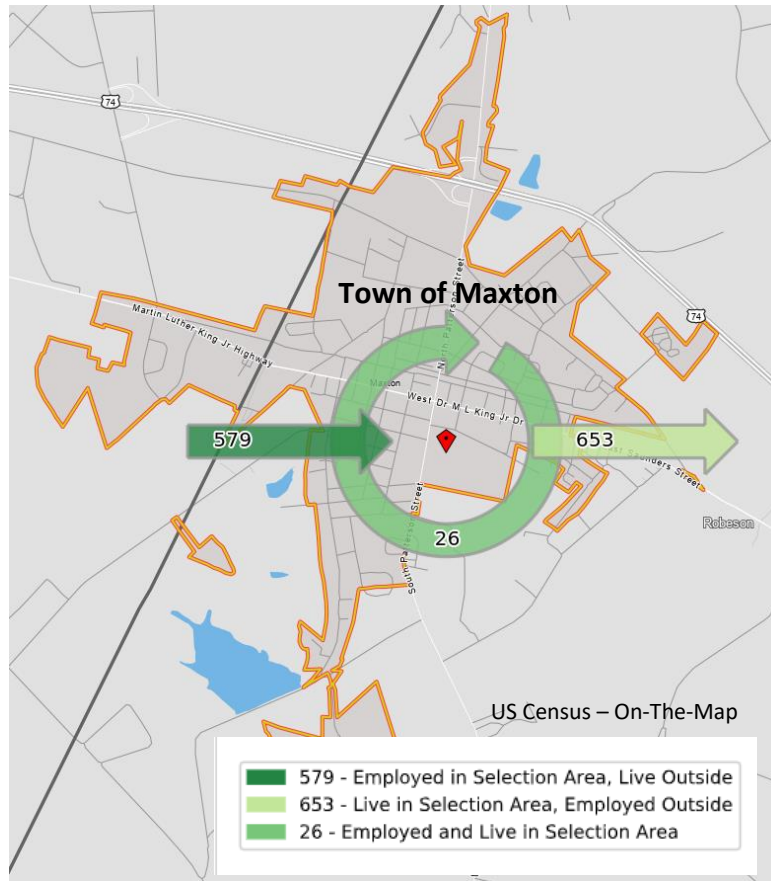
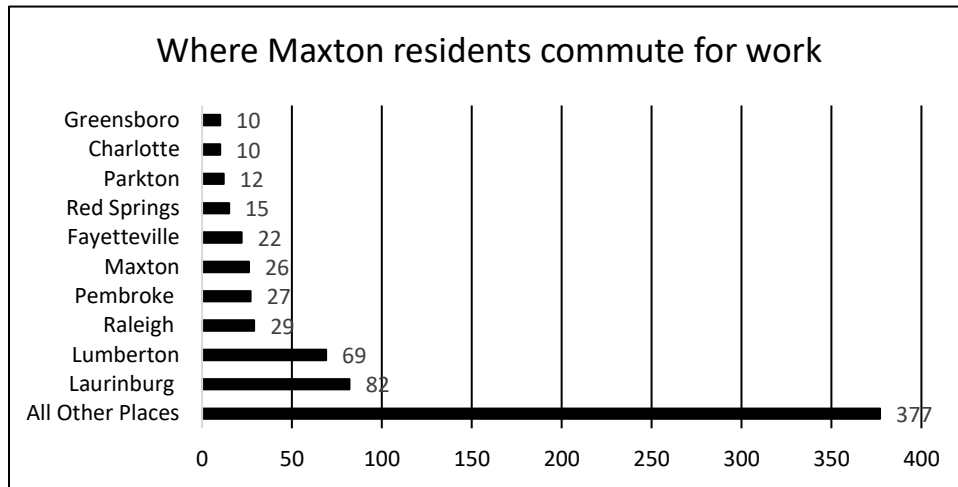


Figure 4-8. Jobs inflow and outflow analysis of Maxton – 2015.

In Figure 4-9 and Table 4-9, the commute Town residents take to work are shown. Laurinburg, Lumberton, Raleigh and Pembroke are the largest percent destinations.

Figure 4-9. Where Maxton residents commute for work.



US Census – On-The-Map

Table 4-9. Where Maxton residents commute to for work (percent).

Commute for Work	Percent
Laurinburg	12.1%
Lumberton	10.2%
Raleigh	4.3%
Pembroke	4.0%
Maxton	3.8%
Fayetteville	3.2%
Red Springs	2.2%
Parkton	1.8%
Charlotte	1.5%
Greensboro	1.5%
All Other Places	55.5%

US Census – On-The-Map

Town – Retail Service Economic Assessment

The following Table 4-10 shows analysis results of economic retail service categories within a five-mile radius of the center of Maxton in 2019. This radius effectively is the whole town and trade area. The information in this section should be taken in an approximate manner.

Dollar surplus (\$) amounts coming into the town five-mile trade area are shown. This means that customers are drawn in from outside the town trade area for the town retail service items shown. For example, “gasoline stations” category is the largest positive draw to Maxton at approximately \$17.6 million. While the “non-store retailers” category still positive, it is a small draw at approximately \$116,000. The total capture of dollars received from outside the town and trade area is approximately \$30.1 million dollars.

Retail surplus means the Town’s trade area is capturing the local market plus attracting non-local shoppers. Surplus doesn’t necessarily imply that the Town can’t support additional types of these businesses. Table 4-10 lists existing businesses that attract both the local market and non-local shoppers to Maxton. Recruitment of other businesses that compliment these businesses and could continue to attract local and non-local shoppers should be considered.

Table 4-10. **Town of Maxton surplus where customers are drawn in from outside the trade town area for the following six retail services (\$ Surplus, 2019).**

	Retail Service	Surplus (\$)
1.	Gasoline Stations	\$17,602,620
2.	Grocery Stores	\$8,315,621
3.	Health & Personal Care Stores	\$3,113,189
4.	Direct Selling Establishments	\$861,537
5.	Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	\$186,247
6.	Nonstore Retailers	\$116,237
	Total	\$30,195,451

Access-NC - ESRI Retail Marketplace Profile - 2019

Table 4-11 shows how much money “leaks” from the town’s trade area in the various retail categories or, in other words, the table shows how much money leaves Maxton when people shop outside Town at those categories listed. For example, the Town loses (or leaks) approximately \$10.8 million in “automobile dealers” category and also leaks almost \$320,000 in “drinking places-alcoholic beverages” category. Other retail categories with leakage are also shown.

Conversely, the retail leakage categories shown in Table 4-11 represent potential business niche opportunities for growth in the town because of the customer demand and current dollars being lost to outside the town and trade area. The total leakage potential opportunity for the town is approximately \$35.2 million dollars. The town would need to look closely at these categories to determine what businesses opportunities would be realistic for Maxton.

Table 4-11. **Town of Maxton retail service dollar (\$) leakage in 2019, and potential business opportunities.**

	Retail Service	Leakage (\$) and Potential Opportunity
1.	Automobile Dealers	\$10,819,028
2.	Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	\$6,627,265
3.	Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	\$3,794,845

4.	Restaurants/Other Eating Places	\$3,019,827
5.	Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$1,758,250
6.	Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$1,542,790
7.	Clothing Stores	\$1,532,367
8.	Furniture Stores	\$1,234,224
9.	Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	\$1,228,689
10.	Home Furnishings Stores	\$790,230
11.	Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	\$689,115
12.	Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	\$631,692
13.	Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	\$491,209
14.	Shoe Stores	\$406,465
15.	Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	\$370,795
16.	Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	\$319,121
	Total	\$35,255,912

Information from Access-NC - ESRI Retail Marketplace Profile - 2019

Section 5. Assessment

Town economic development Plan assessment information was gathered with the following:

Assessment Information

- **Community Assets and Economic Drivers Input**
- **Strengths and Opportunities - Public Input Meeting Comments**
- **Town Citizen Telephone Interviews – Appendix A**
- **Survey Questionnaire Results – Appendix B**

Community Assets and Economic Drivers Input

The following assets and economic information were recorded from the Project Committee at a 2-11-19 meeting.

Economic

- Supermarkets: Food Lion, Piggly Wiggly, Safeway.
- Drugstores: Walgreens, The Medical Shoppe.
- Variety stores: Dollar General. Family Dollar.
- Restaurants: Mona’s Pizza N Hot Subs, H & H Drive In, Hardee’s, Mom’s Fish and Fry Seafood, Latino Market, Rocking Pig BBQ Bakery Catering.
- Gasoline stations and convenience stores: Kangaroo Express, Shell, Exxon.

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- Medical facilities: Southeastern Medical Clinic; Maxton Family Practice Center; Shoeheel Medical Arts; Maxton Medical Center.
- Napa auto parts.
- ABC Store.

- Lumbee Guaranty Bank.
- Insurance Company.
- Robeson County resource center – e.g. job training.
- Peoples Gas and Oil.

- Scotland County industrial park.
- Campbell Soup plant; 2 miles from town – served by railroad.
- Laurinburg-Maxton Airport, 3 miles away.
- Interstate 74.
- CSX Railroad goes through town but does not have a stop.

Cultural

- Gilbert Patterson Library and Museum.
- Collards Festival.
- 4th of July.
- Fall Festival.
- Easter egg hunt.

- Christmas.
- Historical designation – e.g. some homes and downtown buildings.
- Lions Club.
- Boy and Girl Scouts.

Natural and Recreational

- Beacham Park, e.g. ballfield.
- Lumber River.

Institutional

- Public schools: R.B. Dean Elementary and Townsend Middle.
- Head Start program.
- Day care centers – three.
- In Town 11 to 15 churches; in area of Town 21 churches.

Community and Human

- Lions Club.
- Home health care agencies.

Government

- Town Hall and administration.
- Police.
- Queheel Fire Department.

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- Water and sewer utilities.
- Rescue Emergency Medical Services.
- Disaster response by Town – disaster relief center.
- Powell Bill money from State.
- Inspections by Town and County.

- Gilbert Patterson Library.
- US Post Office.
- Served by: League of Municipalities, NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

Strengths and Opportunities - Public Input Meeting Comments

The following information was recorded at a public Town Meeting at 4-16-19 at Town Hall. Fourteen people attended the meeting. The information collected are Town strengths and opportunities. Comments on how to maximize opportunities were also recorded.

Strengths

- People care about the town.
- Parks.
- Community schools.
- Strong churches.
- Historical homes.

- Walkable town.
- Public Library.
- Fire and rescue service.
- Proximity to two hospitals.
- University of NC – Pembroke, 11 miles away; St. Andrews University – Laurinburg.

- Highway 74 / I-74; Highway 74 Business; SR-71; SR-130.
- Laurinburg – Maxton Airport north of town.
- CSX Railroad runs through town.
- Natural environment, Lumber River.
- Campbell Soup plant.

- Two wineries nearby: Locklear, Cypress Bend.
- Farming areas around town: e.g. cotton, corn.
- Natural gas service.

Opportunities

Organization

- Improve communication between Town leaders and citizens.
- Improve leadership of elected officials and appointed persons.
- Find a way to improve community resources e.g. volunteers, Town project committee.
- Apply for grants, grant writing tutorial needed.

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- Strengthen partnerships: e.g. Lumber River Council of Governments, NC Department of Commerce, Community College, etc.
- Improve the function of Chamber of Commerce.
- Consider targeted fundraiser for a specific Town activity.
- Improve town unity.
- Improve Town Board of Commissioners responsiveness to citizens.
- Increase cohesiveness with citizens and Town government.

Promotion and communication

- Improve and update Town website with current information.
- Improve social media to inform residents; e.g. TV, radio, Twitter, Facebook, Town website, Maxton Times newspaper.
- Prepare “Welcome Packet” of town information available for new residents.
- Improve Town activities for residents e.g. parade, festival.
- Promote Laurinburg – Maxton Airport facilities.

Economic vitality

- Improve business retention, recruitment, and expansion.
- Bring business to downtown.
- Look into business recruitment e.g. improve shopping diversity; e.g. it’s hard to find clothes in Maxton.
- Pursue grants.
- Improve support for new businesses.

Design - building improvement

- Improve empty buildings in downtown.
- Improve historic home preservation.
- Restore renovate Town Hall – Patterson Building.

Police and crime prevention

- Improve police services, e.g. address crime which is affecting town reputation.

Code enforcement

- Enforce code enforcement in fair and equal manner.
- Address dilapidated property buildings.
- Have building owners to be responsible for care and up-keep of dilapidated buildings.
- Renovate abandoned buildings, there are too many unsafe buildings on the Town’s main street - Patterson Street.
- Improve code enforcement e.g. research options; better public effort or consider private company; better follow through with fee collection; better address conditions of property and structures, blight dilapidation, junk.

Education and job access

- Promote resources and classes available – Robeson and Scotland Community Colleges.
- Tie into job fairs e.g. Community Colleges.
- Improve job training opportunities e.g. Community Colleges.

Transportation

- Improve availability of public transportation - e.g. SEATS - Southeast Area Transit System and SCATS - Scotland County Area Transit System.

Community resources – public facilities

- Improve Gilbert Patterson Library and Museum, e.g. include Town military history information from WW-II glider training program.
- Improve Town infrastructure e.g. water, sewer, roads, etc.
- Improve disaster preparedness.

Youth activities

- Improve recreation and activities for youth.
- Have program like Girls and Boys Club in the Town that would create better activities for youth; would help to prevent crime; programs for youth e.g. ages 13-17 during summer and after school.

Section 6. Recommended Plan Actions

The following Table 6-1 is a list of Plan economic development topic categories. The list of recommended action items that follow this table were compiled from comments of the Project Committee, input from the telephone interviews (Appendix A), feedback from the public meeting (Section 5), and results from the public survey (Appendix B). General information about business retention, expansion and recruitment is shown in Appendix C. Resources are also shown that are available to the Town to help address the action items.

Table 6-1: Topics for Recommended Plan Actions

- **Organization**
- **Promotion**
- **Design**
- **Business development**
- **Land use and environment**
- **Transportation**
- **Community resources and public facilities**

Most of the recommended Plan action items will have to be addressed by Town elected officials and staff. The Town Board of Commissioners could, however, appoint an Action Committee to assist with these actions and/or work with Town staff and elected officials to achieve results.

It is understood that the Town has limited staff and resources; therefore, it is recommended that one or two of the easiest actions (low hanging fruit) should be tackled in the first year after adoption of the Plan. The North Carolina Main Street and Rural Planning Center with the NC Department of Commerce is ready to assist the Town as it starts to work on the recommendations.

In the second year the Plan, the Town Board of Commissioners, Town staff and/or a Plan Action Committee would tackle a second action or two. This would happen similarly for years three, four, and five of the Plan. Improvements with Town planning and economic development is a long-term process. But with Town commitment, it is possible to yield positive results.

Plan Recommendations: Topics, Goals, and Actions

Topic: Organization

Goal: Improve Town resources and activities.

Actions:

- **Plan Action Committee** – It is recommended that the Town Board of Commissioners appoint a Plan Action Committee of citizens that would address one or two actions from the Plan within the first year after adoption. In the second year of the Plan, the Committee would tackle a second action or two. This would be similarly repeated for years three, four and five of the Plan. New Committee members could be appointed each year in order to spread the workload and avoid volunteer burnout.
- **Elected officials and Town manager** –Recommend training opportunities for the Board of Commissioners, Town Clerk, and Town Manager such as those offered at the University of North Carolina School of Government. These training opportunities will provide professional development to move the Town forward with the latest and best information as well as enhance the depth of knowledge for those that serve the Town.

Resources: University of North Carolina School of Government, North Carolina League of Municipalities, North Carolina City and County Management Association, Lumber River Council of Governments.

- **Grants** – For a particular action item that the Town wants to address, it is recommended to review possible relevant grant(s) and apply if appropriate.

Resources: The North Carolina Department of Commerce - Main Street and Rural Planning Center maintains an active grant list. The Lumber River Council of Governments and the North Carolina Rural Center are also a source of grant assistance.

- **NC Main Street program** –Recommend assessing annually whether to apply to the North Carolina Main Street Downtown Associate Community Program. Program benefits are technical assistance and strategic downtown business development planning.

Resource: North Carolina Department of Commerce - Main Street and Rural Planning Center.

Topic: Promotion

Goal: Increase communication and community well-being of the Town.

Actions:

- **Communication** – Communication from the Town was noted as a major need for improvement by the Project Committee, as well as from telephone interviews, the public meeting, and survey results. This included notices for meetings and events as well as partnership development. Improved communication would raise awareness of Maxton for economic opportunities and enhance the quality of life for citizens of the Town.

Methods of improved Town communication are recommended to include the following:

- Improvement and expansion of the Town’s website to make sure citizens are aware of what is happening in the Town. Citizens could also learn how ordinances and rules are handled. The website could post a calendar of meetings and events, Mayor and Town Commissioners’ meeting agendas, Town policies, and staff contact detail. The website would be continually updated so that the information is current.
- Social media is how many people learn about what is going on in the Town. The Town may want to explore have accounts with Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
- **Events** - Continue to plan and hold parades, special events, and festivals in the Town. Consider adding a new event or events.

Resources: Robeson Community College and Scotland County - Information Technology program, St. Andrews University at Laurinburg - Communication Studies Program.

Topic: Design

Goal: Facilitate physical improvements for the Town and create a sense of place for residents and visitors.

Actions:

- **Building façades** –Recommend having a building façade grant program for the downtown. Grant money should be carefully directed and monitored to properties that have a business plan and are viable. The Town could consider budgeting money for façade improvements.

Resource: North Carolina Department of Commerce - Main Street and Rural Planning Center – Prosperity Zone Planners.

- **Streetscaping** - Recommend long term planning and maintenance for downtown along Patterson Street streetscape amenities such as: planters; tree plantings; and benches.

Resources: North Carolina Department of Commerce - Main Street and Rural Planning Center, North Carolina Department of Transportation e.g. BUILD grant and Town of Maxton Public Utilities.

- **Wayfinding signs** –Recommend a review of wayfinding signs for the Town. Determine if they are adequate and that they direct and advertise the Town for citizens and visitors. For example, consider having Town entrance signs on the main roads: e.g. 4 signs total - one each on: north NC -71, south NC-130, and Business 74 east and west. Also, review that signs are adequate on I-74 for the Town. Also, recommend having wayfinding signs for Town Hall, park, library, etc.

Resources: North Carolina Department of Commerce - Main Street and Rural Planning Center, Lumber River Council of Governments, North Carolina Department of Transportation. Recommend reviewing wayfinding signs in Hope Mills, Sanford, and Aberdeen.

Topic: Business Development

Goal: Encourage and facilitate business retention, expansion, and recruitment.

Actions:

- **Business assistance** –Recommend creating a brochure that addresses “Doing business in Maxton”. The Town brochure would explain and include information such as: business process overview, contact information, fees, codes, permits, and inspections. This information should also be posted on the Town website and or social media. (The Town of Waxhaw, NC has an example brochure to review.)

- **Downtown Parcel – Building Inventory** – Recommend developing and maintaining a downtown inventory in Excel spreadsheet of vacant and underused parcels and buildings. The data, for example, would show address, owner, square footage, current use, property value. Also photographs of buildings could be compiled. It would be possible to post vacant and underused inventory on Town's website and share with others (e.g. see the below businesses development resources list).
- **Vacant buildings** –Recommend identifying NC Main Street program communities that have successfully filled downtown vacant buildings. Apply methods that these communities have used. Recommend attending NC Main Street program promotion and economic vitality education workshops.
- **Business strengthening** –Recommend talking with existing local businesses to determine their challenges, opportunities, issues and outlook for retention and or expansion. Enlist the support partners and resources as appropriate in support of retention and or expanding local businesses.
- **Business recruitment** – Recommend using market surplus and leakage analysis information from this plan for recruitment of business. The surplus businesses (Table 4-10) and leakage businesses (Table 4-11) are shown. Analysis would identify sites and buildings conducive to the operation of businesses. It would be possible to identify types of business in nearby communities to contact for recruitment. Scheduling and conducting recruiting visits to these types of businesses in the region could be done. More detailed information is shown in Appendix C.

Business Development Resources: There are many resources available the Town could use, they include: The North Carolina Department of Commerce – Main Street program has information on economic development downtown incentives. Maxton Chamber of Commerce, Robeson County and Scotland County - Community College Small Business Center, Robeson County - Office of Economic Development, Scotland County Economic Development Corporation, Golden Leaf Foundation, Southeastern Economic Development Commission, and Economic Development Partnership – NC.

Topic: Land Use and Environment

Goal: Improve development and protect natural resources.

Actions:

- **Code enforcement** – Recommend exploring hiring code enforcement staff and or contracting with a code enforcement company. Explore this option to ensure compliance is met. Identify existing violations and notify owners of non-compliance. Establish compliance deadline and determine enforcement means for non-compliance beyond that date. Research and make recommendations for improved new code enforcement language to the Town government for adoption.

Recommend the Town has an e.g. annual community clean-up day where property debris, trash, and junk material is collected and disposed.

Resources: Town of Maxton and Robeson County code enforcement programs. Lumber River Council of Governments. Recommend Town Code enforcement staff become members of the North Carolina Association of Zoning Officials program which has training, workshops, and best practices. See: www.ncazo.org

- **Land use plan** – Recommend preparing a Town future land use plan and future land use map. Use “The Small-Town Planning Handbook” T. L. Daniels et. al. as resource from the American Planning Association. Benefits of having a land use plan include the increased ability to successfully apply and obtain grants, and proactively plan for Town needs.

Resource: Lumber River Council of Governments.

- **Landscaping** – Recommend upgrading the zoning ordinance language for requiring having landscaping standards for new commercial and industrial development.

Resource: Lumber River Council of Governments.

- **Environmental site concerns** –Recommend reviewing NC Department of Environmental Quality files. Acquire information, list, and map sites in Town, such as hazardous sites, brownfields, hazardous spills, and underground tanks.

Resource: North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality.

- **Storm water and flooding - recovery and resiliency** –Recommend preparing a long-range plan assessing and addressing storm water and flooding. Review resources, plans and grants available to prepare the town for disaster and recovery.

Resources: Lumber River Council of Governments, Southeastern Economic Development Commission Disaster Recovery, NC Public Safety: Office of Recovery and Resiliency.

Topic: Transportation

Goal: Provide safe and improved facilities and methods of transportation.

Actions:

- **Roads** - Continue to plan for transportation needs. Conduct a Town roads and traffic analysis.
- **Sidewalks** – Recommend having a sidewalk improvement plan, with list of needed sites, costs, and prioritization. Could list improvements as part of capital improvements plan.

- **Trails** –Recommend planning a trail in the Town.

Resources for transportation actions: Lumber River Council of Governments - Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO), North Carolina Department of Transportation e.g. Powell Bill.

Topic: Community Resources and Public Facilities

Goal: Improve human resources and physical infrastructure.

Actions:

- **Capital improvements** – Ensure that the Town has a capital improvements and public services plan. Consider having a 3- to 5-year plan of basic Town capital improvements and public services with annual review. Describe and list physical improvements, programs, and budget such as: solid waste; potable water; sewage disposal; police protection; fire protection; emergency services; parks and recreation; and Town municipal buildings.

Resources: Lumber River Council of Governments, Southeastern Economic Development Commission, US Department of Agriculture - Rural Development.

- **Police services and crime prevention** – Continue to address community safety and crime prevention with best practices.

Resources: Maxton Police Department, University of North Carolina School of Government, North Carolina League of Municipalities, District Attorneys: Robeson County and Scotland County, and North Carolina Justice Academy.

- **Internet** –Recommend meeting with the NC Broadband Infrastructure Office to identify the best path forward for improved Town internet service.

Resources: North Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Office, Lumber River Council of Governments.

- **Youth activities** –Recommend researching and recommending actions to set up an enhanced youth activities program by the Town. Meet with County Parks and Recreation staff to discuss opportunities for joint programs, resources and/or facilities.

Resources: Robeson County and Scotland County: Parks and Recreations Programs, YMCA of the Sandhills, Boys and Girls Club of North Carolina-Two Stream Community Building, Southeastern Health, North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

- **Public schools** –Recommend maintaining a dialogue with County school department regarding public school facilities in the Town and their programs
Resource: Robeson County Schools.
- **Community College** –Recommend coordinating with Robeson and Scotland Community Colleges regarding satellite classes, activities and programs. Consider keeping updated information on and or linked to the Town website.

Resource: Robeson and Scotland: Community Colleges.

- **Health** –Recommend maintaining dialogue with County Health Departments regarding public health services programs available for Town residents. Southeastern Health provides health care and services throughout Robeson County. Consider advertising and promoting the services on the Town website. Potential programs could for example include, healthy foods, exercise, and drug and alcohol prevention.

Resource: Robeson County and Scotland County: Health Departments, Southeastern Health.

Section 7. Plan: Review, Adoption, and Monitoring

The following are recommended steps to review, adopt, and monitor this Five-Year Town Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Plan Progress Items to Address and Follow

- ✓ Project Committee reviews Plan, makes any changes, recommends approval of the Plan and forwards it to the Planning Board.
- ✓ Planning Board reviews Plan, makes any changes, recommends approval and forwards Plan to Town Board of Commissioners.
- ✓ Town Board of Commissioners reviews, makes any changes and adopts the Five-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- ✓ Town Board of Commissioners appoints an Action Committee made up of current plan committee members and others from the community to address recommendations from this strategic plan. (See p. 24 Plan Action Committee recommendation for more details.)

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- ✓ Recommend every six months after Plan adoption that the Town Board of Commissioners has a progress update from the Town Clerk, Town Manager or Mayor. The progress update would address the actions items in Section 6 of the Plan.
- ✓ At a minimum one year after Plan adoption, the NC Department of Commerce staff meets with the Town Clerk, Town Manager, or Mayor to review progress. The Department of Commerce, thereafter, has annual progress visits with the Town for the five years of the Plan. The Commerce staff are also ready and willing to meet more frequently with the Town, should the Town desire additional assistance.
- ✓ If goals and actions in Section 6 need revisions or adjustments, the Plan should be amended by the Town. These amendments should also be adopted by the Town Board of Commissioners.
- ✓ A suggestion is that the easiest action items (“gathering low hanging fruit”) in Section 6 should be addressed and accomplished first. The more difficult action items will take more persistence and time by working with the resources identified in Section 6 and Appendix C.

Appendix A: Town Citizen Telephone Interviews

The Project Committee gave NC Department of Commerce - NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center staff a list of persons to be interviewed. Staff completed telephone interviews with 10 persons in February and March 2019. Additionally, 7 other persons were contacted but declined to be interviewed.

The interviewees were asked the following:

- ✓ What are the Town's opportunities?
- ✓ Do you have any suggestions of what could the Town do to try to improve the quality of life in the next five years?
- ✓ What could the Town do to improve its programs and services in the next five years?
- ✓ Do you have any other comments or suggestions that will help aid the Town in its economic development and planning efforts in the next five years?

The responses are organized around the topics of:

- Organization
- Promotion
- Business Development
- Design - Building Improvement
- Police and Crime Prevention
- Code Enforcement
- Education and Job Access
- Land Use and Environment
- Transportation
- Community Resources and Public Facilities
- Youth Activities

Organization

- Town and leadership need vision, mission and plans for the next five years with reasonable milestones.
- Develop a short and long-term plan. Set immediate and long-term goals. Involve stakeholders in process.
- Need to develop and implement three and five-year plan and actively involve residents in the process.
- Develop a capital and strategic plan. Need an implementation plan program.
- Town committees need to work together.

- Town management needs to build a better relationship with citizens.
- Need clearer vision to apply for grants.
- Town needs to work together as one with each civic organization.
- Town officials need to follow through with promises.
- Include seniors and youth.

Promotion

- Upgrade town website - help citizens and outsiders to get town information.
- Marketing plan for town needed.
- Festivals are good to bring people to community.
- Improve community e.g. events, parades, reunions. Need to be proud of who we are. Don't have to compete with larger towns and urban areas – can offer things that these areas don't have. Tell our stories. Build confidence to invest in town.

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- We have several events during the year that are great and get the community involved.

Business development

- Need to attract business and industry.
- Create incentives for downtown and to improve economic situation.
- Town is affordable for businesses to start here – cost is less than other places.
- Love to see economic recruiter for area - solicit new businesses to the area.
- Need more shops open on main street.

Design - building improvement

- Need to have building space available for businesses.
- Need more active and attractive downtown for small businesses to locate. Incentives would help.
- Need to maintain older historic architectural buildings.
- Need to revitalize downtown with small shops and businesses.

Police and crime prevention

- Need improved law enforcement
- Safety of citizens is a first – need to reduce crime. Not just police on street but help people economically and raise standards in the community.
- Need more proactive police department.

Code enforcement

- Need improved code enforcement.
- Town needs to get property owners to maintain and renovate their properties.
- Need people to repair and fix up houses – need to have time limit to address repairs.
- Address dilapidated building issues; property owner should pay for this.

Education and job access

- Robeson County Community College has many programs that increase education and employment opportunities.
- Strengthen relationship and ties to Robeson Community College for workforce training.
- Need to improve education and employability skills for citizens in area.

- Need to invest in school system.
- Need to have programs to train young people – basic skills, job shadowing, interview skills.
- Town had building with Golden Leaf money for workforce development and training – need to revisit status of this.

Land use and environment

- Up the Town appeal e.g. propane tanks are unsightly off Patterson St., e.g. need landscape screening.
- Do a study and plan to address flooding issues.

Transportation

- Maintain the streets.
- Our sidewalks need improvement.
- Transportation is an issue and barrier for economic development for some families and workers. Need to develop creative way for transport. Uber is possibility.

Community resources and public facilities

- Improve internet access and broadband.
- Plan for infrastructure – decide what is in best interest of town and prioritize.
- Invest in good parks.
- Improve basketball courts with security.
- Improve public resources – libraries, cultural activities, etc.

- Improve trash and debris collection.
- Maintain and improve water and sewer facilities.
- Some storm drain lines are full of roots, need to replace or fix.
- Need improved catch basins.
- Improve the museum facility.

Youth activities

- Youth programs needed.

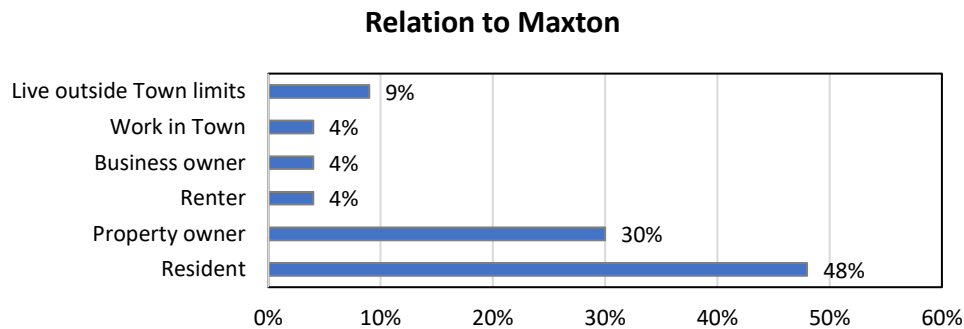
Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire Results

Paper Distributed Survey

The following are the results of the Town paper economic development survey. Fifteen people answered the survey. Generally, survey respondents were supportive of economic development planning and program improvements.

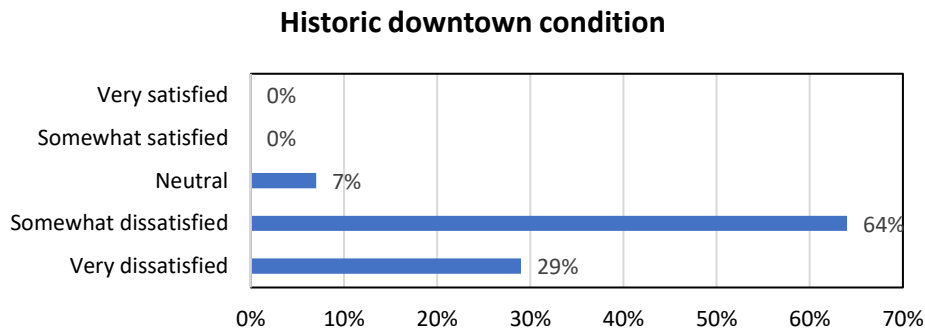
Town relationship

1. Your relationship with the Town? (check all that apply)

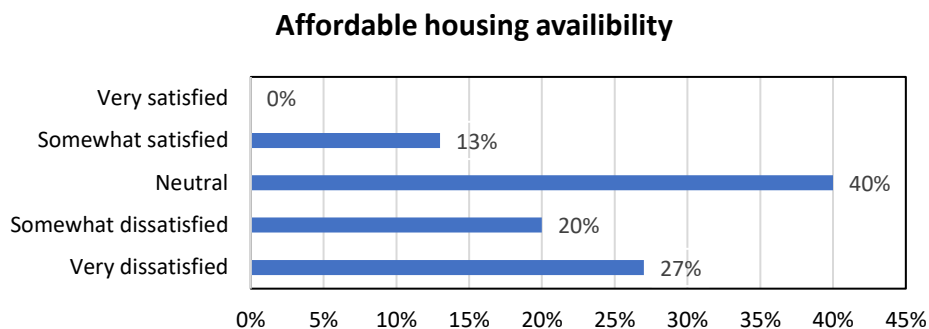


Please rate the following items

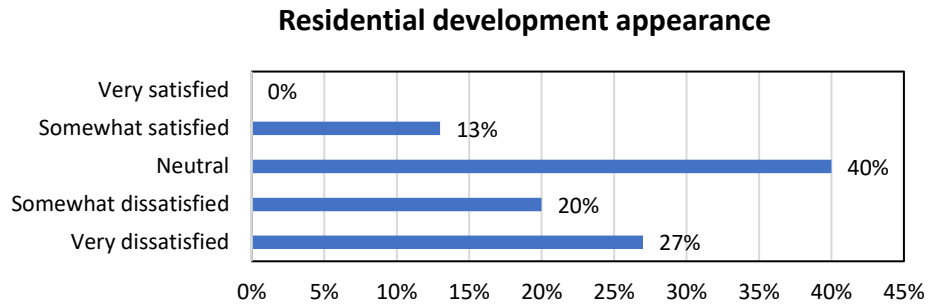
2. Historic downtown condition?



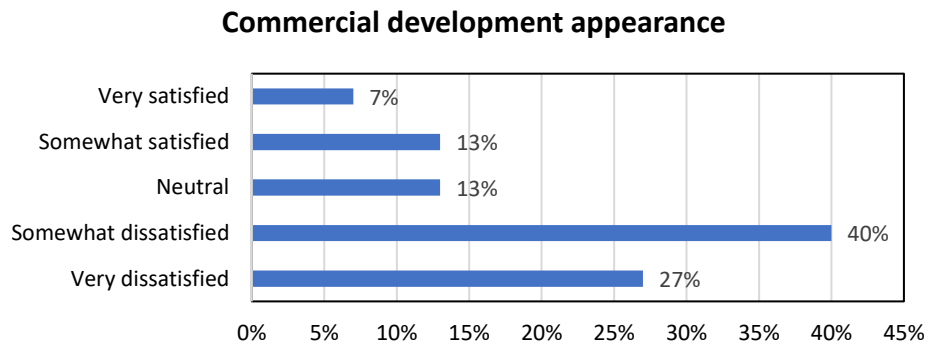
3. Availability of affordable housing in Town?



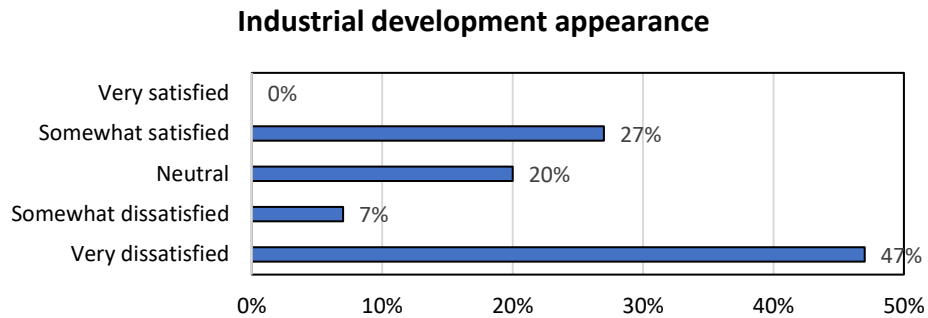
4. Overall appearance of residential development in the Town?



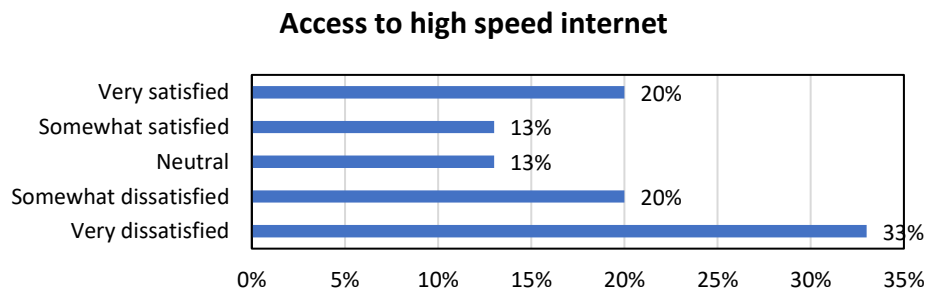
5. Overall appearance of commercial development in the Town?



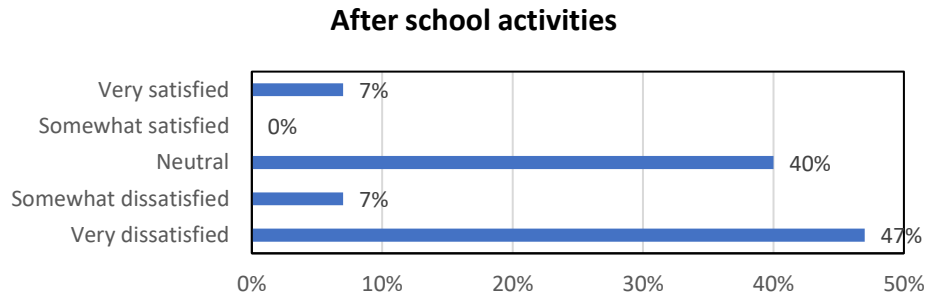
6. Overall appearance of industrial development in the Town?



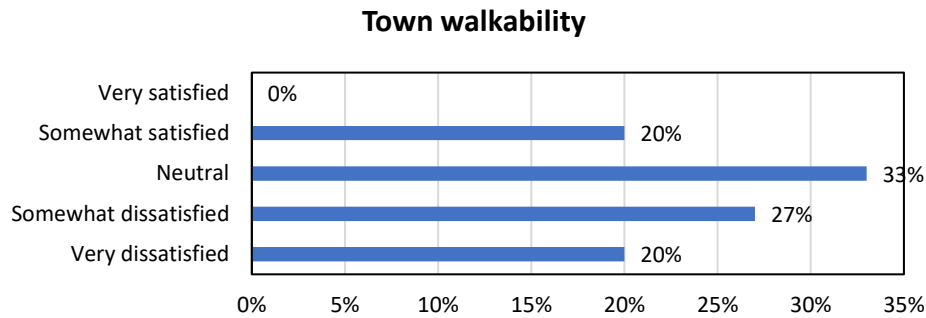
7. Access to high speed internet (broadband) in the Town?



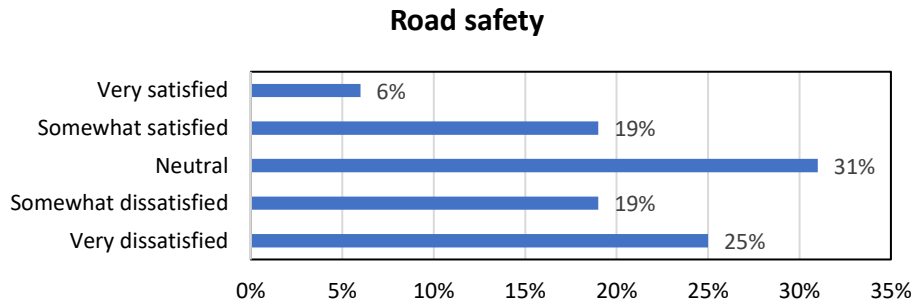
8. How satisfied are you with the type of after school activities for youth?



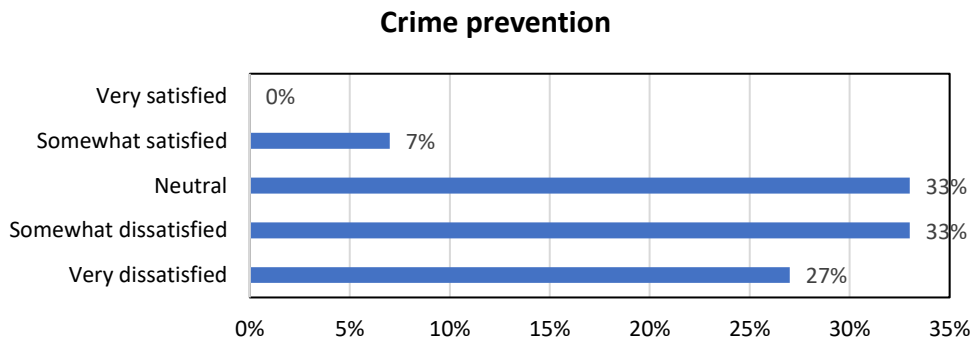
9. Walkability in the Town?



10. Road safety of the Town's streets?



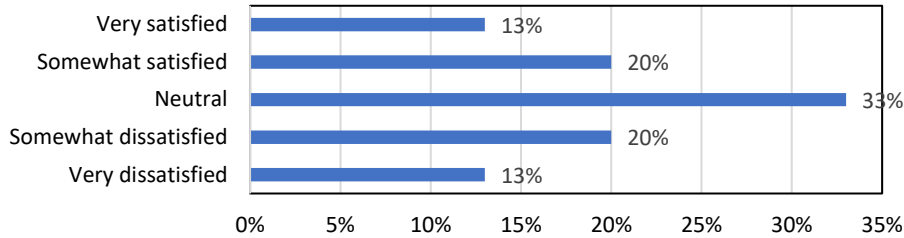
11. Crime prevention in the Town?



Please rate the following services

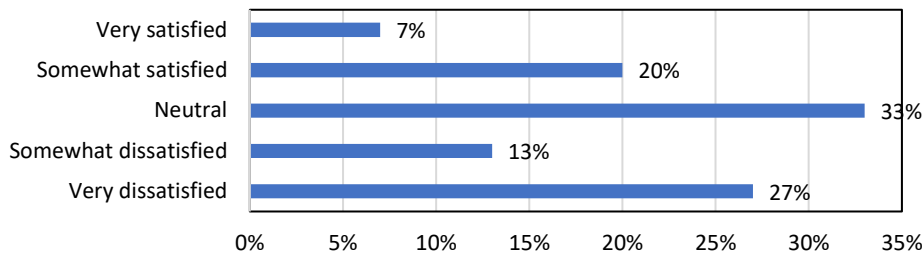
12. Water (“tap water”, drinking) facilities and service in the Town?

Water (drinking) facilities and service



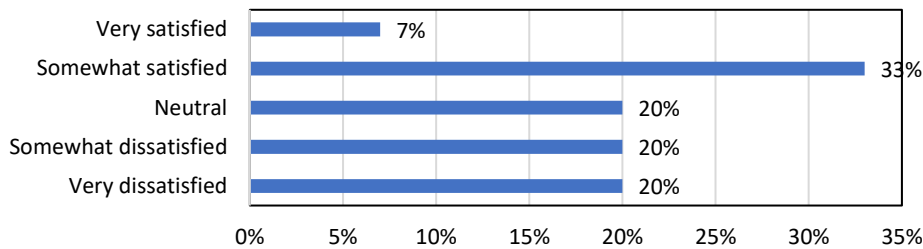
13. Quality of Town parks?

Town Parks



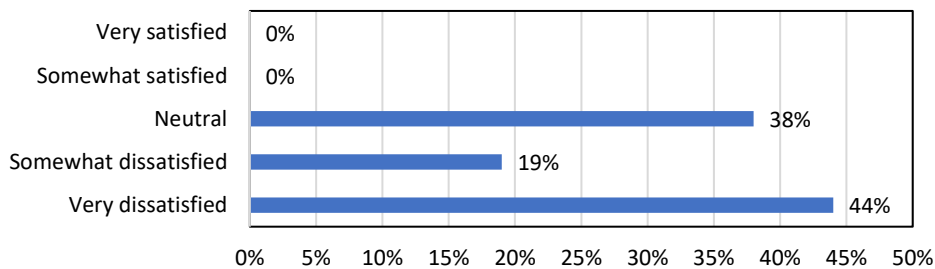
14. Availability of general health care services within the Town?

Availability of health care

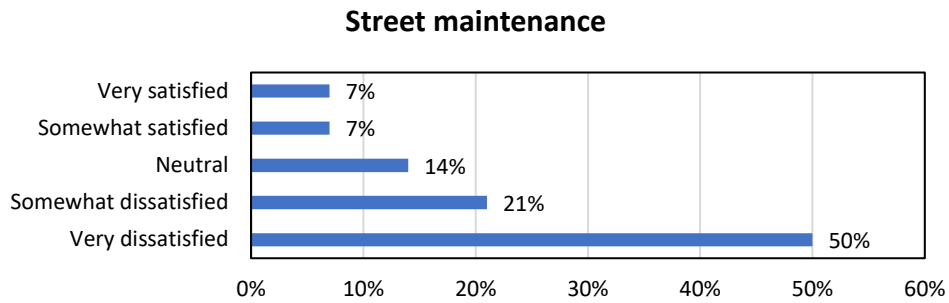


15. Quality of ordinance code enforcement in the Town?

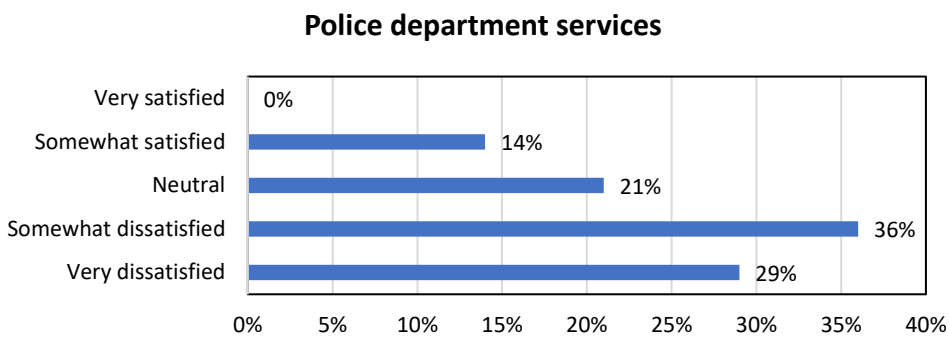
Code enforcement



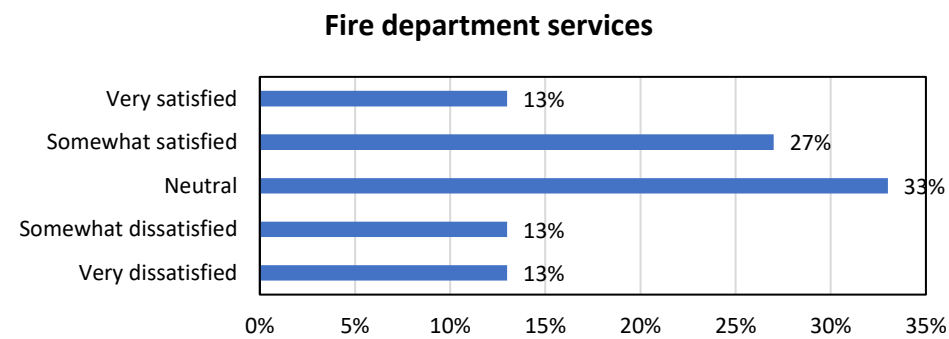
16. Maintenance of streets in Town?



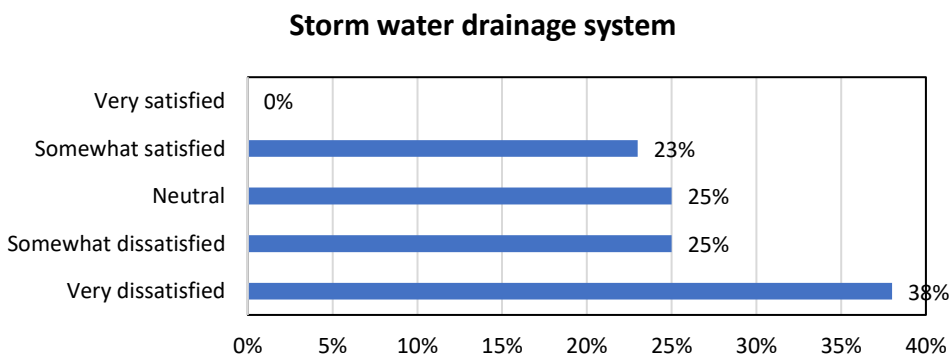
17. Police department service within the Town?



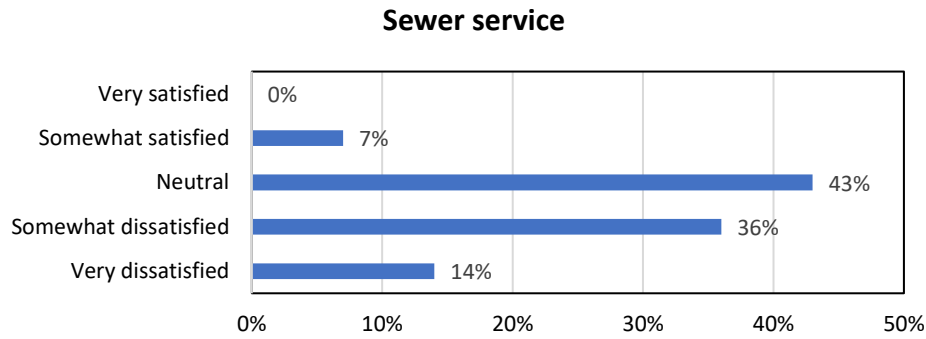
18. Fire department service within the Town?



19. How satisfied are you with the storm water drainage system in the Town?

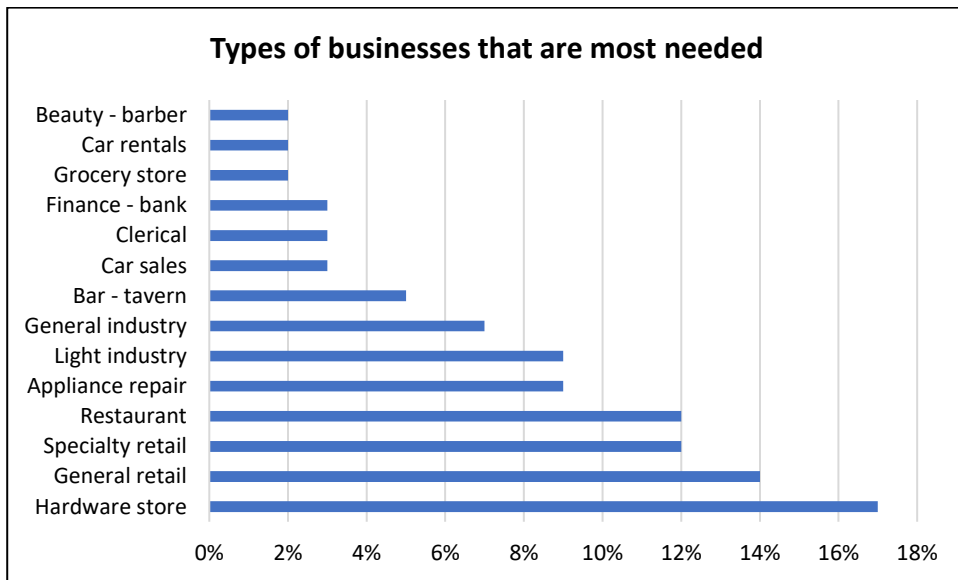


20. Sewer service in the Town?

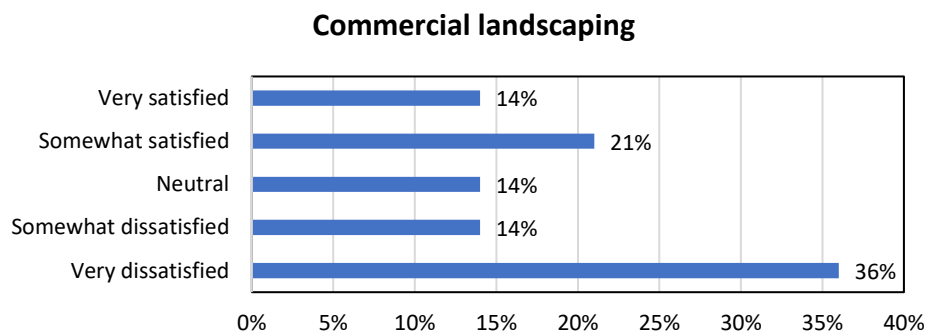


General Town Questions

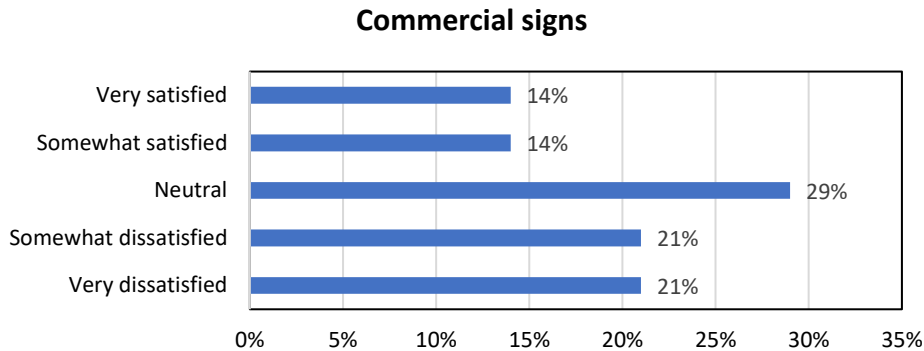
21. Please indicate the type of businesses that are most needed in the Town? (check all that apply)



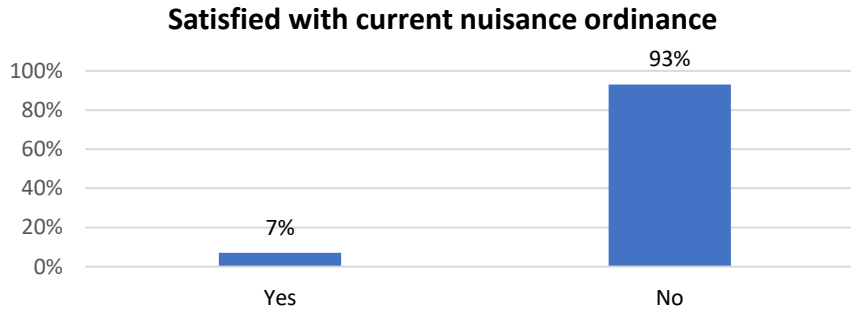
22. Quality of commercial landscaping in the Town?



23. Appearance of commercial signs in the Town?



24. Are you satisfied with the current nuisance ordinance (grass height, trash on property, noise, dilapidated structures, abandoned vehicles, etc.)?

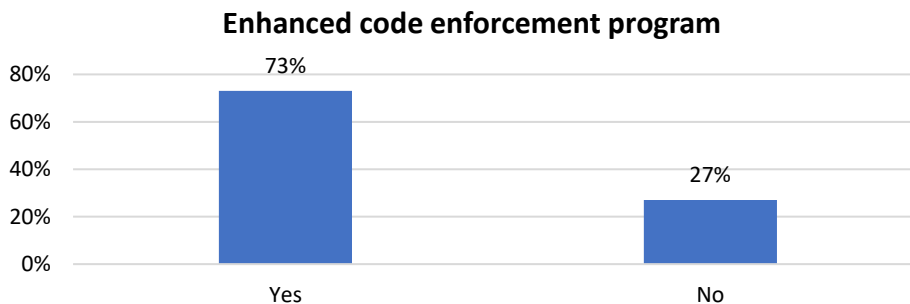


If the answer is “No” please specify why.

Written responses

- We need to enforce the current codes. (2)*
- Abandoned buildings and houses are a problem. (2)*
- Dilapidated structures are an eye sore.*
- Agree that there are problems with code enforcement.*
- Junk in yards, dilapidated structures.*
- People throw trash on private property.*

25. Would you be in favor of an enhanced code enforcement program to address residential, commercial and industrial property owner nuisance problems?



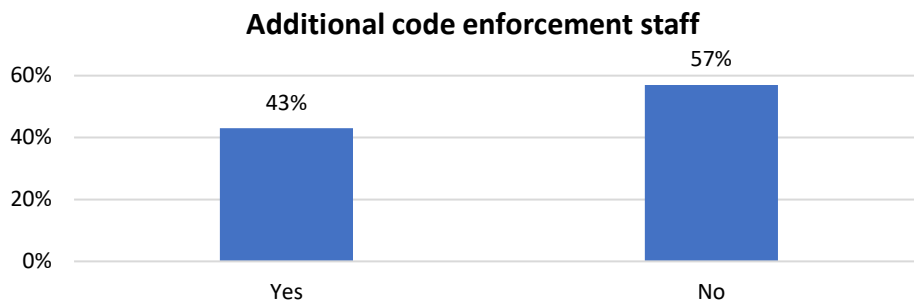
If the answer is “Yes”, specify why.

Written responses

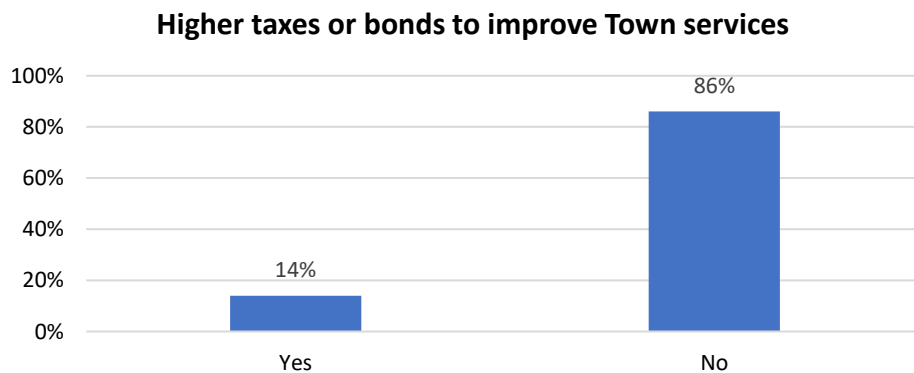
- *Ordinances are not being enforced (2)*
- *Abandoned houses are a problem.*
- *Need to keep the residents informed of updates and changes.*

- *Citizens need to know that changes can be enforced.*
- *Need to improve code enforcement program.*
- *Trash on private and public property shows a lack of care about the town.*

26. Would you be in favor of the Town setting aside funds for an additional code enforcement person?



27. Would you be willing to pay higher taxes or bonds to improve any of the Town services or facilities listed in the survey?



If the answer is “Yes”, specify which services or facilities. *(There were no comments.)*

28. Do you have any additional community planning and economic development comments regarding the Town?

Written responses

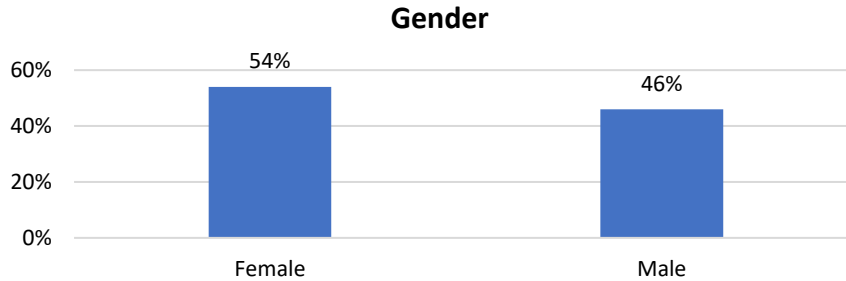
- *Young adults and children need social programs.*
- *Need to clean up old abandoned houses.*
- *Would like to have a Town Welcome Committee and packets of information for new residents.*
- *We need to clean-up the town.*

Town of Maxton, North Carolina – Economic Development Strategic Five-Year Plan

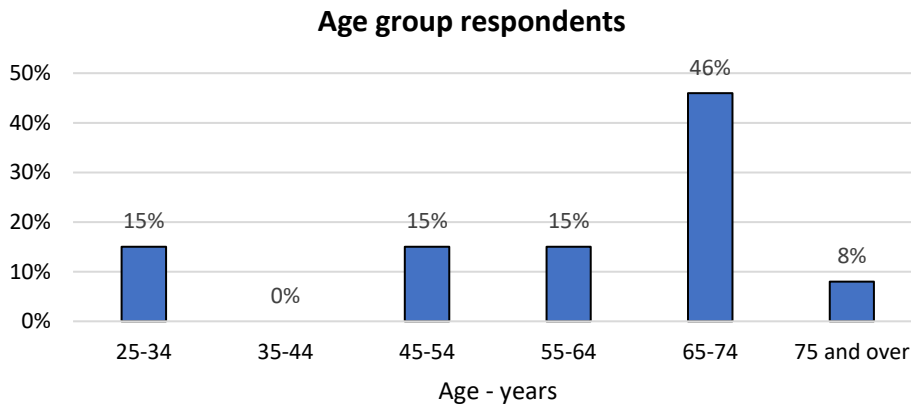
- *Need to get more people to participate with town activities.*
- *Safety of my children is a concern (crime).*
- *The town web site needs to be improved.*
- *The lot with the propane tanks needs to be improved. Sad sight.*
- *The appearance of the town would be improved if the falling down buildings were rehabilitated or removed.*
- *We chose Maxton for the general small town feel and racial diversity.*

Demographics

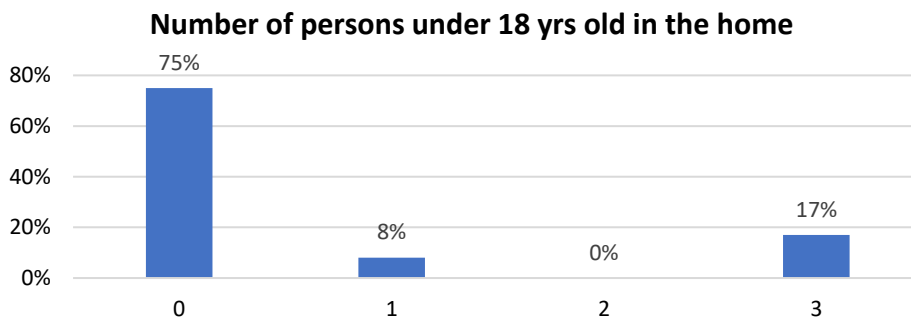
29. Your gender?



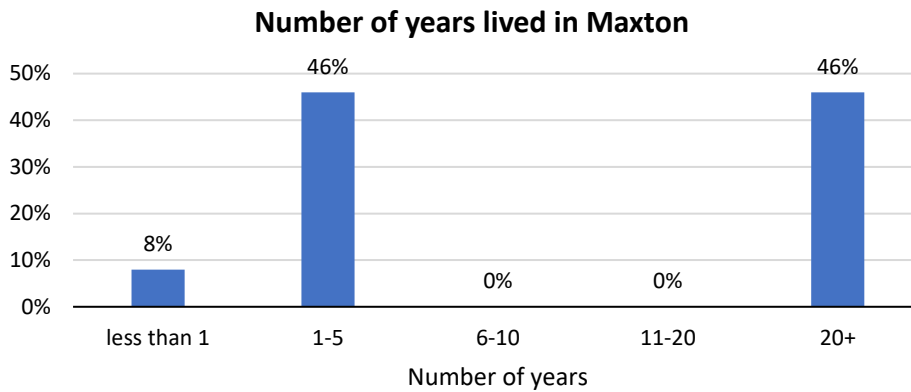
30. Select your age group – years?



31. Number of person(s) under the age of 18 in the home?



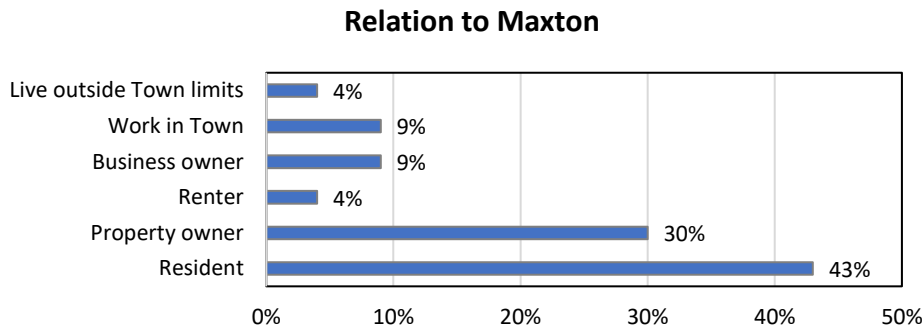
32. How long have you lived in Maxton?



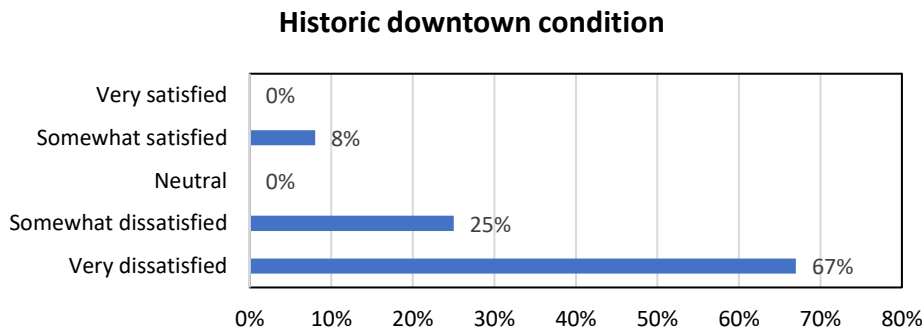
On-line “Survey Monkey” Results

The following are the Town economic development on-line survey results from “Survey Monkey”. Twelve people answered the survey. Generally, the results are similar to the previous shown paper survey in Appendix B.

1. Your relationship with the Town? (check all that apply)



2. How do you find the old historic downtown condition?



Summarized written comments

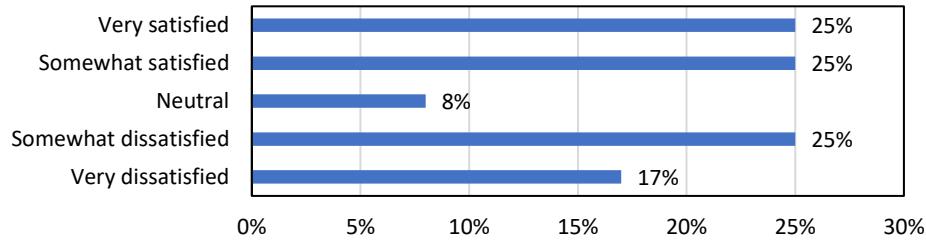
- *Patterson Building – Town Hall needs to be repaired.*
- *Code enforcement should be improved for dilapidated properties e.g. in downtown.*
- *Many downtown buildings are in need of repair and better maintenance.*

Town of Maxton, North Carolina – Economic Development Strategic Five-Year Plan

- *Propane tanks on lot on main street are an eyesore.*

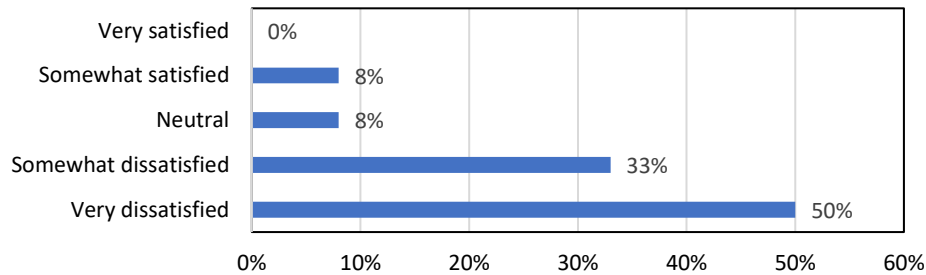
3. How satisfied are you with access to high speed internet (broadband) in the Town?

Access to high speed internet



4. Are you satisfied with crime prevention in the Town?

Crime prevention

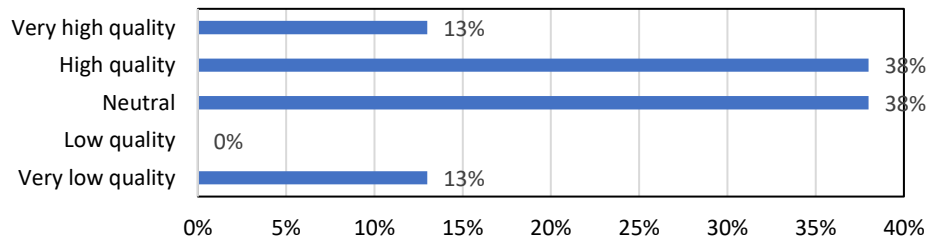


Summarized written comments

- *Crime is an issue and problem in the Town.*
- *Need improved Town police services.*

5. How would you rank the water ("tap water" drinking) facilities and service in the Town?

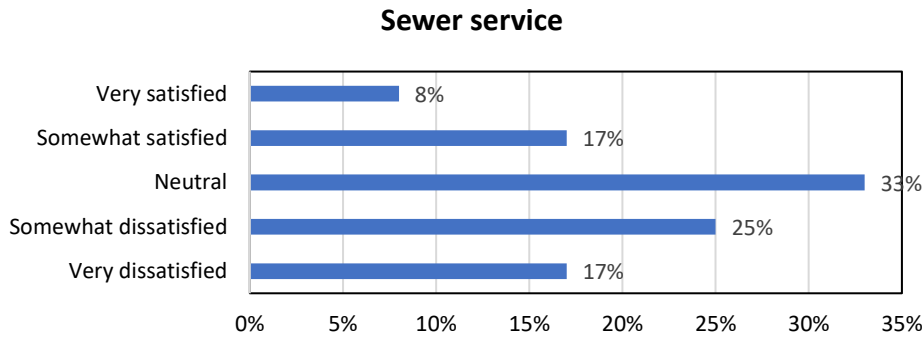
Water (drinking) facilities and service



Summarized written comments

- *Water quality and service should be improved.*

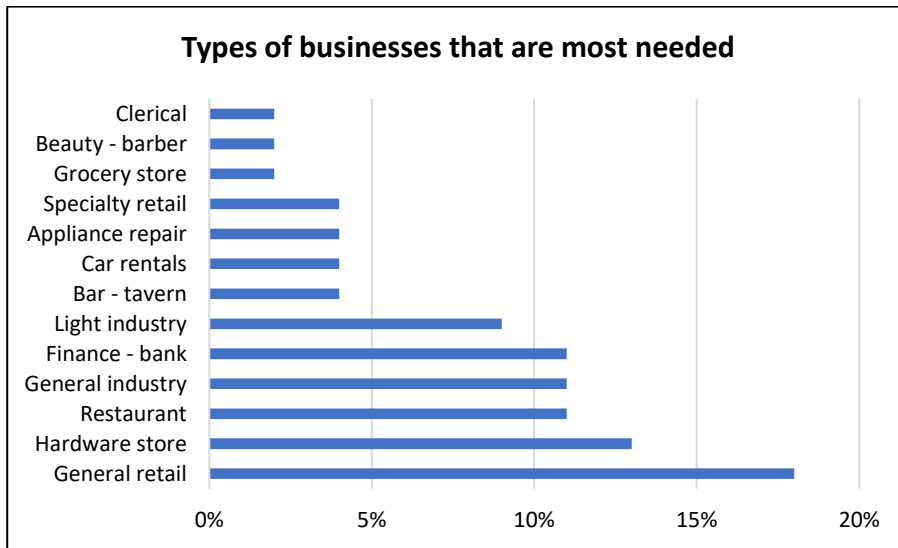
6. Are you satisfied with the sewer service in the Town?



Summarized written comment

- *Sewer maintenance and service should be improved.*

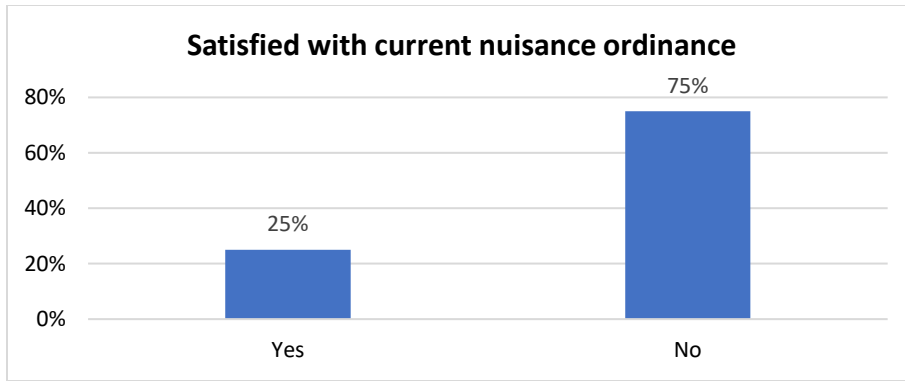
7. Please indicate the type of businesses that are most needed in the Town (check all that apply)



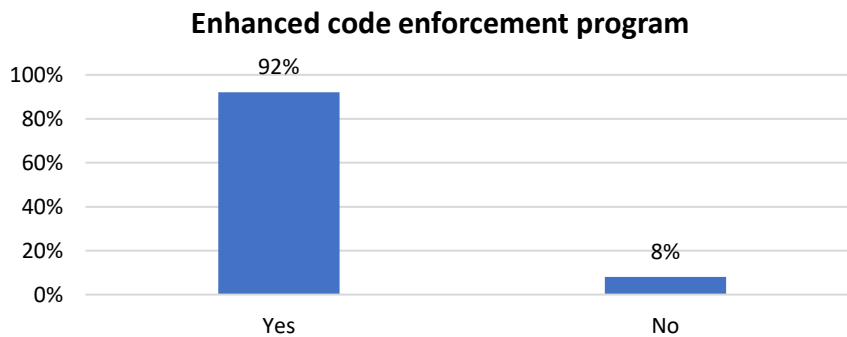
Summarized written comments

- *Don't want fast food restaurants.*
- *Need to attract businesses to Town, particularly to downtown.*

8. Are you satisfied with the current nuisance ordinance (grass height, trash on property, noise, dilapidated structures, abandoned vehicles, etc.)?



9. Would you be in favor of an enhanced code enforcement program to address residential, commercial, and industrial property owner nuisance problems?



10. Do you have any additional community planning and economic development comments regarding the Town?

Summarized written comments

- *Building and property code enforcement needs improvement.*
- *Need improved social programs for the youth.*
- *Public safety needs to be improved. Crime is a problem. Police services need improvement.*
- *Need more community outreach by elected officials.*

- *Downtown buildings and properties need to be fixed up.*
- *Need to attract businesses to Town, particularly to downtown.*
- *Town drainage needs to be studied, form a plan, and implemented for improvements.*
- *Need to pick up litter throughout town on more routine basis.*

Appendix C: Business Retention, Expansion, and Recruitment Information

To carry out the economic development actions of this Plan the Town and/or an appointed Plan Action Committee should consider the following. A successful Economic Development Strategic Plan will retain existing quality businesses in the community, expand them where possible, and will also help in recruiting new businesses.

The Town, and a potentially appointed Plan Action Committee have many resources regarding business retention, expansion and recruitment. They include for example: NC Department of Commerce - Main Street and Rural Planning Center; Maxton Chamber of Commerce; Robeson County and Scotland County - Community College Small Business Centers; Lumber River Council of Governments; Robeson County and Scotland County: Economic Development Offices; Southeastern Economic Development Commission (federal program); Economic Development Partnership of NC (state program); and the NC Rural Center.

Visits could be made with owners of existing businesses to identify problems, and weaknesses that may need to be addressed. Business opportunities would be identified that could be met by existing business expansion. New businesses could be identified for recruitment that would be complementary and would attract customers for existing businesses as well.

A general method for business recruitment would be the following: New business types that are likely to succeed in the Town and downtown would be identified and solicited (for potential business types see Section 4 - Tables 4-10 and 4-11). A general economic assessment has been conducted in this Plan in Section 4. It can be used as a starting point about what products or services citizens must go for outside the Town to purchase and what businesses are desired in the Town.

Identification of market potential for goods and services to add or expand is important. Business feasibility would need to be identified. A list of those types of businesses located in nearby communities would be prepared. A recruitment package should be developed with information gathered from a community assessment, market data, and business plans to solicit these businesses.

The Town and/or an appointed Plan Action Committee should undertake a recruitment effort with information on available buildings that includes square footage, potential rent, etc. Market information and data gathered in this report could also be shared in recruitment. Follow-up efforts by the Town and/or an appointed Plan Action Committee could include: phone calls; a personal visit to the prospects; invitations for the prospects to visit the community; maintaining contact until a decision is made; and regular contact afterwards to retain the business.

End of Plan