

WINSTON-SALEM STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOUNDATIONS REPORT



PREAMBLE

What is the Strategic Plan? Why is it important?

Imagine Winston-Salem is a planning process sponsored by the **Greater Winston-Salem, Inc.** and **Visit Winston-Salem**, in partnership with the **Winston-Salem Foundation**. The process will create a strategic action plan for the community with an emphasis on connecting community assets and strengthening the City as a travel destination. The results will support our growing economy, guide future community investments, and create a thriving place for people to live, work, and visit.

A central component of the Strategic Action Plan is understanding how people currently experience Winston-Salem and identifying ways to make their experiences more complete. Tourism, arts and culture, higher education, innovation, and quality-of-place all play an important role in shaping the City's economy and identity. The plan examines how these assets interact with housing, workforce trends, industry, and infrastructure to achieve our community vision and goals.

Early phases of the process focus on building a shared understanding of existing conditions and trends, while later phases translate that understanding into priorities, strategies, and implementation actions.

The Foundations Report supports the Strategic Action Plan by establishing this baseline understanding. It documents current conditions related to people, jobs, housing, places, visitors, and supporting systems, including Winston-Salem's destination and tourism dynamics. The findings in the Foundations Report are not recommendations; rather, they provide the foundation needed to inform dialogue, test ideas, and guide the development of the plan.

The vibrancy of our community destinations play a meaningful role in Winston-Salem's economy, supporting jobs, local businesses, and public revenues. At the same time, visitor dynamics are closely tied to broader community conditions, including housing affordability, transportation access, cultural vitality, and downtown activity. The Strategic Action Plan creates space to examine these connections and to consider how destination-focused investments can reinforce broader community goals.

Why now?

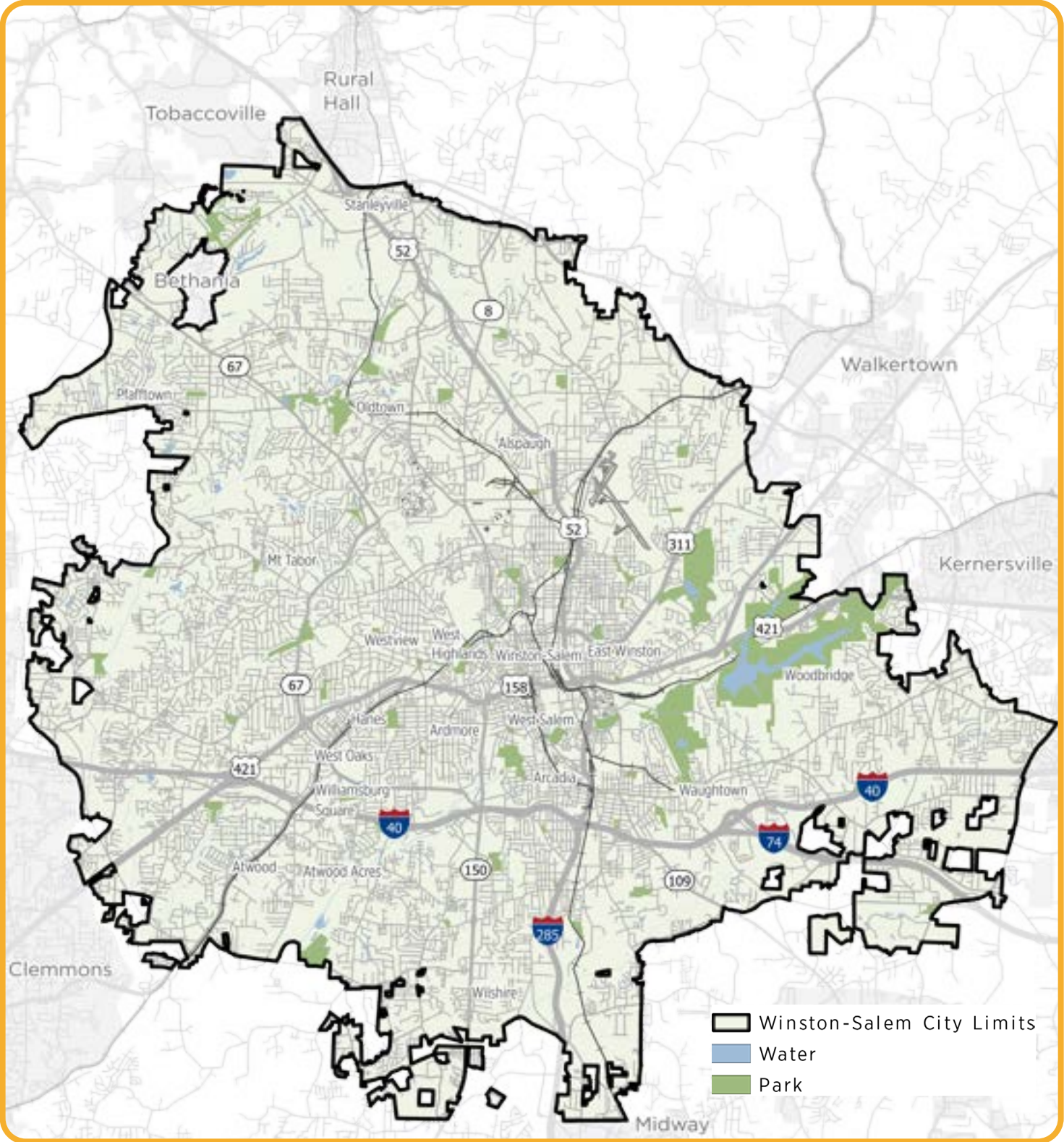
The timing of this plan isn't by accident. We're at a critical crossroad where the decisions of today will have lasting impact. This timing also coincides with:

- Shifts in our local economy (from manufacturing to service and technology)
- Increasing and changing challenges (for families and our workforce)
- Opportunities for tourism to play a greater role in our community vibrancy
- New generation of leadership in our industries and institutions

Who is involved?

- Greater Winston-Salem, Inc.
- Visit Winston-Salem
- The Winston-Salem Foundation
- City of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County departments and agencies
- Institutional Anchors
- Private Sector and Business Community
- Community Organizations and Residents

City of Winston-Salem



THE PIEDMONT TRIAD

Our Place in the Region

The Piedmont Triad is a 12-county region in central North Carolina named for its three principal cities: Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and High Point. Interstate highways (I-40, I-85, I-73, and I-74) and the Piedmont Triad International Airport (PTI) provide regional connectivity and supports commerce and commuting across the Triad, including to and from Winston-Salem.

Winston-Salem is the second-most populous city in the Piedmont Triad, behind Greensboro. It balances the region economically and culturally alongside Greensboro and High Point, contributing its own industries, educational institutions, and cultural assets. Traditionally a hub for tobacco, textiles, and furniture, **Winston-Salem has been diversifying into technology, healthcare, and research.** Winston-Salem hosts major universities and colleges such as **Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem State University, Carolina University, Salem College, Forsyth College,** and the **UNC School of the Arts.**

Together with Greensboro and High Point, Winston-Salem helps define the Triad’s economic footprint, labor market, and regional identity. The three cities collectively influence North Carolina’s business attraction, education landscape, and transportation priorities.



People

Approximately 14% of the Piedmont Triad population resides in Winston-Salem, making it the second-most populous city in the Triad



Jobs

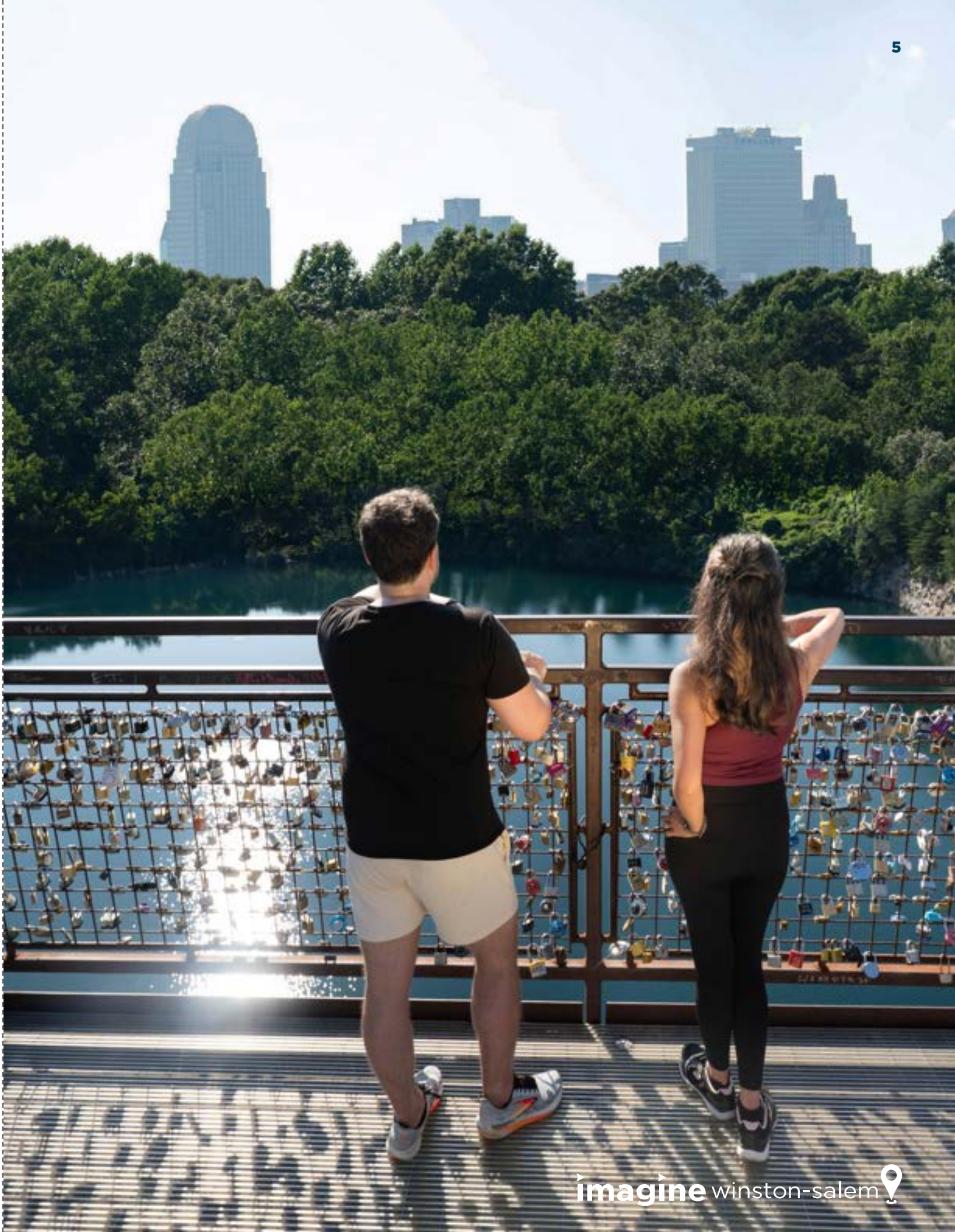
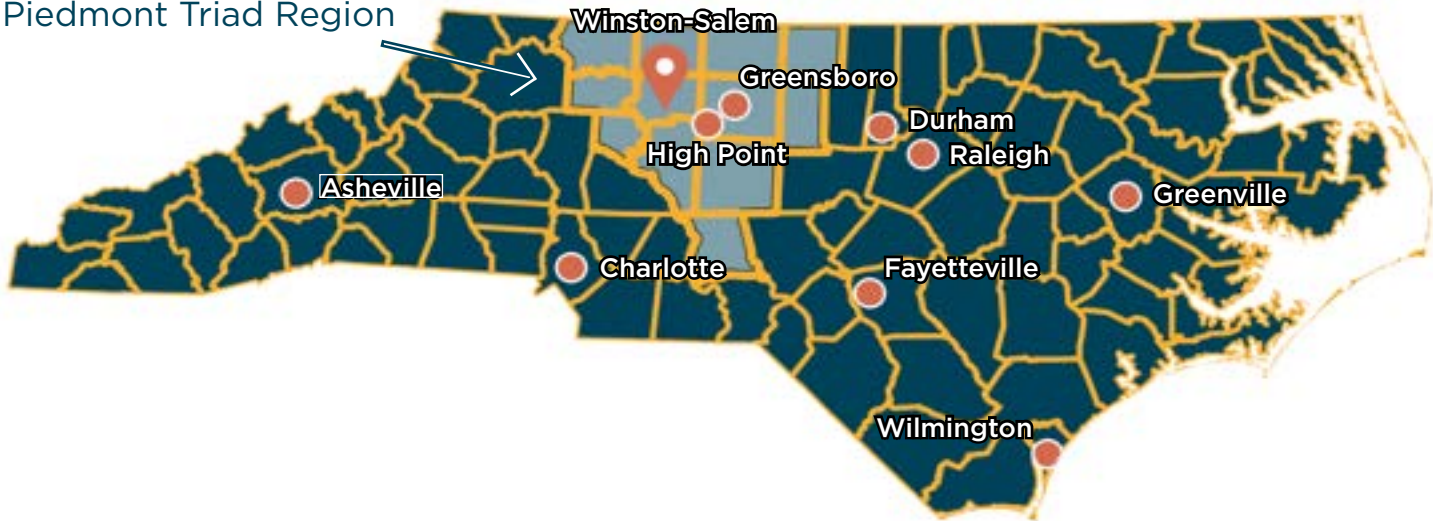
About 22% of all jobs in the Piedmont Triad are located within Winston-Salem. Nearly 33% of all healthcare and education jobs in the Region are in Winston-Salem.



Destinations

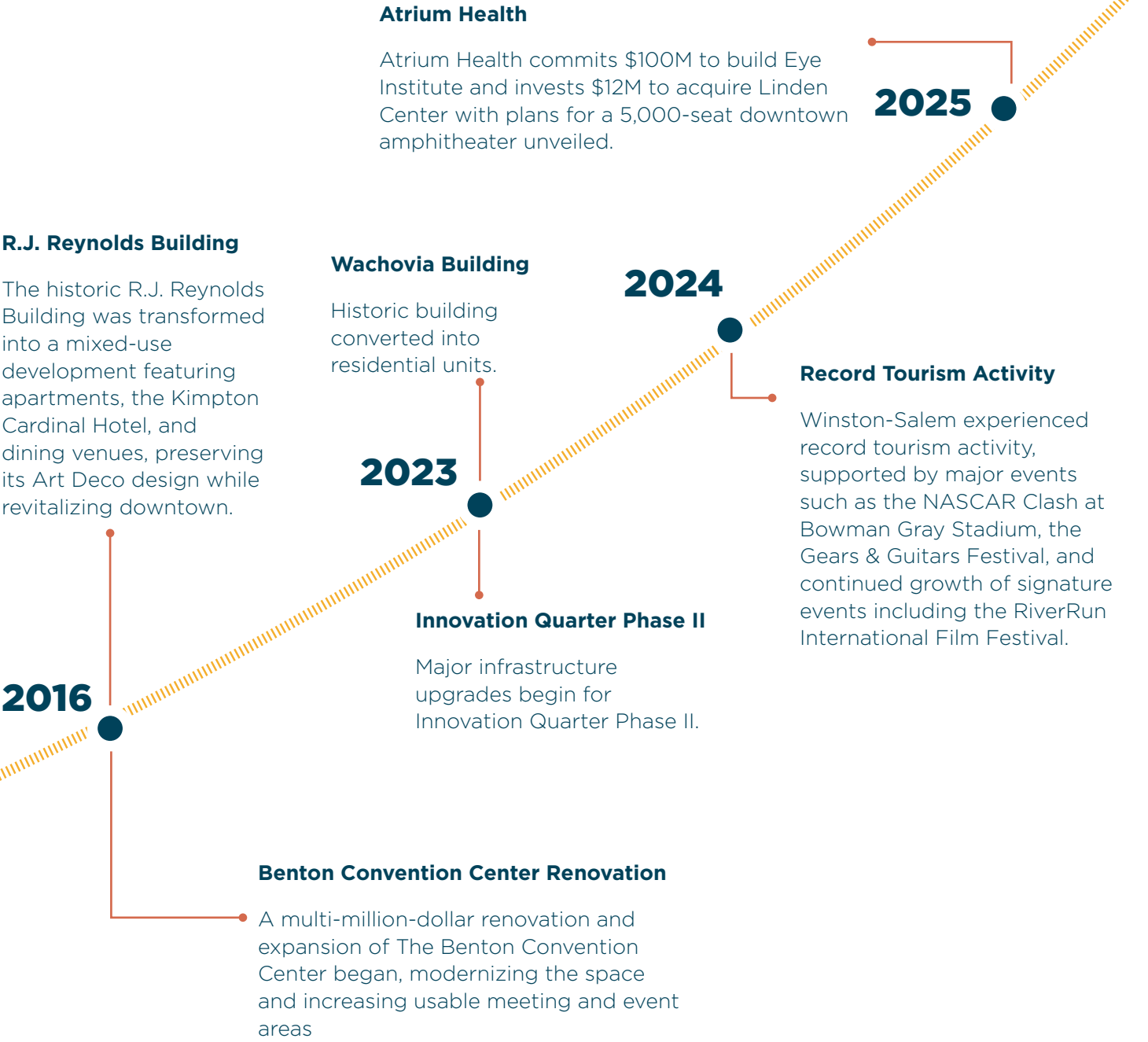
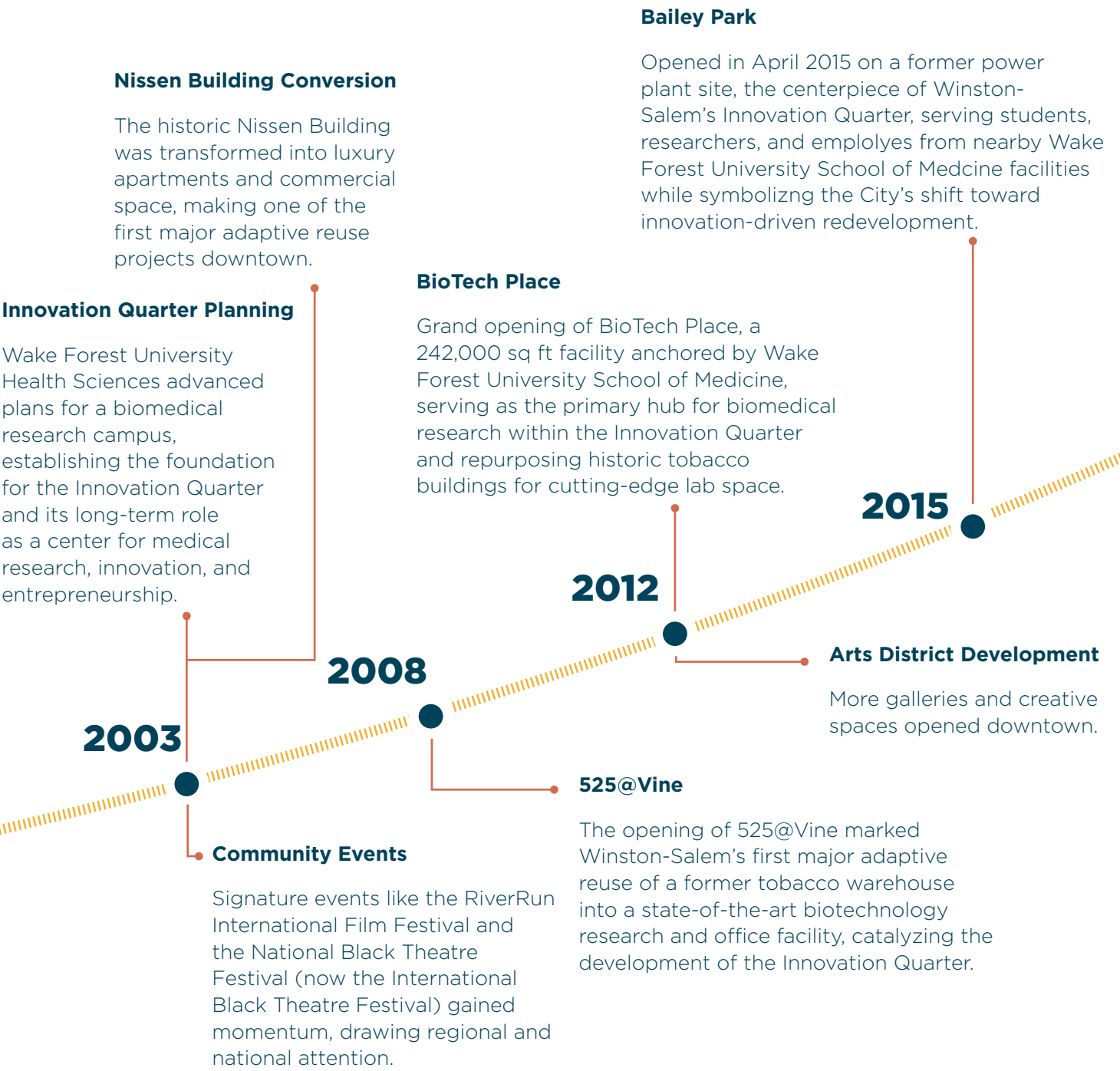
Winston-Salem is home to three major universities within the Triad and is a regional host for sports, arts, and civic events.

Piedmont Triad Region



OUR PAST TO PRESENT

Winston-Salem has undergone remarkable transformation since the early 20th century, both in its demographics and economic foundations. Originally, the City thrived as a manufacturing hub, dominated by tobacco and textile industries led by companies like R.J. Reynolds and Hanes. After World War II, returning veterans helped fuel population growth and economic expansion. During the 1960s and 1970s, as housing opportunities broadened and civil rights advances opened doors, Winston-Salem became increasingly diverse. African American families and other minority groups moved into neighborhoods once limited by segregation, contributing to a richer cultural fabric and a more inclusive community.



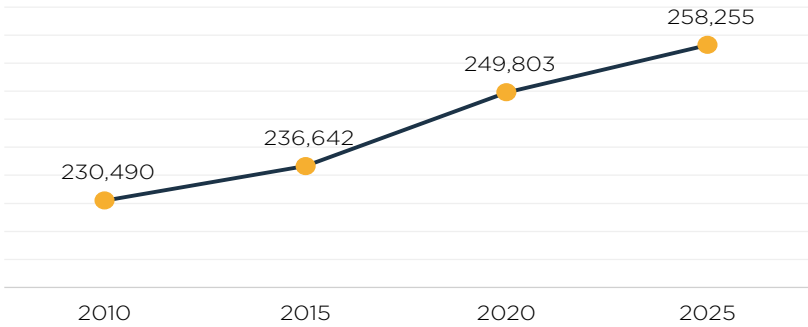
In recent decades, Winston-Salem has shifted from its manufacturing roots to a knowledge-based economy centered on education, healthcare, and innovation. The relocation of Wake Forest University in the 1950s laid the groundwork for this evolution, and today, institutions like Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center and the Innovation Quarter drive research and entrepreneurship. Historic tobacco warehouses have been repurposed into cutting-edge biotech labs, offices, and residential spaces, symbolizing the City's commitment to revitalization. This ongoing transformation reflects a community that honors its history while actively shaping a dynamic, forward-looking future.

OUR PEOPLE

Population Trends

Over the past 15 years, Winston-Salem has added nearly 28,000 residents, reflecting a 12% increase overall. Population gains accelerated between 2015 and 2020, followed by continued growth into 2025. This pattern suggests that Winston-Salem remains an attractive place to live, supported by a combination of employment opportunities, educational institutions, and neighborhood investment.

Population Change (2010-2025)

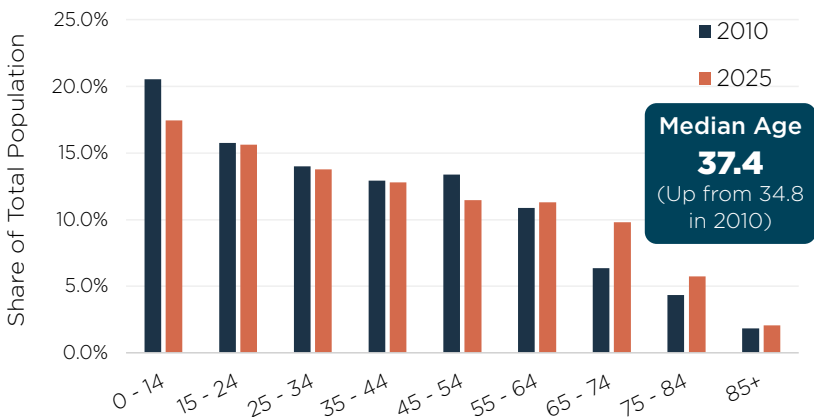


Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online (BAO), 2015-2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Data Profile

Age

Population growth in Winston-Salem has been driven primarily by generational shifts toward an older population, alongside steady gains among younger working-age adults. The strongest growth occurred among Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation. Residents ages 65 to 74, increased by more than 10,600 people, while those ages 75 and older grew by nearly 5,900 residents combined. At the 25 to 44 age group added more than 6,500 residents, and the 15 to 24 population grew by over 4,000 residents. In contrast, the population of children (Gen Alpha) declined modestly.

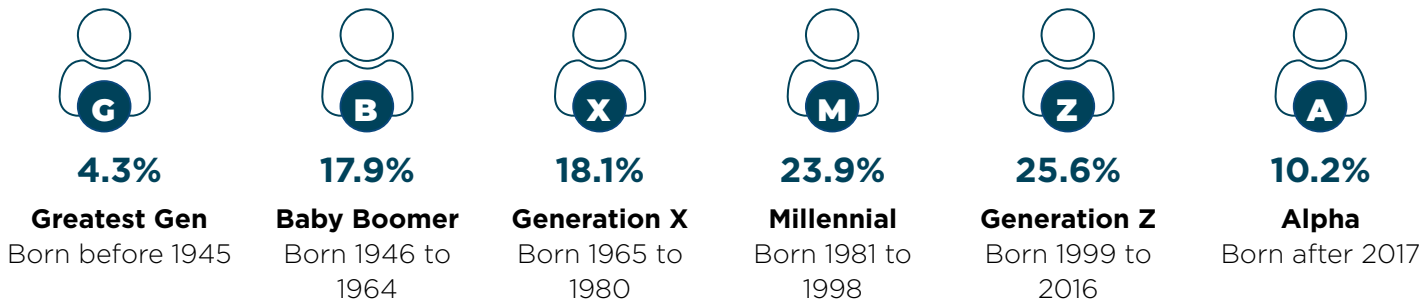
Population by Age Cohort (2010-2025)



Source: ESRI BAO

Population by Generation

Combined, Millennials and Generation Z make up more than 49% of the population in Winston-Salem.

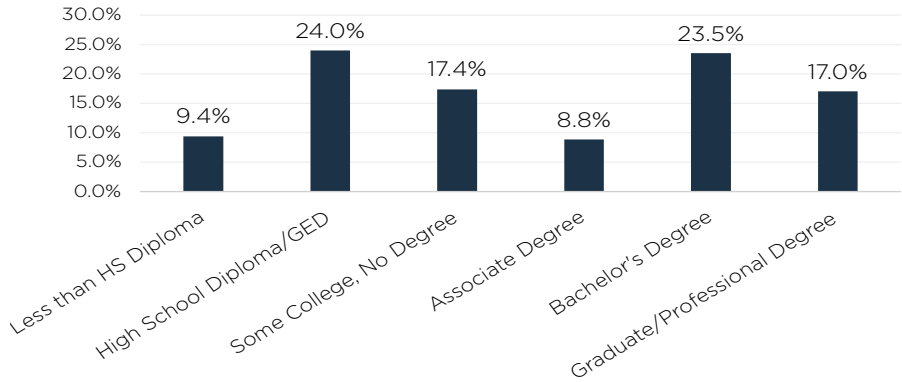


Source: ESRI BAO

Education

Educational attainment in Winston-Salem reflects a diverse mix of education levels. 24.0% of residents over the age of 25 have a high school diploma or GED, and 17.4% have some college experience without a degree. More than 40% of residents hold an associate degree or higher, including 23.5% with a bachelor's degree and 17.0% with a graduate or professional degree. At the same time, 9.4% of residents have not completed high school.

Educational Attainment (2025)

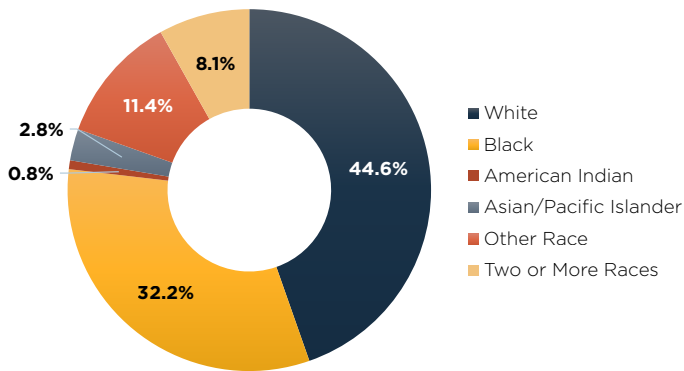


Source: ESRI BAO

Diversity

White residents make up the largest share of the population in Winston-Salem at 44.6%, followed by Black residents who account for 32.2%. While nearly one-in-five residents identifies as Hispanic or Latino, a population that spans multiple racial categories.

Race (2025)



Source: ESRI BAO

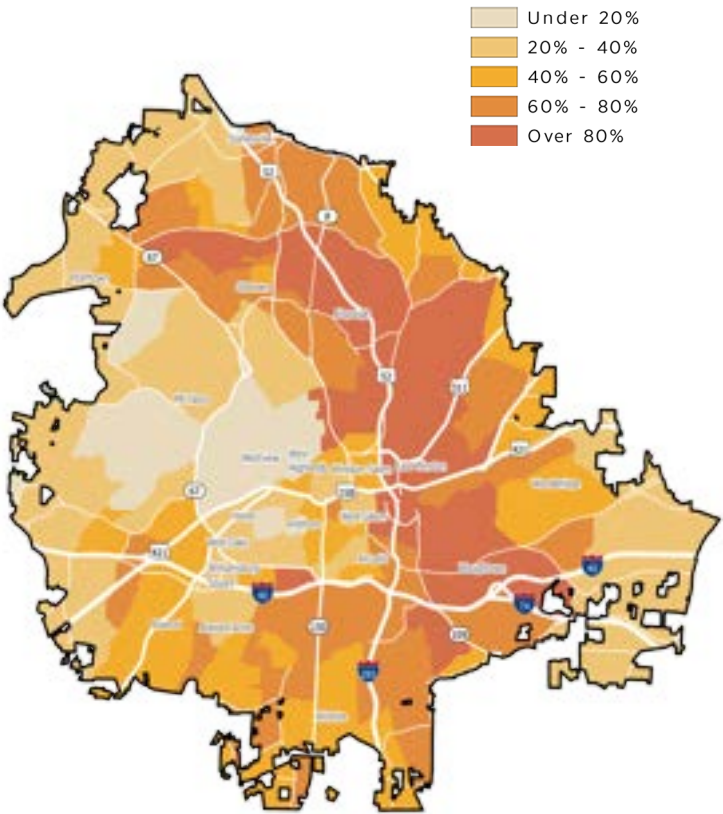
55.4%

Of residents belong to a racial minority group

18.3%

Of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino

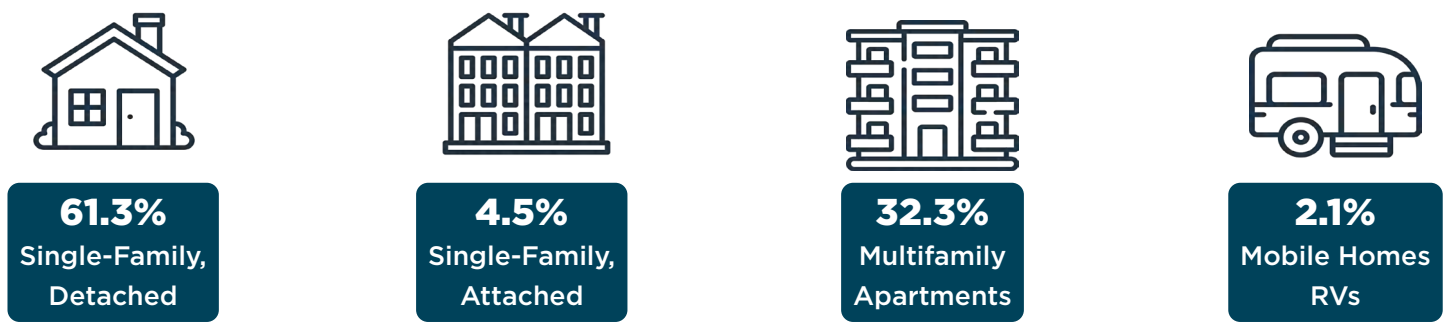
Non-White Population



OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

Housing Types

As of 2025, Winston-Salem has approximately 118,200 housing units. The housing stock is predominately single-family, with 61% of units being single-family detached, while multi-family housing accounts for 32%. Single-family attached units and mobile homes or other housing types make up a relatively smaller share of total units.



Source: ESRI BAO

Occupancy

Between 2010 and 2025, owner-occupied housing in Winston-Salem declined slightly and renter-occupied units increased from 38.6% to 42.5%. Vacancy has decreased, indicating stronger utilization of the city's housing stock. Together, these trends point to growing demand for rental housing alongside improved overall occupancy.

Tenure (2010-2025)

Tenure	2010	2025
Owner-Occupied	50.3%	48.9%
Renter-Occupied	38.6%	42.5%
Vacant	11.2%	8.6%

Source: ESRI BAO

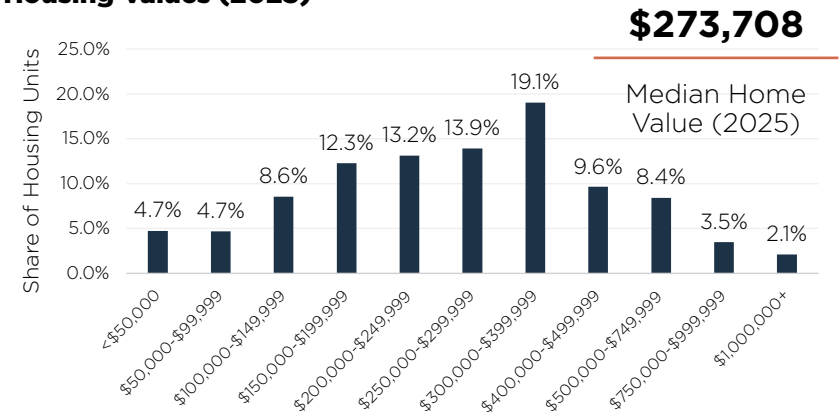
Housing Tenure Change (2010-2025)

- » Owner Share Change: **-1.4%**
- » Renter Share Change: **+3.9%**
- » Vacant Share Change: **-2.5%**

Home Values

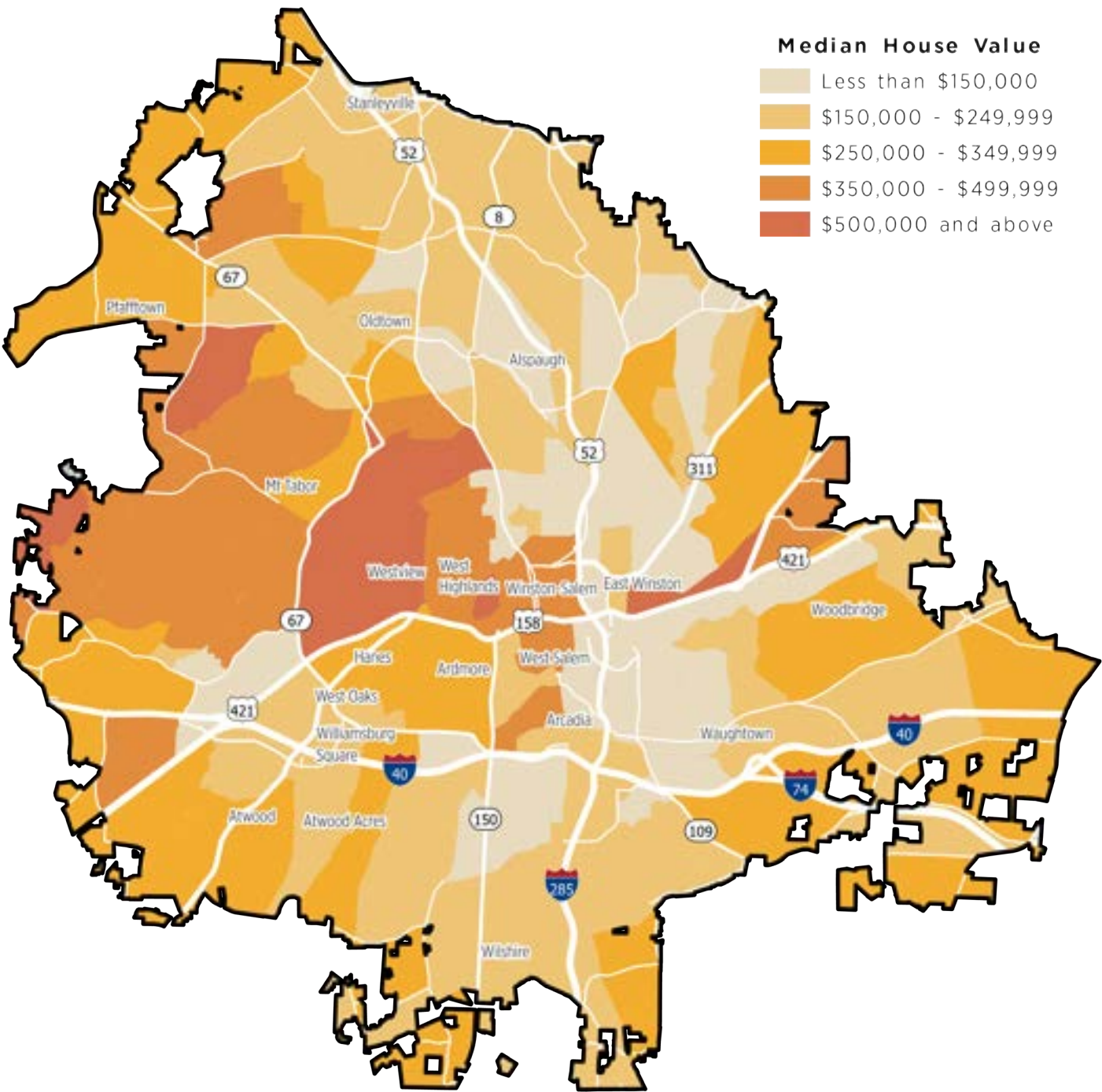
Home values in Winston-Salem are concentrated in moderate price ranges, with nearly half of owner-occupied homes valued between \$200,000 and \$399,999. The city's median home value is \$273,708, reflecting a housing stock that remains relatively attainable compared to higher-cost markets. With a median year built of 1980, much of Winston-Salem's housing consists of established homes and neighborhoods.

Housing Values (2025)



Source: ESRI BAO

With a median home value of \$273,708, much of the city, including areas such as Old Town, Ardmore, West Salem, and East Winston, falls within the \$150,000 to \$349,999 range. This range closely aligns with the citywide median. Higher median home values, generally \$350,000 and above, are concentrated in northwestern and western neighborhoods. Together, these patterns highlight a housing market where affordability is broadly available across many neighborhoods, with localized variation driven by housing stock, location, and market demand.

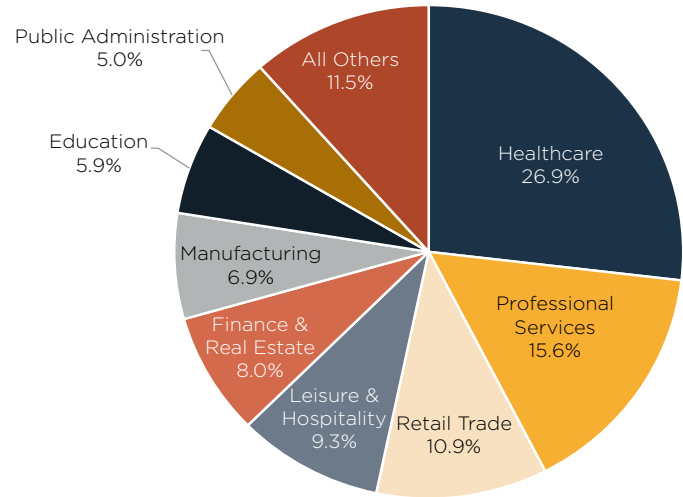


OUR WORKFORCE

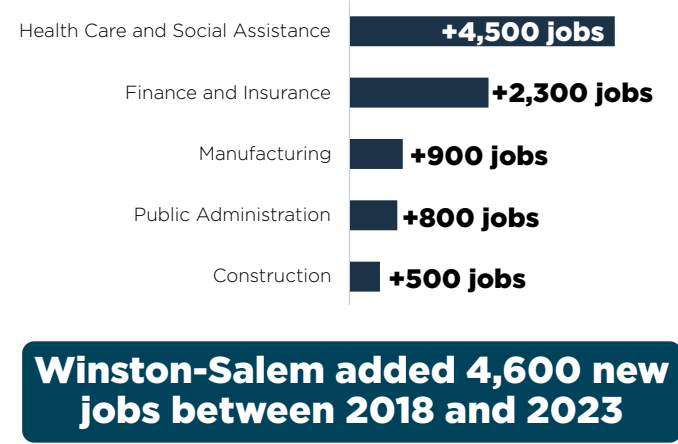
Employment Sectors

Winston-Salem’s economy is anchored by health care, which plays a central role in both overall employment and recent job growth. Professional services, retail, and leisure and hospitality also make up sizable portions of the workforce, reflecting a service-oriented economy that supports residents, visitors, and regional demand. Employment growth has been led by health care, with gains in finance and insurance and steady increases across manufacturing, public administration, and construction.

Employment by Industry Sector (2023)



Sectors with Largest Growth (2018-2023)



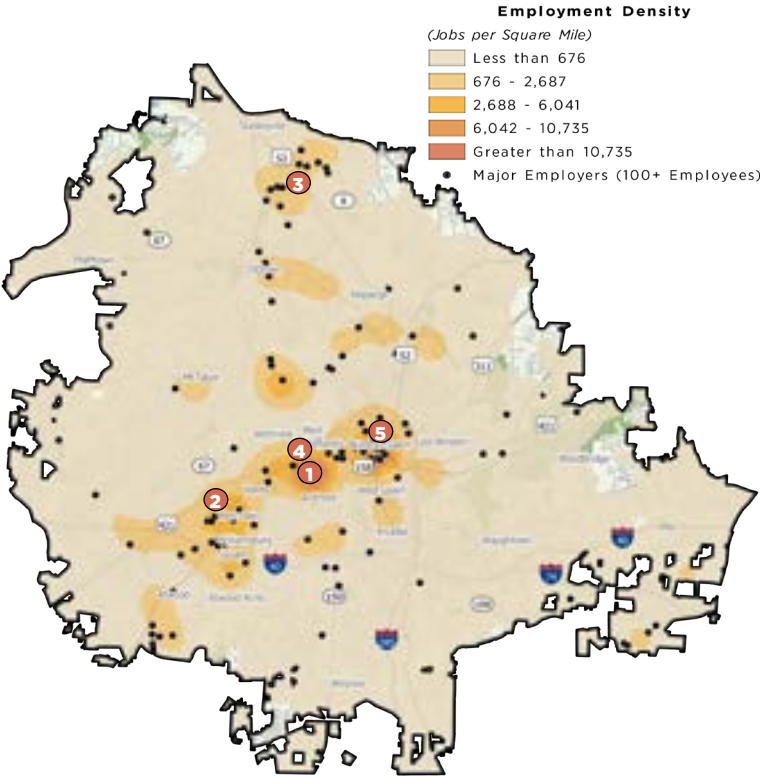
Source: US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) OnThe Map

Employers

The highest employment densities are centered around Downtown Winston-Salem, The Medical Center and Innovation Quarter areas anchor the City’s largest concentration of jobs, driven by employers such as Atrium Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, Wake Forest University, and the Piedmont Triad Research Park. Additional employment clusters correspond with manufacturing and corporate employment which are located primarily in northern and eastern parts of the City.

- Largest Employers**
1. Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center
 2. Novant Health
 3. Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools
 4. Truist
 5. Reynolds American

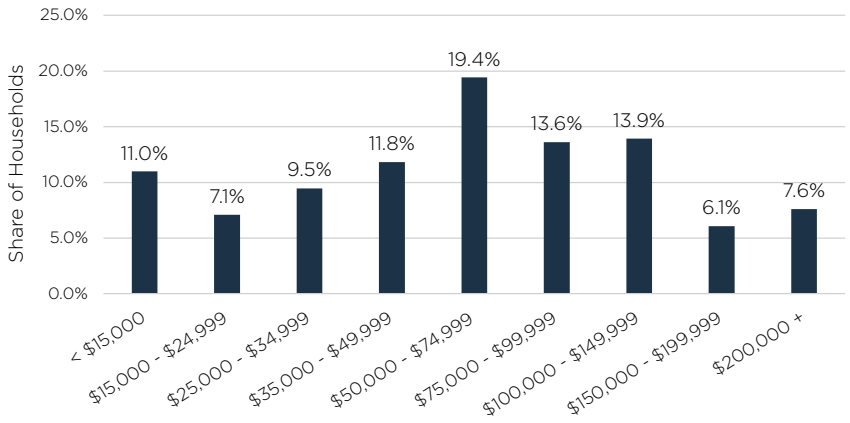
Source: Greater Winston-Salem Inc



Income

Household income in Winston-Salem reflects a broad range of earning levels. The median household income is \$63,287, with nearly four-in-ten households earning less than \$50,000 annually. After accounting for taxes and other deductions, the median disposable income is \$51,705, providing important context for household spending power and affordability. Together, these income patterns help frame how residents experience the local economy and inform discussions around economic opportunity.

Median Household Income (2025)



Source: ESRI BAO



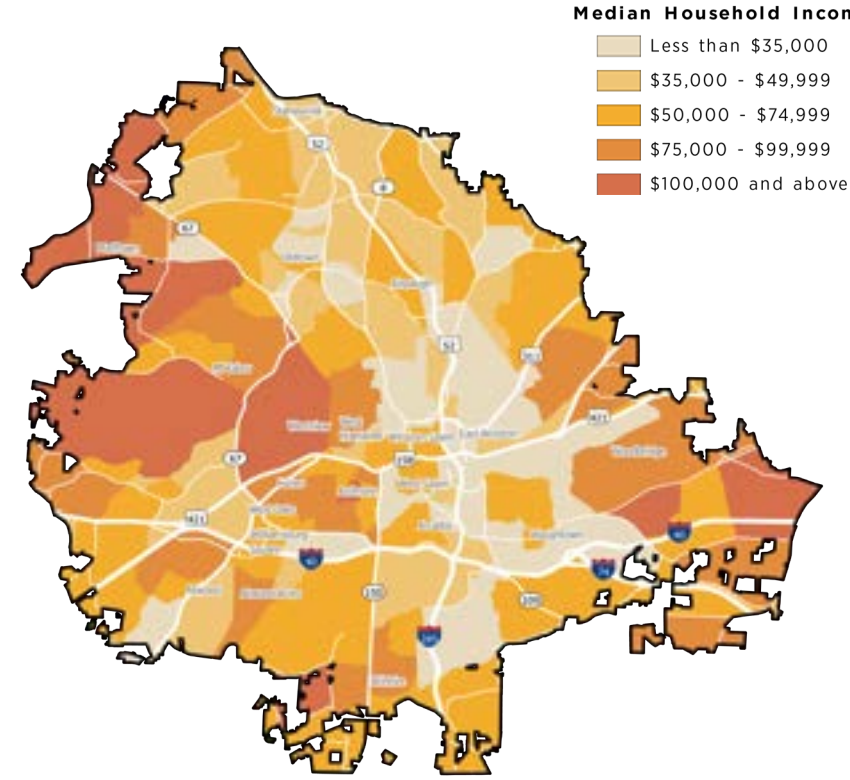
\$63,287
Median Household Income



39.4%
Households earning less than \$50K annually



\$51,705
Median Disposable Income



- » Higher median household incomes (above \$75k) are more prevalent in western and northwestern neighborhoods, including Pfafftown and Mt. Tabor.
- » Lower median income households (below \$50k) are more common in parts of central, eastern, and southeastern Winston-Salem, including East Winston and Waughtown
- » Most neighborhoods fall within the \$50,000 to \$74,999 range, aligning closely with the citywide median household income.

OUR PLACE

Identity

Winston-Salem’s appeal as a destination is anchored in a carefully curated portfolio of cultural assets, educational institutions, and recreational amenities. Together, these assets reflect a City shaped by the preservation of its Moravian heritage alongside sustained investment in arts, culture, research, and innovation-driven activity, contributing to a distinctive and evolving destination experience.



Heritage & Culture

Historic and cultural institutions form the foundation of Winston-Salem’s identity, offering authentic experiences rooted in Moravian heritage, preservation, and education.



Arts

Arts and creative expression are central to Winston-Salem’s sense of place, shaping how residents and visitors experience the city on a daily basis.



Innovation & Downtown

Investment in innovation and districts has strengthened the City’s urban environment and reinforced its role as a center for research, employment, and activity.

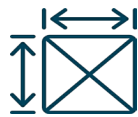
Key Destination Assets

- » **Old Salem Museum & Gardens:** National Historic Landmark showcasing Moravian heritage through preserved buildings, traditional crafts, and living history
- » **Reynolda House Museum of American Art:** Historic estate featuring American art collections, formal gardens, and Reynolda Village retail and dining
- » **Bethabara Park:** Early Moravian settlement site offering archaeological interpretation and cultural programming
- » **University of North Carolina School of the Arts:** Nationally recognized arts conservatory with year-round performances and programs
- » **North Carolina Museum of Art Winston-Salem:** Contemporary art exhibitions housed in historic adaptive reuse setting
- » **Downtown Arts District:** Galleries, work studios, public art, and creative spaces integrated into the downtown core
- » **Innovation Quarter:** Mixed-use innovation district anchored by research, education, and healthcare institutions, including Wake Forest University School of Medicine
- » **Wake Forest University:** Major research and education anchor, with primary campus, athletics, and event facilities.
- » **Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist:** Regional health system supporting employment and medical innovation



Hospitality & Gathering Spaces

The Benton Convention Center—formerly the M.C. Benton Jr. Convention Center—provides 150,000 square feet of flexible meeting and event space, following renovations completed between 2016 and 2017 and subsequent upgrades to Benton South in 2021. The facility includes direct connections to the 319-room Winston-Salem Marriott and the 146-suite Embassy Suites, while approximately 1,200 additional hotel rooms are located within walking distance in downtown Winston-Salem. Overall, Winston-Salem maintains approximately 4,725 hotel rooms across strategic clusters, with the largest share concentrated in the upper-midscale and upscale segments, supporting the city’s positioning for association meetings, cultural tourism, and quality leisure travel.



150,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space



4,725 hotel rooms

Primary sports facilities include Truist Stadium (home to the Winston-Salem Dash minor league baseball team), Bowman Gray Stadium (featuring NASCAR-sanctioned racing and Winston-Salem State University football), and Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum (Wake Forest University basketball and volleyball), and Allegacy Stadium, the primary football venue for Wake Forest University. The City’s signature event calendar—anchored by the Carolina Classic Fair (over 300,000 attendees), RiverRun International Film Festival, Holidays at Old Salem, International Black Theatre Festival, Winston-Salem Open, and Bookmarks Festival of Books & Authors,—creates year-round reasons to visit.

Infrastructure & Connectivity

Winston-Salem benefits from strategic regional positioning along Interstate 40 and U.S. Route 52, situating the city within a 2-hour drive of Charlotte, the Research Triangle, and southern Virginia markets, with equidistant to Washington, D.C. and Atlanta (both approximately 300-350 miles). Piedmont Triad International Airport, located 30 miles east of downtown, offers approximately 60 daily nonstop flights to key East Coast and Midwest hubs, while proximity to Charlotte Douglas and Raleigh-Durham airports provides expanded air options for business and leisure travelers.

M.C. Benton Jr. Convention Center



Truist Stadium



Bowman Gray Stadium



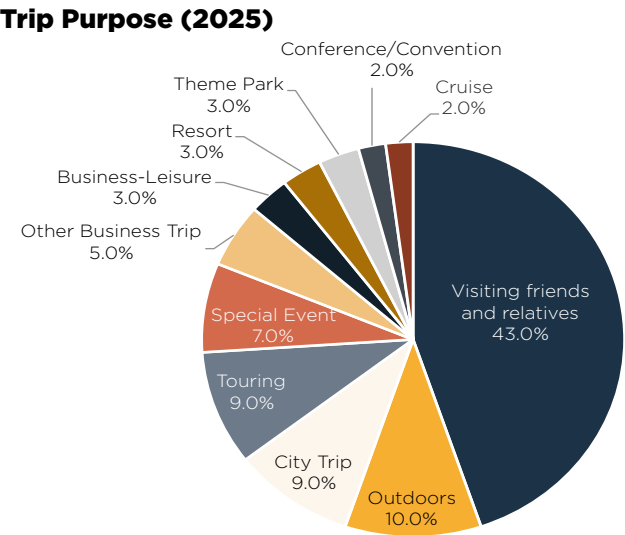
Carolina Classic Fair



OUR VISITORS

Why They Visit

Visitors come to Winston-Salem for a combination of travel, cultural experiences, institutional activity, and recurring events. Heritage sites such as Old Salem Museums & Gardens and Bethabara Park support educational and group travel tied to Moravian history, while arts institutions and performances contribute to year-round cultural visitation. In addition, conferences at the Benton Convention Center, collegiate and professional sports, youth tournaments, and signature events create distinct periods of increased travel activity. Visiting friends and relatives remains a consistent driver of visitation, reinforcing Winston-Salem’s role as a regional destination supported by repeat and relationship-based travel.



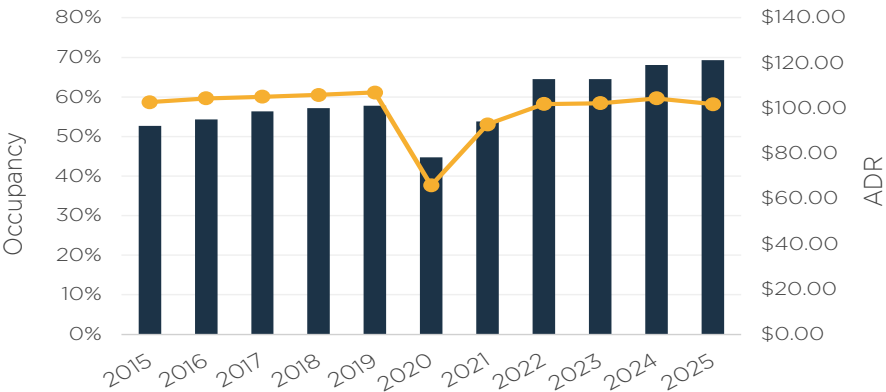
Source: Travel USA Visitor Profile-Longwoods International

TOURISM SUPPORTS 6,750 JOBS IN FORSYTH COUNTY

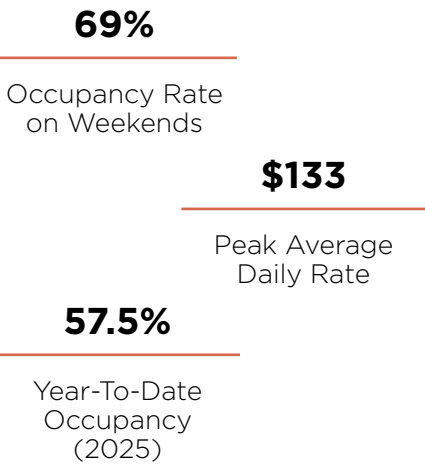
Hotel Market Performance

Winston-Salem’s hotel market exhibits clear weekly and seasonal demand patterns. Occupancy strengthens on weekends, averaging approximately 69% on Friday and Saturday nights compared to the mid-50% range during weekdays. In 2025, the average daily rate (ADR) peaked in April (\$129) and October (\$133), driven by major regional events such as the High Point Furniture Market. Year-to-date through September 2025, the market experienced occupancy softening to 57.5% as supply growth outpaced demand growth, with ADR remaining flat at \$117. The Short-Term Rental sector demonstrated stronger dynamics, with supply expansion matched by robust demand growth, maintaining stable occupancy near 60.2%.

Hotel Market Performance Trends (2015-2025)



Source: Winston-Salem Hotel Performance Reports-STR; CoStar



ECONOMIC IMPACT & PATTERNS

FORSYTH COUNTY RANKED #9 IN VISITOR SPENDING IN N.C.

7.1 M VISITORS

TOP VISITOR MARKETS

- » CHARLOTTE
- » RALEIGH-CARY
- » GREENSBORO-HIGH POINT

60% IN-STATE VISITORS

\$1.05B VISITOR SPENDING



AVERAGE LENGTH OF TRIP 2.8 NIGHTS

AVERAGE SIZE OF TRAVEL PARTY

2.9 PERSONS

79% REPEAT OVERNIGHT VISITORS



OVERNIGHT PARTIES INCLUDE:
58% SPOUSES/PARTNERS
44% CHILDREN

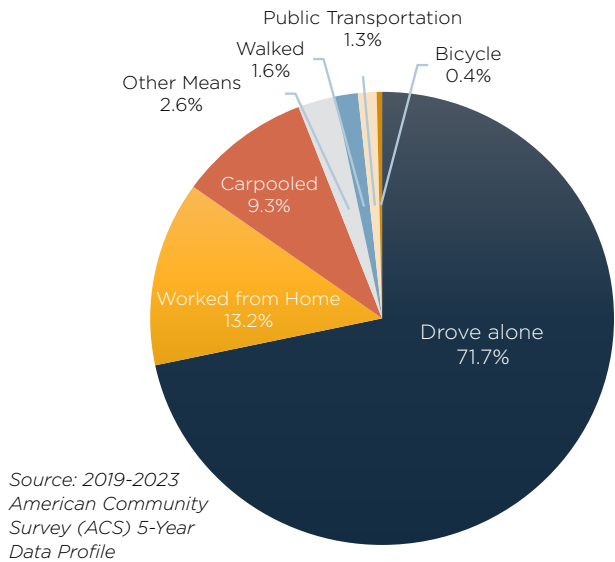
Source: Economic Impact of Visitors in Winston-Salem, NC; Tourism Economics & Travel USA Visitor Profile; Longwoods International

OUR MOBILITY

Commuting Trends

Winston-Salem’s transportation patterns reveal a strong reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, with limited use of public transit, walking, and bicycling. A small share of commuters work from home or carpool. Winston-Salem’s commute times indicate that residents generally experience shorter travel times compared to national averages, suggesting close proximity between housing and employment centers and manageable traffic congestion. This pattern aligns with the car-dependent nature of the community.

Mode Share (2019-2023)



21.8 Minutes

Average Commute Time



20.9%

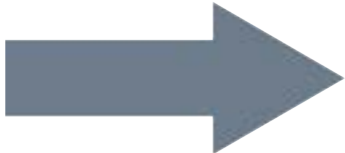
Working Commute Times >30 Minutes

Commuting Inflow & Outflow

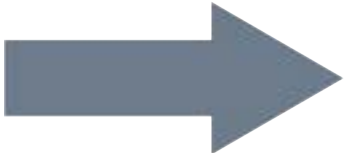
Winston-Salem’s commute patterns show it functions as a regional employment hub: 109,261 nonresidents commute into the City daily, 50,205 residents both live and work locally, and 55,196 commute out. This creates a daytime employment base of about 159,466 workers and a net inflow of roughly 54,065. The strong inflow and sizable outflow underscore regional connectivity, add peak-hour pressure on corridors and parking, and highlight opportunities to expand alternative transportation options while aligning land use to bring housing closer to major job centers and reduce cross-boundary commutes.

Commute Patterns (2023)

109,261
Commute In



55,196
Commute Out

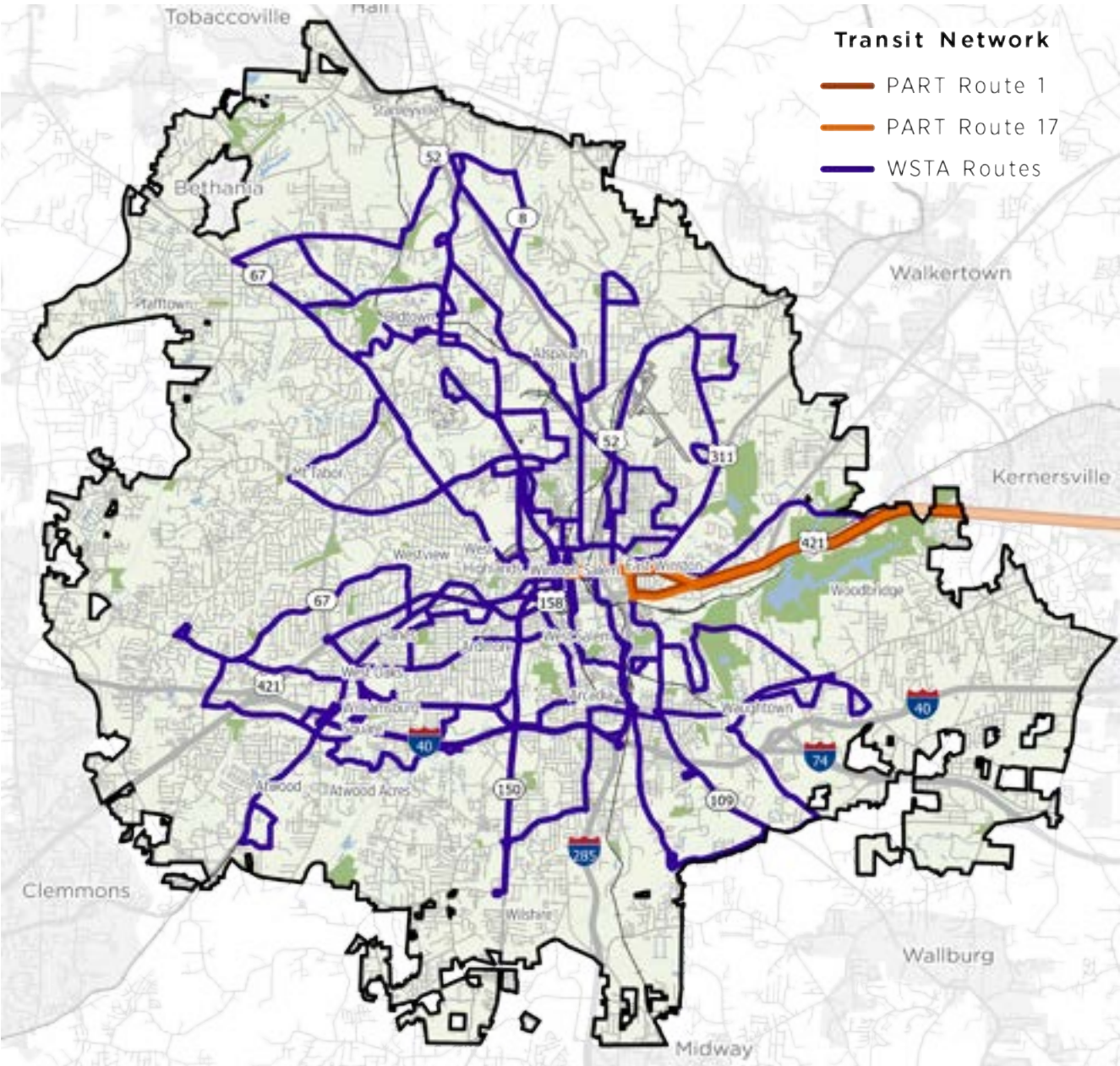


Source: US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) OnThe Map

Public Transportation

The **Winston-Salem Transit Authority (WSTA)** provides fixed-route local bus services within the City of Winston-Salem. The majority of the routes run at a 60-minute frequency and four routes run at a 30-45 minute frequency. WSTA also operates Trans-AID, a door-to-door shared ride paratransit service for older adults and people with disabilities that prevent them from using WSTA’s fixed route services.

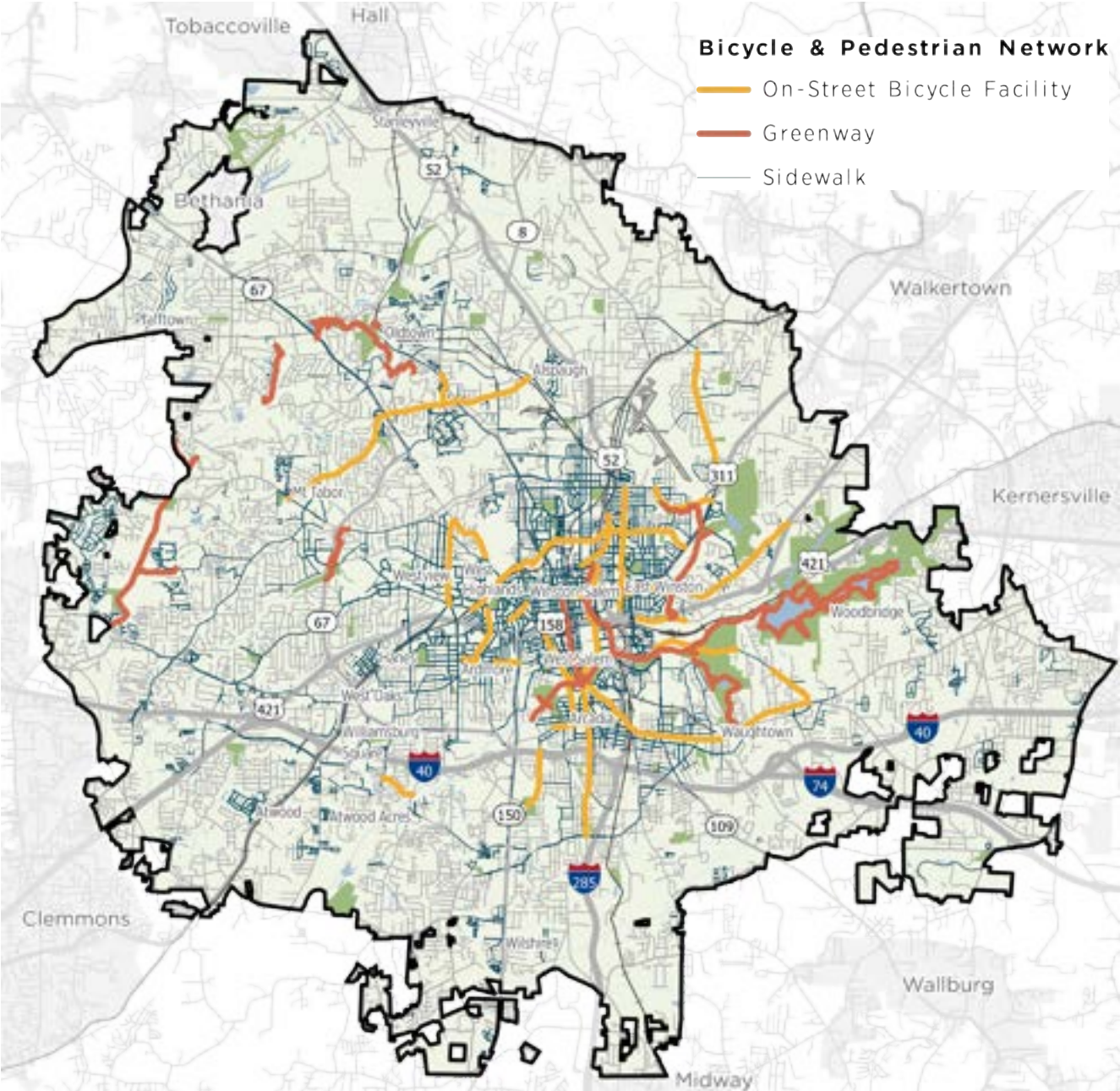
The **Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART)** operates several regional express routes between Greensboro and the Winston-Salem area, with other routes connecting the central NC region. Winston-Salem is most directly served by Route 1 (Winston-Salem Express), an express bus connecting Winston-Salem directly to Coble Transportation Center near Piedmont-Triad International Airport, and Route 17 (Kernersville Express), connecting Kernersville to Winston-Salem and Coble Transportation Center.



Bicycle & Pedestrian Network

Winston-Salem’s sidewalk network is extensive and generally well-connected in the City’s central areas, with the highest density in downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. However, many of the sidewalks are narrow or in need of major repair. Much of the sidewalk infrastructure has been expanded over the past decade, largely driven by development requirements.

In addition to sidewalks, local greenways and bicycle facilities provide important connections between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Greenways such as the Salem Lake Trail, the Strollway, and Long Branch Trail link downtown to neighborhoods on the east and south sides. However, a lack of greenway connections exists to the north, south, and west of downtown.



OUR FUTURE

Innovation Quarter

The Innovation Quarter has evolved over more than a decade from a revitalized industrial district into a nationally recognized innovation hub anchored by research, healthcare, and knowledge-based industries. Since its early development in the 2010s, when historic tobacco facilities were repurposed to house labs, offices, and academic partners, the district has attracted hundreds of companies, thousands of employees, and a mix of educational, research, and commercial activity.

Today, the Innovation Quarter supports a dynamic ecosystem of research, biomedical science, and advanced industry while serving as a vibrant urban place with residential, retail, and public spaces. Building on this foundation, the newly unveiled **Phase II master plan** will expand the district by **28 acres** and facilitate approximately **2.7 million square** feet of additional mixed-use development, including **lab, office, residential, retail, hospitality, and public green space**, positioning Winston-Salem for sustained long-term economic and innovation-driven growth.



The Grounds

The Grounds is a major **100-acre mixed-use development** underway in northwest Winston-Salem near key event venues and Wake Forest University that is poised to transform how this portion of the City functions as a year-round destination for residents, students, employees, and visitors.

The Grounds represents a collaborative effort between Carter, Front Street Capital, Wake Forest University, and the City of Winston-Salem to create an integrated community hub anchored by a **+4,000 SF retail and dining village**, approximately **~130,000 SF of Class A office space**, and supporting infrastructure and public realm improvements. These investments are designed to strengthen connections between major entertainment assets, greenways, and surrounding urban neighborhoods.

The first residential phase, Creekside at The Grounds, broke ground in July 2025 and will deliver **229 multi-family units** with walkable access to retail, trails, and campus amenities, alongside **placemaking investments**, including **stream restoration and greenway connections**, as vertical development advances toward a late-2027 opening.



PLANS & INITIATIVES



The Downtown Winston-Salem Plan 2023

The Downtown Winston-Salem Plan 2023 sets a vision downtown that builds on the City’s recent successes in residential growth, adaptive reuse, public spaces, and cultural venues. Developed through extensive public input and collaboration among city agencies and stakeholders, the plan identifies distinct downtown districts and outlines strategies for growth, connectivity, and appearance. Key recommendations include promoting small businesses and affordable housing, supporting adaptive reuse of vacant buildings, enhancing public art and festivals, improving pedestrian and micro-mobility infrastructure, and expanding green spaces and tree canopy. The plan provides a phased implementation schedule, prioritizing projects such as sidewalk dining standards, public art ordinances, improved parking and lighting, and new recreational amenities, all aimed at fostering a walkable, dynamic, and diverse urban center that honors Winston-Salem’s unique character and legacy.

East End Master Plan (2018)

The East End Master Plan for Winston-Salem envisions inclusive, community-driven growth near downtown and the Innovation Quarter. Developed collaboratively by Ayers Saint Gross, the City, and S.G. Atkins CDC, it seeks to preserve affordability, honor African-American heritage, and prevent displacement. Key strategies include creating a mixed-use 5th Street “Main Street,” adding diverse housing with 20% affordability, expanding parks and greenways, and supporting minority businesses through an enterprise zone. The plan also prioritizes connectivity, pedestrian and bike infrastructure, and public realm improvements, with phased implementation via catalyst projects, land banking, and public-private-community partnerships to ensure long-term vitality.



Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Parks and Open Space Plan Update (2019)

The 2019 Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Parks and Open Space Plan outlines strategies to enhance parks, recreation, and open spaces through public input. It prioritizes renovating existing facilities, adding parks in underserved areas, expanding greenways, improving ADA accessibility, and fostering funding partnerships. The plan promotes health, sustainability, and inclusivity, while preserving open space and rural character. Implementation includes phased upgrades, new park development, and ongoing maintenance to create a vibrant, connected county, while emphasizing community engagement as a cornerstone for success.

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Forward 2045 Comprehensive Plan (2024)

Forward 2045 is the comprehensive plan for Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, guiding growth and public policy through 2045. It addresses housing, economic opportunity, transportation, sustainability, and land use, emphasizing equity, livability, resiliency, and reparative planning to correct historical injustices. Strategies include expanding affordable housing, fostering job growth, improving transportation, preserving rural areas, and enhancing public spaces. The plan promotes managed growth where infrastructure exists, supports mixed-use neighborhoods, and protects farmland and open space, with implementation through policy changes, infrastructure investments, and ongoing community engagement for a just, inclusive, and sustainable future.

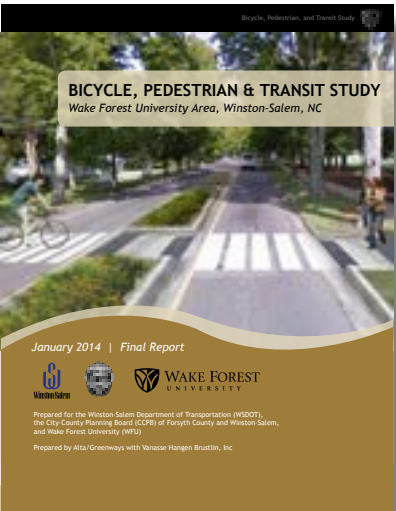


Development Opportunity Study Phase 3 Infill and Development (2017)

The Development Opportunities published in 2017 identifies 67 sites across Forsyth County with potential for infill development or redevelopment. Building on previous phases that mapped vacant or underutilized properties suitable for commercial, industrial, multifamily, or mixed-use development, this phase focuses on sites within the County’s Growth Management Areas. Each site is evaluated for its size, ownership, current and proposed land use, environmental factors, and alignment with the Legacy 2030 Comprehensive Plan and area plans. The study provides guidance for identifying opportunities for smart growth, sprawl management, and revitalization, though it notes that factors such as topography, access, utilities, and ownership status are not fully assessed in this analysis.

Wake Forest Bicycle and Pedestrian Transit Study (2014)

The Wake Forest University Area Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Transit Study, prepared for the Winston-Salem Department of Transportation, City-County Planning Board, and Wake Forest University, provides a comprehensive assessment and recommendations to improve active transportation and transit options in the university area of Winston-Salem. The study identifies gaps and barriers in the existing bicycle, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure. Through public outreach, surveys, and field analysis, the report recommends a phased approach to infrastructure improvements along with policy changes and programs to encourage walking, biking, and transit use. The study also outlines strategies for implementation, funding, and ongoing evaluation, aiming to create a safer, more connected, and accessible environment for students, staff, and the broader community.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Winston-Salem's population growth is steady and generationally diverse.

Over the past 15 years, Winston-Salem has added nearly 28,000 residents, reflecting consistent population growth supported by employment opportunities, educational institutions, and neighborhood investment. Growth has been strongest among older adults, while Millennials and Generation Z together account for nearly half of the population, reinforcing the City's role as a place that supports multiple life stages.

Housing conditions show increased utilization of existing neighborhoods.

Winston-Salem's housing stock remains predominantly single-family, with a median home value of \$273,708 that remains attainable relative to many peer markets. Between 2010 and 2025, renter occupancy increased while vacancy declined, indicating stronger utilization of existing housing and a growing demand for rental housing, particularly multifamily and other rental-oriented products, alongside shifting tenure patterns across the City.

Employment activity is anchored by health care and institutional employers.

Employment in Winston-Salem is anchored by large, place-based institutions, including Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem/ Forsyth County Schools, and the Innovation Quarter. Health care represents the City's largest employment sector and has driven much of the recent job growth, supported by gains in professional services, finance and insurance, manufacturing, and public administration. Together, these service-oriented industries form the backbone of the local economy and support a broad ecosystem of small and locally owned businesses. The City's steady job growth points to consistent demand for everyday goods and services, suggesting opportunities for small businesses to grow incrementally, with success often tied to location, surrounding employment centers, and neighborhood needs.

Cultural, institutional, and innovation assets define Winston-Salem's identity.

Winston-Salem's visitor economy is supported by a mix of heritage, arts, sports, and event-driven destinations, including Old Salem Museums & Gardens, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, and downtown venues. Conferences at the Benton Convention Center, collegiate and professional sports, and major annual events further reinforce the City's role as a regional destination with strong repeat visitation.

Visitor activity contributes meaningfully to the local economy.

Winston-Salem attracted approximately 7.1 million visitors in 2024, generating \$1.05 billion in visitor spending across Forsyth County. Visitation is largely regional and repeat-driven, with tourism supporting approximately 6,750 jobs and generating state and local tax revenues that offset household costs.

Winston-Salem's mobility is shaped by a strong reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, with opportunities to grow alternative transportation modes.

Winston-Salem relies heavily on single-occupancy vehicles, with limited use of public transit, walking, and bicycling. The City's short commute times and significant net inflow of workers reflect its role as a regional employment hub with strong connectivity. While central pedestrian and bicycle networks are well-developed, gaps remain, presenting opportunities to expand alternative transportation options and improve mobility for all residents.



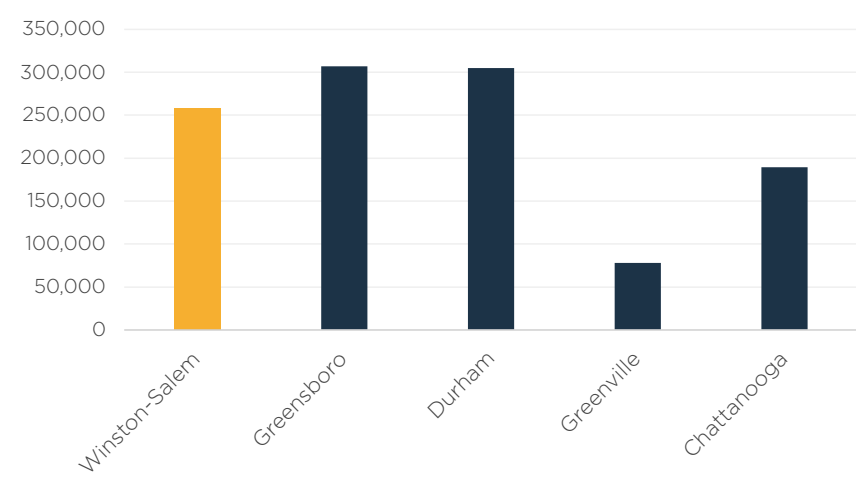
COMPARISON COMMUNITIES

Peer Communities

Peer community analysis provides essential context for understanding Winston-Salem’s current position and future opportunities. Examining cities with similar population size, economic structure, institutional anchors, and development trajectories helps distinguish unique local conditions and those that reflect broader regional or national patterns. Rather than serving as a comparison for replication, peer communities act as reference points. Understanding where peer cities are accelerating, stabilizing, or facing similar pressures provides practical insight into how Winston-Salem’s assets, infrastructure, and economic base position the city within a competitive landscape. This approach ensures that future strategies are informed by evidence, calibrated to comparable conditions, and responsive to how Winston-Salem functions relative to similar cities rather than measured against places with fundamentally different scales, resources, or market realities.



Population (2025)



2010-2025 Population Growth	
Winston-Salem	12.0%
Greensboro	12.0%
Durham	30.4%
Greenville	27.4%
Chattanooga	11.3%

	Winston-Salem	Greensboro	Durham	Greenville	Chattanooga
 Median Household Income	\$63,287	\$62,393	\$85,789	\$76,756	\$67,108
 Median Home Value	\$273,708	\$280,737	\$421,481	\$475,822	\$340,534

Source: ESRI BAO

Destination Benchmarks

Winston-Salem’s strengths align most closely with Durham and Greenville in terms of arts, culture, and higher-education-driven demand, while its meeting infrastructure and mid-to-upscale lodging mix place it alongside Greensboro and Chattanooga for regional group business. Winston-Salem is particularly strong in the combination of authentic Moravian heritage, nationally recognized arts institutions, and innovation- and research-oriented activity anchored by the Innovation Quarter and Wake Forest University. This blend of heritage, innovation, and serious arts programming is more distinctive than Greensboro’s tournament-driven focus and Greenville’s primarily lifestyle-oriented positioning, and more multi-faceted than Chattanooga’s outdoor-centric brand. Winston-Salem also benefits from a dense cluster of higher education institutions in and around downtown, which drives recurring, relationship-based visitation in ways similar to Durham but with a more compact, walkable historic core.

However, Winston-Salem faces competitive gaps related more to hotel mix and positioning than overall supply. While its total room count of approximately 4,725 rooms is comparable to peer markets such as Greensboro (5,900 rooms) and Chattanooga (4,400 rooms), Winston-Salem lacks the large-scale luxury inventory found in markets like Durham and Greenville. This limits its ability to consistently target high-end incentive travel and premium small meetings that require higher-tier accommodations. Air access via PTI is solid but does not match the nonstop breadth of RDU, giving Durham a structural advantage with national corporate and association planners. Greenville’s GSP and Chattanooga’s CHA pair air access with strong weekend/leisure brands that Winston-Salem has not yet fully matched in consumer awareness.

Greensboro

- Regional sports and events hub anchored by the Greensboro Coliseum Complex
- Strong tournament and large-group capacity
- ~5,900 hotel rooms, concentrated in upscale and upper-upscale segments
- Serves statewide meetings, youth sports, and entertainment-driven travel
- Generated ~\$1.7B in annual travel spending in 2023

Durham

- Anchored by Duke University, Duke Health, and Research Triangle Park
- High-value academic, medical, and corporate visitation
- ~3,800 hotel rooms, with a larger luxury and upper-upscale footprint
- Downtown growth aligned with innovation and knowledge-economy demand
- Welcomed ~13.2M annual visitors and generated ~\$1.16B in travel spending

Greenville

- Destination built around walkable downtown, riverfront parks, and trails
- Strong leisure, culinary, and boutique meeting appeal
- ~2,600 hotel rooms, skewing upscale and upper-upscale/luxury
- Attracts high-yield weekend travelers and small-group meetings
- Produces ~\$2.5B in annual travel spending

Chattanooga

- Outdoor- and family-oriented destination along the Tennessee River
- Major attractions include Tennessee Aquarium and Lookout Mountain
- ~4,400 hotel rooms across a balanced price range
- Supports both value leisure travel and convention demand
- Attracts ~10.7M annual visitors, generating ~\$1.7B in travel spending

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