

Town of Whitakers

Profile

Whitakers is split. Like Rocky Mount, its larger neighbor to the south, it straddles railroad tracks between Edgecombe and Nash counties. Even with both sides added, Whitakers is a small town, population 776.

The town is named for Richard and Elizabeth Whitaker, who settled the area in 1740. One of their descendants developed a siding operation for the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, and a village grew up around it. The town incorporated in 1872.

Prosperity has long been hard to come by here, and in recent years, it has seemed all the harder. Businesses just keep closing – retail stores, an apparel factory. Farmers have gone out of business, too. Even the Johnson Brothers sweet potato house closed. Throughout tier one Edgecombe County and tier two Nash, more than 800 jobs have disappeared in the past three years. It seems like more. The problems continue despite participation in a USDA program designed to combat entrenched poverty. Of the second census tracts included in the program's Halifax-Edgecombe-Wilson Enterprise Community, two lie in Whitakers.

Community Issues

In Whitakers, every third person lives in poverty. This poverty has been so entrenched that seeing beyond it can be difficult. The town has modest aspirations: to be a family-oriented community with moderate growth and decent housing options for all. Potential help for its economy may lie just up the road. Thirty miles to the north, Roanoke Rapids is developing the Carolina Crossroads entertainment complex. In the opposite direction, about two miles south on U.S. 301, Consolidated Diesel Co employs more than 1,500 people in the manufacture of diesel engines.

Opportunities

Whitakers recognizes the need to build an inclusive leadership team to further its goals for revitalization, and that is the first goal for its participation in NC STEP. Early planning efforts also call for the growth of business and tourism; improvements to public safety and infrastructure; increased recreational opportunities; beautification projects; and enhanced community pride.

Contact

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