
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO GASTON COUNTY AND THIS FACT BOOK

This Gaston County Fact Book was prepared by the Gaston County Economic Development Commission (GCEDC) to provide a detailed introduction to Gaston County, primarily for business decision-makers and developers considering locating in business in Gaston County or expanding an existing one.

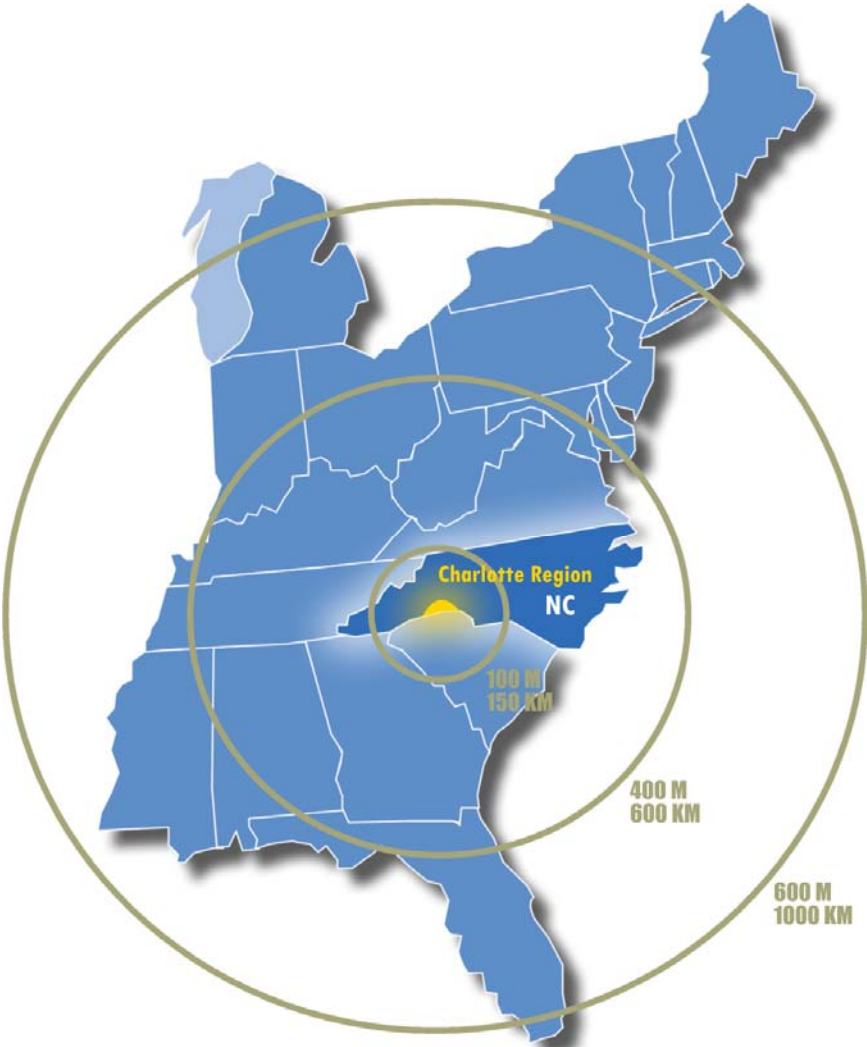
As the second-largest county in the Charlotte Region, Gaston County has a great deal to offer businesses and residents. Located just across the Catawba River from Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, Gaston's close proximity to the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, its penetration by Interstate 85, rail lines and other major highway infrastructure, gives Gaston's businesses major competitive advantages. Gaston's long heritage as a hard-working, manufacturing center has been enhanced in recent years with a steady growth in service-related firms and the rapid expansion of retail stores and shopping centers.

Gaston County offers businesses superior value through economical real estate, dedicated workers, transportation advantages, and an excellent quality of life.

If, while making your decision about Gaston County, you need information that is not included in this publication, please do not hesitate to contact the Gaston County Economic Development Commission at 704-825-4046 or send an email to edc@co.gaston.nc.us.

LOCATION

The Strategic Location



GASTON COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

The Gaston County Economic Development Commission (GCEDC) is dedicated to attracting and retaining desirable employers to continue improving and diversifying economic opportunities in the County. The EDC's main functions are:

- Attracting new, quality industry and commerce;
- Helping existing industry and businesses grow;
- Stimulating development of appropriate land and buildings;
- Improving area infrastructure, especially water, sewer and transportation;
- Improving the general business climate, including conditions for new industry; and
- Informing citizenry of the advantages of economic development.

The elected Gaston County Board of Commissioners appoints members to the Gaston County Economic Development Commission Board to serve three-year staggered terms. Seven full-time staff members handle daily operations.

GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Location and Geography

Gaston County is located in the south central "Piedmont" section of North Carolina, immediately West of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. It is bound on the south by York County, South Carolina, with Lincoln County to the north and Cleveland County to the west. Gaston is midway between the Florida Keys and New England, and just 200 miles from the Atlantic Ocean, making it a strategic center for serving the entire Eastern United States.

The County includes approximately 365 square miles of diverse topography, mostly gently rolling hills. Higher elevations include the Kings Mountain Pinnacle at 1,705 feet above sea level, as well as Spencer Mountain and Crowders Mountain. These low "mountains" are the first that the traveler sees moving West from Charlotte on I-85. Average elevation in the County is estimated at 825 feet.

The County's climate has an average temperature of 60 degrees year-round, 80's in the Summer and 40's in the Winter. The average annual precipitation is 44 inches, and average relative humidity is 54 percent. The Catawba River and its South Fork tributary provide major natural drainage as well as abundant boating and fishing opportunities.

Gaston's 2005 population estimate was 193,886, eighth largest in the state.

History and Recent Developments

Catawba Indians and other Native Americans populated Gaston originally. In the mid-18th Century, early settlers began moving down from the northeastern states. They included Scotch-Irish, Pennsylvania Dutch and English immigrants and descendants, who found the warmer climate more conducive to farming. The area soon attracted miners because of its deposits of gold, iron, sulfur and tin.

Gaston's strong rivers provided waterpower for cotton mills beginning in the 1840's, as later hydroelectric energy to drive other facilities. Although its economy continues to diversify, Gaston County still leads the United States in yarn and thread production, with more spindles in operation and more cotton bales consumed than any other U.S. location. Gaston is also a world leader in advanced textile technology and automation.

Supplying all that textile equipment with parts and machinery has also made Gaston one of the largest centers of metalworking firms in the U.S., with more than 150 companies employing over 3,000 people. Today some of that metalworking skill serves a major Freightliner truck manufacturing facility and other automotive component producers. A wide variety of plastic products, power tools, electrical goods and components, motor oil filters, paper products and many others are also made in Gaston. Following manufacturing in order of local employment are retail, service, government, construction and wholesale.

Gaston County residents also benefit from the State's fifth-largest school system and two colleges. Caromont Healthcare has over 450 beds, a state-of-the-art cancer treatment center, and continues to grow as one of the top medical resources in the region. The Schiele Museum of Natural History and the Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden attract visitors and tourists from many states. In all, Gaston County offers a full spectrum of opportunities for quality of life and work.

LOCAL CLIMATE

Summary (30-Year Averages)

| Month | Daily Max. Temp. F | Daily Min. Temp. F | Avg. Monthly Temp. F | Relative Humidity Percent | Precipitation Inches | Avg Number of Sunny Days |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Jan | 49 | 29.6 | 39.3 | 72 | 3.71 | 15 |
| Feb | 53 | 31.9 | 42.5 | 68 | 3.84 | 15 |
| Mar | 62.3 | 39.4 | 50.9 | 68 | 4.43 | 17 |
| Apr | 71.2 | 47.5 | 59.4 | 68 | 2.68 | 18 |
| May | 78.3 | 56.4 | 67.4 | 78 | 3.82 | 18 |
| Jun | 85.8 | 65.6 | 75.7 | 80 | 3.39 | 18 |
| Jul | 88.9 | 69.6 | 79.3 | 82 | 3.92 | 19 |
| Aug | 87.7 | 68.9 | 78.3 | 84 | 3.73 | 20 |
| Sep | 81.9 | 62.9 | 72.4 | 83 | 3.5 | 19 |
| Oct | 72 | 50.6 | 61.3 | 80 | 3.36 | 21 |
| Nov | 62.6 | 41.5 | 52.1 | 76 | 3.23 | 18 |
| Dec | 52.3 | 32.8 | 42.6 | 73 | 3.48 | 16 |
| Year | 70.4 | 49.7 | 60.1 | 76 | 43.09 | 214 |