
QUALITY OF LIFE

RETAIL & SHOPPING

With an abundance of shopping centers and two malls, Gaston County provides shopping convenience, diversity and quality. Consumers flock to Gaston County's retail establishments. For example, Mary Jo's Cloth Store is the largest fabric store in the Southeast, and it attracts consumers from all over the United States.

Westfield Shoppingtowne encompasses over 800,000 square feet and 100 stores, and ranks as the fourth largest mall in the Carolinas. Major retailers such as Belk, J. C. Penney, Dillard, and Sears anchor the facility. Franklin Square, built in five phases beginning in 1989, has over 1,000,000 square feet. With anchors such as Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Lowe's, Sam's, Best Buy, and Kohl's, Franklin Square has further enhanced Gaston's consumer appeal. Franklin Square is also populated by numerous small and medium-sized retailers, restaurants and a movie theater with thirteen movie screens and stadium seating. The neighboring Franklin Corners is home to Home Depot. Gaston Mall and Akers Center continue their traditions of quality and selection. Gaston Mall is anchored by Harris Teeter, Mary Jo's Cloth Store, Lebo's and Media Play. Akers Center houses retailers such as Hobby Lobby, Target, Toys 'R Us, and Eckerd Drug Store. Over the past 5 years, Wal-Mart has built two more facilities, one on the western part of Gastonia and another in Belmont. Complimenting the Belmont Wal-Mart, Lowe's has constructed a home improvements facility next door.

RESTAURANTS

Gaston County's dining selections offer outstanding quality and variety. For a comprehensive list of restaurants, please contact Gaston County Department of Tourism at (800) 849-9994 and request a copy of the *Magnolia Tour Guide*.

HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND COSTS

Gaston County offers diverse and high quality housing. Residents can choose among historical neighborhoods, golf course developments, lake communities, apartments and condominiums, and rural housing developments.

In ACCRA Cost-Of-Living Surveys, Gastonia/Gaston County consistently rates as one of the communities with the lowest cost-of-living in the Southeast. Housing costs are below the national average. A new mid-management 2,400 square foot home located within city limits with close proximity to shopping and schools costs less than \$230,000.

ACCOMMODATIONS

There are more than twenty-five hotels, motels and bed & breakfast facilities in Gaston County. Major chains located in the area include Comfort Suites, Days Inn, Fairfield Inn, Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Inn Keeper, Masters Economy Inn, Microtel, and Super 8. For a complete list of accommodations, please contact Gaston County Department of Tourism at (800) 849-9994 and request a copy of the *Magnolia Tour Guide*, or visit their website www.gastontourism.com.

HEALTH CARE

Major medical services are provided to the citizens of Gaston County by CaroMont Health. CaroMont is a private, non-profit general, acute care hospital. It employs more than 2,500 health care and support personnel. CaroMont is licensed for 442 beds and encompasses an area of nearly 400,000 square feet. Each patient room is private.

More than 250 physicians practice in Gaston County and more than 60 dentists providing services to residents from their Gaston County offices.

SPORTS & RECREATION

The most popular recreational pastime in Gaston County is golf. Gaston residents enjoy both public and private golf courses. Area parks also offer tennis courts, jogging trails and walking and nature paths.

Location is the key to Gaston County's tourist appeal. Gaston places the tourist right in the middle of regional attractions and events. Professional sports are a favorite for most and are accessible within thirty (30) minutes of the county. The events include the Carolina Panthers (NFL football), NASCAR Auto Racing, U.S. Clay Court Tennis Championships, Paine Webber Invitational and the Charlotte Knights (AAA Baseball).

Gaston County has a large variety of special events. For additional information, contact Gaston County Department of Tourism at (800) 849-9994 and request a copy of the *Magnolia Tour Guide* or visit their web site at www.gastontourism.com.

ARTS & CULTURE

A wide variety of cultural attractions, enriched by highly regarded regional museums, are a source of great pride to Gaston County's resident. The cornerstone of Gaston County's thriving arts community is a rich array of museums including the Schiele Museum of Natural history and Planetarium, the Gaston County Museum of Art & History, the C. Grier Beam Truck Museum, the Piedmont Railroad Museum and the American Military Museum. The 480-acre Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden, bordering on Lake Wylie, further exemplifies the diversity of the Gaston County cultural offering. The United Arts Council of Gaston County, along with its affiliates and associate groups, provides the community with excellent theater, dance and concerts, as well as exhibits by local and visiting artists.

For a complete calendar of events, contact Gaston County Department of Tourism at (800) 849-9994 and request a copy of the *Magnolia Tour Guide* or visit their web site at www.gastontourism.com.

GASTON-LINCOLN REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM

This library system is the largest regional system in the state and the 6th largest public library system in the state. The library offers the following services to its patrons: art prints, audiocassettes, audiovisual equipment, bestsellers, books on tape, business reference services, career guides, children story hours, college catalogs, compact discs, computer resources on CD ROM and online, fax services, foreign language materials, genealogy and local history, information services over the phone and in-house, interlibrary loans, large print books, magazines, meeting rooms, newspapers, photocopies, read and lead literacy collections, special programs & activities, summer reading program, telephone directories, videocassettes, and voter registration.

Individuals who either live, work or own property in either Gaston or Lincoln County may obtain a library card free of charge.

The Gaston-Lincoln Regional Library System has 11 regional branches.

Main Library
1555 E., Garrison Boulevard, Gastonia
704-868-2164

Ferguson-Erwin Center Branch
913 N. Pryor St., Gastonia
704-868-8046

Belmont Branch
111 Central Ave., Belmont
704-825-5426

Lowell Branch
203 McAdenville Rd., Lowell
704-824-1266

Bessemer City Branch
207 N. 12th Ave., Bessemer City
704-629-3321

Mt. Holly Branch
245 W. Catawba Ave., Mt. Holly
704-827-8573

Cherryville Branch
605 E. Main St., Cherryville
704-435-6767

Stanley Branch
205 Peterson St., Stanley
704-263-4166

Dallas Branch
105 S. Holland St., Dallas
704-922-3621

MEDIA

Radio Stations

WAAK-AM	WSGE-FM
WGAS-AM	WCSL-AM
WLTC-AM	WCGC-AM
WGNC-AM	

Television Stations

Call Letters	Location, Network	Channel
WBTW	Charlotte CBS	3
WSOC	Charlotte ABC	9
WJZY	Belmont, Independent	46
WCNC	Charlotte, NBC	36
WTVI	Charlotte, Education	42
WUNG	Concord/Chapel Hill,	18
WCCB	Charlotte, Independent	13
WLOS	Asheville, ABC	13
WSPA	Spartanburg, SC, CBS	7
WFVT	Belmont, Independent	55

RELIGION

History

The Calvinists who moved into the Gaston County area did not wait long to establish a meeting house. The story of the site selection for the church seems almost providential. A man passing through the area died and was buried in a clearing. Others who died thereafter were buried nearby. As the people began to visit the graves of their loved ones at this clearing in the woods, it began to take on a sacred air. Sometime before 1764, Elihu Spencer and Alexander McWhorter established a Presbyterian church on that very spot. The fledgling house of worship, located in what is now North Belmont, was named Goshen. Arriving in 1795, Humphrey Hunter became the first preacher at the log church. Hunter later helped to establish a school.

Joseph Kuykendall, a German, unpacked his wagon and setup by the Scotch-Irish near a creek that was later known as Dutchman's Creek (apparently a reference to Kuykendall). Kuykendall and his family attended Goshen Church until Germans in a settlement near the present town of Dallas established a Lutheran church.

The Germans in the area, many of whom came from Pennsylvania, had migrated to North Carolina around 1740. Among the settlers were Peter Heyle, John Freitag, Bostian Bess, Adam Kastner, the Leyenbergers, Seigmunds, and Hochstetters. They were settling further North on the South River near a creek that became Hoyle's Creek and later Dallas. By 1750, when patents were registered for the land, the spelling of the Germans' names were anglicized—Hoyle, Friday, Best, Carpenter, Sigmon, Huffstetler, and Lineberger.

Another settler in that area, John Sloan, found iron ore and built a smelting furnace to extract ore. Sloan's furnace provided andirons, skillets, irons and other domestic items for settlers.

In 1767, the Lutherans built a church on the South Fork River near present day Dallas. The church was first called Kastner's, after one of its charter families, but the name was later changed to reflect a famous town in their native state of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Another Protestant group of settlers on Long Creek, also near today's Dallas. Being of the Baptist following, the settlers built a log structure in 1772, which became the first Long Creek Church.

Another group springing off from Goshen settled near what is now Gastonia. Then two more Presbyterian churches had organized, Pisgah ARP Church near present day Gastonia, and Long Creek Presbyterian near what is now Bessemer City. By 1795, two more Presbyterian churches were organized: New Hope and Olney.

The Methodists came to the area known as Stanley Creek in the 1840s and built a campground.

An Italian, Chevalier Riva de Finola, searched for gold in the eastern part of the county near Tuckaseegee Ford. Workers in de Finola's mine were predominantly Irish and their religion was Catholic. For a while, they worshipped in de Finola's home, but their dream was to have their own church. Hearing of this desire, a Catholic farmer, William Lonegan, who also longed for a church of his denomination, donated land on Mountain Island for the construction of a chapel. The chapel still stands as a monument of faith on the island. Construction on the building began in 1842 and was completed in 1844. Judge William Gaston, who lived in Eastern North Carolina and died in 1844, sent money to help with the cost of construction. Given the name St. Joseph's, the chapel prospered and by 1969 was well established. It remained the worship place for the County's Catholic population until Belmont Abbey was built later in the century.

Present Day Religion

A lot has changed in Gaston County since the area's meek beginning in the 1700s. Now, nearly 700 churches and other houses of worship are located in Gaston County, representing more than 20 different denominations.

LOCAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Belmont Chamber of Commerce	704-825-5307
Bessemer City Chamber of Commerce	704-629-3900
Cherryville Chamber of Commerce	704-435-3451
Gaston Chamber of Commerce	704-864-2621

Source: Telephone Directory.