



COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP VISIT 2024 DURHAM, NC



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Thinking Bigger: 30 Years of Community Leadership Visits

Since 1994, the Springfield Chamber's Community Leadership Visits (CLV) have inspired ideas by showcasing peer communities and best practices. These annual trips spark collaboration, connect leaders and drive transformative projects for our region. Over two and half days, delegates hear directly from host city leaders and

see community assets firsthand. For much of its history, Community Leadership Visits have culminated with a debrief session and post-trip report to record impressions and takeaways, all archived online at springfieldchamber.com/CLV.

Thinking Regionally: Durham, North Carolina & The Research Triangle

The 2024 trip focused on a community in which municipalities, universities and community colleges, economic development and philanthropic organizations, and private businesses work together in a myriad of ways. Regionalism has been the focus of recent CLV trips to Northwest Arkansas and Tulsa, but The Research Triangle, which benefits from the engagement of several interconnected organizations but not a single governing entity, presented a unique approach.

What We Heard: Words of Wisdom

When 83 delegates from Southwest Missouri traveled home from this year's CLV, they carried several memorable quotes with them. The Research Triangle's success is built on a shared vision, but with no overarching regional authority, leaders described necessary "co-opetition" among partners. These leaders learned to build trust through meaningful connections because "you can't throw a brick at someone you had breakfast with," and stressed that "community should be an action word" when tackling challenges. A regional transportation alliance aims to make major infrastructure projects happen in "less forever" timeframes, reflecting the region's culture of collaboration and innovation. And when it comes to attracting talent and business investment to the Triangle, leaders say "no one cares about lines on the map."

What We Learned: Building the Triangle

In the 1950s, North Carolina's per capita income was falling and university graduates were leaving an economy dependent on tobacco, textiles and furniture manufacturing. Over the next 25 years, a partnership between the governor's office and businesses led to the creation of the Research Triangle Park, spurring technology investment into what is now North America's

largest research park. Anchored by three universities – Duke University, North Carolina State University and University of North Carolina Chapel Hill – the area around Durham, Raleigh and Chapel Hill began to be known as The Research Triangle by the 1990s. But not everyone agrees on exactly what is and isn't in the Triangle. The term is sometimes used as shorthand for the three main cities, but also for a wider multi-county area and as an identity that makes the region seem larger and more attractive for investment. The Research Triangle Regional Partnership, an economic development organization representing 14 counties, touts a website tagline: "It's Not Just a Shape or Region, it's an Engine for Growth." Today, the region boasts 2 million people, 7,000 companies, and dozens of universities and community colleges that produce 65,000 graduates each year.

What We Observed: Blueprint for Growth

The transformation of Durham, Raleigh and the broader Research Triangle since the 1990s can be tied directly to:

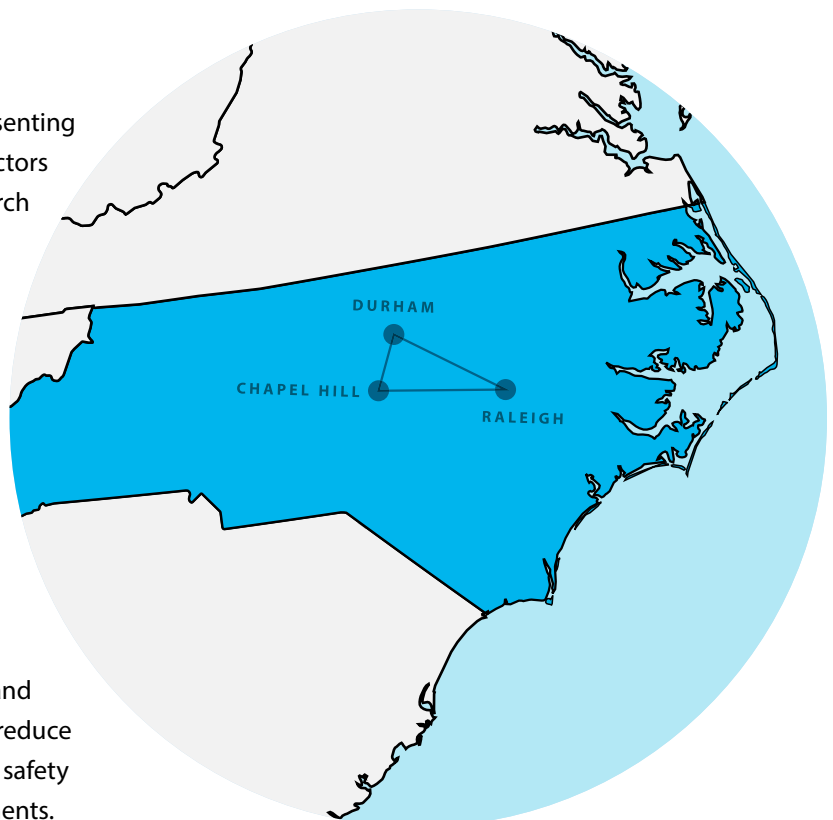
- Public-private partnerships and regional cooperation, which drove projects like the Durham Bulls Athletic Park, American Tobacco Campus, Dorothea Dix Park, and the Durham Performing Arts Center, transformed downtown Durham into a culturally vibrant hub and catalyzed further development.
- Streamlined processes and a unified vision that enable successful development and attracted private investment through predictable regulatory frameworks, flexible zoning, reduced bureaucracy and alignment of local and regional needs.

- Community colleges, universities and training programs that prepare the workforce for current and future industries, with regional workforce development initiatives that provide pathways for economic mobility and local employment.
- Philanthropic contributions, not just in the shape of funding, paired with visionary leadership that has built and sustained investment in regional development and community well-being.
- Efforts to promote affordable housing, equitable opportunities and urban planning to balance the challenges of high-end downtown development and rapid growth.
- **Streamline Processes to Accelerate Growth:** Update city development standards and checklists in Springfield to facilitate faster project approvals and reduce bureaucratic delays and barriers, so it's a more attractive place for business to grow.
- **Execute Bold Leadership:** Unite stakeholders to propel the community forward through collective impact; encourage private sector-led development with support from public and philanthropic partners and establish a childcare cooperative model to remove a workforce barrier.

What We Want to Replicate: Takeaway Themes

Both during and after the trip, CLV delegates representing business, government, education and nonprofit sectors discussed ideas inspired by Durham and the Research Triangle. In the Southwest Missouri region, they would like to prioritize collective action to:

- **Establish a Regional Vision for Economic Development:** Develop a clear, collaborative vision for regionalism across borders while defining the roles and responsibilities of each entity; encourage greater private sector investment and community support to reinforce this unified vision.
- **Enhance Downtown Areas and Address Homelessness:** Invest in center city Springfield and regional downtowns, and establish strategies to reduce homelessness in our community, improve public safety and quality of life, and protect economic investments.





The 2024 Community Leadership Visit delegation, comprised of key community, business and civic leaders from the Springfield region (see complete attendee list on page 24).

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SESSION 1

The Story of Durham & The Research Triangle

Speakers:

Andrew Blackburn – Vice President of Government Affairs,
Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce

Bryan Fox – Vice President of Public Policy, Greater Durham
Chamber of Commerce

Leonardo Williams – Mayor, City of Durham

Bryan Fox admitted that **“Bull Durham put our town on the map.”** Since the 1988 movie, leaders have worked to ensure Durham is not seen in isolation but as part of **“one big region, more like Triangle USA,”** a vision championed by Mayor Leonardo Williams, who emphasized that this regional approach makes it easier to get industry support for economic enhancements. **“Durham might be #6 and Raleigh #14 on the best cities lists, but together we’re the most concentrated, educated, populous community in the country.”**

With no formal regional governance, the Research Triangle is defined by informal cooperation among cities, counties, universities and business communities. Andrew Blackburn feels that **“in a lot of ways Durham and Raleigh are distinct cities, but we interact at a subconscious level and that’s how we’ve found success, mutually. When we advertise to the outside world, we do it as a region. You really have to look at the details to determine what municipality you live, work and build a business in.”**

With the absence of a governmental entity, the business community has stepped up to lead regional partnerships for economic development and transportation, but childcare and housing remain challenges.

Fox added, **“The story of the Triangle is the story of the Research Triangle Park and Duke, NC State and UNC and the great community colleges coming together,**

helping us thrive based on the talent and innovation they’re growing.” When the Research Triangle Park started, it was built in the pines between Durham and Raleigh, so they had to cooperate. With economic development leads, Blackburn said, **“We want to help businesses decide between Durham and Raleigh but we’re not allowing anyone to drive a wedge between us – we’re not playing that game – because they will quickly learn that one’s success is dependent on the other.”**



Chamber leaders shared how Durham and Raleigh cooperate as a regional engine to external audiences.



Attendees heard about how partners in the Research Triangle cooperate for regional success.

SESSION 2

Research Triangle Park: Where People + Ideas Converge

Speaker:

Kelly Propst – Vice President of Marketing and Communications, Research Triangle Park

Designed as a solution to brain drain, or the emigration of educated individuals out of the area, the Research Triangle Park (RTP) has evolved over the past 65 years from an area focused on agriculture, textiles, and tobacco into a global hub for innovation. Kelly Propst described RTP as **“uniting our three Tier 1 universities with businesses to employ their students.”** The spillover effect of the park with partners rallying around it has made a difference not only in the region, but also the whole state with \$25.1 billion in economic impact. Totalling 7,000 acres, the park boasts 375 established and startup companies, a third of them within a 100-acre footprint that employs 55,000 people in bio, ag and fintech, data sciences, cybersecurity, and clean technology.

RTP is undergoing a \$4.7 billion transformation, incorporating mixed-use development, housing units, restaurants, trails, a hotel and retail. This comes as GoTriangle, the regional public transportation authority, brings rapid transit to a mobility hub within RTP. Propst said that at the time of the trip, **“soon we’ll have the first people living in the park.”**

“We realized that this central area needed to have services that bring people in, not just as a place to go to work,” she continued.

RTP leaders are exploring how the park and its infrastructure can support smart growth and how owners and tenants can reimagine equitable benefits as it transitions away from being an isolated campus.



Participants heard how Research Triangle Park evolved into a global hub for innovation and growth.



Kelly Propst shared with participants how Research Triangle Park is building a stronger, more connected regional economy.

SESSION 3

The Triangle's Regional Economic Development Approach

Speakers:

Adrienne Cole – President and CEO, Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce

Ryan Combs – Executive Director, Research Triangle Regional Partnership

Geoff Durham – President and CEO, Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce

Aaron Nelson – President and CEO, The Chamber For a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro

Economic development in the Triangle, from funding to managing projects, is handled regionally by multiple entities. Every five years, the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce develops a comprehensive economic development strategy, with corresponding action and fundraising goals. The most recent iteration has a \$7 million price tag and focuses on infrastructure, business retention and expansion, and talent recruitment. From this private sector funding, the Raleigh Chamber fuels its subsidiary Wake County Economic Development and contributes to the Research Triangle Regional Partnership (RTRP). The RTRP is also sustained by investment from 14 counties, which pay based on population, as well as the Research Triangle Park Foundation and state government.

Intentional leadership that supports regionalism is key to making this model work, with regular meetings among project managers in both economic development and public affairs in a central location that prioritizes going into each other's communities to celebrate their successes.

"We don't have sharp elbows and we're very generous with credit," said Adrienne Cole. **"You need all the right voices at the table – academic, business, nonprofits. We establish trust with new leaders early in case they aren't used to this level of collaboration, but if they stop showing up, I'll call and remind them that their**

voice is important and they can't complain if they're not there. You can fake sincerity, but you can't fake showing up."

Durham County contracts with the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce to assist companies looking to expand or relocate. Moving from another, more competitive market, Geoff Durham (the last name is just a coincidence, he admits) said he found the Triangle to be a **"refreshing environment from an economic development perspective, it's why we're punching above our weight."** As Aaron Nelson pointed out, though, it does take work.

"We have transportation systems and funding and MSAs that divide us," Nelson indicated. **"But we have an embarrassment of riches, so it's easy to be magnanimous and say that we work together to make sure something just lands in the Triangle. Companies pick places, not necessarily a specific municipality."**

According to Ryan Combs, the Research Triangle's advantages make it **"a microcosm of the state as a whole, with an urban core and rural surrounding it, where you can still build a big manufacturing facility and no one is more than 30-40 minutes away from a community college."**

However, maximizing these advantages requires a unified approach, ensuring that both urban and rural communities remain engaged and see the benefits of regional collaboration.

"We have to convince partners in both areas to keep them engaged and demonstrate return on investments," said Ryan Combs. **"For rural communities, we can't promise wins, but we have to leverage our resources, tell the same stories, and all be pushing in the same direction."**

*Speakers from Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, and
RTRP shared lessons in regional leadership.*



SESSION 4

Cultivating Talent Through Workforce Partnerships

Speakers:

J.B. Buxton – President, Durham Technical Community College

Kate Goodwin – Owner, Kate's Korner Educational Services LLC

Dr. Scott Ralls – President, Wake Technical Community College

Sam Rauf – Senior Economic Development Manager, Wake County Economic Development

Along with the Research Triangle Park, North Carolina developed a robust community college system to prepare workforce-ready students and attract new business.

Today, there are 58 community colleges across the state, with Wake and Durham Technical Community Colleges – serving 72,000 and 20,000 students respectively – focused on addressing the unique needs of industries like biotechnology, advanced manufacturing and healthcare.

Dr. Scott Ralls said customized training programs and industrial education centers **“play a big part of the economic development puzzle here. Effective workforce development isn't really that hard, it's people, programs and place in that order.”**

Funding for workforce programs comes from county support as well as public-private partnerships. J.B. Buxton pointed out that employers don't necessarily care which community college they work with, they just need the services provided and understand there needs to be skin in the game.

“We have to function like a region, but we're defined by a service area so there's professional etiquette to only fundraise with companies that are growing on your side of the county line,” he said.

With rapid growth in the Triangle, upskilling and economic mobility are challenges. Business feedback is changing the way community colleges respond within their offers. Sam Rauf highlighted, **“All industries are now putting**

more emphasis on short-term training, internships and apprenticeships; 'economic laddering' has grown more important over time.”

In academic fields that have a hard time attracting students from certain backgrounds, colleges have developed unique partnerships to serve the greater good. For example, local businesses provide white lab coats for biotech students and executives attend graduation ceremonies to shake graduates' hands to immediately provide industry connections. Additionally, counties are willing to step up to fund childcare training programs, despite lower salary expectations for graduates because the community realizes the importance of childcare as economic infrastructure.

Kate Goodwin was invited to Durham to help establish an innovative solution to workforce participation through a community-based childcare practice. Despite the high prices paid by parents, childcare facilities struggle to provide healthy environments for children amid strict regulations, underpaid and overworked educators and a lack of equality and accessibility.

Through partnerships with government agencies, university and business – especially at the American Tobacco Campus, which offered discounted rent as a collaborative opportunity – Kate's Korner Learning Center opened early 2023. Goodwin noted that her model **“addresses inequities in childcare by providing fair wages, sustainable operations, and holistic support for families and educators, ensuring that workers can focus on nurturing children, parents thrive professionally, and businesses can maintain a stable workforce.”**



Participants learned about how community colleges and businesses partner to create to create pathways.

SESSION 5

Tipping Points – American Tobacco Campus & Downtown Durham

Speakers:

Bill Bell – Former Mayor, City of Durham and President and CEO, UDI Community Development Corporation

Matt Gladdek – Vice President of Economic Development, Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce

Michael Goodman – Executive Vice President, Capitol Broadcasting Company

Adam Klein – Associate Vice President for Economic Development, Duke University

Casey Steinbacher – Executive Director, Made in Durham

Capitol Broadcasting Company (CBC) purchased the American Tobacco factory campus in downtown Durham in 2002, beginning a \$200 million renovation project to redevelop the abandoned 19th century buildings into a historic district preserving the city's industrial heritage. The 16-acre American Tobacco Campus (ATC) has been credited for kickstarting a downtown renaissance and is now home to 1 million square feet of office, restaurant, residential and retail space. Among its tenants, ATC hosts 400 high school students of color in career-focused programs, an entrepreneurial hub called American Underground and created a man-made waterway as a recreational feature.

Years before, CBC had also purchased the Durham Bulls minor league baseball team with the intention of moving the stadium downtown to create a regional asset. The move was unpopular at the time, with local politicians losing their jobs over their support. Michael Goodman, part of the fourth-generation Fletcher-Goodmon family behind CBC, described how his father realized the potential of this investment.

“We’re either going to strive together or die apart,” he said. “Our company cannot be successful unless our community is successful. We started as a broadcasting

company, but developed a real estate habit over time and worked with partners to make it happen. Some of this was by accident, but if you mix curiosity and enthusiasm with a long-term understanding that it will pay off, then you can say ‘let’s go play entrepreneurs today,’” he continued.

Former Durham Mayor Bill Bell, recognized for his steadfast support of downtown revitalization efforts, believes, **“A city’s downtown is its living room, and we needed people to commit to come here. Raleigh tore down its old tobacco factories, so you can’t recreate the atmosphere of downtown Durham anywhere else.”** With ATC as a catalyst, public-private partnerships spurred additional development like the Durham Performing Arts Center, with a \$10 million investment from Duke University, a parking deck, and hotels and restaurants. Visionary chamber and business leaders focused on using co-working space, shorter term leases and in-kind rent to attract startups in tech, consumer products and social impact. Adam Klein said the downtown went from 30 to 275 companies over four years and people started calling them the **“Startup Capitol of the South.”**

“Durham had an aspirational vision; it was all oars in,” Klein highlighted.

Flash forward, and leaders say the same transformation would not be possible in Durham today. By attracting business and residents downtown, the cost basis rose, making it too expensive to be creative and fail, and the infrastructure to support a city of half a million remains challenging.

Casey Steinbacher’s number one recommendation for communities looking to grow is to **“plan for success.”**

Attendees heard the story behind Durham's revitalization and lessons for building lasting, inclusive growth.



Speakers reflected on the bold vision, and challenges, behind Durham's transformation.

"We brought people here, filled up ATC and the Research Triangle Park, but we didn't do enough to develop our own talent here, especially for the young people of color and economic mobility for all residents." Now, she says, newcomers don't know the history or context of downtown, or the people who made it all happen. In addition to housing, connectivity is a challenge.

Of the regional bus system, Matt Gladdeck says, **"There's good linkages with downtown centers, but we don't have many choice riders outside of Durham, where people must have it. If we had built light rail, it would have been community game-changing, but the project failed. It would have drastically changed our community patterns."** Ultimately, Goodmon feels Durham's more recent challenges stem from lack of a unified vision and the political leadership will focus on issues like transportation.



SESSION 6

Collaborative Solutions – Bridging Higher Education and Employment

Speakers:

Don Hobart – Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill

Jerry Jones – Executive Director, Center for Workforce Engagement, Durham Technical Community College

Thomas White – Director, Economic Development Partnership, North Carolina State University

“We haven’t historically stayed in our lanes, and this worked because we didn’t stay in lanes – we all share goals and have unique strengths serving the economy.”

That’s how Don Hobart describes the original formation of the Research Triangle Park in the late 1950s, when the three universities needed to make a major workforce play. Through their continued influence on the park’s governing foundation, the universities have created a hub for workforce development and innovation, helping students and businesses alike.

Rooted in decades of legislative work, industry recruitment and economic development initiatives, collaboration is baked into regional partnerships. As Jerry Jones said, **“No one entity can address all the demands for new jobs and new industries coming up. Most new jobs generated by projects are entry level, which require special skills or certification, but not necessarily degrees.”**

AdvanceNC, a collaborative of 11 community colleges, three universities and nine workforce development boards, helps students stay in the region and advance in manufacturing, while allowing institutional partners to reap the reward of their investment. The Building Up Local Life Sciences (BULLS) Academy – a partnership between nonprofit Made in Durham and Durham Tech – helps young adults pursue careers in the life sciences

industry by providing stipends, wraparound services and success coaches as they build credit toward a biotech associates degree. Preparing the Triangle’s workforce also extends into high schools, where educational partners and employers like Duke Health provide tailored training to address shortages in healthcare.

Attracting new business investment and foreign direct investment has been a key driver of the Triangle’s prosperity. Thomas White mentioned that following a former governor’s establishment of a trade relationship with Japan, **“Japanese investment in North Carolina is incredible, especially in RTP. And winning a Merck & Co. project, when the company already had ongoing university connections, means we now have a facility making Johnson & Johnson COVID vaccines here.”** Private companies, as well as nonprofits like the tobacco trust fund Golden Leaf Foundation, are drawn to the Triangle by regional collaboration and access to skilled talent.



Speakers highlighted how collaboration between universities, community colleges, and economic development partners drives workforce innovation and business growth in the Triangle.

Inside Duke's Cameron Indoor Stadium, attendees continued conversations on agenda topics including talent, innovation, and economic growth.



SESSION 7

Adaptive Reuse and Creative Placemaking – Transforming Spaces Through Redevelopment

Speakers:

Stephen Bentley – Director of Parks & Recreation, City of Raleigh

Jeff Merritt – Executive Director, The Centennial Authority & Lenovo Center

Scott Selig – Associate Vice President for Capital Assets, Duke University

Nicole Stewart – Director of Engagement, AJ Fletcher Foundation | Former Mayor Pro Tem, City of Raleigh

Sara Young – Director, Durham City-County Planning Department, City of Durham

Durham and Raleigh both emphasize sustainable growth and public-private collaboration, which fosters growth in their own urban centers as well as throughout the Research Triangle region. The redevelopment of historic properties in both cities hinged on public sectors willing to make changes, philanthropic partners stepping in where municipalities cannot, and efforts to listen to residents and assure them of long-term positive outcomes.

Durham's transformation started with the reuse of historic tobacco warehouses. **"The renaissance happened because the first project at the American Tobacco Campus set the tone and was done right,"** said Scott Selig.

"It happened in Durham because it was harder in other places where they had shut the doors. Developers won't spend 10 years and tons of investment without knowing what will happen."

Leaders credit pro-development officials, flexible but clear rules, and Duke University's support as an anchor tenant for their ability to attract companies like Google, Meta, Boston

Consulting, Clorox and Burt's Bees. Sara Young described Durham's 2023 comprehensive plan as emphasizing **"fill in (redevelopment), fill up (urban density), and fill out (annexation)"** to accommodate growth while preserving greenspace. In her opinion, **"Everyone should expect the next increment of density, even in their own neighborhood."** A planning framework that focuses less on direct city council approval and boundaries, and more on staff approvals and encouraging affordable housing, has helped Durham evolve into a regional hub while maintaining its unique character.

Raleigh's development approach also emphasizes density and sustainability by integrating green spaces. The Lenovo Center, formerly the PNC Arena, is a first-class, multi-purpose facility for the region, home to the Carolina Hurricanes hockey team that intentionally blends with its surrounding natural landscape. In fall 2024, the Hurricanes announced plans to develop 80 acres around the arena, including new parking structures, tailgating areas, a Live Nation concert venue, retail and office space, 500 apartment units and bike trails. Separately, the Centennial Authority will begin a \$300M renovation plan for the arena in summer 2025. Jeff Merritt stressed the importance of developers meeting city needs like housing, even with zoning challenges.

"It's hard to do the right thing if you're not willing to listen and work together," he said. **"Without deliberate time and effort, development won't succeed."**

In 1969, Raleigh's comprehensive plan called for a **"park with a city in it"** and that vision has greatly expanded with the development of the Dorothea Dix Park. Formerly



Speakers from Durham and Raleigh shared how public-private partnerships, intentional planning, and community collaboration have shaped sustainable urban growth across the region.

a plantation, then the home of a state mental hospital for more than 150 years, the 308-acre park was purchased by the city in 2015. Spearheaded by visionary local advocates who wanted to use the land for an urban park rather than private development, Raleigh embarked on a new kind of partnership for the park's 30-year master plan. Raleigh's parks and recreation department owns the park but retained former state employees and collaborated with the nonprofit Dix Park Conservancy to pay for the programming. With aspirations to offer free or low-cost activities to all, Stephen Bentley said, **"We can't do all this as a city, but development in the park needs to align with the city's priorities and create value. Builders have said 'let us help you' and if the Conservancy is taking care of Dix Park, then neighborhood park**

improvements can get done faster and there's money to go around."

Planning for Dix Park, which includes redeveloping the hospital into a hotel, has benefitted from millions in philanthropic investment. Nicole Stewart pointed out that philanthropy is humble in the region, including from the Goodmon family behind the AJ Fletcher Foundation. **"The Foundation is the Goodmon family investing its generational wealth,"** she explained. **"It's running behind everything here, but we're just now at a place where they are wanting to leave a legacy for the next generation. Because philanthropy is small and hard to find, though, big projects still take the government, the universities and the private sector to accomplish."**

SESSION 8

Identifying and Addressing Growth Barriers – Enhancing Pathways to Success

Speakers:

Patrice Andrews – Chief of Police, Durham Police Department

Maurice Jones – Deputy County Manager, Durham County

Joe Milazzo – Executive Director, Regional Transportation Alliance

Angelique Stallings – Vice President of Community Investment, Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce

Erica Wilkins – Executive Director, Durham Public Schools Foundation

The rapid growth of Durham and the Research Triangle has contributed to gentrification and public safety concerns, while a statewide charter school system has challenged public education funding and support. With 10 of the nation's 107 historically black colleges and universities in North Carolina, the region faces the complexity of fostering equitable development while managing the demands of a growing population.

Transportation emerged as a crucial factor early on, with the Regional Transportation Alliance founded to focus on connectivity. Joe Milazzo said, **“If a 15-year project with unfortunate red tape can be done in 11 or 7 years, that makes all the difference for meeting business needs and creating job opportunities for young people. Putting in transportation infrastructure doesn’t mean there’s automatic equity, but without it there’s a barrier, so the system must be sustainable and scalable. The day you stop working on transportation is the day your community has stopped growing.”**

The state's early efforts included constructing highways from the university to the airport and RTP for convenience, but also through historically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Angelique Stallings underscored the systemic nature of such actions: **“It’s not unique to Durham that cities put roads through Black neighborhoods to disrupt Black wealth and harm mobility.”**

In Durham County, minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE) impact the bottom line as economic drivers and for creating more diverse workplaces. Initiatives are underway to help businesses get certified, with Durham County setting goals to increase qualified MWBE vendor contracting. Likewise, the county's economic development plans are focused not just on attracting people to the region, but incentivizing companies that will train the existing workforce for their new jobs. Referencing a training pipeline partnership with Durham Tech, Maurice Jones said, **“The county has put millions of dollars in so people can be ready for entry-level jobs in the \$50-60,000 salary range, with benefits, and to help them grow up, get jobs, and matriculate through life.”**

Only 60% of the school-aged children attend Durham Public Schools (DPS), with 18% attending a charter school and the rest in private schools. Less funding goes to public schools for facilities, staff and programs, which has changed narratives about education. The DPS Foundation works to support good, quality public education for all students, especially for the larger Black population, which is falling behind. Erica Wilkins describes her foundation as serving as **“critical friends of DPS, because we’re happy to be critical when it is necessary- a thriving community depends on a thriving school system.”** Wilkins emphasized the connection between education

Leaders discussed strategies for fostering inclusive growth, strengthening public education, and supporting community safety across the region.

and public safety, advocating for community-driven strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism as crime goes up when kids aren't in school.

Police Chief Patrice Adams echoed that sentiment, noting that both perpetrators and victims of violent crime are getting younger and the police prioritize school safety year-round with active assailant training. Andrews detailed efforts to balance rising violent and property crime rates with limited staffing and resources.

“Community safety doesn’t just mean law enforcement,” she said. **“We’re really proud of the City of Durham’s alternative response programs, with police/fire/EMS and unarmed responders. It’s important to sometimes address the needs that are never heard from by anyone else.”**



IN CONCLUSION

Moving Forward: Applying Lessons to Springfield

The 2024 Community Leadership Visit to Durham and The Research Triangle provided meaningful insights into the impact of strategic collaboration, intentional leadership, and long-term investment in regional growth. The successes observed in the Triangle were the result of decades of coordinated efforts across public, private, and academic sectors—offering valuable lessons for Springfield and Southwest Missouri.

As our region looks ahead, there is a clear opportunity to apply these principles in fostering regionalism, enhancing public-private partnerships, streamlining development processes, and strengthening workforce initiatives. Achieving sustained progress will require a unified vision, a commitment to execution, and the collective engagement of business, government, and community leaders.

With a shared commitment to strategic action and collaboration, Springfield and Southwest Missouri can build on these lessons to drive economic growth, enhance quality of life, and ensure a more prosperous future for the entire region.





Photo courtesy of Visit Springfield, Missouri

2024 Delegation List

Organizations and titles listed for each participant reflect positions at the time of the September 2024 trip.

Logan Aguirre

Publisher
417

Christina Angle

CFO
Erlen Group
President, Springfield Business Development Corporation

David Atkisson

Springfield Office Leader
J.E. Dunn Construction

Amy Bacon

Chief of Staff
Ozarks Technical Community College

Brandi Bailey

Vice President of Strategic Development & Marketing
Snyder Construction Group

Virginia Bailey

Senior Director, Engagement and Inclusion
O'Reilly Auto Parts

Joselyn Baldner

President & CEO
Central Bank of the Ozarks

Brad Bodenhausen

Vice President for Community and Global Partnerships
Missouri State University

Andrea Brady

Community Outreach and Development Manager
Great Southern Bank

Judy Brunner

Board of Education - Vice President
Springfield Public Schools

Megan Buchbinder

Director of Marketing
Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau
Chair, The Network for Springfield's Young Professionals

Max Buetow

President & CEO
CoxHealth

Justin Butler

Market President
UMB Bank

David Cameron

City Administrator
City of Republic

Kristin Carter

Board Chair
City Utilities of Springfield

Jeff Childs

Senior Advisor
SVN | Rankin Company LLC

Jennifer Dalton

Chief Operating Officer
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Janet Dankert

President / CEO
Community Partnership
of the Ozarks

Linda Daugherty

Chief Operating Officer
Academy of Hair Design

Bob Dixon

Presiding Commissioner
Greene County

Paula Dougherty

CEO
Achieve Private Wealth / Ameriprise Financial

Jason England

President
Arvest Bank

Brad Erwin

President
Paragon Architecture

Kim Everest

Reach Engagement Manager
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Sara Fields

Executive Director
Ozarks Transportation Organization

Olivia Flax

Member & Employee Engagement Coordinator
Springfield Area Chamber
of Commerce

Leslie Forrester

Executive Director
Springfield Regional Arts Council

Dwayne Fulk

SVP - Chief Legal & Economic Development Officer
City Utilities of Springfield

Jason Gage

City Manager
City of Springfield

Audrey Garard

Owner
Grooms Office Environments

Jonathan Garard

Owner
Grooms Office Environments

Laura Gates

President
TransLand

Emily Givens

Director of Development
Bryan Properties

Evander Gonzalez

Research Coordinator
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Brian Hammons

President
Hammons Black Walnuts
Chair, Springfield Chamber Board of Directors

Heather Hardinger

Councilmember
City of Springfield

Jessica Harmison-Olson

Owner
Maxon Fine Jewelry

Brandy Harris

CEO
Boys & Girls Clubs of Springfield

Kristen Haseltine

President / CEO
Show Me Christian County

Mark Hecquet

President / CEO
Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau

Amanda Hedgpeth

Chief Operating Officer
CoxHealth

Bob Helm

Partner
Elliott, Robinson & Company, LLP CPAs

Brandon Jensen

Councilmember
City of Springfield

Jen Johnson

Vice President, Corporate Affairs
Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Winter Kinne*President / CEO*

Community Foundation of the Ozarks

Mary Kromrey*Springfield Office Leader*

OWN, Inc.

Karen Kunkel*Workforce Development Manager*

Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

Derek Lee*Councilmember*

City of Springfield

Christian Lewis*Regional Community President*

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