

Rowan County, NC

Community Survey Report



Objective &
Methodology



Objective

The purpose of this research study was to better understand Rowan County, NC from the community's perspective.

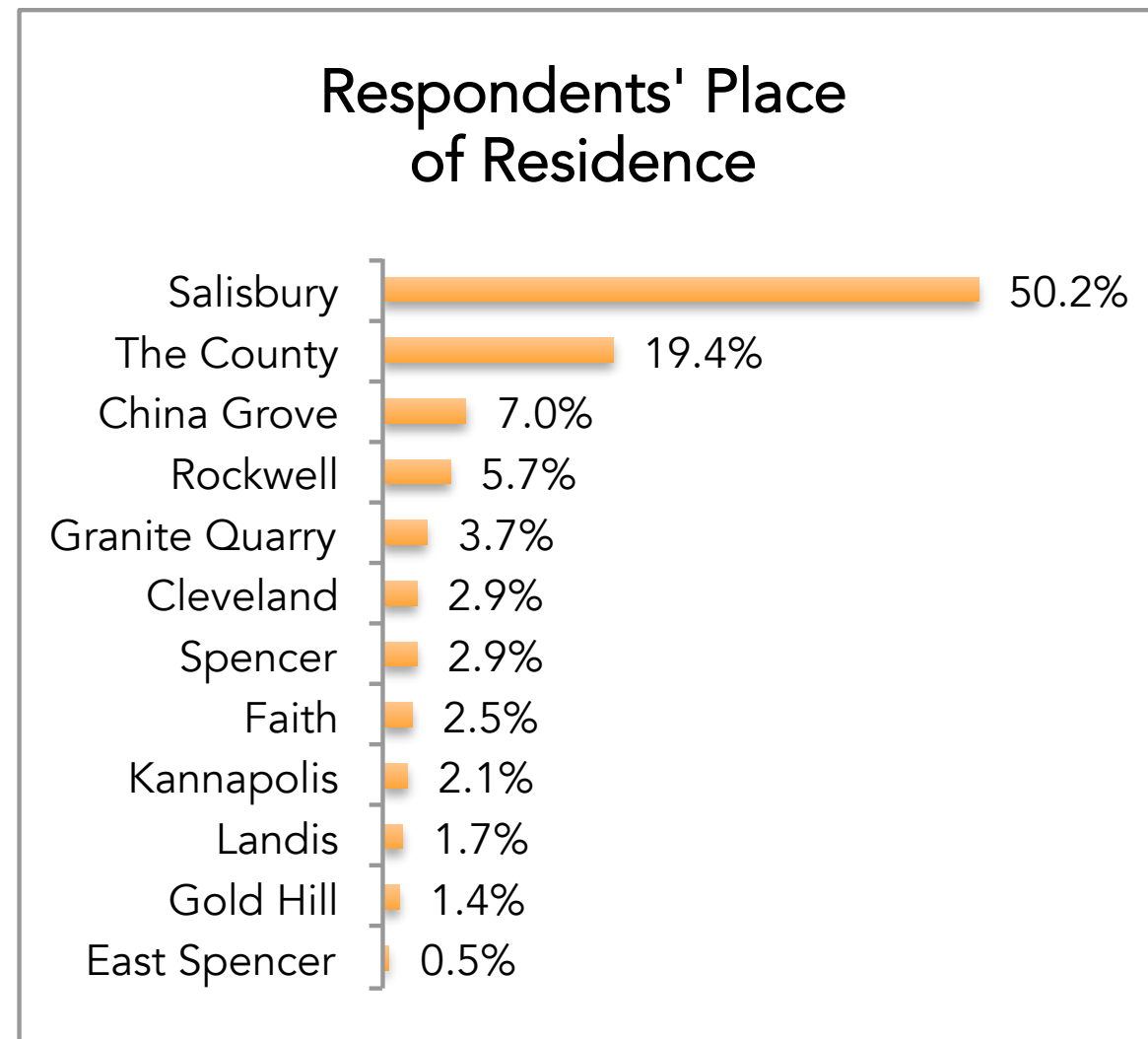
We wanted to find out what people love about Rowan County, what makes them proud of it, the county's assets, how they would describe the county as compared to outsiders, how the county delivers on a series of attributes, and what makes the county attractive to businesses.



Methodology

An online survey was distributed to Rowan County's community through the Chamber of Commerce. A link was provided on the city website.

The survey was approximately twenty minutes long and conducted from 1/26/16 to 2/28/16. No incentive was provided to the respondents. A total of 1,331 responses were collected. The 1,331 completes provide a margin of error of +/-2.74% at the 95% confidence level.





Key Insights



The various communities of Rowan County have different associations/descriptors.

Salisbury: history and crime

Spencer: trains/Transportation Museum

Gold Hill: historic, quiet country side

China Grove: friendly small town

Mt. Ulla: farming, agriculture

Granite Quarry: growing, "Little Salisbury"

Faith: 4th of July Celebration, racist

East Spencer: the problem child of Rowan County

Landis: quiet small town, the mill

Rockwell: rural, growing, on the way to the beach

Cleveland: Freight Liner, rural farmland

Kannapolis: most progressive, research, old mill town



Salisbury is closely tied to Rowan County's identity and success.

Salisbury is the heart of most activities, culture and arts, restaurants and shops. It is the business hub and the county seat and where most of Rowan County's population lives.

The community considers it a top asset, and most important in determining the identity and success of Rowan County.

It is where you'd take someone to leave a memorable impression of Rowan County.

It is highly associated with the five senses of delivering a true Rowan County experience.



Rowan County benefits from its prime location.

Its central location within the state is a top asset for its residents, but also for business:

- Proximity to Charlotte, Winston-Salem and Greensboro
- Easy access to I-85

It's what residents appreciate and love the most about living in Rowan County.



The country side and small town feel give Rowan County its charm.

The land, Dan Nicholas Park and High Rock Lake are considered top assets.

Natural beauty received a 7.2 out of 10 rating.

Dan Nicholas Park and nature are highly associated with the five senses of delivering a true Rowan County experience.



Rowan County's history helps differentiate it.

Its history is considered a top asset.

- Civil War
- History for the state of North Carolina
- Historic homes/sites
- NC Transportation Museum is a top asset, especially for visitors

Rowan County delivers best on its heritage attributes (ratings above 7):

- Preserves its history well
- Has a compelling story to share
- Provides opportunities to learn history

The community is most proud of Rowan County's history.

History makes it unique and helps differentiate it from other counties.



Rowan County suffers from a few challenges that give it a bad reputation.

The perceived #1 challenge are "small town politics."

- County government has a bad reputation; not trusted by the community
- Results in the community perceiving Rowan County not to be progressive
- Gives it a bad reputation among outsiders



Bad politics of the past may require a PR campaign to help overcome the continued bad reputation.

Additional challenges: poor schools, poverty, crime, and lack of jobs.



Detailed
Findings



The community says that Rowan County is a better place to visit than to live in or start a business.

Q: On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being “not at all likely to recommend” and 10 being “extremely likely to recommend” how likely are you to recommend Rowan County to a friend or colleague as a place to visit/live/start a business?

- ➔ As a place to live: 6.4
- ➔ As a place to visit: 6.9
- ➔ As a place to start a business: 5.5



Pros and cons as a place to live.

Q: Why did you rate Rowan County the way you did as a place to live?

Pros:

- Small town feel with lots of activities
- Strong arts community
- Strong sense of community
- Friendly
- Location: close to larger cities, the mountains and beaches
- Good housing cost
- Good quality of life
- Quiet country setting
- Low tax rates

Cons:

- Schools have a bad reputation
- Poverty and crime
- Low pay
- Zoning problems
- Housing cost too high
- Limited restaurants, activities, shopping
- Lack of employment opportunities and opportunities for growth
- Not growing fast enough
- Small town politics

"It is a community that is full of the arts & culture. It has 10g broadband, beautiful farmlands, access to farm fresh food, beautiful, parks (..and is) close to 5 urban centers."

"Not perfect, because of schools & lack of after school programs."



Pros and cons as a place to visit.

Q: Why did you rate Rowan County the way you did as a place to visit?

Pros:

- Historic sites & attractions
- Parks: Dan Nicholas, Sloan Park, Village Park in Kannapolis, Gold Hill Park, etc.
- North Carolina Transportation Museum
- Friendly
- Fun things to do
- Good restaurants
- Unique small towns
- Beautiful country
- No big city hustle & traffic, but big city variety
- Local shops
- Beautiful old homes

Cons:

- Increasing crime rates
- High poverty levels
- Challenged schools
- Limited dining and retail options

"Our claim to fame is Dan Nicholas Park!"

"I love the history of the area and the preservation of the history. From rural churches and towns to the city center of Salisbury."

"A lot of historical places, with many unique small towns."

"It seems as if crime is rising in this area."



Pros and cons as a place to start a business.

Q: Why did you rate Rowan County the way you did as a place to start a business?

Pros:

- Having Salisbury in the county (due to its size)
- Fibrant
- Growth opportunities
- Location: proximity to larger cities
- Available workforce

Cons:

- Water/sewer needs improvement
- Lots of codes, inspections, red tape
- Difficult to work with county commissioners/county government
- Poorly educated & trained workforce
- Too expensive: taxes, fees, real estate - especially Salisbury
- Small businesses struggle
- Not enough interest in shopping local
- Low income community/high poverty: people don't shop
- Poor local economy
- Not considered business friendly

"Salisbury is a big enough town to have a profitable business."

"Location, location, location. Our county is situated between Raleigh, NC and Charlotte, NC. There are tremendous growth opportunities for any business with a desire to succeed."

"Rowan County has the opportunity to grow also people need to work."

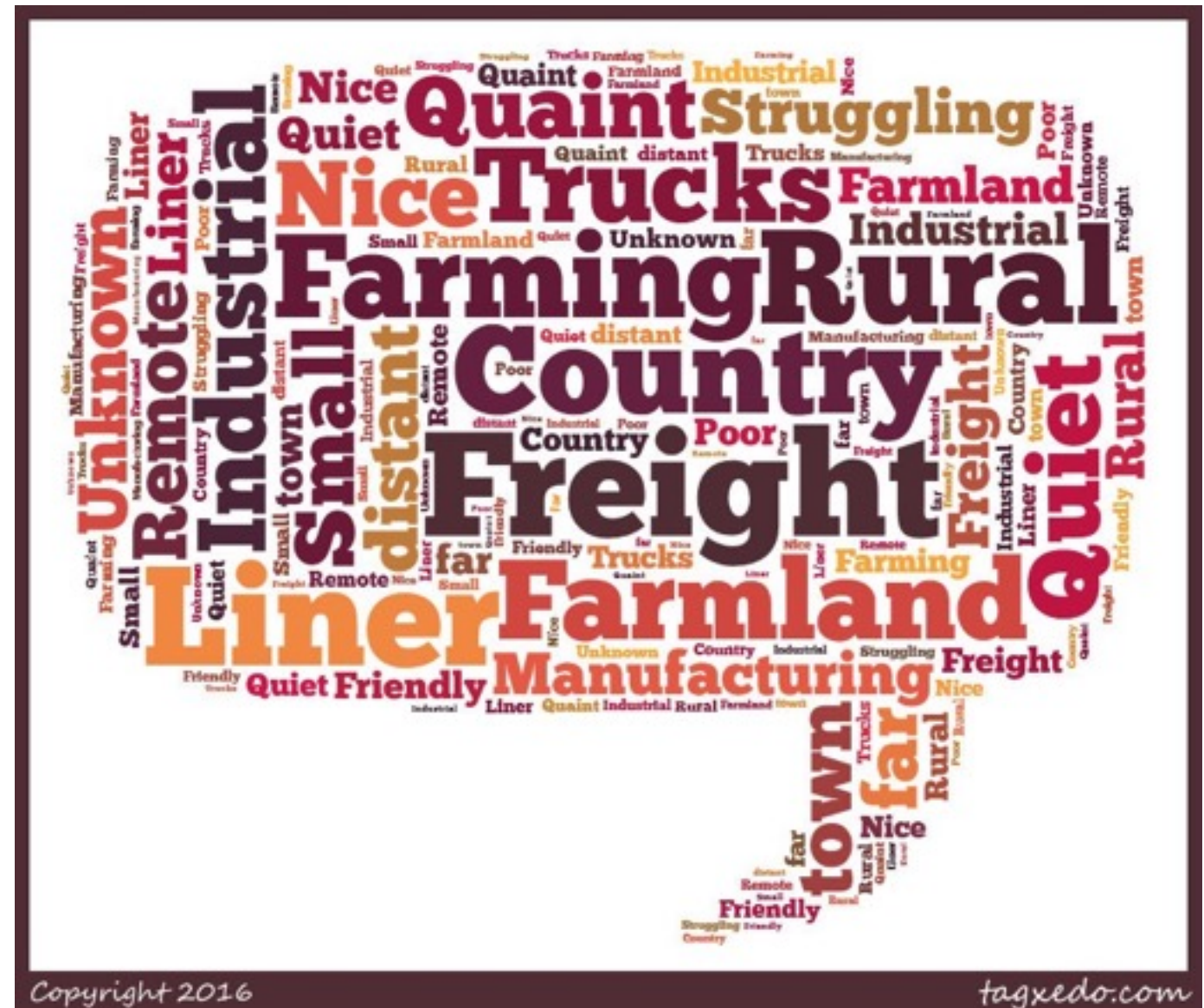
"Have you seen the business death valley called downtown Salisbury?"



Cleveland is mostly known for Freight Liner and rural farmland.

Q: Please list two adjectives or words that best describe Cleveland.

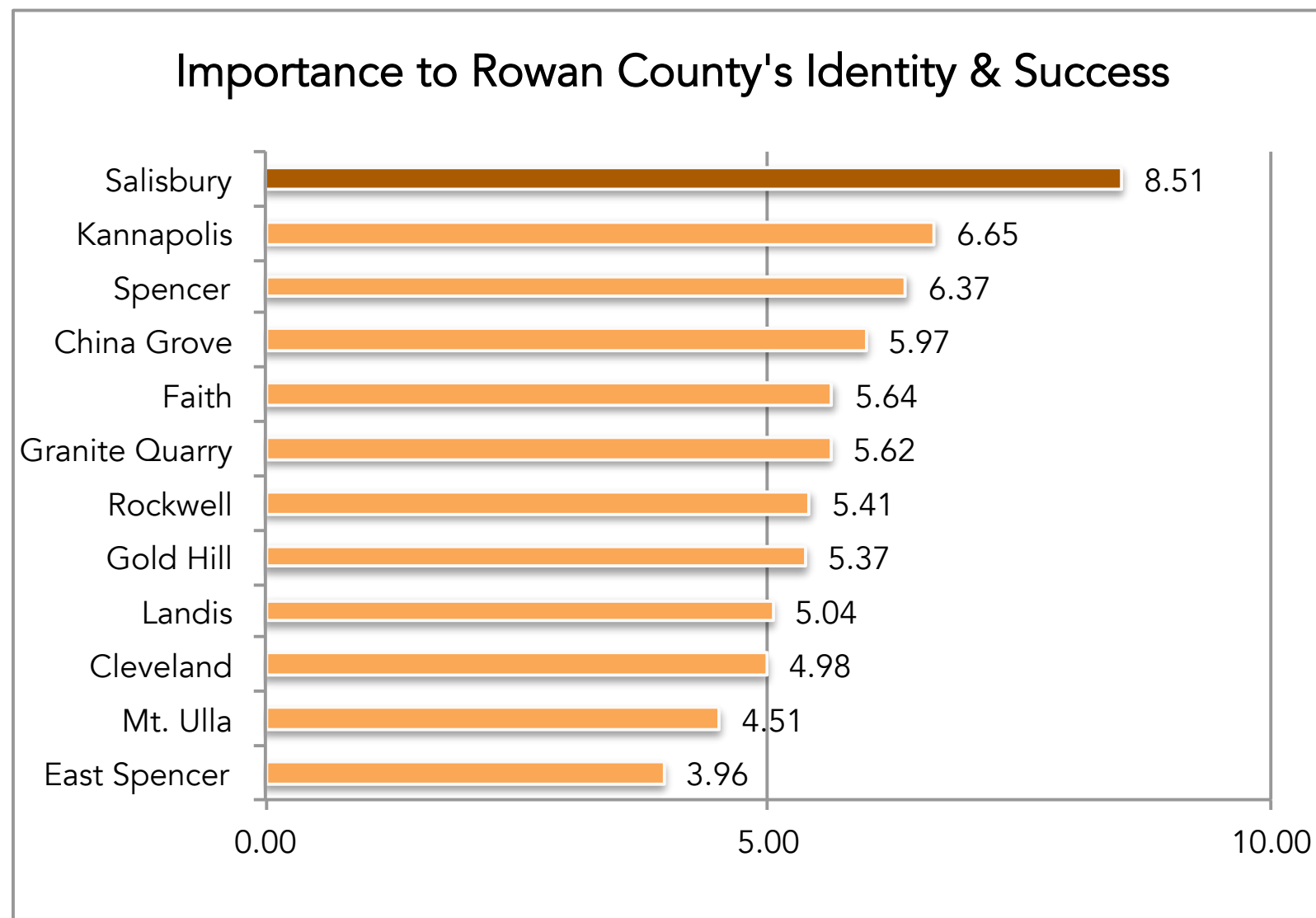
1. Freight Liner
2. Rural
3. Country
4. Farming/Farmland
5. Trucks
6. Quiet
7. Industrial
8. Nice
9. Quaint
10. Small town
11. Remote/far/distant
12. Unknown
13. Poor
14. Friendly
15. Struggling
16. Manufacturing





Salisbury is by far the most important city in helping determine Rowan County's identity and success.

Q: Please rate the following communities on how important they are to the identity and success of Rowan County using a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "offers very little to the identity and success" and 10 being "extremely important to the identity and success."





Salisbury is the “life” of Rowan County.

Q: What does the city of Salisbury add to Rowan County that it would not have if Salisbury didn't exist?

1. History: civil war, for the state of NC, historic homes/sites
2. Arts & culture
3. Shopping/retail
4. Business district/hub
5. Crime
6. Fibrant
7. Courthouse
8. Night life/city life
9. Growth
10. Bigger population
11. High taxes
12. Restaurants
13. A central location
14. Urban lifestyle
15. Food Lion
16. Water & Sewer, utilities
17. Old money
18. A sense of place

“A city hub to lead all the small towns.”

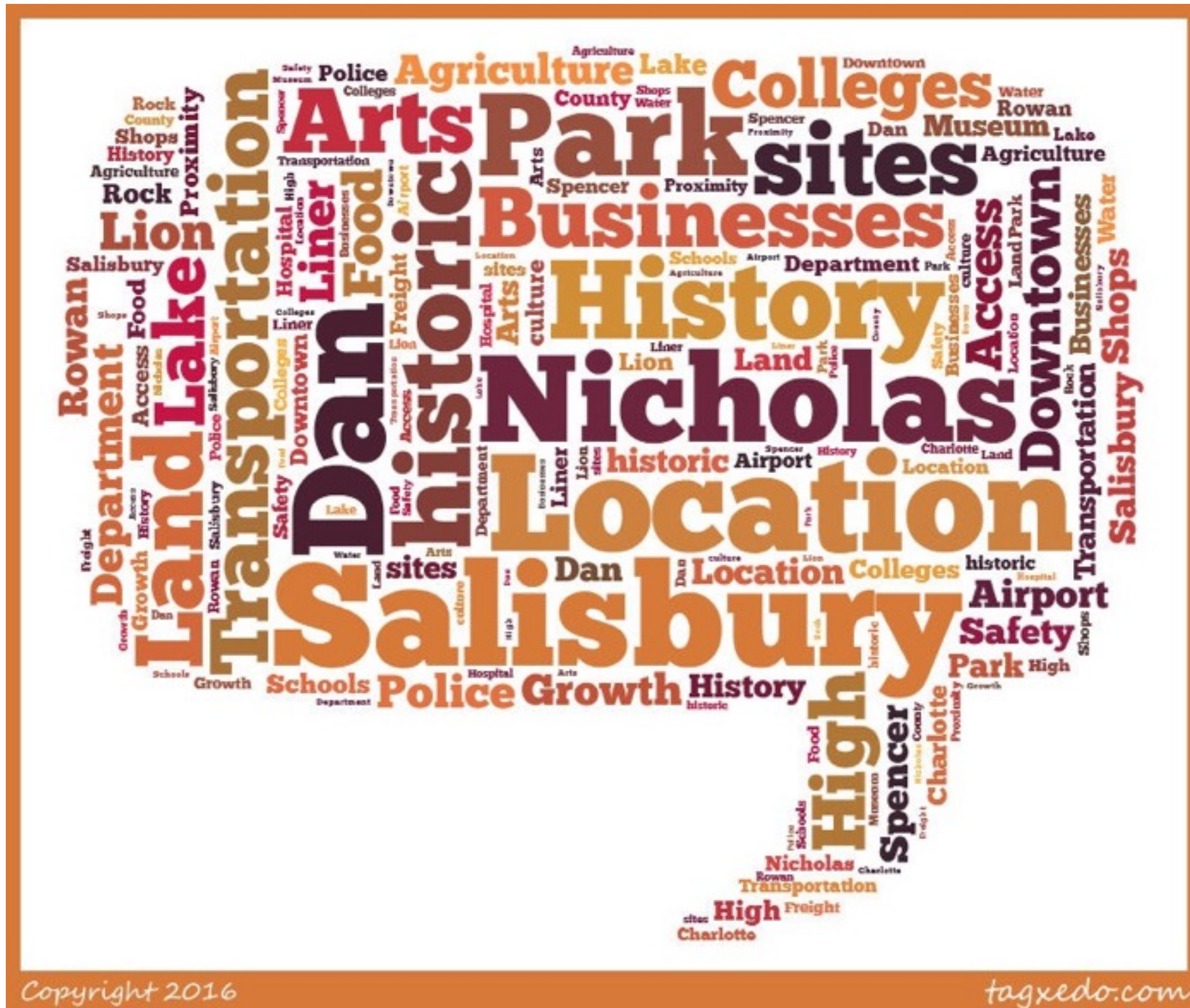


Rowan County's Assets

Q: In your opinion, what are the three most important assets in Rowan County?

Asset #1	Asset #2	Asset #3
Location	Dan Nicholas Park & others	Colleges
Salisbury	Salisbury	History/historic sites
History/historic sites	Location	Location
Dan Nicholas Park	Colleges	Dan Nicholas Park & others
Land	Arts	Businesses
I-85	History/historic sites	I-85
Arts	Land	Arts & culture
Schools	Transportation Museum	Salisbury
Proximity to Charlotte	Downtown Salisbury	Downtown Salisbury
Transportation Museum	Businesses	Land
High Rock Lake	High Rock Lake	Schools
Businesses	I-85	Access
	Water	Transportation Museum
	Freight Liner	Food Lion
	Food Lion	High Rock Lake
	Police Department	Growth
	Hospital	Agriculture
	Rowan County Airport	Spencer Shops
		Water
		Safety
		Proximity to Charlotte

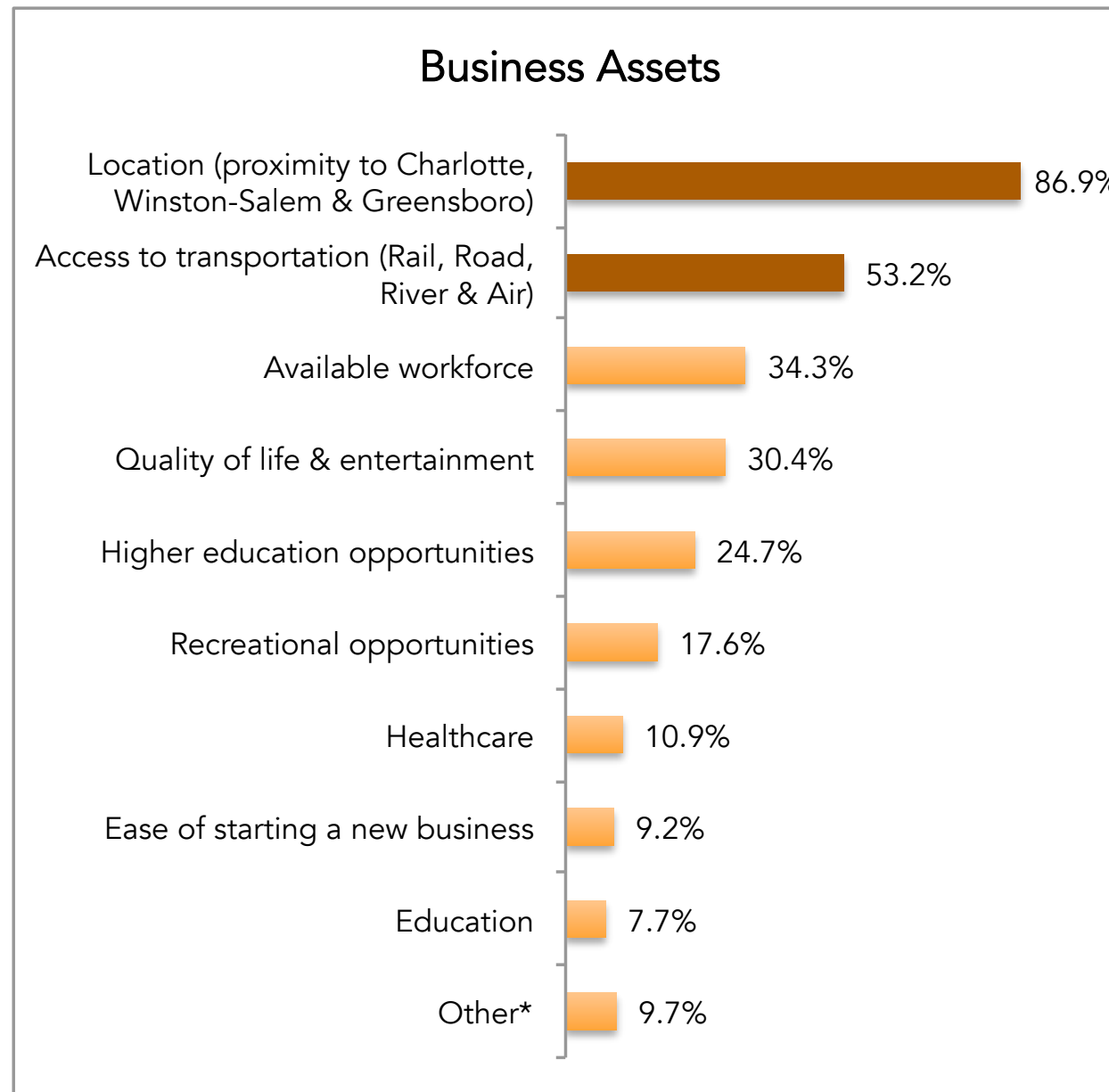
Rowan County's Assets





Location and access to transportation are the county's top two business assets.

Q: Rowan County's three greatest assets for business are...

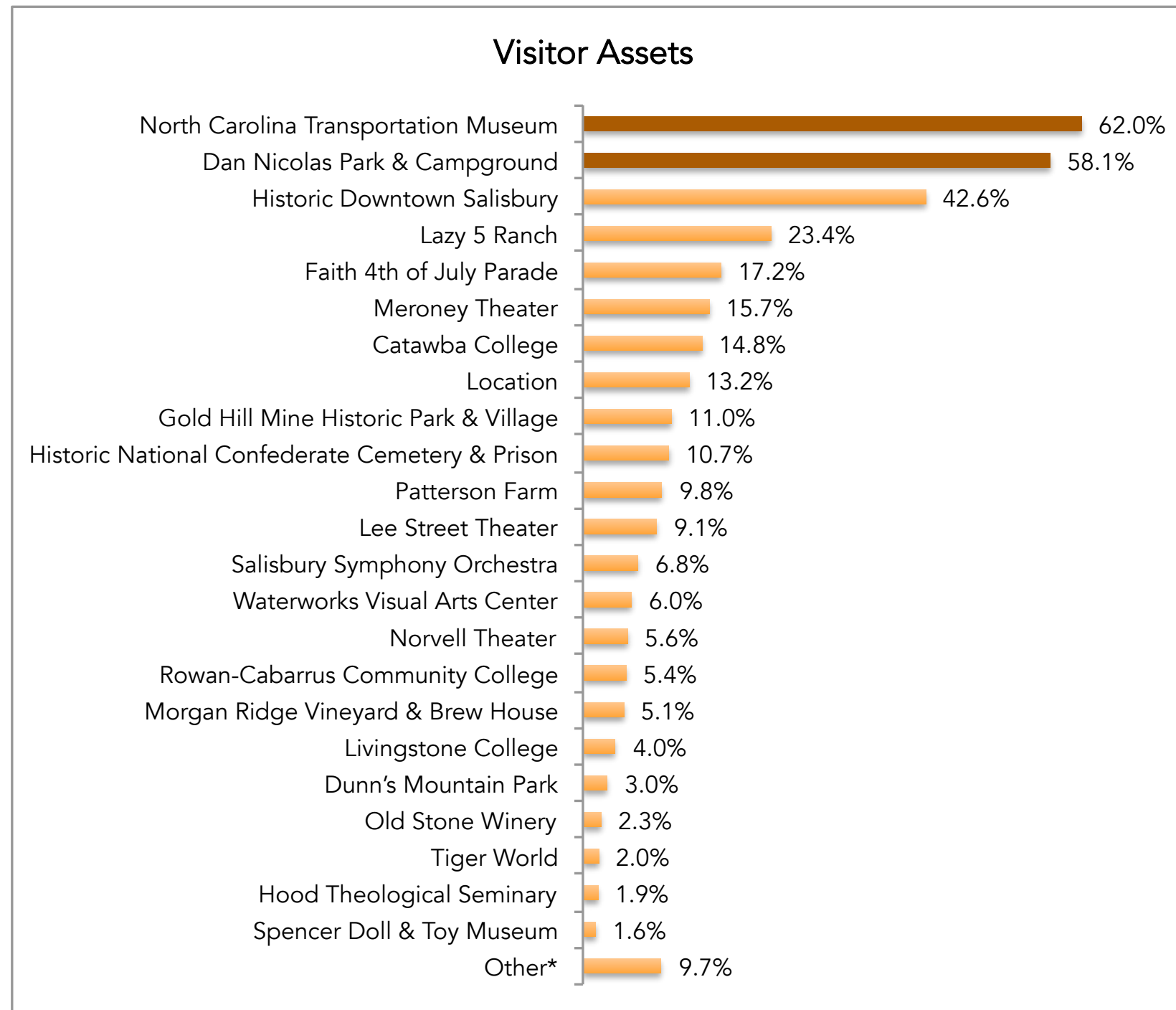


*Other: Fibrant; low taxes



The Transportation Museum and the park are Rowan County's top two visitor assets.

Q: Rowan County's three greatest assets for visitors are...

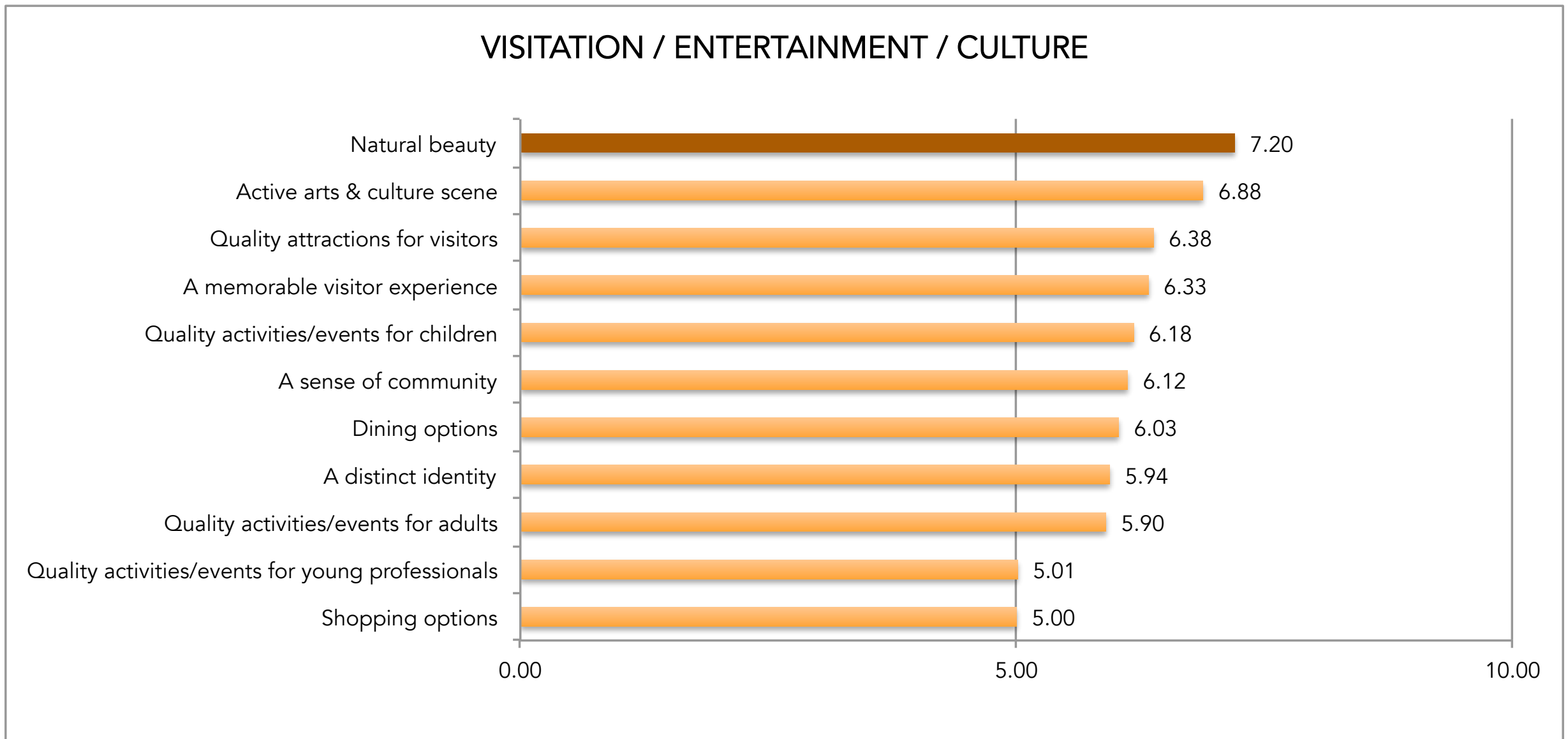


*Other: High Rock Lake, sporting events, Library History Room



The community only rates Rowan County high for natural beauty among all visitation/entertainment/culture attributes.

Q: On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "poor" and 10 being "excellent," how well does Rowan County deliver the following attributes?

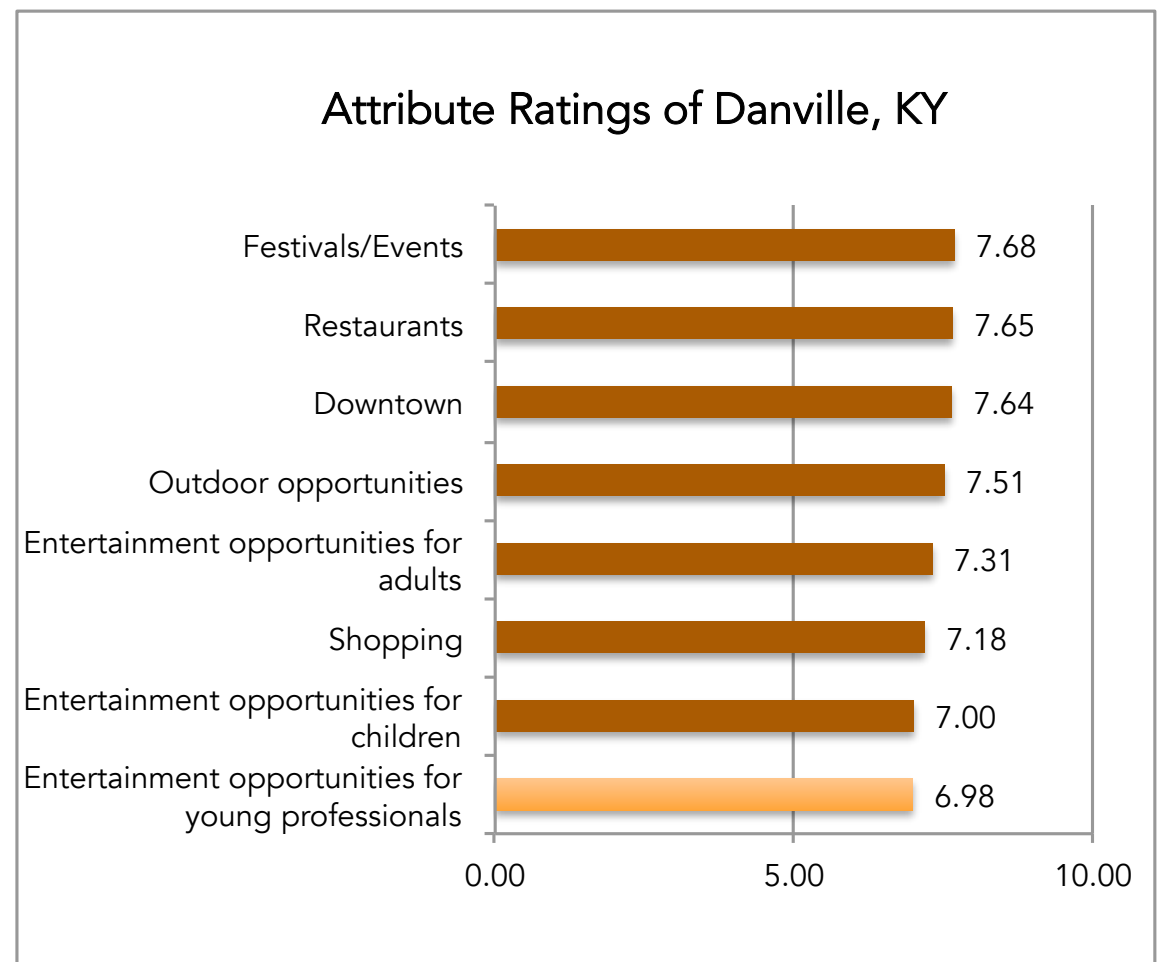
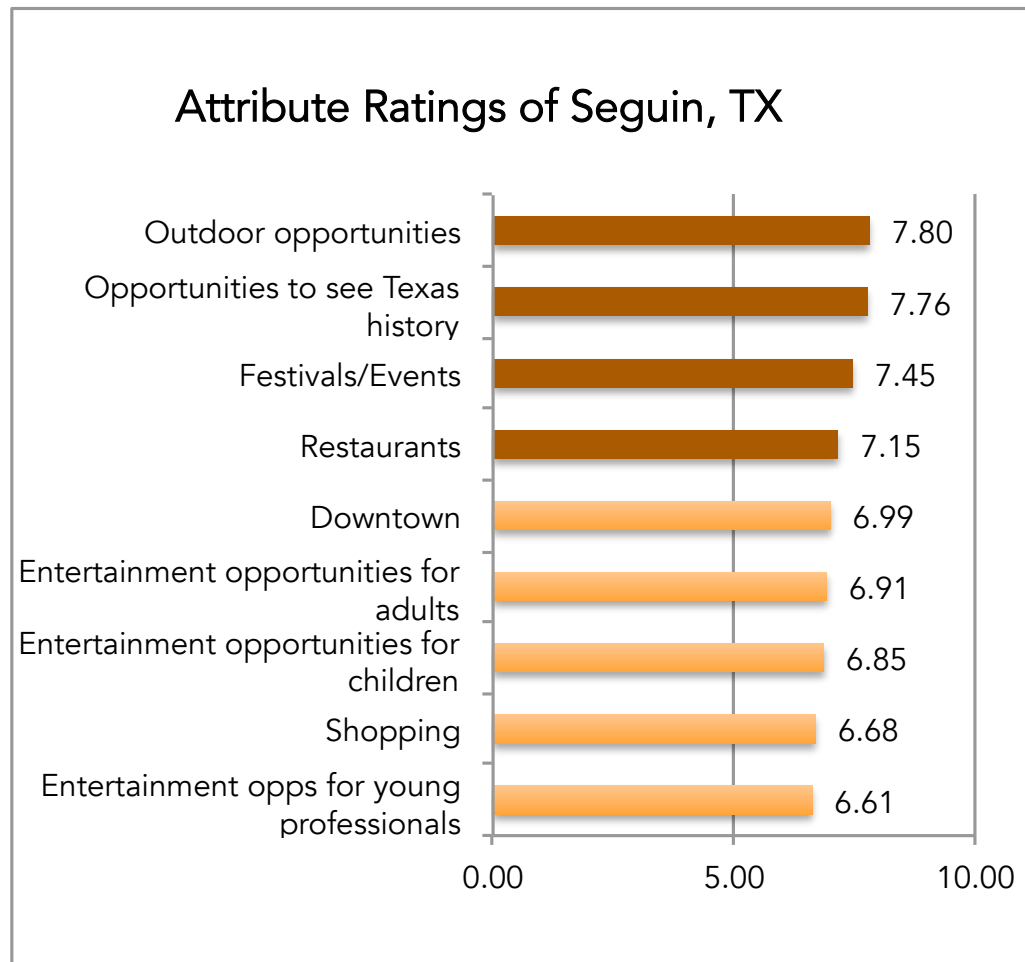


Ideally, ratings should be above 7



Attribute ratings of other communities in comparison:

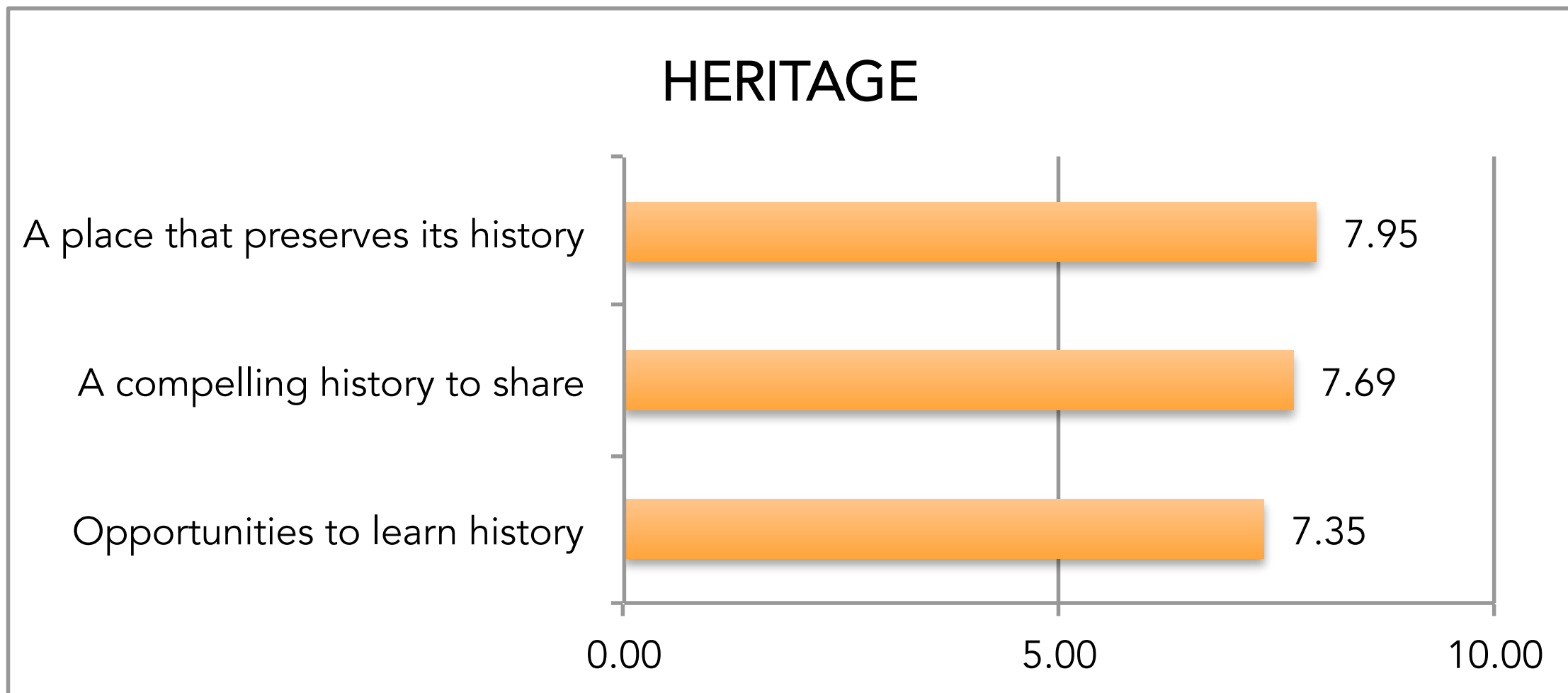
Q: On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "poor" and 10 being "excellent," how well does ____ deliver the following attributes?





However, Rowan County does a great job of delivering on all its heritage attributes.

Q: On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "poor" and 10 being "excellent," how well does Rowan County deliver the following attributes?





Downtown will become more vibrant as more businesses and people move to the area.

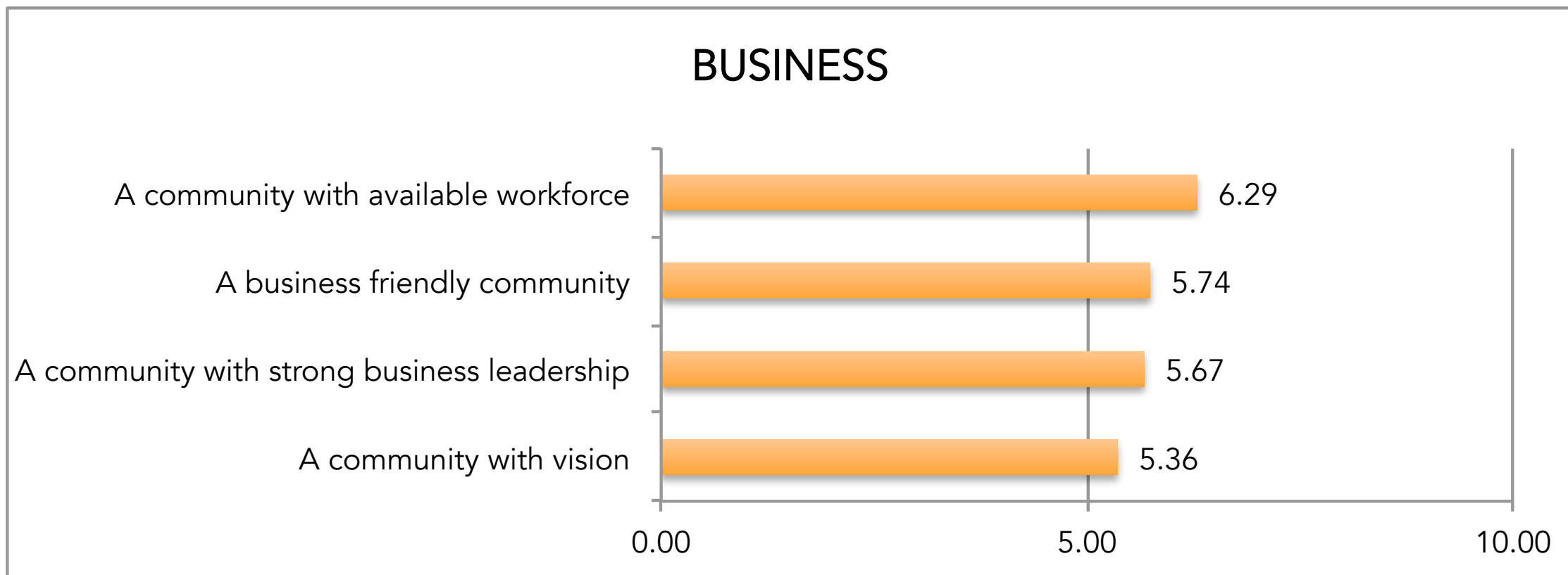
Q: On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "poor" and 10 being "excellent," how well does Rowan County deliver the following attributes?





The community thinks that Rowan County could still improve on its business attributes.

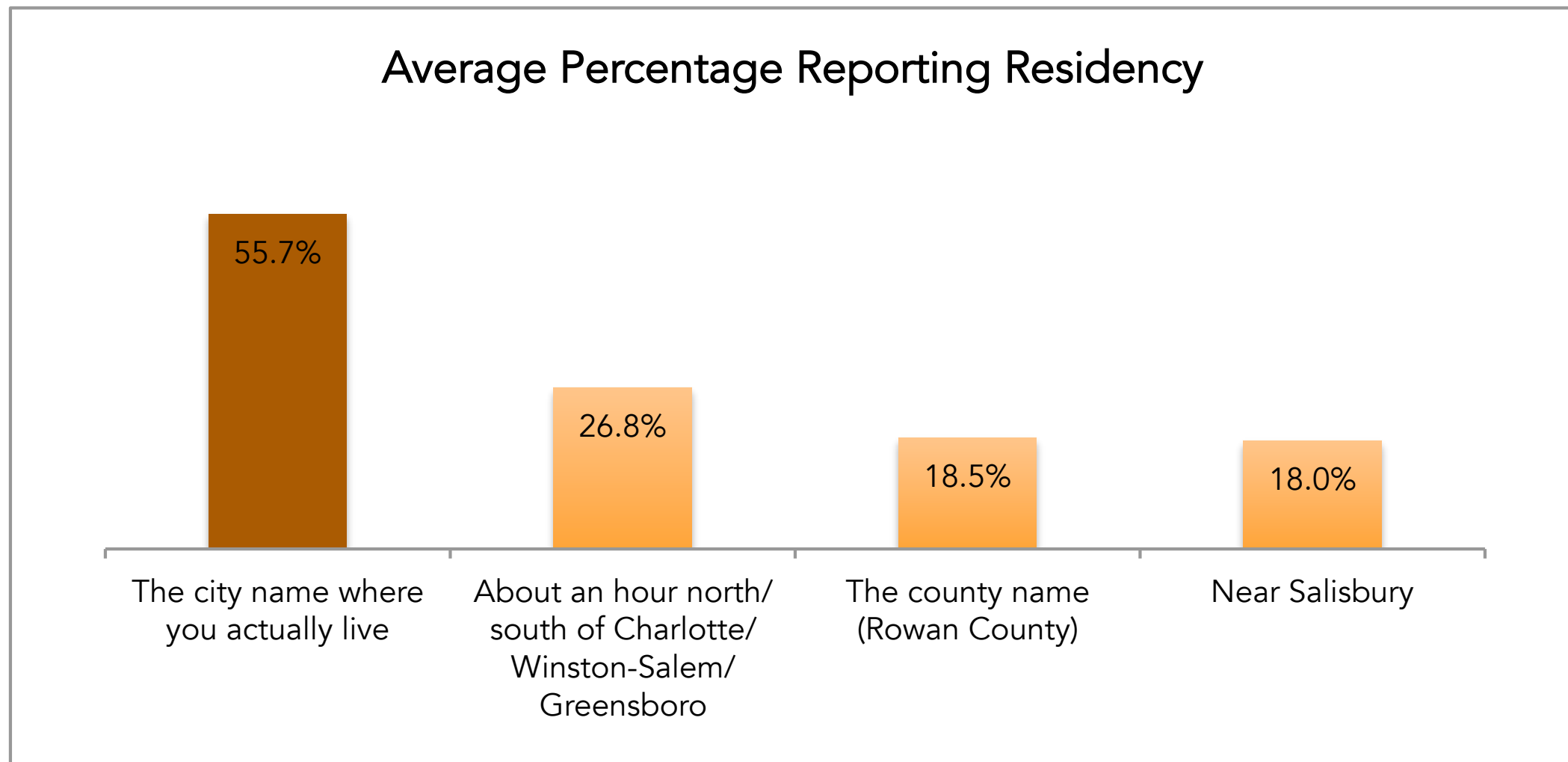
Q: On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "poor" and 10 being "excellent," how well does Rowan County deliver the following attributes?





On average, people tend to tell outsiders the exact city where they live.

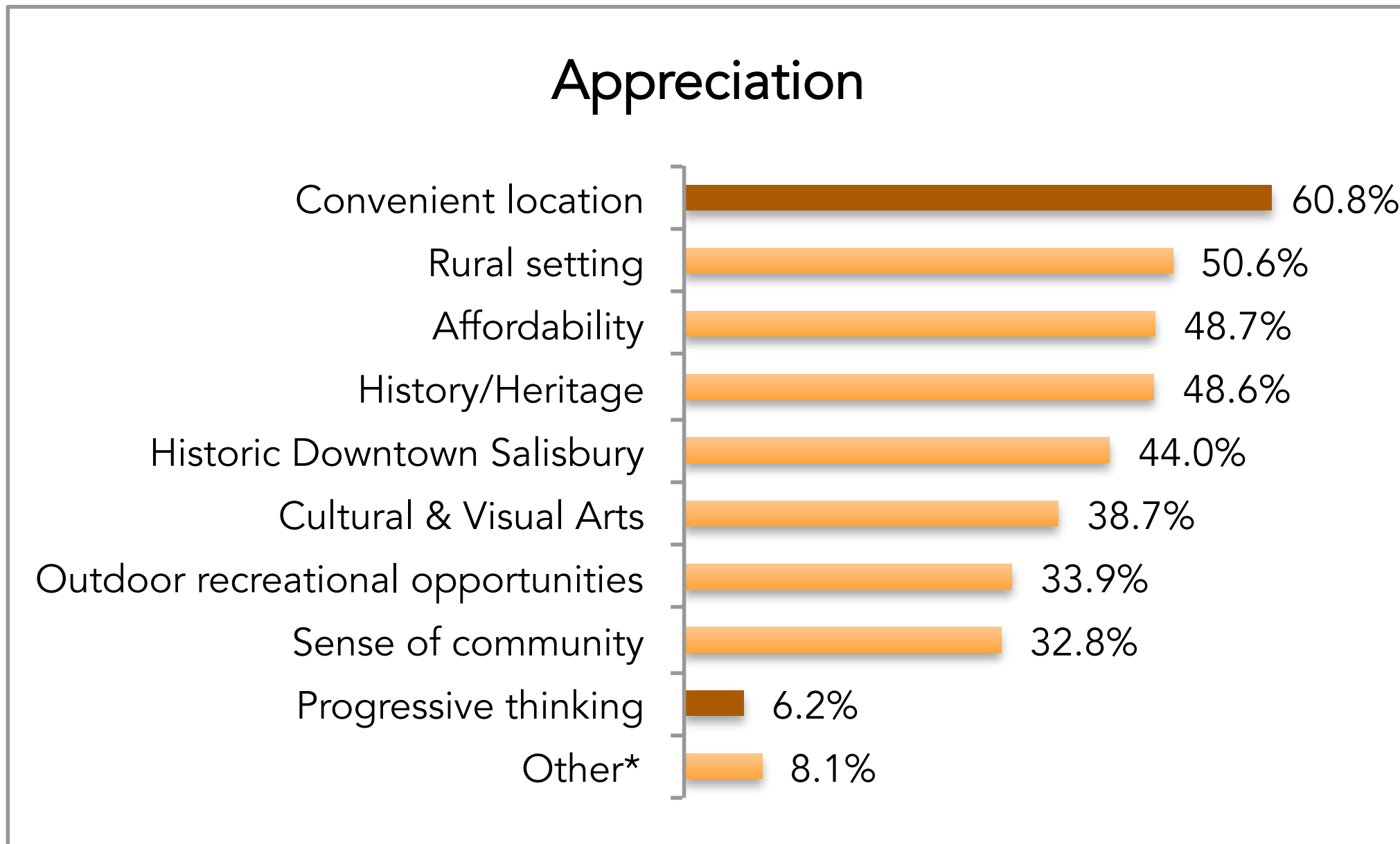
Q: When telling outsiders where you live, what percent of the time would you guess you say you live in ___?





Residents highly appreciate Rowan County's location, but do not perceive it as progressive.

Q: What do residents appreciate most about Rowan County?



*Other: Family, education, churches



People primarily love Rowan County's central and convenient location.

Q: Beyond the people, what do you love about Rowan County?

1. Geographic location:
 - Central Piedmont location
 - Close to Charlotte, Winston-Salem and Greensboro
 - Close to mountains and the coast
2. History
3. Beauty & scenery
4. Arts
5. Sense of community
6. The parks
7. The country side/rural areas/land
8. Small town feel
9. My church
10. Lack of traffic
11. Local shopping
12. High Rock Lake
13. Downtown Salisbury

"The geographic location between the mountains and coast."

"The ease of access to beach, mountains, bigger cities, the importance of God to the community at large, the various attractions both natural and man made."



Rowan County's history and historic downtowns help it stand out.

Q: In your opinion, what makes Rowan County unique compared to surrounding counties?

1. History
2. Historic districts and downtowns
3. Central location to Winston/Greensboro/Charlotte
4. Downtown Salisbury and the other downtowns
5. Small town feel
6. Locally owned businesses
7. The parks, including Dan Nicholas Park
8. Opportunities for growth: culturally & economically
9. But also lacking opportunities & lack of progress
10. Affordable
11. Growing
12. Transportation Museum

"It is untouched by progress despite being surrounded by it."

"Beautiful, proud downtowns. So many downtowns are ghost towns. The downtowns in Rowan County are full of stores and businesses."



Based on the community, Rowan County has a primarily negative reputation among outsiders, often associated with bad politics.

Q: In your opinion, how do you think outsiders describe Rowan County?

1. Lack of leadership and negative associations with previous county government
2. Rural
3. Backwards
4. Crime
5. Historic
6. Poor
7. Country
8. Quaint
9. Small town
10. Friendly
11. Conservative
12. Near Charlotte, Winston-Salem and Greensboro
13. Boring

"Friends outside of the county laugh at our county commissioners' recent shenanigans in disbelief and describe us as backward, ridiculously conservative, and are shocked when they find out what we actually offer. Unfriendly is another word used."

"Backwards (prayer lawsuit), and having a county seat that is unsafe for visitors to walk down the street unarmed."



Bad politics are also perceived as Rowan County's #1 challenge.

Q: What are the biggest challenges that keep Rowan County from being great?

1. Poor county leadership/government & politics
2. Schools/education
3. Crime
4. Lack of jobs
5. Lack of recreational activities

"Our county leaders, school board and school officials not taking serious issues seriously enough and making changes."



The community is most proud of Rowan County's history and heritage.

Q: What makes you most proud of Rowan County?

1. History & heritage
2. Sense of community; the people and their values
3. Salisbury: arts & culture scene, events, historic downtown
4. Historic sites & preservation
5. Family friendly, family feel
6. The colleges in Rowan County & educational opportunities
7. Caring, friendly small town
8. Location
9. Cheerwine
10. Arts & culture
11. Dan Nicholas Park
12. Natural beauty & beautiful rural areas
13. Transportation Museum

"Community, our children and the significance to the state's place in history and the future."

"Once I get friends to Salisbury, they are amazed. Once they enjoy Salisbury they are more open to discovering other parts of the county."



Rowan County's senses are mainly associated with the parks and nature and downtown Salisbury with its restaurants and theaters.

Q: Now we would like for you to think about a true feeling of the "experience of Rowan County" using the five senses (See, Touch, Taste, Smell and Hear). Assume you had friends or business associates visiting and they were not familiar with Rowan County, NC, what would you tell your friend or colleague to ensure they have a "true Rowan County experience?"

SEE	TOUCH	TASTE	SMELL	HEAR
Downtown Salisbury	Lazy 5 Ranch	Cheerwine	Hap's	Trains
Dan Nicholas Park	Dan Nicholas Park	BBQ	Fresh, country air	Symphony
Transportation Museum	Trains	Local restaurants	BBQ	Pops at the Post
Historic homes	High Rock Lake	Hap's hot dogs	Spring flowers	Church bells
Historic districts	Downtown Salisbury	Chef Santos	Farms	Lee Street musical
Old Stone House	Transportation Museum	Downtown restaurants	Downtown bakeries & restaurants	Downtown live music
Hall House	Patterson Farms	Morgan Ridge	Coffee	Bluegrass music
Lazy 5 Ranch	Art	Salty Caper	Cut grass	Faith 4th parade
Gold Hill	Water	Sweet Meadow	Krispy Kreme	Park activities
A play at the Meroney or Lee Street		Cava		Nature sounds at parks
High Rock Lake		Pizza		Birds/nature
Faith 4th		Strawberries		Quiet



Downtown Salisbury and Gold Hill deliver the most memorable experiences for Rowan County.

Q: Where would you take out of town guests for a memorable Rowan County experience for ___?

DINING	SHOPPING	FUN	TO LEAVE A MEMORABLE IMPRESSION
Sweet Meadow	Downtown Salisbury	Dan Nicholas Park	Historic districts
Hap's	Queen's Gift Shoppe	Lazy 5 Ranch	Transportation Museum
Cava	Emporium	Lee Street Theater	Lazy 5 Ranch
Chef Santos	Stitchin' Post	Transportation Museum	Dan Nicholas Park
Gary's BBQ	Caniche	High Rock Lake	Downtown Salisbury
Salty Caper	Concord Mills	Downtown Salisbury	Faith 4th
Mambo Grill	Antique shops	Gold Hill	Lee Street Theater
Go Burrito	Belks	Faith 4th	October Tour (of homes)
College BBQ	Pottery 101	Spencer shops	National Cemetery
Downtown Salisbury	Critters		Gold Hill Park
Sidewalk Deli	Gold Hill Shops		Meroney Theater
Morgan Ridge			Spencer Shops
Stag & Doe			Rowan Museum



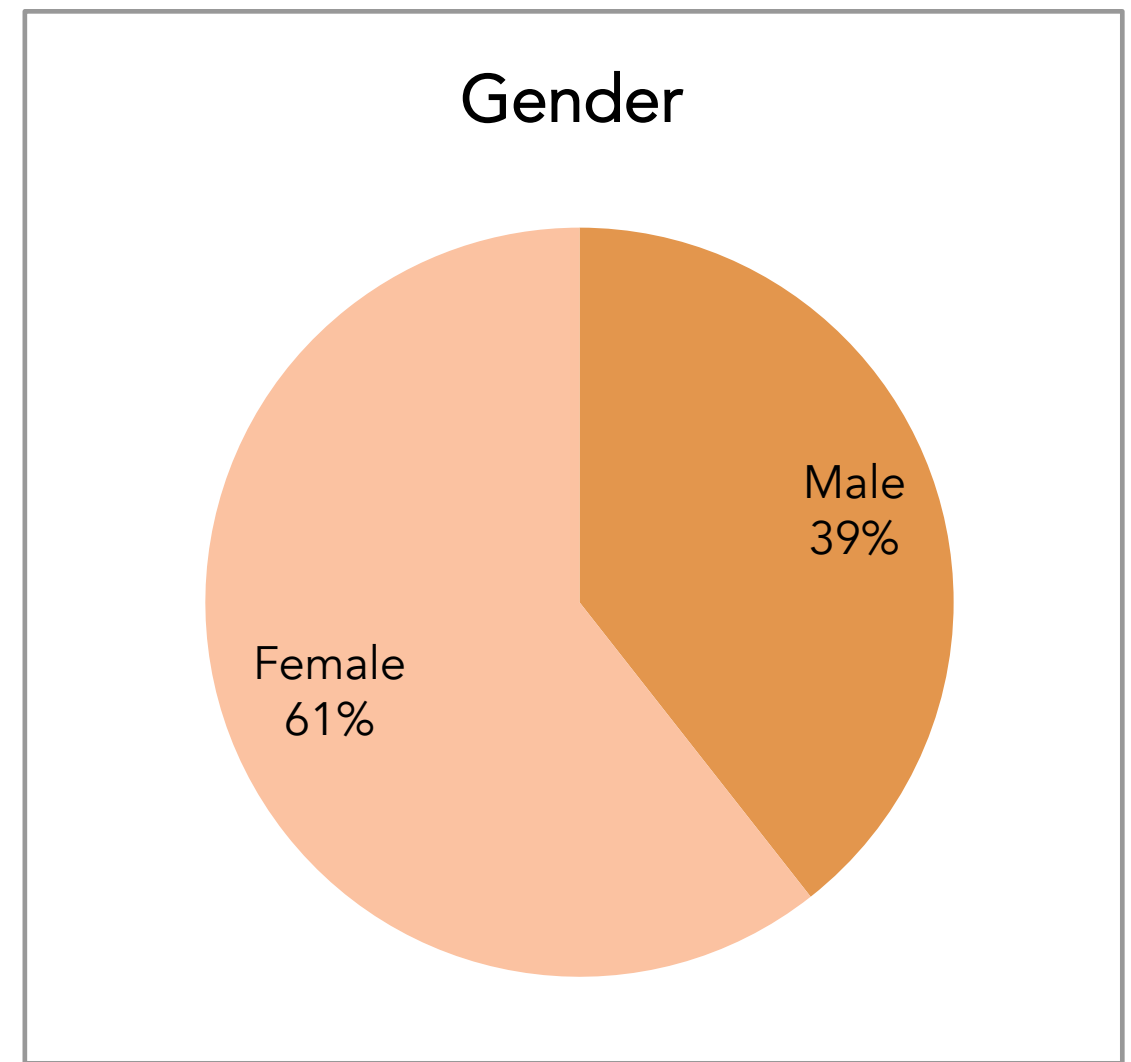
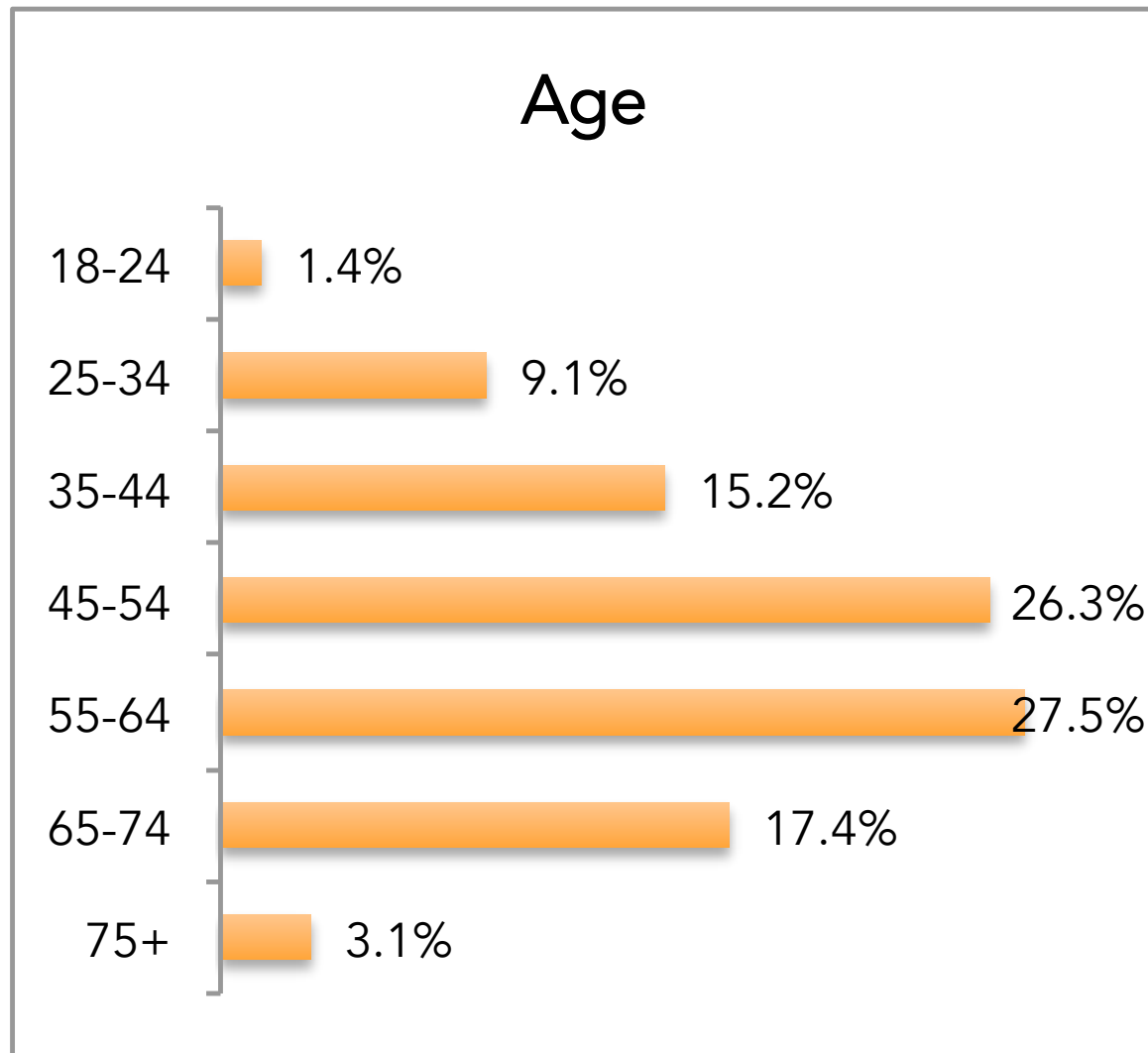
Food Lion is the greatest success story to come out of Rowan County.

Q: What is the biggest success story to come out of Rowan County?

1. Food Lion / Ralph Ketner
2. Cheerwine
3. Little League girls' softball team (world series)
4. Former U.S. senator Elizabeth Dole
5. Fibrant
6. Dan Nicholas Park
7. Catawba College
8. Transportation Museum



Respondent
Demographics



Thank you!
