

*For Immediate Release*

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# North Carolina Tops Forbes Best States for Business List – Davie County is Taking Advantage of Positive Business Climate!

North Carolina is now the nation's top state to do business, according to Forbes Magazine's Best States for Business ranking.

Although North Carolina is the only state to appear among the top five states all 12 years since the magazine launched the list, this year is the first time it has occupied the top spot. Last year, Forbes ranked North Carolina # 2.

Over the past twenty years, North Carolina has built one of the nation's healthiest business climates through low business costs, incentives, and a young and educated workforce. The state's strong universities and resources such as Research Triangle Park have helped train that labor pool, the magazine said.

Migration rates into the state are also among the highest in the U.S. annually, according to Forbes.

Frank Emory Jr., chairman of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) Board of Directors, said recognition in third-party rankings the caliber of Forbes helps the state market itself to companies considering the best place to locate or expand.

“This year has been a good one for the state, in terms of such rankings,” Emory said. “Not only is North Carolina Forbes’ top state for business, but we’re also Site Selection magazine’s most competitive state for attracting new plants and its No. 2 state for the best business climate. In addition, Chief Executive lists North Carolina as the third-best state for business, and CNBC ranks it fifth-best.”

### **NC Only State in Top 20 in all Six Categories**

Forbes’ list evaluates states based on their business costs, labor supply, regulatory environment, economic climate, growth prospects and quality of life. This year, North Carolina is the only state to place among the top 20 states in all six categories, according to the magazine.

North Carolina jumped to the top spot in this year’s ranking because of its improved employment outlook and second-lowest business costs (covering labor, energy, and taxes), Forbes said.

Following North Carolina among the top 5 on Forbes’ Best States for Business 2017 are Texas, Utah, Nebraska, and Virginia.

I sat down with Terry Bralley, president of the Davie County Economic Development Commission, to talk about this exciting news and to discuss the ways Davie County is capitalizing on North Carolina’s positive business climate.

### **Q: Were you surprised that North Carolina received the #1 spot on Forbes’ Best States for Business ranking?**

*I wasn’t surprised at all; North Carolina has a terrific geographic location supported by great infrastructure with close proximity to the ports. We have great rail systems, great road systems, and an excellent business climate. We are working on regulatory reform and rolling taxes back to be more business-friendly. We have a great university system here in North Carolina, which has created a great workforce. North Carolina has a lot to offer and has worked hard to earn this spot.*

**Q: The Forbes list evaluates states on their business costs, labor supply, regulatory environment, economic climate, growth prospects and quality of life. How does Davie County stack up in these critical areas?**

*Those are all critical areas that North Carolina has looked at long and hard. The North Carolina General Assembly is rolling back corporate taxes and instituting regulatory reform. We witnessed that this year with Senate Bill 131, which included modifications to the insulation R-values required for certain types of buildings, as well as the resolution of some wetland and environmental issues. I think the general assembly and the people we have elected to public office get it and understand what it takes to strike the delicate balance of less regulation and fewer taxes to make ourselves more attractive to major industry.*

*Those same attributes are well-reflected here in Davie County. Locally we try to be competitive with our existing companies by helping them to expand and take advantage of whatever state and federal grants and programs are available to help them become low-cost producers for what they do.*

*I also think Davie County is actively engaged in what is going on in our state when it comes to economic development. We understand what it takes to move an economy both locally and state-wide. We are constantly talking to our lawmakers in Raleigh, and we make the North Carolina Department of Commerce aware of the efforts we are making here. We are continuously looking for ways to better ourselves, and we don't leave it up to the state and the federal governments to fix our problems or change our small county for us. We aren't looking for handouts; we are looking for partnerships.*

**Q: What is Davie County doing to take advantage of the positive developments at the state level in North Carolina?**

*We are helping the private sector to develop industrial parks so that we have new buildings and building sites available. We are also concerned about the workforce and are seeking ways to add value moving forward by developing apprenticeship programs and working with the high school, the community college and industry to facilitate engagement. We do realize that we have full employment here and we are working on ways to connect the schools and industry in a way they have not been connected in the past and to show our young people opportunities they may not have known existed.*

*Davie County has developed within the state a reputation for winning deals and doing what it takes to bring new companies to our community and to*

*help our existing companies win opportunities. Our reputation is a positive thing for the brokers and developers that I work and deal with. We are always looking for ways to get better which is why we are currently working on a new five-year strategic plan to determine where we need to be, where the jobs are going to be and what we need to do to take advantage of those opportunities.*

**Q: Over the last five years, Davie County has been very successful attracting manufacturing companies that have created thousands of new jobs and millions of dollars in new investment. To what do you attribute our success?**

*We were able to take advantage of a growing economy. We had buildings and available product, and we connected with our brokers and the North Carolina Department of Commerce to bring companies here. At the beginning we had a double-digit unemployment rate, so we had a workforce that was available, which is one of the top five things companies consider when looking for a location. We had the road network, and we had all of the necessary relationships in place. The leadership here among the towns and the county is pro-industry and understands that you need jobs for your citizens and opportunities to grow your economy. I think we had the right chemistry to make things happen.*

**Q: What do you see as our biggest challenges in keeping the momentum in our favor?**

*Over the years we have learned to make things happen by identifying potential problems or issues and then taking steps to remove the obstacles. I believe we need to focus on developing our next generation of leaders by teaching them the tools we used to gain our advantages while also looking ahead at new tools that may become available. Also, we can't rest on our laurels. We must remain proactive by looking to the future regarding where jobs are going to be and what new horizons for new companies might be out there. Working with the education system to train the next workforce and making them aware of the opportunities that might exist will continue to be important.*

*One of the biggest weaknesses in rural counties is infrastructure: water, sewer, natural gas, fiber optics, and rail. We just don't have the urban concentration to be able to afford to put those in place, but they are critical*

*to our ability to continue to develop industrial sites. Continued site development is certainly a priority. We have to make sure our state and local leaders are aware of those weaknesses and work to make them stronger.*

**Q: What are Davie County's most significant challenges over the next five to ten years and what can we do now to begin addressing them?**

*What we have is good, but we must continue to ask ourselves 'how do we get better and how do we sustain that?'*

*We will have to face the challenges of having an older workforce as well as leaders that are a little older. We must continue to develop new talent in leadership roles across the county as well as the state.*

*We have a low unemployment rate, so workforce development will continue to be a major issue. We are going to have to find ways to attract people to Davie County to help us grow because we suffer from a shortage of labor as does the nation as a whole. We have to do a better job of making people aware of the amenities we have to offer and why they should want to live here. Our quality of life and family values should be a huge draw as well as our proximity to major medical centers and shopping areas.*

*We must also constantly look forward to new and better ways to attract higher paying jobs and additional jobs for our younger generations that have gone off to universities and would like the opportunity to come back home.*

*Creating the strategic plan and making sure that we are on the same page and focusing hard on the future will ensure that we are ready and able to face whatever challenges lie ahead.*