

► “We show our age with a lot of pride and keep it beautiful. There are seasonal activities throughout the year coupled with fine accommodations, independent restaurants and boutique shopping,” says Mallory Denham, Executive Director of Edenton-Chowan Partnership, which focuses on local economic development.

“I’ve been here for two years and the number one thing is the people,” he says. “They are extremely outgoing and friendly. I’ve felt part of the community day one.”

But, all this is not to say that the town is stuck in the past. There are many new developments and expanding businesses that range from growing sage and peanuts to yacht-building.

His role as a director of economic development for the small county is a natural fit for Denham, having grown up in a similarly small and historic town of Maysville, Kentucky, 60 miles east of Cincinnati on the Ohio River. Denham started in economic development in Kentucky and worked for state Governor Steve

Beshear. “By the time he served both terms I was looking for a job. One of my supervisors sent me a listing on Edenton, knowing I had a background in economic development, and I showed up here. Life is good.” It’s been a great fit and Denham appreciates both the wonderful history and the potential for growth.

Outside of the town of Edenton, the countryside is a mix of forests and farms that is ideal for both outdoor enthusiasts and people looking to escape to a simpler lifestyle and a relaxed pace. And because it is located on the inner banks of North Carolina, there is easy access to water activities, including a portion of an old highway that has been converted into a fishing pier.

Edenton-Chowan also has the advantage of being located about midway between Norfolk, Virginia and Greenville, North Carolina, which makes it an easy commute for people who have city jobs but don’t necessarily want the city life.

While the countryside is beautiful and the town clearly holds appeal for tourists, Denham and the Edenton-Chowan Partnership face the same challenges that many small counties face – attracting and growing new business for the local economy while keeping the area’s history and that easy-going southern charm intact.

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***“One major change coming to the area is the development of Interstate 87.”***

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“We are at the halfway point on the east coast so we have been able to attract people from both ends of the coast. And we have a lot of knowledge,” says Denham. “The partnership has been at work during the past couple of years to establish a brain trust of retired CEOs and senior business managers that local business owners and entrepreneurs can tap into to grow businesses.”

This partnership also played a role in creating 225 jobs over the last two years by helping manufacturing companies to expand. One of the notable projects is Regulator Marine, a boat company undergoing a 40,000-square-foot expansion and adding more jobs to boost the local economy. Another success is Jimbo’s Jumbos Peanut Co. which actually expanded twice, the first being a 70,000-square-foot expansion in 2015 and the current one, an addition of 40,000 feet. Colony Tire has just finished a 105,000 square-foot build and is in the process of adding another 100,000 square foot building. These expansions will also add up to 125 jobs when completed.

But it is not just about expanding the size of existing operations in the area; it is about diversifying the businesses throughout the county. Take sage for an example, which, in addition to cotton and peanuts, is one of the main crops grown in the



**i** Regulator Marine gears up for the 2020 Model Year as boats move to the end of the line in the new assembly building.



**i** View from the second floor catwalk as different pieces of a Regulator enter into the new assembly building at Regulator Marine.