

Community Economic Recovery and Resiliency Initiative (CERRI) Quarterly Impact Report #3

2021 Quarter 3 (July - September) Activities

What is CERRI?

In January 2021, the Rural Planning Program (RPP), part of the N.C. Department of Commerce's Main Street & Rural Planning (MS&RP) Center, launched CERRI in response to the economic challenges small towns and rural communities have faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. CERRI provides participating communities with a planning process to develop local strategies for economic recovery and technical services for strategy implementation. Key steps include conducting a community assessment, developing an economic recovery plan of work, and delivering implementation services to help communities support small businesses and build local economic resiliency. The RPP has engaged eleven communities, across North Carolina's eight Prosperity Zones, in CERRI (as shown on the map below).

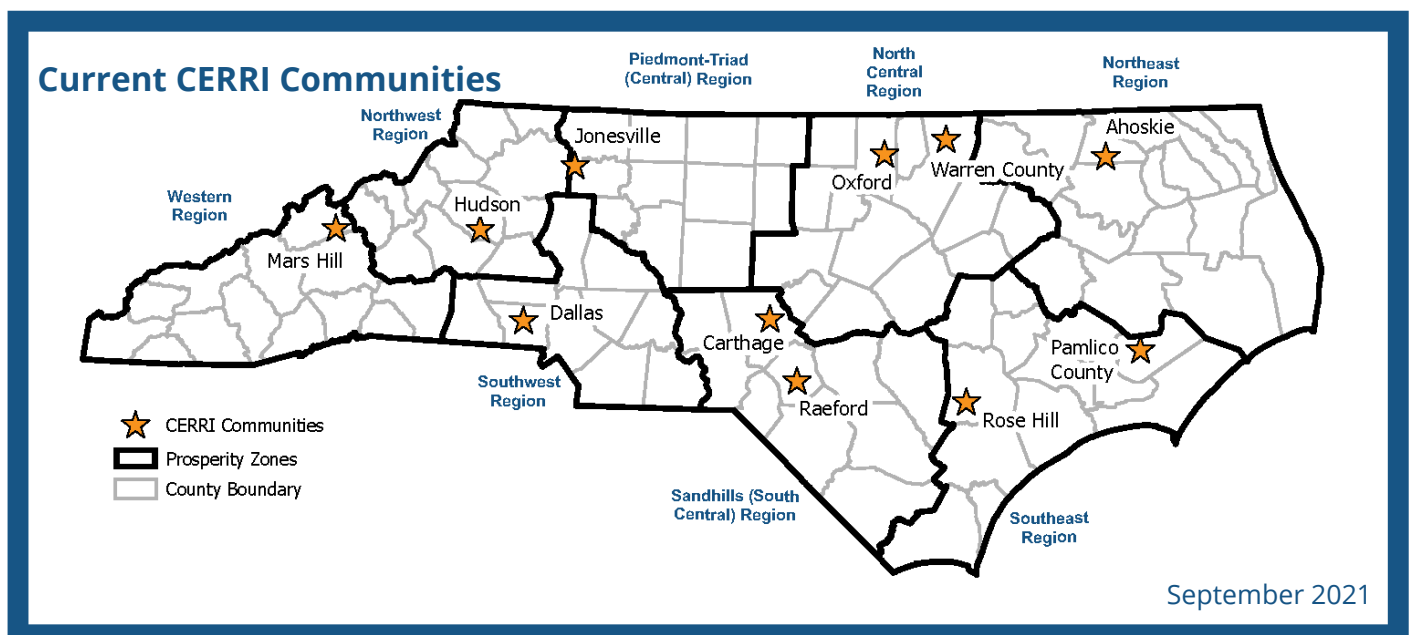


The Town Square in Rose Hill

Site of the annual NC Poultry Jubilee (November 5-6, 2021)

CERRI Partners

In addition to RPP services, CERRI communities receive project development, resource identification, and implementation assistance from project partners, including regional councils of government, local and regional economic development organizations, the NC Appalachian Regional Commission program, NC Hometown Strong, and the U.S. Economic Development Administration. They also benefit from training and tools provided through the MS&RP Center's affiliation with Leverage NC, the North Carolina Small Business and Technology Development Center, and others.



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CERRI Activities - Third Quarter Highlights

- 1 Economic recovery plan of work completed
- 12 Meetings with local work groups
- 7 Meetings with local coordinators and project partners
- 3 Tours of towns and facilities
- 2 Presentations to town governing boards
- 4 Hometown Strong Action Team visits with communities

Ahoskie Completes CERRI Economic Recovery Plan of Work

The Town of Ahoskie worked with the RPP's Lee Padrick to develop a CERRI Economic Recovery Plan of Work. Ahoskie has great regional partners, and involved East Carolina University, Elizabeth City State University, the Small Business and Technology Development Center, the Mid-East Commission, and Hometown Strong in its planning process.

Plan of Work strategies focus on community economic resiliency and small business support: 1) Market Ahoskie's shopping and dining opportunities and develop a "Shop Local" campaign; and 2) Continue to build the desired quality of life for Ahoskie's citizens. Identified projects include developing a single website portal for restaurants and virtual shopping for local businesses, increasing partnerships with the local business community, upgrading infrastructure, and attracting the offshore wind industry to the community.

Mr. Padrick continues to meet regularly with the Ahoskie town manager and Chamber of Commerce to discuss Plan of Work implementation and potential funding sources for projects. Ahoskie is now hosting a monthly community event, "Pop Up Saturday," in the downtown area; a direct result of its economic recovery planning through CERRI.

"Ahoskie has benefited from involvement with the Rural Planning program's CERRI program. The CERRI process brought the right people to the table to discuss resiliency and recovery in an uncertain time, gathered key regional partners, and helped us craft a list of projects that support our small business community while bolstering the town's role in growing our local economy."

**Amy Braswell, Executive Vice President
Ahoskie Chamber of Commerce**

CERRI Expansion to New Communities is Underway

In August, the RPP held a virtual information session for communities interested in applying for CERRI. Representatives from approximately 30 towns, 8 counties, and 8 regional councils of government, as well as from Hometown Strong and other partners, attended. Since the September 17 CERRI application deadline, the RPP has been reviewing submittals and meeting with applicants to ask and answer questions and to assess their needs for CERRI and other services.

Raeford CERRI Update

Raeford's CERRI work group is creating an Economic Recovery Plan of Work with assistance from a RPP staff team led by Grace Lawrence. The work group, which includes local business owners, Raeford-Hoke Economic Development Commission and Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce officials, and others, will meet in early November to review and refine its draft plan.



Tann's Seed & Garden Store
Downtown Ahoskie

Hometown Strong Action Team

The Hometown Strong (HTS) Action Team met during the third quarter with Carthage, Hudson, Mars Hill, and Pamlico County. Hometown Strong connects communities with cabinet-level state agencies to address local needs. Support from the HTS Action Team has been helping CERRI communities leverage state and local resources for projects. For example, after Hudson met with the HTS Action Team, N.C. Department of Transportation staff visited the town to discuss implementation of its bicycle and pedestrian plan, which will create pedestrian-friendly access to downtown businesses and events.

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