



INTRODUCTION

The Metro Comparisons Analysis is an independent study commissioned by Wake County Economic Development that contrasts the Raleigh metro with the top 100 largest metros across the United States. A dataset of more than 268 comparative metrics was analyzed covering the areas of cost, talent, demographics, innovation, economic diversity and quality of life. A series of six indexes were created to aggregate the metrics and highlight key business growth and site selection decision factors.

The Results: The analysis has revealed that year over year the Raleigh metro is one of the most competitive metros in the nation, consistently outperforming and outpacing the other communities in the study.

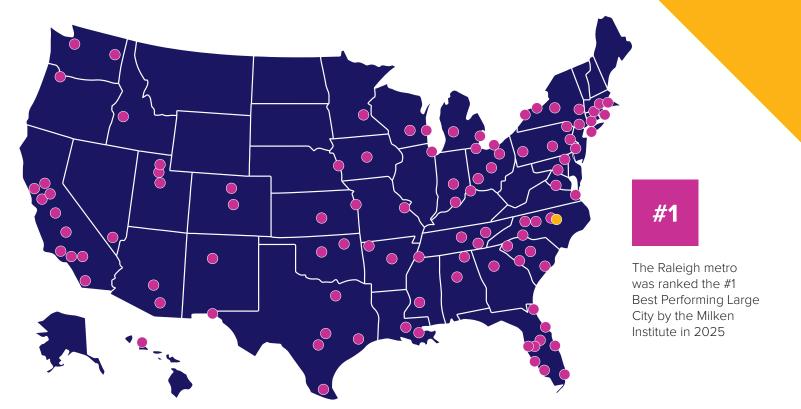
What makes the Raleigh metro one of the best places to live and work in the United States? The Raleigh metro is home to a diverse economy, a highly educated and skilled workforce, a welcoming culture, a strong business climate, world-class colleges and universities, and a collaborative spirit unique to our region.

Six indexes revealed the region's strengths as a leading metro:

- Talent
- Cost of Doing Business
- Global Engagement

- Momentum
- Future
- Quality of Place





Metros Factored Into Comparison

The comparable metros evaluated are within the top 100 largest metros in the U.S. The metros highlighted in yellow are the regions the Raleigh metro is typically compared to or competes against for business and talent. Metros are listed in overall rank order.

Austin, TX

Raleigh, NC

Dallas, TX

Salt Lake City, UT

Durham, NC

Charlotte, NC

Knoxville, TN

Nashville, TN

Huntsville, AL

Atlanta, GA

Provo, UT

Chattanooga, TN-GA

Des Moines, IA

Seattle, WA

Boise, ID

Tampa, FL

Indianapolis, IN

Omaha, NE

Ogden, UT

Palm Bay/Melbourne, FL

Charleston, SC

Madison, WI

Denver, CO

Fayetteville-Springdale

Grand Rapids, MI

Portland, OR

Orlando, FL

Greenville, SC

Phoenix, AZ

Columbus, OH

Kansas City, MO

Jacksonville, FL

Houston, TX

Boston, MA

New Orleans, LA

Bakersfield, CA

San Antonio, TX

Cincinnati, OH

Colorado Springs, CO

Cape Coral, FL

San Diego, CA

North Port/Sarasota, FL

Tucson, AZ

Miami, FL

Midiii, FL

Lakeland, FL

Louisville, KY

San Jose, CA

Minneapolis, MN

El Paso, TX

Richmond, VA McAllen, TX

San Francisco, CA

Winston-Salem, NC

Washington, DC

Daytona Beach, FL

Worcester, MA

Wichita, KS

Dayton, OH

Pittsburgh, PA

Spokane, WA

Hartford, CT

Albany, NY

Albarry, INT

Greensboro, NC

Memphis, TN

Bridgeport, CT

St. Louis, MO

Detroit, MI

Augusta, GA

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Philadelphia, PA

Birmingham, AL

Buffalo, NY

Sacramento, CA

Allentown, PA

Tulsa, OK

Columbia, SC

Harrisburg, PA

Virginia Beach, VA

Stockton, CA

Providence, RI Chicago, IL

New York, NY

Albuquerque, NM

Baltimore, MD

Cleveland, OH

Toledo, OH

Oklahoma City, OK

Las Vegas, NV

Akron, OH

Riverside, CA

Rochester, NY

Los Angeles, CA

Poughkeepsie, NY

Syracuse, NY

Baton Rouge, LA

Scranton, PA

Milwaukee, WI

- ----

Fresno, CA

Oxnard/Ventura, CA

Jackson, MS

Little Rock, AR

New Orleans, LA

Bakersfield, CA

Honolulu, HI

1. TALENT

One of the most important competitive advantages and differentiators for the Raleigh metro is talent. The availability of highly skilled talent continues to be a top priority for both existing companies and those considering the metro for a relocation or expansion. With 12 colleges and universities and over 175,000 students enrolled in higher education and an additional 88,000 in the region's community colleges, the Raleigh metro is one of the most educated metros in the United States.

The Raleigh metro is propelled by a diverse economy of technology, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, clean technology and more. The metro offers a rare mix of culture and affordability. As a top millennial magnet with projected population growth over the next 10 years of 19% and 75% of the population with a postsecondary education, the region is home to some of the best talent in the world.

People have more choices than ever when it comes to where they live and work. And the "how" and "why" people make these decisions are changing. To answer the growing need for talent, Wake County Economic Development launched one of the very first national talent attraction initiatives in 2012. The program was relaunched in 2022 to address the ever-changing talent attraction landscape. The Raleigh metro is taking a highly proactive approach to talent attraction, ensuring that we have both the homegrown pipeline and inbound talent migration necessary to meet the growing needs of our workforce.



Most Promising Metro for Recent College Graduates (Raleigh)

ADP Research, July 2024



Best City to Start a Career (Raleigh)

Elevate Leadership, Nov. 2024

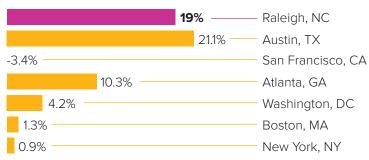


Customized Workforce Training (North Carolina)

Business Facilities, Aug. 2024

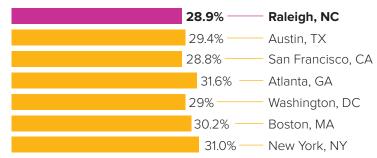


Projected Population Growth (2024-2034) METRO



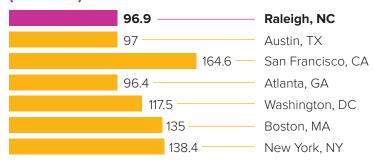
Source: Lightcast

Median Annual Rent as Percentage of Median Household Income (2022) METRO



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

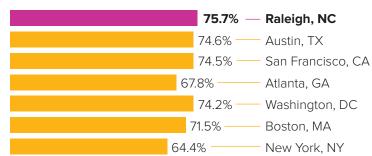
Cost of Living Index (4Q 2024) METRO



Supporting Summary: The Cost of Living index measures price level for consumer goods and services. The average for all metro/ non metro areas equals 100 percent. If a metro's index is below 100, then the metros cost of living is below the national average.

Source: ACCRA; Lightcast; Economic Modeling 2024

Population Over Age 25 with Postsecondary Education (2023) METRO



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



2. COST OF DOING BUSINESS

This index examines cost factors including cost of doing business, legal and regulatory environment, and tax climate. A company's decision to grow or locate in a community relies heavily on the business environment.

The bigger your business, the more expensive things tend to be. That's partly why industry giants and Fortune 500 newcomers alike keep bringing their business to the Raleigh metro. Joining the many homegrown and domestic owned-companies, more than 700 internationally-owned companies have also set up shop here.

The ease of doing business in the Raleigh metro is one of the most desirable traits of the state and attracts high-quality companies and talent. The Raleigh metro has a pro-business regulatory environment and a low cost of living, making the metro a competitive place to live and work. Business costs are 5% below the national average and North Carolina has a AAA bond rating, making it one of only 13 states to earn this rating from all three major national bond rating agencies.



Best Business Climate-Large (Raleigh/Cary)

Business Facilities, Aug. 2024



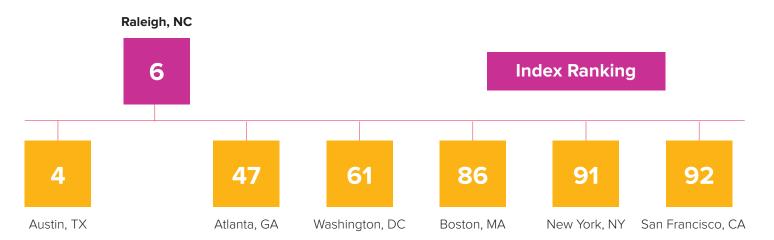
Best State for Business (North Carolina)

CNBC, July 2024



Best Business Climate (North Carolina)

Business Facilities, Aug. 2024



Business Cost Ranking (2024) STATE
Source: CNBC

Austin, TX

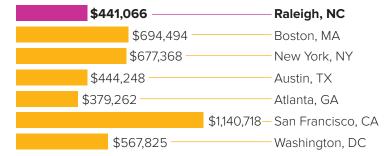
Atlanta, GA

New York, NY

San Francisco, CA

Boston, MA

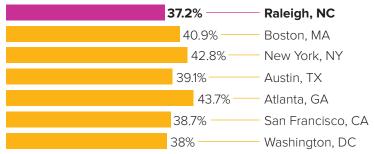
Average Single Family Home Value (Dec. 2024)



Source: Zillow

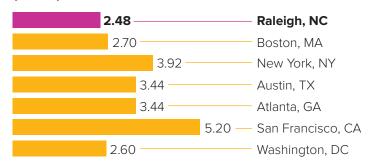
Percentage of Renters Paying More Than

35% of Income Towards Rent (2023) METRO



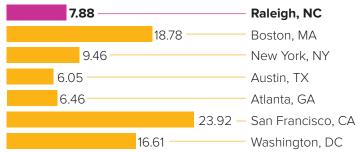
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Violent Crime Per 1,000 Population (2002)



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation

Average Retail Electricity Price for Industrial Customers, Cents Per KwH (Oct 2024)



Source: Energy Information Administration

Raleigh, NC



3. GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

With more than 700 international companies, the Raleigh metro and the Research Triangle region offer a strong foundation for global companies to grow and thrive. International Business in the region brings new jobs and investment, as well as new culture, practices, and customs. The global engagement index measures a region's ability to attract international business, engage in international trade, and appeal to highly skilled foreign-born talent.

International Business in the region is critical to growth, diversity in the workforce, global reach, and a more dynamic economy. The Raleigh metro has invested time in creating an environment capable of supporting foreign companies and several strategic initiatives to attract international business to the metro area. Several large international companies like FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies, Lenovo and Ajinomoto, have found long-term success in the region, as have other newer companies, including UBS, Infosys, Audemars Piguet, and HCL.

The Raleigh metro offers a unique foundation for foreign-born residents and foreign-owned companies. The region has three tier-one research universities, access to a variety of industries, a strategic east coast location, and an international airport. The Raleigh-Durham International Airport continues to expand, offering direct flights to London, Paris, Frankfurt and more, plus more than 60 nonstop destinations.

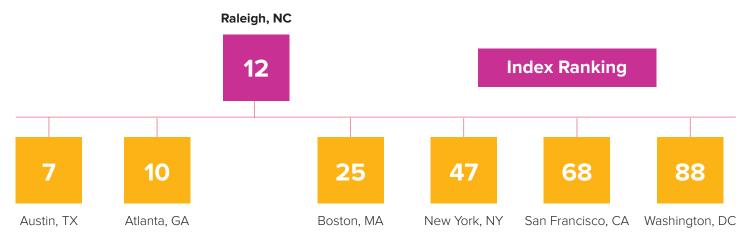


Fastest Growing Top 50 Airport (Raleigh-Durham International)
U.S. DOT, 2023

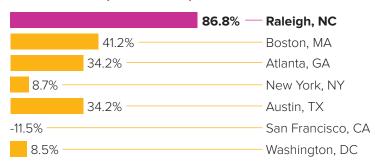


Foreign Direct Investment (North Carolina)

Business Facilities, Aug. 2024



Total International Exports 5 Year Growth Rate (2018-2023) METRO



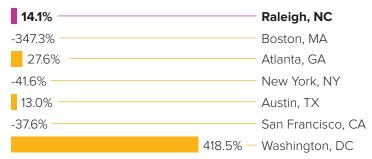
Source: Office of Trade and Industry Information

Growth in Total Export Supported Jobs (2012-2022) State

-7.8%		Raleigh, NC
-8.7%		Boston, MA
-9.3%		— Atlanta, GA
-14.7%		- New York, NY
	17.4% —	— Austin, TX
-15%		— San Francisco, CA
-52.5%		— Washington, DC

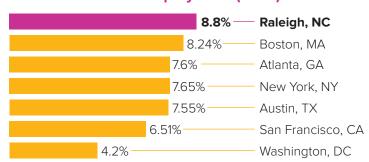
Source: Office of Trade and Industry Information

International Migration total 2020-2023 as % of total population change 2020-2023 METRO

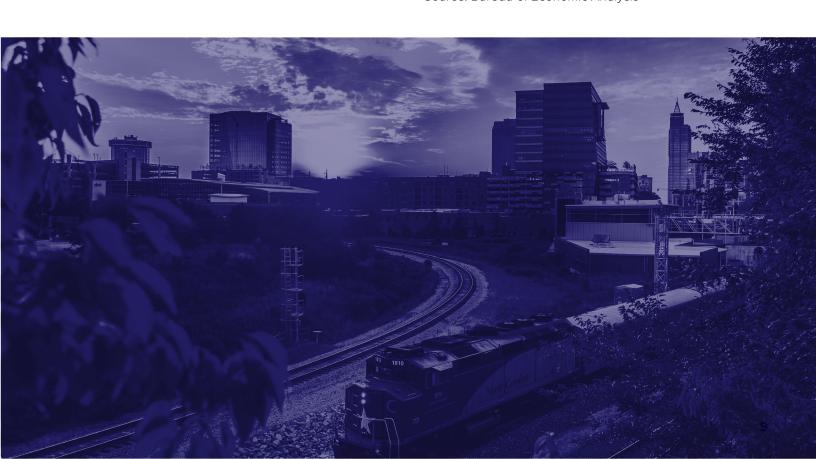


Source: Office of Trade and Industry Information

Employment of US Subsidies As Percentage of Private Non-Farm Employment (2021) STATE



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis



4. MOMENTUM?

The momentum index measures current economic activity and includes factors such as population, gross metropolitan product, wages, and productivity. The Raleigh metro and region are rapidly growing in population, development, and industry.

Raleigh has seen consistent in-migration contribute to the population, with an increase of 25 percent from 2013-2023. The Raleigh metro has experienced strong job and wage growth and the momentum remains strong. The population in Raleigh metro is expected to grow 71 percent over the next 30 years, which signals a major transformation for the region. By pursuing critical needs of the region, such as transit, research and development, innovation, diversifying industry, and preserving greenspace, the Raleigh metro will continue to grow in a smart and sustainable way. Additionally, the Raleigh metro and region are committed to ensuring prosperity for all as the metro faces rapid growth and development.

As one of the largest life sciences hubs in the country, the Raleigh metro is a biotech and life sciences innovation leader and among the leading recipients of National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health research funding. With more than 600 life sciences companies with operations here, employing 42,000+ people, the industry is growing at an exponential rate.



Most Popular Urban Area to Move to (Raleigh)

moveBuddha, Nov. 2024



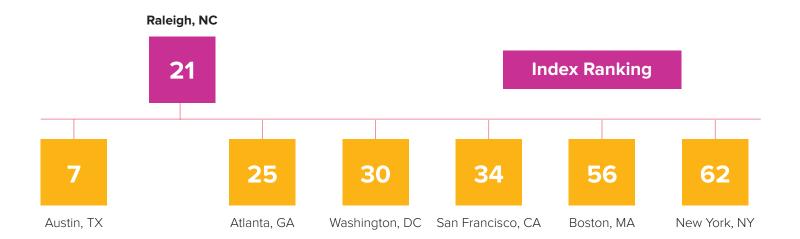
Best Large Metro for Women in Tech (Raleigh)

CoworkingCafe, Mar. 2024



Top Growth State (North Carolina)

U-Haul, Jan. 2024



Raleigh, NC

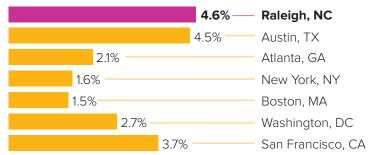
Ranking: Overall Best Performing Cities (2025)
Source: Milken Institute

6 61 62 119 126 153

Washington, DC

GDP Growth Rate (chained) (2022-2023) METRO

Austin, TX

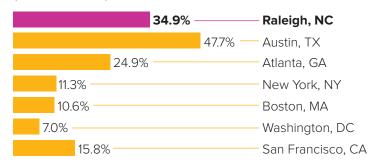


Atlanta, GA

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis

Total Employment Growth Rate (2013 - 2023) METRO

Boston, MA

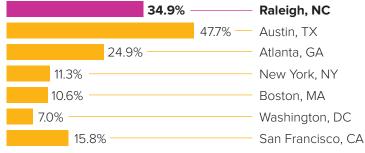


San Francisco, CA

New York, NY

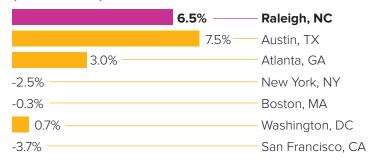
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Total Employment Growth Rate (2013 - 2023) METRO



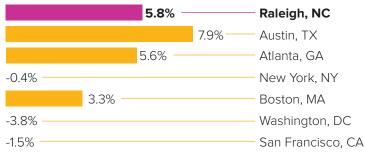
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Population Change (2020-2023) METRO



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age 25-44 Population Growth (2018-2023)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



5. FUTURE

The Future Index focuses on ten factors to predict future economic success including overall economic strength and diversity, growth in the industries expected to increase in the coming years, infrastructure demands, and the dependence ratios of the population. Planning for smart, equitable growth and economic mobility are critical in preparing for the future of the Raleigh metro.

The Raleigh metro is one of the fastest-growing metros in the United States. Wake County is growing by 51 people a day. Of those 51, 17 are born here and 34 move here. There's more to growth in the Raleigh metro than simply demographics. The job market has exploded over the past five years — and it's not slowing down anytime soon.

The Raleigh metro has long been associated with innovation thanks to giants like Apple, IBM, Biogen, and Cisco in Research Triangle Park and more recently Red Hat and Pendo in downtown Raleigh, but within the last few years, the region has emerged as a hotbed of entrepreneurship springing out of the local startup community. The region has born 2,500 startups, raising \$1.2 billion in venture capital in 2023 alone. With the Raleigh Metro recently being named one of the most resilient tech hubs, it is safe to say that the startup scene will continue to drive innovation.



Best Big City for Career Growth (Raleigh)

moveBuddha, April 2024



Broadband Speed (Raleigh)

Business Facilities, Aug. 2024



Al Jobs (Raleigh)

Axios, April 2024



Policom Economic Strength Rankings (2024) METRO
Source: Policom

Austin, TX

Atlanta, GA

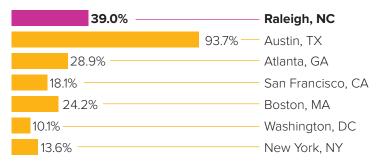
Boston, MA

San Francisco, CA

Washington, DC

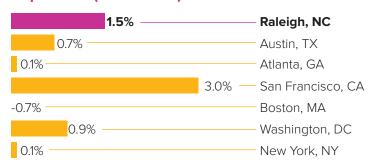
New York, NY

Percent Change in Professional & Business Services Jobs (2013-2023)



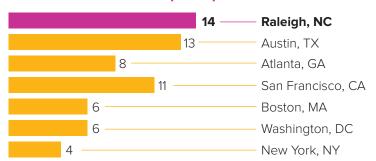
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Millennials Change in Share of Total Population (2010-2023)



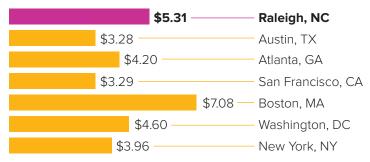
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Number of High-Tech Industries with Location Quotient >=1 (2025)



Supporting Summary: A location quotient (LQ) greater than 1 indicates that a particular industry or occupation is more concentrated in a specific region compared to the national average. Source: Milken Institute

Higher Education R&D per \$1,000 of GDP (2022) STATE



Supporting Summary: This indicator represents the ratio of R&D expenditures at a state's colleges and universities to the size of the state's economy.

Source: National Science Foundation

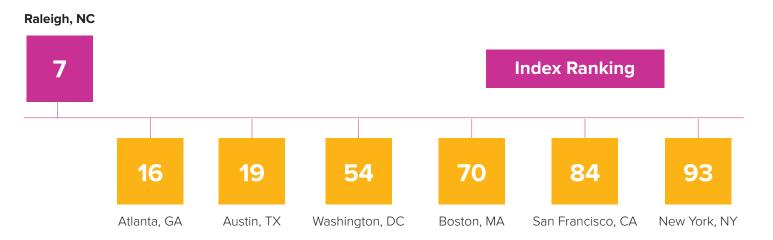
6. QUALITY OF PLACE

Quality of Place is the newest index in the Metro Comparisons report. In a post-pandemic world, talent continues to prioritize quality of life as a motivating factor when considering relocation. Now more than ever, individuals and the organizations that employ them are placing increased emphasis on the livability and affordability of a community.

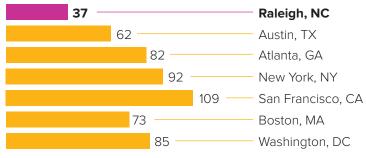
Centrally located on the east coast, Raleigh offers all the benefits of a big city without the hassle. The region's diverse population hails from around the globe and enjoys a rich culture of food and entertainment. And while Raleigh offers its own vibrant outdoor scene, the capital city also boasts easy year-round access to the highest mountain peaks in the Eastern U.S. and the most pristine beaches along the Atlantic.

Things are booming in Raleigh. As one of the nation's fastest-growing regions, we offer an ideal blend of cost, comfort, and culture, plus thousands of diverse jobs. Our national cost of living is 97, which is lower than the national average. The metro is a vibrant, eclectic mix of an estimated 2M people from all over the U.S., and the world.



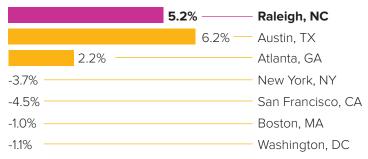


Average Annual Hours spent in traffic congestion (2023)



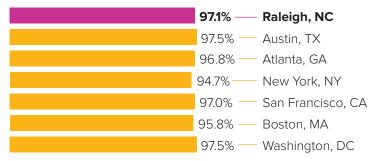
Source: INRIX Urban Mobility Report

Total Net Migration 2020-2023 as % of total 2020 population METRO



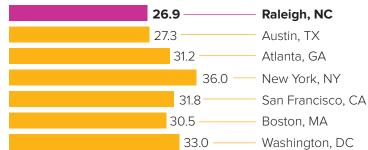
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Households That Own a Computer (2023)



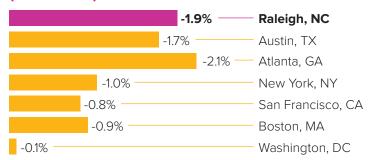
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Average Travel Time to Work in Minutes (2023)



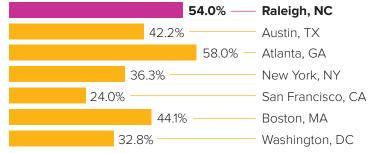
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Change in Poverty Rate (2018-2023) METRO



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Percentage Change in Average SF Home Value (Nov. 2019-Nov. 2024)



Source: Zillow

BUSINESS THRIVES IN THE RALEIGH **METRO**

As part of North Carolina's famed Research Triangle Region, the Raleigh metro is all about access. Access to talent and technology, access to fast-growing markets, and access to an expansive network of resources designed to help people and companies prosper.

These are just a few examples of companies who have recently planted their flag here, with both new investments and business expansions.

Amgen



\$1B

investment





Amgen, one of the world's leading biotechnology companies, announced plans in to invest \$1 billion to expand its manufacturing facility in Holly Springs, North Carolina. The investment includes a second state-of-the-art multi-drug substance manufacturing facility and 370 new jobs.



The company's total planned investment in Holly Springs is now more than \$1.5 billion, with employment reaching 725 by 2032. This expansion will enable Amgen to increase capacity and meet current and forecasted demand for life-saving medications across the globe.

Audemars Piguet



\$22M

investment





Audemars Piguet, the Swiss Haute Horlogerie manufacturer based in Le Brassus, Switzerland, announced plans to invest \$22 million and create 105 new jobs in Raleigh. Audemars Piguet employs almost 3,000 people, operates 97 points of sales globally and keeps growing internationally, while focusing on qualitative development, employee



wellbeing and sustainability, partly thanks to the work of the Audemars Piguet Foundation since 1992. Raleigh Iron Works will be the new home of their North American Service Center.

The 63,000-square-foot real estate deal, the largest new-to-market office lease of 2023 in Raleigh, is part of a growing cohort of luxury brands establishing a presence in the city. The watch service center is in a City of Raleigh priority area for economic development and a Wake County targeted growth area.

Forge Battery



\$142M investment



new iobs



Forge Nano, Inc., a leading materials science company that enables peak performance products through atomic-level surface engineering, announced plans to launch a lithium-ion battery manufacturing business called Forge Battery in North Carolina. The company and its investors plan for an initial investment of more than \$142M to build a new lithium-ion battery manufacturing facility in Morrisville, bringing hundreds of high-paying jobs to Wake County. Forge Battery expects the facility to be operational in 2026.



Based in Colorado, Forge Nano improves the performance of materials used in batteries by applying specialized, atomic-scale coatings using proprietary industrial manufacturing equipment. The technology, called Atomic Armor, offers manufacturers protective nano-coating that can increase the battery's energy density, improve safety and extend the useable lifetime.

FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies



\$1.2B





680

new jobs



FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies, a global leading contract development and manufacturing organization (CDMO), announced that it will expand its large-scale cell culture manufacturing facility currently under construction with a \$1.2 billion investment from FUJIFILM Corporation, adding an additional 680 jobs.



This investment in the Holly Springs, North Carolina, facility brings the total investment in the site to over \$3.2 billion, with employment reaching 1,400 by 2031. Once construction is completed, the facility will be one of the largest end-to-end cell culture biopharmaceutical CDMO facilities in North America.

Jewelers Mutual Group



\$5.8M

investment



200

new jobs



Jewelers Mutual[®] Group, a leading insurer dedicated to protecting jewelry and jewelry businesses, announced plans to locate a new office for business expansion in Raleigh, North Carolina. The Wisconsin-based company plans to invest \$5.85 million, and create 200 jobs.



Founded in 1913, Jewelers Mutual is trusted by over 1 million customers nationwide and in Canada. The company is committed to protecting jewelry businesses and helping them run secure and successful operations, while transforming customer experiences through insurance and technology solutions.

Jewelers Mutual was attracted to Wake County thanks in large part to the robust talent pipeline. As the recently-ranked #1 metro for new college graduates and a top-10 most-educated metro in the United States, Raleigh has the talent pool to drive innovation and economic growth.

Weatherby Healthcare



\$7M

investment



148

new jobs



Weatherby Healthcare, a CHG Company, announced plans to invest more than \$7M, and create 148 new jobs in Raleigh, North Carolina. With this expansion, the company adds a new business unit to its North Carolina presence, while retaining 374 employees in the market.



Weatherby Healthcare is an industry leader in locum staffing solutions, helping medical facilities to fill staffing gaps and cover difficult-to-fill specialties. Weatherby Healthcare will occupy 46,000 square feet in One North Hills Tower.

CONCLUSIONS

This data was collected by Ted Abernathy, Managing Partner with Economic Leadership, LLC. Economic Leadership is an economic development and strategic planning consultancy that helps places, organizations, and leaders be more competitive, more collaborative, and more successful.

In the last decade, data analytics has emerged as the top decision-making tool for business. We live in a time where information is ubiquitous, and change is constant. Where should your company invest? Where can you attract the talent necessary for growth? Where can you find a supportive business climate, affordability, diversity, great infrastructure, and a place positioned for the future?

In one of the world centers for data analytics, creating a multifactor index to identify and address regional strengths and weaknesses makes perfect sense. In the current analysis, the Raleigh metro remains among the most competitive region in the country.

This year the Raleigh metro scored #2 of the 100 metros analyzed and took the top spot in both Future Index and the Quality of Place Index.

- The Future Index focuses on factors that predict future economic success including economic strength and diversity, industry growth, infrastructure demands and more.
- The Quality of Place Index analyzes an area's livability, with factors like cost of living, commute times, migration trends, internet access and more.

These factors consistently rank among the most important for site selection decisions. Other independent rankings have placed the Raleigh metro and North Carolina in the top tier for business and careers, lowest state and local tax burdens, best place to start a business, best city to work in, best city for young professionals and best quality of life in the world.

There are many great regions in the United States and the competition for investment and workforce continues to intensify. The post-pandemic landscape puts a premium on places that can attract talent with a combination of high quality of place and affordability; on places that have strong technology assets; on places that value and celebrate diversity and innovation; and on places where the business, government and higher education leaders work together as stewards of a place they love. The future for the Raleigh metro and the Research Triangle region looks bright.

EDGE 7 Investors

Diamond



Platinum









MERZ AESTHETICS®















Silver

BASF

Capitol Broadcasting Co., Inc.

Carolina Hurricanes

NC State University

UBS

WakeMed Health & Hospitals

Womble Bond Dickinson

Copper

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Carolinas Realtv

Brasfield & Gorrie LLC

Clancy & Theys Construction

Company

Coastal Credit Union

Coldwell Banker Howard

Perry and Walston

Crescent Communities

Curi Management Company

Dewitt Carolinas, Inc.

Ernst & Young LLP

First National Bank

Helix Ventures

Highwoods Properties, Inc.

Investors Title Insurance

Company

John Deere – Agriculture & Turf Division

Kane Realty Corporation

Kilpatrick Townsend

& Stockton LLP

Kimley-Horn

LS3P Associates

McGough

McGuireWoods

MetLife

North Carolina

Railroad Company

Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein LLP

Pinnacle Financial Partners

Poyner Spruill LLP

RTI International

Skanska USA Building, Inc.

Smith Anderson Law Firm

Summit Real Estate Group

The Sunrock Group

The Whiting-Turner

Contracting Company

TowneBank

Trinity Capital Advisors

Wells Fargo

Bronze

Alfred Williams & Company

Allen Tate Realtors

Barnhill Contracting Co., Inc.

Barringer Construction

BHDP Architecture

Blue Cross Blue Shield of

North Carolina

Brady

Brookfield Properties

Development

Capital Associates

CBI Workplace Solutions

CBRE

Coworking NC, LLC

Dewberry

D.H. Griffin Infrastructure

East West Partners

Fidelity Bank

First Bank

First Horizon Bank

Foundry Commercial

FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies

Greene Resources

HH Architecture

IBM Corporation

Implement Consulting Group

JLL

King Street Properties

Lincoln Property Company

Little Diversified Architectural

Consulting

Mack Real Estate

Maynard Nexsen

McAdams

Merritt Properties

Messer Construction

O'Brien Atkins Associates

Pepsi Bottling Ventures

RATIO

Redgate

Shelco, LLC

S&ME, Inc.

S&P Global

Storr Office Environments

Terracon

Vaco

Williams Mullen

Wyrick Robbins Yates &

Ponton LLP

York Properties

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