



NC RURAL CENTER

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Pembroke Named 2017 Small Town of the Year

RALEIGH – The town of Pembroke was honored as the 2017 Small Town of the Year at this year’s Rural Assembly, held in Raleigh on November 16. Hosted annually by the NC Rural Center, the Rural Assembly is the state’s premier event focused on the big issues facing North Carolina’s rural communities.

The Small Town of the Year award recognizes communities that embrace citizen engagement, value diversity, and foster strong partnerships. The town must show progress through innovative economic development projects and programs, and foster an entrepreneur-friendly environment. The nominees should have overcome economic barriers and challenges that have impacted rural North Carolina and have been creative, diligent, and resourceful in building a new economy.

“This award is a testament to the partnerships the town has formed with key community stakeholders—such as UNC-Pembroke and the Lumbee Tribe of NC—and reflects our Town Council’s desire to do more for our community through partnerships,” said Tyler W. Thomas, Pembroke Town Manager. “We are grateful to the Rural Center for this award and believe we are laying a foundation for a successful future.”

The town was recognized during the Rural Center’s annual awards ceremony, one of the Rural Assembly’s most highly anticipated events. A group of town representatives accepted the award in front of a crowd of more than 400 attendees.

As in previous years, the Rural Center received competitive nominations for the award, all of which highlighted successful community economic development efforts throughout the state.

“It is always a difficult task selecting our small town of the year,” said Rural Center President Patrick Woodie. “The Rural Center honored Pembroke as the 2017 Small Town of the Year to recognize their collective efforts to promote inclusive community dialogue, nurture entrepreneurship, and grow their economy. ”

The Town of Pembroke in Robeson County has a population just under 3,000 and a bold vision for the future. Home to the Lumbee Indian Tribe and UNC-Pembroke, the town and its

leadership are seeding a new culture of entrepreneurship focused on growing their economy in three core sectors: health care, construction, and agribusiness.

As a participant in Innovate NC, a first-in-the nation effort to spark inclusive innovation statewide, a Pembroke committee of public and private partners has developed a strategic plan to leverage community assets and weave a spirit of entrepreneurship into the fabric of the community. The town recently approved a master revitalization plan that will unite the commercial district and the University by adding sidewalks, lighting, bicycle lanes, and streetscaping to improve pedestrian access to the heart of historic downtown Pembroke.

About the NC Rural Center

For 30 years, the NC Rural Center has worked to develop, promote, and implement sound economic strategies to improve the quality of life of rural North Carolinians. The Center serves the state's 80 rural counties, with a special focus on individuals with low to moderate incomes and communities with limited resources.



Pictured above front row from left: NC Rural Center Vice President Barry Ryan, Town of Pembroke Mayor Gregory Cummings, Town of Pembroke Clerk Amira Hunt, Town of Pembroke Mayor pro tem Channing Jones, Town of Pembroke Councilman Ryan Sampson, RamLock, LLC Chris Locklear, NC Rural Center President Patrick Woodie
Back row from left: NC Rural Center Board Chair Grant Godwin, Director of UNCP Entrepreneur Incubator Thomas Hall, Director of Community Relations UNCP Paul Jolicoeur, Town of Pembroke Manager Tyler Thomas, Interim Director Entrepreneur Incubator James Freeman

