



# Monroe, NC

Population 33,475

Monroe is a wonderful place to live with much to offer, and very little not to like. Located twenty-five miles from the center of Charlotte, the residents of Monroe can take advantage of everything the big city has to offer, and then return to the less complicated life of their hometown. Many residents were born and raised here, continuing a legacy their families have held for generations. Pride is visible everywhere. The City has a strong industrial sector, beautifully restored historic homes, and a downtown that is making a comeback. New stores and restaurants pop up regularly along Highway 74 while farms grow crops and serve as pastureland for animals and livestock.

While nearby Charlotte has an international airport, Monroe's Executive Airport is outstanding and should not be overlooked. The 7,000 foot runway is built to handle heavy planes and the arrival of U.S. Customs in 2014 will enable Monroe to host international flights. The airport has also helped the City become the home

of a burgeoning aeronautics industry. It is currently first in the state and third in the southeast for aeronautical recruitment and retention.

One of the keys to the City's success in business recruitment is its utilities. The City offers water, sewer, natural gas and electric through its own departments and thus offers what a prospective business needs. The reason? This is a progressive, business-oriented city that does what it needs to do to be a success. Fifteen years ago, it was being held hostage to the regional natural gas company. Supply was limited and prospects for additional capacity were dim. The City decided to build its own pipeline (connecting to a Transco pipeline some 42 miles north). The impediments were significant. They included being told the City could not legally do what it wanted to do and a gas wholesaler which fought to keep a major customer. Where there is a will, there is a way. Monroe had the will, it found a way and the pipeline

has been built. Today the City's natural gas capacity has increased threefold and assuming growth at a typical rate, capacity will be available for another 30 or so years. When it is reached, the City will no doubt think of something else.

Recreation opportunities abound within Monroe. Some which the City provides are the Ellen Fitzgerald Senior Center, Monroe Aquatics and Fitness Center (double-gymnasium, racquetball courts, indoor pool, outdoor water park, indoor running track, and numerous aerobic classes totaling 80,000 square feet and which is debt-free), the Monroe Country Club (judged as the best municipal course in the State), and numerous ball fields and tennis courts. The City also has plans to include a greenway to connect all of the city's parks.

Monroe is centrally located to many outdoor and sporting opportunities. Hunting and fishing are easily accessed nearby. The U.S. National Whitewater Center is located in Charlotte and hosts a myriad of activities for the outdoor enthusiast, including mountain biking, trail running, white-water rafting, and rock climbing. The Center also hosts many races, concerts, and special events throughout the year. Nantahala National Forest is two hours to the west—offering stunning vistas, wonderful hiking, and outstanding white water rafting. World-renowned Myrtle Beach is three and half hours to the east, which always offers a great getaway.

If you prefer spectator sports, you are right in heart of the Atlantic Coast Conference. The University of North Carolina, Duke, North Carolina State, and Wake Forest are all within a few hours drive. Charlotte hosts many professional level sports,



including: Bobcats (NBA), Panthers (NFL), Knights (Triple A minor league baseball), Hurricanes (NHL), Eagles (MLS), and the Hounds (MLL). For NASCAR fans, the Charlotte Motor Speedway and the NASCAR Hall of Fame are less than an hour away. The area also hosts numerous cultural and entertainment venues including the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Billy Graham Library, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, and Opera Carolina.

While many fine colleges and universities are within a few hours drive, South Piedmont Community College is located

within the City, offering strong and varied programs that support local businesses. Well-regarded Wingate University is six miles east and recently placed 6th in a report listing “Best Value Colleges and Universities in the South”. (U.S. News and World Report).

Most importantly, the people are friendly and maintain the Southern hospitality and gentility the area is known for. They are proud of and passionate about their community. The city is relatively safe. Housing prices are reasonable: a nice 2,300 square foot home sells between approximately \$120,000 and \$250,000, depending on the neighborhood. As we said, all who come will find that Monroe has much to offer and very little not to like.

### History

Settlers first began arriving in the region in the mid-1700s, centering in Charlotte and spreading to the southeast. In 1767, future president Andrew Jackson was born in the nearby Scotch-Irish community of Waxhaw. Aside from the Revolutionary War, the area was largely peaceful and focused on farming. In 1842, the North Carolina Assembly created Union County from parts of Anson and Mecklenburg Counties. The lawmakers also determined that the county seat would be located within two miles of the center of the County and would be named in honor of President James Monroe. In 1844, the town of Monroe was incorporated.

The area remained primarily agricultural until 1874, when the Carolina Central Railway was completed and connected Wilmington and Charlotte and Monroe transitioned quickly into a market town. One of Monroe’s citizens, Henry Belk, opened his first retail store in 1888. It was different from other stores of the time: prices were clearly marked—no haggling—and accepted only cash for payment. Further, any customer not satisfied could return his purchase for a refund. By 1952, when Henry Belk died, over 300 Belk Department Stores were in operation and it was the largest department store chain in the southeastern United States.

Monroe’s status as a rail hub meant that it became home to a large transient population of railway employees. The City’s growth attracted two other groups: traveling salesmen were drawn by its large wholesale commerce, and travelers who passed through on their north-south journeys to enjoy Monroe’s hospitality. In the early 1900s, the 100 room Hotel Joffre (named in honor of the French WWI general) was built at the corner of North Main and West Franklin to accommodate the influx in visitors.

Table I: Historic Populations

Census	Population
1850	204
1860	239
1870	1,144
1880	1,564
1890	1,866
1900	2,427
1910	4,082
1920	4,084
1930	6,100
1940	6,475
1950	10,140
1960	10,882
1970	11,282
1980	12,639
1990	16,127
2000	26,228
2010	36,397

Source: U.S. Census

Table II: Breakdown by Age

Age Group	Percent
Under 5	9.8%
5 to 15	17.1%
15 to 25	12.0%
25 to 35	15.8%
35 to 45	13.9%
45 to 55	12.5%
55 to 65	8.5%
65 to 75	5.5%
75 to 85	3.4%
85 +	1.6%

Median Age	32.0
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Source: U.S. Census

The Depression of the early 1930s halted the development of the downtown. The establishment of Camp Sutton, a military base, in Monroe during World War II, introduced large numbers of soldiers and their families to the City, but the downtown remained dormant. The Camp was later given to the City, and with its existing water and sewer, it was the ideal location for the City's first industrial park.

Over the past 20 years, Monroe has grown relatively rapidly and has enhanced its standing as a regional hub. See Table 1 on page 3.

Although the Monroe Opera House and Hotel Joffre have been demolished, Monroe's Central Business District still reflects the period of Downtown Monroe's greatest prosperity as an agricultural

and commercial center. The original courthouse is iconic and pictured in many movies. Further, Monroe remains a hub of industrial and retail activity within the region as well as being the focus of culture and commerce within Union County. Millions of dollars in renovations, façade improvements, and new interest in mixed-use development, have made Downtown Monroe again a destination for commerce and travelers alike.

## Geography

Monroe covers 29.76 square miles according to the U.S. Census and is located in the south-central Piedmont region of North Carolina. To the east one finds mostly rolling hills and farm land. To the west is farmland interspersed with the encroaching suburbs of Charlotte.

## Demographics

According to U.S. Census figures, approximately 63% of Monroe's population is White, 24% is Black, and the remainder is composed of other races, or a compilation of races. Those of Hispanic or Latino origin compose approximately 30% of the population. 28% of the population speaks a language other than English at home. 76% have a high school degree while 15% of those over 25 years of age have a Bachelor's degree or higher. The median household income is \$44,000 and 21% of the population lies below the poverty line. The median age is 32, which is somewhat younger than the United States as a whole (median age is 37.2).

Table III: Principal Employers

Employer	Employees	Percentage of Total City
Tyson Foods	1,600	10.5%
ATI Allvac	1,250	8.2%
Carolinas Medical Center-Union	1,500	9.9%
Union County	573	3.8%
Charlotte Pipe	450	3.0%
SCOTT Safety	550	3.6%
City of Monroe	452	3.0%
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.	350	2.3%
Colfax Corporation (IMO Pump)	240	1.6%
Goodrich Corporation	240	1.6%

Total	7,205	47.3%
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Source: 2012 CAFR

## City Manager

Table IV: Climate Data

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Normal High °F	51.2	55.5	63.3	72.4	79.4	86.6	89.5	87.9	81.7	72.3	62.9	53.3	71.4
Normal Low °F	31.3	34.4	41.0	48.6	57.5	66.3	69.7	68.8	62.0	50.4	40.8	33.5	50.4
Precipitation in Inches	3.41	3.32	4.01	3.04	3.18	3.74	3.68	4.22	3.24	3.39	3.14	3.24	41.61

Source: NOAA

## Commerce

While near Charlotte, Monroe is a commercial hub in its own right. The City has a significant industrial presence relative to its population, with the industrial park near the airport attracting many new businesses. See Table III on page 4.

## Climate

Monroe, like much of the southeastern United States, has a humid subtropical climate with four distinct seasons. Winters are short and generally cool. Only at night does the temperature generally drop below freezing. Summers are hot and humid: forty-four days per year have highs at or above 90°F. Table IV displays the typical temperatures and precipitation by month.

## The Government

Monroe is governed by a seven member city council, following the council – manager plan. The Mayor is elected at large and serves a two year term; the remaining six members are also elected at large but serve staggered four year terms. Elections occur in October of odd numbered years and are non-partisan. The Council is very stable: five members are at least in their second term and the longest serving member is in his 33rd year. While the current council often votes unanimously on issues, split votes of 4 to 3 are not uncommon. All seven members have strong opinions, but southern gentility prevails in the public meetings. The City has a strong and talented staff and it is well regarded by the elected officials and the public.

The City is a full service city (and then some), providing Airport, Economic Development, Electric, Fire/EMS, Parks and Recreation (including the Aquatics/Fitness

Center and the Monroe Country Club), Natural Gas, Planning, Police and Public Works (including cemeteries solid waste and stormwater). The City's general fund budget is \$26.6 million and the total budget is \$137.9 million. The City has approximately 500 full time and 250 part time employees. The largest departments in terms of full time employees are Police (97), Fire (78), Water (58), Parks and Recreation (50), Finance (35), Building Standards (27) and Energy (27). The other employees are spread over the remaining departments. The state of North Carolina does not have unions.

Overall, Monroe has weathered the country's economic downturn reasonably well. It has not experienced the wild fluctuations in revenues that many other local governments have experienced over the past ten years. For example, total property tax collections have grown fairly steadily from \$10.4 million in 2003 to \$18.8 million in 2012. Over the same period, the City's employee count has grown by a little over 16%. Some positions were eliminated for budgetary reasons 2009-2010.

## The Issues

While the City is financially sound, resources are scarce and are expected to continue to be scarce for the foreseeable future. As a result, the City needs to carefully husband its money. All programs need to continue to be examined to determine if they can operate more efficiently and all expenditures need to be looked at critically. Further, the City has deferred some of its maintenance and that issue needs to be addressed in the near future.

The second issue is the economic development/redevelopment. The City is in an incredible location and has a great deal to offer in terms of infrastructure, utilities, work force and amenities. It also is located adjacent

to a rail line and the only transportation improvement that could be made would be a nearby readily accessible interstate. The airport is a major plus and the City is constructing a 100,000 square foot spec building hoping to attract additional industry. Further, the City has also recently combined efforts with the County, assuming responsibility for economic development within Union County. Currently 45% of the residential property in Monroe is rented. That percentage is higher than desirable and a focus will be on increasing the owner occupied properties. The City has grown nicely over the past 20 years and it is eager to continue the upward trend.

The third issue is trust. The City recently commissioned a study designed to highlight areas where it could improve its governance. It was specifically concerned with why the most recent three City Managers' tenures only lasted 3-4 years. The report's recommendations were valuable, although the findings were somewhat controversial among the council members. Some felt they were not entirely fair. Along the way, the level of trust both inside and outside the city government has suffered. It will take some time for improvements to be made and the level of trust to recover.

The final issue is public education within the City. Overall, Union County Public Schools are outstanding—some of the best in the state. Those within the City's boundaries are not up to that standard, however, and inhibit the kind of development the City is seeking. Imagination and creativity will be needed to find ways to improve educational opportunities within the City.

## The Ideal Candidate

The City is looking for a strong, positive and dynamic professional, someone who will partner with the Council and lead the staff. The individual will be proactive, have a positive

attitude, be a visionary, and view obstacles as opportunities rather than roadblocks. The next City Manager will be able to inspire the enthusiasm and respect of everyone with whom he/she works. Key to that is being an individual with one standard for everyone: a standard that is based on honesty, integrity, fairness, and a strong moral core. He/she will be someone with self-confidence, though not arrogant. The individual will be decisive. He/she will realize you cannot please everyone and will say "no" when "no" is in the best interests of the City, the residents, and the smooth operation of the government.

The next manager will understand what it takes for the City Council to be successful and provide the support its members need. Issues will be thoroughly researched, options presented, and recommendations based on solid analysis and facts. The manager will realize different council members have different needs and address them to the extent they are consistent with the overall direction the Council as a body has provided. By the same token, the individual will recognize that he/she has responsibility for the City's day-to-day operations and that he/she will be held accountable for the success or failure of these operations. The manager will work hard to ensure there are no surprises and that all the Council Members are equally and fully informed.



## City Manager

The ideal candidate will be an experienced manager with a well-rounded knowledge of government. The manager will set high expectations, leading the staff and organization to a higher level of efficiency and growth. Together they will develop programs that are achievable and will accomplish the Council's goals. The manager will ensure the directors and staff have the resources they need, monitoring progress, but not micromanaging. Results will be important and the staff will be held accountable for achieving them.

The individual will be customer service oriented and lead by example. If a resident has a problem, the manager will expect the staff to address it in an understanding and respectful way. The City may not be able to solve the problem as the resident wishes, but hopefully it will identify a solution that achieves a similar end. Failing that, the City will at least explain what its limitations are and what the resident's alternatives are available.

The next city manager will need to have outstanding communications skills and be comfortable being in the community, meeting with residents, and being one of the City's ambassadors. Restoring trust will be imperative: the manager will need to be approachable, accessible, and transparent. He/she will be able to communicate comfortably with people from all walks of life, races, and ethnicities. Further, the individual will communicate easily with the business community and see business development as an asset. He/she will work hard to insure that city hall does all it can to assist desirable development in coming to Monroe.

The ideal candidate will have seven to ten years as a senior level manager in a local government and a track record of achievement. A Bachelor's degree in administration or some other field applicable to local government is required and a Master's degree is preferred. Experience with economic development is a plus.

## Compensation

The starting salary will be between \$120,000 and \$160,000. Benefits are excellent and the City participates in the North Carolina pension system.

## Residency

Residency is not required by the city charter but has been a requirement in the City Manager's contract.

## Confidentiality

Under North Carolina law, it is illegal to release the names of the applicants. Consequently, all applications will be kept strictly confidential and no candidate's names will be released without the candidate's prior permission.

## How to Apply

E-mail your resume to [Recruit28@cb-asso.com](mailto:Recruit28@cb-asso.com) by March 29th. Faxed and mailed resumes will not be considered. Questions should be directed to Colin Baenziger of Colin Baenziger & Associates at (561) 707-3537.

## The Process

Applications will be screened between March 30th and May 6th. Interviews will be held on May 17th and 18th with a selection made shortly thereafter.

## Other Important Information

The City of Monroe is an Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages minorities to apply. It is committed to serving its residents and businesses and providing the highest quality of service.

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES  
EXECUTIVE RECRUITING