



# NEWS RELEASE

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## NORTH CAROLINA'S SOUTHEAST WELCOMES NEW INVESTORS AND BOARD MEMBERS

### *Regional Leaders Bring Business Expertise*

*February 3, 2023 (Elizabethtown, N.C.)* Several private companies and organizations have recently joined North Carolina's Southeast (aka The Southeastern Partnership) or elevated their membership. NC's Southeast engages in global economic development marketing on behalf of the 20 member counties in the southeast region. Several high-profile business and community leaders have joined the board as well.

Five companies and organizations have joined or enhanced their investment with NC's Southeast:



**Thomas & Hutton**, a multi-disciplinary engineering and technical services firm serving clients in the Carolinas, Georgia and Tennessee.



**Wilmington International Airport**, an international airport serving southeastern NC, with services comprised of six airlines and 14 non-stop destinations.



**Timmons Group**, an engineering, design and technology firm founded in 1953 and serving the southeast U.S.



**Highland Roofing Company**, a family-owned company providing quality roofing solutions for commercial and industrial customers.



**Pee-Dee Electric**, an Electric Membership Corporation and cooperative serving over 20,000 members across seven counties.

“Close strategic collaboration with private-sector allies has always been a key ingredient of our region's economic development success,” said Jeff Etheridge, Chairman of NC's

Southeast. “We appreciate having the generous support of these companies and organizations as we engage our mission and build on the remarkable results of the last few years.”

New Board Members coming onto the NC’s Southeast Board of Directors are:

- **Chris Isley**, Regional President for Eastern North Carolina at Truist, has served in management positions at the bank for the past 21 years in Wilson and the Triangle. Headquartered in Charlotte, Truist is the sixth-largest commercial bank in the U.S.
- **Donnie Spivey**, CEO of Pee Dee Electric Membership Cooperative, has led the utility since 1999. Pee Dee Electric’s seven-county service area includes Anson, Montgomery, Moore, Richmond and Scotland.
- **Owen Andrews**, President of Printelect in New Bern, will represent Craven County and the Craven 100 Alliance, which he chairs. Andrews’ firm provides printing services and signage, as well as election equipment, supplies and maintenance.
- **Jeffrey Bourk** has been airport director of the Wilmington International Airport (ILM) since December 2021. A licensed private pilot for the last 30 years, Bourk previously held high-level management positions at airports in Portland, Maine, Teterboro, N.J. and Branson, Mo.
- **Drew Covert**, chairman and CEO of Southern Bank and Trust, has been with the Mount Olive-based financial institutions since 1998. He also worked as an examiner for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) in Atlanta and Raleigh. Covert succeeds Greg Morgan, who recently retired from Southern Bank, which is a longtime NC Southeast investor.
- **Blake Hall**, principal at Timmons Group in Raleigh, has been a landscape architect for nearly 20 years. Timmons is a leading engineering and technology company providing civil, environmental, GIS and surveying services to clients across the U.S.

- **Gary VonCannon**, appointee from Moore County Partners in Progress, is Market President for Truist in Pinehurst, and began his corporate banking career with BB&T in 2007.
- **Dr. Mark Sorrells**, President of Fayetteville Technical Community College. He replaces Dr. Larry Keen, who has served for the last several years as appointee from Cumberland County.
- **Bryan Land**, County Manager in Richmond County, where he has led county government services since 2017, and has been instrumental in county economic development programming.
- **LeAnn Pierce**, Vice-Chair of the New Hanover County Commissioners, has been a business leader in the New Hanover County and the greater Wilmington area, and has led community revitalization projects.

“We’re delighted to welcome these new board members to our leadership ranks,” added Etheridge. “Their business and economic development acumen will expand the already-inviabile reservoir of intellectual capital that fuels our organization.”

Arriving board members are already familiar with the organization and its work, and expressed an eagerness to serve on the Southeast’s board.

“We’ve been contributors to the program for a number of years,” said Donnie Spivey, CEO of Pee Dee Electric. “We want to grow that relationship, which will be good for our area.”

Craven County’s Owen Andrews believes collaboration is essential to bringing new jobs to the region. “As Chairman of the Craven 100 Alliance, I’ve seen first-hand how well the Southeast Partnership integrates with its member counties,” Andrews said. “Together the 20-member counties are much stronger coordinating their economic development efforts through the Southeast Partnership.”

“Truist has long been a visible, vocal supporter of economic development in the communities we serve,” said Chris Isley, regional president for Eastern North Carolina at Truist. “I’m eager to join other business and community leaders on the board of North Carolina’s Southeast as the partnership works to bring sustainable prosperity to the region and its residents.”

Blake Hall of Timmons Group called it an honor to serve as an NCSE Board member. “This organization works tirelessly to encourage investment and economic development across the Southeast region of our state,” Hall said. “As a land development professional and a father, I’m excited to be a part of NCSE’s efforts to promote sustainable economic growth that creates opportunities and preserves the uniqueness of our state and environment for future generations.”

A public-private partnership headquartered in Elizabethtown, N.C., **North Carolina’s Southeast’s** mission is to “provide strong economic development leadership in southeastern North Carolina through innovative marketing and collaborative regional initiatives that will support the creation of new jobs, generate capital investment and secure new business locations.” Member counties include Anson, Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Duplin, Hoke, Jones, Lenoir, Montgomery, Moore, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland and Wayne. For additional information, visit [www.ncse.org](http://www.ncse.org)

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