

# Rowan County, North Carolina Brand Story

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## Why branding matters for a community?

A community's reputation will be defined by its government, its businesses and its residents - or it will be defined by others.



**Community branding** is the purposeful orchestration of a place to positively affect its image and build its reputation by exploiting and creating shared experiences that are attractive to residents, businesses and visitors alike.



people

attractions

buildings

events

art

businesses

infrastructure



## Reason #1 why branding a community is hard

No one entity owns the name.  
But almost everyone shares it.



## Reason #2 why branding a community is hard

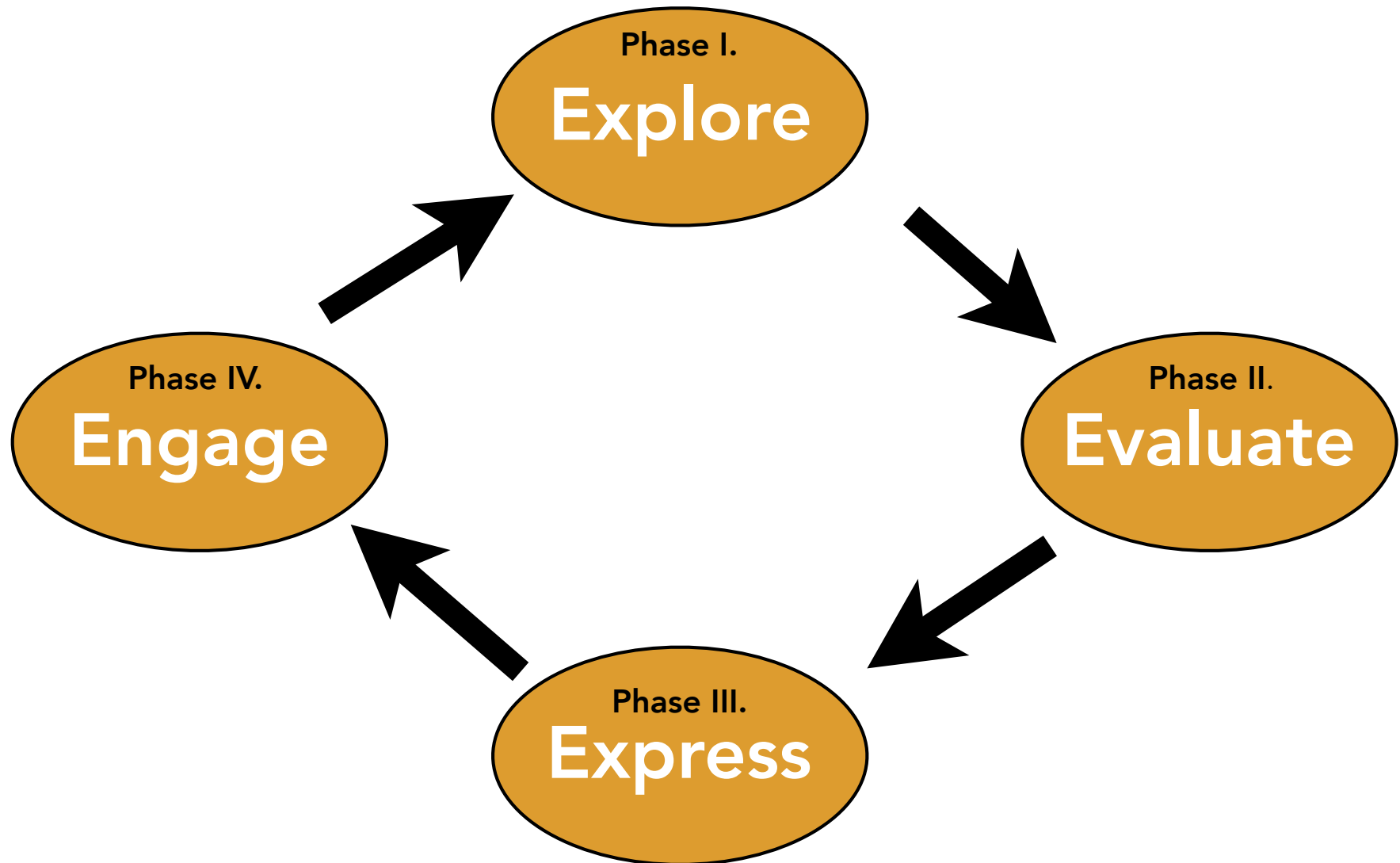
No hierarchy of direction.  
Difficult to get agreement.



## Reason #3 why branding a community is hard

No one entity has control of the entire experience.  
Everyone plays a role — good and bad.

# Rowan County Branding Process







# Research Recap

Over 1,800 people participated

- 41 interviews with community stakeholders
- 7 focus groups with people in the community (59 participants)
- 3 online focus groups with outlying markets (58 participants)
- 1,331 community surveys completed
- 314 attitude, awareness and perception surveys completed by residents in Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro and Raleigh
- A review of Rowan County's digital footprint
- Community segmentation profiling

# Brand Truths Summary



1. The community's critical self image but outsiders are pretty complimentary.
2. Picturesque country settings and agricultural lifestyles.
3. Location allows access to all you want...or to get away from it all.
4. The communities of Rowan County give it a variety of cultural and quaint main street experiences.
5. Salisbury is the primary cultural center of Rowan County for social, educational and historic value with the responsibility of maintaining high quality and standards.
6. Heritage is highly valued and noticeable.



# Brand Strategy

**Position Rowan County as both culturally cool and home to local main streets (a relief from larger metros).**

A place that has plenty of art, historic landscape and social scene.

A place that still values space, heritage and connections.



# Rowan County, North Carolina Brand Platform

## **Target**

For people seeking a country setting with a dynamic cultural heart.

## **Landscape**

Rowan County is conveniently centered in the prosperous North Carolina Piedmont region.

## **Promise**

Where life includes a historic cultural center and the flavorful charm of quaint local communities.

## **Benefit**

So you always have choices on the kind of experience you want and the pace of your day.



# **Building the Rowan County Brand Story**



# What is a brand story?

Unifier

Personality

Aesthetics

Way you talk

What you talk about

What you care about

Never the exact same

But always familiar



## Themes used to build the story.

- Kinda' Country, Kinda' Cool
- Right Place, Right Time
- Freedom to Be
- Spirit of Individualism
- Preservation of Land, History & Culture
- Appreciation of Arts & Creativity
- Pride & Commitment to Community



Rowan County  
must believe in itself.





# Rowan County Brand Story



## Rowan County Brand Story

Rowan County's dichotomy of engaging countryside and urban vibe speaks to its unique character. But what defines our county is its compelling spirit of individualism that connects residents and visitors alike. Here, people do as they believe, because, for them, that's the right way. Businesses, whether a one-person operation or one that employs thousands, do it their best way. This shared spirit is strong and perseveres here. Each community of Rowan County sees things slightly their own way. Opportunity to be who you want can be found here. Our residents capitalize on this potential to make the area a better place every day. We're a tight-knit community, but we welcome those seeking a network where you can be yourself. There's a lot to celebrate and rally around in Rowan County. Because this is the place where you can truly, **"be an original."**



**How does  
the brand story  
"Be an original"  
work for specific  
audiences?**



## Rowan's Pillars

**Community**

**Education**

**Small Business**

**Economic Development**

**Visitors**



# Creative Storyboards

What you are about to see?



# Community



## Community

Question: How can the brand story “Be an original” send a rallying cry to our community?

Answer: Our unique camaraderie of urban centers, local towns and countryside, young and old, natives and newcomers, gives each person their own strong story of life. In Rowan County, these qualities give each one of us the opportunity to celebrate what we have and at the same time unite us with our neighbors.

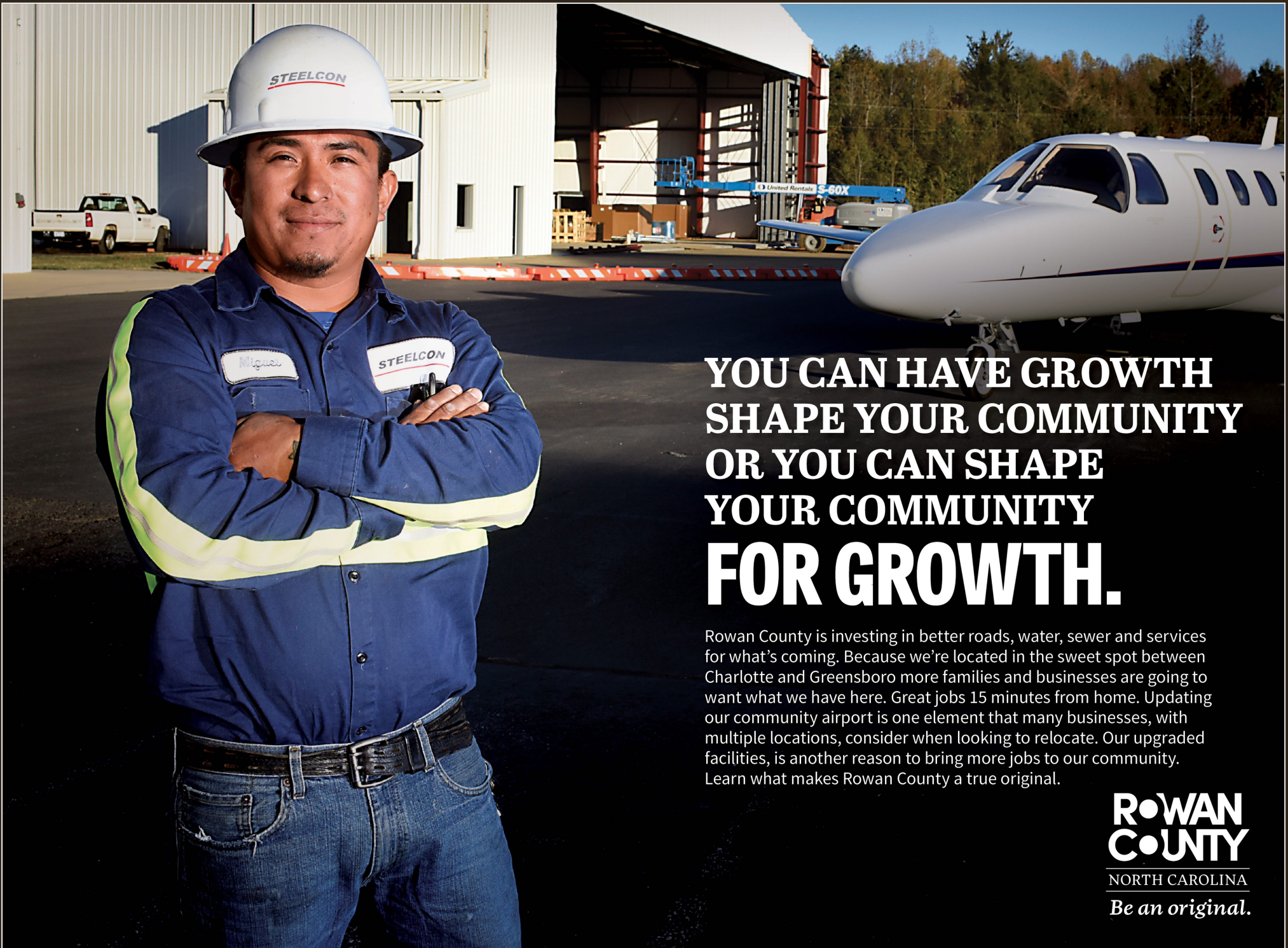


YOU CAN TALK ABOUT  
CHANGE OR JUST  
**GO AHEAD AND  
MAKE CHANGE.**

Rowan County is changing daily. One of the forces behind this change is Mr. Otis Gibson. Working behind the scenes, Mr. Gibson helped secure \$600,000 in grants to improve Royal Giants Park in East Spencer. He's also the force behind the Royal Giants Summer Camp for kids. For Mr. Gibson, community starts with kids, "The things we do for our kids pay off for everyone later. Give them a sense of responsibility and it reflects out to our community." Learn what makes Rowan County **a true original.**

**ROWAN  
COUNTY**  
NORTH CAROLINA  
*Be an original.*





**YOU CAN HAVE GROWTH  
SHAPE YOUR COMMUNITY  
OR YOU CAN SHAPE  
YOUR COMMUNITY  
FOR GROWTH.**

Rowan County is investing in better roads, water, sewer and services for what's coming. Because we're located in the sweet spot between Charlotte and Greensboro more families and businesses are going to want what we have here. Great jobs 15 minutes from home. Updating our community airport is one element that many businesses, with multiple locations, consider when looking to relocate. Our upgraded facilities, is another reason to bring more jobs to our community. Learn what makes Rowan County a true original.

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# Education



## Education

Question: How can the brand story “Be an original” tell our story of education?


Answer: Rowan County Schools have a vision where every day, everyone discovers and achieves the extraordinary. They inspire and provide opportunities for innovative and engaging learning. Teachers throughout Rowan County truly invest in their students and prepare them for a bright future ahead.



**YOU CAN'T EXPECT  
NEW RESULTS  
BY DOING THINGS  
THE SAME OLD WAY.**

Rowan County is changing education. In North Rowan, our middle and high schools are now community schools that focus on students' educational careers. Alexis Cowan, North Rowan Schools Community Principal creates teaching partnerships between the schools and in the community. Mr. Cowan explains, "We're personalizing learning to each student. This prepares them for every level of their education. Even to the point of getting students on a career path by seventh grade. It's how we're impacting the future leaders of our community." Learn what makes Rowan County a **true original**.

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# WHEN YOU STOP LEARNING, YOU STOP GROWING.

Rowan County has a culture of lifelong learning. Our four diverse institutions of higher learning are a testament to that. The leaders of these colleges inspire the community to continue to evolve, grow and learn. And when you do, life is so much more fulfilling. The diversity found in our community's four colleges proves that originality in education runs deep in Rowan County. You can learn what you want, how you want without leaving home. Keep learning. Keep growing. Learn what makes Rowan County **a true original.**

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# Small Business



## Small business

Question: How can the brand story, “Be an original” help our small business community?

Answer: Small businesses are originals. Our brand story can help each one to focus on telling its story and connect deeply with the community. This can help them be seen as a leader in their neighborhood, because in Rowan County this is our way of life.



**TO BUILD A STRONG  
COMMUNITY YOU HAVE  
TO GROW IT FROM  
THE GROUND UP.**

Rowan County has high-tech businesses. At the same time, we have businesses that started at a time when the plow was high tech. Patterson Farms is not only an operating farm selling to grocers throughout the state, it's a tourist destination. Michelle Patterson says, "We've been part of this community since 1919. We've always been about connecting people with where their food comes from. And when we do that we also create memories that connect people to each other." Learn what makes Rowan County **a true original.**

*Patterson*  
**FARM**  
*Inc.*

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COUNTY**

NORTH CAROLINA

*Be an original.*



A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light-colored vest over a green long-sleeved shirt and a dark floral scarf, smiles warmly at the camera. She is standing in a scrap metal yard filled with piles of metal debris. In the background, a large crane is visible, lifting a piece of scrap metal. The sky is overcast.

**WITH THE FREEDOM  
OF RUNNING YOUR  
BUSINESS COMES THE  
RESPONSIBILITY  
TO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE.**

Rowan County is filled with unique businesses. Holmes Iron & Steel has reshaped its focus as a “scrapping” company started 69 years ago into a business focused on 21st century needs. “Recycling was never a thought when my grandfather started this business. Now it’s one of our biggest services. Everything we get, we try to figure out how it can be used again. We hope that in some way, we’re helping our community and our planet,” says Nicole Holmes. Learn what makes Rowan County **a true original.**

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# Economic Development



## Economic Development

Question: How does the brand story “Be an original” help my business? What’s it mean?

Answer: This is the right place. This is the right time. We have the land for your business, infrastructure, workers, transportation, technology and government support. All of this gives your business the freedom to be as innovative and prosperous as you can envision it.



**YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE  
BIG TO MAKE AN IMPACT.  
YOU JUST NEED  
YOUR OWN PATH.**

Rowan County attracts multi-national businesses. Just as importantly, 100 year-old family-owned businesses stay here. Cheerwine thrives in the soft drink business because of its uniqueness that can't be duplicated. Cliff Ritchie, CEO of Cheerwine, says they call Rowan County home, "Because of our community's diversity, central location and its individualism. We're not Charlotte, or Raleigh or Atlanta. And we don't want to be. We just want to be ourselves." Learn what makes Rowan County **a true original.**

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**WHEN YOU  
BUILD A COMPANY  
YOU ALSO BUILD  
A COMMUNITY.**

Rowan County is high tech. Integro Technology is a worldwide leader in robotic inspection devices. Instead of being in a community filled with high tech employees, they wanted to grow their own. Anh Nguyen, Application Engineer, tells how Integro is changing the tech environment in Rowan County, “Two years ago, we had about 20 employees. Now, we’ve doubled in size. And many of these employees are high tech engineers. It’s typical that when you have a group of people like this in one place, more are sure to come.” Learn what makes Rowan County **a true original.**

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# GO BURRITO!

**SOMETIMES, TO BUILD  
YOUR BUSINESS YOU HAVE  
TO BUILD SOMETHING  
MORE THAN  
YOUR BUSINESS.**

Rowan County's heart is Salisbury. But savvy business owners recognize that city and county are one. Go Burrito promotes all things Rowan County. They're part of the downtown Mural Concert Series as well as the Food Truck Rally. Mikey Wetzel, Owner of Go Burrito explains why he's all in with Rowan, "The way I see it, the more people that visit here, the more they want to live here. Then they eventually show up at my place. If it's good for Rowan County, it's good for us." Learn what makes Rowan County **a true original.**

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# Visitors



## Visitors

Question: How can the brand story “Be an original” work into the tourism realm?

Answer: We’re kinda country and kinda cool. One part is engaging countryside. Rolling landscape, parks, rivers, lakes, farms and unique agri-tourism sites. The other, faster paced. Urban centers with theater, live music, shopping, events, museums and local dives. Here you have the opportunity to conveniently visit both cultures bound together by our heritage and originality.





# ENJOY THE ACTION IN TOWN OR THE WILDLIFE IN THE COUNTRY.

Rowan County offers urban and rural fun seven days a week. At Lazy 5 Ranch, families visit for the unique safari-zoo experience. Luther, Director of Rhino Operations at Lazy 5 Ranch, gives the lowdown on local entertainment options, “Naturally, I love wide open spaces so parks, pick-your-own farms and wineries are high on my list. But it’s also nice to trot into town for some culture to enjoy a nice meal and see some theatre. All of this is why Rowan County is a great place to visit.” Learn more about what makes Rowan County **a true original.**

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**WHEN LOOKING FOR FUN,  
ALWAYS SEARCH  
FOR THE PLACES  
THAT MOVE YOU.**

Rowan County is filled with museums featuring the history of transportation, engineering and industry. We also have sites important to North Carolina and U.S. history. And all of them are an easy drive from one another. Visiting families find so much to do, they return again and again. When looking for places to visit, we know that visitors are searching for lasting memories. Spots like Dan Nicholas Park, Patterson Farms and the Transportation Museum are perfect for providing those moments. Learn more about what makes Rowan County **a true original.**

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# Rowan County Branding

## Now what?



## Plan for 2017

1. Community communication plan.
2. Roll story into key organizational marketing.
3. Community engagement plan.  
How does everyone get involved?



**Video**



**Thank you.**