



CEDS 2015-2019

2015 - 2019 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania Counties

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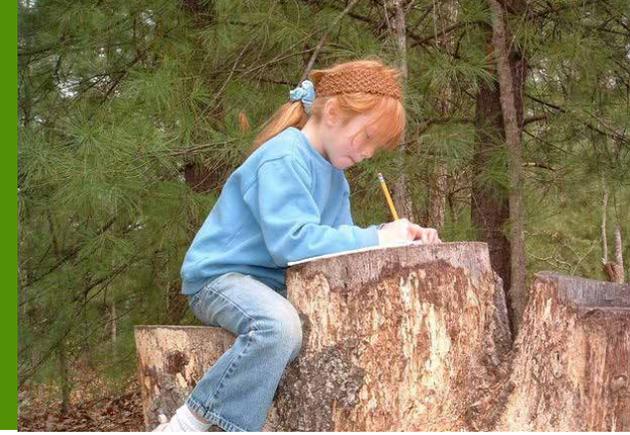
CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Mark Burrows*	Transylvania County
Terry Collins	GE - Mountain Area Workforce Development Board Representative
John Connet	City of Hendersonville
Mark Emory	Mission Hospital
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Tim Lampkin	Asheville/Buncombe Chamber of Commerce
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*Land of Sky Regional Council Board Member

VISION

A prosperous, business-friendly region with resilient economic development strategies, quality jobs, smart infrastructure investments, healthy communities and critical resource protection.



INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A CEDS?

Land of Sky Regional Council is a designated Economic Development District (EDD) through the US Economic Development Administration (EDA). As the region's EDD, the Council is responsible for developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) designed to identify regional priorities for economic and community development.

The Land of Sky region is comprised of 19 local governments within the four counties of Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania. Haywood County is also included in much of the data, analysis, and in the maps for this plan since it is part of the Asheville Metro Statistical Area (MSA), French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO), and Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for transportation planning in the region.

This plan follows the new guidelines released by the US Economic Development Administration in February 2015. The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan developed by a diverse workgroup of local representatives

from private, public, and nonprofit sectors. The following four sections form the basis for the Land of Sky CEDS¹:

1. Summary Background of economic conditions in the region;
2. SWOT Analysis to identify regional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats;
3. Action Plan incorporating tactics identified through planning process, other plans, and stakeholder feedback to develop the priority strategies for the region; and
4. Evaluation Framework to identify and monitor performance measures associated with the plan.

The Land of Sky CEDS also aligns with NC Tomorrow, North Carolina's Statewide CEDS compiled in 2014². In this way the CEDS Strategy Committee anticipates developing a strong relationship between action plans and performance measures for economic and community development at the regional, state, and federal levels.

The CEDS Strategy Committee was formed in February of 2015 and met monthly from March

through September to complete the Plan. The 30-day public comment period was held from August 21 to September 20, 2015. All CEDS meetings were open to the public. A timeline that highlights the components of the process follows:

- **February** - Establish the CEDS Strategy Committee
- **March** - Develop a brief, web-based survey for the SWOT Analysis and distribute to the CEDS Strategy Committee. Compile results and share with the Committee.
- **April** - Conduct SWOT analysis with Committee. Develop the Summary Background.
- **April/May** - Develop an Action Plan with Committee participation.
- **June/July** - Assemble the CEDS document.
- **July/August** - Seek stakeholder input and public comments. Present to the LOSRC Council.
- **September** - Finalize the CEDS. Incorporate final comments from the CEDS Strategy Committee. Present to the LOSRC Council for adoption. Submit to EDA.

¹ http://www.eda.gov/ceds/files/CEDS-Content-Guidelines-full.pdf?utm_source=EDA+Newsletter&utm_campaign=363d120db5-Innovate_EDA_February_20152_5_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_68e7c83ba4-363d120db5-391738129

² <http://www.nctomorrow.org/>

\$ 1.49 MILLION
 According to the 2014 Economic Impact of Travel, \$1.49 million was spent in the Land of Sky region, employing 15,000 and \$303 million in payroll.³



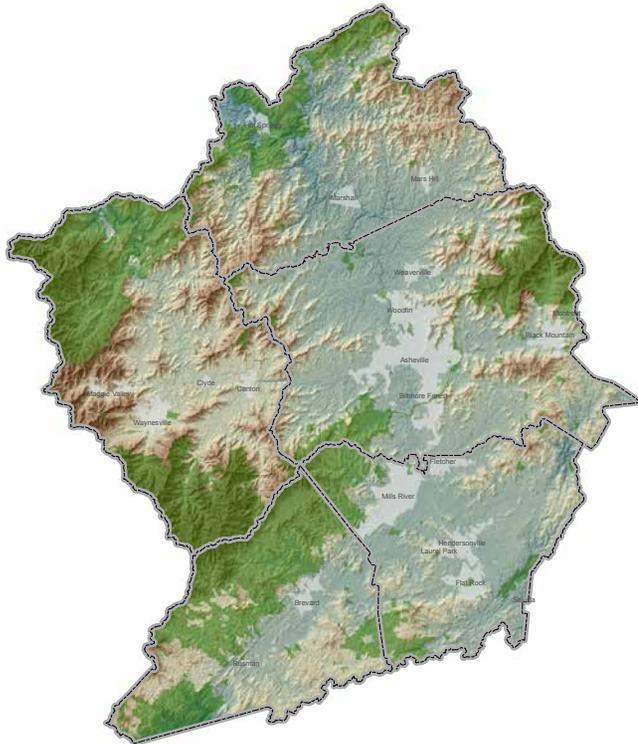
176,000

Growth in regional population projected by the year 2040 per the US Census Bureau

OUR REGION

Our region includes Buncombe, Haywood,** Henderson, Madison and Transylvania counties.

**Haywood county included in the Region due to Asheville Metro Statistical Area (MSA)



SUMMARY BACKGROUND

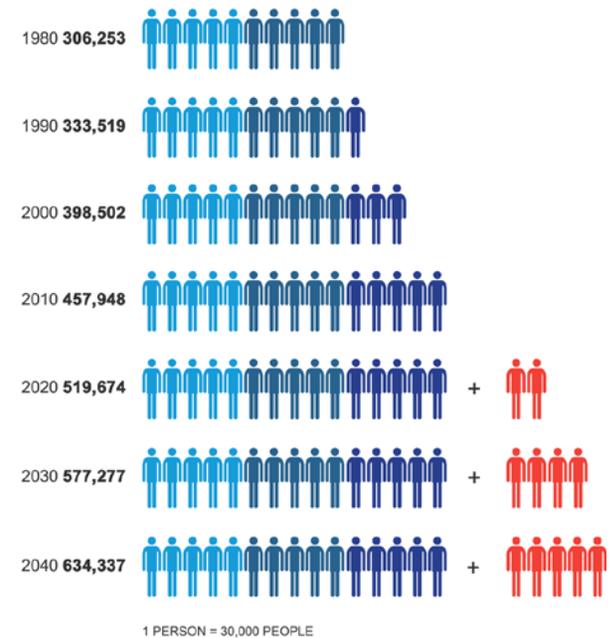
The regional and county snapshots shown on the following pages highlight the demographic and economic statistics of the region. As the data shows, the largest industries are currently related to Health Care, Government, and Tourism (retail and accommodation/food service combined). To support these industries, and develop a broader foundation in other industries such as manufacturing and professional services, it is essential that local governments in the region continue to collaborate on essential services such as the built infrastructure, broadband, and housing options.

By the year 2040, the population of the region is anticipated to grow by 41%. This is an increase of 176,000 people, or the addition of two cities the size of Asheville within the next 25 years.

A growing demographic is of those aged 65 years and older (21% of the population as of the 2010 census). This reflects the region's attraction as a second-home and retirement destination. It also requires planning and strategic investment to address the needs of the older population through additional transportation options, safe and accessible infrastructure improvements, and consideration of land use design incorporating transportation. This demographic is also a

resource for additional workforce development or volunteerism.

POPULATION GROWTH⁴



By 2040, the population of the GroWNC region is expected to increase to more than 630,000 people. The color changes every 150,000 people and the red color represents forecast growth.

³ The Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina counties. www.partnersvisitnc.com

⁴ GroWNC Final Report



ENVIRONMENT

The Land of Sky region is in the heart of the Southern Appalachians. The forests and rivers of these ancient mountains sustain the region's economy and culture. Temperate forests lead to higher elevation stands of balsam firs and red and black spruce. In the valleys, rich soils support a variety of agricultural crops. In total there are 186,079 acres of prime farmland in the study area and over 300,000 acres of working farms and forests.

The region is home to the headwaters of many major river systems. There are over 7,688 miles of streams in the region including 98 square miles of Outstanding Resource Waters, 192 square miles of High Quality Waters, and 246 square miles of Water Supply Watersheds. The French Broad River, forming the backbone of the region, is the third oldest river in the world.

In addition to agricultural working lands, tourism has always been a mainstay of the region's economy. Visitors were drawn to the mountains, rivers, and cooler summer climates at resort communities like Flat Rock, Lake Junaluska, Brevard and Black Mountain. Today, farmers, specialty manufacturers, outdoor recreation, and creative economy entrepreneurs seek inspiration and source quality materials from the region's natural environment.

ECONOMY

To thrive economically, the region must continue to be a place where talented people - and their businesses - want to be. This includes preserving the high quality of life in the region and providing the critical infrastructure needed by businesses to succeed.

Supporting the economy is a system of infrastructure that provides the critical services necessary for the well being of residents, the success of businesses and the safety of communities.

The ability to build and maintain these systems is costly and resource intensive. Many of the region's communities do not have basic water or sewer service. Broadband internet access is also limited to the more urban areas. In addition, the topography, geology, and hydrology of the mountains combine to dramatically increase the cost of building and maintaining infrastructure in our region. For example, NCDOT planning estimates that construction costs in the mountains are 100%-150% greater than in other areas of North Carolina.

As the region continues to grow, jurisdictions must work together to develop a well-balanced system of infrastructure, economic

and community development that serves residents, supports communities, and attracts new businesses to ensure both economic vitality and environmental resiliency.

CULTURE

While the region's natural assets are unparalleled, it is the cultural traditions that set the region apart. For generations the mountains isolated the population from other communities, contributing to a resilient and self-sufficient people and a unique and thriving culture.

The diversity and traditions of the region's ancestors, including the Cherokee and the Scots-Irish, infuse daily routines with unique crafts, skills, pastimes and nuances. The region's long history of clogging, bluegrass, pottery and crafting has developed into an industry that today generates over \$206 million in annual economic impact in Western North Carolina (Center for Craft, Creativity & Design).

These traditions continue to draw the creative class, entrepreneurs and artists to the mountains. In addition to attracting new residents, cultural tourism has grown tremendously in the past years as people travel to experience the arts, heritage and unique regional character.



Cultural assets include:

- Colleges and Universities
- Brevard Music Center
- UNCA's Center of Craft, Creativity and Design
- Blue Ridge Music Trails
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Southern Highland Craft Guild's Folk Arts Center

Growth threatens some of the most valued traditions. The family farm is a cultural icon in WNC, but it is slowly disappearing. In 1950 about 50% of the land in the region was being farmed. As of 2007, only 16% is actively used for agriculture. In addition, the average age of farmers in the five-county region is 58. An aging workforce and the development of critical agricultural lands threaten both the culture and economy of the region.

WORKFORCE

The Land of Sky regional economy is evolving. The agrarian economy is expanding to include food, beverage, and biotech manufacturing. Traditional textile and pulp mills have yielded to advanced technologies that develop plastics, ceramics, and advanced textiles which leads to evolving manufacturing facilities that demand a high-wage, highly skilled workforce.

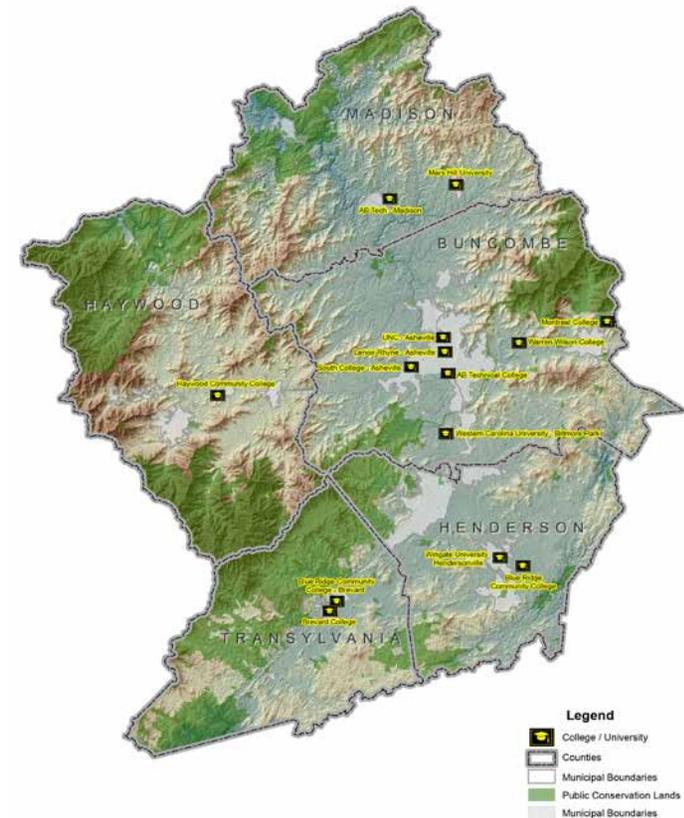
As the economy in the region grows, so does the demand for individuals with strong skillsets in communications, engineering, and advanced manufacturing processes. The manufacturing industry has changed and it is not the industry of generations past. Many systems are highly mechanized, requiring advanced degrees in engineering, coding technologies, and computer sciences. Other processes may not require an advanced degree, but do require unique skillsets requiring specific training, certificates, and apprenticeship.

The area North Carolina Community College system, Universities, Colleges, and County/City School Systems have been working with the Mountain Area Workforce Development Board (MAWDB) and the private sector to develop targeted training and certificate programs to meet the specific needs of industries in the region. The strong partnerships that have formed over past years have led to the creation of career pathways such as Raising Awareness of Manufacturing Possibilities (RAMP) and Made in Henderson County. These pathways are one way in which partners are working with all ages to further develop a strong workforce for emerging students through curriculum in advanced technologies, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), and soft skills.

It is critical to continued economic prosperity and resiliency that the region continues to

develop a diverse set of industry sectors that provide living wage jobs. Development of a diverse, prepared, robust workforce for all sectors of our regional economy will further solidify the ability to attract and support business of any size and sector.

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



SWOT ANALYSIS

In March 2015, Land of Sky Regional Council conducted an analysis of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – also known as a SWOT analysis. The analysis identifies what local government staff, elected officials, community members, and other stakeholders believe to be important in each category. This helps guide the process to identify regional priorities for economic and community development.

The 2015 SWOT Analysis had 87 respondents among the four counties of Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania. The results of the SWOT are shown below. The respondents also ranked regional service priorities (figure on page 5) and the top three are: Infrastructure Improvements; Workforce Development/Job Training; and Affordable Housing Availability.

STRENGTHS

- Good Schools
- Cultural Activities
- Vibrant Town Centers
- Safe
- Recreation Opportunities
- Community
- Natural Beauty
- Quality of Life
- Health Care
- Innovative Businesses
- Entrepreneurial Support
- Workforce Training System
- Supportive
- Job Growth
- Tourism
- Partnerships - Public & Private
- Infrastructure

WEAKNESSES

- Affordable Housing
- Public Transportation
- Aging Infrastructure
- Water Supply
- Rural Transportation
- Broadband / Telecommunications
- School Structure Decline
- Youth Recreation
- Professional Jobs
- Rural Business Attraction
- Rural Jobs
- Youth Retention
- Well-Paying Jobs
- Local Funding
- Childcare

OPPORTUNITIES

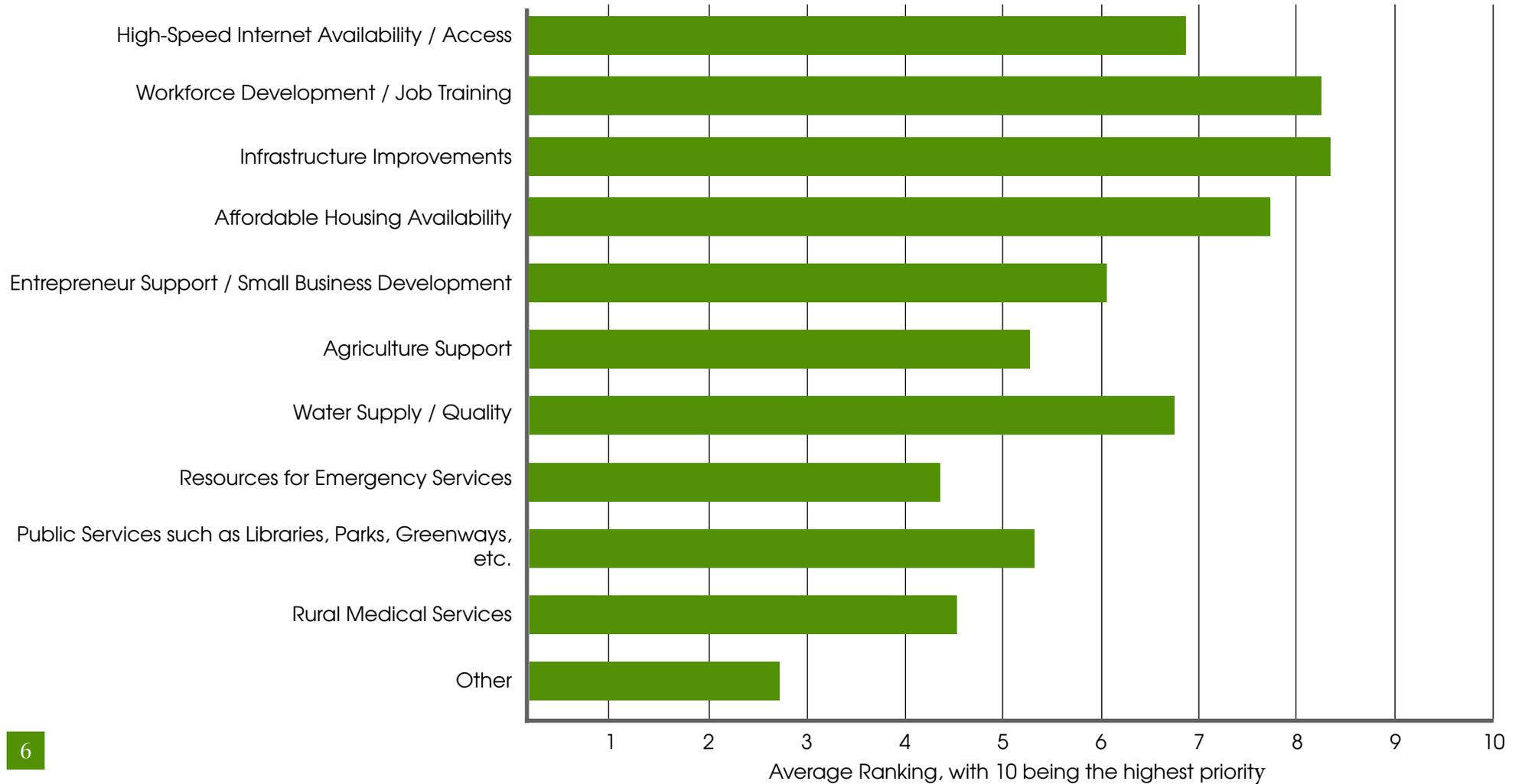
- Workforce Development
- Entrepreneurial Support
- Capital for Businesses
- Small Business Expansion
- Tourism
- Agricultural Land and Support
- Infrastructure
- "Local" Economy
- Natural Amenities
- Marketing Lifestyles
- Culture
- Aging

THREATS

- Youth Flight
- Housing Options
- Water Supply
- No / Low Paying Jobs
- Meeting Aging Population Needs
- Single Economy
- Failing Infrastructure
- Poor Long-Term Planning
- Impacts to Natural Amenities
- Growing Too Fast
- Childcare



REGIONAL SERVICE PRIORITIES



REGIONAL FACT SHEET

Includes Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania counties

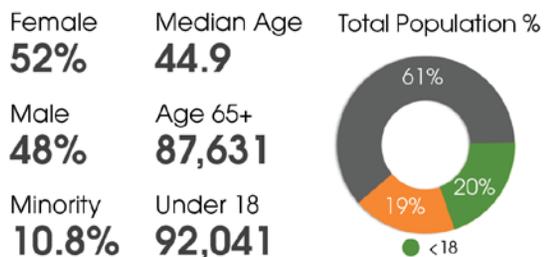


POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
457,864

2012 Estimate
465,510

2020 / 2030 Projection ³
503,754 / 547,838



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$172,600

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
2.1%

Rental Vacancy Rate
7.2%

Occupied Housing Units
196,157

% of Units with No Vehicle Available
5.8%

HIGHER EDUCATION

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Montreat College | UNC Asheville |
| Mars Hill University | Warren Wilson |
| WCU Biltmore Park | South College |
| Lenior-Rhyne University | Brevard College |
| AB Technical Community College | |
| Blue Ridge Community College | |
| Wingate University Hendersonville | |
| Haywood Community College | |

LARGEST PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Memorial Mission Hospital, Inc.
2. Ingles Market, Inc.
3. Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.
4. Eaton Corporation
5. The Biltmore Company
6. Blue Ridge Paper Products
7. Park Ridge Health
8. Margaret R Pardee Memorial Hospital

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$44,460

Per Capita Income
\$24,175

Per Capita Living Wage ⁹
\$20,584

County Property Tax ⁷
N/A

% of Families Below Poverty Level
11%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁶



LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁴

Job Comparison	2010 / 2014		Change in Jobs	2014 Earnings Per Worker ^{with Benefits}
Government	30,367	28,947	-5%	\$56,114
Health Care and Social Assistance	29,825	32,531	9%	\$55,075
Retail Trade	24,928	26,517	6%	\$28,892
Accommodation and Food Services	20,551	23,890	16%	\$19,298
Manufacturing	18,920	19,865	5%	\$61,255
Construction	13,272	11,941	-10%	\$36,019
Other Services (except Public Administration)	10,920	11,782	8%	\$22,882
Admin, Waste Mgmt, & Remediation Services	10,438	11,633	11%	\$29,317
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	7,419	8,549	15%	\$50,690
Wholesale Trade	5,224	5,142	-2%	\$51,714

Sources
 1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
 2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Data, 08-12
 3. North Carolina Office of Budget and Management
 4. Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl.
 5. NC Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division (April 2014)
 6. www.feedingamerica.org
 7. NC Economic Development Guide
 8. www2.fdic.gov
 9. www.livingwage.mit.edu

BUNCOMBE COUNTY, NC

County Seat: Asheville (86,205)

Founded in 1791



POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
238,318

2012 Estimate
244,490

2020 / 2030 Projection ³
270,335 / 300,996

Female
52%

Male
48%

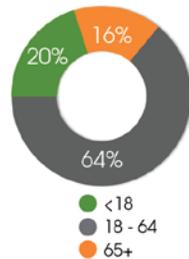
Minority
16%

Median Age
40.7

Age 65+
38,424

Under 18
48,829

Total Population %



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$191,500

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.9%

Rental Vacancy Rate
5.6%

Occupied Housing Units
101,831

% of Units with No Vehicle Available
7%

HIGHER EDUCATION

- University of North Carolina - Asheville
- Montreat College
- Warren Wilson College
- AB Technical Community College
- South College - Asheville
- Lenior-Rhyne - Asheville
- Western Carolina University - Biltmore Park

LARGEST PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS ⁵

- Memorial Mission Hospital, Inc.
- Ingles Markets, Inc.
- Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.
- Eaton Corporation
- The Biltmore Company

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$44,206

Per Capita Income
\$26,219

Per Capita Living Wage ⁹
\$20,155

County Property Tax ⁷
\$0.604 per \$100 Value

% of Families Below Poverty Level
11.7%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁶



LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁴

Job Comparison	2010 / 2014		Change in Jobs	2014 Earnings Per Worker ^{with Benefits}
Health Care & Social Assistance	20,450	22,803	12%	\$58,883
Government	17,632	16,794	-5%	\$61,225
Retail Trade	15,164	16,498	9%	\$28,915
Accommodation & Food Services	13,893	16,552	19%	\$20,147
Manufacturing	10,839	11,246	4%	\$61,464
Construction	7,392	6,647	-10%	\$39,761
Admin, Waste Mgmt, & Remediation Services	6,819	7,646	12%	\$31,172
Other Services (except Public Administration)	6,295	6,824	8%	\$24,365
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	5,224	6,296	21%	\$52,100
Transportation & Warehousing	3,509	3,753	7%	\$45,614

Sources
 1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
 2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Data, 08-12
 3. North Carolina Office of Budget and Management
 4. Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl.
 5. NC Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division (April 2014)
 6. www.feelingamerica.org
 7. NC Economic Development Guide
 8. www2.fdic.gov
 9. www.livingwage.mit.edu

HAYWOOD COUNTY, NC

County Seat: Waynesville (9,869)
Founded in 1808



POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
58,952

2012 Estimate
59,163

2020 / 2030 Projection ³
61,475 / 64,073

Female
52%

Male
48%

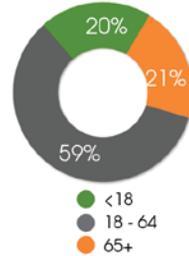
Minority
6.7%

Median Age
45.6

Age 65+
12,416

Under 18
11,535

Total Population %



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$156,900

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
2.1%

Rental Vacancy Rate
8.9%

Occupied Housing Units
26,608

% of Units with No Vehicle Available
5%

HIGHER EDUCATION

Haywood Community College

LARGEST PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Blue Ridge Paper Products, Inc.
2. Haywood Regional Medical Center - A Duke LifePoint Hospital
3. Ingles Market, Inc.
4. Consolidated Metco, Inc.
5. Haywood Vacation Opportunities, Inc.

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$41,557

Per Capita Income
\$24,536

Per Capita Living Wage ⁹
\$21,403

County Property Tax ⁷
\$0.541 per \$100 Value

% of Families Below Poverty Level
12.1%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁶



LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁴

Job Comparison	2010 / 2014		Change in Jobs	2014 Earnings Per Worker ^{with Benefits}
Government	4,260	3,877	-9%	\$46,118
Retail Trade	2,862	3,009	5%	\$28,372
Manufacturing	2,169	2,363	9%	\$62,291
Accommodation and Food Services	2,059	2,134	4%	\$15,920
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,894	2,036	8%	\$50,435
Construction	1,660	1,380	-17%	\$26,969
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,403	1,396	0%	\$20,086
Admin, Waste Mgmt, & Remediation Services	737	835	13%	\$23,783
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	704	558	-21%	\$45,389
Finance and Insurance	452	445	1%	\$53,128

Sources
 1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
 2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Data, 08-12
 3. North Carolina Office of Budget and Management
 4. Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl.
 5. NC Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division (April 2014)
 6. www.feedingamerica.org
 7. NC Economic Development Guide
 8. www2.fdic.gov
 9. www.livingwage.mit.edu

HENDERSON COUNTY, NC

County Seat: Hendersonville (13,294)
 Founded in 1838



POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
106,740

2012 Estimate
108,266

2020 / 2030 Projection ³
115,720 / 122,720

Female
52%

Male
48%

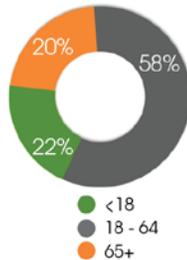
Minority
15.9%

Median Age
45.3

Age 65+
24,185

Under 18
21,794

Total Population %



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$187,800

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
 2.9%

Rental Vacancy Rate
 7.5%

Occupied Housing Units
 44,997

% of Units with No Vehicle Available
 5%

HIGHER EDUCATION

Blue Ridge Community College
 Wingate University - Hendersonville Campus

LARGEST PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Park Ridge Health
2. MArgaret R Pardee Memorial Hospital
3. Ingles Market, Inc.
4. Continental Automotive Systems, Inc.
5. Wilsonart, LLC

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
 \$46,503

Per Capita Income
 \$26,260

Per Capita Living Wage ⁹
 \$20,155

County Property Tax ⁷
 \$0.514 per \$100 Value

% of Families Below Poverty Level
 9.7%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁶



LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁴

Job Comparison	2010 / 2014		Change in Jobs	2014 Earnings Per Worker ^{with Benefits}
Government	5,807	5,666	-2%	\$52,397
Health Care and Social Assistance	5,179	5,583	8%	\$46,690
Manufacturing	5,109	5,352	5%	\$62,431
Retail Trade	5,062	5,142	2%	\$30,142
Accommodation and Food Services	3,151	3,639	15%	\$17,269
Construction	2,803	2,714	-3%	\$34,510
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2,300	2,511	9%	\$21,111
Admin, Waste Mgmt, & Remediation Services	2,271	2,509	10%	\$26,549
Crop and Animal Production	1,330	1,478	11%	\$28,387
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	1,105	1,253	13%	\$48,971

Sources
 1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
 2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Data, 08-12
 3. North Carolina Office of Budget and Management
 4. Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl.
 5. NC Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division (April 2014)
 6. www.feedingamerica.org
 7. NC Economic Development Guide
 8. www2.fdic.gov
 9. www.livingwage.mit.edu

MADISON COUNTY, NC

County Seat: Marshall (1,039)
Founded in 1851



POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
20,764

2012 Estimate
20,742

2020 / 2030 Projection ³
21,864 / 22,573

Female
52%

Male
48%

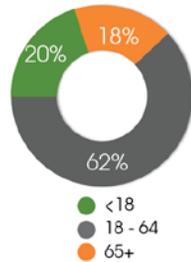
Minority
6%

Median Age
43.6

Age 65+
3,702

Under 18
4,091

Total Population %



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$159,400

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
1.6%

Rental Vacancy Rate
3.8%

Occupied Housing Units
8,828

% of Units with No Vehicle Available
7%

HIGHER EDUCATION

Mars Hill University
AB Technical Community College -
Madison Campus

LARGEST PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Mars Hill College, Inc.
2. Ingles Market, Inc.
3. Printpack Inc.
4. Hot Springs Health Program
5. Nursing Home

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$38,658

Per Capita Income
\$19,953

Per Capita Living Wage ⁹
\$20,155

County Property Tax ⁷
\$0.52 per \$100 Value

% of Families Below Poverty Level
11.3%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁶

North Carolina
17.3%

15.1%

National - 14.6%
Lowest - 7.8%
Highest - 22.7%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁴

Job Comparison	2010 / 2014		Change in Jobs	2014 Earnings Per Worker ^{with Benefits}
Government	1,079	1,048	-3%	\$41,716
Health Care and Social Assistance	661	583	-12%	\$33,867
Educational Services	642	682	6%	\$27,437
Construction	492	387	-21%	\$22,681
Retail Trade	421	486	15%	\$24,624
Manufacturing	385	404	5%	\$49,173
Accommodation and Food Services	300	361	20%	\$17,509
Other Services (except Public Administration)	225	240	7%	\$23,862
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	181	147	-19%	\$19,948
Admin, Waste Mgmt, & Remediation Services	166	218	31%	\$22,921

Sources

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Data, 08-12
3. North Carolina Office of Budget and Management
4. Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl.
5. NC Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division (April 2014)
6. www.feedingamerica.org
7. NC Economic Development Guide
8. www2.fdic.gov
9. www.livingwage.rmit.edu

TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY, NC

County Seat: Brevard (7,609)

Founded in 1861



POPULATION ²

2010 Census ¹
33,090

2012 Estimate
32,849

2020 / 2030 Projection ³
34,590 / 37,476

Female
52%

Male
48%

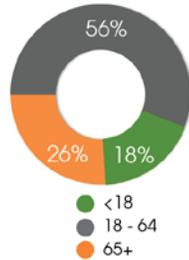
Minority
9.5%

Median Age
49.4

Age 65+
8,634

Under 18
5,792

Total Population %



HOUSING ²

Median Home Value
\$167,400

Homeowner Vacancy Rate
2%

Rental Vacancy Rate
10.2%

Occupied Housing Units
13,893

% of Units with No Vehicle Available
5%

HIGHER EDUCATION

Brevard College
Blue Ridge Community College

LARGEST PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS ⁵

1. Transylvania Community Hospital, Inc.
2. Ingles Market, Inc.
3. Brevard College Corporation
4. Gaia Herbs, Inc.
5. Transylvania Vocational Services, Inc.

ECONOMIC ²

Median Household Income
\$51,374

Per Capita Income
\$23,908

Per Capita Living Wage ⁹
\$21,050

County Property Tax ⁷
\$0.45per \$100 Value

% of Families Below Poverty Level
9.1%

Food Insecurity Rate ⁶

North Carolina
17.3%

15.1%

National - 14.6%
Lowest - 7.8%
Highest - 22.7%

LARGEST INDUSTRIES ⁴

Job Comparison	2010 / 2014		Change in Jobs	2014 Earnings Per Worker ^{with Benefits}
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,641	1,526	-7%	\$42,909
Government	1,589	1,562	-2%	\$47,893
Retail Trade	1,419	1,383	-3%	\$26,493
Accommodation and Food Services	1,148	1,204	5%	\$20,131
Construction	926	813	-12%	\$31,669
Educational Services	807	748	-7%	\$30,637
Other Services (except Public Administration)	697	811	16%	\$20,303
Admin, Waste Mgmt, & Remediation Services	445	426	-4%	\$26,712
Manufacturing	417	500	20%	\$47,611
Wholesale Trade	291	164	-44%	\$55,518

Sources

1. US Census Bureau, 2010 Census
2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5 Year Data, 08-12
3. North Carolina Office of Budget and Management
4. Economic Modeling Specialists, Intl.
5. NC Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division (April 2014)
6. www.feedingamerica.org
7. NC Economic Development Guide
8. www2.fdic.gov
9. www.livingwage.mit.edu



ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The Land of Sky economy is rooted in the abundant natural and cultural resources of the region. The rich quality of life is often listed as the number one reason many businesses expand, locate, or develop here. The mountain vistas are the backdrop for the communities, crafts, music, and diverse heritage of the people in the region. A strong regional economy builds on the strengths of these local communities and creates resilient economies, critical to long-term growth and financial stability for families.

Resilience is defined as “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.”⁵ When applied to economic development, resilience includes a multi-phased approach that anticipates risk, evaluates the potential impact on key assets, and develops a response to the risk. The Economic Development Administration provides guidance on integrating regional economic resilience through a two-pronged approach:

1. Planning for and implementing resilience through specific goals or actions to bolster the long-term economic durability of the region (**steady-state**), and
2. Establishing information networks

among the various stakeholders in the region to encourage active and regular communications between the public, private, education, and non-profit sectors to collaborate on existing and potential future challenges (**responsive**).⁶”

Land of Sky Regional Council strives for resilient communities and regional economic prosperity. As such, the CEDS has included this two-pronged approach in the development of strategies and performance measures.

Steady-state initiatives include:

- Conduct comprehensive planning that includes the integration of hazard mitigation, transportation, and other planning efforts;
- Target the development of emerging clusters or industries that build on the region’s unique assets, such as continued development of Innovation Districts and redevelopment along the river;
- Build a resilient workforce that can better shift between jobs or industries;
- Continue to maintain site data for industrial, commercial, and under-utilized sites through geographic information systems (GIS); and

- Promote and develop value-chains of target industries that close economic gaps and build on the region’s strengths.

Responsive initiatives include:

- Collaborate on hazard mitigation plans, landslide and steep slope preparedness, and other environmental hazard planning efforts;
- Establish a process for regular communication, monitoring, and updating of business community needs and issues, such as through CarolinaWest; and
- Strengthen coordination between the Workforce Development Board, economic development entities, and support services to address short, intermediate, and long-term recovery needs of specific sectors.

A goal of this CEDS is to identify where investment can be made to further diversify the region’s economic base. Creating local value-chains and industries will result in stronger local economies and therefore, economically resilient regions. Through the CEDS Strategy Committee and SWOT Analysis, six target sectors for growth were identified to support regional economic resilience:

⁵ http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/resilience

⁶ <http://www.eda.gov/ceds/content/economic-resilience.htm>



- Tourism
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Educational Services
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Agricultural Technologies

Tourism is the number one industry in the region (accommodation and retail combined) and foundation for many development decisions. This makes sense given the region’s natural beauty, recreation opportunities, and unique cultural heritage. It is also dependent on many variable factors such as the state of the economy – less disposable income means less travel; or climate – daily rain and storms result in rivers that are not safe for recreation.

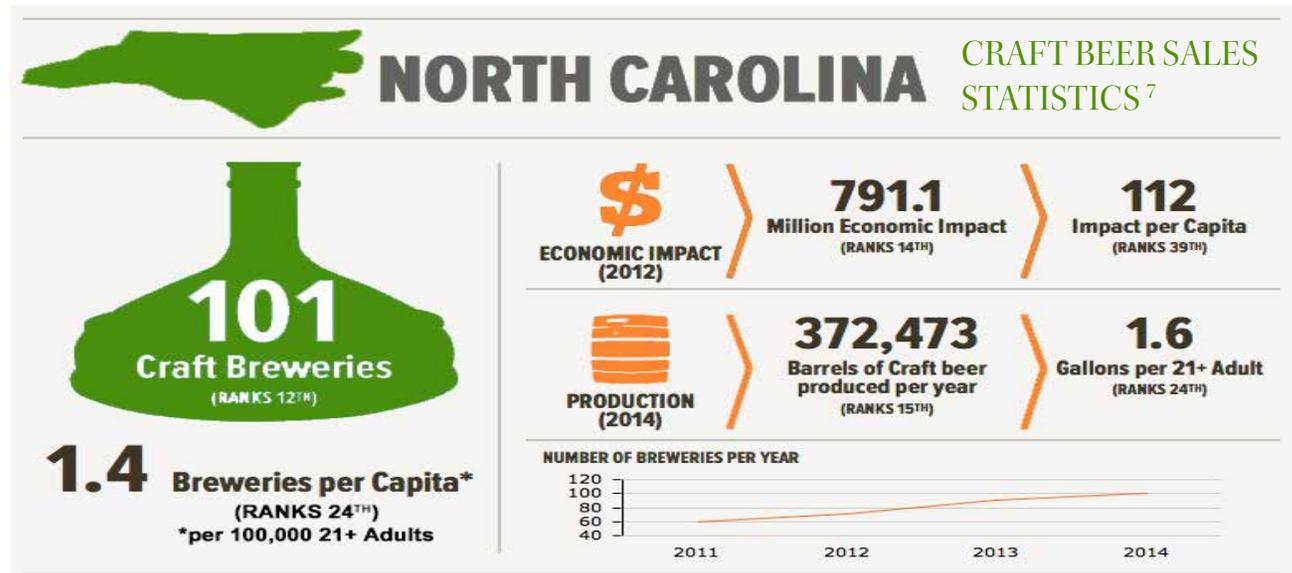
So how can the region build on the strong tourism industry to create a broader economic foundation? In many ways it is already happening with the development of related, ‘bloom’ industries. The Outdoor Gear Manufacturing and Craft Beverage sectors are two prime examples of using components of the tourism industry to build on their products. They are stand-alone manufacturing industries with growing exports that also have local sales, partnerships with retail, restaurants, and recreation businesses. They can build kayaks,

bicycles, and components and test them in their own backyards. It is an example of building on unique local strengths to support the economic resiliency of the region.

Energy independence has been a focus of the nation and region for many years. The fuel shortage that occurred in WNC in 2008 led to the development of the Local Energy Assurance Plan to identify ways that the region can be less dependent on oil and pipelines from gulf ports. Expansion of natural gas pipelines within the region speaks to this need. The Clean Cities and Clean Vehicles Coalition also works with local governments

and companies to expand the infrastructure for alternative fuel vehicles. Identification of ways to prioritize and expand the infrastructure necessary for alternative fuels is a key factor to become a more resilient region.

Another critical component of a resilient region is an informed educational system that can address the needs of emerging sectors. Educational institutions within the region have strong partnerships with the Chambers of Commerce, Workforce Development Board, and leading employers to create appropriate curricula and programs for a skilled labor force.



⁷ Brewers Association

STRATEGIC TARGET SECTORS

TOURISM

- Arts, culture and entertainment
- Accommodation and food service
- Attractions and amenities

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

- Outdoor gear
- Craft beverage
- Aviation and automotive equipment parts
- Biotech and natural products

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

- Workforce Development
- Job Training

HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Senior care and wellness
- Hospital and medical services
- Childcare services

PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

- Sound engineering and technology
- Programming and software development
- Home-based businesses
- Utilities and alternative energy

AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES

- Value-added products
- Medicinal herbs and supplements
- Farmers markets and foodhubs



NC TOMORROW: COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

GOAL 1

Promote adaptive economic development that encourages entrepreneurship, supports existing businesses, and attracts new employers.

The Land of Sky region is a great place for businesses to grow and thrive. In today's globally competitive economy, the region must be as welcoming as possible to businesses of all sizes. All firms, particularly smaller ones with fewer resources, need to be able to focus their energies on serving their customers rather than interacting with government. A business-friendly environment results in good quality jobs for the region's residents.

The Land of Sky region has strong support for entrepreneurs. This is a unique feature in the state as the network continues to expand with initiatives such as One Million Cups Asheville Grown Business Alliance, co-working offices, and social media. There is a growing network for investors and capital growth with the onset of VentureAsheville. The Small Business Centers at Community Colleges, the Small Business and Technology Development Center associated with Western Carolina University, and Cooperative Extension offices provide expertise and guidance. Area nonprofit lenders such as Self-Help, Mountain BizWorks and The Support Center provide capital as well as business support services.

Tourism has been a mainstay of the economy and continues to grow due to increased focus on outdoor sports and recreation and cultural activities. In recent years, the outdoor

sports manufacturing industry has grown to nearly 30 companies in 2015. A WNC Outdoor Gear Manufacturers alliance has emerged, building a strong network of businesses that currently employ 475 people, contributing to \$6,000,000 in local sourcing and contracts.⁸ The opportunity for continued growth in this sector is strong, in part since the products can be tested, sold, and used right in the region.

2014 WNC OUTDOOR INDUSTRY MANUFACTURING CENSUS⁹

BY THE NUMBERS

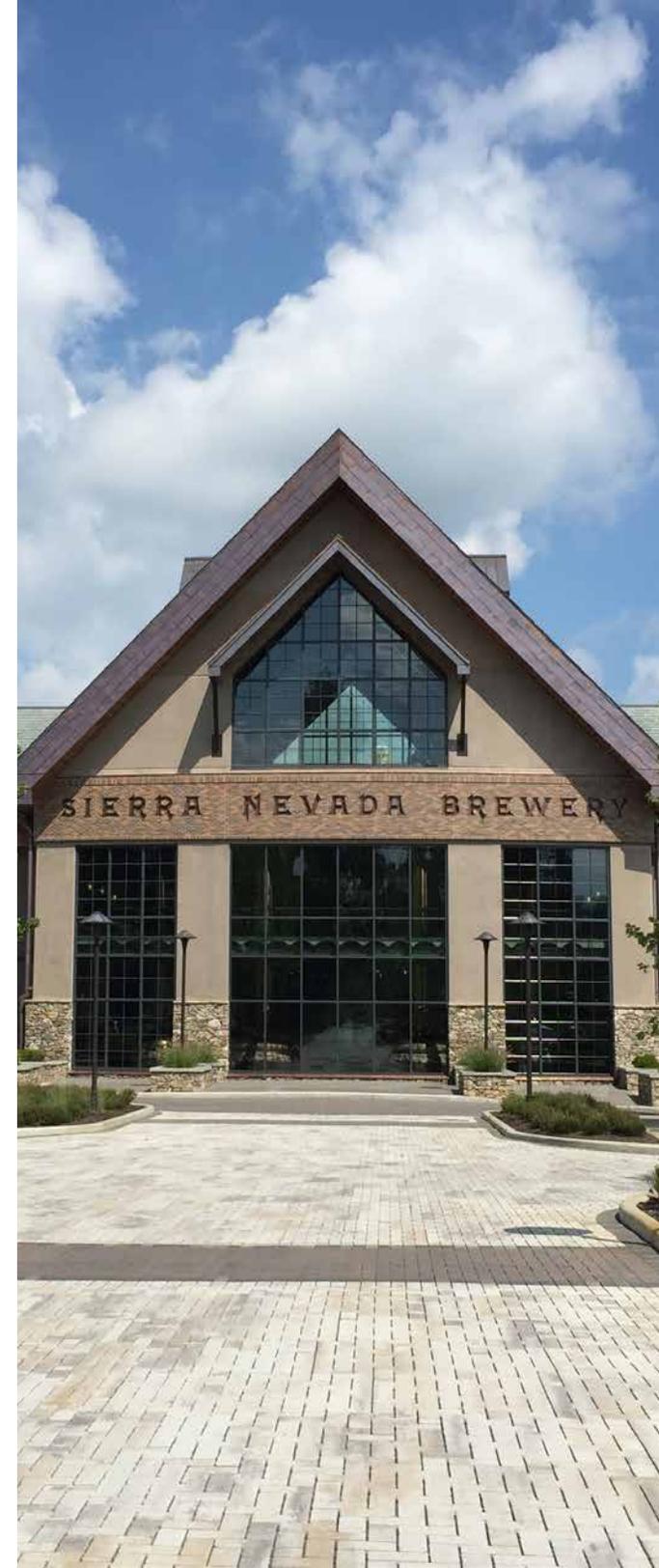
 **26**
WNC GEAR
MANUFACTURERS
IDENTIFIED

470
JOBS
IN THE
WNC ECONOMY 

 **OVER**
\$6m
IN LOCAL
SOURCING

⁸ <http://www.outdoorgearbuilders.com/about>

⁹ <https://www.advantagewest.com/sites/default/files/2014%20Outdoor%20Industry%20Census%202014%20FINAL.pdf>



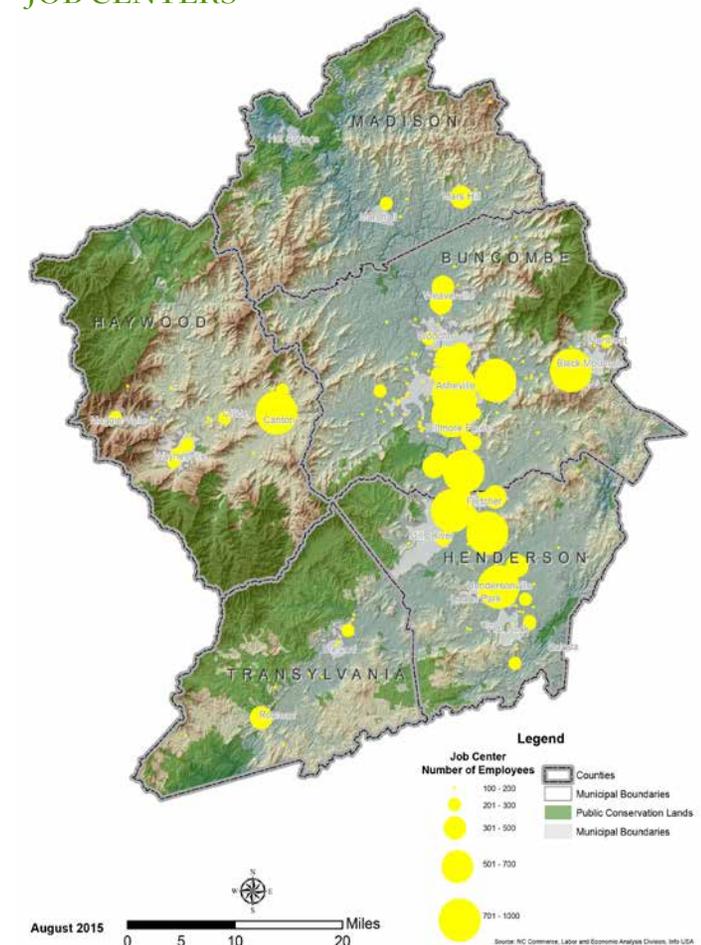


GOAL 1: CHALLENGE

The region has a growing tourism economy, yet struggles to attract investment in other sectors. This is especially true outside the Asheville metro area as a high cost of living, lower incomes, and slow job growth hinder the more rural areas. While it is critical to ensure that the region remains a premier destination for recreation and tourism, emphasis placed on other target industries can attract and retain additional investment in our local communities.

1. **Strategy:** Develop sector-based approaches for policy and program implementation.
 - 1.1 Coordinate data development to identify target sectors within the region.
 - 1.2 Identify economic benefit and needs of target industry sectors.
 - 1.3 Target growth of emerging sectors and ancillary businesses within the region.
 - 1.4 Identify new data collection methods to develop well-connected value-chains.
2. **Strategy:** Promote regional collaboration for stronger networks between rural and urban areas.
 - 2.1 Strengthen and expand existing entrepreneurial support networks in rural areas.
 - 2.2 Promote business and entrepreneur learning opportunities.
 - 2.3 Collaborate with partners to improve urban-rural market connections.
 - 2.4 Facilitate development of a Foreign Trade Zone within the region.
3. **Strategy:** Support Economic Innovation.
 - 3.1 Market the region as a location of choice for companies' headquarters in target industries.
 - 3.2 Improve access to capital (angel, venture, lending) for all types of businesses.
 - 3.3 Identify ways to help traditional manufacturers repurpose assets and adopt advanced technologies.
 - 3.4 Establish business incubators focused on target industry technologies.

JOB CENTERS



GOAL 1: PERFORMANCE MEASURES

FUTURE MILESTONES:

- Complete target sector reports
- Establish Foreign Trade Zone
- Complete Export Analysis for region
- Organize regional entrepreneurial networking sessions

METRICS:

- Revenue growth for key industries
- Number of businesses and entrepreneurs receiving services from community colleges and workforce
- Number of utility cost saving consultations via Waste Reduction Partners
- Volume of small business lending by local community development financial institution
- Number of new entrepreneurs/businesses*

CASE STUDY: WNC INNOVATION PARK

The specific focus area for the WNC Innovation Park will encompass the counties comprising the job centers of Asheville-Brevard-Waynesville-Sylva Combined Statistical Area with a total population of 510,000. This area is the economic center of the 6,000-square-mile region known as WNC, due in large part to the unique quality of life afforded to companies and employees. Creating opportunities where those businesses can co-locate with others within their cluster has led the partnership to identify four initial locations to be the keystones of the WNC Innovation Park:

- The Callen Center, housing The Center for Global Resilience, Asheville, NC
- Western Carolina University's Millennial Campus, Cullowhee, NC
- Biltmore Park Corporate Research Campus, housing the Western Carolina University School of Engineering and other high-tech firms, Asheville, NC
- Blue Ridge Tech Ventures, an emerging technology commercialization center at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College in Candler, NC

This partnership will bring a higher level of research and applied technology to Asheville and the surrounding region by strengthening key assets as the foundation for a stronger regional economy. We have identified these high-growth clusters as:

1. Life Sciences
2. Global Resiliency
3. Advanced Manufacturing

The WNC Innovation Park nodes, organized and marketed as one entity, will have

deliberate synergies among its component parts. There are five distinct components of this world-class research park:

- Research will concentrate on regionally-relevant subjects as well as pure research, using WCU and UNC Asheville as primary members, and incorporate the region's smaller private schools and their unique expertise.
- Workforce will use the existing infrastructure of the region's universities and community colleges, partnering with businesses and corporations to develop programs that meet high-growth industry needs.
- Industrial will promote region-appropriate advanced manufacturing, with emphases on life sciences, automotive, aeronautical, scientific instrumentation, botanical and natural product processes, outdoor recreation and beverages.
- Distribution will leverage our I-40 and I-26 location as a strategic strength and provide regional and national logistical support.
- Administrative will provide professional space and support research and development and ancillary businesses, which will develop as the other Park components grow.

WNC INNOVATION PARK GOALS

2500

Job Creation/Retention

40

Businesses Engaged

\$50M

Private Investment Leveraged

* NC Tomorrow Metric



NC TOMORROW: REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL 2

Create and maintain appropriate physical infrastructure, including affordable housing, needed to support economic development opportunities in each county.

Water and sewer infrastructure represents one of the most costly systems for local governments. Many systems in the region still consist of the clay pipes that were installed in the early 1900s. The unique topography in the region poses additional challenges and expense for infrastructure upgrades and extensions, thereby limiting the business expansions and challenging treatment scenarios.

Broadband internet access enables local communities, regions and nations to develop, attract, retain, and expand job-creating businesses and institutions. It also improves the productivity and profitability of businesses and allows them to compete in local, national, and global markets. It assists government agencies in improving quality, lowering the cost and increasing transparency by making it easier for citizens to interact online. It provides critical access for rural medical facilities and schools.

By 2040, the region will be home to over 630,000 people — nearly 40 percent more people than live in the area today.¹⁰ This translates to a need for almost 75,000 additional housing units dispersed throughout the five counties. The majority of this growth will occur in Buncombe and Henderson counties, with a smaller percentage of the new housing development in Haywood, Transylvania, and Madison counties.

Affordability is defined as a household being able to spend 30 percent or less of their income on housing, which includes the cost of the home and utilities. According to the 2010 Census, nearly 10 percent of the region's population, approximately 17,000 households, is unable to find affordable housing. Western North Carolina also attracts a robust second home/resort community. While there are no definitive statistics provided in terms of seasonal household data, there are an estimated 16,000 vacation homes that are only used seasonally (8% of total housing supply). This market is important to the economy. However, as low to mid value homes are purchased as second homes, it contributes to fewer homes available as primary residences for affordable and workforce incomes. Construction of primary residences at lower price points are also more challenging to build profitably due to the unique constraints of the mountain region.

Expanded transit services within urban areas, as well as greater connection between rural and urban areas, have been identified as a critical need. While there are practical limitations to dramatic increases in transit use in the short term (due to funding constraints and wide variations in land use intensity and mixture), it is critical for transit plans to focus on incremental and sustainable success on both the local and regional scale.

¹⁰ http://www.gro-wnc.org/pdf/Regional%20Plan/GroWNC_Regional_Plan_Final_small.pdf



GOAL 2: CHALLENGE

While some jurisdictions have sufficient infrastructure to meet current and future needs, many areas lack adequate infrastructure for current or future growth. The network of road, rail and air corridors require appropriate maintenance to support the continued economic growth of the region. Although the city centers may have sufficient broadband service, the rural areas are not as well connected. Water and wastewater treatment facilities are aging and/or at capacity. There is a lack of affordable and workforce housing options for our population.

- 1. Strategy:** Facilitate multi-modal transportation planning across the region.
 - 1.1 Coordinate the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for the region.
 - 1.2 Facilitate integration of transportation with land use decision-making with partner jurisdictions and agencies.
 - 1.3 Coordinate a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program within the region.
 - 1.4 Facilitate strategic planning for priority multi-modal infrastructure development.
- 2. Strategy:** Establish a regional broadband task force.
 - 2.1 Identify areas where High Speed Internet & Broadband for middle and last mile is needed.
 - 2.2 Identify locations where additional bandwidth is needed.
- 3. Strategy:** Establish regional water and wastewater planning and coordination to ensure necessary treatment infrastructure.
 - 3.1 Coordinate water resource planning to identify needed infrastructure investment.
 - 3.2 Provide technical assistance to identify strategies for implementation.
- 4. Strategy:** Increase affordable and workforce housing options across the region.
 - 4.1 Coordinate planning to encourage strategic housing investments near Job Centers.
 - 4.2 Provide technical assistance to promote Fair Housing standards in the region.
 - 4.3 Support local jurisdictions' efforts to incentivize affordable housing and workforce housing.
- 4.4** Coordinate housing priority zones with consortiums, local governments, other agencies.
- 5. Strategy:** Support development of alternative fuels within the region.
 - 5.1 Facilitate awareness of alternative fuels such as natural gas, biodiesel, and electric vehicles across the region.
 - 5.2 Provide technical assistance to assist partners and local jurisdictions implement alternative fuel infrastructure.



GOAL 2: PERFORMANCE MEASURES

FUTURE MILESTONES:

- Complete water demand and wastewater treatment forecasts
- Establish Transportation Demand Management Program
- Establish Broadband Task Force
- Identify housing priority zones
- Inventory available commercial space in downtown areas
- Inventory of vacant buildings in downtown areas

METRICS:

- Volume of water and sewer capacity
- Number of linked water and sewer systems*
- Reduction in the number of systems with Special Order of Consent being issued*
- Volume of freight movement in the region*
- Miles of roads in adequate condition*
- Number of businesses participating in TDM Program
- Number of new alternative fuel stations
- Vacancy rates of office/residential/retail space in downtown areas*

* NC Tomorrow Metric

CASE STUDY: I-26 CORRIDOR

Infrastructure:

The I-26 Corridor bisects the region, providing connections west to Tennessee and east to South Carolina. I-26 and I-40 intersect in Asheville, forming a hub of transportation opportunities and challenges for the region. Existing infrastructure, businesses, industrial parks, and housing developments parallel much of the I-26 corridor. Sensitive natural areas, such as rivers, gorges, and mountain passes, also bound the corridor. Large facilities, such as the Asheville Regional Airport and Duke Energy's Skyland Power Plant, are adjacent.

While challenges are present along I-26, great opportunities abound as this is an area identified as an area of growth through the GroWNC planning process. There is an opportunity to responsibly develop affordable housing proximate to job centers, service facilities, and transit lines. Greenway development is focused along much of the corridor parallel to the French Broad River that will connect Sierra Nevada Brewing and Biltmore Park with Asheville, Fletcher, and beyond.

The recent opening of the Greer Inland Port in October 2012 and growth of the Spartanburg/Greenville, SC area has focused attention on this corridor as an emerging priority for economic development. There has been an upsurge in freight traffic from the region as local exports have increased, and through the region as long-haul shipping takes advantage of the new port facility. The Asheville/Buncombe Chamber of Commerce has been working closely with the South Carolina Upstate to foster collaborative approaches to future development opportunities.

NC TOMORROW: HEALTHY AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

GOAL 3

Support an economic development approach that fosters a diversified economy built on the region's priorities, unique assets, competitive advantages, and local initiatives.

The Land of Sky region is steeped in natural beauty and strong cultural identity. The mountains, rivers, and valleys are the backdrop for the music, arts, and agriculture that are the heart of the region. Historic downtowns, strong entrepreneurial spirit, local business networks, and growing manufacturing sectors are adding new dimensions to the regional economy.

The region's population is expected to nearly double by 2040, and it is essential that a balance is struck between use and enjoyment of the landscape, and conservation of sensitive resources. This balance is often included in terms like 'quality of life'. As several businesses and industries have noted, most recently New Belgium Brewery, their reasons for locating or expanding in the region are due in large part to the excellent quality of life for employees. While defining and measuring 'quality of life' is a challenge, most people can identify what that term means to them individually and it is a critical element to include in economic development planning.

Individuals over 65 years of age are the fastest growing demographic in the region. The region is a retirement destination as well as a second-home community. There are also many local citizens who prefer to remain in their communities rather than move to a new location that may be more physically suited to

their needs. However, changing health care needs, loss of mobility, financial concerns, home maintenance and increasing property taxes present significant impediments to this simple and primary desire.

Aging in Place is a diverse range of programs that address these impediments, seeking to retain senior citizens as integral and productive members of their communities. By providing appropriate neighborhood-based health and housing alternatives, Aging in Place strategies increase the personal dignity and functional independence of older adults.

In 2025,



1 in 4
North Carolinians
will be
**60 and
older.**

<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/aging/>





GOAL 3: CHALLENGE

The Land of Sky region has a wealth of natural and cultural assets upon which many industries rely. Historic downtown centers are challenged with attracting businesses in our rural areas. The '55 and over' demographic is the fastest growing population in the region, and there are specific practices that can help residents age in place. Demand for local food is increasing, but the amount of agricultural land is decreasing. Many industries, such as energy production, craft beverages, and manufacturing, rely on plentiful, high quality water that flows through forests and natural areas. It can be a challenge to balance the pressures and variety of impacts of development; however, preserving the region's unique assets is critical to ensure healthy communities, local identity, and economic prosperity.

1. **Strategy:** Revitalize downtowns throughout the region.
 - 1.1 Provide technical assistance to help jurisdictions become Main Street Communities.
 - 1.2 Collaborate with Division of Cultural Resources to develop county-wide historic preservation plans.
 - 1.3 Encourage redevelopment of Innovation and River Districts within the region to promote economic opportunities, building reuse, and connectivity.
2. **Strategy:** Raise awareness about the importance of local planning in ensuring connections between transportation, housing, services, and job centers to create healthier, safer communities.
 - 2.1 Facilitate collaboration and communication among partners for investments in transportation, housing, and public services.
 - 2.2 Encourage multi-modal transportation alternatives to create healthy opportunities.
 - 2.3 Encourage more collaboration between transportation and land use planning.
3. **Strategy:** Raise awareness of Aging in Place or Aging in Community initiatives.
 - 3.1 Identify current and evolving regional programs that support Aging in Community initiatives.
 - 3.2 Identify seed money to create Aging in Community Coordinator position to implement priority initiatives.
4. **Strategy:** Facilitate coordination of local food from rural areas to urban markets.
 - 4.1 Identify potential food hubs in rural areas.
 - 4.2 Facilitate strategic investment to develop rural-urban connections.
 - 4.3 Provide technical assistance to assist the WNC Farmers Market implement the strategic plan.
5. **Strategy:** Establish water resources management and regional collaboration to ensure long-term water supply and quality.
 - 5.1 Facilitate development of watershed plans and watershed restoration plans.
 - 5.2 Facilitate WNC Stormwater Partnership among regional stakeholders.
 - 5.3 Provide technical assistance for water resource planning.
6. **Strategy:** Coordinate on-going conservation of natural resources identified through land use planning – farmland, steep slopes, watersheds.
 - 6.1 Collaborate with partners and local jurisdictions to identify priority conservation areas.
 - 6.2 Facilitate strategic planning to identify agricultural business opportunities.
 - 6.3 Facilitate and encourage on-going support of WNC FarmLink.

GOAL 3: PERFORMANCE MEASURES

FUTURE MILESTONES:

- Sustain Stormwater Partnership
- Establish WNC FarmLink
- Establish WNC Farmers Market Implementation Team
- Develop County-wide Historic Preservation Plans
- Expand the CCAN program
- Develop and implement watershed plans within the region

METRICS:

- Number of stream-miles removed from the Integrated Report (303(d) list of impaired waters)
- Number of Main Street Communities
- Number of Aging in Community initiatives
- Percentage increase in local food produced and sold to regional markets*
- Number of farmer to farmland matches from WNC FarmLink
- Obesity rates*
- Jobs created in defined local food networks*
- Linear miles of sidewalks established*

CASE STUDY: AGING IN PLACE

Mountain Neighbors: Successes & Pitfalls

Mountain Neighbors began as an Aging in Place idea, the seeds of which were planted by Bob and Carol Cumbie of Weaverville. Members of a steering committee reviewed reports of existing programs such as Elder Spirit and The Greenhouse Project. They researched the literature, including "Aging in Community" and explored the internet sites of Village to Village and Culture Change in Aging Network. Their own experiences with aging parents and other family members also provided many important insights. The mission of this effort was identified as "intentionally form an organization operating in the North Buncombe/Madison County population that allows members 55 and older to remain in their homes with dignity as long as desired and practical."

One of the initial tasks was to identify the services already available for elders in the identified geographical areas. It was learned that not only are there are a multitude of services already available, there is also much overlap and duplication of these services. Group members visited Neighbors' Network, an existing program in Conover, NC. Group members also met with Linda Kendall Fields, Aging and Disabilities Programs Specialist at Land of Sky Regional Council, and organizer of the Culture Change in Aging Network of Buncombe County (CCAN BC), and began attending these monthly meetings. Linda and her colleagues provided strong and helpful support and ideas. At this point, a name was needed and Mountain Neighbors was born.

In order to further organize our plan for presentation to community leaders and recruitment of support, a one page

summary was developed with a vision, mission, membership benefits, membership expectations and membership fee. Our initial goal was to recruit a membership of persons 55 years and older who would pay a yearly membership fee. Membership benefits would include: socialization opportunities, a vetted provider list of health and other services, volunteer assistance for personal needs, education related to issues of importance to seniors, and advocacy for members. The fee would support the funding of a part-time coordinator of services, social activities and other organizational expenses. An expectation of members would be their volunteering to assist other members in meeting their needs, such as transportation, shopping or errands.

How is this program marketed to the identified communities? Focus groups and small educational programs were considered. Over time, it was decided that Mountain Neighbors would be limited to Weaverville and that the program would be piloted in Kyfields, a townhome community of 130 homes, located in Weaverville. Four of the steering committee members live there. Membership benefits would be limited to transportation and shopping, and phase in the more comprehensive benefits over time. It also became clear that the trial of the program may need to be totally volunteer and free of charge. Kyfields is predominately what the literature calls a naturally occurring retirement community (NORC), although residents of all ages reside there.

By Pat Grimm

For more information about the Culture Change in Aging Network of Buncombe County visit: www.ccan-bc.org

* NC Tomorrow Metric



NC TOMORROW: INNOVATIVE PEOPLE

GOAL 4

Create a region where individuals have the opportunity to improve their employment status through educational opportunities and affordable access to timely and relevant skills training, job placement assistance and quality childcare.

A skilled workforce is a critical need for regional economic resilience. This has been identified as a high priority by the CEDS Strategy Committee as many industries grow and struggle to find and keep skilled workers. The regional community college and university systems have made great strides to develop curricula for emerging industries such as craft distilling and advanced manufacturing while supporting entrepreneurial foundations such as quickbooks and business planning.

The region is currently at a crossroads – demand for skilled workers is outpacing supply. This is a hardship for the existing businesses in the region who are unable to find suitable

employees. As the region continues to focus on attracting and retaining advanced manufacturing and life sciences industries, training for these job-specific skillsets is critical.

Job advancement opportunities should exist for workers at every education and skill level. Workforce development providers partner with existing and potential employers to understand their existing and future business needs and to develop job training curricula accordingly. A regional alignment taskforce works together to ensure communication and collaboration among stakeholders and to identify and replicate best practices from other areas.

2014 Average Weekly Wages by Industry: Land of Sky Region Compared to North Carolina¹¹

Industry	LOSRC Area	North Carolina	LOSRC-NC	% Difference
Manufacturing	\$958.00	\$1,061.00	(\$103.00)	-9.7%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$801.00	\$886.00	(\$85.00)	-9.6%
Professional and Technical Services	\$963.00	\$1,388.00	(\$425.00)	-30.6%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$1,073.00	\$1,919.00	(\$846.00)	-44.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$947.00	\$880.00	\$67.00	7.6%

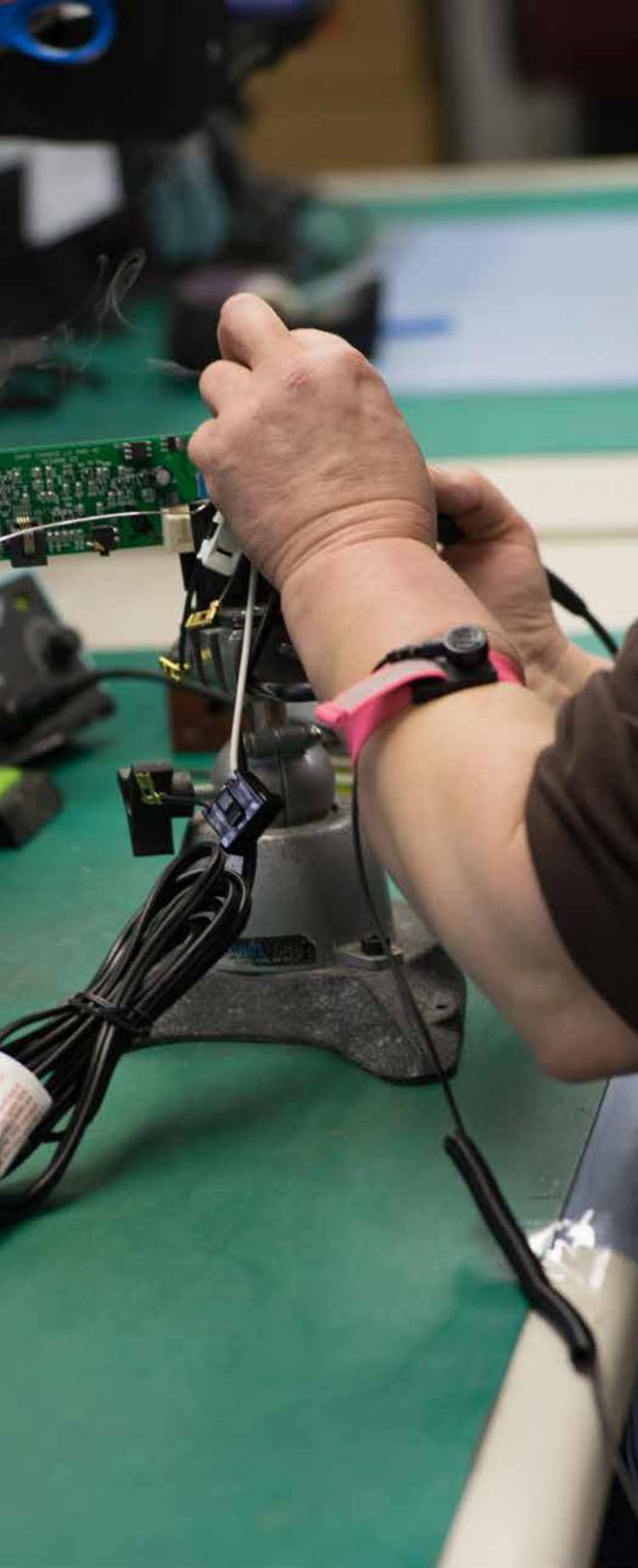
¹¹ Quarterly Census Employment and Wages - <http://esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/QCEWSelection.aspx>



GOAL 4: CHALLENGE

The region was hard-hit by the recession and many sectors have been slow to recover. Service sector job growth has been one of the areas recovering; however the wages are typically lower than in other sectors such as health care and manufacturing. There is a growing need for relevant job training as the demand for skilled labor has surpassed the supply. Services such as quality childcare are in great demand and necessary to support job training and education for the labor force.

- 1. Strategy:** Launch workforce initiatives to align training and educational opportunities to target industries for critical, in-demand occupations.
 - 1.1 Expand the Raising Awareness of Manufacturing Possibilities (RAMP) Program within region.
 - 1.2 Develop a Virtual Job Shadowing program by creating videos about local, in-demand occupations that pay sustainable wages.
 - 1.3 Facilitate the incorporation of applied economics, soft skills, and work ethics in the middle and high school classrooms to prepare students with job ready knowledge.
 - 1.4 Inventory statewide and local K-12 and community college programs that serve targeted industries.
 - 1.5 Collaborate with MAWDB and partners to address workforce skill development at all ages – primary, secondary, adult and senior – with a special focus on upgrading skills of the under-skilled population.
- 2. Strategy:** Improve efforts to prepare workers for available jobs.
 - 2.1 Collaborate with the MAWDB and partners to improve recognition of the Career Readiness Certificates program by businesses, schools, etc.
 - 2.2 Promote the Career Readiness Certificate usage among employers, students, and incumbent workers.
 - 2.3 Support organizations that assist veterans and service personnel find jobs in the region, especially those with in-demand technical skills.
- 3. Strategy:** Increase quality affordable childcare options across the region.
 - 3.1 Coordinate planning to encourage strategic childcare investments near Job Centers.
 - 3.2 Collaborate with partners to support childcare entrepreneurs with business training.
 - 3.3 Identify childcare priority zones within the region.



GOAL 4: PERFORMANCE MEASURES

FUTURE MILESTONES:

- Achieve Certified Work Ready Community status for all counties
- Establish RAMP Program
- Develop sector-specific job training programs
- Create a Virtual Job Shadowing program
- Identify childcare priority zones

METRICS:

- Number of industry recognized certificates issued for specific training programs*
- Number of students in career and technical education programs that are linked to in-demand jobs*
- Number of childcare slots issued
- Number of workers trained, placed, or otherwise impacted by workforce sector initiatives*
- Number of employers using Career Readiness Certificates as part of their hiring process*
- Number of workers or job seekers receiving Career Readiness Certificates*

* NC Tomorrow Metric

CASE STUDY: CAREER PATHWAY

The Raising Awareness of Manufacturing Possibilities (RAMP) initiative is a broadly collaborative effort to encourage in-school youth and jobseekers of all ages to explore technically skilled manufacturing careers. RAMP combines the efforts of leading manufacturing businesses in Buncombe and Madison Counties with all of the key partners in the region's workforce system.

The initiative has brought together the creative energies and resources of the public school administrators, career and technical education professionals, community college continuing education and curriculum leaders, the workforce board's career center and business service specialists, apprenticeship developers, county commissioners and university outreach personnel. RAMP seeks to build a pipeline of talent for the region's vibrant metals, plastics, assembly and food/beverage manufacturing businesses. These thriving industries are competing for technically skilled, creative workers who want above average wages and benefits.

RAMP's goal is to promote the understanding of the diversity of rewarding career opportunities in manufacturing. Then, help students, parents and job seekers clearly understand the pathways of training courses, work-based learning opportunities and skill development options that lead to successful manufacturing careers in mechatronics, machining, PLC programming, engineering, precision plastics production, skilled electrical and electronics assembly, etc. Pay rates are increasing in the manufacturing sector, competition for talent is driving businesses to invest in skill development. RAMP seeks to make the pathways to successful manufacturing careers simpler to navigate and easier to climb.



EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The Evaluation Framework is the implementation schedule for the CEDS. The performance measures for each goal are referenced with responsible entities and within an estimated timeframe for completion.

Goal	Performance Measures	Responsible Entity	Timeframe Short (1-3 years) Mid (3-5 years) Long (5+ years)
Goal 1: Competitive Advantage			
	Establish Foreign Trade Zone	LOSRC, Chambers, EDCs	Mid
	Complete Target Sector Reports	LOSRC, Chambers, EDCs, NCDC, EDP	Short
	Complete Export Analysis for Region	LOSRC, Chambers, EDCs, NCDC, EDP	Short
	Organize regional entrepreneurial networking sessions	WCU, Chambers, SBTDC, Mountain BizWorks, Self-Help, TSC	Short
Goal 2: Regional Infrastructure			
	Complete water demand and wastewater treatment forecasts	LOSRC, Municipalities, DENR	Long
	Establish TDM (Transportation Demand Management) Program	LOSRC, NC DOT, Chambers	Short
	Establish Broadband Task Force	LOSRC, Municipalities, NCDC	Mid
	Housing priority zones identified	Municipalities, LOSRC, Regional Housing Consortium	Mid
	Inventory available commercial space in downtown areas	LOSRC, Municipalities, EDCs	Short
	Inventory of vacant buildings in downtown areas	LOSRC, Municipalities, EDCs	Mid



Goal	Performance Measures	Responsible Entity	Timeframe Short (1-3 years) Mid (3-5 years) Long (5+ years)
Goal 3: Healthy and Vibrant Communities			
	Sustain WNC Stormwater Partnership	LOSRC, Municipalities, Foundations	Short
	Establish WNC FarmLink	SAHC, NCSU, LOSRC	Short
	Establish WNC Farmers market Implementation Team	LOSRC, NC DA, Region A	Short
	Develop County-wide Historic Preservation Plans	LOSRC, Counties, NC DCR	Long
	Expand the CCAN program	LOSRC, Counties, Divisions of Aging	Mid
	Develop and implement watershed plans within the region	LOSRC, RiverLink, Watershed organizations, Municipalities, Counties	Short-Mid
Goal 4: Innovative People			
	Achieve Certified Work Ready Communities status for all counties	MAWDB, Community Colleges	Mid
	Establish RAMP Program	AB Tech, MAWDB, County School Systems	Short
	Develop sector-specific job training programs	MAWDB, County/City School Systems, Community Colleges, NCDC	Long
	Create a Virtual Job Shadowing program	Community Colleges, County/City School Systems, MAWDB	Mid
	Identify Childcare priority zones	SmartStart, Self-Help, Counties, Foundations	Short

EDCs - County Economic Development Councils or Partnerships
 EDPNC - Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina
 DENR - North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
 LOSRC - Land of Sky Regional Council
 MAWDB - Mountain Area Workforce Development Board
 NCDA - North Carolina Department of Agriculture
 NCDC - North Carolina Department of Commerce

NCDCR - North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
 NCDOT - North Carolina Department of Transportation
 NCSU - North Carolina State University
 SAHC - Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
 SBTDC - Small Business Technology Development Center
 TSC - The Support Center
 WCU - Western Carolina University

CEDS IMPLEMENTATION CREATES REGIONAL WEALTH

INDIVIDUAL CAPITAL

Knowledge of business opportunities in target sectors. Awareness of capital sources, business training, workforce development and sector services.

INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

Certificate programs and degrees offered for value-chain careers in target sectors.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Collaborative networks. Stronger relationships among organizations, businesses, and government entities. Regional collaboration through industry member groups, Carolina West, economic and tourism development, educational institutions, and agencies.

NATURAL CAPITAL

Sustainable practices implemented for processing, sourcing, and manufacturing. Opportunities for Land kept or returned to agricultural production and forestry. Conservation based business growth.

BUILT CAPITAL

Reclaiming vacant buildings for manufacturing, commercial, or housing. Shared infrastructure for product delivery to lower individual costs. Increase opportunities for public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian travel, vehicles, and regional connections. New understanding of supply and demands on water/wastewater, broadband, and other regional infrastructure.

POLITICAL CAPITAL

New understanding of the regulatory framework and policies that help or hinder growth of target sectors in WNC. Partnership with elected officials, local government, businesses, and agencies to foster target sector growth.

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

New business opportunities for target sector and value-added products. New capital investment and training available for entrepreneurs. Increased knowledge of opportunities for capital in urban and rural areas.

LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

Shared sourcing of inputs and value-chains. Increase in ancillary businesses and value-added product development. Locally owned and operated businesses with support from local entities. Workforce development partnerships with businesses for program and certification support.

BETTER LIVELIHOODS

New job opportunities and product development. Expansion of training and certification programs for workforce growth. Increase in childcare services, housing options, and aging services. Greater understanding of the demand for services and gaps in current support services.





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