

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2015 PERFORMANCE REPORT



Western Piedmont Council of Governments

September 30, 2015



The Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) was designated as an Economic Development District by the Economic Development Administration. As a requirement of the EDD designation, WPCOG periodically develops Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs) that meet EDA criteria. CEDs serve as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources.

The most recent CEDs for the Hickory Metro was adopted on August 30, 2012. The plan was developed by a special CEDs 2012 Committee appointed by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments Policy Board in November 2011. Its 31 members represent business leaders from Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties (the four counties in the Hickory Metro region), elected and appointed local government officials, as well as education and nonprofit representatives.

The CEDs analyzes regional demographics, infrastructure, economic sectors, and economic development efforts. It also identifies economic development goals and objectives, local economic development projects, projects deemed vital to the region, and performance measures by which to gauge implementation of the CEDs.

This Performance Report shows the current economic conditions of the region, provides status reports of projects identified in the CEDs.

Benchmark Performance Measures Spreadsheet

Public and Private Investment Results

Benchmark	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
The number of jobs created in the region	118	351	532	TBD	
The number of jobs retained in the region	N/A	N/A	N/A	TBD	
The number and types of public investment undertaken in the region	\$7,522,287	\$8,504,250	\$9,100,699	TBD	
The amount of private sector investment leveraged for projects in the region	\$12,270,055	\$2,141,750	\$24,759,500	TBD	

Source: WPCOG and other organizations. TBD means "to be determined."

Changes in the Economic Environment of the Region

Business and Employment Benchmarks

Benchmark	Jun-12	Jun-13	Jun-14	Jun-15	Jun-16
The number of unemployed in the region	19,086	17,457	11,099	10,331	

Source: NC Department of Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division.

Total Number of Jobs in the Region by Type	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Manufacturing	37,378	37,372	37,847	38,541	
Construction	3,555	3,387	3,605	3,411	
Healthcare	21,191	20,603	20,698	20,892	
Education	11,016	10,964	10,741	10,540	
Trade (Wholesale and Retail)	21,502	21,935	22,346	22,536	
Other Services	35,868	36,378	37,528	38,009	
Public Administration	7,885	8,035	7,944	7,827	
Other Employment	1,023	1,012	930	965	
Total Jobs	139,418	139,686	141,639	142,721	

Source: NC Department of Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division.

Benchmark	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total Number of Business Establishments	7,635	7,476	7,462	7,392	

Source: County Business Patterns (US Census Bureau).

Education Benchmarks

Educational Attainment	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Percentage of population 25+ with a high school diploma or equivalent	79.0	79.1	79.4	80.7	
Percentage of population 25+ with a four year degree or higher	18.2	16.7	17.5	18.1	

Source: American Community Survey (US Census Bureau).

Number of community college students by Program	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Associate Degree	12,225	12,788	12,206	11,282	
Diploma	982	1,001	1,033	943	
Licensure and Certification	822	762	779	689	
Basic Skills	6,211	5,942	5,942	4,961	
Occupation	15,354	16,249	20,070	20,792	
Other Programs	20,255	19,585	14,942	11,371	
Total	44,849	56,327	54,972	50,038	

Source: NC Community College System. Note: students may be enrolled in more than one program during the academic year.

Percentage of students graduating from high school in four years	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Alexander	85.0	85.2	84.9	86.7	
Burke	84.9	88.0	90.8	90.1	
Caldwell	84.6	89.4	90.9	90.7	
Catawba*	87.2	89.5	90.0	89.4	
North Carolina	80.4	82.5	83.9	85.4	

*Includes composite data from the Catawba County School System, Hickory Public Schools and Newton-Conover City Schools.
Source: NC Department of Public Instruction.

Percentage of students (K-8) passing both Math and Reading end of grade tests (EOGs)	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Alexander	72.1	44.9	58.1	59.6	
Burke	73.9	48.0	60.9	62.1	
Caldwell	73.7	43.4	58.7	57.2	
Catawba*	70.6	44.7	57.7	56.6	
North Carolina	67.5	44.7	56.3	56.6	

*Includes composite data from the Catawba County School System, Hickory Public Schools and Newton-Conover City Schools. Note: ABCs of education was replaced with the North Carolina accountability model in 2012-13. The testing change caused scores to drop between the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school year. Source: NC Department of Public Instruction.

Income and Poverty Benchmarks

Benchmark-Income	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Average Weekly Wages	\$ 658	\$ 664	\$670	\$687	

Source: NC Department of Commerce, Labor and Economic Analysis Division.

Benchmark-Poverty Rates	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Percentage Living Below Poverty Level-All Individuals	18.4	20.2	17.3	18.9	
Percentage Living Below Poverty Level-Children (0-17)	26.6	30.6	26.2	28.4	

Source: American Community Survey (US Census Bureau).

Goal and Objectivities Performance Report

Goal #1: Build on the Region's Competitive Advantage and Leverage the Marketplace

The following projects were developed in FY 14-15 and received funding:

Local Government	Project	Funding Agency	Grant Amount	Private Investment within the next 2 years	Jobs to be Created within the next 2 years
Alexander County	Applied Technologies Equipment Project	Appalachian Regional Commission	\$100,000	\$1,800,000	327
Morganton	American Hospitality Furniture Building Reuse	NC Department of Commerce	\$212,500	\$2,013,125	17
Claremont	Prysmian Building Reuse	NC Department of Commerce	\$240,000	5,130,795	20
Burke County	Richelieu Building Reuse	NC Department of Commerce	\$500,000	\$893,000	100
Hickory	Blue Bloodhound Building Reuse	NC Department of Commerce	\$259,400	\$650,000	157
Burke County	SpartaCraft Building Reuse	NC Department of Commerce	\$200,000	\$250,000	20
Hickory	Transportation Insight	NC Department of Commerce	\$500,000	\$7,505,000	50
Total			\$2,011,900	\$18,241,250	691

Goal #2: Establish and Maintain a Robust Regional Infrastructure

Local Government	Project	Funding Agency	Grant Amount
Rhodhiss	Town-wide Water and Sewer line Rehab	NC Department of Natural Resources	\$3,000,000
Lenoir	Sewer line Replacement in Downtown	Appalachian Regional Commission	\$273,000
Total			\$3,273,000

Goal #3: Create Revitalized and Vibrant Communities

Local Government	Project	Funding Agency	Grant Amount
Alexander, Burke Caldwell Counties	Urgent Repair for very low income homeowners	NC Housing Finance Agency	\$180,000
Catawba County	Urgent Repair for very low income homeowners	NC Housing Finance Agency	\$50,000
Caldwell County	Single Family Rehabilitation	NC Housing Finance Agency	\$180,000
Total			\$410,000

Goal #4: Develop Healthy and Innovative People

Local Government	Project	Funding Agency	Grant Amount
Burke County	CDBG Community Fellows	NC Department of Commerce	\$25,000
Catawba County	CDBG Community Fellows	NC Department of Commerce	\$25,000
Valdese	Park Project	NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund	\$215,600
Total			\$265,600

Vital Projects Performance Report

- **Conover Broyhill Brownfield Site**
The City continues to redevelop the site adding a fitness center and office space to the campus. The City is also working the Workforce Development Board to move the NC Works Career Center to that site in early 2016.
- **Implement recommendations of the regional recreation marketing plan**
Local governments continue to emphasize the recreation opportunities in the region. The Burke County Tourism office promotes the natural resources of the county for recreation.
- **Implement recreation opportunities in the Duke Relicensing Agreement**
The relicensing agreement has been approved and Duke has begun working with the local governments that will receive recreation opportunities as a result of the plan. In particular, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties will receive opportunities during the first five years after the agreement was signed
- **Overmountain Victory Trail**
Caldwell County was awarded a grant from the National Park Service to do preliminary planning for the trail from Lenoir to Morganton. A consultant was consulted and the plan has been completed with a recommended route.
- **Carolina Thread Trail**
During the last year, Catawba County has completed a section of the trail in Newton and Conover has applied for assistance from the Carolina Thread Trail to complete a designated section of the trail.
- **Lenoir Greenway Capital Project**
During the last year the Mountain Biking trail adjacent to the greenway has been completed. The City is doing preliminary work on converting the abandoned railroad to a rail trail.
- **Catawba County EDC Multi Jurisdictional Park**
Installation of the water and sewer is almost complete and the bridge is under construction.