

Northwest North Carolina Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

December 2003

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The illustration on the cover of this strategy depicts art and craftwork created by Northwest North Carolina residents Audrey Hash-Hamm, Archie Powers, Elkland Handwerke, Delta Peterson, and Jeff and Betty Thomas.

Outline

INTRODUCTION

Vision

Goals

Implementation

Project Priorities

STRATEGIES

Workforce Development

Entrepreneurship

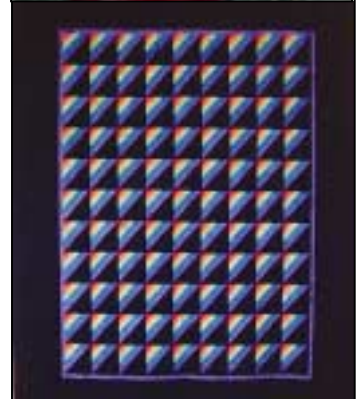
Quality of Life

Sites and Infrastructure

Marketing

APPENDIX

Performance Metrics



Introduction

Northwest North Carolina has suffered significant economic downturn during the past ten years. The U.S. transition away from manufacturing employment has been particularly hard on the Northwest North Carolina region – whose mainstay has historically been in the textiles, furniture, and tobacco industries. Ashe, like the other Northwest North Carolina counties, has reached a point at which a change in direction is needed. Ashe can take one of two paths. Should the county rest complacent with its current situation, job loss will continue and social disparity will increase, making it even more difficult to bring in new investment in the future. Alternatively, should the county acknowledge its economic problems and vow to engage in aggressive economic and community development, the situation can be reversed and positive change can start to take place.

This is a choice that Ashe's leaders must make. This document maps out a strategy for taking aggressive action to remedy the current economic problems Ashe faces. It calls for county leaders and all residents to proactively work to change economic conditions.

Three priority projects have been identified that are critical to jump starting economic development in Ashe. These projects, as well as others recommended throughout this report, will take resources that the county does not have. For these projects, we have suggested possible outside funding sources. At the regional level, we have recommended the formation of a grants team that will assist all Northwest North Carolina counties with pursuing government and private foundation funding.

Other projects recommended in this report will require internal investment. They call for the entire community to assume a role in economic development. One of Ashe's greatest strengths is in its ability for its public sector and local businesses to work closely together to solve problems. Throughout this strategic planning process, Ashe's leaders have proven that they are committed to economic development. Improving the economic health of the county will require work from all sectors of the community. This plan contains ideas for volunteer initiatives that have the potential for making enormous change in the county.

Vision

The vision that Ashe County aspires to is:

Located in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Ashe County offers a crisp, clean environment for visitors and families, and an atmosphere that cultivates clear thinking and new ideas in business.

Goals

The economic development strategy contains recommendations that will increase the region's opportunities for growing its target industries and other high impact businesses. AE has identified five goals for each county's economic development efforts. Each goal relates to each section of the ED plan. These goals are the same for each county in the 8-county area. They are:

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

- Goal One: **Workforce development and education** programs are focused on preparing the workforce for the County's target industries.
- Goal Two: **Entrepreneurship** and small business growth are significant drivers of the economy.
- Goal Three: Ashe County offers a place for its residents to **live, play, and work**, and the County is an appealing place to live for young professionals and individuals employed by **target industry companies**.
- Goal Four: Ashe County's **sites and infrastructure** meet the needs of target industries and a growing population.
- Goal Five: Ashe County is engaged in a proactive, targeted **marketing** campaign to send a clear message that the county is dedicated to these goals and understands the importance of these strategies to improving the economy.

Implementation

AE recommends that the county formalize the economic development initiatives by strongly supporting the Ashe County Economic Development Coordinating Industrial Board (EDCIB) as the county's single economic development organization. This plan calls for the board to hire a full time staff person dedicated to economic development. The Ashe County Chamber of Commerce, Ashe County towns, and local businesses should continue to be strong supporters of the EDCIB.

County Priorities

This plan recommends many initiatives designed to help Ashe County create a healthy economy that will continue to grow for many years to come. We recognize, however, that local, state, and federal resources may be limited. Therefore, we have identified three priority projects that are designed to trigger economic growth and can be accomplished within one year. The impact of these projects will multiply throughout Ashe County and provide a firm foundation for future economic development activities. Detailed information on each priority project is provided in the following sections of the report.

1. **Establish a full-time economic development director position at the county level.** The economic development director should serve the entire county. This individual will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this strategy, coordinating local economic and community development activities to ensure their consistency with the objectives of this plan. Entrepreneurship and small business growth will drive Ashe County's future economy. Because of this, we recommend that this individual have economic development experience as well as a strong knowledge of small enterprise development.

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

Cost estimate:	Annual salary plus overhead and office expenses
Funding sources:	Ashe County government, Ashe County towns, North Carolina Rural Development Center, private contributions to the EDCIB.
Primary Responsibility	Ashe County government and the EDCIB must approve funding for the creation of this position; the EDCIB and county manager will
Timing:	Q3 or Q4 2004

- 2. Develop a business and research park in partnership with neighboring Watauga County.** Ashe County currently only has very limited shovel-ready business park space available. The Beaver Creek Industrial Park and Jefferson Apparel property combined provide 20 acres with some utility infrastructure in place for business expansions. The hilly terrain makes it difficult to identify a large, flat site for development, but that same attribute makes the county an attractive place for small to medium sized offices and park-like business campuses.

Ashe's neighboring county, Watauga, suffers from heightening land prices that makes it difficult for Watauga businesses and organizations to afford to expand in the county.

Ashe and Watauga should work together to solve their related land problems. Ashe should initiate discussions with Watauga leaders about jointly funding the development of a shared business park in Ashe County along the Highway 221 corridor. It would provide Watauga employers less expensive land on which to expand, meanwhile retaining these businesses in the region – allowing Watauga residents to remain in the county and keeping income and revenues circulating locally.

Cost estimate:	To be determined, depending on site
Funding sources:	EDA; Ashe County government; Watauga County government; Private developer
Primary Responsibility	Ashe County government and EDCIB should initiate discussions with Watauga County
Timing:	2004 identify several potential business park sites in Ashe County, identify needed improvements in infrastructure and estimated cost of improvements; Early 2005 – Ashe and Watauga reach agreement on which site to develop, hire an outside company to develop a master plan for the site; Once plan and cost estimates are complete, work with regional grants team to identify potential funding sources and begin applying for funding; 2006 –

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

2007 construction on the site begins. 2008+: aggressive internal and external marketing of the site to targeted businesses.

- 3. Establish a small business incubator and entrepreneurial resource center at Family Central.** Family Central is an innovative facility that provides Ashe County with a one-stop-shop for workforce development and social services. The facility has been highly successful, offering customers day care, computer lab, a job link center, a culinary arts training facility, and access to social service providers all in a scenic convenient location.

In future years, we recommend that Family Central be expanded to provide small business and entrepreneurship assistance as well. A small business incubator should be established within the facility. Look at the Blue Ridge Business Development Center in Alleghany County as a good example.

Cost estimate: Up to \$50,000 for retrofitting 3-4 classrooms in Family Central with desks, cubicles, computer equipment, Internet access, and shared office equipment plus monthly operating costs. Additional funds in the future to remodel wet lab and workshop space in Family Central facility to provide shared testing and production space for incubator tenants.

Funding sources: EDA; North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center's Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship; Incubator tenants pay monthly rent to cover basic costs

Primary Responsibility Family Central, Wilkes Community College, and Ashe County government

Timing: 2004, research successful small business incubator models, including the Blue Ridge Business Development Center in Alleghany. 2005, identify grant funding sources and apply for funding. 2006 renovate classroom space and market space to local entrepreneurs. 2008, plan for expansion. 2006: Begin construction of the track. 2007: Begin construction of educational facility.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

GOAL: Workforce development and education programs are focused on preparing a workforce for Ashe County's target industries.

All counties in Northwest North Carolina are in economic transition, with many workers unemployed and home to aging workers who have inappropriate skills for future high wage, high impact employers. This problem presents the region with a tremendous opportunity: to start fresh and re-tune all workforce development and educational programs on preparing a workforce that meets the needs of its target industries. To meet this goal, it is imperative that investment in education becomes a top priority for all counties.

Helping Ashe's workforce become better prepared for meeting the needs of its target industries can occur on several fronts. First, Wilkes Community College can take steps to ensure that its curricula in Ashe County are highly focused. Second, programs aimed at retraining displaced adult workers can be enhanced and new programs established to make sure that these workers can integrate into Ashe's new economy. Finally, it is essential to provide students in Ashe's school district – from kindergarten to 12th grade – programs to help them learn to be entrepreneurial and prepared for target industry jobs.

Throughout this 10-month planning process, AE has conducted interviews, focus groups, and surveys with more than 300 county residents. From this input, several important workforce strengths and challenges have surfaced. Both residents and businesses agreed that Wilkes Community College and Ashe's good family environment rank among the county's top five assets. The hardworking nature of Ashe's labor force was cited many times.

Based on Ashe's long-term goals, and AE's understanding of Ashe's strengths and challenges, we offer the following major strategies to help craft strong workforce and education efforts:

1. **Ensure that K-12 education is as strong as possible.**
2. **Adopt programs that improve adult education for workers in transition that have not received a high school degree or who need to update their skills to prepare for new job opportunities.**
3. **Create and enhance programs at Wilkes Community College that help workers transition into target industry occupations.**
4. **Develop workforce training programs geared towards Hispanic population.**

In the following pages, we have provided specific action steps, an estimated budget, and timing to help Ashe complete these strategies.

Workforce Strategy 1: Ensure that K-12 education is as strong as possible.

Basic education should be considered the foundation of successful economic development. Those regions across the U.S. who have invested in basic education are also the most successful in growing high tech, high wage employers. The two go hand-in-hand.

Northwest North Carolina has suffered significant job layoffs and economic decline in the past decade. Before an aggressive external economic development campaign is launched, it is essential that all NWNC counties invest in the core of their communities: K-12 education, the revitalization of their downtowns, and infrastructure that supports new economy businesses. This investment will have much greater payoff long term by helping each county retain its current employers and high skilled workers, as well as renew a positive spirit across the community. Businesses in the target industries that have been recommended by AE demand the best possible K-12 education system and workforce training programs in order to prepare the workforce for success in targeted industry businesses. This ensures that they will be able to recruit and retain young professionals who demand that their children receive excellent education. It also shows them that the community is willing to invest in itself, its future, and therefore will support them into the future.

Action 1: Inform students, teachers, and parents of post-graduation options other than college. These programs will help keep graduates in the county, fill workforce needs and keep students from dropping out of high school.

More emphasis should be placed on assisting those students who may not be on a track to community college or university after high school. Assistance needs to start early in a student's high school career.

- Early in high school, identify students who may be interested in a different track other than college. A good example is the Mountain Empire Community College's Talent Search Program. This program helps 12-18 year old students from low-income families define career and educational goals. It is designed to keep students on track throughout their education. Students work with educators to monitor their progress and stay focused on long-term goals.
- Track these students into apprenticeship programs for occupations that are growing but currently not being pursued (construction trades such as plumbing and electrical installation, for example).
- Over time, develop a Web site and printed information package containing resources for non-university bound youth. The Web site and package should contain information about non-college options, links with training organizations, apprenticeship programs, and the community college. The Web site could also contain job postings.
- Establish General Prep and Vocational Prep courses of study in Ashe High School.

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

Funding: To be determined

Timing: Work should begin in 2004. New school programs will take 3-4 years to initiate.

Action 2: Invest in technological infrastructure within schools.

- To bolster economic development, Ashe schools should be cutting edge and nationally competitive. Look at innovative programs such as the Center for Advanced Research and Technology in the Fresno and Clovis Unified School Districts in California as a prime example of the future face of education. www.CART.org
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation \$11 million grant recently awarded to the State of North Carolina. This is the first part of North Carolina's \$30 million initiative to create more than 40 redesigned high schools throughout the state. Ashe County should attempt to be a recipient of a portion of these funds.
- Invite student teams to help school officials brainstorm about how to use school funding. Students can, for example, envision what an ideal computer laboratory would look like. This will help school officials plan facilities that are tuned into student needs while empowering students.
- Adopt a take home computer program. In this program, schools lend computers to parents for 4-6 weeks at a time. To be eligible for the program, parents are required to take an orientation workshop that teaches them the basics of operating a computer, common software packages, and using the Internet.
- Over time, create WIFI networks on the Wilkes Community College and high school campuses.
- Evaluate arts programs and classes in K-12 education. Incorporate design-oriented activities into these programs. For example, arts training for elementary school children could include a segment on the rules of good design. As children progress through school, introduce computer-aided design, graphic design, and animation, for example.

Funding: Ashe County Schools, the Bill Gates Foundation Grant, and State of North Carolina

Timing: Ongoing

Workforce Strategy 2:

Adopt programs that improve adult education for workers in transition that have not received a high school degree or who need to update their skills to prepare for new job opportunities.

Workforce training programs need to be holistic, encompassing not just formal education and skill development but also healthcare, affordable housing, transportation, daycare, and a monthly stipend. To effectively transition displaced workers into target industries, coordinating workforce development programs with these other types of services will yield the most positive results.

Through Wilkes Community College, Ashe residents have good access to adult basic education, ESL, and GED programs.

Action 1: Examine initiatives of other communities for ideas on innovative new programs for Ashe County. Good examples include:

- **Project STRIVE** in Baltimore is an intensive three-week training program for employees. The STRIVE program develops skills for job seeking and job readiness. It helps people in need of finding a job gain skills for workforce behavior, appearance, and attitude through programs such as: group interaction, interviewing, and telephone usage. Many of Project STRIVE's participants have severe financial or personal difficulties and do not have time to enter a vocational training program. Project STRIVE helps these people acquire jobs quickly so they can get back on their feet.
- **Danville Community College in Virginia.** After a careful assessment of who utilized the college and who did not, Danville Community College (VA) established four Neighborhood Educational Opportunity centers that provide GED, computer literacy, and continuing education courses for underserved populations. Through the centers, residents have access to education, job training and placement, neighborhood revitalization work, economic development assistance, and leadership development activities for youth and adults.
- **Southeastern Community College (SCC) in Whiteville, North Carolina.** SCC in collaboration with the Columbus County Partnership for Children, Columbus County Schools, and Four County Community Services offers a Family Literacy Program. In this program, parents and children go to school together. Parents can improve upon their own basic education skills and then actively participate in teaching their children.

Action 2: Seek funding for program development

- Although there are some federal and state funds to support some of this, philanthropic funds would be more flexible to use. The most successful programs (such as HOPE) are community-based approaches.

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

Action 3: Inform the community that these programs are available.

- Encourage people in need to participate, and ensure that all leadership and economic development professionals fully understand the new workforce program delivery at all levels so that they can talk intelligently about these programs in their business development and expansion efforts.
- Include a brief discussion of how a community-wide informational program is needed to funnel these, often hesitant, older workers into new vocational programs. The reason they have not worked in the past is because these workers were forced back into a traditional educational environment in which they did not feel comfortable.
- Include details about where and how to distribute information throughout the community (e.g. libraries, churches, chambers, employers, local media).

Funding: To be determined.

Timing: As soon as possible.

Workforce Strategy 3:

Create and enhance programs at Wilkes Community College that help workers transition into target industry occupations.

The course offerings in Ashe County are a broad range of basic education courses to customized training for managers. Some classes, such as basic computer skills, provide important basic skills for people entering almost any profession.

	Target Industries						Small Business / Entrepreneurship
	Design	Transport. Equip.	Food Process.	Value-Added Ag.	Hospitality	Health Care	
Sample Target Industry Courses - Wilkes Community College							
Architectural Technology (A,D,C)	⊙						
Auto Systems Technology (A,D)		⊙					
Baking (C)					⊙		
Broadcast and Production Technolgy (A,D)	⊙						
Building and Construction Technology (A,D,C)	⊙						
COBOL, Java, Visual Basic (C)	⊙						⊙
Computer Programming (A,D,C)	⊙						⊙
Emergency Medical Training						⊙	
Heavy Equip. and Trans. Technology (A,D,C)		⊙	⊙				
Horticulture Technology (A,D,C)				⊙			
Human Services / Social Services (A,D,C)						⊙	
Industrial Systems Technology (A,D,C)		⊙	⊙				
Line Cook (C)					⊙		
Machining Technology (A,D,C)		⊙	⊙				
Medical Assisting (A,D,C)						⊙	
Nursing (A)						⊙	
Welding Technology (D)		⊙					

*A-Associate's Degree; D-Diploma; C-Certificate

Through WCC, Ashe has access to numerous courses that feed directly into target industries, particularly those occupations that fall within a traditional manufacturing economy – machining technology, welding, and heavy equipment and transportation technology, for example. Ashe also has good access to basic adult education and GED programs. As WCC expands or alters its Ashe County course offerings in the future, we recommend that it enhance its curricula related to starting a business, design, hospitality, and value added agriculture.

Nearby Appalachian State University offers several Bachelor's and Master's degrees that directly tie to Ashe County's target industries. Appalachian State University's Department of Technology, for example, offers programs such as industrial drafting and design and graphic arts and imaging technology that supply workers into the design industry. ASU's Art Department trains students in fine art and graphic design. ASU's Health Leisure and Exercise Science graduates could work within the health care or hospitality industries in Ashe County, as Ashe's health care services become more specialized and the hospitality industry begins to include more health spas and alternative care.

Action 1: Better connect Ashe County to students at WCC and ASU.

- The better-connected Ashe County can become to Wilkes Community College and ASU, the more opportunities the county will have to expand its target industries.
- Provide Ashe high school students with information about programs at WCC and ASU that train for the target industries.
- Draw WCC and ASU students, particularly those in target industry fields, in to Ashe County. Create youth-friendly events in Ashe County and promote them on campus. Work with WCC and ASU administration on a program that sells the benefits of the entire region as a good place to live after graduation.
- Promote Jefferson Station to WCC and ASU students. Jefferson Station provides the entertainment and living options that will appeal to young professionals.
- Enhance Ashe County's entrepreneurship resources. Market the county as the best place in the region for starting a company. The small business incubator (proposed) at Family Central should be promoted to WCC and ASU students through their career placement offices and departments. Let students know that if they have a business idea, Ashe County is the best place for them to be.

Action 2: Build programs that train people and position Ashe County for the hospitality industry.

Ashe County has numerous tourist attractions, including the New River, the numerous parks, the mountainous terrain, the churches of the frescos, and, in the holidays, the Christmas trees. The number of tourists coming to Ashe is expected to climb as the region begins to better package and promote its tourism assets, Handmade in America and Advantage West continue their successful promotion efforts, and the Jefferson Station opens its doors.

In examining Wilkes Community College and other workforce programs in the county, it is apparent that potential hospitality workers have few places to turn for training. The hospitality industry offers a good short- to medium-term solution for displaced workers, because training takes a short amount of time and jobs will quickly emerge in Ashe.

- Expand outdoor recreation and upgrade sports fields at Family Central. Market Family Central to regional sporting events.
- Consider establishing a school for alternative health care. See the Center for Massage and Natural Health and the North Carolina School for Natural Healing, both in Asheville, as examples. Natural health care is increasing in popularity. These services will appeal to Ashe's residents and growing retiree population – many of whom move to Ashe County from more urban environments where alternative health services are available. Spa and health care services will also attract tourists to Ashe County. Those individuals visiting Ashe County to savor its crisp clean natural environment are also likely to purchase massage or other spa services.
- Do not continue to build new facilities for the hospitality industry. When at all feasible, renovate vacant industrial and commercial properties.
- Consider including overnight accommodations in Jefferson Station.
- Launch an aggressive marketing campaign across North Carolina and neighboring states to promote Jefferson Station and other Ashe tourism amenities.
- The goal should be to double tourism revenue in Ashe County by 2008.
- Reinvest new occupancy tax revenue into tourism promotion and improvement of tourism amenities.

Funding: (1) Expansion of outdoor amenities at Family Central could come from Ashe County government, the State of North Carolina, or private funding. (2) Staff time and resources to sell Ashe County to a private school for alternative health care. As tourism revenue (occupancy tax revenue) increases with additional tourist traffic, reinvest new funds into increasing tourism promotion. Work with Thomas Banks on a joint marketing campaign to promote Jefferson Station. This campaign should begin as soon as construction is completed.

Timing: (1) Expansion of outdoor amenities at Family Central should be complete by 2008; (2) By 2005, organize and launch an internal task force to recruit an alternative health care program to Ashe County; (3) Market Jefferson Station

Workforce Strategy 5: Develop workforce training programs geared towards Hispanic population.

Ashe County has seen a slight increase in Hispanic population during the past decade. The Hispanic population in Northwest North Carolina region will continue to rise, and in

the future, Ashe can expect to see its Hispanic population rise as well. Today, 2% of Ashe's population is Hispanic, up from 0.6% in 1990. Migrant workers are typically undercounted by the Census, which may mean that the Hispanic population in Ashe County is actually larger. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that 2,100 migrant workers and family members (uncounted in Census statistics) work on Ashe County farms. If these statistics are accurate, 8% of Ashe's population is Hispanic a couple of months each year.

It is important that all Northwest North Carolina communities have programs in place that assist Hispanics in learning English, obtaining job training, job placement, and saving money in local banking institutions. Along with this, it is important that non-Hispanic residents learn about the Hispanic culture so that incoming residents feel welcome and engaged in the community.

Action 1: Continue to support English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

- ESL classes should be made available throughout the community to provide greatest access to all Hispanic and non-English speaking residents. The Workforce Development Center, local public school facilities, and churches provide accessible locations at little cost to the community.

Action 2: Widely promote the availability and value of these programs.

- A recent study shows that Hispanic residents tend to respond best to radio advertisements and word-of-mouth communication.
- Launch a countywide program to educate Hispanic residents about the options available to them, including ESL, other educational opportunities, and banking services. The program will involve a mix of public service announcements (PSAs), billboards, and flyers distributed at churches, restaurants, and other gathering places. Promotional materials should be in Spanish.

Action 3: Develop cultural awareness programs for all Ashe County residents and businesses.

- Make learning about the Hispanic culture fun. Invite leaders from the Hispanic community within Ashe, or the region, to co-organize a Mexican-American event at which cuisine, traditions, and artwork are showcased.

Funding: Funding depends on the size of the event and should come from sponsorships from local businesses and media organizations.

Timing: The first event should be held in 2007.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGIES

GOAL THREE: Entrepreneurship and small business growth are significant drivers of the economy.

A critical aspect of building sustainable economic competitiveness is linking economic performance with social cohesion. The NWNC region is very diverse in terms of education, workforce skills and economic performance yet the region must strive to reduce disparities among the counties. The stimulation of entrepreneurship through the formation and development of new commercial businesses and social enterprises can play a key role in employing underutilized resources in the distressed areas of the region.

An entrepreneur in the community is a primary contributor and mobilizer of resources to develop the economy, a provider of employment for others, and a stabilizing factor in the society. **The following are some of the major benefits of entrepreneurship:**

- ✓ Provide a productive outlet for energies of enterprising and energetic people
- ✓ Creation of jobs at relatively low capital cost, especially in the fast growing service sector.
- ✓ Development of a pool of skilled and semi skilled workers who are the base for industrial expansion
- ✓ Small businesses are a source of innovation in products, services and techniques
- ✓ Contributing to increased participation of all communities in the economic activities of the region.
- ✓ Serve a social function by creating career opportunities and upward social mobility, and by preserving, in many instances, a set of values increasingly needed in these days of large impersonal firm

Several entities currently provide services for entrepreneurship within the NWNC region with programs ranging from training, technical assistance, funding, and networking. Although there are numerous groups providing an aspect of entrepreneur development, the most overarching organizations in the region are the **Triad Entrepreneurial Initiative (TEI)**, serving Forsyth, Davie, Yadkin, Surry, Stokes, and Rockingham Counties, and the **Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council (BREC)**, serving Western North Carolina and including Alleghany and Ashe counties.

TEI's primary mission is to promote economic development in the North Carolina Piedmont Triad region by fostering the start-up and success of high-growth companies. The Winston-Salem Alliance along with Action Greensboro fund the Triad Entrepreneurial Initiative with a focus on creating high-growth companies in the North Carolina Piedmont Triad region. Although most of the focus for this fledgling organization is within the immediate W-S/Greensboro/High Point MSA, a regional entrepreneurship program could be incorporated into their work plan after a few more years of success in the metropolitan area.

BREC is a nurturing organization for entrepreneurs in Western North Carolina, creating homegrown jobs and growing the region's economy. BREC supports entrepreneurs through the following four focus areas: education, mentoring and networking, communications and capital formation. BREC meets monthly, and provides quarterly opportunities for qualified entrepreneurial businesses to present plans before a group of local investors, the Blue Ridge Angel Investors Network.

Entrepreneurship should be viewed as a career path that all Ashe County residents can pursue. Like any discipline, with proper education and resources, individuals can learn to be successful entrepreneurs.

The education process should begin by instructing the workforce that starting a business can happen in any field. Often, entrepreneurship is thought of an activity only engaged in by people in the high tech industry. This is not the case. Starting a small business can occur in any field. All of Ashe's target industries – from biotechnology to design to tourism and hospitality offer opportunities for local residents to start a company.

Entrepreneurship has a long tradition in Northwest North Carolina. The majority of the region's major employers in tobacco and textiles, for example, were started by local entrepreneurs decades ago. It is this spirit of innovation and creativity that must be reinvigorated. Provided the proper tools, Ashe County's residents can begin rebuilding its employment base one company at a time.

The following are the three major entrepreneurship strategies that we recommend for Ashe County:

- **Provide Ashe County residents with innovative educational resources to help them learn about entrepreneurship and start new businesses.**
- **Better connect venture capital, angel investors, and entrepreneurs within Ashe County and the entire Northwest North Carolina region.**
- **Improve access to capital for startup and small businesses.**

Specific activities to support each of the above strategies are provided in the following sections.

Entrepreneurship Strategy One: Provide Ashe County residents with innovative educational resources to help them learn about entrepreneurship and start new businesses.

In the future, entrepreneurship will be responsible for more than 70 percent of economic development in the U.S. As manufacturing jobs continue to be lost to overseas competition, the U.S. economy will be driven by small businesses. It is critical, therefore, to be preparing today's workforce for a future where they create their own jobs, rather than expect a job with a large employer to be waiting for them when they graduate or transition into a new career.

Action 1: Think entrepreneurially in all K-12 school programming and investment.

Seven out of ten high school students want to start their own businesses, according to the first national Gallup poll on entrepreneurship education commissioned and co-developed by the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership (CEL) of the Ewing Marion Kaufman Foundation [1994]. Young people no longer believe that corporate America will take care of them. Today's high school students watched their parents invest years of hard work and loyalty in companies that promised job growth and security in return. These same youngsters are observing in dismay as corporation after corporation downsizes its workforce and drastically abandons the assumptions that used to constitute the unwritten contract between the long-term employee and the corporate employer.

- Entrepreneurship training can start at an early age.
- Continue to support and get more students involved in the Ashe Leadership Challenge.
- Promote the Duke Endowment's traveling leadership program to Ashe County students and workers. The program will be launched in 2004.
- Ashe County's existing youth leadership programs should involve small, successful local businesses as well as major employers.
- Support an annual business plan competition for all high school students in Ashe County. Invite local business leaders to conduct business plan instruction each fall semester. In the spring, launch a competition in which students conceive of a business idea and submit an executive summary of a business plan. Winners should receive college scholarships or seed capital. Invite previous year's winners to become mentors and judges in the competition.
- Over time, the high school business plan competition could be developed for the entire Northwest North Carolina region, with finalists from each county competing for larger prizes in the regional competition.
- Connect Ashe County's high school business plan competition with WCC's future business plan competition. Ask WCC business plan competitors to provide mentoring to Ashe high school students throughout the high school competition.
- Start a summer entrepreneurship program for teachers. Ask leaders at Ashe's SBDC, local business owners, and teachers from WCC to lead a one day seminar for Ashe K-12 teachers to provide them with tools they can use in their own classrooms to train students on entrepreneurship.

Funding: To be determined. Mentoring, Junior Achievement, and internship programs rely on volunteer time. Junior Achievement costs approximately \$5,000 per school. The business plan competition should rely on local donations. The amount of scholarship awards or start-up capital could range from \$500 per student to thousands of dollars.

Timing: Several of these recommendations have already started. All initiatives that are not currently underway should start by 2005.

Action 2: Start a Rural Entrepreneurship and Action through Learning (REAL) program in Ashe County.

- REAL Entrepreneurship is a course offered to guide students through the process of creating small businesses of their own design. The program lasts eight-weeks, and includes the following:
 - Assessment of participants' potential and marketable strengths
 - Analysis to assess needs in the local community
 - Research and writing a business plan for each student's chosen enterprise
 - Start-up support (including capital) for students who chose to open and operate their own businesses
- Widely publicize the possible availability of this program, the class needs a minimum of 8-10 people to sign up before it can start
- Provide information about the class through the County offices, WCC, ASU, and community spaces such as libraries or recreation centers.
- See www.ncreal.org for additional information.

Funding: Golden Leaf and the Tobacco Trust are possible funding sources.

Timing: Immediately

Action 2: Enhance entrepreneurship resources at Wilkes Community College's Ashe campus.

- Launch a **new Home Business Management Class** offered as an elective to all Wilkes Community College students or offered as a continuing education course to Ashe residents.
- The Home Business Management Class should be promoted to Ashe County farmers. Local farmers could utilize this training to learn about how to set up a home business in which tourists are welcomed into their homes to share a meal and sample local produce. This initiative would greatly support agri-tourism in Ashe County.
- Use the viticulture / winery incubator in Surry County as a model for a future Ashe County small business incubator specifically aimed at a target industry. (*See following recommendation.*)

Funding: A new entrepreneurship class will require enough funding to hire one new faculty.

Timing: The new home business management class should be available by Fall Semester 2005.

Action 3: Create a small business incubator that contains resources needed by Ashe's target industries. The incubator should be located at Family Central.

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

Family Central is an innovative facility that provides Ashe County with a one-stop-shop for workforce development and social services. The facility has been highly successful, offering customers day care, computer lab, a job link center, a culinary arts training facility, and access to social service providers all in a scenic convenient location.

In future years, we recommend that Family Central be expanded to provide small business and entrepreneurship assistance as well. A small business incubator should be established within the facility. Look at the Blue Ridge Business Development Center in Alleghany County as a good example.

- Begin by retrofitting 3-4 classrooms in Family Central with desks, cubicles, computer equipment, Internet access, and shared office equipment plus monthly operating costs. Additional funds in the future to remodel wet lab and workshop space in Family Central facility to provide shared testing and production space for incubator tenants.
- The incubator should contain an entrepreneurship “one-stop-center,” where future entrepreneurs can go for information about the resources available to them in Ashe County and the surrounding region.
- Hire a full time incubator director. This individual will work hand-in-hand with Ashe County’s new economic development director to promote entrepreneurship across the county. Currently, the regional SBDC in Boone has a representative who comes to Ashe County several times each month. Ashe businesses and residents have requested that the county have its own, dedicated small business assistance representative.

***Funding:** Up to \$50,000 to retrofit classroom space in Family Central with office and telecommunications equipment. The incubator director will require an annual salary, benefits, and office overhead funding. Possible funding sources include: the EDA and the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center’s Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship. Incubator tenants pay monthly rent to cover basic costs*

***Timing:** 2004, research successful small business incubator models, including the Blue Ridge Business Development Center in Alleghany. 2005, hire an incubator director, identify grant funding sources, and apply for funding. 2006, renovate classroom space and market space to local entrepreneurs. 2008, plan for expansion.*

Entrepreneurship Strategy Two:

Better connect venture capital, angel investors, and entrepreneurs within Ashe County and the entire Northwest North Carolina region.

Funding for business startup is also one of the biggest impediments to furthering entrepreneurship in Ashe County and the region. The Piedmont Angel Network is one of the only angel investor groups in the Piedmont Triad region, yet seems to be under funded to be able to have a large impact on entrepreneurship development.

According to a recent article by Erik Pages and Shari Garmise in the *Economic Development Journal*, “networks are a central component of an entrepreneurial climate –

a cultural, social, and economic milieu that encourages and nurtures the creation of new business ventures.” The objective of an entrepreneurial network is to provide a forum in which business executives and people who seek to become executives of their own companies can share ideas, do business together, and build relationships.

Action 1: Form the Ashe County Entrepreneurs’ Association.

- The mission of the Association should be to become the lead organization in (1) educating the community about entrepreneurship and (2) creating an atmosphere that embraces entrepreneurship and helps small businesses thrive.
- Promote membership to small business owners, aspiring entrepreneurs, professional service providers, local civic leaders, economic developers, and investors.
- Offer memberships at a low annual cost (less than \$200).
- Ask the Chamber of Commerce, county and town government, local libraries, churches, Rotary Club, and other community organizations to post flyers and online announcements about the foundation of the Association and the date/time of the first networking event.
- Examine the Council for Entrepreneurial Development at Research Triangle Park (www.cednc.org) as a good example program and statewide resources for entrepreneurs.
- The Ashe Chamber should ask a volunteer team of local business executives to serve as the advisory committee for the Association. Initially, the Chamber and advisory committee will organize the monthly events and distribute information about the Association. Once the incubator is established, responsibility for the Association should shift to the incubator director.

Action 2: Create an Entrepreneurs’ Association Web site.

- The Web site should be developed and maintained by the (proposed) small business incubator.
- The Web site should be of professional quality and contain information such as:
 - Links to entrepreneurial and small business assistance in Ashe County and Northwest North Carolina
 - Links to local service businesses (accountants, law firms, banks)
 - A simple guide on steps required to start a business in Ashe County
 - Tips on writing a successful business plan
 - Links to sources of capital in Ashe County and the region
 - Links to helpful articles and Web sites
 - Current news related to entrepreneurship
 - A calendar of events for Ashe and Northwest North Carolina
- Annual membership dues provide access to the Web site.
- Look at the following excellent Web sites as examples:
 - UCSD Connect - San Diego, CA (www.connect.org)
 - Pioneer Entrepreneurs – Bozeman, MT (www.pioneerentrepreneurs.com)
 - ACENet – Athens, OH (www.acenetworks.org)

- Netpreneur – Reston, VA (www.netpreneur.org)

Action 3: Host a monthly Entrepreneurs' Association event.

- The event should include 20-30 minutes of networking time and a 20-30 minute educational presentation.
- Speakers for the event could include: successful entrepreneurs from the region, venture and angel capitalists, representatives from the SBDC and (future proposed) business incubator, instructors from WCC's recommended entrepreneurship class.
- Charge small admission fee to cover the cost of refreshments. Host the event in public facilities, or ask local companies to host the event at their facilities.

Action 5: Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop in conjunction with the SBDC and Wilkes Community College.

- The workshop should occur every six months.
- Present topics such as how to write a business plan, small business finance, and marketing.

Action 5: Establish a SCORE Chapter in Ashe County.

- SCORE consultants are both retired and working executives who share advice with small businesses.
- SCORE is a non-profit association dedicated to providing entrepreneurs with free, confidential face-to-face and email business counseling.
- SCORE chapters are operated in association with local SBDCs.

Action 6: Ashe County's Entrepreneurs' Association should become members of regional entrepreneurial networking organizations.

- Ashe's Entrepreneurial Association Web site should be linked within a Northwest North Carolina regional entrepreneurial resources directory.
- Members of Ashe County's Entrepreneurial Association should receive discounted membership within other regional organizations.
- Invite neighboring counties' entrepreneurs' associations to engage in joint programs and events.

Funding: Funding for Web site development and maintenance should come from membership dues. Charge members a small admission price to attend monthly networking events (to cover the cost of the facility and refreshments).

Timing: Begin forming the Association in early 2004. The first networking event should be held in Q2 or Q3 2004. The Web site should be on-line by Q4 2004.

**Entrepreneurship Strategy Three:
Improve access to capital for startup and small businesses.**

Action: Create a Small Business Loan Program.

- The Ashe County Commissioners should draft a positioning paper examining a possible structure for a countywide small business loan program.
- The County, the Chamber, and private companies could jointly fund the loan program.
- Ideally, the loan will be funded at \$50,000 per year to start.
- Companies receiving loan funds should be required to meet specific goals during the first after receiving the loan. If all objectives are met, then convert the loan into a grant to the company.
- With additional funding and staff, the EDCIB could be responsible for managing the fund.

Funding: \$50,000 per year in the beginning, with funding increasing over time.

Timing: 2007

QUALITY OF LIFE STRATEGIES

GOAL FOUR: Ashe County is an appealing place to live for young professionals and individuals employed by target industry companies.

The most successful economic development regions in the U.S. also contain strong quality of life amenities. In addition to quality education, a quality environment plays a large part in the choice of young, skilled professionals in where they move. It also plays a significant role in retaining good citizens.

A high quality of life is also directly connected to the region's ability to attract tourists. Through the choice of investments in quality of life amenities, the region will be able to target the specific type of tourist that visits. Tourists should be considered an economic development audience. Oftentimes, tourists are the very decision makers around which economic development campaigns are targeted. To get the highest return, economic development and tourism promotions should be closely connected. The audience of both should overlap.

One of the easiest ways for NWNC to become top of mind for its target industries is for executives from those industries to visit the region for vacation. Therefore, tourist activities should portray a certain image of the county, one that is appealing to those executives and other decision makers. Make sure all tourist attractions showcase the county's creativity, natural beauty, and unique lifestyle.

The recommendations offered within this section are aimed at improving the quality of life for two audiences: young professionals and target industry companies. As addressed in the Workforce Development recommendations, both audiences look for cities with high performing primary and secondary schools. Both groups are also attracted to locations with good healthcare, quality housing, safety, ample parks and green space, art and cultural amenities, vibrant downtowns (any size), and environmental cleanliness.

The following are the three quality of life strategies that we recommend for Ashe County:

- **Preserve Ashe County's natural environment and scenic beauty.**
- **Improve recreational amenities for Ashe residents and tourists.**
- **Invest in the beautification and revitalization of downtown Jefferson and West Jefferson.**
- **Become nationally known as a center for fine craft and design.**

Specific activities to support each of the above strategies are provided in the following sections.

From the urban culture of Forsyth County to the scenic beauty and mountainous terrain of Ashe and Alleghany, NWNC contains many qualities that will be appealing to young professionals. The region, however, continues to lose this population. Although Ashe County contains ample amenities that should be attractive to a young, creative

population, its population continues to age. Much of the migration into the county has been from people 45 years of age and older. The median age of Ashe County residents is 42, seven years older than both the national and North Carolina median age of 35. As this group begins to retire, the need for services throughout the county will change

Retaining young professionals is as important as recruiting them. In this section, we recommend improvements to existing quality of life features and the creation of new amenities that will show Ashe's young families that the county is progressive and paying attention to their needs. The projects we recommend are designed to generate a new energy in the county that appeals to a younger population.

Quality of Life Strategy One: Preserve Ashe County's natural environment and scenic beauty.

Action 1: Launch a countywide beautification and clean-up program.

The Ashe County Chamber of Commerce should receive funding to organize a countywide beautification and clean-up program. The beautification program would contain three components:

- Internal marketing to persuade residents to keep their county clean. The internal marketing campaign would include the development of a catchy campaign name and tagline, marketing message, billboards, flyers, postcard mailers, and local media coverage. (See the "Don't Mess with Texas" campaign as an example of an extremely successful campaign. www.dontmesswithtexas.org)
- Assembling a volunteer "Keep Ashe Pretty" team that convenes on a Saturday, for four-hours once a month, to physically clean up key areas of the community. This could include re-painting, picking up trash, or canvassing residents to pick up yard trash or junk cars.
- Reviewing current county and town policies and working with elected officials to tighten ordinances related to keeping the community clean.

Funding: \$5,000 per year for marketing materials; volunteer and staff time. The beautification committee could initiate fund raising activities to secure donations from local residents and businesses.

Timing: 2004

Action 2: Extend and improve existing hiking and biking trails.

Outdoor recreation is an important factor impacting the location decisions of young professionals. With today's technological infrastructure, skilled workers are more flexible in where they live, no longer as tied to the location of a major employer. Connecting Ashe's greenways will create a quality of life amenity that is marketable to a younger population.

Funding: The State of North Carolina may have funding to expand Ashe County greenways and bikeways along existing sewer easements.

Timing: Full regional connectivity of greenways could take up to 10-15 years to complete. Survey Ashe residents to help prioritize segments of the trails to be developed first, and develop a schedule for completing the county / region wide trails.

Quality of Life Strategy Two: Improve recreational amenities for Ashe residents and tourists.

Improved recreational amenities will help Ashe entertain current residents and increase the possibility of retaining a younger population. Tourists will be drawn to Ashe's new recreational amenities, spending longer amounts of time and more money in Ashe establishments. Recreational amenities fall within Ashe's target industry, Hospitality and Tourism, and have good job creation potential.

Action 1: Organize and attract regional sporting events to Ashe County.

- Sporting events will attract young people to Ashe County and expose Ashe and the region to a national audience.
- Ashe should host outdoor adventure sports competitions in which college students from NWNC are invited to participate.
- Upgrade sports fields at Family Central so that regional sport events will be attracted to Ashe County.
- Ashe should host kayaking, canoeing, fishing, and other water sports activities along the New River. Host these events in coordination with Alleghany County.

Action 2: Include Ashe County's parks and recreational amenities as part of a larger regional marketing package aimed at attracting vacationing outdoor enthusiasts.

- Support the creation of a Northwest North Carolina Sports Promotion Agency. This agency would coordinate marketing efforts aimed at bringing regional and national sporting events to the region. The agency would also be responsible for providing each county and town with guidance on developing its own sporting venues.

Quality of Life Strategy Three: Continue investing in the revitalization of downtown West Jefferson and Jefferson.

Active, beautiful downtowns are an essential quality of successful regions. They provide a space in which locals can convene, create an immediate, visual impression of the health of the local economy, and draw in tourists. A thriving, interesting downtown keeps residents living close and reduces sprawl, helping a community accomplish another important goal – preserving the natural environment and green space.

Creating an active downtown requires hard work and determination. It cannot occur overnight. Complete downtowns, no matter the size, offer a place to work during the day as well as places to live, to learn, to eat, to shop, to experience arts and culture, to

attend community events, and to enjoy sports and recreation. To build a complete downtown, community leaders must commit to inducing as many activities as possible to locate downtown. Long-term, new government and public facilities should be located in downtown locations, new civic and recreation centers are located or relocated within walking distance of downtowns, and town and county agencies gear downtowns with ample infrastructure to support small business expansions – attracting even the highest tech companies.

The development of Jefferson Station, in combination with the good main street revitalization efforts currently underway by Handmade in America, are going to make a dramatic difference in downtown Jefferson. It is a good time for County and town leaders to set policies in place that will ensure that future downtown development complements the County's economic development vision.

Action 1: Incentivize business growth in Ashe County downtowns.

Incentives come in many forms, from financial inducements to developing soft infrastructure such as educational resources and business incubators. Several good downtown incentives are already available in Ashe County, but can be expanded upon.

- Waive permitting fees for businesses that locate downtown.
- Create design standards for all four downtown areas and offer incentives (such as paying ½ of the cost of façade improvements) for businesses to comply with standards.
- Jefferson and West Jefferson should work to eventually establish wireless Internet networks their downtowns.

Action 2: Renovate historic buildings and market them for target industry uses.

More than 200 sites--both historic and prehistoric--are known to exist in Ashe County. Archaeological properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places include the Shubal Alexander and Brinegar archaeological districts. In 1995 Ashe County received a state appropriation of \$15,000 for preservation of the Ashe County Courthouse. A 1996 federal grant of \$3,000 was also awarded for the courthouse. Thirteen National Register listings include the Ashe County Courthouse and the Grassy Creek Historic District, the first rural National Register district in the state.

For the purposes of this report, "historic buildings" is used within a broader context than properties that are listed in the national or state register of historic places. We are referring to sites that have architectural significance or buildings that have served as important educational or employment centers throughout Ashe County's history.

- Reuse old buildings rather than tearing them down. For buildings that are no longer in a condition to renovate, keep the original façade of the building intact and construct the new building around it.

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

- Promote vacant buildings to local crafts workers to utilize as studio or retail space. This provides the craftspeople with an affordable space that is located closer to the flow of tourists and daily traffic from residents.
- Encourage Wilkes Community College, public sector organizations, and non-profits to expand future programs into downtown buildings.
- Offer “graduating” companies from the (proposed) small business incubator a discount on leasing office space in downtown locations or waive their permitting fees for renovating / building a new facility in a downtown area.

Funding: There are many possible funding sources for historic and downtown improvements, including the EDA. Others include the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s Historic Preservation Fund Grants-In-Aid program; Save America’s Treasures Grants funded by the Federal Historic Preservation Fund; Transportation Enhancement Funding by the Federal Highway Administration; and the National Parks Service’s National Center for Preservation, Technology, and Training.

Timing: This is a process that should be started today, but will be ongoing into the long-term horizon.

Quality of Life Strategy Three: Become nationally known as a center for fine craft and design.

Northwest North Carolina’s rich tradition in fine craft, arts, and design is what truly differentiates the region from other communities. Each county in the region has a role to play in ensuring that the region becomes nationally recognized for its abundant cultural amenities. This is, in part, a function of marketing. It is also a function of rallying the community around a few, specific projects that will unite the county and region’s artistic resources and form a beacon for fine craft and arts enthusiasts around the world.

The activities recommended here will improve the quality of life for Ashe residents by enhancing local arts and cultural amenities. At the same time, these activities will result in attracting higher end tourists - executives and their families who will come to the region as tourists, recognize the value and beauty of the region as a business location, and place Ashe County on their list of future site locations.

Other counties have a role to play as well. Expand local arts and crafts festivals. Invite jury panels to select the arts and crafts that are sold. Nationally promote these events, a festival that is selling work that has passed a jury selection will bring in serious collectors – individuals who will likely stay longer and spend more money in Ashe County. Schedule festivals across counties to be near each other to retain tourists.

Action 1: Recognize local artists and artistic ventures as economic development prospects.

- Art schools, artists, and skilled crafts workers are each their own engines of economic development and entrepreneurship.
- Invite local artists and organizations to become a part of community organizations, such as economic development boards, Chambers of

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

Commerce, or Convention and Tourist Boards. Their creativity will add spark to event planning and marketing efforts.

- Invite local craftspeople and musicians to participate in Ashe County farmers' markets. Promote the farmers' markets to neighboring counties, to draw in weekend shoppers from the entire region.
- Workforce developers and other community organizations should organize a series of evening workshops designed to teach Ashe County residents about fine craft. Invite local artists and organizations to be guest lecturers at the workshops. These events should cover topics about the history of fine craft in the region, introduce the fine craft marketplace, and show residents examples of fine craft products developed in Ashe County.

Funding: No cost. Activities are organized by volunteers.

Timing: Immediately

Action 2: Support the creation of a virtual arts market for promoting Northwest North Carolina arts and fine craft.

One of the top priorities for the region is to generate a national and international recognition of the region (see the Regional Marketing Strategy). An online market (similar to Ebay © in how transactions occur) and offering only quality products that are made in the region would bring recognition to the region as an arts and crafts center for the U.S. This has tremendous potential as a private sector initiative, but should be started with the public sector (e.g., the CEDS Committee or Council of Governments) developing the framework and contracting it to a private entity for profit.

Regional leaders should with a select group of premier IT individuals to develop the infrastructure to support such a system. Once the infrastructure is developed, "lease" the concept to a private entity who will run the system, in exchange for return profit that will go to support regional marketing efforts. Ashe should encourage local artists to participate in this future NWNC virtual arts market as well as the arts market that is currently being developed by the New River Arts and Crafts.

Funding: \$500,000

Timing: National Arts Council, EDA, Golden Leaf, Private Sector Investment, Foundations

SITES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES

GOAL FIVE: Ashe County's sites and infrastructure meet the needs of target industries and a growing population.

When firms are queried as to which factors are musts when selecting a state or region while making location decisions, labor and education considerations are often the most important, followed by proximity to markets, operating cost environment, and residential amenities for managers and engineers. The only infrastructure that is often mentioned in a regional context is transportation.

When choosing a specific development location within a state or region, however, the availability of infrastructure grows in importance. As infrastructure is available in almost every town, business prospects will compare the availability and pricing of sites that come fully equipped with utility infrastructure and roadways. The availability of a shovel ready site allows a company to move quickly into the community, saving time and energy. It also indicates that the community is business friendly and forward thinking.

The reason for the apparent contradiction in the importance of regional infrastructure versus specific sites is that most larger areas such as regions or states possess sufficient infrastructure somewhere, so it is not a major corporate consideration until after the general location is picked. Therefore, although not the top priority to get a company to choose a region, once they have chosen the NWNC region, it is imperative that adequate infrastructure - water, sewers, bridges, streets and mass transit – be available to support business growth and development – and that this infrastructure fair competitively with that of another region.

Sites and Infrastructure Strategy One: Develop a business and research park in partnership with neighboring Watauga County.

Ashe County currently only has very limited shovel-ready business park space available. The Beaver Creek Industrial Park and Jefferson Apparel property combined provide 20 acres with some utility infrastructure in place for business expansions. The hilly terrain makes it difficult to identify a large, flat site for development. But that same attribute makes the county an attractive place for small to medium sized offices and park-like business campuses.

Ashe's neighboring county, Watauga, suffers from heightening land prices that makes it difficult for Watauga businesses and organizations to afford to expand in the county.

Ashe and Watauga should work together to solve their related land problems. Ashe should initiate discussions with Watauga leaders about jointly funding the development of a shared business park in Ashe County along the Highway 221 corridor. It would provide Watauga employers less expensive land on which to expand, meanwhile retaining these businesses in the region – allowing Watauga residents to remain in the county and keeping income and revenues circulating locally.

Funding: To be determined, depending on site EDA; Ashe County government Watauga County government; Private developer

Timing: 2004 identify several potential business park sites in Ashe County, identify needed improvements in infrastructure and estimated cost of improvements; Early 2005 – Ashe and Watauga reach agreement on which site to develop, hire an outside company to develop a master plan for the site; Once plan and cost estimates are complete, work with regional grants team to identify potential funding sources and begin applying for funding; 2006 – 2007 construction on the site begins. 2008+: aggressive internal and external marketing of the site to targeted businesses.

Sites and Infrastructure Strategy Two: Initiate innovative methods to designate where development does and does not occur in Ashe County.

Countywide and regional land use planning is needed throughout NWNC. Few of the counties included in this CEDS project had up-to-date land use plans in place. In the counties without land use planning, we have witnessed more internal struggle over infrastructure issues – from placement of utilities to encroachment of business or residential developments onto cherished green spaces.

Although the Ashe community may not be supportive of land use planning, ***it is critical that Ashe identify a mechanism for preserving the county's scenic, green areas.*** Residential development will continue to come to Ashe County, particularly after the creation of important new projects like Jefferson Station and economic development activities that draw new residents and businesses to the county. Ashe's current residents, who savor the crisp, green natural beauty, will be disappointed 10 to 20 years from now if the county's most beautiful views are spotted with new developments. Efforts to designate where development does and does not occur in Ashe County should be considered. (The county's farmland preservation program is a good example of an alternative to land use planning. Today, this program includes 9,000 acres of farmland that has been voluntarily committed.)

MARKETING STRATEGIES

GOAL SIX: Engage in a targeted marketing campaign.

In this fierce time of corporate and economic development competition, winning marketers create a strong brand, communicate a unique message, and commit to a targeted marketing plan that leverages technology. For Ashe County to enhance its prospects for economic growth, a business-oriented marketing campaign is required.

Communities benefit from a well-orchestrated marketing strategy that is managed by a single organization and well-integrated team, in this case, the Ashe County Economic Development Coordinating Industrial Board (EDCIB) should serve as the advisory committee for economic development activities. The County and EDCIB should create a full time economic development director position to oversee the day-to-day activities.

Before marketing, a community needs a marketing strategy to guide efforts. First and foremost, communities need to market internally. Internal marketing informs citizens and business leaders of the economic development vision and trains individuals to promote the community with a single message, rather than numerous confusing messages. Internal marketing builds local awareness and buy-in so that when a community markets outside of its region, it has a strong team to get the message out. The use of local media and personal meetings are good avenues for “building local awareness.” With strong internal support, the chances of successful external marketing increase considerably.

Once a community succeeds with internal marketing efforts, it should incorporate external marketing activities aimed at recruiting targeted businesses outside of the region. External marketing, for most communities, should begin one to two years after internal efforts are complete. Then, the trick is to balance both internal and external activities to get the most return – awareness and business. External marketing is vital to diversifying an economy. It can make huge impacts on a community by attracting high quality development, diversifying the tax base, providing more jobs, and creating more quality of life amenities for citizens. For communities today, it is important to have a Web site as primary collateral and to also have material to distribute at conferences and meetings. An integrated approach to external marketing that includes the right frequency of word-of-mouth, publicity, and personal meetings is the key to successful marketing.

Review of Existing Marketing Efforts

Ashe Chamber of Commerce, the Ashe County Arts Council, and Advantage West are the primary organizations marketing the County. Wilkes Community College markets the county to professionals and students.

Ashe County has minimum internal and external economic development marketing. Most efforts are dedicated to promoting tourism. The **Ashe Chamber of Commerce** primarily markets to local businesses and citizens, but also does some external marketing to businesses that are considering relocating and tourists. The Chamber’s monthly newsletter is well laid out and informative. It has information for continuing education and how citizens can get involved in economic development. The Chamber uses on-line and traditional collateral that focuses on the historical value of

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

Ashe County. The simple, Web site contains relevant information about the quality of life in the community; however, the graphics present an old fashioned image, similar to many other counties in the area. The Web site should also incorporate economic development information that targeted industry businesses desire.

Advantage West is the main external marketing engine for Ashe and its neighboring counties. There is an opportunity for Ashe County to present its new marketing message and target industry information on Advantage West's Web site. The county can also better leverage two marketing tools that Advantage West has created to promote film and workforce. The site, <http://www.wncfilm.net/overview.html> is an excellent tool to use in marketing to film companies who are looking for a site for their next movie. Advantage West's on-line promotion of workforce capabilities, <http://www.workready.net/about.mv>, is an excellent tool to communicate the regions resources for employers and employees.



High Country Host is successful in promoting the region to vacationing tourists. This organization has cooperative marketing tools in place to assist local businesses with promotion.

Wilkes Community College has a targeted, well-developed brochure to recruit college students. Workforce training is an asset of the County and its excellent to see the investment in promoting this important aspect of economic development. Future material should incorporate a County marketing theme.

Overall, economic development organizations in Ashe use Web sites as a primary communication tool, which is the preferred tool for site selectors. Each organization should make sure contact information is easily available, link to each other's Web site, and agree to a consistent marketing message.

Marketing Strategies

The remaining section provides a description and steps necessary for Ashe County to engage in a targeted marketing plan, beginning with internal marketing, external activities, and readjusting the plan.

Seven marketing strategies are recommended:

1. **Commit to and support a single organization to lead marketing efforts.**
2. **Brand the region and each county**
3. **Better understand the needs of the target audiences**
4. **Gain local media support**
5. **Launch internal marketing campaign**
6. **Implement external marketing campaign**
7. **Measure and readjust the plan**

AE is providing a Marketing Guide that contains information to assist the Northwest North Carolina region and each county in implementing the economic development strategies over the next five years. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the NWNC Economic Development Strategy and specifically to support leaders who will execute the marketing campaigns.

Strategy 1:

Establish a full-time economic development director position at the county level.

The economic development director should serve the entire county. This individual will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this strategy, coordinating local economic and community development activities to ensure their consistency with the objectives of this plan. Entrepreneurship and small business growth will drive Ashe County's future economy. Because of this, we recommend that this individual have economic development experience as well as a strong knowledge of small enterprise development.

Ashe County EDCIB and the full time economic development director should be Ashe County's primary economic development organization leading its marketing efforts. All other economic development entities such as the Ashe County Chamber of Commerce, the Town of Jefferson, and the Town of West Jefferson, should participate in and support a unified message.

Ashe County's marketing strategy should be to promote a single message, create community-wide marketing ambassadors, and then to market to target industry businesses through the right combination of publicity, direct marketing, and collateral.

Action 1: Ashe County leaders should acknowledge and support the EDCIB and new economic development director as the primary organizations responsible for economic development marketing

Action 2: Tightly coordinate Ashe County's tourism marketing campaign with economic development marketing. These marketing messages should

complement one another. The County should continue to provide support to the Ashe County Chamber.

Action 3: The EDCIB and Ashe County officials should adopt this economic development strategy and agree to utilize its marketing recommendations as a guide for future marketing efforts.

**Strategy 2:
Brand the county.**

Communities that establish a marketing theme that differentiates them from their competitors have greater chances of attracting new investment and talented residents.

A brand theme conveys “who”, “where” or “what” the county offers. There’s a sense of peace within the Ashe County. Perhaps it’s the natural, pristine beauty that contributes to the special attitude that is prevalent throughout Ashe County. Local leaders feel that the most marketable attributes of Ashe County is “creative talent, crisp and clean air, and stunning environment.” As a descriptor, “crisp,” reflects the most unique aspect of Ashe. The air is fresh and crisp – providing people clarity in thought and balance in life. People living in Ashe County are confident and enjoy working and playing hard. Creativity and entrepreneurship play a big role in the county’s workforce, from McFarland book publishing, BREW Bikes, and many new startup companies.



The three **essences**, positives attributes, that best describe Ashe County are:

- **Creative** – people are innovative and full of life
- **Crisp** – The air is fresh and people are confident
- **Breathtaking** – beautiful and tranquil views

To stand out compared to competitors, Ashe County should communicate a primary marketing message centered on a unique quality of the community. **Ashe County offers a crisp clean environment for visitors and families, and an atmosphere that cultivates clear thinking and new ideas in business.**

The positioning pyramid shown here illustrates Ashe’s recommended marketing messaging. It answers three questions and is the foundation of all future promotional activities, although the idea or words themselves might not be specifically stated in marketing materials.



Action 1: The EDCIB, County government, Ashe Chamber, and Town governments should agree to a single economic development brand, tagline, and marketing theme.

Action 2: Ashe County EDCIB should hire an advertising or graphics design firm to develop a new logo and create common images that are utilized in future print and on-line collateral.

Action 3: Over time, all county and economic development-related organizations should revamp their collateral (brochures, business cards, letterhead, Web sites) to incorporate the new logo, images, marketing themes, and / or design style.

Action 4: Ensure that the new EDCIB Web site incorporates the new economic development logo and images that convey the county's marketing image – "crisp."

Timing: Commit to the new marketing brand, tagline, and themes in Q1 2004. Hire a graphic design firm to create the new logo (and future collateral) in Q2 2004.

Funding: \$5,000 in 2004 for new logo and updated collateral.

Strategy 3: **Better understand the needs of the target audiences.**

Understanding how Ashe County satisfies the needs of each target audience will help economic development leaders craft the secondary message for marketing communication. A secondary message occurs after initial inquiry and provides more valuable information.

First, understand the needs of *internal audiences* and inform them of the county's economic development vision. Local employers, the current workforce, influencers, and entrepreneurs are an important aspect to economic development. Recognize these stake holders as audiences for Ashe County marketing. For instance, entrepreneurs residing within the county desire information on how to start a business. This audience also prefers to stay in its "home" location. Communicate with entrepreneurs the value of staying Ashe County and the things County leaders are doing to improve Ashe as a place for small businesses to operate.

Once the county succeeds with addressing internal audiences' needs, it should become familiar with targeted industry businesses, external audiences. Identify target industry champions, who are business leaders that have expert knowledge of a particular industry. These champions understand industry players, trends, challenges and opportunities. These individuals have powerful connections within an industry and are willing to be called on to meet with site selectors, volunteer to speak at events promoting

the county, and share industry knowledge with economic development leaders. The county should have at least three industry champions for each target industry.

The Marketing Guide lists industry associations that can be a resource on target industry trends and prospects. **Ashe's target audiences include: design, transportation equipment, value-added agriculture, food processing, and hospitality and tourism.** Secondary target industries include businesses such as health care specialists, retailers, restaurants, entertainment venues, and bed and breakfasts.

Ashe County should use the targeted messaging in the Marketing Guide and the main "proof points" in this section when crafting secondary messaging for marketing communication.

Ashe County can use these selling points in secondary marketing messaging:

- Ashe's outstanding community values and family-friendly environment.
- Ashe is home to a wealth of talented individuals and creative entrepreneurs.
- Ashe's beautiful, scenic landscape and historic sites makes it an ideal location for visitors and residents alike.
- Ashe's close proximity to Appalachian State University and its target-industry specific educational and research programs.
- Wilkes Community College associate's degree, certification, and vocational education programs available at the Ashe County and main campus.
- Ashe's and the entire region's appeal to crafts workers and artists.

Action 1: Ashe County EDCIB and other local economic development leaders should become familiar with the characteristics and needs of each target audience. *Information about each recommended target industry is provided in the Target Industry Analysis report portion of this CEDS.*

Action 2: Address Ashe's ability to address the needs of its target industries in future marketing communication and collateral.

Action 3: Identify target industry champions.

Action 4: Become industry experts. Track news about Ashe's targeted industries. Maintain a database of news and industry reports. Ask local media to write articles or create radio / television broadcasts featuring the target industries. These reports will help Ashe residents become familiar with the target industries.

Strategy 4: Gain local media support.

Action 1: Ashe County EDCIB should identify local media champions that can assist with persuading the local media to communicate economic development stories to the public. Regionally, work closely with the CEDS Implementation Committee to identify regional and state media champions.

(The Mountain News recently decided to devote a regularly scheduled section of the paper to economic development and entrepreneurship. This is an excellent step. Ashe leaders should support the paper by being responsive to their requests for interviews and information.)

Action 2: Local media champions should assist the county with writing and distributing press announcements to local news companies.

Strategy 5: Launch an internal marketing campaign.

Ashe County needs to market internally. Internal marketing informs citizens and business leaders of the economic development vision and trains individuals to promote the county with a single message, rather than numerous confusing messages. Internal marketing builds local awareness and buy-in so that when a community markets outside of its region, it has a strong team to get the message out. With strong internal support, the chances of successful recruitment increase considerably. For many communities, internal marketing take a year or two to accomplish.

Ashe County has a history of very strong community volunteerism. This type of dedication can greatly benefit economic development efforts. Successful economic development marketing teams with low budgets have one thing in common and that is a community of numerous volunteers that promote the area. With these efforts already in place, it should be easier for Ashe to communicate its new vision and get the community behind these efforts. Ashe could launch, for example, an internal campaign that provides examples of design and fine crafts businesses. County leaders may also consider an internal campaign that encourages residents to “keep Ashe pretty” as part of a countywide beautification campaign.

Internal marketing activities should be launched immediately during a roll out event or economic development county meeting. Ashe County should announce and discuss its three priority economic development projects:

- Creating a new economic development director to serve the entire county
- Developing a new business and research park
- Creating a small business incubator at Family Central

Publicity, promotion, and collateral are the three vehicles recommended to reach Ashe County’s internal audience. The goal is to build awareness among each target audience in a cost effective and quick manner.

Publicity is one of the best vehicles to cost effectively reaching Ashe County’s internal audience and generating a buzz. By distributing press announcements and persuading news companies to “pick-up” a story, Ashe County can gain publicity. Other ways to communicate to the public include: delivering newsletters (with calendar of events) to residents and businesses, posting news in church bulletins, high school papers, regional business journals, bylined articles, and community Web sites. Newsletter topics can be stories that inform residents and create awareness about: *“How to promote the county,” “Planning for our youths’ careers,” and “Why diversifying an economy is important.”*

Promotion includes spreading information by word-of-mouth, attending regional industry events with local businesses, speaking at business networking events with key influencers, forming relationships with regional E.D. teams to sell Ashe County. Promotion also includes calling prospects to provide information on *why do business in Ashe County*, available business park space, and the benefits of operating or starting a business in the county.

The primary economic development collateral piece should be the Ashe County EDCIB's Web site (currently being developed). The Web site should have sections dedicated to offering information to local businesses, tourists, and businesses outside of the region. The Marketing Guide provides additional information for Ashe to consider incorporating into the Ashe County EDCIB Web site. The EDCIB and other Ashe leaders should ask local businesses to mention this Web site to employees, on local businesses Intranet, and in their corporate material when appropriate. Consider simplifying the Web site address and the name of the EDCIB so that it is easy to remember – Ashe County Economic Development Inc. or www.AsheCountyED.com, for example.

Action 1: Ashe County EDCIB and other economic development organizations should approve an internal marketing plan.

Action 2: Ashe County EDCIB should ask for volunteers to assist with implementation.

Action 3: Individuals from the community with a passion for economic development and marketing should volunteer and become part of the marketing team.

Reference the Marketing Guide for more detailed recommendations including Web site layout and content and PR headlines and distribution vehicles.

During the first year of receiving this plan, the Ashe County EDCIB should implement activities that increase local awareness:

Internal Activities

1. Develop a publicity campaign
 - What economic development is, why it's important, and how to market Ashe County
 - Ask for local marketers and writers to volunteer to assist with this activity during the first year. Annual budget should be approximately \$15,000 for hiring a PR firm.
 - Discuss powerful topics in newsletter and on Web site. See page 13 in the Marketing Guide.
 - Negotiate with the local newspapers to get a weekly section dedicated to economic development.
 - Implement a utility billing campaign. Use this to announce Web site URL, news Web page with PR.

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

2. Revamp the EDCIB Web site to reflect Ashe's new brand, marketing messages, and tagline.
This may require some revision to work that is currently underway. Additional funds may be required to incorporate the new theme and recommended content.
3. Assign volunteers to a Recruitment Ready Team
Ashe County EDCIB should create a standard protocol for managing prospects.
4. Design an Entrepreneurial resource guide (in a PDF format) that can be downloaded from the EDCIB Web site. Print a version of this guide for distribution. Promote this tool to local entrepreneurs. Print copies of the guide and distribute at regional entrepreneurial association meetings and events. Send copies to the Triad Entrepreneurship Initiative to make people in the region more aware of Ashe's entrepreneurial resources.
5. Speak at local business associations and provide updates on Ashe County's economic development and marketing efforts. Ashe County should coordinate monthly forum meetings for county business leaders to meet and discuss economic development plans, progress, and new ideas.
6. Establish a "Meet and Greet" program.
This is a program for the county's economic development team to improve its relationship with local businesses by meeting with them in person and conducting business "needs" surveys.
7. Invite high school groups to provide input for economic development efforts.
Ask high schoolers to provide input on what teens are looking for when it comes to working in Ashe County in five years.

Strategy 6: Develop and implement an external marketing campaign.

External marketing promotes Ashe County to identified targeted industry businesses that complement the current economy and help Ashe County meet its economic development vision. Most likely for Ashe County, external marketing campaigns will begin in 2005.

Web sites, publicity, and targeted direct marketing are the most cost effective for communities to "get their message out." Ashe County should balance these activities, be consistent in the message it conveys, and focus on campaigns that will directly reach prospects. The primary vehicle and one that should be used throughout external efforts is publicity. Then, Ashe should begin to incorporate collateral (Web site and brochure), marketing missions, and industry associations & conferences.

Publicity

Publicity may be the most effective form of economic development promotion. Ashe County could significantly increase the amount of publicity the county receives in publications, and ultimately reach the county's target industry companies by having a PR firm on retainer or a PR Manager to develop and distribute releases and bylined articles.

Collateral (Web site and Brochures)

Resources should be invested in redeveloping the primary Web site that promotes economic development in Ashe County and better links content on regional economic development Web sites. The county's main economic development organization's URL and phone number should be incorporated in every activity that promotes Ashe County.

Marketing Missions

Ashe County leaders need to engage in marketing missions to recruit target industry companies from other regions and to see first hand benchmark communities efforts. Schedule marketing missions each year to a region with a high concentration of its target industries and to benchmark cities to view first hand what is working and not working in their business community. Volunteer representatives from business, government, and academia should attend marketing missions. The missions should involve a series of meetings with local companies to sell Ashe County's great location for business. For example, visit regional neighbor benchmark cities such as Charlotte and Asheville. In the second year, consider visiting national such as Fort Collins.

Industry Associations and Conferences

Industry associations offer the opportunity to learn and track trends and they are also a trusted source of information for member companies, prospects. Ashe County should consider joining top associations of its target industries. Place articles in industry association newsletters and sponsor two industry conferences per year to get face time with prospects. Face-to-face marketing is recommended to supplement other marketing efforts. Ashe can attend, sponsor, and exhibit at conferences.

An example of a campaign to grow tourism is targeting travel agents in South Carolina and Virginia with an electronic promotion. Book "X" vacations to Northwest North Carolina and win a 5-day trip for yourself and a companion. Try to reach the end consumer by placing an article on Northwest North Carolina or Yadkin Valley wine and crafts in publications such as *Travel + Leisure*, *Gourmet*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, or *Food and Wine* publications. This will be expensive, and should be a regional effort, but is wonderful technique for building the region's image as a design center and tourist destination.

Action 1: Ashe County EDCIB and other economic development organizations should approve this external marketing plan.

Action 2: Ashe County EDCIB should initiate local campaigns and ask for volunteers to assist with implementation.

Action 3: Individuals from the community with a passion for economic development and marketing should volunteer and become part of the marketing team.

Reference the Marketing Guide for more information on these vehicles.

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

Ashe County should consider implementing activities that increase awareness for the county with external audiences.

External Activities

1. Publicity campaign that targets national publications. *Estimated cost: \$5,000 alone, recommendation is for Ashe to contribute to national public relations campaigns that are launched by a regional organization such as Advantage West or NWNK.*
2. Obtain a target business database and send electronic campaign mail.
3. Develop collateral (annual report) piece and continue to revamp and update the Web site. *Estimated cost: \$10,000*
4. Attend industry events locally and nationwide (as part of a regional delegation). *Estimated cost: \$2,000 per event outside of Northwest North Carolina.*

Strategy 7:

Measure and improve the economic development plan.

In the long term, a successful marketing initiative will result in an increase in the number and quality of companies expanding and starting operations in Ashe County. The economic development leaders should establish metrics to monitor the success of its marketing activities. These numbers should be calculated at least twice a year to assess whether Ashe County's identity is better recognized at a local, regional, and state level. Performance measures are included in the regional report (Metrics) to provide guidelines for progress made on this goal.

Initially and each year, EDCIB needs community leaders to volunteer. Volunteers from the public, private, media, and academia (Implementation Team) should help implement this plan. Volunteers will donate time and participate in business development, public relations, and marketing missions. Some of these activities will require volunteers to make personal investment. For instance, 20 or more individuals should take a mission each year to a benchmark and be willing to pay for their accommodations. Budget figures are included in the regional report (Table of Strategies, Funding, Timing, and Responsibility) to provide guidelines for progress made on this goal.

Appendix:
Performance Metrics

Performance Metrics

An important component of the implementation of the Northwest North Carolina Strategic Plan is a monitoring system to track regional performance in the future.

AngelouEconomics has identified several data sets that have been used during the strategic planning process that we believe will be good measures of economic performance. These data are easily found at state and national sources, are available at the county level, and should be considered good indicators of the overall economic health of the community and its citizens.

Many state and local economic development organizations already use performance metrics. These data are also called “benchmarks,” as local data is usually placed side-by-side state or national data for comparison. By committing to measuring its achievements, NWNC will be joining the ranks of communities in Oregon, North Carolina, Minnesota, and Indiana who have developed successful benchmarking systems to monitor their economic performance. The performance metrics proposed in this plan provides NWNC leadership an excellent opportunity to demonstrate positive results of their efforts and policies and build confidence among the general public that the economy is heading in the right direction.

AngelouEconomics has identified several performance metrics for each recommendation area of this plan that could be used by county leaders to track progress:

Workforce Development

- Job growth in non-manufacturing industries
- Average wage growth
- Unemployment rate
- SAT scores
- Educational attainment
- Drop out rates

Entrepreneurship

- Net firm creation
- Venture capital inflows
- Membership in entrepreneurs associations

Infrastructure & Sites

- Existence of business parks and sites
- Available developable acreage (with utility service)
- Commuter congestion
- Office and industrial vacancy rates

Quality of Life

- Percent of population in the 25-34 age group
- Net migration of new people to the county/region
- Poverty rate
- Per capita income
- Parkland acreage per capita

Ashe County Economic Development Strategy

Marketing

- State or national media mentions relating to economic development
- Prospect activity (info requests or visits)
- Tourism revenues

Each county may choose some or all of these metrics, and may have additional metrics that fit well with the county's goals. AngelouEconomics recommends that performance be measured on a county-by-county basis and that each metric is benchmarked against the U.S. where possible (or to North Carolina if not). Metrics are best used when they are calculated as a share of the U.S. average. For example: Forsyth County's average wage is currently \$31,700 (2002), or 93% of the U.S. average. Forsyth can then set goals to bridge the gap over time with the U.S.

Performance metrics work best when they are easily updated on an annual basis, are easy to understand by the general public, and are measures of results not activity (such as measuring marketing calls or conference visits).

Most of this data can be easily found online at the North Carolina LINC system website: <http://linc.state.nc.us/> This site is extremely comprehensive and monitors hundreds of social, economic, and political progress measures. Most data, but not all, is available on an annual basis.

AngelouEconomics recommends that NWNC counties identify the set of benchmarks that they will track, set goals for when the county will reach parity with U.S. levels, and monitor their progress. We provide an example table with actual benchmark data that can be used to start this discussion:

Potential Performance Metrics Ashe County

	Non-mfg job		Average Wage 2002	Unemploy- ment Rate 2002	Poverty Rate 2000	Per Capita Income 2001
	Job growth (CAGR) 2000-02	growth (CAGR) 2000-02				
Ashe County	-2.1%	4.4%	\$27,019	9.6%	13.5%	\$22,928
North Carolina	-1.3%	0.2%	\$32,696	6.8%	12.3%	\$27,308
United States	-0.6%	0.7%	\$36,744	5.8%	12.4%	\$30,413
Ashe as % of U.S.	0.0%	612.8%	73.5%	165.5%	108.9%	75.4%
Ashe Target Benchmarks as a Percent of U.S.						
1997			76%	190%	--	77%
2000	95%		70%	151%	109%	77%
2002	0%		74%	166%	--	75%
2007	75%		76%	150%	--	78%
2012	90%		79%	140%	105%	83%
2017	100%		82%	125%	--	87%
2022	110%		85%	115%	100%	92%