

Northwest North Carolina Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Rockingham County Economic Development Strategy
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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.

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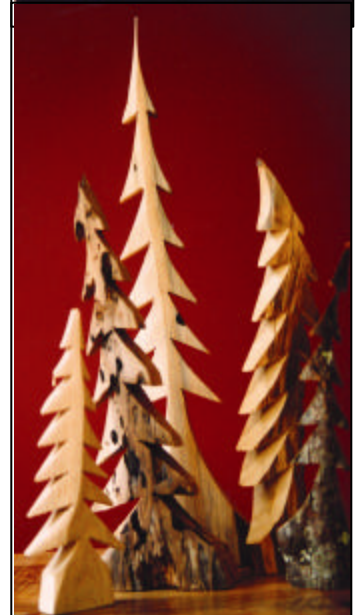
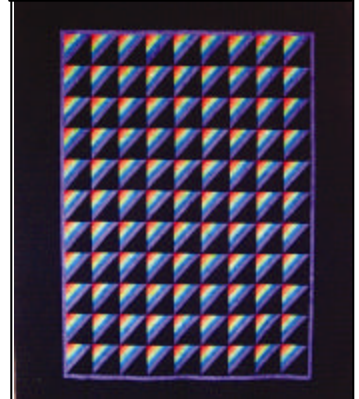
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Introduction

The economic downturn that Rockingham County has experienced during the past five to ten years has had a major impact on city and county revenue, individual personal income, and job loss. This economic crisis will continue but will taper off as new jobs are created in other industries. Nevertheless, leadership in the county must be strong and committed to the economic development strategies found below. These strategies, if adhered to, will positively impact the County.

Rockingham County has tremendous assets in its natural resources, Community College, leadership, and historic downtowns. By focusing on these strengths, and restructuring the economy from a traditional manufacturing and agriculture economy to one built on entrepreneurship, tourism, and an educated workforce. Rockingham County will see positive job growth in the years to come; however, the one key to the success of the county in achieving the vision listed below is commitment of leadership.

Vision

“Rockingham County provides businesses connection to a skilled workforce, strong work ethic, and ingenuity, and provides residents, tourists and businesses an environment of a caring, small town atmosphere.”

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 eight-county area. The goals are:

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

Implementation

AE recommends that the county continue to utilize the Rockingham County Economic Development Partnership as the primary economic development implementer. This type of public/private partnership has been a successful model for the county and will undoubtedly continue to provide the medium for more success.

One of the first priorities for the County will be to convene a stakeholder meeting to focus on the implementation of this plan. A facilitator should be used for this meeting and the outcome of the meeting should be to gain a consensus on the organizational strategy for implementation.

County Priorities

This plan is a roadmap for Rockingham County to utilize that will lead the county to a sustained healthy economy. However, when resources are scarce within the county or at the state and federal level, the following prioritized project list will assist the county in directing resources to the most critical needs and to areas that will have the biggest impact in the county:

1. Further develop the Mayo River State Park, River Walk and Covered Bridge

One of Rockingham County's premier assets is its natural recreational amenities. Rockingham County has developed premier marketing materials focused on these tourism assets and is in the process of receiving designation for a new North Carolina State Park. The State of North Carolina recently identified areas within the state that they felt would make good state parks and where a need existed for such development. Two areas were identified in Rockingham County. The first site is along the Haw River on the border with Guilford County. The second site is along the Mayo River near Mayodan and northward along the Mayo. Both areas have officially been approved as state park sites. There is a private group that is also looking to develop an abandoned textile mill as a major gospel music center adjacent to the Mayo River in Mayodan. Mayodan and Madison are additionally looking at developing a River Walk connecting the two towns. A covered bridge has also been mentioned as connecting the River Walk with the State Park's eastern shore property. All of this development would help to stimulate economic and tourism activity in the two towns and in the county in general. Funding is needed to help Rockingham County secure property and to develop the walking path and build the bridge.

Funding: \$250,000. Potential Funding sources include: Golden Leaf, Department of Interior, NC Parks and Wildlife

Timing: This work has already begun and should be complete before the end of 2004.

2. Develop state of art Small Business and Entrepreneurship Training Center.

There is a fledgling entrepreneurship initiative located in Madison that is underutilized. Many in the county feel that the primary reason that this small business incubator is not working is due to its location – not in the center of the county and not near the major population centers. AE recommends that Rockingham County move this incubator to the "SCORE" building located in Wentworth and expand the program to include a youth entrepreneurship program similar to the CARTS (Center for Advanced Research and Technology) in Fresno, California. The SCORE Building is directly across from the Rockingham Community College, adjacent to the County

Administration Offices and is currently underutilized. The County should develop a feasibility study and for developing this building into a state of the art business and technology incubator for the county. The County should then develop this building similar to CARTS.

Funding: \$150,000 (feasibility Study) and \$2-3 million (estimate for development). Potential funding source include: EDA, Golden Leaf, Private Sector Investment, NCDOC

Timing: The development of a feasibility study should begin in early 2004 .

3. Expand Airport to accommodate increased commuter airline traffic due to FedEx expansion at Greensboro-Winston-Salem International Airport.

Currently, the Rockingham County Airport has a 5,200' long by 100' wide runway, with a strength rating of approximately 24,000 pounds. A partial taxiway extends approximately half the length of the runway. The airport is served by a combination of maintenance hangar/terminal building. Three sets of hangars and several corporate size hangars provide storage space for based aircraft. In order to attract additional corporate users and to prepare for anticipated growth, the regional Airport Authority has proposed to expand the airport runway and taxiway facilities.

Funding: \$4.6 million is the budgeted amount for this expansion. The FAA Improvement Plan provides 90% of funding and local governments must secure the remaining 10%. The County has provided some matching and does not anticipate any additional funding required. The needs are for FAA to fund the 90% so that Rockingham County can be prepared for growth when FedEx begins construction and operation. Potential funding source include FAA

Timing: 2004

4. Develop I-73/I-74 (this strategy is a regional Priority Project and is described further in that report)

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

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

Rockingham County has made significant progress in Community College infrastructure and program development over the last several years. Yet, the K-12 education system in Rockingham County is in need of assistance. Current efforts such as addressing high drop out rates must continue. Workforce Development is the foundation for economic success. Leaders in the county must embrace this perspective and fund infrastructure and program development at schools to bring the quality of education up. The general public must also see the leadership in the county committed to education reform and improvement. They must see and hear the county leadership espouse the importance of obtaining a high school diploma. Without improvements in workforce and education the quality of job growth will be poor and therefore, the revenue to the county, in terms of sales tax and property tax will not improve.

There are several areas that the county can focus on to address the changing economy and the job losses that the county has experienced over the past few years. The following are the most critical areas for Rockingham County to focus workforce and education efforts:

- **Ensure K-12 Education is as strong as possible.**
- **Improve adult education for workers in transition**
- **Adopt and enhance programs at Rockingham Community College that create workers to supply target industries**
- **Develop workforce-training programs geared towards Hispanic population.**

Workforce Strategy 1: Ensure 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 lay offs 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 pay off 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 that the best possible K-12 education system and workforce training programs are in place that are preparing the workforce to succeed 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 potential, and therefore will support them into the future.

The following chart shows the current technological training offered through the high schools in Rockingham County:

County and Name of School	Vocational Program (K-12)					
	Agriculture	Business Education	Family and Consumer Sciences	Health Occupation Education	Techonology Education	Trade and Industrial Education
Rockingham						
McMichael HS	X	X	X		X	X
Morehead HS			X	X	X	
Reidsville HS		X	X	X	X	
Rockingham HS	X		X			

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.

- 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 all high schools that are geared towards targeted industries.

- Promote the resources of the Community College in all high schools.

Funding: To be determined; Possible sources: Golden Leaf Foundation

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, all school systems 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 \$11million 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. Rockingham County should attempt to be a recipient of a portion of these funds.
- Invite student teams to help school officials brainstorm on how to use new school bond revenue. 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 WI-FI networks on the Community College and all 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.

Action 3: Develop Adopt-A-School Programs in every school in Rockingham County.

- Develop a model program for every school to support and utilize. Consider developing a program that could be replicated. The following is a description on the Austin Independent School District's Partners in Education Program. A similar type of program has been developed within W-S, and could be expanded and then replicated as a model to use throughout the region.

Austin Partners in Education is a collaborative effort between AISD and the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce. It encourages cooperative business and community involvement in public schools to enhance the quality of education for Austin students. Its mission is to create and foster effective community partnerships that support and enrich student learning and success. Partners are matched with

the school or AISD program of their choice and provide volunteer services, in-kind contributions and cash donations. The program is campus-based. AISD central office staff and the Chamber of Commerce facilitate the program and support the campus representatives. Schools consult their Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs), conduct needs assessments and develop Partner Plans to guide their partners' efforts.

Austin Partners in Education recruits, train and sustains partners, mentors, and volunteers. All mentors have to go through a mentor training program. In 1998-99, the program had between 800 and 2,000 mentors on 70 campuses, mainly in elementary schools. In 1999, it received 530 applications from community members who want to be mentors. APIE acts as a clearinghouse for volunteers. Austin Partners in Education was established as Adopt-A-School in 1983 in partnership between the Austin Chamber of Commerce and the AISD. The program began with 12 business and community organizations adopting 25 schools. The Adopt-A-School program was expanded between 1986 and 1988 to all schools and district programs with 576 partners. The number of adopters increased nearly four-fold to 2,059 between 1984 and 1995. In 1998-99, the program included 2,118 community partnerships and provided services or resources to 123 schools and programs.

The program changed its name in 1988 to Austin Partners in Education. During 1998-99, Austin Partners in Education consisted of 363 Partners and 1,774 Friends. Partners are organizations committed to a consistent, sustained relationship with a school or district program. Friends provide direct support or service to a school or district program through one-time or occasional offerings of assistance. In its 16-year history, Partners in Education provided more than \$52 million in donations of time and financial resources to AISD schools. In 1998-99, the program generated about \$7 million in contributed resources, a \$90-per-student return on investment versus a cost of \$5 per student.

Funding: To be determined. Possible funding sources include: the Bill Gates Foundation Grant and State of North Carolina

Timing: 2004

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.

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

- Project QUEST in San Antonio
- STRIVE in Baltimore
- HOPE in Detroit
- **Danville Community College in Kentucky.** 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.

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. TBD (after program proposal has been developed)

Timing: Begin in 2004

Workforce Strategy 3: Adopt and enhance programs at Rockingham Community College that create workers to supply target industries.

The following chart illustrates the skills that are currently being addressed and that need to be developed at the Rockingham Community College to develop a workforce for the targeted industries recommended by AE to Rockingham:

	Target Industries						
	Logistics, Distribution	Design	Materials	Transportation Equipment	Food Processing	Value-Added Agriculture	Hospitality
Rockingham Community College							
Electrical/Electronics (A,D,C)	⊙						
Electronics Technology (A,D,C)	⊙						
Fluid Power Technology (C)			⊙				
Horticulture Technology (A,C)						⊙	
Machining Technology (A,D)	⊙		⊙	⊙	⊙		
Mfg Engineering Tech (C)			⊙		⊙		
Mechanical Technology (C)	⊙		⊙		⊙		
Welding Technology (C)				⊙			

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

Action 1: Educate Rockingham Community College about target industry workforce needs.

- Provide CC leaders information on the target industries, such as the types of businesses within these industries, specific training needs that these businesses will need.
- Seek existing target industry businesses within the County to express their interest in these programs.

Funding: \$NA

Timing: Immediate

Action 2: Enhance workforce training for the health care industry.

Education and training is in place that is geared towards the health care industry. The primary hurdle to overcome in this area is that a nursing certificate generally requires a two-year curriculum commitment, and that is only before students meet the minimum requirements. Rockingham Community College should ensure that their programs are not just geared towards nursing and similar fields, but also for assisted living.

- The medical transcription program is a model program that could be expanded. Seek businesses within Rockingham County who may take advantage of these workers so that graduates of this program can work within the county.

Funding: \$TBD

Timing: Begin discussions in 2004/5 with local and regional health providers, universities and community colleges to

Action 3: Market the Community College

- Improve signage throughout the County
- Continue to introduce high school students to programs at the Community College, such as the 8th grade exposure program and College for Kids during the summer.

Funding: \$10,000 for billboard space (sources for funding could come from private sector participation, ISD, County, and Community College)

Timing: Early in 2004 begin developing plan for marketing

Action 4: Expand CC programs to meet existing and future business needs (private sector driven training)

- Seek input from major businesses within county about their existing and future needs.
- Seek resources from businesses to help support training programs.

Funding: \$TBD (from private businesses)

Timing: Immediate

Action 5: Economic Development groups and Rockingham Community College should become familiar with target industry skill requirements in further developing programs to meet current and future needs.

- Hold quarterly workshops with Community College Leaders to develop regional strategic plans geared towards this initiative.
- Build programs that train people and position Rockingham County for the hospitality industry. Rockingham County has numerous tourist attractions, major annual festivals, and historic downtowns. The number of tourists coming to the Region is expected to climb as Rockingham County begins to better package and promote its tourism assets and the Yadkin Valley viticulture region brand becomes more widely recognized. In examining the 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 small amount of time and jobs will quickly emerge in Rockingham County.
- Consider having the County tourism specialist provide training to high school students on careers in hospitality.
- Develop a program curriculum on hospitality training at the Community College.

Workforce Strategy 4: Develop workforce training programs geared towards Hispanic population.

As have all the counties in the region, Rockingham County has seen an increase in Hispanic population during the past decade. The Hispanic population in Northwest North Carolina will continue to rise. Migrant workers are typically undercounted by the Census, which may mean that the Hispanic population in Rockingham County is actually much larger.

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 residents and businesses.

- Make learning about the Hispanic culture fun. Invite leaders from the Hispanic community within Rockingham County, to co-organize a Mexican-American event at which cuisine, traditions, and artwork are showcased.
- Work with local banks to become more flexible to the needs of Hispanic workers. Provide information on banking in Spanish. Be more flexible on the type of identification required to open a savings account.

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

Timing: The first event should be held in 2005.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGIES

GOAL: 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 natural features, yet the region must strive to reduce economic 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 and reducing this disparity.

The 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

Where is the opportunity?

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, Rockingham, Rockingham, Stokes, and Rockingham Counties, and the **Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council (BREC)**, serving Western North Carolina and including Rockingham 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 workplan 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.

The following are the most critical areas for Rockingham County to focus entrepreneurial efforts:

- **Develop state of art Small Business and Entrepreneurship Training Center for County.**
- **Provide residents in Rockingham County with innovative educational resources to help them learn about entrepreneurship and start new businesses.**
- **Better connect venture capital and angel investors across the region with Rockingham County Entrepreneurs**

Entrepreneurship Strategy One: Develop state of art Small Business and Entrepreneurship Training Center for County.

There is a emerging entrepreneurship initiative located in Madison that is underutilized. Many in the county feel that the primary reason that this small business incubator is not working is due to its location – not in the center of the county and not near the major population centers. AE recommends that Rockingham County move this incubator to the “SCORE” building located in Wentworth and expand the program to include a youth entrepreneurship program similar to the CARTS (Center for Advanced Research and Technology) in Fresno, California. The SCORE Building is directly across from the Rockingham Community College, adjacent to the County Administration Offices and is currently underutilized. The County should develop a feasibility study and for developing this building into a state of the art business and technology incubator for the county. The County should then develop this building similar to CARTS.

Action 1: Create an action committee to determine full purpose for SCORE building.

Action 2: Write grant for feasibility study to determine overall cost of upfitting building to accommodate the small business incubator.

Action 3: Once feasibility study is complete, seek funding to complete project. Educate public throughout process about this project.

Funding: \$150,000 (feasibility Study); \$2-3 million (estimate for development);
Potential funding source include: EDA, Golden Leaf, Private Sector Investment, NCDOC.

Timing: Begin developing action committee in early 2004 in order to develop applications for funding in early 2005. Seek to develop this in late 2005/early 2006.

Entrepreneurship Strategy Two: Provide residents in Rockingham County 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 Kauffman 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.

- **Start a school mentor program or Junior Achievement program in every junior high and high school in Rockingham County.** This program will invite local business owners to talk to students about why they started their own business, what they enjoy about it, and how they did it. Investigate other Junior Achievement programs throughout country that are unique and successful.
- **Develop a youth leadership-training program in 10th/11th grade for every high school in Rockingham County.** Look to the John Ben Sheppard Institute, or the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA, utility company in Austin, Texas) as model programs for youth leadership.
- **Support an annual business plan competition for all high school students in Rockingham 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. TEI could lead this initiative.
- **Start a summer entrepreneurship training program for teachers.** Ask leaders at TEI, Community Colleges, and private businesses to lead a 1 day seminar for 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. 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. Seek funding for some of these initiatives from the NC Rural Entrepreneurship Initiative.

Timing: Several of these recommendations have already started. All initiatives that are not currently underway should start by 2004.

Entrepreneurship Strategy Three: Better connect venture capital, angel investors, and entrepreneurs within Rockingham County.

Funding for business startup is also one of the biggest impediments to furthering entrepreneurship Rockingham County. 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: Broaden the Triad Entrepreneur Initiative to a Regional scope

- 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 city government, local libraries, churches, 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.
- Look at the newly formed Rural Entrepreneurship Program (<http://www.ncruralcenter.org/entrepreneurship/about.asp>)

Action 2: 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 Rockingham County, venture and angel capitalists, representatives from the SBDC (and SBTDC) and business incubator, instructors from Community Colleges’ recommended entrepreneurship class.

Action 3: Host a one-day entrepreneurial education workshop in conjunction with the SBDC and Community Colleges.

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

Action 4: Develop a Regional Entrepreneurs’ Association.

- Action Greensboro and Winston-Salem Alliance are already funding the TEI with similar large contributions. This type of regional collaboration towards entrepreneurship is an excellent start.
- Seek assistance of the newly formed NC Rural Entrepreneurship Initiative

Rockingham County Economic Development Strategy

Funding: Charge members a small admission price to attend monthly networking events (to cover the cost of the facility and refreshments), but obtain private funding to support association events during first year.

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.

QUALITY OF LIFE STRATEGIES

GOAL: Rockingham 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 Rockingham County's ability to attract tourists. Through the choice of investments in quality of life amenities, Rockingham County 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 Rockingham County 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.

From the urban culture of Forsyth County to the scenic beauty and mountainous terrain of more rural counties, NWNC contains many qualities that will be appealing to young professionals. Future marketing efforts, for example, could be aimed at attracting younger tourists to Rockingham County by promoting Yadkin Valley wineries or by promoting the county and region's tremendous outdoor recreation opportunities, and accessibility to the other areas in the southeast.

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 Rockingham County's young families that Rockingham 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.

The following are the quality of life strategies that AE recommends for Rockingham County:

- **Foster an Environment to Take Advantage of Yadkin Valley Viticulture Region**

- **Expand parks and recreation, preserve green space and improve trail connectivity.**
- **Become nationally known as a center for fine craft and design.**
- **Invest in the redevelopment and beautification of downtowns**

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

Quality of Life Strategy One: Foster an Environment to Take Advantage of Yadkin Valley Viticulture Region

One of the greatest opportunities that the Region has is its growing wine industry. How will the wine industry benefit Rockingham County? The wine industry will compliment all other tourism related activities in Rockingham county and the region. Consider some of this information from the NAPA Valley (from www.napavintners.com):

- “While it may appear to the casual observer that Napa County is bursting with grapevines, the truth is that only nine percent of Napa County is planted in vineyards and less than three percent remains suitable for grape planting, according to the findings of the Napa County Watershed Task Force.
- Napa County encompasses 485,120 acres in total and just 45,275 acres are planted in vineyards.
- Our reputation in the world of wine is huge, yet Napa Valley accounts for only four percent of California's total wine production.
- Napa Valley accounts for only five percent of total United States vineyard acreage.
- In 1968, Napa Valley vintners and others in the community had the forethought to preserve open space and prevent future over-development of 30,000 acres by enacting the nation's first Agriculture Preserve. Since its adoption, not one acre of land has been removed from the Preserve.
- Local landowners have placed a total of 11,000 acres of agricultural land in the Land Trust of Napa County, ensuring their land will never be developed. Another 16,000 acres are protected under the Williamson Act, a program that provides incentives to keep land in agriculture production and open space.
- The Napa Valley Vintners Association, through the Napa Valley Wine Auction, has dedicated almost \$2 million to Napa Valley Community Housing to fund affordable housing projects, including those that house farm workers.
- Vineyards and surrounding open space provide a natural habitat for a variety of wildlife species and many growers invite birds, including owls and hawks, into their vineyards by installing special protective bird boxes. The birds of prey help control rodent and pest populations in and around the vineyards.
- The pesticide most commonly used in Napa Valley is sulfur. Sulfur, an organic fungicide, is used to control mildew and rot in fruits and ornamental plants. Sulfur is a natural compound found in mineral form in both aquatic and soil environments, and is certified for use in organic farming.
- The Napa Valley Wine Auction, first held in 1981, is the world's most successful wine charity event with all of the proceeds staying within Napa County.
- Through the Auction, the NVVA has donated almost \$50 million to Napa County health care, youth development and affordable housing organizations over the past 23 years.

- Napa County has a long, rich history in grape growing with the first vines planted in 1838-1839 by George Yount. The first wine from these vines was produced in the mid-1840's.
- In the late 1850's, Los Angeles had ten times as many vines as did Napa.
- Napa Valley's wine industry accounts for \$4 billion of California's annual \$33 billion economic impact from winemaking and related industries.
- The familiar statue on Highway 29 that greets those who enter Napa County from the south is called *The Grapecrusher*. The bronze sculpture by Gino Miles, was erected in 1987 and is dedicated to the workers who labor in the vineyards.”

Action 1: Participate in Regional delegation to NAPA to see how the wine industry has had a positive impact on that region.

Action 2: Allow the sale of all alcoholic beverages (in particular wine) in all Rockingham cities and the county, and tout the Yadkin Valley wines.

Quality of Life Strategy Two: Expand parks and recreation and preserve green space.

One of Rockingham County's best assets is its natural beauty and existing recreational amenities. Being a neighbor to both Guilford and Forsyth County, Rockingham could become the “Central Park of the Triad”. Several initiatives are underway to take advantage of the rivers, trails and potential parkland. AE recommends that the following actions be pursued to further brand the county as the MSA's recreation destination.

Action 1: Develop a TRIAD Equestrian Center

Rockingham, Forsyth, and Guilford Counties rank in the top ten counties in the State in the number of horses per capita, yet there is no major equestrian facility in this portion of the state. Equestrian Centers have been developed in both eastern and western North Carolina and these facilities are providing significant economic boosts to these area economies. This type of multipurpose agriculture center would serve a major existing need and help to provide employment and an economic stimulus to the county. Averett University in nearby Danville, Virginia has an equestrian program with over 200 students in enrollment that could both utilize and help support this facility. AE is recommending funding to conduct a feasibility study for the equestrian center.

Funding a feasibility study for the Northstar Equestrian and Agricultural Center goes directly to Goldenleaf's priority of economic support for initiatives that result in job creation and retention in tobacco-dependent and low-wealth counties. Such a study, conducted by an independent firm, will:

- Establish the facilities and acreage needed to accommodate meetings, events, riding trails, and training activities;
- Establish the cost of purchasing adequate land and building the center;
- Establish the ongoing cost of administering such a center;
- Determine the expected revenue through usage fees, rents, and other charges;
- Establish the economic benefits provided by new jobs and ancillary benefits such as increased hotel/mote/restaurant revenues, and;
- Develop a work program to measure the market and financial feasibility of the center.

Funding: The feasibility study will cost approximately \$40,000, and the Potential Cost of Project: \$2.5 million

Timing: Begin developing funding application for combined feasibility study (Phase I) in 2004 with the idea of securing funding in late 2005.

Action 2: Develop Revolutionary War Ironworks Facility.

Rockingham County played a major role in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse which substantially weakened British General Cornwallis' army before it moved northward to Valley Forge where the American forces, with the help of the French, were able to surround Cornwallis, secure his surrender, and the subsequent independence of the United States from Great Britain. Rockingham County was both a staging area and a provider of iron products for General Nathaniel Greene's army which opposed Cornwallis at Guilford Courthouse. The original foundry foundation, sluice and impoundment are still intact and the site is owned by a conservation group. Additionally this forty-acre site is at the eastern terminus of the second state park planned in Rockingham and Guilford counties along the Haw River. Guilford County has secured much of the property where the actual courthouse battle transpired and the site is designated as a national historic site and park. The forty-acre iron works site would be a significant addition to this historical chapter, and if restored, would draw many tourists to the site. Additionally, the Rockingham Community College has a historic village that could be moved to this site to further enhance the tourist appeal of the property. It may also be desirable to provide blacksmithing demonstrations at the site.

Funding: \$TBD (Golden Leaf, Department of Interior, NC Parks and Wildlife)

Timing: Some efforts towards this initiative have already begun. Continue developing applications for funding and secure funds for development in 2005/6.

Action 3: Further develop the Mayo River State Park, River Walk and Covered Bridge

The State of North Carolina recently identified areas within the state that they felt would make good state parks and where a need existed for such development. Two areas were identified in Rockingham County. The first site is along the Haw River on the border with Guilford County. The second site is along the Mayo River near Mayodan and northward along the Mayo. Both areas have officially been approved as state park sites. There is a private group that is also looking to develop an abandoned textile mill as a major gospel music center adjacent to the Mayo River in Mayodan. Mayodan and Madison are also looking at developing a River Walk connecting the two towns. A covered bridge has also been mentioned as connecting the River Walk with the State Park's eastern shore property. All of this development would help to stimulate economic and tourism activity in the two towns and in the county in general. Funding is needed to help Rockingham County secure property and to develop the walking path and build the bridge.

Funding: \$250,000 (Golden Leaf, Department of Interior, NC Parks and Wildlife)

Timing: Finalize funding strategy in early 2004 and begin development of park in 2005/6.

Action 4: Begin working with land trust organizations, vineyards, and others to develop an open space and greenways plan for the County.

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 Rockingham County's greenways will create quality of life amenity that is marketable to a younger population.

Successful programs have uses "rails to trails", floodways, electric transmission and other and utility easements as opportunities for potential trails.

Funding: \$TBD

Timing: Begin identifying regional or county land trust organization in 2004.

Action 5: Organize and attract major regional and national sporting events.

- Sporting events will attract young people to Rockingham County and expose Rockingham County to a national audience.
- Support the creation of a Northwest North Carolina Sports Promotion Agency. A similar organization exists within the Triad Partnership, but this entity could be expanded with a fiduciary role to fund certain strategies. This agency would coordinate marketing efforts aimed at bringing regional and national sporting events to Rockingham County. The agency would also be responsible for providing each county and city with guidance on developing its own sporting venues.
- Work with local bicycle shop owners and neighboring counties to organize a road or mountain bike race.

Funding: TBD (funding sources could include user taxes as well as foundation funding)

Timing: Planning should begin immediately.

Action 6: Include Rockingham County's parks and recreational amenities as part of a larger regional marketing packaged aimed at attracting vacationing outdoor enthusiasts.

- Support the creation of a Northwest North Carolina Sports Promotion Agency.
- Participate with this organization or another similar organization to ensure that Rockingham County events are part of a regional promotion package.
- Consider getting buy-in from vintners who will receive significant benefit from this type of promotional package.

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 Rockingham County 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 all 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 Rockingham County as tourists, recognize the value and beauty of Rockingham County as a business location, and place Rockingham County on their list of future site locations.

As Rockingham County's Marketing Strategy suggests, each county has a role to play in the overall regional messaging whether it be arts and crafts festivals, wine festivals, extreme sport events, art exhibitions, or bake sales.

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 Downtown / Main Street organizations, economic development boards, Chambers of Commerce, or Convention and Tourist Boards. Their creativity will add spark to event planning and marketing efforts.
- Chambers of Commerce and other community organizations should organize a series of evening workshops designed to teach Rockingham 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 Rockingham County, introduce the fine craft marketplace, and show residents examples of fine craft products developed in Rockingham County.

Funding: No cost. Activities are organized by volunteers.

Timing: Begin developing database of artists in early 2004.

Action 2: Support a virtual arts market for arts and crafts created in the Greater Winston area. (See Strategy under Entrepreneurship Section in Regional Strategy)

Quality of Life Strategy Four: Invest in the redevelopment and beautification of Downtowns

Active, beautiful downtowns are an essential quality of successful economies. 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.

Action 1: Develop Master Plan for Downtowns

- Seek funding for master plan development
- Obtain professional expertise from nationally recognized Landscape Architect and/or Urban Designer

Funding: \$75,000 (EDA, State of NC)

Timing: *Begin immediately*

Action 2: Incentivize business growth in Commercial Business Districts

- Develop and adopt specialized incentives that assist existing and future retail, commercial and office business downtown (see Resource Section).
- Reduce permitting fees (or eliminate) for businesses downtown
- Invest in wireless infrastructure downtown

Funding: \$NA

Timing: *Begin immediately*

Action 3: Encourage residential development in downtowns

- Allow mixed-use development in all city and county zoning ordinances

Funding: \$NA

Timing: *Begin immediately*

Action 4: Improve Downtown Signage

- Adopt and enforce strict billboard control ordinances – limiting size, increasing distance between billboards
- Develop thematic and uniform city signage in downtowns that goes with County and City marketing theme.
- Develop sign ordinance for downtowns that promotes signage that is similar in scale.

Funding: \$NA

Timing: *Begin immediately*

Action 6: Develop Downtown Tourism Amenities

- Develop 1-2 kiosks (linked to wireless Internet access and tourism promotion), downtown walking tours, specific tourist attractions (with artistic attractions), maps, and other visitor amenities such as benches.

Funding: \$TBD

Timing: *Begin immediately*

SITES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIES

GOAL: Rockingham 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 city, 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 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.

Several counties in the Region (Stokes, Rockingham) have several sites available for business, while others such as Forsyth, Rockingham and Alleghany are limited in their available sites. This is another area where there is a significant disparity among the NWNC counties – and potential opportunities for collaboration. Additionally, several projects can foster a regional economic impact. These include transportation projects as well as multi-jurisdictional projects – taking advantage of new legislation that the State of North Carolina has given counties. All infrastructure projects should follow the policies of cities and counties that have been developed in comprehensive plans for these counties. For example, the *Legacy Plan* for Forsyth County clearly indicates a need to reduce sprawl. Therefore, in infrastructure should be planned and developed so that development is directed to growth areas identified in the *Rockingham County Future Land Use Plan*.

We are offering four major strategies for improving Rockingham County's infrastructure:

- **Develop I-73/I74 from Virginia to South Carolina through Rockingham County**
- **Improve Cellular Phone Capability**
- **Promote Retail Power Center in Reidsville/Eden area.**
- **Develop sites and infrastructure for business and industrial parks**

Sites and Infrastructure Strategy 1: Develop I-73 from Virginia to South Carolina. (this is a regional priority project and is further described in the regional strategy)

This interstate is planned to traverse western Rockingham and Guilford Counties north to south. Many studies have documented the direct correlation between interstate highway accessibility and economic development. Interstate 73 is planned from Michigan to the coast of South Carolina. Development of this interstate will have a profound positive impact on all of the jurisdictions within close proximity to this interstate once it is developed. Many of the counties along the corridor for this interstate have suffered structural economic decline that has been exacerbated by national trade policies that have allowed American jobs, particularly in textile and furniture, to be sacrificed for national policy.

The new Federal Express air transport hub is planned in Guilford County along this interstate corridor. This air cargo hub is expected to generate thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in economic activity for the region. However, counties north and south of this facility, along the proposed I-73 corridor, will be at a competitive disadvantage due to the lack of major four lane/interstate accessibility to this facility until this linkage is established.

Interstate 73 would, in theory, run through the length of Rockingham County along with or near U.S. 220. Much of 220 through the county is already a 4-lane road with grade crossings. However, *the state currently lists no plans of any sort, funded or unfunded, to upgrade U.S. 220 to a freeway.* Most of I-74, on the other hand, is covered at least by unfunded projects in the 2002-08 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). But all that is listed in Rockingham County for I-73 are an unfunded welcome center near the Virginia border, and a short stretch of a longer project mostly in Guilford County.

Sites and Infrastructure Strategy Three: Improve cellular phone capacity

Cellular phone reception is spotty throughout the county, due mostly to the topography of the county. Regardless, this is an important issue to try to address/resolve for future business development.

Action 1: Adopt ordinances allowing for co-location of cell towers of differing providers.

This has already been done at the County level. It may be worthwhile to educate cellular phone providers about this.

Action 2: Consider utilizing existing water tanks or wastewater treatment plants for cellular providers to place antennae.

Funding: \$NA (Could be potential revenue generator for county by leasing space on utility sites to private business)

Timing: 2004

Sites and Infrastructure Strategy Six: Develop a Reidsville/Eden Retail Power Center.

The NC Department of Commerce's Twenty-First Century Report for Rockingham County identified a need for additional support services in the county, such as major retail establishments. Reidsville and Eden have populations of approximately 15,000 each. Both have limited retail potential due to size. It may be desirable for the two cities and their Chambers of Commerce to join forces to promote a retail power center just north of Reidsville near the Lowe's Home Center. Collectively the two cities with their close proximity might be able to attract major retailers to locate in a new power center. Rockingham County will always lose some of its retail business to Greensboro and Danville given their proximity, but can probably recapture some of the lost sales if enough quality major retail is available to attract people to the area. This center would also help promote opportunities for small retail businesses and restaurants near the center. Both cities will automatically share in the sales tax revenue based on per capita distribution. It may be desirable for the cities to enter into an agreement to also share the property tax revenue from the center to lessen the concerns about lost tax base.

To attract major tenants the cities and county will need to secure investors to buy options on property and the three entities may need to offer incentives to induce major retailers to come to this area. This assistance should probably be viewed similar to the attraction of a major industry with pay back coming from property and sales taxes and the stimulation of other business in the county.

Funding: \$TBD (NC Department of Commerce)

Timing: 2004

Sites and Infrastructure Strategy Five: Develop sites and infrastructure for business and industrial parks

Due to the nature of the topography in the County, site preparation for business and industrial parks is nearly cost prohibitive. Although Rockingham County is in the process of developing a business park close to Greensboro, another site adjacent to this site will not be able to be developed without some financial assistance for site development.

Funding: \$300,000 (EDA, NC Department of Commerce)

Timing: 2004

Sites and Infrastructure Strategy Five: Expand Airport to accommodate increased commuter airline traffic due to FedEx expansion at Greensboro-Winston-Salem International Airport.

Currently, the Rockingham County Airport has a 5,200' long by 100' wide runway, with a strength rating of approximately 24,000 pounds. A partial taxiway extends approximately half the length of the runway. The airport is served by a combination of maintenance hangar/terminal building. Three sets of hangars and several corporate size hangars provide storage space for based aircraft. In order to attract additional corporate users and to prepare for anticipated growth, the regional Airport Authority has proposed to expand the airport runway and taxiway facilities.

Rockingham County Economic Development Strategy

Funding: \$4.6 million is the budgeted amount for this expansion. The FAA Improvement Plan provides 90% of funding and local governments must secure the remaining 10%. The County has provided some matching and does not anticipate any additional funding required. The needs are for FAA to fund the 90% so that Rockingham County can be prepared for growth when FedEx begins construction and operation. Potential funding source include FAA

Timing: 2004

MARKETING STRATEGIES

GOAL: Rockingham County is engaged in a proactive, targeted marketing campaign to send a clear message that the county is dedicated to these goals and the importance of these strategies to improving the economy.

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. In order for Rockingham County to enhance its prospects for economic growth, a more proactive targeted 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 **Rockingham County for Economic and Tourism Development Partnership (RPETD)**. 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

Of all the eight counties in this study, Rockingham has strong, collaborative efforts towards marketing. However, there is an opportunity to elevate local and national positive press, and market the region as a whole.

Rockingham County has moderate external efforts in economic development marketing. The current county marketing plan incorporates appropriate strategies and actions to grow tourism and the newly identified targeted industries. With a tourism centric brand, the county will not be able to significantly market their business strengths to other target industries; therefore, AE recommends Rockingham create a business brand that is attractive and aligned to the tourism message and also the region.

The current brochure and Web site collateral material are sharp, but lack business appeal. North Carolina's North Star is a catchy tagline that highlights the geographic location and that there something special happening in Rockingham County. The newly developed Web site is excellent.

The Rockingham County River Guide brochure is eye catching and consistent with the Web site look and feel. It is intriguing and grabs the audience's curiosity. This is a slick marketing piece for tourism and will be a good addition to a business collateral piece.

The Piedmont Triad Partnership effectively markets 12 counties, including Rockingham, for business expansions and relocations. It does a good job of promoting the region and Rockingham's assets. However, there is an opportunity for more collaboration. For instance, the Partnership and Rockingham can provide on-line information about the newly identified target industries.

Rockingham County has a minimum amount of internal marketing for economic development. The established speakers bureau is a terrific example of the county's current campaign to residents, officials, and community leaders. It is an easy way for businesses to get important information. However, thus far this section is not included on the new Web site.

Currently the business news section on the Web site is the county's primary method of posting publicity. Only 11 stories have been posted in a year. This is a low amount of news and can greatly be improved upon. Rockingham should strive to triple the amount of articles in industry publications to aggressively compete.

The newsletter that has been re-implemented is great internal marketing collateral for targeting local businesses and professionals. It corresponds with the Web site, brochures, and its title is "The North Star." This consistently makes it easier for the target audience to form an image and positive association to the county. It recognizes outstanding individuals in the community, gives updates on the future of the community, and highlights target industries. The newsletter can be improved by featuring more high impact stories and promotion.

Overall, economic development organizations 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 Actions necessary for Rockingham County to engage in a targeted marketing plan, beginning with internal marketing, external activities, and readjusting the plan.

There are seven recommended strategies, including:

- 1. Establish a lead economic development organization and commit to a marketing strategy**
- 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 (MG) 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 Strategic Report and specifically to support leaders who will execute the marketing campaigns.

Marketing Strategy One: Establish a lead economic development organization and commit to marketing strategy

In the past, Rockingham County has had good efforts towards economic development marketing, but it can be improved. Today, leaders recognize the importance of having a unified plan, led by one economic development organization, to retain and welcome appropriate types of businesses. The County needs to commit to a long-term vision and marketing strategy to shape its economic future. Although several local organizations have been charged with various elements of marketing, no single body is responsible for overseeing activities. Rockingham County Economic and Tourism Development (RPETD) should be Rockingham County's primary economic development organization leading marketing efforts. All other economic development entities should participate and support a unified message. RPETD will need to obtain \$40,000 funding for implementation of this marketing plan during the first year. By year three, the county should double its marketing budget.

Rockingham's marketing strategy is to improve awareness of economic development benefits and to turn citizens into promoters who will endorse the great attributes of living and doing business in Rockingham to external target industry businesses through the right combination of publicity, direct marketing, and promotional collateral.

Action 1: Local economic development leaders should agree on RPETD being the lead organization to implement marketing.

Action 2: RPETD and other local economic development leaders should approve the marketing strategy.

Marketing Strategy Two: Brand the county

Communities that establish a marketing theme that differentiates, have greater chances of attracting economic growth. Rockingham County is primarily marketing to make consumers aware of the region.

A brand theme conveys “who”, “where” or “what” the county offers. Local leaders feel that the most marketable attribute of Rockingham County is “the creativeness of the workforce and amazing outdoor attractions.” As a phrase, “**discover**,” reflects the most unique aspect of Rockingham. The current internal state campaign theme is “Discover the County You’re In” and the proposed tourism theme “You’re Invited”, the descriptors creative, discover, and escape are the most appropriate positions to communicate. Marketing should establish awareness of Rockingham County as the North Star. North Star is the identity (name). “Discover a new way,” is a catchy tagline – Rockingham has the heritage of being a place to discover nature, discover your self, and discover a new way of doing business.

Region Brand Identity:
Northwest NC

Region Umbrella Tagline Theme:
 designing tomorrow

Rockingham Brand Identity:
North Star

Rockingham Tagline Theme:
 discover a new way

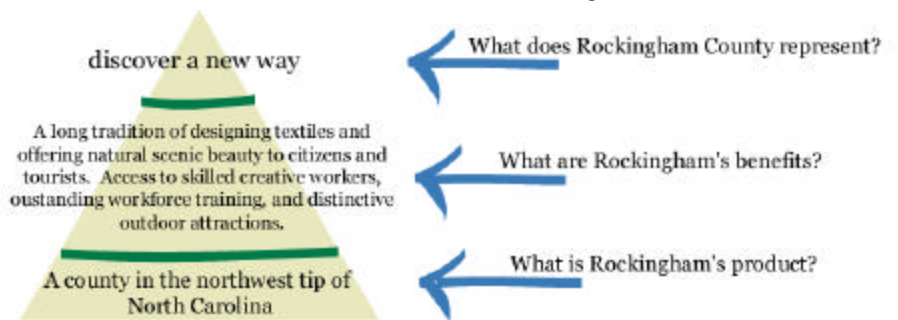
The proposed theme is meant for economic development leaders to use when developing the logo and a marketing message to use in communication.

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

- **Place to escape** - Two river that draw residents and tourists
- **Creative** - People and businesses within the County think creativity and welcome growth
- **Organized** - County that is connected and prepared for the future

To stand out compared to competitors, Rockingham County should communicate a primary message centered on a unique quality of the community. Rockingham County provides businesses connection to a skilled workforce, strong work ethic, and ingenuity, and provides residents, tourists and businesses an environment of a caring, small town atmosphere.

A positioning pyramid is a technique used to determine the message. 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: RPETD and other economic development organizations should discuss and approve a county theme.

Action 2: Local economic development organizations should agree on using a consistent message to promote the county to local businesses, tourists, and new businesses.

Action 3: RPETD should hire an advertising firm to develop a logo.

Action 4: All economic development organizations should revamp marketing collateral to convey this primary message.

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.

Marketing Strategy Three: Better understand the needs of the target audiences

Understanding how Rockingham 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. Recognizing these segments as a target audience and understanding their needs, is sometimes overlooked. 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. Economic development marketing should communicate that Rockingham County is less costly, has a strong workforce, and balance to life and work. The RPETD should improve relationships with local businesses and provide additional services that can help them be more successful. The use of local media and personal meetings are good avenues for building awareness and demand for economic development services.

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 MG list industry associations that can be a resource on target industry trends and prospects. **Rockingham's target audiences include: logistics and distribution, hospitality and tourism, design, transportation equipment, value-added agriculture, food processing, and materials.**

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

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

- Rural region with a strong agricultural tradition

- Home to many unique, talented artists
- Close proximity to a major U.S. markets
- Strong college and workforce development programs to support target industry businesses
- Beautiful natural resources – Dan and Mayo River (Over 44 million people visited the state in 2002, making North Carolina the sixth most visited state in the country)
- Entrepreneur-minded individuals
- Scenic county making it ideal to film movies
- Plentiful land and building space

Action 1: The RPETD and other local economic development leaders should get 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: Continue to revamped marketing communication with targeted message.

Action 3: Identify target industry champions.

Action 4: Become industry experts.

Marketing Strategy Four: Gain local media support

Rockingham County needs media champions to gain support of all local news companies. Local newspapers, radio stations, company newsletters, and Web sites are good tools for communicating information about the economic development initiative to residents. It is imperative that local media companies speak positively about the county and provide coverage. What local news publishes, directly impacts citizen's views and commitment.

Reidsville Review, Madison Messenger, Eden Daily News, and Greensboro News and Record should Action up and support county economic development by publishing informative, positive stories. Accomplishing the economic development marketing strategy requires publicity that educates and creates excitement within Rockingham County. Private and public leaders should regularly meet with the media and provide updates on economic development successes. The local media is the first avenue for "building the local buzz."

An excellent example of the local media supporting economic development is, The Mountain Times in Ashe County. The Mountain Times just announced that it is going to dedicate a weekly section of its paper to informing citizens on small business and entrepreneurial resources and successes. It will provide information on resources, such as Wilkes Community College, that can assist local businesses. This type of initiative can also benefit Rockingham County.

Action 1: RPETD and the Implementer Committee should identify local media champions that can assist with persuading the local media to communicate economic development stories to the public.

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

Action 3: Local media companies should publish stories on economic development.

Marketing Strategy Five: Launch internal marketing campaign

Rockingham 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.

Internal marketing activities should be launched during a roll out event. At a local rollout event, Rockingham County should announce its three major goals:

- Developing a State Park
- Developing a state of the art small business and entrepreneurship training center
- Expanding the airport with commuter flights
- Gaining local media support

Publicity, promotion, and collateral are the three vehicles recommended to reach Rockingham 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 vehicle to cost effectively reach Rockingham County's internal audience and generate a buzz. By distributing press announcements and persuading news companies to "pick-up" a story, Rockingham County can gain more publicity and improve its image. The county economic development newsletter is excellent and should always be available on-line. Other ways to communicate to the public include: posting news in church bulletins, high school papers, regional business journals, bylined articles, and community Web sites. Topics to consider including in the county newsletter that will inform residents and create awareness about: *How to promote the county, Planning for our youths' careers, Why diversifying an economy is a good thing, and Growing entrepreneurs.*

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 Rockingham County, and calling prospects to provide information on why do business in Rockingham County, available business park space, and the benefits of operating a business in the county. Some regional organization events to consider attending include North Carolina Textile Manufacturing Association, North Carolina Arts Council, and the Western North Carolina Film Commission.

The primary economic development collateral piece should be the newly launched RPETD Web site. By continuing to update the Web site to contain the new marketing message, this will be a strong piece to reach both internal and external audiences. Rockingham County should ask local businesses to mention this Web site to employees, on local businesses Intranet, and in their corporate material when appropriate.

Action 1: RPETD and other economic development organizations approve the internal marketing plan.

Action 2: RPETD 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 apart of the marketing team.

Reference the MG 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 RPETD 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
 - Contribute \$8,000 a year to hiring a PR firm.
 - Discuss powerful topics in newsletter and on Web site. See the MG.
 - Negotiate with the local newspaper to get a weekly section dedicated to economic development. For instance, 50 words on important economic development topics.
 - Implement a utility billing campaign. E.g. Use this to announce special projects, successes, and news Web links.
2. Continuously update primary ED Web site
Hire Web design firm, budget \$12,000
3. Develop a Recruitment Ready Team
RPETD and each ED organization should create a standard protocol for managing prospects
4. Speak at local business associations and provide updates on Rockingham County's economic development and marketing efforts
5. Develop collateral to distribute during personal meetings with local business leaders
6. Create a youth entrepreneurship group
 - *To better connect youths and assist them with starting companies locally*
 - *Ask TEI to be on the board of this newly formed group*
 - *Consider calling the group "E-power"*

Marketing Strategy Six: Develop and implement external marketing campaign

External marketing promotes Rockingham County to identified targeted industry business whom complement the current economy and help Rockingham County meet its economic development vision. Most likely for Rockingham County, external marketing campaigns will begin in 2006.

Web sites, publicity, and targeted direct marketing are the most cost effective for communities to “get their message out.” Rockingham 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, Rockingham 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. Rockingham County could significantly increase the amount of publicity the city receives in publications, and ultimately reach the city’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 promote economic development in Rockingham County and better linking 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 Rockingham County.

Marketing Missions

Rockingham 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 Rockingham County’s great location for business. For example, visit regional neighbor benchmark cities such as Danville, Asheville and Ft. Collins. In the second year, consider visiting national such as Memphis and Atlanta.

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. Rockingham 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. Rockingham can attend, sponsor, and exhibit at conferences.

Action 1: RPETD and other economic developments organizations approve external marketing plan

Action 2: RPETD should approve 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 apart of the marketing team.

Refer to the Marketing Guide Reference for more information on these vehicles.

Rockingham 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 Rockingham to contribute to national public relations campaigns that are launched by a regional organization such as Advantage West or NWNC.*
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.*

Marketing Strategy Seven: Measure and improve 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 Rockingham 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 Rockingham 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, RPETD 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 1:
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

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 Rockingham County						
	Job growth (CAGR) 2000-02	Non-mftg job growth (CAGR) 2000-02	Average Wage 2002	Unemploy- ment Rate 2002	Poverty Rate 2000	Per Capita Income 2001
Rockingham County	-6.1%	0.1%	\$31,541	8.5%	12.8%	\$22,148
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
Rockingham as % of U.S.	0.0%	0.0%	85.8%	147.3%	103.2%	72.8%
Rockingham Target Benchmarks as a Percent of U.S.						
1997			88%	104%	--	80%
2000	0%		81%	133%	103%	74%
2002	0%		86%	147%	--	73%
2007	50%		90%	130%	--	76%
2012	75%		95%	115%	86%	80%
2017	100%		100%	100%	--	85%
2022	125%		105%	95%	83%	90%