

# sync<sup>TM</sup>

Highlights from the  
North Carolina Department of Commerce



## New Regional Headquarters to Bring 149 Jobs to Rowan County

Agility Fuel Systems will locate a regional headquarters and a state of the art production facility in Rowan County, creating 149 new jobs over the next three years. The company plans to invest \$7.5 million in Salisbury. Governor Pat McCrory made the announcement December 22.

"Agility Fuel Systems is a great addition to North Carolina's growing transportation-related industry," said Governor McCrory. "Agility will be in a great position to serve the Eastern United States by having its regional headquarters and production facility here in North Carolina."

Agility Fuel Systems is headquartered in Santa Ana, California and develops safe, reliable and cost-effective natural gas systems for heavy trucks and buses. Agility has been in business for 18 years and has more than 25,000 trucks on the road, logging 1.5 billion miles per year. The company's Rowan County facility will serve as a regional headquarters for the East Coast.

"We are really pleased to announce that our new world class production facility will be located in Salisbury, North Carolina, where we will be able to access a well-qualified workforce and be strategically located to serve our customers," said Barry Engle, Agility's president and CEO. "We would like to thank Governor Pat McCrory, Secretary Sharon Decker, the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the Rowan County Board of Commissioners, Robert Van Geons, Executive Director of RowanWORKS, and Duke Energy, for their efforts to bring Agility Fuel Systems to North Carolina. We are committed to making this relationship a win-win-win for the State of North Carolina, Rowan County and our company."

The project was made possible in part by a performance-based grant from the One North Carolina Fund of up to \$300,000. The One NC Fund provides financial assistance, through local



*John E. Skvarla, III is all smiles as North Carolina's new Commerce Secretary. Next to Secretary Skvarla is his wife Liz and Justice Paul Newby who performed the swearing-in ceremony*

### Secretary Skvarla Sworn In as New Commerce Leader

John E. Skvarla, III was sworn in yesterday (Jan. 5) as the State of North Carolina's Secretary of Commerce in a ceremony held at the State Capitol in Raleigh.

Secretary Skvarla's appointment was announced December 2 by Governor Pat McCrory. Former Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker resigned last month to rejoin the private sector.

In a video greeting to Commerce employees, Secretary Skvarla said, "As someone I respect very much said to me recently, 'A job is the only issue that everyone in the state of North Carolina knows about and cares about.' So we have a daunting but an exciting opportunity ahead of us to provide that for every citizen of our state."

Skvarla joins Commerce following a successful appointment as Secretary for the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources for the two previous years.

Prior to his government service, Skvarla enjoyed a successful business career, most recently serving as chief executive officer for Restoration Systems, an environmental mitigation firm based in Raleigh that helps improve and restore wetlands and

governments, to attract business projects that will stimulate economic activity and create new jobs in the state. Companies receive no money up front and must meet job creation and investment performance standards to qualify for grant funds. These grants also require and are contingent upon local matches.

[Read more.](#)



*Sypris employees play beach volleyball in the manufacturing plant's backyard as part of an annual company-wide tournament*

## Dedication to Wellness Starts at the Top for Sypris Technologies

Creating a healthier work culture in a company takes adjustments. Some of these shifts at Sypris Technologies have been easy home runs, according to Human Resources Manager Jennifer Nicholes. Bringing fruit and granola bars to employee meetings instead of doughnuts, for example, have been a big hit. So has serving grilled or baked chicken at the annual Christmas dinner along with other healthy side dishes. "We have our share of diabetics," Nicholes says of the steel parts manufacturing plant's 270 employees, "and now they feel more included."

Other changes present more of a challenge. Increasing options for physical activity, for one, is difficult with limited staff to lead activities. As a three-shift operation, Sypris faces scheduling challenges when planning employees' physical activity.

The drive to create a healthy workplace at Sypris comes directly from its CEO, Jeffrey Gill, who is "dedicated to wellness," according to Nicholes. Gill oversees the three Sypris Solutions sites from its headquarters in Louisville, KY. "The effort started with his decision to hire a nurse on staff at the plant, to ensure better futures for our employees and their family" said Nicholes. "He believes it's the right thing to do."

Nicholes' group is exploring such things as sharing a weekly farmer's market day in the business park and creating low-cost activities like community walks to get more people out and moving.

For all of the healthy successes, Nicholes remembers one sure wellness bust: the year when she tried to offer healthy Halloween treats instead of the usual mini candy bars. "It was a miserable failure," she laughs. "It's clear that changing Halloween is off limits."

waterways. He also led Wilkinson Hi-Rise, a manufacturer of waste management and automated recycling systems. Skvarla previously served as chief operating officer for Proactive Therapy, one of the largest physical therapy providers in the Southeastern United States. He also was chief operating officer of The Aviation Group, Inc., a company that emerged as the world's largest all-cargo airline during his tenure.

An attorney, Skvarla in 1978 founded and served as senior partner to the Raleigh-based Wyrick Robbins Yates & Ponton law firm, where he specialized in corporate and tax matters, as well as public and private capital formations.

## 939 Jobs Retained with JMAC Grant to Blue Ridge Paper Products

Blue Ridge Paper Products, a subsidiary of Evergreen Packaging, has been awarded a [Job Maintenance and Capital Development Fund \(JMAC\)](#) grant to be used to convert two of its coal-fired boilers to natural gas at its Haywood County plant. Funding for the JMAC grant was included in a bill with bipartisan support signed by Governor Pat McCrory at the Western Residence in September. As a result, not only will 939 jobs be retained, but the plant will also be more energy efficient and operate cleaner. The remaining funds will be used to retrofit three additional boilers.

The North Carolina Economic Investment Committee (EIC) approved the grant December 19. The company will receive up to \$12 million over ten years to make the conversion. Evergreen Packaging will invest \$51 million.

"When I signed this bill in September at the Western Residence, I noted that it was intended to ensure job retention and help manufacturing companies move toward cleaner energy operations," said Governor McCrory. "This JMAC grant is doing exactly that at Canton Mills. When the work is completed, Blue Ridge Paper Products will be operating more efficiently, and will have kept a significant number of high-paying, high-quality jobs."

Blue Ridge Paper Products is the largest private employer in Haywood County. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency informed the company it has until 2019 to comply with federal boiler maximum achievable control technology (MACT) or be required to shut down.

The JMAC Fund is a discretionary incentive program that provides sustained annual grants to businesses that meet the requirements of a major employer or a large

*Healthy Places Change Lives is a partnership between the N.C. Department of Commerce and Prevention Partners, a nonprofit based in Chapel Hill. Prevention Partners guides schools, workplaces, hospitals and clinics to address the leading causes of preventable disease. The non-profit's Healthy Together NC initiative aims to reach at least 10 organizations in all 100 counties of the state by 2025. Learn more at [ForPrevention.org/HealthyTogetherNC](http://ForPrevention.org/HealthyTogetherNC)*

## N.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority Approves Eighth Round of Grants

The North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) approved 13 grants or loans totaling more than \$5.1 million on December 18. These projects reflect a commitment of nearly 299 new jobs.

[Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\)](#)/loans approved include:

- **Davidson County:** \$400,000 to lend to Surface Source USA to support the reuse of an industrial building which has been vacant for the past five years. The company has committed to create 20 new, full-time jobs.
- **Lincoln County:** \$500,000 to lend to Carolina Nonwovens LLC to support the reuse of an industrial building which has been vacant for more than three years. The company currently has 38 employees and has committed to creating 25 new, full-time jobs.

The Industrial Development Fund Utility Account grants approved include:

- **Stanly County:** \$500,000 to assist with sewer improvements to serve the Airport Road business corridor in Albemarle.
- **Town of Tarboro (Edgecombe County):** \$750,000 to assist with the purchase of a generator to provide direct assistance to General Foam Plastics during peak load periods. The company has committed to create 100 new, full-time jobs.
- **Perquimans County:** \$1,500,000 to assist with Phase I of a 16.5 acre man-made marine basin. The purpose of Phase I is to attract marine manufacturers and supply chain manufacturers.

[Building Reuse Program grants](#)/loans approved:

- **Alexander County:** \$150,000 to support the expansion of a building in Taylorsville occupied by Precision Materials. The company is currently producing furniture for IKEA and Ashley Furniture and has committed to create 15 new, full-time jobs.
- **The City of Washington (Beaufort County):** \$500,000 to support the expansion of a building occupied by idX Impressions for 18 months. idX Impressions is a manufacturer of store fixtures for major retailers such as Dell, John Deere, and JC Penney and has committed to create 50 new, full-time jobs.
- **The Town of Edenton (Chowan County):** \$127,455 to support the reuse of a building's second floor. Standard Medical Acceptance, Inc. (SMA) plans to locate a new operations center creating 11 new, full-time jobs.
- **Granville County:** \$254,826 to support the reuse of a building in Oxford vacant for three years. IDEAL Fastener will expand its manufacturing operation, including a commitment to create 21 new, full-time jobs.

manufacturing employer. The JMAC Fund is intended to encourage retention of significant numbers of high-paying, high quality jobs and large-scale capital investment that will modernize processes and provide more globally competitive projects.

[Read more.](#)



North Carolina  
Main Street

## Downtown Revitalization Projects Win Funding

The North Carolina Department of Commerce announced December 18 that the City of Shelby and the Town of Warrenton have been awarded up to \$75,000 each from the Main Street Solutions Fund.

"We are very excited about these two new projects," said Liz Parham, director of the North Carolina Main Street Center. "The hope is to not only preserve each community's historic character, but also revitalize their commercial districts."

The project in Warrenton relocates and expands an existing business in two full floors of an historic building. The renovated facility will serve as showrooms, classrooms, service center and administrative offices for an expanding quilt and sewing shop.

The Shelby project rehabilitates an abandoned department store building in uptown Shelby and converts it into a micro-brewery and tasting room.

Shelby and Warrenton, along with other Main Street and Small Town Main Street communities in North Carolina, are successfully following the principles of the National Main Street Center's [Four-Point Approach](#) to downtown revitalization. North Carolina Main Street and Small Town Main Street have experienced \$2.1 billion in public and private investment and a net gain of more than 18,000 jobs since the inception of the program in 1980.

For additional information about the Main Street Solutions Fund, visit

**Halifax County:** \$33,794 to support the expansion of a building in Weldon occupied by Weldon Steel for 15 years. The company has committed to create 4 new, full-time jobs.

- **Montgomery County:** \$200,000 to support the expansion of a building in Biscoe. Grede Holdings, LLC has committed to create 20 new, full-time jobs.
- **The Town of Seagrove (Randolph County):** \$100,000 to support the reuse of a building vacant for more than four years. H&H Furniture, a manufacturer of residential upholstered furniture, has committed to create 20 new, full-time jobs.
- **Rutherford County:** \$122,190 to support the reuse of a building in Rutherfordton. Family Preservation Services of NC, Inc. (FPS) will expand its existing operation, and has committed to create 13 new, full-time jobs.

The RIA was established as part of the Rural Economic Development Division at the N.C. Department of Commerce to assist with the review and approval of grants for rural areas in the state. The grants-making programs of the division include assistance for building reuse and well as infrastructure, including water and sewer.

[Read more.](#)

[www.nccommerce.com/MainStreet](http://www.nccommerce.com/MainStreet), or contact Liz Parham, director of the North Carolina Main Street Center at 919-715-0527.

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## Happy New Year!

Welcome to 2015. Have a story you'd like to share with our audience of economic development allies across the state? We can't publish everything, but submit your ideas for consideration to SYNC editor David Rhoades at [drhoades@nccommerce.com](mailto:drhoades@nccommerce.com)

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## N.C. in the News

### This Week's Highlights

- [2014: Wilmington Proved It's a Town for Tourists And Startups](#) (*ExitEvent.com* - Dec. 31)
- [When the ball drops, so will N.C. corporate tax rates](#) (*Triangle Business Journal* - Dec. 29)
- [Why aren't Triad jobs being filled?](#) (*WXII-TV* - Dec. 29)
- [Unemployment office offers more than just a check](#) (*Salisbury Post* - Dec. 28)
- [Eastern N.C. economic development regions to merge](#) (*JDNews.com* - Jacksonville - Dec. 28)
- [Study to examine labor pool after Vertex finishes hiring](#) (*StarNews Online* - Wilmington - Dec. 28)
- [If Mercedes is serious about North Carolina, state lawmakers may have to return to Raleigh](#) (*Triangle Business Journal* - Dec. 24)
- [RTRP, a 25-year tenant of RDU, to vacate airport offices, move to Cary](#) (*Triangle Business Journal* - Dec. 24)
- [Chinese manufacturer to add 120 jobs in Statesville](#) (*Charlotte Business Journal* - Dec. 22)
- [Spirit AeroSystems Celebrates A350 XWB Delivery to Qatar Airways](#) (*Spirit AeroSystems Corporate Communications* - December 22)

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