

# sync<sup>®</sup> NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES FROM N.C. COMMERCE



Governor Cooper with company and local officials at the announcement event held earlier today in Sanford.

## 209 Jobs Coming as Gov. Cooper Announces Gene Therapy Company to Invest Over \$100 Million in Sanford

Today (February 18), **Governor Roy Cooper** announced that Audentes Therapeutics, a genetic medicines company, will create 209 new jobs in Lee County, investing \$109 million to locate a manufacturing facility in Sanford.

"With our powerhouse research centers and highly-skilled workforce, biotech pioneers recognize North Carolina's role as a leader in the life sciences," said **Governor Cooper**. "Lee County is a perfect fit for Audentes as they seek to become a global leader in genetic medicines."

Audentes Therapeutics focuses on innovative genetic medicines that can offer transformative benefits to patients. Audentes will develop a 135,000 square foot, state-of-the-art, large-scale gene therapy manufacturing facility in Sanford. The initial phase of the capital investment is planned to occur over approximately 18 months, with the plant expected to become operational in 2021. The remaining investment will take place over two additional planned expansion phases.

"Our investment in internal large-scale manufacturing has always been a cornerstone of our strategy to develop and ultimately deliver our important genetic medicines to patients as rapidly as possible. This new facility in Sanford will support the next phase of our growth as we establish a robust, global supply chain and expand our therapeutic and geographic scope as a part of the Astellas group of companies," stated **Natalie Holles, President and Chief Executive Officer of Audentes**. "We are excited to join the vibrant biopharmaceutical research



In Goldsboro yesterday, Secretary Copeland (center) presents a ceremonial fine china plate to Bret Strickland (left), CEO & President of Atlantic Casualty and Bobby Strickland, founder of the company.

## Atlantic Casualty Insurance to invest \$11.8 million in Goldsboro, Creating 83 Jobs

Atlantic Casualty Insurance Company, a national provider of commercial insurance products, will create 83 jobs as it expands its Wayne County headquarters, Governor Roy Cooper announced yesterday (February 17). The company will invest more than \$11.8 million in Goldsboro.

**North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland** led an event to announce the project at the company's offices in Wayne County.

"Atlantic Casualty will bring more jobs and investment to Wayne County, which is good for eastern North Carolina's people and our economy," said **Governor Cooper**. "When companies choose to expand in North Carolina, we know our state is doing the right things to grow our workforce."

Atlantic Casualty Insurance Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Auto-Owners Insurance Group, is a specialty provider of commercial insurance for hard-to-place risks. Headquartered in Goldsboro with offices in Glastonbury, Connecticut, Richmond, Virginia and Scottsdale, Arizona, the company operates in 49 states. The project in Goldsboro will include a significant expansion of the company's existing 28,850 square foot facility by constructing a new 30,000 square foot office building.

and manufacturing community that the state of North Carolina has established."

"Audentes Therapeutics is joining one of the nation's top life science clusters," said **North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland**. "North Carolina has the largest biomanufacturing workforce in the nation and a growing concentration of gene therapy scientists, researchers and workers."

The average for all new positions could reach up to \$83,900. The current average annual wage in Lee County of \$41,784.

Over the course of the 12-year term of the company's Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG), the project will grow the state's economy by nearly \$1.4 billion according to estimates. Using a formula that takes into account the new tax revenues generated by the 209 new jobs, the JDIG agreement authorizes the potential reimbursement to the company of up to \$3,725,100, spread over 12 years.

Because Audentes chose to locate in Lee County, a Tier 2 county, the company's JDIG agreement also calls for moving as much as \$414,000 into the state's Industrial Development Fund - Utility Account.

The Utility Account helps rural communities finance necessary infrastructure upgrades to attract future business. Even when new jobs are created in a Tier 2 county such as Lee, the new tax revenue generated through JDIG grants helps more economically challenged communities elsewhere in the state.

In addition to [N.C. Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#), other key partners in the project include the [North Carolina General Assembly](#), the [North Carolina Community College System](#), [Lee County](#), the [Sanford Area Growth Alliance](#), and the [N.C. Biotechnology Center](#).



Vince Bussio (left), President for Armorock with Secretary Copeland yesterday at the announcement event in Battleboro.

"We are excited to be expanding our home office here in Goldsboro. Our business was founded 37 years ago and we look forward to continuing our support in this great community and in the State of North Carolina," says **Bret Strickland, President & Chief Executive Officer of Atlantic Casualty**.

"Financial services companies like Atlantic Casualty have always done well in our state," said **Secretary Copeland**. "The concentration of these companies in North Carolina speaks to our favorable business climate and to our ability to provide the skilled and available workforce they need."

Salaries for the new jobs will vary by position but the average annual wage will be \$54,398. The Wayne County average annual wage is \$35,485.

A performance-based grant of \$250,000 from the One North Carolina Fund will help facilitate Atlantic Casualty's expansion in North Carolina.

In addition to the [North Carolina Department of Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#), other key partners in the project include the [North Carolina General Assembly](#), the [North Carolina Community College System](#), the [N.C. Department of Transportation](#), [Duke Energy](#), the [Golden LEAF Foundation](#), [North Carolina's Southeast](#), Harry & Mollie, LLC, [Wayne County](#), the [City of Goldsboro](#), and the [Wayne County Development Alliance](#).



(L-R) Jimmy Stallings, Mayor of Edenton; Paul German, President & CEO for Nebraska Plastics; and Secretary Copeland at the announcement event in Edenton yesterday.

## Fence Maker to Invest \$1 Million in Edenton Adding 22 Jobs

Nebraska Plastics, a vinyl fence manufacturer, will create 22 new jobs in Chowan County, **Governor Roy Cooper**

## Concrete Manufacturer Armorock to Create 55 Jobs in Edgecombe County

Armorock, a large supplier of polymer concrete structures, will establish a new manufacturing facility in Edgecombe County, creating 55 jobs, **Governor Roy Cooper** announced yesterday (February 17). The company plans to invest \$6.6 million in Battleboro in order to be closer to its growing customer base in the Southeast.

**North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland** led an event in Battleboro to announce the project.

"Armorock is the latest example of a global manufacturer choosing North Carolina because it is the right fit for their business," said **Governor Cooper**. "North Carolina wins jobs based on a number of reasons, but most important is the strong workforce to support business growth."

Armorock Founders have been in the business of manufacturing wastewater collection structures for more than 50 years. In addition to meeting all engineering requirements, Armorock's products are affordable and sustainable, two criteria critical for municipalities needing to upgrade existing sewer systems and new projects.

"Armorock is excited to manufacture our sustainable corrosion proof sewer structures here in North Carolina. We are confident in the world class work force available to us in Edgecombe County. We look forward to growing roots here and building trust with our local team and community. We are grateful for the warm welcome extended to us," said **Vince Bussio, President of Armorock**.

"We welcome Armorock to North Carolina's growing roster of manufacturing companies," said **Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland**. "From around the globe, North Carolina's reputation as an outstanding business location is well known."

Although wages will vary depending on the position, the average for all the new positions could reach up to \$52,577. The current average annual wage in Edgecombe County is \$35,732.

A performance-based grant of \$200,000 from the One North Carolina Fund will help facilitate Armorock's move into Edgecombe County.

In addition to [North Carolina Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#), other key partners in the project include the [North Carolina General Assembly](#), the [North Carolina Community College System](#), [Carolinas Gateway Partnership](#), the [N.C. Department of Transportation](#), [Edgecombe County](#), and the [City of Rocky Mount](#).

announced yesterday (February 17). The company will invest more than \$1 million into a manufacturing facility in Edenton.

**North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland** led an event to announce the project at the Edenton Town Council Chambers.

"Manufacturing companies like Nebraska Plastics choose to grow in North Carolina because of our strong economy, great quality of life, and especially for our talented workforce," said **Governor Cooper**

Nebraska Plastics, Inc. started in 1945 producing plastic irrigation products for agriculture. The company first invented vinyl fencing in 1978 under the brand name Country Estate Fence. Headquartered in Cozad, Nebraska, the company has remained a family-owned business for 75 years and supplies products to customers in all 50 states and overseas. Along with vinyl fence and railing, Nebraska Plastics continues to produce a line of above ground and below ground PVC irrigation pipe for agriculture.

"The opportunity to produce Country Estate Vinyl Products in Edenton, North Carolina gives us a unique advantage to supply our growing demand on the East Coast by producing products closer to our customers," said **Paul German, President and CEO of Nebraska Plastics, Inc.** "We are excited to be a part of the community of Edenton. Our customers will enjoy the same quality products they are used to. Having two locations now allows us to improve customer service while reducing freight costs."

"North Carolina has the fifth largest manufacturing economy in the United States," said **North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland**. "With more than 170 million customers within a day's drive and the largest manufacturing workforce in the Southeast, North Carolina is a great state for manufacturers to expand their operations."

Although wages will vary depending on the position, the average for all new positions could reach up to \$36,591. The current average annual wage in Chowan County is \$34,112.

A performance-based grant of \$60,000 from the One North Carolina Fund will help facilitate Nebraska Plastics' expansion to North Carolina.

In addition to the [North Carolina Department of Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#), other key partners in the project include the [North Carolina General Assembly](#), the [North Carolina Community College System](#), the [Town of Edenton](#), [Chowan County](#), and the [Edenton Chowan Partnership](#).





(L-R) Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles; Governor Cooper; and Dr. Phil Dubois, Chancellor, UNC-Charlotte.

## Governor Cooper Leads Roundtable on Economic Growth and North Carolina's Growing Workforce Initiatives

Governor Roy Cooper met with business leaders, workforce development representatives, and local community colleges and university administrators at UNC-Charlotte on February 13 to discuss economic development in North Carolina. Governor Cooper and his office have recruited and announced more than 62,000 jobs. More than 6,923 were announced in Mecklenburg County, along with \$539 million in investment.

"Companies come to North Carolina and choose to grow here because of our talented and educated workforce," said **Governor Cooper**. "Partnerships among business, schools and government are how North Carolina continues to prepare workers for fulfilling careers and make our state a place businesses want to call home."

Recognizing the critical role employers play in workforce development, the event focused on employers' needs, workforce development and career services. Participants discussed ways the state, employers, and community colleges and universities can partner on education attainment and job growth in the state.

Governor Cooper was joined by representatives from **Honeywell, Chime Solutions, Ernst & Young, Lending Tree, AvidXchange, Stratifyd, and Allstate.** Mayor Vi Lyles, Central Piedmont Community College President Kandi Deitemeyer, Charlotte Works President Danielle Frazier, UNC Charlotte Chancellor Phil Dubois, Johnson C. Smith University Director of STEM Innovation Terik Tidwell and local career services directors also participated in the event.

Since taking office, Governor Cooper has made workforce development a critical focus of his administration.

In 2018, Governor Cooper announced the [NC Job Ready initiative](#) to strengthen workforce development in the state, through partnering with employers, promoting skills and education attainment, and spurring local innovation.

Governor Cooper's [Finish Line Grants program](#) is one example, providing critical funding so community college students who face an unexpected financial hurdle, like a car repair or health care bill, can stay on track to graduate. The Finish Line Grants

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## On Our Radar

- [Gig East – a hub for innovation in Wilson](#)
- [Struggling to find tech workers? You might need to train them yourself.](#) (News & Observer) - February 14

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## N.C. in the News

- [N.C. college enrollment turns the corner](#) (Richmond County Daily Journal - February 17)
- [China Trade War Walloped More Than Half of U.S. States in 2019](#) (Yahoo Finance - February 14)
- [Honeywell, LendingTree and other big employers talk hiring needs, challenges at Charlotte workforce forum](#) (Charlotte Business Journal - February 14)

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## About Us

SYNC is North Carolina Commerce's electronic newsletter for local government officials, private-sector allies, state policy makers, and other economic development leaders. We offer unfiltered details about new economic development projects and events, useful news about your peers, and opportunities to synchronize with statewide programs and tools in order to advance economic development in your community. [Send your story ideas to the editor.](#)

program has already provided two million dollars in funding and issued over 3,000 grants.

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