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Weekly highlights from the
North Carolina Department of Commerce



(Left-right) N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco, Mary Tarnowka of the U.S. Embassy in India, and Bob Garrett of KPMG in New Delhi.

Crisco leads N.C. trade mission to India

With the second-fastest growing major economy in the world, expected to soon expand 8.6 percent, India is one of the most desirable overseas markets for U.S. companies. Looking to tap the economic resource, N.C. Department of Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco is currently leading a North Carolina trade delegation on a five-day business trip to India. According to New Delhi's *India Real Time*, Crisco's goals for the trip are to search for export markets and to encourage Indian firms to invest more in North Carolina, which will result in jobs coming to the state.

"There is no secret here: all states know about it," Crisco said of India's economic attractiveness. Crisco added that North Carolina is actively competing with several other states, including Virginia, to expand trade with the country.

Indian companies have invested in North Carolina and created more than 700 jobs in the state over the past three years, but said Sec. Crisco, "It needs to be more."

In addition to individual states looking to boost trade with India, President Barack Obama and U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, who is also on a trade mission in India, have expressed a desire to export more goods to the country while bringing jobs to the United States. [Read more.](#)

[North Carolina Courts India Business](#) (*The Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 7)

Crisco addresses lawmakers about importance of economic development

Last week, N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco addressed a N.C. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee about the importance of the state's economic development funds. Over the past two years, those funds alone have led to the commitment of more than 24,000 jobs and about \$3.5 billion in investment. Nearly 150 projects have been announced using the Job Development Investment Grant and the One NC Fund since 2009.

Crisco emphasized that during these tough times creating jobs and economic development is critically important. He pointed to the increased competition North Carolina faces and the fact that in Virginia Governor Bob Mc Donnell's State of the State message he requested additional money for economic development, not less, and specifically called out North Carolina as a state to beat.

Perdue announces \$14M in grants to 26 local governments

Gov. Bev Perdue on Feb. 8 announced that \$14 million will be distributed to 26 local governments through the Community Development Block Grant Economic Recovery Program (CDBG ER). Each grant will help develop infrastructure, housing or special needs in the community.

"Improving infrastructure and housing in our neediest communities, while creating jobs is a win-win for all involved," said Perdue. "I congratulate each of our communities that are participating in the CDBG program."

Each project funded was required to meet national standards and to identify the creation and/or retention of jobs. The recommended projects are "bid-ready" meaning applicants receiving an award are ready to bid the project as soon as all funding conditions are released. In addition, highest priority was given to areas of the state with high unemployment.



(Left-right) U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Gary Locke and N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco in New Delhi.



(Left-right) N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco, Brownie Plaster of Destination Cleveland County (accepting the organization's award for Best Public-Private Partnership), Assistant Secretary for Community Development Henry McKoy and Deputy Secretary Dale Carroll

Urban Development holds successful Main Street Conference

The N.C. Department of Commerce's [Urban Development Division's](#) 2011 N.C. Main Street Conference was held in Shelby, an original Main Street city, Jan. 26-28. This year's theme was "Community Fitness Training: Preparing communities for economic success."

This year 352 people from 103 communities turned out to hear sessions including "Downtown Revival in a Fiscal Crunch," "Building Entrepreneur-Friendly Communities," "Visual Merchandising for the Artistically Challenged and Financially Deprived," and "Thinking Creatively About Underutilized Buildings."

On the evening of Jan. 27, 34 Main Street Champions were honored at the N.C. Main Street Awards program for their dedication and outstanding contributions to downtowns. Four Small Town Main Street award winners and 16 Main Street award winners were recognized for their exemplary projects, which serve as models for other downtowns. Champions and award winners received certificates presented by N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco, Deputy Secretary Dale Carroll, Assistant Secretary for Community Development Henry McKoy and Urban Development Division

Perdue announces \$8.5M for energy projects

Gov. Bev Perdue announced on Feb. 7 the North Carolina Energy Office has awarded \$8.5 million in federal Recovery Act funds to 43 public and private agencies to make downtown local government and small businesses more energy efficient, promote conservation and use of renewable fuels in industrial buildings and provide for greater energy efficiency in commercial and large nonprofit facilities.

"These investments are more than much-needed job creating investments in our communities," said Perdue. "These projects also will make businesses and government facilities more energy efficient, which holds down costs and helps -- particularly during these challenging economic times -- control government spending on utilities."

[North Carolina invests \\$8.5 million for energy projects statewide](#) (GovMonitor, Feb. 7)

Emerging Issues Forum looks at health care

The 26th annual [Emerging Issues Forum](#) took place through today (Feb. 8) at the Raleigh Convention Center. Titled "An Idea Exchange for Healthcare," the forum looked at health care innovations and how they can help the economy.

Today's scheduled speakers included CNN medical correspondent Sanjay Gupta and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina CEO Brad Wilson.

[Perdue addresses health care at annual NCSU forum](#) (WRAL, Feb. 8)



Tourism Division offering small business workshops

The N.C. Department of Commerce's Division

Director Liz Parham.



(Left-right) N.C. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary Dale Carroll, Boone Mayor Loretta Clawson, Hospitality House Private Sector Fundraising Co-Chair John Cooper, Hospitality House Executive Director Lynne Mason, Former N.C. Representative Cullie Tarleton

Grant winner Hospitality House holds grand opening in Boone

On Feb. 4, the Hospitality House facility for the homeless, which serves seven northwestern North Carolina counties, held a grand opening in Boone. This public-private initiative will include temporary housing for 62 residents and a commercial kitchen expected to serve 100,000 meals to citizens in need each year. The N.C. Department of Commerce awarded a Community Development Block Grant to partially fund this regional project, which leveraged \$3 million in non-governmental funding. N.C. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary Dale Carroll participated in the ceremony.

Business plan competition for women entrepreneurs now accepting submissions

AdvantageWest's entrepreneurial development program and VERVE, a monthly magazine targeting Western North Carolina women in the arts, business, fashion and design, announce the launch of the "VERVE-aciouly BIG Idea Business Plan Competition," a contest for women entrepreneurs.

The competition targets women-owned, for-profit businesses, both established ventures seeking expansion and would-be entrepreneurs with ideas for a startup. A total of \$10,000 in cash, prizes, business support services and expert advice will be awarded. Deadline to enter is April 1.

Businesses participating in the competition must be located in the 23-county region served by AdvantageWest, the economic development partnership for Western North Carolina. The contest is open to businesses in any industry segment, though high-growth businesses or those that use technology in an innovative way are strongly encouraged. Businesses co-owned by men will not be considered.

A panel of judges that will include representatives of AdvantageWest and VERVE, as well as business and academic leaders, will review all submissions. Winners will be

of Tourism, Film and Sports Development will offer a series of new community-based training programs designed to help small tourism-related businesses in North Carolina.

Offered in concert with the New Bern/Craven County Convention and Visitor's Center, the Division will roll out the first program this month. These programs are designed to help tourism-related businesses engage more fully with programs offered by the North Carolina Department of Commerce and its partners. Tourism Resource Assistance Center will bring the Division of Tourism's program managers to local communities for a day to discuss the nuts and bolts of working with the Division. And, representatives from the N.C. Department of Commerce will be on hand to discuss services they can provide businesses including strategic planning, assistance with identifying funding sources, and as liaisons with other local, state, and federal agencies.

The first TRAC session will be at the New Bern Convention Center in New Bern on Feb. 17 from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. There is no charge to attend, and no reservation is required. For additional information on this session, to schedule a specific appointment time or to learn more about scheduling a TRAC visit to your community, contact [André Nabors](#) at (919) 733-7502 or [Eleanor Talley](#) (919) 733-0869.

[Tourism agencies offer business programs](#) (enctoday.com, Feb. 4)

Metrics from B&I Division

Below are year-to-date metrics tracked by the N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Business and Industry that illustrate some of the recent activities of the Division. The metrics include the number of new economic development projects assigned to B&I development staff; the number of economic development project announcements; the number of announced jobs created and capital invested; the number of interactions existing industry staff had with businesses throughout the state; and the number of contacts received by the Business Link North Carolina/Business ServiCenter.

Jan. 1 - Feb. 8, 2011

New projects assigned:	30
Projects announced:	12
Jobs created:	1,277
Capital invested:	\$237M
Industry visits by existing industry staff:	149
Calls to the Business ServiCenter:	2,270

N.C. in the News

announced at Carolina Connect, AdvantageWest's signature annual conference for entrepreneurs and investors, on May 5 in Asheville.

The winner of the competition will be profiled in *VERVE* magazin's June 2011 issue. A business coach provided by Mountain BizWorks – a nonprofit organization offering small-business assistance and lending programs, which is also co-sponsoring Carolina Connect – will be paired with the winner and will monitor the company's progress at the end of six months and again after one year.

January Economic Overview released

The N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Policy, Research and Strategic Planning has released its Monthly Overview of North Carolina's Economy for January 2011.

National and state indicators have been mixed this month. The number of people in North Carolina either employed or unemployed (but actively seeking work) has increased, but the unemployment rate has risen slightly as well. A majority of North Carolina industries have added jobs this month with professional and business services being the largest contributor. [Read the overview.](#)

North Carolina trends

- The state's unemployment rate rose from 9.7 percent in November to 9.8 percent.
- There was an increase in the number of people unemployed and the size of the labor force from November to December.
- The monthly unemployment rate remained unchanged or decreased in 67 counties.
- Five counties account for 30 percent of the total unemployed people in the state.
- Since November 2010, North Carolina has gained 2,300 non-farm payroll jobs.
- Over the past twelve months, the state has gained 10,400 non-farm payroll jobs.
- Since the start of the recession, the state has lost 272,800 non-farm jobs.
- Foreclosures and housing authorizations are down while existing sales increased.

This Week's Highlights

- [Data centers growing in North Carolina](#) (*Southeast Real Estate Business*, January 2011)
- [A new fuel](#) (*Kinston Free Press*, Feb. 7)
- [HPU work force to grow to 1,000](#) (*High Point Enterprise*, Feb. 7)
- [Health Decisions hopes to hire 60](#) (*The News & Observer* - Raleigh, Feb. 7)
- [N.C. attorney general wants TVA lawsuit reinstated](#) (*The News & Observer* - Raleigh, Feb. 6)

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