



sync[®] NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES FROM N.C. COMMERCE



Secretary Sanders learned more about NALA Systems' work to develop new reverse osmosis membranes for water desalination during her visit to the First Flight Venture Center in RTP.

Secretary Sanders Begins Commerce Service Focusing on Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Inclusion

Machelle Baker Sanders affirmed her oath of office as North Carolina's Secretary of Commerce on March 1 during a ceremony at the First Flight Venture Center. Secretary Sanders' choice of the Research Triangle Park venue honors the ongoing importance of innovation, entrepreneurship, and inclusion to the state's economy.

Secretary Sanders assumed her role on the first day of Women's History Month and on the heels of Black History Month as the first African-American and African-American female to helm North Carolina's Department of Commerce.

After the ceremony, **Secretary Sanders** toured the RTP technology incubator, including stops at Hanger6, First Flight's precision prototyping facility and NALA Systems, a female-owned company based at First Flight that is developing reverse osmosis membranes to help expand the availability of fresh water around the globe.

"Innovation and new ideas are the rocket fuel of the North Carolina economy," said **Secretary Sanders**. "As a biotechnology executive, I've witnessed the significant impact that entrepreneurial innovation has on our state. We must welcome everyone to contribute and then act with deliberate intention to nurture and support those ideas, especially those



Offshore Wind Industry Offers Potential for New Jobs and Billions of Investment in North Carolina

North Carolina stands well positioned to attract a significant portion of a more than \$100 billion market opportunity from the growing offshore wind energy industry, according to a comprehensive new report released today by the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

The publication of the report from BVG Associates marks the latest step in Governor Cooper's far-reaching commitment to build a clean energy economy to fight climate change and grow clean-energy jobs in North Carolina.

BVG Associates (BVGA), a consulting company with extensive wind energy experience, forecasts the U.S. east coast will see a total offshore installed capacity exceeding 40 gigawatts (GW) by 2035. Reaching this level of capacity will require a manufacturing ecosystem to supply component parts for at least two dozen utility-scale wind farms.

To reach the capacity targets for wind projects already publicly announced by states and site developers, BVGA expects the industry will invest \$140 billion by 2035 to establish and build out its supply chain, install equipment, and operate the wind facilities. BVGA forecasts North Carolina manufacturers can address and supply equipment for the entire east coast market, not just for projects directly off the state's coast.

"Wind energy means new jobs for North Carolinians," said **Machelle Sanders, North Carolina's Commerce Secretary**. "Just like

high-impact companies that solve global issues."

The First Flight Venture Center (FFVC) is North Carolina's original, science-based technology incubator, first developed by the Department of Commerce before it was spun out from the agency to become its own stand alone, non-profit corporation. Today, FFVC is one of the nation's largest, most stable incubators with a proven record of success. During her visit with FFVC President Krista Covey, Secretary Sanders toured Hanger6, an equipment-rich Do It Yourself (DIY) facility that helps entrepreneurs streamline the critical but often costly process of developing a product prototype.

"We are honored to have hosted Secretary Sanders' affirmation ceremony here at First Flight," said **FFVC President Krista Covey**. "We are aligned in our vision to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, and inclusivity to all people with a desire to have their scientific ideas commercialized. This is our 30th anniversary! We have worked hard to provide resources and reduce barriers to see over 400 companies to go to market. One way First Flight has supported this mission is with programming specifically geared to supporting minority, women-owned and rural based companies. We have been honored to represent North Carolina as one of 24 SBA Federal and State Technology (FAST) awardees which enable underserved companies to apply for and win non-dilutive Federal Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer (SBIR/STTR) grants for new research and innovation. We are excited for our next 30 years of service!"

Secretary Sanders also toured FFVC member company NALA Systems, a female owned cleantech startup led by a dynamic mother-daughter team working to expand membrane materials and products available for desalination and water purification. This technological breakthrough will make a difference in expanding available freshwater for human population, industrial, and agriculture needs. **CEO Sue Mecham, Ph.D.** and her mother **Dr. Judy Riffle** bring more than 50 years of experience in polymer science to address a major problem facing the world, the growing shortage of fresh water in many locations around the globe. NALA Systems' new reverse osmosis membranes offer improved performance, efficiency, and durability of current commercial products.

"We were honored to attend the ceremony in honor of Secretary Sanders' appointment," said **Dr. Mecham, NALA Systems' CEO**. "As a women led team we particularly appreciate her spotlight on our work to build a product and business with a positive impact on the world's water crisis. NALA Systems has been fortunate to find a supportive community in RTP and FFVC. Our work has been supported by early-stage and impact investors, Good Growth Capital (GGC) and Oval Park Capital, North Carolina angel investors from RTP Capital and Wilmington Angels for Local Entrepreneurs (WALE), and the National Science Foundation SBIR program. We look forward to being a part of Secretary Sanders initiatives in her new role, and supporting business in North Carolina including small innovative businesses, particularly those led by women and minorities."

Many of the companies with roots at FFVC have received grants over the years from N.C. Commerce's One North Carolina Small Business Program, a fund that continues to support North Carolina's emerging tech companies with grants to match federal technology grants. The Department's Office of Science, Technology & Innovation administers the fund and recently completed its latest round of grantmaking, awarding \$1.5 million to 29 companies.

Secretary Sanders joins the Department of Commerce

biotechnology was for us many years ago, today clean energy represents an industry of the future and North Carolina always embraces the future."

The North Carolina Office of Science, Technology, & Innovation, an operating unit of the Commerce Department, led the study project for the state and commissioned the report. The BVGA lead team included experts from Lloyds Register Energy Americas, Timmons Group, and North Carolina State University and its NC Clean Energy Technology Center.

BVG Associates, headquartered near London with offices in Glasgow, Scotland and Richmond, Virginia, conducted an extensive assessment of the state's strategic position for the offshore wind industry. In addition to the market analysis, BVG researched and is developing an inventory of businesses, organizations, and physical infrastructure best positioned to promote offshore wind (OSW) development in North Carolina. The report finds that North Carolina has multiple port and water-front properties well-suited to support the OSW industry currently developing off the U.S. East Coast. The state also has a fully integrated, up-to-date high-capacity intermodal transport system consisting of rail, road, inland waterways, and coastal waterways that connects well to North Carolina's coastline and adjoining states.

The company's report includes recommendations for actions the state might take to leverage the emerging OSW opportunity. The company developed a similar study for the State of Virginia.

North Carolina already features one approved Wind Energy Area (WEA) under lease for development. The Kitty Hawk WEA, located 24 nautical miles from Corolla, is projected to be able to support 2,500 megawatts of electricity generation, which would be enough to power approximately 700,000 homes.

The publication of today's report sends an important signal to OSW developers and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) that North Carolina is committed to the industry, both as a location for wind energy projects as well as an ideal manufacturing location for projects along the entire eastern seaboard.

The new assessment is part of the ongoing work to implement Governor Cooper's Clean Energy Plan for the state.

In October 2018, **Governor Cooper** signed Executive Order 80 to reaffirm North Carolina's commitment to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions and support the expansion of clean energy businesses. Among other actions, the executive order directed the Department of Commerce to support the expansion of clean energy

following her service as Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Administration. Prior to joining Governor Roy Cooper's cabinet, Secretary Sanders served as vice president of manufacturing and general manager of Biogen's largest and most advanced manufacturing facility, located in RTP. She has 30 years of pharmaceutical/biotechnology experience and held leadership positions overseeing manufacturing, global quality assurance and quality control functions at Biogen, Purdue Pharmaceuticals, and Diosynth-Akzo Nobel.

Associate Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, Michael Morgan, administered the oath of office on Monday to **Secretary Sanders**. The North Carolina Senate is expected to convene a confirmation hearing for Secretary Sanders in the coming weeks.

For more information about the First Flight Venture Center, NALA Systems, and the Department's technology focused One North Carolina Small Business Program, visit these websites:

- [First Flight Venture Center \(ffvcnc.org\)](http://ffvcnc.org)
- [NALA Systems \(nalasystems.com\)](http://nalasystems.com)
- [One North Carolina Small Business Program \(nccommerce.com\)](http://nccommerce.com)



N.C. Supreme Court Associate Justice Michael Morgan looks on as Secretary Sanders completes formal paperwork during her March 1 oath ceremony

Virtual Main Street Conference Underway This Week

North Carolina Commerce Secretary Machel Sanders delivered remarks earlier today at the 2021 North Carolina Main Street Conference, being held in a virtual format this week. The high-profile gathering of community and economic development leaders focused on North Carolina's downtowns continues through Thursday (March 11).

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the signature conference, the theme of this year's event is, *Main Street: Pivoting for Prosperity*. The theme recognizes that the Main Street Program helps communities, businesses, property owners, and individuals build more resilient downtowns that are better equipped to face the next pandemic, natural disaster, market shift, or another crisis.

businesses and service providers, encourage clean technology investment, and support companies seeking to procure renewable energy. On October 1, 2019, the Department of Commerce published an extensive workforce assessment for the clean energy and clean transportation industry sectors. On October 29, 2020 the governors of Maryland and Virginia joined Governor Cooper to announce a three-state framework to advance offshore wind projects, known as the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic Regional Transformative Partnership for Offshore Wind Energy Resources (SMART-POWER).

The full report, [Building North Carolina's Offshore Wind Supply Chain, is available online at nccommerce.com](http://nccommerce.com).

Secretary Sanders Comments on New Biogen \$200M RTP Expansion

Biogen, the global pharmaceutical company, announced a \$200 million investment in Research Triangle Park on March 4. The company plans to build a 175,000-square-foot facility to support clinical production for its gene therapy pipeline. The company plans to add 90 more workers to its workforce of approximately 1,900 people at its two facilities in RTP.

"North Carolina's diverse and highly-skilled workforce continues to make NC a destination for investments from global leaders in the life sciences industry," said **N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Machel Sanders**. "Biogen represents the caliber of high-impact, innovative companies our state must continue to attract and support to secure good jobs for a strong economy. Not only are they focused on improving people's lives with breakthrough, best in-class therapies, but as a former Biogen executive, I can attest to their commitment to serve our communities and contribute to a sustainable, equitable economy."

[Read more.](#)

N.C. in the News

- [New reports shine bright light of Raleigh: No. 1 metro, significant job growth coming \(WRAL TechWire - March 9\)](#)
- [Opinion: Policy traps that imperil California's job market \(Cal Matters - Sacramento - March 9\)](#)
- [N.C. Civil Rights Trail Announces Three New Markers \(Yes Weekly - Greensboro - March 9\)](#)
- [Governor Cooper appoints McLaurin chair of Economic Development Partnership \(Richmond County Daily Journal - March 5\)](#)

The Main Street Program and its strategies, principles, and comprehensive Four-Point Approach™ to downtown revitalization, helps communities pivot for prosperity. The Program was developed more than 40 years ago as a result of the development of malls and strip centers, retail properties that persuaded anchor businesses to relocate away from downtowns. Small towns and cities across the country had to pivot to survive and to thrive. To many, it seemed like a man-made disaster had struck, but downtowns came back stronger than ever. Expert observers are confident downtowns will emerge even stronger following the COVID-19 pandemic as well.

As the conference continues on Wednesday, March 10, **Erik Pages, President of EntreWorks Consulting**, will discuss effective strategies for building a more resilient local economy built on innovation, entrepreneurship, and creativity; and **Ben Muldrow, Partner with Arnett Muldrow and Associates**, will discuss the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on communicating, marketing, and planning for downtown.

The annual North Carolina Main Street Awards Ceremony will be held on Wednesday, March 10 and the Main Street Champions Recognition will be held on Thursday, March 11. These two events recognize outstanding projects completed in Main Street downtowns throughout the state and honor individuals dedicated to making their downtowns thriving places.

For more information, visit NCMainStreetandPlanning.com.

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.](#)

(919) 814-4600

[For Business](#) | [Grants & Incentives](#)

[Data, Tools & Reports](#) | [Jobs & Training](#) | [Programs & Services](#)
[Directory](#)

Building Location:

301 North Wilmington Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-1058

Mailing Address:

4301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-4301

[Email the Editor](#) [SYNC archive](#)

© 2020 North Carolina Department of Commerce | SYNC® is a registered trademark of the N.C. Department of Commerce.
