

syncTM Weekly highlights from the North Carolina Department of Commerce



(Left-right) Wake County Board of Commissioners Chair Joe Bryan, Cary Mayor Harold Weinbrecht, MetLife Executive Vice President Marty Lippert, and Governor Pat McCrory

MetLife to create over 2,600 jobs in North Carolina

On March 7, Governor Pat McCrory announced that MetLife, Inc., a leading global life insurance and employee benefits company, intends to create 2,600 jobs in Charlotte and Cary by the end of 2015. The company expects to invest, or cause to be invested, \$125.5 million into its new Mecklenburg and Wake County campuses. The N.C. Department of Commerce's [David Spratley](#) was the developer on this project.

"We're proud that a strong corporate partner like MetLife has decided to invest in North Carolina," said Governor McCrory. "These jobs will complement our financial services sector in Charlotte and our high-tech hub in Wake County, two distinct sectors we want to expand."

The announcement of more than 2,600 jobs by the Governor is the largest jobs announcement in recent North Carolina history.

"This administration is committed to working with companies like MetLife to spur job creation and growth," added Sharon Decker, N.C. Commerce Secretary. "We congratulate MetLife for its success and for investing in North Carolina in this transformational way."

MetLife plans to establish hubs for its U.S. Retail Business in Charlotte and for its Global Technology & Operations



Decker addresses leaders at N.C. Northeast's State of the Region

N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker was among the speakers who addressed economic development topics at the March 1 State of the Northeast Region gathering in Williamston. The annual event drew about 300 government, business and education leaders from across the region and beyond.

The 16-county Northeast, a patchwork of rural and micropolitan communities, enjoys an historic chance to re-shape its economic landscape, Decker told the gathering. "You have a tremendous opportunity in northeastern North Carolina to think creatively about economic transformation," she said. While state-level policy action will make an impact on the direction local economies take, grassroots leadership is the critical factor in embracing new opportunities. "Change happens at the community level," said Decker.

Other speakers at the event included David Herman, MD, chief executive officer at Greenville-based Vidant Health, which serves

organization in Cary. New positions would include product management, marketing, sales and customer support in Charlotte and information technology positions in Cary focused on delivering global solutions to support MetLife and the customers it serves.

"We would like to thank Governor McCrory, Commerce Secretary Decker, Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte, Wake County and the Town of Cary for their partnership through this process," said MetLife Executive Vice President Marty Lippert. "MetLife is pleased to be joining the other great companies that make up the North Carolina business community. We are confident that the wide array of resources that the state affords MetLife will contribute significantly to MetLife's continuing success."

"North Carolina has much to offer our employees and the company. The strong sense of community in Cary and Charlotte, as well as the region's robust infrastructure and sustainable talent pool were all compelling reasons for coming here," said MetLife Executive Vice President Eric Steigerwalt.

The project was made possible in part by an award from the state [Job Development Investment Grant program](#) and a [One North Carolina Fund Award](#). Receipt of the awards is based on proof of job creation and other performance requirements. The state Economic Investment Committee voted earlier that day to award a JDIG to MetLife. JDIGs are awarded only to new and expanding businesses whose benefits exceed the costs to the state and would not be undertaken in North Carolina without the grant.

Under the terms of the company's JDIG award, MetLife is eligible to receive up to twelve annual grants equal to 75 percent of the state personal income tax withholdings from the eligible new jobs created since the date of the initial award. Receipt of each annual grant is based on state-certified proof that the company has fulfilled incremental job creation and capital investment requirements. Over twelve years, the JDIG award could yield aggregate benefits to MetLife of up to \$87.2 million.

As much as \$29.09 million in additional funds from the company's JDIG award could be added to the state's Utility Fund for infrastructure improvements in economically distressed counties. When a JDIG is awarded to a company whose site is located in the state's more economically prosperous counties such as Mecklenburg and Wake, 25 percent of the company's grant is allocated to the Utility Fund to encourage economic development in less prosperous counties. For more information on the county tier designations, visit: <http://www.nccommerce.com/research-publications/incentive-reports/county-tier-designations>.

The project was also made possible in part by a performance-based grant from the One North Carolina Fund of up to \$2 million. The grant is contingent upon proof of job creation and receipt of a local funding match. The One NC Fund provides financial assistance, through local 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.

Other partners who assisted with this announcement include: N.C. Community Colleges, Mecklenburg County, City of Charlotte, Charlotte Chamber, Charlotte Regional Partnership, UNC Charlotte, Wake County, Town of Cary, Cary Chamber, Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce, N.C. State University, Research Triangle Regional Partnership and Duke

1.4 million eastern North Carolina residents. Herman spoke of healthcare access and costs as an economic development issue. "Healthcare expense is a detriment to global competitiveness," he said. VantageSouth Bank CEO Scott Custer spoke of the still-fragile state of North Carolina's economy. Though positive signs are visible, modest economic growth-rates continued to make business leaders cautious about plans for hiring and new investment. "It is a time to be mindful and careful about how we proceed," Custer said.

North Carolina's Northeast Commission President Vann Rogerson reviewed highlights of the past year's economic development accomplishments, which included the selection of Hyde County as a testing site for unmanned aerial vehicles and the launch of College of the Albemarle's Aviation and Technical Training Center in Currituck County. "Our region is a special spot for the aerospace industry," Rogerson said, noting also the recent arrival of LSA America, a manufacturer of light sport aircraft, to Halifax County. The past year also had witnessed progress in the Northeast's efforts to harness new investments in alternative energy, agricultural biotechnology and boatbuilding, Rogerson said.

Unprecedented: Mooresville-Statesville named "No. 1 Micropolitan Area in the Nation" by *Site Selection* magazine for the last 9 out of 11 years

Mooresville and Statesville have been named the "No. 1 Micropolitan Area in the Nation" for 2012, *Site Selection* magazine announced in its annual "Governor's Cup" issue. This unprecedented event marks the ninth time in the past eleven years Mooresville-Statesville has held the top spot.

The *Site Selection* ranking groups Mooresville and Statesville in the same area, which finished the year with 20 qualifying projects surpassing second-place Findlay, Ohio, which had 19 projects, and third-place Lexington-Thomasville.

The U.S. Census defines a "micropolitan" as a rural county whose largest city does not exceed a population of 50,000. The United States has a total of 576 micropolitan areas. Iredell County's micropolitan area consists of the Town of Mooresville, Troutman and Statesville and is north of the Charlotte region.

In order to qualify, a new or expanding industry project must meet one of three criteria: capital investment of at least \$1 million, creation of 50 or more new jobs, or new construction of at least 20,000 square feet.

Energy. [Read more.](#)

[MetLife to bring 2,600 jobs to Charlotte and Cary](#) (*The Charlotte Observer*, March 8)

OFS Brands to create 188 jobs in High Point

Today (Mar. 12), Governor Pat McCrory and N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker announced that OFS Brands, a furniture and logistics company, will expand its facility in Guilford County. The company plans to create 188 jobs and invest \$9.25 million over the next five years in High Point.

"Our state has a proud history as a leading furniture manufacturer because our workforce is second to none," said Governor McCrory. "We're excited that OFS Brands has decided to invest in North Carolina once again."

OFS Brands, founded in 1937, is a family-owned and operated furniture and logistics company. The company manufactures furniture under the brands OFS, First Office, Carolina Business Furniture and Loewenstein. OFS Brands also provides transportation services through Styline Logistics, a subsidiary located in High Point. The company currently employs more than 190 people in North Carolina.

"We're committed to partnering with companies to increase the number of products made right here in North Carolina," said Sharon Decker, N.C. Secretary of Commerce. "OFS Brands is a great corporate citizen that is actively engaged in the High Point community. We wish them continued success in North Carolina." [Read more.](#)

Metal manufacturer to create 121 jobs in Macon County

On March 5, Governor Pat McCrory and N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker announced that Franklin Tubular Products Inc., a manufacturer of manipulated tubular assemblies, will locate its operations in Macon County. The company plans to create 121 jobs and invest \$4 million over the next three years in Franklin. The N.C. Department of Commerce's [Jennifer Hogsed](#) was the developer on this project.

Franklin Tubular Products is a subsidiary of Tricorn Group PLC. As a part of the project, Tricorn acquired the facility, business and assets of Whitley Products. The Franklin facility will continue to manufacture fabricated metal tubes. Currently more than 100 people are employed at that plant.

The project was made possible in part by a performance-based grant from the [One North Carolina Fund](#) of up to \$56,000. The grant is contingent upon proof of job creation and receipt of a local funding match.

Other partners that helped with this project include: N.C. Community Colleges, Macon County, Macon County Economic Development Commission, AdvantageWest and the Town of Franklin. [Read more.](#)

In all, North Carolina had 16 of the top micropolitan on the list, including Lexington-Thomasville in third place, Shelby tied for fifth place, and Lincolnton tied for 11th place.

Site Selection magazine, published by Conway Data Inc. since 1954, delivers expansion planning information to 45,000 executives of fast-growing firms. Conway Data is an international publishing, association management and events company headquartered in Atlanta.

[Speed racer](#) (*Site Selection*, March 2013)

Plastics manufacturer to create 32 jobs in Mecklenburg County

On March 6, Governor Pat McCrory and N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker announced that Otto Environmental Systems North America Inc., a plastics manufacturer, will expand its facility in Mecklenburg County. The company plans to create 32 jobs and invest \$7 million over the next three years in Charlotte. The N.C. Department of Commerce's [Uconda Dunn](#) was the developer on this project.

Otto Environmental Systems is an innovative injection molding company that manufactures a variety of plastic products serving multiple markets including the waste, automotive and material handling industries. Otto Environmental Systems opened its first domestic plant in Charlotte in 1988. The facility currently employs more than 330 people.

The project was made possible in part by a performance-based grant from the [One North Carolina Fund](#) of up to \$48,000. The grant is contingent upon proof of job creation and receipt of a local funding match.

Other partners that helped with this project include: N.C. Community Colleges, Mecklenburg County, City of Charlotte and the Charlotte Chamber. [Read more.](#)



Motorcoaches bring more than \$3.2 billion to N.C.

The total economic impact of motorcoach tour and travel in North Carolina is more than \$3.2 billion, based on the results of the American Bus Association Foundation's [Motorcoach Group Tourism Economic Impact Study](#). This number proves the group travel market is a



*N.C. Department of Commerce Small Business Ombudsman
Christine Ryan speaks to workshop participants*

BLNC and DWS present entrepreneurship workshops

Business Link North Carolina (BLNC) and the Raleigh local office of the Division of Workforce Solutions, both divisions of the N.C. Department of Commerce, have begun presenting monthly entrepreneurship workshops for customers interested in starting a business. The workshops cover a variety of issues involved in starting a new small business, including business entity selection, developing a business plan, funding, and marketing a small enterprise.

"We put together a program that presents a broad overview of the information an entrepreneur needs," said N.C. Department of Commerce Small Business Ombudsman Christine Ryan, the lead presenter of the program. "Participants walk away with two valuable things: an idea of what is involved in starting a business, and a list of local resources to help them through the process."

"It's been great utilizing Christine and the BLNC team here in the Division of Workforce Solutions. We always have a packed house for her workshops on entrepreneurship, and Christine does a fantastic job providing our customers with the data they need," stated Chet Mottershead, manager of the Raleigh local office of the Division of Workforce Solutions. "Leveraging the resources within the Department of Commerce just makes sense, and our customers love it." Staff members are currently scheduling participants for the May workshop, as the March and April workshops are already filled.

Small Town Main Street application workshops planned for next month

The [Small Town Main Street program](#) addresses the growing number of small, rural towns that need downtown development assistance but are not likely, due to size or resource limitations, to pursue the regular Main Street program. Selected communities receive on-site technical assistance from the Small Town Main Street staff including:

- Organizational development
- Market analysis
- Business assistance
- Promotions
- Design

vital part of the overall tourism base in North Carolina.

Annually, the N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development attends several group travel trade conventions to promote North Carolina as a destination for all travelers to tour operators. These conventions include American Bus Association Marketplace, National Tour Association Travel Exchange, Travel South Showcase, Student Youth Travel Association Conference, and North Carolina and Virginia Motorcoach Associations Annual Marketplace. The Division hosts tour operator and AAA Travel Agent familiarization tours and conducts a domestic sales mission reaching tour operators, tour receptive operators and travel agents in key domestic markets.

Forbes

Forbes: N.C. cities among best places to retire

Forbes has announced its "[25 Best Places to Retire](#)" and three cities in North Carolina are among the list. [Asheville](#) was noted for its nice scenery, agreeable climate, below average cost of living, plenty of doctors, and a high level of volunteerism; [Charlotte](#) for its reasonable cost of living and good weather; and [Winston-Salem](#) for its low cost of living, moderate climate, college amenities, high doctors per capita, and high Milken Institute aging rank. To compile the list, Forbes crunched data on more than 400 cities from every state, looking at factors ranging from living costs and taxes to crime to the availability of doctors and the opportunity to stay active with outdoor exercise and volunteer work.

Year-to-date Metrics

Below are year-to-date metrics tracked by the N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Business and Industry Development 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

As in the regular Main Street program, no funds come with the designation, and travel expenses must be reimbursed to the N.C. Department of Commerce.

An application workshop for the Eastern N.C. Small Town Main Street program will be held April 2 at 1:00 p.m. in Benson at the Town Conference Center, 303 E. Church Street.

An application workshop for the Western N.C. Small Town Main Street program will be held April 16 at 11:00 a.m. in Saluda in the 2nd floor conference room of the Saluda Library, 44 W. Main Street.

State launches second program to help small businesses with trust taxes

The N.C. Department of Revenue, along with the N.C. Small Business Commissioners Office, is following up the popular Small Business Taxpayer Recovery Program with a similar effort to help small businesses recover from certain tax liability issues. The new initiative is called the Small Business Counseling Program because of its increased focus on confidential, one-on-one management and financial planning assistance and counseling for the participating businesses.

The Small Business Counseling Program will offer penalty and fee waivers, as well as payment plans to companies that have fallen behind on sales, withholding and other trust taxes. Businesses with 200 or fewer employees may qualify for the program and must agree to have a responsible corporate officer, responsible LLC member or manager, or responsible partnership partner attend small business counseling in North Carolina through the counseling services of the [Small Business and Technology Development Center](#) or the [N.C. Small Business Center Network](#).

For more than 25 years, the SBTDC and SBCN have helped thousands of owners improve their businesses. The SBTDC, the business advisory service of the University of North Carolina System, provides personalized management counseling designed to help small and mid-sized businesses with strategy, financing, marketing and performance improvement. The SBCN, operated through the N.C. Community College System, provides potential and current small business owners with business counseling services, small business start-up and management training, and resource and referral services. [Read more](#).

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 - March 11, 2013

New projects assigned:	86
Projects announced:	24
Jobs announced:	4,550
Capital investment announced:	\$468M
Industry visits by existing industry staff:	228
Calls to Business Link N.C.:	4,265

N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [N.C. ranked No. 1 in creating clean-energy jobs in Q4](#) (*Triangle Business Journal*, March 6)
- [Economic forecast coming to Hilton Garden Inn](#) (*The Outer Banks Sentinel*, March 6)
- [Cree hires 200 to make \\$10 LED bulbs](#) (*Triangle Business Journal*, March 6)
- [Merinos closes on Hanesbrands plant, will hire 158](#) (*The Business Journal of the Greater Triad*, March 5)
- [Convergys growing in Hickory as well as in Charlotte](#) (*Charlotte Business Journal*, March 4)
- [Durham's Cenduit adding space, workers](#) (*Triangle Business Journal*, March 4)
- [Tarheel Plastics expanding in Davie County](#) (*The Business Journal of the Greater Triad*, March 4)
- [Belk Inc. marks 125th anniversary with \\$600 million in investments](#) (*The Charlotte Observer*, March 2)
- [N.C.'s life science strength shows at Raleigh conference](#) (*WRAL Tech Wire*, March 1)

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