

syncTM Weekly highlights from the North Carolina Department of Commerce



Gov. Bev Perdue introduces N.C. Commerce Sec. J. Keith Crisco (right) as she announces the GMAC expansion March 20 in Charlotte. (Photo by The Charlotte Observer/Diedra Laird)

State grant helps GMAC expand in Charlotte

Gov. Bev Perdue announced March 20 that GMAC Financial Services will grow its Mecklenburg County operations and invest more than \$16.4 million, including capitalized lease payments, for an expanded corporate center. The Charlotte expansion is expected to create 200 finance, marketing, IT and related jobs over the next two years that will pay an average annual wage of \$96,124, not including benefits.

The state's Economic Investment Committee voted unanimously to award a Job Development Investment Grant to GMAC to facilitate this expansion. This is the second JDIG awarded in 2009. [Read more.](#)



Marlinda Ma, Trade and Investment Representative for the State of North Carolina

Commerce opens Shanghai office

The International Trade Division has opened a trade and investment office in Shanghai. It joins six other Commerce overseas offices: Hong Kong, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Germany and Korea. Marlinda Ma will manage the office, working closely with Commerce's foreign and U. S. economic developers and trade experts. Ma is an experienced economic developer who most recently served as the trade commissioner, Ontario Section, for the Consulate General of Canada in Shanghai. The state exports a variety of goods and services to China, including electrical machinery, and pharmaceutical and wood products. The total value of exports from North Carolina businesses to China through October was \$1.73 billion, making China the state's second-largest export market. Between 2000 and 2007, the total value of exports from North Carolina businesses to China increased by 405 percent. Marlinda Ma can be reached at mma@nc-asia.com.

Dep. Sec. Carroll to appear on OPEN/net tonight

Dep. Commerce Sec. Dale Carroll will participate in a televised panel discussion on "Green Jobs in North Carolina" tonight at 8 p.m. on OPEN/net. Also participating on the panel are Chuck Sathrum of the N.C. Energy Office, Paul Quinlan from the N.C. Sustainable Energy Association and Matt Meyer from the Community College System. The program will focus on North Carolina's emerging "green" economy, the impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on green economic development, and the resulting entrepreneurial and career opportunities in this sector.

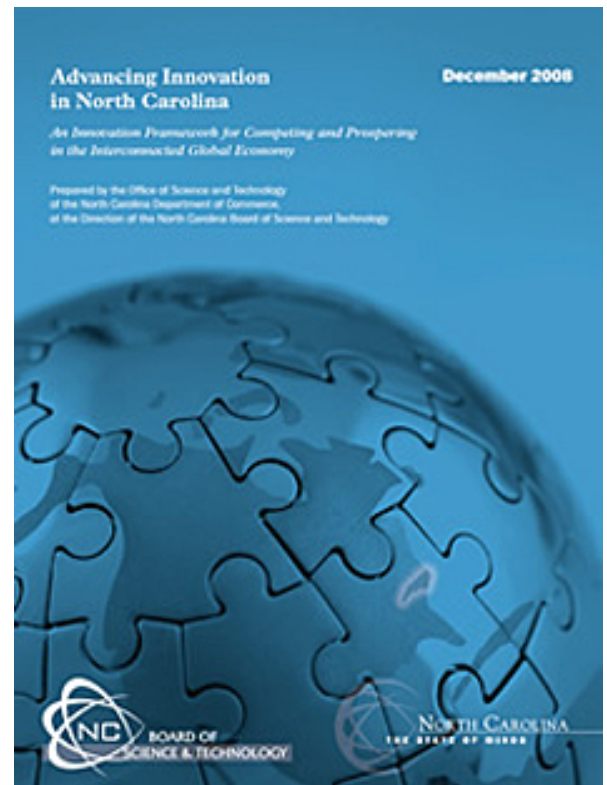
OPEN/net is shown on different cable channels across North Carolina. See a county-by-county list of channels [here](#), or watch live streaming video of the program [here](#).

Commerce announces 50 job training program awards

The Dept. of Commerce has awarded \$989,979 for Incumbent Workforce Development Training Program projects to aid 52 companies and more than 1,700 workers statewide. The funding will allow companies to conduct productivity-enhancing, educational and skills training for workers. The 50 awards, administered by the Division of Workforce Development and local Area Workforce Development Boards, will go to a wide array of companies, from manufacturing, engineering and shipping firms to those specializing in communication, health and food. Two of the 50 grants were collaborative, so the employees of 52 companies will benefit from the training. A total of 55 proposals were submitted in January from 20 local workforce boards. [Read more.](#)

[See the full list of funded proposals.](#)

[Job-enhancing programs get \\$1 million from state](#) (The News & Observer – Raleigh, March 23)



Report: N.C. must promote innovation to compete in global marketplace

North Carolina must put more emphasis on innovation or risk losing its competitive advantage in the world marketplace, says a new report released by the [N.C. Board of Science and Technology](#). The report, *Advancing Innovation in North Carolina*, is a call to action that defines the innovation challenges facing the state, assesses its performance to date and recommends a framework that leverages North Carolina's unique strengths to help all regions of the state compete and prosper in the interconnected global economy. Innovation, the report says, is the "creation and adoption of new products, services, and business models." The report was prepared by Commerce's Office of Science and Technology, which staffs the board. The timing of the report offers a roadmap to the state's new administration and legislature that assumed office in January 2009. [View the report.](#)

N.C. Green Business Fund seeks advisory committee members

Proposals to the N.C. Green Business Fund are



(Pictured, left – right, at Hendrick Motorsports, March 20) Concord Mayor Scott Padgett; Avery Staley, counsel to Lt. Gov. Dalton; Concord City Manager Brian Hiatt; Lucille Dalton, wife of Lt. Gov. Dalton; Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton; Commerce Sec. J. Keith Crisco; Asst. Commerce Sec. Lynn Minges; Deputy Cabarrus County Manager Mike Downs; Cabarrus County Commission Chairman Jay White. Not pictured: John Cox, CEO of Cabarrus Economic Development Corporation.

Lieutenant Governor, Commerce Secretary tour Cabarrus County industries

Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton, Commerce Sec. J. Keith Crisco, Asst. Commerce Sec. Lynn Minges and officials from Cabarrus County and the City of Concord conducted a tour of some of the major industries and businesses in Concord on March 20. After a welcome by Concord Mayor Scott Padgett and Cabarrus County Chairman Jay White at the Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce, the group toured PreGel America, an Italy-based company known as the largest manufacturer and distributor of ingredients for gelato and frozen yogurt. Later they toured several racing-related businesses, including Lowe's Motor Speedway, Hendrick Motorsports and the Windshear/Wind Tunnel, the world's first commercially available, full-scale, rolling-road wind tunnel of its type. [Read more about the Cabarrus tour.](#)

\$48.85 million in neighborhood stabilization grants announced

Gov. Bev Perdue announced March 18 that 20 local governments, nonprofits and other organizations have received grant awards totaling \$48.85 million under the new federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program. The program was developed late last year by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development to assist those areas hit hardest by the housing crisis.

evaluated by an advisory committee composed of scientists, engineers and qualified experts drawn from both inside and outside of the Board of Science and Technology, including industry, academia and other government agencies. The counsel of these merit reviewers has proven invaluable in identifying worthy projects. By serving as a reviewer, you will help shape the future of a green company, and, by extension, of North Carolina.

In selecting reviewers, the board makes every effort to avoid organizational and/or personal conflicts of interest and/or competitive relationship between the evaluator and the applicant. Committee members agree to maintain confidentiality of all information contained in the proposal. If you are interested and qualified to serve as an advisory board committee member, please email R.V. Rikard (rvrikard@nccommerce.com) and include your CV/resume.

State Unemployment Rate Released

The January state-level unemployment rate was released March 11. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 9.7%, up from 8.1% in December 2008. North Carolina's unemployment rate was the sixth highest in the nation in January.

Dare had the highest unemployment in the state in January (17.3%), according to county-level unemployment figures released March 18 by the N.C. Employment Security Commission. Graham (17.0%) was second, followed by Scotland (16.8%), Cherokee (16.4%), Edgecombe (15.6%) and Swain (15.6%). Seventy-two counties had an unemployment rate above 10% in January. Mecklenburg's unemployment rate was 9.5%. Orange had the lowest unemployment rate in January (5.8%), followed by Durham (7.3%), Wake (7.4%), Chatham (7.6%), Gates (7.7%) and Watauga (8.1%).

Every North Carolina county experienced an increase in unemployment rate in January. Mitchell had the largest increase (48.9%) followed by Graham (47.8%), Alleghany (44.1%), Dare (43.0%) and Watauga (42.1%). Twenty-five

States were required to identify areas of greatest need based on the number of foreclosure starts and other housing-related statistics from state and national sources. In North Carolina, areas in 23 counties met the "greatest need" criteria: Alamance, Brunswick, Buncombe, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cumberland, Dare, Davidson, Durham, Edgecombe, Forsyth, Gaston, Guilford, Iredell, Johnston, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Pitt, Randolph, Rowan, Union, Vance and Wake.

NSP funding is provided through HUD's Community Development Block Grant program under the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. In North Carolina, the NSP grants are administered by the Commerce Department's Division of Community Assistance. DCA staff developed North Carolina's guidelines through a public process late last year. Total NSP grant funding to North Carolina is \$52.1 million; 5 percent of that will be used by DCA to implement and monitor the program. [Read more.](#)

[Read more about Community Development Block Grants.](#)



Commerce developers meet with members of the Heilbronn and Wertheim chambers of commerce and industry March 16 at Kloster Bronnbach in Wertheim, Germany.

Commerce developers pitch N.C. to European companies

Martyn Johnson and Dallas Hardenbrook, economic developers with the Division of Business and Industry Development, are currently conducting a business recruitment trip to Germany, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, where they are meeting with leaders of companies that have shown an interest in expanding in North Carolina. John Brennan and Carsten Lex from the State of North Carolina European Office in Frankfurt am Main, Kevin

counties experienced an increase of at least 30% month-over-month.

[See the graphic](#) showing the state-level and national unemployment numbers.

[View the county-by-county unemployment numbers](#) from The Employment Security Commission.

N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [A code of silence persists at Dell](#) (The News & Record - Greensboro, March 22)
- [GMAC to Add 200 Jobs in Mecklenburg County](#) (WSOCTV.com – Charlotte, March 20)
- [GMAC to add 'hundreds' of jobs in Charlotte](#) (Charlotte Observer, March 20)
- [GMAC to bring 200 jobs to Charlotte, get \\$4.5M in incentives](#) (Triad Business Journal, March 20)
- [AW plant cuts about 500 jobs](#) (The News & Observer, Raleigh, March 20)
- [AW North Carolina expects about 500 buyouts](#) (Durham Herald-Sun, March 20)
- [Parkdale Mills closing no. 10 plant in Gastonia on Friday](#) (Gaston Gazette, March 20)
- [SAS forges ahead with Cary expansion](#) (The News & Observer - Raleigh, March 20)
- [SAS To Build New Facility](#) (NBC-17 – Raleigh, March 19)
- [Funds could help Core City](#) (High Point Enterprise, March 19)
- [Workers sacked behind scenes](#) (Charlotte Observer, March 19)
- [BASF to close Wilmington-area vitamin plant](#) (Star-News – Wilmington, March 19)
- [MeadWestvaco to shift some production to Mebane](#) (The News & Record – Greensboro, March 19)
- [N.C.'s layoffs law has loopholes](#) (The Charlotte Observer, March 19)

Johnson of RTP, Steve Gooze of Davidson County, and John Erwin, partner with Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein, are also participating in the trip.

Two highlight events of the trip are seminars introducing the state's business climate to representatives of 50 interested German companies. Seminars were held March 16 in Wertheim, near Heilbronn, and March 19 in Würzburg, two cities whose major industries are machine tool manufacturing, automotive and logistics. Each seminar featured testimonials on doing business in North Carolina from local German companies that have recently established facilities in the state.

Chaffee named president and CEO of NCER

John D. Chaffee was named president and CEO today by the board of [North Carolina's Eastern Region](#). He will assume his duties April 6. Chaffee will work directly with the board and will be responsible for the overall operation of NCER, to include the planning, evaluating and administering of all economic development programs and services provided by the region.

Magazine ranks N.C. second for business

Chief Executive magazine has ranked North Carolina the second-best state in which to do business, up from No. 3 in last year's ranking. Texas was No. 1 for the fourth straight year. California was ranked last, also for the fourth straight year. The ranking is based on surveys by 543 CEOs. The magazine ranks states on such issues as tax policies, proximity to resources, infrastructure and quality of living. The magazine ranked North Carolina's workforce as the third best in the nation. It was ranked tenth for both business friendliness and access to capital. [Read the article.](#)

- [Philip Morris expands marketing efforts at site](#) (Statesville Record and Landmark, March 17)
- [Effort to pry a number from Dell runs into a stonewall](#) (Winston-Salem Journal, March 17)
- [Corning Cable to shut Hickory facility](#) (Triad Business Journal, March 17)
- [Stanford Financial cuts 66 N.C. jobs](#) (Triad Business Journal, March 17)
- [Company closing 2 N.C. container plants](#) (Fayetteville Observer, March 17)
- [N.C. coastal county laying off 27 as revenues fall](#) (Kinston Free Press, March 17)
- [New plant means 105 jobs in Littleton](#) (Daily Herald - Roanoke Rapids, March 17)

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