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Weekly highlights from the  
North Carolina Department of Commerce



(Left-right) Ryan McDaniels, Cabarrus EDC, Governor Bev Perdue, Connexions CEO Steven Auerback, Charlotte Chamber Project Manager Kati Hynes and N.C. Department of Commerce Project Manager Ron Leitch at the announcement that Connexions Inc. will open a new call center in Charlotte.

## New call center to bring 1200 jobs to Charlotte

The [highly skilled workforce](#) in the Charlotte area has helped attract an Orlando, Fla.-based company to locate a new facility in Charlotte and expand an existing facility in nearby Concord, both of which will result in approximately 1,200 new jobs coming to the region. [Connexions Inc.](#), a business that provides call-center services for major health-insurance companies, will locate a new facility at Charlotte's Forest Park business complex and will add 400 new employees to its existing facility in Concord. The announcement is the largest for the area so far in 2011 and is further proof that Charlotte has become a hub for call centers.

"We are excited that Connexions has chosen Charlotte. This four-year Inc 5000 winning firm has continued to invest locally, bringing jobs and economic growth to North Carolina for more than three years," said Kati Hynes, vice president of economic development of the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce. "Connexions' continued commitment to our state and their decision to bring additional jobs to our community during these challenging economic times demonstrates the excellent relationship fostered between our state and Connexions."

The facility at Forest Park will total 61,000 square feet and will generate 800 new jobs, both agent and management positions. Connexions is the latest call center operation to locate at Forest Park, which is home to call centers for the

## Innovative small business award launched

On April 25, Governor Bev Perdue announced plans to honor communities across the state for the creative, innovative ways they help small businesses bring jobs to North Carolina. Two-thirds of all new jobs are created by small businesses, making them critical economic drivers for communities across the state.

"Small businesses are the backbone of North Carolina's economy and one of the reasons we are in the top ten states to improve our unemployment rate, which has dropped by nearly one-and-a-half points compared to where we were last February," said Perdue. "My goal for North Carolina is basic. We're going to continue to be the best place in the world to turn big dreams into jobs through innovation and by growing our small businesses."

The nomination period for the inaugural Governor's Innovative Small Business Community Awards is now open. Local governments are invited to submit nominations for efforts that reflect excellence in community economic development, small business and entrepreneurship, and sustainability. Successful entries will reflect a vision or creative solution to improve the quality of life and well-being for all North Carolinians through job creation and job sustaining activities. [Read more](#). [Learn more about small business in North Carolina](#).



## Charlotte one of Kiplinger's 'Comeback Cities'

*Kiplinger* has listed Charlotte as one of its

American Red Cross and Zenta Mortgage Services. Construction of the facility is expected to begin in May. Connexions' facility in Concord currently employs approximately 600 people. [Read more.](#)

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## Main Street Grants create 260 jobs

Governor Bev Perdue announced April 21 that seven communities will receive more than \$969,000 through the state's [Main Street Solutions Fund](#). The small businesses that benefit from the Main Street Solutions grants will create or retain a minimum of 119 permanent and 57 part-time jobs in addition to 84 construction jobs, according to the grant applications.

For every \$1 invested by the state, an additional \$4.21 will be invested by the local communities, bringing the total public/private investments to just over \$4 million. These funds will be used to provide direct support to North Carolina small businesses with revitalization activities that include commercial building rehabilitation, façade improvements, LEED certification energy efficiency and code improvements.

"Small businesses create more jobs than any other part of the economy, and we are helping to bring those jobs to our communities," Perdue said. "These grants will support some of the most creative and innovative economic development work being done today. Main streets can be at the heart of North Carolina's economic recovery with the right support and investment. The small businesses and other economic partners in our downtown areas will be stronger for this important investment."

Developing main streets in small towns is key to spurring economic growth in communities that have been hit hard by the global economic recession. The Main Street Solutions program helps increase economic activity through public/private redevelopment, historic preservation and small business assistance. The April 21 announcement is the second round of funding through the Main Street Solutions program. To date, the program has handed out nearly \$3 million in grants with an expected \$13 million in additional public/private investments.

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## Unilever to bring 65 jobs to Hoke County

Governor Bev Perdue on April 21 announced that Unilever, one of the world's largest consumer products companies, will expand its manufacturing facility in Hoke County with the creation of 65 jobs and an investment of \$35 million during the next three years in Raeford. The project was made possible in part by a \$195,000 grant from the One North Carolina Fund. The N.C. Department of Commerce's Martie Butler was the developer on this project.

"Our hard-charging job creation strategy is focused on more than bringing new companies into North Carolina," Perdue said. "Companies like Unilever that already have operations in North Carolina see that we are pushing policies that maintain our strong business climate, skilled workforce and excellent training programs. They feel at home expanding here."

Unilever's Raeford facility currently employs 275 and manufactures a mix of deodorants, body washes and shampoos under the brand names Dove, AXE, Caress, Suave and Degree for the North American market. The project will

"Comeback Cities" for 2011. According to the magazine's May issue, growth in the [energy and power industries](#) will boost the city in the coming year. In particular the magazine touts a new power turbine factory being build by Siemens Energy in the city. [Read more.](#)

Mark Pringle, directory of operations for [Siemens Energy](#) in Charlotte, talks about energy-focused training programs and research and development at North Carolina universities and community colleges in [a recent video](#). "I believe what we are creating here in North Carolina is going to be a benchmark for the United States and maybe even the world," Pringle says. [See the video.](#)

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## Furniture maker to add 26 jobs in Burke County

Governor Bev Perdue on April 21 announced that Geiger International, a manufacturer of premium wood case goods, seating and occasional furniture for commercial and residential interiors, will expand in North Carolina with a new facility in Burke County. The company plans to create 64 jobs and invest \$3.7 million during the next three years in Hildebran. The project was made possible in part by a \$128,000 grant from the One North Carolina Fund. The N.C. Department of Commerce's Uconda Dunn was the developer on this project.

"North Carolina is known worldwide for manufacturing top quality furniture for the past century," said Perdue. "Geiger International recognizes that distinguished history, the importance of the furniture industry to the Hickory area and the top-ranked business climate we have built in North Carolina. Their expansion is great news for a community hit hard by the recession, and it is a validation of the policies we put in place to attract jobs to our state."

Geiger International is a subsidiary of Herman Miller, Inc., a globally recognized leader and innovator in furnishings for the office, home, healing and learning environments. The company's products are distributed in more than 140 countries and often sold through the architectural and design community. Geiger's current facility in Hickory has 24 full-time employees. This project will incorporate the Hickory operation in an updated and larger facility in Hildebran. [Read more.](#)

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## Greenville ranks high on 'American Cities of the Future' list

Greenville is officially on the list of "American Cities of the Future." Greenville made the top 10 in four categories, three of which were top five, in the first ever *fDi Magazine* ranking.

upgrade the facility to increase manufacturing and processing capacity, and flexibility for Unilever's personal care business. [Read more.](#)

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## Pinehurst No. 2 reopens to rave reviews

On April 11, Ben Crenshaw joined Pinehurst owner Bob Dedman for the official reopening of Pinehurst No. 2. More than 65 members of the media, along with Crenshaw, played No. 2 for the first time since the course reopened after a year-long restoration. And the reviews were incredible. [Learn more.](#) [See video of the event.](#)

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## NCDBA expo showcases defense industry

N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco and Director of Foreign Operations Derek Chen spoke at a defense industry expo in Pinehurst sponsored by the [N.C. Defense Business Association](#), April 19-20. The expo was North Carolina's first-ever trade show of its kind.

The expo also featured Governor Bev Perdue and Lieutenant General Frank Helmick, the XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg commander.

"From the NCDBA's beginnings in 2009, the organization's strength has been its ability to bring together defense industry representatives and help forge new relationships that are vital to growing the state's defense industry," NCDBA Board Chairman Steven Moore said. Learn more about the [defense industry in North Carolina.](#)

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## Warren County plans 'greentech' campus

[Warren County](#) officials have approved plans to create an agricultural biotechnology cluster of companies and support services on a 100-acre greentech business campus.

The campus itself will be green, the first agricultural biotechnology park in the nation powered completely by alternative energy sources – solar and biodiesel.

The new initiative, developed by the Warren County Economic Development Commission and approved by the County Board of Commissioners, seeks to capitalize on the agricultural, livestock, human and natural resources of Warren County and

Greenville ranks as 4th Overall Micro City of the Future, 4th Micro City for Economic Potential, 5th Micro City for Foreign Direct Investment Strategy and 6th Micro City for Human Resources.

*fDi Magazine*, from The Financial Times Ltd., focuses the rankings on a mixture of data and expert opinion to name cities that have the best prospects for inward investment, economic development and business expansion.

"We expected to do well in this evaluation, but even optimistic economic developers don't expect marks quite this good in multiple categories. Our community has won many accolades, and we're very pleased to add these kudos to the list," remarked Wanda Yuhas, executive director of the [Pitt County Development Commission](#). [Read more.](#)

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## Forbes.com: Edenton among America's Prettiest Towns

Forbes.com names Edenton among "America's Prettiest Towns." Saying Edenton sets itself apart with its historic architecture, an enviable location on Edenton Bay and enough charm to earn its nickname, "The South's Prettiest Small Town," the site also notes Edenton is worlds away from the modern resort architecture of the Outer Banks destinations.

[America's Prettiest Towns](#) (Forbes.com, April 12)

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## Year-to-date Metrics

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.

surrounding areas to create business and jobs, said EDC Chair Sallie White.

Economic developers plan to attract eight to 12 agriculture and food-related companies over the next five years to create more than 900 jobs. Meanwhile, they have obtained private investment from regional livestock producers and consumers to fund a new certified humane advanced technology meat processing facility. It will be built on the site to serve existing markets and stimulate additional livestock production in north-central North Carolina and Virginia. The new processing plant, which could open in early 2012, would process beef, hogs, sheep and goats, creating 50 jobs in the plant and 500 jobs regionally in the livestock, agriculture supply and transportation industries.

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## NCMBC to host Federal IT Symposium

The [N.C. Military Business Center](#) will host the Second Annual North Carolina Federal IT Symposium on May 10 in Chapel Hill at The William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education. The symposium is designed to address the federal IT outlook in the face of budget cuts.

Companies looking to expand into the federal market will learn the steps needed to position their company to support the IT requirements of the federal sector. Topics will include advanced strategies for government sales, green IT, and gaming/simulation/training.

"The federal IT market is the world's largest consumer of IT. We have assembled a group of professionals that are prepared to present skills, tools, investment, time and effort needed for success," says Mickey Finn, senior consultant and owner of Cold Run Enterprises Inc. "Attendees should walk away with the ability to set realistic goals and measure their progress." [Learn more.](#)

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## USA Today: Lumbee Pow Wow among '10 Great'

*USA Today* ranks the Lumbee Spring Pow Wow in Lumberton among the "10 Great Places to Be Wowed by American Indian Culture." The article notes the event celebrates the heritage of the Lumbee and other southeastern tribes and also honors tribes from the American West, Canada and Central America. Songs and dances are prayers in motion, but don't miss the thrill of the contests, Paul Gowder, creator of [powwows.com](#), says, in which excellent dancers compete to award-winning drum groups from across the U.S. and Canada.

[10 great places to be wowed by American Indian culture](#) (*USA Today*, April 18)

Jan. 1 - April 26, 2011

New projects assigned:	123
Projects announced:	59
Jobs created:	5,232
Capital invested:	\$994M
Industry visits by existing industry staff:	476
Calls to Business Link N.C.:	6,913

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## N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [47 states and D.C. add jobs; three states continue to lose](#) (The Business Journals, April 25)
- [Durham seeks to reduce city fleet's emissions](#) (WUNC, April 25)
- [Chasing nanotechnology, Greensboro gambles with state money](#) (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 24)
- [Equity firm to mentor Triangle startups](#) (WRAL - Raleigh, April 25)
- [North Carolina tax revenue jumps](#) (*The Business Journal of the Greater Triad*, April 25)
- [Textile jobs come to North Carolina from China](#) (News 14 Carolina, April 22)

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