

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



Pfizer to Invest in Gene Therapy Manufacturing Facility in North Carolina

Pfizer Inc., one of the world's premier biopharmaceutical companies, will expand in Lee County as the company prepares to produce new gene therapy medicines at its plant in Sanford. **Governor Roy Cooper** announced the company's plans on Monday (August 7), which include a commitment to invest \$100 million, creating 40 jobs.

"North Carolina is one of the few places in the country with the biotech resources to take an idea all the way from the lab to the manufacturing line," **Governor Cooper** said. "Pfizer's investment in Lee County is a prime example of how North Carolina's world-class universities and cutting-edge industries work together to move our state forward."

The Pfizer expansion in Sanford will focus on gene therapy, a potentially transformational technology for patients. The technology involves introducing genetic material into the body to deliver a correct copy of a gene to a patient's cells to compensate for a defective or missing gene. The Pfizer project builds on research and technology developed at UNC-Chapel Hill.

"Pfizer is proud to further expand our presence in North Carolina, particularly as we build our leadership in gene therapy," states **Lynn Bottone, Site Leader at Pfizer Sanford**. "We look forward to the next phase of this expansion as we build a clinical and commercial manufacturing facility."

"Innovation drives economic opportunity and expansion," said **North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland**. "Pfizer's decision to expand in North Carolina proves how our investments in education pay off in new jobs and new solutions to the world's toughest challenges."



Executives of Lenoir-based Aria Designs, at the 2015 China International Furniture Expo in Shanghai. (Left-right) Robin Hoff, vice president of sales and marketing; Jeff Arditti, chief executive officer; and Ted Arditti, executive vice president. Photo courtesy of Aria Designs

Deadline Nears to Apply for Export Assistant Funds

Companies interested in growing their profits through exporting should be aware of an approaching September deadline for applying for funds that could help offset some of the cost of doing business internationally.

The support funds are available through the federal State Trade Expansion Program (STEP), which is administered by the International Trade team at the Economic Development Partnership of N.C.

STEP offers eligible companies up to \$3,500 for airfare and lodging expenses related to exhibiting at an international trade show. Participation in certain U.S. trade shows also qualifies for reimbursement. In addition, the program provides up to \$2,000 for the translation of websites or marketing materials to promote products and services in foreign markets.

Under the 2016-17 funding cycle, companies must apply for travel funds by September 29, and trade show travel must be completed by the same date.

Two years ago, STEP helped Lenoir-based Aria Designs participate in the China International Furniture Expo in Shanghai. There, the upholstery manufacturer began discussions to feature Aria Designs products in hundreds of retail stores in China. "We

Pfizer will add a variety of jobs with this expansion, delivering a total payroll impact of more than \$3.9 million each year to the community, once all positions are filled. A performance-based grant of \$250,000 from the One North Carolina Fund will help facilitate the expansion. The One NC grant will formally be awarded to Wyeth Holdings, LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Pfizer Inc.

"We are excited that Carolina's research will improve lives and create jobs for North Carolinians," said **Carol Folt, Chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**. "This is a perfect example of how placing innovation at the center of our university creates new opportunities. We are proud to be a part of the technologies, expertise and infrastructure that went into Bamboo Therapeutics and helped make this manufacturing expansion in Sanford possible. Gene therapy is a strength at Carolina and we look forward to continue to help advance this industry."

In addition to [North Carolina Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of N.C.](#), other key partners in the project include [North Carolina General Assembly](#), the [North Carolina Community College System](#), the [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#), the [N.C. Biotechnology Center](#), [Duke Energy](#), [Lee County](#), and the [Sanford Area Growth Alliance](#).

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A Wireless expands with 250 new jobs in North Carolina

A Wireless, Verizon's largest exclusive independent agent by store count, has selected Wake County as its new headquarters and home of its support operations, creating 250 jobs over five years. The company plans to invest \$4.95 million in North Carolina.

The decision was announced July 25.

"A Wireless will join a growing number of technology leaders who call North Carolina home," said **North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland**. "Our state's university and community college system, talent, quality of life, and community of IT powerhouses allow companies like A Wireless to thrive."

A Wireless was founded in 1996 in Wilson, N.C. and now employs more than 5,500 people and serves customers in more than 1,150 retail locations across 46 states.

"We are thrilled to locate our corporate headquarters in Wake County," stated **George Sherman, Chief Executive Officer of A Wireless**. "The community's robust job market, skilled people, vibrant growth, and strong technology base provide the right resources for us to continue our rapid growth."

The company's expansion in North Carolina will be facilitated, in part, by a Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG). Over the course of the 12-year term of this grant, the project is expected to grow the state's economy by an estimated \$640 million. Using a formula that takes into account the new tax revenues generated by the new jobs, the JDIG agreement authorizes the potential reimbursement to the company of up to \$3.3 million, spread over 12 years.

Partnering with [North Carolina Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of N.C.](#) on this project were the [North Carolina General Assembly](#), the [City of Raleigh](#), the [North Carolina Community College System](#), and [Wake County](#)

also expanded our global business to Russia, as well as Australia, at the September 2015 Shanghai show," said Robin Hoff, Aria Designs' vice president of sales and marketing.

For more information, [download the EDPNC's STEP Program Overview](#) or [email Jen Vogelsberg, STEP Program Manager for EDPNC](#).



New Initiative to Support Defense Contractors in N.C.

A new, proactive initiative to help businesses respond to changes in the federal defense budget has been launched in North Carolina.

The North Carolina Defense Industry Diversification Initiative (DIDI) aims to lessen the impacts of defense cuts resulting from the 2011 Budget Control Act. Data on defense spending collected by the Department of Defense for Fiscal Year 2015 show that prime defense contracting activity in North Carolina has decreased by more than \$1 billion since 2011.

The initiative is being managed through a partnership of N.C. State University's Industry Expansion Solutions and the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Visit the initiative's new website at ncdidi.com.

On Our Radar

- [Research Triangle Foundation Selects New President & CEO](#)
- [Workforce Challenges Are Top Concern For Manufacturers](#) (via *Business Facilities*)

N.C. in the News

- [Economic Development Group Releases New 3-year Plan](#) (*WilmingtonBiz* - August 7)
- [Jobless rate drops across area](#) (*Rocky Mount Telegram* - August 7)
- [CSX rail hub to create 1,500 regional jobs](#) (*Wilson Times* - August 4)
- [Is there a Megasite Highway in the region's future?](#) (*News & Record* - Greensboro - August 3)
- [Downtown Dunn To Get Help From The](#)

[Economic Development.](#)

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Asheboro, Dunn and Henderson selected for Downtown Associate Community Program

The N.C. Main Street & Rural Planning Center selected Asheboro, Dunn and Henderson for the Center's Downtown Associate Community program, Secretary Anthony M. Copeland announced July 28.

The towns will receive up to three years of downtown technical assistance services from the Center, beginning in September. These communities may have the opportunity to receive official Main Street designation if they successfully complete the program and demonstrate that they have met the requirements of the N.C. Main Street program within the three-year time frame.

The Downtown Associate Community program launched in May 2015 and provides communities interested in downtown revitalization with the tools to build a sustainable organizational foundation. North Carolina communities must start with this program to become a designated N.C. Main Street community. The competitive selection process takes place every other year.

For more information about N.C. Main Street & Rural Planning programs, visit nccommerce.com/MainStreet or contact Liz Parham, director of the N.C. Main Street & Rural Planning Center, at (919) 814-4658 or via email at lparham@nccommerce.com.

[Pros](#) (*The Daily Record* - Dunn - August 3)

- [Hickory-area teachers learn how to fill the gap between classroom, industry](#) (*Hickory Record* - July 30)
- [North Carolina develops four auto plant megasites](#) (*Automotive News* - July 30)
- [Steve Googe enters retirement helping Davidson economy push forward on manufacturing expertise](#) (*Winston-Salem Journal* - July 29)

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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.](#)

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