



RURAL FOCUS

CDBG Now Funds Demolition of Unusable Buildings

Nearly half a million dollars in federal funds are helping ready an industrial property in Lumberton for new businesses and jobs. In August, the North Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) approved a request by the City of Lumberton for economic development funds under the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. CDBG dollars have for years helped communities build infrastructure. But in this instance, the infrastructure is already in place. All that is needed is financial assistance to demolish two dilapidated buildings on the site that have no marketable use or tax value.

"We feel like in about six months we'll have everything completed and can turn the property over to the Robeson County Office of Economic Development to begin marketing," says Wayne Horne, Lumberton City Manager. The two buildings, dating to the 1920s and 1940s, once housed textile production operations. The site has industrial-grade power, ample water and wastewater service, and sits beside a rail spur that connects to the CSX mainline running between Charlotte and Wilmington. "You can see the CSX railroad from the site," Horne says. "It would be ideal for manufacturing or distribution operations."

Supported by the [Rural Economic Development Division](#) at the N.C. Department of Commerce, the RIA distributes CDBG funds to all counties except Cumberland, Mecklenburg and Wake and all municipalities except the 24 "entitlement" communities [those local governments work directly with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on CDBG requests]. Recent General Assembly action expanded the program to include building demolition in instances where job creation might reasonably occur on re-developed industrial properties. RIA's \$495,000 grant to Lumberton marks the first time the CDBG small cities program funded building demolition in North Carolina.



The RIA reviews requests for CDBG economic development funding six times per year. The Rural Division staff works with communities in assessing whether projects fit within both state and federal guidelines. For additional information to see how



Governor Pat McCrory (second from left) at the company's groundbreaking ceremony September 14

Governor McCrory Breaks Ground on New AvidXchange Headquarters

Governor Pat McCrory broke ground yesterday (Sept. 14) on AvidXchange's headquarters expansion in Charlotte that will create more than 600 jobs. AvidXchange automates the Accounts Payable process providing one platform for clients to login to for anytime, anywhere access to all invoice and payment data.

"AvidXchange's success shows that nothing compares to North Carolina as a place for businesses to grow and prosper," Governor McCrory said. "This is a prime example of the unlimited potential in our state, and we will not stop until similar success stories are produced all across North Carolina."

Last year, Governor McCrory announced the company was expanding and creating 603 jobs and investing \$21.5 million by 2018. The new jobs will have an average salary of \$61,651. The average salary in Mecklenburg County is \$59,046. The company has already hired more than 180 employees towards reaching that goal. The groundbreaking ceremony was held at the NC Music Factory, a historic mill rehabilitated with the help of historic tax credits.

"Today's groundbreaking is a great step forward for a successful JDIG project, as well as historic tax credits which helped revitalize the Music Factory area and is attracting companies to invest in our state," continued Governor McCrory.

Michael Praeger, CEO and co-founder of AvidXchange, came to Charlotte, North Carolina 14 years ago to start a new software company. The company that started in his basement has now been recognized as one of the fastest-growing private companies in the country.

your community might participate, visit nccommerce.com/rd



The introduction of North Carolina's new branding program included more than 70 roadside billboards posted across the state

N.C.'s New Branding Effort Provides System to Unify and Streamline Promotion Efforts

As competition for investment and talent increases worldwide, North Carolina has developed a comprehensive branding initiative to promote the state's assets, unify communications and help attract business and visitors.

"In an increasingly competitive environment, it's crucial for North Carolina to articulate at a glance all we have to offer," said N.C. Governor Pat McCrory. "The new look and messaging are reflective of the people and the assets that make this state such an inspiring place to live, work and play. North Carolina has great momentum and will be even stronger with support of a brand that pulls everything together."

As spelled out in North Carolina's 10-year jobs plan, Gov. McCrory's goal has been to develop one overarching brand to serve as an anchor for all state communications and underlying products. All state Cabinet agencies will participate in the effort.

"A well-defined brand will help us consistently tell our story and highlight North Carolina's economic vitality and variety of opportunity," said N.C. Commerce Secretary John E. Skvarla, III. "This initiative will draw attention to the qualities we know already attract people and investment to North Carolina."

More information on the new state branding program can be found online at brand.nc.gov.

[Read more.](#)



CeJae Briscoe (third from left), a veteran who found full-time work through the NCWorks Career Center in Raleigh, picks up a box of free produce. She is joined by veteran specialists Houston Campbell, Derek Carter, and Markanthony Taylor-El.



Baebies, the recipient of a 2014 OneNC Small Business award is developing a medical screening device for newborns

Company Supported by OneNC Small Business Fund Reaches New Milestone

A recent recipient of a N.C. Department of Commerce small business grant has garnered \$13 million in new private financing - a key milestone for commercial success and the latest example of the value early-stage support can bring to new companies with high growth potential.

Baebies, headquartered in Durham, is developing a diagnostic machine for more effective screening of newborns for inherited disorders. The One North Carolina Small Business Fund provided Baebies a \$50,000 award in 2014 to match a \$225,000 federal grant the company received. The program provides funds that increase the survivability of emerging technology companies.

Baebies' co-founders Vamsee Pamula and CEO Richard West helped develop the newborn screening technology while at Advanced Liquid Logic (ALL), a spin-out company from Duke University. ALL, which sold for \$96 million in 2013, also received One North Carolina matching awards.

"The One NC program has been critical for both companies," said West. "With startups, every dollar counts between success and failure. Public funds are important validation for private investors."

Baebies currently has 40 employees but plans to expand rapidly, with the device already in pilot production in North Carolina. West believes Baebies will grow into a large company with hundreds of employees in North Carolina and a tool that will help save thousands of babies' lives around the world.

John Hardin, Executive Director of N.C. Commerce's Science, Technology & Innovation office acknowledges the role of public funds in promoting technology companies. "Baebies shows how public investments can fill North Carolina's gap in very early company funding. With such investments, and initial prototyping success, the company becomes attractive to private investors which carry the company to production."



More information about the [OneNC Small Business Fund](#) is available online.

NCWorks Career Centers Give Free Food to Veterans

NCWorks Career Centers' ongoing support for military veterans seeking employment takes a healthy turn thanks to a new partnership with The Produce Box, a local organization that sells and distributes fresh produce grown by North Carolina farmers

The Produce Box, located in Raleigh, turned to N.C. Commerce's Workforce Solutions team for help after searching for unique ways the company could assist veterans. The two organizations agreed to provide complimentary boxes of fresh produce to out-of-work vets and their families through the state's career centers, which already work closely with veterans to help them find jobs and training programs.

"We're working hard to make North Carolina the state of choice for vets, in ways both large and small," said N.C. Commerce Secretary John Skvarla. "While our main focus is to connect veterans with training programs and job opportunities, this gift from The Produce Box provides an additional helping hand."

Last month, 114 boxes of fresh produce were distributed to veterans through the career centers in Charlotte, Raleigh, Wilmington, and Winston-Salem.

CeJae Briscoe, a veteran of the U.S. Navy and Air Force, was one recipient of the distribution. Briscoe used the NCWorks Career Center in Raleigh to connect with a job opportunity at Volunteers for America. A single mother of two children, Briscoe recently accepted a full-time position - also a promotion - at Passage Home, one of the organization's sister agencies. "Had I never come here," Briscoe said, referring to her career center, "I would have never known about either."

[Read more.](#)

Initial Class of Downtown Associate Community Participants Chosen

The North Carolina Main Street Center has selected four municipalities to participate in its new Downtown Associate Community program. The Town of Aberdeen, the Village of Chimney Rock, the Town of Elon and the City of Laurinburg will take part in the three-year program, which offers training, networking and technical expertise to communities with populations of fewer than 50,000.

"The four municipalities will connect with the guidance and support they need to bring businesses, jobs and investment to their downtowns," said N.C. Commerce Secretary John Skvarla. "The new Downtown Associate Community program adds valuable tools to help with their economic development."

Chosen after a competitive application process, the towns will receive up to three years of technical assistance from the NC Main Street Center beginning immediately. Upon completing the Downtown Associate program and meeting the requirements of the NC Main Street program, the four participants are eligible to apply for official designation as Main Street communities.

The Downtown Associate Community program, launched in May of this year, will provide communities with the tools to build sustainable organizational foundations that strengthens



Governor McCrory signs Senate Bill 15 into law at the Gaston County Career Center. Assistant Secretary for Employment Security Dale Folwell (right) joined other officials at the ceremony

Governor McCrory Signs Unemployment Insurance Reforms Into Law

Governor Pat McCrory continued his sweeping reform of North Carolina's unemployment insurance program with the signing of Senate Bill 15 during a ceremony at the Gaston County Career Center facility in Gastonia.

"This legislation will give us the tools we need to put people back to work sooner and crack down on the fraud that has plagued the program for years," said Governor McCrory.

In addition to providing claimants more work opportunities and more weapons to fight fraud, the legislation will also help investigators identify non-compliant employers as well as provide a trigger to suspend the State Unemployment Reserve Fund Surtax.

[Read more.](#)

Telecommunications Carriers Extending Broadband to Underserved North Carolina Communities

North Carolina consumers in less populated areas will receive quicker broadband service thanks, in part, to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Connect America Fund (CAF) and participation from four broadband service provider partners.

"This is welcome news to families and companies in North Carolina seeking fast and reliable connections to the global economy, educational resources and healthcare services via broadband Internet," said Governor Pat McCrory. "We look forward to every North Carolinian enjoying the option of high-speed access to the digital world."

More than \$19 million in annual funding during the next six years will help with the buildout of broadband service. AT&T, CenturyLink, Frontier Communications and Windstream Communications will each receive funding to provide service across North Carolina to more than 68,000 businesses and households currently unserved or underserved with broadband. In return, each carrier must meet annual milestones and complete the build-out by the

downtown revitalization efforts. The program uses a process pioneered by the National Main Street Center that focuses on organization development, design, promotion and economic restructuring.

"We are excited to work with this inaugural class of the Downtown Associate Community program and look forward to strengthening their downtown revitalization efforts," said Elizabeth Parham, director of the NC Main Street Center at the N.C. Department of Commerce. "The new Downtown Associate Community program model empowers municipalities with knowledge, support and best practices, providing the foundation for long-term success."

NC Main Street Center officials expect the Downtown Associates Community program to undertake a competitive selection process every two years.

[Read more.](#)



(Left-right) HCL executives Sameer Bagga, Vice President, Marketing; Rahul Singh, Head of GDC Operations and Administration (Americas); N.C. Commerce Secretary John Skvarla; C. Vijay Kumar, President, Infrastructure Services Division; and Todd Crandall, Executive Vice President

Skvarla Visits HCL

On September 2, N.C. Commerce Secretary John Skvarla paid a visit to HCL Technologies (HCL), a leading global IT services provider with a significant presence in Cary. The company, which last fall announced plans to add more than 1,200 jobs by the end of 2018 continues to grow its Wake County presence.

Veterans To Gain Business Start-Up Advice

Business Link North Carolina (BLNC) is participating in a free September 24 event that will help guide military veterans and their spouses through the process of starting their own business.

The VetStart event will be held from 2:30 - 7:30 p.m. at [Research Triangle Park](#).

Twenty-five percent of post - 9/11 veterans express interest in owning their own business, but only 6 percent will do so, according to VetStart, a collaboration of the Startup Veterans organization and the non-profit Research Triangle Foundation. Because so many small businesses fail in their first few years, VetStart's goal is to help veterans build solid business foundations and sustainable growth plans to get them through their fifth year.

The upcoming event will help guide veterans through the

end of 2020.

"Broadband connects North Carolina businesses to customers, suppliers, employees and partners in a way that boosts the competitive position of the entire state," said N.C. Commerce Secretary John Skvarla. "It also enhances the ability of governments to serve citizens, educators to teach students, and health providers to treat patients."

[Read more.](#)

New Conference on Manufacturing On Tap Next Month

mfgCON, a new conference focusing on manufacturing innovation in North Carolina will convene in Raleigh October 20 with two days of presentations and breakout sessions designed for maximum exposure to the newest ideas, tools and resources in manufacturing.

N.C. Commerce Secretary John Skvarla and Economic Development Partnership of N.C. CEO Chris Chung will offer keynote remarks at the event.

Professionals from world-class companies, including large OEMs, small suppliers, and emerging manufacturers, will weigh in on technology, sustainability, workforce development, market building, innovation and continuous improvement. Practical advice and takeaway tips will be shared so that participants will be able to capture immediate results.

"Any time you have collaboration, such as you do with this conference, it's a great opportunity to look at best practices that are being employed across the entire manufacturing industry," said Chung.

[Video: Chris Chung speaks about mfgCON.](#)

[Conference website.](#)

N.C. in the News

- [Secretary concerned over tax proposal](#) (*Denver Weekly* - September 11)
- [Governor McCrory signs unemployment benefit reforms into law](#) (*WJZY-TV Fox 46* - Charlotte - September 10)
- [Cranes are back in Charlotte as development booms again](#) (*Charlotte Observer* - September 9)
- [Lewis Family Boatbuilders Receives Heritage Award](#) (*Time Warner Cable News* - September 7)
- [A free education and a job](#) (*Gaston Gazette* - September 4)
- [Raleigh Chosen for Novo Nordisk's New Bio-Manufacturing Facility](#) (*Industry Week* - September 4)
- [North Carolina Department of Commerce Unveils New State Branding Initiative](#) (*Time Warner Cable News* - September 4)

entrepreneurial process with expert panels, networking opportunities and insights from successful entrepreneurs. The panelists include Holly Yanker, senior business counselor with BLNC, the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina division that provides free one-on-one, year-round counseling to individuals who want to start and maintain a small business in North Carolina. The event's three panels of experts will cover business opportunities and options, resources and financing.

Randy H. Nelson, a former nuclear submarine naval officer, is the keynote speaker. Nelson, who founded and later sold two multimillion-dollar companies, now runs a consulting firm that helps entrepreneurs and CEOs achieve their full potential.

[Additional information and registration in now online.](#) For more information about small business counseling available through BLNC, call 1-800-228-8443.

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