

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

*Engaging, Enhancing, and
Transforming Rural North Carolina*



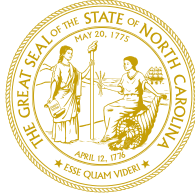
2019 Annual Report



**NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE**
RURAL ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

*Office of the Governor
State of North Carolina*

*Roy Cooper
Governor*



*20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, N.C. 27699-0301*

Fellow North Carolinians,

When I took office, I developed a vision for North Carolina: I want all North Carolinians to be healthier, better educated, and have more money in their pockets so they can live abundant, purposeful lives. To turn that vision into reality for people across our state we must work together to help rural communities thrive.

The Rural Economic Development Division's FY2019 Annual Report highlights programs, investments and partnerships, as well as several important achievements that are moving North Carolina one step closer to that goal. The report details expanded engagement in FY2019 that yielded records for grants awarded and grant dollars awarded.

The Rural Division programs were responsible for more than \$119 million in grant awards that support 183 projects, serving as catalysts for job creation, infrastructure upgrades, downtown revitalization and improved housing in our state's rural communities. In 2018, my Downtown Strong initiative was created to help support that work and administer Local Capacity Grants.

Thanks to collaboration among the Rural Division, my Hometown Strong initiative, state agencies, nonprofit organizations and local leaders, our state is strengthening rural communities and increasing economic competitiveness across North Carolina. I look forward to continuing our work.

Very truly yours,
Governor Roy Cooper

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "C".

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Engaging, Enhancing, and Transforming Rural North Carolina

Rural Partners,

The Rural Economic Development Division (REDD) is driven to advance the Commerce mission and build strong partnerships with North Carolina's rural communities. REDD offers targeted programs that provide grants, technical assistance, capacity building, and economic development support that help increase competitiveness and enhance the quality of life in rural communities. REDD programs are designed and implemented to reflect the Division's four strategic priorities:

- Building a strong ecosystem for rural prosperity
- Fostering job growth and investment in rural communities
- Developing products and services to enhance community capacity
- Prioritizing engagement and collaboration

In FY 2019, Team REDD expanded our base of community partners, increased investments in rural communities, added new programs, and elevated our level of engagement with communities and external stakeholders. **Our programs generated grant awards in excess of \$119 Million that supported 183 projects throughout the state. The 2019 totals represent a \$22.5 Million increase in grant awards over FY 2018.**

REDD activities remain mission driven and focused on delivering impactful programs. Through continued engagement, investment, and collaboration, we will enhance our state's competitive profile and help create the best environment for rural prosperity, economic development success, and transformation.

We appreciate your partnership and collaboration!

Sincerest regards,

Kenny Flowers

Assistant Secretary for Rural Economic Development



Assistant Secretary for Rural Economic Development, Kenny Flowers, speaks to local leaders. Photo Credit: Linda Fox, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

“The North Carolina Department of Commerce is focused on helping North Carolina's rural communities create the future with a well-trained workforce, 21st century infrastructure, and the tax structure to help these communities prepare to attract industry. I'm proud of our results-driven team and the accomplishments outlined in this annual report. Today's great results are not guaranteed successes for tomorrow. The Commerce team works diligently each day to bring economic success to every community in North Carolina.”

*Anthony M. Copeland, Secretary,
North Carolina Department of Commerce*

2019

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Division's 2019 Strategic Priorities focus on statewide collaboration and program enhancements to ensure continued growth and development in rural NC.

Build a Strong
Ecosystem for
Rural Prosperity



Increase Job
Growth &
Investment



Strengthen Capacity
of Stakeholders
& Partners



Statewide
Engagement &
Collaboration



APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) works to address economic and quality of life issues for the people in the thirteen-state Appalachia region. Twenty-nine counties in North Carolina are eligible to receive ARC funds for economic development activities. These counties are: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Davie, Forsyth, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey.



Pictured is a western North Carolina woodworking artisan who is part of the Blue Ridge Craft Trails program. Phase 2 of this project will further expand the outreach and promotion of these artisans and entrepreneurs within 25 counties in western North Carolina.

Blue Ridge Craft Trails Program Expansion

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA) was awarded ARC funding to expand its system of craft trails with a Phase 2 investment that will build on the success of work completed in Phase 1. Phase 1 developed a network of craft entrepreneurs located in 25 counties in western North Carolina, identifying 75 entrepreneurs and support from local organizations. Phase 2 will expand the trail system with the addition of 100 new entrepreneurs and craft-related events, create 30 curated itineraries, and develop content emphasizing western North Carolina as a crafts destination. The itineraries will cross-promote activities and locally-owned businesses to encourage visitor spending beyond the well-known destinations of Asheville and Biltmore Village.

ARC provides funding for projects throughout western North Carolina. These projects must support one of the ARC's five goals:

- **Economic Opportunities:** Invest in entrepreneurial and business strategies that strengthen Appalachia's economy.
- **Ready Workforce:** Improve the education, knowledge, skills, and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia.
- **Critical Infrastructure:** Invest in critical infrastructure – especially broadband; transportation, including the Appalachian Development Highway System; and water/wastewater systems.
- **Natural and Cultural Assets:** Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region's natural and cultural heritage assets.
- **Leadership and Community Capacity:** Build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development.

“With the invaluable support of the ARC, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area is able to increase income for traditional and contemporary craft artisans, enhance cultural tourism and improve local Appalachian economies by launching the Blue Ridge Craft Trails project in 25 counties in Western North Carolina. By building on the region's history as a leading center for craft production, this work ultimately strengthens the creative industries within our small towns and invigorates our local economies.”

Angie Chandler, Executive Director, Blue Ridge National Heritage Area

2019 RESULTS	Grants Approved		Granted		Businesses Created and/or Strengthened	
	28		\$5,133,297		1,422	
	Jobs Created and/or Retained	Communities Served	Households Served with Improved Infrastructure, Transit, Healthcare, and Educational Services		Total Open Grants	
	1,750	74	7,895		\$18,830,019	

Statistics noted above are for the state fiscal year 2018-19, except for households served and total open grants, which are cumulative. · Eligible ARC applicants are public entities and nonprofit organizations.

For more information: Olivia Collier, ARC Program Manager | 919 814 4656 | ocollier@nccommerce.com

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

The State of North Carolina's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is administered by the Rural Economic Development Division (REDD) within the Department of Commerce. The CDBG Infrastructure Program is administered by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. CDBG funding is available to local units of government to spur job creation, job retention, infrastructure, and housing activities. The CDBG Program prioritizes low to moderate-income households and is available to non-entitlement communities in our state.

Veterans Life Center Set to Open Spring of 2020

As a result of a \$7.8 million Community Development Block Grant, the largest such grant in state history, and more than \$2 million in private funding, the Veterans Life Center (VLC) in Butner, North Carolina, is under construction and set to open in the spring of 2020.

At full capacity, the facility will have 100-plus beds, with double rooms, showers and bathroom facilities. The VLC will also have a full commercial kitchen, a dining room, a large multipurpose room, a library, a computer lab, a conference room, and office space for more than 30 staff members.

The VLC project engages multiple stakeholder and provides comprehensive services, including an Individualized Veteran's Reintegration Plan for homeless and disenfranchised veterans.



The Veterans Life Center in Butner, NC, recipient of a \$7.8 million CDBG grant, plans to open in 2020.

CDBG Programs

- **CDBG - Economic Development:** Funding to local units of government to assist businesses in job creation and retention. Grant and loan opportunities include: infrastructure for water, sewer, natural gas, and rail.
- **CDBG Building Reuse Loan Program:** Funding to revitalize vacant industrial/commercial spaces for reuses as income producing property. Awards are made as forgivable loans, forgiven if jobs are maintained during the four-year reporting period.
- **Shell Building Loans:** Funding to local units of government that covers 50% of the project cost, with yearly payments for a five-year term.
- **Industrial Site Development Loans:** Funding to local units of government with a repayment term of seven years at 2% interest.
- **CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization Program:** Funding to local units of government to address critical housing and public facility needs to spur neighborhood revitalization.
- **Neighborhood Stabilization:** Funds to assist with expanding affordable housing opportunities.



Interior and exterior of the Grey Mill Project in Hendersonville, NC, during construction. The project is the largest historic tax credit project in the county's history and was awarded \$500,000 from the CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization Program. "Even incomplete, the project is driving interest in the Main Street and 7th Avenue commercial historic districts," says Lew Holloway, Downtown Economic Development Director for the City of Hendersonville.

"The Veterans Life Center will serve 21st Century veterans. Our goal is to provide each of our residents the prospect of a constructive and personally satisfying role in civil society."

John Turner, Founder and Senior Advisor, Veterans Life Center

2019 RESULTS

All Open Awards

\$182,961,478

Neighborhood Revitalization

\$23,550,497

Economic Development

\$46,519,199

Infrastructure

\$103,384,114

NCCAT/SS

\$9,507,668

2018-2019 New Awards

37

CDBG funding and awards is 2018-19 FY then mention the proposed 2019 HUD allocation of \$47,529,379

For more information: Iris Payne, CDBG Program Director | 919 814 4663 | ipayne@nccommerce.com

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND / UTILITY ACCOUNT

The Industrial Development Fund Utility Account provides grants to support local development in the 80 most distressed counties in North Carolina. Grants support publicly-owned infrastructure projects that are reasonably expected to result in the creation of jobs. Utility Account projects include water, sewer, road access to industry, natural gas, and rail. The Utility Account allows the department to consistently invest in rural communities and build a stronger grid of infrastructure across our state. The Utility Account is funded by the Jobs Development Investment Grant (JDIG) program.



Catawba County received funds to assist in providing industrial access to a new business park where ITM would become the second tenant. The company committed to provide 137 high-paying jobs and \$12 million in investment to manufacture isotopes.

to businesses that were ready to locate there and allowed the flexibility to accommodate future growth at the park. This strategy has paid dividends through the successful recruitment of several cutting-edge companies. The park is a critical piece of the County's recruitment efforts.

ITM Medical Isotopes Road Project City of Hickory (Catawba County)

Catawba County had a vision for an upscale business park that would attract high tech, growth-oriented companies. In developing Trivium Corporate Park, the County devised a strategy through Utility Account funding that would allow it to build out the park in phases. The County's approach provided much-needed infrastructure



The Gaia Herbs Sewer Project will create 50 additional jobs in the region

Gaia Herbs Sewer Project Transylvania County

Gaia Herbs is a major employer in Transylvania and surrounding counties. The Gaia Herbs Sewer Project will allow the company to expand its operations. In addition to the headquarters and production facility in Transylvania County, the company has warehouse facilities in both Brevard and Flat Rock. All of these locations will benefit directly or indirectly as a result of the infrastructure. The Utility Account was able to play a role in providing a solution to the company's wastewater challenges.

“Our goal with the Trivium Corporate Center was to create a park that would compete for advanced manufacturing projects that would counteract the loss of jobs and investment in our region. The Utility Account helped us turn an old dairy farm into a turn-key park—and we recently won an international pharmaceutical company investment that's committed to pay well over 150% of our average wage. That is effective economic development.”

Scott Millar, President, Catawba County Economic Development Corporation



Working with the Utility Account, Edenton installed a second source of water for the Peanut Drive Industrial Park to provide more reliable service and increase fire protection.

Peanut Drive Industrial Park Water Project Town of Edenton (Chowan County)

The Town of Edenton had recently experienced two major water main breaks in lines that serve its industrial customers at a major industrial park. Utility Account funding helped the Town install a second source of water for the park and increase both reliability and fire protection. This redundancy provided the industrial park users the confidence they needed to make new investments and expand their existing workforce.

2019 RESULTS

Approved

11

Granted

\$10,569,744

Active Grants
as of June 30, 2019

52

For more information: Mark Poole, Financial Analyst, Industrial Development Fund | 919 814 4616 | mpoole@nccommerce.com

RURAL GRANTS

The Rural Grant Programs (RGP) team administers grants authorized by the North Carolina General Assembly to support economic development projects that lead to job creation and increased investment. The Building Reuse, Infrastructure, and Demolition programs are available to local governments to support the transformation of buildings and the development of public infrastructure. RGP also administers the Rural Housing Infrastructure program that provides grants to local governments to assist with infrastructure that supports the development of new housing units in hurricane-impacted counties. All RGP programs prioritize projects in Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties.

Pacon Manufacturing Corporation, Navassa

Pacon Manufacturing Corporation, a contract manufacturer of surgical drapes and various forms of wipes, will locate a manufacturing facility in Navassa. The economic prosperity of Tier 3 Brunswick County, where Navassa is located, is not widespread. Areas like Navassa are more rural and economically distressed. The 200 plus jobs that Pacon will bring will have a profound impact on the community, providing new employment opportunities and increased economic activity in Navassa. A \$700,000 Rural Building Reuse grant awarded to Brunswick County will assist in the renovation of the long-vacant building that Pacon will inhabit as it breathes new life into the Navassa community.



Governor Roy Cooper and local officials deliver remarks at the announcement of Pacon Manufacturing Corporation in Navassa.

“Our success in locating Pacon was possible due to the support of our state, regional and local partners. We are grateful to the North Carolina Department of Commerce and Rural Development for its support of Pacon and Brunswick County. Commerce staff has been great to work with through the process.”

Bill Early, Executive Director, Brunswick Business & Industry Development

2019 RESULTS	Granted	Funds Granted to Existing NC Businesses	Funds Granted to Tier 1 and Tier 2 Counties	Housing Infrastructure Grants
	\$22 M	54%	93%	8
2019 RESULTS	Economic Development Grants Awarded	Jobs Committed	Leveraged Investment	Housing Units Assisted with Infrastructure
	74	2,540	\$370M	528

For more information: Melody Adams, Director, Rural Grant Programs | 919 814 4661 | melody.adams@nccommerce.com

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION PROJECTS

State-Wide Engagement and Impact





For more information
about the programs, visit:
nccommerce.com/rd | arc.gov
mainstreet.org | hud.gov

MAIN STREET

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center works in regions, counties, cities, towns, downtown districts, and in designated North Carolina Main Street communities, to inspire placemaking through building asset-based economic development strategies that achieve measurable results such as investment, business growth, and jobs.

Building Capacity Through Educational Training

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center conducts extensive training through: Main Street Basic Training centered around the National Main Street Center's Main Street Four-Point Approach to Downtown Revitalization: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization; an annual Main Street Director's Meeting; and the annual NC Main Street Conference. More than 900 local Main Street staff and volunteers attended the 2018-19 trainings offered by the Center.



Local NC Main Street directors and state staff attending training in Mount Airy, NC.



Before and after façade improvements in Elizabeth City.

Partnership With UNCG Inspires Good Design

In 2019, the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center renewed a three-year contract with the UNC Greensboro Department of Interior Architecture to develop façade improvement plans for the state's designated NC Main Street and Small Town Main Street communities. The collaborative effort provides a vitally important service to rural communities that may lack the professional expertise to design façade improvements in keeping with the architectural style of buildings as well as real-life experience for students who are able to see their designs implemented.

“We have taken advantage of the design services from UNCG over the last couple of years. What a great program that is. We also had a business owner participate in the residential design program. Definitely hitting home runs with that program in downtown Elizabeth City!”

Deborah J. Malenfant, Executive Director, Elizabeth City Downtown, Inc.



Patrons of The Hackney enjoy the atmosphere of the beautifully renovated building while dining on meals created with high quality local ingredients.

Main Street Solutions Fund Leverages Private Investment

A Main Street Solutions Fund grant was awarded to Washington, North Carolina, to renovate the historic Bank of Washington building that had stood vacant for more than 10 years. The \$200,000 grant helped bring the \$1.2 million project to fruition and the building was transformed into The Hackney in January 2019, a farm-to-table restaurant that features high quality local ingredients and supports a new generation of local growers. In addition, the renovation of this iconic building demonstrated faith in the market and an additional \$3 million in private investment is being made in property redevelopment projects in downtown Washington.

2019 RESULTS

Grants
Approved

33

Granted

\$800,740

Community
Public/Private Investment

\$269,847,513

Downtown Buildings
Renovated

297

Downtown Facades
Improved

378

New
Downtown Businesses

345

New
Downtown Jobs

2,211

Volunteer Hours
Invested

150,372

Communities
Served

185

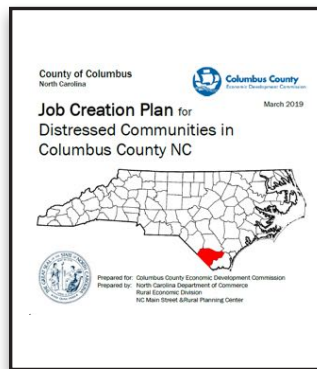
RURAL PLANNING

Job Creation Plan Identifies Business & Employment Opportunities

The Rural Planning program prepared a *Job Creation Plan for Distressed Communities in Columbus County NC*, that helped the County Economic Development Commission identify the potential for 300 to 450 or more job opportunities for the county and the municipalities within it. The plan addresses existing businesses and those likely to be established in each community, as well as the buildings that would need to be constructed, purchased, leased, and/or upfitted to accommodate them. It estimates the costs and potential economic impacts of each business development project, such as the effects on local employment levels, tax revenues, wages, retail sales, and more. The plan also provides a strategic methodology the communities can use for project and job creation. In the Town of Lake Waccamaw, for example, people identify the lake as a valuable resource and want to maintain the quality of life that makes it so popular. The plan recognizes eco-tourism as an area for potential business expansion. Since the plan's completion, the Town has approved a local community group's request to fund a study and plan for a bike and pedestrian trail to encircle the lake.



Town of Lake Waccamaw citizens identified the lake as the community's top economic and natural asset during an assessment related to the Columbus County Job Creation Plan.



The Town of Biscoe hosted the Rural Planning program's Recruiting Retail Businesses workshop on January 23, 2019.

30 Communities Attend Recruitment Workshop

The Rural Planning program has developed a workshop series designed to provide smaller and resource-limited rural communities with information and tools to help them grow their local economies. The first workshop, Recruiting Retail Businesses, debuted in Biscoe, NC, in January 2019. Forty-eight participants representing more than 30 communities in the Sandhills, Southwest, and Piedmont-Triad Prosperity Zones attended. The workshop provided tools and tips to communities on evaluating local markets, identifying types of businesses to attract, locating appropriate land for development, and communicating with prospective businesses. They also learned best practices for growing the local tax base, creating new jobs, and spurring additional development activity. Participants left the workshop equipped to start their own conversations with national retailers.

“The Rural Planning program is allowing our community to continue to thrive. They have resources that, through partnership and effort, help bring things to our community that increase the quality of life for our citizens and enhance opportunities for our visitors.”

Brandon Holland, Town Manager, Biscoe, NC

2019 RESULTS

Strategic Plans

38

Implementation Services

28

Market Studies

20

GIS Services

25

Development Policy Reviews

4

Communities Served

100

For more information: Liz Parham, CMSM, Director, NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center | 919 814 4658 | lparham@nccommerce.com

Build a Strong Ecosystem for Rural Prosperity



Pictured is the current state of the former Broyhill Plant property showing what was left after the demolition for scrap material in 2009. The rubble is the major barrier to redeveloping the site. ARC funds will assist in this clean up.

barrier to redeveloping the site. Developers are unwilling to carry out remediation activities until the site is cleared and the full scope of work can be determined.

Once the site is cleared, testing is completed, and the Brownfield Agreement is obtained, the Caldwell County Economic Development Commission plans to market the property to industrial users. The site has access to city services and has been considered recently by advanced manufacturing and data center prospects. Future private investments on this property are estimated to be \$10 million and have the potential to create 50 new jobs.

Broyhill Plant Site Redevelopment Project

ARC has invested \$300,000 in the Broyhill Plant Site Redevelopment Project within the City of Lenoir, located in Caldwell County.

The City plans to clear waste from a portion of the Broyhill Plant site, a 15-acre brownfield located in the center of the Lenoir's Fairfield South redevelopment area. The scope of work also includes completing a Phase II environmental site assessment and entering the property into a Brownfield Agreement with the State of North Carolina.

The Broyhill Plant site was home to furniture manufacturing operations for over 100 years. The plant was demolished for scrap value in 2009 by a private owner and the City took ownership in 2014. The remaining demolition rubble is the major



Pictured is a site map of the current 15-acre property that will be cleaned up, inspected, and ultimately marketed for development by the City of Lenoir.



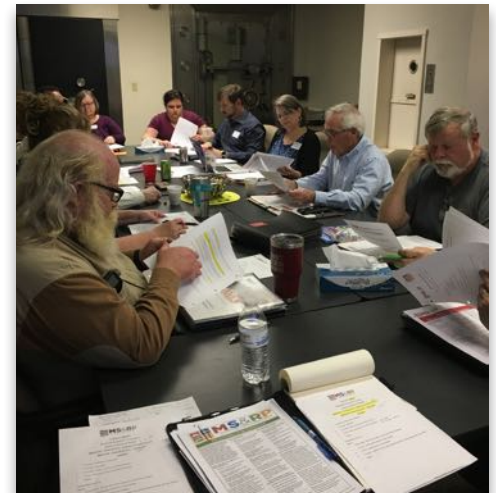
Fairfield Park Apartments, St. Pauls

A recent market analysis indicates a significant need for affordable multi-family housing units in St. Pauls in Robeson County. Fairfield Park Apartments, a 64-unit apartment community with a mix of one, two, and three-bedroom units in St. Pauls will help fill this need. The community will have three residential buildings, a clubhouse, and outdoor amenities. All units will be marketed and affordable to residents at 50% and 60% of area median income (AMI) and the site is close to schools, shopping, restaurants, and services. The partnership between the Town of St. Pauls, NC Housing Finance Agency, and local developers spurred the project and a \$299,700 RGP Rural Housing Infrastructure grant to the Town of St. Pauls will assist with water, sewer, and stormwater improvements to serve the site.



CDBG - Neighborhood Stabilization Program

The Enclave project in Winston-Salem, NC, is in the process of developing 96 units of multi-family rental housing for occupancy by households earning at or below 120% of area median income. The project is transforming a once dilapidated area to a viable community while creating additional affordable housing choices.



Reidsville citizens work through the strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning Work

Strategic planning is a primary role of the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. Staff members facilitate a comprehensive strategic planning process with leaders of communities of all sizes to help them identify assets to leverage economic development strategies that will spur investment, business growth, and jobs.

Increase Job Growth & Investment



Chewy Expands in Rowan County

Chewy (owned by PetSmart), an online retailer of pet food and other pet-related products, will be transforming rural Rowan County by expanding the company's footprint and growing the region's workforce with the award of a \$1.5 million CDBG Economic Development Infrastructure Grant. The grant will support the installation of a 4,000-linear-foot, 16-inch gravity sewer extension to a site in Salisbury where Chewy plans to construct a 700,000-square-foot warehouse and distribution center. The infrastructure project will facilitate the company's investment of \$55 million in this development that will create 1,200 jobs.



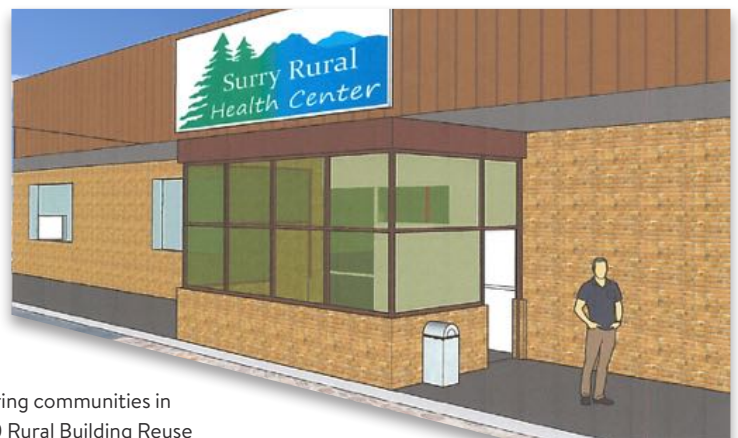
“We greatly appreciate the partnership with the City of Salisbury, Rowan County, the Salisbury-Rowan Economic Development Commission, North Carolina Department of Commerce, and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina. We look forward to making a positive economic contribution to the region with the creation of 1,200 new jobs. In addition to job creation, our new fulfillment center will enhance our delivery network across the southeastern United States, allowing us to better service Chewy customers with even faster delivery times.”

Pete Krilles, Vice President, Corporate Real Estate and Facility, Chewy, Inc.



Surry Rural Health Center

Surry Rural Health Center provides the rural populations of Surry County and neighboring communities in Virginia with comprehensive preventive care and onsite laboratory testing. A \$100,000 Rural Building Reuse grant awarded to Surry County will assist Dr. Minton with the costs associated with renovating the Scenic Outlet building to expand the clinic and create 10 new full-time jobs. The expansion will allow the clinic to serve patients whose closest medical facility is currently over twenty miles away.



The dated, uninviting facade of the Scenic Outlet building as it appears today will be renovated and expanded to the appealing, sleek appearance shown in the illustration.

Strengthen Capacity of Stakeholders & Partners



Local Government Capacity Grants and Downtown Strong Initiative

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center awarded 29 communities a total of \$600,740 in local government capacity grants to support rural economic development activities. The funds will be used to implement infrastructure improvement, hurricane recovery, and downtown revitalization projects identified through the 2019 Downtown Strong initiative and engagement with the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. Downtown Strong was established to assist rural cities and towns located within the state's 80 Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties. The Center selected 24 communities from across the state to receive downtown revitalization technical assistance and strategic planning to improve economic prosperity. The initiative followed the National Main Street Center's Main Street America™ program that helps communities develop economic development strategies that will transform downtown and organize initiatives around the Main Street Four Points™ for downtown revitalization: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization.



A facade improvement plan was created for Maysville, NC.



Main Street Conference

The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center, in collaboration with the City of Salisbury, hosted the NC Main Street Conference in March 2019. The conference attracted over 700 attendees from more than 150 communities, all with the desire to network with one another and learn how to grow and leverage stakeholders and partners to increase the capacity for economic development in downtown districts and rural communities.

NC Main Street Conference attendees are educated on best practices when converting historic buildings into residential living, during the "Living it Up Downtown" breakout session.

“The key to building capacity for downtown revitalization is to train both the local Main Street staff and volunteers. This will ensure that Main Street best practices are instilled deep in the community, beyond just the staff.”

Liz Parham, Director, NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center

Homegrown Leaders Training Program

ARC awarded grant funds to the NC Rural Center in 2018 to increase leadership development in NC's 29 Appalachian counties and develop the Homegrown Leaders training program. Homegrown Leaders is a regional leadership and economic development training program that develops and supports highly skilled, highly motivated leaders who are committed to building collaboration across multi-county regions in the state. Homegrown Leaders addresses the need for high-quality, professional leadership, and economic development training that equips community leaders with the skills they need to lead long-term economic advancement in their communities and regions. Additionally, the program seeks to increase cooperation, collaboration, and coordination across a broad array of organizations and sectors. Homegrown Leaders provides opportunities for participants to hear from economic development and leadership experts, engage with and learn from peers, apply knowledge through classroom exercises, and learn about community successes.



Pictured is the first Homegrown Leaders class and instructors upon completion of their three-day course in spring 2019 in Cullowhee. The next Homegrown Leaders program is planned for September 2019. Photo Credit: NC Rural Center.

Statewide Engagement & Collaboration



Assistant Secretary for Rural Economic Development, Kenny Flowers and Hometown Strong's Pryor Gibson meet with local leaders in Raeford.

Photo Credit: Linda Fox, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

Hometown Strong

In small communities, when you face a problem, you solve it by bringing everyone around the table. Hometown Strong brings that same spirit to state government and gives rural communities a partner they can count on in Raleigh.

Hometown Strong, Governor Cooper's new initiative, offers a more personal and hands-on approach for state government's reaction to the needs of North Carolina's rural communities. Hometown Strong creates a partnership between state agencies and local leaders to champion rural communities. The effort leverages state and local resources, identifies ongoing projects and community needs, and implements focused plans to boost the economy, improve infrastructure and strengthen North Carolina's hometowns.

Hometown Strong is a priority for the Rural Economic Development Division. The new Downtown Strong initiative is a direct result of the division's Hometown Strong engagement.

“Helping rural North Carolina thrive is one of my top priorities. We'll listen to local leaders to make sure they're getting the support they need to help their communities prosper.”

Governor Roy Cooper

West Jefferson Has Better Understanding of Design Principles Through Collaboration

In the spring of 2019, the Town of West Jefferson submitted a request to the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to conduct a review of the Town's design guidelines. Following the review, Main Street staff, in collaboration with the Appalachian Regional Commission Community Development Planner and the SHPO Restoration Specialist, facilitated a public meeting to recommend changes to the design guidelines, reviewed façade improvement plans and upper story schematic designs proposed by the UNC Greensboro Department of Interior Architecture Main Street Fellows and implemented by the private sector in West Jefferson, and conducted a downtown walk-about with staff and community leaders to increase knowledge of the Main Street principles of good design.



NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center staff during the 2018 NC Main Street Conference.



Program Manager for the Appalachian Regional Commission, Olivia Collier, leads a workshop for community members.



NC Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary for Communications and External Affairs, Beth Gargan, and NC Governor Roy Cooper at the 2018 NC Main Street Conference

DIVISION-WIDE IMPACT

\$119,396,972

Grant Funds Approved

183

Grants Approved

Rural Economic Development Division Leadership & Staff Contacts

Contact: 919 814 4600 | nccommerce.com/rd

Kenny Flowers

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APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

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