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Weekly highlights from the
North Carolina Department of Commerce



(Left-right) Ken Allen and Martie Butler, existing industry specialists with Commerce's Fayetteville office; Steve Yost with N.C.'s Southeast regional partnership; Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco; Karen Wrigley, site manager for Dupont Fayetteville Works; Joe Melvin with N.C.'s Southeast; Chris Caldwell, government affairs manager with Dupont Fayetteville Works; and Commerce Assistant Sec. for Tourism, Marketing and Global Branding Lynn Minges.

Crisco meets with industry partners in southeast N.C.

Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco and Assistant Sec for Tourism, Marketing and Global Branding Lynn Minges visited southeastern North Carolina Jan. 6 to meet with existing industry partner Dupont Fayetteville Works and other economic development leaders for a briefing and overview of business and opportunity in the region. Commerce existing industry specialists Ken Allen and Martie Butler, and Steve Yost and Joe Melvin with [N.C.'s Southeast](#) regional partnership agency, accompanied Crisco and Minges on a tour of the Dupont plant.



(Left-right) Husqvarna President for North America and Latin America Michael Jones receives a State of North Carolina flag from Commerce Deputy Sec. Dale Carroll during the Jan. 7 jobs announcement in Charlotte.

Husqvarna to add 160 jobs in Charlotte

Gov. Bev Perdue announced Jan. 7 that Husqvarna, a global leader in outdoor power equipment, will double its Charlotte workforce with the opening of a new North American headquarters. Husqvarna plans to add 160 workers over the next three years and invest \$2.75 million in the project. The company currently employs 160 workers in Charlotte. Commerce's Ron Leitch was the developer on this project.

"This decision by a top international company such as Husqvarna shows what trade magazines have long said - that Charlotte is among the nation's best places to live and do business," Perdue said. "I will continue working aggressively to create opportunities across the state that put our people to work."

Husqvarna is based in Sweden and employs more than 15,000 workers in 42 countries. It is the world's largest producer of chainsaws, lawn mowers and other gas-powered garden equipment such as trimmers and leaf blowers. Its products are sold in North America under many brand names including Husqvarna, Poulan, PoulanPro, Weed Eater, Dixon, Gardena and Jonsered. [Read more.](#)

[Husqvarna to double Charlotte workforce](#)
(WBTV - Charlotte, Jan. 7)



(Left-right) Mayor Richard Boyce, City of Belmont; Jim Jones, chairman, Gaston County Economic Development Commission; Donny Hicks, executive director, Gaston County EDC; Mickey Price, chairman, Gaston County Board of Commissioners; Greg Botner, CEO, Wilbert Plastic Services; Commerce existing industry specialist Uconda Dunn; and Rusty Harris, chairman, Gaston Regional Chamber Economic Development Division.

Plastics maker to relocate HQ to Gaston County

Gov. Bev Perdue on Jan. 6 announced that Wilbert Plastic Services, a national supplier of molded plastic parts for the automotive, industrial equipment and custom parts markets, will expand its operations in Gaston County. The company will relocate its headquarters from Chicago to Belmont, invest \$5.7 million and create 41 jobs during the next three years. The announcement was made possible in part by an \$82,000 grant from the One North Carolina Fund. Commerce's Uconda Dunn was the developer on this project.

Wilbert Plastic Services, part of Wilbert Inc., produces custom injection molded and thermoformed parts for heavy trucks, agricultural and construction equipment, recreational vehicles, industrial equipment and other applications. The company has operations nationwide, including a Belmont facility with 86 workers and a Harrisburg plant that employs 90 people.

The company plans to relocate its headquarters from the Chicago area to its Belmont facility, where operations include the molding and painting of plastic compounds, machining for metal molds and final product assembly. The new headquarters will be nearer to the company's southern manufacturing operations and closer to its expanding customer base in the Southeast. [Read more.](#)

6 agencies to receive energy funding

Gov. Bev Perdue announced Jan. 6 that more than \$860,700 in federal Recovery Act funding for energy efficiency block grants will help six local agencies create jobs and save on utility and fuel bills. The six grants mark the first distribution of money from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program in North Carolina. Additional grants are expected to be announced in the coming weeks as funding applications are reviewed and acted upon.

The grants program is administered by the North Carolina Energy Office to encourage energy conservation and economic investment in counties, municipalities, community colleges and public schools. A total of \$7.2 million is available to local government agencies and \$6.3 million to public

[Husqvarna to hire 160 in Charlotte](#) (Charlotte Business Journal, Jan. 7)

River Textile Services to bring 55 jobs to Rutherford County

River Textile Services (RTS) announced Dec. 21 before the Rutherford County Commission that it has chosen Forest City as the location for its new 62,500 sq. ft. healthcare laundry facility. RTS will employ 55 local residents, and add approximately \$5 million to the county and city's tax base.

RTS is a specialized textile service company that focuses solely on helping healthcare organizations strengthen linen cost control measures, enhance infection control efforts and improve patient care and comfort.

Emerging Issues Forum to focus on creative economy

The economic power of North Carolina's creative culture will be the theme of the 25th annual [Emerging Issues Forum](#), Feb. 8-9, at the Raleigh Convention Center. Among the questions to be discussed: What will it take to move North Carolina to a state characterized by a culture of creativity? Featured forum speakers will include Michael Linksvayer of Creative Commons and Roger Martin of the Rotman School of Management.

N.C. to develop Energy Efficiency Action Plan

North Carolina is one of six states selected to participate in a new nationwide effort to save energy and serve as a model for other states in developing new strategies to improve the energy efficiency of existing buildings, reduce utility costs and cut emissions.

"This is an opportunity for North Carolina to continue demonstrating its leadership and commitment to promoting and increasing energy efficiency," said John Morrison, Commerce assistant secretary for energy.

schools and community colleges.

The first six grants have been awarded to Buncombe County schools, Burgaw, Elkin, Morganton, Valdese and Vance-Granville Community College. [Read more.](#)

'Main Street' energy projects approved for recovery funding

Gov. Bev Perdue on Jan. 5 announced that more than \$330,000 in federal Recovery Act funds have been awarded to eight North Carolina "Main Street" communities to help with energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. The grants are the first distribution of money from the North Carolina Energy Program for the state's Main Street initiative.

"North Carolina continues to use recovery funds for job creation and energy efficiency," said Perdue. "These grants will provide service jobs for local businesses and help local communities save money on utility bills."

The Main Street initiative seeks to boost economic development in small towns, including those in rural areas that have been designated by Commerce's Division of Community Assistance. A second round of grants is expected to be awarded during the first quarter of this year.

The N.C. Energy Office, in partnership with the N.C. Main Street Center, awards grants to eligible local governments and/or nonprofit downtown revitalization organizations for projects totaling no more than \$250,000. Grants are awarded to Main Street communities for energy audits and planning and policy work to support long-term sustainable changes for energy efficiency. [Read more.](#)

Wake Forest makes list for growth

On Jan. 5, [Gadberry Group](#) announced its list of last year's nine most notable high-growth areas in the U.S. - Gadberry Group's "9 from 2009." Wake Forest, earned the No. 6 spot on that list.

Headquartered in Little Rock, Ark., Gadberry Group provides location intelligence services and data for the world's top retail brands. According to Gadberry data, the Wake Forest area grew from 8,150 households in 2000 to 17,803 in 2009, or 118%. Wake Forest had 13 emerging blocks, the second highest in the group.

Wake Forest saw an overall decrease in median age, dropping from 34.5 in 2000 to 34.1. Average household income for Wake Forest increased from \$70,148 to \$82,771.

Tourism to lead New York media mission

The Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development will lead a media mission to New York City on Jan. 13. Teaming with 15 partners throughout the state, the division has arranged desk-side visits with key media outlets in addition to an evening reception showcasing the best of North Carolina for 2010. During these events, the division and partners will meet with key travel and lifestyle producers, writers, editors and communicators, and share what's new in North Carolina. More than 50 members of the media are scheduled to attend.

The state was chosen to participate in the National Governors Association's (NGA) Center for Best Practices "Policy Academy on State Building Efficiency Retrofit Programs," a nine-month project intended to create and implement exemplary policies and programs for building efficiency retrofits. North Carolina's proposal focuses on residential retrofits to promote and expand the number of residential energy-improving upgrades in the state. The effort will be a public-private initiative involving the Governor's Office, the state Energy Policy Council and N.C. Community Colleges along with Advanced Energy, the state's utilities and energy-efficiency contractors.

Other states selected to participate in the initiative are Colorado, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Utah and Wisconsin. All states will work with experts provided through the NGA Center and resources within the state to develop the model programs.

BlackBerry maker to open Triangle office

Canadian company Research in Motion (RIM), which makes the BlackBerry mobile phone, has announced plans to open an office somewhere in the Triangle. According to a statement from the company, RIM picked the Triangle because of its large pool of talented workers, and has already begun hiring.

[Triangle talent lures BlackBerry maker](#) (The News & Observer - Raleigh, Jan. 7)

Workforce awards grants

The Division of Workforce Development has awarded four special grants, using federal Workforce Investment Act funds, to focus on youth most in need. The awards were made to Durham Workforce Development Board, Mountain Area Workforce Development Board, Northeastern Workforce Development Board and Southwestern Workforce Development Board. The grants are for \$125,000 each during the period January 2010 through December 2011. As demonstration projects, the recipients will host site visits, provide written analysis of the projects to include successful approaches and any unsuccessful experiences, present at the annual [N.C. Workforce Development Partnership Conference](#), and provide peer learning sessions.

PTI to get advanced flight simulator

New York-based company FlightSafety International has announced plans to build an advanced flight simulator at the HondaJet

Partnering organizations include: Harrah's Cherokee Casino & Hotel, Asheville CVB, Outer Banks VB, International Civil Rights Center and Museum, Greensboro Area CVB, Pinehurst Resort, Greater Raleigh CVB, Brunswick County TDA, NASCAR Hall of Fame, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, Hickory Furniture Mart, N.C. Wine & Grape Council, N.C. Brewers Guild, Blue Ridge Parkway 75th Anniversary, N.C. Arts Council, Wilmington/Cape Fear Coast CVB, Wildwater Rafting, Chimney Rock Park, Tour Cleveland County, Currituck County Dept. of T&T, Cabarrus County CVB. Contact Wit Tuttell at (919) 733-7420 or via wit@visitnc.com for more information.

NCDOT tweeting rockslide news

N.C. Dept. of Transportation (NCDOT) Communications Officer Van Denton is hoping to build a stronger Twitter network to share information about the I-40 rockslide. Denton asks that both state/local government and private sector partners e-mail him with their Twitter information so NCDOT can start following them. Denton also wants to make sure as many people as possible know about the DOT Twitter feed so they can begin following it. While there are different roles to play in this, by sharing news and information, everyone using Twitter regarding the rockslide should be able to reach a broader audience. Contact Denton at rvdenton@ncdot.gov or connect on Twitter [@i40_RockSlide](https://twitter.com/i40_RockSlide).

December economic overview released

On Jan. 7, Commerce's Policy, Research & Strategic Planning Division released its Monthly Overview of North Carolina's Economy for December 2009. North Carolina's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased slightly to 10.8 percent. Since February the change in the state's unemployment rate has remained relatively flat. In November, seasonally adjusted employment and labor force levels increased. As a result, the number of unemployed workers decreased by more than 6,800 between October and November. However, compared to the same time last year (October 2008) there are 143,801 more unemployed workers in North Carolina, a 41.8% increase. [Read the overview](#).

Among the findings:

- Non-farm employment decreased slightly between October and November.
- Announced business closings and layoffs decreased to their lowest levels since the recession started.
- Existing home sales and new housing units authorized and foreclosure filings declined.
- The national economy is showing signs of recovering, but improvement will be drawn out.

N.C.'s Eastern Region to host 'State of the Region' Jan. 19 in Goldsboro

[N.C.'s Eastern Region](#) (NCER) will host a program on regional workforce development issues, detailing developments and progress over the past year, and looking forward to plans for 2010. The morning program will take place Jan. 19 at Moffatt Auditorium on the campus of Wayne Community College. The program will include a progress report from NCER, a community college panel discussion on the gaming/simulation industry and an update by Lt. Governor Walter Dalton on the

campus at Piedmont Triad International Airport. The company plans to add 25 to 30 employees at the campus.

[Flight simulator coming to HondaJet](#) (The Business Journal of the Greater Triad, Jan. 8)

Metrics from B&I Division

Below are year-to-date metrics tracked by the Division of Business and Industry (B&I) 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.

Jan. 1 - Jan. 11, 2010

| | |
|---|--------|
| New projects assigned: | 10 |
| Projects announced: | 2 |
| Jobs created: | 201 |
| Capital invested: | \$8.4M |
| Industry visits by existing industry staff: | 7 |
| Calls to the Business ServiCenter: | 462 |

N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [Cree tax credit worth \\$39 million](#) (The News & Observer - Raleigh, Jan. 11)
- [How Cleveland County's bad situation could lead to good things](#) (Shelby Star, Jan. 11)
- [Businesses find a thoughtful guide](#) (The News & Observer - Raleigh, Jan. 10)
- [How Bev Perdue became Charlotte's closer](#) (Charlotte Business Journal, Jan. 8)
- [N. Carolina Targets Florida's Boating Industry](#) (Florida Trend, Jan. 1)
- [Gov. Bev Perdue makes herself at home in Western North Carolina](#) (Asheville Citizen-Times, Dec. 28)

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