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Weekly highlights from the
North Carolina Department of Commerce

Packaging Company to Expand in Wilkes County

Governor Pat McCrory and N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker announced on Jan. 6 that [InterFlex Acquisition Company, LLC](#) will be expanding its operations in Wilkes County. The company plans to create 63 new jobs and invest more than \$10.2 million during the next three years in Wilkesboro. The N.C. Department of Commerce's [Joe Holbrook](#) was the developer on this project.

InterFlex Acquisition Company, LLC is a manufacturer of flexible packaging products used primarily in the food industry. InterFlex has been in North America for 35 years and currently employs 104 people in North Carolina. The Wilkesboro facility is the North American division headquarters.

Salaries will vary by job function, but the average annual wage for the new jobs will be \$37,854 plus benefits. The Wilkes County average annual wage is \$31,512.

"Interflex has been a long-standing corporate citizen of Wilkesboro and is pleased to call Wilkesboro our headquarters. The efforts of the local and state governmental agencies to support the further long-term growth and development of our business were instrumental in our decision to expand our operations in Wilkesboro," said Interflex Senior Vice President Jeff Zeber. "We look forward to a continuing mutually beneficial relationship between Interflex and its community and governmental partners."

The project was made possible in part by a performance-based grant from the [One North Carolina Fund](#) of up to \$180,000. The One NC Fund provides financial assistance, through local governments, to attract business projects that will stimulate economic activity and create new jobs in the state. Companies receive no money up front and must meet job creation and investment performance standards to qualify for grant funds. These grants also require and are contingent upon local matches.

Other partners that helped with this project include: N.C. Community Colleges, Wilkes Economic Development Corporation, Wilkes County, and the Town of Wilkesboro. [Read more.](#)



N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker (top left) visiting a classroom at the N.C. School of Science & Mathematics in Durham last week

Decker Tours NCSSM

N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker toured the N.C. School of Science & Mathematics in Durham last week and talked with NCSSM Chancellor Todd Roberts, as well as members of the school's Board of Trustees and Foundation. Housed on the old Watts Hospital campus, the school was created in 1980 as a public, residential high school where students study a specialized curriculum emphasizing science and math.

Decker toured the arts department and various classes, including an online discussion in African American Studies. The NCSSM began offering distance education in 1994 and has provided video courses to more than 10,000 students since that time. The program has grown tremendously, and currently, students in all North Carolina schools are eligible to take video courses at NCSSM.

"The video course I observed was very impressive, with students from across the state having a very lively dialogue about race relations, all facilitated from a well-equipped studio at the school in Durham," said Decker. "The NCSSM is not only an excellent educational institution, but also a strong economic development tool that we need to tout as we market North Carolina to prospective businesses. We also need to strengthen the bonds between the school and the corporate community as we continue the dialogue about preparing students for the future workforce."



TV Land's Andy Griffith statue in Mount Airy

Mount Airy Named Official Retirement Community

The N.C. Department of Commerce announced on Jan. 9 that Mount Airy has been designated a [N.C. Certified Retirement Community](#). The N.C. General Assembly established the program in 2008 to designate communities that offer unprecedented quality of living that is desirable to retirees.

"This designation will be a valuable economic development tool for the City of Mount Airy and its residents," said N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker. "The people of Mount Airy recognize the valuable contributions that retirees can make to the overall enhancement of their community."

"North Carolina is experiencing a healthy in-migration of retirees to the state, and this program aims to attract retirees and persuade them to put down roots here," said Wit Tuttell, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Department's Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development.

To gain certification, a local government must submit an application that includes a comprehensive community survey and assessment tool that spans numerous dimensions reflective of the city's readiness for retiree attraction. Ratings criteria include:

- Demographics
- Housing/technology
- Healthcare

The NCSSM currently serves 680 students in its residential program and another 720 through its distance education program. School and state education leaders are considering plans to expand the high school with additional campuses.

N.C. Employers Use Grants to Train Workers, Prevent Layoffs

More than 30 North Carolina businesses and 700 employees are benefitting from [grants from the N.C. Incumbent Worker Development Program](#) that were awarded in December 2013. The program provides funding for employers to train their existing workforce.

The IWDP is a competitive, retention solutions grant that is administered through the N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Workforce Solutions and local Workforce Development Boards. Qualifying businesses can use the grant to address employees' skills gaps, resulting in increased knowledge, professional and technical skills, certifications, and value to the company.

"This program provides several economic advantages to our state," said N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker. "It helps businesses thrive by improving the skills of their workers, helping to both prevent layoffs and strengthen North Carolina's economy. Addressing employees' skills gaps also contributes to a company's competitiveness regionally and globally."

The maximum amount of an IWDP grant is \$25,000, with a lifetime funding limit to a company of \$40,000. Applications are submitted directly to the local WDB for consideration. Twelve local WDBs approved more than \$440,000 in grants in December 2013 to help 32 North Carolina employers train their workers.

Since 2002, more than 1,000 IWDP grants, totaling more than \$25 million, have been awarded to North Carolina businesses, resulting in benefits to more than 30,000 employees.



- Local economy
- Leisure/cultural opportunities
- Services for retirees
- Community/education/military

"Beyond being the inspiration for 'The Andy Griffith Show,' Mount Airy offers amenities found in larger cities," said Mayor Deborah Cochran. "Our people, location, climate, and health care providers make Mount Airy an ideal place to call home. For the person who enjoys small town charm and a quaint downtown with Wi-Fi, Mount Airy boasts many cultural and recreational opportunities. We are excited about this designation and hope it will attract even more people to our great city. "

Mount Airy was noted for its many local amenities that are attractive to retirees. Communities with this official designation receive marketing and promotion assistance from the Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development.

The Department of Commerce accepts applications for the Certified Retirement Community Program in January and July of each calendar year.

North Carolina previously recognized the following cities as Certified Retirement Communities: Lumberton, Asheboro, Marion, Sanford, Mount Airy, Pittsboro, and Eden. [Read more.](#)

[State official celebrates city retirement status](#) (Mount Airy News, Jan. 9)



The Kirby Theater on Main Street in Historic Uptown Roxboro

Roxboro Awarded \$175,000 Grant for Uptown Renewal Project

The N.C. Department of Commerce announced on Jan. 13 that Roxboro has been awarded up to \$175,000 from the [Main Street Solutions Fund](#) for the Kirby Rebirth and Uptown Renewal project.

"The Office of Urban Development's Main Street Solutions Fund continues to work closely with communities across North Carolina," said N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker. "We are pleased to provide direct support to small businesses in Roxboro's Uptown District."

"We're excited about this project for Roxboro," said Office of Urban Development Director Liz Parham. "These funds will help renovate one of Uptown Roxboro's most significant

N.C. Department of Commerce Office of Science and Technology Executive Director Dr. John Hardin

Hardin Presents New Innovation Report

A packed house at the "Carolina Innovations Seminar Series" heard Dr. John Hardin, executive director of the N.C. Department of Commerce's Office of Science and Technology, present an overview of the office's new [2013 Tracking Innovation report](#). The latest in a series, the report tracks North Carolina's performance in 38 measures of the state's innovation economy. The seminar, held Jan. 9, is part of UNC-Chapel Hill's ongoing lecture series on commercializing university technology.

Hardin described a North Carolina that "despite its image for technology" ranks only 24th overall out of the 50 states. The state does have strengths, reported Hardin. For example, North Carolina excels at research and development conducted by universities, ranking fifth.

Other indicators, however, pull down North Carolina's total ranking. For example, research and development conducted by businesses place the state 21st among the states. Also, North Carolina's percentage of engineers in the workforce ranks 37th.

The seminar series is produced by the university's Office of Technology Development and brings together faculty, researchers, entrepreneurs, and investors to help build an entrepreneurial environment on campus.

N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [Look for broadband to have huge impact in 2014](#) (WRAL Tech Wire, Jan. 13)
- [Decker emphasizes focus on rural development](#) (Mount Airy News, Jan. 10)
- [Sierra Nevada making progress: brewery could open in August](#) (Times-News - Hendersonville, Jan. 10)
- [N.C. rises to No. 2 in solar installations](#) (Triangle Business Journal, Jan. 10)
- [Trinity company to expand with 14 jobs, invest \\$4.7M](#) (The Business Journal of the Greater Triad, Jan. 9)
- [Freightliner adds warehouse to its operations](#) (Gaston Gazette, Jan. 9)
- [Decker speaks to local business leaders](#) (Mount Airy News, Jan. 9)
- [Charlotte region in competition for \\$25M in federal aid to manufacturing economies](#) (Charlotte Business Journal, Jan. 8)
- [Cardinal Innovations to add Charlotte](#)

architectural buildings and will bring awareness and recognition to the small businesses that are offering goods and services in the district and the nonprofits that are working to improve Roxboro's quality of life."

Roxboro, along with other Main Street communities in North Carolina, is successfully following the principles of the National Main Street Center's Four-Point Approach to downtown revitalization. N.C. Main Street communities have experienced \$2 billion in public and private investment and a net gain of more than 19,000 jobs since the inception of the program in 1980.

The N.C. Main Street program, utilizes the Four-Point Approach methodology, a comprehensive downtown revitalization process focused on organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring that was developed by the National Main Street Center.

For more information about the [Main Street Solutions Fund](#), visit the website or contact Parham at (919) 571-4900.

[service center, 80 jobs](#) (*Charlotte Business Journal*, Jan. 7)

- [N.C., S.C., Ga. merge unemployment services](#) (*Citizen-Times* Asheville, Jan. 5)
- [Gildan to pick Mocksville site within 30 days, Davie official says](#) (*The Business Journal of the Greater Triad*, Dec. 30)

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