

DRAFT

2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

CENTRALINA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

AUGUST 15, 2017

Introduction

This project provides the 2017-2022 five-year update to the *2012 Prosperity for Greater Charlotte* Centralina Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report and collaboratively partners the Centralina Economic Development Commission with Centralina Council of Governments, Charlotte Regional Partnership and nine Economic Development District regional counties in an innovative, integrated approach that is essential to support the region’s future growth and prosperity.

Creation of the **2017 Prosperity for Greater Charlotte** Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy recognizes today’s reality that economic dependencies and competencies require cross sector and jurisdictional collaboration, acknowledging that the Greater Charlotte region is a complex system of various regional components. Based on this overarching and interconnected existence, this Centralina Economic Development Commission Economic Development District (EDD) project updates the CEDS with a comprehensive economic development planning approach to support the goal of the Greater Charlotte Region as a globally competitive, vibrant and resilient collaboration of communities with a common vision.

The **2017 Prosperity for Greater Charlotte** Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy outlines an approach to coordinate growth and prosperity that builds on the region’s strengths, prioritizes key regional industry clusters and emphasizes collaboration. A key component of this strategic planning process is to maintain and bolster the regional economy and job growth by continued linkage of the region's workforce skills and strengths, education assets and infrastructure to the needs of high-growth and emerging industries proven as successful economic foundations in the 2012 CEDS. The strategy will support and guide priorities for economic development in the region to create jobs, build community and quality of life and strengthen the local economy.

The use of “Greater Charlotte Region” in the language of this report is reflective of the larger collaborative analysis by the Centralina EDD and the additional inter-relational and centralized impacts of an established and operative 50-mile regional economic zone. However, all report findings and priorities with goals, objectives and tactics are specifically endorsed and adopted only for the U.S Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA)-approved nine-county jurisdiction of the Centralina Economic Development Commission’s Economic Development District (EDD). This report in no way replaces or supplants adjacent EDD CEDS jurisdiction plans that share partial



coverage within the economic zone of influence defined and analyzed for this report that may be partially included on occasion in some metropolitan statistical area (MSA) analytic databases.

Why this Plan?

This plan builds on a core foundation of success that is the current Centralina Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy completed in 2012, **Prosperity for Greater Charlotte**. Over the past five years, much has happened in the Greater Charlotte Region; however, much remains a continuation of the same priorities and challenges. Our current strategic effort aims to assemble the next clear and refreshed vision for the future of the 9-county Centralina EDD region while recognizing the interconnected economics of the entire 16-county Charlotte USA region.

Successful economic development today requires a plan to be in place. In fact, site selectors and companies exclusively look to a region's plans as an indicator of where a community plans to be, how it plans to get there and which institutions are accepting responsibility. Regions with cohesive and realistic plans will grow in a more organized fashion and better leverage the assets in each of the component counties or jurisdictions that comprise an area of economic influence. Simply put, cities and counties cannot pursue a comprehensive economic development strategy without considering their role within the larger region. With EDA supporting the viability and growth of community economies and jobs creation it would be neglectful to evaluate the economic conditions and strategies without truly assessing the compound regional influences. This evaluation ensures alignment with multiple local initiatives for the greatest efficiency and sustainable impact of regional growth for decades to come.

This plan is meant to be a guide to the entire community, not just to leadership. The project reports have been organized in a modular format so that the reader can jump directly to sections of interest. Business executives, students, workers and elected leaders should all find value in the content and data of these reports. The plan's goals, priorities and strategies were created with four overarching goals that are supported by four to five strategic objectives within each. Language has been used to express the plan's ideas in straight-forward ways without unhelpful complication.

Finally, the plan was conceived as a first step in an ongoing process: plans are most useful when they are updated regularly, can adapt and can be all-inclusive. While this plan will be finalized for submittal to government agencies, the Centralina Economic Development Commission and its Advisory Council aim to make this a "live plan" going forward.

The Centralina Economic Development Commission invites participation in implementing this plan. We hope that this strategic framework will serve the region, its stakeholders and residents for years to come. We thank the hundreds of residents, as well as the CEDC advisory board, area economic development professionals and elected officials across the region who contributed to the creation of this document.

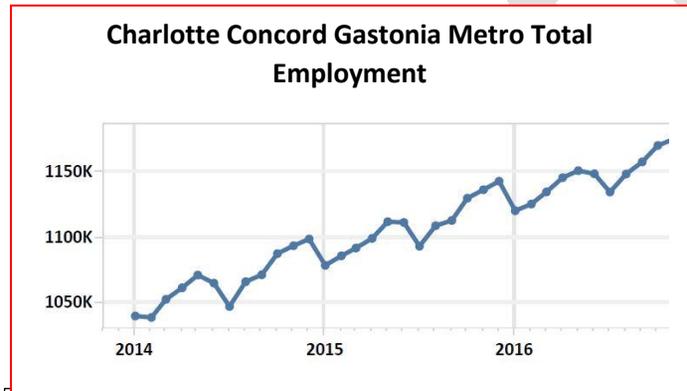
Summary Background

The Centralina Economic Development Commission (CEDC), a 501(c)3 nonprofit established in 2005 by Centralina Council of Governments (COG), promotes a diversified and innovative regional economic base, advocates sustainable growth and supports jobs development through expansion, retention and recruitment of business and industry. The CEDC region of nine counties, also delineated as North Carolina COG Region F, is designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) as the approved Centralina Economic Development District (EDD).

The CEDC is responsible for developing and maintaining the regional Centralina Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and administering the Centralina Economic Development District. This plan follows the new guidelines released by the US Economic Development Administration in February 2015. The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan developed by a diverse workgroup of local representatives from private, public, workforce, education and nonprofit sectors.

About the Region

The City of Charlotte is the urban core of the Greater Charlotte region and serves as a hub for the urban/rural region for commerce, arts and entertainment and housing. People like to live, work and play in the Greater Charlotte region. Relocating companies demonstrate repeatedly that they are successful in recruiting highly talented individuals from all regions of the U.S. and abroad. The Greater Charlotte region has one of the highest in-migration rates in the nation. In fact, in November 2016, Rentonomics by Apartment List ranked the Charlotte MSA as the #1



Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, SYNEVA Economics March 2017

destination of millennials (18-34-year-old) in the nation. With a population of more than 2.4 million, the Greater Charlotte region offers all the advantages and amenities of a major urban\rural quality of life environment. The Greater Charlotte region's cost of living is lower than the national average and housing affordability is also favorable compared to other major urban markets. Charlotte is rapidly bouncing back from the recession with one of the strongest housing recoveries in the nation. The populations of 10 major U.S. metropolitan areas will skyrocket by more than 50% in the coming quarter-century, according to projections issued in October 2016 by American City Business Journals. The nation's number of major markets, defined as metropolitan areas with populations above 1 million, was projected to grow from 53 in 2015 to 68 in 2040. The Greater Charlotte region falls just outside of those top 10 major growth

markets, coming in at No. 11. According to the projections, the Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia metropolitan area's population over the next 25 years is predicted to grow by 49% to 3.6 million inhabitants by adding about 1.2 million people to its ranks and remain a top 25 U.S. market.

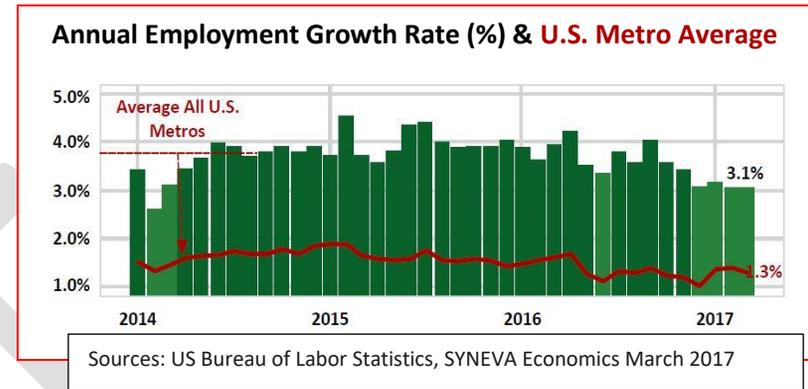
Syneva Economics reported in March 2017 that employment in the **Charlotte Concord Gastonia** metro totaled **1,169,700**. This represents a net change of 34,700 jobs from a year earlier, an annual employment growth change of 3.1%. By comparison, the average rate for all U.S. metros was 1.3%.

The Greater Charlotte region is strategically located in the U.S. and is only a two-hour plane ride from 60 percent of the U.S. population. The highest mountains in eastern North America are a short 2-hour drive away, while some of the best Atlantic coast beaches can be reached by car in only 3 to 3.5 hours. Charlotte Douglas International Airport provides superior air service with nonstop daily service to 166 destinations, including international service to Dublin, Frankfurt, Munich, London, Montreal, Toronto, Mexico City, Rome, Madrid and many Caribbean islands. Job opportunities in Charlotte are greater than in most other U.S. cities.

The region's economy is also highly diversified. No single industry sector, including financial services, has a dominant share of the employment market. All major industry groupings are represented. More than 1,300 companies regionally employ 100 or more residents. The region boasts 291 Fortune 500 operations with seven Fortune 500 headquarters. The region also offers a highly developed and sophisticated international business environment. There are currently more than 986 foreign-owned companies and their presence spawns a large number of international businesses and cultural organizations.

While the finance, manufacturing and technology sectors all have a major presence, the Greater Charlotte region is consistently named a top region for entrepreneurs wishing to start their own business. Though the region is not immune from swings in the economy, this diverse mix provides greater stability than what is found in many other urban markets.

The Greater Charlotte region is firmly established as one of the country's most recognized and respected regional health care centers and offers a nationally acclaimed level of higher education. The 51 colleges and universities within the area serve more than 240,000 students. A thriving arts community enhances an already rich and stimulating quality of life. Symphony, dance, theater, opera, art museums and a wide range of other venues exist throughout the region as well as an abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities. Sports are represented by professional



Headquartered companies

- \$34.8 billion** in total wages, salaries and benefits
- 34.7%** of the regional economy is supported by headquarters operations
- 529,649** Total impact of jobs supported by headquarters operations
- 986** foreign-owned companies in the Charlotte area. There were only 606 in 2003.

NFL, NBA, NASCAR, PGA, USL, AAA baseball and others, not to mention collegiate teams.

Business Overview

The Greater Charlotte region remains one of the fastest-growing regions in the country and a top destination for new and expanding businesses. The region is connected to the global economy and continues to strengthen its position as one of the most dynamic and diversified locations in North America.

The region prides itself on the strength of its international business community. One of the region's greatest assets is the Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT), which hosts over 44 million passengers a year on 721 daily departures with nonstop service to 166 destinations, including London, Munich, Frankfurt, Paris, Rome and 28 other international locations. The Charlotte region is at most one plane change away from any important business destination in the world.

This regional economy draws its strength from its remarkable diversity having emerged in less than a decade from mainly a United States banking and financial center to home of many world headquarters and seven Fortune 500 companies with a majority outside the financial sector in varied industries such as energy, retail and manufacturing.

The Greater Charlotte region's well-known pro-business environment is evident in its ability to move people and products efficiently and conveniently throughout the world. Service is available by air, rail, land and inland port. Factor in geographic location, amenable climate, convenience to major U.S. markets, the Foreign Trade Zone, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection office and the inland port and it becomes clear the region offers advantages that makes business easier to conduct and more profitable.

Of the nation's 51 metropolitan markets with more than 1 million in population, 34 are located on the Eastern Seaboard, making up more than 58 percent of the country's population. Of these 34 markets, 29 lie within a 650-mile radius of Charlotte and can easily be reached by 24-hour truck delivery or two hours flight time. The Greater Charlotte region is the only major distribution center midway between the Northeast, Midwest and Florida. Of the major metro centers in the Southeast, the Greater Charlotte region has 7.4 million people living within a 100-mile radius, compared to Atlanta's 8.3 million. This radius population well exceeds Miami's 6 million and Memphis' 2.6 million. As a result, the entire region has emerged as a leading national and global financial, distribution and transportation center.

While the Greater Charlotte region is traditionally known for its banking and financial services, the region thrives because of its vibrant, balanced economy that encompasses many sectors and companies that range in size from multinational to microbusiness. This variety helps make the Greater Charlotte region's economy one of the healthiest and strongest in the nation. Diverse business interests provide shelter from the problems that can result from slowdowns and other economic challenges, including natural and man-made disasters. The solid base also facilitates exceptionally strong growth during economic upswings.

Manufacturing has grown and diversified through the decades. The region has over 4,000 firms specializing in sophisticated intelligent manufacturing, with precision metrology, optoelectronic and biomedical technology developing alongside such traditional manufacturing as primary and fabricated metals, machinery, chemicals, plastics, electronics, transportation equipment and food and beverages. With such a strong workforce, operations and distribution infrastructure, pro-business climate and more, it is no wonder that manufacturers increasingly choose to call the Greater Charlotte region home.

The increasing number of international companies is important to the Greater Charlotte region that has seen steady and impressive growth in international business. Currently, there are more than 986 in the region, representing 46 countries and employing more than 61,000 workers. The region offers a nurturing climate for regional, national and international companies of all sizes and offers numerous nonprofit organizations that focus on international business, foreign policy and global culture. The Greater Charlotte region is home to the honorary consuls of Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Moldova, Nicaragua and Switzerland.

In 2015, Charlotte was the 23rd largest exporter in the U.S. and, on average; exports from the region have increased by 13.0% annually over the past 10 years. Exports are a major foundation to current economic strength of the region.

The Greater Charlotte region is a significant transportation and distribution center. At its heart, Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT), home to the second-largest hub of American Airlines, is the world’s fifth-most-active airport in total operations and the nation’s ninth busiest in total passengers. The airport is also less than 25 minutes from most regional business parks. CLT serves its active business community with approximately 20 cargo carriers supported by 500,000 square feet of warehouse space in the Charlotte Air Cargo Center. CLT also offers both domestic freight and international airfreight services from 70 freight forwarders, customhouse brokers and professional international service providers. In 2015, Norfolk Southern opened an intermodal facility at CLT that links air, rail and truck services to East Coast seaports.

Public transportation plays a significant role in connecting the people of Charlotte and the surrounding areas. The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) is growing at a rapid pace, serving Mecklenburg County and the five surrounding counties. The LYNX Blue Line is the region’s first light rail system, running 10.5 miles from South Charlotte to Center City and current 9.3-mile extension through northeast Charlotte, connecting with UNC Charlotte campus, will open in fall 2017.



Source: Office of Trade and Economic Analysis, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce Data year: 2015 last updated: September 2016.

Charlotte's industrial market continues to be particularly strong, creating very low vacancy rates and challenges for tenants who can't find or relocate to bigger spaces. Market-wide, the vacancy rate for warehouse space dropped to 4.4% in June of 2017, compared to 5.9% at the start of 2016, according to an industrial market report by Cushman & Wakefield. Further, a report by **Avison Young** noted that for first quarter 2017, the absorption for the region's industrial market totaled 1.1 million square feet, making it the fourth consecutive quarter that absorption totaled more than 1 million square feet.

More than 3 million square feet of warehouse space is under construction, but much of that is geared toward larger tenants — and with a lack of land and rising construction costs, much of the industrial development in the region will be outside of Mecklenburg County, the Cushman report predicted. Foundry Commercial's 2017 1st quarter industrial report said about 4 million square feet is being built in the region, with much of that to be delivered this year.

Greater Charlotte's key business asset in addition to the CLT Douglas International Airport has been the inter-connection and targeted workforce talent pipeline focus that was foundational to the 2012 CEDS strategies and is even more appropriate as we look forward for 2017-2022. Maintaining and developing the interconnected clusters and industry sector needs with education and workforce providers systems is more paramount than ever to keep abreast of the growth and expansion of the jobs and commerce including foreign direct investment (FDI) centralizing within the region.

Economic developers in the 21st century face new and dynamic challenges due to the changing structure of the global economy. Globalized markets increase competition, shortened technology lifecycles create a persistent demand for new skills and changing expectations force businesses to become more real-time responsive. These evolutions are altering business models and strategies, in unforeseen and consequential ways. The challenge of slow wage growth compared to the much higher pace of productivity gains in this new economy will be a primary issue to balance for continued success of matching workers to the industry need. Established structures of education have not kept pace with this change. In the past, there was an idea that students were prepared for a career by the number of years they spent in school, with a distinct break between the education and working worlds. Today, that distinction is blurring. Students are increasingly working, learning about potential careers and gaining knowledge through real-world experience, while workers are increasingly learning, pivoting out of careers that no longer serve them, or using new credentials to ascend to a higher job positions and career opportunities.

As noted by the 2016 IEDC workforce research publication, “Chutes and Ladders”, it is a phenomenon that has given rise to the term “working-learner,” a phrase that, when considered broadly, captures a large swath of the population. When considered in context of economic development, it is a model that many economic development organizations (EDOs) are currently supporting, without necessarily terming it as such. That may be because workplace learning is fundamental to the way that economic developers view workforce development. EDOs that support programs like apprenticeships, targeted workforce training and career fairs – all of which are included under the umbrella of working-learning – understand that a strong pipeline of qualified workers leads to business retention, expansion and ultimately attraction.

Economic Development Vision Statement

The 2017 Prosperity for Greater Charlotte CEDS is designed to align with NC Tomorrow, North Carolina's Statewide CEDS compiled in 2014 and updated for 2017 in addition to the Charlotte Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan of July 2016. In this way, the Centralina EDD CEDS Advisory Committee anticipates developing a strong relationship between action plans and performance for economic and community development at the regional, state and federal levels. To that end, the 2017 Prosperity for Greater Charlotte CEDS embraces and aligns with the regional vision statement adopted within the regional work accomplished last July that unified many multifaceted initiatives and strategic planning efforts as previously referenced. Primarily much of that foundation was promulgated by the original 2012 Prosperity for Greater Charlotte CEDS implementation success and is therefore perfectly aligned for this common updated vision 2017 CEDS.

The Charlotte Regional Economic Development Strategic Plan identified unifying the following work of existing activities and plans as an important implementation strategy:

- Entrepreneur Design Sprint (May 2016)
- Strategy for the Greater Charlotte Region Global Initiative (2016)
- Charlotte Entrepreneur Growth Report (2015)
- Catalyst Report (2015)
- *Centralina Manufacturing Ecosystem Development Strategy (2015) **
- *Charlotte Chamber Industry Focus Groups (2013) **
- *Mapping the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (2013) **
- *Prosperity for Greater Charlotte CEDS (2012) **
- *Charlotte Regional Partnership marketing study (2012) **
- *CONNECT OUR FUTURE (2010-2012) **

* with Centralina 2012 CEDS foundation

Vision: The Greater Charlotte region invests together to enforce its position as a global leader in business, innovation and talent.

“Global leadership” in business, innovation and talent expresses stakeholders’ desire for the region to be one of the best performing economies in the world. It recognizes that accomplishing this requires having an environment that nurtures business, encourages innovation and entrepreneurship and attracts talent. All three are critical components of a thriving economy.

“Enforcing” the Greater Charlotte region’s position as a global leader emphasizes the fact that the region is already among the ranks of the best locations for business in the world. Maintaining that position requires constant reinforcement through targeted marketing and business development initiatives, strengthening the region’s brand and continually investing in the community’s assets.

Much has changed in the business world in the last ten years. We have moved into a much more globalized economy with technology touching every aspect of life and business. Economic development initiatives are no different than any other business enterprise and must adapt to a constantly changing environment. The definition of “economic development” is broadening and rightly so. Decades ago, communities could focus their economic development initiatives on corporate recruitment (a.k.a., “elephant hunting”). Today, competition for projects is up, while few larger projects are available to hunt. Job creation is now much more nuanced than in decades past, with talented workers first choosing where to live and companies following the talent.

Having a thriving economy requires economic developers to have much greater collaboration with educators, nonprofits, government and the private sector. All stakeholders must share a unified approach to ensure that the community invests together in assets that will propel the economy forward. This 2017 CEDS Strategic Plan reflects a holistic, modern view of economic development. While global business recruitment is one part of the initiative going forward, there is a wider approach needed that includes business retention and expansion, entrepreneurship, talent and product development. With additional focus on quality of life factors and economic mobility, these components complete the optimal community spectrum for future health and prosperity for the Greater Charlotte region.

Since the Greater Charlotte region’s nine county EDD geography represents the full definition of the Urban\Rural divide, this plan also seeks to address the challenges for all the member residents and communities. NC Justice Center reported in 2016, that after nearly four years since the formal end of the Great Recession, rural North Carolina is experiencing a very different recovery than the state’s urban areas. Instead of replacing the jobs lost during the recession, rural parts of the state are continuing to experience job loss, while at the same time the state’s metropolitan and micropolitan areas have experienced employment growth.

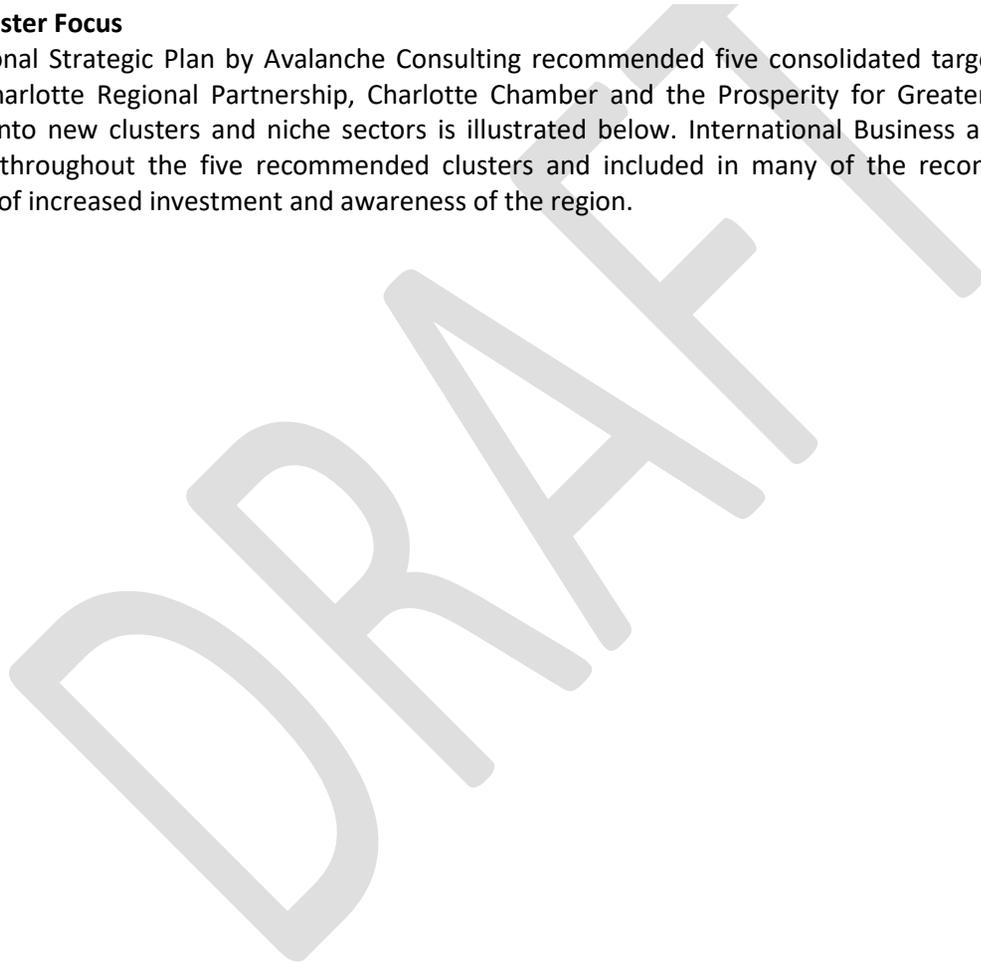
Metropolitan areas saw a 5.6 percent increase in employment levels, with the small cities in the state’s micropolitan areas not too far behind at a 4.9 percent increase. At the same time, rural areas saw total employment drop by 13.5 percent, suggesting that workers left rural communities in droves and moved to the state’s cities to find employment. A major factor behind this shift from rural to urban employment involves the long-term trend away from manufacturing employment and towards service employment.

Historically, rural counties have depended on the manufacturing sector to provide the bulk of its employment opportunities, so as rural manufacturing declined due to global economic restructuring, rural workers were faced with a transition to service industries—generally lower-skilled and lower-wage, especially Leisure & Hospitality and Retail—and overall shrinking job opportunities.

The conclusion of the Great Recession did not create a positive turnaround for all residents; instead, it marked an even greater depression for the rural economy. Without the creation of more manufacturing jobs, comprehensive economic restructuring in these rural counties and skills training for a 21st century economy, residents of rural counties will likely continue to face the hardships of job loss and economic depression. The goals and objectives of this 2017 CEDS plan ensure the integration of this issue into the recommended strategies for the future.

Business and Industry Cluster Focus

The 2016 Charlotte Regional Strategic Plan by Avalanche Consulting recommended five consolidated target clusters to unify and update the current targets of the Charlotte Regional Partnership, Charlotte Chamber and the Prosperity for Greater Charlotte CEDS. The transition of previous target clusters into new clusters and niche sectors is illustrated below. International Business and Corporate Headquarters remain targets, but are layered throughout the five recommended clusters and included in many of the recommended niche sectors. These will naturally grow as a result of increased investment and awareness of the region.

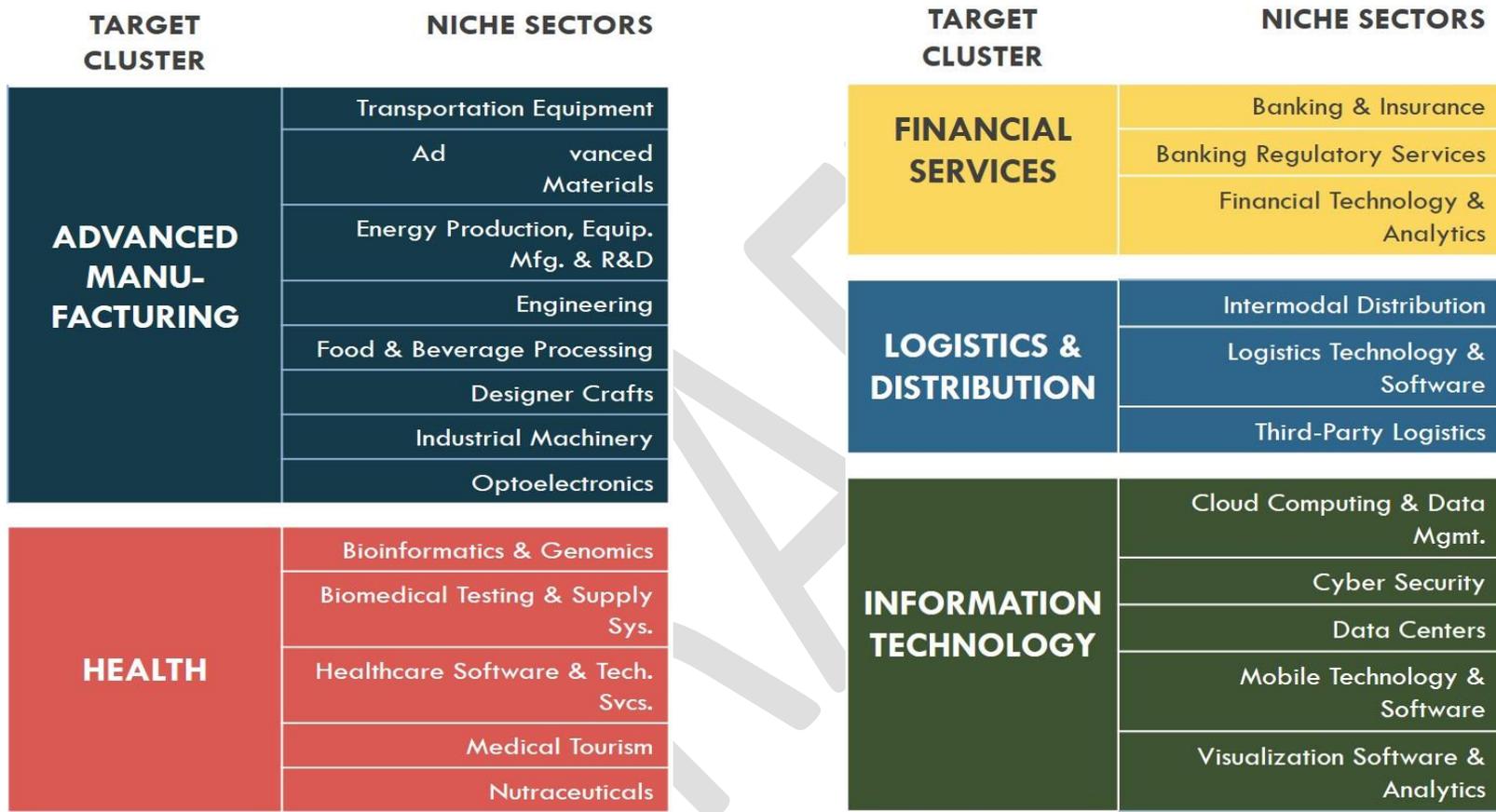


2017 Targeted Industry Clusters

PREVIOUS TARGET CLUSTER	NEW CLUSTER	NICHE SECTORS
AEROSPACE / DEFENSE	ADVANCED MANUFACTURING	Transportation Equipment
AUTO / MOTORSPORTS		Advanced Materials
ENERGY & POWER		Energy Production, Equip. Mfg. & R&D.
MANUFACTURING		Engineering
		Food & Beverage Processing
		Designer Crafts
		Industrial Machinery
		Optoelectronics
FINANCE	FINANCIAL SERVICES	Banking & Insurance
		Banking Regulatory Services
		Financial Technology & Analytics
HEALTH / BIOMEDICAL	HEALTH	Bioinformatics & Genomics
		Biomedical Testing & Supply Sys.
		Healthcare Software & Tech. Svcs.
		Medical Tourism
		Nutraceuticals
LOGISTICS & DISTRIBUTION	LOGISTICS & DISTRIBUTION	Intermodal Distribution
		Logistics Technology & Software
		Third-Party Logistics
ANALYTICS & TECH	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	Cloud Computing & Data Mgmt.
		Cyber Security
		Data Centers
		Mobile Technology & Software
		Visualization Software & Analytics



The following industry cluster alignment is endorsed and adopted in this 2017 CEDS plan in strategic alignment of the common assets and priority focus of all the regional economic development organizations. These Cluster targets provide high-growth opportunities for a variety of residents and communities within the Greater Charlotte Region.



This 2017 Prosperity for Greater Charlotte CEDS Five Year Update identifies critical regional issues and opportunities over the next 3-5 years and provides an action plan to address these issues and maximize opportunities. The project includes validation of the region's current industry targets and exploration of other potential clusters for future expansion. The plan provides specific recommendations for the region's business attraction (domestic and international) efforts; retention and expansion actions; and small business and entrepreneurial support initiatives optimizes these strategies under four overarching goals with objectives and an action plan identified for implementation.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The use of the Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) concept is a traditional but highly effective method to facilitate meetings with stakeholders. A SWOT discussion brings structure to a group discussion and helps participants consider where their opinions should be grouped and prioritized. Listing strengths allows the group to come to consensus about what should be celebrated in the region. Participants voice their concerns as either a weakness (present, having negative effects on people or businesses) or threat (if we don't fix this soon, things will get much worse). Opportunities usually reflect the hopes and ambitions of the region, either building on strengths or turning weaknesses into strengths.

SWOTs are intended to be high-level summaries so that the community and its leadership can understand the key priorities for action in the coming years. We encourage the SWOT to be used as a big picture guide, with future workgroups and activities prompted by the CEDS able to further define the extent of each issue in greater detail.

Below and on the following pages, we present highlights of the community-wide online CEDS survey of economic issues and the summary "SWOT Boxes" for the four focus areas of the 2017 CEDS:

- Workforce & Education
- Business Climate\Innovation\Entrepreneurship
- Infrastructure
- Quality of Life

While these survey results and summary boxes are formulated and condensed by the CEDC staff assessment of all input, they reflect the collective entirety of responses from the CEDS Advisory Committee, focus groups, staff research and 400+ community-wide online survey respondents. Many of the observations are focused on the region; some counties may determine that the findings do not apply; some observations may be specific to single or multiple counties.

Economic Assessment Survey Findings

- The Region's top three competitive strengths were identified as #1-Geographic location 72%, #2-Cost of living 56%and #3-Lifestyle 39%.

- The Region's top three weaknesses were identified as #1-Transportation Infrastructure 54%, #2-Government/Political Leadership 45%and #3-Pre-K-12 Schools 33%.
- The Region received the three highest rankings of very satisfied or satisfied expectations in Quality of Life on #1-Climate 90%, #2-Natural Environment 89%, #3-Family friendliness 87%.
- Business Climate expectations ranked the top three positive areas as #1- Future Economic Growth Potential 58%, #2- Cost of Doing Business 50%and #3- Image as a Business Destination 42%.
- Selection of meaning for successful economic development in the Region resulted in top three definitions of #1 Supporting Existing Business Retention & Expansion 77%, #2 Recruiting/Expanding New Industry 76%, #3 Improving/Increasing Educational Assets 46%.
- Response on change over the past three years in availability of programs and services for entrepreneurs resulted in 42% Significant or Somewhat Improved while 53% indicated Stayed the Same (neither improved or declined) which represents an overall positive advance in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- The top three positive areas of Workforce and Employment expectations met were ranked as #1 Job Availability 35%, #2 Career Advancement Opportunities 33%, #3 Entrepreneurial Support 30%.
- Response on change over the past three years in availability of skilled workforce in the region resulted in 37% Significant or Somewhat Improved while 46% indicated Stayed the Same (neither improved or declined) which represents an overall positive advance in the workforce ecosystem.
- The most important types of existing infrastructure assets that impact economic development in our region were ranked as #1 Air, #2 Housing, #3 Broadband.
- Resiliency of the region was ranked as either Very or Somewhat resilient by 59% of respondents with 23% indicating Neutral on the topic which, in total, is a confirmation for existing regional resiliency strategy.
- Inquiry on the biggest threats to resiliency yielded the top three as #1 Over-reliance on One Industry or Employer 44%, #2 Vacant Downtowns 39%, #3 Lack of Civic Participation 38%.
- Top three actions selected that leaders can do to make the region a better place for residents were; #1 Improve K-12 Education 51%, #2 Improve Roads and Connectivity 45%, #3 Create Job Opportunities 41%.
- Top three actions selected that leaders can do to make the region a better place for businesses were; #1 Improve the K-12 education system 36%, #2 Improve infrastructure 30%, #3 Provide Small Business Support 29.5%.

WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, educated and growing young professional population • UNC Charlotte, strong technical institutes and private colleges • Strong community colleges in every county • Good work ethic and low unionization rate • Focus on up-skilling of workforce has occurred in manufacturing • Apprenticeship programs and industry-education collaboration are world-class • Emerging collection of Career Academies (embedded High Schools at Community Colleges) • Regional postsecondary attainment focused programs launched such as NC Manufacturing institute, Lumina People\Skills\Prosperity, Career Headlight and many community college Advanced Manufacturing Centers 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining inefficiencies of alignment between education, workforce development and business community • Soft skills issue still present for some industries • Low educational attainment levels and adult literacy rates in some counties • K-12 performance varies across counties • Difficulty in transferring credits across institutions and across the state line • Limited success in focus on Adult Learners • Limited investments in Higher Ed and R&D required for new program areas of future
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and strengthen communication and collaboration gains across education, workforce development, economic development and business channels • Continue of education and workforce development alignment with target industry needs through sector partnerships • Promote legislative support related to education funding • Continue improvements to K-12 programs that focus on basic skills development and workforce preparedness • Continue ongoing technology upgrades in the classroom with industry support (hardware and software) • Strengthen focus on transitioning of military to civilian careers 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued lack of understanding in students for apprenticeship programs and technical careers • Retiring manufacturing workers creating talent gaps in adv. mfg. techniques, automation/robotics that are in high demand • Public education funding challenges for the future support and expansion needed to keep pace with demand of economy

BUSINESS CLIMATE \ INNOVATION \ ENTREPRENEURSHIP

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-business environment • The Charlotte Regional Partnership and 16 EDC organizations comprise Charlotte USA, awarded mega-region ED partnership • Lowered NC corporate income tax rates • Small Business Development Centers at community colleges • Ventureprise and Packard Place resources and incubators • North Carolina Research Campus (NCRC) in Kannapolis • UNCC & Charlotte Research Institute with focus on Advanced Manufacturing, Energy, Computing & Big Data and Life Sciences • UNCC EPIC – Energy Production and Infrastructure Center • Entrepreneurs are attracted to the region’s lifestyle, amenities and international airport 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmented entrepreneurial efforts across counties • New small business formation and growth of small firms has decreased in some surrounding counties • Access to angel investment, venture Capital and micro lending opportunities is limited • R&D assets are not well known or leveraged • Lack of a Tier 1 research university ranking for UNCC • Inability to offer local property tax abatements • Regulatory environment can still be a burden
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support collective visioning initiatives and affirm strong political leadership is required to carry the region forward • Increase collaboration and align entrepreneurial resources across counties for larger impact through the new Charlotte Entrepreneurial Alliance; extend services across counties • Maximize utilization of Charlotte Research Institute and NC Research Campus with entrepreneurship organizations • Collaborate with education and community leaders to increase incubator/accelerator and innovation spaces • Expand entrepreneurship education into all levels of education • Davidson College Entrepreneur HUB 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Econ Dev focus on large industries may impact public support for programs for small, high-growth entities • Nationally, VC-backed startups are gravitating to a handful of regions; successful startups may be moved out of Charlotte when they are funded by VC’s • Federal and state research dollars may diminish and not come to the region versus established research locations • Local incentives lack targeted jobs with above-average wages • Potential failure of urban and rural communities to achieve collaborative solutions

INFRASTRUCTURE

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly connected road and rail network to first-tier markets • Low electric costs • Accessible geographic location within 1 day of 60 % of US market • Charlotte/Douglas International Airport service domestic and international • Key location on Piedmont Crescent Corridor freight rail of NFS and CSX railroads • NC Commuter rail line and successful 2007 Light Rail project with 2017 expansion that will double system size 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More NC Commerce certified ready industrial sites needed • Traffic congestion beginning to make mobility within the region difficult • Fiber Cable\Telecommunications access in some rural areas is limited • Adequate funding of cost for water/sewer needs • Alignment of efficient utility services within the counties
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support new intermodal facility and significantly enhance the capacity and integration of the regional distribution network of rail, highway, air and seaports • Become a “multi-modal” region for passengers: rail, highways, bikes, shared vehicles, streetcars, walkable streets • Increase the availability of shovel-ready sites and business parks • Continue to invest in transportation and basic infrastructure to support population and business growth • Maintain regional planning successes that will mean more efficient, i.e. lesser cost financial investment over time • Implement 2017 Regional Freight Mobility Study and complete 2018 Regional CATS Transit Plan 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic congestion is projected to be a significant problem as the region grows; “preferred growth corridors” in the region are also where most congestion exists • Inter-basin transfer of water will continue to be an issue • Lack of diversified housing in some counties means workers are forced to commute more and industry locators rate it a negative • Some counties are hesitant and restrictive of growth due to lack of water

QUALITY OF LIFE

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively low cost of living, affordable home values • Plentiful recreational amenities, open spaces, greenways and bike trails that are continuing to expand • Professional sports teams and NASCAR • Thriving cultural and arts community throughout region • Diverse, open and progressive community brand • Uptown Charlotte is urbanized and growing downtown population has increased retail, office and commercial spaces • Small towns charm remains throughout region • Close driving distance to both mountains and beach • Region remains a great place to raise a family 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 education is improving but still considered a weakness affecting quality of life and the attractiveness to outsiders for some areas in the region • Lack of connectivity in some towns and counties via sidewalks, bike trails, etc. is lacking • Air quality\ nonattainment issue must be monitored with growth • Affordable housing issues remain in many jurisdictions • Urban edgy districts are emerging but still more needed to meet demands of younger growing demographic (22-44 age range)
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate on regional tourism marketing campaign • Expand convention tourism and junior sports competitions • Embrace growing ethnic diversity from incoming populations to make the region more globally-oriented (incl. tourism) • Generally agreed upon viewpoint (consensus) to avoid the mistakes made by other large metros (transportation planning, extreme commutes, misalignment of work-live-play assets) • Consensus that the next generation of community leaders exists but needs to be better engaged; reenergized leadership plan is needed 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism marketing is often fragmented and inefficient • External perceptions are that Charlotte doesn't have cultural amenities or nightlife • Growing non-profit community competes for funding and experienced board leadership • Limited local jurisdiction authority limits local funding control and potential future investment • Lack of local funding mechanism make public-private partnership difficult for medium and small cities

The regional alignment of the Centralina Economic Development District(EDD) with the NC Southwest Prosperity Zone of the NC Commerce department is possible through the boundary coverage being identical of the nine counties in the EDD of the with 10 counties of the NC Southwest Prosperity zone that adds Cleveland county to the group. In parallel timing and participation with the CEDS Advisory Committee work, the NC Commerce Economic Development Partnership has prepared an overarching SWOT analysis that incorporated the CEDS findings that provides both local, regional and statewide alignment to the findings. This information is included as supporting data and validation of this CEDS Plan strategic evaluations. This SWOT outline is included below and the full detailed analysis attached and Appendix.

DRAFT

SWOT Analysis for Southwest Prosperity Zone

<p>S</p> <p>Residential amenities and low cost of living</p> <p>Industrial diversity and strong finance, manufacturing, motor sports, energy, HQ, data center, transportation, & entertainment sectors</p> <p>Population growth, particularly young talent</p> <p>High incomes and suburban wage growth</p> <p>World class airport</p> <p>Well-developed infrastructure across the region</p>	<p>W</p> <p>Heavy reliance on Charlotte for jobs and wages</p> <p>Transportation/commuting difficulties</p> <p>Entrepreneurship</p> <p>Low-paying and low-skill job growth</p> <p>Below-average urban and rural income growth</p> <p>No direct flights to Asia</p>
<p>O</p> <p>Small cities/towns becoming regional employment centers</p> <p>Continued residential growth around Mecklenburg</p> <p>Retiree attraction</p> <p>Health Care employment</p> <p>Construction job growth</p> <p>Foreign business relocation/investment</p> <p>Exports</p> <p>North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis</p>	<p>T</p> <p>Low economic mobility</p> <p>Mid-career population declines outside of urban core</p> <p>Near-term costs to accommodate growth</p> <p>Coordinating growth across jurisdictional lines</p> <p>Manufacturing jobs in decline</p> <p>Meeting manufacturers' employment needs</p> <p>Rising housing costs</p>

Global Charlotte Resiliency Ecosystem

A CEDS strategic response to the 2007 economic downturn experienced by the Greater Charlotte region, yielded resiliency tactics and outcomes for the region that were incorporated and still exist currently for all future planning perspectives. Strong regional population and job growth experienced through 2007 sharply declined during the great national recession. Job growth turned significantly negative from 2008-2010 with a loss of 88,000 jobs (almost 10% of workforce); with the financial services and construction industries taking hardest hit and manufacturing job losses accelerating.

“Prosperity for Greater Charlotte 2012 CEDS” effort resulted in very detailed analyses of strong, weak, advancing and declining industries in each of the counties of the region over the next five years. Similarly, the Prosperity for Greater Charlotte report through the Jobs, Workforce and Education Alignment Strategy tracked the skills needed and training available within the region, at a very fine-grained level. The combination of these industry-cluster and workforce education analyses permitted an unprecedented level of strategic planning for workforce preparedness, which was critical for the next five years until 2017.

A diverse region is identified as more able to withstand shock, be it economic downturn or a natural disaster, i.e. Portfolio effect. Economic diversification is both a recovery strategy and a tool for communities to increase their resiliency for future disasters. Proven economic diversification strategies that have been integrated over the past decade as a part of the Greater Charlotte region’s CEDS strategy include:

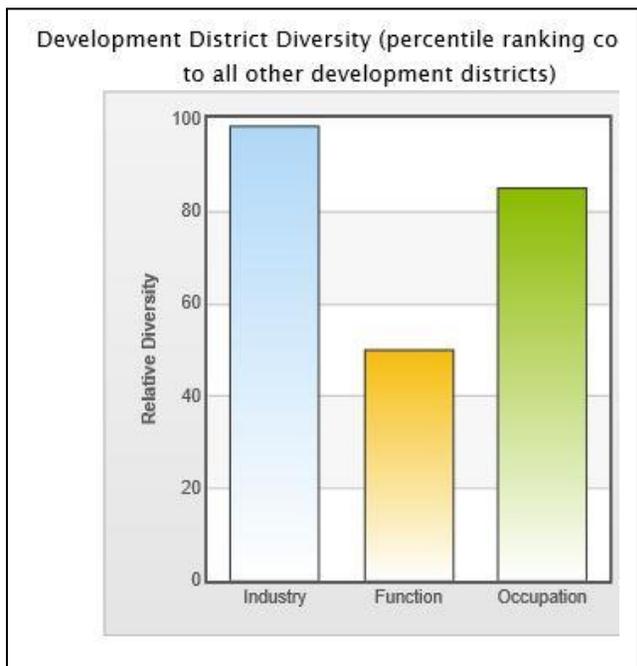
- Promoting entrepreneurship and small business within the community
- Improving and building upon the local workforce
- Encouraging multiple regional clusters
- Increasing export activity

The CEDS identified unique core competencies of Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Information Technology that are embedded in five of our six existing major Target Industry Clusters (Aerospace, Automotive, Life Sciences, Logistics and Energy). Together, these competencies and Industry Clusters form the Charlotte Advanced Industries Super-Cluster.

Key diversification and resiliency assets for the region now exist within the manufacturing Super-Cluster of firms that develop and or apply new technologies, processes and solutions, increasingly classified as “Advanced Industries”. The region harnesses Engineering & IT competencies to design innovative technologies, Advanced Industries manufacturing competencies to competitively produce a very wide range of goods and Logistics\Transportation to provide competitive advantage in delivering products worldwide.

The partnership of the region’s highly networked manufacturers, educational institutions, workforce boards and economic development agencies continues to maintain and strengthen a long tradition of collaboration. The following Centralina EDD data measures the mix of economic and workforce activity across the Centralina EDD. Industry diversity measures the number of industry types in a region and the evenness of employment across a maximum of 1,110 industry types that employ a region's residents. Low diversity implies employment concentrated in only a few industries. High diversity implies employment distributed relatively evenly across many industries. Function diversity measures the evenness of employment across eleven broad industry functions, such as finance, insurance and real estate, health care and capital-intensive manufacturing. Low diversity implies employment concentrated in only a few functions. High diversity implies employment distributed relatively evenly across many functions. Occupation diversity measures the evenness of estimated employment across 96 occupational groups, such as agricultural workers, life scientists, secretaries and administrative assistants and top executives. Low diversity implies employment concentrated in only a few occupation groups. High diversity implies employment distributed relatively evenly across many occupation groups.

Centralina Economic Development District (EDD) – Resiliency Diversity Status in US and Local



Development District Rank by Industry Diversity

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Mecklenburg County, NC | 99 th Percentile |
| 2. Union County, NC | 94 th Percentile |
| 3. Iredell County, NC | 93 rd Percentile |
| 4. Gaston County, NC | 92 nd Percentile |
| 5. Cabarrus County, NC | 91 st Percentile |
| 6. Lincoln County, NC | 83 rd Percentile |
| 7. Stanly County, NC | 82 nd Percentile |
| 8. Rowan County, NC | 81 st Percentile |
| 9. Anson County, NC | 46 th Percentile |

Development District Rank by Function Diversity

1. Rowan County, NC	96 th Percentile
2. Stanly County, NC	93 rd Percentile
3. Anson County, NC	90 th Percentile
4. Iredell County, NC	89 th Percentile
5. Cabarrus County, NC	84 th Percentile
6. Lincoln County, NC	82 nd Percentile
7. Union County, NC	77 th Percentile
8. Gaston County, NC	67 th Percentile
9. Mecklenburg County, NC	63 rd Percentile

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Regional Priorities, Goals and Objectives

This section presents the priorities, goals and objectives for economic growth and investment within the Region based on quantitative analysis shown in the previous sections, as well as input from a series of meetings that were conducted throughout 2017, stakeholder interviews, a region wide survey and CEDS committee meetings. Under each priority are a series of goals, objectives and tactics intended to help guide the economic development activities of the Greater Charlotte region. Though many of the strategies present opportunities for region-wide collaboration, they also offer practical solutions for local officials in their particular locale.

Business and Industry

GOAL 1: CREATE AND MAINTAIN A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE REGION

The region is globally recognized for its business and industry clusters but must successfully coordinate efforts to build, grow and maintain robust, competitive areas of proficiency and innovation that drives the continued evolution of existing clusters. Aimed at supporting disruptive technologies and business models that could help leapfrog global competitors, promoting disruptive advantages to create growth opportunities “beyond clusters” will rely on noteworthy emerging technologies or transformational business models rather than just continuing traditional existing cluster development. Companies in almost any industry may gain a competitive advantage by developing new products or market niches in a wide variety of areas. These technological shifts have the potential to create new business models for almost every industry, from construction and manufacturing to product distribution to business services and health care to a variety of other supporting services. Research and development, innovation and entrepreneurial leadership will be key assets for the future pursuit of these objectives in addition to the globalization of the community workforce and industry base.

Objective A: Boost entrepreneurial development and support services across the region

Tactic 1: Support and expand entrepreneurial education and training programs in high schools and at local community colleges and universities

Tactic 2: Promote access to venture, angel and other financial capital

Tactic 3: Facilitate catalysts for the engaging the private sector with entrepreneurial populations at risk of loss to the region.

Tactic 4: Develop an R & D research agenda to support economic development planning and implementation.

Objective B: Identify and improve practices and policies designed to grow and attract industries to the region.

Tactic 1: Encourage collaboration in marketing regional economic and community development assets

Tactic 2: Identify supply chain networks related to key industry clusters and determine key network gaps that should receive targeted attention and investments

Tactic 3: Identify on-going development of select emerging clusters or unique technologies

Tactic 4: Promote industry access to direct assistance for existing businesses in becoming more globally competitive

Objective C: “Globalize” the region’s businesses and institutions by promoting and developing our international competency

Tactic 1: Promote connections within our diverse international, ethnic and minority populations for enhancing economic and social mobility opportunity

Tactic 2: Facilitate assessment to identify and remediate any existing cultural gaps, barriers or voids that impact international visitors and investors

Tactic 3: Foster regional branding, product development and product marketing initiatives that engage networks of small businesses in industries that need to collaborate to build scale (e.g., agricultural products and local foods, viticulture, recreation and tourism, etc.)

Tactic 4: Advocacy transfer of educational credentials for immigrants

Workforce and Education

GOAL 2: DEVELOP, RETAIN AND ATTRACT TALENT WITH CRITICAL IN DEMAND COMPETENCIES AND EDUCATION.

A priority for the long-term success of the region, residents and businesses will be preparing all future young students and adults in the region’s workforce with critical in-demand education skills, competencies and knowledge that align with evolving business and industry needs. Promoting and informing residents, businesses and leaders that education and lifelong learning are important drivers of economic development will be a fundamental requirement of all strategic community initiatives. Many industries are suffering because too many jobseekers lack the essential skills that employers require and the training provided does not always prepare workers with the needed technical skills. Efforts to recruit,

prepare and retain a world class workforce requires a vision implemented through regional cooperation to prepare the flexible, entrepreneurial, globally-oriented and skilled workers that are the key competitive asset for businesses in the 21st Century.

Objective A: Increase region-wide collaboration between all educational institutions to create real time linkages to target industry's workforce needs.

Tactic 1: Facilitate innovative career pathway counseling and training that will prepare workers for high-skill jobs.

Tactic 2: Promote career and technical education opportunities in high growth areas such as advanced manufacturing, logistics\transportation and creative industries

Tactic 3: Research a coordinated outreach campaign that identifies and promotes middle-skill career opportunities that can be promoted to middle school- and high school-aged children.

Tactic 4: Promote market universal career pathway systems (standardize)

Objective B: Create awareness among stakeholders (citizens, business and leaders) that lifelong learning is vital for economic health and resiliency.

Tactic 1: Support communication campaigns centered on career opportunities and associated learning and credentialing programs to K-12 students, university graduates and adult workers

Tactic 2: Continue promotion of sector (or industry related) workforce initiatives designed to align training and educational options with the skill demands for critical, in-demand occupations

Tactic 3: Engage both individuals and companies through networks (e.g. chambers, trade groups, HR) to identify specific workforce\succession shortages and the skills, certifications, or training required for job advancement and improved incumbent workforce.

Tactic 4: Advocacy for more incumbent worker program resources from State and Federal agencies.

Objective C: Increase awareness and understanding of all ethnic cultures and the multinational community that visit, live and/or work in the region-

Tactic 1: Support CRP\CLT Strategic plan initiatives on talent attraction and diversity outreach to businesses and workers to increase inclusion and economic opportunity

Tactic 2: Support and encourage the formation and expansion of multinational cultural group networks and schools

Tactic 3: Continue to promote and expand the global and cultural connections through organizations and councils

Tactic 4: Increase access and inclusion in the workplace

Infrastructure

GOAL 3: IMPROVE AND MODERNIZE INFRASTRUCTURE TO MAINTAIN A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE

Adequate capacity and condition of infrastructure assets contributes to overall economic competitiveness. Strategic investments must be made to ensure that these assets are maintained and expanded. To remain competitive in a growing global economy, the region should make the revitalization and improvement of local infrastructure a priority for policy change and funding. Moving goods and information efficiently is vital to accessing markets, moving workers and maintaining cost-competitive production of products or services. The region will become more competitive when businesses, entrepreneurs and residents are able to make use of a well-coordinated and robust regional transportation, water/sewer/gas, broadband, housing, energy and natural environment infrastructures.

Objective A: Promote and facilitate alignment with the regional growth plan (CONNECT Our Future) to ensure we have sufficient shovel-ready sites and business parks.

Tactic 1: Support inventory development of site assets for each county

Tactic 2: Update local bodies of new and emerging funding mechanisms for rural counties

Tactic 3: Utilize CCOG to advocate and facilitate funding for infrastructure projects for the region

Tactic 4: Facilitate collaboration between natural gas providers and local planners and economic developers for investment in the development of appropriate natural gas infrastructure and related facilities

Tactic 5: Promote improvements for adequate and affordable broadband access to unserved and underserved areas

Objective B: Support the implementation of the Greater Charlotte Regional Freight Mobility Plan's goals and objectives

Tactic 1: Help educate stakeholders on the value of regional approaches to preservation and maintenance of regionally significant streets, highways and bridges

Tactic 2: Maintain up-to-date information on development of all modes that affect the region's business and industry

Objective C: Promote regional transit planning to efficiently move people from outside, within, and through the region to jobs, homes, living and amenity activities.

Tactic 1: Facilitate local assessments of the supply and variety of housing available to current and future residents aligned with employment patterns and future development growth

Tactic 2: Define and identify deficiencies the rural and urban within the existing affordable housing stock in areas near employment centers and existing infrastructure

Tactic 3: Promote alignment of economic development planning with the Charlotte Area Transit (CATS) Metropolitan Transit Commission 2017 Regional Transit Engagement project

Quality of Life

GOAL 4: FOSTER CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION'S LIFESTYLE AMENITIES AND ATTRIBUTES

To thrive and prosper, both urban and rural communities must actively build on unique advantages to revitalize and/or maintain their city and town centers and local lifestyle amenities and attributes. This will require not only creating environments where businesses want to locate, but also as places where people of all ages want to spend time personally and professionally. This lifestyle design recognizes the productivity improvements that can be achieved by encouraging companies to work near one another – through the opportunities for greater collaboration, through the amenity assets that can help workers be more prolific, as well as the shared learning that happens from close community ties. It recognizes changing consumer preferences as more workers, families and active retirees seek to satisfy their preference for either urban amenities or small-town living. Finally, community connections and communications will be ever increasing through expanding digital media channels so a regional strategic planning portal can facilitate\assist with continuity of vision.

Objective A: Advocate for continued investment in region's amenities, recreation and greenspace, arts and sports venues that enhance and increase lifestyle attractiveness to residents.

Tactic 1: Educate elected officials on the value and need for focus on quality of life issues.

Tactic 2: Facilitate technical assistance for rural counties to assess\identify valuable attributes such as greenways, trails, pedestrian plans and recreational venues that will provide lifestyle attractiveness for location

Tactic 3: Promote downtowns in the region to invest in arts non-profits, entertainment venues, and transportation choices

Objective B: Promote a healthier metro region through improved community design for healthy and lifelong communities.

Tactic 1: Promote best practice examples of how local development plans can provide more opportunities for “natural exercise” (e.g., walking, biking, etc.) to improve community safety and health

Tactic 2: Promote increased access to more outdoor public space, development of pedestrian and bikeway plans and senior-friendly initiatives designed to create a greater sense of community

Tactic 3: Facilitate local food networks to encourage small farmers to aggregate in new local networks or assimilate with existing ones to strengthen sales and coordinated distribution with potential markets

Objective C: Promote and communicate the assets of the CEDS plan and the role of the Centralina Economic Development District.

Tactic 1: Promote a project management / collaboration portal to capture information, activities and new data

Tactic 2: Instruct regional elected officials on the value and use of the CEDS plan

Tactic 3: Educate regional partners on CEDS goals and objectives

Tactic 4: Generate opportunities for larger regional collaboration centered on common CEDS strategies and objectives

Tactic 5: Develop regional resiliency awareness of the region’s industry diversification and disaster preparedness

ACTION PLAN: IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation or action plan identifies the goals, objectives, performance measures and implementation partners necessary for guiding economic development priorities for the next five years. The purpose of the action plan is to provide a "roadmap" for targeting future economic development investments throughout the Region, thereby launching the CEDS into action. Each of the goals and objectives within the action plan addresses one or more of the key issues facing future economic development within the Region. The action plan will be utilized to steer the selection of future economic development projects and investments as they are implemented to address critical barriers to regional economic prosperity. Each goal and objective is associated with one or more performance measures in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.

GOAL 1: CREATE AND MAINTAIN A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE REGION

Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Objective A: Boost entrepreneurial development and support services across the region	Tactic 1: Support and expand entrepreneurial education and training programs in high schools and at local community colleges and universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess current inventory of entrepreneurial programs and identify gaps and develop strategies around filling gaps • Distribute inventory of resources to stakeholders to bring programs to scale 	Charlotte Research Institute; Chambers of Commerce; Centralina Workforce Development Board; Gaston Works; Charlotte Works; Ventureprise; Charlotte Entrepreneurial Alliance; SBA; and SBTDC
	Tactic 2: Promote access to venture, angel and other financial capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase federal dollars invested via EDA, benchmark current investment • Link communications to Clt Chamber communications platform 	EDA; Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, Charlotte Research Institute; Charlotte Chamber of Commerce; Ventureprise, Charlotte Entrepreneurial Alliance; SBA; and SBTDC
	Tactic 3: Act as a catalyst for the engaging the private sector with entrepreneurial populations at risk of loss to the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify at risk populations • Coordinate annual engagement events for private sector investors and at-risk entrepreneurs 	Ventureprise, Charlotte Entrepreneurial Alliance; SBA; and SBTDC

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark and increase the number of private sector investments 	
	Tactic 4: Develop an R & D research agenda to support economic development planning and implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify entrepreneurial resources and gaps and work with stakeholders to develop an action plan Benchmark and Increase R&D activity 	Ventureprise, Charlotte Entrepreneurial Alliance; private sector stakeholders
Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Identify and improve practices and policies designed to grow and attract industries to the region	Tactic 1: Encourage collaboration in marketing regional economic and community development assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene annual meeting of all regional EDCs to discuss marketing needs and strategies 	Charlotte Regional Partnership; Economic Development Corporations
	Tactic 2: Identify supply chain networks related to key industry clusters and determine key network gaps that should receive targeted attention and investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete supply chain analysis of key clusters and report network gaps to stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One cluster per year 	Economic Development Corporations; Business/Industry; Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Administration
	Tactic 3: Identify on-going development of select emerging clusters or unique technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly evaluate industry clusters and update stakeholders via quarterly newsletter 	Economic Development Administration
	Tactic 4: Promote industry access to direct assistance for existing businesses in becoming more globally competitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold annual workshop of federal, state and local funding agencies 	Federal, State, local funding agencies, Charlotte Regional Partnership; Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Business/Industry
Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Globalize” the region’s businesses and institutions by promoting and developing our international competency	Tactic 1: Promote connections within our diverse international, ethnic and minority populations for enhancing economic and social mobility opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene annual meetings to connect partners for encouraging collaboration 	Charlotte Regional Partnership, Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce, Latin, German, Asian and other Chamber Associations, District

			Export Council and Honorary Counsels
	Tactic 2: Facilitate assessment to identify and remediate any existing cultural gaps, barriers or voids that impact international visitors and investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete assessment of gaps and barriers for international investors and visitors and potential solution options. 	Charlotte Regional Partnership, Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce, Latin, German, Asian and other Chamber Associations, District Export Council and Honorary Counsels; NC Economic Development Partnership
	Tactic 3: Foster regional branding, product development and product marketing initiatives that engage networks of small businesses in industries that need to collaborate to build scale (e.g., agricultural and local food products, viticulture, recreation and tourism, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold planning meetings with local EDC's and CRP • Develop strategies to carry forward CRP's regional marketing with local EDCs 	Economic Development Corporations; Charlotte Regional Partnership; Chambers of Commerce; Business/Industry Stakeholders; NC Economic Development Partnership
	Tactic 4: Advocacy for transfer of educational credentials for international workers and immigrants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop advocacy materials to support messaging on the benefit to the local economy • Distribute materials to key organizations who are able to influence the implementation 	Community Colleges and Universities; Workforce Boards, Economic Development Administration; NC Economic Development Partnership; Chambers of Commerce; Economic Development Corporations

GOAL 2: DEVELOP, RETAIN AND ATTRACT TALENT WITH CRITICAL IN DEMAND COMPETENCIES AND EDUCATION.

Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Increase region-wide collaboration between all educational institutions to create real time linkages to target industry’s workforce needs	Tactic 1: Facilitate innovative career pathway counseling and training that prepare workers for high-skill jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop regional system for tracking pathway degree attainment 	Workforce Boards; Lumina Foundation; Chambers of Commerce; Community Colleges and Universities; Centralina Foundation
	Tactic 2: Promote career and technical education opportunities in high growth areas such as advanced manufacturing, logistics\transportation and creative industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand use and marketing of Centralina Career Headlight Track number of career related internships and apprenticeships 	K-12 Institutions; Community Colleges and Universities, Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Business and Industry; Workforce Development Boards
	Tactic 3: Research a coordinated outreach campaign that identifies and promotes middle-skill career opportunities that can be promoted to middle school- and high school-aged children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and outreach campaign Track/measure and report quarterly on the number of organizations that use career pathway systems and number of new organizations using systems 	K-12 Institutions; Community Colleges and Universities, Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Business and Industry; Workforce Development Boards
	Tactic 4: promote market universal career pathway systems (standardize)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop materials in support of universal pathways and define the value it brings to the local economy 	K-12 Institutions; Community Colleges and Universities, Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Business and Industry; Workforce Development Boards
Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Create awareness among citizens, business and leaders that lifelong learning is vital for economic health and resiliency	Tactic 1: Support communication campaigns centered on career opportunities and associated learning and credentialing programs to K-12 students, university graduates and adult workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop webpages dedicated to connecting to communication campaigns At least annually feature related topics in the CEDC quarterly 	K-12 Institutions; Community Colleges and Universities, Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Business and

		newsletters	Industry; Workforce Development Boards
	Tactic 2: Continue promotion of sector (or industry related) workforce initiatives designed to align training and educational options with the skill demands for critical, in-demand occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish updates on initiatives on the CEDC website Track data on in-demand occupations and feature on CEDC website 	K-12 Institutions; Community Colleges and Universities, Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Business and Industry; Workforce Development Boards
	Tactic 3: Engage both individuals and companies through networks (e.g. chambers, trade groups, HR) to identify specific workforce\succession shortages and the skills, certifications, or training required for job advancement and improved incumbent workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the People Skills Prosperity post-secondary attainment program Survey local business and industry to pin point workforce development needs Connect both companies and individuals to resources and track successes 	K-12 Institutions; Community Colleges and Universities, Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Business and Industry; Workforce Development Boards
	Tactic 4: Advocacy for more incumbent worker program resources from State and Federal agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track the and quantify the need for incumbent worker training resources Develop advocacy materials to communicate need and distribute to influencers 	K-12 Institutions; Community Colleges and Universities, Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Business and Industry; Workforce Development Boards
Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Increase awareness and understanding of all ethnic cultures and the multinational community that visit, live or work in the region	Tactic 1: Support CRP\CLT Strategic plan initiatives on talent attraction and diversity outreach to businesses and workers to increase inclusion and economic opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote attraction of a diverse workforce 	Workforce Development Boards; Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Corps, Community Colleges and Universities
	Tactic 2: Support and encourage the formation and expansion of multinational cultural group networks, councils, organizations and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess what groups currently exist and where there are gaps Develop strategies around gaps 	Workforce Development Boards; Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Corps, Community Colleges and Universities
	Tactic 3: Advocate for increasing access and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop materials outlining how 	Workforce Development

	inclusion in the workplace	access and inclusion can bring value to individual businesses and the region	Boards; Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Corps, Community Colleges and Universities
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GOAL 3: IMPROVE AND MODERNIZE INFRASTRUCTURE TO MAINTAIN A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE

Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Promote and facilitate alignment with the regional growth plan (CONNECT Our Future) to ensure we have sufficient shovel-ready sites and business parks.	Tactic 1: Support inventory development of site assets for each county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create webpage linked to County site assets • Provide technical assistance to County to develop inventory 	Economic Development Administration, NC Economic Development Partnership, Economic Development Corporations
	Tactic 2: Update local stakeholders of new and emerging funding mechanisms for rural counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop by annual publication updating stakeholders on all economic development funding, existing, new and modified programs • Convene annual workshop centered on economic development funding and best practices 	Economic Development Administration, NC Economic Development Partnership, Small Business Administration, NC Rural Center, Golden Leaf Foundation, NC Department of Commerce- Rural Development; Main Street, USDA
	Tactic 3: Utilize CCOG to advocate and facilitate funding for infrastructure projects for the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create webpage and materials centered on communicating the value of investments • Develop impact analysis for regional projects 	CCOG Board of Delegates
	Tactic 4: Facilitate collaboration between natural gas providers, local planners and economic developers for investment in the development of appropriate natural gas infrastructure and related facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene workshops centered on best practices 	USDA, Economic Development Administration; Business and Industry; Economic Development Corporations
	Tactic 5: Promote improvements for adequate and affordable broadband access to unserved and underserved areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene workshops centered on best practices 	NC Broadband Infrastructure, USDA, Economic Development Administration; Business and

			Industry; Economic Development Corporations
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Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Support the implementation of the Greater Charlotte Regional Freight Mobility Plan's goals and objectives	Tactic 1: Help educate stakeholders on the value of regional approaches to preservation and maintenance of regionally significant streets, highways and bridges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene regional workshops 	Centralina Council of Governments;
	Tactic 2: Maintain up to date information on development of all modes that affect the region's business and industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute current information to stakeholders 	Metropolitan Planning Organizations; Freight Associations; Federal Highway Association; NC Department of Transportation;
Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Promote regional transit planning to efficiently move people from outside\within\ and through the region to jobs, homes, living and amenity activities	Tactic 1: Facilitate local assessments of the supply and variety of housing available to current and future residents aligned with employment patterns and future development growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete housing assessments for areas centered around current or future transit options 	Centralina Council of Governments; Metropolitan Transit Commission, Regional Counties and Municipalities
	Tactic 2: Define and identify rural and urban deficiencies within the existing affordable housing stock in areas near employment centers and existing infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete assessment of affordable housing 	Centralina Council of Governments; Regional Counties and Municipalities
	Tactic 3: Promote alignment of economic development planning with the Charlotte Area Transit (CATS) Metropolitan Transit Commission 2017 Regional Transit Engagement project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene public engagement events to education stakeholders on the value this drives 	Centralina Council of Governments; Regional Counties and Municipalities, Metropolitan Transit Commission

GOAL 4: FOSTER CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION’S LIFESTYLE AMENITIES AND ATTRIBUTES

Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Advocate for continued investment in region’s amenities, recreation and greenspace, arts and sports venues that enhance and increase lifestyle attractiveness to residents.	Tactic 1: Educate elected officials on the value and need for focus on quality of life issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training and information to elected officials at CCOG board meetings • Research and identify drives and reasons for demographic migration choices 	Economic Development Corporations; elected officials
	Tactic 2: Facilitate technical assistance for rural counties to assess\identify valuable attributes such as greenways, trails, pedestrian plans and recreational venues that will provide lifestyle attractiveness for location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send communications to Counties informing them of technical assistance availability • Provide technical assistance for Counties per their requests 	Parks and Recreation Planners
	Tactic 3: Promote downtowns in the region to invest in arts non-profits, entertainment venues, transportation choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect municipalities with technical assistance from Private\Foundation funders and other relevant funding agencies 	Municipalities; Economic Development Corporation; NC Main Streets; Visitor’s Associations
Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Promote a healthier metro region through improved community design for healthy and lifelong communities.	Tactic 1: Promote best practice examples of how local development plans can provide more opportunities for “natural exercise” (e.g., walking, biking, etc.) to improve community safety and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute best practice guidance • Convene workshops to disseminate information • Healthier citizens 	Healthcare Systems; municipalities- planners; Economic Development Corporations
	Tactic 2: Promote increase in access to more outdoor public space, development of pedestrian and bikeway plans and senior-friendly initiatives designed to create a greater sense of community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of ADA compliant public spaces • Increase accessibility 	Regional Parks and Recreation Staff; Planners; Area Agencies on Aging
	Tactic 3: Facilitate local food networks to encourage small farmers to aggregate in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene workshops to increase network connections and create new 	Municipalities; local food advocates; Economic

	existing and new local networks and coordinate distribution with potential markets.	channels of communication	Development Corporations
Objectives	Tactic	Performance Measures	Implementation Partners
Promote and communicate the assets of the CEDS plan and the role of the Centralina Economic Development District	Tactic 1: Create a project management / collaboration portal to capture information, activities and new data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an updated website that contains real-time CEDS data and regional information to inform all partners and external stakeholders 	Economic Development Administration; local Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Workforce Development Boards
	Tactic 2: Instruct regional elected officials on the value and use of the CEDS plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Council and Commission meetings throughout the region and orientate them on the CEDS and activities and accomplishments 	CEDC Board members; Economic Development Corporations
	Tactic 3: Educate regional partners on CEDS goals and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop regular communications via quarterly newsletter 	Economic Development Administration; local Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Workforce Development Boards
	Tactic 4: Generate opportunities for larger regional collaboration centered on common CEDS strategies and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene stakeholders annually to develop regional collaboration to achieve regional strategies and objectives. 	Economic Development Administration; local Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Workforce Development Boards; Education Institutions; Business and Industry; NC Partnership for Economic Development
	Tactic 5: Develop regional resiliency awareness of the region's industry diversification and disaster preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene stakeholders to develop a regional resiliency plan 	Economic Development Administration; local Economic Development Corporations; Chambers of Commerce; Workforce Development Boards; Education Institutions; Business and Industry; NC Partnership for Economic Development

Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework serves as a mechanism to gauge progress on the successful implementation of the overall CEDS while providing information for the CEDS Annual Performance Report, as required by EDA. These regular updates keep the strategic direction and action plan outlined in the CEDS current and the plan as a whole relevant. The evaluation framework is an important element of the ongoing planning process and should answer the questions “How are we doing?” and “What can we do better?” The performance measures will help to evaluate the organizations independent and collective contributions to other organizations who together influence and effect the regional economy through the implementation of the CEDS.

The CEDC will post and distribute the results of each annual evaluation over the next five years. These results will assist the CEDS governing board with adjusting the goals as needed when changing strengths and weaknesses are identified that modify the threats and opportunities presented throughout the five-year planning period. The ability to adjust metrics helps to ensure the CEDS is focused on relevant tactics to bring forward continued economic prosperity for the Greater Charlotte region.

Goal 1: Projected Metrics



- Number of new entrepreneurial programs in education system
- Increase in regional access and investment of Venture and Innovation Funds
- Increase in the number of new startup firms
- Number of new patents applied for
- Increase international investments
- Increase in export activity

Goal 2: Project Metrics



- Number of career pathway aligned degrees and certificates
- Number of Career Headlight users
- Number of region wide adopted universal pathways

- Number of sector related jobs filled
- Number of immigrants and minorities relocating in the region
- Number of immigrants and minority employees

Goal 3: Project Metrics



- Number of new shovel ready sites
- Increase in federal project related investments
- Increase in infrastructure funding
 - Broadband
 - Natural Gas
 - Transportation
 - Utilities

Goal 4: Projected Metrics



- Increase in the number of bicycle and pedestrian plans
- Increase the miles of greenways
- Increase philanthropic and Arts investments in downtowns
- Number of Healthy Communities designation\certification
- Number of new local food networks\ farm-to-market councils