

**21ST CENTURY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM
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**North Carolina
Department of Commerce**

21st Century Communities Program



**Progress to the
Future**

HELPING TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR
NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITIES

JULY 2009

Introduction

With its eye on the future, the North Carolina Department of Commerce has responded to the ever-changing needs of our state's economy and the communities that it affects. Through innovative strategies that foster long-term, comprehensive economic development, the department provides a level of support to communities that enhance both local and statewide economic development.



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The mission for the Department of Commerce is to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for all North Carolinians.

J. Keith Crisco, Secretary

Background

In 2001, in response to a series of business and industry closures, and the loss of thousands of jobs in the manufacturing and textile industries, the department initiated the 21st Century Communities program. With this program, the Department has positively affected some of the state's most challenged communities, and helped jump start their economic development planning efforts.



The program establishes creative partnerships that help direct human and financial resources, and provides technical assistance to targeted communities that support the development of broad-based, sustainable economic development plans and initiatives.

OUR PROGRAM

The Department selects communities through an application process that are experiencing economic sustainability challenges and helps them move forward in today's global economy. The program pledges the full support of the Department of Commerce, its available programs and resources to ensure success at the local level. The primary premises of the 21st Century program are:

- Economic development success comes from investing in education and a skilled workforce, attractive and prepared communities and an exceptional business climate.
- Economically challenged counties that have local leaders committed to making progress will yield the greatest results.
- Building upon the unique strengths and character of each county is essential in the formation of sustainable economic development strategies.



As of 2009, the 21st Century program is presently collaborating with 11 counties and has assisted 20 counties.

OUR PROCESS

The Department believes that effective implementation of the 21st Century Communities program will achieve long-term, positive outcomes that support increased economic development competitiveness at both the state and local levels.

To achieve program goals we will:

- Conduct a complete assessment of the local economy;
- Meet with local leaders to identify areas of greatest concern;
- Assess economic development assets such as available building sites, vacant facilities, cultural and natural heritage, eco-tourism, entrepreneurship opportunities and other unique area assets;
- Identify infrastructure needs;
- Develop a comprehensive economic development plan; and
- Coordinate available financial, human and technical resources to maximize impact.

The 21st Century Communities program is end-to-end, providing assistance from the application process to the implementation plan.

Program consideration begins with a competitive application process open to most North Carolina counties. The Department selects counties based on objective criteria that include specific economic and demographic variables, as well as subjective criteria that assess a county's ability to effectively partner with Commerce for successful program implementation.

OUR PARTNERS



The Department of Commerce has engaged a diverse group of key partners that work to support our communities, including: participating county and municipal governments, the regional partnerships, N.C. Department of Transportation, N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, N.C. Department of Public Instruction, N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, N.C. Community College system, the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, N.C. Department of Agriculture, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Institute of Government, the Rural Center, the Golden LEAF Foundation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the N.C. Partnership for Children.

FIND OUT MORE

To find out more about the program, contact:

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Visit our 21st Century webpage:

www.nccommerce.com/21cc

For more information on all of NC Department of Commerce's programs:

www.nccommerce.com



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NC Department of Commerce's business assistance website:

www.blnc.gov

View our [NC Green Economy Resources Directory](#) at:

www.ncscitech.com/gbf/grd.htm

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