

Wilkes EDC Newsletter

Fall Newsletter

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President Obama and
Governor Perdue Visit Wilkes
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President Barack Obama spoke at West Wilkes High School on October 17 touting his proposal for the American Jobs Act. Obama's visit to Wilkes was part of a three-day bus tour through North Carolina. He landed on Air Force One and spoke in Asheville, had lunch at a barbecue restaurant in Marion and made a stop at the Mast General Store on King Street in Boone before heading to Wilkes.

He said he was asked by someone why he comes to North Carolina as much as he

Greetings from Wilkes County, North Carolina. Since the Wilkes EDC embarked on a five-year job creation program in July 2011 we have hit the ground running with some exciting project announcements. Despite a sluggish economy, a number of local businesses continue to thrive. We had President Obama and Governor Perdue visit Wilkes County within 10 days of one another last month.

In an effort to enhance our communication with you as local stakeholders, regional and state allies and national site consultants please take a moment to catch up on some recent news. As always you can visit our website at www.WilkesEDC.com for updated information.

Please call on us if we can help your business locate or expand in Wilkes County.

Jeff Garstka, CECD
President

CertainTeed Adds 29 Jobs

Governor Beverly Perdue announced in October that CertainTeed Corporation., a manufacturer of building materials, will expand its operation in North Wilkesboro in Wilkes County. The project is expected to create 29 jobs, and the company expects to invest \$2.7 million in the plant by the end of 2012. The project was made possible in part by a \$98,000 grant from the One North Carolina Fund. The company chose Wilkes County over a similar location in the Pacific Northwest

"Creating jobs is my top priority, and North Carolina's workforce has the knowledge and skills that companies like CertainTeed demand," Gov. Perdue said. "Our history of investments in education and job training is essential to bringing well-paying jobs to communities like North Wilkesboro."

does. "I said there is just something-the people of North Carolina are so nice. They are gracious and they are kind, and even the folks who don't vote for me are nice." Ten days later on October 27, Gov. Bev Perdue toured the Applied Technology Center at Wilkes Community College, meeting with community leaders, faculty, staff and students. The Applied Technology Center is advanced technology equipment for the aerospace, transportation, construction and advanced technology industries and is funded primarily by the Golden Leaf Foundation.

"I don't believe every kid wants to be a rocket scientist," Gov. Perdue said. Advanced technical training fills jobs created in the modern economy, she said as she toured the robotics lab. "This is exciting," she said. "This is what should be going on."

LEAP Fund Update

The Wilkes EDC has raised close to \$600,000 in private investments for its five-year LEAP program. The program has already been instrumental in helping create jobs at CertainTeed and also at Hinson & Hale Medical Technologies. The EDC continues to seek new investors to reach the goal of \$750,000 in private pledges. The LEAP money is used as an "opportunity fund" to help close the gap on incentives, matching grants, revolving loans, site

The company will incorporate a paint line in the plant that has traditionally been done by third party vendors. The initiative is expected to increase efficiency and reduce costs. Salaries will vary by job function, but the average annual wage for the new jobs will be \$42,741 not including benefits. The Wilkes County average annual wage is \$29,172.

The \$98,000 One North Carolina Fund grant will be matched locally by Wilkes County and the Wilkes EDC LEAP Fund. The LEAP Fund is a five-year private funding effort in Wilkes County to provide additional incentive support for high-impact economic development projects. In addition, the company is eligible for additional State tax credits and Community College training dollars.

CertainTeed is a subsidiary of Saint-Gobain, headquartered in France and one of the top 100 industrial companies in the world. Saint-Gobain employs approximately 22,000 people in North America and more than 109,000 people in 64 countries world-wide.

Existing Businesses Experience Growth

Several Wilkes County businesses are finding that despite a sluggish economy, business opportunities still exist. Key City Furniture recently entered a partnership with High Point, N.C.-based Schnadig Corp. to produce an upholstered line for Ralph Lauren. The contract was welcome news to the 80+ year old company. Key City will begin manufacturing the Ralph Lauren product in 2011. Schnadig currently offers 50 fabric choices for the RL line and was manufacturing the furniture in China before entering the deal with Key City.

Hinson & Hale Medical Technologies began work with Tampa, Fla.-based SRI Surgical, the nation's largest supplier of surgical room textiles. HHMT uses a proprietary infused polyester material that is more durable, fade-resistant and uses less washing/drying capacity than the current surgical textiles on the market. The life of the material is virtually endless and can save a large hospital millions of dollars a year. HHMT currently employs 18 full-time workers and plans to continue adding sewing capacity.

The Brushy Mountain Bee Farm, one of the nation's leaders in beekeeping supplies for over 30 years, recently expanded its footprint in Wilkesboro with the addition of 5,000 square feet of warehouse space. The Bee Farm is also in the process of hiring

development opportunities and other impactful projects.

For a list of current LEAP investors [Click Here.](#)

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Site Studies Underway

The Wilkes EDC recently completed several site development studies. Duke Energy chose a site in Wilkes for its Site Readiness Program, partnering with McCallum Sweeney Consulting to study a 70-acre tract suitable for a large data center. The EDC also partnered with the High Country Council of Governments GIS Planning department on a comprehensive aerial study of the US-421 corridor, identifying all undeveloped land 10 acres or greater. The maps also overlay all public and private utility lines. Phase II of the study will investigate a number of sites in greater detail with a long-term goal of identifying a top-tier business park site along US-421.

additional technical staff.

Tyson Continues to Perform

As Wilkes County's largest employer at over 2,100 employees, Tyson's Wilkesboro Fresh Plant continues to be the top producer in the company's line of U.S. plants. While grain prices have skyrocketed, the company has managed to keep prices down for consumers. The Wilkesboro Fresh Plant, known as "Plant 1" within the Tyson family, produces 535 million pounds of processed live birds, primarily for retail chicken breast tray packs. The plant is capable of processing 2 million live birds per week. Tyson invested \$25 million in equipment in 2010 and added more than 240 employees to handle a new de-boning process.

In addition to the plant itself, the Live Production grower market is expanding along with the demand. Tyson currently has 344 contract growers in Wilkes and surrounding counties that produced over 94 million chickens in 2011.

Tyson's overall annual economic impact in Wilkes County is \$210 million. The Fresh Plant employs 64% Wilkes County residents and 1 in 6 of the 2,000+ team members have been with the company more than 20 years.