Isothermal Planning & Development Commission

Representing Cleveland, McDowell, Polk and Rutherford Counties
Isothermal Regional Economic Development Strategy

October 4th, 2017
Gathering of Stakeholders

Broad River Water Authority
Carolina Foothills Chamber of Commerce
Chimney Rock Village
City of Kings Mountain
City of Marion
City of Saluda
Cleveland Community College
Cleveland County Schools
Isothermal Community College
Isothermal Planning & Development Commission
McDowell County Cooperative Extension
McDowell Economic Development Association (MEDA)
McDowell Technical Community College
NCSU Cooperative Extension
Our Carolina Foothills
Personnel Service Unlimited
Polk County Cooperative Extension
Polk County Planning Department
Polk DSS
Rutherford Chamber of Commerce
Rutherford TDA
Thermal Belt Habitat for Humanity
Town of Earl
Town of Forest City
Town of Lake Lure
Town of Rutherfordton
Town of Spindale
Town of Tryon
Trelleborg
Tryon Downtown Development Association
The Region’s population is changing:

Population change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population projections</th>
<th>Isothermal Region</th>
<th>North Carolina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>291,661</td>
<td>7,829,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2010</td>
<td>231,394</td>
<td>9,304,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2014</td>
<td>228,998</td>
<td>9,714,986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2020</td>
<td>233,313</td>
<td>10,340,298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3% 18.8% -1.0% 4.4% 1.9% 6.4%
The Region’s population is aging:
### Assessment of Challenges

- **Regional income is declining:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income &amp; Poverty</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population in Poverty</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minors (Age 0-17) in Poverty</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Median Household Income ($2013)</td>
<td>$42,974</td>
<td>$41,730</td>
<td>$38,633</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment of Challenges

- Declining earnings per worker:
  
  Earnings per worker in 2014

NOTE: Earnings include wages, salaries, supplements and earnings from partnerships and proprietorships.
Assessment of Challenges

- Regional residents are commuting out:

### Journey to Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>2013 Jobs</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed in Region</td>
<td>72,135</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed in Region but Living Outside</td>
<td>30,071</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed and Living in Region</td>
<td>42,064</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>2013 Jobs</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region Residents</td>
<td>91,315</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Outside Region but Living in Region</td>
<td>49,251</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed and Living in Region</td>
<td>42,064</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Location Considered
Assessment of Opportunities

• Considering the data and the challenges facing the region, opportunities identified include:
  – Great Community Colleges in the region that work together and can partner on initiatives
  – Collaborative regional marketing/branding
  – Plenty of recreational opportunities
  – The tourism and manufacturing industries are growing (Lake Lure/Chimney Rock is one of the state’s most popular destinations)
• Considering the data and the challenges facing the region, opportunities were identified including:
  
  – There is plenty of talent within the region
  
  – Potential for US 74 to gain interstate status
  
  – Potential for public transit – for tourism and workforce purposes
  
  – Healthy small towns with well-established downtown areas
Three Goals

Isothermal Region Goal Development

Build Regionalism

Targeted Industry Cluster Development

Agriculture
Manufacturing
Tourism

Pathways to Economic Foundations

Transportation
Housing
Workforce
Wellness
Broadband and Utilities
Purpose

• **Vision:** We are a regional coalition which values economic diversity and collaboration. Together we share risks and rewards in order to build opportunities for our citizens. We are a network of the surrounding economic engines with internal and external partners that enhance economic growth.

• **Mission:** To be a regional brokerage of assets and talent development that improves individual, household and business prosperity and strengthens local communities.
Manufacturing

• Manufacturing in the region is diverse
  – strategies that aim to grow capital and import/retain talent include:

  – Evaluate potential for a regional transit system that can operate on a traditional 3-shift manufacturing schedule
  – Increase the number of student transfers to direct employment
  – Grow a regional manufacturing supply chain ecosystem
  – Develop career pathways
The Region’s tourism industry is growing – strategies to support the industry include:

- Increase entrepreneurship in the tourism sector
- Develop a tourism consortium and hospitality education training consortium
- Conduct regional asset mapping of regional tourism infrastructure (project underway)
- Conduct a public awareness campaign for the 4-county region as a destination
The Region has an agriculture presence that can be highlighted, marketed, and expanded. Strategies include:

- Establishment of an Agricultural Stakeholder Committee and Agricultural Purchasing Cooperative
- Develop incentives to increase the number of producers in the region
- Increase communication and coordination of food system stakeholders
- Analyze land loss and land reuse policies throughout the region
Each of the 5 pathways will be explored by each group and within each industry cluster.
Pathways Explored

We cannot ignore any of the pathways, and cannot develop them without working together as a region.
Next Steps

• Establishment of an Economic Development District (EDD)

• Gathering of committees

• Asset mapping data to be complete by end of Sept. 2017

• IPDC responsibilities, membership and partner responsibilities from this point, and moving forward

• Isothermal Regional Economic Development Strategy
  https://regionc.org/regional-development/setv/
Upcoming Symposiums

• **Housing** – October 2017

• **Employee-owned Businesses** – November 2017

• **Transportation** – December 2017

• **Legislative Breakfast** – January 2018

• **Agriculture** – Spring 2018

• **Tourism** – Spring 2018
Thank You!

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www.regionc.org