

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2008



High Country Council of Governments Economic Development District

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Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2008
For the North Carolina High Country Council of Governments (COG)
Economic Development District

NORTH CAROLINA HIGH COUNTRY COG MEMBER GOVERNMENTS

Alleghany County

Town of Sparta

Ashe County

Town of Jefferson

Town of Lansing

Town of West Jefferson

Avery County

Town of Banner Elk

Town of Crossnore

Town of Elk Park

Town of Newland

Village of Sugar Mountain

Mitchell County

Town of Bakersville

Town of Spruce Pine

Watauga County

Town of Beech Mountain

Town of Blowing Rock

Town of Boone

Town of Seven Devils

Wilkes County

Town of North Wilkesboro

Town of Ronda

Town of Wilkesboro

Yancey County

Town of Burnsville

ABSTRACT

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Content: The strategy is an economic development planning tool intended to aid local governments in decision-making. The document provides an analysis of regional and local economic conditions within Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey Counties, NC. Specific projects have been identified that will address economic development in the High Country COG area.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	5
II.	Analysis of Regional Economy	8
A.	Demographics.....	9
	1. Population.....	9
	2. Workforce.....	11
B.	Infrastructure.....	12
	1. Transportation	12
	2. Water and Sewer.....	14
	3. Telecommunications	16
	4. Industrial Sites	17
C.	Economic Clusters	19
	1. Manufacturing.....	19
	2. Tourism.....	21
	3. Arts and Crafts.....	23
	4. Agriculture.....	23
	5. Retail Trade and Service Industry	24
	6. Small Business/Entrepreneurial Development.....	25
	7. Growing Industry Sectors	26
	8. Declining Industry Sectors	28
D.	Current Economic and Community Development Efforts	30
	1. Statewide Programs.....	30
	2. Regional Programs	31
	3. Local Programs.....	32
	4. Funding Programs.....	33
III.	Public/Private Participation	36
IV.	Goals and Objectives.....	38
V.	Action Plan.....	41
	A. Suggested Projects.....	42
	B. Vital Projects	49
VI.	Performance Measures	51
VII.	Coordination with State Economic Development Efforts	53

High Country Council of Governments

**Comprehensive Economic
Development Strategy
2008**

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

High Country Council of Governments (COG) is one of seventeen multi-county planning districts in North Carolina. The North Carolina Department of Administration, in 1974, designated High Country COG as the Lead Regional Organization (LRO) for the seven counties of Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey.

High Country COG was designated an Economic Development District (EDD) by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) on March 23, 1976. The Council has also been designated a Local Development District (LDD) by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). The purpose of the Economic Development District and the Local Development District is to provide the administrative capacity to establish a continuous economic development planning process which identifies problems and potentials, creates goals and strategies, and provides an implementation organization where necessary and feasible.

Other designations for High Country COG include an Area Agency on Aging (AAA), a Service Delivery Area for administering the Workforce Investment Act programs, and the Lead Planning Agency (LPA) for the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO). The Council is also a Certified Development Company as designated by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for making SBA 504 loans within the seven counties.

The purposes of the Council are as follows:

- To offer professional and technical services to individual member governments.
- To provide services for member governments that can best be provided on a regional basis.
- To serve as a forum for discussion of regional problems and interests and to promote good intergovernmental relations.
- To facilitate effective communications among the member governments.
- To promote the coordination of other regional public agencies of the seven county area in order to avoid duplication.
- To promote, in the region and statewide, the individual efforts of member governments.
- To serve as a consensus voice for its member governments on matters mutually affecting them.

High Country Council of Governments provides regional administration and planning through the following departments: AAA, the Regional Computer System, Workforce Development, Finance, and Planning. The Child Development Program Coordinator is an administrative employee of High Country COG, although Region D Child Care Inc. is a separate nonprofit corporation which operates three child development centers.

The membership of High Country Council of Governments consists of 26 local governments who contribute annual dues on a per capita assessment. Each county and town selects a member of its governing board to serve on the High Country COG Executive Board. A minority member is elected by the minority organizations within the region.

High Country COG consists of seven counties and 19 towns in northwestern North Carolina. The region is primarily rural with small manufacturing and service towns. Wilkes County is the largest county and has the largest concentration of manufacturing in the region. Watauga County is the home of Appalachian State University and has an economy based on education, government, the service industry, and tourism. Avery County has become a major year round tourist destination with winter ski resorts and many seasonal residents. Alleghany and Ashe Counties are typical of rural Appalachian counties where industrial growth has been slow to offset the decline in agricultural employment. Mitchell County originally developed around the mining industry in the early 20th century. Yancey County has diversified from an agricultural economy to one based on light manufacturing. The seven counties have similarities in their obstacles to development. Land uses are limited due to mountainous conditions and most counties have few mineral resources.

The transportation system has historically been considered to be the greatest barrier to large-scale industrial development. Driving distances to the nearest commercial airports are one to three hours. The region is served by four major US highways and nine state highways, although many are two-lane. There is no Interstate access in the region.

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Development Strategy
2008**

Chapter II

ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL ECONOMY

A. Demographics

1. Population

Tables 1 and 2 provide population data for the High Country COG local governments. Between 1940 and 1970, the seven counties in the region experienced losses of population. This decline was primarily caused by a lack of employment opportunities that resulted in large numbers of Appalachian people migrating to large cities in the northern United States. Around 1970, outmigration began to reverse and the population of the High Country region stabilized. This reversal was due to a number of factors including the continued development of Appalachian State University, new industry in Wilkes and other counties, and improvements to the area's transportation systems. Population is projected to continue to grow in the region, although at roughly half the rate as that of the State.

Few minorities reside in the area with 92% of the population being white.

Table 1 County Population Data, 2000 and Future Estimates

	Population 2000	Persons Per Square Mile	Population 2010	Population 2020	Population 2030	% Change 2000-2030
Alleghany	10,667	45.5	11,735	12,625	13,365	25.2%
Ashe	24,384	57.2	26,297	27,757	28,908	18.6%
Avery	17,167	69.5	18,906	20,250	21,164	23.3%
Mitchell	15,687	70.7	16,557	17,268	17,734	13.0%
Watauga	42,695	136	46,810	50,311	53,062	24.3%
Wilkes	65,632	87.3	71,488	76,673	81,472	24.1%
Yancey	17,774	56.7	19,819	21,639	23,205	30.6%
High Country	194,016	77.3	211,612	226,523	238,910	23.1%

Source: US Census Bureau and NC Demographer

Table 2 Population Estimates, 2006 (Counties) and 2005 (Municipalities)

	Population
Alleghany County	11,000
Town of Sparta	1,778
Ashe County	25,778
Town of Jefferson	1,456
Town of Lansing	150
Town of West Jefferson	1,136
Avery County	18,174
Town of Banner Elk	979
Town of Crossnore	302
Town of Elk Park	453

Town of Newland	701
Village of Sugar Mountain	238
Mitchell County	15,894
Town of Bakersville	355
Town of Spruce Pine	2,023
Watauga County	43,406
Town of Beech Mountain	360
Town of Blowing Rock	1,427
Town of Boone	14,130
Town of Seven Devils	139
Wilkes County	66,924
Town of North Wilkesboro	4,168
Town of Ronda	476
Town of Wilkesboro	3,178
Yancey County	18,368
Town of Burnsville	1,638
North Carolina	8,860,341
United States	299,398,484

Source: NC State Demographer

Table 3 provides county-level data on age, education attainment, and income. All seven counties in the High Country are below the state per capita income average of \$20,307 (1999).

Table 3 Median Age, Education, & Income

	Median Age, 2000	% High School Grad or Higher, 2000	Percent Bachelors Degree or Higher, 2000	Median Family Income, 1999	Per Capita Income, 1999	% of Families Below Poverty Level, 1999
Alleghany	43.0	68	11.7	\$38,473	\$17,691	11.3
Ashe	42.1	68.6	12.1	\$36,052	\$16,429	10.1
Avery	38.4	70.6	14.5	\$37,454	\$15,176	10.9
Mitchell	42.0	68.6	12.2	\$36,367	\$15,933	10.7
Watauga	29.9	81.6	33.2	\$45,508	\$17,258	7.2
Wilkes	38.5	66	11.3	\$40,607	\$17,516	8.8
Yancey	41.9	71.1	13.1	\$35,879	\$16,635	10.9
North Carolina	35.3	78.2	22.5	\$46,335	\$20,307	9.0
United States	35.3	80.3	24.4	\$50,046	\$21,587	9.2

Source: US Census Bureau

2. Workforce

Table 4 provides data on employment by sector. In most High Country COG counties, the number of non-manufacturing industry employees is higher than those employed in manufacturing. This is most apparent in Avery and Watauga Counties where tourism is a major industry. Although agriculture is still a major component of the region's economy, it provides little employment. The retail trade and healthcare sectors continue to grow slowly in terms of employment.

**Table 4 Percent Workforce by Sector
1st Quarter, 2006**

	Agriculture	Construction	Finance/ Insurance/ Real Estate	Government	Manufacturing	Retail Trade	Wholesale Trade	Healthcare	Lodging and Food Services
Alleghany	1.9	7.0	2.4	20.8	17.5	8.9	*	19.1	5.7
Ashe	1.3	8.7	3.3	17.0	23.6	13.3	1.0	16.4	6.2
Avery	1.3	8.1	4.3	20.5	4.0	11.4	1.9	18.2	13.6
Mitchell	*	6.1	3.3	23.0	12.3	13.1	2.2	13.5	7.2
Watauga	0.1	6.7	5.0	23.3	3.8	15.7	2.9	14.5	15.4
Wilkes	0.6	4.0	4.4	19.5	21.8	11.3	3.8	11.9	6.6
Yancey	0.9	11.8	3.0	24.0	15.9	11.4	2.1	9.0	6.9

Source: NC Dept of Commerce, Economic Policy & Research Division * data not available

The labor force in the District (June 2007) is 97,887. Table 5 provides unemployment data for the region. The statewide unemployment rate for 2006 was the lowest in six years. The rates in the High Country have consistently been higher than the state average, with the exception of Watauga which has traditionally had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the state.

**Table 5
Unemployment Rate, 2005 (Annual Average)**

Alleghany County	5.0%	Mitchell County	6.3%	Yancey County	5.6%
Ashe County	5.7%	Watauga County	3.8%	North Carolina	4.8%
Avery County	5.0%	Wilkes County	5.5%	United States	4.6%

Source: Employment Security Commission of N.C.

B. Infrastructure

1. Transportation

Several federal highways provide direct access to major cities in North Carolina and Tennessee, and connections to Interstates 40 and 77. US Highway 421, traversing Watauga and Wilkes Counties, provides direct access to Tennessee and the NC Piedmont cities of Winston-Salem and Greensboro. US 321, entering the region in Watauga County, provides a route to either Tennessee or to Hickory and eventually South Carolina. US 221 is a circuitous route from Virginia through several counties in the region, ultimately entering South Carolina. US 19 crosses the westernmost counties of Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey, providing access to Johnson City, Tennessee and Asheville, North Carolina. The Blue Ridge Parkway passes through portions of every county in the High Country region.

The widening of US 421 was completed in the Fall of 2003, creating a safer and quicker route to interstates I-40 and I-77. Other major highway improvements underway include the four-laning of US Highway 321 from Blowing Rock to Hickory, and the four-laning of US Highway 19E from I-26 into Avery County. Many of the NC highways are narrow, twisting, two-lane, and poorly shouldered roads. This is particularly true in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties where poor road conditions have been a major barrier to economic development for decades. Overall, the highway system of the District has substantially improved over the years.

No commercial airports exist in the High Country COG region. Nearby commercial air service is located in Asheville and Hickory in North Carolina, and at the Tri-Cities Airport in Tennessee. General aviation services are provided at four local airports in the District. Ashe, Avery, and Wilkes Counties operate and maintain county public airports, while Watauga has a private airport with few facilities. Avery County's airport handles corporate and business travel for Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties. Wilkes County has the greatest air traffic capability and the most advanced facility in the region. Ashe County is in the process of expanding its airport by 700 feet, including terminal and parking area expansions. Following are details concerning each of these local airports:

Ashe	4,300 feet X 75 feet runway; serves all personal and business aircraft up to 12,000 pounds; located northeast of Jefferson off NC Hwy 16N and US Hwy 221
Avery	3,000 feet X 60 feet runway; serves all aircraft up to 12,500 pounds; located off US Hwy 19E near the Mitchell County line
Watauga	2,600 feet X 40 feet runway; privately owned and operated; serves all aircraft up to 20,000 pounds; located off Bamboo Road near US Hwy 421 in Boone

Wilkes 6,200 feet X 100 feet runway; serves all aircraft up to 60,000 pounds with a maximum wingspan of 79 feet; located off NC Hwy 268 East in Roaring River; current operations – 63/day

The High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) was chartered by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) on February 19, 2002. The High Country RPO is one of 20 RPOs across the state that enables rural areas to participate in continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning with NCDOT. The RPOs are modeled after the established MPOs, and are governed by policy boards comprised of local elected officials and representatives of the NC Board of Transportation. The RPOs develop long range, multi-modal transportation plans; provide a forum for public input in the transportation planning process; and develop and prioritize suggestions for projects to be included in the State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The High Country RPO includes the seven High Country COG counties of Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey. High Country Council of Governments serves as the administrative agent for the High Country RPO, providing staff, technical support, and GIS services. The High Country RPO's current Highway Priority Needs List is included as Table 6.

Table 6
High Country RPO- Priority Needs List (approved August 1, 2007)

RANK	SCORE	NCDOT PROJECT #	COUNTY	ROUTE DESCRIPTION	COST (est.)	STATUS
1	82	R-2520	Avery	US 19E/NC 194, Spruce Pine to US 221	51,300,000	Funded
2	77	U-4020	Boone	King Street (US 421), Boone	8,320,000	Funded
tie	77	R-2915	Ashe	US 221, Jefferson to US 421	68,450,000	Funded
tie	77	R-2237	Watauga	US 321, Blowing Rock	121,810,000	Funded
5	63	R-2519	Yancey	US 19E, Burnsville to Spruce Pine	91,800,000	Funded
6	57	R-3101	Alleghany	US 21, south of Sparta	7,700,000	Funded
7	49	R-2310	Ashe	US 221, from NC 16 to Alleghany	12,260,000	Funded
8	48	U-3812	Ashe	NC 88, from NC 194 to US 221 Business	7,750,000	Funded
9	46	R-2710	Watauga	NC 194, Avery to Valle Crucis	6,480,000	Funded
10	45	R-2100	Ashe	NC 16, Jefferson to Parkway	34,707,000	Funded
tie	45	R-3405	Wilkes	NC 18, Fairplains to Mulberry	2,500,000	Funded
12	39	R-4060	Alleghany	Sparta Western Loop	6,490,000	Funded
13	74	R-2566	Avery	NC 105, Linville to Boone	79,700,000	Unfunded
14	71	R-2595	Avery	US 221, from NC 194 to Linville	55,750,000	Unfunded
tie	71	U-2703	Boone	US 421 Bypass, Boone	139,800,000	Unfunded
16	65	R-2615A	Watauga	US 421/321, US 321 to TN	67,958,000	Unfunded
tie	65	R-2615B	Watauga	US 421, US 321 to Boone	20,200,000	Unfunded
18	62	N/A	Mitchell	NC 226, US 19E to Bakersville	Undetermined	New
19	60	R-2207	Wilkes	NC 16, from US 421 to Ashe	25,940,000	Unfunded
20	59	R-2603	Wilkes	NC 268, from NC 18 to Airport Road	13,445,000	Unfunded
tie	59	R-2596	Avery	US 221, south of NC 194	62,300,000	Unfunded
22	50	R-3309	Wilkes	NC 268, from Airport Road to West Elkin	69,200,000	Unfunded
tie	50	R-2516	Alleghany	NC 18, south of Sparta	3,700,000	Unfunded
24	49	R-5016	Watauga	US 321, Vilas to Avery County	132,100,000	New

25	46	N/A	Mitchell	NC 226, McDowell County to US 19E	Undetermined	New
26	45	N/A	Yancey	SR 1186 (Old US 19, Micaville Loop)	Undetermined	New
tie	45	R-616	Wilkes	NC 268/18 Bypass, North Wilkesboro	63,000,000	Unfunded
tie	45	R-2563	Ashe	NC 88, Watauga to NC 194	6,300,000	Unfunded
29	40	R-4058	Ashe	NC 16, Jefferson to Virginia	28,400,000	Unfunded
30	39	R-4744	Wilkes	US 421/NC 268 Connector	35,800,000	New
tie	39	N/A	Yancey	NC 80, US 19E to Mitchell County	Undetermined	New
32	38	N/A	Wilkes	SR 1001, US 421 to NC 18/268	Undetermined	New
tie	38	R-2599	Mitchell	NC 226, from NC 261 to NC 197	3,813,000	Unfunded
34	34	U-3468	Wilkes	US 421 Bypass, Wilkesboro	60,200,000	Unfunded
35	32	N/A	Mitchell	NC 226, NC 197 to Tennessee	Undetermined	New
36	29	N/A	Wilkes	NC 18, Mulberry to Alleghany County	Undetermined	New
tie	29	N/A	Yancey	US 19W, US 19E to Tennessee	Undetermined	New
tie	29	N/A	Yancey	SR 1308 (Double Island Road)	Undetermined	New
tie	29	R-4756	Alleghany	NC 93, Twin Oaks to Virginia	19,800,000	Unfunded
40	26	R-2602	Wilkes	NC 268, short section at Caldwell line	4,600,000	Unfunded

2. Water & Sewer

Only Watauga and Wilkes Counties have more people on public water systems than on private wells. In every county, more people rely on private septic tanks than municipal sewer systems. Water and sewer service statewide is available primarily within the corporate limits of municipalities. Table 7 shows US Census data on water and sewer system usage in the High Country region.

Table 7 SOURCE OF WATER & SEWER SERVICE, 2000

	Alleghany	Ashe	Avery	Mitchell	Watauga	Wilkes	Yancey
Population	10,667	24,384	17,167	15,687	42,695	65,632	17,774
Total Housing Units	5,344	11,119	8,923	6,983	19,538	24,960	7,994
Water Supply= Public System or Private System							
Individual Well	1,485	1,400	2,879	2,011	8,534	12,897	1,601
Other Water Source	2,646	5,264	3,528	2,228	7,640	10,151	2,792
Public Sewer	1,213	4,455	2,516	2,744	3,364	1,912	3,601
Septic Tank or Cesspool	999	1,152	2,359	1,349	7,260	3,836	1,161
Septic Tank or Cesspool	4,134	9,354	6,342	5,276	11,582	20,467	6,247

Other Sewage Disposal	211	613	222	358	696	657	586
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SOURCE: US Census Bureau, 2000

In the High Country Council of Governments region, public water and sewer service is limited to the municipalities, and five water associations in Wilkes County. The water associations in Wilkes County all purchase finished water from the Towns of Wilkesboro and North Wilkesboro. Economic development activities that rely on public water and sewer service availability are limited to areas within the towns' service areas. Tables 8 and 9 show information on the municipal water and sewer systems in the District.

Table 8 WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS

COUNTY	TOWN	OWNERSHIP	CAPACITY (GPD)	AVERAGE DAILY USE (GPD)
Alleghany	Sparta	Municipal	628,000	299,000
Ashe	Jefferson	Municipal	750,000	270,000
	Lansing	Municipal	25,000	14,500
	West Jefferson	Municipal	400,000	230,000
Avery	Banner Elk	Municipal	691,000	126,000
	Crossnore	Municipal	144,000	35,000
	Elk Park	Municipal	230,000	120,000
	Newland	Municipal	417,000	175,000
	Sugar Mtn.	Private	106,000	100,000
Mitchell	Bakersville	Municipal	200,000	35,000
	Spruce Pine	Municipal	1.6 million	1.1 million
Watauga	Beech Mtn.	Municipal	1 million	300,000
	Blowing Rock	Municipal	2 million	725,000
	Boone	Municipal	3 million	1.7 million
	Seven Devils	Municipal	240,000	50,000
Wilkes	N. Wilkesboro	Municipal	4.2 million	4 million
	Ronda	Municipal	75,000	50,000
	Wilkesboro	Municipal	10 million	6.9 million
Yancey	Burnsville	Municipal	2.2 million	600,000

SOURCE: High Country COG Survey, 2003

Table 9 SEWAGE TREATMENT SYSTEMS

COUNTY	TOWN	OWNERSHIP	CAPACITY (GPD)	AVERAGE DAILY USE (GPD)
Alleghany	Sparta	Municipal	600,000	260,000
Ashe	Jefferson	Municipal	300,000	275,000
	Lansing	Municipal	50,000	20,000

	W. Jefferson	Municipal	369,000	275,000
Avery	Banner Elk	Municipal	600,000	196,000
	Crossnore	Municipal	70,000	35,000
	Elk Park	Municipal	100,000	45,000
	Newland	Municipal	320,000	200,000
	Sugar Mtn.	Private	500,000	150,000
Mitchell	Bakersville	Municipal	75,000	70,000
	Spruce Pine	Municipal	2 million	400,000
Watauga	Beech Mtn.	Municipal	480,000	150,000
	Blowing Rock	Municipal	800,000	260,000
	Boone	Municipal	4.8 million	2.4 million
	Seven Devils	No system		
Wilkes	N. Wilkesboro	Municipal	2.0 million	750,000
	Ronda	under construction		
	Wilkesboro	Municipal	4.9 million	3.5 million
Yancey	Burnsville	Municipal	800,000	500,000

SOURCE: High Country COG Survey, 2003

The proportionately high water and sewer usage in the Town of Wilkesboro is due to the presence of the Tyson chicken processing plant.

The NC Watershed Protection Act of 1989 requires local governments to protect the half mile critical area upstream from each public water source, and to regulate development through zoning controls or police power ordinances within the watershed. These regulated areas have been mapped in each county. The purpose of the legislation is to protect public drinking water sources from unregulated growth and development.

3. Telecommunications

Information and telecommunications (IT) infrastructure is a critical component of economic development in the High Country region. While all industries can benefit from increased use of IT technology, access to high-speed internet service is becoming increasingly important to small businesses and the service-sector industry for marketing purposes. IT technology impacts economic development through the following four methods:

- Providing access to external sources of information (i.e., telemedicine)
- Improving product and service quality (i.e., shipping and supply-chain tracking)
- Improving productivity (i.e., computerized manufacturing machinery)
- Expanding markets (i.e., use of websites for marketing)

In the seven-county High Country District, telephone companies are the largest internet service providers. However, not all existing phone lines are capable of providing high-speed internet access. Table 10 provides data on high-speed internet access in the District.

Table 10 High-Speed Internet Access

County	% Households with High-Speed Internet Access
Alleghany	79%
Ashe	80%
Avery	73%
Mitchell	71%
Watauga	83%
Wilkes	77%
Yancey	94%

Source: e-NC Authority

Although access to high-speed internet is relatively high in the seven counties, cost of the service can vary greatly.

In North Carolina, legislation was passed in 2000 and 2003 creating the Rural Internet Access Authority, and the e-NC Authority, respectively. The purpose of both initiatives is to increase affordable internet access for all North Carolinians, especially those in the rural areas of the state. The e-NC Authority provides grants and technical assistance for a variety of public and private telecommunications projects. Currently, the e-NC Authority is working on the following initiatives:

- Working with telecom companies to increase availability of affordable high-speed internet access
- Establish four additional Business and Technology Telecenters – the Telecenters provide public internet access, technical and business support services, and computer training
- Education to local communities on internet access and use
- LEG-UP – a program designed to improve the delivery of public services through use of IT technology

The Blue Ridge Business Development Center (BDC), located in the Town of Sparta in Alleghany County, is one of the e-NC Authority’s original Business and Technology Telecenters. The BDC focuses on creating high quality, high technology jobs. To achieve this goal, the BDC offers tailor-made training, business counseling services, incubation space, and flexible physical space in the form of offices, work stations, meeting facilities, and potential small building sites.

All seven counties have facilities capable of teleconferencing and distance learning.

4. Industrial Sites

The North Carolina Department of Commerce maintains a listing of available industrial and commercial sites and buildings, separated by county. The listings are available on the following web address:

<http://www.ncsitesearch.com/defaultcis.asp>

Information on available properties was obtained from the NC Department of Commerce and directly from the individual counties.

Tables 11 and 12 provide details on available sites and buildings in the District.

Table 11 Available Sites

County	Site Name	Acreage	Location	Water/Sewer	Natural Gas
Alleghany	Choate Property	85	NC Hwy. 18N	public	no
Ashe	Beaver Creek Site	30	Professional Way, West Jefferson	public	yes
Avery	Morrison Field	18	US Hwy. 19E	none	yes
Watauga	Deerfield Meadows	15	Deerfield Road, Boone	private water, no sewer	no
Watauga	Brookshire Property	30	Brookshire Road, Boone	no	no
Wilkes	Wilkes Industrial Park	552	NC Hwy. 268	public	yes
Wilkes	Miller Property	11	Ind. Park Rd., Wilkesboro	public	no
Wilkes	Cohen Property	86	Brushy Mtn. Rd., Wilkesboro	public	yes

Table 12 Available Buildings

County	Building Name	Sq. Feet	Year Built	Location	Water/Sewer	Natural Gas
Alleghany	Dr. Grabow Pipe Factory	70,000	1977	US Hwy. 21 South	public	no
Ashe	Tigra-USA	25,000	1999		private	
Avery	Pineola Properties	62,700	1980	NC Hwy. 181	private	yes
Mitchell	Ethan Allen	289,000	1989	Ethan Allen Rd.	public	yes
Watauga	Blue Skies #1-B	20,000	1999	Dick Watson Rd.	private	no
Watauga	Blue Skies #1-C	40,000	1999	Dick Watson Rd.	private	no
Watauga	CF Warehouse	18,800	1995	Bamboo Rd.	private	no
Wilkes	Carolina Mirror	225,000	1970	US Hwy. 268	public	yes
Wilkes	Cohn Bldg.	15,300	1942	NC Hwy. 115	public	yes
Wilkes	U-Can II	30,800	1991	Industrial Dr.	public	no
Wilkes	Jenkins Bldg.	32,000	1994	Cothorn St.	public	yes
Wilkes	Jenkins Bldg., main	40,000	1949	Vance/Maple St.	public	yes

C Economic Clusters

1. Manufacturing

Due to factors such as steep terrain, distance to Interstates, and the relatively small labor pool, the District has historically trailed much of North Carolina in manufacturing.

Alleghany County has experienced major cutbacks in their manufacturing industries. Bristol Compressors, the largest manufacturing firm in the county, closed in 2002 and eliminated 450 jobs. Existing manufacturing firms in the county include Parkdale Mills, Truline Truss, and Pioneer/Eclipse Corporation.

Ashe County has a relatively large total manufacturing employment with five firms in excess of 100 employees.

Avery County has a small manufacturing workforce and only several manufacturing-sector employers. The lack of manufacturing illustrates the importance of tourism and the Christmas tree industry in the county.

Mitchell County has experienced a significant decline in manufacturing over the last three years. The mining industries in Mitchell County remain strong, producing enough mica, quartz, and feldspar to supply at least the entire eastern United States.

Watauga County has a relatively small manufacturing workforce with 809. Appalachian State University, the Watauga Medical Center, tourism and related service industries dominate Watauga County's economy.

Wilkes County has the largest concentration of manufacturing in the region with 5,087 employees. Many textile industries in the county have closed recently, while furniture and building materials manufacturing remains.

Yancey County has also seen a sharp decline in the textile industry recently. Two textile industries remain, and the county recently recruited Altec, with a projected employment of 300 manufacturing jobs

Over the past decade, the manufacturing sector of the region's economy has been in decline, with numerous layoffs and plant closings. The region's manufacturing has historically been dominated by traditional industries, such as textiles and furniture.

Since 1991, manufacturing job losses in the District have totaled 8,625. The majority of these job losses have been in the textile industry. Table 13 details the manufacturing job losses in the District since 1991.

Table 13 Manufacturing Job Losses

County	NAICS	Date	Company	Product	Jobs	Reason
Alleghany	313	3/1/2000	Spring Ford Industries	Textiles	75	business slowdown
Alleghany	313	11/1/2000	Spring Ford Industries	Knit fabric	137	Import competition
Alleghany	313	12/1/2000	Carolina Narrow	Fabric	103	business climate
Alleghany		9/1/1995	Sara Lee Knit Products	Hosiery	364	Economics
Alleghany		11/1/1999	VF Knitwear	Knitwear	206	Moving to Mexico
Alleghany		8/1/1996	Spartacraft	Wood Box Mfg.	25	Moving operations
Alleghany		11/1/2000	NAPCO	Binders	14	Workforce reduction
Alleghany		9/1/2002	Bristol Compressors	Compressors	450	Cost cuts
Alleghany		12/1/2000	Sparta Industries	Smoking pipes	5	Restructuring
Ashe		5/1/1996	Sara Lee Knit Products	T-Shirts	589	Soft market
Ashe	315	2/1/2001	Jefferson Apparel	clothing	162	Foreign competition
Ashe		1/1/2002	Catawissa Lumber Co.	Lumber	30	Lost contract
Ashe		10/1/2001	Thomasville Furniture	Furniture mfg.	239	Sales decline
Ashe		6/1/1999	Gates Rubber Co.	Tires	150	Reduction in force
Ashe		11/1/2000	The Oldham Company	Saw blades	30	Economic slowdown
Ashe	333991	12/1/2005	Black & Decker Corp.	Power tools	250	Restructuring
Ashe		3/1/2001	United Chemi-Con	Electronics	50	Economic slowdown
Avery		8/1/1991	International Resistive	Resistors	61	Transfer operations
Mitchell		1/1/1994	Hampshire Group, Ltd.	Hosiery	100	Cutbacks
Mitchell	313	3/1/2001	Vision Legwear LLC	Hosiery	235	Acquisition
Mitchell		7/1/1998	VF Knitwear	T-Shirts/Fleece	93	Price pressure
Mitchell	315211	2/1/2004	Taylor Togs	Apparel	125	Lost contract
Mitchell		6/1/1994	Henredon Furniture	Furniture	115	Shutdown/Restruc.
Mitchell		7/1/1997	Lexington Furniture	Furniture	225	Consolidation
Mitchell		11/1/2001	Lexington	Furniture mfg.	297	Decreased demand
Mitchell		11/1/2001	Henredon	Furniture mfg.		Slow orders
Mitchell	337122	11/1/2004	Henredon Furniture	Furniture mfg.	350	Not stated
Mitchell		12/1/2000	Outboard Marine	Marine engines	260	Financial difficulty
Mitchell	339113	5/1/2005	ForceOne LLC	Body armor	6	Relocation within state
Watauga	315231	9/1/2003	Shadowline, Inc.	Lingerie	77	Import competition
Watauga		3/1/1999	Fellowes Mfg.	Cabinets	36	Competition
Watauga	337124	11/1/2005	Charleston Forge	Furniture mfg.	34	Consolidation
Watauga		5/1/1991	Vermont American	Steel saw blades	185	Consolidation
Wilkes		1/1/1995	Regal Manufacturing	Yarn Mfg.	60	Consolidation
Wilkes		1/1/1996	Ithaca Industries, Inc.	Hosiery	50	Reduction in force
Wilkes		12/1/1999	Glendale Group Ltd.	Sheer-hosiery	120	Declining demand
Wilkes		6/1/2001	Phantom-Glendale	Knit fabrics	155	Foreclosure
Wilkes	315119	6/1/2003	Gateway Hosiery	Hosiery	40	Import competition
Wilkes	313312	6/1/2003	Phantom USA	Hosiery	38	Import competition
Wilkes		10/1/1993	Bassett-Walker, Inc.	Apparel	68	Not stated
Wilkes		12/1/2001	VF Imagewear Inc.	T-shirts	301	Financial difficulty
Wilkes		1/1/2002	Carolina Glove Co.	Work gloves	40	Foreign competition
Wilkes	315992	6/1/2003	Schas Circular Ind.	Knit gloves	158	Import competition
Wilkes		10/1/1995	Johnston Lumber Co.	Lumber	30	Depressed prices
Wilkes		12/1/2001	American Drew	Furniture	58	Business decline
Wilkes		12/1/2001	American Drew	Furniture	70	Business decline
Wilkes		1/1/2000	U.S. Fiber Co.	Insulation	35	Relocating to Charlotte
Wilkes		1/1/1994	Thom McAn Mfg.	Shoe Mfg.	76	Import Competition
Wilkes		6/1/1994	ThomMcAn Mfg.	Footwear	259	Import Competition
Wilkes		2/1/2002	Ansell Golden Needles	gloves	750	Moving mfg. to Mexico
Yancey	313111	5/1/2004	Avondale Mills, Inc.	Denim yarn	163	Foreign competition

Yancey		12/1/1996	Taylor Togs, Inc.	Work clothing	100	Seasonal slowdown
Yancey		12/1/1997	Taylor Togs, Inc.	Blue jeans	289	NAFTA
Yancey	315211	2/1/2004	Taylor Togs	Sewing factory	25	Lost contract
Yancey	315211	7/1/2005	Taylor Togs	Denim products	175	Declining demand
Yancey		12/1/2000	Outboard Marine Corp	Marine engines	487	Financial problems

Source: NC Employment Security Commission

Although the traditional manufacturing industries of textiles and furniture have suffered losses during the last decade, significant new manufacturing operations have opened in the District recently. These include some textile and furniture operations, as well as industries new to the District. They include:

- Parkdale Mills/Magnolia Manufacturing – textiles; Alleghany County
- Martin-Marietta Composites – composite materials; Alleghany County
- Smith Aerospace – airplane parts; Ashe County
- Genesis Furniture – upholstered furniture; Mitchell County
- Altec, Inc. – utility truck components; Yancey County

In addition to the new companies listed above, some existing manufacturing companies in the District have expanded recently. These include:

- Charleston Forge - metal furniture; Alleghany County
- TruLine Truss – wooden trusses; Alleghany County
- US Buildings – steel buildings; Wilkes County

2. Tourism

Tourism is rapidly growing and has become as significant as manufacturing to the local economies of the seven counties. Although tourism does not provide the same quality of high-paying jobs as manufacturing, a highly developed network of service industries has now emerged in the region based on tourism. All of the counties in our region have become major tourist destinations for North Carolina and the Southeast. Tourism is also important because it incidentally promotes the area to potential industries.

Northwest North Carolina is attractive because of the scenic beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains, cool summer temperatures, skiing opportunities, and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Attractions associated with the New River bring visitors to Alleghany County. The county also contains Doughton Park, a major recreation area along the Blue Ridge Parkway. The New River is a major draw in Ashe County as well. The agrarian character of the county and several churches with impressive frescos also make Ashe County a tourist destination. Avery County offers visitors Grandfather Mountain, the highest peak of the Blue Ridge, in addition to a number of ski resorts. Roan Mountain and various mineral attractions bring people into Mitchell County. Watauga County contains two major recreation parks along the Parkway- Moses Cone and Julian Price, as well as ski resorts, outdoor historical drama, and a railroad theme park. Merlefest is an important spring event in Wilkes County that features nationally known country and bluegrass

music acts. Also in Wilkes, W. Kerr Scott Reservoir and Stone Mountain State Park offer visitors a number of recreation opportunities. Yancey County is home to the highest peak east of the Rockies- Mt. Mitchell- that is located in a state park by the same name.

Table 14 provides information on the tourism industry in the District

Table 14 TOURISM IMPACT, 2006

County	Expenditures	Payroll	Jobs	State and Local Tax Receipts from Travel
Alleghany	\$16.27 million	\$3.49 million	120	\$2.13 million
Ashe	\$38.17 million	\$6.04 million	370	\$4.18 million
Avery	\$89.31 million	\$22.48 million	1,270	\$8.75 million
Mitchell	\$18.62 million	\$3.08 million	170	\$1.67 million
Watauga	\$179.14 million	\$42.25 million	2,550	\$16.56 million
Wilkes	\$59.44 million	\$9.41 million	560	\$4.35 million
Yancey	\$26.51 million	\$4.83 million	250	\$3.21 million

SOURCE: NC Dept. of Commerce 2005

Based on the economic indicators listed in Table 14, the tourism economies grew in all seven counties, with Wilkes and Yancey having increases of greater than 10% from the previous year.

Tourism development and promotion in the District is handled by individual town and county Chambers of Commerce, and by High Country Host. High Country Host was organized in the late 1970s to promote tourism and the attractions of the area. The organization provides information and markets the area in the major metropolitan centers of the southeast.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area was designated in November 2003. National Heritage Areas are a strategy that encourages residents, government agencies, non-profit groups and private partners to collaboratively plan and implement programs and projects that recognize, preserve and celebrate many of America's defining landscapes. The heritage areas seek short and long-term solutions to their conservation and development challenges by fostering relationships among regional stakeholders and encouraging them to work collaboratively to achieve shared goals.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area is comprised of 25 counties, including all of those in the High Country region. The Heritage Area board and staff assist governmental agencies, the private sector, and local communities in "managing, preserving, protecting, and interpreting the cultural, historical, and natural resources of the Heritage Area while continuing to develop economic opportunities." The Heritage Area's Management Entity Board is appointed by HandMade in America, AdvantageWest, the Education and Research Consortium of WNC, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians and the Governor.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Board and staff is currently developing a Master Plan for the 25-county area. In addition to the Master Plan, each county included in the area has developed county heritage plans. These plans, completed in 2005, provide an overview of local opportunities for heritage preservation and development, and identify project priorities.

3. Arts and Crafts

The arts and crafts industry is a significant component of the District's economy. The craft industry is made up of full-time professional artisans, part-time artisans, and craft retailers. Like tourism, the craft industry is promoted locally by Chambers of Commerce. Handmade in America, Inc. is an organization formed in 1993 with the mission to nurture the craft industry in western North Carolina. A study conducted by Handmade in America (in conjunction with Appalachian State University) in 1995 quantified the economic impact of the industry on a 20-county region of western North Carolina. The study concluded that the craft industry contributes \$122 million annually to the local economies.

Mitchell and Yancey Counties have each undertaken initiatives to promote and grow the arts and crafts industries. In Mitchell County, the Mitchell County Development Foundation was established to assist displaced furniture factory workers in developing craft businesses. The Foundation has established the "Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree" Store, a retail outlet for locally-produced crafts. The County has plans to expand the project by developing a website and mail-order operation.

Yancey County has established the Mountain Heritage Center, a small business incubator focused on the craft industry. The Mountain Heritage Center is multi-faceted project designed to promote and expand the craft industry in the County. The project includes establishment of a crafts-focused business incubator, a retail outlet, and a Marketing Director position.

4. Agriculture

Although employment has shifted away from agriculture and the total number working in farming is relatively small, agriculture still has a significant economic impact on the region. The cash receipts from agricultural products sold was \$464.4 million in 2004.

The most significant agricultural product in the region is Christmas trees, specifically Fraser fir. The region had 24,525 acres in Christmas tree production in 2002 (most recent data available), with Ashe having the highest (9,611 acres) and Wilkes having the least (24 acres). In 2002, almost 2.5 million Christmas trees were harvested in the region.

The region is also prominent in livestock production. Alleghany County ranks third in the state for number of milk cows and Wilkes County is number one in North Carolina for broiler production and ranks third in beef cattle. For total cash receipts in livestock, dairy, and poultry (combined), Wilkes ranks fourth in the entire state. For total farm cash receipts, Wilkes County stands fifth in North Carolina.

Table 15, below, shows data on the economic impact of agriculture in the region. Data is from the 2002 US Census of Agriculture, which is produced every five years.

Table 15**Economic Impact of Agriculture, 2002**

County	Number of Farms	Average Farm Size	% of County Acreage in Farms	Market Value of Ag. Products Sold, 2002	Hired Farm Labor Payroll
Alleghany	544	134 acres	48.4%	\$23.8 million	\$1,940,000
Ashe	1,152	94 acres	39.6%	\$29.2 million	\$7,639,000
Avery	495	62 acres	19.4%	\$27.9 million	\$3,283,000
Mitchell	358	73 acres	18.4%	\$3.9 million	\$530,000
Watauga	731	71 acres	25.9%	\$11.6 million	\$956,000
Wilkes	1,273	98 acres	25.6%	\$207.5 million	\$7,100,000
Yancey	622	62 acres	19.3%	\$5.6 million	\$245,000
High Country	5,175	85 acres	-	\$309.5 million	\$21,693,000
North Carolina	53,930	168 acres	-	\$7 billion	\$552,486,000

SOURCE: Census of Agriculture, 2002

5. Retail Trade and Service Industry

The service industry plays a dominant role in the economy of the High Country Council of Governments Economic Development District. Encompassing retail trade, health services, food service, lodging, business services, finance, and real estate, the service industry represents the largest employment sector in all seven counties. The service industry accounts for 76% of the District's workforce. The tourism economies of all seven counties contribute significantly to the region's service economy. Healthcare also plays a growing role in the District's Service Economy due to the older than average population, and the region's status as a retirement destination.

Table 16, below, provides data on retail sales in the District.

Table 16 Sales

	Retail Sales FY 2002	Retail Sales FY 2003	Retail Sales FY 2004	Retail Sales FY 2005	* Taxable Sales FY 2006
Alleghany	\$64,728,000	\$68,793,000	\$75,918,000	\$91,604,000	\$63,307,000
Ashe	\$227,249,000	\$227,636,000	\$240,853,000	\$277,731,000	\$144,084,000
Avery	\$189,411,000	\$193,009,000	\$194,181,000	\$215,967,000	\$149,738,000
Mitchell	\$169,176,000	\$174,988,000	\$199,082,000	\$240,888,000	\$112,063,000
Watauga	\$651,853,000	\$670,772,000	\$744,365,000	\$831,265,000	\$612,939,000
Wilkes	\$707,871,000	\$716,349,000	\$714,836,000	\$772,321,000	\$409,588,000
Yancey	\$105,792,000	\$99,284,000	\$109,475,000	\$119,521,000	\$106,316,000

SOURCE: NC Dept of Revenue

* Beginning in FY 2006, reporting procedure changes took effect that make comparisons to previous years obsolete.

6. Small Business/Entrepreneurial Development

Small business/entrepreneurial development efforts are not new to the District, but have received increased attention in recent years. Entrepreneurial development has been recognized as a major component of economic development efforts at the federal, state, and local level. Statewide, there are three significant small business development efforts:

1. The NC Rural Economic Development Center, Inc. (Rural Center)'s Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship offers potential and existing entrepreneurs training, information, financing, and technical assistance.
2. The North Carolina Small Business and Technology Development Center (SBTDC) helps small business owners (and those interested in starting a business) by providing management counseling and educational services to small and mid-sized businesses throughout North Carolina. The SBTDC has 17 offices - each affiliated with a college or university.
3. The Small Business Center Network (SBCN) is operated out of the state's 58 Community Colleges. The SBCNs, like the SBTDCs, provide counseling and education services to entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Following is a list of local government small business/entrepreneurial development efforts in the High Country COG District.

Alleghany County developed the Blue Ridge Business Development Center (BDC) in 2002 to revitalize and diversify the local economic base, focusing on the creation of high-tech jobs. Services offered at the BDC include small business counseling, customized technology training, incubator space and services, and flexible office/meeting space.

Ashe County has developed the Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen Incubator focused on food processing and catering. The facility provides individuals access to commercial kitchen equipment for the production of specialty food products. The incubator facet provides collective business support, including marketing, labeling, and distribution.

Mitchell County Economic Development Commission plans to expand its promotion of locally-produced crafts to include the development of a small business incubator. The focus of the incubator will be on the craft industry, providing marketing and other business support to local craftsmen.

Watauga County is in the process of reestablishing a small business incubator. The project involves the provision of typical incubator functions (office space, administrative assistance, etc.), and also includes a strong group of support partners to provide business counseling. These partners include Watauga County Chapter of SCORE, Appalachian State University's Appalachian Regional Development Institute, the Small Business and Technology Development Center, and AdvantageWest (western NC's regional economic development commission).

Yancey County has established the Mountain Heritage Center, a small business incubator focused on the craft industry. In addition to the incubator space and business assistance, the project includes coordination of apprenticeships with artisans and craftsmen.

7. Growing Industry Sectors

Information on growing and declining industry sectors was obtained from the High Country Labor Area Industry Growth Analysis (IGA). The IGA report was conducted for the High Country Workforce Development Board in 2005, and covers the same seven-county area as the High Country COG region. The IGA evaluated 214 job sectors on three factors - 1) current employment in the sector in the region; 2) average wage in the sector in the region (2004 data); and 3) projected employment growth in the sector nationwide (growth projection figures were obtained from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics). The resulting analysis identified employment sectors that pay above-average wages, are projected to grow, or both. The goal of the IGA was to help educators and workforce development agencies target their efforts towards those specific employment sectors.

In the High Country Labor Area Industry Growth Analysis, 71 manufacturing sectors were analyzed. Of these 71 sectors, 37 are projected to grow in employment. Further, 20 of the manufacturing sectors are expected to have employment growth AND currently pay higher than the average weekly wage of the region (\$529). These 20 high-pay, high-growth sectors are:

- Nonmetallic Mineral Mining
- Support Activities for Mining
- Animal Food Manufacturing
- Other Food Manufacturing
- Veneer and Engineered Wood Products
- Wood Products-Mobile Homes & Wooden Buildings
- Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing
- Other Nonmetallic Mineral Products
- Cutlery and Handtool Manufacturing
- Plate Work/Fabricated Structural Products
- Ornamental & Architectural Metal Products
- Coating, Engraving & Heat Treating Metal
- Commercial & Service Industry Machinery
- HVAC and Commercial Refrigeration Equipment
- Metalworking Machinery Manufacturing
- Communications Equipment Manufacturing
- Electrical Equipment Manufacturing
- Transportation Equipment Manufacturing
- Mattress Manufacturing
- Surgical Appliance and Supplies Manufacturing

Although currently paying wages below the regional average, the construction industry is projected to grow in employment. With steady growth in new home starts, especially large second-homes, the construction industry is expected to remain a large segment of the manufacturing industry in the region.

In the service industry, 143 sectors were analyzed. Of these 143 sectors, 134 are projected to grow in employment, and 50 are expected to have employment growth AND currently pay higher than the average weekly wage of the region. These 50 high-pay, high-growth sectors are:

- Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods
- Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods
- Electronic Markets and Agents / Brokers
- Automobile Dealers
- General Freight Trucking
- Specialized Freight Trucking
- Support Activities for Transportation
- Couriers and Messengers
- Warehousing and Storage
- Software Publishers
- Sound Recording Industries
- Cable and Other Subscription Programming
- Wired Telecommunications Carriers
- Telecommunication Resellers
- Cable and Other Program Distribution
- ISPs and Web Search Portals, & Data Processing
- All Other Information Services
- Depository Credit Intermediation
- Nondepository Credit Intermediation
- Security and Commodity Credit Activity
- Insurance Carriers
- Insurance Agencies, Brokerages & Support
- Machinery & Equipment Rental and Leasing
- Lessors, Nonfinancial Intangible Assets
- Architectural Services
- Engineering Services
- Industrial Design Services
- Graphic Design Services
- Computer Systems Design and Related Services
- Management Consulting Services
- Environmental Consulting Services
- Other Technical Consulting Services
- Management of Companies and Enterprises
- Office Administration Services
- Other Support Services

- Waste Treatment and Disposal
- Remediation and Other Waste Services
- Colleges and Universities
- Business, Computer and Management Training
- Technical and Trade Schools
- Offices of Physicians
- Offices of Dentists
- Outpatient Care Centers
- Medical and Diagnostic Laboratories
- General & Medical Surgical Hospitals
- Emergency and Other Relief Services
- Spectator Sports
- Museums, Parks and Historical Sites
- Golf Courses and County Clubs
- Photofinishing

While the service industry is projected to grow in employment, the sectors projected for high growth tend to be low paying. These include household services sectors and non-hospital health care sectors, both associated with the region's status as a retirement destination.

8. Declining Industry Sectors

The High Country Labor Area Industry Growth Analysis also identified manufacturing and service industry sectors that are projected to decline in employment over the next seven years. Similar to the identification of sectors that currently pay **above-average** wages AND are expected to **grow** in employment (listed above), the IGA identified sectors that currently pay **below-average** wages AND are expected to **decline** in employment. In the manufacturing industry, these low-pay, low-growth sectors include:

- Vegetable and Melon Farming
- Fruit and Tree Nut Farming
- Greenhouse and Nursery Production
- Other Crop Farming
- Animal Production
- Forestry and Logging
- Beverage Manufacturing
- Textile and Fabric Finishing Mills
- Carpet and Rug Mills
- Curtain and Linen Mills
- Other Textile Product Mills
- Hosiery and Sock Mills
- Other Apparel Knitting Mills
- Cut and Sew Apparel Manufacturing
- Leather and Allied Product Manufacturing
- Sawmills and Wood Preservation

- Wood Products-Mill Work
- Glass and Glass Product Manufacturing
- Sawmill and Woodworking Machinery

In the service industry, the low-pay, low-growth sectors identified include:

- Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores
- Warehousing and Storage
- Radio and Television Broadcasting
- Travel Arrangement & Reservation Service
- Electronic Equipment Repair and Maintenance
- Private Household Services (i.e., cooks, maids, gardeners, ec.)

D. Current Economic and Community Development Efforts

This section will identify current economic development programs and initiatives in the District, and identify available economic development resources.

1. Statewide Programs

- **North Carolina Department of Commerce** – the NC Department of Commerce provides a variety of assistance to local governments and businesses, including:
 - Business and industry recruitment
 - Industrial site certification
 - Labor market analysis
 - Permitting assistance
 - Tax credits and other incentives

The High Country COG District is served by NC Department of Commerce staff from the Fletcher and Boone regional offices.

Another economic development program operated by the NC Department of Commerce is the Main Street Program. The program is designed to stimulate economic development in downtowns by promoting new business development and redevelopment. The program offers training, technical assistance, advocacy, and networking opportunities to municipalities. In the High Country COG District, the Towns of Boone, Spruce Pine, Sparta, and North Wilkesboro are participants in the Main Street Program.

- **North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, Inc. (Rural Center)** - The Rural Center was created in 1987 to develop, promote, and implement sound economic strategies to improve the quality of life of rural North Carolinians. The Rural Center is a private, non-profit organization funded by public and private sources. To achieve its mission, the Rural Center operates a variety of programs and initiatives, including:
 - The Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship
 - The e-NC Authority (Business and Technology Telecenters)
 - The Rural Dislocated Worker Initiative
 - Rural Economic Development Institute (leadership training)
 - Agricultural Advancement Consortium
 - Small Towns Initiative
- **Appalachian State University** – Appalachian State University (ASU) operates the Appalachian Regional Development Institute (ARDI). ARDI is an applied research and public service program that makes ASU’s resources, faculty and professional staff available to address economic, business, government, and social issues related to regional development. ARDI, in partnership with Watauga County and ASU’s College of

Business, has created the Watauga Entrepreneur Development Partnership and the High Country Business Network. Both efforts are designed to support small businesses and create a culture of entrepreneurship in the region.

Another significant initiative of ASU is the development of a nursing program to help meet the growing demand in the region for certified nurses.

2. Regional Programs

- **Regional CEDS** - Six of the seven High Country COG counties are currently included in two separate EDA-funded regional economic development efforts. Ashe and Alleghany Counties were included in the Northwest North Carolina Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2003); and Watauga, Wilkes, Avery, and Mitchell Counties are members of the Future Forward Economic Alliance. Both initiatives have the goal of retooling local economies to adapt to recent changes in the regional, state, national, and global market. Also, both efforts have strategies relating to workforce development, entrepreneurship, and community development. High Country Council of Governments has been involved in these initiatives, and will continue to provide support to our member governments as they implement the identified strategies. High Country COG staff serve on two separate committees of the Future Forward Economic Alliance – the Planning Corridors Committee, and the Infrastructure Committee.

A current initiative of the Future Forward Economic Alliance is the establishment of the NC Center for Engineering Technology. The Center will provide education and training programs targeted to the needs of the region's manufacturers. A building has been purchased to house the Center, and fundraising is underway to renovate the building. Western Carolina University will provide the education services initially, with the goal of transforming the Center into a member of the University of North Carolina system.

- **AdvantageWest** - the Western North Carolina Regional Economic Development Commission (AdvantageWest) was created by the NC General Assembly to market the region for corporate location/expansion, film production, and tourism. AdvantageWest administers the Economic Developers Advisory Council (EDAC), a group of local and corporate economic developers from across the region that works closely with the NC Department of Commerce on industrial marketing and recruitment. High Country COG is a member of the EDAC. Additional AdvantageWest initiatives include the Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council and the Blue Ridge Angel Investors Network. AdvantageWest is currently working on establishment of a field office in Boone.
- **Advanced Materials Cluster** - Another regional economic development strategy in the District is the creation of the Advanced Materials Cluster in Alleghany, Ashe, and Wilkes Counties. The cluster concept consists of forming public/private partnerships for enhancing research, education, and economic infrastructure. The advanced materials cluster program is led by Wilkes Community College and centers around Martin Marietta Composites, a composite materials manufacturer located in Alleghany County. The goal

of the program is to develop and increase the number of advanced materials manufacturers, suppliers, and related industries in the three counties. Current focus of the initiative is on development of an Advanced Materials Center. The Center will provide research and development, materials testing and analysis, and training.

- **Workforce Development Programs** – The High Country Workforce Development Board (HCWDB) oversees workforce development efforts in the seven-county District. The HCWDB formulates strategy on developing the region’s workforce, and establishes policy directing service provision for the region’s Workforce Investment Act service providers and the seven County JobLink Career Centers. A current Workforce Development initiative is the Incumbent Workforce Development Program. The program, funded through the federal Workforce Investment Act, provides funding to established businesses to provide educational and skills training for current workers. It is designed to benefit businesses by enhancing the skills of employees, thereby increasing employee productivity and the potential for company growth. The program in the High Country region is coordinated by the High Country COG Workforce Development staff.

Another Workforce Development strategy nationwide is the requirement that States increase participation of business and industry in workforce development activities. The HCWDB has implemented this strategy through the creation of the position of Business Services Representative for each of the region’s seven JobLink Centers. The Business Services Representatives promote the services of the JobLink Centers to the business community. The HCWDB also created the position of Business Consultant. The role of the Business Consultant is similar to that of the Business Services Representatives, with the additional task of coordinating workforce development and economic development activities in the region. The Business Consultant works closely with private businesses to assess private industry needs.

The HCWDB is appointed by local elected officials, and is comprised of a majority of private sector representatives.

- **Blue Ridge Resource Conservation and Development Council** - Another regional entity with which High Country COG coordinates is the Blue Ridge Resource Conservation and Development Council (Blue Ridge RC&D). All Resource Conservation and Development Councils are designated by the USDA to promote the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources. Blue Ridge RC&D covers the same seven counties as High Country COG, and undertakes various projects that serve the dual purpose of natural resource conservation and economic development (i.e., landfill gas-to-energy projects, value-added agricultural facilities, etc.).

3. Local Programs

In addition to the economic development activities described in various sections above, each of the seven counties in the District have local Economic Development Commissions, with dedicated staff. Current local initiatives include

Alleghany County is currently planning for the development of the Sparta Teapot Museum. The museum will be located in downtown Sparta, and is projected to draw 60,000 visitors per year. The Town and County have been working on downtown revitalization strategies to capitalize on the projected tourism traffic generated by the Sparta Teapot Museum. These strategies have resulted in the development of a town-wide Pedestrian Transportation Plan, a countywide Parks and Recreation Plan, and a downtown Master Plan.

Ashe County is currently conducting improvements to the Ashe County Airport. The airport expansion will be instrumental in attracting corporations to locate in the county. The County is also planning a large recreation complex that will serve local residents as well as provide “quality of life” benefits that will be used for corporate recruitment.

Avery County currently has no industrial park. The County is studying the feasibility of developing land adjacent to the Avery County Airport for industrial use. With the planned widening of US Highway 19E in the area, the subject property would be ideally suited for industrial use.

Mitchell County recently recruited new businesses into vacant industrial buildings in the Town of Spruce Pine. Current initiatives in Mitchell County consist of identifying new property for industrial development, and continuing to promote the arts and crafts industry.

Watauga County is currently working on the development of a small business incubator. Additionally, the County recently purchased approximately 75 acres for economic and community development purposes. Plans for the site include development of up to six speculative (spec) buildings for commercial use, affordable housing, and recreation facilities. Another economic development effort in Watauga is development of a Career Center focused on skilled trades.

Wilkes County has approximately 550 acres of industrial land available in an established Industrial Park. The County continues to recruit new business to the park, and work on improvements to infrastructure serving the park. Also, the County is starting to work on supporting entrepreneurial development through establishment of a small business incubator.

Yancey County recently had a Strategic Economic Development Action Plan completed. The Plan, funded in part by US EDA, included interviews and focus groups with local business, government, and education leaders. The Plan makes specific recommendations in areas of infrastructure development, entrepreneurship, marketing for tourism, and workforce development. The County is pursuing action steps outlined in the Plan.

4. Funding Programs

The following grant and loan programs are available to local governments for economic development, infrastructure, and community development projects:

Federal

- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) – ARC funds can be used for infrastructure improvements (including telecommunications) associated with economic development. ARC funds must be justified by direct job creation or retention, and require a minimum 50% match.
- US Economic Development Administration (EDA) – EDA's Public Works and Economic Development funds can be used for "the construction or rehabilitation of essential public infrastructure and facilities necessary to generate or retain private sector jobs and investments, attract private sector capital, and promote regional competitiveness, including investments that expand and upgrade infrastructure to attract new industry, support technology-led development, redevelop brownfield sites and provide eco-industrial development funds."
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds – CDBG funds are federal funds administered at the State level. One category of CDBG funds is specifically for economic development purposes. These CDBG Economic Development funds are administered in North Carolina by the Department of Commerce's Commerce Finance Center. Funds are available for infrastructure projects, based on new job creation.
- USDA Rural Development – USDA's Water and Waste Program provides loan and/or grant funds to local governments for infrastructure improvements. USDA also operates a variety of business programs, including Guarantee Loans, Direct Loans, and Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG).
- US Small Business Administration (SBA) – SBA 504 loans are available to eligible small businesses for the purchase of real estate, construction of buildings, or purchase of machinery. The SBA 504 loans are made in conjunction with loans from private lenders, and are approved locally by Certified Development Companies. In the High Country COG District, the Region D Development Corporation, Inc. is a Certified Development Company, and is staffed by the High Country COG.

State

- North Carolina Department of Commerce – the NC Department of Commerce has a variety of financial assistance programs available to local governments and private business. These include Industrial Revenue Bonds, the Industrial Development Fund, the One North Carolina Fund, and the Industrial Access Fund. All programs are dependent on job creation and/or private investment.
- North Carolina Rural Center – The Rural Center also has a variety of grant programs available to local governments for economic development. These programs include water and sewer grants, the Building Reuse and Restoration Grants Program, the Microenterprise Loan Program, the Entrepreneurial Incubator Grant Program, and the NC Small Town Economic Prosperity (NC STEP) Program.

The NC STEP Program provides planning funds, and implementation funds over a three-year period. Current local participants in the Program include the Towns of Sparta, Bakersville, West Jefferson, and Crossnore.

- Golden LEAF Foundation - The Golden LEAF Foundation was created in 1999 to administer one half of North Carolina's share of the master settlement agreement with cigarette manufacturers. The Foundation is a nonprofit devoted to advancing the economic well being of North Carolinians and to transforming its economy. It works in partnership with local governments, educational institutions, economic development organizations and other public agencies, and nonprofits to effect positive change. The Golden LEAF Foundation provides grants in the areas of agriculture, economic development and workforce preparedness.

Local

Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation (BREMCO) is a local electric cooperative serving three of the District's seven counties (Ashe, Alleghany, and Watauga). Skyline Telephone Membership Corporation is a local telephone service cooperative serving four of the District's seven counties (Ashe, Alleghany, Avery, and Watauga). Both cooperatives operate Rural Development Revolving Loan Funds to provide no-interest loans for the promotion of rural economic development projects that create jobs and support construction of community facilities and infrastructure.

High Country COG staff also assists local governments in preparing grant applications for housing, water quality, and infrastructure projects. These projects may not have direct economic development impacts, but can create community improvements that are helpful in business recruitment. Typical grant programs include:

- North Carolina Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund and High Unit Cost Grants
- North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund
- North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund
- CDBG Scattered Site Housing Rehabilitation Program
- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Grants
- Transportation Enhancements Program (federal, administered by NCDOT)

High Country Council of Governments

**Comprehensive Economic
Development Strategy
2008**

Chapter III

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTICIPATION

Development of the High Country Council of Governments Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was overseen by the High Country Workforce Development Board (HCWDB). The HCWDB, per its by-laws, is comprised mainly of private-sector representatives.

As functionaries of our member local governments, High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) staff primarily interfaces with local government officials. However, local government staff are in constant contact with the business community, and work to support private-sector needs with public resources. Much of the information contained in the CEDS reflects ongoing exposure to the 26 local governments in the District, including community and private-sector needs. In gathering information for development of the CEDS, HCCOG staff interviewed public and private-sector officials to assess current and planned economic development efforts. HCCOG staff routinely interacts with private-sector groups, including Chambers of Commerce and various Civic Groups.

The High Country Council of Governments Executive Board held an advertised Public Hearing prior to consideration of the CEDS.

High Country Council of Governments

**Comprehensive Economic
Development Strategy
2008**

Chapter IV

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal #1: Improve the Region’s Infrastructure to Support New and Expanding Business and Industry

- Objective: Increase municipal water supply and wastewater treatment capacities and service areas
- Objective: Expand affordable, high-speed internet access to underserved areas
- Objective: Improve the safety and capacity of the region’s transportation networks
- Objective: Ensure availability of established industrial sites in each county in the District

Goal #2: Support Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development

- Objective: Establish small-business incubators in each county in the District
- Objective: Promote available business planning, consultation, and financing programs to small businesses
- Objective: Participate in statewide and regional entrepreneurship efforts

Goal #3: Prepare the Region’s Workforce for Sustainable Employment

- Objective: Target workforce development efforts toward industries identified in the High Country Labor Area Industry Growth Analysis (IGA)
- Objective: Expand vocational programs in high schools and community colleges
- Objective: Improve adult education/training opportunities

Goal #4: Improve/Maintain Environmental and Social Amenities in the Region

- Objective: Expand recreational opportunities at individual county and town parks
- Objective: Implement water-quality protection measures

Objective: Promote downtowns in the region as cultural centers

Objective: Promote planned growth strategies

High Country Council of Governments

**Comprehensive Economic
Development Strategy
2008**

Chapter V

ACTION PLAN

A. Suggested Projects

Goal #1: Improve the Region's Infrastructure to Support New and Expanding Business and Industry

Objective: Increase municipal water supply and wastewater treatment capacities and service areas

Identified Projects

Alleghany- Build a joint water treatment plant for the Town of Sparta and the Town of Independence, VA.
Time Frame- 2009-2011 Estimated Cost- \$8 million

Alleghany- Expand water and sewer service south on Hwy. 21 in Sparta
Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$2.5 million

Alleghany - Construction of a new wastewater treatment plant for the Town of Sparta
Time Frame - 2012 Estimated Cost - \$5 million

Ashe- Extend water and sewer service to various residential locations in West Jefferson.
Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$50,000 annually

Ashe- Extend services to West Jefferson Business Park. Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$150,000

Ashe - Extend water service from Lansing to the Warrensville community
Time Frame - 2010 Estimated Cost - unknown

Ashe- Upgrade existing water and sewer lines in the Town of Jefferson.
Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$500,000

Ashe- Construct additional wells in the Town of Jefferson. Time Frame- 2009-2011 Estimated Cost- \$300,000

Ashe- Extend Jefferson's water and sewer lines to the Bristol community.
Time Frame- 2010-2012 Estimated Cost- \$2 million

Ashe- Extend water and sewer lines to the Smethport community.
Time Frame- 2010-2012 Estimated Cost- \$3 million

Ashe- Extend Jefferson's water and sewer lines from Mtn. View School site to Greensboro Mfg. Rd.
Time Frame- 2010-2012 Estimated Cost- \$3 million

Ashe- Construct a new well for the Town of Lansing. Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$100,000

Ashe- Replacement of old water lines in West Jefferson's commercial area.
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$300,000

Ashe- Various water and sewer extensions from West Jefferson to surrounding businesses.
Time Frame- 2010-2012 Estimated Cost- \$1.9 million

Ashe- Provide public water and sewer service from West Jefferson to the Baldwin community.
Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$1.7 million

Avery- Construct a new well for the Town of Newland. Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$300,000

Avery- Replace water lines along NC Highway 194 in Newland
Time Frame- undetermined Estimated Cost- undetermined

Avery- Construct a new reservoir for the Town of Newland. Time Frame- 2011-2013 Estimated Cost- unknown

Avery- Construct an additional well for the Town of Crossnore.
Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- 100,000

Avery- Upgrade Crossnore's wastewater treatment plant. Time Frame- 2010-2012 Estimated Cost- unknown

Avery- Further development of a stormwater collection system in downtown Banner Elk.
Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$500,000

Avery- Extend sewer line to Hemlock Place in Banner Elk. Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$175,000

Avery- Continued replacement of water meters to touch/read meters in Banner Elk.
Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$20,000

Avery- Extend waterline on Dobbins Rd. in Banner Elk. Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$26,000

Avery- Rehabilitate Mill Pond Rd. sewer line in Banner Elk. Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$300,000

Avery- Construct Tate Dr. outfall line in Banner Elk. Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$78,000

Avery- Extend sewer line on Turnpike East Rd. in Banner Elk. Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$65,000

Mitchell- Extend water and sewer service to Mitchell High School.
Time Frame- 2010 Estimated Cost- \$1.5 million

Mitchell- Extend water and sewer service to the northern portion of Mitchell County.
Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- \$1.5 million

Mitchell- Wastewater plant sludge press/composting operation in Spruce Pine.

Time Frame- 2010 Estimated Cost- \$450,000
Mitchell- Complete dredging of Spruce Pine's Beaver Creek Reservoir.
Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$470,000
Mitchell- Expand the Town of Spruce Pine's water treatment plant.
Time Frame- 2011 Estimated Cost- \$2.6 million
Mitchell- Construct a 1 million gallon potable water storage tank in the Town of Spruce Pine.
Time Frame- 2010 Estimated Cost- \$900,000
Mitchell- Complete extension of water line to serve Pine Branch Rd., Sullins Branch Rd., and Stafford Rd. in the Town of Spruce Pine. Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$450,000
Mitchell- Extension of water line from Town of Spruce Pine to NC Department of Corrections prison facility
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$120,000
Mitchell- Rehabilitate the Town of Spruce Pine's water system intake on North Toe River.
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$28,000
Mitchell- Replace Town of Spruce Pine waterline along NC Highway 226 South.
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$300,000
Mitchell- Design and procurement of improvements to Bakersville's 100,000-gallon standpipe storage tank.
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$90,000
Mitchell- Installation of new 8" water main in improvements for Hwy 261/226 area in Bakersville.
Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$120,000
Mitchell- Installation of new 8" and 6" water main improvements for Cane Creek Rd. and Maple St. in Bakersville.
Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$175,000
Watauga- Possible development of a county-wide water & sewer system.
Time Frame- 2010-2018 Estimated Cost- \$10 million
Watauga - Extend water and sewer service to the Brookshire property in Boone
Time Frame - 2008-2009 Estimated Cost - \$100,000
Watauga - New raw water intake and High Rating Filters for Town of Boone
Time Frame - 2010-2013 Estimated Cost - \$18 million
Watauga - New Water Treatment Plant for Town of Boone
Time Frame - 2017-2020 Estimated Cost - \$45 million
Watauga- Construct a new wastewater treatment plant for the Town of Blowing Rock.
Time Frame- 2010-2012 Estimated Cost- \$3 million
Watauga- Upgrade 2" & 3" waterlines to 6" & 8" lines in Seven Devils to create a looped system and increase flow to fire hydrants. Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$1.8 million
Watauga- Extend water line to NC Hwy. 105 to serve commercial district in the Town of Seven Devils.
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$400,000
Watauga- Completion of water line replacement program for the Town of Seven Devils.
Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$2 million
Watauga- New raw water intake for Blowing Rock. Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- 1.5 million
Watauga- Various water and sewer line extensions to unserved areas in the Town of Blowing Rock.
Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$100,000 annually
Watauga- Upgrade of Beech Mountain's Pond Creek wastewater treatment plant.
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$1.3 million
Watauga- Complete Phase II of Beech Mountain's collection system rehabilitation.
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$480,000
Watauga- Install back-up power to the wastewater treatment plants and pump stations in the Town of Beech Mountain.
Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- \$900,000
Watauga- Develop a stormwater drainage system for the Town of Seven Devils.
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$1 million
Watauga- Conduct a Comprehensive Stormwater Evaluation and Improvement Plan in Blowing Rock.
Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$100,000
Wilkes- Construct a raw water intake at Kerr Scott Reservoir to serve Wilkes County, Wilkesboro, and North Wilkesboro. Time Frame- 2009-2015 Estimated Cost- \$13.5 million
Wilkes- Upgrade and expansion of North Wilkesboro's water treatment plant.
Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$6.5 million
Wilkes- Upgrade existing raw water intake for Wilkesboro. Time Frame- 20010 Estimated Cost- \$1 million
Wilkes- Complete water and sewer lines to entirely service Wilkes Industrial Park.
Time Frame-2010-2013 Estimated Cost- \$1 million
Wilkes- Acquisition of Tyson's wastewater facilities for Wilkesboro.
Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- \$3.6 million
Wilkes- Construct a pump station near the former Golden Needles factory for Wilkesboro.
Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$750,000
Wilkes- Expansion of Wilkesboro's wastewater treatment plant from 4.9 MGD to 7.0 MGD.

Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$1.5 million
 Wilkes- Rehabilitation of Wilkesboro's sewer lines. Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$500,000
 Wilkes- Extend Wilkesboro's sewer lines to Oakwood subdivision. Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$3 million
 Wilkes- Construction of two above-ground water storage tanks for Wilkesboro.
 Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$2 million
 Wilkes- Construct upgrades to facilitate efficient connections between Wilkesboro and Cricket-Millers Creek
 water systems. (Browns Ford Loop Project) Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$800,000
 Yancey- Upgrade of Burnsville's existing wastewater treatment plant. (Phase II)
 Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$1 million
 Yancey- Various improvements to Burnsville's water and sewer system.
 Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- unknown
 Yancey- Extend water and sewer service to Micaville
 Time Frame- 2008-2010 Estimated Cost- \$4 million

Objective: Expand affordable, high-speed internet access to underserved areas

* no specific projects identified

Objective: Improve the safety and capacity of the region's transportation networks

Identified Projects

Alleghany -Implement recommendations in the Sparta Pedestrian Plan
 Time Frame - 2008-2017 Estimated Cost - \$2 million
 Alleghany - Conduct improvements on US Highway 21 South
 Time Frame - 2009 Estimated Cost - \$16 million
 Alleghany -Complete the Sparta Western Loop
 Time Frame - 2012 Estimated Cost - \$7 million
 Ashe- Expansion of the Ashe County Airport with road improvements to the airport.
 Time Frame- 2007-2011 Estimated Cost- \$8.5 million
 Ashe - Construct connector road between Beaver Creek Industrial Park and Smith's Aerospace
 Time Frame - 2008 Estimated Cost - unknown
 Ashe- Various sidewalk extensions in West Jefferson. Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$100,000
 Avery- Further expansion of the Shawneehaw Greenway in Banner Elk.
 Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- \$200,000
 Avery- Expansion of the Town of Newland's sidewalk system.
 Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$800,000
 Mitchell- Widen NC Hwy. 226 from McDowell County to Spruce Pine.
 Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- \$15 million
 Watauga- Sidewalk improvements in the Town of Blowing Rock.
 Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$100,000 annually.
 Watauga- Relocate Boone Fire Department station away from current location to avoid congestion.
 Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- \$700,000
 Watauga- Upgrade the street system to meet DOT standards for the Town of Seven Devils.
 Time Frame- 2008-2010 Estimated Cost- \$1.5 million
 High Country COG- Continue administration of the High Country Rural Transportation Planning
 Organization (RPO). Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$130,000 per year
 Regionwide - work with NCDOT to establish bicycle routes in each county
 Regionwide - work with NCDOT to schedule and implement projects identified in the Transportation Improvement Program

Objective: Ensure availability of established industrial sites in each county in the District

Identified Projects

Alleghany - Identification and development of an industrial park.

Time Frame- 2009-2011 Estimated Cost- \$6 million
 Ashe- Identification and development of an industrial park.
 Time Frame- 2007-2009 Estimated Cost- \$2.5 million
 Ashe- Certify West Jefferson Business Park. Time Frame-2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$50,000
 Ashe- Conduct a feasibility study to redevelop the vacated Jefferson Apparel Building.
 Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$40,000
 Ashe- Potential business development of old Lansing school building.
 Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- unknown
 Ashe- Extend water and sewer lines to a potential industrial site in Jefferson.
 Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$300,000
 Avery,Mitchell,Yancey- Develop the Tri-County Morrison Field Industrial Park Complex.
 Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- \$2.5 million
 Avery- Extend water and sewer to potential industrial properties. Time Frame- 2008-2010 Estimated Cost- \$750,000
 Avery- Work with the NC Department of Commerce/Advantage West to locate potential clients to fill the vacant
 Owens-Brigam building. Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- unknown
 Mitchell- Development of certified industrial sites on NC 226 in Mitchell County (Bailey property).
 Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$500,000
 Mitchell- Development of certified industrial sites on US 19E in Mitchell County.
 Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$500,000
 Watauga - Develop commercial/industrial sites and buildings on Brookshire Road property
 Time Frame- 2008-2012 Estimated Cost- \$3,000,000
 Wilkes- Continued development of the Wilkes Industrial Park.
 Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$1 million
 Yancey- Identification and development of an industrial park.
 Time Frame- 2009-2011 Estimated Cost- \$6 million
 Yancey - Identification and marketing of available industrial buildings.
 Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$5,000

Goal #2: Support Small Business and Entrepreneurial Development

Objective: Establish small-business incubators in each county in the District

Identified Projects

Alleghany- Recruit small businesses to the Blue Ridge Business Development Center.
 Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- unknown
 Ashe- Expansion of food incubator at Ashe Family Central.
 Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$300,000
 Mitchell- Continued development of the "Home of the Perfect Christmas Tree" project.
 Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- unknown
 Watauga- Re-establish small business incubator in Watauga County.
 Time Frame- 2007-2008 Estimated Cost- \$400,000
 Wilkes - Establishment of small business incubator
 Time Frame - 2009 Estimated Cost - \$400,000
 Yancey- Development of former OMC building into a potential industrial park and incubator facility.
 Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- unknown
 Yancey- Continued development of Brown Dormitory as a craft incubator.
 Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$500,000

Objective: Promote available business planning, consultation, and financing programs to small businesses

Identified Projects

Watauga - participate in AdvantageWest's Certified Entrepreneurial Community Program

Time Frame - 2008 (continuing)	Estimated Cost - unknown
Yancey - participate in AdvantageWest's Certified Entrepreneurial Community Program	
Time Frame - 2008 (continuing)	Estimated Cost - unknown
Regionwide - conduct workshops with private lending institutions to promote the SBA 504 loan program	
Time Frame - ongoing	Estimated Cost - n/a
Regionwide - Encourage schools to offer entrepreneurship curricula	
Time Frame - ongoing	Estimated Cost - unknown

Objective: Participate in statewide and regional entrepreneurship efforts

Identified Projects

Alleghany, Ashe, Wilkes - Recruit businesses within the composite industry that would complement Martin Marietta.	
Time Frame- ongoing	Estimated Cost- unknown
Watauga- Develop the Appalachian State University Millennium Campus/Watauga Technology Park.	
Time Frame- unknown	Estimated Cost- \$15 million

Goal #3: Prepare the Region's Workforce for Sustainable Employment

Objective: Target workforce development efforts toward industries identified in the High Country Labor Area Industry Growth Analysis (IGA)

Regionwide - Conduct research on the economic impact of the second-home industry in the region	
Time Frame - 2009	Estimated Cost - unknown

Objective: Expand vocational programs in high schools and community colleges

Watauga - Establishment of Career Center focused on construction trades	
Time Frame- 2008-2009	Estimated Cost- unknown

Objective: Improve Adult Education/Training Opportunities

* no specific projects identified

Goal #4: Improve/Maintain Environmental and Social Amenities in the Region

Objective: Expand Recreational Opportunities at Individual County and Town Parks

Identified Projects

Alleghany- Conduct Master Plan and improvements at Crouse Park in Sparta.	
Time Frame- 2008	Estimated Cost- \$250,000
Alleghany- Development of multi-purpose fields	
Time Frame- 2008	Estimated Cost- \$300,000
Alleghany- Establish Bledsoe Creek Greenway.	
Time Frame- 2009-2012	Estimated Cost- \$380,000
Alleghany- Develop County Park along Sparta Bypass.	
Time Frame- 2008-2009	Estimated Cost- \$500,000
Ashe- Ashe County Park improvements- new restroom facilities, new ball fields, development of playgrounds.	
Time Frame-2008-2009	Estimated Cost- \$400,000
Ashe- Walking trail in West Jefferson Park.	Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$30,000

Ashe- Development of a new town park and walking trail in Lansing.
Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$100,000

Ashe- The purchase of playground equipment at Bowie-Seagraves Park in West Jefferson.
Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- \$50,000

Avery- Extend the Riverwalk greenway in the Town of Newland.
Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- unknown

Avery- Purchase land for new park and bicycle trail in the Town of Newland.
Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$300,000

Avery- Construct sidewalk to portions of Mitchell St. & Estatoa St. in Newland.
Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- unknown

Avery- Construct a walking trail in the Village of Sugar Mountain.
Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$150,000

Avery- Further development of Heritage Park. Additional infrastructure and support facilities are planned.
Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$250,000

Avery- Banner Elk Town Park expansion. Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$250,000

Watauga- Construct a new Watauga County Recreation Center.
Time Frame- 2009-2013 Estimated Cost- \$10 million

Watauga- Develop multi-use trail (greenway) along Middle Fork New River.
Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$4 million

Watauga - Develop soccer fields on Brookshire Road property
Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$2,500,000

Watauga- Development of a recreation center/swimming pool in Blowing Rock.
Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- unknown

Watauga- Construct a concession stand with restroom facilities at Buckeye Creek Park in Beech Mountain.
Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$25,000

Watauga- Construct the Buckeye Recreation Center at Buckeye Creek Park in Beech Mountain.
Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$2,700,000

Watauga- Town of Boone Greenway expansion. Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- \$420,000

Watauga- Development of park at Boone's Anne Marie Drive. Time Frame-2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$2 million

Wilkes- Continue development of Park at River's Edge. Additional infrastructure and support facilities are planned.
Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$125,000

Yancey- Development of a multi-purpose facility for fairs, agricultural exhibits, and various recreational activities.
Time Frame- 2010 Estimated Cost- unknown

Objective: Implement water-quality protection measures

Alleghany - Implement stormwater BMPs identified in the Bledsoe Creek Watershed Plan
Time Frame - ongoing Estimated Cost - \$750,000

Avery - Construct wetlands in the Shoemaker Bottom property in Newland
Time Frame - 2008-2009 Estimated Cost - unknown

Objective: Promote downtowns in the region as cultural centers

Identified Projects

Alleghany- Develop Sparta Teapot Museum Time Frame- 2010-2012 Estimated Cost- \$10 million

Alleghany- Establish downtown revitalization program to recruit and retain businesses in downtown Sparta.
Time Frame- 2008-2010 Estimated Cost- \$1 million

Alleghany- Construct new public library in Sparta.
Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- unknown

Alleghany- Upgrade Sparta downtown area by burying power lines and constructing new sidewalks.
Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$2 million

Ashe- Renovation of the Jefferson Town Hall. Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$500,000

Ashe- Complete rehabilitation of the old Courthouse building in Jefferson.
Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$500,000

Avery- Construct a new Sugar Mountain Village Hall. Time Frame- 2009-2010 Estimated Cost- \$750,000

Avery- Further development of the Banner Elk streetscape project.
Time Frame- ongoing Estimated Cost- \$500,000

Avery- Purchase and renovation of the old Banner Elk Elementary School.
Time Frame- 2010 Estimated Cost- \$3 million

Avery- Construction of a municipal parking lot in Banner Elk. Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$75,000
 Avery- Enlarge the public works facility in Banner Elk. Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$150,000
 Mitchell- Renovate and improve the old Mitchell County Courthouse.
 Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$850,000
 Mitchell- Revitalization of downtown Spruce Pine, including restoration of Carolina Theater.
 Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$3 million
 Mitchell- Acquire CSX Train Depot in Town of Spruce Pine and renovate for use as Community Center.
 Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$2 million
 Watauga- Construct a new Watauga County Administrative Building.
 Time Frame- 2009-2011 Estimated Cost- \$2.5 million
 Watauga- Develop a Master Improvement Plan for Main Street and Sunset Drive in Blowing Rock.
 Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$1 million
 Watauga- Begin Howard Street improvements in Boone.
 Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$200,000
 Yancey- Development of a Children and Family Services Building (Phase I).
 Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$6 million

Objective: Promote planned growth strategies

Identified Projects

Ashe- Development of low-income housing in Lansing. Time Frame- unknown Estimated Cost- unknown
 Mitchell - Digital Image Mapping Time Frame - 2008-2011 Estimated Cost \$450,000
 Watauga- Construct two Emergency Medical Service stations for eastern and western Watauga County.
 Time Frame- 2008-2009 Estimated Cost- \$750,000
 Watauga- Upgrade the Watauga County Emergency Communications Systems.
 Time Frame- 2008-2010 Estimated Cost- \$2 million
 Watauga - Develop affordable housing project (Workforce Housing Development)
 Time Frame- 2008-2010 Estimated Cost- unknown
 Yancey- County jail expansion. Time Frame- 2009 Estimated Cost- \$2 million
 High Country COG- Expand the regional Geographic Information System (GIS) Program to include web-hosting capabilities.
 Time Frame- 2008 Estimated Cost- \$75,000

B. Vital Projects

The following projects are considered vital due to factors such as economic impact, available resources, employment impact, or current level of commitment:

- Sparta Teapot Museum - as discussed previously, the Sparta Teapot Museum is expected to draw significant numbers of visitors to downtown Sparta. Fundraising is currently underway for the \$10 million project, with \$3 million secured.
- Ashe County Airport improvements - The Ashe County Airport Expansion will facilitate business recruitment efforts, and may ultimately lead to development of industrial sites adjacent to the airport.
- Morrison Field Industrial Complex (Avery County) - proximity to US 19E and the Town of Spruce Pine's water and sewer service makes this area attractive for industrial development. A Feasibility Study needs to be conducted for the project.
- Watauga County Small Business Incubator - The close working relationship between Watauga County and Appalachian State University will greatly enhance the success of this project.
- High Country Council of Governments GIS Program expansion - the ability of the COG to serve the local governments digital data will be a valuable planning tool, and will provide an economy of scale that will benefit all member governments.
- Establishment of the Advanced Material Center - the Center will provide the research, development, and training component to the successful Advanced Materials Cluster initiative.
- Additional water supply well for the Town of Lansing - lack of adequate water supply currently prohibits the Town from any new connections.
- Additional water supply well for the Town of Crossnore - lack of adequate water supply currently prohibits the Town from any new connections.
- Additional water supply (intake) for the Town of Boone - for long-term growth, the Town will need to develop an additional water supply.
- Widening of US Highway 221 in Watauga and Ashe Counties - currently programmed by the NC Department of Transportation, the improvement of US Highway 221 between US Highway 421 and the Town of Jefferson will be critical to economic growth in Ashe and Alleghany Counties.
- Development of new raw water intake on the W. Kerr Scott Reservoir to supply the Towns of Wilkesboro and North Wilkesboro - development of a raw water intake on the reservoir will provide the two towns with abundant, clean, and reliable water supply to meet future demands.
- Development of new raw water intake to supply the Town of Sparta - the town's current network of water supply wells will not be adequate to support new industrial growth.
- Widening of US Highway 19E in Yancey, Mitchell, and Avery Counties - widening of the highway will provide four-lane access into the southern end of the District.
- Construction of the Sparta Western Loop (US Highway 21 Bypass) - completion of the Sparta Parkway (US Highway 21 Bypass) is critical to Sparta's downtown development efforts.

- Development of Industrial Sites - either individual county sites, or regional industrial sites developed as multi-county efforts - lack of industrial sites will hamper industrial recruitment efforts throughout the region (with the exception of Wilkes).
- Promotion of the US SBA 504 loan program - the program can help achieve the goal of small business growth in the District.
- Digital image mapping for Mitchell County - lack of digital tax parcel maps make infrastructure planning, industrial site planning, and hazard mitigation planning difficult.
- Nursing Program at Appalachian State University - due to the projected growth in the healthcare sector, and the demographics of the region, a local training program for nursing will help supply a growing employment demand.

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2008**

Chapter VI

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The following Performance Measures will be used to evaluate implementation of the CEDS:

- Number of jobs created
- Number of jobs retained
- Amount of public funds leveraged for projects in the region
- Amount of private investment leveraged for projects in the region
- Unemployment rate
- Per capita income
- Number of new business starts
- Increase in municipal water supply and wastewater treatment capacity

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Chapter VII

**COORDINATION WITH STATE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS**

Through ongoing communication with the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the High Country Council of Governments will coordinate with state economic development efforts. Early coordination is essential to providing necessary infrastructure and workforce training.

High Country COG staff work closely with the NC Division of Employment and Training and the NC Division of Community Assistance in assisting the COG member governments. Additionally, High Country COG staff maintains ongoing contact with State funding agencies.

Copies of the CEDS will be distributed to the following State agencies:

- NC Department of Commerce - Business and Industry Division regional offices
- NC Department of Commerce - Division of Community Assistance regional offices
- NC Department of Administration
- NC Rural Economic Development Center
- NC Workforce Development Commission
- NC Division of Employment and Training