Mecklenburg County
Strategic Economic Development Plan

May 2, 2011
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I. Executive Summary
Mecklenburg County through consultation with a broad-based group of stakeholders (see listing in Appendix A) has embarked on a planning process to recommend a new and invigorated economic development initiative that will continue the economic development successes of the past and provide greater diversity in the economic base in the future. As the old saying goes “If you don’t know where you are going any road will get you there”. This plan establishes a new vision of a prosperous future and establishes a road map to achieve that vision. This planning process consisted of several work sessions with the stakeholder group that identified the assets of the County, established a vision for the County, proposed a set of goals and objectives to achieve that vision and establishes an action agenda. The Stakeholder group met twice a month for 3 months from January to April to develop this Strategic Economic Development Plan. This report summaries the work of this stakeholder group.

This Strategic Economic Development Plan integrates the combined thinking of the stakeholder group, and the recommendations of the marketing staffs of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the Virginia Tourism Corporation. The Strategic Plan outlines a series of actions that, when implemented, will create a bustling, vibrant and prosperous economy.

Vision:
Mecklenburg County is rated as one of the top rural communities in the nation with a standard of living characterized by:

- A diverse and robust economy fueled by advanced manufacturing, information technology, distribution/logistics, and tourism,
- Businesses offering a variety of high-paying, high-skilled job opportunities,
- Entrepreneurial activity flourishing with numerous small businesses being created,
- Unemployment below the state average and household incomes exceeding neighboring metropolitan areas,
- The costs of living and doing business well below state averages,
- Award winning schools, ranked among the best in Virginia, preparing the youth for modern careers requiring extensive knowledge and skills,
- Revitalized towns bustling with activities, thriving businesses, and cultural events providing the amenities offered in neighboring urban areas,
Residents and visitors participate in a variety of active outdoor activities on the lakes, trails, and in the countryside,
- Warm southern Virginia hospitality and friendly rural charm.

The economic development successes of Mecklenburg County have been recognized nationally and serve as models for rural communities across the country.

Vision (short version)

Mecklenburg County’s high standard of living and economic development successes have achieved national recognition for elite rural communities and serves as a model for small creative communities across the country.

Goals
Goals - The following set of goals have been developed to provide a way to achieve the vision of the County outlined in the previous section. These goals are the desired outcomes/results needed to fulfill the vision and establish the direction for the economic development efforts for the County.

1. US News and World Report lists Mecklenburg Consolidated High School as one of the “Best High Schools in America”

![America's Best High Schools](image)

2. Mecklenburg School Division ranks as one of the “top ten” rural school divisions in VA

3. Information technology firms represent 10% of total employment in the County (increasing current technology employment from 200 to 1250 in ten years)

4. Tourism Expenditures and employment increase by 4% per year over ten years (2008 – 2009 -6.3%, 2003 -2009 18.1%)
5. At least 50 new start-up companies are created per year by the year 2021. (In 2008, 2009, and 1st and 2nd of Q 2010 - 33, 29 and 28 new companies were created respectively.)

6. Mecklenburg County is listed as one of AOL Real Estate’s Top Rural Places to Live

7. The high-speed rail line running between Richmond and Raleigh stops regularly at the La Crosse station.

8. Area Development Magazine recognizes Mecklenburg Economic Development Office for one of its Silver Shovel Awards.

**Action Items:** While improvements in education, K-12, programs and facilities are considered essential for the County to achieve its vision of being a national leader in economic development a specific set of actions items are not provided since the responsibility for achieving this goal rests primarily with the School Board and Board of Supervisors. Similarly, action items for implementation of the goal of high-speed rail service to LaCrosse rests with the state and federal government and is beyond the direct control of the County.

Implementation of the following 10 action items will begin the process of achieving the vision outlined above:

1. Marketing - Develop aggressive business recruitment and tourism marketing plans over the next year and update those plans every two years.
2. **Product (sites and buildings) - Develop additional marketable industrial sites in the Clarksville area; Kinderton Technology Campus, Burris/Connor site and Burlington property.**
   - Extend utility service to the Kinderton Technology Campus and grade sites for suitable building pads.
   - Extend utility service to the private Burris/Connor site.
   - Demolish the existing older manufacturing building on the Burlington property.

3. **Product (sites and buildings) - Build a modern shell building in the Roanoke River Regional Business Park.**

4. **Workforce Development - Continually evaluate and revise the career development program offerings to reflect the skills and knowledge required by target industries and existing employers.**
   - Undertake a workforce development study to identify occupations and competencies that will be required by existing and target industries.
   - Revise/develop career development programs in the public schools workforce development centers and Community College using “Career Pathways” as a model.
   - Investigate the expansion of the early childhood development programs, “Smart Beginnings”, in the county to accelerate the learning processes at an early age.
   - Enhance or possibly restructure the “Business Education Partnership” program (BRP). The Patrick County Education Foundation may serve as a model for restructuring of the BEP.

5. **Tourism Development - Create a tourism function/office within the County government structure based upon the recommendations of the Tourism Strategic Plan (see Appendix B).**
   - Establish an active tourism council
   - Create a tourism office with staff
   - Adopt a meals and lodging tax with a significant portion of the revenues supporting the tourism office

6. **Entrepreneurship Center - Establish a center that is dedicated to nurturing emerging and small business development. This center would be the service center for small and emerging businesses and serve as an incubator for start-up businesses. A component of the Entrepreneurship center would be youth entrepreneurship program sponsored through the school system in conjunction with the Southside Community College.**

7. **Existing Business/Industry Program - Expand and formalize the current existing industry program efforts of visitation and the industry events.**
8. Expand/modify the existing business incentives to include identified target businesses, small and emerging businesses and tourism related enterprises.

9. Recreate a regional economic development marketing effort for both business recruitment and tourism promotion.

10. Work with existing and potential internet providers to extend robust broadband service throughout the County so all businesses and residents have broadband access at reasonable costs.

**Initial Steps:** The following are a set of 10 initial steps that, if taken, will move the County towards achieving the vision of a stronger economy. The County has already taken initiated action to implement most of these initial steps. Those are designated with an asterisk.

1. Website Enhancements* - Continue to develop an economic development website for the County and expand the information available on that website related to business recruitment, small and existing business development and tourism. Create an online database of available commercial properties.

2. VTC Tourism Strategic Plan* - Implement the recommendations of the Tourism Strategic Plan to establish a Tourism Council for the County.

3. IT Marketing - Institute an aggressive marketing campaign directed towards the information technology and data center markets.
   - Create a technology advisory council consisting of local IT departments of local businesses, education institutions and area schools.
   - Market the “greater Clarksville area” as one information technology center that features the premiere technology businesses already located there and the available business properties that can be served by the exceptional broadband service and redundant power supplies.
   - Institute a specific marketing program targeted at information technology and data processing with an emphasis on data centers, health care IT and information security firms.

4. Workforce Development - Undertake a detailed study of existing and target industries to identify current and potential careers/occupations that will be required by these industries and prepare career development programs in the public schools and workforce development centers to meet these needs.
   - There exists a potential to accelerate this effort through funding of a major “STEM” (science, technology, economics and mathematics) initiative with the school system and the Southside Community College.

5. Marketing - Develop business recruitment and tourism marketing plans for implementation in 2012.
6. Take your Marketing Representative to lunch - Visit VEDP and other state agency offices monthly and take select Marketing Managers to lunch to brief them on the latest developments in Mecklenburg County.

7. Existing Industry Program* - Expand/enhance the current existing industry visitation efforts and the industry breakfasts.

8. Regional Marketing Council* - Reactivate the Lake Country Marketing Council or establish a new regional marketing council to conduct joint marketing activities on behalf of several “Southside” localities. A regional tourism marketing organization should be established to market tourism assets. One organization may be able to serve both functions.

9. Kinderton Technology Campus* - Implement the Tobacco Commission grant to extend water and sewer service to the Kinderton Technology Campus and prepare graded building pads on the site.

10. Entrepreneurship Center - Establish a committee to investigate the establishment of a multi-tenant entrepreneurial center and visit successful centers in VA. Such a business innovation center typically has a variety of common facilities and services to serve small and emerging businesses. The Crossroads Institute in Galax and business incubators in Martinsville and Franklin would be a good examples of entrepreneurial business centers.
II. Introduction
Mecklenburg County has developed a strong economic development program over the last 20 years. The efforts of the County have been extremely successful resulting in a variety of major new employers locating in the County. This program has been built upon the strength of the County’s commitment to building “state-of-art” industrial parks and workforce development facilities supporting new business growth. Historically, the County has relied heavily on support from the Southside Planning District Commission/Lakeside Marketing Council for economic development assistance and support.

If Mecklenburg County is to continue be a rural leader in economic development it must provide the quality product (buildings, sites and infrastructure) that today’s businesses are looking for. With today’s economy based upon a strong service sector fueled by small and emerging businesses the County should expand its economic development efforts to include strong tourism and small business initiatives.

The County is blessed with a wide array of significant employers that have been the foundation of the County’s economy. The County has recognized the contributions of these businesses and supported their continued prosperity and expansion. Moving forward the County should expand the activities supporting the expansion of the existing business base.

The County is not an island but a part of a region with distinct characteristics. Today’s businesses looking to locate in an area do not understand or appreciate political boundaries. They are interested in the characteristics of an area/region that will meet the needs of their business. This is why it is so very important to think regionally and to position the economic development program based upon not only your local assets but those of a larger region. The amenities and resources of Richmond and North Carolina metropolitan areas are but a short distance. Certain business recruitment and tourism marketing functions can benefit tremendously from regional cooperation and organization.

Today’s younger businessmen and professionals care deeply about the quality of life that an area offers. It is not just about the “job” but the “community”, quality of the schools, shopping opportunities, good places to eat and hang out, recreation and cultural outlets, access to high-speed internet service at home and in public spaces, quality and affordable housing options and the list goes on. For a community to be competitive and attractive to these younger decision makers, Mecklenburg must demonstrate quality in all aspects of public and private life.
III. Assets and Challenges
A strong economic development program is built upon a foundation of the community assets that can be leveraged to achieve lofty community goals. The positive attributes of a community can be a springboard for other positive results in the community - “success breeds success”. Here is a partial listing of assets from which Mecklenburg County can build a stronger economic base.

Product
• The County has a variety of “shovel ready” industrial and commercial sites in industrial parks located throughout the County. The inventory of fully-serviced business properties would be the envy of most localities in Virginia.
• There are a few buildings available for occupancy but they do not meet modern standards for most business sectors.

Workers and Worker Training
• The County has a strong relationship with the Southside Community College which offers a wide range of training and education opportunities for businesses located in the community or looking to locate to the community.
• The County is blessed with “state-of-art” training facilities located at South Hill, Clarksville and Chase City. These facilities are specifically designed to offer training in health care professions, advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, information technology and many other courses of study.
• There is a significant pool of available workers ready to be trained. The regional labor force lacks the higher education levels and the technical training found in competing metropolitan areas.
• The Southside Planning District Commission has conducted several studies to quantify the characteristics of the labor force for specific industrial categories.
Cost of Doing Business

• The local governments go out of their way to be business friendly.
• The County has the third lowest real estate tax rate in the state. Other County taxes are very modest when compared to more metropolitan localities.
• The County and Towns have established policies to provide incentives for new businesses looking to expand in the County and successfully used these incentives over the years to bring new business to the County.
  - HUB Zones
  - Enterprise Zones
  - Technology Zone
• The County has access to the financial resources of the Tobacco Commission to assist in expansion of business activity in the County.
• Other costs, electric, water and sewer, housing, labor, are all very competitive when compared to most metropolitan areas.

Market

• The County is located almost equidistant between two major metropolitan areas, each within an hour’s commute.
• The County is within easy reach of 3 major cities.
• There is a population of 250,000 in the labor market area.
• The County is mid-way on the east coast corridor within an easy day’s drive of major east coast markets.
• The County has a diverse and engaged business community with a large proportion of it in manufacturing. In addition to the strong manufacturing base the County enjoys a strong tourism base centered on the lakefront activity and a
strong agricultural sector. The County has recently been able to attract businesses associated with the knowledge-based information technology sector.

• The possibility of a future high-speed rail terminal would provide additional access to large metropolitan markets up and down the east coast.
• The County has direct access to the Port of Hampton Roads.

Quality of Life
• The County prides itself on the small town and rural lifestyle where people are friendly, know their neighbors and never lock their cars.
• The County is blessed with a very low crime rate reflective of its rural character.

• The County has a small but quality hospital that provides a variety of specialized health care services to the region.
• Situated on the Virginia/North Carolina border the weather is moderate compared to the cold extremes in the northeast and the hotter weather of the deep south.
• The Mecklenburg County school system is considered an excellent public school system for a small rural county with all schools being SOL accredited and three schools having “Blue Ribbon Status”.

Community College’s dual enrollment courses within the school division.
• The County is blessed with abundant land and open space for business and residential expansion.
• The County and Towns provide quality public services at modest costs to businesses and citizens.
• The County provides an abundance of recreational and cultural opportunities within the County and within a short drive.
  o Abundant athletic facilities and kid friendly activities
  o Cultural activities – Colonial Theater – performing arts
  o Numerous festivals
  o Parker Park – outstanding recreation facility
  o 13 golf courses within easy
The access to the Corp of Engineers lakes, Buggs Island Lake and Lake Gaston, provides a major recreational and tourism draw. Lakefront living opportunities on these lakes has attracted retirees and vacationers with higher incomes and extensive business talent.

The County is blessed with a rich history from ancient native american times to the lasting traditions of the tobacco industry.

The County citizens enjoy an “Aquaterrarian” lifestyle (on the water and land).

The County has numerous very active civic associations, organizations and faith groups.

There is the availability of quality housing at modest prices.

Infrastructure

- The County has excellent highway access both east and west and north and south being at the intersection of Interstate I-85 and four-lane Interstate quality Rt 58.
- The County has a modern general aviation airport to serve business customers.
- The County is only an hour and a half away from 2 major commercial airports.
- The County is served by a major state-of-art advanced fiber optic broadband network connecting the County to the major super high speed data transmission hubs.
- The County has developed a network of water and sewer services throughout the County that has significant capacity to serve large water and sewer users.
- The County is served by 2 electric utility companies with the possibility of additional electric supply from private suppliers.
- The County is served by east-west rail service with the future potential of north-south rail service along abandoned rail right-of-way.

Organization

- The County has a long history of having a pro-business attitude supported by strong local and regional economic development organizations.
- The County has a pool of retired executives that live along the lake and throughout the County that can provide mentoring skills to new businesses.
- All of the organizations and institutions that need to come together for the location and expansion of business in the County have demonstrated a
cooperative spirit to do “what is necessary” to make the business decision positive for the County.

While the County must build upon its assets it must also recognize the challenges that exist to economic development. Here is a partial list of challenges that have been identified by the strategic planning workgroup.

Challenges
• While there is housing available at reasonable costs the selection of various housing types and costs are not as competitive as in neighboring communities particularly in North Carolina.
• The community does not offer the range of “active lifestyle” activities and urban amenities desired by many “Gen X and Y” households.
• There is a lack of inventory of existing “modern” industrial buildings
• While there is “state-of-art” backbone broadband connectivity there is a lack of high-speed internet service to small business and residential properties.
  - Slow process to receive service to businesses
  - Limited access for small businesses
  - Limited access to the home
  - AT&T transition from Alltel
• There are insufficient number of workers with high-tech skills, security clearance and training for many of the occupations now in demand.
• There is a need to provide greater exposure to “career paths” in the middle school.
• There is a need to recruit minorities into leadership rolls within the community.
• Some of the existing school facilities are older and in need of replacement.
• The local news coverage presents a negative image of the County.
• There is a lack of retail shops and a lack of activity, particularly in the evening, in the downtowns.
• There is a need for additional sources of business finance and investment capital for growing businesses.
IV. Economic Development Approach and Vision

Economic Development Approach
Localities and their economic development organizations must be able to meet the three basic needs of business: having a suitable location (site/building) to do business; abundant, quality workers that they can depend on; and a low cost of doing business initially and over the long haul. These basic elements are equally important to existing businesses wishing to expand, new businesses wishing to locate to the County or entrepreneurs wishing to establish a business. While the County has most of these elements in place it must continue to strengthen these elements in order to keep a competitive edge with other localities. With over 15,000 economic development organization in the US alone, it is not enough to have the necessary components for successful economic development but your “product” must be superior in order to be the preferred business location.

With most job increases coming from existing employers in the community it is essential to be able to keep the existing employer base and help them expand.

Creating new businesses from local entrepreneurs offers an opportunity to take individuals with creative ideas and loyalty to the community and transform those ideas into new businesses ventures that will grow and flourish.
It is always important to continue to expand the business base by attracting new businesses to the community. This influx of new business capital expands the job opportunities for local residents and expands the tax base. These new business locations are few and far between given the current economic climate and are highly sought after by a host of competitor communities.

In today’s modern society businesses and visitors alike are very aware and desire a community that offers quality in all of aspects private and community life. A community must have quality schools, cultural activities, recreation opportunities and quality residential areas to be able to attract the professional and managerial workers that are the core of an information and creative economy.
Vision
The following vision statement is provided to describe the desired economic conditions of the County over the next 10 years. The vision statement is a written description of those economic characteristics that the County should strive to achieve. While not a complete graphic illustration of the County’s future it is illustrative of the economic activity that is desired. This vision expresses the desire not only to be successful but to be a national leader among rural communities in all aspects of community life. Mediocre is not the preferred outcome.

Mecklenburg County is rated as one of the top rural communities in the nation with a standard of living characterized by:
• A diverse and robust economy fueled by advanced manufacturing, information technology, distribution, and tourism,
• Businesses offering a variety of high-paying, high-skilled job opportunities,
• Entrepreneurial activity flourishing with numerous small businesses being created annually,
• Unemployment below the state average and household incomes exceeding neighboring metropolitan areas,
• The costs of living and doing business well below state averages,
• Award winning schools, ranked among the best in Virginia, preparing the youth for modern careers requiring extensive knowledge and skills,
• Revitalized towns bustling with activities, thriving businesses, and cultural events providing the amenities offered in neighboring urban areas,
• Residents and visitors participating in a variety of active outdoor activities on the lakes, trails, and in the countryside,
• Warm southern Virginia hospitality and friendly rural charm.

The economic development successes of Mecklenburg County have been recognized nationally and serve as a model for rural communities across the country.

Vision (short version)

Mecklenburg County’s high standard of living and economic development successes have achieved national recognition among elite rural communities and serves as a model for small creative communities across the country.
V. Goals

Goals - The following set of goals have been developed to provide a way to achieve the vision of the County outlined in the previous section. These goals are the desired outcomes/results needed to fulfill the vision and establish the direction for the economic development efforts for the County.

1. US News and World Report lists Mecklenburg Consolidated High School as one of the “Best High Schools in America”

2. Mecklenburg School Division ranks in the “top ten” in rural school divisions in VA

3. Information technology firms represent 10% of total employment in the County (currently total employment is about 12,500 jobs in the County with about 200 being employed by technology firms)

4. Tourism Expenditures and employment increase by 4% per year over ten years (2008 – 2009 -6.3%, 2003 -2009 18.1%)

5. Tourism Expenditures and employment increase by 4% per year over ten years (2008 – 2009 -6.3%, 2003 -2009 18.1%)

6. Mecklenburg County is listed as one of AOL Real Estate’s Top Rural Places to Live

7. The high-speed rail line running between Richmond and Raleigh stops regularly at a station in La Crosse.

8. Area Development Magazine recognizes Mecklenburg Economic Development Office for one of its Silver Shovel Awards.
VI. Objectives
A specific set of objectives have been established for each goal.

1. US News and World Report lists Mecklenburg Consolidated High School as one of the “Best High Schools in America”
   a. Develop a forward thinking PLAN for new High School
   b. Build community support through chamber, business, MCBEP and civic groups
   c. Build a strong coalition between Board Of Supervisors, School Board and business community
   d. Build community understanding for a tax increase
   e. Issue debt and receive other funding for consolidation of the High Schools
   f. Find a location for and construct new High School

2. Mecklenburg School Division ranks in the “top ten” in rural school divisions in VA
   a. In test scores
   b. In % of graduates
   c. In % of students going to post education
   d. In student teacher ratio
   e. In low dropout rate
      i. Provide resources in the schools to expand or develop trade and technology programs
   f. Acquire, retain and competitively pay quality teachers

3. Information technology firms represent 10% of total employment in the County (currently total employment is about 12,500 jobs in the County with about 200 being employed by technology firms)
   a. Create a technology advisory council consisting of local industry IT departments, educational institutions and area schools.
   b. Market the “cloud computing” capabilities to high-tech companies
      i. Use existing “top IT” companies and other existing companies as “best practice” models to entice other technology companies to locate in the county
   c. Continue to improve the infrastructure meeting the needs of data center and information technology companies
      i. Strengthen fiber network and availability of broadband access throughout the County
      ii. Provide suitable sites and buildings for
technology companies

d. Continually improve and expand workforce training for high-tech occupations
   i. Make the needed investments in K-12 education
   ii. Build upon the strong community college, business and school partnerships
   iii. Provide continual opportunities for career training and dual enrollment opportunities

e. Provide a unique set of incentives tailored to technology firms.

f. A broad range of quality housing choices at competitive prices are available in the county for the workers and management of new and existing technology companies.

4. **Tourism Expenditures and employment increase by 4% per year over ten years (2008 – 2009 -6.3%, 2003 -2009 18.1%)**
   a. Mecklenburg County develops and implements an overall economic development and tourism marketing and branding plan and updates that plan every two years
      i. Mecklenburg County creates a tourism office
   b. Mecklenburg County recognized as “outdoor recreation” capital/mecca of Southeast US.
      i. Mecklenburg County launches an aggressive tourism marketing campaign
      ii. County Tourism Department actively markets the County sports and recreation assets
      iii. Corp of Engineers is an active partner in the tourism marketing efforts
   c. Retail businesses support outdoor recreation - outfitters, bike rentals, tack shop, boating supplies, etc.
      i. The Towns of Clarksville, Chase City and South Hill have instituted aggressive downtown revitalization efforts that have resulted in numerous renovated commercial properties and a variety of community events/activities.
   d. Colonial Theater hosts major entertainment production series
      i. Target marketing conducted in conjunction with the VA Film Office
   e. Willow Grove celebrates 5th anniversary as a lake resort complex
      i. Corp of Engineers and financial institutions reach compromise on conditions for financing

5. **At least 50 new start-companies are created per year over the next ten years. (2008 – 33, 2009 – 29, 2010 – 1st and 2nd Q 28)**
   a. Mecklenburg County establishes incentives for small and emerging businesses
   b. Develop a entrepreneurship center that provides an array of services supporting new business creation and small business growth. The entrepreneurship center should have a program targeted at youth
entrepreneurship in conjunction with the school system. The range of services provided should include:

i. Multi-tenant incubator space
ii. Common shared facilities - meeting space, copying, etc.
iii. Business education and business plan development
iv. Debt capital - revolving loan funds, capital access program, etc.
v. Equity capital - angel investor program
vi. Business mentoring - SCORE program

C. Alternative fuel businesses partner with local farmers

i. Farmers partner with land grant universities to explore and develop agricultural opportunities

d. Establish a High School Entrepreneur program that fuels new business growth

i. Start a High School Entrepreneur Incubator
ii. Find funding for a small business incubator

e. Involve municipal officials in developing additional business friendly practices.
f. Develop website and social media presence.

6. Mecklenburg County is listed as one of AOL Real Estate’s top Rural Places to Live

a. Develop a presentation to AOL identifying the following County assets exhibiting the “best of both worlds”, active lifestyle living with the slower pace of rural living:

i. Low crime rate
ii. Colleges and Universities presence in the area
iii. Affordable housing costs
iv. Availability of a wide range of housing choices (additional work needed)
v. Highly rated public schools

1. New schools
vi. Access to quality healthcare facilities
vii. Moderate climate
viii. Availability of cultural opportunities
ix. Abundant recreational opportunities
x. Vibrant downtowns (additional work needed)
xi. Active lifestyle activities

1. Companies investing in “lifestyle” activities
xii. Community “contacts”/friendliness
xiii. Available senior activities/clubs etc.
xiv. An active conference center (future development project)
xv. Active and vibrant churches and facilities

7. The high-speed rail line running between Richmond and Raleigh stops regularly at a station in La Crosse.
a. Encourage VA leadership, Department of Rail and Public Transportation, to work with NC DOT-Rail Transportation to lobby the federal government for the necessary funding
b. Lobby for a rail station in La Crosse with a transportation connection to South Hill

8. **Area Development Magazine recognizes Mecklenburg Economic Development Office and Virginia for one of its Silver Shovel Awards.**
   a. Revamp incentives by “types” of companies and their specific needs
   b. Institute an aggressive marketing program
      i. Complete and keep up-to-date website
      ii. Build our “brand” through marketing successes
   c. Reactivate the Lake Country Marketing Council or similar regional organization.
   d. Build small business opportunities and funding options
   e. Create an aggressive existing industry retention and recognition program.
      i. Utilize/involve business expertise in “forwarding” the County’s use of and direction in social media, technology, web-based application, etc.
      ii. Drive users to the website - rewards, call to action, etc.
      iii. Establish technology “ambassadors”, “expert leadership” or “community work groups”.
   f. Continue collaboration with community and existing industry leaders.
VII. Action Items and Initial Steps
Several of the goals will require that they be implemented by organizations outside of the sphere of influence of the Economic Development Office and core County offices. Particularly the goals related to improvements in the school system will require that the School Board and School Administration embrace the goals and take the actions necessary to achieve the goals. Similarly, the goal to have high speed rail service stop at a station in LaCrosse will be determined by actions at the state and federal level. Strategies can often impact several goals. The following action items and initial steps are recommended to have a positive impact on several goals and objectives.

Action Items:
Implementation of the following the 10 action items will begin the process of achieving the vision:

1. Marketing - Develop aggressive business recruitment and tourism marketing plans over the next year and update those plans every two years. Seek matching grant assistance for development of the Tourism marketing plan from the Virginia Tourism Corporation. A more complete discussion of potential marketing approaches is contained in the section on marketing strategies later in this report.

2. Product (sites and buildings) - Develop additional marketable industrial sites in the Clarksville area; Kinderton Technology Campus, Burris/Connor site and Burlington property.
   • Extend utility service to the Kinderton Technology Campus and grade sites for suitable building pads.
   • Extend utility service to the private Burris/Connor site.
   • Demolish the existing older manufacturing building on the Burlington property.

3. Product (sites and buildings) - Build a modern shell building in the Roanoke River Regional Business Park.

4. Workforce Development - Continually evaluate and revise the career development program offerings to reflect the skills and knowledge required by target industries and existing employers.
   • Undertake a workforce development study to identify occupations and competencies that will be required by existing and target industries
   • Revise/develop career development programs in the public schools, workforce development centers and Community College
   • Enhance or possibly restructure the “Business Education Partnership” program of the County
   • Establish a “Mecklenburg Education Foundation” modeled after the Patrick County Education Foundation.
5. **Tourism Development** - Create a tourism function/office within the County government structure based upon the recommendations of the Tourism Strategic Plan (see Appendix B).
   - Establish an active tourism council
   - Create a tourism office with staff
   - Adopt a meals and lodging tax with a significant portion of the revenues supporting the tourism office

6. **Entrepreneurship Center** - Establish a center that is dedicated to nurturing emerging and small business development. This center would be the service center for small and emerging businesses and serve as an incubator for start-up businesses. A component of the Entrepreneurship center would be youth entrepreneurship program sponsored through the school system in conjunction with the Southside Community College.

7. **Existing Business/Industry Program** - Expand and formalize the current existing industry program efforts of visitation and the industry events.

8. **Expand/modify the existing business incentives to include identified target businesses, small and emerging businesses and tourism related enterprises.** The County has a very low cost of doing business environment with structured incentive policies for larger new businesses locating to the County. These policies are typically based upon reductions in land cost and tax benefits over time. The more aggressive localities and states are offering fewer tax incentives and more cash up front to business prospects. The County may wish to examine its incentive policies to have an alternative incentive policy ready to provide up-front cash assistance based on a “present value” calculation of tax incentives and expand the incentives to smaller businesses. With an emphasis on technology business development, the County may wish to designate one or more “Technology Zones” for those areas of the County where technology businesses are best suited.

9. **Recreate a regional economic development marketing effort for both business recruitment and tourism promotion.** Many of the surrounding counties share common economic development attributes, labor, location, natural resources and lifestyle. Given these common features there are likely common target industries, tourism, wood products, etc, where joint marketing would benefit all of the localities in the region. There is currently an effort to explore the development of a regional marketing organization to market “Southern VA”.

10. **Work with existing and potential internet providers to extend robust broadband service throughout the County so all businesses and residents have broadband access at reasonable costs.**
**Initial Steps:**  
“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” With limited resources it is imperative that the County select those activities that will begin that journey on the right foot. There are two overarching principles that govern the selection of these initial steps:

A. Mecklenburg County’s priorities for business expansion and location should be focused on; 1) providing facilities that can support the needs of target businesses, 2) supplying an adequate number of quality workers and 3) continuing a modest-cost environment of doing business (initially and over the long-term).

B. “You can’t sell your product if no one knows about it”. Active marketing is essential even in a down economy.

The following are a set of 10 initial steps that, if taken, will move the County towards achieving the vision of a stronger economy. The County has already taken initiated action to implement most of these initial steps. Those are designated with an asterisk.

1. **Website Enhancements** - Continue to develop an economic development website for the County and expand the information available on that website related to business recruitment, small and existing business development and tourism including an online database of available commercial properties.

2. **VTC Tourism Strategic Plan** - Implement the recommendations of the Tourism Strategic Plan to establish a Tourism Council for the County. Seek matching grant assistance for development of the Tourism “marketing plan” from the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

3. **IT Marketing** - Institute an aggressive marketing campaign directed towards the information technology and data center markets.
   - Create a technology advisory council consisting of local IT departments of local businesses, education institutions and area schools.
   - Market the “greater Clarksville area” as one information technology center that features the premiere technology businesses already located there and the available business properties that can be served by the exceptional broadband service and redundant power supplies.
   - Institute a specific marketing program targeted at information technology and data processing with an emphasis on data centers, health care IT and information security firms.

4. **Workforce Development** - Undertake a detailed study of existing and target industries to identify current and potential careers/occupations that will be required by these industries and prepare career development programs in the public schools and workforce development centers to meet these needs.

5. **Marketing** - Develop business recruitment and tourism marketing plans for implementation in 2012.
6. Take your Marketing Representative to lunch - Visit VEDP offices monthly and take select state agency Marketing Managers to lunch to brief them on the latest developments in Mecklenburg County.

7. Existing Industry Program* - Expand/enhance the current existing industry visitation efforts and the industry breakfasts.

8. Regional Marketing Council* - Reactivate the Lake Country Marketing Council or establish a new regional marketing council to conduct joint marketing activities on behalf of several “Southside” localities. A regional tourism marketing organization should be established to market tourism assets. One organization may be able to serve both functions.

9. Kinderton Technology Campus* - Implement the Tobacco Commission grant to extend water and sewer service to the Kinderton Technology Campus and prepare graded building pads on the site.

10. Entrepreneurship Center - Establish a committee to investigate the establishment of a multi-tenant entrepreneurial center and visit successful centers in VA. Such a business innovation center typically has a variety of common facilities and services to serve small and emerging businesses. The Crossroads Institute in Galax and the business incubators in Martinsville and Franklin would be good examples of a entrepreneurial business centers.
VIII. Marketing Strategies

Target Industry Sectors
Economic development efforts are structured around building on the assets of the community and a realistic assessment of target markets or opportunities. Based upon the assets listed in this report and the growth industries in the economy here are a list of target business sectors for potential business development that were identified during the VEDP visit to the County.

- **Advanced Manufacturing** - Mecklenburg already has a significant manufacturing business base from which to build upon. With the advanced manufacturing training facilities in South Hill, this is a natural target market for the County. In the current economic environment with traditional manufacturing shrinking it will be important to identify those niche manufacturing companies that will be expanding using the latest technology.
  - Rolls Royce location and Suppliers - The site of the Rolls Royce location in Prince George County will have a higher education research institute for Advanced Manufacturing supported by several research universities in the commonwealth. Having a direct and ongoing relationship with this institution will further advanced manufacturing in Mecklenburg County. The Rolls Royce plant will be serviced by a number of parts suppliers which will be looking to locate facilities close to the main manufacturing facility. The County may be a suitable location for such suppliers.

- **Information Technology and Data Processing** - The County has built a strong base of world renowned information technology businesses. Even in the current recession the information technology industry sector is flourishing and is projected to grow significantly well into the foreseeable future.
• Education Information Technology - While there will be a major contraction in education workers in the K-12 school systems there will be a continued expansion of technology in the classrooms to be able to maintain educational standards. Building upon the technology base in the County and the regional education programs, the County may be able to attract an education software development company or an education information technology deployment business to the County.

• Computer and Electronic Device Manufacturing - Along with the expansion of the information technology sector will be the expansion of the hardware component of the industry, electronic devices and their components.

• Health Care - With the continued greying of the “Boomer” generation and the national emphasis on health care cost reductions and reforms, there are tremendous opportunities for business expansion in the health care industry. The County already has a strong training facility for health care workers and a emerging base of information technology. There will be significant advances in the health information automation from the simple transfer of paper files to digital format, to advanced imaging techniques, to remote diagnostics. In addition, there will be major expansion in health equipment manufacturing and health service companies.

• Cyber security - With more and more use of electronic data and the internet there is greater concern that the vast quantities of information may be compromised or stollen by outside forces. There will be an ever expanding demand for companies and services to provide protection against attacks from outside sources.

• Regional Distribution - The County’s location at the intersection of I-85 and Rt 58 equidistant between Raleigh and Richmond provides an opportunity for a distribution facility that could serve both of those markets as well as the larger east coast market. The current national economic conditions are not conducive for distribution facility expansion. As the economy improves and more energy efficiencies are deployed in the distribution network a distribution facility at a South Hill location may be a possibility.
Here are some additional suggested potential target industries that are well suited to the assets of the County.

- **Richmond - Raleigh Connection** - The metropolitan areas of Richmond and Raleigh have common industrial clusters that may offer the opportunity for Mecklenburg County. For businesses needing to serve both markets, Mecklenburg County is a very desirable location. The County may wish to have a study commissioned to further identify additional industry clusters and potential business suppliers that may need to serve both markets from a central Mecklenburg location. Here are a couple of industry clusters that appear to be present in both metropolitan areas:
  - Pharmaceuticals
  - Biotechnology
  - Information technology

- **Plastics** - A variety of consumer products industries utilize extruded or molded plastics as the foundation of their product line. Several plastics firms have either located in Southside VA or have expressed interest in locating to the area. With the economic recovery just beginning there may be the potential for a branch plant location in the County given the variety of marketable site available.

- **Alternative Energy** - The County has had negotiations with an ethanol plant to locate near Chase City. It is unknown if this facility or another similar facility will locate in the County but given the international market preferences for alternative fuel sources a facility producing alternative fuels could be a potential for the County in the years ahead. Over the next several years there will be a huge expansion of research and deployment of advanced technologies to produce a variety of alternative energy products. The County should explore building upon the recruitment of the ethanol facility into other alternative energy products that are suitable to the infrastructure available in the County.

- **Wood Products** - The abundant supply of forest resources and a fairly developed industry cluster around the wood products industry provides an opportunity for potential expansion in this industry sector. The current depression in the residential construction market limits short-term possibilities in this industry but there may be opportunities as the economy recovers.

- **Retirement and Vacation Living** - With the combination of abundant shoreline, available health care, low crime and low cost of living, the County is well positioned to attract second home and retirement investment into the County. The current economic conditions will need to improve before this market revives. Future retirees are likely to be looking for more modest retirement homes in a low-cost setting with access to cultural and community amenities. If Mecklenburg can increase its variety of cultural and recreational offerings it may be well positioned to capture a healthy share of retirement and second home market.
Marketing Methods
Mecklenburg County is largely unknown outside of Virginia and is often confused with Mecklenburg County, NC. Business leaders from outside Virginia don’t know where Mecklenburg County is located much less know what its attributes are. When marketing Mecklenburg County to an external audience it should always be framed in the perspective of the larger regional context - “Mecklenburg County - mid-way between Richmond and Raleigh on I-85”. Businesses in Mecklenburg County have easy access to and enjoy access to the business amenities of these two major metropolitan regions.

The challenge that Mecklenburg faces is to present the County’s assets and marketable strengths to the target audiences - businesses, industries and influencers, tourists in an attention grabbing way with limited financial resources. As the old saying goes, “you can’t sell them unless you can get them in the store”, holds true for economic development. Surveys of corporate executives by several national groups have determined the most effective methods of influencing business location decision makers. They have found that the most effective methods are; effective use of the internet, personal interaction with peers, professional advisors and economic development professionals, positive news stories and a pleasant travel experience.

There are several audiences that Mecklenburg County needs to reach with its marketing strategies. Each of these audiences may require a different marketing strategy or approach. A visitor to the County requires a totally different marketing strategy than an executive of a Fortune five-hundred company. The County needs to develop a overall brand for the County with separate images or positioning for each audience based upon the “value proposition” for that audience. The “value proposition” for business location or expansion has to address the business considerations (a facility that meets their needs, quality workers that they can count on and a low cost of doing business) that resonate with them.

Existing Business and Industry
The goal of an existing industry program is to retain those businesses currently in the County and to help them flourish. An existing business and industry program not only expands your local economy but also generates support for the economic development program. An existing industry program not only expresses the County’s appreciation for the contributions that industry makes to the County but provides valuable insights into the major areas of concern that businesses are having. Often businesses don’t know how an economic development organization can be of assistance. In addition, if a business is considering locating to the County they will often pick up the phone and talk to an existing business to see what issues they are having and how satisfied they are in the County. Here are several recommended marketing efforts targeted at assistance to existing County businesses:

- Continue and expand the existing business “Call” program - visit at least 20 to 30 key businesses a year - formalize the visitation process
- Continue and possibly expand the business breakfasts
- Recognition event (semi-annual) - During Business Appreciation week and one other event possibly in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce
• International trade assistance - VEDP
• e-newsletter to major businesses
• Ambassador Program - local businessmen schooled to outreach to their peers - spreading the Mecklenburg “value-added” story

Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)
VEDP is currently and will likely continue to be the primary lead source for new business prospects to the County. The Marketing Managers of VEDP are the County’s sales force to future business prospects. It is extremely important that this sales force know and understand the assets and “product” that Mecklenburg has to sell. Here are several suggested methods for keeping Mecklenburg County on the radar screen of VEDP:
  • On a monthly basis take one or more VEDP Marketing Managers to lunch in Richmond
  • Make a presentation to the VEDP Business Development staff at their staff meeting at least once per year
  • Participate with VEDP on out-of-state marketing missions and trade shows
  • Conduct periodic one-day tour of industrial properties for the VEDP staff featuring the training and support facilities available in the County

Commercial Real Estate Brokers
The commercial real estate brokers of the Richmond and Raleigh areas are continually in contact with businesses that are looking to expand or locate. Being equidistant between these two major metropolitan areas may give Mecklenburg County a locational advantage for some select businesses. Keeping this audience informed and providing an incentive for bringing prospects to the County may increase the volume of prospects from these areas. Here are some suggested methods for encouraging the commercial real estate brokers to refer prospects to the County:
  • Become a member of and participate actively in GRACRE (Greater Richmond Association of Commercial Real Estate) and the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce
  • Provide a commission for leads that result in sale of industrial property in Mecklenburg County
  • Host an annual event for active brokers in the county
  • Communicate regularly with brokers through an e-newsletter

Consultants
Private site location consultants are being used more and more by firms large and small to help find suitable expansion locations for businesses. These professionals are highly skilled and heavily courted by economic development professionals all over the country. Since these professionals’ recommendations are so influential in corporate location decision making it is important to regularly communicate with them and create a favorable impression of the County. Here are some suggested methods for communicating the Mecklenburg “brand”:
  • Through a regional effort host a special event inviting consultants to attend. The event must be extra special to be able to entice consultants to visit the County.
- Communicate regularly with consultants through an e-newsletter

Public Relations
Having an article written about the County in a trade or business publication is a cost effective way to showcase a particular aspect or attribute of the County. Often the articles are written about a particular unique business or an expansion/location of a new business. It may be possible to highlight a unique feature such as a advanced training program. Since one of the potential target markets is the business clusters in the Richmond and Raleigh markets it is recommended that the articles be pitched to the Times Dispatch Monday business section and the Triangle Business Journal.

Target Industry Strategies
Each of the target industries identified in this report have their own set of professional associations, trade associations and industry groups. It is important to be knowledgeable about the latest developments, products and emerging markets to better position the County to identify those companies that may be expanding. Here are several ways to stay abreast of target industry trends and identify prospective business prospects:
- Attend target industry trade shows and workshops.
- Conduct familiarization - “fam” - tours for writers of trade/industry publications showcasing the County’s assets
- Utilize the “Ambassador Program” to target CEO’s of the target industries

E-marketing
Electronic marketing is the most cost effective method of reaching the target audiences. A dynamite website is imperative in today’s marketplace. Whether it be a tourist looking for things to see and do or a location consultant looking to scout out a location for an expanding industry, the “web” is the first place they look. Initial screening is often done on the internet prior to any formal contact with the state or locality. The County is currently working to upgrade its website with a significant expansion of its economic development components. The website should contain a wealth of information related to tourism, existing and small business development as well as new business location. It is not sufficient to design a great website. The County needs to execute a series of marketing techniques, particularly electronic, that will drive traffic to the website. A website that no one sees is not effective. The website needs to be fresh and timely so the target audiences continue to visit it regularly. E-newsletters and regular blast e-mails can encourage visitors to view new features on the website. A new and emerging electronic marketing technique is the social network sites like Facebook or Twitter. While intended for social networking these sites have grown to become business marketing sites with a variety of information sharing and news. Again, it is important to make sure that these networks are regularly updated with fresh material and news that is relevant to the target audience.

SUMMARY OF MARKETING STRATEGIES

A. Website Enhancements
1. Business Recruitment
2. Small Business and Entrepreneurship
3. Existing Business Development
4. Tourism
B. E-newsletter(s)
   1. Location consultants
   2. Commercial brokers
   3. Existing businesses
   4. Entrepreneurs
   5. Business and travel writers
C. Expanded Existing Business Program
   1. Call Program
   2. Breakfasts
   3. Additional events
   4. International trade
D. Ambassador’s program
   1. Business Recruitment
   2. Existing Business Development
   3. Target industry sectors
E. Professional Association Participation
   1. GRACRE
   2. Raleigh Chamber of Commerce
F. Public relations articles
   1. Business journals/sections
   2. Travel publications
G. Events and Workshops
   1. VEDP tour
   2. Broker outing
   3. Business appreciation
   4. Entrepreneurship workshops
   5. “Fam” tour
H. Lunch with marketing representatives
   1. Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP)
   2. Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
   3. Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC)
   4. Norfolk Southern/Department of Rail and Public Transportation
I. Cooperative marketing
   1. VEDP
   2. VTC
Appendix “A”
Mecklenburg County Strategic Plan Stakeholder Group

Mecklenburg County Economic Development Strategic Plan Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jean Clary-Bagley</td>
<td>Century 21 Clary &amp; Associates, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Tanner</td>
<td>Virginia Tourism Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Thomas</td>
<td>First Citizens Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol Bowman</td>
<td>Mecklenburg County School Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dan Sowers</td>
<td>Jones Apparel Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Marion</td>
<td>BGF Industries, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob MacKenzie</td>
<td>Peebles-a Division of Stage Stores</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Lee</td>
<td>Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Steele</td>
<td>Alcan Packaging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glenn Barbour</td>
<td>Mecklenburg County Board of Supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billy Wilkinson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Cowell</td>
<td>HP Enterprise Services, LLC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer Greene</td>
<td>HP Enterprise Services, LLC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Creedle</td>
<td>Benchmark Community Bank</td>
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<td>Tammy Manning</td>
<td>First Citizens Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo Ann Cage</td>
<td>Southside Virginia Comm. College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faye Matthews</td>
<td>Community Memorial Healthcenter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlie Simmons</td>
<td>Simmons &amp; Associates Realty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard Walker</td>
<td>MCBEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glenn Burney</td>
<td>Dominion Generation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chad Barbour</td>
<td>South Hill Town Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hart Hudson</td>
<td>R. Hart Hudson Farms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glenn Price Hudson</td>
<td>R. Hart Hudson Farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary McAden</td>
<td>Virginia Quilting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henry Egan</td>
<td>Southern Textiles Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Justin Rose</td>
<td>Rosemont Vineyards &amp; Winery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Jane Elkins Horne</td>
<td>Southside Virginia Comm. College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jim Moody</td>
<td>Veterans Enterprise Tech. Solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judy Jacqueln</td>
<td>Community Memorial Healthcenter (retired)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angie Kellett</td>
<td>Office of Economic Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gina Mull</td>
<td>Office of Economic Development</td>
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Mecklenburg County Tourism Strategic Plan
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Acknowledgments

The following Tourism Strategic Plan was facilitated by Sandra Tanner from the Virginia Tourism Corporation and is the result of in-depth discussions and consideration by the following representatives, business owners, organization leaders, and stakeholders of Mecklenburg County, all of which demonstrated a passion for positive impact on the Mecklenburg’s economy and quality of life through tourism:

- Gina Mull  Boydton Economic Development
- Angie Kellett  Boydton Economic Development
- Lisa Clary  South Hill South Hill Chamber President
- Carol Corker  South Hill Southside PDC
- Kim Callis  South Hill Town Manager
- Mary Willis  Clarksville CEDA Clarksville
- Melinda Moran  Clarksville Town Manager
- Natalie Coronas  South Hill SVCC
- Sandra Towne  Bracey Realtor
- Kim King  South Hill Bank
- Frank Malone  South Hill South Hill Chamber/Mecklenburg Chamber
- RC Hartley  Chase City Chase City Chamber
- Tommy Zincone  South Hill South Hill Revitalization Committee
- Michael Womack  Boydton Corp of Engineers
- Joseph Epps  Chase City VA’s Retreat
- Liz Lowrance  Chase City MacCallum Moore Gardens
- Patricia Folio  Bracey South Hill Farmer’s Market
- Linda Williams  Clarksville Clarksville Chamber
- Eddie Bratton  Chase City Mayor
- Andy Wells  South Hill Southside PDC
- Gregg Gordon  Clarksville Board of Supervisors
- Robin Allen  South Hill South Hill Planning Commission/Revitalization
- Barbara Stubbs  Clarksville Antique Mall Clarksville

Sandra Tanner, Tourism Development Specialist with the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) facilitated the strategic planning process and drafted this document with the assistance and input of the previously listed stakeholders. Sandra will continue to assist our community as we move forward with the implementation of this plan.

Special recognition to Angie Kellett and Gina Mull, Mecklenburg Economic Development Office for their support and encouragement to develop this strategic plan.
Background

Past Tourism Efforts
Mecklenburg County's tourism has always been handled by each town and the chamber offices within the town. Until this point there was not a Countywide Tourism effort – it just wasn't recognized by the County as an "Industry". With our economic situation over the last few years it has come to the attention of the Economic Development Office the we need to find other avenues to grow our County's economic base. Tourism, with little effort, normally generates $3.2 Million dollars of the County's revenues. We feel that if the County was serious about Tourism and put some time, effort and funds into this “Industry” we could greatly enhance those revenues coming to Mecklenburg County, as well as, adding to the attractiveness of our Quality of Life that we market to typical economic development prospects.
This plan will only be successful if the County and each of its towns' is accepting and participating in it. In this plan it became obvious that we lack the “downtown” atmosphere that many of todays business leaders are looking for in a location. This will be a Countywide effort to grow, market and change the face of Tourism as we know it in Mecklenburg County, Virginia.

To that end, Sandra Tanner met with Angie Kellett, Mecklenburg County Economic Development Director to discuss VTC services such as Tourism Assessment Planning. Mecklenburg County Office of Economic Development recognizes that Tourism is vital to the County’s economy and requested a Tourism Assessment Plan to be done as part of the Strategic Economic Development plan for the county.

Development of this Plan
As a result of discussions and several meetings with Angie Kellett, the Mecklenburg County Economic Development office and IDA formally requested assistance from the Virginia Tourism Corporation with developing its first tourism strategic plan. Strategic planning sessions were held on June 15 and 23, 2010, at the Southside Planning Commission Conference room and The Advanced Knowledge Center, South Hill, Virginia, with community and tourism stakeholders attending. The content of the following plan was determined through facilitated discussion with input from the previously listed stakeholders during the planning sessions. Discussions were lively and informative throughout the planning sessions. Attendees were pleased with the information gathered and were happy to be invited to be part of the process.
Situational Analysis

As an important aspect of the planning process, the stakeholders group conducted a Situational Analysis of tourism to help determine the goals and objectives of this plan. The process included the identification of tourism assets existing in the community and targeted customers who could enjoy those assets. The process then included the traditional examination of the community’s infrastructure analysis, Business gaps that support tourism, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Results from the Situational Analysis can be found in the Appendix, page 13.

Tourism Mission & Vision

In order to clearly and concisely convey the direction of the tourism plan and its goals and objectives, the following Mission and Vision Statements will be drafted by a tourism committee defined by the Economic Development Department and appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

Mission Statement

The Tourism Mission Statement for Mecklenburg’s Tourism Group is:

Vision Statement

The Tourism Vision Statement for Mecklenburg’s Tourism Group is:
Planning & Visioning

Tourism Goals, Objectives, Measures, Targets, & Initiatives/Tasks

Following are the identified tourism strategic plan goals, objectives, and related implementation measures, targets, and initiatives/tasks, as identified by the stakeholders group. Utilization of the identified measures and targets, and completion of the listed initiatives and tasks, will result in significant progress toward each tourism goal and objective.

The overall goal of Mecklenburg County is to develop strategies and opportunities for increased economic impact through tourism development. Below is a list of strategies to meet that goal

Goal 1

Create Tourism-Friendly Culture in Mecklenburg County to enhance the visitor experience to the region

Objective 1.1 Educate Businesses - their role in Tourism
Measure 1.1 Education-Tourism Benefits
Target 1.1 TBA

Initiatives & Tasks 1.1
1. Develop Speakers Bureau to educate local businesses on their role in regional tourism and economic benefits of tourism by speaking at local civic group meetings
2. Utilize workshops and VTC Customer Service Training to educate business community
3. Educate business owners on how to increase their customer base and their role in Tourism
   a. Coordinate with VTC to hold more retail seminars
   b. Educate business owners how to increase their bottom line through tourism
   c. Educate and communicate with business owners about special events and how they can increase their bottom line.
   d. Educate about the need for consistent business hours to increase their bottom line
e. Publicize business success stories and testimonials of businesses who have increased their bottom line through tourism to help educate other businesses

Responsible: Tourism Committee/Tourism Director

Objective 1.2 Education of Local Community
Measure 1.2 educate citizens about the importance of tourism
Target 1.2 TBA

Initiatives & Tasks 1.2
1. Educate the local community about the benefits of Tourism using the local media campaign
2. Educate the local community about the Quality of life benefits, economic benefits and how tourist dollars reduce pressure on real estate/personal property taxes
3. Use Local Chambers, Community enrichment, and civic organizations to get the word out

Responsible: Tourism committee/Tourism director

Objective 1.3 Develop Customer Service program to make Mecklenburg more Welcoming to Visitors and New Citizens
Measure 1.3 More welcoming and accepting community
Target 1.3 TBA

Initiatives & Tasks 1.3
1. Develop Customer Service/Ambassadors for Lake Country/Welcome Committee
2. Work with new School Superintendent to have customer service program in school
3. Develop Positive speaking points for the county
4. Work with Management to create customer service/friendly front line staff
5. Repair Fractured County-one county not east/west end
   a. Develop countywide events to show unity on Town/County level
   b. Build a sense of community
6. Police Officers and All Public Employees should be ambassadors of Lake Country and should attend Customer Service Training.
7. County/Towns should be the leaders by mandating that their employees attend training sessions.

8. Develop workshop utilizing VTC and SVCC

*Responsible: Tourism Committee/Tourism Director*

---

**Objective 1.4  Education Local Leaders**

**Measure 1.4  Educate local leaders tourism economic benefits**

**Target 1.4  TBA**

1. Develop quarterly reports for local leaders to keep them updated with projects and progress

2. Annual economic update for Boards/Councils so that they know how important tourism is to their area.

*Responsible: Tourism Committee/Tourism Director*

---

**Objective 1.5  Develop Tourism Plan/Program for Mecklenburg County**

**Measure 1.5  Expand existing program**

**Target 1.5  TBA**

1. Appoint Countywide Tourism Committee to work with Economic Development Director to develop Tourism Program

2. Explore and create Tourism Development Coordinator for the county to fall under Economic Development Department

3. Establish dedicated funding for position

4. Develop a position description and plan to include:
   
   a. Would develop and coordinate county wide marketing effort

   b. Would assist in expansion of current and development of new tourism assets

   c. Would look for grant opportunities
d. Would work with state/regional marketing efforts

e. Would develop tours/itineraries to better market Mecklenburg County

Responsible: Tourism Committee/Tourism Director

Objective 1.6  Develop Volunteer program
Measure 1.6  Expand existing program
Target 1.6  TBA

1. Develop a County wide volunteer plan/program

2. Establish Data Base for Volunteers
   a. Use County Website(or develop a County Website)
   b. Volunteers register on website and identify areas of interest
   c. Project/program planners can access site to find potential volunteers
   d. Develop Newsletter/email list from registration

*Facilitator Note: This could also help alleviate feelings of non-acceptance

Responsible: Tourism Committee/Director

Goal 2

To Improve, Enhance, and Promote Quality of Life

Objective 2.1  Develop a plan to increase tourism and economic benefit for Mecklenburg County and make it a tourism destination through outdoor recreation
Measure 2.1  Enhance Current Tourism assets and develop new product
Target 2.1  TBA
Initiatives & Tasks 2.1

1. Tourism Committee will advocate and support tourism development and growth in the county.
2. Explore opportunity to develop Outdoor Mecca to include huge retail facility with an area to participate in extreme sports such as whitewater rafting, ziplines, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, biking, etc.
   a. Do research
   b. Work with state agencies for development help
   c. Find a location
   d. Work with Corp of Engineers
3. Hold community meetings to gain support for enhancement of quality of life through tourism development-speakers bureau can help with this
4. Continue to develop Outdoor Recreation
   a. Continue to work with Roanoke River Rails to Trails to finish development of Tobacco Heritage trail in Mecklenburg County
   b. Continue to work with Blueway/Canoe Trail Committee to Develop Meherrin River Blueway managed Trail and Meherrin River Scenic River Designation
5. Develop walking driving tours(with golf cart access)
   a. Develop narrative to tell story/history
   b. Develop printed material and also web-based downloadable/podcast/google/map app
   c. Develop individual town tours and then use to develop county tours

Responsible: Tourism Committee/Director

Objective 2.2 Address Infrastructure needs to enhance tourism
Measure 2.2 Develop tourism infrastructure plan
Target 2.2 TBA

Initiatives & Tasks 3.2

1. Develop Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Tourism
   a. Water/sewer needs
   b. Other infrastructure needs
   c. Work to find grant funding for infrastructure needs for expansion/growth and development of underutilized areas
   d. Recruit developers to develop area of needs
2. Develop Countywide Transportation plan
   a. Expand Lake Country Bus Service into the county if possible
   b. Look at entrepreneur opportunities and offer incentives for start up
   c. Water Taxi opportunities for transportation around the lake near Roccheche project

3. Develop Lake Access Plan
   a. Develop more public lake access points work with Corp and DGIF
   b. Develop river walk/trails around the lake areas
   c. Recruit more boat rentals on the lake
   d. Develop fishing guide services

4. Develop Artist/Artisan Community
   a. Connect with untapped talent in the lake areas of the county
   b. Tie together the artisan assets that we have
   c. Recruit artisans to open galleries/studios, etc in downtowns

5. Develop Agritourism opportunities

6. Develop trails and geo-caching as ways to tie towns together

7. Redevelop, incentivize, and recruit businesses to locate in the downtown areas
   a. Develop retail incubators for small business start ups
   b. Develop Towns and County incentives for small business development
   c. Develop micro loan program to help small business start ups
   d. Create retail incentives

8. Recruit the following businesses to fill Tourism Gaps
   a. Golf Cart rentals where ordinances allow
   b. Outfitters
   c. Increase hotel rooms to maximize Lodging needs in the county
   d. Encourage cabins, B&B’s etc to meet alternative lodging needs
   e. Develop Night time needs plan-determine needs, opportunities, and recruit

Responsible: Tourism Committee/Tourism Director

Goal 3

Create Financial Support for Tourism Initiatives

Objective 3.1 Secure Dedicated funding source for Mecklenburg County Tourism Development for the area

Measure 3.1 sustainable funding for growth and development of tourism
Target 3.1  TBA
Initiatives & Tasks 3.1
1. Raise Real Estate Tax 1 cent and dedicate to tourism
2. Explore Grant Opportunities and grant writer
3. Utilize portion of current tax revenues generated by tourism for development and funding
4. Institute lodging tax
5. Institute food tax
6. Leverage coop funds and market regionally
7. Utilize VTC funds for marketing efforts
8. Develop Tourism committee to accept donations/endowments/etc could fall under IDA

Responsible: Tourism Committee/Director

Goal 4

Improve Marketing Efforts

Objective 4.1  Develop a realistic marketing plan
Measure 4.1  Completion and implementation of a marketing plan
Target 4.1  TBA
Initiatives & Tasks 4.1
1. Develop a comprehensive Marketing Plan capitalizing on Outdoor Recreation, Natural assets, and racing
2. Develop sports Marketing Plan
3. Establish and Market Mecklenburg as a year round destination
4. Work with Marketing firm to develop a Brand for Mecklenburg County to include tourism-to include an identity for each town
5. Develop P.R. Campaign
6. Develop local baseline tourism numbers and tracking system to track growth benchmarks
7. Develop funding/advertising opportunities and incentives for development/printing of brochures/websites
8. Better utilize Social Media-Facebook, Twitter, You Tube Etc

Responsible: NN Tourism Commission
Goal 5

*Mecklenburg County will create a cohesive strategy/effort for development and marketing the area*

Objective 5.1 Improve Cooperation at Fed/State/Local levels  
Measure 5.1 Better Communication between Members/Board  
Target 5.1 TBA  
Initiatives & Tasks 5.1  

1. Get buy-in/support from federal government for local initiative  
2. Streamline the process so that projects can move forward faster  
3. Build relationships within agencies-use VTC to get players to the table  
4. Educate new elected leaders before they take office (through generational changes) about tourism benefits  

*Responsible: Tourism Committee/Tourism Director*

**Conclusion**

Representatives of Mecklenburg County recognize the significance of tourism through its economic impact and related contributions to the quality of life for the citizens in the city, towns, and county. The significant steps taken by those representatives and milestones met prior to the development of this first tourism strategic plan serve as evidence of that recognition. This plan is intended to build upon those accomplishments and to help create a sustainable tourism program.

Local government support and stakeholder participation is required for this plan to be implemented and successful. A Tourism organization will be created and will take a leadership role in overseeing implementation. However, future assistance and input from various members of tourism organizations, businesses, civic groups, and other interested citizens, will also be extremely vital.

The targets and measures of this plan were determined during the planning process and will serve as references for evaluation. To encourage progress toward the established targets, this plan should be reviewed by the Mecklenburg Tourism Committee on a regular basis (from the date of formal adoption of this plan). Upon each review, any adjustments that need to be made to this
plan can be discussed. Once a majority of the targets have been met, a new or updated plan will be developed.

Using this plan as guidance, the Mecklenburg County, and the towns within, are expected to make significant progress toward the development and promotion of tourism. It is imperative that the plan be referenced consistently as any new tourism related discussions occur and as all related decisions are made. While new ideas and recommendations should be considered in the future, officials should reference this plan and determine if implementing any new ideas and recommendations is feasible and in accordance with this plan. This document will also serve as a reference piece for tourism entrepreneurs and businesses that are considering locating within the city or county, and should be available for distribution at local economic development offices and other appropriate distribution sites.

Appendix

Situational Analysis

Premier Tourism Assets
The following is a list of the identified current premier tourism assets for Mecklenburg County which are the assets most likely to be featured in advertising and promotional materials. Mecklenburg County is situated in the Southern Region of Virginia and Borders North Carolina. And is half way between New York and Atlanta, Raleigh, NC and Richmond VA. Their location lends itself to be either the hub or the spoke of a tourist’s vacation planning. They are situated to be able to market with other Southern Virginia counties and northern North Carolina for partnerships and marketing opportunities. A complete inventory of all of the tourism assets in Mecklenburg County is listed below. It will be up to the Economic Development and its tourism committee to prioritize their marketing efforts of the area’s attractions. Mecklenburg County already has in place many amenities and attractions that would make anyone’s stay enjoyable. The consensus is that Mecklenburg County is wealthy in outdoor recreation, all outdoor activities, history and agricultural significance. There are many opportunities for the
development of new tourism product in the tourism area. Below is a list of Mecklenburg County’s existing premier tourism assets:

**Existing Premier Tourism Assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outdoor Recreation/Activities/Lakes/Trails</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosemont Winery/Vineyard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festivals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Downtowns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museums</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Streets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic ByWays</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries/Research/Genealogy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Streets/Shopping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Current Tourism Assets** listed are the current tourism assets for Mecklenburg County and those that can be marketed to bring in more tourism dollars. The list is quite extensive and can be used to develop packages for marketing to the list of customers that were identified during the assessment session.

- Lakes
- Ball fields
- Soccer fields
- Whittles mill
- Prestwould
- Maccallum more
- Rosemont
- Clarksville museum
- Occoneechee
- Golf courses
- Market square events
- Farmers market
- Thyne memorial
- Tobacco heritage trail
Festivals
Parker Park
Centennial Park
Robbins Park
Blue Ribbon Schools
Doll-Train-Farm Museum
Coopers Landing
Night time Fishing Lights
Shopping
CMH
Cancer Center
Buffalo Road Park
Shadowlawn
Willow Grove Marina
Clarksville Marina
Campgrounds
Env education center
South Central Fair
SVCC/Satellite Services
CRIEHT
Civil War Trails
Visitor Center
Airports
Cabbage Farm
Antique Shops
Flea Markets
Enrichment Complex
Downtowns
Restaurants
John H. Kerr Dam
Lakefest
Hydroplane Challenge
Bingo
Hunting preserves
Dick Cross Wildlife
House boating
Pontoon Boating
Picnicking
Sailing
Islands-lakes
Historic walking trails
Scenic views
Scenic By-ways
Water Fowl impoundments
Fly-in at airports
Horse shows
Pageants
Bull riding
Chili cook off
Cruise in
Bike show
Poker run
Blue Horse Mukwa
Libraries
Statues-courthouse ??
Native American Heritage Festival
Genealogy
Unique: Tobacco Farm Life museum-Triangle shape building
Old Town Bracey
Tobacco Warehouses
Tobacco Barns-Tours
Lincoln Hotel
Randolph Macon College Ruins
Town of Boydton
Courthouse
Tanner House And Store
La Crosse Hotel
Horse Show
Fabric Outlet La Crosse
Veterans Memorial Park
DAR Memorial
Buffalo Springs
Biggest Lake
Only Lakeside Town in VA
South Hill one of only 3 Towns developed in a circle
Clarksville first and only night time fishing in VA
Christmas Parades
Illuminations
Tell Santa
Legendary Santa Breakfast
Craft Shows
Dances-Clarksville every Friday night
Jam sessions at the Vines
Jazz in the Park Theater productions (Community Theater)
2 Jacob Holt Houses in Chase City-connection/marketing with Warrenton, NC
Trunk or treat

Undeveloped Premier Tourism Assets

The following assets do not yet exist, but they have strong potential to become premier tourism assets should the Tourism Committee, Organizations, or Private Investors choose to develop them. The committee and those organizations should prioritize project development to maximize the market position of Mecklenburg County.

- Blueway
- Tobacco Heritage Trail
• Colonial Center
• Cove Project
• State Park Marina
• Lake Gaston Public Access
• Old Town Bracey
• Downtowns
• Restaurants
• Tackle Shops
• Tractor Supply
• Farmers Market
• “Lake Country Drink” Lemonade-Mecklenburg Shine
• Micro Brewery
• Good Grocery Store
• Farm tours
• Skateboard Park
• Bowling Alley/activity center
• Teen Center
• Golf/Golf Pkgs
• 18 hole Golf Course
• Swimming areas
• Tennis
• Playgrounds
• Conference Center
• Coffee Shops
• Triathalon
• Fall foliage-Boat Cruises
• Spa-Day Spa
• Sky Diving
• Horse riding
• Houseboating
• US 1
• Outfitters-
• Shops to support Outdoor Recreation
• Horse Park
• Archery
• ATV Courses
• Sporting Clays
• Geo Caching
• Movie Theaters
• Yard Sale Trail
• Train Excursion
• Historic Walking Tours
• Historic homes-driving trail
• Historic Driving Tour
• CCC Camps-tour
• Shuttle Service
• Transportation-train style shuttle or trolley
• Art Studio-Art Community-Artisan network
• Cooks offs
• Motorcycle tour
• Blue Horse Mukwa-Camp Opportunity
• Historic Church Tour-
• Historic Cemetery tour
• Brunswick Circuit Rider Tour
• Jones NY/Peebles outlets
• Outlet mall
• Nightlife
• Evening activities
• Industrial tours
• Dam tours
• Agritourism
• Railroad history
• Bateau-ferries
• Native American Trading path
• African American History
• Native American History
• Kid friendly-teen friendly activities
• Water industry-springs
• Literary Festivals
• Community theater groups
• Folk lore:
• Mecklenburg Hotel
• Angies Bridge
• Machine Gun Kelly-captured at the Horse Shoe by (Millie Bracey’s father)
• Tunnel to Colonial Theater
• Antique Car Rally
• Pontoon Boat Poker Run
• Tractor Pulls
• Bubba Fest
• Motor Maid-Women Driver tour
• Tour Guides-Step on for Motor Coach tours

Target Customers/Tourists/Visitors
Following is a list of specific customers/tourists/visitors determined for the purpose of identifying target markets for future advertising and marketing of Mecklenburg as a tourism destination:

• Families
• Bicyclists
• Birdwatching
• Water Skiers
• Jet Skiers
• Canoeing
• Sports Tournaments-Team Sports
• Sports Spectators
• Outdoor enthusiasts
• Outdoor sportsmen
• Fishermen
• Kayakers
• Film industry
• Interstate 85 traffic
• US 58 Traffic
• History Buffs
• Geo-cachers
• Festival goers
• Foodies/Food Festival Goers
• Foreign travelers
• Farm tourists
• Agritourists
• Photographers
• Antiquers
• Thriftiquers
• Yardsalers
• Campers
• Hunters
• Equestrians
• Walkers/stollers
• Hikers
• Native American historians
• Gex X’ers
• Gardeners
• African American historians
• Music lovers
• Girls getaways
• Doll lovers
• Wine lovers
• Train lovers
• Quilters
• Scrapbookers
• Night fishermen
• Bed and Breakfast Lovers
• Fair Goers
• Theater Buffs
• Aviation Buffs
• Motorcyclists
• Ghost hunters-metaphysicalists
• Skateboarders
• Business Travelers-and their families
• Traveling Nurses/Doctors
• Patients and patient families
• Archaeologists
• Hydroplane racers
• Thrill seekers/Race Enthusiasts
• ATV Racers
• Weddings
• Reunions-Family
• Reunions-church
• Genealogists
• Pleasure Boaters
• Sailors
• Railroad Enthusiasts
• US 1 Historians –Boydton/Plank Road
• Antiques car Lovers
• Downtown Shoppers/Main street lovers
• Street Musicians
• Farmer Market lovers/vendors
• Artists
• Art lovers
• Skeet shooters
• Historic Church lovers
• Historic Cemetery lovers
• Historic courthouse lovers-regional market
• Athletes
• Adventurist
• Pontoon Boat lovers
• Firework lovers
• Motor Maids
• Knitters
• Rug hookers
• Tractor club
• Demolition derby
• Tractor pull goers
• Interior decorators
• Home decorators
• Red hatters
• Ladies clubs
• Golfers
• Focus groups
• Hobbyists
• Balloonists
• Group Tours
Tourism Infrastructure Analysis/Business Gap Analysis

Infrastructure can enhance or inhibit the growth of Tourism in Mecklenburg County. The following list of infrastructure needs and businesses needed to help tourism grow in Mecklenburg County was developed through discussion. The Business Gaps are potential small business opportunities to support the Mecklenburgs’s Tourism Industry.

- Lack of Tourism person at County to coordinate and lead effort
- Lack of education in county about value of tourism –too much negative talk about area
- Lack of Customers Service Skills
- Lack of restaurants local/special-need more in all areas of county
- Need more lodging and alternative lodging
- Water/Sewer needed for expansion of Tourism growth and development in Bracey area and other areas of the county-need better cooperation between the county/town
- Lack of public water access points on Lake Gaston
- Lack of public transportation/shuttle service
• All towns have growing need for replacement of aging infrastructure—at some point this will be a crisis
• No parking for Motor Coaches
• Public Safety has been an issue in the past and has kept large events from taking place.—Over enforcement is an issue
• Need signage—wayfinding signs County wide
• Horrible Trash problem in the County
• Ordinance and Zoning can be prohibitive to Tourism growth and development
• Bureaucracy towards development on lakes
• Have Great interstate and Primary road access
• Bus pick up/drop out point-no ticket station
• Airports
• Trainstation—proposed High Speed Rail line
• Adequate coverage for events by Public Safety

Business Gap Analysis
• Bicycle rental/repair
• Outfitter
• Canoe Rental/Repair
• Equestrian Supplies
• Bed and Breakfast
• Cottages
• Campgrounds along trails
• Equestrian Camping
• Grocery Stores
• Butcher Shops
• Specialty foods stores
• Boat Rentals
• Movie Theaters
• Bowling Alley
• Golf shops
• Bookstores (New/Used)
• Office Supplies
• Coffee Shops
• Bakeries
• Hunting guides
• Fishing guides
• Tackle Shops
• Niche Gift shops
• Nightlife spots
• Sports Bar
• Toy store
• Department Stores
• Specialty Boutiques
• Business Incubators
• Retail Incubators
• Cooking Classes
• Sports Complex
• Micro Brewery
• Cigar Bar
• Antique/Collectible Stores
• Artisan Community
• Increase Agritourism opportunity
• Artisan Studios
• Shuttle Service/Limo Service
• Bus Service
• Another 18 Hole Golf Course
• Drive-In Theaters
• Hunting Supply Stores
• Eco-tourists
• Volunteer Vacationers
• Outdoor Recreation Store/Retail-like Bass Pro or Cabellas
• Go-Cart Track
• Drive In
• Enrichment Programs-
• Wine shop

SWOT Analysis
The discussion and identification of SWOT – S (Strengths), W (Weaknesses), O (Opportunities), and T (Threats) – was used as a key method in developing this tourism strategic plan for the Mecklenburg County. Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors, while Opportunities and Threats are external factors. Goals, Objectives, Targets, Measures, and Initiatives were all determined later, after careful consideration of the SWOT analysis:

Strengths

• Chambers
• Location-1/2 way to everywhere
• Lakes
- Sports
- Highway system-easy to get here and around
- Scenic routes
- Affordability-taxes, homes, food, etc. lodging
- History/heritage
- Civic organizations/fraternal
- Parks
- Recreation
- Museums/gardens
- Local events/festivals
- Dedicated volunteers
- People
- People willing to work to make a difference
- Leadership Mecklenburg
- “Safe Haven”
- Lack of Development at all exits-room for growth and expansion
- Land for expansion
- Responsive to needs and willing to pitch in to help when needed
- Good schools-colleges/satellite sites
- Churches
- CMH/Clinics/Helipad
- Nursing/retirement homes
- Shopping
- Flea markets/thrift stores/antiques
- Town support
- Downtowns
- Culture/cultural events-diverse
- 3 newspapers
- Broadband
- Available buildings
- Diverse assets
- Trails/Blueway-Tobacco Heritage Trail
- Outdoor recreation and natural assets
- Library system
- Airports
- Excellent public safety-rescue, fire, police
- Corp parks opening dates extended into fall-ability to have more tourists
- Rosemont Winery
- Market square
- Hotels(Availability)
- Infrastructure to host large events-Ex. Dixie World Series, and Bike VA
- Community Pride
- Local artisans
- Fed/state/local gov’t cooperation
- Large variety of natural resources
- Potential to go from good to great
- Accessibility to decision makers
- Corporate sponsorships
- Pavilion in Chase City
Main streets in Chase City, Clarksville, South Hill

Weaknesses

- Resistance to change
- Not open to change
- Territorialism
- Inept in customer service
- Lack of knowledge of community assets
- Businesses not open
- Lack of buy in
- Lack of participation
- Lack of support from community
- Lack of Lake Concessions and Rentals
- Lack of Lake Access on Lake Gaston
- Lack of Central Event info
- Need better way to communicate with the community
- No local Tourism Coordinator at the County Level
- Lack of collective marketing packaging effort
- Need to form committee to coordinate tourism efforts for the county
- No developed tour of historic assets-walking/driving etc
- Lack of county wide lodging
- No local radio media
- Lack of cultural events
- Lack of patience-it will take time to make things happen
- Loss of interest in projects due to lack of patience
- Lack of persistence
- Lack of coordinated vision
- Lack of volunteers
- Need Customer Service Training
- Education-SOL based and students not getting the basics
- Good Mecklenburg County Map
- Lack of diverse Restaurants-need more Mom/Pop with local flavor
- Lack of a community facility to hold 500 plus
- Segregation still exists
- Lack of diversity
- Grocery choices limited-need a good grocery store
- Lack of infrastructure
- Lack of funding sources
- Inadequate infrastructure to support growth
- Lack of commitment
- Name Recognition for Buggs Island/John H. Kerr Dam
• Lake citizens feel disconnected from towns/County
• Perception of “too far between towns”

Opportunities

• Location, location, location
• Colonial Theatre-To expand cultural learning thru education MCPS and SVCC, theatre and Music
• To develop new cultural events and volunteer opportunities based on interests
• Vacant Buildings-new business opportunity
• To recruit more small local restaurants featuring local flavor
• To recruit county wide lodging
• To bridge gaps and build relationships through common goals
• Market lakes and rivers
• To enhance our current assets and develop new
• Create mix use and downtown living
• to utilize proximity to metro areas(Richmond, Raleigh, Mountains, Beaches)
• Road systems
• Attract more people by marketing festivals outside of local community
• Sports marketing at Parker Park and Bunny’s field
• Attract more fishing tournaments
• Attract more vendors and buyers to Farmer’s Market
• Enhance public transportation/create business opportunity for shuttle services or taxi service
• Develop walking tours
• Create incentives for small business development
• To develop new programs/assets by tapping into resources living in the areas(on the lakes)
• Develop unique shopping
• Cultural events
• Educate about the value of tourism-local leaders and local citizens
• Educate local businesses as to how they are a part of tourism and to the value of tourism
• Develop packages to market
• Develop, enhance, and market trails-water, multiuse, driving, historic walking trails
• Better coordinate events
• Develop better system to market events to local citizens and outside of area
• Work with CMH in marketing assets
• To improve resistance to change
• Lifestyle changes
• To promote/market Sense of Place-“Somewhere USA” Good Place to live
• Friends of the Lake Groups to knock down “silos” of townies and lakies
• Organize Volunteer groups to help non-profits- and projects-Corp., trails, museums, etc.
• Educate and create more volunteer opportunities
• Get more diverse volunteers-encourage youth volunteers
• Gain new volunteers and citizens to invest in the community through new industry recruitment
• Encourage people to live here and work through telecommuting by developing a creative economy
• Enhance our quality of life
• To capitalize on our outdoor and natural resources
• To utilize books written about our history, genealogy organizations, etc to develop unique historical tours
• To maximize and use or human resources by recruiting “new” volunteers
• Developing a signature beverage (w/optional take home glass) to be served in every restaurant in the county. Lake lemonade or Mecklenburg Shine
• Market regionally
• To better utilize pavilion in Chase City
• Package lake events and activities to make them weekends and not just day trips
• Develop more recreation and entertainment opportunities
• Develop indoor sports center for archery and shooting range
• Develop Yard Sale trail on US 58 for Memorial Day and Labor day weekends to coincide with Hillsville.
• Develop historic homes trail
• Utilize Mecklenburg Enrichment Center
• Work with new Superintendent to teach Customer Service skills and area awareness to students
• Promote, promote, promote
• To network regionally
• To market and develop to equestrians and utilize Boydton Horse Park as indoor and outdoor venue for large meetings/groups
• To create regional driving tours/projects
• To make Mecklenburg Shine
• To hold Customer Service workshops/hospitality training

Threats

• Lack of Customer Service in the area
• Competing events
• Fluctuating Lake Levels on Kerr
• Lake of Resources Money, Man-power, Marketing
• Economic Downturn
• Strangulation Bureaucracy-agencies can be helpful/can take a LONG time for approvals/changes
• Liability issues
• Fear of Failure
• Resistance to Regionalism/change
• Lack of community support/understanding
• Rural distances-geography
• Metropolitan Competition-
• Perception of over regulation-tourists “regulated out of North Bend park”-Reservation system lose camp site revenues due to no shows
• Lack of Historic preservation by modernization
• Limited infrastructure
• Poor land developmental planning – keep rural values
• Security and Safety-perception of not enough for big events
• General apathy-let someone else do it
• Schools not teaching our assets-heritage
• Water transfer to other metro areas-effect lake levels
• Foreign competition-economic development
• Learning social etiquette/acumen-need to teach soft skills to students
• Closed minds
• Local talent leaving area need to keep them in our job market
• Sense of entitlement
• Not fully using technology to our advantage
• Not finding balance/niche
• Negative thinking
• Lack of volunteers-same ones doing everything
• Lack of teenage volunteers
• Negative talking
• Name recognition of Buggs Island/John H. Kerr Dam
• Lake citizens feel disconnected from towns/county
• Perception of too far between towns

Exercise for Marketing: License plate
An exercise to describe the Mecklenburg County for marketing purposes was done by having participants develop a license plate to describe the area.

• H2OPRDS
• USRT#1
• FRIENDS
• FARMING
• FUN R US
• LAKEFUN
• MUSEUMS
• HISTORY
• CIVLRTS
• FISHING
• CAMPING
• TOBACCO
• HORSLVR
• ANTQUES
• BY-WAYS
• EXT#12
• EXT#15
• GDCNTRY
• WNCNTRY
• BOATING
• SWIMMING
• FOODFUN
• HUNTING
• GAME4U
• CRIEHT
• LUVLAKE
• GR8LAKE
• FUN4U
• JUS4FUN
• CUS4FUN
• 2TSTWYN
• WINELVR
• (HEART) 2 HUNT
• LAKTOWN
• LAKCNTY
• FUNITOWN
• FISHLVR
• WINELVR
• LAKEVR
• LAKE4U2
• NICEFLK
• CAMPOUT
• GR8FLKS
• WETEACH
• (HEART) R LAKES
• (HEART) FISHIN
• DAMGOOD
• BOATNBY
• FISHRUS
• VALAKES
• BIGBUGG
• BUGGLVR
• LAKENUT
• TRLSRUS
• SUN&FUN
• LAKE FUN
• BRDSIVU
• PMFISHIN
• IMFISHN
• VASBEST
• HEYALL
• LAKELVN
• LV2HUNG
• LV2FISH
• BIRDDOG
• SUNSETN
• SUNRISN
• COMECUS
Performance Measures
Quick Reference Chronological Summary
To be determined by the Mecklenburg Economic Development/Committee

2011

Measure 1.1
Measure 1.2
Measure 1.3
Measure 1.4
Measure 1.5
Measure 1.6

Measure 2.1
Measure 2.2
Measure 3.1
Measure 4.1
Measure 5.1
Terms & Definitions

- **Goals**: Broad statement of measurable outcomes to be achieved on behalf of customers

- **Initiatives/Tasks**: Specific programs, strategies, and activities that will help you meet your performance targets

- **Measures**: Meaningful indicators that assess progress towards accomplishment of goals and objectives

- **Mission Statement**: Statement of purpose; fundamental reason for the tourism effort’s existence

- **Objective**: Statements of what you must do well, or barriers that you must overcome, to achieve a specific goal

- **Opportunities**: Factors or situations that exist beyond your organization that may have a favorable effect on it

- **Strengths**: Resources or capabilities that can be used to accomplish your mission

- **Target**: The numerical value of the performance measure you hope to achieve

- **Target Customers/Tourists**: Any person, group, or organization that is believed to have an interest in utilizing your tourism related product(s) and/or service(s)

- **Threats**: Factors or situations that exist beyond your organization that have a negative affect
➢ **Tourism Assets**: Any tourism related product, attraction, site, or event that is of interest to target customers/tourists

➢ **Vision Statement**: A descriptive picture of the future that the organization/tourism effort intends to ultimately become or influence

➢ **Weaknesses**: Deficiencies in resources or capabilities that hinder your ability to be successful