



Future Forward Economic Alliance

Revisiting the Economic Strategy

March 8, 2006



Today's Objective

- Revisit and Assess Our Efforts to Date
- Discuss Priorities for the Future
- Revise Our Future Plans to Reflect New Priorities



Agenda

- Review current vision and strategies
- Assess our progress to date
- Examine new challenges and opportunities
- Develop a refined work program and resource plan



Our Vision

- Promote a more diverse economy
- Foster a renewed sense of entrepreneurship and business innovation
- Improve workforce education and skills
- Develop and protect amenities that appeal to young adults and active retirees
- Coordinate the area's governance to enhance regional collaboration



Our Challenges

- Quality of Workforce
- Quality of Available Education Opportunities
- Global Economic Pressures
- Slow Adoption of New Business Technologies
- Barriers to Regionalism
- Fiscal Crises for Local Gov'ts
- Inadequate Infrastructure (esp. water/sewer)
- Lack of 4-Lane North-South Corridor
- Quality of Life concerns



Our Priority Actions

- Create a network of regional alliances
- Identify transportation corridors for development
- Identify targeted infrastructure projects
- Conduct a “value of education” campaign
- Develop an improved people-job matching information system



Our Priority Actions (continued)

- Establish a “Learning and Innovation” network to provide training programs and facilities
- Conduct a market research study to identify firms in the targeted clusters
- Promote a mega-development project as a tourism/retail destination (and industrial development)
- Promote development of a “high-end” tech park
- Establish a regional task force to support planned development, strategic outdoor amenities, and heritage/cultural assets

Network of Regional Alliances

- Creation of Future Forward Economic Alliance
- Seed resources for 5-county tourism alliance
- Creation of Higher Education Coordinating Council
- Support for Workforce Development Board collaborations (planned joint retreat)

Transportation Corridors as Focus of Development

- Development of development guidelines and/or principles for target corridors
- Influence on individual county or municipal actions (?)
- Completion of land use development plan for I-40/Burke County
 - Study adopted in December 2003
 - Burke County implementing some of these recommendations through rezonings, etc.

Targeted Infrastructure Projects

- Advocacy for key highway improvements:
 - **Hwy 321 bridge over the Catawba River**
 - \$9,600,000 earmarked for replacement of southbound bridge
 - NCDOT authorized Planning & Environmental Study
 - Construction contract will be let in 5 years
 - **US 221 improvements**
 - NC 226 Feasibility study
 - Brushy Mtn Pkwy – Phase One of Foothills Pkwy
 - **NC 150 improvement feasibility study**
 - Project currently in NCTIP for Planning & Environmental Study
 - Work not yet begun
 - **Hwy 16 improvement**
 - Unifour DOT Rep says it their highest priority for Catawba County
 - Will try to partially fund in the new state TIP
 - US-321/I-40 interchange frontage road

Targeted Infrastructure Projects (con't)

- Analysis of needs
 - **Brownfield/vacant building survey**
 - Fiber optic corridors (broadband) cost and gap analysis
 - Regional water and sewer utility efficiency studies
- Advocacy for regional facilities
 - **Hickory Airport task force assembled**
 - Morganton-Lenoir Airport – fly-in industrial park
 - Tri-County Morrison Field Industrial Park complex
 - ASU millennium campus
- Preparation of Regional Infrastructure Plan
- Support for regional water/sewer initiatives
 - W. Kerr Scott Reservoir Water project
 - Catawba River sediment removal project
 - Western Catawba/Broad Regional water distribution system
 - **Claremont (water improvements)**
 - **Town of Catawba/City of Hickory (sewer improvements)**

“Education is How” campaign

- Resource feasibility assessment
- Obtain \$77,000 in ARC funds to support Future4Kids initiatives in ARC counties
 - Implemented in Burke, Rutherford, Mitchell Counties
 - Funding for Catawba County

People-jobs matching

- Statewide workforce job matching system

“Learning and Innovation” network

- Hickory Metro Higher Education Center
- Foothills Allied Health and Science Higher Education Center (WCU & WPCC)
- Appalachian Teaching Center (ASU, CCTI, Caldwell County, and Caldwell County Schools)
- NC Center for Engineering Technologies



Market research study – Industry Growth Analysis

- **Western Piedmont Labor Area** (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba)
- **Region C Labor Area** (McDowell, Rutherford)
- **Centralina Labor Area** (Iredell, Lincoln)
- **High Country Labor Area** (Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes)

Site development

- Identification of mega-sites
 - I-40 at Burke-McDowell (industrial)
 - Blackburn Landfill, Catawba (mixed-use)
- Certified sites initiative
 - Alexander, Burke, Iredell, Lincoln, Rutherford
- Brownfield site assessments
 - Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, McDowell, Watauga, Wilkes

Regional Technology Park



Regional Planning Task Force

- Unifour recreational task force – economic impact of recreational facilities study



Changes in the Region

- New Priorities
- Critical Challenges and Opportunities
- Proposed Actions
- Resource Constraints



New Priorities

- Which strategies have momentum? Why?
- Which have not gained traction? Why?
- Should we eliminate any of these priorities?
- What has changed in the region during the past 3 years that should affect our strategy?



Our Challenges: Reminder

- Quality of Workforce
- Quality of Available Education Opportunities
- Global Economic Pressures
- Slow Adoption of New Business Technologies
- Barriers to Regionalism
- Fiscal Crises for Local Gov'ts
- Inadequate Infrastructure (esp. water/sewer, telecom)
- Lack of 4-Lane North-South Corridor
- Quality of Life concerns



Critical Challenges and Opportunities

- What are the most important challenges and opportunities still facing the region today?
- Which of these challenges and opportunities should be the focus of our attention during the coming year?



Proposed Actions

- What existing strategic actions should we continue/discontinue?
- What new actions should we consider?
- Which of these new actions have consensus support and are more feasible?
- What two-to-three actions should we spend time on in the coming year?

Our Challenges:

Possible New Actions to Consider

■ Quality of Workforce

- Provide staff resources to support Higher Educ Coordinating Council
- Conduct “community college of the future” study aimed at identifying opportunities for better regional collaboration
- Identify and propose entrepreneurial development curriculum to be included in area post-secondary education programs (including Higher Ed Center)

■ Quality of Available Education Opportunities

- Raise funds for “Education is How” campaign
- Assess Future4Kids impacts to date and develop a plan for rolling out a related effort in all 12 counties

■ Global Economic Pressures

- Conduct pre-development work on identified mega-sites
- Expand brownfields clean-up program
- Conduct a study of the impact of tourism on the region
- Develop a regional tourism marketing campaign

Our Challenges:

Possible New Actions to Consider

(additional)

- Slow Adoption of New Business Technologies
 - Establish a peer-to-peer business mentoring network for budding entrepreneurs and small innovative businesses
 - Develop (AND share at ASU summit?) local case studies of regional businesses in the target cluster industries to implement new management principles or adopt new technologies
- Barriers to Regionalism
 - Support ASU Leadership Summit aimed at engaging more business persons as well as public leaders
- Fiscal Crises for Local Gov'ts
 - Conduct regional water/sewer efficiency study
- Inadequate Infrastructure
 - Develop a FF regional infrastructure plan
 - Conduct an assessment of broadband costs and gaps in the FF area
- Lack of 4-Lane North-South Corridor
 - Conduct an “Alternative Transportation Financing” summit to move the area’s transportation priorities forward
- Quality of Life concerns
 - Support recreation and tourism efforts to identify area assets and assess their economic impact on the region



Resource Constraints

- What resources do we have available to implement these actions?
- What additional resources do we need?
- Where might we obtain additional resources?
- What should we incorporate into a proposal to federal/state/foundation funding sources?



The Future of Future Forward

- Are we making adequate progress toward achieving our vision?
- How should Future Forward continue or can/should other groups take up this effort?
- What role should Future Forward play in moving the selected actions forward?
- How should Future Forward integrate its efforts better with Advantage West and the Charlotte Partnership?
- How can Future Forward better communicate its accomplishments to date – or should it?



Next Steps in Implementation

