

STRATEGIC PLAN Caldwell County

NORTH CAROLINA
Economic Development



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EXISTING INDUSTRY SUPPORT

Possible Strategies & Actions

- » Conduct both systematic and as-needed visits with existing industry to identify needs
- » Identify & develop existing industry tools & resources +
 - ▶ Facilitate business engagement with educational institutions to improve labor market alignment and student outcomes +
 - ▶ Business engagement around “earn and learn” opportunities for employees +
 - ▶ Promote work-based learning opportunities (i.e. internships, apprenticeships) +
 - ▶ Conduct annual wage and benefits surveys
- » Support small business development lending for job creation by working with local agencies that provide loans*
- » Promote/market local area careers; labor market details for the region to a variety of audiences (i.e. students, parents, educators) *
- » Work with school system to identify upcoming K-12 talent to retain workforce
- » Continue to offer Workforce Wednesday program to expose educators to local career opportunities for K-12 students

Metrics

Number of resources for existing industry; number of participants in work-based learning programs; number of loans; new marketing materials.

Partners

Local governments, community groups, Workforce Development Board, private sector, youth leadership programs, education systems, lenders, grant agencies.

SITE DEVELOPMENT & RECRUITMENT

Possible Strategies & Actions

- » Study the feasibility of development opportunities at/along both the rail in Caldwell County and at the Foothills Regional Airport*
 - ▶ Evaluate existing infrastructure at/along both rail & airport
- » Pursue grant funding for due diligence and improvements at publicly owned sites
- » Attend targeted industry site selection events
- » Identify critical utility projects and collaborate in multi-jurisdictional projects ~*
- » Explore the use of public-private partnerships (P3) opportunities*
 - ▶ Support the public-private partnership for housing project in Cahah’s Mountain
- » Explore incentive options that would prioritize who Caldwell County would offer incentives
- » Maximize building reuse and site redevelopment opportunities*
- » Use the Western Piedmont Industry Growth Analysis (IGA) for business recruitment*

Metrics

Number of pad-ready sites available/created; new public/private partnerships; identified sites and number of new shovel-ready sites; number of evaluated corridors/rights of way/ rail improvements; number of added links; number of successful grants; number of new recruitments.

Partners

Local governments, railroad, Foothills Regional Airport, NCDOT, grant agencies, WPCOG, utility departments, private utility companies.

~shared strategy/action from January 2020 Caldwell County Comprehensive Plan

*shared strategy/action from the 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

+aligned with myFutureNC attainment strategies

PUBLIC AWARENESS/MARKETING OR BRANDING

Possible Strategies & Actions

- » Grow Caldwell County Economic Development's social media presence with a focus on both a professional and layperson audience
- » Explore marketing/branding initiatives (i.e. Work in Burke, NC Carolina Core); consider an initiative (perhaps regional) to recruit additional talent
- » Increase the use of videos to promote industry in Caldwell County
 - Schedule and complete additional CaldWELL Made videos
- » Promote & support regional assets such as the Manufacturing Solutions Center (MSC), Morganton Campus of the NC School of Science and Math (NCSSM), Appalachian State University, Lenoir Rhyne University, the NC Center of Engineering Technologies (NCCET), community colleges, and other critical economic development assets (educational, recreational, etc.) *
 - Inform the community of the importance of these assets*
 - Create new opportunities near campuses, such as retail, hotel, housing, sidewalks, greenways, recreation, and transit*
- » Intentionally focus efforts on disengaged populations +
- » Promote quality of life in county to retain and attract talent ~
 - Develop informational talking points targeting various audiences (visitors, current residents, prospective residents, business & industry) that can be used consistently throughout the county*
 - Link the proximity of the county to the idea that we are a region with everything (NC Foothills Experience website, etc.)*
 - Link the proximity of the county to major metros
- » Ensure students and parents are aware of career opportunities available in the county and educational programs that align with those careers*+
 - Promote postsecondary attainment to meet specific employer/workforce needs
- » Develop methods to encourage relocation to the county and/or market Caldwell as a destination ~*
 - Continue to support the veteran population with jobs, living and healthcare resources. Recruit veterans for workforce needs*

Metrics

Website and social media analytics; number of videos created; size of disengaged population; number of marketing materials created.

Partners

Local governments, chamber of commerce, TDAs, private and non-profit partnerships, educational facilities, Caldwell Public TV, Greenway Public Transportation, WPCOG.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION, EDUCATION & SUPPORT

Possible Strategies & Actions

- » Beautification (i.e. minimum housing, code enforcement, main street programs, placemaking, HWY 321 & gateway entrances) ~
- » Housing (identify housing development opportunities)*
 - Support homebuilders' association
 - Unified development ordinances w/ unified planning department
 - Implement strategies and best practices around housing, as identified by the WPCOG housing study
- » Begin implementing strategies and best practices as identified through the Center on Rural Innovation study for building a tech economy in Caldwell County
- » Promote entrepreneurialism through small business startup and retention efforts
- » Support the expansion of existing childcare centers as well as new centers looking to locate in the county with a emphasis on quality pre-K education~
- » Work to achieve 1.5 to 2% population growth annually to avoid population loss and maintain healthy community growth
 - Organize the Population Optimization Project and solicit recommendations for growing our population
- » Decrease the workforce who commute out of the county for jobs
- » Work with local, state, and federal officials to reduce the approval process time for development – modify processes and ordinances to become more development/business friendly*
- » Support Greenway transportation services and assist their expansion across Caldwell County
- » Promote the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities connecting communities and area attractions
- » Explore increasing and marketing recreational opportunities such as parks, open spaces, and walking trails/sidewalks/greenways that will attract new residents, tourism, and young adult populations back into the region ~

Metrics

number of designated main street programs; number of gateway improvements; number of new housing units; number of childcare providers; population growth

Partners

Local governments, chamber of commerce, TDAs, private and non-profit partnerships, educational facilities, local veterans' affairs office, NCDOT, WPCOG, MPO, PARTF, Parks/Rec Departments.