

CLAY COUNTY, NC



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

**A Five Year Plan for Promoting Job
Creation and Economic Growth**

Clay County Board of Commissioners

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Contributing Organizations

Clay County Chamber of Commerce
 Clay County Travel and Tourism Board
 Small Town Main Street
 Clay County Communities Revitalization Association
 Friends of Historic Courthouse Committee
 Clay County Historical and Arts Council
 Hayesville Evening Market
 Southern Appalachian Family Farms

Resources

2011-2021 Clay County Comprehensive Plan
 Southwestern North Carolina Economic Development Strategy
 North Carolina Department of Commerce
 North Carolina Jobs Plan
 United States Census Bureau



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Purpose of the Plan

The intent of the Clay County Economic Development Strategy is to help Clay County Government assess and analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to job creation and economic development within Clay County. The objective of the strategy is to allow local leaders, committees and non-profit organizations a framework by which to align their goals and vision in order to achieve economic success. This plan will arm leaders and citizens with the information needed to guide short-range and long-range change, responsible growth, and development. The purpose of the Clay County Economic Development Strategy is to:

- Provide vision for future growth and development in Clay County;
- Identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as they relate to job creation and economic growth
- Recognize clusters appropriate for economic growth and development
- Recommend action steps necessary to grow the identified clusters
- Identify needed infrastructure improvements to facilitate future growth
- Foster the economic development base by capitalizing on the county's unique opportunities and resources;
- Recognize and retain existing businesses while encouraging growth and expansion
- Promote workforce development opportunities with our local partners
- Serve as a vehicle for community awareness and education;
- Provide detailed strategies to implement plan recommendations; and
- Develop metrics by which to quantify the success of the plan and ensure measurable and obtainable objectives

*“Efforts and courage are not enough without **PURPOSE** and direction” – John F. Kennedy*



Vision

The Vision of the Economic Development Commission is to create a business friendly environment to help foster the growth of our existing businesses while attracting new businesses to Clay County. The EDC would like to see the county grow and increase the tax base while at the same time, maintain our small town heritage and exceptional quality of life. We would like to grow our business sectors allowing for more residents in the area to receive good paying jobs and help make Clay County a great place to call home. We will focus on retention, recruitment and readiness.

Retention: Retention will aim to support the local businesses that Clay County currently has and help foster an environment for future growth. The EDC will work to provide assistance and incentives that result in the retention and creation of jobs and investment in Clay County. Furthermore, the County will make efforts to identify issues negatively affecting business stability and will work to mitigate these issues including (but not limited to) infrastructure deficiencies, workforce needs, regulatory over-reach, and changes to State and Local Statutes detrimental to business and industry.

Recruitment: Recruitment is the sector of economic development that will focus on attracting new businesses into Clay County. The EDC will work to market the assets that make Clay County an attractive place to relocate or start up a business. Some of the assets include Clay County's vast beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, excellent school system and phenomenal quality of life. Recruitment of appropriate businesses and industries desirable to Clay County's citizens will require regular and systematic review by the County's Economic Development Commission. The EDC should, at least bi-annually, review the County's target market sectors, and make efforts to empower the EDC Director with the appropriate tools necessary to adequately recruit identified sectors.



Introduction and Overview

Readiness: The Economic Development Commission will work with our local, regional and State partners to advance a proactive plan consisting of improvements to our current assets, products, community development, and workforce/resource development. We will continue to assess our infrastructure with regards to water, sewer and telecommunications and look for opportunities to expand these crucial components to further economic growth. The EDC will maintain and continually update listings of available land and commercial property to show prospective clients. The EDC will also work to foster community development by working with our partners to promote events with the understanding that community development ultimately leads to economic development. Clay County will work with our partners in education, specifically, Tri-County Community College, to assist with workforce development in existing and newly emerging fields of employment. The EDC will also continually look into resource development in the form of grants, loans and other available tools to assist business growth, expansion and relocation.



Plan Organization

The Economic Development Strategy is divided into nine chapters.

Each chapter presents a variety of data and documents to support the content using tables, figures, images, and maps. When appropriate, action steps will be included at the end of each section.

Planning Process

The development of the Clay County Economic Development Strategy involved several steps, with the goal being the adoption and implementation of the plan to guide future community growth and development. Measures were taken to ensure that the Clay County Board of Commissioners all had adequate input in developing the plan, through questionnaires and review prior to approval. Also, Commissioners Penland and Peck were selected by Chairman Roach and County Manager Leak to actively work with Mr. Aaron Patton, Economic Development Director, during the creation of the plan.

Commissioner Adoption

Upon final completion, the Clay County Economic Development Strategy will be presented to the Clay County Board of Commissioners with a target date of May 7, 2015.



Economic Development Board

Once the strategy is adopted by the Clay County Board of Commissioners, steps will be taken to appoint a new Economic Development Board in conjunction with the bylaws set forth by the Board of Commissioners. The Economic Development Board will oversee the implementation of the Economic Growth Strategy. Their duties and obligations will be clearly outlined within the bylaws.



Chapter 1: Demographic Overview

County Profile

Clay County (NC)

February 2015

Demographics		
Population & Growth	Population	Annual Growth
2019 Proj Total Population	11,199	0.4%
2014 Proj Total Population	10,968	
2010 Census Total Population	10,587	2.1%
July 2013 Certified Population Estimate (NC only)	10,794	
Urban/Rural Representation		Urban/Rural Percent
2010 Census Total Population: Urban	0	0.0%
2010 Census Total Population: Rural	10,587	100.0%
Estimated Population by Age		Pop by Age
2019 Proj Median Age	52	
2014 Proj Median Age	51	
2014 Proj Total Pop 0-19	2,139	19.5%
2014 Proj Total Pop 20-29	951	8.7%
2014 Proj Total Pop 30-39	1,053	9.6%
2014 Proj Total Pop 40-49	1,241	11.3%
2014 Proj Total Pop 50-59	1,707	15.6%
2014 Proj Total Pop 60+	3,877	35.3%

Source: NC Department of Commerce: Access NC

The population in Clay County according to the 2010 census data was 10,587, a 20.6% increase from the Census of 2000. From 2010 to the 2014 projection of 10,986 the county saw an estimated growth of 2.1%. The county is expected to have a total population of 13,718 by 2030. With Clay County's increasing population, measures must be taken to ensure that infrastructure is able to meet the population demands.

Age: Clay County is experiencing an aging population as represented in the lower half of the above table. The 2019 projected median age is 52 and it is currently at 51 years of age. The biggest percentage of the population of Clay County is that of the 60+ age persons. This section makes up 35.3% of the total population of Clay County. In fact, Clay County has the highest median age of all 100 counties in the State of North Carolina. The smallest age range is from 20-29 years representing only 8.7% of the total population of Clay County. These numbers are largely due to the number of retirees that move into the county and the number of college graduates that leave the region in search of work. It is important to note that Clay County's working-age population, in total, remains well in excess of 67%, and these individuals, along with the younger population readily leaving the community following high school graduation, will need employment for many years to come.



Ch. 1 Demographic Overview

LAND

LAND AREA:	215 Sq. Miles	
WATER AREA:	6 Sq. Miles	
TOTAL AREA:	220.81 Sq. Miles	
FOREST LAND:	110,096 Ac	80.4%
NON-FOREST:	26,806 Ac	19.6%
TOTAL LAND:	136,902 Ac	100%



As you can see from the above chart much of the land in Clay County is covered in either water (6 square miles) or by forest property (80.4%). This is both a positive and a negative aspect for Clay County. The negative is that much of the forest property is not available for development and results in a loss of tax revenue. The County does receive payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) for both the TVA and Forest Service property (nearly 52% of total land), though these reimbursements are less than what would be received through property taxes if developed, and those PILT payments will likely continue to decrease in the years to come. The positive is that the land can be used for other purposes such as hunting, fishing, hiking, biking and many other forms of outdoor recreation. Furthermore, over-development and greenspace preservation issues that plague more metropolitan areas will not likely ever become an issue in Clay County. The mix of development and outdoor recreation opportunities is one aspect that makes Clay County so unique. We must continue to ensure availability, access and use of these public lands while protecting the assets themselves.

Ch. 1 Demographic Overview

Employment / Unemployment		
	Currently	2013 Annual
Dec2014 Prelim., 2013 Employment	4,037	4,054
Dec2014 Prelim., 2013 Unemployment	219	351
Dec2014 Prelim., 2013 Unemployment Rate	5.1%	8.0%
2014Q3 YTD, 2013 Announced Job Creation	.	.
2014Q3 YTD, 2013 Total Announced Investments (\$mil)	.	.

The current Unemployment rate is at 5.1% in Clay County. This number is down from the 2013 unemployment rate of 8.0%. This suggest that more people in the county are able to find work. The number of the unemployed has dropped but the number of employed in Clay County has remained roughly the same. This means that some are seeking employment outside the county. Also to be considered is the number of folks who have stopped looking for work and those self-employed and unable to draw unemployment. Both of these numbers may result in an artificially lower unemployment rate.



Ch. 1 Demographic Overview

Commuters, Workers Age 16 and Over, 2013 Est			
Percent of Workers, By Travel Time		Workers, By Transportation	
Avg Travel Time, Minutes	20.5	Worker Transp, Base	3,647
Workers Not Working at Home	3,647	Work at Home	2.1%
Travel Time to Work: < 10 minutes	15.7%	Drove Car/Truck/Van Alone	90.2%
Travel Time to Work: 10-14 minutes	22.9%	Carpooled Car/Truck/Van	4.9%
Travel Time to Work: 15-19 minutes	22.1%	Public Transportation	0.0%
Travel Time to Work: 20-24 minutes	15.6%	Walked	1.4%
Travel Time to Work: 25-29 minutes	2.8%	Other Transportation	1.3%
Travel Time to Work: 30-34 minutes	11.6%		
Travel Time to Work: 35-44 minutes	3.4%		
Travel Time to Work: 45-59 minutes	1.1%		
Travel Time to Work: 60+ minutes	4.9%		
Place of Work		Commuters	Residents
Worked in State/County of Residence		1,760	48.3%
Worked in State/Outside County of Residence		1,000	27.4%
Worked Outside State of Residence		887	24.3%

The Graph above represents commuters in Clay County and their respective commute to and from work each day. The most popular mode of travel is alone in a car, truck or van (90%). The workforce in Clay County has an average travel time to work of 10-19 minutes. This travel time to work represents 45% of the total population. This time is partly due to the rural setting of Clay County, and the main business sector being in the middle of the county. The lower part of the graph represents the place of work. 48.3% of the residence of Clay County actually work within the county while 27.4% of residence travel outside Clay County to find work. 24.3% of residence travel outside the state to work. The high level of residents employed out of state is obviously partially accounted for by the proximity to the Georgia state line. By adding both of these numbers together 51.7% of the total population in Clay County is traveling outside of the county to work each day. This is a high number and it is the hopes of the EDC to create jobs within the County and keep some of those workers within the county.



Ch. 1 Demographic Overview

Income		% Growth or % of Total
2013 Est Median Family Income	\$46,528	22.5%
2019 Proj Median Household Income	\$41,830	13.1%
2014 Proj Median Household Income	\$36,994	18.6%
2013 Est Median Worker Earnings	\$22,854	
2019 Proj Per Capita Income	\$25,026	1.4%
2014 Proj Per Capita Income	\$23,356	28.2%
2013 Est Total Pop with Income Below Poverty Level, Last 12 months	2,543	0.2%

The average household income of Clay County is \$36,944. The average individual earnings are \$23,356. These numbers are down from the 2013 averages but are expected to make an increase in the 2019 projections of Median household income of \$41,830 and individual earnings average of \$25,026. Within the Southwest North Carolina Economic Development District, 17.2% of the region lives in poverty, with an astounding 31% of children within the same district in poverty.

Employment / Wages by Industry	2014 2nd Qtr Employment	2013 Annual Employment	2014 2nd Qtr Avg Weekly Wage	2013 Avg Weekly Wage
Total All Industries	2,041	1,909	\$516	\$535
Total Government	554	508	\$566	\$638
Total Private Industry	1,487	1,401	\$497	\$498
Agriculture Forestry Fishing & Hunting	0	0	-	-
Mining	0	0	\$0	\$0
Utilities	0	0	\$0	\$0
Construction	176	157	\$676	\$601
Manufacturing	0	0	-	-
Wholesale Trade	0	0	-	-
Retail Trade	388	391	\$481	\$473
Transportation and Warehousing	17	19	\$899	\$889
Information	0	0	-	-
Finance and Insurance	43	41	\$664	\$688
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	0	3	-	\$704
Professional and Technical Services	24	30	\$845	\$1,048
Mgt of Companies, Enterprises	0	0	\$0	\$0
Administrative and Waste Services	56	39	\$360	\$318
Educational Services	222	211	\$682	\$711
Health Care and Social Assistance	0	0	-	-
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	0	0	-	\$0
Accommodation and Food Services	0	206	-	\$266
Other Services Ex. Public Admin	50	0	\$400	-
Public Administration	31	36	\$694	\$795
Unclassified	0	0	\$0	\$0

The top employers in the county are private industry, employing a total of 1,487 people. The next top employer is Government which employs 554 people within the county. The top employers by industry are retail trade (388), educational services (222), and construction (176).



Ch. 1 Demographic Overview

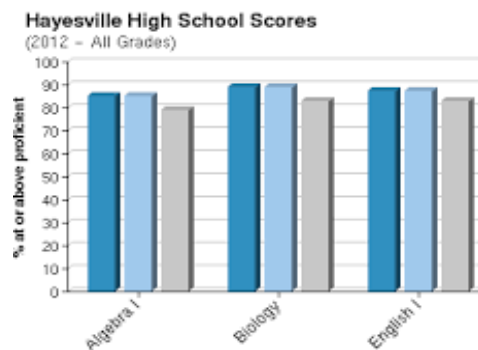
Education			Pop Age 25+
'013-14 Kindergarten-12th Enrollment	1,323		
'014 Average SAT score (2400 scale)	1,503		
'014 Percent of Graduates taking SAT	58.5%		
'012-13 Higher Education Completions	.		
'012-13 Higher Education Total Enrollment	.		
'013 Est Education Attainment - At Least High School Graduate	6,787	86.9%	
'013 Est Education Attainment - At Least Bachelor's Degree	1,605	20.6%	

From information in the above graph, K-12 enrollment is at 1,323 students. In 2013, 86.9% of the population has obtained at least a high school diploma and 20.6% of the population was involved in higher learning having at least a bachelor's degree. The graduation rate for Clay County Schools is above the state average. The percentage of students that complete the requirements for graduation in the four years of high school enrollment is 88.8% compared to the state average of 82.5%



Clay County's Hayesville High School has been recognized nationally by US News as one of the best high schools in the State of North Carolina. HHS has a national rank by US News of Bronze, boasting a Student/Teacher ratio of 12:1.

Subject proficiency testing shows that HHS students tested above the state average in both English, Biology and Algebra, with a proficiency rating of 87% in English and 85% in Algebra.

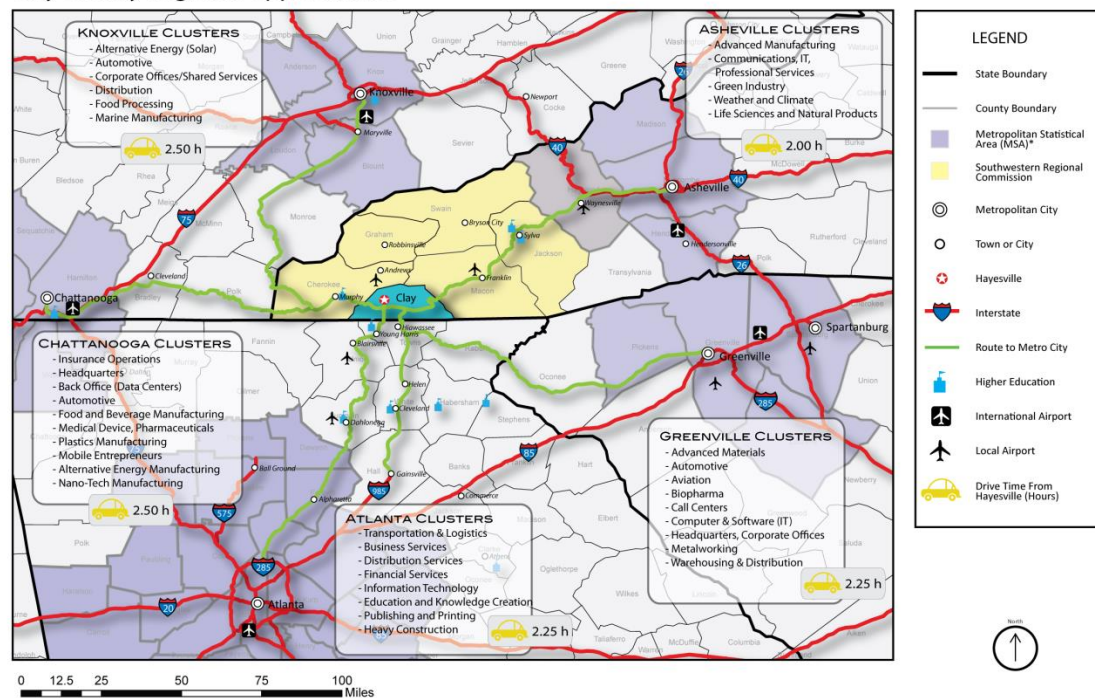


Clay County Economic Development Strategy

Chapter 2: Regional Opportunities

Clay County is centrally located between several major markets and is within a 2-2.5 hour driving distance of five specific markets. In the graph below one can see that Clay County is conveniently located to the major markets of Atlanta GA, Asheville NC, Greenville SC, Chattanooga TN, and Knoxville TN.

Clay County Regional Opportunities



Each of the above markets has identified clusters that they are or have been working on. This allows Clay County an opportunity to tap into these clusters and provide an area that can feed the needs of the clusters in those markets. If Clay County is able to do this the economic impact would be great, more jobs would be created and retention of younger generations would be a direct result. The EDC and supporting organizations will continue to work with our partners in the years to come, attending regional meetings and marketing the County in these regions in hopes to gain attention from these major markets.

Ch. 2 Regional Opportunities

Working closely with our regional partners is imperative in order to ensure that both Clay County and the region itself can remain competitive in today's global economy. Both Clay County and the region need to identify the region's competitive advantages, allowing to prioritize public and private investments to exploit those advantages.

Specifically in Southwestern North Carolina, The Southwestern NC Economic Development District, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), dated 9/30/2012, gives a good analysis of problems and opportunities facing the region and economic development strategies aimed at the following:

- Building on the Region's Competitive Advantage
- Establishing and Maintaining a Robust Infrastructure
- Creating Revitalized and Vibrant Communities
- Developing Healthy and Innovative People



Within the CEDS there is a lot of valuable information regarding the background, regional profile and analysis of economic and community development for Southwest North Carolina. There is significant information contained within the CEDS and the benefits of working with our regional partners are obvious. However, we believe that the local government of Clay County should continue to make all decisions directly related to the County and not sign over local authority to any planning process or other regional development authorities.

Ch. 2 Regional Opportunities

Regional Opportunity	Benefits
<p><i>Proximity to Metropolitan Areas</i></p> <p>Clay County is within driving distance from five metropolitan areas: Knoxville, TN to the north, Asheville, NC to the east, Greenville/ Spartanburg, SC to the southeast, Atlanta, GA to the south, and Chattanooga, TN to the west.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Employment opportunities » Economic development opportunities building on the economic clusters of the metropolitan areas » Further Clay County Transportation's (CCT) goal of becoming a public transportation provider
<p><i>Proximity to Interstate Highways</i></p> <p>Clay County sits in the middle of a ring of Interstate Highways, with the closest access point being I-75 near Cleveland, TN. From Chattanooga, TN (2.50 hours), one can access I-75 and I-24. From Knoxville, TN (2.50 hours), Interstates 75, 81 and 40 are accessible. Asheville, NC (2.00 hours) provides access to I-26 and I-40. I-85 and I-26 pass through the Greenville/Spartanburg, SC area (2.25 hours). The main interstates coming into and heading out of Atlanta, GA (2.25 hours), are I-85, I-20, and I-27.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Economic development marketing opportunity (market that Clay County is two hours from everywhere) » Opportunity to plan for greater metropolitan access in future transportation plans » Coordinated commuting opportunities
<p><i>Proximity to Higher Education</i></p> <p>A number of two- and four-year higher education institutions are within a 20-minute to one-hour driving distance; many of which have satellite centers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Job retraining » Youth/young adult retention » Increase the number of adults with bachelor's degrees (an economic development indicator) » Opportunity to create a regional learning center in Clay County
<p><i>Proximity to Airports</i></p> <p>There are a number of small regional airports easily accessible and close by. Larger airports are in each of the metropolitan areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Economic development » Opportunity for CCT or a private business owner to run shuttles to nearby airports
<p><i>Regional Tourism</i></p> <p>While these are not detailed on the map, Clay County and the region have similar natural features outdoor recreation opportunities, a shared cultural heritage, and overlapping events. Many communities do not have enough activities to entice visitors to stay for several days. Clay County can work with other communities to develop and market regional, or loop, tourism opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Tourism promotion in the metro areas » Economic development through natural resource and outdoor recreation promotion » Promotion of the loop tourism concept (see page __)
<p><i>Economic Development Clusters</i></p> <p>Each metropolitan area has identified the economic development clusters they have or are trying to develop.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Clay County can intentionally reach out to business leaders in the metro area to share how Clay County can further their business growth plans » Clay County can assist local small business owners develop their businesses by intentionally linking them to business opportunities in the metro areas

Clay County Economic Development Strategy

Chapter 3: Real Estate and Property Development

REAL ESTATE: Real estate and property development is a complex and continually evolving cluster that is directly tied to the health of our local economy. When discussing the economic engines in our economy this is one sector that is often overlooked. The basic function of the real estate industry is the marketing of lands and residential, commercial and industrial buildings built by the construction industry and the manufactured homes produced by the manufacturing sector. The marketing of these real properties is the final stage in the production of real assets. Regardless of how many millions of dollars are spent in the production, the value of these goods is only realized after they are marketed and sold. Since resources have already been allocated to produce these homes and buildings, substantial economic losses are incurred if the properties remain unsold. The real estate industry provides a vital service in the movement of these assets between buyers and sellers. The purchase and sale of homes with the assistance of the real estate sector plays a major role in local economies.



Like other industries, the real estate sector has both direct and indirect impacts on the local economy. The direct effects are focused on the real estate industry and businesses directly involved in home sales. Examples may be title companies, mortgage companies, attorneys, inspectors and appraisal firms that are an integral part of the home sale process. The sale of a home not only generates demand for the services provided by real estate firms but may also generate demand for the services of electricians, plumbers, HVAC companies, roofing and siding firms and landscape companies to correct deficiencies prior to the closing of the sale. Indirect effects are generated as real estate related businesses require more goods and services from other types of businesses such as accounting firms, advertising firms, and printing firms. Induced effects result from the increased incomes received by workers in all industries that they then spend on goods and services. Another induced effect is home owners spending to redecorate or improve their new purchase.

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT: Home building generates substantial local economic activity, including new income and jobs for residents, and additional revenue for local governments.



The National Association of Home Builders has developed a model to estimate the economic benefits of home building in a typical local area on income, jobs and taxes generated. Their model captures the effect of the construction activity itself, the ripple impact that occurs when income earned from construction activity is spent and recycles in the local economy, and the ongoing impact that results from new homes becoming occupied by residents who pay taxes and buy locally produced goods and services. In order to fully appreciate the positive impact residential construction has on a community, it is important to include the ripple effects and the ongoing benefits.

For the sake of this Economic Development Strategy, we will look at the impact of constructing 100 single family homes in Clay County, utilizing the National Association of Home Builders model, dated April 2015 from the Housing Policy Department. It should be noted that the figures outlined below are based on National averages.

The estimated one-year impacts of building 100 single-family homes in a typical local area include \$28.7 million in local income, \$3.6 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 394 local jobs. These are local impacts, representing income and jobs for residents of an average metropolitan area or **nonmetropolitan county**, and other sources of revenue, including permit fees) for all local jurisdictions within the local area. They are also one-year impacts that include both the direct and indirect impact of the construction activity itself, and the impact of local residents who earn money from the construction activity spending part of it within the local area. While the likelihood of this scope of construction in Clay County may be unlikely in a years' time, the key is to understand the real impact of home building on a local economy.

The additional, annually recurring impacts of building 100 single-family homes in a typical local area include \$4.1 million in local income, \$1.0 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 69 local jobs. These are ongoing, annual local impacts that result from the new homes becoming occupied, and the occupants paying taxes and otherwise participating in the local economy year after year. The ongoing impacts also include the effect of increased property taxes, based on the difference between the value of raw land and the value of a completed housing unit on a finished lot, assuming that raw land is taxed at the same rate as the completed housing unit. Again, these numbers are based on National averages and may not accurately reflect Clay County, but the economic impact of property development is clearly evident.



The following are the results of a strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis, relating to economic development in this particular cluster.

REAL ESTATE AND DEVELOPMENT:

STRENGTHS

According to a tourism study by Western Carolina University College of Business, in 2013, Clay County was able to generate \$12.51 million in tourism spending. Given this level of tourism it is the hope of the EDC and community partners that some of the visitors to the area will eventually look to relocate to the area buying a house or looking to build a house within the county.



Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Clay County experiences four distinct and beautiful seasons that provide breathtaking views from stunning 5,000 foot mountain peaks to peaceful 1,500 foot valleys. Lake Chatuge and other nearby picturesque locales provide the perfect backdrop for exciting activities of all kinds. The sheer beauty of the Clay County coupled with its laid back lifestyle make this an ideal place to retire or vacation. Coupled with our excellent school system, young families may also look to relocate to raise their children. Clay County is also ideally located within 2 to 2 ½ hours from Asheville, NC; Greenville, SC; Atlanta, GA and Chattanooga and Knoxville, TN. Marketing the many wonderful aspects of Clay County within our regional metropolitan areas may increase this sector growth substantially. Clay County still has plenty of land available to supply economic growth without adversely affecting our small town charm and heritage.



WEAKNESSES

The price of the available land plays a part in the real estate development process. The prices of land in the county have often been high and the higher price can turn away potential clients and home buyers. High prices of available residential and commercial land can hinder the economic development process. According to Access NC information the average value of owner occupied housing is \$154,700. Another factor in the real estate market is the aging population of Clay County. Many of these residents are retired and are already owners of a retirement house in the county. According to the 2013 census information 27.5% of Clay County residents are ages 65 and older. The same census information reveals that 90.5 percent of the Clay County population had lived in the same house for a year or longer.

OPPORTUNITY

As confidence returns to real estate, the industry faces a number of fundamental shifts that will shape its future. Clay County is poised to see further growth because of the combination of its location and beauty coupled with changing markets in Florida and metro Atlanta. It is estimated that by 2020, investable real estate will have grown by more than 55% compared to 2012. It is hopeful that Clay County will see another increase in second home ownership/vacation homes as investment properties, setting the stage for future retirement and full time residence.



Clay County may also capitalize on the Casino coming to neighboring Cherokee County. With an investment of nearly \$110 million and the expectation of creating nearly 900 jobs, the Casino is certainly going to bring change to its surrounding area, including Clay County.

Clay County is in close proximity to the location of the new casino making it a prime location for visitors to locate. Visitors or employees looking to be close to the casino but outside of the casino environment could buy a residence within the county. Market studies will need to be done to see if the outlying areas around a casino are able to capture new home buyers. Contacts with Swain and Jackson counties will be a resource to see the impacts they have received from the current Cherokee Casino.

The County also has an industrial Park that according to the Clay County Comprehensive Plan, adopted on October 7, 2010, will be able to support the counties industrial growth for the next ten years. Development in this area could be an opportunity to gain new businesses in the county. The county owns the property and would be able to offer incentives to potential clients. Hwy 69 has been identified as the main growth corridor with recently completed water and sewer infrastructure down that highway to the Industrial Park.



THREATS

Approximately half of Clay County, is covered by either Forest Service or TVA property. This often limits its use for economic development purposes. A lack of investment in real estate and development due the down turn in rural economy may have lingering effects. The lack of investment in manufacturing will have an impact on the success in this sector limiting large job growth and subsequent relocation. Site ready land is also a motivator for industries and homeowners to relocate. In the years to come Clay County needs to work toward having sites ready to be developed. Infrastructure updates will directly help this process.



Clay County Economic Development Strategy

Chapter 4: Travel and Tourism

The Economic Development Board wants to work with the Clay County Travel and Tourism Board to promote travel and tourism for Clay County. The Clay County Travel and Tourism Board is funded by the three percent Clay County Occupancy Tax collected from accommodation businesses. Visit North Carolina, a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina provided County statistics in its study "The Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties." This study was prepared for Visit NC by the US Travel Association. In it they cite the following economic impact of tourism on Clay County: Expenditures in millions (\$12.51), Payroll in millions (\$1.33), Employment in thousands (0.06), state tax receipts in millions (\$0.51), local tax receipts in millions (\$1.36), and tax savings per resident as a result of the increased revenue (\$175.44). Clearly, Travel and Tourism serves a substantial role in Economic Growth and Development. Working with our community partners we would like to achieve the following:

- Increase consumer awareness of Clay County as a travel destination.
- Increase consumer inquiries about travel to Clay County.
- Increase market share and visitation to Clay County.
- Increase spending by visitors while in the county.
- Increase Occupancy Tax by attracting new accommodations
- Assist the Clay County Recreation Department with recruiting and hosting regional sporting events and tournaments.
- Increase local tax revenues.
- Increase the number of jobs supported by the tourism, outdoor recreation, and agri-tourism
- Leverage partnerships with attractions and other local organizations to maximize reach and efficiency.

Clay County
Communities
Revitalization
Association



Ch. 4 Travel and Tourism

- Work with the TVA towards possible development of lake front property to further recreational and community related activities
- Assist the Travel and Tourism Board in tourism product development and sustainable practices.
- Support the Clay County Chamber of Commerce in promoting their community events, including the Punkin' Chunkin' Festival



- Help the Travel and Tourism Board with their branding campaign, utilizing their logo, as seen on the bottom of each page, in all marketing products

Clay County is well situated for future success in this economic cluster. The county is covered by National Forest offering many heritage tourism opportunities such as hiking, biking and trail running. The county also has Lake Chatuge which is a body of water covering roughly six square miles in the county offering an array of water recreation. The lake and pristine freshwater creeks offer an abundance of fishing opportunities. The county also has two 18-hole golf courses within its confines which is an attraction to retirees moving to the area and visitors alike. One important goal of the EDB is the acquisition of a chain hotel/motel to be able to house more visitors that come into the county. We will market this cluster in three main areas:

- ❖ **Outdoor recreation-** Clay County offers many forms of outdoor recreation, with substantial room to grow, creating many jobs within the county.

Ch. 4 Travel and Tourism

- ❖ **Agri-tourism-** Agri-Tourism is defined by the Chamber of Commerce as any agriculturally-based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm, ranch or winery. It may include a wide variety of activities, such as: buying produce or meat directly from a farm or a farm stand, navigating a corn maze, picking fruit, feeding animals, or staying at a B&B on a farm and visiting a vineyard.



- ❖ **Community Development-** Community development is the process of making the community a better place to live and work and occurs primarily in the public sector. Economic development is the process of creating wealth, in which community benefits are created secondarily. To have a vibrant local economy, a community needs both community development and economic development. We will work to promote community events that lead to increased visitation and highlight our heritage and culture.

The following are the results of a strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis, relating to economic development in this particular cluster.

STRENGTHS

Many events and gatherings to attract tourists are put on through the chamber of commerce and other organizations throughout the community. The EDC will support these activities.

Clay County has received certification and is now considered an AVA region for wineries. American Viticultural Areas, or AVAs, are geographical wine grape growing regions in the United States.



Ch. 4 Travel and Tourism

There are three major wineries within Clay County and the growing conditions here are comparable to Napa valley region. This can be a draw to bring heritage tourists into the region to visit and experience the feel of a working winery.

Many outdoor recreation opportunities county wide: Clay County has a multitude of outdoor recreation opportunities available, including; hiking, biking, camping, hunting, golf, fishing and water recreation.



Besides camping and lake access, Clay County offers recreation parks for sporting events such as soccer, basketball, baseball, and football. We also boast a newly renovated and expanded indoor recreation center which includes cardiovascular machines, weights, racquetball court and gymnasium. Facilities have been expanded to accommodate the increasingly popular pickleball and the development of additional athletic fields is in the works. This will help ease the lack of practice facilities and allow for revenue generating tournaments.

Lake Chatuge is one the biggest assets in the travel and tourism sector that the County can capitalize on. The Lake covers roughly six square miles in the county and has potential to be a major draw for tourists around the region.



Many of the County's community organizations are focusing on this aspect of economic development. Getting all organizations to work together, toward a common goal will be key in optimizing our success.

WEAKNESSES

Clay County is lacking in the ability to house visitors. The county has two “mom and pop” type hotels. These hotels are small and combined house less than 100 visitors in the county. The lack of a chain motel hurts the ability to keep tourists in the county because there is a low option of places to stay. Due to the low number of hotel rooms, tourists often stay outside of the county. As a result we lose much needed revenue. Development of a hotel in Clay County and being able to house tourists visiting the area would benefit Clay County greatly.

Of additional concern is the significant decline in the golf industry and its continued implications for two of our prominent recreation amenities, The Ridges Golf Course and Chatuge Shores Golf Course.

***OPPORTUNITIES***

The TVA lease on property adjacent to the recreation park. This land has the ability to host a tourist based business, expanding recreation opportunities. The EDB needs to maintain dialogue with the TVA and proactively pursue revenue generating development possibilities.

Working with the counties recreation department will give an opportunity to bring more tourists into the county. The Recreation Park will have the ability to put on sporting tournaments and would pull visitors into the county from outside areas. These tourists spend money while they are here and would directly benefit the county.

THREATS

There is the threat that the new Cherokee Casino pulls more tourists away from Clay County to Cherokee County. It is a possibility that the tourists coming to the region will not visit Clay County directly. Marketing must be done to ensure that Clay County is being seen and not just passed through.



Clay County Economic Development Strategy

Chapter 5: Information Technology



Information technology (IT) is the application of computers and telecommunications equipment to store, retrieve, transmit and manipulate data, often in the context of a business or other enterprise. It refers to anything related to computing technology, such as networking, hardware, software, the Internet, or the people that work with these technologies. Many companies now have IT departments for managing the computers, networks, and other technical areas of their businesses. IT jobs include computer programming, network administration, computer engineering, Web development, technical support, and many other related occupations. Since we live in the "information age," information technology has become a part of our everyday lives. That means the term "IT," is here to stay. As a rapidly growing business sector, Clay County has an opportunity to tap into this market. The county has an industrial park that would be a fitting location for businesses of this type. The industrial park already has a call center in Drake Enterprises.



Clay County has broadband fiber connectivity along the business corridor but the outlying areas of the county are not currently served. Some industries in this field are able to work from home and the need for greater residential saturation of connectivity is in great need.



STRENGTHS

IT type businesses have the ability to work from anywhere. The business corridors of Clay County have efficient broadband connectivity supported by BRMEMC.

The afore mentioned county owned industrial park has availability and would accommodate IT businesses quite well as evidenced by the success of Drake Enterprises. The county can offer incentives to businesses looking to relocate to the industrial park. The EDB can market Clay County's quality of life, and lower cost of business to companies strapped by the high operating costs of larger metropolitan areas.

WEAKNESSES

Infrastructure is not currently set up to support widespread residential service. Broadband/ connectivity is not fully saturated in the county. The business corridor in the county is being served, but the county currently has locations where there is no broadband connectivity. This has and may in the future dissuade small from home IT based businesses from relocating to Clay County. The county would need to work to improve the infrastructure to be able to support such businesses and residences. A partnership with BRMEMC will be key in the years to come in getting Clay County better connected. If BRMEMC fails to expand the IT infrastructure, additional relationships may need to be explored to fill the void.

On the next page is a representation of the connectivity within Clay County and the download speeds of the broad band that is available.



Ch. 5 Information Technology

ACCESS TO ANY		VALUE				
Broadband Technology (% of population)		85.10%				
NUMBER OF AVAILALE		1+	3+	5+		
Broadband Providers (% of population)		96.73%	24.50%	6.05%		
Wireline Providers (% of population)		21.51%	0.00%	0.00%		
Wireless Providers (% of population)		96.64%	9.14%	0.00%		
MINIMUM ADVERTISED		10M	25M	50M	100M	1G
Download Speed (% of population)		60.72%	3.18%	2.92%	0.00%	0.00%
Upload Speed (% of population)		2.92%	2.92%	2.92%	0.00%	0.00%
Wireless Download Speed (% of population)		58.89%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

85% of the population in Clay County has broad band available to them, leaving 15% without coverage. The county could benefit by working to increase this number in the future with infrastructure improvements. This would make more broadband available at faster download/upload speeds expanding the reach of IT and other home based businesses.

OPPORTUNITIES

Workforce training in this sector can be gained by working with our partners in economic development, specifically, Tri County Community College to help businesses train employees to fill positions. This training is often times free to the company and is highly beneficial in tailoring employees to fit the need of the specific company.



Ch. 5 Information Technology

Here is another example for the need to improve infrastructure throughout the county to support future IT companies and other industries alike. By increasing infrastructure, such as telecommunications, water and sewer we increase the likelihood of attracting businesses. The county would need to work with partners and be willing to allocate funds to see this process through.

As mentioned earlier, marketing the “quality of life” of Clay County helps attract these types of businesses. Information Technology companies have the unique ability to work from anywhere they desire. The County must actively market other benefits of operating in a small county, such as the small town values, lower crime rates, lower cost of living, and schools. Tech Training within the Clay County School System would be an asset as well leading to further workforce development.

THREATS

“Connectivity” businesses of this type rely heavily on the ability to be connected electronically. Updates to infrastructure as well as broadband/ fiber would be necessary for attracting business within this sector. Such investments would require extensive investment and may be years away.

Positions may be difficult for employers to fill due to the needed knowledge and experience often required in information technology. Training of future employees would be a necessity. Working with our schools and local community college to develop tech training programs would help fill the possible void of qualified employees.



Clay County Economic Development Strategy

Chapter 6: Small and Specialty Manufacturing



Small and specialty manufacturing will be the focus of this sector. Manufacturing is an incredibly valuable industry to have as part of an economy and it is currently an important aspect of Clay County. According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, manufacturing has a multiplier of \$1.40, which is the largest multiplier of all industry sectors. This means that for every \$1.00 of manufacturing sales, \$1.40 of sales from other industries is generated as well. Manufacturing is also stable and non-seasonal.

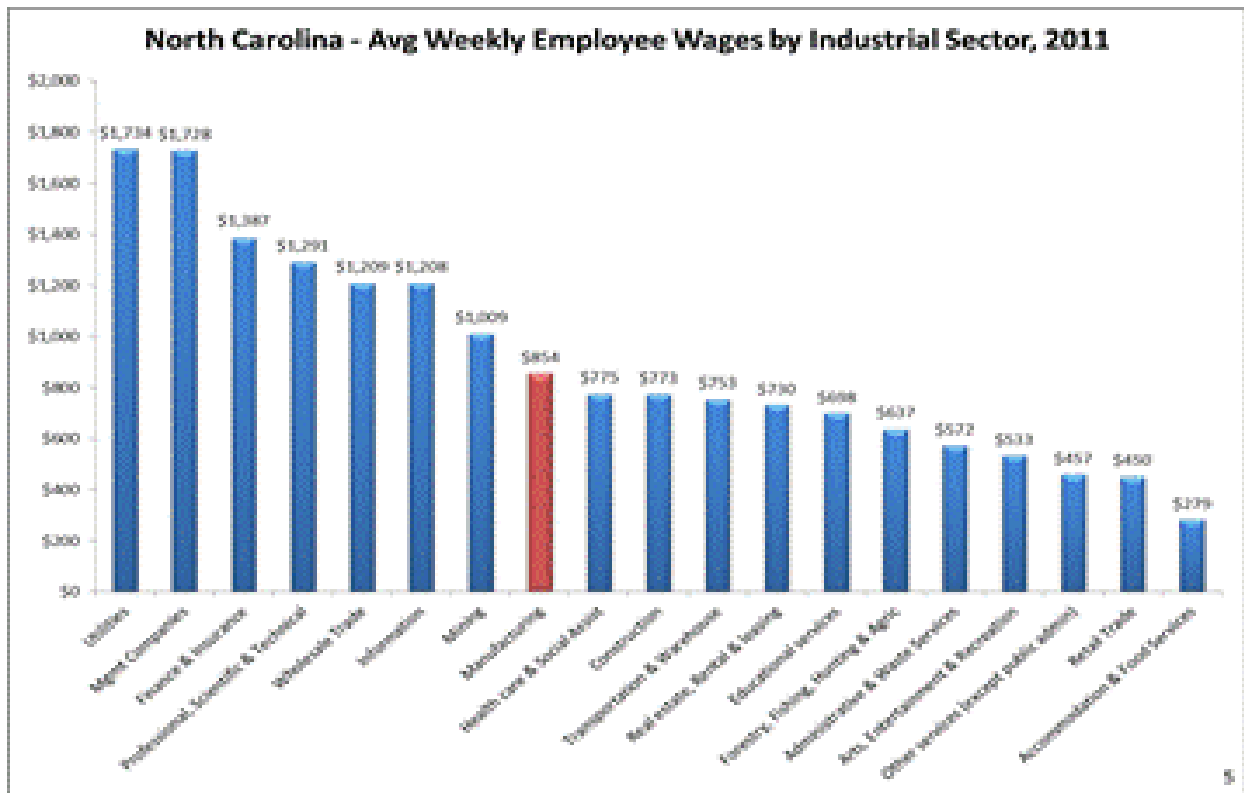
Mass production of generic products that compete on margin need ready access to ground transportation, but specifically, manufacturing of small specialty products does not. This is helpful in light of Clay County's more rural setting. Product can often be shipped via UPS or FedEx. We have two wire and cable manufacturers in the county each employing 50 or more employees. If within the next 5 years only 2 new manufacturing companies with an average of 50 employees were created, it would result in 100 new, year round, sustainable jobs. For simple math, if each of these new 100 jobs paid an average of \$30,000.00, it would have an economic impact of \$3.0 million. This would also result in a \$1.40 multiplier effect on other industries bringing the total economic impact to \$4.2 million. These support industries would include restaurants, retail shops, small businesses and professional services.

Large vacant buildings, that are big enough to be suitable for large manufacturing is limited within the county. Large manufactures would be welcomed but the focus would be on attracting businesses that will total less than 100 employees.

STRENGTHS

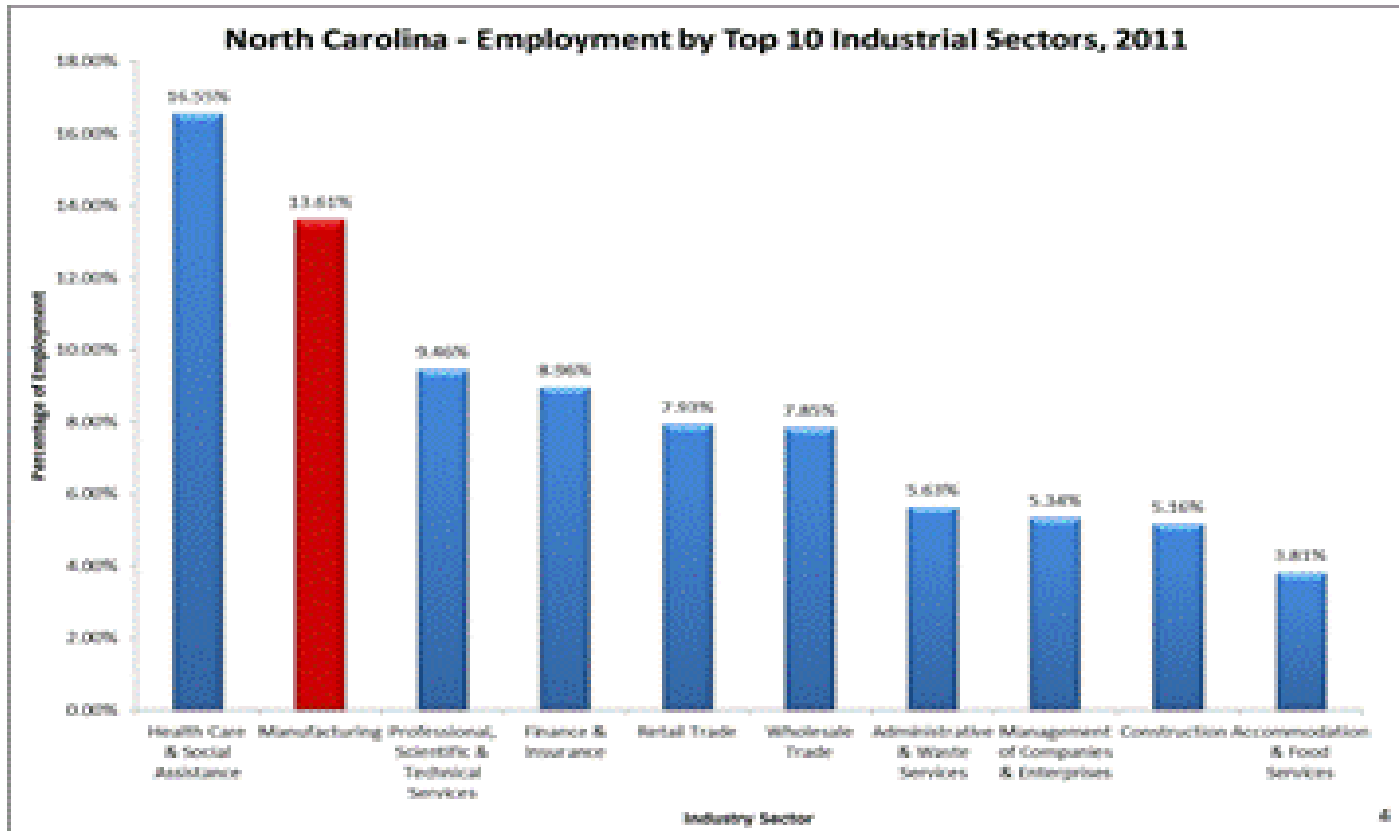
Clay County has several successful manufacturing businesses already in place.

Manufacturing jobs generally pay a higher wage than the county average



Source: US Census Bureau - State & County Facts - North Carolina.

According to the above chart manufacturing jobs in North Carolina pay an average of \$854 per week which is well above the county average. The same source also claims that manufacturing is one of the top employers in the state taking the second position as the state's top employer in the industrial sector.



Source: US Census Bureau - State & County Facts - North Carolina.

WEAKNESSES

Many of the available buildings in the county may not be suitable for manufacturing companies.

Companies that are looking to relocate to a specific area are generally looking for a specific size building that is “move in ready”. Many of the buildings within the county are either too small to support large manufacturing or they need upgrades to the building to make it usable for what the manufacture needs. The county has limited buildings/ commercial space available to manufacturers. Currently the county only has one building available that would be a possible fit for a manufacturing business. An ongoing inventory of available buildings and open land for development will be important in attracting new industry.

OPPORTUNITIES

Attracting manufacturers that will be able to complement one another, such as buyer/ supplier relationships could be beneficial. Recruiting companies that complement one another or use products in their manufacturing that are supplied by a manufacturing company close by would cut down time and expense and would lead to a greater turnout of products.

Because of Clay County's central location to many large markets, regional opportunities exist. The EDB needs to work on incentives for manufacturing companies looking to relocate to the area.

Small custom manufacturers will be the goal. Again, we need to utilize our economic development partners, such as TCCC, for workforce development opportunities.

THREATS

Working age population is declining due to the aging population and higher number of retirees that continue to move into the region.

Companies may be less inclined to move to Clay County in the future due to the lack of a natural gas and other lagging infrastructure.

Proximity to major interstates could be a threat to some potential businesses. Clay County is located about two hours from all major cities, and about an hour and a half from the closest interstate. Clay County is also lacking in rail access. Some major manufacturers still choose to ship large order via rail and Clay County is not able to accommodate that request. Companies looking for ease of shipping may be less inclined to choose Clay County as a business destination because of this reason. Again, this is why we would prefer to focus on small and specialty manufactures less dependent upon ground and rail transport of goods.



Clay County Economic Development Strategy

Chapter 7: Retail Trade

The focus in this economic cluster would be the expansion of retail trade along the business corridors of highways 69 and 64, as well as within the downtown of Hayesville. Entrepreneurial type retail operations will be the main focus. While it is understood that the majority of retail trade will occur among the more heavily and visible corridors, much effort will be given to revitalize the downtown for economic growth. The past few years have brought a major shift in how the state of North Carolina approaches economic development. The state's current economic development structure focuses more on business attraction and retention, and less on local economic development. As a result, the local small businesses that are the backbone of economies in communities such as Clay County suffer. Downtowns are important economic and community assets. The restaurants, shops, offices and more are critical economic engines. They create jobs, generate wealth, and are rooted in communities. In an interview in the January 2015 issue of Carolina Country, **Governor Pat McCrory states the following:**

"I believe a small town environment is the living room of rural areas. If I am recruiting new industry to those areas, I want to show off the living room, which is the main street, the business district. To have abandoned and vacant buildings makes it something I can't sell, because it indicates the region is unhealthy. I am upset with the legislature, even in my own party, for eliminating the historic preservation tax credit. We need to reinstate that to encourage investment in small town commercial areas, to bring retail and the marketplace back to the small town business districts."



STRENGTHS

Clay County is suitable for retail/ entrepreneurial business. Entrepreneurial type businesses already make up a large portion of the businesses located within the county and there is a great support network set up to help those businesses if needed. With the recently completed infrastructure improvements to Hwy 69, additional opportunities are now available for food establishments and other operations which were lacking water and sewer for permitting of their operations.

Clay County's lone municipality of Hayesville was chosen to participate in The Office of Urban Development's Small Town Main Street Program (STMS). The N.C. Department of Commerce announced on Aug. 12 of 2013, that six new communities had been chosen with Hayesville being selected after a competitive application process that included 18 communities from across the state. Small Towns BIG IDEAS Case Studies in Small Town Community Economic Development from the UNC School of Government stated that *"The program grew out of the recognition that North Carolina's smallest places serve a major role in the economic, social and cultural well-being of the state as a whole, yet many are struggling to cope with job losses, population decline, high poverty, empty buildings and crumbling infrastructure."*



The Small Town Main Street program addresses the growing number of small, rural towns that need downtown development assistance through a Four-Point Approach that incorporates organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring in its comprehensive process for downtown revitalization. As a result, Hayesville has been given two-years of concentrated monthly on-site and any time on-call technical services by the STMS staff, following the four-point approach. Participants may remain in the program indefinitely; however, the level of service provided by the program staff is reduced to "as necessary" assistance and visits after year two.



Services available in the community's first two years include:

- STMS staff will commit to coordinating and facilitating monthly STMS committee meetings;
- Will help community create shared community visions for their future;
- Will prepare a Business and Market Development report based on data gathered by committee;
- Offer design assistance to property and business owners;
- Assist in creating functional committees with leadership skills;
- Assist the town in becoming more engaged in deciding their destiny as small towns;
- Will coordinate/facilitate regional workshops/round tables;
- Work toward assisting the community in increasing levels of reinvestment in their downtowns and;
- Helping the community to renew civic involvement by identifying partners and engaging these partners in the process

With a strong local organization and committed volunteers, Hayesville's Small Town Main Street program is moving forward with implementation of the plan and has recently completed some design studies to freshen the appearance of the downtown businesses.



WEAKNESSES

	0.2-mile Radius	One-mile Radius	Five-mile Radius
Demand	\$474,824	\$6,469,238	\$49,460,319
Supply	\$2,229,930	\$4,588,366	\$40,942,102
Leakage/(Surplus)	(\$1,755,106)	\$1,880,872	\$8,518,217
Notes	Surplus is four times greater than demand.	Demand is greater than supply.	Demand is greater than supply.
% of sales lost (leakage) to markets beyond the defined radius	N/A	29% (leakage divided by demand)	17% (leakage divided by demand)

Source: Small town Main Street

A Large Retail Leakage already exists in the county resulting in loss of business to surrounding counties. As you can see from the chart above, a 29% leakage exists within one mile from the town center of Hayesville. A 17% leakage exists within a five mile radius.

Weak incentives package at the county and state level to assist in entrepreneurial business startups and incentivize entrepreneurs in the county incentive plan. Lack of investment capital for downtown revitalization.

OPPORTUNITIES

With the current leakage that exist, Clay County has an opportunity to work to recoup some of the lost revenue. Adding a variety of retail shops would help to minimize leakage. By helping new and existing businesses we can keep more revenue within the county and minimize our losses to neighboring counties or across the state line.



THREATS

Current incentives package are not attractive to small retail business at this point. Incentives will need to be addressed in the future to make Clay County an attractive destination for all types of business.

Efforts will need to be aimed at changing the shopping habits of locals to buy local and help keep revenue within Clay County. Retail trade will benefit if we can keep more of our citizens employed within Clay County. Keeping workers in the county would be of benefit to the county due to the increase in local purchases that would come as a result.



Clay County Economic Development Strategy

Chapter 8: Healthcare

Health care jobs: A fast-growing sector

Today, ten of the twenty fastest-growing occupations are related to health care, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Career Guide to Industries, 2010–11 Edition. The BLS does not expect this growth rate to abate soon. The agency estimated that between 2008 and 2018, health care will generate 3.2 million new jobs, more than any other industry. This growth rate is fueled by many factors, including America's aging population and its need for more health care services. A March 2010 International Economic Development Council report titled "Creating Quality Jobs: Transforming the Economic Development Landscape" suggests that communities focusing on job quality rather than job quantity are more likely to achieve sustained economic benefits. From this perspective, health care jobs make sense—the average earnings of nonsupervisory workers in most health care segments are higher than the average for all private industry. The presence of certain physician specialties or a hospital/clinic can give a community a competitive advantage. Also, the Healthcare industry has proven its resiliency even in tough economic times.



Clay County is positioned well to see an increase in health care related jobs and businesses. According to the 2012 census the median age of Clay County residents is 50 years of age with a projected median age of 52 by 2019. With the highest median age of all 100 counties in the State of North Carolina and an expected ever increasing number of retirees to the area, the need for healthcare will continue to grow locally. This allows for an opportunity to attract healthcare facilities into the county. Due to the close proximity of other small community hospitals, the focus would likely be on a smaller scale healthcare facility such as an urgent care facility and more primary care physician offices.



STRENGTHS

With the aging population of Clay County there is an obvious need for jobs in this economic cluster. Hayesville High School has a Health Occupations program which can continue to act as a feeder system into the Healthcare arena. Local nursing programs are also nearby which allow for further education and development of the workforce necessary to fill many of the healthcare related positions.

The Clay County Health Department provides a wide variety of services to our citizens. Soon, the department will move into a brand new state of the art facility which will allow for future growth and expansion. They provide primary care services and access to dental care. As per Department Director, Janice Patterson, the lack of dental care has been a long-term and serious problem in our county and surrounding counties. The Clay County Health Department opened The Far West Dental Clinic in 1995 to provide full service dental care to children in Clay, Cherokee and Graham Counties. As a result, they have directly increased revenue to the County.



In the absence of a clinic sized facility the County Health Department could continue to look to expand services to residents, filling the possible void of healthcare providers and increasing revenue to the County.

WEAKNESSES

There are currently only two healthcare firms within the County and no hospitals. We do have regional hospitals in the area that are an important asset to the region in terms of recruitment. An additional urgent care facility or clinic may have a negative financial impact on those hospitals. Also, there is no current facility, located within the county to house a new clinic. This would necessitate build out of a new facility.

OPPORTUNITIES

Union General has purchased property in the county. The EDB needs to have open and ongoing dialogue with them in order to determine their plans or willingness to construct a facility at this time.

As mentioned earlier, Clay County has an aging population and the need for more healthcare facilities will be needed to support them. We need to continue to work with the educational programs which will result in direct job placement within many of these professions and the supportive positions needed to administer care.

THREATS

Need skilled and experienced healthcare workers. The nursing program at Tri County Community College offers classes up to an Associate's Degree. The region might not have enough skilled workforce in the nursing field, or within the county to fill those positions. This may necessitate outside recruitment to fill the positions. Also, primary care physicians may be less likely to relocate to rural areas due to lower pay and benefits.



Clay County Economic Development Strategy

Chapter 9: Implementation Policies

The county will collaborate with public and private sector partners throughout the region to align goals and priorities between organizations and across jurisdictions, and establish an implementation plan to carry out the actions recommended by the strategy. Oversight of the implementation of the strategy will be managed by the Economic Development Director in coordination with a newly established Economic Development Board appointed by and under the direction of the Clay County Board of Commissioners.

GOALS:

1. Support Existing Businesses
 - Support local business
 - Visit 7 small businesses per month and 1 manufacturing business per month in the county. Provide assistance as needed and provide market research as needed. Be visible within the community.
 - Attend 4 business development seminars/ classes per year
2. Attract and Support New Businesses
 - Follow up with business leads
 - Follow up with hotel leads
 - Provide assistance to potential business clients
 - Update webpage about potential land and buildings within the county suitable for development on a monthly basis. Maps of available commercial/retail space and land will be updated throughout the year
 - Provide economic analysis data to potential clients as needed from (TVA, south western commission, advantage west etc...)
 - Respond to all possible RFI's (Request for information) that become available to the county.



Ch. 9 Implementation

3. Inform Elected Officials, Other Community Leaders and the Public about the County's Economic Development Actions and Opportunities
 - Work with County organizations that have a direct involvement in Economic Development.
 - Attend organizational and Commissioner Meetings to gather information as well as provide monthly updates.
 - Attend regional meetings/seminars in and outside the county to gather information and report back on findings and information received.
4. Enhance Clay County' Quality of Life
 - Work to promote outdoor recreation opportunities in the County
 - Work with Recreation Department to promote sporting tournaments within the county.
 - Maintain regular contact with the TVA and forest service about development opportunities
 - Incorporate the County's comprehensive plan
5. Promote Workforce Development Opportunities
 - Promote workforce development partnerships with TCCC
 - Support the efforts and work with the TCCC Small Business Center.
 - Continue updating Resource development. Stay up to date on opportunities that are available. Grants, business loans, low interest loans through supporting organizations, and other tools that are essential to economic development.

Each goal is supported by a set of strategies and action items. Achieving the goals calls for following the strategies and completing the action items, resulting in five primary outcomes:

- a) New Jobs/Businesses' Created
- b) Increase in the local tax base
- c) Increase in the number of building permits completed
- d) Increase in local real-estate sales
- e) Number of new infrastructure improvements



Measurements of Success:

- 1) Jobs created
- 2) Increase local tax base
- 3) Increase the number of building permits completed
- 4) Increase local real estate sales
- 5) Number of new infrastructure improvements

- 1) Increasing the number of jobs created within the County.

Jobs may be created by either recruitment of new business to the area or by expanding local business to fit those needs. Both situations provide jobs to the county and will in turn, increase the local tax base. According to North Carolina Department of Commerce, A .4% growth is expected in Clay County by the year 2019 and jobs will need to be created to support that growth. 51.7% of Clay County's residence are traveling outside the county to go to work. 24.3% of that are traveling outside the state to go to work. The goal is to create jobs within the County to help keep a portion of those workers in Clay County and support anticipated growth.

Source: Access NC, North Carolina Economic Data and Site Information

The unemployment Rates from 2013-2014 have changes at a rate of -2.9% meaning that more people in the county are employed in 2014.

Statistic	Clay County (NC)
Dec 2014 Prelim Labor Force	4256
Dec 2014 Prelim Employment	4037
Dec 2014 Prelim Unemployment	219
Dec 2014 Prelim Unemployment Rate	5.10%
2013 Annual Labor Force	4405
2013 Annual Employment	4054
2013 Annual Unemployment	351
2013 Annual Unemployment Rate	8.00%



Ch. 9 Implementation

2) Increasing the local tax base

The Definition of “tax base” is the assessed value of all the property within a taxing jurisdiction. Local governments are always extremely sensitive to the size of the tax base and the need to increase it, and will often offer incentives to developers who will increase the sales taxes in the area, increase the tax base through additional improved properties, or increase the tax base through redevelopment and increased property values.

Source: The Complete Real Estate Encyclopedia by Denise L. Evans, JD & O. William Evans, JD.
Copyright © 2007 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

3) Increase number of building permits issued.

The permitting process should be handled in a timely and professional matter. County fees should remain competitive with neighboring counties, while effectively recovering costs.

4) Increasing Real Estate Sales

The availability of affordable housing plays a role in employers’ locational decisions, and helps them recruit and retain employees. The lack of affordable housing also contributes to longer commutes to work and an increase in congestion along their routes to and from work. A range of housing prices would allow new buyers and renters to enter the Clay County housing market and stay in the County as their housing needs change.



Ch. 9 Implementation

5) Infrastructure

Infrastructure is one of the most important aspects to retaining and recruiting business to the County. Updates to infrastructure have been made to the highway 69 corridor to the industrial park. Water and sewer is now available in that area and this is the corridor that the county expects to see the most growth in the coming years. Updates to other areas within the county will be next steps in the coming years. Broadband connectivity will be a point of focus and making county wide improvements in that area will be a focus. Collaboration with local power suppliers will be important to see these upgrades through.



Action Items:

- Working with other community organizations in promoting a strong community identity that emphasizes the unique features of the community.
- Promotion of a variety of housing options to accommodate a range of groups, from executives to young professionals; and plan for an adequate supply of workforce housing.
- Continue creating strong open space and trails that includes bicycles paths and walking trails. Continue working with other departments to enhance overall recreation programming.
- Offering art, cultural, and entertainment amenities that appeal to a range of residents.
- Supporting the efforts among local organizations to reach out to and include the young people within our community.
- Encourage economic reinvestment and redevelopment
- Enhance site readiness for development

Ch. 9 Implementation

- Foster business retention and growth of existing businesses.
- Stimulate business investment.
- Build and nurture relationships with targeted businesses, reinforcing the positive perceptions and collectively addressing our challenges to ensure Clay County as a premier business destination.
- Facilitate and encourage the growth of small and entrepreneurial businesses. Garner relationships with local business owners giving them a contact when help is needed.
- Utilize interactive and collaborative proposals to respond to requests for information regarding development opportunities.
- Enhance business outreach program to ensure that new businesses, as well as those that are poised for growth or facing contraction, are included in the program.
- Identify and anticipate needs of existing businesses.
- Establish and/or strengthen relationships with local business owners.
- Recognize trends or issues and ensure follow-up is conducted.
- Identify ways to welcome new businesses to Clay County and work with County Commissioners to help create an incentive program that would be attractive to new and expanding business.
- Evaluate the fiscal implications of facilitating development through investment in site readiness.
- Maintain a current database of available commercial property within the county and in the near future fully utilize the city's website to aide in the recruitment of new businesses to the community.
- Work with utility providers (BRMEMC, Duke Power) to provide optimal and sustainable service within the county.



Ch. 9 Implementation

Clay County offers a desirable quality of life, with clean and safe neighborhoods, an extensive series of parks and trails, a range of housing options, multiple recreation opportunities and events sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations around the County, and an attractive natural setting. The County's educated professional population are an excellent resource with regards to Economic Development. Additionally, Clay County's public school system further enhances the County's appeal to investors looking to relocate. Local campuses of Tri County Community College and Young Harris College offer ongoing career training and lifelong learning opportunities for local workers and residents. Clay County has a working relationship with Tri County Community College. The Economic Development Strategic Plan supports all these factors, and recognizes that a high quality of life is a key element of successful local economic development.

The Clay County Board of Commissioners, Clay County Economic Development Commission, Town of Hayesville, our Economic Development Partners, Supporting Organizations and county citizens all want what is best for Clay County. While there may be some difference in opinions about how to best grow the county, working together to align our goals even in light of our differences will ultimately lead to economic growth and success. Having everyone involved working towards a common goal is the only way we can expect to achieve results that will benefit Clay County. It is of great importance for the EDC to garner relationships and work with/ support organizations that are working toward the greater good of the county. With a united vision, we will see positive economic growth while maintaining the small town values that will continue to make Clay County a great place to live and call home.

