

APPENDIX II, PART 1:
SWOT ANALYSIS RESULTS



PROSPERITY
FOR GREATER CHARLOTTE

2017-2022 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Centralina
Economic Development District

Appendix II

SWOT ANALYSIS RESULTS

In parallel timing and member participation with the CEDS Advisory Committee work, the NC Commerce Economic Development Partnership has prepared an overarching SWOT analysis that incorporated the CEDS findings that provides both local, regional and statewide alignment to the findings. This information is included as supporting data and validation of the CEDS Advisory Committee strategic SWOT evaluations during the update process. The regional alignment of the Centralina Economic Development District(EDD) with the NC Southwest Prosperity Zone of the NC Commerce department is possible through the boundary coverage being identical of the nine counties in the EDD of the with 10 counties of the NC Southwest Prosperity zone that adds Cleveland county to the group.

WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Large, educated and growing young professional population• UNC Charlotte, strong technical institutes and private colleges• Strong community colleges in every county• Good work ethic and low unionization rate• Focus on up-skilling of workforce has occurred in manufacturing• Apprenticeship programs and industry-education collaboration are world-class• Emerging collection of Career Academies (embedded High Schools at Community Colleges)• Regional postsecondary attainment focused programs launched such as NC Manufacturing institute, Lumina People\Skills\Prosperity, Career Headlight and many community college Advanced Manufacturing Centers	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remaining inefficiencies of alignment between education, workforce development and business community• Soft skills issue still present for some industries• Low educational attainment levels and adult literacy rates in some counties• K-12 performance varies across counties• Difficulty in transferring credits across institutions and across the state line• Limited success in focus on Adult Learners• Limited investments in Higher Ed and R&D required for new program areas of future
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain and strengthen communication and collaboration gains across education, workforce development, economic development and business channels• Continue of education and workforce development alignment with target industry needs through sector partnerships• Promote legislative support related to education funding• Continue improvements to K-12 programs that focus on basic skills development and workforce preparedness• Continue ongoing technology upgrades in the classroom with industry support (hardware and software)• Strengthen focus on transitioning of military to civilian careers	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued lack of understanding in students for apprenticeship programs and technical careers• Retiring manufacturing workers creating talent gaps in adv. mfg. techniques, automation/robotics that are in high demand• Public education funding challenges for the future support and expansion needed to keep pace with demand of economy

BUSINESS CLIMATE \ INNOVATION \ ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Strengths:

- Pro-business environment
- The Charlotte Regional Partnership and 16 EDC organizations comprise Charlotte USA, awarded mega-region ED partnership
- Lowered NC corporate income tax rates
- Small Business Development Centers at community colleges
- Ventureprise and Packard Place resources and incubators
- North Carolina Research Campus (NCRC) in Kannapolis
- UNCC & Charlotte Research Institute with focus on Advanced Manufacturing, Energy, Computing & Big Data and Life Sciences
- UNCC EPIC – Energy Production and Infrastructure Center
- Entrepreneurs are attracted to the region’s lifestyle, amenities and international airport

Weaknesses:

- Fragmented entrepreneurial efforts across counties
- New small business formation and growth of small firms has decreased in some surrounding counties
- Access to angel investment, venture Capital and micro lending opportunities is limited
- R&D assets are not well known or leveraged
- Lack of a Tier 1 research university ranking for UNCC
- Inability to offer local property tax abatements
- Regulatory environment can still be a burden

Opportunities:

- Support collective visioning initiatives and affirm strong political leadership is required to carry the region forward
- Increase collaboration and align entrepreneurial resources across counties for larger impact through the new Charlotte Entrepreneurial Alliance; extend services across counties
- Maximize utilization of Charlotte Research Institute and NC Research Campus with entrepreneurship organizations
- Collaborate with education and community leaders to increase incubator/accelerator and innovation spaces
- Expand entrepreneurship education into all levels of education

Threats:

- Econ Dev focus on large industries may impact public support for programs for small, high-growth entities
- Nationally, VC-backed startups are gravitating to a handful of regions; successful startups may be moved out of Charlotte when they are funded by VC’s
- Federal and state research dollars may diminish and not come to the region versus established research locations
- Local incentives lack targeted jobs with above-average wages
- Potential failure of urban and rural communities to achieve collaborative solutions

INFRASTRUCTURE

Strengths:

- Highly connected road and rail network to first-tier markets
- Low electric costs
- Accessible geographic location within 1 day of 60 % of US market
- Charlotte/Douglas International Airport service domestic and international
- Key location on Piedmont Crescent Corridor freight rail of NFS and CSX railroads
- NC Commuter rail line and successful 2007 Light Rail project with 2017 expansion that will double system size

Weaknesses:

- More NC Commerce certified ready industrial sites needed
- Traffic congestion beginning to make mobility within the region difficult
- Fiber Cable\Telecommunications access in some rural areas is limited
- Adequate funding of cost for water/sewer needs
- Alignment of efficient utility services within the counties

Opportunities:

- Support new intermodal facility and significantly enhance the capacity and integration of the regional distribution network of rail, highway, air and seaports
- Become a “multi-modal” region for passengers: rail, highways, bikes, shared vehicles, streetcars, walkable streets
- Increase the availability of shovel-ready sites and business parks
- Continue to invest in transportation and basic infrastructure to support population and business growth
- Maintain regional planning successes that will mean more efficient, i.e. lesser cost financial investment over time
- Implement 2017 Regional Freight Mobility Study and complete 2018 Regional CATS Transit Plan

Threats:

- Traffic congestion is projected to be a significant problem as the region grows; “preferred growth corridors” in the region are also where most congestion exists
- Inter-basin transfer of water will continue to be an issue
- Lack of diversified housing in some counties means workers are forced to commute more and industry locators rate it a negative
- Some counties are hesitant and restrictive of growth due to lack of water

QUALITY OF LIFE

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relatively low cost of living, affordable home values• Plentiful recreational amenities, open spaces, greenways and bike trails that are continuing to expand• Professional sports teams and NASCAR• Thriving cultural and arts community throughout region• Diverse, open and progressive community brand• Uptown Charlotte is urbanized and growing downtown population has increased retail, office and commercial spaces• Small towns charm remains throughout region• Close driving distance to both mountains and beach• Region remains a great place to raise a family	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• K-12 education is improving but still considered a weakness affecting quality of life and the attractiveness to outsiders for some areas in the region• Lack of connectivity in some towns and counties via sidewalks, bike trails, etc. is lacking• Air quality\nonattainment issue must be monitored with growth• Affordable housing issues remain in many jurisdictions• Urban edgy districts are emerging but still more needed to meet demands of younger growing demographic (22-44 age range)
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate on regional tourism marketing campaign• Expand convention tourism and junior sports competitions• Embrace growing ethnic diversity from incoming populations to make the region more globally-oriented (incl. tourism)• Generally agreed upon viewpoint (consensus) to avoid the mistakes made by other large metros (transportation planning, extreme commutes, misalignment of work-live-play assets)• Consensus that the next generation of community leaders exists but needs to be better engaged; reenergized leadership plan is needed	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism marketing is often fragmented and inefficient• External perceptions are that Charlotte doesn't have cultural amenities or nightlife• Growing non-profit community competes for funding and experienced board leadership• Limited local jurisdiction authority limits local funding control and potential future investment• Lack of local funding mechanism make public-private partnership difficult for medium and small cities