

Henderson-Vance Economic Development Commission retreat: Framework laid for strategic plan
by AL WHELESS

(Editor's note: This is one of four stories about the retreat. Each headline refers to the retreat.)

Members of the Henderson-Vance Economic Development Commission agreed Wednesday on the framework for a strategic plan set for approval as a document at the Nov. 18 meeting.

If that happens, the proposed plan would then have to be adopted by both the county's Board of Commissioners and the City Council.

On Wednesday, the second day of the EDC's retreat, Chairman Sam Watkins suggested that the organization's marketing efforts be funded through five percent of any new tax base revenue it produces.

A lot of the foundation work for the frame of the roughed-out plan was accomplished Tuesday by representatives of numerous stake-holder organizations in the community, as well as by members of the EDC Board, the City Council and the Board of Commissioners.

On Wednesday the EDC members approved a list of strategic objectives, complete with action steps for each.

1) Create And Retain Jobs.

- Develop existing business programs.
- Develop and implement a strategy to serve existing businesses.
- Make on-site visits to businesses, and create inventories of their needs.
- Develop a business incubator.
- Acquire high-speed rail.

2) Market The Community.

- Develop a marketing strategy of the community.
- Update websites.
- Improve community appearance.
- Alignments with Research Triangle Region, the Hub and commerce.
- Develop marketing to the community and stress the positive over the negative.
- Establish a marketing budget.

3) Improve Education.

- Partner with schools and work force development.
- Develop education support programs.
- Practical trade skills.
- Explore on-the-job-training.

- Innovative approach.
- Academic support programs for disadvantaged youths.
- Partnering with Work Force Development Board and the Hub to explore options.

4) Enhance Pro-business Environment.

- Move at the speed of business.
- Fast-tracking permits.
- Board development and selection.
- Teach employees to be customer-friendly to business.
- Shovel-ready, move-in.
- Incentives and financing.

5) Improve The Quality Of Life.

- Market to ourselves, to our own community. Understand the history of cultural diversity. Understand your own history in order to overcome it. Understand who we are as a county and have honest action.
- Partner with law enforcement and the juvenile system to address crime issues.
- Create a comprehensive study on crime and potential solutions, using real data.

“We need to know why our crime rate is the highest in the state,” said President Bill Edwards of the Henderson-Vance Chamber of Commerce.

- Improve community appearance.
- Improve houses and neighborhoods.
- Look at public housing.

6) Provide Effective Economic Development Leadership.

- Develop budget that supports marketing and product-development initiatives.
- Align EDC Strategic Plan and our initiatives with the Research Triangle Region, the County, the City of Henderson and strategic partners.
- Determine whether we want to develop structure so EDC can have 501C status.
- Enhance appearance of the community.

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 PO Box 908
 Henderson, NC 27536