

# Program Focus Area

Existing Business Activity — Business Recruitment — Real Estate Development

## Project Averages

*Active and Missed*

66 Missed Project Over 12 Months



**37**

**JOBS**  
252



**13**

**THOUSAND**  
**SQUARE FEET**  
174K



**5**

**ACRES**  
61



**\$14**

**MILLION**  
**INVESTMENT**  
\$206M

### February Unemployment Rate

**3.9%** = same percentage in January.

Regional February Rate is 3.3%

State February Rate is 3.5%

To learn more, visit the link below.

[High Country WDB Overview | LEAD Analytics \(nccommerce.com\)](#)

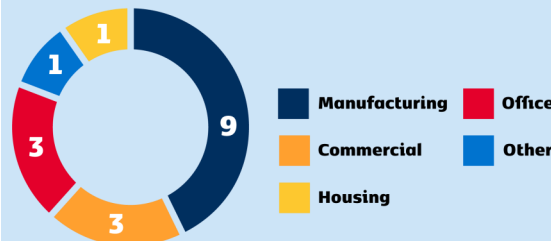
## Project Activity Stats



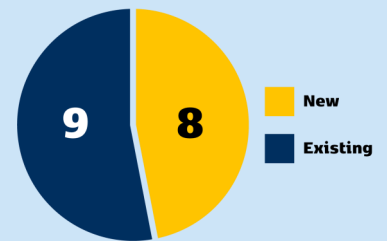
## Active Projects

**17**

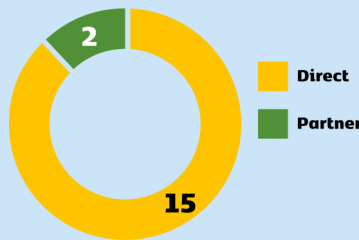
### Project Industries



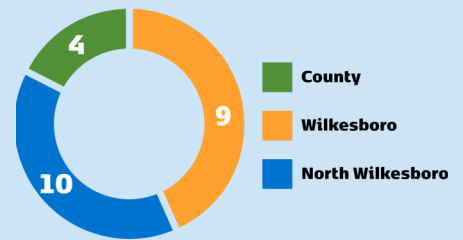
### Projects by Type



### Projects by Source



### Projects by Location



## Existing Business

Current and YTD Total  
Activity since July 1, 2023



**5**

**UNIQUE VISITS**  
59



**2**

**FOLLOW UP VISITS**  
38

## Program Stats



**11**

**PARTNER**  
**MEETINGS**  
112



**5**

**REAL ESTATE**  
**DEVELOPMENT**  
55



**26**

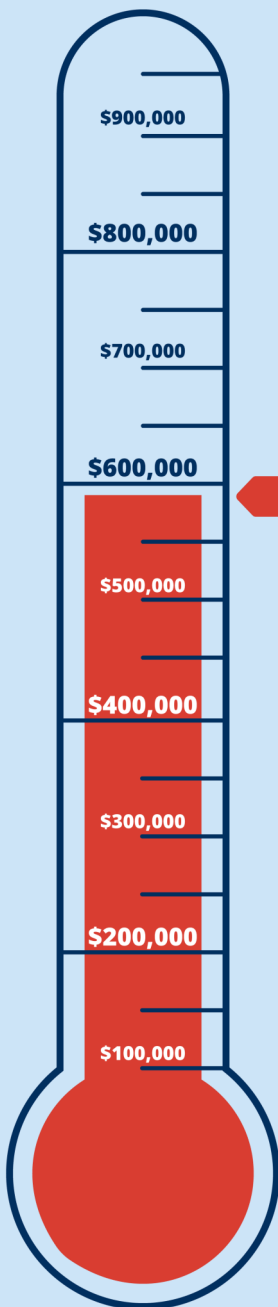
**SOLUTIONS**  
**PROVIDED**  
258

# LEAP Forward

## Local Expansion & Attraction Program

*Together We Can Grow!*

**\$1,000,000**  
 Over 5-Years



The Wilkes Economic Development Corporation works closely with businesses and the community to find unique solutions to economic challenges. Since 2010, Private LEAP funds have been instrumental to ensure this mission is possible. It is time to request your help replenishing the funds to continue moving Wilkes forward.

The need for investment builds upon the traditional program of work of the EDC: existing business retention and expansion, marketing and new business recruitment, and real estate development. Special Projects focus on Wilkes Commercial Business Center(s), Housing, Childcare, Outdoor Economy, and Talent Retention and Attraction, which are critical for ensuring a strong economy and building Wilkes County capacity.

### Will you invest in Wilkes County's future?

Wilkes EDC expresses our gratitude to those who have already committed to the LEAP Forward Campaign and mission of the EDC! Below is a list of our investors to date.

- Alex and Amy Blair
- Andrew Palmer
- Arnold and Becky Lakey
- Blair Properties
- Cam Finley
- Champion Towing
- Dale and Michelle Isom
- Duke Energy
- Eddie and Anna Holland
- Fortress Management Group, Inc.
- Hampton Inn
- Holiday Inn Express
- Holly Minton
- Jim Smoak
- Joe and Debbie Johnston
- Ken Noland
- Leonard G. Herring Family Foundation
- Lesa Hensley
- McNeill Chevrolet & Nissan of Wilkesboro
- MECI & Associates, Inc.
- Mountain View Hardware, LLC
- Omega Construction
- Riverstone Land and Equipment, LLC
- Scott Nafe
- Shelmer Blackburn
- *And Additional Anonymous Donors*

Ready to make a pledge? Visit the [link](#) or scan the QR code to invest or call (336) 838-1501.

Investors of our LEAP Forward Campaign will be recognized on our website, monthly Activity Reports, Newsletters, and at our Annual Meeting.



## STEAM Expo

On Wednesday, March 27th, Wilkes County Schools and Event Coordinators of Charlotte Motor Speedway held the STEAM Expo at the North Wilkesboro Speedway. This event was open to middle school students, drawing out more than 1800 students from all four middle schools.

There were 30 interactive and educational booths at the Speedway. Students participated in hands-on learning activities in the areas of robotics, engineering, aerodynamics, traction and friction, and technology. Student also had the opportunity to take a few laps around the track.

Dr. Joe Bullis, Executive Director of Federal Programs/Career and Technical Education (CTE), Mr. Alexander Baucom, Principal Fellow and Administrative Intern, and Ms. Melissa Stirewalt, STEAM & Event Coordinator of the Charlotte Motor Speedway (CMS), successfully coordinated North Wilkesboro Speedway's first STEAM Expo. Wilkes EDC enjoyed assisting Wilkes County Schools and CMS by connecting and encouraging of our local industries participation. We're excited and grateful to see this event come to fruition for Wilkes County middle school students.



## Potential for Future Interstate Designation—Hwy 421

U.S. 421 from Wilkes through Yadkin to I-40 and Forsyth is being considered for Future Interstate status. The potential identification of the future interstate was revealed as I-777 to the state's congressional delegation and economic development entities in Forsyth, Yadkin, and Wilkes counties.

"We are excited about the potential opportunity to designate a second Future Interstate along U.S. 421 in the Carolina Core. Our current effort is for the segment spanning from Wilkesboro through Yadkinville and on to I-40 in Winston-Salem," said Loren Hill, Carolina Core Regional Economic Development Director. "Along with the already designated Future I-685 from I-85 to I-95, this would further improve connectivity and commerce throughout the state while increasing our region's economic competitiveness."

The Piedmont Triad Partnership (PTP) created the Carolina Core in 2018 to promote economic development along U.S. Highway 421, focusing on marketing megasites and amenities. The Carolina Core is working with local, state, and federal officials to designate two segments of U.S. 421 as Future Interstate highways to increase economic competitiveness, safety, and mobility.

The Core helped the eastern section of U.S. 421 receive its designation, from I-85 Greensboro to Sanford as Future I-685. Highway funding was included in the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure legislation.

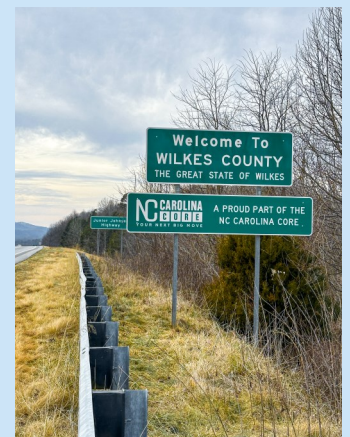
Following that work, the Carolina Core focused on the mid to western portion of North Carolina along U.S. 421, from Winston-Salem to Wilkesboro. Economic development and local government authorities in Wilkes, Yadkin, and Forsyth counties are a part of the Carolina Core marketing efforts and recently received highway signage.

The state's congressional delegation has received eight resolutions supporting Future Interstate 777 and is seeking for legislation to incorporate it. Resolutions came from High Country Council of Governments, Ashe, Wilkes County, Town of Wilkesboro, Town of North Wilkesboro, Yadkin, Surry, and Forsyth.

Hill, the former president of the High Point Economic Development Corp. who joined PTP in 2021, has been the Carolina Core's point person. "Justifications for such an Interstate designation include improving the movement of freight traffic, providing better travel time reliability, allowing a good alternative route if an incident occurs on I-40, I-77, or Future I-74; and providing a high-design evacuation route in the event of natural disasters." Additionally, designation allows economic developers to market properties along the Core as having immediate access to an interstate, creating the opportunity to attract more companies by fulfilling that requirement.



[Road from Wilkesboro to I-40 in Winston-Salem could become I-777 | FOX8 WGHP \(myfox8.com\)](https://www.fox8.com/story/news/politics/economy/2024/03/27/road-from-wilkesboro-to-i-40-in-winston-salem-could-become-i-777-fox8-wghp/7418112002)



## Blue Ridge Ranch

Wilkes EDC had the opportunity to connect with Troy and Nanette Lovins of Blue Ridge Ranch thanks to introductions made by Wilkes EDC Board Member Cindy Thompson. Blue Ridge Ranch requested a meeting where EDC President LeeAnn Nixon coordinated efforts to visit the ranch with Thomas Salley of Wilkes TDA, Heather Murphy of The Health Foundation, and Cindy Thompson.

They had the opportunity to explore Blue Ridge Ranch's amenities and learn about its history and values. The group had productive conversations about ways to welcome visitors and possible events that would fit well at the ranch. Everyone enjoyed touring Blue Ridge Ranch and learning about its continued growth and success.

Click the link to learn more and visit their Facebook page to stay up-to-date on activities and events.

[Blue Ridge Ranch](#)



# MerleFest®

**Music. Moments. Memories.**

April 25-28, 2024

Presented by *Window World*



**Thursday, April 25**

**OLD CROW MEDICINE SHOW**  
**MOLLY TUTTLE & GOLDEN HIGHWAY**  
**STEEP CANYON RANGERS \* DAN TYMINSKI BAND**  
**WILLIE WATSON \* DONNA THE BUFFALO \* PRESLEY BARKER \* ROY BOOK BINDER**

**FULL LINEUP:**  
[www.MerleFest.org](http://www.MerleFest.org)  
**800-343-7857**  
Wilkesboro, N.C.



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**Music. Moments. Memories.**  
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**Friday, April 26**

**TURNPIKE TROUBADOURS \* LARKIN POE**  
**THE EARLS OF LEICESTER \* SHINYRIBS**  
**NICK SHOULDERS \* PETER ROWAN \* SCYTHIAN \* DONNA THE BUFFALO**  
**JIM LAUDERDALE \* KRUGER BROTHERS \* CHATHAM COUNTY LINE**  
**CHATHAM RABBITS \* WILLI CARLISLE \* THE WAYBACKS \* BUFFALO NICHOLS**

**Saturday, April 27**

**THE TESKEY BROTHERS \* SAM BUSH**  
**BELA FLECK MY BLUEGRASS HEART \* JERRY DOUGLAS**  
**SIERRA HULL \* BRANDY CLARK \* PETER ROWAN \* SCYTHIAN**  
**DONNA THE BUFFALO \* JIM LAUDERDALE \* KRUGER BROTHERS**  
**DARIN & BROOKE ALDRIDGE \* S.C. GOODMAN \* JOHN MCEUEN \* ADEEM THE ARTIST**  
**THE WAYBACKS \* NEFESH MOUNTAIN \* THEM COULEE BOYS \* JAKE KOHN**

**Sunday, April 28**

**NICKEL CREEK \* LUKAS NELSON & POTR \* PETER ROWAN**  
**DONNA THE BUFFALO \* JIM LAUDERDALE \* NEW DANCERFIELD \* TWISTED PINE**  
**THE SENSATIONAL BARNES BROTHERS \* PALMYRA \* GOLDPINE**

**Also Performing**

ALEXA ROSE \* ANDY MAY \* ARKANSAUCE \* ASHES & ARROWS \* B. TOWNES \* BANKNOTES \* BOB MARGOLIN \* CAROL RIFKIN \* CAROLINA DETOUR  
CHARLES WELCH \* COLBY T. HELMS & THE VIRGINIA CREEPERS \* COREY HARRIS \* ETTORE BUZZINI BAND \* EVAN HOMER \* FALLING TIMBER BAND \* FLATTOP  
GRAVITY CHECK JUGGLING \* THE HARRIS BROTHERS \* THE INTERACTIVE THEATER OF JEF \* INTO THE FOG \* JACK LAWRENCE \* JEFF LITTLE TRIO \* JIGJAM  
JOE SMOTHERS \* JOSH COFORTH \* KYSHONA \* THE LANGAN BAND \* THE LAST REVEL \* LAURA BOOSINGER \* LIAM PURCELL & CANE MILL ROAD  
THE LOCAL BOYS \* MARK BUMGARDNER \* MISSY RAINES & ALLEGHENY \* MITCH GREENHILL & MITCH'S KITCHEN \* NEW FOUND GAP \* PETE & JOAN WERNICK  
PIXIE & THE PARTYGRASS BOYS \* PRESLEY BARKER \* ROAN STREET RAMBLERS \* ROY BOOK BINDER \* THE SILENT COMEDY \* THE SULLIVAN SISTERS  
T. MICHAEL COLEMAN \* THE TAN & SOBER GENTLEMEN \* TONY WILLIAMSON \* UWADE \* WAYNE HENDERSON \* WYATT ELLIS