2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
Committee Meeting
Wednesday, May 3, 2017
3:00 PM at WPCOG Offices

Committee Members Present: Tommy Luckadoo (Chair), Nancy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Rocky Brooks, Elle Engstrom, Gary Herman, Stacee Rash, Malla Vue, Trish Johnson, Jeremy Ku, Lisa Miller, Sara Black

Committee Members Absent: Lindsay Keisler, Christopher Todd, Zack King, Crissy Thomas

Staff Present: Anthony Starr, Dee Blackwell, Sherry Long, John Marshall, Taylor Dellinger, Wendy Johnson, Jason Toney, Duncan Cavanaugh, Amanda Wallace

I. Call To Order
Tommy Luckadoo, CEDS Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:04.

II. Welcome and Introductions
Mr. Luckadoo welcomed everyone present.

III. Approval of April 26, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting Minutes
Mr. Luckadoo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 26, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting. A motion was offered by Mr. Vue and seconded by Mr. Herman. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. Discussion of 2017 CEDS SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis
Mr. Starr reminded committee members of the regional issues that were discussed at the last meeting. He then asked them what they felt were the strengths of our region. Mr. Starr wrote responses on a large board, and the committee was told that when the process was completed, they would receive five stickers to vote for the five responses that stood out the most. Below are the responses received during the meeting, along with the number of votes received from committee members.

- Lower costs of living/taxes – 10 votes
- Physical assets - mountains, rivers, trails – 8 votes
- Proximity to Charlotte, Asheville, coast, mountains, etc. – 7 votes
- Educational opportunities (public education, private schools, early college, community college and Lenoir Rhyne University) – 4 votes
- Family friendly – 4 votes
- Philanthropy (private and community) – 4 votes
- Abundant water supply – 3 votes
- Diversifying community – 3 votes
• Low crime rate – 3 votes
• Strong arts community – 3 votes
• Moderate Climate – 2 votes
• Transportation (little congestion) – 2 votes
• Desire to improve – 1 vote
• Quality of Life – 1 vote
• Competent local government – no votes
• Excellent location for businesses to start and thrive – no votes
• Events and festivals – no votes
• Google/Apple facilities – no votes
• Healthcare access – no votes
• Manufacturing skilled workforce – no votes
• Number of family owned/closely held businesses engaged in community – no votes
• State, county and municipal parks – no votes
• Strong/growing brewery/distillery business – no votes
• Strong faith community – no votes
• Potential of revitalization – no votes

Mr. Starr then asked the committee for the weaknesses of the region. The same voting process occurred. Below are the responses and votes received.

• Lack of entertainment outlets for 21-40 year olds – 8 votes
• Lack of high paying jobs – 8 votes
• Lack of iconic attraction – 5 votes
• Lack of new housing – 5 votes
• Out-migration of our young people's future leaders – 5 votes
• Inadequate promotion of region – 4 votes
• Lack of shell buildings for new businesses – 4 votes
• Diverse part of community not feeling included in decision-making process – 2 votes
• Lack of regional partnerships between local governments – 2 votes
• Lower educational attainment than competing metro areas – 2 votes
• Stagnant entry pay with increasing job requirements/qualifications – 2 votes
• Lack of broadband in rural areas – 1 vote
• Lack of employable workforce – 1 vote
• Lack of high profile employees – 1 vote
• Lack of job opportunities for recent college graduates – 1 vote
• Low access to public transportation – 1 vote
• Not supporting our local businesses enough – 1 vote
• Too close to Charlotte and Asheville – 1 vote
• Unwillingness to buy into the big picture thinking – 1 vote
• Disconnect in image of who we are and who we want to be – no votes
• Lack of apartments/rental homes that are not income based (subsidized) – no votes
• Lack of downtown/walkable housing – no votes
• Limited nightlife options – no votes
• Lack of professional sporting teams – no votes
Next, Mr. Starr asked the committee to list opportunities for the region. Below are the responses with corresponding votes.

- Development of a collaborative regional marketing plan – 9 votes
- Recruit/retain employable and diverse workforce – 7 votes
- Job training to fill vacant job openings – 6 votes
- Surveying young people for what they want – 6 votes
- To construct shell buildings – 4 votes
- Business development/expansion – 4 votes
- Address educational attainment goals regionally – 3 votes
- Identify more cultural events to draw more visitors – 3 votes
- Promotional/marketing plan for the opening of the NC School of Science and Math – 3 votes
- Develop outreach plan for local leaders to engage minorities – 2 votes
- Expand infrastructure to areas of need for businesses (grants) – 2 votes
- Networking and integrating our civic efforts and groups – 2 votes
- Marketing our natural resources – 2 votes
- Getting local government/homebuilders to address need for new housing – 1 vote
- Promote our strong fiber network – 1 vote
- Ability to serve businesses that use a lot of power/water – no votes
- Address need for renovating housing – no votes
- Good place for families to relocate to – no votes

Mr. Starr then asked committee members to list the threats of the region. Below are the responses and votes.

- Region's inability to solve long-standing problems – 10 votes
- Not responding to migration of young adults – 9 votes
- The region not developing regional marketing plan for another 15 years – 9 votes
- Over reliance on manufacturing – 6 votes
- Major businesses leaving the area – 4 votes
- National trend of automation of jobs – 4 votes
- Void in skill sets for manufacturing jobs – 4 votes
- Not using opportunity with NC School of Science and Math and other projects – 3 votes
- Aging population – 2 votes
- Lack of political cooperation – 2 votes
- Competition with other small Charlotte region communities – 1 vote
- Poor perception as a region of small country towns – 1 vote
- Are we already too late to improve the region significantly? – no votes
- Competition between small businesses (saturation of markets) leading to closing of small business due to lack of support – no votes
- Complacency with status quo – no votes
- National trend of online retail affecting local retail – no votes
- National trend of unfunded mandates – no votes
- Not addressing stagnant wages – no votes
- Not having jobs for young people who may move away – no votes
- Not sharing best practices among businesses and not seeking help – no votes
• Unwillingness to agree on the identity of our region – no votes

V. Discussion of Regional Resiliency
Mr. Starr presented the committee with definitions of "resilience." Oxford Dictionary defines resilience as "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness." Merriam Webster’s definition says resilience is "the ability to recover or adjust easily to misfortune and change." Mr. Starr then asked the committee to think about how our area is resilient now. There was no voting on these responses.

• Aggressive EDC offices (good talent)
• Community foundation/Philanthropy work across counties
• Establish early college/high school programs
• Local governments streamline their operations in response to lower revenue and property values
• Our businesses adapted to shifts with economy
• Passed 40 million dollar bond (Hickory)
• Pull yourself up by bootstraps mentality
• There are strong efforts in protecting the natural environment
• We are re-tooling people who were laid off during recession
• We continue to seek opportunities to replace what we lose
• We diversified our types of businesses
• We have found great ways to revitalize some of our downtowns
• We repurpose our vacant buildings
• We still have manufacturing at three times national rate
• Willing of our people to get re-training

Mr. Starr then asked the committee how we can improve resiliency for our region. Responses and votes are listed below.

• Being proactive in planning – 10 votes
• Not wait another 15 years for a marketing plan – 10 votes
• Increasing availability of shell buildings – 8 votes
• Accept individual diversity – 6 votes
• More incentives to revitalize and renovate – 4 votes
• Public/private cooperation – 4 votes
• Bring in more large industries – 3 votes
• Partnerships for the greater good – 3 votes
• Make sure our broadband infrastructure stays technologically current – 2 votes

VI. CEDS Schedule Going Forward
Mr. Dellinger stated that we are over halfway through the CEDS process. The next CEDS meeting will occur on Wednesday, May 31st, where a presentation about Transportation Initiatives will occur. The goals and objectives process will begin, and will be wrapped up at the June 7th meeting, along with performance measures. A draft will be sent out to the committee
by mid-to-late July. The goal is an active document for community officials, which will be 20 pages or less. Appendixes, which will available for viewing on the WPCOG web site, will be created with additional CEDS information

VII. **Next CEDS Committee Meeting on Wednesday, May 31st at 3:00 P.M. @ WPCOG Offices in Long View**

VIII. **Other Business** - Mr. Blackwell asked committee members if we were missing any key points. He stated that to get something accomplished, you have to have the support of elected officials and big businesses. Mr. Blackwell asked how will they promote the region and work together?

   Ms. Long stated that a key factor is growing businesses that are already here and help them to succeed. If they succeed, we all succeed.

   Ms. Wendy Johnson stated that there needs to be constant contact with marketing, not stopping after a few months. Attempts to market the area in the past have failed because it was not marketing the entire region, just small portions.

   Mr. Dellinger stated that our area has the most sprawl, by percentage. Everything is spread out.

   The group asked what happened with the marketing plan from 15 years ago. Mr. Starr stated that there were regular meetings of tourism directors, but those stopped. Territorial issues developed, and areas slipped back into their own and stopped working as a group.

IX. **Adjournment** - As there was no other business, Mr. Luckadoo adjourned the meeting at 5:14 PM.