



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chamber Applauds Beginning of Phase I Work on NHC Economic Development Strategy Creation

Wilmington, N.C. — The work of developing an updated economic development strategy for New Hanover County moved forward this week when Garner Economics LLC began Phase I (Discovery) by meeting with focus groups and stakeholders composed of business and community leaders. The corporate site location and economic development strategy advisory firm was introduced to New Hanover County Commissioners at the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce 2013 Annual Meeting in April, where founder Jay Garner was the keynote speaker. The Commissioners then hired Garner Economics LLC in August to develop recommendations for a new strategy, which the Wilmington Chamber Board of Directors feels is a positive step in improving the region's competitiveness at attracting new jobs.

"The way that new or relocating businesses decide on a location has changed significantly in the last several years," said Wilmington Chamber Chairman Hal Kitchin (McGuireWoods LLP). "We believe that Jay Garner's speech at the Chamber's Annual Meeting was an important factor contributing to the County's decision to take a closer look at New Hanover County's overall economic development strategy. Job creation is a multi-tiered effort, and the Chamber is eager to see the recommendations."

The Garner Economics study will evaluate New Hanover County's competitive position from an economic development perspective, focusing on an economic analysis, a labor analysis, assets and challenges assessment (SWOT), and cluster analysis/business target identification. All angles will be considered to reveal the region's competitive advantages and identify what sets New Hanover County apart.

Six focus groups were held over a two-day period (October 16-17) to provide input for these assessments. In addition, an electronic/public survey will be conducted.

The project goals of the economic development strategy are to build on the region's rich natural, cultural, and historical resources; develop an action plan to strengthen existing industries; identify and attract emerging industries; identify impediments to doing business in New Hanover County; and increase private investment and job retention.

The Chamber supports the development of a new strategy, and Chamber Board of Directors Chairman Hal Kitchin (McGuireWoods LLP) serves on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee serves an advisory role by providing overall guidance for the project and assessing goals with an eye towards how their respective organization/institution can help implement the resulting plan.

After Phase I (Discovery) is completed, Phase II (Strategy) will commence, followed by Phase III (Implementation Recommendations).

About the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce

The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce is the largest membership-based business association in Southeastern North Carolina. The Chamber's mission is to ensure economic prosperity throughout our region. This is accomplished by: creating a diverse, inclusive organization that serves as a strong voice for businesses in the Greater Wilmington area; offering unique membership benefits, services and education; and challenging government officials to address long term community and business interests.

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