



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Wilmington Chamber Calls for Consensus Building Among Area Economic Development Groups to Define Strategy**

Wilmington, N.C. — The work of developing an updated economic development strategy for New Hanover County will take another step forward Wednesday when Garner Economics LLC presents its final economic development target analysis report *Pathways to Prosperity* and the *Competitive Realities Report*. The Wilmington Chamber urges the community to approach the report with an open mind and seek consensus on those areas that we can agree on to move forward.

“We appreciate the county hiring Garner Economics to conduct this study and guiding this process,” said Hal Kitchin (McGuireWoods LLP), 2013 chairman of the Wilmington Chamber and a member of the county’s economic development initiative steering committee. “Jay’s report is thorough, data-filled and thought-provoking from the standpoint of where we stand with our current economic development efforts and our potential opportunities. This report is not the end; it’s the beginning.”

Garner Economics 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, where founder Jay Garner was the keynote speaker. The Commissioners then hired Garner Economics LLC in August 2013 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.

“A great deal of work by members of our community has gone into the preparation of this study,” said 2014 Wilmington Chamber Chairman Rickey Godwin (McGladrey LLP). “Nobody will agree with all of the recommendations. The question we need to concentrate on answering now is which ones can we agree on in order to move forward? The Chamber would like to work with any group that is interested in being proactive to improve our community.”

“We have an excellent opportunity to coalesce as a community,” said Hal Kitchin. “This is one of our defining moments and I hope we take advantage of it.”

***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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