

# STRONG ECONOMIES, RESILIENT COUNTIES

The Role of Counties in Economic Development



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## HALIFAX COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

### Improving Resiliency through Industry Diversification



Halifax County, located in rural northeastern North Carolina, is a predominantly agricultural county. Historically, Halifax County had strong resource-based industries, lumber and textile mills. These industries are undergoing a long term decline, placing at risk counties such as Halifax dependent on these sectors.

For example, the closing of a textile mill in the county in the 1990s put approximately 2,000 people out of work, which amounted to nearly 12.7 percent of the county population. County officials are actively working to improve the county's resilience through economic diversification and reduce the impact on county residents.

The county's economic development strategy builds on existing assets to achieve the long-term goals of diversification. Its history of skilled manufacturing workers and existing timber resources offer workforce and capital advantages to businesses. The county is in close proximity to various modes of transportation infrastructure: Interstate 95 – the key north-south highway, three international airports that are less than 90 minutes away; the ports in Virginia are within 80 miles, and a rail line in the county.

Halifax County implements its economic development strategy with the help of the Halifax County Economic Development Commission (HCEDC). Established by the Halifax County Board of Commissioners in the 2000s, HCEDC is a 12 member advisory board that represents business and community interests in Halifax County. The county charged the commission with supporting job creation and investment in the county, while promoting and fostering business and industry expansion. The advisory board is comprised of citizens appointed by the County Commissioners, and two full-time staff members that implement the strategies decided by the commission.

- Population, 2013: 53,453
- County Board size: 6
- County Manager

### Halifax Industrial Center and Halifax Corporate Park

Halifax County developed the 100 acre Halifax Industrial Center in the early 1990s, adjacent to Interstate 95. Current tenants include Reser's Fine Foods, Pelican Packaging and PCB Piezotronics, among others. With the majority of the properties in

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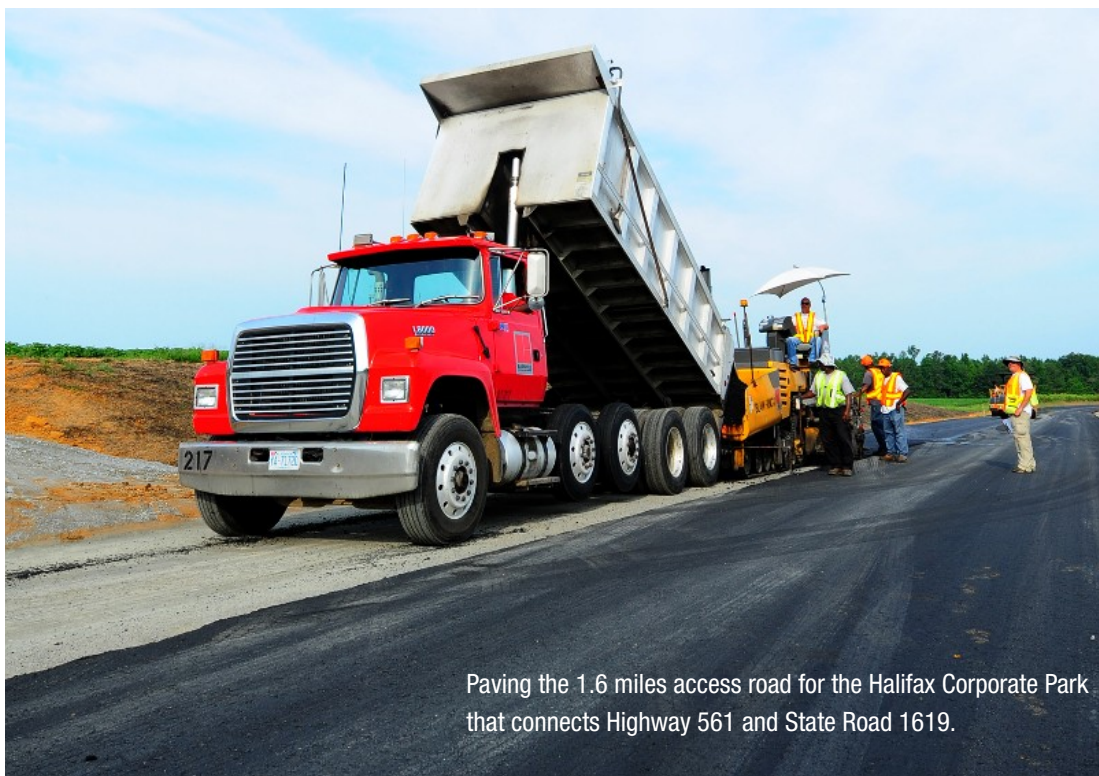
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the Halifax Industrial Center developed, Halifax County began looking at other sites to continue the momentum in attracting manufacturers to the area. In 2007, the Halifax County Board of Commissioners purchased a 700 acre tract of land on Highway 561 to develop another industrial park. Located adjacent to the new Halifax-Northampton Regional Airport, the Halifax Corporate Park offers industrial-quality utilities, including water, electric, sewer, telecommunications and natural gas. Besides major roadways such as Interstate 95, the park is close to ports in both North Carolina and Virginia and a CSX rail line. The Halifax Corporate Park is ready for development, with all the geotechnical, environmental and other site studies completed. The site is also a North Carolina Certified Industrial Park. The county has begun planning the construction of a 35,000 square foot industrial building at the Halifax Corporate Park that will be leased to Empire Foods.

## Lumber Industry Cluster Initiative

Halifax County also plans to build on the strengths of its economy. In 2012, the county recruited an international lumber company, Klausner Lumber to build a mill in Enfield. This will be one of the two plants the company will build in the United States. In addition, the county attracted a number of lumber-related businesses to the county and promoted their clustering around the mill to maximize the usage of lumber in the area. This would result in a multiplying effect, with jobs created at the mill and additional jobs in the forest products businesses, about 1,500 jobs with the construction of the mill and the clustered lumber businesses.

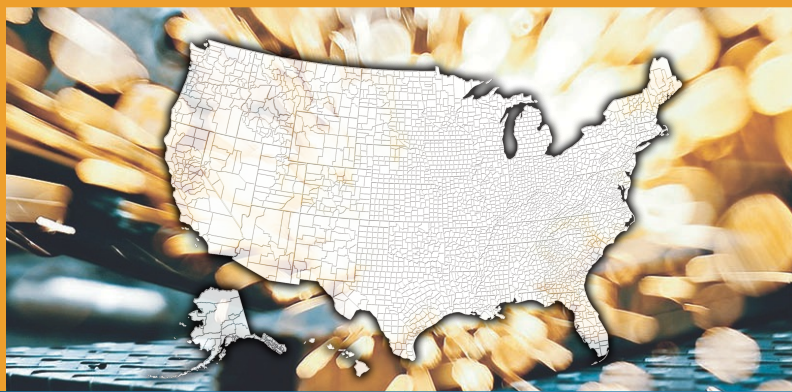
Halifax County utilized its current strengths and its prime location nearby major roadways and ports to attract new businesses to the county. The county understood the risks of dependency on an industry and as a result, initiated economic development programs to diversify its range of industries. The ultimate goal of these initiatives is to strengthen the economy and in the process create jobs for its residents.



Paving the 1.6 miles access road for the Halifax Corporate Park that connects Highway 561 and State Road 1619.

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