

# CRAVEN

*Strategically Planning For The New Millennium*

## 2006

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## CRAVEN

## 2006

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## ***CRAVEN 2006: STRATEGICALLY PLANNING FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM***

*Change is inevitable. In order for that change to be positive, a community must anticipate that change and take action to use it for the public good.*

*With this in mind, the citizens of Craven County have embarked on an ambitious project to prepare the county for the next millennium. This report is the culmination of that project. It describes the strategies we must pursue right now to be the well-educated, healthy, prosperous community we want to be in the year 2006.*

While this report arises out of a project begun two years ago, its real beginning lies in the successes of a previous community project. In 1987, the New Bern Area Chamber of Commerce called together leaders from the public and private sector, armed them with community input and hard demographic data, and asked them to decide how to get the community to where it needed to be by the turn of the century. The resulting community-wide "strategic planning" project--*Craven County 2001: Previewing the Future*--was a resounding success. Members of the community adopted the strategies developed in that project as their personal responsibilities. For example, a group of citizens came together to form the Craven County Transportation Commission. This group played an integral part in the early development of the Neuse River Bridge and US 17 Bypass projects. The *Craven County 2001* project demonstrated the power that community partnerships have in improving the future.

In 1995, Craven County Future, Inc. was created at the behest of citizens who wanted to see the successes of the 2001 project continue. Charged with continuous oversight of a permanent public planning process in Craven County, this not-for-profit corporation has called together a working group to revisit the Craven County 2001 programs and develop new strategies to take us through the year 2006. The project is called *Craven County 2006: Strategically Planning for the New Millennium*; its plan of action for Craven County is documented in this report.

Both the Craven County 2001 and 2006 Committees employed a widely used, highly respected community planning tool called "strategic planning". Like most planning models, strategic planning requires the analysis of a great amount of factual data to look at the "big picture" in a community. However, its strength lies in using the insight and knowledge of community residents to focus a community's efforts--to arrive at a succinct list of strategies that are the most likely to get done and the most likely to have the highest impact within a foreseeable future.

In the case of the current project, the 2006 Committee hired professional data gatherers from East Carolina University to compile information about the county's population, economics, education, environment and government and other factual circumstances. Then, as prescribed by the strategic planning model, the 2006 Committee left no stone unturned in

finding out what local people think, since the community as a whole must embrace the final strategies to make them happen. The committee conducted a survey of ninety-five community leaders, five public hearings around the county attended by 120 residents, and fifty personal interviews. The participants in these forums combined to list 165 issues which might be addressed to improve life in Craven County.

The 2006 Committee took this list, established criteria for choosing which issues to work on and narrowed the list to five broad issues. These five were later reduced to three, with the help of over one hundred additional community residents at a final public forum. The 2006 Committee and public participants chose to focus on these issues:

- education,
- the environment, and
- economic development.

The 2006 Committee created three working groups of residents, some who had expressed an interest in each of these topics and some whom committee members knew had special expertise, to develop strategies for improving life in Craven County in these three areas. Called the Education Taskforce, Environment Taskforce, and Economic Development Taskforce, these teams set to work over the course of seven months--studying and analyzing the available information and community input, collecting more information and opinions where they perceived gaps, and developing a plan of action for getting to where the community has said it hopes to be in the year 2006.

Using the work of the Taskforces, the Craven County 2006 Committee has developed this report. The committee now is charged with getting each strategy into the hands of those community members with the interest and resources to pursue it. The preparation of this report is a first step in promoting that community action. As you read the following sections, look for those issues and strategies that feel most important and feasible to you-- that you think will have the most positive impact on the lives of your family and friends through the year 2006. Then get in touch with someone listed in this report to offer your services!

#### Criteria Used to Narrow the Issues

1. Is the issue tangible, with a high probability of success?
2. Will the issue affect the lives of citizens in a positive manner?
3. Will the issue positively affect the future?
4. Will addressing the issue build goodwill in the community?
5. Is the issue an important one to the community?
6. Should the issue be addressed in the Craven County 2006 project (as opposed to elsewhere)?
7. Will the issue touch many people?
8. Will the issue help the poorer people in the county?
9. Is there the possibility of regional impact and cooperation on the issue?

# EDUCATION

**MISSION: To enhance all levels of learning and prepare our community and families for the demands of the twenty-first century through the cooperative use of all resources available to Craven County.**

*Each day, our society asks more and more of its educational systems. The economy is becoming increasingly global, and our workforce has to be better prepared in order to compete. Efforts to reform the welfare system require the educational environment to move people into the workforce who need training and support to perform adequately. "Baby boomers" are reaching an age at which they will require retraining to remain relevant in the workplace, while another population wave is just reaching our elementary schools.*

*At the same time, providing a suitable educational environment is becoming more and more complicated. Disruptive activities by poorly functioning students are an increasing threat to classroom education. North Carolina statistics show a dramatic increase in incidents of seriously disruptive behavior, "out-of-school suspensions" and drug use over the past few years. Addressing these behavioral problems requires a comprehensive look at why these students are not well adapted to the classroom and, as a result, are performing poorly.*

*Despite escalating demands and difficulties, Craven County residents are well-positioned to meet the challenges and to seize the opportunities that will confront education in the next century. The following are strategies which will build on our strengths to provide better workforce training and more support for workers with children, as well as address problems in the classroom through preschool intervention and sensitive response to individual needs throughout the school years. Ultimately, these actions will help ensure that each Craven County resident can be a productive member of society.*

## **FINDINGS:**

Projections for the workforce of the next millennium suggest that eighty-five percent of employees will need at least some post-secondary education and training; this requires that students be able to successfully negotiate the educational system from the very beginning of their school careers. Craven County has a number of highly effective educational systems. Craven Community College, public schools and other existing institutions and organizations provide a good base upon which to build an excellent system of lifelong learning for our residents.

The cornerstone of education in Craven County is the public school system. With an enrollment of nearly 15,000 students, 1739 employees, and twenty-two schools, public education is the key for the future of Craven County. In the past few years, efforts to improve the public schools have begun to be recognized. Out of 1631 schools in the state, Brinson Memorial Elementary School was one of fewer than a dozen designated as a School of Excellence. Ten of thirteen elementary schools were designated "exemplary". The drop-out rate has been lower than the state average for the last three years, and reading and math scores for grades three through eight have exceeded the state averages for the last four.

Efforts are underway which are expected to propel Craven County into the top ten percent of the State's public school systems during the next century. Concepts such as:

- Adoption of District Strategic Directions and Goals embracing student achievement, a safe learning environment, quality partnership, a high performing work force and an integral management system.
- A progressive school construction campaign that has resulted in the opening of a new middle school in the Havelock area and which is a part of an on-going plan of roughly forty-one million dollars in additions, renovations, and expansion of the current system.
- The development of Career Awareness programs in the elementary and middle schools and Career Centers at the secondary and post-secondary levels.
- Innovative programming and scheduling such as Year Round Schools as well as block scheduling at all high schools.

There are a number of other opportunities for improvement in the Craven County public schools. Local funding of the schools lags behind that of many other counties, and local teacher supplements are less than half of the state average. Past and current litigation questioning the availability of appropriate services for exceptional children indicates that the Craven County Board of Education must address this issue immediately, aggressively and positively. Also, the residents of Craven County need a reliable avenue for ascertaining what goes on in the public schools, both good and bad, so that we can make informed decisions about our children's education and hold informed opinions about the public schools.

Some Craven County children are not in the public school system. A number of alternatives are available, such as church and private schools. Also, a sizable Home School effort is underway in the county. Craven County currently has 135 Home Schooling families and, if national projections hold true locally, that number will triple by the year 2005.

Along with the public, private and home schooling through twelfth grade, Craven County offers post-secondary opportunities which prepare residents to contribute valuable services in the workplace and community. Since its inception in 1965 as Craven Technical Institute, Craven Community College has grown to five buildings on the New Bern campus, with an enrollment of approximately 2,400 curriculum students. Continuing education

programs provided on the New Bern campus and in rented or donated classrooms across the county bring that number up to 9,000 students. In addition to the wide range of workforce training programs traditionally offered in the community college system, Craven Community College is participating in a partnership with East Carolina University and Carteret Community College to allow access in Craven County to classes leading to four-year degrees in Industry and Technology, Information Processing or Middle Grades Education. Craven Community College has responded aggressively to the illiteracy problem in the county; it works with the public schools, human services agencies and others to enroll residents in need of literacy training, and it supports an Adult Literacy Council which enlists volunteers to fight illiteracy.

Another workforce training effort in the county is CETC Employment Opportunities, Inc. CETC assists persons with disabilities and other special needs to achieve independence by overcoming barriers to employment. In 1996, CETC served 214 individuals and placed eighty-one of its clients in permanent positions of employment.

Finally, the youngest children in Craven County are the beneficiaries of growing recognition that investing in early education bears great dividends. Current studies suggest the learning process begins before birth and the years before a child's sixth birthday are most critical. Plans for educating Craven County's population must begin to embrace options and programs that begin before birth and reflect the diverse needs of children and the changing requirements of families. Smart Start is an exciting example of a program that will benefit Craven County by providing coordination and centralization of early childhood and parental education.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

Construct a Technical Education Center adjacent to the Institute of Aeronautical Technology (IAT) in Havelock to provide comprehensive education and training for Craven County residents by the year 2000.

### **Rationale**

Craven Community College must resolve its critical problems with space. Increased demands for services and programs have outstripped the college's physical capacity; for example, the partnership with East Carolina University and Craven Community College cannot expand to provide new programs for the workforce. Daytime enrollment in classes in Havelock is limited by the fact that all classroom space is rented or donated and thus not available at all times, forcing the 500 students enrolled from that area to attend school only at night or commute to New Bern.

The Technical Education Center, in conjunction with the adjacent Institute of Aeronautical Technology (discussed further in the Economy section of this report), is a key component in the continuing effort of Craven Community College to prepare our workforce for the growth and change in the region's economy in the next millennium. While the Institute of Aeronautical Technology will provide very focused workforce training for the aircraft

maintenance industry, the Technical Education Center will expand education and training opportunities by offering ten additional programs in Havelock. In addition, the latter will contain space for library services for existing programs and for those proposed in the Institute of Aeronautical Technology and the Technical Education Center. The new space, or space freed up on the New Bern campus, can be used to expand the four year programs offered through East Carolina University. A very important by-product of that expansion would be the training of public school teachers to alleviate the projected teacher shortage.

By simultaneously planning and constructing the Institute of Aeronautical Technology and the Technical Education Center, we can address space problems in post-secondary education in the most efficient way. In so doing, we will position ourselves to meet the demands of the next century by providing technological opportunities for Craven County residents today.

### **Action Steps**

The following step must be accomplished to achieve the above recommendation.

- Encourage local government to adopt a strategic funding plan for the construction of the Technical Education Center.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

Establish countywide support for the implementation of the Smart Start Program in Craven County.

### **Rationale**

The five major program areas of the Smart Start program are: (1) availability of day care services; (2) accessibility of day care services; (3) improved training of day care personnel; (4) adequate health care services for all children; and (5) parent education and family support. Addressing these issues focuses our resources on two pressing needs: supporting workers with families, some of whom have previously been dependent on public assistance, and ensuring that children entering the public schools can succeed.

Smart Start can only work, however, through the combined efforts of all county agencies serving children. In addition, business and industry, government, and the community must recognize the importance of child care and family support services to Craven County's ability to prosper into the next millennium, and must act collectively on that belief.

### **Action Steps**

In order to successfully implement the above recommendation, the following steps must be taken.

- Promote public awareness of the goals and needs of Smart Start by holding informational forums, distributing fliers, and publishing and broadcasting public service announcements
- Appoint a member of Craven 2006 to the Smart Start board
- Solicit donations of time, money, space and equipment from business and community groups
- Provide grant writing support
- Recruit volunteers, including retirees.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

Develop and implement an on-going training program for Craven County public school personnel which focuses on:

- Eliminating racism and its harmful effects;
- Helping students with special needs such a learning disabilities to master basic skills and overcome other handicaps;
- Teaching students identified as academically gifted and talented;
- Teaching students "at risk" or those who do not perform at a satisfactory level in traditional settings.

### **Rationale**

In the Craven County schools, as elsewhere, there are groups of students with special needs. Teachers and other school personnel must be prepared to deal flexibly and sensitively with differences between students--their cultures, personal histories and circumstances, abilities and interests--so that all may be accommodated in the public schools. The training program proposed here will provide a sound foundation from which to build programs to effectively reach those students whom traditional approaches have failed.

Learning disabled (LD) children with special needs require individual attention to achieve their full potential. Because of improper detection and teaching methods, only 52 percent of LD children graduate from high school. Many of those who do graduate have endured great frustration throughout the learning process.

Similarly, early detection is the key to remedying the problems of "at risk" children--those on the verge of failing or dropping out of school. Students who do not achieve in traditional settings require innovative intervention. Many of these students have behavioral problems that manifest themselves in disruptive behavior at school. Failure to adequately

address these special needs can have negative consequences in the schools and, ultimately, in society at large.

Educating gifted and talented students, while a good "problem" to have, nonetheless requires special expertise and effort on the part of school personnel. Often, exceptional talents cannot be fully developed in the traditional school setting. Whether it is in music, art, math, languages, or other skill areas, these students must be challenged early in their school careers to achieve success.

### **Action Steps**

In order to successfully implement the above recommendation, the following steps must be taken.

- Develop a permanent, action-oriented partnership of administrators, principals, supervisors, teachers, support staff, advocacy groups, parents, and the community.
- Secure funds to hire professionals who can bring a high level of expertise to developing and implementing the needed training activities. The participation of professionals must be a long-term commitment and will therefore require permanent funding.

### **Craven 2006 Education Task Force**

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# THE ENVIRONMENT

**MISSION: To improve, conserve, protect, and use the environment in ways that ensure long term social, environmental, and economic benefits for Craven County.**

*The environment plays a crucial role in the quality of life in Craven County. We are blessed with a wealth of environmental diversity.*

*However, our ecosystems are in delicate balance. Our growing population and the development that comes with it place ever increasing demands on our once abundant natural resources. Media coverage has focused the attention of the state and nation on our region's environmental concerns. Craven County's leaders and other citizens must take action now to protect and improve our quality of life for future generations.*

*Because of the sheer volume of potential issues related to "the environment", the Environment Taskforce decided to focus on one critical issue it felt could be most productively addressed during the time frame of this project--**water quality**. The rivers, wetlands, lakes and streams help to define the county, and make it the kind of place in which we want to live. Without improvements in this area, Craven County will see its social, cultural and economic opportunities diminish.*

## **FINDINGS:**

The water quality problems in the Neuse Estuary involve the entire basin. Because our community will be a major beneficiary of improved water quality conditions, Craven County can and should take the lead in the restoration of the Neuse.

The form of pollution that poses the most pervasive threat to water quality is "nutrient loading". Substances that we might normally consider valuable as fertilizer--for example, nitrogen, phosphorus, even soil--get into the water and cause excessive growth of plants such as aquatic weeds and algae. During the life cycles of these plants, oxygen levels in the water fluctuate and fish and other aquatic life dies. To break this cycle, we must prevent too many nutrients from entering the water.

Craven County is both urban and rural, and each form of land development presents its own risks to water quality. As our population continues to increase, land will continue to be developed for urban uses--residential, commercial and industrial. How do we keep too much stormwater from running off developed property and how do we keep the stormwater that does enter the natural environment from being full of nutrients and other pollutants? Also, population growth and urban development raise the issue of disposal and treatment of wastewater. With roughly 10,000 septic tanks already in operation and expansion to municipal

wastewater systems underway, keeping the nutrients in wastewater from entering the environment will be a serious challenge.

Raising crops, timber and livestock has long been a way of life in rural Craven County and this will continue to be the case in the future. Almost eighty million dollars in sales are generated by these activities each year--a significant proportion of our local economy. Nevertheless, crop and livestock production and forestry are important contributors of nutrients into the Neuse Estuary. Farmers cultivate over 900,000 acres of land in the Neuse River Basin. In Craven County alone, there are thirty-two "intensive livestock operations"--businesses which raise enough livestock to require monitoring by the State--not to mention the many family farms with livestock. These operations present opportunities to improve water quality by improving farming practices.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

Develop and adopt a Uniform Growth Management Plan and implement that Plan through the adoption by county and municipal governments of ordinances, policies, incentives and other tools.

#### **Rationale**

Statewide, few county governments have attempted to manage development comprehensively, or to mitigate the impact of development on the environment. Some controls that are in place are enforced only by the State, often without coordination among local authorities.

Similarly, Craven County currently has only limited land use controls in place. Zoning ordinances in the county's municipalities focus primarily on land uses permitted in prescribed zones and the density and dimensions of development. More and more often, these ordinances address aesthetic and cultural issues such as the appearance of signs and landscaping, historic and neighborhood preservation and highway corridor protection.

As a result of our current limited approach to land use management, Craven County is facing the loss of irreplaceable wetland habitats, seriously degraded surface water quality, and depletion and contamination of ground water resources. Adoption, implementation, and enforcement of a Uniform Growth Management Plan will allow balanced, managed growth throughout the county, while protecting the natural resources currently at risk.

#### **Action Steps**

In order to successfully implement the above recommendation, the following steps must be taken.

- Apply for a \$100,000 grant from the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund to defer costs associated with preparing the Uniform Growth Management Plan.

The grant application should specify that this Plan will serve as a model for other river basin counties and should be a joint effort by managers and planners from Craven County, Havelock, New Bern, and other governmental agencies

- Stipulate that legal counsel and environmental experts should participate in the preparation of the Plan and related documents to ensure that they implement the spirit as well as the letter of the Federal Clean Water Act and other federal and state legislation as may be appropriate. The Plan should focus on incentives for people and businesses to abide by the Plan and not solely rely on enforcement penalties. The Plan should, furthermore, reflect the recommendations of the 1996 Craven County Wastewater Management Advisory Committee Plan and take into consideration policy documents adopted by local governments. The Plan and ordinances must include provisions for enforcement by county and local municipal code enforcement and public health officials.
- Form uniform Growth Management Advisory Group, including professional and technical staff and knowledgeable representation from each municipality and the county, to oversee the dissemination, implementation, and ongoing administration of the Plan.
- Encourage local governments must provide financial support for the personnel and equipment needed for implementation following adoption of the plan.
- Implement a countywide public relations program for dissemination of information and education of the public on the new regulations.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

Develop a coordinated and comprehensive approach to address wastewater treatment and disposal issues. The paramount goal being that all wastewater should be appropriately treated before it is released into the environment. This wastewater planning must acknowledge the widespread use of individual septic systems in the County and provide for disposal of septage during regular maintenance of those systems.

### **Rationale**

The discharge of treated wastewater to our rivers and the underground discharges of individual septic systems contribute to the excess of nutrients in the Neuse Estuary. Given the increase in population and development expected in Craven County, comprehensive, creative solutions for disposal of wastewaters are needed to minimize the impact on surface and ground waters.

The Craven County Wastewater Advisory Committee, in its 1996 Plan, identified proper maintenance of on-site septic systems as inadequate, and recommended immediate intervention. Regular pumping of on-site septic systems and replacement of failing systems are

elements of proper maintenance and should be included in planning for regional wastewater treatment needs. On-site systems located in environmentally vulnerable areas should be eliminated.

### **Actions Steps**

The following steps must be accomplished to achieve the above recommendation:

- Inspect existing septic systems to identify failing systems.
- Designate Craven County Health Department as the lead agency to handle septic system maintenance and inspections.
- The Craven County Wastewater Management Advisory Committee(WMAC) Report identifies known problem areas in the county.
- Initiate a regular maintenance and inspections program.
- Require of proper maintenance including regular pumping.
- Develop funding mechanisms for low income homeowners with maintaining existing septic systems.
- Develop criteria for assistance when system replacement is required.
- Develop criteria for assistance with regular maintenance of septic systems.
- Design treatment facilities to accommodate failed septic systems.
- Implement this component of the Craven County Wastewater Management Advisory Committee Report in regions with failing on-site systems (Dover, Cove City, Tuscarora, and unincorporated areas).
- Identify regions in County adjacent to tributaries where septic tanks should be converted to sewer.
- Encourage the NCSU Cooperative Extension Service to develop and administer educational programs for homeowners on proper care of septic systems, including regular pumping to maintain treatment capacity, as well as the value of water conservation.
- Explore potential administrative structures to manage a comprehensive wastewater treatment infrastructure for Craven County, possibly adjoining in a collaborative regional approach.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**

Control the quantity and quality of water entering the Neuse Estuary by: (1) developing a regional approach to reducing urban and residential stormwater impacts, and (2) reducing nitrogen leaving Craven County croplands by thirty percent through the use of Best Management Practices.

**Rationale**

The proposed Neuse River Basin Nutrient Sensitive Waters Management Strategy is an attempt to address water quality in the Neuse Estuary on a regional basis. It would require New Bern and Havelock, along with several communities in other counties, to develop stormwater management plans and would require that runoff from new development in the region be limited to prescribed levels.

This proposed Strategy also would require all farmers to adopt specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce nitrogen leaving croplands by thirty percent, which is estimated to result in a reduction in nitrogen loading to the Neuse River Estuary of 1,695,000 pounds per year. These BMPs include water controlled drainage, nutrient management planning, and no-till and conservation farming.

Whether or not the Nutrient Sensitive Waters Strategy or any other coordinated plan is adopted region-wide, water quality continues to be affected by the practices of farmers and builders adjacent to the estuary. The strategies described above are sound steps toward improving those practices and, therefore, Craven County should implement these strategies.

**Action Steps**

In order to successfully implement the above recommendation, the following steps must be taken.

- Develop a regional stormwater plan in conjunction with New Bern and Havelock.
- Develop acceptance of concept by Craven County Commissioners and the cities of New Bern and Havelock for a comprehensive regional stormwater plan.
- Organize a task group, including all stakeholders, to develop a framework for the regional stormwater plan and recommended components of the detailed plan.
- Finalize components of the plan through negotiations involving Craven County, New Bern, Havelock, other municipalities and groups with input from NC Division of Water Quality.
- Obtain approval of the plan by NC Division of Water Quality and implement its components with appropriate oversight to ensure compliance.

- Develop an educational program for low impact gardening, lawn care, and storm drain protection.
- NCSU Cooperative Extension Service should take the lead in developing a local education program for the public in conjunction with state educational initiatives.
- Craven County can demonstrate leadership in defining practices with a "low impact" on downstream waters and in developing methods to document nutrients leaving residential areas.
- Encourage legislative support of a study to define low impact development.
- Create development practice standards with low impacts on downstream waters based on research results.
- Incorporate the low impact development practices into the regional plan.
- Encourage the Lower Neuse Non-Point Source Team to develop a project addressing methods to document the type and quantity of nutrients leaving residential areas.
- Initiate and administer an educational program for landowners and farmers in conjunction with the Cooperative Extension Service.
  - This program will move towards achieving the thirty percent reduction in nitrogen run off from croplands through the use of BMPs.
- Designate an Intensive Livestock Operation (ILO) staff person should visit each ILO on a monthly basis to make sure that farms are in compliance.
  - At the present time, there are a number of initiatives at the State level which may provide financial resources to local, federal or non-profit agencies to facilitate the hiring of staff concerned with ILO operations. Craven County should consider the assistance available for this challenge before making decisions that affect county manpower or its budget.
- Pursue incentive programs with the State, for landowners and farmers to implement BMPs to reduce nitrogen by thirty percent.

### **Craven 2006 Environment Task Force**

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# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**MISSION: To create prosperity and stability in Craven County's economy through emphasis on retention and growth in desirable sectors of business and industry.**

*Economic development is a critical component of quality of life. Over the past several decades, local government, businesses and citizens have worked to broaden the Craven County economy to support not only rural activities but also those which would capitalize on a coming age of instant information and technological advances. That age is now upon us. Once again, we must look thoughtfully to what the future will bring, plan for that future, and act on our plans, so that Craven County remains a good place to live, work, play, and learn.*

*The Economic Development Taskforce studied many issues as it attempted to predict our economic future. In the end, three opportunities for dramatic progress rose, like cream, to the top. The recommendations and actions steps which follow are designed to take full advantage of those opportunities.*

## **FINDINGS:**

The availability of an appropriately skilled work force is the most critical factor affecting our future prosperity. This requirement is as applicable to the survival and growth of existing establishments as it is for recruitment of new industrial and business prospects. A striking example of the continual need for skilled workers to support existing businesses is Cherry Point's Naval Aviation Depot (NADEP).

NADEP is our largest industrial employer, employing approximately 4000 workers and generating more than \$600 million in revenue annually. For Craven County, it represents a high quality, environmentally sound economic asset. Unfortunately, NADEP's continued activity is extremely susceptible to changes in the political climate. Availability of qualified technicians is an on-going requirement to encourage the continuing presence of this high quality, environmentally sound economic asset. The proposed Institute of Aeronautical Technology is specifically designed to address this need.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Craven County economy. The North Carolina Department of Commerce estimates that Craven County received \$63 million in travel related expenditures in 1996, up significantly from \$17 million in 1980. We must develop and coordinate tourism efforts on a county-wide and regional basis to maximize the return from our investments in this highly productive area.

Heritage based tourism is, and should remain, the foundation for future tourism growth in Craven County. As we continue to explore the historical significance of our individual sites and communities--for example, Tryon Palace Historic Sites and Gardens and James City--we can develop and promote them as tourism assets. Focusing on providing high quality experiences for diverse visitors, and grouping activities and events into "packages", will enhance the visits of corporate, group and family travelers and encourage overnight stays and repeat visits.

In support of efforts to promote tourism in Craven County, we must work toward improving the desirability of Craven County as a tourist destination. Zoning the major highway corridors, such as Highways 70 and 17 between New Bern, Havelock, and Vanceboro, should be a high priority in a comprehensive effort to improve the appearance of the county to visitors. Also, increasing air and ground transport services at the airport will help make Craven County more accessible to citizens, tourists and business travelers. We know that Craven County is a place worth visiting and we must take decisive action now in order to have the chance to share our enthusiasm with others in the future.

Craven County, through its Economic Development Commission and Committee of 100, has experienced significant successes in the area of industrial recruitment. Well-paying manufacturing jobs have provided a better quality of life for many citizens. In order to continue to bring good jobs to the area, we must expand services to desirable businesses interested in expanding or relocating in the county and enhance our resources for selectively recruiting industry. Space for expansion and relocation must be consistently available.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

Support the building of the Institute of Aeronautical Technology in Havelock.

#### **Rationale**

In order to remain competitive in our increasingly global society, business and industry must keep current with technological advances. One of the biggest barriers to the implementation of technology in business and industry is the lack of skills in the work force. For economic growth to continue in Craven County, it is imperative that we train our work force in the skills necessary to meet the demands of the twenty-first century business environment.

The proposal to create an Institute of Aeronautical Technology meets this concern head on. With the increase in the workload at NADEP as a result of base closures nationwide, there is an immediate demand for employees with highly specialized technological skills. Fortunately, Craven County has a large potential workforce; unfortunately, some county residents currently have limited opportunities for obtaining a technical education. Training at the Institute of Aeronautical Technology would solve both problems--NADEP's need for skilled workers and workers' need for good jobs.

#### **Action Steps**

In order to successfully implement the above recommendation, the following steps must be taken.

- Encourage local, state and federal governing boards and agencies to support the establishment of the Institute of Aeronautical Technology, with the recommendation that the facility would be administered by Craven Community College.
- Coordinate efforts to promote the construction of the Institute of Aeronautical Technology with complementary efforts aimed at constructing the Technical Education Center (described in the Education section of this report) adjacent to the Institute of Aeronautical Technology site in Havelock.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

Strengthen and expand tourism in Craven County.

### **Rationale**

Tourism has a wide impact on our communities. New Bern and Craven County are recognized as a stand-alone tourist destination. Additionally, guests come to see family, stop while traveling to other destinations, and stop here on business or as part of a tour group. We must take full advantage of the opportunities visitors present by improving the quality of experience they are able to have while here. We must also market the many attractions of New Bern and Craven County to encourage extended and return visits.

The completion of a convention center in downtown New Bern, a new airport terminal with expanded air services, and a new high rise Neuse River Bridge connector for U.S. Highways 17 and 70 along with continued development of New Bern's historical and preservation themes will support tourism growth in Craven County. Once new bridges and other facilities are in place, local traffic circulation and parking needs will change; these changes should be anticipated and prepared for in local planning efforts. For our visitor's convenience, we should provide street signs and brochures with directions to local attractions as well as knowledgeable community-wide hosts. A team effort between all tourism related businesses and organizations is essential to develop a professional and well-trained tourism workforce.

### **Action Steps**

In order to successfully implement the above recommendation, the following steps must be taken.

- Strengthen and expand heritage tourism in Craven County by encouraging community support for the efforts of Tryon Palace Historic Sites and Gardens to develop the Barbour Boat works site.

- Support the establishment by the Convention Center Planning Committee of an advocacy group charged with securing proper funding for the project.
- Protect and improve the physical appearance of the County and its communities by:
  - Identifying entry way corridors and focusing efforts on improving their appearance.
  - Developing and enforcing corridor standards that protect the County's appearance along the highway links between New Bern, Havelock, and Vanceboro.
  - Developing and implementing plans to keep all Craven County roads clean.
  - Updating, expanding and funding the 1990 Urban Design Plan and the City of New Bern Waterfront Conservation and Development Plan, with an emphasis on programs and projects that support tourism.
  - Developing and implementing a comprehensive municipal sign system throughout Craven County; and, encouraging adoption of billboard regulations along all corridors.
  - Completing and implementing the New Bern 1997 Downtown Access, Circulation, and Long Range Parking Plan, which includes the downtown and surrounding areas.
- Develop a tourism marketing plan that (1) distinguishes between leisure travel and convention travel and targets each of these areas as a separate tourist pool; and (2) focuses on natural and community heritage tourism.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

Support the expansion and enhancement of existing businesses, and create an environment that entices new businesses to locate to Craven County.

#### **Rationale**

To continue our healthy economic growth, we must be able to support our existing businesses and industries while attracting new ones. With that in mind, the Economic Development Taskforce identified two pressing needs of existing and potential businesses--available building space and utility sleeves or conduit pipes.

The North Carolina Department of Commerce, Business and Industry Development Division reports that eighty-two percent of all industries locating in North Carolina chose to move their operations into existing buildings. We need to continue to maintain an inventory of appropriate size industrial space.

Availability of underground utility sleeves or conduit pipes enhances the marketability of land for business purposes and saves money. These amenities should be planned along with all major highway construction in Craven County. We must coordinate with the North Carolina

Department of Transportation, through our Craven-Pamlico Transportation Committee, to insure that utility planning is made a part of transportation planning.

### **Action Steps**

The above recommendation can be accomplished by:

- Assure the constant availability of industrial space by encouraging both public and private sectors to option sites, plan and budget for infrastructure and services, and construct shell building space.
- Encourage the Craven County Commissioners to maintain a constant supply of available industrial space.
- Include the necessary utility sleeves or conduit pipes in all highway right-of-ways planned in all future Transportation Improvement Plans (TIPs) prepared for Craven County and approved by the North Carolina Department of Transportation; support the Craven-Pamlico Transportation Committee in its annual TIP requests; continue the support of Highway 17 Association; and support the establishment of a Highway 70 Association to examine the corridor from Raleigh to the Port of Morehead City.
- Support the continuing work of the Craven County Economic Development Commission and Committee of 100 in their efforts to provide aggressive marketing materials, and to conduct annual business roundtable discussions.
- Assist the Department of Social Services and associated agencies to build community support for the Work First Program.

### **Craven 2006 Economic Development Task Force**

Dell Ipock, Chair

Grady Friday, Vice Chair

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