Strategic Plan

2014 – 2017

Seize the Future!
Introduction

This plan sets forth the direction of the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce for the next three years (2014-2017). The plan outlines a direction with which the Chamber intends to align all of its activities.
**Mission**

"Building business for a strong community."

**Vision**

The Henderson County Chamber of Commerce advocates for business through public policy, new business recruitment, and providing member businesses with opportunities to network, learn, and succeed.
What We Value

Our values are the principles & beliefs that guide the board and staff as we establish policies, determine important issues, the program of work, and actions that will be taken on behalf of our investors. Our values establish a framework and drive the culture of the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce.

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Critical Areas for Attention

The following areas were identified through the Board of Directors planning retreat and membership input gathered during the planning process.

**Focusing on Our Members:** Return on investment, membership growth and engagement

**The Voice of Business:** The Voice of Business / Public Policy

**Business / Entrepreneurial Development:** Small business focus, business development / entrepreneurial development

**Education / Workforce Development:** Developing and engaging community leaders, developing and engaging young professionals

**Community Development:** Focusing on businesses throughout Henderson County, creating a community that will maintain and attract young professionals, reaching out in Henderson County
The Five Pillars
Strategic Objectives
and Action Items
The Voice of Business

In addition to dealing with current economic conditions, businesses are saddled with burdensome regulations, paperwork, and taxes. The cost of compliance is high and extremely time consuming. To ensure that our members have every opportunity for success and profitability, and are able to compete on a level playing field, the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce must be the true voice of business and play an active advocacy role with local, state, and national elected and appointed officials.
Objective 1: Develop the public policy agenda of the Chamber and actively advocate for the passage of key issues.

Action 1: Track local legislative issues and identify those that may impact the business community.

Action 2: Use resources provided by the North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry, the North Carolina Economic Developers Association, the American Chamber of Commerce Executives and the US Chamber to identify, track and become informed about state and federal issues.

Action 3: Hold Candidate’s Forums in the fall during election years.

Action 4: Present Chamber transportation priorities to the appropriate officials and advocate their completion.

Action 5: Initiate use of a monthly “Chamber Legislative Report” that is emailed to Chamber members.
Action 6: Host focus groups on a regular basis to seek input of current topics and create and maintain a Public Policy agenda for issues that will impact businesses.

Action 7: Develop guidelines for board action related to public policy issues.

**Objective 2: Grow and nurture appropriate relationships to build trust and allow the Chamber to effectively serve as the Voice of Business in Henderson County.**

Action 1: Develop opportunities to network with elected officials including luncheon meetings with elected officials and a leadership trip to Raleigh to advocate business needs.

Action 2: Encourage business community members to serve on governmental boards, commissions, and committees, and attend public meetings as Chamber representatives.

Action 3: Survey local elected officials and key staff members to determine effectiveness of Chamber public policy efforts.
Business Development – Entrepreneurial Development

In order to ensure the economic sustainability of Henderson County, we must effectively retain business and industry that create quality, higher paying jobs for our citizens. We also understand that small businesses are the driving force of the business community. This sector of our economy faces numerous obstacles and issues. To ensure that our smaller enterprises have every opportunity for growth, success, and profitability, we must provide meaningful programming and support that will assist them with their ongoing challenges.
Objective 1: Proactively assist our partner organizations in the recruitment and attraction of targeted business and industry to the Henderson County market.

Action 1: Work with Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development (HCPED) to determine areas of assistance.

Action 2: Work with Henderson County AgriBusiness to determine areas of assistance.

Objective 2: Conduct an aggressive business retention and expansion program.

Action 1: Coordinate activities with HCPED to ensure efforts are not duplicated.

Action 2: Meet with major employers to gauge their stability in the market and assist when possible.
Action 3: Explore possibilities of “Back Office” recruitment.

Action 4: Meet with representatives of all major business sectors to determine efforts that will enhance their investment in our community.

**Objective 3:** Provide specialized forums for the various business sectors in our community.

Action 1: Identify major business sectors in Henderson County and coordinate one or more meetings with those sectors to promote networking/idea sharing and solicit public policy/programming feedback.

**Objective 4:** Create an environment for the growth of new businesses through entrepreneurial development.

Action 1: Conduct “Business Plan Contest” pilot activity. This program encourages new and existing businesses to engage in quality planning for their business.
Action 2: Host the Blue Ridge Business Growth Awards - A program that identifies and recognizes successful businesses in the community.

Action 3: Seminar Series - Host seminars and workshops for the membership. Goal of 24 per year.

Action 4: Upgrade and host the Chamber Business Expo tradeshow.

Action 5: Provide valuable/useful economic/demographic data to start-up and existing businesses.

Action 6: Host the annual Economic Outlook Breakfast.

Action 7: Review and recreate Affinity Programs that are beneficial to the membership.
Objective 5: Work with other appropriate organizations to develop a business climate that makes it less burdensome and stressful to go into, and operate, a business in the area.

Action 1: Coordinate with The Voice of Business Task Force.

Objective 6: Design small group programs for our members to interact with other members to exchange ideas and best business practices.

Action 1: Offer CEO Roundtables as an opportunity for members to participate in confidential advisory groups.

Action 2: Consider organizing an IT Roundtable group that can utilize resources at Blue Ridge Community College. The IT Roundtable would also offer a valuable networking opportunity.
Objective 7: Provide multiple networking/business development opportunities to the membership. The variety of opportunities should address the various needs of the membership.

Action 1: Provide networking opportunities that are specific to women in business including Professional Women’s Luncheon and ATHENA Award.

Action 2: Provide general networking opportunities for all members to include Business After Hours, Business Morning Update, AM Power Hour events in addition to offering Power Networking programs.

Action 3: Offer Leads Group opportunities to the membership.
Finding qualified, skilled employees is a critical need for businesses in Henderson County. In order to be in a competitive position to attract and retain high paying, quality jobs to Henderson County, we must place emphasis on developing a workforce that is prepared for the numerous job demands of the future. By linking education and industry, we can better understand Henderson County’s specific workforce needs and address any possible skill gaps.
Objective 1: Develop strong partnerships between educational institutions and industry in Henderson County.

Action 1: Develop additional opportunities - potentially events or programs - to help employers connect with local schools, colleges and universities.

Action 2: Expand the Chamber Education Committee to include more business and industry representatives.

Action 3: Expand the focus and increase participation in the annual Chamber Job Fair.

Action 4: Research best practices among other Chambers throughout the region to identify workforce development programs that effectively support business and industry.
Objective 2: Increase the quality of the local workforce to improve economic growth.

Action 1: Develop roundtables and events to help business and industry understand the existing workforce development programs and initiatives through Henderson County Public Schools and Blue Ridge Community College.

Action 2: Enhance coordination between the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development and the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce.

Action 3: Explore the development of internships with area industries through local schools, colleges and universities.

Action 4: Support local schools through programs like NC Scholars, New Teachers Luncheon, and the Junior Leadership Development Program.
Objective 3: Develop a better understanding of the unique industry skills among Henderson County employers.

Action 1: Seek input from the Chamber membership through surveys and roundtables to identify specific skill gaps within the workforce.

Action 2: Work with educational institutions to address these needs and potentially incorporate these skills into the local curriculum.

Objective 4: Work to change the perception of industry - specifically manufacturing - among parents, teachers and students in Henderson County.

Action 1: Strengthen the relationship between high school guidance counselors/college career advisors and local industries.

Action 2: Offer plant tours and educational events associated with large local manufacturers.
Community Development

We must proactively work to make Henderson County a special place that all our citizens enjoy calling home. In order to be successful in creating a desired sense place, a vision must be developed as to what Henderson County can become. We must also promote Henderson County so as to give our citizens a sense of pride about our area, while inviting visitors and prospective businesses to our wonderful community. 2015 is the year that Generation X and Millennial’s are projected to replace Baby Boomers as the majority in the workplace. Engaging young professionals in the work of the Chamber and in the life of Henderson County is crucial to our community’s future success. We must develop and deliver programs that will not only train leaders, but place them in key leadership roles in appropriate organizations within our area.
Objective 1: Support other community efforts to promote our visitor attractions to Henderson County and to establish new visitor and tourism opportunities.

Action 1: Support the summer youth camp industry through Camp Field Day activities.

Action 2: Support outdoor recreation through development of an events calendar and open house events.

Action 3: Support the “Arts” community as a vital part of tourism and local quality of life through Arts After Dark Event.

Objective 2: Identify a few quality, highly visible programs that can be established quickly, and be seen by our citizens and guests.

Objective 3: In 2017 consider establishing a “visioning” process for Henderson County that involves the City of Hendersonville, business community, civic organizations, and citizens.
Objective 4: Initiate, support and grow activities that attract tourists to Henderson County. Include add-on activities as well as primary attractions.

Action 1: Enhance and grow the Apple Festival 8K and Mini Moo Mile.

Action 2: Enhance and grow the Zombie Escape – make it a tourist attraction.

Action 3: Incubate and support the Four Season’s Running Club and the Club’s Grand Prix Series.

Action 4: Support and promote local sports tournaments/events that attract visitors to Henderson County.

Objective 5: Brand the Community.
Objective 7: Continue to enhance, promote, and deliver the Vision Henderson County Leadership Program to the satisfaction of participants and their sponsors.

Action 1: Support the Vision Henderson County Leadership Program.

Action 2: Developing processes that secure the future sustainability of the program.

Objective 8: Create an active Vision Alumni Association to perpetuate the leadership desire and engagement of our graduates.


Objective 9: Conduct Junior Leadership Henderson County to high school students in our service area.

Action 1: Continue to support the Junior Leadership Program.
Objective 10: Grow and develop the Henderson County Young Professionals into a model program in the state of North Carolina. The program will offer social and professional development opportunities and focus on attracting and retaining young professionals. The program should connect, engage, and inspire our young talent through leadership development and social interaction.

Action 1: Begin discussions with HCPED in partnering with existing programs.

Objective 11: Offer a Nonprofit Leadership Academy so as to attract younger board members, develop effective board governance, and foster excellence for the important nonprofit service sector impacting our quality of life.

Action 1: Initiate discussions with United Way of Henderson County, Community Foundation of Henderson County and Vision Henderson County Alumni Association in partnering with existing program.
Focusing on our Members

Business investors are the lifeblood of the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce. In order for us to accomplish the strategic objectives outlined in this plan, we must reach our full potential in terms of investor support and engagement. We must create a mindset among the business community that investing in the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce is a wise business decision.
Objective 1: Grow the membership investment, through the recruitment of new members and the retention of current members, by a net increase of 15% by March 2017.

Action 1: Gather data to determine viability of a commissioned sales program.

Action 2: Either conduct a membership campaign or design a new strategy for new member recruitment.

Objective 2: Achieve a retention rate of 86% annually (in the top 10% of Chambers in the country).

Action 1: Implement retention program that involves Board member calls, staff calls and renewal postcards.

Action 2: Call all non-renewing members to determine cause for non-renewal.
Objective 3: Continually explore and provide value-added benefits for members.

Objective 4: Revise our investment structure to tiered levels of investment that permit investors to bundle products and services appropriate for their business.

Action 1: Compare investment schedules with those of surrounding area Chambers to determine if a dues increase is appropriate.

Action 2: Consider tiered dues structure and/or hybrid Tiered Dues/Customized Dues (TRC) structure.
Objective 5: Create Business Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that segment and provide unique value to our members and prospective members and to provide input about products and services. Possible examples of Business Councils are Retail Council, IT Council, Non-profit Council, Homepreneur’s Council (home based businesses).

Action 1: Use Strategic Plan Focus Groups to determine viability and need for SIGs in various Chamber sub-groups.