

sync[®] NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES FROM N.C. COMMERCE



Governor Cooper Announces 146 New Jobs in Western North Carolina at GE Aviation

GE Aviation, the global manufacturer of aircraft engines and components, will create 146 full-time jobs over four years at its facilities in Asheville and West Jefferson, **Governor Roy Cooper** announced March 1. The company will invest nearly \$105 million to add production capacity supporting its revolutionary ceramic matrix composite (CMC) line of engine components.

"North Carolina welcomes innovators who drive our economy forward," Governor Cooper said. "GE Aviation and their North Carolina employees have a long history of accomplishment in our state and this expansion will put even more people to work building the next generation of innovative products for the aerospace industry."

GE Aviation's Asheville and West Jefferson facilities are part of the company's Aviation Supply Chain. The Asheville plant, opened in 2014, was the company's first site to mass produce CMC components for jet engines. The ceramic components, which are lighter and stronger than conventional materials, enhance engine performance and offer lower fuel and maintenance costs.

GE Aviation currently employs more than 1,700 people in North Carolina. Of the 146 new positions, 15 will go to Ashe County and 131 to Buncombe County.

"We are very pleased to continue expanding our GE Aviation



Opportunity Zone Comment Period Extended for N.C. Communities

The period for local communities to comment and recommend areas as potential North Carolina Opportunity Zones has been extended.

The new deadline for communities to submit input is Tuesday, March 27.

Opportunity Zones are a new tool for community and economic development, created by recently passed federal tax legislation. The zones are designed to provide tax incentives to qualified investors when they reinvest unrealized capital gains into low-income communities.

"The Opportunity Zones program could bring a needed infusion of investment to our most distressed rural and urban areas," said N.C. Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland. "We are soliciting recommendations from local governments, businesses, nonprofits and anyone interested in making their community a better one. Many communities across the state have provided recommendations, and we hope to get more with this extended deadline."

The new tax law, known as The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (H.R. 1), authorizes each state to designate up to 25 percent of its total low-income census tracts as qualified Opportunity Zones. Low-income census tracts are areas where the poverty rate is 20 percent or greater and/or family income is less than 80 percent of the area's median income.

North Carolina has just over 1,000 qualifying low-income census tracts. The state is authorized to designate up to 252 census tracts as Opportunity Zones. N.C. Commerce is responsible for developing a list of recommended census tracts, and is looking to local communities to offer suggestions for

business in Asheville," said **Michael Meguiar, Asheville Plant Leader**. "We continue to build on a great workforce, culture and community that supports advanced manufacturing jobs in Western North Carolina. This merging of technology and a strong, creative workforce is the foundation of our success. Our site continues to grow as we win components for our next generation of engines such as the GE9X and the CFM LEAP. I'm very proud of the technology advances and the continued competitiveness that our teams have been able to demonstrate."

"The companies that know North Carolina best are the ones already doing business in our state," said North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland. "GE Aviation's vote of confidence with this decision confirms once again that North Carolina offers innovative companies all the ingredients they need for success in today's competitive marketplace."

Salaries for the new jobs will vary by position but will average \$48,214, well over the average wage of \$39,192 in Buncombe County or the average wage of \$31,705 in Ashe County.

A performance-based grant of \$558,700 from the One North Carolina Fund will help facilitate GE Aviation's expansion in North Carolina.

In addition to [N.C. Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#), other key partners in the project include the [North Carolina General Assembly](#), the [North Carolina Community College System](#), [Buncombe County](#), [Ashe County](#), the [City of Asheville](#), [Ashe County Economic Development](#), and the [Economic Development Coalition of Asheville and Buncombe County](#).

[Read more.](#)



Downtowns in the Spotlight This Week in Clayton

Leaders from North Carolina communities are gathering today (March 13) in Clayton for the Department of Commerce's annual N.C. Main Street conference, coordinated by the N.C. Main Street & Rural Planning Center. The three-day conference, operating with the theme *Think Change: Think Main Street*, will explore ways that North Carolina communities are effectively changing their local economy.

The conference is open to anyone interested in downtown revitalization and economic development strategies.

The 2018 conference will offer tools to help attendees transform their downtown districts, such as quality design and historic preservation initiatives, funding options and creative revitalization strategies.

The keynote and breakout sessions will feature entrepreneurship, branding, social media and more. Attendees

these tracts. Commerce must report its findings to the U.S. Department of the Treasury by April 20, 2018.

The U.S. Treasury is still in the process of developing the criteria that will determine how funders will be certified, and the process that will be followed to certify investors. The U.S. Department of the Treasury has not released a timeline for when capital may begin to flow, but earliest estimates point to late 2018 or early 2019.

The Department of Commerce has published a website, public.nccommerce.com/oz/ with more information and a form for submitting recommendations. Interested parties can also contact Business Link North Carolina (BLNC) at (800) 228-8443.



Deputy Secretary Will Miller to Provide Commerce Update at Mid-Winter Conference

North Carolina's economic developers will gain insight on several state initiatives being managed by the Department of Commerce during tomorrow's business meeting at the North Carolina Economic Development Association's MidWinter Conference, being held at the Pinehurst Resort.

Commerce Deputy Secretary Will Miller is scheduled to deliver the Commerce update at 9:00 a.m. Wednesday (March 14) during the conference's general session.

In addition to highlighting the state's 2017 project performance, Deputy Secretary Miller will provide information on new programs relevant to economic development professionals, including Rural ReadySites, Governor Cooper's *Hometown Strong* initiative, the new workforce development push known as *NC Job Ready*, and the recently announced Opportunity Zones.

More information about the [NCEDA MidWinter Conference is available at the association's website.](#)

On Our Radar

- [We Are The Triangle](#) (Video from Research Triangle Park Foundation)

will hear from some of the state's inspiring leaders, including committed Main Street Champions and city, town and county managers. These speakers will share how they create partnerships for vibrant communities.

The host town, Clayton, is one of North Carolina's vibrant Main Street communities. In the last decade, Clayton government and businesses have successfully partnered to preserve small-town charm while investing more than \$20 million in revitalization projects ranging from a brewery in an old cotton mill and modern offices in a 1920's Ford dealership to jazz cocktail lounges and rooftop restaurants in previously-abandoned Main Street storefronts.

The annual North Carolina Main Street Awards Dinner and Ceremony will be held tomorrow evening (March 14) and the Main Street Champions Recognition will be held on Thursday, March 15. These two events recognize outstanding projects taking place in Main Street downtowns throughout the state and honor individuals dedicated to making their downtowns thriving places.

Since 1980, North Carolina Main Street and Small Town Main Street communities have generated over \$2.75 billion in public and private investment. Nearly 23,500 cumulative net new full-time and part-time jobs and nearly 5,900 new businesses have been created in North Carolina Main Street districts since the program's inception. In FY 2016-17, 139,336 volunteer hours were committed to North Carolina Main Street and Small Town Main Street downtown districts, valued at more than \$3.2 million.

- [The Data Roller Coaster: A Revised Take On North Carolina's Labor Force Trends](#) (Article from our Labor & Economic Analysis team at their blog, *The LEAD Feed*)
- [Meeting March 21: Getting Prepared for New Data Privacy Rules in Europe](#) (British American Business Council - Triangle Chapter)

N.C. in the News

- [How Carolinas' metros measure up in Site Selection ranking of new and expanded corporate facilities in 2017](#) (*Triad Business Journal* - March 7)
- [Amazon still considering the Triangle for HQ2, but it's already poaching its students](#) (*Herald-Sun* - Durham - March 5)
- [Here's a peek at how Charlotte's airport is planning to become a major industrial hub](#) (*Charlotte Observer* - March 2)
- [Garland factory finesses fashion for Brooks Brothers](#) (*Business North Carolina* - March 2)
- [CSX scraps plans for rail hub](#) (*Rocky Mount Telegram* - February 27)

About Us

SYNC is North Carolina Commerce's electronic newsletter for local government officials, private-sector allies, state policy makers, and other economic development leaders. We offer unfiltered details about new economic development projects and events, useful news about your peers, and opportunities to synchronize with statewide programs and tools in order to advance economic development in your community. [Send your story ideas to the editor.](#)

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