

# sync<sup>®</sup> NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES FROM N.C. COMMERCE



## 200 New Jobs Coming to Durham as N.C.'s Gene Therapy Cluster Grows

AveXis, a clinical-stage gene therapy company developing treatments for rare and life-threatening neurological diseases, will locate a new manufacturing center in Durham County, creating 200 jobs, **Governor Roy Cooper** announced today (May 22). The company is expected to invest approximately \$55 million in the facility to produce potentially breakthrough therapies to address rare neurological genetic diseases.

"We're proud to be the place where cutting edge work will happen on gene therapies to fight disease and improve people's health," **Governor Cooper** said. "North Carolina has long been a leader in the life sciences, and AveXis' decision further enhances the state's expertise in this emerging field."

A Novartis company headquartered in Bannockburn, Illinois, AveXis' initial product candidate, AVXS-101, is a proprietary gene therapy currently in development for the treatment of spinal muscular atrophy, or SMA, Type 1, the leading genetic cause of infant mortality.

"Our primary focus is to bring gene therapies to patients suffering from devastating rare neurological diseases — such as SMA, genetic amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, and Rett syndrome - and continued investment in establishing our manufacturing infrastructure is a critical component to accomplishing this goal," said **Andrew Knudten, Senior Vice President of Technical Operations and Chief Technical Officer at AveXis**. "As a long-established biotechnology hub that attracts the nation's top talent, Research Triangle Park was an optimal location to expand our footprint and complement our existing state-of-the-art manufacturing site in the Chicagoland area."

"It's notable that AveXis has chosen to expand its manufacturing operations in North Carolina," said **Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland**. "Life science companies understand the many advantages our state offers



### U.S. Treasury Certifies North Carolina Opportunity Zones

The United States Treasury certified 252 areas in the state as official North Carolina Opportunity Zones on May 18, potentially opening a new source of investment capital for regions of the state that need it the most.

In April, the state recommended all of these areas for federal consideration and with last Friday's decision, Treasury officially declares these low-income census tracts can participate in the investment program.

The action marks an important milestone in the development of the state's Opportunity Zones, but the U.S. Department of the Treasury is still in the process of developing other criteria and guidelines that will define how the Opportunity Zone effort, and related Opportunity Funds, will operate. There is no clear timeline for when capital may begin to flow, but earliest estimates point to late 2018 or early 2019.

"We're pleased that communities in every corner of our state will be able to utilize this new development tool," said **Napoleon Wallace, Deputy Secretary at the North Carolina Department of Commerce**. "With the certification of our proposed zones, our local and regional partners can accelerate their work to identify and prepare projects and investments in their areas suitable for equity capital."

Recently passed federal legislation, known as The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (H.R.1), created the Opportunity Zone concept and authorized each state to designate up to 25 percent of its total low-income census tracts as qualified Opportunity Zones. The legislation creates a tax benefit for qualified investors who wish to re-invest realized capital gains into Opportunity Zones, avoiding standard capital gain tax obligations.

manufacturers, particularly the investments North Carolina has made in education and workforce training for the biotechnology industry."

AveXis will create a variety of positions in Durham County, including engineers, manufacturing and quality control personnel, and supply chain specialists. When all new positions are filled, the total payroll impact is anticipated to be in excess of \$20 million annually.

AveXis' was awarded a 12-year Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) today, authorizing the potential reimbursement to the company of up to \$2,232,000. Over the course of the 12-year term, the project will grow the state's economy by an estimated \$918.5 million.

AveXis' JDIG also calls for moving as much as \$744,000 into the state's Industrial Development Fund - Utility Account. The Utility Account helps rural communities finance necessary infrastructure upgrades to attract future business.

Partnering with [North Carolina Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina](#) on this project were the [North Carolina General Assembly](#), the [North Carolina Community College System](#), the [North Carolina Biotechnology Center](#), [Durham Technical Community College](#), [Durham County](#), and the [Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce](#).

[Read more.](#)



Secretary Copeland (standing) and Assistant Secretary for Rural Economic Development Kenny Flowers (seated, left) participated in a series of Hometown Strong meetings and activities in Burke County yesterday and today (May 21-22).

## Hometown Strong Brings Focus to Burke County

Governor Roy Cooper's Hometown Strong team convened a series of meetings and working sessions this week in Burke County. **North Carolina Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland** and **Kenny Flowers, the Department's Assistant Secretary for Rural Economic Development** participated in

North Carolina has just over 1,000 low-income census tracts. The North Carolina Department of Commerce coordinated the state's multi-phase and collaborative approach to identify which areas to include for federal consideration. Guided by data and driven by local priorities, the process included an extensive review of census and economic data, public input collected through the Department's website and direct outreach, and close collaboration with local leaders, government staff, and officials from across the state.

The list of North Carolina Opportunity Zones can be downloaded at this link.

Commerce has published a website where you can learn more about the selection process and review the candidate zones that were submitted to the Treasury. Visit [public.nccommerce.com/oz](http://public.nccommerce.com/oz).



Dr. John Hardin addresses employers, students and teachers attending the annual STEMEast Summit in New Bern on Thursday, May 3.

## Commerce Spotlights Importance of STEM Education for Economic Development

Dr. John Hardin, Executive Director of Commerce's Office of Science, Technology, & Innovation, served as the keynote speaker at the STEM East: E2 Summit at the Riverfront Convention Center in New Bern, May 3.

The annual event convenes regional school districts and employers in the state's eastern region to enable a dialog around workforce needs and preparation strategies.

Focusing on the STEM employment pipeline (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), the Summit provides employers a forum for sharing their changing job needs, while school districts demonstrate what steps they have taken to help meet these needs.

In his remarks, Dr. Hardin discussed the importance of STEM education for industry; the importance of raising educational attainment of all North Carolina citizens,

the event, focused on ways to streamline economic development activities in the area.

The Hometown Strong initiative coordinates with both the public and private sectors across many industries to make state government better work to benefit the people it's meant to serve. The motto of the program is 'Community Focused Partnerships,' with the focus of the work aimed at meeting the needs of local communities.

Broad themes are emerging as the Hometown Strong team continues to engage with local leaders, including the need to revitalize local economies, improve and extend infrastructure and connectivity, and the need to focus on workforce training.



A bird's eye view of the I-77 Welcome Center, courtesy of an overhead drone.

## Record Visitor Spending Reported as Welcome Centers Celebrate Tourism Week

North Carolina's nine Welcome Centers celebrated National Travel and Tourism Week May 6-12, hosting a series of events during an action-packed week.

This year's national theme - Travel Then and Now - was especially appropriate, as North Carolina's Welcome Centers commemorate 50 years of service to the state's visitors this year.

North Carolina tourism generated record visitor spending in 2017 with a total of \$23.9 billion, a 4.2 percent increase from 2016, according to new data released May 6.

"North Carolina is a welcoming place for the nearly 50 million visitors who travel here each year, and tourism continues to be an economic engine for our state, employing 225,200 people across more than 45,000 businesses last year," **Governor Roy Cooper** said. "I'm proud of the way the tourism industry continues to fuel growth in communities across our state."

Every day since the doors opened at the I-85 North Welcome Center in Warren County in August, 1968, professional travel counselors have demonstrated North Carolina's famous hospitality, while promoting thousands of tourism-related businesses - attractions, accommodations, restaurants, events and more - to visitors already in the state actively seeking travel information.

More information about the centers can be found online at [nccommerce.com](http://nccommerce.com).

particularly STEM skills; and spotlighted and recognized the work of STEMEast in eastern North Carolina.

More information about the Summit is available online at [NCEast Alliance](http://NCEastAlliance.com) and [STEMEast](http://STEMEast.com).

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## On Our Radar

- [Governor Cooper Honors the Late Chris McKeaver with the Old North State Award; Chris was our former manager of the I-77 Welcome Center](#) (*Mount Airy News*) - May 17

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## N.C. in the News

- [Tire plants put area in spotlight](#) (*Rocky Mount Telegram* - May 21)
- [Economic development leaders focus on the future](#) (*Topsail Advertiser* - Jacksonville - May 17)
- [Stakeholders give views on outdoor recreation opportunities](#) (*Stanly News & Press* - May 15)
- [In the 'diabetes belt,' a small town grapples with growth of the world's largest insulin maker](#) (*STAT News* - May 15)
- [N.C. State is giving IBM a hand in pushing what might be computing's next revolution](#) (*News & Observer* - May 14)
- ['State of Region' event to highlight Triangle's present & future \(+ video preview\)](#) (*WRAL TechWire* - May 13)
- [Apprenticeship programs try to change perception of advanced manufacturing jobs](#) (*Winston-Salem Journal* - May 12)

## 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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