

Governor Cooper Announces Program to Attract Jobs to Rural Industrial Sites

\$12 Million Rural ReadySites Program available to help local governments prepare and compete for business

Rural communities will soon have access to \$12 million to get industrial sites ready to attract new jobs, Governor Roy Cooper announced recently. Through the Rural ReadySites Development Program, rural areas will be able to apply for funding to build or improve public infrastructure for sites that have strong potential to attract employers, create jobs and support the local, regional and state economy. "North Carolina's rural communities have so much to offer businesses, but sites must be ready when employers are looking to bring new jobs," Governor Cooper said. "We know our rural areas are great places to live and work, and this program will help them become more competitive at attracting good jobs."

The program will be run out of the North Carolina Department of Commerce. It will launch this spring with applications due April 13.

"Companies look for industrial sites with the water, sewer, power and road access necessary to get their project off the ground quickly," said Commerce Secretary Anthony M. Copeland. "I invite the leaders in our rural communities to apply for these funds so we can help them be competitive."

In order to qualify for the program, applicants must have a well-developed strategy to market the site to appropriate private sector businesses. Other qualifications include:

- The applicant must be a government entity in a Tier 1 or 2 county.*
- The site must be publicly owned or controlled.
- The site must be a minimum of 50 contiguous acres.
- Funds will only be used to construct public infrastructure, with priority given to water, sewer and industrial access improvements.
- Additional consideration will be given to sites located in counties with the greatest economic distress.

Interested local government applicants should contact Mark Poole at mpoole@nccommerce.com for application forms. Applications are due April 13, 2018. Selected projects will be announced this summer.

Recently Governor Cooper launched Hometown Strong, a new initiative to partner with local governments to support local economies, improve infrastructure, and strengthen rural communities. Hometown Strong will work with local leaders to stimulate economies and help businesses thrive in North Carolina's rural communities by focusing on projects such as infrastructure improvements, broadband access, and workforce training. The Rural ReadySites Development Program is an example of the kinds of tools available to rural communities through Hometown Strong, its director said.

"In Hometown Strong, we hear directly from rural communities and champion their priorities within state agencies to leverage existing resources and programs," said Pryor Gibson, leader of the Hometown Strong initiative. "The Rural ReadySites is a perfect example of how state agencies are answering the call to action."

* **Tier 1 or 2 County** The North Carolina Department of Commerce annually ranks the state's 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a Tier designation. The 40 most distressed counties are designated as Tier 1, the next 40 as Tier 2 and the 20 least distressed as Tier 3. This Tier system is incorporated into various state programs to encourage economic activity in the less prosperous areas of the state.

County Tiers are calculated using four factors:

- 1) Average unemployment rate
- 2) Median household income
- 3) Percentage growth in population
- 4) Adjusted property tax base per capita

The law governing County Tier status also further specifies automatic qualifying criteria for Tier One and Tier Two status: Tier One Automatic Qualifiers include:

- A county must be Tier 1 for at least two consecutive years
- A county with less than 12,000 people
- A county with a population less than 50,000 people AND a poverty rate of 19 percent or greater

Tier Two Automatic Qualifier:

- A county with a population less than 50,000 people

More information is available at www.nccommerce.com.

Ensure Your Devotion, Insure Your Valentine's Gift

If the romantic notions surrounding Valentine's Day prompted you to give your significant other a precious gift, you might want to make sure the gift is insured. Whether it's a necklace, a watch, an engagement ring, or some other valuable, it's important to know your options when insuring your gift against theft, damage, or loss.

North Carolina Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey recommends that the first step is finding out what coverage you already have. Most homeowner's and renter's insurance policies include jewelry as a type of personal property you can insure. However, the coverage might not be enough. Homeowner's and renter's insurance policies have a maximum coverage limit for the combined value of all your jewelry.

Commissioner Causey and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners recommend you review your policy or check with your insurance agent to find out the scope of your current coverage. If the coverage is insufficient, you may want to consider getting an endorsement known as a "personal article floater" to cover your item.

To make sure you have the right amount of insurance, get your item appraised. The NAIC also recommends you shop around for the best coverage. Ask your insurance agent questions about options, including deductibles for your items.

Know the difference between replacement coverage and actual cash value coverage. Replacement coverage replaces the item with a similar piece of jewelry that is equal in value. Actual cash value coverage provides a cash amount equal to the value of your item as agreed upon in your policy.

While you're reviewing your property insurance, it's also a good time to check into your life insurance. Preparation for their future may be one of the best gifts of all.

You can check out tips for life insurance and property insurance at the N.C. Department of Insurance web page at www.ncdoi.com and at the National Association of Insurance Commissioners web page at naic.org.

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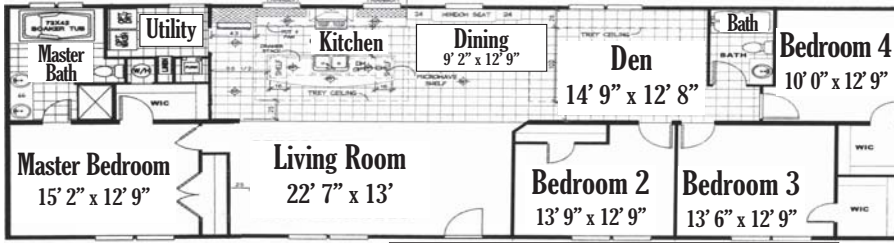
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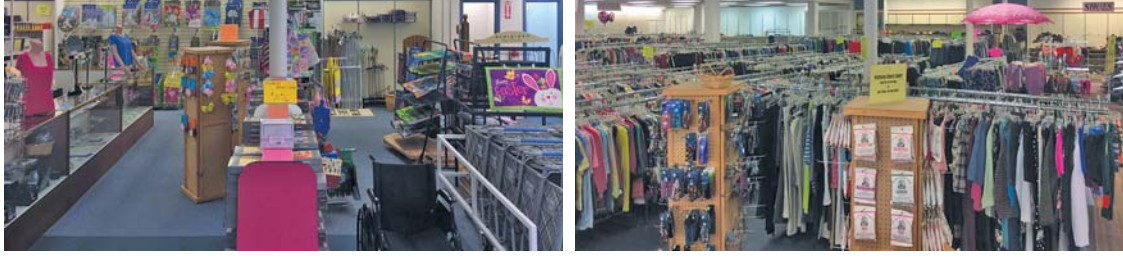
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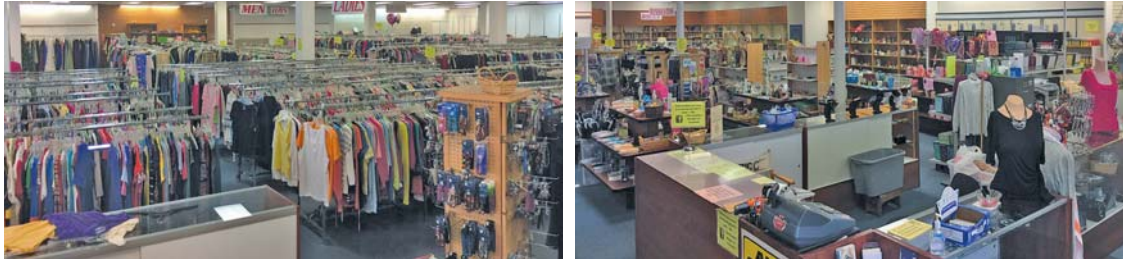
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<p>COUPON Dayspring Gift Items, Buy One, Get One For Only 12 Cents!* <small>*With Coupon. Boxed cards excluded. Discounted item must be of equal or lesser value. Good thru 3/31/18.</small></p>	<p>COUPON Fill A Bag Full Of Books, DVDs, CDs, Cassettes For Only \$1.20!* <small>*With Coupon. New items excluded. Good thru 3/31/18.</small></p>	<p>COUPON Get Any New Scarf For Only \$1.20 With Any \$5 Purchase!* <small>*With Coupon. Good thru 3/31/18.</small></p>
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*Proceeds benefit terminally ill patients and their families served by Hospice of Chesterfield County. Donations of new and gently used items greatly appreciated.