

# Bertie County economic visioning project seeks community input

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Residents of Bertie County are invited to help create a vision for the county's economic future during four public forums to be held in July.

Input gathered during the forums will be used to craft an economic development strategy, Bertie County 2020, under development by the county with the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, part of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School.

"The Great Recession took jobs and businesses from Bertie County, as it did the rest of the nation," said Steve Biggs, Bertie County economic development director. "We need participation, ideas and perspectives from every part of our community to shape a vision and plan for restoring economic health and vitality to our county."

The four forums and the communities and populations they target are as follows:

- Monday, July 15, 6-7:30 p.m., Community Building, 201 S. Queen St., Windsor, targeting residents of Askewville, Indian Woods and Windsor;
- Thursday, July 18, 6-7:30 p.m., Community Building, 130 S. Commerce St., Aulander, targeting residents of Aulander, Kelford, Lewiston-Woodville, Mitchells, Roxobel and Snake Bite;
- Thursday, July 25, 6-7:30 p.m., Volunteer Fire Department, 101 Winton St., Colerain, targeting residents of Colerain, Merry Hill, Powellsville and Whites; and
- Monday, July 29, 6-7:30 p.m., Community Building, 201 S. Queen St., Windsor, targeting all county youth ages 16-24.

The community forums will focus on two basic questions: What is the community's vision for the economy of Bertie County in 2020? What can the people of Bertie County do over the next few years to realize that vision? Light refreshments will be served and raffles for prizes held.

"Our goal is to have participation from every community and town in the county – from business leaders, youth, public servants, religious leaders, those who have lost their jobs and businesses during the recession and those who have prospered despite a tough economy," said Mark Little, program director for economic development at the Kenan Institute.

The Bertie County planning project is funded in part by a grant to the Kenan Institute from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration to promote economic growth in 18 rural eastern North Carolina counties.

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