Centralina Council of Governments is the lead organization to coordinate regional solutions for growth and quality of life issues.

**Economic Development**

The Centralina Economic Development Commission is a new venture providing regional leadership on the broad, longer-term issues surrounding public policies and investments in economic development. Commission Board members are recommended by COG member governments and come from the public and private sectors, a combination that offers skills and expertise to guide policies and programs to increase investments and spur innovation and productivity in our region.

The Commission implements the recommendations adopted in the comprehensive economic development strategy, completes an annual update of the document, prioritizes regional development projects and recommends individual projects to the Economic Development Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce. The Commission provides a vision beyond the next economic cycle.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

Centralina Council of Governments is the lead organization to coordinate regional solutions for growth and quality of life issues.
will serve serious cyclists, while a number of more local loops provide for student and family use, and for bike commuters. Current plans call for new communities along the Route to be encouraged to provide connections to it, so that the public has ready access to an alternative for transportation and recreation.

“Clear the Air for Kids!” -
This year, through “Clear the Air for Kids!” Centralina has led the state in efforts to reduce idling from school buses and from carpool lines. “Clear the Air!” focuses on educating children and their parents about the links between diesel and auto emissions, ozone and fine particle air pollution, and children’s health. It also promotes turning off engines whenever kids are breathing—a strong and simple message about how parents can improve kids’ respiratory health. An upcoming partnership with the NC Department of Environment and National Resources will provide funding for signs at every school in the region to reinforce the no-idling message.

Sustainable Environment for Quality of Life - SEQL has led the nation for the past three years as a voluntary local government-based program to promote the environment and integrated planning. In the past year, additional action items were developed and promoted, a survey made of major SEQL participants, and 809 actions have been documented from local jurisdictions on air quality, sustainable growth and water resources issues.

Area Agency on Aging

With the increasing number of older adults, communities and organizations must plan now to prepare for the coming changes. Centralina Area Agency on Aging staff continues to play a vital role in local, regional, state, and national planning on aging issues. Several staff members serve in leadership roles on the state and national committees and have made presentations on aging issues at local, regional, state and national conferences.

The Aging Program Administrator testified before before the US Senate Select Committee on Aging regarding service and program changes in the Centralina Region in preparation for the “Coming of the Baby Boomers”.

Regional Initiatives

The Lake Norman Bike Route - Several years ago, the Lake Norman Bike Route was just a gleam in someone’s eye. During 2006, with leadership from Centralina’s Regional Initiatives staff working with the Lake Norman RPO, it is becoming real. The Route has been planned, and the plan has been endorsed not only by the Lake Norman RPO, but by the Unifour RPO and the Mecklenburg-Union MPO—all preliminary steps to formal adoption by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The 150-mile main loop around the lake

Planning

Centralina Clean Fuels Coalition (CCFC) -
The Centralina Clean Fuels Coalition (CCFC), managed by the Centralina Council of Governments, is part of the US Department of Energy’s “Clean Cities” program. Centralina staff oversees the day-to-day activities of the Coalition and works with a stakeholder group. CCFC’s goal is to reduce petroleum consumption in the region and to this end has engaged both the private and public sectors in establishing a foundation for creating a viable alternative fuel market in the Charlotte region. The CCFC promotes the use of alternative fuels such as biodiesel, electricity, hydrogen, propane, natural gas and ethanol, as well as the use of idle reduction technologies and hybrid vehicles. This past year CCFC has worked with fuel distributors and station owners to help open retail ethanol and biodiesel fueling stations throughout the region. Currently, there are six fuel stations publicly offering E-85 fuel (a fuel blend of 85% ethanol and 15% regular gasoline) and seven that offer biodiesel.
CCFC is currently developing a state-wide online mapping tool that will allow users to locate alternative fuel stations across North Carolina. In May 2006, CCFC co-Sponsored its second annual “Try and Drive Day” event with the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to give fleet managers from around the region first-hand experience with hybrid vehicles and other alternative fuel vehicles. In the Summer 2006, CCFC enrolled two regional fleets to participate in the biodiesel pilot program. The Town of Matthews and the Gaston County landfill began using biodiesel in their fleets for the first time for a two-month trial period. CCFC has collected data on these pilot programs that will be shared with fleet managers around the region.

Goose Creek - Since 2005 Centralina has spearheaded a stakeholder process to develop an action plan to protect the Carolina heelsplitter, a federally-endangered species, in the Goose Creek watershed in Union County. This watershed provides habitat for one of only seven known populations of this species in the nation. Portions of Goose Creek and Duck Creek in Mecklenburg and Union Counties are designated as critical habitat for the heelsplitter. The designation has a significant impact on local and regional land use plans and on a number of regional projects and local initiatives. Over the past year, stakeholders from local governments, wildlife agencies and transportation agencies have participated in a series of meetings to explore possibilities for protecting the Goose Creek Watershed and Carolina heelsplitter. In the Summer of 2006, local government and transportation agency stakeholders developed a Memorandum of Understanding, which outlined several protective measures that local governments would undertake through land use regulations to protect the watershed. Centralina will continue to work in the Goose Creek watershed as it has entered into a contract with the NC Department of Transportation to develop an education program for citizens to better understand the environmental issues facing the watershed.

Workforce Development

The Centralina WDB has been active during the past year in providing leadership in a host of workforce development and related areas. Through its private sector leaders, the Board has been effective in meeting the needs of the current and emerging workforce. Centralina WDB members and staff are all focused on “Working Locally and Planning Regionally to Compete Globally”.

The Board, in partnership with other area workforce boards, formally released the regional “State of the Workforce” study covering all nine Centralina COG counties as well as those with Catawba Regional COG in South Carolina. This study, which included leadership interviews, labor market data analysis, and community forums, provides the roadmap for workforce services in the future. Several county workforce development summits were held in 2006 including Iredell County, Union County and the Workforce and Economic Development Alliance Summit in cooperation with the Charlotte Regional Partnership.

Board members and staff have made presentations regarding its leadership and forward thinking. These include the NC Commission on Workforce Development, Southeastern Employment and Training Association, National Association of Workforce Boards, North Carolina Association of Workforce Professionals, North Carolina Community College System, WDB Directors Council, State Youth Leads meeting, State Business Services Coordinators meeting, Virginia Youth Practitioners summit, Leadership Cabarrus, and local Rotary, Civitans, and Lions clubs. Additionally, staff and Board members serve in key roles on state and national advisory boards and committees.

Speakers for Centralina WDB have included Disney Leadership Institute, The Region’s Economic and Business Outlook, From Textiles to Technology, Regional Entrepreneurial Efforts, Branding Our Services - What is Our Market Position? and NC Research Campus Update.

“Working Locally and Planning Regionally to Compete Globally.”
Planning

Gaston Unified Development Ordinance - A major planning effort continues in Gaston County with the development of the Gaston Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The UDO is designed to update and place all of the County’s land use regulations into one ordinance. Presentation to the Gaston County Board of Commissioners is expected in early 2007.

Although Centralina is under contract with Gaston County to produce the report, the writing of the UDO represented a true collaborative effort between Gaston County and its municipalities as all played pivotal roles in the creation of the UDO text. The text will be in a form suitable for adoption by all local governments in the County.

Training - Centralina continues to play a lead role in providing planning training to both citizen boards and elected bodies throughout the region. Examples include:

• Joint planning board training to Mount Holly, Bessemer City and Cramerton

• Training to the region’s elected officials on Planning 101

• A collaborative effort with South Piedmont Community College to provide training to the region’s planning boards.

NC 73 Council of Planning/Transportation and Land Use Study - The NC 73 Council of Planning, created in 2005 as a result of the NC 73 Transportation/L and Use Study continued to serve as a forum for planners and elected officials along the NC 73 Corridor between Lincolnton and Kannapolis to review projects taking place along the Corridor and to discuss mutual concerns.

The Study and the associated Council of Planning have been recognized as a model effort. Planners from the Triangle area are considering using a variation of the NC 73 Study/Council of Planning to address transportation issues along the US 1 Corridor. The Transportation/L and Use Study received an award in 2006 from the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association (NCAPA) for as an outstanding example of regional planning and collaboration.

Area Agency on Aging

Much of the work of the Area Agency is dependent on our ability to partner and collaborate with other organizations. The AAA has begun focusing on the non-traditional partners like the Attorney General’s Office and AARP in the implementation of four “Scam Jams” across the region.

Another example of non-traditional partners is the "Mature Worker Job Fair" which brought many businesses to the Aging Network to meet potential employees. The 2006 Annual Aging Conference was an excellent collaboration between the Area Agency, Charlotte Region Hospice and Palliative Care and Duke University Family Caregiver Program. Training was provided to over five hundred individuals from across the region.

Workforce Development

Collaboration is at the heart of all activities involving the Centralina WDB. From the continued development and improvement of local JobLink Career Centers to the coordination of services for dislocated workers to joint partnerships for youth services, the Centralina WDB is the vital link in making workforce development collaboration happen in the region. The Board served as the lead organization in the formation of The Competitive Workforce Alliance and for implementation of the State of the Workforce Study, which also involved Mecklenburg and Gaston counties. It has worked extensively with area employers, community colleges, private training providers, and NC State Industrial Extension Service in the development, approval, and implementation of workforce development grants to assist in the upgrading of skills for incumbent workers in order to keep our local businesses here. A total of 10 local employers received assistance with 797 employees scheduled for training. The Centralina WDB through Incumbent Worker Training made a total of $304,745 in economic investment in our counties.

(continued on Pg. 4)
The Centralina WDB worked in partnership with Mitchell Community College and Rowan-Cabarrus Community College to help the colleges be pilots for the new statewide Career Readiness Certification project. The Career Readiness Certificate, using the nationally recognized “Work Keys” assessment, is an employability credential that reflects an individual’s attainment of certain core employability skills required across many industries and occupations.

Additional collaboration efforts for the Board including serving on local JobReady/School-to-Career committees; working on a regular basis with local chambers of commerce and economic development commissions; promoting the Early College efforts in Iredell, Union, and Anson counties; sponsoring Job and Career Fairs in Iredell and Lincoln counties and Existing Industry seminars in Iredell and Union counties; staffing the Centralina Youth Council to help provide solutions for youth needs and coordinating local training initiatives and special grants (New Ventures Business Development Centers in Anson and Union counties, Project Health for medical students in Iredell County, Stanly County Workforce Transitions for Youth, etc.). Board members and staff are also actively involved with the Southwest Regional Career and Technical Education Partnership, Cabarrus Regional Chamber of Commerce Workforce Committee, the BizHub Network (for entrepreneurship), and the Union County Business Growth Council.

**Centralina Economic Development Commission**

**Logistics Network Highlights** - The CEDC, in partnership with the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, Charlotte Chapter, has formed the Logistics Roundtable of the Carolinas. This Roundtable is comprised of more than 30 organizations in North and South Carolina that promote, support, or engage in logistics, distribution or supply chain management. The Roundtable will launch a website in early 2007 to publish and promote the many events of its various member organizations and to provide information on the logistics industry.

**Bioinformatics Network Highlights** - The CEDC Bioinformatics Sub-Committee on Education formed from the Bioinformatics Network to promote biotech education and workforce preparedness in the region. In June, a Forum on Education was held for community colleges, four-year educational institutions, and K-12 systems in the Centralina region to investigate bioinformatics and biotech and to identify what resources are available to help prepare students of all ages for careers in the growing biotech industry.

**Connect with Success Workshop** - The series targets planners, managers, elected officials, and community and economic development professionals and is designed to highlight best practices, share replicable tools, and connect new program ideas to funding sources. The workshops were well attended and provided central themes of public/private partnerships, creative financing tools and community revitalization.

**Regional Initiatives**

**Transportation Funding Website** - During 2006, Centralina’s Transportation Program staff worked with the staffs of North Carolina RPOs to develop a transportation funding website. The site contains information about all transportation funding resources available to local governments in North Carolina, and use a simple decision-tree technique to lead users to the funding source(s) best suited for their needs. Centralina will house and maintain the site. This type of collaboration represents a cost-effective way for the planning community, all local governments, civic and not-for-profit groups, and the public to have access to important funding information that can help to move projects ranging from sidewalks to bike paths to intersection improvements forward.

**Air Quality Education** - “Clear the Air for Kids!” is making great headway because of collaboration with groups such as Gaston County’s Quality of Natural Resources Commission, Lincoln County’s Natural Resources Committee, the Carolinas Clean Air Coalition, and school systems throughout the region. This program, which has the potential to do for air pollution what educating kids did for recycling, is possible only with the efforts of multiple partners and stakeholders. Local volunteers are educating their own communities, with Centralina providing the materials and expert information, in collaboration with the North Carolina Division of Air Quality’s Air Awareness program. The results will bear fruit for years in the future.
Truck Stop Electrification -
Truckers stop for 10 hours in every 24 hour period, and unless the weather is perfect, they must run their engines for heating or cooling as they sleep in their cabs. The trucks vibrate and make noise, and the engines produce tons of pollutants over the course of a year. Working collaboratively with the Cabarrus-Rowan MPO, the NC Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and US EPA, Centralina secured remaining funds for implementation of the Derrick Truck Stop in Rowan County. This has stimulated the development of additional sites in or adjacent to the region, to be funded privately or through other sources such as Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality funds. These public-private partnerships are classic examples of the collaboration needed to make a major impact on air pollution—TSE is one of the single most cost-effective ways to impact mobile source emissions that produce NOx and fine particle pollution.

Regional Initiatives staff has also collaborated with a number of organizations and jurisdictions on their own efforts, including serving on the planning committees for the Cultivating Creative Communities Conference and the “Clean Air Works!” pilot project on business solutions to air quality issues, and on the Charlotte Mayor’s Environmental Cabinet.

Area Agency on Aging
In June 2006, Centralina Area Agency on Aging held a regional retreat to explore new and better ways to develop grassroots planning initiatives for the Four Year Regional and State Aging Plans. Historically, planning began at the State level, and filtered to the regional and county levels. This new approach to planning will give communities the opportunity to identify the priority issues. Centralina Area Agency on Aging is working with the communities to develop regional and state plans that are responsive to the needs of the community and not mandates of the process.

Providing information and assistance to community planners, organizations, and individuals is a key responsibility of the Area Agency on Aging. Staff shortage, increased work demands, and concern for maximum quality of service, the Area Agency on Aging reorganized the staff responsibilities to implement the “Answer Desk”. This innovation was designed to provide enhanced consumer responsiveness, greater staff efficiency, and increased assurance of quality.

More and more individuals find themselves in the situation of serving as caregiver for an older family member. Generally, the individual finds themselves thrust into a situation that is unfamiliar and wrought with emotion. One of the priority needs of these individuals is information. Many of the agencies providing Caregiver Services through Family Caregiver Support Programs have done an excellent job of providing information, training, and respite support. Centralina Area Agency on Aging, in collaboration with the Charlotte Region Hospice and Palliative Care, hosted a “Skills Training Workshop” for caregivers. Demands of caregiving require caregivers to provide daily care for which they need very specific skills. Approximately one hundred paid and unpaid caregivers took advantage of this innovative training.

An essential part of the Ombudsman program is the Community Advisory Committee. Volunteers in this program are trained quarterly on how to assure the rights of individuals living in long term care facilities are protected. Centralina Area Agency on Aging Ombudsman Program was asked to present at the National Conference for Nursing Home Reform on their program to train the Community Advisory Committee Volunteers on the new complaint management initiative.

Regional Initiatives

A New Way of Visioning – Most regional visions start with a huge citizen-based effort, involving tens to hundreds of citizen meeting through multiple citizen outreach gatherings. This is expensive, time-consuming, and duplicative of work done by individual jurisdictions. Is there a way to “fast track” a regional vision? When it comes right down to it, how can a regional vision be implemented over a broad and diverse geographic area?
Centralina, working with Catawba Regional COG and a leading national consultant, blazed new ground with CONNECT. Our bi-state greater Charlotte region is the first in the nation to begin with a review of what has already been adopted by local governments as the basis for its vision. Through CONNECT, over 30 values in six “regional framework” areas have been identified as common throughout the region, along with policies that support them. Through a four-month process, the core values around which a regional vision will be shaped have been identified. Furthermore, an innovative methodology has been developed, that allows jurisdictions to decide where they fit into the region’s vision based on their own needs, and allows “brokering” of what has to happen locally and what has to happen regionally to create a sustainable future. These next phases of the project will be undertaken over the next two years, so that by the end of 2008, the region will have a consensus "game plan" for the future and a set of implementation tools to get there.

Low Impact Development Educational Outreach -
"I don’t want a swamp in my yard!" Imagine yourself as a realtor trying to sell a home with a rain garden—great for the environment, great for filtering stormwater and pollutants—but sometimes a perceived nuisance to a potential homebuyer. Centralina, in partnership with the NC Division of Water Quality (through a 319 grant) and The Chandler Group, is developing a program to educate realtors to low impact development (LID) techniques for managing stormwater. This has tremendous potential for promoting cost-effective, environmentally-sound technique, because it reaches the market that eventually makes the decision about whether or not to buy the LID concepts. And if the market supports LID, so will the development community. The program will be available in the summer of 2007 and will qualify for continuing education credits for realtors and brokers in North Carolina.

Sustainable Environment for Quality of Life -
What is the impact of local planning decisions on the environment? How does density impact water quality over large areas? Is there a better/worse way to develop? These are questions to which every community seeks answers. SEQL has worked with US EPA’s Office of Research and Development to begin to produce such outputs for our region. Using projections from the Regional Travel Demand Model, population growth in the year 2030 has been distributed in two “smarter growth” scenarios, one highly urban and one somewhat more suburban. Peer-reviewed models for water quality and a host of other environmental indicators have been used to identify the differences between the two scenarios and to begin to delineate what advantages each has and where areas of "higher risk" for environmental degradation are produced by each. Such analyses is the beginning of enabling local officials to understand the impact of their decisions on the environment, and to better inform the decision-making process on a regional scale.

Workforce Development

The Centralina WDB continues to be the innovator for workforce development in North Carolina and throughout the country. The Board is constantly looking for ways to create new ways to better serve its primary customer – local businesses.

The Board was the first in North Carolina to receive an Incumbent Workforce Development Program grant. The Board continues to be the leader in North Carolina this past year with 10 approved grants in place to upgrade the skills of employees with local businesses, in turn providing over $300,000 in economic investment in our region. Keeping our current workforce up to date with the latest skills is a key element with the expansion of local businesses.

The Centralina WDB was one of only 3 areas in the state to receive grant funds to establish a new approach to serving high school dropouts. The Board in partnership
with I Care, Inc., the Statesville Housing Authority, Mitchell Community College, and JobLink established the LEAP Youth Center in Statesville. The LEAP Youth Center offers a nontraditional approach and an exciting atmosphere to young adults ages 16-21 that have dropped out of school. The center and partners are available to assist youth to become self sufficient and productive citizens in the community.

The Centralina WDB worked with fellow Competitive Workforce Alliance members and the Charlotte Regional Partnership to hold the "Workforce and Economic Development Alliance Summit". Over 150 people attended this event which will now be held annually. Economic development personnel hailed this meeting as "the best way to connect workforce development and economic development".

The Board has utilized the State of the Workforce Study to examine the changes occurring in the natural labor shed around the region. The results impact the development of training offerings in the area. The Board is working with the Charlotte Regional Partnership and the 22 industry clusters for the region to determine current training offerings, gaps in service, and where the Board can target its employment and training resources in order to grow local businesses and place more individuals into employment. The Board has implemented the BusinessWise software program with local JobLink Career Centers to enable the center staff to reach out to more local businesses and increase job orders, job placements, and employer services. The Board conducts monthly surveys of local businesses to determine if workforce services offered through local JobLink Career Centers are effective. The Board has also implemented a new economic development planning projection software package called Strategic Advantage and is currently working with several area economic development organizations in providing them with important and relevant data.

Additionally, the marketing and communications strategy developed by the Board's Community Relations Community continues to be recognized by state and national officials as "the right way to brand a Workforce Board and its services".

**Centralina Economic Development Commission**

**Advanced Manufacturing** - With an award from EDA and investments from equity partners, the CEDC has completed Phase I of the Advanced Manufacturing Feasibility Study. Two reports offer a sector-by-sector review of advanced manufacturing in the region. The information, along with maps of advanced manufacturing companies throughout the region, is available on the CEDC website at www.4noboundaries.org.

Consultants from CH2M Hill have been retained for Phase II and will use their extensive experience with manufacturing and operations to determine technologies and techniques in use in manufacturing regionally and compare that to emerging technologies on the world scene. The complete feasibility analysis for an advanced manufacturing center which will support growth and investment in this important sector.

Partnerships promoted advanced manufacturing in the region. The CEDC partnered with Central Piedmont Community College to develop a regional presence for their new Advanced Manufacturing Training Program, an NCIST certified program. Forty-four students were trained in advanced manufacturing techniques.

CEDC also partnered with the Small Business Technology and Development Corporation to offer matching grants to small manufacturing firms interested in improving their management processes.
carolinas - charlotte - connect

Regionalism...Connects Us With Tomorrow
The bi-state Greater Charlotte region, the 15 counties that form the SEQL region, will add population equal to that of St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Denver by 2030. This area is served by four Councils of Government, five Metropolitan Planning Organizations, three Rural Planning Organizations, and includes over 100 units of local government.

How can those local governments and other entities come together to plan for the future? Are there commonalities in values and goals that can frame a regional agenda?

Centralina COG led what has become the Carolinas - Charlotte - Connect regional visioning project, to answer that question. During 2006, Centralina worked with Catawba Regional COG in South Carolina to form a citizen task force. The COGs brought in one of the nation’s leading visioning consultants, Gianni Longo, to facilitate the process. His work found a tremendous degree of consensus on values, and a corresponding degree of consensus on policies consistent with those values. Six core values have been crafted into a regional challenge for the future:

- Sustainable, well-managed growth
- Increased collaboration among jurisdictions
- A strong, diverse economy
- A safe and healthy environment.
- High quality educational opportunities available to all residents.
- Enhanced social equity through community leadership and cooperative volunteerism.

In the process the region will develop an exemplary model of regional, public, private, and civic cooperation that connects local priorities with a deep understanding of regional possibilities.

The next steps for the project include deeper discussion of how those shared regional values can be realized by each community, through workshops at more local levels, with leadership provided by a Regional Visioning Team.

CONNECT provides the region with the foundation for a regional vision—one that is based on local plans and visions, and connected to the communities’ sense of our treasures and aspirations. How do we want to live in this region? What do we want to leave as a legacy for our grandchildren? Through Centralina’s leadership, CONNECT has begun to provide those answers.
Customer Service Provided at Centralina JobLink Career Centers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL – All 8 Centers • J July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job and Training Seekers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Customers Seeking Services</td>
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<td>Placed in Jobs through Centers</td>
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<td>Placed in Training through Centers</td>
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<td>People Utilizing Career Resource Room/Area</td>
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<td>People Receiving other Services</td>
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<td><strong>Employers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Orders Placed through Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Orders Filled through Centers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Employer Services Provided through Centers</td>
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</table>

Workforce Development

Local JobLink Career Centers continue to be the single point of contact for businesses and individuals. The eight centers in the Centralina region provided the following services during the past year:

Through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Centralina WDB provides funding for services to adults, dislocated workers, and youth in the region. The assessment, education, training, and placement efforts provided meets the needs of dislocated workers, welfare recipients, and other individuals seeking to enter or re-enter the labor force. These services are available through the local JobLink Career Centers.

The Board, in partnership with the Employment Security Commission, produces a monthly Labor Market Information Update, which is available at: www.centralinaworks.com. Additionally, over 1,000 of the Centralina WDB - “Growing Occupation” posters have been distributed to local schools, community colleges, JobLink Career Center and their partner agencies throughout the region to better inform job seekers on employment and training trends. The Board also has staff that can write grant applications and serve as a point of contact for building partnerships among agencies seeking funding for special projects as was evident in the Board’s support for Community-Based Job Training Grants submitted in partnership with three local community colleges, all designed to meet training needs for local employers.

Area Agency on Aging

Key service areas provided by the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) are:

- **Ombudsman Services** - As the largest region in the state, the Ombudsman Program averages about 15,442 beds and over 167 volunteers during the year. The Ombudsman Program successfully resolved 277 complaint cases, made 846 facility visits.

- **Senior Community Service Employment Program** - About 172 individuals were served in seven counties participating in the program. Forty individuals received unsubsidized employment and the participants provided over 90,000 hours of community service.

- **Planning** - Centralina Area Agency on aging has allocated over $7 million dollars in service funds through the Home and Community Care Block Grant; $5,882 in Senior Center Outreach; $99,422 in Disease Prevention Health Promotion; $109,707 in Senior Center General Purpose.

- **Family Caregiver Support Program** - The program served 480 caregivers with direct services such as access to services, support and education, respite, and supplemental services such as nutritional supplements, special transportation, and home modification. 1,790 caregivers were assisted with information and referral services, and 2,199 caregivers were reached at community activities with information about the program.
Planning

Technical Assistance - The past year saw all of Centralina’s planning staff work on a variety of different technical assistance projects for its member governments. A sampling of these projects include:

- **Lincoln County Land Use Plan** - The Planning and Regional Initiatives staffs began work on updating the Lincoln County Land Use Plan as well as undertaking three small area plans in rapidly growing portions of the County.

- **Annexation** - Centralina continues to play a pivotal role in annexation efforts throughout the region. The past year saw Centralina involved in annexation studies in three communities.

- **Ongoing Planning Assistance** - Centralina’s planning staff continued its long-standing tradition of providing ongoing planning staff assistance to member governments. Communities where Centralina served as “staff planner” or provided in-house training to staff included: Stanley, Wesley Chapel, Unionville, Marshville, Mineral Springs, Landis, Waxhaw and Fairview.

- **Staff Planner Hiring** - Assisting other communities in the hiring of their planning personnel is a role that the planning staff is increasingly called upon to perform. Hiring assistance was provided to Wesley Chapel and Waxhaw.

- **Code Enforcement** - Centralina’s Planning Staff continues to provide Code Enforcement services to help improve community conditions and remove blighting conditions from downtown areas.

Communities that are currently being assisted by Centralina include: Albemarle, Bessemer City, Cherryville, Lowell, Marshville, Ranlo, Stallings and Stanley.

- **Facility Studies** - Centralina continues to provide Facility Space Studies to assist local governments with space planning to accommodate long term growth. Centralina conducts staff interviews, building assessments and final reports, which include recommendations for departmental square footage estimates.

- **Urban Redevelopment** - Centralina staff continue to manage Urban Redevelopment programs that provide downtown revitalization and job creation. These programs focus on transforming vacant commercial buildings into mixed use developments.

Meeting Facilitation - Local governments are increasingly calling on the Planning staff to facilitate and moderate meetings of local and regional importance. Examples of work performed during the past year include:

- **Monroe City Council** - Facilitated a number of meetings of the Council to prioritize action items.

- **Annexation Agreements** - Facilitated meetings between Wesley Chapel, Mineral Springs and Monroe to discuss potential changes to the communities’ annexation agreements.

- **Iredell County Planning Board** - Facilitated a series of public forums held in the County, the purpose of which was to solicit public input on growth and development.

Regional Employment and Income

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>% of Total Employment</th>
<th>Average Annual Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
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November, 2006/CEDC

Centralina Council of Governments 11
Centralina’s Information Technology Department completed a regional orthophotography project comprising: Alexander, Burke, Cabarrus, Catawba, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg and Richmond counties. Centralina staff served as liaisons between the vendors and the participating jurisdictions. Centralina conducted training session in quality control software and facilitated the delivery of data and resolution of discrepancies. Through this effort, participating counties realized cost savings of approximately 35% when compared to what the individual cost would have been to each county.

Centralina’s Information Technology Department is also facilitating discussions between Gaston and Lincoln County representatives in regards to their shared county boundary. The goal of this facilitation is to resolve discrepancies in various renderings of the boundary line. Decisions made as a result of the dialogue will impact residents in various forms including residency, school assignments, taxation, etc.

In an effort to maximize the use of Centralina’s communication bandwidth, the Information Technology Department implemented an integrated software suite to diminish SPAM, detect viruses and streamline the use of Internet resources.

**Regional Initiatives**

**Assessment Centers and Promotional Processes** - Personnel are an investment, and it is not necessarily true that the best worker is also the best supervisor. Over the years, Centralina’s staff has assisted a number of communities with personnel selection and promotional processes, for positions as diverse as Police Sergeant, Fire Chief, and City Manager. 2006 was no exception, with Regional Initiatives staff developing and conducting assessment centers for Albemarle, Gastonia, Gaston County, Huntersville, Kannapolis, Mooresville, Mount Holly, Shelby, and Statesville. Regional Initiatives staff also continued service as Interim Manager for the Town of Stanley. Work was also completed on the Salisbury Police Strategic Plan.

**Grants Preparation** - Centralina's Regional Initiatives staff provides assistance with a variety of grant applications, through the Lake Norman RPO, SEQL, and on a technical assistance basis.

Among the grants awarded to applicants who relied on Centralina for assistance this past year are: Gaston County's and Lincoln County's Mobile Source Emissions Reduction Grants for diesel oxidation catalysts for school buses, Badin's and Shelby's Pedestrian Planning Grants, and Marshall's Urban and Community Forestry Grant. Additional applications will be filed for a number of jurisdictions this fall.

**Pedestrian Planning** - Kids walk to school. Older adults who no longer drive walk to the drug store. Disabled students walk to class. Commuters walk to bus stops. Community residents walk for exercise. Walking is one of the best ways our nation can combat the obesity epidemic, promote cardiac health, and reduce pollution from motor vehicles. Getting people to walk is not simply a behavioral change, however; it also depends on the support of the built environment. Pedestrian planning involves linking destinations, designing in amenities, and ensuring that land uses support a walkable environment. It's not just about building sidewalks! Over the past year, Centralina's Regional Initiatives staff has partnered with the Planning section to prepare pedestrian plans for Boiling Springs, and plans are underway in Norwood, Troutman, and Badin. Planning grant applications are being developed for Cherryville and Kings Mountain.

**Special Projects, Reports and Facilitation** - Centralina's Regional Initiatives staff provides assistance with a variety of special projects ranging from strategic planning to traffic study review to facilitating community or council meetings and retreats. Over the past year, staff initiated the "Rooftops and Paychecks" quarterly report of building starts and employment statistics, conducted a strategic planning process for the Salisbury Public Works Department, facilitated land use and community meetings, reviewed proposed transportation projects for conformity with local plans, and provided a comprehensive update of socio-economic projections for counties in the Lake Norman RPO and Stanly County.

**Commission and Council Staffing** - Regional Initiatives staff members provide ongoing support for the Lake Wylie and Mountain Island Lake Marine Commissions, the Centralina Fire Chief's Council, the Lake Norman RPO, and the NC 73 Council of Planning. Additionally, staff has provided data for the Bi-State Catawba-Wateree River Commission.

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Regional Initiatives

Through Mobile Source Emissions Reduction Grants, Regional Initiatives staff helped Gaston and Lincoln Counties retrofit over 200 buses with Diesel Oxidation Catalysts, reducing emissions by over 15 tons per year. To date, a total of 625 school buses in the region have been equipped with DOCS.

The “Clear the Air for Kids!” program has reached over 75,000 children and their parents with information about idle reduction, both for school buses and for cars in carpool lines. Staff have also educated over 150 bus drivers in idle-reduction practices.

Regional Initiatives’ staff work has enabled Marshville to obtain funding for a tree ordinance, Badin and Shelby to obtain funding for pedestrian planning, and helped facilitate the start-up of the expanded CATS express bus service to Lincoln County.

Workforce Development

During the past year, the various programs and services funded and/or coordinated by the Centralina WDB have produced outstanding results which exceeded state and federal mandated standards for program performance. Eight out of every ten disadvantaged individuals finishing workforce development programs entered employment or received a high school diploma or GED certificate. Over 95% of dislocated workers served through Centralina training programs entered employment. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of program terminees rated the Centralina WDB’s services as either “Excellent” or “Very Good” during post-program follow-up.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs funded through the Centralina WDB enrolled a total of 2,586 in training and education services. This included 1,081 dislocated workers, 887 adults, and 618 youth. The average hourly wage at job placement for adult and dislocated worker completers was $11.54.

The eight JobLink Career Centers continue to improve on the quality services that they offer to businesses and job/training seekers. The Board rechartered each center and each center has met or exceeded the established benchmarks for performance including having over 94% of JobLink customers rate the services received as either “Excellent” or “Good” and having a customer wait time for individual services of less than 20 minutes. Each center has successfully met the NC Commission on Workforce Development requirements for state certification and each center is currently working on Level II and Level III certifications (Rowan County JobLink Career Center was certified as a Level II JobLink in early 2006).

Planning

Mineral Springs Land Use Plan - Centralina assisted the Town of Mineral Springs on a Land Use Plan outlining the Town’s vision for the coming years. Now that the plan has been adopted, Centralina will now work with town leadership on a complete overhaul of the Town’s zoning and subdivision ordinances to make that vision a reality.
clusters, and prioritizes economic development projects. The No Boundaries report and planning process have been cited by EDA as an exemplary CEDS document and regional partnership.

**CEDC Website Launched** - CEDC launched a new website: [www.4noboundaries.org](http://www.4noboundaries.org).

**CONNECT: Economic Development Program Series**
CEDC launched a new series of economic development programs entitled CONNECT: Ideas ---> Success. The series, targeting planners, managers, elected officials, and community and economic development professionals, is designed to highlight best practices, share replicable tools, and connect new program ideas to funding sources.

**Best Practices for Small Area Development Workshop** - presented new approaches to financing development projects and tactics to proactively create growth and jobs in smaller areas.

**Re-Cycling Land: A Brownfield Redevelopment Workshop** - provided information about programs, legal issues, and grant resources for localities in the region to redevelop brownfield sites. Brownfield remediation and development is a concern for many areas in the region, especially those with vacant textile mills.

**Revitalizing Commercial Districts Workshop** - highlighted best practices of communities throughout the region that have successfully recharged their commercial districts. The central themes in the series was public/private partnerships, creative financing tools, and community revitalization. Over 100 participants from communities across the region attended the workshops.
After six years of active involvement with Centralina... I believe there has never been a more important time to use COG for our collective benefit. We are faced with a growing list of environmental, land use, economic development and other challenges in this region, and it is time to step up and plan more intensively for the region’s future together.

This year we have accelerated our forward progress and decisively stepped up our regional planning through the initiation of a VISIONING Process. Creating a vision for our greater Charlotte Bi-State Regional future is critical. Centralina, working with Catawba Regional COG (Rock Hill, SC) and our many local city and county governments, is at a critical crossroads between the past and the future.

COG continues to bring forward the most pressing issues facing citizens and their governments in this region. COG is the one organization that provides a consistent forum for elected officials from the eight counties in the Centralina region to meet to discuss and resolve those issues. COG is also the one organization that is available to foster on consistent basis collaboration among governments and businesses in the region. The next step--serving as the principal convener for solving problems together--is going to be a challenge for our organization. Councils of Governments, such as Centralina, cannot do so alone. Instead, they must foster new ways of collaborating with non-governmental partners, including business organizations, educational institutions, private non-profit organizations and grass roots advocacy groups throughout the region.

I have enjoyed serving as Chairman of the Board of Delegates of the COG for the past two years immensely. We have good leadership at the staff level and many dedicated employees who really do the COG’s work. I have seen much progress in the region and at the COG during my two year tenure. I am highly confident that the current board level leadership and our capable staff will continue to strengthen the organization.

I want to encourage local elected officials in this region who serve on the COG Board of Delegates as well as those who do not to:

- Continue to embrace the concept of regionalism— a concept that has made the Greater Charlotte Bi-State Region an exemplary model for other communities.

- Continue to provide the essential leadership this region needs as we work to define and better understand the many challenges we face and craft our collective future.

- Remember that regionalism and forward movement help create the kind of environment and infrastructure we all want for today and for future generations.

I appreciate the hard work that members of the Board of Delegates, particularly its officers, the Centralina COG staff and others have done to make the past year a success. As this organization finds itself well into the first quarter of a new calendar year, let us continue to be mindful of the collective potential of this region and work together to realize it.

Dumont Clarke, 2006 Chairman
Throughout this year, Centralina has engaged in a diverse range of activities that have enhanced the region's quality of life to highlight a few:

- COG hosted the successful aging conference, The Seasons of Aging, that was attended by more than 500 participants and service providers;
- the Centralina Economic Development Commission officially became the designated Economic Development District by EDA;
- the Council of Planning for NC 73 Corridor was recognized as a State model for integrating land use and transportation planning;
- we have an expanded Ombudsmen program to better serve senior citizens and their families;
- private sector employees are being retrained before they lose their jobs;
- two new member governments, the City of Kings Mountain and Town of Wadesboro have joined COG.

As the state-designated lead regional planning organization, Centralina has the responsibility of keeping the region informed and is increasing highlighting issues of regional concern; we provide more data, specialized web pages and opportunities for regional dialogue. We have had success this year in advancing regional issues - due in large part to our unique group of member governments and collaborative partners throughout the Greater Charlotte Bi-State Region.

We recognize the diligence and reinforce the efforts in making this region as one that delivers results.

Local governments throughout the region are providing quality services to their citizens. They are innovative, effective and efficient and COG supports the members in these efforts in numerous ways. The next level of regional excellence is for these local efforts to be reinforced by the region and develop a more synergistic approach to public service. To that end, COG has launched a regional visioning process for the Greater Charlotte Bi-State Region. We have done our homework by analyzing member governments’ public policies, local plans and community visions. We found an amazing degree of agreement in intent and values. I invite you to read the Visioning Report (available on our web site) and partner with us.

The long-term challenge for the whole Greater Charlotte Region is balancing how our region will grow and prosper while preserving the exceptional quality of life. So our next step will be to define our common vision for the future. During this year, Centralina, in partnership with Catawba Regional COG in South Carolina, has taken tangible steps in moving our bi-state region closer to this ideal.

Therefore for next year “Carolinas— Charlotte— CONNECT: framework for our future” will represent a collaborative effort and an exemplary model of what can be achieved with regional public, private and civic cooperation. We have done our homework and taken stock and we are now ready to move forward with the regional vision and CONNECT us to our future.

Respectfully Submitted,

A. R. Sharp, Jr.
Executive Director

"The long-term challenge for the whole Greater Charlotte Region is balancing how our region will grow and prosper while preserving the exceptional quality of life."
FINANCIAL SUMMARY...

Centralina Council of Governments

SOURCES OF REVENUE

- Members’ Dues: $654,685
- Interest and Others: $276,751
- Technical Assistance and Regional Planning: $1,011,109
- Staff Services Contracts: $56,488
- Workforce Grants: $7,099,937
- Federal Grants: $1,042,025
- State Grants: $9,715,552
- Totals: $19,856,547

EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM

- General Government: $209,078
- Transportation: $245,265
- Environmental Protection: $315,826
- Economic and Physical Development: $1,510,941
- Human Services: $9,483,787
- Workforce: $7,948,660
- Totals: $19,713,557

Credits
Photos Courtesy of:
US National Whitewater Center
Gaston County Schools
Piper Warlick Photography