

Moloka 'i

or

Stokes® Purple Sweet Potatoes

Introduction

My name is Michael Bobbitt. Chairman Taylor invited me to make a data driven presentation to you, the Board of Commissioners, on what I perceive as the positive outcomes in the county by looking at where we have been, where we are today, and where we are going.

In Chairman Taylor's letter to me he stated "The purpose of the presentation is to use data to emphasize positives that are now going on, or will soon be occurring in Vance County as a result of the efforts of [my] organization."¹

I am please to accept Chairman Taylor's invitation on behalf of the readers of Home In Henderson. Although I am not the head of the organization I did prepared this presentation with approval of Phil Hart the owner of Home In Henderson and input from the readers of Home In Henderson.

Home In Henderson is a Henderson based blog of Vance County and Henderson news, commentary and the opinions of its readers. I post commentary on both the county and city government meetings that I attend under the heading Notes from the Peanut Gallery. As Mr. Hart's time permits recordings of commissioners' and city council meetings are also posted to the blog site. Home In Henderson has averaged 3,624 unique readers in the past six months. Some 50 unique readers actively post their comments and opinions on the blog. Some postings are insightful, some are informative, some are rantings; all are the views of individuals mostly living in Vance County.

To achieve Chairman Taylor's intentions Home In Henderson's needed a methodology to find the data that emphasizes the positives within Vance County according to the readers of Home In Henderson.

A local business owner suggested using a survey tool to gather the data. Many readers use a pseudonym when posting to Home In Henderson negating an interview type approach of data gathering. For those adverse to anonymous postings, there are historical precedents, including Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay who used pseudonyms when writing letters to news papers promoting the ratification of the United States Constitution.

A survey was deemed the better vehicle for seeking data from the many readers of Home In Henderson. The survey focused on economic development of the county. I also interviewed several business owners for their vision of the county's future.

¹ Letter from Chairman Taylor, December 23, 2014

Where We Have Been

In 1987 Vance County Commissioners appointed the AdVance Strategic Planning Commission and charged it with developing strategies for the future growth and progress of Vance County. The AdVance Strategic Planning Commission published a report in 1990 that "... presents the results of an intense citizen's effort to [develop] a strategic plan for the future of Vance County."²

The vision statement is a full page in length. The first three paragraphs state in part:³

II. VISION STATEMENT

Vance County in the year 2000 will be a county remarkable for its success in capitalizing on the strengths of its location, its size, and the talents of its residents. This success will be reflected in the quality of life that has become possible in a moderate-sized community with easy access to all of the resources in the nearby Triangle area. Vance County's quality of life will be considered the best of any community within an hour's drive of the Triangle area.

By the year 2000, our economy will be diversified and will capitalize on the technological sophistication of neighboring communities. It will be an economy that attracts people to the community through developing opportunities rather than forcing them to leave due to lack of opportunity.

Our labor force will be prepared for the changes taking place at the beginning of the 21st century. There will be a lower level of poverty in the community, with the types of human service programs, educational system, and job opportunities that will enable the poor to climb out of poverty.

"Vance County in the year 2000 will be a county remarkable for its success in capitalizing on the strengths of its location, its size, and the talents of its residents."

"By the year 2000, our economy will be diversified and will capitalize on the technological sophistication of neighboring communities. It will be the economy that attracts people to the community through developing opportunities rather than forcing them to leave due to lack of opportunity."

"Our labor force will be prepared for the changes taking place at the beginning of the 21st century."⁴

² AdVance Strategic Planning Commission report 1990, pg 4.

³ Ibid pg 3.

⁴ A complete copy of the AdVance Strategic Planning Commission report is available in the library and available for downloading from Home In Henderson.

Where We Have Been

By the year 2000 the irrational exuberance of those 1990 projections were self evident.

In 2003 the Market Street Services, Inc. of Atlanta, GA., was contracted "... to guide the development of an analysis of short and long-range business development opportunities and the corresponding economic development strategies that should be pursued by Vance County. Through ... statistical analysis and frequent community input, a thorough targeted and sustainable economic development strategy [was] created [laying a] foundation for tomorrow's Vance County".⁵

Market Street Services, Inc., a national community, economic and workforce development consulting firm located in Atlanta, Georgia, has been selected to guide the development of an analysis of short and long-range business development opportunities and the corresponding economic development strategies that should be pursued by Vance County. Through a comprehensive process that involves statistical analysis and frequent community input, a thorough, targeted and sustainable economic development strategy will be created to lay the foundation for tomorrow's Vance County. The process will provide community leaders with the skills and confidence to implement desired changes, and to manage future change.

Market Street Services continued "... Past strategic planning efforts (AdVance in the late 1980s) created a solid plan with ideas for growth ... but an economic development strategy for today's economy must be a dynamic document that is continually updated by ... leaders empowered with the skills to manage the change."⁶

Market Street Services published four separate reports as follow:⁷

Economic and Demographic Profile – February 20, 2003

Business Climate Analysis – April 16, 2003

Target Business Analysis – June 26, 2003

Economic Development Strategy – December 2, 2003

⁵ Economic and Demographic Profile February 20, 2003, pg 1.

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ A complete copy of the Market Street Services' 2003 study is available in the library and available for downloading from Home In Henderson.

Where We Have Been

The ten minutes I've been allotted for this presentation is insufficient to discuss the contents of the four volume Market Street Services study. Two points in the Target Business Analysis report of June 26, 2003, are the focus of survey and this presentation.

The first is the largest employers (business and government) in number of employees in 2003.⁸

Largest Employers		
Name of Business	Product/Service	Employment
Vance County Schools	Public Education	1000
Wal-Mart Associates Inc.	Retail Trade; Distribution	500-999
Royal Home Fashions Inc.	Bedroom Ensembles	750
Maria Parham Hospital	Health Care	500 - 999
Americal Corporation	Hosiery	250
Roses Stores, Inc.	Variety Wholesalers	550
Harriet & Henderson Yarns	Yarn	150
Pacific Coast Feather Co.	Quilts & Comforters	368
Saint Gobain Containers	Glass Containers	250 - 499
Purolator Products Air Filtration	Air Filters	270
Vance County Mental Health	Health Care	346
Vance County Government	Government	300
City of Henderson	Government	250
Vance-Granville Comm. College	Education	200
Corporate Express Distribution Cntr.	Retail Office Supplies	180
Food Lion LLC	Grocery Store	100-249
The IAMS Company	Pet Food	155
Clayton Homes	Manuf. Homes	150
Custom Molders	Plastics	135
HandCrafted Homes	Modular Homes	100
M.R. Williams	Wholesale Food Prod.	100

In 2003:

- The top twenty (20) largest employers in Vance County employed between 6,604 and 9,350 wage earners. The variance in the number employees is due to the estimated number of employees at four of the largest employers (actual number are unavailable)
- Five government entities accounted for 32% to employees working at one of the top twenty employers.
- Three of the largest employers were locally owned and operated and employed between 750 to 1,250 individuals. In 1990 “Roses Stores and Harriet Henderson both locally owned and committed to Vance County”... “employed 3,000 people accounting for 18% of county’s [employment].”⁹

⁸ Target Business Analysis June 26, 2003, pg 9.

⁹ AdVance Strategic Planning Commission report 1990, pg 47.

Where We Are Today

Below is a comparison of the top twenty employers in 2003 in the left column to the top sixteen employers as of the end of 2014 in the right column.

2003	Employees	2014	Employees ¹
Vance County School	1,000	Vance County Schools	1,050
Wal-Mart Distribution	500 – 999	Wal-Mart Distribution	423
Royal Home Fashion, Inc	750	Closed	
Maria Parham Hospital	500 – 999	Duke LifePoint Hospital ²	705
Variety Wholesaler	550	Variety Wholesaler	861
Harriet & Henderson Yarns	150	Closed	0
Pacific Coast Feather Co	368	Pacific Coast Feather	349
Saint Gobain Containers	250 – 499	Ardagh Group ³	285
Purolator Products Air Filtration	270	Closed	0
Vance County Mental Health	346	Vance County Mental Health ⁴	40
Vance County Government	300	Vance County Government ⁵	439
City of Henderson	250	City of Henderson ⁶	260
Vance-Granville Community College	200	Vance-Granville Community College ⁷	252
Corporate Express Distribution Center	180	Staples Fulfillment Center ⁸	Not Provided
Food Lion LLC	100 – 249	Food Lion LLC ⁹	250
The IAMS Company	155	Mars Pet Food ¹⁰	134
Clayton Homes	150	Closed	
Custom Molders	135	Closed	
Handcrafted Homes	100	Closed	
M.R. Williams	100	M.R. Williams	250
		Vescom America, Inc ¹¹	75
		Phillips Electronics North America ¹¹	75
		Xerox ¹²	500

¹ Number of employees listed for 2014 are the actual number of employees as of January 2015, according to management representative at the entities listed.	⁷ Vance-Granville Community College includes only Vance County staff and full time instructors.
² Duke LifePoint, a joint venture between Duke and LifePoint Hospitals (Brentwood, TN) acquired Maria Parham Medical Center in November of 2011. Source: http://www.mariaparham.com/about_us/history.aspx .	⁸ Staples Inc, Framingham, MA, acquired Corporate Express between 2003 and 2014. Source: http://finance.yahoo.com/q/pr?s=SPLS+Profile .
³ Ardagh Group, an Ireland based corporation, acquired Saint Gobain Containers, a French based corporation, in June 2014.	⁹ Food Lion is not listed on the 2014 Henderson – Vance County Industrial Guide.
⁴ 2012 State budget changes privatized Vance County’s mental health outsourcing all except 40 employees.	¹⁰ Proctor & Gamble Company acquired the IAMS Company in 2006. Mars, Incorporated acquired “a significant portion of P & G Company’s pet food ...” including the former IAMS Company in April 2014. Source: http://biz.yahoo.com/e/140409/pg8-k.html
⁵ Vance County Government’s total employment at the end of 2014 is 439. Includes 335 fulltime and 114 part-time employees throughout all departments plus the sheriff’s department including the county jail.	¹¹ Vescom America, Inc and Phillips Electronics North America are both new manufacturing plants in Vance County since 2003 and both are owned by separate EU based corporations.
⁶ City of Henderson’s total employment at the end of 2014 is about 260. Includes 210 fulltime and 40 to 60 part-time / seasonal employees throughout all departments including fire and police departments.	¹² Xerox and its predecessor, ACS, were not part of top 20 largest employers in 2003. Xerox operates a call center for processing the pharmaceutical health claims of various health insurance vendors.

Where We Are Today

The list of 2014 largest employers is based on the 2003 list of largest employers and new (since 2003) large employers listed on the Henderson – Vance County North Carolina Industrial Guide.

- Six (6) of the largest employers in 2003 were no longer going concerns in Vance County by the end of 2014.
- Vescom America, Inc and Phillips Electronics North America are new manufacturing businesses filling the void in large employers, although employing less total employees than the business's they replaced on the list.
- Xerox is another new business to Vance County since 2003.
- Only four government entities are included as one of the largest employers.
- In 2003, three of the fifteen largest non-government employers were locally owned and operated. By the end of 2014 only one of the largest non-government employers is locally owned and operated. Four of the largest non-government employers are European Union based corporations. The members of the AdVance Strategic Planning Commission recognized the importance of utilizing "... talented individuals in the private sector who volunteer their time and expertise in solving problems and helping plan for the County's future."¹⁰ Do those talented individuals working for business headquartered outside Vance County or the US have a strong interest or motivation in solving problems of Vance County?

¹⁰ AdVance Strategic Planning Commission report 1990, pg 3.

Where We Are Today

The second point in the Target Business Analysis report we examined are the six (6) business areas Main Street Services targeted for growth in the Vance County.¹¹ The six business areas include:¹²

- Health Care
- Nonmetallic Mineral Manufacturing and certain food manufacturing
- Tourism
- Entrepreneurship and Small Business/Management of Companies and Enterprises
- Wholesale Trade
- Transportation and Warehousing

Qualitative and quantitative information reviewed for the *Economic, Demographic and Labor Force Analysis*, the *Business Climate Analysis*, and this *Target Business Analysis* revealed six areas that Vance County should target:

1. Health Care
2. Nonmetallic Mineral Manufacturing and Certain Food Manufacturing Sub Sectors
3. Tourism
4. Entrepreneurship and Small Business/Management of Companies and Enterprises
5. Wholesale Trade
6. Transportation and Warehousing

This does not mean that other sectors can be neglected, nor does this mean that these same businesses should be targeted 10 years from now. Existing businesses must be encouraged and given the tools needed to thrive, and community leaders must continually assess those clusters that are developing. However, in terms of business attraction and creating the types of assets that will attract certain higher-paying segments, these categories provide a roadmap utilizing Vance County's current strengths and opportunities for wealth creation.

Home In Henderson was asked to make a **data driven** presentation emphasizing the positives that are now going on, or will soon be occurring in Vance County. The data was gathered using a survey tool of twenty-six (26) questions. The survey starts asking the readers if they believe that Vance County has actively supported growth in one or more of these six categories.

The survey was posted to Home In Henderson on Saturday January 17, 2015 and is still open, although for this report the cutoff was Friday January 23, 2015.

Readers were not required to sign-in (to authenticate) to the blog site as they are required to do when posting a comment. Readers only requirement when taking the survey was to be a resident of Vance County.

¹¹ Target Business Analysis June 3, 2003, page 5.

¹² Market Street Services included goals and actions steps for each of the six (6) business areas targeted for growth in the county in the Economic Development Strategy report.

Where We Are Going

Before examining the survey results a review of some general and demographic data about the readers of Home In Henderson will set the tone for the survey results.

1. Forty-two (42) readers responded to the survey as of the end of day on January 23, 2015. This compares to a recent Chamber of Commerce survey that reaped five (5) responses from all local chamber members.
2. 12 (28.6%) of those responding own their own business located in Vance County.
3. 17 (63.0%) of those responding are employed outside of Vance County.

The demographic portion of the survey included four questions. Readers were allowed to opt-out of the demographic questions. Thirty-six (85.7%) of the forty-two readers agreed to answer demographic questions. The responses to the last two demographic questions were as surprising and revealing.

1. 100% of the thirty-six responders indicated they are registered voters in Vance County.
2. 33 (91.7%) of those registered voters did cast a ballot for a local candidate in the November 2014 election.

Where We Are Going

Eleven years ago Main Street Services targeted for growth in the Vance County six business categories. The readers of Home In Henderson were asked through a survey if they believe that Vance County has actively supported growth in one or more of these six categories. For each category readers could choose Strong Effort, Some Effort, Uncertain, Minimal Effort, or No Effort.

In 2003 Market Street Services was contracted to study economic development in Vance County. Six business areas were suggested as targets for growth in the county. Do you believe that Vance County has actively supported growth in one or more of these six categories?

Targets for growth in the county.	Strong Effort	Some Effort	Uncertain	Minimal Effort	No Effort
Health Care	4	16	5	7	7
	10.26%	41.03%	12.82%	17.95%	17.95%
Nonmetallic Mineral Manufacturing and certain food manufacturing	1	2	8	18	10
	2.56%	5.13%	20.51%	46.15%	25.64%
Tourism	6	14	2	12	5
	15.38%	35.90%	5.13%	30.77%	12.82%
Entrepreneurship and Small Business/Management of Companies and Enterprises	2	7	3	16	11
	5.13%	17.95%	7.69%	41.03%	28.21%
Wholesale Trade	1	4	7	17	10
	2.56%	10.26%	17.95%	43.59%	25.64%
Transportation and Warehousing	3	5	4	16	11
	7.69%	12.82%	10.26%	41.03%	28.21%

Where We Are Going

Readers also were asked if they owned a business in Vance County. Those who responded they did were asked if that business was among one of the six targeted growth categories. Below are the survey results.

Do you own your own business in Vance County?	Responses	Percentage
Yes:	12	28.6%
No:	30	71.4%

What is the Category of your business?	Responses	Percentage
Health Care	1	10%
Nonmetallic Mineral Manufacturing and certain food manufacturing	0	0.0%
Tourism	0	0.0%
Entrepreneurship and Small Business/Management of Companies and Enterprises	4	40.0%
Wholesale Trade	0	0.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0.0%
Other than above	5	50.0%

Readers who are employed in Vance County were asked if their employer was in one of the six targeted growth categories.

Are you employed in Vance County?	Responses	Percentage
Yes:	10	37.0%
No:	17	63.0%

What is the Category of your business is your primary employer?	Responses	Percentage
Health Care	1	10.0%
Nonmetallic Mineral Manufacturing and certain food manufacturing	0	0.0%
Tourism	0	0.0%
Entrepreneurship and Small Business/Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	10.0%
Wholesale Trade	0	0.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0.0%
Other than above	8	80.0%

Where We Are Going

In the survey readers were asked five specific questions focusing on possible positives occurring in Vance County.

Kerr Lake is a major positive according to both the 1990 and the 2003 economic studies and to many business owners. Residence of Vance County were asked:

How often do you visit Kerr Lake for recreational activities?	Responses	Percentage
Never	16	44.4%
1 to 2 times a year	13	36.1%
3 to 5 times a year	4	11.1%
Monthly	1	2.8%
Weekly	1	2.8%
Daily	1	2.8%

The annual car show was not referenced in either the 1990 or the 2003 economic studies. However the car show is considered a major tourist attraction and revenue generator for the county. One business owner when interviewed wondered aloud why the sponsors objected to adding additional classes of entries. Another business owner wondered if the fees collected and taxes generated covered the cost of the car show. The readers of Home In Henderson were asked:

For the annual Car Show in Downtown Henderson, (Show, Shine, Shag and Dine) how long do you stay in Downtown Henderson for the event?	Responses	Percentage
I don't go at all	21	58.3%
For 1 hour to 2 hours	11	30.6%
For half a day	4	11.1%
For the whole day	0	0.0%
For all events of the show	0	0.0%
I have an entry in the show	0	0.0%

Where We Are Going

In the AdVance report of 1990 two of the government systems are referenced in the body of that study. The two were zoning and a county water system. Both were needed to improve planning and the management of the county's growth.¹³ One business owner commented we have the bones (hospital, library, and soon a performing arts venue) in place for growth and prosperity; all that is needed is county zoning to spur growth. Because this progressive thinking business owner was unaware that county zoning has been in place for three years, we added a question about zoning to the survey. The readers were asked:

Do you believe that county zoning has benefited the county and city residents?	Responses	Percentage
Yes:	14	38.9%
No:	22	61.1%

The county water project has been and continues to be a contentious issue before the county commissioners. It is beyond the purpose of this survey to assess the pros and cons, shoulds and should nots of the commissioners decisions and actions to build the water system. The water project is a major investment in the county' infrastructure. The readers were asked:

Do you believe that the county water project has benefited the county and city residents	Responses	Percentage
Yes:	15	41.7%
No:	21	58.3%

¹³ Advance Commission Strategic Plan 1990

Where We Are Going

The survey's last question was intended to measure the overall positives that are now going on or will be occurring in Vance County. Cost constraints limited the survey to yes or no or select from a list type question. To include a field for readers to provide a more detailed answer was cost prohibitive for a non-income generating blog site that survives because opinionated active voters are willing to submit their views on local issues. Readers of Home In Henderson were encouraged to sign-in and post a comment expressing their view of positive improvements in the county. There were no comments posted by Sunday January 25, 2015. To gain an understanding of the positives occurring in the county readers were asked one all encompassing question.

Do you believe that Vance County is in a better economic position today than in 2004?	Responses	Percentage
Yes:	3	9.1%
No:	33	91.7%

Although the survey did not produce the irrational exuberance of the 1990 projections the survey results are data. Data that by design or life's vicissitudes does emphasize a positive within the readership of Home In Henderson. Forty-two anonymous readers of a Henderson – Vance County based blog site responded to a survey seeking the positive outcomes within their county. Thirty-six of the forty-two responders completed the demographic portion of the survey indicating they are registered to vote and vote.

Where We Are Going

Why is that a positive?

Looking back at what the AdVance Strategic Planning Commission wrote in 1990, “The ‘good old boy’ network dominates electoral politics, and people outside that network often feel it is futile to get involved. ...”¹⁴

Still, there are a number of problems with local leadership. We have suffered from lack of unity, trust, and communication among racial and economic groups. We lack broad representation in leadership positions. There are few women or minorities in elected or appointed positions, and the same people tend to get appointed to advisory boards. The "good old boy" network dominates electoral politics, and people outside that network often feel it is futile to get involved. The public is not adequately informed or included in critical decisions.

Market Street Services reported in 2003 that, “Successfully reenergizing Vance County’s economy ... will require expanding the scope of participatory leadership to include local constituencies that may have been overlooked in the past.”¹⁵

Successfully reenergizing Vance County’s economy and preparing the area to compete in future New Economy sectors will require expanding the scope of participatory leadership to include local constituencies that may have been overlooked in the past. As many focus group participants noted, Vance County’s minority communities represent some of the area’s “great untapped resources,” and should be integrated into positions of community leadership and counted on as vital components of the local workforce.

One business owner I interviewed succinctly said, “Nothing is going to change here as long as the same small group has a lock on political and economic progress. A control they have maintained for decades.”

Chairman Taylor asked what positives are now going on, or will soon be occurring in Vance County due to the efforts of Home In Henderson. Only time will tell if his request for data from the readers of Home In Henderson has opened the tent to allow “local constituencies that may have been overlook in the past” to offer their energies and ideas towards positive outcomes in the county.

¹⁴ AdVance Strategic Planning Commission, pg 25 - 26

¹⁵ Economic Development Strategy December 2, 2003, pg 45

Commentary

Home In Henderson is more than a collection of anonymous blog posters some who vote, it is also a place where commentary and the odd ball idea circulate.

I have reserved the end of my presentation to emphasize two potential positives growth avenues you and the economic development commission should consider. Both are outside the box ideas. As one business owner said it is those outside the box ideas that need to be considered 'if they want to include more people under the tent for growth'.

The last car on the trains that running between Raleigh and Charlotte is part café and part baggage car. The baggage part of the car is equipped with bicycle racks to hang bikes. Encourage the DOT to try a business experiment to test the willingness of bike riders from Charlotte to Raleigh to ride a train to Henderson for a weekend of biking. The train would return the bike riders to Raleigh and onto Charlotte on Sunday. An entrepreneur has started the Tour de Vance bike ride. Maybe there are bike riders from Charlotte to Raleigh who would like to participate in the Tour de Vance and are willing to ride the train to get here. Cary started building their rail road station 20 years ago where could we be in 20 years starting with a weekend train to Henderson?

You may have wondered what purple sweet potatoes have to do with this presentation? The answer starts last April when two students of VGCC's culinary school won first place in a statewide contest with a meal they prepared that included mashed purple sweet potatoes. The weekend before Christmas I finally found Stokes® Purple Sweet Potatoes at the newly opened Farmer's Market Store in Durham. I prepared them for Christmas dinner using a Hawaii recipe. Very colorful, flavorful, and very different. A few weeks before Christmas public media outlets were reporting that a farmer Brown in Franklin County was giving away his entire crop of traditional sweet potatoes. Mr. Brown told me he is trying to improve the fresh vegetables and grains available in communities where food deserts abound and processed food is the norm. On the other side of the economic scale there is an increasing demand for fresh vegetables and grains grown within 250 miles of the store or restaurant where they are sold. I know little to nothing about farming. I do know that our county was an agrarian county when founded and today 56% of the tax parcels are listed for agricultural use.¹⁶ Vance County has the land, the warehousing space, and access to the infrastructure to produce, package and ship fresh vegetables and specialized grains to the major markets between Washington, DC to Charlotte that are within the magical 250 mile barrier. Instead of focusing our economic development efforts exclusively on that next high tech industry, adjusted that focus to include agricultural production, warehousing, and transportation to grow the county's economy.

¹⁶ Vance County Tax Department.

Appendix

The following individuals were gracious enough to talk with me to discuss their ideas that would help answer Chairman Taylor's request to use data to emphasize the positives occurring in Vance County.

Jason Brown - First Fruits Farm and Wisdom of Life Ministry

John Fogg – Fogg's Exxon

Reginald Hicks – Union Bank and Trust

Pafeel Lewis – Fogg's Exxon

Steve Moss – Holden Moss North Carolina CPAs

Michael Williams – MR Williams

Len Wester – Wester Farms