

N.C. Metropolitan Mayors Coalition 2014 Legislative Agenda

Census data released last week shows that Charlotte and the Triangle regions accounted for two-thirds of the state's population growth between 2010 and 2013. This is big news, but for those of us who live and work in North Carolina's large cities and to the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, it is not surprising. In fact, eight of the top ten growth areas in the state are represented in our Coalition. Raleigh is the third-fastest growing city in the country, and Charlotte is eighth.

Cities are the vibrant economic engines of our state. They are centers where arts and culture thrive and where innovation is supported and nurtured. Cities are attracting new residents, new industry and new jobs. People from around the country are moving to our cities for our high quality of life and the exciting opportunities here. As a result, our cities have racked up an impressive number of accolades.

Companies around the country and the globe are taking notice of all that North Carolina cities have to offer. MetLife moved 2,600 jobs from offices in four Northeast states and California to Charlotte and Cary citing the talent pools and culture in the two regions. BuzziSpace, a big name in the international furniture design scene with products at the Facebook, Twitter and Google offices is opening a production plant in High Point saying the city and its skilled labor force were a good fit for the international company. GE Aviation is building a new \$125 million plant in Asheville citing the area's workforce as key to its location decision.

Citrix is moving its North Carolina offices into Raleigh's downtown noting that the location will help it recruit and retain top talent, those who prefer to live and work in urban centers rather than isolated office parks. New York-based research firm Ipreo recently created a center in downtown Raleigh saying the company wanted to be part of the technology boom happening in Raleigh and tap into the talent attracted to the city. "And the downtown Raleigh space and the area just fit our culture a little better in terms of having a lot to do in and around Raleigh," Marcus said. "And, frankly, being a draw as an urban area and an urban area that will attract young talent and the proximity to North Carolina State's campus didn't hurt."

That job growth fuels some of the lowest unemployment rates in the state. The statistics demonstrate that our metros are succeeding.

The success of our metro areas and our cities is a direct result of local decision-making, deliberate planning, and smart taxpayer investments that reflect each locality's values. Local government and our locally elected officials – those who are closest to our citizens – have built a culture of growth and energy in our State's metro centers. We are the places where innovation and entrepreneurialism thrive. New residents are flocking to our cities.

Local control is at the heart of our metro regions' success. North Carolina is a state of great diversity of its people, geography and values. Local control allows each region to build a community that reflects its local culture and values. Our history of doing so is paying great dividends as evidenced in the release of the census data last week. What we are doing at the local level is working. Our mayors and all our locally elected leaders are committed to continuing our track record of success.

The Metro Mayors Coalition's advocacy agenda is built around continuing the great success our urban regions have experienced and duplicating that success in the regions of our State that are still struggling to achieve it. It centers on job recruitment which is key in attracting top talent to our regions.

To that end, the Metro Mayors Coalition 2014 Short Session Agenda includes:

- Companies that choose our State's big cities for growth and investment regularly cite the high level of services and amenities offered in our cities as key to their relocation decision. As such, we will support legislation that ensures cities have a well-balanced menu of revenue options that result in sufficient revenues to continue to make strategic investments in building a high quality of life for our residents.
- Young educated workers continue to choose urban centers as the place to live, work and play. As such, we will support legislation to ensure cities have the tools necessary to revitalize their urban core with a mix of high quality, well-planned residential, retail and office space and the right mix of transportation options that urban residents desire.
- North Carolina cities are a magnet for attracting a high quality workforce who can choose to locate in any city in any state. To continue to attract a high quality workforce to our State, we will support legislation that ensures cities have the local control to plan and build a community that reflects the values and desires of migrating talent which is ultimately what business seeks when choosing where to locate jobs.