

REBUILD & KEEP RISING



MITCHELL COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2025 SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT



MITCHELL COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

DEAR INVESTORS AND SUPPORTERS,

The Mitchell County Economic Development Commission and the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce are proud to share this semi-annual report as a reflection of the hard work, resilience, and momentum achieved over the past six months. From supporting local businesses to advancing key projects, every step we took was made possible by the dedication and collaboration of our partners.

To our investors and supporters—thank you. Your commitment helped reopen doors, spark new opportunities, and guide our recovery. Because of you, we are not only back on our feet—we are moving forward with confidence and renewed purpose.

We appreciate your trust, your partnership, and your belief in what Mitchell County can achieve. Here's to continued progress and a future built even stronger than before.



SINCERELY,

Bill Slagle
Executive Director
Mitchell County Economic Development
Commission & Mitchell County Chamber
of Commerce

EDC Board Members



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bill Slagle

CHAIRMAN

Chris Gentry
The Quartz Corporation

TREASURER

Amanda Hollifield
Penland School of Craft

EX-OFFICIO

Allen Cook
County Manager

Lee Ellis
County Commissioner

Daniel Stines
Spruce Pine Town Manager

ADVISOR

Jamie McMahan
Mountain Community Health Partnership

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Jon Duncan
United Community Bank

SECRETARY

Dr. Tonia Hale
Blue Ridge Regional Hospital

CHAMBER REPRESENTATIVE

Patti Jensen
Mitchell County Chamber

Dr. John Boyd
Mayland Community College

Chuck Vines
Mayor of Bakersville

ADVISOR

Morgan Buchanan
Mayland Small Business Center

ADVISOR

Curtis Taylor
BRP

OUR MISSION:

The Mitchell County Economic Development Commission desires to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for all Mitchell County residents by recruiting new business and industry, supporting existing employers and assisting companies with business related needs.

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

The Mitchell County Economic Development Commission (MCEDC) hosted North Carolina Secretary of Commerce Lee Lilley for an official tour of Mitchell County, including the Towns of Bakersville and Spruce Pine. During the visit, Secretary Lilley met with leadership and representatives from The Quartz Corporation, Bombardier Recreational Products, DT's Blue Ridge Java, and several local small business owners to discuss regional opportunities and economic priorities.

SMALL BUSINESS & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

MCEDC announced a formal partnership with the Small Business Center at Mayland Community College to coordinate outreach and enrollment for small businesses and start-ups. This collaboration enhances access to technical assistance, training programs, and resources designed to support business formation and growth.

To strengthen marketing and communications capacity, MCEDC hired Marley Cloer as Digital Marketing Specialist. This position is shared with the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce through a co-located office arrangement. The Commission successfully applied for and was accepted into the North Carolina Apprenticeship Program as a certified worksite, and Ms. Cloer is fully enrolled as an apprentice. Her initial hiring was supported through the NCWorks program.

BUSINESS PARK DEVELOPMENT

The MCEDC office secured the required documentation with Halltown Properties for approximately 90 acres designated for the proposed Mitchell Business Park, located in the Halltown community near Spruce Pine. The Commission was awarded grants from the North Carolina Railroad Company and the North Carolina Electric Cooperative Program to fund due diligence activities. Formal contracts have been executed with Sanford Holshouser to conduct preliminary evaluations assessing the site's suitability for future industrial and commercial development.

Additionally, MCEDC was awarded a grant through the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) to produce a professional drone video showcasing the Mitchell Business Park. Production is scheduled for Spring 2026. The Commission has also received formal notification that the Mitchell Business Park was selected as a Top Five site in EDPNC's Western Site Selection Program.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

The MCEDC completed a comprehensive update of its bylaws, implementing minor revisions to improve clarity and governance structure. The Commission currently consists of nine board members and three advisory board members.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

In Fall 2025, Project Highland was announced, representing the development of Mountain Community Health Partnership's new headquarters. The project will create 24 new jobs with an average annual salary of \$77,000 and includes a capital investment of approximately \$18 million.

Project Chevy, a retail growth initiative, is scheduled to begin development in the Town of Spruce Pine in Spring 2026.



Project Supply Chain was completed in collaboration with Mayland Community College, Sanford Holshouser, and Sibelco – a region wide study for expansion and attracting advanced manufacturing. (See attachment)

COMMUNITY & DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

MCEDC facilitated an introduction between the Bakersville Beautification Group and Mr. Dale Carroll of Sanford Holshouser. This partnership is actively pursuing federal and state funding opportunities to support revitalization and community enhancement projects within the Town of Bakersville.

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT & COLLABORATION

Partner engagement expanded significantly during the first seven months of the reporting period. Active collaboration includes, but is not limited to, NC Department of Transportation, NC Department of Environmental Quality, NC Commerce, NC Community Colleges, Downtown Spruce Pine, Bakersville Beautification Group, BAMA, Town of Spruce Pine, CSX, Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce, Mitchell County Tourism Development Authority, the Blue Ridge Parkway, Mitchell County government, NC Economic Developers Association (NCEDA), Carolina West Wireless, NC Electric Cooperative, Piedmont Natural Gas, Blue Ridge Regional Hospital, and other regional stakeholders.

BUSINESS & INDUSTRY OUTREACH

During the reporting period, the Mitchell County Economic Development Commission completed more than 120 direct contacts with local businesses, industries, and external partner organizations to advance its economic development mission.

Strengths

- Unity with all local governments and partner agencies
- Mayland Community College + their training programs
- Mitchell Business Park
- Leadership in State House and State Senate

Weaknesses

- Housing (AIA & CIP)
- Childcare
- Perception of Mitchell County
- Funding for Special Projects
- Stagnant population growth

Total Current Assets
as of November 2025

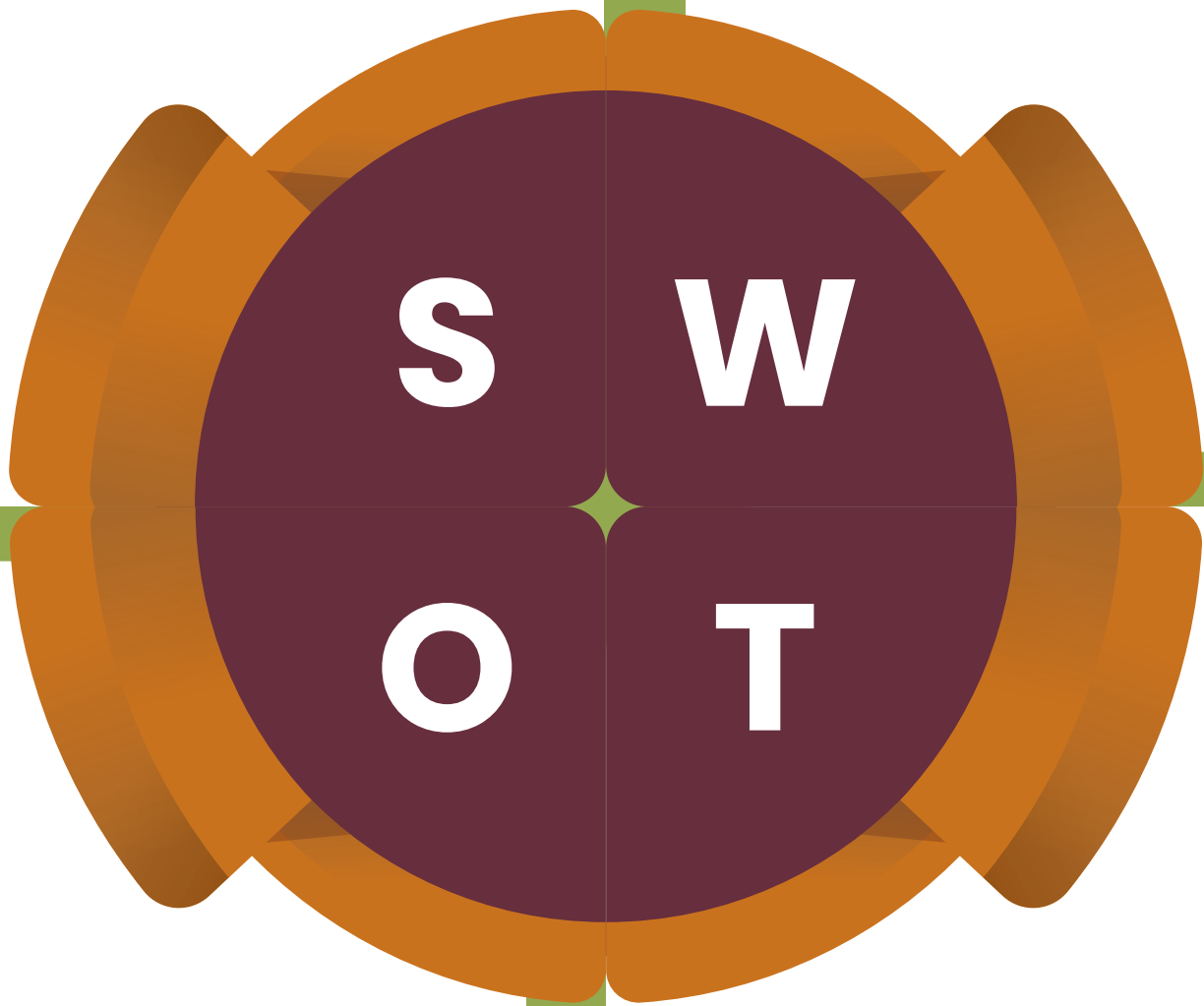
\$606,867

Money Market Balance
as of November 2025

\$503,901.70

Monthly Expenses
as of November 2025

\$9,664.55



- Resilience and Recovery – story about Mitchell County
- Increase efficiency in corporate structure (Creative EDC Study)
- Development of Mitchell Business Park
- Creating better communications

Opportunities

- Lack of Funding
- Failure to implement various plans that enhance the image of Mitchell County
- Fatigue
- Blue Ridge Parkway continued closure

Threats

Chamber Board Members



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bill Slagle

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Patti Jensen

VICE PRESIDENT

Jamie McMahan

*Mountain Community Health
Partnership*

April Jones

NC Works

Kelly Jones

Proper Realty / TDA Director

Daniel Stines

Spruce Pine Town Manager

Lee Ellis

County Commissioner

Thomas Perkins

Edward Jones

Steve Rowland

Rowland Enterprises

Alan Blevins

Retired - KPMG

BOARD PRESIDENT

Nikki Presnell

WTOE / WKYK

TREASURER

Morgan Buchanan

Mayland Small Business Center

Starli McDowell

*Mitchell County Shepherd's
Staff*

Janeen Long

City Drive In/670 on Oak

Jennifer Newton

*Clinic of Joshua Newton,
PA-C / Newtomics Consulting Inc.*

Cy Thomas

*Tree House Mountain
Realty*

David Whitson

*Whitson Electric / Superior
Installations / Appalachain
Protective Services / Cross
Street Commerce Center*

OUR MISSION:

*To support and promote local businesses,
enhance economic opportunities, and improve
the quality of life in Mitchell County.*



Highlights & Accomplishments

51% ↑

Since December 2024, the Mitchell County Chamber has seen a 51% increase in membership.

Launching of the Leadership Circle memberships and welcomed six businesses to the investment level totaling \$26,000.

\$26K

37+

The Chamber has gained 37+ new members, so far this year.



NEW BENEFITS & SERVICES

In 2025, the Chamber opened a new office location offering enhanced visibility and accessibility. Through a collaborative partnership with the Economic Development Commission (EDC), the Chamber provides shared office space and resources to support economic development efforts. The new office has experienced significant engagement from both Chamber members and the broader community.

The Chamber launched a new website featuring new member login access, a Jobs Board, a Community Events Calendar, and automated billing, payments, and communications. A new community app, Hello Mitchell, was also introduced to promote local businesses, organizations, and events. The app was officially launched at the Annual Membership Dinner on November 10, with special launch gift boxes presented to attendees. In response to Hurricane Helene, beginning in the Fall of 2024, the Chamber created a dedicated Helene resource section on its website for local businesses that included monthly member surveys and continuously updated financial and business recovery resources.

EVENTS

The Chamber introduced several new events to increase engagement and connection. Coffee+Connect, a monthly networking event, provided opportunities for member promotion and relationship-building and hosted more than 100 participants. The Business Prayer Breakfast was launched as a new community-focused event centered on thankfulness and fellowship, featuring speaker Zach Dasher and drawing approximately 75 attendees. The Economic Impact Forum addressed the effects of Hurricane Helene, with presentations from Dan Gerlach, Senator Ralph Hise, Representative Dudley Greene, and EDPNC representative Bill Slagle, and welcomed more than 100 attendees.

The NC Mineral and Gem Festival was canceled due to construction and repairs at the event venue. The Chamber co-sponsored the Top to Toe 5K with The Quartz Corporation, and the second year of the event saw an 80% increase in participation. The Annual Membership Dinner was held on November 10 at Grassy Creek Golf & Country Club with capacity attendance, featuring installation of board members, a Chamber update by Bill Slagle, remarks by Senator Ralph Hise, and the official launch of the new community app.

The Chamber is continually researching successful models for new events to impact the Chamber's revenues as well as support the community at large. As an example, a new Chamber golf tournament is scheduled for May 2026 in addition to the new Business Prayer Breakfast which was added in 2025.

POLICY AND PLANNING

The Chamber Board adopted a three-year strategic plan focused on membership growth, non-dues revenue, engagement, corporate memberships, member benefits, and events. A formal review of the Chamber bylaws was initiated in partnership with the Small Business Center and a local attorney. The Chamber also began the process of establishing a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity.

FINANCIAL HEALTH

The Chamber strengthened its financial position over the past year. Ongoing efforts remain focused on developing new revenue streams, expanding new and renewed memberships, and maintaining strong financial stewardship. While the organization unfortunately was unable to hold the NC Mineral and Gem Festival in 2025, it has worked hard to develop new events to help supplement the loss of revenue.

COLLABORATIONS

In June 2025, the Chamber and Economic Development Commission entered into a two-year memorandum of understanding to collaborate under a shared director. EDC Director Bill Slagle was appointed Executive Director of the Mitchell County Chamber by both boards. The Chamber participated in various other community collaborations with municipalities and non profits to add support and administrative assistance to community programs and events.

GRANTS

The Chamber was awarded the Creative Economic Development Consulting GiveBack Grant, valued at \$25,000 in services, to examine the impact of Hurricane Helene, identify potential collaborations, and develop a storm resiliency toolkit. Additional grant support included \$50,000 from the North Carolina Railroad Company to offset losses from the canceled 2025 NC Mineral and Gem Festival, and a \$5,000 grant from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce following Hurricane Helene.

SHIRLEY HISE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The Chamber selected Mitchell High School senior Ivy Young as the recipient of the 2025 Shirley Hise Memorial Scholarship.



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