

# Town of Siler City

## Redefine or Replace Economic Development Tiers

Speaker: Hank Raper

**Goal:** Modify the current usage of the state's economic development tier system for distribution of non-economic development funds OR replace it with a system that recognizes the vast wealth disparities within counties.

**Background:** In December 2015, the Program Evaluation Division of the General Assembly released a report calling for the dissolution of the economic development tier system. The report summarized several ways that these tiers have not been effectively used to get non-economic development funds to the most distressed counties. However, the General Assembly has failed to act on this report and continues to use the current economic tiers for various grants and programs.

Chatham County serves as a key example of why the current tier designations are grossly unfair. The western part of the county, including Siler City, remains an economically distressed area, even though the eastern part is considered wealthy. Over the years, the county, and the western area, including Siler City, have missed out on funding that would help this area take major steps toward economic recovery. As a case in point, Siler City received \$4 million of a \$8.87 million requested of the Golden LEAF Foundation to run water lines to the CAM Megasite in Siler City, but the tier designation prevented the town from getting additional funds for wastewater lines to the mega site.

Resulting from multiple member governments' request, Central Pines Council of Governments (formerly Triangle J Council of Governments (TJCOG)) analyzed the hidden distress in Tier 3 counties. The Central Pines COG white paper, [link](#) here, conducts an analysis of the issue and offers several alternative recommendations. These recommendations include:

- The creation of an exception rule for municipalities significantly located within low-income census tracts;
- The adoption of new indicators of economic distress;
- The redesign of the tier system to operate as a census tract-based index updated every five years;
- The release of multiple indices of economic distress.

Some state funding programs have been amended, allowing for Tier 3 communities to apply for grant opportunities. Chatham County appreciates movement in this direction. Until a more permanent resolution can be reached, we ask that the state continue along these lines, which will grant access to critical funding opportunities to many

communities in most need, but otherwise limited by the designation of the counties they happen to be geographically tied to.

**Request:** We ask that the tier system structure recognizes the far-ranging economic differences that exist within counties, addressing distress that is hidden with the existing tier system structure.

## Protect Local Control

### NCACC General Government Additional Advocacy Goal

Speaker: Hank Raper

**GOAL:** Recognize and oppose additional legislation imposing state control over local governments

**BACKGROUND:** Over the years, substantial legislation has been introduced and passed that has eroded local control. The Chatham County Board of Commissioners previously submitted the following goals relating to local control to the NCACC:

1. Support legislation allowing counties flexibility in holding remote board meetings, allowing contemporaneous, virtual public hearings, to expeditiously conduct county business during emergencies.
2. Oppose efforts to divert to the state, fees or taxes currently allocated to the counties or to erode existing county revenue streams with unfunded mandates.
3. Seek legislation that will allow the North Carolina Sedimentation Control Commission an option to delegate portions of its authority under the Sedimentation and Pollution Control Act to local County programs for all private, State and Federal projects, at the request of the county.
4. Seek legislation to restore county authority over solid waste management and oppose any further shift of authority away from local governments.
5. Support efforts to provide greater flexibility to local governments in expenditure of 911 surcharge funds and ensure adequate funding for next-gen technology.
6. Support efforts to preserve and expand the existing local revenue base of counties and authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdictions to all counties.
7. Support legislation that considers the voice of local voters in determining what their community looks like, its environmental projections and how it is managed.
8. Oppose legislation forcing unfunded mandates on localities in terms of increased staffing, inefficient processes, and software costs.

9. Preserve local public health authority to respond to public health threats. This authority allows local public health departments to respond to communicable diseases outbreaks, including COVID-19, among many other diseases.

**REQUEST:** Oppose further reduction in local control.