

ASHE COUNTY ACQUIRES LAND FOR INDUSTRIAL PARK

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Ashe County has marked a significant economic development milestone, as the County is now the owner of a 41.8-acre tract with the goal of adding jobs and industry.

The land is located off Ray Taylor Road in the West Jefferson extra-territorial jurisdiction, across from GE Aviation. The County plans on developing the tract into as many as six separate lots.

“The prospect of having new jobs, having a new company in the area is important to our County’s future,” Economic Development Director Cathy Barr said.

An economic impact analysis created for Ashe County by Creative EDC estimates that the industrial park can create 322 direct jobs and potentially attract five new companies. The total output from businesses in the County would increase by \$202,000,000 and the County’s tax base would increase by \$162,868.95 annually.

WithersRavenel assisted Ashe County with preparatory work for the site, including a GIS-based site evaluation, preliminary geotechnical investigation, wetland delineation, Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment, master planning, preliminary utility coordination and preliminary cost estimating. After completing these steps, WithersRavenel and Ashe Economic Development presented the Ashe County Board of Commissioners with the findings, which led to the property being acquired.

To help fund quicker development of the property, Ashe County is applying for grants and loans from Blue Ridge Energy’s Rural Economic Development Loan Grant (REDLG) program, Appalachian Regional Commission and Golden LEAF.

The next steps in the process that started nearly two years ago involve earth-moving and road-building, Barr said. When the site is ready, the County will have a finished product to show potential companies. The County also hopes to capitalize on the US 221 road widening project that is expected to spur further growth in the area.

The County plans to work with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina’s recruitment team while also utilizing website promotion, site brochures, social media and other publicity to drum up interest in the new site.

By having a County-owned piece of property dedicated to attracting companies, Barr is hopeful the County can grow and increase opportunities.

“I’d love to see our youth coming out of high school have more options as far as good companies to work for,” she said.