

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2007

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SENATE BILL 621

Short Title: Small Towns Prosperity Program/ Funds.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senator Jones.

Referred to: Finance.

March 12, 2007

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN RURAL NORTH
2 CAROLINA BY EXPANDING THE SMALL TOWNS ECONOMIC
3 PROSPERITY PROGRAM AND INCENTIVES TO REUSE AND RENOVATE
4 VACANT BUILDINGS AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO THE RURAL
5 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CENTER, INC., FOR THE SMALL TOWNS
6 ECONOMIC PROSPERITY PROGRAM AND THE BUILDING REUSE
7 PROGRAM.
8

9 Whereas, shifts in the economy away from traditional manufacturing have
10 left many plants and downtown businesses vacant across the State; and

11 Whereas, when located in rural areas, these vacant buildings usually remain
12 empty; and

13 Whereas, in 2004, the General Assembly established the Building Reuse and
14 Restoration Program in the Rural Economic Center, Inc., as part of the rural Economic
15 Infrastructure Fund; and

16 Whereas, the Building Reuse and Restoration Program has been successful in
17 spurring economic activity and job creation by assisting in the productive reuse of
18 vacant buildings in small towns; and

19 Whereas, since 2004, the Building Reuse and Restoration Program has
20 funded 43 projects resulting in private sector businesses that created jobs for 2,279
21 people; and

22 Whereas, in 2005, the General Assembly included the Building Reuse and
23 Restoration Program in the recurring budget; and

24 Whereas, in 2006, the Rural Economic Development Center, Inc., initiated
25 the Small Towns Economic Prosperity Program and selected 33 small towns to design
26 and carry out economic expansion strategies, and

27 Whereas, many more small towns have shown a readiness to help their
28 economy transition from economic decline toward recovery; Now, therefore,

29 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

1 **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Rural
2 Economic Development Center, Inc., the sum of six million nine hundred fifty thousand
3 dollars (\$6,950,000) for the 2007-2008 fiscal year and the sum of six million nine
4 hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$6,950,000) for the 2008-2009 fiscal year to be used as
5 follows:

- 6 (1) To provide matching grants to local governments in distressed areas
7 that will productively reuse vacant buildings and properties, with
8 priority given to towns or communities with a population of less than
9 5,000.
- 10 (2) To provide a Brownfields incentive fund of up to one million dollars
11 (\$1,000,000) in each year to help small towns assess and remediate
12 environmental contamination at the site of any abandoned buildings
13 and to prepare the buildings for reuse.
- 14 (3) To provide up to three million seven hundred fifty thousand dollars
15 (\$3,750,000) for expanding the Small Towns Economic Prosperity
16 Program and to provide grants to stimulate innovative economic
17 recovery and expansion projects in small towns.
- 18 (4) To provide up to four percent (4%) of the funds appropriated in this act
19 for the use of the Rural Economic Development Center, Inc., in
20 administering grants and delivering technical assistance to local
21 governments.

22 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2007.