



NEWS RELEASE

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NORTH CAROLINA'S SOUTHEAST WELCOMES NEW COUNTIES, EXPANDS SOUTHEAST REGION *Jones County and Richmond County Join the Region*

December 1, 2022 (Elizabethtown, N.C.) The North Carolina's Southeast Board of Directors has approved requests from county and business leaders in Jones and Richmond counties to join the Southeastern Partnership. In admitting the two as members, the Board also amended the organization's by-laws to raise the cap on participating counties from 18 to 20. The action, along with the addition of new board members and investors, occurred at the board's November 17 meeting in White Lake.

"Our unique public/private model continues to attract the interest of potential partners, and we welcome Jones and Richmond counties into our regional promotional footprint," said Jeff Etheridge, chairman of N.C.'s Southeast board. Prior to the vote, the organization's staff and officers carefully considered the benefits and advantages each county brings to the region's economic development strategy, as well as the benefits and assistance N.C.'s Southeast can bring to the counties. "These new member counties bring economic assets that align nicely with our target clusters, especially advanced manufacturing, defense contracting and value-added agribusiness. We're thrilled to have them in the Partnership," Etheridge said.

With productive agriculture and strategic access to coastal North Carolina military bases and other assets, Jones County brings opportunities to recruit military businesses and food and beverage processing. It is also engaging on product development strategies for industrial building and site development. Its affordable real estate and proximity to the North Carolina Global TransPark also position the county for success in aerospace and other advanced manufacturing operations. "Jones County is very excited about this opportunity," said John Bender, Director of Jones County Economic Development. "Given our location, it makes perfect sense." Local leaders there weighed the benefits of membership prior to issuing its request to join N.C.'s Southeast, Bender said. "We realized it would very much be a benefit to Jones County to be part of this."

Richmond County was among the original members of N.C.'s Southeast when the partnership was established in 1994 by the North Carolina General Assembly. Its return to the regional program brings strong infrastructure, shovel-ready industrial properties, and leadership into the Southeast's inventory of assets. "In the post-pandemic economy, scale makes a huge difference," explained Martie Butler, Economic Developer and Management analyst for Richmond County. "By being part of North

Carolina's Southeast, we join with our regional partners to promote Richmond County on a larger and more visible platform. Collaboration brings benefits, and we look forward to doing our part to embrace the exciting opportunities ahead," Butler said.

"With the arrival of new member counties, N.C.'s Southeast continues to build on its 28-year track record of delivering results-driven regional economic development marketing programs across our service area," said Steve Yost, President of N.C.'s Southeast. "Our staff is eager to engage the ideas, expertise and contacts these counties bring to the region."

A public-private partnership based in Elizabethtown, **North Carolina's Southeast** provides strong economic development leadership in southeastern North Carolina through innovative marketing and collaborative regional initiatives that will support the creation of new jobs, generate capital investment and secure new business locations." Member counties include Anson, Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Duplin, Hoke, Jones, Lenoir, Montgomery, Moore, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland and Wayne. For additional information, visit www.ncse.org

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