

LABOR GAINS

While politics may change the story, North Carolina has a red-hot reputation, with many global and domestic companies viewing the state as a great location for expansions.

It shared top billing with Texas in *Site Selection* magazine's 2016 Prosperity Cup, which recognizes states based on their business climates. The magazine noted the state's strong reputation, AAA bond rating and record venture-capital funding. Separately, *Forbes* ranked North Carolina as its second-best state for business in 2015, citing low labor costs and one of the nation's highest migration rates. (Utah ranked first.)

BUSINESS NORTH CAROLINA compiled a list of the largest projects announced or initiated between June 1, 2015 and May 31, 2016, based on projected job-creation goals. There is no official state list of such expansions, so our sources also included individual companies, state and local economic-development executives and press reports.

The good news comes with potential clouds looming as CEOs of some large U.S. companies have condemned the state's House Bill 2 law, which nullifies a Charlotte ordinance that would have added nondiscrimination protections for LGBT individuals. Two featured projects may not come to fruition: Red Ventures and DB Global Technologies have put their expansion plans "on hold" while legislators and business leaders seek a compromise. E-commerce company PayPal would have made the list had the company not pulled its plans to bring 400 jobs to Charlotte in response to the new law.

We included the state's incentives aimed at attracting companies. The largest grant, \$16.8 million, went to insulin-maker Novo Nordisk, which is adding nearly 700 jobs in a \$1.85 billion expansion of its Johnston County plant.

Most of the expansions occurred in or near Charlotte, Durham and Raleigh, continuing a long-term trend. A key exception was BSH Home Appliances Corp.'s plans to add 460 jobs in Craven County.

—Cathy Martin





WAL-MART STORES INC., BENTONVILLE, ARK.

COUNTY: **MECKLENBURG**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$10 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **1,000** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **NONE**

The world's largest retailer last summer opened an office in Charlotte that is part of its global shared services division, providing back-office support including financial and payroll services. As of early June, the company had filled 800 of the new jobs at a five-story building in Lake Pointe Corporate Center. The center will support Wal-Mart's operations in the United States and Canada. The new jobs are a combination of hourly and salaried positions. Wages were not disclosed.



NOVO NORDISK PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRIES INC., BAGSVAERD, DENMARK

COUNTY: **JOHNSTON**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$1.85 BILLION**

NEW JOBS: **691** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$16.8 MILLION**



FIDELITY GLOBAL BROKERAGE GROUP INC., BOSTON, MASS.

COUNTIES: **DURHAM, WAKE**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$10 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **600** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$15.5 MILLION**

Already employing more than 3,500 in the Triangle, the privately held financial-services giant also considered India for this expansion, which includes mostly technology jobs such as software developers and design engineers. Annual salaries will exceed \$100,000. Offering retirement planning, college-savings plans and other financial services, Fidelity's parent company, FMR LLC, had 25 million customers and \$5.2 trillion in assets as of Dec. 31.



RED VENTURES, INDIAN LAND, S.C. **[TIE]**

COUNTY: **MECKLENBURG**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$5 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **500** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$2.7 MILLION**

Founded in the Queen City in 2000, Red Ventures is known for its employee perks, such as onsite bowling and a basketball court at its main campus about 17 miles south of downtown Charlotte. CEO Ric Elias was one of the first to decry House Bill 2 and said in April the company was reconsidering its long-term plans in the state. The company did not provide an update as of mid-June. The marketing-services company also considered its South Carolina headquarters for the expansion, announced in December, that will include software developers, analysts and inside sales agents. Average annual salaries for the new jobs will exceed \$48,000.



MOUNTAIRE FARMS INC., MILLSBORO, DEL. **[TIE]**

COUNTY: **CHATHAM**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$100 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **500** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **NONE**

The poultry processor said in May it plans to acquire and renovate the plant previously occupied by Townsend Inc., which was Siler City's largest employer with more than 1,000 workers before filing for bankruptcy in 2010. The plant changed hands a couple of times, and now Mountaire hopes to replicate its success at seven other North Carolina locations, where it employs more than 3,000 people. The company also plans to expand a local hatchery and open a feed mill nearby.



BSH HOME APPLIANCES CORP., IRVINE, CALIF.

COUNTY: **CrAVEN**

PROJECTED
INVESTMENT:
\$80.7 MILLION

NEW JOBS: **460**
N.C. INCENTIVES:
\$4.1 MILLION





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**ASHLEY FURNITURE
INDUSTRIES INC.,** ARCADIA, WIS.

COUNTY: **DAVIE**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$9.7 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **454** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$4.6 MILLION**

The largest furniture retailer in the U.S. built an \$80 million manufacturing and distribution center in 2012 and quickly doubled its original commitment of creating 550 jobs, employing more than 1,100 at its 2.8 million-square-foot facility in Advance. The private company owned by the Wanek family employs 25,000 people worldwide and had sales of nearly \$4 billion in 2014, according to *Forbes*. In 2015, the company considered a sale to a private-equity group, but the Waneks decided to keep it in the family, *The Wall Street Journal* reported.



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HERBALIFE LTD.,
LOS ANGELES

COUNTY: **FORSYTH**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$3.5 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **301** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$3.5 MILLION**

The nutritional-products manufacturer that took over the former Dell Inc. plant in 2013 said last July it was doubling its workforce in Winston-Salem, boosting manufacturing operations and adding jobs in information technology. Herbalife makes nutritional products and supplements that are sold through independent distributors. The company also looked at Los Angeles, Colorado Springs, Colo., and Mexico for the expansion.

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REPUBLIC SERVICES INC.,
PHOENIX **[TIE]**

COUNTY: **MECKLENBURG**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$6.8 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **350**

N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$216,000**

The Fortune 500 company provides recycling and waste-management services in 41 states and Puerto Rico. Republic announced in February it was opening a customer-service center in Charlotte with average annual salaries exceeding \$57,000. The company had revenue of more than \$9 billion last year and a market value of \$17.2 billion as of June 16.



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GF LINAMAR LLC,
SCHAFFHAUSEN, SWITZERLAND; GUELPH,
ONTARIO **[TIE]**

COUNTY: **HENDERSON**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$217 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **350** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$4.7 MILLION**

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**DIMENSIONAL FUND
ADVISORS LP,** AUSTIN, TEXAS

COUNTY: **MECKLENBURG**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$105 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **316** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$10.3 MILLION**

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**AUROBINDO PHARMA
LTD.,** HYDERABAD, INDIA

COUNTY: **DURHAM**

PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$31.7 MILLION**

NEW JOBS: **275** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$3.8 MILLION**

India's fourth-largest drugmaker said in April it will establish a research and development and manufacturing center, with jobs paying an average annual salary of more than \$62,000. Aurobindo employs more than 15,000 people worldwide, making semi-synthetic penicillins and other generic drugs. The company aims to boost revenue from \$2 billion in the latest fiscal year to \$3 billion by 2018, in part by increasing the number of new product launches in the U.S.



PREMIER RESEARCH, PHILADELPHIA

COUNTY: **DURHAM**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$4.1 MILLION**
NEW JOBS: **260** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$2.6 MILLION**

The contract-research organization also considered its hometown of Philly for its North American operational hub, where functions will include project management, clinical-trial management and other support services. Salaries will average \$73,296 for the new jobs. Founded in 1989, Premier last month added five experts on rare diseases, including three specializing in rare oncology as a result of growth in the field.



DEUTSCHE BANK AG, FRANKFURT, GERMANY [TIE]

COUNTY: **WAKE**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$9 MILLION**
NEW JOBS: **250** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$3.4 MILLION**

The German financial-services company with annual revenue of \$37 billion announced in September it was expanding its software-development center in Cary, where DB Global Technology employs about 900 people, with the new jobs paying an average of more than \$85,000. But in April, Deutsche Bank said it was freezing hiring in North Carolina in reaction to House Bill 2. Co-CEO John Cryan told the *Triangle Business Journal*, "We very much hope that we can revisit our plans to grow this location in the near future." The company did not respond to a request for comment. Shares of parent Deutsche Bank, Europe's largest investment bank, have declined more than 40% in the last year amid fears of a recession in Europe.



GILBARCO VEEDER-ROOT, GREENSBORO [TIE]

COUNTY: **GUILFORD**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **NA**
NEW JOBS: **250 (ESTIMATE)**
N.C. INCENTIVES: **NONE**



CASTLE HOME FURNISHINGS, OXNARD, CALIF. [TIE]

COUNTY: **GUILFORD**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **NA**
NEW JOBS: **200**
N.C. INCENTIVES: **NONE**

CH Living, an upholstered-furniture division of the California-based company, opened an 180,000-square-foot manufacturing plant that will allow it to reduce delivery times for its East Coast retailer customers, which include Buy Buy Baby, Target and Wayfair. Workers at the plant will make sofas, loveseats, chairs and ottomans and conduct product testing.



GRIFOLS SA, BARCELONA, SPAIN [TIE]

COUNTY: **JOHNSTON**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$210 MILLION**
NEW JOBS: **250** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **NONE**

Johnston County's largest private employer will build two additions at its local plasma facility, a 100,000-square-foot fractionation plant and a 120,000-square-foot purification plant. Grifols also considered Texas for the expansion but was lured by \$1.3 million in local incentives to be issued annually over 10 years. The company entered Johnston County in 2011 through its \$3.4 billion acquisition of Talecris Biotherapeutics and employs 14,000 people worldwide.



ETS EXPRESS INC., OXNARD, CALIF. [TIE]

COUNTY: **CABARRUS**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **NA**
NEW JOBS: **200** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **NONE**

The West Coast drinkware company opened a 152,000-square-foot manufacturing and distribution center in Concord, aiming to reduce shipping times and freight costs for customers in the Midwest, Northeast and South. Established in 1985, the company makes water bottles, insulated coffee cups and mugs that can be personalized with custom logos.

**17 INTERACTIVE INTELLIGENCE
GROUP INC., INDIANAPOLIS (TIE)**

COUNTY: **DURHAM**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$1.3 MILLION**
NEW JOBS: **200** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$1.6 MILLION**

Interactive Intelligence provides software and cloud services for call centers, with clients including Coca-Cola, Sony, Kohl's and CarMax. The company's revenue increased 15% to \$390 million in 2015, with revenue from cloud services growing 62% over the previous year. The Durham location is responsible for PureCloud, its newest cloud platform. Founded in 1994, the publicly traded company employs more than 2,000 people at more than 35 offices worldwide. Average annual salaries for the new jobs will be \$70,000.



**17 TECHTRONIC INDUSTRIES CO.,
HONG KONG (TIE)**

COUNTY: **MECKLENBURG**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$5 MILLION**
NEW JOBS: **200** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$3.8 MILLION**

The maker of Hoover, Dirt Devil and Oreck vacuum cleaners said last August it will open a marketing and innovation center in Charlotte, where new hires will earn an average annual salary of \$103,618. Ohio-based TTI Floor Care North America is a unit of the Hong Kong-based parent company that also makes and sells lawn-care products and power tools. The company considered South Carolina for the project.

**17 FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS
CORP., NORWALK, CONN. (TIE)**

COUNTY: **DURHAM**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$4.3 MILLION**
NEW JOBS: **200** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$880,500**

While other communications companies are ramping up wireless services, the fourth-largest U.S. telecom provider has focused on growing by buying up landlines. Earlier this year, it bought Verizon Communications Inc.'s traditional phone business in California, Florida and Texas in a \$10.5 billion deal that doubled its internet and TV subscribers. Frontier offers voice, video and wireless internet access and other communications services. The Durham location will provide technical and billing support to customers in 28 states. Average annual wages will be \$47,112 for the new jobs. Frontier also considered sites in Florida, Texas, Utah and Myrtle Beach, S.C.



**17 LIDL US LLC,
NECKARSULM, GERMANY (TIE)**

COUNTY: **ALAMANCE**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **\$125 MILLION**
NEW JOBS: **200** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **\$250,000**

Part of the Schwarz Group, Europe's largest retailer, discount grocer Lidl broke ground in December on a regional headquarters and distribution center in Mebane that is expected to open by 2018. The 80 full-time jobs will pay an average annual salary of \$80,000, more than double the county's average of \$37,821, and the company also plans to hire 120 part-time workers. With nearly 10,000 stores in Europe, Lidl is making a push into the U.S. market following the success of competitor Aldi, which has about 1,500 U.S. stores. Lidl has been scouting East Coast sites for its first stores.

**17 THOMAS BUILT BUSES INC.,
HIGH POINT (TIE)**

COUNTIES: **GUILFORD, RANDOLPH**
PROJECTED INVESTMENT: **NA**
NEW JOBS: **200** | N.C. INCENTIVES: **NONE**

The school-bus manufacturer said in March it was adding a second shift at its 275,000-square-foot plant in High Point. Founded in 1916, Thomas Built became a subsidiary of Freightliner LLC, now Daimler Trucks North America, in 1998. The company added 216 jobs in 2015 and employed more than 1,600 before the recent expansion.

BSH HOME APPLIANCES | NEW BERN

CRAVEN HAVEN

Call it the HGTV effect, or maybe it's the improved housing market that is prompting a flurry of kitchen renovations. Either way, demand for high-end appliances is fueling economic growth in Craven County, with BSH Home Appliances announcing in December an \$80.7 million expansion of its local operations that will add 460 jobs over five years.

The company, a subsidiary of Munich, Germany-based BSH Hausgeräte, makes sleek appliances with brands including Bosch and Thermador. Europe's largest home-appliance manufacturer reported an 11% increase in revenue to \$14.2 billion in 2015, including 26% growth in North America due to robust sales of its premium products. (Some models of its Thermador ranges retail for more than \$10,000.)

That growth is likely to continue, with annual spending for home remodeling and repairs in the U.S. projected to reach \$323.3 billion in 2017, up from \$237.5 billion in 2013, according to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University.

About 1,000 employees at the New Bern plant produce cooktops, ranges and an estimated 1 million dishwashers a year. BSH has shown consistent growth since the plant opened in 1980, says Timothy Downs, director of economic development for Craven



County. A major expansion in 2005 added a distribution center just outside the city limits on U.S. 70.

The latest expansion will add 380,000 square feet to the distribution center, giving BSH a manufacturing footprint of about 1.9 million square feet. Other companies that serve BSH have sprung up around it, including one that produces plastic liners for its dishwashers and another that makes dishwasher racks.

Craven County seems to be an exception to the notion that less-populous areas aren't able to attract and maintain good, stable jobs. Ohio-based Moen produces faucets and other fixtures at a local assembly plant and in May completed an \$11.5 million expansion that added 100 jobs to its existing 700.

While the wages — \$42,188 is the average annual salary for the new BSH jobs — pale when compared with the salaries of Triangle tech workers or Charlotte bankers, 460 jobs has a big impact in 300-year-old New Bern, which has about 30,000 residents.

"We're sort of the anomaly when it comes to eastern N.C.," Downs says. The area is unique because of such a strong manufacturing presence in such a small town, says Downs, an N.C. State graduate who moved with his family from Dayton, Ohio, almost three years ago to be near the North Carolina coast.

BSH considered sites in South Carolina and Tennessee, where it has an existing manufacturing plant in La Follette, for the expansion. "BSH's success in North America is, in large part, due to the hard work and incredible people of Craven County," company spokeswoman Lore McKenna said in an email.

When Downs arrived in New Bern, there was no existing economic-development office, website or marketing program. "I saw potential and opportunity here," he says. "We've redefined ourselves when it comes to economic development."

— Cathy Martin

1.9 million

square feet. Size of BSH footprint in New Bern after the expansion is complete

26%

BSH revenue growth in North America in 2015

\$1.6 billion
Gilbarco revenue in 2015

**GILBARCO VEEDER-ROOT
GREENSBORO**

**PUMP
IT UP**

39,526%

Danaher's stock increase over
the last 30 years

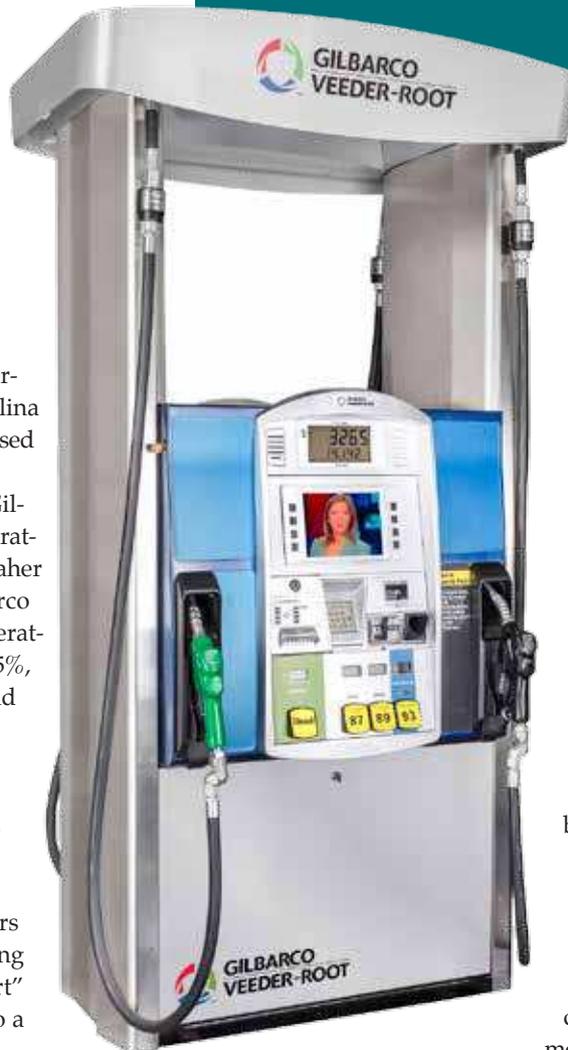
Millions of people literally touch their products weekly, but one of the lesser-known success stories in North Carolina manufacturing may be Greensboro-based Gilbarco Veeder-Root.

Incorporated in 1870 in Springfield, Mass., Gilbarco had about \$420 million in sales and an operating margin of 5% when it was acquired by Danaher Corp. for \$309 million in 2002. By 2015, Gilbarco Veeder-Root had revenue of \$1.6 billion and operating profit of more than \$300 million, or about 15%, reflecting expansions into other technologies and greater demand for pumps.

That demand is prompting Gilbarco to add 250 jobs at the West Friendly Avenue plant, says Wayne Gibbs, a Teamsters union business agent who represents about 550 hourly workers. About 1,500 salaried staffers also work at the Greensboro site, he says. Gilbarco customers include Costco and Circle K, which are replacing old pumps with new models that accept "smart" credit cards that improve security, according to a June investor presentation.

"Virtually every gas pump in the U.S. is having to be revamped to accept the new credit cards, which has been a blessing for the plant," Gibbs says. Gilbarco has hired about 150 hourly workers in the first half of 2016 and may add another 100 by Jan. 1, many of them for a new third shift, he adds.

"It's a great endorsement when a local company makes an expansion," says David Ramsey, executive vice president for economic development at the nonprofit Greensboro Partnership. "They are one of two [pump manufacturers] that can deliver their product on a worldwide basis, and they've seen a nice uptick in demand." Gilbarco declined to comment.



The growth doesn't involve any local or state incentives. Some businesses prefer avoiding public scrutiny that occurs when government agencies get involved.

The expansion reflects the dynamism of Guilford County's manufacturing sector, which Ramsey cites as the region's key selling point in competing for new industry. "Greensboro has a ton of potential energy, it's in a wonderful location and it has a great price point for labor, so it's a very easy place to sell," he says. Ramsey moved to Greensboro last year after heading Mississippi's state economic-development organization.

Charles Gilbert and John Barker started the business that was renamed Gilbarco in 1929. Its headquarters moved to Greensboro in 1965.

Gilbarco's profit gains helped Washington, D.C.-based Danaher's stock surge more than 39,000% over the last 30 years, making it the sixth-best U.S. stock over that time period, *The Wall Street Journal* said in a January story.

A conglomerate that makes hundreds of products after acquiring more than 400 companies since 1984, Danaher is splitting into two groups this month. Gilbarco will be among the biggest units in a \$6 billion industrial technologies business called Fortive Corp., based in Everett, Wash. Danaher is retaining its scientific and technology businesses.

—David Mildenberg

**DIMENSIONAL FUND ADVISORS
CHARLOTTE**

**FUND
TIMES**

Replacing old structures in Charlotte to make way for big buildings filled with smart finance professionals may be as common as a Myrtle Beach sunburn. And the new Dimensional Fund Advisors' office in Charlotte is certain to raise the city's financial IQ, given the money-management firm's reliance on Nobel Prize-winning economists.

Still, the DFA expansion comes with considerable regret because its planned seven-story building will replace the Common Market, a favorite coffee, sandwich and beer spot, and a vacant lot that hosted a popular weekly food-truck gathering. Common Market's courtyard is widely viewed as a treasure, frequented by hipsters, CEOs, cyclists and people of all colors. "It's an intimate space that is unique in Charlotte," says David Walters, a retired UNC Charlotte architecture professor who leased space nearby for 26 years.

It's also one of the best real-estate locations in Charlotte, a mile south of the Bank of America headquarters building, next to a light-rail station and in the South End neighborhood, where the population has more than doubled since 2009, to almost 9,000. Starting in the 1980s, Charlotte graphic designer Gaines Brown bought real estate there, convinced the deteriorating industrial neighborhood had a future as an artists' haven.

\$147,000

average annual salary for the new jobs

\$414 billion

DFA managed assets as of April 2016



Now, South End is teeming with young professionals with center-city jobs, along with at least eight brewpubs. What the area lacks is major employers, Walters says.

DFA will help fill that void. Aided by \$18 million in local and state grants and tax breaks, the company expects to employ at least 300 people there by 2020. Those workers, involved in investment management, sales and IT, have average annual compensation of about \$147,000. The 900-employee company paid \$12.2 million for the 2.3-acre plot, mostly owned by Brown. "No sane individual would have turned down that deal," Walters says. "It's a classic tale of gentrification. It won't be South End in the future. It will be downtown South. That is how cities evolve."

Atlanta-based Cousins Properties Inc. will own the building and has a 15-year lease with the investment company. Durham-based Duda Paine Architects is the designer. DFA declined to comment. Started in 1981, DFA's assets under management grew to \$4 billion in 1990, then to more than \$400 billion now, placing it among the 10 largest U.S. mutual fund companies. It caters to larger investment advisers.

Charlotte will be DFA's third U.S. office, along with its Austin, Texas, headquarters and one in Santa Monica, Calif. "The regional center will enhance client services and provide state-of-the-art facilities for conferences and meetings," co-CEO David Booth said in a statement. He may be best known for giving \$300 million to the University of Chicago's business school, which now bears his name.

"Change is inevitable, and this is a natural evolution of an urban transit-oriented district that is adjacent to great neighborhoods and downtown," says Terry Shook, a Charlotte architect who helped pioneer South End. "We just don't want to diminish the values that made the district great in the first place."

—David Mildenberg

NOVO NORDISK | CLAYTON

BIOTECH BOON

As the old saying goes, when one door closes, another one always opens. In Johnston County, behind the new door is a high-tech manufacturing plant that will be the size of seven football fields and create nearly 700 jobs. Danish drugmaker Novo Nordisk said last August it plans to invest \$1.85 billion in the plant, where it will make ingredients for diabetes products. The project came on the heels of Lake Forest, Ill.-based Hospira's announcement in early 2015 that it would close its local drug factory, idling 250 workers. Hospira later was acquired by Pfizer Inc. in a \$17 billion sale completed in September.

Originally dubbed "Project Bright Sky," the deal marks the single largest foreign direct investment in North Carolina's history, and Novo could receive state incentives totaling as much as \$16.8 million over 12 years if it meets investment and job-creation targets. The new jobs will pay an average annual salary of \$68,420, 84% higher than Johnston County's average. Though the plant is under construction, hiring has begun, and 1,500 people applied for the first 50 positions, says Chris Johnson, director of economic development for Johnston County.

The county is a star among the state's strengthening life-sciences sector. North Carolina jobs in the industry grew at triple the national growth rate from 2012-14, according to a report released at last month's BIO 2016 International Convention. Johnston's largest private employer, with about 1,650 employees, is Barcelona-based plasma producer Grifols SA, which also has plans for a \$210 million expansion (page 57).

The world's largest insulin maker, Novo already occupies a 20-year-old plant in Clayton, about 18 miles southeast of Raleigh, where nearly 800 workers assemble insulin pens. At 833,000 square feet, the new plant will be the company's first outside Denmark to manufacture active ingredients for its products. Novo picked the U.S. because it is the largest market for diabetes treatments.

The company broke ground on its new plant on March 28, less than a week after the General Assembly passed House Bill 2, the controversial new law that has prompted criticism

\$1.85 billion
investment in Clayton expansion

70,466
number of N.C. life-sciences jobs in 2014



from many large employers. Gov. Pat McCrory attended the event and held a press conference intended to celebrate what was arguably the state's biggest economic-development project of the year. Instead, reporters peppered him with questions about the law.

"It really kind of took the air out of the project," Johnson says, adding that Novo has stated it is comfortable with North Carolina and its own internal nondiscrimination policies. Had the bill been introduced before the project BNC company told the *Raleigh News & Observer*. Novo Nordisk ranked among *Fortune* magazine's 50 Best Places for Diversity in 2015.

Novo also looked at sites in Massachusetts and New Jersey — its U.S. headquarters are in Plainsboro. Johnson says the company's history in the county, available land and aggressive local tax rebates were all factors in landing the deal. "I really commend the county commissioners," he says. "They really stepped up and said, 'It's our [project] to lose.'"

After undergoing several expansions over the years, Novo was expected to continue to grow, says Johnson, who has lived in Johnston County since 1990. "But we never expected this."

—Cathy Martin

GF LINAMAR | MILLS RIVER

SWISS BLISS

Despite low gas prices over the last year and a half, a push to make cars more fuel-efficient and eco-friendly has led to a joint venture of two of the world's biggest auto-parts manufacturers. Switzerland's GF Automotive and Canada's Linamar Corp. formed GF Linamar LLC and picked Henderson County as the site of its first manufacturing plant.

As the auto industry moves away from heavy steel, the new company will hire 350 workers, earning an average annual wage of \$47,738, to produce lightweight aluminum powertrain and structural components.

Canada-based Linamar, which had sales of \$4 billion in 2015, opened a machining plant in neighboring Buncombe County in 2012, taking over a former Volvo Construction Equipment factory, and two years later launched a \$115 million expansion. The new joint venture more closely mimics GF's technology, says Andrew Tate, president of the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development. A division of publicly traded Georg Fischer AG, GF produces more than 600,000 tons of iron, aluminum and magnesium components at nine worldwide plants annually. Through its aluminum die-casting technology, auto parts can be made at half the weight without compromising safety, Tate says.

LARGEST ECONOMIC- DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

**RANKED BY EXPECTED
INVESTMENT**

**ANNOUNCED BETWEEN
JUNE 1, 2015 AND MAY 31, 2016**

	COMPANY	COUNTY	INVESTMENT [MILLION]	NEW JOBS
1	Novo Nordisk Pharmaceutical Industries Inc.	Johnston	\$1,850	691
2	GF Linamar LLC	Henderson	217	350
3	Grifols SA	Johnston	210	250
4	Facebook Inc.	Rutherford	200	na
5	Bridgestone Corp.	Wilson	164	0
6	Lidl	Alamance	125	200
7	Dimensional Fund Advisors LP	Mecklenburg	105	316
8	Mountaire Farms Inc.	Chatham	100	500
9	BSH Home Appliances	Craven	81	460
10	KSM Castings Group	Cleveland	80	80

\$217 million
total expected investment

\$11.6 million
state and county incentives
awarded to GF Linamar

GF Linamar acquired a 55-acre site at Ferncliff Industrial Park, where construction will begin soon on a 380,000-square-foot plant that is about a half-mile from Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.'s massive East Coast brewery and adjacent to Asheville Regional Airport. The plant, in Mills River, is expected to open in the second quarter of 2017.

"There really is not an aluminum die-casting operation in the U.S." from which the company could pull from an existing workforce, Tate says. "They felt like this was a place where people with experience would move to," adding that Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock has developed a curriculum to train workers for the plant.

GF Linamar also considered Richland County, S.C., near Columbia, but proximity to BMW's auto manufacturing plant in Greer, S.C., about an hour's drive from Mills River, was one of several factors that helped the N.C. site, Tate says.

Before the last decade or so, Henderson County's population was driven by retirees. Now, more than half of residents are younger than 35, Tate says, attracted by the quality of life and low crime rate. "We're not the cheapest place to do business or to live." But Henderson County has "less potholes, less mosquitoes and better schools" than South Carolina, he says.

—Cathy Martin