



Community and Economic Development in North Carolina and Beyond Blog: CCP Awards \$20,000 for research to benefit communities and companies in Lenoir and Caswell counties

By CED Guest Author

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Will Lambe is the Director of the Community & Economic Development Program and the Community-Campus Partnership.

CCP has awarded a \$20,000 grant to Dr. Emil Malizia, chair of the Department of City and Regional Planning at UNC-Chapel Hill to support his project titled “Fostering Resilient Places: Sources of Economic Strength in Nonmetropolitan North Carolina.” The project will identify community assets and policies contributing to the success of companies in traditional industries in the state, despite a struggling economy and shrinking markets. The project is expected to yield important insights and lessons for communities and companies in Caswell and Lenoir counties.

In small towns and rural areas of North Carolina, companies in declining industries have withstood considerable economic pressure during the recent recession. What has contributed to their sustainability? Can their success stories be replicated or referenced in other North Carolina communities? This study seeks to find answers to these two questions. The proposed project will focus on successful companies—primarily in the food, textile-apparel and/or furniture sectors—and trace their resilience back to community-level assets or barriers that were overcome. Researchers will work with leaders from the Eastern and Piedmont Triad regional economic development partnerships to identify successful companies in these declining industries.

“The CCP grant will enable me to pursue a research idea that will help economic developers working in Caswell and Lenoir counties,” Malizia says. “Selected companies in small towns and in declining industries—such as furniture or textiles—have been successful despite significant challenges. I am interested in learning how the company-community connections have influenced their success.”

*Will Lambe authored the NC Rural Center report, *Small Towns, Big Ideas*, and he served as Director of the Community and Economic Development Program at the School of Government from 2009 to 2014.*