

Central Park NC – originally known as the Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project – was formed in 1993 by a consensus of leaders from the region to develop a strategy to preserve the natural and cultural assets of central North Carolina, using them to create a sustainable local economy. In 2000, Central Park NC published "A Strategy for North Carolina's Central Park" – a blueprint for the development of a new economy for our region based on heritage and cultural tourism development and outdoor recreation opportunities. The region includes Anson, Stanly, Richmond, Montgomery, Moore, Randolph, Davidson and Rowan counties.



The Central Park strategy focuses on small businesses development complementary to heritage and cultural tourism, and also developing the regional infrastructure for increasing overnight tourism. According to studies conducted by Appalachian State University and the Belk College of Business at UNC Charlotte, the implementation of this strategy will result in a doubling of overnight visitation to the region from 20% to 40% by focusing on scenic natural areas, driving/sightseeing, nature walks, historic sites, and zoos/wildlife observation, and will create an additional 25,000 jobs above the benchmark forecast and an incremental positive net economic impact of \$2.1 billion per year.

In 2005, Central Park NC began STARworks Center for Creative Enterprise in a former hosiery

mill in the small town of Star. STARworks is home to several for profit and not for profit businesses, focusing on renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and creative arts-related businesses.