

## Citizen-Times viewpoint

# Push to make Asheville a climate center looks like a winner

**W**ise leaders always try to anticipate the future and position those they lead to thrive. The assumptions they make often determine their degree of success.

It's hard to argue with the assumptions leaders of the Hub Project made in choosing to capitalize on the presence of the National Climatic Data Center as the focus for a concerted economic development initiative.

The NCDC possesses the world's largest collection of weather records going back for more than a century, making it a natural "hub" for weather information. Its location should be a place where weather and climatologic education and weather-related businesses and industries flourish.

Weather affects almost

everything and if scientists are right about global warming, changing weather patterns will create a growing need for understanding of and information about the climate.

"The climate is ours to lose," said Janice Brumit, the incoming president of the Hub Project cabinet's executive committee. "We want to strike while the iron is hot."

Brumit said Asheville is in competition with other communities, including Boulder, Colo., that are also pursuing weather-related economic development initiatives.

The 2 1/2-year-old Hub Project is based on two basic ideas. The first is the idea of business clusters, the theory that areas with interconnected groups of companies and other institutions focused on a particular industry or product are best positioned to be

sources of innovation in those industries.

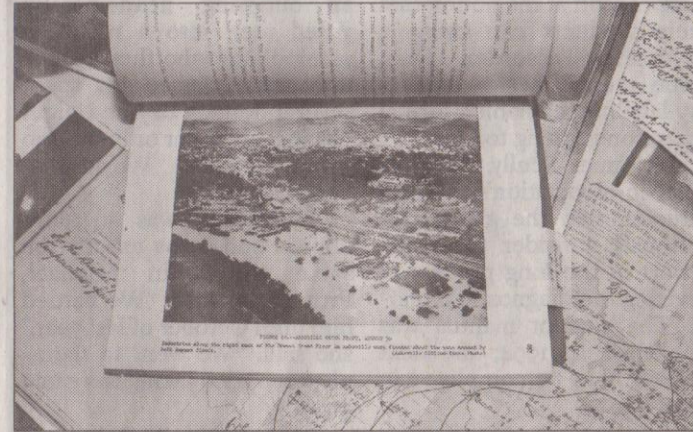
The second is the idea of using assets like the National Climatic Data Center, the region's crafts base and the quality and variety of conventional, complementary and alternative medicine that already exists here as the focus of such clusters, thereby tying new companies and jobs to region-specific resources and making it less likely they will move away.

## Time for action

As Hub Project leaders seem to recognize, after 2 1/2 years of study and discussion, it's time to begin implementation.

"The one that could propel us forward would be our climate initiative," Brumit said.

The effort needs continuing support from local govern-



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**The National Climatic Data Center in Asheville holds a wealth of records of past weather events that could hold the keys to divining the future course of weather. They could also be an important link to the area's economic future if an initiative from the Hub Project succeeds.**

ments and institutions. It also needs a strategic plan with a way to evaluate results. One of the Hub Project's emphases

for the coming year is to establish the metrics to measure its success. That will be crucial in sustaining support

from the community and local governments.

Jack Cecil of Biltmore Farms, the current chairman of the Hub cabinet's executive committee, sees a need for a process like the ones used by Atlanta and Los Angeles when pursuing bids to hold the Olympic Games. That will require a coordinated, focused and well-planned effort.

Much effort has gone into getting the Hub initiative to this point. But as Brumit perceives, it's now at a crossroads. It's time to move beyond the talking and studying stage.

The cabinet's choice of climate as its first concentrated push is a logical one with every chance of bringing new jobs to the region. Now it's time for all the players to step up and provide the planning and the support to make it work.