

# Macon County Now A Tier 4

By Candice Cunningham

This year, Macon County was transferred to a Tier 4 classification. This switch may cause town and county officials to work harder for grant monies, according to County Manager Sam Greenwood.

There are five tiers which are used to rate a county's economic status. Tier 1 counties are considered the lowest ranking. Tier 5 counties are considered the least economically distressed.

Macon County's advancement to a Tier 4 from a Tier 3 creates more problems than advantages.

Just last month, the county lost a \$400,000 Rural Center grant that could have gone towards the sewer project along the

Georgia Road because of the promotion.

Greenwood says it creates less eligibility for grants and less financial incentives for outside corporations to move to Macon (companies that invest in lower tier counties receive larger tax credits).

The tier system uses population growth, unemployment rates, and per capita income to determine each county's classification.

"We don't reap any benefits from being placed at a higher tier," said County Planner Joe Stark.

Out of all western counties, Macon, is the only Tier 4 county.

Tier fives include Asheville's Buncombe County, Henderson, and

Transylvania Counties.

Jackson and Haywood Counties are a Tier 3. Western Tier 1 counties include, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, and Swain Counties.

Greenwood said he was surprised to see Jackson and Haywood Counties in the Tier 3 group but said it was due to the larger population base of the two counties.

"I think that generally speaking, people want all of North Carolina to be successful, and there's an understanding that Tier 4 and Tier 5 have perhaps the fiercest competition"- Jim Fain, *NC Department of Commerce as quoted in the September 2001 issue of North Carolina magazine.*

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