



Domestic Partnership Benefits

A presentation to
The Asheville City Council

February 9, 2010

Introduction

Why does Asheville provide benefits to its workforce?

- ✓ To recruit quality employees
- ✓ To retain quality employees
- ✓ To increase productivity & morale
- ✓ To increase competitiveness
- ✓ To value employees & their families

Opportunity

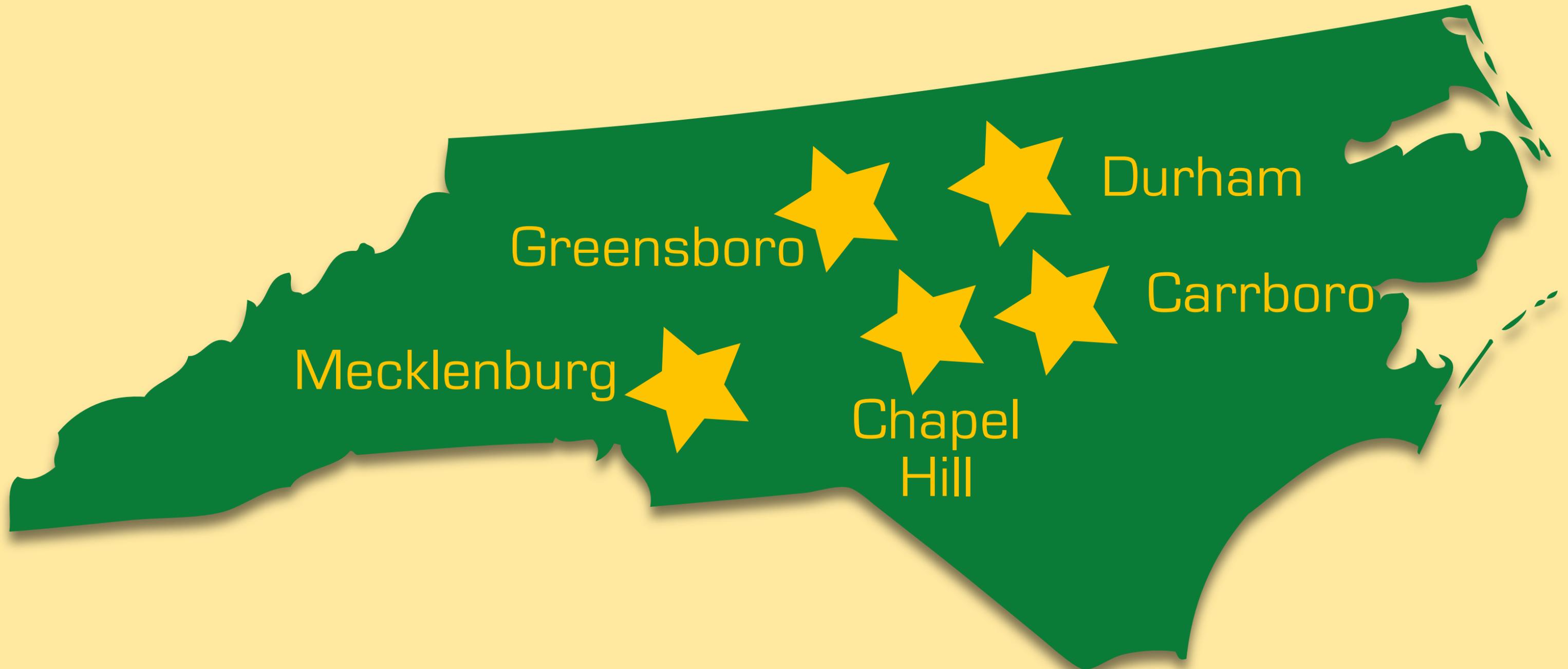
- ✓ Improve recruitment and retention
- ✓ Provide equal rights to our employees who are denied the option to marry
- ✓ Strengthen families
- ✓ Maintain Asheville's image as a safe, inclusive community that respects diversity
- ✓ Compete with private sector employers
- ✓ Bolster economic resilience

Why now?

- ✓ Staff preparing health insurance report for our March 9th Work Session
- ✓ Council direction imperative
- ✓ History of inaction
- ✓ Bolster staff morale

Who offers Domestic
Partnership Benefits?

Governments in North Carolina



Mecklenburg

Greensboro

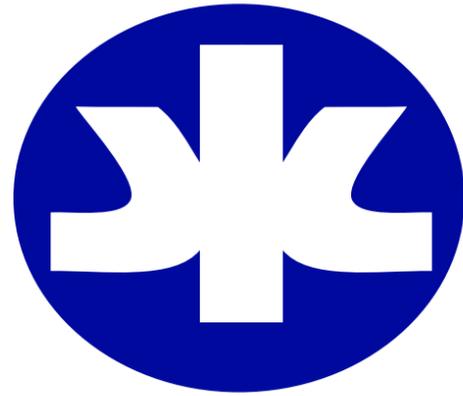
Chapel
Hill

Durham

Carrboro

Who offers Domestic
Partnership Benefits?

270 of the Fortune 500
offer Domestic
Partnership Benefits



Kimberly-Clark



BARNES & NOBLE
BOOKSELLERS



TIME WARNER
CABLE

Bank of America 



Progress Energy



**Office
DEPOT.**



**The
Grove Park Inn**
RESORT & SPA

Legality

“County legal staff, in collaboration with staff from the NC School of Government, has concluded there is no legal reason why a NC local government cannot adopt policies designed to positively impact the recruitment and retention of a capable and diligent workforce.”

Mecklenburg County
Domestic Partner Benefits: Research and Review
December 15, 2009

What are Domestic Partnership Benefits?

The same benefits now offered to the spouses of married city employees:

- ✓ Medical, Dental, Vision, Cancer, Accident, Life, Prescription
- ✓ Bereavement Leave
- ✓ Family and Medical Leave

How are Domestic Partners Defined?

Carrboro's legal definition of domestic partner:

- ✓ Are not related by blood closer than would bar marriage in North Carolina
- ✓ Are not married or related by marriage
- ✓ Share the common necessities of life
- ✓ Are 18 years old or older

How are Domestic Partners Defined?

- ✓ Are competent to enter into a contract
- ✓ Declare that they are each other's sole domestic partner
- ✓ Agree to be responsible for each other's welfare
- ✓ Agree to notify the town of any change in the status of their domestic partnership

Why offer Domestic
Partnership Benefits?

Improve recruitment and retention

- ✓ The Number One reason for offering DPB is to attract and retain employees, according to a 2005 Hewitt Associates study
- ✓ In a time of salary freezes and job uncertainty, this is a way to let employees know we value them
- ✓ With so many private employers offering DPB, we could lose some of our best and brightest

Fairness

- ✓ Gay city employees are city employees: their families are families of city employees
- ✓ Many of our employees work equal time for unequal compensation
- ✓ Reflect our historical commitment to treating our employees with respect and fairness

Strengthen families

- ✓ The following groups have endorsed DPB:
 - The American Academy of Family Physicians
 - The American Psychological Association
 - The National Association of Social Workers
 - The American Medical Association
- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics found that offering DPB can further strengthen families

Enhancing Asheville's Reputation

- ✓ Passing Domestic Partner Benefits reinforces Asheville's image as an inclusive community
- ✓ Gay tourists, who spend \$64 billion per year (in the US alone) travel to destinations that have a reputation for being safe and welcoming

Economic Growth & Resilience

- ✓ Our city's commitment to equality will add to its economic resilience and potential for growth
- ✓ "A community's success in attracting and retaining high-tech business" depends upon "providing a safe, respectful, and congenial environment"
- ✓ A Brookings Institution study shows a strong link between a thriving tech-oriented economy and diverse populations

How will this work?

Defining Domestic Partners

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Same-sex Domestic Partners vs. Comprehensive Domestic Partners

- ✓ Same-sex couples are not capable of accessing benefits available to opposite-sex couples
- ✓ The cost of implementation will be lower if targeting only same-sex couples

Registering as Domestic Partners

Program details to be determined by City Staff:

- ✓ Employees may register their Domestic Partnership with appropriate department
- ✓ A fee may be charged for processing registration
- ✓ Registration will include proof of partnership
- ✓ Termination of the Domestic Partnership registration will terminate the benefits
- ✓ Current precautions against misuse of marital status will extend to the new same-sex policy

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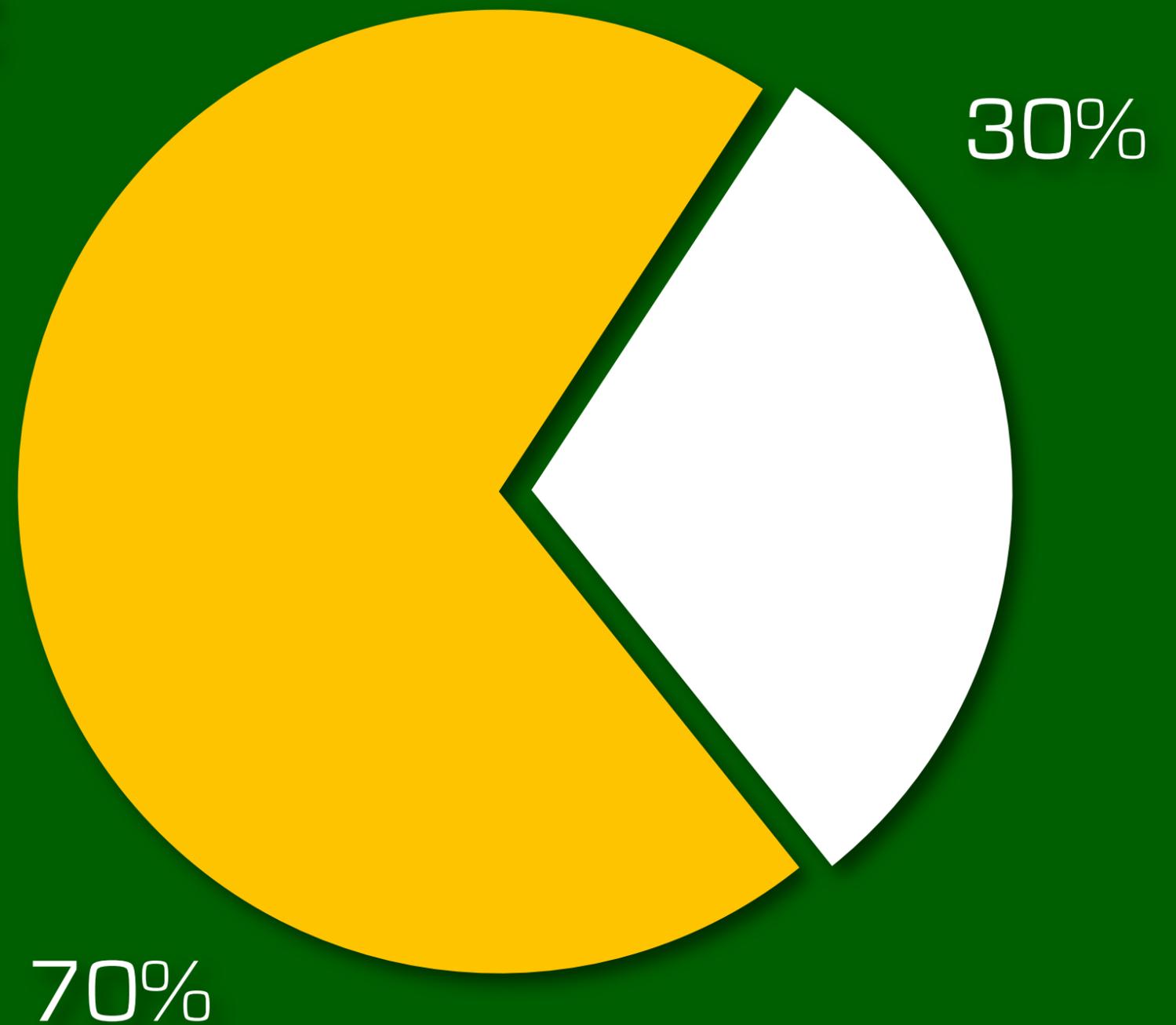
Financial Impact

Recruitment & Retainment

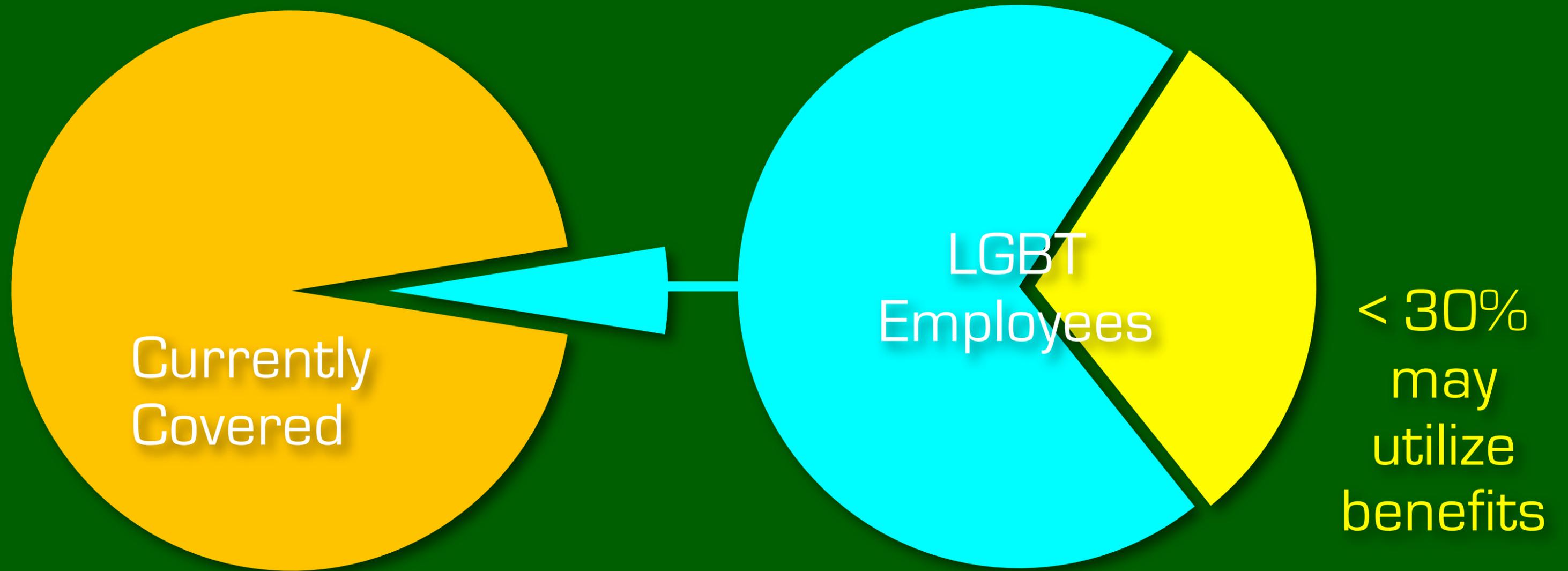
- ✓ To recruit quality employees
- ✓ To retain quality employees
- ✓ To increase worker productivity & morale
- ✓ To increase competitiveness
- ✓ To value employees and their families

Current Coverage

The City of Asheville currently employs 1,101 full-time & 89 part-time employees. Only 30% of employees currently utilize Spousal and/or Family Coverage (357 employees)



Projected Possible Coverage



95% of Employers have a financial impact of less than 3% of their total healthcare costs.

—Hewitt Associates, 2005

Mecklenburg County anticipates a financial impact of one percent or less.

Arguments for & against
Same-Sex
Domestic Partner Benefits

Religious Beliefs

People of faith hold many different religious beliefs regarding same-sex domestic partners

- ✓ Personal religious views are not a valid basis for denying some municipal employees the benefits that are provided to other employees

Financial Impact

Some argue that increased health care costs are not fiscally responsible:

- ✓ Increased recruitment and retention reduces human resources costs
- ✓ Fairness is a core value of our city government
- ✓ Maintaining the status quo will institutionalize discrimination against same-sex couples

Conclusion

- ✓ Same-sex Domestic Partnership Benefits improve recruitment, retention, competitiveness
- ✓ Join other cities and counties in North Carolina
- ✓ Opportunity to include all of our city employees' families
- ✓ Improve Asheville's reputation as a safe, inclusive community that welcomes diversity
- ✓ Improve Asheville's economic prospects



I ask tonight that we extend Domestic Partnership Benefits to City Employees who choose to register their same-sex couples status.

I ask that City Council direct staff to return with implementation suggestions during our March 9th worksession