

*May 2025 Edition*

# CRAFTING HICKORY

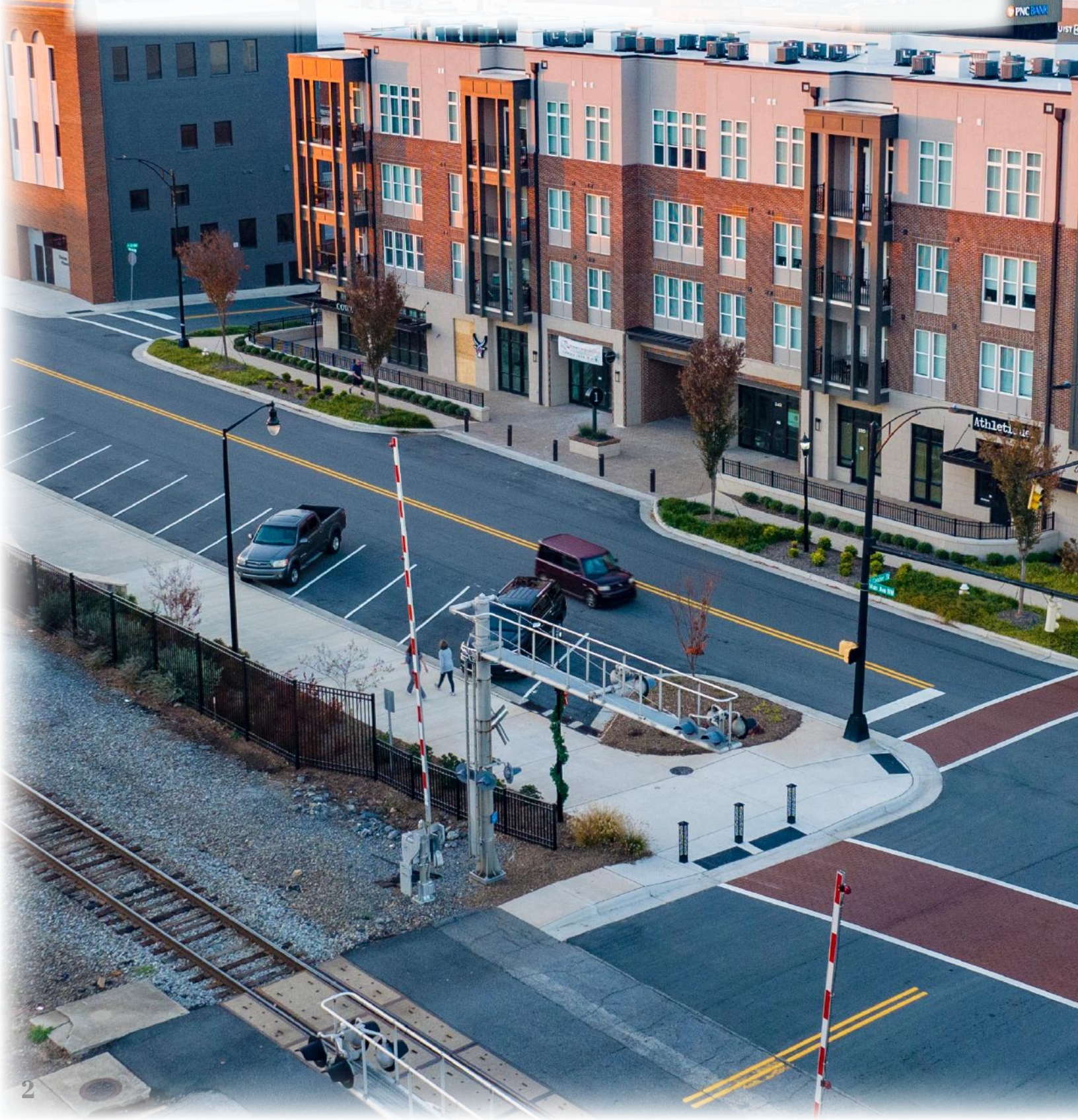




# craft · ing · hick · o · ry

[ kraftiNG hik(ə)rē ] : noun

a city-wide initiative to create a vibrant, stronger future for Hickory through strategic investments in placemaking, public infrastructure, and recreational amenities







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# CRAFTING A TRAILBLAZING PATH FORWARD

A walk or drive through Hickory today reveals a vibrant, revitalized city, abundant with opportunities for a well-crafted life. And it keeps getting better!

Since the passing of a \$40 million bond referendum in 2014, the City of Hickory has embarked on a journey of transformation. In recent years, the bond money has been leveraged to gain an additional \$75 million in grants for complementary projects. This has allowed the City to invest more than \$115 million into trailblazing projects that create a high quality of life and spur economic growth to attract residents and businesses.

The result of the City's investment will be an 11-mile multimodal urban trail system connecting destinations across the city, placemaking through streetscapes and gateways, and a 378-acre Class A advanced business park to lure industry and create jobs.

## THE HICKORY TRAIL

The Hickory Trail is an economic catalyst that showcases the diverse landscapes of the community and connects destinations across the city. From the Trail, residents and visitors have access to some of Hickory's greatest assets – a beautiful lake, renovated downtown, educational centers, cultural amenities, sporting and entertainment venues, and the airport. An interactive map and additional information about the Hickory Trail are available online at [www.hkytrail.com](http://www.hkytrail.com).

Nearing completion, the Hickory Trail includes five distinct segments—City Walk, Riverwalk, Aviation Walk, Historic Ridgeview Walk, and OLLE Art Walk.

*“It is so exciting to see four segments of the Hickory Trail being completed and utilized. It has been an honor to be a part of and witness this. I appreciate the work the 42-member commission and the City have done. Seeing the community and visitors using these trails now is wonderful.”*

**-Burk Wyatt, Bond Commission Chair**





## HICKORY TRAIL STATUS

CITY WALK

**OPEN**

RIVERWALK

**OPEN**

AVIATION WALK

**OPEN**

RIDGEVIEW WALK

**OPEN**

OLLE ART WALK

**UNDER  
CONSTRUCTION**

### City Walk

The Hickory community celebrated the grand opening of the City Walk on December 16, 2021, with a ribbon cutting ceremony and sunset dedication of the N.C. 127 pedestrian bridge as the Rudy Wright Bridge in honor of late Hickory Mayor Glenn Rudolph "Rudy" Wright, Jr. Running through the heart of downtown Hickory, the City Walk is a popular attraction for runners, joggers, walkers, and bicyclists looking for exercise or convenient access to Lenoir-Rhyne University and downtown destinations.



### Riverwalk

The Riverwalk along the Catawba River officially opened on April 4, 2024, and provides public access to Lake Hickory with an overwater bridge and a combination of waterfront and wooded trails. From the elevated trail, Riverwalk visitors enjoy a variety of scenery and multiple vantage points to admire the beauty of the lake and the surrounding natural environments. Hickory's Riverwalk overwater bridge was designed by renowned architect Miguel Rosales and is the longest inverted Fink truss bridge in North America. The Riverwalk creates a unique destination in the region and presents opportunities for economic development in Hickory's innovation district.



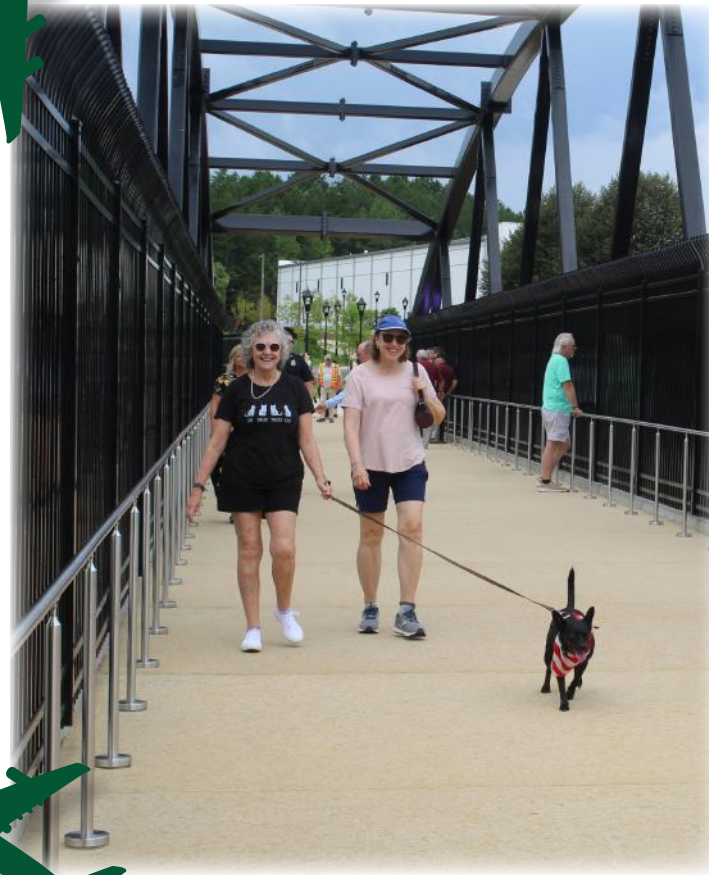


## Aviation Walk

Funded largely by a \$17 million BUILD grant from the United States Department of Transportation, the Aviation Walk creates another critical link between several notable Hickory destinations.



The Aviation Walk provides bicycling and pedestrian connectivity from Old Lenoir Road and the OLLE Art Walk, across U.S. 321 via a steel pedestrian bridge, past L.P. Frans Stadium and Winkler Park, up to the Hickory Regional Airport and beyond. A ribbon cutting marked the official grand opening of the Aviation Walk on July 30, 2024, making it the third Hickory Trail segment to be completed. Extensions of this trail segment are already in the works to connect to additional destinations like Appalachian State University and the new Hickory Aviation Museum.



This area of the city holds great potential for future development, and the Aviation Walk is a key driver in creating an innovation district that builds on the synergies between the Hickory airport, The Dale Earnhardt Regional Innovation Complex, the expanded Hickory Aviation Museum, Appalachian State University's Hickory Campus, the Catawba River, Riverwalk, the future Lackey project, and the U.S. 321 corridor.





# Historic Ridgeview Walk

The City celebrated the completion of the Historic Ridgeview Walk with a ribbon cutting on November 26, 2024. Historic Ridgeview Walk links the Ridgeview neighborhood to downtown Hickory and U.S. 70, creating a 1.2-mile, 10-foot-wide multiuse path for pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities. The Historic Ridgeview Walk path travels from the City Walk down South Center Street, west across City-owned property at the Historic Ridgeview Public Library, and south on First Street SW to the current Ridgeview Branch Library. The path then goes west on Seventh Avenue SW past Ridgeview Recreation Center, before turning south and following Fourth Street SW to U.S. 70. In addition to improving pedestrian safety and connectivity, the new walk easily connects residents to community amenities and highlights the neighborhood's history. Historical markers are placed along the route to recognize and celebrate people and places of historical significance in Ridgeview, as identified by community stakeholders. The Untouchables monument at Samuel William Davis, Sr. Multipurpose Field is one of the historic focal points featured on the trail.



*“Additionally, the economic development from the City Council’s forward thinking has been, and will continue to be, impactful to the City of Hickory. The bond program that passed in 2014 is enhancing the quality of life and increasing business and economic development along the Trail and the entire City. I look forward to seeing the impact of the Hickory Trail and Trivium Corporate Center’s industrial park in the future.”*

**-Burk Wyatt, Bond Commission Chair**

## OLLE Art Walk

The Hickory Trail continues to take shape as construction of the final segment is now underway along Old Lenoir Road. The OLLE Art Walk trail will run approximately 2.4 miles along Ninth Street NW and Old Lenoir Road to create an essential link between the City Walk, Riverwalk, and Aviation Walk segments of the Hickory Trail. Once a major thoroughfare into and out of the central business district of Hickory, Old Lenoir Road is now home to funky retail boutiques,

a budding arts district, and a variety of businesses. This new section of trail is named after the OLLE Arts District, which derives its name from the first two letters of “Old” and “Lenoir” in the road name, Old Lenoir Road. This area of Hickory will be revitalized with the OLLE Art Walk, which is anticipated to be a catalyst for private investment and economic development along this corridor. With the hope of continuing to cultivate the arts in this area, the OLLE Art Walk plans to

incorporate historical markers, public art pieces, and colorful murals along its path.











# HICKORY

TRAIL

IR



127

127

1

2



3

CITY WALK  
2.5 MILES

127

HISTORIC  
RIDGEVIEW WALK  
1.2 MILES

6

7



70



SCAN FOR  
INTERACTIVE MAP





# TRIVIUM CORPORATE CENTER

While the Hickory Trail encourages private investment, the City of Hickory's revitalization plan also calls for the creation of industry-ready infrastructure, assets, and property. To ensure Hickory can readily meet the site demands of industrial businesses, the City of Hickory partnered with Catawba County to develop a master-planned Class A business park called Trivium Corporate Center on Startown Road. What was once dairy farmland is now a 378-acre Class A business park with five international tenants manufacturing products for global distribution and additional opportunities for businesses looking to locate and/or expand in Hickory.

Named for the Latin word meaning "the place where three roads meet," Trivium Corporate Center is ideally positioned in Hickory at the intersection of I-40, U.S. 70, and U.S. 321. Zoned for office and light industrial, Trivium is located less than two miles from I-40 and less than one hour from Charlotte Douglas International Airport. Conveniently set less than one mile from shopping, hotels, and restaurants in the Hickory MSA's commercial center, the business park is also ideal for corporate headquarters and is less than one mile from Catawba Valley Community College.

Since breaking ground on the project in 2018, the industrial park's convenient location, robust infrastructure, and advanced capabilities quickly lured in global companies looking to take advantage of Hickory's manufacturing expertise. Trivium Corporate Center includes two new Corning facilities, cable manufacturing operations for its

Optical Communications business segment; Cataler North America Corporation, developing and supplying automotive catalysts and activated carbon products to customers around the world based on new environmental technologies that purify air and water; Gusmer Enterprises, Inc., manufacturing and selling a wide range of products geared towards the winemaking, brewing, edible oil, and pharmaceutical markets; and American Fuji Seal, a global pioneer in the manufacturing of shrink sleeve labels, self-adhesive labels (pressure sensitive labels), spouted pouches, and packaging machinery.

The early success of Trivium in generating economic impact led to the industrial park's expansion in 2021. Originally 270 acres, Trivium Corporate Center expanded by 108 acres with the addition of Trivium East. This expansion builds more opportunities to bring new and expanding businesses to the region. For more information about available parcels in Trivium Corporate Center, visit [www.hickorync.gov/trivium-corporate-center](http://www.hickorync.gov/trivium-corporate-center).





# A VISION REALIZED

The Hickory that was once envisioned is now here. In early 2012, the City of Hickory recognized that a plan was necessary to economically revitalize the City. The resulting bond program is now yielding its intended results.

To date, the economic activity at Trivium Corporate Center and along the Hickory Trail has generated over \$845 million in private investment, will support 1,565 jobs, and has spurred 1,316 new housing units within a half mile of each project.

Today's Hickory is thriving and continues to craft a strong future. To stay up to date with what's coming next, visit [www.hickorync.gov](http://www.hickorync.gov) and follow the City of Hickory on social media.

Hickory is on the rise, and you should be here!



*"The Hickory of tomorrow is being created today. The efforts and investments we are making through the bond program to build connectivity and drive economic development will benefit our community and be felt by generations to come. Decades from now, newcomers to Hickory will not see the remnants of the recession we went through in the early part of the century. Instead, they'll see the vitality, the amenities, the innovation, the jobs, and the quality of life. They'll see a flourishing city, feel the momentum, and understand what makes Hickory so special."*

*- Hank Guess, Mayor of Hickory*



# \$115 M PROJECTS



To date, the City of Hickory has leveraged the \$40 million bond referendum approved by Hickory voters to secure over \$75 million in additional grant funding.

# 1,565 NEW JOBS



The economic activity at Trivium Corporate Center and along the Hickory Trail will support 1,565 jobs.

# \$845 M

## PRIVATE INVESTMENT



With Trivium and several residential and commercial projects along the Hickory Trail, the bond program has generated over \$845 million in private investment.

# 1,316 NEW HOUSING UNITS



The Hickory Trail and Trivium have spurred 1,316 new housing units within a half-mile of each project.

FOR PROJECT DETAILS AND UPDATES: [WWW.CRAFTINGHICKORY.COM](http://WWW.CRAFTINGHICKORY.COM)







FACT  
IMPACT  
CONOMIC  
ENGAGEMENT





# CRAFTING INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY

Investing in Hickory through infrastructure and amenities is an invaluable catalyst for growth, innovation, and opportunity. High-quality infrastructure lays the foundation for economic expansion, attracting businesses and fostering efficient movement of goods and people. Amenities like parks, cultural centers, and recreational facilities not only enhance the quality of life but also stimulate local commerce by drawing in visitors and potential residents. These enhancements create a vibrant, attractive community that encourages social interaction, fosters creativity, and provides a fertile environment for start-ups and entrepreneurs. Ultimately, by prioritizing these investments, the City of Hickory is cultivating a dynamic, resilient economy; elevating living standards; and inspiring the ingenuity that drives progress and prosperity.

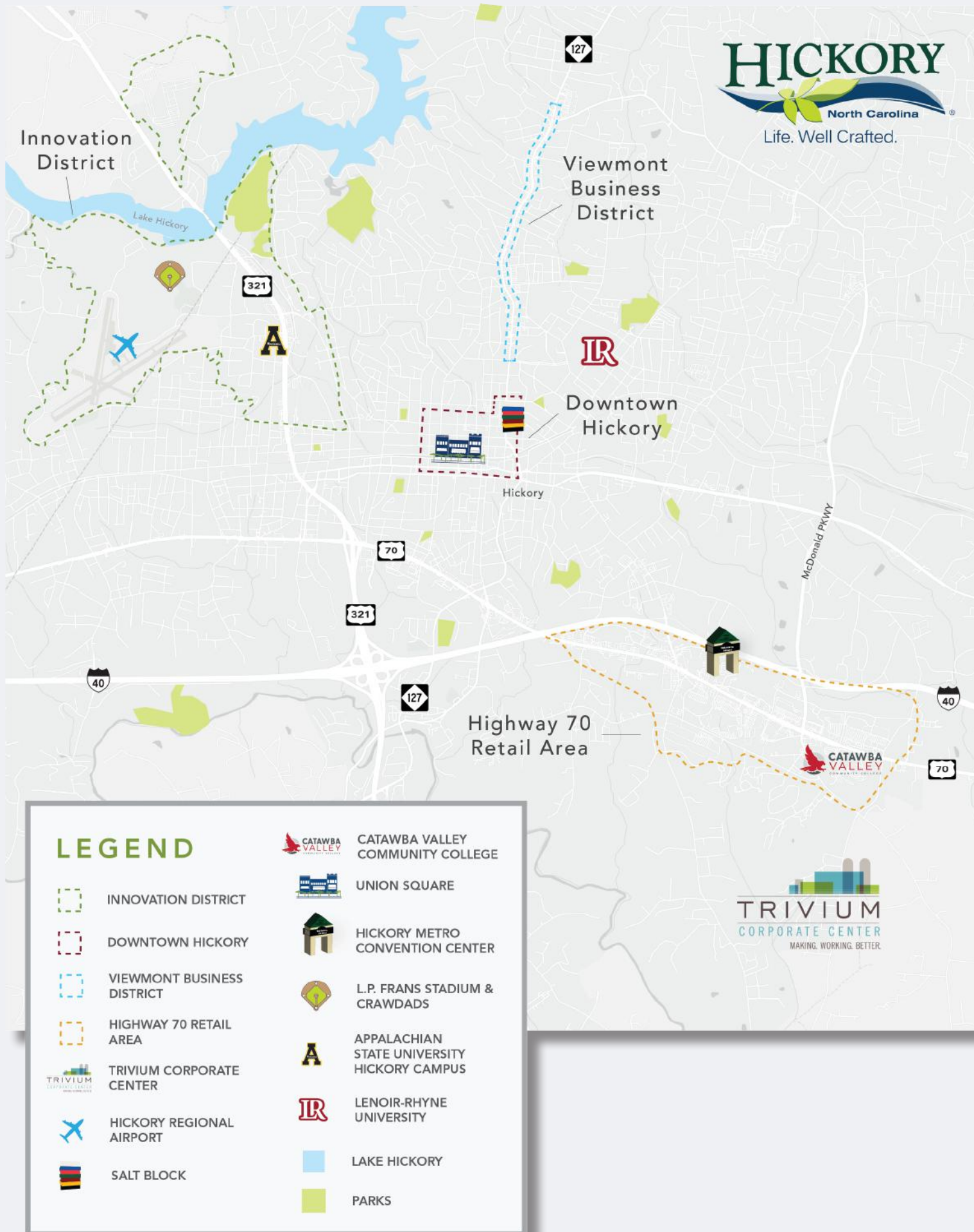
## HICKORY INNOVATION DISTRICT

Hickory's revitalization efforts and economic resurgence continue to create synergies and potential opportunities throughout the city, but an area of great interest for future economic development has been identified as the Hickory Innovation District in the northwest corner of Hickory directly along the U.S. 321 corridor. The area is over 2,000 acres and three square miles in size and will contain over seven miles of the interconnected Hickory Trail System. The district is strategically located and contains Appalachian State University's Hickory Campus, the Hickory Regional Airport, Catawba Valley Community College's The Dale Earnhardt Regional Innovation Complex, and the Hickory Regional Water Treatment Facility. The area also includes regional recreation amenities

including mountain bike trails, the region's minor league baseball stadium, and access to beautiful Lake Hickory.

Area leaders are joining forces to leverage this strategic location as a place for education, innovation, and recreation that will achieve Hickory's vision for economic development by increasing access to education and workforce training, enhancing the quality of life through improved access to recreation and outdoor amenities, and stimulating new mixed-use development.









# Regional Innovation Complex & Hickory Aviation Museum

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Catawba Valley Community College received a state allocation to construct a workforce training center at the Hickory Regional Airport. This facility proposes to align innovative educational efforts regionally and will build on the success of its existing Workforce Solutions Complex, resulting in a regional education campus with flexible space that includes high-tech equipment, classrooms, and virtual simulators for training the next generation of the region’s workforce. In recognition of a transformational gift from The Dale Earnhardt Foundation in support of the project, this facility will be officially named The Dale Earnhardt Regional Innovation Complex to honor the legacy of the iconic NASCAR champion.

The Hickory Aviation Museum has been located at the Hickory Regional Airport since 2007. In 2025, it will expand its footprint by moving into a state-of-the-art facility adjacent to the Regional Innovation Complex. This joint facility will house the museum’s extensive collection of vintage military aircraft, preserve

aviation history, and provide STEM education and workforce development opportunities. The museum and educational center are located at the end of the runway at Hickory Regional Airport. Set atop the highest point in Hickory, this new facility will become a regional destination for education and experience, offering beautiful views of the Catawba Valley and Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance.







# Hickory Regional Airport

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Hickory Regional Airport (HKY) is a general aviation airport that has seen significant increases in private aviation activity over the past several years. The North Carolina Division of Aviation’s 2025 State of Aviation Report highlights data showing Hickory Regional Airport’s significant annual economic impact. According to report, HKY supports 335 jobs, generates \$26.6 million in personal income, and generates \$66.1 million in economic output. The airport sees over 41,000 operations annually and is home to nearly 100 based aircraft. Planned runway expansions and continued hangar development aim to increase traffic at the airport in the coming years.







## Appalachian State University - Hickory Campus

In 2015, Corning made the decision to move its corporate headquarters from Hickory to a new building in Charlotte. While the company's operations and manufacturing operations remained in Hickory, and the company has expanded since the announcement, the departure left a nearly 250,000-square-foot building on U.S. 321 vacant. An average of over 47,000 people a day pass by the building, which created the possibility for the site to become an eyesore to the community. When the building went on

the market, Appalachian State University embraced the opportunity to expand access and open a second campus to provide additional public educational opportunities in the region. The campus opened to students in 2023 and looks to grow rapidly in the coming years. Nearly 600 students enrolled in the Fall 2024 semester.



## U.S. 321 Improvements

U.S. 321 is the main thoroughfare between Charlotte and Boone. This road sees nearly 40,000 vehicles per day and is set to be widened into a six-lane superstreet in 2027. Construction will take at least five years. The result is likely to push development to either side of the highway, opening new opportunities for mixed-use development in the Innovation District and Old Lenoir Road areas.





# Hickory Water Treatment Facility

The City of Hickory's Water Treatment Facility is a regional water supply facility, providing potable drinking water to three counties and managing three purchased water systems extending from northern Alexander County to the Town of Catawba and Sherrills Ford. The facility also supplies water to the municipalities of Brookford, Catawba, Claremont, Conover, Icard, Long View, Maiden, and Taylorsville. Additionally, Hickory's water system has interconnections with Newton and Mooresville. Drawing water from the Catawba River, the facility is a conventional surface water treatment facility with a rated capacity of 32 million gallons of water per day. The Catawba River Basin originates from springs in the tallest mountains of the Appalachian Mountain chain and flows east past Hickory. This provides the City of Hickory with a quality water source, relatively free from contamination. Duke Energy operates two hydroelectric dams, Rhodhiss upstream and Oxford downstream from the plant. Hickory's treatment facility operates well under capacity, which offers significant opportunities for growth.





# Hickory Trail System

The Hickory Trail spans over 11 miles across the city, providing provides bicycle and pedestrian safety while connecting popular destinations and amenities. The Trail, along with the City's culture of providing an atmosphere for dynamic growth and robust development, is a major asset in the community's effort to craft a strong economy, provide good jobs, and create a desirable quality of life for residents.

The Hickory Trail encompasses the City Walk, Riverwalk, Aviation Walk, Historic Ridgeview Walk, and OLLE Art Walk. The Hickory Innovation District includes significant outdoor and recreational assets. Upon completion, over seven miles of bicycle and pedestrian trails, representing more than 60% of the Hickory Trail System will be located within the district.

## Outdoor Amenities

The district also contains additional outdoor recreation assets, including the Lake Hickory Trails System, which contains over eight miles of mountain bike trails. The Riverwalk and future Deidra Lackey Memorial Park will improve access to Lake Hickory and provide new entertainment and recreation opportunities in the area. L.P. Frans Stadium and the Hickory Crawdads provide family-friendly entertainment for people throughout the region. The planned Catawba River Environmental Education Center will provide additional programming related to water quality and the river.





# The Future

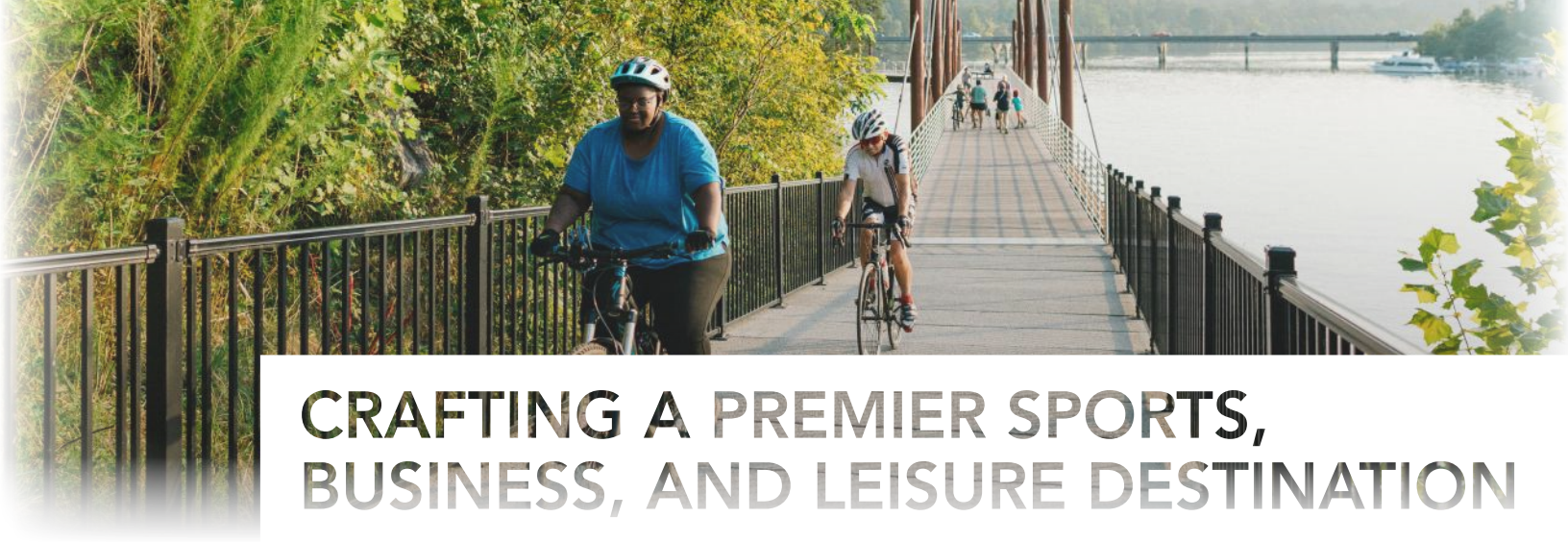
The Innovation District is centrally located within the Hickory region. Its goal is to leverage the extensive resources located within it to support and develop a mission with key partners that supports education, innovation, and recreation. The Hickory Innovation District will be a partnership with university officials, community college officials, local and county governments, and the business and residential communities surrounding the district.

Developments within the district will include strong placemaking elements to ensure the area is a quality place that brings people together. The presence

of multiple educational institutions, public assets, private businesses, and outdoor amenities will seek to bring together people through cross-industry programming and collaboration. The district will prepare the regional workforce for success, while also serving as a location that will bring people together through employment, retail, entertainment, and outdoor amenities.







## CRAFTING A PREMIER SPORTS, BUSINESS, AND LEISURE DESTINATION

There are so many reasons people travel to Hickory, from business to sports to leisure travel and more.

It was another record-breaking year in Catawba County when it comes to visitor spending, as guests spent more than \$348 million in 2023. This growth in economic impact confirms the importance of tourism and the value it adds to the community. Hickory is a destination, whether it be for business travel, meetings and events, furniture shopping or shopping in general, sports, outdoor adventures, arts and cultural experiences, the culinary scene, and much, much more.

Not only is Hickory a destination for furniture and conferences, but Hickory also has, and continues to have, a focus on sports tourism. The City of Hickory Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism Department, along with the partnership with the Hickory Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau, brings a variety of sports tournaments to Hickory. These tournaments and events include soccer, tennis, basketball, softball, fishing, gymnastics, and cycling, bringing hundreds, and sometimes thousands, to this area.

The City of Hickory has installed three artificial turf fields at Henry Fork River Park within the past five years. Adding turf fields lowers field costs for trucks, mowers, blowers, and other maintenance equipment. Additionally, Hickory has had the ability to enhance and grow its sports tourism program, lower financial inputs for yearly maintenance, and provide greater local programming. To date, Hickory has hosted soccer, lacrosse, flag football, football, and ultimate frisbee events, games, and tournaments on the fields.







Another project that greatly enhances Hickory's local economy was an \$18 million renovation and expansion of the Hickory Metro Convention Center that was completed in 2024. The facility is now approximately 165,600 square feet all on one level, with 132,000 usable square feet for meetings and events, which makes it even more attractive for recruiting large conferences and sporting events that yield significant economic impact.

This expansion, coupled with the updated outdoor sports fields within the city, brings more opportunities for additional sporting events in Hickory, which add to the area's professional baseball, semi-professional soccer, and the Hickory Motor Speedway.

There are more than 1,500 hotel rooms in the city, along with Airbnb and VRBO lodging, with one downtown Hickory property having 14 rooms.

Two hotels are under construction and should be completed by the end of 2025, adding about 200 more hotel rooms in Hickory.

The tourism and hospitality industry continues to blossom and it's all due to collectively working together for the greater good of the Hickory community. It's all about partnership in the Hickory Metro.



*"The vibrancy of the tourism and hospitality industry continues to blossom in Hickory which makes a large economic impact in our community. The Hickory trails system has transformed our tourism landscape too. The trails are extremely fun and beneficial to residents and, as we have seen over the last year, the trails are bringing visitors to our community too. Visitors strolling on the trail have so many places to stop to enjoy music, food, shopping and much, much more."*

***-Mandy Pitts Hildebrand, Hickory Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau Chief Executive Officer (CEO)***







# C.O.R.E.

## Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies



Hickory, located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, is building upon a tradition of craftsmanship to enhance the city as the regional center of an outdoor recreation economy that creates quality jobs, supports business development and entrepreneurship by emphasizing a high quality of life, embracing a spirit of community collaboration, and fostering outdoor recreation culture.

The area's economic stability and growing interest in outdoor lifestyles create a favorable environment for businesses that are focused on adventure and recreation.

## Skilled Workforce and Leading Higher Education Institutions



- Catawba Valley Community College
- Appalachian State University
- Lenoir-Rhyne University



## Strong Economy

NUMBER  
11  
TOP HOUSING  
MARKETS

- Hickory MSA ranked No.11 among top housing markets in America (2024) -WSJ/Realtor.com

North Carolina ranked 2nd in CNBC's 2024 Top States for Business -CNBC

NUMBER  
2  
IN TOP STATES  
FOR BUSINESS

Hickory listed among top 10 most beautiful and affordable places to live in the U.S. (2023) -Travel + Leisure

NUMBER  
10  
MOST BEAUTIFUL  
AND AFFORDABLE



- Competitive Cost of Living
- 6% lower than the national average
  - Housing is 10% cheaper than the U.S. average



# Build Your Outdoor Business Here

Hickory's business community is increasingly supportive of outdoor recreation, with local entrepreneurs and organizations fostering a vibrant ecosystem for outdoor activities, such as DeFeet, Carolina Pedal Works, and Feetures.

The Manufacturing Solutions Center specializes in applied research and development, prototyping, testing, domestic sourcing, and training for 21st-century manufacturing to help U.S. manufacturers increase sales, improve quality, and improve efficiency to create or retain jobs.

*"Manufacturing makes up 30% of Catawba County's workforce, compared to 10% nationally.*

*It's in our blood and we're quite proud of it."*

*- Scott Millar, Catawba County Economic Development Corporation President*

## Regional Population

2M



60 MINUTE  
DRIVE TIME POPULATION

368K



REGIONAL POPULATION  
IN 2022

## Growing Tourism Sector



TOTAL ANNUAL  
VISITOR SPEND

348.22M

IN 2023  
(5.1% INCREASE)



ANNUAL  
OVERNIGHT TRIPS

419K

(4.9% INCREASE)

## Outdoor Amenities

The Hickory Trail is an 11-mile walking, running, and biking paved trail system that spans across the city, connecting destinations and amenities.



8 MILES

OF MOUNTAIN BIKE  
& NATURE TRAILS



26 PARKS

From boating and jet skiing, to kayaking and fishing, Lake Hickory provides a natural playground for a number of water sports. Hickory's Riverwalk, which is part of the Hickory Trail, offers spectacular views of the lake from its elevated, overland trail and overwater bridge.



LAKE HICKORY

4,223 ACRES  
105 MILES OF SHORELINE

## Regional and National Parks Nearby



Riverbend Park  
(12 Miles)



Wilson Creek  
(47 Miles)



Mountain Creek Park  
(26 Miles)



Pisgah National Forest  
(39 Miles)





# CRAFTING LOCAL TALENT & TOMORROW'S LEADERS

A skilled labor force is vital for economic development and the success of any community. As the revitalization of Hickory continues with investments in public infrastructure, housing, and business, Hickory's educational partners are working together to transform lives by investing in the people of the region.

*“Economic Development and Education are synonymous terms. Without one you cannot and will not have the other in today's competitive labor marketplace.”*

*“Hickory excels in this arena, precisely because it recognizes you have to create and fund programs for the entire workforce spectrum from K-64, from veterans services to certificate programs and beyond.”*

**- Scott Millar, Catawba County Economic Development Corporation President**







# K-64

Catawba County is committed to crafting tomorrow’s leaders through the game-changing K-64 education initiative. Bringing education, business, and government together, K-64 is a systematic approach to talent development established to proactively drive local economic and population growth by connecting students and employers through

local educational programs proven to prepare a qualified workforce. From learning in technology-rich environments to experiencing local and global employment possibilities, K-64 actively engages students of all ages in preparing for viable and sustainable careers throughout their lifetime.

## TO ACCOMPLISH THIS, K-64 FOCUSES ON SIX PRIORITY AREAS:

### ONE-TO-WORLD TECHNOLOGY

- Accelerating learning inside and outside the classroom by connecting students with access to relevant technologies.

### WORK-READY SKILLS

- Teaching critical soft skills, such as goal setting, interpersonal communication, and team building, to ensure students are well-prepared to engage in work and in life.

### TECH-SAVVY EDUCATORS

- Continually equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to incorporate leading-edge technologies into lesson plans and classroom environments.

### WORK-BASED LEARNING

- Facilitating job shadowing, internships, co-ops, work-study programs and apprenticeships to connect students with real-world careers and local employers.

### EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

- Cultivating collaborative partnerships with businesses to invest in the development of a well-prepared and highly engaged workforce of tomorrow.

### CAREER ADAPTABILITY

- Ensuring access to relevant educational services and training opportunities to help adults develop nimble skill sets and assure career longevity.



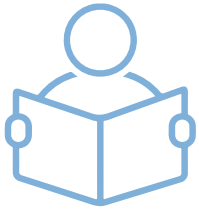
K-64 is dedicated to developing, attracting, and retaining a future-ready talent pool to meet growing workforce demands and ensure a bright economic future. True to the collaborative spirit of the region, local educational institutions, business organizations, and community partners work together to support K-64, including Catawba Valley Community College, Catawba County Schools, Hickory City Schools, Newton-Conover City Schools, Catawba County Government, Catawba County Economic Development Corporation, The Chamber of Catawba County, Lenoir-Rhyne University, and Appalachian State University.





# HICKORY CITY SCHOOLS: ROOTED IN EXCELLENCE, GROWING FUTURES

**3,700+**  
STUDENTS  
ACROSS 9 SCHOOLS



Hickory City Schools (HCS) offers more than an education; it provides life-changing opportunities that empower students to succeed academically, socially, and personally. Since 1903, the HCS district has been committed to fostering student success and preparing them for higher education, the workforce, or the military.

Rooted in the heart of Hickory, North Carolina, HCS proudly serves 3,700+ students across nine schools, including a primary school, four elementary schools, two middle schools, one traditional high school, and Hickory Career & Arts Magnet High School (HCAM). The district's dedicated team of over 500 educators and staff nurtures a diverse student population, with a global representation of over 20 different languages spoken in student homes.

## A District Rooted in Community

The Hickory City Schools district is guided by a "Rooted" theme, symbolizing its deep connection to its students, families, and community. The district's strategic plan prioritizes:

### 1. PURPOSEFUL REBRANDING & MARKETING

Enhancing the district's digital presence to highlight educational excellence and opportunities.

### 2. EMPOWERING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Delivering innovation, comprehensive support, and quality resources for all students.

### 3. INNOVATIVE FACILITIES & OPERATIONS

Modernizing schools for safety, accessibility, and technology integration.

### 4. HIGHLY QUALITY EDUCATORS

Recruiting, retaining, and developing a diverse and effective workforce.

### 5. TRANSPARENT BUDGETING

Maximizing resources to support teaching and learning.



HICKORY  
CITY  
SCHOOLS



# Exceptional Academic Opportunities

Hickory City Schools delivers a rich educational experience designed to inspire excellence. Some highlights include:

## ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

HCS empowers learners with 21st-century tools to excel in a digital world through initiatives like one-to-one technology for middle and high school students. In addition, HCS is at the forefront of educational innovation by providing students and staff with AI literacy programs and comprehensive guidelines for ethical and effective AI use, ensuring responsible engagement with emerging technologies.



## HICKORY CAREER & ARTS MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL (HCAM)

HCAM offers innovative academies, Computer Programming, Criminal Justice, Culinary Arts, Graphics & Photography, Health Sciences (CNA, EMT & Pharmacy Tech), Performing Arts, and Visual Arts. Each academy offers hands-on learning and skills for future careers. HCAM students may also attend classes and participate in sports at Hickory High, providing them with a well-rounded high school experience.

## HICKORY HIGH

Hickory High offers programs to inspire and challenge every student, including the AP Academy for advanced academics, state championship athletics, award-winning arts like orchestra and band, and CTE programs such as automotive and carpentry. Students can discover their strengths, pursue their dreams, and take classes at HCAM to explore specialized academies and career-focused learning.

## COLLEGE & CAREER PATHWAYS

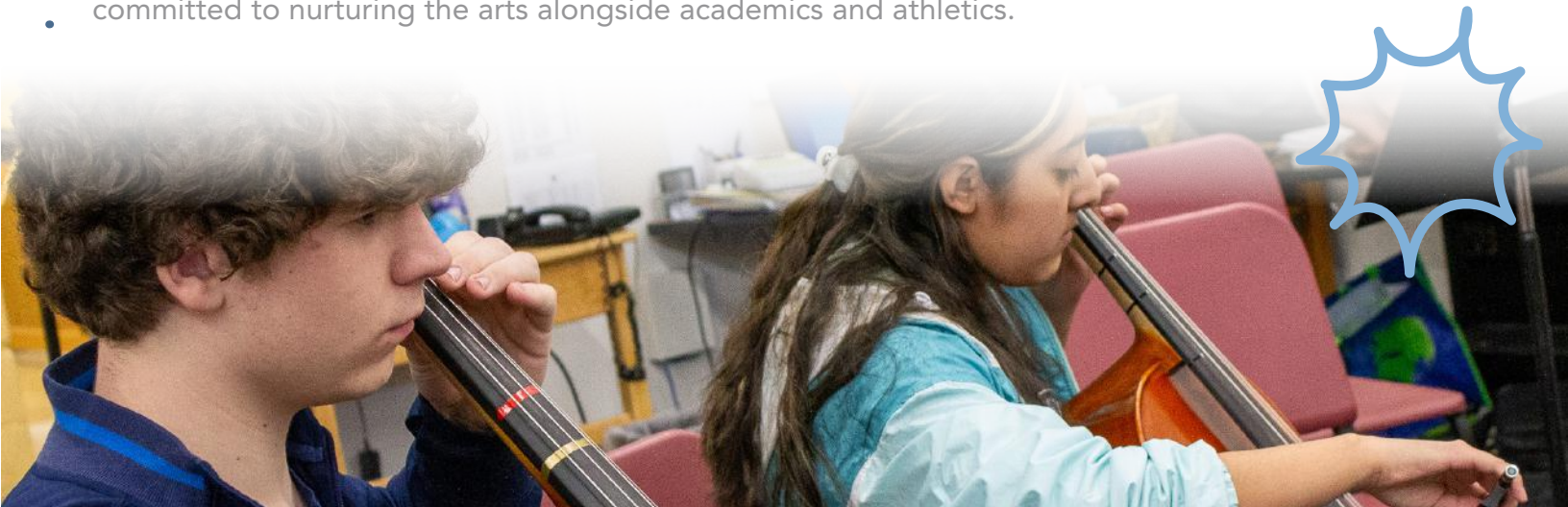
HCS provides juniors and seniors opportunities to earn college credits through collaborations with Catawba Valley Community College and the Scholars Program at Lenoir-Rhyne University.

## DUAL LANGUAGE IMMERSION

Four schools in the district offer Spanish Dual Language Immersion programs, including Grandview Middle, a Global Leaders school that provides students with a global advantage.

## ORCHESTRA PROGRAMS

HCS is the only district in the county offering orchestra programs for grades 6-12. The district is committed to nurturing the arts alongside academics and athletics.







# CATAWBA VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Offering more than 50 programs of study and enrolling 4,800 students, Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC) is a comprehensive learning community that provides a multitude of collegiate, industrial/vocational, and life-skills/personal enrichment experiences. CVCC consistently ranks as one of the top community colleges in the nation and is widely recognized for its innovative programs that are cultivating a new generation of doers and makers and providing individuals with the tools and training to be successful in today's workforce.

CVCC has established several academies to support the growing need of businesses and the community. The CVCC Furniture Academy, CVCC Manufacturing Academy, CVCC Construction Careers Academy, Hospitality Academy, and Valley Datacenter Academy are available to train or retrain employees with the qualified skills needed.



**50+**  
PROGRAMS  
OF STUDY



**4,800**  
ENROLLED  
STUDENTS







Hickory has a rich history of craftsmanship and furniture manufacturing. The Catawba Valley Furniture Academy at CVCC is an industry-driven training program designed by local furniture manufacturers to prepare students for skilled positions that are in high demand by one of the region's largest employers.



The CVCC Workforce Solutions Complex is a leading-edge 80,400-square-foot facility housing technology and engineering programs. The \$25 million project is the culmination of many years of planning and collaboration with the three public school systems. The building includes state-of-the-art classrooms, offices, labs, and shop areas for students studying HVAC systems, welding, automotive mechanics, machining, engineering, mechatronics, and more. The Workforce Solutions Complex ensures a future pipeline of talent for high-tech jobs, making the Hickory area even more attractive to new and expanding industry.

In March 2025, CVCC held a ribbon cutting for its new Valley Datacenter Academy, an initiative supported by Microsoft to empower individuals in cloud computing, cybersecurity, and information technology (IT). The newly opened facility provides students with a real-world, hands-on learning environment, featuring a mock datacenter equipped with decommissioned servers, racks, and networking gear recycled and donated by Microsoft Circular Centers. Located in CVCC's Workforce Solutions Complex, the Valley Datacenter Academy is a workforce development program in which Microsoft collaborates with CVCC to prepare students for national industry certifications and to be highly skilled for employment in the growing cloud computing and IT sectors. This ensures that when companies like Microsoft need skilled professionals, they will have access to a well-prepared talent pool to meet their workforce needs.

CVCC also continues the development of its Public Safety Training Center off Sweetwater Road in Hickory. The 55,000-square-foot training center pad is used by the college and local agencies to teach students and train seasoned public service professionals in fire, rescue, emergency medical services, law enforcement, and telecommunications. The property contains a four-story training tower and burn building for firefighters to practice real-world skills in a simulated environment.

Catawba Valley Community College offers the Career and College Promise (CCP) programs for high school students to get a head start on their college careers. The Career and College Promise (CCP) Program allows qualified students to be enrolled in high school and earn tuition free college credits at the same time. Students can earn college credit through one of seven college transfer pathways with NC Career and College Promise that can then transfer to all public universities in North Carolina, as well as many private colleges or universities. Students can also choose to earn tuition free credits toward many of the career technical programs offered at CVCC.







# APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

As a premier public institution, Appalachian State University (App State) prepares students to lead purposeful lives as global citizens who understand and engage their responsibilities in creating a sustainable future. App State is one of 17 institutions in the University of North Carolina System and boasts a national reputation for innovative teaching and opening access to a high-quality, affordable education for all. The university enrolls more than 21,000 students, has a low 16:1 student-to-faculty ratio, and offers more than 150 undergraduate and 80 graduate majors at its Boone and Hickory campuses and through App State Online. Appalachian State University consistently earns high marks in U.S. News & World Report's annual "Best Colleges" rankings. In 2025, App State ranks No. 2 in Top Public Schools, No. 3 in Regional Universities in the South, and No. 34 among Best Value Schools. The university has also ranked in the top three spots for Most Innovative Schools among Southern universities for eight years in a row.

In February 2025, Appalachian State University received a Research Activity Designation of Research 2 (R2) from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, the nation's leading framework for categorizing U.S. higher education institutions. This new designation is awarded to institutions with high research activity and doctorate production. A strong emphasis on undergraduate research opportunities has long set App State apart from other research universities. App State students benefit from hands-on experience on impactful projects and avenues to present their research at major conferences, deepening learning and preparing students to excel in their future careers and/or graduate studies. App State's R2 designation opens the door for additional opportunities for students to conduct groundbreaking research and advance creative endeavors side-by-side with faculty and staff.

Founded in the Blue Ridge Mountains in 1899 to provide North Carolinians with expanded access to education, Appalachian State University is located in a place of great beauty, cultural heritage and recreational opportunity. The pioneering spirit necessary to overcome the mountains' hardships quickly characterized the institution, giving App State a special niche in higher education that continues today.



**150**  
UNDERGRADUATE  
MAJORS



**80**  
GRADUATE  
MAJORS







# Appalachian

## STATE UNIVERSITY

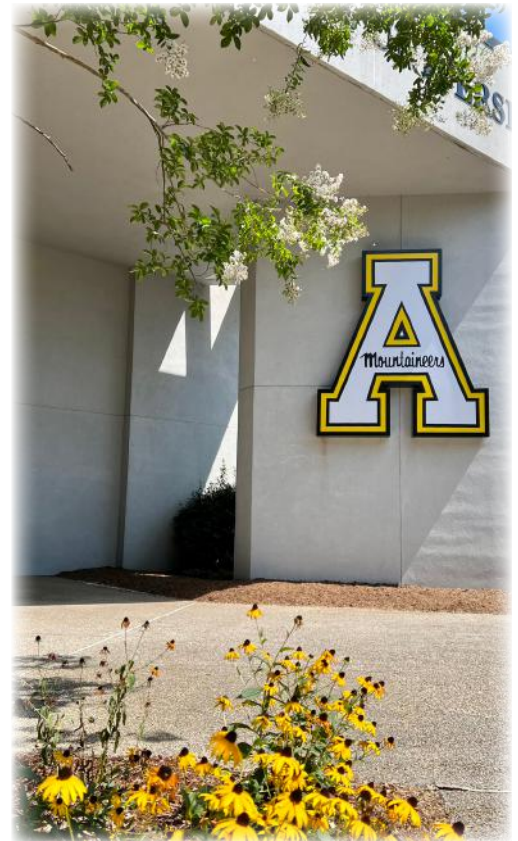
In fall 2023, App State expanded its accessibility by opening a new campus in Hickory, filling a need in the region for a public, four-year institution of higher learning. The App State Hickory Campus has frontage along U.S. 321 and is ideally situated near the Aviation Walk and within the City's planned innovation district. App State Hickory features more than 100 academic programs aligned with the demands of local industries and the workforce needs of tomorrow. App State's cutting-edge Hickory campus offers the appeal of a small college with the prestige of a premier public institution, while fostering a close-knit community of students and faculty.

Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute in Hudson, and Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton are all within a 30-minute drive of the App State Hickory Campus, and all three are partners in the Aspire Appalachian Co-Admission Program, which provides a seamless pathway for students enrolled at partner community colleges to complete their degree at App State.



**21,000**  
**ENROLLED**  
**STUDENTS**

While the university continues developing plans for its Hickory programs, the location of the App State Hickory Campus within Hickory's budding innovation district and the evolving educational needs of the region are sure to inspire its future offerings.



**#2** TOP PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS

**#34** BEST VALUE  
SCHOOLS

**#3** REGIONAL  
UNIVERSITIES  
IN THE SOUTH







# LENOIR-RHYNE UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1891, Lenoir-Rhyne University (LR) is a co-educational, private liberal arts institution offering 50+ undergraduate degree programs and 20+ graduate degree programs. With a 15:1 student-to-faculty ratio, LR enrolls more than 2,230 undergraduate and graduate students.



Lenoir-Rhyne is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. LR is affiliated with the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and welcomes students from all religious backgrounds. The Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary at LR is with only ELCA seminary in the southeastern United States.

Lenoir-Rhyne continues to work with the community to identify the programs and skills it needs. LR has created new partnerships to help increase the number of teachers in North Carolina, prepare community college

students for the transition to a four-year degree, and added new majors that meet the demands of students and employers. In addition, LR's commitment to making higher education affordable and accessible continues through the Lenoir-Rhyne Promise, which offers a minimum of 50% off tuition to any North Carolina resident who is a first-year undergraduate student with a 3.5 or higher high school GPA, or to a transfer undergraduate student with more than 30 attempted hours from an accredited North Carolina community college and a 3.5 GPA.



**50+**  
UNDERGRADUATE  
DEGREE PROGRAMS



**20+**  
GRADUATE  
DEGREE PROGRAMS



# LENOIR-RHYNE UNIVERSITY



Today, 97% of Lenoir-Rhyne graduates are employed or in graduate school six months after graduation. The University has also been named a U.S. News Top 40 School for Social Mobility and Best Value in the South.

Over the years, Moretz Stadium has become a treasured part of the Lenoir-Rhyne experience as the backdrop for hosting football and men's and women's lacrosse, commencement, and campus events, as well as community events like concerts, high school graduations, camps, and youth sports.



**2,230**

**UNDERGRADUATE &  
GRADUATE STUDENTS**

In 2022, Lenoir-Rhyne embarked on an \$18 million renovation of the stadium to enhance the game-day experience for student-athletes and fans. Improvements included new and enhanced grandstands, new entrances on the west and east sides, new LED lighting, new concession stands and restrooms, two new video boards, new press box, and a new fieldhouse for the men's and women's lacrosse teams. The renovation also added eight luxury suites and a club VIP seating area, making Moretz Stadium one of the few Division II schools with suites and club seating.

The stadium renovation allows LR to provide nationally competitive facilities for its NCAA Division II athletics program, aid in the recruitment of student-athletes, and enhance Lenoir-Rhyne's position as a university recognized for both its academic and athletic success.







# CRAFTING COMMUNITY

## DOERS & MAKERS ARE THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

**H**ickory’s Doers and Makers embody creativity, resilience, and a collaborative spirit. They promote growth within our community through hard work and true craftsmanship.

Doers & Makers are paving the way for the future and shaping Hickory to make Life. Well Crafted. for all. Here are a few of Hickory’s Doers & Makers.

### Jeff and Pam Hale

Originally from Kansas, Jeff and Pam Hale moved to Texas and then relocated to North Carolina. They settled in Hickory to raise their family and operate their business. They appreciate Hickory’s family-friendly atmosphere, downtown entertainment, close proximity to the mountains and coast, and strong work ethic.



*“The workforce that we find and the people that we recruit here are as good as anywhere we could hope to recruit. There’s an amazing work ethic here. It’s a great place to live, it’s been a great place to raise our family, and it’s been a fantastic place to home our business. So, we’re not going anywhere.”*  
**-Jeff and Pam Hale**

### Dan and Meagen Kelly

Dan and Meagen Kelly wanted to own and operate a marina. After a nationwide search, they found an opportunity in Hickory that resulted in them relocating their family from Minnesota to North Carolina to run Lake Hickory Pub and Marina.



*“Really what drew us to Hickory was the community aspect, and community involvement, and really looking for somewhere that we could run a successful small business and ultimately transitioning into retirement. Quite honestly the biggest thing was just the amount of development that we’ve seen and the commitment from the community to really invest in Hickory.”*  
**-Dan and Meagen Kelly**



# Zack Cranford

Zack Cranford grew up in the restaurant business with a family of entrepreneurs. Now a serial entrepreneur himself, he continues to invest in Hickory through his family's hospitality ventures.



*“We made a commitment a while back that instead of growing our brand beyond the area, we wanted to have an impactful and meaningful life here in Hickory, so that’s why we committed over the years to invest in it. Any advice for someone starting in Hickory...there is no better time to do it than now. Don’t be afraid. You don’t have to know everything. Part of the fun is the journey in finding out.”*

**-Zack Cranford**

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# Jay Brown

Local realtor Jay Brown is a strong supporter of Hickory and an active member of several community groups. He stays plugged in, creating lasting relationships and helping others make their home in Hickory.



*“If you’re bored in Hickory, I’m going to say that’s your fault. I really do love Hickory because I do think it’s a special city. There’s a lot of special people here. There’s a lot of good leadership in this city. It’s a complete package. Hickory has a lot of history that we can be proud of, but what’s happening here, right now, is pretty special.”*

**-Jay Brown**

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# Tracy Hall

As the executive director of Catawba Science Center, Tracy Hall knows a thing or two about creating inspired, educational experiences for families and collaborating with community partners.



*“Hickory, for me, is the perfect place to live. We are close to big cities. We are close to the mountains. We are not too far from the ocean. I think the convenience of being able to get to places very quickly, but then have adventures nearby, make it the perfect place to live.”*

**-Tracy Hall**

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For more about these Doers & Makers, and to watch all the videos, scan the QR code.





# STAY CONNECTED WITH HICKORY



City of Hickory, NC-  
Government



@CityofHickory



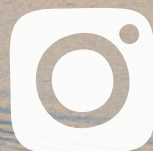
Official City Website:  
[www.HickoryNC.gov](http://www.HickoryNC.gov)

Hickory Trail Website:  
[www.HKYtrail.com](http://www.HKYtrail.com)

Virtual Tour & More:  
[www.MyHKY.com](http://www.MyHKY.com)



City of Hickory



HickoryWellCrafted





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- Sign up for email communication
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*Home*



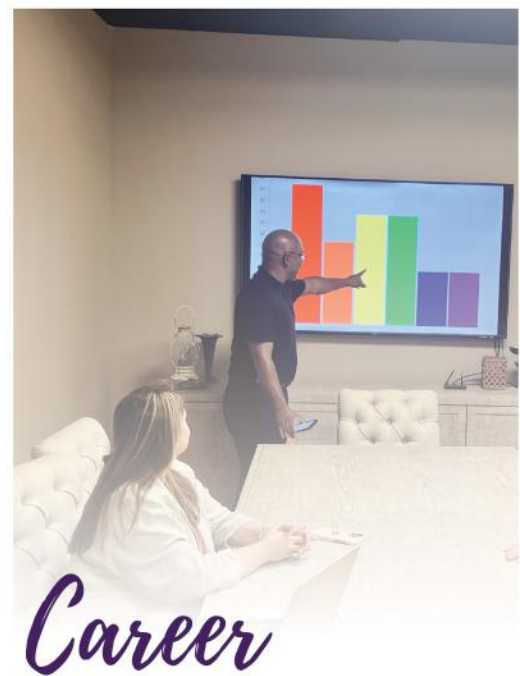
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