

# **WESTERN PIEDMONT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS NEWSLETTER MAY 2022**



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# WPCOG, City of Morganton Provide Boost to Donut Shop

## Article by Paul Teague

Thanks to assistance from the City of Morganton and WPCOG Staff, the City has welcomed a new donut and bakery shop to the downtown area.

Divinity Donuts & Bakery, located at 318 Bouchelle St., began operations in late February after receiving assistance from Morganton's CDBG Entitlement Small Business Loan Fund that the WPCOG administers.

The bakery obtained a \$30,000 loan and pledged to create at least one full-time job. Instead, the company wound up creating two. After repaying half the loan, the City forgave the rest per the grant terms.

Divinity Donuts specializes in small-batch donuts made from scratch while also offering other treats such as macarons, cupcakes, cookies, and cake slices. Meanwhile, the bakery offers Pennsylvania Dutch options such as long johns, whoopee pies, and shoo-fly cake.

The business operates on Fridays through Sundays from 7 a.m. until noon or until sold out.



# NCDOT Releases Draft 10-Year Program of Fewer & Delayed Projects

## Article by Brian Horton

On April 25, 2022, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) released the draft 2024-2033 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Though it was expected, the new draft STIP is unprecedented for having no new major roadway projects compared to the current 2020-2029 STIP. This unusual development was featured in the August 2021 WPCOG newsletter, and expanded upon in the November 2021 WPCOG newsletter, as also having fewer projects funded fully than the current 2020-2029 STIP. With the release of the new draft 2024-2033 STIP, we now know which specific projects would no longer be funded over the next ten years if the new draft STIP ultimately becomes the next adopted STIP.

During the development of the draft STIP, sixteen area roadway projects were identified as at risk of losing their funding. With the release of the draft STIP, nine of these projects have retained their delivery status. However, seven total projects that were previously committed in the current STIP would now only be funded for design and thus, would no longer be fully committed. These seven projects include five projects in Burke County and two in Catawba County. The five highway projects in Burke were previously funded for construction but are now only funded for design; interchange improvements at Exits 100, 103, 107, 111, and 116 on Interstate 40. The two highway projects in Catawba County were previously funded for construction but are now only funded for design; the widening of Startown Road from Catawba Valley Boulevard to NC 10 and the widening of NC 150 from Greenwood Road to NC 16.

Resulting from coordination between NCDOT and the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization, a revised STIP is expected to be publicly released by the end of 2022 and the adoption of the final STIP in Summer 2023. While all but seven area projects remain funded for delivery in the latest draft STIP, many of the Western Piedmont region's projects still have new schedules later in the new draft STIP than previously programmed in the current STIP. A comparison of the project schedules in the current 2020-2029 STIP to the new draft 2024-2033 STIP is available on the following WPCOG web page: <https://www.wpcog.org/spot-prioritization>.



# OLDER AMERICANS MONTH



AGE MY WAY: MAY 2022



## Article by Ricky Handoo

May is Older Americans Month, and for 2022, the theme is Age My Way. This theme gives us a chance to reflect on the things we want to accomplish as we age and how to help older adults remain involved and included in our communities. With everyone coming from different walks of life, the Area Agency on Aging is committed to ensuring that older adults can continue to thrive and have every option available to them on how they want to age.

### History of Older Americans Month

Older Americans Month was first established in 1963 when only 17 million Americans had reached their 65th birthday. About a third of them lived in poverty, and there were few programs to meet their needs. With concerns about our aging population growing, President John F. Kennedy and members of the National Council of Senior Citizens designated May as "Senior Citizens Month," known as "Older Americans Month." During May, we acknowledge the contributions of our past and current older Americans. We also take this time to pay tribute to older persons in their communities through volunteering, attending ceremonies, and other special events that help our older adults!

### Volunteer and Give Back

There are a lot of ways that you can help our senior citizens! The first way is by volunteering. You can volunteer with Meals on Wheels, a program that delivers meals to homebound senior citizens. The program provides a meal for them and provides a social aspect so they do not feel as isolated. You can also sign up as a volunteer for home repair programs where you help older adults with repairs or maintenance they may not be able to afford or do themselves. There are many organizations to partner with, such as Volunteers of America, Feeding America, and Habitat for Humanity.

Spend time with your older loved ones and see how you can help your community! If we can provide the services we need for our older adults; the same can be reciprocated for us when we age. Older Americans Month may be just in May, but it takes a year-round effort to ensure our senior citizens are thriving and enjoying their golden years the best way they can. If possible, take time to volunteer or donate to reputable causes that help our senior citizens. The more focus we put on the issues that affect our senior citizens, the better we can make it for them and ourselves in the future. If you have any questions, want to get involved, or find out more about services for older adults, please feel free to contact us at Area Agency on Aging or your local Senior Center.

#### Area Agency on Aging

WPCOG  
1880 2nd Ave. NW  
Hickory, NC 28601  
(828) 485-4257  
[www.wpcogaaa.org](http://www.wpcogaaa.org)

#### Alexander Senior Center

730 7th Street SW  
Taylorsville, NC 28681  
(828) 632-1717  
[www.alexandercountync.gov/senior-center](http://www.alexandercountync.gov/senior-center)

#### Bethlehem Site

Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church  
9379 NC-127  
Bethlehem, NC 28601  
(828) 409-3742  
Burke County Senior Services  
[www.burkenc.org/departments/senior-services](http://www.burkenc.org/departments/senior-services)

#### East Burke Senior Center

101 Main Ave. West, Suite A  
Hildebran, NC 28637  
(828) 397-3397

#### Morganton/Burke Senior Center

501 North Green Street  
Morganton, NC 28655  
(828) 430-4147

#### Caldwell Senior Center, Inc.

PO Box 933  
650 Pennton Avenue SW  
Lenoir, NC 28645  
(828) 758-2883  
[www.caldwellseniorcenter.org](http://www.caldwellseniorcenter.org)

#### Catawba Council on Aging

West Hickory Senior Center  
400 17th Street SW  
PO Box 835  
Hickory, NC 28603  
(828) 328-2269  
[www.catawbacoa.org](http://www.catawbacoa.org)

#### Neighbors Network

502 Thornburg Drive  
Conover, NC 28613  
(828) 464-1111  
[www.neighborsnetwork.org](http://www.neighborsnetwork.org)

# Mainstream Voucher Wait-list is Open

Article by Stephanie Godfrey

Mainstream vouchers assist non-elderly persons, between the ages of 18-61, with disabilities. Aside from serving a special population, the administration of mainstream vouchers adhere to the same rules as other housing choice vouchers. Funding and financial reporting for mainstream vouchers is separate from the regular tenant-based voucher program. The wait-list for the Mainstream Voucher Program is currently open.

## Mainstream Voucher Program

Affordable Housing  
for Disabled  
Families!

A member of the household  
**MUST** be between the age of  
18-61 **AND** Disabled

Apply Online at [Housing.wpcog.net](https://Housing.wpcog.net)

For questions about the waitlist, please contact us at  
828.322.9191 or [housing@wpcog.org](mailto:housing@wpcog.org)



**Western Piedmont**  
Council of Governments

Regional Housing Authority

# Most NC Businesses Meeting or Exceeding Goals

Article by Donna Gilbert

Read more about the results from North Carolina's Business Pulse Survey. The North Carolina Department of Commerce has administered the Pulse survey, in partnership with other key stakeholders. The Pulse survey gleans input from diverse sectors across North Carolina.

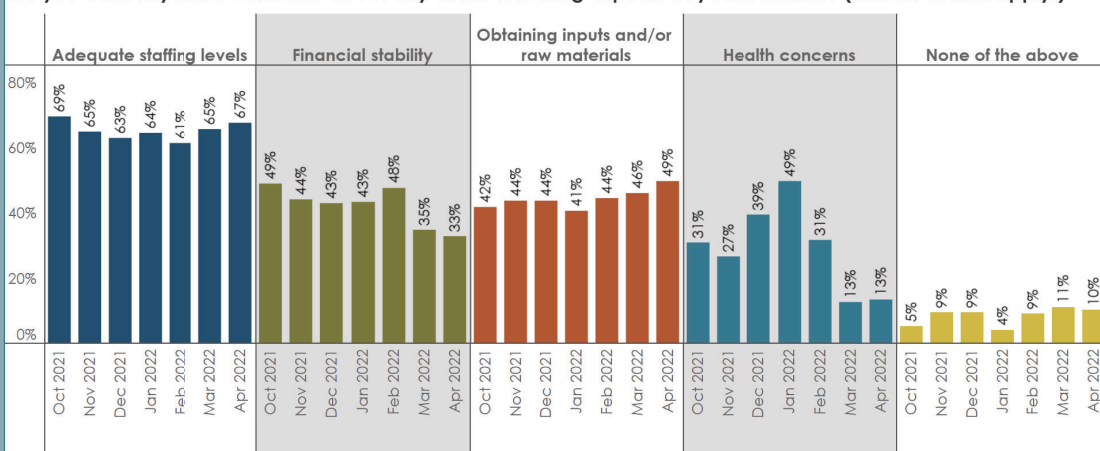
## CURRENT STATE OF BUSINESS

From 1 (Poor) to 10 (Excellent), how would you rate the current state of your business?

Monthly Average

October 2021	6.7
November 2021	7.0
December 2021	6.9
January 2022	6.7
February 2022	6.6
March 2022	7.0
April 2022	7.2

Do you currently have concerns about any of the following aspects of your business? (Check all that apply.)



(Snapshot of initial chart in the Pulse survey analytics. The Business Pulse survey is a product of the North Carolina Department of Commerce in partnership with [myFutureNC](https://myFutureNC.org) and the [NCWorks Commission](https://NCWorksCommission.org). Funding support also provided by the [Duke Energy Foundation](https://DukeEnergyFoundation.org).)

# Spring 2022 Economic Indicators Newsletter

## Article by Taylor Dellinger

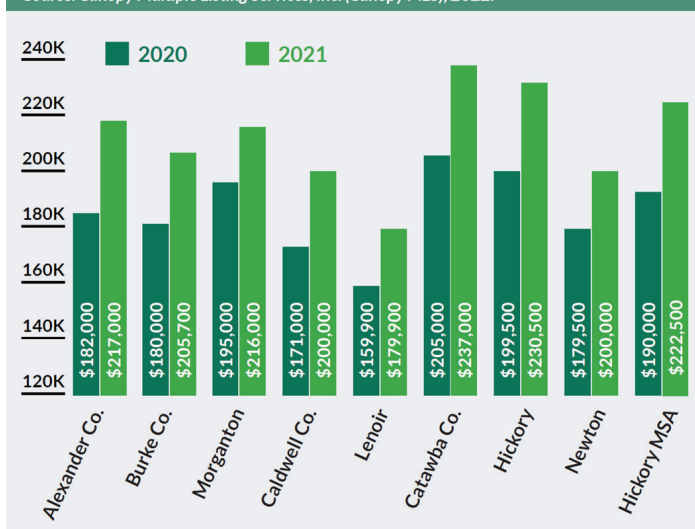
The latest issue of the Economic Indicators Newsletter (EIN) focuses on economic trends and issues affecting the Hickory Metro Region. The current issue addresses Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) unemployment rates, Hickory Metro gross state tax collections, Hickory MSA real estate trends and Hickory MSA age group projections.

### Here are a few key highlights of the EIN:

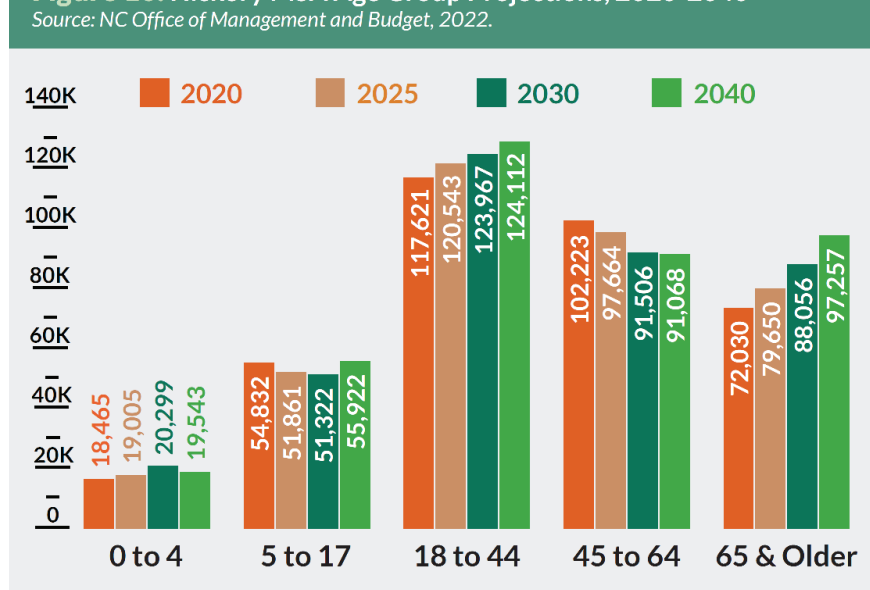
- The Hickory MSA's unemployment rate has decreased from 5.8% in January 2021 to 3.5% in January 2022.
- Between January 2021 and January 2022, the estimated number of employed persons increased from 156,372 to 164,928 (8,556), while the civilian labor force grew from 166,014 to 170,889 (4,875).
- Average annual Hickory MSA bank deposits grew from \$4.126 billion in June 2015 to \$6.270 billion in June 2021.
- The Hickory MSA had 5,241 new housing listings and 4,672 closed sales in 2021. These totals were more than 16.0% higher than in 2020. All Hickory MSA locations had more new listing and closed home sales in 2021 than in 2020.
- The Hickory MSA's median sale price increased 17.1% in 2021 to \$222,500. All Hickory MSA locations, except Lenoir, had a median sales price of \$200,000 or more in 2021. Catawba County had the highest median sales price in 2021 (\$237,000) followed by Hickory (\$230,500) and Alexander County (\$217,000).
- The Hickory MSA average sales price exceeded \$275,000 for the first time in 2021. The highest average sales price was in Catawba County (\$303,555) followed by Hickory (\$272,986) and Morganton (\$264,746).
- As of December 2021, the Hickory MSA had only 319 houses for sale on the region's Multiple Listing Service.
- During 2021, it took on average less than 25 days to sale a home once it was on the market. A sign of a very tight housing market, the Hickory MSA had only 0.8 months supply of housing inventory in December 2021.
- By far the most rapid population growth will occur in the age 65 and over group. The total population of the 65 and over cohort will be near 100,000 in 2040 as more than 25,000 persons will be added to the age group. Population growth in the age 65 and over group is anticipated in all four Hickory MSA counties between 2020 and 2040.
- Modest population growth of 5.5% is expected in the Hickory MSA's younger labor force (age 18 to 44) from 2020 and 2040. Population projections from the State indicate that most of the growth in the age 18 to 44 group will take place in Catawba County.

See the selected figures for additional information. The EIN is produced quarterly and is a publication of the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board. To subscribe to the EIN, visit [www.wpcog.org](http://www.wpcog.org), or contact Taylor Dellinger, Data Analyst at 828-485-4233 or by email at [taylor.dellinger@wpcog.org](mailto:taylor.dellinger@wpcog.org).

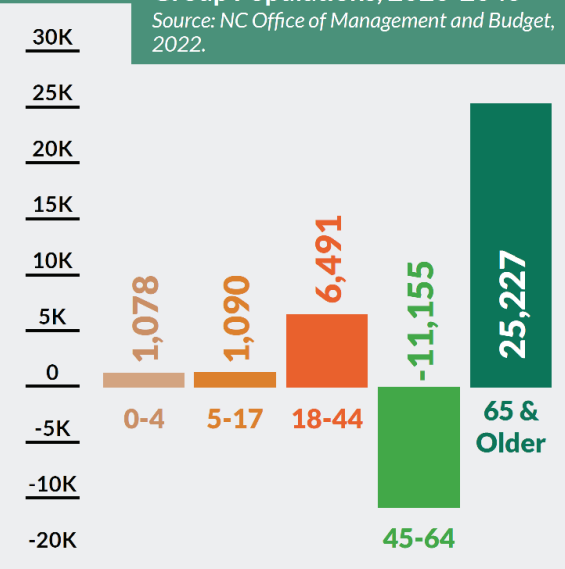
**Figure 5. Hickory MSA Median Sales Price, 2020-2021**  
Source: Canopy Multiple Listing Services, Inc. (Canopy MLS), 2022.



**Figure 10. Hickory MSA Age Group Projections, 2020-2040**  
Source: NC Office of Management and Budget, 2022.



**Figure 11. Hickory MSA Change of Age Group Populations, 2020-2040**  
Source: NC Office of Management and Budget, 2022.







## CONTACT INFORMATION

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