

Civilian Labor Force

The Hickory MSA's December 2024 unemployment rate was 3.4%. The Hickory MSA's unemployment rate equaled 3.3% as of December 2025 (Figure 1). Between December 2024 and December 2025, the estimated number of employed persons decreased from 163,362 to 162,317 (-1,045), while the civilian labor force fell from 169,106 to 167,931 (-1,175). In December 2025, the Hickory MSA had the fifth lowest (eleventh highest) unemployment rate among North Carolina MSAs (Table 1). December 2025 unemployment rates by county were Alexander 3.2%, Burke 3.3%, Caldwell 3.5%, and Catawba 3.3%.

Figure 1. MSA Unemployment, Dec. 2024 - Dec. 2025

Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2026.

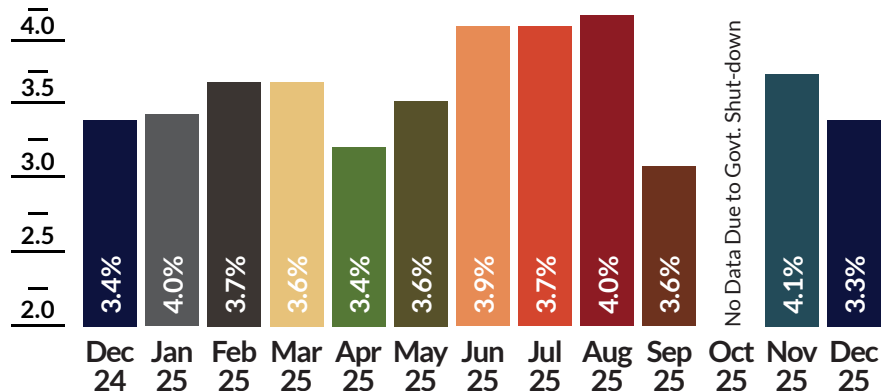


Table 1.

MSA Unemployment Rate, December 2025

Raleigh	3.0%
Durham-Chapel Hill	3.1%
Pinehurst-Southern Pines MSA	3.2%
Asheville	3.2%
Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton	3.3%
Burlington	3.4%
Wilmington	3.4%
Goldsboro	3.5%
Winston-Salem	3.5%
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia	3.6%
Jacksonville	3.6%
Greenville	3.7%
Greensboro-High Point	3.9%
Fayetteville	4.3%
Rocky Mount	4.8%

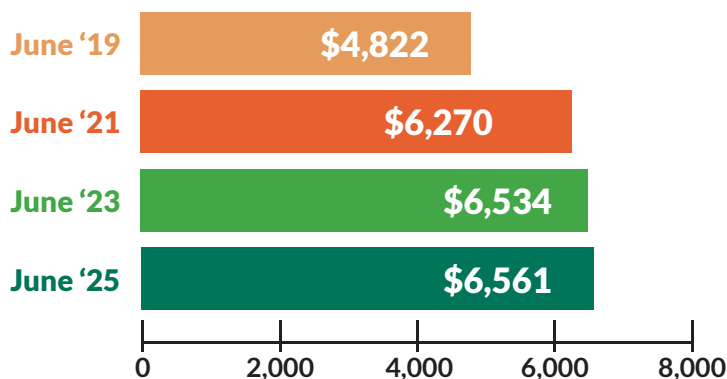
Source: NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2026.

Bank Deposits

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) summary of deposits data reveals that since June 2023 Hickory Metro bank deposits have increased \$27 million to \$6.561 billion. The Hickory MSA was one of eight metro areas in North Carolina to experience net gains in bank deposits between June 2023 and June 2025.

Two of the four Hickory MSA counties had more bank deposits in June 2025 than in June 2023 (Table 2). Burke County bank deposits exceeded \$1 billion in June 2025. Catawba County's bank deposits increased from \$4.017 billion in June 2021 to \$4.149 billion in June 2025. Catawba County's bank deposits in June 2025 were the 10th highest among North Carolina counties.

Figure 2. MSA Bank Deposits (\$ Millions), June 2019 - 2025



Source: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), 2026.

Table 2. Bank Deposits (\$ Millions)

Source: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), 2026.

County	June 2021	June 2023	June 2025	NC Rank 2025
Alexander	\$354	\$331	\$400	73rd
Burke	\$977	\$1,005	\$1,058	41st
Caldwell	\$922	\$970	\$954	45th
Catawba	\$4,017	\$4,228	\$4,149	10th

EIN SPOTLIGHT | Hickory MSA Multiple Listing Service (MLS) Real Estate Sales Data, 2024-2025

Local market updates for the Catawba Valley Multiple Listing Service or MLS (a research tool provided by Canopy Incorporated) provide insight into the residential real estate market in the Hickory MSA. For the analysis, residential sales are defined by MLS as single-family, condominiums, and townhomes that list with the Catawba Valley MLS (residential real estate transactions not using MLS are not included in the analysis). Included in the local market update are the number of new listings, pending and closed sales, median and average sales price (does not account for sale concessions and/or down payment assistance), days on the market until sale, total inventory or homes for sale, and months of supply of inventory.

Table 3 shows 2024 and 2025 totals of the number of new residential real estate listings and closed sales in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties, as well as for Morganton, Lenoir, Hickory, and Newton. The Hickory MSA tallied 5,833 new residential listings and 4,306 closed sales in 2025. There were 311 more new listings and 306 more closed sales in 2025 than in 2024. The number of Hickory MSA new listings equaled 4,955 in 2022 and 5,741 in 2023, while the number of closed sales totaled 4,105 in 2022 and 3,903 in 2023. Table 3 results show a larger percentage gain in closed sales (7.7%) than new listings (5.6%) between 2024 and 2025.

Table 3. Hickory MSA MLS New Listings and Closed Sales, 2024-2025 Source: Canopy Multiple Listing Services, Inc. (Canopy MLS), 2026.

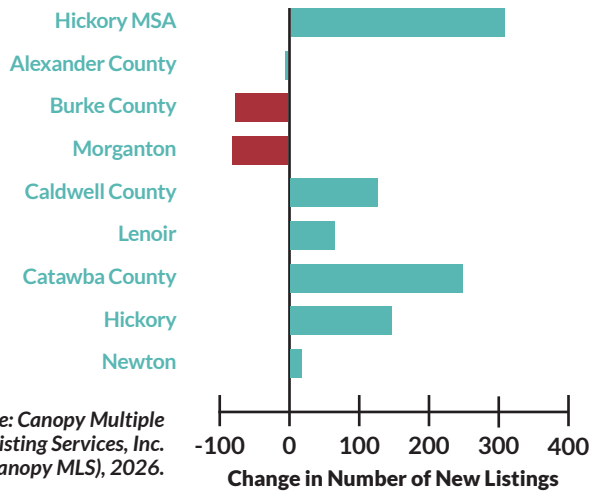
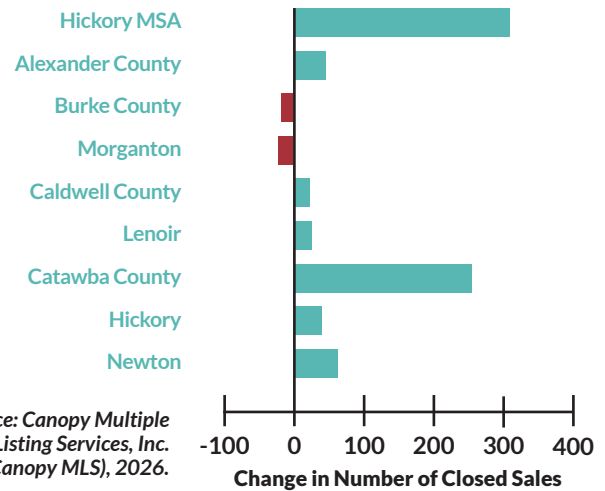
Location	New Listings				Closed Sales			
	2024	2025	Change	% Change	2024	2025	Change	% Change
Alexander County	342	354	12	3.50%	249	294	45	18.10%
Burke County	1,087	1,018	-69	-6.30%	790	770	-20	-2.50%
Morganton	663	592	-71	-10.70%	491	469	-22	-4.50%
Caldwell County	953	1,075	122	12.80%	748	776	28	3.70%
Lenoir	537	605	62	12.70%	410	439	29	7.10%
Catawba County	3,140	3,386	246	7.80%	2,213	2,466	253	11.40%
Hickory	1,399	1,545	146	10.40%	1,024	1,063	39	3.80%
Newton	428	449	21	4.90%	296	362	66	22.30%
Hickory MSA	5,522	5,833	311	5.60%	4,000	4,306	306	7.70%

New residential listings in Catawba County grew 7.8% from 3,140 in 2024 to 3,386 in 2025 as new housing units were added to the market. About 150 more new listings occurred in the City of Hickory in 2025 compared to 2024, while 21 more listings happened in Newton in 2025 than in 2024 (Figure 3, page 3). The increase in new listings in Hickory and Newton (167 combined) between 2024 and 2025 represent about 68% of the new listing growth in Catawba County (246) over the past two years. The number of new listings in Alexander County grew 3.5% from 342 in 2024 to 354 in 2025.

Catawba County experienced significant gains in the number of closed sales between 2024 and 2025. Catawba had 2,466 closed home sales in 2025, or 253 more than in 2024 (Figure 4, page 3). The number of closed sales in Hickory rose to 1,063 in 2025. Newton had 66 more closed sales in 2025 than in 2024. Alexander County had 294 closed sales in 2025 (45 more than in 2024).

The number of new listings in Burke County decreased 6.3% from 1,087 in 2024 to 1,018 in 2025. Morganton saw a 10.7% loss in the number of new listings in 2025 (592) compared to 2024 (663). About 58% of all new listings in Burke County in 2025 were in Morganton. Caldwell, just like Alexander and Catawba Counties, had growth in the number of new listings from 2024 to 2025. Caldwell County's new listings were 12.8% higher in 2025 (1,075) than in 2024 (953). In contrast to Morganton, Lenoir had 62 more homes listed in 2025 (605) than in 2024 (537). About 56% of all new listings in Caldwell County in 2025 were in Lenoir.

The number of closed home sales in Burke County fell by 2.5% in 2025 to 770 units. The number of closed sales in Morganton also decreased from 491 in 2024 to 469 in 2025. About 61% of closed sales in Burke County occurred in Morganton. Caldwell County experienced a small gain in the number of closed sales in 2025 (776) compared to 2024 (748). From 2024 to 2025, the number of closed home sales in Lenoir increased 7.1% to 439. More than 56% of closed sales in Caldwell County during 2025 occurred in Lenoir.

Figure 3. Hickory MSA MLS Change in the Number of Residential Listings, 2024-2025

Figure 4. Hickory MSA MLS Change in the Number of Closed Residential Sales, 2024-2025


Median/Average Sales Price and Percentage of Original List Price Received

Data in Table 4 displays the 2024 and 2025 median and average sales price in the Hickory MSA, each of the four Hickory MSA Counties, and in Morganton, Lenoir, Hickory, and Newton. Median sales price for a location means that half of homes sell for higher than the median price, while half of homes sale for less than the median price. Average sales price, which is typically higher than the median sales price, is the mean of all sales prices in each area. In 2025, the median sales price in the Hickory MSA equaled \$299,900 and the average sales price was \$364,369, or \$64,469 more than median price. These results show the influence a few higher cost home sales have on the average sales price.

The 2025 median sales price in the Hickory MSA was \$9,900 (3.4%) higher than in 2024. The Hickory MSA average sales price was \$8,350 (2.3%) more in 2025 compared to 2024. During 2025, the Hickory MSA the average sales price was more than \$364,000 for the first time. The median sales price percentage increase from 2024 to 2025 were greater than the rate of inflation between July 2024 and July 2025 (2.7%), while the average sales price percentage increase was slightly less than the inflation rate. Results from Table 4 would indicate that additional housing inventory, along with higher mortgage interest rates has slowed the rate of price increases over the past couple of years. The 2025 median and average sales prices in the Hickory MSA are much lower than the Charlotte MSA (\$415,000 median sales price, \$528,496 average sales price), or the Asheville MSA (\$450,000 median sales price, \$556,296 average sales price).

Data displayed in Table 4 reveals that 2024 versus 2025 changes in median and average sales prices, in terms of both dollar amounts and percentages, vary widely within the Hickory MSA counties and municipalities. In Alexander County, for example, the median sales price in 2025 (\$289,900) was \$4,000 less (or 1.4% lower) than in 2024 (Figure 5). Alexander County was the only Hickory MSA location to see a decline in median sales prices between 2024 and 2025. The average sales price in Alexander County, meanwhile, grew 2.7% between 2024 and 2025 to \$372,988. The median sales price for

Table 4. Hickory MSA MLS Median and Average Sales Price, 2024-2025 Source: Canopy Multiple Listing Services, Inc. (Canopy MLS), 2026.

Location	Median Sales Price				Average Sales Price			
	2024	2025	Change	% Change	2024	2025	Change	% Change
Alexander County	\$293,900	\$289,900	-\$4,000	-1.4%	\$363,356	\$372,988	\$9,632	2.7%
Burke County	\$260,000	\$274,000	\$14,000	5.4%	\$330,239	\$336,458	\$6,219	1.9%
Morganton	\$271,500	\$280,450	\$8,950	3.3%	\$339,234	\$334,707	-\$4,527	-1.3%
Caldwell County	\$255,900	\$267,000	\$11,100	4.3%	\$317,926	\$329,616	\$11,690	3.7%
Lenoir	\$248,000	\$253,000	\$5,000	2.0%	\$303,487	\$303,368	-\$119	<-0.1%
Catawba County	\$310,000	\$316,500	\$6,500	2.1%	\$377,241	\$382,990	\$5,749	1.5%
Hickory	\$293,500	\$300,000	\$6,500	2.2%	\$341,589	\$357,564	\$15,975	4.7%
Newton	\$239,950	\$240,000	\$50	<0.1%	\$283,790	\$271,775	-\$12,015	-4.2%
Hickory MSA	\$290,000	\$299,900	\$9,900	3.4%	\$356,019	\$364,369	\$8,350	2.3%

both Burke County and Morganton grew faster than the inflation rate between 2024 and 2025. Burke County experienced a median sales price gain of \$14,000 from 2024 (\$260,000) to 2025 (\$274,000). Morganton's median sales price rose 3.3% in 2025 to \$280,450. Burke County's average sales price grew 1.9% in 2025 to \$336,458. Morganton's average sales price, in contrast to Burke County, fell 1.3% during 2025 to \$334,707.

The median Caldwell County sales price grew 4.3% between 2024 and 2025 to \$267,000. Caldwell's average sales price in 2025 (\$329,616) was \$11,690 more than in 2024. The median sales price in Lenoir (\$253,000) was the second lowest of the Hickory MSA locations in which 2025 data was available (Newton had the lowest median sales price in 2025-\$240,000). The Lenoir median sales price increased 2.0% from 2024 to 2025. Little net change occurred with respect to Lenoir's average sales price between 2024 (\$303,487) and 2025 (\$303,368). The 2025 average sales price in Lenoir was \$26,248 less than the 2025 average sales price in Caldwell County.

Catawba County median and average sales price were the highest among Hickory MSA locations (that have available data) due to sales in the Hickory and Lake Norman areas. Catawba County's median home sales price increased \$6,500 (2.1%) from 2024 (\$310,000) to 2025 (\$316,500). The average sales price in Catawba County was close to \$383,000 in 2025. Catawba County's mean sales price grew just 1.5% from \$377,241 in 2024 to \$382,990 in 2025. Significant median and average sales price growth occurred in Hickory during 2025. Hickory's median sales price was 2.2% (\$6,500) more in 2025 compared to 2024, as the average sales price rose 4.7% to \$357,564. Newton's median sales price increased slightly from \$239,950 in 2024 to \$240,000 in 2025. Newton's average sales price fell 4.2% in 2025 to \$271,775.

Figure 6 reveals the percentage of original list price received (does not account for sale concessions and/or down payment assistance) for several Hickory MSA locations. The higher the percentage of original price received, the more likely that it is a home seller's market in that the seller is collecting close to the original asking price for the house. In 2025, homeowners in the Hickory MSA were able to collect 94.2% of the original price for their homes. Charlotte MSA homeowners received 96.0% of the original list price, while Asheville MSA homeowners got

Figure 5. Hickory MSA Median Sales Price, 2024-2025

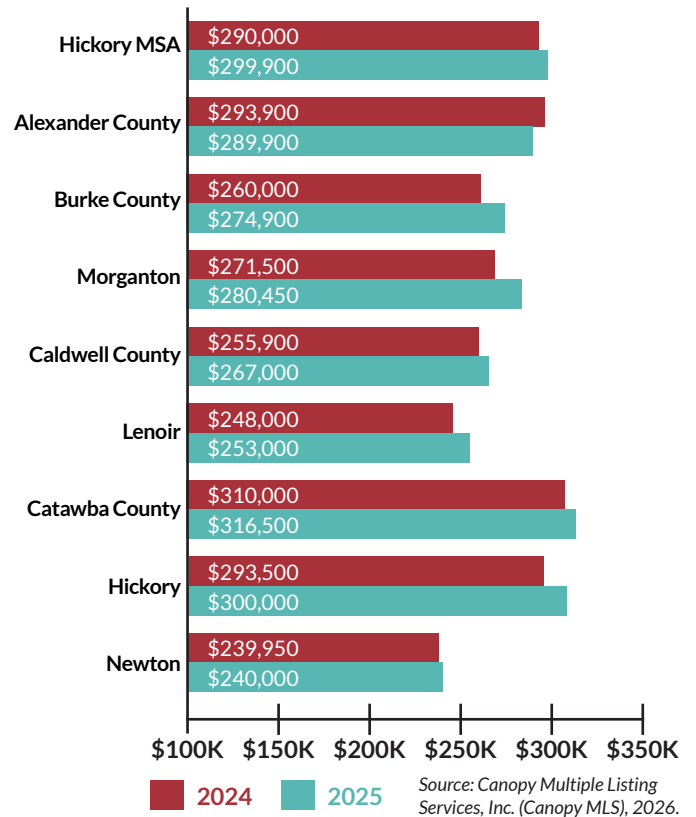


Figure 6. Hickory MSA MLS Percentage of Original Asking Price Received*, 2025

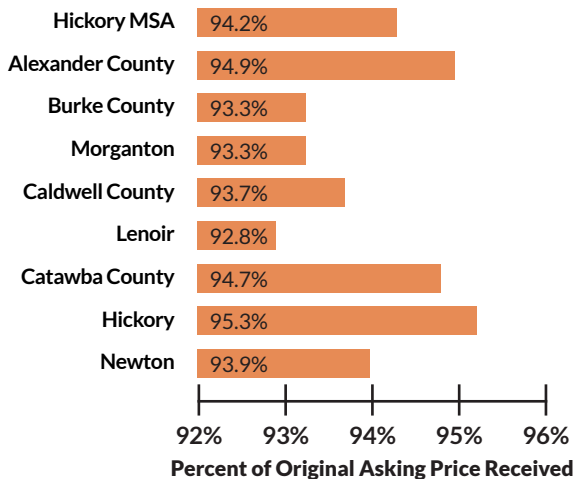


Table 5. Change in Hickory MSA Percentage of Original Asking Price Received*, 2024-2025

Location	2024	2025	Change
Alexander County	95.4%	94.9%	-0.5%
Burke County	94.2%	93.3%	-0.9%
Morganton	94.5%	93.3%	-1.2%
Caldwell County	95.6%	93.7%	-1.9%
Lenoir	95.0%	92.8%	-2.2%
Catawba County	95.3%	94.7%	-0.6%
Hickory	96.0%	95.3%	-0.7%
Newton	94.4%	93.9%	-0.5%
Hickory MSA	95.1%	94.2%	-0.9%

Source: Canopy Multiple Listing Services, Inc. (Canopy MLS), 2026. *Does not account for sale concessions and/or down payment assistance.

Source: Canopy Multiple Listing Services, Inc. (Canopy MLS), 2026.
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93.6%. All Hickory MSA locations received at least 92.8% of the original listing price in 2025. In Alexander and Catawba Counties (as well as Hickory), homeowners received more than 94% of the asking price. Lenoir had the lowest percentage of original asking price received (92.8%) in 2025.

All Hickory MSA locations had a lower percentage of the original asking price received in 2025 than in 2024 due to higher interest rates and an increase in available inventory (Table 5, page 4). The largest decrease was in Lenoir, which experienced a 2.2 percentage point drop, with respect to the original asking price received, over the past year. The percentage of original asking price received fell by 1.9 points in Caldwell County between 2024 and 2025. Alexander County and Newton had the smallest decline (-0.5%) in the percentage of original asking price received over the past year, with homeowners receiving 94.9% of the asking price in Alexander County and 93.9% in Newton.

Days on Market until Sale and Available Inventory of Homes for Sale

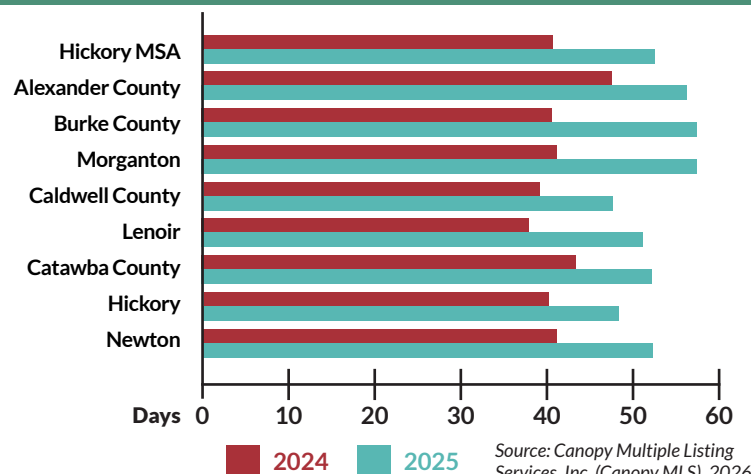
An analysis of days on market that a housing unit is available before it sells reveals the continued tightness of the Hickory MSA housing situation, even though the number of days on market is higher in 2025 than in 2024. A Hickory MSA house was on the market an average of 53 days in 2025 before it was purchased (Table 6). In 2024, it took on average 42 days on the market until the sale of the house (Figure 7). It should be noted that number of days on market until sold has been steadily growing over the past few years due to rising costs, higher interest rates, and increases in available inventory. In 2022, it took on average just 22 days on the market for the sale of a Hickory MSA house (Figure 7).

Table 6. Days on Market until Sale by Hickory MSA Location, 2024-2025

Location	Days on Market Until Sale			
	2024	2025	Chg.	% Chg.
Alexander County	47	56	9	19.1%
Burke County	41	58	17	41.5%
Morganton	42	58	16	38.1%
Caldwell County	38	47	9	23.7%
Lenoir	37	52	15	40.5%
Catawba County	44	53	9	20.5%
Hickory	40	48	8	20.0%
Newton	38	44	6	15.8%
Hickory MSA	42	53	11	26.2%

Source: Canopy Multiple Listing Services, Inc. (Canopy MLS), 2026.

Figure 7. Hickory MSA Days on Market until Sale, 2024-2025



All Hickory MSA locations experienced increases in the number of days a house was on the market until sold in 2025 compared to 2024. The biggest gain in the number of days on market until sold over the past year occurred in Burke County. It took 41 days for a house to go from on the market to sold during 2024. In 2025, it took 58 days in Burke County (17 more days than in 2024) for a house to go from on the market to sold. In comparison, in 2025 it took less than 50 days on market for a house to sold in Caldwell County, Hickory, and Newton. In Alexander, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties it took nine (9) more days on market to be sold in 2025 compared to 2024. For Hickory, the number of days on the market rose from 40 in 2024 to 48 in 2025.

Table 7, on page 6 displays the inventory of homes for sale in the Hickory MSA, as well as months of supply of housing inventory (defined as the number of active listings on the market in the previous month divided by the total number of sales in the previous month). In December 2025, the Hickory MSA had 1,081 homes for sale, or 69 more homes than in December 2024 (Figure 8). The Hickory MSA had 3.0 months supply of inventory in December 2025, the same as December 2024 (Figure 9).

Results in Table 7 indicate that while the region's housing market has a few more units of inventory in December 2024 compared to December 2025, the inventory of homes available for sale remains near historical lows. In a more normal real estate market, there is about six (6) months of housing inventory. This means the Hickory MSA remains a home

seller's market as opposed to a home buyer's market. The tight inventory of homes also tends to lead to faster rising home prices as well as homeowners receiving a higher percentage of original asking price received (although this trend has been tempered somewhat by rising interest rates and higher home prices).

Table 7. Hickory MSA MLS Inventory of Homes for Sale & Months Supply of Inventory, Dec. 2024 to Dec. 2025

Location	Inventory of Homes for Sale				Months Supply of Inventory			
	2024	2025	Change	% Change	2024	2025	Change	% Change
Alexander County	73	62	-11	-15.1%	3.4	2.5	-0.9	-26.5%
Burke County	218	214	-4	-1.8%	3.3	3.4	0.1	3.0%
Morganton	142	136	-6	-4.2%	3.4	3.6	0.2	5.9%
Caldwell County	162	219	57	35.2%	2.6	3.3	0.7	26.9%
Lenoir	107	133	16	24.3%	3.1	3.7	0.6	0.6%
Catawba County	559	586	27	4.8%	2.9	2.9	0.0	0.0%
Hickory	220	267	47	21.4%	2.5	3.1	0.6	24.0%
Newton	67	62	-5	-7.5%	2.5	2.0	-0.5	-7.5%
Hickory MSA	1,012	1,081	69	6.8%	3.0	3.0	0.0	0.0%

Source: Canopy Multiple Listing Services, Inc. (Canopy MLS), 2026.

The inventory of homes for sale in the Hickory MSA increased by nearly 7% between December 2024 and December 2025. Caldwell County had the largest gain of inventory, in terms of number of units, among Hickory MSA locations. The number of homes for sale in Caldwell County (total inventory) grew from 162 houses in December 2024 to 219 in December 2025. Hickory had 47 more homes for sale in December 2025 than in December 2024. Alexander had the largest loss of housing inventory among Hickory MSA locations from December 2024 to December 2025. Alexander County's housing inventory fell by 15.1% to just 62 units between December 2024 and December 2025.

Figure 8. Change in Inventory of Homes for Sale, December 2024-December 2025

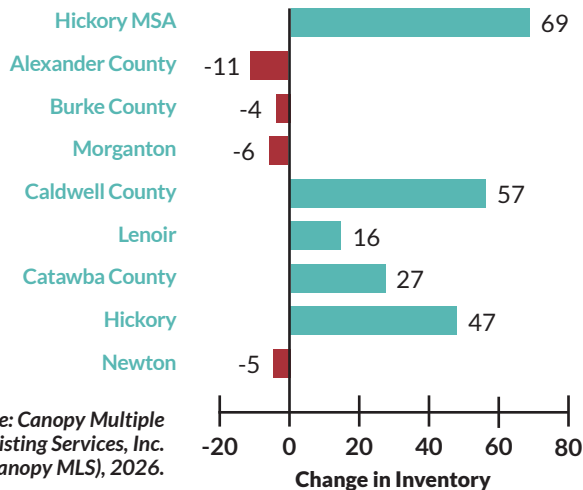
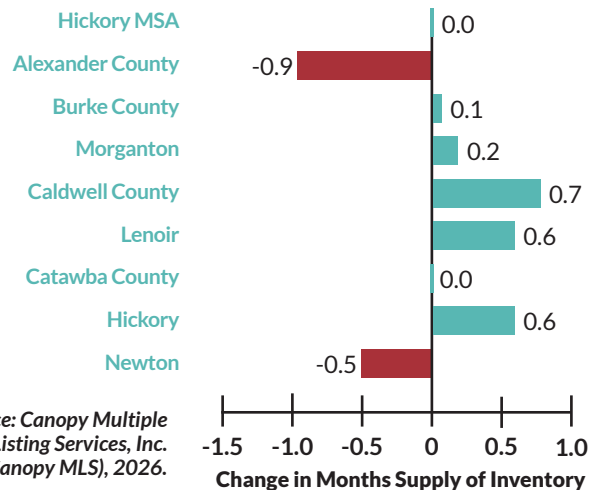


Figure 9. Change in Months Supply of Inventory, December 2024-December 2025



Burke County tallied 214 homes for sale in December 2025 compared to 218 homes in December 2024. Morganton's housing inventory slightly decreased from 142 units in December 2024 to 136 units in December 2025. About 64% Burke County's inventory of homes in December 2025 were located in Morganton. Catawba County had a 4.8% increase in housing inventory over the past year, with 586 homes were available for sale in December 2025. Newton had 62 homes for sale in December 2025.

All Hickory MSA locations had 3.7 months or less of housing inventory as of December 2025. Newton had the fewest months of inventory in December 2025 (2.0), followed by Alexander County with 2.5 months and Catawba County with 2.9 months. Lenoir had most months supply of housing inventory (3.7) as of December 2025. All locations, except for

Alexander County and Newton, had more months of supply of housing inventory in December 2024 than in December 2025. Caldwell County had a 0.7 months increase in supply of inventory over the past year. Lenoir and Hickory experienced a 0.6 months gain in the supply of inventory between December 2024 and December 2025. In contrast, Alexander had a 0.9 months reduction in inventory from December 2024 to December 2025.

Summary

The Hickory MSA had 5,833 new housing listings and 4,306 closed sales in 2025. These totals were more than 5% higher compared to 2024 due to growth in available inventory, particularly new site-built single-family units. Except for Burke County and Morganton, all other Hickory MSA locations had more new listings and closed home sales in 2025 than in 2024. The Hickory MSA's median sale price increased 3.4% in 2025 to \$299,900, which means that half of homes sold on the region's Multiple Listing Service during 2025 were purchased for more than \$299,900. All Hickory MSA locations (which had available data), except for Alexander County, experienced growth in median sales price from 2024 to 2025. All Hickory MSA locations had a median sales price of \$240,000 or more in 2025. Catawba County had the highest median sales price in 2025 (\$316,500), followed by Hickory (\$300,000) and Alexander County (\$289,900).

The Hickory MSA average sales price approached \$365,000 in 2025. The majority of Hickory MSA locations with available data experienced gains in average sales price during 2025. The highest average sales price was in Catawba County (\$382,990), followed by Alexander County (\$372,988) and Hickory (\$357,564). As of December 2025, the Hickory MSA had only 1,081 houses for sale on the region's Multiple Listing Service. During 2025, it took on average about 53 days to sale a home once it was on the market. A continued sign of a tight housing market, the Hickory MSA had just 3.0 months supply of housing inventory in December 2025. While the months inventory was higher in 2024/2025 (3.0) than in 2022 (1.7) or 2023 (2.2), it remains near historical lows. Newton had only 2.0 months supply of housing inventory in December 2025, while Alexander County had just 2.5 months supply of housing inventory.

Hickory MSA Job Market Information

The NC Works Online website (www.ncworks.gov) was created by the North Carolina Department of Commerce as a "one-stop" resource for job seekers, employers, and researchers. Persons seeking employment can search for job openings, create resumes for employers, and find information concerning education and training programs. Employers can post job openings, find potential candidates, and learn about job training and education programs that training providers and schools offer to workers. Researchers and employers can use the labor market services portion of the website to acquire information on demographic and economic data and labor market trends. This EIN article will use data gathered by NC Works Online to study the Hickory MSA job market. Topics covered include information on job openings versus the number of people counted as unemployed, openings by occupation, and wage data for job openings.

An analysis of the number of unemployed persons versus available job openings reveals that the total number of monthly openings have decreased steadily since November 2021, as the national economy has established a "low fire-low hire" labor market (Table 8, page 8). Through a combination of jobs being filled, plus fewer new openings, there were about 4,800 fewer jobs posted online in November 2025 compared to November 2021. Overall, there were 41.9% fewer openings in November 2025 than in November 2021. It is likely that over the next 12 months the number of openings will remain steady or continue to slowly drop, as was the case between November 2024 and November 2025.

From November 2021 to November 2023, the region saw a small decrease in the number of unemployed as residents found employment after the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of unemployed in the region, however, has been rising since November 2023. The number of unemployed has grown from 5,774 in November 2023 to 6,939 in November 2025. Part of this increase has been caused by people getting off the "sidelines" and rejoining the labor force seeking employment. There are also fewer job openings available to unemployed workers. Overall, the number of unemployed persons in November 2025 is 16.8% higher than in November 2021.

Figure 10 on page 8 reveals the climb with respect to the ratio of the number of unemployed per job opening over the past four years. In November 2021, the ratio equaled 0.52, meaning that there were about two job openings per unemployed worker. Since November 2022, the ratio has been steadily increasing due to a combination of fewer job openings and more unemployed persons in the work force. In November 2023, the ratio equaled 0.68 unemployed persons per

job opening. By November 2024, the ratio had increased again to 0.93. Over the last 12 months, the ratio of unemployed to job openings has grown by 0.12 to 1.05 unemployed per job opening. This change is also due to a continued reduction in job openings and an increase in the number of unemployed workers. The 1.05 ratio means that there are slightly more persons counted as “unemployed” in the region than the number of job openings. The last time this occurred in the region was during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Table 8. Hickory MSA Number of Unemployed vs. Job Openings, November 2021-2025

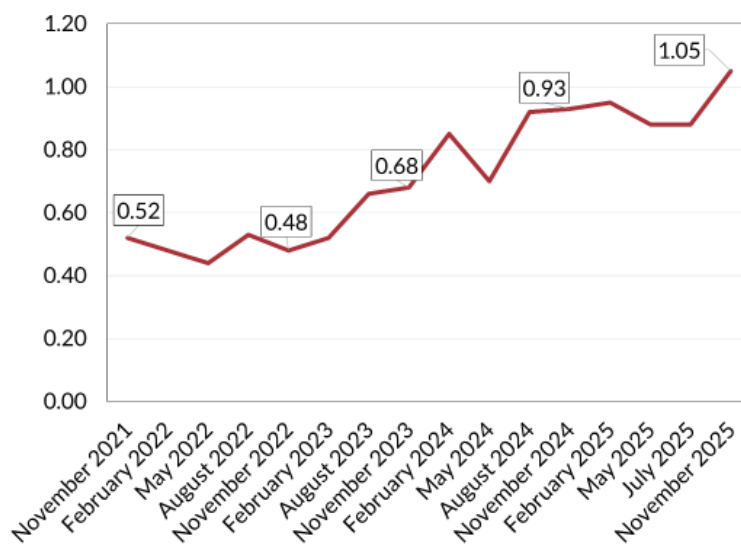
Group	Nov. 2021	Nov. 2022	Nov. 2023	Nov. 2024	Nov. 2025	Change Nov. 2021-25	% Chg. Nov. 2021-25
Number of Unemployed (Not Seasonally Adjusted)	5,941	5,931	5,774	6,271	6,939	998	16.8%
Number of Job Openings	11,404	12,252	8,503	6,719	6,627	-4,777	-41.9%
Number of Unemployed per Job Opening	0.52	0.48	0.68	0.93	1.05	0.53	101.9%

Source: NC Works Online, NC Department of Commerce, 2026.

The job market analysis will next compare the number of unemployed persons per job opening in the Hickory MSA with other NC metro areas (Table 9). The number of November 2025 job openings by North Carolina Metro area ranged from 2,340 in the Goldsboro MSA to 63,690 in the Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia MSA. The Goldsboro MSA had the lowest number of unemployed (2,152) among NC MSAs while the Charlotte MSA had the most unemployed (51,561). In November 2025, North Carolina had 220,464 unemployed with 256,670 job openings.

All Metro areas in North Carolina, except for the Hickory, Rocky Mount, and Winston-Salem MSAs, had more job openings than the number of unemployed in November 2025 (Table 9). The Hickory MSA had the fourth highest ratio of number of unemployed per job opening (1.05) in November 2025. The Jacksonville MSA had the highest ratio of the number of unemployed per job opening (1.29) followed by the Rocky Mount (1.24) and Winston-Salem MSAs (1.16). In these metro areas,

Figure 10. Hickory MSA Ratio of Unemployed Persons per Job Opening, November 2021-November 2025



Source: NC Works Online, NC Department of Commerce, 2026.

Table 9. North Carolina MSA Unemployed Persons and Number of Job Openings, November 2025

Source: NC Works Online, NC Department of Commerce, 2026.

NC MSA	Number of Unemployed (Not Seasonally Adjusted)	Number of Job Openings	Number of Unemployed Persons per Job Opening
Asheville	8,379	17,992	0.47
Durham-Chapel Hill	12,265	18,406	0.67
Raleigh-Cary	30,456	39,616	0.77
Greenville	3,618	4,649	0.78
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia	51,561	63,690	0.81
Pinehurst-Southern Pines	1,844	2,225	0.83
North Carolina	220,464	256,670	0.86
Fayetteville	7,761	8,846	0.88
Greensboro-High Point	16,777	18,651	0.90
Goldsboro	2,152	2,340	0.92
Burlington	3,547	3,819	0.93
Wilmington	9,316	10,039	0.93
Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton	6,939	6,627	1.05
Winston-Salem	13,772	11,842	1.16
Rocky Mount	3,584	2,883	1.24
Jacksonville	3,233	2,506	1.29

it is more difficult for persons to find jobs in the region where they live. The lowest ratios were in the Asheville (0.47), Durham-Chapel Hill (0.67), and Raleigh-Cary (0.77) MSAs. In these metro areas, there are more than one and a half job openings per unemployed person. It is likely that many of these openings are lower paying service sector opportunities.

Hickory MSA County Level Job Openings

The number of unemployed persons and advertised job postings between November 2021 and November 2025 for each Hickory MSA County is revealed in Table 10. Results show that ratios of the number of unemployed per job opening vary widely across Hickory MSA Counties. Each county has also experienced substantial changes in the number of unemployed per job opening over the past four years.

Table 10. Unemployed Persons and Number of Job Openings by Hickory MSA County, November 2021-2025

Alexander County		Nov. 2021	Nov. 2022	Nov. 2023	Nov. 2024	Nov. 2025	Change Nov. 2021-25	% Chg. Nov. 2021-25
Group								
Number of Unemployed (Not Seasonally Adjusted)		563	565	634	590	638	75	13.3%
Number of Job Openings		367	530	295	263	227	-140	-38.1%
Number of Unemployed per Job Opening		1.53	1.07	2.15	2.24	2.81	1.28	83.7%
Burke County		Nov. 2021	Nov. 2022	Nov. 2023	Nov. 2024	Nov. 2025	Change Nov. 2021-25	% Chg. Nov. 2021-25
Group								
Number of Unemployed (Not Seasonally Adjusted)		1,368	1,400	1,296	1,600	1,651	283	20.7%
Number of Job Openings		2,557	2,612	1,740	1,283	1,121	-1,436	-56.2%
Number of Unemployed per Job Opening		0.54	0.54	0.74	1.25	1.47	0.93	172.2%
Caldwell County		Nov. 2021	Nov. 2022	Nov. 2023	Nov. 2024	Nov. 2025	Change Nov. 2021-25	% Chg. Nov. 2021-25
Group								
Number of Unemployed (Not Seasonally Adjusted)		1,300	1,272	1,235	1,338	1,541	241	18.5%
Number of Job Openings		1,621	1,519	1,317	1,025	959	-662	-40.8%
Number of Unemployed per Job Opening		0.80	0.84	0.94	1.31	1.61	0.81	101.3%
Catawba County		Nov. 2021	Nov. 2022	Nov. 2023	Nov. 2024	Nov. 2025	Change Nov. 2021-25	% Chg. Nov. 2021-25
Group								
Number of Unemployed (Not Seasonally Adjusted)		2,710	2,694	2,609	2,743	3,109	339	12.5%
Number of Job Openings		6,859	7,591	5,151	4,148	4,320	-2,539	-37.0%
Number of Unemployed per Job Opening		0.40	0.35	0.51	0.66	0.72	0.32	80.0%

*Number of Unemployed not seasonally adjusted. Source: NC Works Online, NC Department of Commerce, 2026.

In Alexander County, the number of unemployed persons in November 2021 totaled 563 with 367 job openings to yield an unemployed to job opening ratio of 1.53. The number of job openings peaked in Alexander County (530) in November 2022. Currently there are only 227 job openings with 638 unemployed residents. The 2.81 number of unemployed persons per job opening in November 2025 is 83.7% higher than in November 2021, and is the highest among the Hickory MSA counties. The relatively high ratio of unemployed per job opening is forcing Alexander County residents to seek work in Catawba, Iredell, or Mecklenburg Counties.

The number of unemployed in Burke County in November 2025 (1,651) is 283 more than in November 2021. Job postings in Burke County exceeded 2,600 in November 2022 before falling to 1,121 in November 2025 as the job market cooled. The number of unemployed per job opening equaled 0.54 in November 2021 and 2022. As of November 2025, the ratio equals 1.47 unemployed per job opening. The ratio has exceeded 1.4 due to a combination of fewer job openings and more unemployed persons.

The number of persons counted as unemployed in Caldwell County totaled 1,300 in November 2021. Since November 2021, Caldwell's unemployment fell to 1,272 in November 2022 before increasing to 1,541 as of November 2025. The number of unemployed persons in November 2025 is 18.5% higher than in November 2021. The number of Caldwell job postings in November 2025 (959) is 40.8% lower than in 2021 (1,621). Currently, the number of unemployed per job openings is above one and a half (1.61), which is much higher than 0.80 ratio recorded in November 2021.

The November 2025 number of unemployed persons per job opening ratio was much lower in Catawba County (0.72) than the other Hickory MSA counties. Catawba had 3,109 unemployed residents while the number of job openings totaled 4,320. These results reveal that there are more job openings in Catawba County than the number of persons counted as unemployed. It also means that there are job openings available for unemployed residents of Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties, if they are willing to commute to Catawba County. It should be noted, however, that the County has about 2,500 fewer job openings in November 2025 compared to November 2021.

Hickory MSA Job Openings by Industry and Occupation

NC Works Online also provides important information on job openings and wages per occupation group. Of the Hickory MSA job openings in which the occupation group could be determined (major occupation group for 324 openings could not be determined), healthcare practitioners and technical occupations had the most openings (2,300). The advertised annual entry-level wage in November 2025 for healthcare practitioners and technical occupations equaled \$71,184 with a median annual wage of \$92,924, a mean wage of \$93,967, and an experienced wage of \$117,314 (Table 11).

Table 11. Hickory MSA Job Openings by Occupation Group and Advertised Wage Rates, November 2025

* Entry level and experienced wage rates represent the mean of the lower 1/3 and upper 2/3 of the wage distribution respectively. Source: NC Works Online, NC Department of Commerce, 2026.

Occupational Title	Job Openings	Entry Level Wage*	Mean (Average) Wage	Median Wage	Experienced Wage*
Architecture and Engineering	187	\$80,413	\$111,507	\$110,000	\$142,569
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	88	\$30,700	\$53,586	\$39,676	\$88,407
Building and Grounds Maintenance	96	\$28,311	\$35,460	\$34,413	\$43,571
Business and Financial Operations	154	\$47,006	\$83,303	\$72,500	\$127,524
Community and Social Service	113	\$45,274	\$58,028	\$59,842	\$70,399
Computer and Mathematical	78	\$59,846	\$111,162	\$97,078	\$173,827
Construction and Extractions	90	\$35,765	\$45,980	\$42,276	\$59,599
Educational Instruction and Library	158	\$46,383	\$68,100	\$57,828	\$95,118
Food Preparation and Serving Related	261	\$27,198	\$33,177	\$32,240	\$40,115
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	2,300	\$71,184	\$93,967	\$92,924	\$117,314
Healthcare Support	224	\$30,907	\$41,209	\$36,400	\$55,265
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	311	\$38,726	\$59,052	\$54,626	\$82,935
Life, Physical, and Social Science	47	\$49,187	\$75,305	\$77,610	\$100,500
Management	423	\$48,382	\$87,631	\$72,500	\$139,290
Office and Administrative Support	390	\$33,394	\$42,466	\$43,368	\$51,782
Personal Care and Service	56	\$24,232	\$29,990	\$30,618	\$35,304
Production	418	\$35,210	\$46,377	\$41,239	\$62,233
Protective Service	92	\$35,062	\$43,340	\$43,265	\$51,379
Sales and Related Occupations	492	\$28,678	\$50,052	\$37,440	\$83,555
Transportation and Material Moving	324	\$33,802	\$46,861	\$43,368	\$64,822
Other/Could Not be Determined	324	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total All Occupations and Wages	6,627	N/A	\$70,824	N/A	N/A

In November 2025, sales and related occupations had 492 job openings. The entry-level wage for these positions was \$28,678 a year with a mean wage of \$50,052. Management occupations had more than 420 openings with an entry-level annual wage of \$48,382 and an average annual wage of \$87,631. Production had 418 openings, followed by office and administrative support with 390. All other occupation categories had fewer than 350 job openings.

Occupation groups with the highest entry level (lower one-third (1/3) of the wage distribution) and experienced wage (upper two-thirds (2/3) of the wage distribution) are revealed in Figure 11 and 12. Three occupation wage groups had job opening entry-level wages above \$50,000 a year as of November 2025, while four occupation wage groups had experienced wages greater than \$125,000 a year.

Architecture and engineering occupations had the highest job opening entry-level wage (\$80,413), while computer and mathematical occupations had the highest experienced wage (\$173,827). Health practitioners and technical occupations had the second highest entry-level wage (\$71,184), while architecture and engineering had the second highest experienced wage (\$142,569). Management occupations had the third highest experienced wage (\$139,290), but only the fifth highest entry-level job opening wage (\$48,383).

In November 2025, Hickory MSA personal care and service occupations had the lowest entry-level job opening wage (\$24,232), followed by food service and related occupations (\$27,198), and building and grounds maintenance occupations (\$28,311). Personal care and service occupations had the lowest experienced job opening wage (\$35,304) followed by food preparation and service-related occupations (\$40,115) and building, grounds and clearing occupations (\$43,571).

Figure 11. Highest Entry Level Wages by Occupation Wage Group, November 2025

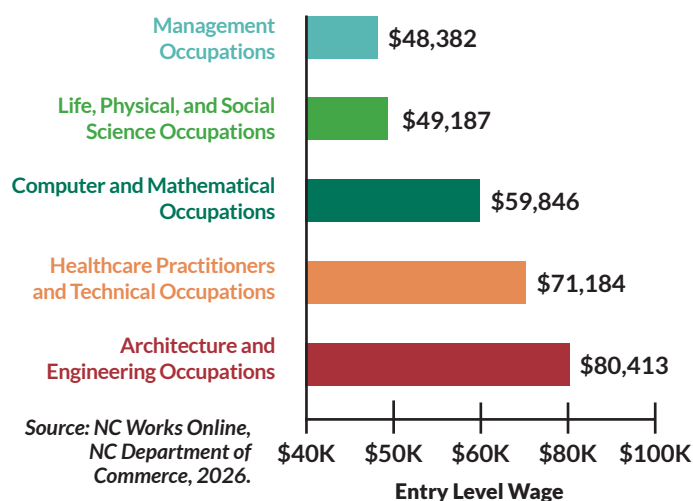
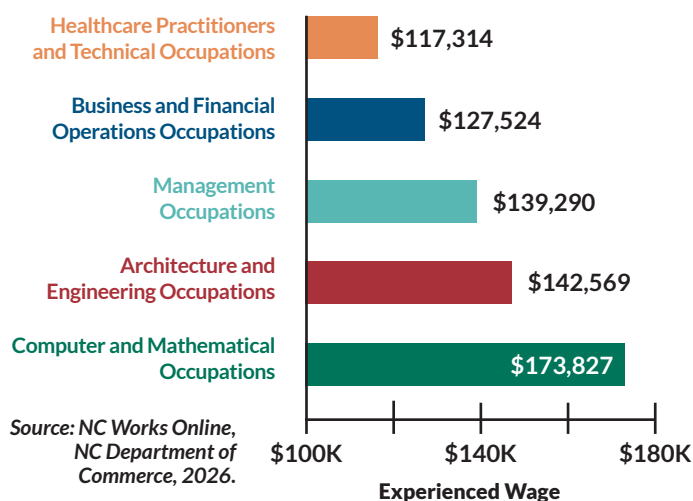


Figure 12. Highest Experienced Level Wages by Occupation Wage Group, November 2025



Summary

NC Works is a helpful online tool to analyze the Hickory MSA job market. The analysis revealed that the ratio of unemployed persons to job openings in the Hickory MSA has been steadily rising over the past three years mostly due to fewer openings as well as an increase in unemployed workers. The November 2025 ratio of unemployed by per job opening equaled 1.05, meaning that there are slightly more persons counted as unemployed than the number of advertised job openings. Higher unemployed per job opening ratios occurred in Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties compared to Catawba County. In fact, Catawba was the only county in region with a ratio less than one employed worker per job opening.

Healthcare practitioners, sales, and management occupations had the most Hickory MSA online job openings. These three occupation groups accounted for 48.5% of all November 2025 job openings. Entry-level annual wages in these fields ranged from \$24,232 for personal care and service occupations to \$80,413 for architecture and engineering occupations. Average wages ranged from \$29,990 for personal care and service occupations to \$111,507 for architecture and engineering occupations. Six Hickory MSA occupation groups had experienced job opening annual wages greater than \$100,000.

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