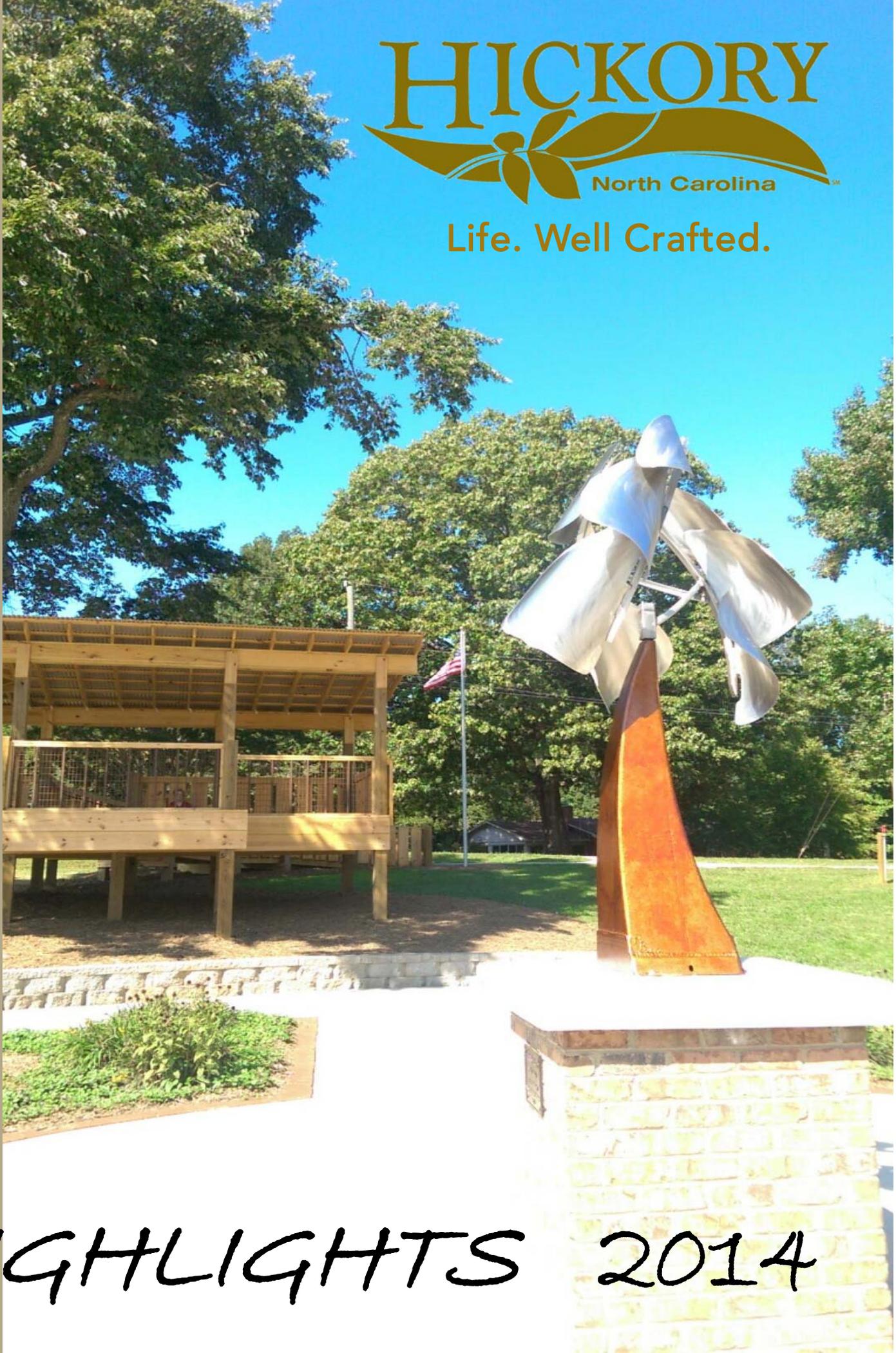


HICKORY



North Carolina

Life. Well Crafted.



HIGHLIGHTS 2014

CITY MANAGER'S MESSAGE



We are pleased to present the Hickory Highlights Report for the 2014 calendar year. At the City of Hickory, we focus on delivering high quality services to our citizens and visitors through excellent coworkers. Positive **innovation, communication, and customer service** form the core values of our organization.

As City Manager of Hickory, I take great pride in Hickory's core values and in the employees who diligently work to provide services to our community. We value our community and provide exceptional facilities and programs in a fiscally and environmentally responsible way.

2014 was an exciting year with two bonds, totaling \$40 million, passing with overwhelming citizen support in November. The referendum marks another cross road of prosperity for our City. Keeping with our heritage of craftsmanship, we will strive to "measure twice, cut once" to ensure the projects maximize the tax investment to grow jobs and population. We are all anxious to see our City revitalized through implementation of the bond projects and we've learned from other successful communities that there is no "easy button." This marks the beginning of a decade of hard work to design, build and enhance the City in a way that will attract the next generation of jobs and people.

I invite you to explore our website www.HickoryNC.gov and www.HickoryWellCrafted.com. I encourage you to become involved and learn more about Hickory through City Council meetings, boards and commissions and through our many programs and events.

While our city coworkers provide many of the services we need, it takes all of us to make Hickory a great place to work, play and live. We value your input and welcome any comments and ideas you may have.

Mick Berry

MICK BERRY
Hickory City Manager



Pictured from left to right: Hickory City Manager Mick Berry, City Attorney John Crone, Hickory City Council: Brad Lail (Ward 1), Bruce Meisner (Ward 2), Mayor Rudy Wright, Danny Seaver (Ward 3), Hank Guess (Ward 4), David Zagaroli (Ward 5) and Jill Patton (Ward 6 and 2014 Mayor Pro Tempore).



THE CITY OF HICKORY

Hickory began in 1870 as a small piedmont city whose growth and development moved it from a late nineteenth-century trading center on the Western North Carolina Railroad to a thriving 20th century manufacturing center for furniture, hosiery, and textiles. As Hickory makes its way through the 21st century, manufacturing continues to be prominent, along with a variety of diversified industries.

Hickory is known for its craftsmanship.

It's more than a way of doing something. It's a way of seeing, being and creating anew. Hickory has a history of craftsmanship. The City's past and future prospects have drawn to this place a people with an eye for detail and a hand for hard work, a passion for making something of themselves and of the future. From furniture capitol to fiber optic center, natural wonder to fine arts splendor, recreational heaven to entertainment haven, small town values to big city drive, the people of Hickory have crafted a living and a life that's rich both in tradition and promise. They've made Hickory more than a wonderful place at an advantageous location. They've made a living and a life here.

Hickory is where Life is Well Crafted.

LOCATION: 50 miles northwest of Charlotte and 80 miles east of Asheville in North Carolina's Piedmont region. The city is located primarily within Catawba County, but its borders extend into portions of Burke and Caldwell Counties.

POPULATION: Over 40,000

SIZE: The city spans approximately 28 square miles and is intersected by Interstate 40, US Highway 321 and US Highway 70.





CITIZENS AT WORK

The City has 14 boards and commissions, made up of 163 Hickory citizens, who have a variety of purposes that includes everything from increasing the recycling rate, guiding the future of parks and recreation, to assisting with business development and beautification grants. All groups are made up of citizens from different wards and/or diverse backgrounds. In 2014, the City added a new commission, the University City Commission. Additionally, the Inspiring Spaces Committee, appointed by City Council, was instrumental in the preliminary work that led to two Hickory Bond Referendums on the November 2014 ballot.

The University City Commission:

Created to deepen and broaden the relationship between Lenoir-Rhyne University and the City, as well as with students and residents. A focus of the UCC is to grow the student body's presence and interaction in the community and increase the young adult population in Hickory, while enhancing the collegiate atmosphere and promoting school pride throughout the community.

The Inspiring Spaces Committee:

Worked with Land Design, the company that was contracted by the City, and City Council and staff to create a list of potential projects, recommendations, and implementation strategies for dozens of projects under the Inspiring Spaces plan, which were identified in 2014. Those included the categories of gateways or entrances into the City, special places, parks, greenways, and streetscapes. All the projects were intended to enhance public areas, stimulate economic development, redevelopment and create additional recreation/outdoor areas.

Grants that the City has received and have given out help with overall revitalization.

The Brownfield Advisory Group:

Makes recommendations on where to utilize the Brownfield Assessment Grant funding, along with City Planning and Development staff. This Environmental Protection Agency grant assess sites for environmental hazards. Since 2007, the City has received \$800,000 in Brownfield Grants and have assessed 38 sites, including sites like Hollar, Moretz and Lyerly Mills, the Hutto Store (Verizon on 127), Piedmont Wagon, the former Hot Rod Barn and Simmons Hosiery. The City applied for both a \$200,000 EPA Brownfield Planning Grant in 2014 and another \$400,000 Assessment Grant in 2014.

The Business Development Committee:

Serves in an advisory role to Hickory City Council. The purpose is to support business development in the City of Hickory for increased employment by identifying and assessing ideas and applying local business development resources to determine the level of success of the project/proposal. The BDC manages the Operation: No Vacancy Program. City Council approved four Vacant Building Revitalization Grants (3 for renovation and 1 for demolition) in 2014. The city's \$110,000 investment will be leveraged into approximately \$6.8 million in private investment. Since 2011, the Vacant Building Revitalization Grant program has leveraged over \$30 million in private investment to rehabilitate vacant commercial and industrial buildings.

CULTURE & RECREATION

Culture and Recreation in the City of Hickory provides residents with services like The Hickory Public Library, Parks and Recreation and a variety of boards and commissions. Excellent quality of life is shown through the numerous activities, events, programs, parks, recreational facilities, and library services that are offered in the City, which enhances a well crafted life.



- The 22 year old Hickory baseball stadium, L.P. Frans Stadium, underwent major renovations, which was in partnership with Hickory Baseball and the City of Hickory, that began in 2013 and were completed in April 2014.
- The Zahra Baker All Children's Playground at Kiwanis Park was upgraded with the construction of a new treehouse, picnic shelter and accessible restrooms, another public/private partnership with the Kiwanis Clubs.
- New field lights were purchased and installed on five soccer fields at Henry Fork River Regional Recreation Park through a public/private partnership with the Catawba Valley Youth Soccer Association.
- 1,010 local seniors participated in the 2014 North Carolina Senior Games. Hickory had the largest local contingent across the state for the 5th consecutive year.
- 13,250 people reserved and utilized one of the City of Hickory's 18 group picnic shelters.
- 808 children and adults participated in the swim program partnership between the City of Hickory and the Hickory Foundation YMCA.

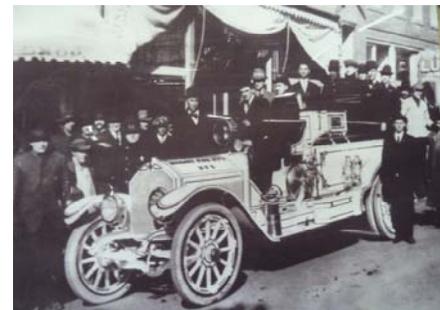


- Hickory Public Library began the process of developing a new strategic plan to guide library services during the next three to five years. The process is supported through a grant of \$20,160 from the Institute of Museum and Library Service (IMLS) under the provisions of the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) as administered by the State Library of North Carolina, a division of the Department of Cultural Resources.
- 340,065 visitors to Hickory Public Library
- 881 Library programs offered with 19,449 people in attendance
- Author visits in 2014 – Sherman Alexie, John Hart, Joseph Bathanti, Ron Rash and Rebecca Skloot
- 75,750 feet of film of the Hickory Daily Record (1915-2013) on microfilm was digitized
- 2014 Summer Reading Program: 1,364 Participants; 104 of Programs; 5,509 were in attendance at programs; 11,283 hours was time spent reading by participants

PUBLIC SAFETY

The City of Hickory Public Safety function includes the Hickory Police Department and Fire Departments. Hickory Police Department is committed to providing the highest quality of police service to the citizens of and visitors to the City. Dedicated to improving the quality of life in the City, this department will work in partnership with the community to provide a high degree of effective and efficient public safety, while maintaining respect for cultural diversity and individual rights and dignity. The department operates under a philosophy of community based policing. The Hickory Fire Department's goal is to prevent fires, save lives and property, and protect the environment. That is a simple statement, but vast amounts of training and planning go into reaching this goal to better protect the citizens of Hickory. The Hickory Fire Department promises to strive toward improvement, to listen to the needs of the community, and to ensure their department answers the needs of the public throughout the City.

- Hickory Fire Department received the Assistance to Firefighters Grant for \$1,974,800 to enhance radio communications throughout Catawba County and the City of Hickory. This is a regional grant that involves 19 emergency agencies within Catawba County, giving all emergency agencies the ability to communicate during multi-agency emergencies.
- Educators and firefighters conducted 348 programs throughout the year and directly reached 21,786 people with fire safety information.
- On March 10, an event was held at Fire Station 1 to display and celebrate the 100-year old birthday of the first motorized fire truck, purchased by the City of Hickory. This truck was purchased by the Huffman family of Granite Falls in the 1950's and refurbished. During this event, the 1914 American LaFrance fire truck was on display to the public.



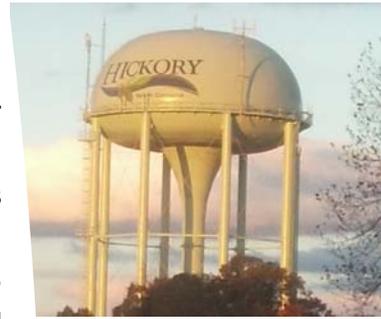
- The crime rate in Hickory decreased 18% in calendar year 2013, giving the City the lowest crime rate since 1995. In the first 11 months of 2014, Hickory continued to show a further decrease in the crime rate.
- Technology has always been a priority at the Hickory Police Department. New in 2014 were body worn cameras for all uniform police officers, creating accurate documentation and overall safety for the public and officers. Check out the City's You Tube Channel (go to www.HickoryNC.gov and click on the icon on the Home Page) to learn more details on the body cameras.
- At the beginning of 2014, new Hickory Police Department vehicles featured upgraded technology and the first new paint scheme for HPD since 1998, tying into the "Life. Well Crafted." brand.



Hickory serves citizens through various departments, including Public Works, Public Utilities, the Hickory Regional Airport, the Office of Communications and Administrative Services by providing services such as, but not limited to street maintenance, traffic and signal maintenance, landscaping, recycling, clean drinking water production and waste water treatment, private air service, internal overall communications and programming for City-wide events.

SERVING THE PUBLIC

- The Solid Waste Division has initiated its transition to Single Stream Recycling. Continuing to work through cost, implementation and contract negotiations for the program, which is planned to start in the spring of 2015.
- The Solid Waste Division secured a \$30,000 grant to assist the City of Hickory's transition to Single Stream Recycling, specifically for purchasing recycling carts.
- City Council increased the budget for resurfacing streets in the 2014 - 2015 budget, the Street Division has met and completed its increased resurfacing schedule for the fall of 2014 and will continue with the resurfacing program in the Spring of 2015 as the weather allows.
- Street Division completed, in house, approximately 85% of the over 400 different locations of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) storm water repairs required as a result of the July 2013 flooding event. These projects are scheduled to be complete in summer 2015.
- Public Utilities finalized and signed the Bulk Water Purchase agreement with Long View for potable/palatable water.
- Public Utilities continued construction and initiated operation of half of the new Hickory-Catawba Waste Water Treatment Plant.
- Engineering worked with a firm to design the Windridge Bridge replacement that washed out during the flooding of July 2013, which is a FEMA bridge project. This project has been bid and is under construction with a scheduled completion in mid-2015.
- The Hickory Regional Airport was awarded a grant from the NCDOT - DOA to rehabilitate and overlay Taxiway B, S and the North Apron in the amount of \$107,867 for the design phase and \$2,379,152.00 for the construction phase of the project with the City's local share being 10 percent of those totals.
- In February 2014, NC Forest Services leased a hanger at the airport, which enhances safety for the area and Western North Carolina.



- City sponsored events and partnerships included the Sails Music Series, Furniture. Well Crafted., Hickory Museum of Art's Lake Norman Folk Art Festival, Western Piedmont Symphony's Symphony under the Sails, Hickory Community Theatre's "Live Theatre. Well Crafted.", TEDxHickory, Hickory Arts' Tastin' Tunes and Tomatoes at the Downtown Hickory Farmer's Market, Viewmont Business Association's Viewmont Strut, Hickory Crawdads All-Star Game, Charity Chase Half Marathon and Carolina Cycle Challenge sponsors, just to name a few.

- New "Life. Well Crafted." brand videos were created and distributed, which targeted various demographics. The messages of each video were unique, promoting young professional activities, Brownfield grants, redevelopments, Hickory City departments and staff and Public Art. Videos can be watched on Hickory's You Tube Channel.

- Old school marketing is just as important as the latest communications fad, and in 2014 four postcards were created. The first two were in partnership with the Convention and Visitors Bureau and showcase Leisure and Sports. In the fall, a Sails Music postcard was created and in December came a Furniture. Well Crafted. postcard. Postcards are free and available at many locations across the City.



Furniture.
Well Crafted.
2014



CITY AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Historic \$40 million dollar bond referendum, overwhelmingly passed by citizens' vote, November 2014.

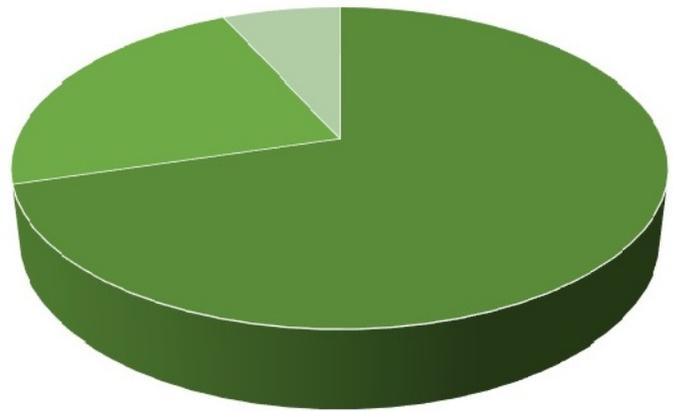
Includes: \$15 million Economic Development Bond & \$25 million Streets and Sidewalks Bond

Keep updated throughout the bond process on www.HickoryNC.gov/Bonds.

Certificate of Achievement
for Excellence in
Financial Reporting for the
18th consecutive year

Distinguished Budget Award
for Fiscal Year '13-14, which
was the 19th year.

City of Hickory Grants Awarded in 2014 = \$6,729,359



■ Federal \$4,744,352 ■ State \$1,520,412 ■ Required Match \$464,595

- The Zahra Baker All Children's Playground received Partners For Parks' 2014 Project Recognition Award.
- The Hickory Fire Department's Bikes for Tykes program was chosen for the "2014 Giving from the Heart Volunteer" award, which was presented to the department during a special luncheon at the Catawba Country Club in November.
- Hickory was once again named a TREE CITY USA.

2014 LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

In the fall of 2013, the City of Hickory began initiatives to strengthen the relationship between Hickory and state legislators. This program engaged state delegates with Hickory citizens, local officials and local concerns.

- 12 visits to Raleigh
- 6 Legislative Action Committee meetings or Legislative Liaison meetings attended
- 57 Conference calls with legislative partners
- 14 Meetings with regional/local legislators
- 2 Legislative Thank You events
- 92 Virtually attended NC General Assembly meetings

This is a publication from the City of Hickory.

For more information call (828) 323-7400 or go to www.HickoryNC.gov.

A 2014 City Fact Sheet, containing more facts and statistics, as well as website links, is available online at the City's website, www.HickoryNC.gov.