



Life. Well Crafted.

***City of Hickory  
Planning & Development  
Services Department***

***Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Report***

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## Introduction

The City of Hickory's Planning and Development Services Department functions as the city department responsible for overseeing the physical development of the City of Hickory. The Planning and Development Services Department focuses its efforts on six primary functions:

1. Community Development. This function handles housing issues, including homeownership, housing rehabilitation, and affordable housing through administration of the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program;
2. Land Use Planning. This function consists of both comprehensive and short-range planning efforts. Comprehensive planning involves the development of comprehensive plans that work to guide growth within the City of Hickory. Short-range planning involves the issues related to zoning changes, development review, and land subdivision.
3. Permit Center. The Permit Center provides permitting and zoning enforcement services. The Permit Center functions as the clearinghouse for development review, development inspections, and carries out zoning enforcement services;
4. Community Appearance, Historic Preservation, and Public Art. Each of these functions work collectively to enhance and develop many cultural and social aspects of the City of Hickory.

Community Appearance works to enhance the visual attractiveness of the City by supporting community cleanup and landscaping initiatives through landscape grants, appearance grants, as well as providing recommendations concerning the development and operations of public properties.

Historic Preservation works to promote the preservation of historic structures and landmarks within the City of Hickory.

Public Art works to develop art projects that can be enjoyed by the citizens and visitors of the City of Hickory.

5. Transportation. This function works to enhance and improve both motorized and non-motorized transportation facilities and options available to the citizens and visitors of the City of Hickory.
6. Other Activities. The Planning and Development Services Department oversees grant-writing services regarding community development and planning related activities for the City. These services involve technical

assistance concerning research and submittal of grant proposals intended to benefit the citizens of the City of Hickory.

Management of properties under the ownership of the City is also a responsibility of the Planning and Development Services Department. This specific responsibility involves the buying of new properties and the selling or marketing for development of properties under City ownership.

Project management is another responsibility of the Planning and Development Services Department. The City requires a development review conference for all projects proposing to erect, renovate or add an addition to a structure with a gross floor area of 15,000 square feet or greater. The Planning and Department Services department is tasked with overseeing these projects and acting as the liaison between the developer and other city/county departments.

Each of the above outlined functions works collectively to ensure growth and development patterns of the City of Hickory advance in ways that reap the most benefits for the citizens of the City of Hickory.

The following report is designed to serve as a snapshot of the efforts and activities of the Planning and Development Services Department during the 2014-2015 fiscal year. The following discussions and data explain how, where, and to some extent why development occurred in the City of Hickory during FY 14/15.

## Departmental Budget

The operational budget for the Planning and Development Services Department for fiscal year 2014-2015 is broken into two distinct divisions within the City of Hickory's annual budget. These divisions are Planning and Community Development. The table below depicts the annual operational budgets for the Planning and Development Services Department as outlined within the City's annual budget. Specific operational funding utilized by Community Development is touched upon at the end of this section and is discussed extensively in the Community Development section of this report.

### Departmental Budget

<u>Expenditure by Type</u>	<u>Planning &amp; Development</u>
Personnel	\$529,261
Operations	\$70,018
Capital	\$2,800
Pro-Rata Reimbursements	(\$28,897)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$573,182</b>

In addition to the expenditures associated with the day-to-day functions of the Planning and Development Services Department, the department also participates in or oversees the functions of a number of other boards and agencies utilizing City appropriated funds. The following table outlines each of these functions.

### Associated Board and Agency Budget

<u>Board or Agency</u>	<u>Monetary Allocations</u>
Public Art Commission	\$16,000
Youth Council	\$3,600
Community Appearance Commission (including façade/landscape grant funds)	\$41,300
Catawba County Economic Development Corporation	\$132,440
Historic Preservation Commission	\$11,100
Hickory Regional Planning Commission	\$0
Economic Development Activities	\$59,285
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$263,725</b>

### Total Operational Budget

<b>Total Budgeted Expenditures of Activities Associated with Planning and Development Services Department</b>	<b>\$836,907.00<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Community Development</b>	<b>\$864,433.82<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,701,340.82</b>

1. Allocated as part of City budget

2. Includes Federal CDBG funds

## **Community Development**

As a result of annual grant submission to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Hickory received \$310,314.00 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. In addition, the City received approximately \$171,744.35 in program income from the repayment of low-interest rate housing rehabilitation loans and low-interest rate down payment assistance program loans administered to benefit qualifying low to moderate-income citizens in previous years. In sum, the City of Hickory had approximately \$864,433.82 (includes \$382,375.47 unspent funds from previous years) in available funding from CDBG funds and Program Income to address identified priorities in its "Annual Action Plan FY 14." The allocation of the above listed fiscal recourses is outlined in detail within the City's Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report, which is provided to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

## **Land Use Planning**

The City's land use planning efforts are typically divided into projects termed comprehensive and short-range. Comprehensive planning initiatives generally encompass projects that develop over longer time frames and which efforts produce the policies and procedures that drive short-range initiatives.

Short-range planning activities generally involve the realization of comprehensive polices and procedures through the implementation of day-to-day planning activities. Over time, short-range planning initiatives work to guide and steer growth and development in the direction envisioned by comprehensive planning initiatives.

The following narrative and data display demonstrates both the comprehensive and short-range planning initiatives undertaken by the Planning and Development Services Department during FY 14/15.

### **Comprehensive Planning**

During FY 14/15, the City's Planning and Development Services Department worked toward the development of numerous comprehensive planning initiatives. The following bulleted list highlights the major comprehensive planning accomplishments of FY 14/15.

- Completed annual review and updates to the Hickory by Choice 2030 Plan and Future Land Use Map.
- Completed annual review and updates to the City's Land Development Code and Zoning Map.
- Collaboration with the Unifour Air Quality Early Action Compact to study and understand new air quality measures being proposed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Worked with the city manager's office, stakeholders, citizens and planning consultant's Land Design on the Inspiring Spaces plan.
- Conducted 40 environmental Phase one & two assessments and continued to identify potential brownfield redevelopment sites.
- Worked with the Green Park and Claremont Neighborhood Association's to initiate updates to their existing neighborhood plans.
- Awarded a \$200,000 US EPA area-wide brownfield grant.

## Short-Range Planning

During FY 14/15, the City's Planning and Development Services Department processed ten (10) petitions for rezonings, special-use permits (SUP's), text amendments and administrative appeals. Of the processed petitions, all 10 were approved.

*Note: The referenced rezonings and text amendment were part of the staff initiated annual review of the City's Land Development Code and Zoning Map.*

### **Rezoning Petitions – FY 14/15**

<u>Petition</u>	<u>Action</u>
15-01	Rezoned from R-1 to C-3 (Startown Rd & Catawba Valley Blvd SE)
<b>Rezoning Petitions – FY 14/15</b> <b>Total Petitions Received: 1</b> <b>Total Petitions Approved: 1</b> <b>Total Petitions Withdrawn: 0</b> <b>Total Petitions Denied: 0</b> <b>Rate of Approval: 100%</b>	

### **Special Use Permits FY- 14/15**

<u>Petition</u>	<u>Action</u>
14-02	Approved a manufacturing and production business in the C-1 district
14-03	Approved a drinking establishment in a C-2 district
14-04	Approved a drinking establishment in a CC-2 district
14-05	Approved a telecommunications tower in a R-2 district
14-06	Approved an expansion of a daycare in a R-4 district
15-01	Approved an expansion of a daycare in a R-4 district
15-02	Approved a group living facility in a R-1 district
<b>Special-Use Permit Petitions – FY 14/15</b> <b>Total Petitions Received: 7</b> <b>Total Petitions Approved: 7</b> <b>Total Petitions Withdrawn: 0</b> <b>Total Petitions Denied: 0</b> <b>Rate of Approval: 100%</b>	

### **Text Amendments FY – 14/15**

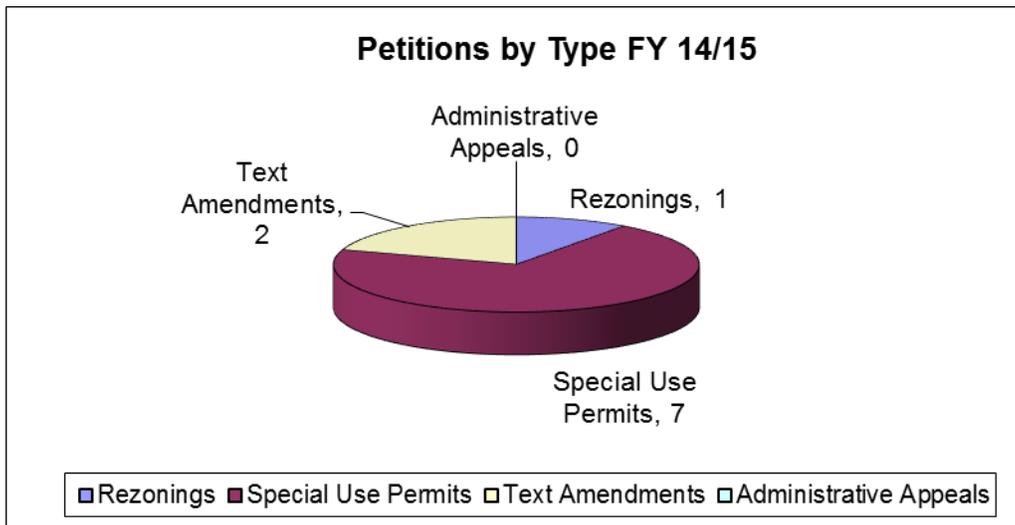
<u>Petition</u>	<u>Action</u>
14-02	Approved amendments to LDC Articles 6 and 14
14-03	Approved amendments to LDC Articles 6, 7, and 14
<b>Text Amendment Petitions – FY 14/15</b> <b>Total Petitions Received: 2</b> <b>Total Petitions Approved: 2</b> <b>Total Petitions Withdrawn: 0</b> <b>Total Petitions Denied: 0</b> <b>Rate of Approval: 100%</b>	

### Administrative Appeals – FY 14/15

Petition	Action
None	N/A
<b><u>Text Amendment Petitions – FY 14/15</u></b> Total Petitions Received: 0 Total Petitions Approved: 0 Total Petitions Withdrawn: 0 Total Petitions Denied: 0 Rate of Approval: N/A	

### Petitions by Type – FY 14/15

	<u>Rezoning</u> s	<u>Special Use Permits</u>	<u>Text Amendments</u>	<u>Administrative Appeals</u>
<b>Total Number of Petitions</b>	1	7	2	0
<b>Percentage of Total Petitions</b>	10%	70%	20%	0%



The Planning and Development Services Department is also entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing applications for the subdivision of property within the planning jurisdiction of the City of Hickory.

During FY 14/15, 41 subdivisions and boundary adjustments were submitted for review. In total, 23 new lots were created, and nine new multi-family/townhome units.

The Planning and Development Services Department is also responsible for processing request for annexation. During FY 14/15, three annexation petitions were received, which collectively added 22.25 acres of area to the City of Hickory.

## **Permit Center & Zoning Enforcement**

The Planning and Development Services Department's permitting and zoning enforcement efforts are handled through the City's Permit Center. The Permit Center is responsible for the intake and processing of development permits, and site review of all development proposals permitted within the planning jurisdiction of the City of Hickory. In addition to initial project review, the Permit Center conducts post-construction inspections to ensure compliance with all applicable city codes. The Permit Center is also responsible for the investigation of citizen complaints pertaining to suspected zoning violations.

### **Permit Activity**

The Permit Center provides for the intake, review, issuance, and inspections of applications for zoning compliance permits. During FY 14/15, the Permit Center issued 762 permits. Of this number, 92 were for new construction and 670 were for renovations, additions or other types of activities. During FY 14/15, the value of construction was \$73,818,949, a decrease of 5.65% from the prior fiscal year.

In addition to zoning permits for development projects, the Permit Center also processes applications for temporary signs, temporary structures and special events. During FY 14/15, the Permit Center processed 266 of these applications, a slight decrease from last year's total. Of this number, 68 were for temporary sign applications, 46 were for temporary structure applications and 152 were for special event applications.

### **Zoning Compliance/Enforcement**

The City of Hickory's Permit Center is also responsible for the enforcement of the City's Land Development Code. These activities are broken into two distinct functions, which are inspections and zoning enforcement.

During FY 14/15 the Planning and Development Services Department performed 88 inspections. Such inspections are performed before or after new construction, development expansions, reoccupancy, changes of use, or as part of preliminary development or redevelopment consultations.

As part of the Zoning Enforcement activities the department investigated 27 specific zoning cases, and fielded in excess of 70 complaints during FY 14/15. Such cases and complaints can involve a variety of different situations, including, but not limited to, signs placed in public rights-of-way, the operation of businesses without proper inspections or permits, and construction without permits.

One specific Zoning Enforcement activity that has garnered much attention concerns the removal of signs placed within public rights-of-way. During FY 14/15 Zoning Enforcement, 1,466 signs were removed from the public rights-of-way. The removal of these signs has greatly improved the appearance of the City's roadways.

## Community Appearance

The focus of the Community Appearance Commission is to facilitate community attractiveness through the coordination of volunteer civic involvement and the consideration of projects funded by means of the City's appearance and landscape incentive grants.

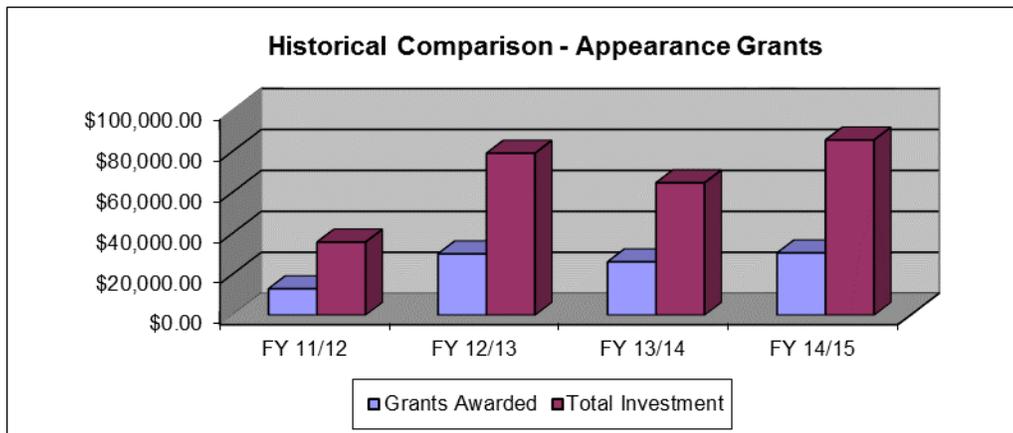
The volunteer civic involvement component of the initiative is centered on the City's adopt-a-spot program. This program entails the adoption of a "spot" within the City in which the adopting individual or group assumes the responsibility for maintenance and beautification. The components of the initiative involving City grant funding opportunities include the City's Community Appearance Grants and Landscaping Incentive Grants.

### Community Appearance Grant

Community Appearance Grants are awarded to the owners or tenants of non-residential buildings located in the City's commercial revitalization area. These grants are used to fund improvements to buildings and landscapes in an effort to improve the overall appearance of the City. During FY 14/15, the Community Appearance Commission recommended funding for seven (7) Community Appearance Grants totaling \$30,415.86 as displayed in the following table.

**Community Appearance Grants FY 14/15**

<u>Grantee / Project</u>	<u>Grant Awarded</u>	<u>Total Investment</u>
Piedmont Wagon Properties	\$10,000.00	\$38,471.00
Catawba County Historical Assoc.	\$5,000.00	\$16,000.00
KAD Investments, LLC	\$2,240.00	\$4,480.00
Hickory Tree	\$1,150.00	\$2,300.00
Winn Appraisal Group	\$2,685.49	\$5,370.97
Hickory Chiro Properties, LLC	\$4,540.37	\$9,080.74
Rahe Bryce, LLC	\$4,800.00	\$9,900.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$30,415.86</b>	<b>\$85,602.71</b>

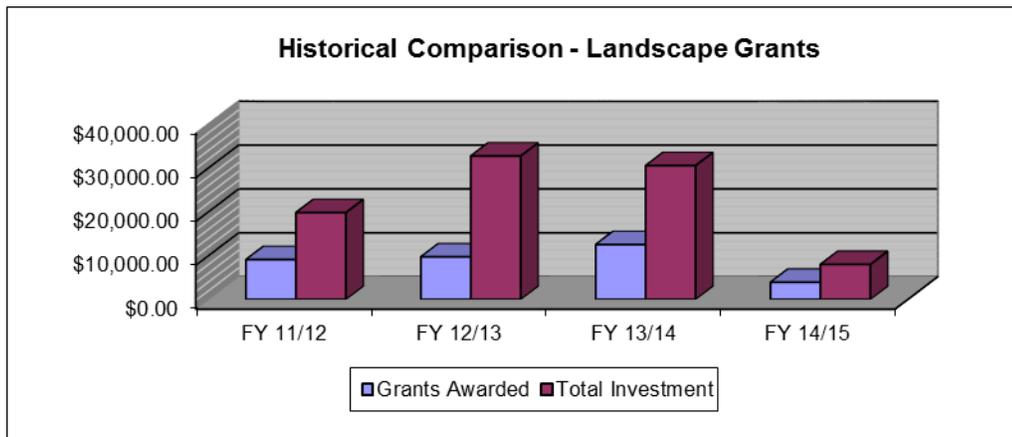


**Landscaping Incentive Grant**

The Landscaping Incentive Grant component of the program consists of the allocation of funds used to provide landscaping features so designed to provide aesthetical beautification to the surrounding community. During FY 14/15, the Community Appearance Commission recommended funding for three (3) Landscape Incentive Grants totaling \$3,910.82 as displayed in the following table.

**Landscape Incentive Grants FY 14/15**

<u>Grantee / Project</u>	<u>Grant Awarded</u>	<u>Total Investment</u>
Catawba County Historical Assoc.	\$2,500.00	\$5,147.21
Hickory Tree	\$1,120.00	\$2,240.00
Winn Appraisal Group	\$290.82	\$598.61
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$3,910.82</b>	<b>\$7,985.82</b>



## **Historic Preservation**

The City's Historic Preservation Commission oversees the preservation of historic structures and areas within the City of Hickory. The purpose of the Historic Preservation Commission is to preserve and protect the heritage of the City through recognition of structures and landmarks that personify our history.

The Historic Preservation Commission is responsible for the issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) for projects involving the modification or movement of any historic structures with the City's designated historic districts. During FY 14/15 the Historic Preservation Commission issued three minor Certificates of Appropriateness and three major Certificate of Appropriateness.

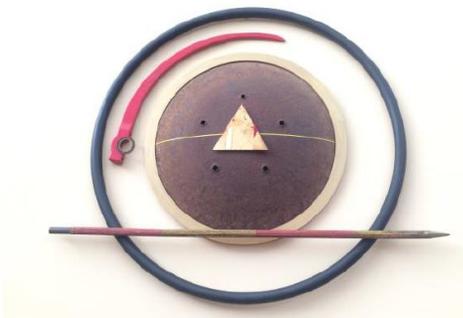
In addition to its activities involving Certificates of Appropriateness, Planning and Development Services Department, in conjunction with the Historic Preservation Commission accomplished the following during FY 14/15:

- The Commission funded sign toppers in the City's three residential historic districts.
- The Commission also continued a Federal Historic Preservation Fund Grant project to update the City's survey of historic properties. The project will include updates to existing survey files, identification of 100-125 properties that warrant more comprehensive survey, and an assessment of five residential areas for their potential for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The final part of the project is an assessment of 15 to 20 post-war subdivisions to determine their historic integrity. This project will be completed in September 2015.

## Public Art

The Public Art Commission is entrusted with the responsibility of providing civic art opportunities available for appreciation by the public in public places. The Public Art Commission reviews project proposals for the placement of pieces of art throughout the City. During FY 14/15 the Public Art Commission their mission to spread public art throughout the city. These projects include:

- Installation of one new bench.
- Restoration of five benches at various locations throughout the City.
- Purchased two new hanging wall sculptures and four paintings, all located in the Patrick Beaver Memorial Library.



## **Transportation**

Transportation functions involve the development and/or implementation of projects involving vehicular (non-transit) and pedestrian oriented modes of transportation. During FY 14/15, the Planning and Development Services Department worked on the following transportation related items:

- Worked along with the MPO on the planning of the US Highway 321 improvement project. This project includes the replacement of the bridges across Lake Hickory and the widening of the roadway from US Highway 70 to Grace Chapel Road in Caldwell County.

## **Brownfield Grants**

The Planning and Development Services Department works to identify and pursue opportunities to obtain state and federal funds that can be used towards expanding or creating new programs and facilities within the City of Hickory. Often in preparing proposals to be evaluated by funding agencies, the Planning and Development Services Department develops plans and organizes supplemental information that is to be used during the evaluation process.

In the summer of 2012, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) awarded the city two grants totaling \$400,000 for implementation of a Community-Wide Brownfields Program. This program provides opportunities for the city, developers and private property owners to evaluate, conduct environmental site assessments and market properties thought or shown to be environmentally contaminated.

The Planning and Development Services Department, along with AMEC, has helped to organize the Brownfield Advisory Group (BAG) to assist in prioritizing suspect sites and assist with community outreach.

The FY 14/15 has seen a significant increase in environmental site assessments. Thus far the City has provided funds for 30 environmental site assessments. Some of the sites receiving grant money include the Simmons Hosiery Mill, Lyerly Mill, the Mortez Mill, the former Clay Printing site, and the former Freightliner site, five properties that are in the process of being purchased by LRU for their medical program, the former Southern Desk site, and the former S&W Chemicals site.

The Lyerly Mill, Mortez Mill, Hollar Hosiery, and Piedmont Wagon sites have seen significant redevelopment, while aiming to keep the historic character of the buildings. The Lyerly Mill site is in the final stages of site transformation into the new corporate headquarters for Transportation Insight, a local logistics company. The site will include office space, recreation fields, and a cafeteria. The Mortez Mills site is being used as a multi-purpose complex with a fitness center, day spa, several office uses, including a recently announced software company that will add 190 new jobs. The former Piedmont Wagon site is now the new corporate headquarters for Cornerstone Financial Services. The redevelopment of these sites have acted as an economic catalyst for the surrounding areas.

## **Neighborhoods**

The City of Hickory has a historic partnership with its neighborhoods. The purpose of this initiative is to work with neighborhoods to improve the services provided and to facilitate effective communication between the neighborhood and the municipal government by encouraging neighborhoods to organize and form Neighborhood Associations.

During FY 14/15, the Hickory City Council and the staff of the Planning and Development Services Department continued its commitment to addressing neighborhood needs and concerns through participation in regular meeting of established neighborhood associations.

Doing its part, members of the Planning and Development Services Department served as staff liaisons to the Mountain View, Green Park, Oakwood/Hillcrest, Claremont, and Forest Hills Neighborhood Associations. In their capacity as Neighborhood Liaisons, staff organized meeting agendas, arranged meeting speakers and provided support to all other activities of these neighborhoods.

During this reporting period staff has also worked with the Green Park and Claremont Neighborhood Associations to begin the process of updating their existing Neighborhood Plans. Staff has made significant progress on both plans with the Claremont Neighborhood plan being near completion. The activities associated with this process will be reported in more detail in following reports.