



The Hickory Regional Planning Commission will hold its regular meeting on **Wednesday, September 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers of City Hall.** The following will be the agenda for the Regular Meeting:

AGENDA

- Parliamentary Call to Order
- Welcome
- Roll Call
- Swearing in Ward 1 representative, John Andrews.
- Items of Correspondence
- City Council Action
- Approval and signing of minutes from July 22, 2026 meeting.
- Reading of State Rules of Ethics
- Reading of Rules of Public Hearing Procedures

PRESENTATIONS AND HEARINGS

1. **Rezoning Petition RZ 26-08.** Rezoning of property owned by the City of Hickory located at 964 and 970 Airport Rhodhiss Road and a vacant parcel to the east, from Burke County R-3 Residential to Planned Development (PD). The subject properties are shown in more detail as Burke County PINs 2783785060, 2783788894, 2783886713.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Annual Election of Officers.

The Hickory Regional Planning Commission does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the provision of its service as charged by the City Council of the City of Hickory. All meetings are held in accessible facilities. Any person with a disability needing special accommodation should contact the Planning Department at (828) 323-7422 at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

Hickory Regional Planning Commission
Wednesday, July 22, 2026, 6:00 pm

A regular meeting of the Hickory Regional Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, July 22, 2026, 6:00 pm, in Council Chambers of the Julian G. Whitener Municipal Bldg.

Members Present: Bill McBrayer, Bill Pekman, Sam Hunt, Christina McNally, Anne Williams, and Beth Berry

Members Excused: Rob Lelewski and Steve Mull

Members Absent: none

Others Present: Planning Director Brian Frazier, Senior Planner Mike Kirby, City Attorney Tim Swanson, and Minutes Clerk Anne Starnes

A quorum was present.

Parliamentary Call to Order & Welcome: Bill McBrayer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and welcomed everyone.

Roll Call: Planning Director Brian Frazier said a quorum was present, and Mr. Lelewski and Mr. Mull were excused.

Items of Correspondence: none

City Council Action: City Council unanimously approved Rezoning Petition 26-05 for property in the Highland area, the first of Legacy Home Builders' zoning requests on the Commission's July meeting agenda, and following the meeting, they withdrew their second rezoning request.

Approval and Signing of Minutes from the June 24, 2026 Meeting: Minutes from the previous meeting held in June were distributed in advance. No additions, deletions, or corrections were stated. Anne Williams moved, seconded by Christina McNally, to approve the June 24, 2026 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Reading of State Rules of Ethics: Mr. McBrayer read the NC Ethics Rules aloud:

In accordance with the State Government Ethics Act, it is the duty of every member of this board to avoid both conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts. Does any member of this board have any known conflict of interest, or appearance of conflict, with respect to any matters coming before us today? If so, please identify the conflict, or the appearance of conflict, and refrain from any undue participation in the particular matter involved.

None of the members stated a conflict of interest or asked to be recused.

Reading of Rules of Public Hearing Procedures: Mr. McBrayer said there was one public hearing on the meeting agenda, for a rezoning petition. He explained the public hearing procedure, saying the staff report would be presented first, followed by a period of 15-minutes for persons in favor of the rezoning to speak, then a period of 15-minutes for the persons to speak who are not in favor of the petition, and a 5-minute rebuttal period for both groups. The Commission will discuss the request and vote to either recommend City Council approve or deny the rezoning, and their members will make a final decision during a future meeting, here in Council Chambers.

PRESENTATIONS & HEARINGS

1. Rezoning Petition 26-07. Rezoning of property owned by Matthew T. Varney and Yer Varney located at 2536 Startown Road, from Medium Density Residential (R-2) to Planned Development (PD). The subject properties are shown in more detail as Catawba County PIN 3721-19-50-9129.

Mr. McBrayer opened the hearing for Rezoning 26-07.

Senior Planner **Mike Kirby** presented the staff report and referred to PowerPoint slides. He reviewed **slide #2** (Rezoning Petition 26-07).

- **Property Owners:** Matthew T. Varney and Yer Varney
- **Applicant:** Piedmont Companies, LLC
- **Location:** 2536 Startown Road
- **Current Zoning:** Medium Density Residential (R-2)
- **Property Size:** 10.91 acres
- **Request:** The applicants have requested to rezone the property in its entirety to (PD) Planned Development

Slide #3 (Map 1. Hickory by Choice 2030 Future Land Use). Mr. Kirby said the area highlighted in dark yellow is Medium Density Residential, as is the subject property, which is hashed in red on the map.

Slide #4 (Map 2. Current Zoning). Mr. Kirby said this would be the current zoning map, noting the subject property is located in Hickory R-2 and hashed in red. The zoning designation directly south of the subject property is Catawba County R-20. The area directly north, shaded in red, is zoned Planned Development (PD) and includes the existing Planned Developments Trivium Meadows and Trivium 1 & 2. The area shaded in purple is zoned Industrial-Conditional (IND-CZ), which is also part of the Trivium Corporate Park across the road.

Slide #5 (Map 3. Aerial Map). Mr. Kirby pointed out the adjacent Planned Developments to the north on the aerial map, Trivium Meadows and Trivium 1 & 2, again noting that Trivium Corporate Park is located on the opposite side of Startown Road.

Slide #6 (Site Plan). Mr. Kirby said the site plan for the project was submitted by the applicants. It includes 41 single-family homes and two (2) entrances from Startown Road. He said the back section of the property would remain as open space, which includes a stream.

Mr. Kirby reviewed **slide #7** (Rezoning 26-07).

- According to the HBC 2030 Plan, the property is located in a **Medium-Density Residential** Area.
- The subject properties are located contiguous to other Planned Developments with mainly single-family homes. The proposed development would continue this pattern.
- The proposed development is within a short distance of larger shopping areas along Startown Road and Catawba Valley Blvd. While walking to these areas may not be ideal, their close proximity would reduce cross-town commutes for goods and services.
- The development proposal shows approximately 5 acres of the development's total area as being set aside as open space. Much of this open space is located in the eastern portion of the project site, which will provide the required riparian buffering for the existing stream.

He noted the density would be approximately 4-units per acre, as the applicants have requested smaller lot sizes in the Planned Development in order to avoid impacting the existing stream on the property.

Mr. Kirby reviewed **slide #8** (Rezoning 26-07).

Recommended Action

- Staff has found:
 - The request is **consistent** with the Hickory by Choice 2030 Comprehensive Plan.
 - The requested **action is reasonable**, as it continues with density comparable to the existing Medium Density Residential district, and continues an established land use pattern.
- Given these factors, staff recommends the following:
 - **Affirm the petition is consistent** with the Hickory by Choice 2030 Comprehensive Plan and **acknowledge the action is reasonable** in addressing the continuation of development patterns in the general vicinity.
 - The development of the property shall **adhere to regulations provided** in the Land Development Code and any other applicable standards.
 - Forward a **recommendation of approval** to Hickory City Council.

Mr. Kirby said staff recommends approval of Rezoning Petition 26-07. There were no questions from members, and Mr. McBrayer thanked him.

PROPOSERS

• **Will Clayton**, 2080 Singer Drive, Hickory NC, addressed Commission members, saying he is the owner of Clayton Engineering & Design and was attending for the property owner, who is out of the country until next week. He understood the property had previously been annexed, noting that when they laid the project out, it was getting close to the creek area, so they tried to place everything close together and avoid interfering with the existing stream, and requested a Planned Development so they could reduce the lot size.

Mr. Clayton offered to address members' questions, and there were none. Mr. McBrayer thanked him.

• **Loren Barrett**, 1910 Waterbury Court, Hickory NC, addressed Commission members, saying she attended the City Council meeting on the previous evening. She explained her reason for attending the Commission meeting was to inquire about Hickory's utility growth, specifically the long-term infrastructure planning and appropriation of funds to purchase property directly adjacent to the Henry Fork Wastewater Treatment facility, which was discussed at the City Council meeting last night. She requested clarification on the intended 48-acre expansion, and Mr. McBrayer said the property being rezoned here did not appear to be the same property she was describing. He clarified that the only agenda business being conducted by Commission members tonight was the rezoning petition that City staff had presented earlier, and the members could not address her concerns. City Attorney Tim Swanson added further clarification, and Ms. Barrett thanked everyone for their time. Mr. Kirby offered to discuss the matter with Ms. Barrett at later time, and Mr. McBrayer thanked her for her interest.

No additional proposers requested to speak.

OPPONENTS

No opponents signed up or requested to speak.

Mr. McBrayer closed the public hearing. He asked for a motion to recommend City Council approve or deny Rezoning Petition 26-07.

Anne Williams moved, seconded by Sam Hunt, to forward a recommendation of approval of Rezoning Petition 26-07 to City Council, as it is consistent with the Hickory by Choice 2030 Comprehensive Plan and the current development pattern in the surrounding area. There was no further discussion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McBrayer said the motion had carried, and would be forwarded to City Council.

Other Business: Mr. McBrayer asked if there was any further business for the Commission.

RFQ Proposals – Mr. Frazier said the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was released for consulting services for a new Hickory by Choice 2050 Plan and Land Development Code. Staff received 16 statements from potential consultants, and the top five (5) were recommended to the City Manager’s Office. They hope their chosen candidate will be under contract sometime in September.

Resignation – Mr. McBrayer said he and his wife would be moving to Shelby soon, where other family members live. He explained the circumstances that led them to this very difficult decision, and said he would be resigning from the Commission, effective September 1, 2026. While the members and staff support his family’s decision, everyone will miss his friendship and leadership; it is a huge loss for Hickory and the Commission.

Next Meeting: The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 26, 2026, 6:00 pm at City Hall. Mr. Frazier was not sure if members will need to meet next month, but said staff would advise them in advance.

Adjourn: Mr. McBrayer thanked everyone for attending. There being no further business, he declared the meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.

Bill McBrayer, Chair
Hickory Regional Planning Commission

Anne Starnes, Minutes Clerk
City of Hickory

REZONING ANALYSIS

PETITION: 26-08

APPLICANT: City of Hickory

AGENT: City of Hickory

PROPERTY LOCATION: 964 and 970 Airport Rhodhiss Road and including an unaddressed parcel to the east.

PIN NUMBERS: (Burke County) 2783785060, 2783788894, 2783886713

WARD: If annexed, the subject properties will be in Ward 5 (Councilwoman Dula).

REQUESTED ACTION: Rezone from Burke County R-3 Residential to City of Hickory Planned Development (PD)

ACREAGE: 24.39 acres

REQUESTED ACTION: The properties are under consideration for voluntarily annexation and zoned R-3 Residential by Burke County. The request is to rezone the property to Planned Development (PD).

BACKGROUND: The City has petitioned for voluntary non-contiguous annexation of the properties, which are located within the jurisdiction of Burke County. Upon annexation of the properties, the City requests they be rezoned to Planned Development (PD).

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL: The properties are currently zoned R-3 Residential by Burke County. Burke County's zoning ordinance describes this district as: *A less restrictive residential district allowing a broader range of residential uses including Class A and Class B manufactured homes. A variety of compatible non-residential uses are allowed in areas that may be less suburban in nature.*

If annexed, the City would request the properties be rezoned Planned Development (PD). The City's intention is to use the properties for the location of the future Catawba River Environmental Education Center (CREEC). This facility will be open to the public for educational and recreational purposes. The plan involves the renovation and construction of buildings, trails and parking areas to support the Center's mission.

REVIEW CRITERIA: In reviewing and making recommendations on proposed zoning map amendments, review bodies shall consider the following factors:

1. Consistency of the proposed zoning with the Hickory Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan (Hickory by Choice 2030) and the stated Purpose and Intent of this Land Development Code;

The properties are not located within an area strategized as a growth area by the comprehensive plan when it was finalized in 2011. Since this time the city has grown into northeastern Burke County. Burke County's ordinances for the area were examined, and parks and similar facilities would be permitted as the properties are currently zone. While this isn't a recommendation from the City's comprehensive plan, it is an indication the properties, prior to annexation, were foreseen as possibly containing the same or similar use being proposed.

- Preserve and protect land, air, water and environmental resources and property values.

The request is to rezone the properties to Planned Development (PD) with the intention of being used for the location of an environmental education center. The center itself, as depicted on the overall development plan, has a small footprint, and preserves much of the property as open space and riverine buffer.

- Promote land use patterns that ensure efficiency in service provision as well as wise use of fiscal resources and governmental expenditures.

As previously outlined, the area is predominately residential in nature. The requested rezoning is to allow for a Planned Development consisting of a public park and educational center. Facilities of this type provide a direct quality of life benefit for citizens and nearby residents. The expenditures put toward the facility will further this public benefit.

When the properties were evaluated for annexation, it was determined public resources were not expected to be negatively impacted.

- Regulate the type and intensity of development; and

The current land use pattern of the immediate area is residential in nature. Public resources to provide critical services have been determined to be in place to serve the properties, now and into the future.

- Ensure protection from fire, flood and other dangers.

Development on the subject properties will be required to adhere to all state and local building, fire, and flood zone related development regulations. Such regulations will ensure proper protection is provided to ensure surrounding residents, and property is adequately protected as prescribed by law.

2. Existing land uses within the general vicinity of the subject property **(Please refer to accompanying maps for more detail):**

- **North:** Lake Hickory (Catawba River) abuts the properties to the north.
- **South:** The properties are zoned R-3 Residential by Burke County and occupied by residences.
- **East:** The properties are zoned R-3 Residential by Burke County and occupied by residences.
- **West:** The properties are zoned R-2 Residential by Burke County and occupied by residences.

3. The suitability of the subject property for the uses permitted under the existing and proposed zoning classification:

The current Burke County R-3 Residential district permits parks and public facilities. The rezoning is being put forward to assign city zoning after the properties have been annexed. With the proposed use of the properties being a park and educational center, the future use of the properties would comply with the current zoning.

4. The extent to which rezoning will detrimentally affect properties within the general vicinity of the subject property:

The rezoning and future use of the properties are not expected to have major impacts on the surrounding area. Lighting and noise from groups and visitors may occur but are not anticipated to be significant.

5. The extent to which the proposed amendment (zoning map) will cause public services including roadways, storm water management, water and sewer, fire, and police protection to fall below acceptable levels.

Public resources to provide critical public services have been determined to be in place, and will not be negatively impacted by the rezoning.

6. The proposed amendment (zoning map) will protect public health, safety, and general welfare.

Any future development that occurs of the properties as the result of the rezoning, will be required to be adhered to regulations related to zoning, building and fire code, traffic, stormwater, etc., which will work in conjunction with one another to ensure the health and safety of residents and visitors are properly protected.

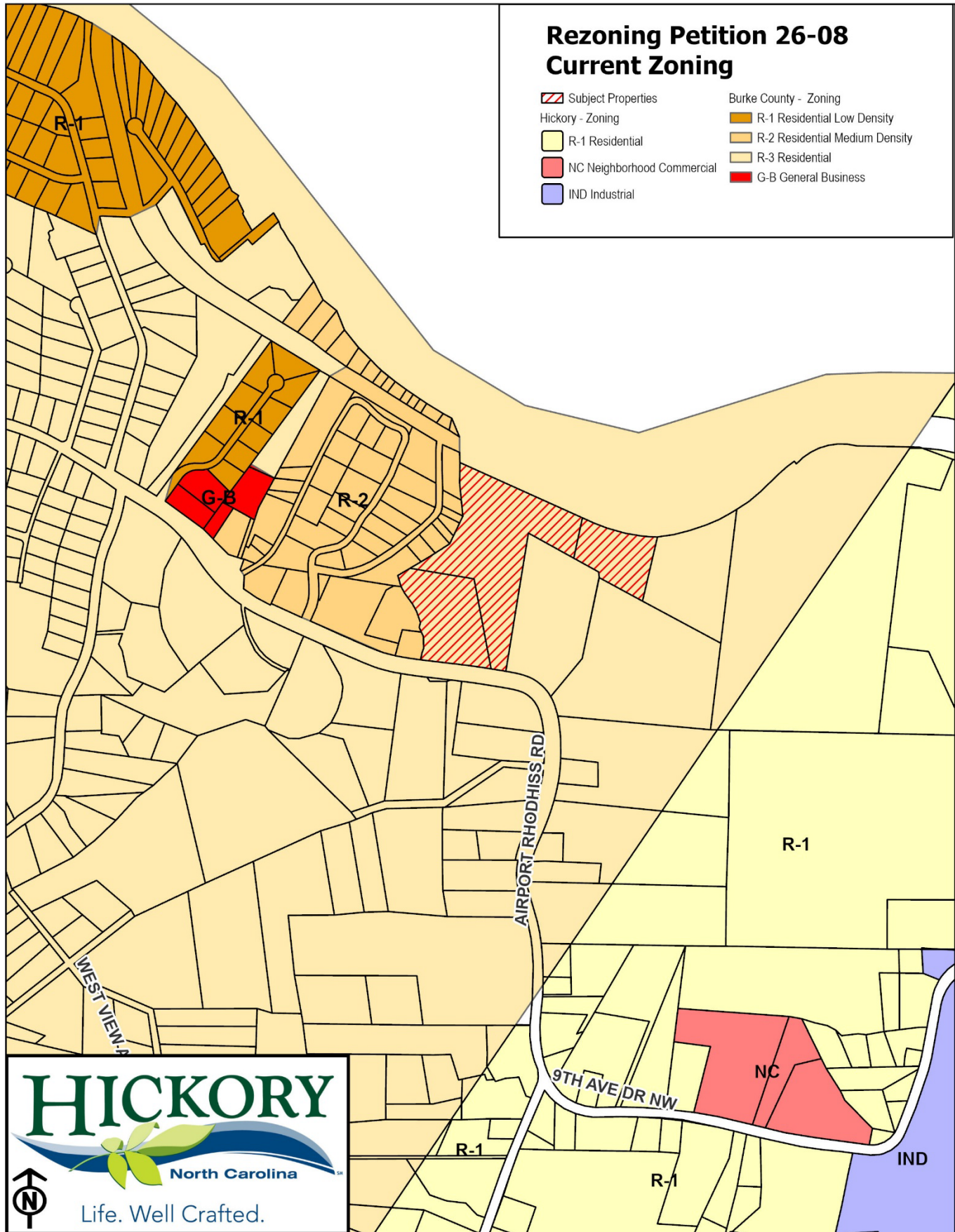
RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Upon analysis, staff has found Rezoning Petition 26-08 to involve properties located **outside the Hickory Choice 2030 Comprehensive Plan's study area**, and recommends the following:

1. The Hickory Regional Planning Commission finds the Comprehensive Plan does not contain strategies or recommendations of the area. However, the rezoning and future use would be compliant with the current zoning;
2. Adopt a statement indicating the Comprehensive Plan does not include strategies or recommendations for the area; and
3. Forward a recommendation of approval to the Hickory City Council.

CITIZEN INPUT:

As of September 14, 2026, staff has not received any inquiries regarding this petition.



Rezoning Petition 26-08 Aerial Photography

 Subject Properties

