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## Western Piedmont Council of Governments

*Creative Regional Solutions Since 1968*

June 2017



### Table of Contents

Feature Story  
[CEDS Update](#)

Area Agency on Aging  
[World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#)

Community & Economic Development  
[Counselor's 500th Client](#)

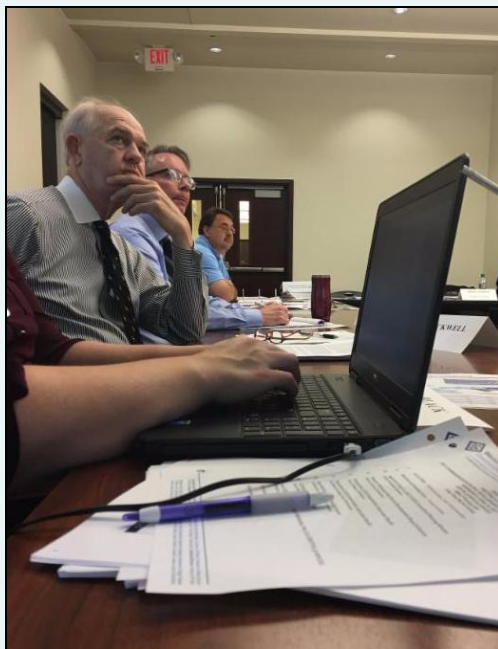
Community & Regional Planning  
[2017 Summer EIN Released](#)

IT/GIS Services  
[Summer Intern - Aaron McMillian](#)  
[Regional Housing Authority](#)  
[Employee Spotlight - Kim Duncan](#)

Workforce Development  
[Highlighting Core Performance Measures](#)

[Contact Information](#) | [Events Calendar](#)

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update



On May 31, the CEDS committee reviewed CEDS Vision Statement: "The CEDS will maintain and enhance vibrant, healthy, and prosperous communities in the Western Piedmont Region. The vision will be achieved by robust and aggressive economic development, desirable and affordable housing, successful marketing of regional assets, inclusive and flourishing community life, retention and recruitment of a talented workforce, and efficient and well-maintained infrastructure." Committee members voted to approve the Vision Statement.

The CEDS Committee then began to finalize the strategies of the CEDS Action Plan. Strategies were discussed in the Infrastructure-Transportation and Water, Sewer and Broadband, Housing and Marketing-Regional Recruitment and Retention portions of the CEDS Action Plan. Each CEDS strategy includes details on how the strategy will be accomplished, strategy metrics and responsible parties to implement the strategy.

During the May 31 meeting, the committee also heard a presentation on regional transportation updates. They learned about the functions of the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Technical Coordinating Meeting (TCC). The MPO is currently in the process of updating its regional long-range transportation plan. The presentation concluded with a discussion of major transportation projects in the region.

On June 7, the CEDS Committee completed work on finalizing the CEDS strategies. Strategies were discussed in the Community Life, Workforce and Economic Development sections of the CEDS Action Plan. During the June 7 meeting, Committee members also approved a list of CEDS Performance Measures. The measures (or benchmarks) can be used as a tool at gauge the impact the CEDS strategies are having on the region.

The final CEDS committee meeting will take place on Wednesday, August 2, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM at the WPCOG offices, as the committee will vote to recommend approval of the CEDS report to the WPCOG Policy Board. The committee will also discuss CEDS implementation. For more information about the CEDS process, agendas or presentations, please refer to the [WPCOG website](#).

Article by Taylor Dellinger

## Community & Economic Development Counselor's 500th Client Persistent, Deserving



Persistence can pay off. Cynthia Abernathy's wait to receive help through North Carolina Housing Finance Agency's (NCHFA) Hardest Hit Fund began in the summer of 2015 and ended on June 15, 2017 when she signed her closing documents.

Ms. Abernathy had received funding through the Mortgage Payment Program when a local cable company downsized and she was laid off. In 2015 when she contacted Kim Duncan, a WPCOG housing counselor, Ms. Abernathy had part-time work and she was expecting her social security benefits to begin in the fall.

Kim suggested that Ms. Abernathy apply for the new program NCHFA was rolling out at the time, Principle Reduction Recast/ Lien Extinguishment (PRRLE). In early 2016 Ms. Abernathy was approved for PRRLE but her lender refused to allow her to receive the funds from NCHFA.

After some brainstorming and planning, Ms. Abernathy decided to refinance with another lender that accepted NCHFA funding. She did that in late 2016. This spring Kim submitted a new PRRLE application for Ms. Abernathy and it was recently approved for \$50,000.

To make the success even more special, Ms. Abernathy was Kim's 500<sup>th</sup> client to receive Hardest Hit funding.

"Ms. Abernathy is a wonderful lady. She has been great to work with and so patient through the long process. I'm excited that she turned out to be my 500<sup>th</sup> client," Kim said.

Ms. Abernathy wrote a thank you letter to NCHFA saying she screamed and praised the Lord when Kim told her she was approved. "I am so, so grateful for Kim and the PRRLE Program. The PRRLE Program was my light at the end of the tunnel."

To date, the WPCOG has assisted 824 clients. If you would like more information about the PRRLE program or other programs offered through the Mortgage Payment Program, please call Laurie Powell at (828)485-4249.

Article by Kim Duncan

## 2017 Summer Economic Indicators Newsletter (EIN) Released

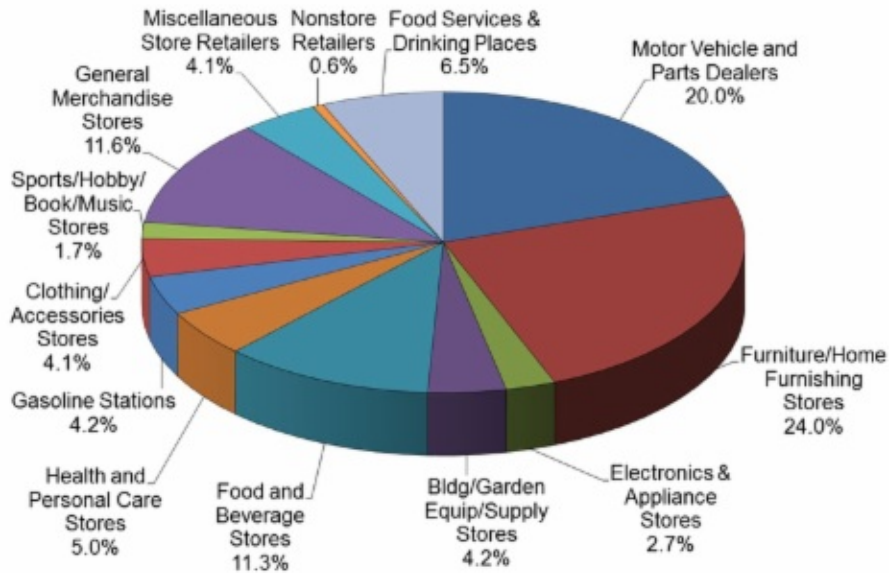
The latest issue of the Economic Indicators Newsletter (EIN) is now available. The current issue addresses Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) unemployment rates, Hickory Metro per capita personal income (PCPI), Hickory MSA Retail Sales and Hickory MSA Site-Built Single-Family Building Permit Trends.

Here are a few key highlights of the EIN:

- The Hickory MSA's unemployment rate declined from 4.7% in October 2016 to 3.9% in April 2017.
- April 2017 was the first month since December 2000 that the Hickory MSA unemployment rate was lower than 4%.
- Hickory MSA Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) grew from \$32,390 in 2012 to \$35,406 in 2015.
- According to estimates provided by North Carolina Department of Commerce through its ACCESSNC web portal, Hickory MSA 2016 estimated total retail sales equaled \$6.9 billion. Catawba County retail sales accounted for 58.2% (\$4.00 billion) of all Hickory MSA retail sales in 2016.
- The largest retail subsector was furniture/home furnishing stores with 24.0% (\$1.65 billion) of all 2016 Hickory MSA retail sales. Closely behind furniture store sales was motor vehicle and parts dealers, whose sales equaled \$1.37 billion (20.0% of all sales).
- In 2016, the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA had the seventh highest total retail sales of any NCMSA.
- The Hickory MSA had the highest percentage of retail sales from furniture (24%) than any other metro area in North Carolina.
- The number of site-built single-family permits issued in the Hickory MSA has increased from 299 in 2011 to 586 in 2016.
- The 586 single-family permits issued in the Hickory MSA during 2016 was the most since 2009.

Between 2012 and 2016, the estimated value of site-built single-family construction grew to \$125.2 million for an 86.0% increase.

### Distribution of Hickory MSA Retail Sales by NAICS Retail Subsector, 2016



Source: NC Department of Commerce ACCESSNC and ESRI Retail-Marketplace Database, 2017.

To subscribe to the EIN, please contact Taylor Dellinger, Data Analyst at 828-485-4233 or by email [taylor.dellinger@wpcog.org](mailto:taylor.dellinger@wpcog.org).

Article by Taylor Dellinger

## IT/GIS Services

### Aaron McMillian - Meeting the Next Generation of IT/GIS Summer Internship



The WPCOG IT/GIS Department is pleased to welcome Aaron M. McMillian from Appalachian State University for a summer internship beginning on May 22, 2017.

Aaron was born in Salisbury, NC and lived in Troutman and Mount Holly before moving to Mooresville for his teen years, where he graduated from Lake Norman High School. Aaron then attended Western Carolina University where he studied Computer Information Systems. He spent two years there before transferring to Appalachian State, where he has been pursuing a bachelor's degree in Geography with a concentration in Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

While attending Appalachian State, Aaron worked in numerous part-time jobs while attending school full-time. During each summer at ASU, Aaron performed internships with an IT consulting company, CB5 Solutions LLC, based out of Fort Mill, SC. This experience provided hands-on learning, including working on customer websites as part of a consulting team, project-based duties and help-desk assistance.

The coursework Aaron has studied at Appalachian for the GIS Concentration has included Cartography, Town/City and Regional Planning, Digital Image Processing, Environmental Remote Sensing, Advanced GIS and GeoComputation. He also gained experience with Desktop GIS by working in the ASU Computer Lab.

Though Aaron still has to complete the GIS internship this summer to receive his degree, he was a part of ASU's May 2017 graduation ceremony. While at the COG, Aaron will be immersed in work ethic and responsibilities of the IT/GIS Department. His projects and tasks this summer involve working alongside the GIS Analysts, GIS Technician and GPS Technician staff members in their GIS duties. Aaron will also assist with IT activities related to the maintenance and upkeep of GIS servers as well as the administration of agency-wide computers, databases and servers. The IT/GIS Department is glad to have Aaron on our team this summer and look forward to his bright future in IT and GIS.



Article by [Trey Schweitzer](#)

## Regional Housing Authority

### Kim Duncan - RHA FSS Coordinator Employee Spotlight

In October 2009, Kim Duncan was hired by WPCOG as a Foreclosure Prevention Secretary. Initially, Kim worked with counselors to assist clients in applying for loss mitigation options through their mortgage lenders.

In October 2010, NC Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) launched the NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund,

and Kim began working exclusively with that program. Kim screened clients for eligibility, followed families through the process and helped 500 families through the program. The NC Foreclosure Prevention Fund offers multiple mortgage payment options. Kim determined which program would be most advantageous for families facing foreclosure. Kim became a certified housing counselor in 2012 and a Community Development Administrator in 2014.

In 2016, NCHFA gave Kim the Underwriter's Choice award, and thanks to her dedication and hard work, WPCOG was awarded the Best Agency.

In April, Kim joined the Regional Housing Authority as the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Coordinator. FSS is a program that offers Section 8 participants an opportunity to achieve goals, earn money and gain financial freedom with the guidance of an FSS Coordinator. While working to increase FSS participation, Kim is also working toward developing valuable community partnerships. In the FSS program, it is essential to create and maintain working relationships with agencies that offer services to help participants identify their obstacles and overcome them.

Since becoming our FSS coordinator, Kim has cultivated several partnerships to utilize housing as a platform for improving participant's quality of life. Kim attends monthly housing vision meetings in Catawba and Burke cultivating relationships with housing partners. She participated in training through Credit Financial Protection Bureau called Your Money Your Goals to help her become a better resource for helping her clients budget, earn money and become fiscally responsible. Kim has quickly become a vital part of the Regional Housing Authority team. She considers herself very fortunate to have worked with two amazing teams at WPCOG and is excited to see how the FSS program can continue to develop and grow.

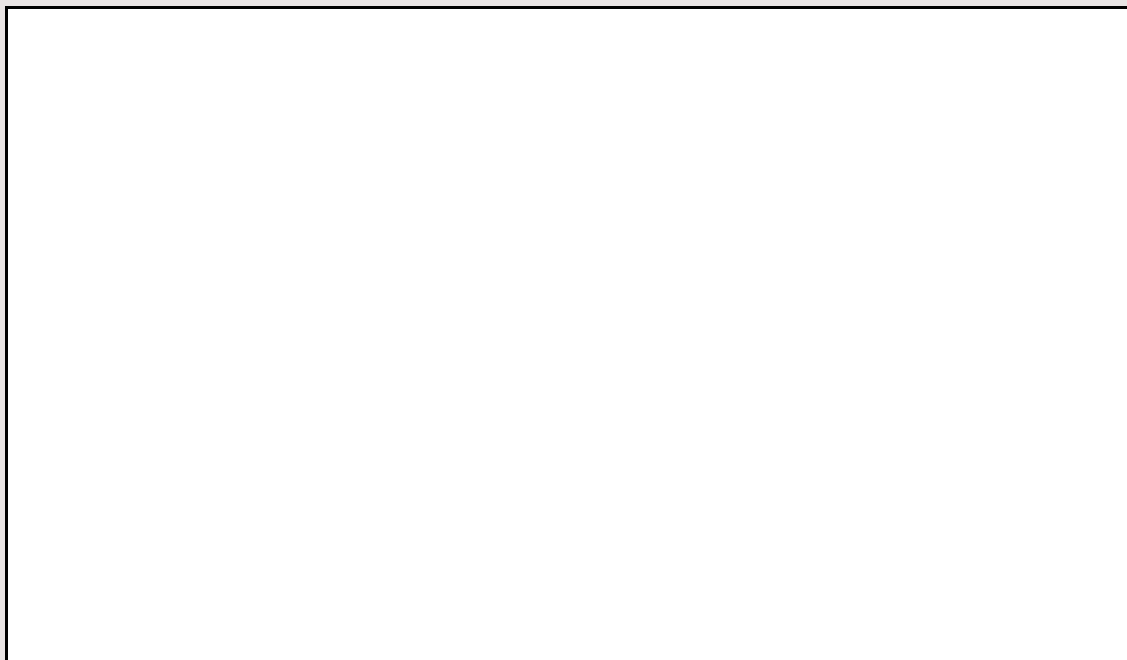
If you would like to know more about how to join the FSS program or if your agency would like more information on the FSS Program, please contact Kim Duncan at 828.485.4299 or [kim.duncan@wpcog.org](mailto:kim.duncan@wpcog.org)

Article by Kala Guido

## Workforce Development

### Highlighting Core Performance Measures

In an effort to improve our NCWorks Career Center Operations, the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board met with the career center management team to establish core performance measures that would be tracked and utilized to help improve services. A new dynamic dashboard has been developed to highlight core center operations and how the service staff provides impacts your region. Monthly measures are updated and advertised at [www.westernpiedmontworks.org](http://www.westernpiedmontworks.org).



## Jobseeker



12

Jobseekers currently receiving training scholarships



13

On-the-Job-Training (OJT) and Work Experience



153

People not working that newly registered in NCWorks



294

People that registered in NCWorks for the first time

## Employer



368

Employers served at NCWorks Career Center



14

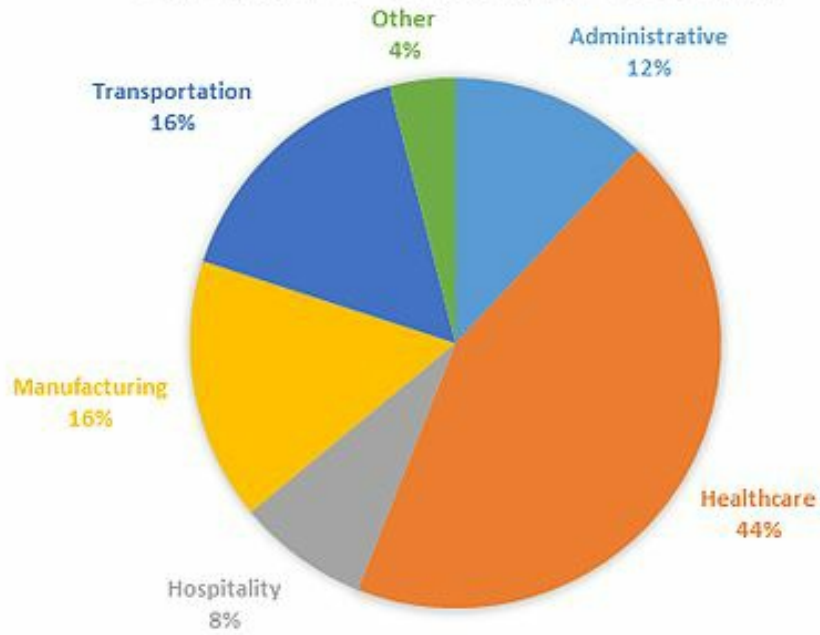
Staff assisted Recruitment Events at a Career Center or Employer Site



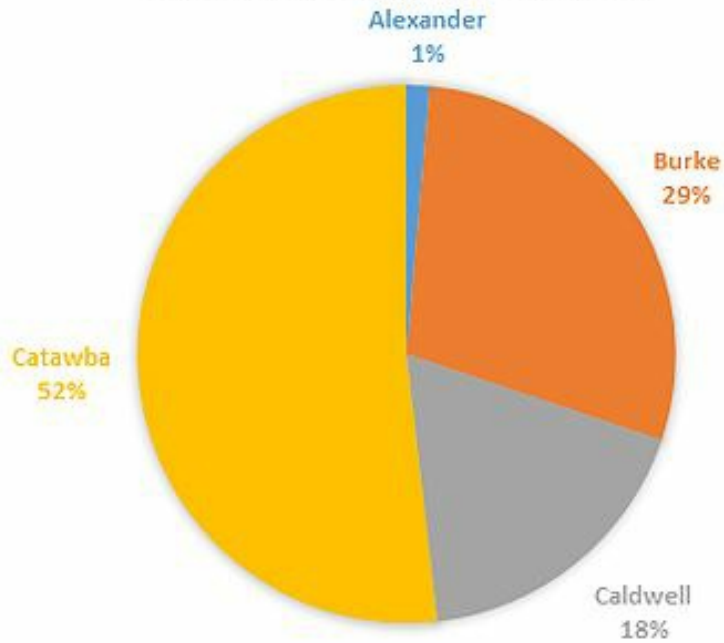
1,584

Job Openings in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell & Catawba Counties

## SCHOLARSHIP & TRAINING INDUSTRY



## JOB OPENINGS BY COUNTY



## Area Agency on Aging



For the last eleven years, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day has continued to bring forth the issues of elder abuse and promote awareness of the different types of abuse and the ways that the community can help to put an end to elder abuse. Elder Abuse Awareness Day aims to provide individuals with the tools and the courage to report an incident if they see one, however, not every incident is reported. The Center on Elder Abuse states that for every case that is reported to Adult Protective Services (APS), at least another five go unreported. This hidden problem needs to be brought up to the surface.

Elder abuse can come in many shapes and forms and they can often be hard to recognize. Abuse can be in the form of physical, sexual, psychological, financial, neglect, verbal abuse and threats, and abandonment. The abuse can come from a spouse, family member, caregiver, or friend. It is likely that someone they know is abusing the individual. Often, the individual being abused may not verbally say it, so it is up to the community to notice signs of abuse and report it immediately. It is crucial that the community looks out for their elders, especially those who are more vulnerable to abuse. This includes individuals with dementia, women, and "older" elders, which can increase their risk for abuse.

If you suspect that you or someone you love is being abused, report it immediately. During a life-threatening situation, do not hesitate to call 911. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to report abuse if they suspect that it is happening. To report elder abuse contact the Department of Social Services, Adult Protective Services. If you suspect abuse in a nursing facility, please contact your Regional Ombudsman or the Department of Health Regulations in North Carolina. If we stand together and unite against Elder Abuse, we can help put an end to the suffering of older adults in these situations. There are many resources within the Area Agency on Aging that can help you or your loved ones seek help for those who are being abused. These resources include information on how to contact authorities in the correct manner in order to receive help, education on what elder abuse is, and help you or someone you love protect themselves.

To recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, we wore purple to bring awareness and start a conversation that can possibly save someone from abuse. On June 15th, 2017, we asked the community to come together to educate themselves on how to help those who cannot help themselves.

As mentioned above, financial abuse happens way too often to older adults. The Area Agency on Aging will be partnering with Senior Information Resources to hold a Scam Jam. This Scam Jam will include many educational presentations to inform, educate, and help older adults protect themselves from being scammed and avoid being part of a fraud situation. This event is free and lunch will be included. It will be held at Hickory Metro Convention Center on October 6, 2017, at 10 a.m. So save the date and stay tuned on [www.wpcog.org](http://www.wpcog.org) for registration information coming soon. We encourage all of those who are worried about themselves or their loved ones in regards to financial fraud and scams to attend this event!

To find out more information about World Elder Abuse Day, please visit:

[eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/about](http://eldermistreatment.usc.edu/weaad-home/about)

The website provides free resources on what signs of abuse to look for, how to prevent elder abuse, and



## WPCOG Calendar of Eve

July	August	September
19 - Water Resources (12 PM)	02 - CEDS Meeting (3 PM)	09-12 - NADO Conference
20 - Regional Managers Meeting (12 PM)	03 - WNC Water Quality Conference (8:30 AM) @ Lenoir-Rhyne	19 - Western Piedmont Air Quality Committee (10 AM)
24 - Regional Aging Provider Meeting (2 PM)	04 - WNC Air Quality Conference (8:30 AM) @ Lenoir-Rhyne	26 - Policy Board (6 PM)
25 - Policy Board (6 PM)	14 - Regional Aging Advisory Committee (12 PM)	27 - MPO TCC (2 PM) & TAC (3:30 PM)
26 - MPO TCC (2 PM) & TAC (3:30 PM)	22 - Executive Committee Meeting (6 PM)	
28 - NCAUG NC Government GIS Symposium (10:45 AM)	23 - MPO TCC (2 PM) & TAC (3:30 PM)	
	24 - Workforce Board (8:30 AM)	
	24 - Mayors/Chairmen/Managers Meeting (6 PM)	

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