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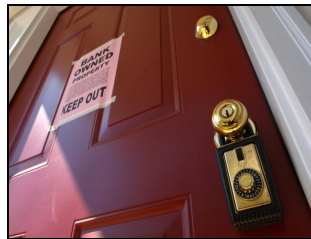
# WPCOG - Newsletter

## July 2018

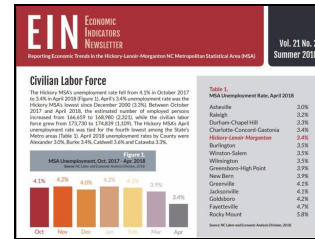
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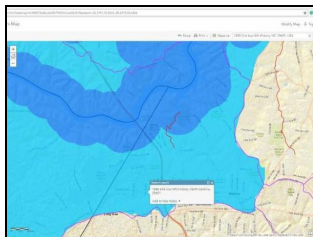
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## **Community & Economic Development** Free Foreclosure Prevention Resources



Western Piedmont Council of Governments offers free foreclosure prevention resources to help, including a state-designed fund that can help pay your mortgage while you look for work or complete job training for up to 18 months of assistance. This is funded through the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency and provides Mortgage Payment Program (MPP) and Principal Reduction/Recast Lien Extinguishment Program (PRRLE) to help with your mortgage. You may qualify if you've lost your job through no fault of your own after, have taken a new job and have a ten percent reduction in pay or have started receiving disability/social security after a job loss after 2008. The Council of Governments is a local, HUD-approved agency that has already helped more than 893 families. To find out if you are eligible, call Laurie Powell at 828-485-4249.

**Article by Laurie Powell**

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## Community & Regional Planning

### Summer EIN Highlights Hickory MSA Employment Trends and Hickory MSA Foreclosure Trends

The latest issue of the Economic Indicators Newsletter (EIN) was released today by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments. In print since 1998, this quarterly publication focuses on economic trends and issues affecting the Hickory Metro Region. The current issue addresses Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) unemployment rates, Hickory Metro per capita personal income, Hickory MSA employment trends and Hickory MSA foreclosure trends.

Here are a few key highlights of the EIN:

- The Hickory MSA's unemployment rate equaled 3.4% in April 2018. April's Hickory MSA unemployment rate was the lowest since December 2000 (3.3%)
- Between October 2017 and April 2018, the estimated number of employed persons increased from 166,659 to 168,980, while the civilian labor force grew from 173,730 to 174,839.
- Hickory MSA Per Capita Personal Income (PCPI) increased from \$32,215 in 2013 to \$36,526 in 2016
- Total employment in the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA grew from 145,044 in fourth quarter 2014 to 152,109 in fourth quarter 2017 (Table 3). About 29.3% (2,068) of the 7,065 employment increase in the Hickory MSA between fourth quarter 2014 and 2017 was in manufacturing.
- As of fourth quarter 2017, five Hickory MSA industries tallied average weekly wages of more than \$1,000 a week: finance and insurance (2,020 workers), management of companies and enterprises (2,432 workers), professional, scientific, and technical services (3,707 workers), utilities (535 workers) and wholesale trade (7,076 workers).
- The Hickory MSA was one of 13 metro areas in North Carolina that experienced employment gains over the past three years. North Carolina total employment increased 6.0% over the same period, due in part to rapid job growth in the Charlotte and Raleigh MSAs.
- The number of foreclosure cases in the Hickory MSA in 2017 (773) is 66.8% less than in 2010 (2,205).
- The Hickory MSA had the eighth lowest (or eighth highest) number of foreclosure cases among North Carolina Metros in 2017.

More than 40% of all foreclosure cases filed in North Carolina in 2017 occurred in either the Charlotte, Raleigh or Greensboro MSAs.

To view/download a copy of the [2018 Summer EIN](#) | [Sign Up for Future Issues](#)

Article by Taylor Dellinger

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## IT/GIS Services

### Unifour Septic System Repair Interactive Online Map

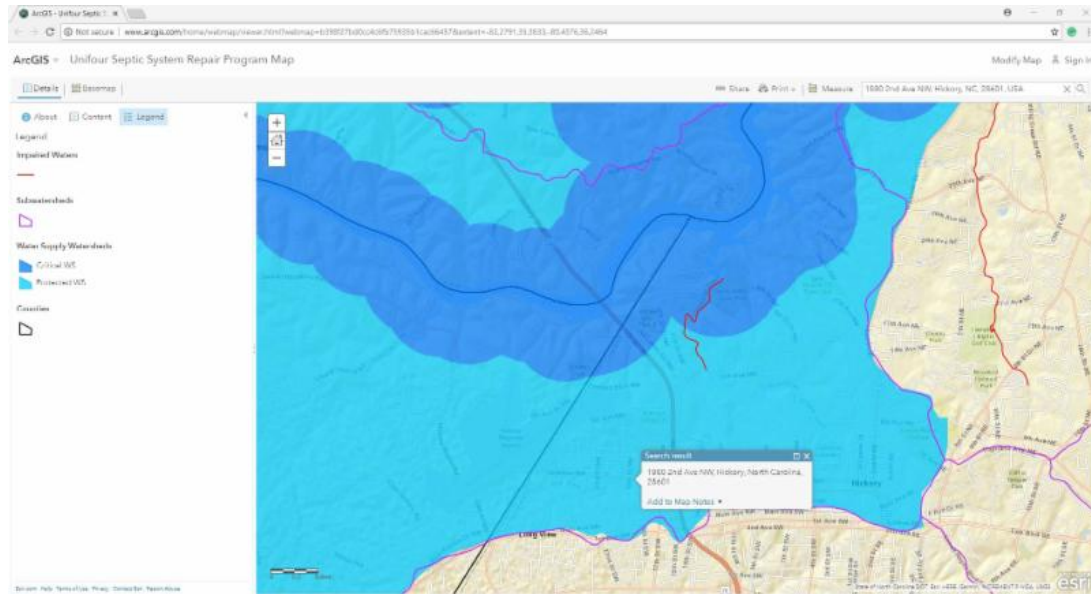
The Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) Information Technology/GIS (IT/GIS) Department is a central resource of geographic information for the Western Piedmont Region. They provide a variety of digital mapping solutions and geospatial data services for member governments, other public agencies, private agencies, and internal departments as needed.

In 2013, the WPCOG received a grant from the North Carolina Clean Water Management Trust Fund to continue their Unifour Septic System Repair Program. The program is a no-interest, revolving loan program for repairing failing septic systems. Eligibility for the program, at the time, required participants to live in the WPCOG region, meet an established income requirement, and be a homeowner.

The WPCOG received additional funding for the program by way of a United States

Environmental Protection Agency 319 grant in 2016, which tacked on more eligibility requirements. Now program members must own homes located either in the water supply watershed or a subwatershed of an impaired stream. With these new geographic restrictions, Environmental Planning staff approached the WPCOG IT/GIS Department for a reference map showing subwatershed boundaries, locations of impaired streams, and protected and critical areas of water supply watersheds.

For the request, IT/GIS staff created an ArcGIS Online interactive map with the requested layers to use for the Unifour Septic System Repair Program application screening process. The map quickly allows staff to see an applicant's qualifications by typing their address into the search box and the map will zoom to the home's location.



As an example, if the applicant lived at the WPCOG campus (1880 2nd Avenue Northwest, Hickory, NC, 28601), then they would qualify for septic tank replacement assistant because their home would be located in both a water supply watershed and subwatershed of an impaired stream.

To see if you would qualify for the Unifour Septic System Repair Program, click the link to our interactive map: <http://septic.wpcog.org/>

For more information about the WPCOG Unifour Septic System Repair Program, contact Senior Planner/Natural Resource Administrator, Johnny Wear, at 828-485-4283.

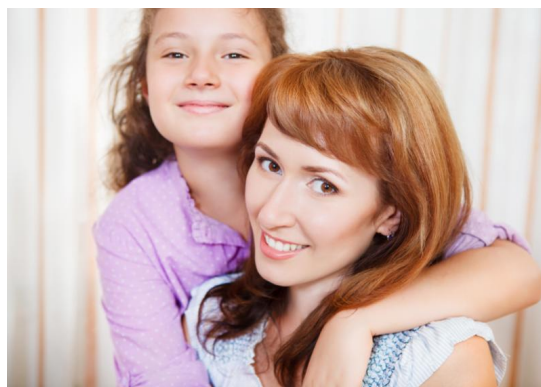
For more information about WPCOG IT/GIS services, contact Director of IT/GIS, Scott Miller, at 828-485-4235.

Article by Todd Stroupe

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## Regional Housing Authority RHA Offers New Program REACH to Assist Families Towards Self-Sufficiency

The Regional Housing Authority offers a voluntary program to assist Section 8 tenants in moving toward self-sufficiency. Recently renamed REACH, the program tries to assist families by providing resources needed to succeed in completing the goals they set for themselves.



A tenant can graduate from the program one of two ways:

- Setting goals and accomplishing them over a five-year period. The final step to graduate is to obtain suitable full-time work.
- Earning wages that grow in proportion to a family's housing costs and show that the family has reached an income level that, according to guidelines, says they are self-sufficient. Since June 2017 the RHA has graduated 7 tenants - all women - from the program.

We are proud of the hard work these ladies have put forth and the accomplishments they have made to better themselves and their families.

Article by Kim Duncan

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## Transportation

### MPO Completes Five-Year Update to the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Staffed by the Council of Governments, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) leads transportation planning and prioritization of transportation funding for our region. The MPO recently completed the five-year update of the prior 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan with the newly adopted 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. This new Plan recommends over \$2 Billion in transportation projects across all four counties.

The Plan is financially constrained by an updated forecast of Federal transportation revenues, much of which is comprised of the Federal gas tax coming back to the region. The Plan then serves as the adopted vision for how to prioritize those funds across multiple projects. In developing this vision, the Plan updated population and employment forecasts, as well as evaluated key transportation performance measures, including safety, travel time, goods movement, public transportation, and other modes of travel.

This Plan moves many roadway projects long anticipated by our region's citizens closer to implementation. These include widening projects to enhance capacity, as well as modernization projects to enhance safety. Projects are listed in the Plan by three timeframes: near-term by 2025, intermediate-term by 2035, and long-term by 2045.

The full Plan chapters, appendices, and maps can be read online at: [www.wpcog.org/metropolitan-trans-plan-mtp](http://www.wpcog.org/metropolitan-trans-plan-mtp).

Article by Brian Horton

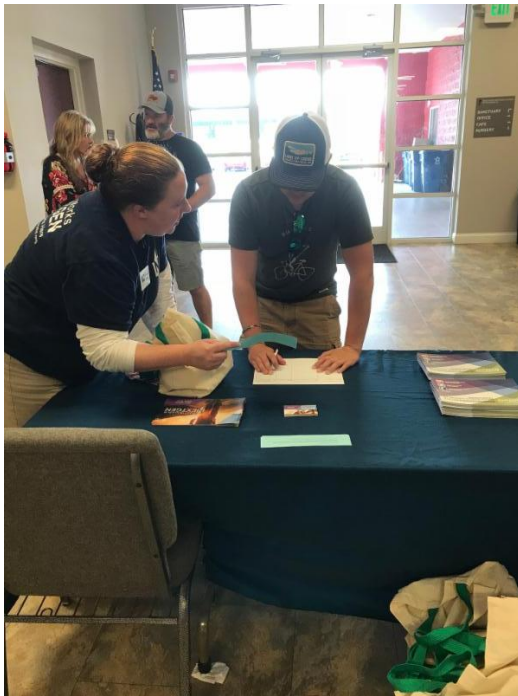
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## Workforce Development Board

### NEXTGen Hiring Event in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell & Catawba Counties



Our regions youth and young adults need work experience and valid career opportunities. On Saturday, June 23, 2018, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm the Western Piedmont Workforce Boards NCWorks Career Center NEXTGen program, hosted a hiring event in each of the four counties (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba).



We invited employers from across the four counties to participate in this inaugural NEXTGen Hiring Event for the Western Piedmont Region. This opportunity was at no cost to employers, and they understood that these future employees would come with little to no work experience. Partnering workforce agencies such as the community colleges, I-Care Inc., Vocational Rehabilitation, and Alexander EDC joined us at the event to help encourage our young population. Overall, an average of 17 employers per county participated and approximately 20 youth/young adult per county attended the event to seek out work experience opportunities.

This hiring event was and is our social responsibility to encourage youth and young adults to enter a career pathway, with endless possibilities for lifelong learning. This hiring event was and is our

social responsibility to encourage youth and young adults to enter a career pathway, with endless possibilities for lifelong learning.

Article by Wendy Johnson

## Area Agency on Aging Fighting the Fear of Falling

One out of three adults age 65 and older falls each year, but less than half talk to their

healthcare provider. Among older adults (those 65 or older), falls are the leading cause of injury death. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma. Many people who fall, even if they are not injured develop a fear of falling. This fear may cause them to limit their activities leading to reduce mobility and loss of physical fitness, which in turn increases their actual risk of falls.

Ask yourself, "Are falls a normal part of aging?" While many people answer yes, the actual answer is no. Many times older adults relate their falls to just another part of aging when in reality falls can be caused by various factors. Muscle weakness causes many falls in older adults, poor balance and vision, decreased muscle strength, lack of confidence and side-effects of medications.

If you have developed a fear of falling as you have gotten older, you are not alone. The Area Agency on Aging has been and will continue to work with older adults who have developed this fear by implementing evidence based programs such as A Matter of Balance and Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention.

A Matter of Balance is an evidence-based program that recognizes the risk of falling but also highlights real-world coping strategies to reduce the fears of falls. In the workshop participants will be able to shift their thought about falls to see that falls can be controllable. Throughout the Matter of Balance



workshop, participants will have an opportunity to establish realistic goals to increase their physical activity. The workshop will provide each participant with exercises that focus on balance and strength that can be done in the comfort of your home. A Matter of Balance also works with participants to change their view about falls and provides ways that older adults can reduce their risk of falls.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention is recognized worldwide for its overall health benefits. Focusing on three main principals which include movement control, weight transfer and integration of mind and body, Tai Chi works to increase balance and in turn reduce falls. The movement control principal in Tai Chi encourages slow, smooth and continues movements so that participants can increase their internal muscle strength without causing too much tension on their bodies and joints. The second principle, weight transfer, allows participants to focus on weight transfer with each step, therefore, helping improve overall mobility, coordination and balance. The integration of body and mind as the third principal encourages to find a balanced connection between their mind and body. With a balanced mind and body, participants are able to focus on relaxation and continue to build confidence as they gain strength.

If you are interested in A Matter of Balance, Tai Chi for Arthritis for Fall Prevention or any other health promotion workshops contact Aging Specialist Sarah Stamey at 828-485-4216 or find more information online at [www.wpcogaaa.org](http://www.wpcogaaa.org).

Article by Sarah Stamey



## Calendar of Events

August

September

October

06 - Regional Aging  
Advisory Committee/STHL  
Meeting (12pm)

22 - Greater Hickory MPO  
TAC/TCC (2pm)

23 - Workforce  
Development Board  
Meeting (8:30am)

28 - WPCOG Executive  
Committee Meeting (6pm)

29 - Regional Managers'  
Meeting (12pm)

30 - Mayor/Chairman/  
Manager Meeting (6pm)

18 - WPAQC Meeting  
(10am)

25 - WPCOG Policy Board  
Meeting (6pm)

26 - Greater Hickory MPO  
TAC/TCC (2pm)

17 - Water Resources  
Committee Meeting  
(11am)

22 - Regional Aging  
Provider Meeting (2pm)

23 - WPCOG Executive  
Committee Meeting (6pm)

24 - Greater Hickory MPO  
TAC/TCC (2pm/3:30pm)

25 - Mayor/Chairman/  
Manager Meeting (6pm)



Stay Connected



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[www.wpcog.org](http://www.wpcog.org)