

Tourism is Big Business in the Hickory Metro

2019 - 2020 Year in review

1. Mecklenburg - \$5,998 B
2. Wake - \$2,563 B
3. Guilford - \$1,591 B
4. Buncombe - \$1,294 B
5. Dare - \$1,267 B
6. Forstyh - \$1,001 B
7. Durham - \$913 M
8. New Hanover - \$658 M
9. Brunswick - \$633 M
10. Cumberland - \$601 M
11. Moore - \$563 M
12. Cabarrus - \$478 M
13. Carteret - \$389 M
14. Henderson - \$324.7 M
15. Nash - \$324.5 M
16. **Catawba - \$302 M**

In Catawba County:

- **3.3%** increase in visitor spending
- **2,510** people directly employed in travel & tourism industry
- **\$16.48** Million in state tax revenue
- **\$8.96** Million in local tax receipts

In 2019 Catawba County ranked **16** out of 100 counties in visitor spending for North Carolina.

#16

Visitors to North Carolina set a new record for spending in 2019 with an increase of 5.6 percent from 2018, \$26.7 billion in total spending.

"Our tourism partners in our neighboring counties of Alexander, Burke and Caldwell also saw an increase in visitor spending in 2019. We work well with our tourism partners in the Hickory Metro and working together is beneficial for all of us as visitors do not see city and county lines. Working together leads to a larger footprint of attractions, outdoor events, natural amenities and more."

-Mandy Pitts Hildebrand, CEO
Hickory Metro Convention
Center & Visitors Bureau

- Visitors to and within **Alexander County** spent \$23.22 million, which is an increase of 5.9 percent. More than 130 people are employed in the tourism industry with a payroll of \$3.51 million. State tax revenue generated was \$1.28 million and local taxes generated about \$960,000.
- Visitors to and within **Burke County** spent \$110.01 million, which is an increase of 2.7 percent. More than 760 people are employed in the tourism industry with a payroll of \$17.02 million. State tax revenue generated was \$5.99 million and local taxes generated about \$3.09 million.
- Visitors to and within **Caldwell County** spent \$61.19 million, which is an increase of 10.1 percent. More than 380 people are employed in the tourism industry with a payroll of \$9.65 million. State tax revenue generated was \$3.31 million and local taxes generated about \$1.88 million.

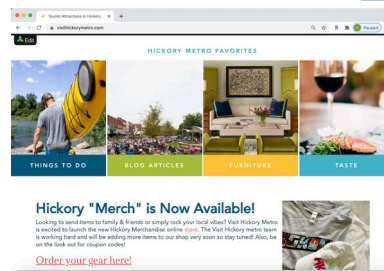
www.VisitHickoryMetro.com

There has been a large increase in website traffic for www.VisitHickoryMetro.com. Created in 2019, the vibrant site promotes things to do, local restaurants, blogs and stories and now also promotes a Hickory Metro "merchandise" landing page. In the midst of the pandemic, a COVID-19 page was created with updates on local restaurants, activities and more.

Website Specs:

Sept. 5 2019- Sept. 11 2020

- 51K Users
- 61K Sessions
- 56.5% Mobile
- (Wed.-Sat. More Traffic for things to do)



@VisitHickoryMetro



Facebook

- Total Page Views: 4,000
- Gained Page Likes: 644
- Gained Followers: 681
- Total Reach: 423,101
- Story Reach(Jan.-Jun.): 2,121

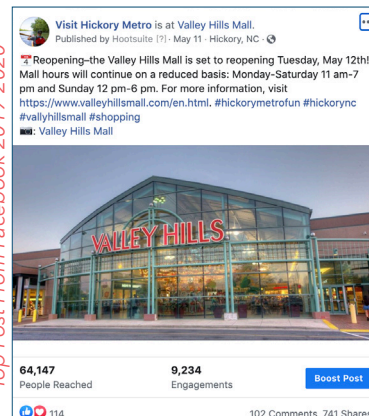


Instagram

- Total Followers: 1,528
- Gained Followers: 463
- Post Reach: 180,240
- Post Impression: 226,541
- Story Reach (Mar.-Jun.): 8,446

- * **Reach**- the number of unique accounts that have seen your post.
- * **Impressions**- the total number of times your post has been seen.

Top Post From Facebook 2019-2020



Top Post From Instagram 2019-2020





There are **24** lodging entities, including VRBO and Airbnb, in Hickory and Conover that pay occupancy tax to the Hickory - Conover Tourism Development Authority. Overnight visitors in Hickory and Conover pay a 6% occupancy tax that goes toward paying for and operating the Hickory Metro Convention Center, and to market the Hickory Metro as a business and leisure destination. Hickory and Conover offer all types of lodging amenities which cater to all people whether someone is visiting for business, leisure or sports. Occupancy Tax revenue remained about the same as it has been in prior years until mid-March 2020 and COVID-19. For Fiscal Year 2019-20 (July 2019 - June 2020) occupancy tax was down more than \$450,000 ending the year with a little more than \$1.6 million. Fiscal Year 2020-21 is starting off slow, but with more people beginning to travel again to the area and with tourism partners working together we look to see increases to visitor spending in 2nd quarter.



July 2019 was a busy month and the kickoff to a year that was predicated to be one of the busiest years since the Hickory Metro Convention Center opened in 1997. The Home Furnishings Manufacturing Solutions Expo returned back to Hickory after being

in Atlanta, GA and Greenville, SC for many years. The convention center was full with the latest machines and technology in furniture manufacturing and thousands of people attended the expo, including international visitors. The year remained steady until Mid-March 2020 when COVID - 19 led to more than 30 events and meetings being canceled during the FY 19-20 Fiscal Year.

The Hickory Metro Convention Center received a call from Merchants Distributors LLC (MDI) late March inquiring about turning open space into a training center.

"Within four days the MDI team put together a remote training center at the Hickory Metro Convention Center. The trainees at the convention center were being sourced by MDI through staffing agencies. These trainees helped us respond to the challenging dynamics of feeding communities through this pandemic."

-Kimberly George, Alex Lee, Inc.,
Vice President, Communications and Corporate Citizenship



The MDI training center began April 1 and continued until the end of June.

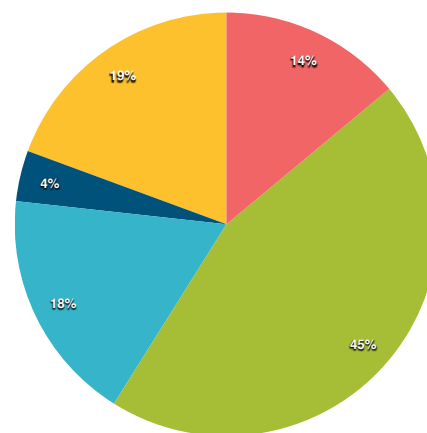
"I am especially grateful for MDI and their utilization of the convention center space. It kept most of the convention center employees working and made us feel like we played a positive role in navigating this pandemic as we were able to assist an essential business through this unprecedented time."

-Mandy Pitts Hildebrand, CEO
Hickory Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau

Updates to the Hickory Metro Convention Center and Future Renovations/ Expansion Plans

- The Hickory Metro Convention Center now offers a portable audio/video cart specially built for videoconferencing. The cart allows customers to host or join videoconferencing meetings easily, whether for an individual leading a presentation or a large group to join a remote meeting.
- Restroom renovations were approved by the Hickory-Conover Tourism Development Authority (HCTDA) for restrooms on the Hickory and Conover hallways. Renovations will begin in fall 2020 and the updated restrooms will be equipped with touchless sinks, soap, hand dryers and commodes.
- The HCTDA approved to move forward with renovating and expanding the Hickory Metro Convention Center. Construction drawings are underway with the goal to have approved plans by December 2020.

Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Event Breakdown



Event Categories	Numbers
Public	18
Corporate/Government	58
SMERF (Social, Military, Education, Religious, and Fraternal)	23
Sports	5
Associations	25
Total Events	129

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- Sports
- Associations