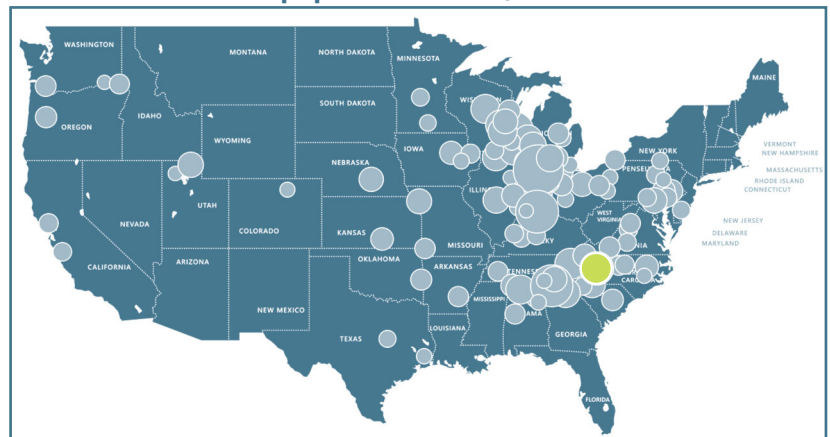




Manufacturing share of all jobs MSAs with population of 100,000 and above



Hickory MSA has the highest percentage of employees in the manufacturing sector in NC and SC; more than 3 times as specialized in manufacturing as the national average.

- *Hickory Metro ranks **5th** in the nation for concentration of manufacturing—**421** manufacturers & **24,564** employees in Catawba County alone*
- **30.4%** of the workforce is employed in manufacturing compared to the NC average of 11.3% and the national average of 9.8% (BLS QCEW—2022 Annual)
- *Average manufacturing wage in the Hickory Metro is **below the US average** wage for all jobs and below the national manufacturing wage*

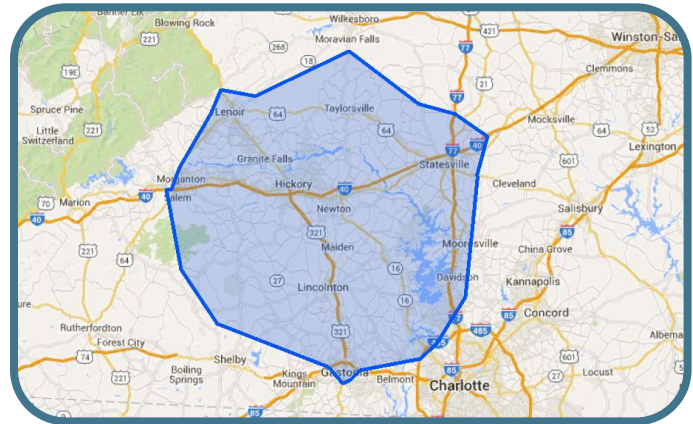
Other Competitive Advantages

- *Low Cost, Reliable and Redundant Electricity*
- *Low Cost/Abundant Water*
- *Low Cost and Reliable Fiber and Network Infrastructure by multiple providers including AT&T/Brightspeed/Conterra/Lumen, MetroNet & Spectrum.*
- *Low property tax rates*
- *Lowest Unionization Rate in NC—Less than 1% unionization rate with only 1 of 421 manufacturers unionized*
- *Insulated from Natural or Manmade Disasters*
- *Fast Track Local Permitting*
- *Extensive Training Assistance from the NC Community College System*
- *Manufacturing Assistance through the Manufacturing Solutions Center*
- *Manufacturing Assistance and Training by NC Center for Engineering Technologies*
- *Laborforce totals over 413,000 within a 45-minute drive*
- *Within 45 minutes of the Charlotte Douglas International Airport*

Forbes

Hickory, NC MSA ranked
#1 in the US for
 Cost of Doing Business **since 2016**
 Ranked in the top 6 since 2006

45-Minute Drive Time



822,985
 population

413,652
 civilian labor force

Demographics

	Catawba County	Greater Hickory MSA
Population (2023 ACS):	164,645	370,030
Population Growth (2018-2023):	3.77%	0.44%
Households (2023 ACS):	68,126	155,168
Median Household Income (2023 ACS):	\$64,214	\$58,164
Per Capita Income (2023 ACS):	\$36,281	\$33,884
Unemployment Rate (January 2025):	3.8%	4.0%
Labor Force (January 2025):	77,835	170,885
Unemployed (January 2025):	2,952	6,778
Retail Sales: (*14th Highest in NC)	\$3.58B*	\$6.07B
Bank Deposits: (*10th Highest in NC)	\$4.35B*	\$6.69B

Catawba County Ethnicity (2023 ACS)	
White, non Hispanic	72.0%
Black, non Hispanic	8.5%
Asian*, non Hispanic	4.8%
Other, non Hispanic	3.1%
Hispanic	11.7%

*-10th largest Asian population in NC, 2022

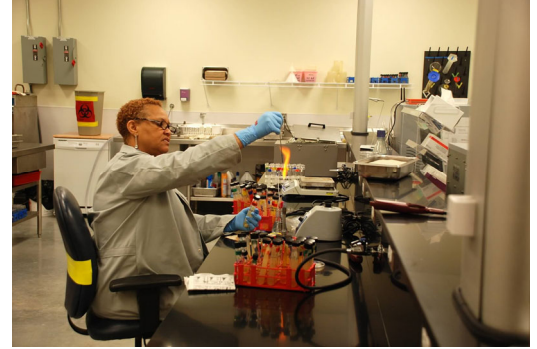
Catawba County Educational Attainment (2023 ACS)	
High School Diploma or Higher	88.7%
High School Graduate	27.8%
Some College	23.1%
Associate Degree	12.4%
Bachelor's Degree	17.7%
Master's Degree & above	7.7%

Manufacturing Solutions Center

Bringing manufacturing into the NEW ERA of changing technologies, global marketing and production innovations. The mission of the Manufacturing Solutions Center (MSC) is to help US manufacturers increase sales, improve quality and improve efficiency to create or retain jobs.

This is accomplished by:

- *Enhancing and improving products through research and development*
- *Assisting in creating prototypes for new, innovative offerings*
- *Analyzing new materials to enhance structure and programs*
- *Testing products for reliable content and quality*
- *Training personnel for lean manufacturing processes and supply chain efficiencies*
- *Providing a forum for rollout of new 21st century technologies*
- *Providing hands-on guidance for international marketing, sales and military procurement*
- *Providing photo-realistic renderings and visualizations*
- *Creating 3D rapid prototypes in a variety of materials*
- *Industry advocacy*



Our services include testing services, training, product development, marketing, engineering, assisting inventors & entrepreneurs.

Workforce Solutions Complex



*Catawba County is a community committed to the future of manufacturing and ensuring our manufacturers have a workforce pipeline for the future. This is evident by the county's investment in a new state-of-the-art Workforce Solutions Complex on the campus of CVCC. A culmination of many years of planning and collaboration with the three public school systems, **this \$26 million dollar, 80,400 square foot facility houses technology and engineering programs for college students, and junior & senior high school students from all schools in Catawba County.** Business-driven programs will include: Computer Engineering Technology, Electrical Engineering Technology, Computer Integrated Machining, Electronics Engineering Technology, Welding, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Mechatronics, and*

NC Center for Engineering Technologies

The North Carolina Center for Engineering Technologies provides facilities for applied research in engineering related fields and serves as a conduit to baccalaureate education delivered by the University of North Carolina system schools. Conceived as a community supported higher education effort in technical and engineering disciplines, this Center was established through a collaboration of business, government and higher education organized as the Future Forward Economic Alliance. The Center may collaborate with other schools in bringing the best programs to the region to meet employment needs.



Labs include:

- *Rapid Product Realization Laboratory*
- *Engineering Design Laboratory*
- *Metrology & Reverse Engineering Laboratory*
- *Distance Education Lab*
- *Polymers Lab*
- *Patternmaking Laboratory*

Degree programs include:

- *Building Sciences (Appalachian State University)*
- *Engineering Technology (Western Carolina University)*
- *Industrial Technology (East Carolina University)*
- *Electrical Engineering Technology (UNC-Charlotte)*
- *Fire Safety Engineering Technology (UNC-Charlotte)*
- *Engineering Management (UNC-Charlotte)*

421 manufacturers · < 1% unionization rate · Only 1 unionized

Selected Recent Expansions

Company	Product	Investment	Jobs
Millwork & Panel (CertainTeed)	Vinyl Siding	\$27,800,000	48
Technibilt/Wanzl	Shopping Carts & Retail Equipment	\$15,000,000	10
Westrock	Sheeting & Printing	\$23,300,000	25
CommScope	Fiber optic cable	\$60,300,000	250
Pregis	Flexible Packaging	\$11,200,000	10
NuFabrx	R&D, Pharma Textiles	\$10,000,000	45

Selected Recent Announcements

Company	Product	Investment	Jobs
Steel Warehouse	Steel Solution Providers	\$27,000,000	58
Gusmer Enterprises	Liquid Filtration Media & Devices	\$38,200,000	73
American Fuji Seal	Shrink Wrap Sleeves	\$52,000,000	101
Crate & Barrel	Warehouse & distribution (Artisan-made home furniture)	\$38,500,000	150
MaxPax	Packaging	\$9,550,000	300
Arhaus	Warehouse & distribution (Artisan-made home furniture)	\$26,000,000	67
Cataler, NA	Automotive catalysts	\$42,000,000	151

Some Catawba County Manufacturers