

# Plan pushes Hickory for business, living

By [Larry Clark](#) | Hickory Daily Record

## HICKORY

Scott Millar knows the importance of branding.

"Branding is trying to convey more than what is in a name," he said, or a logo.

Millar is president of the Catawba County Economic Development Corp., a partner in Hickory's branding and marketing initiative.

He's been in the forefront of many major economic coups for the Greater Hickory Metro area. Millar has been the EDC for more than 18 years.

"Branding is very important. It gives you something identifiable," said. "You want to project an image so strong that people can picture in their minds what's there before they get there."

That's what Hickory is trying to establish, a positive picture of what people will find when they consider moving their families or their businesses to the city.

The branding initiative isn't just about new, diverse industry, Millar said, although diversity is vital to maintain a strong, steady economy.

"We are identified with furniture. People recognize Hickory as a furniture center," he said.

Even though furniture manufacturing has taken a big hit in the recessive economy, it's still a major player in local industry.

"We are likely to have more manufacturing than other areas," Millar said. "We have the location, the resources and the cost structure to support manufacturing. We still have the highest concentration of manufacturing in the United States."

Still, there are other strengths.

"We need to ask, what are our strong points. Who do we want to sell to? Who and what do we want to attract? That's what any marketing campaign must include."

Millar thinks Hickory is on the right track in creating a focused branding effort.

"You want one campaign, not a lot of little ones. The right campaign will present a broad picture that can get results."

It's a heavy task, Millar said, because of all the elements in Hickory's economy and the city's amenities.

"To balance out the economic spectrum â□□ that's the challenge," he said.