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## Survey to measure residents' view of Hickory

By Hickory Record Staff

Hickory leaders want to take advantage of the city's strengths in the effort to attract new residents, business and tourism. The marketing and branding initiative that was launched several months ago needs citizen input. So, city officials want Hickory residents to participate in a community survey that's open until Jan. 31. The multiple-choice survey is a part of the research and marketing project led by the Hickory Business Development Committee.

The Hickory City Council, upon recommendation from the BDC, hired North Star Destination Strategies to implement research, marketing and branding strategies that will boost efforts to bring people and businesses to Hickory.

North Star is a research and marketing firm that specializes in working with cities.

The complete research and marketing strategy project is expected to be completed by the summer of 2011. Meantime, residents opinions are needed.

Don McEachern, North Star CEO, says the city must determine what makes it special so it will stand out in the marketplace. It's called the competitive differentiator.

That's why citizen input is important to the marketing effort. The people who call Hickory home have opinions on what makes the city special, according to a news release.

North Star developed a customized communitywide online survey. The questionnaire will evaluate the city's strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities as seen by residents.

The survey is at [www.hickorygov.com](http://www.hickorygov.com) and is submitted electronically.

Printed surveys are also available at the Julian G. Whitener Municipal Building (City Hall), Patrick Beaver Memorial Library, Ridgeview Branch Library, and all city recreation centers.

"We have partnered with more than 130 communities in 30 states nationwide, and I can't emphasize enough the importance of insights gleaned from community members," McEachern said.

"To learn what makes a community special, you have to go to the people who spend more than just their money and time there. You have to go to the people who spend their lives there."

For more about the branding initiative, go to [www.hickorygov.com](http://www.hickorygov.com) or call the Office of Communications at 261-2222. For more about North Star Destination Strategies, go to [northstarideas.com](http://northstarideas.com).