Avril M. Pinder, CPA, ICMA-CM
County Manager

Buncombe County Government
Commissioner Briefing
September 15, 2026
3:00 PM
Commissioner's Chambers, 3rd Floor

I.	Meeting Called to Order			Chair Edwards
II.	Review Meeting Agenda			Chair Edwards
III.	Staff Updates			
	a.	Bear Activity	10 mins	Dane Pedersen
	b.	Helene Recovery Update	30 mins	Kevin Madsen
	c.	Solid Waste Update	15 mins	Dane Pedersen
	d.	East Fork Project Update	15 mins	Josh Hallingse
	e.	Sidewalks Grant Update	15 mins	Kevin Madsen
IV.	Open Discussion			All

[MEET_FOOT]

Bears in Buncombe

Dane Pedersen

Ashley Hobbs

FCC Bear Carts

- Bear carts available through FCC
- Purchase Option at $320
- Lease option at $10 additional per month
  - $28.65 basic service rate + $10.00 bear cart lease = $38.65 per month
- FCC currently has approximately 2,853 bear carts deployed
- Increase of 800 bear carts deployed yoy
- Manufacturer lead times with producing bear carts orders
- Average lead time from customer order is approx. 2 weeks to receive bear cart


Toter
VO237316


Credit: C.Davenport

Escalating Bear Behavior in Asheville & Buncombe County

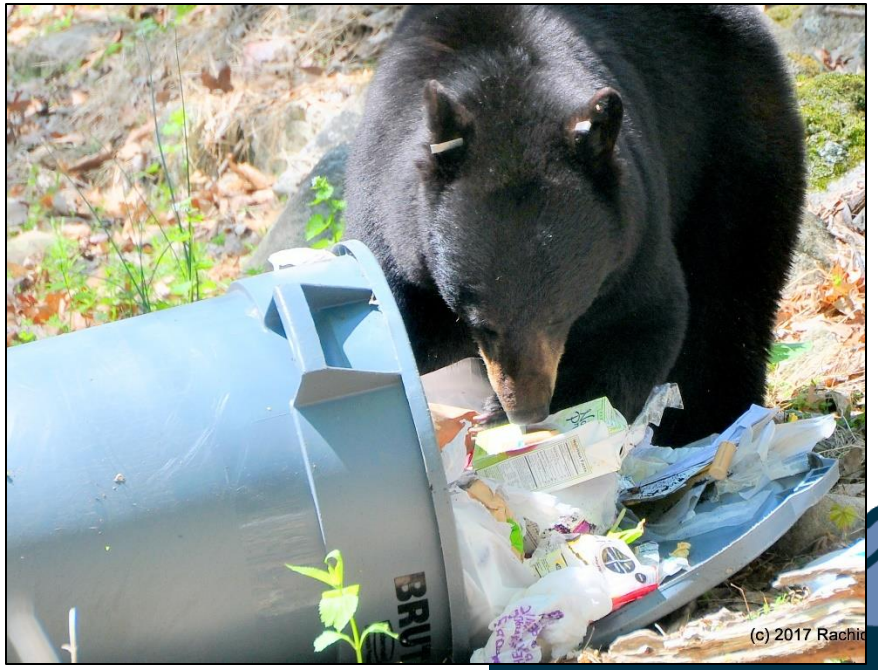
Ashley Hobbs

NCWRC Special Projects Biologist



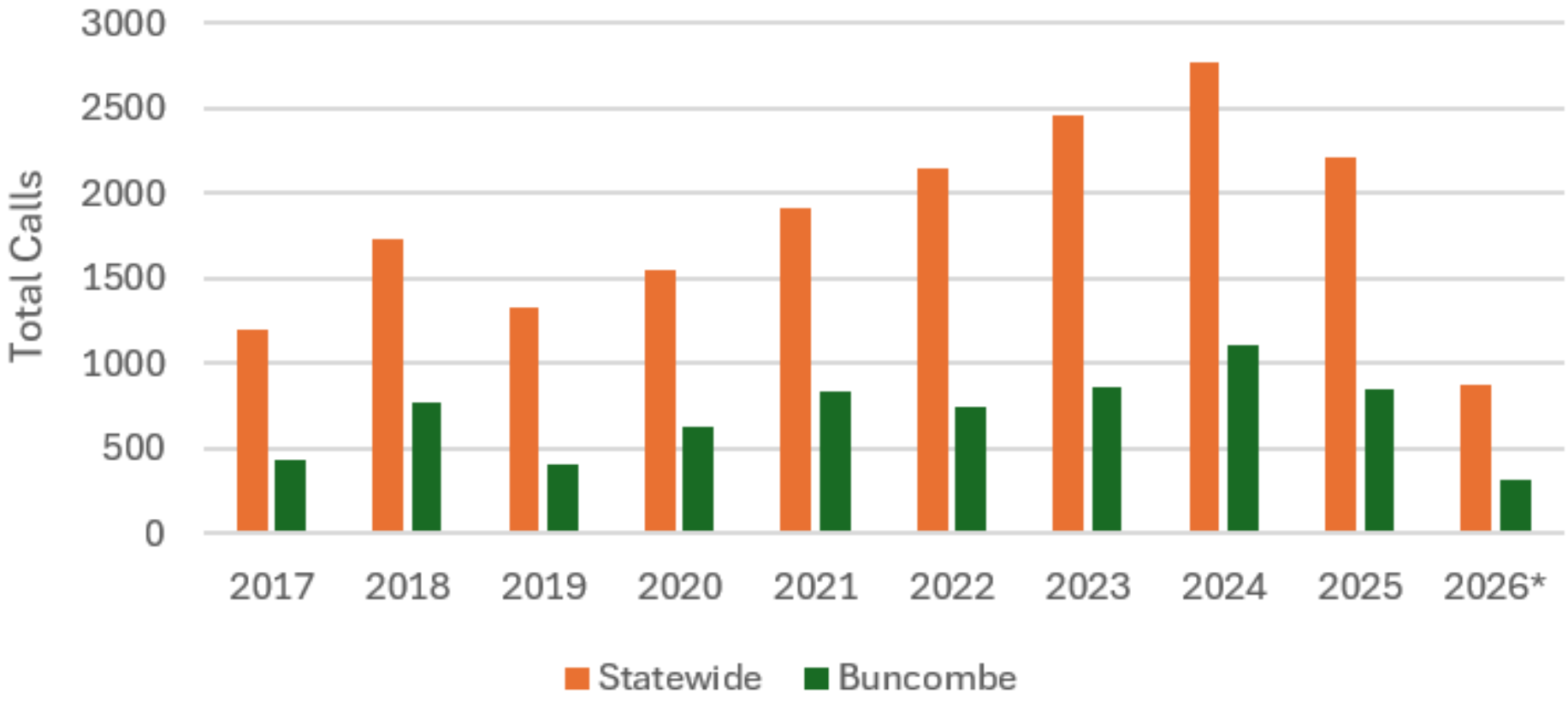






NORTH CAROLINA Wildlife RESOURCES COMMISSION

Annual Bear Calls to NC Wildlife Helpline 2017-present



Buncombe County: 2017-Present



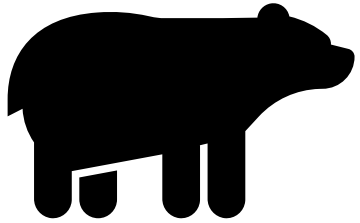
Average 38% statewide calls annually



11 humans injured



250+ entries to homes



30 bears dispatched for human safet

NCWRC staff have responded by:

- Providing immediate BearWise education
- Providing technical guidance on nonlethal techniques to deter bears
- Conducting aversive conditioning.
- Conducting site visits to homeowners feeding bears purposely and incidentally.





Since 2009, bears have made physical contact with humans **11 times in Buncombe County.** In contrast, in the other 99 NC counties, bears have made contact 8 times since 2007.

abc13 NEWS | NEWS | WEATHER | NEWS 13 INVESTIGATES | COMMUNITY | MONEY

Bear that injured resident in Buncombe County will be put down: officials

by Marisa Sardonia & Ruby Annas | Tue, August 18, 2026 at 10:56 PM
Updated Wed, August 19, 2026 at 8:58 PM



FILE - A bear in western North Carolina. (Photo: WLOS Staff)

What does NCWRC recommend?

- ✓ Wildlife feeding ordinance
  - Continue to enforce & communicate with public
- Consistent BearWise outreach by the County
  - Promote NC Wildlife Helpline as go-to contact for bear concerns
- Expand bear-resistant cart program
  - More bear-resistant carts
  - Encourage retrofit options
  - Education & communication

NORTH CAROLINA Wildlife RESOURCES COMMISSION

Wildlife
NC WILDLIFE HELPLINE
HELPING PEOPLE SOLVE WILDLIFE PROBLEMS

Why does trash matter? – Florida Study

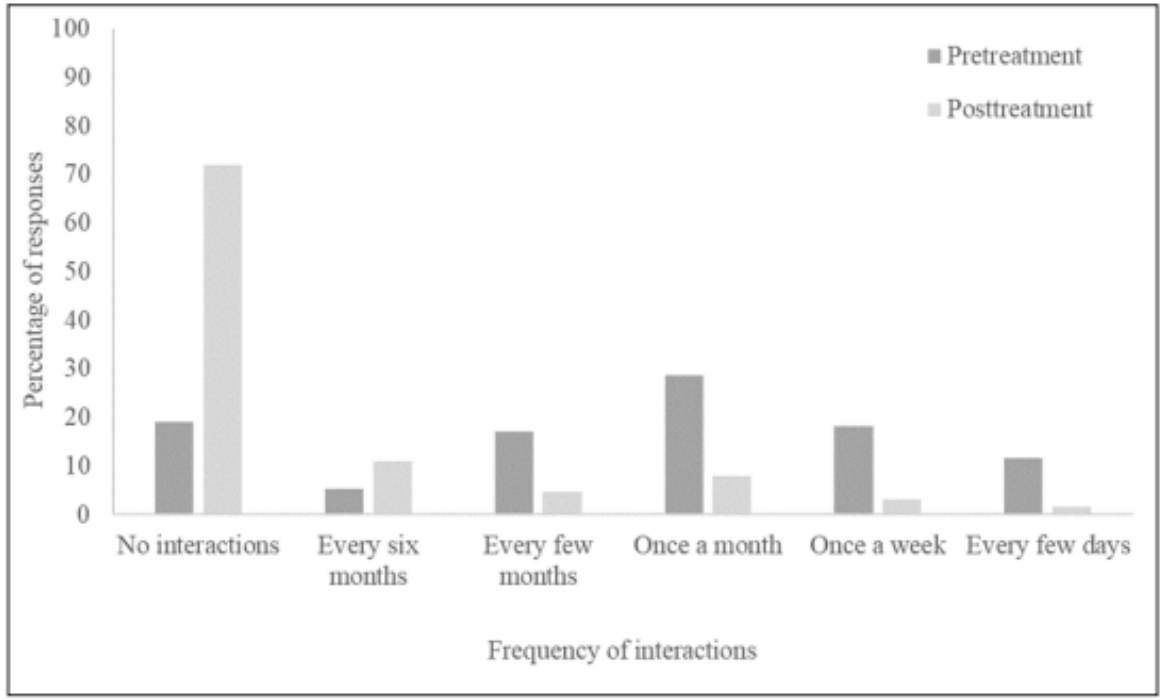


Figure 2. Percent frequency of human–bear (*Ursus americanus floridanus*) interactions from combined surveys in 2 residential neighborhoods within an urban bear ordinance zone in Seminole County, Florida, USA, for 1 year before (pretreatment) and 1 year after (posttreatment) receiving bear-resistant garbage cans in 2017.

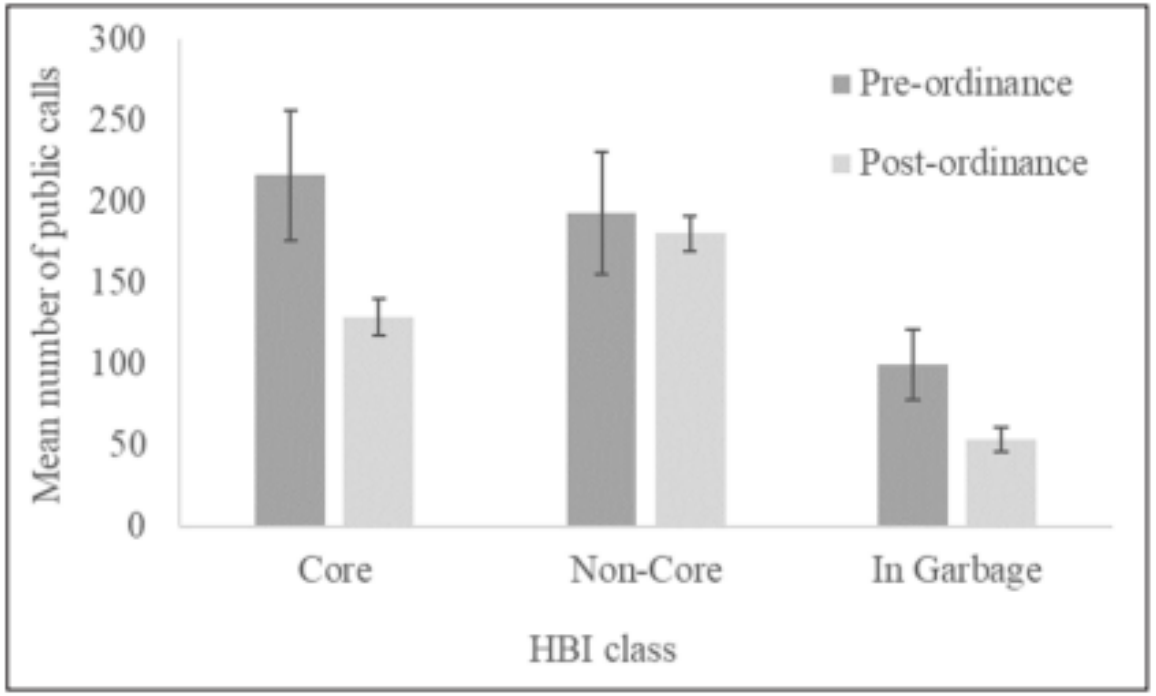


Figure 4. Mean (± standard error) number of human–bear (Ursus americanus floridanus) interactions (HBI) categorized as core HBI (determined to be conflicts with bears) and non-core HBI (general observations of bears in the area) that were summarized from public calls to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for 5 years before (pre-ordinance) and 5 years after (post-ordinance) an urban bear ordinance zone was established in 2016 within Seminole County, Florida, USA. In garbage (a core HBI) was also shown separately being a primary management concern.

NORTH CAROLINA Wildlife RESOURCES COMMISSION

Barrett, Mark A.; Barrett, Sarah E.; Telesco, David J.; and Orlando, Michael A. (2023) "Human–Black Bear Interactions and Public Attitudinal Changes in an Urban Ordinance Zone," Human–Wildlife Interactions: Vol. 17: Iss. 1, Article 10.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.26077/f546-9ddd

Why does trash matter? – Colorado Study

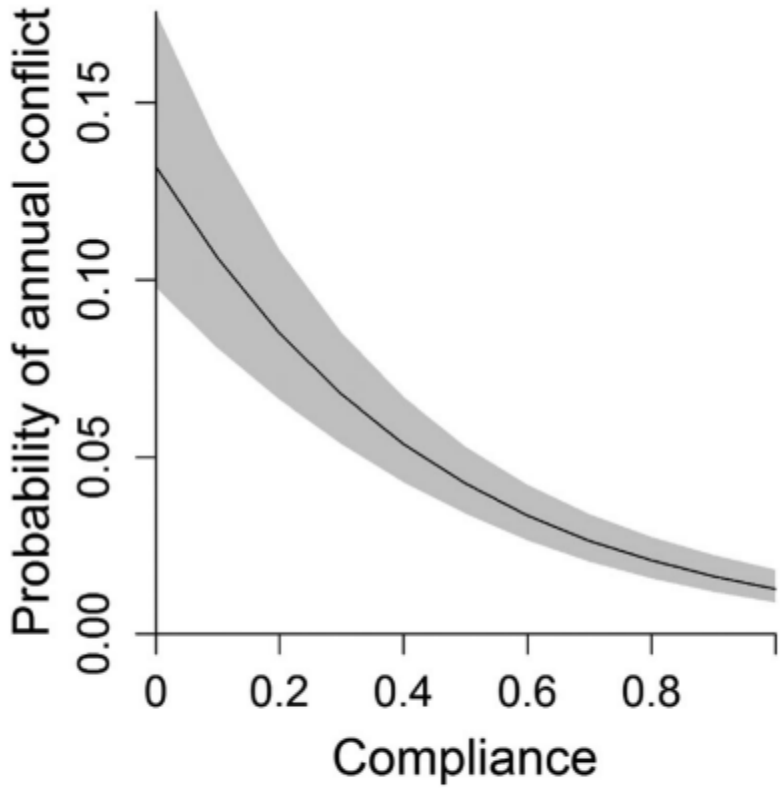


Figure 3. Annual probability of a black bear-related trash conflict being observed at an individual residence on the morning of trash pick-up (Jul–Sep) based on the proportion of homes within the city block that complied with a city ordinance requiring residents to secure their garbage from wildlife in Durango, Colorado, 2013–2016.

Johnson, H.E., Lewis, D.L., Lischka, S.A. and Breck, S.W. (2018), Assessing ecological and social outcomes of a bear-proofing experiment. Jour. Wild. Mgmt., 82: 1102-1114. https://doi.org/10.1002/jwmg.21472

Why does trash matter? – Asheville Study

Table 4. Trash and recycling cart spills outcomes by retrofit, 2021-2023.

	No Retrofit		R1		R2		B		Total
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	
Success (cart contents not breached)	90	13.7%	13	2.0%	14	2.1%	29	4.4%	146
Failure (cart contents breached)	484	73.6%	8	1.2%	9	1.4%	11	1.7%	512
Total	574	87.2%	21	3.2%	23	3.5%	40	6.1%	658

Table 5. Cart spills observed on waste collection vs. non-waste collection days, 2021-2023.

	Trash Spill		Recycling Spill		Total
	n	%	*n*	%	
Collection day	121	56.5%	18	8.4%	139
Non-collection day	61	28.5%	14	6.5%	75
Total	182	85.0%	32	15.0%	214

NORTH CAROLINA Wildlife RESOURCES COMMISSION

Solid Waste Updates

Dane Pedersen
Solid Waste
September 15, 2026

Litter Sweep

Dane Pedersen

Solid Waste

The Problem

Keep Buncombe Beautiful



- Multiple complaints from communities from all over the County (no large number of complaints from any one specific area)
- NCDOT has limited budget/programming for secondary road litter collection in BC

The Solution

Keep Buncombe Beautiful



Picture: environment.transportation.org

Contact the NCDOT Litter Sweep Coordinator at: (828)298-0397

Total Cost:
$190k total (~$95k per cleanup)

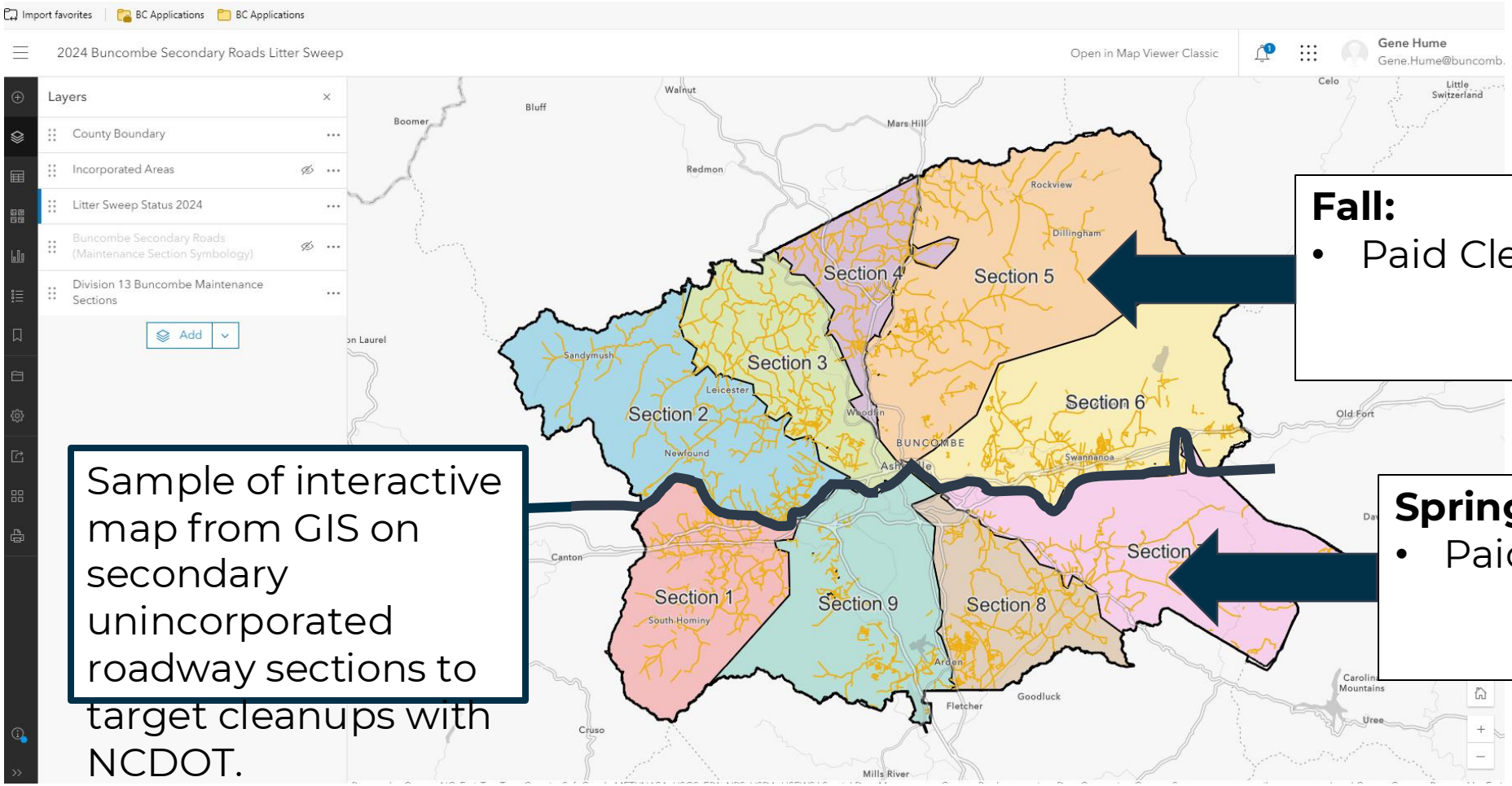
Scope:
•Contracting with NCDOT
•Two litter sweeps: Fall and Spring
•Targeting secondary roads in unincorporated areas

Coverage:
•2,000 shoulder miles total (1,000 miles per cleanup)

Volunteer Engagement:
•Volunteer push to cover non-contracted cleanups
•Partnership with CAPE for engagement

Spring and Fall Litter Sweeps

Keep Buncombe Beautiful



Fall:

- Paid Cleanup North

Spring:

- Paid Cleanup South

Sample of interactive map from GIS on secondary unincorporated roadway sections to target cleanups with NCDOT.

Engagement & Outreach

Communication Deliverables:

- Press release to announce investments in litter removal efforts and a schedule for cleanup areas.
- FAQ on how these programs work.
- NextDoor will be used to communicate with specific areas of the County where litter sweep is occurring.
- Social media engagement for announcement and updates.
- Work with DOT to highlight adopt-a-street program and organizations engaged in this program.
- Continued communications along timeline of work.

Additional Highlights / Opportunities:

- Amount / lbs of waste removed by contractor
- Investment by BOC in county-wide solid waste removal effort
- Highlight adopt-a-street efforts
- Map of fall vs. spring focus areas

Additional updates

- County in process of securing pre-positioned agreement with disaster debris collection contractor
- FCC rate adjustment conversation coming in October

Economic Development Incentive Program – East Fork Update

September 15, 2026

Briefing to the Board of Commissioners

Background

- Established in 2010, East Fork Pottery is a leading manufacturer and distributer of ceramic dishware
- Expansion was announced in December 2025
- Driven by national demand, this investment will double East Fork's production capacity, creating new living wage jobs and expanding their core line of ceramics
- East Fork currently employs and will continue to sustain 125 existing jobs

Scope of Project

East Fork Pottery will:

- Invest **$2.5 million** in building improvements and business personal property
- Create **40** new jobs
- Provide an average annual salary of **$54,080** ($26/hour)

Aligns with Strategic Plan Goals for increasing average wages and total employment.

Economic Development Incentive

- **Incentive Structure**
  - Total Incentives: $21,000
    - Policy-based: $16,000
    - Hiring incentives: $5,000
  - **Single-year payment**
  - **Term**: 5 years (3 year creation + 2 year retention)
  - **Payment Structure**: pay-for-performance (pro rata) based on actual job and investment schedule.

Investment, Job and Incentive Schedule

	PROJECT	PROJECT	OUTFLOW	INFLOW		COUNTY IMPACT	
Fiscal Year	New Job Creation	New Capital Investment	Incentives	Tax Revenue (Annual)	Tax Revenue (Cumulative)	Cost / Gain (Annual)	Cost / Gain (Cumulative)
2026	20	$1,500,000	$0.00	$8,169.00	$8,169.00	$8,169.00	$8,169.00
2027	20	$1,000,000	$0.00	$13,070.40	$21,239.40	$13,070.40	$21,239.40
2028	0	$0.00	$0.00	$12,090.12	$33,329.52	$12,090.12	$33,329.52
2029	0	$0.00	$21,000.00	$11,218.76	$44,548.28	($9,781.24)	$23,548.28
2030	0	$0.00	$0.00	$10,401.86	$54,950.14	$10,401.86	$33,950.14
TOTAL	40	$2,500,000	$21,000	**$54,950.14**	**$54,950.14**	**$33,950.14**	**$33,950.14**

Next Steps

- **Notice of Public Hearing:** will be published 9/25
- **Public Hearing:** October 6th, 2026
  - Formal vote on economic development agreement and incentives

Sidewalks Grant Update

Helene Recovery Office

September 15th, 2026 Briefing

Background

- **April 29, 2025**: NC Commerce launched a Helene recovery grant opportunity, **the Small Business Infrastructure Grant Program (SmBIZ)**
- **In partnership with the NC Department of Transportation**, staff began developing several projects to fund pedestrian infrastructure repairs and extensions throughout the Swannanoa Commercial Corridor
- Staff **successfully submitted two applications** for funding to repair and extend sidewalks in Swannanoa
  - “Whitson Avenue,” awarded $979K
  - “Railroad, Alexander, and South” awarded $786K
  - **Total awards to date $1.7M**

Small Business Infrastructure Grant Program

- Enabled $55M in funding for infrastructure recovery in support of small business revitalization
  - 10% cap per county ($5.5M)
  - $1M cap per project
  - Local government applicants
  - Rebuild and repair qualifying infrastructure
  - Infrastructure cannot be owned or maintained by the small business(es)
  - Support economic recovery and sustainability by impacting small businesses that employ 150 or fewer employees

Applications and Awards

First Application: Whitson Avenue

- Improve 1,280 square yards of pedestrian infrastructure
- Construction management to be provided by NCDOT
- $979K awarded

Second Application: Railroad, South, Alexander

- Improve 1,000 square yards of pedestrian infrastructure
- Construction management to be provided by NCDOT
- $763K awarded

Map of Awards

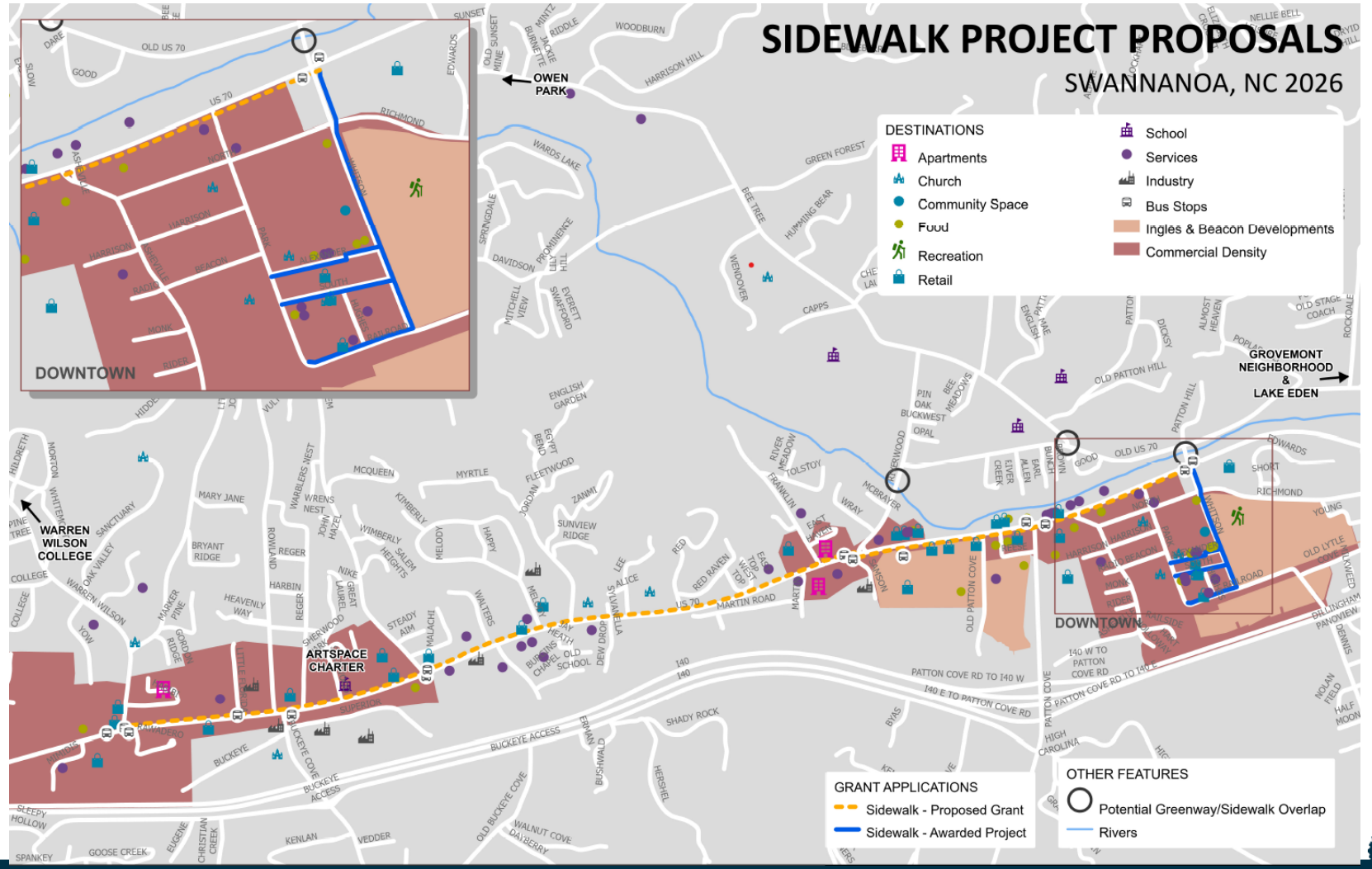


Awarded projects shown in Blue.

Pursuing Additional Funds

- Staff have submitted an additional request to the Division of Community Revitalization
  - Commercial District Revitalization, Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding
  - Request: $10M
  - Project Area: Highway 70, between Whitson Ave and Warren Wilson Road
  - Deliverables: 2.25 miles of contiguous sidewalks
- Continue to seek additional funding

Map of Awards and Applications



Next Steps

Board Authorization

- Returning for the October 6th meeting to seek Board authorization to accept the grant agreements

Additional Opportunities for Funding

- Application submitted for Commercial District Revitalization CDBG-DR funding
- Seeking additional opportunities