HELENE UPDATE

Board of Commissioners | November 18, 2025

Topics for Today

PRESENTATIONS:

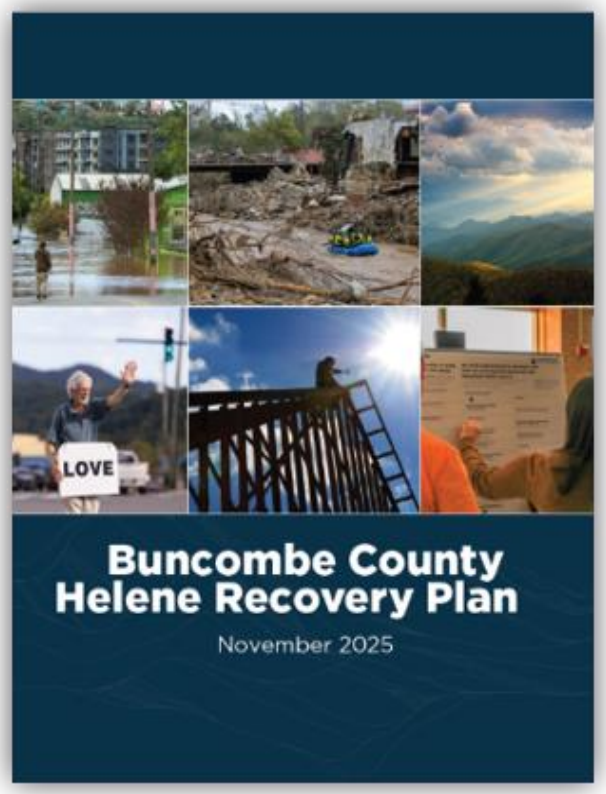
- **Recovery Update** – Kevin Madsen
- **Landslides** – Burnett Walz
- **HMGP** – Brad Hughes

APPENDIX:

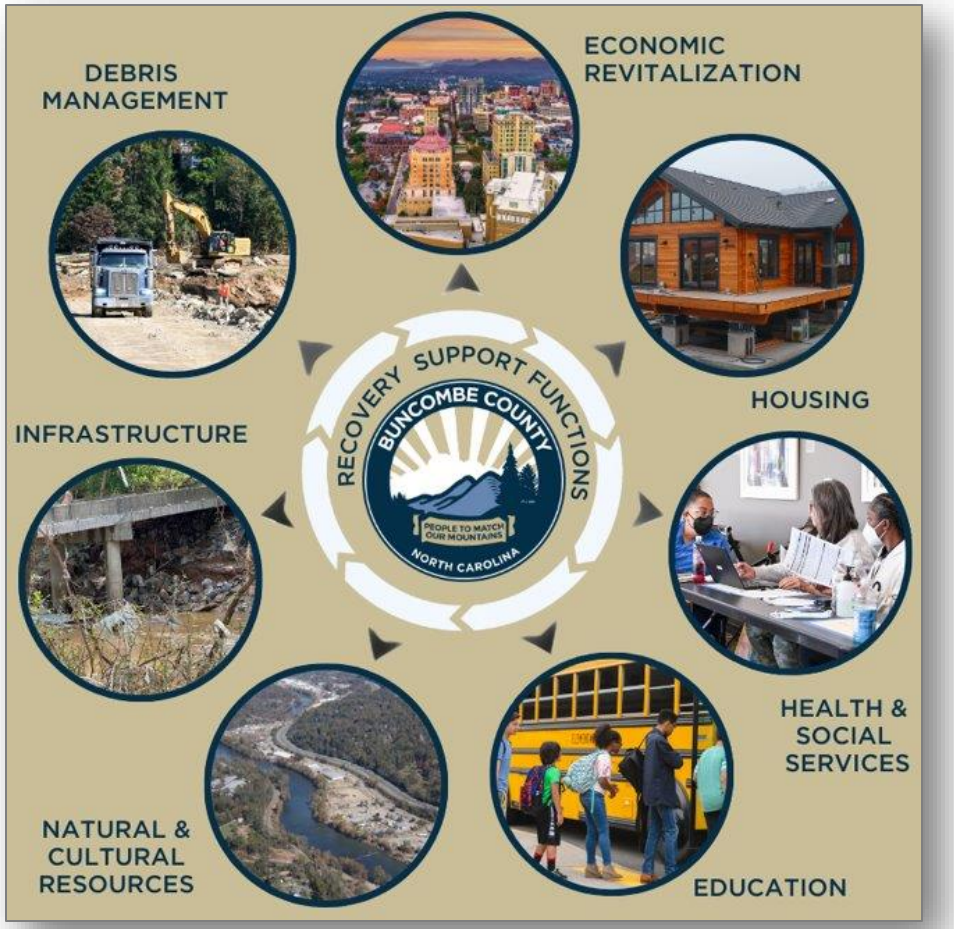
- **Data Updates by Recovery Support Function**

Recovery Update

- Helene Recovery Plan
  - Endorsement of the 114 countywide projects
  - Adoption of the 31 Buncombe County projects
    - Sub projects may expand/adjust through the process
  - Estimated timelines (*once started*)
    - Short-term (*1-2 years*) = 11 projects
    - Medium (*3-5 years*) = 16 projects
    - Long-term (*5+ years*) = 4 projects
- Implementation strategies in development
  - Scheduling time with department leads



Recovery Update



- Transitional planning and coordination with Recovery Officer
- Continued RSF meetings and collaboration efforts
  - Foundational | Grants & Funding
- Coordination with NCEM and FEMA partners for Public Assistance

Recovery Update

- Helene Recovery Office
  - Two project managers and one business analyst hiring is in progress
    - Job postings closed on Monday, November 10th
- Helene Resource Center
  - Visitors to date 1,230
  - Staffing
    - Buncombe County staff
    - Renew NC representatives
    - NCEM disaster case managers
    - FEMA community liaison

Helene Resource Center

94 Coxe Avenue in downtown Asheville



8:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday – Friday

Questions?

Landslides: Progress Update

- **Grovemont**
  - Overview: Test case slide in Swannanoa
  - Update: Vendor selected to perform the Architectural & Engineering (A&E) study
  - Next steps: Working to finalize vendor contract & targeting December for Board approval
    - Funding agreement with North Carolina Emergency Management - 75% of contract amount when contract signed with balance paid when work is complete
- **Slides on Buncombe County property**
  - Overview: 2 slides – 40 McCormick Place & Landfill (Riverside Dr.)
  - Update: McCormick Place A&E study likely to be completed in the next 90-120 days
  - Next steps: Evaluate applying for stabilization funds & launch RFQ for Landfill slide

Landslides: Next Steps

- Request for Qualification (RFQ) process for remaining slides
  - Overview: 55 slides initially identified as impacting 2 or more residential properties
    - 25 met FEMA criteria for A&E funding
  - Next Steps:
    - RFQ strategy: slides to be grouped and released in 3-4 sequential RFQ's
    - RFQ Timeline (tentative):
      - Issued: end of November
      - Vendor selection: beginning of 2026

Questions?

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Acquisition	Elevation	Land Stabilization	Mitigation Reconstruction	Slope Stabilization
277	95	43	9	5

Total: 429 Applications

Data as of November 7, 2025

Acquisition Project Status by Group

Group	Number of Properties	Status
Acquisition Group 1	23	• Application Submitted to FEMA by NCEM on Feb 21, 2025 • Awaiting FEMA review and decision
Acquisition Group 2	26	• Application submitted to FEMA by NCEM on Jun 04, 2025 • Awaiting FEMA review and decision
Acquisition Group 3	157	• Application submitted to FEMA by NCEM on Nov 05, 2025 • Awaiting FEMA review and decision

HMGP Acquisitions Project Timeline

- RFP process opens – Demo and removal
- RFP process closes
- NCEM reviews proposals and selects vendor
- Vendor award & Notice to Proceed
- NCEM-Vendor-County coordination meeting
- Property Owner Engagement Meeting
- Project Work Begins – Appraisal, Survey and Acquisition documents

Elevation Project Status by Group

Group	Number of Properties	Status
Elevation Group 1	53	• Group submitted to Buncombe by NCEM on Sep 19, 2025. • Assessments complete; contractor completing designs
Elevation Group 2	17	• Group submitted to Buncombe by NCEM on Oct 23, 2025. • Assessments underway

HMGP Elevations Project Timeline

- NCEM provides county with application group
- Buncombe works with contractor to complete assessments
- Contractor completes design and submits information to NCEM
- NCEM finalizes application and submits to Buncombe
- Buncombe reviews and signs application; goes back to NCEM
- NCEM submits formal application to FEMA
- FEMA reviews and decisions application

HMGP Updates

- For the latest HMGP updates, visit: https://www.buncombenc.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=432

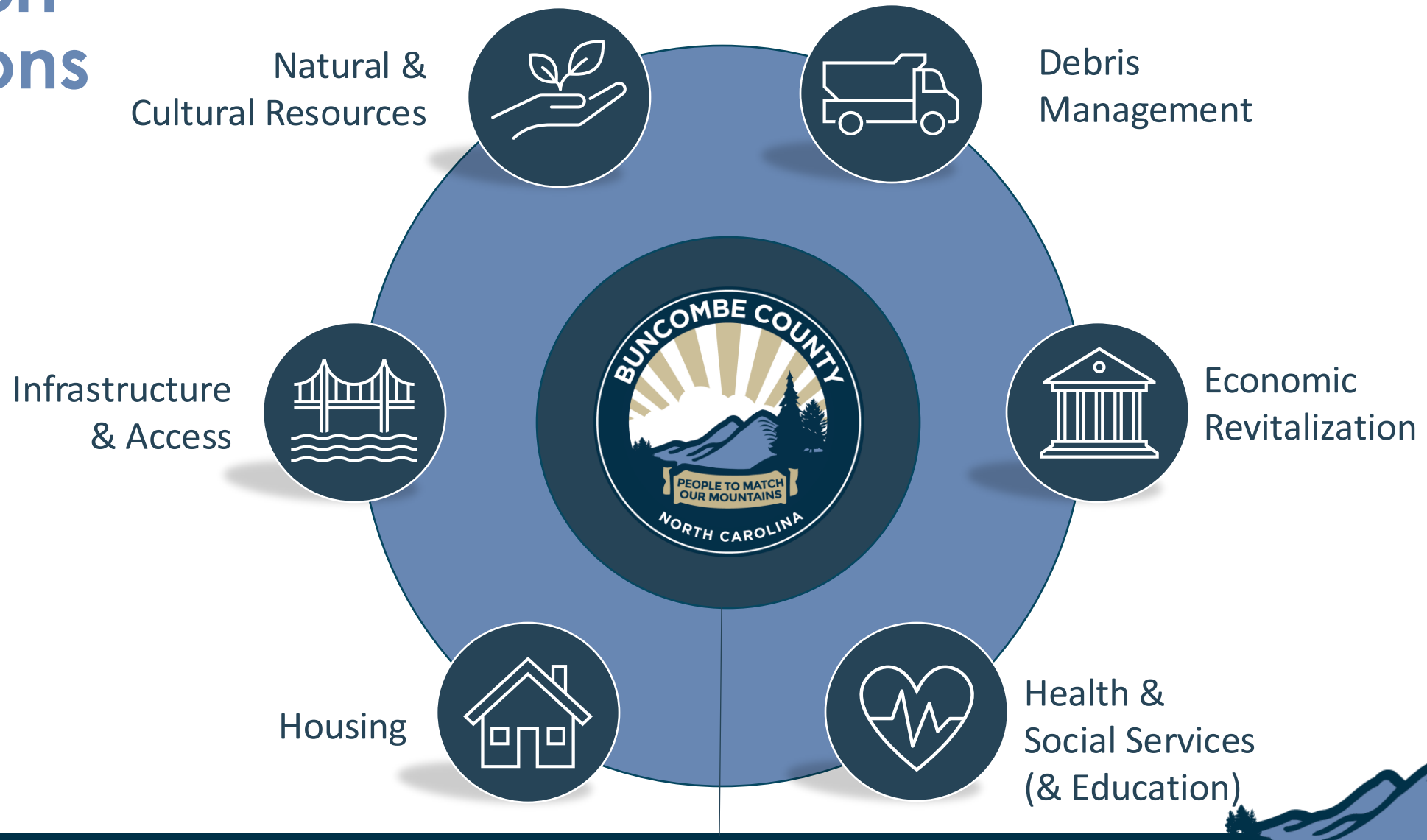
Questions?

End of Presentation

APPENDIX – DATA UPDATES

Reference Data by Recovery Support Function

Recovery Support Functions



DEBRIS MANAGEMENT



Focused on storm debris, including solutions for debris removal on public and private property and waterways, managing specialized debris types, evaluating hazardous materials considerations, coordinating disposal, and exploring sustainable re-use of debris.

DEBRIS MANAGEMENT

- Cubic yards of debris collected (right of way): 1,557,232 (no change compared to last update)
- Cubic yards of debris collected (waterway): 1,606,668 (<1%% increase over last update)
- PPDR applications received: 6,074 (no change compared to last update)
- PPDR applications submitted to USACE for action: 5,290 (no change compared to last update)
- PPDR Parcels completed & closed out by USACE: 4,816 (6 additional parcels compared to last update)
- Number of title property cleared: 39 (no change compared to last update)
- Demolition applications received: 323 (no change compared to last update)
- Demolition applications verified, permitted, & sent to FEMA: 117 (no change compared to last update)

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION



Focused on stimulating economic recovery, supporting local businesses, responding to workforce needs, and ensuring the long-term economic stability and prosperity of the area with a focus on revitalization of critical economic sectors

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

- Asheville-Buncombe "Rebuilding Together" Business Grant www.mountainbizworks.org/helene/fund/
  - 843 applications received totaling more than $18M (no change compared to prior update)
  - Buncombe County Only
    - 137 small businesses awarded grants, totaling $1,567,480 (no change compared to prior update)

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

Small Business Association Loans*				
	Home Loans	**For Profit Business Loans**	**Nonprofit Business Loans**	**Total**
Number of Applications	3,721	7,365	155	11,241
Number of Loans Disbursed	685	2,319	7	3,011
$ Amount of Loans Disbursed	$34,31146	$244,583,403	$413,000	$279,307,868

**no new data to report since prior update*

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

Unemployment Data			
Month	**Unemployment Rank* - Buncombe County**	**Unemployment Rate – Buncombe County**	**Unemployment Rate – Asheville Metro****
September 2024	1	2.5%	NA
October 2024	100	10.4%	NA
February 2025	96	6.2%	5.5%
May 2025	83	4.5%	4.10%
October 2025 *(provisional data)*	62	4.2%	4.00%

As of 11/17/25, no new data to report since prior update

*A Rank of 1 indicates the county with the lowest unemployment rate in NC; a rank of 100 indicates the highest unemployment rate in NC

**Asheville Metro includes Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, and Madison counties

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES



Focused on ensuring the health and well-being of residents with attention to the social determinants of health, including consideration of medical, behavioral, educational, and environmental health concerns and social service recovery needs

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

- NC DHHS Disaster Energy Assistance: $2,340,610 (no change; program is now complete)
- NC DHHS Disaster Adult Service Assistance: $153,584 (<1% increase compared to prior update)
- NC DHHS Disaster Child Welfare Assistance: $649,800 (1% increase compared to prior update)
- NC DHHS Disaster Rental Assistance: $227,594 (no change; program is now complete)
- Septic assessments complete – 132*
- Septic assessments - # found to be in “red zone” – 29*
- Septic assessments - # found to be in "yellow zone" – 50*

**all septic assessments are completed for properties visited by the permits & Inspections officials immediately following the storm*

EDUCATION

- The number of homeless (unhoused) students identified under the McKinney-Vento Act:
  - Asheville City Schools – 185 (compared to 294 at the end of the 2024-2025 school year)
    - **6 of these cases are due to Helene** (comparted to 80 at the end of the 2024-2025 school year)
  - Buncombe County Schools - 412 (compared to 1476 at the end of the 2024-2025 school year)
    - **76 of these cases are due to Helen**e (comparted to 982 at the end of the 2024-2025 school year)

HOUSING



Focused on supporting people in moving toward housing permanence through home repair, removing barriers to temporary housing units, connecting survivors to short- and long-term rental, and coordinating rental and mortgage assistance for survivor households with economic impacts

HOUSING

- Households approved for rental assistance: 1602 (1 household increase compared to prior update)
- FEMA Direct Housing Units sold: 12 (compared to 9 units sold at the prior update)

INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESS

Focused on restoring and enhancing essential public infrastructure and accessibility to private property, including comprehensive damage assessments, coordination of repairs/restoration, and mitigation of future hazards such as floods and landslides

INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESS

- 429 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) applications have been submitted to NCEM
  - 277 for acquisition; 104 for elevation/reconstruction; 48 for slope stabilization
- State-operated private bridge and road program applicants: 985
- 5 bridge projects have been completed with 17 currently under construction
- 55 landslide inspections completed
  - Staff is working to finalize engineering study contract for Grovemont slide
- 406 Substantially Damaged Structures in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES



Focused on the restoration and sustainable management of natural and cultural resources, including capabilities to maintain, conserve, renew, and rehabilitate resources such as parks, farmland, watersheds and streambanks in alignment with environmental and historical preservation laws

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

As of 11/17/25, no new data to report since prior update

- Emergency watershed protection potential applicants identified: 714 (<1% increase compared to prior update)
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program:
  - Field Visits Completed: 488 (1% increase compared to prior update)
  - Applications submitted: 204 (1% increase compared to prior update)
  - Applications approved: 192 (3% increase compared to prior update)
  - $ Amount of funding approved: $26,330,000 (no change compared to prior update)
- 7 County parks open to the public (no change compared to prior update)
- 12 County libraries open to the public (no change compared to prior update)

FOUNDATIONAL

Focused on coordinating the resources needed for an effective recovery for and linking recovery with organizational operations –such as grants & funding, data sharing, county property damage, staffing considerations, communications, funding, facilities, fleet, human capital and technology

FOUNDATIONAL

- $ 27.3 M expended for Helene; $4.4 M committed
- FEMA Public Assistance:
  - Emergency work - claims submitted: $26.9 M (2% increase over prior update)
  - Emergency work - $ amount reimbursed: $12.4 M (250% increase compared to prior update)
  - Permanent work - claims submitted: $14.8 M (no change compared to prior update)
  - Permanent work - $ amount reimbursed: $2.4 M (170% increase compared to prior update)
- Insurance claim for County-owned assets:
  - Claims submitted: $6.3 M (3% decrease compared to prior update)
  - Claim received: $4.3 M (96% increase over prior update)
- Recovery-related grant funding:
  - Awarded: $7.5 M (17% increase over prior update)
- Helene Recovery Center:
  - Average visitors per day (11/10-11/14): 3.5 (3% decrease since prior update)
  - Total visitors since opening: 1230 (7% increase since prior update)