Budget Retreat

Presented by

John Hudson, Budget Director

November 13, 2025

Budget Meetings
(FY2026-2027)

November 13, 2025
Board Budget Retreat

January 22, 2026
Capital Improvement Plan
(work session)

March 24
FY26 Budget
(work session)

April 16
FY26 Budget
(work session)

April 28
FY26 Budget
(work session)

May 5
Budget Message
(regular meeting)

May 19
Public Hearing
(regular meeting)

June 2
Budget Adoption
(regular meeting)

Agenda

- FY2025 Lookback
- Current Year FY2026 Budget By Function
- Planning for FY2027
  - Future Considerations
  - Discretionary Community Investments
  - Recovery and Preparedness
- Federal Legislation and Impacts on the County
- Fire District Update
- Wrap Up

FY2025 Lookback

FY2025 Drivers Since August Work Session

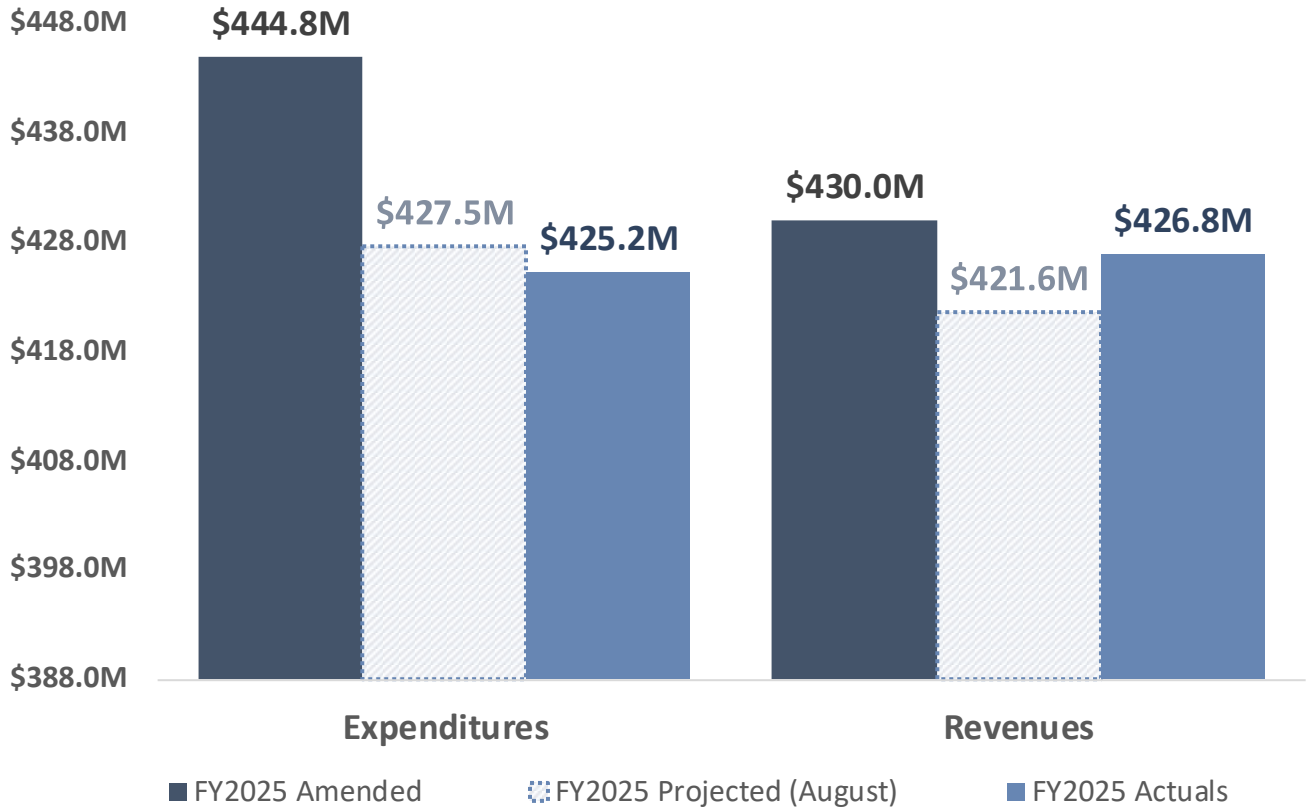
Revenue

- August projections were 98.8% accurate ($5.2M↑ vs. projected)
  - Stronger than anticipated year-end RMV property tax collections (↑$1.2M)
  - Ambulance revenue spiked last quarter of year (↑$1.8M)
  - Continued investment earnings buoyed by strong market (↑$1M over budget)

Expenditures

- August projections were 99.4% accurate ($2.3M↓ vs. projected)
  - ~$600K in expenses carried forward to FY2026
  - Departments reduced operating spending beyond reduction plan

FY2025 Year End (Adjusted and Unaudited)



Projected Fund Balance Surplus

$1.6M

Projected Fund Balance as % of Exp.

14.6%

Note: FY2025 Amended, FY2025 Actuals, and FY2025 Projected amounts are adjusted to exclude year-end closure items brought at the 6/17 meeting such as $32.6M in escrow payments and $6.4M in GASB accounting adjustments. FY2025 Amended also includes a reduction of $921,342 in interfund transfers due to Helene that was brought on 1/21/25.

Current Year Budget by Function

NCGS 159-8 requires a balanced budget

"The sum of estimated net revenues and appropriated fund balances is equal to appropriations."
(NC G.S. §159-8)

Appropriations
(Expenditures)

=

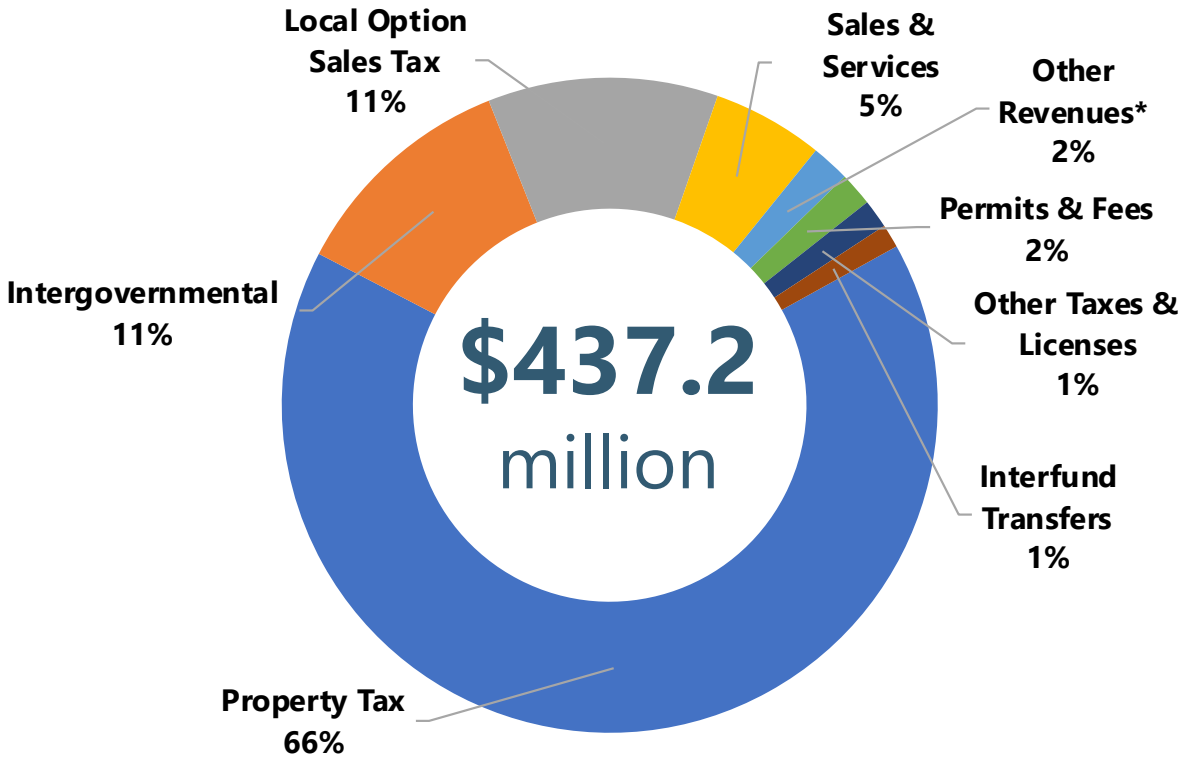
Resources
(Revenues, Fund Balance)

What is our budget philosophy?

Structural balance: Recurring revenues fund recurring expenses and one-time revenues fund one-time expenses

FY26 Amended - Revenue

Revenue Source (millions of $)	FY2026 Amended	FY2026 Actuals YTD
Property Tax	287.2	51.0
Intergovernmental	49.6	11.7
Local Option Sales Tax	49.6	6.2
Sales & Services	23.9	7.1
Permits & Fees	7.2	2.4
Other Taxes & Licenses	6.2	1.8
Interfund Transfers	5.1	0.1
Other Revenues*	8.3	9.6
Total	**437.2**	**89.8**
Appropriated Fund Balance	0.6	0.0
Total	**437.8**	**89.8**

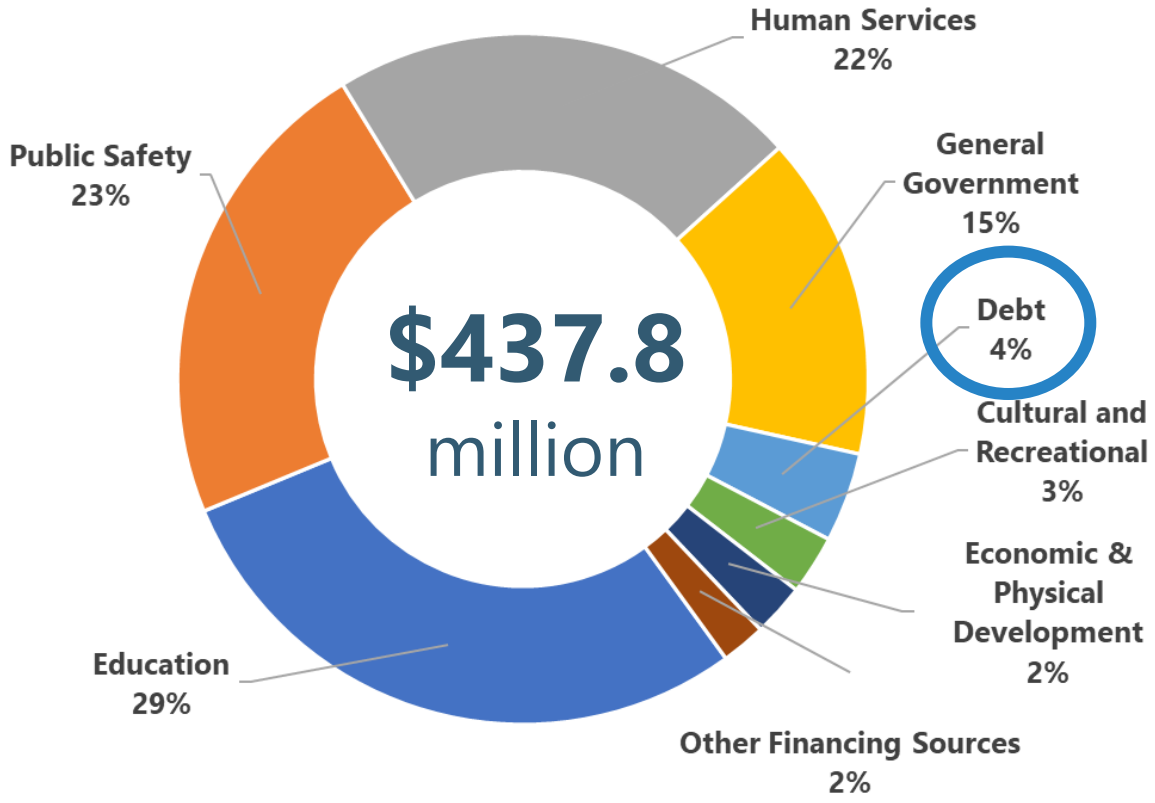


Amended budget and actuals as of November 6, 2025

Note: Other Revenue includes investment earnings, indirect cost recovery, and sale of assets.

FY26 Amended – Expenditures by Function

Function (Millions of $)	FY2026 Amended	FY2026 Actuals YTD
Education	125.9	41.8
Public Safety	98.5	29.4
Human Services	96.6	31.4
General Government	66.4	21.3
Debt	18.3	.0
Cultural and Recreational	12.2	3.5
Economic & Physical Development	10.8	3.9
Other Financing Sources	9.1	7.6
Total	**437.8**	**138.9**

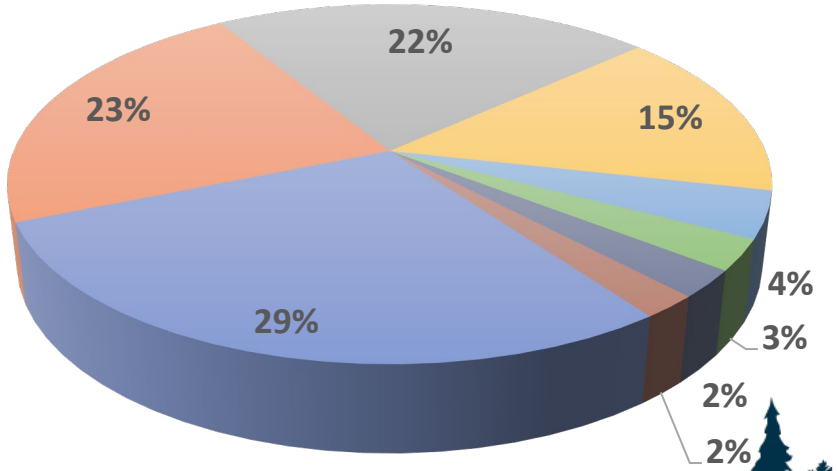


Amended budget and actuals as of November 9, 2025

FY26 Amended – Education

Function/Cost Center	Program Support
Education	**$ 125,896,840**
AB Tech*	$ 8,396,570
Asheville City Schools	$ 17,964,427
Buncombe County Schools	$ 99,296,843
Education Support	$ 239,000

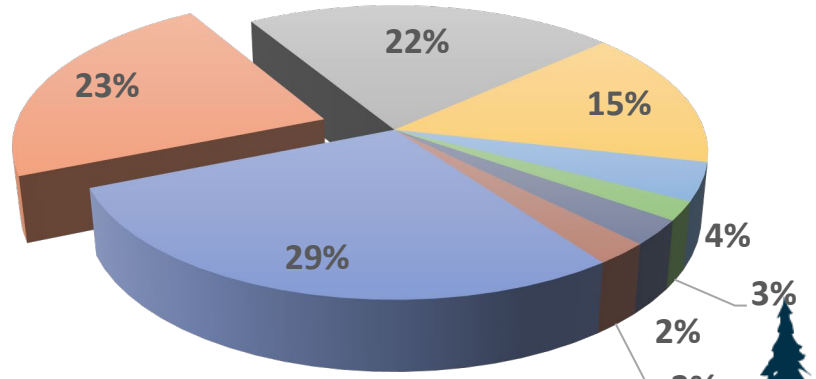
Additional Funds		*Estimated*
Article 39 - School Capital Fund Commission^	$	25,450,626
Article 40/42 - School Capital	$	22,724,378
Article 46 - AB Tech Capital	$	15,149,792
Asheville City Schools Supplemental Tax	$	16,509,918



***$5M of Interfund Transfer Revenue of Article 46 Sales Tax supports this expense. "Additional Funds" is less that $5M.**
^$4M of Article 39 was taken for operating in this year. "Additional Funds" is less that $4M.

FY26 Amended – Public Safety

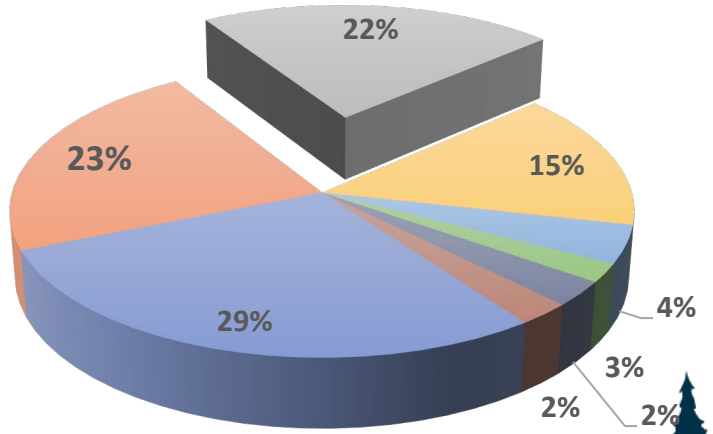
Function/Cost Center	Salaries and Benefits	Operating/ Program Support	Capital Outlay	Total
Public Safety	**$ 81,929,421**	**$ 15,978,173**	**$ 395,455**	**$ 98,303,049**
Emergency Services and Public Safety Training Center	$ 24,900,048	$ 3,563,643	$ 395,455	$ 28,859,146
Identification Bureau	$ 2,013,716	$ 98,487		$ 2,112,203
Justice Services	$ 3,940,547	$ 1,946,434		$ 5,886,981
Public Safety Interoperability Partnership (PSIP)	$ 959,501	$ 577,146		$ 1,536,647
Sheriff's Office and Detention Center	$ 43,133,889	$ 9,436,084		$ 52,569,973
911 Operations	$ 8,014,158	$ 356,379		$ 8,370,537



This function has $175,000 of contingency budgeted as well.

FY26 Amended – Human Services

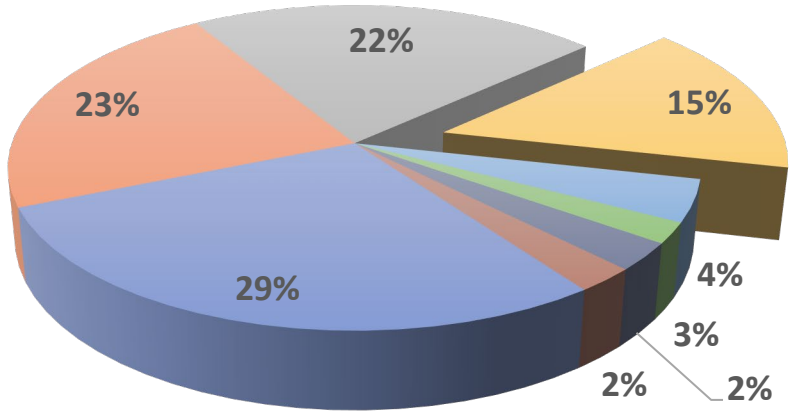
Function/Cost Center	Salaries and Benefits	Operating/ Program Support	Total
Human Services	**$ 68,515,625**	**$ 27,927,040**	**$ 96,442,665**
Animal Services	$ -	$ 1,780,931	$ 1,780,931
Direct Assistance	$ -	$ 8,457,748	$ 8,457,748
Division of Social Services	$ 52,500,056	$ 9,645,792	$ 62,145,848
Public Health	$ 16,885,578	$ 7,429,334	$ 24,314,912
Veterans Service	$ 470,889	$ 13,235	$ 484,124
Behavioral Health	$ -	$ 600,000	$ 600,000



This function has $175,000 of contingency budgeted as well.

FY26 Amended – General Government

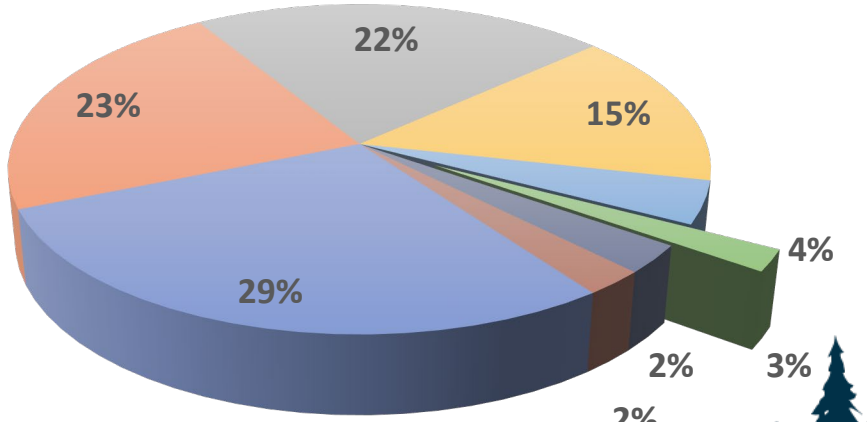
Function/Cost Center	Salaries and Benefits	Operating/ Program Support	Capital Outlay	Total
General Government	**$ 38,952,390**	**$ 26,410,729**	**$ 957,361**	**$ 66,320,480**
Access and Human Affairs	$ 461,221	$ 48,393	$ -	$ 509,614
Budget	$ 830,516	$ 13,840	$ -	$ 844,356
CAPE	$ 2,147,336	$ 475,288	$ -	$ 2,622,624
County Manager	$ 1,834,920	$ 102,812	$ -	$ 1,937,732
Elections	$ 1,446,910	$ 1,463,145	$ -	$ 2,910,055
Finance	$ 2,638,072	$ 514,277	$ -	$ 3,152,349
General Services and Fleet	$ 5,828,377	$ 9,362,926	$ 957,361	$ 16,148,664
Governing Body	$ 633,291	$ 371,556	$ -	$ 1,004,847
Human Resources	$ 2,600,276	$ 359,422	$ -	$ 2,959,698
Information Technology	$ 9,564,996	$ 11,287,627	$ -	$ 20,852,623
Internal Audit	$ 440,044	$ 10,885	$ -	$ 450,929
Legal and Risk	$ 1,294,860	$ 97,723	$ -	$ 1,392,583
Register of Deeds	$ 2,019,248	$ 97,638	$ -	$ 2,116,886
Strategic Partnerships	$ 584,194	$ 648,278	$ -	$ 1,232,472
Strategy and Innovation	$ 1,547,920	$ 17,229	$ -	$ 1,565,149
Sustainability	$ 325,769	$ 204,385	$ -	$ 530,154
Tax Assessment	$ 4,146,095	$ 506,478	$ -	$ 4,652,573
Tax Collections	$ 1,357,322	$ 762,666	$ -	$ 2,119,988



This function has $125,000 of contingency budgeted as well.

FY26 Amended – Cultural and Recreational

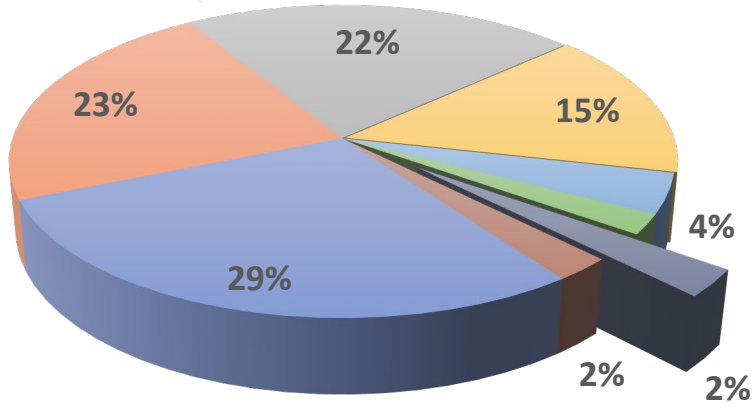
Function/Cost Center	Salaries and Benefits	Operating/ Program Support	Capital Outlay	Total
Cultural and Recreational	**$ 9,704,966**	**$ 2,353,826**	**$ 85,000**	**$ 12,143,792**
Library	$ 8,171,114	$ 1,504,900	$ -	$ 9,676,014
Parks and Recreation	$ 1,722,211	$ 848,926	$ 85,000	$ 2,656,137



This function has $25,000 of contingency budgeted as well.

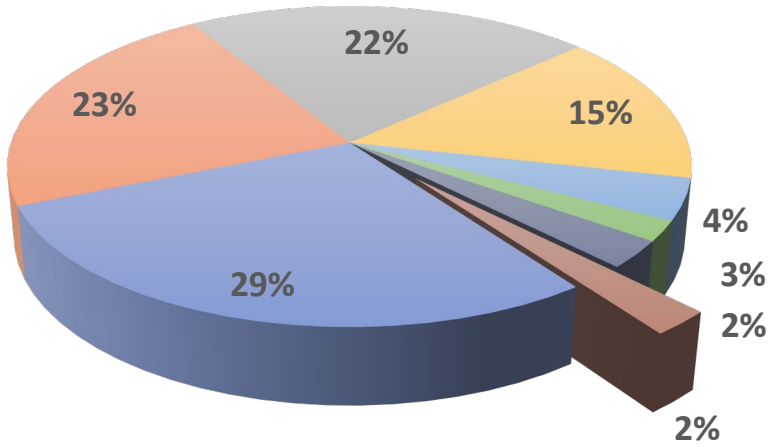
FY26 Amended – Economic & Physical Development

Function/Cost Center		Salaries and Benefits		Operating/ Program Support		Total
Economic & Physical Development	**$**	**7,885,915**	**$**	**2,899,402**	**$**	**10,785,317**
Economic Development	$	-	$	1,745,000	$	1,745,000
Permits & Inspections	$	3,147,326	$	126,178	$	3,273,504
Planning	$	4,017,822	$	305,541	$	4,323,363
Agriculture and Land Resources	$	871,266	$	722,683	$	1,593,949



FY26 Amended – Other Financing Sources

Function		Transfers And Other Financing
Other Financing Sources	**$**	**9,073,617**
Reappraisal Reserve Fund	$	422,000
Conservation Easements	$	250,000
Economic Development Incentives	$	3,330,000
Early Childhood Education	$	3,974,691
Transportation Fund	$	1,096,926



FY2027 Budget Considerations

FY27 Budget Considerations

- Code Enforcement Team – Jason Rogers, Assistant Director, Permits and Inspections
- Deaverview Mountain Planning - Allison Dains, Parks and Recreation Director
- Countywide Security - Billy Looper, Public Safety Training and Security Manager
- Vehicle Replacement
- Professional Development
- Fund Balance Review - Melissa Moore, Finance Director
- Funding OPEB - Mason Scott, Assistant Finance Director
- Debt Service Impacts - Matt Evans, Financial Planning and Analysis Manager

Code Enforcement Team
FY2027 Planning

Activity to Date

- Created in 2022 to bring multiple department complaints into a space to be discussed and collaborate on the path forward to compliance
- Membership: Planning , Building Inspections, Solid Waste, Environmental Health, Air Quality, Fire Marshal's Office & Legal
- County support partners: Social Services, Sheriff's Office & the Homelessness Program Manager
- 2,192 total complaint cases for all departments
- Code Enforcement Team cases to date: 117
    - Cases incorporate multiple complaints across 3 - 4 departments per site
    - Recurring property concerns

Challenges

- Highly complex issues for resolution
- Frequent and high touch properties
- Court system / legal involvement – most cases require some level of legal action to aide in obtaining compliance
- New Challenges Post Tropical Storm Helene

Evaluation & Process Review

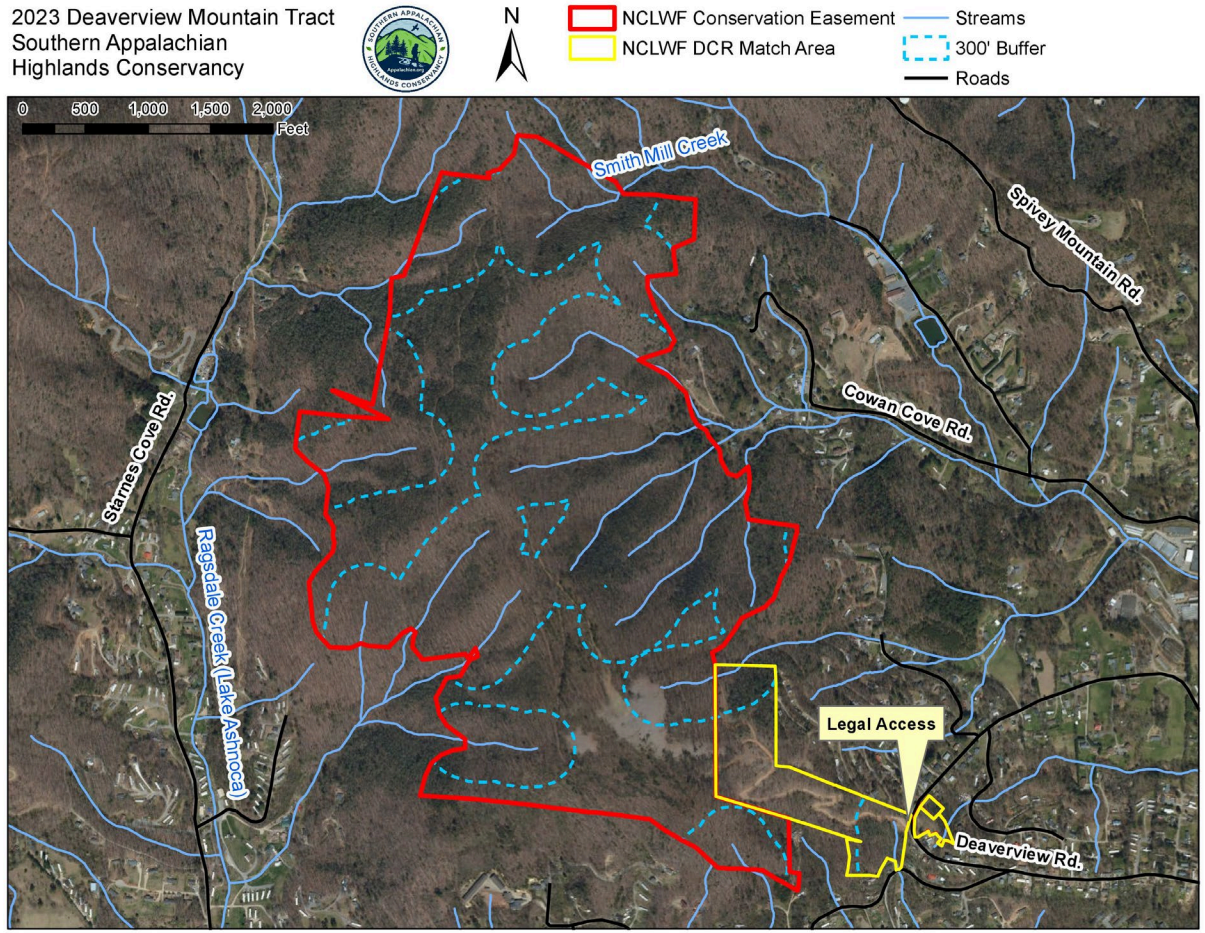
- Completed a comprehensive review of team processes and full execution of updated Standard Operating Procedures
- Review resulted in several initiatives and opportunities
- Will require focused staff and funding to address rising need

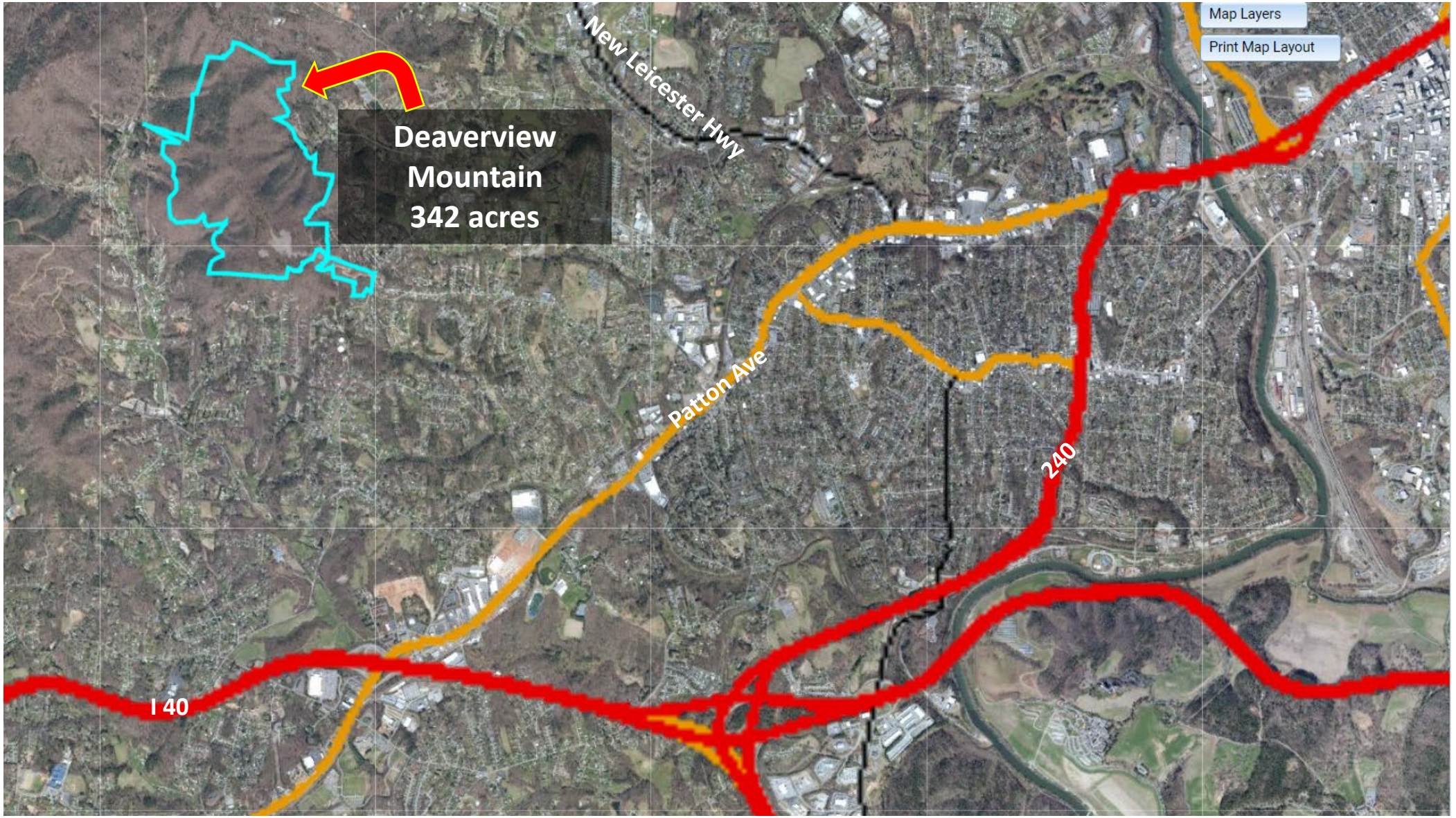
Deaverview Mountain Planning

Park Acreage

Overview

- Current Buncombe County Park acreage is 584.36 acres (553.36 developed acreage)
  - 320 acres at Lake Julian includes 5 full-time staff, 3 Temp/Seasonal staff
  - 6.5 miles walking/hiking trails
- Deaverview Mountain is 342.15 acres
  - 16 headwater streams
  - Approximately 3 miles walking/hiking trails currently exist
  - 2 viewsheds
- **Total Parks Acreage (with Deaverview) is 926.51**
- **Increase in Parks Acreage of 58.55%**





Located in the Deaverview Community

- 5.2 miles from Downtown Asheville
- 3.6 miles from West Asheville
- 7.5 miles from Leicester
- 7.9 miles from Candler

New Park Development Research

- Conducted outreach to major parks across North Carolina to gather insights and assess operational needs.
  - Benchmark sites included Chestnut Mountain Park, Pisgah View State Park, Mecklenburg County Parks, Wake County, Cabarrus County
- Evaluated key factors such as staffing requirements, development and operational costs, security, and volunteer engagement opportunities
- Collaborated with professional organizations, including Recreation Resource Services (RRS), North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association (NCRPA), and National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)

Budgetary Forecast

5-year Staffing Plan

- In development
  - **Parks Operations Staff** - Daily park operations, including guest services, safety patrols, small projects, and general maintenance
  - **Landscaping and Trail Crew** – Trail maintenance, construction, and restoration including bush hogging , pruning, invasive species control, and building structures

Park Planning and Development

- Phased Approach
- Prioritize Ingress/Egress and essential amenities such as restroom facilities and parking

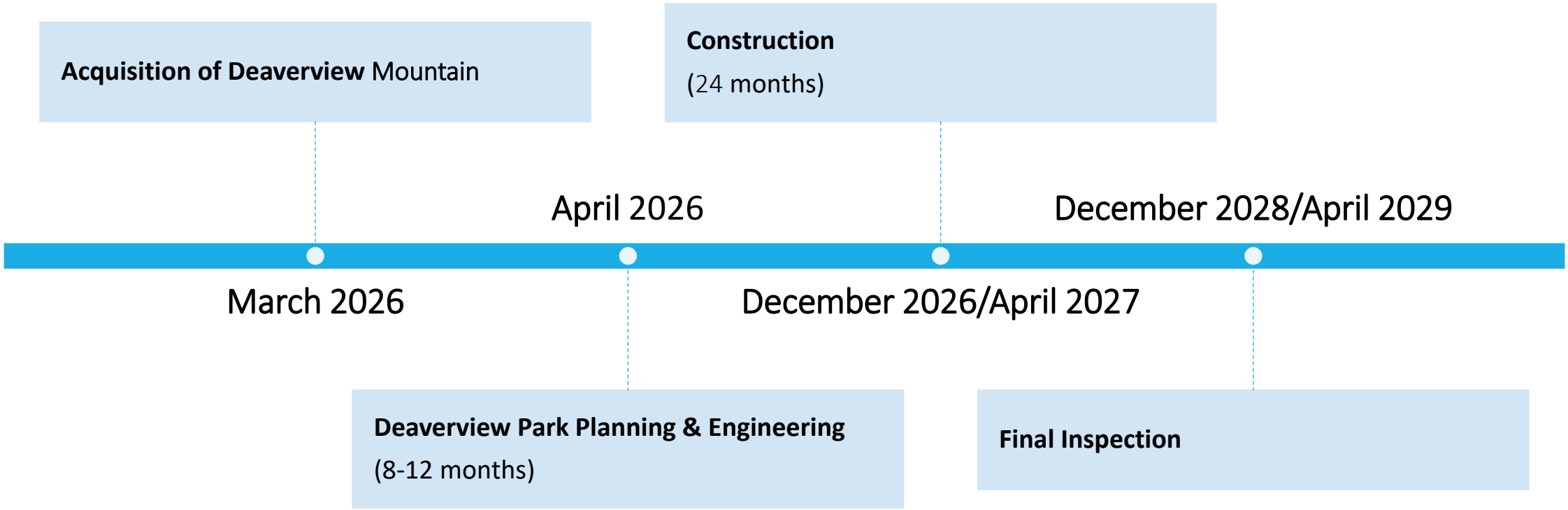
Operation Funds

- Conservation Easement requirements for invasive species removal and viewshed management.
- Tree and forest management
- Daily cleaning, maintenance, safety patrols
- Specialty Equipment and Tools for trail development and maintenance.





Timeline



Note: Draft timeline, staff will explore options for phased opening

Physical Security
FY2027 Planning

Current State

- Security infrastructure:
  - 60+ facilities/sites
  - 2+ million square feet
  - 30 County Departments
  - Over 1,800 personnel
- Security management & funding decentralized
  - Contract security at varied sites
- FY23, began process to centralize coordination in Emergency Services under the role of the Public Safety Training and Security Manager
- Capacity to assess and respond to high traffic sites only

Challenges

- No dedicated physical security budget
- Current environment of heightened security concerns & risks
- Increase in security assessments
- No full-time management of security issues across the county
- No replacement plan for security equipment
- Reactive stance to security concerns only

Looking Ahead

- Establish a strategic security plan
  - Equipment replacement program
    - Access control
    - Security cameras
  - Identify major CIP security projects
  - Recurring assessment and evaluation of security preparedness

- Security expansion to county parks
  - Installation of needed infrastructure – cabling for camera systems
  - Video analysis & intelligence driven security solutions
  - Evaluate and respond to evolving needs

- Continued collaboration with Sheriff's Office to identify solutions and ensure effective security at county facilities, including the courthouse

Vehicle Replacements

Vehicle Replacements

- Deferred vehicle replacements in recent years due to budget constraints and supply chain shortages
- Nearly 1/3rd of the County fleet will meet replacement criteria over the next five years (est. cost = ~$13M)
- Replacement criteria is based on vehicle age, mileage, and lifetime maintenance costs
- Replacements are scored and placed in tiers based on score and type of role (e.g., Patrol, Detention, General Government, etc.)
- Per the Sustainable Fleet Policy, hybrid, electric, and alternative fuel replacement options will be prioritized where feasible to reduce operating costs and emissions



Professional Development

Professional Development

- In prior years, professional development was reduced to meet more prioritized demands.
- Importance:
  - Up-to-date on regulatory changes, best practices, and innovations
  - Enhances efficiency, improves morale, and reduces turnover
  - Generally, a cost-effective way to build capacity and improve outcomes
- Examples of positions that require certification and training:
  - Code Enforcement Officers, Social Workers, Environmental Health Specialists, Erosion Control Officers, Paramedics, Clinicians, Accountants, Attorneys, and a variety of other professions

Fund Balance Review

Fund Balance

An accounting term, which is the difference between **assets** (what we own or expect to own) and **liabilities** (what we owe).

- Certain portions of Fund Balance are **unavailable** to spend, and certain portions are **available** to spend.
- We can use **Appropriated Fund Balance** (from the available portion) to balance our budget(s).
- We have a **local policy** that states we should maintain between 15% and 20% of available fund balance.

Typical Uses of Fund Balance:

- Loss of revenue, due to declines in economy
- Natural disasters
- Public Safety or Public Health emergencies

Fund Balance

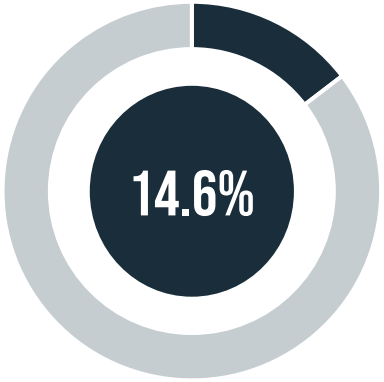
5 Components: Most Restrictive to Least

- **Nonspendable**: Money that can't be spent due to being in a nonspendable form or contractually required to be maintained intact (prepaid items, lease receivable)
- **Restricted**: Money that must be used for a specific purpose, as required by external parties and NC GS 159-8 (tax reappraisal, register of deeds, state stabilization)
- **Committed**: Money set aside by the Board of Commissioners (Fund Balance transfer to Capital)
- **Assigned**: Money intended for specific uses and budgeted by Board of Commissioners (Appropriated Fund Balance, Capital Projects)
- **Unassigned**: Money that is left over and can be used for any purpose

Available fund balance = Committed + Assigned + Unassigned

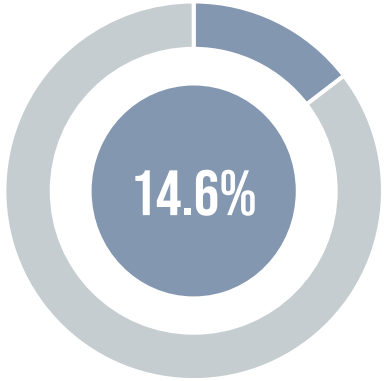
FY2025 Fund Balance

Available Fund Balance



$68.1M, 14.6% of total General Fund Expenditures which did not meet the County's fund balance minimum of 15%.

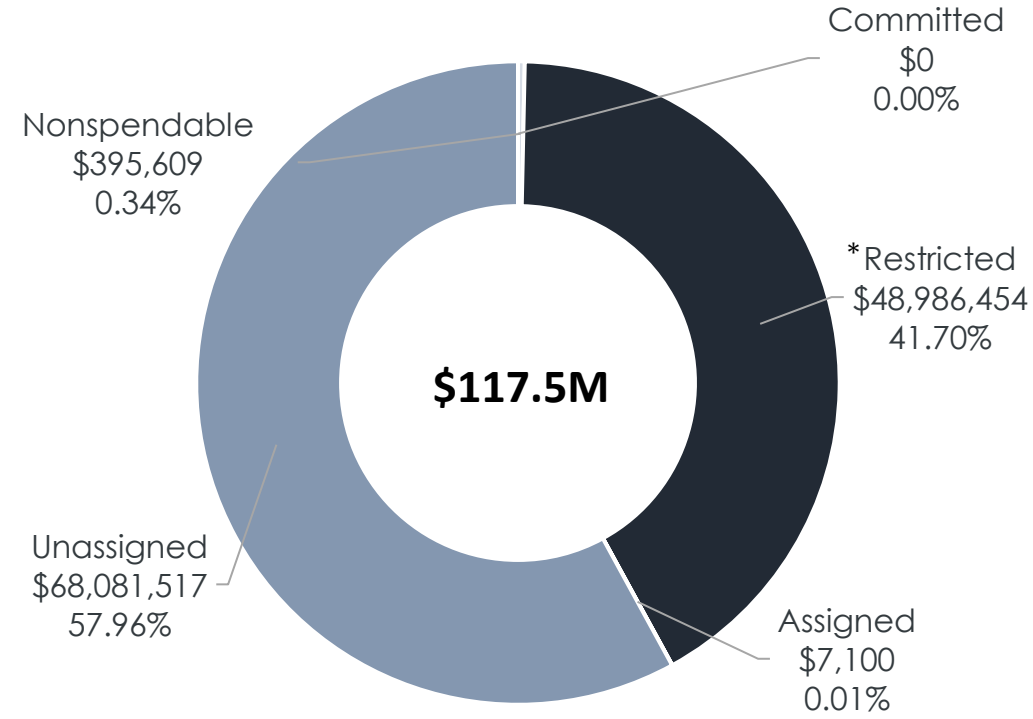
Unassigned Fund Balance



$68.1M, 14.6% of total General Fund Expenditures which did not exceed 20% to transfer funds over to the Capital Project Fund, per policy.

Fund balance projected end is $117.5M. An increase of $1.6M from prior year end.

General Fund Balance by Component



*$9.8M of restricted fund balance represents cash loaned to pending Helene Grant reimbursement

Available Fund Balance Considerations

- FY25 Available Fund Balance totaled $68.1M* (14.6% of General Fund Expenditures and Transfers)
- Fund Balance Policy minimum required $1.6M additional Available Fund Balance totaling $69.7M to reach 15%.
- Policy requires a plan to save or replenish the fund balance to the 15% minimum.

*FY25 Unaudited results

Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB)

Funding Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB)
Background

What is OPEB?

- County provides health insurance to eligible retirees until age 65
- Eligibility ended for hires after June 30, 2015

How do we pay for OPEB?

- *Pay-go*: County directly pays benefits until trust is sufficiently funded
- *Trust*:* funded by County contributions and investment earnings

*Trust aligns to best practices from GFOA/NCGFOA, State Treasurer, auditors, rating agencies

Why does it matter today?

- OPEB is a long-term commitment by the County
- Financial impacts: current vs long-term flexibility
- County has skipped trust contributions past two years (3 of last 10 years)

Funding OPEB

Important numbers as of June 30, 2025

- **Participants:** 1,210
- **Total commitment:** $122.8 million
- **Funds in trust:** $54.6 million
  - Past annual contributions = $2 million/yr
  - No contribution in FY20, FY25, or FY26
  - 44.5% of total commitment
- **Unfunded commitment:** $68.1 million
- **Remaining timeline:** Variable
- **Pay-go benefit payments:** $6.7 million (“Out of pocket”)

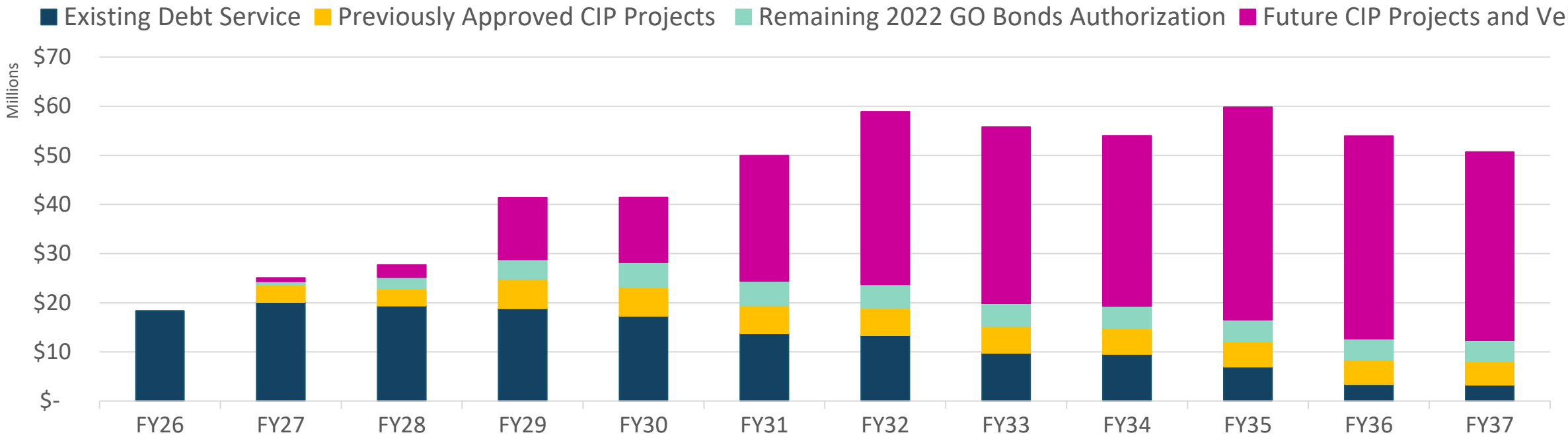
Example retiree	
Retirement age:	**50**
Retirement year:	**2022**
Years until age 65:	**12** *as of today*
Benefits already paid (est.):	**$97,180**
Final year of benefit:	**2037**
Estimated cost remaining:	**$341,685**

Debt Service

Gen. Fund Debt Commitments w/Est. CIP* Projects

Annual Impact to the General Fund

FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	FY 2032	FY 2033	FY 2034	FY 2035	FY 2036	FY 2037
$18.3M	$25.1M	$27.7M	$41.4M	$41.4M	$50.0M	$58.9M	$55.8M	$54.0M	$59.8M	$54.0M	$50.7M



**Capital Improvement Plan*

Estimating GO Bond Costs (High-Level)*

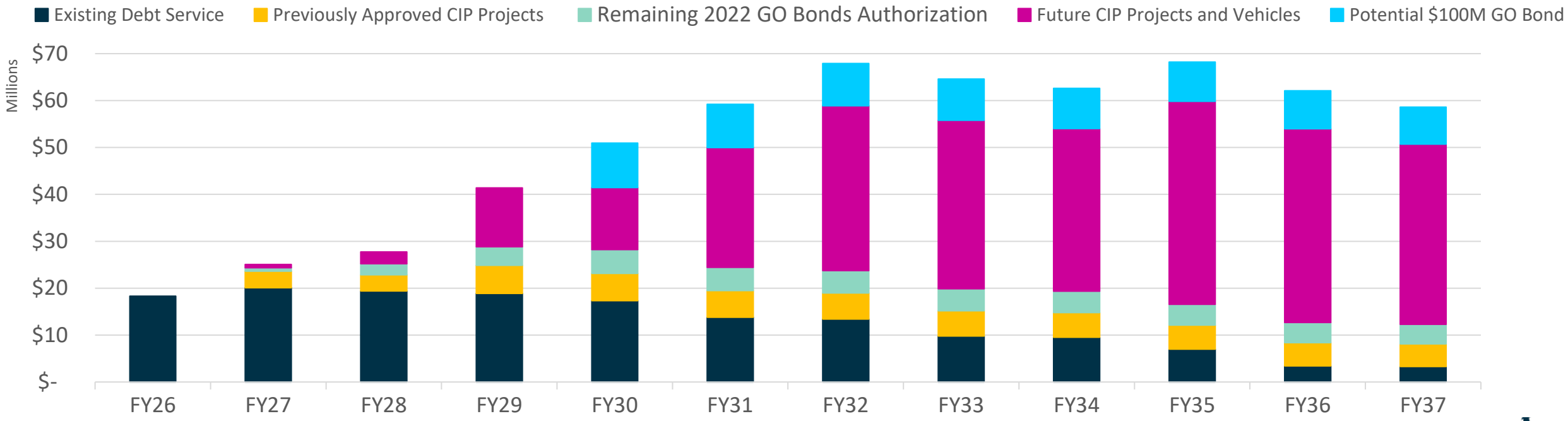
Amount/Principal	Interest	Total Debt Service	Avg Annual Debt Service**
$10M	$4.73M	$14.73M	$0.74M
20M	9.45M	29.45M	1.47M
50M	23.63M	73.62M	3.68M
100M	47.25M	147.25M	7.36M
150M	70.88M	220.88M	11.04M
200M	94.50M	294.50M	14.73M
300M	141.75M	441.75M	22.09M

**Estimations based on 4.5% interest rate at a 20-year term.*
***Debt Service will generally be higher in years 1-10*

Debt Outlook with $100M GO Bond

Annual Impact to the General Fund

FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	FY 2032	FY 2033	FY 2034	FY 2035	FY 2036	FY 2037
$18.3M	$25.1M	$27.7M	$41.4M	$50.9M	$59.2M	$67.9M	$64.6M	$62.6M	$68.2M	$62.1M	$58.6M



Discretionary Community Investments

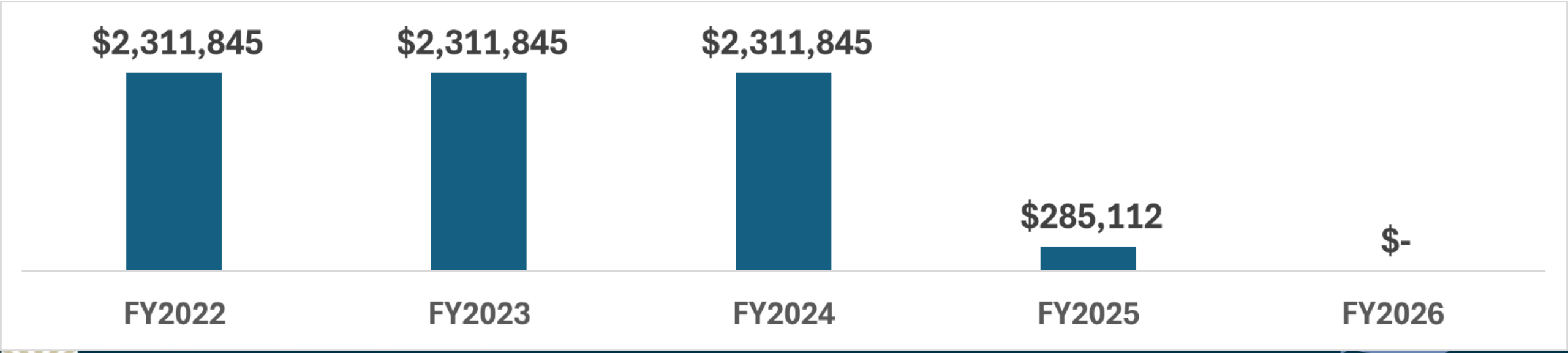
Affordable Housing Services Program

What this Funds:

- Grants and loans to support services such as construction, downpayment assistance, tenant-based rental support, and emergency repairs

Key Accomplishments:

- 137 Affordable rental units under construction
- 291 Emergency home repairs completed
- 22 Households purchased a home with downpayment assistance
- 558 Households received tenant based rental assistance



Aging Services Supplemental Funds

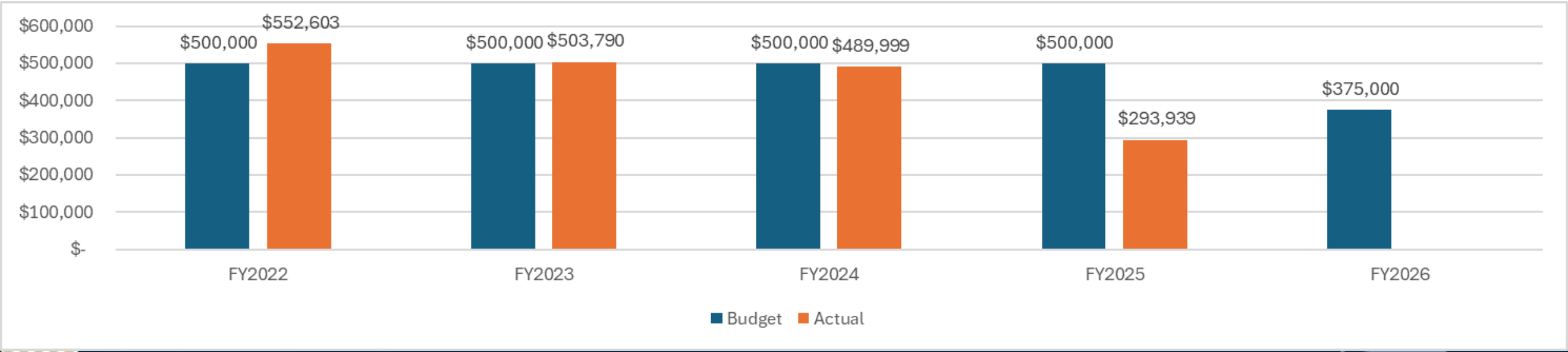
What this Funds:

Supplement to the Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) that provide in-home and community-based services in support of older adults, age 60+ and their unpaid primary caregivers.

Supports older residents' ability to age in place and increases physical, mental, and financial wellbeing for older adults and unpaid caregivers.

Key Accomplishments:

- 3,495 older adults and unpaid caregivers received services from FY2022-FY2025
- Services include: caregiver support & education; financial counseling & education; in-home aide & home-based primary care programs; adult daycare & respite; socialization opportunities; housing stabilization; care repair; end of life care management; transportation



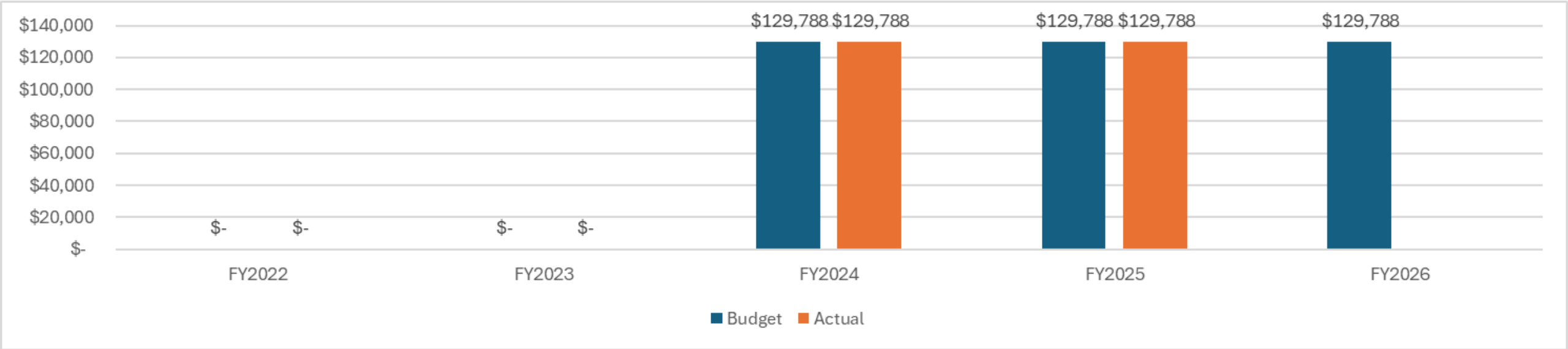
Arts Funding

What this Funds:

- Grassroots Arts Program Grants, which supports nonprofit arts organizations.
- Arts Build Community Grants which supports innovative, arts-based projects that inspire participants to be more active, involved and civically engaged by creating together.

Key Accomplishments:

- Awards 20 Arts Build Community Grants annually
- Awards over 40 Grassroots Arts Community Program Grants annually
- Completed Creative Economy Snapshot Report



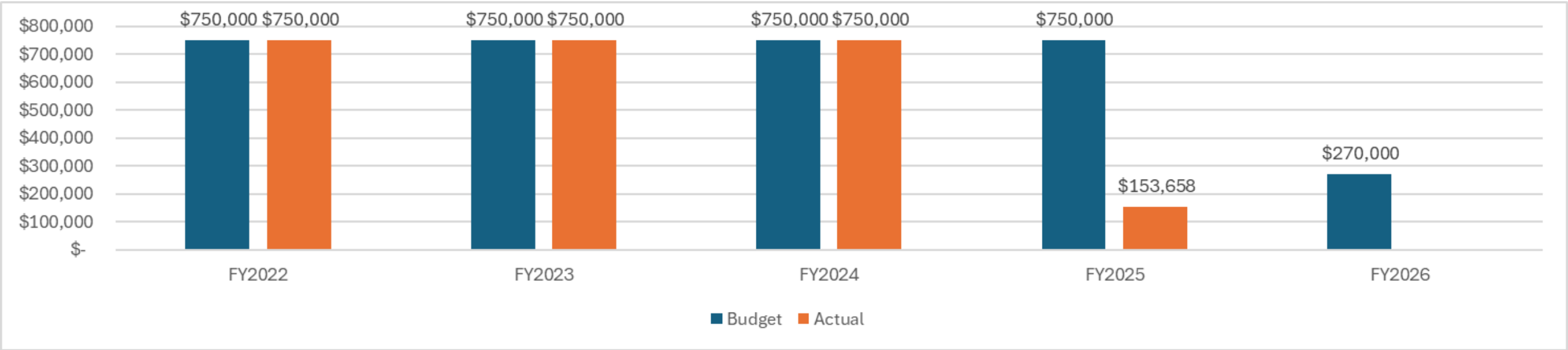
Conservation Easements

What this Funds:

Conservation easements to protect farms, forests, wildlife habitats, and natural resources from development on a property into perpetuity, as guided by Land Conservation & Agricultural Advisory Boards.

Key Accomplishments:

- Conserved 650 acres a year over last 5 years
- Working with county & community partners to meet 20% of county conserved by 2030 goal
- Over the last five years, Buncombe Farmland Preservation Program brought in over $2.9M in grants, Initiating 23 easement projects & Closing 25 easements



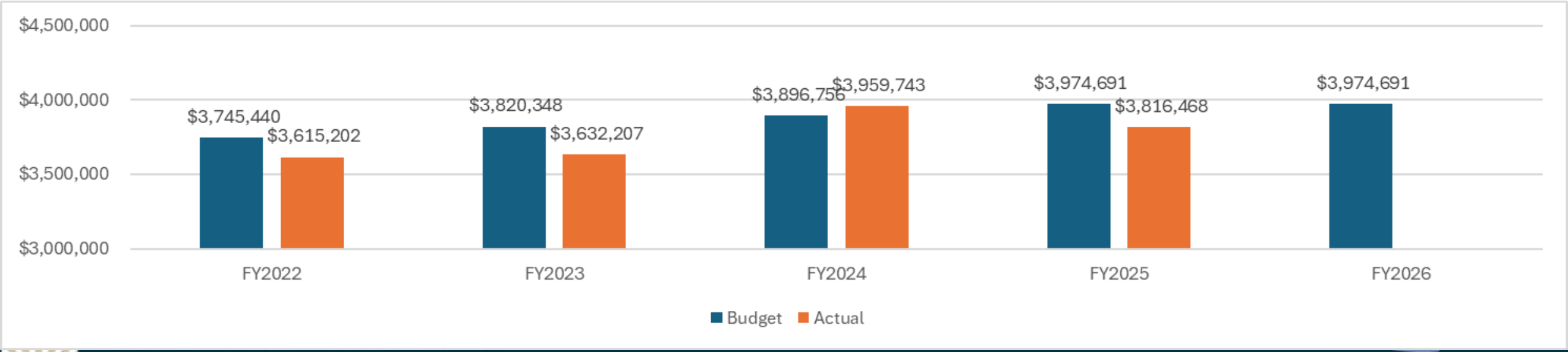
Early Childhood Fund

What this Funds:

The purpose of the Early Childhood Education and Development Fund is to ensure that every child in Buncombe County has an equal opportunity to thrive during their first 2,000 days, including access to quality early childhood education.

Key Accomplishments:

- 18 Organizations funded & 91 grants awarded over five years, including:
  - NC Pre-K expansion
  - Curriculum, assessments, etc.
  - Classroom furniture and supplies
  - Behavioral support
  - Workforce development and retention



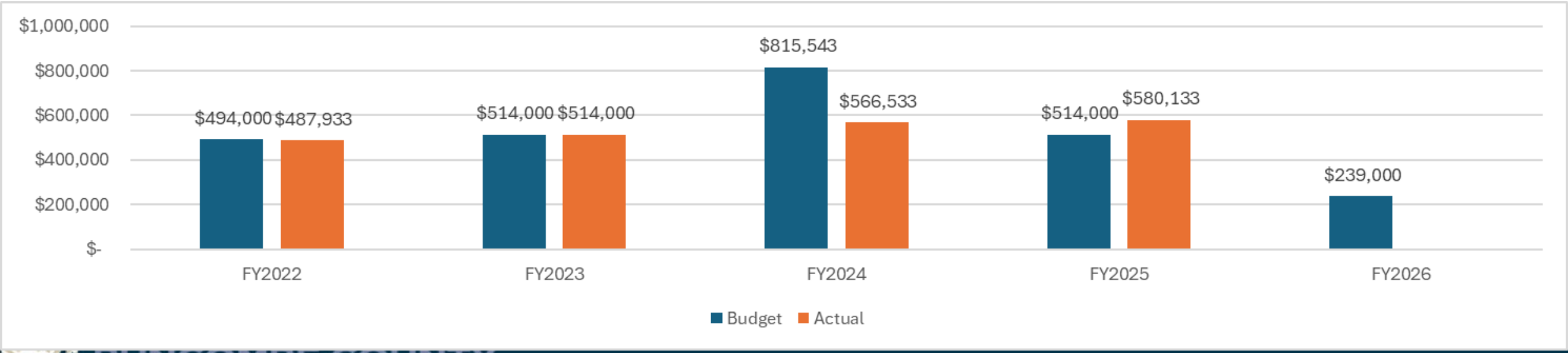
Education Support Contracts

What this Funds:

- Includes Buncombe County Schools Career Academy, City of Asheville Youth Leadership Academy (CAYLA), and School Community Impact Funding
- Historically included School Consolidation Feasibility Study, the Literacy Pilot Project and AMOS operating expenses

Key Accomplishments:

- Career Academy at Erwin graduation rate has increased to 96.1% - well above local & state rates
- CAYLA program hosted 35 students at 28 sites in 2025. All seniors enrolled in college in fall.



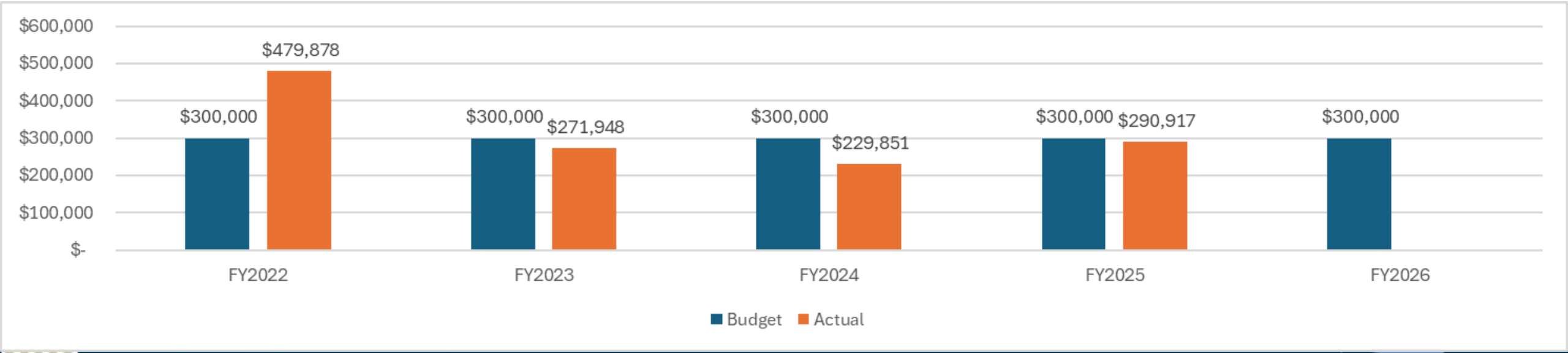
Homeowner Grants

What this Funds:

Homeowners may qualify for up to $300 applied to their property tax bill, any city municipality taxes, and/or applied to other housing related obligations such as housing costs, mortgage, or insurance.

Key Accomplishments:

- Assisted almost 4,000 homeowners over the last 5 years
- Helped offset housing expenses of low-income, long-time homeowners
- Educated individuals on state sponsored tax exemptions



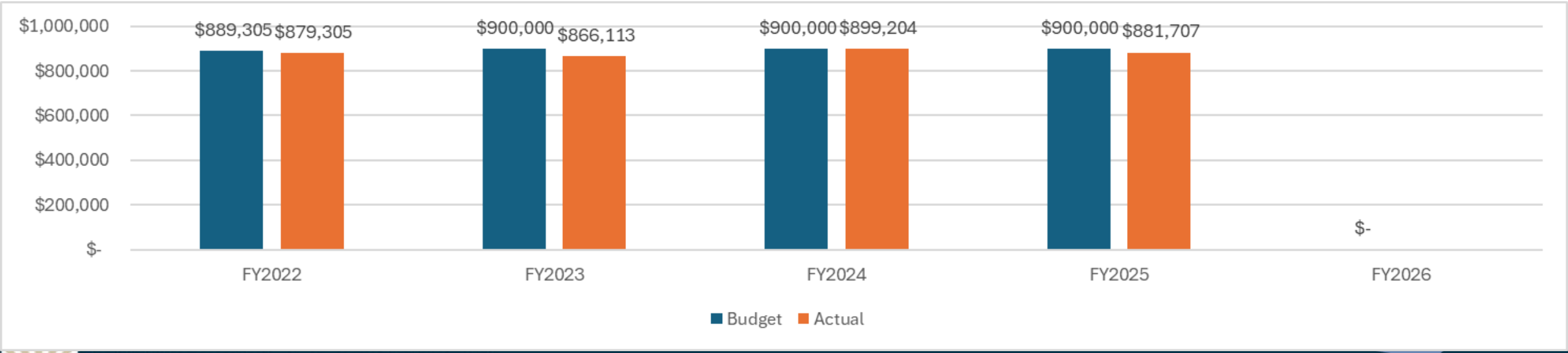
Strategic Partnership Grants

What this Funds:

Funding is granted to nonprofit organizations working toward outcomes in alignment with Buncombe County's strategic plan.

Key Accomplishments:

- Average of 25+ projects funded annually achieving results related to fresh food, animal assisted therapy, health access, legal aid, financial counseling, litter cleanup, workforce support & more.



2030 Strategic Plan

Strategic Focus Areas

	Strategic Objectives
Growth & Development	-Encourage a diversity of housing as a foundation for affordable, healthy and thriving communities, particularly for the most vulnerable residents -Maximize the use of land, guiding development to targeted growth areas that lead to resilient communities
Economic Development	-Increase opportunities and support for local workforce -Increase economic and business opportunities in Buncombe County
Education	-Enhance early & adult learning -Improve outcomes in education
Community Health	-Increase coordination and resilience of community health services to create a healthier and safer community -Improve outcomes in physical, mental, and behavioral health, and increase connectedness -Improve community well-being by providing person-centered, trauma informed services
Public Safety	-Increase prevention and harm reduction -Increase hazard mitigation and disaster preparedness to support a climate resilient community -Enhance individualized diversion services
Energy & Environment	-Preserve the agricultural heritage of Buncombe County & prioritize the conservation of natural resources -Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect air quality

Strategic Partnership Grants

- **Re-launch for FY2027**
- **Align to Strategic Objectives from 2030 Strategic Plan**
- **Fold in previous stand-alone grant programs** (e.g. Community Recreation Grants, Tipping Point Grants)
- **Prioritize Helene Recovery projects**
- **Exclude certain application types to avoid duplication with other Buncombe County investment programs**:
  - Affordable housing development & home repairs (*See Affordable Housing Services Program*)
  - Arts (*See Arts Block Grant*)
  - Conservation easements (*See Land Conservation Advisory Board*)
  - Programs and services specific to early childhood education (*See Early Childhood Fund*)
  - Programs and services specific to older adults (*See Aging Services Funding*)

Roles

Board of County Commissioners:

- Adopt strategic plan & establish strategic objectives
- Appoint members of the Strategic Partnership Grant Committee
- Maintain a resolution establishing guidelines for the funding of non-profit agencies
- Adopt an annual budget with consideration of the recommended grant awards
- Approve grant awards

Strategic Partnership Grants Committee:

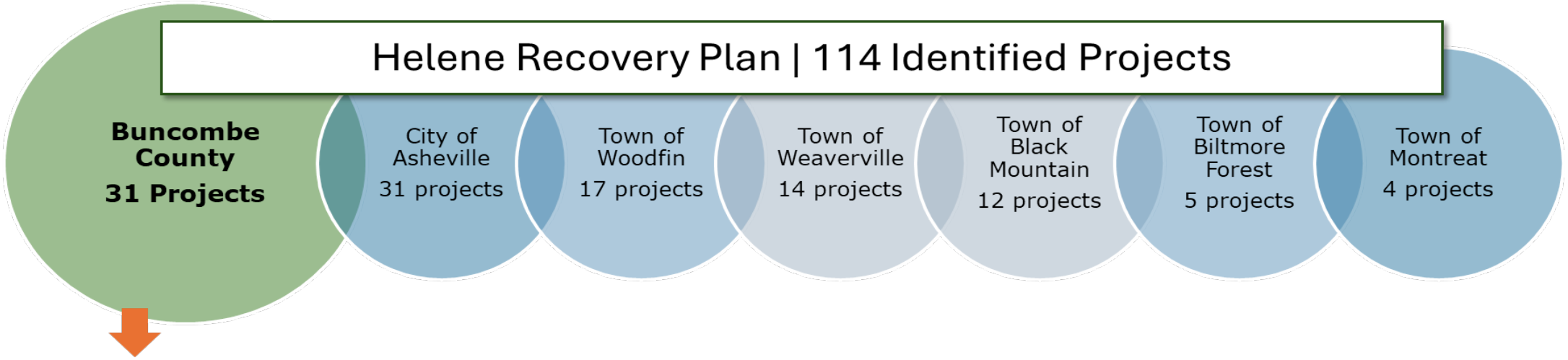
- Abide by committee bylaws and update as needed
- Utilize a standardized, points-based scoring system to review grants
- Recommend a portfolio of grants to the Board of Commissioners
- Meet throughout the year to monitor grants and review progress
- Provide feedback to staff about the grant process

County Manager or staff designees:

- Manage all processes in the grant lifecycle: application; review; award; contracting; monitoring; and closeout
- Establish grant guidelines
- Recommend annual budget with committee grant award recommendations

Helene Recovery & Preparedness

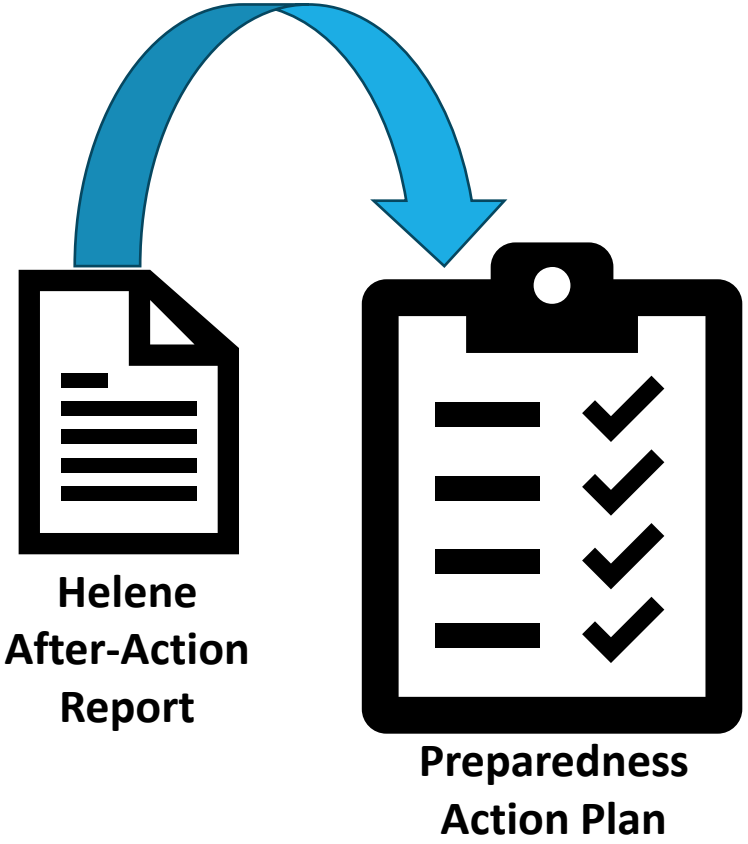
Helene Recovery Plan



Community Health	5 Projects	30 Sub-projects	• Lead Departments • Internal Partners
Economic Development	3 Projects	3 Sub-projects	• Lead Departments • Internal Partners
Energy & Environment	3 Projects	36 Sub-projects	• Lead Departments • Internal Partners
Growth & Development	7 Projects	16 Sub-projects	• Lead Departments • Internal Partners
Public Safety	13 Projects	51 Sub-projects	• Lead Departments • Internal Partners

Preparedness Action Plan

- Recommendations from interviews indexed in the Buncombe County Helene After-Action Report
- 49 recommended actions with 199 subtasks
  - Priorities and lead departments assigned
- **This plan is how we intend to improve future response**



Preparedness Action Plan

Action items that will have fiscal impact in FY27 (includes all priority levels):

- Procure a new Emergency Operations Center
- Develop a backup infrastructure for IT
- Provide emergency training to County staff
- Create backup infrastructure for Public Safety Communications
- Establish a Comprehensive Commodities Redistribution and Distribution Point (CRDP)
- Implement emergency backup solutions for County buildings and equipment

Two Departments are assigned 49% of the 49 actions in the Preparedness Action Plan

Federal Legislation and Impacts

Health and Human Services



One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) <--> House Resolution (HR) 1



Makes it tougher for people to get or keep **Medicaid and SNAP**.



Shifts Financial and Administrative Responsibility to States and Counties

Medicaid Background

- **1 in 5 residents** (62,686) in Buncombe County is enrolled in Medicaid as of June 2025.
  - Health coverage to thousands of low-income children, adults, seniors, and people with disabilities
  - Doctor visits, hospital care, prescriptions, and long-term care, are covered by Medicaid
  - Funded by both the state and federal governments
  - Medicaid is one of the largest programs supporting our local health system and community safety net

Medicaid Policy Changes

Policy Changes for FY27

- Work Requirements for clients 19-64 years old
- Medicaid Expansion program recertifications every 6 months

Current Recertification Caseload

- 49,200 Recertifications
- Actuals for August 2025
  - Most Representative Month

Future Recertification Caseload

- 62,964 Recertifications
- Estimate based off current policy framework and subject to change as rules are written

Local Impact:
Staff workload will increase

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Background

- **1 in 10 residents** (27,664) in Buncombe County receive SNAP Benefits as of June 2025.
  - Helps low-income families buy groceries
  - **$5M** per month SNAP Benefits
  - Every dollar of SNAP benefits generates an estimated **$1.50–$1.80** in local economic activity
    - Supporting jobs in grocery stores, food distribution, farms, etc.
  - During economic instability, natural disasters and other emergencies SNAP enrollment tends to rise and plays an important role in recovery support

SNAP Funding Changes

Administrative cost-share change

Current (FY26)	Future (FY27)
50% County/50 % Federal	**75% County/25% Federal**
$4.96M County Administrative Cost	**$6.86M** County Administrative Cost

Local Impact:

Administrative cost share will increase county cost in FY27 by approximately **$1.9M**

Federal Government Shutdown 2025



- Shutdown began on October 1, 2025
  - Currently on day 44
- November payments for SNAP have been paused, delayed and may not be the full allotment
- As the shutdown continues, more programs face funding and service risks

Public Health

Woman, Infants and Children (WIC)

- WIC benefits, which support women, infants, and children, are funded through the end of **November.**
- WIC staff are continuing to receive and process applications with no change in services.

➢**Local Impact:**

No immediate disruption, but risk increases with prolonged shutdown.

Social Work

Adult Protective and Aging Services

- Funding sources secured through **November**

Child Welfare

- Intake, Investigations and On-call has seen disruptions in funding as of **October 1, 2025**
- Services will continue to be provided

➢**Local Impact:**

Funding disruptions for some programs in Child Welfare; additional funding disruptions may occur as the shutdown extends.

Economic Services

Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)

- Auto-LIEAP (for 60 and older, or individuals with disabilities that maintain enrollment) will be paid to vendors on behalf of the household.
- Currently, there will *not* be an open application period in December if the federal budget is *not* passed.

➢ **Local Impact:**

- Eligible households will not be able to receive assistance to pay energy bills.

Economic Services

SNAP

- Currently, November benefits are partial payments
  - Impacts 1 in 10 **residents (27,664)** in Buncombe County as of June 2025

Example Allotments provided by NCDHHS

Household Size	Regular Allotment	Partial Payment
2	$ 208	$ 17
3	$ 600	$ 324
4	$ 348	$ 0

https://partial-payment-calculator.vercel.app/chart

- SNAP allotments are determined by household size, income and deductions
- These examples are not illustrative of every allotment

Local Impact: Heightened food insecurity for families who receive SNAP.

County Budget Impact Summary

Beginning November 1, some federal service reimbursements are on hold pending budget approval.

- Health and Human Services **$3.3M*** per month
  - Social Services **$3.13M** per month
  - Public Health **$168K** per month

* Estimated calculations as of October 2025. Numbers are expected to increase if the shutdown extends beyond November

Federal Impacts Across the County

- Justice Services
  - Two-thirds of grant funding is federal funding ($3M)

- Air Quality
  - 33% of revenues are Federal EPA grants

- FTA grants uninterrupted at this time (Transportation, Parks)

Fire District Update

Overview

- Buncombe County is responsible for fire protection for all unincorporated areas of the County
- Fire protection is funded through 19 fire tax districts with protection provided by fire departments via annual contract with the County
- Tax rates and service standards vary across the 19 fire tax districts
- In preparation for the FY2027, County staff, in collaboration with fire chiefs, seek to continue the evaluation of fire service operations and funding needs in an effort to implement a single fire tax district to fund County Fire Departments

Challenges the Project Seeks to Address

- Uneven financial sustainability across Buncombe County Fire Departments
- Challenges that fire departments have in recruiting and retaining firefighters
- Uneven fire service standards throughout the County combined with uneven property tax rates

Project Purpose

- Improve baseline fire protection service in unincorporated Buncombe County through the following potential options:
    1. Shift from 19 individual fire tax districts to a Countywide Tax District with a single tax rate
    2. Development of minimum fire service standards for the 19 fire departments

Counties that have Undergone Similar Changes

- Bertie
- Scotland
- Durham
- Surry
- Moore
- Wake
- Cleveland
- Johnston
- Bladen
- Cumberland
- Avery
- Vance
- Person
- Iredell
- Transylvania
- Caswell
- Gaston
- Forsyth
- Stokes

Project Status

- Have held four facilitated work sessions with fire chiefs with bi-weekly meetings scheduled
- Currently working with fire chiefs on development of minimum service standards
- Both fire chiefs and County staff are gathering best practice and lessons learned from County's that have undergone similar efforts in North Carolina
- Internal County stakeholder group has been formed to ensure all necessary steps for a single fire tax district are met

Major Timeline Steps

Late 2025

- Development of Fire Department Service Standards and Funding Formula

Winter 2026

- Finalize Fire Department Service Standards and Funding Formula

Early Spring 2026

- Presentation of Fire District Findings Report
- Public Notice mailed to all impacted property owners

Late Spring 2026

- Public Hearing around District Development
- Ordinance around district adopted
- FY27 Budget presented with new tax district and funding formula built in

Wrap Up and Next Steps

