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

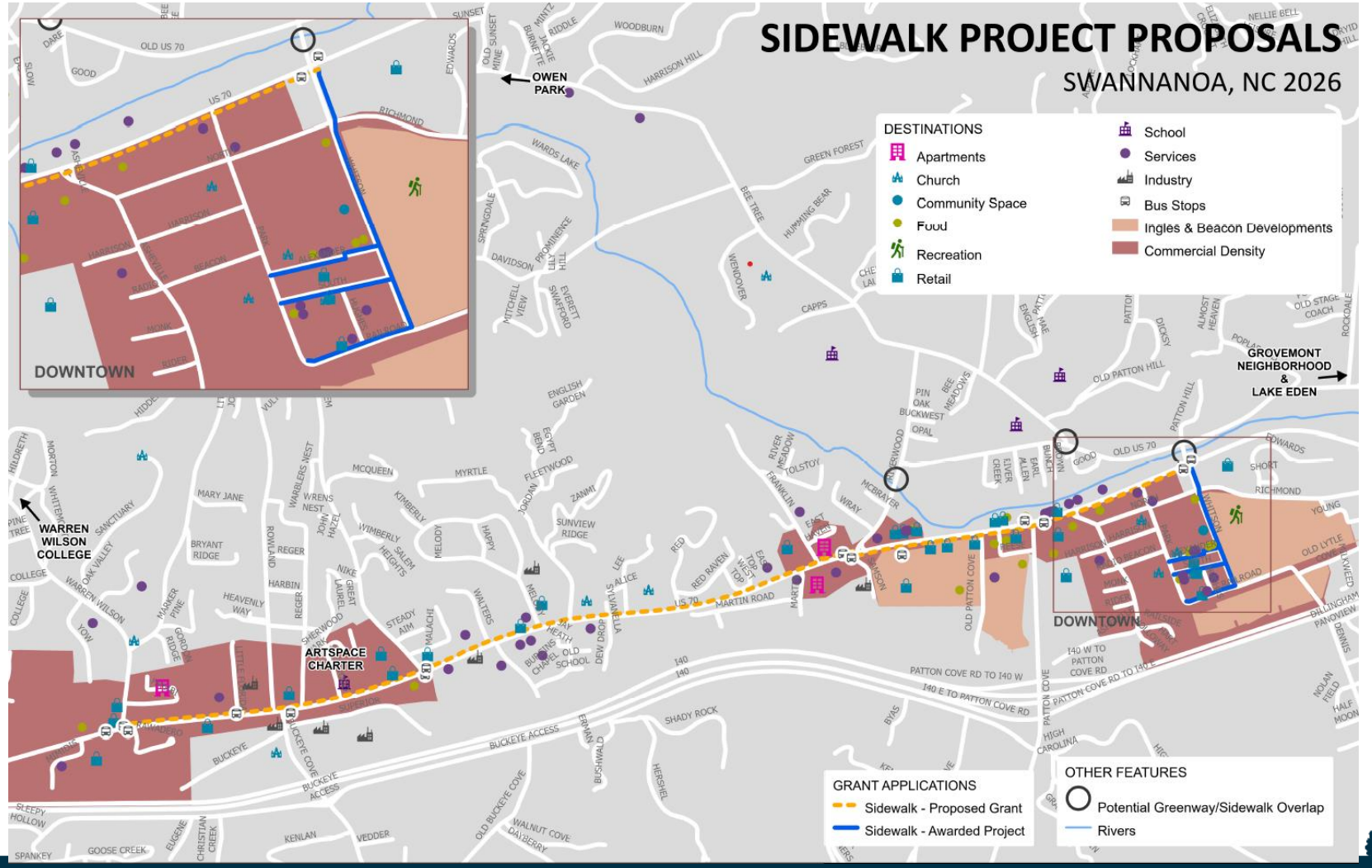


Awarded projects shown in Blue.

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
- Pending opportunity with Rural Economic Development Division
  - CDBG-Neighborhood Revitalization (CDBG-NR)
  - Request: up to $750K
  - Project: Right of way acquisition and assessment, to complement SmBIZ
- 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
- Public hearing for CDBG-NR scheduled for October 6th