Buncombe County Government

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

Buncombe County Government
Commissioner Briefing
November 5, 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. FCC Rate Discussion	15 mins	Dane Pedersen
	b. WNC Rail Support and Sponsorship	10 mins	Commissioner Drew Ball
	c. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Reporting	10 mins	Rachael Sawyer
	d. RFP Scope for Buncombe County Public Transit Plan	20 mins	William High
	e. Buncombe County Legislative Agenda, 2026-2027 Biennium of the North Carolina General Assembly	20	Josh Hallingse
IV.	Open Discussion		All

[MEET_FOOT]

FCC Updates

Board of Commissioners

Briefing Meeting

November 5th, 2026

Franchise Contract Background

- Subscription service for unincorporated area of County
- 7 year base contract that began Jan 1, 2025
- Includes 1 year extension option
- Every week trash collection
- Every other week recycling collection

Subscriber Rate Change Process

- No price increase for first 2 years of contract
- Current rate is $28.65/month
- Jan 1, 2027 begins year 3 and will be first rate adjustment
- Minimum 3.5% annual increase with 5% cap
- County reviews and approves CPI data provided by contractor
- Garbage and Trash collection CPI-U index



FCC Environmental Services

Presentation for:
Buncombe County Commissioners

Total Customers

December 2024

36,676
Total Customers

September 2026

39,766
Total Customers

58,982
Total Homes in Buncombe County

67.4%

of Buncombe County Homes Served
Serving 39,766 of 58,982 homes in the county

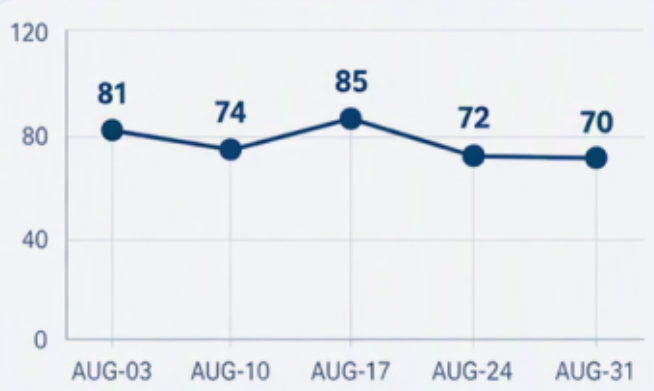
+3,090
Increase in Customers

+8.4%
Increase Since December 2024

Quality of Service - YoY

2025

Reported Missed Collections – August

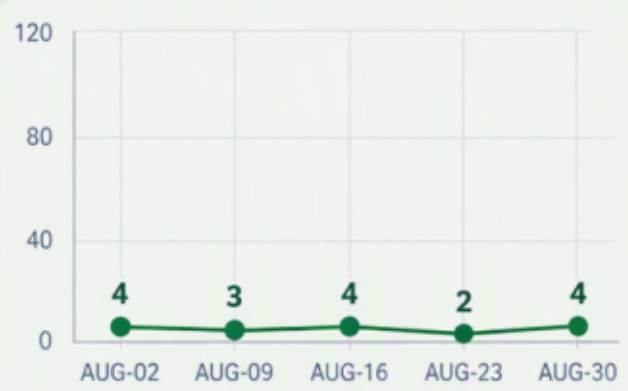


392 Total Misses in August

78 Average Misses per Week

2026

Reported Missed Collections – August



17 Total Misses in August

3 Average Misses per Week

HOW WE CALCULATE CUSTOMERS SERVED

59,659
Residential Services completed each week.

4
Reported Missed Collections (Week of Aug 20, 2026)

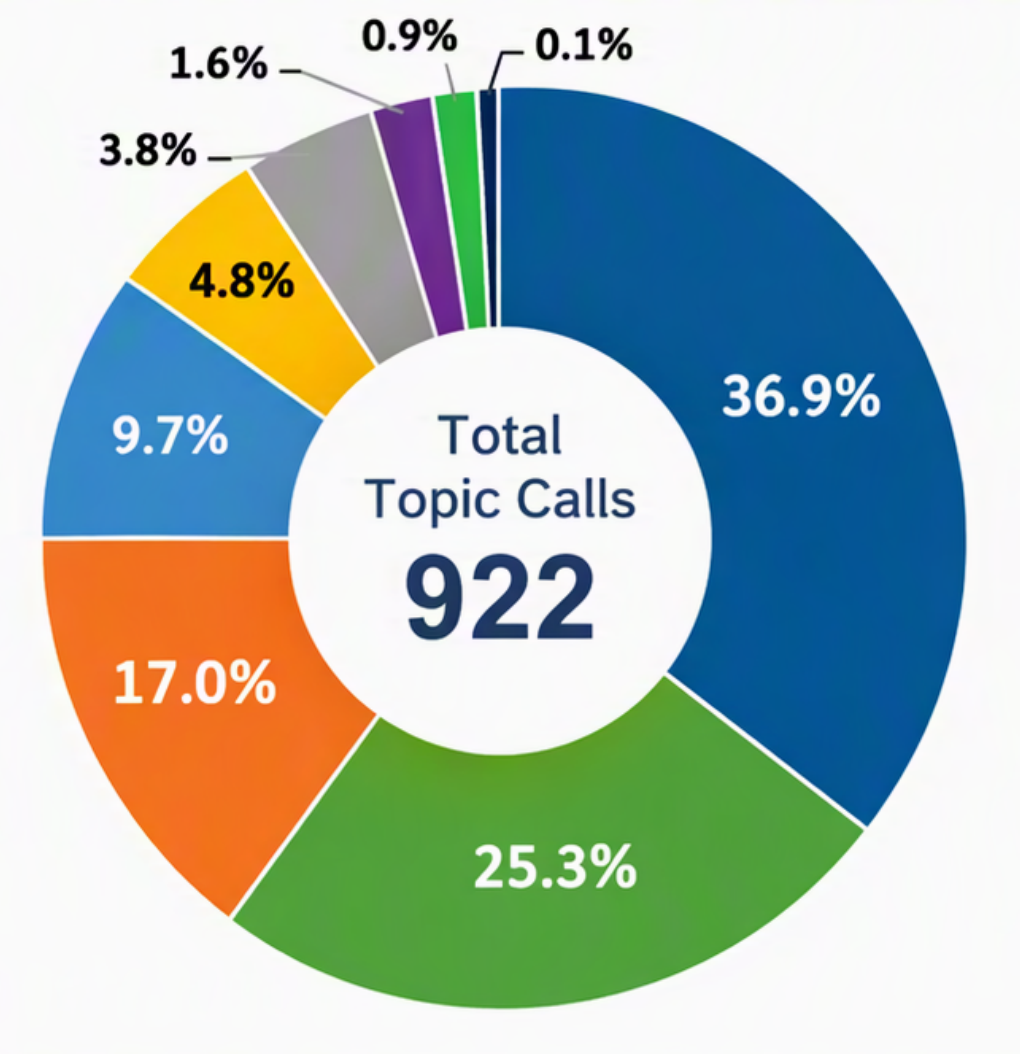
59,655
Successfully Completed Services



99.99%
Quality of Service
of customers were serviced as scheduled this week.

We completed **59,659** services each week. In the week of August 30, 2026, only **4** reported misses, resulting in a **99.99%** Quality of Service rate.

Call Center Update



August Incoming Calls
2,734

August Calls Missed
669

August Voice Mails
1,179

August Average Calls Per Day
130

Calls by Topic – August (Total 922)

Calls About Carts	340
Calls About Missed S/W	233
Calls About New Starts	157
Calls About Missed Recycling	89
Calls About Billing	44
Calls About Bear Carts	35
Calls About Bulk Pickups	15
Customer Complaint Calls	8
Calls About Property Damage	1

Recycling Performance – Strong in 2026



Cart Numbers

Carts Ordered

January 2026 – September 2026



2,428

Total Carts Ordered

Carts In Stock Now



Solid Waste Carts

96-Gallon	64-Gallon	48-Gallon
92	54	106



Recycling Carts

96-Gallon	64-Gallon	48-Gallon
90	50	76

Bear Cart Program







Bear Carts Ordered
January 2025 – Present
2,480

Total Carts in Service
September 2026
3,340

Current Bear Cart Inventory
178
Bear Carts In Stock

Ongoing Bear Cart Orders

Beginning January 2027, FCC will establish a recurring truckload order of **210 bear carts** per shipment. These scheduled deliveries will help maintain inventory levels, ensure carts are readily available for new customers, and eliminate customer wait times for bear cart requests.

210
Bear Carts (Truck Load)
RECURRING ORDER STARTING JANUARY 2027

8.5%
Customer Adoption Rate
8.5% of Customers Have Bear Carts

Customer Purchase vs. Lease
83.7%
of Customers Lease Their Bear Cart

Our Goal

Maintain sufficient bear cart inventory so that once a customer orders a bear cart, it is scheduled and delivered before their next service day.



Prepared Communities Reduce Bear Conflicts

2026 Community Outreach & Engagement

Swannanoa Community Preparedness Day

Provided meals for 300 attendees and Spanish-language interpretation to make the event more accessible.

300 PEOPLE FED

Swannanoa Resilience Hub

Provided one year of free trash and recycling service to support the hub's recovery after the hurricane.

1 YEAR OF FREE TRASH AND RECYCLING SERVICE

Hard 2 Recycle

Participated in all five countywide events, with two more events planned for 2027.

5 EVENTS ATTENDED

2 EVENTS PLANNED FOR 2027

Composting Event

Donated 50 FCC-branded buckets so attendees could take composting materials home.

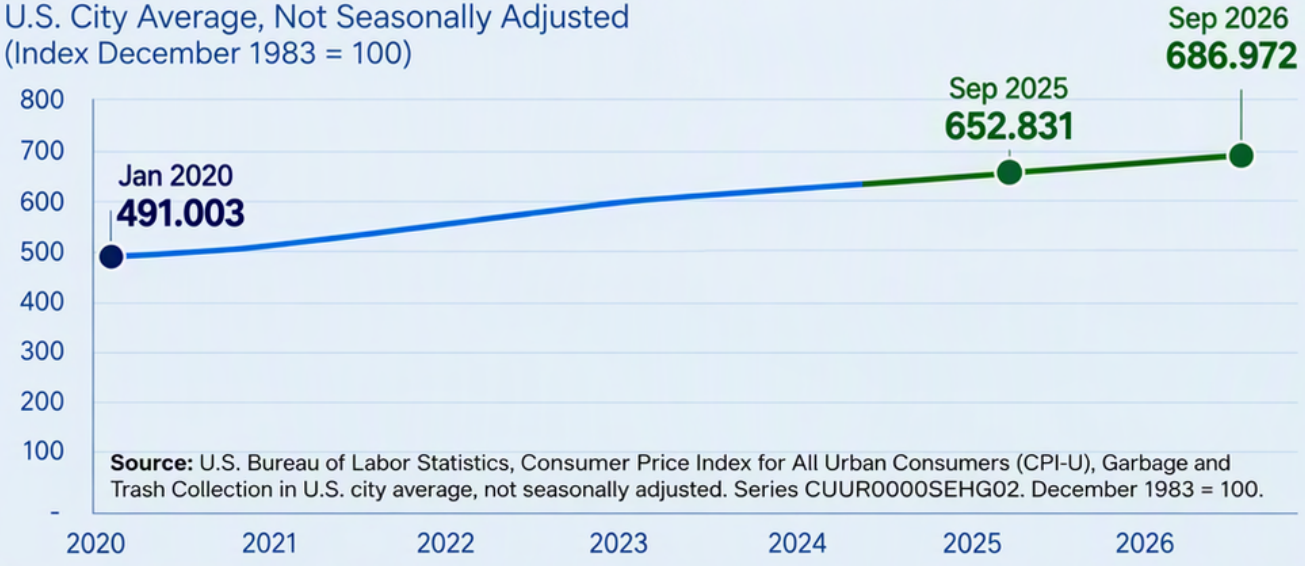
50 BUCKETS DONATED

Consumer Price Index (CPI) Information

CPI Index Trend

CPI-U: Garbage & Trash Collection

U.S. City Average, Not Seasonally Adjusted
(Index December 1983 = 100)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), Garbage and Trash Collection in U.S. city average, not seasonally adjusted. Series CUUR0000SEHG02. December 1983 = 100.

Annual CPI Change

+5.23%

September 2025 to September 2026
CPI-U: Garbage & Trash Collection

Rate Adjustment Effective

January 1, 2027

No subscriber fee adjustment is permitted before this date. Annual CPI-based adjustments may occur on January 1 thereafter, as provided in the agreement.

Index Used

- CPI-U: Garbage & Trash Collection
- U.S. City Average
- Not Seasonally Adjusted
- Published by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adjustment Method

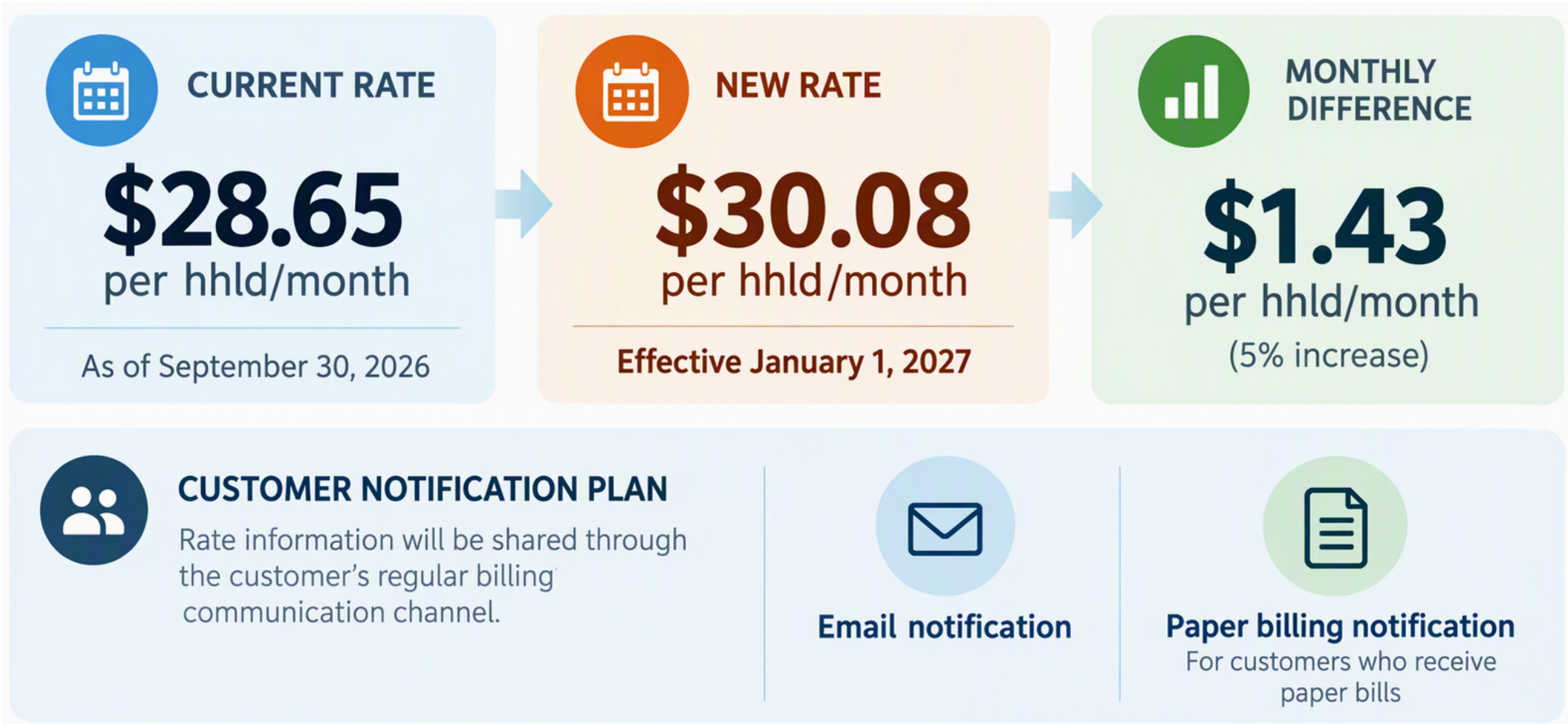
- Based on the annual percentage change for the month ending **September 30**
- Contractor must provide **60 days** advance notice to the County.

Annual Limit

- Annual CPI-based adjustment may not exceed **5%** in any single year.

Monthly Rate Information

Customer communication planned for the proposed 2027 rate change



#WeAre



Conclusion



CDBG Reporting

Rachael Sawyer, Strategic Partnerships Director

November 5, 2026

Background

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a federal funding program from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that supports housing, infrastructure, and economic development for low- and moderate-income residents.
- Buncombe County has multiple CDBG awards, passed through from the North Carolina Department of Commerce.
- Award terms require quarterly reporting to the elected board.
- These reports have previously been provided separately for each grant and are now consolidated.
- This report covers the reporting period ending September 30, 2026.

Quarterly Report

See meeting packet for full report as of September 30, 2026



Community Development Block Grant

Quarterly Report as of September 30, 2026

Buncombe County leverages external sources of funding in support of local projects, initiatives and goals. External grants come with a variety of terms and conditions, including reporting requirements.

One type of external funding utilized by Buncombe County is the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), a federal funding program from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that supports housing, infrastructure, and economic development for low- and moderate-income residents.

Buncombe County's CDBG awards are passed through from the North Carolina Department of Commerce. One of the award requirements is that "*Administrators of the project will give written status reports to the elected board at a minimum quarterly.*"

This consolidated report has been compiled by Strategic Partnerships, a county department with responsibility for overseeing incoming grants from state, federal, and private funders to ensure resources are used effectively and responsibly.

Contents include status updates for all current CDBG awards managed by Buncombe County.

Contents

CDBG-Neighborhood Revitalization (NR) 2
CDBG-Recovery Housing Program (RHP) 3

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CDBG-Neighborhood Revitalization (NR)

Buncombe County Home Repair Program

Award Amount: $400,000

Spent as of 9/30/26: $0

- Funding initially awarded to support home repairs assisting low- and moderate-income homeowners. In process of modifying to a new Public Infrastructure activity to support sidewalks in Swannanoa.

Activity Updates:

- Resolution authorizing submission of grant modification documents approved by Commissioners
- Amendment request submitted to increase funding to $719,400 for Sidewalks in Swannanoa

CDBG-Recovery Housing Program (RHP)

Pathways to Recovery

Award Amount: $3,502,213

Spent as of 9/30/26: $33,475

- Funding to support Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministries (ABCCM) in expanding Transformation Village by constructing a 4 story, 64-unit building with 32-units dedicated to women and mothers with children in recovery from substance use and are households with income below 80% or less than area median income (AMI).

Activity Updates:

- Special Use Permit approved by Board of Adjustment
- Anticipated construction start date delayed due to non-compliant procurement, had to back up to design phase
- ABCCM released bid for architectural and engineering services with responses due 10/29/26

Next Steps

- Goal is to provide future reports within 30 days of the completion of each quarter (*During October for Jul-Sept, During January for Oct-Dec, During April for Jan-Mar, and During July for Apr-Jun*)
- While the grant requirement is to provide written reports, staff will incorporate as part of Commissioners Briefing Agenda for now, with the option to transition to the Consent Agenda over time.

Community Development Block Grant

Quarterly Report as of September 30, 2026

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CDBG-Neighborhood Revitalization (NR)

Project Name: Buncombe County Home Repair Program

Award Number: 21-C-4009

Funder: North Carolina Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division (REDD), with federal funds under Assistance Listing 14.228

Award Amount: $400,000

Period of Performance: January 2023 – June 2026

Administering Department: Planning & Development

Primary Contact: Nancy Williams, Community Development Program Manager

Project Description: Funding initially awarded to support home repairs assisting low- and moderate-income homeowners. In process of modifying to a new Public Infrastructure activity to support sidewalks in Swannanoa.

Summary of Previous Activity: After Buncombe County received this award to support home repair for low-and-moderate income homeowners. 2023 & 2024 were spent launching the home repair program by identifying and contracting a subrecipient, establishing procedures, and selecting homes for repair. The program paused in Fall 2024 due to Tropical Storm Helene. CDBG-NR is no longer a priority for home repair partners given disaster recovery needs & funding sources. No funds have been spent on the award.

Activity from the Past Quarter: Rather than cancelling the award upon conclusion of the period of performance as of June 30, 2026, the Rural Economic Development Division (REDD) offered Buncombe County the opportunity to modify both: the Scope of Work to a different eligible activity; and the Award Amount if more than $400,000 is needed. The period of performance can be extended until August 2028. Staff reviewed the CDBG-NR guidelines and County-adopted plans and identified Swannanoa Sidewalks as a proposed project.

Next Steps: At the start of the next quarter (on October 6, 2026) the Board of Commissioners approved a resolution authorizing submission of grant modification documents. The modification documents were compiled, and a request was submitted to REDD on date proposing an increase to $719,400 for Swannanoa Sidewalks. Upon approval, next steps will include a budget amendment and Interlocal Agreement (ILA) with NC Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to carry out the project.

Budget to Actual: As of September 30, 2026, no funds have been spent on this award.

CDBG-Recovery Housing Program (RHP)

Project Name: C1 Pathways to Recovery

Award Number: 21-T-4140

Funder: North Carolina Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division (REDD), with federal funds under Assistance Listing 14.228

Award Amount: $3,502,123

Period of Performance: July 2024 – February 2027

Administering Department: Health and Human Services

Primary Contact: Victoria Reichard, Behavioral Health Manager

Project Description: Funding to support Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministries (ABCCM) in expanding Transformation Village by constructing a 4 story, 64-unit building with 32-units dedicated to women and mothers with children in recovery from substance use and are households with income below 80% or less than area median income (AMI).

Summary of Previous Activity: Initially granted at $1,000,000, the award was increased in January 2025. Federally-compliant Environmental Review was completed in December 2025. The project was delayed significantly as a result of impacts from Tropical Storm Helene. On May 7, 2026, Buncombe County received a High Risk Notification from REDD urging the County to take steps to prevent further delay to the project schedule.

Activity from the Past Quarter: The Master Plan was reviewed by the Buncombe County Board of Adjustment in July 2026, and a Special Use Permit was approved. ABCCM opened a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a General Contractor, and construction start was targeted for this past August or September. However, compliance concerns were identified in ABCCM's procurement process, specifically the absence of completed and stamped construction drawings. In response, Buncombe County took corrective actions to terminate a 3rd party Grant Management agreement to allow the County to work directly with ABCCM on the project. On September 30, ABCCM released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for architectural & engineering services. Buncombe County requested a grant extension of the Obligation deadline from October 4, 2026 to February 21, 2027.

Next Steps: At the start of the next quarter (on October 5, 2026), REDD approved the extension request. Responses to the RFQ are due October 29, 2026.

Budget to Actual: As of September 30, 2026, $33,475 has been spent (.01% of total award) for administrative costs.

Legislative Agenda
2026-2027 Biennium of NCGA

Intergovernmental Affairs

Legislative Agenda Process

- November 5: Briefing presentation
  - Full draft included for your review
- November 17: Regular meeting
- January 25: Legislative meeting at East Asheville Library

Observed Trends and Patterns

Five broad categories emerged during department director and board member engagement:

- Mental health
- Criminal justice
- Tax & regulatory items
- Economic recovery
- Disaster preparedness

Draft Agenda: Highlights

- Support the County's eligibility for the Supplement Funds for Teacher Compensation program (PRC 071)
- Seek reimbursement for Local School Consolidation Study Mandated by S.L. 2023-128.
- Increase funding for the NC Innovation Waiver program to address the County's waiting list.
- Expand NC's non-law enforcement IVC transport pilot to WNC.
- Encourage legislation to facilitate the use of surplus State property for economic recovery.
- Seek funding support for the purchase and installation of storm gauges targeted towards waterways to inform decisions regarding evacuations and the deployment of emergency responders.

Priorities for 26-27' Biennium NCGA

- Top Priorities
  - Increase NC Innovation Waivers
  - Create a permanent solution for PRC 071
  - Seek legislation to use state surplus property to advance affordable housing and/or economic development goals

Remaining Next Steps

- November 5: Briefing
- November 17: Regular Meeting
- January 25: Legislative Meeting at East Asheville Library

Buncombe County Legislative Agenda
2026 – 2027 Biennium of the North Carolina General Assembly

Top Priorities

- Support Buncombe County's eligibility for the Supplemental Funds for Teacher Compensation program (PRC 071) by increasing the adjusted market value threshold and annual pay adjustments for classified personnel or, preferably, by identifying a more permanent eligibility solution.
- Increase funding for the NC Innovation Waiver program to address Buncombe County's waiting list which supports adults and children with intellectual or development disabilities.
- Pursue State legislation to facilitate the utilization of surplus State property for economic recovery. The State could restrict use of properties for economic development and/or affordable housing. Sites considered for economic development could be considered for the N.C. Select Sites program administered by the EDPNC.

Policy Priorities

- Additional State funding for mental and behavioral health resources, including services and support for emergency responders, law enforcement personnel, and state employees is needed. The following would improve Buncombe County's ability to deliver services and manage costs more effectively:
    - Any restructuring of the state behavior health system should account for county fiscal and operational impacts and protect community-based crisis capacity including co-responder teams.
    - Increase state-funded inpatient state-funded psychiatric bed capacity including child/adolescent and competency-restoration beds so patients stabilized locally have somewhere to go; and (2) expand the state's non-law-enforcement involuntary-commitment (IVC) transport pilot into western North Carolina, building on the existing $20 million pilot and the authority already in G.S. 122C-251.
- Support modifications to district attorney and public defender allocation models to facilitate additional judicial resources in Buncombe County. Ensure that periodic reviews adequately account for population growth, caseloads, and local demand. Support increases or adjustments to State funding distributions that provide sufficient

prosecutorial and district attorney capacity in rapidly growing counties, including Buncombe County.

- Seek legislation expanding State programs to help those in need of property tax relief including both the circuit breaker program and property tax exclusion programs for Seniors, Permanently Disabled, and Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities.
- Seek legislation to modify the SNAP/FNS payment error rate penalty distribution, included in SB 257, to ensure counties that maintain payment error rates below the 6% federal threshold are not assessed penalties.
- Amend eligibility criteria for the North Carolina Building Reuse Tool and other NC Commerce Tier and census tract driven economic development programs so that opportunities typically reserved for Tier 2 counties might continue to be available to Buncombe County during economic recovery periods.

Appropriation Priorities

- Seek State funding support for the purchase and installation of storm gauges targeted towards critical waterways to inform fact-based decisions regarding flood mitigation, evacuations, and the deployment of emergency response personnel.
- Seek State funding for the Candler water extension project and for residential septic repairs for damage caused by Helene.
- Seek additional State support for Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program administration and management.
- Reimbursement for Local School Consolidation Study Mandated by S.L. 2023-128. The County respectfully requests a reimbursement for $300,000 costs incurred related to the school consolidation study required by the General Assembly in 2023. The County has finalized the study and submitted it to the General Assembly. This request was previously a priority on the 2024 and 2025 legislative agenda.