BUNCOMBE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

2030 Strategic Plan Briefing Book

Strategic Plan Overview

Buncombe 2030 is our next five-year roadmap that guides the County's work and priorities. This plan was nearly done before Helene but was paused and refocused following the storm in order to align with new priorities and plans that came into being in the storm's wake. Grounded in our mission and values, the plan sets out goals and objectives across key focus areas, including Growth and Development, Community Health, Education, Energy and Environment, Public Safety. and Foundational.

Overall Measure Report

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Growth & Development				
Encourage a diversity of housing as a foundation for affordable, healthy, and thriving communities, particularly for the most vulnerable residents				
There has been progress towards increasing housing affordability across rental development, homeownership opportunities, and unit repairs contributing to the County's broader commitment to healthy, thriving communities. All three related housing measures are currently below target, yet there is nuance to this as the unit repair goal was hindered by a funding pause and will more than make up ground by the end of FY27. Additionally, while below target, the goal relating to the development of rental units completed over 91% of the intended amount (246 out of 269 projected units). The home ownership goal is truly struggling, but this is due less to a lack of resources or effort and more to systemic impediments in the local housing market and the innate challenge of the goal itself. The best way to view the former two goals is that the table is set to exceed targets within the next fiscal year, while the latter goal is likely to continue struggling in the current economic environment. Regardless, the County has continued momentum toward expanding and preserving housing options for households earning below 80% of area median income.	Support development of 1,500-1,850 rental units for households at <80% AMI	246.00	269.00	FY26
	Support development of 400 ownership units for households at <80% AMI.	20.00	80.00	FY26
	Support repair of 1,000 units for households at < 80% AMI.	71.00	100.00	FY26
Maximize the use of land, guiding development to targeted growth areas that lead to resilient communities				
Reporting for this period focuses on one goal—completing 3.5 miles of County-managed greenways by 2030. Currently there are multiple greenways projects in development, but there has not been any new greenway construction in FY26 as the County is conducting thorough reassessments of previous plans in a post-Helene landscape. There has been 0.6 miles of new paved paths added to the Buncombe County Sports Park and Right-of-Way acquisition for the Woodfin Greenway is underway. Additionally, the acquisition of Deaverview Mountain will provide additional opportunities for trail development. The two remaining goals—directing more than 70% of new residential development to designated growth areas and participation in the FEMA Community Rating System—are not being reported at this time. The designated growth area's goal will be reporting in the spring since it is a calendar year goal, and the CRS participation goal is not slated to begin until FY28.	Direct greater than 70% of new county residential developments into growth areas as defined by the Growth, Equity, and Conservation (GEC) Framework by 2030. More on this is found in the 2043 Comprehensive Plan.	63.00%	70.00%	CY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Maximize the use of land, guiding development to targeted growth areas that lead to resilient communities (continued)				
	Complete a minimum of 3.5 miles of Buncombe County managed greenway projects by 2030.	0.00	0.70	FY26
	Join the FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) and achieve Class 8 status by 2030.	0.00	0.00	FY26
Economic Development				
Increase opportunities and support for local workforce				
The County is approaching workforce opportunities from multiple directions, supporting the creation of quality jobs through economic development investments, helping residents overcome barriers to training and employment through More Than a Job, and providing accessible employment resources through the library system. FY26 included both progress and transition across this work. One way we support quality employment opportunities is through our economic development incentive programs, working with local industries and businesses to encourage investment and job creation. We are on track with this goal, with two projects moving forward for FY27, including the Board-approved Southeastern Container project, representing a $31M facility and 12 new full-time jobs averaging $32.90/hour, and the proposed $2.5M East Fork Pottery expansion, which would add 40 new jobs. We also want to help residents overcome barriers to accessing those opportunities. More Than a Job connects participants with training through A-B Tech and provides wraparound support for needs like transportation, books, testing, and uniforms. We are awaiting greater clarity from the state on the program's future and are working internally and with A-B Tech to determine how these services can continue through that transition. Finally, our libraries provide an accessible community connection to employment resources. While that measure is currently below target, Libraries is reviewing how we track these services and how we can better connect job seekers with available resources. Ultimately, this work is about ensuring that as employment opportunities grow in Buncombe County, our residents are positions to benefit from them.	Increase the percentage of new Economic Development Investment Program projects that offer worker benefits beyond health care (Ex. childcare, housing, transit, etc.) from 14% in 2024 to 25% by 2030.	14.00%	14.00%	FY26
	Increase the percentage of More Than a Job participants who gain employment upon completion of program from 24% in 2024 to 50% by 2030.	26.00%	26.00%	FY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Increase opportunities and support for local workforce (continued)				
	Increase the number of library customers who connect to employment information from 734 in 2024 to 1,000 (35% increase) by 2030.	532.00	784.00	FY26
Increase economic and business opportunities in buncombe county				
The second objective for the Economic Development Focus Area aims to "Increase Economic and Business Opportunities in Buncombe County." Results for goals rolling up to this objective are mixed. Specifically, it's likely that the economy is still working to overcome the impact from TS Helene as evidenced by the fact that targeted industries (Advanced Manufacturing and Professional and IT) saw a 5% reduction in employment in 2025. The County, however, has seen some very positive gains in broadband access with the number of households unserved or underserved by high-speed internet fall from 5,500 to 3,000. The Board also recently approved two new incentive agreements (East Fork and Southeastern Container), which will help make strides toward our goals related to County policy-based economic development incentives.	Increase total employment in target industries (Professional & IT and advanced manufacturing) from 22,060 opportunities in 2024 to 35,300 (60% increase) by 2030.	20,904.00	24,708.00	FY26
	Increase the average wage for Buncombe County Economic Development Investment Program projects from $31.44 in 2024 to $45.50 (30% increase) by 2030.	$ 31.44	$ 34.25	FY26
	Increase average entry level wage for Buncombe County Economic Development Investment Program projects from 92% of projects at the living wage in 2024 to 100% by 2030.	92.00%	92.00%	FY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Increase economic and business opportunities in buncombe county (continued)				
	Decrease the number of households in Buncombe County that are unserved or underserved by high-speed internet from 5,530 in 2024 to 2,765 (50% reduction) by 2030.	3,047.00	4,977.00	FY26
	Increase the number of small businesses in Buncombe County from 9,429 in 2023 to 9,900 (5% increase) by 2030.			CY26
Education				
Enhance early and adult learning				
Buncombe County's early and adult education focused strategic goals are aimed at strengthening long-term educational and workforce related outcomes. And there is some promising momentum: the share of Opportunity Youth has fallen to 8.3%, which has already surpassed the 2030 target of 9%. The items that impact this goal are efforts to improve labor-market conditions and a rising the graduation rate. The latter of which is the second goal within this objective. The County's goal of reaching a 92% 4-year cohort graduation rate has also reached its target, currently sitting at 92.3%. There is still some nuance to consider amongst this good news. The data for the Opportunity Youth goal has a significant lag at 2 years. Therefore, this goal bears monitoring to determine if this is sustainable momentum or if there are post Helene impacts. Furthermore, because graduation rates reflect several years of educational experiences and transitions, sustained collaboration with community partners and schools will be essential to maintaining the 2030 target of 92%.	Partner with community organizations to increase the percent of children aged 0-5 in childcare and Pre-K from 27% in 2025 to 31% by 2030.		28.00%	CY26
	Work with community partners to decrease the percentage of youth ages 16-24 who are disconnected from school or work from 9.9% in 2023 to 9.0% by 2030.	8.30%	9.70%	FY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Enhance early and adult learning (continued)				
	Work with community partners to increase the adjusted four-year cohort graduation rate average from 90.7% in 2024 to 92% by 2030.	92.30%	92.00%	FY26
Improve outcomes in education				
There are three goals in the Improving Educational Outcomes objective: reducing disparities in youth court referrals and moving towards parity in both the kindergarten readiness gap and the public high school graduation gap for at risk populations. The initial baseline for the youth court referral goal has been revised and was higher than the initial data indicated. The new target is to reduce the disparity ratio from 2.9 to 1.9 by 2030. To date, there has been an impressive drop in the disparity ratio from 2.9 to 2.5. The goals pertaining to the reducing the kindergarten readiness gap and the public high school graduation gap for at risk populations remain a challenge. For instance, the kindergarten goal saw better outcomes amongst black children, but not the same level of gains with Hispanic children. Additionally, the graduation rate goal saw similar outcomes across all at risk populations. So even as the County's high school graduation rate is achieving its overall target, there is still work to do to make sure all children can succeed.	Work with community partners to reduce disparity in youth court referrals by 35% for at risk populations by 2030.	2.50	2.90	FY26
	Engage with partners to move towards parity in the kindergartner readiness gap for at risk populations with a 45% reduction by 2030.	24.60	16.00	CY26
	Work with community partners towards parity in the public-school graduation gap with a 50% reduction amongst at risk populations by 2030.	3.40	2.60	FY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Community Health				
Increase coordination and resilience of community health services to create a healthier and safer community				
Of the three goals that roll up to this objective, only one goal has data to report in the first quarter of fiscal year 2027; all other goals will be reported at the end of the calendar year. This one goal, around increasing the percentage of former Buncombe County foster children enrolled in the Extended Foster Care (EFC) program, is precisely on target for FY26, with 76% of eligible young people choosing to enroll in the program. This represents a 4% increase in enrollment from the baseline of 73% the previous year. This growth in program enrollment represents a meaningful contribution to the Community Health objective designed to create a healthier and more safe community through coordinated and resilient health services, as the EFC program relies on diligent case management and relationship building by social workers to support former foster youth in evaluating whether this voluntary program is the right fit for them. Once enrolled, EFC program participation allows 18–21-year-olds to receive ongoing support from a social worker, access to funds for education and other needs while learning the skills necessary to survive as a functioning adult in society, contributing significantly to a foundation from which young adults can build the conditions for a productive and healthy life in our community.	Increase the number of residents successfully connected to the health resources they need through a community referral system from 61.1% in 2024 to 76.1% by 2030.		65.10%	CY26
	Decrease the number of community members over 65 with reported independent living difficulty from 6.4% in 2023 to 4.8% by 2030.		5.40%	CY26
	Increase the percentage of former Buncombe County foster care children enrolled in the Extended Foster Care program (18 to 21 year-olds) from 73% in 2025 to 85% in 2030.	76.00%	76.00%	FY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Improve outcomes in physical, mental, and behavioral health, and increase social connectedness				
Of the two goals that roll up to this objective, one is reported during this cycle. The value for the infant mortality rate goal is based on data reported at a state website and it's generally not available until the end of the calendar year. The goal reported during this cycle, increase number of participants attending County-sponsored programs promoting well-being, met and exceeded target. Looking at the departments that offer programs meeting the definition for inclusion, Parks & Recreation participation was on target compared to the reported Libraries' value which significantly exceed target. The positive variance to target reported for the library value can be attributed to the fact that there were multiple programs that saw large attendance numbers this year and these programs were not offered following tropical storm Helene and these were not included in the baseline and target values. In addition, anecdotally, it's believed that with the economic downturn people are looking for free activities closer to home; thus, leading to greater participation in library programs.	Decrease the infant mortality rate from 5.0 in 2023 to 4.5 by 2030.		4.90	CY26
	Increase number of participants attending County-sponsored, in-person programs that offer opportunities for recreation, social connectivity, and promote mental health, physical wellness, and overall wellbeing in the community from 35,111 in 2024 to 41,431 (18% increase) by 2030.	65,230.00	36,375.00	FY26
Improve community well-being by providing person-centered, trauma informed services				
This objective contains two goals that rely on state data collected and evaluated after the end of each calendar year. As such, there is no new data to report around either substance use-related deaths or deaths by suicide in Buncombe County for quarter one of fiscal year 2027. However, the county is actively conducting a variety of activities to achieve these goals including the Community Paramedic Post Overdose Response Team, Public Health's Harm Reduction Program and Health Promotion Team, and Justice Services Community Re-Entry to support those seeking substance use recovery resources, as well as multiple community partnerships, support for trauma-informed programming, and mental health training initiatives underway through the Helene Recovery Plan and Healthy Communities initiatives to increase the awareness of suicide risk factors and availability of mental health resources communitywide.	Improve mental health outcomes in the community as indicated by a reduction in the number of per capita deaths by suicide from 18.8 in 2023 to 12.5 (33% reduction) by 2030.		20.00	CY26
	Reduce the per capita rate of substance use-related deaths from 44.6 in 2024 to 33.5 (25% reduction) by 2030.		36.90	CY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Public Safety				
Increase prevention and harm reduction				
There are three goals under the objective to increase prevention and harm reduction efforts across the county. Goals within this objective focus on community violence, child welfare, and emergency preparedness. Today, we are reporting on one goal under this objective - reduce gun-related injuries and deaths by 10%. Under this goal, the County and its partners work to prevent violence by addressing root causes and increasing community collaboration. Currently, we are on target with this goal as EMS responded to fewer gun related injuries and deaths than the stated target for FY2026. The remaining goals in this objective will be reported on during the next Strategic Plan report out.	Partner with community organizations to reduce gun-related injuries and deaths from 48 in 2024 to 43 (10% decrease) by 2030.	44.00	47.00	FY26
	Increase the number of community members that are trained in risk reduction/preparedness from 3,307 in 2024 to 20,000 by 2030.		3,300.00	CY26
	Improve the percentage of Child Protective Services cases that are initiated on time from 87.2% in 2024 to 95% by 2030.			CY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Increase hazard mitigation and disaster preparedness to support a climate resilient community				
The goals within this objective of increasing hazard mitigation and disaster preparedness to support a climate resilient community are well under way. In combination with many of the preparedness action plans and planning, the goals for this objective are being meant. Staff have worked through the Preparedness Action Plan to provide testing of core capabilities, a new location for the 911 call center, which includes primary systems that are operational. Wildfire campaigns have contributed to a climate resilient community as well as continued awareness efforts. The data shows a steady and positive outcome for this objective with more data to be received in the springtime for stream-gauges.	Increase the number of core emergency capabilities tested from 9 in 2025 to 21 (65% of the total 32) by 2030.	17.00	10.00	FY26
	Increase the number of stream gauges from 12 to 18 (50% increase) by 2030.		13.00	CY26
	Implement four levels of public safety communication planning for emergency operations based on the PACE model by 2030.	1.00	1.00	FY26
	Develop and conduct annual wildfire hazard seasonal awareness campaigns targeting areas where risk is high by 2030.	1.00	1.00	FY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Enhance individualized diversion services				
The goals within this objective seek to increase our direct services and support to people experiencing behavioral health needs and justice system involvement. Alternative response programs currently operate in two departments within the County - EMS and the Sheriff's Office - and seek to, when appropriate, divert individuals from the justice system and Emergency Department. Justices Services operates multiple programs that are designed to divert cases or provide alternative pathways through the justice system, with the aim of reducing an individual's future involvement in the system. All three goals within this objective are currently on target. Specifically, our alternative response programs responded to more people in need of support and diversion programs saw an increase in enrollments and maintained low rates of recidivism in FY2026.	Increase the number of responses by trauma-informed alternate emergency responder services from 5,208 in 2025 to 6,250 (20% increase) by 2030.	5,852.00	5,416.00	FY26
	Maintain the percent of Community Re-entry program participants who do not receive new charges within in a 6-month period at 80%	81.80%	80.00%	FY26
	Increase the number of eligible cases referred for diversion services from 340 in 2025 to 364 (10% increase) by 2030.	364.00	346.00	FY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Energy & Environment				
Preserve the agriculture heritage of buncombe county and prioritize the conservation of natural resources				
Our objective is to preserve the agricultural heritage of Buncombe County and prioritize the conservation of our natural resources. We're doing that by reducing waste, restoring waterways, conserving land, and supporting the long-term viability of agriculture. One important part of this work is keeping reusable materials out of our landfill. While we ended FY26 just below our construction and demolition waste diversion target, a new $3.5M grant has now come online. This investment will help build the infrastructure needed to recover materials like wood, metal, cardboard, brick, and concrete – significantly expanding our diversion capacity in future years. We're also restoring our waterways from Helene damage while providing future protections. Stream bank restoration has reached over 3,000 linear feet, exceeding our FY26 goal of 2,000 feet, with additional projects in design for FY27. Through partnerships with local land trusts, we're protecting land for the future. This year, 934 acres were initiated for conservation, exceeding the Board-adopted annual goal of 700 acres within the year. Finally, supporting the long-term viability of agriculture is intentionally scheduled to begin in 2028, allowing staff to remain focused on Hurricane Helene recovery and other priorities. Ultimately, this work is about protecting the land, water, and agriculture resources for future generations of the county to inherit.	Increase economic viability and stability of agriculture by supporting 20 farmers with workshops, business planning, and farm estate planning by 2030.		0.00	CY26
	Increase the percentage of total recycled waste generated in Buncombe County, to include Construction & Demolition waste (C&D), from 9.9% in 2024 to 20% by 2030.	11.14%	12.00%	FY26
	Restore 10,000 linear feet of streambank by 2030.	3,050.00	2,000.00	FY26
	Conserve 20% of the county's total acres by 2030 by initiating conservation of 700 acres per year (board adopted goal).	934.00	700.00	FY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect air quality				
In our pursuit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect the air quality of our community, the projects tend to have a longer lead time. We have not added any public EV chargers yet, but have 6 installations scheduled in the coming months. Additionally, our next Solarize campaign is tentatively scheduled for 2028 as long as we maintain the ability to navigate the ever-changing incentive programs offered by the state and federal governments. More immediate successes have been realized at the landfill, as we've been able to divert over 389 tons of organic matter away from our landfill, to be composted. This aids in extending the life of our landfill. *Of note: in pursuit of our goal to power 100% of County operations with renewable energy by 2030, we have plateaued at about 38% for multiple years and may be likely to slip backwards instead of pushing forward. We are limited in our agency with this goal, and are very dependent on Duke Energy to produce energy using renewable resources. Duke is producing less renewable-based energy than they projected.*	Increase residential solar installations from 165, which resulted from a previous solarize campaign in 2022, to 200 from future solarize campaigns (an 18% increase), by 2030.	165.00	165.00	FY26
	Increase the quantity of organic compost offset from the landfill from 250.5 tons in 2024 to 900 tons by 2030.	389.76	380.00	FY26
	Increase publicly-available electric vehicle charging ports at County facilities from 9 in 2024 to 25 by 2030.	9.00	9.00	FY26
	Achieve 100% renewable energy usage for County operations by 2030 (board adopted goal).	38.00%	40.00%	CY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Foundational				
Optimize business practices				
Of the 4 goals that roll up to this objective, 3 were reported during this cycle. The goal related to increasing the quality of customer service is dependent upon results from the community survey and that data will not be available until the spring of 2027. For the goal relating to small business participation in solicitations, the number of small businesses with active contracts in Workday declined from 218 in FY25 to 202 in FY26. In response to the decrease, Procurement is taking a more proactive approach to increasing small business participation through more intentional and consistent outreach to the small business community as well as continuing to leverage partnerships with organizations like Mountain BizWorks. Looking at the goal related to implementing performance indicators on service contracts, the reported actual value was slightly below target. In the years to follow, a project team will work to implement procedures, policies, and a system for recording performance measures tied to service contracts with the objective to increase across the organization the number of service contracts with performance measures. For the goal related to standardization of data collection, all contract data is derived from Cobblestone and there has been a focused effort to clean up the data and put systematic safeguards in place to ensure data fidelity going forward. These steps have been necessary to accurately measure the number of service contracts that have performance measures associated with them. With this in mind, this goal should be considered complete.	Increase small business participation (based on responses) in solicitations by at least 10% year over year through 2030.	-7.30%	10.00%	FY26
	By 2030 ensure 85% of annual service contracts have at least 2 performance indicators.	19.00%	20.00%	FY26
	Increase the overall quality of customer service rating on the community survey from 65% in 2024 to 75% by 2030.			CY26
	Ensure 85% of annual service contracts have standardize data collection by 2030.	100.00%	100.00%	FY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Focus on strengthening organizational culture				
Of the 5 goals that roll up to this objective, none were reported during this cycle. The goals are all related to data points that will be captured in the employee survey scheduled for December 2027.	Increase the favorable score on cross department collaboration from 53% in 2024 to 64% (the government benchmark) by 2030.			CY26
	Increase the favorable score on the work life balance category within the employee survey from 63% in 2024 to 76% (the government benchmark) by 2030.			CY26
	Increase the favorable score on the organizational communication and psychological safety employee survey questions from an average of 53% in 2024 to 62% (the government benchmark) by 2030.			CY26
	Increase the overall quality of satisfaction with internal service departments according to the internal customer service survey from 60% in 2024 to 70% by 2030.		62.00%	CY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Focus on strengthening organizational culture (continued)				
	Increase the favorable score on employee innovation from 70% in 2024 to 75% (the corporate benchmark) by 2030.			CY26
Grow and retain buncombe county employees				
Of the 3 goals that roll up to this objective, none were reported during this cycle. 2 of the goals will be captured in the employee survey scheduled for December 2027, and the goal related to annual turnover is scheduled to be captured at the end of this calendar year.	Increase the favorable score on the meaningful recognition employee survey question from 57% in 2024 to 64% (the government benchmark) by 2030.			CY26
	Increase the favorable score on the employee survey questions related to career development & growth from 61% in 2024 to 67% (the corporate benchmark) by 2030.		63.00%	CY26
	Increase the favorable score on the employee survey questions related to career development & growth from 61% in 2024 to 67% (the corporate benchmark) by 2030.			CY26

Analysis & Recommendations	Goals	Actual	Target	Reporting Period
Grow and retain buncombe county employees (continued)				
	Decrease Annual Turnover from 13% in 2024 to 10% by 2030.			CY26

Strategic Plan Goals Report for Briefing

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Growth & Development	Support development of 1,500-1,850 rental units for households at <80% AMI	FY26	246.00	269.00	The Affordable Housing Services Program (AHSP) developed 246 units at or below 80% AMI out of the targeted 269 units by FY26. The program is still on track to produce 796 units in the pipeline that are already funded, but there is a ~800-unit gap between the FY30 goal of 1,850 developed units and what has been funded so far.
	Support development of 400 ownership units for households at <80% AMI.	FY26	20.00	80.00	There are a number of challenges generating significant headwinds for this goal including: the cost of land, occupant income, interest rates, and construction costs. Buncombe County is a high demand housing market that makes developing single family homes, duplexes, etc. at the <80% Area Median Income (AMI) level extremely challenging. AHSP is continuing to pursue partnerships that will help make homeownership a reality for low-income Buncombe County residents and achieve this ambitious goal.
	Support repair of 1,000 units for households at < 80% AMI.	FY26	71.00	100.00	While this goal did not meet its target of 100 units in FY26, this was primarily due to the Affordable Housing Services Program (AHSP) being paused for FY26 due to Helene. As a result, the County did not fund any new units and extended existing contracts. Regardless, AHSP is projected to generate 164 home repairs in FY27 which, if realized, will more than compensate for the prior year's shortfall.
	Complete a minimum of 3.5 miles of Buncombe County managed greenway projects by 2030.	FY26	0.00	0.70	Due to TS Helene and the recovery timeframe, and the significant damage done, greenway projects have been on hold. The adoption of the Recovery Plan, Strategic Plan and the Master Parks Recreation plan will include greenways. The addition of a project manager to Parks and Recreation, RFP's and recent purchase of the Deaverview park all will help in contributing to the miles of greenway added. Currently, Parks and Recreation is in a Right-of-Way acquisition for the Woodfin Greenway which takes a full year to complete. In addition, a .6-mile 10-foot asphalt path was added to the Buncombe County Sports Parks.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Growth & Development	Join the FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) and achieve Class 8 status by 2030.	FY26	0.00	0.00	Due to the impacts of Hurricane Helene that have required significant attention and resources, this strategic priority was intended to have a delayed start in FY28. The need and intent remain, and the County is continuing to work toward creating the conditions necessary to begin this work.
Economic Development	Increase the percentage of new Economic Development Investment Program projects that offer worker benefits beyond health care (Ex. childcare, housing, transit, etc.) from 14% in 2024 to 25% by 2030.	FY26	14.00%	14.00%	Buncombe County did not finalize any new economic development agreements in FY26, resulting in no increase in outcomes for this goal. Extended project timelines, complex incentive requirements, and disruptions to the project pipeline following Hurricane Helene contributed to this delay. Economic development activity began recovering in spring and summer 2025, with several new investment and expansion opportunities emerging, such as with SEC and East Fork Pottery's expansion. The County's economic development team has several agreements in development for SY27 and anticipates reporting new outcomes in future years.
	Increase the percentage of More Than a Job participants who gain employment upon completion of program from 24% in 2024 to 50% by 2030.	FY26	26.00%	26.00%	The More Than a Job program experienced a temporary pause in new enrollments beginning in July 2026 due to changes in state contracting requirements. Buncombe County resumed administering the program internally in October 2026 and is working to address the backlog of requests accumulated during the pause. As of the end of October, six new cases have been added, and outreach to existing participants is underway to update their records. One staff member is currently dedicated to the program, with plans to add temporary staffing support to help manage the workload.
	Increase the number of library customers who connect to employment information from 734 in 2024 to 1,000 (35% increase) by 2030.	FY26	532.00	784.00	We may need to explore our statistics-tracking to ensure that we're adequately tracking our queries and public computer use by job seekers. It's likely that we're not capturing the true numbers of job applicants using our public PCs and printers. Additionally, though we held a number of drop-in programs with our partner NCWorks, these sessions did not have the attendance that we had hoped. It's possible that other programming models could have different results.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Economic Development	Increase total employment in target industries (Professional & IT and advanced manufacturing) from 22,060 opportunities in 2024 to 35,300 (60% increase) by 2030.	FY26	20,904.00	24,708.00	Professional & IT services have been notably impacted by the decrease in total employment. Employers in this field have likely been impacted by the implementation of new technology that does not require hiring at the same pace, cuts to government spending such as consulting services, and financial shifts like interest rates and the cost of borrowing, which can slow hiring rates. Advanced manufacturing can be a little easier to explain (tariffs, Helene impacts to tourism, and also cost of borrowing), but the change in advanced manufacturing total employment is negligible to the extent that it is nearly flat.
	Increase the average wage for Buncombe County Economic Development Investment Program projects from $31.44 in 2024 to $45.50 (30% increase) by 2030.	FY26	$ 31.44	$ 34.25	This goal is below target partly due to the fact that there were no new Economic Development Agreements signed for FY26 and it's important to keep in mind that Economic Development agreements can require significant time to finalize. The two incentives have been finalized this fiscal year as of October 2026 (SEC and East Fork) were for expansions that were announced in FY26. Company response time and complicating factors like state grant incentives (such as building reuse) can extend the timeline. The Economic Development team communicates frequently with the EDC about new opportunities, and not all applicants make it through the pipeline. Companies may go for another site, or a project can fizzle out. An additional deterrent is that TS Helene impacted the pipeline of projects that were likely to be completed in FY26.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Economic Development	Increase average entry level wage for Buncombe County Economic Development Investment Program projects from 92% of projects at the living wage in 2024 to 100% by 2030.	FY26	92.00%	92.00%	No new Economic Development Agreements signed for FY26, yielding no movement. Economic Development agreements can require significant time to finalize. The two incentives we have finalized so far in FY27 (SEC and East Fork) were for expansions that were announced in FY26. Company response time and complicating factors like state grant incentives (such as building reuse) can extend the timeline. The Economic Development team communicates frequently with the EDC about new opportunities, and not all applicants make it through the pipeline. Companies may go for another site, or a project can fizzle out. Additionally, Helene impacted our pipeline of projects. We started hearing from companies in Spring/Summer 2025 about new investment and expansion opportunities. This is a relatively quick recovery from Helene, but the storm disrupted our pipeline of projects that were likely to be completed in FY26.
	Decrease the number of households in Buncombe County that are unserved or underserved by high-speed internet from 5,530 in 2024 to 2,765 (50% reduction) by 2030.	FY26	3,047.00	4,977.00	Major influx of infrastructure repair, hardening, and expansion work in the wake of TS Helene has yielded some positive growth in broadband access for our community.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Education	Work with community partners to decrease the percentage of youth ages 16-24 who are disconnected from school or work from 9.9% in 2023 to 9.0% by 2030.	FY26	8.30%	9.70%	Buncombe County's Opportunity Youth rate dropped from 9.9% to 8.3% potentially due to several reinforcing factors. Stronger employment growth and lower unemployment created more entry-level opportunities for young people and there is notable improvement in high school completion that would further reduce disconnection. Other factors to potentially consider are the impacts from local workforce initiatives and youth-support programs helped reconnect young people to school and work through training, mentoring, and wraparound services. Despite having already eclipsed the 2030 goal of 9.0%, this is a lagging, and volatile, indicator that has a 2-year delay (this is 2024 data) and you cannot measure the impact that Hurrinca Helene may have had on this result as population shifts occurred post-storm. This goal bears monitoring to understand if this shift is temporary or here to stay.
	Work with community partners to increase the adjusted four-year cohort graduation rate average from 90.7% in 2024 to 92% by 2030.	FY26	92.30%	92.00%	The results for this goal represent robust progress toward the county's commitment to enhancing early and adult learning, as the FY26 adjusted four-year concentration rate of 92.3% exceeds the target of 92.0% set to by accomplished by 2030. Nonetheless, the dynamic nature of social, behavioral, and economic factors impacting young people's ability to attend and succeed in school settings necessitates ongoing emphasis on addressing socioeconomic conditions, access to resources, and school-level initiatives to maintain the successes of FY26. Particularly in the wake of Tropical Storm Helene's impacts on housing stability, the local economy, and community mental health, sustaining the community partnerships and coordination with school systems committed to in FY26 will be vital to supporting this positive growth in graduation rates through FY30.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Education	Work with community partners to reduce disparity in youth court referrals by 35% for at risk populations by 2030.	FY26	2.50	2.90	For clarity, the baseline for this goal was originally reported as 1.6. However, recent data revisions show the correct baseline was significantly higher, at 2.9. Currently, the ratio stands at 2.5—higher than the original (incorrect) baseline of 1.6 but notably lower than the correct baseline of 2.9. The goal is to reduce the disparity in youth court referrals to a ratio of 2 to 1 within the five-year plan. While that may not sound like progress at first glance, it represents substantial improvement: in 2020, the disparity was 4 to 1 (four at-risk youth referrals for every one non-at-risk youth referral). Since then, the disparity has decreased by 38% over the course of the 2025 Strategic Plan.
	Work with community partners towards parity in the public-school graduation gap with a 50% reduction amongst at risk populations by 2030.	FY26	3.40	2.60	The public school graduation gap among at risk populations for the 2025-2026 school year was 3.4, demonstrating the need for continued prioritization of this goal as the goal for this year was 2.6. Buncombe County will continue to strive towards parity in the public school graduation gap through partnership with local school system, investments in early childhood education, and collaboration with community organizations supporting those at risk populations to remain and succeed in school settings.
Community Health	Increase the percentage of former Buncombe County foster care children enrolled in the Extended Foster Care program (18 to 21 year-olds) from 73% in 2025 to 85% in 2030.	FY26	76.00%	76.00%	This goal is precisely on target for FY26, with 76% of eligible young people choosing to enroll in the program. This represents a 4% increase in enrollment from the baseline of 73% the previous year. This growth in program enrollment reflects the diligent case management and relationship building efforts of social workers to support former foster youth in evaluating whether this voluntary program is the right fit for them by promoting awareness of the benefits of enrollment as young people prepare to age out of traditional foster care services. Nonetheless, the county remains 10 percentage points behind the ultimate goal for EFC program enrollment of 85% by FY30. This goal will be accomplished through engagement with the HHS subject matter experts who lead the program to evaluate and support strategies for program sustainability and growth.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Community Health	Increase number of participants attending County-sponsored, in-person programs that offer opportunities for recreation, social connectivity, and promote mental health, physical wellness, and overall wellbeing in the community from 35,111 in 2024 to 41,431 (18% increase) by 2030.	FY26	65,230.00	36,375.00	For the period, this goal exceeded target. Looking at the departments that offer programs meeting the definition for inclusion, Parks & Recreation participation was on target compared to the reported Libraries' value which significantly exceed target. The positive variance to target reported for the library value can be attributed to the fact that there were multiple programs that saw large attendance numbers this year and these programs were not offered following tropical storm Helene and these were not included in the baseline and target values. In addition, anecdotally, it's believed that with the economic downturn people are looking for free activities closer to home; thus, leading to greater participation in library programs.
Public Safety	Partner with community organizations to reduce gun-related injuries and deaths from 48 in 2024 to 43 (10% decrease) by 2030.	FY26	44.00	47.00	Gun-related injuries fluctuate yearly and are influenced by many factors, and the aim of the efforts within this goal focus on preventing violence by working to address root causes and increasing community collaboration. A major component of this work is the County's Community-based Public Health Response to Violence. We are currently on target with this goal, as EMS reports they responded to 44 gun-related injuries or deaths in FY 2026, 3 below the target.
	Increase the number of core emergency capabilities tested from 9 in 2025 to 21 (65% of the total 32) by 2030.	FY26	17.00	10.00	This goal is divided between HHS and Emergency Services. Each department is testing the core capabilities in selected events, trainings and incidents. For FY 2026, HHS tested on 9 of the core capabilities. Those included community preparedness, community recovery, and emergency operations coordination to name a few. These are based on FEMA recommended testing. FY2026 also include Emergency Services testing 8 core capabilities, which included critical transportation, situational awareness and planning as well as other capabilities.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Public Safety	Implement four levels of public safety communication planning for emergency operations based on the PACE model by 2030.	FY26	1.00	1.00	911 standing up new location at 35 Woodfin and ensuring primary systems, including phone and radios are in working conditions. Still having some issues with static on the line but currently having standing meeting with IT to resolve issues. Primary radios are operational at this time. Phone systems are operational.
	Develop and conduct annual wildfire hazard seasonal awareness campaigns targeting areas where risk is high by 2030.	FY26	1.00	1.00	Community Wildfire plans were completed in FY 2026, Emergency Services participated in the Swannanoa, Skyland and Barnardsville community outreach programs and assisted in the event, with future events planned for Fairview, Candler and Leicester/Sandy Mush.
	Increase the number of responses by trauma-informed alternate emergency responder services from 5,208 in 2025 to 6,250 (20% increase) by 2030.	FY26	5,852.00	5,416.00	In FY26, County alternate emergency responder programs - the Sheriff's Office's co-responder unit and Emergency Services' community paramedic program - saw over 5,800 combined responses, which is 400 responses beyond target. These trauma-informed services seek to divert individuals in need of behavioral health support away from criminal detention and/or hospitalization, toward sustainable care with community-based providers.
	Maintain the percent of Community Re-entry program participants who do not receive new charges within in a 6-month period at 80%	FY26	81.80%	80.00%	Justice Service's Community-based reentry program is designed to assist those recently released from incarceration, providing community linkage to care and support for up to 12 months post-incarceration for individuals with severe and persistent mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders. Last fiscal year, nearly 82% of people did not experience an arrest for new charge within the first six months of program participation.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Public Safety	Increase the number of eligible cases referred for diversion services from 340 in 2025 to 364 (10% increase) by 2030.	FY26	364.00	346.00	Justices Services' Adult Misdemeanor Diversion Program and Felony Drug Diversion Program are collaborations with the District Attorney's Office. If an eligible person enrolls and completes the requirements of the program, which include completing educational classes and volunteer service, along with access to case management and community resources, the District Attorney's Office can dismiss the original charges. Both programs saw increases in eligible cases and enrollments last fiscal year - 364, nearly 20 beyond the target.
Energy & Environment	Restore 10,000 linear feet of streambank by 2030.	FY26	3,050.00	2,000.00	Ag and Land Resources completed streambank stabilization at five project sites in FY26, restoring a total of 3,050 linear feet: 1. Spring Mountain Community Center, 2. McCully, Redmon, Webb, Lyle & Rogers, 3. Dubuc, Robertson/Dumont & Lee, 4. Okelly, 5. Galloway & Coker. An additional 213 sites are under contract for streambank stabilization over the next several fiscal years, demonstrating continued progress toward stream restoration efforts.
	Conserve 20% of the county's total acres by 2030 by initiating conservation of 700 acres per year (board adopted goal).	FY26	934.00	700.00	Buncombe County has made significant progress toward its land conservation goal, surpassing the annual target of initiating conservation of 700 acres through partnerships with local land trusts. This progress has been supported by annual funding and Open Space Bond funding, which have helped leverage additional state grants, private funding, and charitable landowner contributions. Continued investment and partnerships remain important to sustaining conservation efforts and advancing the County's long-term land conservation priorities.
	Increase residential solar installations from 165, which resulted from a previous solarize campaign in 2022, to 200 from future solarize campaigns (an 18% increase), by 2030.	FY26	165.00	165.00	Sustainability currently plans to run a solarize campaign in FY28 with the intention of aligning with state and federal incentive programs. These programs are currently experiencing some unpredictability, so staff are monitoring opportunities.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Energy & Environment	Increase the quantity of organic compost offset from the landfill from 250.5 tons in 2024 to 900 tons by 2030.	FY26	389.76	380.00	Buncombe County Solid Waste has established a new composting facility at the landfill to support increased organic waste diversion. The composting program remains in a state-required pilot phase, which currently limits the volume of material that can be processed. As the program develops and these restrictions are addressed, the new facility is expected to support continued progress toward the County's 2030 composting goal.
	Increase publicly-available electric vehicle charging ports at County facilities from 9 in 2024 to 25 by 2030.	FY26	9.00	9.00	Work on public facing chargers continues, with several installations not completed by end of FY26 but on track for completion by end of the calendar year. We expect 6 new public charging ports by the end of the calendar year: 2 at Leicester Library, 2 at South Buncombe Library, and to reopen 2 College Deck chargers to the public.
Foundational	Increase small business participation (based on responses) in solicitations by at least 10% year over year through 2030.	FY26	-7.30%	10.00%	The number of small businesses that have active contracts with the County declined by 7% from FY25 to FY26. In response to the decrease, Procurement is taking a more proactive approach to increasing small business participation. To this end, staff will pursue outreach and engagement with the small business community. Planned activities include partnering with Mountain BizWorks to provide procurement presentations and participate in networking events with the focus on building relationships with small businesses and increasing awareness of County contracting opportunities; collaborating with other County Departments on community engagement events which were previously successful in connecting Procurement with local businesses; as well as leveraging the North Carolina electronic Vendor Portal (NC eVP) for outreach to eligible small businesses on solicitation opportunities.
	By 2030 ensure 85% of annual service contracts have at least 2 performance indicators.	FY26	19.00%	20.00%	The reported actual value was slightly below target. In the years to follow, a project team will work to implement procedures, policies, and a system for recording performance measures tied to service contracts in an effort to increase across the organization the number of service contracts with performance measures.

Focus Area	Goal	Period	Actual	Target	Analysis & Recommendations
Foundational	Ensure 85% of annual service contracts have standardize data collection by 2030.	FY26	100.00%	100.00%	All contract data is derived from Cobblestone. In 2026 there has been a focused effort to clean up the data and put systematic safeguards in place to ensure data fidelity going forward. These steps have been necessary to accurately measure the number of service contracts that have performance measures associated with them. With this in mind, this goal should be considered complete.