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

Buncombe County Government
Commissioner Briefing
January 20, 2026
3:00 PM
1st Floor Conference Room - 200 College St.

I.	Meeting Called to Order		Chair Edwards
II.	Review Meeting Agenda		Chair Edwards
III.	Staff Updates		
	a. Helene Recovery Updates	15 mins	Kevin Madsen
	b. Just Home Update	10 mins	Regenia Herring, Max Taintor
	c. Paint NC Mural	10 mins	Rachael Sawyer
	d. Community Health Update	10 mins	Ellis Matheson
IV.	Open Discussion		All

[MEET_FOOT]

Helene Recovery Update

Presented by

Kevin Madsen, Helene Recovery Officer

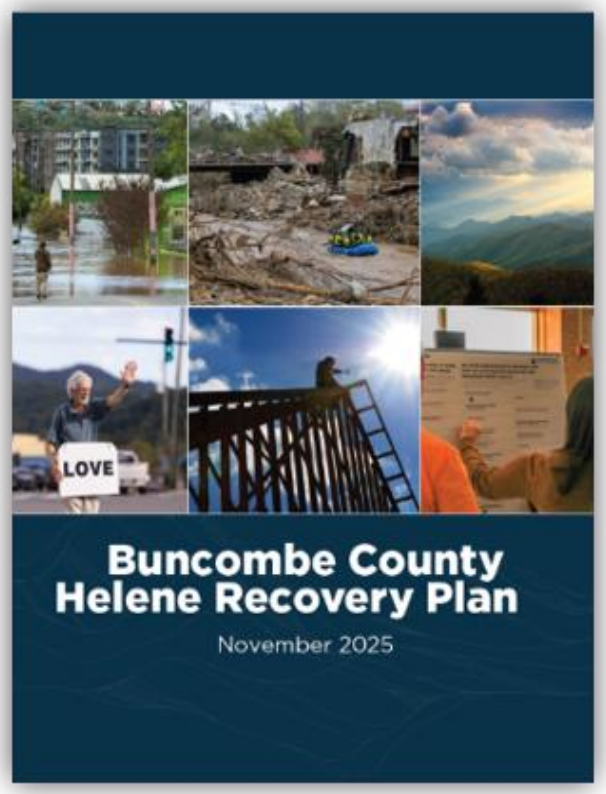
Agenda

- Helene Recovery Office
- Helene Recovery Plan
- 2026 Briefing Schedule
- Landslide Mitigation Project
- FEMA Public Assistance (PA)
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-DR)

Helene Recovery Office

- Staffing
  - 2 project managers selected and starting this month (1/12, 1/26)
  - 1 business analyst start date of 1/26
  - All 3 positions are grant-funded
- Project Coordination
  - Each of the 31 Helene Recovery Plan projects assigned a project manager
  - The team is developing project management strategy
  - Scheduling coordination time with departments
- Grants | Funding
  - Business analyst will develop financial reports and data analytics

Helene Recovery Plan | Reporting

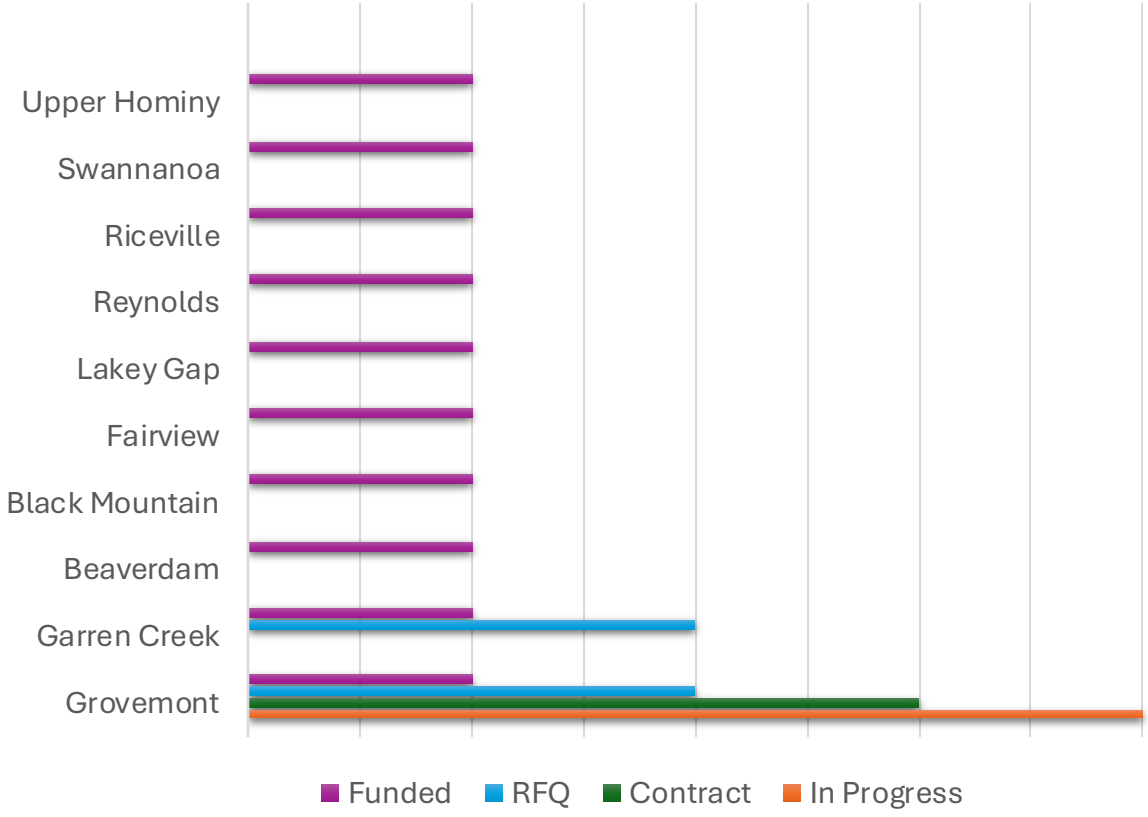


- Project management system in development
  - Tracking of projects (*framework and sub-projects*)
  - Funding and timing included components
- Board of Commissioner's Briefings
  - Quarterly Reporting (*March, June, September, December*)
  - Coordination with Preparedness Action Plan reporting
- Monthly recovery briefings will conclude after January 20, 2026
- Anticipating project and grant focused briefings as needed (*CBDG-DR, HMGP*)

Landslide Mitigation Project

Buncombe County Helene Recovery Plan Complexity: High | Cost: High (*FEMA PA*) | Timing: Long-term

- **Project Lead -** Helene Recovery Office
- **Project Components**
  - Phase One | Design and Engineering
  - Phase Two | Mitigation*
- **Funding**
  - FEMA Public Assistance | Phase One only
- **Sub-projects** (*Active*)
  - Grovemont
  - Garren Creek
- **Sub-projects** (*Pending*)
  - Beaverdam
  - Black Mountain
  - Fairview
  - Lakey Gap
  - Upper Hominy
  - Reynolds
  - Riceville
  - Swannanoa



Grovemont Landslide Update

Helene Recovery Plan Landslide Mitigation Project | Phase One (A&E) Obligated by FEMA Public Assistance



- Contract signed with ECS Southeast, LLC
- $595,650 Received from NCEM (75% of Contract Amount)
- Activities between 12/08/2025 and 01/05/2026
  - UAV based aerial LiDAR scan completed
  - Right-of-entry (ROE) forms delivered to Grovemont residents
  - All ROEs signed for properties containing initiation zones
  - Initial site visit completed by ECS personnel
  - ECS and Appalachian Landslide Consultants (ALC) began existing data review
- Activities in progress
  - Path and vegetation clearing
  - Field reconnaissance by ECS and ALC
  - Completion of the LiDAR and topography

Garren Creek Landslide Update

Helene Recovery Plan Landslide Mitigation Project | Phase One (A&E) Obligated by FEMA Public Assistance

- Second landslide mitigation project identified in Helene Recovery Plan
- Phase One (A&E) is 100% funded by FEMA Public Assistance
  - Buncombe County will receive 75% of obligated funds after contract signed
- Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
  - Closed early January 2026
  - Six (6) vendors submitted
  - Staff are currently working to select the most qualified vendor
  - Vendor selection in February; staff will begin contact negotiations
- Phase Two mitigation options (if available) to be defined by Phase One

Recovery Funding Update

FEMA Public Assistance

- 55 projects submitted to FEMA for Public Assistance
  - 32 obligated projects at $28.56 million
  - $11.76M received by the County

    ($*9.7M reimbursements* | *$2.06M for up-front costs*)
- Finalizing last group of projects to submit to FEMA within next few weeks
- Recent Activity
  - 2 projects submitted last week for over $1.1M
  - $2.3M in projects are in the final FEMA PA stage (*Pending Award*)

FEMA PA Obligations	Amount
A - Debris Removal	$5.36M
B- Emergency Protective Measures	$18.99M
C - Roads and Bridges	$1.32M
E - Building and Equip	$78.27K
G - Parks, Rec, Other	$1.92M
Z - Management Costs	$904.5K
Total Obligations	**$28.57M**

Program Status

North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) Administration | FEMA Funding

Acquisitions | ALL Awaiting FEMA Review and Decision

- Group 1 | 23 Applications submitted on Feb 21, 2025
- Group 2 | 26 Applications submitted on Jun 04, 2025
- Group 3 | 157 Applications submitted on Nov 05, 2025
- Group 4 | In development with NCEM

Elevations

- Group 1 | 53 Applications submitted on Sep 19, 2025

  Assessments complete; contractor completing designs
- Group 2 | 17 Applications submitted on Oct 23, 2025

  Assessments underway

HMGP Updates: https://www.buncombenc.gov/helene

Type	Qty
Acquisition	277
Elevation	95
Mitigation Reconstruction	43
Land Stabilization	9
Slope Stabilization	5
Total applications	**429**

Program Status

N.C. Department of Commerce, Division of Community Revitalization (NC DCR) Administration | HUD Funding

Housing

- Renew NC Small Rental Rehabilitation Program is open now for eligible small rental property owners (1-4 units)
- Medium Multifamily Housing Rental Rehabilitation Program will be available later in 2026
- Large Multifamily Housing Rental Rehabilitation Program is open for project applications through the NCHFA's LIHTC application cycle

Commercial District Revitalization

- Anticipated Notice Of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) by February-March*

Infrastructure

- Anticipated NOFO by Q2 of this year*

***Pending publication of the Programs and Policies documents**

Statewide Allocations	
Single Family Reconstruction and Rehabilitation	$807M
Multifamily Housing	$191M
Commercial District Revitalization	$101M
Infrastructure	$174M

Renew NC

N.C. Department of Commerce, Division of Community Revitalization (NC DCR) Administration | HUD Funding

Repair Program

- Continues to take applications through the end of January
- Applications submitted from Buncombe County residents accounts for 27% of the total 7,466
- Homeowner grant agreements signed includes:
  - 21 Reconstruction
  - 6 Rehabilitation
  - 4 Replacement

  Note: Disaster-wide there are 104 agreements signed

Buncombe County	
Applications	2,030
Signed Agreements	31

Renew NC Timelines	
Rehabilitation including move-out and move-in	66 Days
Replacement including move-out and move-in	81 Days
Reconstruction including move-out and move-in	171 Days

Upcoming Notices of Funding

N.C. Department of Commerce, Division of Community Revitalization (NC DCR) Administration | HUD Funding

Infrastructure and Commercial District Revitalization

- Developing projects aligned with the Helene Recovery Plan and CDBG-DR eligibility
  - The Programs and Policies document and the Notice of Funding Opportunity will provide greater insight into how projects will be evaluated
- Applications will be a two-step process
  - Screening tool (voluntary) – review projects with DCR to ensure they meet CDBG-DR requirements
  - Full application (required)
- Working with Technical Assistance providers to assess and prioritize grant applications
- Preparing for grant application requirements
  - CDBG programs include a public input process

Grant Application

N.C. Disaster Recovery Act of 2025 Part II (S.L. 2025-26) | Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)

Helene Recovery Plan Project

- Construction of engineered, ADA-accessible boat launches at three French Broad River parks, improving safety and accessibility while reducing erosion, protecting water quality, expanding inclusive recreation, and strengthening emergency river access
- Project locations:
  - Bent Creek River Park
  - Glen Bridge River Park
  - Hominy Creek River Park
- Team is working on securing grant match funds, if awarded
- Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. on January 30, 2026
- Approval for grant application will be on the 5:00 p.m. meeting's Consent Agenda

Statewide FEMA Update *(as of January 13, 2026)*

- **Individual Assistance**
  - $549.5 million approved for 160,859 households, including money for rent, basic home repairs and other disaster-caused needs
  - 51 households are living in FEMA temporary housing units
  - 6,046 households have received rental assistance
- **Public Assistance**
  - $984.2 million obligated to the state for 1,968 Helene recovery projects
  - Over 7 million cubic yards of debris has been cleared from public rights of way
  - The waterway debris mission has removed nearly 7.2 million cubic yards of debris
- **National Flood Insurance Program**
  - $216.9 million paid in claims
- **Private Roads and Bridges**
  - 12,408 families have received $33.7 million for repair or replacement

Resources

- Renew NC Housing Program

  The Renew NC Single-Family Housing Program is a state program to repair, rebuild or replace eligible homes with remaining damage from Helene

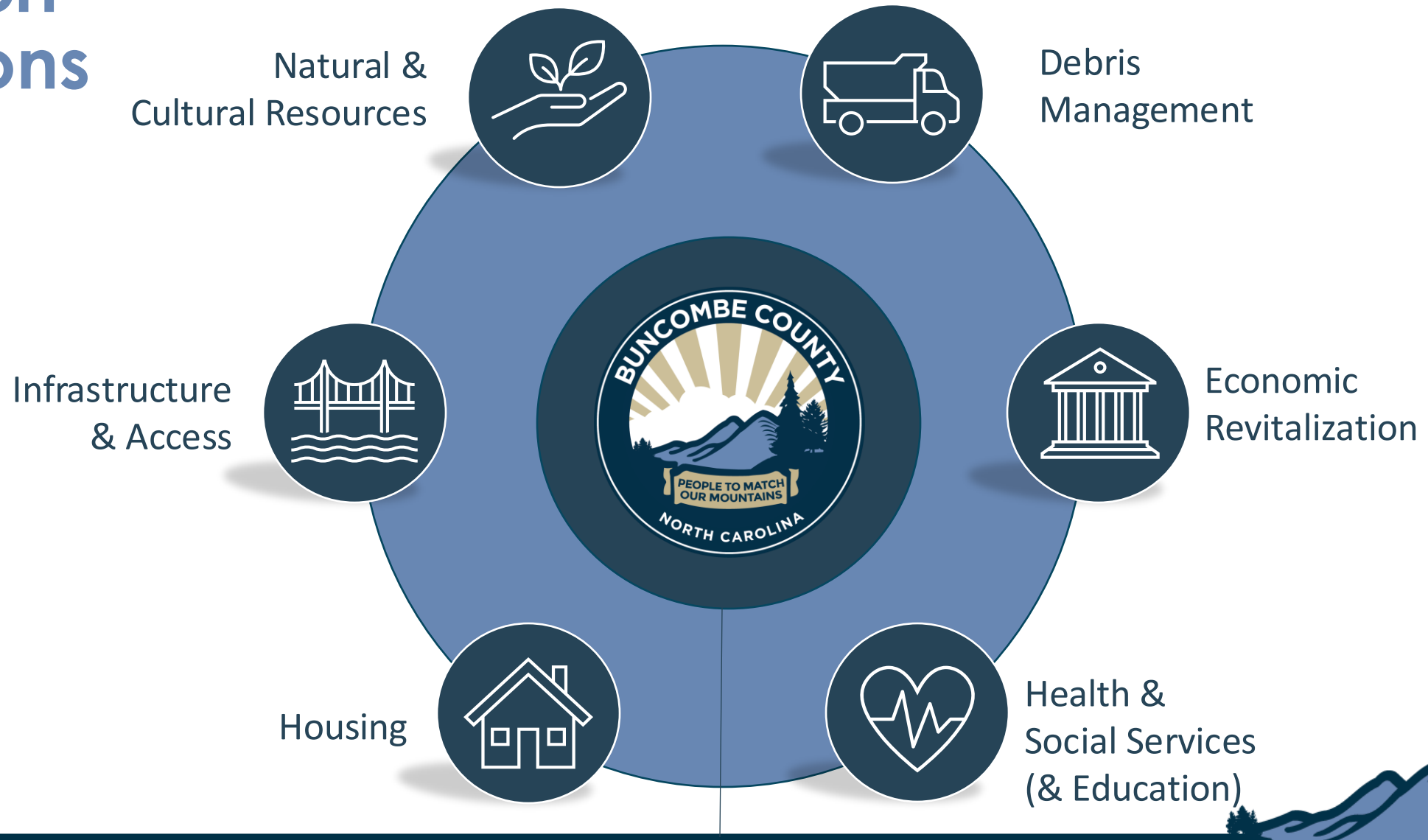
  - Applications accepted until January 31, 2026
  - How to Apply for Assistance | NC Hurricane Helene Recovery
    - Online Portal
    - Mobile Application
    - In-person
    - Phone Call (888-791-0207)
- Buncombe County Helene Resources Webpage
  - www.buncombenc.gov/helene

End of Presentation

APPENDIX – DATA UPDATES

Reference Data by Recovery Support Function

Recovery Support Functions



DEBRIS MANAGEMENT



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

DEBRIS MANAGEMENT

- Cubic yards of debris collected (right of way): 1,557,232 (no change compared to last update)
- Cubic yards of debris collected (waterway): 1,606,668 (no change compared to last update)
- PPDR applications received: 6,074 (no change compared to last update)
- PPDR applications submitted to USACE for action: 5,290 (no change compared to last update)
- PPDR Parcels completed & closed out by USACE: 4,816 (no change compared to last update)
- Number of title property cleared: 46 (15% increase compared to last update)
- Demolition applications received: 323 (no change compared to last update)
- Demolition applications verified, permitted, & sent to FEMA: 117 (no change compared to last update)

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION



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

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

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

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

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

**no new data to report since prior update*

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

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

No new data to report since prior update

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

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

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES



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

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

- NC DHHS Disaster Energy Assistance: $2,340,610 (no change; program is now complete)
- NC DHHS Disaster Adult Service Assistance: $178,871 (<16% increase compared to prior update)
- NC DHHS Disaster Child Welfare Assistance: $691,718 (6% increase compared to prior update)
- NC DHHS Disaster Rental Assistance: $227,594 (no change; program is now complete)
- Septic assessments complete – 132*
- Septic assessments - # found to be in “red zone” – 29*
- Septic assessments - # found to be in "yellow zone" – 50*

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

EDUCATION

- The number of homeless (unhoused) students identified under the McKinney-Vento Act:
  - Asheville City Schools* – 185 (compared to 294 at the end of the 2024-2025 school year)
    - **6 of these cases are due to Helene** (comparted to 80 at the end of the 2024-2025 school year)
  - Buncombe County Schools** - 472 (compared to 1476 at the end of the 2024-2025 school year)
    - **78 of these cases are due to Helen**e (comparted to 982 at the end of the 2024-2025 school year)

**data reported as of November 14, 2025*

***data reported as of December 12, 2025*

HOUSING



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

HOUSING

- Households approved for rental assistance: 1,621 (compared to 1,602 at prior update)
- FEMA Direct Housing Units sold: 15 (compared to 12 units sold at the prior update)

INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESS



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

INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESS

- 429 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) applications have been submitted to NCEM
  - 277 for acquisition; 99 for elevation/reconstruction; 48 for slope stabilization
- State-operated private bridge and road program applicants: 985
- 31 bridge projects have been completed with 6 currently under construction
- 55 landslide inspections completed
- 406 Substantially Damaged Structures in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES



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

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

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

- Emergency watershed protection potential applicants identified: 719 (no change compared to prior update)
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program:
  - Field Visits Completed: 488 (1% increase compared to prior update)
  - Applications submitted: 204 (1% increase compared to prior update)
  - Applications approved: 192 (3% increase compared to prior update)
  - $ Amount of funding approved: $29,880,000 (13% increase compared to prior update)
- 7 County parks open to the public (no change compared to prior update)
- All County libraries open to the public as of January 5, 2026

FOUNDATIONAL

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

FOUNDATIONAL

- $ 27.3 M expended for Helene; $4.4 M committed
- FEMA Public Assistance:
  - Emergency work - claims submitted: $33.9 M (62% increase over prior update)
  - Emergency work - $ amount reimbursed: $12.4 M (64% decrease compared to prior update)
  - Permanent work - claims submitted: $25.3 M (104% increase compared to prior update)
  - Permanent work - $ amount reimbursed: $3.3 M (37% increase compared to prior update)
- Insurance claim for County-owned assets:
  - Claims submitted: $7.1 M (12% increase compared to prior update)
  - Claim received: $6.2 M (44% increase over prior update)
- Recovery-related grant funding:
  - Awarded: $7.5 M (no change compared to prior update)
- Helene Recovery Center:
  - Average visitors per day (11/30/25-12/6/25): 5.25 (50% increase since prior update)
  - Total visitors since opening: 1230 (as of November 10th – updated data not available)

Just Home Progress

Presented by

Regenia Herring

Director, Justice Services

Just Home Background

- A national initiative to address the intersection of housing instability and justice involvement
- Buncombe County was selected as one of nine counties nationwide
- Focus: expand safe, affordable, and supportive housing to reduce incarceration driven by homelessness
- Achieve this focus through a construction project based around unique community needs

Just Home Project Phases

COMPLETE

Phase 1

Community Engagement and Housing Investment Action Plan (HIAP) Creation

August-December 2025



IN PROGRESS

Phase 2

Project Selection and Funding Approval

Began January 2026



Phase 3

Design and Construction

TBD



Phase 1 Complete

- **Creation of the Community Advisory Committee**
  - 30 Members from 17 Unique Organizations over four meetings.
- **Four Countywide Surveys**

82 Responses	Service Provider Organizations
327 Responses	Lived-Experienced Individuals
117 Responses	Community-Wide Residents
21 Responses	Loved Ones of Lived-In Experience
547	TOTAL SURVEYS COMPLETED

- **Internal Data Review**
  - A significant share of justice-involved individuals experience housing instability, 17-19% of all bookings presumed. Also, 45% of those screened for Justice Services Programs.
- **Creation of Housing Investment Action Plan (HIAP)**



Needs Assessment Results

Activity	Fiscal Year 2024	Fiscal Year 2025
Number of Bookings	3,423	7,403
Number of Bookings Unhoused	683	1,288
Percent of Bookings Unhoused	19%	17%
Number of Unique People Unhoused	459	696

The number of ***unique unhoused people*** booked **rose 51%** (from 459 to 696), confirming detention is acting as a temporary solution for housing deficits.

Population of Focus

1. High acuity single men, between the ages of 37-40, who have experienced both incarceration and housing insecurity and dealing with mental health/substance use issues.
2. High acuity single parents requiring family reunification support. *(During the dialogues, single women with this same need were identified; however, the resources for women were expressed to be more accessible than for men).*
3. Justice-Involved families with children experiencing immediate housing instability following a parent's release.

Next Steps

1. Currently waiting on feedback from MacArthur Foundation on the Housing Investment Action Plan (HIAP).

2. Development of an RFP contingent on approved HIAP.

3. Tentative Timeline:
    1. Feb/Mar - Release RFP
    2. April/May - RFP due

4. The Developer selected must successfully complete underwriting with third party funder to receive Program Related Investment (PRI) loan.

Questions?

Paint NC:
100 Murals in 100 Counties

Presented by

Rachael Sawyer

Buncombe County Strategic Partnerships

Board of Commissioners Briefing Meeting 1/20/26

Buncombe County envisions a healthy, safe, well-educated and thriving community with a sustainable quality of life.

The arts are key to this vision:

- as an economic driver
- cultivating a sense of place
- enhancing culture
- connecting us to our history





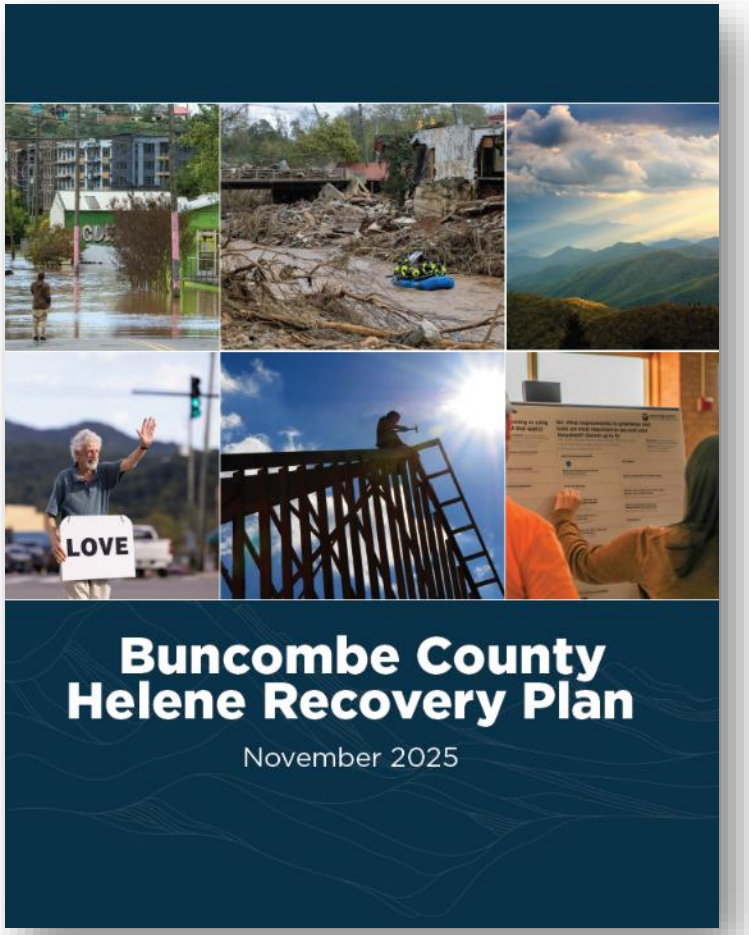








Public Art & Recovery



GOAL: Commission and install public art pieces across key public spaces in Buncombe County, focusing on neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and community gathering areas.

PURPOSE: Public art strengthens community cohesion and emotional resilience, particularly during and after crises. It transforms shared spaces into places of healing, provides platforms for storytelling and collective reflection, and contributes to economic recovery.

Recent Buncombe County Murals



Rebuild
by Gabriel Eng-Goetz



Eres un Orgullo Latino
by Leslie Reynalte-Llanco

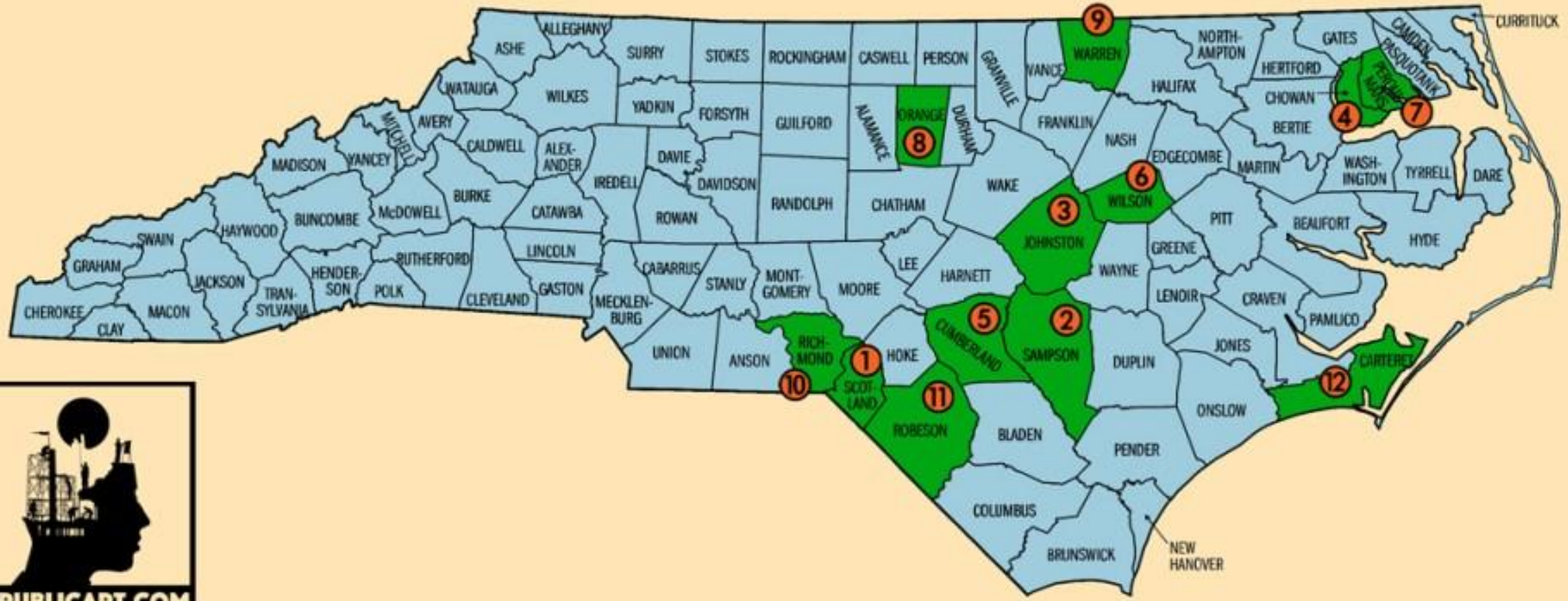
Paint NC: 100 Murals in 100 Counties



Statewide public art initiative by artist Max Dowdle dedicated to honoring North Carolina's people, places, and overlooked histories through large-scale murals. Each work is rooted in local narrative, celebrating educators, civic leaders, cultural figures, and collective identities that have shaped communities.

In partnership with Larry Wheeler, Director Emeritus of the North Carolina Museum of Art, NC Mainstreet, The North Carolina Museum of Art, and the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners

PAINT NC: 100 MURALS IN 100 COUNTIES



NCPUBLICART.COM


SMITHFIELD 1777




LAURINBURG INSTITUTE



Selected Mural Location





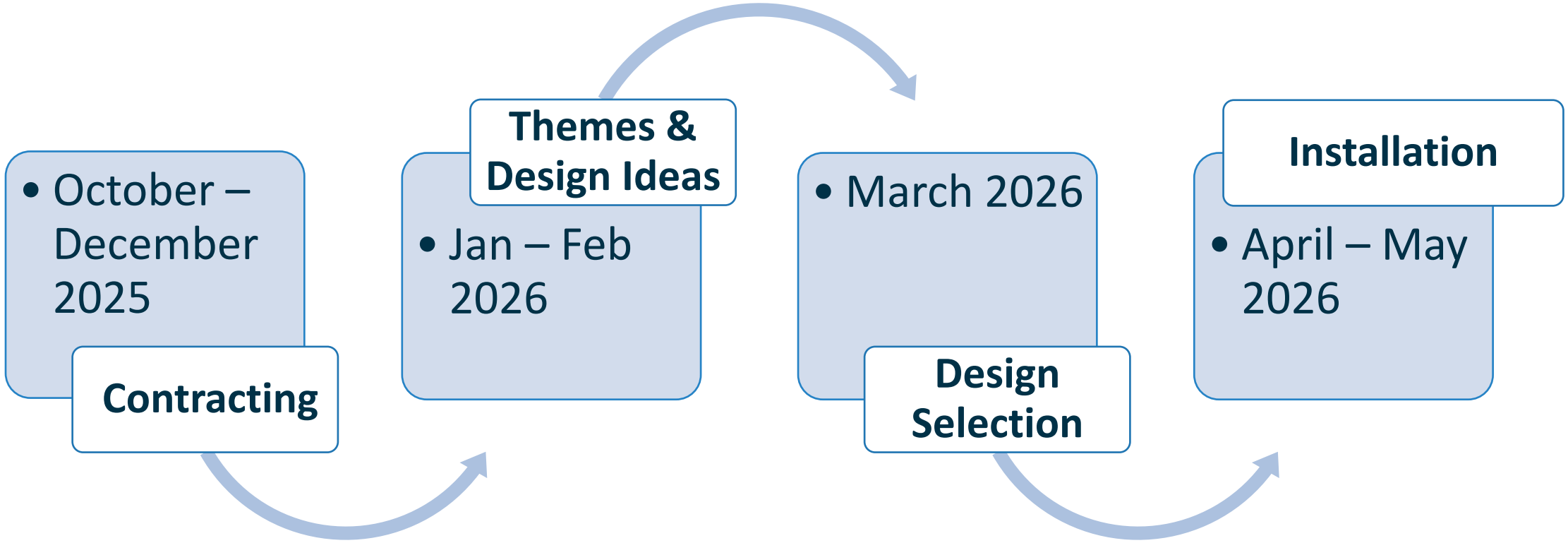


3,000+ SF of outdoor & indoor painting at Pack Memorial Library

Project Plan

- The Pack Memorial Library Branch Director will convene a focus group of local voices to identify theme and design ideas in collaboration with the artist.
- The public will provide input on proposed designs via online engagement & in-person voting at the library.
- The public will be invited to participate in mural installation on "Community Paint Days."

Project Schedule



Project Funding

LATCF (Local Assistance & Tribal Consistency Fund)	**$153,438**
Budgeted for Public Art Projects	
Previous Murals	**- $89,753**
Paint NC	**- $37,600**
Remaining	**$26,085**

Next Steps

- Convene focus group
- Promote theme/design contribution opportunities
- Organize Community Paint Days
- Celebrate mural installation
- Maintain and display murals for at least 5 years