



2022 WPCOG ANNUAL REPORT





The Western Piedmont experienced a successful year in 2022. Many of our communities experienced strong growth, and many opportunities lie ahead. Our local governments continue smart investments to enhance our regional economy and improve the lives of our residents.

Since 1968, our local governments have continued to trust the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) as the primary mechanism to share expertise and resources among our communities. That partnership allows us to reach new levels of achievement that benefit our residents and businesses.

Complacency is an obstacle to achievement, and we must endeavor to build on our successes to position our region and its communities for the future. We must identify and address our challenges as they arise. This year, the WPCOG continued its outstanding support of its local governments for those efforts. The WPCOG facilitates our partnerships and sharing of limited resources. As we experience new people assuming leadership roles, I encourage you to appreciate our spirit of cooperation rather than assuming it will maintain itself. Make intentional efforts to work with each other whenever possible.

This 2022 Annual Report contains some of the successes that demonstrate the value of the WPCOG. Our local governments' leadership, vision, and engagement built one of the strongest and most comprehensive Councils of Governments in the nation. Organizations nationwide look to the WPCOG to see how regionalism is best practiced. We can rely on the WPCOG to serve the needs of the region.

Jill Patton
Board Chair, Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Council Member, City of Hickory



The WPCOG has served our region for more than 54 years in various ways, and 2022 was a highly successful year. Our local governments demonstrate great competence and strategic vision to serve the region's residents. The WPCOG assists our local governments in improving our economy, making our communities even better places to live, and managing finite resources in a period of constant change.

The WPCOG focuses on service to its local governments and partners. Local government support makes us very effective, and the regional cooperation we enjoy is uncommon and is a competitive advantage over other areas. That partnership does not happen by

accident and requires cultivation and intentional efforts. Our local elected and appointed leaders understand the value of partnership and continue to look for opportunities to work together for the benefit of the public.

Finally, I want to thank our staff for the incredible work they consistently accomplish. We ask more each year, and they consistently demonstrate their amazing talent and dedication. Western Piedmont staff is excellent and fosters greater teamwork and provides fantastic examples of public service. I am grateful to work alongside them.

Anthony W. Starr, ICMA-CM, AICP
Executive Director, Western Piedmont Council of Governments

Chair	 Jill Patton Hickory	Vice Chair	 Joseph L. Gibbons Lenoir	Secretary	 Larry Chapman Hudson	Treasurer	 George B. Holleman Taylorsville	Past Chair	 Bob Floyd, Jr. Cedar Rock	Member At-Large	 Randy Burns Burke County	Member At-Large	 Cole Setzer Catawba County	Member At-Large	 Marla Thompson Long View	Member At-Large	 Larry Yoder Alexander County
	 Wayne Annas Rutherford College		 Dennis Anthony Drexel		 Dr. Caryl B. Burns Granite Falls		 Ramona Duncan Connelly Springs		 Joie Fulbright Conover		 Jerry Hodge Newton		 Ben Honeycutt Hildebran		 Chris Jernigan Morganton		 Mike Labrose Caldwell County
	 Holly Crafton-Lay Maiden		 Barbara Pennell Gamewell		 Donald Robinson Catawba		 Ronnie Setzer Cajah's Mountain		 Dale Sherrill Claremont		 Allen Spencer Rhodhiss		 Bobby Mosteller Sawmills		 Charlie Watts Valdese	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>LEGEND</p> <p>Executive Committee</p> <p>Elected Delegates</p> <p>Appointed Delegates</p> </div>	
	 Amparo Alfaro		 Tonia Stephenson		 Helen Chestnut		 Tommy Luckadoo		 Erisha Lipford		 Jeanna Price		 Malla Vue	<p>NOT PICTURED ABOVE: Elected Delegates - Sheila Perkins for Glen Alpine and Kelvin Gregory for Brookford.</p>			

The WPCOG is governed by a Policy Board which includes delegates and alternates appointed by each of the 28 municipal and county member governments. Each city and county member government has one vote. The Policy Board also includes seven appointed members who represent the private sector.

Current membership of the WPCOG is 100% of the eligible counties, cities and towns located within the area designated including: Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties, and the municipalities of Brookford, Cajah's Mountain, Catawba, Cedar Rock, Claremont, Connelly Springs, Conover, Drexel, Gamewell, Glen Alpine, Granite Falls, Hickory, Hildebran, Hudson, Lenoir, Long View, Maiden, Morganton, Newton, Rhodhiss, Rutherford College, Sawmills, Taylorsville and Valdese.

An Executive Committee including a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Past Chair and four At-Large members is elected annually by and from the Policy Board at their November meeting. Officers are installed at the January Policy Board Meeting.

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

ADMINISTRATION

The staff of the Administration Department supports the efforts of all other WPCOG departments, including general office support, facility management, and communications. The Administration Staff also supports the WPCOG Policy Board, Executive Committee, and several other regional committees. In the second year, post-pandemic, the WPCOG continued to help strengthen the region through more staff outreach, especially assisting with the significant influx of funding government entities received through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

EXECUTIVE SEARCHES

The WPCOG Administrative staff, led by the Executive Director and Administrative Services & Human Resources Director, regularly conduct executive searches for area local governments to fill important and high-profile positions. In addition, the staff has extensive experience facilitating hiring personnel positions, including town managers, town administrators, department directors, and more. For example, in 2022, the WPCOG completed the executive searches for the Conover City Manager, Newton City Manager, Greenway Transportation Executive Director, Gamewell Town Clerk, and Long View Deputy Police Chief and Long View Town Manager.

“One of the most significant decisions elected officials can make is whom to hire for their county or municipality. In 2022, the City of Conover completed its process of hiring a new city manager with the assistance of the WPCOG. The high level of professional expertise provided by WPCOG staff made the process easy, so our Board could focus on hiring the best possible candidate. We felt we were always a priority as WPCOG staff took the necessary time to answer all questions along the way. I have consistently recommended this great service to our fellow local governments in the WPCOG Region.”

– Kyle J. Hayman, City of Conover Mayor.



2022 Publications



The EIN & WPCOG Impact Report are digitally distributed, estimated distribution per issue is 1,000+

COMMUNICATIONS

During 2022, Communications worked with several local governments, providing advertising support for open positions, website design, web maintenance, and event promotions. In addition, WPCOG communications continued to support the NCWorks Career Centers each year with job fair templates for advertising and signage while supporting the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board's (which oversees the NCWorks Career Centers) website and social media presence.

Lumber River Council of Governments (LRCOG) hired WPCOG Communications to design and maintain the LRCOG's new website, which launched in late summer of 2022. The project aimed to create a new site that supported their primary client base, senior adults using AAA resources. The site also supported the LRCOG's other operations by bringing a fresh, updated look with easily accessed information. Since the website launch, staff continues support with monthly site updates and general site maintenance. Staff also continues web support for Long View, Long View Police Department, Cedar Rock, NC Association of Area Agencies on Aging, and Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

Internally, communications completed the 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) design, the 2022 Industrial Growth Analysis, 2022 State of the Workforce report, created a new monthly newsletter for Workforce Development called the *Business Brief*, and supported numerous advertising and outreach efforts through print, web, and social media for each department at the WPCOG.

2022 Social Media & Site Usage



FINANCE

**FY2021-2022
Total Fund Balance
\$2,181,115**

The focus of the Council's governmental funds is to provide information on near-term inflows, outflows, and balances of usable resources, which helps assess the Council's financing requirements.

FY2021-22 Revenues

68% Restricted Intergovernmental Revenues

The General Fund is the chief operating fund of the WPCOG. At the end of the fiscal year 2022, the WPCOG's available General Fund balance was \$868,075, while the total fund balance reached \$2,181,115. The Council currently has an available fund balance of 12.8% of total General Fund expenditures and transfers out fewer lease liabilities issued, while the total fund balance represents 32.1% of that same amount. The unassigned fund balance increased by \$701,284.

28% Charges for Service

On June 30, 2022, the governmental funds of the WPCOG reported a combined fund balance of \$3,321,736, with a net increase in fund balance of \$368,869. This change in fund balance includes an increase in the General Fund of \$247,496, WIOA Fund of \$10,162, Section 8 Fund of \$94,981, Aging Fund of \$79, and Capital Reserve Fund of \$16,151.

4% Local Government Dues

DEPARTMENT	REVENUES	EXPENSES
General Government	\$102,032	\$74,833
Transportation	\$908,262	\$983,975
Environmental Protection	\$357,093	\$326,939
Community Development	\$1,155,063	\$1,167,321
Community and Regional Planning	\$696,077	\$611,979
Economic Development	\$722,179	\$752,415
Regional Public Housing	\$1,095,375	\$1,090,229
Area Agency on Aging	\$985,268	\$1,011,098
WIOA	\$690,951	\$1,125,865
Mis/Local Dues/Fringe & Indirect	\$336,608	\$132,450
Totals	\$7,048,908	\$7,277,104
Total Other Financing Sources	\$475,692	
Net Change in General Fund/Fund Balance	\$247,496	

In 2022, the Finance Department assisted two local governments and one non-profit with full financial services. Full financial services include accounts payable, accounts receivable, and payroll.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is an organization working within a federal mandate to inform, advocate, and plan for community services on behalf of older adults and caregivers. The agency is part of the National Network set in place by the Older Americans Act of 1965. There are 622 AAA's in the US and 16 in North Carolina. The Western Piedmont AAA covers Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties.

The AAA administers the Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) for the region. This grant funds an array of in-home and community based services to help seniors stay in their homes. The HCCBG allows counties the flexibility to determine which services to fund based on community need. Services are provided to older adults age 60+ and are based on need.

SERVICES

- Resource Directory for Older Adults
- Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
- Family Caregiver Support Program
- Technical Assistance to Agencies Serving Older Adults
- Senior Tar Heel Legislature Support
- Operation Fan/Heat Relief
- Medicare Information for Patients and Providers Act Grant
- Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternative to Running on Empty)
- Evidence-Based Health Promotion Classes
- Presentations on Aging Issues
- Vaccine Information and Outreach

HCCBG SERVICES FUNDED IN REGION E

- Home Delivered Meals
- Congregate Meals
- In-Home Aide
- Adult Day Care
- Adult Day Health
- Medical Transportation
- General Transportation
- Housing & Home Improvement
- Senior Center Operations
- Information & Options Counseling

1,300
Resource Directories Distributed

People Reached Through Vaccine Outreach

1,149,650


94 Community Presentations





148,838
Meals Served


43,906
Hours of In-home Aid Services


143
Housing & Home Improvement Projects


9,632
Medical & General Transportation Trips


3,801
Adult Day Care/ Health Days-of-Service


1,014
Hours of Legal Assistance



FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM (FCSP)

- FCSP continued to offer Caregiver Directed Vouchers. This program offers caregivers the option of choosing their caregivers to receive respite from their caregiving responsibilities and caring for family members.
- FCSP partnered with Adult Children of Aging Parents to plan and organize a regional virtual caregiver Symposium, *I'm Tired, Please Help!*
- FCSP provided grandparents raising grandchildren with school supplies in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties.
- FCSP coordinated with Long-Term Care Ombudsman program and local public school systems to present to high school Health Science classes and community college medical classes about caregivers and the importance of the caregiver role with their patients.
- FCSP coordinated with Catawba County Schools, Oxford Elementary school counselor, and school nurse and offering evening meetings for grandparents raising grandchildren families during school year 2022/23. Families attend and have dinner, followed by a time for grandparents to meet and grandchildren to participate in an activity.
- FCSP expanded coordination with Human Resource staff in businesses and organizations across the region by visiting corporations in our region and providing caregiver information for employees. Also participated in employee health fair with Design Foundry.
- FCSP offered three ongoing caregiver support groups in our region in 2022.

REGIONAL LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN

- Ombudsman program handled 137 long term care complaint investigations received from/or on behalf of residents of long-term care facilities.

PROJECT C.A.R.E.

- AAA Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) program territory serves 16 counties. The program provides services to caregivers of people living with Alzheimer's, dementia and related cognitive disorders. The program provides information, education, care management, and respite vouchers.
- Project CARE completed 108 assessments, 30 reassessments, conducted 65 home visits and granted 173 vouchers.
- 1,662 people reached with Project CARE information and referral.
- Project CARE completed two training sessions for safety officials, including local police, firemen, emergency medical, and rescue personnel.
- Project Care utilized 99.7% of funding to provide supportive services to caregivers of those with dementia.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

- Utilized ARPA funding to offer new chore & enhanced chore services to provide additional support to older adults.
- Contracted Catawba Public Health with ARPA funds to employ part-time community health worker, providing outreach to underserved older adults.
- Expanded options counseling services with ARPA funds and successfully certified two additional staff members.

AAA OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

- Staff responded to 473 telephone calls for Information & Assistance Referrals and provided Options Counseling to several individuals/families.
- Served as administrative agency for SIR (Senior Information Resources).
- Working with grant from NC Center for Health and Wellness to become Medicare accredited to allow for reimbursement for certain classes we teach to the community.
- Contracted by Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist for D-Care program to provide care consultation to caregivers of dementia patients generating over \$40,000 in program funding.

AAA EVENTS

- Raised awareness and \$1,472 for Alzheimer's by participating in the "Walk to End Alzheimer's" in October 2022.
- Attended SIR Expo in September to distribute information on the AAA, including services and resources available in the region.
- FCSP conducted *Caregiving From the Heart* caregiver series virtually and in-person in Burke, Caldwell, & Catawba counties in partnership with Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte.
- One staff member completed Leadership Catawba and one staff member completed Caldwell Leadership program.
- Published new Resource Directory for Older Adults.
- AAA held a very successful Scam Jam event to educate the public on scams against seniors, reaching nearly 200 attendees.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GRANT DEVELOPMENT & ADMINISTRATION

In 2022, staff developed applications that resulted in grant funding for 31 projects totaling \$17,571,930. The funding ranged from \$10,000 per entity to provide charging stations in three communities to \$4,990,000 in Rural Economic Development Division funds for a sewer project.

New private sector investments for economic development projects in 2022 totaled \$235,225,000 in addition to creating 400 new, full-time jobs and affecting 442 housing units. In addition, staff was able to secure six (6) N.C. Commerce Building Reuse grants, six (6) Rural Transformation grants, three (3) Rural Economic Development Division grants, and continued to administer more than 80 community and economic development grant projects.

Grant highlights include \$4.99 million for a sewer project in **Granite Falls**; \$900,000 for land acquisition for **Hickory**; \$950,000 to **Newton** for the renovation of a community center; \$850,000 to **Valdese** for the Old Rock School; \$650,000 to **Alexander County** to renovate a downtown building for educators' housing; \$500,000 to **Morganton** for Gerresheimer Glass' expansion that features \$66 million in investment and the creation of 78 new, full-time jobs; \$500,000 to **Burke County** for an access road at its industrial park; a combined \$324,000 in funding for Essential Single-Family Home Repairs (ESFR) in **Alexander and Catawba Counties**; \$278,500 in combined Urgent Repair Program funding for **Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties**; and, \$789,700 in Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grants to develop and renovate parks in **Morganton and Hildebran**.

When combined with local government match commitments, Community & Economic Development Staff assisted in project development totaling **\$254.3 million**.

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION, HOUSING REPAIRS

For the 12th consecutive year, the WPCOG's housing counselors worked with N.C. Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) to prevent home foreclosures. Staff worked with 115 homeowners to prevent or resolve mortgage delinquency. A total of 37 applications were approved, yielding \$800,144 in funding. Staff also utilized the Housing Stability Counseling Program to work with 77 clients and engage in 231 counseling sessions.



HOME CONSORTIUM

In 2022, the HOME Program provided 35 first-time homebuyers with more than \$900,000 in assistance through the Unifour Consortium Down Payment program, and by leveraging approximately \$6.3 million in lender financing.

HOME PROGRAM FUNDED:

- Alexander County Habitat for Humanity with a \$150K loan for the construction of 6 new homes; nearing completion.
- Burke County Habitat for Humanity with a \$150K loan for the construction of 6 new homes.
- Caldwell County Habitat for Humanity with a \$200K loan for the construction of 8 new homes.
- Olive Hill Economic Community Development with a \$40K loan for the construction of 1 new home.

UNIFOUR CONSORTIUM LOANS:

- Katz Corner (68 apartments), located in Lenoir, was completed using a \$150K loan from the Unifour Consortium to assist with the \$13M project.
- Kirkland Grove (70 apartments), located in Hudson, was completed using a \$300K loan from the Unifour Consortium to assist the \$12.9M project.

GOVERNMENT	GRANT	Funding Source	Grant Amount	Local Match	Private Sector \$	Project Total	Jobs Created
Lenoir	Campus LHS Upgrade & Improvement Project	NCDOC	\$580,000				
Conover	Downtown Tread Trail Connector Project	NCDOC	\$640,000				
Morganton	Project Fill (Gerresheimer)	NCDOC	\$500,000	\$25,000	\$62,000,000	\$62,525,000	78
Claremont	Project Eos (Prysmian)	NCDOC	\$375,000	\$18,750	\$136,000,000	\$136,393,750	50
Newton	Project Tuscany (Pasta Piccinini)	NCDOC	\$175,000	\$8,750	\$7,000,000	\$7,183,750	27
Newton	Central High School Community Center	REDD	\$950,000	\$625,000		\$1,575,000	
Alexander Co.	Sterling Road Project	REDD	\$645,044			\$645,044	
Granite Falls	Sewer Project	REDD	\$4,990,000			\$4,990,000	
Morganton	Project Vette (Molded Fiber Glass)	NCDOC	\$200,000	\$10,000	\$7,200,000	\$7,210,000	30
WPCOG	Planning Explorer Tool	EDA	\$40,000			\$40,000	
Morganton	Bethel Park Renovation PARTF	PARTF	\$500,000			\$500,000	
Lenoir	EV Level 2 Charging System	NC DEQ	\$10,000			\$10,000	
Taylorsville	EV Level 2 Charging System	NC DEQ	\$10,000			\$10,000	
WPCOG	EV Level 2 Charging System	NC DEQ	\$10,000			\$10,000	
Lenoir	HOME	HUD	\$1,530,918			\$1,530,918	
Lenoir	CDBG	HUD	\$153,768			\$153,768	
Burke Co.	Industrial Park Access Road Project	ARC	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$1,900,000	\$1,000,000	100
Newton	Project Primo West (PregisPolyMask)	NCDOC	\$70,000	\$3,500	\$11,200,000	\$11,473,500	10
Valdese	Old Rock School	NCDOC	\$850,000			\$850,000	
Newton	Downtown Revitalization	NCDOC	\$900,000			\$900,000	
Alexander Co.	Downtown Multi-Use Teacher Building	NCDOC	\$650,000			\$650,000	
Hickory	Land Acquisition	NCDOC	\$900,000			\$900,000	
Catawba Co.	URP	NCHFA	\$125,000			\$125,000	
Alexander-Burke-Caldwell	URP	NCHFA	\$253,500			\$253,500	
Morganton	Project Highlander (Vanguard)	NCDOC	\$200,000	\$10,000	\$5,925,000	\$6,135,000	80
Caldwell County	Tri-County Speedway	NCDOC	\$500,000			\$500,000	
WPCOG-Alexander Co.	ESFRLP	NCHFA	\$162,000			\$162,000	
WPCOG-Catawba Co.	ESFRLP	NCHFA	\$162,000			\$162,000	
Drexel	Butler Hill Build-Ready Sites	NCRR	\$500,000			\$500,000	0
Burke Co.	Project Bravo (Meritor)	NCDOC	\$200,000	\$10,000	\$4,000,000	\$4,210,000	25
Hildebran	New Town Park Development	PARTF	\$289,700	\$289,700		\$289,700	
			\$17,571,930	\$1,500,700	\$235,225,000	\$254,297,630	400

 **31** Projects
Totaling
\$17.5M

\$235M
Private Sector
Investment 

 **400**
New Full-time
Jobs Created

80 Administered
Projects 

 **\$254M**
Assisted Project
Development

442
Affected
Housing Units 

COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PLANNING

Planning provides a variety of current and long-range planning support to member governments. Current planning consists of daily permitting and inquiries, text amendments, rezoning, special use permits, plan (residential, commercial, and industrial) reviews, and action plans. Planning had 14 contracts during 2022, including Catawba (town), Cedar Rock, Claremont, Drexel, Gamewell, Hildebran, Hudson, Maiden, Rhodhiss, Rutherford College, Sawmills, and Alexander, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties.

Long-range planning consists of visionary plans, such as comprehensive plans, small area plans (downtown, neighborhood, commercial nodes), and corridor plans.

Due to the legislative requirements of NC General Statute 160D, planning provided the following long-range planning services to the following (total of 13): comprehensive plans – Catawba County, Cahaj’s Mountain, Drexel, Granite Falls, Hildebran, Hudson, and Maiden; land use plans – Cedar Rock, Connelly Springs, Gamewell, Long View, Rhodhiss, and Taylorsville. In addition, due to updates, the following municipalities requested rewrites of their subdivision and zoning ordinances: Cahaj’s Mountain, Catawba, Cedar Rock, Connelly Springs, Claremont, and Rhodhiss.

Providing training opportunities for the region and planning staff has is of great significance. Multiple training sessions were held with some of the following organizations - NCDOT, UNC School of Government, NC Association of Zoning Officials, International City/County Management Association, Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce, Catawba County Chamber of Commerce, Water Quality Conferences, NC Chapter of the American Planning Association, NC ArcUsers Group, and NC League of Municipalities.



DOWNTOWN VALDEESE

14


Municipalities with Planning Administration

4,580

Hours of Planning Administration

208  Major, Minor, & Exempt Subdivisions (Plat)

13  Rezoning Cases

89  Text Amendments

91  Planning Board & Board of Adjustment Meetings

178  Zoning Violation & Compliance Letters

9  Appeals

9  Annexations

1,098  Zoning Permits

50  Site Plan Reviews (Commercial & Industry)

8  Major Subdivisions (Plan reviews)

6  Special Use Permits

306  Council & Municipal Meetings

2  Variances

AWARDS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



- Received two awards from the National Association of Development Organizations for the WPCOG Industrial Growth Analysis and the NC Foothills Experience web application.
- Continued coordination with Hickory on future plans near App State - Hickory Campus and the Hickory Airport.
- Community engagement is an important for the WPCOG, staff participated in the following events and initiatives:
 - > Community Foundation of Burke Affordable Housing Task Force
 - > Caldwell Chamber Leadership Committee
 - > CVCC Digital Inclusion/Broadband Task Force
 - > Caldwell Leadership Subcommittee

ACTION PLANS

- Hudson Council Retreat
- Valdese Council
- Rutherford College Council & Planning Board

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Completed the 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
- Completed the Digital Inclusion Planning Kickoff Meeting. Began digital inclusion plans for all four counties (completion by Fall 2023) – the project is working in conjunction with the Institute of Emerging Issues within NC State University and funding support provided by Dogwood Foundation, NC State Employees Credit Union, and Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI).
- Updated data for the Burke Quality of Life web application project with assistance from the Dogwood Foundation.
- Completed the Kerr-Tar Council of Governments drone project to support their 5-county regional marketing.
- Staff began work on a project regarding community resiliency and recovery. The scope of the project includes:
 - > Train the trainer on grant administration for local governments
 - > Capturing drone videos to prioritize stream debris clean-up efforts
 - > Creating a quality of life (preparedness) tool for emergency management personnel to predetermine needs based on a natural disaster.
- Began the professional based co-learning grant participation with Caldwell County School System to support educational curriculum development and marketing the NC Foothills Experience Tool.
- Completed an amenities/services analysis along the short-line railroad from Hickory to Lenoir.

FEATURED PLANNING PROJECT

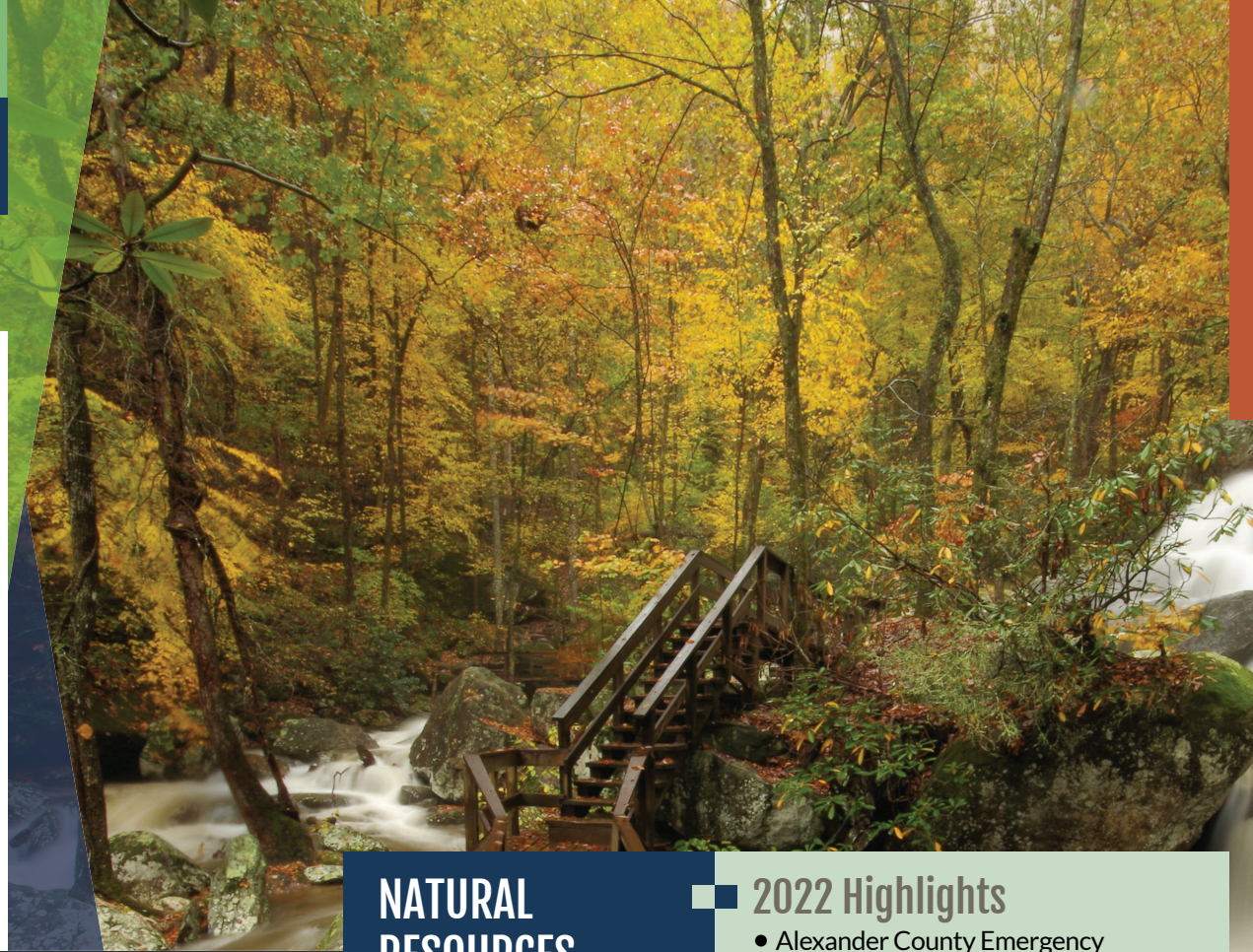
EDA NC Foothills Experience

www.expncfoothills.com

After two years of development, hundreds of drone flights, and extensive work with community partners, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) launched the NC Foothills Experience Web App, a new comprehensive program highlighting the rich collection of adventures, experiences, amenities, and food destinations across the four-county region.

The project, which was made possible through funding from the EDA CARES Act, is a first-of-its-kind application. The application demonstrates to current residents, prospective residents, and area businesses the high quality of life offered by the Western Piedmont.

"We are excited to launch the NC Foothills Experience. Our region possesses so many great assets and things to do. This tool helps our residents and visitors easily access information, and it demonstrates how this area is the best of North Carolina," said Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director.



 **897**
Drone Flights

 **604**
Photographs

 **105**
Videos Produced

NATURAL RESOURCES

42 Stormwater Design Plans Reviewed

18 Good Housekeeping Inspections

31 Illicit Discharge Issues Reported

49 Stormwater Control Inspections

155 Outfall Inspections

2022 Highlights

- Alexander County Emergency Watershed Protection grant obtained and administered to support debris removal for strategic flood prone locations.
- Stormwater ordinances updated for 9 municipalities we provide stormwater partnership services.
- Administering Gamewell stream restoration project in conjunction with Caldwell County and Resource Institute; completed Abingdon Creek restoration.
- 3,100 pounds of trash and debris, and a 10k-pound trailer was also removed from waterways.



Stormwater Outreach

20 Educational Events
1,941 Attendance

6 Public Events
109 Attendance

WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Western Piedmont Water Resources Committee is the key interface the WPCOG uses to interact with local governments on water resources issues. The committee comprises individuals representing local governments, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and businesses from Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties.

STORMWATER PLANNING & ADMINISTRATION

The Stormwater Planning and Administration program is designed to allow municipalities to comply with federal and state requirements and ensure the quality of their local waterways at a very reasonable cost. The WPCOG stormwater program focuses on the measures required by EPA municipal stormwater permits.

The Stormwater Planning & Administration Program uses the skills of other divisions to fulfill the requirements of stormwater permits. For example, the Code Enforcement program enforces illicit discharge, and the GIS division oversees the collection and monitoring of stormwater utility data.

The program oversight is managed under the Natural Resources Division, which provides outreach, public participation, and post-construction management.

WATER QUALITY CONFERENCE

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments hosted the 2022 Western North Carolina Water Quality Conference on October 7, bringing together experts and officials to discuss one of the most critical components of a healthy and sustainable region: clean water. The conferences regularly attract attendees representing local municipalities, local industries, public health organizations, public education agencies, environmental advocacy groups, state and federal agencies staff, and other public groups and private citizens.

Nearly 80 people registered for the conference, which was held virtually to ensure the widest range of participation. AICP certificate maintenance credits were available for certified planners.

THE RIVER TRAIL OF BURKE COUNTY

The 20-mile River Trail of Burke County will follow the south side of the Catawba River, extending to Connelly Springs, Drexel, Hildebran, Long View, Rhodhiss, Rutherford College, and Valdese. The hiking and biking trail will be a mix of natural surface, crushed cinder, and paved as it wanders along the riverbanks and into downtowns. In addition, to provide a trail option to all municipalities, Glen Alpine will have a connector trail to the Fonta Flora State Trail.

Representative Hugh Blackwell and Beth Heile of the Friends of the Valdese Recreation initiated the River Trail of Burke County. Representative Hugh Blackwell wanted to explore the idea of a trail along the river to reach each municipality in eastern Burke County, bringing better physical and mental health for the residents while boosting the local economy.

Heile and Blackwell gained some traction with the idea of a trail. The WPCOG committed to a broad feasibility study for the River Trail of Burke County. Over ten months, Blackwell, Heile, and COG staff met with local municipalities and large landowners to get support for the trail. As a result, the River Trail of Burke County Feasibility Study was developed to identify priority parcels for a mapping tool that displays the most promising trail alignments in eastern Burke County, connecting the end of the Morganton Greenway to the proposed pedestrian infrastructure in Hickory. The feasibility study will serve as a guide for the direction of the trail and stronger grant application submissions.

In 2022, Representative Blackwell secured funding that will be distributed to the WPCOG and local governments along the trail and could be used for further planning, property surveys, and acquisition and construction of trails and park amenities.



3 Miles with Initial Agreements

5.7 Miles on the Ground

3 Miles of Prospective Acquisition

13

SOUTH MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

Photo by Mark File

Stormwater Management Services (13): Cahaj's Mountain, Conover, Gamewell, Granite Falls, Hudson, Lenoir, Newton, Rutherford College, Sawmills, and Valdese. In addition the program offers public education and outreach services to Hickory, Maiden, and Morganton.

Stormwater Mapping (6): Cahaj's Mtn., Gamewell, Sawmills, Granite Falls, Hudson, & Conover.

DATA CENTER

A Lead Regional Organization (LRO) Affiliate of the North Carolina Data Center, WPCOG Data Center Staff provide assistance in locating and analyzing demographics for local governments, nonprofits and the private sector. Data Center Staff also produce specialized data products, including community assessments, economic indicators newsletters, industry growth analysis, and student growth estimation models.

Data Center 2022 Highlights

- Compiled Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, & Catawba Counties building permit data and created maps.
- State of the Workforce & Industrial Growth Analysis reports completed for the Workforce Development Board.
- Updated chronic disease patients & online feature layers for Burke Quality of Life Explorer.
- Catawba County School Growth Model completed and presented to the Board of Education.
- Provided Industrial Commons data analysis of the region's furniture industry for a NPR story.
- The Data Center managed Greenway passenger sampling monthly schedules and reporting.
- Completed data for Rural Transformation Project grant applications for the Community & Economic Development Department.
- Completed 1970-2020 population growth charts for the Hickory MSA region and Hickory MSA Counties and housing analysis to determine the need for a 1 to 2% growth.
- Completed Charlotte vs. Hickory economic & real estate analysis.
- Completed regional furniture industry analysis for Hickory Furniture Mart.
- Completed poverty rate analysis for all Catawba County zip codes for Catawba County Public Health.
- Completed analysis of Hickory MSA labor force participation and disability rates.
- Completed 2020 Burke County Fire District population estimates.
- Assisted Community Development Department with data for a Hudson Community Kitchen Grant.



Data Activities

 **663**
Data Requests

 **218**
Presentations & Meetings

4 
Economic Indicators Newsletters

4 
Hickory Economic Indicator Reports

WPCOG Regional Snapshot



3.5%
Unemployment Rate

14%
Poverty Rate

154K
of Jobs

365K
Population Estimate

\$53K
Median Household Income

\$174K
Median Housing Value

165K
of Housing Units

22 MINS.
Mean Travel Time to Work

Sources: NC Office of Management and Budget, NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2021 American Community Survey.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

WPCOG GIS Services is a central resource of geographic information for the Western Piedmont Region. The WPCOG's GIS group maintains an extensive library of local, county, regional, and statewide datasets and provides a variety of digital mapping solutions and geospatial data services for member governments and other public and private agencies. WPCOG GIS staff also design spatial GIS-based applications which can be accessed easily on PCs, tablets and smartphones. These applications can allow local workers to view and edit utility or other data in the field as infrastructure is updated. WPCOG can host and maintain spatial data on our servers and serve it out to PCs and mobile devices using ArcGIS Online from ESRI, Inc.

GIS Activities

 **897**
Drone Flights

 **54,872**
Number of Points Geocoded

 **551**
Maps & Spatial Data

GIS 2022 Accomplishments

GIS maintenance services (7 local governments)

- Claremont, Drexel, Maiden, Rutherford College, Taylorsville, Valdese, and Sawmills
- Archived Claremont's and Maiden's 2022 work orders
- Conducted Maiden's GIS Audit

MAPPING SUPPORT & APP CREATION

- All Comprehensive, Land Use, Bike & Pedestrian, Recreation, & ADA Transition Plans.
- Alexander County Environmental Watershed Protection Grant.
- The River Trail of Burke County Project.
- ADA inventory viewer for Conover & Granite Falls.
- Stormwater outfall screening/collection online layers & web maps for field collection.
- NC Foothills Experience map application.
- Updated the code enforcement online mapping application.

PROJECTS

- Update regional commuting pattern statistics and mapping products.
- Began Caldwell County water mapping collection.
- CEDS: Provide assistance with CEDS implementation & reporting including new Industry Growth Analysis.
- Work with the Community Foundation of Burke County Grant on continued support to the Burke Quality of Life Explorer.
- Generated land use layer & assigned sections to Catawba County Land Use Plan team, total of 10,000 parcels mapped thus far.
- Valdese Ward Redistricting Project.
- Completed Hudson's Developable Property Project.
- Mobile home survey completed for Gamewell.
- Analyzed the Patterson School sewer/water data.
- Coordinating mapping efforts for Claremont.

DRONE MANAGEMENT

- Renewed the agencies drone registrations
- Recertified & new FAA part107 (drone license) - 4 employees' licensed

GEOCODING PROJECTS

- Alexander, Burke, Caldwell County, Catawba Counties, & Morganton Building Inspection Department building permit locations.
- January & July Carolina Textile District (CTD) clients, CTD members, Manufacturing Solution Center (MSC) customers, & referral companies impact mapping.
- Caldwell Growth Estimation Model.
- Catawba Growth Estimation Model.
- Generated Manufacturing Solutions Centers in NC Opportunity Zones map for Community Development grant.
- Coordination with Highland Mapping to link parcel data & update information on a daily basis with all four-counties GIS systems.
- Digitized the Mountain Creek Park Trail System in Catawba County.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

In 2022, Caldwell County, Brookford, Cahaj's Mountain, Catawba (town), Cedar Rock, Claremont, Drexel, Gamewell, Hildebran, Hudson, Maiden, and Rhodhiss contracted with the COG for code enforcement services. The Code Enforcement Program helps citizens become compliant through education and consultation. An in-house GIS application allows for a real-time database and needed documentation. The Code Enforcement Program made a significant impact, resolving approximately 900 violations in 2022. Efforts to remove housing and non-residential structures have helped address dilapidated housing that attracts criminal-related activities. In addition, municipalities save money through code compliance.

Code Enforcement supports the WPCOG Stormwater program, providing the Illicit Discharge Detection & Elimination program (IDDE). An illicit discharge is any non-stormwater discharge in storm system (including natural waterways) which damages water quality. Code Enforcement began conducting waterway inspections by boat to eliminate illegal discharges and promote a cleaner environment. As a result, code enforcement made 31 illicit discharge and detection reports, all resolved.

Code Enforcement 2022 Activities

 **1,510**
*New
Violations

1,051
Nuisance
Violations 

 **98**
Minimum
Housing

49
Minimum
Non-residential 

 **314**
Abandoned/
Junked Vehicles

*2 violations not listed in total are IDDE, listed under Stormwater program.

 **31**
Information
Requests

131
Monthly
Reports 

 **67**
Meetings

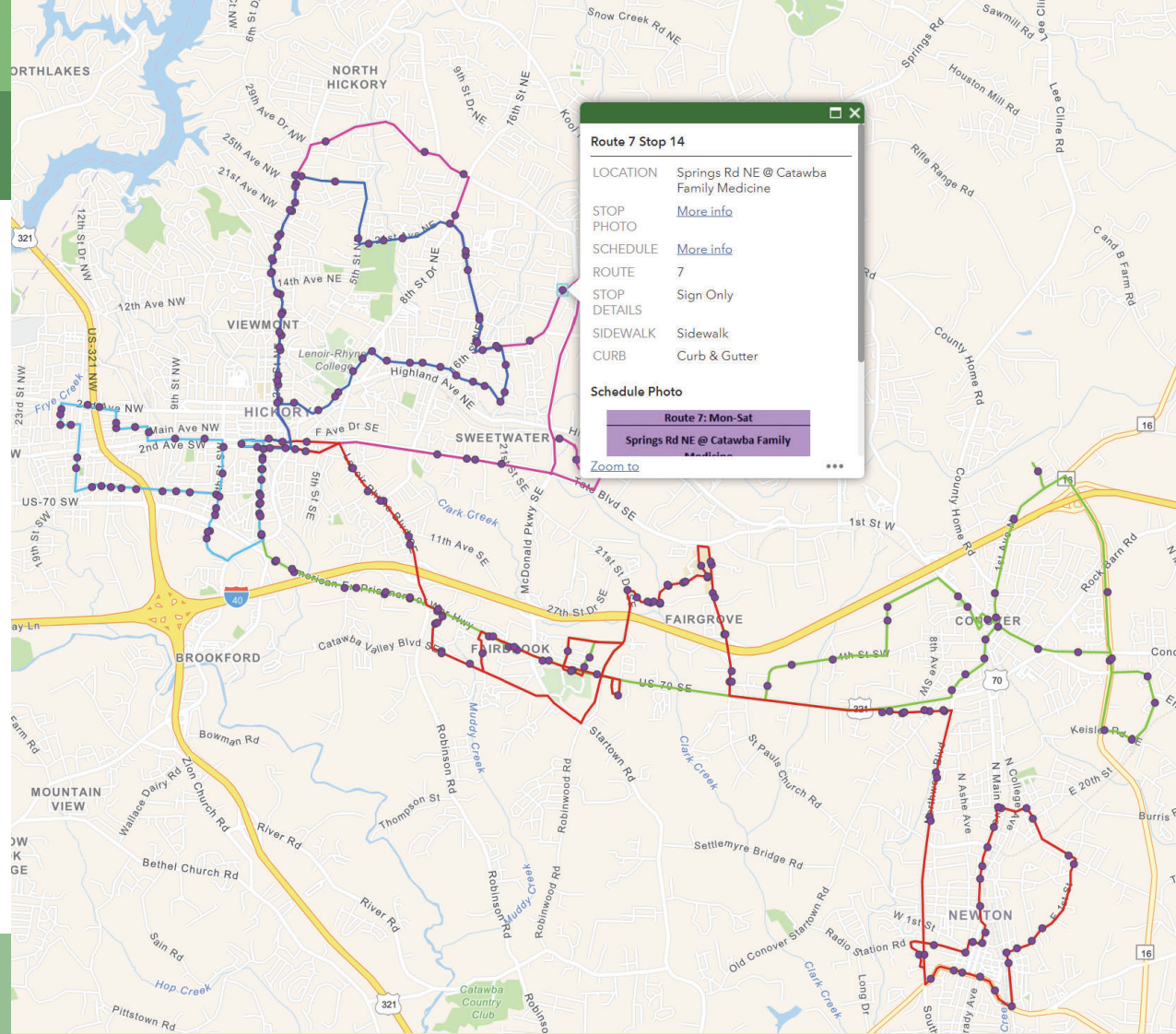


TRANSPORTATION

The Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) is updating its Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Most chapters were drafted and presented to the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) in 2022. Under federal law, all metropolitan areas with a population greater than 50,000 must have a long-range transportation plan in order to access federal funds.

Long-range transportation planning allows the region to plan for the infrastructure needed to handle increases in population, employment and travel demand. Long-range planning assists in mitigating congestion, reducing air pollution and addressing other associated issues. This update covers through year 2050 and will be adopted no later than July of 2023. While not all transportation projects within the plan are fully funded or committed, the plan does include a fiscal component with cost estimates. The plan also includes planned and current bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects within the region. A completed version of the MTP will be available on the Transportation WPCOG webpage in August 2023.

Public involvement and accuracy are priorities for MTP development. MPO staff attend many events to educate and inform locals of the current and planned transportation systems and infrastructure.




Transportation Activities

53 
Workshops/
Trainings

40 
Transportation
Committee Meetings

5 
LAPP Projects
Awarded

 337
Passenger
Sampling Trips

 66 Burke 271 Catawba

FEATURED PROJECT: GREENWAY TRANSIT INTERACTIVE RIDER MAP

The new interactive web map for Greenway Transit was built to include the Catawba Re-Route. Routes 1 through 6 travel through Hickory, Conover, and Newton. Each point on the map represents a stop and provides valuable information to the passengers and bus drivers who also use this tool for training. The pop-up that appears after selecting a point describes the general area (sign, bench, shelter, sidewalk, etc.), address, other stops and routes that share that point. Most importantly, photos of the schedule and bus stop also appear. Additionally, a user can search for a location which zooms to the point of interest and assist the user to locate the nearest bus stop.

Transportation 2022 Highlights

- Calculated estimates for Unlinked Passenger Trips and Passenger Miles Traveled and Average Passenger Trip Length for Greenway fixed/flex route service and demand response service.
- Evaluated ridership of Burke microtransit service; revision to the Appalachian Regional Commission Burke Transit Grant to include microtransit reimbursement & a 1-year extension.
- Communicated changes in the draft 2024-2033 STIP and mapped all changes for 3 divisions and 4 counties.
- Hosted 5310 Transit workshop & call for projects for the area surface transportation providers.
- Developed transportation recommendations for the Granite Falls Comprehensive Plan.
- Attended public meeting for U-6157 Cahah's Mountain Rd. to recommend including bicycle & pedestrian accommodations on one side of the road to help with maintenance costs.
- Coordinated Burke River Trail initiatives with those in the NCDOT Great Trails State Plan.
- Traffic calming research for Cedar Rock.
- Completed Hildebran vehicle & bike/pedestrian maps for comprehensive plan.
- Provided support to the Catawba (town) for the Bike & Pedestrian Plan.
- Adoption of the Unified Public Work Plan (UPWP), March 2022; Created draft UPWP for FY 23-24.
- Completed the interactive Greenway bus route web map to include the new Catawba re-route & Morganton routes housed in the Enterprise system.
- Completion of the TAZ (Transportation Analysis Zones) and mapping for the region.
- Completed 13 vehicle occupancy rate surveys at seven locations across the region – oldest data set in the region collected by WPCOG. The collection began in 1984 (38 years old).
- Completed commuting pattern analysis for surrounding counties.
- Working with Share the Ride NC to implement the tool in our four-county region.
- Outreach Coordinator distributed information about the 2050 MTP update at public events.
- Coordination with NC School of Science and Math - Morganton Campus regarding pedestrian opportunities for students



ADA TITLE II FOR STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) is an unfunded mandate. WPCOG's ADA Title II program is designed to inventory all local government-owned existing facilities, any facility used by that local government, municipal parking lots, and all features located within the public right of way. The ADA coordinator takes account of all inventory using an in-house GIS application tailored to create a database for present and future use. This data is used to create a transition plan for participating municipalities. The inventory is separated into critical, medium, and low impact to be addressed during future maintenance or repairs as dictated by the municipality's schedule to obtain compliance. The ADA coordinator works on behalf of the municipalities to prevent issues or respond during audits.

In 2022, staff provided ADA maintenance for inventory and transition plans as new construction or upgrades occurred in Conover and Granite Falls. Staff attended 29 meetings to support these efforts. An ADA inventory and transition plan is also in development for Sawmills.

ADA Activities

 **5**
Facilities
Inventoried

 **2**
Plans
Completed

 **1**
Plan in
development

 **29**
ADA
Meetings

MOVABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC)

The Movability Advisory Committee (MAC) is listed as goal one in GHMPO's Team Action Plan. MAC was specially designed to help the GHMPO planning area identify necessary policy, systematic, and environmental changes. The committee promotes equitable access to all forms of transportation, specifically bike, transit, and pedestrian. For many, walking, transit, and biking are their only means of accessing employment, education, medical care, food, and entertainment. MAC strives to make alternative transportation modes as safe as possible by identifying and removing mobility barriers. MAC utilizes locally adopted plans as well as public involvement to identify mobility barriers, and addresses those mobility barriers by coordinating with municipalities, NCDOT, and key representatives in the four-county region (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba). MAC held three meetings and conducted two walk audits during the year. One walk audit in Long View, NC, and the other at the North Carolina School of Science and Math in Morganton, NC.

MAC Activities

 **3**
*MAC
Meetings

 **2**
Walk
Audits

 **2**
Walk Audit
Reports Completed

* Hosted quarterly bicycle, pedestrian, and transit meetings through the Movability Advisory Committee (MAC)

REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY



The Housing Choice Voucher program is the federal government's primary program for assisting low-income families in obtaining affordable housing in the private market. Participants are free to choose any housing that meets the program's requirements.

By the end of 2022, RHA had 59 units leased in Alexander County, 276 in Burke County, 427 in Caldwell County, and 558 in Catawba County.

In 2022, the RHA increased its total number of available vouchers by 17, with 12 being regular Housing Choice Vouchers and five (5) new Veterans vouchers. New regular vouchers have not been awarded to the RHA in over ten years, making this a significant accomplishment.

Since January 2018, the RHA was awarded 30 Emergency Housing Vouchers, 15 Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers, 246 Mainstream Vouchers, and 12 regular Housing Choice vouchers resulting in a 28% increase in overall voucher capacity.

In December 2022, the RHA was awarded \$123,000 in Extraordinary Administrative Funding, supporting additional Mainstream Voucher families in securing and maintaining stable housing. The RHA received the 9th highest award out of 150 national awards from HUD.

Annual Landlord Seminar

The 9th annual Landlord Information Seminar was held in November 2022, with 41 owners and property managers in attendance. The RHA provided a new Owner's Handbook for everyone in attendance, an open Q&A session with RHA staff, and booths available to provide one-on-one guidance for common questions and challenges that owners and property managers face.



RHA By the Numbers

RHA Clients by Race
59% White
40% Black
1% Other

81%
 Head of Household (Female)

19%
 Head of Household (Male)

1,324
 # of Families Assisted

1,377
 Total # of Vouchers

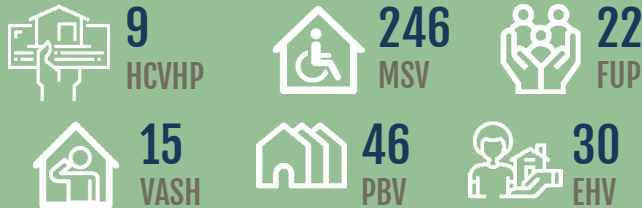
17
 New Vouchers



Special Programs

The RHA works to enhance the quality of life for participating families by offering opportunities through special programs. Programs include Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership, Mainstream Vouchers, Family Unification Vouchers, HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing, Project-based Vouchers, Emergency Housing Vouchers, and REACH-Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

Special Programs Activities



Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program

The Homeownership Program (HCVHP) allows Housing Choice Voucher participants to use their rental subsidy toward mortgage payments. This year, the RHA assisted nine families with their monthly mortgages.

Mainstream Vouchers (MSV)

Mainstream Vouchers assist families with a disabled person in the household between 18 and 61. Aside from serving a special population, the administration of MSV adheres to the same rules as other Housing Choice Vouchers. Funding and financial reporting are separate from the regular tenant-based voucher program.

Family Unification Program (FUP)

FUP helps families whose children have been displaced from their household or are at severe risk of displacement and facing the imminent threat of losing their children due to inadequate housing. These vouchers also assist former foster youth transitioning out of foster care. The RHA works in cooperation with Public Child Welfare Agencies to provide these vouchers to families in need.

Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)

The VASH program combines HUD's Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance for homeless Veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The VA provides these services for participating Veterans at VA medical centers,

community-based outreach clinics, through VA contractors, or other VA-designated entities. In 2021, the RHA was awarded 10 VASH vouchers, in 2022 an additional five (5) VASH vouchers were awarded, for a total of 15 veteran vouchers.

Project-based Voucher (PBV)

PBVs are a component of the public housing authority's (PHA's) Housing Choice Voucher program. No additional funding is allocated for PBV units; the PHA uses its tenant-based voucher funding to allocate project-based units to a project. The RHA runs three (3) project-based voucher projects. Two (2) are in Catawba County for the "hardest to serve" population, with the third project located in Burke for the elderly population over 62.

Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV)

The EHV program is available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The RHA was awarded 30 EHV vouchers in July 2021. These vouchers are to assist families that are homeless, at risk- of homelessness, fleeing or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, or were recently homeless with a high risk of housing instability. The RHA is ranked 2nd in NC and 35th nationally for its successful EHV leasing rates.

ENVISION CENTER (RHA-EC)

The RHA EnVision Center is a centralized hub supporting the following four pillars: (1) Economic Empowerment, (2) Educational Advancement, (3) Health & Wellness, & (4) Character & Leadership. The RHA continues to operate as 1 of 100 unique EnVision Centers in the country.

FRAUD COLLECTION

Families assisted through the RHA Housing Choice Voucher program who inaccurately report their income are placed on a repayment agreement. If the RHA is unable to collect the income through the agreement, the family is entered into the NC Debt Setoff collection system. In 2022, the RHA collected \$12,792 directly from clients and \$1,866 through the NC Debt setoff collection system, totaling \$14,660.

INSPECTIONS

During COVID, the RHA adjusted inspection procedures to be performed bi-annually. In January 2022, the RHA resumed yearly inspections. Due to program growth, a second full-time inspector was hired, and 2,440 were performed in 2022, with a pass rate of 66%.

REACH (Family Self-Sufficiency)

REACH, a family self-sufficiency program for Housing Choice Voucher families, offers participants the guidance of an FSS coordinator and referrals to community resources and services. Each participant, with the assistance of the FSS Coordinator, sets goals and creates a plan to achieve them, with suitable employment being HUD's mandatory final goal. As families increase their household earned income, the RHA deposits funds into an escrow account. Participants receive escrow savings by completing their goals and graduating from REACH.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

The purpose of the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board is to be at the center of community and regional leadership to identify workforce challenges; the convener of the conversation to resolve the challenges; the champion for workforce development; work in a collaborative partnership with key stakeholders; bring resources to bear on resolving the challenges; and act as the accountability agent to ensure the work is completed.

Through the planning and oversight of the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, our local area NCWorks Career Centers have delivered:

 5,430 Employer Services	 75,111 Jobseeker Services	 63 Recruitment Events	 166 Scholarships Awarded
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In 2022, the Western Piedmont Workforce Development NCWorks Scholarships funding for Adults, Dislocated Worker and Youth was awarded across the following counties:

- Alexander **\$105,841**
- Burke **\$252,733**
- Caldwell **\$274,755**
- Catawba **\$418,178**



NCWorks
NEXTGEN
Your Future Starts Here

Youth and Young Adult NEXTGEN program (16-24 yrs old) delivered (January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022)

 16 WEX Internships	 29 Entered Post-Secondary	 13 Received High School/Equivalency
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In 2022, the NCWorks Career Centers in Western Piedmont were recognized for completing the center certification process. To apply for certification as a Tier 1 career center and use the NCWorks Career Center brand, career centers must meet the following minimum criteria in each category:

- Location and Appearance
- Operations
- North Carolina's Integrated Web Portal – NCWorks Online
- Trained Staff
- Customer Satisfaction
- Partnerships

Upskill

5 Grants Issued 52 Trainees \$41,242 Funds Awarded

Employers included:

Von Drehle, Shurtape Technologies, LLC, Catawba Valley Insurance Agency, Lincotek Surface Solutions, and Performance Foodservice

In 2022, the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board continued administering the Incumbent Worker Grant program, branded Upskill. Upskill offers competitive training grants to businesses to address skills gaps, improve employee retention, help stabilize the business, and increase employee and business competitiveness. Through this effort, businesses:

- Improve productivity & competitiveness
- Retain key talent & expertise
- Reduce employee turnover

Strengthening Partnerships

In 2022, WDB partnered with the Caldwell County Public Library, offering NCWorks Career Services on Wednesday afternoons at the Caldwell County Public Library - Lenoir Branch.

The NCWorks Career Center would like to personally invite everyone to visit us and receive at no cost: personalized career coaching; online job search information and updates on hiring events; personal assistance writing a resume; career coaching to interview better when you apply for a job; information on scholarships for training (college courses) that can increase your job getting skills and hopefully increase your pay. For employers, staff assistance with developing job descriptions and/or posting jobs; advertisement and support coordinating recruitment events; and up-to-date labor market information.



The NCWorks Career Centers in Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba have met the NCWorks Commission's criteria for quality customer service.



A Path to Success

Tabitha Arrowood

On October 13, 2022, Ms. Tabitha Arrowood received the 2022 Governor's NCWorks Award of Distinction for Outstanding Adult at the NCWorks Partnership Conference Governor's Banquet. With support from a workforce training scholarship through the NCWorks Career Center in Burke County, Ms. Arrowood graduated from the Interpreter Education program at Western Piedmont Community College in 2021 as the first college graduate in her family. She remained focused on her educational goals while working two jobs and raising two young children. After graduating from WPCC, Ms. Arrowood obtained her state Transliterator license and worked at the college assisting deaf and hard-of-hearing students. She also served as a staff interpreter for N.C. School for the Deaf before she joined Purple Communications as a sign language interpreter.



Priya Vang

Priya Vang was interested in a career in Dental Assisting. So, she pursued her Dental Assisting certificate from CVCC, completing it in February 2022. After completion, she accepted an internship at Joshua M. Millsaps, DDS Hickory Dentistry, then hired as a Dental Assistant for William Straka, DDS, at the end of her internship.

Priya's said, "NCWorks has helped me in many ways, assisting in getting through the pandemic during school. The initial impressions of my (career) coaches were very hospitable. They understood and got to know me as a person rather than another intern for their program. The experience eased my financial concerns and gave me good leverage to succeed

in a career I never knew I would enjoy, all with the help and encouragement the career center staff gave me: both financially and culturally in work. NCWorks offers a reliable program with the potential to continue on to success."

SUCCESS STORIES CONT.



Ms. Jaco

When asked about the services she received from NCWorks, Ms. Jaco with USPS stated, "NCWorks has been a key instrument in providing the Lenoir USPS with Job Fairs that have produced applicants and resulted in quality employees. The whole process with Caldwell County NCWorks has been professional. The advertising they have provided helped reach potential

applicants. When job fairs are conducted, the process is seamless. We can use the onsite computers to assist applicants in applying for the jobs they are interested in. The Lenoir Post Office's experience with the Caldwell County NCWorks has been an example for all NCWorks in the area. We thoroughly enjoy working with their team and hope to continue to work with them in the future."

Ms. Jaco shared her experiences with other postmasters in other counties and has sparked other postmasters to contact their local NCWorks to get assistance. As a result, USPS - Lenoir plans to schedule more recruitment events at NCWorks in the future for their recruiting needs.

Thomas Parks

Veteran Thomas Parks came to NCWorks with several life issues from circumstances while serving in the US Navy. While working with Patrick Hamber, NCWorks Veterans Career Advisor and Business Consultant, Mr. Parks indicated his biggest barriers to employment was a lack of transportation. He is currently battling to overcome numerous barriers to employment. Mr. Hamber reached out to Hickory Disabled American Veterans #34 (DAV), and they generously donated \$1200 to purchase Mr. Parks a new scooter to assist him along the way. Since working in partnership with Hickory DAV #34 and NCWorks, Mr. Parks is excited to see his life moving in a better direction. Mr. Parks said, "I'm grateful to the DAV and glad I came to NCWorks."



Estella "Lynne" Alexander

Ms. Estella "Lynne" Alexander started her journey with the Trade Program at the beginning of the COVID Pandemic. Being a new student going through training is hard, but learning how to navigate a new system and work with instructors and administration without ever seeing them in person, is even harder.

Just when the finish line was in sight, graduation was pushed back. However, Ms. Alexander viewed all the complications she encountered as a speed bump instead of a dead end. Ms. Alexander is a real winner because she forged ahead through all of the many hardships.

Ms. Alexander completed her coursework in Library Information Technology with an Associate's Degree from Central Carolina Community College in Sanford, NC, on May 9, 2022. She is currently working part-time at Catawba County Library in Conover, NC as an intern and working for Fed Ex while pursuing a full-time position in a library.

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twitter.com/WPWorkforceDev



youtube.com/channel/UCsZ5inndfEReMmELO5yPQA

WPCOG STAFF

Administration

Anthony Starr Executive Director
Sherry Long Assistant Executive Director
David Pugh Director of Administrative Services & HR
Jason Toney Communications Manager
Lucas Bentley IT Manager
Tasmin Mack HR Specialist
Lori Dixon Administrative Assistant/Reception

Finance

Andrea Roper Finance Director
Ashley Adkins Assistant Finance Director
Karley Connolly Financial Manager
Brianna Wert Financial Manager
Makayla Pannell Accounts Payable Technician

Area Agency on Aging

Tina Miller Area Agency on Aging Director
Christina Franklin Regional Ombudsman
Anita Roberts Regional Ombudsman
Mary Mitchell Family Caregiver Support Administrator
Karen Phoenix Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultant
Sarah Stamey Aging Program Manager
Ricky Handoo Aging Specialist
Michael Layza Aging Specialist

Community & Economic Development

Ben Willis Community & Economic Development Director
Rick Oxford Housing Program Manager
Paul Teague Community & Economic Project Developer
Laurie Powell Community & Economic Development Administrator
Lisa Helton Community & Economic Development Administrator
Erin Schotte Community & Economic Development Administrator
Jennifer Cannon Community & Economic Development Administrator
Helen Whisnant Housing Counselor
Jeffrey Currie Housing Counselor
Joel Herman Housing Inspector
Stephen Pflieger Housing Inspector

Community & Regional Planning

Alison Adams Community & Regional Planning Director
John Wear Assistant Community & Regional Planning Director
Taylor Dellinger Senior Data Analyst/GIS Manager
Averi Ritchie Transportation Planning Manager
Ashley Young Senior Long-Range Planner
Duncan Cavanaugh Senior Planner - Project Management
Teresa Kinney Senior Planner
Dustin Millsaps Community & Regional Planner
Scott Berson Community & Regional Planner
Rachel Wooster Community & Regional Planner
Daniel Odom Transportation Planner
Jess Odette Transportation Technician
Caren Shorthouse Natural Resource Administrator
Haleigh Hopkins Natural Resource Administrator
Curt Willis Code Enforcement Officer
Chad Powell Code Enforcement Officer
Trey Schweitzer GIS Specialist
Robert Block GIS Specialist
Katerina Pascht GIS Technician
Dallas Goodnight GIS Technician

Regional Housing Authority

Stephanie Harvey Director of Regional Housing Authority
Elizabeth Moncrief RHA Program Manager
Kim Duncan Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator
Lisa Acuff Housing Specialist
Jennifer Cater Housing Specialist
Chasity Houck Housing Specialist
Kelley Hayward Housing Specialist
Viveca Huffman Housing Specialist
Reinhardt Kaleigh Housing Specialist
By Khang Housing Inspector
Doug Woodall Housing Inspector

Workforce Development Board

Charity Patterson Hamber Director of Workforce Development
Donna Gilbert Workforce Program Manager
Elizabeth Hilliard Workforce Program Coordinator
Matthew Xiong Business Services Liaison



ROCKY FACE MOUNTAIN RECREATIONAL AREA



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