



ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Western Piedmont
Council of Governments



The year 2021 was another challenging year for our region and its communities. However, the economy is recovering from the global pandemic and our region is resilient. To seize opportunities, our local governments continue to make substantial investments to improve our residents' lives and enhance the appeal of our region. Local governments continue to demonstrate sound leadership and decision-making.

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 between our communities. That collaboration allows us to reach new levels of achievement that benefit our residents and businesses.

There are many encouraging indicators of economic progress, but we must not become complacent. Our communities and region face both challenges and opportunities, and we can reach even more success with the assistance of the WPCOG. This year, the WPCOG continued its outstanding support of its local governments. The WPCOG is the common thread that ties us together and allows us to develop and maintain relationships and better serve our constituents. I encourage you to not take our spirit of cooperation for granted and make intentional efforts to partner with each other whenever possible.

Within this 2021 Annual Report, you will find some of the successes that demonstrate the value of the WPCOG. Our local governments' leadership, vision, and engagement built one of the strongest Councils of Governments in North Carolina and the nation. Organizations from across the nation look to the WPCOG to see how regionalism is best practiced. We can depend 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 53 years in a variety of ways, including administrative and financial services, community and regional planning, community and economic development, workforce development, assisting our aging population, and providing housing assistance. The WPCOG is grateful to assist 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 continues its focus to serve our local governments and partners.

Our local governments demonstrate great competence and strategic vision to serve the region's residents. In turn, the WPCOG enjoys unsurpassed local government support that makes us very effective. Our regional cooperation is unusual and is a competitive advantage over other areas. Collaboration does not happen by accident and requires cultivation and intentional efforts. Our local elected and appointed leaders understand the need for cooperation and 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. More was asked of the staff in the last two years, and they showed their amazing talent and dedication to meet those demands. Our staff fosters great teamwork and are fantastic examples of public servants.

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	 Wayne F. Abele, Sr. Burke County	Member At-Large	 Kitty Barnes 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		 Danny Hipps Maiden		 Jerry Hodge Newton		 Ben Honeycutt Hildebran		 Chris Jernigan Morganton
	 Mike Labrose Caldwell County		 Barbara Pennell Gamewell		 Donald Robinson Catawba		 Ronnie Setzer Cajah's Mountain		 Dale Sherrill Claremont		 Allen Spensor Rhodhiss		 Keith Warren Sawmills		 Charlie Watts Valdese		
 Amparo Alfaro	 Randy Burns	 Helen Chestnut	 Tommy Luckadoo	 Erisha Lipford	 Jeanna Price	 Malla Vue											

LEGEND

Executive Committee

Elected Delegates

Appointed Delegates

NOT PICTURED ABOVE:
Elected Delegates - Sheila Perkins for Glen Alpine and Kelvin Gregory for Brookford.

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. Additionally, the Administration Staff support the WPCOG Policy Board, Executive Committee, and several other regional committees. After the upheaval of 2020, the year 2021 brought back a sense of normalcy for WPCOG. In January, all staff returned to the office after nearly nine months of primarily remote work. In April of 2021, the office opened back up to the public.

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. The staff has extensive experience facilitating the hiring of personnel, including town managers, town administrators, department directors, and more. In 2021 WPCOG completed the executive searches for Long View PIO/clerk, the Caldwell County manager, the Greenway Transportation executive director, and the Town of Catawba manager.

“One of the most important decisions elected officials can make is whom to hire for their county or municipality. In 2021 Caldwell County undertook the process of hiring a new county manager with the assistance of the WPCOG. The expertise and guidance of WPCOG staff made the process an easy one. They handled the logistics, and we focused on the candidates.” Randy Church, Caldwell County Commissioner.

Communications

As COVID concerns continued to affect day-to-day operations, new meeting rules required the installation of a “hybrid” meeting platform. To comply with the newly implemented rules, staff researched and coordinated the installation of technology to change the way people attend meetings. Work continues on WPCOG facilities and technology to prepare for hybrid meetings where in-person and remote participation can occur simultaneously. More technological improvements may be required in our main conference room to make this possible or fully compliant. We expect this to become a common manner of conducting business and allow members of various boards and committees to participate in meetings they might otherwise not attend.

Communications also worked with the Town of Long View Police Department to launch a newly designed website. Work began in early February, and the site launched in July of 2021. In 2021, communications also won a bid to build a new website for a sister COG, Lumber River Council of Governments, with

preliminary work beginning in July of 2021 and concluding in early 2022. Staff also supports websites for the Town of Long View, Village of Cedar Rock, NC4A, and the Catawba County Council on Aging.

Internally, communications created an updated WPCOG Newsletter design and an updated Workforce Development newsletter design to accommodate a changing delivery system through Constant Contact.

ADMINISTRATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- As part of the first-ever virtual Annual Meeting, WPCOG hosted keynote speaker Doug Griffiths, author of *13 Ways to Kill Your Community*. Followed by a virtual training event on May 9.
- WPCOG completed a strategic plan during 2021. Consultants from the SouthEast Regional Directors’ Institute (SERDI) managed the process. They conducted surveys, stakeholder meetings, focus groups, and presented to the Policy Board. The following areas had specific strategies developed to guide efforts by staff, elected officials, and area partners:
 - > Community and Regional Marketing
 - > Healthy Housing
 - > Utilities Infrastructure
 - > WPCOG Staff Succession Planning
 - > Workforce Development
 - > Weather Radar Services
 - > Expansion to WPCOG Office
 - > New and Expanded Services to Local Governments

2021 Publications

WPCOG NEWSLETTERS	9 Issues	30% Open Rate	1,553 Readers
WORKFORCE NEWSLETTERS	4 Issues	34% Open Rate	419 Readers
ECONOMIC INDICATORS NEWSLETTER	4 Issues	The EIN and Impact Report are sent electronically and mailed. Estimated distribution per issue is 500+	
WPCOG IMPACT REPORTS	12 Issues		

2021 Social Media | Public Outreach | Building Usage

	Website	32,616 USERS	126,155 PAGEVIEWS
	FaceBook	5,510 POSTS	290,551 REACHED
	Twitter	1,398 TWEETS	327,187 REACHED
	Building Usage	122 MEETINGS	1,550 ATTENDEES

FINANCE

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

The General Fund is the chief operating fund of the Western Piedmont Council of Governments. At the end of FY2021, the WPCOG's General Fund balance was \$357,684, while the total fund balance reached \$1,933,619. The Council currently has an available fund balance of 5.65% of total General Fund expenditures, while the total fund balance represents 30.52% of that same amount. Unassigned Fund Balance decreased \$563,024, for a total of \$3,350.

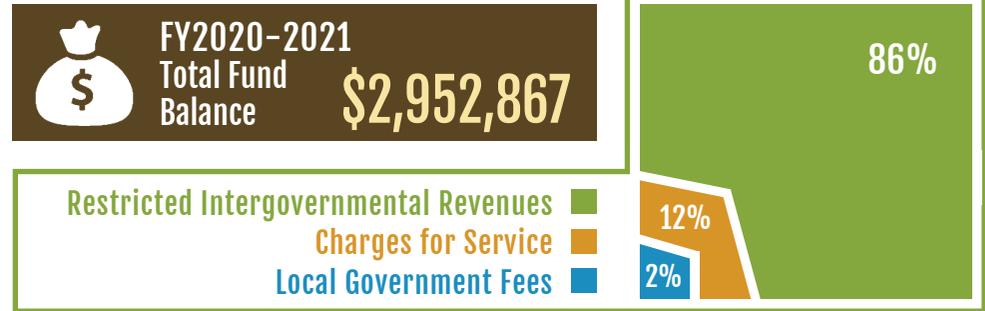
On June 30, 2021, the governmental funds of the WPCOG reported a combined fund balance of \$2,952,867, with a net increase in fund balance of \$521,376. Included in this change in fund balance is an increase in the General Fund of \$179,906, Section 8 Fund of \$207,362, Capital Reserve Fund of \$148,647, and a decrease in WIOA Fund of \$2,806, Aging Fund of \$1,405, Building Generator Project Fund of \$10,328.

In 2021, the finance department assisted one local government and one non-profit with complete financial services. Work began for an additional full financial services client with a contract beginning in January 2022. Comprehensive financial services include accounts payable, accounts receivable, and payroll. In addition, finance served another local government with specific financial services, including bank reconciliations, chart of account review, monthly journal vouchers, credit card statement reconciliations, accounts payable assistance, and various financial reporting assistance.

WPCOG Revenue Resources

 FY2020-2021
Total Fund
Balance **\$2,952,867**

FY2020-21 Total Revenues



2021 Revenues, Expenditures & Changes

	General	WIOA	Aging	Section 8	Other Gov't	Total
Revenues						
Restricted Intergov'tal Revenues	\$4,147,233	\$1,213,938	\$3,492,925	\$6,071,723		\$14,925,819
Charges for Services	\$2,050,974					\$2,050,974
Local Government Dues	\$297,186					\$297,186
Investment Earnings	\$492		\$96	\$514		\$1,102
Miscellaneous	\$8,919					\$8,919
Total Revenues	\$6,504,804	\$1,213,938	\$3,493,021	\$6,072,237		\$17,284,000
Expenditures						
General Government	\$49,126					\$49,126
Transportation	\$971,125					\$971,125
Environmental Protection	\$353,587					\$353,587
Community Development	\$1,056,981					\$1,056,981
Community & Regional Planning	\$478,384					\$478,384
Economic Development	\$633,354					\$633,354
Regional Public Housing	\$906,559			\$5,864,875		\$6,771,434
Area Agency on Aging	\$801,968		\$3,494,426			\$4,296,394
WIOA	\$803,045	\$1,216,744				\$2,019,789
Mis/Local Dues/Fringe & Indirect	\$132,450					\$132,450
Total Expenditures	\$6,186,579	\$1,216,744	\$3,494,426	\$5,864,875		\$16,762,624
Revenues over (under) expenditures	\$318,225	(\$2,806)	(\$1,405)	\$207,362		\$521,376
Other Financing Sources (Uses)						
Transfer in	\$10,328				\$148,647	\$158,975
Transfer (out)	(\$148,647)				(\$10,328)	(\$158,975)
Total Other financing sources	(\$138,319)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$138,319	\$0
Net Change in Fund Balance	\$179,906	(\$2,806)	(\$1,405)	\$207,362	\$138,319	\$521,376

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 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.

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

The AAA administers the region's Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG). 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 funded services to provide to older adults (age 60+) based on community needs.

HCCBG SERVICES FUNDED IN WESTERN PIEDMONT

- 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 and Options Counseling



Family Caregiver Support Program



- FCSP continued to offer the Caregiver Directed Voucher program. This program offers caregivers the option of choosing their caregivers to provide respite from their caregiving responsibilities and caring for a family member.
- FCSP completed a competitive proposal process and selected new providers for this current fiscal year and will

continue to offer In-Home Caregiver Respite Services through these providers.

- FCSP collaborated with area employers and human resources to provide caregiver information to staff and employees of local businesses/organizations.
- FCSP partnered with Adult Children of Aging Parents to plan and organize a regional virtual caregiver conference.
- FCSP provided grandparents raising grandchildren with school supplies in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties.
- FCSP collaborated with the Veterans Administration to participate in the virtual VA Caregiver Summit and presented caregiver information.
- FCSP began offering a new caregiver support group in partnership with Catawba Council on Aging in Catawba County.

Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman



- Ombudsman provided notebooks with Ombudsman contact information for all facilities in the region.
- Ombudsman provided activity books in October for all facilities in the region to celebrate Resident’s Rights Month.

CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security)



- Provided services to older adults and caregivers in the region using CARES Act funds. The funds were used to purchase groceries and needed supplies and have them delivered or contactless pick-up so that this vulnerable population can stay safe during the pandemic.
- Offered respite services for caregivers with caregiver-directed vouchers or through local home health providers in each county.
- Provided internet access to grandparents raising grandchildren during the virtual school year.

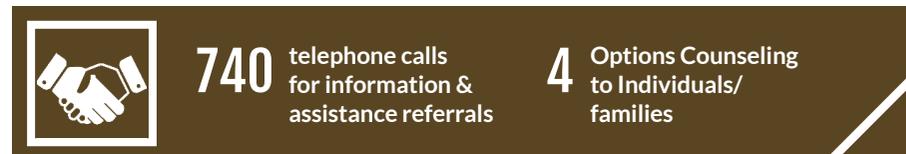
Project C.A.R.E.



- AAA PROJECT C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) program 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.

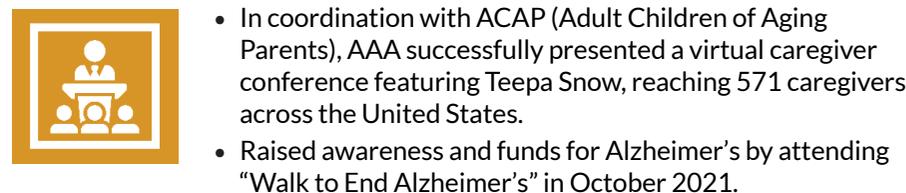
- In 2021, Project CARE completed a combination of in-home and telephone assessments due to ongoing COVID concerns.
- In a new outreach program, Project CARE completed two training sessions for Safety officials, including local Police, Firemen, Emergency Medical, and Rescue Personnel.

AAA Outreach and Support



- Served as administrative agency for SIR (Senior Information Resources).
- AAA is working with a grant from NC Center for Health and Wellness to become Medicare accredited to allow for reimbursement for certain classes we teach to the community.
- Hired a new Aging Specialist to focus on COVID-19 vaccine outreach to those who are homebound or have limited mobility.
- Distributed COVID-19 at-home vaccination postcards/flyers, published on the WPCOG Facebook page, submitted a newsletter online post to over 1,000+ residents in the community.
- Partnered with local organizations (nutrition sites, DSS locations and senior centers) to provide direct outreach via postcards/flyers.

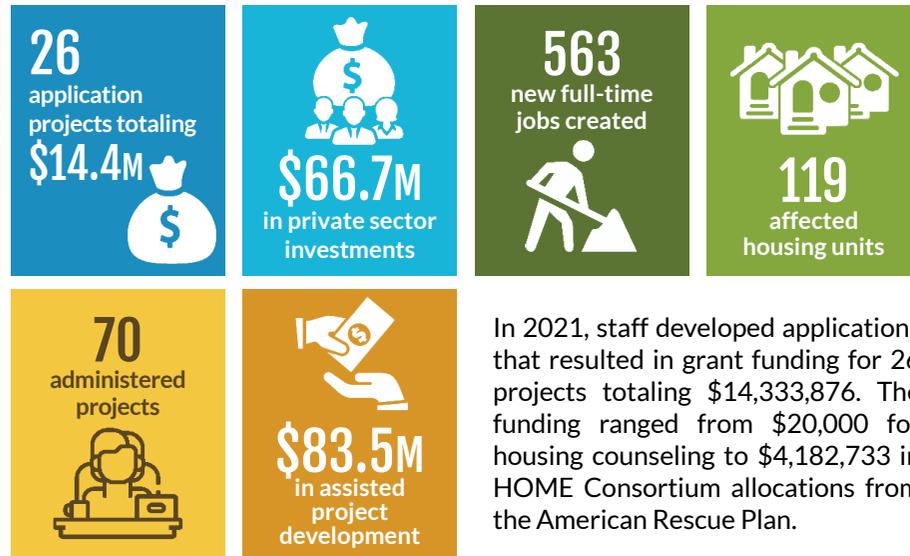
AAA Events & Conferences



- Raised awareness and funds for Alzheimer’s by attending “Walk to End Alzheimer’s” in October 2021.
- Attended Senior Information Resources Expo in September to hand out information regarding services offered by AAA and provide information about providers. Also provided information to seniors about services that their counties offer.
- AAA was awarded the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) 2021 Impact award for COVID Relief assistance to Seniors, Caregivers, and Aging Service Providers.

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GRANT DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION



New private sector investments for economic development projects in 2021 totaled \$66,741,200, in addition to the creation of 563 new, full-time jobs. Staff was able to secure nine (9) N.C. Commerce Building Reuse grants, four (4) COVID-19 Response Projects, two (2) Appalachian Regional Commission grants, and continued to administer more than 70 community and economic development grant projects.

Grant highlights include \$2.16 million for the Utility Infill Affordable Housing Project in Morganton, \$500,000 to Claremont to assist Poppelman Plastics' investment of \$21.7 million to expand its facility and create 83 new jobs, \$600,000 in Economic Development Agency funding to assist the Manufacturing Solutions Center with equipment in Conover, a combined \$380,000 in funding for Essential Single-Family Home Repairs (ESFR) in Burke and Iredell Counties, \$300,000 in combined Urgent Repair Program funding for Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties, and more than \$80,000 in funding for the Housing Stability Counseling Program.

When combined with local government match commitments, the Community and Economic Development staff assisted in project development totaling \$83.49 million.

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION, HOUSING REPAIRS

For the 11th consecutive year, the WPCOG's housing counselors worked with the NC Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) to prevent home foreclosures. Staff worked with 147 homeowners to prevent or resolve mortgage delinquency. In addition, new funding was obtained for the Housing Stability Counseling Program and began assisting individuals at the end of the year. Staff also will be working with the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) on a new Homeowner Assistance Fund that was approved in December 2021.

ESSENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY REHAB URGENT REPAIR PROGRAM

- **McDowell Co.** - 4 housing units completed | totaling \$85,033 from 2017 NCHFA funds
 - **Iredell Co.** - 3 houses completed | 4 in progress | totaling \$185,482 from 2018 NCHFA funds
 - **Catawba Co.** - 4 units completed | 1 in progress | totaling \$92,779 from 2019 NCHFA funds
 - **Alexander Co.** - 1 unit completed | 4 in progress, totaling \$108,086 from 2019 NCHFA funds
 - **Caldwell Co.** - 11 units completed, totaling \$350,000 from 2017 NCHFA funds | 2 units in progress | 2 units out for bid | 4 waiting for rehab inspection - totaling \$190,000 from 2020 ESFR funds
 - **Burke Co.** - 6 units completed | 2 in progress | totaling \$300,000 from 2018 NCHFA funds
 - **Catawba Co.** - 24 housing units completed, totaling \$132,635 from 2019-2021 NCHFA funds
 - **Urgent Repair ABC** - Received \$200,000 in funding in 2021 to assist with 23 units in 2022
- ### ADDITIONAL GRANTS
- **Burke & Catawba counties** - \$2.6 million in Scattered Site Housing, affecting 59 housing units
 - **Burke & Iredell counties** - Both received \$190,000 in NCHFA funding and applications are being taken
 - **Morganton Entitlement** - Spent \$180,000 in CARES Act funds through local non-profits. Funded \$23,000 for community needs. 4 Small Business Loans issued, totaling \$120,000. 2 Infrastructure Projects completed, totaling \$120,000

HOME CONSORTIUM



In 2021, the HOME Program provided 26 first-time homebuyers with more than \$593,000 in assistance, through the Unifour Consortium Down Payment program, and by leveraging approximately \$4 million in lender financing.

The HOME program funded Habitat for Humanity of Catawba Valley with a \$400,000 loan for the construction of 4 new homes that are nearing completion.

The Unifour Consortium used new construction funds for Open Hearts Place in Morganton. A total of \$300,000 was utilized to construct 3 single-family homes in Morganton and made available for rent to families with incomes below 80% of the area's median income.

In addition, Center Crossing Senior apartments – a \$9 million project in Hickory – has been completed.

GRANTS FUNDED IN 2021	GOVERNMENT	GRANT	FUNDING SOURCE	GRANT AMOUNT	LOCAL GOVT. MATCH	PRIVATE INVESTMENT	PROJECT TOTAL	JOBS CREATED	HOUSING UNITS
		BURKE CO.	ESFR 2021	NCHFA	\$190,000			\$190,000	
	BURKE CO.	TONER MACHINGING BUILDING REUSE	NCDOC	\$240,000	\$12,000	\$912,000	\$1,164,000.00	30	
	BURKE CO.	EKORNES BUILDING REUSE GRANT	NCDOC	\$500,000	\$25,000	\$11,500,000	\$12,000,000	80	
	CATAWBA CO.	2021 URP	NCHFA	\$100,000			\$100,000		12
	CLAREMONT	PRYSMIAN CABLE AND SYSTEMS BUILDING REUSE	NCDOC	\$375,000	\$18,750	\$21,700,000	\$22,093,750	50	
	CLAREMONT	WESTROCK CONVERTING BUILDING REUSE	NCDOC	\$375,000	\$18,750	\$16,843,750	\$17,237,500	50	
	CLAREMONT	POPPELMANN PLASTICS BUILDING REUSE	NCDOC	\$500,000	\$25,000	\$8,225,000	\$8,750,000	83	
	CONOVER	SHERRILL FURNITURE BUILDING REUSE	NCDOC	\$440,000	\$22,000	\$2,961,000	\$3,423,000	80	
	CONOVER	MSC EQUIPMENT	EDA	\$600,000	\$150,000		\$750,000	88	
	GRANITE FALLS	COVID-19 RESPONSE PROJECT	NCDOC	\$302,000			\$302,000		
	HICKORY	INDUSTRIAL PARK SEWER PROJECT	ARC	\$300,000			\$300,000		
	HILDEBRAN	SYNERGY LABS BUILDING REUSE GRANT	NCDOC	\$500,000	\$25,000	\$2,303,000	\$2,828,000	60	
	IREDELL CO.	ESFR 2021	NCHFA	\$190,000			\$190,000		5
	LENOIR	HOME CONSORTIUM	DHUD	\$1,154,095			\$1,154,095		
	LENOIR	HUD ENTITLEMENT	DHUD	\$164,146			\$164,146		
	LENOIR	HOME CONSORTIUM ARP	DHUD	\$4,182,773			\$4,182,773		
	LONG VIEW	CLEARELECTRIC MOTOR SERVS BUILDING REUSE	NCDOC	\$84,000	\$4,200	\$96,450	\$184,650	12	
	MAIDEN	COVID-19 RESPONSE PROJECT	NCDOC	\$560,974			\$560,974		
	MORGANTON	HUD ENTITLEMENT	DHUD	\$159,683			\$159,683		
	MORGANTON	E J VICTOR BUILDING REUSE	NCDOC	\$240,000	\$12,000	\$2,200,000	\$2,452,000	30	
	MORGANTON	UTILITY INFILL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT	DOGWOOD TRUST	\$2,161,125	\$1,922,000		\$4,083,125		
	NEWTON	COVID-19 RESPONSE PROJECT	NCDOC	\$715,000			\$715,000		
	WPCC	SIMULATED MACHINERY EQUIPMENT GRANT	ARC	\$100,000	\$179,295		\$279,295		
	WPCOG	STATE HOME FORCLOSURE PREVENTION PROGRAM	NCHFA	\$20,000			\$20,000.00		
	WPCOG	HOUSING STABILITY COUNSELING PROGRAM	NCHFA	\$80,080			\$80,080.00		77
	WPCOG	ALEXANDER, BURKE, CALDWELL URP 2021	NCHFA	\$200,000			\$200,000		20
				\$14,243,876	\$2,413,995	\$66,741,200	\$83,399,071	563	119

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, annexations, plan (residential, commercial and industrial) review and action plans.

Due to the legislative requirements of NCGS 160D, planning has helped 15 local governments in the region with ordinance updates, land use, and comprehensive plan development. A list a local governments supported by this effort is found in the planning accomplishments section.

Long range planning can also consist of corridor plans, small area plans (downtown, commercial nodes, and neighborhood plans), land use studeis to indetify development ready properties with infrastructure in place and limited environmental landscape challenges.

To ensure the department is using best practices, 14 training events were attended and/or put on at the WPCOG. Training for the region and planning staff has and will continue to be important. A total of 14 training opportunities ocurred (multiple trainings were held with some of these organizations- NCDOT, NCSOG Carolina Thread Trail, NCAZO, ICMA, Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce, Catawba County Chamber of Commerce, Air/Water Quality Conferences, NCAPA, NCMS, NCAUG, ESRI and NCLM).

PLANNING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Provide Daily Planning Support: (total of 13 local governments)
 - > Valdese (Jan-June), Rhodhiss (plan review), Claremont (zoning enforcement), Caldwell County (zoning enforcement and flood plain administration), Drexel, Hudson, Gamewell, Sawmills, Rutherford College, Catawba, Hildebran, Alexander County, & Catawba County
- Comprehensive/ Land Use Plans: (total of 12 local governments)
 - > Completed: Caldwell County, Bethlehem, Drexel, & Granite Falls
 - > In process: Catawba County, Hudson, Longview, Cedar Rock, Cahah's Mountain, Maiden, Rhodhiss, & Hildebran
- 160D Ordinance Updates: (total of 15 local governments)
 - > Completed: Drexel, Cedar Rock, Cahah's Mountain, Rutherford College, Claremont, Catawba, Gamewell, Sawmills, Alexander County, Taylorsville, Hudson, Connelly Springs, Glen Alpine & Hildebran.
 - > In process: Rhodhiss
- Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance Rewrites: (total of 3 local governments)
 - > In process: Catawba, Claremont and Connelly Springs
- Completed the Hildebran Recreation Plan with Community & Economic Development to aid with PARTF grant opportunity.
- Created 3-D renderings for all comprehensive plans
- Created marketing sheets for proposed residential development in the Town of Hudson

4,576 HOURS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT





NATURAL RESOURCES

Stormwater Planning and Administration

The Stormwater Planning and Administration Program is designed to allow municipalities to comply with DEQ requirements as well as 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 (NPDES MS4). Currently, we are contracted to administer full stormwater programs for: Conover, Newton, Rutherford College, Lenoir, Granite Falls, Hudson, Gamewell, Sawmills, Cahaj's Mountain, and Valdese. In addition, we provide educational programs in: Hickory, Maiden, and Morganton. The Stormwater Planning and Administration Program utilizes the skills and from other departments to fulfill the myriad of requirements of the MS4 Permits. The Code Enforcement program enforces illicit discharge and the GIS department oversees the collection and monitoring of stormwater utility data. The program oversight is managed under the Natural Resources Division which also provides outreach and public participation, as well post-construction management. The Natural Resources Division is made up of the Assistant Community and Regional Planning Director, Stormwater Administrator, and Stormwater Education and Outreach Coordinator.

NATURAL RESOURCES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Wrote and obtained NCDEQ approval for nine municipal stormwater management plans, all nine received their NPDES permits from NCDEQ
- Developed new website materials for stormwater for our own website and the local governments
- Coordinated stream clean-up events in jurisdictions that participate in the stormwater program
- Radio interview for stormwater education and outreach was conducted, reached 1,500 people
- Worked to get the Caldwell County Environmental Health Program started, but no success due to NCDHHS. During that time, served as the interim environmental health supervisor and secured contract support staff for the program to aid the backlog
- Completed the Catawba River Trail Alignment Project
- Assisting the Town of Gamewell with the Abingdon Creek Stream Restoration Project. Implementation will occur 2022/2023
- Held the annual Air and Water Quality Conferences in partnership with the Reese Institute at Lenoir Rhyne University
- Worked in conjunction with the NC School of Government to hold a virtual water/wastewater resiliency training
- Bid packages obtained for Alexander County's Emergency Watershed Protection grant. WPCOG is helping with the grant administration

STORMWATER SERVICES

41

Design Plan Reviews

16

Approved Plans

71

IDDE Issues Reported

7

SWMP/NPDES Permits Approved

43

SCM Inspections

24

Good Housekeeping Inspections

12

Public Outreach Events

5,580

Total Public Event Attendees

The Western Piedmont Water Resources Committee

The Western Piedmont Water Resources Committee is the key interface used by the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) to interact with local governments on the issue of water resources. The Water Resources Committee consists of individuals representing local governments, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions and businesses from Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties in Western North Carolina.

Western NC Air and Water Quality Conferences

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments hosted the 2021 Western North Carolina Air and Water Quality Conferences in late October, bringing together experts and officials to discuss some of the most critical components of a healthy and sustainable region: clean air and 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.

The conferences began in 2007, making this the 14th annual event. Each conference took one day, with the Water Quality Conference on October 28th and the Air Quality Conference on October 29th. Nearly 140 people registered across both days for the conferences, which were held virtually to ensure the widest and safest range of participation. AICP certificate maintenance credits were available for certified planners.

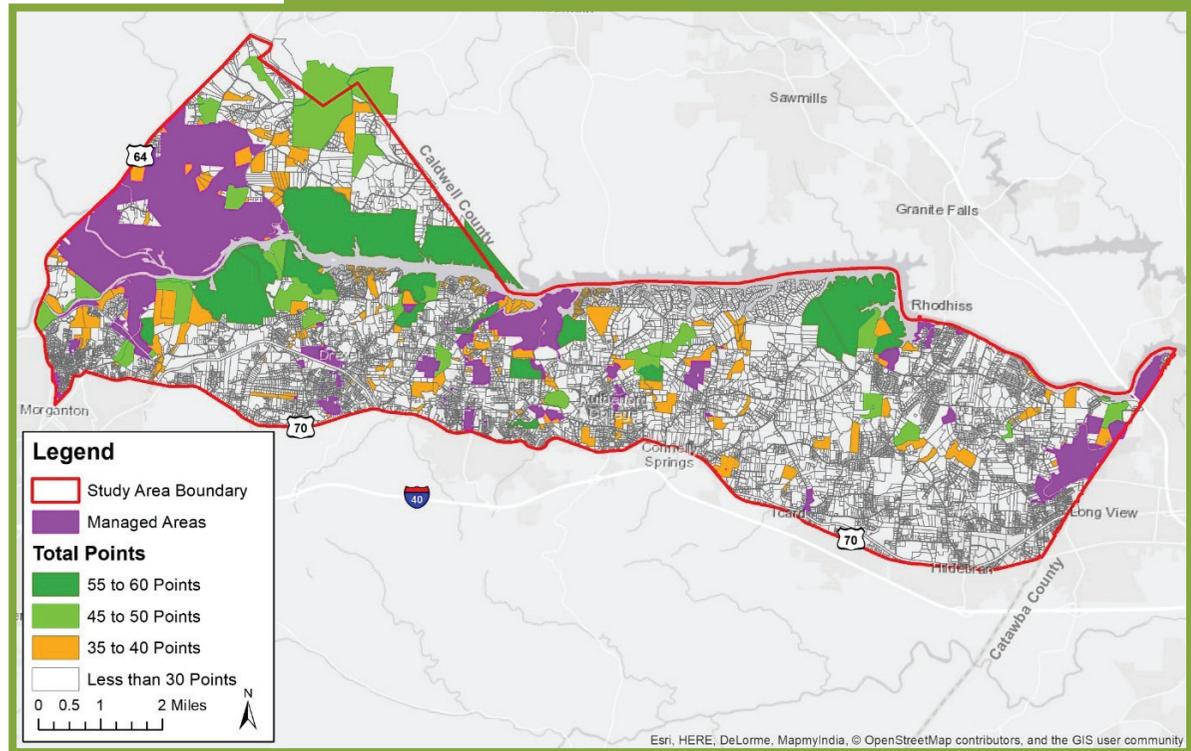
The topics and speakers were diverse. Air quality speakers ranged from North Carolina Director of Air Quality Mike Abraczinskas to meteorologist Bradley McLamb to NCDOT multimodal special projects engineer Stephanie Sudano and more. Much of the discussion focused on clean transportation and alternative fuels, as well as new tools for reporting and monitoring ambient air quality. Water quality speakers included Water Supply Watershed Protection Coordinator Paul Clark from the Department of Environmental Quality, Dr. Jeff Wilcox from the University of North Carolina Asheville, Melissa Patton, executive director of Carolina Land and Lakes, and several other speakers. Topics ranged from regional updates, new research regarding stormwater monitoring, and innovative stormwater projects from the local area.

Burke River Trail Feasibility Study

The Burke River Trail Feasibility Study was developed by the WPCOG for the identification of 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 should serve as a guide for trail direction as well as a document for stronger grant applications. This initiative was promoted by Representative Hugh Blackwell and Beth Heile of the Friends of the Valdese Recreation.

The map below features information received throughout the feasibility study process and public input meeting. The trail will stay south of the river and utilize existing routes, utility easements, and other pedestrian paths to go through (or connect to) the towns of Connelly Springs, Drexel, Hildebran, Long View, Rhodhiss, and Valdese in eastern Burke County.

BURKE RIVER TRAIL ANALYSIS – TOTAL POINT RESULTS



COMPLIANCE

COMPLIANCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Introduced and adopted nuisance, minimum housing, and minimum non-residential ordinances revisions related to 160D
- Research and early conversations about providing Pre-trial services have begun. Staff met with Mecklenburg County, NCSOG, and Piedmont Triad Regional Council to discuss Pre-trial services. Staff attended Attorney General Stein's Western Pretrial & Accountability Roundtable. Staff met with Burke County, Caldwell County, Sheriffs, Police Chiefs, District Attorney, the district court and superior court judges about pre-trial.



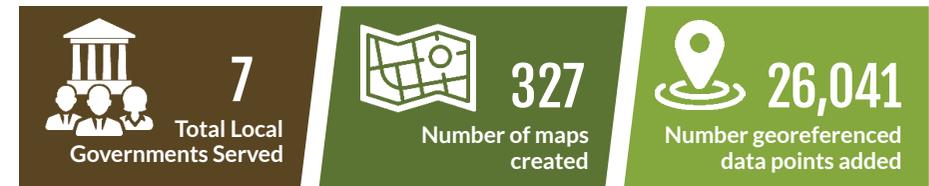
In 2021, Brookford, Catawba, Caldwell County, Claremont, Hudson, Hildebran, Gamewell, Cahaj's Mountain, Drexel, Cedar Rock, Maiden, Rhodhiss, and Valdese utilized the COG for code enforcement services. WPCOG's Code Enforcement Program uses an approach that helps the citizen to become compliant through educating and consultation. An in-house GIS application helps create a living information data base in real time and print documents needed. Despite dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Code Enforcement Program has made a significant impact for the participating municipalities, 470 violations in 2021 resolved. These efforts to remove housing and non-residential structures are in conjunction with the need to address dated housing and drug related activity within the region. Municipal monies are saved due to compliance from citizens and business owners, after enforcement notification within those municipalities is initiated.

Code Enforcement is supporting the WPCOG Stormwater Program by providing illicit discharge detection and elimination service. An illicit discharge is any non-stormwater discharge to our storm system (including natural waterways) which damages water quality. WPCOG's Code Enforcement program will be performing waterway inspections, by boat, to eliminate illegal discharges to promote a cleaner environment. Seventy-one illicit discharge and detection reports were investigated and resolved.

GIS/DATA CENTER

GIS (Geographic Information Services)

WPCOG GIS Services is a central resource of geographic information for the Western Piedmont Region. The 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. GIS staff also design spatial GIS-based applications accessed easily on PCs, tablets and smartphones. These applications 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 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- GIS Maintenance Services were provided to Maiden, Taylorsville, Valdese, Rutherford College, Drexel, Claremont, and Sawmills.
 - > Working with Claremont to resolve wastewater mapping issue & plan for integrating Wooten Engineering data into on-line GIS
 - > Conducted GIS app training for Rutherford College staff
 - > Improved Rutherford College collector app & collected utility data
 - > Conducted Maiden's GIS Audit
 - > Maiden data request for county water and sewer shapefiles
 - > Worked with Valdese to set-up water meter data format and issues with the GIS app

GIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONT.

- GIS Stormwater Mapping Services: Conover, Granite Falls, Hudson, Cahah's Mountain, Gamewell, and Sawmills
- Geocoding
 - > 2020 Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba counties, and Morganton Building Inspection Department building permit locations. 2020 regional building permit totals and created 2018-2020 regional building permit location map
 - > Geocoded and generated maps for January and July Carolina Textile District (CTD) clients and members, Manufacturing Solution Center (MSC) customers, and Referral Companies Impact mapping
 - > Geocoded July 2020 to June 2021 Chronic Disease patients and updated online feature layers for Burke Quality of Life Explorer
 - > Geocoded 2020 Alexander Building Permit locations and databases
- Mapping
 - > Six Community Development grant applications
 - > All comprehensive, land use, bike & pedestrian, recreation, and ADA Transition Plans
 - > Hildebran downtown Park PARTF application
 - > Town of Catawba proposed annexation study
 - > New Granite Falls Zoning Map
 - > Alexander County Environmental Watershed Protection Grant
 - > Lakeside Park RTP Application
 - > Caldwell and Catawba Counties Growth Estimation Models
 - > FEMA project applications
 - > Generated MSC in North Carolina Opportunity Zones Map for Community Development grant
 - > General mapping request for Hildebran, Claremont, Rutherford College, Glen Alpine, Gamewell, Sawmills, and Hudson
 - > Completed semi-annual CTD and MSC impact maps
 - > Generated Caldwell County new school district maps
 - > Generated maps for 5 FEMA Building Resilience Infrastructure and Community Grant applications
- Projects
 - > Hickory Equity Project - mapping data points to show patterns
 - > Rutherford College Wastewater Project - Collected 1,815 wastewater features
 - > Generated Lake Rhodhiss Site Plan for Duke Energy FERC License
 - > Completed Drexel Heritage Redevelopment Project map
- > Generated marketing materials for Hudson Residential project
- > Worked on planning for the Weather radar (drone) study to be conducted around the airport
- > Generated land use layer and assigned sections to Catawba County Land Use team, currently 10,000 parcels
- > EDA - Cares Act Grant: Foothills Experience GIS application (Planning/GIS), four-county transit service (transportation) and the Industrial growth analysis (Data)
- > Foothills Experience App - 92 recreation sites, 154 trails and 82 parks mapped, 42 drone videos recreation
- > Caldwell County Schools Redistricting project
- > Long View Ward Redistricting project
- > Partnership with UNC on Burke Quality of Life to include opioid data
- Online Applications
 - > ADA inventory viewer for Conover and Granite Falls
 - > Completed AGOL STEM West Asset redesign app project
 - > Developed Storm Water outfall screening/collection online layers and web maps for field collection
 - > Developed, recreated, and published NC Foothills Experience map application, online layers, and web maps
 - > Updated the Code Enforcement Online mapping application

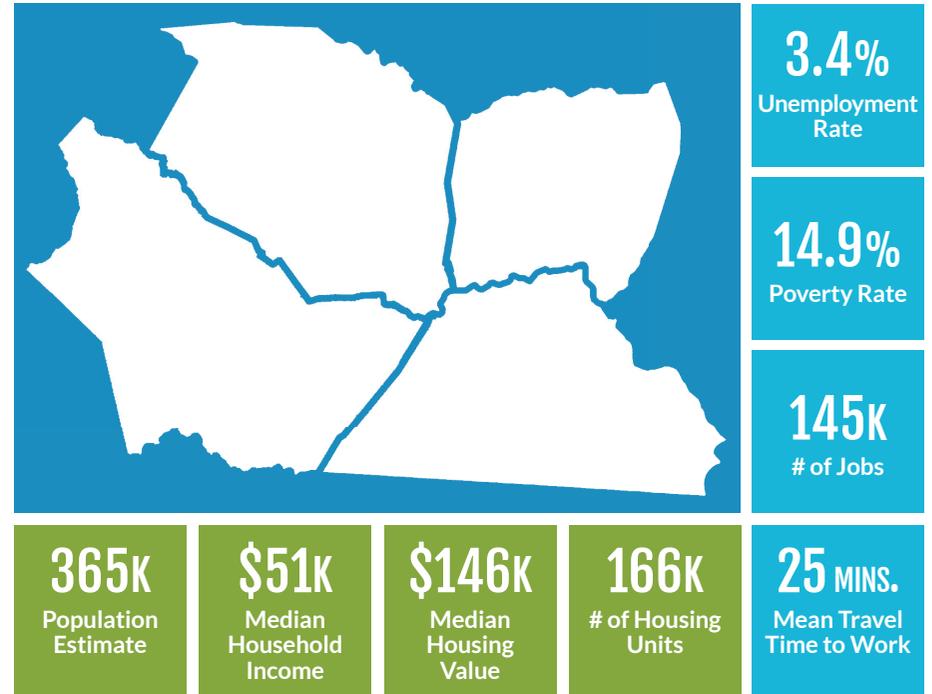
Data Center

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



DATA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 2020 Traffic Analysis Zone data layer using 2020 Census Geography
- Data collection/compiled for Lenoir multi-family recruitment project
- 2020-2021 Greenway Passenger Sampling Report
- 2021 Greenway Methodology Report
- Vehicle Occupancy Rates (VOR) Statistical Data: Update regional commuting pattern statistics and mapping products per VOR data with VOR collection of 16 sites
- Updated regional forecloser database
- Caldwell County economic analysis for the Bernhard foundation
- Catawba County housing analysis for Prism
- Analysis of regional furniture and textiles for The Industrial Commons
- Gamewell/West Lenoir Elem. merger analysis for Caldwell Co. Schools
- 2020 regional building permits-Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties
- Analysis of eligible COVID-19 Vaccine Group 3 eligible workers in Catawba County and COVID shot distribution
- Data related to underserved communities for CVCC and WPCC
- Caldwell County West Lenoir, Lower Creek, Valmead and Whitnel redistricting analysis
- Research and support with 2020 census – many data request and presentations associated with the release of numbers
- Analysis of Burke County homelessness survey
- Data request from West Consultants for Valdese sewer data
- State of housing data information for Lenoir
- Hickory MSA population migration analysis
- Created 1, 3, & 5-mile radius analysis for commercial site in S. Hickory
- Data for Catawba Co. and Newton's Fair Housing Assessment Report
- Unemployment Hourly Wage Analysis for Hickory
- Catawba County worker age demographics analysis for Conover
- Analysis of Latino owned businesses in Hickory for Central Latino
- 2020 population estimates for the Caldwell County fire district
- Analysis of 2010 to 2020 Census results for regional managers
- Data tables for ARC 2020 grant application
- Analysis of regional textile mill employment over the past decade
- Catawba County low-moderate income analysis for YMCA grant
- Assisted with low-moderate income analysis for Maiden Recreation
- Assisted Hickory in creating disability services survey
- Assisted Developers with Conover housing data information and assisted City with worker-age demographics analysis



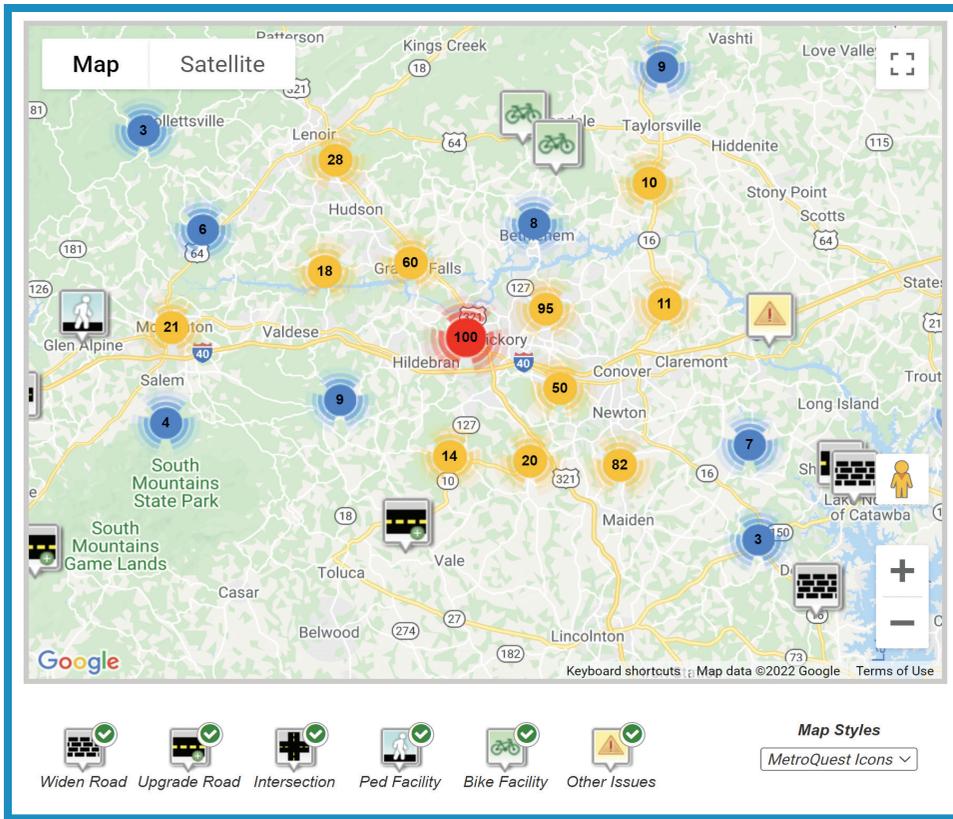
Sources: NC Office of Management and Budget, NC Labor and Economic Analysis Division, 2019 American Community Survey.

TRANSPORTATION

Designated as the administrator for the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the WPCOG is responsible for regional transportation planning. The MPO evaluates transportation system performance, identifies project needs, develops long-range plans, prioritizes projects, and recommends funding. The WPCOG is the primary local recipient of the transportation planning funds received from the state and federal governments. The MPO is governed by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of elected officials from each of the 28 local governments in the region.

Highlighted Project

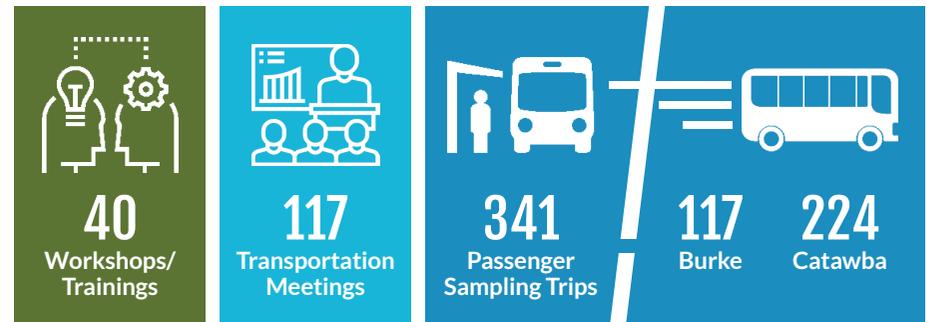
2050 Plan Survey Captures Area Values for Future Transportation Priorities
Late in 2021, 247 survey responses were collected to gather area input on changing values and priorities for future transportation needs. Among those who shared where they lived, 119 survey respondents were from Catawba County, 36 from Caldwell, 29 from Burke, and 11 from Alexander. One of the



survey pages asked respondents to pick and rank their top transportation values. Safety was both ranked consistently highest and listed among respondents' top priorities. Congestion Relief was the second highest ranked value, though not as often listed among respondents' top priorities as other values, including in order of times listed, Accessibility, Livability, Economy, Environment, and Maintenance.

A budget exercise allowed survey takers to break up one dollar proportionally among their priorities. Listed in order of priorities given the most to least funding by survey respondents, Safety was the top budget item, followed by Congestion, then Maintenance, Economic Development, Transit, Pedestrian Facilities, Technology, and Bike Facilities. The survey also has a map exercise where respondents could drop icons and comments on facility needs or other concerns. A total of 581 map-markers and 337 comments were collected. Many of these markers and comments pointed to targeted locations, even when noting widening needs, such as congestion concerns near schools.

This collected survey data will be used as WPCOG develops the new 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Under federal law, all metropolitan areas must have a long-range transportation plan in order to access federal funds for transportation projects. In metropolitan areas like our four-county region, this long-range plan is updated every five years. The last 2045 Plan was adopted in 2018. WPCOG staff have started developing the 2050 Plan, which must be completed by 2023. Upcoming surveys in 2022 will ask for public comments on identified transportation needs and recommended project priorities for the four-county region.



PRESENTATIONS

- 11 - Transportation Advisory Committee
- 11 - Technical Coordinating Committee
- 12 - Greenway Board
- 2 - Transit Advisory Board
- 3 - Movability Advisory Committee
- 5 - Commissions / Councils / Boards
 - Catawba County, Conover, Hickory, Newton, Valdese
- 3 - Steering Committees
 - Burke & Caldwell Transit, Sawmills Bike-Ped Plan
- 3 - Community Open Houses
 - Morganton, Sawmills, WPCOG
- 2 - New Plans
 - Sawmills Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan
 - Greenway Public Transportation Local Coordinated Plan
- 1 - Walk Audit Ridgeview Community
- 1 - Bike-Ped Planning Grant
 - Town of Catawba

TRANSPORTATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- KB Reynolds grant reporting, research/provide census/demographic/other data updates, and conduct community outreach/education sessions for Burke quality of life explorer
- Conducted 24 Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meetings
- Assisted Caldwell County with traffic safety data in Dudley Shoals
- Completed quarterly reporting and invoiced for FTA and FHWA to obtain reimbursement
- Complied over 200 survey responses for Local Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan
- Transit
 - > Passenger sampling and marketing for Burke County Transit
 - > Locally Administered Projects Program grant work for pedestrian and bus projects
 - > Begin Caldwell County pilot transit program using EDA Cares act monies to establish a 4-county system
 - > Support Greenway and acting secretary (clerk) to the board
 - > Assist Greenway in improving all Morganton bus stops, including visuals for NCDOT and City reviews
 - > Public survey, results analysis, created a preferred scenario for Catawba Re-Route 2021 to improve ridership
 - > Developed low-cost bus-service option for Long View Food Lion
 - > Tested bus route scenarios for the Newton Walmart
 - > Hosted workshops - Local Coordinated Public Trans. Plan
 - > Developed new Burke Flex routes service plan
 - > Hosted Burke routes open house in Morganton
 - > Host/Host the following workshops 5310 project, LAPP, and Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian workshops
 - > Met with the NC School of Science and Math to coordinate their transportation needs in Morganton
 - > Completed the Burke Women's Fund project
 - > Developed new subway-style maps for Catawba Fixed Routes
- MPO
 - > Evaluating MTP performance measures annually and update the public involvement policy.
 - > Released draft Unified Planning Work Program for FY 2022
 - > Updated Local Input Points methodology for Prioritization 6.0
 - > Launched the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan update to include an online survey

ADA

WPCOG ADA Planning Services team partners with local governments to develop ADA policies, improve existing facilities, and develop Transition Plans. Our mission is to ensure that local government programs, facilities, policies, and procedures comply with ADA regulations. Transition Plans are required in municipalities with more than 50 employees as part of an unfunded mandate. These Plans protect municipalities in the event of a Department of Justice (DOJ) audit or investigation. In addition, we maintain current information regarding state and federal ADA regulations and adhere to best practices regarding the rights of persons with disabilities.

Our team developed a Pedestrian Right-of-Way Collector Application to document mobility hazards within pedestrian rights of way. The application uses GPS and GIS software as a living document that provides an inventory of noncompliant locations. As a result, the pedestrian and facility mobility hazards are prioritized and included in Transition Plans.

ADA ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Formed the Movability Advisory Committee (MAC)
- Updated criteria for Locally Administered Project Program (LAPP)
- Completed CDC Walkability Action Institute - virtual academy
- Completed grant requirements and Team Action Plan (TAP) for the Walkability Action Institute
- Updated Pedestrian ROW Collector GIS Application for ADA
- 3 completed ADA Transition Plans & inventory collection
- 1 ADA Transition Plan & inventory collection in progress
- 2 ongoing ADA maintenance contracts updating Transition Plans
- Hosted walk audits through MAC and ADA maintenance
- Completed ADA sections for land use, recreation, and bike/ped plans
 - > In progress: updating long range transportation plans
- Ongoing meetings with NCDOT regarding resurfacing schedules and ADA issues



17
Number of Pedestrian
Miles Inventoried



10
Number of Facilities
Inventoried

REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

In 2021, the Regional Housing Authority (RHA) increased its number of available vouchers by 115, a 9% increase from 2020 and a 27% increase since November of 2018. As a result, the total number of vouchers available to assist families at the end of 2021 was 1,360. In 2021, 1,477 families were offered the opportunity to join our Section 8 program and receive housing assistance, increasing from 1,050 families in 2020.

COVID-19: IMPLICATIONS FOR RHA

- A Landlord Incentive Program began in January 2021 and ran through March 2021. The RHA used COVID funding for the program and was able to increase our landlord population through offering incentives for renting to a Section 8 eligible client. This program paid new landlords a one-time incentive of \$500.00 for signing a 12-month new Section 8 contract. A referral incentive of \$50 was paid to landlords that referred first time landlords. Payments were processed upon the signing of the 12-month housing contract. Many new landlords started on our program because of the incentives and remain Section 8 landlords currently.
- With the continuation of COVID, the per unit cost (PUC) for housing units for our RHA rose to \$415.00 in 2021. This was a trend seen across the nation because so many people lost their jobs or were unable to work. As things slowly go back to normal and the tenant population continues to go back to earning more income, the average PUC for the RHA will continue to decrease. As of October 2021, our PUC had dropped to \$406.00. This is a positive turn and one that should continue.
- On December 1, 2021, the RHA had its first hybrid landlord meeting. Landlords and potential landlords were able to attend our meeting in person or virtually. This left the choice up to the person and still allowed everyone to participate and feel safe.
- The RHA was awarded 30 Emergency Housing Vouchers that became effective in July 2021. These vouchers became available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

RHA BY THE NUMBERS

1,360

Total # of Vouchers

427

New Vouchers

1,477

of Families Assisted

425

Families with Children

32% Male

68% Female

63% Adults

37% Minors

56% White

43% Black

1% Other

ENVISION CENTER

The RHA EnVision Center provides communities with a centralized hub for support in the following four pillars: (1) Economic Empowerment, (2) Educational Advancement, (3) Health and Wellness, and (4) Character and Leadership.

Although COVID has changed the way we are able to do things, the RHA has continued the EnVision Center Initiative by working with partner agencies to connect services in our communities. In 2021, the RHA conducted the 3rd annual Dignity Drive in order to raise feminine products for women in our four county jurisdiction. Each year, the numbers have increased with approximately 10,000 feminine products donated for distribution.

FRAUD COLLECTION

Families assisted through the RHA Housing Choice Voucher program who inaccurately report income end up owing the RHA a debt. The RHA



\$28k
in Fraud Collection

offers each family a one-time repayment agreement. If the RHA is unable to collect the income from the family, the family is notified and entered into the NC Debt Setoff collection system. In 2021, the RHA collected \$12,982 directly from clients and \$14,428 through the NC Debt Setoff collection system.

INSPECTIONS

In 2020, the RHA did not perform annual inspections March - December due to COVID. Annual inspections resumed in March of 2021. The RHA performed 685 inspection in 2020, and performed 1,668 inspections in 2021.



685
Inspections in 2020

1,668
Inspections in 2021



SPECIAL PROGRAMS

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

Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program

The Homeownership Program allows housing choice voucher participants to use their rental subsidy toward mortgage payments. This year, the RHA assisted six (6) families with their mortgages each month.

Mainstream Vouchers

Mainstream vouchers assist non-elderly persons with disabilities. Aside from serving a special population, the administration of mainstream vouchers adheres to the same rules as other housing choice vouchers.

Funding and financial reporting are separate from the regular tenant-based voucher program. In March of 2021, the RHA was awarded 75 additional vouchers bringing the total mainstream voucher number to 246. In November of 2021, the RHA opened the waiting list to accommodate the additional vouchers.

Family Unification Program (FUP)

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

Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)

The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-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). VA provides these services for participating Veterans at VA medical centers (VAMCs), community-based outreach clinics (CBOCs), through VA contractors, or other VA designated entities. The RHA was awarded 10 VASH vouchers that became effective February 2021.

Project-based Voucher (PBV)

Project-based vouchers (PBVs) are a component of a public housing agency's (PHA's) Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. There is no additional funding 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) located in Catawba County for the "hardest to serve" population. The remaining project is in Burke County and serves the elderly population over 62.

Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV)

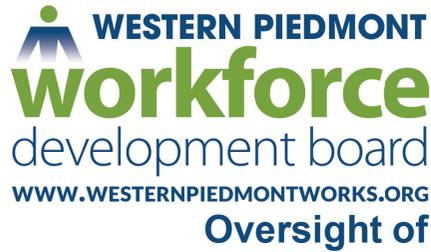
The Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program is available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Through EHV, HUD is providing 70,000 housing choice vouchers to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) to assist individuals and families who are homeless, at-risk of homelessness, fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, or were recently homeless or have a high risk of housing instability. The RHA was awarded 30 EHV vouchers that became effective in July 2021.

REACH (Family Self-sufficiency)

REACH is a family self-sufficiency program for Housing Choice Voucher participants. The REACH Coordinator supports families with referrals to community resources and services. Participants are guided through a process to identify existing barriers in their lives. The coordinator helps those families create a plan and counsels them through steps to overcome those barriers and become self-sufficient. As participants obtain employment, increase their household earned income, and achieve their goals, the RHA is able to deposit funds into escrow accounts. The family can receive their escrow savings by achieving their goals and graduating from the REACH program.



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, to be the convener of the conversation to resolve the challenges, to be the champion for workforce development, to work in a collaborative partnership with key stakeholders, (especially economic development and education), to bring resources to bear on resolving the challenges, and to act as the accountability agent to ensure the work is completed.



Employers included: Armacell, LLC, HSM Solutions, Hancock & Moore

In 2021, the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board continued its administration of the Incumbent Worker Grant Program, branded as Upskill. The Upskill Grant offers competitive training grants to businesses in addressing employees' skill gaps, improving employee retention, helping stabilize the business, and increasing the competitiveness of the employee and business. Through this effort, businesses:

- Improve Productivity and Increase Competitiveness
- Retain Key Talent and Expertise
- Reduce Employee Turnover

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



2021 NCWorks Scholarships Funding by County (Adults, Dislocated Worker and Youth)	ALEXANDER COUNTY	\$27,413
	BURKE COUNTY	\$114,476
	CALDWELL COUNTY	\$110,121
	CATAWBA COUNTY	\$204,181

Other funding provided covers Support Services for childcare and transportation \$27,128.04.



SUCCESS STORIES – OPEN YOUR MIND TO SUCCESS



Martha's Story

The one true deafness, the incurable deafness, is that of the mind." I made a commitment to go back to school to obtain a degree in Interpreter Education. I am a single mother, with two kids, and was working two jobs at the time I enrolled. I chose Interpreter Education because Deafness has been an embedded part of my life since birth. I am the only hearing person in my immediate family - I have a Deaf father, mother, brother, and sister. Needless to say, I have been "interpreting" since I was a child. Through some research I found the NCWorks Scholarship Program. I met all

requirements and received a scholarship! The NCWorks Scholarship has been a significant aid in ensuring I graduated from WPCC. After one year in the program, I convinced my little sister Martha to join the Interpreter Education program to train to become a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI). Now, I am proud to say, I am the first college graduate of my family. In December, Martha will be the first Deaf college graduate of our family! None of this would have been possible without NCWorks! The encouragement and mentoring from NCWorks Career Advisor, Cynthia has made such a positive impact on my life.



Chad's Story

"I received resume help and general assistance with applications, as well as received some great guidance from the awesome staff at NCWorks Career Center-Catawba."

Chad stated he really enjoyed the open environment and the openness the staff had with each other to help all those in need. Chad came back into the NCWorks Career Center on 6/16/2021 to sign his official offer letter from Commscope to be a Machine Operator. He started on July 6th, 2021. He is extremely excited for this new journey and thanks the NCWorks Career Center-Catawba staff for

all their hard work and assistance. "From the beginning, everyone made me feel comfortable and were willing to answer questions and guide me as I applied to different companies. I don't believe I would have ever completed my application for Commscope without the help of NCWorks."



Antonio's Story

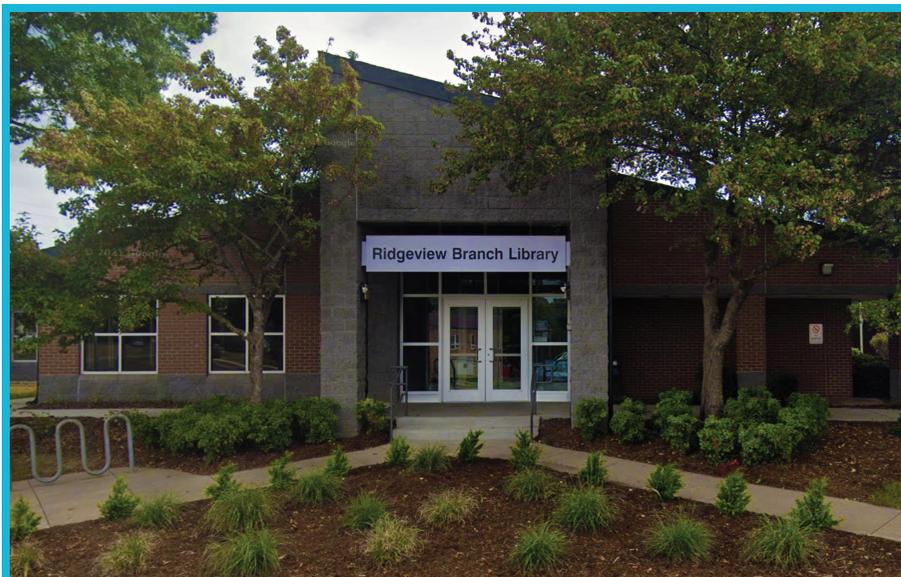
Antonio came to the Caldwell County NCWorks Career Center in September of 2020 after being laid off due to COVID 19. He knew he wanted to do something different. When he came to the center he had a plan in mind. He was already enrolled at Plush Kutz Barber School in Hickory, NC, but he needed help with the tools of the trade needed for Barber College. NCWorks was able to assist him with the financial support to purchase the tools. Antonio successfully completed his training in August 2021 and found employment immediately after, with

the Program Director of Plush Kutz, David Williams. Antonio will work at David William's recently opened barbershop in Lenoir, called Plush Vibes. David Williams, Program Director at Plush Kutz/Owner of Plush Vibes says, "Antonio Johnson has been a great student who has made a great change in his life. So much so, I have hired him to work at my barbershop. I would like to thank The NCWorks Scholarship program for making this opportunity possible for him and myself."

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Beginning January 5, 2022 we will offer NCWorks Career Services at the Ridgeview Library on Wednesday afternoons 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. We are excited to collaborate with the City of Hickory, the Hickory Public Library and the Ridgeview Community on this opportunity.

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 assistance developing job descriptions and/or posting jobs; Advertisement and support coordinating recruitment events; Up to date labor market information.



In some ways, 2021 was no different from 2020 in regards to how COVID-19 continued to impact job postings, and people feeling safe enough to return to work. We have definitely seen those effects across childcare needs/facilities, where some have closed, and others are struggling to fulfill their staffing needs.

We are also partnering with both Catawba County Partnership for Children, the YMCA of Catawba Valley and Footsteps Childcare Center to help push awareness of their job openings in the childcare field. The YMCA of Catawba Valley is working with Burke County Schools to offer and staff an after school program for 5-12 year olds.

The Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board has encouraged continued outreach efforts, through our social media outlets and strengthened community partnerships. We are now offering more virtual workshops that include: Financial Literacy (Operation HOPE), Customer Service/ Soft Skills (Catawba County Library), NCCareers Exploration, just to list a few.

WORKFORCE HAPPENINGS

WHAT'S GOING ON THIS WEEK?

Virtual Employment Workshop

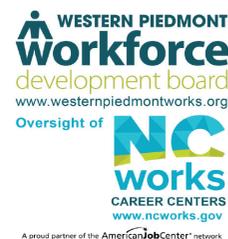
- **Virtual Interviewing Workshop**
 - Tuesday, August 17th @ 10am
 - Call your local NCWorks Career Center to register.

Recruitment Events (Info flyers attached)

- **NCWorks Catawba Job Fair**
 - Thursday, August 19th, 2pm - 4pm
 - Location: NCWorks Career Center Catawba, 403 Conover Station SE, Suite C
 - See flyer for participating Employers
- **NCDPS Job Fair**
 - Tuesday, August 17th, 10am - 7pm
 - Location: Foothills Correctional Institution, Morganton, NC

Other Workforce Happenings

- **Western Piedmont Regional Reentry Meeting**
 - This meeting is Virtual, Tuesday, August 17th at 1pm
 - Email Leslie Farris, leslie.farris@wpcog.org if you would like the link to join.
- **Additional Recruitment Events can be found on our Social Media Sites**
 - **Facebook** Western Piedmont NCWorks Career Centers
 - **Twitter** Western Piedmont NCWorks
 - **Instagram** Western Piedmont NCWorks



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WPCOG STAFF 2021



First Row (left to right): Wendy Johnson, Andrea Roper, Ashley Bolick, Tina Miller, Stephanie Hanvey. **Second Row** (left to right): Brittany Williams, Laurie Powell, Karen Phoenix, Sandy Jones, Anthony Starr, Rick Oxford, Sherry Long, Sarah Stamey, Ashley Adkins, Brianna Wert. **Third Row** (left to right): Kelley Hayward, Sherry Deal, April Lail, Lisa Helton, Ashley Kale, Jennifer Cannon, Terresa Kinney, Donna Gilbert, Averi Ritchie, Kim Duncan, By Khang, Caren Shorthouse, Elizabeth Moncrief, Emma Stogner, Mary Mitchell, Elizabeth Hilliard, Helen Whisnant. **Fourth Row** (left to right): Michael Layza, Todd Stoupe, Scott Berson, Leslie Farris, Stephanie Queen, Erin Schotte, Ricky Handoo, Todd Justice. **Back Row** (left to right): Jason Toney, Johnny Wear, Trey Schweitzer, Curt Willis.



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