



2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Western Piedmont
Council of Governments

Creative Regional Solutions Since 1968



Our region of four counties, twenty-four municipalities and 365,471 residents continues as one of the major manufacturing and economic hubs of our state. While each year brings new challenges, a spirit of cooperation provides a solid foundation for our continued success. Our local governments look to the Western Piedmont Council of Governments and the entrepreneurial efforts of our citizens to build a better community now and for future generations.

The Western Piedmont Council of Governments is not just a collection of 28 member governments, but also an idea of cooperation and collaboration driven by member support and built by a staff of dedicated and knowledgeable professionals. As we approach our 50th year as an organization, each of our communities can point to a project or service, provided by the WPCOG that has improved the quality of our region. I take great pride in our staff, as they provide insightful, timely and concise solutions to the tasks presented by our members. We should continue to look to our Council of Governments for guidance in shaping a positive future for the Western Piedmont, and we are counting on those efforts.

Within this Annual Report, you will see a small glimpse into the work and successes that happened in 2016. Through the strong leadership of our local governments, the WPCOG has established itself as one of the most esteemed Council of Governments in North Carolina. I encourage each of our local governments to strive to maintain a spirit of cooperation when tackling the issues our region faces and look to the Council of Governments for guidance when those issues fall in line with their unique experience.

George Holleman

George Holleman
Chair, Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Mayor, Town of Taylorsville



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 by the State as Multi-County Planning Region E. The area includes 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 Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Past Chairman 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.

Executive Committee

George B. Holleman, Chairman - Town of Taylorsville

Barbara Pennell, Vice-Chair - Town of Gamewell

Bob Floyd, Jr., Secretary - Village of Cedar Rock

Jill Patton, Treasurer - City of Hickory

Robert L. Smyre, Past Chairman - Town of Maiden

Johnny E. Berry, Member At-Large - Town of Connelly Springs

Kitty Barnes, Member At-Large - Catawba County

Wayne F. Abele, Sr., Member At-Large - Burke County

John "Chip" Black, Jr., Member At-Large - Town of Valdese

Policy Board Delegates

Dr. Caryl B. Burns - Town of Granite Falls

Larry Chapman - Town of Hudson

Forrest A. Flemming - City of Morganton

Joie Fulbright - City of Conover

Jerry Hodge - City of Newton

Rick Justice - Town of Rhodhiss

Barbara Lowman - Town of Hildebran

Mike Labrose - Caldwell County

Josh Lail - Alexander County

Gary McClure - Town of Rutherford College

Vernon Moyer - Town of Long View

Benny Orders - Town of Drexel

Ronnie Setzer - Town of Cajah's Mountain

Donald Robinson - Town of Catawba

Dale Sherrill - City of Claremont

Jimmy Wakeford - Town of Glen Alpine

Keith Warren - Town of Sawmills

Ben Willis - City of Lenoir

Appointed Delegates

Amparo Alfaro

Nicky Setzer

Helen Chestnut

Pat Hatley

Tommy Luckadoo

Mary Bess Lawing

Larry Yoder



ADMINISTRATION

Executive Searches

The WPCOG Administrative staff, led by the Executive Director and Administrative Services and Human Resources Director, regularly conduct executive searches for area local governments to fill critical and high profile positions. The staff has extensive experience facilitating the hiring of personnel including Town Managers, Town Administrators, Community and Regional Planners and more. In 2016, WPCOG facilitated the placement of a shared position for the Town of Hildebran and the Town of Catawba. WPCOG employee Tom Drum, Local Government Manager/Administrator, spends half of his week serving as the Town Administrator for the Town of Hildebran and half of his week as the Town Manager for the Town of Catawba. Additionally, the Town of Rhodhiss utilized the Executive Search services of WPCOG in 2016 to recruit and hire their new town manager. This service is conducted with the highest level of integrity and confidentiality. Staff are available through every step of the process including: writing and distributing job announcements, reviewing incoming resumes, focusing the potential candidate list, interviews and providing an objective and non-bias assessment of final candidates.

Retreat and Meeting Facilitation

Local governments called upon the WPCOG Executive Director and other WPCOG staff in 2016 to facilitate various planning retreats and meetings. Having a trusted, impartial third party facilitate these types of events often allows for more open discussion and the development of better action plans.

Electronic Document Management System

During 2016, WPCOG invested in a new electronic document management system (EDMS). The EDMS establishes a secure, electronic database-driven way to more efficiently file and store documents, which streamlines document administration and creates a means to construct electronic workflow processes. Although collaborative in nature, the EDMS has been recognized as a function of WPCOG Administration.

WPCOG Building & Hosting of Meetings

In 2012, the local governments in the Western Piedmont completed a wise investment to construct a new WPCOG office. Each year, the WPCOG hosts numerous meetings of not only projects and programs of the WPCOG but also many local government meetings. WPCOG conference rooms can host meetings from 5 to 150 people and is available for local governments, state agencies, and key partners. Local governments may use WPCOG rooms at no cost.

2016 Building Usage

324 **5,497**
Total Events Attendees

264
Meetings



4,158
Attendees

37
Trainings



906
Attendees

17
Webinars



126
Attendees

6
Conferences



307
Attendees

Communications

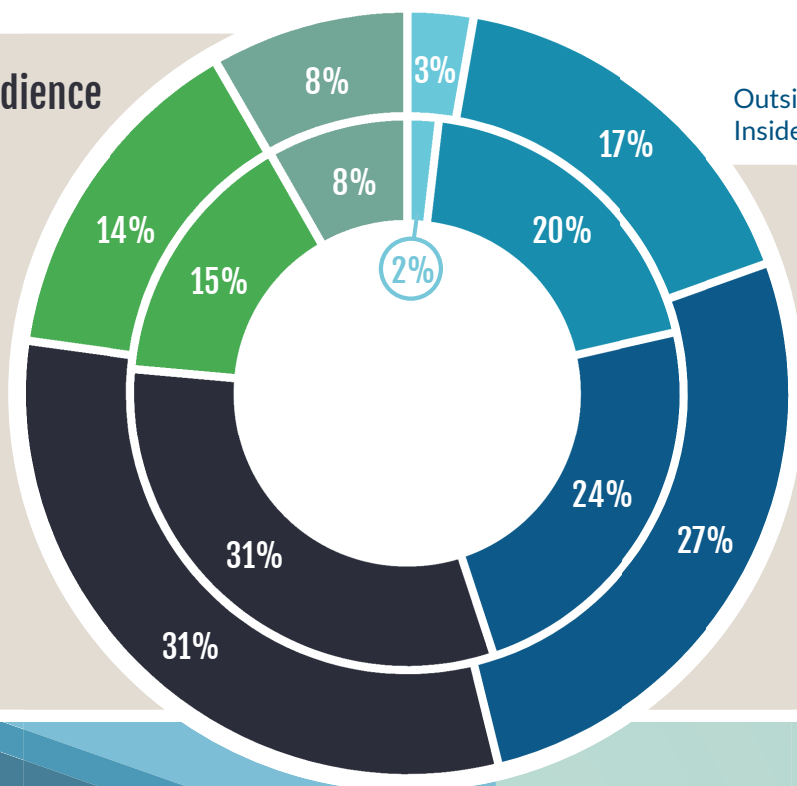
In 2016, work continued on the updated WPCOG website, including reintegrating Workforce Development into the COG's site (Workforce was maintaining an external website). In addition, staff designed an additional internal site for the newly added STEM West section of Workforce Development. As with many of our departments, these sites can be accessed directly with a personalized URL (i.e. westernpiedmontworks.org or wpcogaaa.org) by their respective clients, or can be accessed from the WPCOG homepage.

The WPCOG's Social Media engagement increased by 68% between 2015 and 2016, adding more than 700 new followers on Facebook and Twitter. The addition of many of the new followers can be contributed to efforts by the WPCOG and its partners in creating a more collaborative effort in sharing information cross-agency. Furthermore, the WPCOG's web and social media presence have become an important tool for public engagement.

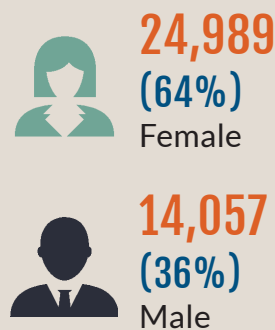
Communications continued work in branding the NCWorks Career Centers across our region (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba) with the new NC State brand "Nothing Compares." New materials were created in an effort to promote the new look and brand identity. Additionally, new signage was created and installed at the Burke and Catawba County Career Centers.

Facebook Audience by Age

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+



Facebook Audience Demographic



Website

100,764

Total Views

8,397

Average Monthly Views

27,208

Users



Facebook (170 Posts)

39,046

Total Views (Reaches)

88

Average Views per Post

516 +407 from 2015

Followers



Twitter (172 Tweets)

28,492

Total Views (Impressions)

1,195

Profile Visits

438 +317 from 2015

Followers



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. AAA is part of a National Network set by the Older Americans Act of 1965. There are 623 AAA's in the US and 16 in North Carolina.

Services

- Evidence-Based Health Promotion Classes
- Family Caregiver Support Program
- Local Contact Agency - Counsel residents in skilled nursing facilities about options to return to community living
- Medicare Information for Patients and Providers Act Grant
- Operation Fan/Heat Relief
- Presentations on Aging Issues
- Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) - Support program for caregivers of those caring for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia
- Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
- Resource Directory for Older Adults
- Reverse Mortgage Counseling
- Senior Tar Heel Legislature Support
- Technical Assistance to Agencies Serving Older Adults

Home & Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) Services Provided



164,585
Meals Served



51,153
Hours of In-Home
Aide Services



159
Housing & Home
Improvement Projects



11,246
Medical & General
Transport Trips



23,000
Seniors Attending Local
Senior Centers (Estimated)



3,739
Adult Day Care/
Health Days-of-Service



885
Hours of Legal
Assistance

Home & Community Care Services Funded in Western Piedmont

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

AAA administers the Home & 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, and 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.

Highlights

Caregiver Support Program

- Conducted 20 special events to show appreciation for and provide education to over 560 caregivers throughout the year
- Partnered with local organizations in Catawba County and NC A&T University to present a program on "Healthier Habits for a

Healthier You” and Caldwell County to present “Your Health, Your Greatest Wealth”

- Applied for and received a grant from Hickory International Council to support printing caregiver materials in Spanish to increase outreach to Hispanic populations
- Developed a new partnership with NC Services for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing to present community presentations for caregivers on the challenges of caregiving and hearing loss
- Provided 50 backpacks and school supplies to grandparents raising grandchildren in Alexander County
- Summer Fun Camp Packets for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren were distributed in Caldwell County

Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman

The Ombudsman Program made 110 visits to long-term care facilities; opened 73 new complaint investigations; closed 61 of those cases; and provided 25 presentations/trainings to facilities.

Local Contact Agency

There were 54 referrals handled by the Local Contact Agency Program for long-term care residents. The referred residents indicated an interest in exploring their options regarding a transition back into the community. The program successfully transitioned 12 residents.



2,477
Hours of
In-Home Respite
Services*



48
Reverse Mortgage
Counseling
Sessions



75
Served Through
Health Promotion
Classes



110
Community
Trainings/
Presentations



800
Resource
Directories
Distributed

*Provided through
Family Caregiver
Support Program

Project C.A.R.E.

AAA initiated the Project C.A.R.E. (Caregiver Alternatives to Running on Empty) program to serve Caregivers of people living with Alzheimer's, dementia and related cognitive disorders within an 11 county area of western North Carolina.

Options Counseling

Options Counseling services provided to 21 older adults, allowing them and their families to make informed decisions concerning aging issues and future plans.

AAA Outreach and Support

- Assisted regional senior centers and dialysis centers for 96 hours during Medicare Open Enrollment, providing one-on-one counseling to 104 seniors/disabled beneficiaries
- Developed new 4-year Regional Aging Services Plan “Booming Growth: Planning Today for a Successful Tomorrow,” which includes 6 goals, 12 objectives, 30 strategies and 63 measurable outcomes
- Worked with Catawba Aging Coalition to complete the Catawba Aging Plan
- Received 2 awards for local provider and business from Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A) at the 2016 conference

AAA Events & Conferences

- Sponsored and volunteered at the 2016 Unifour Senior Games
- Participated in the 2016 Alzheimer's Walk, and raised \$815 for Alzheimer's research
- Highlighted Elder Abuse Awareness Day and collected personal care items for seniors in long-term care facilities
- Hosted 2016 Caregiver Conference at WPCOG with ACAP (Adult Caregivers of Aging Parents) and Catawba Regional Hospice



AAA Staff volunteered with Foothills Service Project to build a wheelchair ramp for a caregiver in Catawba County.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Foreclosure Prevention

In 2016, WPCOG's housing counselors completed their sixth year working with North Carolina Housing Finance Agency's (NCHFA) Foreclosure Prevention Fund (FPF).

Since its launch in late 2010, WPCOG counselors have helped 780 families receive assistance through three programs – Mortgage Payment Program (MPP), Second Mortgage Refinance Program (SMRP) and Principle Reduction Recast/Lien Extinguishment Program (PRRLE). The assistance provided during those 6 years is more than \$12.9 million with funding for 2016 totaling \$1,750,838.

Included in the totals in 2016 was the number of clients who received help through NCHFA's newest program, the Principle Reduction Recast/Lien Extinguishment Program (PRRLE). PRRLE gives clients who have had a hardship and have recovered by gaining permanent income, such as disability, or have become re-employed, but continue to struggle, to receive a mortgage recast or lien extinguishment depending on the circumstances. WPCOG's PRRLE recipient awards quadrupled in 2016 (\$729,365) from the previous year (\$138,773) and the amount of assistance averaged \$45,580 per client.

Comparing WPCOG's counselors work performance to others across the state made 2016 a year of several achievements.

- The WPCOG counselor case file approval rating for 2016 exceeded 90%, 20.2% higher than the NC Partner state average.
- The agency received the 2016 Excellence Award for maintaining its superior approval rating.
- In addition, an agency counselor received the Underwriter's Choice award for consistently submitting quality applications to NCHFA.

In the mortgage default program, 167 homeowners received counseling and 100 avoided foreclosure by resolving their mortgage default.

HOME Consortium

The HOME Consortium Program assisted 95 first-time homebuyers leveraging over \$6.9 million in lender financing. The HOME Consortium Program provided 4 loans totaling \$1.1 million to promote affordable multi-family housing projects in the region. Private developers invested over \$32.2 million, constructing 264 apartment units in Claremont, Hickory, Lenoir and Morganton.

Grant Development

Staff developed applications and received grant funding for 30 projects totaling \$10,005,150. Projects varied in amount from the \$10,000 ARC Broadband Study for Alexander County to a \$1,965,700 Community Development Block Grant for water and sewer line replacement in the Town of Long View. In addition to the 30 new projects funded in 2016, the WPCOG staff administered 63 additional community and economic development grant projects.

2016 Program Highlights



67

Mortgage
Payment
Program Loans



60

Homeowner
Foreclosure
Preventions



95

First-Time
Homebuyers



18

Housing
Rehabilitation
Loans



40

Urgent
Repairs
Completed

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) made a significant investment in Alexander, Burke and Caldwell counties, funding 7 projects in 2016, including 5 Downtown Wi-Fi projects for Granite Falls, Hudson, Rutherford College, Morganton and Valdese. Alexander County received 2 grants, a Broadband study and infrastructure grant.



30
New
Projects



\$10 Million
Grant
Amount



296
Jobs
Created



764
Housing
Units Affected



\$74.4 Million
Private
Investment

Projects funded in 2016

	Grant Amount	Jobs Created	Housing Units Affected	Private Sector Investment
Alexander Co. - ARC ¹ Broadband Study	\$10,000			
Alexander Co. - ARC ¹ Sewer Project	\$298,348			
Alexander Co.-Essential SFR ⁷ NCHFA ⁵	\$175,000		5	
Burke Co. - Fonta Flora Building Reuse	\$150,000	12		\$354,500
Burke Co. - Peds Legwear Building Reuse	\$500,000	50		\$2,414,392
Catawba Co. - Essential SFR ⁷ NCHFA ⁵	\$175,000		5	
Catawba Co. - Urgent Repair NCHFA ⁵	\$100,000		16	
Claremont- NCDOD ² IDF ³	\$120,975	5		\$4,000,000
Claremont - Prysmian NCDOD ² Building Reuse	\$500,000	50		\$20,000,000
Claremont - STPDA ⁹ - Centennial Blvd Sidewalk	\$460,000			
Granite Falls - ARC ¹ Downtown Wifi	\$29,681			
Hudson - ARC ¹ Downtown Wifi	\$40,751			
Lenoir - CDBG ⁴ Entitlement	\$140,272			
Lenoir - HOME Consortium	\$793,802		93	\$39,100,000
Long View - DEQ ¹⁰ CDBG ⁴	\$1,965,700			
Morganton - ARC ¹ Downtown Wifi	\$30,783			
Morganton - CDBG ⁴ Entitlement DHUD ⁶	\$150,470			
Newton - NCDOD ² Temprano Tech. Bldg. Reuse	\$253,750	21		\$253,750
Regional - NCHFA ⁵ Hardest Hit Fund	\$1,750,838		69	
Regional - DHUD ⁶ Counseling	\$28,772		225	
Regional - NCHFA ⁵ Training Reimbursement	\$10,000			
Regional - NFMC ⁸ Round 10	\$109,980		184	
Rutherford College - ARC ¹ Downtown Wifi	\$31,720			
Rutherford College - DEQ ¹⁰ AIA Water Project	\$52,541			
Taylorsville - NCDOD ² Building Reuse	\$85,000	12		\$271,000
Taylorsville - DEQ ¹⁰ AIA ¹¹ Water Project	\$54,268			
Valdese - ARC ¹ Downtown Wifi	\$49,094			
Valdese - CDBG ⁴ ED Meridian	\$1,000,000			
Valdese - NCDOD IDF ³ Meridian	\$828,425	146		\$8,000,000
WPCOG - NCHFA ⁵ NFMC ⁸ 10	\$109,980		167	
Totals	\$10,005,150	296	764	\$74,393,642

NOTES:

¹ARC =
Appalachian
Regional Commission

²NCDOD =
NC Department
of Commerce

³IDF =
Industrial
Development Fund

⁴CDBG =
Community
Development
Block Grant

⁵NCHFA =
North Carolina
Housing Finance
Agency

⁶DHUD =
US Department of
Housing and Urban
Development

⁷SFR =
Single Family
Rehabilitation

⁸NFMC =
National
Foreclosure
Mitigation
Counseling

⁹STPDA =
Surface
Transportation
Program Direct
Apportionment

¹⁰DEQ =
Division of
Environmental
Quality

¹¹AIA =
Asset Inventory
Assessment



COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PLANNING

Planning

In 2016, Planning Staff directed and completed numerous efforts for our local governments. Staff, while working on behalf of their respective contracted local government, and in cooperation with local citizens, provided strategic planning and guidance to facilitate the completion of projects, update plans, make local improvements and organize future planning efforts.

- Completed Walk Rutherford College/Valdese (WalkRCV) Pedestrian Plan
- Finalized Drexel's rezoning and mobile home text amendment
- Completed future and current land-use mapping for Claremont, Sawmills and Rutherford College
- Worked with Alexander County Planning Board to adopt standards requiring sidewalks in cluster subdivisions
- Prepared Granite Falls Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant application
- Conducted Conditional Use Hearing/Site Plan Review for Weaver-Kirkland (80-unit senior apartment complex in Hudson)
- Launched and analyzed results of Sawmills Comprehensive Plan citizen survey
- Completed and adopted Rutherford College Action Plan
- Held annexation hearing for Town of Hudson
- Held public hearings in Catawba and Claremont about residential architectural standards
- Prepared materials for street name changes in Drexel to address 911 concerns
- Prepared interlocal agreements for Taylorsville and Alexander County
- Researched and presented auto salvage text amendment to Claremont Planning Board
- Assisted with Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) application for Drexel Heritage Redevelopment Project
- Completed Board of Adjustment training session for Claremont, Drexel, Gamewell, Hildebran and Sawmills
- Organized a community forum for the Rutherford College Comprehensive Plan
- Completed the administrative section of the new Alexander County Zoning Ordinance
- Completed an Electric Vehicle Charging Station grant application for Valdese
- Created text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to create a new Light Manufacturing District (M-1) in Claremont
- Held Board of Adjustment hearing for "Horror Fields" Conditional Use Permit in Sawmills

Community & Regional Planning Highlights



133

Meetings Attended
(Commission, Council and Planning Board)



\$4,070,100

STP-DA Funded Projects



\$240,000

Water Grants Obtained



3,224

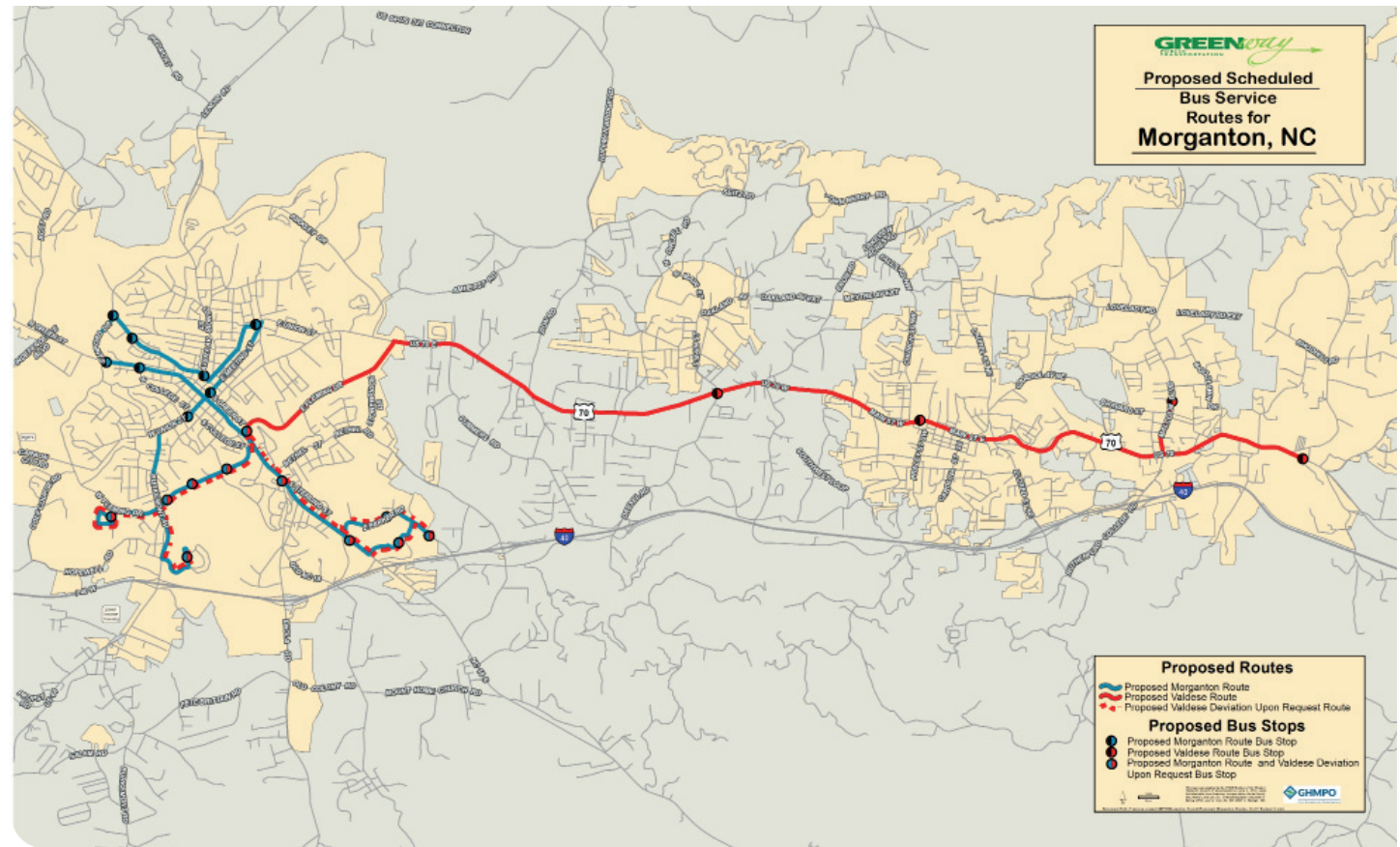
Planning Hours Provided to Local Governments



672

Data Requests Answered

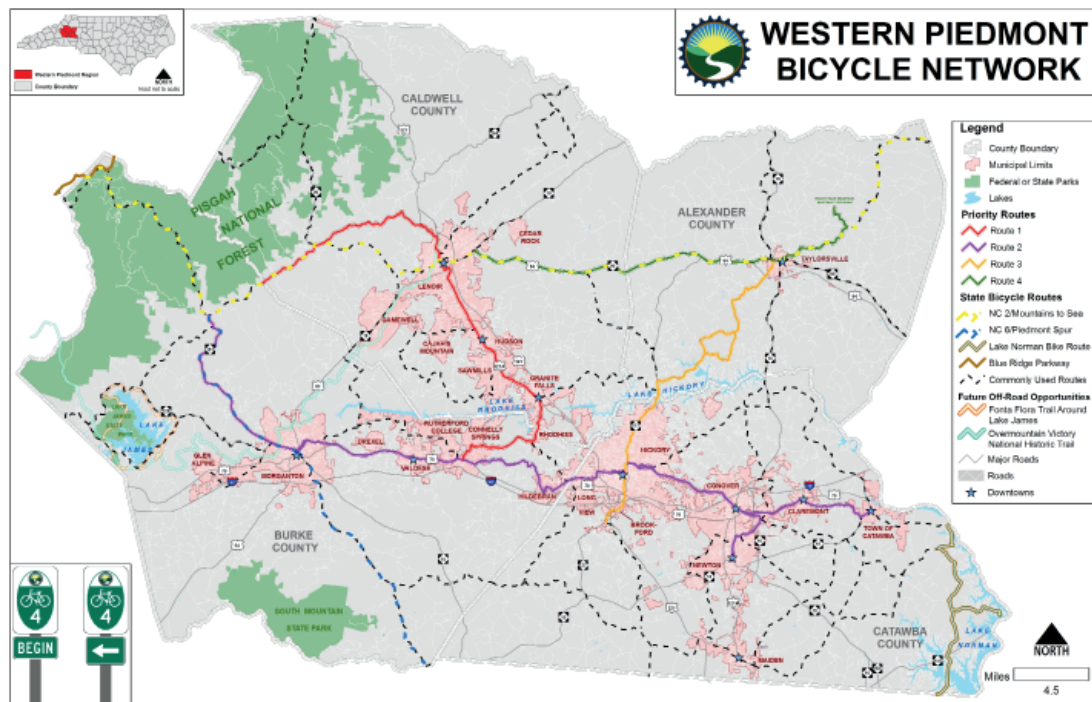
- Met with Drexel and Sawmills on town-wide Recreation Plans
- Helped Valdese Planning Board with text amendment for Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and presented it to Valdese Town Council
- Submitted Connect NC Bond application with Granite Falls
- Met with Burke Development Inc. (BDI) about Drexel Heritage Site Redevelopment
- Conducted Regional Board of Adjustment Training
- Aided in establishing Claremont's "Standard Specifications and Details Manual" for developers
- Held public input meeting for Sawmills Recreation Plan
- Worked on Minimum Housing Code and Zoning Ordinance amendments for Town of Gamewell



Transportation

- Hosted MPO Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)/Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) monthly meetings
- Gave transportation presentation at a Claremont Comprehensive Plan Meeting
- Attended NC Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations Quarterly Meetings
- Attended monthly Greenway Transportation Meetings
- Met with officials to discuss design options for NC 150
- Sponsored Locally Administered Projects training

- Presented the Western Piedmont Bicycle Plan to the Caldwell and Catawba County Commissioners and Catawba County Planning Board
- Met with Hickory Planning Commission on transportation projects and Highway Divisions 11 and 12 about SPOT 4.0 Regional Projects
- Attended NCDOT Division 11, 12 and 13 public hearings for SPOT 4.0 regional projects
- Attended yearly NCAMPO conference in Greensboro
- Prepared documents for Federal Section 5310 call for projects and administered 5310 - Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Workshop



- Attended NADO Rural Transportation Conference
- Participated in multiple webinar sessions concerning new legislative changes to MPOs
- Attended public input hearings for US 321 improvements in both Hickory and Lenoir
- Presentation to Caldwell City/County Services Committee, Leadership Catawba, Catawba Valley Newcomers Club, Hudson Council, and local business owners on U-4700 (US 321)
- Coordinated with Greenway Transit to prepare proposed trial fixed route service in Morganton and Valdese
- Met with Community Foundation of Burke County about proposed fixed route public transit and funding options for Morganton and Valdese
- Published survey for proposed Burke County fixed route bus service and analyzed the 515 responses
- Attended Centralina Council of Government's Regional Freight Mobility Plan coordinating committee meeting

- Distributed trucking surveys to local freight facilities
- Met with NCDOT's Director of Logistic Strategies concerning the MPO's freight planning initiative
- Attended the Newton Pedestrian Plan Kick Off Meeting and subsequent workshop

Data Services

- Gave demographic/economic data presentation at the Burke County Chamber Retreat and Burke County Schools Administrators meeting
- Completed 4 quarterly Economic Indicators Newsletters (EIN)
- Presented commuting data at Western Piedmont Workforce Development Meeting
- Completed 2016 Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Building Permit tabulations by Census Tract
- Completed data model for the 2015 Base Year and 2045 population and household estimates/projections for the Hickory MPO Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs)
- Completed 2016 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Distressed Census Tract Maps for Burke and Caldwell Counties
- Completed 2010-2015 Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) population change analysis
- Completed analysis of businesses with more than 50 employees within 5 to 10 miles of High Schools in the STEM West region (Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba and Lincoln Counties)
- Presented Burke Asset Mapping project results to new Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust Staff
- Completed 2016-17 to 2022-23 Catawba County Schools student projections by school
- Completed economic development and environmental justice project point allocation - SPOT 4.0 transportation projects

- Interviewed with Reuters News Agency concerning Hickory Metro Economic Trends between 2000 and 2015
- Completed 2016-17 Greenway Passenger Sampling Report
- Collected tabulating results of the 2016 Vehicle Occupancy Rate (VOR) data set for the Greater Hickory MPO
- Determination of call center location quotients (LQ) for Burke County, Hickory-MSA and North Carolina
- Worked with Catawba County Government and Catawba County School System to make updates to school capacity data
- Gave Census presentations to classes at North Lincoln High School
- Generated population estimates and projections 2010 to 2035 by Census Tract for the region
- Collected economic and demographic data needed for the targeted community areas of the Hickory Brownfields Grant Application
- Completed 4 City of Hickory Economic Indicator Reports
- Completed economic impact analysis of 2016 Hickory Hops and Oktoberfest
- Completed demographic and economic data updates for Burke County Health Assessment

Environmental Planning

- Scheduled Duke Energy to speak on the Relicensing Agreement at the quarterly Water Resources Committee Meeting
- Completed Environmental Assessments for Town of Hudson's Parks, a water and sewer extension in Longview and a project in Valdese
- Completed work on two Environmental Assessments for water line projects in McDowell County
- Held quarterly Western Piedmont Air Quality Committee and Western Piedmont Water Resources Committee Meetings
- Attended Water Resource Research Institute Conference
- Hosted annual STEM tour for Maiden Middle and Newton-Conover Middle Schools
- Attended a Watershed Planning Workshop at Catawba College
- Attended Hickory Earth Day for Stormwater Outreach
- Held Illicit Discharge and Good Housekeeping training for local governments provided by NCSU Cooperative Extension
- Held a stormwater workshop for teachers that provided continuing education credits
 - Received a 319 Grant to continue funding for the Unifour Septic Tank Repair Program
 - Worked with STEM West teachers on stormwater and water quality projects
 - Held the annual Western NC Air Quality Conference and Western NC Water Quality Conference at Lenoir-Rhyne University
 - Gave an air quality presentation to a Community Watch group meeting in Conover
 - Received funding and began work on the McGalliard Creek Restoration Plan



Senior Planner, Johnny Wear, discusses Environmental Planning with students attending an Annual STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) Tour.

FINANCE



The Finance Department manages the agency's pass through funds totaling more than \$11 million and supervises the intricacies of a \$16 million budget, which includes 100 different contracts with local, state and federal agencies and private firms.

In Fiscal Year 2015-2016, the General Fund had an increase in fund balance of \$169,058, totaling \$1,250,573. Out of total budgeted expenses, Federal awards paid \$12,826,793 (78%) and State awards paid \$868,914 (5%). The remaining expenses of \$2,780,270 (17%) were paid with local/assessment dues, local government contracts and deferred revenues.

During 2016, the Finance Department updated the paper purchase order to an electronic purchase order process. The new electronic process was made possible due to the purchase of the Square 9 document management system. Now, WPCOG staff can create and approve a purchase order through their computer. The freedom of being able to approve a purchase order (PO) online versus having to physically sign a PO has made the Finance Department workflow more efficient. Along with online PO's, Finance also implemented electronic invoice approval. The electronic invoice approval process allows a supervisor to approve payment for an invoice from their computer.

To better serve our local governments, the Finance Department went through an organizational change in 2016. During the reorganization, one of the Accounting Technician positions was replaced with a Financial Manager position, which builds a stronger foundation for our financial administration services and adds to our staff's extensive financial experience. Combined, the Finance Staff has over 45 years of governmental accounting experience, and two staff members have master's degrees in accounting. The Financial Department also provides cost effective services to local governments and other governmental organizations.

REVENUES: \$15,056,418



Region E
Development Corp
\$14,011



Transportation
\$837,619



Aging
\$2,898,058



Environmental
\$116,503



CDBG/Planning/
Grants Mgmt/GIS
\$891,553



Workforce Innovation &
Opportunities Act
\$3,262,710



General Government
\$493,444



Urgent Repair/
Housing Related Projects
\$808,206



Section 8
Housing Vouchers
\$5,734,314

EXPENSES: \$14,709,442

Region E
Development Corp
\$14,011

Transportation
\$832,836

Aging
\$2,894,627

Environmental
\$99,245

CDBG/Planning/Grants
Mgmt/GIS
\$838,832

Workforce Innovation &
Opportunities Act
\$3,262,662

General Government
\$396,978

Urgent Repair/
Housing Related Projects
\$810,285

Section 8
Housing Vouchers
\$5,559,966

Financial Administration Services

- Accounts payable
- Accounts receivable
- Assistance in budget development and amendments
- Cash management
- Coordination with local government's independent auditor
- General ledger accounting
- Monthly account reconciliations
- Monthly finance reports
- Payroll administration
- Powell Bill reports to NCDOT
- Purchase order processing
- Quarterly reports to IRS, LGC, etc.
- Review and preparation of audit records and materials
- Sales tax refund reports

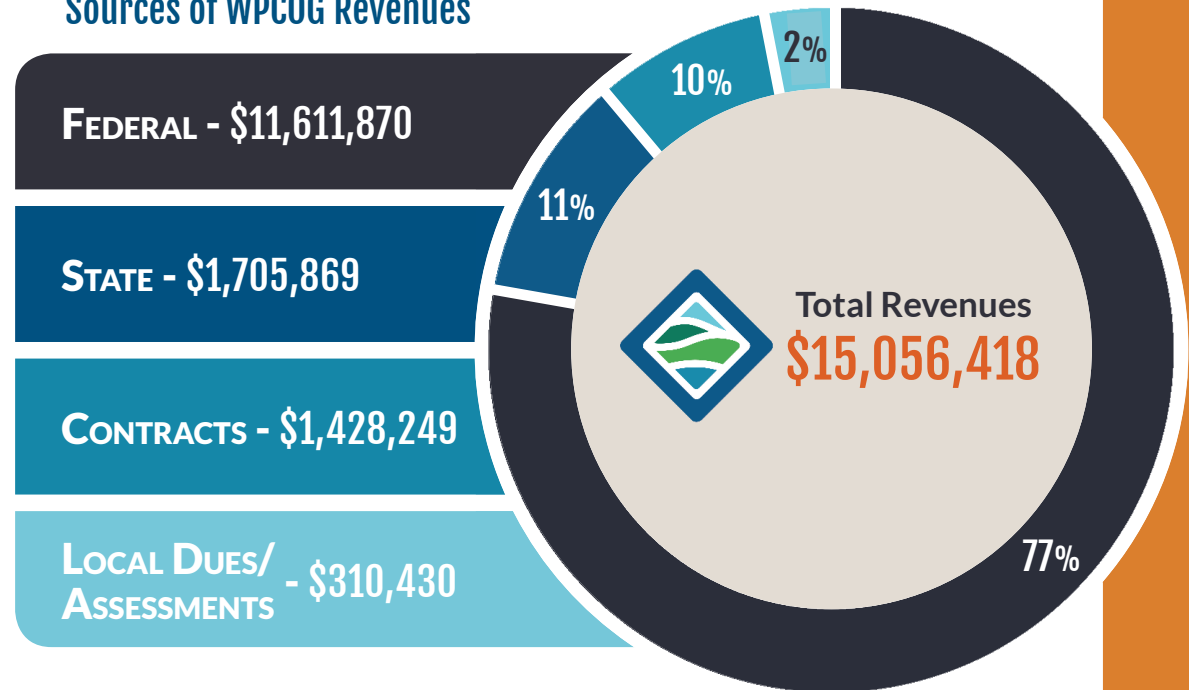
Benefits of WPCOG Finance Department Administering Your Local Government's Finances

- Segregation of duties that eliminates that annual finding in your audit
- Greater protections from fraud and misuse of funds
- Expertise of staff that comes with a larger organization
- Avoid difficulties of recruiting and retaining trained and experienced financial staff
- Continuity of service that is difficult for single-person or small financial operations in local governments
- Avoid expensive accounting software fees
- Cost savings from WPCOG financial administration versus hiring your own staff
- Seamless service to your board or council, staff and the public



Finance Staff: Left to Right - Sandy Jones, Financial Manager, Andrea Biddix, Finance Director, Deanna Butcher, Accounting Tech.

Sources of WPCOG Revenues





INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY/GIS

The WPCOG Information Technologies/Geographic Information System Services (IT/GIS) Department provides a variety of digital mapping solutions and geospatial data services for member governments as well as the public and private sector.

Town of Maiden Utilities GIS

In June 2016, IT/GIS Services completed a Utilities GIS for Maiden. As part of this effort, Departmental Staff accomplished the following:

- Conducted comprehensive GPS collection of all water, sewer, electric and stormwater features and created GIS mobile applications
- Created and helped Maiden to implement an online GIS-based work-order system
- Created ArcGIS Collector interface allowing Town staff to edit infrastructure GIS features while in the field
- Digitized 200+ As-Built/technical drawings for the Town. Implemented new "As-Built" tool in Town's GIS which allows users to view these spatial documents in their proper geographic settings as a layer with other features
- Completed Maiden GIS Sign-Inventory project and placed data into Town's online mobile GIS
- Created series of video tutorials on WPCOG's YouTube Channel for Town staff training regarding various aspects of the new GIS



The Maiden Utilities GIS project received a "2016 Innovation Award" at the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

Maiden Features Collected



6,798
Sewer



48
Stormwater



6,986
Water



5,574
Electric



1,133
Street Signs

City of Hickory GIS

WPCOG provides GIS services for the City of Hickory. In addition to database management and map creation, WPCOG staff created the following tools in 2016:

- Zoning Enforcement ArcGIS Online (AGOL) Application: The application allows the user to create a point location of the infraction and/or illegal sign, enter attribute data, and then download the data into a spreadsheet to create a monthly report
- Downtown Hickory Historical Landmark Walking Tour – A mobile application developed for a walking tour of 13 historical landmarks within Hickory's downtown. The application includes photos, a brief description, and web link for each landmark
- Hickory Downtown Dining and Shopping Guide – an application showing all of Hickory's Downtown dining and shopping businesses
- Trash Pick-up AGOL Application – Public search for a Hickory address and identify the day of the week for garbage pickup
- Updated City of Hickory's Leaf Pickup schedule – allows public to identify their scheduled pickup service.

Other GIS Services

Burke County "Quality of Life Explorer"

As part of the Kate B. Reynolds "Healthy Places NC" initiative, staff created a new online GIS-based application entitled "Burke County Quality of Life Explorer." In 2016, 28 interactive layers were created to the online application.

Valdese Utilities and Cemetery GIS

- Upgraded the interface of the Town's online utility viewing and editing interfaces to make them more efficient and user-friendly
- Allowed Town staff to indicate water and sewer lines that are not in service, as well as view flow-direction of wastewater features while editing them

Town of Taylorsville Water Features and Create a Water-based Utility

In 2016, WPCOG staff collected 1,635 features and created a beta-version of the Town's GIS.

Greenway Transportation

IT/GIS staff conduct passenger sampling on behalf of Greenway Transportation for Catawba County fixed route service. These samplings are a federal requirement and provides data on activity at each of Greenway's 349 stops in the County, and helps to plan efficient expansion of bus services and infrastructure. During the year, WPCOG staff sampled 218 individual fixed bus routes.

Greenway Support



218

Fixed Routes
Sampled



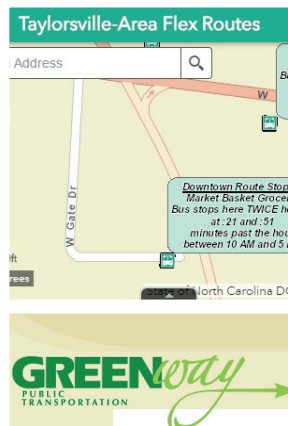
1,928

Unlinked
Passenger Trips
(UPT) Sampled



3,692

Uses of
Bus App



In Autumn 2016, WPCOG IT/GIS Staff created a web application for Greenway Transportation's Alexander County flex-route system. This new tool also incorporates the new "West Taylorsville" flex-routes, which run from NC 16 westward to NC 127 in Ellendale.

Information Technology (IT)

External IT Support for Municipalities

- Worked with municipalities throughout the region to assist them in applying for NC Asset Information and Assistance grants. These grants help local governments with assessing their current water and wastewater infrastructure to help them plan for the future. IT/GIS staff produced three applications (of which two were approved), and assisted three other applications (of which two were approved)
- Assisted Hudson, Granite Falls and Rutherford College in drafting Request for Proposals (RFP) relating to the ARC Downtown WiFi Grant projects

Internal IT Support for WPCOG

- Implemented new Square 9 SmartSearch document management system to improve organizational workflow by streamlining numerous internal administrative tasks
- Installed two new servers
- Upgraded 50+ PCs and tablets to Windows 10

IT Support



1,004

"Help-Desk"
Tickets



148

End-User
Support



151

Map
Requests



77

Data
Requests



433

System
Tasks



195

Software/
Hardware
Support



REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

In 2016, the Regional Housing Authority (RHA) provided affordable, decent, safe and sanitary housing throughout Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties. The RHA aspires to be the leader in providing affordable housing ensuring all regional residents have access to the highest quality housing. Providing a foundation for improving quality of life and achieving self-sufficiency is the goal of our agency. The RHA capitalizes on the Housing Choice Vouchers Program's (HCVP) potential to enable families to move to better neighborhoods. The RHA fulfills its mission through diligent, courteous and fiscally responsible administration of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 8 HCVP.

The Regional Housing Authority continues to be the leader in providing Section 8 rental assistance to income-eligible families in the region. The RHA has funding for 1,074 units with more than 500 property owners currently participating on the program. With a budget exceeding \$5 million in 2016, the RHA was able to assist 1,047 families in the form of rent and utility payments.

Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS)

With the help of an FSS coordinator, the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program offers Section 8 participants opportunities to define obstacles in their lives and create goals to become financially independent. In 2016, the FSS program had 26 new enrollments and 62 total participants. Two families graduated from the program after achieving their goals. The RHA deposits money into an escrow account for each participant as they obtain employment and reach their goals. An average of \$2,730 was deposited into escrow savings accounts for 2016. The current escrow savings balance is \$74,538.

Number of Families Provided Section 8 Rental Assistance

1,047

Regional
Family Total

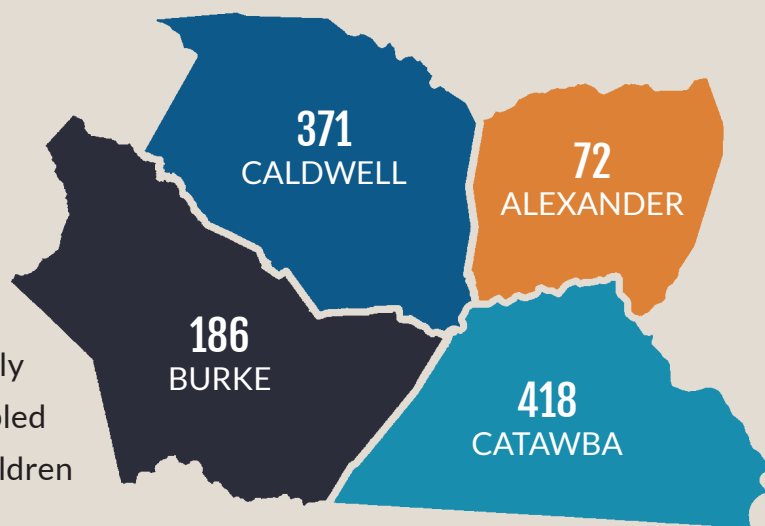
2,289

Total number of
family members

432 (19%) Elderly

781 (34%) Disabled

1,007 (44%) Children



Homeownership Program

Through the Homeownership program, Section 8 participants are able to use their rental subsidy toward their mortgage. In 2016, the RHA assisted 8 participants with their mortgage payments.

Head of Household by Gender (Out of 1,047 Families)



900 (86%)
Female

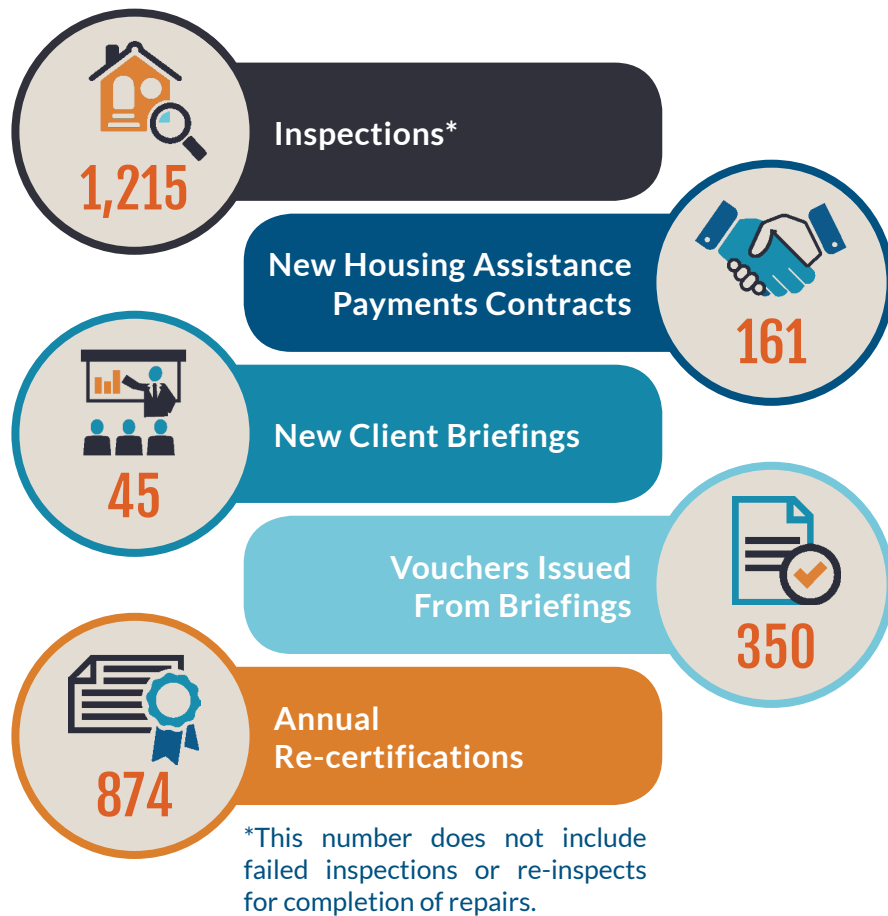


147 (14%)
Male

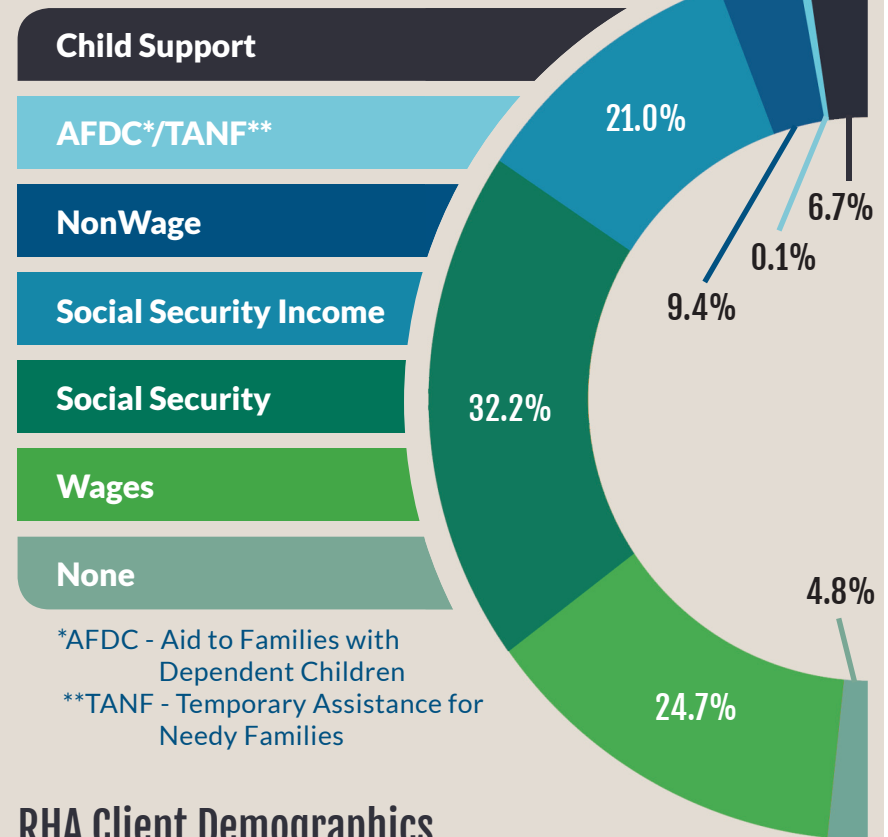
Family Unification Program (FUP)

Thanks to the Family Unification Program (FUP), a family is considered eligible without having to apply through the waiting list. They are given immediate assistance with a voucher in an effort to avoid placing children in a home separate from the parents. In 2016, 9 new vouchers were issued to families in need of adequate housing. In total, 21 families currently receive Section 8 assistance through an RHA FUP voucher.

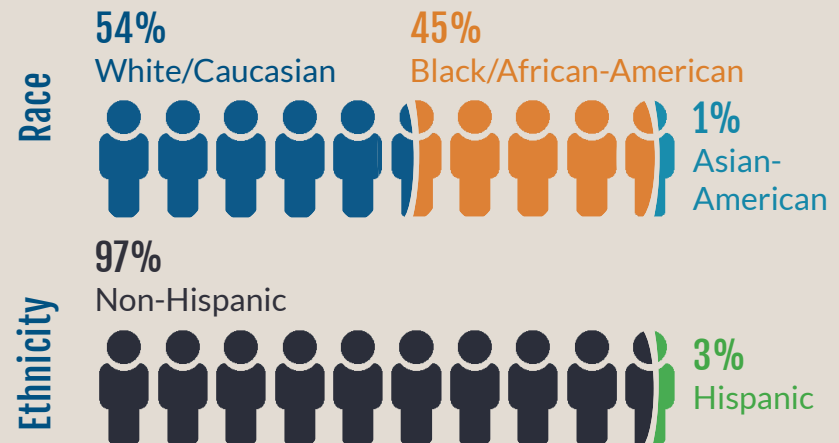
2016 By the Numbers



Residents' Primary Income for 2016



RHA Client Demographics





WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, board staff and the NCWorks Career Centers in Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties go above and beyond to increase business outreach and retention and directly impact those unemployed and underemployed. Clarification to rule-making and performance measures were finalized in 2016 to meet the new requirements established by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Core to the success of WIOA, the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board provides oversight of the local areas NCWorks Career Centers. As of December 2016, there were 2,240 more people working in the region than this same period in 2015. In regards to the NCWorks Career Center, the Catawba NCWorks Career Center was moved to a new innovative location at 403 Conover Station, SE, Conover, on March 31, 2016. The official ribbon cutting for the new space was held on May 16, 2016.

NCWorks Career Centers by the Numbers



126

Trainings

On-the-Job-
Training
(OJT), Trade
Adjustment
Act (TAA)
and Work
Experience



4,814

Assisted
Customers

Developing
and/or
updating
jobseeker
resumes



14,368

Provided
Business
Services

Job postings,
recruitment,
referrals, OJT,
labor market
intelligence,
etc.



91

Recruitment
Events

Staff assisted
recruitment
events at a
career center
or employer
site



2,746

New
Registered
Unemployed

People not
working
that newly
registered in
NCWorks.gov
Jan. - Dec. 2016



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the grand opening of the NCWorks Career Center-Catawba.

Federal funding provided through WIOA has allowed the local area to provide training scholarships in areas such as: Accounting, Computer Integrated Machining, Electronic Engineering, EMT Basic, Human Services, HVAC, Industrial Maintenance, Industrial Sewing, Nuclear Medicine Technology, Nursing, Medical Assistant, Office Systems Technology, Physical Therapy Assistant, Polysomnography and many others.

Workforce Development has seen a continued increase and sustainability in recruitment events that are hosted within the region's NCWorks Career Centers. Two separate Veterans events held in 2016 were successful -- drawing 50+ veterans to each occasion with 100+ available job openings.

Youth/Young Adult Services

The youth and young adult customized Career Advantage Program offers support for training programs that lead to recognized credentials that align with local

Youth/Young Adult Programs



38

Youth/Young Adults Completed GED/HS Diploma



29

Enrolled in Post-secondary Education



44

Entered Permanent Employment



30

Participated in short-term work experience

in-demand industries and occupations. Such programs can be short-term or long-term and may include: CNA1, Computer Technology, Electronics Engineering, Human Services, Med Tech, Physical Therapy Assistant, Truck Driving and more.

On-The-Job Training

The On-the-Job Training (OJT) program provided by the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board is a resource to assist businesses in acquiring skilled workers and helping eligible individuals gain employment. Many employers in our area have taken advantage of the OJT program as they add additional employees to their workforce.

The Western Piedmont Workforce Board's On-the-Job Training program provided 38 OJT placements, which are full-time employment positions in occupations like: Borderer, CNC Machine Operator, Customer Service, Furniture Finisher, Engineer Maintenance Tech, Knitter, Lathe Operator, Material Handler, Mechanic, Mechanical Assembler, Packer, Upholsterer and many others.

On-The-Job Training Success Stories

Employer: West Penn Hardwoods Inc.

Business Services Consultant, Matthew Xiong had the pleasure of connecting with West Penn Hardwoods Owners Kim and Rocky Mehta through Conover City Manager, Donald Duncan . The Mehtas

recently moved their company from Western New York State to Conover, but were having a difficult time finding workers.

"We moved our company to Conover, NC in early 2015 and immediately had issues finding qualified candidates for warehouse labor and shipping and receiving positions. We were told the Workforce Development Group within the Western Piedmont Council of Governments could help us not only find employees, but also had funds to help train them. This was similar to an On-the-Job Training program we had utilized while we were in New York State. Matt has been able to locate several candidates for us, test their skill set and recommend a funded training program that not only helps us as an employer but helps local candidates find jobs for which they may not be trained. The benefit to our company has been enormous. Thank you to the Workforce Development Group, we look forward to working with this program in the future as our company expands." - *Kim Mehta*

Employer: Big Twig | OJT Participant: Melvin Keener

Mr. Melvin Keener visited the NCWorks Career and Placement Center in Caldwell County. The staff advised Melvin to attend the Caldwell is Hiring event the following day on October 1, 2015, which would take place next door to the career center.

Melvin attended the event, spoke to many employers. The last employer he spoke to that day was Big Twig, also known as Timber Wolf Forest Products. Big Twig, which has been in business for over 20 years in Hudson, manufacturers fine wood components for high-quality furniture products.

On-The-Job Training



38

OJT placements with full-time employment positions



\$103,788

Wage reimbursement for OJT paid to employers to offset training costs



\$11.27/hour

Paid to OJT employees during training time

Melvin approached the booth, with both confidence and strength, and met with Randy Roper (Owner) and Hollie Pennell (Co-Owner). Melvin stated “Sir, I am looking for a job” Randy stated “as long as you are willing to work hard and have a good attitude, I have a job for you”. Melvin was very honest with Randy and Hollie and quickly mentioned he had recently been released from prison and needed work. Randy had him fill out an application and Melvin returned for an interview the following day. Melvin was quickly hired through the On-the-Job Training Program (OJT). Melvin started on October 12, 2015 as a General Woodworking Sander/Machine Operator/Finisher and completed OJT training on January 29, 2016.

In Melvin’s OJT final evaluation, Madison Roper (Co-Owner) stated “Melvin had been an exceptional employee since he has been here. He is a great employee who has a good attitude, willing and able to learn, and is a model for other employees to follow. We wish we had 20 more just like him”.



STEM West advocates and supports the alignment of educational and occupational objectives through the regional workforce and community partnerships. STEM West is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board. The STEM West region includes Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba and Lincoln Counties.

After several community meetings and development of an advisory board, the STEM West mission statement and initiatives were developed. A pilot grant from the Institute of Emerging Issues paved the way for the first initiatives of the organization by partnering teachers with local STEM business partners to create and implement real-world project-based learning units for the classroom. On March 1, 2016, STEM West became an official part of the WPCOG.

STEM West represents the educational arm of Workforce Development. The initial funding was granted by the Duke Energy Foundation for the first two years, along with additional funds from the NC Community Foundation (Biogen) and the Burroughs-Wellcome Fund. Below are a few highlights from 2016 revealing the impact STEM West is having on the region.

- In partnership with CVCC’s Education Matters, EXTREME STEM Tour teams were trained from Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba and Lincoln Counties. Over 10,000 8th graders have participated in these tours over the last 5 years, visiting local STEM businesses and touring community colleges and the pathways that align with STEM careers.
- During Summer 2016, 16 teachers attended a 5-day professional development training in a program entitled “Filling the Gap.” After visiting 8 STEM businesses, they developed and implemented project-based learning units in their schools. These real-life, relevant learning units engaged 450 students across the region.
- STEM West grants received in 2016: Duke Energy Foundation (\$100,000), Biogen (\$5000), Burroughs Wellcome Fund (\$9000).
- Robox Sumo Train-the-Trainer one-day workshop trained 54 adults engaged and over 400 students in engineering robotics through after-school clubs, science center events and scout programs.
- In partnership with the Committee of 100 and the Burroughs Wellcome Fund, BetaBox, a mobile STEM lab, was set up at the NC Center of Engineering Technologies. The event gave local stakeholders an opportunity to evaluate Betabox. Over 70 students used the lab to create prototypes to solve everyday problems.



Catawba County School Board and teachers tour Betabox Mobile Lab.

ADMINISTRATION

Anthony Starr - Executive Director
Sherry Long - Assistant Executive Director/ Community & Economic Development Director
Ashley Bolick - Director of Administrative Services & Human Resources
Tom Drum - Local Government Manager/Administrator
Jason Toney - Communications Specialist
Amanda Wallace - Administrative Assistant
Judy Caldwell - Receptionist

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Tina Miller - Director of Area Agency on Aging
Christina Franklin - Regional Ombudsman
Mary Mitchell - Family Caregiver Specialist
Karen Phoenix - Project C.A.R.E. Family Consultant
Sarah Evitt - Aging Specialist
Anita Roberts - Aging Specialist

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Leah Martin - Senior Planner, Infrastructure & Economic Development
Rick Oxford - Community Development Administrator
Laurie Powell - Community Development Administrator
Lisa Helton - Community Development Administrator
Jennifer Cannon - Community Development Administrator
Helen Whisnant - Housing Counselor

COMMUNITY & REGIONAL PLANNING

John Marshall - Director of Planning, Transportation & Environmental Programs
Cody Moneymaker - Transportation Planner
Taylor Dellinger - Data Analyst
Duncan Cavanaugh - Data Technician
John Wear - Senior Planner & Natural Resources Administrator

Teresa Kinney - Community & Regional Planner
Erin Schotte - Community & Regional Planner
Leslie Meadows - Community & Regional Planner
Averi Ritchie - Planning Technician

FINANCE

Andrea Biddix - Director of Finance
Sandy Jones - Financial Manager
Deanna Butcher - Accounting Technician

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY/GIS

Scott Miller - Director of IT/GIS
Daniel Ezell - GIS Analyst
Tom Bell - GIS Analyst
Todd Stroupe - GIS Technician
Trey Schweitzer - GPS Technician

REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Stephanie Hanvey - Director of Regional Housing Authority
Vicky Abernethy - Senior Housing Specialist
Kim Duncan - Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator
Kala Guido - Housing Specialist
Joann Parlier - Housing Specialist
Elizabeth Moncrief - Housing Specialist
By Khang - Housing Inspector

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Wendy Johnson - Director of Workforce Development
April Lail - Financial Manager
Donna Gilbert - Program Administrator
Elizabeth Hilliard - Program Coordinator
Matthew Xiong - Business Services Consultant
Carol Moore - STEM West Coordinator



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