



# FY25 Budget Outlook

*Presented by*

John Hudson, Budget Director

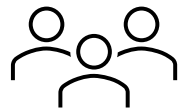
**January 16, 2025**



# Current Economic Conditions



# Current Economic Conditions



Employment



Housing



Occupancy Tax (*i.e., Tourism-Related Economic Activity*)

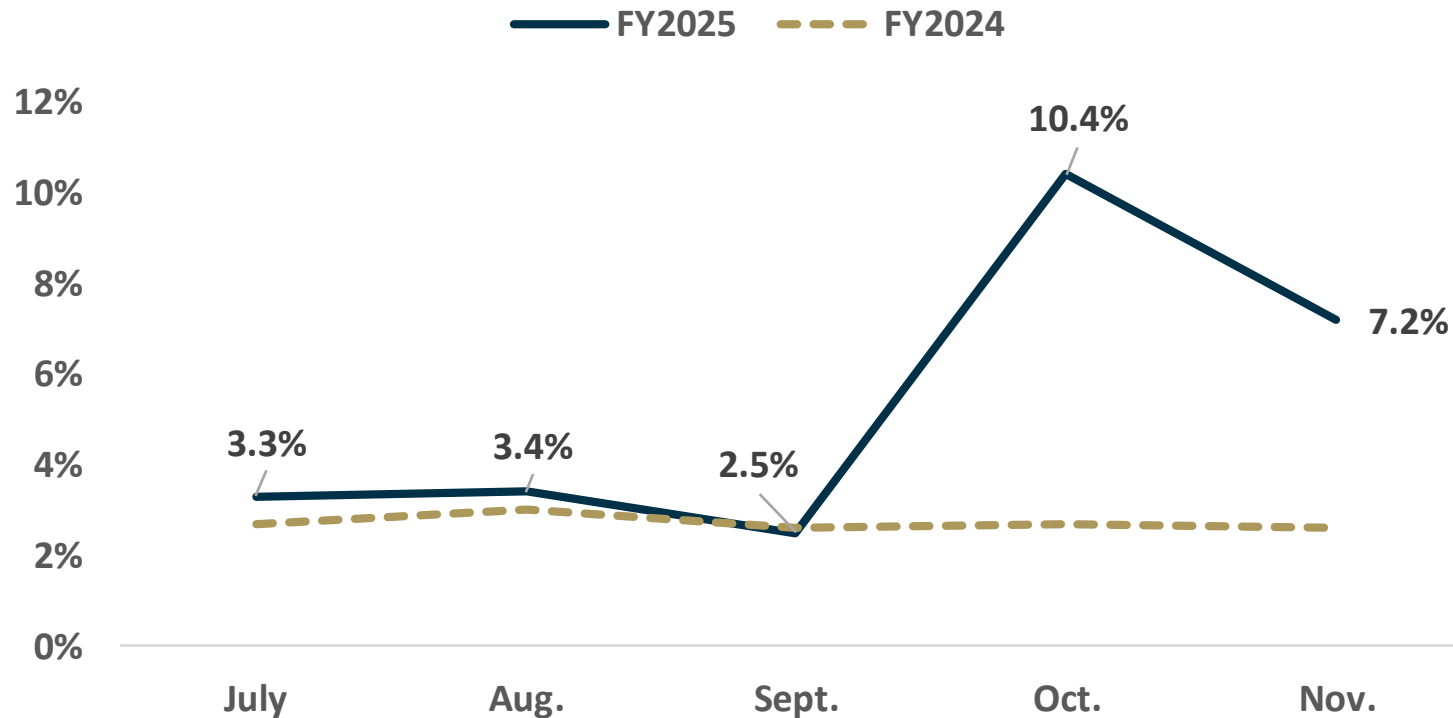


Sales Tax (*i.e., Overall Economic Activity*)



# Employment

Unemployment Rate & Unemployed Persons, Buncombe County, FY2024 & FY2025



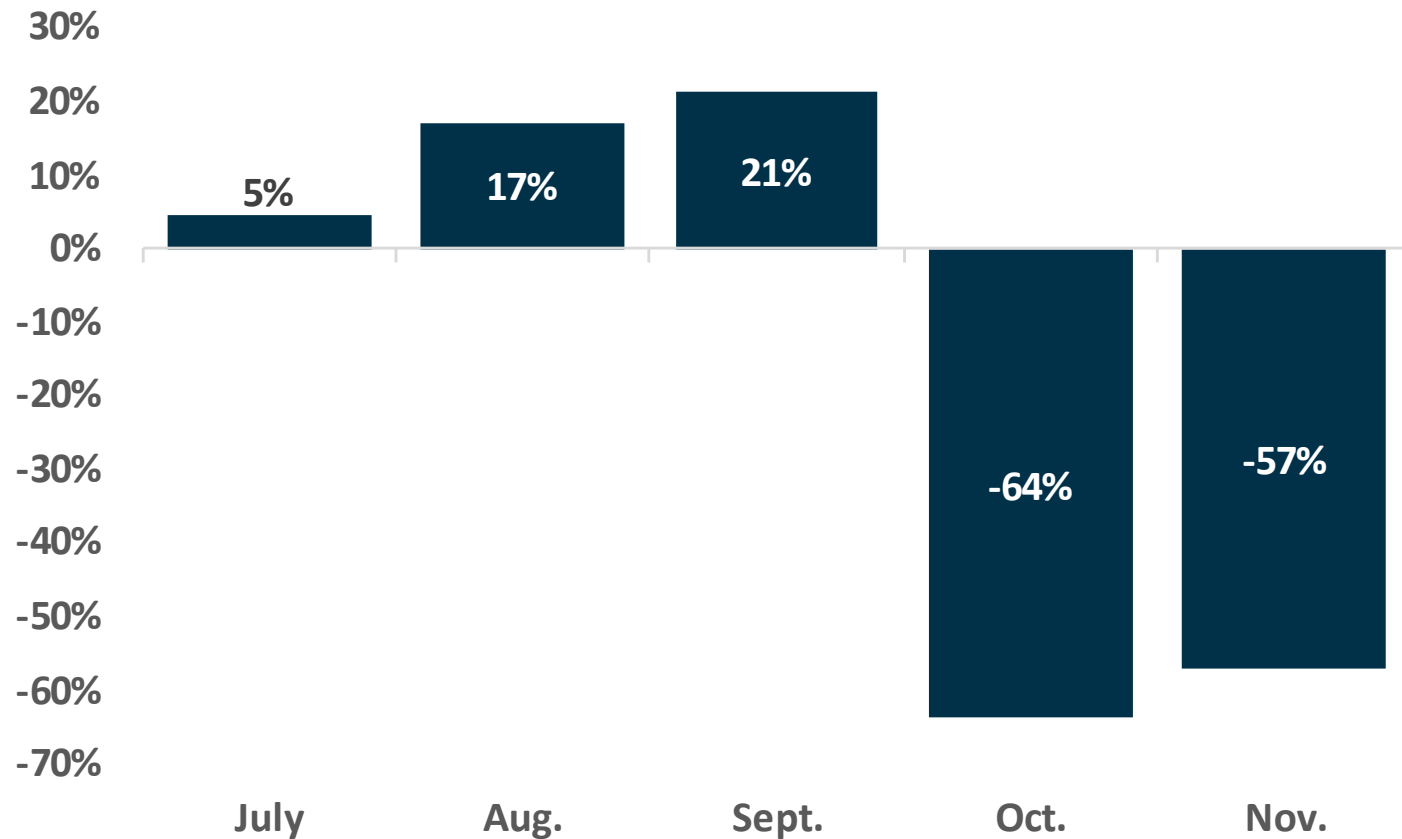
Unempl.	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
	4,707	4,871	3,573	15,811	10,621

- In October, the County went from having the lowest unemployment rate in NC to highest
- In November, rate dropped by around 3%; however, unemployment in the County is still over 10,600



# Housing

% Change in Permits for New Construction (Single-Family) vs. Prior Year, Buncombe County, FY2025

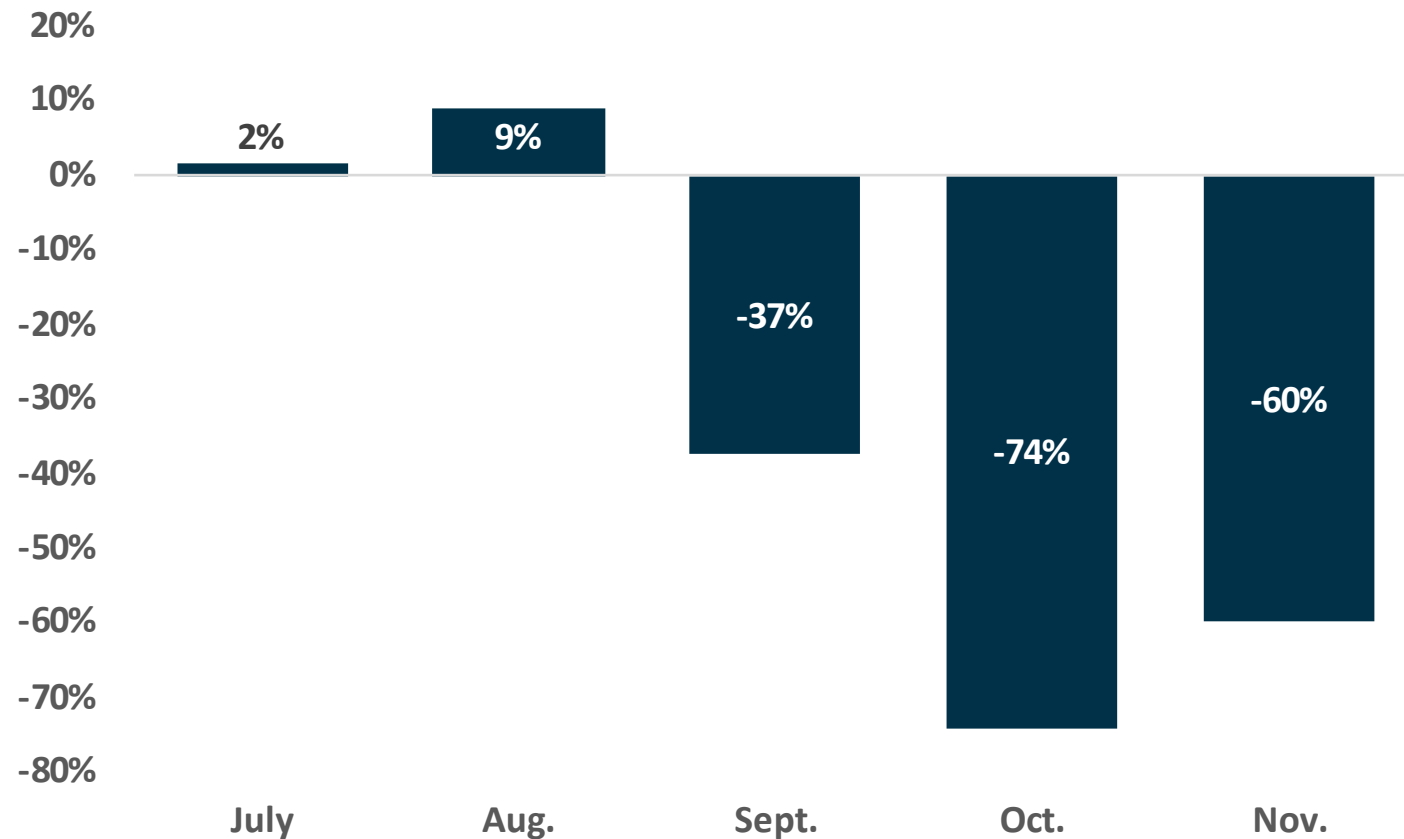


- Single-family housing starts dropped around 60% since start of October compared to prior year.
- Over 9,200 residential units were damaged by Helene, with 331 destroyed and 609 suffering major damage



# Occupancy Tax

% Change in Occupancy Tax Collections vs. Prior Year, Buncombe County, FY2025

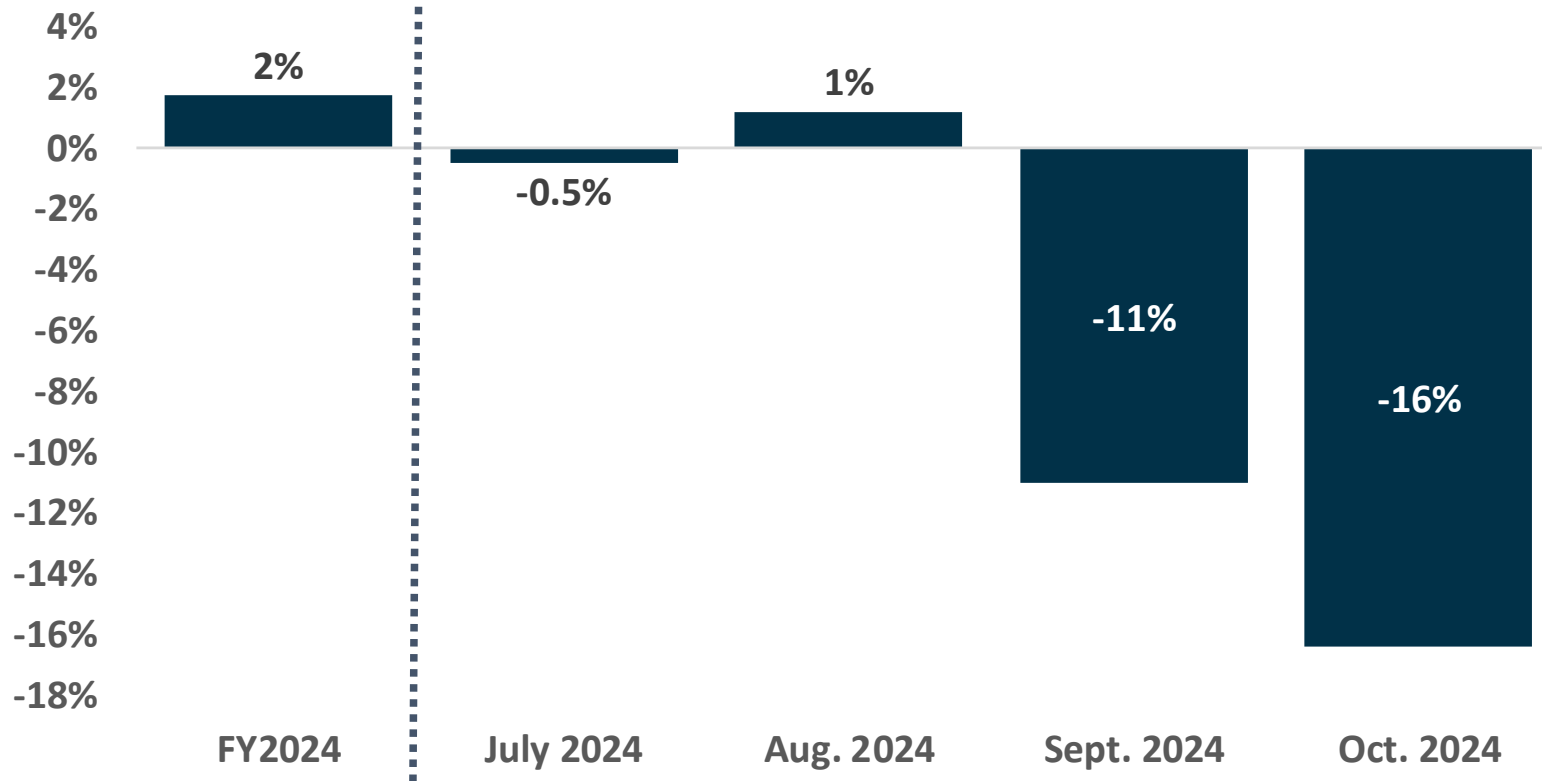


- October is historically one of the strongest months for occupancy tax during fiscal year
- Compared to FY2024, occupancy tax collections are down 35% YTD (or \$5.9M)



# Sales Tax

% Change in Sales Tax Distributions vs. Prior Year, Buncombe County, FY2024 & FY2025



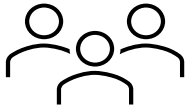
Point of Sale Articles	-1%	1%	-16%	-26%
Per Capita Article	1%	1%	0%	5%

- October-December is historically the strongest three-month period for sales tax during fiscal year
- Compared to FY2024, sales tax revenues are down 7% YTD (or \$1.0M)\*

\*Through October 2024



# Summary



Unemployment is above 10,600 as of November



9,200 residential units damaged; new construction activity down significantly



Occupancy tax down \$5.9M vs. prior year as of November



Sales tax down \$1M vs. prior year as of October





# Revenue Discussion



# FY25 Revenues

Category	FY2025 Amended
Property Tax	278.0M
Sales Tax	46.6M
Intergovernmental	49.4M
Sales and Services	24.9M
Other Revenues	30.0M
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>428.9M</b>



# FY25 Revenues – Property Tax

Category	FY2025		
	Amended	Projection Range	
Property Tax	278.0M	-6.5M	-4.8M
Sales Tax	46.6M	-7.5M	-3.5M
Intergovernmental	49.4M	-3.2M	-1.2M
Sales and Services	24.9M	-4.5M	-3.7M
Other Revenues	30.0M	-3.9M	-2.0M
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>428.9M</b>	<b>-25.7M</b>	<b>-15.1M</b>

Realizing our tax base and our collections rate this year will be the primary drivers of this revenue stream



# FY25 Revenues – Sales Tax

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<b>Revenue</b>	<b>428.9M</b>	<b>-25.7M</b>	<b>-15.1M</b>

Sales Tax is a volatile revenue stream that reports with a three-month lag.



# FY25 Revenues – Intergovernmental

Category	Amended	FY2025	
		Projection Range	
Property Tax	278.0M	-6.5M	-4.8M
Sales Tax	46.6M	-7.5M	-3.5M
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<b>Revenue</b>	<b>428.9M</b>	<b>-25.7M</b>	<b>-15.1M</b>

Intergovernmental revenue is restricted and largely tied to expenditures.



# FY25 Revenues – Sales and Services

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Sales and Service revenues are largely based on demand for the service.



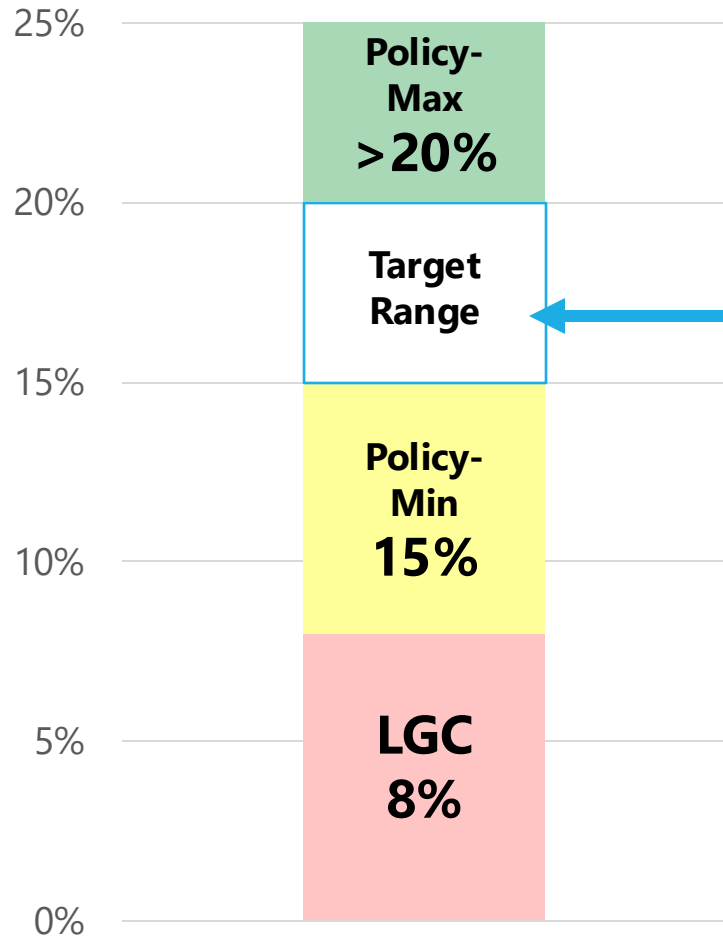
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<b>Revenue</b>	<b>428.9M</b>	<b>-25.7M</b>	<b>-15.1M</b>

Included here are Permits and Fees, Other Taxes and Licenses, Interfund Transfers, and other revenue to include investment earnings, bond proceeds, sale of assets, and miscellaneous revenue



# Fund Balance



**FY24 Estimated Ending Fund Balance as % of Exp**

**17%**

**Appropriated \$16M in FY25**





# State & Federal Relief Legislation

- State

- H149: Disaster Recovery Act
  - \$273M for Helene Fund
- S743: Disaster Recovery Act (Pt. 2)
  - +\$604M for Helene Fund
  - Cashflow Loans via LGC
  - School Calendar Flexibility
- S382: Disaster Recovery Act (Pt. 3)
  - +\$227M for Helene Fund

- Federal

- American Relief Act
  - Funds FEMA for ongoing local efforts
- FEMA Community Disaster Loan Program
- Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief
  - \$1.4B to State
- Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Program

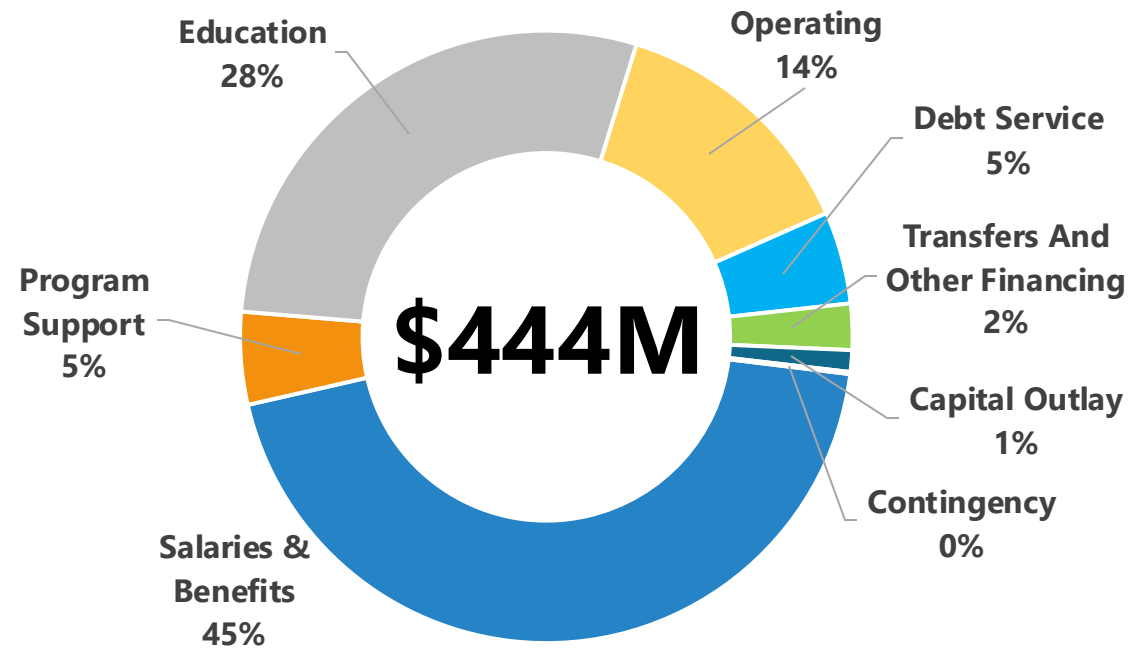


# Expenditure Reduction Plan



# FY25 Expenditure Budget

Ledger Summary	FY2025 Amended
Salaries & Benefits	197.8
Program Support	21.7
Education	126.5
Operating	60.6
Debt Service	21.7
Transfers And Other	10.8
Capital Outlay	5.1
Contingency	.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>444.6</b>



# FY25 Salaries & Benefits

## Reductions of **\$4.2M**

- Hiring Freeze - Currently **89** vacancies
- Expected \$2M in salary budget reduction
- Sheriff is freezing hiring of non-certified Law Enforcement Personnel

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<b>Total</b>	<b>444.6</b>



# FY25 Program Support

## Reductions of **\$2.5M**

- Programmatic reductions across Public Health, Social Work Services, Justice Services, Economic Development, and Economic Services

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# FY25 Operating

## Reductions of \$5.1M

- Defer IT infrastructure and postpone software implementation
- Deferred Scheduled Maintenance of County facilities and planned Energy Efficient upgrades
- Reduction in Animal Shelter Capacity & Operations
- Reduction in Library & Recreation Programming
- Reduced Office Expenses & Medical Supplies
- Delayed Purchase/Replacement of Non-Capital Equipment

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# FY25 Transfers & Other Financing

## Reductions of **\$1.0M**

- Reductions in Tax Reappraisal Funding, Future Conservation Easements, and Early Childhood Education funding

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<b>Total</b>	<b>444.6</b>



# FY25 Expenditure Reduction Summary

Function	FY25 Amended Budget	Reduction
Salaries & Benefits	\$197,803,861	\$4,166,542
Operating	\$60,550,820	\$5,078,174
Program Support	\$21,728,475	\$2,497,962
Capital Outlay	\$5,060,607	-
Transfers & Other	\$10,845,574	\$1,000,000
Debt Service	\$21,656,974	-
Contingency	\$500,000	-

**\$318.1M**

**\$12.7M**  
**(4% reduction)**

**Gap from Projected Revenue**  
**-\$2.4M to -\$13.0M**





# FY25 Education

## Reductions of **\$4.8M**

- Asheville City Schools  
&  
Buncombe County Schools  
Local Current Expense  
Appropriation
- Reductions in Education contracts

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Capital Outlay	\$5,060,607	
Transfers & Other	\$10,845,574	\$1,000,000
Debt Service	\$21,656,974	
Contingency	\$500,000	
Education	\$126,475,477	\$4,815,450

**\$444.6M**

**\$17.6M**

**Gap from Projected Revenue  
+\$2.5M to -\$8.1M**



# Discussion



# Next Steps

- GS 159-13(b)(9) “Appropriations...may not be reduced after the budget ordinance is adopted...unless a general reduction in county expenditures is required because of prevailing economic conditions.”

Before that:

- a) Hold a public meeting at which the school board is given the opportunity to present information on the impact of the reduction.
- b) Take a public vote on the decision to reduce.



# Next Steps

- County Staff will
  - Continue monitoring for salary savings
  - Limit expenditures as appropriate
  - Monitor and project sales tax revenues
  - Communicate with Tax Collector on Collections and Tax Assessor on projecting FY26 valuations



# Education Appendices



# State Statute

- GS 115C-408 “...it is the policy of the State of North Carolina to provide from State revenue sources the instructional expenses for current operations

...facilities requirements for a public education system will be met by county governments.”



# State Statute

- GS 115C-426(e) “The local current expense fund shall include appropriations sufficient, when added to appropriations from the State Public School Fund, for the current operating expense of the public school system in conformity with the educational goals and policies of the State and the local board of education, within the financial resources and consistent with the fiscal policies of the board of county commissioners.”





# State Statute

- GS 115C-521(b) Buildings, Furniture, Apparatus
- GS 115C-249(e) Garage and Maintenance Equipment for Buses
- GS 115C-47(25) Liability Insurance
- GS 115C-521(c):524 Maintenance of Facilities
- GS 115C-517 Site Acquisition
- GS 115C-522(c) School Building Supplies, Water and Sewer

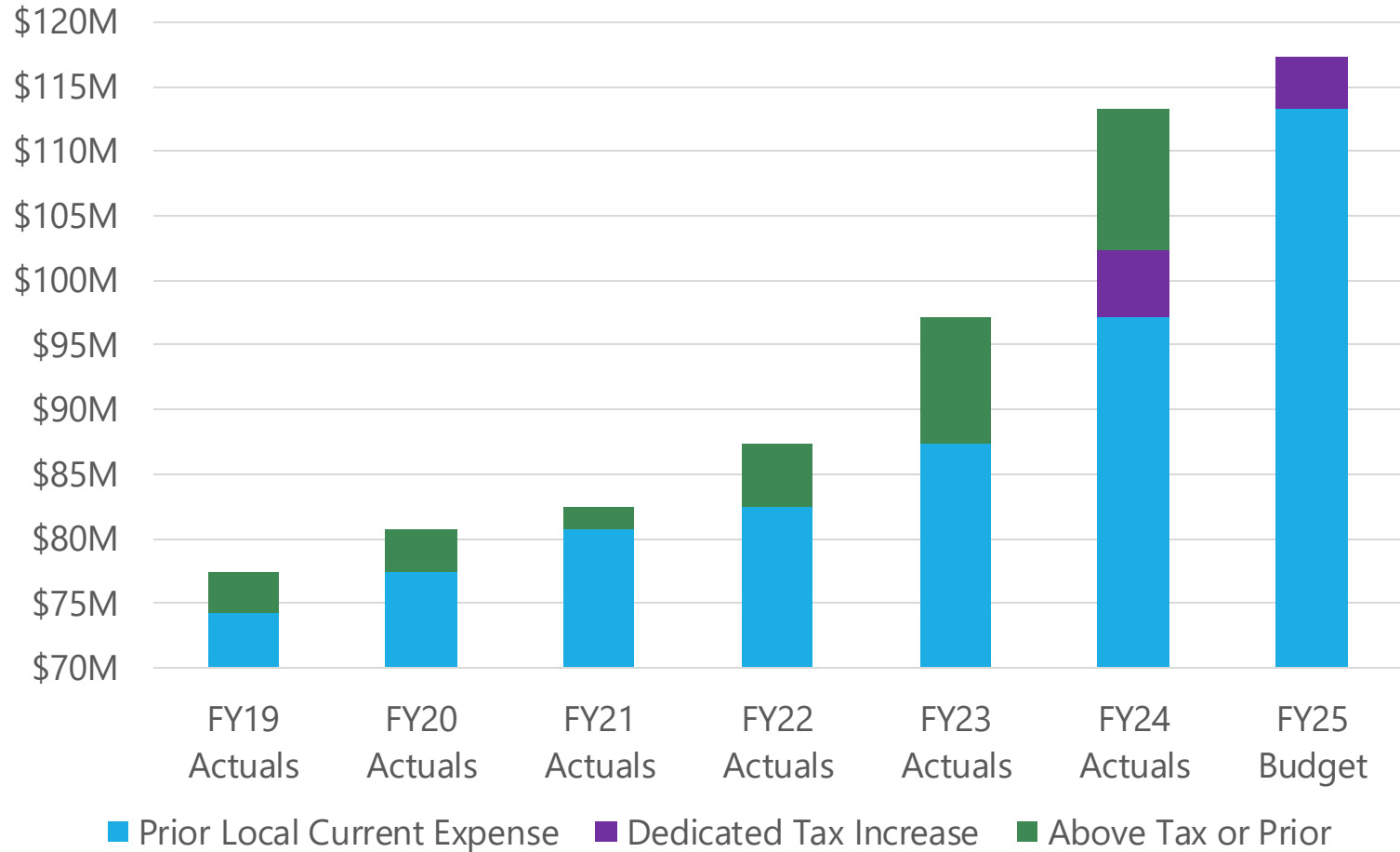


# Considerations for Funding

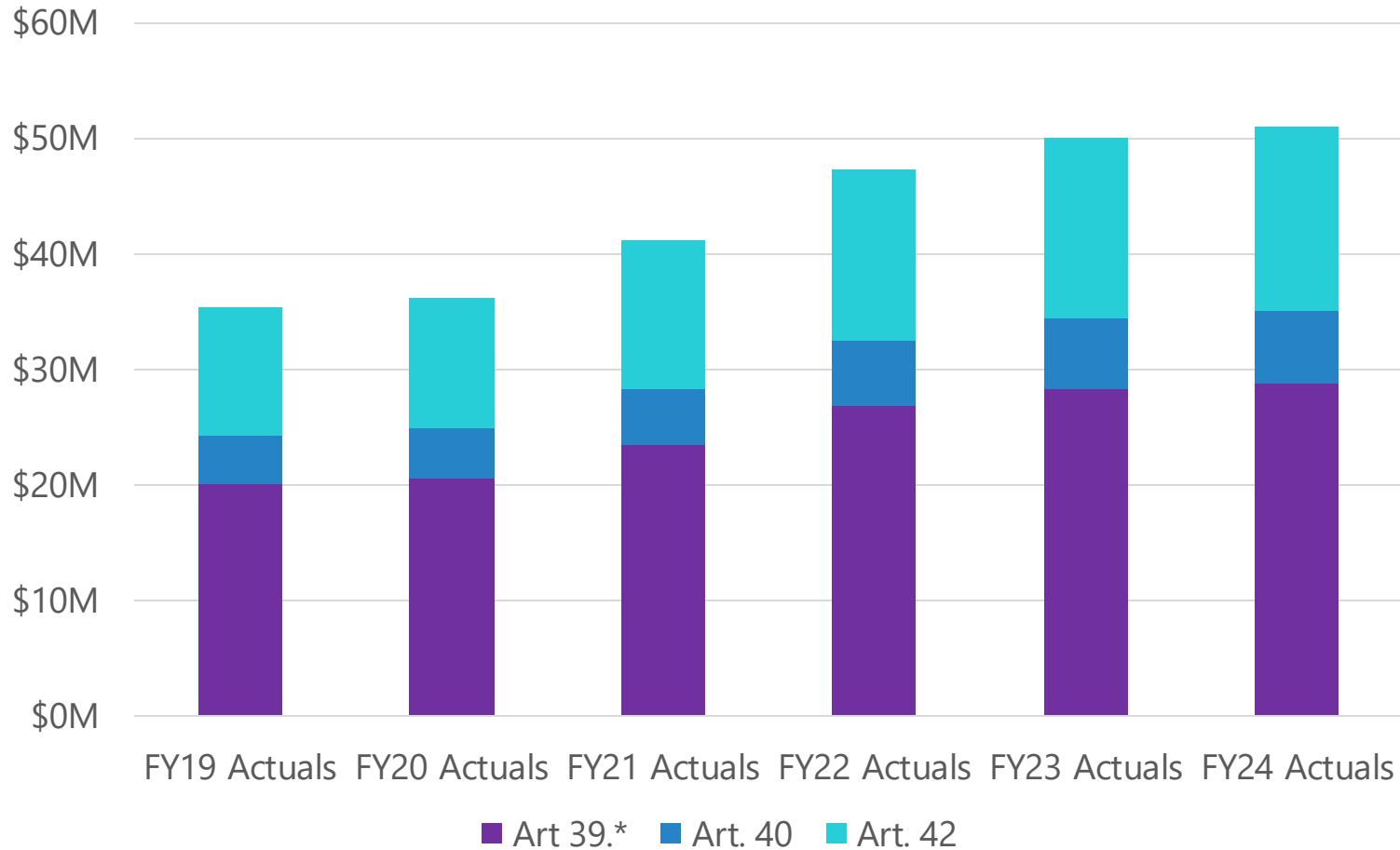
- Outlined in NCGS 115C-431:
  - The budget request for capital and operational expenses from the county's school administrative units
  - The amount of funding the school administrative units receive from other sources – including the state and federal government
  - The educational policies of the state and the county's school administrative units
  - The size and composition of the student populations in the county's school administrative unit
  - The financial resources of the county and fiscal policies of the county's board of commissioners.



# Historical K-12 Operational Funding



# Historical K-12 Capital Funding

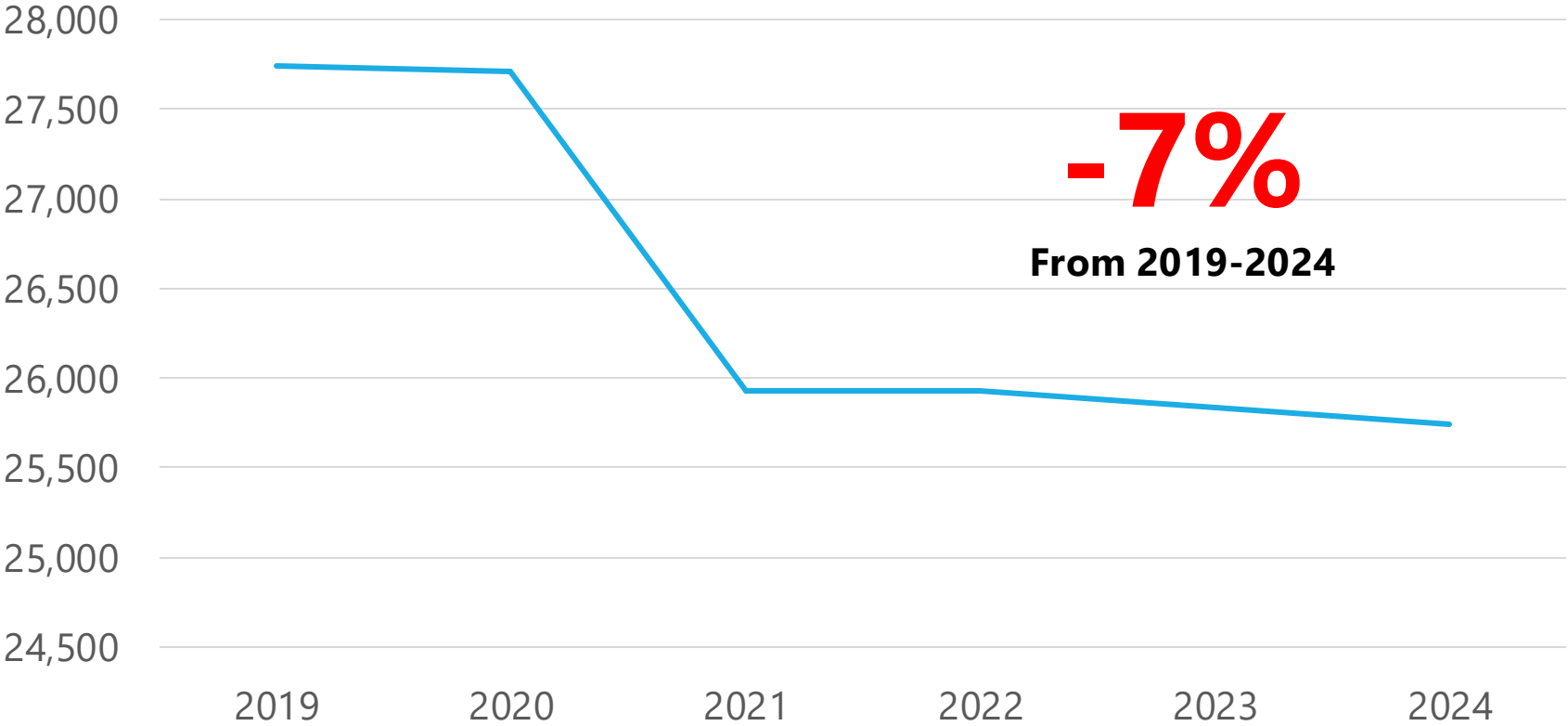


\*Reminder that SL 2016-19 only applies to Buncombe County and moves otherwise unrestricted revenue to school capital.



# Student Count

Combined Final ADM



Over the same period of time, funding increased

**+36%**





# FY26 County Budget Planning

*Presented by*

John Hudson, Budget Director

**January 16, 2025**



# FY26 Budget Planning



# Agenda

- Structural Budgeting
- Fund Balance
- Revenue Drivers
- Expenditure Drivers
- Recovery
- Questions





# NCGS 159-8 requires a balanced budget

“The sum of estimated net revenues and appropriated fund balances is equal to appropriations.”

(NC G.S. §159-8)

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Appropriations} \\ \text{(Expenditures)} \end{array} = \begin{array}{l} \text{Resources} \\ \text{(Revenues, Fund Balance)} \end{array}$$

## What is our budget philosophy?

Structural balance: Recurring revenues fund recurring expenses



# Structural Balance

## Expenses

### Recurring

Routine annual commitment

**Examples:**

- Salaries & benefits
- Operating expenses
- Education (school systems)
- Debt service

### One-Time

Single year appropriation

**Examples:**

- Capital PAYGO
- IT Software
- Other ad hoc

## Revenues

### Recurring

**Examples:**

- Property Tax
- Sales Tax
- Intergovernmental Revenue

### One Time

**Examples:**

- Reserves
- Grants
- **One-Time Use** of Fund Balance



# FY2024 – FY2025

	FY2024 Final Budget	FY2024 Actuals*	FY2025 Adopted	FY2025 Amended
Revenue	(\$414.4M)	(\$418.3M)	(\$428.3M)	(\$428.9M)
Expenses	438.9M	429.5M	440.0M	444.6M
<b>Fund Balance Use</b>	<b>(\$24.5M)</b>	<b>(\$11.3M)</b>	<b>(\$11.7M)</b>	<b>(\$15.7M)</b>
<b>Ending Fund Balance %</b>		<b>17.4%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>

\*unaudited



# Fund Balance



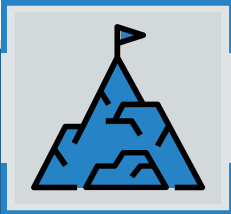
## Definition

An accounting term used for the difference between assets and liabilities, used as a measure of financial condition.

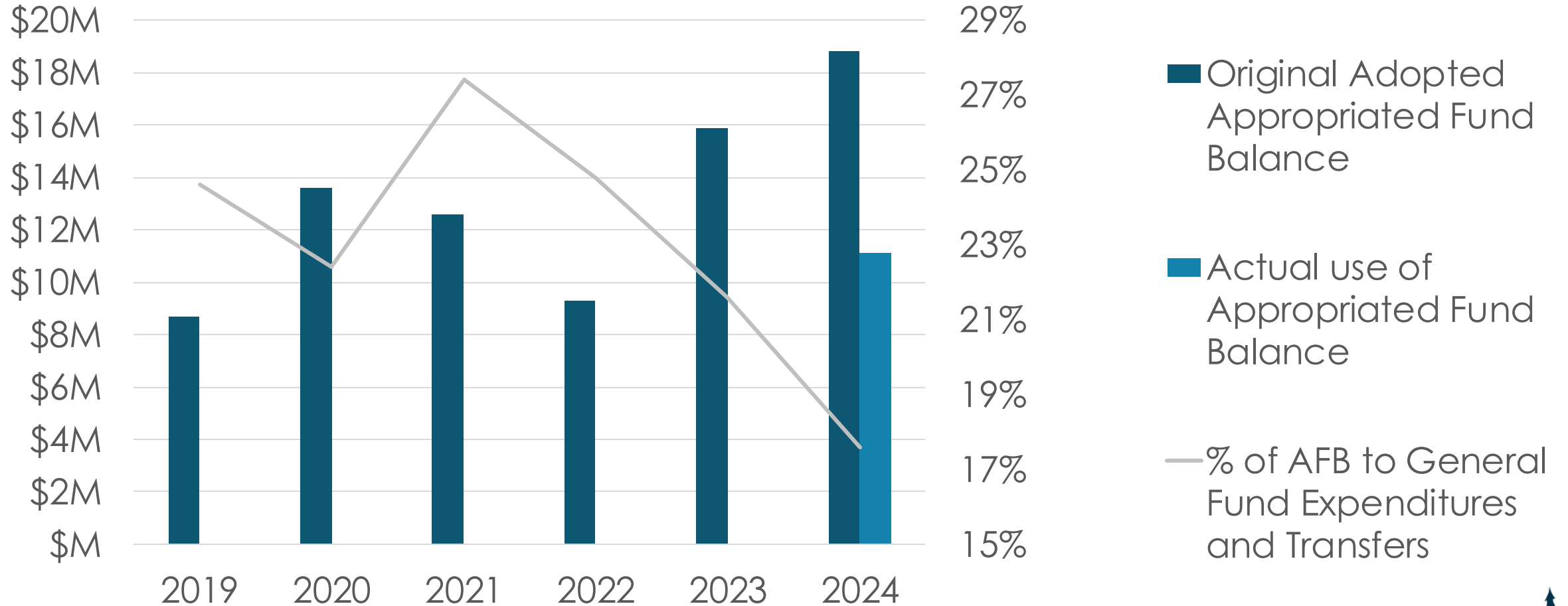


## Recommended

Funding used to cover loss of revenue, declines in the economy, natural disasters, public safety and health emergencies.

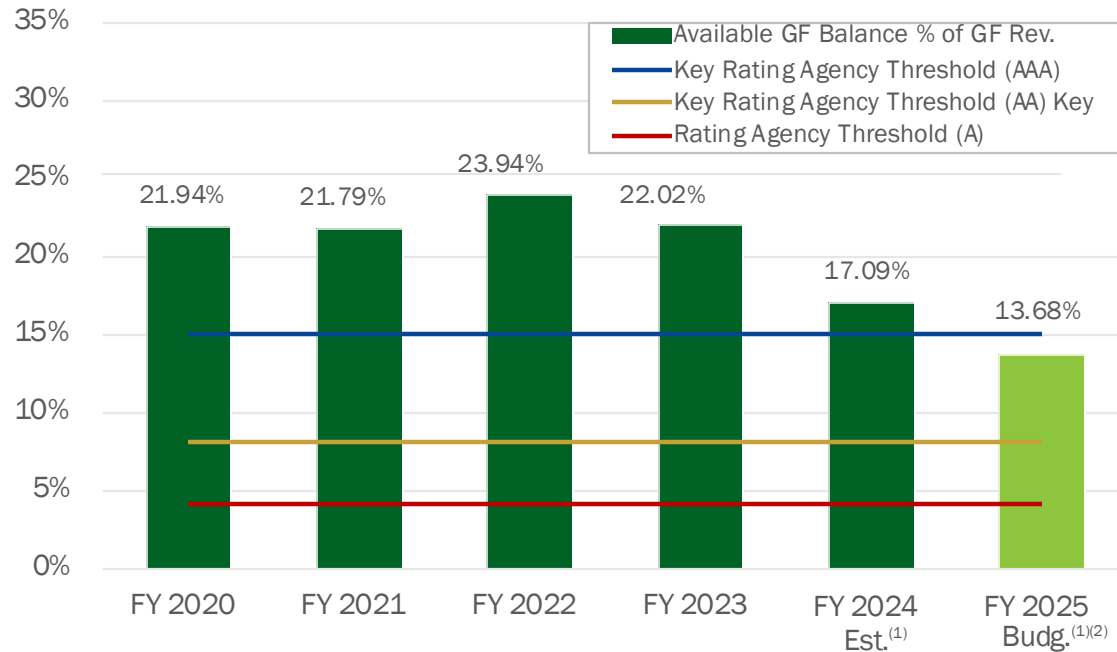


# Historical Appropriated Fund Balance



# Credit Rating Considerations | General Fund Balance

## Available General Fund Balance as % of General Fund Revenues (FY2020 - 2025)



<sup>(1)</sup> Budgeted FY24 and FY25 revenues net of appropriated fund balance.

<sup>(2)</sup> FY25 Available Fund Balance equal to estimated FY24 Fund Balance less FY25 budgeted appropriated fund balance of \$11,764,570.

- Each of the Credit Rating Agencies evaluates Fund Balance as a portion of its overall rating assessment. Below is an example of the different tiers.

- Key Rating Agency Threshold for Available Fund Balance as % of Revenues:

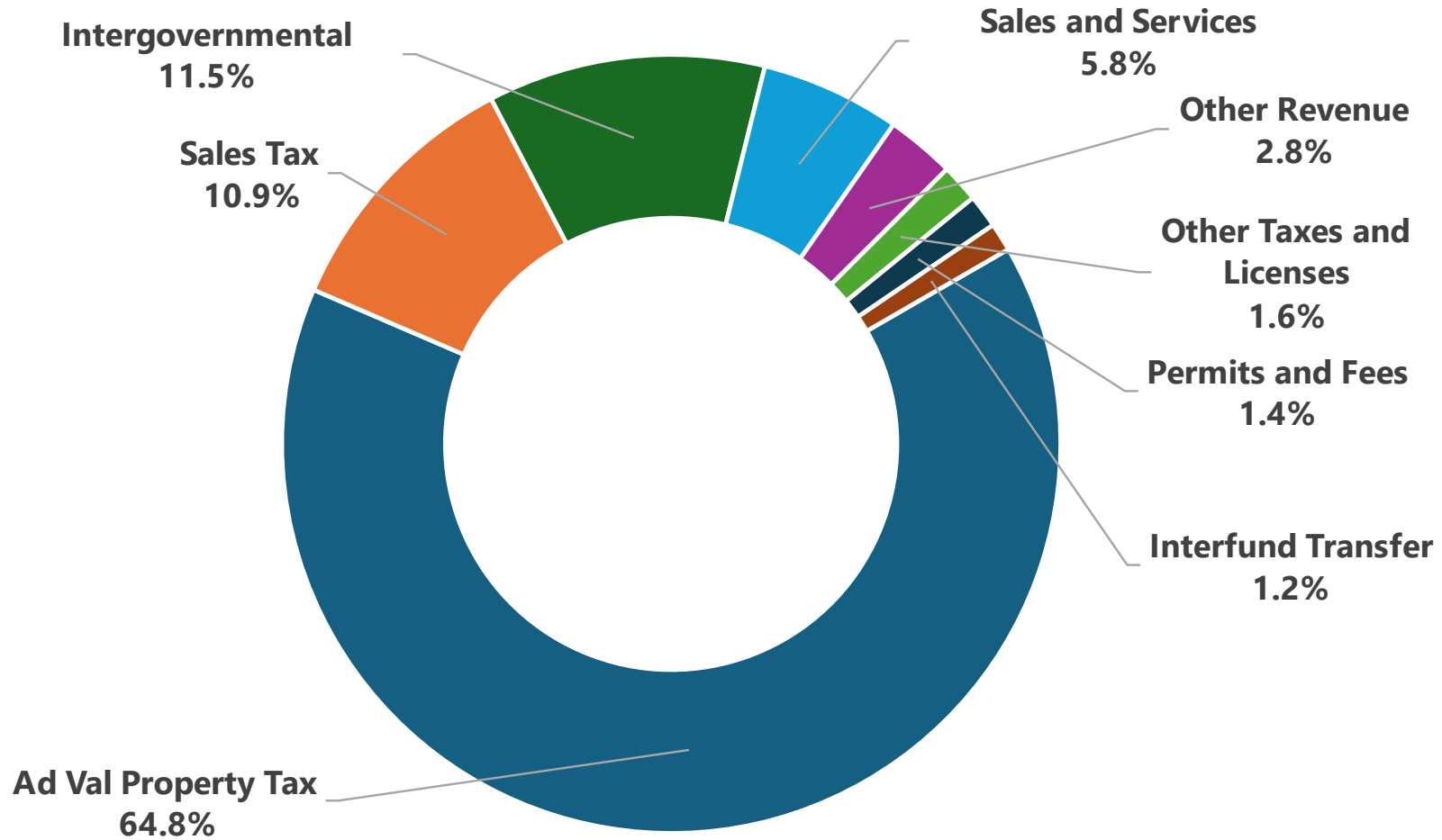
- Very Strong (AAA): > 15%
- Strong (AA): 8% to 15%
- Adequate (A): 4% to 8%
- Weak (BBB): 1% to 4%
- Very Weak (BB): < 1%



# Revenue Drivers



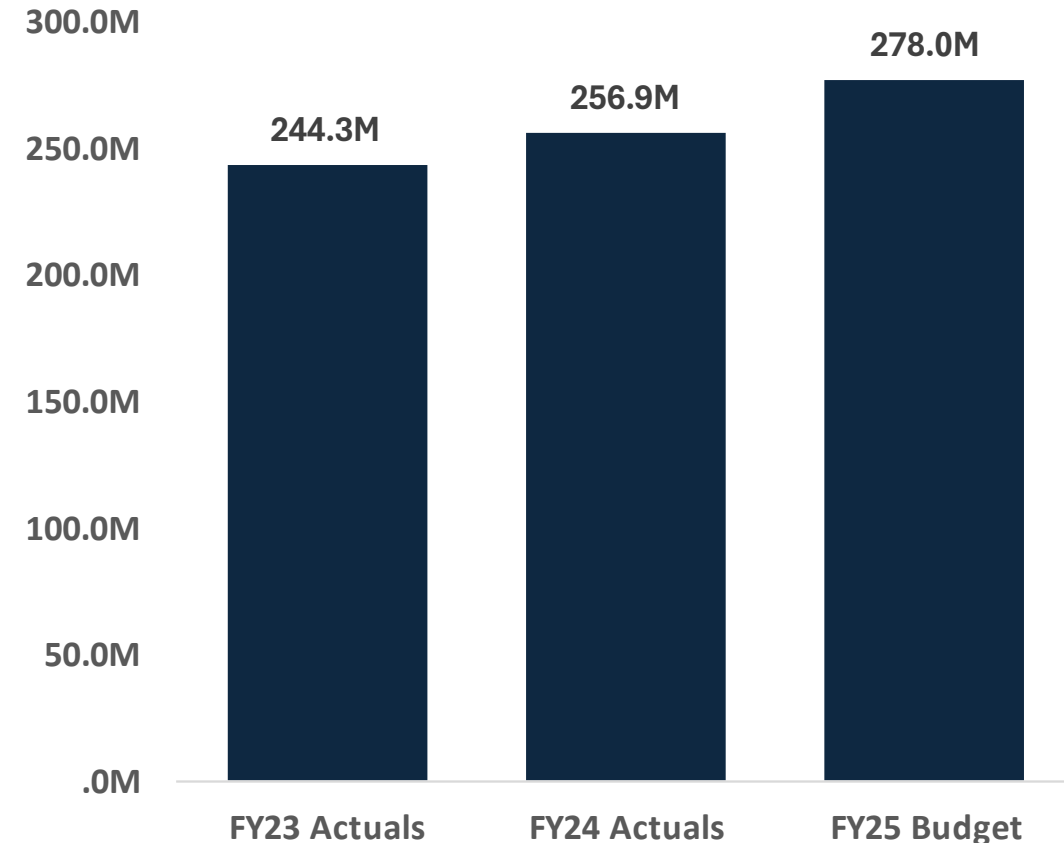
# Revenue Sources





# Ad Val Property Tax

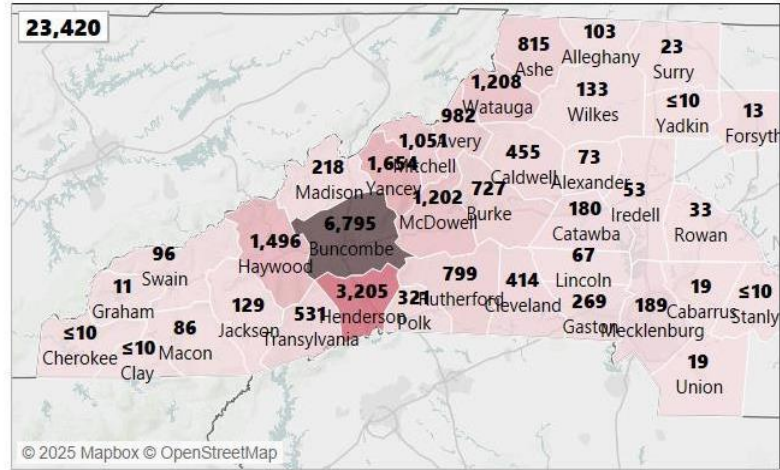
- Largest revenue stream
- Last reappraisal in 2021; reflected in FY22 budget
- Next appraisal was slated for 2025; delayed to 2026
- Tax rate increases in FY24 and FY25
  - FY24: 1¢ Increase for Education
  - FY25: 0.75¢ of 1.96¢ Increase for Education



# FEMA Verified Damage Maps

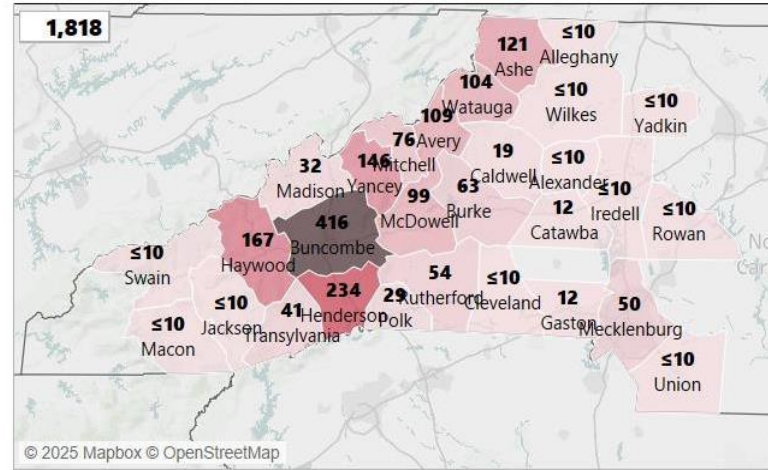
## OWNER - HOME REQUIRES HABITABILITY REPAIRS

DR-4827-NC Source: IA - Inspection Results (ODS) 1/7/2025 8:49:02 AM



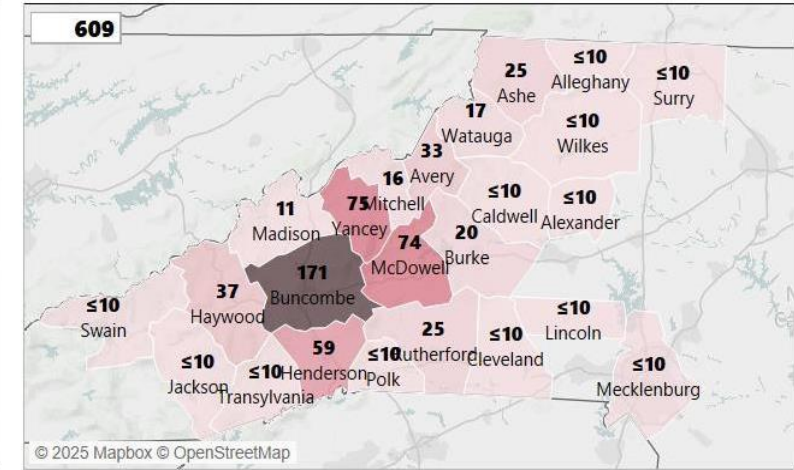
## OWNER - HOME HAS MAJOR DAMAGE

DR-4827-NC Source: IA - Inspection Results (ODS) 1/7/2025 8:49:02 AM



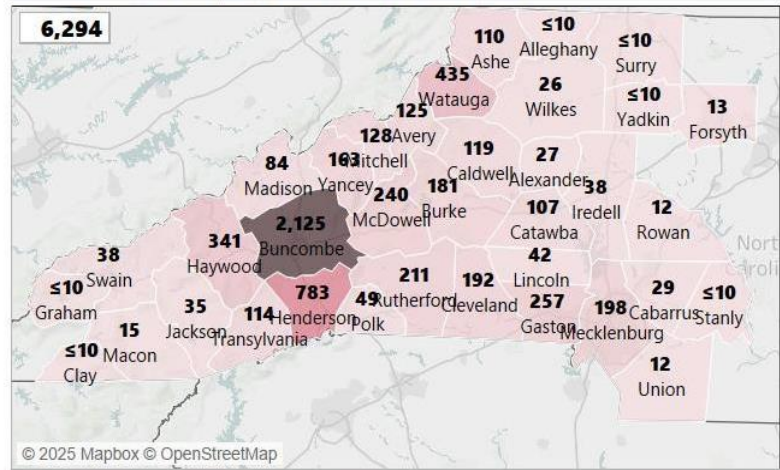
## OWNER - HOME IS DESTROYED

DR-4827-NC Source: IA - Inspection Results (ODS) 1/7/2025 8:49:02 AM



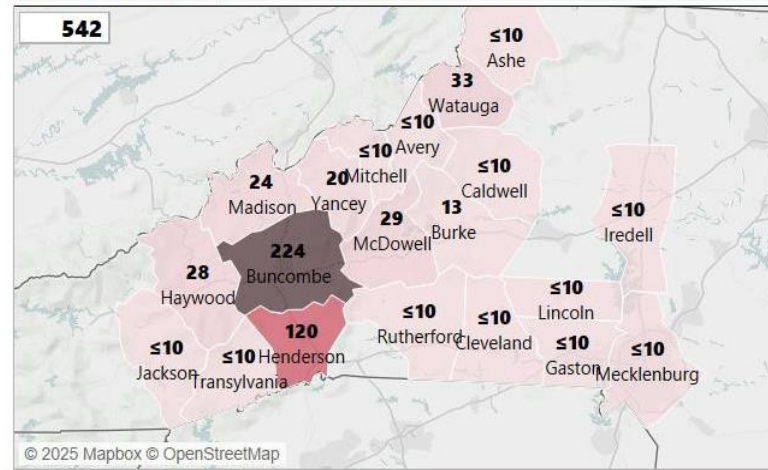
## RENTER - HOME REQUIRES HABITABILITY REPAIRS

DR-4827-NC Source: IA - Inspection Results (ODS) 1/7/2025 8:49:02 AM



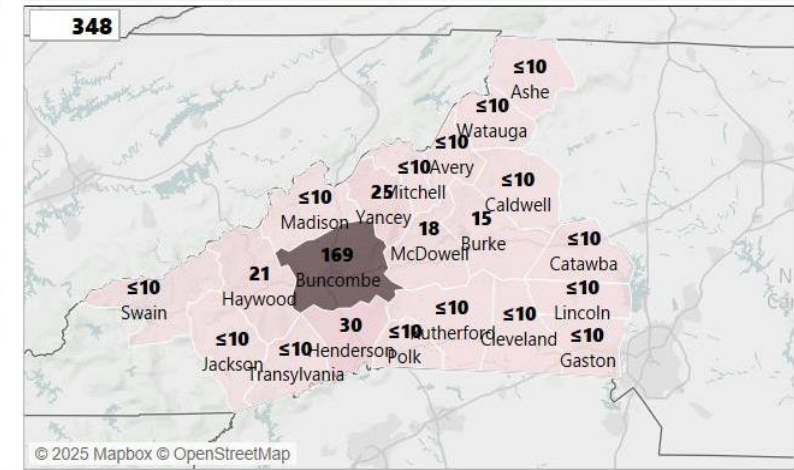
## RENTER - HOME HAS MAJOR DAMAGE

DR-4827-NC Source: IA - Inspection Results (ODS) 1/7/2025 8:49:02 AM

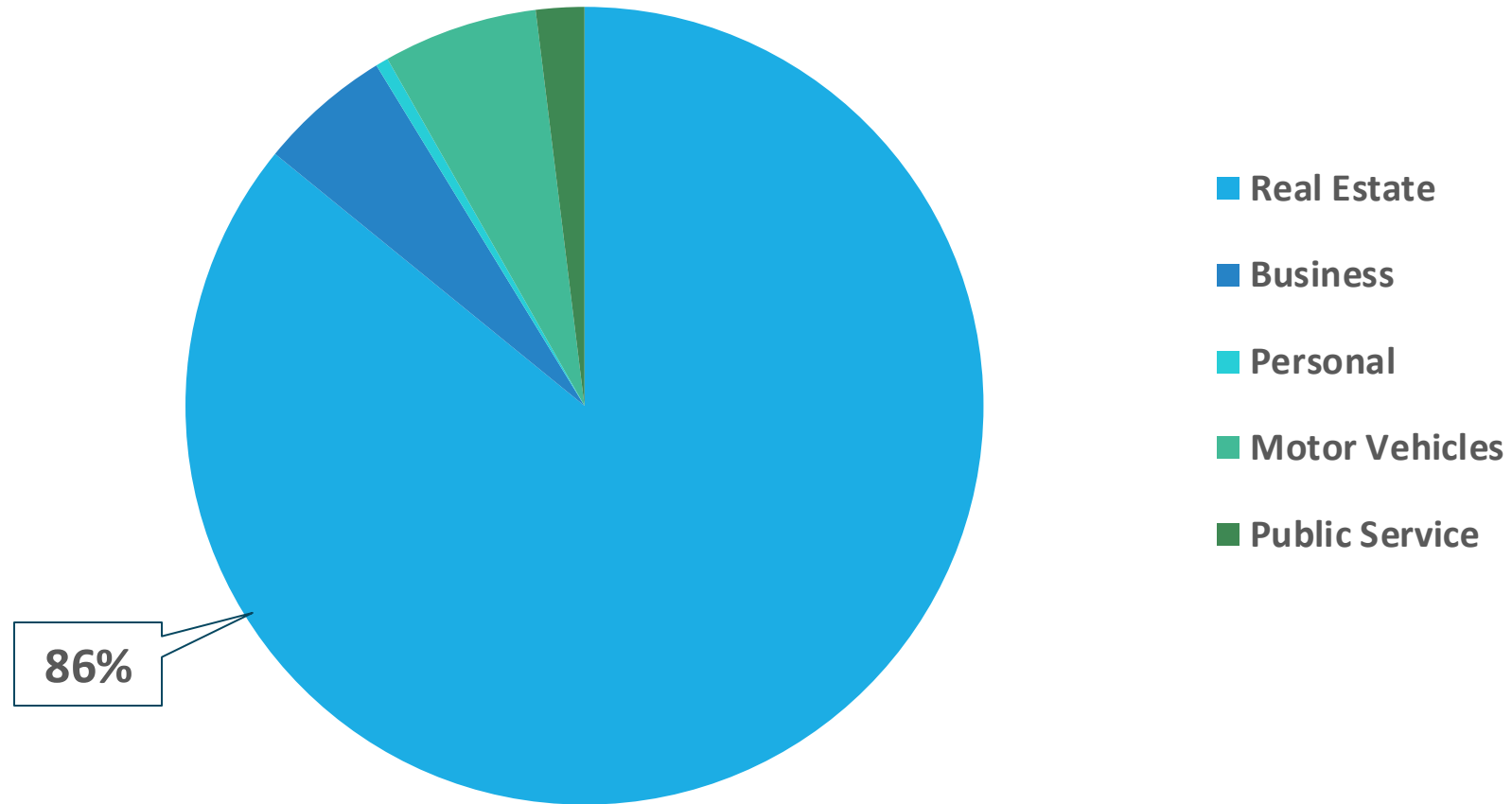


## RENTER - HOME IS DESTROYED

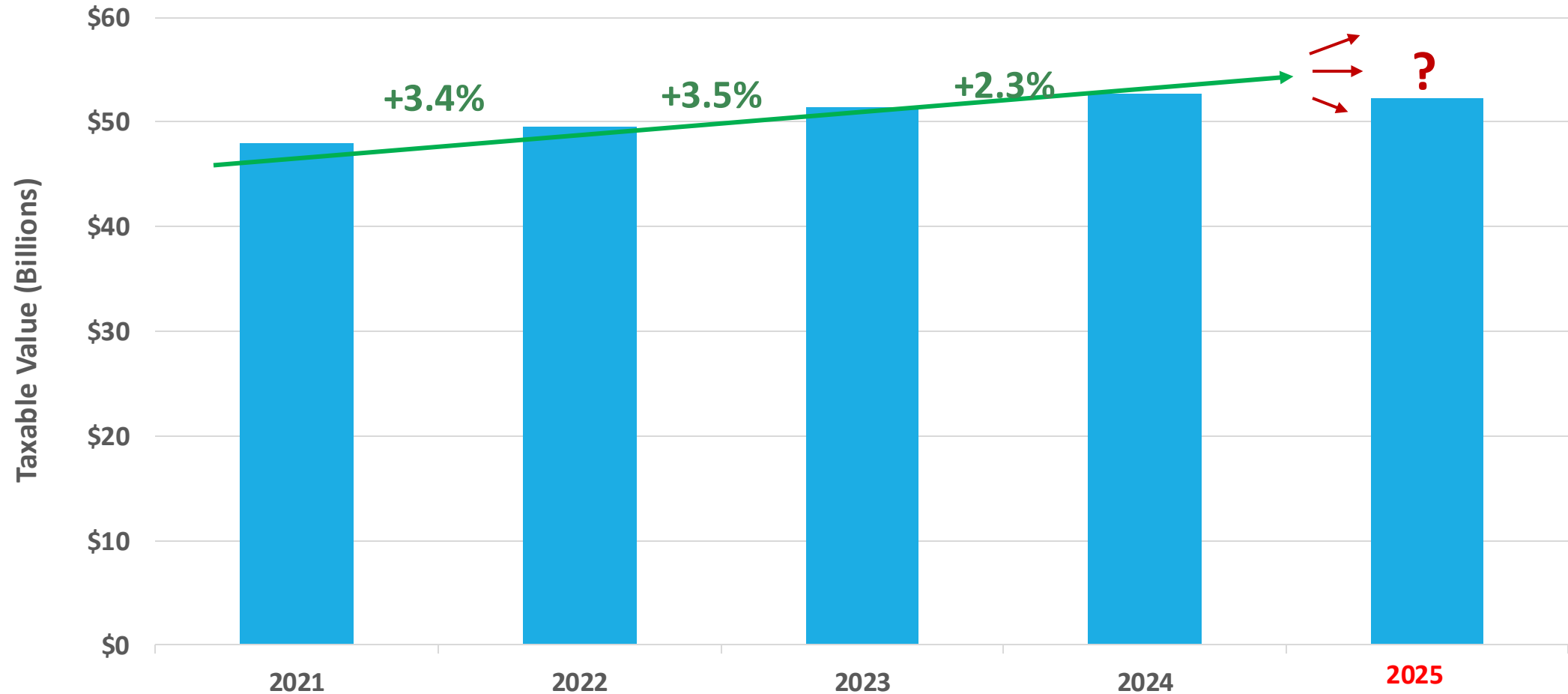
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# Breakdown of Tax Base, 2024

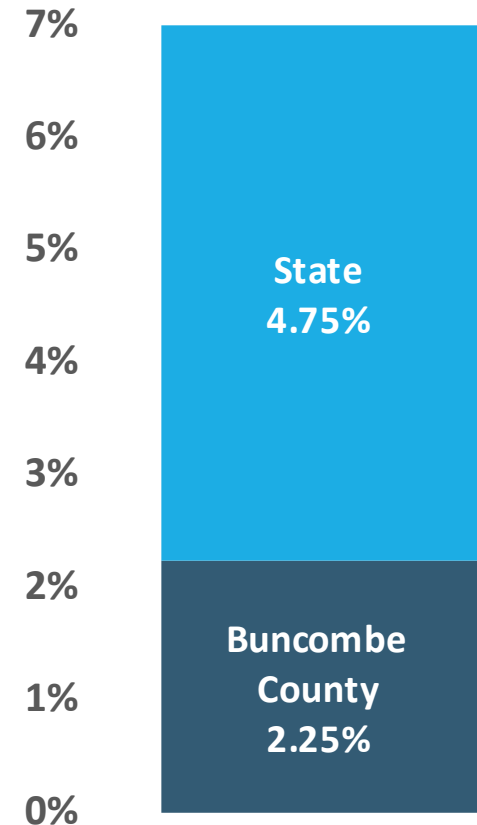


# Tax Base Percent Growth, 2021 - 2024



# Sales Tax

- State and counties each levy sales taxes
- State levies **4.75%**
  - All proceeds kept by state
- Buncombe County levies **2.25%**
  - Made up of 4 articles (Article 39, 40, 42, and 46)
  - Most proceeds are shared with municipalities, fire districts, and Asheville City Schools.



# Sales Tax Articles

Article	Rate	Distribution Method	Restrictions	Shared w/ Municipalities?	Effective County Share <sup>2</sup>
<b>39</b>	1.00%	Point of Sale	50% to School Capital Fund Comm. (ACS/BCS) <sup>1</sup>	Yes	32%
<b>40</b>	0.50%	Per Capita	30% to school capital (ACS/BCS)	Yes	45%
<b>42</b>	0.50%	Point of Sale	60% to school capital (ACS/BCS)	Yes	25%
<b>46</b>	0.25%	Point of Sale	100% to AB Tech <sup>1</sup>	No	0%

<sup>1</sup> Result of local bills from state legislature specific to Buncombe County

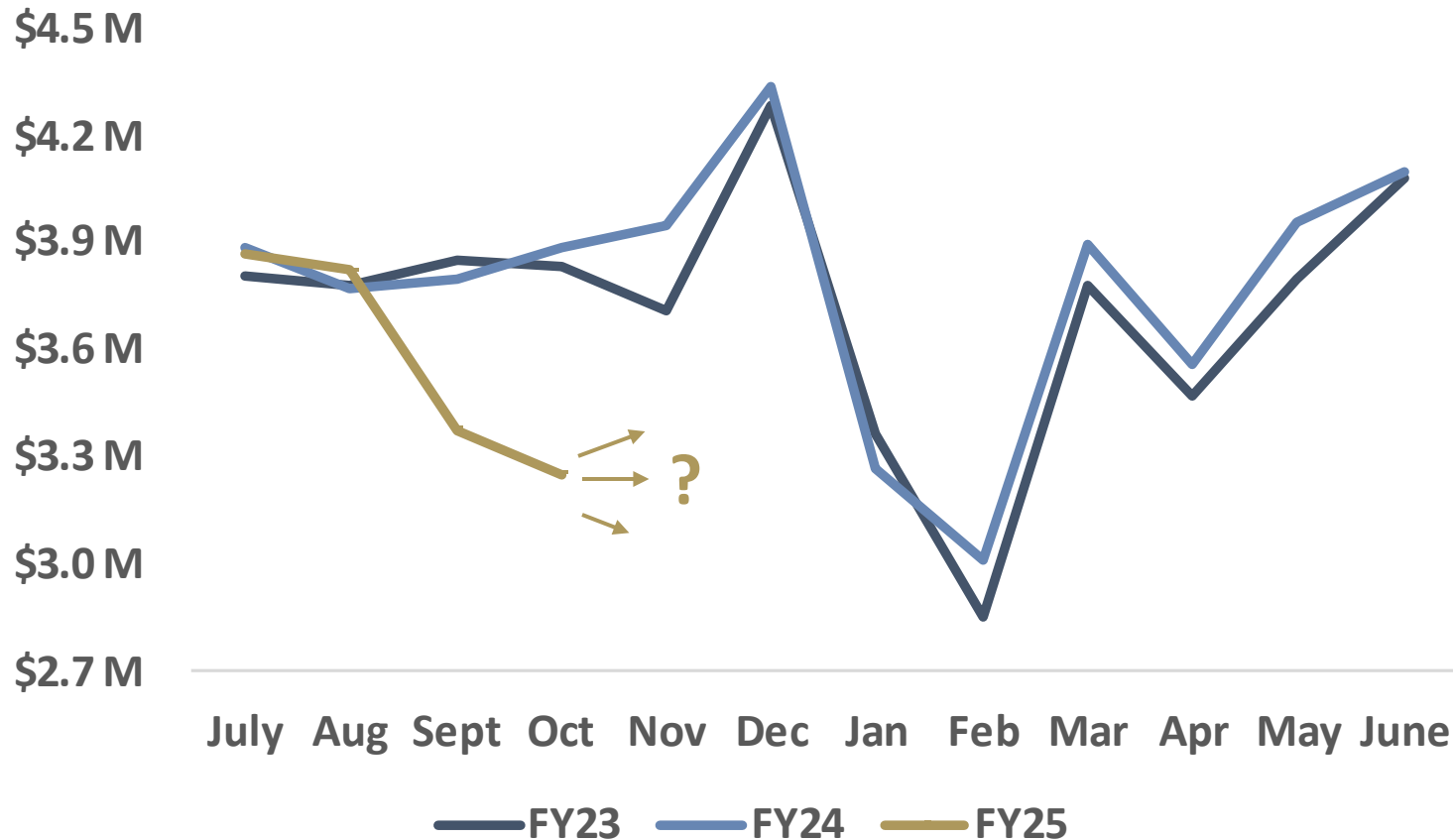
<sup>2</sup> Reflect distributions used for FY2025; portion of sales tax retained by County after distributions to municipalities, school capital, fire and school districts, etc.

- Of the 2.25 cents levied, the County receives revenue of around 0.67 cents



# Sales Tax Budgeting

Monthly Sales Tax Distributions, Buncombe County, FY2023-FY2025



- Uncertain revenue stream in normal times; more-so post-Helene
- Research suggests that, on average, after a major disaster, local government sales tax revenue takes several years to return to pre-disaster levels<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ismayilov, O., & Andrew, S. A. (2016). Effect of natural disasters on local economies: Forecasting sales tax revenue after Hurricane Ike. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, 15(2), 177–190. doi:10.17477/jcea.2016.15.2.177



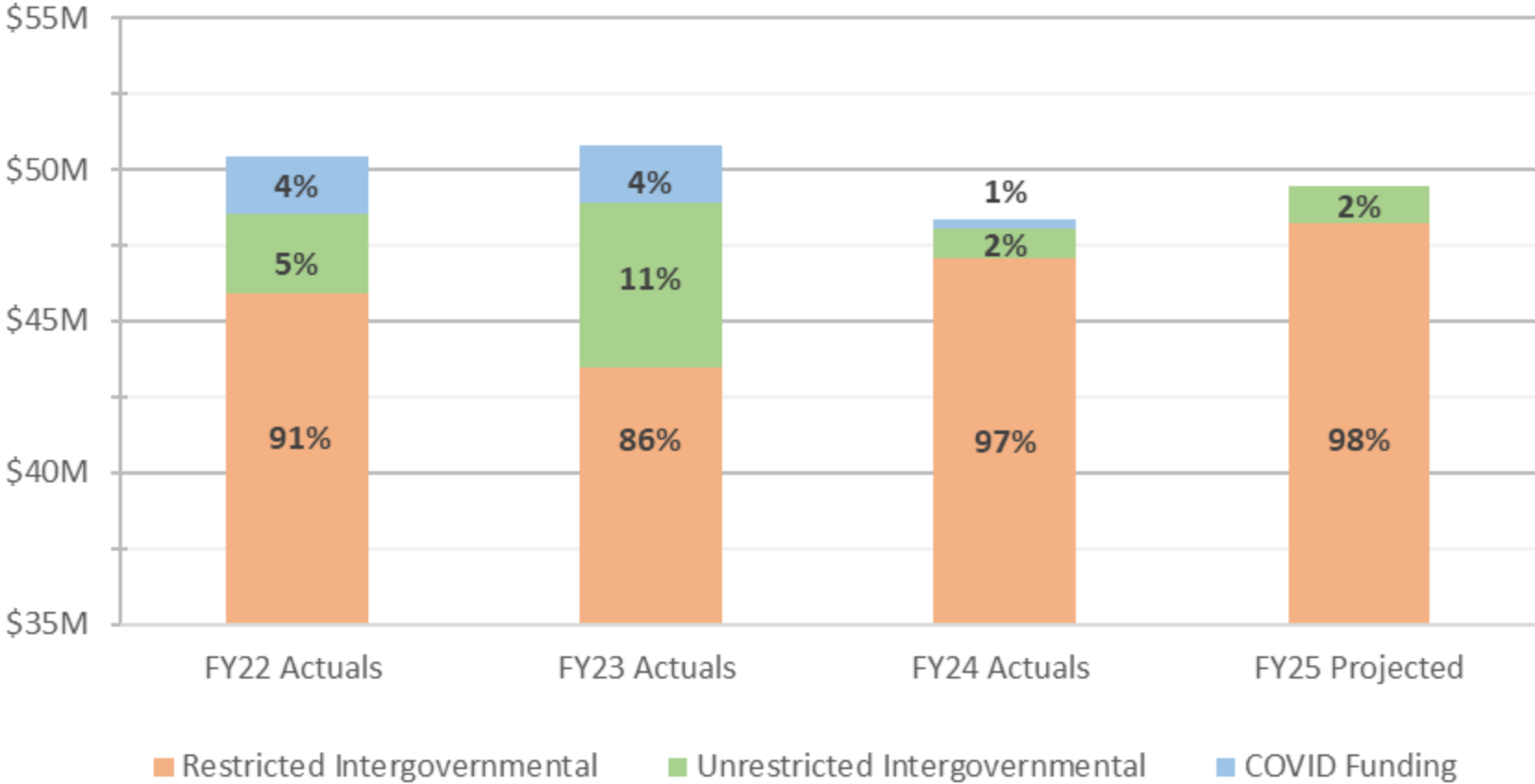
# Intergovernmental Revenue

- Largely Restricted Revenue
  - Administration of Medicaid / Food & Nutrition (FNS) Programs
  - Foster Care Room & Board
  - Public Health Funding
  - Local Intergovernmental Public Safety Agreements





# Intergovernmental Revenue



# Other Revenues

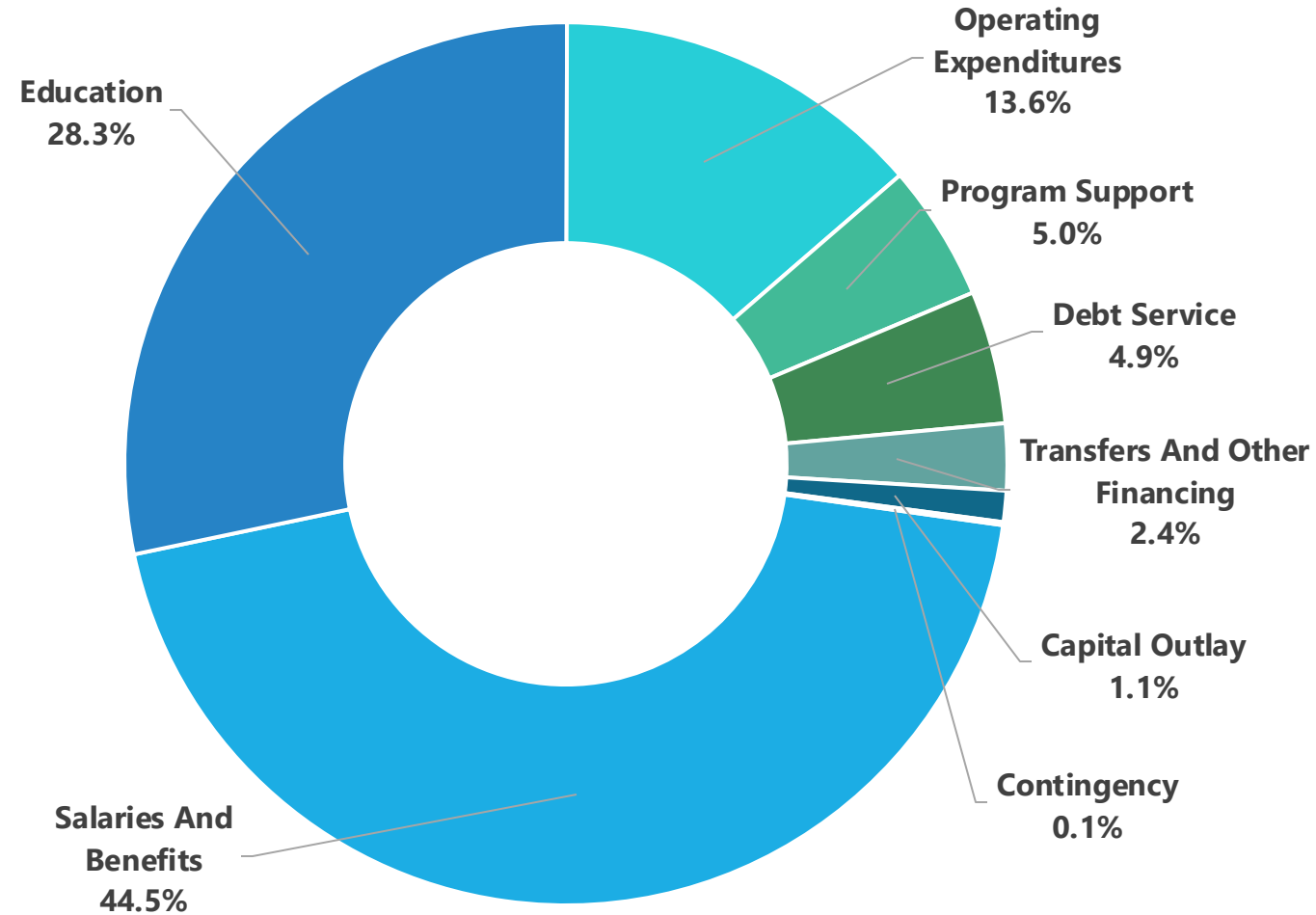
- Sales and Service
- Permits and Fees – largely restricted
- Other Taxes and Licenses
- Bond Proceeds
- Investment Earnings



# Expenditure Drivers

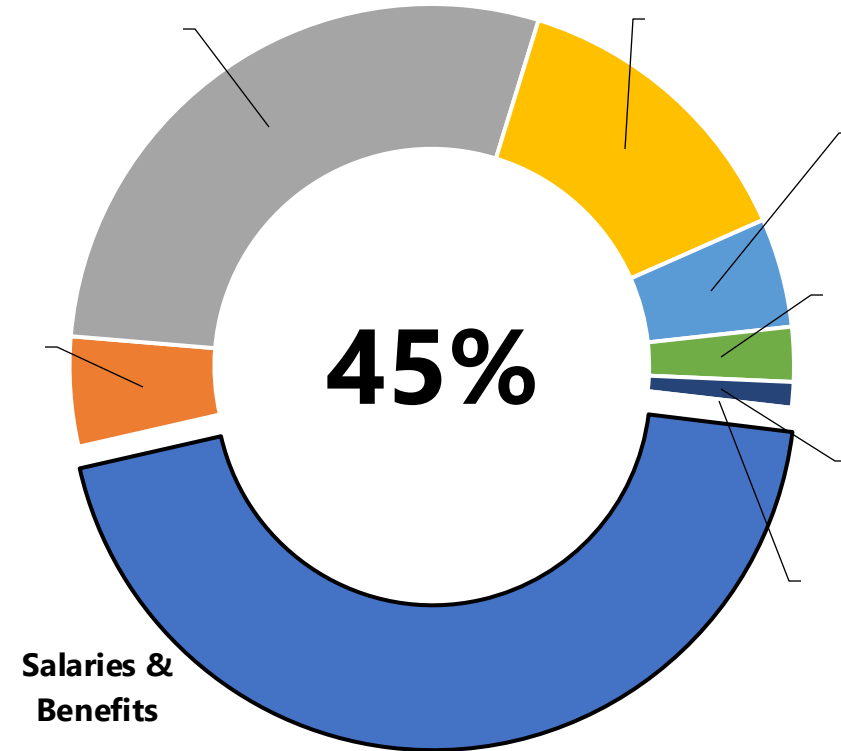


# FY25 Expenditure Budget



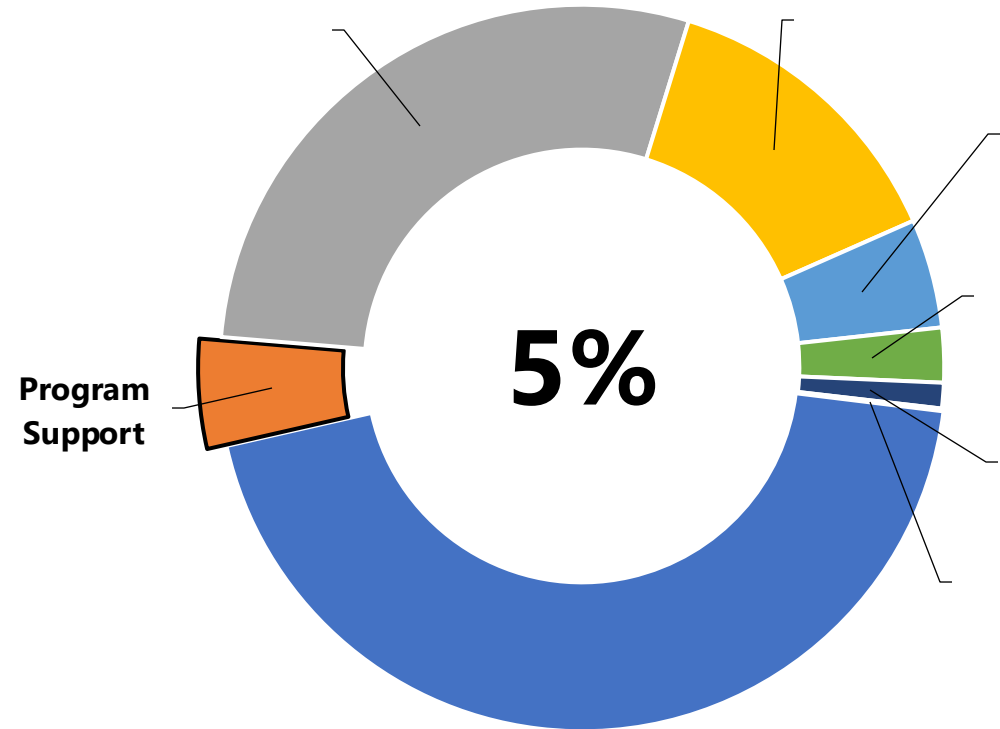
# FY25 Salaries & Benefits

- Outside of Education and Debt, Salaries and Benefits make 67% of general fund expenditures
- As a service-driven organization, the investment in staff needs to be significant

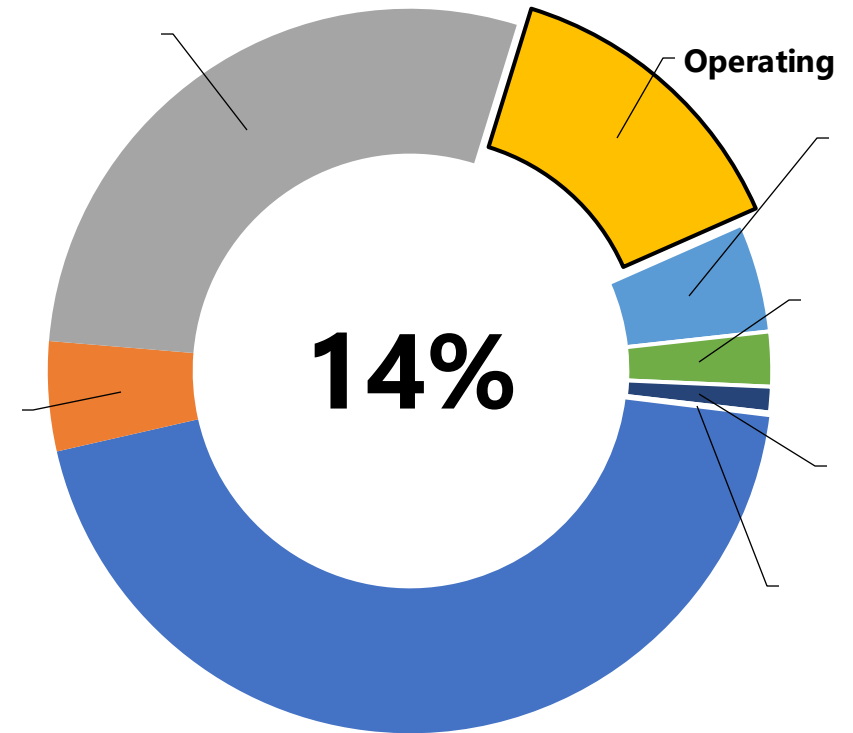
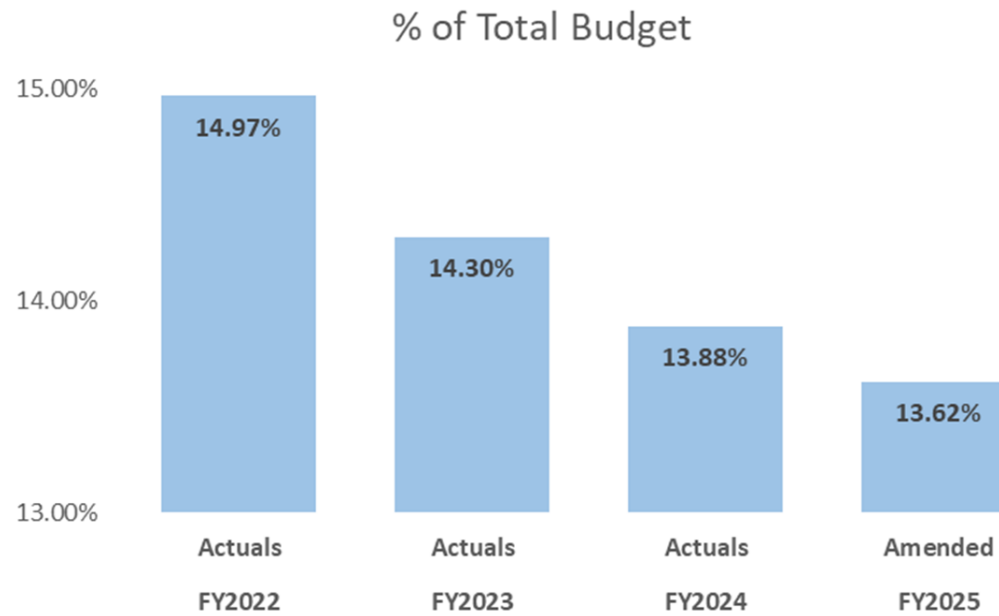


# FY25 Program Support

- Largely Health and Human Services programs driven by demand, which generally increases with community trauma
- Grant programs administered through Strategic Partnerships

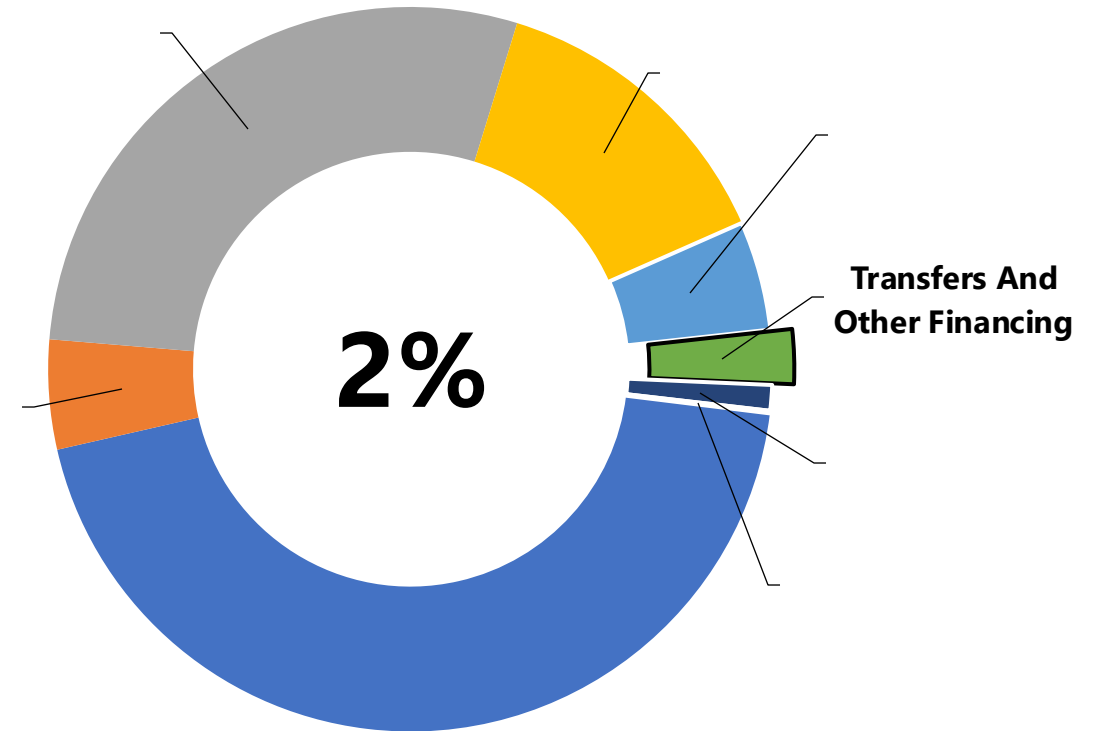


# FY25 Operating



# FY25 Transfers & Other Financing

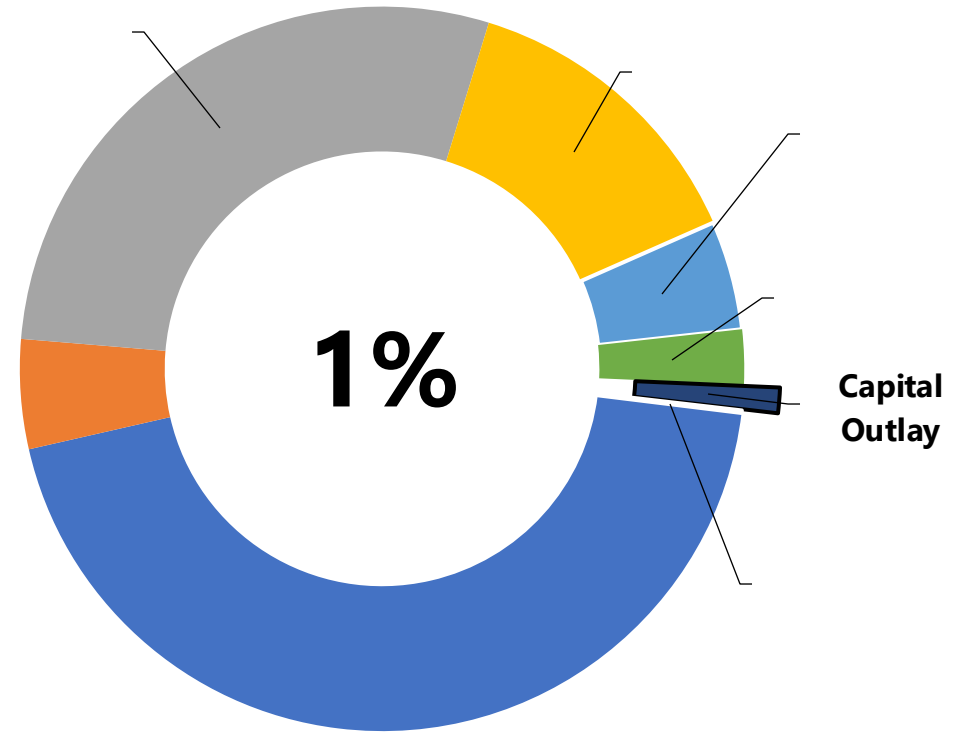
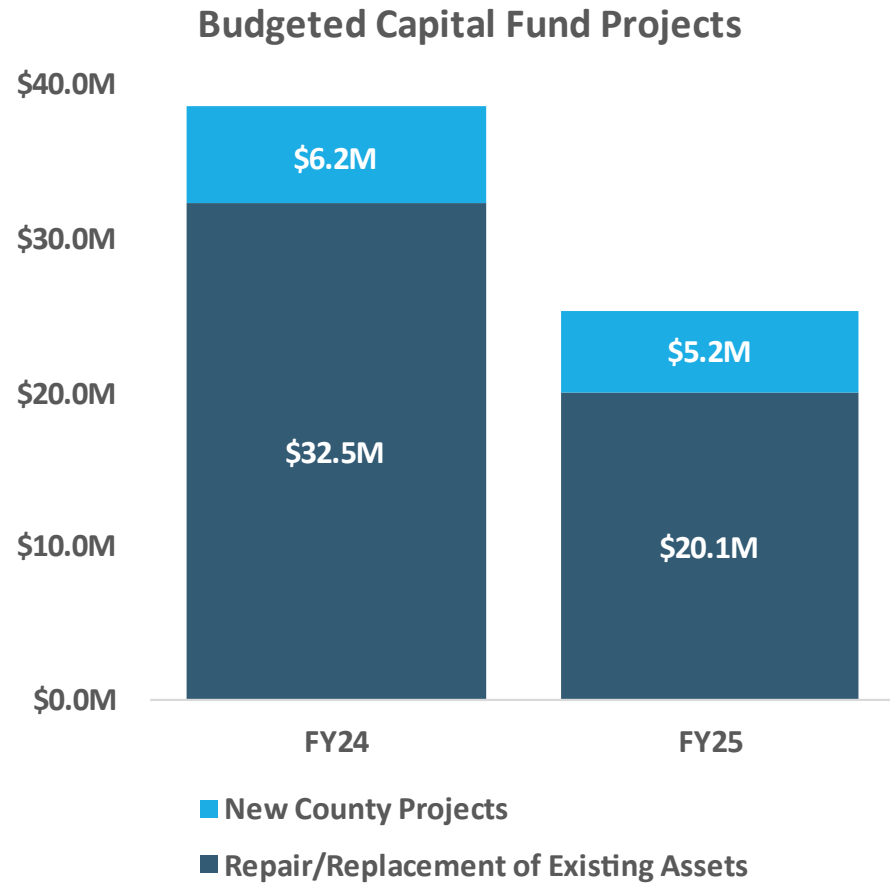
- Includes transfers to other funds for:
  - Transportation
  - PayGo capital
  - Grant matches
  - Strategic plan priorities





# FY25 Capital Outlay

- Comprehensive Facility Assessment yielded a 15-year plan for upgrading County facilities and moving departments for most effective service delivery and best use of buildings



# Repair and Replacement Examples

County Courthouse Repairs



Detention Center Repairs

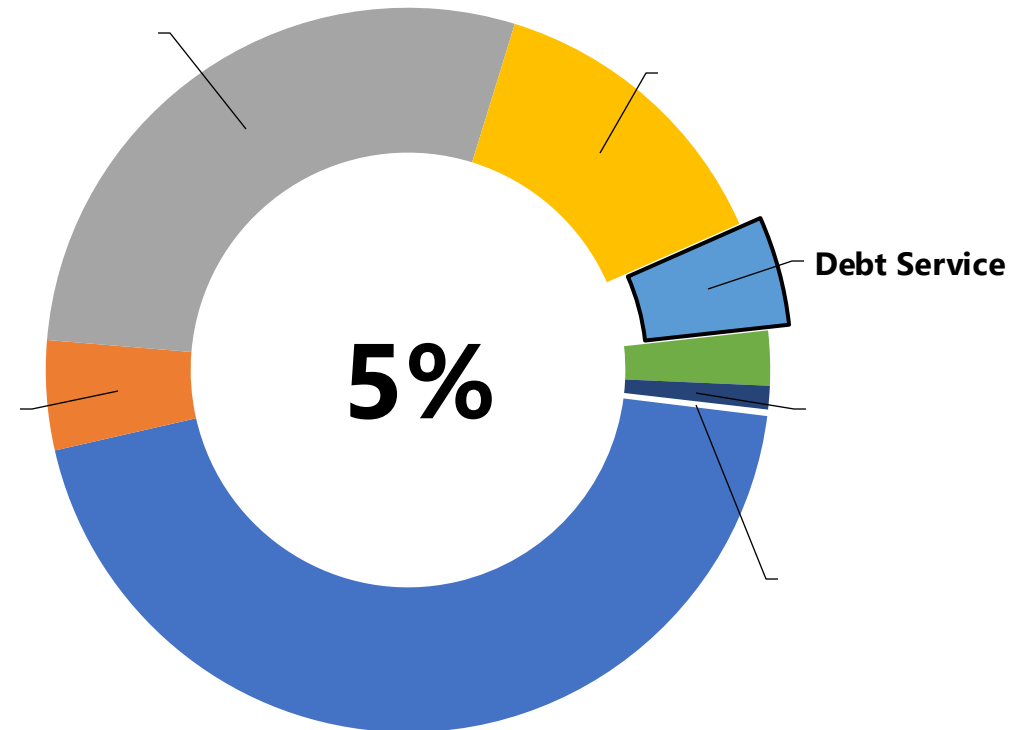


35 Woodfin Renovation



# FY25 Debt

- Debt payments have averaged \$20M-\$22M annually
- Future debt to include GO Bonds and debt-funded capital projects from FY23-24 will influence debt payments



# Recovery

- Budgeting v. Paying for Recovery Projects
- What will go unreimbursed?
  - Seek to minimize this
- Timeline for Reimbursement



# Questions?

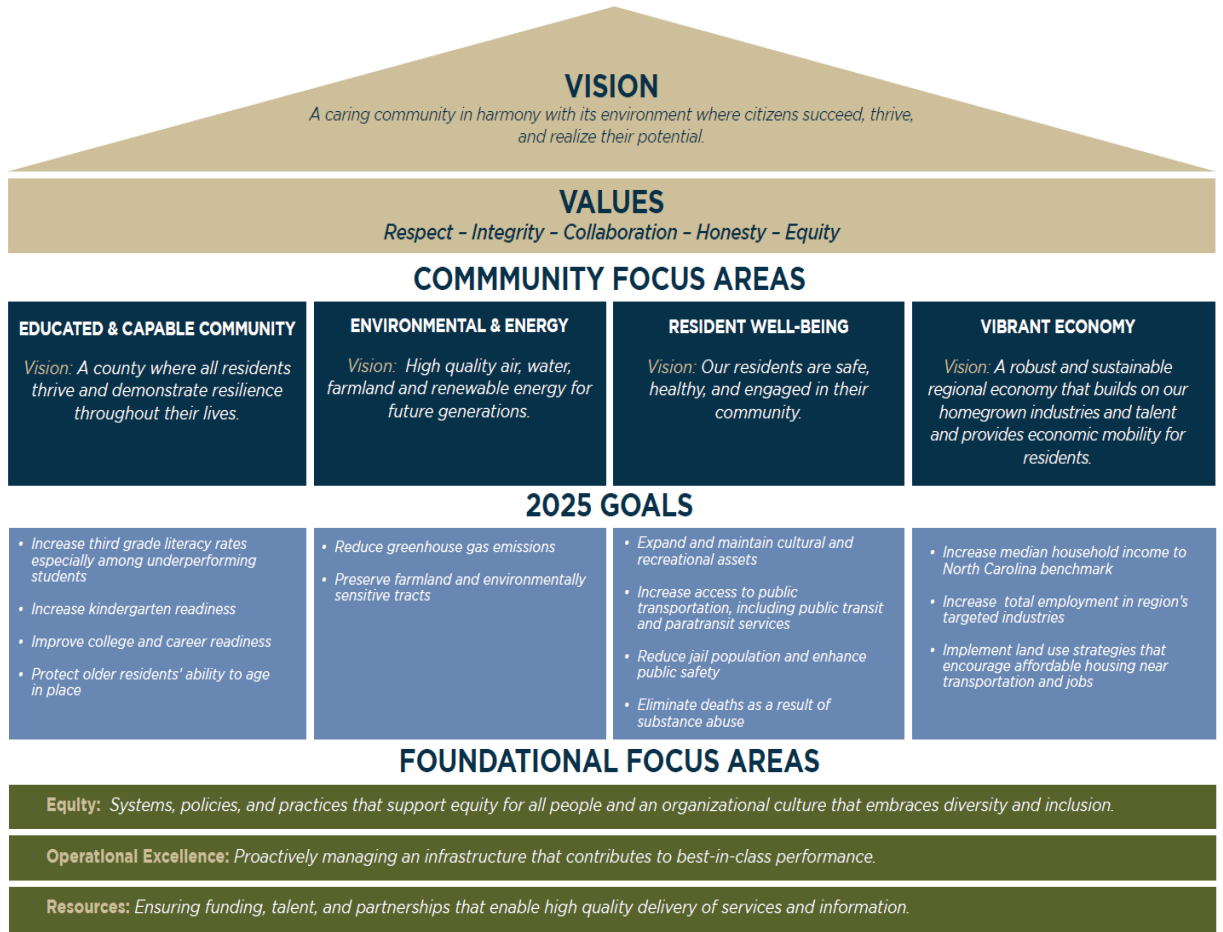


# Refocusing Budget for Recovery



# 2025 Buncombe County Strategic Plan

- ✓ Adopted by Board of Commissioners in 2020 and represented first Countywide Strategic Plan
- ✓ Included four Community Focus Areas and one Foundational Focus
- ✓ The County's operating budget is developed around an in support of the Strategic Plan with budgeting by Strategic Plan Focus Area



# Commissioner Strategic Priorities

## Educated & Capable

Strengthened Education partnerships with community organizations to reduce college and career readiness gaps

## Environment & Energy

\$9 million of conservation easement funding contributed to 2,537 acres of initiated conserved land

\$13,245,333 of funding to support 59 projects to install solar panels on public facilities

## Resident Well-Being

6 EMT Apprentices successfully completed program and accepted permanent positions within EMS

35% increase in MTN Mobility ridership from FY21-FY24

## Vibrant Economy

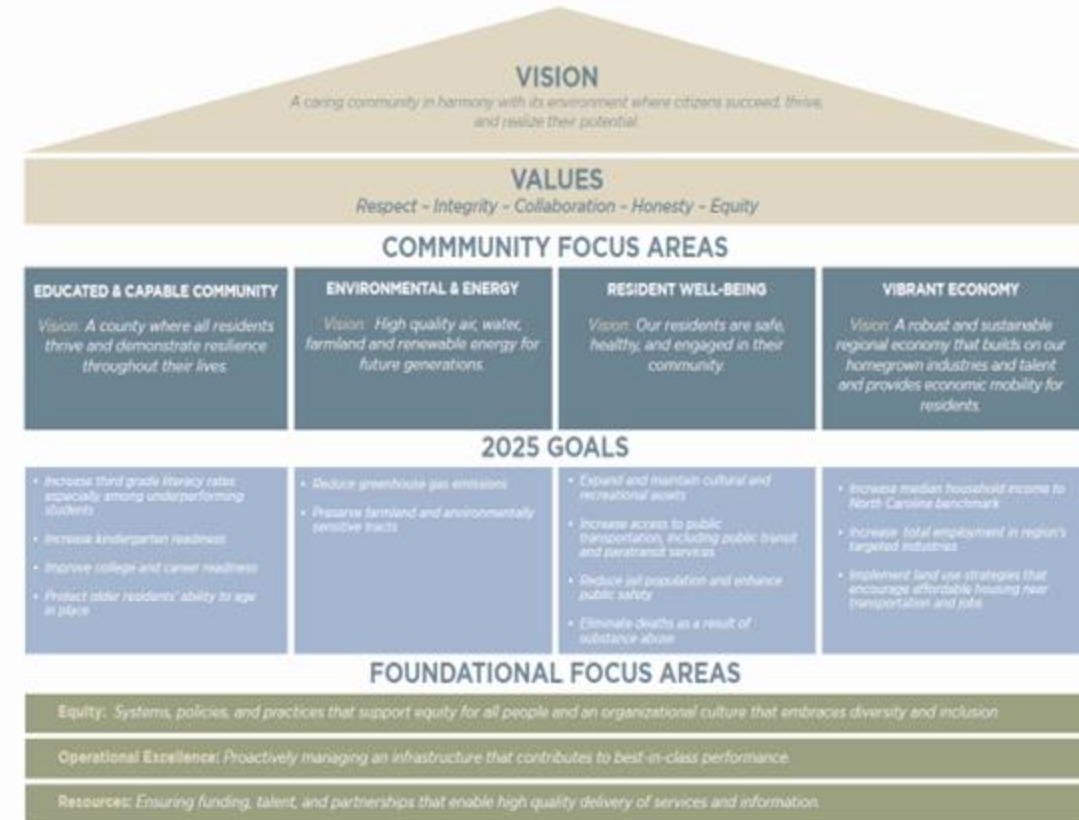
\$11.1 million of Affordable Housing Funding contributed to 628 number of created or preserved affordable housing units

Homeowner Grant Program supported 393 qualified Buncombe County homeowners with \$117,868 for housing assistance



# 2025 Strategic Plan Closeout

- 2025 Strategic Plan sunsetting at the end of the Fiscal Year
- Prior to Helene, staff and the Board had worked with the community to develop a near final draft of the 2030 Strategic Plan which will need to be adjusted to reflect changing needs and priorities post Helene
- Staff are working to develop a plan to update the draft 2030 Strategic Plan to be adopted in the coming fiscal year that is focused and aligned with the long-recovery work related to Helene





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# Helene Recovery

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*Refocusing Budget for Recovery*

Rachael Sawyer & Heather Parkinson



# Disaster Timeline



# Helene Emergency Response



- Rescue operations
- Safety & wellness checks
- Sheltering
- Meals & food distribution
- Water distribution
- Showers, laundry access
- Power restoration
- Phone & internet restoration
- Transitional housing
- Water restoration
- Damage assessments
- Safety repairs
- Road & bridge clearing & temporary repairs
- Debris removal
- Donations & volunteer management



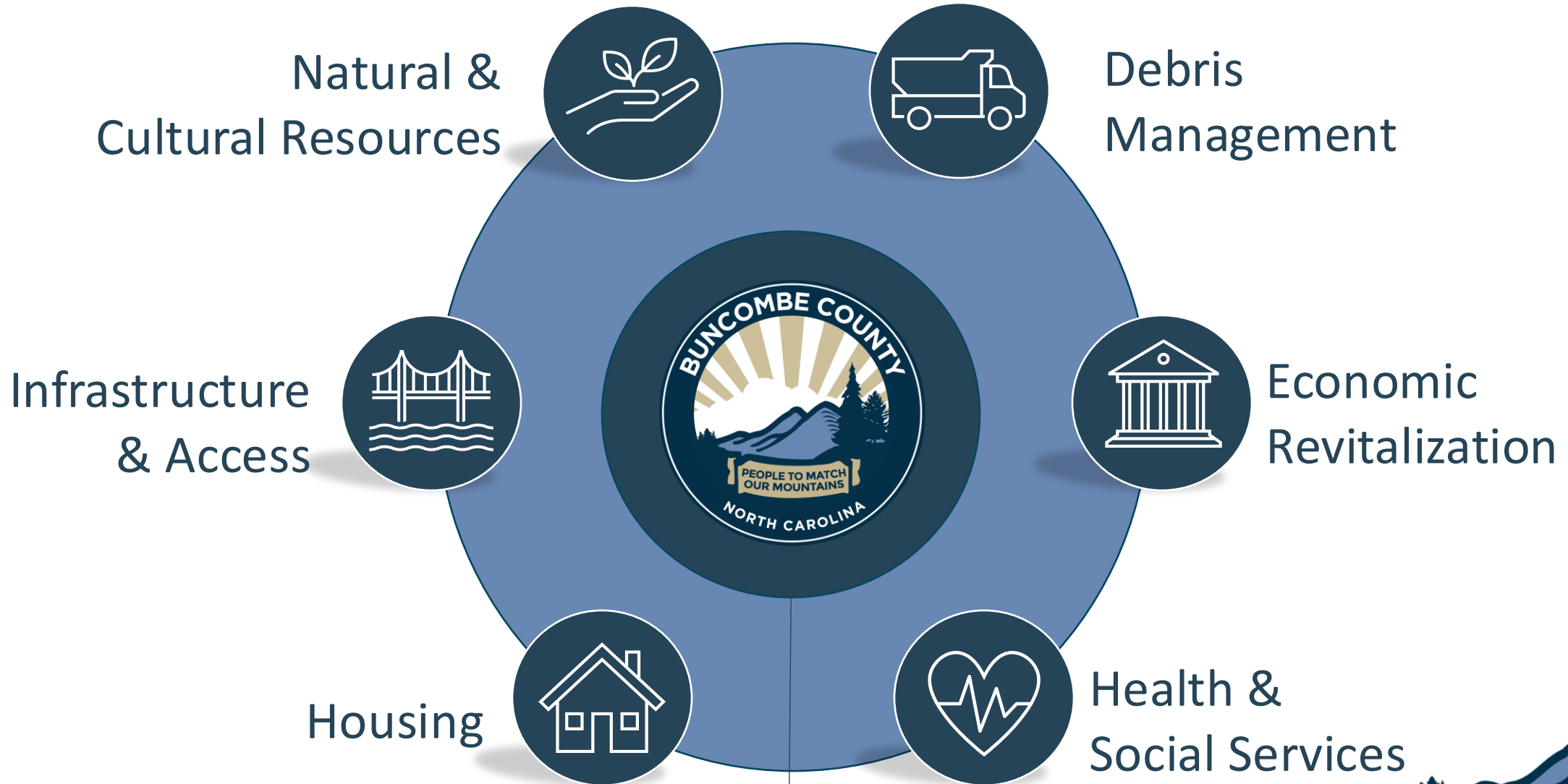
# Recovery Planning

Addressing disaster-related damages & future vulnerabilities and enhances resilience, equity & sustainability through:

- Collection of data to uncover key issues and challenges
- Community and partner engagement
- Establishment of short, medium and long-term recovery priorities
- Identification of recovery projects
- Financial planning to maximize available funding sources
- Building local capacity for recovery and resilience



# Recovery Support Functions



# Interagency Recovery Assessment

An aerial photograph showing a wide, muddy river flowing through a valley. A multi-lane bridge spans across the river in the middle ground. The surrounding landscape is densely forested with green trees, and some residential or commercial buildings are visible on the banks. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

Published December 31, 2024 by FEMA Interagency Recovery Coordination in collaboration with federal, state & local govt. partners

- Establishes recovery outcomes to guide strategic action
- Identifies recovery needs by Recovery Support Function

# Recovery Outcomes to Guide Strategic Action

Individuals and Families remain in their communities, resilient to future disruptions, and disaster related homelessness has been prevented.

Catastrophically rearranged natural and built infrastructure has been rehabilitated, preserved and made more resilient and sustainable.

Economy has been restored to contribute to GDP and taxable income and tribal/local governments can plan and manage their own recovery.





# Debris Management Recovery Needs

- Extraordinary Amounts of Storm Related Debris
- Removal of Debris from Public Right of Way, Private Property & Waterways
- Complexity of Debris Removal Regulations (e.g. Multi-agency Coordination, Ownership, Risk & Insurance Considerations, Environmental Regulations)
- Demolition of Private Residential & Commercial Structures
- Debris Volume Straining Storage Capabilities



# Economic Revitalization Recovery Needs

- Damage to and Loss of Small businesses
- Reduction of infrastructure and resources supporting the Workforce leading to concerns for Workforce Retention and Loss of Jobs
- Disaster Impacts Exacerbated Existing Need for Economic Diversification
- Skills Gap identified by Increased Demand for Workforce in Trades related to Rebuilding and Recovering
- Fragmented and Eliminated Key Commercial, Industrial and Arts Districts
- Historic impacts and repetitive loss in small town and unincorporated areas require significant redevelopment



# Health & Social Services Recovery Needs

- Timely Human Services Coordination
- Challenges to Restoration & Adaptation of Public Health & Social Services
- Extreme Impacts of Prolonged Stress and Behavioral Health
- Environmental Exposures from Mold/Debris/Sediments
- Potential Exacerbation of Communicable Diseases
- Disruptions to Child Care and K-12 Schools
- Health, Social Services & Education Facility Recovery



# Housing Recovery Needs

- Extensive Storm-Damaged & Destroyed Homes
- Lack of Temporary Housing for Displaced Residents
- Renters Facing Evictions as a Result of Loss of Income Sources
- Pre-Disaster Affordable Housing Shortages Exacerbated
- Outdated Building Codes & Zoning Challenges
- Challenges to Reconstruction/Relocation as a Result of Damages to Land
- Disproportionate Impacts to Limited English-Speaking/Vulnerable Populations



# Infrastructure & Access Recovery Needs

- Damage to public roads and bridges
- Numerous damaged and destroyed private roads and bridges in rural areas are the only access points linking residents with community services
- Storm damage significantly altered geomorphology of western North Carolina, rendering existing mapping of watersheds, zoning and insurance rates obsolete
- Impacts to waterways, loss of habitat and bank de-stabilization due to flooding and hydrogeomorphology changes



# Natural & Cultural Resources Recovery Needs

- Aquatic & Terrestrial Habitat Loss
- Shift in creeks obstructing private property
- Farmland and Topsoil is Severely Eroded and/or Contaminated
- Disruption and Loss to Agriculture Sector
- Damaged state/local parks, wildlife management areas and other green spaces
- Flooded historic downtowns and buildings
- Impact and damage to art, art studios, and cultural institutions



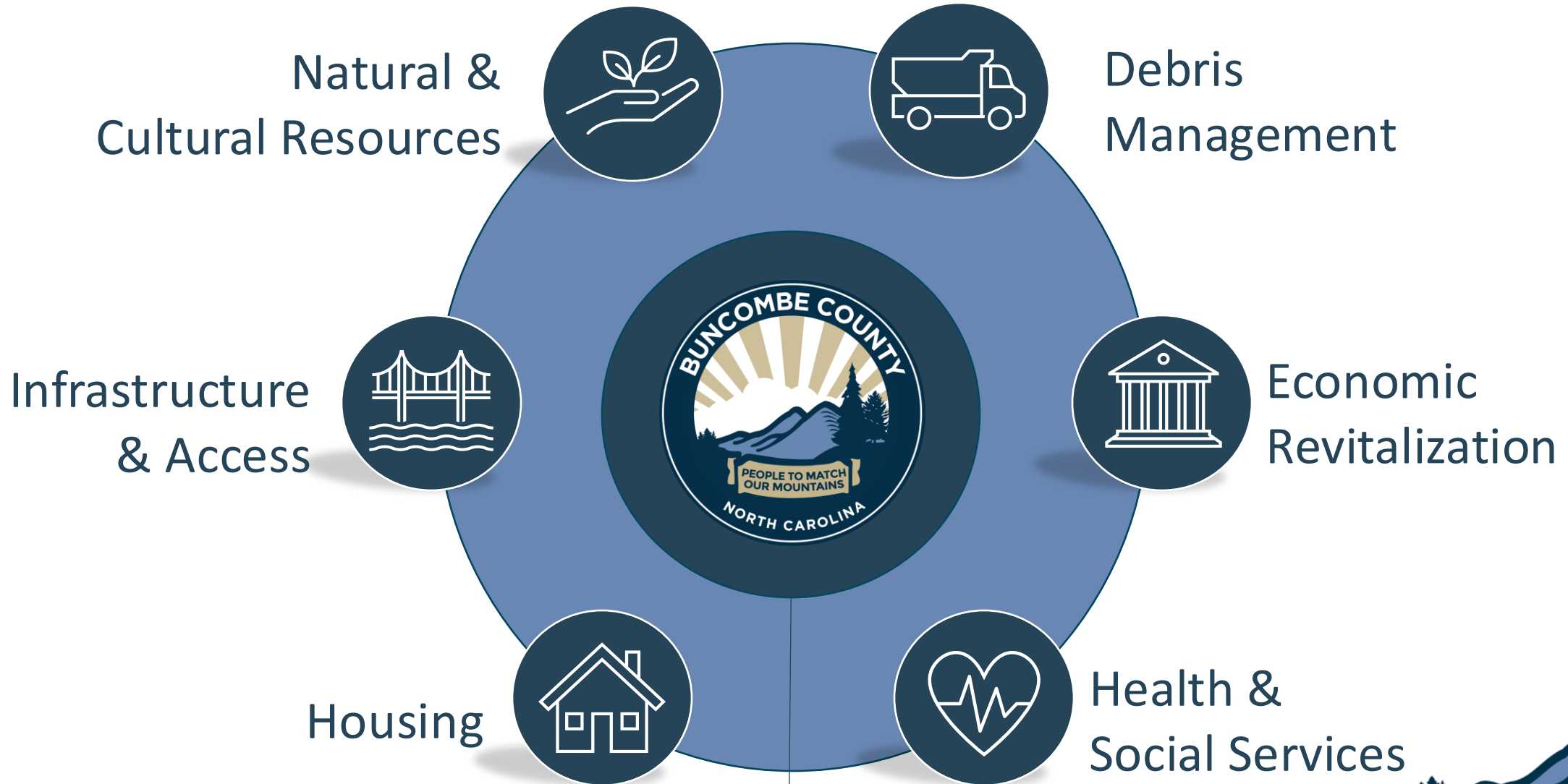
# Recovery Wrap-Up

Key takeaways:

- Immediate Response phase wrapping up
- Recovery phase underway
- Recovery Support Framework as a guide
- Alignment to state & federal outcomes & identified needs
- Locally created long term recovery plan
- Community & partner engagement critical
- Will require collaboration with all available funding and resources



# Recovery Discussion





# Wrap Up



# Wrap Up

- Questions or Comments
- March Budget Work Session

