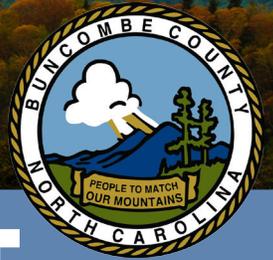


DRAFT

Buncombe County



SUSTAINABILITY PLAN UPDATE

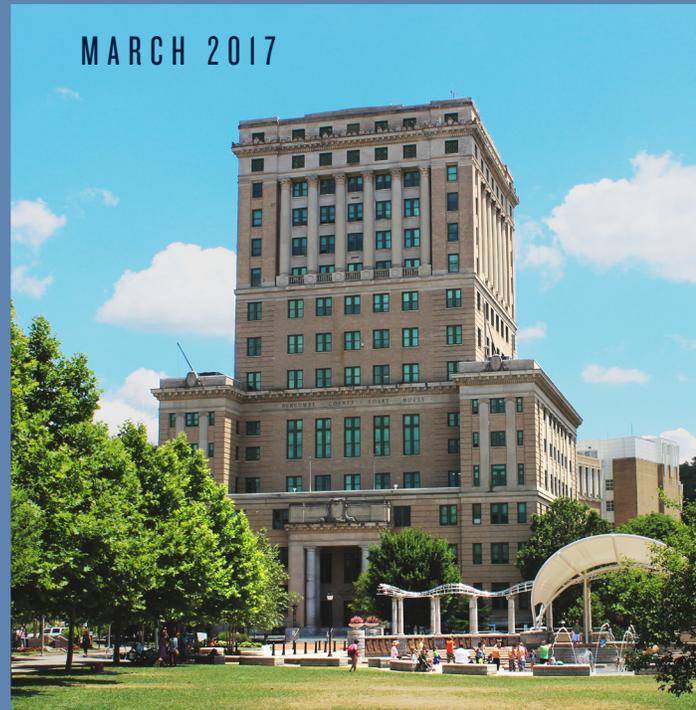




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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



As your County Commissioners, we strive to responsibly serve the community with integrity and innovation. Buncombe County has made a commitment to protect the social, environmental, and economic health – the sustainability – of the community by focusing today’s decision-making and actions on the impacts to future generations. To this end, we have supported staff efforts in implementing the Sustainability Plan that was first adopted in 2012 and has been updated to continue through 2021.

Building sustainability is not solely the work of the government. It is a systematic, integrating principle which every member of the community, whether they are an individual, business, or organization, can engage in and promote. The County strives to provide leadership to the community as we move forward together in all of our efforts. Given the social, environmental, and economic challenges we face as a nation, state and county, the time is now to embrace the benefits and need for sustainability and respond with action at the local level.

Brownie Newman
Chairman

Ellen Frost
Commissioner

Jasmine Beach-Ferrara
Commissioner

Joe Belcher
Commissioner

Al Whitesides
Commissioner

Robert Pressley
Commissioner

Mike Fryar
Commissioner

SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERSHIP

The partners that contributed to the update of the Sustainability Plan were selected for their expertise and knowledge of current conditions, new initiatives, and anticipated policy and funding changes. These individuals are experts within their fields, and are also well seasoned in the County's sustainability efforts. Many of our partners have been involved and have helped shape the County's Plan since its inception. Buncombe County thanks our partners and is grateful for their knowledge and their commitment.

Angie Ledford

Buncombe County Emergency Services

Ashley Featherstone

WNC Regional Air Quality

Ben Teague

Asheville Chamber of Commerce

Charlie Glazener

Asheville City Schools

Clint Shepherd

Buncombe County Physical Facilities

Denise Braine

Buncombe County Planning & Development (Transportation)

Donna Cottrell

Buncombe County Planning & Development (Housing)

Gary Higgins

Buncombe County Soil & Water Conservation District

Kathy Hughes

Buncombe County (Citizen Participation)

Kevin Kimrey

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College Economic and Workforce Development

Kim Moretz

Buncombe County Pretrial Services

Kristy Smith

Buncombe County Solid Waste

Rasheeda McDaniels

Buncombe County Health and Human Services

Sheri Powers

Buncombe County Sheriff's Department

Steve Duckett

North Carolina Cooperative Extension

Susanne Swanger

Buncombe County Schools





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Buncombe County Sustainability Plan was adopted May 15, 2012. The Plan was developed to guide our growing community toward a more sustainable, improved quality of life. The Plan was designed to be implemented within five years of its adoption, and contained the commitment to revisit and update the Plan after the initial five year period. This is our first five-year Plan Update which was undertaken to ensure both the relevancy of the Plan and to maintain a positive direction for our community in the future.

We are committed to continually improve our community for the betterment of future generations as indicated by our Mission and Vision Statements. The Mission Statement (which focuses on what we plan to accomplish) and Vision Statement (which articulates our desired future) were crafted in order to help guide both County Government and the community as a whole in the development of goals, objectives, indicators, and strategies for implementation of the Plan. These statements help the community focus its efforts as we work towards our vision for the future.

Mission Statement

Buncombe County is dedicated to strengthening our quality of life for everyone by taking fiscally and socially responsible actions to ensure the prosperity of future generations. Our collective decisions as citizens, businesses, government, and organizations measurably enrich our environment, our community, and our economy.

Vision Statement

Buncombe County is a leader in sustainable practices through the collaboration of citizens, institutions, businesses, and government.

We promote a sense of community through public engagement. We celebrate a healthy, safe, well-educated, and thriving community with a sustainable quality of life. We are stewards of the environment who advocate the conservation, preservation, and restoration of resources. We are part of a community and environmentally-conscious economy that is stable and diverse. We have a strong sense of place, and continue to work to preserve our distinctive landscape and culture.

We are committed to continually improving our community for the betterment of future generations.

SUSTAINABILITY GOALS



This Sustainability Plan Update contains revised goals and objectives in order to continue to address the most relevant issues facing our community and to apply our efforts in the most productive manner. These goals and objectives address the wide-reaching and interconnected needs and desires of our community. The goals define what we want to achieve within our community, environment, and economy and the objectives serve as statements of action to provide guidance on how to obtain each goal. The goals and objectives are presented on the following pages.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

COMMUNITY



QUALITY EDUCATION

- Increase high school graduation rate.
- Increase access to higher education.
- Expand quality early childhood programs.
- Increase parent and community involvement in the educational system.
- Increase the percentage of children reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.



HEALTHY LIVING

- Decrease infant mortality rate.
- Increase the use of recreation facilities, programs, and services.
- Improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Increase access to mental health and substance abuse services.
- Improve the ability of people with diabetes to better self-manage their illness.
- Increase access to affordable health insurance.



AFFORDABLE, GREEN, AND LIVABLE HOUSING

- Provide housing assistance for affordable and workforce housing.
- Support quality rental developments that are required to remain affordable.
- Increase financial capabilities for people to increase knowledge, build savings, and improve credit.
- Expand housing repair programs.
- Continue to encourage the construction of Green Built NC certified homes.





CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

- Increase voter registration in Buncombe County.
- Increase the use of library programs and services.
- Increase the use of the Buncombe County website.
- Increase volunteerism in Buncombe County.
- Increase the number of citizens willing to serve on Buncombe County Boards.
- Increase the use of social media.



EQUITY IN ACCESS

- Expand access to information.
- Expand provision of public transportation.
- Improve access to health care.
- Continue opportunities through which citizens receive education in food choices, nutrition, and food safety.
- Increase the number of recreational activities available in the community.
- Expand the provision of health and human services in collaboration with community partners.



SAFE RESILIENT COMMUNITY

- Ensure timely emergency service response.
- Offer alternatives to incarceration, including specialized courts and diversion programs.
- Promote crime prevention through site assessments for residences and businesses.
- Ensure public safety personnel are trained and prepared for emergencies.
- Engage the community as a partner through Community Policing activities.
- Encourage the location of critical facilities outside high hazard areas.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES



ENVIRONMENT



CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- Conserve and protect water resources.
- Protect ecological systems and wildlife.
- Promote energy conservation.
- Encourage sustainable land use.
- Educate the public in reducing their environmental footprint.



POLLUTION AND WASTE PREVENTION

- Improve air quality.
- Improve water quality.
- Reduce the use of harmful chemicals.
- Manage waste – reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Reduce Buncombe County Government's carbon footprint.



ACCESSIBLE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

- Reduce the rate of increase of annual Vehicle Miles travelled (VMT).
- Increase commuting choices.
- Increase fixed route public transportation ridership.
- Extend greenways for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Encourage land development connected to existing transportation corridors.

ECONOMY



THRIVING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

- Promote farmland preservation in order to decrease loss of agricultural land.
- Promote sustainable agricultural production and community gardening.
- Increase demand for locally produced foods.



ROBUST LOCAL ECONOMY

- Increase the number of new jobs in Buncombe County.
- Increase the number of new jobs with earnings above \$50k.
- Maintain high employment.
- Recruit new business.
- Support the expansion of existing businesses.



RESPONSIVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Increase the number of specialized training courses offered for businesses in Buncombe County.
- Provide job applicant assessment and job training that fits anticipated and current job skills demand.
- Increase the number of companies participating in training and/or services for job creation or advancement.



INTRODUCTION

BUNCOMBE COUNTY'S Sustainability Plan outlined a five-year process for improving Buncombe County's community, environment, and economy, and established 14 goals within each of those three areas. Five years have passed since the Plan was adopted, and much has been learned and changed in that time. In 2016 Buncombe County began work on the Sustainability Plan Update, which also incorporates the fifth year Annual Report. Revised objectives, strategies, and indicators have been established for each goal to continue measuring progress over the next five years. The Plan Update does not intend to be a comprehensive summary of all progress within the County, but instead, focuses on important trends and data for which reliable information is available.

Information in the Sustainability Plan Update comes from many sources, and is a mix of fiscal and calendar year data. Most information is directly reported from those individuals whose daily work impacts the indicators' status. These individuals and those with whom they work maintain high quality programs and strive to improve services for Buncombe County. In addition to reports that are received annually from our partners, data is also tracked through agency reports and websites. All of the photos used throughout the report are from various aspects of Buncombe County and have been graciously provided by many of our local partners, including County staff.



Goal:

A description of what we want to achieve.

Objective:

A statement of action that indicates how to obtain a specific goal.

Strategy:

The plan of action that identifies how to achieve a goal or objective. Strategies include projects, policies, programs, education, outreach, etc.

Indicator:

A measurable quality or characteristic that is used to identify progress and track trends over time.



DEVELOPING THE PLAN UPDATE

Buncombe County Government adopted its first internal Sustainability Plan in 2009. This Plan primarily focused on the operation of County facilities and fleet. Building from the success of this initial Plan, in 2011, the Board of Commissioners established a public stakeholder group to help create a County-wide Sustainability Plan. This Sustainability Plan focused on the three main goal areas of Community, Environment, and Economy. Through a collaborative effort involving staff, elected officials, community partners, citizens, and consultants, the Sustainability Plan was adopted by the Board of Commissioners on May 15, 2012. The intention of the Plan was to guide the efforts of both local government and the greater community toward sustainable practices over a five year time frame.

In the past five years, there have been shifts in trends and priorities, and growth and adaptation have occurred. One such change has been the need to reduce staffing costs and create better efficiencies by contracting out services. Another trend to increase efficiency and convenience has been co-locating some services and County departments, and creating integrated database systems. New construction and renovations of County buildings have been a priority. Examples of recently completed County facilities include the Judicial Complex, the Public Safety Training Center, and the Family Justice Center. This trend toward expansion and growth is seen elsewhere in the County. Our airport is completing a \$64 million expansion, and our hospital system is undergoing a \$400 million expansion. There is no doubt, our community is growing.

Throughout the five-year period of the initial Sustainability Plan, Annual Reports were issued with indicator data, strategies, and local photos supplied by many different sources. The Annual Reports captured information under each of the 14 original goals. Once trends were established, after the second year Annual Report, an effort was made to evaluate the indicator information from the baseline year.



In the spring of 2016, a framework for updating the Sustainability Plan was established. The current Plan's strengths and weaknesses were evaluated. The strengths included the commitment from our partners to pursue the Plan's objectives; the schedule for the issuance of the Annual Report; and the quality of the data included in the Plan. The weaknesses were the amount of data being requested and provided; and the lack of clear connection between the objectives, indicators, and strategies.

A committee was formed to update the Sustainability Plan in the summer of 2016 and worked with staff and the consultant to review the current goals, objectives, indicators, and strategies. Four meetings were held over a four month time period with workgroup sessions frequently occurring between each meeting.

Changes were made in the number of goals included in the Plan Update. Within the Community section of the Plan, the eight goals were reduced to six. Healthy People and Healthy Environments were combined into one goal: Healthy Living. Safe, Low-Crime Communities and Resistance to Natural and Manmade Hazards were combined into one goal: Safe Resilient Community. Other goal titles were modified to streamline or to clarify the goal concept (e.g., Quality Education replaced Educational Resources Which Match the Needs of the Community; Citizen Involvement replaced Participation in Community Decisions, etc.). Three goals remain to support Environment, and three to support Economy. In total, there are 12 goals in the Plan Update.

The committee was asked to review the current plan, and select no more than six (6) objectives (i.e., statement of action) per goal. They selected the most relevant objectives, either from the current Plan or by identifying new objectives. Many of the current Plan's objectives were used, but some changed. Because the committee members have each been involved in the Sustainability Plan process, and because they work every day as community leaders in the goal area they represent, they have the ability to decide upon the most appropriate objectives.

Once the objectives were agreed upon, the committee identified one indicator to measure each objective. This process was meant to establish a direct linkage between intentions and results. By associating one measurement per objective, there will be direct accountability for the annual progress made on each objective. Within the current Plan, that direct relationship had not been well established, and progress was measured using several different indicators.

The final challenge for committee members was deciding upon one strategy (i.e., plan of action) for each objective. The strategies represent the projects, programs, education, or outreach to achieve the objective. Within the framework of the Plan Update, only the strategies may change from year to year, and will be identified in the Annual Reports.

The draft Sustainability Plan Update was presented to the committee members in October 2016. Public review and comments were received between October and January 2017, with adoption on March 7, 2017.

PLAN UPDATE

THE PLAN UPDATE has a section for each goal identifying indicators of progress as well as strategies for implementation for each objective. Each goal section also highlights current conditions and accomplishments. Many of the indicators have been changed in this update, but for those indicators that were carried over from the original Plan, comparisons have been shown. The most current available indicator data was used.



COMMUNITY

Buncombe County promotes a sense of community through public engagement. We celebrate a healthy, safe, well-educated, and thriving community with a sustainable quality of life.

The Buncombe County Sustainability Plan Vision Statement





QUALITY EDUCATION

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

- Increase high school graduation rate.



Four-year high school graduation rate at Asheville City Schools (ACS) and Buncombe County Schools (BCS)

Provide personalized graduation plans for all students aligned to their career and college planning.

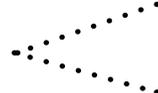
- Increase access to higher education.



Number of students enrolled in college level courses in grades 9-12

Provide opportunities for students to enroll in college courses during high school.

- Expand quality early childhood programs.



Number of children enrolled in four- and five-star rated child care centers

Expand accessible, affordable, high-quality preschool for 3 and 4 year olds through a public-private partnership.

- Increase parent and community involvement in the educational system.



Volunteer hours contributed to Asheville City and Buncombe County school systems

Provide a variety of opportunities for parents and families in areas such as academics, career and college planning, and parenting skills.

- Increase the percentage of children reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.

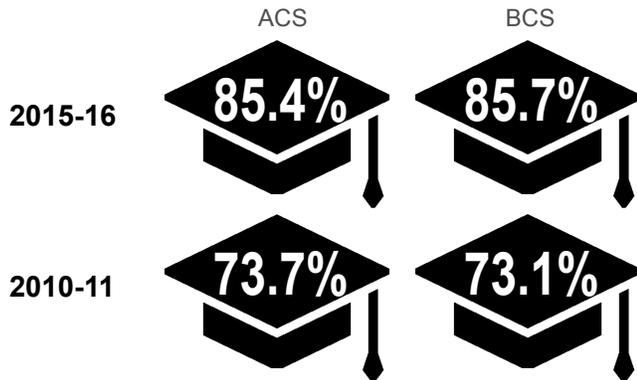


Percentage of children reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade

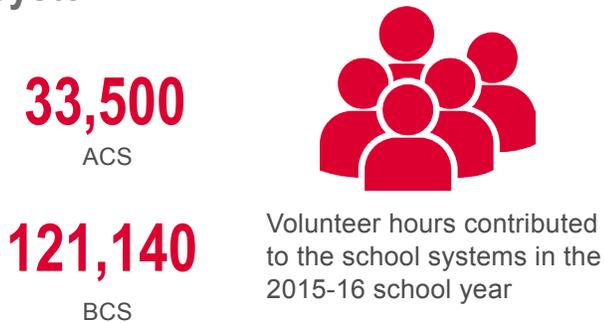
Provide research-based, grade level reading instruction supported through high quality professional development and classroom coaching using a variety of digital and print resources.

PROGRESS

Increase high school graduation rate.



Increase parent and community involvement in the educational system.

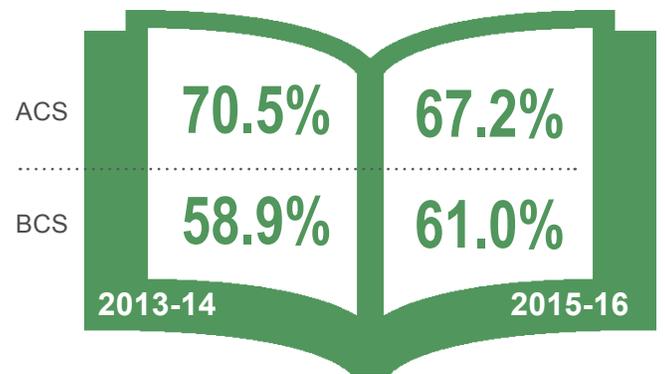


Expand quality early childhood programs.



Total enrolled in four- and five-star child care centers and family child care homes (out of the total 4,152 in child care centers)

Increase the percentage of children reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.



Increase access to higher education.



Number of students enrolled in college level courses in grades 9-12 in the 2015-16 school year





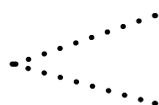
HEALTHY LIVING

INDICATOR

STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

- **Decrease infant mortality rate.**



Infant mortality rate in Buncombe County

Promote preconception health and access to adequate prenatal care.

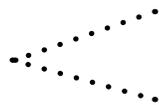
- **Increase the use of recreation facilities, programs, and services.**



Number of adults participating in Buncombe County adult recreation activities and leagues

Use social media to promote recreation facilities, programs, and services.

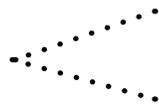
- **Improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.**



Number of traffic related pedestrian and cyclist injuries in Buncombe County

Educate residents through the Watch For Me safety campaign.

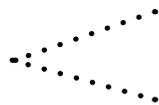
- **Increase access to mental health and substance abuse services.**



Number of Medicaid clients receiving mental health and substance abuse services

Coordinate with the Local Management Entity (LME) to strengthen mental health and substance abuse services.

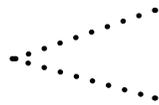
- **Improve the ability of people with diabetes to better self-manage their illness.**



Diabetes mortality rate in Buncombe County

Support the availability of diabetes prevention and management programs.

- **Increase access to affordable health insurance.**

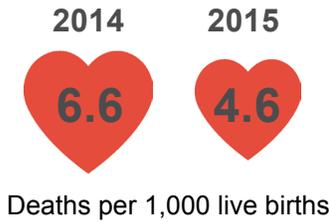


Percentage of uninsured adults between the ages of 19-64

Promote Affordable Care Act information and enrollment assistance.

PROGRESS

Decrease infant mortality rate.



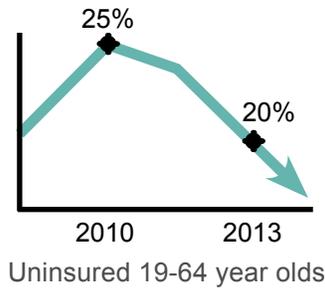
Deaths per 1,000 live births

Increase the use of recreation facilities, programs, and services.



Adults participated in BC adult recreation activities and leagues in FY2016

Increase access to affordable health insurance.



Uninsured 19-64 year olds

Increase access to mental health and substance abuse services.



Improve the ability of people with diabetes to better self-manage their illness.



15.3 Diabetes mortality rate per 100,000 people in BC in 2014 compared to 13.3 in 2013

Improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

27  Bicycle crashes

95  Pedestrian crashes

FY 2015
compared to 73 total crashes in 2008



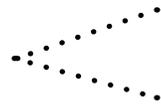


AFFORDABLE, GREEN, AND LIVABLE HOUSING

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

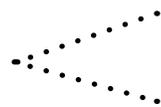
- Provide housing assistance for affordable and workforce housing.



Number of units assisted through Buncombe County funding

Continue to fund the Buncombe County Affordable Housing Services Program.

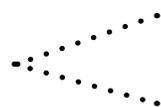
- Support quality rental developments that are required to remain affordable.



Number of affordable rental units assisted with Buncombe County funding

Participate with the HOME Consortium Board to prioritize rental development.

- Increase financial capabilities for people to increase knowledge, build savings, and improve credit.



Number of participants in financial education classes through OnTrack Financial

Provide money management, credit education, and counseling.

- Expand housing repair programs.



Amount of funding supporting emergency repair programs

Partner with organizations that complete emergency home repairs.

- Continue to encourage the construction of Green Built NC certified homes.



Number of Green Built NC (Formerly Healthy Built) certified homes

Increase the amount of Buncombe County Affordable Housing Services Program application points awarded for Green Built NC certified units.

PROGRESS

Expand housing repair programs.

\$100,000

Amount spent on emergency repair programs in FY2016 resulting in **30 repairs**



Increase financial capabilities for people to increase knowledge, build savings, and improve credit.

Number of participants in OnTrack financial education classes in FY2016



Continue to encourage the construction of Green Built NC certified homes.



148

Green Built NC certified homes in progress in BC in FY2015

1,116 total homes certified since 2011

Support quality rental developments that are required to remain affordable.

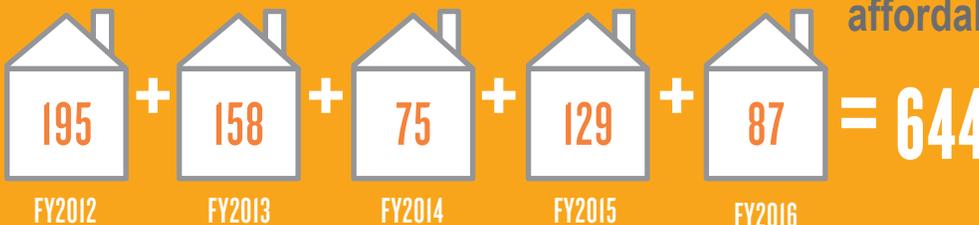


Rental units assisted with BC funding in FY2016

114 total since FY2012



Provide housing assistance for affordable and workforce housing.



Families assisted through affordable housing programs in the County since 2012

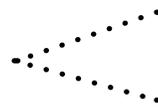


CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

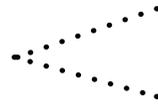
- Increase voter registration in Buncombe County.



Number of registered voters

Conduct outreach to community groups, libraries, and high schools with registration drives.

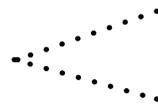
- Increase the use of library programs and services.



Number of Buncombe County residents attending library programs

Increase social media advertising of programs in each of the branch library areas.

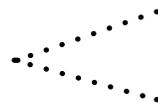
- Increase the use of the Buncombe County website.



Number of hits on Buncombe County website

Include the web address on all print and online media, and keep web information current.

- Increase volunteerism in Buncombe County.



Number of volunteers through Asheville-Buncombe United Way Initiatives

Advertise volunteer opportunities online and through school and employer Resource Teams.

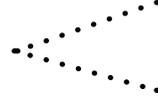
- Increase the number of citizens willing to serve on Buncombe County Boards.



Number of applications received for Boards

Create a virtual online academy to inform citizens about the County, service opportunities on boards and commissions, and how to volunteer.

- Increase the use of social media.



Number of views of Buncombe County social media

Invest advertising funds in social media marketing with strategic posts encouraging citizen involvement.



Increase voter registration in Buncombe County.

194,728



4.8% increase since 2012

Increase the use of library programs and services.

115,465



Number of residents who attended library programs in FY2016 compared to **110,179 residents** in FY2015

Increase the number of citizens willing to serve on BC Boards.

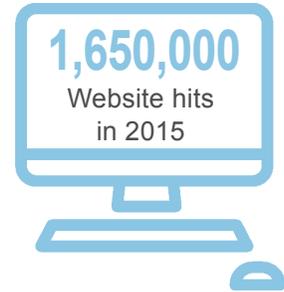
81

Applications received for 131 seats in 2016 (including 36 reappointments)



compared to **75** received for 76 seats in 2015 (including 45 reappointments)

Increase the use of the Buncombe County website.



Increase the use of social media.



Increase volunteerism in Buncombe County.



Number of volunteers through United Way Initiatives in 2015

compared to **3,403** in 2014

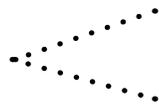


EQUITY IN ACCESS

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

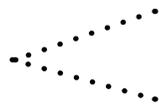
- Expand access to information.



Number of new videos produced and played on BCTV

Improve the quality of video and social media content, and publicize community events, resources and programs.

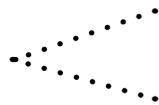
- Expand provision of public transportation.



Number of Mountain Mobility passenger trips

Promote Mountain Mobility services through presentations to communities and agencies and distribution of Trailbrazer brochures and flyers to existing and potential markets.

- Improve access to health care.



Number of patients served through Western North Carolina Community Health Services

Promote medical care home model for integrated health care.

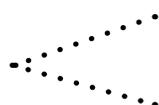
- Continue opportunities through which citizens receive education in food choices, nutrition, and food safety.



Number of participants in Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Family & Consumer Science (FCS) classes

Ensure the continuation of the EFNEP and FCS programs by coordinating with partners (HHS, WIC, and faith based organizations) to identify qualified participants.

- Increase the number of recreational activities available in the community.



Number of participants in Buncombe County Recreation Services activities, programs, or facilities

Plan new recreation programming in response to customer feedback and community trends.

- Expand the provision of health and human services in collaboration with community partners.



Number of Buncombe County contracts with government entities, nonprofits, and the private sector to provide health and human services

Partner with a broad array of community organizations to deliver health and human services.

PROGRESS

Expand the provision of health and human services in collaboration with community partners.

172

Number of BC contracts to provide health and human services in FY2015



Expand provision of public transportation.

MOUNTAIN MOBILITY PASSENGER TRIPS



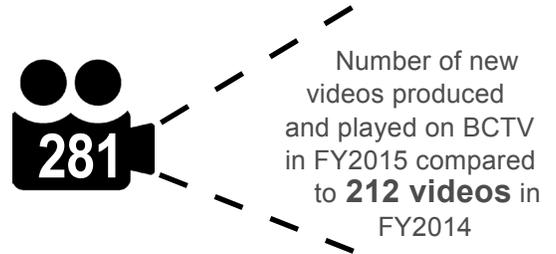
Improve access to health care.



14,740

Patients served through WNC Community Health Services in 2015 compared to **14,480** in 2014

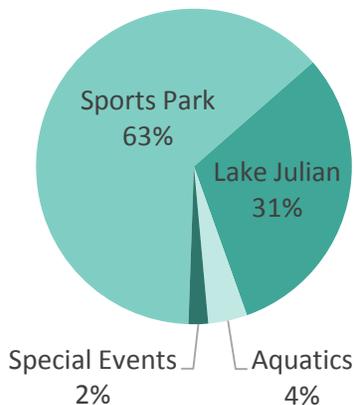
Expand access to information.



Increase the number of recreational activities available in the community.

834,811

Number of participants in BC Recreation Services activities, programs, or facilities in FY2016



Continue opportunities through which citizens receive education in food choices, nutrition, and food safety.



2,500

Number of participants in EFNEP and FCS classes in 2015

11,959

Total since 2012

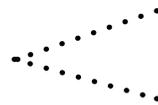


SAFE RESILIENT COMMUNITY

INDICATOR
STRATEGY

OBJECTIVES:

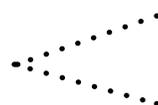
- **Ensure timely emergency service response.**



Average response time for Buncombe County Sheriff's Department emergency calls

Provide deputies with adequate training and equipment to efficiently answer calls and use Resource Management Systems (RMS) to predict and schedule staff for high volume call times.

- **Offer alternatives to incarceration, including specialized courts and diversion programs.**



Number of alternatives to incarceration supported through Buncombe County

Partner with the courts, law enforcement, and local agencies to implement programming based on nationally recognized best practices.

- **Promote crime prevention through site assessments for residences and businesses.**



Number of assessments made to improve safety and security of property and businesses

Continue to meet with the community using productive analytics including RMS to identify problem areas and offer safety assessment services.

- **Ensure public safety personnel are trained and prepared for emergencies.**



Number of training hours for public safety personnel through the Buncombe County Public Safety Training Center

Offer training each year that is focused on current issues and officer needs such as defensive tactics, taser use, firearms, active shooter, and driver training.

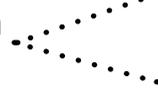
- **Engage the community as a partner through Community Policing activities.**



Number of Community Oriented Problem Solving (COPS) teams community meetings

Use COPS teams to identify and problem solve in areas with increased crime.

- **Encourage the location of critical facilities outside high hazard areas.**

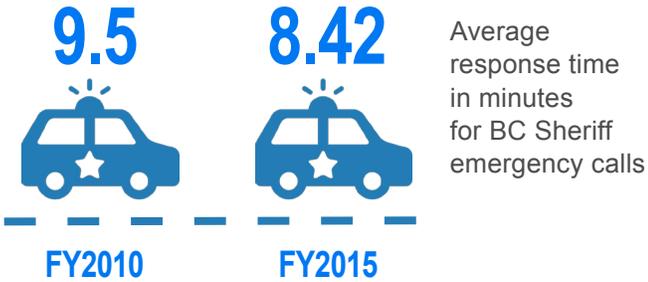


Critical facilities newly permitted to be located in the 100-year floodplain

Require a pre-application meeting for critical facilities locating in the 100-year floodplain to explain risks and requirements.

PROGRESS

Ensure timely emergency response.



Engage the Community as a partner through Community Policing activities.



Offer alternatives to incarceration, including specialized courts and diversion programs.



Ensure public safety personnel are trained and prepared for emergencies.



Promote crime prevention through site assessments for residences and businesses.

Number of assessments made by the BC Sheriff's Department in FY2015

55 total since 2011



Encourage the location of critical facilities outside high hazard areas.

1 Critical facility newly permitted in the 100-year floodplain in 2015 (the only critical facility permitted in the floodplain since 2012)

