

SUSTAINABILITY ANNUAL REPORT FOR BUNCOMBE COUNTY



INTRODUCTION

BUNCOMBE COUNTY'S SUSTAINABILITY PLAN was adopted two years ago, on May 15, 2012, and outlined a five year plan for the County and its residents to make improvements in our community, economy, and environment. This Second Year Annual Report provides information related to the 14 adopted goals, their objectives, and the indicators used to measure progress. The updated strategies are included to highlight actions that have been identified to pursue in the third year of implementation.

Themes that have emerged throughout this past year's efforts are collaboration and consolidation, particularly related to buildings and County services. Renovations and new construction have helped to: consolidate court services and related functions into a judicial complex; create one location for public safety training for law enforcement, emergency services, and firefighters through the Public Safety Training Facility; and centralize mental health and substance abuse assessments and treatment through the Buncombe County Assessment Center.

Coinciding with these efforts to better serve residents in convenient, accessible locations is the decision to group similar services and uses. This will ultimately make a difference in the County's energy consumption, which supports Buncombe County's annual carbon footprint reduction goal of 2% (adopted December 2013).

The Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update was adopted within this past year, and included specific information and linkages with the Sustainability Plan. Examples of areas of mutual focus include affordable and workforce housing in areas served by existing infrastructure; transportation choices and improving transportation corridors; location of critical facilities; and land use decisions that incorporate social, environmental, and economic considerations. As shown through the incorporation of the goals and objectives of the Sustainability Plan into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update, the concept of sustainability is becoming an important consideration in the decision making process.

This Second Year Annual Report provides information on the progress related to the 14 Sustainability Goals. Buncombe County remains committed to the accomplishment of each of these goals, and supports the efforts made by County departments and our sustainability partners to improve our community, economy, and environment.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

COMMUNITY



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES THAT MATCH THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

- Increase high school graduation rate.
- Increase access to higher education.
- Expand quality and quantity of early childhood development programs.
- Increase parent and community involvement in the educational system and in the education of individual children.
- Promote programs that supplement equitable educational opportunities for all ages.
- Ensure that all children are reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade or have a reading intervention program/curriculum in place.



HEALTHY PEOPLE

- Decrease rates of childhood and adult obesity.
- Reduce tobacco use and exposure to second hand smoke.
- Assure the availability of a medical home for all to increase appropriate, age-specific health screenings and preventative care and improve equality in access to health care.
- Decrease infant mortality and low weight births.
- Increase access to mental health and substance abuse prevention programs.
- Increase access to affordable health insurance.



AFFORDABLE, GREEN, AND LIVABLE HOUSING

- Provide educational opportunities in financial planning and homebuyer education.
- Expand housing rehabilitation and repair programs.
- Provide affordable and workforce housing assistance funding for new developments in areas with existing infrastructure.
- Promote home ownership while also supporting quality rental developments that are required to remain affordable and safe.
- Ensure the availability of a diverse housing stock.
- Ensure that County regulations, ordinances, and other programs do not impede, and where possible, provide incentives for the adoption of sustainable products and strategies.



CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DECISIONS

- Create partnerships across multiple sectors of the community to reduce duplication of services and to assist in prioritizing and funding initiatives.
- Increase opportunities for civic engagement and participation.
- Ensure that information reaches citizens.
- Value and respect the contributions of all Buncombe County citizens.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



EQUITY IN ACCESS

- Improve equality in access to health care.
- Promote an array of transportation options.
- Increase quantity and quality of recreational activities.
- Build an extensive network of social services with locations in each high school district.
- Increase the availability of locally produced foods to low income individuals and increase their educational opportunities regarding farms and locally produced foods.
- Ensure reliable access to information resources (i.e. broadband internet).



SAFE, LOW-CRIME COMMUNITIES

- Support neighborhood watches and community policing.
- Foster a sense of neighborhood pride and civic responsibility.
- Provide a comprehensive criminal justice system that includes law enforcement, court staff, alternative treatment providers, and members of the community who collaborate to deliver justice while protecting the public.
- Promote crime prevention through environmental design for residences, businesses and our parks.



RESISTANCE TO NATURAL AND MANMADE HAZARDS

- Locate critical facilities outside high hazard areas.
- Ensure local preparedness for emergencies (floods, fuel shortages, climate change, fire, droughts, earthquakes, food shortages, landslides, hazardous materials incidents, medical epidemics, etc.).



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

- Improve and increase opportunities for safe, active living.
- Promote healthy buildings and homes.
- Decrease unintentional injuries.
- Improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

The following Objectives have been added since the Plan adoption in order to provide additional guidance to reach our goals:

AFFORDABLE, GREEN, AND LIVABLE HOUSING

- Work in partnership with outside organizations to assist families in finding safe, affordable housing.

SAFE, LOW-CRIME COMMUNITIES

- Engage with the community as a partner to problem solve community issues.
- Provide a comprehensive public safety system in which communication between agencies is seamless and effective, and staff is continually trained using best methods and practice.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

ENVIRONMENT



PARTNERSHIPS FOR CONSERVATION/PRESERVATION/RESTORATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- Conserve and protect water resources.
- Protect ecological systems/wildlife.
- Promote energy conservation programs.
- Restore natural resources.
- Encourage sustainable land use.
- Educate the public to help them reduce their environmental footprints.



POLLUTION AND WASTE PREVENTION

- Improve air quality.
- Improve water quality.
- Reduce the use of harmful chemicals.
- Manage waste – reduce, reuse, recycle.



ACCESSIBLE, MULTI-MODAL, AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

- Reduce vehicle miles travelled (VMT).
- Increase multi-modal options.
- Encourage land development connected to existing transportation corridors.
- Promote access to goods and services in areas of significant population density and in neighborhood hubs.

ECONOMY



SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

- Promote farmland preservation and decrease loss of agricultural land.
- Promote sustainable agricultural production and personal and community gardening in connection with the County's agricultural heritage.
- Increase demand for locally produced foods.



SUSTAINABLE LOCALIZED ECONOMY

- Provide incentives to businesses for growth.
- Encourage a “business-friendly” regulatory environment.
- Promote “Buy Local” programs.
- Ensure a diverse economy with competitive wages.
- Support small business development.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Identify and reduce barriers to employment (e.g., childcare, transportation, housing, insurance).
- Provide robust job training that fits present and anticipated workforce demand.
- Encourage collaboration among workforce and educational institutions.

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



Educational Resources

The 4-H sponsored robotics program reached

OVER 100

youth through school and club programs



Citizen Participation in Community Decisions

2,700 individuals volunteered

22,000 HRS

with Nonprofits

Healthy People

Obesity among adults

↓ **0.4%**



The County partnered with Pisgah Legal Services to provide Affordable Care Act (ACA) appointments in Community Service Navigators locations and provide information about the ACA.



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES THAT MATCH THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

PROGRESS

- **Increase high school graduation rate.**
 - The high school graduation rate (for Buncombe County 9th grade cohorts) has shown great improvement. It increased from 73.1% for 4-year cohorts and 76.8% for 5-year cohorts in the 2010 – 2011 school year to 80.3% for 4-year cohorts and 83.4% for 5-year cohorts in the 2012 – 2013 school year.
- **Increase access to higher education.**
 - The percent of adults with some post-secondary education has increased from 65% (years of data used: 2006 to 2010) to 69% (years of data used: 2008 to 2012).
 - The number of individuals receiving associate degrees, certificates, and diplomas at AB Tech grew from 1,017 in the 2009 – 2010 school year to 1,403 in the 2012 – 2013 school year.
- **Increase parent and community involvement in the educational system and in the education of individual children.**
 - The number of volunteer hours contributed to the Buncombe County School System increased from 102,178 in the 2009 – 2010 school year to 112,300 in the 2012 – 2013 school year.
- **Promote programs that supplement equitable educational opportunities for all ages.**
 - The number of Title 1 parent meetings increased from 131 in the 2010 – 2011 school year to 174 in the 2012 – 2013 school year.



STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- The Buncombe County Schools system provides mClass benchmark assessment training for K-3 teachers using iPads. Teachers assess students on mClass benchmark assessments at least 3 times/year and monitor progress for those who are at-risk of not being on grade level at the end of 3rd grade. In order to assess student growth in reading, the Department of Public Instruction selected mClass: Reading 3D to support the legislative requirement to implement a developmentally appropriate diagnostic assessment that would enable teachers to determine student learning needs and individual instruction.
- In order to support teaching curriculum standards through instructional coaching and job embedded professional development, Buncombe County Schools support staff and instructional coaches participated in national literacy training. Instructional coaches and directors continue to provide reading support and training on all aspects of Reading 3D, an early literacy formative assessment that is intended to guide instruction, and Read to Achieve Portfolio Process. A third-grade student may be promoted to grade 4 if the student demonstrates reading proficiency on the NC End-Of-Grade Test or Completes the Grade 3 Reading Portfolio or NC Read to Achieve Test.
- North Carolina created a new 2013 READY Accountability Model focused on career and college readiness measures. The data from the 2012 – 2013 school year will serve as a baseline for future years.



HEALTHY PEOPLE

PROGRESS

- **Decrease rates of childhood and adult obesity.**
 - In 2013, the percentage of diagnosed obesity among adults age 20 and older in Buncombe County is 23.6%, only slightly less than 24% from the baseline measure from 2009.
 - Obesity among students in kindergarten through fifth grade in Buncombe County is also only slightly down to 32.8% in 2013, from 33.2% in 2012.
- **Decrease infant mortality and low weight births.**
 - The percentage of low birth weight is slightly decreasing, from 8.6% reported in 2010 to 8% reported in 2013.
 - The infant mortality rate has slightly decreased, from 5.4 per 1,000 live births reported in 2010 to 5.2 per 1,000 live births in 2013.
- **Assure the availability of a medical home for all to increase appropriate, age-specific health screenings and preventative care and improve equality in access to health care.**
 - In July 2012, a Health Fair was held including Mission Hospital, the Asheville Buncombe Institute of Parity Achievement (ABIPA), and other resources in the community. Over 300 people came and had blood pressure and cholesterol checked, and received information about staying healthy and available social services programs.
 - A Women's Health Day was held on Saturday, May 18, 2013, at the Pisgah View Community Center. The day was designed to give the community a better understanding of the health issues facing women, and to offer free screenings and resources regarding services and programs. Approximately 200 people attended the event.

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- "Girls on the Run" is a national nonprofit for girls in 3rd-8th grade. The program is a collaborative effort between the girls, their parents, schools, volunteers and the community. Through running, girls are motivated and encouraged to develop lifelong health and fitness, and build confidence through accomplishment. In 2012 – 2013, three different sessions of "Girls on the Run" were held throughout the County, with one team originating in the Pisgah View Apartment community.
- In 2013, the Buncombe County Assessment Center opened to provide forensic evaluation and treatment services for Health and Human Services and jail diversion program clients, including Pretrial Services, Drug Court, DWI Court, and Family Treatment Court. Comprehensive assessments are completed, and treatment and treatment services are provided. The Assessment Center provides flexible, timely appointments for clients, and is able to respond to urgent requests by HHS staff, Judges, and other justice partners for immediate evaluation or crisis intervention.
- Buncombe County Parks and Recreation joined the Buncombe County Schools Child Nutrition Department in 2012 and 2013 to begin the Free Summer Meals Program. Lunches are served at four of the County's outdoor swimming pool sites, with physical activities provided on site. Since the program began in Buncombe County, over 7,800 meals have been served at the outdoor pool sites. Plans are in place to continue the program in the summer of 2014.
- Buncombe County introduced a Wellness Program that created an opportunity for employees to earn \$400 while improving their health in 2014. This program combined the wellness programs Buncombe County already offered to employees, such as smoking cessation and weight loss programs on site, and added additional choices for a total points program, the Fit Wellness Points Program. Because preventable conditions are a leading driver of health care costs—with preventable illness making up approximately 90% of all health care costs and accounting for eight of the nine leading categories of death—the Buncombe County Wellness Point Program is designed to help employees prevent illness and be active in maintaining their health. This program is available for all employees who are enrolled in the health insurance plan.





AFFORDABLE, GREEN, AND LIVABLE HOUSING

PROGRESS

- **Provide affordable and workforce housing assistance funding for new developments in areas with existing infrastructure.**
 - Funding in support of affordable housing continues to be a priority. Since FY2011, \$2.28 million has been used to support affordable housing through the Affordable Housing Services Program, the Home Investment Partnership (HOME) Program, and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program (FY2011 – \$816,122; FY2012 – \$675,000; and FY2013 – \$794,900).
- **Work in partnership with outside organizations to assist families in finding safe, affordable housing.**
 - Through the affordable housing programs supported in the County, 577 families were assisted since FY2011 (FY2011 – 224; FY2012 – 195; FY2013 – 158).
- **Provide educational opportunities in financial planning and homebuyer education.**
 - Through OnTrack and Habitat for Humanity's educational efforts, in FY2013, 252 individuals participated in financial planning and homebuyer classes (FY2012 – 340 and in FY2011 – 114).
- **Ensure that County regulations, ordinances, and other programs do not impede, and where possible, provide incentives for the adoption of sustainable products and strategies.**
 - In FY2013, Building Permits and Inspections implemented an application process for the review and consideration of alternate materials and methods.

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- Through the Analysis of Impediments in January 2013, a need was identified for ADA retrofits to existing houses such as adding wheelchair ramps, grab rails in showers, and expanded entry and doorways to accommodate wheelchairs. Beginning in 2013, the application for the County's Affordable Housing Services Program was expanded to include a new category, offering funding for ADA retrofits. Further, the County modified its Zoning Ordinance to provide broader exemptions for ADA retrofits.
- For FY2015, new construction projects on existing infrastructure will be prioritized to receive affordable housing funding.
- The 2013 Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update recommends that the County expand the types of housing available to residents, such as cohousing and intentional community models, and also promotes affordable and workforce housing by recommending that higher density development be allowed in areas where infrastructure is available when affordable units are included within the development.
- Recent updates to the Buncombe County Zoning Ordinance work to stimulate infill development in areas where infrastructure is available by allowing for reduced lot sizes and setbacks on lots with sewer access. This change will allow for more dense development within the urbanized areas of the County.





CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DECISIONS

PROGRESS

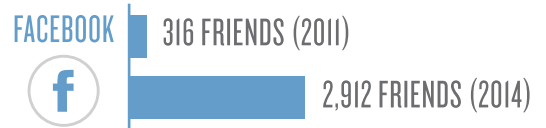
- **Increase opportunities for civic engagement and participation.**
 - In 2013, 2,700 individuals volunteered 22,000 hours with nonprofits. The volunteer participation rate for Asheville is 30.4% and Asheville is ranked 34th in the country for mid-size cities.
- **Ensure that information reaches citizens.**
 - Links for additional sources of information on the Building Permits page of the County's website has increased from 8 in 2012 to 26 in 2013.
 - Buncombe County funding for community, economic, and cultural development increased from \$13,282,070 in FY 2011 to \$15,054,390 (\$5,396,943 County budget and \$9,657,447 Culture & Recreation Authority) in FY 2014.
- **Value and respect the contributions of all Buncombe County citizens.**
 - The number of surveys collected with comments and feedback from participants of Parks and Recreation programs and facilities jumped from 98 in 2012 to 300 in 2013.

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- The Buncombe County Public Relations Department is coordinating social media, including YouTube, with web and print to increase outreach and attract a wider audience for greater effectiveness.
- The Buncombe County Public Relations Department is investigating new design and development techniques that will make the County website function better on smaller screen sizes. The department will assess the site and determine which will be the best approach to take.
- Information on Building Permits' inspection results is being made available for contractors and homebuilders on Buncombe County's website. The site went live April 30, 2013. Information on inspections is available online and is posted in real time when the inspection is completed in the field.
- Buncombe County staff has worked to find new ways to engage the public in order to better enhance the effectiveness of public hearings and the community response. This effort has included the addition of a dedicated phone number and e-mail address on all public hearing notices and pre-meetings which work to explain the process to the public and answer any questions they have prior to the meeting.



NUMBER OF BUNCOMBE COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA USERS HAS SOARED





EQUITY IN ACCESS

PROGRESS

- **Promote an array of transportation options.**
 - Miles of Asheville Redefines Transit (ART) routes has increased from 176.2 in 2010 to 179.7 in 2013.
 - Miles of sidewalks in the County has increased from 417.3 in 2011 to 493.2 miles in 2013.
 - Mountain Mobility ridership has increased from 148,578 trips provided to 7,456 subscribed passengers in FY2010 to 159,974 provided to 11,547 subscribed passengers in FY2013.
 - An additional mile was added to the County's greenways network in 2013 for a total of 14 miles. This supplements the 132 miles of trails that already exist within the County.
- **Increase quantity and quality of recreational activities.**
 - The number of athletes involved in the Special Olympics increased by 180 athletes between 2012 and 2013, representing a 35% increase in participation (2012 – 518 athletes; 2013 – 698 athletes).
 - Buncombe County added the Collier Nature Preserve and the Lake Julian Park Extension with trail during fiscal year 2013.
- **Build an extensive network of social services with locations in each high school district.**
 - In the first two years of its existence, the Community Service Navigators (CSN) program has connected 941 citizens with services. In the second year alone (2013), Community Services Navigators served more than 100 additional citizens than were assisted in the first year (2012 – 417 served; 2013 – 524 served).
- **Increase the availability of locally produced foods to low income individuals and increase their educational opportunities regarding farms and locally produced foods.**
 - The Buncombe County Cooperative Extension provided technical assistance to 19 school gardens in 2012, two more school gardens than were reported as operating in 2011.
 - The Buncombe County Cooperative Extension also worked to educate the community on healthy food options and preparation through Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP) nutrition classes. Participation in the classes increased by more than 80% between 2012 and 2013, from 2,511 to 4,531 children and adults.



STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- The Community Service Navigator program (CSN) utilizes outpost staff to connect citizens in areas of identified need with health and human services provided or supported by the County. Over the past year, the CSN program has expanded from three to five locations and increased the number of citizens served by more than 25%. In addition, there are 43 locations within the County served by nurse-social worker teams, prevention staff, and/or economic services community outreach representatives.
- Health and Human Services (HHS) partners with Pisgah Legal Services to provide Affordable Care Act (ACA) appointments in CSN locations and promote information about ACA.
- HHS community partners sponsor health screenings, identify minorities with chronic diseases, and help them find a doctor to treat their disease. Preventive Health Screening and education for low-income, uninsured women is provided through the Breast & Cervical Cancer Control Program and the WISEWOMAN program (heart health screening).
- Parks, Recreation and Greenways, as part of the newly created Culture and Recreation Authority, continues to work to provide the opportunity to increase participation in Special Olympics. As of 2013, 12 sports are open to qualified athletes. In addition, outreach and publicity for the Special Olympics have greatly improved; participation increased by 35% between 2012 and 2013.



SAFE, LOW CRIME COMMUNITIES

PROGRESS

- **Support neighborhood watches and community policing.**
 - In 2013, 18 new community watch programs were established, for a total of 131 programs throughout the County.
- **Foster a sense of neighborhood pride and civic responsibility.**
 - A year-round drop box for disposal of unused prescription and illegal drugs was offered throughout the year, and two Drug Take Back events were held, in which 463.4 pounds of drugs were collected. With the 586.8 pounds collected in 2012, over 1,000 pounds of illegal or unused prescription drugs were collected and disposed of over the past two years.
 - The detention prevention vehicle visited 10 schools and was featured at 26 different events in 2013, reaching 1,742 students and an additional 3,768 youth at non-school events.
- **Provide a comprehensive criminal justice system that includes law enforcement, court staff, alternative treatment providers, and members of the community who collaborate to deliver justice while protecting the public.**
 - The number of offenders supervised by Pretrial Release increased from 1,197 in 2012 to 1,233 in 2013, saving 105,124 jail days that offenders awaiting trial may otherwise would have spent in the detention facility.
- **Provide a comprehensive public safety system in which communication between agencies is seamless and effective, and staff is continually trained using best methods and practices.**
 - There were 32 additional officers trained in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) in 2013.

1,233

OFFENDERS SUPERVISED
BY PRETRIAL RELEASE



105,124

JAIL DAYS SAVED



STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- A public relations coordinator was hired by the Sheriff's Department in 2013 to increase accessibility and transparency to the public. Since then, the Sheriff's Department has worked closely with media to promote community outreach programs such as Community Oriented Problem Solvers (COPS) teams, Drug Take Back events, Detention Prevention, and the Buncombe Crime Stoppers programs. In addition, the department has also increased the use of Facebook as a public information and advocacy tool.
- In 2013, Buncombe County opened the Assessment Center located one block from the courthouse. Court involved individuals can be referred for Substance Abuse and Mental Health assessments and attend psycho-education groups free of charge.
- A program for graffiti removal utilizing inmate labor and partnering with NCDOT to clean up trouble spots around the community continues to be needed in our community. COPS teams lead cleanup projects in the community, where trash, graffiti removal, and maintenance and beautification activities are conducted.



RESISTANCE TO NATURAL AND MANMADE HAZARDS

PROGRESS

- **Locate critical facilities outside high hazard areas.**
 - There continues to be no critical facilities permitted within the 100-year floodplain.
- **Ensure local preparedness for emergencies (floods, fuel shortages, climate change, fire, droughts, earthquakes, food shortages, landslides, hazardous materials incidents, medical epidemics, etc.).**
 - In 2013, 25 additional community members were Community Emergency Response (CERT) trained. Since 2003, 265 individuals have received training.
 - The average response time for emergency calls has greatly improved since 2007, decreasing by 15%, from 10.7 minutes to 9.1 minutes.
 - Through the Public Safety Training Center, in 2013, 9,147 emergency services providers and law enforcement received training. The Center opened in December 2012.
 - In 2013, Emergency Services worked with the Buncombe County Schools, Asheville City Schools, the Biltmore Company, and long-term care facilities in the development and maintenance of their emergency response/crisis management plans.



↓ 15%

EMERGENCY CALLS RESPONSE
TIME HAS DECREASED SINCE 2007

265

NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS
RECEIVED COMMUNITY
EMERGENCY RESPONSE (CERT)
TRAINING

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- In educating the public regarding hazard mitigation/emergency preparedness, a public input survey for the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan was administered through the Buncombe County website. The survey provided information and a brief introduction to the concept of hazard mitigation. There were 176 respondents with 84% expressing interest in becoming more hazard resistant. Mitigation actions that were identified as highly important included natural resource protection, prevention, and emergency services.
- Buncombe County Emergency Services is an active participant in the NC Domestic Preparedness Region 9, the 12 westernmost counties and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. This group includes representatives from all emergency response disciplines and meets at least twice each year to address issues of planning and resource allocation/location.
- The Special Needs Registry is an online registry where people with special needs or conditions can register those conditions with Emergency Services. Examples of needs would be hearing impaired, sight impaired, or immobile. The Registry is maintained and kept continually updated, to better serve all citizens.



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

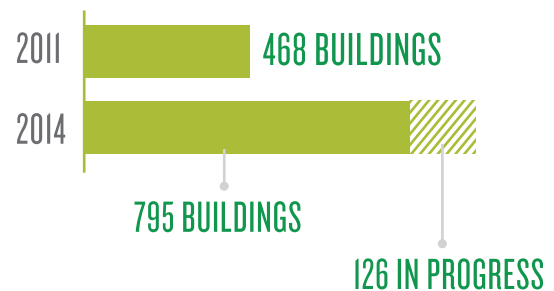
PROGRESS

- **Promote healthy buildings and homes.**
 - The total number of healthy built certified buildings has increased from 468 in 2011, to 795 in February 2014, with 126 in progress.
 - Buncombe County Building Permits and Inspections provided more inspections in 2013 than in 2012, from 23,378 to 26,502. These inspections include building and trade inspections for code compliance and safety.
 - The number of residential energy efficiency certificates issued in Buncombe County increased from 398 in 2012 to 515 in 2013.
- **Improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.**
 - There are 570 miles of roads suitable for biking in Buncombe County.
- **Decrease injuries.**
 - In both 2012 and 2013, Health and Human Services inspected 87 adult care homes.
 - In 2013, Health and Human Services inspected 2,128 homes for safe sleeping arrangements for children and infants (up from 608 in 2012). Those same homes were also inspected for fire safety plans.

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- The first steps in the Parks Master Plan at Lake Julian have begun, with the Disc Golf Course opening, and the first trail segment of Lake Julian under construction.
- Parks, Recreation and Greenways completed a survey of all existing park facilities within the County and shared this data with both the County and City of Asheville GIS. This could facilitate greater awareness of all parks locations.
- The Health and Human Services Child and Protection Team sponsor seminars on reducing abuse and neglect throughout the community. One such seminar is “Keeping DSS from Your Front Door”, where laws and policies regarding abuse, neglect, and dependency are discussed, and questions can be answered.

NUMBER OF HEALTHY BUILT CERTIFIED BUILDINGS HAS INCREASED



570 MILES OF ROADS SUITABLE FOR BIKING IN BUNCOMBE COUNTY

ENVIRONMENT

We are stewards of the environment who advocate the conservation, preservation, and restoration of resources.

— The Buncombe County Sustainability Plan Vision Statement



EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

146 MILES

of trails and greenways

POLLUTION AND WASTE PREVENTION

18% Residential waste recycled

POLLUTION AND WASTE PREVENTION

486 Conventional gas cans are swapped for lower emitting cans

1,992 Pounds of Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions are reduced per year



Buncombe County adopted an 80% carbon reduction goal for its internal operations and vehicle fleet.



PARTNERSHIPS FOR CONSERVATION / PRESERVATION / RESTORATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

PROGRESS

- **Conserve and protect water resources.**

- The number of linear feet of streams with livestock excluded has soared from 1,016 planned and 250 installed in FY 2012 to 4,990 planned and 5,013 completed in FY 2013.
- The feet (acres) of riparian buffers has increased from 500 feet (0.25 acres) planned in FY 2012 to 5,000 feet planned and 5,013 feet (1.75 acres) completed by the Soil and Water Conservation Service in FY 2013.
- The Soil & Water Conservation District received two State grants in the past year, and through its partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), has secured over \$500,000 to permanently protect a 203 acre farm.

- **Protect ecological systems/wildlife.**

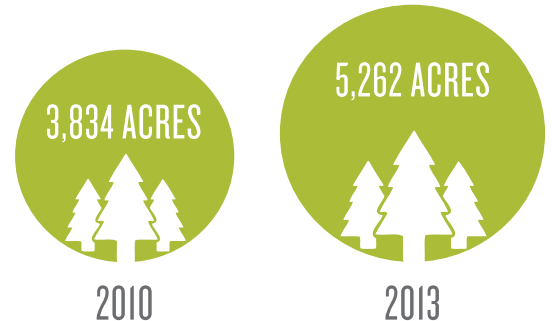
- The number of conservation easements with some Buncombe County funding has increased from a total of 23 projects and 3,834 acres in 2010 to 35 projects and 5,262 acres in 2013.

- **Encourage sustainable land use.**

- The number and acres of conservation plans by the Soil and Water Conservation Service is mixed. The number of plans increased from 6 in FY 2012 to 12 plans in FY 2013 but the number of acres slightly decreased from 777 in FY 2012 to 749 FY 2013. There were 216 acres with wildlife habitat improvement in FY 2013.

- **Educate the public to help them reduce their environmental footprints.**

- The number and reach of environmental education programs has grown from 13 programs reaching a total population of 57,068 in 2009 to 14 programs reaching a total population of 67,398 in FY 2013.



NUMBER OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS HAS INCREASED

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- In an effort to educate the public and provide additional green programming on BCTV and YouTube, the Public Relations Department is planning a new garden show that will include backyard gardening with composting and recycling.



- In an effort to encourage sustainable land use, Buncombe County now requires the Board of Adjustment to consider the Land Use Plan as an element of its decision making processes. The 2013 Land Use Plan Update prioritizes development using a variety of environmental, topographic, and development factors in order to provide prescriptive guidance to decision-making bodies regarding where development can be situated in a sustainable manner.
- Prior to adoption of the first Sustainability Plan for the County, projects such as lighting upgrades, window replacement, reflective roof installation, efficient electric motor and HVAC systems upgrades had already been undertaken to improve the energy performance of the County's existing facilities. In 2013, an energy audit was completed for 10 major buildings within the County's network of facilities, identifying 26 potential Energy and Water Cost Reduction Measures with estimated cost savings of \$250,000 per year. Nine measures are scheduled to be completed in 2014. In addition, the County adopted an 80% carbon reduction goal for its internal operations and vehicle fleet through the Buncombe County Energy Independence Initiative on December 3, 2013. There is an annual carbon footprint reduction goal of 2%.



POLLUTION AND WASTE PREVENTION

PROGRESS

- **Improve air quality.**
 - Current Design Value for Ozone in the County fell from 68 ppb in 2012 to 65 ppb in 2013.
 - Current Design Value for Fine Particulate Matter in the County declined from 9.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2011 to 8.7 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2013.
- **Improve water quality.**
 - The number of approvals/permits issued for onsite septic system repairs increased from 109 in 2012 to 125 in 2013.
 - Number of NC Agricultural Cost Share Program (NCACSP) projects increased from 6 planned and 2 installed in 2012 to 10 planned and 8 installed in FY 2013.
- **Manage waste—reduce, reuse, recycle.**
 - Percent of solid waste recycled/percent reduction in landfilled solid waste volumes:
 - Residential waste recycled—14.5% in 2008 increased to nearly 18% in FY 2011.
 - The Land of Sky Regional Council, Waste Reduction Partners (WRP) has helped reduce or recycle over 177,000 tons of solid waste headed to landfills since 2000 and saved over \$14.5 million.
- **Reduce the use of harmful chemicals.**
 - Over 700 citizens were certified in safe pesticide use.

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- WNCRAQA completed a grant funded project with monies obtained from the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR) to retrofit five (5) Reems Creek Fire Engines with air pollution control devices that will decrease emissions of particulate matter, carbon monoxide, and hydrocarbons. Publicity efforts are being utilized to help inform other public and private fleet managers about the benefits and potential funding sources available for similar projects that will help improve air quality in our area.
- The Mobile Environmental Learning Center (MELC) has been a recycling education tool for over 10 years. It was recently replaced with the Recycling Education Vehicle (REV) and is one of the many recycling education tools Buncombe County invests in for recycling education in the County. MELC and the REV are sponsored by Buncombe County, three other regional partners (Solid Waste departments of Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania), the City of Asheville, and the Land of Sky Regional Council. These educational tools have been incorporated into Buncombe County's 10 Year Solid Waste Management Plan to help meet the required recycling education component within that Plan.
- In 2010, Buncombe County Parks, Recreation and Greenways began adding recycling garbage cans at parks. Currently there are 16 recycling trailers constructed by the General Services Department in two parks and 10 underground recycling bins in two more.

AMOUNT OF HAZARDOUS AND SPECIAL WASTE RECYCLED:

ANTIFREEZE



ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT



WHITE GOODS



TIRES





ACCESSIBLE, MULTI-MODAL, AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

PROGRESS

- **Reduce vehicle miles traveled and Increase multi-modal options.**
 - Miles of alternative transportation options increased from 1,261.6 in 2011 to 1,341 in 2013:
 - Roads suitable for bike use has remained unchanged at 570.
 - Miles of ART routes has increased from 176.2 to 179.7.
 - Miles of Mountain Mobility routes has remained constant at 98.1.
 - Miles of sidewalks in the County has increased from 417.3 to 493.2.
- **Increase multi-modal options.**
 - The number of individuals using alternative transportation options:
 - Asheville Transit ridership declined from 1,525,212 riders in FY 2010 to 1,437,104 riders in FY 2013.
 - Mountain Mobility ridership increased from 7,456 passengers taking 148,578 trips in FY 2010 to 11,547 passengers taking 159,974 trips in FY 2013.
 - The miles of trails and greenways has increased from 145 (13 miles of greenways and 132 miles of trails) in 2012 to 146 (14 miles of greenways and 132 miles of trails) in 2013.
 - Annual bike and pedestrian counts in the City of Asheville has increased from 4,086 in 2012 to 5,261 in 2013.
- **Promote access to goods and services in areas of significant population density and in neighborhood hubs.**
 - The number of new commercial building permits within ¼ mile of transportation options increased from 13 in FY 2010 to 81 in FY 2013.

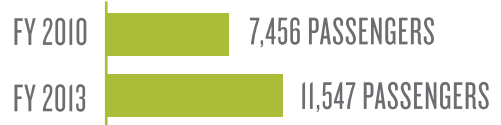
MOUNTAIN MOBILITY RIDERSHIP HAS INCREASED



TRIPS PROVIDED



SUBSCRIBED PASSENGERS



STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- The County is in the process of amending its standards pertinent to mixed-use development to allow for more flexibility when siting such developments in order to encourage more sustainable land use and to allow the provision of basic goods and services within residential developments.
- The Land Use Plan recognizes transportation corridors as an important facet of land development within Buncombe County and makes recommendations that more intensive types of development (such as commercial development) takes place within a reasonable proximity to existing transportation corridors.
- Buncombe County is currently in the process of allowing the Board of Adjustment additional flexibility in considering mixed-uses in large-scale developments to allow better connections to goods and services within new developments and could foster the development of neighborhood hubs.
- The Friends of Connect Buncombe is a nonprofit that formed in 2013 to assist in the implementation of the Buncombe County Greenway Master Plan, known as Connect Buncombe. Their goals for the coming year are: build their organization and membership base; identify the top priority projects; and advocate, educate and collaborate on greenways with the public, elected officials and greenway partners throughout the County.

ECONOMY

We are part of a community and environmentally-conscious economy that is stable and diverse.

— *The Buncombe County Sustainability Plan Vision Statement*



SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

26 Community gardens
(number increased from 15 in 2011)

SUSTAINABLE LOCALIZED ECONOMY

Promote “Buy Local” programs:

The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) participating producers has increased in 2013, with

12 Certified processors

112 Certified farms



Quarterly Friends of Agriculture breakfasts feature local food and farmers and also offer networking and programs that may assist local food farms and farmers.



SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

PROGRESS

- **Promote farmland preservation and decrease loss of agricultural land.**
 - Enrollment in the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District program (EVAD) has increased from no farms in 2011 to 5 farms with a total of 664 acres in 2013.
 - Buncombe County contributed funding towards 12 conservation easements since 2010, permanently protecting 1,423 acres. The cost to the County per acre protected has fallen from \$1,451 in 2010 to \$344 in 2013. County funding leveraged an additional \$6,058,053 in grants, owner and private donations during the same time period.
- **Promote sustainable agricultural production and personal and community gardening in connection with the County's agricultural heritage.**
 - The number of Appalachian Grown certified farms increased from 109 in 2012 to 112 in 2013. The number of certified processors increased from 10 in 2012 to 12 in 2013.
 - The number of community gardens increased from 15 to 26 between 2011 and March 2014.
- **Increase demand for locally produced foods.**
 - The number of community supported agriculture (CSA) programs increased from 23 in 2011 to 26 CSAs in 2013. In addition, there are 14 tailgate markets, 16 roadside stands, and the regional farmers market in the County.
 - The number of local outlets (restaurants, retail, tailgate markets in Buncombe County) grew from 232 in 2011 to 294 in 2014.

26 COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA) PROGRAMS

NUMBER OF FARMERS STANDS AND MARKETS **30**

294 LOCAL OUTLETS (RESTAURANTS, RETAIL, TAILGATE MARKETS)

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD



- Quarterly Friends of Agriculture breakfasts feature local food and farmers and also offer networking and programs that may assist local food farms and farmers. Cycle to Farm partners with local farms and supports agri-tourism in that community.
- A Soil and Water Conservation Service staff member serves on the Advisory Committee for Farmlink, the new land linking program which helps farmers with available land to lease to new and aspiring farmers.
- The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy's incubator farm in Alexander gives potential or "new" farmers a chance to pay a small rental fee to put their farming idea into practice to see if it will work before going to the huge expense of purchasing or entering a long term lease on land. Also, shared use equipment is provided and mentoring and training support is available.
- Cooperative Extension offers workshops, consultation, blogs, publications, newsletters, news articles and one-on-one consultations to help new and existing farmers of all sizes and types to enhance or maintain their profitability to allow them to continue farming. Projects involving agri-tourism and other farm related ventures are also addressed. Cooperative Extension's Urban Horticulture program provides gardening info for citizens to promote personal and community gardening in connection with the County's agricultural heritage. Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, the Cooperative Extension, and Blue Ridge Food Ventures work to increase marketing to connect farms with buyers.



SUSTAINABLE LOCALIZED ECONOMY

PROGRESS

- **Provide incentives to businesses for growth.**
 - In 2013, the number of new jobs created through economic development incentives has been 285, with \$3.9 million offered in incentives. Within the past two years, the number of new jobs created through economic development incentives has been 767, with the amount of economic development incentives offered exceeding \$15 million.
 - The number of jobs created through the expansion of existing businesses is 273.
- **Promote “Buy Local” programs.**
 - In 2013 the number of participating producers in the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) has increased over 2012, with 12 certified processors and 112 certified farms, up from 10 and 109 in 2012.
- **Ensure a diverse economy with competitive wages.**
 - The unemployment rate has decreased since 2010, with an annual average in 2010 of 8.4%, in 2011 of 7.7%, and in 2012, 7.5%.

273

**JOBS CREATED
THROUGH EXPANSION
OF EXISTING
BUSINESSES**

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- A Job Fair sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce was held at the Biltmore Square Mall on January 3, 2013. Over 2,000 job seekers were placed with 84 employers seeking employees. The event has been so successful that in 2014, the Job Fair will move to the WNC Agricultural Center.
- A strategy used to promote local programs and products is the Farm to Table movement. Restaurants, grocery stores, and farmers markets offer meats, vegetables, fruits, and other products that were locally grown and produced, helping provide fresh, healthy food options while also strengthening the local economy.
- Buncombe County has worked closely with GE Aviation to retain and expand local production capabilities to accommodate production of the revolutionary aircraft engine material known as Ceramic Matrix Composite (CMC). This local expansion brings an investment of \$126M in new, taxable capital equipment, and requires the addition of 52 new positions to its current workforce of 300 in a new flagship facility.





WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

PROGRESS

- **Provide robust job training that fits present and anticipated workforce demand.**
 - The number of people placed in employment through participation in Work First was relatively unchanged from 2012 to 2013, with 126 employed in 2013 and 127 employed in 2012.
 - The number of referrals to the ASPIRE economic development program decreased from 307 participants and 58 graduates in 2012 to 243 participants and 50 graduates in 2013.
 - The number of individuals served by the Client Supply job readiness program increased from 121 in 2012 to 233 in 2013.
- **Identify and reduce barriers to employment.**
 - The number of preschoolers (ages 0-4 years) served by the daycare subsidy program was 1,736 in 2013, decreasing from 1,799 in 2012.
 - The number of clients served through the Emergency Assistance funding for rent assistance was relatively unchanged from 2012 to 2013, with 1,785 funded in 2013 and 1,790 in 2012.
- **Encourage collaboration among workforce and educational institutions.**
 - The number of companies participating in training and/or services through the Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College (AB Tech) Economic and Workforce Development-Continuing Education Programming decreased from 62 in 2012 to 41 in 2013.
 - The number of customized or specialized courses or services offered through AB Tech Economic and Workforce Development-Continuing Education Programming decreased from 80 in 2012 to 56 in 2013.

STRATEGIES AND LOOKING FORWARD

- AB Tech Workforce Development has been working with the Asheville Housing Authority to develop a Job Readiness program which will be directly accessible within public housing complexes. The first program was held in April 2014.
- AB Tech Workforce Development will continue to outpost a staff member with Goodwill.
- AB Tech Workforce Development can offer pre-hire trainings for specific industries. Staff can pre-train job applicants and provide certifications, such as Yellow Belt and OSHA certifications, that benefit both job applicants and industries with specific criteria for employment.
- In April 2014, Duke Energy awarded \$195,000 to AB Tech to further develop AB Tech's Craft Beverage Institute of the Southeast. The overall goal of the Institute is to create workforce capacity, support existing industry, and help attract new business.



CONCLUSION

BUNCOMBE COUNTY'S SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

is actively being implemented across County departments, as well as through the actions of several partnering agencies. The goals and objectives identified through the Sustainability Plan help guide funding decisions. The strategies identified represent efforts and resources being used that are believed to make a difference.

In the third year of implementation, the focus will be on continued progress and "looking forward". We will be midway in the five year implementation of the Sustainability Plan this coming year, and should be able to distinguish between those strategies that are effectively leading to change from those that need to be discontinued or altered. Our framework for measuring progress should continue to improve, with those indicators emphasized which are most directly related to the objectives being pursued.

Throughout the next year of implementation, the identified actions under each goal will continue. In addition, highlighted activities will include:

- Increased services provided through the five Community Service Navigator (CSN) locations.
- Completion and adoption of the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Additional green programming on BCTV and YouTube including a new garden show.
- Reduction in the carbon footprint by County operations.
- Initial outreach for the Update to the Consolidated Strategic Housing and Community Development Plan.

The adoption of carbon footprint reduction goals by the County Commissioners adds a new element to the Sustainability Plan. In order to meet the goals of a 10% reduction over the next five years, the County must now focus on its short term efforts to meet 2% annual reductions while developing long term goals and strategies that will allow sustained reductions over the coming years. In moving into the third year of implementation, further strides will be made to integrate the Sustainability Plan with the carbon footprint reduction goals in order to maximize the gains made by the two efforts.

The Sustainability Plan being implemented is one that continues to be broad reaching and large in scope. The actions identified affect the way our community functions and grows, and reflect how we care for ourselves and our neighbors. Our progress in meeting the Plan's objectives is directly related to our progress in shaping a better community, improving our economy, and protecting our environment.





**2014 SUSTAINABILITY ANNUAL REPORT
FOR BUNCOMBE COUNTY**

Download this report online:

www.buncombecounty.org/Governing/Depts/Planning/Sustainability.aspx