



Governor's Advisory Committee on Western North Carolina Recovery

April 20, 2026

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Today's Agenda

Call to Order, Introductory Remarks | Mayor Esther Manheimer, Co - Chair

Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Awards for Helene Recovery / *Brian Strong, Director, NC State Parks, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources*

Remarks / *Governor Josh Stein*

Renew NC Housing and Commercial District Revitalization Program Updates | *Stephanie McGarrah, Deputy Secretary for Community Revitalization, NC Department of Commerce*

Governor Stein's Helene Phase Three State Budget Request | *Matt Calabria, GROW NC*

Arts Sector Recovery Updates and Future of Region's Arts Ecosystem | *Katie Cornell, Executive Director, ArtsAVL*

Recovery Updates / *Matt Calabria and Emily Gangi, GROW NC*
Next Steps / *Matt Calabria, GROW NC*

Adjourn



Photo: Renew NC Single Family Housing Program



north carolina state parks
NC TRAILS

Twelve million two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$12,250,000) to the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund for eligible uses in the affected area. Of these funds, sixty five percent (65%) shall be used for the State Parks System or State recreational forests in accordance with G.S. 143-135.56(b)(1) and thirty five percent (35%) for matching funds to units of local government or public authorities in accordance with G.S. 143B-135.56(b)(2). The North Carolina Parks and Recreation Authority shall not impose the maximum grant size set forth in NCAC Subchapter 13K .0100 with respect to funds provided by this subdivision.



June 2025: At the Chimney Rock State Park, Governor Roy Cooper signed into law the new funding for the State Parks System.

Since 1994, PARTF awards matching grants to local governments for parks, public beach access, and improvements in state parks. The statewide program helps local governments reach their park and public access goals to improve the quality of life in their communities.

OVER \$500 MILLION
for NC state parks system land acquisition, facility development, and maintenance

OVER \$262 MILLION
to over 1,000 county and municipal parks projects across all 100 counties

OVER \$54 MILLION
to the Division of Coastal Management's Public Beach and Waterfront Access Program



Timeline

October 1,
2025

Announcement

The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR) announces the availability of Helene Recovery Fund matching grants to local governments.

January 30,
2026

Application Deadline

Applications are due, either via paper submission or online in SharePoint by 5 p.m. Paper submissions should be post-marked by January 30 to be eligible for consideration.

March 27, 2026

Selecting Grant Recipients

The Parks and Recreation Authority meets to select grant recipients. The meeting location will be announced on the N.C Division of Parks and Recreation website.

May 1, 2026 -
April 30, 2029

Anticipated Project Period for Helene Recovery Fund projects.

GRANT AWARDS SELECTION

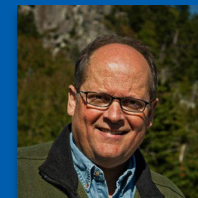
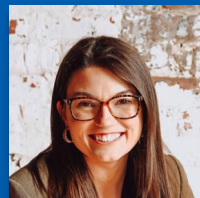


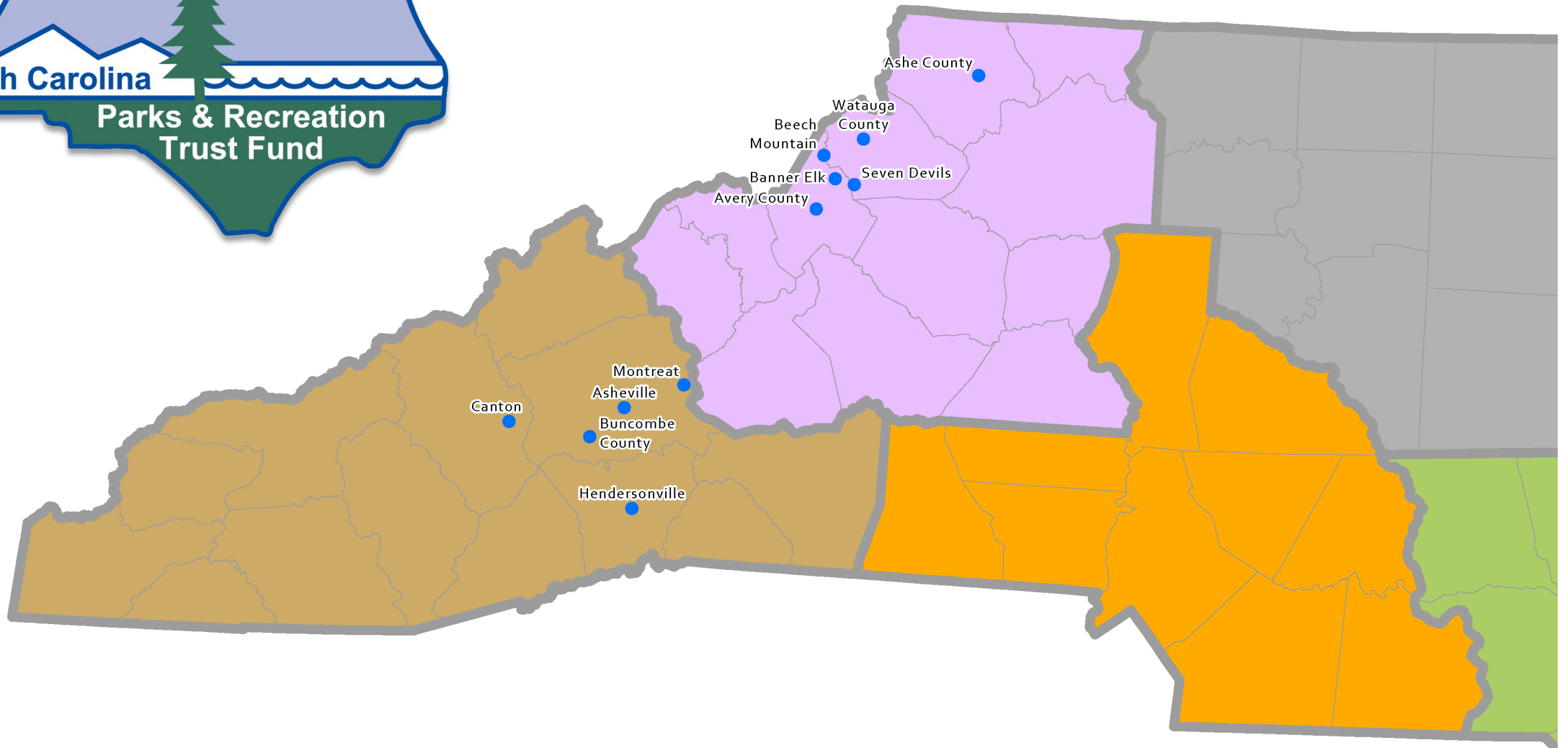
Criteria

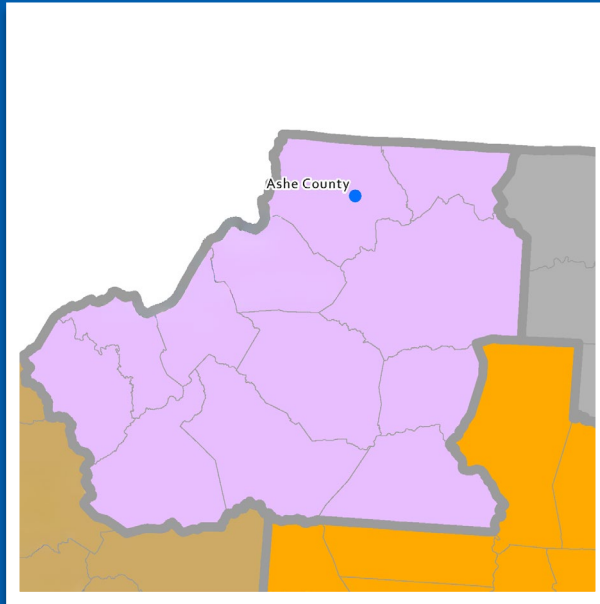
- application scores as evaluated by the State Parks Grants and Outreach team and NC State's Recreation Resources Services
- the geographic distribution of projects (across counties designated as natural disaster areas due to Helene)
- the presence or absence of other funding sources
- the population of the applicant
- the level of compliance with prior grant agreements
- the grant amount being requested by each applicant (there is no maximum grant size for the Helene funds)
- the PARTF funds available for all grant applications

Parks and Recreation Authority

Nine-member board (five, including chairperson, appointed by Governor Stein; two members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the NC Senate; and two members appointed by the Speaker of the NC House)



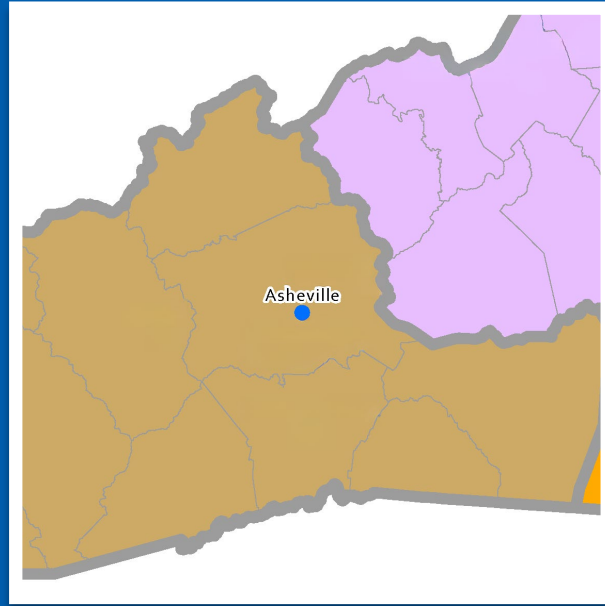




\$300,000

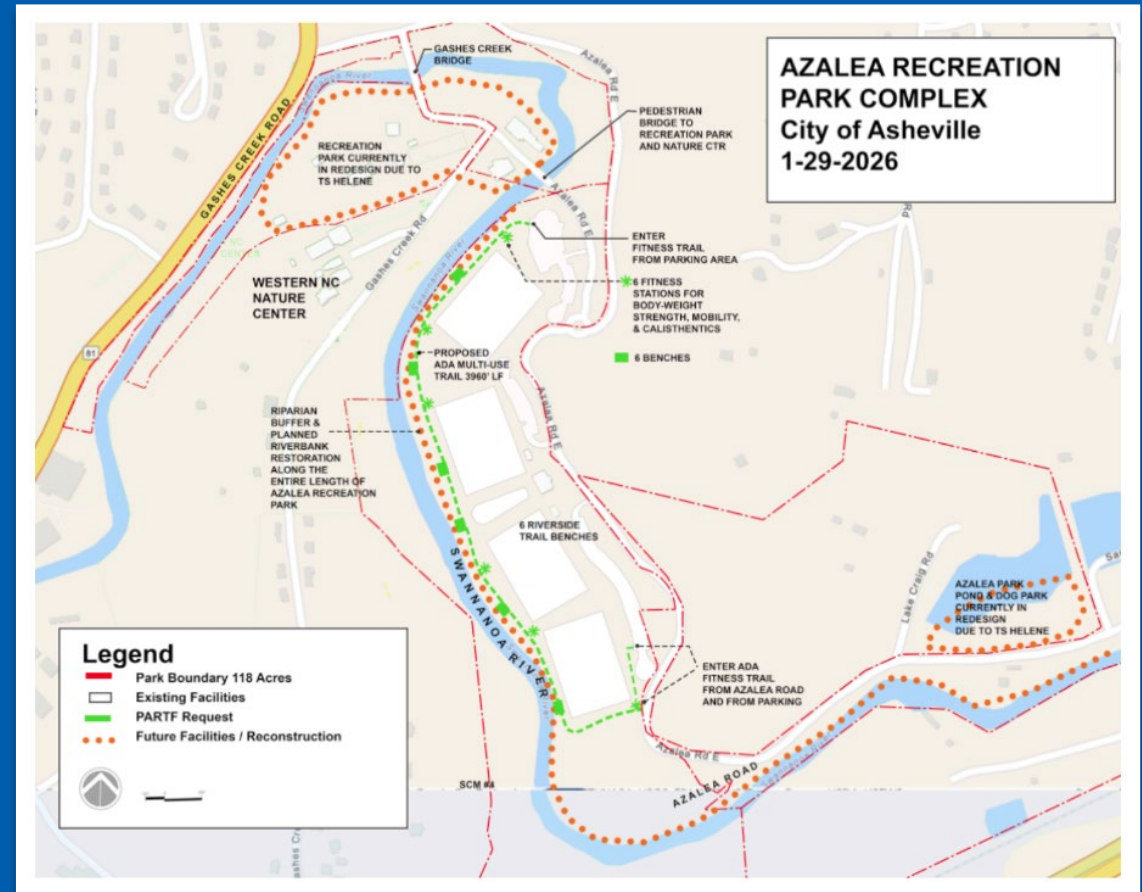
Ashe County *Family Central Splash in Jefferson*

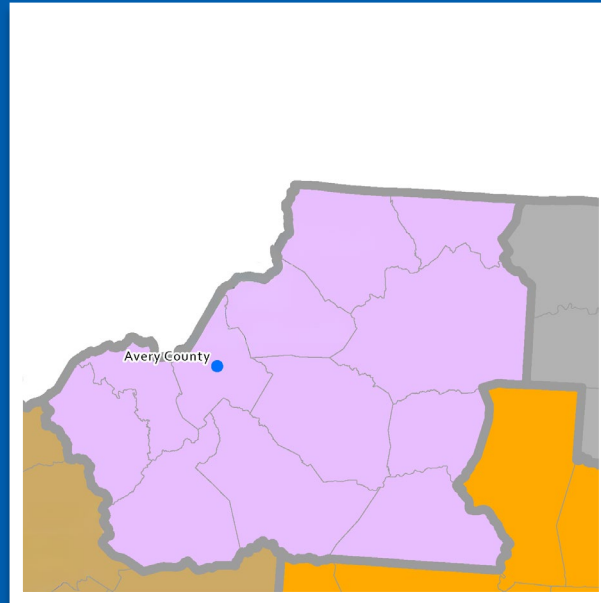




\$345,000

City of Asheville
Azalea Park in Buncombe County

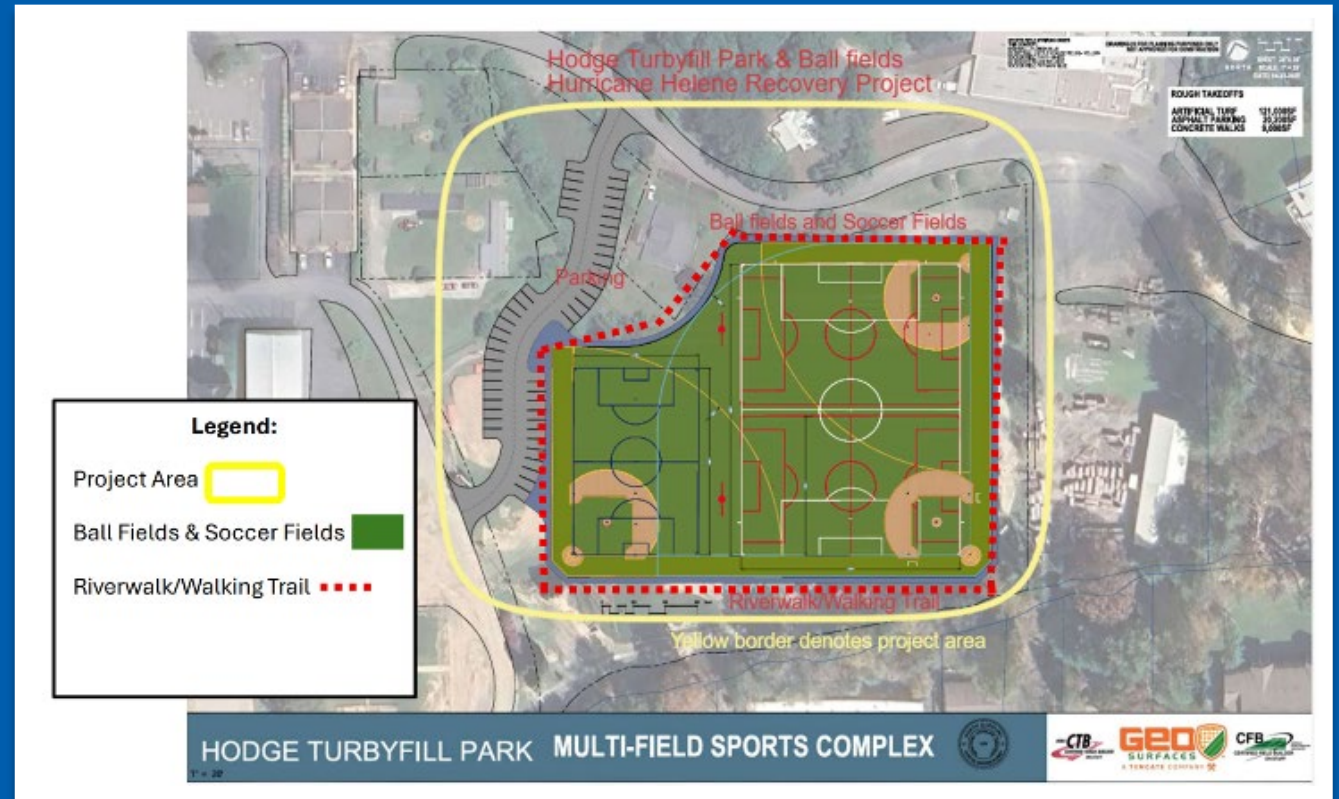


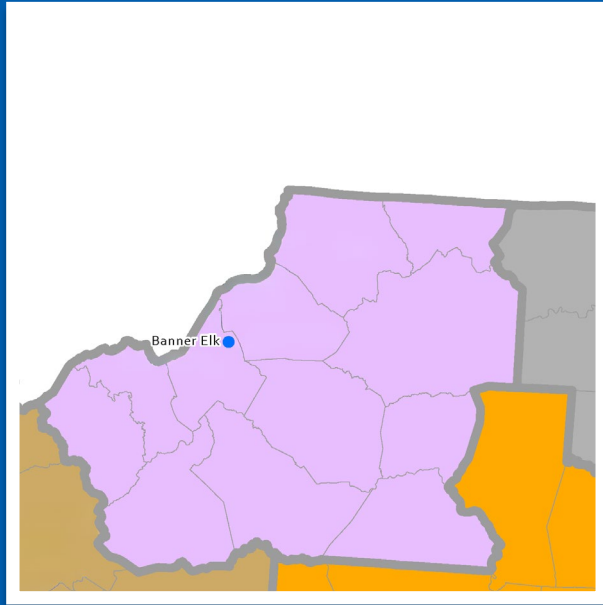


\$987,500

Avery County

Hodge Turbyfill Fields in Newland

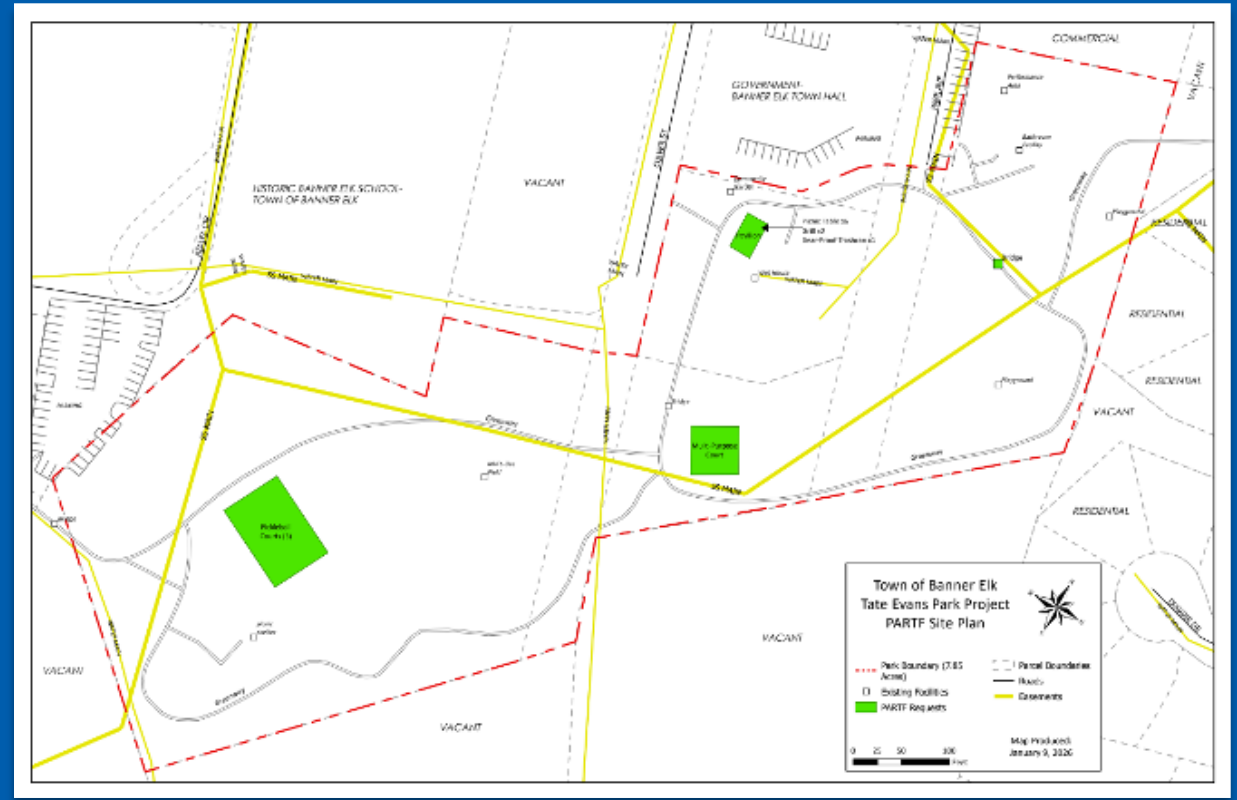


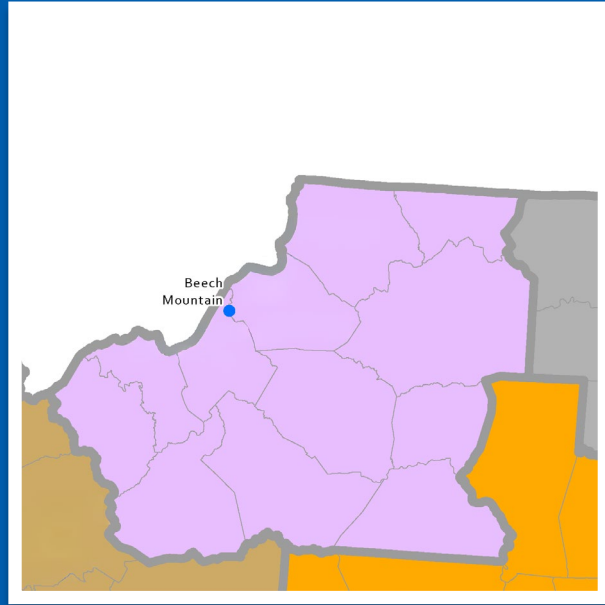


\$204,201

Town of Banner Elk

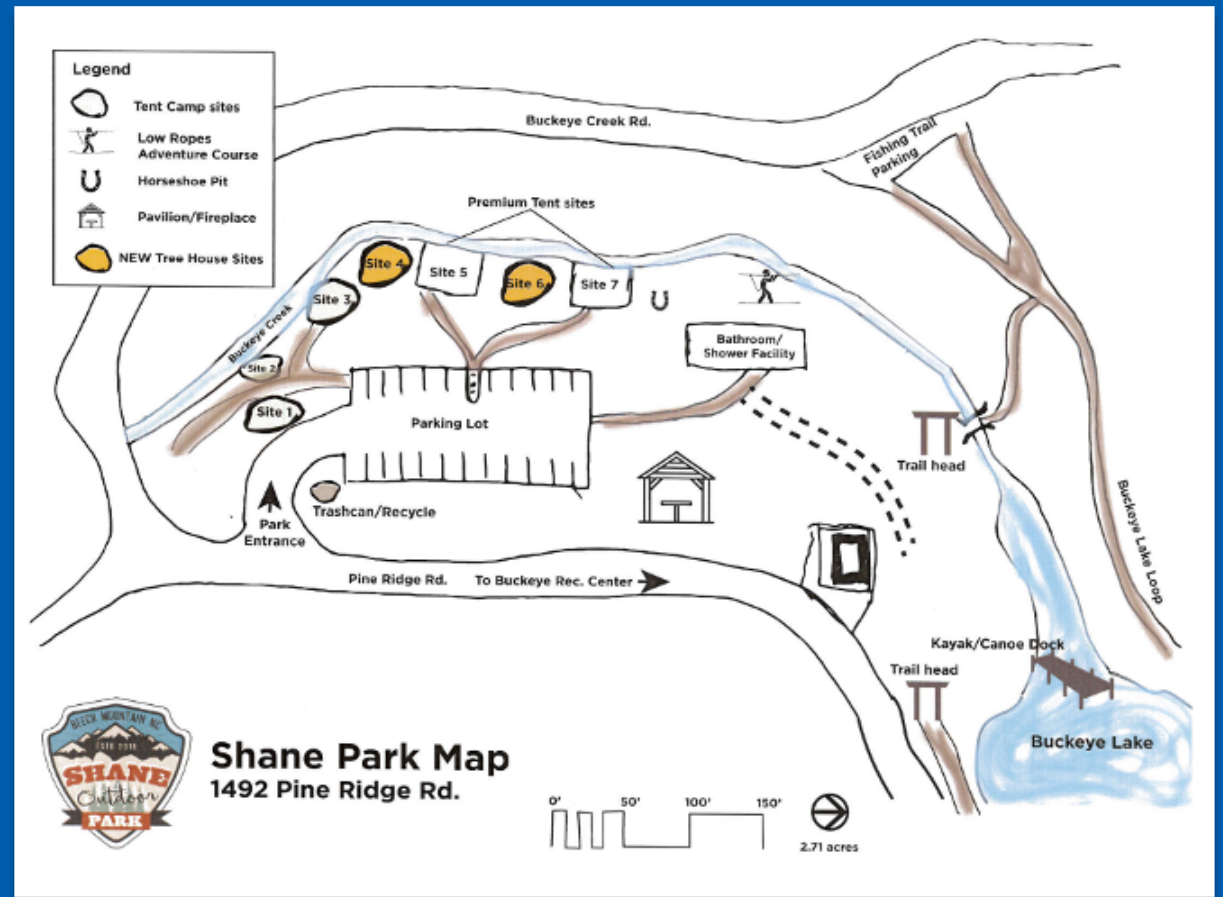
Tate-Evans Park in Avery County

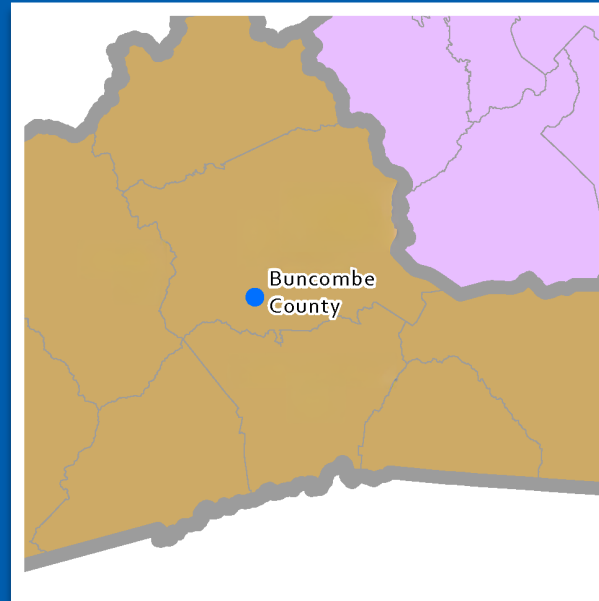




\$353,250

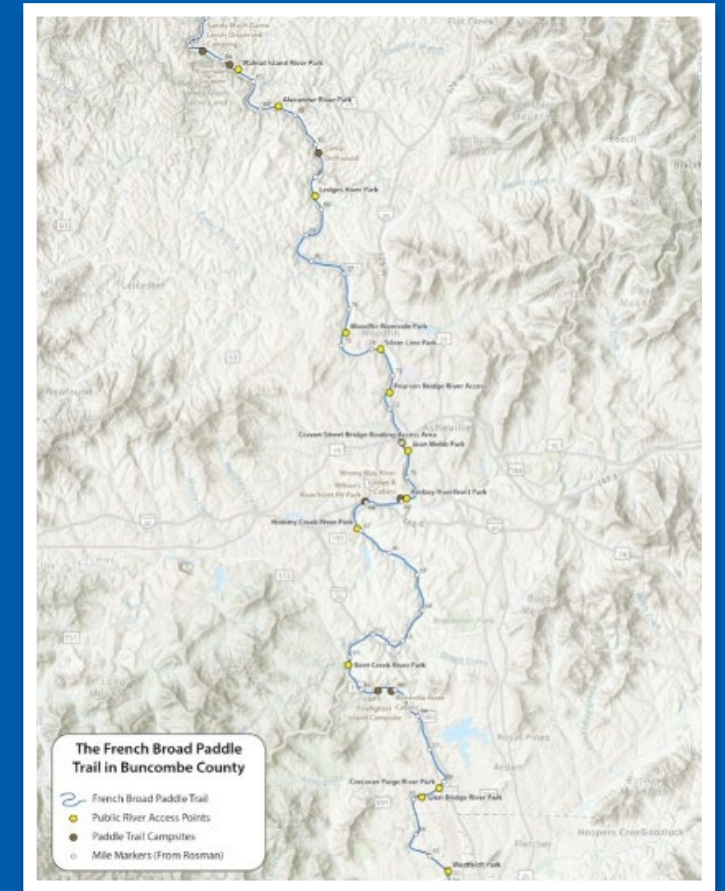
Town of Beech Mountain
Shane Park in Watauga County

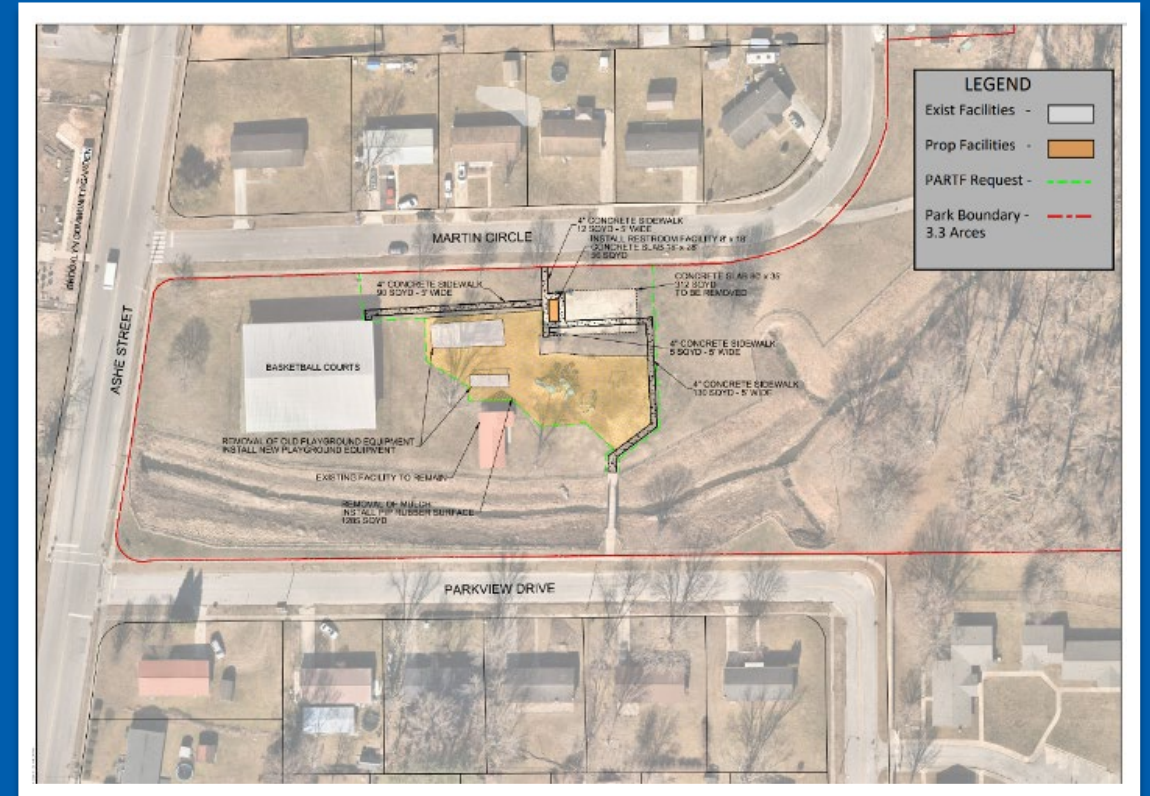
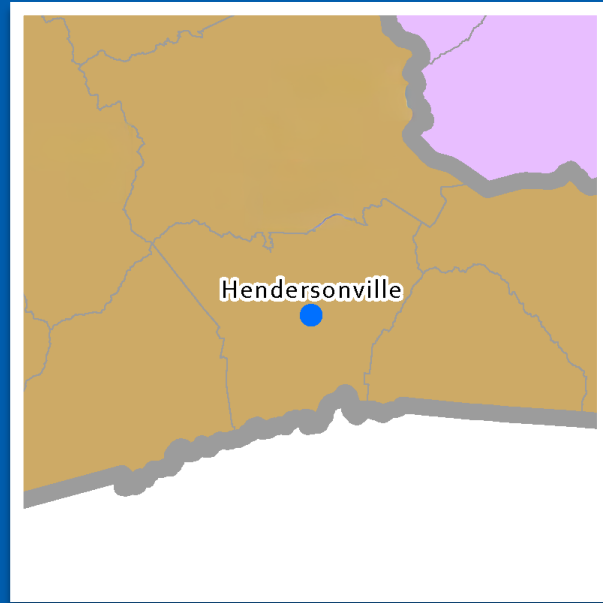




\$284,368

Buncombe County
French Broad River boat launches

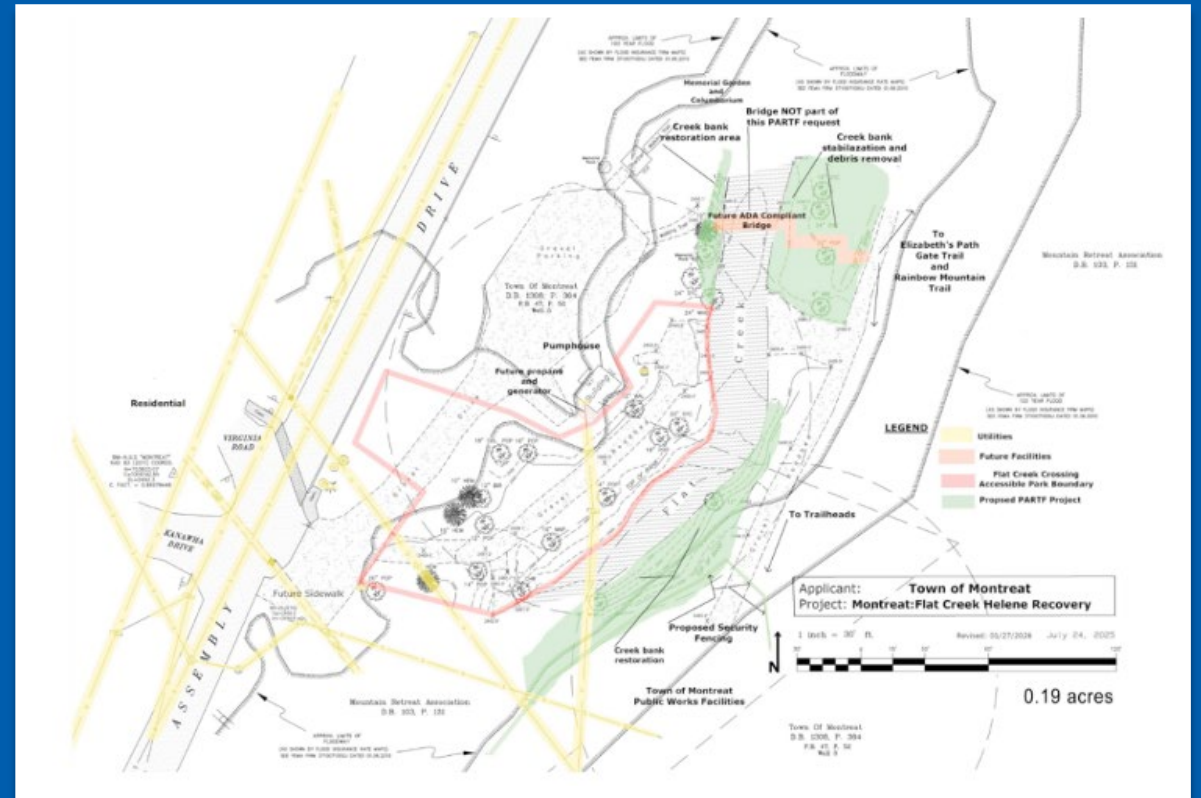
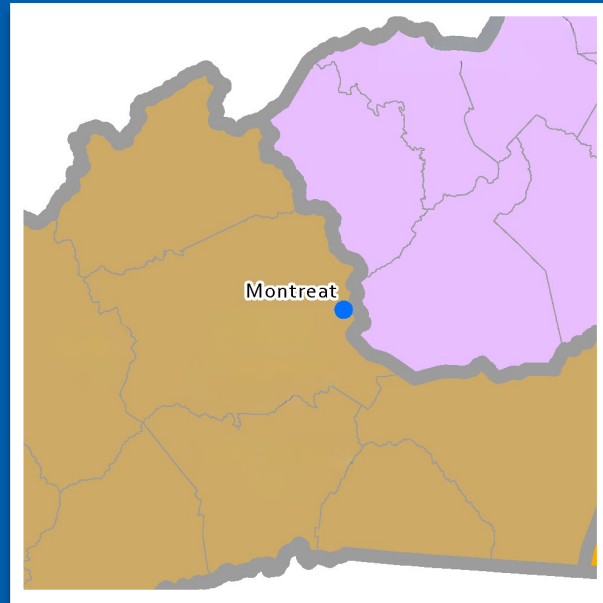




\$361,762

City of Hendersonville
 Sullivan Park in Henderson County

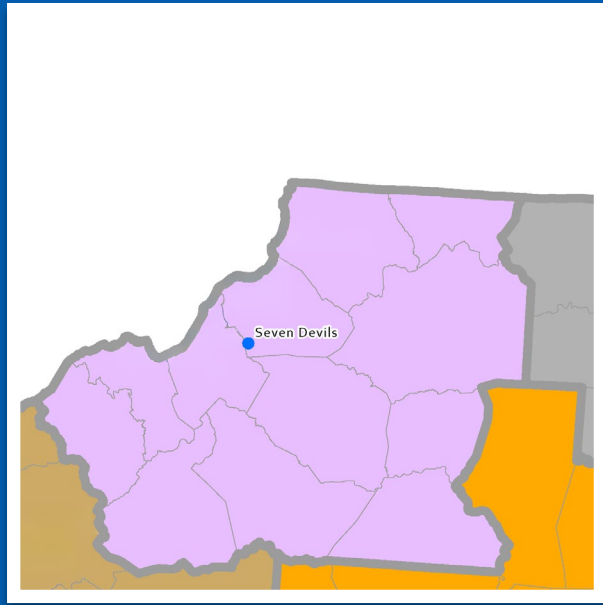




\$307,274

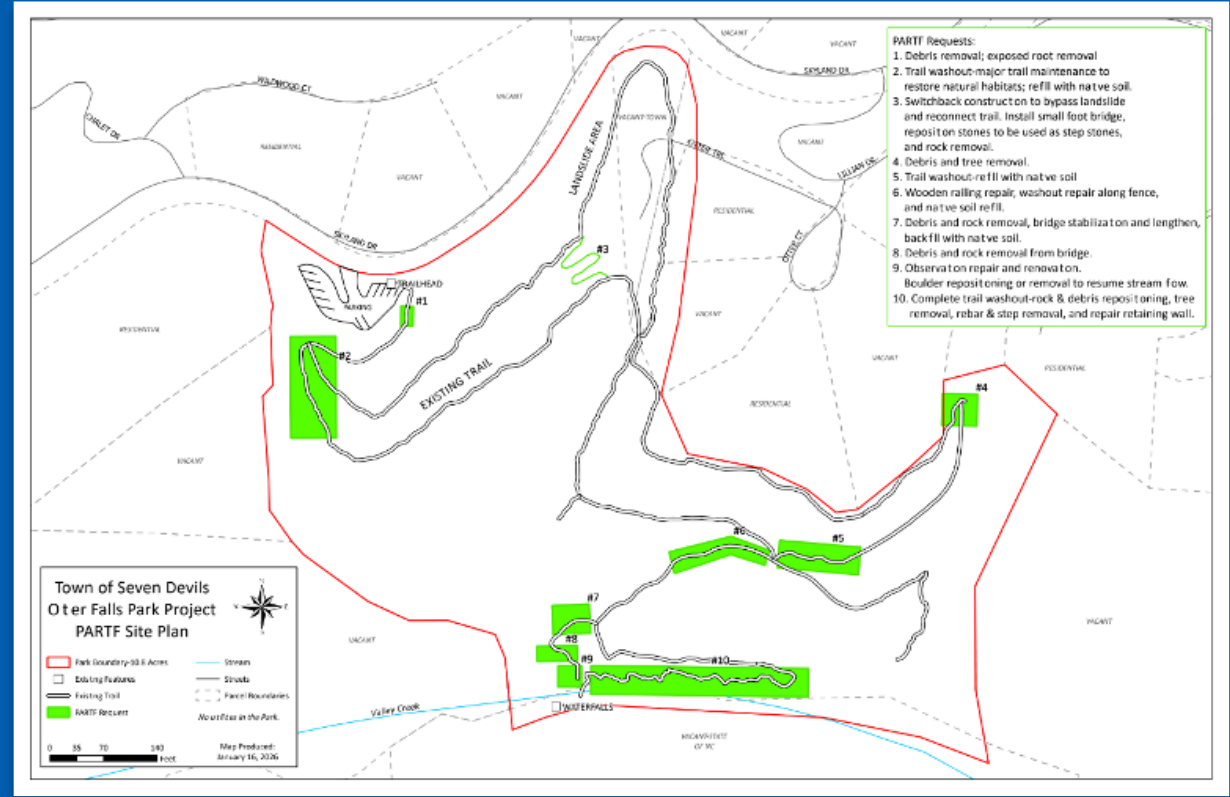
Town of Montreat
Flat Creek in Buncombe County

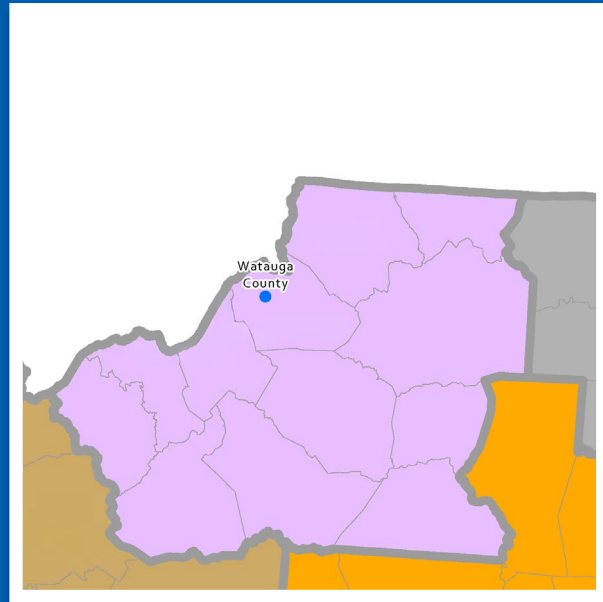




\$117,716

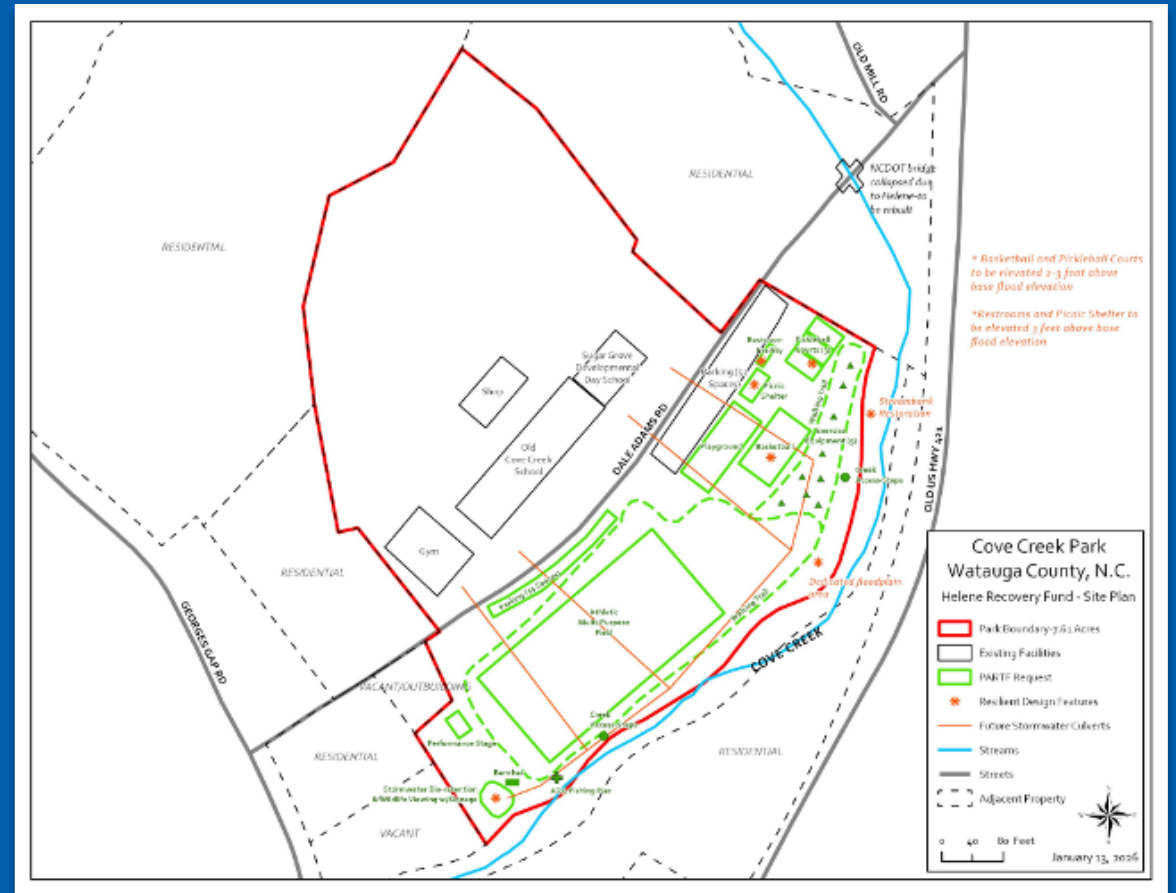
Town of Seven Devils Otter Falls Trail in Watauga County





\$494,000

Watauga County
Cove Creek Park in Sugar Grove









Remarks

Governor Josh Stein





NC DEPARTMENT
of COMMERCE
COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

Helene Recovery Update

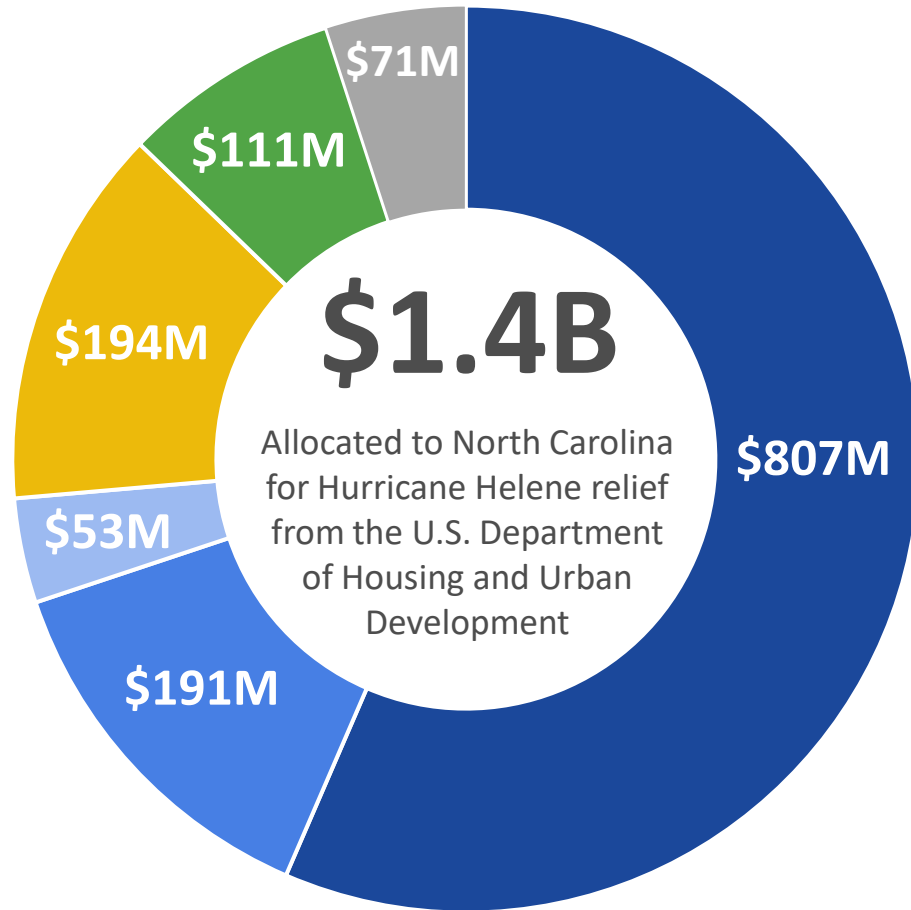
Division of Community Revitalization, NC Commerce

Stephanie McGarrah, Deputy Secretary

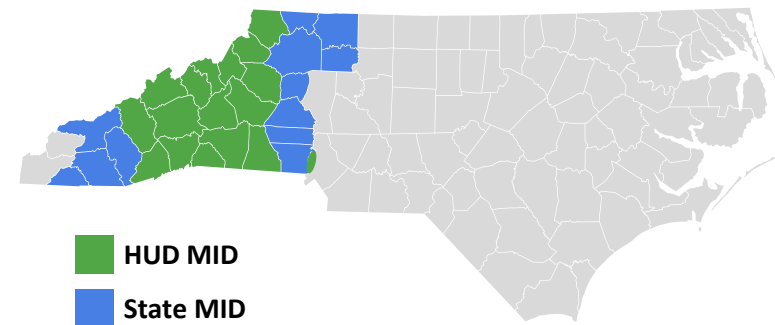
April 20, 2026



CDBG-DR Allocation Breakdown



- **\$807M:** Single-Family Housing Program
- **\$191M:** Multi-Family Housing Program
 - 3 segments: small; large LIHTC; large, non-LIHTC
- **\$53M:** Workforce Housing for Ownership
- **\$194M:** Community Infrastructure Program
- **\$111M:** Commercial District Revitalization Program
- **\$71M:** Administration



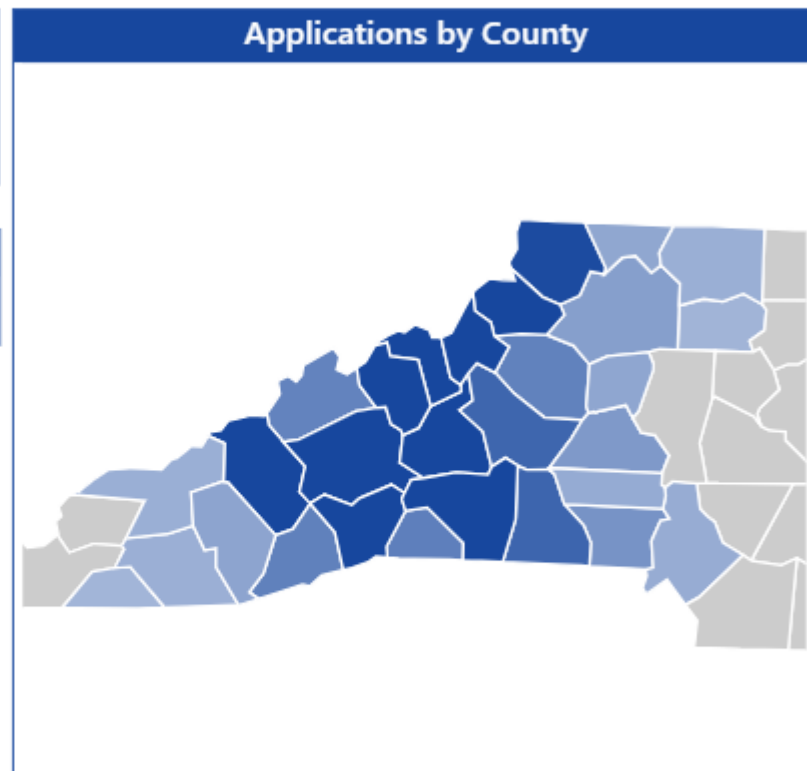


Renew NC Single-Family Housing Dashboard

4/15/2026 10:35:49 AM

Latest Data Refresh

Applications in Progress But Not Submitted	Total Applications Submitted	Total Active Applications	Inactive or Ineligible Applications
2,178	7,924	3,432 i	4,492 i



Application Submission Deadline
January 31, 2026

Verified Eligible Phase and Priority i

Phase	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Total
Phase 1	1,433	236	108	15	1,792
Phase 2	211	70	12	7	300
Phase 3	121	3	N/A	N/A	124
Phase 4	437	15	N/A	N/A	452

Hover over the information bubble for Phase and Priority definitions.

Applications will be processed beginning with Phase 1, followed by Phase 2, etc.



Financial Projections for Single-Family Housing

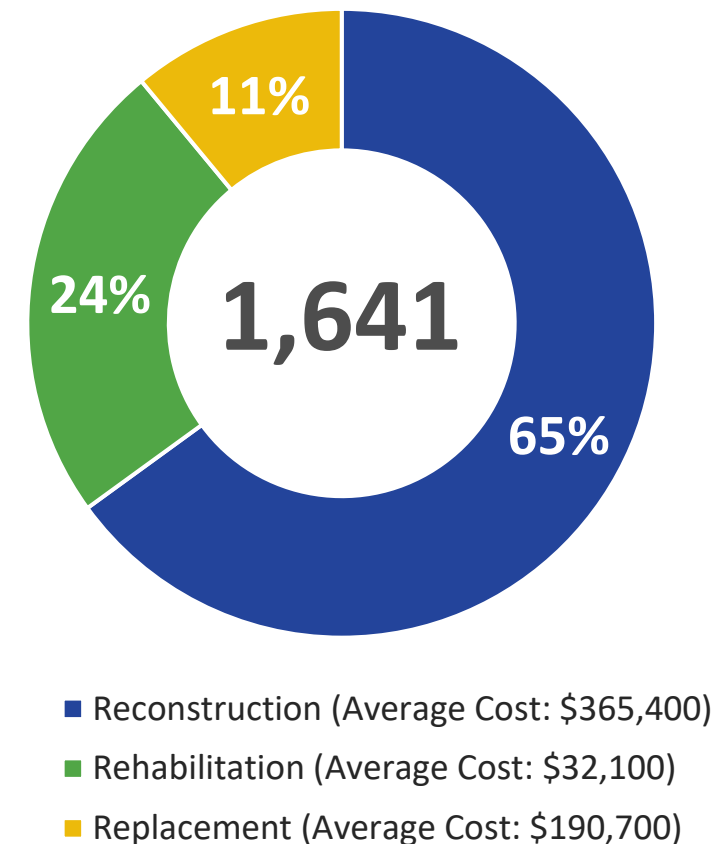
Initial projections indicate insufficient funding to serve every eligible applicant.

Current weighted average cost (**\$276,285**) for each home times number of current active applications (**3,676**) would require **\$1.02 billion** in funding, which exceeds the construction budget of **\$722 million**.

Multiple variables will determine outcome:

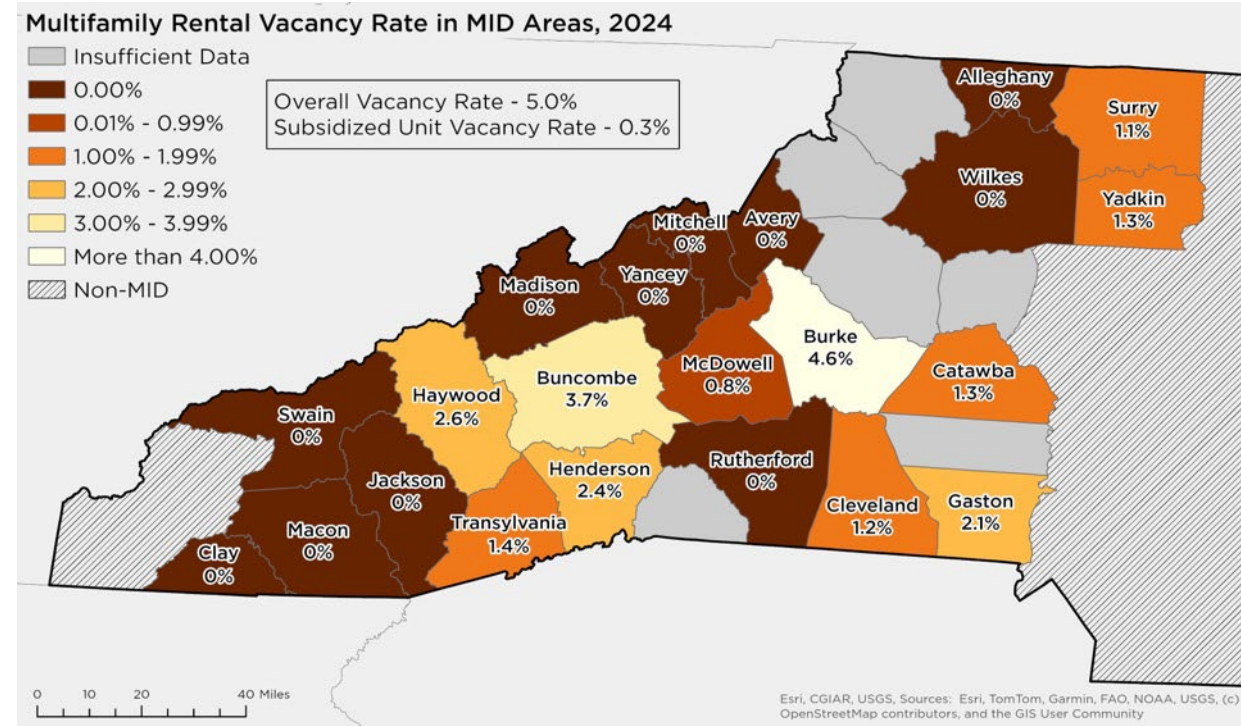
- Award types
- Applicant funds
- Inflation/rising construction costs
- Eligibility determinations/withdrawals at each stage of process

Award Types Determined



Temporary Relocation Assistance (TRA)

- Lack of temporary housing options for Renew NC Single-Family applicants is a significant chokepoint from "Pre-Construction" to "Construction."
- \$60 million TRA program would provide short-term housing for an estimated 2,200 applicants <80% AMI with a demonstrated hardship.
 - Applicants don't move out until they have a notice-to-proceed for construction.
 - Builders handle funds and work with their assigned applicants to find appropriate housing.
 - DCR will pay builders state hotel nightly rate plus taxes and overhead for a maximum number of nights based on the project type. Builders are responsible for overages.
- DCR is actively developing partnerships for additional funding and housing assistance with multiple non-profits.



*Data map from Bowen National Research

Housing Progress to Date

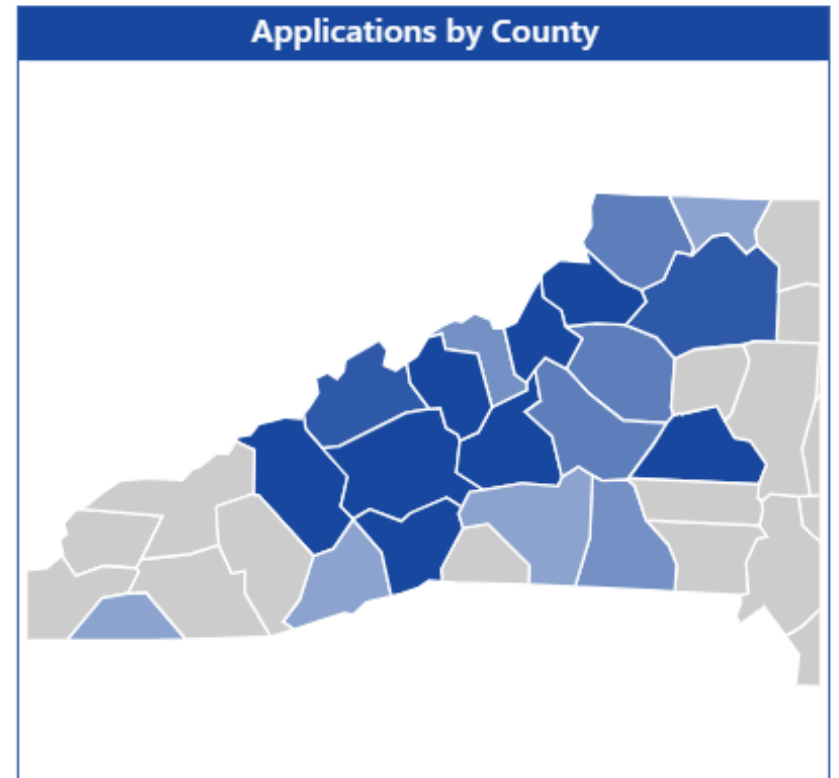
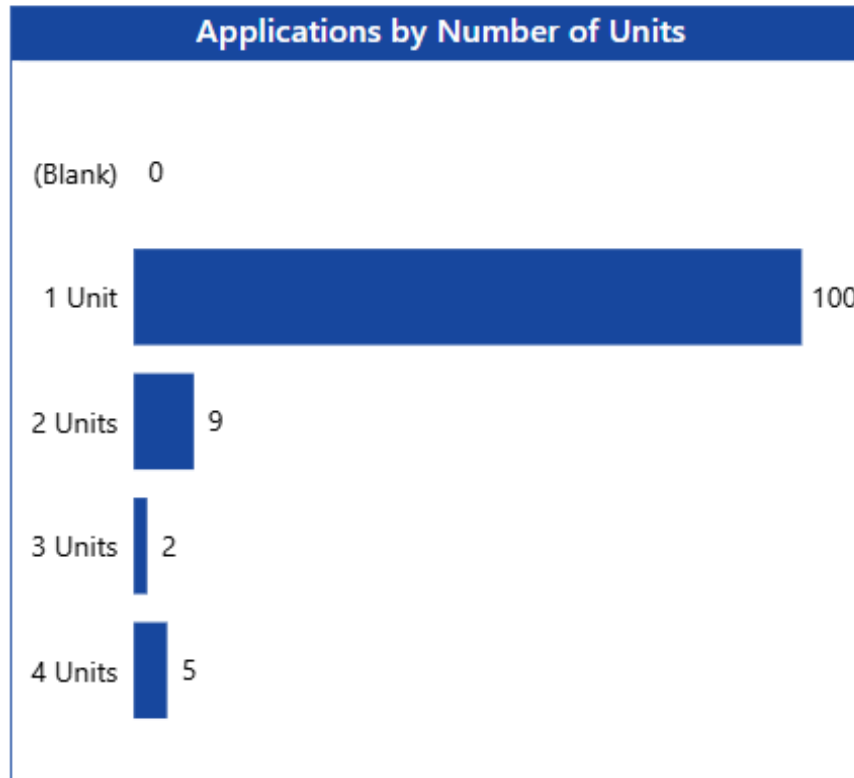
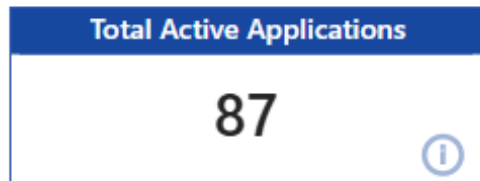
- 34 single-family homes completed to date with 156 more in the construction pipeline
 - To get to this stage, DCR and BDO attended over 62 community events with an estimated 63k attendees, knocked on 56k doors, made 23k phone calls, closed the application window after 7 months, completed over 3k intake and eligibility reviews, and visited nearly 2k sites.
- Launched Small Rental Rehabilitation Program in December 2025
- Working with NCHFA to co-fund large LIHTC projects; applications opened in January with awards expected in mid-2026
- Two additional housing programs – large, non-LIHTC and workforce housing – to launch in mid-2026

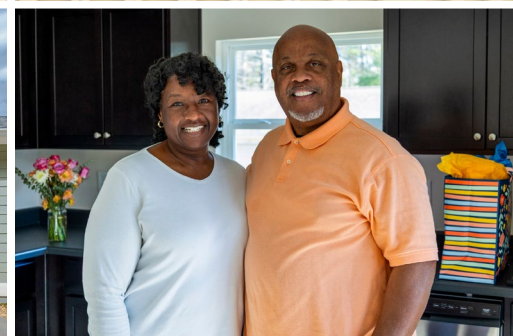


Renew NC Small Rental Housing Dashboard

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Latest Data Refresh





Additional Programs Underway

- Commercial District Revitalization first application round launched on April 6, 2026
 - First round makes \$40 million available to restore commercial districts in WNC damaged by Hurricane Helene
 - Eligible applicants are local governments and non-profits
 - HUD and State Most Impacted and Distressed (MID) areas are eligible
 - Prescreening opened in February to allow DCR to provide technical assistance to interested applicants
- Community Infrastructure Program launched the prescreening phase in February so that DCR can provide technical assistance to local governments
 - First round to open after additional FEMA PA decisions made





Governor Stein's Helene Phase Three Budget Recommendations

Matt Calabria, Director, GROW NC

Governor Stein's Helene Phase Three Budget Recommendations

\$81.5M to boost economic recovery by supporting small businesses, boosting tourism, and supporting local governments

Local Government Cash Flow Revolving Loans
Small Business Forgivable Loans
Tourism Promotion through Visit NC
Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation Match Funds
Good Jobs Western North Carolina Pilot

\$10M for housing recovery so people have safe places to live

Rental and Utility Assistance
Temporary Relocation Assistance (\$60 million from existing appropriation)
Additional grants to nonprofits for housing repair and reconstruction (\$20 million from existing appropriation)

\$17.3M to mitigate wildfire risks, repair parks, protect natural resources

Wildfire Mitigation and Preparedness
Holmes Educational State Forest Repairs and Recovery
State Parks Repairs



Governor Stein's Helene Phase Three Budget Recommendations

March 26, 2026



Governor Stein's Helene Phase Three Budget Recommendations

\$230.2M to strengthen infrastructure for future storms

Private Roads and Bridges
Local Government Capital Grant Program
Disaster Relief and Mitigation Fund
Debris Removal Unmet Need
VIPER Tower Infrastructure
Flood Resiliency Blueprint Projects in WNC
Dam Safety and Removal
Public School Insurance Fund and State Property Fire Insurance Fund
WNC Flood Monitoring and Alert Network (FIMAN)
Decentralized Wastewater System Restoration
Cover Gap Between Federal Highway Administration & HMGP Compensation Rates for Property Owners
Gameland Repairs
Landslide Hazard Mapping and Early Warning System
Microgrids

\$452M for disaster response and recovery to leverage available federal funds

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers State Match
Federal Disaster Programs State Match and Reimbursable Cash Flow
Communications and Disaster Systems Improvements at NCEM



Arts Recovery in Western North Carolina

A Regional Strategy for Long-Term Economic Recovery

April 2026

The Creative Economy is Core Infrastructure

Creative Economy

- \$3.1 billion in total economic activity
- 34,000+ jobs supported across WNC

Core Economic Functions

- Tourism & visitor economy driver
- Small business ecosystem support
- Downtown & commercial district activation
- Cultural identity & place-based economic value

System Characteristics

- Cross-county workforce mobility
- Interconnected supply chains
- Regional audiences and tourism flows
- Mixed structure: Nonprofits, For-profits, Independent & Gig-based
- Foundational layer within the regional economy

System-Wide Disruption

Impact of TS Helene on the Arts Sector

- 26 counties impacted across WNC
- 16 most economically distressed

Major Infrastructure Loss

- 80% of the River Arts District destroyed
- Studios, galleries, and venues significantly damaged across the region

Regional Economic Impacts

- ~70% decline in tourism at peak season
- Widespread event cancellations
- Business interruption across arts organizations and creative businesses
- Significant loss of earned revenue streams

Uneven Impact, Shared Risk

Arts Sector Impacts Across WNC

- Infrastructure loss (studios, venues, facilities)
- Earned revenue disruption
- Workforce displacement (staff + contractors)
- Reduced organizational capacity

System Reality

- Impacts differ by community
- Recovery capacity varies
- Economy is interconnected

→ Economic impacts ripple across the regional system

What Worked

A Coordinated Arts Recovery Model:

- ArtsAVL — regional coordination
- Local arts agencies — county-level delivery
- NC Arts Council — state alignment
- Mountain BizWorks — business support

Integrated Approach:

- Direct funding to artists, nonprofits, and businesses
- Technical assistance and business support
- Market access and audience recovery

Funding Delivered:

- \$5.2M distributed across WNC
- \$1.2M additional in process

Where We Are Now

Arts Recovery Status

- Stabilized, but not rebuilt
- System remains fragile

Ongoing Conditions

- Revenue instability
- Infrastructure gaps
- Workforce strain
- Uneven recovery across region

System Constraint

Reduced capacity → reduced
production → reduced revenue →
slower recovery



Nonprofit Arts Recovery Grant Insights

Current Conditions Across WNC

- 90 applications (60% Buncombe / 40% regional)

Key impacts:

- 80% loss of earned revenue
- 81% canceled programming
- 68% tourism-related loss
- 58% reduced staffing
- 66% ongoing revenue decline

Top barriers:

- Lack of operating funding
- Loss of audience + donors
- Nonprofits operating as economic drivers within the sector

Investment Gap in Arts Recovery

Public Investment

- ~\$20M state investment during COVID
- No comparable state investment post-Helene

Philanthropic Investment

- Significant philanthropic investment across WNC recovery
- \$2.5M targeted specifically to nonprofit arts recovery
 - Community Foundation of WNC
 - NC Community Foundation
 - Dogwood Health Trust

→ Current recovery is being carried without aligned public investment

What Recovery Requires

1. **Treat Arts & Culture as Core Economic Infrastructure**
2. **Invest in Regional Systems, Not Isolated Projects**
3. **Rebuild and Expand Cultural Infrastructure**
4. **Strengthen High-Growth Creative Industries**
5. **Expand Access to Capital and Business Support**



State Alignment for Economic Recovery

State Implementation Opportunities

- Targeted investment in music and craft industries
 - Establish a Creative Economy Office within the Department of Commerce
 - Integrate arts into Phase 3 recovery funding:
 - Small business programs
 - Tourism investment
 - Infrastructure funding
 - Commercial district revitalization
 - Align eligibility to include nonprofit + for-profit creative economy
- Align state systems with how the creative economy actually operates



Federal Engagement in Western NC

NEA Grants Workshop

May 6, 2026 | 9:30 AM | Wortham Center

- Federal funding guidance and grant support

National Council on the Arts Public Meeting

May 6, 2026 | 11:00 AM | Wortham Center

- Federal advisory body convenes in Asheville, highlights national focus on WNC recovery

Free and open to the public
Register: worthamarts.org



Recovery Updates

Matt Calabria, Director, GROW NC

Emily Gangi, Chief Deputy Director, GROW NC

Final \$196M for Helene EPA State Revolving Fund Water and Sewer Projects Awarded

Funds awarded to communities that experienced significant infrastructure damage from Hurricane Helene.

Awards will support projects to repair damage and strengthen resilience for future storms.

Cumulative Totals for Helene SRF:

- \$645 million awarded
- 127 projects
- 69 unique recipients
- 26 counties

More than \$640 million of unmet needs from remaining applications.



For the list of funded projects: <http://bit.ly/48aZtUR>

Governor's Federal Funding Request for Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Projects

- \$512 million in additional EPA Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds
- \$1.33 billion in additional HUD CDBG-DR funding for water quality infrastructure
- \$233 million in CDBG-I funding for stormwater projects (estimated \$250 million in need)



NC Commerce Awards Nearly \$8.5M to Strengthen Small Business Infrastructure in WNC; application still open

Projects awarded in Ashe, Caldwell, Jackson, and Mitchell counties. Part of \$55M appropriation from the NC General Assembly to assist small businesses by expediting infrastructure repairs impacting the operation and patronage of small businesses in the affected area.

More than \$25M remaining; max award per project: \$1 million.

Eligibility: Local governments impacted by Hurricane Helene and designated under a major disaster declaration from Helene. Special consideration given to local governments in Tier 1 and Tier 2 Counties.

Timeline: Applications accepted on a rolling basis; awards announced:

- June 30, 2025 – *\$7.3m announced*
- November 12, 2025 – *\$13.8m announced*
- March 20, 2026 – *\$8.5m announced*
- June 30, 2026 (anticipated)



For more information: commerce.nc.gov/SmBIZ

NC Private Road and Bridge Program

- Estimated Need:
 - 3,497 unique sites
 - \$481M to address all sites
- Construction Program Progress
 - 80 sites complete
 - 169 sites in progress
 - 464 households served to date
- Reimbursement Program Progress
 - \$1,256,861 reimbursements paid so far
 - 559 households served by reimbursement

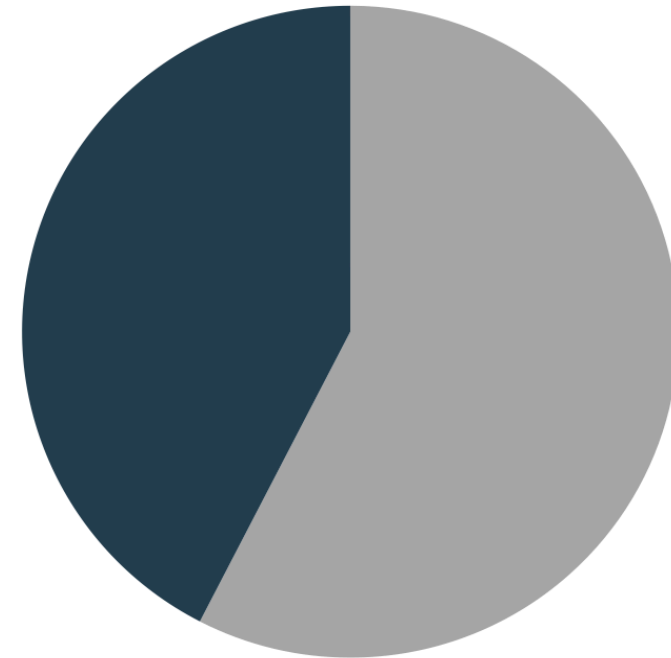


The “Restoring our Infrastructure” page of the GROW NC Recovery Dashboard includes data from the NC Private Road and Bridge Program.

FEMA Public Assistance reimbursement delays continue

- FEMA has obligated more than \$1.6 billion for Public Assistance reimbursements.
- Local governments wait months for approval through the standard FEMA review process.
- In response to the shutdown, the Department of Homeland Security slowed review of temporary projects and halted review of permanent recovery work.
- "Temporary" categories of work include debris removal, and "permanent" categories of work include repair of bridges, public buildings, and water/sewer facilities.
- Delays in FEMA decisions impact approval timelines for other state and federal programs.
- Rescinding the Department of Homeland Security \$100k sign off policy will partially reduce delays experienced.

■ Obligated FEMA PA Projects - 2,356 (57.6%)
■ Unobligated FEMA PA Projects - 1,736 (42.4%)



Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)

- \$2 billion in funding to North Carolina, including state match
- Three primary categories of HMGP:
 - voluntary acquisition of damaged properties,
 - voluntary elevation of flood-prone properties,
 - infrastructure improvements to protect against future disasters
- The state submitted applications to FEMA faster than ever before
- DHS / FEMA reviewed first applications for nearly a year before approval
- North Carolina Emergency Management provides an online listing for projects submitted to FEMA for this program and their status by county.

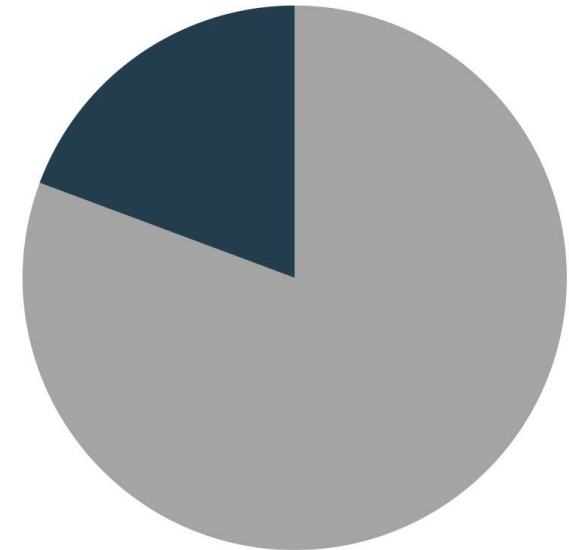
ncdps.gov/HMGP

Progress made on FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, but majority of applications remain pending

- Together with North Carolina's federal delegation, the state secured its first Helene-related HMGP acquisition approval from FEMA in January 2026.
- DHS/FEMA reviewed applications for nearly a year before first acquisition approval.
- \$2 billion available in HMGP funding to North Carolina, including state match
- The state submitted HMGP applications to FEMA faster than ever before.

Voluntary home acquisition applications

- Awaiting FEMA approval - 551 (80.7%)
- Approved by FEMA - 132 (19.3%)



Total submitted to FEMA: 683 properties

Wildfire Prevention

The first quarter of 2026 saw intense wildfire activity across the state, with over 3,500 wildfires. (On average, NC sees more than 4,500 annually; nearly 99% are caused by human activities like backyard burning and campfires.

With more fuel on the ground due to Helene debris, it is important everyone does their part to prevent and prepare for wildfire.

- Follow recommended best practices for safe outdoor burning.
- Harden your home and create defensible space in the home ignition zone.

The NC Forest Service (NCFS) offers a comprehensive resource list to help communities prepare for and prevent wildfires. When in doubt, contact local NCFS county rangers at the link below.

www.ncagr.gov/divisions/nc-forest-service/contacts



Share these best practices with others:

- Never burn on dry, windy days, and never leave fires unattended
- Keep a water source, shovel, rake and phone nearby.
- Ensure you have a valid burn permit.

NC Emergency Management Awards \$16M for Volunteer Organizations Doing Home Repair and Rebuilds

Last month, NCEM announced another \$16M in grants to 16 volunteer organizations managing housing repair and rebuild projects across western North Carolina. This is the second round of grants and part of a \$28 million appropriation by the NC General Assembly for this purpose.

As of late March, nonprofit partners have rebuilt or repaired more than 800 homes using state funds.



For more information: <https://bit.ly/4tLoMC8>

USDA Single-Family Housing Rural Disaster Home Repair Grants

Applications are available year-round as long as funding is available and are processed in the order in which they are received.

- Maximum grant award of \$32,420.
- Available to very-low income and low-income homeowners.
- Homes must be owner-occupied and located within an eligible rural area.
- Grant recipients must certify there is no duplication of benefits with other funding or awards. Contact a USDA home loan specialist in your area.
- A homeowner is qualified to apply if:
 - Property was damaged in an authorized Presidential Disaster Declaration since 2022, such as Helene, and;
 - The home must be homeowner occupied (occupancy after repair can be authorized).



Applications open - \$221M USDA block grant to assist agriculture and forestry producers



North Carolina Department of
Agriculture & Consumer Services

The block grant has four program categories, with an application required for each category in each county that a farmer or landowner qualifies for.

- Farm Infrastructure – cost-share assistance for farm structure repair or replacement and farm road or bridge repair and replacement.
- Future Economic Loss – cost-share assistance for economic loss for perennial crops, poultry and aquaculture operations.
- Market Loss – cost-share assistance for harvested or unharvested commodities or select value-added products in which value was reduced or destroyed by power outage.

Deadline for the programs above: May 15

- Timber Loss Relief Program – private timber landowners with at least 10 acres of timber loss are eligible. *(Applications open April 20. Deadline to apply. June 12)*



Find program information and apply: www.ncagr.gov/agdisaster

Support Towns Impacted by Blue Ridge Parkway Closures

Tourism Development Authorities have partnered on creative ideas to help visitors discover scenic byways as a detour to towns and attractions impacted by Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) repairs.

HIGH COUNTRY ROAD TRIP: along this 50-mile driving tour loop in Avery and Watauga counties, discover 500+ stops (attractions, hikes, shops, galleries, and restaurants), and the charming downtowns of Banner Elk, Blowing Rock and Boone.

MAYLAND MEANDER: explore 120 miles through 12 small towns in Mitchell, Avery, and Yancey Counties (MAYland). Visit often overlooked Blue Ridge Mountain towns like Bakersville, Crossnore, Little Switzerland and Newland.

Access the maps and plan your next trip: highcountryroadtrip.com

Share your summer events and travel ideas with us: wncrecover@nc.gov



Norfolk Southern Opens Restored “Old Fort Loops” Section of Railway Damaged by Helene

On April 7, Norfolk Southern ran a train on the Old Fort Loops section of the AS-Line for the first time since the route was devastated by Hurricane Helene.

Initial damage assessments discovered 20,500 feet of track washed out, more than 50,000 feet of track damaged, and over 15,000 feet of failures, slides, and damaged bridges.

All Norfolk Southern routes to Asheville that were damaged during Helene are now back online.





Wrap Up and Next Steps

Matt Calabria, GROW NC

Next meeting: **Friday, May 22**, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
(Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College)

Stay Connected

GROW NC is sharing recovery news, resources, progress metrics, and more.



Renew NC Launches Commercial District Revitalization (CDR) Program for Western North Carolina

Application Period: April 6, 2026 – August 4, 2026

- For eligible local governments and nonprofit organizations to revitalize designated commercial districts damaged by Hurricane Helene
- \$40 million of the total \$111 million CDBG-DR allocation will be available in the first round
- Award amounts will range from \$500,000 to \$10 million per project.
- Will fund projects in HUD-identified and State-identified Most Impacted and Distressed (MID) areas
- Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:
 - Acquisition, demolition, site preparation, or rehabilitation of commercial structures
 - Assistance for small businesses for rehabilitation and physical improvements to their places of business;
 - Assistance for small businesses for rehabilitation and physical improvements to their places of business;
 - Facade improvements to private or public structures in commercial areas.



www.commercerecovery.nc.gov/renew-nc-programs/commercial-district-revitalization-program

Highlighting Recovery Collaborations Across WNC

GROW NC is celebrating the many collaborations that are weaving a network of hope and connection across the region.

The partnerships that emerged in the days and weeks following Hurricane Helene have grown stronger over the past 18 months and are the nexus of the momentum western North Carolina needs to build on early progress and push forward with long-term recovery efforts.

This new blog post from GROW NC:

- Highlights important work of long-term recovery partners
- Outlines Governor Stein's plan to unlock the next phase of western North Carolina recovery
- Lists 5 ways anyone can get involved to support continued recovery



https://bit.ly/Collaboration_Recovery_WNC

Trail Volunteers Celebrated at Kuwohi

In early April, leaders from the National Park Service, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Friends of the Smokies, and GROW NC joined local leaders for a marker unveiling for the Mountains to Sea Trail (MST) on Kuwohi Mountain.

The mountain, at 6,643ft. above sea level, is the highest point of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which brings millions of visitors to WNC annually.

Thousands of volunteers worked to speed up the reopening of 98% of this state trail.

As of April 9, 2026, the mountain is officially designated as the westernmost point of NC's MST, which stretches 1,175 miles across the state to Jockey's Ridge State Park.



Read more and share the news: www.facebook.com/wncrecoverly

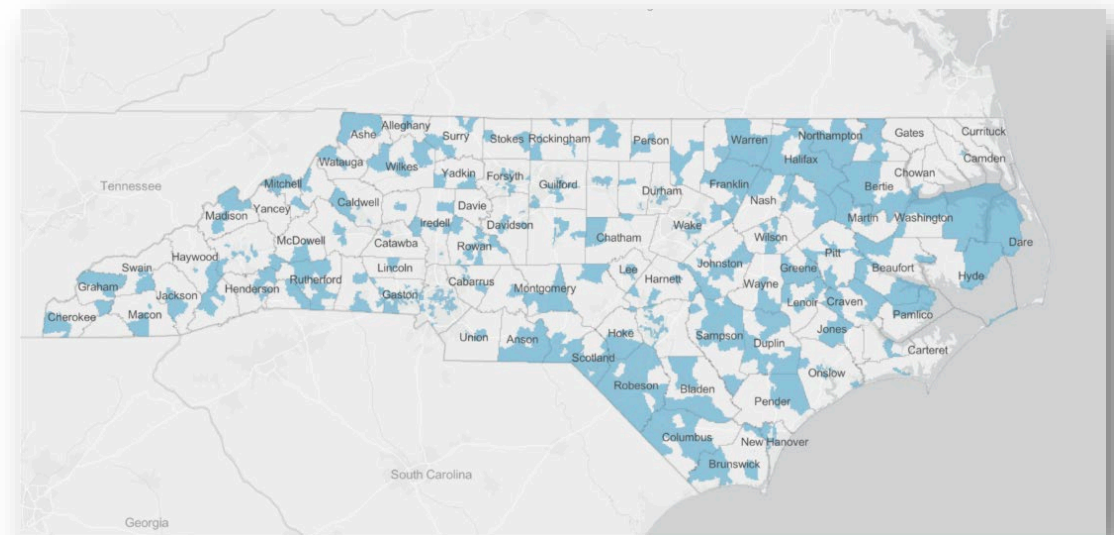
Opportunity Zones Program

Opportunity Zones, a federal tax incentive created in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, are intended to encourage long-term private investment in economically distressed census tracts by strengthening local economies through job creation, business growth, and redevelopment.

Each state leads a process to identify and submit a list of census tracts to US Treasury that will eventually be certified as Opportunity Zones.

NC Commerce will soon open a 30-day public feedback window. Respondents will identify how nominated tracts align with the state's three guidelines: business development, revitalization, or housing supply.

Beginning on July 1, 2026, state governors will have 90 days to nominate 25% of their state's eligible low-income census tracts for inclusion in the next round of Opportunity Zones, which take effect on January 1, 2027, and stay in effect for 10 years.



Department of Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin Visits WNC

- Review of FEMA Permanent Work resumed
- \$103 million in FEMA PA reimbursements approved
- \$26 million approved by FEMA for 75 voluntary property acquisitions through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)
 - Projects are in Henderson, Polk, and Yancey counties
- Commitments to work on:
 - Accelerated pace, staff availability and consistency for FEMA PA review
 - Accelerated pace of HMGP review and approval
 - Regulatory flexibility within Secretary's Authority related to rebuild requirements
- DHS shutdown will impact availability of funds and pace of additional approvals

