Buncombe County Schools

Student Assignment & Educational Facilities Capacity Study

Buncombe County Schools
Board of Education

May 7, 2026

NC STATE

ORED | Operations Research and Education Laboratory

School CAMP | School & Community-Aligned Master Planning

Presentation Overview

A. Intro: School Planning @ NC State University / ITRE
B. BCS K12 Facility Capacity Study and Data
C. Buncombe County Community Land Use Study
D. BCS K12 10-Year Enrollment Forecast
E. Utilization and Out-of-Capacity Table for BCS K12 Schools
F. Questions and Next Steps

Introduction: ITRE/School Planning & Transportation



ITRE/SchoolCAMP + OREd Contact Information

School Planning and Transportation	**Mathew Palmer** **Kristen Brookshire**	wmpalme2@ncsu.edu khbrooks@ncsu.edu
Student Enrollment Projections	**Thomas Dudley** **Brian Godfrey**	tedudley@ncsu.edu
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SchoolCAMP: https://itre.ncsu.edu/schoolcamp/		

School CAMP | School & Community-Aligned Master Planning + OREd + TMS

BCS Vision and Mission

Vision

Every Buncombe County Schools student will graduate on time, prepared to pursue their chosen path as critical thinkers and collaborative leaders in our diverse society.

Mission

Buncombe County Schools will foster a culture of excellence and continuous improvement where every student will thrive and learn from exceptional educators.

Frame every decision through the BCS Mission: fostering a culture of excellence where every student thrives.

Keeping the Focus on What's Best for Kids

- Safe, welcoming, and supportive learning environments
- Access to high-quality instruction and student supports
- Reasonable class sizes
- A strong sense of belonging and continuity

BCS Educational Facility Study

2025-26 Project Components & Timeline

Classroom Database / Space Use	*Jan - Apr 2026*
10-Year Enrollment	*May 2026*
BCS K12 Facility Program Capacities	*May 2026*
Enrollment / Capacity Review	*May 2026*

Why are we doing this work?

- Best practice: 5-year Comprehensive Review of K12 Student Enrollment and School District Facilities
- Exploratory and Discovery - Listen, Learn & Understand enrollment and facility data and interconnected issues
- Long-term sustainability of school operating system

Buncombe County Schools
K-12 Classroom Database

BCS K12 Facility Inventory & Classroom Database

BCS K12 Facility Classroom Database: What are the capacities of schools?

Classroom	*What room is the program in?*
Attributes	*What are the features of the classroom – Size, Bathroom, Sink?*
Program / Use	*What grade and assigned students occupy the space?*

BCS K12 Facility Inventory & Classroom Database

BCS Facilities and Maintenance collected information on the conditions and attributes of K-12 Classrooms

Verification of BCS Facilities Information to validate the use - and corresponding capacities - of each school

<u>Local Leadership</u>: Validation of School Classrooms
BCS Administration & SchoolCAMP collected, analyzed and validated Facility Information throughout Spring 2026.

BCS K12 Facility Inventory & Classroom Database

Example: Candler Elementary School

Room	Program Use	Square Footage	Bathroom	Sink	Hot Water	Spaces in Mobile Units
101	3rd Grade	879	0	0	0	0
102	3rd Grade	879	0	0	0	0
103	**EC**	**879**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
104	3rd Grade	879	0	0	0	0
105	**Speech/Hearing**	**879**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
106	3rd Grade	879	0	0	0	0
107	3rd Grade	879	0	0	0	0

BCS K12 Facility Inventory & Classroom Database

Example: Candler Elementary School

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CAPACITY WORKSHEET			
School Name: Candler Elementary	Total Rooms	35	
	Number of Teaching Stations	Capacity per Teaching Station	K-5 Optimal Capacity
Capacity Generating Spaces:	24		
Kindergarten classrooms:	5	X 18 =	90
First grade classrooms:	5	X 16 =	80
Second grade classrooms:	5	X 17 =	85
Third grade classrooms:	5	X 17 =	85
Fourth grade classrooms:	4	X 26 =	104
Fifth grade classrooms:	0	X 26 =	0
Self-contained exceptional children clrms:	0	X 10 =	0

BCS Classroom Database: Elementary - Enka

SCHOOL DATA			SCHOOL CAPACITY SUMMARY				
District	Tab	School Name	NCDPI Capacity	24-25 BCS Functional Capacity	25-26 BCS Program Capacity	Total Rooms	K6 Classrooms
Enka	CES	**Candler Elementary School**	606	557	444	35	24
	HVES	**Hominy Valley Elementary School**	514	489	446	35	25
	PES	**Pisgah Elementary School**	204	196	184	17	10
	SHVES	**Sand Hill-Venable Elementary School**	816	745	632	54	36
	EIS	**Enka Intermediate School**	990	930	644	49	28

BCS Classroom Database: Elementary - Erwin

SCHOOL DATA			SCHOOL CAPACITY SUMMARY				
District	Tab	School Name	NCDPI Capacity	24-25 BCS Functional Capacity	25-26 BCS Program Capacity	Total Rooms	K6 Classrooms
Erwin	EES	**Emma Elementary School**	478	431	286	31	16
	LES	**Leicester Elementary School**	555	484	446	39	25
	JES	**Johnston Elementary School**	317	292	252	24	14
	WBES	**West Buncombe Elementary School**	586	574	480	41	27
	WES	**Woodfin Elementary School**	165	140	184	16	10
	JPEIS	**JP Eblen Intermediate School**	1035	940	620	43	27

BCS Classroom Database: Elementary - N Buncombe

SCHOOL DATA			SCHOOL CAPACITY SUMMARY				
District	Tab	School Name	NCDPI Capacity	24-25 BCS Functional Capacity	25-26 BCS Program Capacity	Total Rooms	K6 Classrooms
North Buncombe	BES	Barnardsville Elementary School	171	146	184	19	10
	NBES	North Buncombe Elementary School	582	557	476	37	26
	WVES	Weaverville Elementary School	393	369	392	33	21
	WVPS	Weaverville Primary School	230	220	204	19	12
	NWRIS	North Windy Ridge Inter School	706	681	610	43	26

BCS Classroom Database: Elementary - Owen

SCHOOL DATA			SCHOOL CAPACITY SUMMARY				
District	Tab	School Name	NCDPI Capacity	24-25 BCS Functional Capacity	25-26 BCS Program Capacity	Total Rooms	K6 Classrooms
Owen	BMPS	**Black Mountain Primary School**	410	385	360	33	22
	BMES	**Black Mountain Elementary School**	348	318	202	22	9
	WDWES	**WD Williams Elementary School**	500	455	480	34	25

BCS Classroom Database: Elementary - Reynolds

SCHOOL DATA			SCHOOL CAPACITY SUMMARY				
District	Tab	School Name	NCDPI Capacity	24-25 BCS Functional Capacity	25-26 BCS Program Capacity	Total Rooms	K6 Classrooms
Reynolds	FES	**Fairview Elementary School**	826	657	582	49	31
	HCES	**Haw Creek Elementary**	540	436	500	39	27
	OES	**Oakley Elementary School**	474	449	532	39	28
	CCBES	**CC Bell Elementary School**	283	258	300	24	16

BCS Classroom Database: Elementary - Roberson

SCHOOL DATA			SCHOOL CAPACITY SUMMARY				
District	Tab	School Name	NCDPI Capacity	24-25 BCS Functional Capacity	25-26 BCS Program Capacity	Total Rooms	K6 Classrooms
Roberson	ACES	**Avery's Creek Elementary School**	712	546	520	42	29
	GAES	**Glen Arden Elementary School**	554	518	469	35	26
	WWEES	**WW Estes Elementary School**	736	711	758	55	45
	CTKIS	**CT Koontz Intermediate School**	1035	930	674	49	31

BCS Classroom Database: Middle Schools

SCHOOL DATA			SCHOOL CAPACITY SUMMARY				
		School Name	NCDPI Capacity	24-25 BCS Functional Capacity	25-26 BCS Program Capacity	Total Rooms	Classrooms
Middle	EMS	Enka Middle	1,077	1,018	906	53	33
	CAEMS	CA Erwin Middle	1,008	904	794	53	29
	NBMS	North Buncombe Middle	618	501	504	42	18
	CDOMS	CD Owen Middle	722	680	608	42	23
	CCMS	Cane Creek Middle	816	790	756	49	27
	ACRMS	AC Reynolds Middle	868	670	840	46	30
	VSMS	Valley Springs Middle	1,046	1,032	1,064	71	48

BCS Classroom Database: High Schools

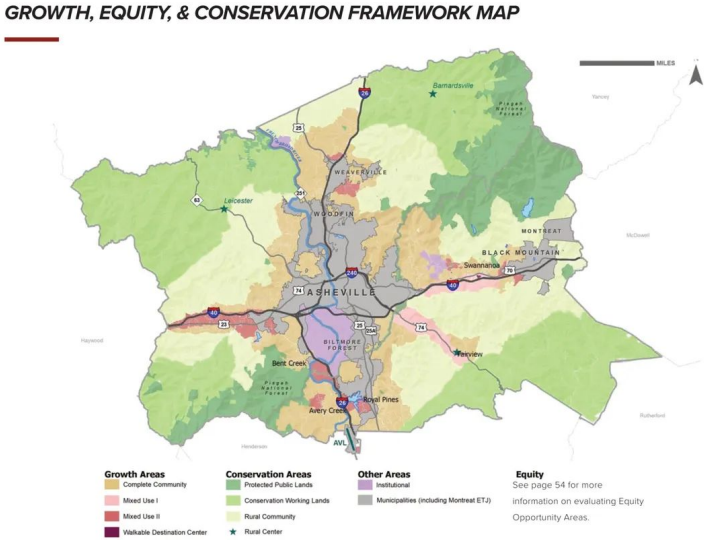
SCHOOL DATA			SCHOOL CAPACITY SUMMARY				
		School Name	NCDPI Capacity	24-25 BCS Functional Capacity	25-26 BCS Program Capacity	Total Rooms	Classrooms
HIGH	EHS	Enka High	1,342	1,305	1,373	82	70
	CAEHS	CA Erwin High	1,465	1,414	1,244	80	58
	MLNDA	Nesbit Discovery Academy	400	400	465	24	21
	NBHS	North Buncombe High	1,383	1,155	1,133	61	55
	CDOHS	CD Owen High	1,196	1,005	969	53	49
	ACRHS	AC Reynolds High	1,643	1,445	1,566	90	76
	TCRHS	TC Roberson High	1,943	1,725	1,590	111	77

Land Use Study: Interview Roster

	Name	Title
County Leadership and Planning		
Buncombe County	Savannah Glance	Development Services Division Manager
Municipal Leadership and Planning		
City of Asheville	Chris Collins	Assistant Director of Planning and Urban Design
Town of Biltmore Forest	Tony Williams	Town Planner
Town of Black Mountain	Russell Cate	Planning and Zoning Administrator
Town of Montreat	Alexis Baker	Interim Zoning Administrator
Town of Weaverville	James Eller	Planning Director
Town of Woodfin	Ricky Hurley	Planning Director
Community Stakeholders		
Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce	Clark Duncan	Vice President of Economic Development
Metropolitan Sewerage District of Buncombe County	Hunter Carson	Engineering Director
French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization	Tristan Winkler	Director

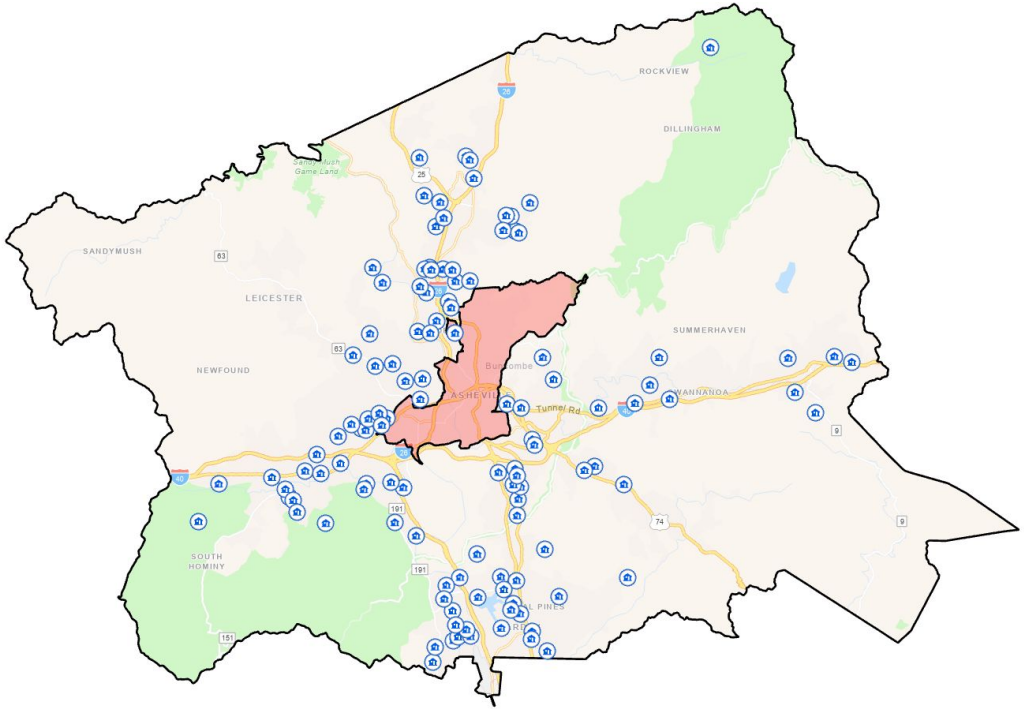
Land Use Study: Factors

- **Residential Development**
  - Considerable pace of development across the county
  - Ongoing recovery from Hurricane Helene
  - Greater focus on density & multifamily housing
- **Commercial & Industrial Development**
  - Tourism + Strong Regional Economy
  - Local job opportunities = Attracting Families
- **Infrastructure**
  - Overall strong water & sewer utilities



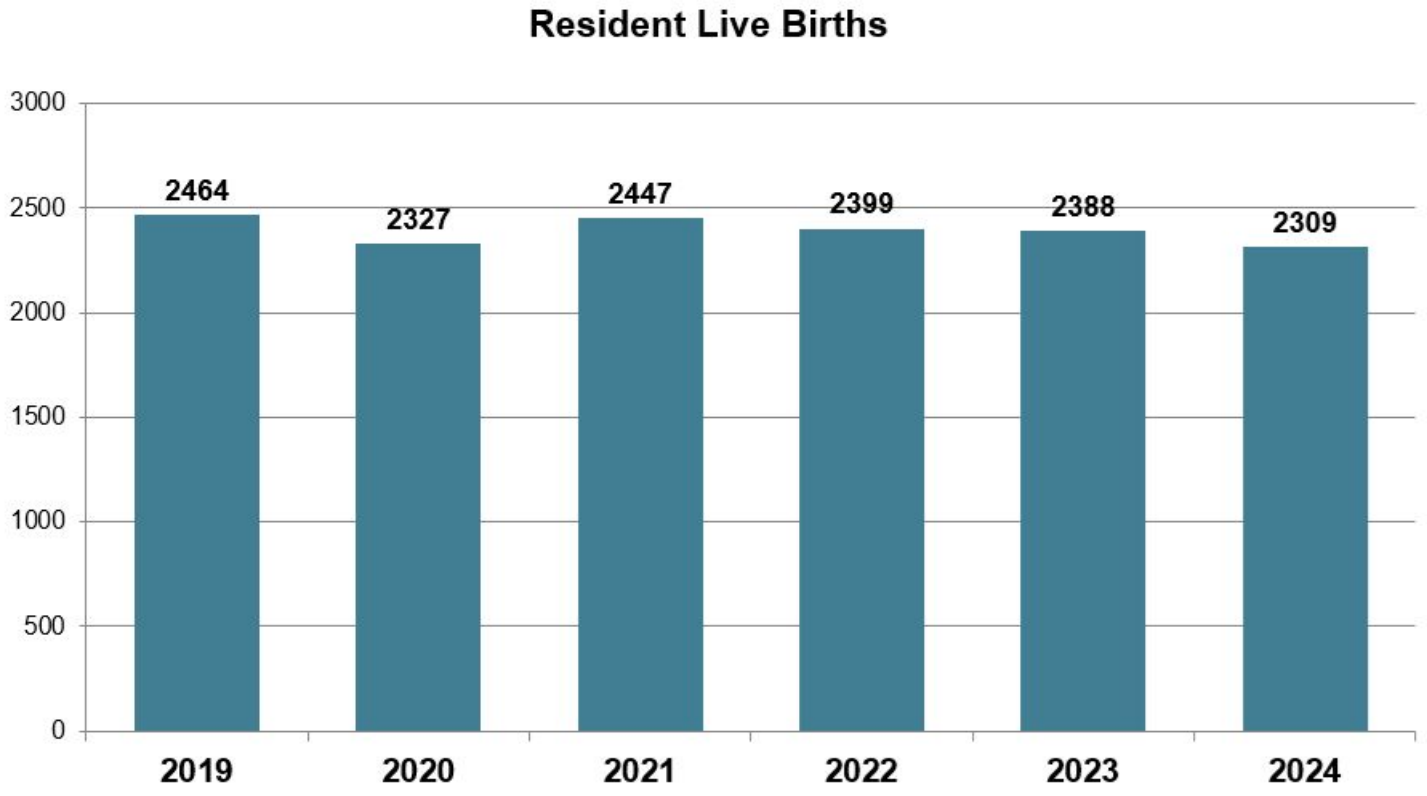
Buncombe County Growth, Equity, and Conservation Map

Land Use Study: Development Inventory



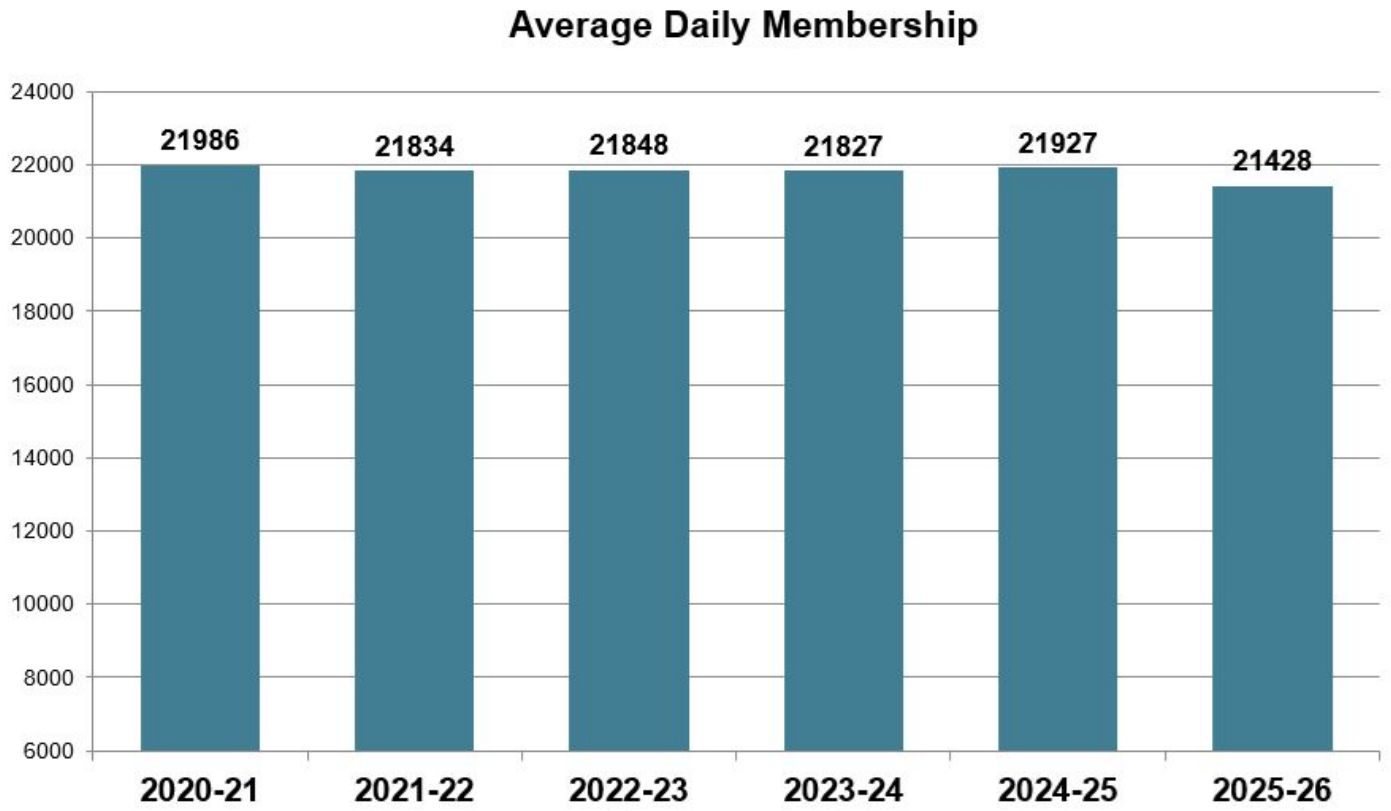
- Steady growth in all directions
- Approximately **117** residential developments currently pending
- Nearly **11,000** additional dwelling units
- **Expect continued homebuilding**

Membership Forecast: Resident Live Births

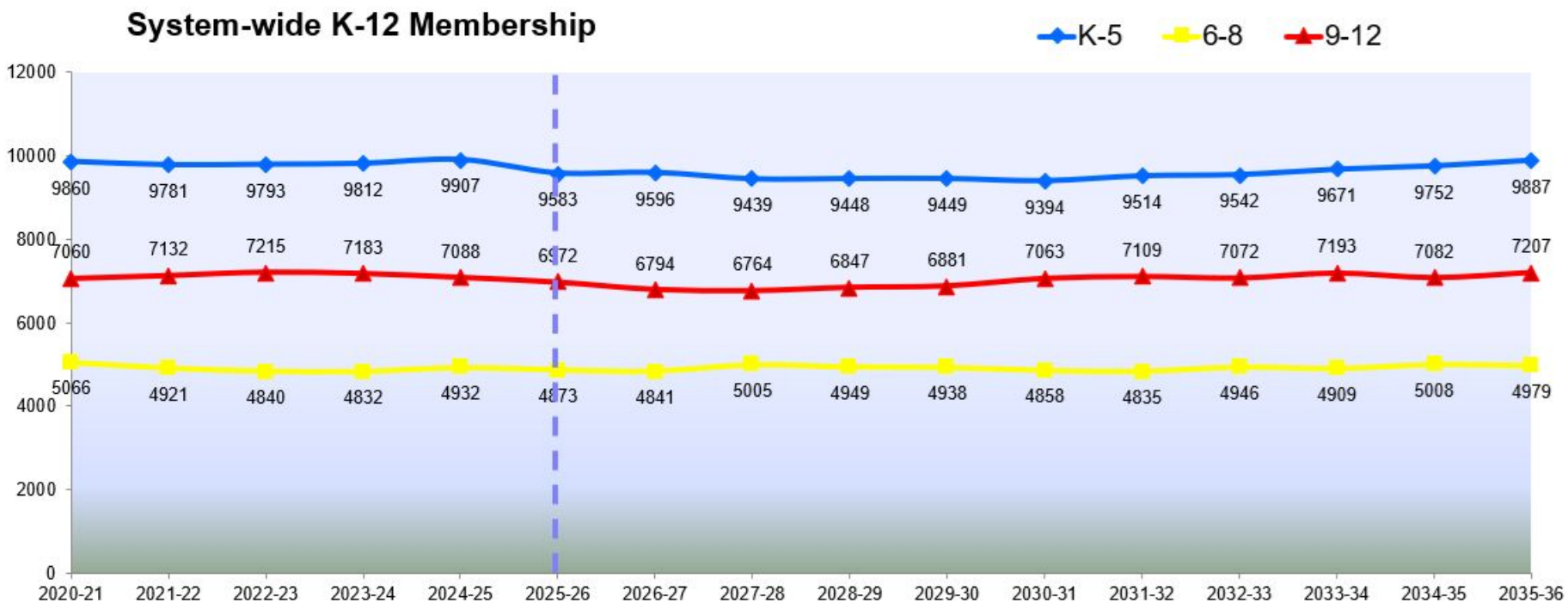


*Data provided by NC DHHS and the North Carolina Center for Health Statistics

Membership Forecast: Membership History



Membership Forecast



Date: 5/7/2026

Out-of-Capacity Table: Elementary Schools

Elementary/Intermediate Schools	Capacities	ADM	Forecasted ADM									
	2025-26	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	2035-36
Barnardsville Elementary	184	108	109	109	110	106	108	107	106	106	106	107
Black Mountain Elementary	202	186	184	176	179	178	184	181	180	178	178	180
Black Mountain Primary	360	328	337	333	338	333	332	332	333	336	338	340
Candler Elementary	444	383	390	386	396	385	375	374	374	378	381	384
Bell Elementary	300	219	218	219	222	218	217	216	214	214	213	215
Emma Elementary	286	227	227	234	234	238	241	238	237	237	238	239
Fairview Elementary	582	572	554	541	530	541	530	533	529	528	527	529
Glen Arden Elementary	469	467	458	447	451	446	451	451	454	453	455	459
Haw Creek Elementary	500	333	328	315	304	295	293	308	309	311	312	315
Hominy Valley Elementary	446	373	341	332	325	313	322	326	338	360	382	401
Johnston Elementary	252	199	205	195	189	189	181	182	183	182	183	184
Leicester Elementary	446	372	360	369	359	351	359	355	354	353	355	357
North Buncombe Elementary	476	564	542	523	515	511	518	518	525	537	549	545
North Windy Ridge Intermediate	610	473	506	536	512	513	471	463	491	492	493	501
Oakley Elementary	532	466	477	477	484	493	487	495	503	511	517	524
Pisgah Elementary	184	166	158	167	171	170	167	166	165	164	165	166
Sand Hill-Venable Elem	632	536	543	540	547	522	534	533	538	547	558	566
Avery's Creek Elementary	520	533	539	543	547	550	549	551	555	560	564	567
Williams Elementary	480	439	440	422	424	425	431	419	418	418	419	423
Estes Elementary	758	735	726	734	741	743	759	773	784	790	799	803
Enka Intermediate	644	563	586	592	546	578	583	553	566	563	563	571
Weaverville Elementary	392	336	331	322	318	308	325	318	320	331	349	360
Weaverville Primary	204	202	194	211	211	210	214	236	252	254	255	256
West Buncombe Elementary	480	570	567	584	598	600	593	592	596	603	609	615
Woodfin Elementary	184	100	92	92	89	93	89	91	93	96	101	105
Koontz Intermediate	674	689	697	703	680	696	701	715	720	730	748	754
Eblen Intermediate	620	548	555	514	499	512	511	527	525	524	521	520
Totals	**11861**	**10687**	**10665**	**10617**	**10519**	**10519**	**10525**	**10552**	**10664**	**10755**	**10880**	**10987**

Utilization

- < 95%
- 95% - 100%
- 100% - 105%
- > 105%

1. 2025-26 ADM data provided by BCS.
2. Capacities reviewed by SchoolCAMP (5/2026), mobile units not included.

Date: 5/7/2026

Out-of-Capacity Table: Middle and High Schools

	Capacities	ADM	Forecasted ADM									
	2025-26	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	2035-36
Middle Schools												
Reynolds Middle	840	479	474	515	506	508	507	488	496	491	518	519
Cane Creek Middle	756	477	471	453	441	408	404	405	426	411	417	413
Owen Middle	608	475	485	526	525	530	488	512	516	530	516	507
Erwin Middle	794	529	532	523	530	495	481	494	496	512	510	509
North Buncombe Middle	504	493	492	490	526	562	540	549	531	532	543	544
Enka Middle	906	557	552	559	583	591	554	584	585	564	584	587
Valley Springs Middle	1064	666	674	668	675	681	659	674	679	692	698	706
Totals	**5472**	**3676**	**3680**	**3734**	**3785**	**3775**	**3634**	**3705**	**3731**	**3733**	**3787**	**3785**
High Schools												
Reynolds High	1566	1141	1107	1108	1147	1128	1134	1150	1110	1134	1093	1101
Owen High	969	611	609	621	618	646	695	693	698	687	680	692
Erwin High	1244	906	837	834	823	839	856	837	837	819	805	827
Enka High	1373	1048	1025	985	964	966	984	1001	991	1028	1016	1041
North Buncombe High	1133	853	844	826	832	827	875	913	952	1009	1021	1046
Roberson High	1590	1453	1429	1452	1517	1535	1563	1567	1550	1578	1559	1590
Totals	**7875**	**6012**	**5852**	**5826**	**5902**	**5940**	**6107**	**6161**	**6138**	**6255**	**6174**	**6298**
Early College/Special/Alternative Schools												
Center for Career Innovation		34	28	28	24	23	23	23	22	23	22	22
Community High School		136	132	132	134	134	138	136	133	133	128	129
Early College		213	211	210	211	211	215	213	209	210	202	202
Nesbitt Discovery Academy		362	356	354	363	358	365	362	354	357	342	342
System Total	**25208**	**21120**	**20923**	**20900**	**20936**	**20960**	**21008**	**21151**	**21251**	**21465**	**21533**	**21764**

Utilization
< 95%
95% - 100%
100% - 105%
> 105%

1. 2025-26 ADM data provided by BCS.
2. Capacities reviewed by SchoolCAMP (5/2026), mobile units not included.

Date: 5/7/2026

BCS Vision and Mission

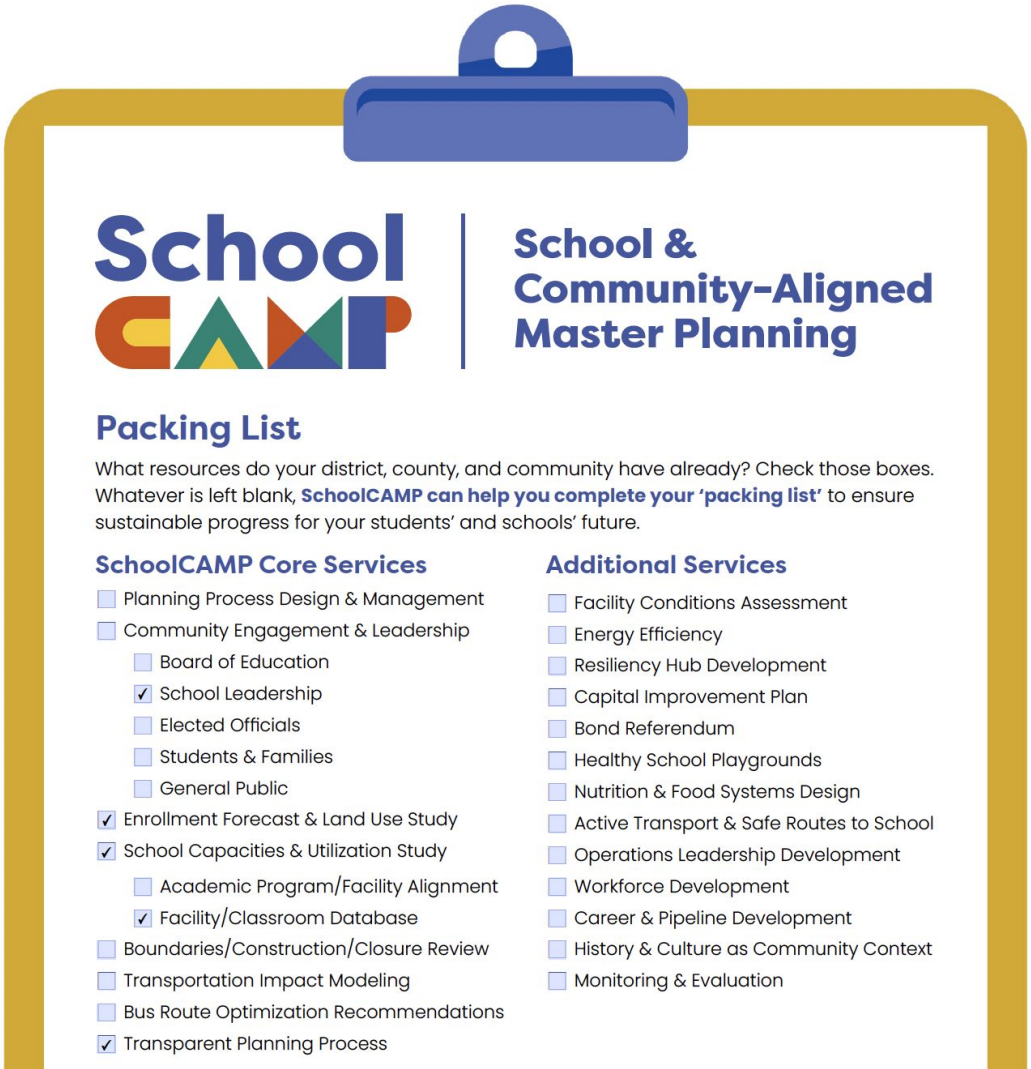
Vision

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BCS's Systems Planning for Thriving School Systems

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School CAMP | School & Community-Aligned Master Planning + OREd + TMS

BUNCOMBE COUNTY SCHOOLS
175 BINGHAM ROAD
ASHEVILLE, NC 28806

INTEGRATED PLANNING FOR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY (IPSAC)

2026 LAND USE STUDY REPORT

PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY
OPERATIONS RESEARCH AND EDUCATION LABORATORY
INSTITUTE FOR TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH AND EDUCATION
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
SPRING 2026



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Executive Summary

In the Spring of 2026, the Buncombe County Schools Board of Education commissioned the Operations Research and Education Lab (OREd), based at the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) at North Carolina State University, to evaluate the residential, commercial, and industrial developments approved within Buncombe County. Through evaluation of the supplied development inventories and municipal and county stakeholders, OREd will construct a student growth projection model accounting for development and buildout time periods.

Land Use Study | Buncombe County

Between March and April 2026, OREd met with community leaders and planning officials from Buncombe County, City of Asheville, and others to discuss long-term factors which may influence district enrollment. The population growth across the county is attributable to the area's high quality of life and strong regional economy.

The near-term development potential of Buncombe County is considerable. Census data show that over the past decade, Buncombe County's population numbers have increased, with a more recent dip in residents attributed to the impacts of Hurricane Helene (see later sections). Nonetheless, in the Spring of 2026, there were about 117 developments containing approximately 10,948 remaining lots/units (either proposed or approved). This inventory of pending residential projects aligns with Buncombe County's recent history of development, and reiterates that population growth can be expected to resume and continue into the near future. Indeed, the Buncombe County Land Use Study highlights the area's many strengths and appealing qualities for families: local employment opportunities, beautiful mountains and temperate weather, superb recreational assets, and a world-renowned high quality of life.

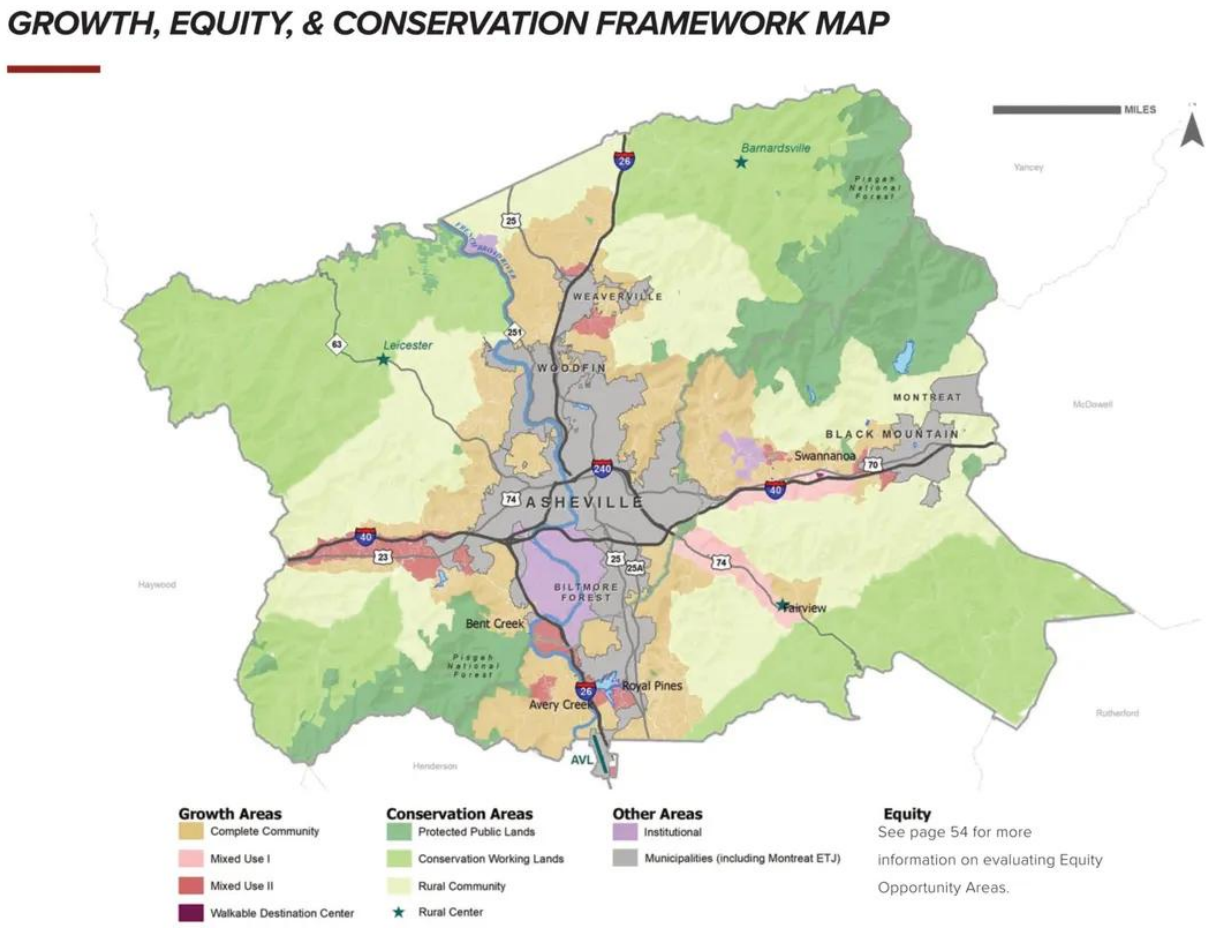


Figure 1: Buncombe County Growth, Equity, and Conservation Map

Source: Buncombe County 2043 Comprehensive Plan (2023)

Overview

School systems nationwide are facing difficult planning challenges due to fluctuating student populations and aging school infrastructure. These challenges are shared by the communities that fund building and renovation projects. The Operations Research and Education Laboratory (OREd) has developed a system of Integrated Planning for School and Community (IPSAC) that uniquely integrates community and regional data, ten-year economic and demographic forecasts, demographic and land use studies, digitized pupil and school location files, and mathematical optimization algorithms.

The integrated planning system is comprised of multiple data-driven processes including:

- Enrollment Forecasting
- Land Use Study
- Out-Of-Capacity Analysis
- School Location Optimization Scenarios
- Attendance Boundary Optimization and Redistricting

This report documents findings from the Buncombe County Land Use Study. The Land Use Study outlined in this report includes two components: Community Interviews and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis.

Community Interviews

Discussions with planners, town administrators, utility works, economic development officials, and transportation professionals, etc. allow OREd to compose an impression of future growth for the study area. These critical interviews engage the community to participate in the articulation of infrastructure development plans (transportation, water and sewer), recent subdivision permits, residential zonings, land available for development, and comprehensive plans developed by local government agencies.

GIS Analysis

OREd also performs spatial analyses based on GIS parcel data using state-of-the-art ArcGIS software. This GIS analysis provides quantitative data concerning available parcels and subdivision lots that then can be used to identify areas of future growth. Student demographic analysis can also be conducted at this stage to better understand socio-economic compositions that may influence school assignment decisions.

Through the combination of community interviews and data-intensive GIS analysis, OREd is able to forecast school population growth at the individual school attendance boundary level. The culminating deliverable of this analysis is the Capacity worksheet, which projects school membership over a ten-year period.

Introduction

The Land Use Study draws this information together through a selection of key informants, community stakeholders, and planning officials that were interviewed in the Spring of 2026. Additional information was gathered through conference calls, emails, public planning documents, and demographic information provided by the United States Census Bureau.

This report is organized in a comprehensive topical framework that depicts an overall snapshot of growth within the county. This includes both new land uses (developments) and economic generating activities, such as transportation and infrastructure investments. The development of residential land alongside commercial and industrial projects indicates areas of the county that are likely to experience growth and change in the coming years.

History

Buncombe County is situated in the French Broad valley of the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina. Buncombe County was first inhabited by the Cherokee Indians, whose nation encompassed a sprawling territory across southern Appalachia (Anderson & Wetmore, 2006). European-American settlement grew in the late 1700s following the Revolutionary War, when Americans began expanding westward into the mountains. As settlements grew, in 1791 Buncombe County was formally established from Rutherford and Burke counties and was named for Revolutionary War officer Edward Buncombe (Cutshall, 2021).

For much of Buncombe County's history, the region was largely characterized by rural agricultural and logging communities. Its early development was slow due to its rugged terrain and relative isolation, but by the late 1800s, Buncombe County began to grow in prominence with improved transportation. The arrival of the railroad in the 1880s transformed Asheville into a destination for health-seekers and travelers drawn to the temperate mountain climate (Cutshall, 2021). Famously, George Washington Vanderbilt II invested heavily in the area, culminating in the creation of the Biltmore Estate, which solidified the area's reputation nationwide as a mountain retreat known for its high quality of life.

The 20th century brought modernization and economic diversification to the area. Today the area is known for tourism, healthcare, and education, while being a regional economic hub for western North Carolina. Indeed, Buncombe County has been shaped its dynamic legacy of growth and development. From the bustling downtown of Asheville to forests of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and from the scenic homes of Leicester to the historic streets of Black Mountain, Buncombe County has prospered due to its landscape, its economy, and its people.

Today

Today, Buncombe County is a diverse geography of new and established neighborhoods, beautiful mountains, charming towns, productive farms, and modern industries. Asheville and surrounding areas are seeing substantial residential and commercial development, with new subdivisions and apartments being built across different areas of the region. The strong market demand for this new housing is driven by the area's many desirable features, notably its quality

of life. Furthermore, in addition to the popular tourism sector, Asheville and the County government are making efforts to expand commercial and industrial development, with the goals of broadening the tax base and employment opportunities.

While Buncombe County has enjoyed a consistently growing population for many years, the most recent Census estimates show that for the first time in decades, the county's population declined slightly in 2025. With about 1,800 fewer people than 2024, the primary driver of population loss has been attributed to Hurricane Helene, according to State Demographer Dr. Mike Cline (Sonmez, 2026). But according to the American Community Survey, from 2017 to 2024, Buncombe County's population increased by approximately 8.8%. Indeed, residential development has been occurring at a substantial pace, with new zoning ordinances encouraging denser housing such as townhomes and apartments.

Finally, of the county's working residents, about 66.2% of workers are employed within of Buncombe County (Census OnTheMap). This speaks to the availability of local job opportunities, with the area serving as a regional economic hub for Western North Carolina—driven in part by Buncombe County's well-connected highways, making it a suitable location for commuting. Being home to many major thoroughfares, such as I-40 and I-26, gives regional residents direct access to job centers within Buncombe County.

Hurricane Helene

On September 27, 2024, Hurricane Helene made landfall on the Florida coast and quickly moved northward, only to stall over the southern Appalachian Mountains. The results were devastating, with the storm dropping record-breaking amounts of rainfall across several towns, including Swannanoa, Black Mountain, Fairview and several others. Widespread flooding, destruction of buildings and infrastructure, and loss of life made Hurricane Helene the costliest and deadliest hurricane in modern North Carolina history (Thiem & Lindsey, 2024).

In Buncombe County, the impacts of Helene were severe. Nearly all of the county was left without electricity and water. It is estimated that over 11,000 homes in the county were damaged or destroyed as a result of the storm (Bailey, 2026), adding to the pre-existing housing shortage in the region. The NC Rural Center highlights that Hurricane Helene's impact on housing cannot be overstated. Tens of thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed in Western North Carolina, and recovery activity has been mixed. While the resilient Buncombe County community has largely returned to day-to-day, it is clear that a full housing recovery will take more time and support. But encouragingly, recent data like localized construction employment growth and the number of multifamily housing permits suggest increased activity in Buncombe County (Bailey, 2026). Furthermore, as this report will show, there is a sizeable inventory of new homes expected to be built in the coming years.

The Land Use Interview

The Land Use Study is comprised of interviews with local practitioners and stakeholders that can help contextualize the quantitative data available to the OREd lab staff. Moreover, while OREd's capabilities with historic/archived school enrollment data have been consistently precise in their estimations over the past twenty years, future-oriented information is critical to ensuring the accuracy of the school enrollment projections. This can only be achieved through conversations with local practitioners and stakeholders.

Strategic Purpose and Goal of Land Use Studies

The purpose of the land use interviews is to gain a better understanding of what development (residential, commercial, industrial and economic) is taking place as of 2026, as well as residential and commercial developments that are either expected or planned to occur in the near future (one to ten years).

Questions included in the Land Use Study interviews that are relevant to school enrollment and planning projections are below:
With regard to residential development:

- Can you share the locations of new or upcoming subdivisions?
- Are these developments scattered throughout the school district or concentrated?
- What is the pace of residential development?
- Has that number been increasing, and if so, at what rate?
- Is that number expected to increase, and if so, at what rate?

With regard to commercial and industrial development:

- Have any new major employers recently opened a facility in the school district?
- Are any new employment facilities that would bring new families to the area expected to open in the next year or so?

The tables on the following page outline the direction that is taken with the key informant interviews. *Figure 2* outlines the concepts and ideas OREd wishes to discuss with interviewees, as well as anticipated results and materials. *Figure 3* is a list of names and affiliations of OREd's interviewees.

Interview Topics	Anticipated Materials & Results
County and City/Town Planning Department(s)	
Residential, industrial and commercial development in progress and/or planned for the future	• Zoning ordinance • Comprehensive plan • Summary of subdivision permits
Development trends	
Status of development currently in progress (% of approved units that are now built, by subdivision	
Price range of units in subdivisions currently under development)	
Mobile home parks	
Building moratoria in existence or planned	
Impact fees (if any)	
Economic Development Commission	
Industrial and commercial development in progress and/or planned for the future	• County/local municipal economic development information • Largest employers • Employers that have recently located to/moved from the county, etc.
Economic bases of the county/city	
Development trends and locations	
Economic development policies	
Employment trends	
Infrastructure available/required for future needs	
Water / Sewer / Electric / Other Utilities	
Current location of water/sewer, and utility lines	• Maps of current water/sewer, and other utility lines
Current capacities of water and sewer treatment plants and planned expansions	
NCDOT District Engineer:	
Planned highway expansion/construction in the county, and information on other transportation modes as appropriate	• Current and anticipated STIP projects, projects not included in the STIP that NCDOT believes are high priorities for action

Figure 2: List of Anticipated Results

	Name	Title
County Leadership and Planning		
Buncombe County	Savannah Glance	Development Services Division Manager
Municipal Leadership and Planning		
City of Asheville	Chris Collins	Assistant Director of Planning and Urban Design
Town of Biltmore Forest	Tony Williams	Town Planner
Town of Black Mountain	Russell Cate	Planning and Zoning Administrator
Town of Montreat	Alexis Baker	Interim Zoning Administrator
Town of Weaverville	James Eller	Planning Director
Town of Woodfin	Ricky Hurley	Planning Director
Community Stakeholders		
Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce	Clark Duncan	Vice President of Economic Development
Metropolitan Sewerage District of Buncombe County	Hunter Carson	Engineering Director
French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization	Tristan Winkler	Director

Figure 3: List of Interviewees

Key Demographic Trend and Status Indicators

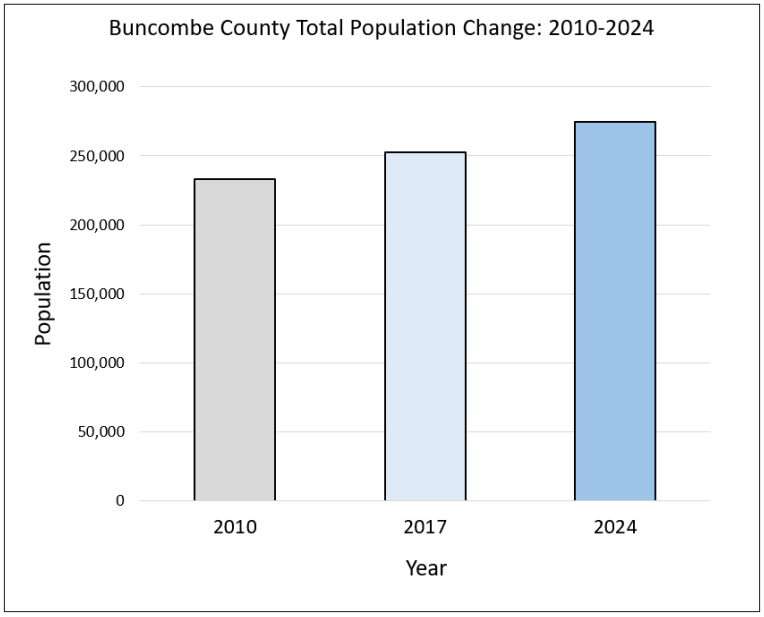


Figure 4: Buncombe County Total Population Change

According to 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, the total population of Buncombe County is 274,360. Previously, the population of Buncombe County increased 8.2% from the 2010 census to the 2017 ACS. Then, from 2017 to 2024, the county saw a further population increase of 8.8%. As seen in *Figure 4*, the entire county's population has been growing since 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau). Although Buncombe County has lost some small share of population since Helene, the recent pace of new residential development—especially in and around Asheville—indicates a return towards population growth. With a desirable location and an expanding economy, people are consistently moving to Buncombe County in search of both employment opportunities and a higher quality of life.

Age

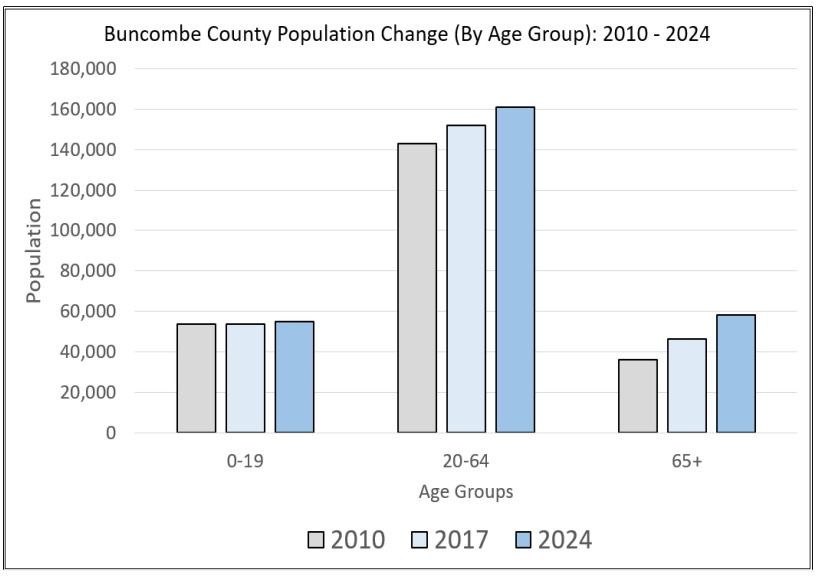


Figure 5: Buncombe County Population Change By Age Group

Buncombe County's population appears to be greying, as older age groups (65 & Older) have been on the rise since 2010. From 2010 to 2024, the portion of the population 65 or older grew by 60.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey). Meanwhile, the 20-64 age group increased moderately, with a 12.6% rise from 2010 to 2024 (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey). And after years of stagnant growth, younger generations appear to once again increasing. Overall, since 2010 the population of children in Buncombe County has risen, as the number of school-aged kids fell 0.4% between 2010 and

2017, but then increased 2.4% between 2017 and 2024. (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey).

Race and Ethnicity

For comparison purposes, the ORED lab analyzed Buncombe County's demographic numbers to two other counties in North Carolina. Union County was chosen for the comparison because it has a similar total population count. Additionally, Wake County was included to see how Buncombe County's demographic numbers compare to a more urbanized setting and to the home of the capital of North Carolina. As seen in *Figure 6*, Buncombe County has lower diversity rates when compared to its Union County counterpart. Buncombe County is comprised of 82.0% White populations, while Union is at 69.2% (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey). Correspondingly, Buncombe County has a lower population of Black or African American citizens as compared to Union County, with their communities reporting at 4.8% and 11.2%, respectively. However, Buncombe County has a higher share of population reporting as "Two or more races". Meanwhile, when comparing against Wake County's larger population, Buncombe County has fewer people from other types of backgrounds, such as Asian or Some other race.

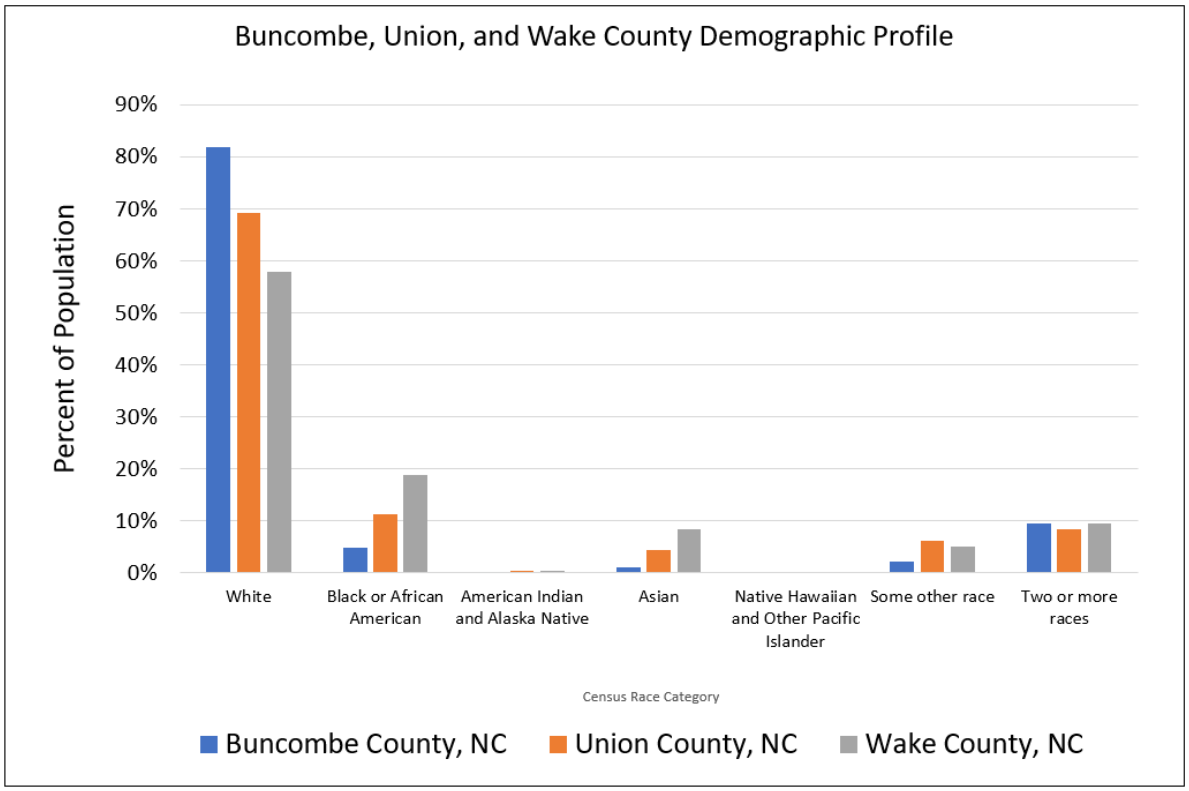


Figure 6: County-Level Demographic Profile Comparison

As expected, Buncombe County's diversity rates shift when its profile is compared to North Carolina and the United States. Regarding the portion of the population that Whites comprise, Buncombe County (82.0%) is higher than North Carolina as a whole (61.8%) and the United States (61.0%). Correspondingly, Buncombe County is comprised of 4.8% Black or African Americans while North Carolina and the United States are 20.3% and 12.2% respectively. Additionally, Buncombe County has slightly higher rates of people reporting as "Two or more races" than North Carolina as a whole. However, Buncombe County has lower rates of citizens reporting as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or Some Other Race, as seen in *Figure 7* (U.S. Census Bureau).

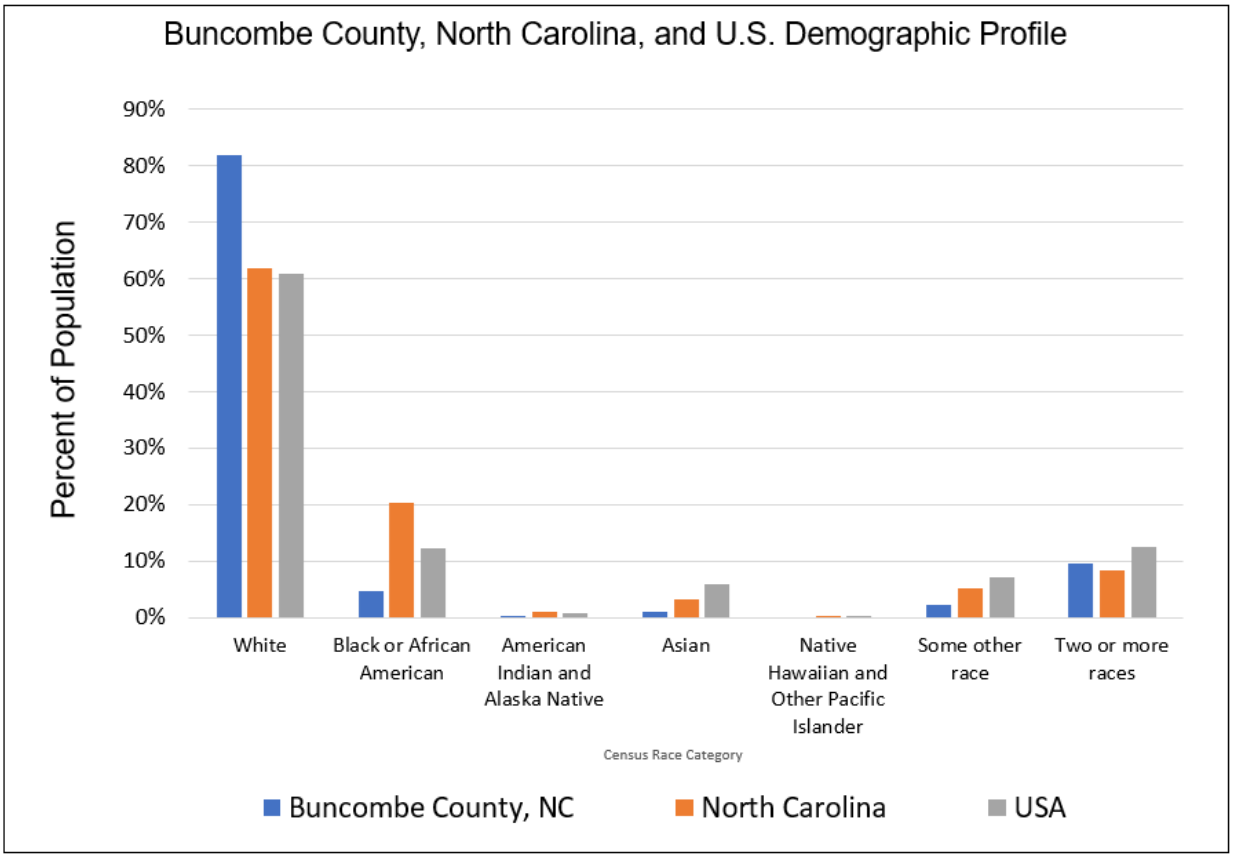


Figure 7: State & National Demographic Profile Comparison

In addition to the U.S. Census race categories, questions about ethnicity are used to gather information about individuals' cultural heritage and origin. Respondents are asked to identify their ethnicity as either "Hispanic or Latino" or "Not Hispanic or Latino", which is defined as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. This distinction is made because people who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race. In Buncombe County, approximately 8.6% of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau).

Veterans

In 2017, 8.8% of Buncombe County's population over the age of 18 were veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. That estimate then decreased to 6.3% in 2024 (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey).

Education

According to U.S. Census numbers, 45.9% of the population holds a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey). Buncombe County residents may attend any of North Carolina's excellent colleges and universities, including the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Other local higher education institutions include Warren Wilson College, Montreat College, and Mars Hill University. These regional opportunities for higher education can be appealing to prospective students and part-time commuters.

UNC Asheville is an important local school for higher education. Founded in 1927 as the Buncombe County Junior College, today UNC Asheville hosts nearly 3,000 curriculum students on its 365 acre campus in the city. With a focus on liberal arts and sciences, UNC Asheville's rankings on regional, national, and global lists consistently demonstrate a distinguished reputation as a top college for budding discoverers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and creatives (Key Facts, 2026)

Buncombe County is also home to Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College. Founded in 1959, A- B Tech has grown into the largest community college in western North Carolina. Serving more than 10,000 curriculum students and more than 14,000 individuals in continuing-ed and workforce development programs each year, A-B Tech is a fully accredited, multi-campus college with facilities in Asheville, Candler, Marshall and Woodfin (Locations, 2026). With a wide range of associate degree and certificate programs, college transfer courses, and career readiness offerings, A-B Tech makes high-quality education available to its community at an affordable rate.



Figure 8: Seal of UNC Asheville

Altogether, Buncombe County's colleges and universities are tremendous assets to the whole community. These institutions empower students with the education and skills for good careers, all while facilitating local workforce development in Buncombe County's growing economy. By providing access to an exceptional and affordable education, these schools support the region's people and businesses.

Employment and Income

North Carolina Department of Commerce data indicate that as of August 2025, the unemployment rate in Buncombe County was approximately 4.2%, or about 5,937 local people seeking employment. This is comparable to North Carolina's 4.0% State average unemployment

rate (Local Area Unemployment Statistics). U.S. Census data from the ACS also showed that Buncombe County's median household income for 2024 was $74,436. This was higher than North Carolina's median household income of $72,388 (Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates). But importantly, the cost of living in Buncombe County is 16.3% higher than the North Carolina state average and 5.8% higher than the U.S. average (Best Places, 2026). Details are shown in *Figure 9*.

Indicator	Buncombe County	North Carolina
Estimated Percent Population Change 2017-2024 (U.S. Census)	**8.8%**	**6.7%**
Unemployment Rate - Aug 2025 (NC Dept. of Commerce – "Local Area Unemployment Statistics")	**4.2%**	**4.0%**
Median Household Income – 2024 (U.S. Census – "Income")	**$74,436**	**$72,388**
Persons in Poverty – 2024 (U.S. Census)	**11.8%**	**13.0%**
Cost of Living (Best Places)	**105.8**	**89.5**
Living Wage (MIT Living Wage Calculator – 1 Adult)	**$23.74 (Hourly)**	**$22.47 (Hourly)**

Figure 9: Buncombe County's Employment and Income Indicators

Cost of Living

Buncombe County and North Carolina's measurements on the cost of living are derived from several factors that comprise the Cost of Living score indicated in *Figure 9*. Factors include the costs of groceries, healthcare, housing, median home cost, utilities, and transportation, as collected by MIT's Living Wage Calculator. The average living wage for the county is $23.74 an hour (Glasmeier, 2026). For reference, the living wage represents the rate at which one person can fully support themselves including expenses.

Employment Preparation

Of Buncombe County's population 16 years and over, 136,831 people (59.1% of adult population) were participating in the overall labor force in 2024 (U.S. Census, Selected Economic Characteristics). The largest portion of the labor force falls into the $50,000 to $74,999 wage bracket by household (U.S. Census, Income in the past 12 Months). Of the population age 25 years and over, 45.9% have a bachelor's degree or higher. The largest portion of the population who are 25 years and older (92.6%) have a high school diploma or higher as their educational attainment (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey).

Employment Sector

Buncombe County's economic base is constituted of a broad, diverse collection of employment sectors. These employment sectors include: Healthcare and Social Assistance (18.6%), Accommodation and Food Services (12.4%), Retail Trade (12.3%), Manufacturing (9.6%),

Educational Services (7.4%), and many others (Census OnTheMap, 2025). Details of Buncombe County's major employers can be seen in *Figure 10* (as of Q3, 2025).

Major Employers

Rank	Company Name	Industry	Employment Range
1	MH Hospital Manager LLC	Health Care and Social Assistance	1000+
2	Ingles Markets Inc	Retail Trade	1000+
3	Buncombe County Board of Education	Educational Services	1000+
4	Veterans Administration	Health Care and Social Assistance	1000+
5	County Of Buncombe	Public Administration	1000+
6	Biltmore Workforce Management	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1000+
7	City Of Asheville	Public Administration	1000+
8	Wal-Mart Associates Inc	Retail Trade	1000+
9	Eaton Corporation	Manufacturing	1000+
10	Mountain Area Health Education Cent	Health Care and Social Assistance	1000+
11	Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College	Educational Services	500-999
12	Omni Hotels Management Corp	Accommodation and Food Services	500-999
13	UNC Asheville 18173	Educational Services	500-999
14	Unison Engine Components Inc	Manufacturing	500-999
15	Mission Health Community Multispecialty Providers LLC	Health Care and Social Assistance	500-999
16	Borgwarner Turbo Systems Inc	Manufacturing	500-999
17	Asheville City Schools	Educational Services	500-999
18	M B Haynes Corp	Construction	500-999
19	Ralph E Stewart Et Al	Manufacturing	500-999
20	Lowes Home Centers Inc	Retail Trade	500-999
21	State Of Nc Dept Of Health & Human	Public Administration	500-999
22	Young Mens Christian Association	Other Services (except Public Administration)	500-999
23	Jabil Circuit Inc	Manufacturing	500-999
24	TTEC Services Corporation	Other Services (except Public Administration)	250-499
25	Kearfott Corporation	Manufacturing	250-499

Figure 10: Buncombe County's Top 25 Employers

Growth

This section discusses potential areas of growth within Buncombe County:

- Geospatial Element and Determinants of Growth
- Characteristics of Growing Buncombe County

Geospatial Elements and Determinants of Growth

Buncombe County is situated in the French Broad Valley of the southern Appalachian Mountains. The City of Asheville and surrounding communities are renowned for healthful, outdoor lifestyles and culturally rich, unique communities. Overall, Buncombe County is a very desirable place to live, and residents enjoy many features of a high quality of life. People are moving to Buncombe County seeking all the area has to offer: pleasant weather and varied seasons, community activities, mountain recreation, and the largest economic hub in the region. Historically, Buncombe County's fertile soils and milder climate attracted settlement and development, leading to the formation of the county's historic forestry and farming communities. Furthermore, the area's ideal weather and landscape attracted residents and visitors seeking good health and wellbeing. Still today, Buncombe County is a major destination for both tourists and newcomers seeking the special experiences of downtown Asheville, the French Broad River, and the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The long-term potential for growth in Buncombe County will also be partially influenced by the transportation infrastructure leading into the region. Regionally, the confluence of highways and railways in Buncombe County continues to support the economy and attract growth. As detailed in the later section on Transportation, several major highways make Buncombe County a convenient and central location for commerce. Furthermore, additional future roadway improvements, such as the planned Liberty Road/I-40 Interchange, will likely bring substantial investment and spur additional growth.

Although development on mountainsides and steep slopes can present challenges, OREd researchers found that Buncombe County still has a considerable supply of buildable land. The French Broad Valley still has room to accommodate growth, as shown in the many housing projects inventoried in the Residential Development Inventory (see following sections).

Finally, as with all development, the presence of water and sewer utilities is a powerful determinant of what can be built and where. In particular, the lack of water and wastewater infrastructure in some of the more rural and mountainous portions of the county can prohibit denser residential development. Individual well and septic systems are commonly used to support homes in unincorporated areas. However, overall Buncombe County enjoys substantial water supplies and robust utilities systems. The availability of these utilities across the municipalities of Buncombe County means additional growth can continue to be supported. Furthermore, OREd researchers found that Buncombe County still has a reasonable supply of buildable land, and development can be expected to continue across the county into the near future.

Characteristics of Growing Buncombe County

Buncombe County and Asheville host a variety of different land uses. These include the historic downtown, suburban neighborhoods, mountainside retreats, rural farms and forests, and commercial corridors. In the past few years, much of the region's homebuilding has been concentrated within the BSC district, as development spills outward from Asheville's historical footprint. Indeed, the City is experiencing considerable residential growth, as new housing developments continue to be proposed, planned, and constructed. Nonetheless, residential development is occurring across different areas of Buncombe County. Housing is being built in all cardinal directions from Asheville—north, south, east and west—particularly along the I-26 and I-40 corridors.

The past few years have seen a robust pace of residential development in Buncombe County. Between new single-family subdivisions, spacious townhomes, and modern apartments, the many characteristics of the region's growth vary in style and location. Mixed residential developments are increasingly common, where master-planned communities are often built with a combination of detached single-family lot homes, as well as attached townhome buildings. Many of the City of Asheville's larger tract developments are being constructed to the south and west of the downtown core, where buildable land is most available. For example, the various housing projects in and around Arden and Avery Creek can be expected to continue to be built out for many years to come. The City of Asheville, County of Buncombe, and other jurisdictions have all worked to update their land use ordinances to promote higher density multifamily developments. This can be seen in the many new apartment projects being planned and built across the county.

With its combination of employment opportunities, beloved and unique communities, mountains and climate, and recreational assets, Buncombe County has had success in attracting new families to the area. The region offers something for everyone, from outdoor adventures to all the modern amenities of a major metropolitan area. Taken together, Buncombe County has all the conditions present for continued population growth, and new residential developments will continue to be proposed, planned, and built into the near future.

Residential Developments

Residential growth is occurring across the county. Commute times to work, amenities, and activities play a role in the demand for steady residential growth. Currently, there are approximately 117 developments that are either proposed, permitted, or actively under construction in the region, all of which are identified in *Figure 11*.

Jurisdiction	Development Name	Approved or Proposed Lots/Units	Built Lots/Units	Remaining Lots/Units
1088 West Chapel Subdivision	Asheville	14	0	14
1116 Sweeten Creek Apartments	Asheville	126	0	126
1191 Bleachery Blvd	Asheville	7	6	1
124 Rock Hill Subdivision	Asheville	11	0	11
14 Crestfield Avenue	Woodfin	7	0	7
220 Ledbetter Road	Buncombe County	29	0	29
230 Sardis Apartments	Asheville	180	0	180
25 Pond Street Subdivision	Asheville	5	0	5
2544 Hendersonville Road	Buncombe County	22	0	22
300 Hamburg Mountain Road	Weaverville	35	0	35
3183 Sweeten Creek Rd Multi-family	Asheville	304	0	304
75 Cole Road Apartments	Weaverville	223	0	223
830 New Stock Road	Weaverville	114	0	114
Abundance Run	Asheville	16	6	10
Acton Hill	Asheville	349	0	349
Altitude	Buncombe County	114	0	114
Altura	Woodfin	394	0	394
Apex on Hazel Mill	Asheville	92	0	92
Asheville West	Buncombe County	74	16	58
Baird Cove Investments LLC	Woodfin	110	0	110
Beacon Ridge	Buncombe County	170	0	170
Bee Tree Village Ph. 4	Buncombe County	10	0	10
Belcrest at Biltmore Park	Buncombe County	357	0	357
Bleumont Ph. 1	Buncombe County	168	0	168

Broadmoor	Woodfin	16	0	16
Brooks Cove - Black Mountain	Black Mountain	47	33	14
Burleson Branch Land	Buncombe County	30	0	30
Caribou Commons	Asheville	100	0	100
Carroll at Sweeten Creek	Buncombe County	305	0	305
Case Cove Subdivision	Buncombe County	35	0	35
Cedar Ridge Apartments	Buncombe County	136	0	136
Central Park	Buncombe County	208	0	208
Chapel Crossing	Buncombe County	13	3	10
Charter Mountain	Woodfin	300	0	300
Christ School Townhomes	Buncombe County	33	0	33
Creekside Community Ph. 2	Buncombe County	178	0	178
Crest Mountain - Remaining	Woodfin	95	0	95
CYF Construction and Design LLC	Asheville	7	0	7
Emma Road Townhomes	Buncombe County	107	0	107
English Forest	Buncombe County	8	4	4
Ferry Road Community	Asheville	645	0	645
Forest Rose Apartments	Asheville	10	0	10
Fox Lair Crossing	Weaverville	45	21	24
Frisbee Builders	Buncombe County	9	1	8
Fuller Center Disaster Rebuilders	Black Mountain	50	0	50
Garrison Hills	Buncombe County	41	25	16
Glenn Bridge - Windsor Homes	Buncombe County	34	0	34
Hawkeye Trail Subdivision	Buncombe County	5	0	5
Hawthorne at Bent Creek	Buncombe County	252	0	252
HI-ALTA Investments LLC	Asheville	14	11	3
Hidden Meadows	Buncombe County	16	10	6
Julian Shoals	Asheville	198	0	198

Kirkwood Crossing	Buncombe County	75	17	58
Lakeshore Drive Subdivision	Asheville	18	0	18
Lakeshore Villas - MHO	Buncombe County	120	0	120
Liberty Oaks	Buncombe County	111	36	75
Lincoln Ridge	Buncombe County	11	4	7
Majestic Villas	Woodfin	7	0	7
Mallard Run - Focus Homes	Buncombe County	28	0	28
Mayfair Townhomes	Asheville	16	0	16
Meadows at Haw Creek	Asheville	84	0	84
Meribel Apartments	Weaverville	156	0	156
Mount Carmel	Buncombe County	34	32	2
New Heights - Habitat Ph. 2	Buncombe County	60	5	55
Northridge Farms	Weaverville	568	0	568
Oakmoss Mobile Home Park	Buncombe County	13	0	13
Oberon Ridge - Epsen Ridge	Woodfin	19	1	18
Old Charlotte Doran Subdivision	Buncombe County	516	0	516
Old County Home Road Apartments - MHO	Buncombe County	159	0	159
Olivette	Woodfin	300	90	210
Pentland Hills - MHO	Buncombe County	69	0	69
Pine Lane Apartments	Asheville	126	0	126
Pinnacle at Arrabella Heights	Buncombe County	55	48	7
Pinners Cove Subdivision	Buncombe County	269	0	269
Pisgah View Subdivision	Buncombe County	20	0	20
Pleasant Grove	Weaverville	40	36	4
Pleasant Grove Ph. 2	Weaverville	51	0	51
Reed Street Cottages	Asheville	5	0	5
Reems Creek - Remaining	Weaverville	73	20	53
Reynolds Mountain - Remaining	Woodfin	77	0	77

Riverstone Apartments Ph. 3	Buncombe County	118	0	118
Rocky River Apartments	Woodfin	120	0	120
Rolling Hills	Buncombe County	99	0	99
Rolling Hills of French Broad - Remaining	Woodfin	9	0	9
Royal Pines Village	Asheville	7	0	7
Rydele Heights	Buncombe County	72	56	16
Sardis Road Apartments	Asheville	196	0	196
Sheehan Townhomes	Buncombe County	119	0	119
Sherwood Subdivision	Buncombe County	17	0	17
Sky Ridge	Woodfin	17	0	17
Springs at River Knoll	Buncombe County	16	0	16
Springside Subdivision	Asheville	37	0	37
Star Point	Asheville	60	0	60
Starlight Grove - MHO	Buncombe County	60	0	60
Station at Rivers Edge - Arden Ridge	Buncombe County	270	0	270
Studios at Glenn Bridge	Asheville	19	0	19
Swannanoa Apartments	Buncombe County	48	0	48
The Apex at Brevard	Buncombe County	197	0	197
The One at Candler	Buncombe County	336	0	336
The Ramble	Buncombe County	360	266	94
The Settings of Black Mountain - Remaining	Black Mountain	25	0	25
The Springs of North Asheville	Woodfin	139	86	53
The Springs of North Asheville Ph. 3	Woodfin	73	0	73
The Townes at Fountain Park	Buncombe County	240	226	14
Tudor Croft Ph. 3-4	Black Mountain	30	0	30
Tylers Run Ph. 1	Buncombe County	5	0	5
Versant - Vertana - Remaining	Woodfin	43	0	43
Victoria Hills Ph.1-2	Buncombe County	101	47	54

Views at Reems Creek	Buncombe County	10	1	9
West City View	Woodfin	36	0	36
Westmore Subdivision	Asheville	19	8	11
Westside Village - Remaining	Buncombe County	10	0	10
Westview Village	Asheville	30	10	20
Wilderness Ridge	Buncombe County	74	0	74
Wood/Bleachery Residential	Asheville	23	0	23
Woodland Townhomes	Asheville	72	0	72
Woodland Trace	Buncombe County	18	0	18
		Approved or Proposed Lots/Units	**Built Lots/Units**	**Remaining Lots/Units**
TOTAL	**TOTAL**	12,073	1,125	10,948

Figure 11: Buncombe County Residential Developments

Area Housing Market Statistics

The average home sale price for Buncombe County was $461,543 as of November 2025 (Zillow.com). While North Carolina's average sale price was lower at $329,817 as of November 2025, homes in Buncombe County have appreciated 123% in the last 10 years (Best Places 2025). From November 2020 to November 2025, Buncombe County's average sale price increased approximately 39.2% from about $332K to $462K (Zillow.com). Information on the sale prices of all homes from 2020-2025 is provided in *Figure 12*.

Comparative Year	Buncombe County	North Carolina
November 2025	$462K	$330K
November 2024	$477K	$331K
November 2023	$463K	$325K
November 2022	$444K	$274K
November 2021	$387K	$230K
November 2020	$332K	$209K

Figure 12: Buncombe County vs. North Carolina Average Sale Prices

Commercial/Industrial Development

This section describes current and future commercial and industrial development in Buncombe County. This is an important topic to cover when considering population growth as this development contributes to a more stable economy with higher paying jobs and attractive employee benefits; a notion that tends to be a strong pull factor for prospective families.

Commercial Development

In the Western North Carolina region, Buncombe County is an important regional hub of market activity. The area's legacy as a commercial center continues to support a modern and dynamic mix of business activities. In and around Asheville, longstanding local businesses cater to residents' needs for neighborhood retail, services, and amenities. The region also has a strong and growing healthcare industry, seen in recent approvals for new hospitals by AdventHealth and Novant (Sonmez, 2026). In addition, the county has a strong base of small businesses tailored to tourism. Notably, the central business district of historic downtown Asheville is a thriving market of many food and retail options for citizens and tourists alike. Between art galleries, bespoke shops, live entertainment, historic tours, and riverfront walks, downtown Asheville is a unique and inviting community hub and destination.

In rural Buncombe County, valley farms continue to support a strong agricultural industry. Naturally, the legacy of farming in Buncombe County continues with the production of many fine local foods, notably fruits, vegetables, and cattle. Furthermore, in the unincorporated countryside, the county's farms support popular recreational and agritourism enterprises, including rustic wedding venues and seasonal farm festivals. This agritourism pairs well with Buncombe County's beautiful landscapes, temperate weather, and mountain recreation. Indeed, local restaurants and farmers markets serve as excellent showcases for Buncombe County's fresh and unique flavor.

Buncombe County's economy is robust because it is multifaceted. Between tourism, healthcare, Asheville's downtown, and a central location as a regional hub of retail and services, Buncombe County enjoys a strong and growing commercial sector. The area also has a considerable and growing industrial sector (detailed in the following section). OREd researchers believe the current trends of new commercial development will continue to align with future residential growth.

Industrial Development

Despite its reputation as a tourism hub, Buncombe County is home to a number of small, mid-sized, and large industrial operations. These include enterprises in aviation and aerospace, medical testing, precision manufacturing, food and beverage processing, and warehousing and distribution. As a regional production center in the western North Carolina mountains, Buncombe County is a major attractor for workers seeking good-paying local industrial jobs. Combined with linkages by rail, air, and interstate, Buncombe County benefits from favorable conditions for future industrial development.

Looking ahead, Buncombe County's strategic location will continue to prove attractive to new enterprises. The area's connection to the Port of Charleston, via upstate South Carolina, means products can be imported and exported with ease. The county's existing industrial base, skilled civilian workforce, and strong educational and training institutions, all together support a healthy industrial sector. And importantly, these types of higher-skill jobs often pay well and serve as a strong attractor for new families to move to the area. Between the existing and emerging industries in the area, Buncombe County is well-positioned to benefit from continued industrial growth. Similarly, the region's existing transportation infrastructure and planned improvements, like the forthcoming I-26 Connector (detailed in the following section), are sure to continue to appeal to prospective industrial operators.

Infrastructure

Transportation

Buncombe County's transportation system is a network of roads, bus routes, railways, sidewalks and greenways. Although mobility around Buncombe County largely depends on automobiles, the area's many miles of scenic country roads are popular features for highlighting and preserving the county's beautiful landscapes and historical communities. The Blue Ridge Parkway is a world-renowned route that showcases the area's stunning vistas. However, as a metropolitan area situated within a mountain valley, traffic congestion can be problematic, especially near Asheville's urban core.

Several major highways converge in Buncombe County, including I-26, I-40, I-240, U.S. 70, U.S. 74, U.S. 25, NC 191, and more. There are also multiple planned roadway improvements in the area. Construction has been underway for several years on the I-26 corridor south of Asheville, where widening and other improvements are expected to be completed later this year. Furthermore, the long-planned I-26 Connector is breaking ground this Spring. A $1.8 billion dollar project, this new median divided freeway would connect I-26 southwest of Asheville to U.S. 19/23/70 in northwest Asheville over a series of bridges.

Other noteworthy projects include the sidewalk upgrades near Haw Creek Elementary (expected to be completed this year), and the planned Liberty Road/I-40 Interchange, which will likely spur development west of Asheville by enabling interstate connectivity where none currently exists. Finally, construction is expected to be complete soon on Asheville Airport's terminal expansion. At a cost of around half a billion dollars, the terminal expansion represents the most significant infrastructure endeavor in the airport's 60-plus year history, and will grow the facility from 7 gates to 12, with ample room for further expansion (Johnson, 2024).

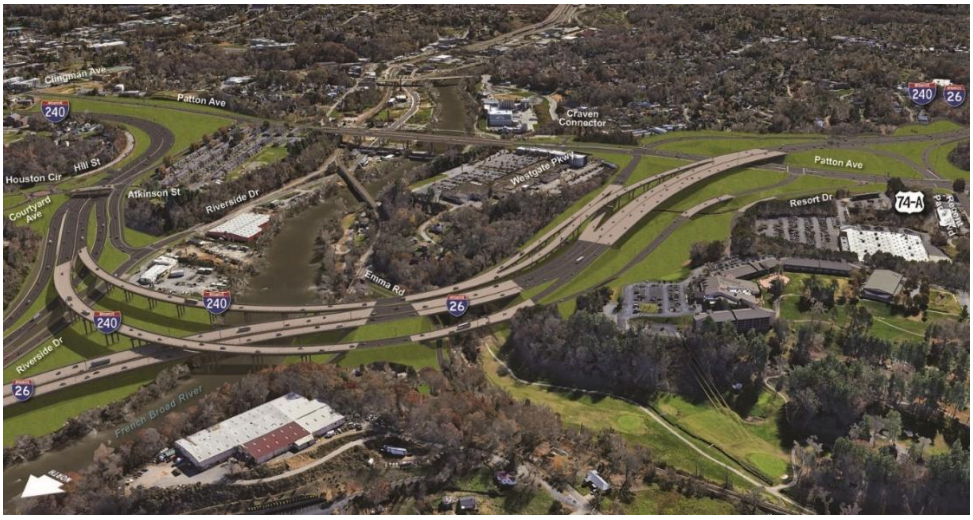


Figure 13: Aerial Rendering of Planned I-26 Connector & I-240 Realignment by Emma Road

Source: NCDOT, 2025

Water and Sewer

In Buncombe County, there are several different authorities operating water and sewer infrastructure. The primary sewer utility for most of the county is the Metropolitan Sewerage District of Buncombe County (MSDBC), which is an independent public utility serving Asheville and surrounding areas. Meanwhile, the largest water supplier in the area is the City of Asheville's Water Resources Department, which supplies drinking water to large portions of the county. Local piped distribution networks are maintained in their various jurisdictions, such as Woodfin, Weaverville, and Black Mountain.

Buncombe County's water and sewer infrastructure is a critical determinant of where growth and development can occur in the near future. Like many rural areas in North Carolina, large portions of the unincorporated county still rely on wells and/or septic systems, which limits the types of development that can occur there. Nonetheless, the presence of existing water and sewer services across Buncombe County—and especially around Asheville—indicates that growth can continue to be supported across the region. In addition, efforts to upgrade utilities are also underway. This includes ongoing construction to expand the capacity of Weaverville's Water Treatment Plant, as well as MSDBC's project to upgrade the Carrier Bridge Pump Station. In the coming years, MSDBC is also planning to upgrade and expand their regional Water Reclamation Facility.

Overall, water and sewer are not significant deterrents to development in the county. There are cooperative agreements and interconnections, meaning sufficient water and sewer capacity to serve future residences and industries. Although aging infrastructure creates maintenance challenges, in general, communities in Buncombe County benefit from strong and resilient water and sewer infrastructure systems. Furthermore, utilities providers' continued investment in improving and expanding infrastructure means that greater development can be supported across Buncombe County in the years to come.

Entity Utilities	Capacity
MSDBC - French Broad River Water Reclamation Facility	40 million gallons per day
City of Asheville – North Fork WTP	31 million gallons per day
City of Asheville – William DeBruhl WTP	5 million gallons per day
City of Asheville – Mills River WTP	7.5 million gallons per day
Town of Weaverville WTP*	1.5 million gallons per day **Expanding to 3 mgd*
Woodfin Water District WTP	2 million gallons per day

Figure 14: Buncombe County Utilities Capacities

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