

# WESTERN PIEDMONT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS NEWSLETTER SEPT & OCT 2021



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# WPCOG Assists Two Local Businesses with NC Commerce Grants

Article by: Paul Teague

Two area businesses have been awarded North Carolina Department of Commerce Building Reuse grants through the Rural Economic Development Division that will create 110 new, full-time jobs.

WPCOG Staff assisted Prysmian Group in Claremont and Synergy Labs in Hildebran in completing the grant applications.

A world leader in the energy and communications cable industry, Prysmian Group is creating 50 new jobs and investing more than \$24 million. Meanwhile, Synergy Labs – a prominent manufacturer in the pet products industry – is investing nearly \$3 million to renovate more than 20,000 square feet to add 60 new jobs.

Prysmian Group was awarded a \$375,000 grant via the City of Claremont, while Synergy Labs was awarded a \$500,000 grant with the Town of Hildebran. The new jobs will pay well above the annual averages for both Catawba and Burke counties.

Along with officials from the respective communities, WPCOG worked on the grant with Catawba Economic Development Corporation and Burke Development, Inc.



## Code Enforcement is at Full “Force” with Two New Officers

Article by: Scott Berson

Officers Curt Willis and Matt Taylor joined the WPCOG’s code enforcement division last month, bringing years of security and law enforcement experience to the team. The code enforcement division, which provides a variety of services to area municipalities, is digging into work throughout the region and pushing hard to provide superior service to residents. The mission of the code enforcement division is to promote and maintain a safe and desirable living and working environment throughout the area’s municipalities. Additionally, the Division strives to maintain and improve the quality of each community by administering fair and unbiased enforcement of state laws and local ordinances to correct violations and reduce hazards that create blight and adversely affect the quality of life of residents and guests.



Code enforcement officers (from left to right), Matt Taylor, Todd Justice, and Curt Willis.

The Division works to enforce many different ordinances and codes. Perhaps the most prominent is nuisance abatement, such as removing junk, debris, or abandoned motor vehicles and mobile homes. In addition, officers perform inspections regularly out in the field and work actively with citizens to resolve violations. The Division also participates in public awareness and engagement by holding events, speaking with citizens, and sharing information about code requirements. Willis, one of the new officers on the team, is a Burke County native and Marine Corps veteran, where he served as a guard at various U.S. embassies abroad. He attended Gardner-Webb University and pursued a career in contract and corporate security for many years, both in the U.S. and overseas, before finding his way back to North Carolina.

Being back in his home allows him to bring fresh perspective and urgency to his work. “Code enforcement is important to me, as it addresses the safety needs of a community,” Willis said. “Growing up locally, leaving for many years, and returning to the area gives me some perspective on how to handle any declines in upkeep and appearance in different communities that we can help address.”

Taylor, who joined the team concurrently as Willis, also brings years of local expertise as a Caldwell County native and graduate of Appalachian State University with a degree in criminal justice. Taylor spent the last ten years as a justice officer before coming to the code enforcement division.

“Serving the community has always been my passion, and I hope to continue to do so,” he said.



# Access to COVID-19 Vaccination

Article by Michael Layza

## AT-HOME COVID-19 VACCINES

Available for those with limited mobility

Call the At-Home Vaccination Hotline: 1-866-303-0026 or visit: [www.ptcr.org/COVID](http://www.ptcr.org/COVID)

YOU HAVE A SPOT. TAKE YOUR SHOT.



**Delta variant is surging in the U.S. Vaccination is more urgent than ever.**



**Vaccinated**  
people are at  
**lower risk**



**Unvaccinated**  
people are at  
**higher risk**

for **severe illness, hospitalization, and death**

Getting vaccinated helps prevent **severe illness, hospitalization, and death** from COVID-19, including the **Delta variant**. It can also help reduce the spread of the virus in communities.



[cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://cdc.gov/coronavirus)

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 vaccines are effective at helping protect against severe disease and death from variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 currently circulating, including the Delta variant.

All currently authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective and reduce your risk of severe illness. Vaccines are widely accessible in the United States and are available for those age 12+ at no cost. In addition, many doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, hospitals, and clinics offer COVID-19 vaccinations.

There are several ways you can look for vaccination providers near you in the United States:

- **For those who are Homebound and/or have limited mobility** – you can receive a vaccine in your home. Call **1-866-303-0026** or visit [www.ptcr.org/COVID](http://www.ptcr.org/COVID) to register for free.
- **Visit [Vaccines.gov](http://Vaccines.gov)** to find vaccination providers near you. In some states, information may be limited while more U. S. vaccination providers and pharmacies are being added. Learn more about [COVID-19 Vaccination Locations on Vaccines.gov](http://COVID-19 Vaccination Locations on Vaccines.gov).
- **Text your ZIP code to 438829** or call **1-800-232-0233** to find vaccine locations near you in the United States.
- **Check your local pharmacy's website to see if vaccination appointments are available.** Find out which pharmacies are participating in the [Federal Retail Pharmacy Program](http://Federal Retail Pharmacy Program).
- **Contact your state health department** to find additional vaccination locations in the area.
- **Check your local news outlets.** They may have information on how to get a vaccination appointment.

# 2050 Plan Survey and Community Outreach

Article by: Brian Horton

Where do you see our region in 30 years? What transportation investments are needed between now and 2050 to support that vision? What strategic investments will make our four-county region an attractive place to live, work, and visit? Tell us your priorities, ideas, and more by taking this quick survey: [ghmpo2050.metroquest.com](http://ghmpo2050.metroquest.com)

The results from this survey will help guide the development of the new 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update being developed by WPCOG staff. The current "2045 MTP" was adopted in June 2018. A new "2050 MTP" must ultimately be adopted by June 2023. To learn more, visit the WPCOG / GHMPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) page at: [www.wpcog.org/metropolitan-trans-plan-mtp](http://www.wpcog.org/metropolitan-trans-plan-mtp)

A variety of community outreach activities will expand upon the survey. Area community organizations are strongly encouraged to become involved. Contact us via phone or email, if interested in helping shape the 2050 Plan.



# NCWorks Success Stories

Article by: Wendy Johnson

**Antonio** came to the Caldwell County NCWorks Career Center in September of 2020 after being laid off due to COVID 19. He knew he wanted to do something different. Antonio has a passion for cutting hair, loves interacting with customers and providing a service.

Antonio came to the Caldwell County NCWorks Career Center with a plan in mind. He was already enrolled at Plush Kutz Barber School in Hickory, NC, but he needed help with the tools needed for Barber College.

Antonio successfully completed his training in August 2021 and found employment immediately after, with the Program Director of Plush Kutz, David Williams.

Antonio will be employed at David William's recently opened barbershop in Lenoir, called Plush Vibes. David Williams, Program Director at Plush Kutz/Owner of Plush Vibes says, "Antonio Johnson has been a great student who has made a great change in his life. So much so, I have hired him to work at my barbershop. I would like to thank The NCWorks Scholarship program for making this opportunity possible for him and myself." Congratulations Antonio and David on all your success!



**Cho Yang** came to the NCWorks Trade Training Program from United Technologies Corporation (UTC) where she had 21 years of experience as an electronics assembler. She had already started on her new career path before she was accepted into the Trade Training Program.

Cho had achieved her Associate of Applied Science Degree, and had earned pre-approval for the Radiology Program at Catawba Valley Community College. The Radiology program is stringent with courses that must be followed without room for error. Add to the mix the obstacles that the pandemic presented, this made for especially tough training. Cho came through training like a trooper, and graduated like the shining star that she is, with a 3.367 GPA and with a second Associates Degree, this time in Radiology.

By mid-June 2021 Cho had taken and passed, on the first attempt, the Radiology exam: American Registry of Radiologic Technologic Technologists. She is currently applying for positions, where no doubt, she will be an excellent addition to any medical team.

## Partnerships Vital to REACH Program

Article by: Kim Duncan

"Partnership is not a posture but a process – a continuous process that grows stronger each year as we devote ourselves to common tasks. - John F Kennedy

Partnerships take time to form and effort to nurture, but their value is beyond measure when it comes to supporting programs such as WPCOG's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program called REACH.

Under HUD guidelines, a FSS program is required to establish a Program Coordinating Committee (PCC). The PCC consists of a network of partnerships from the community that provide resources and assistance to participants in the FSS program. A PCC should consist of the Regional Housing Authority (RHA) Director and the FSS Coordinator along with public and private sector agencies and individuals who want to partner with the FSS Coordinator to offer services and guidance to participants. A RHA participant is also a required member of the committee. This gives participants an opportunity to voice concerns of tenants, as well as share stories of their struggles and successes while in the FSS program.

WPCOG is fortunate to have a healthy, diverse PCC. The FSS Coordinator has built relationships with individuals and agencies in the four-county area, creating a PCC membership of more than 70 members. Entities represented on the committee include community colleges as well as workforce development and non-profit service organizations. Agencies that offer disability services are also included.

"Partnerships in the counties we service are strong and without them my job would not be possible," said Kim Duncan, WPCOG's REACH Coordinator. "I often call my partners and say, 'I have a tenant who needs . . . ' and they always assist or guide me in the right direction. I am so incredibly thankful for all the help my partners have given me and my tenants." To learn more about the REACH program and its PCC, contact Kim Duncan, REACH Coordinator, at 828.485.4299 or [kim.duncan@wpcog.org](mailto:kim.duncan@wpcog.org).

# Waiting List Opens for Mainstream Vouchers

Article by: Elizabeth Moncrief

Western Piedmont Council of Governments Regional Housing Authority (RHA) is opening its waiting list for Mainstream voucher applications on November 1, 2021. Mainstream vouchers are tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) that assist families with a non-elderly disabled household member. Since 2018, the RHA has been awarded 286 Mainstream Vouchers.

To be eligible to apply for a Mainstream voucher, a household needs to have at least one member who is disabled and between the ages of 18 and 61. The waiting list will remain open until the available Mainstream vouchers are utilized. The waiting list application will be available to complete online at [housing.wpcog.net](https://housing.wpcog.net). If you have any questions regarding the application process, please contact Sharday Black at (828) 485-4241 or [sharday.black@wpcog.org](mailto:sharday.black@wpcog.org).

In addition, the RHA continues to accept HCV applications on a referral basis for the Family Unification Program vouchers, HUD-VASH vouchers, and Emergency Housing vouchers. These targeted population vouchers assist households that meet specific eligibility criteria.

- The Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers assist families who have lost custody of their child or children or are at imminent risk of losing custody due to a lack of adequate housing. They also assist former foster youth who have aged out of foster care and lack adequate housing. To be eligible, Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, or Catawba County Department of Social Services must certify the family as eligible. WPCOG has 22 FUP vouchers.
- The HUD-VASH vouchers are for homeless veterans who also require case management. The Veterans Administration refers eligible applicants to the RHA. The RHA has ten active HUD-VASH vouchers. If you would like additional information about the FUP or HUD-VASH vouchers, please contact Elizabeth Moncrief at (828) 485-4244 or [elizabeth.moncrief@wpcog.org](mailto:elizabeth.moncrief@wpcog.org).
- Most recently, the RHA received 30 Emergency Housing Vouchers for those facing the possibility of homelessness. Applicants for these vouchers are referred to the RHA from the local Continuum of Care (CoC) point of contact and are triaged based on need by the CoC. If you want information about the EHV, please contact Brittany Williams at (828) 485- 4227 or [brittany.williams@wpcog.org](mailto:brittany.williams@wpcog.org).

# WPCOG Helps Local Businesses find \$680K in state grants

Article by: Paul Teague

WPCOG Staff has worked with local businesses and municipalities in applying for \$680,000 in North Carolina Department of Commerce Building Reuse Grants.

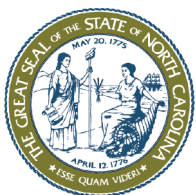
A longtime manufacturing company in Catawba County is seeking \$440,000 to renovate an existing building and create 80 new, full-time jobs. The grant is being processed through the City of Conover.

Meanwhile, the City of Morganton is working with E.J. Victor – a furniture manufacturer – in order to help the company expand its operations and create 30 new, full-time jobs.

The grants are scheduled to be formally awarded on December 9.

The Building Reuse Grant program assists companies with certain renovation or expansion expenses and awards are based on investment and new-job growth. Companies are required to document and maintain their new jobs for a specified amount of time in order to satisfy the grant requirements.

The WPCOG has worked with Catawba County EDC and Burke Development, Inc. in preparing the grants.



NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT of  
COMMERCE

E J V I C T O R

# October is Resident's Rights Month!

Article by: Christina Franklin

October is Resident's Rights Month! This year's theme is "Reclaiming My Rights, My Home, My Life!" Now more than ever, our Long Term Care residents need to be connected to the community to have their voices heard. In March of 2020, all Long Term Care facilities closed their doors to visitors and all non-essential providers. In September 2020, new visitation guidance was passed down by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the NC Division of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) with its most recent revision in April and May of 2021, respectively. Facilities are currently opening their doors to visitors with some restrictions based on this guidance. These months of restrictions have taken their toll on our long-term care residents and have emphasized the impact of visits from loved ones on their health and well-being.



If you or a loved one reside in a long-term care facility and would like to review this visitation guidance, please visit [covid19.ncdhhs.gov/media/2334/open](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/media/2334/open) or [www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-certificationsurvey/certificationgeninfpolicy-and-memos-states-and/nursing-home-visitation-covid-19-revised](https://www.cms.gov/medicareprovider-enrollment-and-certificationsurvey/certificationgeninfpolicy-and-memos-states-and/nursing-home-visitation-covid-19-revised).

It is important for everyone to be familiar with residents' rights, especially at a time when our Long Term Care residents are most vulnerable. The following are the rights established by the Residents' Bill of Rights:

- To be treated with consideration, respect, and full recognition of personal dignity and individuality.
- To receive adequate care, treatment, and services that are adequate and appropriate and comply with relevant federal and state rules.
- To receive at the time of admission and during stay a written statement of services provided by the facility and of related charges. Charges for services not covered under Medicare and Medicaid shall be specified.
- To have on file a physician's orders with the proposed schedule of medical treatment. In addition, written, signed evidence of prior informed consent to participation in experimental research shall be in the patient's file.
- To receive respect and privacy in his medical care program. All personal and medical records are confidential.
- To be free of physical and mental abuse. To be free of chemical and physical restraint unless authorized for a specific period of time by a physician according to clear and indicated medical records.
- To receive from the administrator or staff of the facility a reasonable response to all requests.
- To receive visitors or have access to privacy in phone use at any reasonable hour.
- To send and receive mail promptly and unopened, with access to writing materials.
- To manage his/her financial affairs unless other legal arrangements have been so ordered.
- To have privacy in visits by the patient's spouse.
- To enjoy privacy in his/her room.
- To present grievances and recommend changes in policies and services without fear of reprisal, restraint, interference, coercion, or discrimination.
- To not be required to perform services for the facility without the resident's consent and written approval of the attending physician.
- To retain, to secure storage for, and use his personal clothing and possessions, where reasonable.
- To not be transferred or discharged from a facility except for medical, financial, or their own or other patient's welfare. Any such transfer shall require at least five days' notice unless the attending physician orders immediate transfer, which shall be documented in the patient's medical record.

To be notified when the facility's license is revoked or made provisional. The responsible party or guardian must also be notified. If you have questions or concerns about facility visitation or the rights of residents in Long Term Care, contact your local Ombudsman at 828-485-4213 or 828-485 4265.



# Census Population, Race and Housing Regional Data Now Available

Article by Scott Berson

Last month, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that preliminary data from the 2020 Census is now available to the public. This data is the 2020 redistricting data and is used by legislatures to redraw congressional and state legislative boundaries. Still, it includes important, detailed statistics about the region's demographics and its cities, towns, and counties. Topics include 2020 Census population counts by race, Hispanic origin, voting age, and housing unit data for counties, places, census tracts, and blocks.

"We are excited to be able to provide these data to the public in a format that's easier to use," said acting Census Bureau Director Ron Jarmin.

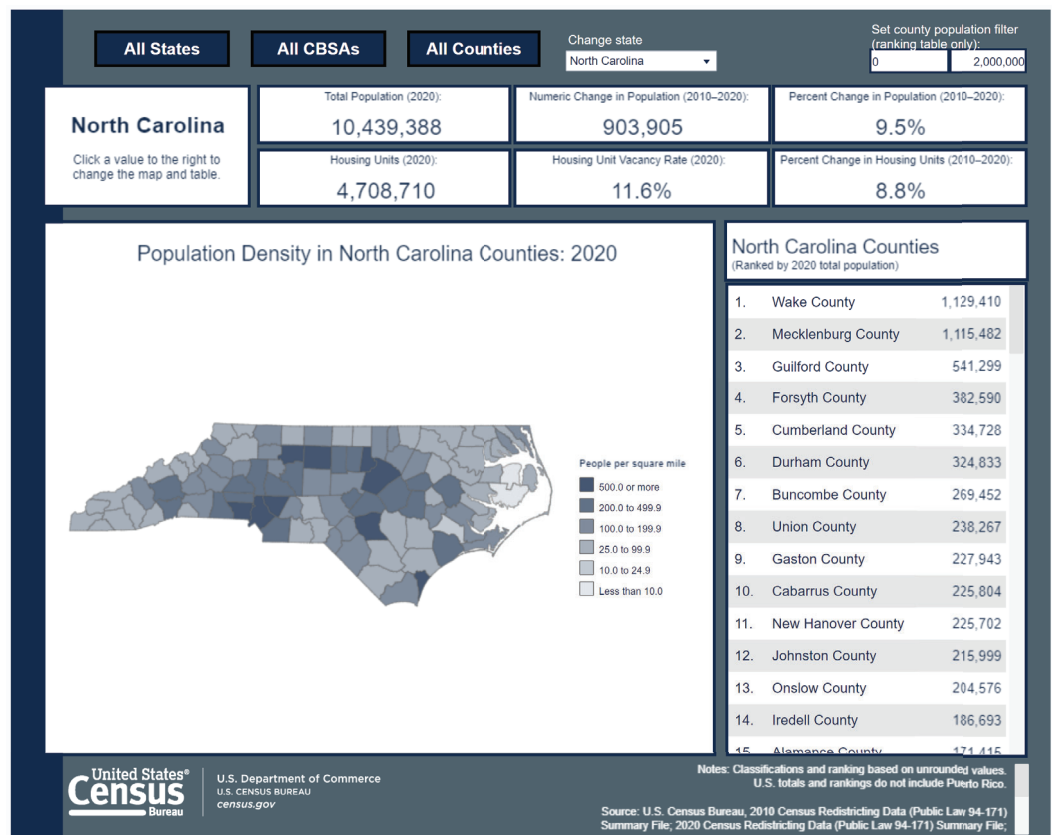
Additional information, including more data on different age groups and characteristics of households, is expected in early 2022, said WPCOG Data Analyst Taylor Dellinger.

This is the first 2020 Census data release available on the Census Bureau's data dissemination platform, [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov). The site allows data users to search geographies down to the block level and access data through tables, maps, and downloads. Data users can also access a geography, such as a state, county, or place, in a geographic profile with visualizations and infographics.

Features of data.census.gov include:

- Data tables: Users can select geographies, sort by topic, or add any other applicable filters. Data can be reordered, pinned, and hidden with drag and drop functionality. Included are the following tables:

- P1. Race
- P2. Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race
- P3. Race for the Population 18 Years and Over
- P4. Hispanic or Latino, and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race for the Population 18 Years and Over
- P5. Group Quarters Population by Major Group Quarters Type
- H1. Occupancy Status
- Mapping: Data users can display data across collections of geographies in a thematic map for a more visual representation.
- Data downloads: Users can download multiple tables for 2020 and 2010 censuses simultaneously for easier reference.



Instructional videos on accessing 2020 Census redistricting data are available on the [data.census.gov resources page](https://data.census.gov/resources). They include videos on accessing population counts, census blocks, mapping geographies, customizing the table view, and comparing 2020 and 2010 census data.



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