



catawba county
north carolina

2018

Annual **FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

Fiscal Year Ended
June 30, 2018



MAKING.



LIVING.



BETTER.



catawba county
MAKING. LIVING. BETTER.

North Carolina



CATAWBA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In 1937, Catawba County became the third county in the State to adopt the council-manager form of government. The Board of Commissioners is comprised of a five-member board elected at large on staggered terms in a countywide election. The Board of Commissioners is the policy-making and legislative authority for the County. It is responsible for adopting the annual budget, approving zoning and planning issues and other matters related to the health and welfare of the County. The Board makes appointments to various boards and commissions and appoints the County Manager.

The County Manager is the Chief Executive Officer and is responsible for enforcement of laws and ordinances, preparation and administration of the annual budget, delivery of services, implementing policies, managing daily operations and appointment of department heads.

Catawba County provides its citizens with a broad range of services that include public safety, environmental protection, health and human services, cultural and recreational programs, community and economic development, and education.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



C. Randall Isenhower
Chair



Barbara G. Beatty
Vice Chair



Kitty W. Barnes



Sherry E. Butler



Dan A. Hunsucker

INSIDE THIS REPORT

Catawba County Government	2
Board of Commissioners	2
Management's Message	3
Community Profile	4
Financial Highlights (Revenues & Expenses)	5
Financial Highlights (Net Position)	6

Capital Assets	6
Long-term Debt Obligations	8
General Fund	9
Fund Balance	10
Economic Outlook	10
Long-term Financial Planning	14
Achievements	14

MANAGEMENT'S MESSAGE

Citizens of Catawba County:

We are pleased to present the 2018 Catawba County Financial Highlights. This report is an opportunity to present the financial activity of Catawba County in an open and transparent manner.

In today's complex world of financial reporting, analyzing financial statements can be a challenge—especially for those without accounting backgrounds. This report was designed to address that issue by providing a recap of your County government's finances in an easy to read format.

The financial statements used in this report are simplified and condensed to reflect financial information regarding Catawba County's government-wide information. The County's government-wide financial statements provide information on revenues, expenses, and net position of Catawba County for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018.

Most of the information in this report is drawn from the financial information appearing in the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018. The CAFR is a more detailed and complete financial presentation prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and was audited by the County's independent external auditors. While the financial data in this report conforms with GAAP, the statistical, economic and demographic data are taken from various sources and are not necessarily GAAP based. Additional financial information can be found in the CAFR, available at Catawba County public libraries and online at www.catawbacountync.gov/depts/finance/.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact the Chief Financial Officer at (828) 465-8210, or write to: Chief Financial Officer, Catawba County, P.O. Box 389, Newton, NC 28658.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature of Mick Berry in black ink.

Mick Berry
County Manager



A handwritten signature of Robert Miracle in black ink.

Robert Miracle
Chief Financial Officer

CONDENSED FINANCIAL STATEMENT

This publication provides the public with an easy-to-read overview of the County's finances. The information is derived from the County's 2018 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The CAFR includes more detailed information, was prepared in conformance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), and was audited by the County's independent auditors. The 2018 CAFR is available for review on the County's website at www.catawbacountync.gov

ABOUT CATAWBA COUNTY

COUNTY SERVICES

(Expenses)

Education

- 28 Catawba County Schools
- 7 Newton-Conover Schools
- 10 Hickory City Schools
- Catawba Valley Community College

Human Services

- Social Services
- Public Health
- Mental Health
- Medical Examiner

Public Safety

- Sheriff
- Emergency Services
- Fire/Rescue Services
- Veterans Services
- Animal Control
- E911/Comm. Center

Economic Development & Planning

- 3 County Parks
- Information Technology
- Planning & Zoning
- Utilities & Engineering
- Facilities

Culture and Recreation

- 7 County Libraries

Environmental Protection

- Cooperative Extension
- Soil & Water Conservation
- Forest Ranger

General Government Administration

- Board of Commissioners
- County Management
- Legal
- Budget
- Tax Assessor/Collector
- Board of Elections
- Human Resources
- Self Insurance
- Register of Deeds
- Finance & Purchasing

Solid Waste Management

- Blackburn Landfill
- Recycling/Convenience Centers
- Household Hazardous Waste
- Methane Recovery

Water and Sewer

- Water & Sewer Management

Located in a peaceful valley just east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Catawba County is conveniently located within a 1-hour drive to Charlotte, Asheville, and Winston-Salem, and

affords easy access to both Interstate 40 and Highway 321. The County's mid-Atlantic location is halfway between New York and Miami and includes a land of scenic beauty and diverse cultures with a large industrial workforce. Three beautiful lakes are located within its 414 square miles, and the Catawba River winds along its western, northern and eastern border.

Early Catawbans were German and Scotch-Irish, who initially settled in Pennsylvania and migrated to the south when converging factors of crowding and under-employment evolved. The County is named for the river and the Catawba Indians who settled in the valley and welcomed the first German and Scotch-Irish settlers who arrived in 1747.

Catawba County was officially established on December 12, 1842 when Lincoln County was divided by an act of the North Carolina General Assembly. The County has eight cities and towns within its boundaries, and is home to a population of 157,424 residents, which positions it as the 18th largest county in North Carolina and one of the 27 urban counties with population of 100,000 or more.

Catawba County has it all –beautiful climate, with four seasons that are distinct as they are mild, unique places to work, low cost of living, vast array of recreational opportunities, arts and culture and an unparalleled lifestyle. It is an ideal place to live, work, play, rear a family and retire.



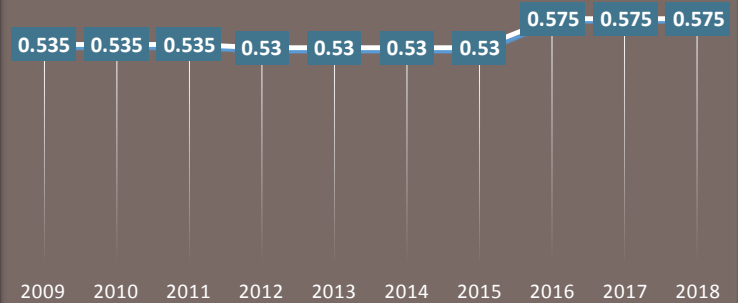
2018 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS (Revenues/Expenses)

REVENUES - Monies the County receives from a variety of sources to provide services to citizens.

Local governments rely heavily on tax revenues for operating governmental and business-type activities. Catawba County is no exception, 72% of the total operating revenue is attributed to taxes, which consist mainly of sales tax and property tax.

- Property tax, the County's largest single revenue source, accounted for \$104.1 million or 55% of governmental revenue. The property tax rate of \$.575 for every \$100 of value is below the State average of \$.664 making Catawba County's tax rate the 24th lowest of all 100 counties in North Carolina.
- Sales and other taxes accounted for \$39.2 million or 20% of revenue. Catawba County remains a retail magnet. In 2018, taxable sales increased by 9%, on top of a healthy 9% increase the year before. Shopping in Catawba County helps support local business and keeps property taxes low.

PROPERTY TAX RATES



EXPENSES - Monies the County spends to provide services.

The County incurs a number of expense to provide a variety of quality services to its citizens. Expenses increased by \$5.8M from the prior year. Funding for education increased \$12.1M as renovations and capital

improvements were made to several schools throughout the year. Public Safety increased \$1.5M as the County added additional patrol and EMS personnel. General government and Human Services reported decreases in expenses. Expenses remained consistent in the business-type activities.

	2018	2017	2016
ALL FUNDS			
Assets and Deferred Outflows	\$ 465,432,377	\$ 433,653,162	\$ 389,981,037
Liabilities and Deferred Inflows	<u>260,002,987</u>	<u>225,033,238</u>	<u>187,417,308</u>
Net Position	\$ 205,429,390	\$ 208,619,924	\$ 202,563,729

REVENUES			
Governmental Activities	\$ 188,333,204	\$ 189,403,207	\$ 188,310,805
Business-type Activities	<u>12,160,059</u>	<u>8,620,651</u>	<u>9,355,430</u>
Total	\$ 200,493,263	\$ 198,023,858	\$ 197,666,235

EXPENSES			
Governmental Activities	\$ 188,105,599	\$ 182,578,388	\$ 166,126,876
Business-type Activities	<u>7,929,946</u>	<u>7,649,047</u>	<u>7,626,096</u>
Total	\$ 196,035,545	\$ 190,227,435	\$ 173,752,972

CAPITAL ASSETS - net of depreciation			
Governmental Activities	\$ 130,025,133	\$ 122,258,095	\$ 113,584,561
Business-type Activities	<u>70,231,993</u>	<u>67,731,181</u>	<u>65,452,782</u>
Total	\$ 200,257,126	\$ 189,989,276	\$ 179,037,343

LONG-TERM DEBT OUTSTANDING			
Governmental Activities	\$ 189,593,688	\$ 159,727,269	\$ 136,732,524
Business-type Activities	<u>9,275,503</u>	<u>10,528,106</u>	<u>11,770,466</u>
Total	\$ 198,869,191	\$ 170,255,375	\$ 148,502,990

2018

Top 10 Taxpayers

(16% of the County's assessed value)

- Apple, Inc.
- Duke Energy Carolinas
- GKN Driveline Newton
- Corning Cable Systems
- CommScope, Inc.
- Draka Comteq Americas, Inc.
- Target Corporation
- DPL Frye Regional Medical Center, LLC
- Piedmont Natural Gas Co.
- ZF Chassis Components

2018 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS (Net Position)

The difference between revenues and expenses/transfers represent the Change in Net Position. One of the most important questions asked about the County's finances is, "Is the County, as a whole, better off as a result of the past year's activities?" The Statement of Net Position presents information on of the County assets, deferred outflow of resources, liabilities, and deferred inflows of resource with the difference reported as net position.

As of June 30, 2018, the County's net position totaled \$205.4M. The three components of net position are:

- The largest component, approximately \$164M or 80%, represents the County's **investment in capital assets** less any related debt used to construct or acquire those assets. The County uses these capital assets to provide services to citizens, consequently, they are not available for future spending.

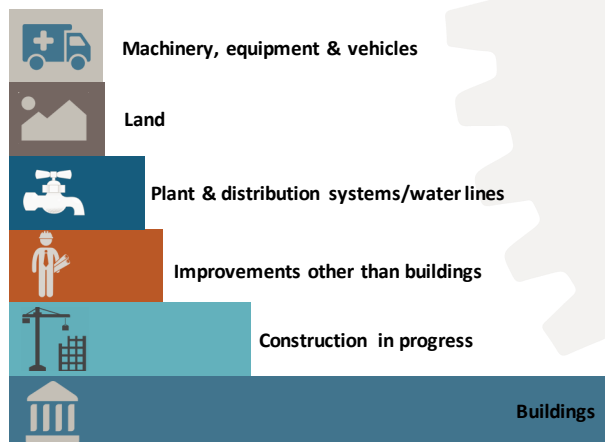
	2018	2017	2016
NET POSITION - Primary Government			
Invested in capital assets	\$ 163,888,226	\$ 149,381,797	\$ 135,751,257
Restricted	26,520,247	32,848,390	37,336,072
Unrestricted	15,020,917	26,390,737	29,476,400
Total Net Position	\$ 205,429,390	\$ 208,620,924	\$ 202,563,729

- The second component, **restricted net position**, represents resources that are subject to external restrictions on how they may be used. External restrictions include those imposed by grantors, regulators, or restrictions imposed by legislation. Total restricted net position is approximately 13%.
- The final component of net position is **unrestricted**, or 7% of the total net position. Unrestricted net position consists of resources that the County may use to meet its ongoing obligations to citizens and creditors.

CAPITAL ASSETS

Catawba County continues strategic investments in the high priority areas of education, public safety, economic development and quality of life. These assets include land, buildings, infrastructure, machinery & equipment and vehicles.

Catawba County's Total Capital Assets (net of depreciation)

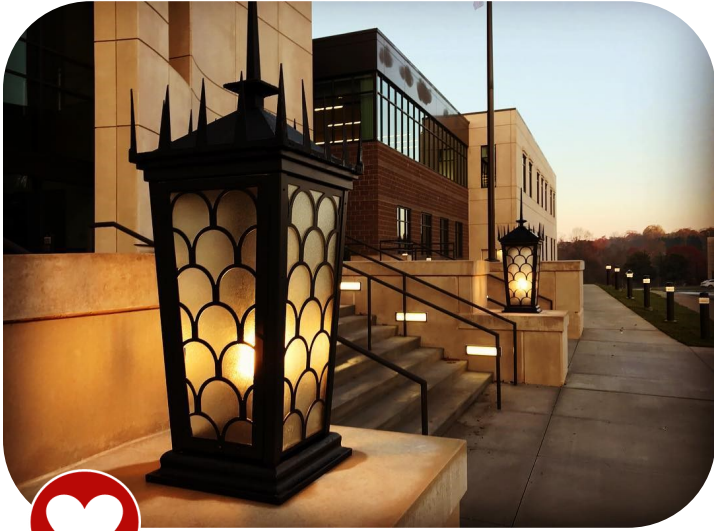


As of June 30, 2018, the County's capital assets (net of depreciation) totaled \$200.2M an increase of \$10.2M over the prior year.

- Purchase of new public safety vehicles including ambulances
- Additional equipment for NC 911 Center
- Increase in construction in progress for the jail expansion and multi-jurisdictional data center
- Construction of new landfill cells and equipment

CAPITAL ASSETS (continued)

Below are highlights of a few major projects in progress or completed in fiscal year 2018.



JUSTICE CENTER EXPANSION

The new Justice Center Expansion opened in the fall of 2017 culminating 10 years of planning and construction. The expansion adds 125,640 square feet, approximately half of which is dedicated to new courtrooms and court related space. The other half houses a new E-911 Communication Center, and Emergency Operations Center, Veteran's Services, EMS Administration and other Emergency Services personnel.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS CENTER - CVCC

Opening early 2019, the 83,000 square-foot facility will create state-of-the art classrooms and laboratory spaces to teach advanced manufacturing skills and other technical skills. It will house technolo-



gy and engineering programs, including Computer Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Computer Integrated Machining, Electronics Engineering, Automotive Systems Technology, Welding, Mechanical Engineering, Mechatronics and Robotics, and Heating/Ventilation & Air Conditioning.



JAIL EXPANSION

It is the County's responsibility, as required by State law, to house all inmates. A 320-bed expansion is currently under construction to expand the detention center in Newton to meet current and future needs.



MOUNTAIN CREEK PARK

Planning has begun for the development of a new County Park. Developed over several phases, when complete the 588-acre site will include amenities such as canoe portage, camping, picnic shelters, hiking trails, and multi-use buildings.

LONG-TERM DEBT OBLIGATIONS

The County's large capital improvement projects normally require long-term financing. The outstanding debt obligations consist of the following purposes: Education, Public Safety Jail Expansion, Water & Sewer Projects, Economic Development Data Center and new County Park.

As of June 30, 2018, the County's long-term debt totaled \$198.8M, an increase of \$28M over prior year.

- The County issued new debt for county and school capital projects in the amount of \$39M and made debt service payments of approximately \$15M.

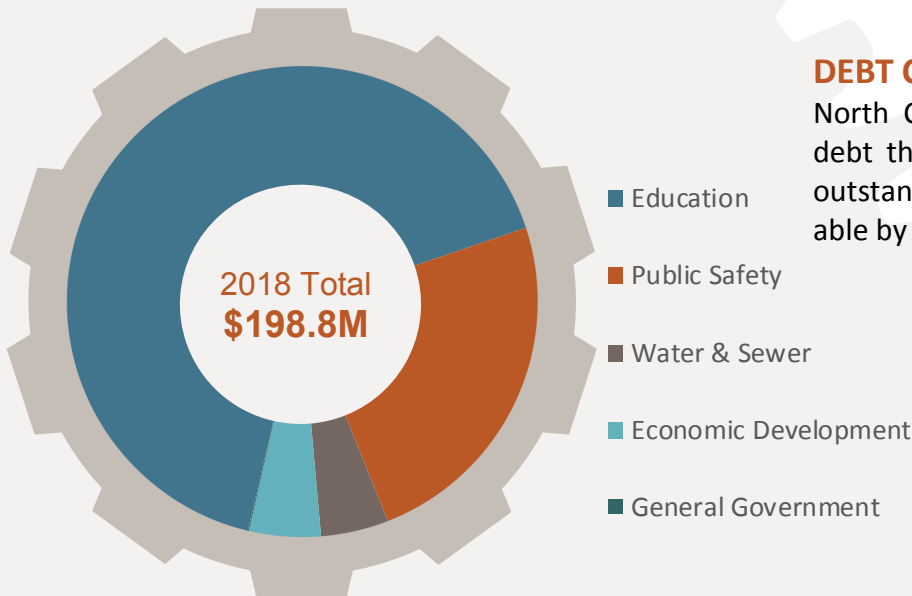
BOND RATING

The County obtains a credit rating or evaluation of its credit-worthiness by an independent rating agency. In FY2018, Standard and Poor's upgraded Catawba County's general obligation debt bond rating from AA to AA+. Also, for the ninth consecutive year, the County maintained its Aa1 bond rating from Moody's Investor Service.

Upgraded
Bond Rating
AA+

This stable bond rating is a clear indication of the sound fiscal condition of the County, keeping interest costs low on the County's outstanding debt.

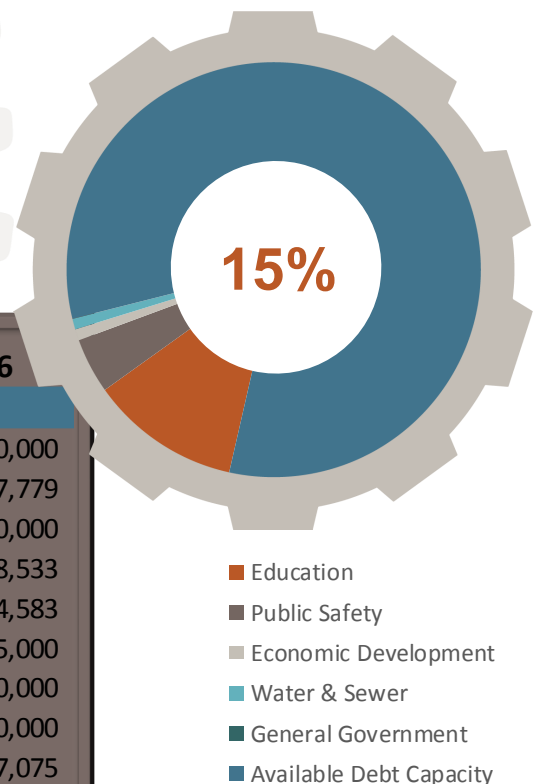
Uses of Outstanding Debt 2018



DEBT CAPACITY

North Carolina general statutes limit the amount of debt that a unit can issue. The County's total debt outstanding of \$198.8M is 15% of the legal debt available by general statute.

2018 County Debt Capacity



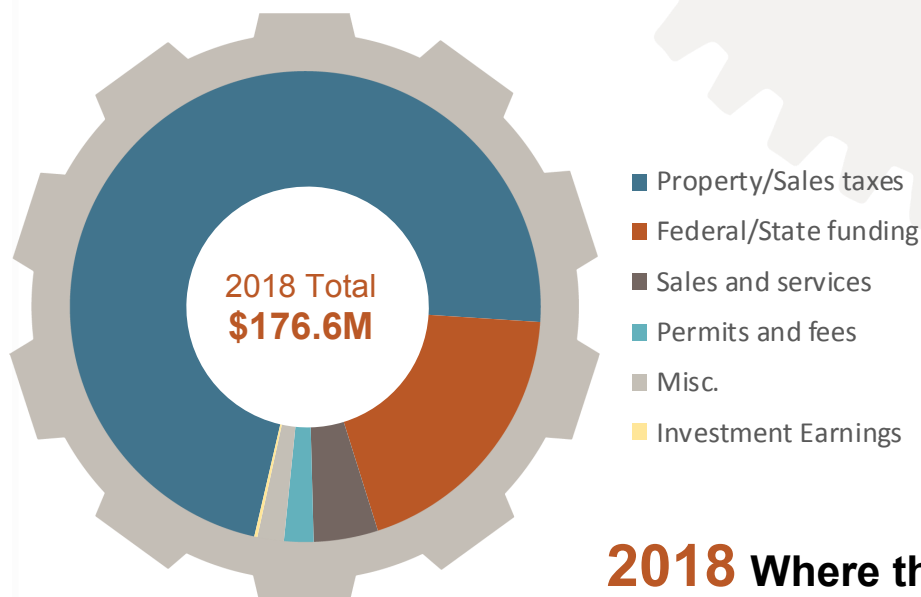
	2018	2017	2016
TOTAL DEBT OUTSTANDING - Primary Government			
Certificate of Participation	\$ 7,115,000	\$ 8,245,000	\$ 9,390,000
Installment Purchases	70,527,799	78,263,515	43,457,779
Qualified Zone Academy Bonds	200,000	250,000	300,000
Qualified School Const. Bonds	27,808,553	27,808,553	27,808,533
Build America Bonds	-	-	5,504,583
Limited Obligation Bonds	80,960,000	47,115,000	52,365,000
Federal Revolving Loan	900,000	975,000	1,050,000
NC Department of Commerce	1,590,784	210,038	2,600,000
Premium on long-term debt	9,767,055	5,497,919	5,847,075
Total Debt Outstanding	\$ 198,869,191	\$ 168,365,025	\$ 148,322,970

GENERAL FUND

The General Fund is the primary operating fund of the County and supports the regular day-to-day operations. This fund captures the general revenues and expenditures of primary governmental activities including education, public safety, human services, parks, libraries and general government. Unlike the information presented earlier, which focused on the government as a whole, the General Fund is presented using a current resources focus (amounts to be collected or paid in the near term).

In 2018, the General Fund expenditures of \$166 million were lower than budget by \$19.1 million. This conservative approach to spending is a hallmark of the County.

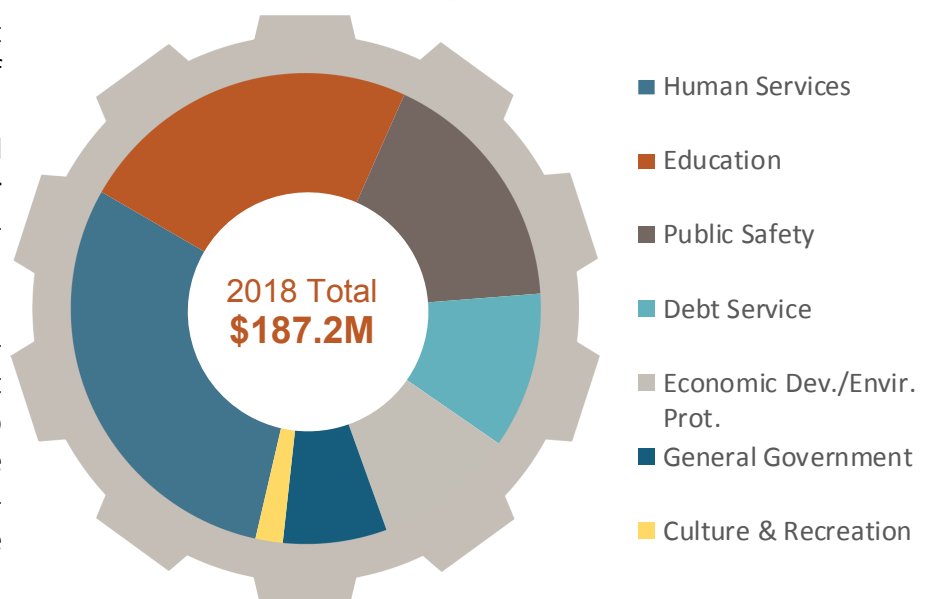
2017 Where the Money Comes From



Property and Sales Tax represent the most significant source of revenue for the General Fund representing 72% of the total revenue collected. Other major sources of revenue, in the General Fund, are shown above.

Once the County collects revenues, the funds must be spent efficiently to provide services to citizens and businesses. The General Fund finances the regular day-to-day operations of the County.

2018 Where the Money Goes



FUND BALANCE (General Fund)

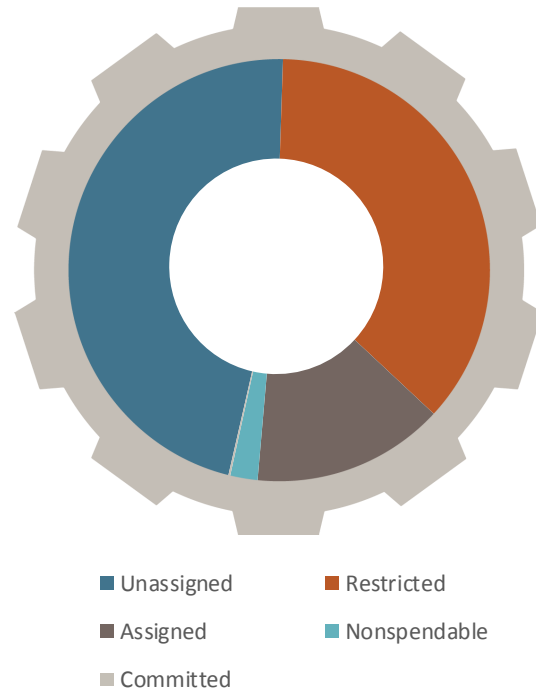
Fund Balance is the difference between what is owned (assets) and what is owed (liabilities).

At June 30, 2018, the ending fund balance of the General Fund was \$84.1M.

Of this fund balance, \$39.5M is available for spending at the Board's discretion (referred to as unassigned fund balance.) The Board of Commissioners have determined that the County should maintain an available fund balance of at least 16% of general fund expenditures. This equates to 2 months of operating expenditures in case of unforeseen needs or opportunities, in addition to meeting the cash flow needs of the County. The County has consistently exceeded this goal.

For FY18, the County has unassigned fund balance of 38.25% of general fund expenditures.

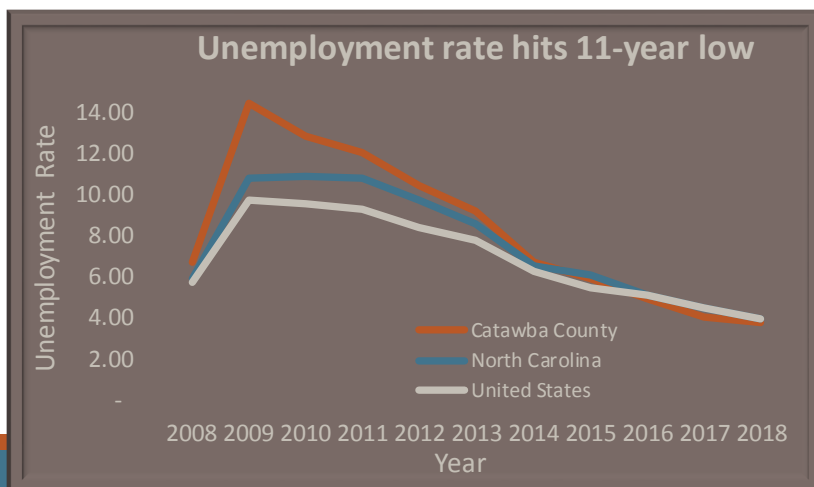
2018 Fund Balance



ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

LOCAL ECONOMY

Catawba County's unemployment rate, 3.8% for the June 2018, has continued to decline. Recently released unemployment figures for August 2018 show a continued decrease in Catawba County, that remains below the State of North Carolina and the US, both at 3.9%. This unemployment rate is among the lowest in North Carolina, with only 8 of 100 counties having a lower rate, and is now 0.1% below the State and national unemployment rates.



Economic Development

Catawba County collaborates with the private sector, municipalities and the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to attract new business, development and jobs. In the past year, the County has added more than \$344.6 million in new investment and 220 new jobs. The County continues to actively recruit and attract targeted national and international companies with a focus on higher-wage industries like information, Emerging & Alternative Energy, and Advanced Manufacturing.

2018 Top 10 Employers

- Catawba County Schools
- Catawba Valley Medical Center
- GKN Driveline Newton
- Corning Optical Communications
- CommScope, Inc.
- Catawba County Government
- DPL Frye Regional Medical Center, LLC
- Wal-Mart Associates
- Target Stores Div.
- Catawba Valley Community College



Apple, Inc. plans to invest another \$1 billion in its data center site in Maiden. To date, Apple has added over \$4 billion to the County's tax base.



Sutter Street Mfg. **Sutter Street Manufacturing**, announced it would invest \$19.2 million and add 72 new jobs to upgrade its facilities in Claremont.



Prysmian Group announced it would invest another \$53.48M and 50 jobs. This marks the company's third expansion within three years.



Room & Board announced plans to construct a new 250,000 sq. ft. warehouse & distribution center in Newton, investing \$122.87M and adding 13 new jobs.



Bassett Furniture announced plans to manufacture a new line of outdoor furniture investing \$400,000 and creating 40 new jobs.



Bradington Young announced an expansion of its Hickory facility that would create 17 new jobs and invest \$4M over the next 4 years.



Corning Optical Communications opened a new manufacturing facility in Newton that will create 210 new jobs and result in a \$67M investment.

Deliberately Driving Workforce Development

While Catawba County's economy is built upon a large industrial base with over 29% of its workforce in manufacturing. Growth in five key sectors has resulted in a more balanced economic composition today than what existed a decade ago. From 2007 through 2017, the following sectors have experienced double-digit employment growth, collectively comprising 15% of the total economy.

- Professional, Scientific, Technical Services
- Administrative, Support, & Waste Mgmt. and Remediation Services
- Wholesale Trade

The growth of these sectors represents a 24.1% increase from 2007 employment levels.

Further, the County has been a leader in the manufacture and development of fiber optics and telecommunication equipment, producing approximately 50% of the world's supply of fiber optic cable and still providing significant opportunities for County residents.

Building upon the core strengths of the local economy, Catawba County has made significant strides in preparing its workforce with the skills to meet current

and future labor needs. Cross sector partnerships between local governments, the business community, and public education institutions have institutionalized a full-spectrum approach to align local talent with available jobs.

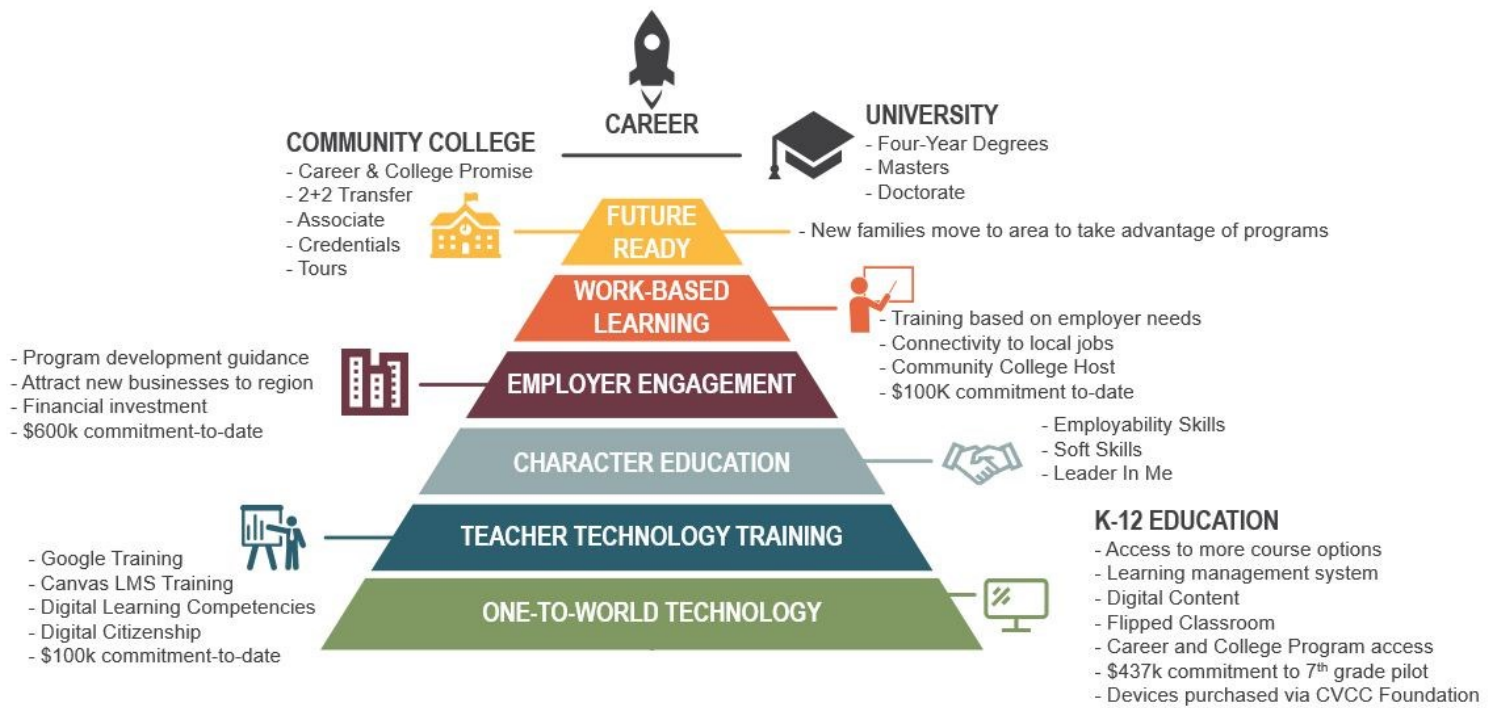
Several key initiatives have emerged from the strategic plan implemented in 2017.

K-64

K-64 is a systemic approach to shaping future careers and meeting workforce demands by connecting students to real world careers and related curriculum choices from early on as well as empowering adults to enhance employability in a dynamic work environment.



The long-term goal of the K-64 initiative is to create a seamless, demand-driven, replicable education system that consistently cultivates a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce ready to fill local jobs and help drive the economy. On January 17, 2017, the Catawba County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution to form K-64 and approve its bylaws. In May 2017, the initiative's governing board was formed and work on building this innovative initiative began.



Catawba County Promise

In September 2018, Lenoir-Rhyne University announced an innovative, new program to provide a minimum of 50 percent discount off tuition for any first-year undergraduate student with a 3.5 or higher high school GPA who is a Catawba County resident or to a transfer undergraduate student from Catawba County with more than 30 attempted hours from an accredited college and 3.5 GPA.

County Driven Economic Development

Trivium Corporate Center

Trivium Corporate Center is a 270-acre Class A Business Park being developed jointly by Catawba County and the City of Hickory.

The Park is being developed incrementally over time in an effort to create job opportunities in advanced light manufacturing facilities, technical operations, and corporate headquarters. The Fiscal Year 2018/19 budget commits an additional \$2.7 million for a total of \$3.25 million towards development of the

Park. The vision is to have amenities such as community walking/cycling trails, community gardens, silos, and open green space to accentuate the site's character, and to appeal to business prospects in a corporate, up-scale environment where light manufacturing, engineering, and innovation co-exist and augment the greater community.

Ground was broken on the park in May 2018 and improvements have begun, including extension of the sewer line into the park, a paved entryway, and landscaping. The first tenant in the park was named in August 2018 when Corning announced plans to build a new cable manufacturing facility intending to invest \$60 million in this location and create approximately 110 jobs over the next five years.





Strong Medical & Healthcare Presence

Well positioned to meet the future medical and health care needs of its citizens, the County is home to a prospering medical and healthcare community and two large medical centers.

Catawba Valley Medical Center (CVMC) is the largest not-for-profit community hospital in the region and the County's second largest employer. While technically owned by Catawba County, CVMC is completely self-supporting.

Based on the quality and consistency of medical care provided by the facility, the medical center has received numerous awards over the past few years:

- Comprehensive Center for Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery from the American College of Surgeons (2016)
- The Joint Commission Top Performer Quality Measures in Heart Attack, Pneumonia, Surgical Care, Stroke and Perinatal Care
- A 2016 Premier QUEST award winner from high-value healthcare
- Women's Choice Award - Best 100 Hospitals for Patient Experience (each year from 2012-2016)

Frye Regional Medical Center, a Duke LifePoint Hospital, is a 355-bed acute care hospital and com-

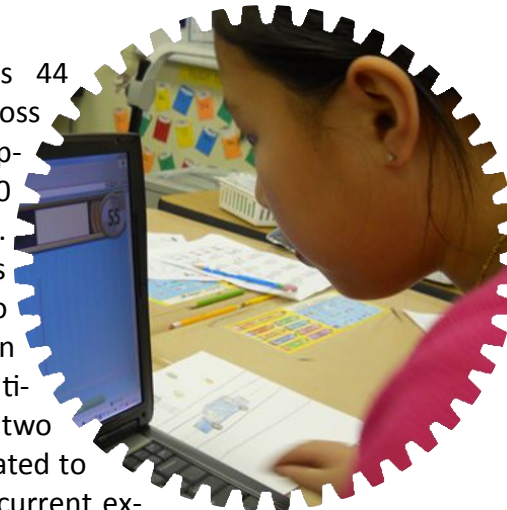
prehensive healthcare system that has been serving the Catawba Valley region since 1911.

Education

Catawba County has 44 public schools across three systems with approximately 23,000 combined students. The County continues funding initiatives to improve the education attainment of its citizens. Over the next two years, \$1.3M is dedicated to K-64, 2.6% per pupil current expense increase for the three public school systems, and a 4.8% increase in funding to the community college. Additionally the budget funds \$5.94M in school's annual capital needs and plans for up to \$9.26M in projects in the last year of a four-year construction funding cycle.

Results of these efforts are paying off with all three public school districts achieving above average measurable objectives.

For 2017, the average 4-year graduation rate for the three systems combined, increased to over 90 percent, exceeding the statewide rate of 86.5 percent. Individually, **Newton-Conover City Schools** had one of the highest graduation rates in the State at 94 percent. **Catawba County School's** rate was over 91 percent while **Hickory Public School's** was over 85 percent.



Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC), offers over 60 programs of study with one and two-year degree programs, a two-year college transfer program, and continuing education classes. CVCC was recognized as 1 of only 4 of the 58 community colleges in the State to achieve Excellence Level on 4 or more of the 8 performance measures for student success.

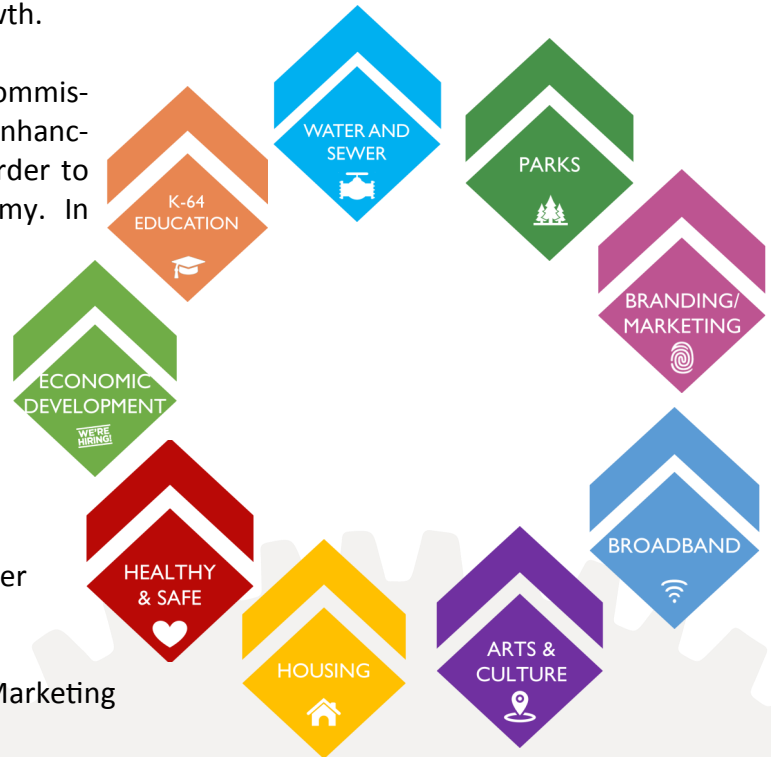
LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

Catawba County's economy continues to grow as reflected in strong retail sales activity, increasing building permit activity, business investment, and the County's low unemployment rate, the County is taking deliberate steps to accelerate and reinforce this economic growth.

Over the course of the past year, the Board of Commissioners led a strategic planning process aimed at enhancing and promoting the County's quality of life in order to attract working-age families and to grow the economy. In the coming years, the County will continue to focus on anticipating future service pressures and delivering responsive services to the community.

The strategic plan invests in services and infrastructure related to 10 major areas as well as general service needs.

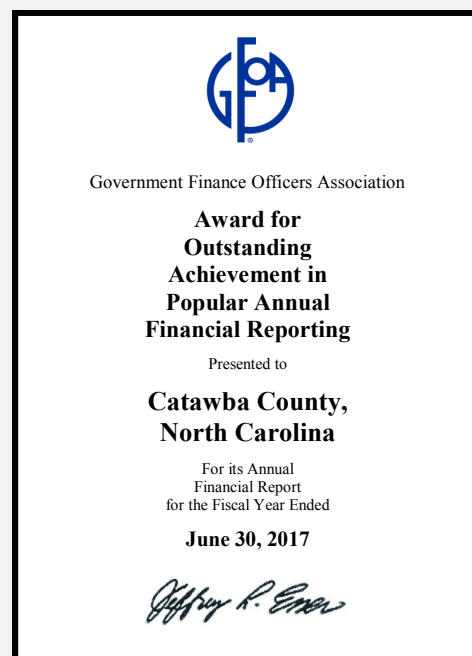
- Education (K-64)
- Economic Development
- Health & Safety
- Housing
- Arts & Culture
- Water & Sewer
- Parks
- Broadband
- Branding & Marketing



AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Catawba County is known across the nation as the home of an innovative county government. Our innovation is reflected in numerous awards. These awards are won in completion with thousands of other outstanding programs across the state and nation. Here are several of the most significant awards for FY2018.

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada has give an **Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting** to Catawba County for is Annual Financial Highlights report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017. This is a prestigious national award recognizing conformance with the highest standards for preparation of state and local government popular reports. Catawba County has received this award for the past ten years.

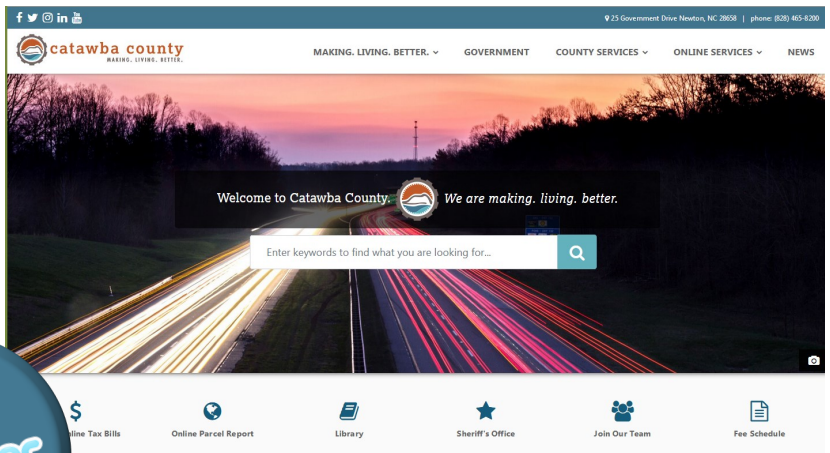


The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada presented the Finance Office the **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting** for the creation of an easily readable and understandable comprehensive annual financial report covering all funds and financial transactions. This is the 36th consecutive year in which Catawba County has won the award.



The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada presented the Budget Office the **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award** for the development of an easily understood budget document which can be used by other government units or the average citizen. This is the 29th consecutive year in which Catawba County has won the award.

The County's website is an excellent source for information about County policies, services and events 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Find information on employment opportunities, community events, Board of Commissioner agendas, meeting hours, tax information and much more.



Logon to take advantage of many online services:

- Pay a tax bill
- Search the County library catalog
- Pay permit fee
- Review your property information
- Sign up for community alert system
- Use the online deed search
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Finance Department

For more information on financial matters of Catawba County, please call the Finance Department at (828) 465-8210.



About the Cover

In early 2018, Catawba County began rolling out a new community brand platform: *Making. Living. Better.* Prior to then, Catawba County government had not focused on community branding or marketing as part of its communications efforts—so why branding, and why now?

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners designated branding and marketing as one of the eight critical action areas in its strategic plan, which is aimed at increasing population and economic growth throughout the county.

The County recognized that significant efforts to promote our community have been in motion for many years—from the Hickory Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau's longtime destination marketing strategies to the City of Hickory's successful *Life. Well Crafted.* campaign. However, in order to be a good partner in these efforts, the County need to play a more active role.

To get started, the County worked with a national community branding firm to develop the County's first brand platform. The process involved several months of research that included County tours, interviews, focus groups, surveys of Catawba County, Charlotte and Asheville residents, and discussions with statewide influencers in the areas of economic development, tourism, and education.

The goal of the research was to identify the assets that make Catawba County both appealing and unique. Some of the assets identified through the research include the County's convenient and accessible geographic location, high quality of life, respected manufacturing legacy, beautiful outdoors, kind and welcoming people, reputation as makers and doers, and collaborative spirit.

The research served as the foundation for a creative process that culminated in the development of a tagline and logo to help define the County's identity and story: *Making. Living. Better.*

- *Making* refers to the community's legacy as makers and doers: we make things happen.
- *Living* refers to quality of life: we enjoy our location, our amenities, and our people.
- *Better* refers to the community's 'can do' spirit; we work together to make a difference.

That story is enhanced by a graphic logo that visually represents many of these same themes:

- The *outer circle* resembles a gear, which symbolized Catawba County's legacy as makers and doers.
- The *inner circle* resembles a second gear, because two gears working together drive things forward. This represents Catawba County's collaborative spirit.
- The *nature scene*, with the foothills and the river, creates a sense of place for the County and symbolized its good quality of life.
- The *foothill* is an outline of Bakers Mountain, the highest and most visible peak in the County, and the *water* represents the Catawba River—two natural assets that speak to the County's remarkable outdoors.

Catawba County, North Carolina
Popular Annual Financial Report
Year Ended June 30, 2018



Prepared by Catawba County Finance Department