

**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 13, 2023**

**MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA**  
**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met in Budget/Public Policy Session in Conference Center Room 267 on the 2nd floor of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center located at 600 East Fourth Street, Charlotte, North Carolina at 2:33 p.m. on Tuesday, June 13, 2023.

**ATTENDANCE**

**Present:** Chair George Dunlap, Vice Chair Elaine Powell,  
and Commissioners Leigh Altman, Patricia “Pat” Cotham,  
Mark Jerrell, Vilma D. Leake, Laura J Meier,  
and Susan Rodriguez-McDowell  
County Manager Dena R. Diorio  
County Attorney Tyrone C. Wade  
Clerk to the Board Kristine M. Smith

**Absent:** Commissioner Arthur Griffin

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dunlap, followed by introductions and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**23-0414 PARK AND RECREATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS FY24-28**

The Board reviewed the process used to prioritize Park and Recreation projects for the FY24 - FY28 Capital Improvement Plan.

Bert Lynn, Division Director, Capital Planning - Park and Recreation Department made the presentation.

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*Background: This presentation will provide additional information regarding the process used to prioritize Park and Recreation projects for the FY 24-28 Capital Improvement Plan. Staff will discuss the process undertaken by the Park and Recreation Department to prioritize park projects, the broader evaluation of proposed projects, and the application of input used to finalize Capital Improvement Plan projects.*



## Priorities

### Ranking Criteria

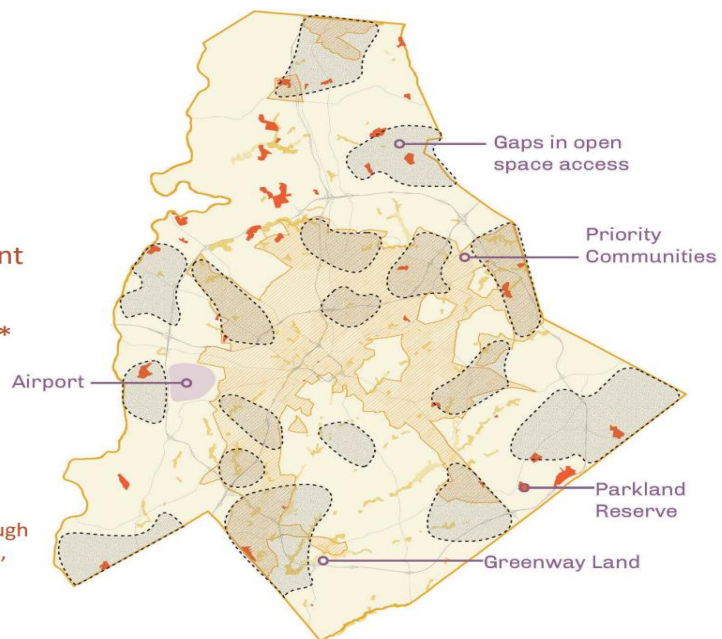
- Previously unfunded CIP requests
- Current project budget shortfalls
- Current, delayed CIP projects
- Partnership projects
- Meck Playbook recommendations
- Public Engagement
  - Meck Playbook engagement
  - CIP public meetings and website
- Public Health priorities



## Project Selection

- Meck Playbook
  - Equity analysis
    - Priority Communities
    - Gap Areas
  - Facility inventory/assessment
- Project types
  - Parks and Nature Preserves\*
  - Greenway Trails
  - Facilities
  - Amenities and Connections

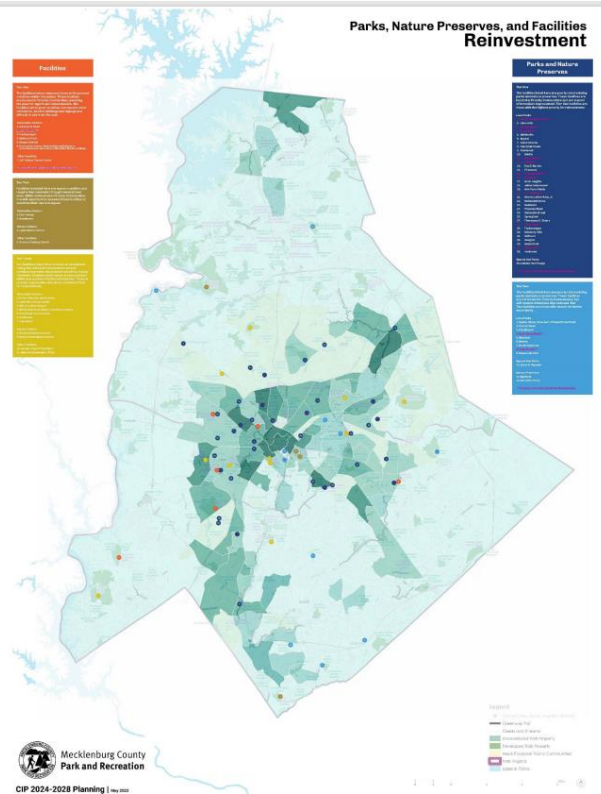
\*Proposed Projects exclude Tier One projects that were already funded through the Equity Parks Initiative (10), ARPA (4), and/or Capital Reserve funding (10)





## Park and Facility Priorities

- Public Health, Built Environment and Active Living Team
- Public Health Assessment
  - Health
    - Chronic Disease Prevalence
  - Connectedness
    - Open space, walk/bike friendliness
  - Crime
    - Property and violent crime, disorder-related and nuisance calls



## Greenway Priorities

- Priority greenway trail projects:
  - Connect to existing trails and destinations
  - Require less land acquisition
  - Serve Priority Communities
  - Fill gaps to parks and facilities
  - Expand partner project opportunities



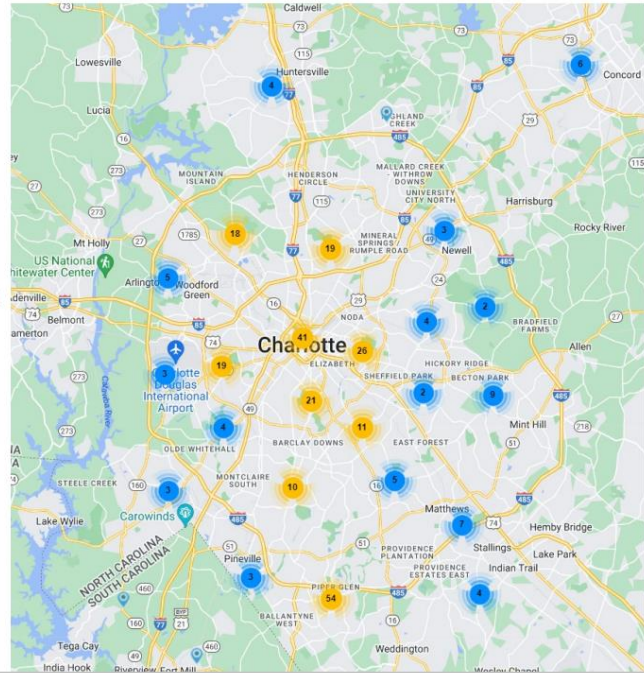
## Amenity and Connection Priorities

### Amenities

- Top amenities from Meck Playbook:
  - Dog parks
  - Pickleball courts
  - Spraygrounds
  - Skate parks
- Locate in existing parks
- Meets local demand and aligns with national trends

### Connections

- Documented need by residents
- Expands access to existing parks and greenway trails
  - Bike/ped access
  - Accessible trails



## Development of County-Wide CIP

- Received Project Funding Requests (Ranking / Cost / Timing)
  - AFM
  - Park & Rec
  - CPCC
  - Library
  - CMS
- Intake Process to Calculate Escalated Costs
- Internal Committee Scoring / Evaluation
- Citizens Capital Budget Advisory Committee (CCBAC) Evaluation
- County Executive Team Input
- Preliminary Short List for Funding
- Funding Scenarios

## Executive Team Review

County Manager & Deputy County Managers developed a list of projects to be recommended for funding upon evaluation of factors including the following:

- Project ranking by department
- Internal committee scoring
- CCBAC input
- Presentations by project submitters
- Other knowledge of community needs
- Funding capacity constraints

None of these factors were the sole determinant of final recommendation

### Proposed FY 24-28 CIP 38 Projects

Parks and Nature Preserves (14)

- Reinvestment
- Investment

Greenway Trails (11)

- Reinvestment
- Investment

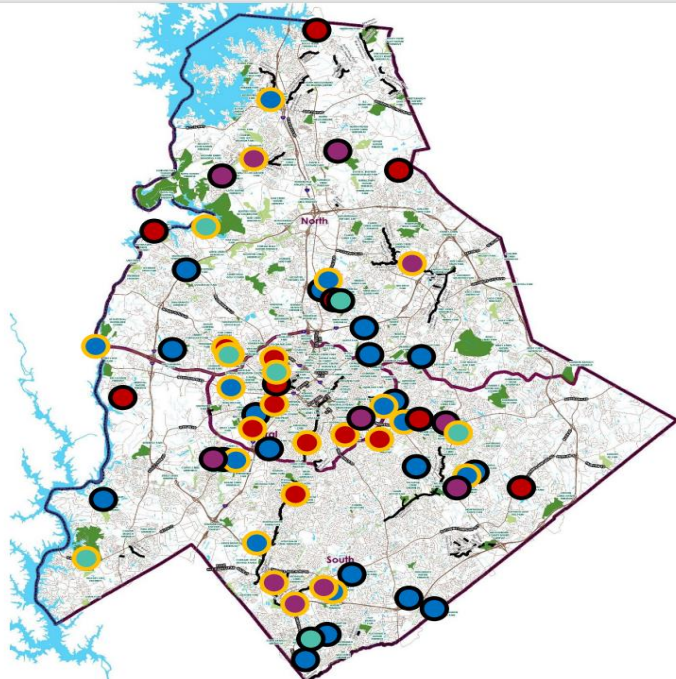
Facilities (7)

- Reinvestment
- Investment

Other Projects (6)

- Connections
- Park Amenities

Proposed project list also includes 10M each year plus escalation for land acquisition.





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**Comments**

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked to explain the rankings of projects. Mr. Lynn said was only one portion of the overall input into which projects were funded. He said in Late October the made their initial submittal and then met with CCBAC where they asked about specific projects. He said some of what they were looking at was the length of some of the segments that were prioritized, which was different from what Park & Rec looked at. He said they filled out an intake form with a number of different criteria. he said that information is further distilled by finance and others kind of as they evaluate CIP projects as a whole.

Chair Dunlap said they rank the projects it's up to the Board to approve and what they present to the Board was merely a ranking and that ranking is based on all the information that was provided. The CCBAC, Park and Rec and staff gives input and gives the Board a final ranking based on that input. He said when it comes to the Board, it can either adopt and accept the recommendations or change something.

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Commissioner Leake said her concerns were about the projects that were submitted and what the needs were. She said communities need different things and in one of the meetings she sat in, nothing was set aside for seniors. She said they needed to be aware of the culture of the community. She asked that they specify the difference between a playground and a park.

Commissioner Jerrell asked Mr. Boyd, when looking at the evaluation process and looking at all those factors that go into the final outcome or the final recommendation regarding funding capacity constraints, if he could give some tangible examples of how that played in and how that was weighted. He said it would be helpful to get tangible examples of how you would look at that to make those final recommendations. *Mr. Boyd said if they looked at the rankings in AFM for county facilities, a third CRC was a high recommendation that we weren't able to fund because it was \$264,000,000. He said if the highest-ranking projects have the highest costs, they may not be able to fit it in.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked Mr. Lynn, regarding greenway projects, how they looked at the intra-connected relationships when each department made their presentations, i.e., Health and Human Services Park and Rec. He asked if there was an evaluation looked at the connectivity with respect to Greenways and says this would be made a high priority because it would connect someone to the CRC. He asked how that would be factored in. Mr. Lynn referred to the presentation and said a CRC Recreation Center, library, schools, etc. were the types of connections that they wanted to make if able to do that under a major roadway or a railway or another kind of transportation infrastructure that served as a barrier between one neighborhood and another.

Commissioner Altman said she received feedback that stated the finance team allowed multiple Greenway projects to jump ahead of higher-ranked projects already, that Greenway projects in South Charlotte near the bottom of the rank list were being funded, and higher-ranked projects in West Charlotte, namely two Irwin Creek Greenway projects were not. It further stated that Park and Rec used an equity lens when the finance team did not. Mr. Lynn said there were many factors, such as new greenways versus existing greenways. He said the greenways in the South part of the county are two highly used existing greenways that greenway operations staff continually had to make repairs to some of the structures and, therefore, were the reason those were ticked up toward the top. He said they also evaluated the projects from a safety standpoint.

Commissioner Altman asked why greenways were bumped and taken off the list. Mr. Lynn said those greenways were on the list that they shared. He said they spoke with other groups evaluating the projects, specifically CCBAC, who was looking at it from a different perspective than Park & Rec when ranking projects.



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Commissioner Altman said she questioned if the CCBAC's opinion should get equal weight as the Park & Rec. She said as a Board member she was not comfortable taking the projects out of order because she didn't have the level of intimate knowledge to do it in a principled way.

County Manager Diorio said the CCBAC was the Board's Advisory Board to whom it made the appointments. She said this was the process they always followed. She said the criteria that the finance team used was to ensure every project was looked at through the same lens in the same way. She said the only group that didn't go through that process was CMS.

Commissioner Meier asked for clarification regarding land acquisition funding which County Manager Diorio and Mr. Boyd answered.

Vice Chair Powell said it was not a perfect process. Appreciated the presenter.

Chair Dunlap said the Board made it a priority to allow the CCBAC to operate differently than any other advocacy group. Their interaction should be with the Board and not the staff. Everyone looks at it from a different lens.

Chair Dunlap asked how did having land acquisition affect the County's ability to fund other things out of the operating budget. County Manager Diorio said they were using fund balance to pay for land acquisition and if they continued to draw down on Fund Balance, they wouldn't have money available to buy land in the future or do the other things the fund balance was used for and would provide less flexibility in the event they needed to use any for the operating budget if there was a crisis.

County Manager Diorio and Mr. Boyd explained how land acquisition was being funded out of fund balance and the operating budget.

## **23-0411      DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES FY2024 HOMES PROGRAM**

The Board received a presentation highlighting the FY2024 Helping Out Mecklenburg's homeowners with Economic Support (HOMES) grant program budget request.





*Background: The Department of Community Resources (DCR) budget request for the HOMES Program was approved in the FY2024 Annual Budget Ordinance. Department director will present the HOMES Program to the Board of County Commissioners. The DCR HOMES Program includes a partnership with the City of Charlotte. This program aligns with the Board Priority of Housing Insecurity.*


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Yulonda Griffin, Department Director, gave the presentation.



## Presentation Overview

-  PROGRAM SUMMARY
-  FY24 FUNDING & ELIGIBILITY
-  FY23 UPDATE
-  FY24 PROJECTIONS & STRATEGIES

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Dena Diorio  
Mecklenburg County Manager

Anthony Trotman  
Deputy County Manager

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## HOMES Program Summary


- Helps low-to-moderate income homeowners reduce the cost of owning their homes
- Program initiated in FY21 at Office of the Tax Collector
  - Transferred to Department of Community Resources in FY22
- **FY24 program year:** Jul. 1 - Nov. 17, 2023

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Mecklenburg County Manager

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## FY24 Funding



<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$13,842,857</b>
Mecklenburg County	\$9,690,000
City of Charlotte*	\$4,152,857

\*Additional funds available to City of Charlotte residents through City-County partnership



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## Application Process



Applications submitted via email, mail, drop-box, or online



Eligibility based on residency, tax status, income, and other program considerations



Grants paid to the Mecklenburg County Tax Collector in the order received until funds are exhausted



Credit of 25% of the County property tax amount, not to exceed \$426\* plus proposed City benefit

\*FY24 calculation, increased from \$340 in prior years



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## FY24 Eligibility Requirements\*

- **Residency:** Homeowners must have lived in the home for at least the past three years, and it is currently their primary residence
- **Tax Status:** No more than one delinquent tax bill in the last three years
- **Total Household income:** Must not exceed 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI)

**2023 AMI Limits, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

# of Persons in Family	1	2	3	4
To qualify, household income must not exceed:	\$55,850	\$63,800	\$71,800	\$79,750

**\*Estimated total eligible households: 72,963**



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## Property Tax Relief Programs

**HOMES PARTICIPANTS MUST NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS**

- **Homestead Elderly or Disabled**
  - At least 65 or permanently disabled
  - Primary residence
  - Name on Deed
  - Income does not exceed \$33,800
  - Exclusion of \$25,000 or 50% of taxable residence value (whichever is greater)
- **Disabled Veteran Homestead Exclusion**
  - No age requirements
  - Property owned by a veteran or surviving spouse
  - Veteran must be service-connected disabled
  - Excludes first \$45,000 of assessed value from property taxes

- **Circuit Breaker Tax Deferral – Elderly or Disabled**
  - Must be 65 or permanently disabled
  - Income does not exceed \$50,700
  - Owned and occupied residence for at least 5 years
  - Less than \$33,800 – 4% Property Tax Deferral
  - \$33,800 - \$50,700 – 5% Property Tax Deferral
- **Present-Use Value**
  - Commercial producer of agricultural, horticultural, or forest products
  - Value property at present use, rather than full market value



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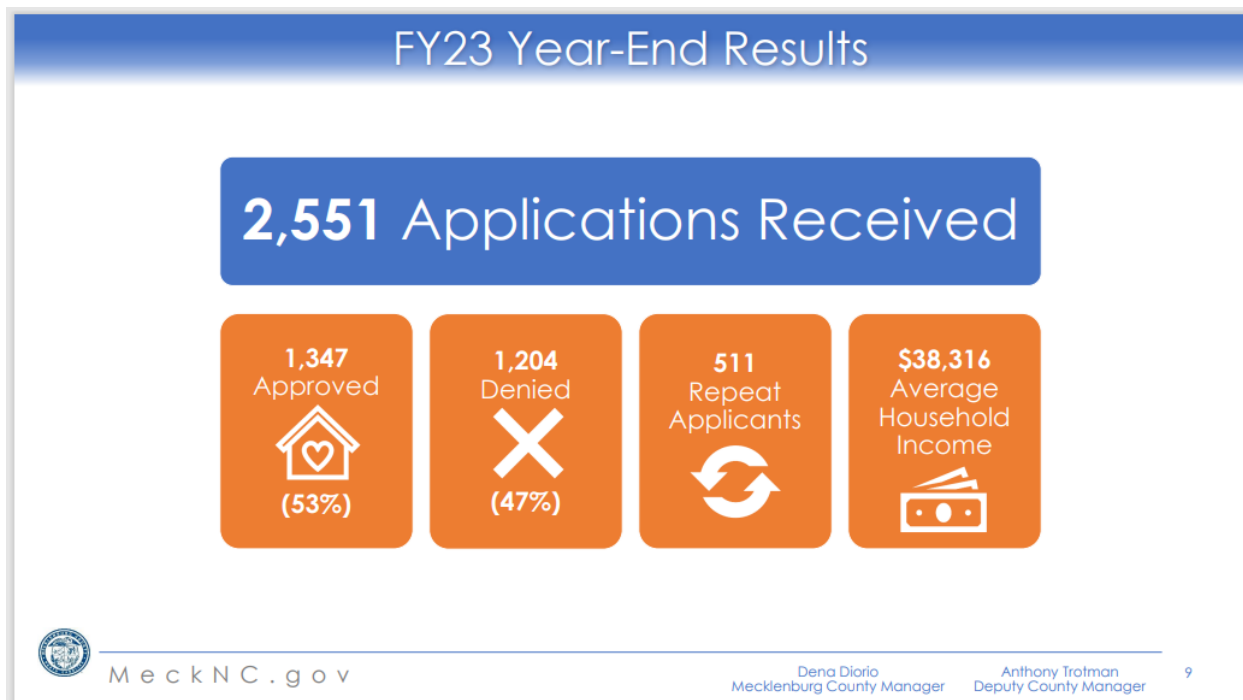
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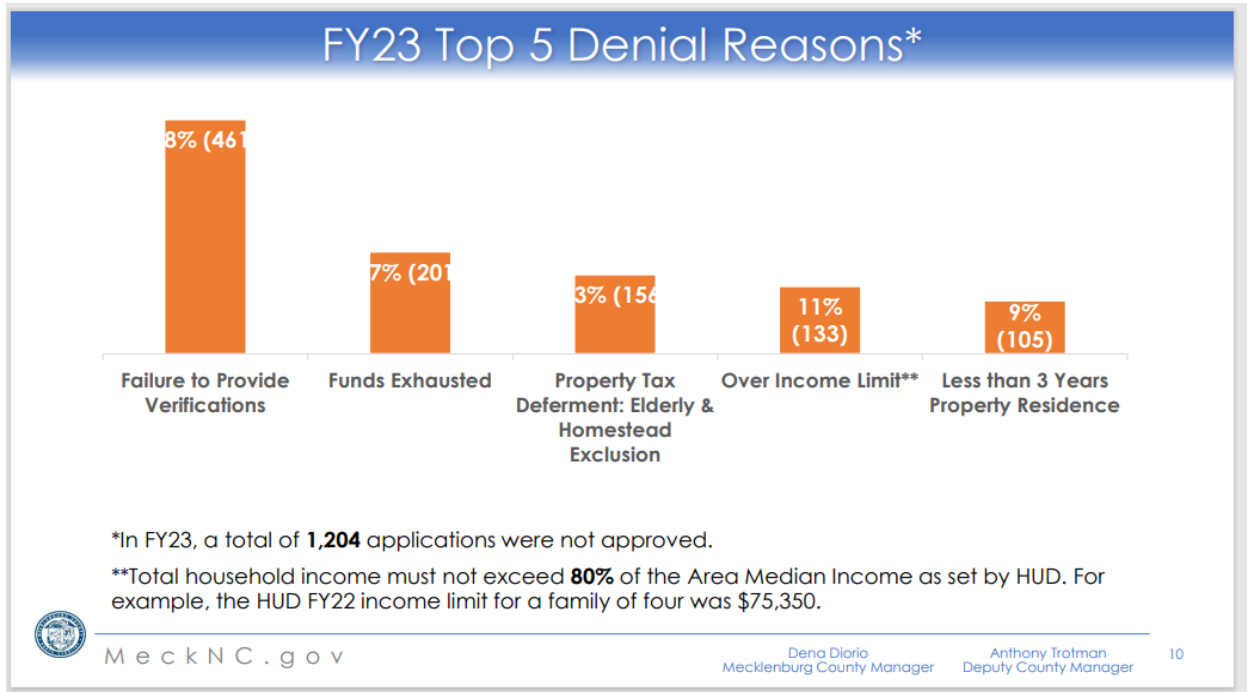
FY21-FY23 Comparison			
Metric	FY21	FY22	FY23
# Applications Received	677	1,122	2,551
# Applications Approved	513	726	1,347
% Applications Approved	76%	65%	53%
Total Grant Amount Applied	\$135,861	\$186,108	\$358,037
Average Grant Award	\$265	\$256	\$266


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### FY24 Projected Grant Awards

Maximum County Grant Award	\$426*
Maximum City Grant Award (proposed)	\$234*
Estimated % Payout	78%
Estimated Average County Grant Award	\$332
Estimated Average City Grant Award	\$183
<b>Total Estimated Average Grant Award</b>	<b>\$515**</b>
<b>Estimated Households Served</b>	<b>25,593</b>

\***Calculation:** 2024 median household property value (\$360,000) x maximum grant award (25%) x current tax rate.

\*\***Average Grant Award:** Award would cover the anticipated increase in taxes due to revaluation and a 1.6 cent tax rate increase over the revenue neutral rate.

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## FY24 Initiatives & Strategies



### Preparations

Onboard & train additional full-time and temp staff

Mass mailings of HOMES flyers in property tax bills



### Enhance Media Plan

Radio & print ads  
Social media

Online/email ads  
Targeted audience/ZIP codes



### Increase Community Outreach

Leverage DCR partners & community-based organizations

Establish grassroots team  
Partnership with City of Charlotte



### Enhance Application & Approval Processes

Implement new software for data management & reporting

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## How to Apply for the HOMES Program



Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Mecklenburg County residents can apply for HOMES via the following ways:

- An online application can be found and submitted on the HOMES webpage at [www.mecknc.gov/4homes](http://www.mecknc.gov/4homes).
- A fillable and printable application can be found on the same webpage. Completed paper applications can be mailed to:

**Department of Community Resources**

3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 1000  
Charlotte, N.C. 28208

- Pick up a paper application from

**Department of Community Resources at:**

3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 1000  
Charlotte, N.C. 28208

**County Assessor's Office located at:**

3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 3500  
Charlotte, N.C. 28208

- Call 980-314-HOME (4663) to request an application or assistance with the process or email [4homes@mecknc.gov](mailto:4homes@mecknc.gov).



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Dena Diorio  
Mecklenburg County Manager

Anthony Trolman  
Deputy County Manager

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### **Comments**

Commissioner Leake said a town hall meeting will take place in August in District 2 concerning the HOMES program. She thanked Ms. Griffin.

Commissioner Altman said no one should be forced out of their home because they can't pay their property tax. She thanked the previous Board and the County Manager for making it happen.

Commissioner Jerrell thanked the county manager for expanding the program as it is critical. He said this was a great opportunity to impact many people. He said the 72,000 represented individuals who were potentially teetering on the border of economic mobility and possibly moving back into a space they tried so hard to climb out of.

Commissioner Jerrell said paper applications are very important. He asked for consideration in leveraging recreation centers with the paper applications and maybe standalone cardboard kiosks where the information could be filled out and dropped off right there. Maybe a standalone kiosk?



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Commissioner Jerrell asked if the information could be mailed out.

Commissioner Jerrell asked if the City and County grants would be approved at the same time. *Ms. Griffin said yes, it would be a single process as long as they are within the city limits.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked if the County was still routing those who didn't qualify to go through a different program if eligible. *Ms. Griffin said yes, they were working on streamlining that process.*

Commissioner Jerrell asked about the max of \$426. He said he would like to understand if the amount was derived based on the median percent of increase and if the amount commiserates with the increases. *DCR Sr. Business Manager Lonnie Parker answered that they had to project the size of the household onto the total population of the incomes of owner-occupied homes. He said this year they modified the application so they could obtain household size and age limits. He said next year they would be able to hon in on the population that was receiving the grants and how much. He said there was a 20-25% variance of the people who would receive the grant that lived outside the city limits.*

Commissioner Meier asked, regarding seniors on a fixed income, if they were penalized for applying more than once. *Ms. Griffin said no, that they could receive for multiple years.*

Commissioner Meier asked if the grant came as a check or if the bill was reduced. *Ms. Griffin said the bill was reduced and that they would receive a notification.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell said there was a huge increase in the number of applications received but noticed the downward trend on approved applications and asked if there was a reason for that. *Ms. Griffin said they started marking the program more and may have individuals applying for the program who may not have been eligible.*

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked about the 201 people who may have been eligible but were turned away because the funds were exhausted. County Manager Diorio said they would continue to track, and if they felt like they were running out of money and there were still more people who were eligible and apply, they could come back and see if the Board would be interested in appropriating additional funds.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked Ms. Griffin to explain why an individual couldn't have more than one delinquent tax bill in the last three years. *Ms. Griffin said the HOMES program is about assisting individuals with remaining in their homes, and it would just pay a portion of their*

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bills for that particular year. She said if an individual had multiple years of delinquency, they would be challenged to pay all those delinquent years. She said they wouldn't necessarily want to spend those funds if an individual would not be able to remain in their home because they would still be delinquent even with those funds and therefore those funds may be able to assist someone else with remaining in their home.

Vice Chair Powell asked if the funds didn't all get used if they were still protected and stayed within the program. *Ms. Griffin said yes, they would request a carryover of funds.*

Commissioner Powell commented on the huge increase from last year to this year of the number of people they were able to serve. She thanked Ms. Griffin for all her work.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked if they would change their criteria to exhaust the funds. Ms. Griffin said they would look at the program and see why they weren't exhausting the funds then work with the Deputy County Manager and the County Manager and come up with a recommendation.

Deputy County Manager Trotman said the program had to be for low-income individuals. He said they used the HUD definition of what low income is, and if they were above that criteria they would be out of compliance with the policies and governance program.

Chair Dunlap said it was important to note that the HOMES program deadline was November 17<sup>th</sup>, but a lot of taxpayers pay on July 1 or at the end of the year. He said it was also important to emphasize the grants were on a first come first serve basis and to state what the criteria was up front to qualify for grants.

Ms. Griffin said if someone were eligible for one of those other programs, they would refer them to those other programs. She said the tax bill didn't have to be paid when applying for the HOMES program. Ms. Griffin said people should apply for the grant before paying their taxes because if qualified the grant would be deducted from their bill.

Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell asked, about qualifications for the other programs, what if they would have received more in the HOMES program than in the other programs. *Ms. Griffin said that is how the policy was set up: if they were eligible for the North Carolina State programs, they would go over to those programs instead of the HOMES program.*

Commissioner Jerrell said the HOMES program was set up for those who didn't qualify for those other programs.

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Commissioner Meier asked if they advised them to go through the other programs. *Ms. Griffin said yes it was part of their process that they were streamlining with the County Assessor's Office.*

**23-0020      COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

Commissioners shared information of their choosing within the guidelines as established by the Board, which included, but not limited to, past and/or upcoming events.

Under Commissioner Reports the CCBAC was discussed. Chair Dunlap asked staff to bring back a recommendation to address advisory board concerns.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Commissioner Leake, seconded by Commissioner Rodriguez-McDowell, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

With no further business to come before the Board, Chair Dunlap declared the meeting adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

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Kristine M. Smith, Clerk to the Board

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George Dunlap, Chair