

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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BILL MOYER
Chairman
CHARLIE MESSER
Vice-Chairman

CHUCK MCGRADY
MARK WILLIAMS
LARRY YOUNG

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF FOREST RESOURCES B.R.I.D.G.E. AND AVIATION PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the County Commissioners to fulfill its obligation to the citizens to provide fire protection, to include Wildland Fire Protection, through local Fire and Rescue Departments and the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources; and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources is charged by law to: detect and suppress all wildfires on any state and private owned lands, accomplished by a partnership between Henderson County and the NC Forest Service. The State provides resources such as: specially trained fire crews (B.R.I.D.G.E. Program – Building, Rehabilitation, Instructing, Developing, Growing and Employing), aircraft, heavy equipment and command staff with support from County Fire and Rescue Departments; and

WHEREAS, recent developments in the North Carolina General Assembly have indicated possible budget cuts resulting in the loss of the B.R.I.D.G.E. program and equipment allocations including aircraft to Western North Carolina;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Henderson County Board of Commissioners does hereby support the NC Division of Forest Resources B.R.I.D.G.E and Aviation programs to effectively control and suppress wildfires in Western North Carolina.

Adopted this 18th day of November, 2009.

WILLIAM L. MOYER, CHAIRMAN
HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

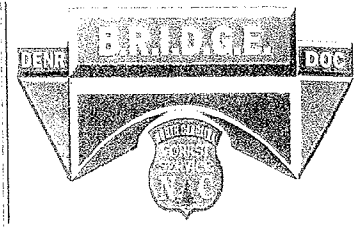
ATTEST:

TERESA L. WILSON, CLERK TO THE BOARD

**N.C. DIVISION OF FOREST RESOURCES
YOUNG OFFENDERS FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

B.R.I.D.G.E.

2161-B MOUNT HOME CHURCH ROAD
MORGANTON, NORTH CAROLINA 28655
TELEPHONE: (828) 438-6267 FAX: (828) 438-5579
06/30/09



FACT SHEET

WHAT: The Young Offenders Forest Conservation Program (B.R.I.D.G.E.), a cooperative effort between the N.C. Division of Forest Resources and the N.C. Division of Prisons

WHEN CREATED: 1986

WHO: Inmates age 18 – 25

INMATE ACTIVITIES: Forest Fire Fighting, Carpentry, Sign Making, Tree Planting, State Tree Nursery Work, Portable Sawmill Work, State Parks, Educational State Forest, Forestry Training Facility, Trail Building, Landscaping, Emergency Relief (i.e. Hurricanes, Ice Storms, Tornadoes, etc.), Assist Emergency Rescue Operations, N.C. Wildlife Special Projects, and Assist Local Government and Schools with Special Projects.

FACILITIES: Morganton, Burke County (84 inmates)

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS SINCE 1986: 4,042

NUMBER OF INMATE HOURS WORKED SINCE 1986: 2,135,052

TOTAL DOLLARS SAVED SINCE 1986: \$19,322,221
(based on \$9.05 pickup firefighter rate)

YOUNG OFFENDERS FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAM (BRIDGE) SAVINGS

FISCAL YR	INMATE MAN HOURS	PICKUP FIREFIGHTER COST @ 9.05/HR	SAVINGS
2007-2008	96,525 @ \$1/day	\$ 873,551.25	\$ 777,026.25
2008-2009	87,258 @ \$1/day	\$ 789,687.90	\$ 702,429.90

To replace the existing 14 BRIDGE crews, it would take a minimum of 3.5 20-man contract crews, at a 2008 daily rate of \$6,240, this **DAILY COST IS \$21,840.00.** (Also, each contract crew must remain in the same location as a unit, which may incur additional crews, whereas, each BRIDGE crew can be disbursed to various locations.

The 2008-09 decrease in inmate man-hours was due to staff deployment to Evans Road Fire, Eastern, NC.

Results of an informal BRIDGE program recidivism rate study showed only 7.3% of BRIDGE inmates returned to prison compared to the state average of 37.5%.

This low recidivism rate saved the taxpayers approximately 2.2 million dollars in inmate housing costs.

Since the program began, BRIDGE has also saved the state taxpayer more than 19 million dollars by working inmates over 2 million man hours.

Prior to fiscal year 2009-10, most of the substantial service contract savings completed by BRIDGE work orders had not been captured. Example of \$40,000 saved on one work order:

- NCFS Mt. Training Facility kitchen floor refinish
 - Contract Estimate \$50,000 vs. BRIDGE \$10,000 (materials/inmate labor)

***Man Hours Costs + Service Contract Expense + Reduced Recidivism
= A Substantial Savings to the Citizens of North Carolina.***

YOUNG OFFENDERS FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAM (BRIDGE)

THE GOVERNOR OF NORTH CAROLINA HAS PROPOSED TO ELIMINATE THE NORTH CAROLINA FOREST SERVICE YOUNG OFFENDERS FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAM THROUGH BUDGET CUTS.

Following the horrific fire season of 1985, that destroyed approximately 5,000 acres and 27 homes in a single Burke County fire, the North Carolina Division of Forest Resources and the North Carolina Division of Prisons collaborated to create the BRIDGE program as a way to increase the states' firefighting capabilities. In 1986, the NC General Assembly approved the funding for this program.

These inmate crews are a critical firefighting resource in all 32 counties of Western North Carolina. Request for crews on high fire danger days often exceed the capabilities of the programs' current fourteen (14) available crews. If the Division were to hire additional firefighters, to perform this job, the expense to the state would result in thousands of dollars a day. The daily cost of contract crew is \$6,240. This reduction in the number of crews will severely impact local Volunteer Fire Departments, who will be requesting additional time away from their place of employment to assist with suppression of wildfires.

During the day, these inmates work under the supervision of the Division of Forest Resources, performing jobs that range in scope from forest firefighting, emergency relief, (i.e. hurricanes, ice storms, floods, tornadoes, etc.) , emergency rescue operations, chain saw operation, tree planting, and a variety of other jobs. Inmates receive training in jobs ranging from landscaping to carpentry. The aforementioned jobs assist NC State Parks, NC Wildlife Resources Commission, US Forest Service, local Government agencies, and non-profit organizations. A total of 2,088,155 inmate work hours have been recorded through December 2008.

The job these young men perform not only saves North Carolina thousands of dollars a year, but more importantly teaches them self esteem, useful job skills, and work ethics which they can apply to the rest of their lives. Many inmates continue their education and/or work in the forestry related field upon their release from prison. Recently, a former program participant received his Associates Degree in Forestry from Haywood Community College and is currently perusing a position with the Division of Forest Resources.

**North Carolina Forest Service
Young Offenders Forest Conservation Program
(BRIDGE)**

Building Rehabilitating Instructing Developing Growing Employing

The BRIDGE Program is a cooperative effort between the NC Division of Forest Resources and the NC Division of Prisons based out of Western Youth Institution in Morganton, NC. In 1986, this program was funded by the NC General Assembly following a horrific fire season of 1985 that destroyed approximately 5,000 acres and 27 homes in a single Burke County fire. The primary goal of the program is to provide well-trained and equipped forest fire fighting crews ready for immediate dispatch. A second, but very important, goal is to develop strong work ethics and skills so inmates will become productive members of society upon release from prison.

BRIDGE also offers a variety of vocational opportunities, including forest management, trail construction and maintenance, painting and sandblasting, portable sawmill operation, masonry, and plumbing. Inmates can receive training certificates in wildland fire fighting, chainsaw operation, gator/ATV operation, forklift operator's license, and enroll in light construction courses offered through Western Piedmont Community College. BRIDGE can also be used as a job reference upon release from prison.

This program is an excellent example of an effective state government program, as it assists in fire control operations and various work projects for state, county, and local agencies, as well as non-profit organizations. **Only 7.3% of BRIDGE inmates returned to prison compared to the state average of 37.5%.** * This low recidivism rate saved the taxpayers approximately 2.2 million dollars in inmate housing costs. ** Since the program began, BRIDGE has also saved the state taxpayer more than 19 million dollars by working inmates over 2 million man hours. ***

The BRIDGE program has proven itself to be a success by supplying trained firefighters and rehabilitating inmates who have participated in this unique and rewarding program in addition to saving the taxpaying citizens of North Carolina millions of dollars per year. Below are two contract comparison examples:

- NCFS Mt. Training Facility kitchen floor refinish
 - Contract Estimate \$50,000 vs. BRIDGE \$10,000 (materials/inmate labor)
- NCFS Linville River Nursery lifting/packing White Pine and Fraser Fir Seedlings
 - Contract Estimate \$30,000 vs. BRIDGE \$426 (inmate labor)

For additional information or questions concerning the program, please feel free to contact Travis Ruff, Camp Director at (828) 438-6267.

* Results of an informal BRIDGE program recidivism rate study conducted by the NCFS in 2009 showed a 7.3% return rate. Recidivism rate of 37.5% for DOC can be found on the NCDOC website.

**Based on repeat offenders times the current annual cost of \$22,218 to house a minimum custody inmate.

***Comparing an inmate's wage with a pickup firefighters' current \$9.05 per hour wage. A contract rate would incorporate a substantial increase.

HENDERSON COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION

Jay Alley
President

Jimmy Womack
Vice President

What effects will continuing budget cuts to the N.C. Forest Service and the N.C. Department of Corrections have on the residents of Henderson County and surrounding areas concerning wildland fire protection?

History

- Local fire departments have in the past, and will continue in the future, to work jointly with the N.C. Forest Service to control and extinguish wildfire in Henderson County. The major goal of these local departments is the protection of homes and other structures, with the bulk of fire extinguishment duties being left to the N.C. Forest Service.
- The demand on local fire departments resources concerning urban interface issues has increased dramatically over the past 5-10 years as thousands of additional homes have been constructed in wooded areas susceptible to wildfire.
- Specialized equipment and resources such as dozers, plows, aircraft, specially trained crews, and command staff have always been available from the N.C. Forest Service on short notice to respond to wildfires in Henderson County.
- The quick response from our local fire departments and resources from the N.C. Forest Service, particularly helicopters from the Asheville Regional Airport, is a major reason why there has been no catastrophic loss of multiple structures in Henderson County due to wildfire.

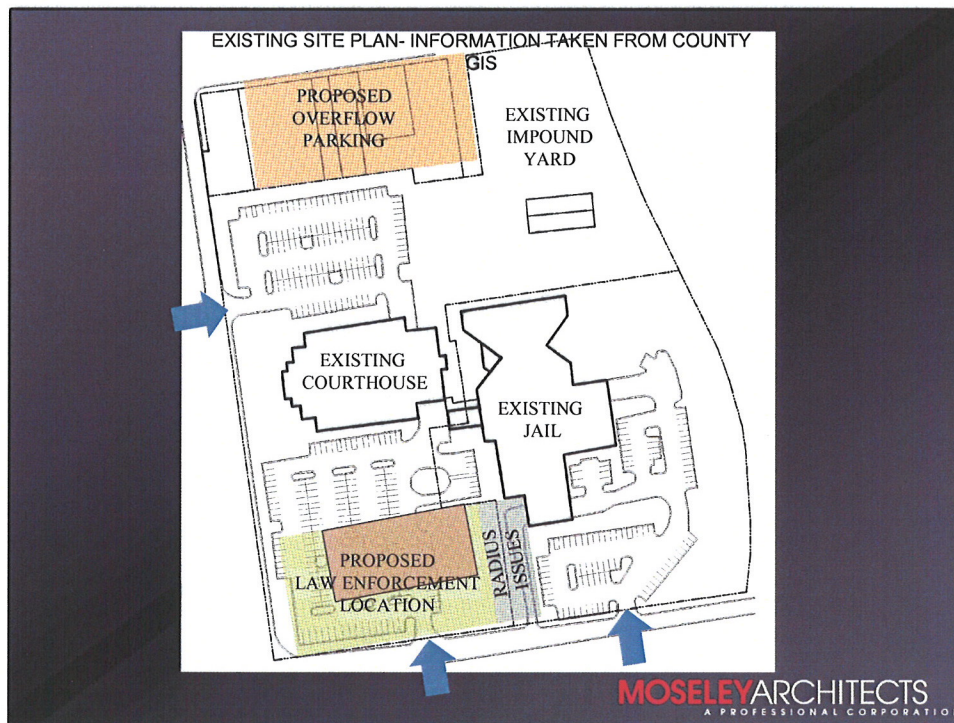
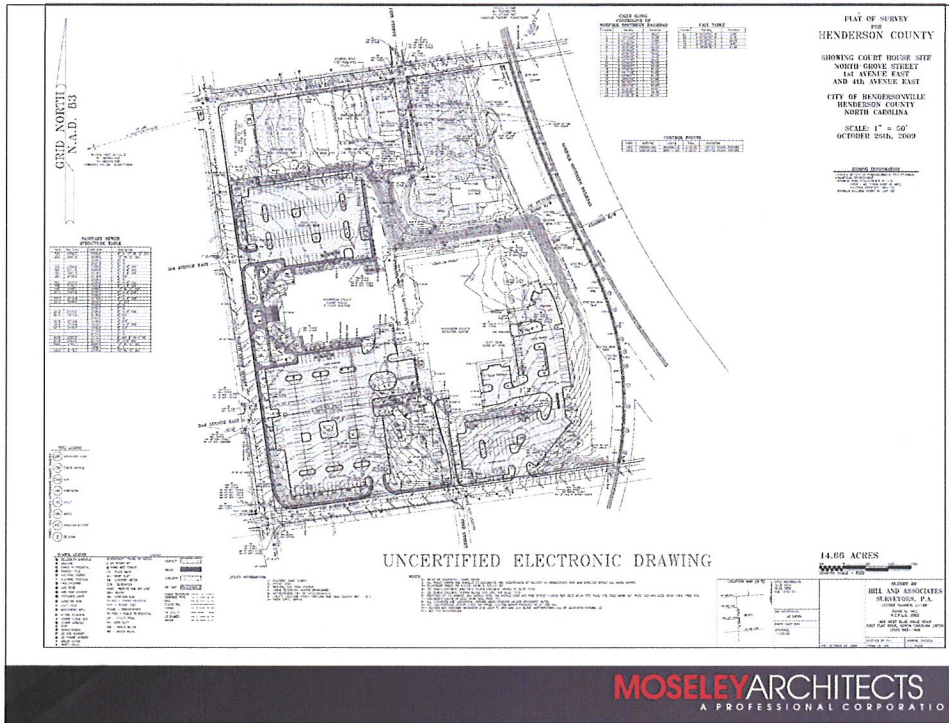
Facts and Statistical Information

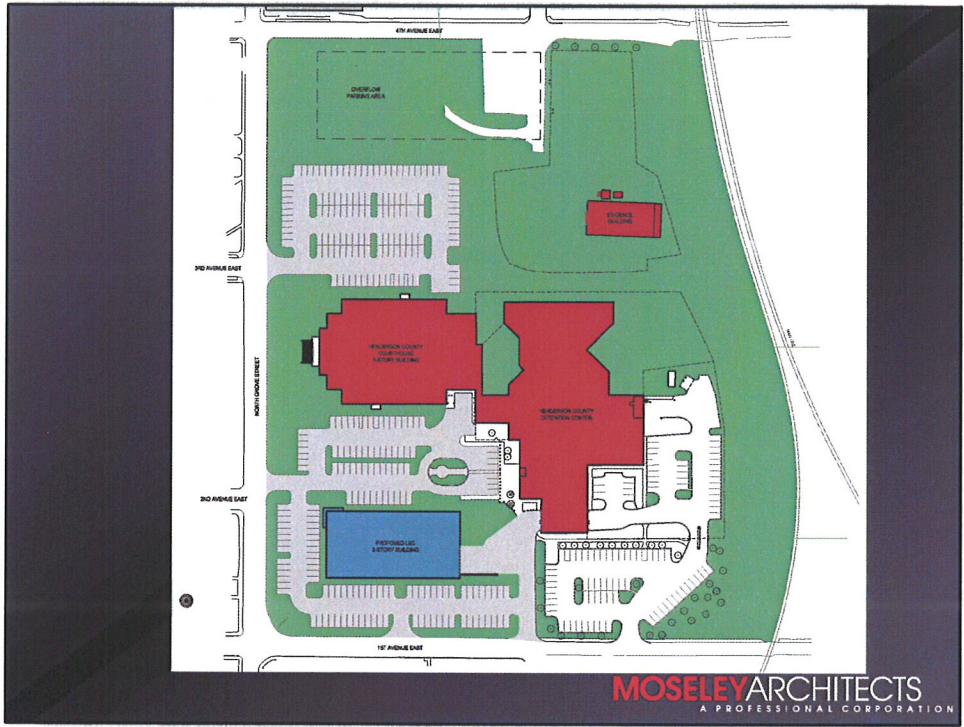
- In Henderson County during the five year period from 2004 through 2008, 330 homes were threatened during wildfire incidents. Of this number, only 6 were damaged with no total losses.
Note: We all tend to develop a sense of false security during those "wet" years when there is minimal danger for wildfires. 2009 is a good example.
- In Rutherford County during 2008, 2 homes were destroyed and 2 others damaged during a single wildfire incident.
- In Swain County during 2007, 6 homes were destroyed and multiple others damaged during a single wildfire incident.

- Currently, the B.R.I.D.G.E. Program is “on the chopping block” and set for elimination in July 2010. The B.R.I.D.G.E. group is a Young Offenders Conservation Program within the Department of Corrections. Since 1995, this program has provided 81,593 hours of assistance during wildfire incidents in Henderson County alone. At a rate of \$8.63 per hour which is the normal rate for part time employees with the N.C. Forest Service, this equates to a savings of \$704,147.00 to the state and to Henderson County.
- During extremely dry periods when wildfire danger is high, it is common for multiple fires to be burning at once, straining the resources provided by the N.C. Forest Service and local fire departments. Evidence of this is shown in the following summary for a 3-day period in February, 2008 (2/8/08-2/10/08). This is for statewide wildfire activity for this 3-day period.
Total Fires: 423
Total Acres Burned: 10,146
888 homes/structures were threatened/protected valued at approximately \$219 million.
70 structures were destroyed with an approximate value of \$948,500.00
12 vehicles were destroyed with an approximate value of \$66,000.00

Conclusion

The demands being placed on local fire departments and the N.C. Forest Service increase daily as our population, homes, infrastructure etc. grow to record levels. This detracts from our ability to respond to wildfires during periods of high call volume, with the same level of resources and personnel which we have supplied in the past. This, coupled with less available resources from the N.C. Forest Service due to budget cuts, creates the potential in Henderson County and throughout the state for “a wildfire catastrophe waiting to happen.”

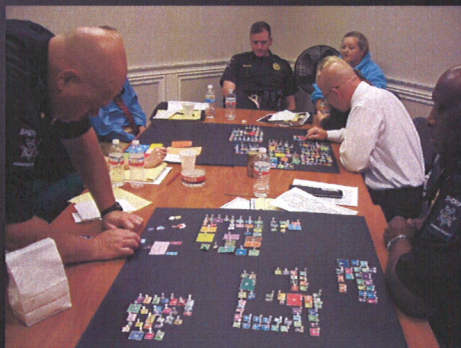




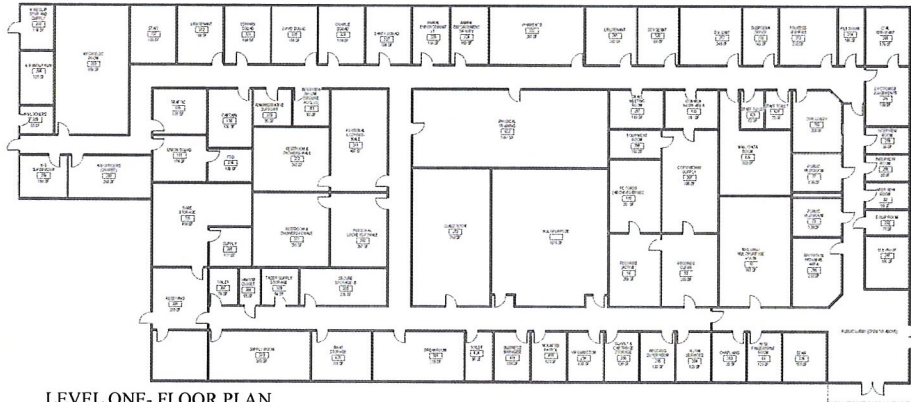
RADIUS ISSUES AT EXISTING JAIL



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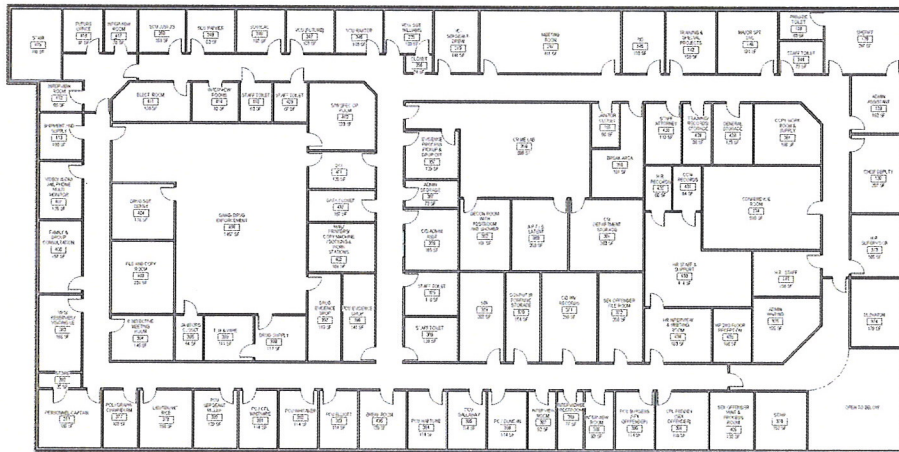
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LEVEL ONE- FLOOR PLAN

1st

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A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

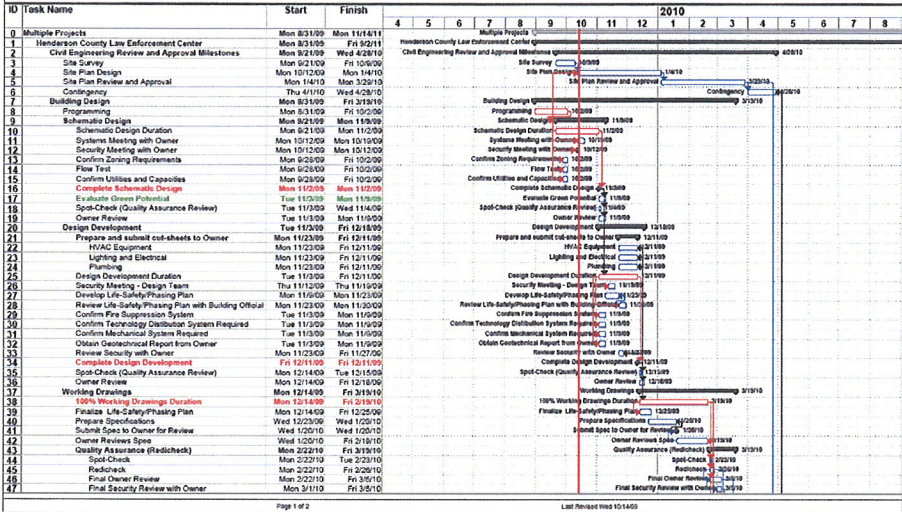


LEVEL TWO- FLOOR PLAN

2nd

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40,000 sq ft.





Audit Process

- Planning and Risk Assessment
- Interim Procedures
- Final Procedures
- Year Around Process



Audit Highlights

- Unqualified opinion
- No material internal control weakness identified
- No findings or questioned costs.
- Cooperative staff



Fund Balance

Serves as a measure of the County's financial resources available.

➤ **Assets – Liabilities = Fund Balance**

3 Classifications:

- Reserved
- Unreserved Designated (Available)
- Unreserved Undesignated (Available)



Fund Balance Position

General Fund

2009

Total Fund Balance 35,211,964

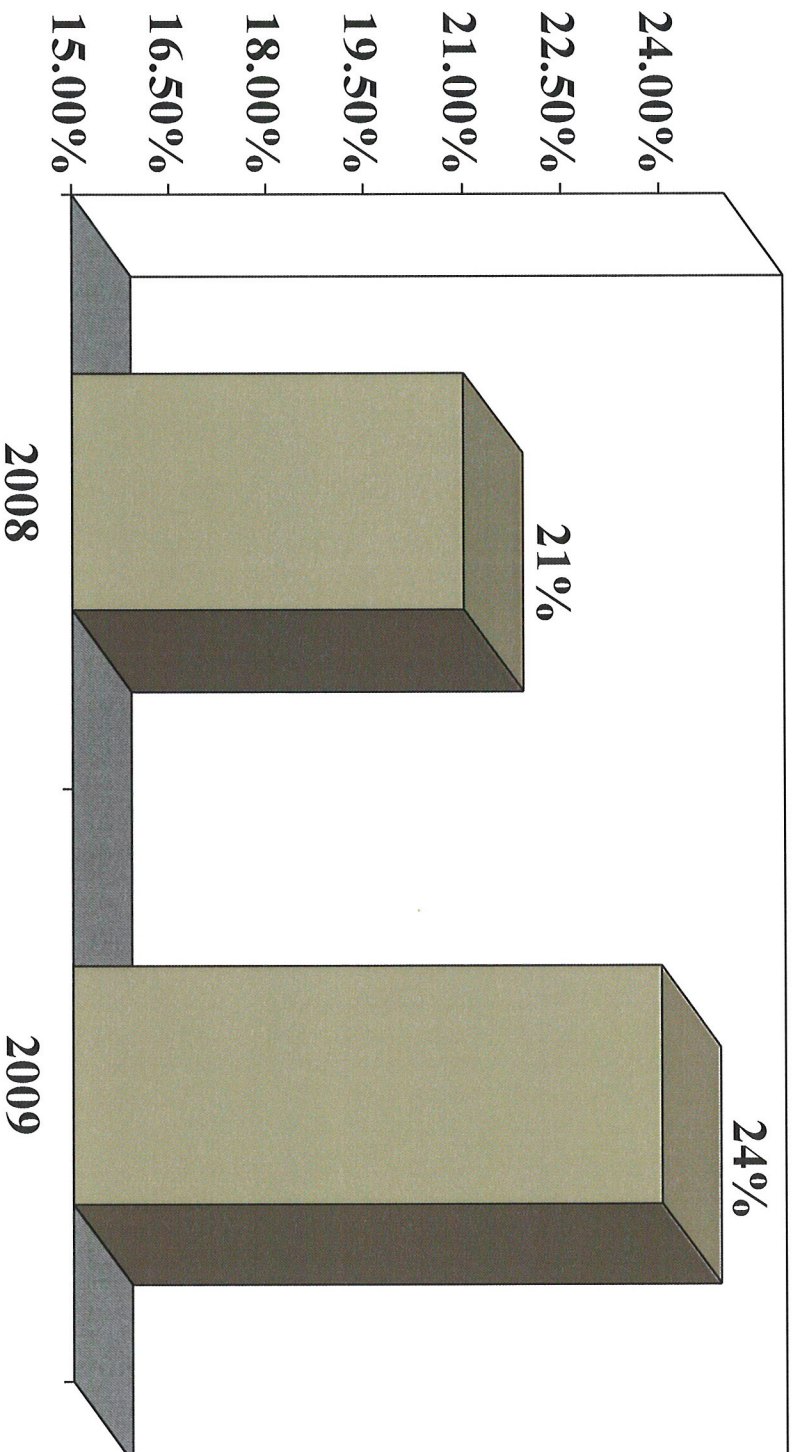
Required Reservations - 7,706,193

Designations - 758,200

Unreserved Undesignated \$26,747,571

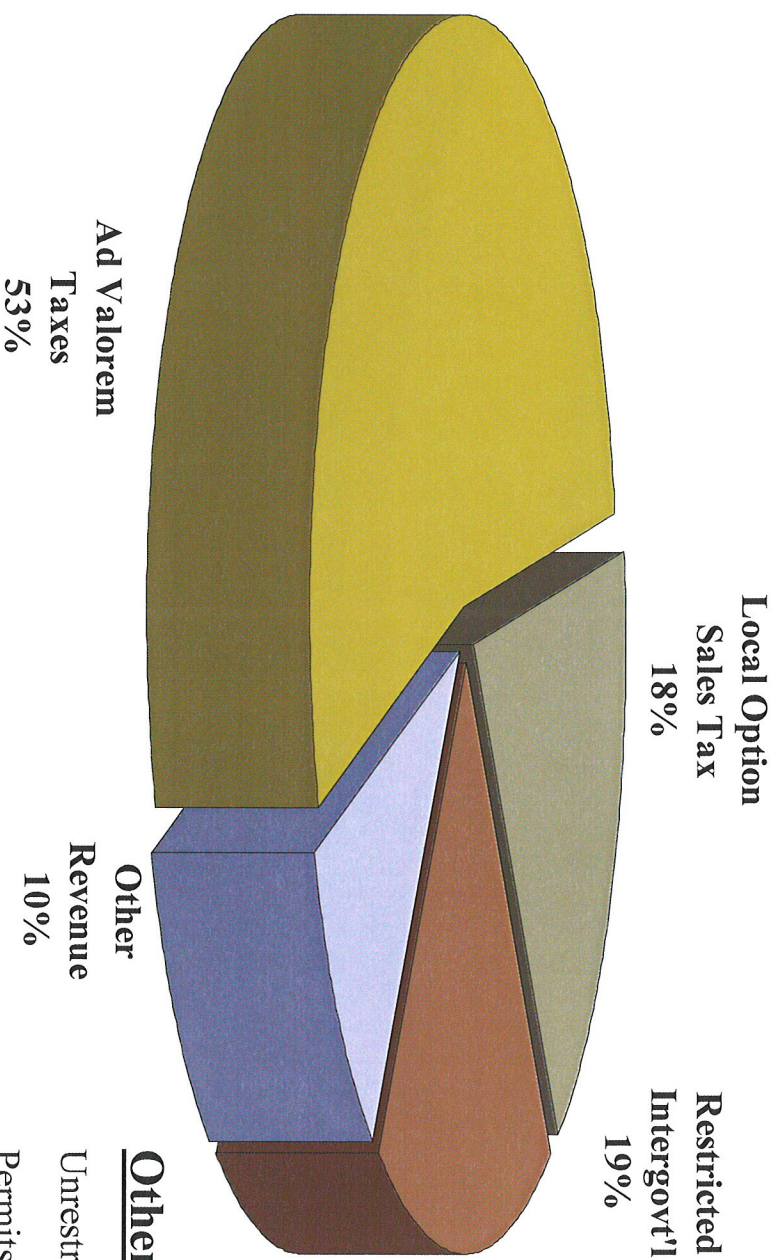


Unreserved Fund Balance as a Percent of Expenditures – General Fund





Top 3 Revenues: General Fund



Other Revenue:

Unrestricted Intergovernmental

Permits & Fees

Sales & Services

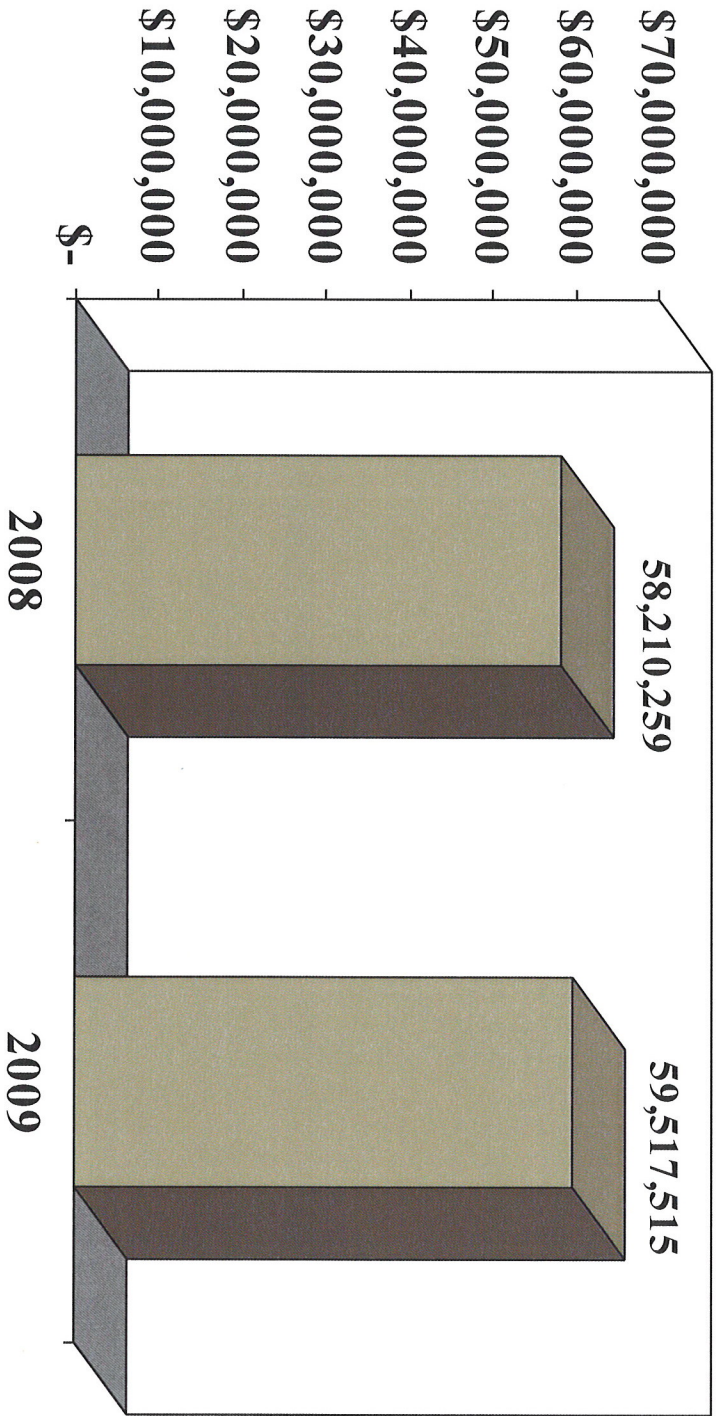
Investment Income

Misc. Revenue

Top 3 Comprise \$101,417,010 (90%) of Revenues

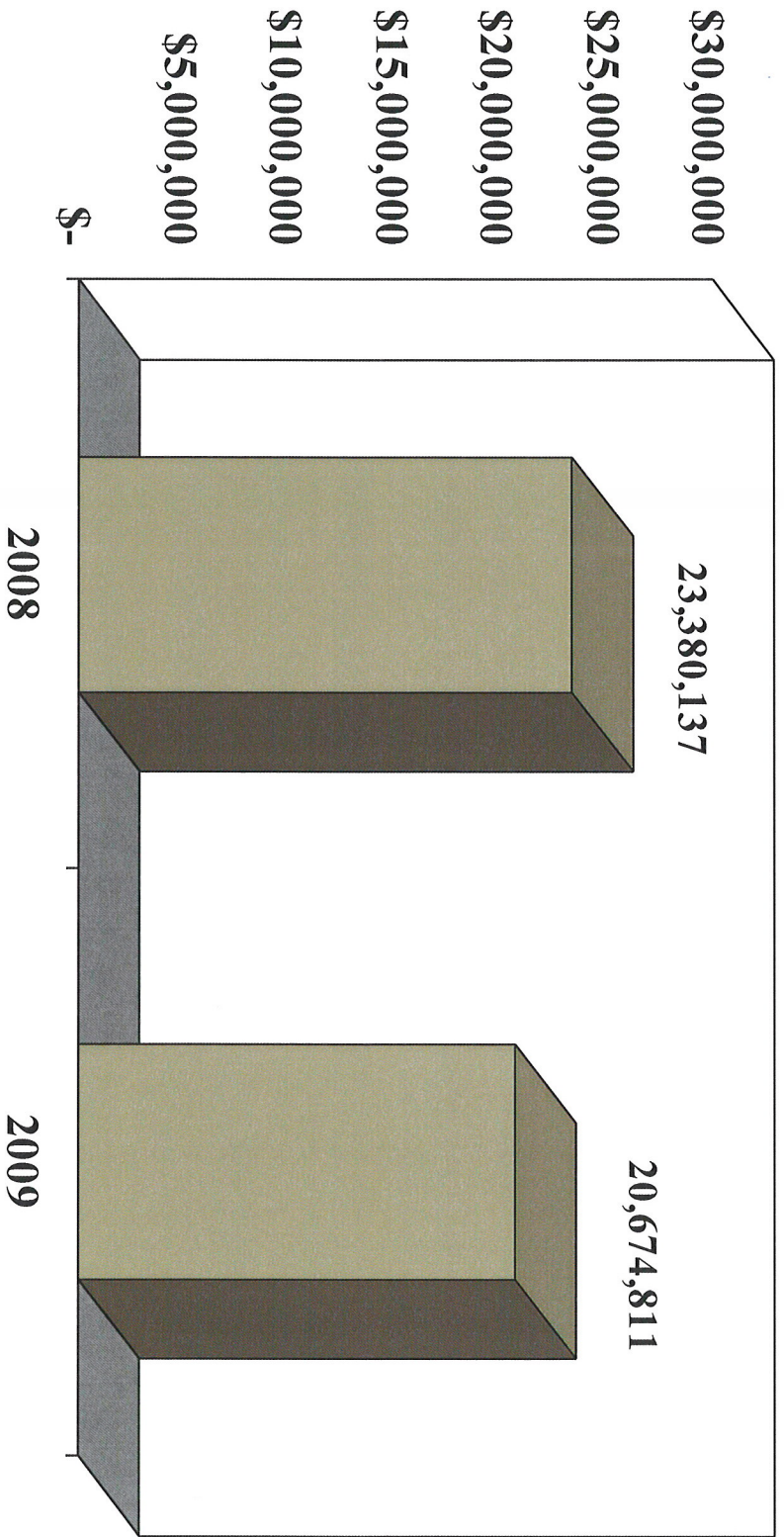


Ad Valorem Taxes



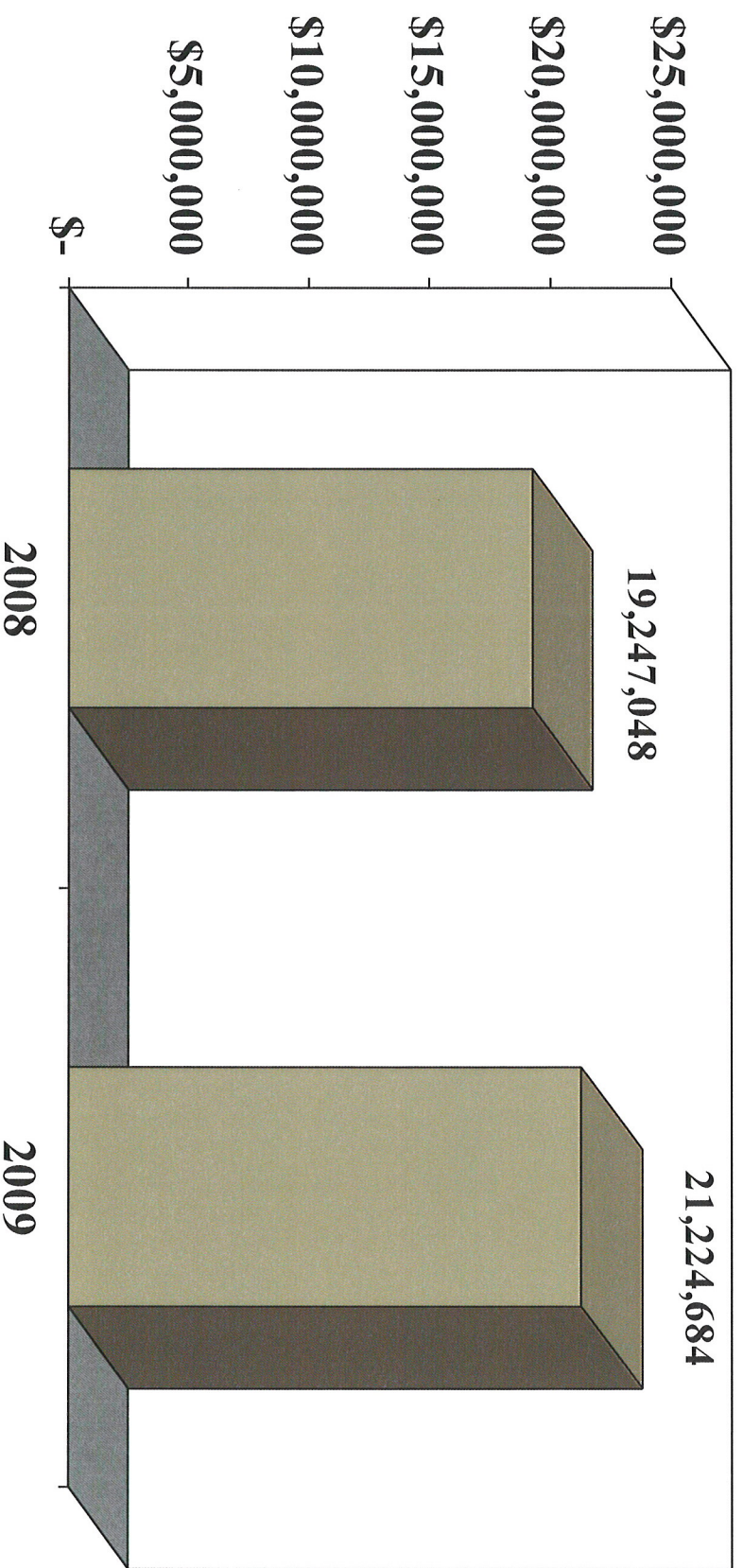


Local Option Sales Taxes



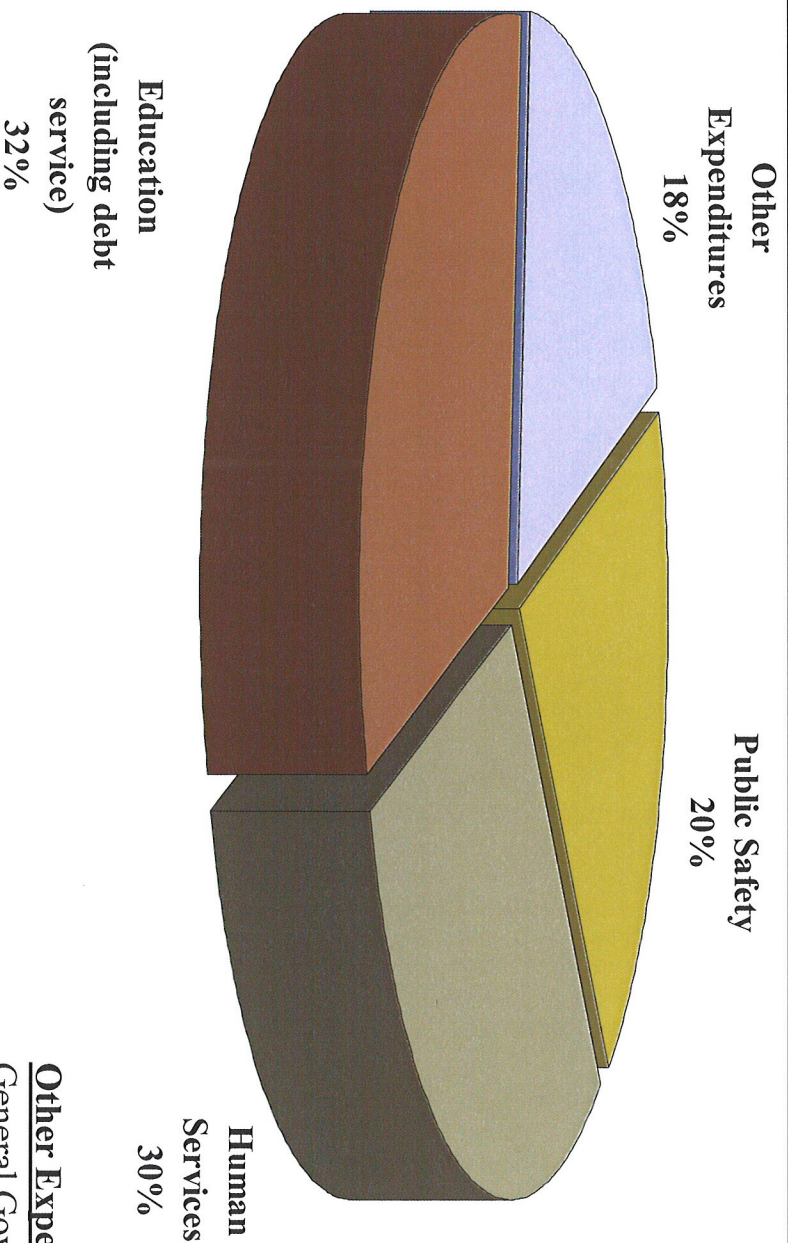


Restricted Intergovernmental





Top 3 Expenditures: General Fund

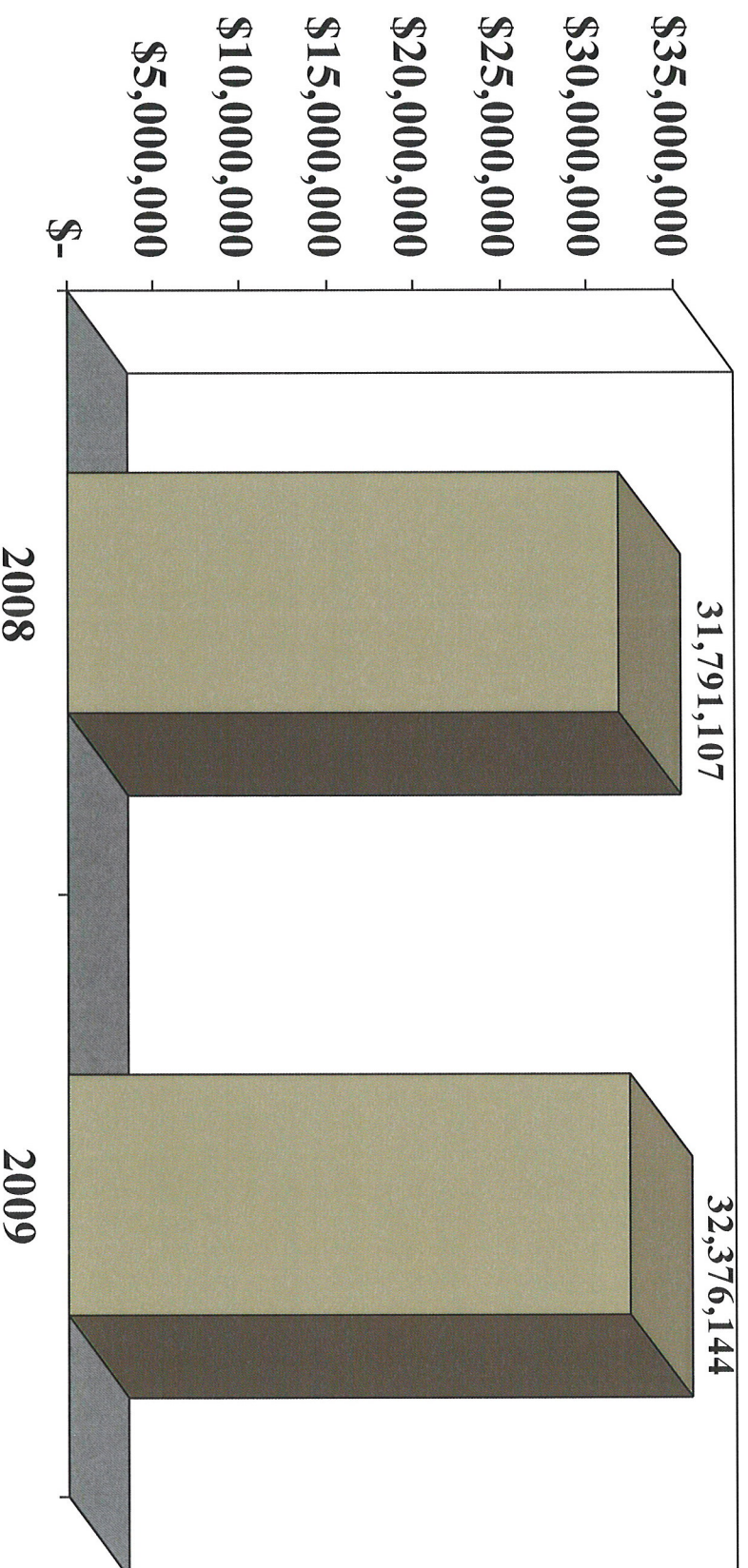


Top 3 Comprise of \$ 91,058,633 (82%) of Expenditures

- Other Expenditures:**
General Government
Environmental protection
Economic and physical development
Culture and recreation
Debt Service (County only)

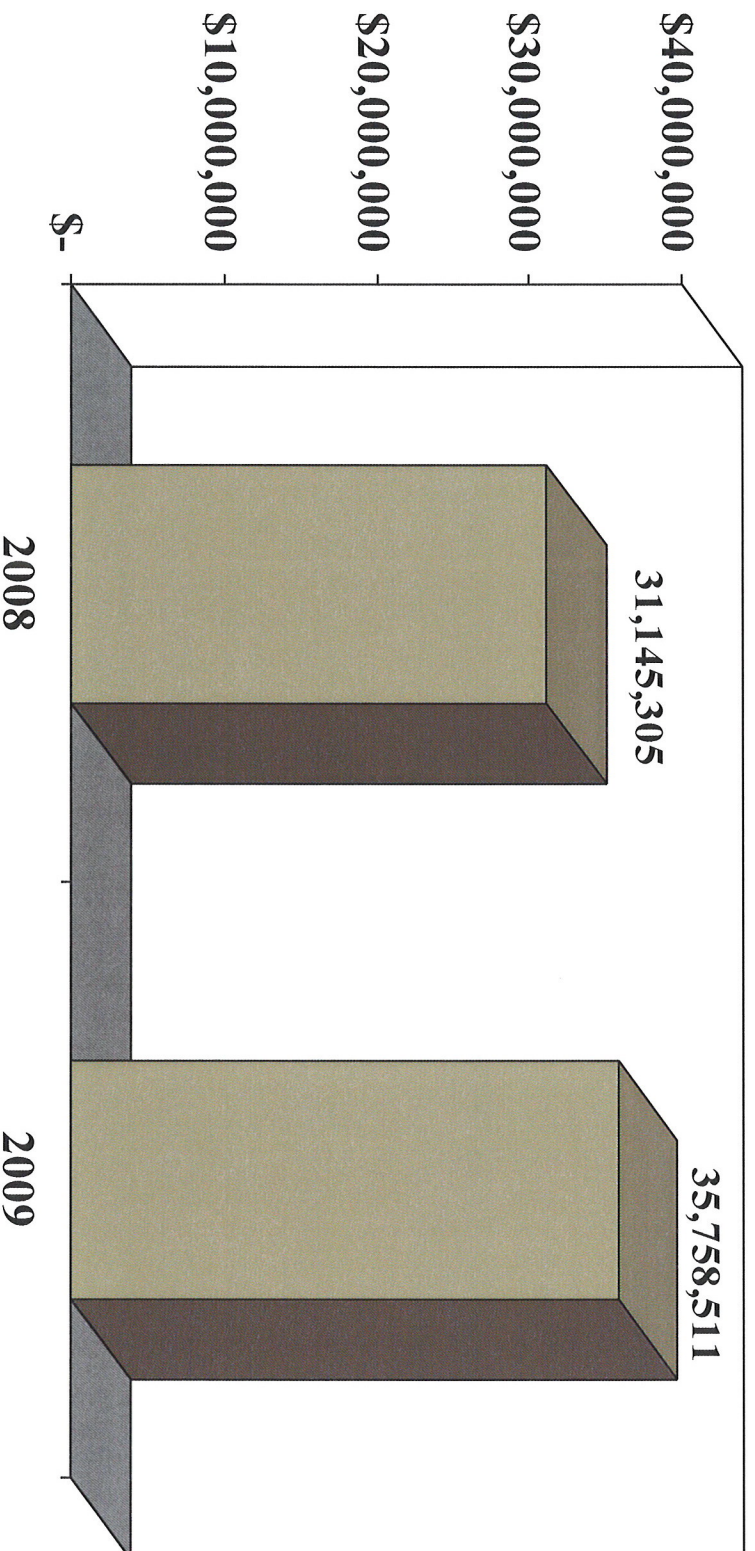


Human Services



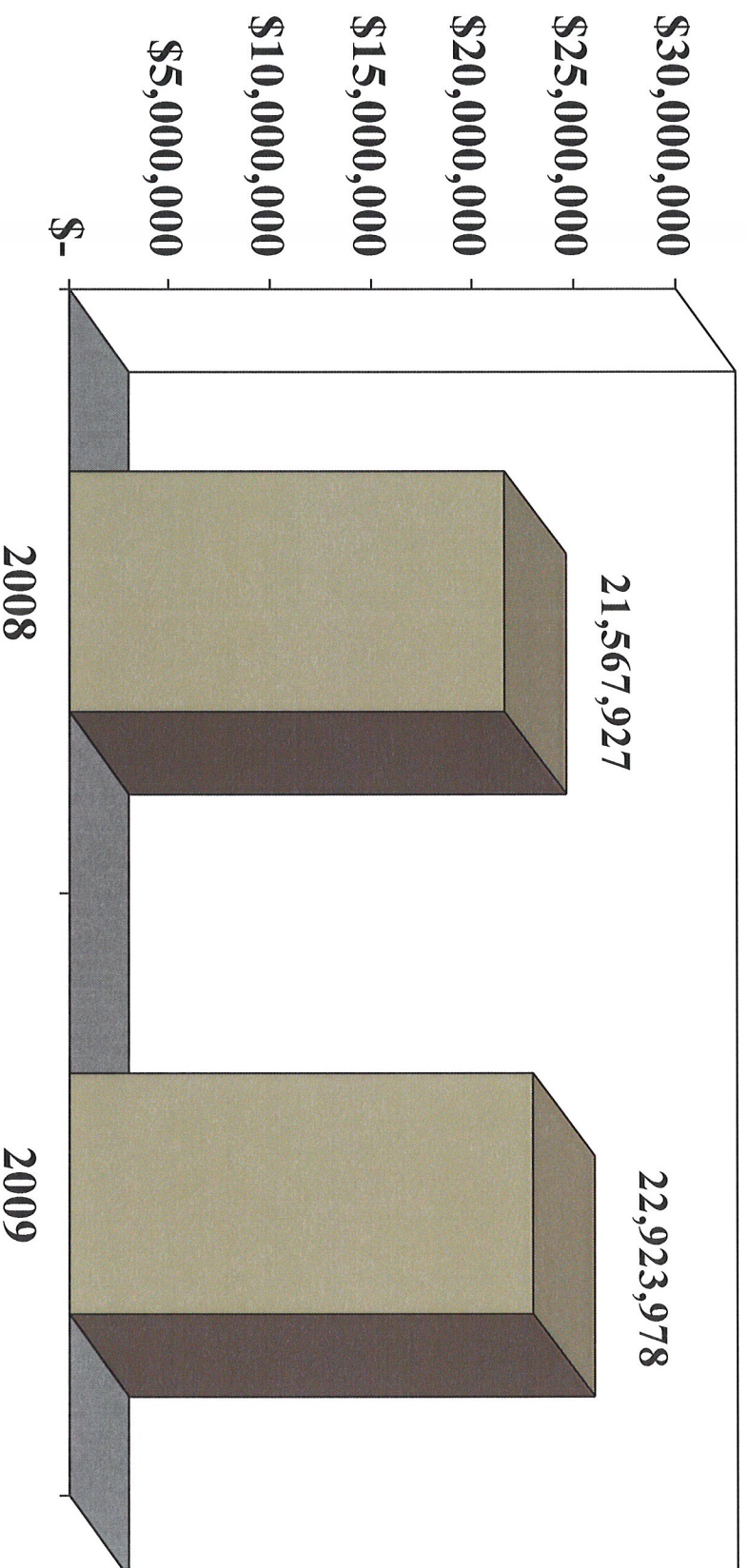


Education (including related debt service)





Public Safety





Debt Service (excluding Education)

