

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING DATE: March 20, 2024

SUBJECT: Broadband Taskforce

PRESENTER: Lee Stevens, Planner III

ATTACHMENTS: PowerPoint Presentation

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

The Broadband Taskforce has reviewed the program guidance for the North Carolina Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) broadband funding programs, including the GREAT grant (Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology), RDOF (the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund), and CAB (Completing Access to Broadband). The CAB program is currently seeking funding commitment forms and county priority areas for broadband access. These items will be included in a Scope of Work from counties across the state, and internet service providers will bid for each contract. The Taskforce has directed Staff to use spatial data to help identify high-need areas that could be prioritized in a CAB Scope of Work. If no priority areas are identified, all unserved addresses in the County would be considered of equal priority. Any funds committed by the County could thus be used to fund a project area proposed by a provider.

Staff have identified areas without broadband access and have mapped those locations alongside Census data, emergency response data, cell service data, and other broadband funded locations to help select potential priority areas. Staff have also estimated how many addresses could be served by different levels of committed funds under CAB's program rules.

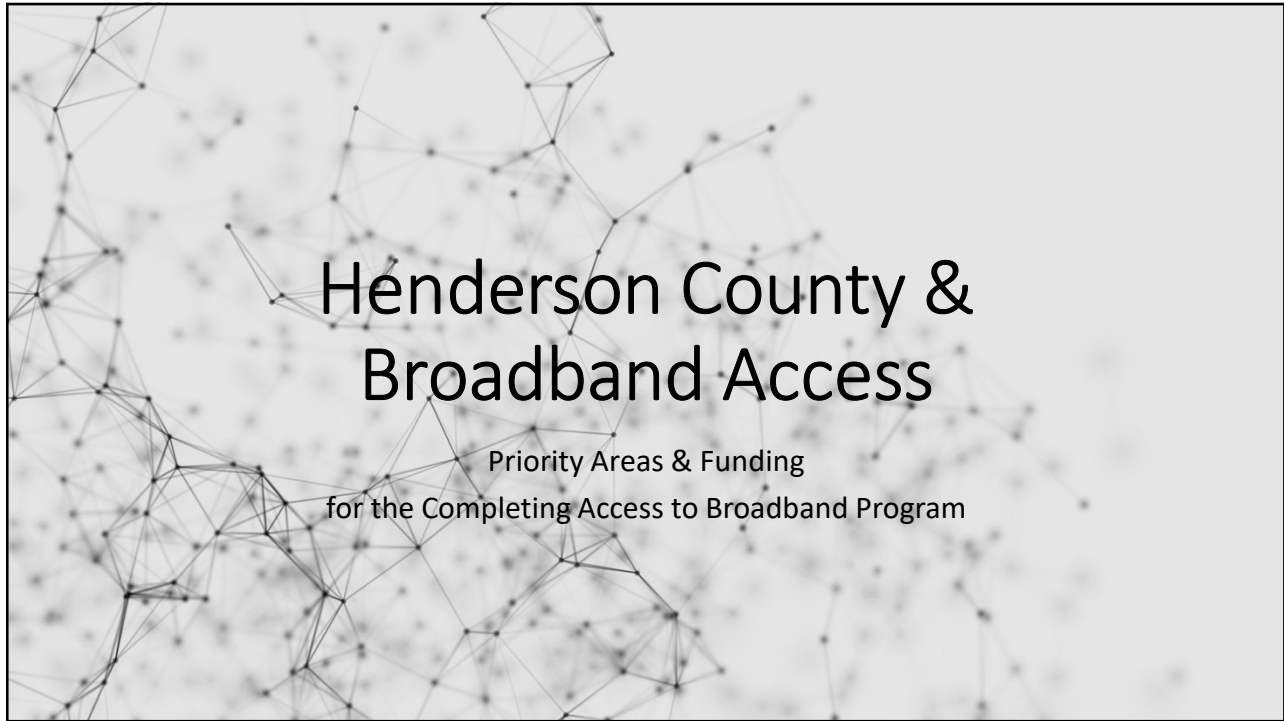
The next steps are for the Taskforce to receive BOC direction on total funding allocation. They will then direct Staff to complete CAB Commitment Forms, a Scope of Work, and to collaborate with NCDIT on selection criteria for responding providers.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

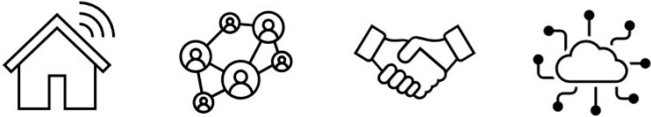
The Board is requested to direct staff regarding the total budget amount to be allocated for broadband programs.

Suggested Motion:

No motion suggested.



1



Completing Access to Broadband (CAB)

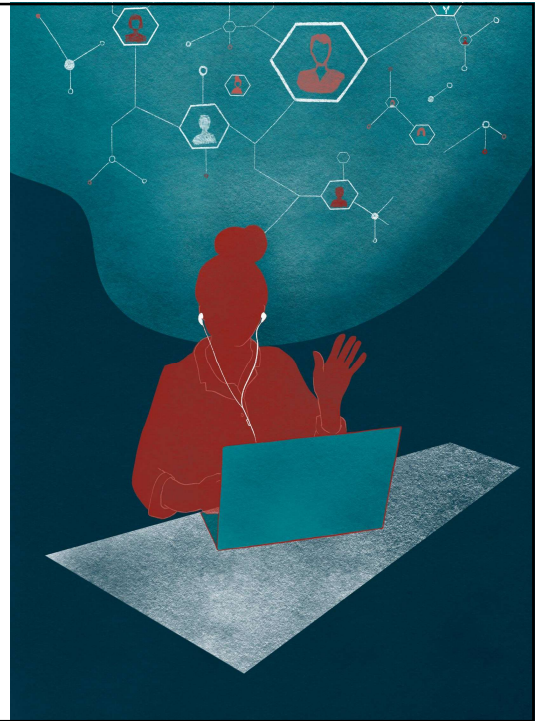
Program Overview

- CAB is a partnership between NCDIT and NC county governments using ARPA funds to connect households and businesses to broadband.
- Procurement process with individual Scopes of Work for each county that may include “high priority areas.” Once award is made, the project is contracted right away to a pre-qualified service provider.
- A *County Commitment Form* with an “up to” amount of funding we plan to commit is required by the program.
- The Stop-Gap Program and BEAD will be following CAB to continue completing access to widely spread unserved areas that are harder to reach.

2

Purpose: Determine Next Steps For CAB

- Identify CAB priority areas (optional)
 - See what's eligible under CAB Program rules
 - Examine datasets to help identify high-need areas:
 - Cell coverage
 - Access to emergency services
 - School-age population
 - Income level
 - Density of unserved homes or businesses
- Allocate funds to be committed for CAB Program



3

Outcomes: Selecting Priority Areas

Option 1

Select one or more Priority Areas for the CAB program's Scope of Work, which could be **difficult-to-reach areas** or **acute need**

Option 2

Do not submit any priority areas and let Internet Service Providers who bid on our project propose the areas for connection. If no priority areas are identified, **all eligible addresses are given equal weight.**



4

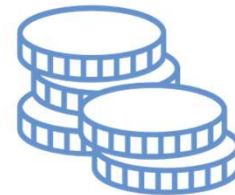
Outcomes: Allocating Funds for CAB

Option 1

Commit the \$900,000 ARPA funds already earmarked for Broadband, reaching an *estimated 570* locations.

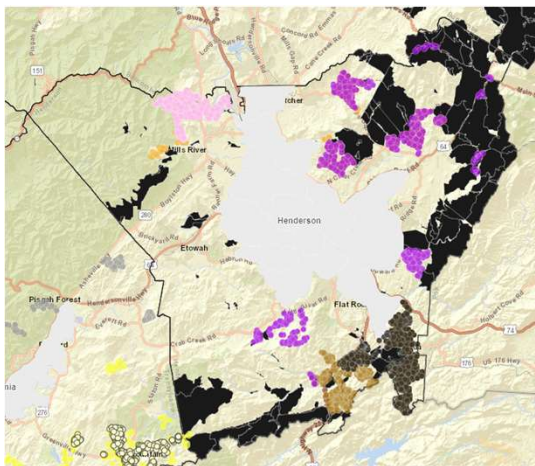
Option 2

Commit more funds to leverage as much \$ as we can from the State Match. Connect more people now to internet and make future connections to unserved areas more feasible.



5

Previous Funding Efforts



*This map is unverified and DOES NOT reflect updates from the protest period. It is only to illustrate potential unclaimed BSLs that could be included in future GREAT Grant RFP process.

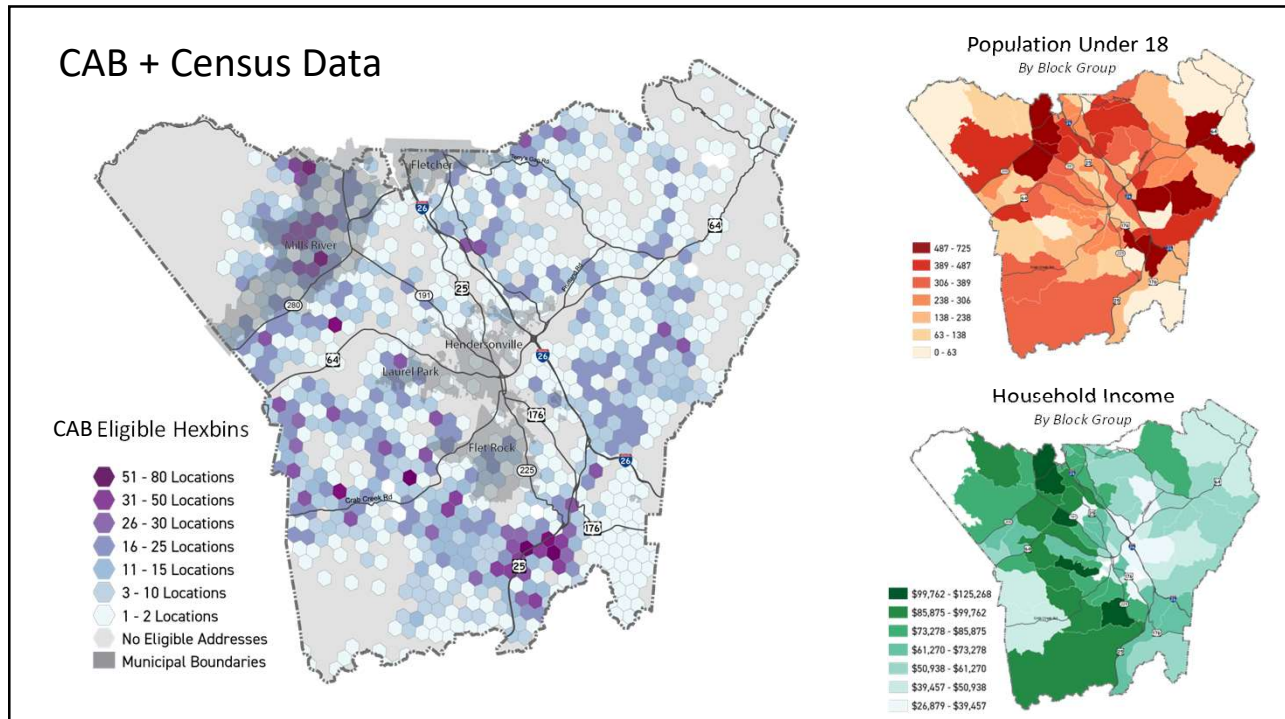
The map shows GREAT grant application and RDOF locations. Some of the mapped addresses align with unserved areas identified by CAB planning tool map.

6

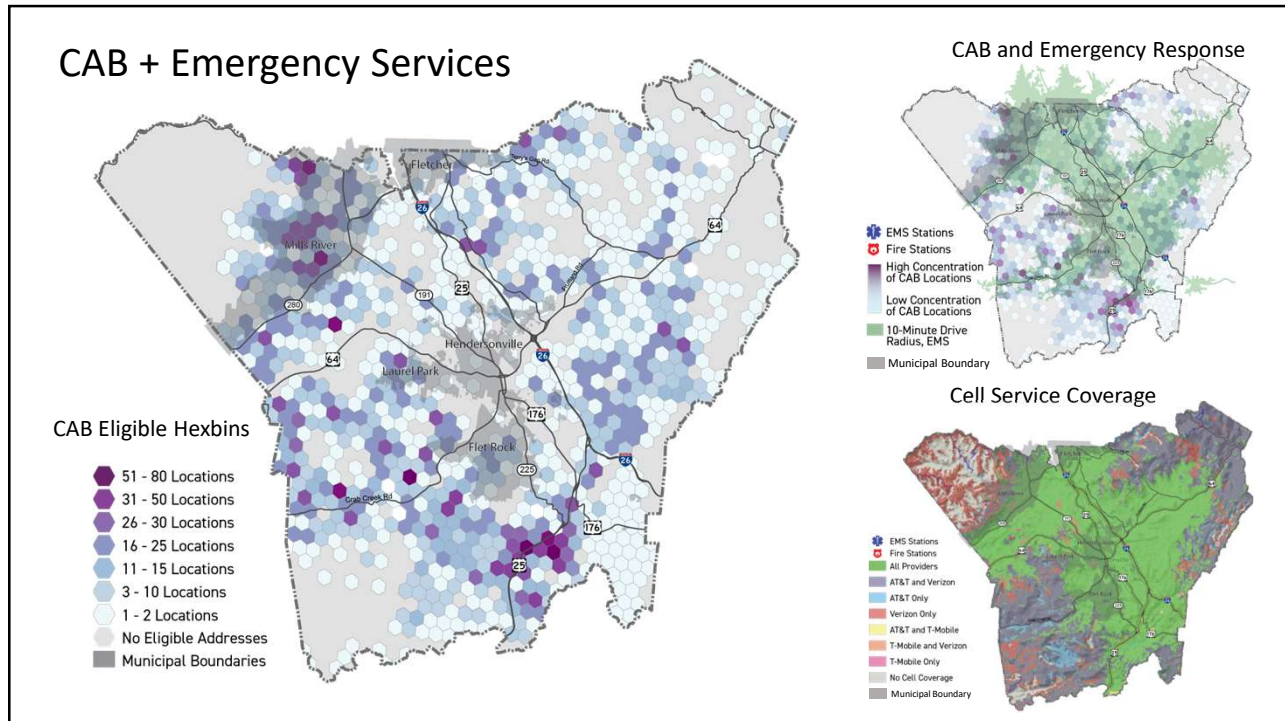
Mapping Broadband Need

To better identify areas of high need, the following maps show availability of emergency services, cell phone coverage, school-age population density, and income across the County alongside data showing density of unserved addresses.

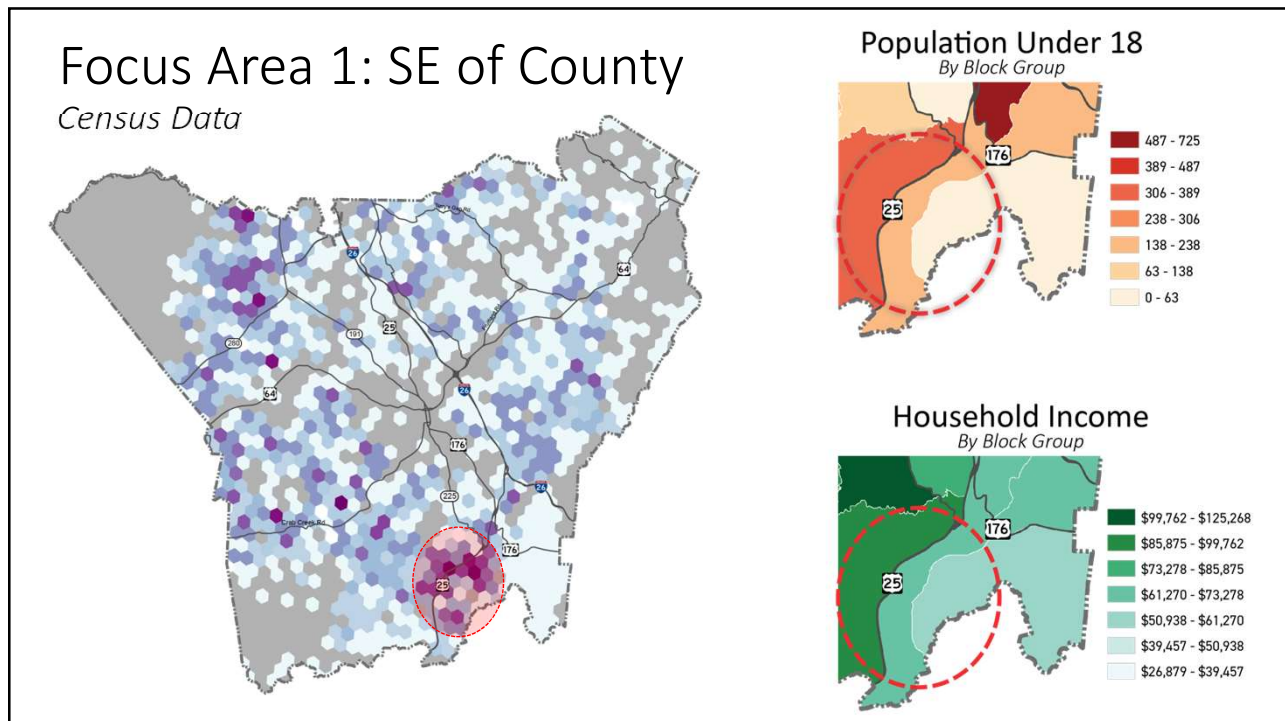
7



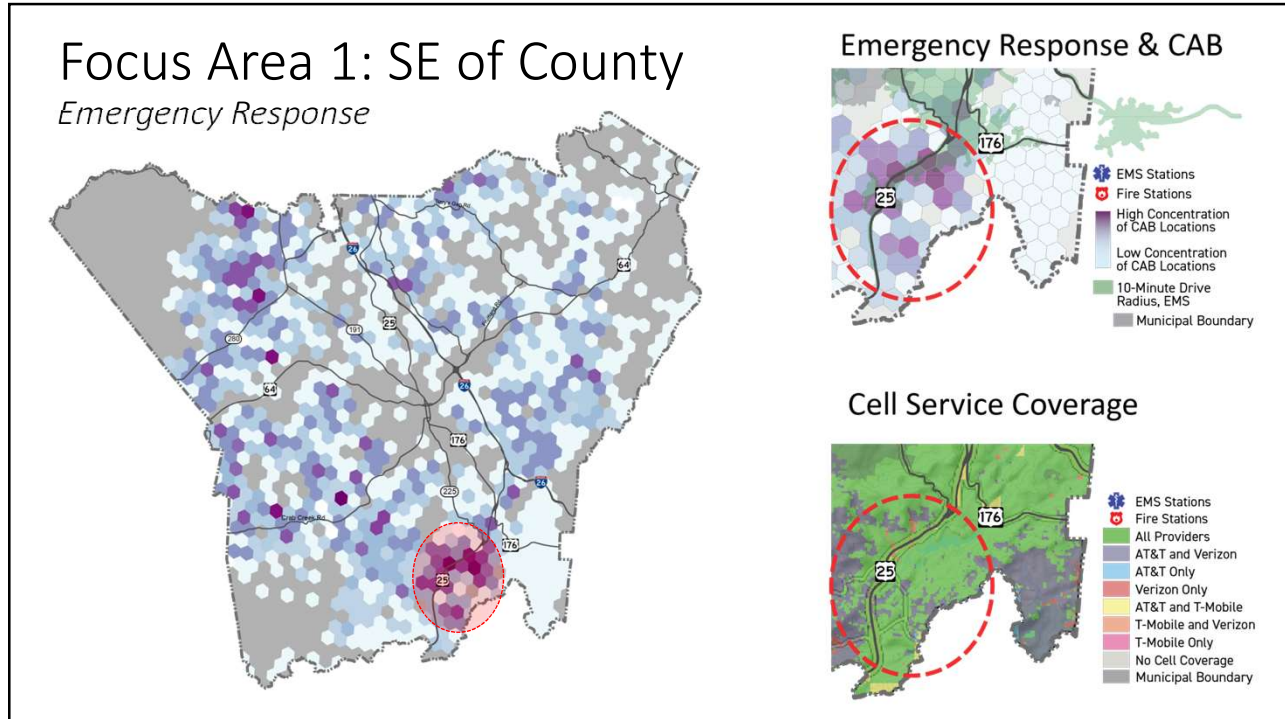
8



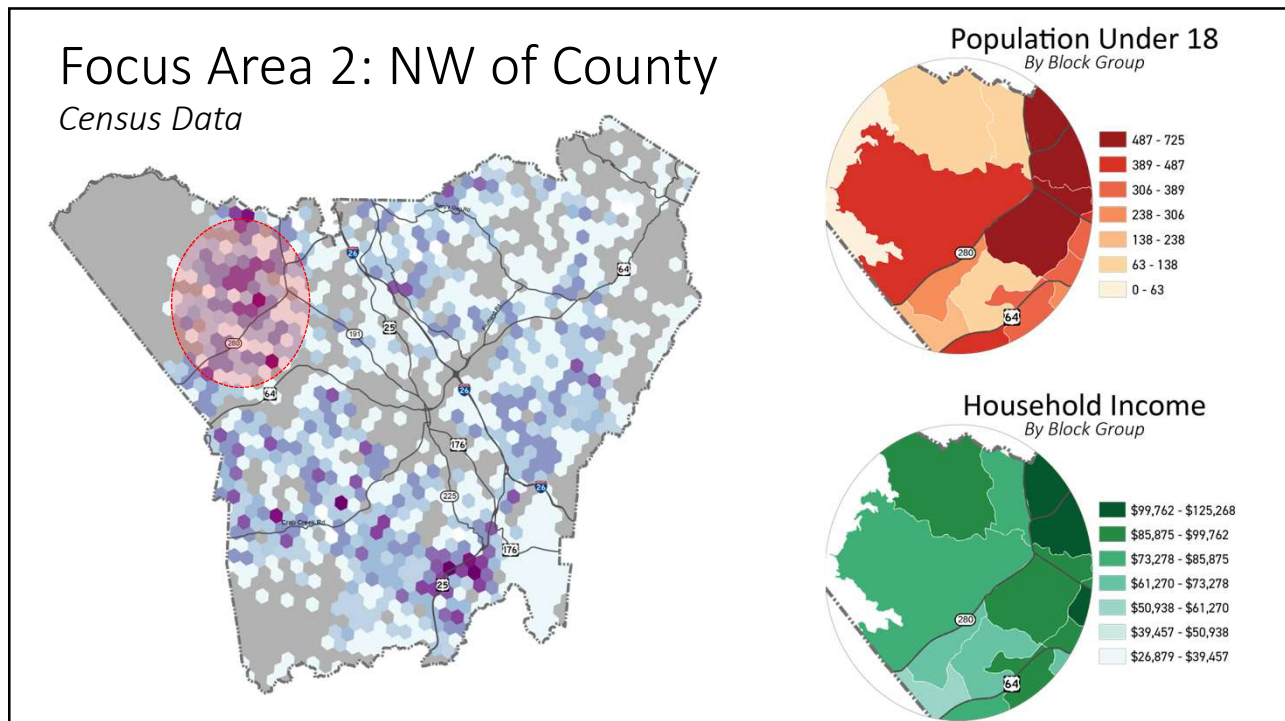
9



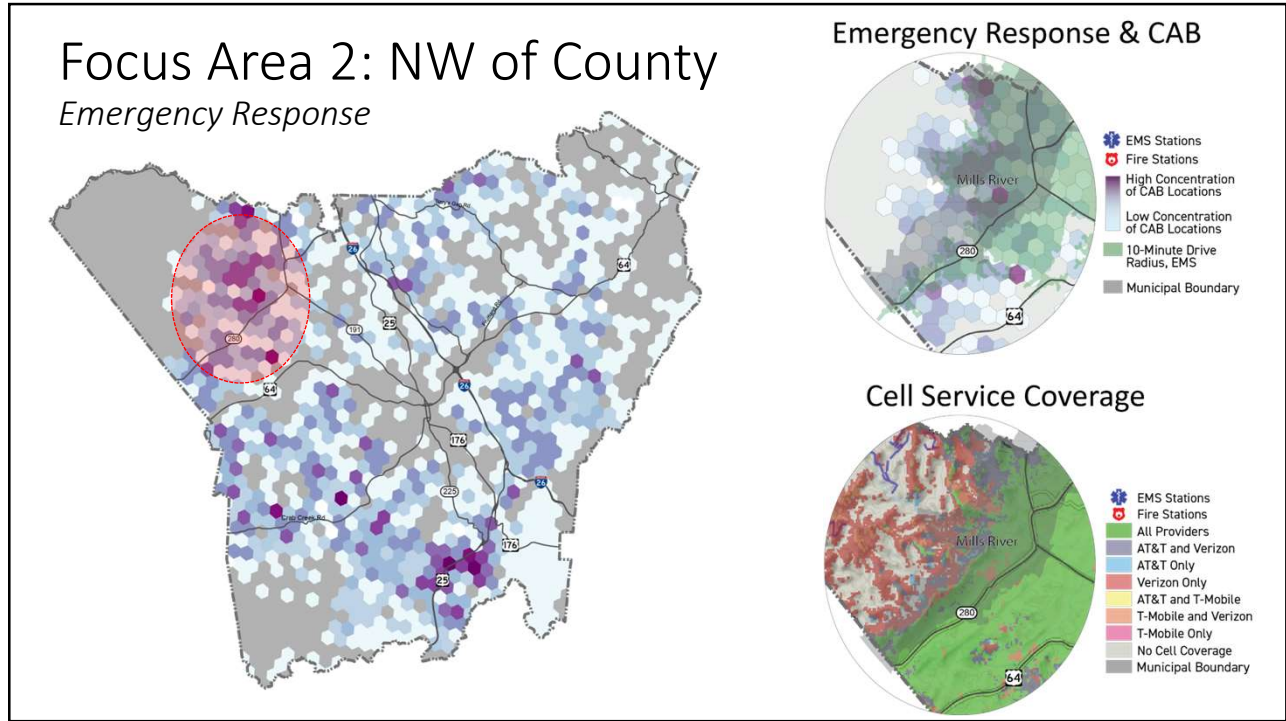
10



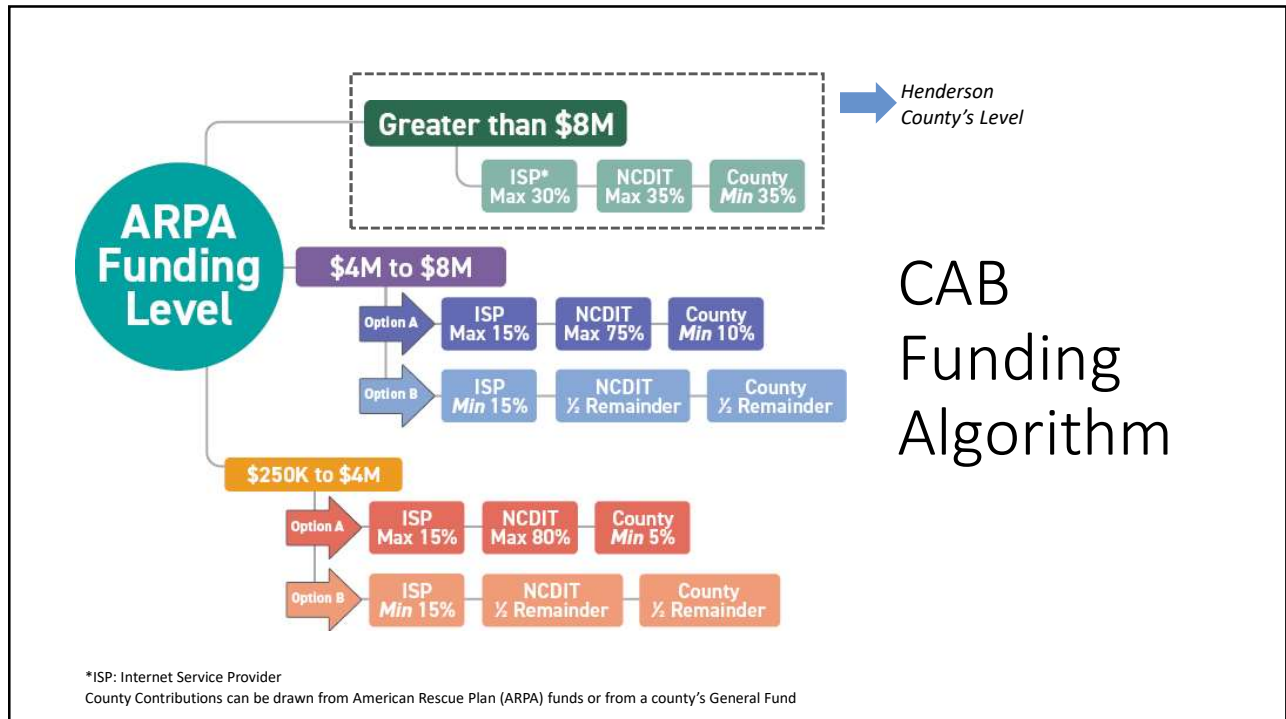
11



12



13



14

Completed Project Examples

ERC Example:



Saluda Mountain Telephone Company Example:

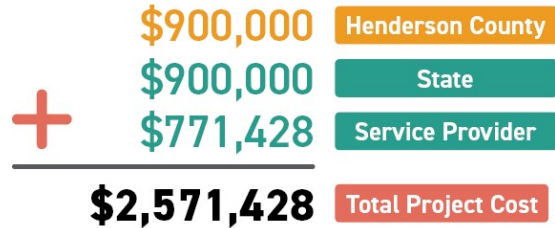


15

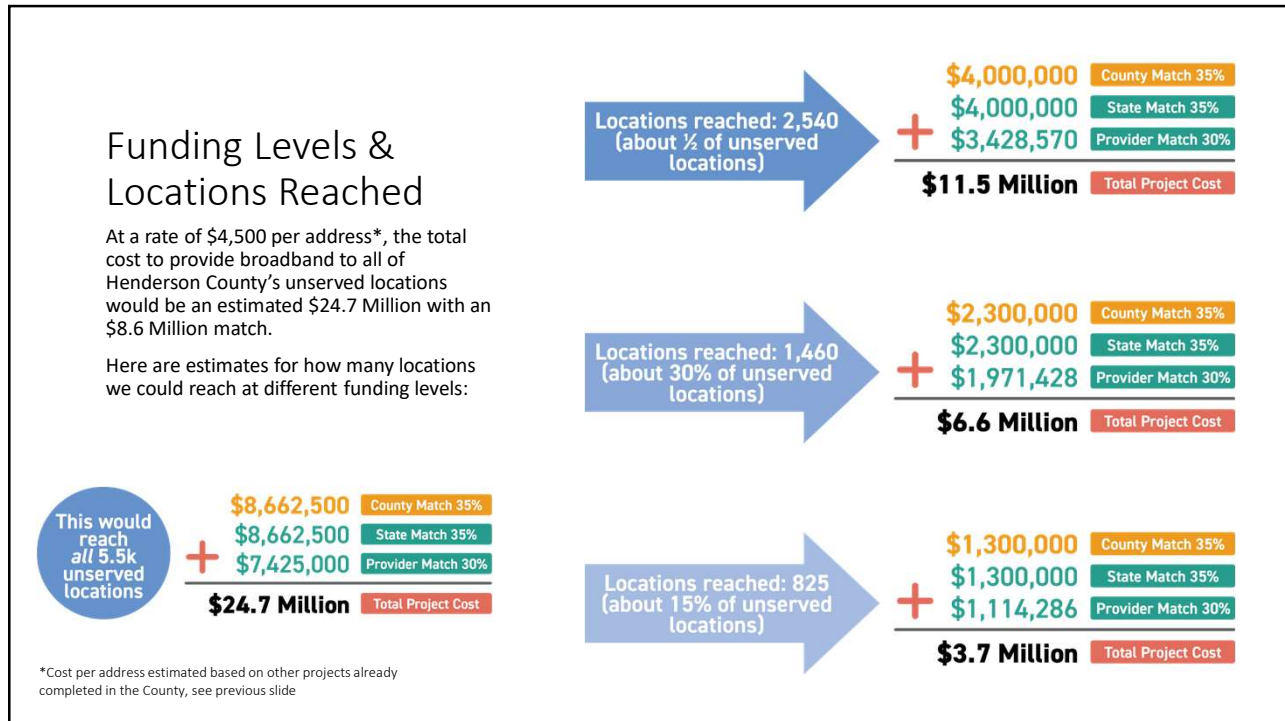


Henderson County Budget

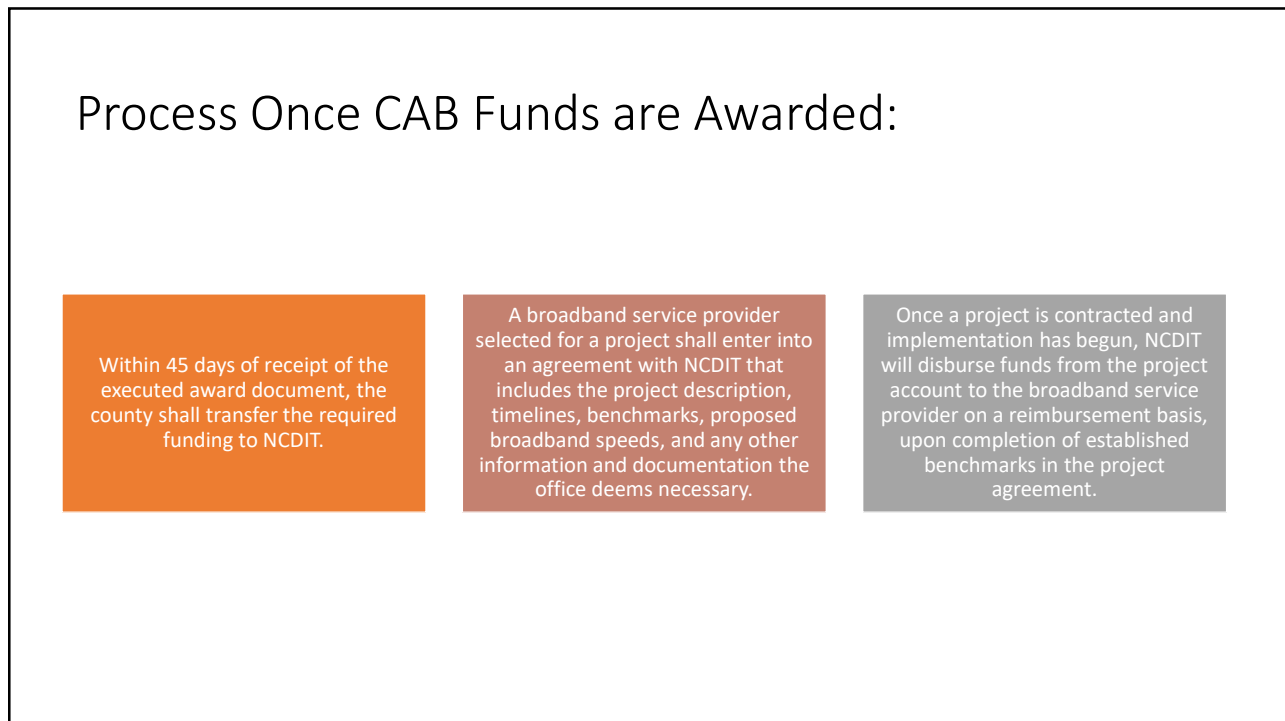
Henderson County currently has \$900,000 in ARPA Funds earmarked to finance broadband



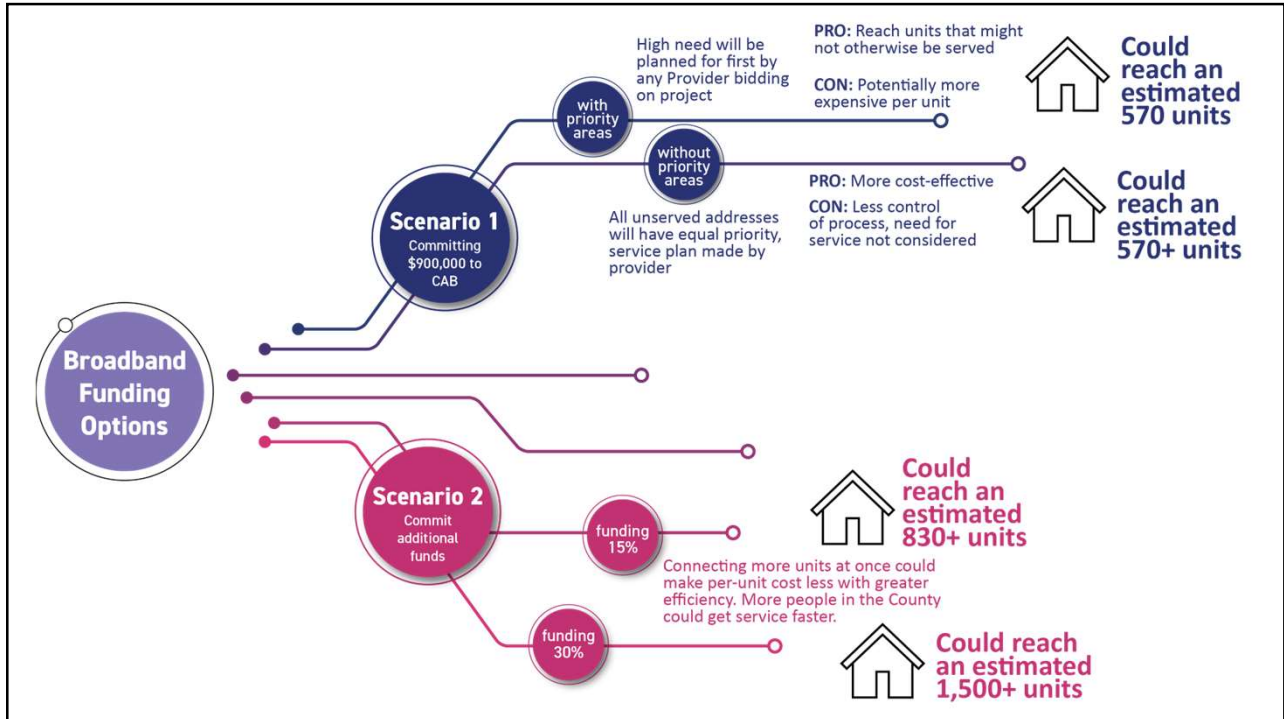
16



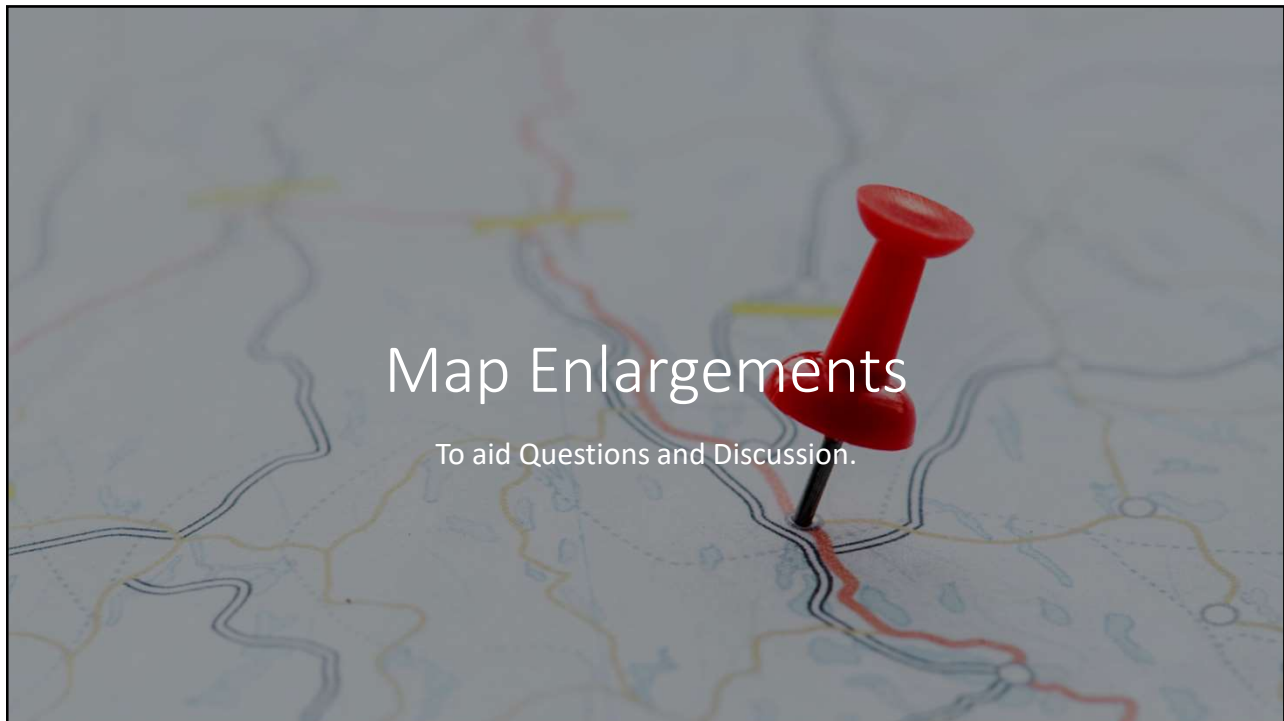
17



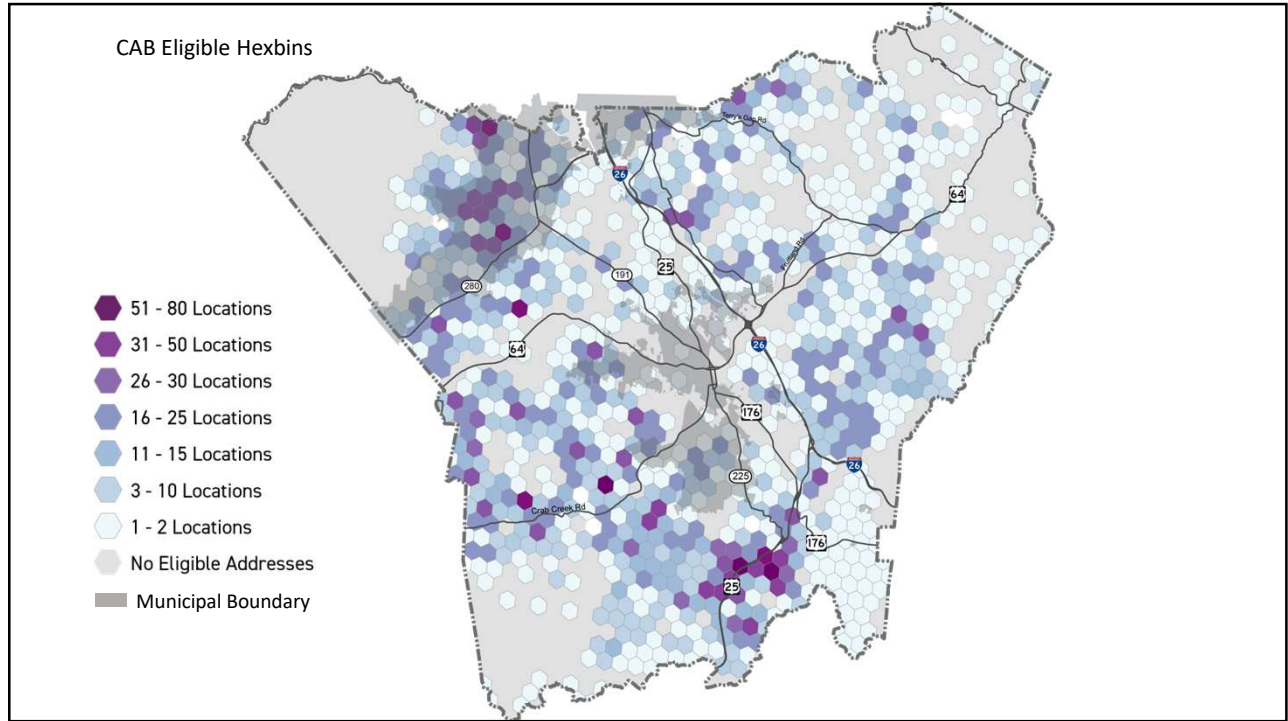
18



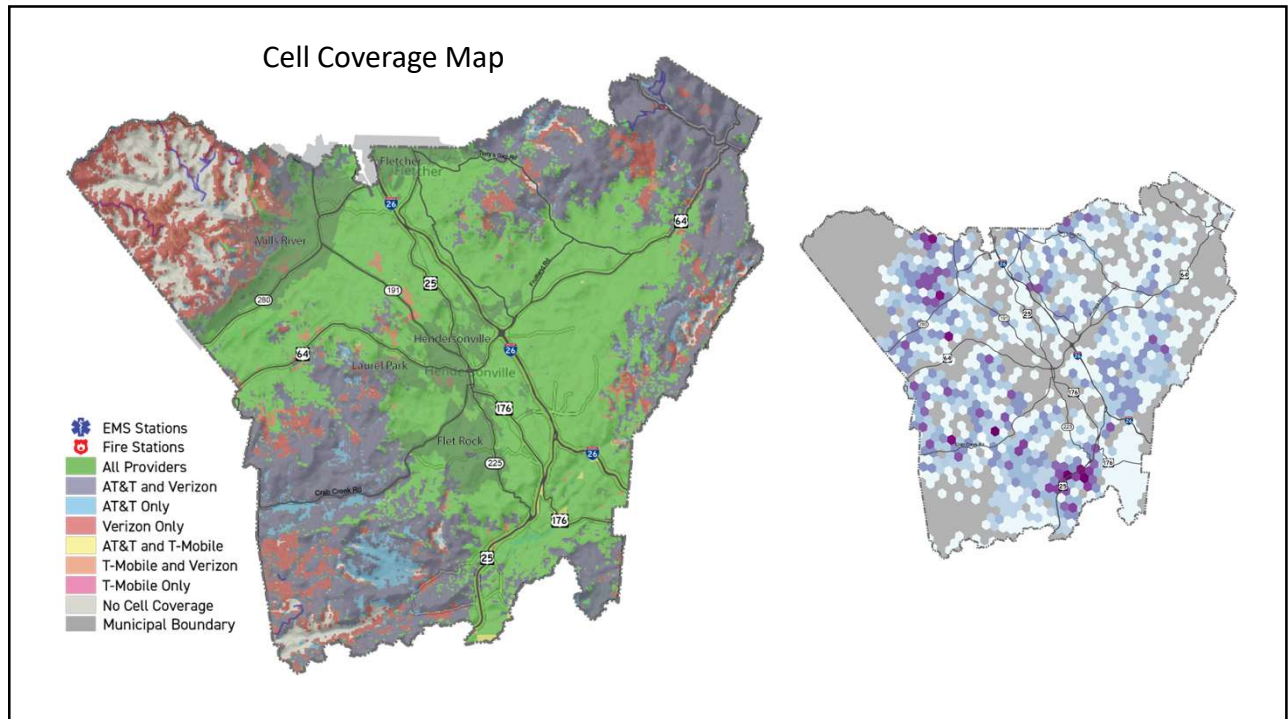
19



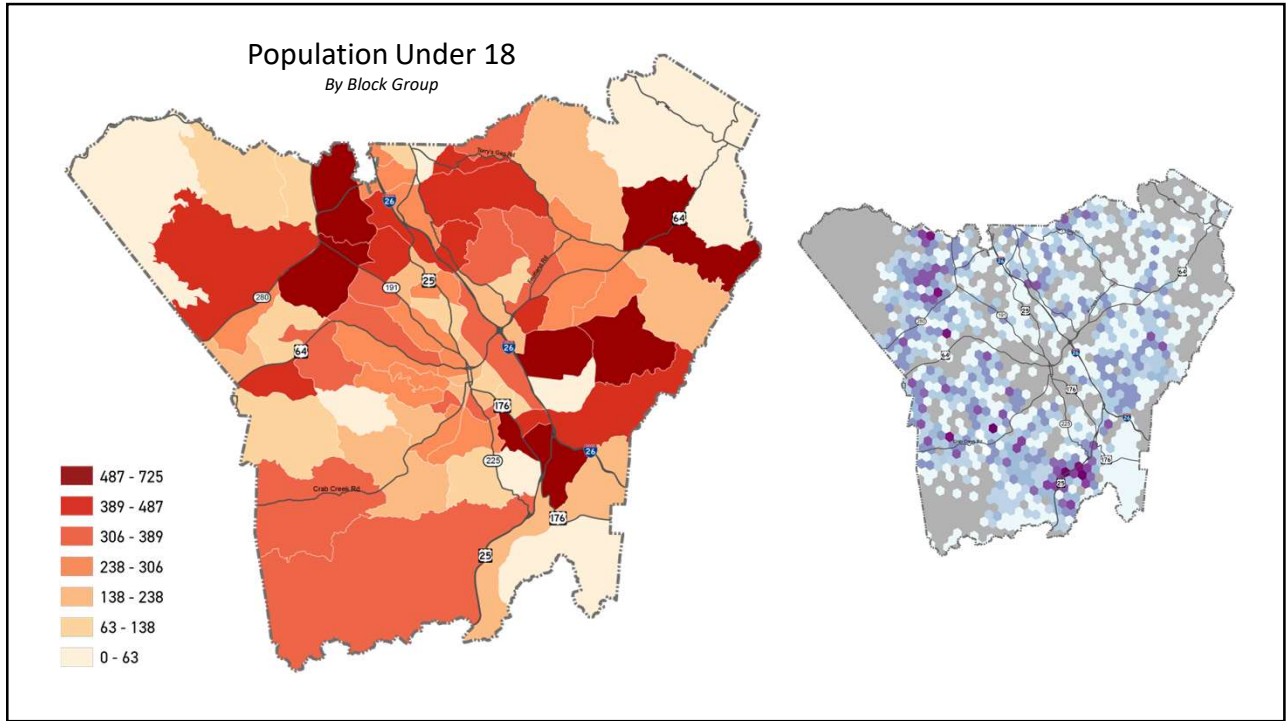
20



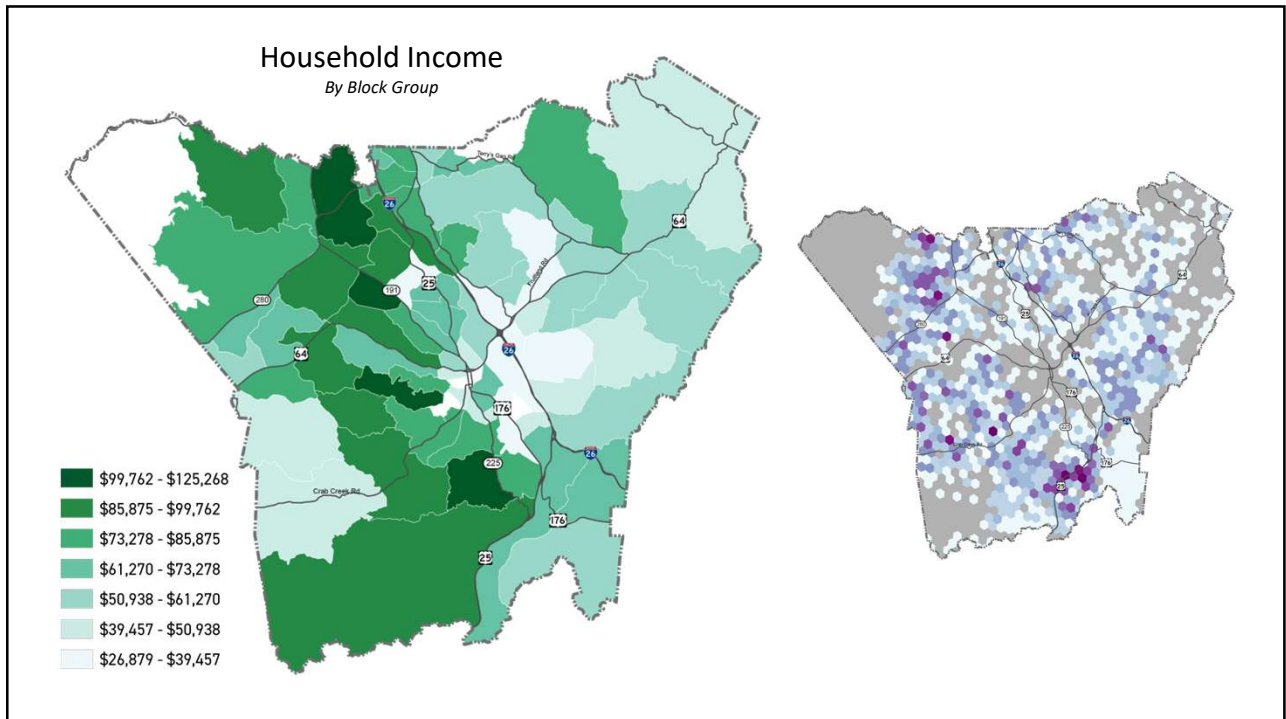
21



22



23



24

