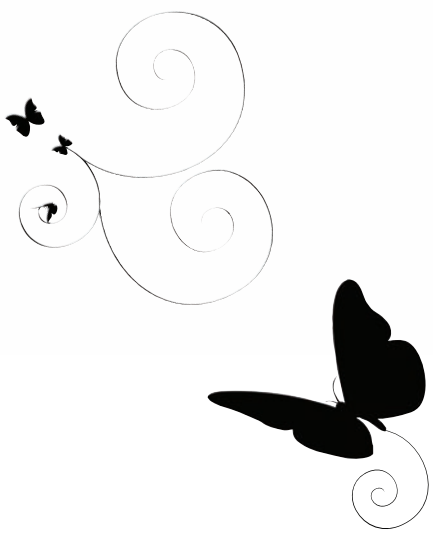


*we need to think differently*  
*reshaping mecklenburg county*  
*we need to think differently*  
*transformation change*

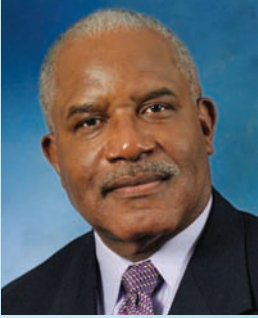


Mecklenburg County  
Performance Report  
2011



# 2011

## Message from the County Manager



**We need to think differently**, were my opening remarks to the Board of County Commissioners at its strategic planning conference in February 2010. Three months later, I reaffirmed this message when I presented the Fiscal Year 2011 recommended budget, as well as noted that we needed to confront the brutal facts as they relate to our economic realities.

The bottom line – we can no longer afford the full array of government services that were offered prior to the Great Recession; and the future will be very different from the past. For the first time in 18 years, budget projections showed essentially no growth in our property tax. And looking into the foreseeable future, it is very unlikely that there will be any meaningful growth in County revenues for the next few years. Yet there continues to be high demand for County services. The increased demand is largely the result of the financial hardships faced by individuals and families, which include record high unemployment.

We envisioned a new future – a new normal – with a focus on preserving the core of County government and stimulating progress. I recommended, and the Board adopted, a multi-year strategic path with the following overarching components to mark our course:

1. Reduce programs, services and personnel to match available funding
2. Maintain long-term fiscal discipline to include deferring issuing debt
3. Redesign and reshape Mecklenburg County government

The budget decisions were not easy, particularly given it wasn't the first year of cuts. The FY2011 adopted budget was \$ 70.9 million less than the previous year and represented a two-year cumulative reduction of \$ 146.7 million.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the County still made progress on the long-term goals on the Community & Corporate Scorecard, a tool used to depict the Board's vision for the community. The scorecard includes 25 measurable goals. All services provided by Mecklenburg County are targeted toward achieving these goals and are aligned to one of four focus areas:

- Community Health & Safety
- Social, Education & Economic Opportunity
- Sustainable Community
- Effective & Efficient Government


We use traffic light symbols as a visual for gauging progress toward our goals. Although progress has been made and some results already achieved 53 percent green lights, we still have a significant journey ahead of us.




Mecklenburg County strives to be the best local government service provider. This annual performance report highlights the County's achievement of, and progress toward, these goals over the past four fiscal years. I hope this report helps you learn more about Mecklenburg County government and our efforts to serve you and our community.

Harry L. Jones, Sr.

## Performance Legend

 A **green light** indicates either the goal has been achieved or performance is at least 95% of the long-term target.

 A **yellow light** indicates performance is between 86% and 94% of the long-term target.



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-  A **red light** indicates performance is at or below 85% of the long-term target.
-  A **yellow/red light** indicates mixed results; performance evaluated using statistical analysis and expert knowledge.

-  **No light** indicates that measurement data are not yet available and/or that targets have not been established.

# Mecklenburg County Scorecard 2011



## Desired Results View

Focus Area .....	<b>Community Health &amp; Safety</b>	<b>Effective &amp; Efficient Government</b>
Customer/ Stakeholder .....	<div data-bbox="717 730 1117 781" style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px;">Reduce Health Risks &amp; Diseases</div> <div data-bbox="717 802 1117 907" style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px;">Improve Management of Mental Illness, Developmental Disabilities &amp; Substance Abuse</div> <div data-bbox="717 928 1117 1012" style="border: 1px dashed red; padding: 5px;">Increase Safety &amp; Security of Residents</div> <div data-bbox="717 1033 1117 1117" style="border: 1px dashed red; padding: 5px;">Increase Efficiency &amp; Effectiveness of Criminal Justice Services</div>	<div data-bbox="1182 730 1588 823" style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px;">Increase Customer &amp; Stakeholder Satisfaction</div> <div data-bbox="1182 835 1588 949" style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px;">Increase Citizen Awareness of County Responsibilities, Services &amp; Results</div>
Internal Business Process .....		<div data-bbox="1172 1276 1598 1369" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Improve Employee Efficiency</div>
Financial .....	<div data-bbox="740 1491 1091 1579" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Reduce/Avoid Costs</div>	<div data-bbox="1172 1491 1598 1579" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Improve Financial Management</div>
Employee & Organization Capacity .....	<div data-bbox="740 1675 1091 1801" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Enhance Workforce Retention &amp; Recruitment</div>	<div data-bbox="1172 1675 1598 1801" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Increase Employee Motivation &amp; Satisfaction</div>

**KEY** **Solid Line** County Is Primary Service Provider **Dotted Line** County Is Not Primary Service Provider



**Social, Education & Economic Opportunity**

Increase Literacy & Workforce Development

Increase Citizen Self-Sufficiency

Increase Respect/Appreciation of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity

Increase Employee Access to Information

Maintain Triple-A Bond Rating

Increase Employee Knowledge, Skills & Abilities



**Sustainable Community**

Improve Air, Water & Land Quality

Improve/Expand Parks, Open Spaces, Greenways & Recreational Opportunities

Preserve Historic Sites & Landmarks

Improve Access to Public Facilities

Increase Economic Development & Job Opportunities

Enhance Citizen Involvement

Maintain Affordable & Competitive Tax Rate

Improve Technology-Related Capacities



photo by Charlie Cowins

# County Assumes New Responsibility

In early 2009 the State of North Carolina informed all counties that it intended to shift the cost of state mandated Child Support Enforcement offices to the counties. This cost saving measure for the State sent counties scrambling to find ways to fund the 'unfunded mandate' in the midst of already troubling budgetary times.

Mecklenburg County was not alone in this challenge, but quickly formed a strategic approach to taking on a new County department in the most cost efficient manner, without compromising service to clients. At the time of the transition, the Child Support Enforcement office in Mecklenburg County had one of the highest total collection rates in North Carolina, yet it lagged far behind the Federal Incentive goals of paternity establishment, support order establishment, collection rate and collection on arrears, or back payments.

CSE is where custodial parents come for help to collect benefits from the non-custodial parent whom the court has determined must pay support for their child or children. Usually this is the father, although there are more mothers required to pay support than in the past. Many times, even with a court order, payments can be hard to collect.

The process to become a County department began in 2009 with a hard deadline by the state to take over provision of the service by July 2010. A team of County staff worked to develop a set of guidelines for success based on past performance of the local CSE office, other CSE offices in the state and successful CSE offices in other localities across the nation. Based on extensive research, the team presented three scenarios to the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners for its approval on January 20, 2010. Those scenarios consisted of:

- 1) Contracting all of the services of the CSE to a third party
- 2) Contracting part of the services to a third party and having some service directly provided by the County
- 3) Having all services provided by the County as a new department

The Board of County Commissioners voted for the third option and work to hire over 90 new County employees, hire a new CSE director, up-fit an existing location, provide new Information Technology resources, and educate clients on the new department began.

In July 2010, the new Mecklenburg County CSE Department opened. Since that time, its new director, **Joan Kennedy**, who came from a similar position



in Prince George's County Maryland, and the 98 staff members have been working to provide excellent service to non-custodial and custodial parents alike as well as educate them on what CSE can do for them.

In the past, people may have believed that many non-custodial parents simply didn't want to pay their court mandated commitments. But Mecklenburg's CSE has found that many simply don't know their payment options, nor do they know how child support workers will help them make their commitments work. As a result, CSE developed an outreach program which includes non-custodial parent centered initiatives that educate them about their rights and responsibilities. The department also restructured service delivery by assigning a single worker to each case thus making contact simpler and increasing customer service.

In Mecklenburg County there are approximately 85,000 children and custodial parents who receive more than \$46.5 million in child support annually.

## Success Stories

- CSE staff were recognized by the State of North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services in FY2011 as Exceptional Collectors more often than any other county in the state.
- Increased paternity establishment rate by 4 percent from FY2010. This was accomplished by completing a special project targeting cases where paternity was at issue, as well as focusing on paternity establishment throughout the year.
- Avoided over \$850,000 in Medicaid costs (more than \$71.3 thousand per month) by enforcing child support orders and successfully collecting child support due on these cases. Through the efficient execution of enforcement responsibilities, CSE led the state in Medicaid Cost Avoidance total dollars for FY2011.
- Ended the fiscal year as the child support office having the highest total net collections statewide. This total of \$46,582,368.13 includes collections on current support and payments on arrears.

## Definitions

**Custodial Parent:** An individual who is the custodian or caretaker for a minor child or children and who is receiving CSE services.

**Non-Custodial Parent:** Any individual who does not have custody of a dependent child but is legally responsible for providing financial support for that dependent child.

**Paternity:** is established when the biological father of a child is determined. If paternity is disputed (“at issue”), CSE cases are referred to the Paternity Processing Unit and Status is suspended until paternity can be determined.

## Community Health & Safety 2011

2015 Performance Goals	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11 Results
<b>Child Abuse Rate</b> To have the County’s abused children rate to be below the State’s rate.				Meck: 7.7 State: 12.4 (cases per 1,000) Performance Trend ▲
<b>Violent Crime Rate</b> To be in the quadrant with the lowest crime rate among comparable jurisdictions in the region.				Lowest Crime Quadrant (557 crimes per 100,000) Performance Trend ▲
<b>Functional Capacity of Jails</b> Not to exceed functional capacity more than 20% of the year.				0% of days exceeded functional capacity Performance Trend ▲
<b>Mental Health Index</b> To obtain 80% or more of targeted mental health goals including increased access to mental health services by decreasing wait time and increased number of consumers staying in the community and/or receiving in-home services.				60% of goals obtained
<b>Disabled Adult Abuse &amp; Neglect Rate</b> To have fewer than 33 cases per 10,000 disabled adults.				Meck: 82 State: 38 (cases per 10,000)
<b>Health Index</b> To obtain 75% or more of targeted health goals including low adolescent pregnancy, preventable mortality and communicable disease rates.				58% of goals obtained Performance Trend ▲
<b>Trial Court Performance Index</b> To obtain 75% or more of targeted trial court goals including case clearance rate, time to disposition and age of active pending cases				33% of goals obtained
<b>Domestic Violence Index</b> To obtain 75% or more of targeted goals including domestic violence reports, protective orders, youth risk behaviors, offender program completion rate and community outreach.				DV Crimes Reported: 1,059 (per 100,000) Protective Orders: 329 (per 100,000) 24% Offender Program Completion Rate

## Social, Education & Economic Opportunity 2011

# No Longer at “The Wall”

On a chilly fall Saturday morning outside Mecklenburg County’s Homeless Resource Center, men and women stand in line waiting to enter two sets of glass doors that open into a large, brightly-lit auditorium.

Inside a group of teen and adult volunteers from Calvary Church in Charlotte stand behind food-and-drink-laden tables. The volunteers offer smiles, greetings and a meal. Bags of belongings get shifted onto shoulders or tucked under arms so that individuals in line can have their hands free to hold paper plates and cups. They eat at tables with attached seating that can accommodate 168 to 200 people in this renovated space that includes meeting rooms, bathrooms and offices for on-site social workers.

Just six months earlier, the scene would have been different. Instead of being inside the space at 618 N. College Street, the outreach ministry would have served the food outside in a location across the street at an area that had come to be known infamously as “The Wall.”

Police and some area business owners had expressed concerns about safety and increased crime at the gathering spot because it had become a hang-out for some even when meals were not being served.

The HRC is the County’s answer to what had been the dilemma of how to effectively partner with community ministries and organizations to do homelessness outreach work via a new delivery model.

Since opening in mid-March 2011, the HRC’s evening and weekend hours of service have offered access to help when traditional community resources are closed. Such hours of availability are crucial, supporters say, in the goal to reach an often transient population that is unsure – or wary – about where to seek help.

“This is a very successful partnership with ministries, churches, and service organizations to give them a role in helping the homeless and discovering they can trust and work well together with the County and each other,” said **Peter Safir**, the County’s homeless services director. His division, Homeless Support Services, is part of the County’s Community Support Services department.

“The facility is attracting other purposes and services under the banner of HRC including (becoming a) cooling and heating station in dangerous temperature weather, a location for shoes, blankets, and umbrella collection/distribution in partnership with concerned organizations and advocates,” Safir said. “We employ highly skilled social workers who are on site to offer assessment, referral, problem solving, follow-up and case management for street homeless who have not used these services elsewhere. We are able to link homeless clients to several of our partner agencies where HSS staff are co-located such as the Men’s and Women’s Shelter, Crisis Assistance, A Child’s Place, (and) Urban Ministry.”

## “It’s Working Extremely Well”

*continued on page 14*

*County staff and local radio personality gather on the steps of the HRC after a successful community donation drive.*



photo by Charlie Cowins



# Future of the Library

**Often innovation occurs in response to various types of challenges, economic and otherwise.** That certainly was the case when Mecklenburg County government, the public library and community came together to create the Future of the Library Task Force. This group of 17 citizen-volunteers was charged with providing recommendations for a sustainable future for the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

The Task Force was appointed at a time when, faced with reduced revenue, Mecklenburg County had to significantly reduce funding to the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. This resulted in the library's budget being reduced by \$10 million, or about a third, in FY2011. Between April and July 2010, the library had to eliminate 180 positions, close four libraries, and cut service hours in half.

But there was hope. Despite the effects of the economic downturn, the County, library and community had a shared goal: to provide Mecklenburg County residents with the best library service possible with the resources available. It took a diverse team of objective, talented, and experienced citizens – the Task Force – to create a realistic, actionable plan to reach that goal.

The members of the Task Force volunteered their time for six months to study the challenges facing the library. **Dr. Jim Woodward**, Chancellor Emeritus of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, led the Task Force. They carefully researched the situation, dispelling widely held misconceptions

*continued on page 15*

photo by Charlie Cowins



## Social, Education & Economic Opportunity 2011

### 2015 Performance Goals

	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11 Results
<b>Ethnic &amp; Cultural Diversity Index</b> To have 80% of residents believe Mecklenburg County is a diverse community, provides an array of cultural activities and has diverse minority-owned businesses.	●	●	●	Diverse Community: 85% Cultural Activities: 90% Minority-Owned Business: 75% Performance Trend ▲
<b>Adult Literacy Index</b> To increase the percentage of adults that are literate.	●	●	●	83% Performance Trend ▲
<b>Student Literacy Index</b> To have students perform on grade level or above on End of Grade Reading (95%), Math (88%) and Writing tests (80%).	●	●	●	Math: 81% Reading: 70% Writing: 74%
<b>Unemployment Rate</b> To have the County's unemployment rate at or below the State's rate.	●	●	●	Meck: 10.4% State: 9.9% Performance Trend ▲
<b>Self-Sufficiency Index</b> To have 50% of clients on public assistance increase their earned income; to assist veterans in accessing VA services; and to decrease the County's homeless population.	●	●	●	Increased earned income: 35% Homeless population: +.2% Veteran claims: 3,054 Paid claims: \$21.6 million Performance Trend ▲
<b>Workforce Development Rate</b>	●	●	●	Under Development

# Opportunities Amid Budget Woes

Lori Saylor

*“Park and Rec is very grateful for the time and effort that so many people have contributed over the past year,”...*

For the second straight year, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation witnessed the reduction of staff and resources, including a \$14 cut million in its operational budget. But in many ways, 2011 was a year of great accomplishment for the department.



*Children observe environmental education exhibit at a nature preserve.*

The challenges were substantial. Cuts resulted in the closing of four recreation centers, and reduced business hours at the remaining recreation centers as well as the County's three nature centers. Reductions also meant that many programs and activities, such as the Great Outdoors Festival at Latta Plantation Nature Preserve and the annual Christmas tree lighting at Freedom Park, were no longer feasible. Park maintenance also felt the pinch. With fewer staff on board, it became

a real challenge for park staff to provide upkeep for the nearly 200 parks in the County.

Park and Recreation responded to these challenges by placing a large emphasis on its volunteer program. A large recruitment effort began in July 2010, and thousands responded to the call. More than 17,000 residents contributed over 100,000 hours of their time (a value of \$2.2 million according to the Points of Light Foundation) to assist in park landscaping, recreation programming, youth leagues, special events, and Therapeutic Recreation and Cooperative Extension programs.

*continued on page 16*

*Supporters unveil a site map at the Carolina Thread Trail greenway.*

photo by Charlie Cowins



# Awards & Recognition

Despite the setbacks, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation was still recognized for its exemplary service to the community and its outstanding programs and facilities. The department was named as a finalist for the NRPA Gold Medal Award for a second year. The award is presented annually by the National Recreation and Park Association to honor excellence in management and planning of parks and recreation agencies.

"I'm very proud of the work and professional dedication of our staff and volunteers to earn this recognition," Park and Recreation Department Director **Jim Garges** said.

The department also received seven awards from the National Association of Counties in recognition of outstanding achievement in programming:

- **All About Arts** artistic opportunity for teens and young adults with disabilities
- **North Carolina Dance Theater Reach** accessible dance training for promising students with financial needs
- **Young Athletes** program modeled from Special Olympics for children with disabilities, focusing on developing physical, cognitive, and social skills
- **Pool Pals** pool-based program for young adults with disabilities
- **McClintock Outdoor Club** targets middle school students with immersive experience in outdoor adventure recreation and nature education
- **Nature Explorer Zone** features nine interactive play areas designed by kids
- **Orienteering for Winners on Wheels** designed for scouts with physical disabilities (ages 6-12) teaches the competitive sport of orienteering

## Sustainable Community 2011

### 2015 Performance Goals

	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11 Results
<b>Business Property Growth Rate</b> To have positive growth in business property valuation.				1.15% increase
<b>Preservation Rate</b> To increase the number of preserved historic sites and landmarks				2 new sites preserved
<b>Environmental Quality Index</b> To have 100% goal attainment for improving air quality, stream water quality, and solid waste management and maintaining excellent lake water quality.				97% of goal obtained Performance Trend ▲
<b>Insurance Services Office Ratings</b> To achieve Insurance Services Office (ISO) ratings of 1.0 or lower for commercial building regulations, 4.0 or lower for residential building regulations and flood control and 5.0 or lower for fire protection.				Commercial: 1.0 Residential: 4.0 Flood: 5.0 Fire: 5.4
<b>Job Growth Rate</b> To have positive net growth in the number of jobs.				0.6% decrease Performance Trend ▲
<b>Transit Proximity Index</b> To have 85% or more of the County's parks, greenways and libraries within one-quarter mile of a transit stop.				Parks: 54% Greenways: 60% Libraries: 92% Performance Trend ▲
<b>Parks &amp; Open Space Index</b> To have 100% goal attainment for voter approved parks, recreational amenities, greenways and natural resources.				11% of goal obtained
<b>Environmental Leadership Index</b> To have 85% or more of the County's annual operations performed in a manner that conserves and protects our air, water and land resources.				59% of goals obtained Performance Trend ▲
<b>Park &amp; Recreation Capital Ratio</b> To have 20% or more of capital expenditures for Park & Recreation facilities matched by other public or private sector partners.				17% matched

## Efficiencies Beyond Cost Reductions

*“... business processes should be evaluated and optimized prior to automation ...”*

Charles Rutherford

**When the question of whether there is a better way to get something done in Mecklenburg County government gets asked, a team is in place to help find an answer.**

In an environment where the after effects of the Great Recession continue to push local governments to come up with new ways to provide services with fewer budget resources, such a team is important.

While leadership has always encouraged and expected effective and efficient programs and services, now the County is taking a more deliberate and focused approach to gain efficiencies.

The Business Process Management team, or BPM, is the dedicated business team created to identify, improve and document efficiencies.

The now 12-member team got its start on a smaller scale in what then was the County's Information Services & Technology Department, says **Charles Rutherford**, manager of BPM. Management in IST (which is now called Information Technology) recognized the need for a process improvement team to help projects move along and have successful outcomes.

“They realized from previous projects that business processes should be evaluated and optimized prior to automation,” Rutherford said. “This approach would have a substantial impact on reducing the possibility or risk of IT developing or procuring applications that automate inefficient processes.”

Now the process improvement effort is enterprise-wide and the team is available to provide service to all County departments and projects. Team members have knowledge, skills and certification in process improvement, project management and Six Sigma. They also have technical backgrounds in Information Technology and/or engineering.

As for the team's recent accomplishments, Rutherford says he's most proud of the BPM efforts at Child Support Enforcement – a new department for the County and which had been managed by the state of North Carolina. After several years of not meeting the federal requirements, the BPM team, through process improvements and implementing standard operating procedures, enabled Child Support Enforcement to qualify for the federal reimbursements and subsidies.

County leaders want the public to know about the successes through BPM and other initiatives. Ultimately, the County's goal is to streamline the processes, reduce cost and improve service delivery.

“Residents should notice improved service quality and delivery,” Rutherford said. “Improved business processes will have a direct impact on service quality and effectiveness, and how efficient the service is delivered. For example, some of the improvements we implemented at the Department of Social Services should allow clients to apply for service remotely and reduce traffic from coming into the office,” he said. “Other improvements may include improving system response time when clients request case status.”

*continued on page 17*

# Effective & Efficient Government 2011

2015 Performance Goals	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11 Results
<b>Bond Rating</b> To maintain Triple A bond rating, the highest possible score.				AAA
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b> To have 80% or more of County residents satisfied with direct and online service delivery.				96% customer satisfaction rating Performance Trend ▲
<b>Employee Access to Information</b> To have 80% or more of County employees satisfied with internal communication and access to information necessary to perform job.				89% satisfaction Performance Trend ▲
<b>Employee Knowledge, Skills &amp; Abilities</b> To have 80% or more of County employees satisfied with training and development opportunities.				85% satisfaction Performance Trend ▲
<b>Employee Motivation &amp; Satisfaction</b> To have 80% or more of County employees satisfied with working at Mecklenburg County.				85% satisfaction Performance Trend ▲
<b>Employee Satisfaction Parity</b> To achieve at least 80% satisfaction (parity) for each indicator by race, gender and age.				Parity achieved by race, gender and age. Performance Trend ▲
<b>Employee Technology Resources</b> To have 80% or more of County employees satisfied with technology related resources.				88% satisfaction
<b>Employees per Capita</b> To optimally manage demands for service at or below the per capita average for North Carolina benchmark jurisdictions.				Meck: 479 Benchmark: 621 Performance Trend ▲
<b>Public Awareness</b> To have 100% goal attainment on awareness of County services, goals and results.				105% of target achieved
<b>Resignation Rate</b> To have the County's voluntary resignation to be at or below the national benchmark for local and state governments.				Meck: 5.3% Benchmark: 6.4%
<b>Tax Collection</b> RateTo be comparable or higher than state average in tax collections				97.70%
<b>Property Tax to Household Income</b> To have residential property tax revenue as a percentage of household income less than or equal to select regional jurisdictions in North Carolina.				Meck: 1.50% Benchmark: 1.43%
<b>Advisory Committee Diversity</b> To have advisory committee membership representative of the County's racial/ethnic population which currently is 28% Black/African American;13% other.				Blacks: 31% Others: 13% Performance Trend ▲
<b>Percentage at Net County Funding</b> To have all departments expenditures within amended budget.				90% (19 of 21)
<b>Stakeholder Satisfaction</b> To have 80% or more of County residents satisfied with quality of service, value for tax dollar and the community as a place to live, work and recreate; and to have 65% or more of residents satisfied with County communication.				73% Satisfaction (Quality Service) 51% Satisfaction (Value/Tax Dollar) 56% Satisfaction (Communication) 72% Satisfaction (Live, Work, Recreate)
<b>Citizen Satisfaction: Input Opportunities</b> To have 80% citizen satisfaction with input opportunities.				60% satisfaction rating Performance Trend ▲
<b>Workforce Representation</b> To have a diverse applicant pool consistent with the Federal Government's selection rate.				Under Development

## No Longer at “The Wall”

continued from page 8

Deborah Mayhew

*“It’s more my job just to be here and build a relationship with them.”*

**Mike Radesky**, who’s been doing such work for more than 15 years, is one of two coordinators with the Calvary Church outreach ministry at the HRC and the Men’s Shelter, said he likes the HRC concept. Radesky’s church is one of five street ministries that now operate out of the HRC, Safir said.

“It’s working extremely well,” Radesky said on a recent Saturday morning. “There was apprehension at first because we did not know whether we might be limited in what we can do – primarily minister to men and women.”

But that hasn’t been a problem, he said, and there’s an added plus to no longer having to serve in cold temperatures, or ice and snow. The collaboration with County government and faith and community organizations is a good idea, he said.

“It’s really rewarding for me to see some of my tax dollars being spent to do something to help us help them,” Radesky said, opening his arms toward the men and women seated and eating.

And helping the clients is the number one goal.

“I am quite pleased that the clients also have accepted this as a step up and appreciate the rest rooms and the cleanliness of the HRC,” Safir said, and added that the County social workers have a great deal to do with efforts success. There are two full-time senior social workers and one part-time social worker assistant assigned to the HRC.

“Empowering the clients economically, that’s what’s going to move them,” said **Teisha Miller**, a senior social worker. “And since jobs are scarce, maybe helping them qualify for SSI (Social Security) benefits can help them achieve that. Trying to get the majority of clients to get involved with resources and not just eat and leave – that’s our ultimate goal,” Miller said.

She and the other social workers say success stories do happen. There’s the woman who talked about wanting to get help for her addiction several times but was afraid. On the day she decided she was ready, a social worker took her to get help immediately. Another woman asked for help learning to read so that she didn’t have to ask for help – and possibly be taken advantage of – withdrawing her disability funds from an ATM.

“When I first came on I wanted to help someone so badly because our job is to help get people off the street,” **Deborah Mayhew**, the Center’s part-time social worker assistant, said. She soon learned to listen and to understand just where her clients are in their journey to self-sufficiency. “I realized: it’s not what I want for you, it’s what you want for yourself,” Mayhew said. “It’s more my job just to be here and build a relationship with them.”

Miller, the senior social worker, agrees.

“When they’re ready, hopefully, we can help them,” Miller said, then after a pause she repeated: “When they’re ready.”

## The HRC At a Glance

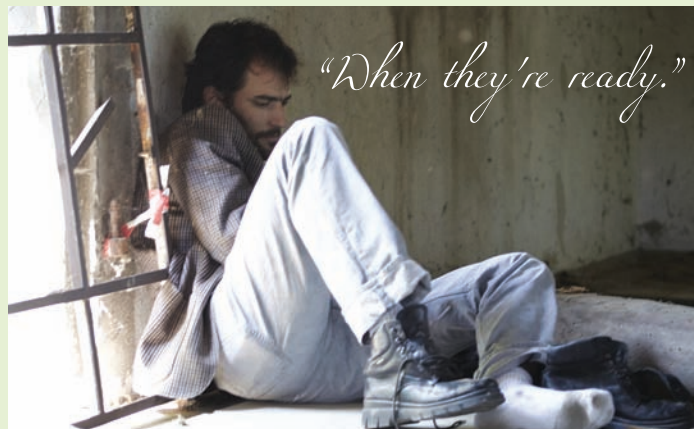
The Homeless Resource Center opened March 14, 2011 and community partner ministries began serving food three days per week. In May 2011, the meals expanded to five days per week.

### Meals by the Numbers

March	330 clients
April	354 clients
May	1423 clients
June	1591 clients
July	2069 clients
August	1945 clients
September	1890 clients
Total	9602 clients

*Source: Teisha Miller, senior social worker, Homeless Support Services division of the Mecklenburg County Community Support Services department.*

Many, if not most of the clients, come to eat more than one day per week.



# Future of the Library

continued from page 9



photo by Charlie Cowins

*Members of the Library Task Force listen to a presentation at an education meeting.*

about the library and developing 39 specific recommendations, which have been adopted as the working model for change over the next two years.

The recommendations fit into eight broad categories: Funding, Operations, Programming, Development/Fundraising, Main Library, ImaginOn, Volunteers, and Governance. For example, in the category of Governance, some of the recommendations include:

- The County Manager or designee will review the library budget draft prior to submission.
- Benchmarking/Scorecard goals of the library will be revised annually to reflect County and library priorities.
- In July 2012, the Future of the Library Task Force will form a committee to review relationship progress.

During the Task Force process, the County and library forged a stronger and more durable relationship based on communication and mutual

understanding. This relationship developed during the process and was further reinforced with Task Force recommendations that formalized the collaboration.

As a result of the Task Force's hard work, the goal of providing residents with the best library service possible with the resources available is becoming more of a reality. First, the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners and Library Board of Trustees unanimously approved the Task Force's recommendations with only minor changes. Second, the BOCC gave the library an additional \$2 million in funding, which allowed the library to improve its services by increasing operating hours and access at larger regional libraries. Simultaneously, the library began making substantial progress on the Task Force's other recommendations. One example of this was the alignment of library programs with three focus areas: Literacy, Educational Success, and Workforce Development. These focus areas came directly from the Task Force Report and the County's Critical Success Factors.

Because of these efforts, school children across the County can continue to utilize the educational resources of a library close to their homes; the jobless have a much-needed place to go for advice and Internet access; and residents across the County can find a quiet space to expand their minds through books, video, research and shared exploration.

The Future of the Library Task Force is a great example of the community coming together to solve a problem, and of finding ways to make innovative changes with the resources available. And as Mecklenburg County and the library continue to work together to serve the county's citizens, other communities around the nation – and even the world – are viewing this collaboration as a model for sustainability in a rapidly changing world.

# Opportunities Amid Budget Woes

*continued from page 10*

“Park and Rec is very grateful for the time and effort that so many people have contributed over the past year,” said Volunteer Services Coordinator **Lori Saylor**. “Their dedication to service has really made a difference in our community.”

Employees did their part, too. Staff did not waiver in their commitment to responsibilities, mission and service to the community. Time and time again, as the service demands increased upon a smaller workforce, staff responded and residents acknowledged the high quality of service delivery with exemplary customer service satisfaction scores:

- 91 percent satisfaction for overall experience at parks, greenways and nature preserves
- 97 percent overall satisfaction for department staff interaction with facility users and patrons

Park and Recreation’s Capital Planning and Greenway Division also experienced tremendous success despite reductions. The two divisions, which merged in 2011 as a cost saving measure, opened seven sections of greenways:

- Toby Creek Greenway near UNC Charlotte
- West Branch Rocky River Greenway
- Little Sugar Creek Greenway – Midtown – three sections
- Stewart Creek Greenway
- Four Mile Creek Greenway

“We are very fortunate that we have the ability to continue the expansion of our greenway system,” said Greenway Planner **Gwen Cook**. “Greenways play such a vital role in our community; they provide areas for hiking or biking and even help improve water quality by buffering streams and trapping water pollutants.”



photo by Charlie Cowins

*A woman and her dog walk along one of the County's greenway trails.*

As the department moves forward, there is optimism that the quality of service will continue to increase. In the FY2012 budget, the Board of County Commissioners approved an increase of \$2 million in Park and Recreation funding.

The money will help facility operating hours, fund expenses for new facilities and greenways and increase materials and supplies for basic maintenance of athletic fields and parks.





*“Improved business processes will have a direct impact on service quality and effectiveness, and how efficient the service is delivered ...”*

Charles Rutherford

## Efficiencies Beyond Cost Reductions

*continued from page 12*

The following list provides other examples of process efficiencies at work in Mecklenburg County:

**Trying the iPad** – Information Services & Technology conducted a pilot to determine the feasibility of using the tablet as a business efficiency tool. The verdict: With its quick and mobile access to email and the Internet, document management and ease of note taking among other benefits, the study shows the iPad is a useful business efficiency tool for staff in several County areas.

**Saving Space** – A document management system created for the Child Support Enforcement department enabled access to digital files and reduced physical file space requirements. The project helped to reduce the record rooms by 67 percent (condensed three file rooms to one) with a savings of \$26,604 a year. Projected annual productivity improvement is \$285,000. Case files and relevant documents can be accessed at the point of need – for example, in court and during outreach activities.

**Managing Documents** – In the Department of Social Services, a multi-generational/multi-phase initiative is in place to manage documents. Some of the project goals include: substantially reduce paper by 50 percent; eliminate paper-driven processes; design and streamline all digital (paperless) processes; eliminate physical record rooms and transition to an e-record room.

**Using In-House Imaging** – For the Tax Collector’s Office, images of payment documentation from 2005 to 2010 were loaded into the County’s enterprise imaging system. Now the information is more accessible to users and the change eliminates the cost of paying an outside vendor for access to and storage of this information.

**Outsourcing Services** – Real Estate Services projected a savings of \$439,000 as a result of outsourcing all of its remaining responsibilities for buildings and grounds maintenance. In FY2011, the department became responsible for the maintenance of approximately 4 million square feet of facilities, including new responsibilities for Park and Recreation and Charlotte Mecklenburg Library facilities. Already, about 78 percent was maintained by outsourced providers, with the remaining 22 percent maintained by a combination of in-house staff and contractors. The department requested bids for that 22 percent and awarded two vendors the work because it was the most cost-effective method.

**Reducing Printing Costs** – The Department of Social Services reduced printing costs by \$103,296 in FY2011 through a project called DIME. The project began as a pilot in March 2009, and was designed to create long-term return on investment to DSS through increased efficiencies by reducing the amount of paper routed through the agency; reducing the amount of paper printed for and filed in cases; and reducing printing costs.

**Improving Processes** – The Finance Department implemented remote deposit capture for select departments throughout the County. Checks are scanned-in and the images and data are submitted electronically to the bank for deposit, eliminating the need to send paper checks to the bank. This initiative has resulted in more timely deposits, improved cash flow, and reduced errors. Implementation of remote deposit capture to additional sites will continue in fiscal year 2012.

# What's MeckConnect?

Derrick Anderson

*"The program provides helpful information and opportunities that allow citizens to engage and participate with County Government for the benefit of our community."*

**For most people in Mecklenburg County**, often the only encounter they have with the County is to pay their taxes, receive one or more of the human services, use one of the parks or greenways, or to request a service such as a building permit. However, among the almost 1 million people living in Mecklenburg County, few know how to get involved – from volunteering to participating in policy development and decision making. Further, based on a survey by the Lee Institute, many people don't believe their involvement will affect change.

As a result, the County in redesigning and reshaping Mecklenburg government decided to be more deliberate in its efforts to engage citizens by starting a new initiative called MeckConnect. So far, MeckConnect has held over 200 community meetings on topics ranging from building the County budget,



to gathering feedback on the recent revaluation, to holding forums to give the Board of County Commissioners feedback on creating the County's Vision 2020. MeckConnect also has developed methods to allow communication between residents and their County government using tools such as Facebook and a webpage at [www.MecklenburgCountyNC.gov](http://www.MecklenburgCountyNC.gov).

One of the participants in a community meeting had this to say about the initiative: "MeckConnect is a useful tool," said Foresight Leadership's **Derrick Anderson**, who is involved with the West Boulevard Community Roundtable. "The program provides helpful information and opportunities that allow citizens to engage and participate with County Government for the benefit of our community."

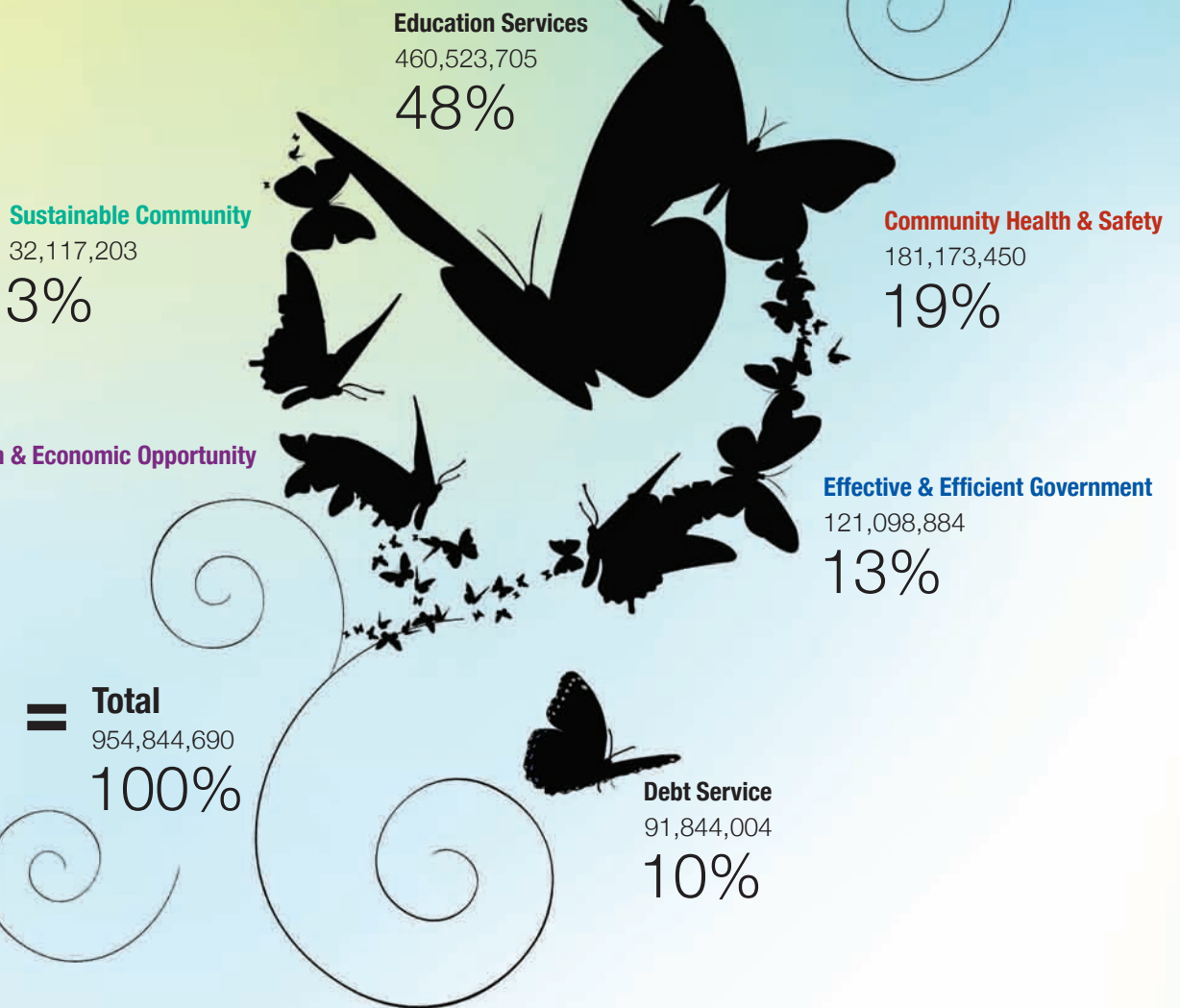
In 2012, Mecklenburg County wants to continue to reach neighborhood and other groups through MeckConnect. The plan is to ask groups what they want to know about County government and provide tailored talks and presentations. To request a speaker for your group or meeting, email **Sophia Hollingsworth**, MeckConnect coordinator at [Sophia.Hollingsworth@MecklenburgCountyNC.gov](mailto:Sophia.Hollingsworth@MecklenburgCountyNC.gov)

*County Manager, Harry L. Jones, Sr., speaks at a community meeting.*



# FY2011 Budget In Brief

## How the Money was Used (County Dollars)



## Mecklenburg County Tax Rate

The County's largest source of operating revenue is the *ad valorem* property tax. Real property (land and buildings), motor vehicles, boats, trailers and income-producing personal property are subject to the property tax unless specifically exempted by North Carolina statute.

Property owners in unincorporated areas (areas not within the City of Charlotte or the other six towns) pay additional taxes for their share of police services through

the Law Enforcement Service District Tax. The police services provided in the city and towns are paid through those municipalities' tax rates.

Last year, the County tax rate was \$0.8387 per \$100 of assessed value (\$1.0175 for unincorporated areas). This means that the tax bill for a home assessed at \$150,000 was \$1,258.05. The FY2011 County and unincorporated area tax rates remained the same.



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