

Social Values and Socio-Economics

Introduction to the WNC Vitality Index Tool

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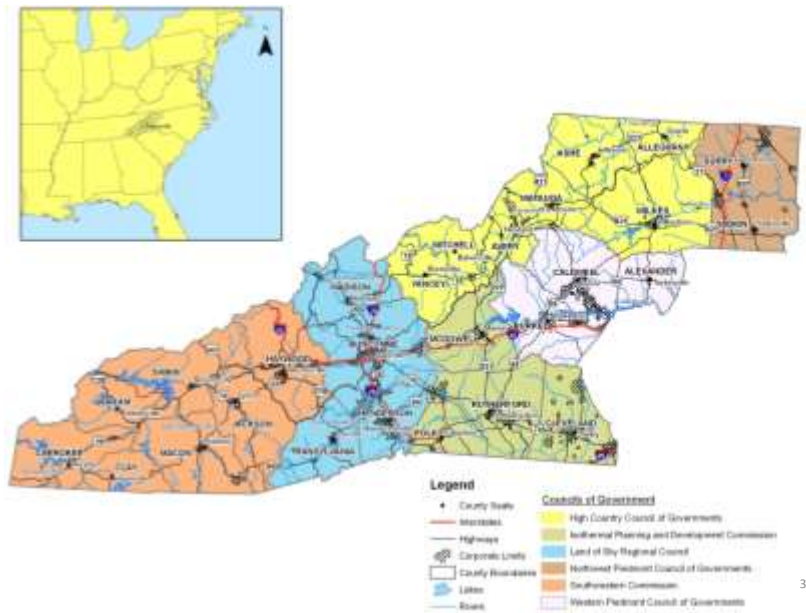


Blue Ridge National Heritage Area was designated by Congress in 2003

The mission of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area is to protect, preserve, interpret and develop the unique natural, historical and cultural resources of Western North Carolina for the benefit of present and future generations, and in so doing to stimulate improved economic opportunity in the region.



Blue Ridge National Heritage Area covers 25 of the 27 Counties that the Mountain Resource Commission covers

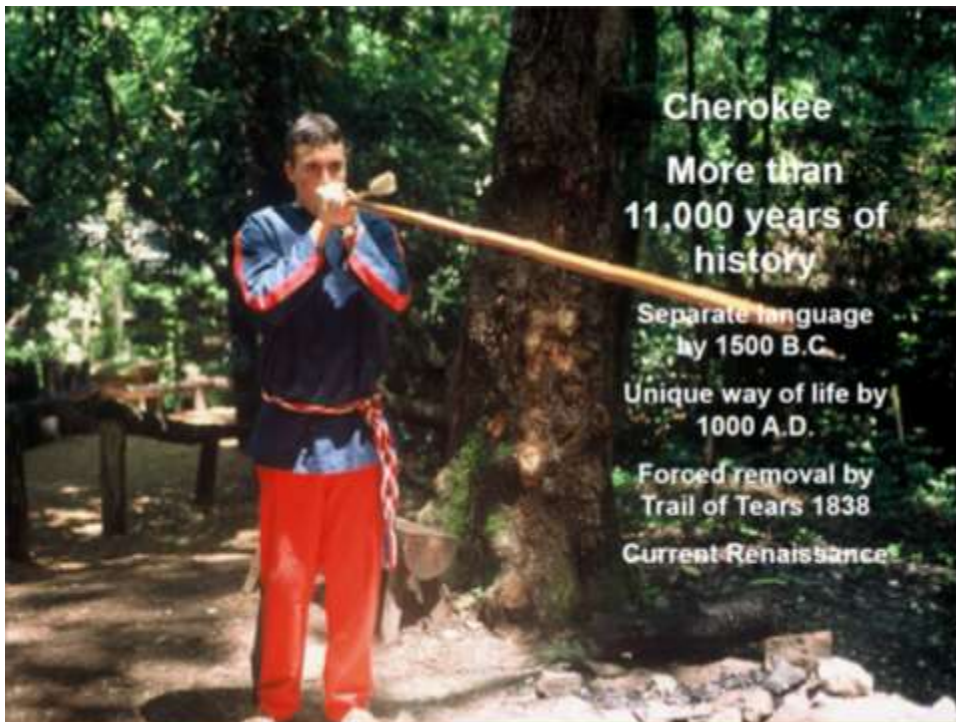


Natural Landscape and Conservation are intertwined with Socio-Economic factors

Five Heritage Themes:

- Natural
- Music
- Cherokee
- Craft
- Agriculture





Current Citizenry of Western North Carolina

Citizens are very earth smart, place-based either by their ancestry or they move here for their love of the scenic landscape.

They are interested in connecting to the earth through agriculture or conservation, crafts and even the music.





Development of the Vitality Index / Mountain Resources Commission

- 2009 State Legislature created the Mountain Resources Commission to advise WNC legislators on issues related to the natural landscape
- Because of the political climate, the group decided to focus on a project that would help develop a score-card of how the region was doing from a variety of disciplines -
 - Natural,
 - Human,
 - Built and
 - Economic
- The process was built around an index that had been created by the US Forest Service to measure Forest Sustainability



Western North Carolina Vitality Index

Home

Overview
 Natural
 Human
 Built
 Economic
 Download

The Western North Carolina Vitality Index reports on the 27 counties of Western North Carolina through the perspectives of the region's natural, social, built, and economic environments. Designed to assist local governments, interest groups, and the public in furtherance of the Mountain Resources Commission's overall mission to "take care of our natural resources to enhance and sustain quality of life and ensure the long term health of our region and our people." This resource allows the information necessary to:

- Preserve the heritage and culture that defines our communities while strengthening public health.
- Improve the region's local economic activity and expand its influence.
- Promote development that accommodates healthy growth.
- Protect our region's abundant and unique natural resources, and
- Compare the western region's status to the rest of North Carolina and the nation at large.

This index is sorted into four categories:

The Natural Environment – From the pristine streams and rivers to the towering Blue Ridge Mountains, this analysis of Western North Carolina's natural resources reports on the vitality of our topographic, geologic, and biological resources, and the state of our weather and climate, water quality, and air quality.

The Human Environment – With generations of experience honed down to an efficient craft, local music, art, heritage, and spiritual values are important elements that reflect all Western North Carolinians. This study observes the region through a lens focused on our population, human health, education, and culture.

The Built Environment – Looking at the region's status on land use, housing, transportation, water supply, energy, and natural stresses, hazards, and risks, this analysis covers the places we work, shop, play, travel, and live. Through careful planning, these uses can be balanced to minimize their environmental impacts in order to ensure a living and productive community.

The Economic Environment – A look at the region's standing on income and poverty, employment, agriculture, forestry, and tourism is essential to promoting a socially healthy and resilient economy.

Mountain Resources Commission | UAS | A | Duke Energy | NCDENR

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Importance of integration

Natural

Importance of integration

Natural
Human

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Importance of integration

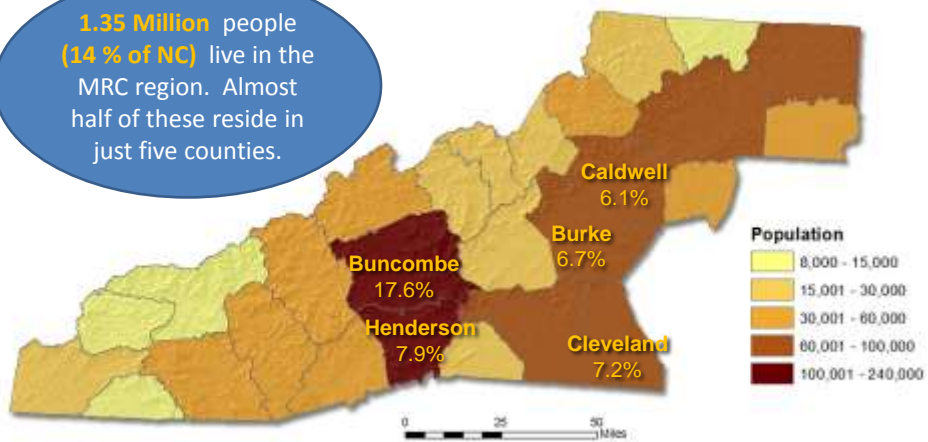
Natural
Human
Built
Economic

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2010 Population

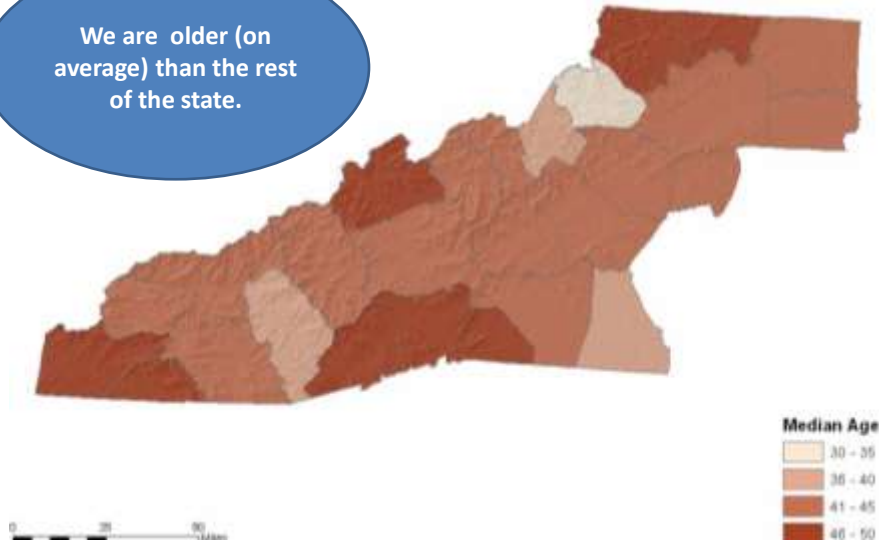
1.35 Million people (14 % of NC) live in the MRC region. Almost half of these reside in just five counties.





Median Age

We are older (on average) than the rest of the state.

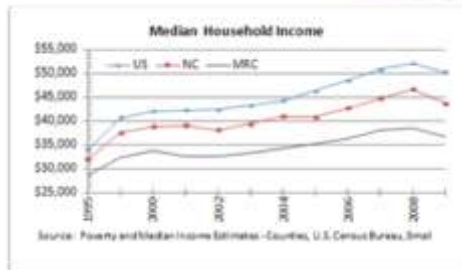
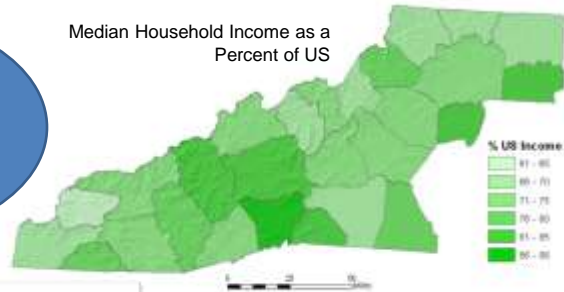




Median Household Income

Median Household Income in the MRC Region is **73%** of the National Average and **84%** of the NC level.

Median Household Income as a Percent of US



Median Income	
Wake (Raleigh)	\$61,594
Meck. (Charlotte)	\$52,363
Henderson	\$43,589
North Carolina	\$43,500
Buncombe	\$42,846
Haywood	\$39,987
Jackson	\$36,741

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Case Studies – Discussion of socio-economic connection with the landscape

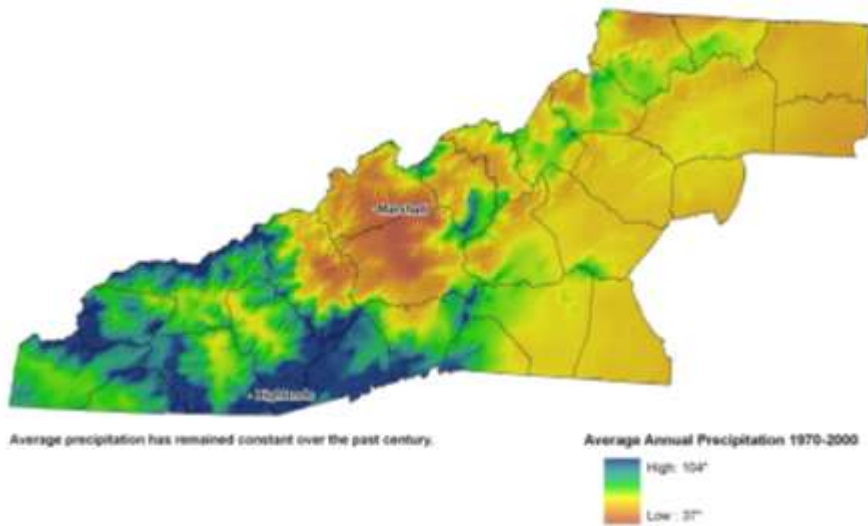
- Water Resources
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Housing

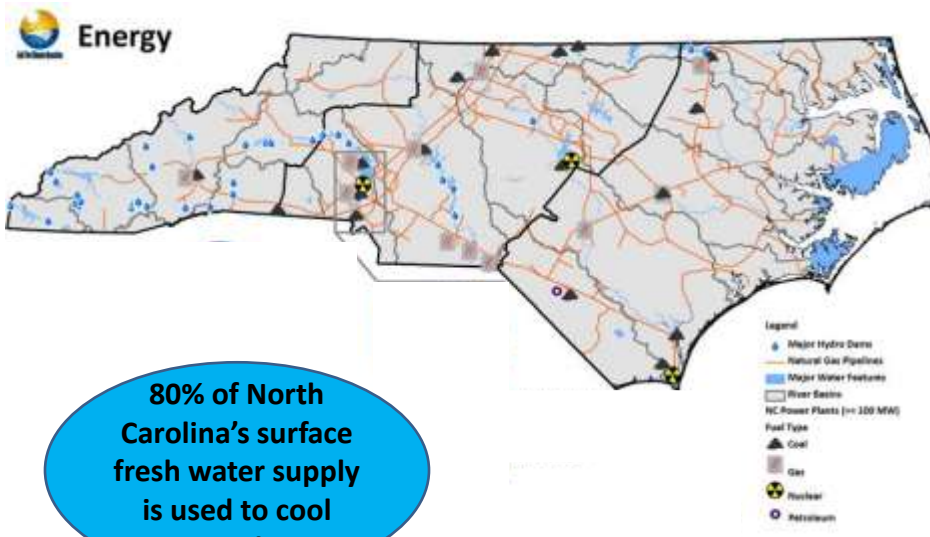
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Water



Average Annual Precipitation





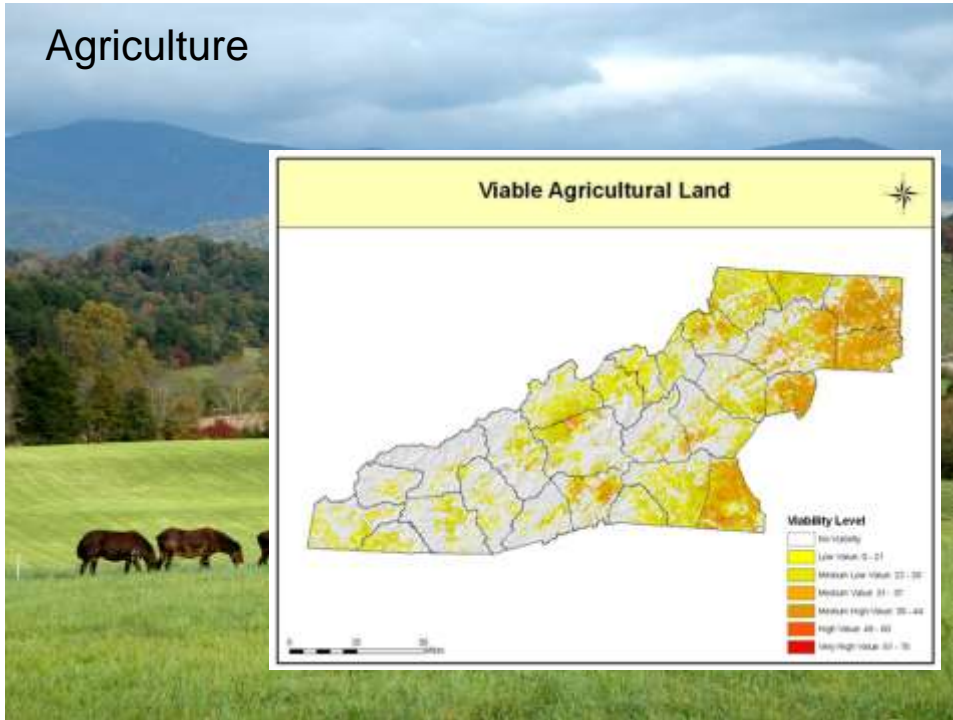
80% of North Carolina's surface fresh water supply is used to cool Power Plants.



Agriculture



Agriculture



The impact of tourism in tying together these heritage assets



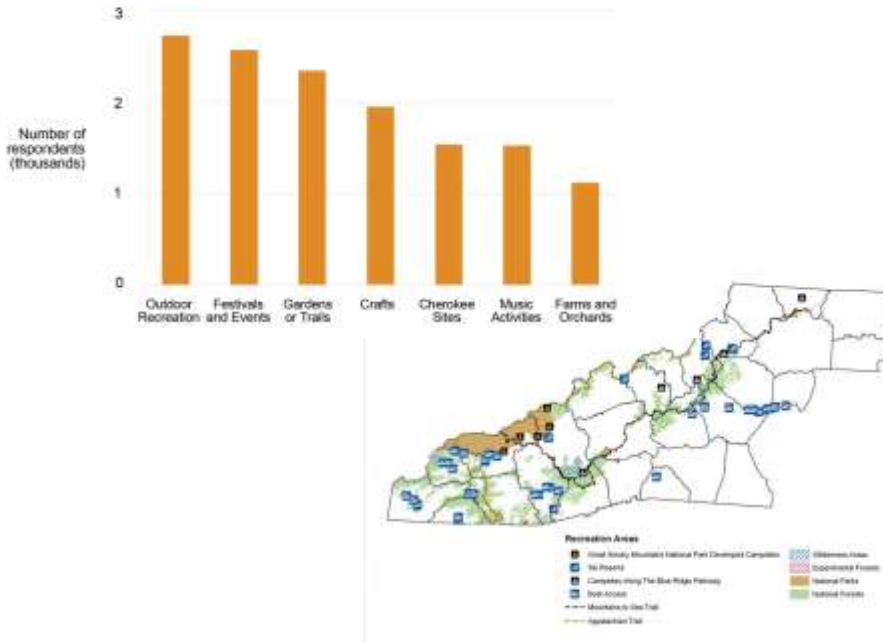
The impact of tourism



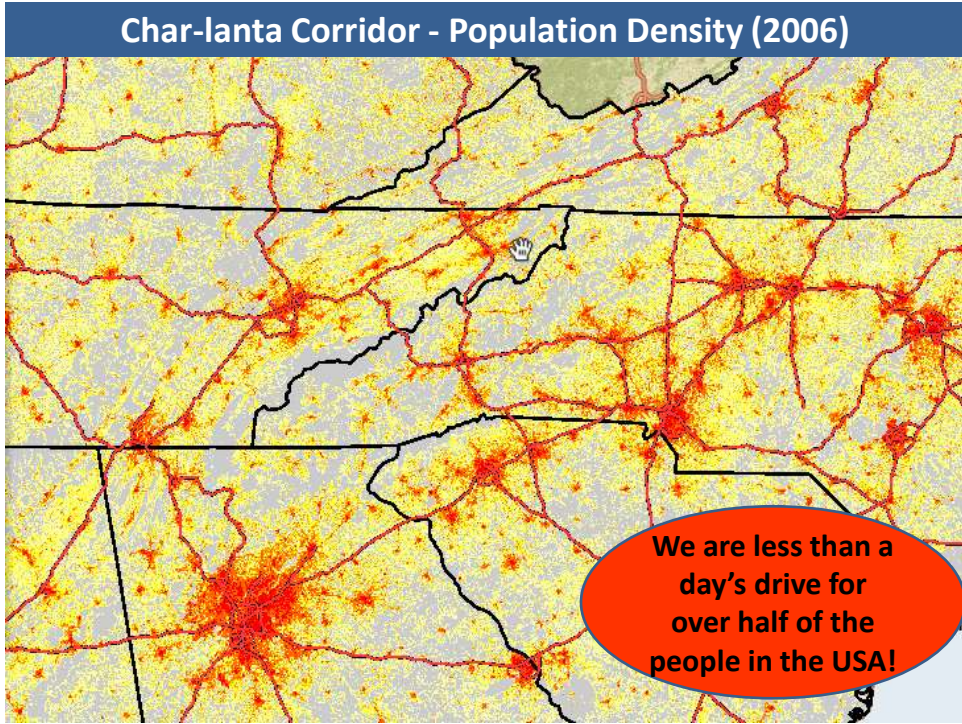
Recreation and Tourism



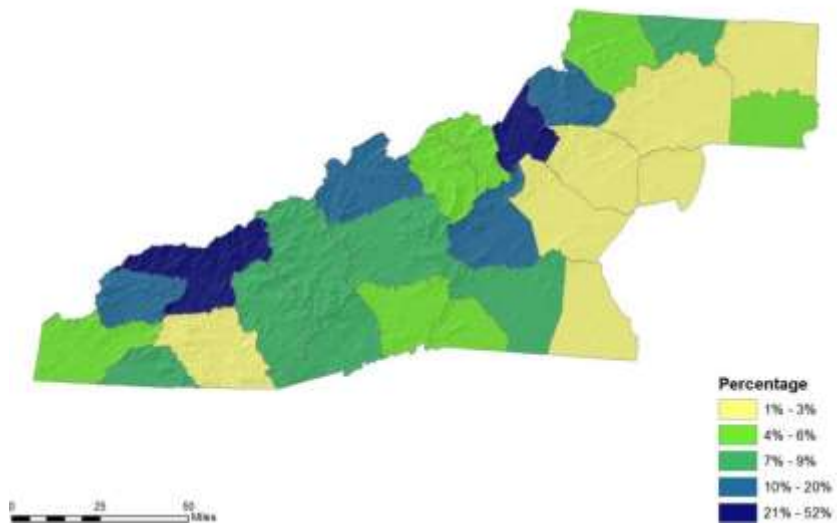
Tourist Activity Preferences in the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area



Quality of Life linked to Cultural Resources and Heritage

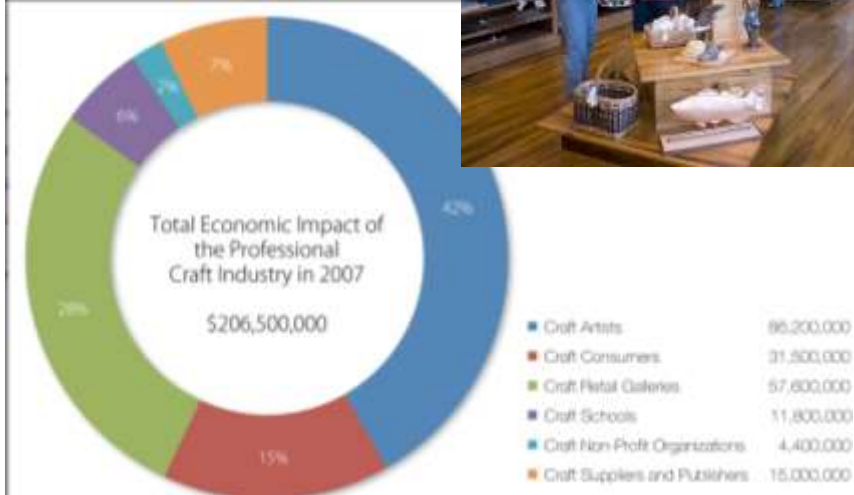


Tourism Employment as a Percent of Total Employment





Economic Impact of Crafts



33





\$20.7m
Total economic
impact of < 20% of
music venues

Audiences at 26 traditional music venues in 18 counties were surveyed in 2011.

Visitor Spending



35

Traditional Music Audiences



For every 100 visitors > \$4,000 will be spent in the community

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Partnerships and Leveraging that have resulted from the Vitality Index

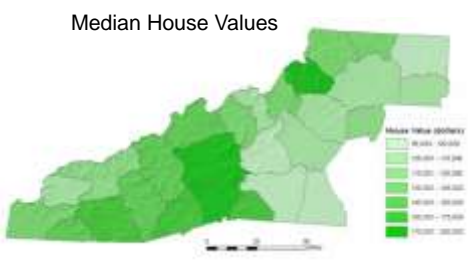
- The Vitality Index has provided for better decision making and has established partnerships.
- The entities who have become involved in the index – health professionals, realtors, economic developers, conservation groups, cultural and arts groups, academic professional, planners, and government officials now have a better understanding of the integrated relationship of all of these different facets of Western North Carolina.
- These groups are starting to see the bigger picture and the importance of all sectors of the economy and the region. They are not making decisions in silos or in isolation.

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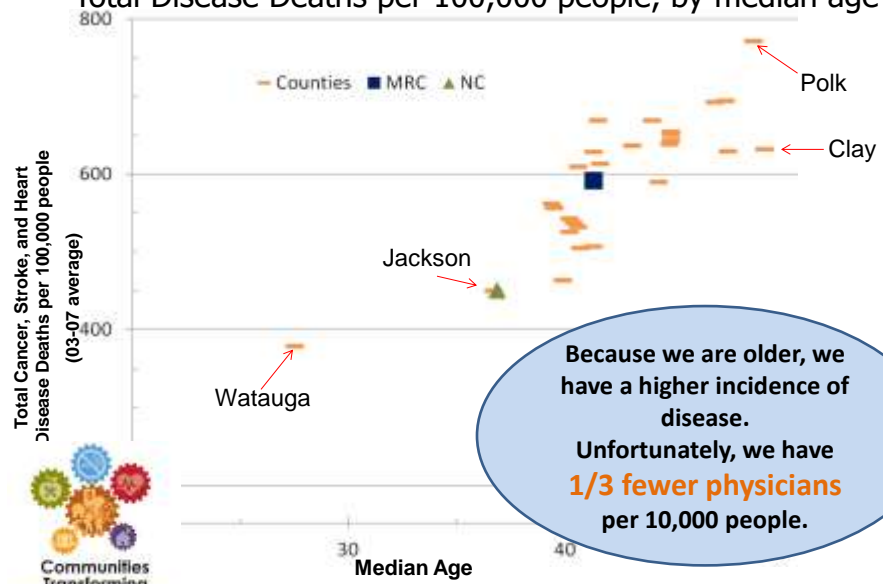


Housing



Health –

Total Disease Deaths per 100,000 people, by median age

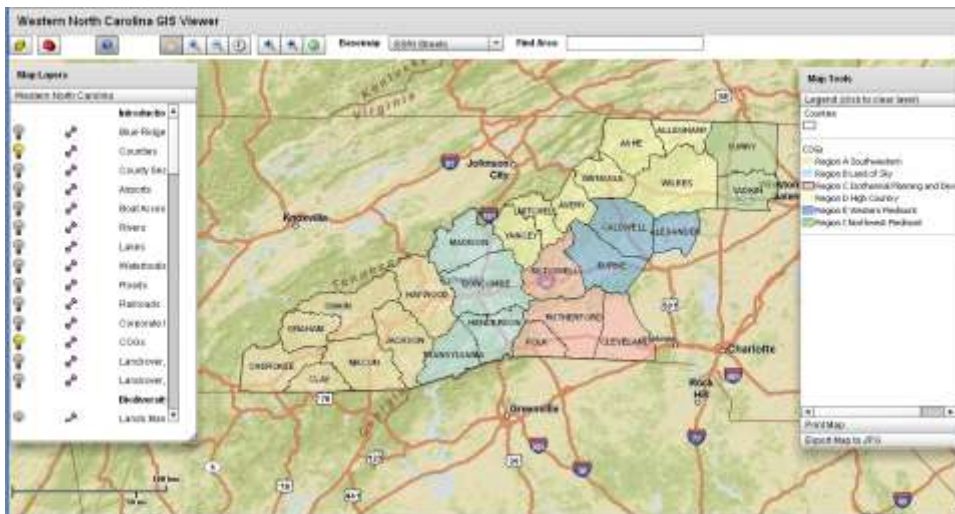


Because we are older, we have a higher incidence of disease. Unfortunately, we have 1/3 fewer physicians per 10,000 people.





Ability to Scale to any County
Interactive Web Viewer



How does the Vitality Index address key regional and local goals?

- Value centric, with metrics that cover economic, natural, cultural resources and more
- Designed to be able to see the whole system (“harmonious relationship between man and the environment on a scientific basis”)
- Designed to identify long-term, sustainable, and ecologically sound economic development opportunities
- Easy to use informational materials and website that are easy to disseminate
- Can be used by the public without any copyright or other issues