

WAKE COUNTY

Recommended Budget

DAVID ELLIS

County Manager

FY 2024

Inflation averaged 8.6% last year



We're feeling the effects of inflation

Postage costs

- Stamps increased **5 cents** since July 2022
- Board of Elections will spend **\$32,000 more** in FY2024 to mail absentee ballots and voter materials



We're feeling the effects of inflation

Security contract cost increased **25%** or **\$1.1 million**

Due to

- Wage adjustments for security positions
- Realign security needs of all county buildings



We're feeling the effects of inflation



Contribution to retiree health insurance



Utility bills



Vehicle purchases

Other areas of the economy we're monitoring



**Federal Reserve
& interest rates**



Bank failures



Housing stock



**Consumer
spending**

Vulnerable residents affected most

- Pandemic illuminated systemic disparities
- Some will continue to need enhanced county services
- Account for these costs in the budget

> **DISPARITIES AMONG:**

- Foster children
- People experiencing homelessness / housing insecurity
- Veterans
- People living with complex mental health issues

Wake County's population growth continues



46% of our new residents are 55+

- Wake County will have more residents over 60 than children under 18 by 2029
- Impacts our service delivery and the kinds of services needed





**In these uncertain
times, we must be
*even more responsible
stewards* of resources.**

Stewardship: Smart growth

Advancing our efforts to

- Tighten spending
- Enhance collaboration
- Be more efficient



Stewardship: Avoided adding office space

Half of Team Wake works hybrid or remote.

Benefits

- Saves money
- Helps attract top talent



Stewardship: Reimagining our structure

Reclassified or repurposed
existing positions to meet
some of our departments
most pressing needs



Stewardship: Reimagining our structure

EMS example

- Converted vacant positions into EMS system controllers
- Manage deployment of ambulances
- Provide situational awareness to shift commander



Stewardship: Reimagining our structure

Register of Deeds example

- Converted positions to support its new Passport Acceptance Facility
- Opened in June 2022
- Processing an average of 600+ applications per month



Stewardship: Reimagining our structure

Sheriff's Office example

- Convert 5 positions into School Resource Officers
- Support the 24 officers already serving schools
- Provide backup response, additional patrols



Funding requests vs. available revenue

\$175+ million

in requests and needs (County departments, WCPSS, Wake Tech)

\$65 million

in available
new revenue

Three themes guided our decision-making



**Community
safety**



**Continuing to
reimagine how
we work**



**A people-first
approach**



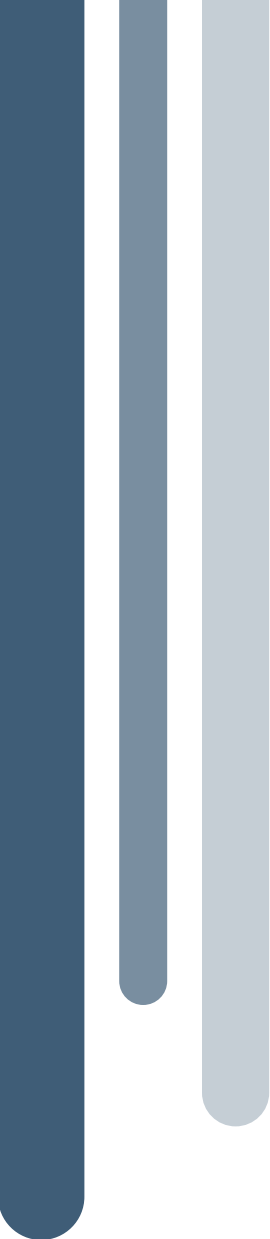
FY2024 Recommended Budget

\$1,864,435,000



Public Safety





**Sheriff Rowe is fostering
a department culture of
*fairness, openness and
transparency.***

Wake County Sheriff's Office



Facing challenges in filling 217 vacant positions

Solutions

- Increased market ranges for deputies and detention officers
- \$50,540 starting salaries

APPLY > wake.gov/careers

Wake County Sheriff's Office



Expanded focus on school safety

Investments

- 5 school resource officers
- New school-focused investigator

Will give peace of mind to families and protect students

Wake County Sheriff's Office

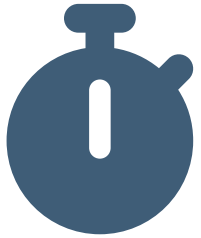


Seeking state and federal accreditation to show commitment to best practices

Add a position to:

- Standardize policies and procedures
- Oversee the accreditation process

CCBI to open state-of-the-art DNA lab



New lab will process samples faster and move cases forward



\$825,000 in state and federal grant funding



Scheduled to open in Spring 2024

Short and long-term investments in medical examiner responsibilities



STATE LAW

Counties **must** transport, store and provide examination facilities for the deceased

EMS is responding to more calls with increased severity

➤ FROM 2017 TO 2022

 **22%**

increase in 911 calls
for EMS

 **26%**

increase in number of units
responding to 911 calls

Nurse Navigation Program helps, but it's not enough to offset growth in demand

**NURSE
NAVIGATION
PROGRAM**

Answered **5,000+**
calls in its first year

Recommendation

- Add 20 EMS positions
- Purchase ambulances to increase emergency response

EMS to open three new stations in FY2024



911 calls are increasing in the Fire Tax District



It includes people in the unincorporated areas and Town of Wendell

↑ 30%

increase from 2021 to 2022

Protecting firefighters from cancer is important



Cost: \$4,000 per set

International Fire Chiefs Association report lists 11 ways to reduce risk

- Must provide our 800+ firefighters with a second set of turnout gear

The Fire Tax District is shrinking

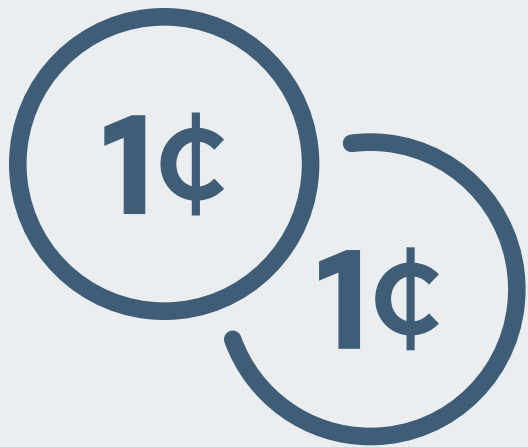
Municipalities are annexing more unincorporated areas

- Reduces the tax base
- Makes it difficult for fire departments to fund their needs



Example: A new fire engine now costs \$900,000

Recommend increasing the Fire Tax to protect residents and firefighters



New Fire Tax rate would equal **12.27 cents** per \$100 of property value

- Only applies to those in the unincorporated areas and the Town of Wendell
- Will enable fire departments to continue serving rural communities

Affordable Housing



Affordable housing is an important issue in community survey

Rankings by respondents

20.5% — Development & growth

20.3% — Affordable housing

10.8% — Education

9.2% — Transportation

8.2% — Public safety

6.3% — Inflation



Aligns with Board's affordable housing goal

**\$19.9
million**

in capital housing
investments in FY2024

- 
- Affordable housing preservation
 - Affordable housing development
 - White Flag / Drop-in shelter
 - Homeless family shelter

Launch Major Repair Community Development Program

\$1.3 million investment

- Assist low-income homeowners with repairs
- Available to people living below the AMI
- Up to \$90,000 budget per home

Result

Help homeowners continue living in their safer, more structurally sound homes



Expand utility assistance program

Current
program uses
**state and
federal** funds



Funds ran out
3 months
earlier than
usual due to
high demand



Propose
**adding
county funds**
to program to
**help more
people**

Behavioral Health



Reopening Cornerstone by early Fall 2023

The renovated facility will:

- Feature 20 new units
- Serve people with long histories of housing instability or homelessness
- Connect tenants with resources and treatment for behavioral health challenges
- Support 40 people each year



Increase our investment in “Familiar Faces”

People who regularly use crisis services, like EMS and behavioral health care, and may spend time in our jail

Benefits

- More short-term housing assistance
- Intensive care management
- Better long-term health outcomes

Increase our investment in “Familiar Faces”

Creating a **data integration program** to piece together all parts of their story



- Purchase technology solution
- Fund program director position
- Add 2 IT support positions

We must invest in crisis services and ongoing support

 17%

of people have behavioral health issues

 1 in 3

young adults had a mental illness last year

WakeBrook is a core crisis response facility

Post-pandemic statistics

- 25% increase in patients
- Beds remain 85% – 100% full

Recommendation

- Increase investment by **39%** to **\$20 million**



Making our mobile crisis response program more efficient

Purpose:

Bring help directly to those in crisis

- Will improve response times



Expanding treatment for substance use

6% of people in our jails are diagnosed with substance dependence

More programming will:

- Provide better access to proper medications and peer support
- Advance recovery
- Improve health



Hiring an Opioid Settlement Fund Program Manager

This position will:

- Coordinate with stakeholders to put funds to the best possible use
- Support evidence-based addiction treatment, recovery, housing and early intervention



Human Services



Reimagining our Child Welfare Program

COVID-19 created a new reality

- Reduced reports about child abuse and neglect from schools
- Limited our ability to place children with foster families

It requires an internal realignment to address the impacts.

Recommendation

- Add 15 positions to make the realignment possible

15 proposed positions would integrate into Child Welfare teams



Goal

Children in permanent, supportive homes

- The faster that happens, the better the outcomes for the children

We desperately need more foster families

FY2019



200

foster families

vs

FY2023



90

foster families

If you're interested in becoming a foster parent, visit wake.gov/foster.

Investing in resources to attract more foster families



Propose adding foster home trainer and parent recruiter positions

- Will help new foster families gain confidence
- Will ensure they can effectively care for the children
- Match families' strengths with child's needs

Requests for assistance with children from other counties and states are climbing

A large green upward-pointing arrow is positioned to the left of the text '6%'. The arrow and the percentage are rendered in a bold, sans-serif font.

increase from
FY2020 to FY2022

**Protecting the safety
of these children is
paramount.**

- Recommend expanding the team that responds to these requests

Helping foster children find permanent homes

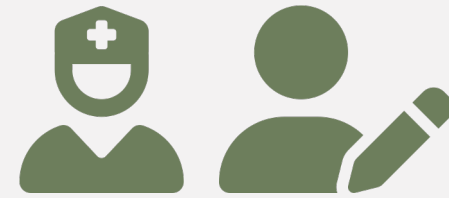
When reunification isn't possible, we must look at:

- Placing children with relatives
- Adoption

By focusing more positions in this area, we will help more children find **forever families.**



**Pair nurses with
social workers to
support children
with complex
medical needs**



↓ 75%

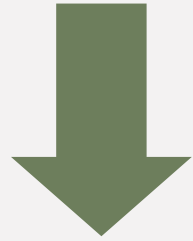
decrease in rate of
reports of repeated
medical neglect

Support for veterans and their families

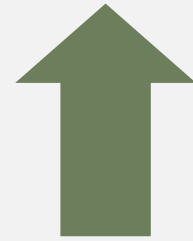
Add a Veteran Service Officer to help them access the benefits they've earned



Increased need for SNAP benefits



**Return to
pre-COVID-19
benefits for food**



**The rising price
of food**

Updated Food Security Plan helps families avoid hunger

It supports:

- Universal school breakfast
- School food pantries
- Expanding food hubs



Address multi-faceted impacts

COVID-19 emergency **ending** + Recertifications for benefits **restarted** = **100,000+** people affected

Recommend adding **6 benefits eligibility team leads** to meet the increased demand

Protecting the Environment





Continue funding for our One Water plan

Access to U.S. Geological Survey's groundwater monitoring network helps

- Project groundwater levels
- Inform future water conservation efforts



Wastewater permits protect our drinking water



Projection:

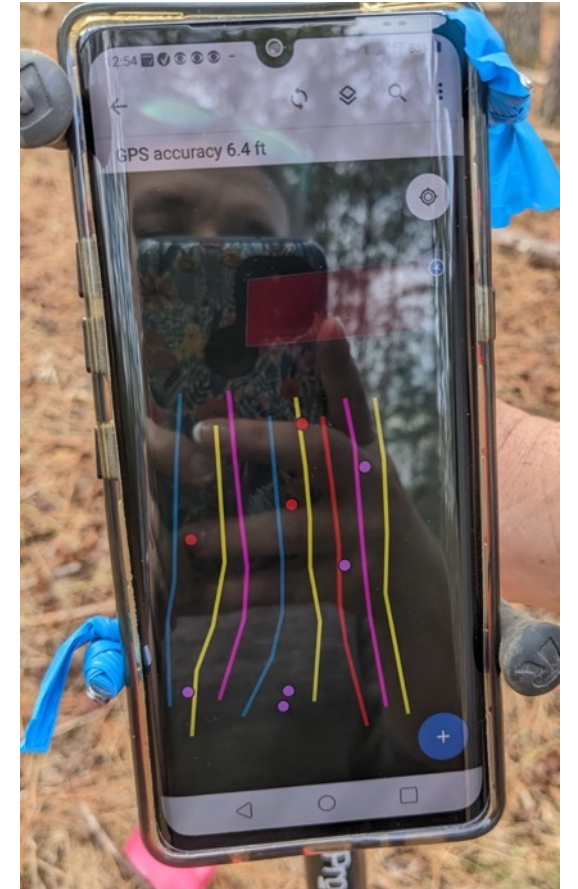
Will receive
nearly **1,100**
applications
for wastewater
permits in
FY2024

Reimagining the wastewater permitting process

Replaced manual efforts with mobile GPS units to:

- Collect geographically accurate drawings
- Export data for septic permitting, inspections and repairs

Saves 2 hours per permit, equaling 1 full-time position



We're focused on protecting farmland

- Lost 20% of farm and forestland over the past 9 years
- Must balance growth with preservation

To help, we've **dedicated a revenue stream** from our property tax for agricultural conservation easements.



Projection: 14,000 inspections needed in FY2024

Recommend adding an inspector to meet state mandates and keep people healthy and safe



Equitable Access



Looking at our purchasing power through an equity lens



100+ projects

out for bid



1,800+ contracts

for services signed

Was our bidding process inclusive?

We launched a **disparity study** to find out.

The results of the disparity study



There is more we can do to ensure inclusive and equitable access to our business

- Adding a coordinator to help all companies have an accessible playing field



Legal Support Center opened in January

Expanding legal support to reach more people



The center would like to:

- Offer Spanish-language support
- Expand hours

**Total investment
of \$290,000**

Parks, Recreation and Open Space





Opening Beech Bluff County Park next year

Planning continues on our next projects



**Future
Kellam-Wyatt Farm**



**Future Lake Myra
County Park**



**Three future
nature preserves**

A paved path with yellow lines winds through a lush green forest. The path is surrounded by dense trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through the leaves. The path curves to the right in the distance.

**You can have a voice in
designing these projects**

Visit wake.gov/parks to learn more!

We want to preserve our parks for family fun for many generations



Facilities, Fleet and Digital Infrastructure



Taking care of our aging buildings

5+ million square
feet of facilities in
our portfolio



Cost of operating our facilities is rising



\$640,000

added for cost increases



\$575,000

added for cost increases

Contract costs for electronic and in-person security are escalating



Buying and maintaining our fleet vehicles costs more, too

We own 1,100+ vehicles. Prices are **up 45%** since the pandemic.



Constantly updating our digital infrastructure for safety and efficiency

Recommendations

- Add a position to review IT contracts to get the best possible deal
- Invest in resources to support more data-driven decision-making



Livestreaming board meetings offers transparency and equitable meeting access



Investing In Our Employees



Retention is a challenge

3%

Unemployment rate
in Wake County

3.5%

Unemployment rate
nationally

Jobs > People available to fill them

Adjusting salaries for compression



- Launched a study in 2021
- Implemented the results this spring

Employee impact

- **51%** received salary adjustments

Shifting market ranges to remain competitive



2.5%
increase

- Expands employees' earning potential
- Allows managers to offer more attractive salaries
- Keeps the county in line with the labor market

Increasing the living wage to reflect the current economic landscape

\$19.64

FY2024 hourly rate

\$40,851

FY2024 annual salary

Will help recruit and retain frontline staff

Investing in merit pay to support a performance-driven organization



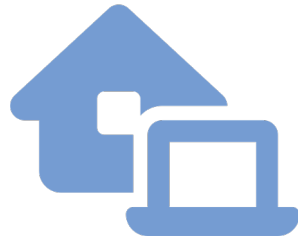
Important recruitment and retention tool

- **2% to 4.5% increase** for successful contributors
- **Up to 6.5% increase** for outstanding contributors

Reimagining how we do business



Making workloads more manageable to improve **work/life balance**



Offer **hybrid and remote** work schedules



Reinstate the county's **rewards and recognition** program

Our employee organizational assessment will guide culture building



- Survey closed on Friday
- Results will show where we're doing well and where we can improve

Our current vacancy rate is 10%

That is **impressive** in this labor market.

- Can reduce the rate even further with greater investments in Team Wake



Work for Team Wake!

Apply today at wake.gov/careers



Education





Wake County Smart Start

Wake County Smart Start

Total recommended county investment:
\$5,173,828

Wake ThreeSchool

- Serves income-eligible 3-year-olds
- Created **100 seats** in FY2023
- Propose adding **100 more seats** in FY2024

NC Pre-K

- Prepares income-eligible 4-year-olds for kindergarten



A young girl with dark skin and braided hair is focused on writing in a lined notebook. She is wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt under blue denim overalls. In the background, other students are blurred, including a boy in a red shirt. The scene is set in a classroom with bookshelves visible in the distance.

Wake County Public School System

Wake County Public School System

Total recommended investment:
\$634,262,316

Increase of **\$40 million** over FY2023





Wake Technical Community College

Wake Technical Community College

**Total recommended investment:
\$32,494,813**

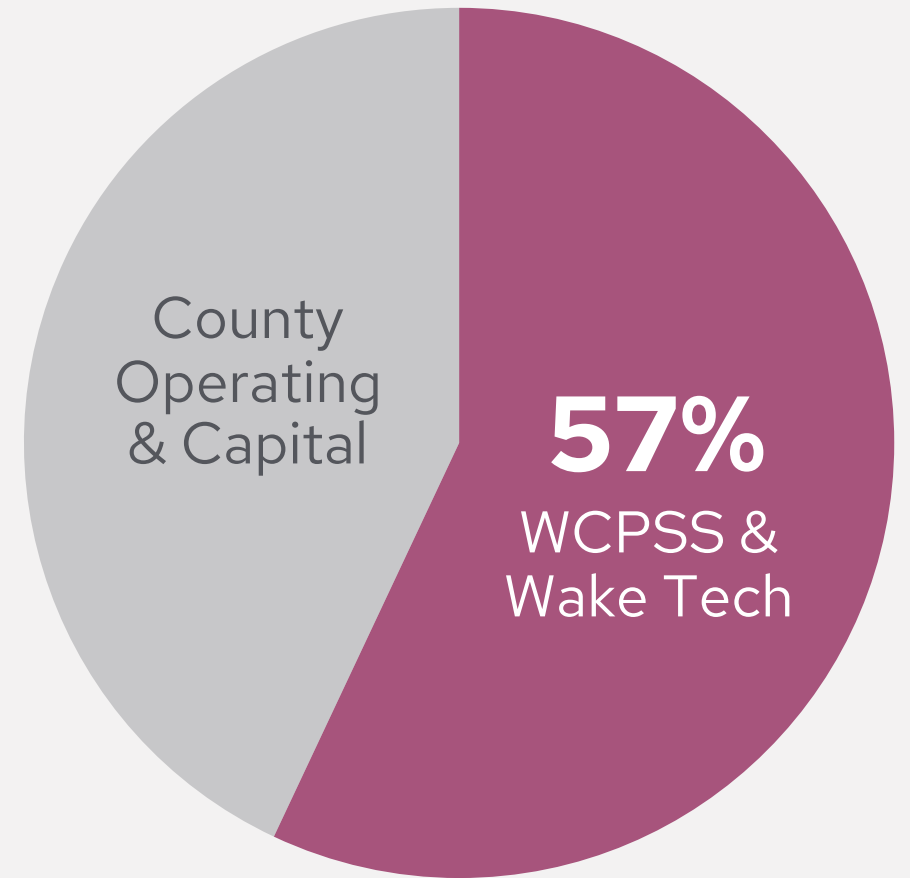
Increase of
\$2.4 million
over FY2023

Will fund:

- Opening of the eastern campus
- Market-rate adjustments for IT and facilities staff
- Wake Invests in Women
- WakeWorks



**Investments in
education would
comprise 57% of our
FY2024 budget**



Voters passed education bonds in November



**Tax
increase**

Totaling \$884 million

Will fund:

- Construction and renovation of public schools and Wake Tech facilities

Our FY2024 Financial Picture

New available revenue is not enough to meet increasing demand for and costs of county services and education



Proposed property tax increase for FY2024 operating budget

Proposed property tax increase would generate \$65 million in new revenue

65.2¢

FY2024 tax rate



The owner of a \$300,000 home would pay **\$98** more in property taxes



FY2024 Recommended Budget

\$1,864,435,000



We're now accepting comments about the proposed budget until May 19 via our website, **wake.gov/budget**.

FY 2024

FY2024 Recommended Budget schedule

MAY
8

**First
board work
session on
budget**

MAY
9

MAY
15

MAY
16

Budget public hearings

MAY
22

**Second
board work
session on
budget**

JUNE
5

**Board
votes on
proposed
budget**

For more information on the
FY2024 Recommended Budget,
visit **wake.gov/budget**.

FY2024