



Catawba Valley  
**Habitat**  
for Humanity®



years of  
homes,  
communities,  
and hope



# 2024-25 Annual Report

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF CATAWBA VALLEY



40 YEARS OF HOMES, COMMUNITIES, AND HOPE // a message from the CEO

Conversations over steamy hot cups of McDonalds coffee launched Habitat Catawba Valley (HCV) in 1982. Each Saturday morning two old friends, Doug Freeman and Ed Rogers, discussed a new ministry of building houses with people who didn't know much about building for people who could only dream of owning a home. In the early days, their vision was filled with skeptics, but slowly church congregations, local government leaders, friends and neighbors shared their dream of building homes, communities, and hope. **In 1985 the band of supporters' resiliency paid off when Doug traveled to New York City to accept the affiliate's charter from Habitat's most famous volunteers, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter.**

Now 40 years later, the roots of this affiliate stretch deep into the Catawba County red clay with the many foundations planted and families reaching new heights. Our work has grown from building one house at a time to restoring community through neighborhood revitalization. When matched with our home repairs work, we are building and restoring more than 30 homes this year.

Since our founding, together we have:

- Opened the door to **211 new homeownership opportunities.**
- Preserved **228 family legacies** through critical home repairs.
- Provided **2,060 hours of financial education** to empower lasting stability.
- Partnered with **434 families** to build or repair a safe, affordable place to call home.

Along the way, we have learned what it means to be true builders. We build value through nationally recognized green building innovations. We build freedom through financial education. We build opportunity through the doors a stable home opens—to better health, stronger education, and greater economic security. **Above all – together, we build change.**

Yet today, rising costs and a shrinking affordable housing supply mean the need is greater than ever. The past 40 years have shown us the power generated by a group of creative, passionate people willing to roll up their sleeves and dig into the work of building something better. **When we come together, transformation happens.**

Now is the time to build on our 40-year legacy and **ensure the next 40 years are even brighter for Catawba Valley families.** We believe the best days are still ahead. Together, we can build a future where all our neighbors have the opportunity to thrive in a safe, affordable, permanent home.

In Partnership,



Mitzi Gellman  
CEO



YOUR IMPACT THIS YEAR // growing the mission

Donating to Habitat builds more than just houses. Your generosity is an investment in the power of people and the promise of a better tomorrow for our entire community. Together with your support this year, we:

**Finished Ridgefield Place** – Habitat opened 5 doors to stronger futures in Hickory's first public/private/non-profit housing development

**Broke ground on Cottages at Ridgeview Phase III** – 42 sponsors to date are helping 6 families build solid foundations

**Established enduring Construction Fund** – no matter the shifts in federal funding priorities, Habitat has a strategy to keep building forward

**Began site planning for Grace Acres** – Habitat launched the early stages of planning our first Neighborhood Revitalization project in Long View

**Launched 'Gather at Home' partnership with Design Foundry** – each new Habitat homeowner will now be gifted a sofa where they can gather to celebrate life's special moments

Total Donors:  
**475**

97 New donors:

**1 out of every 5 donors** (20%) joined our Habitat giving family for the first time this year.

117 Recurring donors:

**1 out of every 4 donors** (25%) reinvested multiple times this year to build strength through shelter.

Economic Impact:  
**x\$1.56**

For every dollar invested, we inject **\$1.56 back** into Catawba County's local economy. For our \$3,074,080 in programmatic expenses last year, **HCV infused \$4,795,564.80 back into our community.**

Legacy Builders:  
**102**

Our **Legacy Builder Society** reached **102 members** this year, marking our highest participation yet of families making a multi-year commitment to help their neighbors build a more secure future.





A Habitat home is more than a foundation - it's a door to greater opportunity. Affordable homeownership transforms every aspect of our lives.

For Hailey, becoming a mother changed everything — so she became a Habitat homeowner to change what was possible for her daughter, Genesis. Hailey first learned she was pregnant during a time of personal turmoil. “I chose the name Genesis because she was my light in the dark, and a beginning to a new life.” Determined to build a better future, Hailey completed recovery treatment, graduated from transitional housing, secured steady work, obtained consistent housing, and saved money. Life was stable, but she wanted more. **Her goal: homeownership by Genesis’ first day of kindergarten.**

*"Homeownership was always a goal for me, but achieving that dream just seemed so impossible. I thought living in apartments was going to be our story for the rest of our lives. I came to Habitat because I knew there was no other way for me to achieve homeownership."*



Through Habitat, Hailey put in sweat equity, took financial management classes, built a savings plan, and finally received the keys to her own home. Along the way, she gained so much more than just a residence. She gained confidence. She gained satisfaction watching Genesis return from kindergarten classes to a home of her own. And she gained the knowledge that **Genesis is already 19% more likely to graduate high school and 50% more likely to attend college simply by growing up as the child of a homeowner.**

As she marks her first year of homeownership, Hailey has earned a promotion, completed classes to become a Peer Support Specialist, and, most importantly, created a lasting foundation for her daughter.

*"The biggest thing I want to achieve through Habitat is paying off this house and leaving something behind to my daughter; something that will forever be hers."*

Hailey’s story is not unique. The ability to purchase – and maintain – an affordable home touches every aspect of a family’s future development.

With an affordable mortgage and attainable repairs, homeowners are able to save more money, invest in education, and create financial stability. This means they can pursue more opportunities, which lead to improved healthcare, stronger childhood development, better nutrition, and increased savings.

Affordable housing’s ripple effects:

- Children of low-income homeowners stay in school longer, have increased earnings, and greater financial independence than children of low-income renters.
- 52% of adult Habitat homeowners went on to enroll in continuing education.
- Housing secure adults are 3x less anxious and 50% better rested than people in insecure housing.
- Older adults receiving home repairs experience a 19% fall reduction rate and are 30% better able to perform daily activities – like walking around inside, bathing and dressing, eating, and toileting.

Homeownership builds generational wealth:

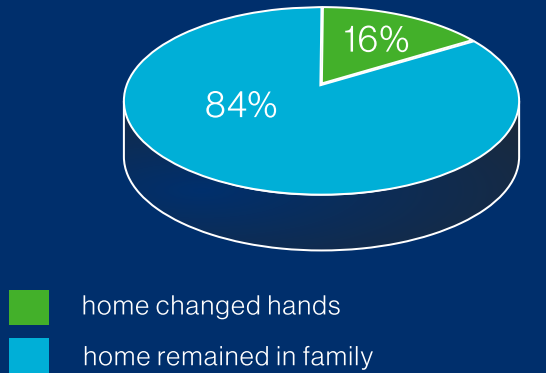
Research shows a correlation between homeownership and increased wealth, with each year of homeownership associated with an average **additional \$9,500 in net wealth.**

Children of homeowners are **25% more likely to become homeowners themselves** as compared to children of renters. And, they transition to homeownership earlier — lengthening the period over which they can accumulate wealth.

the power of permanence

**+84%** of HCV homeowners remain in their home long term.

Habitat Catawba Valley's home closings last 10 years



Habitat Homeownership creates lasting affordability

The average American mortgage lifespan is only 5-7 years. Over the past 10 years, Habitat Catawba Valley has built and sold 43 homes. Of those, only 7 have changed hands. That means nearly 84% of our HCV homeowners have remained in their homes, building equity, stability, and stronger futures.

Over the past year, 643 families - nearly 2 per day - contacted Habitat Catawba Valley seeking affordable, stable housing. For many, Habitat is the only option for permanent affordability.

Currently, the average 2 bedroom apartment rent in the Hickory-Lenior-Morganton MSA is \$1,064. **People need to make \$20.12 an hour to afford this average rent.**

Unfortunately, the average renter in our area only makes \$16.53/hour - meaning they can only afford rents below \$860. **These rents are nearly impossible to come by, pushing renters into cost-burdened situations.**

Yet, for **\$689.58 - less than the cost of the average affordable rent - HCV homebuyers can invest in a quality, affordable, energy-efficient home of their own** and build the strength, stability, and self-reliance they need to thrive.

**\$331,665**  
PRINCIPAL PAYMENTS

Payments for current Habitat homeowners go into HCV's rotating "fund for humanity" to help make homeownership possible for future Habitat homebuyers.

**Homeownership remains the number one wealth building tool for American families.**

US homeowners have 400% greater net wealth than renters, all else being equal. Habitat Catawba Valley keeps the door to affordable homeownership open - so families can keep building forward.

**8** Keys to new homes recieved

**43** Homeowners supported

**5** Families in progress

**87** Applications received

**\$252,350**  
PROPERTY TAXES PAID

Strong and stable homes build strong and stable communities. Habitat homeowners invest back into the life of our community.

**2,404**  
SWEAT EQUITY HOURS SERVED

Habitat homeowners build their houses, their communities, and lasting relationships with their neighbors.

**17%**  
INCREASE IN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Over the last 3 years, participants in our Homeownership Education program have increased their household incomes by an average of 17%.

Home values are soaring, but wages are not. Habitat Catawba Valley has increased our average down payment assistance to our partner families by 193% to keep homeownership attainable – not merely aspirational.

<b>\$689.58</b>	The average Habitat Catawba Valley house payment over the last 5 years is <b>\$689.58, including taxes and insurance.</b>
<b>24%</b>	<b>Habitat Catawba Valley caps mortgage payments at 24% percent of a family's monthly income,</b> ensuring there is money left over for life's other necessities like nutrition, education, health care, home maintenance, and enrichment.
<b>\$537,900</b>	Habitat Catawba Valley helps cover the gap between the cost of a home and what a family can afford through our downpayment assistance program. <b>Last fiscal year, HCV provided \$537,900 in downpayment assistance – an average of \$87,650 per household - to keep homeownership affordable.</b>
<b>72% vs 42%</b>	House values are soaring, and Habitat Catawba Valley is not immune. Over the last 5 years, <b>HCV home values have increased 72% despite no change in our house plans. Yet, the average income of our partner families has only increased 42%</b> over the same time period – widening the affordability gap.
<b>+1,696%</b>	Over the last 5 years, Habitat Catawba Valley has <b>increased our average household downpayment assistance by 193% - and our total annual downpayment assistance provided by 1,696%</b> - to keep our commitment to affordable, attainable, and sustainable homeownership.

Your support makes this increase in downpayment assistance possible, protecting neighbors from rising costs and ensuring families can still afford a safe, stable home where they can thrive.

**Together, we are building better beginnings.**



CONSTRUCTION INNOVATION // building higher standards

Built to last. Habitat Catawba Valley runs a nationally recognized sustainable building program.

As an industry leader, Habitat Catawba Valley takes pride in building above and beyond the standard. Our intentional design choices bring additional value to our homes, pride to our neighborhoods, and long-term affordability to our homeowners. We do this because Habitat homes are more than shelter - they are generational assets for our partner families.

- Built the 1st “Zero Energy Home” in state of NC (2005)
- Chosen as one of 3 Habitat affiliates to build the winning design in the NC State “Sustainable Building Design Competition” (2007)
- Built the 1st Department of Energy “Zero Energy Ready Certified Home” in state of NC (2015)
- Won 4 “Housing Innovation Awards” from the Department of Energy for homes in Northstone (2016-2019)
- Won “Housing North Carolina Award” in the Home Ownership Impact category, presented by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (2018)



HOUSING INNOVATION AWARD  
WINNER  
2016  
2017  
2018  
2019



sustainability = affordability

From using innovative building science techniques to sourcing the most efficient appliances to researching the most sustainable materials to opting for deferred maintenance solutions, HCV builds sustainability into every aspect of our homes. By pursuing efficiency, we build energy savings into the life of the home, and we build environmental stewardship into the life of our community.

\$48.88 per month, guaranteed

Last year, HCV homebuyers were guaranteed \$49 per month average heating and cooling costs for the first two years of their residency. Why? Because affordability isn’t just about what a homeowner can buy – it’s also about what they can maintain.

building an economic engine

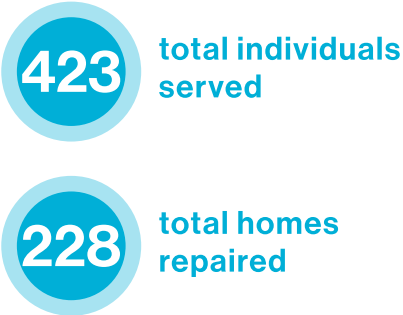
Habitat Catawba Valley's quality building projects have contributed \$1,234,807 construction dollars to our local economy over the last 2 fiscal years combined.

HABITAT REPAIRS // safe, warm, and dry



Celebrating 10 years of Habitat Repairs. As the county's only full-time repair program, we preserve homes and restore hope.

lifetime impact:



fiscal year 2024-2025 impact:



When you can’t afford to make necessary repairs on a deteriorating home and you can’t afford to move, it’s easy to feel stuck. **Habitat Repairs provides the assistance – and the hope – people need to continue living healthily and independently in their own home.**

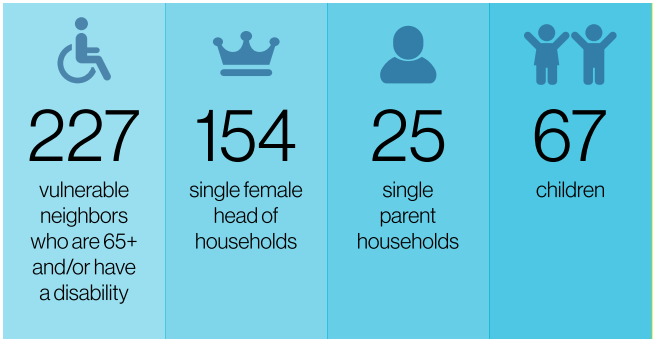
1 in 6 Catawba County homeowners are cost burdened. **That’s 7,410 local homeowners who are unable to afford their housing costs**, and who have little left over for other of life’s necessities.

**The Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton MSA has the oldest housing stock in the state, with over 2/3 of houses more than 25 years old and in dire need of critical repair.** The average Habitat Repairs home is nearly double that age – at 46 years old – and in urgent need of critical repairs.

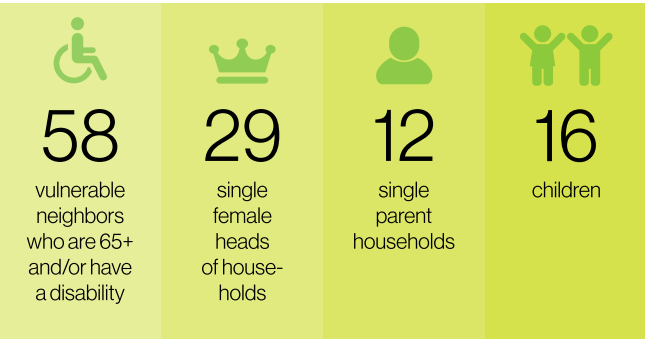
When we surveyed local residents, **46% said they feel stuck in their housing.**

**During our 10-year history, Habitat Repairs has provided 818 total repair interventions for a lifetime average of 3.9 repairs per home.** This means that by the time families seek Habitat's assistance, they have already experienced compounding years of delayed repairs due to the prohibitive cost of fixing their homes.

program lifetime:




fiscal year 2024-2025:




When you drop off items at the ReStore, another family picks up keys to a new opportunity. The ReStore funds construction, repairs, and financial education for families throughout our county. When you donate, volunteer, and shop ReStore, your support keeps families building forward.

Since moving to it's current location in 2011, the ReStore has generated \$11,163,087.14 in net sales. That's the equivalent of 62 Habitat homes.



transactions:  
**33,783**  
638 people a month bought ReStore treasures and built homes and hope



total donations:  
**4,777**  
33% increase year over year

repurposed items diverted from the landfill:



**82 TONS**


round up donations:  
**\$6,965.93**  
273% increase year over year



ReStore shoppers donated enough spare change to fund 4 repair projects last fiscal year.

92 donors per week

Last year, you donated 2.3 times an hour during a typical work week toward building more secure futures.



It takes a village to build homes, communities, and hope. Volunteers provide hours of manual labor, committee involvement, and dedicated advocacy that turn bricks into homes and houses into thriving neighborhoods.

total volunteers:




**280**

total hours served:

**6,179.75**

value of volunteer labor:

**\$214,993**



Last year, the Do Good Institute at the University of Maryland calculated the value of volunteer labor at \$34.79/hour. This means that members of our community contributed the equivalent of:



**\$1,391**  
from school volunteers



**\$13,220**  
from corporate volunteers



**\$17,568**  
from church volunteers



**contact us**

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CEO

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*Habitat for Humanity of Catawba Valley, Inc is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.*

*Habitat for Humanity of Catawba Valley is an Equal Housing Opportunity lender.*

