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## North Carolina braces for Hurricane Helene's wrath

BY JOE MARUSAK

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Hurricane Helene showers are hitting Charlotte, and the North Carolina mountains are braced for up to 20" of rain and what the National Weather Service has labeled potentially "catastrophic flooding."

Charlotte Douglas International Airport was under a Helene-spawned

tornado warning yesterday morning, along with Belmont and Mount Holly in Gaston County. Radar indicated a tornado, NWS meteorologists said, but there were no confirmed reports.

Gusts up to 50 mph are expected in Charlotte early Friday, meteorologists said. The storm is predicted to dump 2" to 3" of rain on Charlotte, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

The Charlotte area, Upstate South

Carolina and the N.C. foothills could see "widespread downed trees, and numerous power outages (are) likely," the NWS office in Greer, South Carolina, said on social media.

Tornadoes threatened the region through Friday morning, NWS forecasters said.

Nearly 8,000 Duke Energy customers were without power in the

**SEE HELENE, 4A**

## Why this may be a good time for potential homebuyers

BY DESIREE MATHURIN

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It may be a promising time to be a potential homebuyer in the Charlotte area.

While initial home prices have increased, price reductions are more common and inventory is up, though still tight, according to the Canopy Realtor Association's monthly market report. And with the Federal Reserve's reduced interest rates sparking a potential decrease in mortgage rates, it's looking good for potential buyers.

"When the Fed rate is lower, historically, we usually see lower mortgage rates associated with it and more buying power for the consumer," said Larry Fiore, the regional sales manager of retail home lending at U.S. Bank in the Charlotte region.

Fiore said the Fed's rate cuts can also influence other aspects of a potential buyer's life, such as lower rates on credit cards or car loans, leading to more "liquidity and fluidity of funds."

### AUGUST HOUSING MARKET DIVE

In Canopy's monthly report, one of the biggest takeaways was that home price reductions were up 61% across the Charlotte region during the first eight months of the year. This means homeowners increasingly reduced initial sale prices. Price reductions rose to 86% in August compared to August 2023, "which means buyers have increasing leverage," according to the report.

Inventory also increased, with an addition of a little more than 9,000 houses to the Charlotte area market. Supply rose 52.9% year-over-year, the report adds.

Home prices in general are steady compared to July, according to the report, with median sales prices down less than a percent (0.7%) and average sales down 1.8%. But year-to-year, sales prices have increased with the median sales price hitting \$399,000, a 3.6% increase, and the average sale price rising to \$501,320, or a 5.8% increase.

Home sales were down across the 16-county region, decreasing by 8.3% year over year. A little more than 3,700 homes sold in August, 336 homes fewer than August 2023. The report adds that month-over-month sales were also down 3.4%, noting that buyers are waiting for lower mortgage rates.

In Mecklenburg County specifically, home sales were down 6.2% year-over-year and in Charlotte sales were down 10.3%.

### WHAT DOES THE FEDERAL RESERVE RATE CUT REALLY MEAN FOR HOMEBUYERS?

The Federal Reserve is the central bank for the U.S. and its main goal is economic

**SEE HOMEBUYERS, 3A**



ANNABELLE GORDON CNP/Sipa USA

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) speaks to the media following Wednesday's passing of a short-term government funding bill in the Capitol in Washington. The Senate approved the package, which will avert a government shutdown, later in the day; President Joe Biden is expected to sign it before the Sept. 30 deadline.

## Short-term funding patch ready for Biden's signature

BY AIDAN QUIGLEY

[CQ-Roll Call](mailto:CQ-Roll Call)

### WASHINGTON

The Senate on Wednesday cleared a 12-week spending bill that would kick this year's spending tussle until after the November elections.

The 78-18 vote means the bill is now on its way to President Joe Biden's desk well ahead of the Sept. 30 deadline to prevent a partial government shutdown.

The rapid-fire votes in both chambers Wednesday – an unusual occurrence – allowed lawmakers to head home to campaign. They'll have roughly five weeks after the elections to secure a full-year fiscal 2025 spending deal before the new Dec. 20 deadline.

Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray, during a very brief floor debate, called the bill a "straight-forward, bipartisan compromise" to temporarily fund the government. She said lawmakers should start negotiating final spending bills.

"It's time for Democrats and Republicans to negotiate those bills together, instead of House Republicans just following the loudest voices on the far right," Murray, D-Wash., said.

During the brief debate, Senate Appropriations ranking member Susan Collins said a shutdown would be disastrous for the Pentagon and other federal programs. "Government shutdowns are inherently a failure to govern effectively," she said, urging her

**SEE BIDEN, 4A**

## Mats of toxic material found in Lake Wylie costly to stop

BY JOHN MARKS

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### YORK COUNTY

Thick mats of toxic material are creeping into Lake Wylie, rising to the surface and threatening to grow. Experts have the winter to figure out the best way to stop it.

"We've got a new problem on our hands, and we're going to do the best we can to fight it," Lake Wylie Marine Commission executive director Neil

Brennan told York County Council Monday night.

That problem is lyngbya, or blue-green algae that can cause sickness for people and pets who come in contact with it. It only covers about 5 acres of Lake Wylie, but there's been significant spread on other water bodies connected by the Catawba River. And it's expensive to control.

Brennan updated York County Council on the growing lyngbya concern Monday. He could return to request funding for what's estimated at a

\$31,000 treatment plan. The marine commission is funded by all three counties surrounding Lake Wylie, the other two being Mecklenburg and Gaston in North Carolina in addition to York County.

"This is a bigger elephant than we can handle with our budgets here," Brennan said.

### WHAT IS LYNGBYA?

South Carolina lists lyngbya as a harmful algal bloom, where microscopic organisms grow to create thick scums or mats on surface water. Blooms can vary in color or in how harmful they are for people and pets.

There have been reports in recent years of dogs dying after drinking or

**SEE LAKE WYLIE, 2A**



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