

JACKSON COUNTY

Office of Economic Development

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Jackson County Board of Commissioners
401 Grindstaff Cove Road
Sylva, NC 28779

Chairman Letson and Commissioners,

The Jackson County Business and Industry Advisory Committee is tasked with providing support to and for the Jackson County Office of Economic Development, pursuant to appointments as made by the Board of Commissioners. The committee regularly convenes to discuss matters of economic interest to Jackson County and surrounding areas, including business recruitment, business retention and expansion, workforce development, infrastructure, and marketing/communications.

In addition, the committee regularly discusses topics that impede economic growth and sustainability, including access to affordable broadband, and the upcoming Highway 107 road improvement project and its potential impacts. As the county has emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic with favorable economic conditions, the lack of access to housing across multiple workforce segments has created a perilous circumstance for the area's employers, both large and small.

The committee is aware of recent findings by the Development Finance Institute and the UNC School of Government specific to Jackson County, affirming other local and regional housing assessments that have been conducted over the past 5-10 years. Whereas Jackson County remains a desirous location for new residents and businesses, the lack of multi-income housing creates a barrier to economic growth for which private sector investment and development alone will not maintain pace. Thus, there is a real possibility that the county will become even more reliant on importing workforce from surrounding communities in neighboring counties. Sadly, those counties are also facing a very similar critical housing shortage.

As such, the Jackson County Business and Industry Advisory Committee unanimously supports the consideration of financial investment from the Board of Commissioners to incentivize new housing development, demonstrating a strong correlation to supporting workforce development. Without such financial support where circumstances merit, the County will most certainly continue to have challenges in meeting the demands of current workforce needs, with very little hope of attracting new businesses and residents to support reasonable growth.

We are grateful for your consideration of this highly important matter.

Regards,



Rich Price, Chairman
Jackson County Business and Industry Advisory Committee