



## Appendix to the Jackson County CORE report

- Asset and Business listings
- Implementation plans
- Site Development
- Existing outdoor plan references
- Work Group Meeting notes
- Economy resources - Retail Market Analysis, Impact Areas

# Outdoor Assets and Business listings

## Jackson County Outdoor Asset Identification

### Activities Supported

Archery	Adventure Racing - Assault on Black Mtn
Backpacking - overnight	Mountain Biking and Gravel riding
Road Bicycling	Birdwatching
Camping - car, tent	Camping - RV
Canoeing	Climbing - indoor, bouldering, mountaineering
Fishing - Fly and Freshwater	Hiking
Hunting	Kayaking - recreational, whitewater, fishing
Nature Study	Rafting and Tubing
Trail running	Skateboarding
Skiing and Sliding (downhill)	Snowboarding
Snowshoeing	Stand-up Paddle boarding
Wildlife Viewing	

### Destinations and Resources

Tuckaseegee River	Blue Ridge Parkway
Nantahala Natl Forest (3 areas):	Panthertown - E Salt Rock, W Rattlesnake Knob
Moses Creek/Roy Taylor	Big Laurel/Caney Creek
Great Smoky Mountains NP	Wayehutta ATV Trails
WCU Mountain Bike Trails	Lakes - Glenville, Balsam, Tanasee, Wolf, Bear, Cedar Cliff
Pinnacle Park Forest Therapy Trail	Mountains to Sea Trail
Sapphire Valley Resort and Ski	Pinnacle Park trails
Waterfalls - various	WNC Fly Fishing Trail - Blueways
Whitesides, Laurel Knob - climbing faces	Fire Mountain mtn bike trails (EBCI)
Piney Mountain	Waterrock Knob
WCU Greenway	W Fork class IV whitewater
Tuck class II mini-gorge	E Fork Eternity Hole
W Fork Duke trail to waterfall	Tuck Central Valley - fly fishing
Hwy 107 Boulders near Cashiers	

### Human + Organizational (outdoor) Assets

Jackson Co Parks & Rec - Outdoor Dept.	USFS Nantahala District - Troy Waskey
Pinnacle Park Foundation	Friends of Panthertown
Friends of MTS Trail	Carolina Mountain Club
Foothills Trail Conference	Land Trusts - Main Spring, Conservation Fund, etc.
Blue Ridge Parkway - Dawn Leonard, Planner	Blue Ridge Parkway Fdn - Carolyn Ward, Director
NC Fish and Wildlife	SORBA - Nantahala chapter
American Whitewater	JC Chamber of Commerce
JC TDA - Nick Breedlove	SCC Outdoor Leadership program
Basecamp Cullowhee	WCU Rapid Center
WCU Native Plant School	Duke Energy - Lisa Leatherman
Burt Kornegay - Slickrock	Scouts + 4-H + youth groups
local Naturalists + Interpreters (retirees, too)	Landmark Learning
EBCI Cultural Office	Blair Ogburn - SOAR, Muddy Sneakers
White Dot Climbing - Cashiers	Balsam Reserve Stables

## Jackson County Outdoor Business Asset Identification

### Destination/Adventure Businesses

Dillsboro River Company	Adventure Racing - Assault on Black Mtn
Sapphire Valley Resort and Ski	Smokemont Riding Stables
Smoky Mountain River Adventures	Whitewater Equestrian Center
Bigelow's Botanical Excursions	Alarka Expeditions - comes out of Macon Co

### Outfitters and Guides

AB's Fly Fishing Guide Service	Black Balsam Outdoors
Blue Chip Fly Fishing	Brooking's Anglers
Carolina Trout Guides	Dream Catcher's Fishing
Fontana Guides	Highland Hiker
Lake Glenville Scenic Waterfall Cruises	Leland's Fishing Adventures
Let's Tie One On Fly Fishing	Rivers Edge Outfitters
Signal Ridge Marina	Tuckaseegee Fly Shop
Hooker's Fly Shop	

### Outdoor Recreation Retail

Highland Hiker	Walmart Supercenter
Dream Catcher's Fishing Supplies	Black Balsam Outdoors
Outpost Mountain Outfitters (boots)	Motion Makers LLC

### Manufacturing - Outdoor Gear

A1 Marine	Shira Forge
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### Other

Lakeshore Pontoon Boat Rental	Mountain View Marina
Arrowmont Stables & Cabins LLC	Yacht Fishing Charter LLC
Fallin's RV Center (repair)	Cycle Tec
many, many Camps, Campgrounds, Resorts, Golf Clubs, Hospitality businesses	

# Implementation Plans

Timeframe: A = 2023-24 B = 2025-26 C = 2027 and beyond

## Jackson County as the Home Basecamp and Natural Escape

Action	Task	Convener	Timeframe	Partners
<b>Increase Connections between Towns &amp; Recreation Assets</b>				
	.Continue/Increase priority of implementing greenway plans, develop and sign those segments easiest to realize	JC Parks & Rec Greenway + Trails Committee, JC Planning Office	<b>A</b> and on-going	RPO, NC DOT
	.Finalize alignment priorities and access options to pursue, develop funding strategy by section			
	.Identify destinations and safe, connecting roadways to sign for convenient daily walking and bicycling			
<b>Support Pinnacle Park Master Planning &amp; Implementation</b>				
	.Participate in planning process, encourage multi-use trail development, connection to downtown Sylva	Pinnacle Park Advisory Council, Pinnacle Park Foundation, Town of Sylva	<b>A</b>	JC Econ Dev, JC Parks & Rec, SORBA, CORE/BOC teams, Volunteer Service Corps
	.Assist with implementation - grant writing, letters of support			
	.Connect Park advocates with Outdoor Stewardship Council			
<b>Establish a Jackson County Outdoor Stewardship Council</b>				
	.Convene existing meet-up group, JC TDA Sustainability Council, trail volunteer organizations, resource owners/managers, others	Friends of Panthertown, JC TDA	<b>A</b>	Vision Cashiers, USFS, SORBA, Land Trusts, Mtns to Sea Trail, JC Parks Rec, Pinnacle Park Fdn, Conserving Carolina, many more
	.Share existing practices, needs, anticipated new demands, determine program of possible joint services			
	.Coordinate volunteer recruitment, training, work/event/activity calendars			
	.Incorporate outdoor educational opportunities, engage youth			
<b>Explore and encourage new recreation Hospitality options</b>				
	.Approach USFS re: developing a campground in Jackson Co	JC Stewardship Council	<b>C</b>	USFS, others
	.Consider other overnight options that might keep budget-conscious recreators in County for an extra meal, overnight			

## A Diverse Outdoor Recreation Scene

Action	Task	Convener	Timeframe	Partners
<b>Develop the Whitewater Park at Dillsboro site</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Convene paddling experts, enthusiasts, businesses, river development experts</li> <li>.Consider what is possible, desired and best strategy</li> <li>.Undertake feasibility and design plans, cost estimates, include also management options, income generation opportunities, funding or investment strategies</li> <li>.Fundraise, contract management, build</li> </ul>	JC Economic Development with enthusiasts	<b>B</b>	Mark Singleton, Shane Williams, Marc Hunt, Dillsboro River Company, Town of Dillsboro, JC Parks & Rec, JCTDA, WATR, Duke Energy recreation, others
<b>Create Expedition-level Mountain Bike/Hike Trail Connections</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Work with property owners, bike enthusiasts to define trail connections between Fire Mountain/Cherokee, Pinnacle Park and Balsam Knob</li> <li>.Convene property owners, trail managers, enthusiasts to plan Moses Creek "Long Trail" using existing trails with new connectors, signage and management plan</li> <li>.Develop business, income opportunities to support long-distance rides and quality experiences in Jackson County</li> </ul>	Mike Despeaux	<b>A</b>	Natahala SORBA, USFS, JC Parks & Rec, Land Trusts/Property owners, EBCI, Pinnacle Park Fdn, JC Stewardship Council, others
<b>Convene and Nurture Outdoor Social Network</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Organize, market semi-regular, informal social gatherings for outdoor recreators</li> <li>.Support new events - Hook, Line and Drinker as outdoor expo, host possible outdoor film festival showing, etc.</li> <li>.Engage local outdoor-supporting businesses, recreators, guides, service providers and invite sport celebrities, Outdoor Business Alliance (formerly Outdoor Gear Builders) members for exposure to Jackson County</li> <li>.Begin to inventory space available for such businesses, discern support needs, supply and value chain opportunities for development</li> </ul>	Sylva Main Street and committees	<b>A</b>	JC Econ Dev, JC Parks & Rec, Chambers of Commerce, WCU departments, Breweries, others

**Timeframe:** A = 2023-24 B = 2025-26 C = 2027 and beyond

## Offering Unique, Personal Outdoor Experiences

Action	Task	Convener	Timeframe	Partners
<b>Establish Youth Outdoor Council</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Identify gaps in local youth outdoor, environmental, recreation exposure, understanding, activity needs</li> <li>.Evaluate opportunities for low income, varied skill levels and summer gaps to fill</li> <li>.Develop coordinated outdoor education across County</li> <li>.Increase access to equipment &amp; training for low/no cost</li> <li>.Expose youth to outdoor careers, skills training, local businesses</li> <li>.Design outdoor student service learning opportunities, coordinate with JC Stewardship Council</li> </ul>	JC Parks & Rec - Outdoor office	<b>A</b>	JCPS, Boys & Girls Clubs, Hights, Scouts, 4-H, STEM programs, WCU, youth representatives, many others
<b>Develop family riverfront and beginner level or less-challenging outdoor recreation activity areas</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Explore use of Drexel/Whittier and Dillsboro (above rapids) sites for possible immediate, less formal recreation activity, undertake clean-up, stabilization, security, and access control</li> <li>.Develop a program of desired and supportable activities and programming management structure - seek proposals</li> <li>.Continue with longer term planning for each site (Drexel, Cullowhee with CURVE, Dillsboro) and its development including outdoor recreation and community events</li> </ul>	Jackson County Econ Development	<b>B-C</b>	JC Parks & Rec, JC Planning, others
<b>Expand Small Audience experiences and Income opportunities</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Evaluate existing small group experience offerings in JC, gaps in equipment access and training offerings, stories or unique conditions not yet shared, carrying capacity of special resource areas and current visitor impacts</li> <li>.Consult with existing Guides on opportunities, gaps and topical expertise missing and/or available in the region, levels of training needed for quality control</li> <li>.Prepare business plan for provision of new coordinated services and experiences for income</li> </ul>	JC Parks & Rec - Outdoor Office	<b>A</b>	JC Stewardship Council, Sylva Main Street + outdoor businesses, JCTDA, SBC, JC Econ Dev, WCU, Harris Regional Hospital, Basecamp Cullowhee, SCC Outdoor Leadership, Chambers of Commerce, others

.Recruit or develop guide, educational, experiential services including concierge package services

**Timeframe:** A = 2023-24 B = 2025-26 C = 2027 and beyond

## JC Outdoor Branding and Information Sharing

Action	Task	Convener	Timeframe	Partners
<b>Develop an Outdoor Brand for Jackson County</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Based on the JC TDA Play-On develop an outdoor recreation brand adaptation, byline, graphic scheme</li> <li>.Identify target markets and niche information resources, marketing strategy</li> </ul>	JC Econ Dev	<b>A</b>	Town of Sylva + Main Street, JCTDA, Chambers of Commerce
<b>Develop and Install trail and activity information kiosks</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Identify locations most readily accessible to local residents + visitors interested in outdoor recreation</li> <li>.Determine information and experiences to be shared, highlighted</li> <li>.Design and Install</li> </ul>	Jake Gottlob	<b>A</b>	JC Econ Dev, Town of Sylva + Main Street, JCTDA, Chambers of Commerce
<b>Design and Implement directional signage program</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Develop consistent sign design with adaptations for vehicles, pedestrians and trail users</li> <li>.Evaluate existing signage and key sign locations, needs</li> <li>.Incorporate public art as part of wayfinding program</li> <li>.Prioritize, work with NCDOT, land managers to locate and install</li> </ul>	JC Econ Dev	On Premise <b>A/B</b> Other <b>B/C</b>	JC Stewardship Council, resource managers, JCTDA, Chambers, NCDOT, SORBA, JC Arts Council, Towns of Sylva + Cashiers, others
<b>Develop Social Media monitoring strategy</b>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.Inventory and assess accuracy of most popular outdoor activity apps as recommended by sport groups</li> <li>.Update as possible</li> <li>.Define best avenue to ensure timely, accurate information to users</li> </ul>	JC Stewardship Council	<b>A/B</b>	JC TDA, Chambers of Commerce

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## Development Potential of County-owned River Sites

### **A Look at Three Sites in Cullowhee, Dillsboro and Whittier**

The Community Outdoor Recreation Economy Work Group took a tour of three sites along the Tuckasegee River, owned by Jackson County and ready for investment or redevelopment. These sites have been studied before and development proposals have come and passed. Usually such a tour would be focused on the “Highest and Best Use”, a term used in real estate development for evaluation of the impact a specific development on a site would have on the local economy. (The use must be legally permissible, physically possible, financially feasible and most profitable. Generally, such a study is looking for which uses result in the best present value and reaps the highest net return over the coming several years.) But—this tour was focused on outdoor economy-building uses and activities. After several meetings discussing strengths, gaps and improvements to the visitor and local experience, the proposals focus on how these sites might help to grow the outdoor economy—a recreation highest and best use!

The three sites considered as part of this outdoor recreation economy strategy each have conditions that do not allow them to fit neatly into a traditional economic development scenarios. As river sites—floodplain/floodway is first on the list. Any activity must comply with the Jackson County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance and other requirements as applicable.

Property appraisals from which property tax is established are listed in county records. Such valuations may vary based on market and financial conditions at the time of the assessment. Jackson County did their property valuations in 2020, effective January 1, 2021 and will be re-appraised in 2024 for effective date January 1, 2025. This may be important for the Whittier/Drexel site where the group was advised that generally only fifty percent of the appraised value may be invested in improving a building within the floodway.

The greatest return for these properties may not come from sale to a private investor but instead from other returns for the public, County and local governments. Public land can anchor investment, establishing the environment and quality conditions to attract greater private surrounding investments. The Work Group can see great potential for each of these sites as an outdoor anchor destination. Lists of activity ideas follow brief site descriptions.

The tour included County staff able to answer questions and guide ideas for potential activities. Sites along the river will require further guidance on floodway and flood plain restrictions, river bank disruption and anything proposed in the river bed to determine what is safe, legal and possible to develop or do on each site. Previous environmental and development studies for the sites had also been requested and reviewed. Brief summaries are on the following pages.

## **Cullowhee River Property**

74 Wayehutta Road, Cullowhee NC  
PIN 7559-46-1151 + 2312  
Owned by Jackson County

### **Site description:**

0.81 acres along the Tuck below the new Old Cullowhee Road bridge. Also own 0.34 acres adjacent with older home on lot 74A—now demolished.

Land value: \$168,680 + \$98,770.  
Zoned Commercial.

### **Public Records search:**

No request was submitted to DEQ in either Raleigh or the Western office for this site partially because of the recent highway bridge construction but also the work by CURVE to do master planning for the site.



### **Archeology record:**

Site disturbed by construction and only partially surveyed. The major Cherokee site at WCU campus could mean some significance may exist.

### **Notes:**

An active group called CURVE has developed a master plan with two options for this site. The preferred plan includes the abandoned building at 76 Wayehutta Road and eliminates the need for the driveway. County and NC DOT attempts to purchase 76 Wayehutta have so far been unsuccessful and implementation of the desired river access park is on hold.

A Water-intake dam is owned by WCU and operated by Duke Energy. Recreators would like to see more releases on the Tuckasee overall. CURVE is considering building a stair-step structure into the dam to make it a safer play location—but Duke/WCU currently have no plans to make changes.

Jackson County also owns other property farther up and down river that may make a larger planning process useful. Recently NC DOT has moved ahead with plans to develop a roundabout near the community gardens just down-stream from the proposed park. The proposal is to take part of the land now used by the community gardens for roadway while then increasing the distance of the roadway from the river. The Greenway is planned to come as far as the Community Gardens—and with the new proposal may be extended to the park area proposed on Wayehutta.

### **Primary Assets of Cullowhee Site(s):**

River views, proximity to WCU students and community, active CURVE community group already engaged in planning and promoting clean up and development on the site

### **Challenges:**

Steep bank down to the river so direct access limited, much of useable land lost to driveway and parking (30+ cars), greenway will end on opposite side of river

**Activities Proposed/Considered:**

The existing “Concept A” plan shows a small event lawn with stage and covered picnic shelter, restrooms and a series of picnic pads terraced into the slope overlooking the river.

**A new Wrinkle:**

NC DOT has prepared plans for a traffic roundabout on South Painter Road where Monteith Gap Road and Ledbetter Road all come together. The roundabout will be located further away from the river, possibly impacting part of the Community Gardens on South Painter. The current bridge over Cullowhee Creek would be relocated upstream about 75 feet or so. As much as 200-300 feet of green space would be available between the new road and roundabout and river front. The riverfront area (PIN 7559-36-5862 + 4487) faces an undeveloped island buffering the community from event activities. It appears that the stream bank is not as steep or high as the planned site and may allow some places for access to the river for paddling, wading, fishing and other passive activities. The river is deeper and swifter on this curve which may limit safe in-water use. The currently planned terminus of the Greenway is under the new bridge to the Community Garden—however with this development, an extension is possible.

This larger site would allow the community and WCU to have a true waterfront park with space for informal games like disc golf, sunbathing as well as picnicking. Any new plans drawn should include not only a larger event space and the toilets but also food truck hook-ups. Ideally parking would be head-in off of Monteith Gap Road to the roundabout and as possible beyond. Students would be expected to walk or bike from campus so bike racks will be needed. Direct access to or along the river should be explored for whatever length possible although an accessible fishing pier may be separate if the community desires such.

It is hoped that the area along Cullowhee Creek might be enhanced as a native river plant garden that would connect to an expanded (if needed) community garden. Perhaps a planting shed and market stall might be incorporated to serve the gardens and offer access to fresh produce in season.

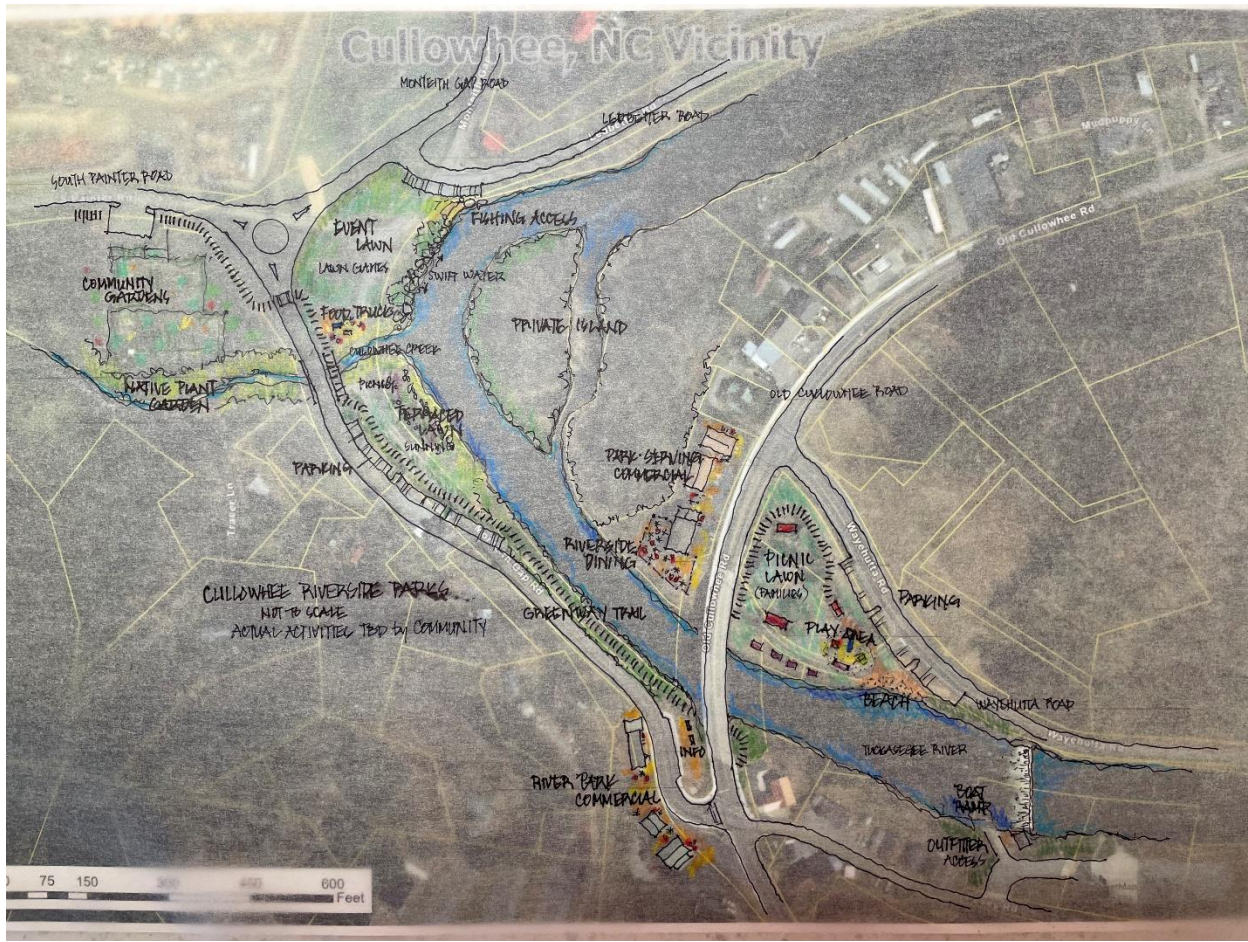
One of the most exciting parts of this new property is the potential to also encourage service commercial development to serve park users. There are very few opportunities for riverfront or river-view dining and a restaurant space could be quite successful with outdoor seating. A General store of sorts might offer river and picnic supplies, perhaps rent equipment (Basecamp Cullowhee extension to offer paddle boards, fishing gear, etc.) as well as games, beach towels, sunscreen, river shoes, etc. This could become a riverfront ‘downtown’ for WCU.

**Economic consideration** includes the development of a focal point for WCU students that differentiates WCU from any other University campus. This larger project could be very important to helping keep WCU financially strong through the demographic cliff by offering an experience and place that no other college or University can offer. (Retention of a critical regional economic driver.)

**Maintenance and management** of such a riverfront park (Continued WCU and/or County ownership) might include a longer-term agreement with a commercial entity with a built-in vested interest in the success of the riverfront park (riverfront dining, park-serving commercial space). Camp Cullowhee might

also be approached for assistance with programming. Community Garden members may also assist with care of the Creekside interpretive garden. Jackson County Parks and Recreation – Outdoor Recreation may also choose to do some programming at this location.

Artist's rendering



## Work Group Ideas for Cullowhee Site Development

These are independent ideas offered by members of the Work Group on the tour:

Would the implementation of the smaller version of the park (without 76 Wayehutta) make it more difficult to then justify investment in a greater facility when/if it could be acquired? It is a shame that so much land is dedicated to parking. Who might program the events to use the facilities proposed?

Can housing be stepped into that steep slope just opposite this proposed park? Earth-sheltered and energy-efficient—also a new model for apartment/condo development to ease housing shortage. Just a question!

Would like to see a small area plan for a major riverfront “town” center serving WCU. Maybe existing or some new commercial could be retrofitted as a recreation and entertainment destination to complement the riverfront park. Bicycle connections to campus and the greenway system as well as upstream are important to making this a destination.

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At the sites we looked at in Cullowhee, hosting recreation nights (teaching people to fly fish. macroinvertebrate days. kayak 101. etc.) teaching people how to enjoy and learn more about rivers in this area. River recreation and education as a focus here. I also think that finding a way to involve WCU at this site would be beneficial. Maybe

art students could design a statue, GNR students could do a macro survey at the sites, classes be held out at that site, all of the above!

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- Greenway extension, connection to campus
  - Outdoor plaza space-- stage, picnic area, etc.
  - Adding fruit trees, bushes as an extension of the community garden
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**Idea 1 (Pull in the Target Market)** - I think what the group was talking about when we visited sums up the best use for the site. It is in the perfect area as a “finishing” or “starting” line for the greenway, and after its implementation, the area around Old Cullowhee Rd can start to be re-envisioned with riverside restaurants and retail spaces. I believe adding something to further draw students from WCU would help because the site is within walking distance of campus. This would include a bocce ball court (the game seems to be getting pretty popular and I don’t believe there is a public court available in Jackson County). There should also be some sort of multi use space (either a pavilion or area to set up some booths) where students or local artists can set up arts and crafts fairs. Check out WCU StudentMade, they do pop-ups throughout the year and have a fairly large following.

**Idea 2 (Greenway as the Heart of Jackson County)** - This other idea stems mostly from the gaps we talked about during the CORE meetings, specifically creating the Jackson County outdoor rec brand, and providing information on outdoor recreation in the county. It’s safe to say that the long term plan for the Greenway could make it draw in a massive amount of both residents and visitors. As a central, noticeable, and accessible location, I believe this makes the Greenway the best place to disseminate information for outdoor rec. A building on site that could house trail maps, information on activities and their locations, guides, and businesses could work well because once again, the site acts as a “finish” or “starting” line for the greenway. The area around can then be used as the “artistic playground” that really hammers in the brand of Jackson County outdoor recreation we want people to have.

## **Drexel Property at the Whittier Industrial Site**

271 Clearwood Drive, Whittier  
PIN 7603-28-3884  
Owned by Jackson County

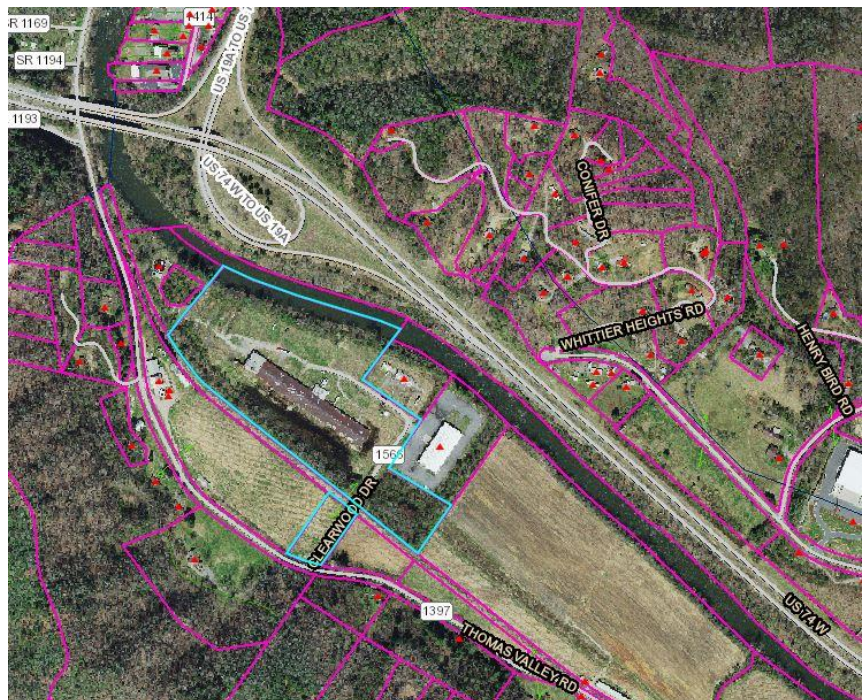
### **Site Description:**

27.82 acre site with 82,380 SF brick on concrete slab structure. Utilities in place, forced air heat. Local farmers are using a portion of the building for crop storage.

Former woodworking operation run by Drexel Furniture/Clearwood.

**Building Value:** \$546,180

**Land Value:** \$802,960



Nearly entire site lies in the floodway. Group was advised that a small flood “shadow” area is currently the only possible location for any new construction. Improvements to the building cannot exceed 50%

of appraised value. Berms were installed along the river but were not recognized in the flood mapping and are therefore considered legally not to exist.

**Western Regional DEQ Public Records search:**

Air quality shows that the air permit was rescinded in February of 2011. No files found for Energy, Mineral and Land Resources. Waste Management found no files for Solid Waste or Underground storage tanks. Review of the on-line website for Brownfield, Hazardous Waste and Inactive Hazardous Sites shows no known or previously-inspected locations at this property. Water Resources also found no files for Public Water Supply or Water Quality reports. A search was not submitted to the state office in Raleigh.

**Archeology record:**

Archeological work has been done on this site and there is a National Register eligible occurrence. Further research would be needed before any disruption. Four other significant precontact and post-contact historic/archaeological sites are located nearby. Proximity to Kituwah may mean an interesting story could be developed for the site!

**Notes:**

Two rafting companies put-in or take-out sites are located just up-stream from this site. This stretch of river is said to be by far the best stretch for teaching paddling to beginners. It offers a potentially safer family river experience than the other two sites. Both assume the berm to be graded for river access.

**Primary Assets of Drexel/Whittier Site:**

- Best lazy stretch of the Tuck for family river play—float, wade, paddle and also best location for learning paddle sports.
- Long, open span building—some areas in reasonable shape.
- Prime food production land adjacent to successful local food farming families (economic resilience seen as needed during Covid supply-chain disruptions)
- Rail spur and potential service from scenic railway
- Significant historical features
- Utility connections and proximity

**Challenges:**

- Site lies within the recognized floodway, not just the flood zone, limiting developable area and investment that might be made to the building.
- The Berm – help or hindrance? Limiting access to the riverfront but possibly limiting flooding on the site—to be determined through additional evaluation.
- Unknown at this time if EBCI has plans to interpret other historic sites in the proximity that might include those on this site or not. Need to protect the sites from disruption until regional plans are established.

**Activities Proposed/Considered:**

The Work Group was serious about limiting immediate investment mostly to clean-up and securing of the site and the stabilizing of whatever parts of the building can be made safe for open use. Port-a-potties will be needed! They recommend then opening it as a managed river event, training and play park with a stage and screen area—possibly in an open section of the building (?), hook-ups for an array of food trucks and informal but controlled parking access. Accommodations for lawn games, paddle and float equipment rental, possibly instruction are desired. The building is of greatest interest in the potential to provide rainy day and off-season outdoor sport inside. Paths, disc golf holes and other such activities might be played through the building—both indoors and out but also possibly with an indoor option. Depending on building conditions, a climbing wall may breach the ceiling line for much needed training to encourage use of Jackson County’s incredible climbing faces. There may also be opportunity for artificial ice, indoor lawn games, skate or bike park, etc. Food, music, dance classes and movies would make the site an even greater destination.

Events in such a flexible facility might also include a fall harvest fair working with Darnell Farms agritourism, a food demonstration of crops brought to the area by various settlers, including preservation and also ag traditions from Cherokee farmers. Perhaps the train might run a special schedule for such major events if not also for a fun day at the river.

#### **Management considerations:**

County may retain ownership in short-term and lease to a local events company to program and maintain for profit. The land might someday be sold to a private company for outdoor recreation destination development putting it back on the tax roles. Eventually an investment in restrooms, a kitchen that may support food trucks and supply storage and an education area with meeting room and gear office as well as whatever training facilities may be desired. A couple of gear manufacturers might be recruited depending on conditions of the building. Jackson County Parks and Recreation might use this site as an outpost for their outdoor recreation programming and camps.

#### **Anticipated Impacts from such activity:**

This site may best provide that ‘destination’ that defines outdoor recreation in Jackson County for families and enthusiasts. Training programs, lazy time near the river and events will make it attractive for all types and ages of visitors and local residents as well. The ability to do outdoor activities inside the building is a unique opportunity—and a much-needed family and rain attraction.

#### **Work Group Ideas for the Drexel Site Development:**

These are independent ideas offered by members of the Work Group on the tour:

I like the event center idea. Certain parts of it could be for “rent” while others could be year-round revenue producing.

Rental Options – this could be on par with the Salvage Station in Asheville

- Roller Derby Matches
- Concerts
- Food Truck Rallies
- Expos
- Big Group Meetings (Revivals, etc.)

- Farmer's Markets
- Haunted House, Scavenger Hunt, Escape Room
- Billiards and Darts, Cornhole

Permanent Ideas:

- Outfitter (bikes, boats, tubes, shuttles, etc. for the "slow float" (proximity to Deep Creek (bike & float), Kituwah Fields (biking))
- Climbing & Rappelling gym (you could easily build up through the roof)
- Indoor Disc Golf (I like the idea of taking outdoor activities and making them semi-indoor for bad weather – we have a lot of it, and this could be a good option)
- Outdoor gear builders
- Dog Agility and Flyball Training Center
- Paintball
- Skatepark

Partners to Involve:

- Darnell Farms
- Tribe for Kituwah Fields

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I love, love, love the idea of a climbing wall and climbing through the roof at the Drexel site. That sounds so cool! What about dance classes in that building as well? Square dance, salsa, tap dance... we mentioned this on Monday, but I like the idea of a multi-use building. There are a lot of different opportunities there. I think that education would be a great addition to that multi-use! eg: different trees and flowers in WNC, how to recreate sustainably, the science of geology. That building has a lot of potential!

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- Fairground
  - I love the idea of a large outdoor amphitheater/music stage/music festival. Check out the [Master Musicians Festival](#) in Somerset, KY, which is way in the middle of nowhere, KY but population of around 12,000. This could go hand-in-hand with a fairground, too?
  - Open-air, covered market (crafts, value-added foods, etc.)
  - Leave its current use or morph into a food distribution hub, but make improvements so farmers use it more. Then use the outside space for recreational opportunities. Could even use it as a wholesale market for local restaurants, etc.
  - Food truck hub
  - Campground
  - equestrian arena
  - paintball course
  - community garden for heritage crops
  - the space reminds me a lot of Barber's Orchard's market, which is PACKED when it's open. There are quite a few roadside markets between Barkers Creek and Darnell Farms, but just a thought.
  - Plant nursery
  - bike park, walking path, etc. for this part of the county
  - river take-out. I love a nice, slow, peaceful float down the river.
- 

**Idea 1 (Outdoor Education and Event Venue)** - With limited investment opportunity into the Drexel building itself the best course of action is to split the building into an outdoor and indoor area if demolition costs do not count towards building improvement. On the outdoor side I think an amphitheater would work great. The concrete slab looked like it didn't need repairs, and construction of a stage and seating may not contribute to building



improvement costs (would have to check on this). The amphitheater could then be mixed use for outdoor education classes, tie in some Cherokee history classes because of the artifact site, and a music venue that could pull people to the site. The money for building improvements could then be used towards repairs on the roof for the better maintained part of the building, which could be used as a food truck area. Finally, I really like the idea of using the office space that is already at the site as a cohabitation space for Jackson County outdoor recreation guides. We could incentivise guides by making rent cheap, and in turn asking them to possibly hold some of the outdoor education events at the amphitheater. I picture it as an incubator but for guides.

**Idea 2 (Multi-sport Outdoor Rec)** - Similar to the first idea, the building should be split into an indoor/outdoor area, with food trucks occupying the indoor portion. This could leave roughly 40k square feet of outdoor slab that could be turned into basketball, tennis, and even futsal courts public to county residents. A disc golf course and a playground could fill up the remaining acreage.



I would like to note that for both ideas, river access should be implemented as well. A tubing or beginners kayaking area from Barkers Creek to the Drexel site could pull more people to whatever is implemented for the site.



## **Dillsboro River Park**

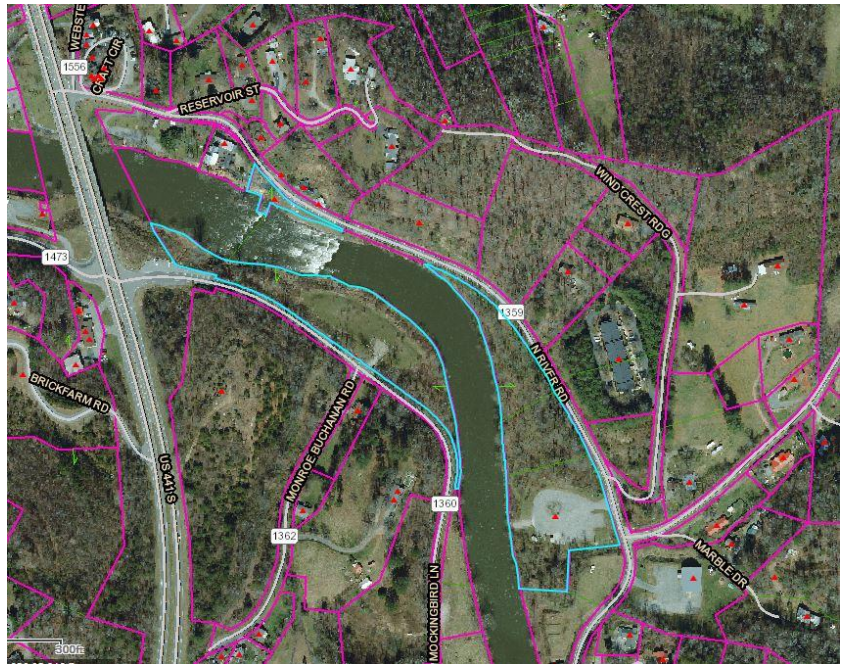
446 N River Road, Sylva  
PIN 7631-44-3600  
Owned by Jackson County

### **Site description:**

17.65 acres split between north and south sides of the Tuckasegee River.

Land Value \$388,870.  
Not zoned.

Includes CJ Harris boat launch site and the site of a former dam.



### **Western Regional DEQ Public Records**

**search:** No records were found for Air Quality or Energy, Mineral and Land Resources. Similarly no records were found under Water Resources or by either Solid Waste or Underground Storage Tank sections. No site visit or inspection appears to have been made by NC Hazardous Waste Compliance and the site has not been assigned an EPA Hazardous Waste ID. Review of the on-line website for Brownfield, Hazardous Waste and Inactive Hazardous Sites shows no known or previously-inspected locations at this property. A request for records was not submitted to the State Office in Raleigh.

### **Archeology record:**

This property has been surveyed by archaeologists and two sites were identified. One of the sites is significant and the property should be investigated before development.

### **Notes:**

The Town of Dillsboro identified this site for a river park as part of their Family-oriented Basecamp for Outdoor Recreation strategy in a 2017 – 2021 Economic Development plan.

A “Heritage Park” plan was created in 2009. The powerhouse and dam were still existing.

Whitewater enthusiasts have been observed using the former dam site for ‘surfing’ after rainstorms. Reports are offered that substantial concrete and rebar from the dam pose hazards to river users. The first rapid area is called “Stitches” for the need for stitches after kayaking it. Also called “Dillsboro Drop” and rated class III by American Rivers.

Water and sewer currently only serve North River Road—the boat ramp site. However, the ramp only offers pit toilets and changing rooms—no running water or sewer connection.

## Primary Assets of Dillsboro Site:

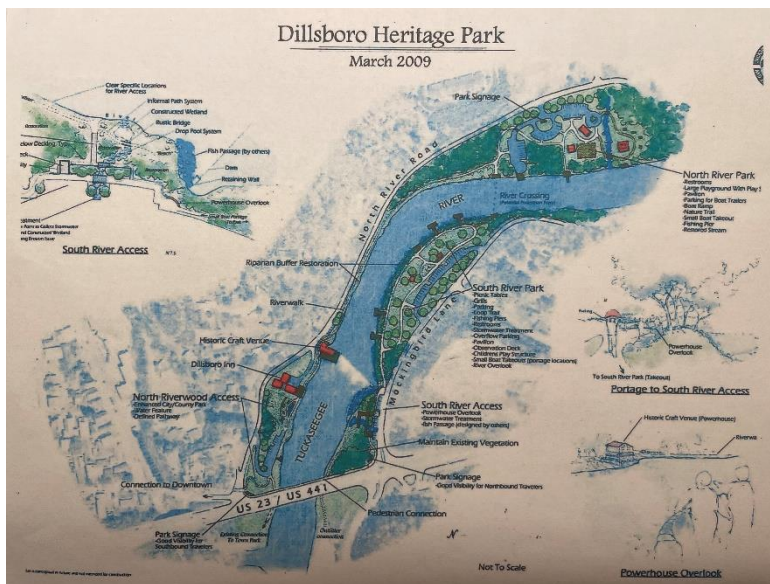
- Dillsboro Dip/Stitches, class II whitewater
- Visibility of the rapids from Dillsboro with full array of food and hospitality services
- Slopes provide natural amphitheater setting for casual viewing, exhibitions or competitive events

## Challenges:

- Developing the right plan with the right supporters for best experience
- Environmental requirements, complexities of in-river work and costs
- Management and Funding for such an attraction

## Activities Proposed/Considered:

All agree this must be improved as a whitewater wave attraction—unique for two consecutive drops. Needs a safe passage for floaters and less experienced paddlers to reach Dillsboro Outfitters and quieter waters downstream. Side slopes can be terraced for viewing, picnicking, sunbathing and possibly enjoying other river events (music?). A convenient kayak put-in and take-out area must be retained—designed also to accommodate competitions and exhibition activity. Restrooms and changing areas will be needed as well.



The 2009 Heritage Park plan included many excellent features and activities especially the bike/walk paths on both sides of the river. It was hoped that the south river open area might be used for training and equipment rental as proposed for Drexel, however the proximity to the very challenging rapids would make it difficult to keep beginners from floating into danger. Instead it may not include so much in-water access but host casual lawn games, picnics, fishing and other such activities...or riverside dining!

If utilities were to be run on the south side, this open area might be perfect for a riverside restaurant. The site might be landscaped as a river forest garden with dining areas carved out for views and sounds of the river—twinkly lights for evenings, roving musicians and a menu of freshwater fish. It all might start with food trucks...

Bicycle and walking loop trails should connect downtown Dillsboro, downtown Sylva and the river park. E-Bikes might make this an even more attractive destination and a key component of the outdoor scene in Jackson County for everyone.

## Anticipated Impacts from such activity:

Having such a central and visible riverfront destination would provide a missing component to the local and visitor experience. There are very few places now to spend the day listening to the river, maybe

wading in or dropping a line. The proximity to Dillsboro shops and restaurants makes for a full and relaxing day in the mountains.

The whitewater park, again in such a visible location, would put Jackson County on the map. It would expose such activities to local youth as well as visitors and send them in search of training, guides and equipment. And bring them back to practice or enjoy an exhibition or competition. Watching the tricks and attempts of paddlers on the rapids is an event—entertainment they will provide impromptu at any time!

### **Work Group Ideas for the Dillsboro Riverfront:**

These are independent ideas offered by members of the Work Group on the tour:

Basics of the Heritage Park Plan (2009) are really good and should be updated. Anxious to see if the new campground being developed across from the ramp will bring water and sewer over from the north side.

- Develop central area (South side) as concierge central for access to guides and introductions to activities requiring equipment like river snorkeling, paddleboards and kayaks. Vans take ‘students’ to areas for instruction or activity. Evidently the rapids are too dangerous to encourage much water interaction—run the risk of being pulled in and over. Bummer....
    - If utilities—develop a quality riverside dining restaurant! Maybe in a managed nature garden or learning arboretum but with maximum river views and the sound of the rapids.
    - Parks and Rec staff pull in a seasonal temporary office to manage such programs and coordinate other local guide services (private or P&R if no private offered) concierge for hiking, botany tours, nature photography, earth bathing, biking, climbing and anything else!
    - Develop wide grassy terraces on the banks in the central area to create an informal leisurely river destination for wading, picnics, etc. Include parking and a convenient kayak put-in.
    - If no utilities other than electricity then support a rodeo of food trucks (options). Still might have decks for riverside dining in a natural forest.
  - Develop boat ramp park as the fly fishing service center for the Tuck. Offer on-site or at least list guide services with equipment rentals. Sell fishing licenses, offer programs on fish species and habitats as well as other riverine nature. Fish weighing and cleaning—either self-service or for a fee on ice. Fish market? Could develop river snorkeling and join the new trail from here as well. If utilities are here maybe a real bathroom someday?
  - Engage whitewater enthusiasts in considering the potential for accentuating the experiences possible at the first old dam rapids area. Evaluate if far enough from Woodfin or able to offer a different enough experience. Use unsafe concrete and rebar conditions to gain opportunity to reconfigure the experience. Terrace the slope on the south side of the river as a viewing area for activity on the rapids...organize to host competitions and offer training. Develop water with an easy floater side and then the other for waves and competition.
    - Wild idea—install a music performance shell and/or film screen across from terraced seating area or mid-stream (Boston) as an evening entertainment venue.
  - Develop walking/biking trails on both sides of river. Then develop loop walking/biking route to connect downtown Sylva and Dillsboro to riverfront activity. Replace the bridge use the pilings from the temporary bridge in Monteith Park to get bicycles off the main road or, connect the two downtowns on e-bikes via Dillsboro Road. Explore signing and terrain appropriateness of a route from Chamber/Visitor Center to the library then Savannah Drive to Yellow Bird Branch Road to the boat ramp park and onto the riverside trails. Maybe someday host an engineering/STEMD competition to devise a way to get bicycles across the river—pulley systems on floats??
-

This site, I think, has a lot of potential. WNC has an incredible whitewater rec community, and this site is very popular among paddlers. Using that knowledge to bring out the best of this site would be very beneficial. "Paddler parking", spectator seating at the dam. Maybe a small playground at this site would be fun too!

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- I definitely like the idea of opening that space up for viewing areas/parking
  - Trolley taking water recreators to downtown Dillsboro, Sylva
  - Nature playground area
- 

**Whitewater Park** - Not much needs to be said about this site. I have heard from multiple people (both recreationists and providers) that the area around the old Dillsboro dam would be perfectly suited for a whitewater park.

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Terraced seating on the slope would grant this kayaker an audience or perhaps a judge on competition day.

## Existing Outdoor Recreation Plans

The idea of better using outdoor recreation as an economic base is not a new concept for Jackson County. It has been a stated goal for many years as is reflected in many plans, development proposals and research projects. Indeed much of the work outlined here endorses and builds on the existing plans and studies. Over time some projects have changed and others have shown themselves to be even more pivotal to the kind of community desired by its residents. Here is a sampling of those plans, reports and studies reviewed during the course of this project.

### **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

Jackson County is located within the Southwestern Commission Economic Development District (EDD). The EDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) includes outdoor recreation as a key focus area in two of the four Goals:

Goal 1: *Build a Strong Regional Economy that is in Alignment with the Culture and Assets of the Region* – “This plan focuses on outreach to those businesses as well as helping to build a more integrated entrepreneurial ecosystem while focusing on sectors of strength or those with high potential such as outdoor manufacturing, agriculture, tourism and retail.”

Goal 2: *Build the Infrastructure required to Ensure Robust Growth that is at a Scale Appropriate to the Region* – “This goal will also focus on infrastructure improvements in specific sectors like outdoor recreation that can help to drive tourism, improve quality of life in the region, and ultimately help in attracting workers to multiple sectors.”

### **Southwestern Commission 2013 Regional Trails Plan**

Jackson County priorities include: Tuckasegee River Greenway; Pinnacle Park Trails Enhancement; Tuckasegee River Blueway Designation; and Cashiers/Glenville Pathway System.

**Jackson County Recreation Master Plan** – 2013 Update – Shows support for more nature trails/areas, the greenway, park land acquisition, walking and biking trails and river park. Twenty-six percent of survey respondents reported not knowing what is being offered and over twenty-two percent said recreation was too far from their home.

**Jackson County Walks** – July 2021 by NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division with Traffic Planning and Design and Chipley Consulting.

**Destination Research** – November 2018 – March 2019 by Young Strategies, Inc. for the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority. Survey with 2,519 visitor responses online + some residents, longer ago visits = 3,783

**Destination Next – Multi-User Online Diagnostic Tool Results** – March 2019 by Destinations International for the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority. Online Diagnostic Survey of Tourism-involved in JC. 150 respondents – local government, DMO Board & staff, Tourism Partners, Local Stakeholders - 56% over age 50, 9% age 18-34

**Jackson County Greenways Project – Comprehensive Master Plan** – June 2009

Includes a complete listing of 50 Greenway trails and connections between the communities in Jackson County, recreation and cultural destinations. Eight priority Initiatives supporting trail partnerships and stewardship, community health and environmental education.

**Various Master Planning maps and reports** for three river sites:

- Smoky Mountain Agricultural Station Development – December 2014, Altamont Environmental, Inc.
- Dillsboro Heritage Park Plan – March 2009. Developed before the dam and powerhouse were removed. Second dam just up-stream was unknown to the planners!
- Cullowhee Park – a community group called CURVE has developed two development options for the 74 Wayehutta Road site—one with the old structure on 76 Wayehutta Road removed and one with it remaining. Recently NC DOT has done preliminary drawings for a roundabout near the community garden on S Painter Road where Ledbetter and Monteith Gap roads also converge. This would provide a larger, contiguous site for a potential river park at the planned end of the Greenway.

# CORE Work Group Meeting Notes



## Jackson County

### Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies

Meeting Notes from March 2, 2023

9:00 – 10:30am at Southwestern Commission

In attendance: Tiffany Henry, Jackson County Economic Development Director; Jake Gottloeb, JC Economic Development Intern; Trevor Brown, Jackson County Parks and Recreation Outdoor Recreation Director; Michael Despeaux, OR enthusiast and Southwestern Community College; Michael Posten, Jackson County Planning Director; Andy Coburn, WCU; Bernadette Peters, Sylva Main Street and Economic Development Director; Becca Scott and Millie Smith from Southwestern Commission and NC Commerce: Ann Bass and Bruce Naegelen.

The purpose of this first meeting was to establish group definitions and common focus areas. A slide presentation noted the economic depth of the outdoor recreation economy and growth during the pandemic, defined the economy more broadly than NAICS codes and tourism and began the conversation about the many Jackson County assets supporting it. This asset mapping is a requirement of the Building Outdoor Communities program that Jackson County will participate in starting this month.

A short survey of the work group prior to the meeting established an understanding of group motivations. The top priorities for the strategic planning process included:

- Increased revenue for exist businesses – 100%
- Development of skilled outdoor workforce – 100%
- Attracting new business + industry to County – 92%
- Greater Q of L for full/part-time residents – 92%

A definition for outdoor recreation as would be considered for this planning process: on a sliding scale of ten the work group expressed scores:

- Resident participation was a priority between Visitor and Resident participation
- Even balance between Conservation/Preservation and the Recreational experience
- Marginal preference for Nature education over physical recreation
- Slightly greater preferences for:
  - Adventure experiences over Competitions
  - Nature-based over Facility-Based activities
  - Lifelong activities over extreme sport

The work group reviewed and revised lists of outdoor activities, outdoor businesses and destinations as taken from the Discover Jackson website, Data Axl listings and Building Outdoor Communities materials. Because so much work has already been done to assemble an asset list, define experiences and promote destinations and services, the lists compiled and extended are included in the report in lieu of the traditional asset mapping



exercise and physical map. Instead, this exercise serves to bring the many and varied assets to top of mind for application during the remaining process!

When asked who else should be at the table or consulted during this process, the suggestions included:

- USFS – recreation staff and/or VISTA volunteer
- Nick Breedlove with the Jackson County TDA as he may have time
- Friends of Panthertown
- Land manager for state and local properties
- Caney Fork and Moses Creek plans

There was discussion throughout the meeting on various best practices, opportunities:

- E-Bikes represent opportunities for broader market to enjoy mountain biking in steep terrain but are not allowed on Federal lands—National Park or USFS. Discussion on levels of assistance could differentiate those that would improve access while not increasing impacts to trails.
- Tourism studies show primary visitors are families and older couples. This is not the extreme sport crowd and JC does not offer so many extreme sport opportunities.
- There is a need for more information—standardized app to help choose trails of appropriate length and difficulty, wayfinding to trail heads, maps to stay on trails and understand how trail systems connect, etc.
- City of Fruita, Colorado (<https://gofruita.com/>) has an exemplary website and branding campaign for outdoor recreation.
- May be some opportunity for training facilities to allow locals access and increase safe participation by more people and extended seasons.
- Being inclusive in who has access and can recreate is important and a possible niche to develop.
- Development of entrepreneurial enclaves for gear and experiences often results in a local “culture”. Not all residents will want to think of their communities in this way.
- Outdoor Recreation needs to be for local residents as much as for tourists.
- Recreation should Do No Harm to the assets that support them.
- There is a need for a variety of routine experiences in the outdoors for evening walks, places to clear the mind and for beginners.
- It is important to be mindful of the carrying capacity of the resource base to maintain the quality of the recreational experience.
- Development of an interconnected greenway has good public support.
- WCU is expanding their mountain biking trails. They are open to everyone, not just students.

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, March 28, 2023 in the same location—if available.



**Jackson County**  
**Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies**  
Meeting Notes from March 28, 2023

9:00 – 11:00am at Southwestern Commission

In attendance: Tiffany Henry, Jackson County Economic Development Director; Jake Gottloeb, JC Economic Development Intern; Trevor Brown, Jackson County Parks and Recreation Outdoor Recreation Director; Michael Despeaux, OR enthusiast and Southwestern Community College; Michael Poston, Jackson County Planning Director; Bernadette Peters, Sylva Main Street and Economic Development Director; Dennis Desmond, Friends of Pinnacle Park; Krista Robb and Kara McMullen, Friends of Panthertown; Becca Scott and Millie Smith from Southwestern Commission and NC Commerce: Ann Bass with Bruce Naegelen, David McRae and Karen Smith joining virtually.

Tiffany and Jake reported that they are doing lots of reading but so far a BOC (Building Outdoor Communities) team has not met. Andy Coburn will be away from May through August, Jake leaves in May as well.

Michael Poston shared an asset map that he and the GIS staff had put together. The group used it to explore options for trail connections, fact-check locations, add overlooked components and develop ideas of new opportunities. The map also spurred updates on existing planning work and connections in process.

The updated asset lists were shared with opportunity to add anything new.

#### Outdoor Recreation Economy Analysis

##### ***What Does Jackson County Have That Sets Us Apart?***

##### **STRENGTHS**

- Marketing across different resources (i.e. chamber, TDA, etc)
- Trout fishing capital – ease of access
- Leave No Trace is included in promotion of the county
- The area is easy to sell (natural resources)
- Good fly fishing guides
- Very established entry-level whitewater scene (small) on Tuck
- Attractive downtown Sylva
- Ale Trail
- Parks & Recreation department does awesome job with groups and outdoor recreation
- Communication between groups - outdoor recreation, stewardship and land management
- Have many hidden gems – not so crowded (like mini-gorge)
- Appeal to people who don't want to be among hundreds of other people in a state park
- Have places that feel like wilderness
- Waterfalls? Whitewater mini-gorge
- Concert series coordinated between Cashiers and Sylva + include ORec activities
- Skatepark and e-bike demos during concerts
- Good at family recreation – little kids pump track
- AirBnB pays bed tax directly to the County/TDA for its members

##### ***What could Jackson County be doing better?***

##### **WEAKNESSES**

- Severe topography limits development, causes safety challenges
- Panthertown has too many user-generated trails
- Survey: need more activities for children up to age 10/12 – mostly send them to towns with wider greenways appropriate for children bicycling

- Summer camps (10-15 yr olds)
- Need more activities for 12 – 14 yo age group, ORec, camps
- Need more sections of greenways completed
  - Activities for youth
- Enough activities to support 3+ day visits
  - Better for day trips
  - Critical mass of activities per certain user type
- JC is a great backyard – maybe better than as OR destination
- Need better access and parking availability at attractions (i.e. Pinnacle, shadow of the bear)
  - GSMP has parking fee encouraging people to use public transport
- WHAT ARE WE GOING TO do WITH PEOPLE ONCE WE BRING THEM?
- Visitors are best economic driver
- People using Greenways spend a lot more money
- Poor connectivity between communities
- Is a need for education and attention to resource carrying capacity
- Consider ease of rescue with limited law enforcement capacity
- Are fewer volunteers – smaller pools, different ages do different work
- Need training for many volunteer jobs – fire, etc.
- Search and rescue
  - Connected to policy, law enforcement is mostly skeleton and relies on volunteerism
    - Older demographic
- How to create conservation culture among people who live and use the resources
- County short on hotel investment because of difficulty finding flat land
- Need Policy for short/long-term housing
  - Air BNB
  - Some upper level downtown owners are doing short-term rentals
  - Some are converting office to long-term rental
- WCU has announced that 2<sup>nd</sup> year students will have to live on campus – may free up apartments but rents high
- Cost of short-term rentals are leveling (and sometimes more than) hotels

***What opportunities do you see or gaps Jackson County might fill in the regional economy?***

OPPORTUNITIES

- Climbing instruction for beginners, have very advanced rock faces in County, stores sell lots of climbing gear
- Long distance mountain bike trail on eastern side of county
  - Creates destination
  - Would put JC on MB map
- Integrate more commercial and retail in OR events
- Present more concerts with OR activities attached
- Develop a rural transit system as a recreational resource so visitors don't need a car when they come to JC – public or private
- (Almost private) Whitewater may be opportunity to attract related businesses
- Incredible local knowledge base for environmental issues
  - Good opportunity for training focus
  - Outdoor etiquette, etc.

- Environmental education at public school level
  - To teach about unique area aspects and resources
  - Soil and Water, 4-H
- Use knowledge to build “culture”
- Guides – different topics
- Signage and branding for trails- refreshing

**What conditions work against Jackson County?**

THREATS

- Overuse of resource base
- Inability to provide adequate Search and Rescue
- Housing market – increasing costs and prices

SACRED and ENDANGERED PLACES not to be shared

- Water quality
  - Headwaters
  - Watersheds
  - Commercial fishing areas?
- Fragile ecosystems, soils
- Super-steep terrain areas
  - Bonas Defeat and Paradise Falls
  - Or may need bigger parking area/boardwalk to minimize impact
- Trails to the tops of waterfalls – minimize rescue calls and injuries
- Sugar Creek as a destination –
  - May be okay to ride through on corridor rather than be a destination
- Botanical Report for Pinnacle Park presented April 13 (same time as Sylva CORE work group but at Town Hall)
  - Heat map to show most sensitive places to avoid
  - Hottest in area where Tribe plans to build bike trail connections
- Plott Balsams – ORec secondary and limited

Other Notes:

- Crossing Balsam people see houses (Haywood) instead of mountains (Jackson) – policy: prefer public views of mountains over private views from mountains
- At every end of the county there’s going to be somebody who’s not represented in this planning effort
- Economy - prioritize business development over more visitors

Who else should be part of this planning process or be interviewed as a stakeholder?

- Someone from EBCI Cultural Resources and/or
- WCU Anthropology
- SHPO may need to look at some of the project sites
  - Drexel
- US Forest Service

ACTIONS and PROJECTS

- Do we want to expand on things that are already good or introduce new activities (climbing wall, etc.)

- Good opportunity for manufacturing location for whitewater gear
- Mountain Bike trail connections
  - o From WCU to Asheville – Wayehutta – 215 – Charlie’s Creek. USFS road – Moses Creek Gap – need bike trail parallel to MTS – gravel to Asheville
  - o Hanging Valley – Cowee – Connelly’s Creek – Big Laurel – Hucklebee – Cowee Tower
- Hiking from Pinnacle Park – Black Rock – Waterrock Knob – Dills Creek – EBCI land over ridge – Dick’s Creek (USFS is supportive!)
- Add Greenway to digital map – start to build support along route
- Education of trail users
  - o Many maps – which best depends on activity, needed for each use
  - o Blazing of trails decoded so easier to follow
  - o Update of maps – Trailforks best app for hiking and mountain biking

Some of the work group members reviewed data from the Tourism studies (Destination Next and Destination Research, March 2019) shared by Nick Breedlove, Jackson County Tourism Development Authority.

- Need more activities/attractions in winter and shoulder seasons
- Need more for children, youth and families to do in all seasons
- Don’t want to drive an hour to hike
- Cultural events, themed experiences and a water park along the Tuckasegee River
- Most appealing activities/experiences to be offered in Jackson County, (identical in visitor profile and resident’s data):
  - cultural events
  - themed experiences
  - water park along the Tuckasegee River
- Top attributes for choosing a mountain destination by respondents was as follows:
  - beautiful scenery
  - nature/wildlife experiences
  - outdoor trails
  - relaxation/wellness
  - cabin/hotel accommodations
  - waterfalls

The next meeting was set for Tuesday, April 18 at 9am again but located instead at the Justice Center.



## **Jackson County**

### **Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies**

Meeting Notes from April 18, 2023

9:00 – 11:00am at Justice Center conference room

In attendance: Tiffany Henry, Jackson County Economic Development Director; Jake Gottloeb, JC Economic Development Intern; Trevor Brown, Jackson County Parks and Recreation Outdoor Recreation Director; Michael Despeaux, OR enthusiast and Southwestern Community College; Michael Poston, Jackson County Planning Director; Bernadette Peters, Sylva Main Street and Economic Development Director; Kara McMullen, Friends of Panthertown; Millie Smith from Southwestern Commission and NC Commerce: Ann Bass with Bruce Naegelen joining virtually.

#### **BOC Update**

Tiffany described the Building Outdoor Communities program and its relationship to CORE in Jackson County. Andy Coburn, the WCU coordinator for BOC is going to Iceland for the summer. Have discussed with Mountain BizWorks staff and Jackson County will become part of the Initiation cohort that begins the seven months of work in August. The CORE group will transition to BOC in the fall. The work plan to be developed at the final Work Group session will give Jackson County a head start for BOC.

Jackson County owns three parcels on the Tuckasegee River. A Field trip Meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2023.

- Trevor Brown offered the Parks + Rec Van to shuttle the group to the sites.
- Additional experts will be invited to inform us of what is possible: especially flood plain management, water recreation, anything rivers, EBCI and others
- Will look at the sites, consider past plans and generate any options especially for outdoor recreation as a highest and best use

The meeting started with a quick review of work accomplished at the last meeting.

Additions to lists in the last meeting notes included:

- Assets addition – please note that Tuck flow can be regulated
  - Dam-controlled with regular releases
- SWOT – consider whether DOT regular brown and blue signs might be an opportunity without doing a whole plan

The challenge for this meeting was to develop the greater perspective on Jackson County within the greater outdoor recreation (economy) landscape. The economic positioning statement is a vision then for the group to work toward achieving over the coming five to seven to ten years. The group reviewed a map of well-known recreation destinations in the immediate region and travel numbers on primary roadways. Ann and Jake offered some language that had been used by the group in previous meetings

as a possible economic position—especially the words “hub” and “gateway”. After much discussion Jake pulled together the main ideas into the statement:

***Jackson County is your basecamp and home to a diverse outdoor recreation scene that provides everyone a unique experience to call our own.***

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The idea of the basecamp acknowledges the role that Sylva and Jackson County already play as the center of hospitality for visitors and second home owners—to settle in, overnight and eat. It is also the hub of myriad activities that occur within easy distance but sometimes in other counties and different directions each day.

Discussion included concepts and language:

“Natural Escape” (from Florida)

Authenticity - We’re not a Bryson City or Gatlinburg

**Cultural and resource-rich backcountry**

Diversity of activities from Cullowhee performances to hiking a ridgeline

You can get everywhere from here

Is both a Place for visitors and place to live

Experience as home and home away from home

Permanent basecamp

Keep it as nice as it was when you got here

Sanctuary, Refuge, Haven

Place to call your own

Place to relax and rejuvenate

Discussion turned to the economic impacts of being a Basecamp and Hub especially in four areas: Increasing Tourism Income and Visitor experiences; Retail & Small Business Growth; Manufacturing; and Culture and Workforce Development.

Manufacturing included discussion on the impacts from WCU’s Rapid Center and phase two as it expands. Is a need to ensure that more people know about the services offered to increase its impact on possible business recruitment as well as being part of the local outdoor business culture.

Western can also be a primary player in developing outdoor education adventures and offering guide services to develop a more engaged local population and also a respectful visitor.

Local Culture & Workforce Development raised several issues including the need to increase local knowledge of all that currently exists. A target group is school children who take the knowledge home to their siblings and parents. It was suggested that an outdoor educator be hired for the schools. An outline of the discussion:

Missed Opportunity: Locals lack of knowledge of what exists

- Suggestion: install informational signs in parking lots of busy places like Walmart, government properties
- Teach/integrate environmental education in schools (elementary level on up)
- Seek grants for outdoor rec educators at schools
  - o Utilize local businesses as educators “Muddy Speakers”?

- Adventure Camps
- Develop a standing committee for youth outdoor education and recreation

The need for marketing was underlined several times. The desire was to develop an outdoor recreation message and image and then target more specific groups. Quality over quantity especially inviting those who may invest in businesses and share the local values.

Another need is to further develop and train the volunteer base that stewards the resource base. Most critical is to maintain the beauty and pristine condition of what exists and encourage only as much use as nature can support. Take care of what we've got, take of our local people, and then invite others in who share this perspective and these values.

Trevor shared a willingness to expand his outdoor recreation program with Parks and Recreation to include offering guide services on many topics and activities. This might range from wildflower walks to beginning kayaking, controlled access to whitewater gems or climbing.

Compilation of the many issues discussed in the previous meetings and placed in action areas under the new draft economic position yields this rough strategic draft:

**Jackson County is our Western NC home basecamp and natural escape to a diverse outdoor recreation scene providing unique experiences everyone can call their own.**

- Residents first, visitors welcomed
- Sanctuary and rejuvenation, inclusivity
- Hospitality center for visitors as already occurs

**Home.Base.Camp** - By taking care of who and what we have, we attract residents and visitors who seek to belong, enjoy, support and respect our natural and cultural resources, environments/communities...The community knows what outdoor resources and opportunities exist, understand their value and spend time enjoying them

- Develop quality of experiences over quantity of access
- Information dissemination – targeted audiences (esp youth, special user groups), signage/art, branding
- Education – env/cultural understanding, stories, wider exposure, as an attraction
- Stewardship – volunteer pools, coordination/communication
- Respectful access – guides, actual facilities/services, training and practice,

**Natural Escape + Diverse Scene** - Our most unique natural assets and the experiences they provide, develop (engaged) cultures/communities around them, increasing synergy between users, supportive businesses and empowered stewards.

- Engage (surrounding) business and manufacturing communities
- Develop sense of group belonging/comradery, ownership, stewardship
- Expose younger recreators to professional community
- Grow these experiences in the County

**Unique experiences for Every One** - Our outdoor recreation assets/facilities are connected to support additional and expanded experiences, improve quality of life and reach/attract new audiences.



- Expedition-style experiences
- Greenways for daily life (w/o car) use, family visits and inclusive recreation
- Levels of challenge
- Guided experiences

Upcoming gatherings:

Field Trip: May 15 at 1:00 pm at Cullowhee river site

Next meeting: May 25 9:00 am



## Jackson County Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies

Meeting Notes from May 25, 2023

9:00 – 11:00am at Southwestern Commission conference room

In attendance: Tiffany Henry, Jackson County Economic Development Director; Jake Gottlob, JC Economic Development Intern; Michael Despeaux, OR enthusiast and Southwestern Community College; Michael Poston, Jackson County Planning Director; Bernadette Peters, Sylva Main Street and Economic Development Director; Dennis Desmond, Pinnacle Park Foundation; Millie Smith from Southwestern Commission and NC Commerce: Ann Bass.

Jake's report on Recreator Stakeholders interviews:

- Most recreation groups have their own niche apps or websites or other information sources
- Most say JC is excellent with wind down places and activities
- JC's "unique elements" are what make it special and are known mostly to active users
  - Laurel Knob as highest climb east of Rockies
  - W Fork of Tuck has class 4 rapids – most challenging
  - Pinnacle trails occur at highest elevations east of Mississippi
- JC has great challenging sites but needs more for other skill levels
  - Indoor climbing other than WCU that offers instruction
- Dillsboro whitewater park is on everyone's wish list
- Gap in services especially for lower income local youth and in sports with high cost of entry
  - Sapphire Ski program
- More and different guide services are needed
  - Rock climbing
  - Possibly novice mountain biking
  - Anything backcountry
- Need to brand JC as a multi-activity outdoor destination like Ohiopyle State Park
  - When you know, you know
  - Home to some of the sweetest human-powered adventures (in the country?)
- Climbers need help with access in some locations – private development blocking routes
  - Could use a primitive campground/climbers camp near Salt Rock in Panthertown – too far to hike in, climb, hike out in one day
- Paddlers seek additional recreational releases from the East Fork

Other notes—

- Check Strava – tracking app for athletes to see heat map of where Strava people are hiking
- Road bike racing events have diminished –
  - BRParkway stopped supporting large events – suggested to attend Blue Ridge Rising meetings and ask
  - Volunteer pool not large enough—very labor intensive

- Scott Baker is most knowledgeable advocate in region
- Bill Baxter in Swain County was contractor who built NOC river experience – retired

The group then reviewed the Economic Positioning statement and three included Areas of Activity or Strategies + added a fourth for the marketing/info efforts discussed.

***Jackson County is our Western NC home basecamp and natural escape with a diverse outdoor recreation scene providing unique experiences everyone can call their own.***

- ***Home Basecamp + Natural Escape***
  - *Hospitality central – place to land, live, shop, eat, rejuvenate*
  - *Hub with connections to the diverse places to be active in nature*
  - *Deep Natural/Cultural knowledge – respect, sense of belonging*
- ***Diverse outdoor recreation scene***
  - *Develop Culture + Sense of Place – social, entrepreneurial, stewardship*
  - *Businesses and Industry are integral, expanded and supported*
  - *Engaged Experts exist to advocate and inform in all sports*
- ***Unique, personal experiences***
  - *Diversity of activities – recreate, study, steward, make*
  - *Access for everyone - challenge levels, interests*
  - *Expeditions - Long and connected + Lesser-known gems – small group/more organized access*

Development of Priority Projects – project, program and policy ideas were written on sticky notes and placed under the four categories. Duplicates were combined, ideas discussed and clarified, a few added and then each person had six votes to define top priorities. Final voted priorities included:

- Expand the greenway, bicycle/pedestrian system to connect communities, recreational facilities and provide family recreation - 7 votes
- Work to develop the Dillsboro Whitewater Park - 5 votes
- Establish a Youth Outdoor Council to explore increasing youth understanding and exposure to natural environment and recreational opportunities - 5 votes
- Undertake development of organized Information Hub, Branding and targeted marketing program - 4 votes
- Support and participate in Pinnacle Park master planning to incorporate multi-use trail systems, mountain bike connections and plan implementation and park management efforts

Millie pointed out the longer-term nature of most priorities and suggested some shorter-term actions:

- Development of the Outdoor Stewardship Council – convene resource providers and supporters to further develop volunteer stewardship groups and actions in the region
- Jake added that storytelling could be a fairly easy program to implement at the library, in schools and camps as storytellers are available in the community
- The Montieth Gap community garden improvement project is also shorter term as DOT will be building the round-a-bout.

It was noted that many of the shorter-term efforts may be first implementation steps for the larger priorities. Work Planning worksheets were distributed. Group members requested to receive the information and work sheet electronically for better concentration and more time.

Because of graduation and family activities that kept Trevor and Kara away, it was decided the group should meet one more time to review a draft report and work plan. Trevor and Kara should be brought up to speed and asked to weigh in on priorities and actions. Ann and Jake will continue stakeholder interviews now expanding to include the resource providers and close partners like the Chambers and TDA. Questions will seek more specific information, suggestions and possible collaboration regarding the priorities and work plan.

Draft review meeting was set for Wednesday, July 12 from 9 – 11am at Southwestern Commission.



## Jackson County Retail Marketplace Snapshot- March of 2023

The purpose of this report is to give Jackson County the baseline information for a better understanding of its current market. The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center Staff studied the retail marketplace data within a 15-mile radius of Cullowhee. The retail leakage analysis examines the quantitative aspects of the retail opportunities.

By reviewing the retail gap, we can:

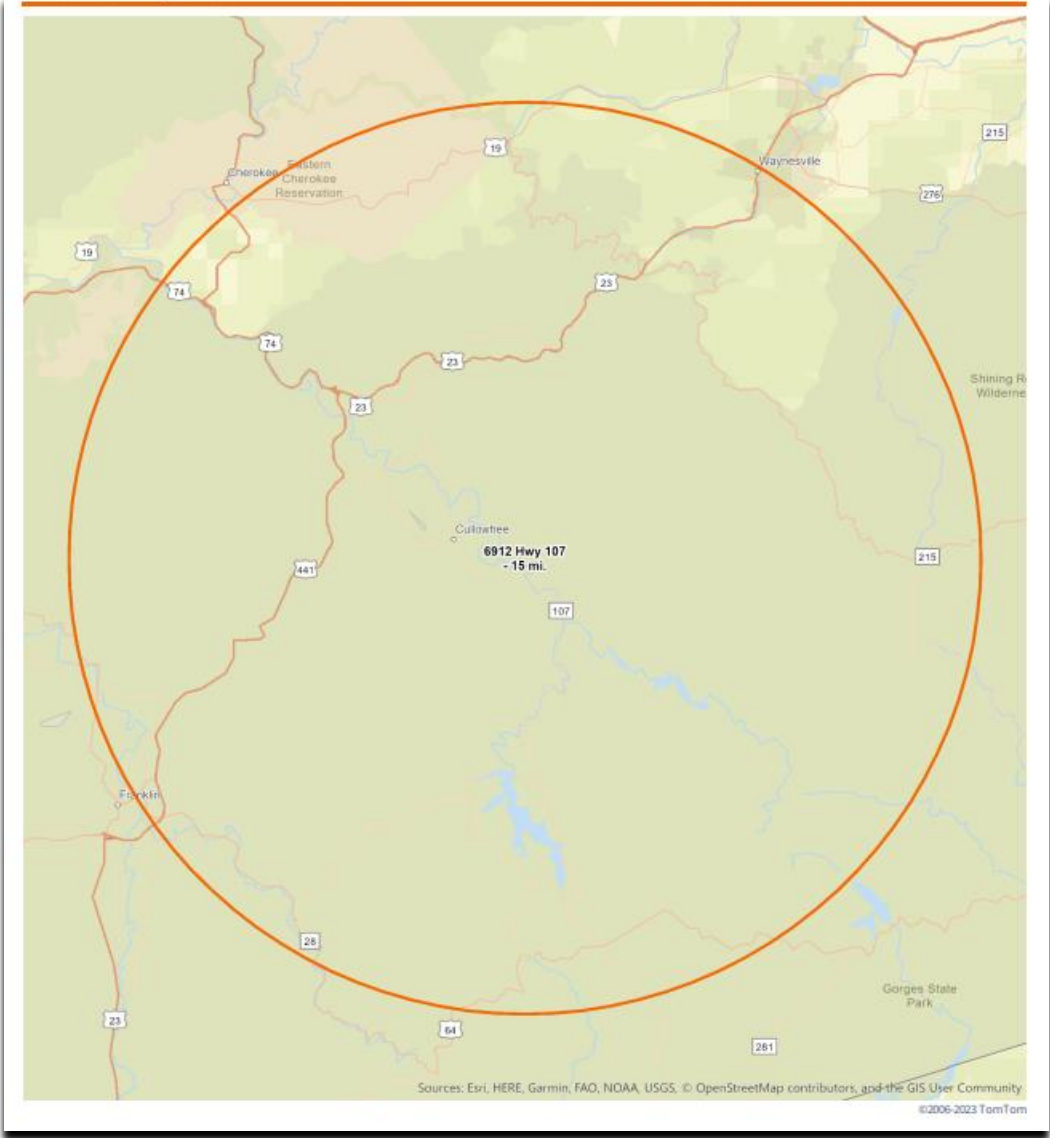
- Understand how well the retail needs of residents are being met.
- Uncover unmet demand and possible opportunities.
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the local retail sector.

When consumers spend their dollars outside the specific radii of Jackson County this is known as “Retail Gap” throughout this report. Retail Gap or leakage indicates an **unmet demand in the trade area**. This suggests the possibility the community can support additional retail for those business categories. Residents within the specified primary trade areas are purchasing products outside that area indicating opportunity to capture those dollars within the downtown district.

There are also categories for which Jackson County is exceeding the local market demand. Those are measured as red numbers on the below report. For the 15-mile radius drive time information, this means that Jackson County is exceeding its market potential in these categories. This retail surplus means the community’s trade area is capturing local market plus attracting non-local shoppers. Surplus means the community has possibly developed strong clusters of retail that have broad geographical appeal.

You can also seek additional retail market data that Jackson County Economic Development or the Southwestern Commission Regional Council of Governments can provide. This report is based on the data collected and should serve as a starting point for your economic vitality efforts.

We highly encourage you to couple this report with consumer surveys to get a complete understanding of the Jackson County potential. The NC Main Street and Rural Planning Center can share examples of consumer surveys and assist with this process as needed.



The above Jackson County map outlines the two trade areas within a 15-mile radius of the center point in Cullowhee. Defining the downtown trade area is critical in determining retail opportunities for the downtown market. The NC Main Street & Rural Center staff only reviewed the data within this segment. Jackson County should be targeting residents within this area. The goal is to capture the retail sales volume leaking to neighboring communities, such as Waynesville. The chart below shows total industry summary for the 15-mile radius of Cullowhee. It details the total retail sales gap, potential 10% capture and retail square footage needed to attract this sales volume.

The sales per square foot column in the charts is the average number based on recent research across the state. Typically, restaurant annual retail sales are higher than \$300 per square foot. There are variables that impact this number such as building owned versus rented, rental rates either higher or lower as well as overall expenses, such as employee wages, insurance, utilities, etc. **Surplus is shown as a red number and retail gap is shown as a black number.**

Distance	Total Retail Gap	10% Capture	Sales/SF	S.F. Needed
15-mile radius	\$113,907,696	\$11,390,770	\$300	37,969

The above chart shows the aggregate number of potential sales within the 15-mile radius from Cullowhee. Below you will see these number broken down by retail category.

### 15-Mile Radius Around Downtown

Jackson County, NC				
Primary Trade Area 15 miles around Cullowhee		DOWNTOWN POTENTIAL		
Business Type	Retail Gap	10% of Retail Gap	Sales/SF	SF
		10%	\$300	Needed
Furniture Stores	\$ 4,118,017	\$ 411,802	\$ 300	1,373
Home Furnishing Stores	\$ 2,308,299	\$ 230,830	\$ 300	769
Appliance Stores	\$ 1,799,378	\$ 179,938	\$ 300	600
Electronics Stores	\$ 4,783,656	\$ 478,366	\$ 300	1,595
Grocery Stores	\$ 13,795,802	\$ 1,379,580	\$ 300	4,599
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores	\$ 6,901,317	\$ 690,132	\$ 300	2,300
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	\$ 23,062,379	\$ 2,306,238	\$ 300	7,687
Cosmetics and Beauty Stores	\$ 3,686,996	\$ 368,700	\$ 300	1,229
Clothing Stores	\$ 21,904,360	\$ 2,190,436	\$ 300	7,301
Shoe Stores	\$ 2,260,548	\$ 226,055	\$ 300	754
Jewelry Stores	\$ 2,313,299	\$ 231,330	\$ 300	771
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	\$ 2,528,202	\$ 252,820	\$ 300	843
Sporting Goods Stores	\$ 6,512,611	\$ 651,261	\$ 300	2,171
Hobby, Toy and Game Stores	\$ 2,457,344	\$ 245,734	\$ 300	819
Book Stores	\$ 713,292	\$ 71,329	\$ 300	238
Department Stores	\$ 12,603,858	\$ 1,260,386	\$ 300	4,201
Office Supplies Stores	\$ 1,749,130	\$ 174,913	\$ 300	583
Pet and Pet Supplies Stores	\$ 409,208	\$ 40,921	\$ 300	136
<b>Total Gap</b>	<b>\$ 113,907,696</b>	<b>\$ 11,390,770</b>	<b>\$ 300</b>	<b>37,969</b>

### 15-Mile Radius Retail Surplus

Category	Retail Surplus
Home Centers	\$ 27,081,778
Paint and Wallpaper Stores	\$ 11,763,735
Hardware Stores	\$ 5,489,134
Nursery, and Garden Supply Stores	\$ 2,695,116
Gasoline Stations	\$ 31,237,252
Used Merchandise Stores	\$ 1,397,892
Full-Service Restaurants	\$ 4,343,404

Limited-Service Restaurants	\$ 1,246,844
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 85,255,155</b>

The retail surpluses confirm that Jackson County is attracting a disproportionate amount of retail sales in these categories and potential exists to attract additional retail and restaurant establishments to take advantage of the additional business potential.

The table below shows the projected sales growth in different commercial categories. This information can help your recruitment process.

## 15-Mile Measurement

Jackson County Demand Growth by Retail Store Types				
Primary Trade Area: 1 5 Mile Radius from Cullowhee				
Business Type	2022	2027	Growth	Compound
	Demand	Demand	\$	Rate (%)
<b>Furniture Stores</b>	\$ 14,023,990	\$ 14,869,607	\$ 845,618	1
<b>Home Furnishings Stores</b>	\$ 9,908,410	\$ 10,960,050	\$ 1,051,640	2
<b>Appliance Stores</b>	\$ 3,701,937	\$ 4,047,775	\$ 345,838	2
<b>Electronics Stores</b>	\$ 13,261,980	\$ 14,371,135	\$ 1,109,156	2
<b>Home Centers</b>	\$ 39,448,234	\$ 45,287,573	\$ 5,839,338	3
<b>Paint and Wallpaper Stores</b>	\$ 2,790,032	\$ 3,550,828	\$ 760,796	5
<b>Hardware Stores</b>	\$ 5,798,927	\$ 6,669,089	\$ 870,162	3
<b>Nursery, Garden and Farm Supply Stores</b>	\$ 7,483,463	\$ 8,251,411	\$ 767,947	2
<b>Grocery Stores</b>	\$ 128,042,216	\$ 141,195,198	\$ 13,152,982	2
<b>Specialty Food Stores</b>	\$ 3,861,647	\$ 4,258,181	\$ 396,534	2
<b>Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores</b>	\$ 11,598,523	\$ 12,849,485	\$ 1,250,962	2
<b>Pharmacies and Drug Stores</b>	\$ 54,436,044	\$ 58,295,346	\$ 3,859,302	1
<b>Cosmetics and Beauty Stores</b>	\$ 3,795,538	\$ 4,086,788	\$ 291,250	1
<b>Gasoline Stations</b>	\$ 86,618,085	\$ 98,931,160	\$ 12,313,075	3
<b>Hobby, Toy and Game Stores</b>	\$ 3,479,007	\$ 3,742,177	\$ 263,170	1
<b>Book Stores</b>	\$ 1,932,381	\$ 2,112,012	\$ 179,631	2
<b>Office Supplies and Stationary Stores</b>	\$ 1,889,221	\$ 2,111,994	\$ 222,773	2
<b>Pet and Pet Supply Stores</b>	\$ 3,958,929	\$ 4,428,488	\$ 469,559	2
<b>Office Supplies and Stationary Stores</b>	\$ 635,926	\$ 692,537	\$ 56,610	2
<b>Drinking Places</b>	\$ 4,822,035	\$ 5,295,131	\$ 473,096	2
<b>Full Service Restaurants</b>	\$ 61,206,404	\$ 66,609,979	\$ 5,403,575	2
<b>Limited Service Restaurants</b>	\$ 51,718,717	\$ 56,183,848	\$ 4,465,130	2
<b>Total Sales</b>	<b>\$ 514,411,646</b>	<b>\$ 568,799,792</b>	<b>\$ 54,388,144</b>	

Note: The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) is the annualized average rate of revenue growth between two given years, assuming growth takes place at an exponentially compounded rate. The most important factor in both charts is the amount of projected growth per category.



## Jackson County Income Data (Source: Claritas 2023 15-Mile Radius and U.S. Census QuickFacts/On the Map for Jackson County)

### HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Median Household Income

**\$52,230**

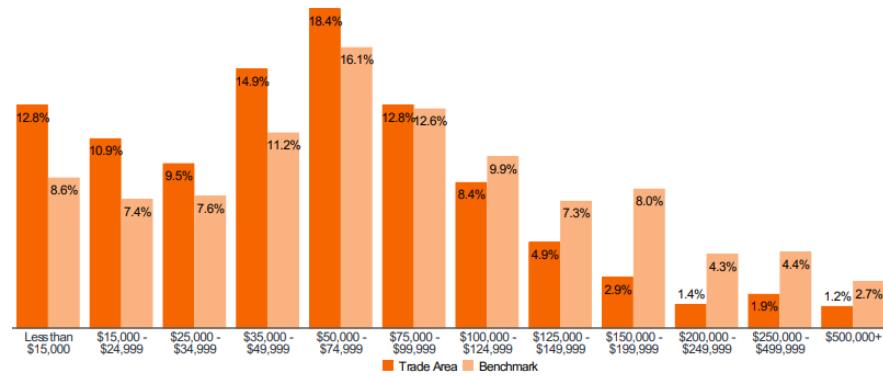
Index:71

Average Household Income

**\$72,929**

Index:69

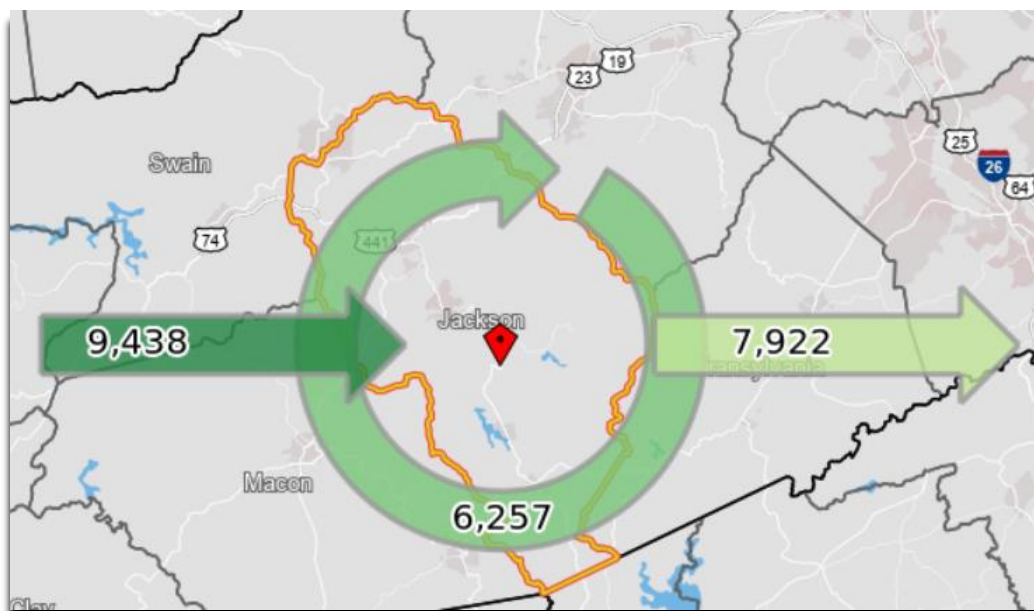
### HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION



Benchmark:USA

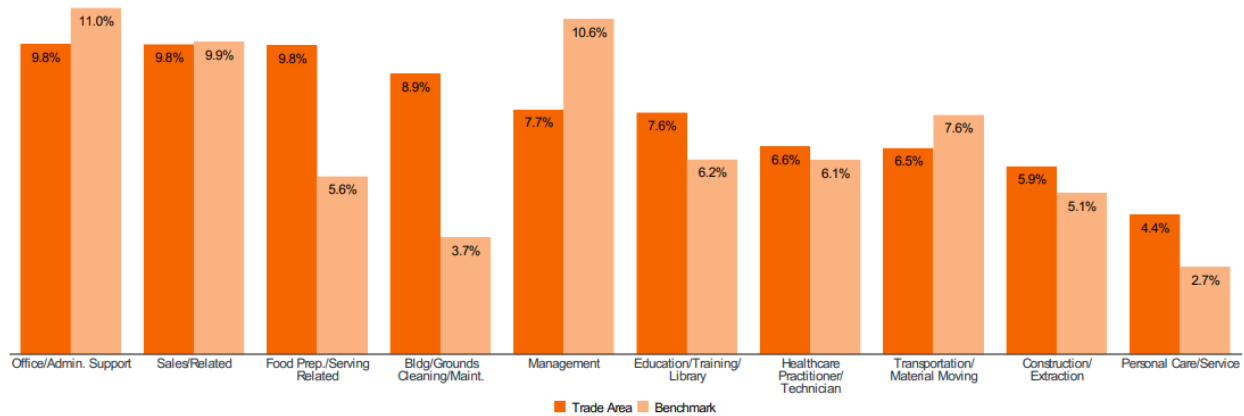
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- \$52,230 Median Household Income
  - \$50,000-\$74,999 is the largest income distribution representing 18.4% of the population.
  - 51.9% of the measured population earn \$50,000 or above.
- \$449,346,000 in Jackson County retail sales
  - \$300,000,000 is often a benchmark for chain retail stores to enter a market.
  - If a market is strong enough for chain stores, it will also support independents.
- 28.8% of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.
  - 25% or above indicates higher spending power.



- 55% labor participation rate
  - 15,695 workers either commute to Jackson County or live and work within the county limits (9,438 inflow and 6,257 living and working within the county.) This represents 65% of the county population, potential consumers for local businesses.

**OCCUPATION: TOP 10\***



Benchmark: USA

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The above chart shows how the top ten occupations are distributed among residents living within 15-miles of Cullowhee. You can see how Jackson County occupations compare to the benchmark USA occupational distribution.

The data above can be used to help recruit businesses to Jackson County to meet the unmet potential and reduce the retail gap or leakage. The priorities are to first retain, then expand and finally to recruit new businesses. The categories that show the most potential should be focused on first. This data can help existing businesses realize there may be potential to expand to capture additional retail sales.

## AARP Livability Index

The AARP Livability Index for Jackson County is 53 on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. The higher the score the more livable the community. Jackson County ranks above average on this scale. It is important to consider the different index categories, such as health, environment, neighborhood, and opportunity to help you determine what needs to be done to improve this score. Some areas of particular interest include:

The positive.....

<u>Category</u>	Jackson County		2022 Median U.S. <u>Neighborhood</u>
	<u>2015</u>	<u>2022</u>	
<b>Housing (51 out of 100)</b>			
Availability of subsidized housing (Units per 10,000)		0	0
<b>Housing (51 out of 100)</b>			
Zero-step entrances (% of those building with zero-step entrances)		50.1%	50.1%
Housing Costs		\$765/month	\$1,057
Housing Cost Burden (% of monthly income spent on housing)		15.1%	16.3%
<b>Neighborhoods (20 out of 100)</b>			
Access to Grocery Stores & Farmer's Mkts (# of stores or markets)		0	0.0
Access to libraries		0	0
Access to jobs by transit		0	0
<b>Transportation (50 out of 100)</b>			
Congestion (Hours per person per year)		0	25.5
Speed Limits (Miles/Hour)		26	28.0
Frequency of Local Transit (# of buses or trains per hour)*		0	0
<b>Transportation (50 out of 100)</b>			
ADA-accessible stations & vehicles (# of trains and buses per hour)		0	0
<b>Environment (56 out of 100)</b>			
Regional air quality (Unhealthy air quality days/year)		0.3	4.37

<u>Category</u>	Jackson County		<u>2022 Median U.S. Neighborhood</u>
	<u>2015</u>	<u>2022</u>	
<b>Environment (56 out of 100)</b>			
Local Industrial Pollution (ORSE score from 0 to 9,070)		0	0.00
Near-roadway pollution (% of people exposed)		0.00%	0.00%
<b>Health (57 out of 100)</b>			
Smoking Prevalence (% of population that smokes regularly)		18.0%	18%
Obesity Prevalence (% of population obese)		26.9%	32.2%
Access to exercise opportunities (% of population accessible)		99.5%	90.1%
Preventable hospitalization rate (% of preventable hospitalizations)		44.1%	48.5%
<b>Engagement (68 out of 100)</b>			
Opportunity for civic involvement (# of organizations per 10,000 people)		10.3	1.18
Social Involvement Index (Index 0 to 2.5)		1.01	.96
<b>Opportunity (67 out of 100)</b>			
High School Graduation Rate		97%	88.5%
Age Diversity (Index 0 to 1)		0.95	0.85
Income inequality (Index from 0 to 1)		0.45	0.46
The negative.....			
<b>Housing (51 out of 100)</b>			
Availability of multi-family housing (% of housing multi-family)		5.7%	18%

<u>Category</u>	Jackson County <u>2015</u>	<u>2022</u>	2022 Median U.S. <u>Neighborhood</u>
<b>Neighborhood (20 out of 100)</b>			
Access to jobs by auto		1,224	44,198
Diversity of Destinations (Index from 0 to 1)		0	0.65
Access to parks		0	1
<b>Neighborhood (20 out of 100)</b>			
Activity Density (Jobs and people per square mile)		40	3,056
Crime rate (Crimes per 10,000 people)		247	217.4
Vacancy rate (% of units vacant)		45%	8.6%
<b>Transportation (50 out of 100)</b>			
Walk trips (Trips per household per day)		0.49	0.73
Household transportation costs (Annual funds spent on transportation)		\$15,400	\$15,331
Crash rate (Fatal crashes per 100,000 people annually)		13	7.7
<b>Environment (56 out of 100)</b>			
Drinking water quality (% of people exposed to violations)		7.33%	0%
<b>Health (57 out of 100)</b>			
Healthcare Professional Shortage Areas (Index from 0 to 26)		18	0
Patient satisfaction (% of patients satisfied)		65.0%	71.8%
<b>Engagement (68 out of 100)</b>			
Broadband cost and speed (% of population with high speed and affordable internet)		40.1%*	93.7%

<u>Category</u>	Jackson County		2022 Median U.S. <u>Neighborhood</u>
	<u>2015</u>	<u>2022</u>	
<b>Engagement (68 out of 100)</b>			
Voting rate (% of people who vote)		59.9%	61.9%
Cultural, arts and entertainment institutions (Institutions per 100 people)		0.2	8.01
<b>Opportunity (67 out of 100)</b>			
Jobs per worker (Jobs per worker available)		0.69	.80

\*Note: The U.S. Census estimates 75.6% of residents have access to broadband.

## Walkscore

Walkscore.com provides a measurement of how walkable and bikeable is a community. Using the 6912 Hwy 107 address, Jackson County scored a 9 Walkscore meaning that it is car-dependent and almost all errands require an automobile.

Jackson County's Bikescore is 6 meaning it is considered somewhat bikeable with minimal bike infrastructure is in place.

Note: The highway address used is why the walkscore and bikescore are so low. In contrast, the walkscore and bikescore for downtown Sylva were 51 and 22 respectively.

Visit <https://www.walkscore.com> for more information.

## Summary and Recommendations

### 1. Retail Gap

Retail sales gaps are seen in furniture, home furnishings, appliances, electronics, grocery stores, beer, wine and liquor, pharmacies, cosmetics and beauty stores, clothing, shoes, jewelry, luggage and leather, sporting goods, hobby, toy and game stores, book stores, department stores, office supplies and pet and pet supplies.

### 2. Retail Surplus

Retail surpluses are seen in home centers, paint and wallpaper stores, hardware, nursery and garden centers, gasoline stations, used merchandise, full and limited- service restaurants. Lowe's Home Improvement and TC Pro Hardware are being picked up in the paint and wallpaper store measurement. Four major grocers contribute to the grocery surplus. Sylva has a significant number of full-service restaurants plus fifteen fast food outlets accounted for in the limited-service restaurant surpluses.

### 3. Retail Surplus and Projected Sales Growth

When recruiting businesses, it is important to present the best possible scenario for a business owner to invest in your community. If a category has both retail sales potential as seen through existing “gaps” and projected growth, it bolsters the argument to locate in Jackson County. Below are those categories:

	15-Mile Radius	
<u>Category</u>	<u>Retail Gap</u>	<u>Projected Growth</u>
Furniture	\$ 4,118,017	\$ 845,618
Home Furnishings	\$ 2,308,299	\$ 1,051,140
Appliances	\$ 1,799,378	\$ 345,838
Electronics	\$ 4,783,656	\$ 1,109,156
Grocery Stores	\$13,795,802	\$13,152,982
Beer, Wine & Liquor	\$ 6,901,317	\$ 1,250,962
Pharmacies	\$23,062,379	\$ 3,859,302
Hobby, Toy & Game	\$ 2,457,344	\$ 263,170
Book Stores	\$ 713,292	\$ 179,631
Office Supplies	\$ 1,749,130	\$ 222,773
Pet and Pet Supplies	\$ 409,208	\$ 469,559

### 4. Retail Recruitment and Downtown Development Guides

Hilary Greenberg of Greenberg Development Services will be producing a business recruitment guide. Also former Main Street Manager Diane Young has created the Downtown Directors’ Guide to Working with Development Projects-- <https://www.ncmainstreetandplanning.com/economic-vitality>-- an invaluable resource for downtown revitalization. Both of these resources are recommended to communities for their business recruitment and development needs.

There is additional Claritas retail data and the U.S. Census Quickfacts report to support your retail recruitment efforts.

If you have any questions concerning the above information, do not hesitate to contact ARC Community Economic Development Planner of the Western Region at 828-508-0107 or [ann.bass@commerce.nc.gov](mailto:ann.bass@commerce.nc.gov)

Sources: Claritas Retail Data

<http://doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation>  
[Livabilityindex.aarp.org](http://livabilityindex.aarp.org)

## Outdoor Recreation Economy Impact Areas

### Tourism/Experiences

The Work Group approached this part of the economy from an experience perspective—seeking better income rather than more tourism. As an economic sector, growth strategies might include:

- Attract more visitors (assumes capacity)
  - Marketing
- Keep existing visitors longer
  - More of existing experiences offered
  - Different targeted experiences developed
- Increase spending level of existing visitors
  - More to spend \$\$ on
  - More expensive offerings
  - More overnight stays



### Retail and Small Business Development

Increasing existing (small) business income was a primary goal. To accomplish this, strategies may include:

- Developing/Recruiting more small businesses
- Expanding current business incomes with new products, services, markets
- Filling gaps in goods and services offered, developing clusters
- Developing destination business(es)
- Other

### Outdoor Recreation Oriented Manufacturing

Two manufacturers of outdoor gear were identified in Jackson County. It should be assumed that many other micro-enterprises or side-businesses also exist but are not primary and thus not reported. The two known manufacturers are:

- A1 Marine
- Shira Forge

If expansion of manufacturing is an economic development priority then work may include:

- Finding other makers - most likely micro-preneurs
- Networking businesses – creating culture, density, workforce
- Support services – building supply chains, local B2B opportunities
- Buildings, locations ready
- Targeted recruitment

### Local Outdoor Culture + Workforce Development - Quality of Life

Strategies to reach Local residents – young and older, too may include:

- Access to the environment, skills and experiences as part of everyday life



- Ability to try new activities – exposure, access to equipment, coaching
- Empower to discover a passion and make it a life focus and income

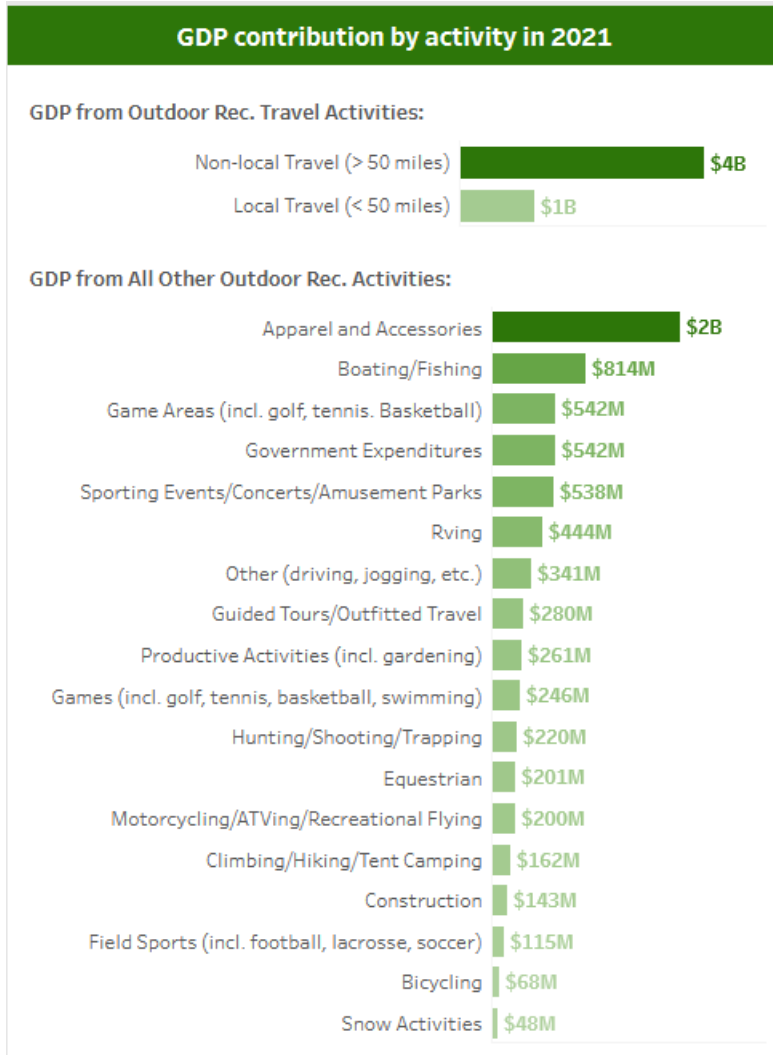
**Jackson Recreator Social network:**

Meet and hang out with people who have the same drive and passion  
 Work hard + Play hard - Challenge yourself  
 Relationships for potential business cooperation  
 Coordinate stewardship and volunteer needs

**NC Impact of Outdoor Recreation Activity – Graphic by Headwaters Economics, Data from BEA, ORSA and Regional Economic Accounts**

This chart (right) shows that the travel aspect of recreation generates the highest incomes for communities with sales of apparel second. The numbers individual sports might be read to reflect the cost of equipment required participation as well as the number of participants.

Below are the NC Jobs in the Outdoor Economy 2021.



retail  
for  
for

