

JACKSON COUNTY PLANNING OFFICE

401 Grindstaff Cove Road
Suite A-258
Sylva, N.C. 28779



Michael Poston
Planning Director
michaelposton@jacksonnc.org
Phone: (828) 631-2255

MEMO

To: Jackson County Board of Commissioners
Cc: Don Adams, County Manager
From: Michael Poston, Planning Director
Date: June 13, 2018

RE: Housing Committee Recommendation

The Jackson County 2040 Land Use Plan recommends that the County create a committee to address the lack of affordable housing. The term affordable housing can be confusing as different groups use the term to describe several housing programs targeted at various income levels. While the federal government defines affordable housing as housing targeted towards those families making less than 80% of the County's median household income. For the purposes our discussions we operated with the understanding that there is a need for affordable housing targeting several income levels.

The first goal in the Housing section of the land use plan is to increase housing opportunities for a broad range of income levels and ages. The first objective is to create a housing task force to begin addressing this issue. In preparation of creating a housing committee, staff from several departments researched and discussed the availability of housing in the County and the many different approaches to providing more housing opportunities for our residents and workforce. The best practices discussed by the group were a part of a report titled "Best Practices for Affordable Housing" from the City of Asheville.

During the initial review of best practices, it was found that the County already engages in reviews of rezonings (as necessary) and that the County reviews and simplifies ordinances as practical. There are several options that may not be the best practices for Jackson County, however, there are a few that staff would recommend as more immediate programs the County can implement to encourage more housing development. The first is to create a Housing Trust Fund that the County would designate funding that can be applied for by developers that meet the County's criteria. The County would have to adopt program guidelines in order to evaluate the requests to achieve the desired results. The second program is for the County to reserve land which can be properties currently owned by the County or purchased for housing

development purposes. Under this program the County can partner with a developer or non-profit entity to create housing inventory targeting those segments that are underserved by our current housing stock.

The Planning Staff recommends that the Board of Commissioners create a formal Jackson County Housing Committee. It is further recommended that the Board appoint the following as the initial Committee membership:

1. Jackson County Economic Development Director
2. Jackson County Attorney
3. Jackson County Planning Director
4. Representative from Tuckasegee Water and Sewer Authority
5. Representative from Mountain Projects

The charge of the committee will be to develop and recommend housing programs that the County can implement to address the housing needs in our communities. The initial task of the committee should include completion of a housing inventory survey, developing and recommending program criteria for a potential Housing Trust Fund and Land Reservation programs, and to complete an Access to Fair Housing report to support the County' CDBG-I grant project.