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Jackson County
Land Use Plan 2040

DRAFT—November 23, 2016

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Comprehensive Plan/Comprehensive Transportation Plan Steering Committee

Gerald Green, Mike Poston — Jackson County Planning Director
Caroline Edmonds — Jackson County Planner
Brian McMahan — Chairman, Jackson County Board of Commissioners
Chuck Wooten, Don Adams — Jackson County Manager
Sarah Thompson — Executive Director, Southwestern Commission
Rich Price — Jackson County Economic Development Director
Paula Carden — Jackson County Health Dept. Director
Chuck Norris — Jackson County Transit Director
Rusty Ellis — Jackson County Parks & Recreation Director
Mike Murray — Superintendent, Jackson County Public Schools
Paige Dowling — Sylva Town Manager
Russ Harris — Sylva Planning Board
Beauford Riddle — Town of Dillsboro
Ron Mau — Village of Forest Hills
Tracy Rodes — Town of Webster
Nick Breedlove — Jackson County Tourism Development Authority
William Shelton — Whittier Area/Agriculture Representative
Stephanie Edwards — Cashiers Area Chamber Director
Tonya Jenks, Cameron Cooper — Tribal Planner, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
Barak Myers, Manuel Maples — Transportation Planner, Cherokee Dept. of Transportation
Don Tomas — President, Southwestern Community College
Scott Baker — Vice President for Information Technology, Southwestern Community College
Mike Byers — Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance, Western Carolina University
Dan Harbaugh — Executive Director, Tuckaseigee Water and Sewer Authority
Steve Heatherly — CEO, Harris Regional Hospital
Lydia Aydlett — Environmental Community Representative
Jackie Moore — Active Routes to School Coordinator
Catherine Bryant, Pam Cook — NCDOT Transportation Planning Branch
Joel Setzer — Operations Engineer, NCDOT Division 14
Wanda Austin — Project Manager, NCDOT Division 14
Rose Bauguess — Regional Transportation Planner, Southwestern Commission

Introduction: Established in 1851, Jackson County is comprised of 494 square miles of breathtaking mountain vistas and over 200 named rivers and streams accentuated by picturesque waterfalls in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Jackson County's identity is tied to its greatest resource, the Tuckasegee River. The Tuckasegee begins in the southern mountains of Jackson County and flows north through the entirety of the County sustaining life and livelihoods. Not only does the County possess great natural beauty, it is also home to several unique small mountain towns and communities. These areas include popular tourist destinations like the Town of Dillsboro, luxurious second home communities like Cashiers, and the County's economic centers like the Town of Sylva and the Cullowhee community, home of Western Carolina University. As important as our geography and natural beauty is, it is the people and their rich cultural traditions that have defined Jackson County's past and will define its future. A large part of the great cultural traditions is that of the Native American history, as Jackson County is a part of the ancestral lands of the Cherokee Nation. Today, it is home a part of the tribal lands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

The County has seen a great deal of change and growth over the past 15 years. Although the growth was slowed by the Great Recession, we are once again seeing more development activity. This renewal in development activity is in part due to the growth of Western Carolina University. WCU has long been an educational and economic catalyst for Jackson County. This trend will continue as we expect WCU to have significant growth pressures as it prepares for a reduction in tuition fees through the NC Promise plan. The anticipated growth will have a direct influence on the County in terms of land use, transportation, natural resources, economic development, and education.

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With this renewal in development activity and the prospect of new development pressure, it is necessary that the County prepare for the challenges and opportunities that increased development brings while never losing site of the values and sense of place that is unique to Jackson County.

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Planning History: Jackson County has long recognized the need for and benefit of planning for future growth and development. The County has completed several land use planning documents that have charted growth and development and made recommendations to address the impacts of that development.

The first plan was created in 1974 with technical support from North Carolina Division of Community Assistance. The plan included nine implementation strategies to address future growth. All nine strategies were eventually implemented, though it required over 30 years to accomplish. The implementation strategies and timeframes are listed below.

- Reactivate the County Planning Board- Was reestablished in 1975. Over the years previous Planning Boards have been discontinued and reestablished. The current Planning Board is operating under an ordinance adopted in 2003.
- Establishing Building and Plumbing Codes and hiring enforcement staff – The County adopted state building codes and department in 1974.
- Adopt Subdivision Standards- The County's Subdivision Ordinance was adopted in 2007.
- Adopt Sedimentation Control- The County adopted a local Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance in 2000. Prior to this adoption the State regulated land disturbance over 1 acre in size. The County's ordinance requires permits for land disturbance over ½ acre in size.
- Create a Water and Sewer Authority- The Tuckaseigee Water and Sewer Authority was created in 1992.
- Prepare a County Facilities Plan- The County prepared its first facilities plan in 1977.
- Implement Zoning for strategic areas- The County adopted its first zoning district in 2003 when it adopted the Cashiers Commercial Area Land Development Ordinance. Since that time, the County has adopted two other regulated districts; The US 441 Development Ordinance in 2009 and the Cullowhee Planning Area Development Standards in 2015.
- Create a Housing Authority- The County created a Housing Authority in 1977.
- Establish a full time Planning Department- By 1977 the County had contracted with the Southwest Commission for planning services. In the 1980s the County hired and maintained a planning staff under various departments. Currently the County has a Planning Department with a four-person staff.

The County continued to develop land development plans in 1977, 1985, 1992, 1997, 2000, and 2006. In addition to land development plans, the County has also adopted the US 441 Small Area Plan, the Cullowhee Vision Plan, the Park and Recreation Master

Purpose: The purpose of this plan is to create a guiding policy document for the County in addressing the impacts of growth over the next 25 years. This document examines existing development trends and growth. It also provides future growth projections and identifies goals and objectives that are designed to manage that growth. In addition, this plan includes a section that guides how these goals and objectives can be implemented over a 25-year time period.

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Vision Statement: Jackson County honors its culture, its environment, and its communities, providing opportunities for its citizens to engage in efforts to create a sustainable County. Jackson County respects its heritage and natural resources while providing economic opportunities and quality housing for all its citizens. With an efficient government, Jackson County plans for and develops community facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of its diverse population and businesses, as well as visitors. With a strong and vital economy, Jackson County offers services and employment opportunities that enable all citizens to live a healthy and productive life.

Citizen Involvement and Public Participation: The first point of public input was the response to the Comprehensive Plan survey. The survey questions covered the broad range of issues that are a part of a comprehensive planning process. There were over 2,000 responses which is roughly 5% of the Jackson County's population. The results from this survey were used by the Steering Committee in identifying policy goals and objectives.

The public was also invited to attend community meetings throughout the County to review and give feedback on the draft goals and recommendations. Community meetings were held in Sylva, Whittier, Savannah, Tuckasegee, and Cashiers.

The County also made use of the Planning Department website to provide drafts of the Comprehensive Plan.

NOTE: This section is not complete.

Steering Committee: The County appointed a steering committee of community stakeholders to help guide the planning process. The Steering Committee members, and their respective positions, are noted on the first page of the plan. The Steering Committee created the vision statement and identified the challenges and opportunities for the County. They were also involved in the creation of the policy goals and objectives designed to address challenges and opportunities associated with future growth.

Demographics:

Demographic characteristics are important factors in the land use planning process as they give us a better understanding of County growth patterns. According to the NC Office of Budget and Management, Jackson County's population estimation for 2015 is 41,265 people. Table 1 shows that Jackson County is 83.16% White alone, 1.85% Black or African American and 9.45% American Indian. Table 2 shows the median household income for Jackson County between 2000 and 2014. In 2000, the median household income was $32,699, in 2010 it was $36,705 and in 2014 it was $38,928. This data shows that the median household income has continued to rise gradually in the past 15 years despite other economic factors. Figure 1 (page 9) shows the population of each census tract in the County according to the 2010 census. The Cullowhee township has the highest population, followed by Sylva Township and Qualla Township. The census tracts containing Glenville, Cashiers, and Balsam have the smallest populations, most likely due to the large number of seasonal residents, the low number of permanent residents, and the amount of federally protected land in these areas.

Table 1: Jackson County Race Characteristics 2010

	Total	Percent
Total	40,271	100.00%
Population of one race	39,489	98.06%
White alone	33,489	83.16%
Black or African American alone	745	1.85%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	3,804	9.45%
Asian alone	348	0.86%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	16	0.04%
Some Other Race alone	1,087	2.70%
Population of two races	746	1.85%
Population of three races	33	0.08%
Population of four races	3	0.01%

www.census.gov

Table 2: Median Household Income

2000 Census Median Household Income	$32,669
2010 Census Median Household Income	$36,705
2014 Census Median Household Income	$38,928

www.census.gov and http://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=18242

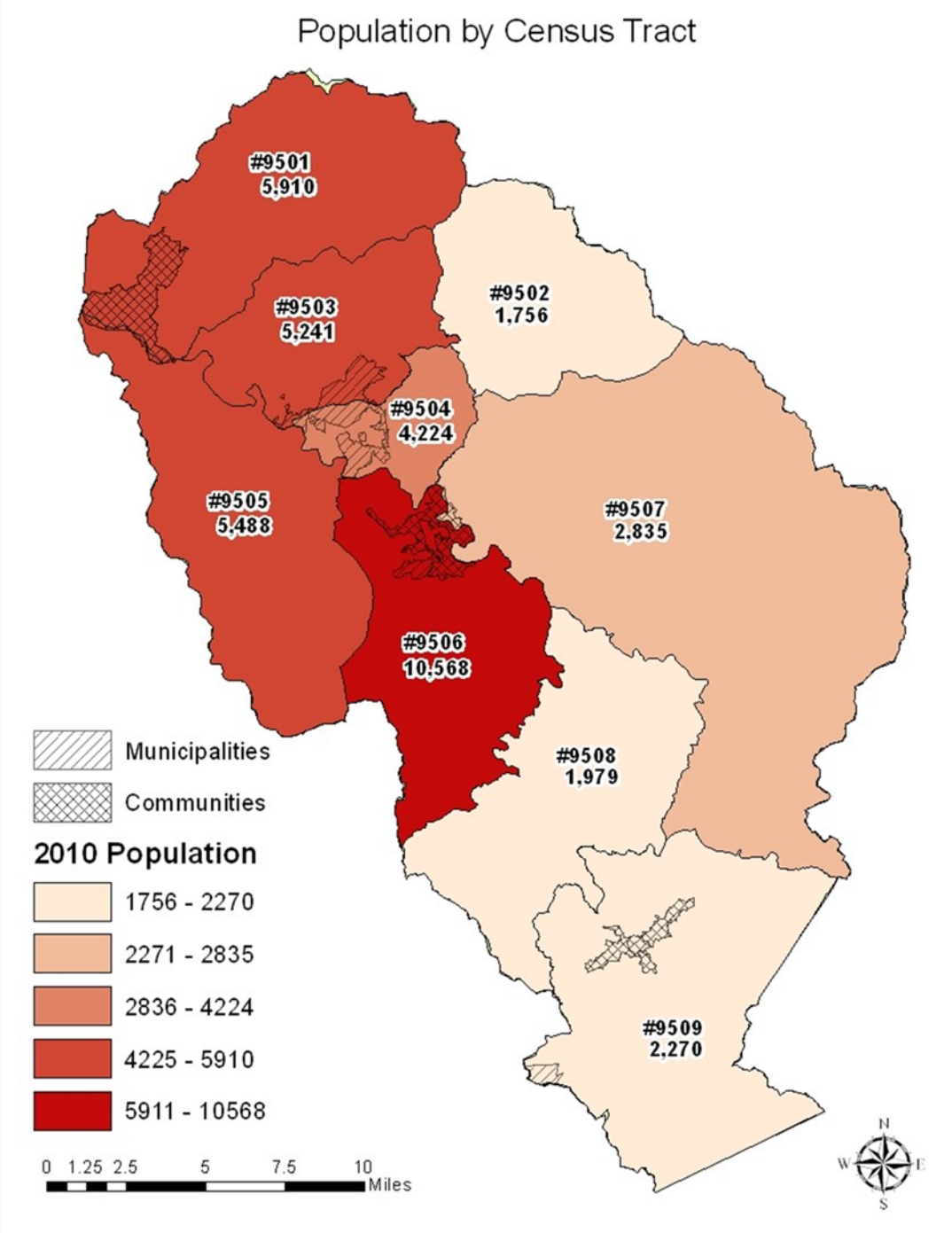

Figure 1: Population by Census Tract, 2010 Census Data

Geographic Area	*Population 2010*	*Percent of Total*	*Population 2000*	*% Change 2000 -2010*
Jackson County	40271	100	33,121	21.6
Barkers Creek township	1839	4.6	1,465	25.5
Canada township	640	1.6	533	20.1
Caney Fork township	738	1.8	667	10.6
Cashiers township	1974	4.9	1,758	12.3
Cullowhee township	9428	23.4	6,412	47
Dillsboro township	1527	3.8	1,331	14.7
Greens Creek township	1429	3.6	1,000	42.9
Hamburg township	1738	4.3	1,455	19.5
Mountain township	492	1.2	450	9.3
Qualla township	6161	15.3	5,295	16.4
River township	1359	3.4	1,257	8.1
Savannah township	1495	3.7	1,028	45.4
Scott Creek township	2094	5.2	1,929	8.6
Sylva township	6671	16.6	6,099	9.4
Webster township	2686	6.7	2,442	10
Dillsboro town	232	0.6	215	7.9
Forest Hills village	365	0.9	317	15.1
Highlands town	4	0.01	N/A	N/A
Sylva town	2588	6.4	2,462	5.1
Webster town	363	0.9	453	-25.3

Table 3: Jackson County Population Change 2000-2010 by Township

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Table 3 displays the change in population from 2000 to 2010 in the townships in Jackson County. The Cullowhee Township showed the highest growth rate of all of the communities in Jackson County between the 2000 and 2010 census. This rate is influenced by the growth at Western Carolina University (WCU), which saw a rise in enrollment from 8,665 in 2005 to 10,805 in 2016. Other areas that experienced significant growth were the Sylva and Whittier townships. Webster is the only township that experienced loss between 2000 and 2010.

Table 4: Jackson County and Surrounding Counties Population Growth 1980-2010 https://www.osbm.nc.gov/demog/County-

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2000-2010 Growth Rate
State of NC	**5,881,766**	**6,628,637**	**8,049,313**	**9,535,483**	**18.46%**
Buncombe	160,934	174,821	206,330	238,318	15.50%
Haywood	46,495	46,942	54,033	59,036	9.26%
Jackson	25,811	26,846	33,121	40,271	21.59%
Macon	20,178	23,499	29,811	33,922	13.79%
Swain	11,268	10,283	12,968	13,981	7.81%
Transylvania	25,520	23,417	29,334	33,090	12.80%

Table 4 demonstrates the growth and growth rates of the State of North Carolina and the counties surrounding Jackson from 1980-2010. The population growth rate from 2000 to 2010 was faster than both the growth rate of the neighboring counties, and the growth rate of the state as a whole. The North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management estimates the population to grow to 44,873 by 2030, and 47,271 by 2040 as shown in Table 5. In the decade prior to 2000, most of the County's growth was from in-migration, although in the decade after 2000, most growth occurred naturally. These tables also show that the County will continue to grow, however it will continue at a lower rate than what was shown between 2000 and 2010 partially due to the decrease in net natural growth.

Table 5: Actual and projected population growth, in-migration, and natural growth in Jackson County, NC

Year	Population	Pop. In-crease	% Pop. In-crease	Births	Deaths	Net Natural Growth	Pop. In-crease from In-Migration	In-Migration As % of Growth	Median Age
1990	26,835	1,035	4	2,925	2,375	550	5,744	21.4	33.05
2000	33,121	6,286	23.4	3,200	2,659	541	59	.01	36.2
2010	40,271	7,150	21.6	3,937	2,133	73	3,023	5.3	38.3
2020	42,477	4,710	12.1	3,808	4,790	-982	3,378	8.0	37.5
2030	44,873	4,136	9.5	2,043	2,770	-727	1,925	4.3	38.73
2040	47,271	2,243	5.4%	_	_	_	_	_	_

NC State Data Center, State Demographics unit (www.demog.state.nc.us) and U.S. Census (www.census.gov) 2040 data- Jackson County CTP Projections

The population growth rate from 2000 to 2010 was faster than both the growth rate of the neighboring counties, and the growth rate of the state as a whole (Table 4). The North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management estimates the population to grow to 44,873 by 2030, and 47,271 by 2040 as shown by Table 5. In the decade prior to 2000, most of the County's growth was from in-migration, although in the decade after 2000, most growth occurred naturally. These tables also show that the County will continue to grow, however it will continue at a lower rate than what was shown between 2000 and 2010 partially due to the decrease in net natural growth.

As indicated in Figure 2, the most populous age group in Jackson County, containing nearly one fifth of the County population, is that of individuals 18 to 24 years old, showing that Jackson County has a very young population. This is likely due to the large number of students at both WCU and Southwestern Community College (SCC). There are currently just over 10,000 students enrolled at WCU and approximately 2,600 at SCC. As Figure 2 indicates, the population in every age group increased from 2000 to 2010, but this can be seen more specifically in the 15 to 19, 20 to 24, 60 to 64, and 65 to 74-year-old age groups. The growth in the older age groups can be attributed to the large amount of second homes and retirees looking for a slower pace of life.

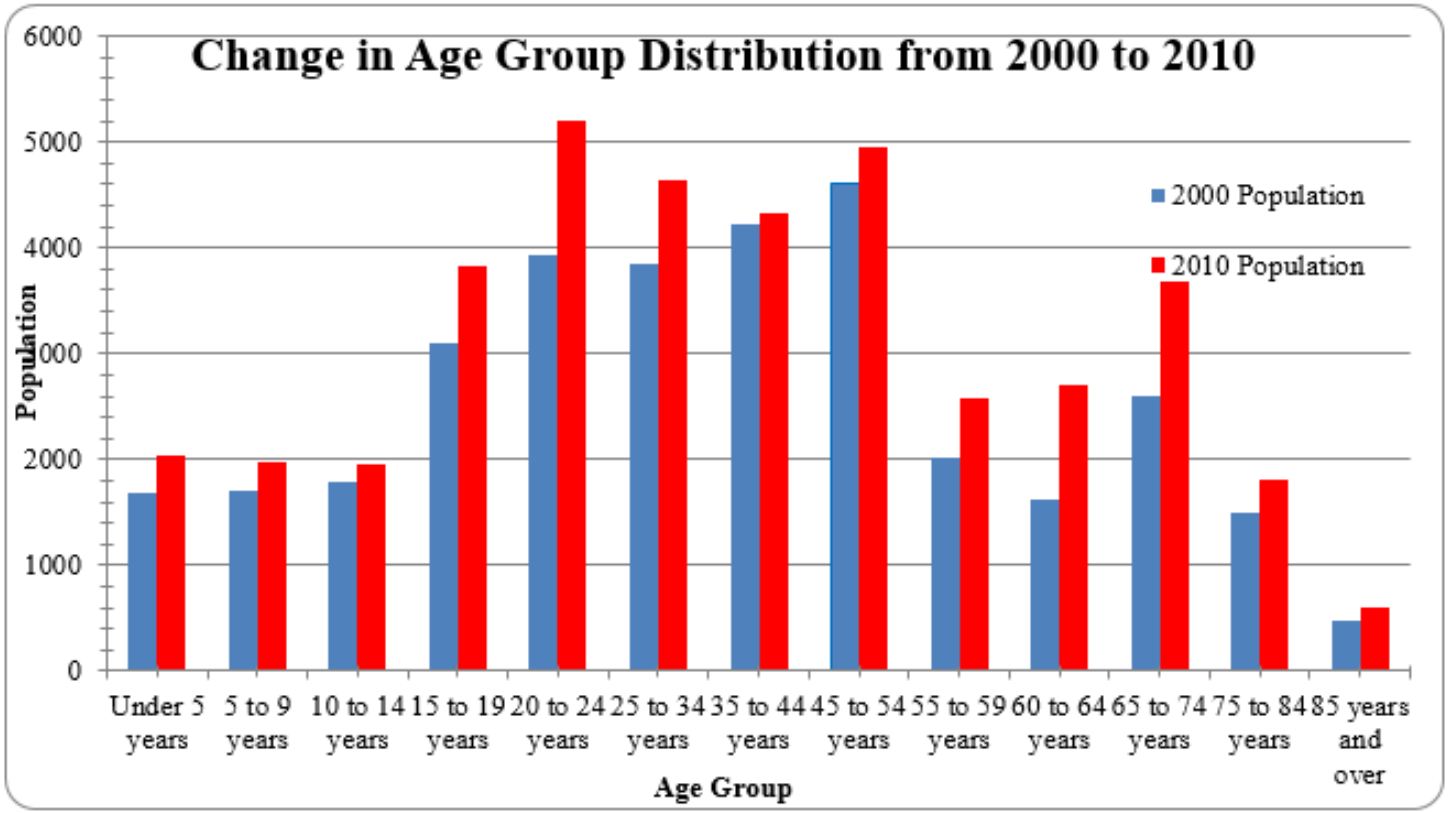

Figure 2. Trends in age group distribution from 2000 to 2010

Communities

Cullowhee

Cullowhee is an unincorporated community located in the center of Jackson County and is the home of Western Carolina University (WCU). The University is nestled in a valley and situated along the Tuckasegee River. As the community of Cullowhee is unincorporated, the growth and development has been located on the immediate outskirts of the University, although the community boundaries are undefined.

Western Carolina University's increased growth has been a contributing factor to the population increase and growth of Cullowhee. As identified above, Cullowhee's population has increased faster than the other unincorporated communities and townships in Jackson County. Development pressure in the early 2000s resulted in the construction of several apartment complexes designed to accommodate student housing needs. Due to that growth, the community came together to create a vision plan to help guide future development. The vision for Cullowhee, as stated in the 2013 Cullowhee Vision Plan, is "that the Cullowhee community will grow and prosper for existing and future residents as well as businesses by building closer relationships with WCU, creating a more inclusive sense of community, identifying partnerships to help manage, fund and improve existing infrastructure, developing a leadership framework to respond to growth, and implementing context-sensitive policies that reflect the character of the community and its history." This will be accomplished by:

- building an image and identity,
- promoting business and economic development
- implementing plans and policies to grow in a predictable manner
- providing opportunities for recreation,
- enhancing multimodal transportation options,
- taking advantage of the area's natural beauty.

Based on the community visioning process, in 2015 the County adopted the Cullowhee planning area to manage development and growth.

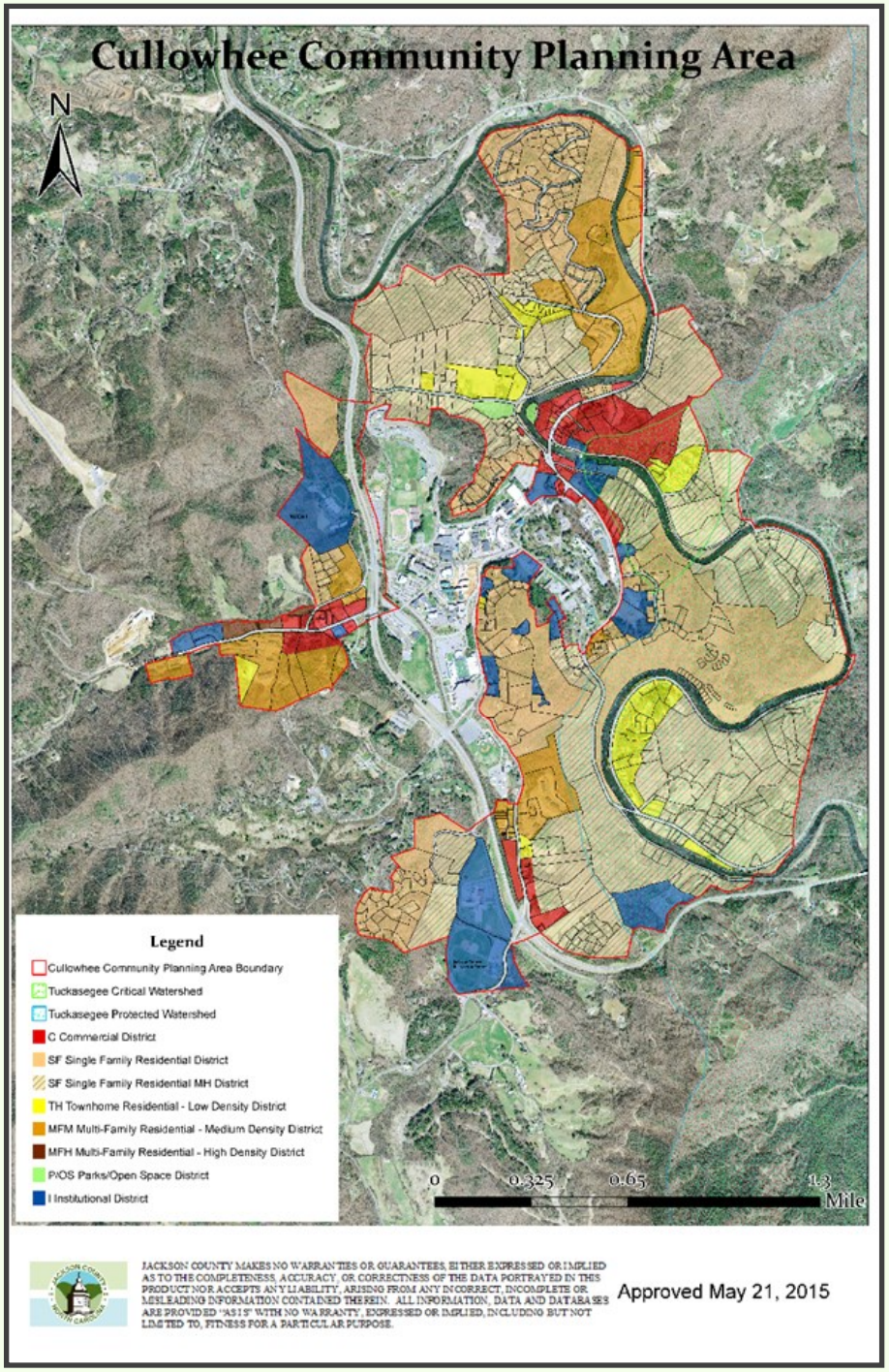

Figure 3: Cullowhee Planning Area

Cullowhee is home to the County's first greenway system. The Tuckasegee River Greenway is a 1.5 mile paved multi-use path designed to meet the recreation and off road mobility needs in the Cullowhee community. It is envisioned that the greenway will be expanded to connect the community to Western Carolina University. As the Tuckasegee Greenway continues to expand the following design concepts will be incorporated:

- Accessibility: Provide several opportunities for greenway access via trailheads and parking areas.
- Recreation: Offer recreational opportunities for a wide diversity of users including walkers, boaters, bicyclists, birdwatchers, fishermen, and other outdoor enthusiasts.
- Education: Serve as an important educational role in the community, including: ecology, history, cultural and wellness education.
- Connections: Connect to existing and future corridors in the area, including the proposed greenways near Sylva and Western Carolina University (WCU).

Cashiers

Cashiers is an unincorporated village located in the southern end of Jackson County. The heart of the Cashiers village is located at the intersection of US 64 and NC 107 on the southern-most plateau of the Appalachian Mountains. With hiking trails, mountain peaks, private clubs, golf courses, summer homes and high end shopping, the Village of Cashiers is a popular seasonal destination. Some of the golf courses in Cashiers were designed by professional golfers and architects like Tom Fazio and Arnold Palmer. The year round population averages 1,700 people, but during the summer season, the population can climb to over 10,000.

Did You Know?
In 2016, A re-make of the movie *Dirty Dancing* was filmed at High Hampton Inn in Cashiers!

Cashiers has been a popular place to escape the summer heat since the early 1900's. Civil War Hero General Wade Hampton III spent his summers in Cashiers on his 2500-acre family estate which is now known as the venerable High Hampton Inn.

In 2003, the Jackson County Board of Commissioners passed an ordinance that created the Cashiers Commercial Development District. This ordinance established the

While there is no small area plan for Cashiers, in 2009 the Mountain Landscapes Initiative did a case study on Cashiers due to increasing development pressure. In the immediate crossroads community, there are several large undeveloped or under-developed parcels that could be improved in the near future.

A small area plan for the Village of Cashiers would help to guide development in a way that would “Keep Cashiers, Cashiers.” Some of the goals identified for Cashiers in the Mountain Landscapes Initiative were:

- to provide choices and lessen congestion in the Crossroads area, to construct a layered pedestrian network,
- to direct growth into the core,
- to provide affordable housing for full time residents and seasonal workers,
- to coordinate water and wastewater utilities,
- to encourage the development of economically and environmentally sustainable buildings that are sensitive to the community aesthetic.
- to institutionalize a coordinated decision making process.

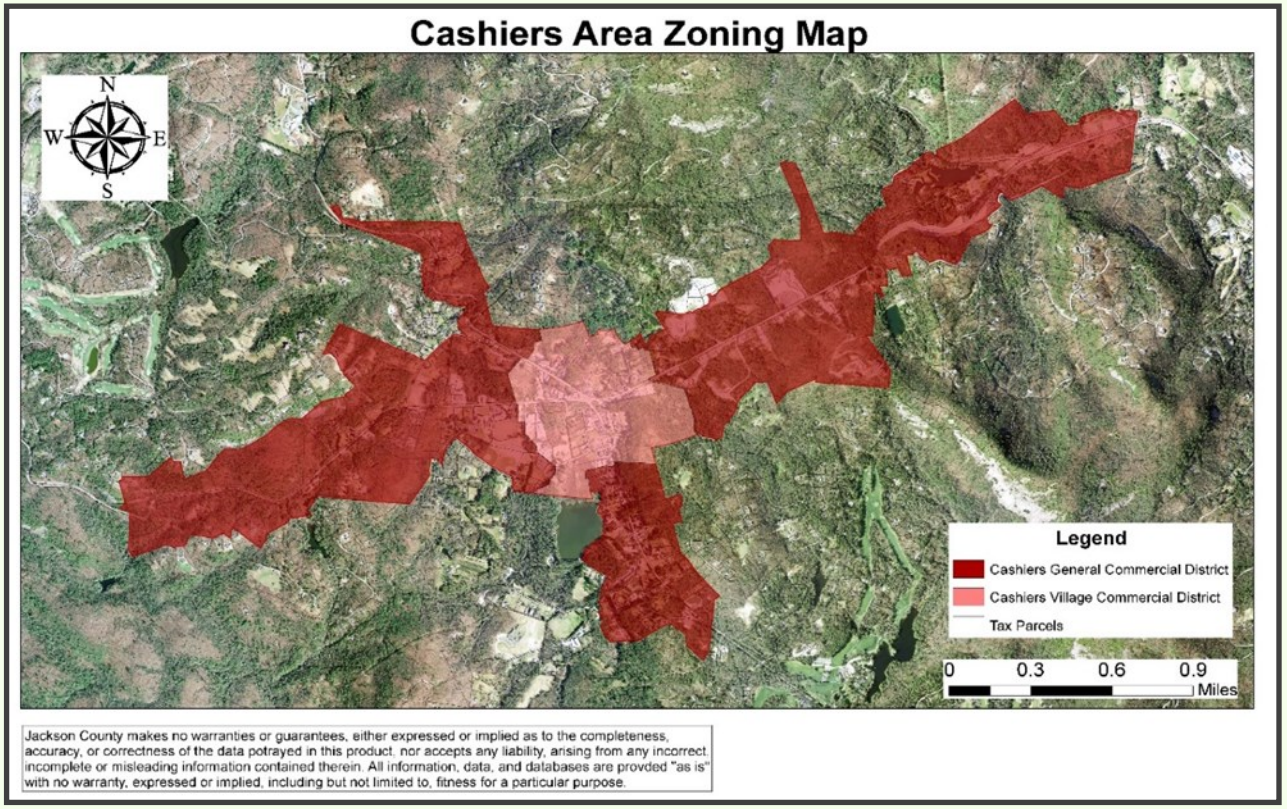

Figure 4: Cashiers Area Zoning Map

Sylva

The Town of Sylva is Jackson County's largest municipality and the county seat. Downtown Sylva is designated as a historic district, with most of the buildings being on the National Register of Historic Places. There is a hospital that serves the Town of Sylva, Jackson County and surrounding counties. The Jackson County Courthouse and governmental offices are also located in Sylva. In 1889, the town was chartered with a jurisdiction of 1.5 square miles, and now encompasses 3.2 square miles.

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The growth of Western Carolina University, Southwestern Community College, as well as the interest in Western North Carolina has increased the population of the town to 2,679 per the 2015 Certified Population Estimate from the Office of State Budget and Management. The Town of Sylva's Smart Growth Plan states that 57% of Sylva's growth and economic development has been in commercial business, 36% residential and 7% institutional. As Jackson County continues to grow, Sylva remains committed to its mission of "providing efficient high quality services, encourage partnerships, and proactively plan for the future to meet changing needs." Sylva's long range vision aims to expand opportunities for viable commercial and residential growth while keeping environmental and aesthetic issues in mind.

The citizens of Sylva have identified goals for accommodating the growth that is occurring at an increasing pace. These goals are:

- Encourage mixed-use developments and buildings;
- Encourage compatible, higher density commercial and residential infill development;
- New development should promote sustainable land development patterns;
- Areas with steep slopes and environmentally sensitive areas should be identified and preserved while allowing alternatives to development that protect private property rights;
- Existing neighborhoods should be strengthened through infill development, housing rehabilitation, proactive enforcement of zoning and building standards, and housing code enforcement;
- Encourage multi-modal transportation interconnectivity between neighborhoods and destination areas such as parks and shopping locations;
- Expanding the sidewalk system throughout commercial corridors;
- The traffic carrying capacity of existing arterial highways should be carefully monitored and maintained at acceptable levels of service;
- Promote compatible land use projects that protect environmentally sensitive land, meet infrastructure needs and allow flexibility in site design to achieve the above guidelines; and
- Ensure projects, policies and ordinances support and encourage sustainable development patterns.

Current development patterns and the anticipated growth have directed the Sylva's attention to the town's two primary transportation corridors, NC Highway 107 and US 23. Recent development along these corridors reflects the strip center commercial model that the town hopes to avoid in the future. Due to this development pattern a major area of concern is the NC Highway 107 corridor. The US 23 corridor is of secondary concern due to its more moderate pace of development. Recent construction along these corridors does not reflect the small-town, pedestrian friendly environment that Sylva wants to promote. Traffic has increased along these important transportation routes. The citizens of Sylva have identified the extension of extra-territorial jurisdiction as the tool of choice for the management of growth.

The future growth and development of Sylva and the associated challenges are reflective of what will occur in Jackson County in the coming years. The decisions made in Sylva, in turn, will affect the county and its ability to accommodate growth and development. A coordinated approach to these issues will ensure that the desires and needs of the town and the county are addressed. Communication, coordination of efforts, and the sharing of information and ideas will be the key to successfully dealing with what lies ahead for the citizens of Jackson County.

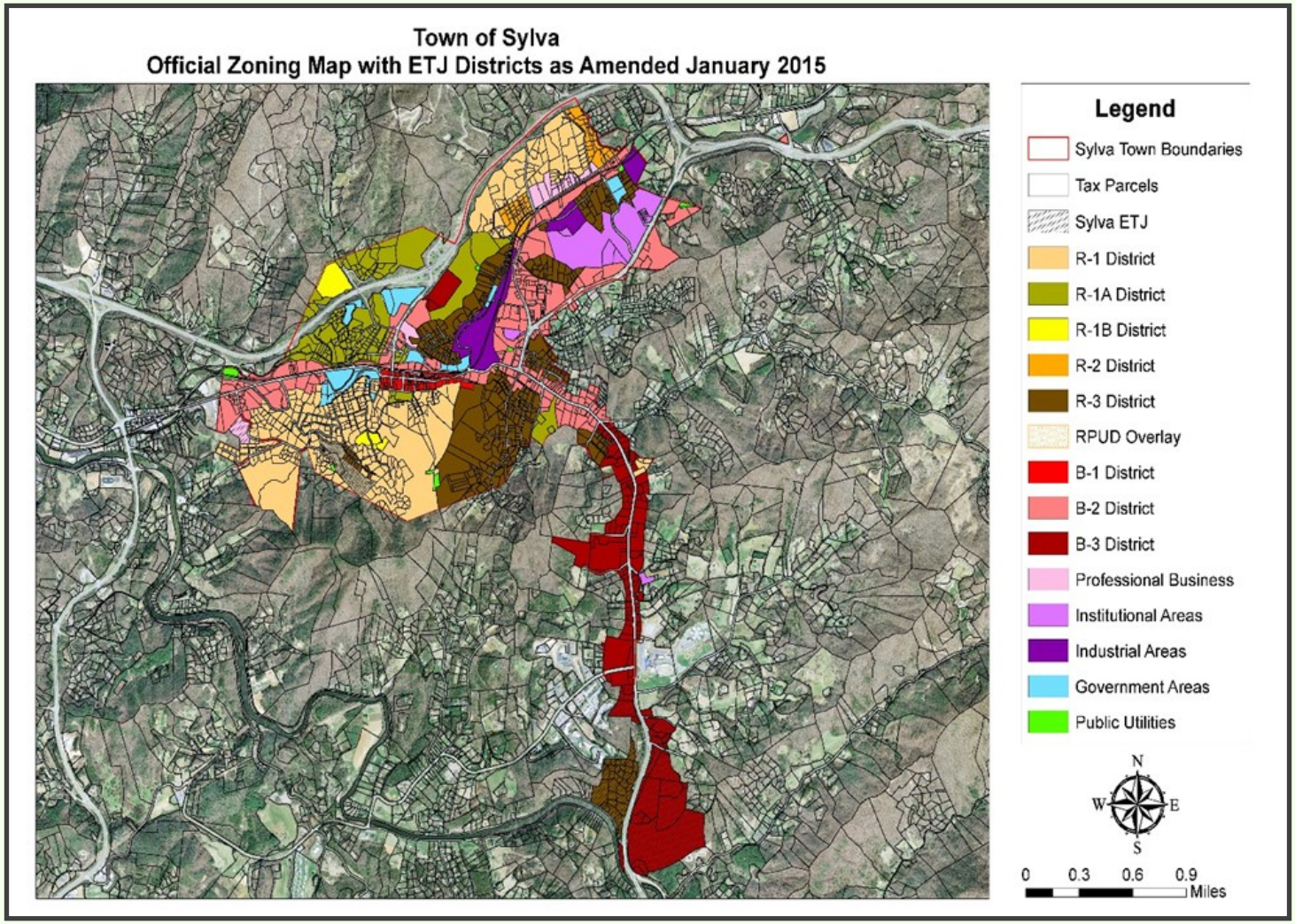

Figure 5: Town of Sylva Map

Town of Webster

The Town of Webster was originally declared the County seat in 1853 when Jackson County was created from portions of Macon and Haywood counties. During this time period, Webster had a local newspaper, a school, a post office, several churches and stores, two hotels, a courthouse and a jail. The population of Webster had reached over 1,000 by the turn of the 20th century. A railroad was soon built through Sylva, bringing prosperity, which resulted in the Town of Sylva being designated as the County seat in 1913.

The Town of Webster is 1.93 square miles located off of NC 107 on Highway 116 between Cullowhee and Sylva. The town is just 5 miles from Western Carolina University, and is also home to Southwestern Community College. The Town of Webster is largely residential now with a population of 363 residents, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

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The Town of Webster's latest vision statement says that "The town will preserve its small town, residential nature by encouraging broad-based community participation that promotes an attractive, welcoming community with a strong sense of place and history" and the most current mission statement says that "The mission of the Town of Webster is to encourage citizen involvement to ensure a secure environment for all of its residents". The Town of Webster has also adopted the following principles to guide growth:

- Maintain an attractive community with a strong sense of place and history,
- engender broad-based community participation in decisions affecting the citizenry,
- provide public places that encourage community interaction,
- integrate transportation choices to achieve maximum efficiency and mobility, and
- maximize use of existing infrastructure and ensure proper maintenance.

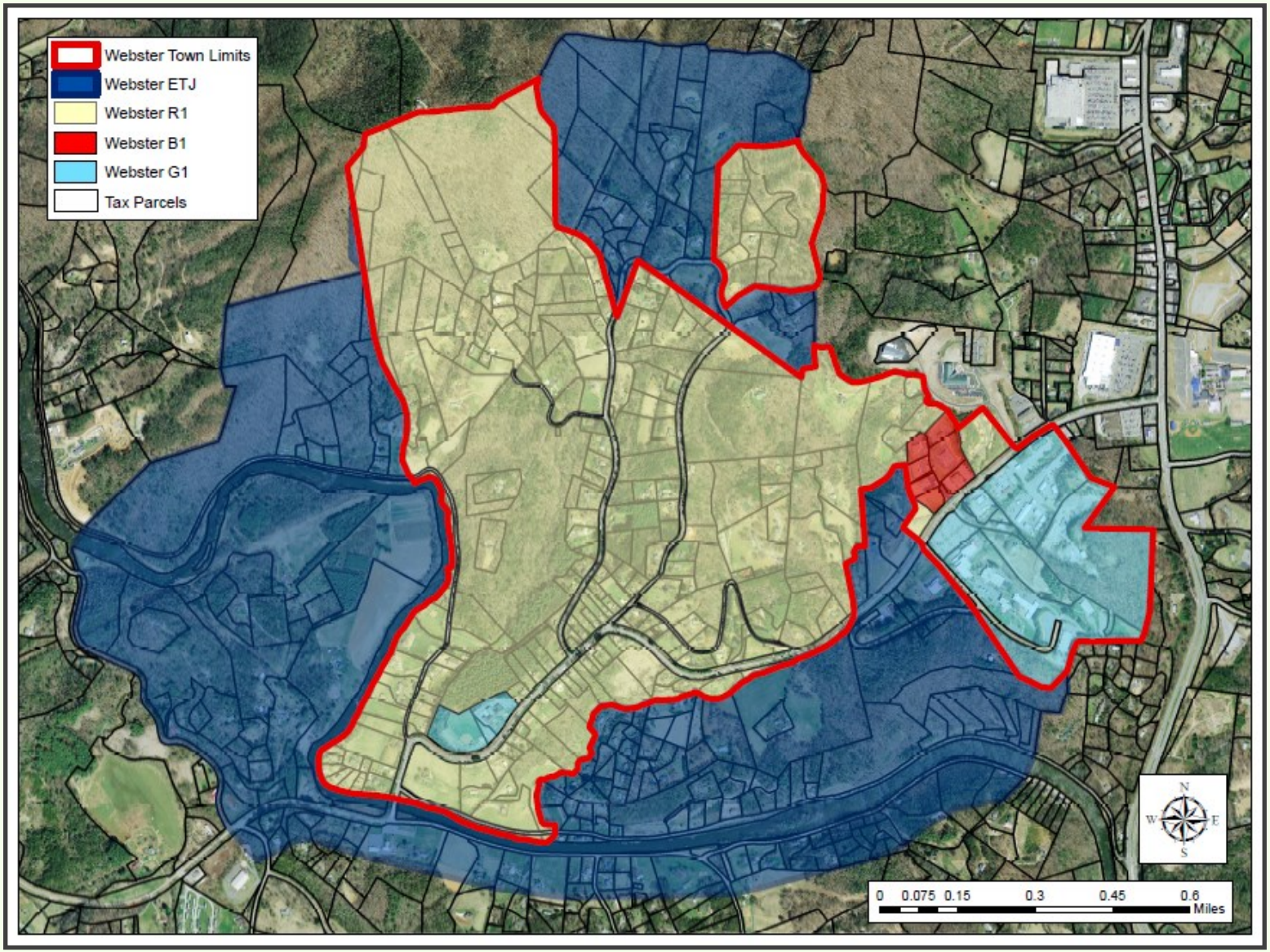

Figure 6: Town of Webster Zoning Map, 2015

Town of Dillsboro

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The Town of Dillsboro was incorporated in 1889, and the development of the town was closely related to the railroad that came in 1882. Dillsboro was named after William Dills, who owned most of the land that now makes up the town. Dillsboro is located at the junction of U.S. Highways 441 and 74, making it an ideal spot for tourists and visitors. Dillsboro is just 45 miles west of Asheville and a quick drive from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Cherokee. The Great Smoky Mountains Railroad called Dillsboro their home for years until recently moving to Bryson City. There are many historic homes that have been converted into commercial uses over the last 30 years. The population of Dillsboro is 236 according to the 2010 Census.

The Town of Dillsboro Board of Alderman have developed ordinances including a zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations to manage both residential and commercial growth. The topography of the town will dictate growth as well as the availability of water and sewer services along the highway corridors and the land adjacent to them.

In 2013, Dillsboro established two new districts called the Traditional Business Districts 1 and 2. These districts have strict zoning regulations and codes to maintain the historic old time feel of the Town. The Dillsboro dam on the Tuckasegee River was removed by Duke Energy in 2010 and since, the river has benefitted aesthetically and environmentally. The removal of the dam enhanced the ability of fish and other aquatic organisms to move unimpeded up and downstream.

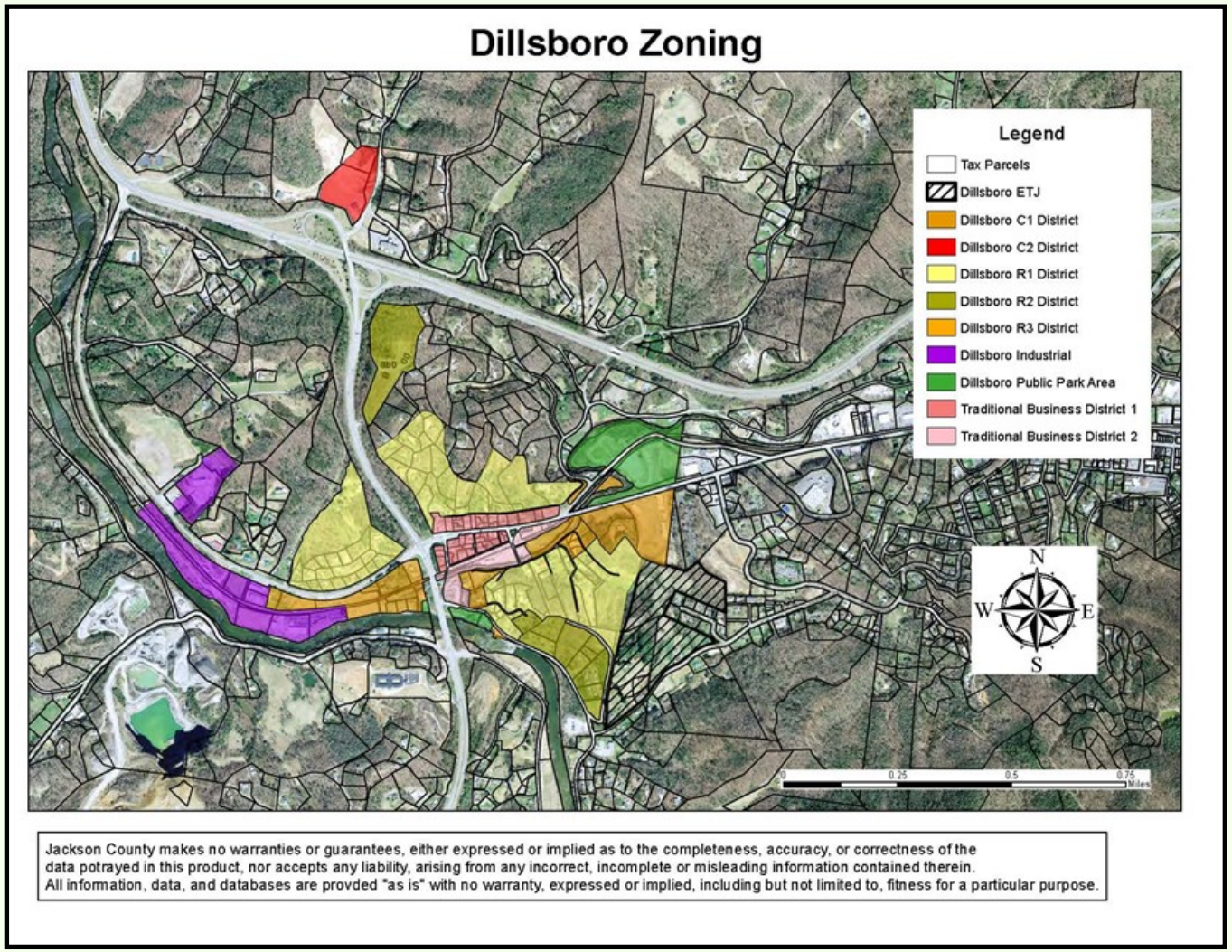

Figure 7: Dillsboro Zoning

Village of Forest Hills

The Village of Forest Hills was incorporated in 1997 and is located directly across NC Highway 107 from Western Carolina University. Today, the Village of Forest Hills is a completely residential community made of up Western Carolina University faculty, staff and retirees. The community is composed of fine homes and open spaces. The Village Council has developed zoning and subdivision ordinances to manage and maintain the residential character of the community. The growth of the Village will largely be dependent on the availability of public utilities and the topography of available land.

The vision statement adopted by the town council states: “The Village of Forest Hills aspires to be a welcoming, safe, and thriving residential community. Nestled in the North Carolina Mountains, the Village seeks to maintain its unique setting, both environmentally and culturally, but fostering an active, friendly, and healthy community.” The mission statement for the Village of Forest Hills states: “The Village of Forest Hills exists to maintain and promote the general welfare of its residents and enrich the lives of each citizen.”

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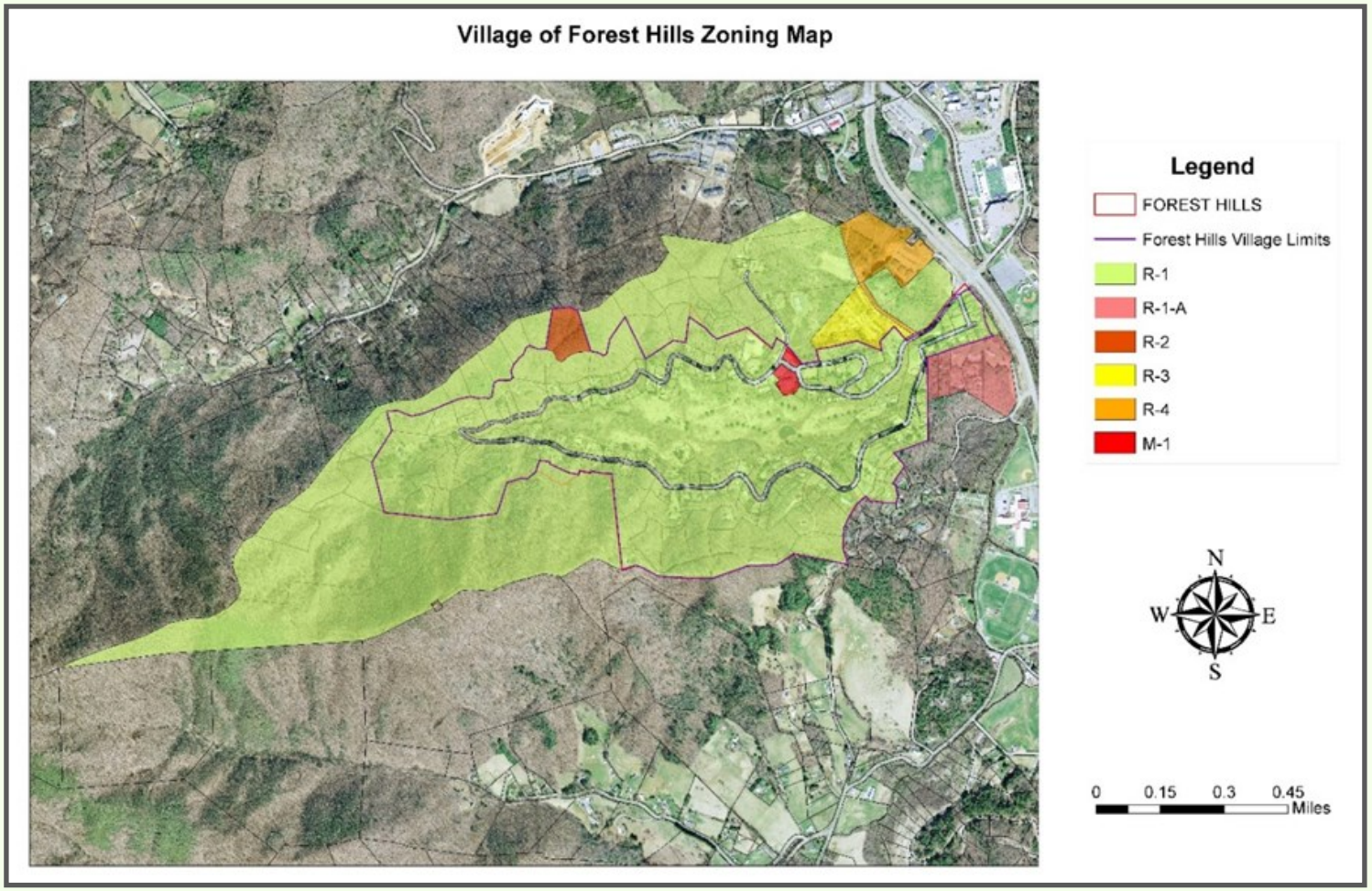

Figure 8: Village of Forest Hills Zoning

The Town Council has also adopted some future development goals in their land use plan including:

- Connect the Village with a network of greenways and sidewalks
- Preserve the open space and natural character of the Village
- Offer a greater variety of housing options in the Village to meet the evolving needs of aging residents and potential homebuyers
- Ensure that new development contributes to a sense of place and community in the Village.

Whittier and 441 Gateway Corridor

The community of Whittier is the north western most community in Jackson County, encompassing the 441 corridor and spilling over into Swain County. The 441 corridor is a planning area that has development standards and a planning council to help guide future development. The community of Whittier is majority farmland and homesteads. Future development will largely rely on the availability of water and sewer as well as topography and available land.

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The 441 Small Area Plan was adopted by the Jackson County Board of Commissioners in 2008. The plan is a culmination of a comprehensive and collaborative planning process that included local residents, business owners, property owners, and representatives from state agencies, conservation groups, public utilities, County planning staff, and the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. The small area plan represents a blueprint for the preferred settlement patterns and design qualities encouraged in the community.

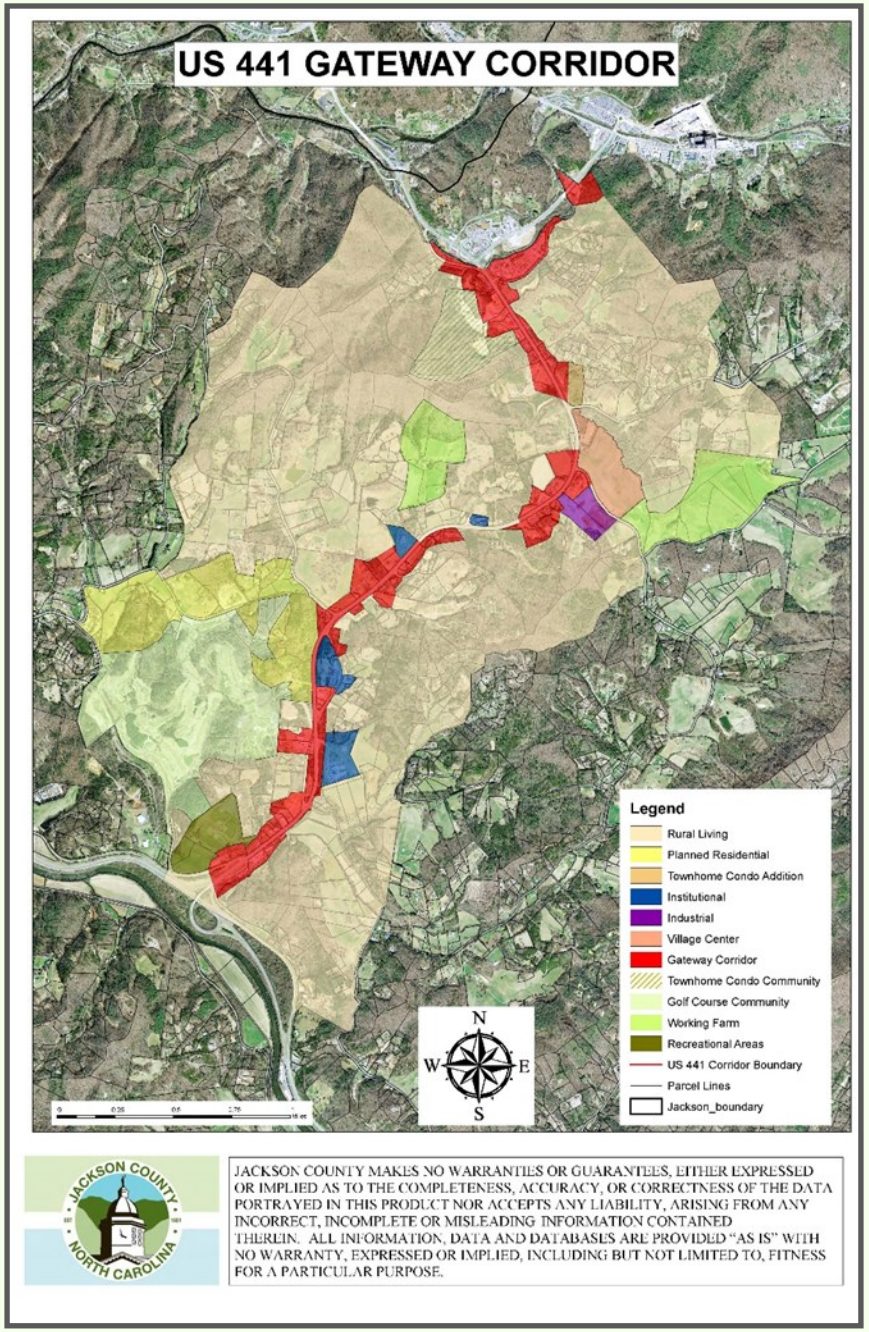

Figure 9: US 441 Gateway Corridor Map

Guiding principles that support, encourage, and implement the community's vision toward more sustainable development were created by a consultant team with the help of elected officials, an advisory committee, key stakeholders, and members of the public. The principles include:

1. Consider the community's concerns for environmental stewardship, economic prosperity, and protection of quality of life unique to this mountain community when formulating any recommendations.
2. Preserve the scenic views, natural areas, and working farms in the study area.
3. Create a vision for development that is economically viable, reflecting both market timing and change anticipated for the next 10 years.
4. Minimize the spatial footprint or detrimental impacts to the visual quality of the surrounding environment associated with new development.
5. Develop a beautification plan for US 441 that is functional, implementable, and affordable, while also addressing community safety concerns identified for the corridor.
6. Balance the need for government regulation that supports the community's vision with the interest of private property owners.
7. Provide recommendations, development and design guidelines, and an action plan that become the community's blueprint for implementation.
8. Treat those most immediately affected by the project with respect, and ensure that their input has impact on the vision and recommendations created for the community.

Education

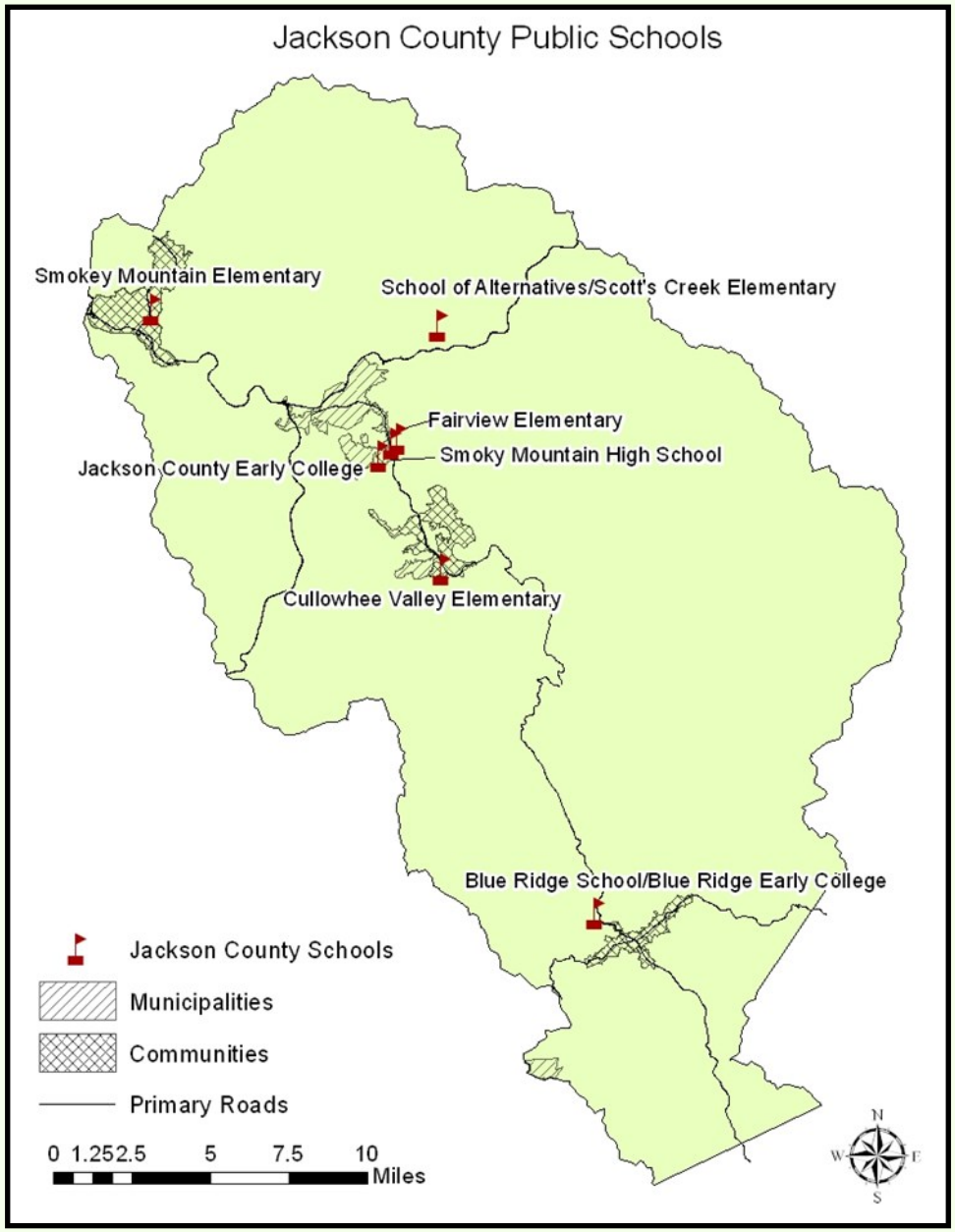

Figure 10: Jackson County Public Schools

Schools in Jackson County date back as far as 1820, and the first superintendent took office in 1853. Jackson County has historically shown strong support for the public education system. Based on the survey, 60% of residents would like to see their tax dollars spent on public schools. Another survey question asked residents to identify the areas of Jackson County's public schools that need the most improvement. Of the 1,804 people that responded, 40.85% said quality teacher recruitment and retention.

Providing an educational system that prepares all students to meet the trials and opportunities of the future is the challenge that Jackson County faces as the education system is evolving to personalized learning. The Jackson County public school system now has nine schools with a current enrollment of 3,695 students, and 629 employees. The Jackson County public school system includes Fairview Elementary, Smoky Mountain Elementary, Cullowhee Valley Elementary, Smoky Mountain High School, Blue Ridge School, Jackson County Early College, Scott's Creek Elementary, and Jackson County School of Alternatives. Jackson County is home to Summit Charter School in Cashiers. Post-secondary education is also readily available from Western Carolina University in Cullowhee and Southwestern Community College in Webster.

Southwestern Community College is a part of the North Carolina Community College system that serves Jackson, Macon and Swain Counties. They offer more than 95 credential options in more than 44 programs of study. Their total enrollment for 2014-2015 was 8,557 students who were either seeking an associates degree, a curriculum diploma, a certificate, transitional education, or continuing education. Southwestern Community College employed 202 full time employees in the 2015-2016 year and 227 part-time employees. The College also offers several community resources, like the small business center that provides seminars and counseling to new business owners.

Southwestern Community College's vision is to be an educational gateway for enriching lives and strengthening our community and their mission is to be a learning and teaching institution offering high-quality, innovative instruction and support, which promotes student achievement, academic excellence and economic development. The goals for future accomplishment that the college identified in the 2016-2017 Southwestern Community College Fact Book are to:

- Provide excellence in learning and teaching for transfer and career education, literacy development, business and industry training and lifelong learning in an accessible format (including face to face. Blended, and distance learning).
- Maintain a nurturing learning environment by providing comprehensive support and intervention services for every individual.
- Identify, acquire and maintain college resources to support the vision, mission and goals of the college.
- Attract and retain quailty employees and provide for their professional development.
- Foster cooperative community-based relationships which contribute to the cultural, economic, and educational advancement of the region.
- Assess institutional effectivenedd as part of the planning and renewal process based on continuous improvement principles.
- Prepare citizens to live, learn and work in a diverse global village.
- Increase community awareness of college programs and services.

Southwestern Community College will continue to grow as they have received partial funding through the NC Connect Bond to construct a new health sciences building at the Jackson County campus.

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Western Carolina University, founded in 1889, has continued to create opportunities for educational growth through teaching, research, service, and engagement. As the westernmost institute within the UNC system, WCU aims to enhance economic and community development in western North Carolina and beyond.

Currently, WCU is home to 10,805 students for the 2016 year. This total includes 9,171 undergraduate and 1,634 graduate students based at the main campus in Cullowhee as well as the additional instructional site at Biltmore Town Square West in Asheville for select programs. Approximately 56% of the student body is female with 44% of the population male. Of the total enrollment, 9,918 students are from within the state and 887 are classified as out -of-state. There are currently more than 115 under-graduate and more than 60 graduate programs offered for students to select from.

In order to provide sufficient support to sustain a successful campus and learning community, WCU employs a total workforce of 1,504 employees as of October 1, 2016. Of this total, staff composes 971 of the permanent positions and faculty holds 533 positions. Additional university support has been provided by 307 temporary employees.

As university growth continues, so does WCU's vision for future campus projects and academic programming. A current initiative focuses on public and private partnerships with the purpose of increasing economic development in the region and beyond through opportunities other than traditional education. With the convenient location directly across from the Cullowhee main campus, the Millennial Campus initiative aims to provide a space for applied research through faculty, students, private firms, non-profits, and government agencies working together. These types of partnerships encourage the blending of the collegiate experience with business exposure to positively benefit both students and the surrounding community. The first building erected as part of this initiative was the Health and Human Sciences building focusing on health related teaching and learning, and includes approximately 5,000 square feet dedicated to partner clinic space. Additionally, WCU is in the process of moving forward with the development of a multi-tenant medical office building. This Millennial Campus facility will house tenants ranging from physicians to dentists, a pharmacy, orthotics, and other health related professions.

Over the past decade WCU has continuously seen significant growth and construction efforts to match the evolving needs of students. Over this time period the university has seen the development of a new student recreation center, a new dining hall (Courtyard Dining Hall), the new Health and Human Sciences building, a new fine and performing arts center (Bardo Arts Center), the addition of two new residence halls (Balsam and Blue Ridge Residence Halls), a new mixed use facility which includes retail space and student housing (Noble Hall), and a new student parking lot. New construction projects have been consistently accompanied by on-going renovation and maintenance projects to ensure all facilities are meeting campus needs and safety standards.

In regard to overall future campus development, WCU aims to maximize the use of existing infrastructure while focusing future land use on new academic development and promoting a more pedestrian oriented campus. As such, there are several future construction projects of interest to note including a new $110 million Science Technology Engineering and Math facility and a new campus parking garage to address these campus goals. Additionally, WCU will begin to focus on expanding and updating campus residence halls by building a new upper campus residence hall, planning renovations/replacement to outdated housing facilities, and completing current construction on the renovation and addition to the Brown building.

Education Goals and Objectives

E1—Goal: Build technology infrastructure to provide equity and access (broadband to remote areas).
Objective: Facilitate public/private partnerships for funding opportunities to expand last mile connectivity.
Objective: Create hotspots at community centers and recreation centers.

E2—Goal: Sustainable k-12 education model.
Objective: Promote innovative school concepts that focus personalized learning programs.
Objective: Explore alternative technology replacement and funding policies.
Objective: Encourage the continued collaboration between the County school system and the higher education institutions.
Objective: County continue to support funding of public education.
Objective: Explore sustainable transportation models.

E3—Goal: Support pathways to vocational jobs.
Objective: Form a New Century Scholar type program to promote and support vocation jobs
Objective: Supports SCC's apprenticeship based programs.
Objective: Support K-12 and Community College education professionals obtain real world work experiences during summer breaks.
Objective: Collaborate with SCC to conduct an assessment to determine local/regional vocational training needs.
Objective: Partner with Southwestern Commission workforce development programs.

E4—Goal: Provide workforce housing for faculty and staff to promote recruitment and retention.
Objective: Explore options for building housing for workforce.
Objective: Explore supplemental housing allowances**.**

E5—Goal: Promote physical activity to promote a healthy lifestyle.
Objective: Partner with the public school system to increase awareness of the Safe Routes to School program.
Objective: Partner with the public school system to increase the number of trainings on how to implement Safe Routes to/at school as well as increase the programs that encourage walking and biking to/at school.
Objective: Continue to partner with Healthy Lifestyle Initiatives.

E6—Goal: Maintaining close communications within the education community.
Objective: Create a standing committee on education to include representatives from the Jackson County School system, SCC, SWC, WCU, EBCI, etc.

E7—Goal: Pursue shift in the transportation culture.
Objective: Explore local and regional public transit options
Objective: Establish park and ride opportunities for students at SCC and WCU
Objective: Provide sidewalks and bike lanes to connect students to SCC and WCU to the extent feasible.

Public Health

In the late 19th Century, public health concerns in large urban areas spawned the first roots of planning. Some of the issues were overcrowded cities, management of human and animal waste, and a rapid onset of infectious disease. These issues led to the development of planning policies that would manage community development and waste disposal. The correlation of public health and planning has changed over the years with the development sanitary sewers/septic systems and the significant progress made in addressing infectious diseases. Now the health issues that face our communities are chronic diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, substance abuse, and a lack of adequate healthcare access. One reason chronic diseases are plaguing our communities is because of the lack of access and infrastructure that encourages physical activity. Bringing planning and public health policies back together will promote sound practices that can increase the quality of life and health of our community.

Current public health trends for Jackson County are identified in the MountainWise Health Impact Assessment and the 2015 Community Health Assessment (CHA) that is completed in conjunction with Harris Regional Hospital's Community Health Needs Assessment. As defined in MountainWise, a health impact assessment is a systematic process that uses an array of data sources and analytic methods and considers input from stakeholders to determine the potential effects of a proposed policy, plan, program, or project on the health of a population. Health impact assessments provide recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects. MountainWise works with the eight westernmost counties of North Carolina to provide opportunities for physical activity, access to local fresh fruits and vegetables, provide support for tobacco-free places and access to services for chronic-disease management. The health priorities identified by MountainWise for Jackson County are:

1. Healthier food options in the community
2. Physical activity in adults (with a subcomponent of fall prevention with seniors)
3. Substance abuse in adolescents

The list above is almost parallel to the health priorities identified in the 2015 Jackson County Community Health Assessment. The CHA identified the following health priorities:

1. Physical activity and nutrition
2. Injury and substance abuse prevention
3. Chronic disease

The similarity in the priorities reinforce the importance of addressing these issues in the community. Jackson County has a community garden in Cullowhee that allows people to grow food free of charge, but a portion of their crops must be given to the Community Table. This policy helps distribute fresh, healthy food in the community, and begins to address the need for healthier food options in the community. The expansion of private and community gardens as well as planting fruit bearing trees on County property would give the community access to healthy, nutritious food while making the County more food sustainable. The County is developing a greenway system that will make safe exercise more accessible. Encouraging walkability and the addition of sidewalks in new development would make walking in our community safer and more accessible. The Active Routes to School program at County elementary schools is a great way to get kids active while keeping them safe.

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Jackson County is home to Harris Regional Hospital, a Duke LifePoint Hospital, located in Sylva. Harris Regional is an 86-bed acute care facility with a long-standing reputation for excellent care since 1929. Some of the services provided by this hospital are cardiology, emergency services, pediatrics, urgent care, women's care, and many more. This hospital was founded with five core guiding principles called their High Five:

- Delivering high quality patient care,
- Supporting physicians,
- Creating excellent workplaces for employees,
- Taking a leadership role in our communities, and
- Ensuring fiscal responsibility.

The number one goal of Harris Regional Hospital is to provide a world-class patient experience, from quality of clinical care to how you feel while in their care.

In the survey, 83% of respondents said that they receive healthcare services in Jackson County. The respondents were asked to identify the health care services that they perceived as lacking and 30% said emergency medicine/hospital and 29.75% said general family practice/internal medicine. A general practitioner treats acute and chronic illnesses as well as provides preventive care and education. An increase in general practitioners and family medicine may decrease the amount of chronic disease in the County. General practitioners provide preventive care through education and immunization which may also decrease chronic disease.

In order to address the community's perceived lack of healthcare services, the establishment of mobile health services would make general and preventive medicine more accessible for the community. The creation of a health care task force would also be beneficial in the coordination of expanding and developing new health care services in the County.

Public Health Goals and Objectives

PH1—Goal: Promote healthy eating and provide access to healthy food options.
Objective: Expand community gardens on County owned land.
Objective: County support gleaning efforts to provide food relief.
Objective: Develop a food sustainability plan.
Objective: Explore the use of food producing vegetation on public lands and rights-of-way.
Objective: Support farmer's markets efforts in the County.
Objective: Continue to support the efforts of the Community Table

PH2—Goal: Promote physical activity within the County.
Objective: Invest in adequate infrastructure (sidewalks, greenway) in existing communities to increase physical activity.
Objective: Support safe walking and biking programs (remote drop off sites, at, before and after school programs) to/at schools through safe routes to school programs/active routes to school programs
Objective: Create point of decision making signs (calories burnt while taking stairs vs. elevator) in County owned buildings and school system.
Objective: Promote and encourage the use of walking/hiking trails within the County.
Objective: Review land development requirements to encourage walkability in site design.

PH3—Goal: Provide support to prevent substance abuse.
Objective: Establish a tobacco policy for County facilities.
Objective: Provides police officers with opioid reversal drugs.
Objective: Engage the children in the County through the use of supervised youth centers.
Objective: Encourage a multi-agency approach to address prescription drug abuse.
Objective: Continue support of the D.A.R.E. program in public schools.

PH4—Goal: Provide adequate healthcare access to residents through a multi-agency approach supported by the County.
Objective: Create a permanent Health Care Task Force to coordinate health care service efforts in the County.
Objective: Encourage the establishment mobile health services.
Objective: Support continued efforts to provide access to preventative care measures.
Objective: Coordinate with health professionals and law enforcement agencies in developing best management practices when responding to calls involving people suffering from mental health issues.
Objective: Continue to provide and broaden transportation options to healthcare offices and facilities.

PH5—Goal: County continues to support the public health accreditation process.
Objectives: Continue to support the efforts of the public health stakeholders in creating the community health assessment.
Objectives: Address health issues and concerns as they arise in the Community Health Assessment.

PH6—Goal: Promote health and safety in Jackson County
Objective: Evaluate and implement Mt. Wise Health Impact Assessment
Objective: Continue to support the County's Environmental Health programs.
Objective: Continue to maintain and update the County's Hazard Mitigation Plans.
Objective: Continue to partner with Duke Power in addressing water hazards events (i.e. flooding)

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is one of the biggest influences on the location and scale of development within the County. Availability of infrastructure has a direct impact on the density and size of residential and commercial development. Due to the County's physical features, it is important to maintain our existing infrastructure and expand it in and around existing communities to allow for future growth. Infrastructure can include many community assets; however, for the purposes of this document infrastructure includes water, wastewater (sewer), communications, and energy.

Water

The Tuckaseigee Water and Sewer Authority (TWSA) was formed in 1992 when existing water and wastewater utilities were consolidated to provide public water and sewer service in Sylva, Dillsboro, and Webster, and the unincorporated areas of Cashiers and Cullowhee, Western Carolina University, and limited areas outside the jurisdictions of these entities. The availability of water and sewer services have greatly increased density of development as well as provided for greater environmental protection.

TWSA operates a system that consists of water treatment, storage, and distribution, as well as wastewater collections and treatment facilities. The water system consists of a 1.5 MGD (million gallons daily) treatment plant and a water capacity of 2,160,000 gallons in 9 storage tanks. Their distribution system is primarily made up of a 6-inch pipe at 417,120 linear feet.

TWSA is also completing a Professional Engineering Report on the potential consolidation of the existing Jackson County Water System in Cashiers into the TWSA ownership. This system is envisioned as the core for a future water system in Cashiers that will provide adequate and sustainable water supply for domestic use and fire protection.

TWSA has performed improvements at the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) in Cullowhee with construction of an operations building including a full laboratory, as well as the construction of a state-of-the-art bulk chemical building. The existing filter system received a major renovation in 2014 to prolong the life of those assets. This work was designed to meet current needs and to accommodate an expansion of the plant capacity in the near future.

TWSA is also completing a Professional Engineering Report on the potential consolidation of the existing Jackson County Water System in Cashiers into the TWSA ownership. This system is envisioned as the core for a future water system in Cashiers that will provide adequate and sustainable water supply for domestic use and fire protection. TWSA will be entering an advanced planning effort in the fiscal year of 2018-19 for a Water Treatment Plant (WTP) expansion in the years following.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) also operates a water system. While most of their infrastructure is located on the Qualla Boundary, they do service commercial and residential areas along the US 441 North Corridor in proximity of the Boundary.

Sewer

TWSA's wastewater treatment system consists of three treatment plants:

- 3.5 MGD plant located on the Tuckasegee River
- 0.5 MGD plant located in Sylva
- 0.1 MGD plant located in Cashiers.

The Tuckasegee Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) received a major expansion in 2012, bringing their MGD from 1.5 to 3.5.

TWSA has acquired a 16 acre site on the Horsepasture River for a new WWTP in the Cashiers Community. Advanced planning has been completed and funding is being secured for the first phase of plant construction and collection system improvements. This phase will provide 0.125 MGD of additional sewer capacity for the community, and the permit allows for two follow-up expansions to make it a total of 0.496 MGD in the future.

TWSA Wastewater Treatment Plant 2 on Scotts Creek is scheduled to receive a major rehabilitation beginning in FY 2016-17 to sustain the current 0.5 MGD treatment capacity. The Jackson Paper Sewer Lift Station is likewise scheduled for a major Addition / Alteration project in FY 2016-17. Other major projects on the current Capital Improvement Plan include various water and sewer line extensions targeting development corridors or Low to Moderate income residential areas.

The Whittier Sanitary District operates a small sewer system in the Whitter Community. The system is not large and has a small customer base. The Whittier Sanitary District is in negotiations with TWSA to maintain that system. The EBCI also operates a sewer system. As with their water system it is mainly located on the Qualla Boundary, but does serve commercial and residential areas in proximity to the Boundary.

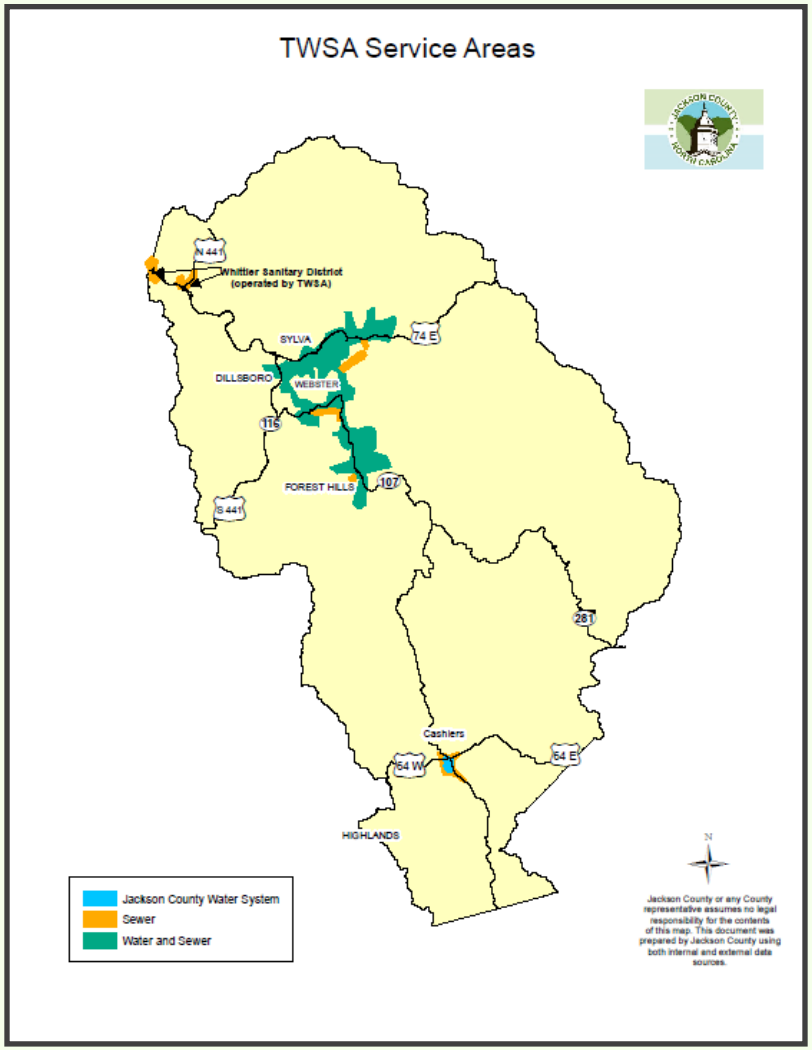

Figure 11: TWSA Service Area Map

TWSA's By-Laws include a process for continually updating a plan for the future in the form of a Water and Sewer Project (WASP) Committee made up of TWSA staff, representatives for each forming entity, and three "at large" members from the community in general. Annually, each entity is provided the opportunity to identify their project priorities for the next fiscal year when a project data call is sent out in the winter. The combination of any projects identified by the forming entities and those identified by TWSA staff are reviewed by the WASP Committee and prioritized for funding in the pending fiscal year budget process. As part of TWSA's By-Laws, each expansion project must have a return on investment within 5 years for it to be funded, so participation by developers or by local governments in the costs will become increasingly important as sources of grant funding continues to decline. TWSA will progressively find the need to generate alternative funding that will drive project decisions. Possible responses to this pressure may include the need to begin making customer connections to extensions mandatory or charging of availability fees to those who elect not to connect. In the absence of mandatory connections or availability fees, the above discussed public / private partnerships in projects to expand capacity or extend service areas will become critical to meeting the financial litmus tests that will allow these projects to move forward.

Figure 11 shows that the existing water and sewer infrastructure is located in municipal limits and in existing communities like Cullowhee and Cashiers. Water lines also extend along the 107 corridor connecting Cullowhee to the Webster-Sylva-Dillsboro area. The map also shows the general service area for the water and sewer services provided by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian.

Communications

Jackson County's communications needs are served through a combination of traditional landline telephone networks, cellular service, cable providers, and broadband providers. The availability of high speed broadband has been identified as one of the greatest needs in the County. This is an issue that permeates our lives, as high speed broadband access is important to schools, businesses, government, and all residents. It impacts how students learn, how businesses operate, and where we choose to live. Respondents to the survey ranked access to high speed broadband as the biggest barrier to economic development growth in Jackson County.

Jackson County's ISPs (Internet Service Providers) are met through a combination of dedicated technologies, to include: dial-up, DSL, cable modem, wireless, satellite, and Fiber Optic interconnects. Availability for high speed internet services for Jackson County has been identified as one of the greatest needs for the County. This is an issue that permeates our lives, as high speed internet service is important for our schools, businesses, government, and residential areas.

Infrastructure for high speed internet services in this area is limited. Primary high speed providers include Balsam West FiberNET, that currently provide fiber optic along the US 74 corridor from Balsam to the Qualla Boundary, from US 74 to WCU, continuing along Hwy 107 to Cashiers, and along the 441 Corridor south to the Macon County line. Other primary providers in our area include Duke Energy, ERC, Frontier, and Morris Broadband. ERC, Duke Energy, and Morris Broadband also join Balsam West in providing fiber to the premise for WCU and surrounding housing for the University. Outside the corridors, internet access is limited. Jackson County has a local high-speed wireless network that provides high speed internet access in areas outside of the above mentioned corridors. Beyond this, there is no access to high speed internet services for a majority of the County.

Throughout this process it has been clear that access to high speed broadband is one of the most critical infrastructure issues that will impact growth in Jackson County. It will impact how schools teach and how student learn, it will impact how business will operate, and it will impact where people choose to live, work, and play. For these reasons, it will be important for the County to continue to encourage the expansion of broadband infrastructure and partner with our utility providers to facilitate expansion.

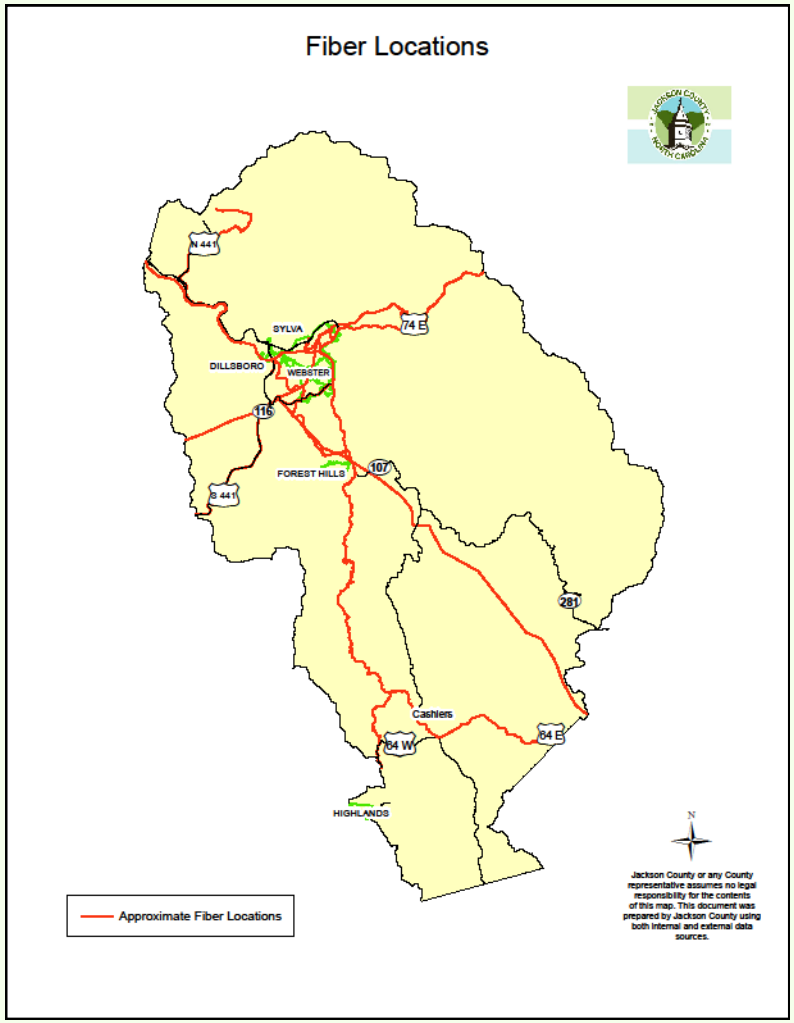

Figure 12: Fiber Lines

Energy

Duke Energy owns and operates the largest energy infrastructure in the County. They produce hydroelectric power using impounded areas along the Tuckasegee River. While Duke Power is the only power generator in the County, Western Carolina also owns and operates a small electrical distribution system around the University. It was initially developed to recruit professors to teach at the college. Western still operates the system, but today the university purchases the power from Duke Energy.

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There is a need in Jackson County to both maintain existing infrastructure and also to promote sustainable development practices by expanding the County's infrastructure, whether public or private, in towns and existing communities to provide residential and commercial growth opportunities while balancing our need and desire to protect our environmental resources. This can be accomplished through the efficient use of resources and collaboration between towns, the County, and local utility providers.

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Infrastructure Goals and Objectives

I1—Goal: Asset Management - Establish an asset management plan that is both progressive and fiscally sound.
Objectives: Work with critical facility owners (government or private) to compile an inventory of critical assets, existing facilities, including age, condition and estimated life expectancy.
Objectives: Establish a point of contact for County's infrastructure. (Possibly from the County Maintenance staff: Chad Parker)
Objectives: Focus on establishing or supporting the current asset management plan for the various public schools in the county.

I2—Goal: Utility Partnership/Consortium - Provide open communication between utility providers through a Utility Consortium to include all utilities: Sky Fi, Verizon Wireless, Frontier, Balsam West, TWSA, Duke, natural gas. Recommend crossover with task forces on Housing, Economic Development, Planning/Land Use.
Objectives: Partner with the Underground Utility Coordination Committee - 811 system as a starting point for creating points of contact.
Objectives: Create existing data base (GIS) layers of infrastructure facilities that is available to public private partners.
Objectives: Foster and encourage policies that allow service providers to co-locate (underground and aerial) with other services. Encourage private partnerships where feasible to utilize nontraditional locations of wireless repeaters ie. churches bell towers, etc.
Objectives: Utilities are looking at their relocation costs. County could encourage better encroachment agreements, ROW agreements. Liability and Maintenance
Objectives: Coordinate with NCDOT, County, Municipalities and service providers to extend trunk lines to economic nodes. Explore utilization of railroad corridors to reach underserved locations. Encourage the sharing of resources like co-locate during installation or installing empty conduit during expansion projects.

I3—Goal: Expand reliable high-speed internet access and mobile phone access across county.
Objectives: Appoint a "point person" to coordinate efforts and opportunities to expand broadband, possibly within the County or Regional level. Partner with NC Broadband Initiative.
Objectives: Inventory all existing resources of broadband and mobile phone infrastructure. Explore reporting requirements to state government to assist with inventory.
Objectives: Explore funding options:

- possible incentives for private companies to invest in the business opportunities within the county.
- opportunities for the county to create a LLC or nonprofit to apply for grants.
- possibility to utilize accumulated money from communication tax

Infrastructure Goals and Objectives (Continued)

Objectives: Partner with WCU to explore allowing use of power infrastructure for broadband providers to obtain access to customers on WCU power grid; including Forest Hills, north, and University Heights. Coordinate with Mike Byers for existing service map.
Objectives: Provide wireless Hot Spots at public locations such as fire stations, community centers, recreation centers. Equip transit vans with HotSpots to encourage ridership.

I4—Goal: Promote Efficient Use of Limited Infrastructure Resources
Objectives: Promote Infill and Redevelopment where infrastructure already exists before expanding to new areas.
Objectives: Identify and anticipate growth areas and communicate development plans to TWSA and other utility providers.
Objectives: Encourage local government coordinating with housing developers. Could be eligible for grant funding. Partnering with entities like Habitat for Humanity to locate residential centers in accordance with comprehensive plan.
Objectives: Synchronize Master Plans between County, Towns, WCU, SCC, TWSA, etc.

Natural Resources/ Environment

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Jackson County is defined by the natural beauty of the physical environment and the vast biodiversity that it supports. From the ridgelines of the Great Balsam Mountain range to the banks of the Tuckasegee River, or the "Tuck", the County is an outdoor paradise enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Our environment has been and continues to be our most valuable resource and asset. Jackson County's ability to prosper will be directly linked to how well we balance future growth and stewardship of our natural resources.

Rivers, Streams and their Rare Wildlife Species

Jackson County has some of the healthiest waterways in North Carolina. There are approximately 415 miles of rivers and streams located in the County that create and support wildlife habitat, and sustain the County's vast biodiversity. The most prominent river is the Tuck, which begins in the Wolf Creek sub-watershed around Wolf Creek Lake. It is the largest watershed in the Little Tennessee River Basin and is a major source for Fontana Lake.

Only two short stream segments in Burling Game and Sugarloaf Creeks have a rating of Fair in terms of water quality. Sugarloaf Creek was contaminated with sediment after the Balsam Preserve Dam Failure (NCDEQ 2010). The remainder of streams and rivers have a rating of Good to Fair or better in Bio-classification by NCDEQ for water quality. There are three impaired waterways in the County: Scott Creek, Savannah Creek, and the section of the Tuck between Dillsboro and Webster. Fecal coliform levels impair these waters from their full function and recreation in these waters may not be safe (NCDEQ 2010). Most sedimentation pollution of streams happens due to deforestation of a river or stream's headwaters, so protection of ridges and forests along headwater streams is very beneficial for water quality.

Four species of fish and mussels that depend on the County's streams are native to only a few counties in North Carolina and found nowhere else in the world. Most of the remainder of rare aquatic wildlife species are native to a limited range within this region of NC and adjacent states. All aquatic species of conservation concern are threatened by even low levels of siltation and increases in water temperature.

The Eastern Hellbender, the largest salamander in North America, is native to roughly one-third of the Eastern U.S. and is documented to exist in many waterways of the County. Contrary to popular belief, they are not poisonous, and young hellbenders are especially sensitive to reduced water quality.

Eastern Hellbender, USDA

Wild Southern Appalachian Brook Trout and stocked trout streams are very important economic generators for the County. Of the 415 miles of rivers and streams, 164 miles are designated as trout waters, making Jackson County the trout capital of North Carolina. The native Brook Trout populations were almost extinguished by extensive logging in the 1800s and have since grown to occupy only 20% of their historic range.

Southern Appalachian Brook Trout, USFWS

Did You Know?
The Tuckasegee Stream Crayfish was only discovered in 2002.

Mountain Ranges and their Rare Wildlife Species

Portions of five major mountain ranges occur in the County. The Blue Ridge runs along the southern tip of the County and joins with the Cowee Range east of Highlands. The Great Balsam Range occupies most of the eastern portion of the County and connects to the Plott Balsams at Balsam Gap. The Plott Balsams merge with the Great Smoky Mountains in the northern portion of the County, and the Cowee Range occupies most of the western portion of the County (NCNHP 1994). Elevation ranges from 1,810 to 6,410 on Richland Balsam. The N.C. Natural Heritage Program estimates that 90 percent of the County has steep slopes commonly exceeding 45 percent. Soils are mostly acidic due to the underlying rock types. Due to these elements, special attention is needed when building new roads or driveways that cut into rock.

Jackson County's mountains are home to some of the most unique and threatened species in the world.
There is a considerable amount of public land in the County, perhaps as much as 35 percent or more. As such, a focus on wildlife habitat corridor areas that connect public lands and protect streams are the most needed types of land conservation.

Ridgetops over 5,500 feet: Spruce-Fir Forest

The highest elevation ridges of the County's mountain ranges contain the second most endangered ecosystem in the U.S.: Spruce-fir forest and a federally endangered mammal, the Carolina Northern Flying Squirrel. This flying squirrel species was only discovered in the 1950s and is only found in Jackson and a few other NC counties. Eastern hemlocks have been decimated by the exotic Hemlock Wooly Adalgid, making conservation of these forests and the many unique wildlife that depend on them of urgent importance.

These forests are "glacial period relics" that remained after the glaciers retreated during the end of the last ice age. Spruce-Fir forests are highly sensitive to land use and air quality impacts because this habitat has a very limited range, and there is a great need for habitat restoration.

Chris Kelley with NCWRC holding a Carolina Northern Flying Squirrel

Over 4,000 feet in elevation: Northern Hardwood Forests

Spruce-fir forests give way to Northern Hardwood Forests, which is the most abundant forest habitat type in the County. Development pressure includes threats from a large increase in second homes and recreation facilities. Many non-native pathogens are a potential problem for several tree species in the Northern Hardwoods ecosystem, including the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Balsam Woolly Adelgid, Gypsy Moth, Emerald Ash Borer, and beech scale.

High-elevation cliffs and rock outcrops are another priority natural community that occur above 4,000 feet. These habitats are critical for Species of Greatest Conservation Need such as the Southern rock vole.

From 3,000—4.500 feet in elevation: Montane Oak Forest

Montane Oak forests are comprised of Chestnut Oak forests, montane oak–hickory forests, high-elevation Red Oak forests, and montane White Oak forests. Maintaining areas at least 300 feet wide or more of contiguous, un-fragmented forest can provide habitat corridors to most forest dwelling species.

The following priority natural communities occur at various elevations throughout the County's mountain ranges:

	What Makes Them Special	Interesting Fact
Bogs & Fens	They are among the rarest natural communities in the Appalachians and NC.	Four rare plant species and seven wildlife species in the County depend on this habitat.
Open Habitats	Open pasture and shrub-land, these habitats are dominated by grasses and flowers and are the best quality for several wildlife species in the County.	The golden-winged warbler is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need that uses open habitats for nesting.
Small Wetland Communities	Upland pools and depressions do not contain predatory fish and are extremely important for amphibians.	It is important to develop no less than 750 feet away from small wetland communities in order to maintain sufficient upland habitat.
Coves, Mines, Flat-rocks, Cliffs	Caves are critical to the survival of several bat species in the County. Low elevation flat-rocks have a diverse plant community and are important for many reptile species.	Bats reduce the number of mosquitoes and crop pests dramatically for the County. Unfortunately, they are regularly threatened by "white-nose syndrome" which kills 99% of bats in an infected cave.
Cove Forests/Dry Coniferous	Known for their sheltered and moist elevation sites, many amphibians and bird species need these habitats in order to persist in the landscape.	Several exotic pest species, like the Wooly Adelgid and Gypsy Moth, can negatively impact the health of Cove and Dry Coniferous forests.

Table 6—Natural Communities in Jackson County's Mountain Ranges, NC Wildlife Resources Commission

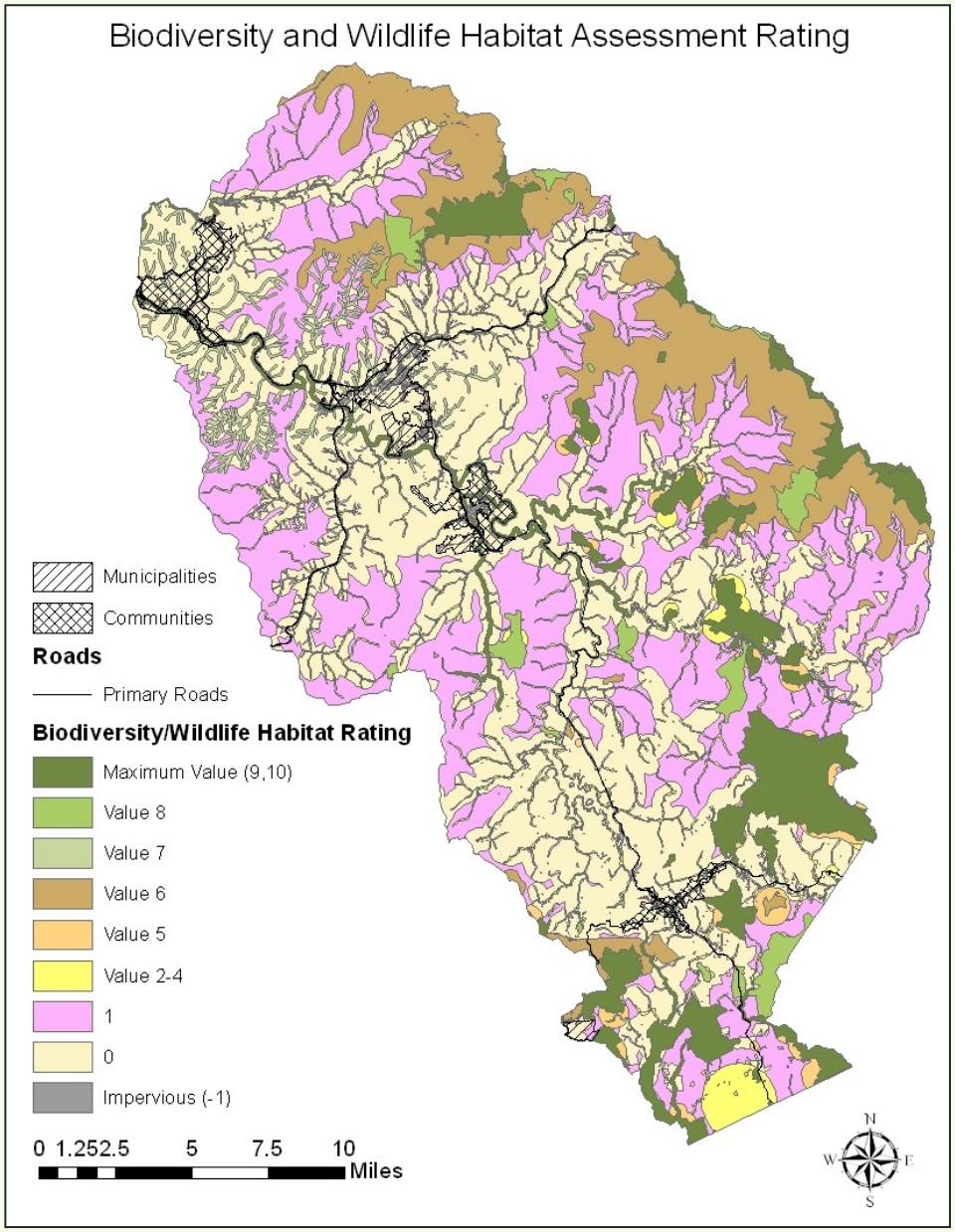

Figure 13: Biodiversity and Wildlife Habitat Assessment Rating

Figure 13 depicts the County's most biodiversity and habitat described above. There is a rating assigned to all aspects of the County's habitat. The higher the rating the, the more value to the conserving the habitat. The map shows that a majority of the highest rated habitat is located on and along federally owned and protected land. Other highly rated habitat is found along the Tuckasegee and its tributaries and along many of the County's highest ridge lines. The areas that have lower ratings include areas in and around our existing towns, communities, and transportation corridors. The County should continue to review policies and development regulations that balance growth with the protection of the natural habitat that supports our great biodiversity.

Federally Protected Land

There are several thousand acres of federally protected park and game lands in Jackson County, as depicted in Figure 14. The Nantahala National Forest and The Great Smoky Mountain National Park account for the majority of the federally protected lands. The Nantahala National Park is 231,148 acres located in Jackson County. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is 522,547 acres in size and spans multiple counties in North Carolina and Tennessee. There is approximately 74,000 acres of federal park/forest land located in Jackson County.

In addition to federally protected land, there are several tracts that have been placed in conservation easements by private property owners through the State and local land trust such as the Mainspring Land Trust. These are shown in Figure 15. The Mind Spring Land Trust is managing over 1,700 acres of land with Jackson County.

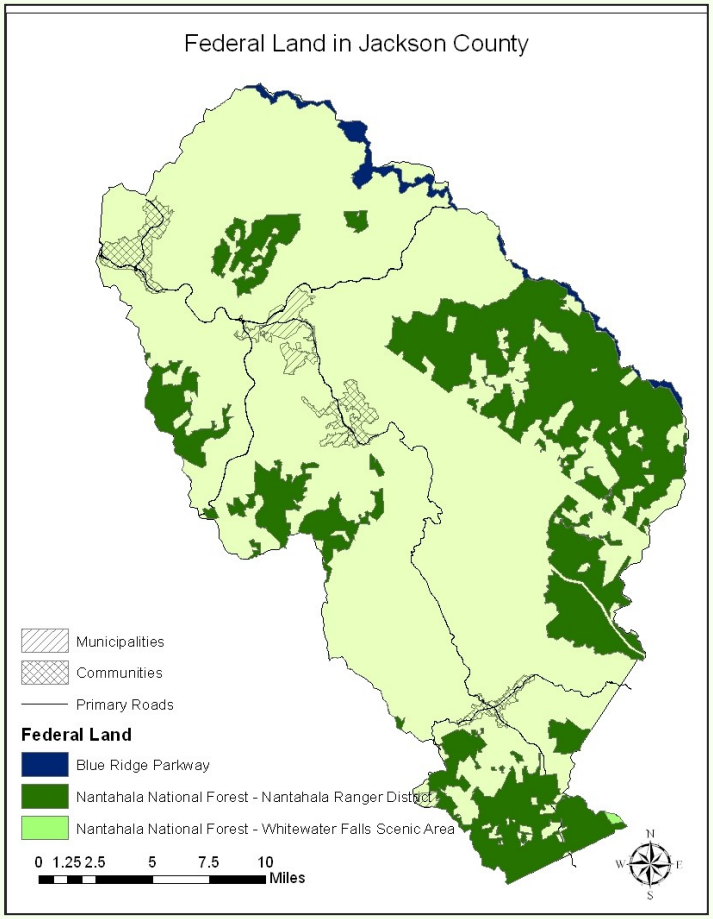

Figure 14: Federal Land in Jackson County

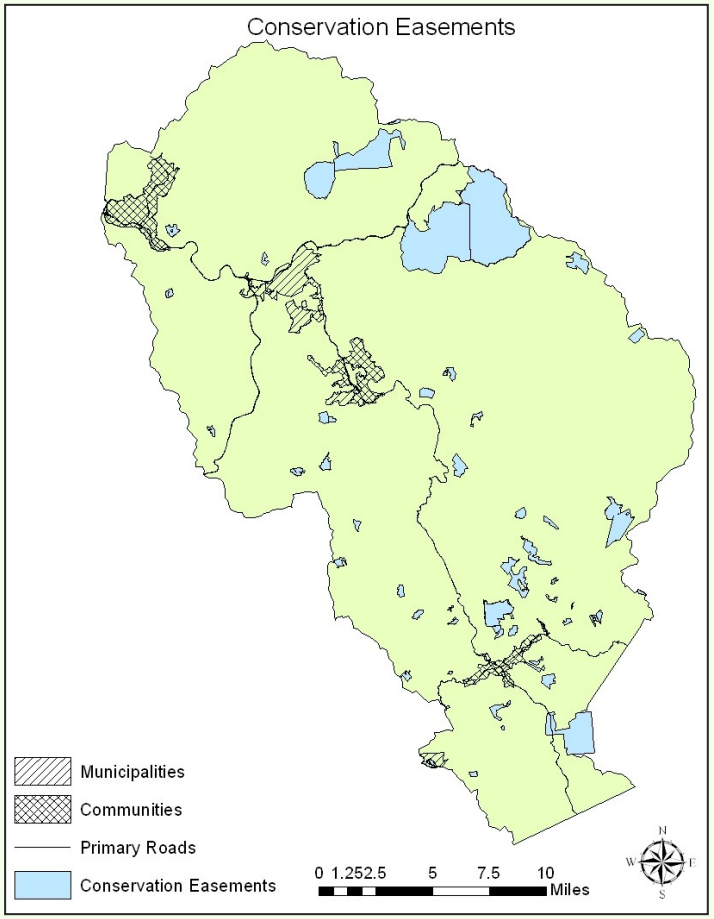

Figure 15: Conservation Easements in Jackson County

Environmental Ordinances

In order to protect our vast natural resources the County has adopted several development ordinances to protect our most sensitive areas. While these ordinances do not preclude development located in these areas, they do create development standards to minimize and mitigate the impacts associated with development. The County has adopted the following ordinances:

Watershed Protection Ordinance—The purpose of the ordinance is to protect the water supply by limiting the exposure to pollution and sedimentation. In order to protect the water supply, the ordinance limits the amount of impervious surfaces for non-residential uses and a minimum lot size for residential uses in order to allow water to filter naturally as it enters our water supply. (See Figure 16).

Floodplain Development Ordinance—The purpose of the ordinance is to promote public health, safety, and general welfare and to minimize public and private losses due to flood conditions within flood prone areas. This ordinance limits the type of development within floodways and established standards for development within the floodplains.

Sedimentation and Erosion Control Ordinance—The purpose of the ordinance is to regulate land disturbing activity to control the acceleration of erosion and sedimentation to prevent the pollution and degradation of bodies of water, watercourses, or public or private property by sedimentation. Erosion Control permits are required for all land disturbing activities of ½ acre or more.

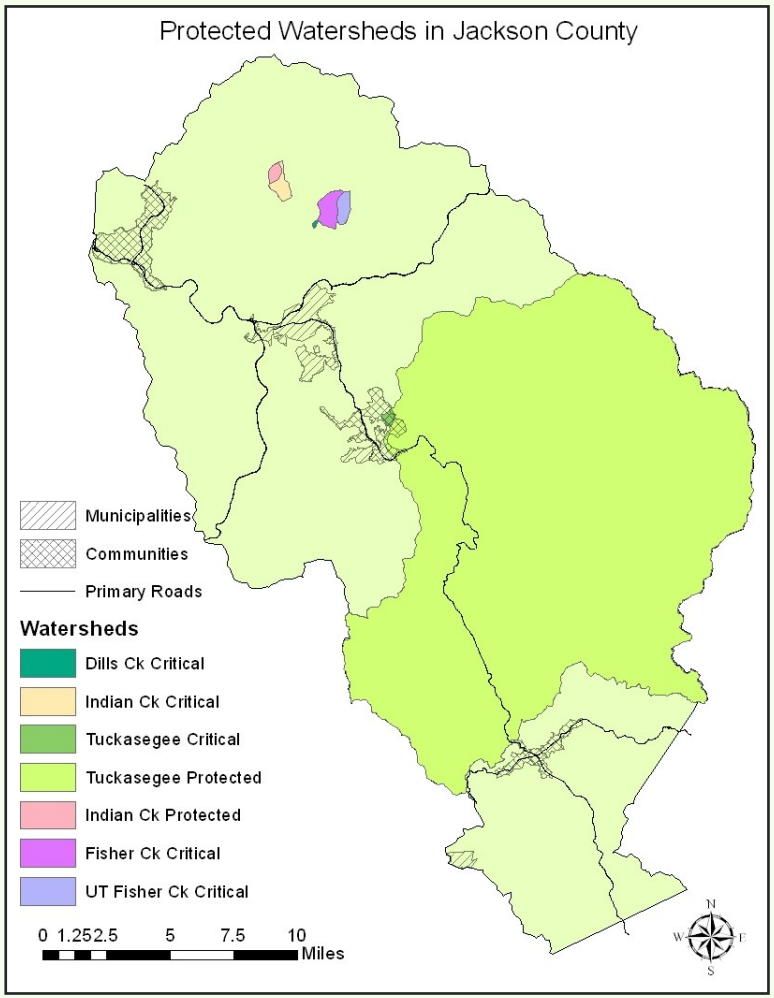

Figure 16: Protected Watersheds

Mountain Ridge Protection Ordinance—The purpose of the ordinance is to regulate the construction of tall buildings or structures on mountain ridges to ensure that they once constructed they have access to water and fire protection, will not adversely affect or endanger persons living at lower elevations, and that the tall buildings will not detract from the natural beauty of the mountains. (See Figure 17).

Mountain and Hillside Development Ordinance—It is the purpose of this ordinance to provide development regulations applicable to mountains and hillsides to ensure that development occurs in a manner that will protect natural conditions and existing topography, prevents inappropriate development, preserves aesthetic qualities of the area, and ensures public health and welfare.

The provisions of this ordinance are intended to prevent developments that will erode hillsides, result in sedimentation of lower slopes and bodies of water, cause damage from landslides or create the potential for damage from landslides, flood downhill properties, or result in the severe cutting of trees or the scarring of the landscape.

Water Recharge Ordinance—The purpose of the ordinance is to promote the recharge of water back into the aquafers. This is accomplished by maintaining pervious surfaces that allow water infiltrate into the ground. Development activities can reduce the amount of land that is available to allow for water infiltration. The ordinance limits the amount of impervious surfaces developed on individual properties without providing areas for water infiltration and stormwater runoff.

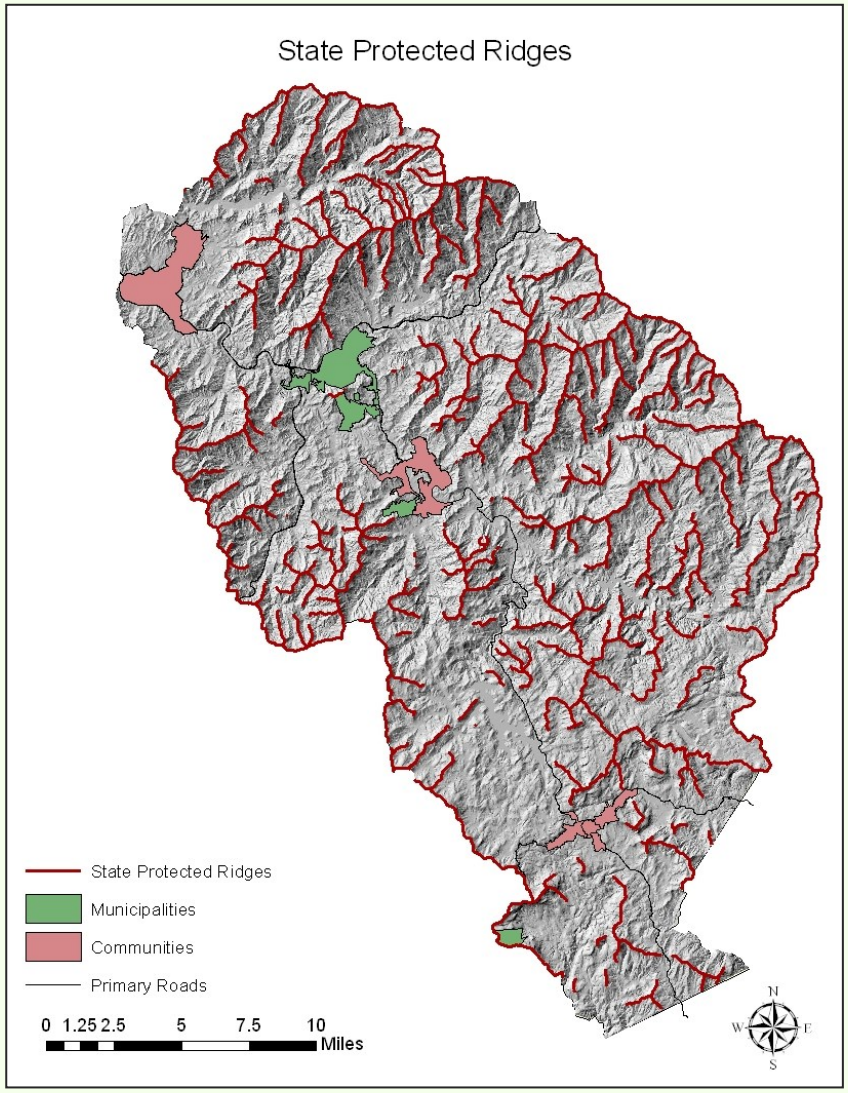

Figure 17: State Protected Ridges

Natural Resources Goals and Objectives

NR1—Goal: Preserve the habitat for identified endangered species
Objectives: Create a GIS map layer with known habitats for endangered species.
Objectives: Collaborate with WCU and environmental groups to identify habitats for significant species.

NR2—Goal: Preserve and protect natural habitat and corridors for migrating wildlife.
Objectives: work with NC Wildlife Resource Commission and other partners to map wildlife corridors.
Objectives: Educate and promote the conservation of sensitive areas.
Objectives: Collaborate with local land trusts to protect sensitive areas.

NR3—Goal: Encourage development that minimizes impervious surfaces.
Objectives: Continue to administer the County's Watershed Protection Ordinance, Water Recharge Ordinance, and the Floodplain Development Ordinance to protect water sources.
Objectives: Continue to identify changes in technology and best management practices related to stormwater control to ensure that the County's ordinances encourage environmentally sound development practices.

NR4—Goal: Encourage development that is compatible with the natural environment.
Objectives: Update the County's BMP guidance (suggested development practices)
Objectives: Educate and promote the County's BMP guidance for development.
Objectives: Continued development of the County's greenway system.

NR5—Goal: Limit commercial and industrial development along trout waters.
Objectives: Continue to enforce the trout water riparian buffer requirements for development.
Objectives: Continue to identify policies and procedures that will protect trout waters.

NR6—Goal: Protect the County's natural viewscape.
Objectives: Continue to administer the Mountain Ridge Protection and Mountain and Hillside Development Ordinances.

NR7—Goal: Ensure that the County is Dark Sky compliant.
Objectives: Ensure that all County facilities are Dark Sky compliant.
Objectives: Create an educational outreach program for contractors, designers, and homeowners regarding Dark Sky compliance.
Objectives: Update the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance to address modern technology and practices.
Objectives: Collaborate with local retailers that stock outdoor lighting to provide information about Dark Sky compliance.

Economic Development

Economic development activities in Jackson County are focused on the improvement of economic condition, increased opportunities for improving wealth, and a betterment of the overall quality of life of the people of Jackson County. Business recruitment, retention and expansion, civil and social infrastructure, workforce development, and strategic marketing are the primary focuses of our Economic Development efforts. The primary economic drivers in our community are education, health care, and tourism, with modest infusions of manufacturing, commercial retail, and entrepreneurial endeavors. Leveraging of our existing economic assets is of primary concern, thus necessitating a creative approach of job creation and business development.

In Jackson County, colleges, universities and professional schools are the industry segment that employs the most people, followed by restaurants, elementary and secondary schools, then recreation and traveler accommodation. Beginning in January 2016, the total workforce in Jackson County was 17,723, by March the workforce rose to 18,346, in May the workforce was at 18,931 and in June there was a slight decrease in the workforce with 18,916 individuals. The top ten employers are:

1. Western Carolina University with 1000+ employees
2. DLP Partner Medwest LLC with 500-999 employees
3. Jackson County Public Schools with 500-999 employees
4. Jackson County Administration Department with 250-499 employees
5. Vaya Health with 250-499 employees
6. Southwestern Community College with 250-499 employees
7. Wal-Mart with 250-499 employees
8. Aramark Food and Support Services with 250-499 employees
9. Ingles Markets with 100-249 employees
10. NC Department of Transportation with 100-249 employees

Western Carolina University and Southwestern Community College provide educational resources that are unparalleled in the region. Small business and entrepreneurial assistance is at the forefront of their respective strategic initiatives, thereby supplying the area with comprehensive efforts to promote sustainable small business creation.

Jackson County's robust tourism economy is relevant to its mild climate, scenic beauty, and diverse natural resources. Visitation to the area is driven by established brands such as Cashiers, Dillsboro, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Cherokee Indian Reservation. An abundance of year-round outdoor recreational activities appeals to multiple consumer segments, providing a staple of economic activity regardless of time of year.

The Jackson County Tourism Development Authority (JCTDA) was established in 2012 to oversee destination marketing efforts within the county. Before the JCTDA's creation, the County had two geographically distinct marketing offices – Jackson County Travel and Tourism Authority and the Cashiers Travel and Tourism Authority.

The levy of 3-percent occupancy tax (in place since 1985) was increased to 4-percent with the establishment of the JCTDA and 4-percent remains the current rate. Jackson County Commissioners received the authority in HB 96 to increase the levy up to a maximum of 6-percent by local legislation.

Visitors to the mountain region of North Carolina cite their primary reason for their visit as pleasure (85%) compared to business related travel (8%) and other (7%). In Jackson County, a one-month study of July 2016 visitors who responded to surveys at the Cashiers area Chamber and the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce indicated they came to the area to visit, vacation and sightsee (respectively). Occupancy Tax collections show that the top months of overnight stays in Jackson County are July, August, and October respectively.

Smith Travel Research insights provides that the highest occupancy months are July with 71.7% and October with 67.9%. The average daily rates in the top months are October with $117.56 and August with $106.87. The most popular days of the week to stay overnight are Saturday, Friday then Thursday (in thet order).

The last visitor profile conducted was in 2013 as part of a branding effort by Virginia-based BCF when "Play On" branding was adopted by the board. That visitor intercept was conducted in February and may not be representative of the county's visitors in an off-peak visitation month.

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Through social media and web analytics, we have identified our target audience geo-target as Atlanta, Charlotte, Raleigh/Durham and Southwest Florida. We are working to refine our visitor profile through polling at the Chambers of Commerce.

For FY 16-17, Jackson County is projecting $22,500,000 in accommodation sales Overnight visits to Jackson County are primarily to hotels/motels followed by vacation rentals.[2] Jackson County collects occupancy tax on vacation rentals and requires accommodation owners to remit taxes monthly.

Airbnb provides data for the period of Oct. 1, 2015 to Oct. 1, 2016 showing that there are 95 hosts in Jackson County with 130 active listing. There were 3,000 inbound guest arrivals with an average length of 2.7 nights per stay and 3.6 guests per stay. This data shows that Airbnb stays grew 140% between 2015 and 2016.

In Jackson County, Tourism is responsible for one out of every ten jobs. In 2015, Jackson County ad a workforce of 1,710 in the tourism industry, as compared with the entire estimated countywide employment of 17,389. Tourism jobs increased 3.1-percent over 2014.[4] Payroll for those workers is $41.53 million, an increase of 7.1 percent over the prior year.[4]

In 2015, tourists spent $175.92 million in Jackson County. That figure represents a 2.8-percent increase over 2014 spending ($171.16 million).[4] Through tourist spending in Jackson County, $9.7 million in state tax receipts were generated in 2015 (a 6.8 increase over 2014). Local tax receipts were $8.04 million in 2015, a 3.7-percent increase over 2014). As a result of taxes generated by tourist spending in Jackson County each of the 26,709 Jackson County households pay $667 less in local and state taxes. In other words, if tourism did not exist, each household would have to pay $667 more in state and local taxes to replace the taxes generated by tourist spending.

State Tax Receipts –9,790,000[4]$
Local Tax Receipts – $8,040,000[4]

$17,830,000 / 26,709[8] households = $667.57 in Tourism Tax Relief

The JCTDA conducted its first planning and visioning/goal setting session. During this meeting, the board reviewed its current operations and plan for FY 17-18 and future years. The board discussed board operations/efficiency, capital projects, grants and the director's plan of work. It is likely that subsequent planning efforts will take place in the next calendar year (2017).

While manufacturing and agriculture were the primary economic catalysts of the past, tourism and education now account for the largest component of Jackson County's economic portfolio.

A recent survey of Jackson County residents revealed several infrastructure related barriers to continued economic growth; the lack of true high-speed broadband connectivity and the limited availability of water and sewer across the County. 40% and 36% of the respondents respectively identified those components as economic weaknesses. In addition, 57% of those responding identified "business recruitment" as the number one priority for Economic Development during the next 20-year period. And our residents agreed that outdoor recreational activities should also remain an economic priority, as 40% of respondents identified recreation as a primary ongoing concern in our Economic Development strategy. Those priorities have been acknowledged in multiple sections and throughout the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Economic Development Goals and Objectives

ED1—Goal: Maintain a robust and sustainable tourism destination.
Objective: Increase occupancy tax revenue over last FY
Objective: Create analytics and analytical process to better define our tourism market.
Objective: Partner with surrounding counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) to promote regional economic development and tourism opportunities.
Objective: Partner with TDA and EBCI to promote eco-tourism opportunities.
Objective: Provide support for the hospitality industry.

ED2—Goal: Build a workforce that will meet the needs of current and future employers.
Objective: Partner with SCC, SWC, WCU, and EBCI to provide programs to meet required workforce needs.
Objective: Create a workforce task force (WCU, SCC, SWC, EBCI, and other organizations).
Objective: Survey local and regional employers to identify existing and future workforce needs.
Objective: Partner with employers and workforce development stakeholders to increase awareness of employment opportunities in the local hospitality industry.
Objective: Partner with local employers and workforce development stakeholders to develop affordable and accessible training opportunities.

ED3—Goal: County wide high speed broadband availability.
Objective: Promote and encourage reliable broadband solutions for our rural areas.
Objective: Continue to develop public/private partnerships to invest in broadband infrastructure.
Objective: Review County ordinances to ensure that regulations are efficient and account for changes in wireless technology.
Objective: Collaborate with NCDOT, TWSA, and broadband providers to install conduit for broadband infrastructure during construction projects.

ED4—Goal: Create a marketing campaign for Jackson County to support existing business and attract new business.
Objective: Perform market analysis of County's retail needs.
Objective: Partner with local merchant associations and chambers of commerce to promote independent small businesses.
Objective: Continue regional partnerships (Mountain West Partnership, EBCI) to enhance economic development opportunities.

Economic Development Goals and Objectives (Continued)

ED5—Goal: County reserve land for economic development purposes.
Objective: Create and maintain partnerships with the WCU Millennial Campus and EBCI's Land Bank.
Objective: Develop relationships with private land owners interested in development opportunities.
Objective: Explore opportunities for the County to secure land for economic development purposes.

ED6—Goal: Commit to becoming an entrepreneurial/small business capital.
Objective: Develop a comprehensive entrepreneurial resource program.
Objective: Market entrepreneurial success stories in the County.
Objective: Create a business incubator for emerging businesses.
Objective: Facilitate partnerships between the private sector and the County's small business resources (SBTDC, SCC, WCU, Sequoia Fund etc.)

ED7—Goal: Maintain a comprehensive economic development strategy.
Objective: Update the County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

ED8—Goal: Maintain and enhance quality of life for citizens, tourists, and small business owners.
Objective: Maintain partnerships with the municipalities in the County.
Objective: Coordinate with the municipalities regarding land use policies and regulations where feasible.
Objective: Form a citizen academy for future elected officials and interested citizens.
Objective: Partner with the municipalities and EBCI to balance economic development with environmental stewardship.
Objective: Develop quality housing options for the County's workforce.

Housing

Housing is an issue that is important to every city and county. In Jackson County it is important to create housing options that can meet our diverse needs. The County housing needs run the gambit from off campus student housing, low to moderate income housing, work force housing, and seasonal and vacation housing. In order to meet all the County's housing needs, it will be important for the municipalities, the County, and the private sector to partner together in creating land use policies that encourage a multitude of housing options.

Table 7 shows that between 2000 and 2010 the County gained more than 6,000 housing units. In that same time period the number of owner occupied and renter occupied units also increased. The owner occupied houses increased by approximately 1,100 units and the rental occupied housing increased by approximately 2,200 units. The number of vacant housing units in the County increased by approximately 3,400 housing units. It is important to note that seasonal homes, where the owner spends less than 6 months in residency are counted as vacant housing units.

Total Housing Units		
	2000	**2010**
Jackson County	19,291	25,948
State of NC	3,523,944	4,327,528
United States	105,480,101	116,716,292
Owner Occupied Housing in Jackson	9,566	10,622
Renter Occupied Housing in Jackson	3,625	5,824
Vacant Housing Units in Jackson	6,100	9,502

Table 7: Total Housing Units. Source: Census 2000, Summary File 3, prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov) and SRC, LLC. 2011; 2010 US Census

This data indicates that many of the housing units constructed during this time were designed to meet the needs of two segments of our housing market; the second home segment and the student housing segment. Building permit data show that since 2000, there have been 11 multifamily student housing projects constructed with a total of 2,340 bedrooms. Likewise, Figure 18 shows the strength of our second home segment in that a majority of tax bills for houses within the County are mailed outside of the County. A majority of the second homes are located in Southern Jackson County in the Glenville, Canada, and Cashiers Communities.

According to the US Census American Community Survey data, between 2010 and 2014 the County has only gained approximately 200 new housing units. This is most likely due to the impacts of the Great Recession. Between 2000 and 2008 the County experienced unprecedented growth in residential building. The 2014 estimates show the impact of the Great Recession on residential construction. However, the County has seen moderate growth in residential building permits over the past two years.

All of this information points to the weakness in the County's housing market, which is the low-to-moderate income housing options and work force housing options. This is consistent with information gained through discussions with local employers and, to a lesser extent, data collected in the survey. Only 446 of the respondents worked in Jackson County and lived outside of the County. Of those responses 18% listed housing affordability as one of the factors, 12% listed availability of preferred housing, 10% listed availability of preferred housing to rent, and 10% listed availability of high speed internet. It should also be noted that 18% of those respondents also listed location of spouse/family member's job as one of those factors.

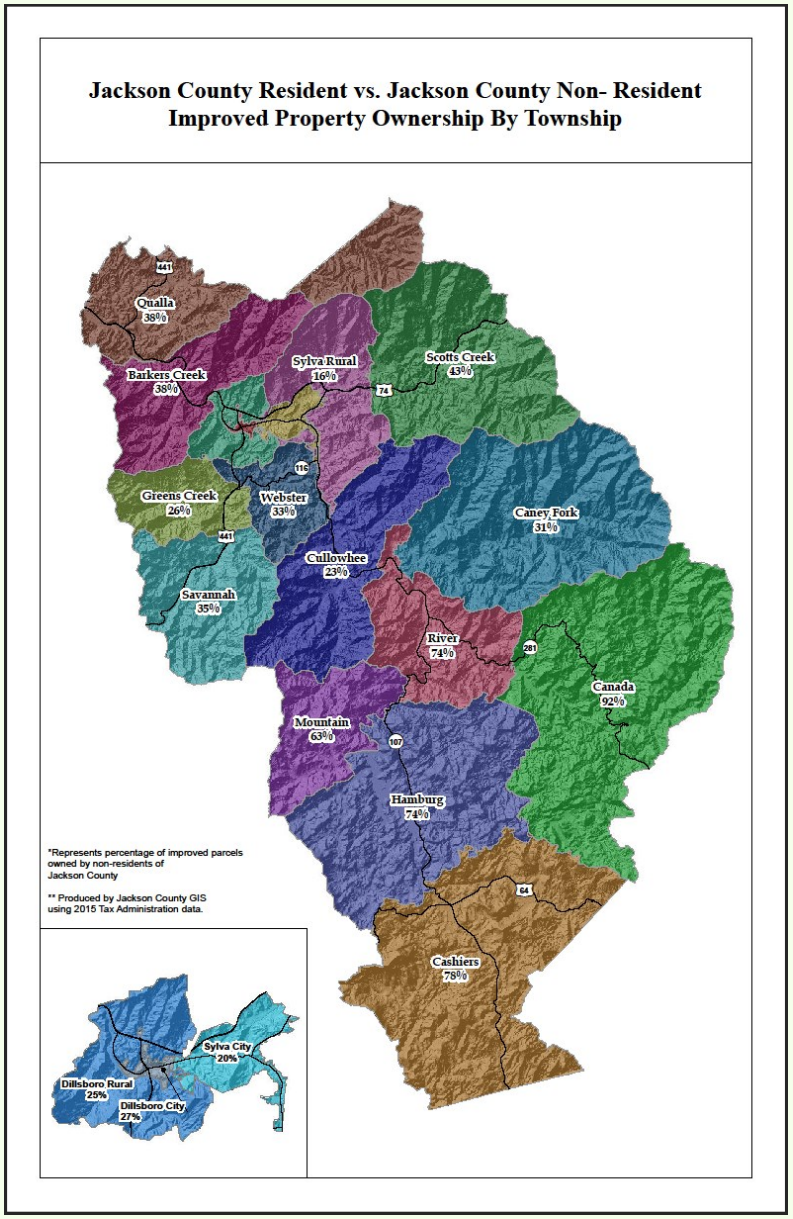


Figure 18: Resident vs. Nonresident

A common comment the County receives from local employers, including Western Carolina University, Harris Regional Hospital, and the County School System, is that there is a lack of housing options for their local workforce and that many people that work in Jackson County live in adjacent counties. It also affects these employers as they seek to recruit new employees, One anecdotal example of the need for housing low to moderate housing is that a recently completed housing complex designed for those with low to moderate incomes leased all of their apartments within a week of accepting applications.

Addressing the needs in the County's housing stock will require partnerships between our communities and developers. It will be important for the County to continue to collaborate with our municipalities and communities to develop and refine our land use policies to encourage the development of all housing options in the County, including ways to maximize land use and density (possible mixed use opportunities) in areas that are served by utilities, encouraging growth along existing transportation corridors, and along corridors with multi modal transportation options. That collaboration should also extend to maximizing public funds to encourage these types of development. This includes continuing to invest in our existing communities through parks, greenways, communications infrastructure, schools, and roadway and utility improvements in growth corridors. It is also important that the development community be a partner in this process and identify the barriers to housing development and possible solutions.

Housing Goals and Objectives

H1—Goal: Increase housing opportunities for a broad range of income levels and ages (owning and renting)
Objective: Create a housing task force comprised of County, municipal, business, higher education, and non-profit stakeholders.
Objective: Survey existing housing inventory to identify the strengths and weaknesses in our housing stock.
Objective: Partner with and support Mountain Projects in providing housing options to County residents.
Objective: Engage private developers to determine barriers to housing development and partner with them to identify solutions.
Objective: Collaborate with municipalities to discuss inclusionary zoning options.
Objective: Research and identify public/private/non-profit partnerships to provide more housing options to residents.

H2—Goal: Invest in adequate infrastructure (utilities, broadband, and roads) in existing communities to incent and support increased residential development in planned locations.
Objective: Partner and support TWSA to maintain and enhance water and sewer infrastructure in existing communities.
Objective: Encourage and support broadband service providers to enhance access to broadband technology in existing communities.
Objective: Continue to support NCDOT and municipal efforts to maintain and improve existing road infrastructure.

H3—Goal: Promote housing for WCU (students, faculty, and staff) that is compatible with the community, safe, and conveniently located.
Objective: Continue to administer and evaluate the Cullowhee Planning Area Development Standards to ensure that development is compatible with the community.
Objective: Maintain and enhance coordination between WCU, Forest Hills, and the Cullowhee Planning Council.
Objective: Support the expansion of the Cullowhee Greenway to connect campus to the community.
Objective: Consider future expansion of the Cullowhee Planning Area as determined by the community.

Housing Goals and Objectives

H4—Goal: Promote housing conveniently located to access alternate modes of transportation in order to minimize the use of single passenger vehicles.
Objective: Collaborate with towns and communities to identify and plan residential nodes that are adjacent to existing bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities.
Objective: Maintain engagement with Southwester RPO to identify roadway projects that include pedestrian and bicycle facilities in existing towns and communities.

H5—Goal: Invest in strategic public improvements (pedestrian and recreation facilities) in existing communities to encourage appropriate residential development in the communities.
Objective: Expand the County's sidewalk infrastructure to connect existing uses (i.e. subdivisions to parks or schools)
Objective: Expand the County's greenway system through implementation of the Greenway Master Plan.
Objective: Continue to support the establishment and maintenance of parks and recreation centers in existing towns and communities.

H6—Goal: Promote and maintain existing housing in a safe and livable condition.
Objective: Explore programs and policies that promote the maintenance of existing homes.
Objective: Encourage collaboration between the County, municipalities, and local non-profits to provide assistance in maintaining existing housing.

Transporation

Transportation infrastructure is a vital component in how people interact with the built and natural environment. Maintaining existing transportation infrastructure and the development of new infrastructure will determine how and where Jackson County will grow. Roadways are the most prevalent form of transportation in the County. However, this section will discuss transportation in multi-modal terms and will include the discussion of pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, and public transit.

It should be noted that this section is a complementary section to the County Comprehensive Transportation Plan that is being completed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

Roads

Counties in North Carolina traditionally do not own or maintain road rights of way. Roadways in counties are either maintained by the State, local municipalities, or are privately maintained roads. The road system is broken down between primary and secondary road systems.

There are several primary road systems in Jackson County totaling approximately 110 miles. Those roads include US 19, US 23, US 441, US 74, US 64, NC 116, NC 281, and NC 107. US 74 is an east/west roadway located in the northern portion of the County connecting to Haywood County in the east and Swain County to the west. US 441 is a north/south roadway that is located in western Jackson County and connects to Macon County to the South and the Qualla Boundary in the North. US 64 is an east/west roadway that is located in Southern Jackson County connecting the Cashiers area to Macon County to the west and Transylvania County to the East. There are over 450 secondary roads located within Jackson County comprising approximately 435 miles of roadway. These secondary roads connect our residential areas to our towns, commercial areas, and other places of interest.

Transit

The Jackson County Transit agency operates a 13-vehicle fleet providing public door to door and human services transportation options. Those served through the County's transit options include the aging community, Webster Enterprises, veterans, adult day care, persons with disabilities, and the general public. Jackson County Transit also operates a deviated fixed route service better known as the Jackson County Trolley. The trolley's route is shown in Figure 19 on page 75. Trolley service is available six days a week, not including Sundays or holidays. The route between Dillsboro and Webster in includes 14 fixed bus stops along the route. In 2016, Jackson County Transit has provided 27,202 passenger trips that include 14, 176 vehicle hours and 231, 364 vehicle miles.
In addition to the Jackson County transit services, Western Carolina also operates a transit service on campus for students.

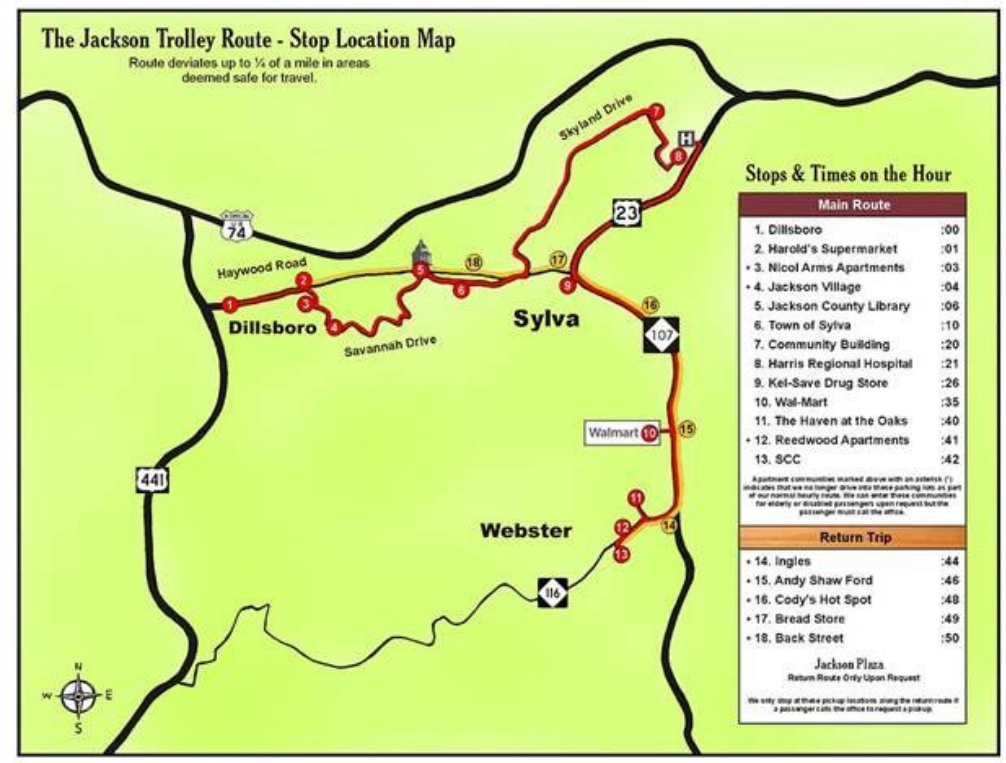


Figure 19: Jackson Trolley Route

Pedestrian Facilities

Sidewalks are the most common form of pedestrian facilities located in Jackson County. The existing sidewalk infrastructure is mostly located in the Town of Dillsboro (.5 miles), the Town of Sylva (10 miles), and the Town of Webster (1.5 miles). The Town of Sylva has the most extensive sidewalk network located along Main Street/NC 107 and within the downtown area. Sylva's zoning ordinance requires any new development or redevelopment projects to install sidewalks along their road frontage. This policy has resulted in pedestrians being able to walk from downtown to the NC 107/NC 116 intersection unimpeded.

The Town of Dillsboro's existing sidewalk system is located along Front Street and Haywood Street providing access to their shops and restaurants. The Towns of Dillsboro and Sylva are almost connected by pedestrian infrastructure. The Towns lack connection over a bridge spanning Scotts Creek along US 23 Business. That bridge is scheduled to be replaced with a newer bridge design that will have the width to accommodate pedestrian traffic. The Town of Webster has sidewalk infrastructure along Hwy. 116/ Webster Road leading from the intersection of NC 107 through town to the intersection of North River Road.

The County maintains a small amount of sidewalk in the US 441 North Corridor near the Qualla Boundary and maintains the Tuckasegee River Greenway. Western Carolina University also maintains a section of sidewalk along Little Savannah Road from NC 107 to the Millennial Campus. The Cashiers Community also has a small pathway system in place that provides mobility in the Crossroads area which is privately maintained.

Bicycle facilities

There are several roads that are commonly used by bicyclists for recreation and daily transportation purposes. However, the County has limited roadways that include bicycle lanes. This necessitates road sharing between motorists and bicyclists. The only roadway that currently has bicycle lanes is NC 107 in the Cullowhee Community and Little Savannah Road from the NC 107 intersection to the WCU Health Sciences Building. It is expected that bicycle facilities will increase over time as new road section designs should consider complete street guidelines that include bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Some of the more popular roads used for bicycling include North River Road, South River Road, Cullowhee Mountain Road, Thomas Valley Road, Sunset Farms Road, Skyland Drive, and Dark Ridge Road.

Transportation Improvements

Transportation improvements are mostly made through the NCDCOT State Transportation Improvement Project (STIP) process. This process allows local governments, through Rural Planning Organizations (RPO), to submit improvement projects for highway facilities, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, transit, rail, and aviation facilities. These projects are scored by NCDCOT based on several sets of data related to congestion and safety. Once the projects are scored by NCDOT, the County working through the Southwestern RPO ranking process, ranks the top two projects in the County. The RPO collects projects from all participating counties and forwards the final list to NCDOT. NCDOT ranks all of the projects from across the state to produce the STIP. Projects that are included in the STIP are divided into those projects that have funding within the next five years and unfunded projects from years five to ten. The project ranking process takes place every two years.

As mentioned above there are several primary roads in the County, but NC 107 is one of the most heavily travelled roads. The traffic count on NC 107 between Asheville Highway (Business 23) and NC 116 is approximately 30,000 trips per day. The current road was designed to accommodate approximately 22,700 trips per day. Through the TIP process a project was created to address the capacity issues along NC 107. The project, R-5600, will make improvements along NC 107 addressing safety, traffic congestion, and provide multi modal transportation facilities. However, even with these improvements, by 2040 that section of NC 107 will be nearing capacity and will need to be addressed.

It should be noted that the Steering Committee discussed future alternatives to address the capacity issues projected for 2040. One of the alternatives is to discuss a connector road from NC 107 to US 74. In the survey conducted for this plan, the highest transportation priority was the construction of the connector. While this project has not been recommended or funded, it is a project that will need continued evaluation and discussion as NC 107 will continue to be the heaviest traveled road in Jackson County.

Transportation Improvements (continued)

Although NC 107 from US 23 Business and NC 116 is the heaviest traveled portion of the road, there are additional projects planned for southern portions of the road. R-4753 is a roadway modernization project scheduled to be let at the end of 2016. This project begins in the East Laporte community and ends at the intersection with NC 281. There are two other projects that are included in the most recent prioritization process, but have not received funding. One is to improve NC 107 from NC 281 to Shoal Creek at the end of the climbing lanes. This project connects to the currently funded project on NC 107 that ends at NC 281. The combination of this project and R-4753 will improve travel time and safety between Cullowhee and Cashiers.

The final project that has been proposed along NC 107 is located at the NC 107/US 64 intersection. The crossroad area is the only other roadway in Jackson County that will be nearing capacity by 2040. This is due to the significant increase in seasonal residency in the Cashiers Community and summer tourism in the area. The project recommends converting the existing two-lane road segment leading up to the intersection with a three-lane design and replacing the signalized intersection with a roundabout.

NC 107 in Sylva, the NC 107/US 64 intersection in Cashiers, and US 23 Business/Asheville Highway are the only roadways nearing capacity by 2040. There are several other multi-modal transportation projects throughout the County that will continue to be evaluated through the prioritization process. These include:

- Upgrading Old Settlement Road (SR 1340) to 22’ wide capacity.
- Upgrading Monteith Gap Road (SR1336) and Ledbetter Road (SR 1337) to widen road and provide bike lanes and sidewalks.
- Constructing a sidewalk along North Country Club Road (SR1330) to University Inn.
- Constructing a sidewalk on Central Drive (SR 1169) from the Baptist Student Union to Old Cullowhee Road.
- Construction of the Tuckasegee River Greenway from South Painter Road to NC 107.
- Construct an eight unit T-Hanger building and two T-Hanger taxi lines at the Jackson County Airport.
- Purchase of a 10 passenger Lift Equipped light transit vehicle to provide trips for citizens through the Senior Center Program in the Cashiers Community.

Transportation Goals and Objectives

T1—Goal: Promote connectivity between schools, housing, business districts, recreation and community centers.
Objective: Encourage land use patterns that promote efficient use of existing transportation infrastructure and discourage sprawl
Objective: Prioritize roadway projects that create and/or enhance connectivity.
Objective: Prioritize multi-modal transportation projects that promote connectivity.

T2—Goal: Provide a variety of multi-modal transportation options.
Objective: Expand sidewalks, bike lanes, and greenways to housing and community centers.
Objective: Encourage the towns to continue to require sidewalks for developments.
Objective: Continue to partner with Southwestern RPO to identify multi-modal transportation projects.
Objective: Coordinate with parks and recreation, municipalities, EBCI to build sidewalks, greenways, and trail systems for pedestrian and bike traffic.
Objective: Connect Scotts Creek Elementary school to the Town of Sylva via Skyland Drive and Parris Branch.
Objective: Provide bicycle and pedestrian connection between Fairview Elementary School and NC 107.
Objective: Provide bicycle and pedestrian connection between Cullowhee Valley Elementary School and Western Carolina University / Forest Hills.
Objective: Connect Smoky Mountain Elementary School to Qualla Boundary with a multi-modal path.
Objective: Designate funds in the budget for local match requirements and maintenance for infrastructure projects.
Objective: Encourage municipalities to designate funds for local match requirements and maintenance for infrastructure projects.

T3—Goal: Improve safety for pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
Objective: Partner with NCDOT and municipalities to upgrade signs at high hazard locations for pedestrian safety.
Objective: Identify and prioritize high hazard locations for pedestrians and bicyclists.
Objective: Improve signage for designated bicycle routes.
Objective: Provide pull out areas for bicyclist along popular bicycle routes such as River Road, Caney Fork Road, Cullowhee Mountain Road, Thomas Valley Road, Sunset Farms Road, Skyland Drive, and Dark Ridge Road.

T4—Goal: Educate citizens about alternative modes of transportation.
Objective: Partner with NCDOT and municipalities to educate public about bicycle safety and rights.
Objective: Partner with WCU to create program to educate new students about mountain road safety.
Objective: Provide public service announcements (radio, newspaper) about cyclist safety, pedestrian safety, and associated health benefits.
Objective: Partner with health department, Mountain Wise, public school and homeschool associations to educate on alternative modes of transportation and bike and pedestrian safety.
Objective: Partner with Smoky Mountain High School driver's education to include a lesson on alternative modes of transportation and driver responsibility.

Transportation Goals and Objectives (Continued)

T5—Goal: Maintain transportation capacity for freight.
Objective: Partner with rail line companies to incentivize and recruit rail dependent industry.
Objective: Protect rail corridors.
Objective: Protect regional transportation freight corridors to maintain mobility.
Objective: Encourage additional rest areas in the region to serve freight service.

T6—Goal: Enhance and support aviation infrastructure and facilities.
Objective: Continue to support the Airport Authority.
Objective: Partner with the airport authority to identify funding resources for airport improvements.
Objective: Partner with Airport Authority to upgrade terminal and hangar facilities.
Objective: Encourage air traffic and consider marketing Jackson County Airport as a destination
Objective: Enhance the aesthetic appeal of the airport as an entry point to the County.

T7—Goal: Maintain and enhance County transportation corridors.
Objective: Create corridor plans for US 441 North from US 74 to Qualla Boundary; US 74/441 from Exit 81 to Exit 74; US 441 South from Exit 81 to Macon County line; and US 74 from Haywood County to Exit 85.
Objective: Promote multi-jurisdictional cooperation in corridor development.
Objective: Perform an assessment of existing facilities (sidewalks).
Objective: Encourage the implementation of setbacks.

T8—Goal: Promote and expand local and regional transit options.
Objective: Create an education campaign promoting transportation options.
Objective: Explore making wireless Wi-fi available in transit vehicles.
Objective: Partner with WCU, SCC and other local employers to encourage transit friendly policies.
Objective: Partner with WCU to create transit routes that are interconnected.
Objective: Include budget provision for transit
Objective: Develop a sustainable revenue source (not based on ridership fees solely)

Recreation

Jackson County's commitment to addressing the County's parks and recreation needs has spanned over 40 years and that same level of commitment is still evident through the work of the Parks and Recreation Department in meeting the needs of the community. The first Parks Master Plan was completed in 1969, long before many counties began addressing the recreation needs of its residents. Those 40 years of planning have led to the construction of facilities and the creation of recreational programs to enhance the quality of life in Jackson County.

The Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department's (JCPRD) Mission Statement is "to promote healthy lifestyles, and to improve the quality of life in Jackson County through the provision of diverse recreational programming and opportunities, parks and recreation facilities, greenways and natural open space."

There have been three Parks Master Plans, the most recent in 2005 with an update in 2013. The 2013 plan update identifies five goals:

- Continue to provide quality recreational programming and opportunities through development of new parks and facilities.
- Maximize the County's existing assets by utilizing and expanding existing parks and facilities that are in-line with existing trends of growth and popularity.
- Promote sustainable planning and public input into the shaping of Jackson County's parks, recreation offerings, and open space.
- Manage all existing and future recreation facilities in a consistent and sustainable way to assure the highest levels of service and safe utilization to our residents, visitors, and users.
- Continue to recognize the value of JCPRD staff in meeting the mission, goals, and responsibilities, and strive to offer a stimulating, challenging, safe, and rewarding work environment to assure continuity of daily operations.

The community continues to be supportive of parks and recreation programming and facilities. In the survey conducted as a part of this planning process, residents were asked to select their top three funding priorities (please refer to Section 1.1 for more information regarding the survey). Spending for recreational facilities garnered 43.86% of the responses, second only to education spending (60.24 %). The survey also shows that 69% of respondents believe that greenways/parks are one of the top priorities for recreation and tourism activities.

The 2013 Parks Master Plan update also conducted a survey of which they received 793 responses. Over 90% of those responses perceived the need for new recreational facilities. In that survey 534 responded that construction of an indoor pool was the top priority followed by the construction of nature trails (468), greenway construction (438), and expand/acquire more land for parks/nature areas (384).

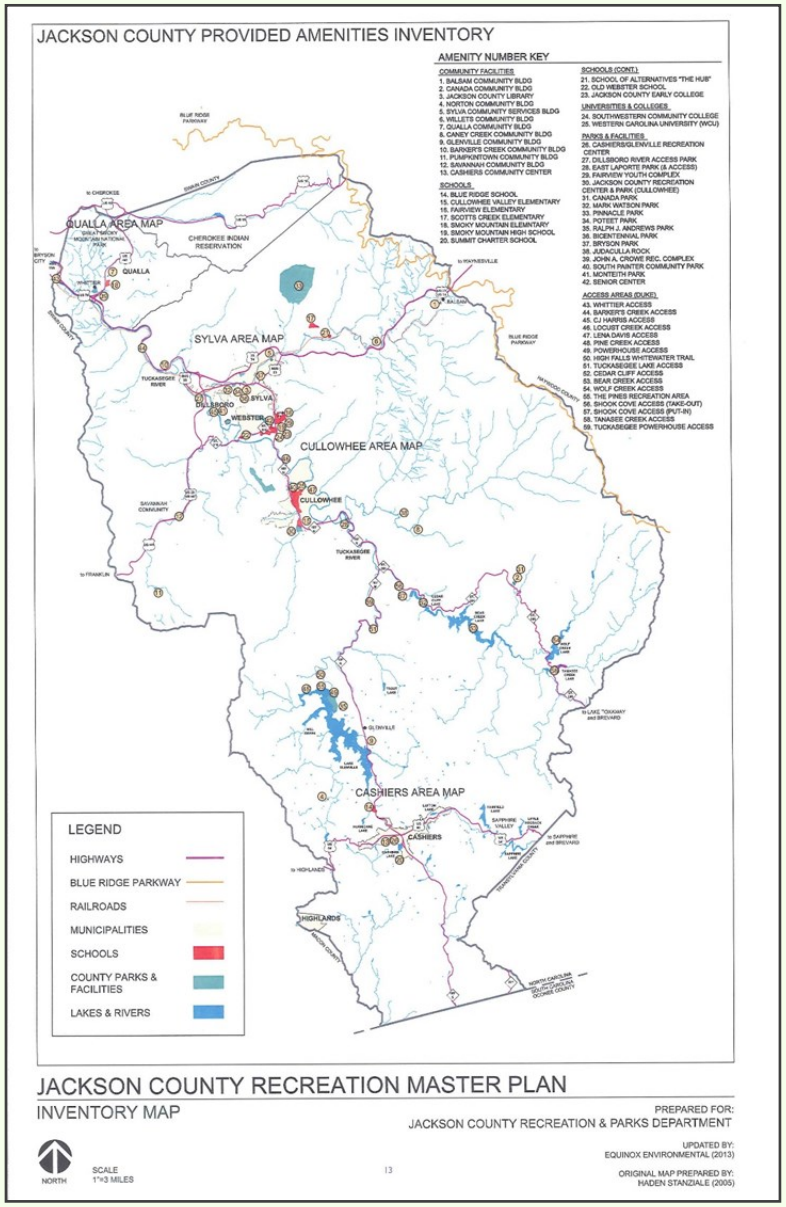


Figure 20: Recreation Provided Amenities

Figure 20 shows the inventory of existing recreational facilities. It was completed as a part of the 2013 Parks Master Plan Update. There are 13 community buildings located within existing communities from Balsam to Cashiers. While a majority of the 13 are limited to a multiuse room and a kitchen, the Balsam and Caney Creek Community Centers also feature an outdoor basketball court and playground. The Cashiers Community Center includes a pool with restroom facilities and an outdoor multi-use space.

There are 10 primary, secondary, and charter schools located within the County. Most of these facilities are equipped with a gymnasium, baseball and softball fields, and basketball courts. The Blue Ridge School also features a soccer field and volleyball court. Smoky Mountain High School features a football field and track. Southwestern Community College and Western Carolina University also have recreation amenities that are too numerous to list.

There are 18 parks and recreation facilities within the County, with three of those being Town of Sylva Parks, one in the Town of Dillsboro and one belonging to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The Jackson County Recreation Center and the Cashiers/ Glenville Recreation Center are the County's two largest facilities providing a large variety of amenities including gymnasiums with indoor basketball courts, playgrounds, men's and women's locker rooms/showers, outdoor walking trails, fitness room, softball and baseball fields, soccer fields, and aerobic rooms. The County's other parks include have a mixture of active and passive recreation amenities. Those amenities span from softball/baseball fields and playgrounds to walking tracks, trails, and open space.

The County also boasts 17 Duke Energy river access areas along the Tuckasegee River. Currently, there are 13 developed access areas along the river from the Tuckasegee Powerhouse, near Glenville, down to Whittier. There are four additional accesses planned for future development along the Tuckasegee.

Since the adoption of the Parks Master Plan update the County has continued to provide recreation facilities and programing opportunities to the park users in Jackson County. The County has recently completed construction of the pedestrian bridge segment of the Tuckasegee River Greenway and has also purchased land in the Savannah community for a future park.

It is very clear through this process that the residents value the parks and recreation opportunities Jackson County offers. The continued investment in our recreational resources will continue to add value to our appeal as an outdoor recreation destination and also provide increased opportunities for residents reap the mental and physical benefits of an active lifestyle.

Recreation Goals and Objectives

R1—Goal: Connectivity - Build trail connections between places of interest to increase accessibility by active modes of transportation.
Objectives: Provide support to the Jackson County Trails Committee (formerly Greenways Committee).
Objectives: Inventory existing rights-of-way such as powerlines, utilities, and rail lines.
Objectives: Prioritize connections between schools, parks and residential areas.
Objectives: Allocate funds for purchasing right-of-way where possible.

R2—Goal: Geographic Equity - Provide access to recreational opportunities near all major communities in the county.
Objectives: Develop "Pocket Parks" near Savannah (2017), Whittier (2019), Little Canada, Balsam, etc.

R3—Goal: Special Events - Develop a Special Events Program to host large-scale events, increasing visitation to the County and generating revenue for the Parks and Rec Department to invest in sustaining programs and expanding opportunities.
Objectives: Work with Jackson County TDA to market Jackson County as a unique destination for recreational events.
Objectives: Host a youth softball/baseball tournament by Summer 2017.
Objectives: Host a Mud Run at Ralph J. Andrews Campground by Spring 2017.
Objectives: Utilize Jackson County's unique features – Tuckasegee River paddle/Greenway run/road biking route, Airport assault, lake swims, Pinnacle Park trails, etc.

R4—Goal: Bicycling Program **-** Develop a multi-faceted program to expand bicycling as a form of recreation and active transportation.
Objectives: Explore partnerships with WCU, SCC, Jackson County Schools, Mountain Wise, Motion Makers, and Jackson County Health Department.
Objectives: Explore forming a Cycling Club at Smoky Mountain High School – compete in regional events, train future champions, and increase awareness and acceptance of bicycling in our communities.
Objectives: Develop a Bicycle Recycling Program and/or a Bicycle Loaner Program to provide access to bicycles for people who don't own one.
Objectives: Apply for grants to obtain a bicycle trailer/storage facility that can transport bikes to pocket parks and host bicycling events in multiple areas of the County.

R5—Goal: Indoor Pool - Build, operate, and maintain an indoor pool in Cullowhee, suitable for hosting year-round swim meets for youth, for fitness classes, and for physical therapy.
Objectives: Form a task force of indoor pool advocates to explore potential funding mechanisms and other logistics. Include swim team parents, physical therapists, aqua fitness instructors, etc.
Objectives: Explore public/private partnership with Duke Lifepoint.
Objectives: Fund a Feasibility Study and develop a fundraising plan.

Cultural Resources

Traces of rich local history and cultural significance are bountiful within Jackson County. The County's cultural resources echo the spirit of the locals who lived here long ago, from original school houses, homes, and churches, to ancient petroglyph carvings dating back to 500 AD. Not only do landmarks and architectural structures embody the legacy of the County, but generations of captivating stories, like those from the local Native American heritage, help keep the County's rich cultural spirit alive. Promoting education, preservation, and the use of these historic resources is a necessary endeavor in order to protect the County's culture and heritage.

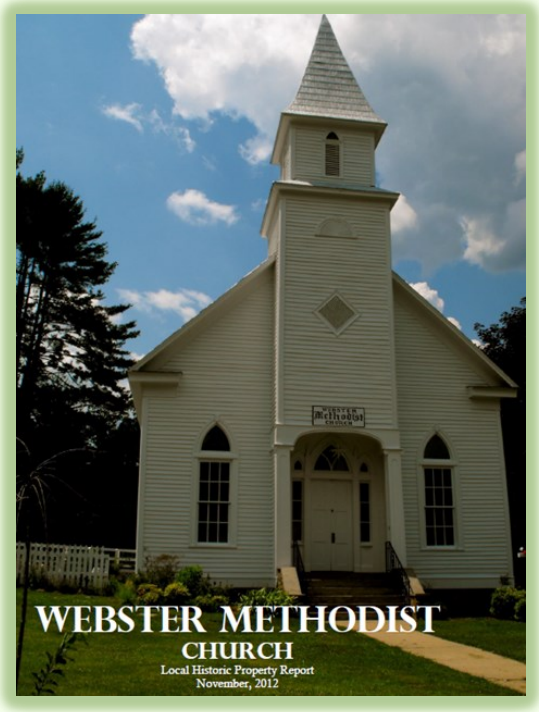
Originally, the Tuckasegee River was the dividing line between Haywood and Macon County until an act created by the N.C. General Assembly established Jackson County, named after President Andrew Jackson. The cultural resources of the County are scattered throughout, but the highest concentration is in the Town of Webster because it was the first County seat. Currently, Jackson County has eighteen places that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, five of them being locally designated as well. Moving from north Jackson to south,

- ***Balsam Mountain Inn,*** a 1908 colonial revival 3 story inn
- ***Elias Brendle Monteith House*** and outbuildings, a 1908 2 story frame house
- ***The Historic Jackson County Courthouse***, a 1914 Neoclassical 2 story courthouse on the west end of main street in Sylva
- ***Dr. D. D. Hooper house,*** a 1906 Queen Anne 2 story frame house
- ***Mount Beulah Hotel***, also known as the Jarrett House, a 1910 3 story frame hotel located in Dillsboro
- ***Downtown Sylva*** is a registered historic district and the commercial and residential buildings range from the year 1900 to 1964.
- ***Lucius Coleman Hall House***, an 1892 Victorian 2 story frame house with an 1850 plank cabin located in Webster
- ***The Webster Rock School*** that dates back to 1936,
- ***The Webster Methodist Church*** that is an 1887 Gothic Revival gable front frame church
- ***The Walter E. Moore House*** that dates back to 1886 and is a Victorian 1-1/2 story frame house
- ***The Elisha Calor Hedden House***, a 1910 Queen Anne 2 story frame house. Each of these sites hold stories of the original County seat and the first community in Jackson County.
- ***The Joyner Building*** was a 1913-14 institutional brick building destroyed by a fire on the original Western Carolina University campus, but held many historic and symbolic associations for the original campus.
- ***Judaculla Rock***, a boulder known for its Native American petroglyph carvings dating back to 500 AD.
- ***The Backus Lodge***, a 1908 Rustic Revival 2 story log hunting lodge.
- ***Camp Merrie-Woode***, a 1919-1945 Adirondack style summer camp for girls located in Sapphire Valley approximately 3 miles east of Cashiers.
- ***The Fairfield Inn,*** an 1896-98 Queen Anne 2-1/2 story frame in home.
- ***The High Hampton Historic District in Cashiers,*** a 1922-1941 rustic resort with 1933 2-1/2 story bark shingled inn.
- ***The Church of the Good Shepherd,*** an 1895 Gothic Revival Frame Episcopal Church NC Highway 107.
- ***The Mordecai Zachary House,*** an 1850 Greek Revival 2 story frame house, the furthest south historic property in Jackson County.

In May, 2009 the Jackson County Board of Commissioners adopted an ordinance establishing a joint Historic Preservation Commission with the Town of Dillsboro, Sylva, Webster, and Forest Hills. The ordinance states that "The historical heritage of the County is a valuable and important asset. By listing and regulating historic districts and landmarks, and acquiring historic properties, the County seeks:

- To safeguard the heritage of the County by preserving districts and landmarks therein that embody important elements of its culture, history, architectural history, or prehistory; and
- To promote the use and conservation of such districts and landmarks for the education, pleasure, and enrichment of the residents of the County and the state as a whole."

Dr. D. D. Hooper House, Photo courtesy of Caroline Edmonds



Webster Methodist, Local Historic Property Report

The Historic Preservation Commission receives applications to locally designate historic landmarks and grants certificates of appropriateness for alterations to these landmarks. The Historic Preservation Commission is seeking designation as a Certified Local Government to take advantage of all of the resources available to preserve the County's cultural resources, as well as educate the community on Jackson County's rich cultural history and how it lives on today.

Cultural Resources Goals and Objectives

CR1—Goal: Identify our past and present historic and cultural resources and events and document them.
Objective: Conduct a new County wide survey of historic properties.
Objective: Identify significant buildings that may be eligible for future historic designation.
Objective: Develop a context document per application submitted and property designated.
Objective: Create a list of endangered historical buildings.
Objective: Conduct a survey of non-structural historic and cultural sites.
Objective: Support the development of Monteith Park and the Appalachian Women's Museum.

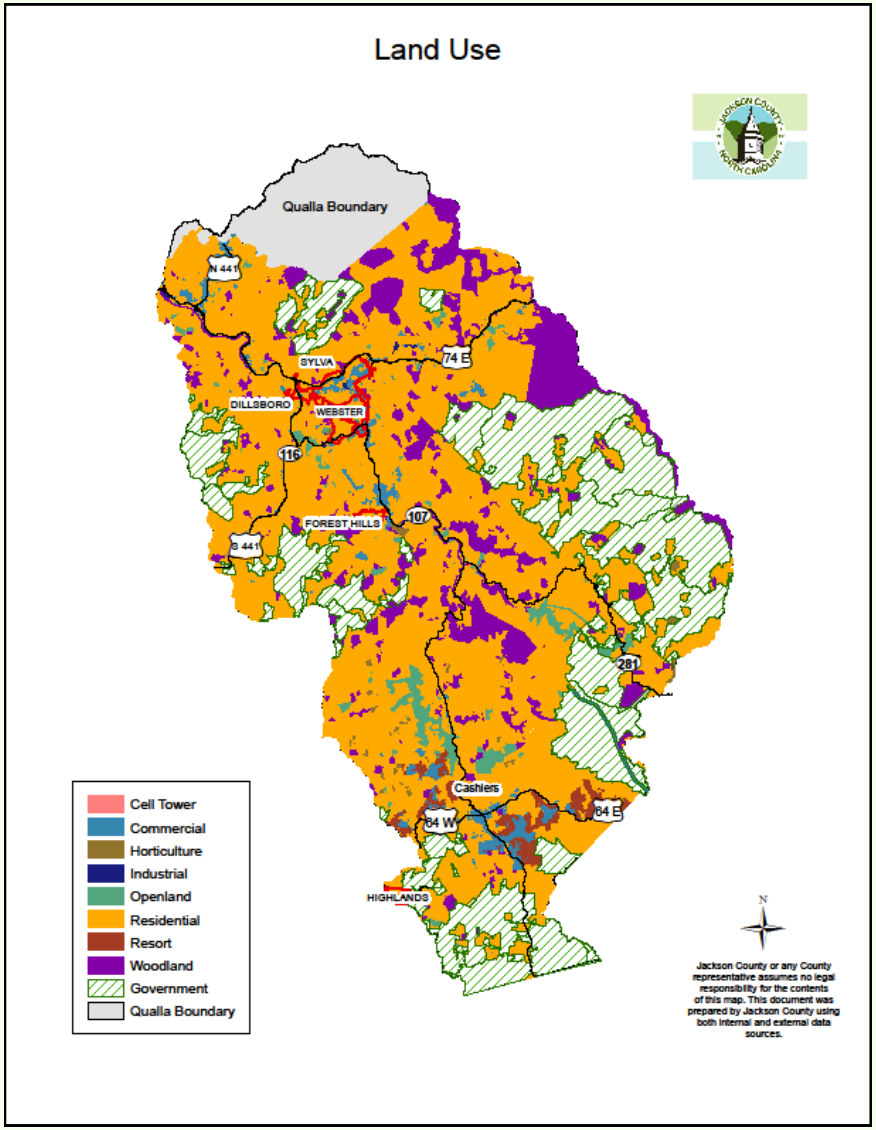
CR2—Goal: Create partnerships with the EBCI, WCU, etc.
Objective: Collaborate with WCU to preserve historic buildings of the Campus.
Objective: Identify and engage groups involved in historic preservation.
Objective: Collaborate with EBCI to identify and preserve historic and culturally significant properties.

CR3—Goal: Educate and communicate with the community and local governments.
Objective: Partner with the Chamber of Commerce to develop a historic home tour.
Objective: Give regular reports to local governments on HPC activity.
Objective: Continue efforts to document the stories associated with historic properties.
Objective: Establish a social media presence for historic preservation programming.
Objective: Expand the presence of historic preservation material on the County's website.

CR4—Goal: Become a Certified Local Government.
Objective: Work with the State Historic Preservation Organization to become certified.

Land Use

Jackson County's 494 square miles is comprised of a variety of uses that creates our strong sense of place and community. The land uses are separated into residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, institutional, and conservation. In order to provide certainty to the development process and to protect our natural resources the County has adopted 20 plus development ordinances, of which three create planning districts to address those areas in the County's jurisdiction that have the most development pressure.



The most prominent land use in the County is residential. Of the County's 316,160 acres of land, 181,237 acres are currently used as residential property. The residential uses are disbursed throughout the County with a majority of the population living in and around the Sylva-Webster area. It should be noted that of the % of residential uses that number is divided between primary residences and secondary homes. The largest concentration of second homes occurs in southern Jackson County. The Cashiers Community is located in this portion of the County and is well known as a luxurious second home community.

Federally protected land uses account for over 74,471 acres are either a part of a national park or in a national forest. A majority of the conservation land is located in the County's higher elevation, which also serves to protect some of our most vulnerable habitats. Commercial uses comprise approximately 7,873 acres and are mostly located along are established commercial corridors and communities. Those areas include NC 107 in Sylva and Dillsboro, NC 64 and NC 107 crossroads in Cashiers, US 441 corridor to the Qualla Boundary, and Business 23 in Sylva. Industrial Property accounts for approximately 160 acres and is dispersed throughout the County. A majority of the industrial uses are located in and around Sylva and include Jackson Paper Company, Tuckasegee Mills building, and HomeTech building. Institutional uses account for 3,388 acres and include government buildings, parks, schools, and public safety uses (police stations and volunteer fire stations). These uses are located throughout the County.

Agricultural

There are approximately 16,200 acres in farm production in the County. While many counties in the state and nation have seen a decline in number of farms and acreage in farm use, Jackson County has seen an increase between 2007 and 2012, as shown in Table 8. According to the US Department of Agriculture's Census, the number of farms has increase by 7%, the total acres in farms have increased 21%, and the average size of farms has increased 14%. Agri-tourism has increased 71% and the gross revenue produce from these activities has increased by 3%. The County has 27 farms that sell direct to consumers with $75,000 in direct customer sales. The County is also home to 5 farmers markets or roadside stands.

	Data from 2012	% Change from 2007
Animal Farms	102	7% increase
Agritourism & Recreational Farms	12	71% increase
Agritourism Gross Revenue	$452,000	3% increase
Melon, Vegetable, Potato Farms	18	18% decrease
Farms with Direct Consumer Sales	27	59% increase
Direct to Consumer Sales Revenue	$75,000	92% increase
Farms Selling through CSA	7	133% increase
Total Farms	245	7% increase
Total Farm Acreage	16,201 acres	21% increase
Average Farm Size	66 acre average	14% increase
Total Acres Harvested	4,813 acres	8% increase

Table 8: Jackson County Local Farms Profile, data from 2007 & 2012 USDA Census

The County's largest agriculture product is Christmas trees. In 2012 there were 73 farms with 2,417 acres in production. That translated into 201,009 trees cut on 63 farms. Animal farms have increased by 7% with an estimated value of $523,000. Cattle comprise the majority of the County's animal farm operations. While the County has had a decrease in the number of melon, vegetable and potato farms, it has had an 8% increase in acres harvested.

Managing Development

The County's unique topography and location presents challenges in balancing our land use development with our natural resources, but also creates a unique sense of place that showcases the beauty of our surroundings. In order to maintain balance, the County has adopted over 20 ordinances designed to manage development within the County. Two of these ordinances establish the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment. These Boards are essential in the development and management of land use policy and regulation. The Planning Board is responsible for advising the Board of Commissioners on land use policy issues and approval of major subdivisions. The Board of Adjustment is the local government equivalent to a judiciary. It adjudicates variances from the ordinances and also appeals from staff decision.

Jackson County is considered a partially zoned County as it has three planning districts that have adopted zoning ordinances. These are the only areas in the County's jurisdiction, outside of municipal zoning jurisdiction, that regulates both the use of land and also how that land is developed. The Cashiers Commercial District was the first area of the County to have zoning regulations. Established in 2003, The Cashiers Commercial District is designed to regulate commercial uses within the Crossroad areas. The district runs along Hwy 107 (north and south of the intersection of Hwy. 64) and Hwy. 64 (east and west of the intersection of Hwy. 107). The ordinance has development standards for commercial uses and includes development standards related to building architecture, stormwater, building setbacks, parking, landscaping and buffering, and signs.

The US 441 planning area was established in 2009 after a community based small area planning process. This area was identified as an area of the County that could see additional growth due to the proximity to the activities on the Qualla Boundary. The ordinance is a more traditional ordinance that regulates commercial and residential uses within the planning boundary. The planning area is zoned by character areas and includes working farm, recreation, rural living, golf course community, planned residential community, townhome/condominium community, gateway corridor, village center, industrial, and institutional. The ordinance includes development standards for architecture, building setbacks, sidewalks, parking, access management along US 441, signage, landscaping and buffering, stormwater, and viewshed protection.

The Cullowhee planning area was established in 2015 to address the rapid growth in student and multi-family housing around the Western Carolina University campus. The ordinance was adopted after a community base visioning plan that set the foundation for the future growth of the community. The ordinance regulates both residential and commercial uses. Zoning districts include single family residential, single family residential- manufactured home, townhome residential, multi-family residential- low density, multi-family residential- medium density, multifamily residential- high density, commercial, parks/open space, and institutional. The ordinance includes development standards for architecture, building setbacks, sidewalks, parking, signage, landscaping and buffering, stormwater, and traffic impact analysis. The Cullowhee ordinance also provides flexible design opportunities through the Planned Development conditional use process and also the conditional zoning process.

The following is a list of the County's general development ordinances and a brief description of their purpose (Please note that environmental development regulations are summarized in the Natural Resources section).

Land Development Ordinance- is designed to ensure that all proposed development complies with all of the County's development regulations. It also establishes the County's vested rights process.

Sign Ordinance- the purpose of this ordinance is to guide and regulate the construction and placement of off premise signs within the County. It is intended that these regulations will preserve our scenic and aesthetic environment as well as improve safety for motorist and pedestrians.

Adult Establishments- the purpose of this ordinance is to regulate the placement of adult establishments through imposing incidental, content neutral place, time and manner regulations without limiting alternative avenues of communications.

Historic Preservation- the purpose of this ordinance is to safeguard the heritage of the County by preserving districts and landmarks important to our culture and history. It also promotes the use and conservation of these areas for education, pleasure, and enrichment of the people of Jackson County.

Outdoor Lighting- this ordinance is designed to provide environmentally sensitive nighttime environment, adequate light for safety and security, reduce light pollution, and promote efficient and cost effective lighting and conserve energy.

Subdivision Ordinance- this ordinance is designed to encourage sound and stable development, that roads and utilities are provided in a coordinated manner, that the development is in harmony with the community, and to ensure accurate public records of ownership .

Wireless Communications Ordinance- the purpose of this ordinance is to provide for the public health safety and welfare by ensuring that the residents and businesses have reliable access to wireless communications and broadband networks while providing protection of our communities.

Industrial Development Ordinance- the purpose of this ordinance is to provide standards that all for the placement of noxious industrial activities while maintaining the health, safety and general welfare of established residential and commercial areas.

Manufactured Home Parks- this ordinance provides for the proper and orderly development of manufactured home parks within the County as they provide an important housing alternative to traditional single family home structures.

Airport Hazard Regulations- this ordinance is designed to regulate the development, growth, and construction of structures that may be hazardous to air traffic utilizing the Jackson County Airport.

Jackson County Permit Overview
2005-2015

	New Single Family	New Multi-Family	New Commercial
2005	520	17	65
2006	497	30	68
2007	442	6	67
2008	273	2	55
2009	150	5	37
2010	158	0	15
2011	105	5	18
2012	125	2	22
2013	154	13	29
2014	169	2	25
2015	149	2	21

Table 9, Permit Overview: supplied by Jackson County Inspections Department

Development

Table 9 shows the number of building permits issued by year since 2005. It shows that the County's development pattern has been focused on primary and secondary housing market. Commercial development continues to be the second most permitted use, predominantly found in our existing communities and development corridors. Multi-family development has remained constant in the County's development pattern. A majority of the recent multi-family housing projects have been private development of student housing in and around the WCU area. The building permit data also highlights that the County's rate of growth was severely impacted by the Great Recession in 2008. Since 2012 the County has had an increase in building activity. Notably, while the number of permits issued has changed, our residential development pattern has remained constant.

Figure 22 depicts the County's challenge in balancing future growth and our natural environment. This map shows the development potential of the County based on average slope, floodplains, rivers and streams, and soils. The purple shaded areas are designated as low suitability meaning they have slopes greater than 45 percent, are in the 100 year floodplains, are publicly owned land (e.g. national forest land, government owned conservation easements, etc.), and protected ridges designated by the county. The green shaded areas are designated as moderate suitability meaning they have protected watersheds, privately owned easements and significant Natural Areas (these areas contain restrictions on use), and slopes of 20 to 45 percent. The white shaded areas are designated as highly suitability and do not have restrictions on use and are less than 20 percent in slope.

As Figure 22 indicates the area of the County that is designated as highly suitable for development are located in existing communities and municipalities. These areas include Dillsboro-Sylva-Webster area along Highway 107, The Cullowhee-Forest Hills area in and around Western Carolina University, the Cashiers Crossroad area, the US441 north corridor around the Qualla Boundary, and the US 441 south corridor in the Savannah community.

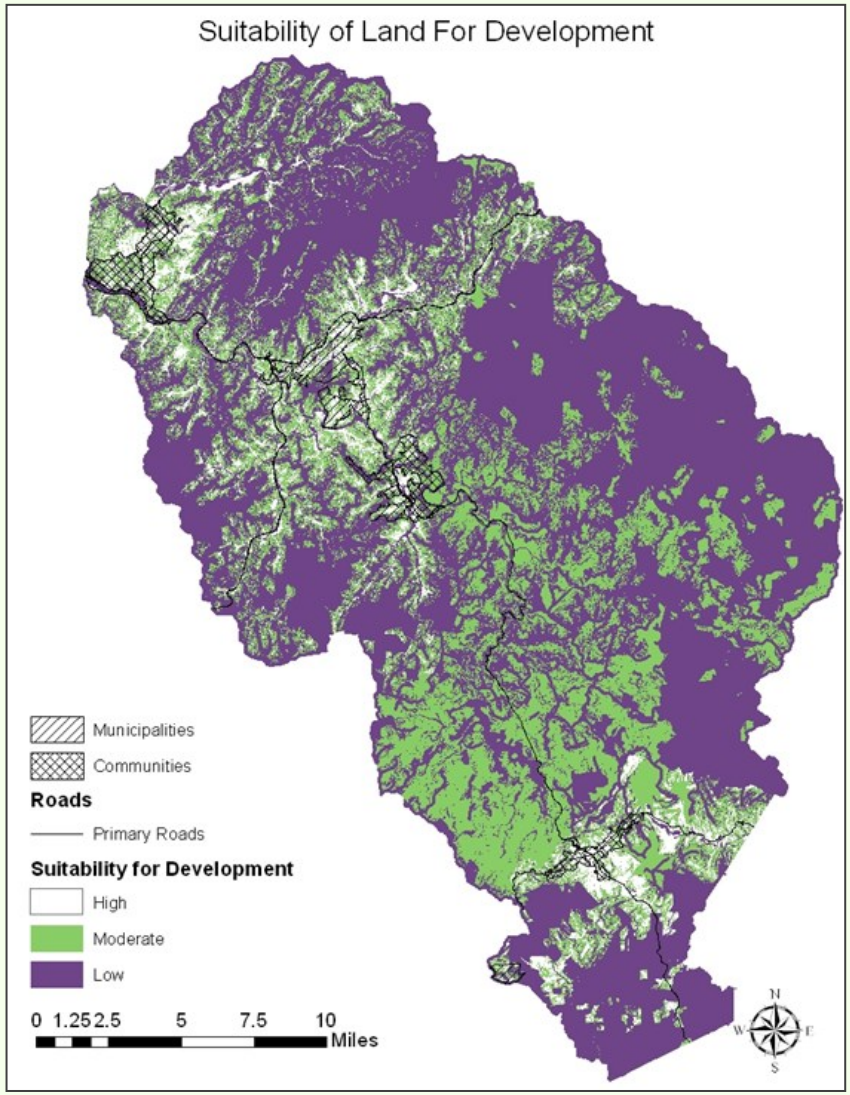


Figure 22: Suitability of Land for Development

In order to maintain a balance in development it will be important to collaborate with our local municipalities to provide growth opportunities within our existing towns and communities. Allowing the growth in and around these areas can minimize the impacts of development on our environment and also potentially reduce the cost of development by focusing infrastructure resources to these areas.

Jackson County's growth patterns have been fairly consistent over time. Higher density residential, commercial uses, and Industrial uses are most often found in the Towns and existing communities. These areas most often have access to public water, sewer, and primary transportation routes. This pattern is expected to continue as the County grows. Figure 23 shows the future growth areas for the County. The primary growth areas are shown in and around the Towns of Dillsboro, Sylva, Webster, and the Village of Forest Hills. Growth is also expected in the Whittier Community near the Qualla Boundary along the US 441 North corridor. The Cashiers area will also be expected to experience growth as it is located at the crossroad of two primary road systems in US 64 and NC 107 and the planned expansion of public sewer in the area. There is an expectation that the Savannah Community along the US 441 South corridor will experience additional growth in the next 25 years due to its location and existing transportation infrastructure. It should be noted that this figure represents our primary growth areas and that rural-residential growth patterns will continue in areas outside of these corridors.

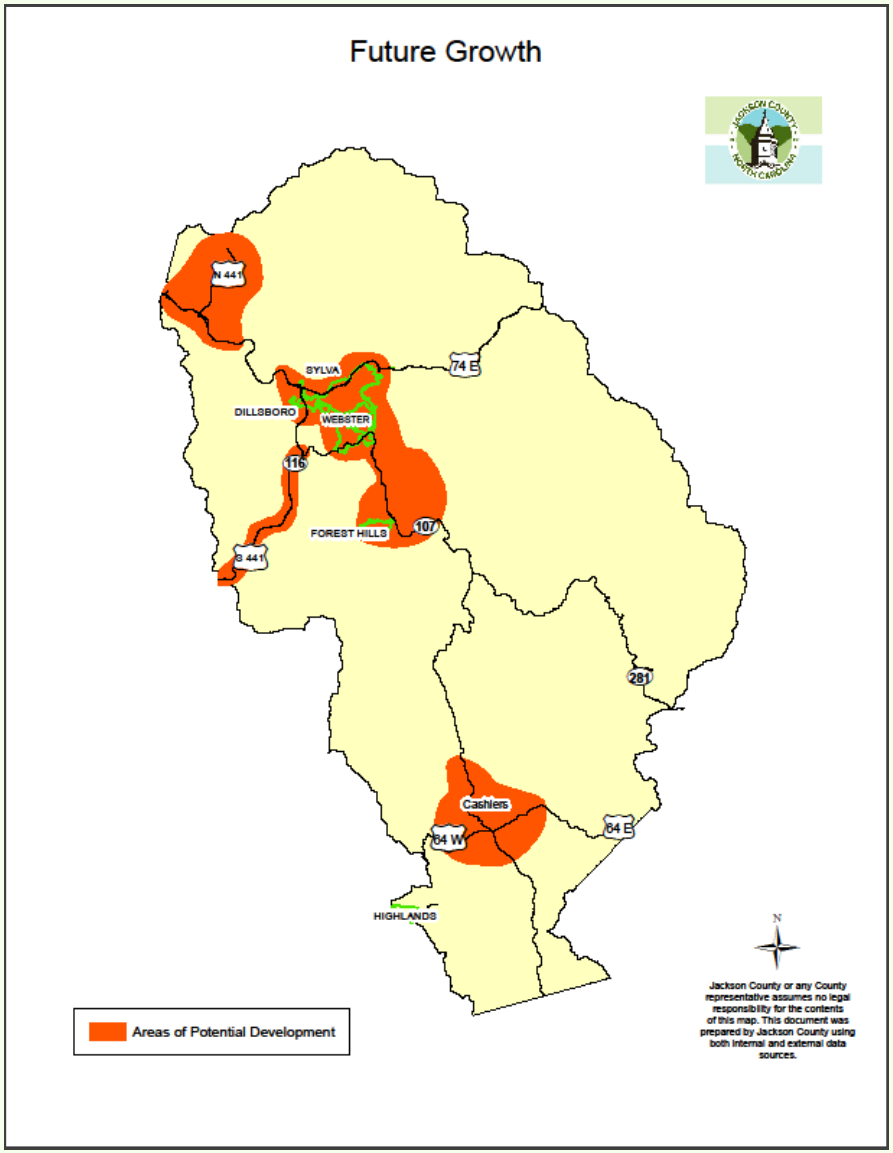


Figure 23: Future Growth Map

Land Use Goals and Objectives

LU1—Goal: Balance future growth with the protection of the natural environment.
Objective: Require conservation/cluster subdivision design for new major subdivisions in the subdivision ordinance.
Objective: Consider amendments to the subdivision ordinance that would require that identified wildlife corridors to be included in open space designs for major subdivisions.
Objective: Identify improvements to ordinances that protect the mountain ridges, slopes, rivers and streams, and wildlife corridors.
Objective: Consider creation of an ordinance requiring environmental impact statements for all major development, as defined by the state.

LU2—Goal: Ensure that development regulations meet existing and future challenges and opportunities.
Objective: Continue to monitor developing land use trends to ensure that County development ordinances meet the needs of the County.
Objective: Creation of a Unified Development Ordinance to modernize the County's development regulation framework.
Objective: Partner with local and state elected officials to promote sound planning practices and tools for local governments.
Objective: Continue to identify improvements to the County's development review and approval processes to ensure that reviews and approvals are completed in an efficient and effective manner.
Objective: Include conditional zoning language to the 441 and Cashiers development ordinances to allow for more flexibility in the design and development of projects in those districts.

LU3—Goal: Continue to build upon community planning efforts in our regulated districts.
Objective: Develop a Cashiers Small Area Plan.
Objective: Develop a Cullowhee Small Area Plan.
Objective: Update the 441 Small Area Plan.
Objective: Identify areas of the County may require future small area planning.

LU4—Goal: Preserve the County's agricultural heritage and expand agricultural opportunities.
Objective: Continue efforts to expand the use of the Voluntary Agricultural Districts
Objective: Work collaboratively with the County Schools to promote agricultural education and sustainable food systems.
Objective: Expand the use of County property for community garden programs.
Objective: Continue to encourage the use of technology to expand the growing season for crops and vegetables.
Objective: Encourage the creation of a packaging facility that will provide local growers the ability to get crop to market.
Objective: Create strategies that encourage a new generation of farmers in the area.
Objective: Support forestry and tree farming operations.
Objective: Promote and support existing farming operations and the creation of new farming operations, including aquaculture and trout farms.

Land Use Goals and Objectives (Continued)

LU5—Goal: Maintain partnerships and coordinate planning efforts along the growth corridors.
Objective: Continue to provide development services to municipalities as needed and agreed to through inter-local agreements.
Objective: Continue participation in the Southwestern RPO with the municipalities to ensure a coordinated approach to transportation infrastructure needs.
Objective: Continue partnership between the local governments and TWSA to ensure utility infrastructure is available and/or planned along growth corridors.

LU6—Goal: Promote sustainable growth polices

Objective: Require pedestrian and bicycle facilities in major subdivisions.

Objective: Require connectivity to greenway segments in the adopted County Greenways Master Plan.
Objective: Encourage high density residential and mixed use development in existing communities along existing infrastructure.
Objective: Encourage municipalities to allow higher density residential and mixed use development along corridors that have existing infrastructure.
Objective: Encourage in-fill development patterns in existing communities.
Objective: Coordinate with NCDOT, TWSA, and local municipalities to encourage expansion of infrastructure to future growth corridors.
Objective: Coordinate with WCU to promote transportation and parking policies that encourage the use of alternative transportation modes for students that live off campus.