

*Jackson County, North Carolina
Office of Economic Development*

401 Grindstaff Cove Road
Suite A231
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TIFFANY HENRY
Director
Phone: (828)631-2240
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Date: September 7, 2023
To: Jackson County Board of Commissioners
From: Tiffany Henry – Director of Economic Development

Subject: EDA – Grant Application

For your consideration:

On behalf of Jackson County Office of Economic Development, I'd like to ask the board to allow us to apply for an Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant to perform engineering work on the county owned property formerly known as Drexel.

This grant will be to perform extensive engineering that will allow us to definitively determine the highest and best use of this site. The grant application is for \$355,000 and Jackson County is eligible for 80% funding under this program. This grant will require a \$71,000 match commitment should we be awarded this grant.

Our request to the Jackson County Board of Commissioners is to allow staff to submit this grant application and provide the required match commitment.

I look forward to answering any questions that you may have, and thank you for your support and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tiffany Henry", is written over a light blue circular background.

Tiffany Henry – Director
Jackson County Economic Development

ED 900 GA Questions

- 1) Describe the scope of work for the proposed EDA investment, including a list of project tasks to be undertaken. List the specific tasks/activities that will be undertaken as a result of this investment.

Jackson County owns a 28-acre parcel at 271 Clearwood Drive approximately one-mile south of Whittier, NC. This property contains the remnants of an old furniture mill that closed circa 2000. The project location is in the Middle Tuckasegee Watershed within the Special Flood Hazard Area (100-year floodplain) of the Tuckasegee River. An existing earth berm exists along the Tuckasegee River, ostensibly constructed to protect the Old Mill site from flooding during extreme storm events. The earth berm is roughly 2,000 feet long and is generally oriented northwest to southeast, with the Tuckasegee River on the east side and the Old Mill site on the west side. No information is available regarding the construction of the earth berm. The most recent regulatory flood maps developed by the North Carolina Floodplain Mapping Program (NCFMP) show the Old Mill site in the Special Flood Hazard Area and a floodway transecting the site (Figure 2). The berm is not shown as protecting the Old Mill site from flooding.

The County is seeking assistance with evaluation of the berm in order to have it recognized as a certified levee according to CFR Part 65.10 of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) regulations, thereby providing flood protection to the Old Mill site.

In order to undertake this evaluation various professional services will be required including civil and geotechnical engineering and flood and levee hydraulic modeling specialists. Included below is an estimated budget for a preliminary engineering report (PER) to evaluate the feasibility of the economic re-development of the Old Mill site. The report will also include a study on the feasibility of utilizing the existing berm as a protecting levee.

Civil Engineering

1. Conceptual Site Layout – perform charrettes with County staff to identify opportunities afforded by the site. These may include: agricultural event center, greenway trails, river access, industrial use, river access, a natural resource education center, etc.
2. Data Acquisition – obtain available existing data for the sites from various sources including:
 - LiDAR
 - Special Flood Hazard Area
 - Base Flood Elevations
 - NCDOT roadways
 - Jackson County GIS
 - TWSA utilities
 - NRCS Web Soil Survey
 - Hydric Soils Mapper
 - US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) – National Wetlands Inventory, Wetlands Mapper
 - NC Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ)
 - NC Surface Water Classifications

- USGS Topo Maps
 - Historic Aerial Photography
 - ArcGIS Online Critical Habitat Mapping Services
 - NCHPO – National Register and historic property survey maps
3. Topographic and boundary surveys - The Existing Condition Survey will consist of the following:
 - a. Survey Controls. The survey will be referenced to the NC State Plane Coordinate System (NCSPC) tied to the NC Grid North (NAD 83-2011) and North American Vertical Datum (NAVD 88).
 - b. Boundary Survey. Property boundary surveying of affected parcels in the Survey Limits sufficient to produce necessary easements for the Survey Limits.
 - c. Topographic Survey.
 - d. Physical Survey. A physical survey will be performed for the Survey Limits including all existing facilities, vegetation limits and visible utilities.
 - e. Flagging. Survey flags or other marks placed by environmental and/or geotechnical professionals to delineate limits of wetlands or other features.
 4. Adjacent Parcel review – Evaluate the location, orientation, cross section of the proposed levee as it relates to conceptual site layout. Develop a map showing parcel lines and property ownership adjacent to the site extending approximately 5,000 feet upstream and downstream of the site and extending to all properties located in the Special Flood Hazard Area on the right side (looking downstream) of the Tuckasegee River to determine potentially impacted properties from the proposed levee.
 5. Environmental Review – perform an initial environmental review to gain familiarity with the proposed project sites, project type, and overall environmental implications associated with the proposed development. A 'desktop review' will be performed to quantify potential environmental impacts and identify agency permitting requirements or coordination. The desktop review will consist of gathering information for the following environmental features:
 - a. Jurisdictional Waters of the US – Streams and Wetlands. Perform a detailed review of available on-line mapping and data services to determine if jurisdictional waters are likely present on the project site that may require Clean Water Act 401/404 permitting, and NC Wildlife Resources Commission or NC Division of Energy, Mineral, and Land Resources consultation. The review will consist of the following:
 - i. NRCS Web Soil Survey, Hydric Soils Mapper, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) – National Wetlands Inventory, Wetlands Mapper, NC Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ), NC Surface Water Classifications, USGS Topo Maps, Historic Aerial Photography.
 - ii. Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species – Review on-line records to assess the need for T&E species site surveys in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Formal consultation will be initiated with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) in the form of a scoping letter requesting comment to initiate Endangered Species Act – Section 7 consultation. The

review will consist of the following: NC Natural Heritage Program Data Explorer (NCNHP), USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation System (IPAC), Jackson County T&E species lists, ArcGIS Online Critical Habitat Mapping Services.

- iii. Historic Preservation - Review on-line records to assess the need for compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Formal consultation will be initiated with the NC Historic Preservation Office in the form of a scoping letter requesting comment to initiate National Historic Preservation Act – Section 6 consultation. The review will consist of the following:
 - f. NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - NC Historic Preservation Office (NCHPO) – HPOWeb – National Register and historic property survey maps.
 - b. The environmental findings from the desktop review will be further evaluated via a field visit to document actual site conditions at each parcel as they relate to Threatened and Endangered Species and Natural and Cultural Resources.
6. Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) Review - Perform a detailed desktop review of the available SFHA data from the NCFMP FRIS website for this segment of the Tuckaseegee River to identify the permitting implications and constraints related to the proposed development. Both the Jackson County Flood Development Ordinance and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) will be referenced to identify limitations on the above development as well as permitting requirements such as flood studies, no rise certifications and Letters of Map Amendment (LOMA's).
7. Transportation network - Perform a desktop review of the existing roadway network from Jackson County GIS and the proximity of utility services available from TWSA to identify the permitting implications and constraints of implementing the proposed development features including use specific roadway improvements and public utilities (water and sewer) requirements. High-level estimates of probable construction cost will also be provided for the bridge crossing the river, roadway improvements, and water and sewer utility extensions.

Geotechnical Engineering

1. A visual inspection of the levee along with the completion of a USACOE Levee Embankment Inspection checklist.
2. A preliminary geotechnical exploration of the levee and its foundation consisting of 20 borings (a set of two borings approximately every 200 feet); 10 on the crest and 10 near the inboard (dry side) toe of levee. Due to inaccessibility, the outboard toe and foundation condition are not proposed to be explored at this time. Sampling at every 2.5 vertical feet with an average depth of 30 feet. Holes are to be backfilled with bentonite grout and some vegetation and access development will be needed.
3. Up to 20 natural moistures, 20 Atterberg Limits and 20 grain size analyses (with hydrometers), and up to three triaxial and three permeability tests of the earth berm material.
4. Preliminary embankment and foundation stability analyses evaluating expected seepage during base flood loading conditions, including flood depth, duration, penetrations, and other seepage and stability factors. The preliminary analysis will

assume steady-state seepage at the design flood elevation and incorporate a simplified rapid drawdown evaluation.

Flood and Levee Hydraulic Modeling Specialists

1. Data Collection, Review and Field Visit - Obtain the regulatory hydrologic and hydraulic modeling along the Tuckasegee River from NCFMP and perform an initial review. This will include the following:
 - a. Obtaining the HEC-RAS modeling and running the model to duplicate the results of the regulatory model.
 - b. Cursory review of the hydrology provided by the NCFMP.
 - c. Conduct a field visit to the site to observe existing conditions and extents of the earth berm.
2. Hydrology and Hydraulics - The effective hydraulic model provided by the NCFMP will be used as the basis for this analysis. The effective model will be updated based on the latest topographic data to create the existing conditions model. The existing conditions model may require realignment of the effective cross sections or addition of new cross sections within the project area. The proposed or revised conditions model will be created by incorporating the proposed levee into the existing conditions model. The height of the levee crest will exceed the 100-year flood, incorporating an additional free board in accordance with CFR Part 65.10. Restudy the regulatory floodway alignment to move the floodway to the riverside toe of the proposed levee adjusting the floodways as needed to meet NFIP requirements.

- 2) **B.2. Describe the specific deliverables/outcomes that the project will produce and the primary beneficiaries or audience of those deliverables. Please note that deliverables are defined as the specific outcomes that will come from the project and differ from information on project tasks/activities requested in B.1. Project tasks/activities requested in B.1 should be reported as process steps that will be achieved to reach the final project while deliverables/outcomes detailed in B.2 are the final product produced.**

The primary deliverable of this project will be the creation of a Preliminary Engineering Report. This report will summarize the analysis and results of the tasks listed in the scope of work, including necessary maps and figures, potential permitting and/or coordination requirements, potential impacts to adjacent properties including increases in the regulatory 1% annual chance flood and floodway, requirements for complying with CFR Part 65.10 and further study. The PER will discuss results and recommendations as well as provide timelines and expected costs for development and levee accreditation.

- 3) **Identify the proposed time schedule for the project, including specific project milestones.**

Start Date: January 2, 2024

End Date: December 29, 2024

Project Start: January 2, 2024

Release RFP: February 1, 2024

RFP Proposal Deadline: March 29, 2024

Consultant Selection: April 23, 2024

Contract Complete, Notice to Proceed: April 30, 2024

Draft Report Due: November 1, 2024

Final Report Due: December 29, 2024

- 4) Describe how the proposed project aligns with one or more of EDA’s investment priorities. Current EDA investment priorities are available at <https://www.eda.gov/about/investment-priorities/>. Applicants must identify all relevant investment priorities with which the project aligns with and describe how the project advances each relevant priority (ies).**

This project directly aligns with several of EDA’s investment priorities, including “**Equity**” and “**Recovery and Resilience**.” By finding additional opportunities to connect a rural area to commerce, economic opportunities, and access to public amenities (such as access to natural assets), this project will advance equity for those living in an underserved community.

Although the census tract in which the site is located is not considered to be an “area of high poverty,” the location is less than a mile from other census tracts that are identified as “areas of high poverty” according to the Census Poverty Status Viewer Map. This includes 370999402.00 (Jackson County) and 371739603.02 (Swain County). A significant portion of the estimated impact area would fall within those two census tracts.

The unemployment rate of residents within a one-mile radius of the site is 5.6%. Twenty-three percent of residents in the area have no high school diploma, 18% have a bachelor’s degree. When examining households in this same radius and comparing them by income level, the largest group (18.6%) falls within the \$15,000-\$24,999 range; however, 45.2% of households within one mile of this site earns less than \$34,999 per year, and 17.8% of households are on Food Stamps/SNAP. Twenty-five percent of the population in this area is 65 and older.

Jackson County has been affected by the loss of manufacturing, similar to other communities in Western North Carolina. This project will provide a direct opportunity to promote long-term economic resilience on a property that was once a key piece of the local economy. Although this building has not been used for manufacturing for many years, it does provide a unique opportunity to transform the facility from its previous use and identify strategies for how it can contribute to the economy once again.

This project will also help the County as it works to identify sites that are developable, which is a challenge in the rural Appalachian Mountains. The Drexel property was identified in a recent site

development study as a potential location for future development; however, its location in the floodway is a significant deterrent for future development. This project will help the County plan for future use and will create significant progress for the County's efforts to continue economic diversification in an area whose economy is driven by tourism.

- 5) For planning, technical assistance, revolving loan funds or other non-construction projects, identify the primary location(s) where the work will be conducted. Include as much geographical information as possible including census tract(s), county(ies), and state(s). If more than one census tract applies, please identify all census tracts where the project will be located. If all census tracts in a county apply, include "All Census Tracts" after the county name. For Revolving Loan Fund applications, please describe the proposed geographic lending area.**

271 Clearwood Drive
Whittier, NC 28789
Census Tract 9505, Jackson County, NC

- 6) The estimated area of impact for your project is the area expected to benefit directly from the proposed EDA project. For construction projects, areas of impact could include the commuting shed where potential employees may reside. For non-construction projects the area of impact could include the geographic scope where the work will occur and where the output of the work will be utilized. Defining the area of impact helps EDA to assess the economic benefits of projects and the merits of applications. Providing complete and accurate information is critical to the application review process. List all census tracts, counties, and states where the project benefit will occur. If all census tracts in a county apply, include "All Census Tracts" after the county name.**

271 Clearwood Drive, Whittier, NC, 28789

9505.00, Jackson County, North Carolina
9402.00, Jackson County, North Carolina
9401.00, Swain County, North Carolina
9603.02, Swain County, North Carolina

C.2.a. Underserved Populations/Geographies

Does the majority of proposed project's planned area of impact (as defined above) serve an underserved population or represent an underserved geography? For definitions of these terms in relation to the planned area of impact, please visit <https://eda.gov/about/investment-priorities/>. Please identify the specific populations/geographies below following the guidance provided at the website referenced above and describe how the project will intentionally attempt to improve the economic conditions of the underserved population or geography within the project's planned area of impact. If yes, enter an explanation in the field below:

Although the census tract in which the site is located is not considered to be an "area of high poverty," the location is less than a mile from other census tracts that are underserved populations based on "geographies." These census tracts are identified as "areas of high poverty" according to the Census Poverty Status Viewer Map, and they include Census Tracts 370999402 (Jackson County) and 371739603.02 (Swain County). The majority of the area of impact will fall within those two census tracts.

- 7) Current Economic Conditions - Area of Impact. Briefly describe the economic conditions of the estimated area of impact with a focus on available data describing the level of distress, if applicable. This should also include a concise overview of the economic development needs, area's workforce, industry clusters, main economic drivers, challenges, and assets. Describe the economic adjustment problems or economic dislocations the area is experiencing (or is likely to experience in the next 24 months). Relevant data may be drawn from the regional CEDS, <https://eda.gov/resources/tools/>, as well as other sources. You'll be asked to provide more details about this in Section H. For revolving loan fund applications, please include information on borrowers and industry sectors that the loan fund is anticipated to target.**

Within the area of impact, which includes the surrounding census tracts, the total population is 19,038, and the median age is 39.0. The median household income is \$48,376, which is higher than the median household income of Jackson County (\$46,820) and Swain County (\$45,554). The percentage of households in the Low Income Tier according to Community Analyst is 29.8%, while 61 % make up the Middle Income Tier. It should also be noted that when zooming further in to the project area to look at a one-mile radius from the project site, 18.6% of households have an annual salary of between \$15,000-\$24,999, and 45.2% of households within one mile of this site earns less than \$34,999 per year. Almost 18% of households in this radius are on Food Stamps/SNAP.

A total of 525 businesses are located within the area of impact, and the sectors with the largest number of businesses include "Retail Trade," followed by "Accommodation & Food Services." However, the sectors that employ the largest number of employees are "Health Care & Social Assistance," "Accommodation & Food Services," and "Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation." The unemployment rate of residents within a one-mile radius of the site is 5.6%. Twenty-three percent of residents in the area have no high school diploma, 18% have a bachelor's degree. Twenty-five percent of the population in this area is 65 and older.

To describe the economic condition of the area of impact, an understanding of the county and larger region is essential. The 7 western-most counties of North Carolina, which is covered by the Economic Development District, are all rural, with the largest town having a population of 10,620. Because of the existing natural assets, the regional economy is largely driven by tourism and tourism-related industries.

A recent regional study completed by Syneva Economics found that prior to the 2020 Pandemic, two-thirds of net job growth in the 7 western Counties of North Carolina was in tourism related businesses. Also, low relative wage industries were responsible for 45 percent of net employment growth, primarily in the "Accommodation and Food Services" and "Retail Trade" sectors. These sectors were also two of the top three sectors at the time of this study. In addition, the region lost 371 manufacturing jobs over the past 5 years, continuing a trend that can be tracked further back, even, than the five years marked in this study. Tourism-related businesses continue to grow in the region, while we continue to see manufacturing jobs leave the area. In June 2023, the region lost another significant manufacturing employer in neighboring Haywood County, Pactive-Evergreen paper mill in Canton, NC, which resulted in the loss of an additional 1,100 manufacturing jobs in the region.

Focusing in on Jackson County, we see that in recent years, the County has experienced a significant increase in population, surpassing even the more urban nearby counties of Buncombe and Henderson. Total population estimates indicate that Jackson County has witnessed the largest percentage growth in population between 1990 and 2021 in Western North Carolina. The current total population in Jackson County is 43,410 with a median age of 38.5.

The largest age group in Jackson County is 25-44 (22.46%), followed by 45-64 (21.92%), and 65+ (20.56%). Eighty-eight percent of residents have a high school diploma or higher, while 28.4% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

With an eighteen percent increase since 2001, the county has transitioned from its predominantly agrarian roots to become a hub for tourism-centered and related businesses, which now dominate its local economy. This is similar to what is being seen across the region. Despite the thriving tourism industry, the largest sectors in Jackson County, namely "Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations" and "Sales and Related Occupations," fail to provide wages that meet the living wage threshold. According to the US Census Bureau, the median earnings for these industries are \$27,179 and \$36,123, respectively, which fall far below the county's median household income of \$47,989. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Living Wage Calculator indicates that a Western North Carolina resident supporting one child would require an hourly wage of at least \$38.17 to achieve a living wage. The current wages offered by the county's primary industries do not meet this standard.

As Jackson County relies heavily on tourism, the average cost of housing has soared by approximately 122% since the year 2000 - likely due to the prevalence of short-term vacation rentals and costly second homes. Consequently, the homeownership rate has dropped from 70% in 2009 to 60% in 2021. Despite the low unemployment rate of 3.9% in March 2023, many employers in the county struggle to find employees, possibly due to the affordability challenges associated with housing and the inadequacy of wages provided by the dominant industries.

Despite the challenges of a growing tourism economy, Jackson County leaders hope to continue capitalizing on the area's strengths. The natural assets that attract visitors also offer

great potential for growing local businesses centered around them. While traditional manufacturing opportunities decrease, the County seeks to make this area an attractive place for companies seeking to expand outdoor gear manufacturing. Recent focus has been placed on the outdoor economy sector by county leaders and external forces alike. This new focus has created an ecosystem of potential for existing business owners and for entrepreneurs interested in entering the space.

In conclusion, while Jackson County, North Carolina has experienced remarkable population growth and established itself as a tourism-driven economy, the wages offered by many of these jobs fail to meet the living wage threshold. Despite the county's economic prosperity, the median earnings for tourism-related occupations fall significantly below the county's median household income, making it difficult for residents to achieve a decent standard of living. This is particularly true for the area of impact for this project, which has a large number of tourism-related businesses.

Additionally, the soaring housing costs, driven by the prevalence of short-term vacation rentals and costly second homes, have led to a decline in homeownership rates and further exacerbated the affordability challenges faced by the county's workforce. Clear potential exists for the development of new opportunities that will capitalize on existing assets (such as the outdoor economy sector), which may offer higher paying and more sustainable jobs going forward. The County has a unique opportunity within this impact area to capitalize on those existing assets that are ripe for economic diversification.

8) Explain how the proposed EDA investment addresses the economic development needs identified in D.1.

In the midst of the challenges and changes brought about by the ever-growing tourism economy in Jackson County, North Carolina, the Drexel Heritage Furniture Plant stands as a symbol of untapped potential. Constructed in the 1960s, the 82,000 square foot building played a vital role in the local community until its permanent closure in the early 2000s. After its permanent closure, the site was purchased by Jackson County. The site sat vacant until 2016 when it was leased to Thomas Valley Growers LLC who transformed it into an agricultural packing center for local farmers. While this venture has been successful, it only utilizes a fraction of the available space, leaving the majority of the site vacant.

This dormant site holds tremendous promise for growth and development in a county that is in need of economic diversification that will capitalize on its existing assets. Recognizing this potential, the County hopes to utilize EDA funding to complete a project focused on exploring the future potential of the site. The project consists of two key components: a feasibility study and a geotechnical exploration that will be detailed in a preliminary engineering report. The County is fully aware of the necessity to conduct a thorough assessment of the property's potential and is proposing to engage a consultant to undertake these evaluations.

The purpose of the feasibility study is to comprehensively analyze various factors, including economic viability, environmental considerations, and regulatory requirements. By meticulously examining these aspects, the study aims to determine the feasibility of developing the site. Valuable insights and recommendations gained from this study will help shape the future utilization of the property, ensuring that it aligns with the needs and aspirations of the local community.

This project holds great promise for the economic prosperity of Jackson County. By harnessing the possibilities offered by the Drexel Heritage Furniture Plant site, the county can create new opportunities for commerce and cultivate greater resiliency. It is a strategic step towards building a more vibrant and inclusive local economy that will benefit the residents and stakeholders of Jackson County for years to come.

9) How does the proposed project align with the regional CEDS (and for revolving loan fund projects, how does the proposed project align with the applicable RLF Plan)? Applicants should identify the specific CEDS strategy(s) that the project helps advance and explain how the project supports the identified goal(s).

This project reflects the County's commitment to making informed decisions that prioritize the community's goals and aspirations. It aligns directly with the 2022 Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy developed by the Southwestern Commission Council of Governments.

The project directly addresses Goal 1 of the 2022 CEDs, which is to "build a strong regional economy that is in alignment with the culture and assets of the region." By thoroughly evaluating the site and generating a comprehensive plan, the County aims to create opportunities for economic growth and development that are in harmony with the unique characteristics and resources of the region. Because of this project's proximity to the Tuckasegee River, the County hopes to take advantage of this natural asset and mitigate the challenges that currently exist due to potential flooding hazards and create additional opportunities for economic activity.

The project is also in alignment with Strategy 4 of the CEDs, which emphasizes the significance of collaborating with counties and towns to establish economic development sites. This collaborative approach aims to foster an environment conducive to business expansion and relocation, attracting a diverse range of enterprises to the region and fostering a vibrant and resilient economic landscape. Despite its barriers to development, the site has future potential, which is significant in a region that has very few sites available for economic opportunities due to challenging building conditions in the Appalachian Mountains.

By adhering to these strategic goals and aligning with the broader vision outlined in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, the project not only enhances the

potential of the Drexel Heritage Furniture Plant site but also contributes to the overall economic vitality and prosperity of Jackson County.

- 10) Provide a clear and compelling justification for the long-term potential economic impact of the proposed project, through anticipated job creation or retention, private investment leveraging, number of businesses or collaborations supported, or other appropriate measures. All job and private investment estimates should reflect the anticipated impact within nine years of the potential EDA investment and applicants should provide documentation or third-party data to substantiate claims.**

The long-term potential economic impact of this project is significant and can be understood in two key aspects. First, it plays a crucial role in fostering a sustainable plan for the diversification of the economy in Jackson County, which presently heavily depends on tourism and tourist-centered businesses. By introducing new information upon which new plans can be built, this project has the potential to broaden the economic base of Jackson County and reduce reliance on a single industry. This diversification is essential for the long-term resilience and stability of the county's economy.

This project will also provide much-needed data and information related to site development. The final deliverable will be a report that will inform future decision-makers (the County Commissioners), who will use this information to implement any long-term development plans for the Drexel site. This study is the next step in transforming this underutilized site into a vital piece of the local economy.

Furthermore, the county commissioners play a pivotal role in establishing partnerships with external organizations, such as state or federal agencies, private investors, or non-profit entities. Collaborative efforts can leverage additional resources and expertise to support the potential development of the site. This collaborative approach increases the likelihood of securing grants, attracting private investments, and implementing sustainable development strategies that align with the county's long-term vision.

Ultimately, this project addresses long-term economic impact by creating future potential for economic diversification and investment by county leaders. It creates opportunities for future collaboration and development by offering leaders and investors alike relevant data and information on a currently underutilized industrial site.

- 11) List and describe the strategic partners and organizations that will be engaged in this project. Describe any third-party organizations, including governmental**

agencies, that will be directly engaged in supporting the proposed project, and explain how each partner will be engaged in the project.

Southwestern Commission

The Southwestern Commission is the regional Council of Governments as well as the Economic Development District for the 7 westernmost counties in North Carolina. The Southwestern Commission will be engaged with this project by providing grant administrative assistance for the project.

12) Applicant's organizational capability. Briefly describe your organization's capability to administer, implement, and maintain the project, including prior experience with federal awards. List any awards received from EDA in the last five years, along with the relevant federal award ID numbers, if known.

Jackson County staff has tremendous experience with managing large projects as well as administering grant awards.

In 2018, Jackson County received over \$2,015,395 Award No. 04-01-0777 for the construction of the Southwestern Community College Health Sciences Building. The County was also able to secure a loan to fund the remaining portion of the project cost. The Southwestern Commission provided grant administration throughout the construction process.

The County has also received several state or private funds in order to complete projects in the past several years. This includes funding from GoldenLEAF Foundation to complete a site development study. In addition, the County received over \$2.2 million from Dogwood Health Trust to construct a building to serve as a shelter for victims of domestic violence.

13) Identify the key staff members who will be responsible for implementing the project and briefly describe how their expertise and experience qualifies them for the project. State whether you will administer the award yourself or contract with a third party for grant administration.

The County Manager has over 25 years of local government experience, including 7 with Jackson County. The Finance Director has 49 years of experience and was a key team member for managing the 2018 EDA project. The Economic Development Director has over 9 years of experience with managing projects and will be overseeing the implementation of this project upon receipt of the funding.

Jackson County will contract with the local Economic Development District (Southwestern Commission) to conduct grant administration for this project. Staff information is below:

Rebecca Scott

Southwestern Commission, Director of Community and Economic Development

Rebecca has 8 years of experience writing and managing federal and state grants. While at the Council of Government, she has managed projects that were funded through federal programs, such as Appalachian Regional Commission and Economic Development Administration. She has also assisted with management and administration of the North Carolina Broadband Infrastructure Office's Growing Rural Economies through Access to Technology's grant program.

September 19, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

Jackson County Board of Commissioners has approved funding in the amount of \$71,000.00 for the County's application to US Economic Development Administration through the Disaster Supplemental Program. These funds are available, committed, and unencumbered.

These funds will serve as a match amount, leveraging the County's request to US EDA for \$284,000.

Signed,

Attest:

Mark Letson
Chairman, Jackson County Board of Commissioners

Angela M. Winchester
Clerk to the Board

This instrument has been pre-audited in the Manner required by the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act.

This the _____ day of _____ 2023

Finance Officer

Jackson County, North Carolina