



JACKSON COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

November 2025
Director's Report

Tiffany Henry
Director of Economic Development

MISSION STATEMENT

Economic development activities in Jackson County focus on strengthening our local economy, expanding opportunities for residents, and improving the quality of life across our communities.



Building Opportunity, Growing Community

DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES

- **Industrial Development** - Create jobs and strengthen local industry
- **Housing** - Expand attainable and workforce housing options
- **Broadband** - Ensure reliable, countywide digital access
- **Childcare** - Support families and workforce participation
- **Outdoor Economy** - Build on our natural assets for sustainable growth
- **Retention and Expansion** - Help existing businesses thrive

WHY THIS MATTERS

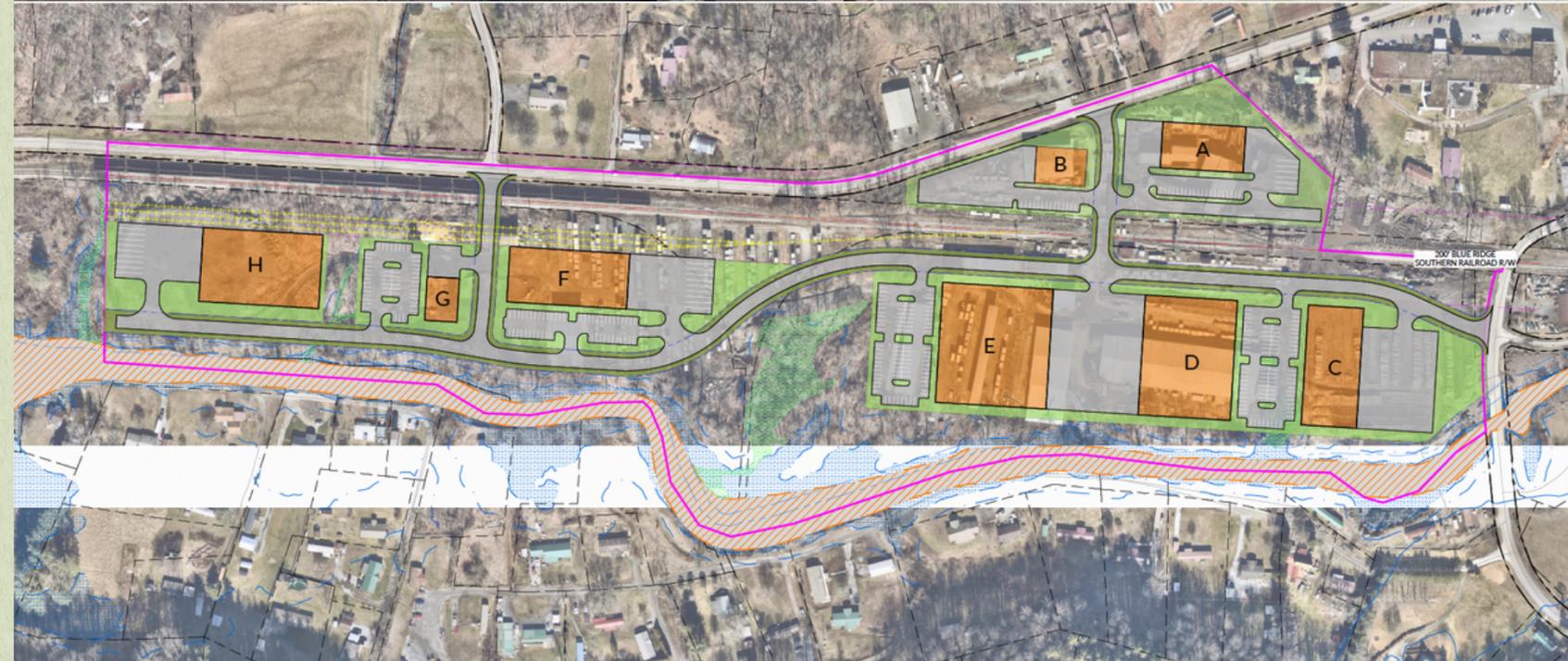
- Jackson County's progress is a collective effort
- We connect people, place, and purpose to create long-term opportunity.
- Partnerships are driving infrastructure, workforce, and housing results today.



PROJECT SHIFT

Preparing nearly 42 acres for industrial use and a regional workforce training center to create new jobs, training opportunities, and business growth.

- Completed Duke Energy Site Readiness milestone and hosted a state economic partner site visit.
- Phase 2 environmental work complete; topographic and wetland surveys are underway.
- Preparing funding applications and a Preliminary Engineering Report to advance site readiness.



PROJECT RISE – STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURE

- 24,000-sq-ft enclosed event space: shell complete- interior work will continue through the winter, with completion expected late spring 2026
- Grant support received for both the event space and pavilion; these awards provide partial funding.
- Partnering with Southwestern Commission and EBCI on an ARC grant for water infrastructure expansion to Whittier that will also serve this site



BROADBAND

- Nearly **95%** of Jackson County addresses are either served or funded for high-speed broadband, positioning the county for strong digital infrastructure and future-ready growth
 - **Spectrum:** 4700 RDOF locations activated
 - 1070 GREAT locations activated (93% complete)
 - **BalsamWest:** Significant construction progress with more than 75% of underground conduit and half of aerial lines installed; activations to begin once fiber installation is complete.
- Ready, Set, Connect Resource Fair in March
- Ready, Set, Connect Digital Skills Training Courses in April
- Connect Humanity- Connectivity Plan finalized in April
- Elevate Digital Collaborative - Prioritizing Telehealth
- Expanding these resources to our Community Centers



HOUSING

- Advancing the Webster Village project
 - Submitted CDBG-NR New Construction application for \$5 million towards Givens Communities
- Our State Our Homes
 - \$5,000 grant submitted to complete a Housing Plan
 - Goals:
 - 600 new units in 8 years
 - study infrastructure gaps
 - create land-banking strategy
 - preserve existing housing stock
 - identify supportive housing providers and needs



CHILDCARE

- Continuing work with Business of Childcare
 - Activation Plan
- Purchased former Webster Enterprises childcare facility
 - Submitted \$500,000 grant to Dogwood Health Trust (notification pending)
 - Exploring EarlyEd FlexPlex model to incubate independent childcare classrooms
 - WestBridge land donation of lower playground area
- Hosting provider events and continuing partner coordination to expand capacity



TOOLS FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

BRE Toolkit

- Updating loan & incentive policies to improve access for small/local businesses
- Completed BRE survey with 200+ business responses

BLOOM

- Quarterly newsletter + annual appreciation event to celebrate and connect local leaders
- Planning for 2nd Annual BLOOM (first planning meeting held in early November)



UPDATES FROM THE TEAM

Tiffany

- Will begin NC Certified Economic Developer capstone project in January 2026

Betsy

- Completed the Basic Economic Development Course
- Completed Homegrown Leaders Training
- Participating in WNC Investment Framers Cohort



THE ROAD AHEAD

- CEDS development launch Q126
- Continued pursuit of infrastructure + grant investment
- Workforce development initiatives
- Partnerships for long-term community growth
- R-5600 Let Date November 18th, 2025



A CLOSING THOUGHT

“We’re building a future where people can stay and thrive.”

-Tiffany Henry, Director of Economic Development



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T H A N K Y O U

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