



SYLVA

CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2029



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	5
Background	9
Setting	13
Existing Plan Review	14
Planning Process	16
Economic Positioning Statement	19
Work Plan Charts	23
Plan Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation	31
Economic Focus Areas	35
Appendix	42

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The Rural Economic Development Division announced the technical assistance program offering Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Planning and Asset Development services in late 2022. Communities from across the state applied to engage with strategic planning services and 34 local governments were accepted to participate. Jackson County, NC was among the first local governments to begin the planning process. Rural Planning staff, who is responsible for facilitating strategic economic development planning and implementation services, worked with local government staff to communicate the goals of the program, identify local opportunities, and assemble a planning work group.

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Adopted: November 14, 2024

Town of Sylva Board of Commissioners

Executive Summary

Through CORE, the Town of Sylva collaborated with N.C. Department of Commerce, Rural Economic Development Division staff members and local stakeholders through a strategic planning process to identify and develop outdoor recreation assets that present economic growth opportunities. Strategy development focused on leveraging outdoor recreation assets to increase tourism, encourage small business development, enhance quality of life for residents, plan for outdoor recreation asset and infrastructure development, and position communities to grow and attract outdoor gear manufacturing industries. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

The plan proposes strategies, actions and tasks that communities can take to increase economic vitality by leveraging outdoor recreation. For the purposes of this strategic planning program outdoor recreation is defined as all recreational activities undertaken for leisure that occur outdoors, with an emphasis on those activities that involve some level of intentional physical exertion and occur in nature-based environments. Furthermore, other community assets and economic institutions that benefit from or complement the outdoor recreation economy are addressed in the plan.

The Town of Sylva (population 2,648) is the County seat for Jackson County and the most iconic mountain town in North Carolina with the historic library overlooking Main Street. The Plott Balsam Mountains bookend the view and inspire the “Greening Up the Mountains” spring event. This steep range is the location of Pinnacle Park—former Sylva watershed land that is undergoing master planning for improved recreational use and ecosystem understanding. Jackson County has some of the steepest topography in the state and indeed Sylva is described as ‘a hotdog in the bun’ of the surrounding slopes. The terrain hosts very challenging levels of recreation and limits developable land to serve local needs.

Sylva is the first town visitors reach on NC Highway 23/74 after crossing Balsam gap under the Blue Ridge Parkway. It is a gateway to the far western region—a destination for visitors who consciously decide to enjoy the Nantahala National Forest, Smoky Mountains National Park, Fontana and other lakes, resorts, high peaks, backcountry areas and the cultural center of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

At the same time as Sylva was working on this plan, Jackson County was also doing Community Outdoor Recreation Economies planning. Coordinators from both processes participated in both working groups to provide continuity and ensure that work plans were complimentary.

Also during this process, Sylva Main Street was up for a five-year update of its strategic plan. One of the strategies identified by the Main Street Board and committees was the further development of outdoor recreation as an economic asset. Some of the tasks identified in this plan seek leadership from the Main Street committees for implementation.

A Work Group was assembled to undertake the strategic planning. Members of the Work Group included representatives from Town Council, Town staff, outdoor businesses in downtown, recreation organizations and resource stewards and Jackson County staff. The process was coordinated by the Sylva office of Economic Development.

At the beginning of the process, the Work Group members were surveyed regarding priority impacts to be pursued from the outdoor economy and its potential. The survey identified three primary areas of work to guide planning. These were:

- Greater quality of life for year around and part-time residents
- Increased revenue for existing businesses
- Development of a skilled outdoor workforce

The Work Group developed an 'economic positioning statement' that establishes the vision and direction for outdoor economy development in the next five years. This statement is aspirational and includes four strategies for its accomplishment.

Sylva is recognized as the Hub of outdoor recreation activity for the far west mountains. In Sylva all residents enjoy outdoor recreation as part of their daily lives, an entrepreneurial outdoor culture enlivens the downtown, residents and visitors are fluent in natural and cultural resource understanding and active in their stewardship.

The four strategies for achieving this vision are:

- Incorporate outdoor recreation into the lives of all residents.
- Develop an entrepreneurial outdoor culture.
- Make Sylva an outdoor education destination.
- Brand (become recognized) the Sylva outdoor experience.

Fifteen actions are proposed for implementation of these strategies. Greater detail can be found in the work plan included later in this report.

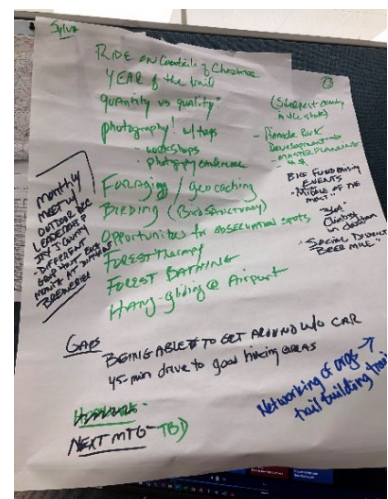
Primary goals for the Work Group included the need to ensure walking/biking connections from downtown Sylva to surrounding recreational destinations, maintenance of the high quality and variety of food and accommodations that makes Sylva a hospitality hub and further development of Sylva's offerings as an engaging outdoor destination for a range of visitors.

#1 Incorporate outdoor recreation into the lives of all residents is the first strategy and emphasizes the desire to build additional walk and bike-ability into the downtown, surrounding neighborhoods and with connections to recreation destinations. A challenge is making connections that are accessible to people of all abilities—placing greater priority on greenways and such facilities that can accommodate families through seniors. It also addresses the desire to develop water access on a cleaner Scotts Creek and ensure that Pinnacle Park is accessible as a Town Park. There is a desire to create beginner opportunities for local residents and guests to try out and build skills in Sylva before heading out to more difficult trails and challenges in the forest.

#2 Develop an entrepreneurial outdoor culture is the strategy most focused on bolstering small businesses so critical to the outdoor experience. As learned from the experience of the Outdoor Business Alliance, there is a focus on bringing businesses and outdoor enthusiasts together to develop a supportive comradery, potentially build new outdoor experiences and identify ways to expand their attractiveness to guests and residents. This group may also help present new and unique recreation-based events. Staff will recruit complimentary and supportive businesses while assisting existing businesses with needs they may encounter.

#3 Make Sylva an outdoor education destination. This strategy seeks to build a feeling of community around the natural environment and recreation in it. It includes convening many partners to share existing efforts and jointly fill gaps in creating an ecologically-engaged public—residents and guests, starting with youth. There are tasks to expand year-round experiences that include guides and topical group programming engaging experts from the community, WCU and renown researchers in interpretation and story-telling. The intent is to minimize impacts by coordinating access to unique places, respecting carrying capacity and building understanding.

#4 Brand the Sylva outdoor experience is an effort to define, within the 'Play On' brand of Jackson County TDA, a unique niche and image for Sylva as a recognized hub for outdoor recreation. Beyond a by-line, the work to make



the brand real include events, gateway and directional signage as well as a social media strategy sharing current and accurate information.

Implementation

Town of Sylva staff have an enviable relationship with Jackson County Economic Development, Tourism Development Authority and the Chamber of Commerce. Coordinated work, especially between these organizations, will be the primary force for implementation. In addition, Sylva's Main Street Economic Vitality committee will be involved as strategies in the two plans overlap. Local experts will be brought in to assist with specific, appropriate tasks. Continued engagement, investment and support from the Town Council will provide the leadership and tools to accomplish the vision for the outdoor economy. The Work Group should be encouraged to report progress to the Town Council on perhaps a twice-annual basis.

Background

There is a long tradition of outdoor recreation in North Carolina. From the mountains to the coast and everywhere in between there are incredible landscapes and unique places to pursue a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities. Participation in these activities generates a large economic impact. In recent years statistics show that participation in outdoor recreation is increasing, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. Continued growth in participation leads to the opportunity for the increased economic impact of outdoor recreation, particularly in rural locations where many of the state’s outdoor recreation assets are located. Also, there is great potential to expose and engage people that have historically not participated in outdoor recreation activities at the same rate as others. It is important for all individuals to have the opportunity and access to enjoy recreational pursuits, and to have an opportunity to benefit economically from outdoor recreation. These factors, combined with other on-going outdoor recreation initiatives across the state, make it an ideal time to think critically about how this sector can continue to be leveraged to benefit local economies.

Economic Impact

Outdoor recreation activity and associated expenditures generate a large economic impact. This is a broad economic sector that comprises a diverse range of industries including manufacturing, retail, arts, entertainment and recreation, as well as many supporting activities such as construction, travel and tourism, accommodation and food service, and many more.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis’ Outdoor



Recreation Satellite Account, nationwide, in 2021, the outdoor recreation economy represented \$454.0 billion in current-dollar gross domestic product (GDP), or 1.9 percent of the United States’ total GDP. The outdoor recreation sector of the economy is growing at a faster rate than the overall economy.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account and Regional Economic Accounts.



“Inflation-adjusted ("real") GDP for the outdoor recreation economy increased 18.9 percent in 2021, compared with a 5.9 percent increase for the overall U.S. economy, reflecting a rebound in outdoor recreation after the decrease of 21.6 percent in 2020. Real gross output for the outdoor recreation economy increased 21.7 percent, while outdoor recreation compensation increased 16.2 percent and employment increased 13.1 percent.” Employment in the outdoor recreation industry increased in all 50 states during 2021. (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021. <https://www.bea.gov/news/2022/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2021>)

At the state level, outdoor recreation contributed \$11.8 billion in total value-added economic impact to North Carolina’s GDP. North Carolina ranked as the 11th highest state in “Value-Added Outdoor Recreation in Total outdoor recreation activities” in 2021. This included employment for over 130,000 individuals that resulted in over \$5.9 billion in total compensation. Employment in key industries within the outdoor recreation sector includes over 8,000 in manufacturing, 44,000 in retail, 27,000 in accommodation and food service, and over 23,000 in arts, entertainment, and recreation. (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2021. <https://www.bea.gov/news/2022/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2021>).

Outdoor Recreation Participation

According to the 2023 Outdoor Industry Association ‘Outdoor Participation Trends Report’, “outdoor participation continues to grow at record levels. More than half (55%) of Americans ages 6 and over participated in at least one outdoor activity in 2022, and the outdoor recreation participant base grew 2.3% and became more diverse in 2022 to 168.1M participants. This growing number of outdoor participants, however, did not fundamentally alter long-term declines in high frequency or ‘core’ outdoor participation.” <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2023-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>

This same study shows that approximately 56% of North Carolinians participate in some form of outdoor recreation each year. This includes more than 22.8 million visitors to North Carolina state parks in 2021 — three million more than any other year on record. Many parks, national forests, and other public recreation areas report increased visitation as well. These numbers represent a solid base of individuals participating in outdoor recreation and contributing to associated economic activity. But there is still room to engage more individuals and continue to increase participation in outdoor recreation, particularly among populations that have not historically participated in outdoor



recreation at levels comparable to others. Also, people increasingly want outdoor recreation opportunities that are convenient to where they live so they can participate on a regular basis without the need to travel long distances.

Jackson County Recreation

Visitor Spending data is collected on a County basis by the State of NC. This spending includes what we are calling outdoor recreation.

The recreation listing in the chart below is the NAICS industry classification and includes Arts and Entertainment as well as traditional Recreation spending. Data in the previous sections have come from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Outdoor Recreation Special Account that has focused in on just outdoor recreation activity.

Visitor spending comparison with surrounding counties shows the strength of Jackson County as a destination. Recreation spending (Arts, Entertainment and Recreation) is higher than Transylvania County which is host to the Pisgah Forest and facilities so often overcrowded.

Visitor Spending 2022 (\$MM) from VisitNC						
	Haywood	Jackson	Swain	Macon	Henderson	Transylvania
Lodging	83.3	115.57	91.74	84.88	97.62	47.13
Food + Beverage	99.83	129.5	98.37	102.53	130.37	55.36
Recreation	43.03	64.3	49.32	47.31	56.39	26.33
Retail	29.06	39.8	30.68	29.71	33.87	17.05
Transportation	80.38	103.4	79.13	72.98	95.08	42.66
Total	336.13	452.57	349.25	337.41	413.32	188.53

Jackson County TDA has done extensive research to understand who is coming to stay and what they do in Jackson County. This is critical to understanding and further developing outdoor recreation that is also appropriate to the visitor base. Not all tourists recreate and not all recreators are tourists but there is a substantial overlap.

Jackson County Visitor Profile Research



Summary & Observations:

- Typical overnight leisure travel party composition is **middle aged adults or families with children**. Most are well-educated and are retired or professionals and arrive in travel parties of 2-4 people.
- The majority of travelers to Jackson County come from the **3 to 6 hour drive radius among contiguous states, however visitors responded to the survey from 42 states as well as the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany. Nearly all visitors drive into Jackson County.**
- **Overall trip satisfaction for visitors to Jackson County is high; Overnight (4.74), Daytrip (4.62) on a 5.0 scale.** Visitor amenities that rated the highest among both segments were variety of outdoor experiences, lodging value and unique, local dining.
- **Overall spending per travel party:** overnight = \$1,082; daytrip = \$202. It is important to note, typically in most destinations, overnight visitors spend 3X as much as daytrippers.
- The **primary purpose for overnight visitors** most recent leisure trip to Jackson County was getaway, general relaxation, driving/sightseeing, hiking and waterfalls while **daytrip visitors reported driving/sightseeing, general relaxation, hiking, getaway and waterfalls.**
- The **majority of overnight (83%) and daytrip (88%) visitors to Jackson County report being repeat visitors** indicating an opportunity to increase advertising and public relations to drive more first-time visitors who stay longer and spend more.
- **Top 5 Activities by OVERNIGHT Visitors: Unique local dining, driving/site-seeing, shopping, waterfalls and hiking.**
- **Top 5 Activities by DAYTRIP Visitors: Unique local dining, driving/site-seeing, shopping, waterfalls and hiking.**

The challenging recreation terrain does not necessarily match the typical travel party of middle-aged and older adults or families with children described here. Visits may need a bit more choreographing to ensure that these visitors can also enjoy outdoor recreation in Sylva. Filling such gaps in experiences and facilities creates opportunities for extending stays and increasing visitor expenditures. Overnight visitors in Jackson County tend to spend over five times more than day visitors.

Satisfaction levels for daytrip and overnight visitors are excellent. Attention must be paid to maintaining that high level and variety of experiences over time. Relaxation and scenic beauty are key components of visits.

Setting

Sylva serves as the county seat of Jackson County, NC hosting both Town and County offices and courts. It is also a regional center of healthcare and education with both Harris Regional Hospital and Southwestern Community College. As a result, the community is home to a population of 2,618 people but that population swells during the daytime to 5,197. Western Carolina University (WCU) is next door in Cullowhee with a student population of nearly 11,700 reliant on downtown Sylva as the shopping and entertainment destination.

Sylva's demographics reflect the proximity of WCU with a median age of 30.3 years—about 80% of the State average age of 39. This is prime age for serious recreation! The median household income (\$38,881) is lower than the immediately surrounding retail region (\$51,037). Sylva has 36.7 percent of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher educational attainment which exceeds Jackson County at 28.8 percent and the state rate of 33 percent. US Census 2021 downloaded May 2023. <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US3766500-sylva-nc/>

In the Jackson County area surrounding Sylva, there are many second homes used as seasonal get-a-ways or for short term rentals. This can be seen in the higher rates of “vacant” homes reported in the Census (22 percent vacant in Sylva and 36 percent in Jackson County). Property taxes are collected on these properties but spending varies—summer residents have spending patterns more like year round residents, buying groceries and household goods. However, the seasonal residents generally do not require services at the same rate—schools especially. Short term rentals host visitors who mostly spend as noted for tourists.

Recreation is available to town residents at Pinnacle Park, Mark Watson Park, Bridge and Poteet Parks on Scott's Creek within the Town limits and nearby at the Jackson County Cullowhee Recreation Center as well as some facilities at WCU. Primary destinations for visitors include the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Nantahala National Forest, Tuckasegee River Blueway and Blue Ridge Parkway.

The map below shows Sylva's location as the first community beyond the entrance to the Blue Ridge Parkway. This underlines Sylva's position as a hospitality hub for western mountain experiences. The map below was prepared by Rural Planning staff.



Existing Plan Review

To complement and build upon subsequent community planning efforts, staff assembled and reviewed other relevant plans and documents. This review provides valuable insight and helps avoid duplication or contradictions of past planning proposals. The following documents were reviewed and considered during the CORE planning process.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

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

Goal 1: Build a Strong Regional Economy that is in Alignment with the Culture and Assets of the Region – “This plan focuses on outreach to those businesses as well as helping to build a

more integrated entrepreneurial ecosystem while focusing on sectors of strength or those with high potential such as outdoor manufacturing, agriculture, tourism and retail.”

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

Southwestern Commission 2013 Regional Trails Plan

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

Main Street Sylva Community Work Plan 2022 and MS Sylva Plan of Work DRAFT 2023-2024 Sylva Economic Development Strategic Plan – a five-year strategic plan adopted May 11, 2017 and now mostly implemented! Strategies: Ideal business location, Great place to visit and Better place to call home.

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

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

Destination Research – November 2018 – March 2019 by Young Strategies, Inc. for the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority. Survey with 2,519 visitor responses online including some residents. Added to that are longer-ago visits making a total of 3,783.

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



Jackson County Greenways Project – Comprehensive Master Plan – June 2009

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

Planning Process

Under the Rural Economic Development Division, Rural Planning staff facilitates the CORE strategic planning process with participation from the local government and an established local work group. This work group is comprised of individuals who have a vested interest in leveraging outdoor recreation to enhance economic development. The planning process employs established planning methods including presenting economic and associated data, asset mapping, economic driver identification, SWOT analysis, stakeholder interviews, business questionnaires, local work group discussions, as applicable. The planning process was tailored to meet the specific needs, goals, and opportunities that local stakeholders identified.

The process used in Sylva was abbreviated a bit and more closely followed the Main Street model—a five-year strategic planning process for the Main Street committees and Board that occurred at the same time as this planning effort. This said—the CORE process was also simultaneous to and an important part of the Jackson County CORE planning process.

A listing of the kinds of organizations, roles in the outdoor recreation economy and expertise in a particular sport were reviewed by the local coordinator. A diverse work group willing to take the time to assist in planning was assembled.

The Sylva Work Group was coordinated by the Sylva Economic Development Director and Main Street Sylva Manager. Active members represent Jackson County Economic Development, Tuckasegee Fly Shop, Balsam Falls Brewing, Black Balsam Outdoors, Motion Makers in Sylva and Asheville, Nantahala Section of SORBA, the Pinnacle Park Foundation, Sylva Town Council and the Friends of Panthertown.

Work Group meetings were held March 2, May 4 and June 22. An April meeting was planned but coincided with a Pinnacle Park environmental study report to the Town Council. There was a lot of parallel outdoor planning going on in Sylva at this time!

Work began with a discussion of the types of activity available and which to be considered under outdoor recreation. A list of activities accommodated in Sylva and within proximity was generated. This list is available in the meeting notes in the appendix at the end of this report.

The chart below shows results from the analysis of Sylva outdoor strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) and sacred assets. Because of a full house crowd at the first work group meeting, the team moved quickly into defining the outdoor economic drivers that underpin the CORE strategies for increasing economic benefits—tourism/experiences, retail, manufacturing and workforce/culture/quality of life development.

SYLVA OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMY ANALYSIS Worksheet

What do we do really well in the OR world?		What could be done better or is missing?	
restaurants * breweries * events * supply hub - gas, food, etc. * guide services * Base Camp Cullowhee * in center of best OR on E Coast *	proximity to public lands * fly fishing * center of mountain biking mecca * ridgeline conservation *	easier hiking trails * connections between town and trails * coordination/networking of OR enthusiasts and businesses * Greenway development * transportation w/o car * over-use of some areas *	destination development * build out range of beginner to advanced-- climbing, mtn bike, etc. * water quality + access to Scott's Creek * advertise space for manufacturing *
What Opportunities exist or Gaps can we fill?		What conditions work against us?	
Nature appreciation and education as attraction + for youth training * Easy trail connection to Dillsboro * revive Middle of the Most * make connections between existing facilities - Pinnacle Park + Fire Mtn * Fishing racks on rental bikes * replace temp bridge between Dillsboro and Sylva in Monteith Park * Waterrock Knob access area *	Regular monthly OR networking schedule * Organizational networking for joint volunteer recruitment, etc. * develop location for ebikes (WCU?) * recreation training center - all season * equipment rental or lending library * horse riding and camping * informal overnighing at Monteith or Mark Watson??	Steepness of terrain makes activities more difficult than usual visitors can do * equipment is expensive when don't know if will enjoy the activity *	E-bikes not allowed in USFS, GSMNP
What is sacred, not to be done or shared or already endangered?			
Black Rock access just needs to be controlled * Consider EBCI priorities			

Identification of “Economic drivers” answers the question—what brings outdoor recreators to Sylva. The primary attraction is its proximity to public lands including the Blue Ridge Parkway,

GSMNP, Nantahala National Forest, Tuckasegee River and others attractions often depending on the preferred sport. Sylva's role in these outdoor adventures includes being the starting point or homebase to go out like spokes to activities throughout the region, then back for lodging, restaurants and entertainment. Events like the music series by the river is important to attracting visitors to come back in the evening to stay. The Work Group declared Sylva to be surrounded by the best outdoor recreation on the East Coast. Fly fishing on the Blueway was credited with being well organized, accessible to visitors and promoted. There was some question about whether it was perhaps promoted a bit too well to have discouraged locals away from the most popular locations. The Tuckasegee Fly Shop invested in Sylva specifically for the blueway exposure and offers guides to lesser-known streams and spots. The development of Fire Mountain, proximity to Tsali and WCU trails, make Sylva the center of a mountain biking "mecca".

A series of very special but not always monumental destinations was identified during the Jackson County CORE asset inventory. Similar to that group, the Sylva team recognized how many of the experiences are best for smaller groups and advanced-skill recreators. Not having a singular attraction is perhaps the reason that Sylva does not already have a fully-defined image in the greater recreation community.

Conservation of land along the Plott Balsam and Great Balsam ridgelines was noted as a source of pride, working to ensure that Sylva maintains uninterrupted mountain views. The efforts are still on-going as critical parcels remain available for development.

Challenges included some lifestyle considerations--the inability to get around without a car or to access trails without driving 45 minutes to a remote trailhead. The desire to also offer more recreation for families, seniors and the traditional visitor profile was a priority. The team preferred to focus on the quality of experiences over the quantity of additional guests. Concern was expressed about the cost of access to gear that would discourage local residents and young people from trying and developing the skills necessary to enjoy these activities. This was noted as a concern for developing an engaged outdoor workforce and entrepreneurial businesses. It is difficult to be passionate about something never experienced or skills not developed.

Information from the studies done by the Jackson County Tourism Development Authority (YSI Destination Development) documented a need for more off-season activities as well as attractions for children, youth and families to do in all seasons. Existing visitors enjoy attending cultural events, themed experiences and expressed possible interest in a water park. Most important are the beautiful scenery, nature/wildlife experiences, nature trails and the ability to relax in a natural environment.

Throughout the process there was excellent participation from the outdoor business community in downtown. A survey was prepared for discussion at the April meeting but it was instead distributed via email to the four outdoor-facing businesses in the work group. Responses supported the information shared at the planning meetings and informed the work plans. More information can be found in the meeting minutes in the Appendix.

Stakeholders, including knowledgeable local recreators, WCU staff, former businesses and supporting organizations, were interviewed as part of the Jackson County CORE planning effort. With the Sylva coordinator participating in both processes, these results and information were shared to also inform the Sylva work plan. The Chamber of Commerce and Jackson County Tourism Development Authority were consulted regarding the work plans and project priorities as they are critical players in plan implementation.

Several meetings included discussion about e-bikes. Although they are not allowed on remote trails in the National Park and Forest, they do help address some of the town issues. They provide the ‘tailwind’ for lesser athletes to get up a street that leads to the river. One business expressed interest in developing additional rides on area back roads during safer hours.

Economic Positioning Statement

Sylva CORE Economic Positioning Statement/Vision:

Sylva is recognized as the Hub of outdoor recreation activity for the far west mountains. In Sylva all residents enjoy outdoor recreation as part of their daily lives, an entrepreneurial outdoor culture enlivens the downtown, residents and visitors are fluent in natural and cultural resource understanding and active in their stewardship.

This economic positioning statement is important in the identification of how the Town of Sylva fits within Jackson County and the larger regional outdoor economy. It articulates what the Work Group saw as the greatest strengths and unique role that Sylva plays, and can expand on, for greater benefit. It is visionary as it is stated as an accomplished condition. The position also includes three strategies or areas of action that will move the Town toward the accomplishment of the position. The four strategies are underlined in the Economic Position and outlined in more detail below.

More information on the evolution of the economic position and strategies can be found in the meeting notes in the Appendix. Here is an abbreviated list of what the Work Group discussed as part of each strategy, followed by the work plan for it. The work plans that follow are a starting place for action in the coming few years and are expected to evolve as groups further engage in and develop the tasks outlined.

Strategy: Incorporate outdoor recreation into the lives of all residents

This strategy directly addresses the desire for Sylva to become more connected for those on foot and bicycle—children, seniors, people without vehicles or preferring not to drive. Connections was the most frequently used word in work planning! Plans have been developed for improved hike/bike infrastructure and this strategy increases the priority for their implementation. Trail connections, or safe and enjoyable route identification, to Pinnacle Park, the Tuckasegee River, WCU trails and the greenway are critical to functioning as the outdoor recreation hospitality hub and should then expand to other destinations as possible. Also important is the connection of residents into Sylva for services—groceries, shopping, work and entertainment.



The continued improvement of water quality in Scotts Creek is part of this strategy with the goal of creating a family river access and floating opportunities from downtown to Dillsboro and the Tuckasegee river. Initial tasks include the implementation of the environmentally sustainable development plans for Bridge Park.

Additional research is part of the action to expand recreation facilities in downtown—especially to serve as beginner learning opportunities and rainy-day entertainment. While climbing is a huge attraction in the County, the climbs are difficult. Feasibility analysis of a climbing center is desired. Mountain biking is another sport that currently requires an advanced skill level with very limited opportunities for beginners to learn and hone skills as may be offered by a pump track. The new half-pipe behind Motion-Makers is a first step for developing such skills.

Access to the necessary equipment is important for local residents and beginners who want to try a sport before investing. One idea discussed was a lending program possibly coordinated with WCU and/or the addition of more rental services in outdoor businesses.

Strategy: Develop an entrepreneurial outdoor culture

Downtown Sylva is the outfitting and social center for outdoor activity. This strategy addresses the desire to grow the businesses and services offered in support of outdoor recreation. Taking

a page from the development of the regional Outdoor Business Alliance the first action proposed is to convene all of those involved in supporting outdoor recreation. The discussion of business needs and opportunity gaps will guide the development of a business support program—possibly including recruitment or expansion or maybe coordination of supply and work force needs.



Social engagement is seen as a way to fuel passion and expand the circle of potential entrepreneurs, workers, facility developers and maintainers. It is important to share stories from recent adventures. Proposed actions include informal social gatherings—drop in at a brewery and development of recreation-oriented events. These events may focus directly on the outdoor businesses and their supported activities or be added to already occurring events to bring in more recreation enthusiasts—a trail run or bike ride before a craft or music event. One possibility was to reimagine the Hook, Line and Drinker as an outdoor expo.

Strategy: Make Sylva an outdoor education destination

One of the unique opportunities for Sylva is access to the resident population of engaged local experts and faculty from Western Carolina University. Development of a coordinated program of educational activities and guided small group tours will make the Sylva outdoors available all year around. The more that residents and visitors know about the unique history, ecological diversity, use of natural materials in craft and architecture, the greater will be the feeling of ownership, pride and belonging.

Actions proposed include the development of an Outdoor Education Association that may initially convene all organizations and experts to share current engagement and programming but also to identify opportunities to tell additional stories, generate a bit of income and access those natural resources that are too fragile to withstand general public promotion. The Pinnacle Park plan will identify several such opportunities with the environmental diversity already inventoried.



A second action is to expand guide services and programming for all seasons, supporting those businesses challenged by the seasonal nature of tourism. Intent is to develop additional income opportunities for potential guides as well. Coordination of who, when, where and how often

will require consultation with resource managers. Local hospitality may be interested in offering packages or hosting particular programs during slow times.

An immediate action is to contact Landmark Learning about relocation plans and assisting to ensure they remain in the Sylva area. Their programs are important to this Strategy and also the Jackson County strategy of developing an Outdoor Youth Council to promote learning for younger residents.

Strategy: Brand the Sylva outdoor experience

This final strategy addresses the desire to become better known as a recreation destination with Sylva as headquarters. The County already has an established “Play On” brand that might be adapted and applied specifically to outdoor recreation and the Town of Sylva. The Jackson County TDA expressed interest in developing such a brand and taglines. Applications will include signage on highways and trails as well as social media.



Part of the branding is anticipated to include the development of a signature outdoor event to be associated directly with downtown Sylva.

Sylva serves many different outdoor destinations. It is easier to tag and be known for one primary destination—like Mt. Mitchell or the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Branding discussion and options should present a fun challenge. Sylva is the first community after the Blue Ridge Parkway crosses Balsam gap. It is the gateway to the farthest western counties—those counties that visitors must consciously decide to visit.



Town of Sylva Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies

Outdoor Economic Position:

Sylva is recognized as the HUB of Outdoor Recreation activities for (the far west mountains). In Sylva all residents enjoy outdoor recreation as part of their daily lives, an entrepreneurial outdoor culture enlivens the downtown, residents and visitors are fluent in natural (and cultural) resource understanding and active in their stewardship.

Implementation Plan

On the following pages are the Strategies with corresponding Actions and Tasks to bring the vision or economic position to fruition. These work plans are anticipated to evolve as work begins in earnest identifying a need for additional expertise on the team as well as opportunities or roadblocks arise. This is considered a five-year plan for planning purposes!

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

Incorporate Outdoor Recreation into the Lives of all Residents

Action	Task	Convener	Timeframe	Partners
Connect Downtown and Outdoor Recreation destinations				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Work with County to finalize and continue implementing the Greenway plan, prioritize sections, signs, map * Develop a safe, enjoyable bike/walk loop route between Sylva and Dillsboro * Plan for and develop an entrance to Pinnacle Park IN Sylva * Sign a bike route from downtown to CJ Harris boat launch via Savannah/Yellow Bird 	Sylva Econ Dev	A	JCEDC, JC Planning, JC Parks & Rec Greenways Comm, JCTDA, Chambers of Commerce
Plan, Design, Build additional, sustainable bike/hike infrastructure				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Participate in Pinnacle Park planning and development to ensure variety of activities & difficulties, parking, trailhead signage, all respecting sustainability * Pursue connections with Fire Mountain and Waterrock Knob, advocate for trailhead on Jackson County side * Assemble and coordinate volunteers for maintenance 	Sylva Econ Dev	B	Pinnacle Park Foundation and Advisory Comm, JC Parks & Rec, Sylva Public Works, Stewardship Council, etc.
Continue work on Scotts Creek access in Bridge Park				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Fundraise for master plan implementation * Implement Trash Trout and filter system to improve water quality, monitor progress * Program as family river destination, work with Dillsboro, connect to Greenway, bike routes 	Sylva Main Street	A	Sylva Public Works, Town of Dillsboro, JC Parks & Rec

Expand Outdoor Recreation opportunities in Sylva downtown

- * Construct East LaPorte Pump Track for Bike skills training
- * Research facilities like a climbing (training) wall in other communities (caverns under Lexington KY, Roanoke, VA) for possible development in Sylva-- off-season and rain activity areas, beginner training and exposure

Sylva Econ Dev

A/B

JC Parks & Rec

Develop an Entrepreneurial Outdoor Culture

Action	Task	Convener	Timeframe	Partners
Convene and Strategize with Local Partners				
* Reconvene Hub team for discussion with outdoor focus, identify needed business support services		Sylva Econ Dev	A	JC Econ Dev, Town of Sylva + Main Street, JCTDA, Chambers of Commerce, WCU program staff, SWC, SBC, SBTDC, outdoor businesses, Outdoor Business Alliance, etc.
* Identify target services, business opportunities, general space needs/availability, recruitment strategy				
Create focused outdoor business development effort				
* Develop property owner relationships to help recruit outdoor retailers, guide services, outfitters, sport and health-related businesses		Sylva Main Street	A	Sylva Econ Dev, SBC, SBTDC, outdoor businesses, Outdoor Business Alliance, Chambers, JCTDA, etc.
* Maintain database of properties and conditions				
* Train outdoor ambassadors - like 'I speak fishing'				

- * Review Retail Market analysis for business (expansion) opportunities, discuss with existing businesses
- * Research and consider new supportive policies, incentives

Use events to build, expand the recreation community

- * Evaluate existing and potential events - goals, locations, schedules, work load, partnerships, engage local experts and celebrities
- * Brainstorm new stand-alone event and/or outdoor activity additions to existing events
- * Consider entrepreneurial activities in events
- * Develop outdoor calendar, appropriate outreach, volunteer pool, partnerships

Sylva Main Street

A

JC Parks + Rec, JCTDA, Chambers of Commerce, outdoor businesses and organizations

Host informal, social convenings

- * Develop organizing core group for informal social convenings on a regular schedule in Sylva
- * Coordinate with and host Outdoor Stewardship Council in Sylva, broaden network as possible

Sylva Econ Dev

A

Sylva Main Street committees, outdoor businesses, organizations, stewards + Council, WCU, Resource Managers, celebrities, OBA/OGB, etc.

Develop Sylva as an Outdoor Education Destination

Action	Task	Convener	Timeframe	Partners
Assist Landmark Learning to relocate in Sylva				
	* Consult on relocation needs and possible assistance	Sylva Econ Dev	A	Main Street Sylva + JC Econ Dev
	* Identify suitable locations and conditions			
Develop an Outdoor Education Association				
	* Identify players and convene, share existing programs, ideas then establish goals/purpose, strategize and problem solve	Sylva Econ Dev	A	JC Parks Rec, JC Econ Dev, Sylva Main Street, JCTDA, Chambers of Commerce, WCU, SEC Swain, others
	* Work with JC Parks & Recreation on establishment of the Youth Outdoor Council and development of new educational guide services and programs. Make contacts interested in overnight activities or those most likely to engage a local business for equipment, support.			
	* Identify local hospitality and outdoor businesses with possible interest in packaged educational program participation			
Expand Guide Services + Outdoor programming for all seasons				
	* Work with JC Parks + Rec, outdoor businesses, guides, resource providers, scientists, WCU faculty, naturalists, historians, retired experts, enthusiasts to discuss ideas, challenges, opportunities, best practices for unique JC programs	Sylva Econ Dev + JC Econ Dev + JC Parks & Rec	B	Many! Businesses, educational institutions, JCTDA, USFS, Land Trusts, Wildlife Resources, Conservation, Recreation organizations, Chambers...
	* Identify potential sites, experiences for interpretation, underutilized facilities for programs and capacities			
	* Establish carrying capacity, timeframes, feasibility, accessibility, etc.			
	* Discuss quality control - of resources, experiences, guide service, presentations/content, etc.			

- * Research business/organizational models to offer for income - for-profit businesses, cooperatives, concierge, Parks & Rec programming, WCU/SWC courses, etc.
- * Begin Kayak rolling classes in new pool - winter 2024

Brand the Sylva Outdoor Experience

Action	Task	Convener	Timeframe	Partners
Identify the Sylva Outdoor Brand				
	* Assemble a Team - Marketing & Promotions, TDA, Chamber, outdoor businesses, engaged others plus outdoor brand team from JC CORE			
	* Research similar town brands and how fit in with regional efforts			JCEDC, JCTDA, Chambers of Commerce, JC Parks & Rec, trail managers, etc.
	* Consider how and where to use new brand - signs (cars, bikes, peds), trail blazes, business recruitment, video/social media, maps, etc.	Sylva Econ Dev + Main Street	A	
	* RFQ for consultant to assist - based on the JC TDA Play-On develop an outdoor recreation brand adaptation, tagline, graphic scheme and promotional adaptations			
Create a signature outdoor event (replace Hook, Line & Drinker)				
	* Research what other communities do and the type of event best suited for Sylva's business and outdoor community			JC Econ Dev, Town of Sylva Econ Dev, JCTDA, Chambers of Commerce
	* Contact Outdoor Business Alliance, others regarding Outdoor Expo event	Sylva Main Street	A	

- * Explore outdoor film and other festival ideas as well as outdoor components to existing events

Install gateway signage and landscaping

- * Using new outdoor brand - design + install at 441 entering JC
- * Install similar on Hwy 74 entering from east and west

JC + Sylva EDC

B

JCTDA, Chambers, NC
DOT, JC Public Works

Develop coordinated social media (video) promotion

- * Collect existing videos on recreation + JC
- * Identify gaps in locations/activities to promote, target audiences and experience interests
- * Video, edit according to target audiences needs
- * Post, distribute to target audiences, local business websites

Corey Bryson,
Sylva Main Street

A

JCTDA, Chambers,
recreation
organizations,
Stewardship Council,
Southwestern
Commission, others

Sylva CORE Work Plan Economic Benefits

(priorities from Work Group Survey)

Strategy + Action proposed	Greater Quality of Life	Increased revenue for existing businesses	Culture + Workforce Development
Incorporate Outdoor Recreation into the Lives of all Residents			
Connect Downtown and Outdoor Recreation destinations	x	x	x
Plan, design & build additional, sustainable bike/hike infrastructure	x		x
Continue work on Scotts Creek access in Bridge Park	x		
Expand Outdoor Recreation opportunities in Sylva downtown	x	x	x
Develop an Entrepreneurial Outdoor Culture			
Convene and Strategize with Local Partners		x	x
Create focused outdoor business development effort		x	
Use events to build, expand the recreation community	x	x	x
Host informal, social convenings	x	x	x
Develop Sylva as an Outdoor Education Destination			
Assist Landmark Learning to relocate in Sylva			x
Develop an Outdoor Education Association	x		x
Expand Guide Services + Outdoor programming for all seasons		x	x
Brand the Sylva Outdoor Experience			
Identify the Sylva Outdoor Brand		x	x
Create a signature outdoor event	x	x	x
Install gateway signage and landscaping			x
Develop coordinated social media (video) promotion		x	x

Plan Review and Adoption

The draft Work Plan was shared with Sylva Town Council on August 24, 2023. The Main Street program uses the implementation plan chart as their entire work planning document. The EDA grant requires this report to accompany the plan.

Implementation is already underway as discussed below.

Plan Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

The Town of Sylva will be responsible for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting accomplishments on the actions of this plan to the Rural Economic Development Division.

Plan Implementation

Maintaining a dedicated group to follow through after the planning process to begin addressing goals and objectives outlined in this plan is critical to attaining the potential economic impact of these strategies. This could be the same work group that helped develop this plan, or another similar group that is representative of the community and can advance the goals of this plan. The sustained presence of such a group builds ‘social capital’ within the group that improves their ability to work together and effectively address common goals. Furthermore, a dedicated group ensures continuity from planning stage through implementation, provides accountability to ensure that objectives are being met, and allows the community to react and respond quickly when an opportunity is presented. But this group should not be the sole entity responsible for implementing all the goals of the plan. Instead, the group should function as a convener and point of contact to connect to other individuals, organizations, and resources to help the broader community achieve these goals. Maintaining a regular meeting schedule will also help to increase the effectiveness of the group, and the overall plan.

Sylva, as a part of the Jackson County team is moving directly into implementation by participating in the Building Outdoor Communities (BOC) program offered by Mountain BizWorks. It is hoped that this process will focus a bit more on the physical infrastructure needed to support quality outdoor recreation complimenting the organizational and programmatic work to impact the economy as addressed here. A tool for evaluating the economic impacts of additional trails and facilities is being developed by Appalachian State University. This tool may also assist with evaluating which facilities to build first for the greatest impact.

The CORE Work Group may be supplemented for this process with additional expert athletes, trail builders and maintainers and resource managers. Western Carolina University was the initial applicant with Jackson County.

Pinnacle Park planning is also in full swing and should include the connections into downtown Sylva, support for a wider-range-of-challenge hiking and biking experiences, possibly include snorkeling opportunities and nature study and also make trail connections to destinations like Fire Mountain, WCU and Waterrock Knob that will increase Sylva’s role as the hospitality hub for experiences not available elsewhere in the region and help create the image.

A gathering is already being planned for the initial Jackson County Stewardship Council in early 2024 that may help Sylva develop further as a nature education destination.

Jackson County CORE and Sylva Main Street have also developed work plans driven by desired economic positions in the outdoor recreation economy. Coordinated implementation by all three groups will allow for faster and more effective results!

Jackson County CORE

Economic Position/Vision: Jackson County is our western North Carolina home basecamp and natural escape with a diverse outdoor recreation scene providing unique experiences everyone can call their own.

Main Street Sylva

Economic Positioning/Vision: *Nestled between the Great Smoky Mountains and the Blue Ridge Parkway, Sylva, NC is the heart of a renewed Appalachian culture blending our rich mountain heritage with our outdoor recreational resources and embracing our independent businesses. Downtown is the host for quality experiences for everyone to visit and call home.*

Organized a bit differently for the four committees, the second strategy for Sylva Main Street is: **Downtown Sylva is the place for outdoor recreational resources.**

Goal: Downtown will be the conduit for connecting people with outdoor recreation from trout fishing to a stroll in the park and anything in between.

Objectives: To grow downtown commerce over the next five years that connects people from downtown to the outdoors. Transit options, Physical Connections (Walk/Bike), Expand equipment rental options.

The strategies to be developed are underlined in the economic positioning statements. They align well with Sylva’s CORE work plan Actions and Tasks. The chart below shows how well these economic positioning statements support each other. Accomplishment of joint tasks expands the implementation workforce while also allowing each group to check them off the list! Often the tasks listed expand the impact and depth of the actions. While Sylva CORE team will be working to create an outdoor business development program, the Sylva Main Street Economic Vitality committee will be working on incentives, growth assistance and growth tools for all businesses.

Work Plan Implementation Coordination

Jackson County CORE	Town of Sylva CORE	Sylva Main Street
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Increase connections between Towns + recreational assets . Support Pinnacle Park planning + implementation . Develop family + less-challenging outdoor recreation opportunities 	<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">Incorporate outdoor recreation into lives of all residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Connect downtown + outdoor rec destinations . Additional, sustainable bike/hike infrastructure . Scotts Creek access in Bridge Park . Expand outdoor recreation facilities in downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Physical connections from downtown to surrounding resources . Expand rental options for recreational equipment . Engage locals to be part of downtown culture - invest, support
<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">A diverse outdoor recreational scene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Convene/Nurture outdoor social network . Expand small audience experiences + income opportunities 	<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">Develop an Entrepreneurial Outdoor Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Convene local Partners to strategize . Create outdoor business development program . Use events to build recreation community . Host informal social convenings 	<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">Embracing independent businesses to thrive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Incentives, assistance, growth tools
<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">JC is Home basecamp + Natural Escape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Establish Outdoor Youth Council . Expand small audience experiences + income opportunities 	<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">Sylva becomes outdoor education destination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Develop an Outdoor Education Association . Expand Guide services + programming for all seasons . Assist Landmark Learning relocation in Sylva 	<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">Downtown is the heart of a renewed Appalachian culture</p>
<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">JC Outdoor Branding + Info Sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Develop outdoor brand for Jackson County . Install trail + activity information kiosks . Implement directional signage program . Develop social media monitoring strategy 	<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">Brand the Sylva outdoor experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Identify Sylva Outdoor brand . Create signature outdoor event . Install gateway signage, landscaping . Develop coordinated social media promotion 	<p style="background-color: #003366; color: white; padding: 2px;">Downtown is host for quality experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Host quality events

Corresponding Strategies

- . Supporting Actions

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular monitoring and evaluation to review progress on the goals, objectives, and action steps in this plan, via regular review sessions with the Strategic Planning team and other community stakeholders, is critical to ensuring it remains a viable, living document. Rural Economic Development staff will periodically communicate and provide assistance as needed to help advance the goals and document the outcomes of the plan.

The Rural Planning staff looks forward to being part of the implementation process. As resources are discovered, they will be shared with the Work Group. There is also work being done within Rural Economic Development to be able to offer CORE communities access to some assistance from Universities across the state. Assistance may include services like schematic design guidance, feasibility analyses, asset mapping, etc. and include opportunity for a field trip to a not-too-distant destination for consultation with another community successfully implementing projects Sylva may be developing.

Economic Focus Areas

The CORE process economic development strategy focuses on leveraging outdoor recreation assets to increase tourism, encourage small business development, enhance quality of life for residents, plan for asset and infrastructure development, and/or position communities to grow and attract outdoor product manufacturing industries. Within these focus areas, broad strategies and specific projects are identified. Each topic below provides supplemental information about a specific strategy, action or task identified in the implementation plan chart.



Tourism and Experiences

The focus for the Sylva Work Group was not on the increase of visitors to Sylva but engaging the visitors to develop a sense of Sylva as a respected home away from home. The strategy to develop Sylva as an outdoor educational destination seeks to provide additional programs and experiences that deepen a visitors’ understanding and appreciation of the natural environment, local history of place and people. The expansion of access to knowledgeable guides, topical experts and small group tours or activities is intended to foster personal relationships and build the outdoor culture that encourages stewardship.

The Jackson County Tourism Development Authority (JCTDA) has done extensive research into visitors, their activities and levels of satisfaction. It was shared that the County maintains a higher than average occupancy rate in local accommodations. This signals a shortage but the traditional hotel and motel chains are not interested in building more capacity. Instead the challenge becomes provision of the full range of accommodations desired one local property owner at a time. Indeed in 2022 AirBnB reported that Jackson County host revenue was \$11,164,000 and yielded \$669,840 in Bed Taxes at the 6% rate . The \$11M represents almost ten percent of the total lodging spending in the County.

- If Income from Visitors is an economic priority, actions might include:
- Attract more visitors (assumes capacity)
 - More or targeted Marketing
 - Keep existing visitors longer
 - More of existing experiences
 - Different, complimentary experiences
 - Increase spending levels of visitors
 - More to spend \$\$ on
 - More expensive offerings
 - More overnight stays

Retail and Small Business Development

The Sylva Work Group was fortunate to have four small businesses active in the planning process. Specific questions were asked of these businesses and their guidance is documented in the meeting notes in the Appendix.

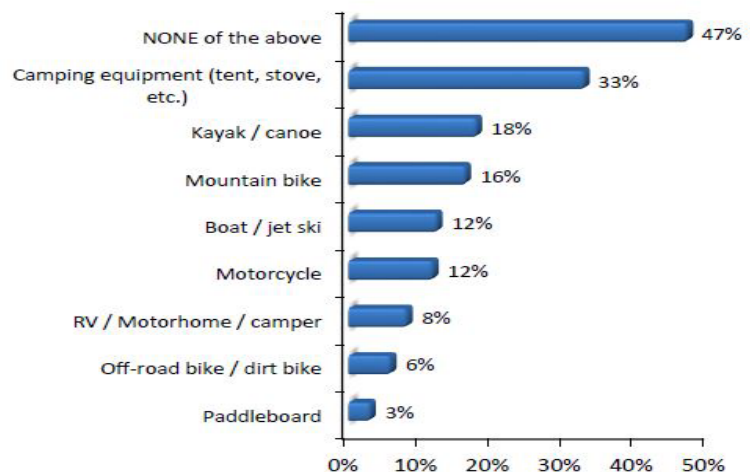
According to VisitNC research, visitors to Jackson County spent over \$64M for recreational activities in 2022. Another almost \$40M was spent on retail purchases—which we know to have included recreational gear and clothing. Lodging \$115.6M and Food & Beverage \$129.5M were the largest spending categories for Jackson County Visitors.

The provision of greater access to outdoor gear is a desired action. Evidence of need comes from JCTDA research by Young Strategies, Inc. showing that most visitors do not have their own gear to be able to participate in the many outdoor activities available to them. This is also an issue for local people, especially youth, who may be interested in trying a sport before investing in gear.

Retail/Small Business Strategies may include:

- Develop/Recruit more OR businesses.
- Fill gaps in goods, services, experiences offered.
- Grow current businesses and incomes.
- Develop destination business(es).
- Other

Do you or anyone in your travel party own any of the following:
n=531



Retail Market Analysis Summary – Claritas March 2023

A Retail Market Analysis for Sylva was performed by Main Street & Rural Planning staff. Data was provided by Claritas and pulled in March 2023. Looking at the summary below—a retail **gap** shows potential for growth while a **surplus** often signals an area of existing economic strength—an attractor. NC Main Street program uses the gap to calculate sales space growth potential for each item classification.

In a 10-mile ring around the Sylva Ingles store there is:

Total Retail Gap (*unmet mkt needs*) of **\$49,559,755**

Clothing	\$13,744,485	10% capture may support 4,581 SF
Shoes	\$ 1,736,686	10% capture may support 579 SF
Sporting Goods	\$ 3,558,598	10% capture may support 1,186 SF

Total Retail Surplus (*exceeds expected need by population*) of **\$48,106,954**

Gift, Novelty and Souvenirs	\$ 355,641
Full-Service Restaurants	\$ 7,999,999
Limited Service Restaurants	\$ 5,819,296

And then there is also projected growth—over \$19.3M in additional sales is anticipated in 2027 over 2022 figures.

Sylva Retail Marketplace Recommendations

1. Retail Gap

Retail gaps exist in furniture, home furnishings, appliances, electronics, nursery, garden and farm supply stores, specialty foods, beer, wine and liquor, pharmacies and drug stores, cosmetics and beauty stores, clothing, shoes, jewelry, luggage and leather goods, sporting goods, hobby, toy and game stores, office supplies and pet and pet supplies stores.

A Google search revealed seven pharmacies located in Sylva, but there remains business potential. Nine downtown clothing stores were counted, but there remains business potential in family clothing. When you see smaller gaps, it provides potential for existing businesses to add lines such as a clothing store adding jewelry and shoes.

2. Retail Surplus

Surplus sales were seen for home centers, paint and wallpaper, hardware, groceries, gift and novelty stores, used merchandise and full and limited- service restaurants. Eight downtown furniture/home furnishing stores contribute to this surplus. Lowe’s Home Improvement and TC Pro Hardware are being picked up in the paint and wallpaper store measurement. Four major grocers contribute to the grocery surplus. Sylva has a significant number of full-service restaurants (14 counted downtown) plus fifteen fast food outlets accounted for in the limited-service restaurant surpluses.

Retail surplus sales mean that Sylva is attracting a disproportionate number of sales in these categories and can support additional businesses in these categories. The downtown

attractions noted through Trip Advisor (below) provide potential consumers for these businesses, especially downtown restaurants.

Couple the above information with the retail demand growth reports to support your recruitment efforts.

3. Outdoor Recreation

Sporting goods shows a retail gap of **\$3,558,598** within the 10-mile measurement. Outdoor recreation is a major objective of Sylva and Jackson County economic development. Several downtown and area Sylva businesses are dedicated to outdoor recreation either with clothing, bike shops or fishing equipment. The retail gap shows that business potential still exists in this category.

4. Walkability and Bikeability

The Downtown Sylva Walkscore of 51 is just above average. Concerning bikeability, Downtown Sylva scores a 22, far below average. Improving the walkability of your downtown will help elevate this score and make it more attractive to new residents. You will want to work with the local NCDOT division to incorporate bike lanes into their streets in downtown as well as those controlled by the Town of Sylva.

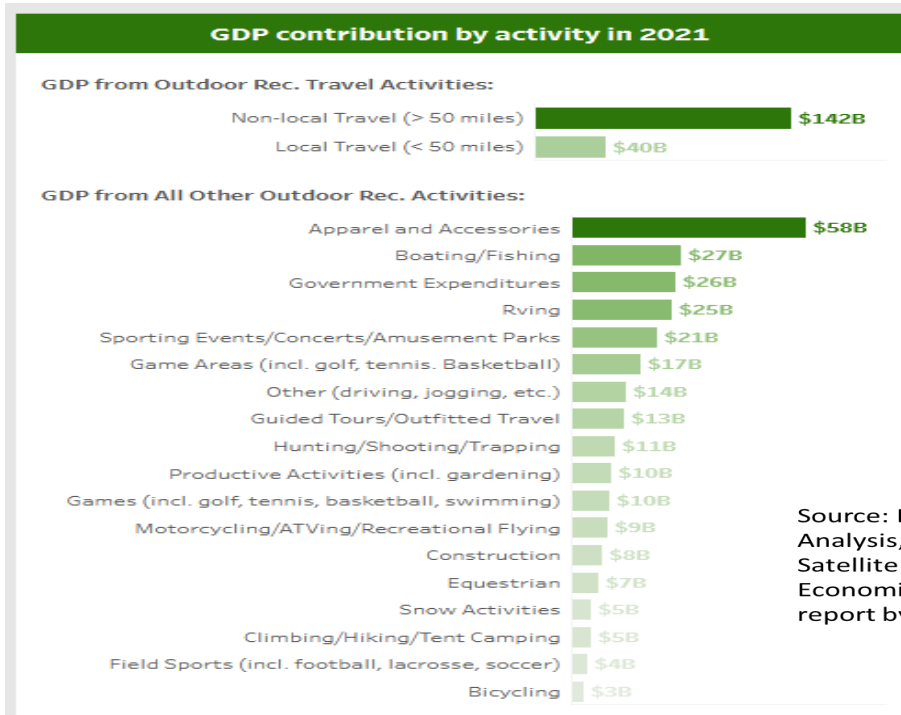
According to a study by real estate advising company Robert Charles Lesser & Co., homebuyers are increasingly looking for green space and trail systems for walking, running, and biking. In fact, green space and trail systems were the No. 1 and No. 2 desirable community features in this referenced article---Source: New Home Source:

<https://www.newhomesource.com/learn/top-community-amenities/>

In addition to the walking and biking trail amenities, the #3 amenity that new homeowners want is: ***Main street village centers with retail services and cafes for gathering and socializing.*** Downtown Sylva fits the #3 desired community amenity. The Town of Sylva should want to see ways to increase walkability and biking options to meet consumer demands.

A more thorough review of the data may be valuable in guiding the Action: Create a focused outdoor business development effort. The Main Street Economic Vitality committee can be engaged for this analysis and especially “ground-truthing” the data and considering how much of a category might be need for recreation-oriented product versus other kinds of apparel and shoes.

Sylva readily accepts its Home Base Camp role as defined by the Jackson County CORE plan. Although food is already a major anchor, it is possible that variety can still be expanded!



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account and Regional Economic Accounts. Included in a report by Headwaters Economics

Outdoor Recreation Product Manufacturing

There is potential for increased manufacturing of outdoor recreation products, including supply chain materials, across the state of North Carolina. Attention should be paid both from a perspective of attracting an existing company to expand their operations in the community, or for a local startup business to emerge. Of the total \$11.8+ billion impact that outdoor recreation contributes to the state’s annual GDP, more than \$1.7 billion of that is contributed from manufacturing. This sector employs over 8,000 people.

- If Rec manufacturing is a priority:**
- Find and nurture local makers - most likely micro-preneurs.
 - Network businesses – creating culture, density, workforce
 - Identify support services – building supply chains, local B2B opportunities
 - Inventory appropriate buildings, locations ready
 - Do targeted recruitment

Two identified local manufacturers of outdoor gear:

- A1 Marine
- Shira Forge

Although manufacturing was not a top priority for the Work Group, the idea of a network to support both business and industry is in the work plan. There are also plans to identify space that might be suitable for a small manufacturer in downtown.

Outdoor Culture, Workforce and Quality of Life

The strategy to make outdoor recreation part of everyday life speaks directly to improved health and quality of life. The pandemic made clear the critical importance of recreation, especially in the outdoors for mental, social and physical health.

Improving quality of life is the best way to recruit a workforce, bring students home after college or to raise children. Outdoor businesses are especially sensitive to being able to enjoy their sport on a regular basis and need that opportunity to help recruit staff. They work hard and play hard!

The development of an outdoor culture is specifically identified for action. This is intended to engage youth, develop social and business networks and create an outdoor community in Sylva. Nature education also supports the development of this culture.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Development

Development of new or improved facilities is not the focus that emerged in this strategic planning process. However, the Pinnacle Park Master Plan will be suggesting new and improved facilities on that site. And one of the action priorities is the connection for Pinnacle Park and other outdoor recreation assets into downtown Sylva. This includes the identification of walking and biking routes with proper signage as well as completion of the greenway and trail system—that is indeed infrastructure, just as are roads and internet access.

Several facilities-related work items and ideas came up during the SWOT exercise including:

- Clean up Scotts Creek, provide better access along the creek to the Tuckasegee River
- Improve trail head access at Fisher Creek Road
- Develop some new activities like maybe:
 - Hang gliding from Jackson County airport

Development of the Outdoor Culture and Workforce may include:

Engage Local Residents:

- Access to the environment, skills and experiences as part of everyday life
- Make it easy to try new things – instruction, access to equipment
- Look for those who are curious – how do things work, why, how to improve
- Offer Entrepreneurial or Problem-addressing opportunities
- Provide access to role models
- Help discover their passion and make it a life focus

Create an outdoor network:

Social opportunities to meet and hang out with people who have the same drive and passion, feature local celebrities to share the journey, develop mentors and ambassadors.

- 360 climbing wall in downtown – businesses sell lots of climbing gear, rainy day activity
 - Beginner climbers interested, but rock faces are for advanced climbers
 - Engage Carolina Climbers Coalition regarding need
- Develop an Outdoor Recreation training center for many activities
 - Program pool for winter kayak roll classes
- Consider bouldering opportunities at Pinnacle Park – if appropriate and available
- Build a pump track for beginner mountain bikers
 - Something for the next level BMX rider
 - Hire programmer to keep the pump track active
- Create an Outdoor Gear lending library
- Add fishing gear racks/rod mounts for bicycles
- Expand options for E-Bikes – offer a menu of available trails and routes
 - Are allowed on WCU trails but not USFS, GSMNP
 - More hunters might use e-bikes
 - Guided rides can be organized on country roads during safe hours

In addition to the idea list above, the Building Outdoor Communities program is anticipated to focus more on the identification of further facilities and improvements. Jackson County has identified three river sites for potential new recreation facilities and experiences. Sylva might lobby for training facilities to be located downtown as well as the inclusion of trail connections in every development plan.

With the increased interest in outdoor recreation during the Year of the Trail and since the pandemic, many new sources of funding have become available and are still being developed. This is a great time to be implementing outdoor recreation plans. A listing of current funding sources can be found in the appendix although it is not comprehensive and new programs will come online soon.



SYLVA

CREATING OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIES

APPENDIX



Appendix Table of Contents

Activities + Outdoor Recreation Assets	44
Meeting Notes	46
Retail Market Analysis	51
Outdoor Recreation Funding	63

Outdoor Assets and Business listings

Jackson County Outdoor Asset Identification

Activities Supported

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

Destinations and Resources

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

Human + Organizational (outdoor) Assets

Jackson Co Parks & Rec - Outdoor Dept.	USFS Nantahala District - Troy Waskey
Pinnacle Park Foundation	Friends of Panthertown
Friends of MTS Trail	Carolina Mountain Club
Foothills Trail Conference	Land Trusts - Main Spring, Conservation Fund, etc.
Blue Ridge Parkway - Dawn Leonard, Planner	Blue Ridge Parkway Fdn - Carolyn Ward, Director
NC Fish and Wildlife	SORBA - Nantahala chapter
American Whitewater	JC Chamber of Commerce
JC TDA - Nick Breedlove	SCC Outdoor Leadership program
Basecamp Cullowhee	WCU Rapid Center
WCU Native Plant School	Duke Energy - Lisa Leatherman
Burt Kornegay - Slickrock	Scouts + 4-H + youth groups

local Naturalists + Interpreters (retirees, too)	Landmark Learning
EBCI Cultural Office	Blair Ogburn - SOAR, Muddy Sneakers
White Dot Climbing - Cashiers	Balsam Reserve Stables

Jackson County Outdoor Business Asset Identification

Destination/Adventure Businesses

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

Outfitters and Guides

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

Outdoor Recreation Retail

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

Manufacturing - Outdoor Gear

A1 Marine	Shira Forge
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Other

Lakeshore Pontoon Boat Rental	Mountain View Marina
Arrowmont Stables & Cabins LLC	Yacht Fishing Charter LLC
Fallin's RV Center (repair)	Cycle Tec

many, many Camps, Campgrounds, Resorts, Golf Clubs, Hospitality businesses



Town of Sylva
Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies

Meeting Notes from March 2, 2023
 6:00 - 8:00pm at Sylva Town Hall

In attendance: Bernadette Peters, Sylva Economic Development/Main Street; Dale Collins, Tuckasegee Fly Shop; Corey Bryson, Balsam Falls Brewing; Matthew, Black Balsam Outdoors; Marla York, Motion Makers Sylva; Ben Hinker Motion Makers Asheville; Peter Tay, SORBA chapter; Dennis Desmond, Friends of Pinnacle Park; Ben Guiney, Commissioner, Town of Sylva; Jason, Friends of Panthertown. NC Commerce Rural Development staff: Ann Bass and Bruce Naegelen.

The purpose of this first meeting was to establish an active group, common definitions and economic focus areas. A slide presentation prompted the outdoor recreation economy conversation about the many Sylva assets supporting it. The conversation was fast, intense and very exciting! These notes may therefore be incomplete.

A short survey of the work group prior to the meeting established an understanding of group motivations. The most important benefits to be gained from local outdoor recreation assets and thus top priorities for the strategic planning process included:

- Greater Quality of Life for year around and part-time residents
- Increased revenue for existing businesses
- Development of a skilled outdoor workforce

The definition of understood outdoor recreation for this planning work spurred a discussion about e-bikes—their role, growth and acceptance as well as the varying levels of assistance offered.

What draws Outdoor Recreation people to Sylva?

Existing Strengths/Economic Drivers—

- Restaurants and Breweries – beer mile, social district
- Proximity to public lands – Blue Ridge Parkway, GSMNP, Nantahala NF, others
- Sylva is starting point – go out like spokes to activities throughout the region, then back for lodging, restaurants
- Hub for gas, food, supplies
- Events – music by river
- Fly Fishing – well developed and promoted
 - Carrying capacity issues?
 - Tuck Fly Shop came to Sylva for the exposure from Bryson City
- Surrounded by best of everything (outdoor recreation) on the East Coast

- Center of mountain biking mecca

What is unique about Sylva (surrounds)?

- Steepest County in the state
- Plott Balsam views and ridgeline conservation

How could Sylva do an even better job at engaging OR people (better, longer, more)? Opportunities

- Clean up Scotts Creek and provide better access
- Difficult access to trail heads – Fisher Creek Road
- New activities
 - Hang gliding off from airport
 - 360 climbing in downtown – selling lots of climbing gear, rainy day activity
 - Beginner climbers but rock faces for advanced climbers
 - Engage Carolina Climbers Coalition
 - Outdoor Rec training center for many activities
 - Bouldering at Pinnacle Park
 - Pump Track for beginners
 - Something for next level BMX (?)
 - Hire programmer to keep track active
- Regular/Monthly informal gathering of OR businesses, organizations, enthusiasts
- Networking of organizations
 - Trail-building training, volunteer pool
- Outdoor Gear lending library
- Fishing gear racks/rod mounts for bicycles
- Make existing space for manufacturing known to outdoor makers
- E-Bikes – menu of available trails
 - Allowed on WCU trails but not USFS, GSMNP
 - More hunters on e-bikes

What is happening already that we can build on?

- Greenway already planned, needs development
 - Critical connection to Dillsboro
- Nature appreciation activities
 - Forest bathing/Forest Therapy trail
 - Photography trips, guides, hashtag locations, workshops, conference
 - Develop observation areas
 - Foraging
 - Geocaching
 - Birding (bird sanctuary designation)
- Pinnacle Park Master Planning and connections
- Fire Mountain bike trail connections
- Year of the Trail promotion
- Endless Adventures: Need More Outdoors
- White Dot guides

- Base Camp Cullowhee (WCU students only or expand?)
- “Middle of the Most” – revive as fundraising and outdoor recreation event
- Greening Up the Mountains – put out request for outdoor recreation ideas

Any glaring gaps or challenges to be addressed?

Weaknesses

- Ability to get around without a car
- 45-minute drive to access hiking trails
- Quality over quantity
- Difficulty of terrain – need some easier hiking to better match family/retiree visitor profile
- Expense of acquiring gear when don’t know if will enjoy the activity

Next meeting time, date and location to be determined! (Balsam Falls Brewing, April 13 at 5pm)

Sylva preliminary draft action plan from meeting #1!

Sylva is the hub of outdoor recreation (OR) activities for the far west mountains.

- Focus on improving access for local residents to OR activities
 - Develop greenway and trail connections from town to destinations – WCU, Dillsboro, Scott’s Creek/Tuck, etc.
 - Figure out how to make equipment available to young people + those curious
 - Rentals
 - Lending “library”
 - Parks + Rec programs
 - Address steepness and thus difficulty of trails and experiences to better match family and retirement-age audience
 - Consider menu of trail options for use of certain levels of e-bikes (not allowed in USFS or NP) to accommodate young, old, less fit living in black-diamond terrain
- Consciously build OR/Entrepreneurial “Culture” in Sylva
 - Regular social gatherings of OR and related businesses, orgs, enthusiasts
 - Encourage coordination and info sharing to safeguard quality of experiences and avoid resource degradation
 - Volunteer trainings
- Develop as an Outdoor Education destination
 - Nature/Ecosystem understanding
 - Historic/Cultural appreciation and participation with outdoors
 - Food?
 - Historic trails
 - Family stories
 - Cherokee traditions
 - Scenic arts participation
 - Photography trips, hashtags, guides, conference, exhibits
 - So many other – WCU courses on ‘what makes a place scenic’, etc.
- Outdoor branding campaign
 - “Middle of Most” Outdoor festival
 - OR Training opportunities for locals and visitors
 - Continue work on Pinnacle Park master plan and possible connection to mountain bike trails from Fire Mountain
 - Scott’s Creek – cleanup for greater engagement in downtown and connection all the way to Tuck



Town of Sylva Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies

Meeting Notes from May 4, 2023
5:00 - 7:00pm at Balsam Falls Brewing

In attendance: Bernadette Peters, Sylva Economic Development/Main Street; Corey Bryson, Balsam Falls Brewing; Matthew, Black Balsam Outdoors; Peter Tay, SORBA chapter; Tiffany Henry, Jackson County Economic Development. NC Commerce Rural Development staff: Ann Bass.

The meeting opened with a discussion regarding the need for additional volunteers with SORBA, Friends of Panthertown and Pinnacle Park. Volunteer roles are off about 15 – 20% most often due to the aging out of long-time supporters.

The group then reviewed work done at the last meeting to identify outdoor-related assets and the analysis exercise—strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Additions and changes have been made to the appropriate lists and work sheets.

Printed copies of slides showing the economic position and areas of work that had arisen through conversations at the first meeting were included in the agenda packet. The economic positioning statement, a vision of economic sort, was generally accepted:

Sylva is recognized as the Hub of outdoor recreation activity for the (far west mountains). In Sylva all residents enjoy outdoor recreation as part of their daily lives, an entrepreneurial outdoor culture enlivens the downtown, residents and visitors are fluent in natural and cultural resource understanding and active in their stewardship.

Primary areas of work or strategies for building to this vision include:

- Incorporate outdoor recreation into the lives of all residents
- Develop an entrepreneurial outdoor culture
- Make Sylva an outdoor education destination
- Brand (become recognized) the Sylva outdoor experience

Work group members then used worksheets to define actions, tasks, timelines, partners and resources needed for their primary program or project interest areas. The results of those charts are to be compiled, completed and reviewed at the next meeting.

The next meeting time, date and location to be determined! (June 22 at 5:30pm, location TBD)



Town of Sylva Creating Outdoor Recreation Economies

Meeting Notes from June 22, 2023
5:30 - 7:00pm at Balsam Falls Brewing

In attendance: Bernadette Peters, Sylva Economic Development/Main Street; Corey Bryson, Balsam Falls Brewing; Peter Tay, SORBA chapter; Tiffany Henry, Jackson County Economic Development. NC Commerce Rural Development staff: Ann Bass.

The primary task for this meeting was to complete the work plan with assignments of leadership and timeline. There was refinement of each of the Actions and Tasks as the group worked through the chart.

A survey was sent to the four outdoor-facing businesses engaged in this planning process including the questions:

1. Describe your typical customer?
2. What would make Sylva an even better destination for each of them?
3. What would make Sylva just perfect for you and your business?
4. Is there anything you want to do to improve or expand your business or services?
5. What can the Town or County do to help generate greater income?

Most of the response had already been shared indirectly during work group meetings, but additional information gleaned included:

A typical non-summer day brings 200-300 customers in the door with weekends 300 – 500 customers. In summer the increase is 30-80 percent more traffic. There is a good bit of traffic during the week from local residents. Tourists mostly come from within about 300 miles although beyond that visitors are common from Florida and the Midwest.

Events are exceptional often bring in thousands of customer each day for the weekend.

Some overnight parking opportunities for campers and vans would bring more visitors into town in general not just the outdoor businesses.

Developing a larger reputation as an outdoor destination would really help business. Ideally Sylva would attract business the way that Black Mountain does from Mt. Mitchell or Bryson City does from Nantahala Outdoor Center.

Would like to see more community involvement and events that would build that outdoor culture into Sylva life. More events would be great—especially if some focused on or included more outdoor activities.



Sylva Retail Marketplace Snapshot-March of 2023

The purpose of this report is to give Downtown Sylva the baseline information for a better understanding of its current market. The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center Staff studied the retail marketplace data within a 10- mile radius around Sylva. The retail leakage analysis examines the quantitative aspects of the retail opportunities.

By reviewing the retail gap, we can:

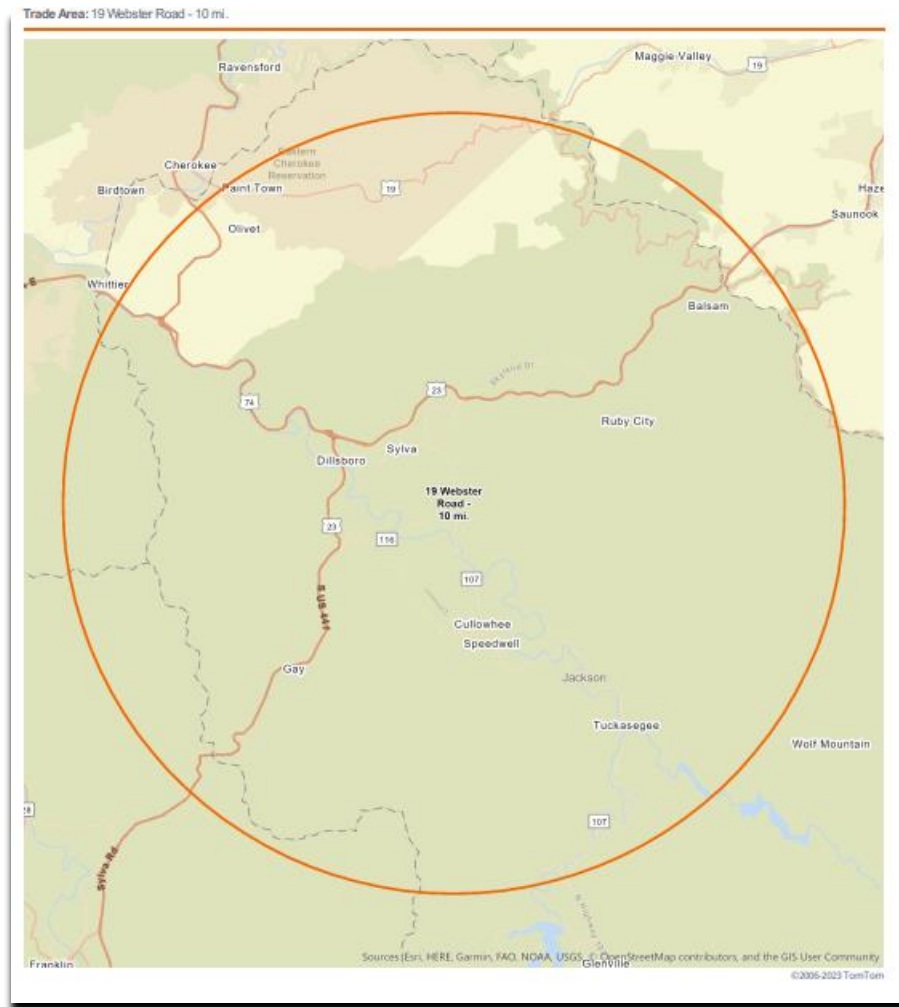
- Understand how well the retail needs of residents are being met.
- Uncover unmet demand and possible opportunities.
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of the local retail sector.

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

There are also categories for which Downtown Sylva is exceeding the local market demand. Those are measured as red numbers on the below report. For the 10-mile radius information, this means that Sylva is exceeding its market potential in these categories. This retail surplus means the community’s trade area is capturing local market plus attracting non-local shoppers. Surplus means the community has possibly developed strong clusters of retail that have broad geographical appeal.

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

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



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

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

Distance	Total Retail Gap	10% Capture	Sales/SF	SF Needed
10-mile radius	\$49,559,755	\$4,955,976	\$300	16,520

The above chart shows the aggregate number of potential sales within the 10-mile radius around Sylva. Below you will see these number broken down by retail category.

10-Mile Radius Around Downtown

Sylva				
Primary Trade Area 10-mile around E. Main Street		DOWNTOWN POTENTIAL		
Business Type	Retail Gap	10% of Retail Gap	Sales/SF	SF
		10%	\$300	Needed
Furniture Stores	\$ 1,626,920	\$ 162,692	\$ 300	542
Home Furnishing Stores	\$ 2,155,136	\$ 215,514	\$ 300	718
Appliance Stores	\$ 1,700,087	\$ 170,009	\$ 300	567
Electronics Stores	\$ 3,888,042	\$ 388,804	\$ 300	1,296
Nursery, Garden and Farm Supply Stores	\$ 1,170,425	\$ 117,043	\$ 300	390
Specialty Food Stores	\$ 840,879	\$ 84,088	\$ 300	280
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores	\$ 4,022,689	\$ 402,269	\$ 300	1,341
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	\$ 7,389,486	\$ 738,949	\$ 300	2,463
Cosmetics and Beauty Stores	\$ 1,980,280	\$ 198,028	\$ 300	660
Clothing Stores	\$ 13,744,485	\$ 1,374,449	\$ 300	4,581
Shoe Stores	\$ 1,736,686	\$ 173,669	\$ 300	579
Jewelry Stores	\$ 1,314,252	\$ 131,425	\$ 300	438
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	\$ 1,656,468	\$ 165,647	\$ 300	552
Sporting Goods Stores	\$ 3,558,598	\$ 355,860	\$ 300	1,186
Hobby, Toy and Game Stores	\$ 1,292,063	\$ 129,206	\$ 300	431
Office Supply and Stationary Stores	\$ 986,708	\$ 98,671	\$ 300	329
Pet and Pet Supplies Stores	\$ 496,551	\$ 49,655	\$ 300	166
Total Gap	\$ 49,559,755	\$ 4,955,976	\$ 300	16,520

10-Mile Radius Retail Surplus

Category	Retail Surplus
Home Centers	\$ 5,950,623
Paint and Wallpaper Stores	\$ 6,698,804
Hardware Stores	\$ 2,772,833
Grocery Stores	\$ 17,709,084
Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores	\$ 355,641
Used Merchandise Stores	\$ 800,674

Full-Service Restaurants	\$ 7,999,999
Limited-Service Restaurants	\$ 5,819,296
Total	\$ 48,106,954

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

Below are two tables showing the projected sales growth in different commercial categories. This information can help your recruitment process.

10-Mile Measurement

Sylva Demand Growth by Retail Store Types				
Primary Trade Area: 10-Mile Radius				Compound
Business Type	2022	2027	Growth	Growth
	Demand	Demand	\$	Rate (%)
Furniture Stores	\$ 7,131,936	\$ 7,549,598	\$ 417,661	1
Home Furnishings Stores	\$ 5,091,373	\$ 5,576,877	\$ 485,504	2
Appliance Stores	\$ 1,923,504	\$ 2,081,039	\$ 157,535	2
Electronics Stores	\$ 6,959,917	\$ 7,460,473	\$ 500,556	1
Home Centers	\$ 20,167,200	\$ 23,139,555	\$ 2,972,354	3
Paint and Wallpaper Stores	\$ 1,405,310	\$ 1,763,024	\$ 357,714	5
Hardware Stores	\$ 2,961,564	\$ 3,406,847	\$ 445,283	3
Nursery, Garden and Farm Supply Stores	\$ 3,797,691	\$ 4,203,732	\$ 406,041	2
Grocery Stores	\$ 67,546,253	\$ 72,602,925	\$ 5,056,671	1
Specialty Food Stores	\$ 2,038,301	\$ 2,193,069	\$ 154,768	1
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores	\$ 6,064,525	\$ 6,590,975	\$ 526,450	2
Pharmacies and Drug Stores	\$ 28,396,824	\$ 29,930,343	\$ 1,533,519	1
Cosmetics and Beauty Stores	\$ 1,980,280	\$ 2,096,636	\$ 116,356	1
Pet and Pet Supplies Stores	\$ 2,031,328	\$ 2,260,206	\$ 228,879	2
Drinking Places	\$ 2,422,370	\$ 2,710,513	\$ 288,143	2
Department Stores	\$ 5,412,610	\$ 5,771,359	\$ 358,749	1
Full Service Restaurants	\$ 31,647,042	\$ 34,601,912	\$ 2,954,870	2
Limited Service Restaurants	\$ 26,951,524	\$ 29,301,634	\$ 2,350,110	2
Total Sales	\$ 223,929,552	\$ 243,240,717	\$ 19,311,163	

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

The above data can be used to help recruit businesses to Sylva to meet the unmet potential and reduce the retail gap or leakage. The priorities are to first retain, then expand and finally to recruit new businesses. The categories that show the most potential should be focused on first, especially within the 10-mile radius of the community. This data can help existing businesses realize there may be potential to expand to capture additional retail sales.

Claritas Income Data (Sources: Claritas 2023, 10-mile ring and U.S. Census On the Map)

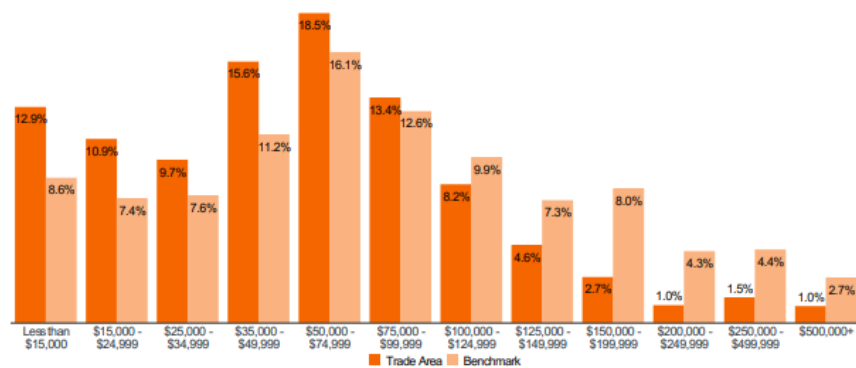
HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Median Household Income
\$51,037
 Index:70

Average Household Income
\$69,109
 Index:66

HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION



Benchmark:USA

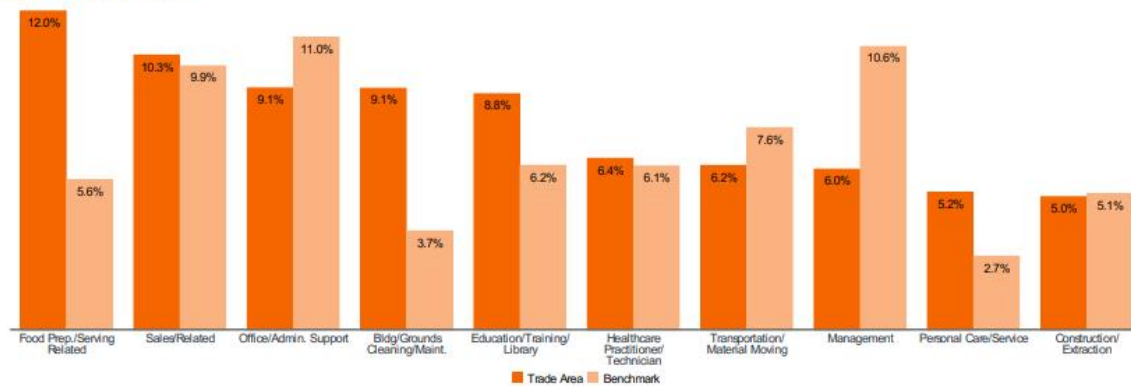
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<https://claritas.easpolight.com/Spotlight/About/3/2023>

*Ranked by percent composition

Index Colors:	<80	80 - 110	110+
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- \$51,037 Median Household Income.
- \$50,000-\$74,000 is the largest income segment-18.5% of the population.
- 50.9% of the population earns above \$50,000.

OCCUPATION: TOP 10*



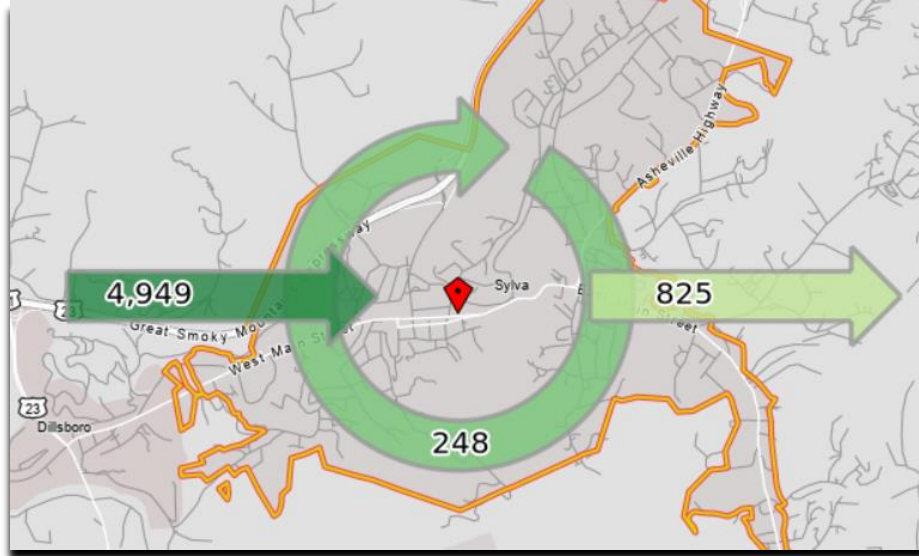
Benchmark: USA

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<https://claritas.easpolight.com/Spotlight/About/3/2023>

*Chosen from percent composition ranking

Index Colors:	<80	80 - 110	110+
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The above graph details the occupational distribution among this population.



Sylvia worker inflow and outflow shows 4,949 people commute from outside the town for work, 248 live and work in Sylvia and 825 live in Sylvia but work outside of town. The equivalent of double the Sylvia population either commutes into town for employment or live and work within this measurement. These are potential consumers for current and prospective business owners. This data should be used to help recruit desired businesses within the Town of Sylvia.

AARP Livability Index

The AARP Livability Index for Downtown Sylvia is 49 on a scale ranging from 0 to 100. The higher the score the more livable the community. Sylvia ranks below average on this scale, but some of the AARP scores are disputed below. It is important to consider the different index categories, such as health, environment, neighborhood, and opportunity to help you determine what needs to be done to improve this score. Some areas of particular interest include:

The positive.....

<u>Category</u>	<u>2015</u>	Sylvia <u>2022</u>	<u>2022 Median U.S. Neighborhood</u>
Housing (65 out of 100)			
Availability of subsidized housing (Units per 10,000)		666 units	0
Availability of multi-family housing (% of units multi-family)		19.1	18%
Zero Step Entrances (% of units)		50.1	50.1

<u>Category</u>	<u>2015</u>	Sylva <u>2022</u>	2022 Median U.S. <u>Neighborhood</u>
Housing Costs (Costs per month)	\$674	\$795	\$1,057
Housing Cost burden (% of income spent on housing)	15.9%	15.7%	16.3%
Neighborhoods (35 out of 100)			
Access to parks		0 parks*	1
*AARP doesn't account for Poteet, Bridge and Mark Watson Parks, all within walking distance of downtown, so their score is incorrect.			
Access to libraries		0 library*	0
*The Keener St. branch is within walking distance of downtown, so their score is incorrect.			
Activity Density (Jobs and people/sq. mile)	715	766 (shows improvement)	3,056
Transportation (50 out of 100)			
Congestion (Hours per person per year)		0	25.5
Speed Limits (Miles/Hour)		25.8	28.0
Household Transportation Costs (per year)		\$15,321	\$15,331
ADA-accessible stations and vehicles (% of stations and vehicles that are ADA accessible)		82.9%	82.9%
Environment (13 out of 100)			
Regional air quality (Unhealthy air quality days/year)	2	0.3	4.37
Health (56 out of 100)			
Smoking Prevalence (% of people who smoke regularly)		17.7%	18%
Engagement (62 out of 100)			
Obesity Prevalence (% of people who are obese)		29.2%	32.2%

<u>Category</u>	Sylva		<u>2022 Median U.S. Neighborhood</u>
	<u>2015</u>	<u>2022</u>	
Engagement (62 out of 100)			
Access to exercise opportunities (% of people with access to exercise opportunities)		99.5%	90.1%
Preventable Hospitalization Rate		44.1	48.5
Opportunity for civic involvement (# of organizations available per 10,000 people)		10.3	1.18
Social Involvement Index (Index from 0 to 2.5)		1.01	0.96
Opportunity (58 out of 100)			
Income inequality	0.47	0.45	0.46
Jobs per worker (Improving since 2015)	0.68	0.69	0.80
High School Graduation Rate		97%	88.5%
The negative.....			
Neighborhood (35 out of 100)			
Access to jobs by transit		0	0
Access to jobs by auto		4,656	44,198
Crime Rate (Crimes per 10,000 people)		247	217.4
Neighborhood (35 out of 100)			
Vacancy Rate (% of units vacant)	13.1%	20.1	8.2%
Transportation (50 out of 100)			
Walk Trips (# of walk trips per household per day)		0.6	0.73
Crash Rate (Fatal crashes per 100,000 people per year)	10.8	19	7.7

<u>Category</u>	Sylva		<u>2022 Median U.S. Neighborhood</u>
	<u>2015</u>	<u>2022</u>	
Environment (13 out of 100)			
Drinking Water Quality (% of people exposed to violations)	3.30	7.33	0%
Near Roadway Pollution (% of people exposed)		5.14	0.00%
Local Industrial Pollution (RSEI Score 0 to 9,070)		5.15	0.0
Health (56 out of 100)			
Healthcare Professional Shortage Areas	17	18	0
Patient Satisfaction	69.0%	65.0%	71.8%
Engagement (62 out of 100)			
Broadband cost and speed (% of residents who have high speed and competitively priced internet)		82.3%	93.7%
Cultural, Arts and Entertainment Institutions (# of institutions per 10,000 people)		1.01	8.01
Opportunity (58 out of 100)			
Age Diversity (Index 0 to 1)	0.93	0.86 (Declining since 2015)	0.85

Walkscore

The below charts measure the Sylva walkscore and bikescores:

581 West Main Street
A location in Whittier
Commute to **Downtown Asheville**

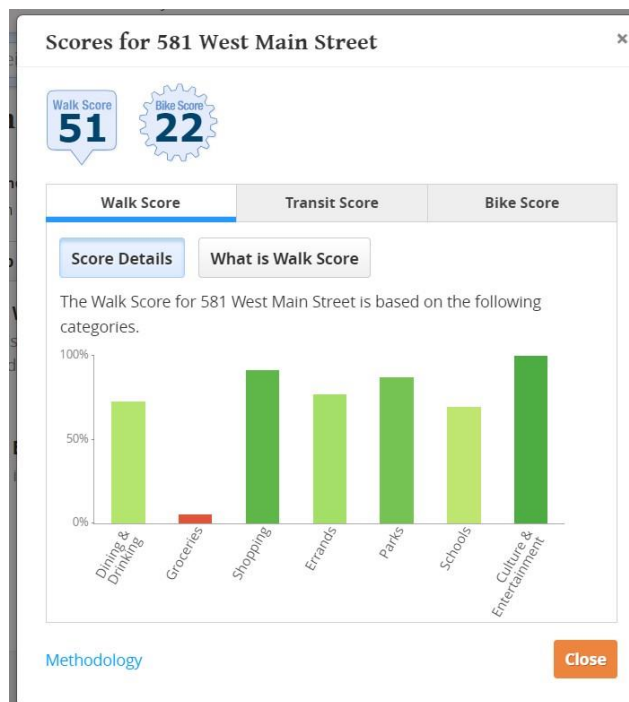
60+ min 60+ min 60+ min [View Routes](#)

[Favorite](#) [Map](#) [Nearby Apartments](#)

Walk Score
51
Somewhat Walkable
Some errands can be accomplished on foot.

Bike Score
22
Somewhat Bikeable
Minimal bike infrastructure.

[About your score](#)
[Add scores to your site](#)



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

Summary and Recommendations

1. Retail Gap

Retail gaps exist in furniture, home furnishings, appliances, electronics, nursery, garden and farm supply stores, specialty foods, beer, wine and liquor, pharmacies and drug stores,

cosmetics and beauty stores, clothing, shoes, jewelry, luggage and leather goods, sporting goods, hobby, toy and game stores, office supplies and pet and pet supplies stores.

A Google search revealed seven pharmacies located in Sylva, but there remains business potential. Nine downtown clothing stores were counted, but there remains business potential in family clothing. When you see smaller gaps, it provides potential for existing businesses to add lines such as a clothing store adding jewelry and shoes.

2. Retail Surplus

Surplus sales were seen for home centers, paint and wallpaper, hardware, groceries, gift and novelty stores, used merchandise and full and limited- service restaurants. Eight downtown furniture/home furnishing stores contribute to this surplus. Lowe's Home Improvement and TC Pro Hardware are being picked up in the paint and wallpaper store measurement. Four major grocers contribute to the grocery surplus. Sylva has a significant number of full-service restaurants (14 counted downtown) plus fifteen fast food outlets accounted for in the limited-service restaurant surpluses.

Retail surplus sales mean that Sylva is attracting a disproportionate number of sales in these categories and can support additional businesses in these categories. The downtown attractions noted through Trip Advisor (below) provide potential consumers for these businesses, especially downtown restaurants.

Couple the above information with the retail demand growth reports to support your recruitment efforts.

3. Outdoor Recreation

Sporting goods shows a retail gap of \$3,558,598 within the 10-mile measurement. Outdoor recreation is a major objective of Sylva and Jackson County economic development. Several downtown and area Sylva businesses are dedicated to outdoor recreation either with clothing, bike shops or fishing equipment. The retail gap shows that business potential exists in this category.

4. Walkability and Bikeability

The Downtown Sylva Walkscore of 51 is just above average. Concerning bikeability, Downtown Sylva scores a 22, far below average. Improving the walkability of your downtown will help elevate this score and make it more attractive to new residents. You will want to work with the local NCDOT division to incorporate bike lanes into their streets in downtown as well as those controlled by the Town of Sylva.

According to a study by real estate advising company Robert Charles Lesser & Co., homebuyers are increasingly looking for green space and trail systems for walking, running, and biking. In fact, green space and trail systems were the No. 1 and No. 2 desirable community features in this referenced article---Source: New Home Source:

<https://www.newhomesource.com/learn/top-community-amenities/>

The list is below:

Parks and green spaces

Paved trail systems for walking, jogging, biking, etc.

Note that in addition to the walking and biking trail amenities, the #3 amenity that new homeowners want is:

Main street village centers with retail services and cafes for gathering and socializing.

Downtown Sylva fits the #3 desired community amenity. The Town of Sylva should want to see ways to increase walkability and biking options to meet consumer demands.

5. Downtown Sylva on Trip Advisor

Twelve of the top eighteen Sylva attractions on Trip Advisor are in Downtown Sylva. This demonstrates a good mix of retail, breweries, recreation, and services to draw visitors to downtown.

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

If you have any questions concerning the above information, contact ARC Community Economic Development Planner of the Western Region at 828-508-0107 or ann.bass@commerce.nc.gov

Sources: Claritas Retail Data

<http://doc.arcgis.com/en/esri-demographics/data/tapestry-segmentation>
Livabilityindex.aarp.org

**NORTH CAROLINA MAIN STREET AND RURAL PLANNING CENTER
 POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES AND RESOURCES
 FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION AND OUTDOOR RECREATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
 (Revised April 2024)**

*** The NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center recommends contacting listed entities directly for more information about their programs. The inclusion of a program on the list is not an endorsement by the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. ***

Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources – The Great Trails State Program	The Great Trails State Program provides funding for new trail development and extension of existing trails anywhere in the state of North Carolina. This includes paved trails or greenways, natural surface trails, biking trails, equestrian trails, and any other type of trail recognized by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. There will be one grant cycle distributing the full \$25 million dollars in non-recurring funding. Application deadline: Sept. 3, 2024	Grants	Eligible applicants receiving a grant under this program shall provide matching funds based on the tier ranking of the county where the project is located. See webpage for details.	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/great-trails-state-program
NC Land & Water Fund	These grants have been used in all 100 N.C. counties to help ensure clean drinking water, protect natural habitat and preserve our unique natural and cultural	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://nclwf.nc.gov/apply

	resources for future generations.			
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - The Land and Water Conservation Fund	The LWCF provides matching grants to local governments to assist with public park and recreation projects. LWCF grants can be used to acquire land for a public park; to develop outdoor recreation and support facilities; or a combination of both. A project must be located on a single site.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	An applicant must match the grant with a minimum of 50 percent.	https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/land-and-water-conservation-fund
North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)	Awards matching grants to local governments for parks, public beach access, and improvements in state parks. The statewide program helps local governments reach their park and public access goals to improve the quality of life in their communities.	Grants - The North Carolina General Assembly funds PARTF each year at different levels.	1:1 Match for Local Government Projects; Funds also available for NC State Parks projects and the Coastal and Estuarine Water Beach Access Program	https://www.ncparks.gov/more-about-us/parks-recreation-trust-fund/parks-and-recreation-trust-fund
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
NCDNCR, Division of Parks and Recreation - Recreational Trails Program Grant	The intent of the RTP is to help fund trails and trail-related recreational needs at the State level for projects that are construction ready for grant funding.	Grants – past grant amounts awarded between \$10k-\$100k	Past years have required a 25% Match of RTP Funds Received	https://trails.nc.gov/trail-grants/apply-grant

<p>NC Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Marine Fisheries - Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program</p>	<p>The BIG program is a federal grant program, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, that provides funding to states for the construction, renovation, and maintenance of boating infrastructure facilities for transient recreational vessels at least 26 feet long that are operated, leased, rented, or chartered primarily for pleasure. Boating infrastructure means the structures, equipment, accessories, and services that are necessary or desirable for a facility to accommodate eligible vessels. Transient vessels are those passing through or by a place, staying up to 15 days. Projects completed using BIG funds must provide public access but may be publicly or privately owned. The NC Division of Marine Fisheries is the lead agency</p>	<p>Grants - Two tiers: State (up to \$200,000) and National (up to \$1.5 million).</p>	<p>Yes – 25% cost share / match. In-kind services, materials, and other contributions are allowed for the cost share / match.</p>	<p>https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/marine-fisheries/grant-programs/nc-boating-infrastructure-grant-program</p>
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	for BIG in North Carolina. Both publicly owned and privately-owned marina facilities that are open to the public are eligible to apply for funding, including private marinas, local municipalities, state agencies, or other non-governmental entities. Note: No announcement yet for 2024 grants.			
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) - America the Beautiful Challenge	Intended to streamline grant funding opportunities for new conservation and restoration projects around the U.S., the America the Beautiful Challenge consolidates funding from multiple federal agencies and the private sector to enable applicants to conceive and develop large-scale projects that address shared funder priorities and span public and private lands.	Grants - Approximately \$85 million	Non-federal match helps demonstrate broad support for the project and may be required by the federal funding requirements. Dependent of federal agency funding.	https://www.nfwf.org/programs/america-beautiful-challenge
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway	Provides funding for a variety of generally smaller-scale transportation projects	Grants	Variable	https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/

Administration (FHWA) – Transportation Alternatives	such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities; recreational trails; and more.			
U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Recreational Trails Program	Provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/
National Forest Foundation – Matching Awards Program	The MAP program supports action-oriented projects that enhance outdoor experiences, forest and ecosystem health, and engage local communities in caring for their public lands.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	1:1 nonfederal cash match	https://www.nationalforests.org/grant-programs/map
US Fish & Wildlife Service - Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program	Programs that distribute funding annually to state agencies and Tribes to manage fish, wildlife, and habitats, evaluate and enhance species of greatest conservation need, and provide recreational opportunities for fishing, hunting, shooting, and boating. Local governments and orgs. may have to partner	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.fws.gov/program/wildlife-and-sport-fish-restoration

	with state agencies to access these funds.			
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Acres for America	Walmart’s Acres for America program stands today as the leading public-private land conservation partnership in the United States. The partnership began in 2005, when Walmart and NFWF joined forces to establish Acres for America as a groundbreaking effort to support and catalyze the conservation of lands and wildlife habitat of national significance, and to benefit local communities and local economies.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	All grant awards require a minimum 1:1 match of cash or contributed goods and services.	https://www.nfwf.org/programs/acres-america
Outdoor Heritage NC - North Carolina Schools Go Outside (GO) Grant	Created to address the main barrier to getting kids outside during the school day – funding. Qualifying for grants require instructors demonstrate how the experience will address topics currently being taught in class and that the experience meets the goals of the Outdoor Heritage Trust Fund plan.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.outdoorheritage.nc.gov/grants/ For questions, contact ohac.grants@nc.gov
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact

<p>Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - Accessible Parks Grant</p>	<p>The Accessible Parks Grant Program provides \$12.5 million in matching grants for parks and recreation to benefit people living with disabilities in North Carolina.</p>	<p>Grants – Maximum of \$500,000</p>	<p>Applicant must match the grant with at least \$1 of local funds for every \$5 in grant funds.</p>	<p>https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/accessible-parks-grant</p>
<p>Department of Natural and Cultural Resources - Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program</p>	<p>The purpose of the program is to provide grants to acquire and/or develop public lands for outdoor recreation purposes consistent with the purposes of LWCF, but with the further specific goals of funding projects that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are located within or serve an Urbanized Area (population of 50,000 or more) as designated by the Census Bureau from the 2010 Census; and <p>Are in, or are directly accessible to, neighborhoods or communities that are underserved in terms of parks and recreation resources and where there</p>	<p>Grants – Funding Amounts Vary</p>	<p>ORLP grant projects must be cost-shared with non-federal funds at a minimum ratio of 1:1.</p>	<p>https://www.ncparks.gov/about-us/grants/outdoor-recreation-legacy-partnership-program</p>

	are significant populations of people who are economically disadvantaged.			
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
NCDOT - IMD Feasibility Studies Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility studies for eligible project types including paved trails, greenways, shared-use paths, sidepaths, and sidewalks. 	Grant – Funding Amounts Vary	A local match is not required; however, it may be a factor to consider for a competitive grant cycle.	https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pages/IMD-Feasibility-Studies-Program.aspx
The Conservation Fund – Resourceful Communities’ ‘Creating New Economies Fund (CNEF)’	Resourceful Communities’ small-grant program, the Creating New Economies Fund (CNEF), provides direct investment in community-based efforts. Seed money supports a range of projects: eco- and heritage tourism, youth conservation programs, farmers markets, alternative energy production and more.	Grants - Grants cannot exceed \$15,000. There is no minimum amount that must be requested for consideration, however, grants average \$8,000-\$12,000.	Not Specified	https://www.conservationfund.org/our-work/resourceful-communities/grants-and-other-resources
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
Athletic Brewing Co. – Two for the Trails	ABC donates 2% of sales to protect and restore trails, and other projects that enhance access to the outdoors. Any registered LLC eligible, with	Grant – Funding Amounts Vary	Not specified	https://athleticbrewing.com/pages/two-for-the-trails

	preference given to 501(c)(3) non-profits.			
Fox Factory Trail Trust	Provide grants to organizations helping to preserve the places we love to play. The goal is to bring together diverse communities to build, maintain, and expand access to trails for both mountain biking and power sports. 501(c)(3) Non-Profits eligible.	Grant – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.trailtrust.com/
NCDEQ – Water Resources Development Grant Program	This program provides cost-share grants and technical assistance to local governments in NC. Applications for grants are accepted for 7 eligible project types: general navigation, recreational navigation, water management, stream restoration, water-based recreation, Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) stream restoration projects and feasibility/engineering studies.	Grant – Funding Amounts Vary depending on project type - \$200,000 maximum recommended for “State & Local Projects”	50 percent matching limit	https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-resources-grants/water-resources-development-grant-program
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact

T-Mobile Hometown Grants program	T-Mobile is committing up to \$25 million over the next 5 years to support small towns across America by funding community projects. Program will help fund projects to build, rebuild, or refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in your town. For example, this might include the town square pavilion, a historic building, an outdoor park, a ball field, etc.	Grants – maximum \$50k per town	Not specified	https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants
NCDEQ – Div. of Coastal Management - Coastal Management Beach & Waterfront Access Program	Provides matching grants to local governments for projects to improve pedestrian access to the state's beaches and waterways. Eligible applicants include local governments in the 20 coastal counties and their municipalities that have public trust waters (ocean, estuarine or riverine waters) within their jurisdictions.	Grants	Local Match Required	https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/coastal-management/coastal-management-beach-waterfront-access-program/beach-waterfront-access-grants
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program	The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program supports bicycle	Grants - up to \$10,000	Do not require a specific % match, but do	https://www.peopleforbikes.org/grant-guidelines

	<p>infrastructure projects and targeted initiatives that make it easier and safer for people of all ages and abilities to ride.</p> <p>PeopleForBikes accepts grant applications from non-profit organizations with a focus on bicycling, active transportation or community development; from city or county agencies or departments and from state or federal agencies working locally.</p>		<p>look at leverage and funding partnerships very carefully. We will not consider grant requests in which PFB funding would amount to 50% or more of the project budget.</p>	
North Carolina Community Foundation	<p>The North Carolina Community Foundation (NCCF) is the only statewide community foundation serving North Carolina and has administered over \$243 million in grants since 1988. With more than \$440 million in assets, NCCF sustains over 1,200 endowments and partners with a network of affiliates to award grants and scholarships in communities across the state.</p>	Grants	<p>Each grant resource administered by the NCCF will have different specifications.</p>	<p>https://www.nccommunityfoundation.org/</p>
Occupancy Tax used for non-	<p>Will be dependent of legislation that dictates</p>	Tax	n/a	<p>Consult local Tourism Development Authority or comparable board regarding how local occupancy tax funds are collected and allocated.</p>

marketing purposes	how local occupancy tax dollars are allocated.			
USDA-RD - Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program	This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area. Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and / or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment and pay related project expenses.	Grants and Loans	Varying match rates dependent upon various factors	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/nc
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
East Coast Greenway Alliance - Complete the Trails Program	The Alliance is seeking proposals for trail projects that can successfully apply CTP funding towards expanding the East Coast Greenway State Trail. This grant is for the purpose of planning, construction, promotion, and maintenance of component trails of the	Grant	Not Specified	https://www.greenway.org/complete-the-trails-nc

	North Carolina Trails System.			
Project Fit for America	Project Fit for America is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works at the grassroots level with schools and frontline educators to create new opportunities for kids to be active, fit, and healthy as part of the everyday school experience. The organization works with communities to bring in funding, equipment, teacher training, curriculum, and the resources schools need to get kids fit and foster a love of movement. The total funding required to sponsor a two-year pilot and model school program is \$18,206.	For the fee listed, Project Fit for America will provide outdoor and indoor play equipment, lesson plan support materials, curriculum, and more.	N/A	https://projectfitamerica.org/pfa-program-summary/
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
Hydro Flask® Parks for All	Parks for All supports the development, maintenance, and accessibility of public green spaces so people everywhere can live healthier, happier, and more fulfilled lives.	Grants and product donations	Not specified.	https://www.hydroflask.com/parks-for-all

	Through Parks for All, Hydro Flask®, in partnership with the Outdoor Foundation, offers grants and product donations (insulated stainless steel drink bottles with the Parks for All logo) to nonprofits dedicated to building, restoring, maintaining, or providing access to parks and recreational public lands and/or beaches and coastal areas. Note: Application deadline for product donations is April 30, 2023. Cash grant application round will open August 2023			
Program	Purpose/Description	Grants/Resources	Match	Website/Contact
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC)	RTC's Trail Grants program helps organizations and government agencies accelerate their trail network plans. The program is open to non-profit organizations as well as state, regional, local or tribal agencies working to support, develop and activate local and regional trail networks.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/grants/

<p>Community Development Block Grant – Neighborhood Revitalization Program (CDBG – NR)</p>	<p>Infrastructure and public improvements that support existing housing in the designated area (e.g., streets, sidewalks/pedestrian ways, curbs and gutters, parks, playgrounds, greenways, water and sewer lines, flood and drainage improvements, and trees).</p>	<p>Grants – Maximum \$950k</p>	<p>The CDBG-NR Program does not have a matching fund requirement.</p>	<p>https://www.commerce.nc.gov/about-us/divisions-programs/rural-economic-development-division/community-development-block-grants-cdbg</p>
<p>Together Outdoors</p>	<p>Outdoor recreation-related programming, events, and leadership development initiatives that benefit communities of color, LGBTQIA+, underserved regions, people with disabilities, and/or other intersecting minority groups.</p>	<p>Grants - \$5,000 - \$10,000</p>	<p>Not Specified</p>	<p>https://www.togetheroutdoors.com/grantprograms</p>
<p>NCDNCR - Hometown Strong Rural Grants Program</p>	<p>Supporting small and rural municipalities across the state with access to grant writers, resources, and training to support better grant award and administration for rural communities. Works closely with local staff, helping build their knowledge of and capacity to write successful</p>	<p>Technical Assistance</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>https://hometownstrong.nc.gov/grants</p>

	proposals and grant applications.			
FHWA - Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP)	The Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) is a competitive grant program to construct projects to provide safe and connected active transportation facilities in active transportation networks or active transportation spines.	Grant – Award Ceiling: \$15,000,000 Award Floor: \$100,000	The Federal share of the cost of an eligible project carried out using an ATIIP grant shall not exceed 80% of the total project cost.	https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/atiip/
The Conservation Alliance	The Conservation Alliance is a group of outdoor businesses that support efforts to protect specific wild places for their habitat and recreation values. There are two grant programs: Member Directed Grant The Confluence Grant.	Grants – Funding Amounts Vary	Not Specified	https://conservationalliance.com/grants/
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation - National Coastal Resilience Fund	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) will make investments in planning, design, and restoration of natural and nature-based solutions to help protect coastal communities from the impacts of storms, floods, and other natural hazards and enable them to	Grants - For planning and design projects, estimated average awards are typically in the range of \$100,000 to \$1 million. For Restoration Implementation projects, average	Match is not required but is still strongly encouraged to show broad support for the project.	https://www.nfwf.org/programs/national-coastal-resilience-fund

	recover more quickly and enhance habitats for fish and wildlife.	awards are typically in the range of \$1 million to \$10 million.		
National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance - National Forest System Trail Stewardship Partners Funding Program	Program is intended to encourage and support volunteer and stewardship group trail maintenance accomplishments and trail deferred maintenance backlog on the National Forest trail system. This program directly supports the implementation of the National Trails Strategy, which has a goal of doubling volunteer trail work in the next decade. The ideal project proposal will engage volunteers in the accomplishment of trail maintenance over the course of a field season over a broad area of a District or Forest.	Grants - Maximum \$30,000.	20% Match Requirement	https://www.wildernessalliance.org/trail_funding
North Carolina Horse Council – Trails Grant	Equine land access is a serious issue for North Carolina and our trail riding community. In addition, our trails continue to be threatened by closure or decreased in mileage. No one knows better where the priorities	Grants – Amount Not Specified	Not Specified	https://nchorsecouncil.com/grants/

	<p>are than the local trail associations who, with this grant program, would partner with the NCHC to implement our strategic plans and promote NC as a trail destination state. NC Trail Associations are encouraged to apply for trail grants across the state.</p>			

In addition to the above list, the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (ORR) in partnership with Oregon State University has compiled a list of national outdoor recreation funding and technical assistance resources. Some resources may be duplicated between the MS&RP and ORR resource guides. The inclusion of a program on the list is not an endorsement by the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center. This list of resources is available via the below link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ucp7AQQQTHa8x0eWYL-ID53AvJU628dE/view>