

Town of Sylva

Five-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan (2017-2021) & Year One Implementation Plan (2017-2018)

Economic Positioning Statement/Vision:

Sylva, NC, is a vibrant mountain town with an historic downtown that serves as a cultural and culinary center. Its natural beauty, proximity to trails and waterways, and distinctive sense of community make Sylva an ideal business location, a great place to visit, and a better place to call home.

Five-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan and Year One Implementation Plan:

The Town of Sylva’s **Five-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan** is built upon on the Community Economic Development Strategies shown below. Its **Year One Implementation Plan** focuses on goals and objectives, as well as actions/projects and tasks (grouped by strategy) that will make the town more economically vibrant.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

| Strategy Area 1: Ideal Business Location | Strategy Area 2: Great Place to Visit | Strategy Area 3: Better Place to Call Home |
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| <p>GOAL: Cultivate a business-friendly environment that attracts investment and encourages economic development/growth that is in keeping with Sylva’s vision for the future.</p> <p>Objective 1.1: Increase the number of diverse, unique, independently-owned food and beverage service establishments, retail, and other businesses in downtown Sylva.</p> <p>Objective 1.2: Attract restaurants, lodging, and retail businesses and services to occupy / expand into vacant buildings and underutilized parcels throughout Sylva.</p> <p>Objective 1.3: Assist businesses seeking to locate or expand in Sylva by providing information, development/permitting process guidance, and/or other support.</p> | <p>GOAL: Enhance Sylva’s appeal as a destination for visitors.</p> <p>Objective 2.1: Ensure that Sylva’s gateways are obvious, enticing, and user-friendly for visitors.</p> <p>Objective 2.2: Continue to improve and promote recreation amenities, entertainment offerings, and events that draw visitors as well as residents.</p> <p>Objective 2.3: Provide more opportunities in downtown Sylva for residents and visitors to celebrate and enjoy art and cultural events.</p> | <p>GOAL: Increase the supply and variety of safe, quality, affordable housing.</p> <p>Objective 3.1: Facilitate the development of upper-floor housing units in downtown Sylva to provide more housing options and increase the customer base for downtown businesses.</p> <p>Objective 3.2: Encourage development of single-family and multi-family housing in various price ranges to meet the needs of people who are employed in but live outside Jackson County, first-time home buyers, senior citizens, and others.</p> <p>Objective 3.3: Help revitalize existing neighborhoods to retain current and attract new residents.</p> |

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| <p>Action 1: Identify opportunities for the development/expansion of food and beverage service establishments, retail businesses, etc., in downtown Sylva.</p> <p>Task 1: Work with the Main Street Sylva Association (MSSA) to have a downtown retail market/gap analysis done to identify businesses development/expansion opportunities</p> <p>Task 2: Work with the MSSA to assess whether downtown Sylva has what the businesses identified in the market/gap analysis need to consider locating or expanding there.</p> <p>Task 3: Report findings to the Sylva Board of Commissioners.</p> | <p>Action 1: Study Sylva’s gateways and develop recommendations for improving them.</p> <p>Task 1: Identify technical assistance and financial resources that may be available to help with the project and with implementing recommended improvements.</p> <p>Task 2: Establish a committee to study Sylva’s gateways.</p> <p>Task 3: Have a set of maps of Sylva’s gateways prepared for committee study and discussion purposes.</p> <p>Task 4: Visit Sylva’s gateways to identify issues and opportunities.</p> <p>Task 5: Develop recommendations for gateway improvements.</p> <p>Task 6: Report study findings and recommendations to the Sylva Board of Commissioners.</p> | <p>Action 1: Study opportunities for and barriers to developing upper floor housing units in Sylva’s downtown buildings.</p> <p>Task 1: Identify technical assistance and financial resources that may be available to help with the project and with implementing recommended improvements.</p> <p>Task 2: Work with the Main Street Sylva Association (MSSA) to establish a committee to develop a preliminary inventory of vacant and underutilized upper floors of downtown buildings that might have the potential to be used for housing.</p> <p>Task 3: Determine what factors, if any, have encouraged or discouraged downtown building owners from developing upper floor housing.</p> <p>Task 4: Identify approaches other communities have used to encourage upper floor housing.</p> <p>Task 5: Report findings to the MSSA and the Sylva Board of Commissioners.</p> |

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| Strategy Area 1: Ideal Business Location | Strategy Area 2: Great Place to Visit | Strategy Area 3: Better Place to Call Home |
| <p>Action 2: Develop a plan for targeting and recruiting to downtown Sylva one or more of the types of businesses identified through the market/gap analysis.</p> <p>Task 1: Identify technical and financial resources that may be available to help develop the plan.</p> <p>Task 2: Research best practices from communities that have successfully recruited businesses (including budget, staff, etc.).</p> <p>Task 3: Explore options for establishing and funding a position focused on recruiting and supporting commercial/retail businesses.</p> <p>Task 4: Develop a list of potential businesses to recruit and recommend steps for doing so.</p> | <p>Action 2: To share information, identify opportunities for cooperative efforts, etc., convene regular (e.g. quarterly) meetings of representatives of the Town of Sylva, Main Street Sylva Association, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, Jackson County Tourism Development Authority, Jackson County Office of Economic Development and other partners involved in attracting and supporting visitors.</p> <p>Task 1: Talk to leaders of tourism and business support entities to gauge interest in meeting.</p> <p>Task 2: Schedule and hold an initial meeting.</p> | <p>Action 2: Identify opportunities for infill residential development/redevelopment.</p> <p>Task 1: Use GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping to identify and conduct a preliminary assessment of vacant and partially developed properties in Sylva’s planning jurisdiction for their potential suitability for residential development.</p> <p>Task 2: Study approaches used by other communities to allow and encourage tiny homes and other infill housing alternatives.</p> <p>Task 3: Investigate what, if any, incentives communities can use to encourage residential development.</p> |
| <p>Action 3: Work with partners, such as Jackson County, the municipalities therein, state agencies, utility/service providers, the business community and others, to make development standards and processes for businesses easier to comprehend and as predictable and streamlined as possible.</p> <p>Task 1: Meet with partners to identify common issues businesses have during the development process and possible solutions.</p> <p>Task 2: Work with Jackson County to update its “New Business Roadmap” brochure.</p> <p>Task 3: Ensure the Tuckasegee Water & Sewer Authority’s fees are in line with those of surrounding areas.</p> | <p>Action 3: Develop a plan to implement a high priority, relatively low cost, short-term project that will improve the movement of pedestrians in downtown Sylva (e.g. Mill Street sidewalks).</p> <p>Task 1: Review Sylva’s 2011 Pedestrian Plan project recommendations and prioritize shorter-term projects that are still relevant.</p> <p>Task 2: Select a high impact project to consider for implementation.</p> <p>Task 3: Determine the feasibility of implementing the project, including resources that will be needed.</p> | <p>Action 3: Amend the Town of Sylva’s development regulations, if needed, to remove unnecessary barriers to increasing the supply and variety of safe, quality, affordable housing.</p> <p>Task 1: Review Sylva’s development regulations to identify factors that might discourage housing construction.</p> <p>Task 2: Recommend amendments, if needed, to Sylva’s development regulations to address unnecessary barriers to housing construction.</p> |

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| Strategy Area 1: Ideal Business Location | Strategy Area 2: Great Place to Visit | Strategy Area 3: Better Place to Call Home |
| <p>Action 4: Identify grants, loans, and other sources or means of funding to implement Sylva’s goals for business recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Task 1: Work with the Southwestern Commission, the NC Department of Commerce, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the US Economic Development Administration, and others to identify actions/projects in Sylva’s Economic Development Strategic Plan that might qualify for outside funding assistance.</p> <p>Task 2: Review the NC Main Street Program’s <i>Downtown Funding Guide</i> and similar resources.</p> <p>Task 3: Gather information from other North Carolina communities regarding project funding sources.</p> | <p>Action 4: Develop or update a site plan for the Bridge Park expansion.</p> <p>Task 1: Discuss goals/ideas for the Town’s property adjacent to Bridge Park, including prior plans.</p> <p>Task 2: Identify a source of/appropriate funds to cover the cost of having a new or updated site plan prepared for the property.</p> <p>Task 3: Hire a landscape architect or other professional to prepare or update a site plan.</p> | |
| <p>Action 5: Help business owners access services and resources that can support them in building and sustaining successful operations.</p> <p>Task 1: Work with partners (Small Business Center at Southwestern Community College, NC Small Business and Technology Development Center at Western Carolina University, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, etc.), to organize a succession planning event for business owners.</p> <p>Task 2: Work with partners to cultivate entrepreneurs by pairing them with more seasoned investors, current and former business owners, etc.</p> | <p>Action 5: Conduct a visitor intercept survey at a downtown Sylva festival to gather data on where attendees reside.</p> <p>Task 1: Identify partners, technical assistance, resources, etc., that may be available to help prepare and implement a visitor survey.</p> <p>Task 2: Determine how and when to deploy the survey.</p> | |

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| | <p>Action 6: Work with Jackson County on updating its greenways master plan to include recommendations for Sylva and for connecting Sylva with the proposed county-wide greenways system.</p> <p>Task 1: Review the current Jackson County greenways master plan.</p> <p>Task 2: Create a conceptual plan to show potential linkages between downtown Sylva, recreational facilities and other points of interest that could be used to develop recommendations for the update to the Jackson County greenways master plan.</p> <p>Task 3: Begin identifying local businesses and organizations that could serve as partners for planning and funding greenways in Sylva.</p> <p>Task 4: Begin building public awareness and support for greenways in Sylva.</p> | |
| | <p>Action 7: Enhance Scott Creek as an asset for downtown Sylva.</p> <p>Task 1: Coordinate/assist with existing Scott Creek cleanup efforts (e.g. the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce’s in the fall of 2017).</p> <p>Task 2: Begin to explore the feasibility and environmental impacts of aesthetic enhancements to the creek and opportunities for creekside recreation.</p> | |