



To: TDA Board
From: Nick Breedlove, TDA Executive Director
Date: November 14, 2025
Subject: Monthly Director's Brief

Dear Board Members,

Please find below my monthly update for November:

Gift Card Promotion with TDA and Chambers

To help support businesses that experienced significant losses following Hurricane Helene last fall, we've launched a local gift card initiative. The concept is simple: encourage people to shop local by purchasing gift cards or gift certificates from Jackson County businesses for the holiday season.

We're working closely with local Chambers of Commerce to pull member data and also gathering our own list of businesses that offer online gift card purchasing. We'll provide direct links to make shopping local easy and accessible. The campaign includes a blog launch around November 24, supported by PR, social media, and chamber promotions.

This effort is timed to coincide with Small Business Saturday (November 29) and will run throughout December. Our hope is that this will provide a meaningful lift in sales for our local merchants.

Meeting with JC Emergency Management & Crisis Email Template Update

I had a very productive meeting with Zeb Holland, our new Emergency Management Director. We had a strong conversation about how our departments can collaborate during crises and be resources to one another. Zeb brings a wealth of knowledge and shares many of our concerns around



visitor safety at waterfalls and other sites. I look forward to building a long-term partnership.

We're also updating our emergency communication email templates. The new versions will allow for quicker deployment and a more cohesive visual identity - mirroring our regular e-newsletter design. These will be used for both visitor messaging and local business communications in the event of future emergencies.

Preliminary October Numbers

By all accounts, October was a strong month. Visitor traffic was high across the county - I personally had trouble finding parking in downtown Sylva on multiple occasions. While occupancy was down 6.8% from last October (at 71.5%), it's important to note that last year's numbers were inflated due to emergency workers staying in the area for Hurricane Helene recovery.

The Average Daily Rate (ADR) was up 34% to \$222, which reflects the shift back to standard pricing after last year's discounts for emergency personnel. Overall, revenue is up year-over-year thanks to the increase in ADR.

Board Member Update

We received four board member applications, which were shared with the County Commissioners for review. We expect their votes soon and look forward to welcoming new members.

At our December organizational meeting, we will need to nominate a Vice Chair. If you're interested, I'm happy to help prepare you to lead meetings and guide you through procedures in case the Chair is absent.

Visitor Kiosk Proposal

Included in your agenda packet is a proposal from TrueOmni to install a digital kiosk system at the Jackson County Chamber & Visitor Center. The Chamber is proposing using the \$10,000 budgeted this year for visitor center improvements to fund this project.

This turnkey system pulls data directly from our website, including events, trails, and waterfalls - eliminating the need for duplicate entry by staff. The



initial setup cost is approximately \$17,000, so we are proposing a \$7,000 budget amendment from fund balance to supplement the allocated funds.

We plan to install this first kiosk in Sylva and evaluate its performance before considering expansion to the Cashiers Area Chamber and Visitor Center.

Upcoming TCPF Applications – January Meeting

We'll be reviewing two Tourism Capital Project Fund applications in January: one for an expansion to the Pinnacle Park trail system and another for restrooms at The Village Green. Please plan to attend and allow sufficient time for presentations and Q&A from the applicants. I've been working closely with both groups on data and application prep.

New Forest Therapy Page

The Jackson County Recreation and Parks Department, in partnership with Callaway, has launched a new forest therapy trail along the Greenway. This marks Jackson County's second such trail - and the first fully accessible forest therapy trail in the United States.

We've launched a new landing page on our website featuring both trails, access information, guide options, and self-guided experiences for visitors.

Link: <https://www.discoverjacksonnc.com/outdoors/forest-therapy/>

National Parks Messaging During Shutdown

Throughout October, we proactively messaged that Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway remained open despite the federal shutdown. This messaging contributed to strong fall visitation numbers.

Sales Tax Dashboard in Symphony

We've worked with Tourism Economics to add county sales tax figures to our monthly Symphony dashboard. This new feature allows us - and our Economic Development team - to better track Jackson County's economic performance.



Looking Ahead: Gravel Trail Guide

We're exploring a collaboration with the Outdoor Economy Office and Made by Mountains to create a guide to gravel biking trails in Jackson County and the surrounding region. This niche market is rapidly growing, and we saw strong interest during the Outdoor Economy Conference. We'll continue pursuing this project for potential rollout in the coming years.

New Director at the Village Green



We're pleased to introduce our TDA Board to Dale Gordon as the new Executive Director of The Village Green. Dale brings a wealth of experience in nonprofit leadership, community development, media, and public service, and was previously recognized as one of Tampa Magazine's Top 10 Leading People. Since 2018, Dale and her husband have made the plateau their home, raising two sons here. She is deeply committed to stewarding The Village Green's mission and is already leading a major campus-wide improvement project focused on restoration, accessibility, and enhanced community spaces. We're excited for the vision and energy she brings to this treasured community space.



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