

## Northeast Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026

For the Northeast Georgia Economic Development District:

Barrow, Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, & Walton Counties

## Acknowledgements

To retain Economic Development District designation, the NEGRC regularly maintains and updates the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Northeast Georgia, with guidance from local public and private stakeholders.

#### **CEDS Committee**

Courtney Bernardi | President, Oconee County Chamber of Commerce

Bo Cochran | Board of Directors, Madison-Morgan Chamber of Commerce (COC)

Daniel Dobbins | President & CEO, Development Authority of Elbert County

Asher Dozier | VP of Economic Development, Newton County IDA

David DuBois | Economic Development Director, Greene County

David Dyer | Executive Director, Development Authority of Jasper County

Serra Hall | Executive Director, Newton County IDA

Amrey Harden | Post 3 Commissioner, Oconee County Board of Commissioners

Bruce Henry | Chair, Jasper County Board of Commissioners

John Howard | Mayor, City of Monroe (Walton County)

Bob Hughes | President/Economic Development Director, Madison-Morgan COC

Lisa Maloof | Barrow County Economic Development Director

Vance Mattox | Private, Oglethorpe County

Ben McDaniel | Barrow County Economic Development Coordinator

Jay Paul | Chair, Oglethorpe County Board of Commissioners

Christopher Roach | Dept. Head for Code Enforcement and P&Z Depts., Madison County

John Rogeberg | Site Development Services Coordinator, Athens-Clarke County

John Scott | VP & Director of Economic Development, Jackson County COC

Shane Short | Executive Director, Development Authority of Walton County

Daniel Sizemore | Bicycle-Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, Athens-Clarke County

Anna Strickland | Executive Director, Madison County Chamber of Commerce

Phil Pitts | County Manager, Elbert County

Sam Young | Secretary, Greene County Development Authority

## Planning & Government Services Committee

Andy Ainslie (Chair) | District 2 Commissioner, Morgan County

Linda Blechinger | Mayor, City of Auburn (Barrow County)

John Daniell | Chair, Oconee County

David Dyer | Executive Director, Development Authority of Jasper County

Cary Fordyce | Gubernatorial Appointee, Oglethorpe County

Pat Graham | Chair, Barrow County

Gail Harrell | Mayor, City of Monticello (Jasper County)

Steve Horton | Mayor, City of Covington (Newton County)

John Howard | Mayor, City of Monroe (Walton County)

W.M. Palmer | Private, Elbert County

Brad Tucker | Private, Oconee County

Lee Vaughn | Chair, Elbert County

#### **NEGRC Staff**

Burke Walker | Executive Director

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Prepared by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Planning & Governmental Services Division

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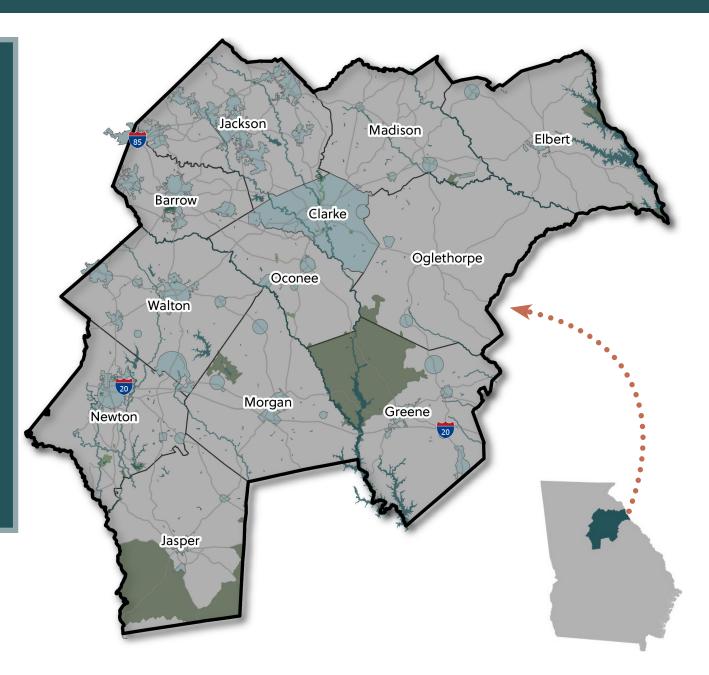
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# The Northeast Region of Georgia

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) serves as the Economic Development District (EDD) for the 12-county Northeast Georgia Region, through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). To retain EDD designation, NEGRC regularly maintains and updates the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Northeast Georgia, with guidance from local public and private stakeholders. This document is consistent with 13 C.F.R. § 303.7 and the CEDS standards and guidelines set forth by the U.S. EDA and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO). It is intended to compliment the vision and initiatives articulated by the Northeast Georgia Regional Agenda.





## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## Who are We?

The Northeast Georgia Region spans from the perimeter of Metro Atlanta to the rural border of South Carolina. It is a region with a strong agricultural heritage and vibrant downtowns. As the region has grown, it has diversified to contain a unique mix of urban, small town, industrial, and pastoral spaces, giving it a unique character.

Athens-Clarke County, located toward the center of Northeast Georgia, is home to the University of Georgia, Athens Technical College, and Piedmont University. Athens, along with portions of Oconee County to the south, makes up the region's central metropolitan core. Barrow, Jackson, Walton, and Newton counties have urbanized areas of their own as a result of their proximity to Atlanta and the major I-85 and I-20 interstate corridors. Elbert, Greene, Jasper, Madison, and Morgan counties contain small municipalities but remain considerably rural in character. However, many rural cities and counties are receiving an increasing amount of developmental pressures for their business, residential, and recreational potential.

According to the 2020 Census, the region has a population of approximately 657,220, which is a 15% increase since 2010. The region is expected to continue growing at a rapid pace, with a projected 2050 population of 914,366. The presence of the University of Georgia and many other post-secondary institutions help make education services the largest industry in the region. The region is also host to a growing manufacturing and transportation hub, exciting retail establishments, and world class healthcare and social assistance facilities.

## **Top Industries**

- 1. Educational services (38,538 jobs)
  - 2. Manufacturing (36,157 jobs)
    - 3. Retail trade (35,219 jobs)
- 4. Health care and social assistance (32,681 jobs)
  - 5. Construction (21,804 jobs)

Source: US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

### 2020 Population 657,200 +15% vs. 2010 +50% vs. 2000

Source: US Census (2020, 2010, 2000)

# 2050 Population Projection 914,366 +39% vs. 2020

Source: Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget

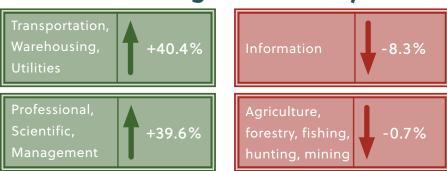
## Where are we as a Region?

The Northeast Georgia regional economy has grown from approximately \$14.2 billion in 2001 to \$21.1 billion in 2020 (adjusted to 2012 dollars), representing a 49% increase in the region's economy. This period of growth has only been interrupted by the 2008-2010 recession and the economic contraction between 2019-2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2010 and 2020, the regional workforce has increased

2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 1: Introduction

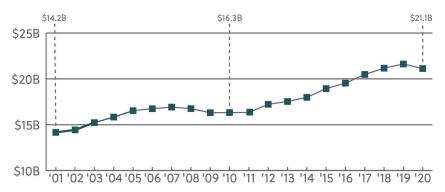
by approximately 17%. This growth has been concentrated in a few industries, including the transportation, warehousing, and utility sector as well as the professional, scientific, management, and administrative sector, which have both seen a 40% increase in the workforce.

## **Notable Changes in Industry Jobs**



Source: US Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010 & 2020)

## Regional GDP Over Time (2012 Dollars)



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

## Impacts of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting economic impacts have tested the economic resilience of the region, and these impacts have been felt differently across industries. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Accommodation and Food Services industry had the largest number of establishments severely impacted by the pandemic, with large impacts on other in-person industries including retail trade, healthcare, and social assistance. As with the rest of the nation, the Northeast Georgia Region is grappling with an affordability crisis due to a high rate of inflation and increasing housing costs.

## **COVID-19 Impacts by Industry (Nationally)**

### **Most Impacted**

- 1. Accommodation and Food Services
- 2. Arts, entertainment, recreation
- 3. Retail Trade
- 4. Healthcare and Social Assistance
- 5. Manufacturing

## **Least Impacted**

- 1. Utilities
- 2. Finance, Insurance, and Management
- 3. Professional and Technical Services
- 4. Arts, entertainment, recreation

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

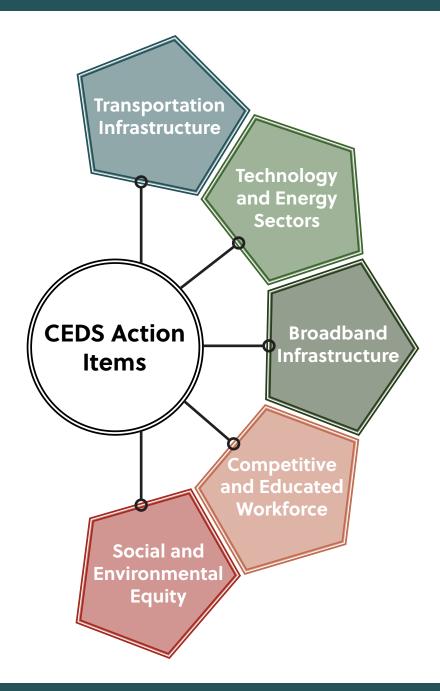
# What are our Economic Development Goals?

For the region to adapt to an ever-changing economic environment, improve the standard of living of all residents, and prepare for future economic difficulties, the region must actively invest in its physical and human infrastructure.

The region must prioritize improving its physical infrastructure by continuing to diversify its transportation infrastructure, enhance the resilience of its technology and energy sectors, and improve the region's broadband infrastructure.

The region must strive to improve the standard of living and capabilities of its residents. The region's local governments must ensure that the economic benefits derived from future economic growth are equitably shared among residents and that no socio-economic group unjustly bears the economic or environmental burden of industry or land development. In addition, fostering a competitive and educated workforce will ensure the region is able to attract in-demand industries that fit the needs of the area.

Refer to Chapter 4 for more information regarding these goals.



2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 1: Introduction



## **Crafting the CEDS**

The CEDS 2022-2026 is the result of four months of public input from local public and private stakeholders. Outreach included regular CEDS Committee meetings and an online questionnaire; input guided the regional economic development strategies and tasks laid out in the Action Plan (described in Chapter 4). An inventory of economic development items from local County and Municipal Community Work Programs (a component of local comprehensive plans) provided additional guidance for strategy and goal development.

#### **CEDS Committee**

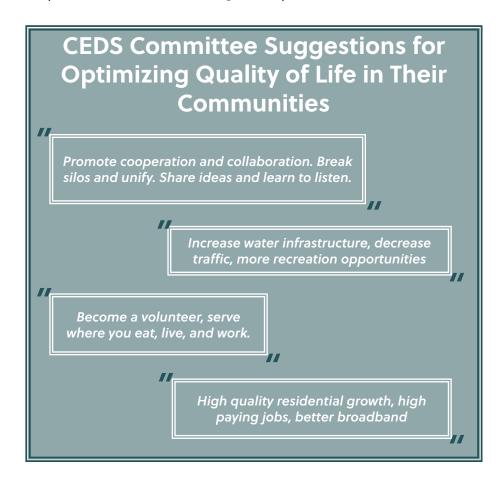
The CEDS Committee served as a steering committee to articulate the regional vision, strategies, and goals. County commissioners from each of the Northeast Georgia counties appointed two CEDS Committee members; the result was a mix of public and private sector representatives with a variety of backgrounds. The CEDS Committee held three meetings: Meeting #1, to review the current economic conditions of the region and examine Northeast Georgia's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; Meeting #2, to outline the region's foci for economic development and draft strategies; and Meeting #3, to refine strategies, goals, and objectives with clear performance measures for each.

### **Questionnaire**

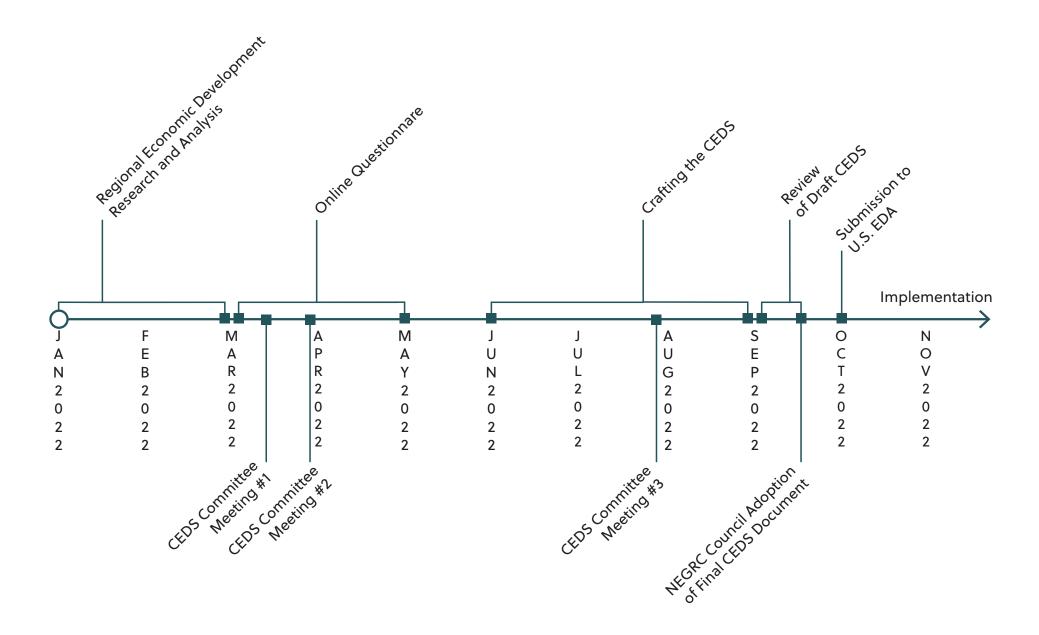
An online questionnaire was distributed to government staff, elected officials, residents, and business owners within the Northeast Region via NEGRC.org, a press release, and through county and municipal social media. Fifty responses provided additional insight for the SWOT analysis and development of the strategy items.

### **Community Work Programs**

The Georgia Department of Community Development (DCA) requires a Community Work Program component for every local comprehensive plan. These programs identify and prioritize community activities and initiatives and are updated every five years. Local government Community Work Program items specific to economic development were compiled and considered during development of the CEDS Action Plan.



## **Timeline**



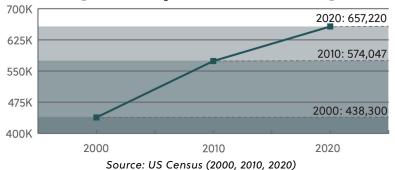
## **Chapter 2: Economic Snapshots**

## **Regional Analysis**

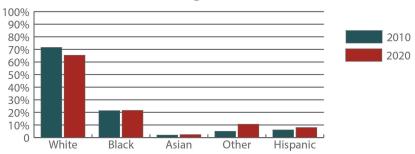
The region's population has grown dramatically in the 21st century, with the overall population growing 31% between 2000 and 2010 and an additional 15% between 2010-2020. Between 2010 and 2020, the region has steadily become more diverse, with the percentage of white residents decreasing from 72% to 65%. The percentage of residents who are Black, Asian, Hispanic, and other races have all increased.

Oconee County has seen the largest population increase between 2010-2020 at over 27%. All counties located along the I-20 and I-85 interstate corridors, which include Barrow, Jackson, Newton, Walton, and Morgan Counties, have seen moderate to high population increases ranging from 13% to 26%. The only counties experiencing a decrease in population are Elbert and Oglethorpe County, which saw population decreases of -0.5% and -2.6%, respectively.

## **Region Population Change**

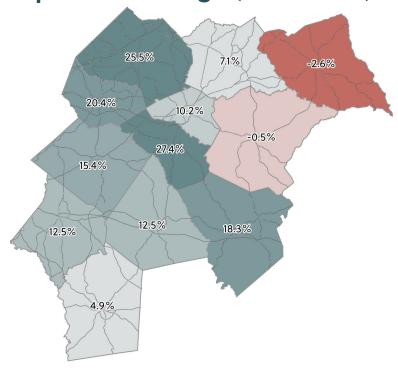


## **Race Change Over Time**



Source: US Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

## Population Change (2010 - 2020)



Source: US Census (2010, 2020)

2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 2: Economic Snapshots

## **Industry Breakdown**

The combined services category is the largest industry in all counties in the region. In Clarke and Oconee County, services make up more than half of all jobs, while other counties have larger manufacturing, transportation, and construction industries. Amazon has grown to the largest employer in the region due to its growth in warehousing space, which has followed the overall growth in the transportation, warehousing, and utility industries in the region.

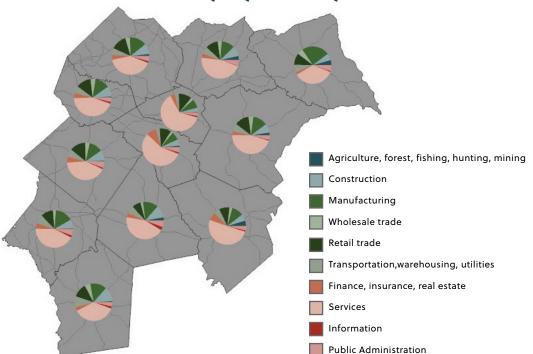
## **Largest Employers in the Region**

- 1. Amazon.com Services, Inc.
- 2. Athens Regional Medical
  Center
- B. HG Georgia Merchants, Inc.
- 4. Hire Dynamics, LLC
- 5. Pilgrim's Pride Corporation

- 6. St. Marys Hospital
- 7. The William Carter Company
- 8. University Of Georgia
- 9. Walmart
- 10. Wellpoint, Inc.

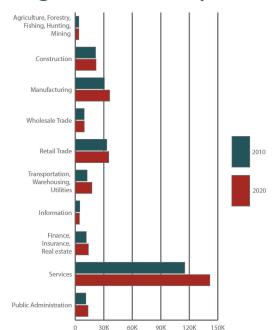
Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Local Area Profiles

## **Industry by County**



Source: US Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

## **Regional Industry Jobs**



Source: US Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

## **Economic Wellbeing**

The average resident of the region has experienced a steady improvement in their socio-economic wellbeing. The average per capita income has increased by 21% between 2016 and 2020, reaching \$45,880 in 2020. The region has also seen a steady decrease in the unemployment rate from 2010 to 2022. While the unemployment rate soared briefly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 11% in May of 2020, it has since dropped to 2.9% at the beginning of 2022.

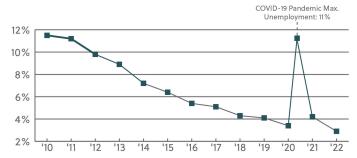
While there has been an average increase in standard of living across the region, poverty continues to be prevalent throughout the region. Overall, the region has a poverty rate of 15.3%, which is higher than the poverty rate for the state of Georgia (14%). Clarke and Elbert County have the highest poverty rates in the region at 26.5% and 24.5%, respectively. Oconee and Jackson County have the lowest poverty rates at 6.2% and 9.1%, respectively.

## **Per Capita Income**



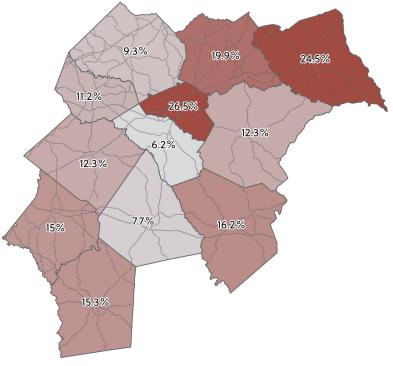
Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Local Area Profiles

## Unemployment



Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Monthly Labor Force Estimates

### **Poverty Rate Across the Region**



Source: US Census, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2020)

## **Education and Opportunity Zones**

The region is anchored by a number of educational institutes that attract and train talent. The largest school is the University of Georgia (UGA), a tier-one research institution with an enrollment close to 40,000 students. Oxford University, which is a satellite school of Emory University focused on liberal arts, is located in Newton County. The region also has a number of technical colleges, including Athens Technical College, Lanier Technical College, and Georgia Piedmont Technical College. In total, 10 out of 12 of the region's counties have at least one post-secondary education institution.

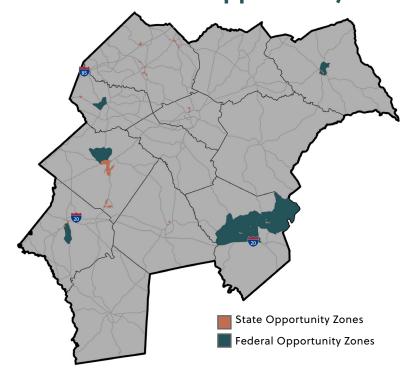
Areas in Barrow, Walton, Newton, Greene and Elbert County have been designated as Federal Opportunity Zones under the Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. This program allows people to invest in distressed areas while obtaining tax benefits. In addition, 14 local governments within the region have designated state opportunity zones within their jurisdiction, which are allowed under the Georgia Job Tax Credit Program. This program allows businesses within the zones to benefit from enhanced Job Tax Credits for new eligible jobs created.

## **Colleges in the Region**

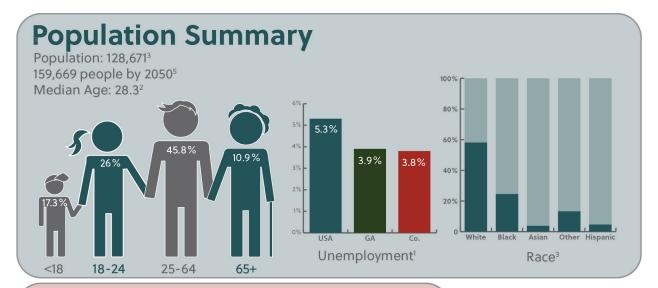
Name	Locations	
University of Georgia	Clarke County	
Piedmont University	Clarke County (Satellite Campus)	
Athens Technical College	Clarke County (Main Campus) Elbert County (Satellite Campus) Greene County (Satellite Campus) Walton County (Satellite Campus	
Lanier Technical College	Barrow County (Satellite Campus) Jackson County (Satellite Campus)	
Southern Crescent Technical College	Jasper County (Satellite Campus)	
Georgia Military College	Madison Campus in Morgan County	
Emory University-Oxford College	Newton County	
Georgia Piedmont Technical College	Newton County (Satellite Campus)	
University of North Georgia	Oconee County (Satellite Campus)	

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Local Area Profiles

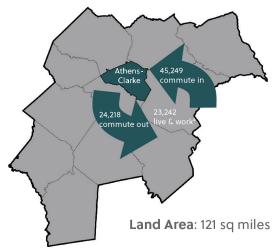
## **State and Federal Opportunity Zones**



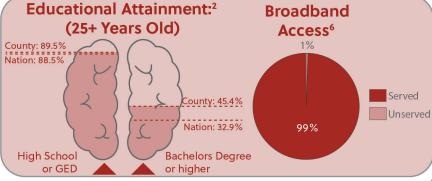
## **Athens-Clarke County**



Sources: 1. Georgia Department of Labor (Q4 2021) 2. U.S. Census Burau 5-Year ACS (2016-2020) 3. U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Census 4. U.S. Census Bureau, On the Map (2019)



**Municipalities**: Athens\*, Winterville \* County Seat



# Median Household Income: Median Home Value \$40,363 \$186,800 \$190,200 \$190,200 \$229,800

# Top 10 Employers:

Athens Regional Medical Center
Athens Technical College
Innovative Solution Advisors
McLane Southeast
Pilgrim's Pride Corporation
St. Marys Hospital
The Kroger Company
University Of Georgia
Walmart

Wellpoint, Inc.

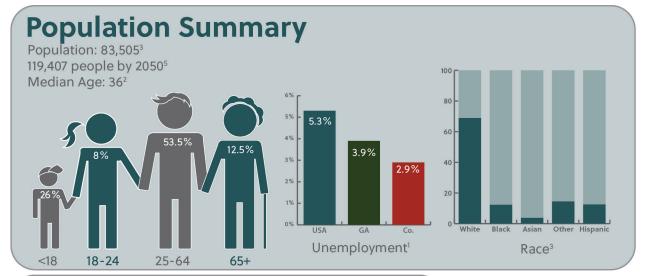
# Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

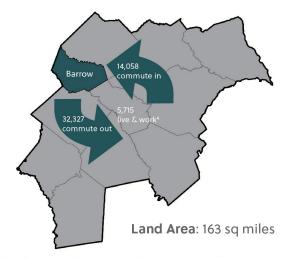
- 1 Education Services
- 3 Retail trade
- 5 Manufacturing
- Administrative, support, waste management
- 9 Transportation and warehousing

- 2 Accommodation and food services
- Health care and social assistance
- Professional, scientific, and technical services
- 8 Construction
- Public administration

5. Governor's OPB (2020) 6. DCA GBDI

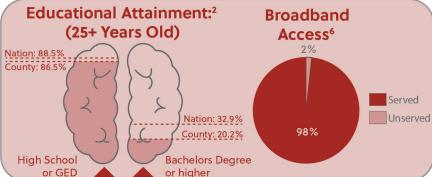
## **Barrow County**





**Municipalities**: Auburn, Bethlehem, Braselton, Carl, Statham, and Winder\*

\* County Seat



# Median Household Income: \$62,990 \$169,900 \$190,200 \$190,200 \$229,800

# Top 10 Employers:

Akin Ford Corp

Carvana, LLC

Chico's Distribution Services, LLC

Harrison Poultry, Inc.

Ingles Markets, Inc.

Johns Manville International, Inc.

Northeast Georgia Med Ctr Barr

Publix Super Markets, Inc.

Sheraton Buckhead

Walmart

## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

1 Retail trade

3 Health care & social assistance

5 Construction

Administrative, support, waste management

9 Transportation & warehousing

2 Manufacturing

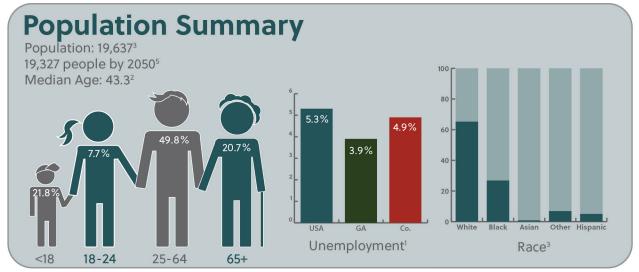
4 Educational services

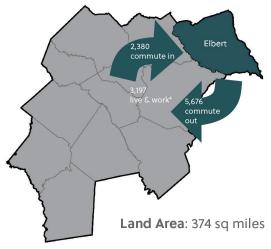
6 Accommodation & food services

Professional, scientific, technical services

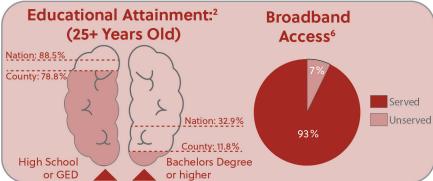
10 Wholesale trade

## **Elbert County**





Municipalities: Bowman and Elberton\*
\* County Seat





# Top 10 Employers:

Eagle Granite Co, Inc.
Ingles Markets, Inc.

Keystone Memorials, Inc.

McDonalds

Mollertech South, LLC

Pilgrim's Pride Corporation

Pinnacle Bank

The York Group

Walmart

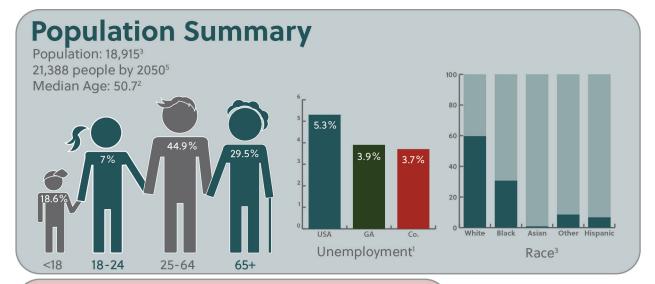
Whitlow Electric Service Co, Inc.

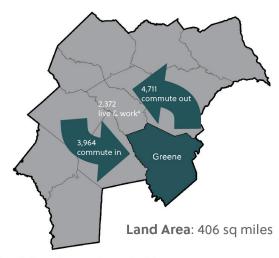
## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- 1 Manufacturing
- Retail trade
- Transportation & warehousing
- Public Administration
- 9 Accommodation & food services

- 2 Health care & social assistance
- 4 Educational services
- 6 Construction
- 8 Wholesale trade
- Administrative, support, waste management

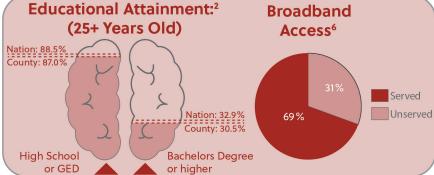
## **Greene County**





**Municipalities**: Greensboro\*, Siloam, Union Point, White Plains, and Woodville

\* County Seat





# Top 10 Employers:

A2bf, Inc.

Bughouse Pest Control Of Lake Oconee

Daniel RP Management, LLC

Nibco, Inc.

**Novelis Corporation** 

Publix Super Markets, Inc.

Ritz-Carlton Hotel

St Joseph's at East Georgia

ot losepii s at Last Georgia

Tendercare Clinic, Inc.

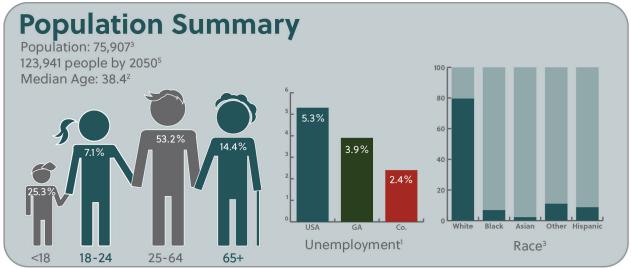
The Home Depot

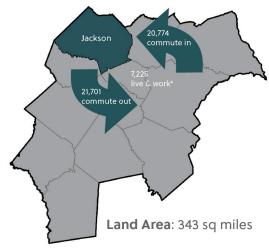
## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- Health care & social assistance
- 3 Manufacturing
- 5 Retail trade
- 7 Construction
- 9 Transportation & warehousing

- 2 Accommodation & food services
- 4 Educational services
- Administrative, support, waste management
- Professional, scientific, technical services
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting

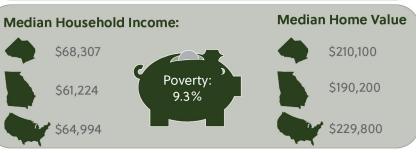
## **Jackson County**





**Municipalities**: Arcade, Braselton, Commerce, Hoschton, Jefferson\*, Nicholson, Pendergrass, Talmo \*County Seat

# Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old) Nation: 88.5% County: 85.3% Nation: 32.9% County: 23.5% Bachelors Degree or higher Broadband Access<sup>6</sup> 18% Served Unserved



# Top 10 Employers:

Amazon.Com Services, Inc.

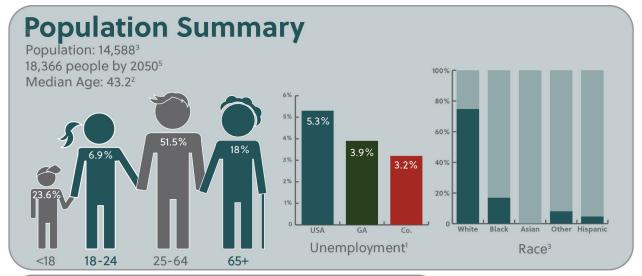
Bed Bath and Beyond, Inc.
Fox Racing Shox
HG Georgia Merchants, Inc.
Hire Dynamics, LLC
Kubota Industrial Equipment Corporation
The William Carter Company
Walmart
Wayne Poultry

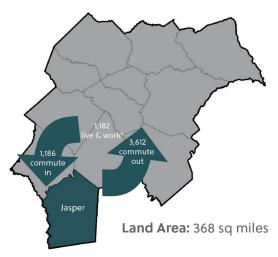
Williams-Sonoma Direct, Inc.

## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

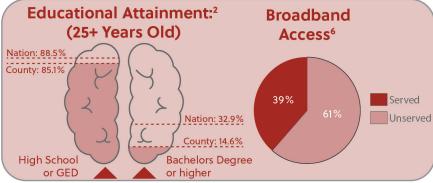
- 1 Manufacturing
  - 2 Retail trade
- Health care & social assistance
- 4 Construction
- 5 Educational services
  - Professional, scientific, technical services
- Administrative, support, waste management
- 8 Transportation & warehousing
- 9 Accommodation & food services
- Public Administration

## **Jasper County**





Municipalities: Monticello\*, Shady Dale \*County Seat



# Median Household Income: \$52,409 \$61,224 Poverty: \$190,200 \$229,800

# Top 10 Employers:

Associated Staffing Services, Inc.

Cal Maine Foods, Inc.

Dexter Axle Company
Ingles Markets, Inc.

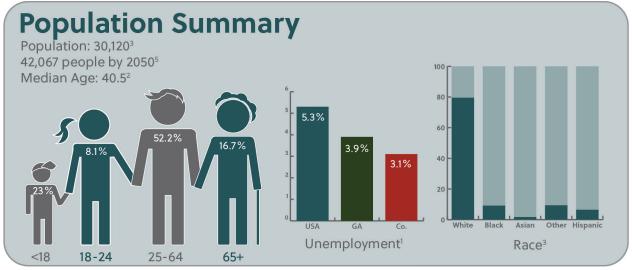
Jasper Memorial Hospital
Norton Packaging, Inc.
Pallets Acquisition, LLC
Permatherm, Inc.
Profile Products
Earth and Turfs Reps, Inc.

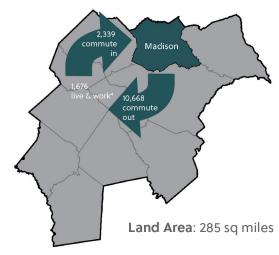
# Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- 1 Manufacturing
- 3 Retail trade
- Health care and social assistance
- Administrative, support, waste management
- 9 Accommodation and food services

- 2 Construction
- 4 Educational services
- Transportation and warehousing
- 8 Wholesale trade
- Public administration

## **Madison County**





Municipalities: Carlton, Colbert, Comer, Danielsville\*, Hull, and Ila
\*County Seat

# Educational Attainment:<sup>2</sup> (25+ Years Old) Nation: 88.5% County: 83.3% County: 19.2% Bachelors Degree or higher Broadband Access<sup>6</sup> 37% Served Unserved

# Median Household Income: Median Home Value \$143,200 \$190,200 \$190,200 \$229,800

# Top 10 Employers:

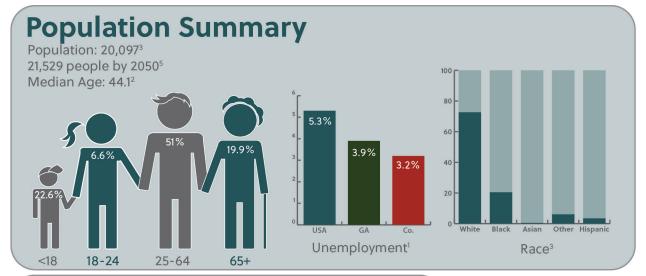
Christopher Bridge, LLC
College Pro Landscaping
Foothills Education Charter High School
Ingles Markets, Inc.
Madison County Health & Rehabilitation
Medlink Georgia, Inc.
Smi Composites, LLC
Spg Construction, LLC
Vital Workforce Solutions, Inc.

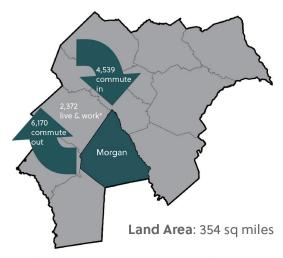
## Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- 1 Educational services
- 3 Retail trade
- 5 Construction
- 7 Transportation & warehousing
- 9 Public Administration

- ices Manufacturing
  - Health care & social assistance
  - Accommodation & food services
  - Administrative, support, waste management
  - Professional, scientific, technical services

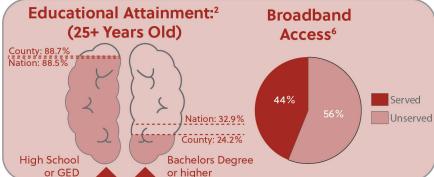
## **Morgan County**





**Municipalities**: Bostwick, Buckhead, Madison\*, and Rutledge

\* County Seat



# Median Household Income: Median Home Value \$68,669 \$230,400 \$61,224 \$190,200 \$64,994 \$229,800

# Top 10 Employers:

Amtico International, Inc.
Bard Manufacturing Co, Inc.

C R Bard, Inc. Flambeau, Inc.

Georgia-Pacific Wood Products, LLC

Ingles Markets, Inc.

Lowe's Home Centers, Inc.

Pennington Seed, Inc.

Townsend Tree Service Company, LLC

Walmart

# Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

1 Manufacturing

3 Construction

Health care & social assistance

Public Administration

9 Transportation & warehousing

4 Accommodation & food services

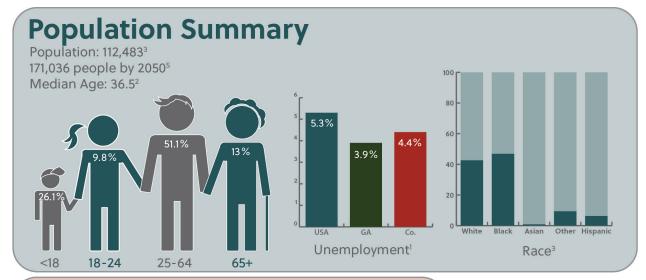
**Educational services** 

6 Retail trade

Professional, scientific, technical services

Administrative, support, waste management

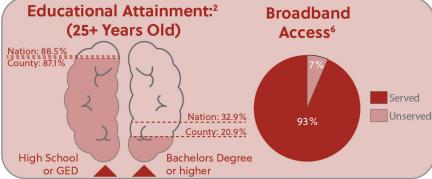
## **Newton County**





**Municipalities**: Covington\*, Mansfield, Newborn, Porterdale, and Oxford

\* County Seat





# Top 10 Employers:

Covington Moulding Co FiberVisions, Inc. General Mills Operations, Inc. Hire Dynamics, LLC Lendmark Financial Services Newton Health System, Inc. Pactiv Corporation Sas Retail Merchandising The Kroger Company

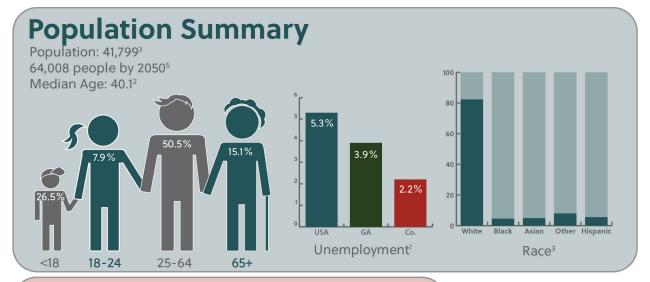
Walmart

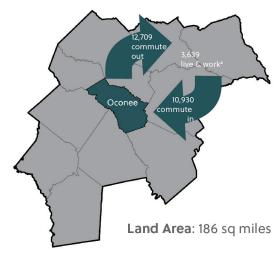
# Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

- 1 Manufacturing
- 3 Retail trade
- 5 Construction
- 7 Transportation & warehousing
- 9 Administrative, support, waste management

- 2 Health care & social assistance
- 4 Educational services
- Accommodation & food services
- 8 Public Administration
- Professional, scientific, technical services

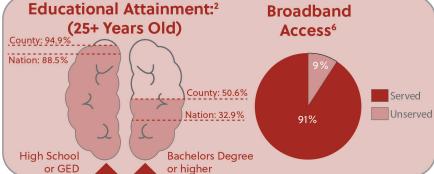
## **Oconee County**





**Municipalities**: Bishop, Bogart, North High Schoals, and Watkinsville

\* County Seat



# \$95,064 \$304,400 \$190,200 \$64,994 \$229,800

# Top 10 Employers:

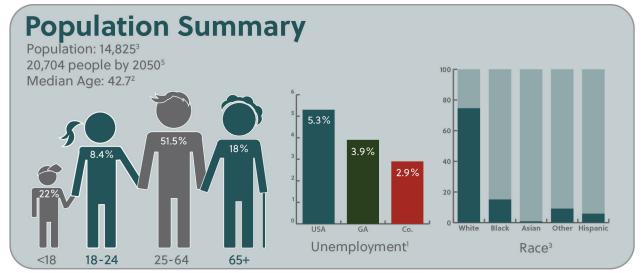
# Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

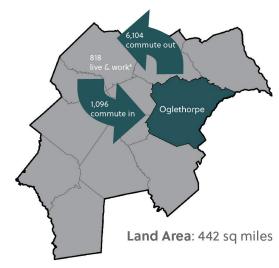
- 1 Educational services
- 3 Retail trade
- 5 Manufacturing
- Real estate, rental, leasing
- 9 Public administration

Zaxby's

- vices
  - 2 Health care & social assistance
  - Professional, scientific, technical services
  - 6 Construction
  - Administrative, support, waste management
  - Accommodation & food services

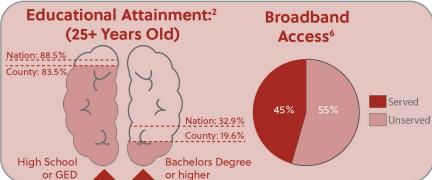
## **Oglethorpe County**





**Municipalities**: Arnoldsville, Crawford, Lexington\*, and Maxeys

\* County Seat



# \$52,816 \$133,200 \$190,200 \$190,200 \$229,800

# Top 10 Employers:

Classic City Solutions, Inc.
G Brand BBQ, LLC
Greater Georgia Printers, Inc.
J & J Chemical Company
James Greenhouses, Inc.
LCS Community Employment, LLC
Oglethorpe Children's Academy, LLC
Quiet Oaks Nursing Home
Raven Manufacturing

The Commercial Bank

# Top 10 Industrial Sectors:

1 Educational services

Health care & social assistance

3 Manufacturing

4 Retail Trade

5 Construction

Transportation & warehousing

7 Accommodation & food services

Administrative, support, waste management

9 Wholesale trade

Public administration

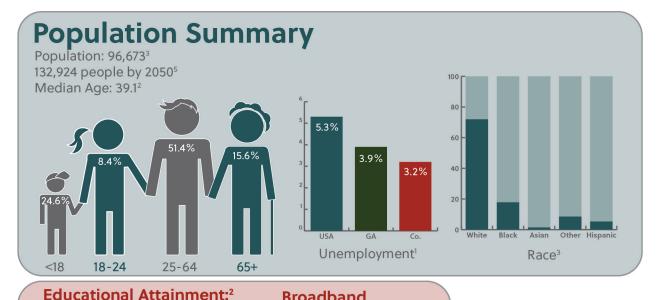
## **Walton County**

(25+ Years Old)

Nation: 88.5% County: 87.2%

**High School** 

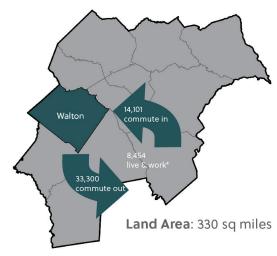
or GED



**Broadband** 

Access<sup>6</sup>

91%



Municipalities: Good Hope, Loganville, Monroe\*, Social Circle, and Walnut Grove \* County Seat

Top 10 **Employers:** Served

Adp Totalsource FI XVII, Inc.

**BXL** Covington

Hitachi Automotive Products (USA), Inc.

Leggett & Platt, Inc.

Pike Electric, LLC

Standridge Color Corp

The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co

Trilogy Foods, LLC

Tucker Door & Trim, LLC

Walmart

**Top 10 Industrial Sectors:** 

Retail Trade

Manufacturing

**Educational services** 

Health care & social assistance

Construction

Public administration

Transportation & warehousing

Professional, scientific, technical services

Accommodation & food services

Administrative, support, waste management

**Median Home Value Median Household Income:** \$65,491 \$210,500 Poverty: \$190,200 \$61,224 12.3% \$64,994 \$229,800

Nation: 32.9%

County: 22.5%

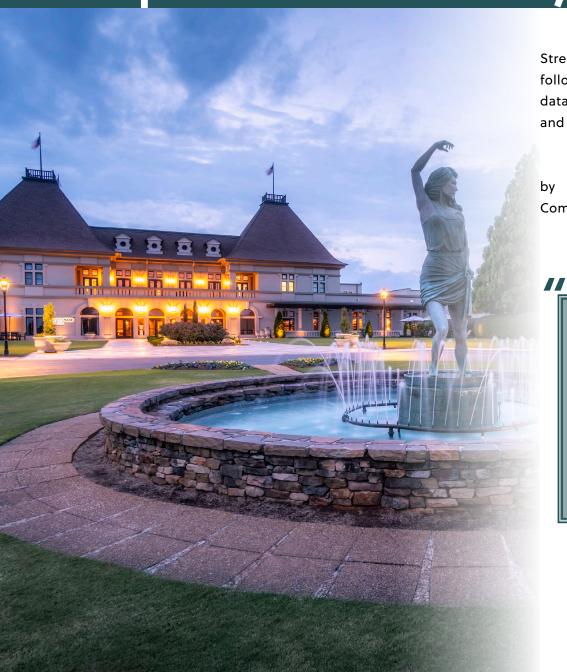
**Bachelors Degree** 

or higher

Sources: 1. Georgia Department of Labor (Q4 2021) 2. U.S. Census Burau 5-Year ACS (2016-2020) 3. U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Census 4. U.S. Census Bureau, On the Map (2019) 5. Governor's OPB (2020) 6. DCA GBDI

Unserved

## **Chapter 3: SWOT Analysis**



The CEDS Committee and NEGRC staff conducted a regional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis following a review of county and regional demographic and economic data. In addition, 50 regional community members, elected officials, and local government staff provided insight via an online questionnaire.

The following page lists the key themes and topics identified by the SWOT analysis; this investigation assisted the CEDS Committee in articulating the Action Plan, presented in Chapter 4.

Our region
should focus
on being
purposefully
branded and
unique as to not
be absorbed by
Metro Atlanta.

We live in a
wonderful
place, the more
we help those
around us, the
more we will
benefit.

2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 3: SWOT Analysis

## **Strengths**

- 1 Infrastructure
- 2. Labor poo
- Quality of life (lifestyle options)
- Educational resources (UGA Athens Tech, GA Piedmont, Lanier Tech)
- 5. Recreational opportunities
- Diversity of workforce opportunities/ job market (smal and large)
- 7. Number of workers available
- 8. Natural Resources
- 9. Relationships with state and utilities
- 10. Willing volunteers
- Proximity to Metro Atlanta (close and far away)
- 12. Range of housing
- 13. Strong small business environment
- Regional collaborations (Stantor Springs)
- 15. Good historical work ethic/workforce
- Post-secondary education opportunities
- 17. Location

## Weaknesses

- Lack of infrastructure to meet growth
- 2. Funding capital/lack of funds available
- Lack of interconnectivity of transportation/transit between communities
- Lack of inventory of industrial & residential (housing)
- 5. Communities/communication patterns
- 6. Regional collaboration (everyone else minus Stanton Springs)
- 7. Metro Flight
- 8. Lack of Broad-band
- Alternative transportation (bike, trails)
- 10. Transportation safety
- 11. Policy barrier with transit
- 12. Growing NIMBYS (Not In My Back Yard)
- 13. Rapid growth
- Not enough affordable, workforce housing

## **Opportunities**

- 1. Growtl
- Holistic approach to Education
- 3. Educational Institutions
- 4. Regional cooperation, collaboration
- 5. Community identity
- EV industry = EV corridor (EV: Electric Vehicle)
- 7. College + Career academics
- 8. Rail infrastructure
- 9. Rebirth of historic downtown for these amenities new
- 10. ECV: Electronic Convenience
  Vehicles
- 11. "Come back in"/prevent rural brain drain (the out-migration of young, college educated workers from the rural areas)/ Control of urban spiral.
- 12. Identity of Communities

## **Threats**

- 1. Anti-change sentiment
- Lack of housing/ workforce/ transportation
- 3. Lack of utility infrastructure
- 4. Higher density in city
- 5. Rebirth of historic downtowns
- 6. Lack of Public transportation
- 7. Public Parks
- Lack/aging infrastructure
- 9 Politics
- 10. Housing
- educational needs to be met for rural areas.

## **Chapter 4: Action Plan**



The action items identified herein are intended to guide economic development throughout Northeast Georgia by building upon existing strengths and pursuing opportunities that will overcome weaknesses and reduce the impacts of threats to the region's economy

The CEDS Committee and NEGRC staff identified the following economic development Action Items for the Northeast Georgia Region:

- 1. Advance a framework for a dynamic <u>transportation</u> network
- 2. Encourage a holistic and complimentary <u>technology and energy</u> sector across the region
- 3. Improve and expand broadband access in the region
- 4. Foster a competitive and educated workforce
- Promote and cultivate <u>social and environmental equity</u> throughout communities

The following Action Plan identifies strategies, tasks, and performance measures for each Action Item.



The <u>Resilience Builder</u> emblem highlights opportunities to strengthen economic resilience against natural disasters, changing weather patterns, economic downturns, pests or disease, and other threats facing the region's economy

**Note:** Action Items are not numbered in order of importance. Key facilitators should prioritize the following based on existing capabilities, available funding, and achievability.

2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 4: Action Plan

Prioritize regional transportation projects Advance a framework for a Assess regional opportunities for intermodal transportation development (focus targeting workforce) dynamic transportation network Expand electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure across the region Match industries that fit the goals and strengths of the region Encourage a holistic and Assess the region's energy sources and identify areas for renewable energy complimentary technology and integration (solar, wind, hydro, etc.) energy sector across the region Improve relationship between agricultural land uses & nearby educational institutions Develop public, private, & non-profit partnerships to expand broadband infrastructure Improve and expand broadband Ensure a regional network of free public broadband access access in the region Educate local stakeholders on the broadband language Support the development of & transition to digital information networks Create new and expand existing business incubators and shared spaces and/or equipment Foster a competitive and Support and expand advanced (high school and higher) skill-building programs educated workforce Issue area education and training in the development sector (builders, knowledge base, homebuyer education, etc.) Distinguish Northeast Georgia as a socially responsible community Monitor and encourage progress on key issues identified by the Middle Ocmulgee, Promote and cultivate social Savannah-Upper Ogeechee, and Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Councils and environmental equity Support local disaster plan updates and emergency communication networks

Promote land use efficiency and access to resources for vulnerable populations.

throughout communities

## **Action Item 1: Transportation**

## **GOAL:** Advance a framework for a dynamic <u>transportation</u> network

Transportation needs are inextricably linked to land use, so the region's transportation network must continue expanding along with the region's population. However, to keep pace with changing transportation needs, the region should prioritize building a diverse system of transportation infrastructure that includes multi-use trails, commuter rail, public transportation, and better street connectivity between neighborhoods and commercial areas. The region must also respond to the coming electric vehicle revolution by building the foundation for EV charging stations across the region.

#### **Key Facilitators:**

Local Government Planning Departments, Planning Commissions, Elected Officials, Transit Agencies, Georgia Department of Transportation, NEGRC, Private Developers



A diverse and dynamic transportation system with multiple mode options will allow the system to continue functioning if extreme stress impacts one single mode. Additionally, shifting to EVs using regionally produced electricity will alleviate the stress of fluctuating gas prices on the region's residents and businesses.



2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 4: Action Plan

### **Strategy 1**

## Prioritize regional transportation projects

#### Tasks:

- Compare applicable MPO plans and county comprehensive plans to identify regional transportation priority projects (including multi-use trails and commuter rail).
- Encourage involvement of local governments in their respective MPOs.
- Identify applicable/relevant funding programs through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IJA) for projects of regional significance

#### **Performance Measures:**

- Grant dollars dedicated to regional projects funded through GDOT or other transportation funding sources
- Reports of newly improved lane mileage on state and U.S. routes

## **Strategy 2**

Assess regional opportunities for intermodal transportation development (focus targeting on workforce)

#### Tasks:

- Determine feasibility of a regional transit authority
- Communicate urban/rural designations to local governments for transit development
- Collaborate with GDOT in regard to the "Greenfield Corridor Alternative" of the Atlanta to Charlotte Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan

#### **Performance Measures:**

- Number of residents served by public transit extent in region
- Track investments in new rail infrastructure in region

## **Strategy 3**

## Expand electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure across the region

#### Tasks:

- (R) Identify current conditions of EV market and map existing infrastructure extent
- Create prioritization list for EV charging stations region-wide
- Identify applicable/relevant funding programs through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IJA) for local governments

#### **Performance Measures:**

- Grant dollars dedicated to EV charging network within region
- Growth rate of available charging stations

## **Action Item 2: Technology & Energy**

# **GOAL:** Encourage a holistic and complimentary (or resilient) **technology and energy** sector across the region

Northeast Georgia is endowed with economic and natural resources that, if capitalized upon, will allow the region to continue to thrive in the future. The region should identify its industrial and commercial strengths and prioritize attracting suitable new businesses. The region can also capitalize on its renewable energy potential to improve its energy independence. However, the region should preserve its agricultural heritage by bringing in educational programs and the public to participate.

#### **Key Facilitators:**

Georgia Power, Local Electric Membership Cooperative's (EMC), MEAG Power Participant Communities, Local Governments, NEGRC, Local Development Authorities, Local Energy Subsidiaries

MEAG Participants of the Northeast Georgia Region: City of Commerce, City of Covington, City of Elberton, City of Monroe, City of Monticello, City of Oxford

EMC's of the Northeast Georgia Region: Central Georgia EMC, Hart EMC, Jackson EMC, Snapping Shoals EMC, Rayle EMC, Walton EMC



Renewable energy is key to local energy independence, which would buffer the region from national and global energy supply disruptions. Similarly, local food production can help make the region less vulnerable to national or international food supplychain shocks.



2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 4: Action Plan

## **Strategy 1**

Match industries that fit the goals and strengths of the region

#### **Tasks**

- Analyze strengths of the regional energy network and share that information with local governments and development authorities
- Create a list of ideal industry types for the region
- Utilize technology platforms to collaboratively market available commercial and industrial land across the region (Note: this already exists at the state level through the Georgia ED Dept and GA Power; reach out to Kristen Miller for reference)

#### **Performance Measures**

- Identification of key strengths and weaknesses in energy sector
- Growth in the number of jobs in target industries
- Number of new businesses in target industries relocating to or starting in the region

## **Strategy 2**

Assess the region's energy sources and identify areas for renewable energy integration (solar, wind, hydro, etc.)

#### Tasks

- Engage private industry to provide internal education and SWOT analysis
- Partner with state and federal partners to support services and programs guided toward renewable energy production
- Offer targeted training and educational programs for local government staff and elected officials

#### **Performance Measures**

- Total megawatts of energy produced by renewable sources in region
- Number of public and private dollars invested in renewable energy production in region

## **Strategy 3**

Improve relationship between agricultural land uses & nearby educational institutions

#### **Tasks**

- Encourage opportunities for the public to directly benefit from local and industrial agriculture operations (ex. farmers markets, farm-to-table or farm-to-school programs, commercial and industrial farms, etc).
- Provide publicly accessible information on the economic impacts of local industries including timber and agriculture.
- Update local land use plans and development regulations to mitigate conflicts between intense agricultural uses, industrial uses, residential development, and sensitive environmental resources.

#### Performance Measures

- Number of jobs created and retained by agricultural industries
- Expansion of local agritourism businesses
- Student enrollment rate of educational programs available for agricultural professions

## **Action Item 3: Broadband**

# **GOAL:** Improve and expand **broadband** access in the regionand energy sector across the region

Access to high-speed broadband internet is essential in today's connected world and will only become more important. Broadband is key to communities developing and expanding job-creating businesses and providing public services. It can also provide access to online education resources and job search opportunities for workers. A significant portion of the Northeast Georgia region is considered rural and broadband coverage in these areas will be an important effort in the coming years.

#### **Key Facilitators:**

Broadband Providers, Local Governments, Economic Development Authorities



A resilient communication network is imperative during times of emergency. Making broadband access universal can help governments communicate essential information to residents during natural or human-caused disasters.



2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 4: Action Plan

## **Strategy 1**

Develop public, private, & non-profit partnerships to expand broadband infrastructure

#### Tasks

- B Identify service gaps and methods for broadband expansion
- Review local planning documents, permitting procedures, and regulations to ensure state and federal funding eligibility and competitiveness (ex. Broadband Ready Certification)
- Appoint a local official/ expert to liaison broadband expansion discussions
- Hold conversations between local governments and providers (local EMCs and private providers) to discuss feasibility of broadband projects and collaborate on state/ federal funding applications
- Develop understandings of the confidence/ risk of investments into broadband infrastructure

#### **Performance Measures**

- Number of new businesses / households served by broadband expansion project(s) in the region
- Number of communities in the region certified as Broadband Ready by DCA

## **Strategy 2**

Ensure a regional network of free public broadband access

#### Tasks

- Review local planning documents to determine if efforts are being taken locally to identify public access points
- Facilitate discussions with local stakeholders regarding planning of publicly accessible Wi-Fi
- Use state and local data to map available public WinnFi locations across the region

#### **Performance Measures**

- Inclusion of public broadband access initiatives in local comprehensive plans
- Understanding and mapping of available state and local data

## Strategy 3

Educate local stakeholders on the broadband language

#### **Tasks**

- Host a broadband education
  series with knowledgeable guest
  speakers
- collaborate with local
  colleges and universities to
  determine avenues for business
  development in the technology /
  broadband sector

#### **Performance Measures**

- Number of local stakeholders who participate in education series
- Inventory of educational programs available in the region for broadband-related professions

## **Strategy 4**

Support the development of & transition to digital information networks

#### **Tasks**

- Develop structured outlines for public entities' web content to promote consistency, recognition, and authenticity of online content
- Establish and maintain platforms and campaigns to promote local businesses, organizations, and initiatives

#### **Performance Measures**

- Development of local promotional platforms
- Offering of trainings for local businesses / organizations
- Reported increases in online sales / patronage of local businesses due to online presence

## **Action Item 4: Education**

## **GOAL:** Foster a competitive and <u>educated</u> workforce

Education is one of the most powerful ways of reducing poverty and increasing the efficiency of organizations, and entrepreneurship is key to accelerating innovative economic growth. Local governments should have an active role in promoting education and entrepreneurship by providing the resources needed to promote a growth-oriented education and business environment.

#### **Key Facilitators:**

Boards of Education (BOE), Technical Colleges, Universities, Private Industry Representatives, WIOA and Other Workforce Training Organizations, Economic Development Authorities, Local Governments



Economic downturns and industrial changes can threaten economic prosperity if the region is not prepared. A highly educated workforce capable of creating new business opportunities will help the region bounce back faster from systemic economic misfortune.



2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 4: Action Plan

## Strategy 1

# Create new and expand existing business incubators and shared spaces and/or equipment

#### **Tasks**

- Work with local high schools and technical colleges to expand existing business incubators and program new shared spaces and equipment.
- Develop public, private, and non-profit
  partnerships to provide support networks and
  guidance opportunities to regional entrepreneurs
- Evaluate local regulatory and amenity environment in relation to business startups and entrepreneurs
- Identify the needs of and solutions for underserved entrepreneurs
- Examine feasibility of dedicating portions of underused facilities in a community to incubatory efforts

#### **Performance Measures**

- Inventory active business incubators available in the region
- Sample the number of jobs created and retained by businesses within business incubators
- · Track annual business "births"

## **Strategy 2**

# Support and expand advanced (high school and higher) skill-building programs

#### **Tasks**

- Expand programs that build soft skills alongside certification or training.
- Expand work training and placement programs in cooperation with local technical colleges, businesses, and industries.

#### **Performance Measures**

- Internship placement in local jobs
- Student enrollment numbers in NE Georgia region academies and universities
- Post-graduate placement rate in local jobs

### **Strategy 3**

### Issue area education and training in the development sector (builders, knowledge base, homebuyer education, etc.)

#### **Tasks**

- Engage private industry to provide internal education and SWOT analysis
- RB Identify gaps in skilled workforce and construction industry needs
- Partner with private, non-profit, and state entities to engage and educate (participate in local area GICH programs, attend housing authority meetings, etc.)

#### **Performance Measures**

- Inventory of regional GICH participants
- Growth vs. demand of workforce in construction industry
- Number of homes built vs. population growth

## **Action Item 5: Equity**

# **GOAL:** Promote and cultivate **social and environmental equity** throughout communities

It is the responsibility of local governments to ensure that all residents of the region benefit from economic growth equally regardless of race, gender, age, or ability. Local governments must also ensure that growth does not come at the expense of vital natural resources in the region, such as the region's water supply or natural land. Humans and wildlife vitally depend on these resources. The support and preservation of wildlife diversity and well-being is as equally important as human equity regarding sustainable economic growth.

#### **Key Facilitators:**

Local Government Planning Departments, Private Industries and Businesses, Economic Development Authorities, Health Service Providers, Non-Profits, NEGRC, Water Planning Commissions, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services



Reducing inequality can help decrease the social vulnerability of disadvantaged communities, which can help improve their resilience to external stressors. Preserving key watershed areas can help reduce the risk of extreme flooding events and improve water quality.



2022 Northeast Georgia CEDS Chapter 4: Action Plan

### **Strategy 1**

### Distinguish Northeast Georgia as a socially responsible community

#### **Tasks**

- Identify areas of wage and race disparity across the region and determine strategies for mitigation
- Review local plans to determine if local steering committees and public input are representative of the local demographics
- Promote sensitive land use practices that strive to prevent environmental justice concerns

#### **Performance Measures**

- Quantifiable reduction in wage disparity between races
- Demographic makeup of local plan steering committees
- Reduction in number of brownfields in the region

## **Strategy 2**

Monitor and encourage progress on key issues identified by the Middle Ocmulgee, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee, and Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Councils

#### **Tasks**

- Report Identify imperiled waterways in the Northeast Georgia region
- Encourage development of passive recreation and conservation corridors along major rivers
- Develop water quality and water capacity goals region-wide

#### **Performance Measures**

- Track water quality parameters over time
- Inventory of passive recreation options and conservation land region-wide

## **Strategy 3**

# Support local disaster plan updates and emergency communication networks

#### **Tasks**



 Identify funding opportunities for emergency services and equipment

#### **Performance Measures**

- Up-to-date PDM's for all counties
- Awarded PDM grants and/or other project funding
- Inventory of new facilities that offer emergency support services

## **Strategy 4**

Promote land use efficiency and access to resources for vulnerable populations.

#### <u>Tasks</u>

- Inventory regional industrial parks and available land to reduce greenfield development
- Identify opportunities to attract new businesses or expand on nearby specialized clusters.
- Determine barriers of access to employment clusters across the region

#### **Performance Measures**

- Track growth rate of industrial parks
- Track number of new business cluster proposals (DRI's)
- Identify changes in average travel times for residents per county

## **Tracking Progress**



The PGS Committee will serve as the monitoring entity for the Northeast Georgia CEDS. In this capacity, PGS Committee members will review the CEDS at least annually to identify progress made in implementing the five Action Items described in the Action Plan.

The NEGRC is governed by a Council of county, municipal, private sector, and state representatives. The Planning & Government Services (PGS) Committee of the NEGRC Council is one of four standing committees, established to consider potential PGS Division projects for inclusion in the NEGRC annual work program, make determinations about Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs), and perform a variety of other functions. On a (typically) monthly basis, the PGS Committee meets to discuss business activity, infrastructure projects, and other planning and government service-related matters within the region. Monthly meetings also provide an opportunity to report matters of importance or interest to the full Council.

Findings through the implementation of the CEDS will be presented to the full Council. Key Facilitators for each Action Item will provide the NEGRC PGS Division performance measure results to be compiled and provided to the PGS Committee prior to each CEDS progress review.

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