

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### *NEGRC Operations During Covid-19*

Like so many of you, the NEGRC continues to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have all had to adjust our operations, work habits, and daily lives. The disruption is significant but necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of our region and state.

At the NEGRC, all our programmatic divisions (Aging, Workforce, and Planning & Government Services) continue to operate and provide services to our communities. Since March 16, 2020, the majority of our staff worked remotely while a few worked from the office to perform "minimum basic operations." Our headquarters, however, has been closed to the public (and scheduled meetings) since **March 16, 2020 and until further notice**. In consultation with NEGRC Chairman Pittard, it was decided to **cancel our April 16, 2020 NEGRC Council meeting**.

Many other national and state conferences have been cancelled, and deadlines were extended for grants--most notably the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) until May 1, 2020.

I would like to share additional information about NEGRC operations related to Covid-19:

- Due to the closings of most Senior Centers, the NEGRC, last month, provided additional funding for over 8,000 prepared meals (congregate and home delivered)
- Two mobile lines were added and numbers provided to our Councilmembers to ensure an immediate response from myself and Julie Ball, NEGRC Executive Assistant. Please note: that all staff have access to office voicemails and emails while remote working
- The NEGRC expanded its server access to enable more staff to remote work
- The NEGRC's Workforce Division (WorkSource Northeast Georgia), in collaboration with the state's WIOA and its 19 Local Workforce Development Areas, is applying for a U.S. Dept. of Labor's National Emergency Dislocated Worker Grant in response to Covid-19. If funded, the grant could provide workforce resources to NEGRC cities and counties

As we all work through this critical period, please know we are here to assist our communities; we are exploring new local, state, and federal resources to assist in your local efforts in response to Covid-19. Please do not hesitate to contact me, **Burke Walker**, NEGRC Executive Director, at **(706) 369-5650 ext. 304** or call/text **(706) 207-1213** and by email: [bwalker@negrc.org](mailto:bwalker@negrc.org) if the NEGRC can assist in any way.

## THINK YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

*Learn how to think (and act!) like an entrepreneur at your local public library*

All public libraries in Georgia offer FREE access to Entrepreneurial Mindset Training, an online, self-paced course focused on the attitudes and thinking that lead to entrepreneurial success. The course is funded through the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) to give all libraries a tool to help patrons strengthen marketable skills.

The course is based on in-depth research that was funded by CISCO System's Entrepreneurship Institute and the Marion Ewing Kauffman Foundation and conducted by the Entrepreneurial Learning Initiative.

Participants are prompted to engage in exercises that connect their life experience to that of successful entrepreneurs, develop a personal vision, interview a local entrepreneur, identify a problem they would like to solve and complete an opportunity canvas that helps them refine and validate their solution.

You also will learn how to:

- Recognize opportunities that others overlook. Drawing from best practices in design thinking, you will learn how to discover opportunities that are hiding in plain sight.
- Master the art of bootstrapping. You will learn how cash-strapped entrepreneurs manage to identify, evaluate and transform their ideas into a sustainable success.

- Develop a success network that will enable you to avoid costly mistakes, reduce the learning curve and accelerate your growth.
- Identify and overcome the self-imposed limitations that may be holding you back.
- Tap into a mindset that will inspire and empower you to create a path toward a more meaningful and prosperous life regardless of where you start.

Access the Mindset course: <https://georgialibraries.org/entrepreneurial-mindset-training/>

NOTE: You will need your GALILEO password. If you don't know it, ask a friendly staff member at your local library.

## BEN EPPS AIRPORT RECEIVES SMALL COMMUNITY AIR SERVICE DEVELOPMENT GRANT

Athens-Clarke County – Ben Epps Airport was recently selected as one of 18 airports in the nation to receive FY2018 U.S. Department of Transportation Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) grant funding. This federal program was designed to help small communities address air service and airfare issues. Ben Epps hopes to use the \$750,000 award to attract a commercial air carrier back to Athens, through revenue guarantees and airport marketing. Recent renovations to the airport, including reconstruction of the main runway and construction of a new commercial terminal, will also help attract a commercial air carrier to Athens. National- and international-based business growth within Northeast Georgia, along with increasing travel times to and wait times in Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, were two primary indicators of the demand and need for commercial air service in the region as identified in the Ben Epps marketing study. The grant application included support letters from large employers in the area, as well as from American Airlines.

For more information about the Athens-Ben Epps Airport, visit: [www.flyahn.com](http://www.flyahn.com).

For more information on the SCASDP grant, visit: [www.transportation.gov/policy/aviation-policy/small-community-rural-air-service/SCASDP](http://www.transportation.gov/policy/aviation-policy/small-community-rural-air-service/SCASDP)

## WINDER RECEIVES \$1M GRANT FOR TRAIL NEGRC ASSISTS CITY WITH SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

In 2018, Georgia voters overwhelmingly approved (83% in favor) a dedicated funding source to build parks and trails, conserve land, and maintain related existing facilities. Using a portion of sales-tax receipts from purchases of sporting goods and outdoor equipment, the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP), known also as "Conserve Georgia," is administered by the Department of Natural Resources. The State plans to make project applications available annually.

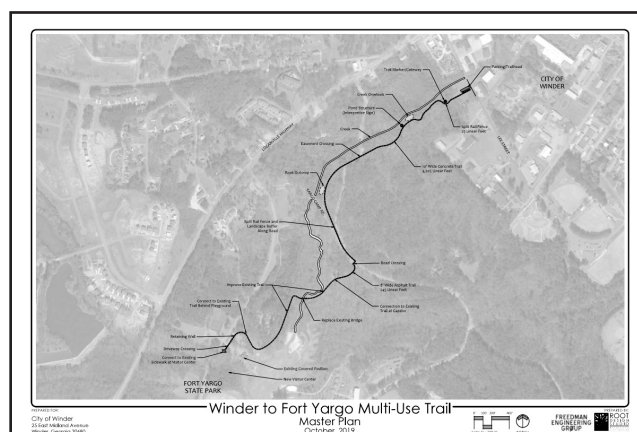
In this, the first year of the GOSP's existence, the City of Winder requested assistance from the Northeast Georgia Regional

Commission in applying for GOSP funding to construct a one-mile, hard-surfaced trail connecting central Winder with Fort Yargo State Park (FYSP). Planning & Government Services staff organized a coordinated process between the City and Georgia State Parks, and prepared application materials including narratives, maps, and budgets. The City, which already owned the required property not located within the State Park, hired a designer to create a design concept and produce cost estimates. Part of the local property features the site of a former company park once operated by the Bellgrade Manufacturing Company; this, along with the natural attributes of the trail corridor, ensures that the project offers both historic and natural interpretive opportunities.

Winder's project – a multi-use trail that will support walking, bicycling, running, inline skating, and other non-motorized uses – was one of only eight local projects selected for funding. At \$1,001,757, the connector trail is larger than all but three of these. In addition to connecting residents to FYSP, the City wanted to allow park visitors to access Winder's diverse shops, eating and drinking establishments, and neighborhoods. The trail is expected to increase both visitation of FYSP and tourism and economic development opportunities in Winder. As is required of all approved local projects, the trail is specifically featured in the community's comprehensive plan.

The Winder/FYSP trail is not the only approved project within the twelve-county Northeast Georgia region. The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County, after preparing its own application, received funding for a \$550,000 project to "re-establish high-quality wildlife habitat, enhance ecosystem services, and provide enhanced outdoor recreation opportunities along the North Oconee River in Athens' downtown district," creating the community's first public water trail. Other approved projects statewide include property acquisition for new passive recreation spaces, construction of improvements within existing conservation and recreation areas, filling-in of a superfluous manmade "cut" between two coastal waterways, and forest restoration.

The 2020-2021 GOSP funding cycle is projected to be open late-summer through mid-fall 2020. Please contact NEGRC Principal Planner, **John Devine**, AICP NEGRC Principal Planner at [jdevine@negrc.org](mailto:jdevine@negrc.org) or (706) 369-5650, to see if your community's project is eligible, or if you have any other questions about GOSP.



*The project involves connecting Fort Yargo State Park with downtown Winder, with the planned route above.*



*The planned trail parallels and then crosses this small, picturesque stream.*



*In the past, children enjoyed boat rides in the former park operated by the Bellgrade Manufacturing Company as shown in this historic photograph.*

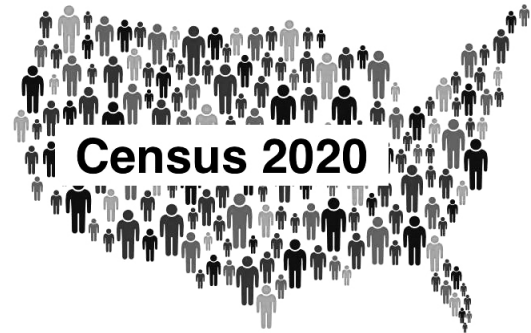
## CENSUS 2020

Invitations to respond to the 2020 Census have been mailed out to residents encouraging them to respond using the online survey by April 1st. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Self-Response Phase (online, phone, or mail) has been extended through August 14th. This will allow additional time to ensure residents are able to access the Internet or receive and complete the paper forms. In addition, Census-takers' in-person efforts have been tentatively postponed to begin in mid-April, making it even more important for local communities to plan for how they can provide additional resources to ensure residents have access to the online, phone, or mail-in surveys.

Results of the 2020 Census will affect local jurisdictions' state and federal funding allocations over the next 10 years (for everything from education to healthcare to infrastructure), as well as data projections and political representation. Everyone counts.

Visit [Census.Georgia.gov](https://Census.Georgia.gov) for state and nationwide updates on 2020 Census efforts; [Census.Georgia.gov/resource-library](https://Census.Georgia.gov/resource-library) contains valuable resources and information for local communities.

Residents can respond to the Census online via [2020Census.gov](https://2020Census.gov).



## GEORGIA TRUST'S 2021 PLACES IN PERIL APPLICATIONS

The Georgia Trust is now accepting applications for the 2021 Places in Peril Program. The list seeks to identify threatened historic sites in order to raise awareness about Georgia's endangered and significant historic, archaeological, and cultural resources, including buildings, structures, districts, archaeological sites, and cultural landscapes. Examples from Northeast Georgia include the Rose Hill School c. 1937, Porterdale, Newton County (2020 Places in Peril) and A.J. Gillen Department Store c. 1907, Maxeys, Oglethorpe County (2018 Places in Peril).

Criteria for Places in Peril are as follows: properties that are historically significant and significantly threatened; sites must be subject to a serious threat to their existence or historical, architectural and/or archaeological integrity; and there must be a demonstrable level of community commitment and support for the preservation of listed sites.

For additional details about the Georgia Trust's 2021 Places in Peril or to download a nomination form, please visit [www.georgiatrust.org/our-programs/places-in-peril/](https://www.georgiatrust.org/our-programs/places-in-peril/). Nomination forms must be submitted by June 19, 2020. For information or questions about historic preservation, please contact **Lydia Joffray**, NEGRG Project Specialist at [ljoffray@negrc.org](mailto:ljoffray@negrc.org) or (706) 369-5650 ext. 316.





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## REGIONAL MEETINGS

**APRIL**

Due to unfolding events related to the Covid-19 pandemic,  
no calendar meetings (as of print time) are listed for April.

Please check the NEGRC website for the latest information  
concerning April's meetings or call the NEGRC at (706) 369-5650.