

## JACKSON COUNTY CELEBRATES COURTHOUSE RESTORATION

After twelve years and three phases of restoration construction, Jackson County and a Courthouse Restoration Committee celebrated the opening their Historic Courthouse and Courtroom on August 17, 2020. The completed project was the culmination of countless hours of volunteer support, grant and local funding, and professional oversight. The phase III completion provides for the historic courtroom to be used by the public as a venue for events, meetings, and special occasions.

Phase I began in 2007 and involved exterior repairs and restoration of the clock tower. Phase II restored/rehabilitated the courthouse's first floor as a welcome center and archives facility. Jackson County Chairman, **Tom Crow**, opened the celebration with remarks about the historic building's significance to the community. During the celebration, **Al Westmoreland** was presented a plaque by **Kevin Poe**, Jackson County Manager, for his dedication as Chairman of the Restoration Committee. In her comments, Sloane Meyer, Historic Courthouse Manager, noted that the courthouse will benefit new residents in Jackson County to learn more about their new home and shared local history.

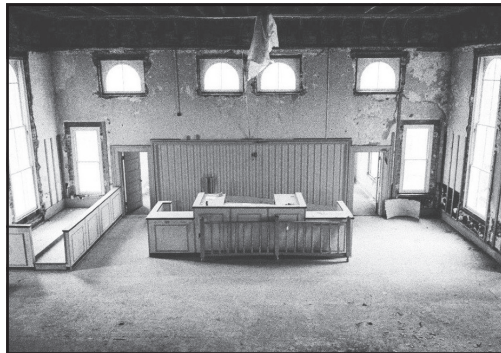
The NEGRC was involved in assisting Jackson County with grant funding to assist in the rehabilitation during Phase II. In particular, Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) funding was used to rehabilitate the building as a welcome center and archives facility to promote tourism within the downtown. **Burke Walker**, NEGRC Executive Director, attended the ceremony. The latest phase marks the completion of the project and the full restoration of the courthouse. The final phase was made possible, in part, with funding from SPLOST, passed by voters in 2016. JOMA Construction of Athens performed the restoration work in Phase III.

The restored courtroom is available to rent for special events and occasions. It includes a full catering kitchen, large open floorplan and balcony area with seating. An elevator also provides access to the courtroom. At a future date, an expanded open house will be held for the larger public to see the space once CDC guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic are eased. For further information, contact the Welcome Center at (706) 387-7585 or the Archives at (706) 387-7684.

For information regarding historic preservation, contact **Lydia Joffray**, NEGRC Project Specialist, at (706) 369-5650.



*Kevin Poe, Jackson County Manager, presenting Al Westmoreland, Chairman Historic Courthouse Restoration Committee, with an appreciation plaque*



*The historic courtroom as viewed from the balcony and prior to restoration and Phase III*



*The restored courtroom that serves as an event venue in Jackson County, as seen from the balcony*

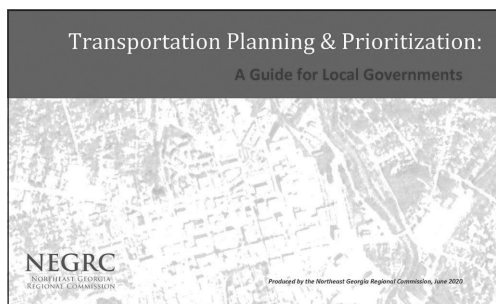
## NEGRC RELEASES HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION AFFORDABILITY STUDY

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission is proud to announce the release of our region-wide study of housing and transportation affordability, available here: <https://tinyurl.com/negrchoustransanalysis>. The study measures the average cost of housing and transportation for households in every county within the region. Most households in the region are paying more than the recommended percentage of household income for both housing and transportation. The study offers general recommendations to reduce the cost of these necessities, such as adding more local business and employment opportunities, and expanding housing and transportation options. Additionally, individual analyses and recommendations are made for each county based on their unique situation. Communities that wish to incorporate these recommendations into their policies can receive assistance from the NEGRC through comprehensive planning,



transportation planning, zoning revisions, and more. Please contact **Mark Beatty**, NEGRC Project Manager, at [mbeatty@negrc.org](mailto:mbeatty@negrc.org), or **Stephen Jaques**, NEGRC Project Specialist, at [sjaques@negrc.org](mailto:sjaques@negrc.org), for housing or transportation-related questions, resources, and assistance.

## TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PRIORITIZATION



*NEGRC Publishes Guide for Cities and Counties, Offers Local Government Assistance*

During development of the 2018 update to the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan, stakeholders identified the need for local governments to address aging infrastructure and allocate limited resources efficiently, especially in regards to transportation. In response, the NEGRC has published a guide for cities and counties to conduct transportation planning and prioritization activities. NEGRC staff are available to provide direct assistance to local governments in these areas.

**Transportation Planning & Prioritization: A Guide for Local Governments** is available on the NEGRC website at <https://tinyurl.com/negrctransportprioritization>. The document presents a review of best practices in the field; context on how Northeast Georgia communities handle transportation decision-making; a suggested transportation prioritization process for cities and counties; a local case study from the region; and a debrief and evaluation.

Based on the Guide's findings, the NEGRC recommends that local governments adhere to the following steps: 1) Determine values and principles through a public process; 2) Select criteria and metrics to evaluate candidate projects; 3) Rank projects as part of a clear, concise, and unbiased methodology; 4) Implement through a phase-based work program that includes immediately actionable projects and a shovel-ready list to leverage funding opportunities, and; 5) Evaluate and adapt the implementation program and the prioritization process to account for successes and lessons learned.

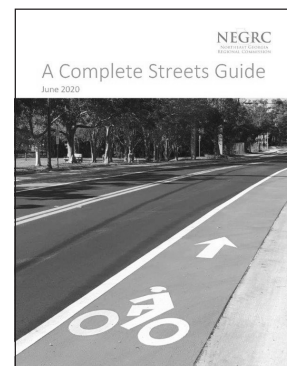
The Planning and Government Services Division is prepared to provide transportation prioritization services for cities and counties, including development of tailored documents that fit the needs of individual communities. Staff will follow the steps cited above to facilitate public and stakeholder involvement, work with leadership to rank projects based on criteria unique to each community, and formulate implementation and evaluation frameworks. If the local comprehensive plan's short-term work program identifies the need for transportation planning or prioritization, the NEGRC may be able to cost-share the project with state funding for a reduced local fee.

Contact **John Devine**, AICP, NEGRC Principal Planner, at [jdevine@negrc.org](mailto:jdevine@negrc.org) more information.

## NEGRC RELEASES COMPLETE STREETS GUIDE

The NEGRC is proud to announce the release of our Complete Streets Guide for local communities, available here: <https://tinyurl.com/negrccompletestreets>. By building "Complete Streets" (right-of-ways that are safe, comfortable, useful, and interesting for people of all ages and abilities), municipalities and counties can increase the safety and value of their communities and decrease household transportation costs. This Guide defines Complete Streets, explains their value, shows how to build them, and provides a model ordinance to help implement the initiative.

The NEGRC is prepared to offer technical assistance to interested communities, including education, walking audits, bicycle and pedestrian plans, and more. For Complete Street questions, resources, and assistance, contact **Stephen Jaques**, NEGRC Project Specialist, [sjaques@negrc.org](mailto:sjaques@negrc.org), or **John Devine**, NEGRC Principal Planner, [jdevine@negrc.org](mailto:jdevine@negrc.org).



## NORTHEAST GEORGIA FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) awards grants to States, U.S. Territories and federally recognized Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) to provide low-income seniors with coupons that can be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs. Ninety percent of federal funds support food costs and up to 10 percent of federal funds can support administrative costs of the program.

In the Northeast Georgia Planning and Service Area, the State of Georgia contracts with the Northeast Georgia Health and Wellness provider through UGA's College of Public Health. The purposes of the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs are to provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey through farmers' markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture programs to low-income seniors. Low-income seniors, are defined as individuals who are at least 60 years old and who have household incomes of not more than 185% of the Federal poverty income guidelines and are the targeted recipients of SFMNP benefits.



Thanks to the hard work from local farmers, Lesley Clack, Assistant Professor/MHA Program coordinator, with UGA College of Public Health/Health Policy and Management and staff from around the Northeast Georgia region, we were able to provide fresh, locally grown produce to approximately 600 participants. Thank you to everyone who came out to support and participate in the farmers' markets. We hope to serve even more participants next year!

## SUCCESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS: FOOTHILLS EDUCATION CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL WELDING PROGRAM

This spring, Foothills Education Charter High School embarked on an exciting new partnership with the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board and WorkForce Innovators of America, Inc. to offer 18 Foothills students the opportunity to complete a 10-week welding program at the Barrow County Foothills site. Upon completion of the program, the students earn an American Welding Society WPS Certification, along with Soft Skill Components that include Lean Six Sigma, OSHA 10 Certification and CPR Certification.

In 2018, the NEGRC/NEGWDB purchased two mobile training trailers for welding and industrial mechanical instruction. They also are used more generally for increasing community awareness related to jobs in the manufacturing industry. In the fall of 2019, the trailer visited Barrow Foothills, and many students expressed interest in learning to weld after touring the trailer.

Foothills and NEGRC/NEGWDB joined forces and resources to bring the pilot program to the Barrow site. Foothills provided funds for the personal protective equipment for students, a portion of the instructional costs, background checks for instructors, costs for certification testing, and support with recruiting and job placement for the trainees. NEGRC provided the training trailer, as well as the balance of the operational costs and instructional supplies. Instruction was provided through trainers from Workforce Innovators, Inc. Students from the Barrow, Walton, and Social Circle Foothill sites were recruited through informational meetings and utilization of YouScience, an assessment that matches a person's unique skills and aptitudes to a specific career field. Site directors at all three locations received information on students whose YouScience assessment showed an aptitude for welding so these students could be encouraged to attend an informational meeting.

In February, 18 students from the three sites entered the program that required them to attend classes Monday through Thursday nights from 5pm to 8pm. This was in addition to any schoolwork needed for other Foothills courses. Because of the broad flexibility provided by their charter, Foothills is "uniquely positioned to provide the Foothills welding course. The charter flexibility was used to teach the standards from the CTAE introduction to welding course in a 10-week period, using instructors from Workforce Innovators of America."

The current COVID-19 situation caused three of students to drop out of the course while the rest resumed the soft skills portion of the training (i.e. resume writing, interview skills, problem solving, financial literacy, six sigma) in an online format with nightly Zoom meetings. The hard skills components of the welding instruction were completed June 2 – 12, 2020.

This course proved successful and valuable to the students. The multiple certifications earned prepared all students for jobs in the

industry. At program conclusion, every student's skills were reviewed by hiring representatives from Kubota Industrial Equipment and Caterpillar. Eleven of the 15 students who were 17 and over were asked to interview for full and part-time jobs. The remainder of the class are well-qualified for the work-based learning opportunities offered in the fall and spring of 2021.

Certifications earned were Lean Six Sigma Intro, CPR/First Aid/AED Training, Welding Safety, Forklift operation and Introduction to MIG Welding. Of the 15 student participants, two were female.

Foothills Superintendent Sherrie Gibney-Sherman stated, "We could not be prouder of our Foothills students. At Foothills we work very hard to help students earn a high school diploma. We identify barriers and work with students to find solutions to overcome barriers. For the last two years we have been focusing on helping students make the transfer from Foothills to the right post secondary or industry certification path that will lead them into the workforce and a great career. The welding project is an example of our efforts. We want students to not only have success in completing their diploma requirement, we want them to also be able to navigate the work world and be contributing citizens to this great state. These students not only learned excellent, important welding skills but they got to participate in actual interviews, complete applications, and all 15 students have been placed in a welding environment as a work-based learning student or full time employment with salaries and benefits. We are super proud."

### Student Testimonies from Foothills Welding Participation:

#### Joey Cagle:

I love it. It got me thinking about my future and a career in welding. It is a great opportunity for students who cannot afford this type of program. The people want the best for you, but you must be willing to work and put in the work. I am learning so many other skills, too—resume writing, interviewing, and life skills. We spent 6 hours talking about attitude and confidence. These are skills that will help in any career.

#### Destiny Evans:

I found out about the program through the announcements, and I went because it sounded interesting and I did not really have a plan for the future. The program opened my eyes. There is a stigma that welding is a task that "big strong men do." But I realized how easy it could be for me, and I am learning skills beyond welding—blueprint reading skills that could help with architecture, time management skills that could help in business. Schools should have more programs like this because not all kids are good with books. Public school offers a "one size fits all," but society is changing, and we need more options.

For information on this or other WorkSource Northeast Georgia WIOA funded programming, please contact the **NEGRC's Workforce Development Division** at **(706) 369-5703**.

*One of the participating students in the welding lab*





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*Update*

**REGIONAL MEETINGS**  
**SEPTEMBER**

3 <sup>rd</sup>	10:00 a.m.	GARC Executive Directors' Meeting	Telephonic
17 <sup>th</sup>	11:00 a.m.	NEGRC Council Meeting	Telephonic
23 <sup>rd</sup>	9:00 a.m.	UOBWA Meeting	NEGRC Atrium

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