

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### Councilmember News

As we end fiscal year 2021 and begin fiscal year 2022, I'm pleased to announce our new NEGRC Council Officers. These new officers were officially sworn in at our in-person June 17, 2021 meeting. They were nominated by a NEGRC Nominating Committee, appointed by NEGRC Council Chairperson Billy Pittard, with Commissioner Andy Ainslie serving as the Committee's Chairperson.

The following NEGRC Councilmembers will serve as officers for a two-year term and include the following positions: Mr. **Bill Palmer**, NEGRC Chairperson; Mayor **Linda Blechinger**, NEGRC Vice-Chairperson; and Chairman **John Daniell**, NEGRC Secretary. These three officers, as required of the NEGRC's bylaws, include a private-sector representative, a mayor, and a county chairperson.

The new officers begin their service to northeast Georgia and the NEGRC on July 1, 2021. Congratulations to our newly elected officers and we appreciate their service to our organization and the region.

A great deal of gratitude is also owed to **Billy Pittard**, as our outgoing NEGRC Chairperson. He served as a NEGRC Council Officer for six years and was presented the "Chairman's Award" at the June 17, 2021 meeting. Next month, he will continue to serve on the NEGRC Council after his recent appointment by **Speaker David Ralston**, serving as the NEGRC's Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives appointee. Mr. Pittard will undoubtedly provide continued leadership and direction for the NEGRC. We appreciate Speaker Ralston and his staff in their efforts in our appointment. Finally, we will welcome both new and reappointed Private-Sector Councilmembers at our August 19, 2021 meeting. Of note is Ms. **Joyce Chambers** who retires from the NEGRC Council, as Walton County's Private-Sector representative, after many years of service and on the NEGRC's Audit and Finance Committee. Thank you for your service to our Council.



*NEGRC Chairman Billy Pittard (left) receiving the "Chairman's Award" and plaque from Commissioner Andy Ainslie*



*NEGRC Chairman Billy Pittard (far-right) delivering the oaths-of-office to incoming NEGRC officers (from left) Bill Palmer, John Daniell, and Linda Blechinger*

### Staff News

I'm also pleased to announce several NEGRC staff promotions that will go into effect on July 1, 2021 and to fill previously vacant positions. These include the following NEGRC staff:

Ms. **Sophia Primer** was promoted to the Comptroller position following a competitive job-candidate search. Ms. Primer holds a bachelor's and master's degrees in Accounting and Business Administration, respectively, from Brenau University in Gainesville. Sophia will oversee the NEGRC's financial operations within the Administrative Division.

Ms. **Amber Bailey** also within the Administrative Division was promoted to Administrative Support and Human Resource Specialist. Ms. Bailey holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia in Psychology. One of her new duties will include human-resource support to the NEGRC's staff and Comptroller.

Mr. **Jon McBrayer** was promoted to the position of GIS Manager from the GIS Specialist position. Jon holds a bachelor's degree in Geography and master's in Public Administration from Georgia College and State University. He is also GIS Certified. He will now manage the NEGRC's Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and provide mapping support to our local governments and within the Planning and Government Services (PGS) Division.

Ms. **Lydia Joffray** was promoted from the Project Specialist position to the Historic Preservation Planner position within the PGS Division. Lydia is well qualified for the position, holding a master's degree in Heritage Preservation from Georgia State University.

Ms. **Rima Sullivan** was promoted from the Youth Program Coordinator to the Youth Program Director within the NEGRC's Workforce Division. Rima's new duties will include those combined from a vacated position. Ms. Sullivan has over eleven years of experience working within the Workforce Division.



NEGRC Executive Director and staff (from right): Burke Walker, Lydia Joffray, Amber Bailey, Rima Sullivan, Sophia Primer, and Jon McBrayer

Congratulations to these individuals and for their professional accomplishments. They all look forward to assisting our local governments in their new capacities at the NEGRC. Their contact information is available on the NEGRC's website at: [www.negrc.org/staff-contacts](http://www.negrc.org/staff-contacts)

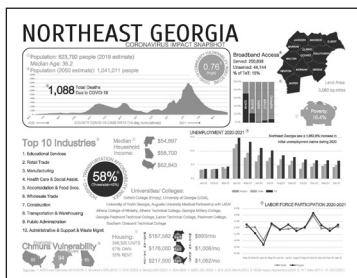
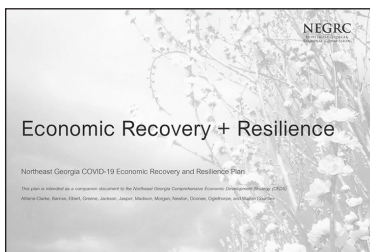
## ECONOMIC RECOVERY + RESILIENCE (ER+R) PLAN FOR NORTHEAST GEORGIA

In July of 2020, the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) to assist with regional economic recovery and resilience-building efforts. The NEGRC recently finalized and adopted the Economic Recovery + Resilience (ER+R) Plan for Northeast Georgia to help guide those efforts. The ER+R Plan was developed through data analysis, surveys, and discussions with local public, private, and non-profit entities involved in economic development and key issue areas, including broadband, housing, and workforce. In total, outreach efforts amassed input from over 350 representatives, from every county in the region, multiple municipalities, regional and state officials, as well as from private and non-profit representatives.

The ER+R Plan includes an assessment of the economic impacts of and vulnerabilities accentuated by the coronavirus pandemic. It then introduces an Action Plan to boost economic recovery and, perhaps most importantly, build economic resilience in the face of future disasters. The ER+R Action Plan identifies five action items and details specific strategies, tasks, and measures local entities should take on in order to work to advance the goals outlined for each. The action items are as follows:

- Improve and expand **Broadband Access** in the region
- Encourage and provide **Quality, Market-Reflective Housing**
- Public, private, and non-profit **Partnerships to Foster a Skilled & Dedicated Workforce**
- Promotion and cultivation of **Authentic Communities**
- **Maintain Competitiveness** at state, national, and global levels

If you are a local government representative looking to act upon the above-detailed action items or are interested in a presentation on the ER+R Plan, please reach out to **Noah Roenitz**, NEGRC Economic Resilience Coordinator, at [nroenitz@negrc.org](mailto:nroenitz@negrc.org). The full Economic Recovery + Resilience Plan is available under the Documents section of our website: [negrc.org/home/resources](http://negrc.org/home/resources).



## SBA COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR PILOT PROGRAM

Following new federal guidance, the Small Business Administration (SBA) has launched the Community Navigator Pilot Program in order to ensure small businesses are receiving needed aid. Earlier rounds of economic relief from 2020 helped millions of small businesses stay afloat, yet to many minority owned businesses and 'mom and pop' stores found themselves at the end of the line, while larger more connected businesses accessed aid programs right away. The Community Navigator Pilot Program seeks to strengthen outreach to underserved businesses by partnering with organizations with deep roots in their communities.

The Community Navigator Pilot Program seeks to increase outreach and assistance to the following audiences:

- COVID-19 affected businesses
- Veterans and Military Entrepreneurs (including spouses)
- Minority Entrepreneurs
- Women Entrepreneurs
- Rural Entrepreneurs
- Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Small Businesses
- Tribal Communities
- LGBTQ Entrepreneurs
- Micro Businesses
- Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

SBA is implementing this initiative by building upon its extensive network of resource partners across the country. The Community Navigator Pilot Program grant funding opportunity is currently open for proposals from SBA resource partners, states, tribes, units of local governments, and other nonprofit organizations. Applications must be submitted by July 23, 2021.

More information is available by searching <https://grants.gov>, funding opportunity number CNP-2021-01.

This program from the SBA is a great opportunity for local governments to pursue funding for recovery services to small businesses and entrepreneurs.

## AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT – LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY

With the passage of the **American Rescue Plan Act**, all U.S. municipal and county governments will be entitled to direct, non-completive federal formula grants from the U.S. Treasury Department via the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CSLFRF). Direct funding means that aid obligated to a local unit of government is not in any way allocated by/ through another local or state entity. The county allocations can be found on the National Association of Counties website (<https://www.naco.org/resources/featured/state-and-local-coronavirus-fiscal-recovery-funds#allocations>), and the metropolitan city allocations are available through the National League of Cities website (here: <https://www.nlc.org/resource/local-allocations-in-the-american-rescue-plan/>). The Treasury has yet to define the final allocations for non-entitlement units, those will be included in the previous link as they become available. The allocation methodology for **metropolitan cities** and **non-entitlement units** are available through [www.treasury.gov](http://www.treasury.gov).

The CSLFRF provides eligible state, local, territorial, and tribal governments with a substantial infusion of resources to meet pandemic response needs and rebuild a stronger, and more equitable economy as the country recovers. Recipients may use these funds to:

- **Support public health expenditures**, by, for example, funding COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral

healthcare, and certain public health and safety staff

- **Address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency**, including economic harms to workers, households, small businesses, impacted industries, and the public sector
- **Replace lost public sector revenue**, using this funding to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the pandemic
- **Provide premium pay for essential workers**, offering additional support to those who have and will bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors
- **Invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure**, making necessary investments to improve access to clean drinking water, support vital wastewater and storm water infrastructure, and to expand access to broadband internet

Local governments will receive CSLFRF funding in two tranches. Fifty percent (50%) of funding was delivered in May of 2021, and the remaining balance is to be delivered approximately 12 months later.

CSLFRF allocations are subject to the requirements specified in the **Interim Final Rule**, which was adopted May 10, 2021 (available here: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/05/17/2021-10283/coronavirus-state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>). The Treasury is currently seeking comment on all aspects of the Interim Final Rule, stakeholders are encouraged to **submit comments electronically** on or before July 16, 2021, through Regulations.gov: <https://www.regulations.gov/document/TREAS-DO-2021-0008-0002>.

Recordings of ACCG and GMA webinars on ARPA – CSLFRF are available via the following links:

- Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) American Rescue Plan Act (5/24/2021): <https://vimeo.com/554436061>
- Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) American Rescue Plan Webinar for City Officials (5/20/2021): <https://youtu.be/NFNFD5mu1g>

For questions about the ARPA, contact **Noah Roenitz**, NEGRC Economic Resilience Coordinator, at [nroenitz@negrc.org](mailto:nroenitz@negrc.org).

## 2021 B.J. SMITH COMMUNITY SERVANT AWARD RECIPIENTS AND DR. HOWARD LEDFORD HONORED

The 16th B.J. Smith Community Servant Award Ceremony, hosted by the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board (WDB), was held on Thursday, June 10th in Ila, Georgia. B.J. Smith served in many roles as a community servant. Prior to his active board involvement in Madison County, he served as a meteorologist with the National Weather Service beginning in 1972. He was stationed at the Athens Ben-Epps Airport. While with the Weather Service, he had his first experience with the local area's summer youth work experience program serving as a worksite supervisor of JTPA summer youth participants. After retiring from the Weather Service in 1990, he joined the Northeast Georgia Private Industry Council, the predecessor to the Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Board (WIOA), as the Madison County private sector representative. He was actively involved as a director of the board of the Madison County Chamber of Commerce and worked on the economic development committee.

Mr. Smith felt that providing people with the tools necessary to ensure their own successes was much more fruitful than providing temporary handouts. After his passing in March 2005, the Workforce Development Board wanted to honor his commitment to community service as well as his memory. The B.J. Smith Community Servant Award was established in February 2006 with the first awards presented in June 2006. Including this year's winners, a total of 43 deserving youth have been awarded this scholarship in the Northeast Georgia region over the past 16 years.

The 2021 B.J. Smith Community Servant Award winners each receive a \$500 college scholarship. This year's winners are:

**Jasmine Hernandez** lives in Barrow County, and is a 2021 graduate of Winder-Barrow High School. Jasmine will be attending the University of North Georgia, and plans on pursuing a degree in Education. Jasmine has a passion for Culinary Arts and will be attending the Hospitality Careers Academy at the Classic Center in Athens this summer. Jasmine has been active in Life Teen and other volunteer opportunities at her Church. She has been active with FCCLA (Family Career and Community Leaders of America), where she served as Historian, and Mu Alpha Theta, where she tutored students in Math. Jasmine helps the Barrow County Health Department at the Local Farmer's market with the WIC program, and actively volunteers at the local library.

**Kennedi Heard** is a resident of Elbert County, and is a 2021 graduate of Elbert County Comprehensive High School. Kennedi will be attending Spelman College and will be pursuing a Biology degree. Her goal is to become a Dermatologist. While in High School, Kennedi was active in a number of organizations, including Anchor Club, Beta Club, Friends Helping Friends, and was a Varsity Football Cheerleader. She volunteered at her church by participating in food drives and community events. Kennedi has a passion for dancing, and has competed in dance competitions and taught dance for youth.

In addition to the two scholarship recipients, the Workforce Development Board honored **Dr. Howard Ledford**, PHD, a WDB member and Youth Committee Chairperson, who recently announced his retirement. Dr. Ledford served on the Workforce Development Board for over 20 years, and strongly supported the Youth program in Northeast Georgia.

These scholarships are presented to WIOA students currently enrolled in the WIOA In-School Youth program within the 12 county region. The scholarships will assist with books, fees, tuition and related expenses during the recipient's freshman year of college. These scholarships will be coordinated with other financial assistance the student may qualify for (i.e. Hope Grant/Scholarship).

For further information the WIOA In-school Youth Program, please contact **Rima Sullivan**, NEGRC/ WIOA Youth Program Coordinator, 706-369-5703.



*Pictured with Mrs. Gladys Smith are the two scholarship recipients: Kennedi Heard (left) and Jasmine Hernandez (right)*



*Pictured with Dr. Ledford are Mrs. Carol Cofer, WIOA Director, and Mrs. Gladys Smith*



305 Research Drive  
Athens, GA 30605

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSR. STD.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
ATHENS, GA  
PERMIT NO. 502

# Update

## REGIONAL MEETINGS JULY

5 <sup>th</sup>	All Day	Closed for Independence Day	
28 <sup>th</sup>	9:00 a.m.	UOBWA Meeting	NEGRC Atrium
29 <sup>th</sup>	2:00 p.m.	Ga Tech Business Recovery Workshop	Webinar

The NEGRC Council does not meet in July.