

2012 Northeast Georgia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

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1. Introduction

Northeast Georgia Economic Development District

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) provides community and economic development, planning, workforce development, and aging services to Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton counties. NEGRC also serves as the designated Economic Development District (EDD) through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for its 12-county region. In this capacity, the NEGRC is responsible for compiling, maintaining, and regularly updating a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document.

CEDS Committee

In June 2012, NEGRC solicited county, municipal, and private sector representatives from the 12-county region to serve on a committee to guide the CEDS process.¹ This committee met at NEGRC offices in Athens on the following dates:

- July 27, 2012
- August 13, 2012
- August 27, 2012

Public Involvement

The public review period for the draft CEDS document occurred during the 30-day period from August 30, 2012 to October 1, 2012. A press release soliciting written comments was distributed throughout the 12-county region, and the draft was made available at the NEGRC headquarters and through its website.²

2. Economic Development Conditions Summary

During FY 2011 and FY 2012, NEGRC facilitated the development of *Northeast Georgia Plan 2035* per the regional planning standards and procedures established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The regional planning process is initiated through the completion of a Regional Assessment, which identifies and describes existing conditions and provides analysis based on available data. This data was collected and analyzed in late 2010 and early 2011.

¹ See Appendix A for the list of CEDS Committee members.

² See Appendix A for public involvement materials and comments received.

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The following information serves as an update to much of the Economic Development data presented in *Plan 2035*, using the most current information available.³

Top 10 Industrial Sectors (3rd Quarter, 2011)

Rank	Northeast Georgia Region	Georgia
1	Education Services	Health Care and Social Assistance
2	Manufacturing	Retail Trade
3	Retail Trade	Education Services
4	Health Care and Social Assistance	Manufacturing
5	Accommodation and Food Services	Accommodation and Food Services
6	Public Administration	Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt., Remediation
7	Admin., Support, Waste Mgmt., Remediation	Public Administration
8	Construction	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services
9	Wholesale Trade	Wholesale Trade
10	Transportation and Warehousing	Transportation and Warehousing

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program

Since the development of the *Plan 2035* Regional Assessment, a few notable changes have occurred in the ranking of industrial sectors for the Northeast Georgia region. At that time (1st quarter, 2010), the “Professional, Scientific & Technical Services” sector ranked tenth in the region’s top industries, whereas the most current data available shows the “Transportation and Warehousing” sector in its place. In addition, the “Administrative Support, Waste Management, Remediation” sector rose in ranking from 9th to 7th, as “Construction” and “Wholesale Trade” fell from 7th and 8th to 8th and 9th, respectively. There was very little change at the State level during the timeframe from early 2010 to the latter half of 2011.

Northeast Georgia Educational Attainment by Age (2010)

	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years	All Ages
Elementary	2.0%	4.1%	3.6%	5.1%	15.9%	5.6%
Some High School	14.1%	13.0%	11.2%	12.6%	16.3%	13.2%
High School Grad/GED	31.0%	29.1%	33.0%	34.2%	32.5%	32.3%
Some College	43.0%	20.5%	21.3%	19.9%	14.4%	23.5%
College Grad (2-year)	2.8%	6.7%	7.1%	6.5%	3.1%	5.6%
College Grad (4-year)	6.5%	17.7%	14.8%	11.8%	9.3%	12.2%
Post-Graduate Studies	0.6%	8.9%	9.0%	9.9%	8.6%	7.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimate

³ For comparison, please reference the *Northeast Georgia Plan 2035 – Regional Assessment*, p. 15-19. This document is available through the NEGRC website at http://www.negrc.org/resource-1.php?page_ID=1294178146

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Since the development of the *Plan 2035* Regional Assessment, educational attainment data has been made available for those with “Elementary” as their highest level, as well as for those with two-year (Associate’s) college degrees. Since 2000, educational attainment in Northeast Georgia has been trending upward, as the percentage of individuals without a high school diploma or GED decreased from 24.7% to 18.8%.

Employment Wage Statistics (3rd Quarter, 2011)

	Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Wage	Average Annual Wage
Northeast Georgia	\$17.28	\$691	\$35,932
Georgia	\$21.68	\$867	\$45,084

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Labor Market Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Annual Per Capita Personal Income for the Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Area was \$29,885 in 2010, down slightly from \$30,224 in 2008.

Unemployment Rate

	% 2010	% 2011	% Change
Northeast Georgia	9.9	9.3	-6.1
Georgia	10.2	9.8	-3.9
United States	9.6	8.9	-7.3

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

The unemployment rate for the region, state, and country rose during the economic recession from 2008 to 2010, but began to drop slowly between 2010 and 2011.

Opportunity Zones

As of April 2012, the following six Northeast Georgia communities have designated Opportunity Zones: City of Covington, City of Greensboro, City of Madison, City of Monroe, City of Social Circle, and Walton County. Several additional Northeast Georgia communities are in the process of developing an urban redevelopment plan to become eligible for Opportunity Zone designation, or are in the process of submitting an application.

Job Tax Credits

In 2012, the 159 Georgia counties have been re-ranked into four tiers based on unemployment rate, per capita income, and percentage of residents with incomes below the poverty level. A county’s tier ranking determines the base number of job tax credits available to businesses engaged in manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, processing, telecommunications, broadcasting, tourism, and research and development industries. All businesses, including retail operations, within designated Opportunity Zones are also eligible for these tax credits at the Tier 1 level. In addition, all 12 Northeast Georgia counties are eligible for an additional \$500 tax credit per job created, as each is located within the jurisdiction of a Joint Development Authority.

- Tier 1 (\$3,500 credit per job, minimum 5 new jobs): Clarke, Elbert
- Tier 2 (\$2,500 credit per job, minimum 10 new jobs): Greene, Jasper, Newton
- Tier 3 (\$1,250 credit per job, minimum 15 new jobs): Barrow, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oglethorpe, Walton
- Tier 4 (\$750 credit per job, minimum 25 new jobs): Oconee

Largest Employers

According to the most recent Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile, the ten largest employers in Northeast Georgia in 2010 were as follows (listed alphabetically):

- Athens Regional Medical Center
- Corporate Office (no additional information available)
- Harrison Poultry, Inc.
- Merial Limited
- Newton Health System, Inc.
- Pilgrim's Pride Corporation
- Reynolds Plantation
- St. Mary's Health Care System, Inc.
- University of Georgia
- Wal-Mart (multiple locations)

3. Innovation in American Regions

To supplement the updated economic development data from *Plan 2035*, NEGRC consulted the tools available through the EDA-funded *Innovation in American Regions* website.⁴ These tools were developed to guide strategic regional conversations on where to invest resources to create prosperity.

Industry Cluster Analysis

The industry cluster data tool uses the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) to enable users to identify existing and emerging industries in the region, gauge strengths and weaknesses compared to national economy, and evaluate potential growth areas. In 2010, Northeast Georgia exhibited a higher concentration of employment than the national average in the following industry clusters, in descending order:

- Mining

⁴ See the *Innovation in American Regions* website for more information at <http://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/>.

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- Glass and ceramics
- Chemicals and chemical-based products
- Apparel and textiles
- Electrical equipment, appliance, & component manufacturing
- Forest and wood products
- Agribusiness, food processing and technology
- Machinery manufacturing
- Primary metal manufacturing
- Transportation equipment manufacturing

Between the last CEDS (2007) and 2010, industry employment concentrations in Northeast Georgia have changed in the following areas, in descending order:

Increased Concentration	Decreased Concentration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glass and ceramics • Primary metal manufacturing • Mining • Apparel and textiles • Transportation equipment manufacturing • Forest and wood products • Chemicals and chemical-based products • Machinery manufacturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical equipment, appliance, & component manufacturing • Agribusiness, food processing and technology

Detailed data tables depicting the number of establishments, total employment, wages, and associated location quotients by industry cluster are located in Appendix B.

Occupational Cluster Analysis

The occupational cluster data tool uses the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system to enable users to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the regional workforce, measure regional competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy, and measure potential alignment with industry clusters. In 2010, Northeast Georgia exhibited a higher concentration of workers than the national average in the following occupational clusters, in descending order:

- Postsecondary education and knowledge creation
- Primary/secondary and vocational education, remediation, social services
- Agribusiness and food technology

Between 2007 and 2010, Northeast Georgia has experienced an increase in both concentration and employment in the following occupational clusters, in descending order:

- Postsecondary education and knowledge creation
- Personal services occupations
- Arts, entertainment, publishing, and broadcasting

- Health care and medical science
 - Medical technicians
 - Therapy, counseling, and rehabilitation
- Technology-based knowledge clusters
- Mathematics, statistics, data, and accounting

Detailed data tables depicting the total employment and associated location quotients by occupational cluster are located in Appendix B.

4. Focus Areas

The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) identifies 17 “key industries” for the state.⁵ Using this list as a starting point to avoid inconsistency with state strategies, the CEDS Committee identified the following six focus areas for Northeast Georgia based upon available quantitative and/or qualitative data and local knowledge. Together, these focus areas contribute to the formation of a regional identity while also uncovering opportunities for economic growth.

Agribusiness & Food Processing

Data Trends

As indicated in Chapter Three, Northeast Georgia currently (2010) exhibits a concentration of industry employment in Agribusiness, Food Processing, and Technology, in addition to a concentration of employment in Agribusiness and Food Technology occupations.

Supplementary Information

During the development of the *Plan 2035* Regional Agenda, stakeholders identified local-based agriculture as having the potential to become a significant economic development generator. Through a planning contract with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), NEGRC staff will be conducting an inventory and analysis of regional food resources (farms, markets, etc.) in SFY 2013 and SFY 2014. This information will be used to work with Northeast Georgia communities in identifying opportunities to capitalize on opportunities for aggregation of food-related activities and encourage new food-related business development.

⁵ See the Georgia Department of Economic Development website for more information on these “Key Industries for Georgia” at <http://www.georgia.org/industries/Pages/default.aspx>.

Arts & Entertainment

Data Trends

Between 2007 and 2010, Northeast Georgia experienced employment growth in Arts, Entertainment, Publishing, and Broadcasting occupations.

Supplementary Information

According to GDEcD, television networks, movie studios, production companies, and independent producers invested more than \$689M in Georgia. The Georgia Film, Music, and Digital Entertainment Office certifies communities as “Camera Ready,” and as of 2012, all but one county (Greene) in Northeast Georgia received this certification.

Life Sciences⁶

Data Trends

Between 2007 and 2010, Northeast Georgia experienced employment growth in Health Care and Medical Science and Technology-Based Knowledge occupations. The region also has a concentration of industry employment in Chemicals and Chemical-Based Products as of 2010, and saw an increase in this cluster between 2007 and 2010. Medicinal and Botanical Manufacturing (NAICS 325411) and Pharmaceutical Preparation Manufacturing (NAICS 325412) fall within this industry cluster, among other related sectors.

Higher Education

In July 2012, the Georgia Health Sciences University (GHSU)/UGA Medical Partnership moved into the former U.S. Navy Supply Corps School on Prince Avenue in Athens, now known as the UGA Health Sciences Campus. By 2020, the partnership is expected to train 60 medical students per year in this location; the first class of 40 will graduate in 2014.

The UGA College of Pharmacy now offers a bachelor’s degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences as of fall 2012. The field of pharmaceutical sciences includes the development and manufacture of new drug therapies. This program will be one of only two in the Southeast and 18 in the U.S.

The new UGA College of Engineering will begin enrollment in August 2012 of civil engineering majors, followed by mechanical and electrical engineering majors in fall 2013.

⁶ As used by the State of Georgia, “Life Sciences” is a broad term that may include certain types of manufacturing as well as the agriculture-related activities.

Workforce Training

According to data obtained for the Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Area (WIA), “Health Support Occupations” and “Health Occupations” ranked second and third in the top ten training occupational areas for both the 2010 and 2011 calendar years. “Health Support Occupations” includes training for health administration positions such as billing, whereas “Health Occupations” includes technical programs for Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs).

The State of Georgia is in the process of constructing a new biotech training center in the Stanton Springs Industrial Park as a result of the recent (April 2012) Baxter International, Inc. location announcement. Georgia Quick Start, a customized workforce training program, will operate the facility, and the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) will assist in recruitment.

Supplementary Information

Eight of the twelve counties in Northeast Georgia are members of the BioScience Work Ready Region designated by State, also known as the Innovation Crescent Regional Partnership: Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton.

As indicated above, Baxter International, Inc. will begin construction in early 2013 on a manufacturing plant, laboratory, and warehouse to support the development of plasma-based pharmaceutical therapies. These facilities, along with the new biotech training center, will be built in the Stanton Springs Industrial Park at the junction of Morgan, Newton, and Walton counties on Interstate 20. Stanton Springs was conceived of and developed through a public-private partnership between the Joint Development Authority of Jasper, Morgan, Newton, and Walton Counties and a realty services firm.

Logistics & Transportation

Data Trends

“Transportation and Warehousing” ranked 10th in the top 10 industrial sectors in the region during the 3rd quarter of 2011, as depicted in Chapter Two.

The University of Georgia’s Selig Center for Economic Growth recently released a study supported by a grant from the Georgia Ports Authority on the economic impact of Georgia’s deepwater ports (Savannah and Brunswick) throughout the state.⁷ The following represents an estimate of the impact on county-level employment for the 12-county Northeast Georgia region in Fiscal Year 2011. The employment

⁷ See Appendix C for a map depicting these two ports and their proximity to Northeast Georgia.

impact was allocated to counties based on their individual economic structures and county-level import and export data.⁸

County	Full- and Part-time Jobs
Barrow	1,421
Clarke	4,180
Elbert	759
Greene	453
Jackson	1,464
Jasper	215
Madison	415
Morgan	543
Newton	1,509
Oconee	593
Oglethorpe	192
Walton	1,756
<i>Region Total</i>	<i>13,500</i>

Workforce Training

According to data obtained for the Northeast Georgia WIA, “Transportation Occupations” ranked as the top training occupational area for the 2010 and 2011 calendar years. This occupational area predominantly comprises Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) training programs. In Northeast Georgia, 257 individuals were trained in this area in 2010, and 124 were trained in 2011.

Supplementary Information

Eight of the twelve counties in Northeast Georgia are members of the Supply Chain Management Work Ready Region designated by State: Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton.

Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, featuring over 1.5 million square feet of cargo space, is located south of the City of Atlanta, approximately 80 miles from central Northeast Georgia.⁹

⁸ Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia (April 2012). *The Economic Impact of Georgia’s Deepwater Ports on Georgia’s Economy in FY 2011*. Retrieved on June 6, 2012 from the Selig Center for Economic Growth website at <http://www.terry.uga.edu/selig/>.

⁹ See Appendix C for a map depicting the location of Hartsfield-Jackson in relation to the Northeast Georgia region.

Manufacturing

Data Trends

In 2010, Northeast Georgia exhibited a concentration of industry employment in several types of manufacturing: Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component; Machinery; Primary Metal; and Transportation Equipment. Between 2007 and 2010, the region experienced increases in industry employment concentration in Primary Metal, Transportation Equipment, and Machinery manufacturing.

Manufacturing was ranked 2nd in the top 10 industrial sectors in the region during the 3rd quarter of 2011, as depicted in Chapter Two.

Supplementary Information

Between 2011 and 2012, several major manufacturing businesses of varying types have selected Northeast Georgia communities for new facility development, including the following:

- Caterpillar (Clarke and Oconee counties): Equipment manufacturing
- Vestar (Newton County): Metal components manufacturing for LED production
- Toyota (Jackson County): Automotive compressor manufacturing
- Hailo (Elbert County): Wind turbine manufacturing

Tourism

Supplementary Information

Northeast Georgia contains portions of three “travel regions” that have been designated by the Georgia DECD:

- Northeast Georgia Mountains: Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, Madison
- Historic Heartland: Clarke, Jasper, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Walton
- Classic South: Greene, Oglethorpe

The 12-county region is rich in natural and cultural resources, and contains several Main Street and Better Hometown programs that promote downtown areas.

Through a planning contract with the Georgia DCA, NEGRC staff will be conducting a regional tourism study in FY 2013. *Plan 2035* stakeholders and the CEDS Committee have identified the potential for new agritourism ventures in Northeast Georgia, such as farm stays and special events.

5. SWOT Analysis

NEGRC facilitated a small group exercise at the first CEDS Committee meeting to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Strengths pertaining to economic development within the Northeast Georgia region. The Committee was divided into four small groups for Phase One; two were asked to

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identify Strengths and Weaknesses (internal characteristics) and two were tasked with identifying Opportunities and Threats (external factors). During Phase Two, the internal groups and external groups were respectively combined to combine and refine lists. The two merged groups then presented these lists to the full Committee in Phase Three. Following revisions and additions by Committee members at the subsequent meeting, the final list is below.

Strengths

- Proximity to transportation outlets (interstate, port, rail, air)
- Inventory of available, affordable sites w/ infrastructure (industrial)
- Available workforce housing inventory
- Higher education
- Diverse, qualified workforce
- Communities complement each other
- Growth of manufacturing
- Growth of health/life sciences
- “Camera-ready” communities (11 of 12 counties)
- Natural and cultural resources
- Vast land resources – developable
- New UGA Medical School, technical facilities (also an Opportunity)

Weaknesses

- Secondary education
- Industrial skills shortage
- Lack of emphasis on trades (e.g. vocational)
- Ability to market ourselves as a region
- Regional distribution of water
- Poverty
- Cooperative efforts between region & state
- Lack of recreational opportunities
- Lack of funding for entrepreneurial development (incubators, etc.)
- Political divisions within our region – no framework for coordination?
- Lack of venture capital

Opportunities

- Hartsfield Jackson International Airport, Ports of Savannah, Brunswick
- New UGA Medical School, technical facilities (also a Strength)
- Nature-based tourism, agritourism trends
- Recent economic development announcements of Caterpillar and Baxter International
 - Spinoff development (suppliers)
 - New bio-tech training center

- Film industry activity
- Existing regional development authorities
- Reservoir development efforts at Hard Labor Creek and Bear Creek (Newton County)
- Opportunity Zone designations in eligible areas
- Forthcoming regional food network inventory/analysis (NEGRC)
- Forthcoming regional tourism study (NEGRC)
- Forthcoming regional housing study (NEGRC)

Threats

- Federal/state regulations that limit business development, i.e. unfunded mandates
- Overseas transfer of jobs
- Water access
- Lack of understanding of the value of funding programs such as tourism, primary education (state & local level)
- Perceived lower level of education/skill of workforce
- State receiving less funding to market itself for economic development
- National strategy toward education
- Transportation project funding
- Non-transportation infrastructure project funding (water, sewer, etc.)

6. Principals and Strategies

Guiding Principles

The Regional Agenda of *Northeast Georgia Plan 2035*, adopted by the NEGRC Council in April 2012, outlines two guiding principles for the region relating directly to economic development:

- Economic development efforts will focus on retention, expansion, and creation of job opportunities that suit the region's current workforce while being mindful of future opportunities in potential growth sectors.
- Education and training programs will improve the quality of the workforce in Northeast Georgia while increasing opportunity and the region's competitiveness.¹⁰

¹⁰ *Northeast Georgia Plan 2035 – Regional Agenda*, p. 26. This document is available through the NEGRC website at http://www.negrc.org/resource-1.php?page_ID=1294178146.

Strategy Development

Four potential regional economic development strategy types, based on the SWOT analysis presented in Chapter Five, were identified to provide guidance to the CEDS Committee:

- Opportunity-Strength: Pursue opportunities that align with strengths
- Opportunity-Weakness: Pursue opportunities by overcoming weaknesses
- Threat-Strength: Reduce threat impacts by capitalizing on or expanding strengths
- Threat-Weakness: Reduce threat impacts by overcoming weaknesses

The Committee was divided into four small groups based on strategy type. Each group was tasked with first linking the external factors with internal characteristics wherever plausible and then developing strategy statements to describe those connections. NEGR staff then streamlined the full list of potential strategies from the Committee, combining statements where there was overlap.

A series of maps depicting available data for the Northeast Georgia region were developed to assist in the strategy development process¹¹:

- Colleges and Universities
- Economic Development Coordination Opportunities
 - Joint Development Authorities
 - Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
 - Travel Regions
 - Water Planning Regions
 - Work Ready Regions
- Infrastructure
- Poverty
- Northeast Georgia Location

Based upon the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) recent summary of the newly proposed EDA requirements, the CEDS Committee has not identified a list of specific projects.¹² Rather, many of the following strategies include potential methods for implementation or project types.

Of the 12 strategies, the first four have been determined by the CEDS Committee to be most critical to the region's economic health and competitiveness.

¹¹ See Appendix C.

¹² See Appendix B for this document.

- **Reprioritize and pursue funding for transportation projects identified by the Northeast Georgia Regional Transportation Roundtable during the 2010-2012 TSPLOST effort**
 - Who: Northeast Georgia counties and cities, with technical assistance from the NEGRC, where applicable

The Transportation Investment Act (TIA) of 2010 created twelve special tax districts based on Regional Commission boundaries throughout the State of Georgia. Citizens in each district were given the opportunity on July 31, 2012 to approve a 1% sales tax for ten years to fund a vetted list of transportation projects. While voters in three of the state's regions did pass the referendum, referred to as the Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST), it did not pass in Northeast Georgia.¹³

The TIA legislation enables districts to reconsider the levy after a 24-month period. In the meantime, however, the source for funding certain transportation projects in Northeast Georgia is unknown. According to news sources, the State is in the beginning stages of developing a "Plan B" for the nine regions that did not pass the referendum.

- **Monitor and encourage progress on key issues identified by the three Regional Water Planning Councils within Northeast Georgia for the purpose of improving water quality and availability in support of new private sector development and redevelopment**
 - Who: NEGRC PGS Division

Following the adoption of the State Water Plan by the Georgia General Assembly in 2008, ten regional water planning councils were formed based on water basin boundaries; of these, three are partially located within Northeast Georgia: Middle Ocmulgee, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee, and Upper Oconee. Each water planning council was responsible for developing a regional water plan for submittal to and adoption by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) in fall 2011.¹⁴ Activities related to these plans will be monitored, and opportunities for improving access to water will be evaluated as they arise.

¹³ The three districts that passed the TIA referendum were Central Savannah River (Augusta), Heart of Georgia Altamaha (Dublin, Vidalia), and River Valley (Columbus).

¹⁴ See Appendix B for summary fact sheets for each of the three regional water plans for Northeast Georgia; key issues identified during the planning processes are listed. The full regional water plan documents are available through the Georgia State Water Planning website at www.georgiawaterplanning.org.

➤ **Enhance efforts to recruit life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and agriculture-related businesses and advocate for improved funding streams and regulations at the state and local levels**

- Who: Joint Development Authorities, Northeast Georgia counties and cities

In addition to and as a result of the recent major economic development announcements in the life sciences and manufacturing sectors, there may be opportunities for small business development in these regional focus areas.

➤ **Encourage redevelopment planning and subsequent designation of Opportunity Zones in eligible areas of high poverty to incentivize commercial and industrial investment toward job creation**

- Who: Northeast Georgia counties and cities, with planning & technical assistance from NEGRC PGS Division

The NEGRC PGS Division has assisted several communities in Northeast Georgia with the preparation of urban redevelopment plans, the adoption of which is a prerequisite for applying to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for designation of an Opportunity Zone. Potentially eligible areas are contained within or adjacent to U.S. Census block groups of 15% or greater poverty; these areas are indicated on the Poverty map in Appendix C.

Opportunity Zone designation may be especially helpful to the redevelopment of downtowns and struggling industrial areas in Northeast Georgia, by enabling local economic developers to promote job tax credit incentives to small business entrepreneurs.

➤ **Utilize the forthcoming (2013) regional tourism study to develop and promote existing and new natural, cultural, and recreational opportunities**

- Who: NEGRC PGS Division to facilitate development of tourism study; JDAs, County economic developers, Better Hometown/Main Street programs, other stakeholders to promote

The CEDS Committee has made the following recommendations for inclusion in the forthcoming regional tourism study:

- Develop database/resource guide to encourage growth of agritourism and nature-based tourism businesses
- Identify gaps in recreational opportunities in NE Georgia
- Catalog and capitalize upon existing tourism-related “branding” efforts in NE Georgia
 - Historic Heartland travel region
 - Georgia Agritourism Association
 - Southeast Regional Agritourism Council
 - Georgia Recreation & Parks Association

Additionally, the forthcoming NEGRC regional food network inventory and analysis project (2013-2014) will likely reveal opportunities to enhance agritourism. This information could result in the development of a regional promotional effort similar to the “FARMeander” guide developed by the Madison-Morgan Conservancy to promote farms, agriculture-related festivals, and other tourism draws in Morgan, Newton, and Walton counties.¹⁵

➤ **Foster networking between counties and adjacent regions to promote assets to interested film industry representatives**

- Who: County Camera-Ready Liaisons, NEGRC PGS Division to provide organizational assistance

The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) Camera-Ready Program Manager regularly contacts designated camera-ready liaisons in each county with inquiries regarding film industry location needs. Should one Northeast Georgia county not have a particular location type sought by a film industry representative, neighboring counties within the region might. To this end, the CEDS Committee identified a need for coordination in order to increase the likelihood of keeping film industry activity in the region. The NEGRC PGS Division will identify opportunities for increased communication amongst the camera-ready liaisons in Northeast Georgia through the facilitation of a regional meeting. Additionally, NEGRC staff will seek inclusion on the Camera-Ready Program Manager’s email distribution list.

➤ **Work with state legislators and regional economic developers to identify non-transportation infrastructure weaknesses and funding mechanisms to address shortcomings for the purpose of attracting new private sector development and redevelopment to the region**

- Who: Joint Development Authorities, and Northeast Georgia counties and cities, with technical assistance from the NEGRC PGS Division, where applicable

The NEGRC PGS Division will commit to facilitating annual educational/informational sessions on non-transportation infrastructure project development and possible funding opportunities. A recent example is the EDA FY12 Disaster Relief Federal Funding Opportunity for counties with a major disaster designation from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) between October 2010 and September 2011.¹⁶ Within Northeast Georgia, Greene, Jasper, Morgan, and Newton counties were included in this designation. Should an eligible infrastructure project be identified within one of these counties for this or future funding opportunities, NEGRC will offer assistance in application development.

¹⁵ Additional information on FARMeander project is available through the Madison-Morgan Conservancy website at www.mmcgeorgia.org.

¹⁶ See Appendix B for a Pre-Disaster Mitigation planning summary sheet for counties in Northeast Georgia.

- **Assemble and maintain an inventory of various types of housing available for workers moving to the region**
 - Who: NEGRC PGS Division to facilitate development of housing study (FY 2013); county/city economic development professionals to utilize as reference and update as necessary

The CEDS Committee has made the following recommendations for inclusion in the forthcoming regional housing study:

- Executive housing availability
- Quality rental housing availability
- Small acreage tract availability
- Amenities
- Price ranges by type

- **Encourage entrepreneurial development by working with local governments and the Georgia Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to disseminate information and “best practices” materials**
 - Who: NEGRC PGS Division, Joint Development Authorities, Northeast Georgia counties and cities; Better Hometown/Main Street programs

The NEGRC PGS Division will commit to working with regional stakeholders to facilitate one or more workshops for local governments on becoming more entrepreneur-friendly. Content will be based upon best practices from throughout the region with regard to efforts such as streamlining licensing/permitting and development review processes, offering incentives, and establishing and utilizing Revolving Loan Funds.

- **Strengthen existing Joint Development Authorities in the region through the development of multi-year work plans for the purpose of improving regional cooperation on economic development issues**
 - Who: Joint Development Authorities, with technical assistance from NEGRC PGS Division, where applicable

NEGRC provides administrative support to the Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia (JDANEG), comprising Clarke, Elbert, Jackson, Madison, and Oglethorpe counties. Additionally, there are three other multi-county joint development authority boundaries within Northeast Georgia; all four are depicted on the “Economic Development Coordination Opportunities” map located in Appendix C. The NEGRC PGS Division will work to develop strategic planning guidance for these authorities to encourage the creation of work plans.

- **Support the efforts of the Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Board (NEGRC Workforce Development Division) to match trained workers with available jobs in growing sectors**
 - Who: NEGRC PGS Division, Joint Development Authorities, Northeast Georgia counties and cities

- **Support the efforts of the Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Board (NEGRC Workforce Development Division) to work with training and education providers in promoting the region’s educational attainment and linking career paths to existing and forthcoming employment opportunities**
 - Who: NEGRC PGS Division, Joint Development Authorities, Northeast Georgia counties and cities

7. Implementation Plan

Monitoring

The NEGRC is governed by a Council of county, municipal, private sector, and state representatives.¹⁷ The Planning and 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 and provides updates to the full Council.

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 12 strategies described in Chapter Six.

Additionally, the NEGRC PGS Division will establish and maintain a CEDS page of the NEGRC website. The final CEDS document, as adopted by the NEGRC Council and approved by EDA, will be posted on this page, along with other materials relevant to strategy implementation.

Performance Measures

At the end of each year following adoption of the CEDS, the NEGRC PGS Division will provide a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to the PGS Committee and EDA to gauge successful implementation of the CEDS. This will include the following:

- Number of jobs created
- Number of jobs retained
- Number and types of investments: public and private
- Unique hits to the CEDS page of the NEGRC website
- Narrative describing any changes to the regional economy

¹⁷ Additional information about the NEGRC Council is available through the NEGRC website at www.negrc.org.

- Identification of projects NEGRC has initiated or assisted with that relate to one or more CEDS strategies

These components will be integrated into the required annual reports to EDA.

8. Appendices

- Appendix A: CEDS Committee and Public Involvement
- Appendix B: Supporting Information
- Appendix C: Maps