

# Northeast Georgia Regional Plan

Update 2018

Planning & Government Services Division  
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission



**NEGRC**  
NORTHEAST GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Area Agency on Aging  
Local Government Services  
Planning  
Workforce Development

# NEGRC

NORTHEAST GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

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James R. Dove, Executive Director

February 27, 2018

Mr. Brian Johnson  
Georgia Department of Community Affairs  
Office of Planning and Environmental Management  
60 Executive Park South, NE  
Atlanta, GA 30329

**Re: Regional Plan Submittal**

Dear Mr. Johnson:

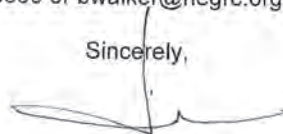
The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission has completed an update of its regional plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the two required public hearings and have involved regional stakeholders in development of the annual update in a manner appropriate to our region's dynamics and resources and in accordance with the Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning, Chapter 110-12-6. Evidence of the public hearings has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have, at a minimum, reviewed the Georgia's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, The Upper Oconee, Savannah-Upper Ogeechee, and Middle Ocmulgee Regional Water Plans, the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), the MACORTS, Gainesville-Hall, and Atlanta Regional Commission's Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Plans and The CSRA, Georgia Mountains, Middle Georgia, Atlanta Regional, and Three Rivers regional commissions' regional plans and taken them into consideration in formulating our update.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Burke Walker, Director of Planning & Government Services, at (706) 369-5650 or [bwalker@negrc.org](mailto:bwalker@negrc.org).

Sincerely,



James R. Dove  
Executive Director

Enclosures  
JD/BW:jab



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The background image is a photograph of a building and a sign, overlaid with a dark blue tint. On the left, a large, light-colored sign stands on a grassy area. It has the text "Northeast Georgia Area Planning And Development Commission" written on it in a dark, sans-serif font. To the right of the sign is a two-story building with a brick lower level and a lighter upper level. The building also has the text "Northeast Georgia Regional Commission" on its upper level. In the foreground, there are some bare tree branches and a parking lot with white lines. The overall scene is set against a clear blue sky.

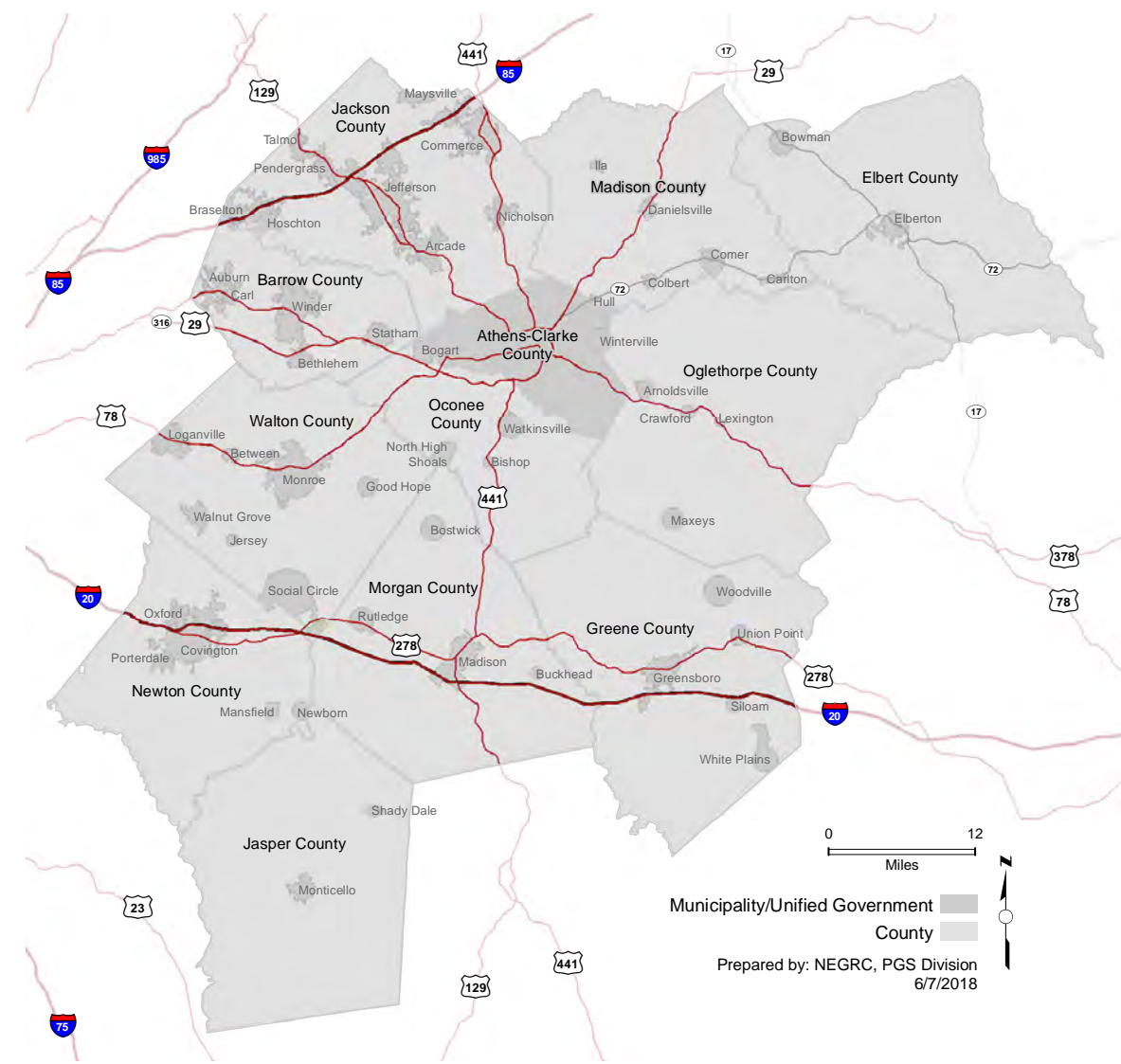
Northeast  
Georgia Area  
Planning And  
Development  
Commission

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



## Executive Summary

From the pastoral, agriculturally thriving eastern and southern parts of our region to the developing western counties and our urban core of Athens, Northeast Georgia boasts diverse landscapes and opportunities, a high quality of life, and, most importantly, wonderful people who are dedicated to their communities.



**Northeast Georgia at a glance.** The region's twelve counties and fifty-four municipalities feature high quality of life, vast opportunity, and great people.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan identifies both short- and long-term strategies to enhance the region's prosperity and competitiveness, improve quality of life for all residents, and establish a framework for regional coordination and cooperation. It answers four essential planning questions:

**1. Where are we now?** We need to understand the current state of the region. Examining existing development and transportation patterns, natural resources and environmental areas, and educational opportunities, prepares us to evaluate future scenarios and respond to identified goals.

Northeast Georgia's main population centers exist in the central and western parts of our region. Generally speaking, this is also where transportation networks are most strained, employment opportunities are most abundant, local governments offer comprehensive services, and natural resources may be most threatened by development. In our rural areas, agriculture dominates the landscape, while small, neighborly towns offer intimate experiences and stakeholders feel that life moves more slowly.

#### **Priority Needs**

- Develop resources to support and encourage local entrepreneurial development.
- Establish greater alignment of workforce skills with current and emerging jobs.
- Address aging physical infrastructure.
- Provide transportation choices throughout the region.
- Enable people without automobiles to access employment opportunities.

**2. Where are we going?** We establish an understanding of the region as it would exist without concerted planning. What will be our greatest needs? What areas present opportunities?

As with the region's current state, we can expect the western and central urbanized and urbanizing areas to account for the majority of Northeast Georgia's growth well into the future. For the most part, rural communities intend to remain so, and local and regional plans address this through focused planning and limited community services and infrastructure expansion. [The Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan](#) identifies Regionally Important Resources and presents protection strategies for use by local governments, developers, and others; following this guide will ensure the viability of our most treasured environmental and cultural assets.

#### **Priority Opportunity**

- Develop web presence to highlight information and market and promote the region.



**3. Where do we want to be?** We form a unified set of goals distilled through stakeholder involvement activities.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) Council led the plan update, supported by a technical advisory committee that worked with NEGRC staff to help develop and refine the plan's goals, priorities, issues, and recommended strategies. Input from stakeholders, the general public, and other interested parties provided additional guidance. Feedback about the plan's contents was captured through a series of public hearings, four listening sessions, and an online survey. The NEGRC website served as an information portal by providing updates, schedule notices, input opportunities (including an online survey), and links to drafts of the plan document. The goal was to gather feedback from as broad a spectrum of the region's population as possible. (Additional information can be found in the plan's Stakeholder Involvement Report Appendix.)

#### **Stakeholder Involvement Activities**

- ▶ Identified key stakeholders in addition to the general public, designated the NEGRC's Council as the plan's Steering Committee the Council's Planning & Government Services Committee as the Technical Advisory Committee for the plan.
- ▶ Held two public hearings to present information on how to provide input and access plan information.
- ▶ Held four public listening sessions to gauge impressions and conduct a SWOT analysis.
- ▶ Published an online survey to gather responses from those unable to attend listening sessions and to give attendees the chance to provide anonymous feedback.
- ▶ Provided a dedicated space on the NEGRC website to serve as a portal for information about the plan.

Through the SWOT analysis, online questionnaire, and visioning exercises, and based on the priority needs and opportunities, we developed a set of goals as a common representation of stakeholder preferences and priorities. (Additional information, supporting policies, and associated maps with defining narratives are located in the Regional Goals chapter.)

#### **Regional Goals**

- ▶ Enhance economic competitiveness.
- ▶ Value communities and neighborhoods.
- ▶ Support existing communities.
- ▶ Promote adequate, equitable, and affordable housing.
- ▶ Provide more transportation choices.
- ▶ Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.

**4. How do we get there?** We present key implementation initiatives that will ensure we achieve the goals laid out in this plan and meet the vast potential of our region.

The Implementation Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Regional Goals and addressing the identified needs and opportunities. It also identifies specific measures to be undertaken by the region's leaders to implement the plan and provide guidance to developers, local governments, and other public agencies for addressing regional goals. (Selected actions are presented here; further action items and other information is found in this plan's work program.)

#### **Key Strategies and Actions to be Pursued**

- ▶ STRATEGY: Promote a Northeast Georgia web presence
  - ACTION: Create and manage a Northeast Georgia promotional website
- ▶ STRATEGY: Aggregate a public, comprehensive, and accessible directory of opportunities and incentives for development in the region
  - ACTION: Create and manage a list of funding and other opportunities for local entrepreneurs and artists
- ▶ STRATEGY: Comprehensive and accessible regional tourism database
  - ACTION: Create, manage, and promote a publicly accessible inventory of historic landmarks, festivals and events, tours, and other visitor attractions
- ▶ STRATEGY: Identify housing needs around job centers to support communities in attracting and retaining works and identify workforce housing programs so workers can live near jobs
  - ACTION: Create report on employer-assisted housing initiatives
- ▶ STRATEGY: Provide communities and bicyclist- and pedestrian-friendly "Complete Streets" best practices to increase community appeal and safety, and to provide access to all users
  - ACTION: Develop Complete Streets design guidelines for various settings

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The 2018 Regional Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Standards and Procedures for Regional Planning established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, effective October 1, 2017.



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A night scene of a fireworks display over a park. In the foreground, a group of people are sitting on the grass, watching the fireworks. A paved path leads from the bottom right towards the center. In the middle ground, there is a grassy area with a small tree and a tripod. Beyond that is a multi-lane road with a guardrail. The background is a dark sky filled with several large, colorful fireworks exploding. The overall scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the fireworks.

# REGIONAL GOALS



## Regional Goals

The Regional Goals element establishes a vision for the Region's future that seeks to articulate what the stakeholders and public are committed to working together to achieve. That vision is presented here in the following ways:

### **Regional Goals & Supporting Policies**

A list of overarching goals that the plan will address, along with general statements that are intended support each goal. Regional goals and policies provide guidance and direction for leaders in the region to ensure their decisions are consistent with the regional vision. This list was developed to provide a framework for addressing the identified region-wide needs and to offer Regional Commission staff and local governments a guide for achieving established statewide planning goals.

### **Regional Development Maps**

Utilizing local plans, the regional development maps illustrate the desired pattern of development for the next 20 years.

### **Areas Requiring Special Attention Map and Defining Narrative**

A map of the region highlighting areas where conditions are present that could lead to potential development conflicts as well as areas with opportunities for economic growth. The accompanying narrative identifies specific strategies for managing each area.

# Regional Goals & Supporting Policies

The following goals and corresponding policies are intended to provide guidance and direction to regional leaders for making decisions consistent with achieving the Regional Vision or addressing Regional Issues and Opportunities.

## **Goal: Enhance economic competitiveness**

- ▶ Support economic development decisions that retain, expand, or create employment opportunities that align with the region's workforce and existing economic clusters.
- ▶ Price in the cost of the potential impacts on public infrastructure and natural resources when evaluating economic development proposals.

## **Goal: Value communities and neighborhoods**

- ▶ Encourage new development that will contribute to, not take away from, the region's character and sense of place.
- ▶ Redevelopment and infill projects should be pursued if they complement surrounding areas and add value to the community.

## **Goal: Support existing communities**

- ▶ Existing infrastructure investments and public facilities should incentivize appropriate infill redevelopment and compact development patterns.
- ▶ Growth and new development should not place an unexpected burden on existing levels of service for the community's residents and employers.

## **Goal: Promote adequate, equitable, and affordable housing**

- ▶ Create affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable option to live in the community.
- ▶ Accommodate our diverse population by encouraging a compatible mixture of housing types, densities, and costs in each neighborhood.

## **Goal: Provide more transportation choices**

- ▶ Support transportation investments that consider modes other than automobile and that encourage walking, biking, car-pooling, and other alternative transportation choices.
- ▶ Transportation improvements will reinforce the desired development patterns for the community.
- ▶ Consider context-sensitive design considerations to enhance community aesthetics and to minimize environmental impacts for new and reconstructed transportation projects.
- ▶ Support the creation of a community-wide pedestrian/bike path network.
- ▶ Encourage new development that supports and complements existing and planned transportation options in the community.

## **Goal: Develop a regional approach to economic development, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection**

- ▶ Work on developing solutions for shared regional issues (such as growth management and watershed protection).
- ▶ Pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making.



## **Regional Development Maps**

The type of development that occurs in a region has implications on nearly all facets of planning, including transportation, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, and infrastructure. Analyzing development patterns allows for a broader review than simply looking at land use. It provides insights into relationships between different sectors of a community or region and helps show intended (or current) scenarios more plainly than land use analysis. This section illustrates the desired patterns of development and areas requiring special attention across the region for the next 20 years.

### **Regional Land Use Map**

Identifies the regional development patterns desired, based on existing and expected conditions over the next 20 years, using three general land use categories: Developed, Developing, and Rural.

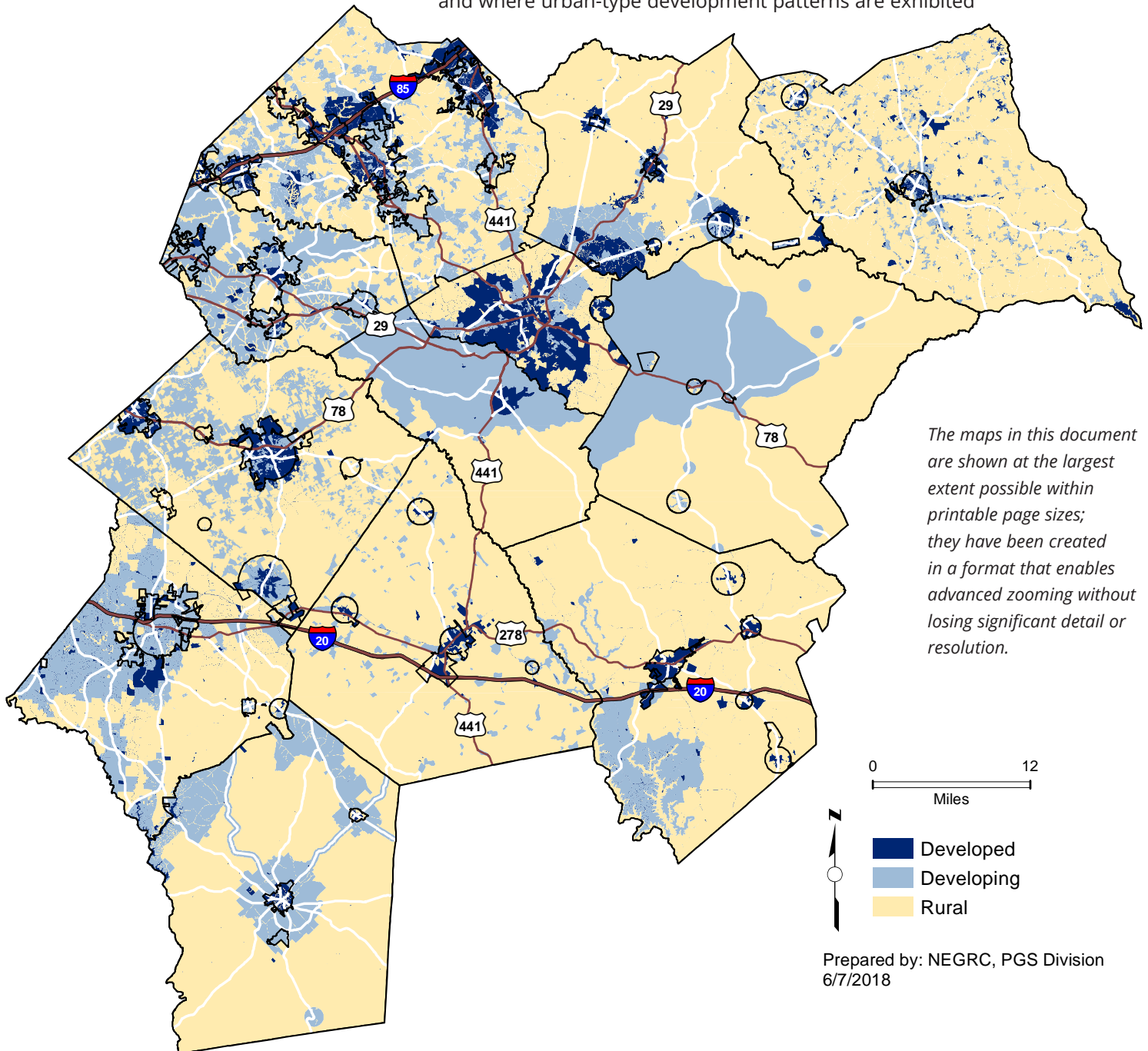
### **Conservation and Development Map**

Delineates important conservation areas based on environmentally sensitive areas, important resources, and other environmental and cultural resources in the region. Conservation areas are overlaid on Regional Land Use categories to identify areas of potential concern.

## Regional Land Use Map

As opposed to traditional land use maps, which often feature upwards of ten categories, the Regional Land Use Map classifies the type of future development desired into one of three general categories:

- ▶ **Rural:** not expected to become urbanized or require urban services in the next 20 years
- ▶ **Developing:** likely to become urbanized and require provision of new urban services in the next 20 years
- ▶ **Developed:** built-up areas in which urban service provision already exists and where urban-type development patterns are exhibited



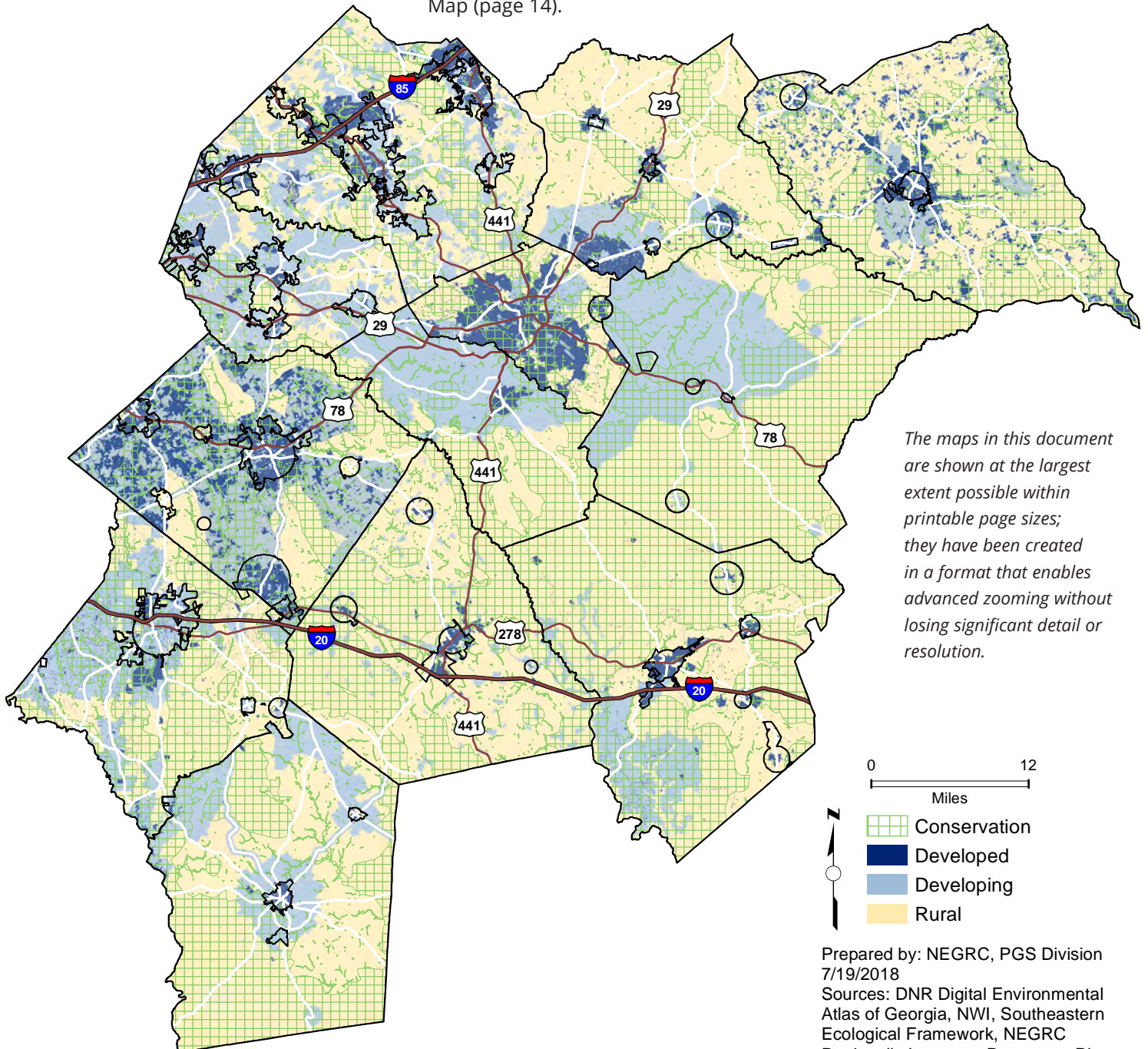
Prepared by: NEGRC, PGS Division  
6/7/2018

## Conservation and Development Map

As a supplement to the Regional Land Use map, the Conservation and Development Map identifies areas to be preserved in order to protect resources of regional importance and environmentally sensitive areas.

"Conservation" includes Regionally Important Resources, wetlands, riparian areas, and groundwater recharge areas.

- Note the areas where Conservation overlaps the Developed or Developing land use categories; they are included in the "Threatened Regionally Important Resources" category on the Areas Requiring Special Attention Map (page 14).



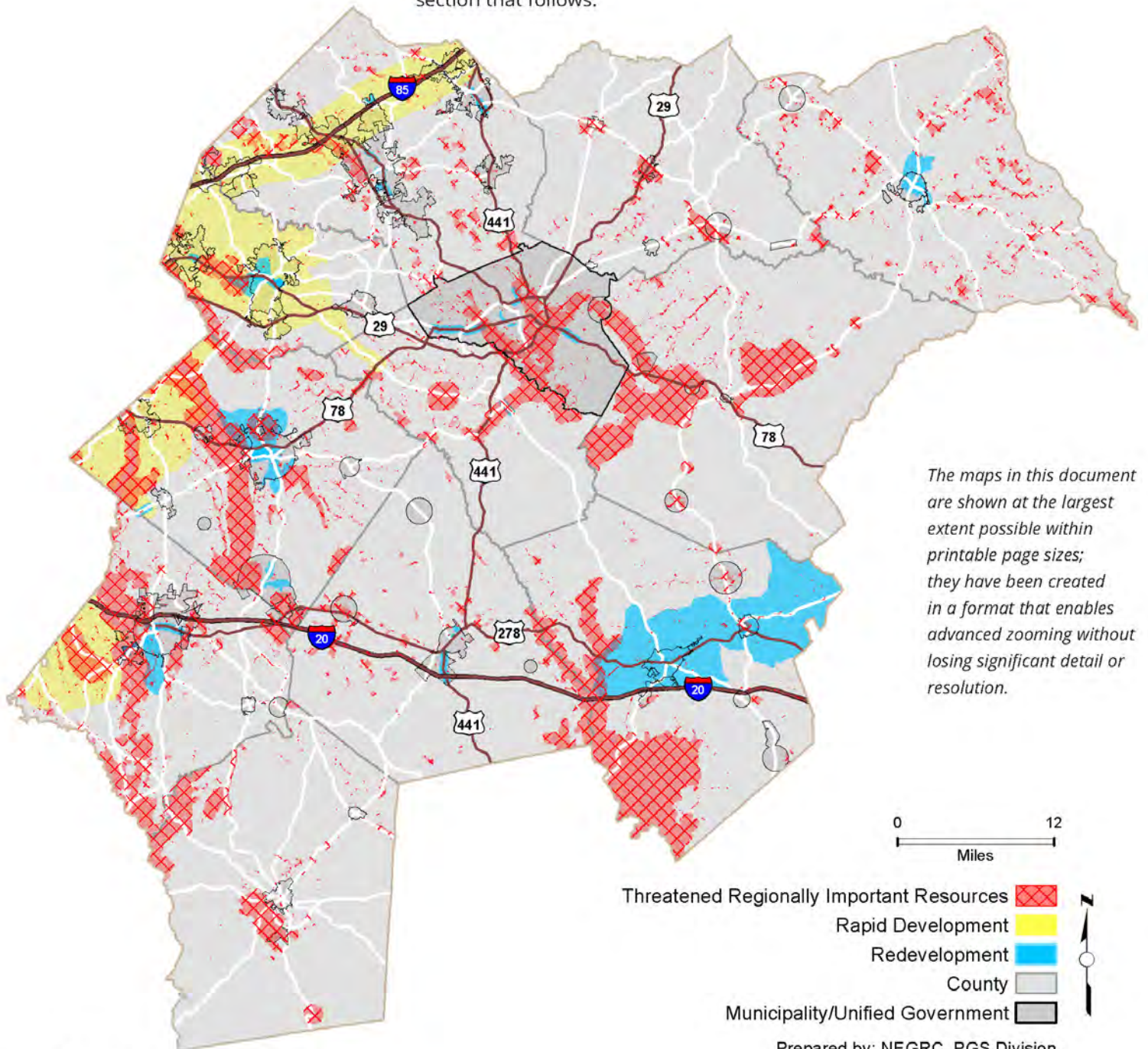
Prepared by: NEGRC, PGS Division  
7/19/2018

Sources: DNR Digital Environmental  
Atlas of Georgia, NWI, Southeastern  
Ecological Framework, NEGRC  
Regionally Important Resources Plan



## Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map

The Areas Requiring Special Attention map illustrates specific areas exhibiting conditions that could need targeted monitoring and mitigation due to factors such as: the potential for rapid development or change of land use, areas with the potential for redevelopment and/or economic growth, and areas with environmental and/or cultural resources that face the threat of development. Strategies for managing each area are described in the defining narrative section that follows.



Prepared by: NEGRC, PGS Division

## Defining Narrative (Areas Requiring Special Attention)

This section provides context and meaning to the development patterns displayed on the Areas Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) Map (previous page). The following defining narratives provide a general definition, a list of compatible land uses, an inventory of Regional Quality Community Objectives, and a menu of implementation measures that may be useful to achieve the desired development patterns for each ARSA Map category.

For ease of use, and to avoid needless repetition throughout the section, the Quality Community Objectives are described here and identified by name only in the proceeding text:

**Economic Prosperity:** Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community.

**Resource Management:** Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community.

**Efficient Land Use:** Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community.

**Local Preparedness:** Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve.

**Sense of Place:** Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities.

**Regional Cooperation:** Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs.

**Housing Options:** Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community.

**Transportation Options:** Address the transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents.

**Educational Opportunities:** Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, and/or pursue life ambitions.

**Community Health:** Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and viable work opportunities.



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## Threatened Regionally Important Resources

This area represents the intersection between Conservation areas (identified on the Conservation and Development Map), adopted Regionally Important Resources (RIR), and 'Developed' and 'Developing' Regional Land Use areas (identified on the Regional Land Use Map).



**Big Haynes Creek**



**Alcovy River Greenway**



**Yellow River**



**Elder Mill Bridge**

### Development Patterns

- ▶ Clustering development to preserve open space within the development site
- ▶ Enlisting significant site features (view corridors, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc.) as amenities that shape identity and character of the development
- ▶ Preservation of environmentally sensitive areas by setting them aside as public parks, trail corridors, or greenbelts
- ▶ Site plans, building design, and landscaping that are sensitive to natural features of the site, including topography and views
- ▶ Using infrastructure availability to steer development away from areas of natural, cultural, and environmentally sensitive resources
- ▶ Consideration of qualitative as well as quantitative measures during the planning and design of infrastructure and other public projects
- ▶ Facilities for bicycles, including bikeways or bike lanes, parking racks, etc.
- ▶ Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards
- ▶ Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses, decrease stormwater runoff, enhance air quality, and perform heat island mitigation
- ▶ Reduced parking requirements for commercial and residential developments, particularly when nearby parking or public transit is available
- ▶ Parking lots that incorporate on-site stormwater mitigation or retention features, such as pervious pavement

### Land Uses

This Area requires less attention to which specific land use classifications are encouraged (or discouraged) than to the nature of development and how it could impact the RIR in question. Although the land uses listed above in Regionally Important Resources could be applicable within the Potential RIR-Development Conflict Areas, certain RIRs might be too sensitive for even agriculture or trail development, while others could easily accommodate more intensive uses nearby. When changes are proposed, or to establish or maintain protection status, local governments should evaluate these areas on a case-by-case basis and should always refer to the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources.

### Quality Community Objectives

- ▶ Local Preparedness
- ▶ Sense of Place
- ▶ Transportation Options
- ▶ Efficient Land Use
- ▶ Regional Cooperation
- ▶ Resource Management

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## Threatened Regionally Important Resources, Continued



**Madison-Morgan Historic District**



**Lake Varner**



**Porterdale Historic District**

### Implementation Measures

The primary implementation mechanism in this area will be the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources.

Other measures that may be useful include:

- ▶ Environmental Impact Review ordinance – requires analysis of effects of proposed development; may suggest mitigation (DCA Model Code 6-5)
- ▶ Identify and improve waterways that do not meet established standards
- ▶ Land and Water Conservation – easements, acquisition, land trusts, farmland protection, purchase/transfer of development rights, etc.
- ▶ Low-Impact Development and Green Infrastructure – protect natural systems and reduce infrastructure costs
- ▶ Planning for Smart Growth – compact development, efficient infrastructure investment, design guidelines, infill development, cluster development, etc.
- ▶ Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)
- ▶ Noise and Lighting Regulations – control the impact of development adjacent to natural, historic, and/or less-intensely developed areas.



## Rapid Development

The western portion of Northeast Georgia has exhibited tremendous growth in recent years. Potentially Rapid Development areas are the most likely locales in this western section in which significant growth is likely to take place. In some cases, it is possible that development could outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including recreation.



**Covington Historic District**

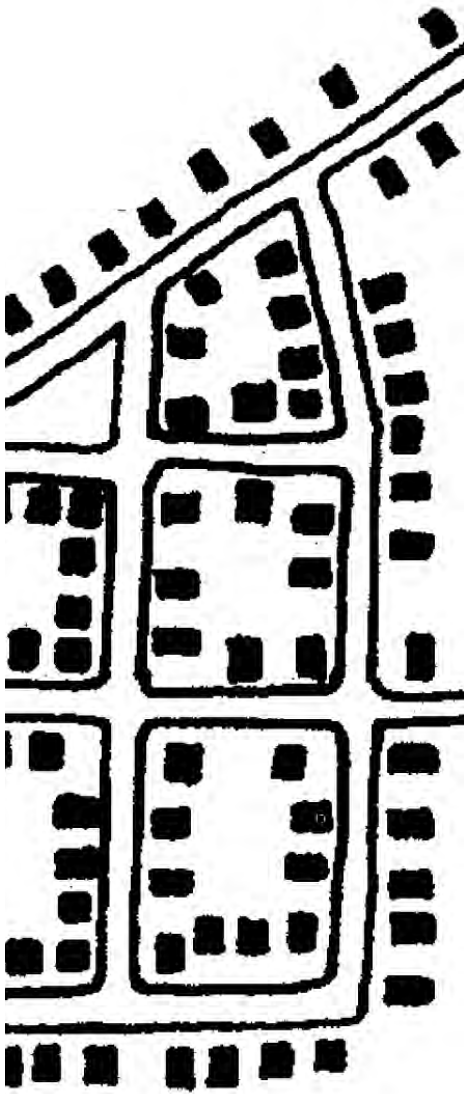
### Development Patterns

- ▶ Addition of neighborhood commercial centers on appropriate infill sites to serve surrounding neighborhoods
- ▶ Developments that have easy access to nearby transit, shopping, schools, and other areas where residents travel daily
- ▶ Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards
- ▶ Structures (shopping, warehouses, offices, etc.), sidewalks, and bicycle lanes located along the street frontage, with parking and connective alleyways in rear of buildings, making the corridor more attractive and pedestrian-friendly while alleviating some traffic congestion
- ▶ Addition of new uses to single-use sites (e.g. restaurants and shopping added to office parks)
- ▶ New developments that contain a mix of residential and commercial uses and community facilities at small enough scale and proximity to encourage walking between destinations
- ▶ Parking regulations that allow for and encourage shared parking
- ▶ Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses, decrease stormwater runoff, enhance air quality, and perform heat island mitigation
- ▶ Brownfield redevelopment that converts formerly industrial/commercial sites to mixed-use developments
- ▶ Greyfield redevelopment that converts vacant or under-utilized commercial strips to mixed-use assets
- ▶ Facilities for bicycles, including bikeways or bike lanes, parking racks, etc.
- ▶ Distribution of affordably priced homes throughout locality/region
- ▶ Residential development that offers a mix of housing types (single family homes, town homes, live/work units, lofts, over-the-shop, and apartments), densities and prices in the same neighborhood
- ▶ Residential development with healthy mix of uses (corner groceries, barber shops, drugstores) within easy walking distance of residences
- ▶ Clustering development to preserve open space within development site
- ▶ Enlisting significant site features (view corridors, water features, farmland, wetlands, etc.) as amenities that shape the identity and character of the development
- ▶ Integrating appropriate mixed-use and/or housing development with new school construction to increase walkability and reduce trip generation

### Land Uses

- ▶ Residential
- ▶ Commercial (office and retail)
- ▶ Mixed-use
- ▶ Light industrial/warehouses
- ▶ Public/institutional
- ▶ Natural, Cultural, and Historic areas
- ▶ Parks
- ▶ Trails, Greenways, Blueways
- ▶ Agriculture (small-scale)

## Rapid Development, Continued



**Compact Development Pattern**

### Quality Community Objectives

- ▶ Sense of Place
- ▶ Transportation Options
- ▶ Resource Management
- ▶ Efficient Land Use
- ▶ Local Preparedness
- ▶ Economic Prosperity
- ▶ Housing Options
- ▶ Educational Opportunities
- ▶ Regional Cooperation

### Implementation Measures

- ▶ Effective, intentional recruitment and planning – recruit businesses that suit the community, match training to workforce needs (current and future), control big-box development, form a business incubator, etc.
- ▶ Utilize existing economic programs and opportunities – Regional Economic Assistance Projects (REAP), Urban Redevelopment/Downtown Development tools (DCA Model Code 5-5), Revitalization Area Strategies (RAS), Enterprise Zones (EZs), Opportunity Zones (OZs, state & federal)
- ▶ Environmental Impact Review ordinance – requires analysis of effects of proposed development; may suggest mitigation (DCA Model Code 6-5)
- ▶ Land and Water Conservation – easements, acquisition, land trusts, farmland protection, purchase/transfer of development rights, etc.
- ▶ Low-Impact Development and Green Infrastructure – protect natural systems and reduce infrastructure costs
- ▶ Planning for Smart Growth – compact development, efficient infrastructure investment, design guidelines, infill development, cluster development, etc.
- ▶ Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)
- ▶ Noise and Lighting Regulations – control the impact of development adjacent to residential and other less-intensely developed areas
- ▶ Overlay Districts – mapped areas where special regulations on development are applied
- ▶ Public Facilities and Services – adequate public facilities standards, appropriate school siting, “Fix it First” policy, strategic location of public facilities, urban service areas
- ▶ Quality, diverse housing stock – provide housing options for all income levels and ages, allow accessory dwelling units, establish Urban Redevelopment Areas (OCGA 36-61-1), etc.
- ▶ Subdivisions and Land Development regulations – contributes significantly to the geography and geometry of the community (DCA Model Code 2-2)
- ▶ Plan for and implement multi-modal transportation – corridor studies, bikeability/walkability audits, bicycling and walking plans, complete streets policies, appropriate facility design, transit-and bicyclist-/pedestrian-oriented development, transportation demand management, etc.
- ▶ Intergovernmental Coordination – coordinated development review processes, Intergovernmental Service Agreements (DCA Model Code 7-5), service delivery strategies, etc.

## Redevelopment

Significant potential for redevelopment exists in high-poverty areas (as shown on the ARSA map through Enterprise Zones and Opportunity Zones) and declining commercial developments. Brownfield sites, including manufacturing and mining sites, also offer the potential for creative reuse.



**Potential Redevelopment Area**



**Positive Redevelopment Attributes**

### Development Patterns

- ▶ Accommodation of “big box” retail in a way that complements surrounding uses, such as breaking up the façade to look like a collection of smaller stores
- ▶ Commercial structures (shopping, warehouses, offices, etc.) located near the street front, with parking in the rear of buildings, making the community more attractive and more pedestrian-friendly
- ▶ Improvement of sidewalk and street appearance and amenities of commercial centers
- ▶ Redevelopment of older strip commercial centers in lieu of new construction further down the strip
- ▶ Infill development on vacant sites closer in to the center of the community; these sites, with existing infrastructure in place, are used for new development, matching character of surrounding neighborhoods in lieu of more development on greenfield sites
- ▶ Driveway consolidation and inter-parcel connections between parking lots
- ▶ Developments that have easy access to nearby transit, shopping, schools, and other areas where residents travel daily
- ▶ Restrictions on the number and size of signs and billboards
- ▶ Landscaping of parking areas to minimize visual impact on adjacent streets and uses, decrease stormwater runoff, enhance air quality, and perform heat island mitigation
- ▶ Use of landscaped tree islands and medians to break up large expanses of paved parking
- ▶ Parking regulations that allow for and encourage shared parking
- ▶ Brownfield redevelopment that converts formerly industrial/commercial sites to mixed-use developments
- ▶ Greyfield redevelopment that converts vacant or under-utilized commercial strips to mixed-use assets
- ▶ Revitalization of existing neighborhood commercial centers to capture more market activity and serve as community focal points
- ▶ Reuse of existing vacant or underutilized structures (e.g. commercial centers, office spaces, warehouses) to accommodate new community facilities

### Land Uses

- ▶ Commercial (office and retail)
- ▶ Mixed-use
- ▶ Light industrial/warehouses
- ▶ Public/institutional

### Quality Community Objectives

- ▶ Sense of Place
- ▶ Transportation Options
- ▶ Resource Management
- ▶ Local Preparedness
- ▶ Economic Prosperity
- ▶ Housing Choices
- ▶ Educational Opportunities
- ▶ Regional Cooperation
- ▶ Community Health



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## Redevelopment, Continued



**Athens Line**



**Existing and Potential Redevelopment Pattern, Athens-Clarke County, GA**

### Implementation Measures

- ▶ Effective, intentional recruitment and planning – recruit businesses that suit the community, match training to workforce needs (current and future), control big-box development, form a business incubator, etc.
- ▶ Utilize existing economic programs and opportunities – Regional Economic Assistance Projects (REAP), Urban Redevelopment/Downtown Development tools (DCA Model Code 5-5), Revitalization Area Strategies (RAS), Enterprise Zones (EZs), Opportunity Zones (OZs, state & federal)
- ▶ Brownfield Site Remediation – clean-up of contaminated properties; can be initiated by property owners or local governments
- ▶ Strategies for Re-Use of Greyfields – reusing sites such as abandoned shopping centers for transit-oriented, mixed-use development
- ▶ Business Improvement District (BID)/Community Improvement District (CID) – self-taxing entity formed by property owners and/or businesses within a specific geographic area; can be formed to provide additional services, increase safety and attractiveness, etc.
- ▶ Rehabilitation Codes – reuse older buildings, leading to reinvestment in blighted areas
- ▶ Targeted Corridor Redevelopment – using public incentives or urban redevelopment powers to encourage revitalization of problem properties, such as declining shopping centers or abandoned “big-box” stores
- ▶ Utility Relocation – remove overhead utilities from public view, either below ground or at the rear of lots
- ▶ Adaptive Use – conversion of a building for new uses
- ▶ Public Nuisance Ordinance – control nuisances such as loud noises, stagnant water, abandoned vehicles, accumulation of junk, and tall weeds and grass
- ▶ Sign Regulations – control the aesthetic impact of signage (DCA Model Code 3-7)
- ▶ Overlay Districts – mapped areas where special regulations on development are applied
- ▶ Plan for and implement multi-modal transportation – corridor studies, bikeability/walkability audits, bicycling and walking plans, complete streets policies, appropriate facility design, transit- and bicyclist-/pedestrian-oriented development, transportation demand management, etc.
- ▶ Access Control Measures – restricts entry/exit to sites to increase safety and attractiveness
- ▶ Intergovernmental Coordination – coordinated development review processes, Intergovernmental Service Agreements (DCA Model Code 7-5), service delivery strategies, etc.





# NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

MAINTAIN HUMANITY UNDER 500,000,000  
IN PERPETUAL BALANCE WITH NATURE  
GUIDE REPRODUCTION WISELY  
IMPROVING FITNESS AND DIVERSITY  
UNITE HUMANITY WITH A LIVING  
NEW LANGUAGE  
RULE PASSION FAITH TRADITION  
AND ALL THINGS  
WITH TEMPERED REASON  
PROTECT PEOPLE AND NATURE  
WITH FAIR LAWS AND JUSTICE  
LET ALL NATIONS RULING  
RESOLVING EXTERNAL DISPUTES  
IN A WORLD COURT  
AVOID PETTY LAWS AND USELESS  
OFFICIALS  
BALANCE PERSONAL RIGHTS WITH  
SOCIAL DUTIES  
PRIZE TRUTH BEAUTY LOVE  
SEEKING HARMONY WITH THE  
INFINITE  
BE NOT A CANCER ON THE EARTH  
LEAVE ROOM FOR NATURE  
LEAVE ROOM FOR NATURE

إنهوا عدد الجنس البشري أقل من ٥٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠  
في توازن دائم مع الطبيعة  
ووجهوا التكاثر بحكمة مع تحسن اللياقة والتنوع  
وحدوا الجنس البشري بلغة جديدة حيوية  
تحكموا بالعاطفة - بالعقيدة - بالتقاليد  
وجميع الأديان وتطلق العقل  
اجمعوا الناس والدول بواسطة قوانين عادلة  
بمشاريع متفق عليها  
دعوا جميع الدول تحكم دولهم  
بالتشريعات الخارجية  
لتحيد القوانين الداخلية والمخالفات  
عادلوا بين المذوقين المختلفين  
وبالواجبات الاجتماعية  
أعطوا الحقيقة - الجمال - الحب  
في التماس الانسجام مع الطبيعة  
دعسوا بالتقديرات السطحية على الأرض  
أفسحوا مكانا للطبيعة  
أفسحوا مكانا للطبيعة

## Regional Needs & Opportunities

This section, presented in divisions relating to classical planning analysis areas such as housing and transportation, presents a final catalog of focal points to guide the forward-looking, implementation-based components of the plan.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) publishes a list of typical issues and opportunities as part of the State Planning Recommendations. This list, in addition to an evaluation for the region's consistency with statewide planning goals and objectives was used as the starting point for developing the Needs and Opportunities list. Further needs and opportunities were identified as part of a synthesis of all of the input received during the planning process.

Needs and/or Opportunities that are called out in **blue text** below are considered a priority and have a corresponding strategy and Action Items in the Regional work Program Section

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## Economic & Workforce Development

Local and regional economic health has major implications for socioeconomic conditions, public health, educational quality and attainment, and the provision of community services.

The analysis of existing economic and workforce conditions within the region highlighted the need for:

- ▶ A platform to market the region, share information, and promote the wide range of incentives and opportunities available.
- ▶ **Resources to support and encourage local entrepreneurial development.**
- ▶ **Greater alignment of workforce skills with current and emerging jobs.**

Northeast Georgia must build on existing economic development and job growth initiatives to ensure its long-term economic competitiveness and resiliency.

These needs suggest opportunities for:

- ▶ **Development of web presence that would be a one stop access point for information, data, and news in order to more effectively market, promote, and increase the entire region's visibility to potential visitors and investors.**
- ▶ Connecting entrepreneurs to available support services.
- ▶ Improving workforce training opportunities and creating stronger links between educational and training programs and employers.

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## Housing & Community Development

An assessment of the built environment included analysis of current housing stock, development and redevelopment trends, and the land use patterns that define the region's diverse communities, including urban centers, small towns, and rural landscapes. Access to quality and affordable housing options is one of the most critical elements of a healthy built environment and a range of housing options that meets the needs of individuals and families of all incomes and life stages supports healthy neighborhoods.

The following were identified as housing and community development needs within the region:

- ▶ A greater diversity of housing types and price points is needed to serve both the projected growth in the aging population and to attract and retain younger people.
- ▶ More transportation choices to connect housing to employment or other destinations.
- ▶ **Aging physical infrastructure replacement.**

Northeast Georgia has established communities and neighborhoods at virtually every scale—all of which serve as a foundation for the region's future development and growth. However, continued uneven distribution of growth will pose a challenge for rural communities and small towns as population trends shift growth away from some of the region's small towns.

These gaps offer opportunities for:

- ▶ Creating connected, resilient, and affordable housing options that will strengthen communities.
- ▶ Improving the efficiency of infrastructure investments by identifying sustainable funding options.
- ▶ Existing housing stock is not currently well suited to meet the needs of the growth in the population aged 65 and over.
- ▶ Overall population growth within the region is projected to be unevenly distributed, concentrated in the western portion of the region.

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## Transportation

An efficient and well-connected transportation network is critical to the long-term economic viability of the region, as well as to a high quality of life for residents.

The region's transportation systems have the following needs:

- ▶ **Few transportation choices region wide.**
- ▶ **Connections to employment by method other than automobile are extremely limited.**
- ▶ Costs for maintenance of transportation infrastructure are increasing.

In addition, transportation routes cross political boundaries and are generally best considered at a regional scale.

The following opportunities exist to address these issues:

- ▶ Connecting housing and major employment centers.
- ▶ Expanding options for mobility and transit.
- ▶ Identifying more reliable funding for the planning, construction, and maintenance of transportation infrastructure.

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## Natural Resources

Intact environmental resources are the cost-effective complement to the region's physical infrastructure, cleansing air and water and reducing environmental risks such as flooding. Most natural systems including watersheds and wetlands also cross the boundaries of individual jurisdictions, requiring inter-governmental coordination to properly manage these complex and critical resources.

The region's Natural Resources systems face challenges related to:

- ▶ Limited nature of water resources and recent droughts.
- ▶ Lack of consistent drought resiliency planning.
- ▶ Limited information about the need for conservation.
- ▶ Lack of preventative infrastructure maintenance and replacement.
- ▶ Lack of land use planning in some areas of the region, which can result in negative impacts to natural resources, including fragmented ecosystems.
- ▶ Need to manage solid waste, including increasing recycling and reuse.

Access to an adequate, stable water supply is vital to the region's health and prosperity. Water resources are finite and easily affected by human activity; they require coordinated decision-making to ensure a clean, long-term supply.

These gaps highlight opportunities for:

- ▶ Increasing the drought resiliency of the region and its communities.
- ▶ Expanding and extending the water supply.
- ▶ Improving marketing around conservation education and the cost of water.
- ▶ Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance efforts.
- ▶ Promoting more sensitive land use practices that reduce the loss of open space and agricultural land and protect ground and surface water.
- ▶ Increasing opportunities for recycling and reuse.



# IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

## **Performance Standards**

The following Performance Standards will be used by local governments to ensure implementation of the Regional Plan across Northeast Georgia. Since these Minimum Standards are seen as essential to implementing the Regional Plan, the Regional Commission and DCA will provide technical and training assistance to governments to help them achieve them.

Excellence Standards are deemed desirable for implementation of the plan, and typically refer to best practices in planning and development.

### **Minimum Standards**

- ▶ Update the local Comprehensive plan, including the Future Development Map and/or Future Land Use Map, at regular intervals, as required by the State of Georgia.
- ▶ Utilize the Future Development Map and/or Future Land Use Map to steer new development to appropriate areas of the community.
- ▶ Update the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) and Capital Improvements Element (CIE), where applicable, as required by the State of Georgia.
- ▶ Submit potential Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) to the Regional Commission per the Development Thresholds established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.
- ▶ Comply with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Part V. Environmental planning Criteria by adopting appropriate ordinances for Groundwater Recharge Areas, Wetlands Protection, and River Corridor Protection, where applicable.
- ▶ Update the local pre-disaster mitigation plan per the standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- ▶ Share updated Tax Assessor's data tables and land parcels with the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission annually, where applicable.

### **Excellence Standards**

- ▶ Develop and adopt a zoning ordinance that is revised and updated regularly to reflect the community vision.
- ▶ Develop, adopt, and implement policies and regulations to preserve agricultural land and activities.
- ▶ Incentivize redevelopment and the enhancement of existing commercial and industrial areas over development in outlying areas through mechanisms such as TDRs, Opportunity Zones, Enterprise Zones, etc.
- ▶ Develop, adopt, and implement policies and regulations to encourage connectivity within the community.
- ▶ Maintain a geographic information system (GIS) that utilizes in-house staff or a third party, such as the Regional Commission.
- ▶ Develop GIS data for address points and building footprints.
- ▶ Maintain current electronic inventories of environmental and historic resources in the community.
- ▶ Adopt a tree ordinance.
- ▶ Adopt a water conservation policy.
- ▶ Monitor impaired streams and rivers to determine pollution sources and implement mitigation strategies.
- ▶ Designate a local historic district and establish an active historic preservation commission through the adoption of an historic overlay ordinance.
- ▶ Actively seek state and/or federal historic designations for districts and/or properties.
- ▶ Develop and adopt a Capital Improvements Element (CIE) according to state law.
- ▶ Develop and adopt an impact fee ordinance according to state law.
- ▶ Partner with local boards of education to identify new school locations in areas connected by appropriate infrastructure.
- ▶ Develop, adopt, and implement local bicycle and/or pedestrian plans.



### **Excellence Standards, Continued**

- ▶ Develop, adopt, and implement plans to protect and create public greenspaces such as parks, greenways, and other recreational facilities.
- ▶ Become an official partner with the Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center.
- ▶ Develop and adopt a local Transit Development plan.
- ▶ Participate in regional transit initiatives and programs.
- ▶ Maintain a current and navigable community website.
- ▶ Participate actively in regional tourism planning and promotion efforts.
- ▶ Maintain a working relationship with the local chamber of commerce to encourage economic development activities that support the community's vision.
- ▶ Develop and adopt an Urban Redevelopment plan, where applicable.
- ▶ Seek the Opportunity Zone designation for an applicable portion of the community from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.
- ▶ Seek the Certified Work Ready Community designation from the Georgia State Workforce Investment Board.
- ▶ Seek the Entrepreneur-Friendly Community designation from the Georgia Department of Economic Development.
- ▶ Develop and implement plans, policies, and regulations to address blighted areas within the community.
- ▶ Actively seek to achieve a diverse supply of rental and ownership housing options to accommodate households of all income levels within the community.
- ▶ Seek designation from the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) to address specific housing needs.
- ▶ Participate in the Georgia Certified Literate Community Program through the Technical College System of Georgia.
- ▶ Develop and implement an Existing Industry Program (EIP) or a Business Retention and Expansion Program (BREP).
- ▶ Participate actively in multi-county economic development efforts (e.g. Joint Development Authorities, Work Ready regions, etc.).
- ▶ Seek the Broadband Ready designation from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

# Local Government Performance Standards Update

The following list of governments have not achieved the regional commission's established regional plan minimum performance standards.

Local Government	Minimum Performance Standard Not Met	Specific Action Steps taken to Assist Government
<b>Athens-Clarke County</b> Winterville	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	
<b>Barrow County</b> Auburn Bethlehem Carl Statham Winder	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	
<b>Morgan County</b> Madison Bostwick Buckhead Rutledge	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	
<b>Greene County</b> Greensboro Siloam Union Point White Plains Woodville	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	
<b>Jasper County</b> Monticello Shady Dale	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	
<b>Jackson County</b> Jefferson Arcade Braselton Commerce Hoschton Maysville Nicholson Talmo	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	

Local Government	Minimum Performance Standards Not Met	Specific Action Steps taken to Assist Government
<b>Oglethorpe County</b> Arnoldsville Crawford Lexington Maxey's	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	
<b>Elbert County</b> Elberton Bowman	Update SDS Update SDS Update SDS	Offered to assist County and City staff with require update forms.
<b>Madison County</b> Danielsville Carlton Colbert Comer Hull Ila	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	
<b>Newton County</b> Covington Mansfield Newborn Porterdale Oxford	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	
<b>Oconee County</b> Bishop Bogart North High Shoals Watkinsville	All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	
<b>Walton County</b> Monroe Good Hope Loganville Social Circle Walnut Grove	Submit potential DRIs to the RC All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met All Minimum performance standards met	Met with County staff to review thresholds and rules.



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## **Regional Work Program**

This portion of the Implementation Program includes a Report of Accomplishments, summarizing activities and achievements since the last Regional Plan update (2012), and an updated Work Program, identifying the specific actions the Regional Commission plans to undertake during the next five years to address the priority Needs and Opportunities.

# Report of Accomplishments

	Activity	Time Frame	Responsible Party	Est. Cost	Funding Source	Status	Explanation
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Development Patterns</b>						
<b>1.1</b>	Facilitate local government greenway, bicycle, and pedestrian planning and education.	2016 2020	NEGRC, local governments	\$25,000 per plan	GDOT, GDCA, Local	Ongoing	Addressed in Action Items on pp. 40-41 now.
<b>1.2</b>	Catalog, assess, and plan for recreation, cultural, agricultural, and tourism resources, including farmland protection.	2016 2020	NEGRC	\$22,500 annually	GDCA	Ongoing	Addressed in Action Items on pp. 40-41 now.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Resource Conservation</b>						
<b>2.1</b>	Review RIR designations annually and assist communities with implementation of RIR management plan as requested	2016 2020	NEGRC	\$2,000+ annually	GDCA	Completed	
<b>2.2</b>	Develop and implement water quality plans and programs	2016 2020	NEGRC, local governments	\$20,000 -30,000 per plan	GEPD, GDCA	Abandoned	Lack of Funding
<b>2.3</b>	Assist local governments with conservation funding opportunities, as requested	2016 2020	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA, GDNr, NPS	Ongoing	Addressed in Action Items on pp. 40-41 now.
<b>2.4</b>	Assist local governments in assessing historic resources and pursuing related funding opportunities, as requested	2016 2020	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA, GDNr, GDOT	Abandoned	Lack of Funding
<b>2.5</b>	Engage in collaborative mitigation planning with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to address air pollution issues, if necessary	2016 2020	NEGRC	Minimal	NEGRC, GDNr	Abandoned	Assisted City of Braselton, Bowman, and Barrow County with planning and grant application preparation
<b>2.6</b>	Assist with regional solid waste planning efforts	2016 2020	NEGRC	Varies	NEGRSWA, GDCA	Abandoned	No requests to date
<b>2.7</b>	Update the RIR plan to improve readability and usefulness of the document for local governments and developers.	2016	NEGRC	\$25,000	GDCA	Completed	
<b>2.8</b>	Produce Yellow River Water Trail Maps for display at kiosks located in the City of Porterdales.	2015 2016	NEGRC, Local Governments, Other Partnering Agencies	\$15,000 per plan	GDCA, NEGRC, Local Governments, Partnering Agencies.	Completed	



### 3.0 Community Facilities and Infrastructure

3.1	Encourage local governments to implement Northeast Georgia Plan 2035	2016 2020	NEGRC	\$22,000 annually	GDCA	Ongoing	Long-term measure, not found in 5-year STWP
3.2	Provide technical and staffing support for local and multi-jurisdictional transportation planning efforts	2016 2020	NEGRC	Varies	GDOT, GDCA	Ongoing	Now addressed in action items on pp 40-41.
3.3	Assist local governments with hazard-mitigation planning and implementation, as requested	2016	NEGRC	\$22,000 per plan	GEMA	Ongoing	PDM Plan updates will be prepared as requested.
3.4	Support GDOT's work on a connectivity study for the Athens-Atlanta corridor by attending stakeholder meetings and providing other requested assistance	2016	NEGRC	Minimal	GDOT, GDCA	Ongoing	Now addressed in action items on pp 40-41.

### 4.0 Social and Economic Development

4.1	Assist local governments with economic development planning and funding opportunities	2016 2020	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA, EDA, ARC	Ongoing	Long-term measure, not found in 5 year STWP
4.2	Assist local governments with housing programs such as Community Home Investment Program (CHIP) and Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), as requested	2016 2020	NEGRC	Varies	GDCA	Ongoing	Now addressed in action items on pp 38-39.
4.3	Quantify regional need for workforce housing and recommend action items for increasing its availability near jobs	2014 2016	NEGRC	\$21,000	GDCA	Ongoing	Now addressed in action items on pp 38-39.
4.4	Develop community-level plans, strategies, and inventories to promote and protect local agriculture and local-food assets	2016 2020	NEGRC	\$15,000-25,000 per plan	GDCA, USDA	Complete	
4.5	Develop regional tourism and branding study and/or plan	2016 2020	NEGRC	\$25,000-35,000 annually	GDCA, GDED	Complete	
4.6	Develop a regional food systems study of growers, suppliers, buyers, distribution, etc.	2014 2016	NEGRC	\$20,000-30,000	GDCA	Complete	

### 5.0 Government Relations

5.1	Market the Planning and Government Services (PGS) Division and educate local government officials through newsletter and in-house training programs and workshops	2016- 2019	NEGRC	\$10,000-20,000 annually	GDCA	Ongoing	Long-Term measure not included in 5-Year STWP
5.2	Host and coordinate Northeast Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force	2016- 2019	NEGRC	\$2,500 annually	GDOT	Ongoing	Long-Term measure not included in 5-Year STWP
5.3	Disseminate historic preservation information pertaining to Section 106 Reviews to local governments	2016- 2019	NEGRC	\$4,000 annually	GDNR	Ongoing	Long-Term measure not included in 5-Year STWP

# Work Program

Priority	Strategy	Action
<b>Development of web presence that would be a one stop access point for information, data, and news in order to more effectively market, promote, and increase the entire region's visibility to potential visitors and investors.</b>	Promote a Northeast Georgia web presence	Create and manage a Northeast Georgia promotional website.
		Create feasibility study for potential impacts of a Northeast Georgia promotional and social media presence and/or smart phone App.
		Catalog and capitalize upon existing tourism and economic development-related promotional efforts in Georgia and the Southeast (ex. Georgia Power's Select Georgia Maps, GDECD's travel regions, Georgia Agritourism Association).
		Conduct audit of and recommend improvements to local and regional online materials (ex: JDANEG website and ED Pros Trails Connectivity Project).
	Comprehensive and accessible regional tourism database.	Create and manage an inventory of vacant land, vacant buildings/spaces, Opportunity Zones (OZs), Revitalization Area Strategy (RAS) designations, Camera-Ready Communities, and other economic incentives and opportunities.
		Create and manage a list of funding and other opportunities for local entrepreneurs and artists.
		Create section of the NEGRC website to feature local government resources.
		Create, manage, and promote a publicly accessible inventory of historic landmarks, festivals and events, tours, and other visitor attractions.
		Survey local, regional, and state stakeholders about whether to reconvene regular or as-needed meetings of the dormant regional tourism group.
	Support entrepreneurial development.	Develop a catalog of all regional entities that are involved in entrepreneurship and develop a plan for enhanced, easy access to existing regional entrepreneurship resources, including educational institutions
		Conduct evaluation of the climate and capacity for entrepreneurial and small business development across the region, defining local strengths and weaknesses, funding gaps, and industry best practices
		Create feasibility study for regional business incubation facilities, and the potential role of local educational institutions in supporting the effort

Partners	Short-Term (1-5 yrs)	Long-Term (6-10 yrs)	Ongoing
JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD	Year 2-3 \$10,000-\$25000		
JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD	Year 4-5 \$15,000-\$20,000		
JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD, EDA	Year 1-3 \$5,000- \$10,000		
GDCA, GDEcD, EDA			\$5,000 Annually
JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD	Year 2-3 \$5,000- \$10,000		
Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, Artist Communities	Year 1-2 Staff Time		\$5,000 Annually
Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments	Year 1-2 Staff Time		\$1,000 Annually
JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments	Year 4-5 \$10,000		
JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments, GDEcD			Staff Time
Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments	Year 3-5 \$10,000		
Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments	Year 1-2 \$25,000		
JDANEGA, Chambers of Commerce, Local Governments	Year 4-5 Staff Time		

# Work Program (continued)

Priority	Strategy	Action
<b>Greater alignment of workforce skills with current and emerging jobs.</b>	Connect employers with skilled and dedicated employees	Produce region-wide report on link between educational preparation/attainment and existing/future employment opportunities.
		Develop educational program (materials and workshop) to educate local governments about diverse housing types for people of all incomes.
<b>Connections to employment by method other than automobile are extremely limited</b>	Identify housing needs around job centers to support communities in attracting and retaining workers and identify workforce housing programs so workers can live near jobs.	Create report on employer-assisted housing (EAH) initiatives. EAH programs can include: Counseling for employees about housing choices and financing Direct financial help to employees for rent, closing costs, or mortgage payments A real estate investment by an employer An Individual Development Account (IDA) or other savings program for employees interested in purchasing a home Use of government matching funds and tax credits as incentives for private investment
		Develop region-wide Housing + Transportation Affordability analysis and recommendations.
	Develop, implement, and sustain viable housing projects that meet market demands and needs.	Publish model guidelines and/or best management practices to assist communities in assessing housing needs and identifying appropriate housing types based on factors such as community demographics, future jobs and housing affordability goals.
		Publish best management practices guide to mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented community design and amenities alternatives to single-family housing, including apartments, condos, and townhouses to meet the needs of both older and younger residents in the region.
<b>Few transportation choices region wide</b>	Provide communities with bicyclist- and pedestrian-friendly "Complete Streets" best practices to increase community appeal, safety, and provide access to all users	Host regional housing collaborative forum, such as a housing roundtable, to promote information sharing and identification of partnership opportunities.
		Develop Complete Streets design guidelines for various settings (neighborhood- and community-level).
		Create document of case studies and/or best practices for multi-purpose infrastructure improvements to maximize positive impacts of public investment (such as multi-use trails within utility easements).
		Complete a study to identify and establish protection and maintenance standards for regionally significant multi-modal transportation corridors.



<b>Partners</b>	<b>Short-Term (1-5 yrs)</b>	<b>Long-Term (6-10 yrs)</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
WIB, Local Governments, Technical Colleges			Staff Time
Local Governments			Staff Time
Local Governments, Federal Government	Year 3-4 Staffing		
Local Governments, Employers, Developers	Year 1-3 \$20,000/ Study		
Local Governments, GDCA	Year 2-4 \$17,500/ Study		
Local Governments			Staff Time
Local Governments, GDCA	Year 3-5 \$50,000		
Bike advocacy groups, Local Governments	Year 1-3 \$20,000/ Study		
Local Governments	Year 3-5 Staff Time		
Local Governments	Year 2-5 \$10,000 /Study		

# Work Program (continued)

Priority	Strategy	Action
Aging physical infrastructure replacement.	Address aging infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and water and wastewater systems.	Develop guide to maximizing longevity and flexibility of infrastructure improvements for local governments.
		Develop best-practices document for capital improvements programming. Examples could include an Asset Management Program that: Conducts ongoing condition assessment that: Evaluates the existing condition of all assets Establishes Level of Service (LOS) Establishes a system of ranking and prioritization to identify the asset most likely to experience failure and identify alternatives for renewing the asset (e.g., rehabilitation versus replacement) Performs life cycle costing Identifies long term funding needs and strategies
		Publish how-to guide to conducting comprehensive infrastructure inventories and assessments for local governments.
	Allocate resources efficiently.	Conduct feasibility study to analyze potential for publishing measures, benchmarks, and/or asset assessment processes to evaluate transportation system improvements and project prioritization.

<b>Partners</b>	<b>Short-Term (1-5 yrs)</b>	<b>Long-Term (6-10 yrs)</b>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Local Governments	Year 4-5 \$25,000/Study		
Local Governments, UGA Vinson Institute	Year 4-5 \$25,000/Study		
Local Governments	Year 2-4 \$5,000/Community		
Local Governments	Year 1-3 \$15,000/Community		

# N F O R D   S T A D I O

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## SWOT Analysis Summary

During the stakeholder engagement process, the NEGRC hosted two public hearings, four listening sessions, and an online questionnaire. Formal Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analyses were conducted at the listening sessions, and further SWOT information was distilled from feedback received via other methods.

### Strengths

#### Education

The region has a strong public and private education system, including pre-school, K-12, technical, undergraduate, and post-graduate programs. Facilities are generally distributed well throughout the region.

#### Automobile Transportation Network

State and federal highways cover urbanized and rural Northeast Georgia well. Traffic congestion, to be expected in urbanized areas, is mostly found within the western section of the region toward Atlanta.

#### Recreation

Small pocket parks, major regional sports complexes, state parks, national forest, and other facilities provide space for traditional recreational programming. Greenways, trails, and paths are popular with hikers and people on bikes. River trails and lakes offer outstanding opportunities for boating.

#### Natural and Historic Resources

Stakeholders cite rural landscapes and small-town feel as major positive attributes. In addition to the recreation-based strengths

noted above, our riparian corridors and lakes provide clean water. Historic downtowns and rural places contribute to the sense of place and distinctiveness noted as major strengths.

#### Economic Development

The region's proximity to Atlanta and accessibility to the Savannah port contribute to excellence in production, employment, and shipping. Dedicated community and regional teams have been highly successful in cultivating existing businesses and drawing new opportunities for economic development.

#### Intergovernmental Coordination

Through the NEGRC, in project-specific groups, and as diverse municipal stakeholder groups within single counties, local governments in our region excel at working together for mutual benefit.

#### Agriculture

Agriculture has long been a major part of the culture and economy of Northeast Georgia; local-based food movements, including the "Georgia Grown" program, have bolstered this as a strength within our region.

## Weaknesses

### Non-Automobile Transportation

While the region excels in automobile transportation, stakeholders reference a deficiency in accommodating users of other modes, such as transit, walking, and bicycling.

### Workforce

At regional listening sessions and in assorted local comprehensive planning input meetings, attendees have noted fairly consistently that the workforce is not well enough trained for the kinds of job currently available and projected to thrive in Northeast Georgia.

### Sprawl

Stakeholder input notes that suburban sprawl is an issue. Inefficient land use threatening rural atmosphere, increased reliance on automobiles and declining ability of roads to handle traffic, and high infrastructure costs contribute to this concern.

### Poverty

Certain areas of Northeast Georgia exhibit poverty levels well beyond state and national averages. Education, employment, and lack of public transportation options are seen as problematic here.

### Traffic Congestion

Some urban and suburban areas face congestion on local roads and highways. Lack of funding for non-automobile modes, lack of coordination between planning for land use and transportation, and major population growth are among the likely responsible factors.

### Housing

While stakeholders noted that a diversity of housing types exist within some areas of the region, the current housing inventory is not well suited to serve the projected rise in the aging population, or to attract and retain young professionals. Both groups have shown a preference for a greater range of options in housing type and price than currently exist.

## Opportunities

### Economic Development

Stakeholders want Northeast Georgia to be selective in economic development, identifying the best industries and employers and targeting them for success here. They specifically mentioned that they do not want poorly conceived economic development to become a threat to communities.

### Film Industry

Within our regional economy, the film industry stands out as a new frontier for successful, high value/low impact development opportunities. Some communities have already seen significant benefits.

### Education & Workforce

Due to the impression that a workforce imbalanced with employment needs is a weakness, we have an opportunity to realign needs. Career academies and technical colleges are already working with local governments, chambers of commerce, and employers to ensure that this happens.

### Planning & Coordination

The activities of the NEGRC (including this regional plan, itself) offer substantial opportunities for strengthening decision making in land use, transportation, community and economic development, natural resources, and other areas.

## Threats

### Water Availability

After major droughts in recent years, stakeholders worry that water availability could become a serious threat (potentially affecting residents, businesses, and wildlife).

### Uncoordinated Economic Development

While the previously-referenced partnerships present examples of successful regional collaboration in economic development, some areas and types of development remain isolated and piecemeal.

### Atlanta Spillover

Regional and local stakeholders are concerned with the presence and ever-growing nature of the Atlanta metropolitan region immediately to the west of our region. Traffic, development pressures, air and water quality, and crime are examples of how this manifests.

### Drug Abuse

Nationally, in Georgia, and for our region, drug abuse is becoming an increasingly prevalent concern. The opioid epidemic is responsible for crime, major health and public safety costs, community decline, and injury and death.

### Infrastructure

Although infrastructure in Northeast Georgia is currently seen as a strength in some areas, region-wide, the need for improvement exists, both at present and to avoid future issues. Specific examples include roads and bridges, water and sewerage, and telecommunications (especially broadband inter-net).

### Stasis

Stakeholder input suggests a relative resistance to change, and that the demands of the future must be addressed with forethought and willingness to vary approaches to business and industry, in addition to governance.

## QCO Analysis Summary

This appendix uses The Georgia Department of Community Affairs guidance on best practices for implementation in analyzing the region's consistency with its Quality Community Objectives (QCO). The best practices were evaluated in two ways: first, by analyzing each of the region's communities' individual consistency as found in their most recent comprehensive plans and forming a regional mean, and additionally, by an analysis of the region at-large. The following summary provides a general, regionalized assessment of the QCOs.

### **Economic Prosperity**

Economic development efforts are based on communities' strengths and weaknesses, as well as sustainability, diversity, and compatibility with existing businesses. Small business development is encouraged through entrepreneur support programs throughout most of the region. Jobs for skilled and unskilled labor, including professional and managerial positions, are available.

### **Resource Management**

Most communities identify environmental protection as a strength, citing inventories and protection programs for natural resources and sensitive areas, passage and enforcement of environmental and tree preservation (and re-planting) ordinances, and use of stormwater best management practices. Additionally, the NEGRC has identified and is in the process of developing a plan for protection of Regionally Important Resources.

### **Efficient Land Use:**

While most of the region maintains inventories of areas ripe for potential redevelopment and allows small-lot development (5,000 square feet or less), infill opportunities associated with previously-developed sites such as brownfields and greyfields are not broadly promoted. Likewise, a majority of communities do not plan for nodal development that focuses growth at intersections rather than allowing it to spread along major roads.

### **Local Preparedness**

In large part, local governments, school districts, and other decision-making entities have and share 20 year population projections to inform planning. Along these lines, the region has designated focal areas for growth, based on natural resources inventories, and communities make public information relatively easy to come by. However, many communities lack a Capital Improvements Program that supports growth with plans.



**Sense of Place**

Northeast Georgia's communities value sense of place. Most cite having distinct characteristics, protecting history and heritage, and regulating signage. However, they do not typically regulate or offer guidance to developers on aesthetics, and farmland protection is not commonly applied.

**Regional Cooperation**

Most governments indicate that they participate in regional economic development and environmental organizations or initiatives; they also work with other communities to increase efficiency of service provision and coordinate planning activities. However, potential for more region-wide coordination exists.

**Housing Options**

Housing diversity throughout the region is sufficient to meet residents' needs, including multi-family and garage apartments. Traditional development patterns, including those that follow communities' original growth patterns, are not as prevalent; nor are community development corporations that build low-income housing or special needs housing.

**Transportation Options**

For the most part, non-automobile transportation is not well established in Northeast Georgia. Public transportation, walking, and bicycling do not play a significant role in most communities. While most communities do not have a plan for bicycle routes, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Council unanimously adopted the Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking. Additionally, walkability is enhanced by most communities allowing shared parking areas for retail and commercial uses where appropriate (having fewer parking lots creates potential for more intensive, pedestrian-friendly development).

**Educational Opportunities**

Communities in most areas of the region provide workforce training related to locally-available employment opportunities, and higher education is prevalent throughout Northeast Georgia, but job opportunities for college graduates are not as ubiquitous.

**Community Health**

The social safety net within the region is strong. With a robust network of both public and private providers that serve the most basic needs of the disadvantaged, the region is well served.

# Stakeholder Involvement Report

## Identification of Stakeholders

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission identified the following parties as essential stakeholders whose input was sought during the planning process. Stakeholders represented a variety of disciplines and affiliations, and were asked to help guide the development of the Regional Plan Update.

Stakeholders were chosen based on their role as regional decision-makers, their ability to affect or be affected by the regional plan, and/or their potential to serve as resources during the plan's implementation phase. The following organizations and disciplines from which stakeholder participation was solicited:

### Regional Agencies & Organizations

- ▶ Council of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
- ▶ Planning Advisory Committee of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
- ▶ Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging
- ▶ Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Board
- ▶ Northeast Georgia Regional Bicycling and Pedestrian Task Force
- ▶ Northeast Georgia Health District
- ▶ Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority
- ▶ Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study

### State & Local Partners

Northeast Georgia's 12 County and 54 Municipal Governments, and Residents

- ▶ Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- ▶ Georgia Department of Transportation
- ▶ Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- ▶ Georgia Forestry Commission
- ▶ Main Street and Better Hometown Programs
- ▶ Development Authorities and Chambers of Commerce
- ▶ Convention and Visitors Bureaus

### Fields & Disciplines

To complement the specific stakeholder groups identified above, representatives from the following fields and disciplines were consulted:

Agriculture & Forestry  
Community & Economic Development  
Community & Regional Planning  
Education  
Historic Preservation  
Housing  
Human Services  
Natural & Cultural Resources  
Recreation  
Tourism Promotion  
Transportation  
Utilities

## Identification of Participation Techniques

This section presents and describes various approaches that were used to gather input during the update of the Regional Plan. Some were intended to disseminate information to stakeholders, while others will generate stakeholder input to be used in developing plan elements.

## Steering Committee

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Council, served as the Steering Committee for the update of the Regional Plan.

### Steering Committee Members:

Andy Ainslie, Morgan County  
Marcello Banes, Newton County  
David Bentley, Morgan County  
Richard Berry, Oglethorpe County  
Jody Blackmon, Madison County  
Linda Blechinger, Barrow County  
Ronnie Boggs, Oglethorpe County  
Phil Brock, Greene County  
Tom Crow, Jackson County  
Joyce Chambers, Walton County  
John Daniell, Oconee County  
Nancy Denson, Athens-Clarke County  
David Dyer, Jasper County  
Dodd Ferrelle, Athens-Clarke County  
Cary Fordyce, State Appointee (Governor's Office)  
Pat Graham, Barrow County  
Larry Guest, Elbert County  
Amrey Harden, Oconee County  
Doug Haynie, Jackson County  
Lamar Houston, Athens-Clarke County  
Tommy Jennings, Barrow County  
Howard Ledford, State Appointee (Governor's Office)  
Kevin Little, Walton County  
Tommy Lyon, Elbert County  
Tate O'Rourke, State Appointee (Governor's Office)  
Bob Padilla, Madison County  
Bill Palmer, Elbert County  
Carl Pennamon, Jasper County  
Fred Perriman, Morgan County  
Billy Pittard, Oglethorpe County  
Jeffery Smith, Greene County  
Lee Rhodes, Greene County  
Roy Roberts, State Appointee (Lt. Governor's Office)  
Jerry Roseberry, Newton County  
John Scarborough, Madison County  
Jim Shaw, Jackson County  
Jeffery Smith, Greene County  
Frank Turner, Newton County  
Stone Workman, Jasper County

## Technical Advisory Committee

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Planning and Government Services Committee, a working group of the NEGRC's Council with the assistance of staff of the NEGRC's Planning and Government Services Division served as the regional plan's Technical Advisory Committee.

### Technical Advisory Committee Members:

Tommy Lyon, Chair, Elbert County  
Andy Ainslie, Morgan County  
Linda Blechinger, Barrow County  
John Daniell, Oconee County  
David Dyer, Jasper County  
Pat Graham, Barrow County  
Carl Pennamon, Jasper County  
Cary Fordyce, State Appointee (Governor's Office)  
Howard Ledford, State Appointee (Governor's Office)  
Bill Palmer, Elbert County  
Jerry Roseberry, Newton County

### Regional Commission Staff:

Burke Walker, Planning & Government Services Director  
Justin Crighton, Planner  
John Devine, AICP, Principal Planner  
Eva Kennedy, GIS Planner

## Public Hearings

Two public hearings were held to present important information about how to provide input and the plan's recommendations to stakeholders, and the general public: the first at the Regional Commission's Headquarters and the second as part of a regularly scheduled Planning & Government Services (PGS) Committee Meeting (immediately preceding NEGRC council meeting). NEGRC staff was present at both to review plan elements and receive input from attendees. Public Hearings were held as follows:

- ▶ November 1, 2017 NEGRC Headquarters - Athens, GA
- ▶ February 15, 2018 NEGRC Council's Planning & Government Services Committee Mtg. - Athens, GA

Y

**NEGRC**  
NORTHEAST GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update  
Public Hearing #1: November 1, 2017 – 10:00 a.m.  
NEGRC Headquarters Building

NAME	TITLE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
JOHN DEWITT JUSTIN CRIGHTON	Principal Planner Planner	NEGRC NEGRC	—

THIS PUBLIC HEARING ALSO SERVED AS LISTENING SESSION #1

**NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION**  
**Planning & Government Services (PGS) Committee**

## Meeting Agenda

February 15, 2018 at 11:30a.m. Hilton Garden Inn

I. Call to Order	Tommy Lyon
II. Approval of January 18, 2018 Minutes	Tommy Lyon
III. Planning & Government Services (PGS) Report -Regional Plan Update/DCA Transmittal	Burke Walker
IV. Other Business/Area Reports	Members
V. Adjournment	Tommy Lyon

## Press Release

For Immediate Release — October 13, 2017

### REGIONAL PLAN HEARING & LISTENING SESSION

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) announces a regional hearing and listening session for the update to the 12-county area's long-range plan. The purpose of the regional hearing is to inform interested parties about the process the NEGRC will use to develop the update. The listening session will be used to gather attendees' input for the region.

The regional hearing will take place at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, November 1, 2017 at the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (305 Research Dr., Athens). The input session will follow immediately after. Please contact Justin Crighton, NEGRC Planner, at [jcrighton@negrc.org](mailto:jcrighton@negrc.org) or (706) 369-5650 with any questions.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) serves Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton counties.

10/13/2017



## Public Listening Sessions

Four listening sessions for the update of the Regional Plan were held to ask invited stakeholders about their general impressions of the region, and how they see it evolving over the next 20 years. Attendees were asked to participate in a SWOT analysis, the results of which factored heavily into the formulation and prioritization of the list of Needs and Opportunities. Listening Sessions were held as follows:

- ▶ November 1, 2017 NEGRC Headquarters - Athens, GA
- ▶ November 3, 2017 Walton County Government Center - Monroe, GA
- ▶ November 13, 2017 Jackson County Planning Auditorium - Jefferson, GA
- ▶ November 17, 2017 NEGRC Headquarters - Athens, GA

NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION			
Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Listening Session #3: November 13, 2017 – 2:00 p.m. Jackson County Planning Auditorium			
NAME	TITLE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
Toni Harvey	Sr. Planner	67 Athens St	tharvey@jacksoncountyga.gov
Gina Ray	PUBLIC DEV DIRECTOR	67 Athens St	gray@jacksoncountyga.gov
Jerry Weitz	Consulting Planner		jweitz@bellsouth.net
Pat Graham	Chairman		pgraham@kennedysga.org
Sam Cigane	Planner		scigane@negrc.org

NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION			
Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Public Hearing #1: November 1, 2017 – 10:00 a.m. NEGRC Headquarters Building			
NAME	TITLE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
JOHN PEVERE	Principal Planner	NEGRC	—
JUSTIN CAUTIONS	Planner	NEGRC	—

THIS PUBLIC HEARING ALSO SERVED AS LISTENING SESSION #1

NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION			
Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Listening Session #4: November 17, 2017 – 10:00 a.m. NEGRC Headquarters Building			
NAME	TITLE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
Stephen Smith	Planner - NEGRC		ssmith@negrc.org
Robert Walker	Director/NEGRC		stephenandkay@bellsouth.net
	Planner, RGS	305 Research Dr.	walker@negrc.org

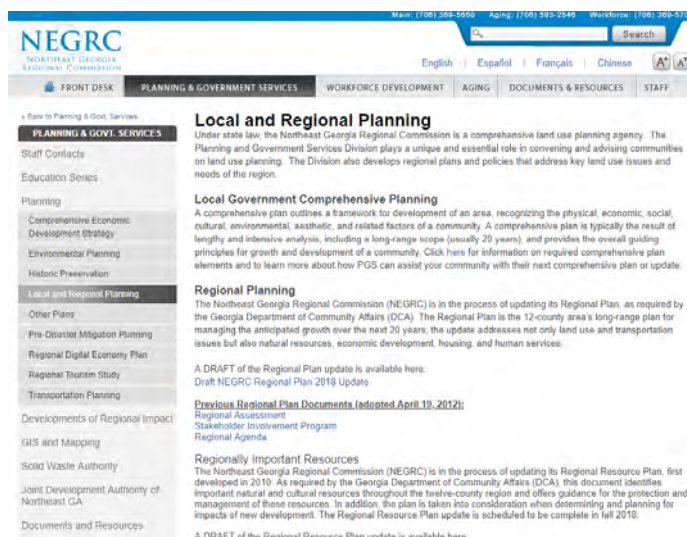
NEGRC NORTHEAST GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION			
Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Listening Session #2: November 3, 2017 – 3:00 p.m. Walton County Government Building			
NAME	TITLE	ADDRESS	EMAIL
Joshua Jameson	Council member (Good Hope)	69 Wayne Meadows Rd Good Hope	jameson@negrc.org
Robert Schwartz	Project Specialist	4303 Lawrenceville Rd Lawrenceville	rschwartz@logantownga.gov
Tim Prater	Director (Lawrenceville)	4303 Lawrenceville Rd Lawrenceville	prater@logantownga.gov
Shannon Bond	Deputy Director	4303 Lawrenceville Rd Logantown	sbond@logantownga.gov
William Malcom	Council Member (Good Hope)	P.O. Box 54, Good Hope, GA	wmalcom30@gmail.com
Dan Curry	Mayor Loganville	4303 Lawrenceville Rd Loganville	dancurry607@bellsouth.net
Jimmy Gutierrez	Mayor Good Hope	P.O. Box 10 Good Hope	tgutierrez@goodhopega.gov
Mike Martin	Director, Walton	303 S Hammond Dr Monroe	mmartin@waltoncountyga.gov
Charne Parker	Asst. Director, Walton	303 S Hammond Dr Monroe	cparker@waltoncountyga.gov
Al Dally	Mayor - Social Circle	166 N. Cherokee Rd Social Circle	adally@socialcirclega.com
Apple Schirmer	City Manager	166 N. Cherokee Rd Social Circle	schirmer@socialcirclega.com
Patrick Kelley	Code Director	215 N. Broad St Monroe	pkelley@monroega.gov
Sam Cigane	Planner, NEGRC	305 Research Dr, Athens	scigane@negrc.org

## Website Information

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's website (NEGRC.org) served as the main online conduit of information for the Regional Plan. The site served as an easily accessible portal for to check the plan's process, drafts, and online survey throughout the update process.

## Online Survey

An online survey was developed and deployed to gather responses from citizens across the region who were unable to physically attend a listening session, or another event. The link to the survey was available on the NEGRC's Regional Plan web page, as well as distributed via e-mail to all of our local governments with a request to share on their own social media. The intent of the online survey was to gather general comments, opinions and how they would prioritize goals for the region as a whole.



## ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE & SELECTED RESULTS

Northeast Georgia Regional Plan Update Questionnaire		
<p>Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Results will be used to identify the needs and opportunities that will help guide the development of the Regional Plan Update. Your responses will help to shape a vision for the future of the region. It should take about 10-15 minutes to complete, and comprises 8 questions. We encourage you to express your opinions as thoroughly as possible in your remarks. Thank you again for your participation.</p>	<p>What patterns or trends in development (within your community and region-wide) would you NOT like to see occur or continue?</p>	<p>What is the region's greatest need?</p>
<p>What county do you live in?</p>	<p>What are the most pressing issues that will affect the Region in the future?</p>	<p>What is the region's greatest strength?</p>
<p>What county do you work in?</p>	<p>Are there any particular places in your community (or elsewhere) that especially require attention? If so, what are they, what is the problem, and what would you do to fix it? (Please be specific in your description of the location.)</p>	<p><b>Question 03</b> What are three defining characteristics of the Region that you would like to see preserved or enhanced?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The rural feel with access to many metropolitan opportunities.</li> <li>2. Preserve the way the individual counties work together as a region.</li> <li>3. Overall communication among community leaders.</li> </ul>
<p>What are three defining characteristics of the Region that you would like to see preserved or enhanced?</p>	<p>What is the region's greatest need?</p>	<p><b>Question 04</b> What patterns or trends in development (within your community and region-wide) would you NOT like to see occur or continue?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth is coming... I would like to make sure we are prepared.</li> <li>Newcomers have a very serious crime problem. Murders, gun violence, burglaries, lack of efficient Public Safety.</li> </ul>

## **Supporting Data**

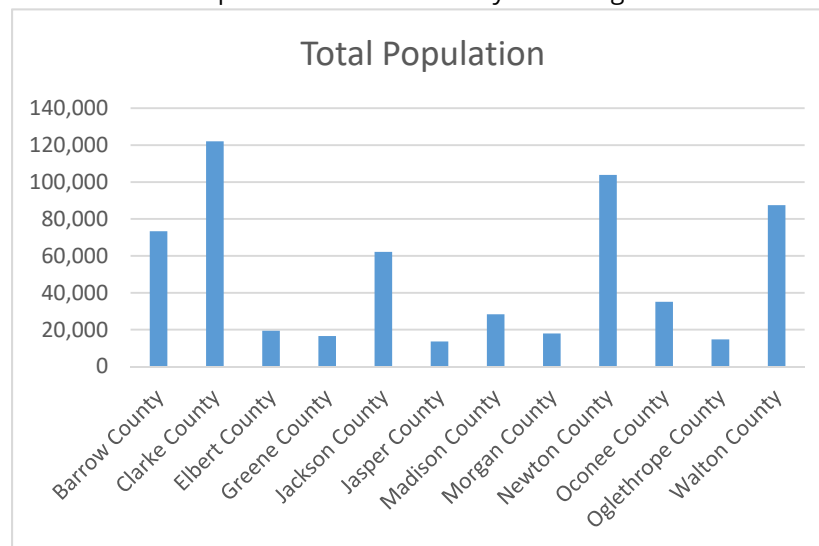
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## Population

### Total Population

- The total population increased for the region increased from 585,627 in 2010 to 594,464 in 2016, a 1.5% population change.
- According to the Governor's Office, Planning and Budget 2015 series population growth for the region will increase 16.1% in 2020 to 2030 but decrease to 14.7% in 2030 to 2040.
- The projected growth rate for the region (164.1%) from 1990-2040 is substantially higher than the state (26.4%) and the nation (13.2%).
- According to 2015 state-to-state migration flow data, the top five states from which people are migrating into Georgia are Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, North Carolina, and Texas, respectively. Nationwide, the top five States which people are migrating into are Florida, Texas, California, North Carolina, and Georgia. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau).

Total Population for each county in the region 2016



Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates) accessed June 6, 2018.

Historical and Projected Regional, State, and National Population

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040
Region	32,8223	438,300	585,627	652,687	756,096	866,947
State	6,478,216	8,186,453	9,687,653	10,895,213	1,2173,406	13,413,400
Nation	248,709,873	281,421,906	308,745,538	322,555,000	354,840,000	373,121,000

Sources: 1) Census Bureau 1990, 2000 and 2010, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2015 series. Accessed June 5, 2018.

Historical and Projected Regional, State, and National Growth Rate

	1990-2000	2000-10	2010-2020	2020-2030	2030-2040	1990-2040
Region	33.5%	33.6%	11.5%	16.1%	14.7%	164.1%
State	26.4%	18.3%	12.5%	11.7%	10.2%	26.4%
Nation	13.2%	9.7%	4.5%	10.0%	5.2%	13.2%

Sources: 1) Census Bureau 1990, 2000 and 2010, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2015 series accessed June 5, 2018.



According to 2015 state-to-state migration flow data, the top five states from which people are migrating into Georgia are Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, North Carolina, and Texas, respectively. Nationwide, the top five states which people are migrating into are Florida, Texas, California, North Carolina, and Georgia. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau)

## Age Distribution

- Population projections show a trending decrease in the percentage of children, a steady young adult and middle-aged population, and an increasing share of adults aged 65 years and above.
- Implications include a need to increase the attractiveness of the region for younger adults who will bring investment, need to provide a variety of recreation, transportation, health-related, commercial services for older adults to allow them to age in place.

Historical and Projected Regional Age Distribution Trend and Percent Total of Population

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040
<b>0-4 years</b>	23,850	30,476	42,723	34,466	38,244	41,506
	7.3%	7.0%	7.3%	5.3%	5.1%	4.8%
<b>5-9</b>	46,734	62,732	72,937	40,148	41,792	46,808
	14.2%	14.3%	12.5%	6.2%	5.5%	5.4%
<b>10-14</b>	13,513	17,560	32,632	45,624	45,449	51,786
	4.1%	4.0%	5.6%	7.0%	6.0%	6.0%
<b>15-19</b>	22,918	27,496	29,198	46,525	50,485	54,185
	7.0%	6.3%	5.0%	7.1%	6.7%	6.3%
<b>20-24</b>	27,098	32,259	46,602	53,585	60,853	62,211
	8.3%	7.4%	8.0%	8.2%	8.0%	7.2%
<b>25-34</b>	54,803	66,828	79,913	82,739	91,718	105,197
	16.7%	15.2%	13.6%	12.7%	12.1%	12.1%
<b>35-44</b>	46,277	65,915	78,276	81,213	91,512	103,987
	14.1%	15.0%	13.4%	12.4%	12.1%	12.0%
<b>45-54</b>	32,655	54,541	75,223	85,881	93,946	108,022
	9.9%	12.4%	12.8%	13.2%	12.4%	12.5%
<b>55-64</b>	24,724	36,763	61,371	80,081	93,538	102,557
	7.5%	8.4%	10.5%	12.3%	12.4%	11.8%
<b>65 years +</b>	35,651	43,730	66,752	102,426	148,558	190,687
	10.9%	10.0%	11.4%	15.7%	19.6%	22.0%

Sources: U.S Census Bureau 1990, 2000, and 2010. Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, 2015 Series. Accessed June 5, 2018.

## Race and Ethnicity

- “White Alone” is the only racial/ethnic category that has decreased (-2.7%) from 2016-2000.
- The increase in the ‘Other’ category is likely due in part to the inclusion of the “One or more races” option, which was new to the 2000 Census.
- While the ‘Latino or Hispanic Origin’ category remains comparatively small, the population continues to grow at a fast pace (106.3%). This could be indicative of future services needed to serve this population.

Historical Regional Racial & Ethnic Composition

	2000	2010	2016	Change
White Alone	74.1%	67.5%	72.1%	-2.7%
Black or African American Alone	18.7%	20.2%	22.0%	17.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.4%	2.0%	2.2%	57.1%
Other	2.4%	4.4%	3.4%	41.7
Latino or Hispanic Origin	3.2%	5.8%	6.6%	106.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	

Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates) accessed June 6, 2018.

## Income

- Northeast Georgia counties’ median household incomes have historically fallen below Georgia’s. The Median Household Income for the state in 2000 was \$42,433, rising by approximately 20.3% in 2016 to \$51,037. While still below the state figures numerically, the average Median Household Income for Northeast Georgia counties increased by 21.1% from 2000 to 2016.
- Projections demonstrate that median household income will increase from \$25,566 to \$62,183 by 2035.
- Poverty estimates indicate that Clarke County has the highest percentage of total population (38.1%) and children under 18 (41.6%) in poverty.

Regional Median Household Income Projection

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2035*
Region	\$25,566	\$39,550	\$45,897	\$48,790	\$62,183
*2035 is the latest projection					

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1990 and 2000, projections calculated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government Applied Demography Program at the University of Georgia.

### Median Household Income by County

County	2000	2010	2015	2016
Barrow	\$45,019	\$48,958	\$52,012	\$53,133
Clarke	\$28,403	\$34,253	\$32,162	\$33,116
Elbert	\$28,724	\$30,543	\$35,388	\$35,739
Greene	\$33,479	\$38,513	\$42,408	\$44,299
Jackson	\$40,349	\$51,506	\$53,379	\$54,246
Jasper	\$39,890	\$42,081	\$42,368	\$41,434
Madison	\$36,347	\$41,343	\$41,912	\$45,063
Morgan	\$40,249	\$45,817	\$51,820	\$54,506
Newton	\$44,875	\$52,361	\$49,179	\$51,068
Oconee	\$55,211	\$74,352	\$72,182	\$75,946
Oglethorpe	\$35,578	\$39,319	\$44,226	\$44,403
Walton	\$46,479	\$51,721	\$54,453	\$54,459
Region	\$39,550	\$45,897	\$47,624	\$47,886
Georgia	\$42,433	\$49,347	\$49,620	\$51,037

Source: Census Bureau 200 and 2010, ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 6, 2018.

### 2015 Poverty Estimates by County

	Total Population		Children Under 18	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Barrow	11,705	15.6	4,276	21.3
Clarke	42,773	38.1	8,835	41.6
Elbert	4,509	23.7	1,488	35.3
Greene	3,510	21.2	1,195	37.9
Jackson	8,134	13.0	2,865	17.8
Jasper	2,355	17.4	936	28.9
Madison	4,265	15.1	1,487	23.0
Morgan	2,551	14.3	927	22.8
Newton	15,433	14.9	6,497	23.3
Oconee	2,452	6.8	818	8.6
Oglethorpe	2,479	16.9	801	25.2
Walton	11,124	12.7	4,307	19.3

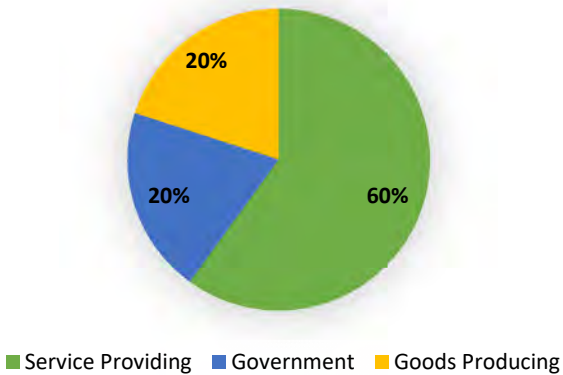
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income, and Poverty Estimates

## Economic Development

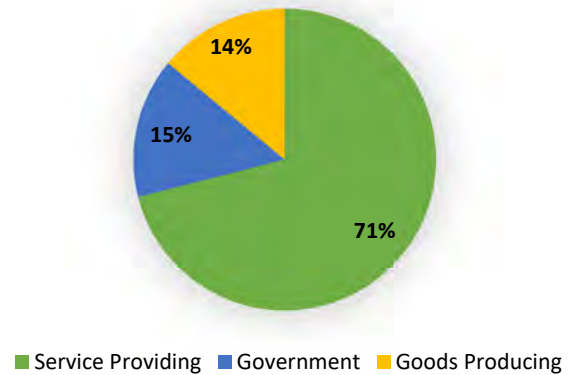
NEGRC collaborated with representatives from member governments to develop the most recent Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in 2017.

### Economic Base

**2017 Northeast Georgia Industry Mix**



**2017 Statewide Industry Mix**



Source: Georgia DOL Labor Market Explorer Industry Mix, Accessed 6/7/18

**Top 10 Industrial Sectors 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, 2017)**

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

Source: Georgia DOL Labor Market Explorer Industry Mix, Accessed 6/7/18



The Education Services sector includes establishments providing instruction and training such as schools, colleges, universities, and training centers. It is more likely that an employee might work in such an establishment in Northeast Georgia than in the state at large due to the presence of the University of Georgia in Athens, a major state institution. While there is a notable presence of establishments and employees providing these education services within the region, there is a lack of employment in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector in comparison to the state. This sector is comprised of establishments whose activities require a high degree of expertise and training, including legal advice and representation, accounting services, architectural and engineering services, computer services, and others.

The Construction sector includes establishments that build and engineer projects and include general, specialty trade, and other contractors. The proximity of Northeast Georgia to the sprawling metropolitan Atlanta region likely contributes to the prevalence of employment in this sector.

## Labor Force

Northeast Georgia Educational Attainment by Age (2010)

	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-64 years	65+ years	All Ages
Some High School	14.1%	13.0%	11.2%	12.6%	16.3%	13.2%
High School Graduate/GED	31.0%	29.1%	33.0%	34.2%	32.5%	32.3%
Some College	43%	20.5%	21.3%	19.9%	14.4%	23.5%
2-Year College Graduate	2.8%	6.7%	7.1%	6.5%	3.1%	5.6%
4-Year College Graduate	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: Georgia DOL Area Labor Profile U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Decennial Census

Northeast Georgia Employment Wage Statistics (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, 2017)

	Average Hourly Wage	Average Weekly Wage	Average Annual Wage
Northeast Georgia	\$20.20	\$808	\$42,016
Georgia	\$26.73	\$1,069	\$55,588
United States	\$27.78	\$1,111	\$57,772

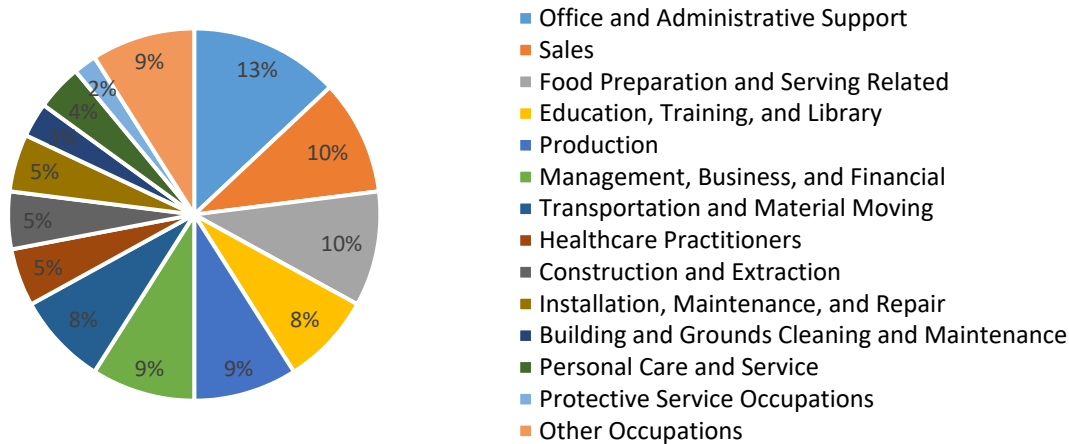
Source: Georgia Department of Labor

## Per Capita Income

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
\$31,556	\$32,810	\$33,711	\$35,169	\$36,102	\$37,803

Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile

## 2014 Occupational Profile for Northeast Georgia



Workforce Statistics & Economic Research

### Unemployment Rate

	% 2016	% 2017	% Change
Northeast Georgia	5.4	4.6	-14.8
Georgia	5.3	4.7	-11.3
United States	4.9	4.4	-10.2

Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile, Bureau of Labor Statistics

### Commuter Inflow/Outflow (2015)

County	Inflow	Inflow (% of workforce)	Outflow	Outflow (% of workforce)	Live & Work	Live & Work (% of workforce)
Barrow	13,410	29%	26,987	59%	5,333	12%
Clarke	40,061	49%	18,922	23%	22,513	28%
Elbert	2,172	23%	4,172	44%	3,090	33%
Greene	3,017	33%	4,018	44%	2,076	23%
Jackson	14,651	39%	17,111	45%	6,209	16%
Jasper	924	18%	3,096	62%	1,012	20%
Madison	1,667	14%	9,206	75%	1,371	11%
Morgan	4,175	37%	4,962	43%	2,305	20%
Newton	14,541	27%	31,471	57%	8,929	16%
Oconee	7,527	35%	10,975	51%	2,956	14%
Oglethorpe	943	13%	5,501	77%	727	10%
Walton	11,875	25%	28,043	59%	7,553	16%
Region	72,397	23%	125,306	41%	111,869	36%

'Inflow' is defined as employed in region and living outside region; 'outflow' is defined as living in region and employed outside region; 'no commute' is defined as living and employed within region.

Source: US Census, <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

## Economic Resources

### Tourism

The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) Tourism Division has grouped all 159 counties in the state into nine Tourism Regions, each with an associated Regional Travel Association. Northeast Georgia counties are split among three of these, as follows:

*Northeast Georgia Mountains:* Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, Madison

*Historic Heartland:* Clarke, Jasper, Oconee, Morgan, Newton, Walton

*Classic South:* Greene, Oglethorpe

Each travel region is profiled briefly on the state's official tourism website, [www.exploregeorgia.org](http://www.exploregeorgia.org), complete with information on where to stay and a list of attractions and events. Tourism development strategies have not been implemented for the 12 counties in the Northeast Georgia Region.

### Tax Credits

The statewide Job Tax Credit program provides a tax credit for businesses engaged in manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, processing, telecommunications, broadcasting, tourism, or research and development industries. The 159 Georgia counties are ranked and placed in economic tiers based on unemployment rate, per capita income, and percentage of residents with incomes below the poverty level. Credits are applicable to eligible new full-time, permanent jobs created. For businesses in Tier 1 counties, a minimum 5 new jobs are required to receive a \$3,500 credit per job, businesses in Tier 2 counties are required to create at least 10 new jobs for a \$2,500 credit each, Tier 3 businesses must create 15 new jobs for a \$1,250 credit each, and Tier 4 businesses must create a minimum of 25 new jobs for a \$750 credit each. These credits are not generally available for retail businesses unless those businesses are located in one of the 40 least developed counties or in census designated areas near a military base or identified Opportunity Zone.

Tier 1: Clarke (#46),

Tier 2: Elbert (#76), Greene (#99), Newton (#92)

Tier 3: Barrow (#132), Jasper (#119), Madison (#124), Oglethorpe (#135), Walton (#140)

Tier 4: Jackson (#145), Morgan (#143), Oconee (#159)

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Job Tax Credit Rankings, 2017

An additional \$500 job tax credit per job is available for those counties within the jurisdiction of a Joint Development Authority; all 12 Northeast Georgia counties are eligible for this additional credit.

Other state income tax credits applicable to Northeast Georgia include those available for job creation in existing industries, investments into businesses, retraining for new technology, child care provision, research and development, quality jobs (paying higher than average wages) creation, and large ("mega") projects employing at least 1,800 new employees.

## Northeast Georgia Opportunity Zones

Opportunity Zones are designated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in areas displaying “pervasive poverty, underdevelopment, general distress, and blight.” Prior to submitting an application for this designation, a local government is required to have either an enterprise zone or an urban redevelopment plan in place and identify those census block groups exhibiting at least 15% poverty. Opportunity Zones currently exist in the following Northeast Georgia communities:

- Athens-Clarke County
- City of Auburn
- City of Commerce
- City of Covington
- City of Elberton
- City of Greensboro
- City of Jefferson
- City of Madison
- City of Monroe
- City of Porterdale
- City of Social Circle
- City of Union Point
- Walton County
- City of Winder

Businesses within these designated Opportunity Zones are eligible for the maximum Job Tax Credit of \$3,500 per eligible job created.

## Federal Opportunity Zones in Northeast Georgia

In 2018, the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) designated Opportunity Zones, by Census tract, in distressed communities across the county. Designations are in place for 10 years. Economic investment in these areas may now be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Six federal Opportunity Zones were designated within the Northeast Georgia Region:

- Barrow County (Census Tract 1802.05)
- Elbert County (Census Tract 4)
- Greene County (Census Tract 9502)
- Greene County (Census Tract 9503.03)
- Newton County (Census Tract 1007)
- Walton County (Census Tract 1104)

## Joint Development Authorities

Four Joint Development Authorities currently exist within the region:

- Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia (Clarke, Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, Madison, Oconee, and Oglethorpe)
  - Facilitated by NEGRC, members participate in regional efforts and partnerships to expand industry and trade within the seven county area.
- Lake Oconee Area Development Authority (Greene, Putnam)
  - Representatives from Greene and Putnam counties meet quarterly to report on unemployment, industrial project activity, and workforce issues.
- Joint Development Authority of Jasper, Morgan, Newton, and Walton
  - The JDA was formed in 1999 to develop a mixed-use industrial area, the Stanton Springs Industrial Park. The JDA's mission is to attract high-quality jobs to the region, primarily through the promotion and development of Stanton Springs.
- Georgia's Innovation Corridor Joint Development Authority (Clarke, Barrow, Gwinnett, Oconee)
  - The authority coordinates development along the GA-316 Corridor to bring high-tech, high-paying jobs along the University Parkway.

## Regional Economic Development Partnership

Ten Northeast Georgia counties belong to the **Innovation Crescent Regional Partnership**: Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton. The Regional Partnership also includes the metropolitan Atlanta counties of Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett. Jobs identified as critical to the growth of the life sciences industry include biological technicians, chemical technicians, chemists, customer service representatives, medical and clinical laboratory technicians and technologists, medical and health services managers, microbiologists, and quality assurance technicians.



## Colleges and Universities

### The University of Georgia

Location(s): Athens (main)

Enrollment: 37,606 (Fall 2017, All Campuses)

Workforce: 10,665 (Fall 2016, All Campuses)

Offers baccalaureate, masters, specialists, doctoral, and professional degrees. UGA's Carnegie Classification is an R1 university (highest classification), and it is a land and sea grant university. The University also has a large Public Service and Outreach department which includes units like the Small Business Development Center, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, and Archway Partnership, as well as programs like the Cooperative Extension Service.

### Oxford College of Emory University

Location(s): Oxford

Enrollment: 979 (AY 2017)

Offers students the option to attend school for two years in Oxford, and gain a liberal arts education, before completing a baccalaureate degree in business, nursing, or the arts and sciences at Emory University in Atlanta.

### Georgia State University's Perimeter College

Location(s): Newton County near Covington (satellite)\*

Enrollment: 1,496 (Fall 2017)

Serves the dual enrollment, international, online, transfer, and first-time associate degree seeking students.

### Athens Technical College

Location(s): Athens (main), Elberton, Greensboro, Monroe

Enrollment: 5,651 (AY 2016, All Campuses)

Offers associate degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit for traditional and online students as well as customized business and industry training (including Georgia Quick Start), economic development services, continuing education, and adult education services.

### Georgia Military College

Location(s): Madison (satellite)

Enrollment: 14,363 (AY 2018, All Campuses)

One of four Military Junior Colleges in the US. Residential, college-level, US Army Senior ROTC program. Offers associate degrees and diplomas for traditional and online students.

### Georgia Piedmont Technical College

Location(s): Covington (satellite)

Enrollment: 5,627 (AY 2016, All Campuses)

Offers associate degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit for traditional and online students as well as customized business and industry training (including Georgia Quick Start), economic development services, continuing education, and adult education services.

### Southern Crescent Technical College

Location(s): Monticello (satellite)

Enrollment: 6,578 (AY 2016, All Campuses)

Offers associate degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit for traditional and online students as well as customized business and industry training (including Georgia Quick Start), economic development services, continuing education, and adult education services.

### Lanier Technical College

Location(s): Barrow County near Winder (satellite), Commerce (satellite)

Enrollment: 4,981 (AY 2016, All Campuses)

Offers associate degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit for traditional and online students as well as customized business and industry training (including Georgia Quick Start), economic development services, continuing education, and adult education services.

### Georgia Career Academies

Location(s): Madison, Clarke, Barrow, and Newton Counties

Sources: UGA by the Numbers, Newton – Perimeter College About, Quick Facts, Oxford College, TCSG Fast Facts and Directory 2017, accessed 6/7/18

## Economic Trends

### Major Employers

In 2017, the ten largest employers in the Northeast Georgia region were:

- Athens Regional Medical Center (Clarke County)
- Bed Bath And Beyond Inc. (including Jackson County distribution center)
- HG Georgia Merchants (distribution center in Jackson county)
- Hire Dynamics LLC
- Pilgrim's Pride Corporation (Clarke County)
- St. Mary's Hospital (locations in Athens and Greensboro)
- The Kroger Company (Multiple locations)
- University of Georgia (Multiple locations; main campus in Clarke County)
- Wal-Mart (Multiple locations)
- Wellpoint, Inc

*Listed alphabetically, not by number of employees*

### Developments of Regional Impact

Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) had remained infrequent as Northeast Georgia continued to recover from the Great Recession. The NEGRRC reviewed only 13 DRIs between January, 2013 and December, 2016. However, applications for large-scale development within Northeast Georgia have noticeably increased over the last eighteen months (February, 2017 – July, 2018), with 19 reviews already completed and further submittals pending. DRIs from January, 2013 to present have been primarily industrial, wholesale and distribution, or mixed-use developments.

### Summary of Trends (who's growing, declining)

Between 2008 and 2009, the number of jobs in Northeast Georgia decreased by 6.6%, from 177,829 to 166,130. In 2012 there were 166,279 jobs in the area. As of 2017, there were 204,442. This represents a 15% growth in jobs from 2008. The number of firms in the area increased from 12,140 in 2012 to 12,231 in 2017. Interestingly, there was a decline in government organizations in the area, but an increase in private firms.

Industry Rankings for 2012 and 2017

Rank	Northeast Georgia Region	
	2012	2017
1	Manufacturing	Manufacturing
2	Retail Trade	Retail Trade
3	Local Government	Local Government
4	Health Care and Social Assistance	Accommodation and Food Services
5	Accommodation and Food Services	Health Care and Social Assistance
6	State Government	State Government
7	Construction	Admin, Support, Waste Mgmt, Remediation
8	Admin, Support, Waste Mgmt, Remediation	Wholesale Trade
9	Wholesale Trade	Construction
10	Food	Transportation and Warehousing

Source: Georgia Department of Labor Area Profile

## Housing

### Housing Types & Mixes

- The data demonstrate that from 1990 to 2016 all the counties except Clarke County (-73.6%) have increased in housing units. However, from 2010 to 2016 the number of housing units has remained stable for all counties. The data also demonstrate that Greene and Newton Counties have a percentage change in housing units that are above the region 1922.8% and 147% respectively.
- The majority of the housing stock for the region is single family (86.5%) which is consistent with the state (87.0%). Multifamily is slightly lower for the region (2.3%) compared to the state (3.7%), and mobile homes are more significant for the region (10.9%) versus the state (9.3%).
- According to the University of Georgia Selig Center for Economic Growth, there are more building permits for single-family homes except for Clarke County. According to the data, Clarke County is consistent with the State number of building permits (553).

Historical Housing Units

	1990	2010	2016	Change
Barrow	11,812	26,400	26,902	127.8%
Clarke	35,971	51,068	9,509	-73.6%
Elbert	7,891	9,583	9,050	14.7%
Greene	4,699	8,688	9,505	1922.8%
Jackson	11,775	23,752	23,866	102.7%
Jasper	3,637	6,153	6,236	71.5%
Madison	8,428	11,784	11,762	28.3%
Morgan	4,814	7,472	7,520	56.2%
Newton	15,494	38,342	38,414	147.9%
Oconee	6,561	12,383	13,121	100.0%
Oglethorpe	3,936	6,484	6,488	64.8%
Walton	14,514	32,435	32,636	124.9%
Region	129,532	234,544	237,372	83.3%

Source: Census Bureau 1990 and 2010. ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 7, 2018.

Type of Housing stock for the Region and State (2016)

Region			Georgia	
	Number of Housing Units	Percent Total	Number of Housing Units	Percent Total
<b>Single Family</b>	205,568	86.5%	3,615,450	87.0%
<b>Multifamily</b>	5,553	2.3%	153,482	3.7%
<b>Mobile Home</b>	25,911	10.9%	384,692	9.3%
<b>Other*</b>	340	0.1%	2,894	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	237,372	100%	4,156,518	100%
<b>*Other refers to Boat, RV, and Van etc.</b>				

Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 7, 2018.

2015 New Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits

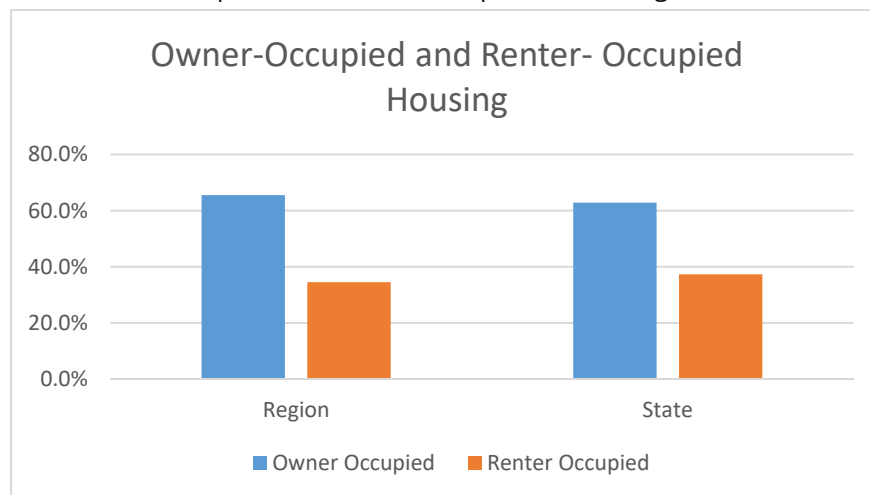
	Single-Family	Multi-Family	Total Units
Barrow	383	6	389
Clarke	89	553	642
Elbert	15	0	15
Greene	225	0	225
Jackson	564	48	612
Jasper	55	0	55
Madison	79	0	79
Morgan	57	0	57
Newton	251	0	251
Oconee	359	44	403
Oglethorpe	35	0	35
Walton	441	0	441
Region	2553	651	3204

Source: University of Georgia Selig Center for Economic Growth

### Condition and Occupancy

- In comparison to the State, owner and renter-occupied households (60% and 35%, respectively) are consistent with the composition of the State. From 2010 to 2015, the vacancy has decreased for the region, which is also compatible with the State.
- Total vacancy estimates for the region have decreased .5% from 2010 -2015.
- In comparison to the state, housing units within Northeast Georgia are of comparable age. In both cases, the highest percentage of housing units were built from 2000 to 2009.

Owner-Occupied and Renter -Occupied for the Region and State



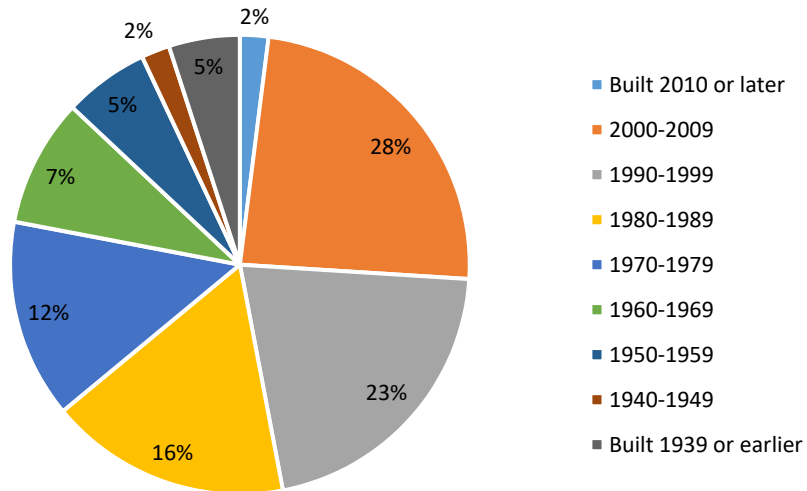
Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 7, 2018.

Percent Vacancy Housing Units

	2010			2015		
	Homeowner Vacancy	Rental Vacancy	Total Vacancy	Homeowner Vacancy	Rental Vacancy	Total Vacancy
Region	3.5%	8.1%	15.5%	2.0%	7.1%	14.0%
Georgia	3.5%	10.9%	13.7%	2.7%	8.7%	13.5%

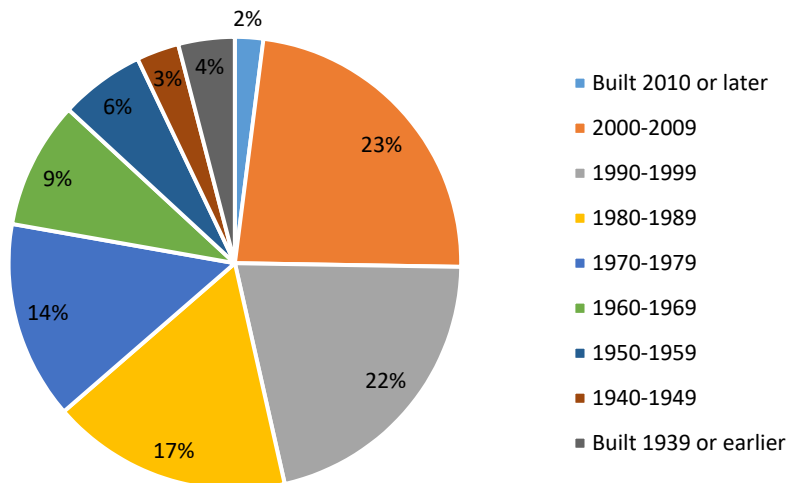
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census, 2015 American Community Survey

Age of Housing Units in 2015 (Region)



Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 7, 2018.

Age of Housing Units in 2015 (Georgia)



Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 7, 2018.



## Substandard Conditions

In 2016, approximately 2.5% of households in region lacked complete plumbing facilities; this percentage is similar to the state level (2.4%). Oglethorpe (6.0%), Elbert (5.4%), and Madison (3.8%) Counties had the highest rates of households lacking complete plumbing. Clarke County had the highest number of households in this category (879).

Households Lacking Complete Plumbing Facilities			
	Estimate; Total:	Lack complete plumbing facilities	Percentages
Barrow County, Georgia	26902	835	3.1%
Clarke County, Georgia	51868	879	1.7%
Elbert County, Georgia	9509	513	5.4%
Greene County, Georgia	9050	223	2.5%
Jackson County, Georgia	23866	852	3.6%
Jasper County, Georgia	6236	78	1.3%
Madison County, Georgia	11762	445	3.8%
Morgan County, Georgia	7520	135	1.8%
Newton County, Georgia	38414	318	0.8%
Oconee County, Georgia	13121	355	2.7%
Oglethorpe County, Georgia	6488	387	6.0%
Walton County, Georgia	32636	849	2.6%
Region Total	237372	5869	2.5%
State	4156518	99375	2.4%

Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 7, 2018.

## Cost of Housing and Cost-Burdened Households

- According to the ACS 2016, 17.7% of the households earn an income of less than \$20,000. This income group also has housing costs that are 30 percent or more of their income (14.8%). In contrast, households that earn \$75,000 or more spend less than 20% of their income on housing costs. This suggests that the lowest income bracket group has affordability issues.
- The U.S. Census Bureau stated that for the 2010 census the national household size was 2.58.<sup>1</sup> In the table above the regional average household size is 2.8. However, Barrow (3.1%) is above the regional and national household size. This may suggest that more individuals are choosing to live in smaller households to mitigate housing costs.
- According to the ACS 2016, the region has a higher percentage of households with social security (30.5%) and supplemental security income (6.0%), than the state. These numbers are consistent with the age distribution being higher for ages 65 years and older for the region.

<sup>1</sup> U.S Census Bureau 2010. Accessed June 8, 2018, from <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-14.pdf>.

#### Housing Costs as a percentage of Household Income in the past 12 months

	Total	Percentage
Occupied Housing Units:	209,599	
Less than \$20,000:	37,033	17.7%
Less than 20 Percent	2,420	1.2%
20 to 29 Percent	3,542	1.7%
30 Percent or More	31,071	14.8%
\$20,000 to \$34,999:	33,301	15.9%
Less than 20 Percent	7,136	3.4%
20 to 29 Percent	7,510	3.6%
30 Percent or More	18,655	8.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999:	30,156	14.4%
Less than 20 Percent	10,605	5.1%
20 to 29 Percent	10,119	4.8%
30 Percent or More	9,432	4.5%
\$50,000 to \$74,999:	38,179	18.2%
Less than 20 Percent	19,406	9.3%
20 to 29 Percent	13,317	6.4%
30 Percent or More	5,456	2.6%
\$75,000 or More:	61,553	29.4%
Less than 20 Percent	49,486	23.6%
20 to 29 Percent	9,760	4.7%
30 Percent or More	2,307	1.1%

Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 7, 2018.

#### Average Household Size

Subject Area	Average Household Size
Barrow	3.1
Clarke	2.5
Elbert	2.5
Greene	2.5
Jackson	2.9
Jasper	2.6
Madison	2.7
Morgan	2.7
Newton	2.9
Oconee	2.8
Oglethorpe	2.6
Walton	2.9
Region	2.8

Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 7, 2018.

### Social Security, Supplementary, and Public Assistance Income

	Region	Georgia
<b>Social Security Income</b>		
Households with Social Security Income	30.5%	28.0%
Households with no Social Security Income	69.6%	72.0%
<b>Supplemental Security Income (SSI)</b>		
Households with Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	6.0%	5.3%
Households with no Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	94.0%	94.7%
<b>Public Assistance Income</b>		
Households with Public Assistance Income	1.8%	1.9%
Households with no Public Assistance Income	98.2%	98.1%
<b>Retirement Income</b>		
Households with Retirement Income	17.9%	17.0%
Households with no Retirement Income	82.1%	83.0%

Source: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates). Accessed June 7, 2018.

## Special Housing Needs

### Opioid Abuse

The State of Georgia is among the top eleven states with the most opioid overdose abuse and 55 counties in Georgia have high opioid abuse rates. In the northeast region, Madison, Walton, Athens-Clarke, Oconee, and Oglethorpe Counties have filed lawsuits against opioid manufacturers and distributors to combat the epidemic.<sup>2</sup>The endemic is causing homeless opioid users to seek supportive housing options under Georgia Balance of State Continuum of Care (CoCs) permanent supportive housing.<sup>3</sup>

### Aging Residents

According to the Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging (AAA), 2011 Area Plan needs assessment survey, the five most needed services for older adults include the following:-

1. Home-delivered meal services: Hot, frozen, of a shelf-stable meal for homebound persons not able to prepare food for themselves
2. Homemaker services: Assistance such as making meals, shopping for personal items, managing money, using the telephone, or doing light housework
3. Respite care services: Services which offer temporary, substitute supports for living arrangements for care recipients to provide a brief period of relief or rest for caregivers
4. Transportation: Transporting an individual from one location to another
5. Personal care services: Personal assistance, stand-by assistance, supervision, or cues

Access to services is provided to older adults in Northeast Georgia through the Gateway and Aging and Disabilities Resource Connection programs administered by AAA staff. Other activities include service delivery assistance, funding provisions for people to maintain their independence and remain in their homes, and the development of health and wellness programs, among others.

<sup>2</sup> The Office of the Attorney General Chris Carr. Accessed Jun 7, 2018, from <https://law.georgia.gov/opioid-abuse>.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Community Affairs Website (DCA). Accessed June 7, 2018, from <https://dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/bos-psh-written-standards-and-prioritization-approved11-4-15.pdf>.

## Homelessness

The State of Georgia CoCs that work to collect and share data on the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population within their respective jurisdiction. One of these is located in Athens-Clarke County. DCA manages the Georgia Balance of the State CoC, using a statistical sampling methodology developed at Kennesaw State University to arrive at a predictive county of unsheltered homeless persons. The total number of beds includes those in emergency and transitional shelters, including shelters providing services for domestic violence victims.

2015 Homeless Persons and Bed Inventories

	Sheltered Homeless	Unsheltered Homeless	Total Homeless	Total Beds
Barrow	34	41	75	93
Clarke	91	135	226	153
Elbert	12	0	12	0
Greene	9	9	18	12
Jackson	43	11	54	16
Jasper	6	0	6	0
Madison	17	0	17	0
Morgan	8	3	11	3
Newton	92	28	120	65
Oconee	7	0	7	0
Oglethorpe	9	0	9	0
Walton	47	0	47	0
State	5,803	7,987	13,790	9,606

Source: 2015 Continuum of Care Housing Inventories and 2015 Homeless Count and Predictive Model

While all twelve Northeast Georgia counties are predicted to contain unsheltered homeless persons, six lack facilities for homeless persons.

## Domestic Violence

According to the Georgia Commission on Family Violence, from 2003 to 2015, 1,550 Georgia citizens have lost their lives due to domestic violence. To curtail the violence cities within the region have emergency shelter homes for victims that need temporary housing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV). Accessed June 7, 2018, from [http://gcfv.georgia.gov/sites/gcfv.georgia.gov/files/related\\_files/site\\_page/2016%20GCFV%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf](http://gcfv.georgia.gov/sites/gcfv.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/2016%20GCFV%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf).  
<https://gcadv.org/domestic-violence-centers/>

## Job-Housing Balance

The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) has developed the H+T Affordability Index, an online tool to measure affordability by combining housing and transportation costs. Using 2015 American Community Survey data, approximately 92.5% households in the region pay at least 45 percent of their income in housing and transportation costs combined.

Housing and Transportation Affordability

	H+T costs less than 45%	H+T costs 45-66%	H+T costs more than 66%
Barrow	11.5%	88.5 %	0%
Clarke	7.1%	64.7%	23.8%
Elbert	0%	68.2%	31.8%
Greene	2.5%	62.7%	34.8%
Jackson	2.4%	89.8%	7.8%
Jasper	18.7%	81.3%	0%
Madison	0%	84.6%	15.4%
Morgan	5.6%	94.4%	0%
Newton	19.2%	78.2%	2.6%
Oconee	0%	3.8%	96.2%
Oglethorpe	0%	10.3%	89.7%
Walton	14.8%	83.0%	2.2%
Region	6.8%	67.5%	25.0%

Source: Based on ACS 2015 (5 Year estimates) and CNT (<http://htaindex.cnt.org>); region data is a calculated average of county data.

These data demonstrate that a large number of households in Northeast Georgia spend more than half of their incomes on housing and transportation costs. According to the index 96.2% and 89.7% of the residents for Oconee and Oglethorpe County, respectively, spend 66% or more of their income on housing and transportation costs. According to the earlier discussion on Median Household income, residents of Oconee and Oglethorpe have median incomes of \$75,946 and \$44,403; respectively, one may infer that the inclusion of transportation costs negatively affect the affordability of living in the region.



## Community Facilities and Services

Northeast Georgia Community Facilities and Services Assessment by County

	Athens- Clarke	Barrow	Elbert	Greene	Jackson	Jasper	Madison	Morgan	Newton	Oconee	Oglethorpe	Walton
Pedestrian Facilities	S	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	I	B	I
Water Supply/Treatment	S	I	S	S	S	S	I	I	S	S	S	S
Sewerage/ Wastewater Treatment	S	B	S	S	I	I	B	B	I	I	S	B
Fire Protection	S	I	S	S	S	S	S	I	S	S	I	I
Public Safety	S	B	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	I
Parks/Recreation	S	B	I	B	I	B	S	I	I	S	S	I
Stormwater Management	S	B	S	S	B	S	S	I	B	I	S	S
Solid Waste Management	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	I	B	S	S	B
Broadband	I	I	I	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	I
	<b>B</b> Base Level <b>I</b> Intermediate <b>S</b> Sufficient											

Source: Data was developed through qualitative analysis and verified at the local level by individual county governments; the *Northeast Georgia Digital Economy Plan* (2015) was considered in the assessment of broadband services.

## Intergovernmental Coordination

### Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority

Created in 1994, this collaboration of officials representing Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, and Oconee counties initiated the development of the Bear Creek Reservoir in southwest Jackson County. The project was completed in 2002 and provides treated water to Barrow, Jackson, and Oconee counties. Clarke County receives raw water for processing at its treatment plant. The Authority continues to meet every other month at NEGRC to facilitate the implementation of the Reservoir Management Plan.<sup>5</sup>

### Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission is a multi-state regional economic development agency that was established in 1965. Four Northeast Georgia counties are part of the Appalachian Region: Barrow, Elbert, Jackson, and Madison. NEGRC is considered the "Local Development District" for these counties, and is eligible to obtain funding for a variety of projects which address the following five strategic goals:

- **Economic Opportunities**-Invest in entrepreneurial and business development strategies that strengthen Appalachia's economy
- **Ready Workforce**- Increase the education, knowledge, skills, and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia
- **Critical Infrastructure**- Invest in essential infrastructure-especially broadband; transportation, including the Appalachian Development Highway System; and water/wastewater systems
- **Natural and Cultural Assets**- Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region's natural and cultural heritage assets
- **Leadership and Community Capacity**- Build the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development.

The Appalachian Regional Commission compares three-year unemployment rates, per capita market income, and poverty rates from each Appalachian county with national averages. Five economic status designations are then used to classify the counties: distressed, at-risk, transitional, competitive, and attainment. For FY18 Elbert has been designated as "at-risk," while Barrow, Jackson, and Madison are considered "transitional."<sup>6</sup>

### Non-Attainment Designations

The Environmental Protection Agency has designated areas standards for meeting (attainment) or not meeting (nonattainment) the six criteria's of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). As of May 2018, there are no counties in the region listed under non-attainment designations.<sup>7</sup> ([https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-05/documents/ga\\_tsd\\_final.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-05/documents/ga_tsd_final.pdf)). This is an improvement from the 2009 report that listed Barrow, Clarke, Newton, and Walton as violating ground-level ozone standards.

### Water Planning Regions

Northeast Georgia is divided among three water planning councils identified at the state level by river basin, as follows:

- Middle Ocmulgee: Jasper, Newton
- Upper Oconee: Barrow, Clarke, Greene, Jackson, Morgan, Oconee, Walton
- Savannah-Upper Ogeechee: Elbert, Madison, Oglethorpe

Each of these councils is charged with developing regional water plans outlining the preferred water management practices. As of 2017 all of the regions have submitted an updated water plan to the EPD that describes short-term and

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<sup>5</sup> Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority. Accessed June 7, 2018, from <https://www.oconeecounty.com/277/Upper-Oconee-Basin>

<sup>6</sup> "Appalachian Regional Commission. Accessed June 7, 2018, from [https://www.arc.gov/appalachian\\_region/CountyEconomicStatusandDistressedAreasinAppalachia.asp](https://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/CountyEconomicStatusandDistressedAreasinAppalachia.asp) and [https://www.arc.gov/images/appregion/economic\\_statusFY2018/CountyEconomicStatusandDistressAreasFY2018Georgia.pdf](https://www.arc.gov/images/appregion/economic_statusFY2018/CountyEconomicStatusandDistressAreasFY2018Georgia.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Accessed June 8, 2018, from <https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/hbcs.html#GA>.

long-term strategies to meet water needs through 2050. Below is a chart with critical issues that are being addressed by each council.<sup>8</sup>

Critical Water Planning Issues for Northeast Georgia (by Water Planning Region)

Middle Ocmulgee: Jasper, Newton	Upper Oconee: Barrow, Clarke, Greene, Jackson, Morgan, Oconee, Walton	Savannah-Upper Ogeechee: Elbert, Madison, Oglethorpe
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effects of Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District withdrawals and discharges, as well as land use, on tributaries of Lake Jackson.</li> <li>2. Future water supply sources for areas above the Fall Line.</li> <li>3. Zones of possible low dissolved oxygen in the lower Ocmulgee River and tributaries.</li> <li>4. More efficient use of water in the region.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Efficient use of the water by all sectors, recognizing the diverse characteristics of the Upper Oconee.</li> <li>2. Strategic wastewater management in fast-growing counties (Barrow, Jackson, Oconee, and Walton Counties).</li> <li>3. Potential limitations placed on future surface water supplies in existing impoundments.</li> <li>4. Protecting the water quality of Lakes Oconee and Sinclair and the Oconee River by reducing both point and nonpoint source nutrient loads.</li> <li>5. The natural capacity of the water bodies to process pollutants is exceeded in the middle (Morgan and Putnam Counties) and lower (Laurens and Wilkinson Counties) portion of the basin due to zones of low dissolved oxygen.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Low dissolved oxygen levels in the Savannah River and Harbor and the sharing of a substantially reduced assimilative capacity between Georgia and South Carolina dischargers.</li> <li>2. Coordination with South Carolina on shared water resources in the Savannah Basin.</li> <li>3. Potential gaps in surface water availability in the Ogeechee Basin.</li> <li>4. Concerns about interbasin transfers of water out of the Savannah Basin.</li> <li>5. Long-term operating procedures at the USACE reservoirs and the use of adaptive management to maintain conservation pools at the highest possible levels.</li> <li>6. More efficient use of water in the region.</li> </ol>

### 2010 Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking

In July 2009, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) contracted with NEGRC to develop the *Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking*. A Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force was assembled to guide the planning process, resulting in a proposed network of bike lanes, paved shoulders, and shared-use paths and a list of recommended planning tools, policies, and programs.

### Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Management Authority

This collaborative is comprised of representatives from ten Northeast Georgia counties, excluding Newton and Jasper. In 2004, the Authority completed a full Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and had just finished an update to its Implementation Program, per the Georgia minimum planning standards. According to this update, the average waste disposal rate in the 10-county area is approximately 4.59 pounds per person, per day, nearly 0.3 pounds more than the

<sup>8</sup> Georgia Water Planning Region. Accessed June 8, 2018, from <https://waterplanning.georgia.gov>.

2009 national average of 4.3 pounds per capita.<sup>9</sup> A stated goal in the updated Implementation Program is to reduce this rate by ten percent over the next ten years. An updated Short-Term Work Program was provided for the region and each county through 2013.

#### Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources

In 2010, NEGRC prepared a resource management plan for designated regionally essential resources (RIRs) following the regulations established by DCA. Designated resources were placed into one of three categories: Conservation, Heritage, and Water. Development practices, policies, and protection measures were developed for each resource category as guidelines for landowners, developers, and local governments. NEGRC will utilize these guidelines when reviewing Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) proposed within one mile of an area included on the RIR map.

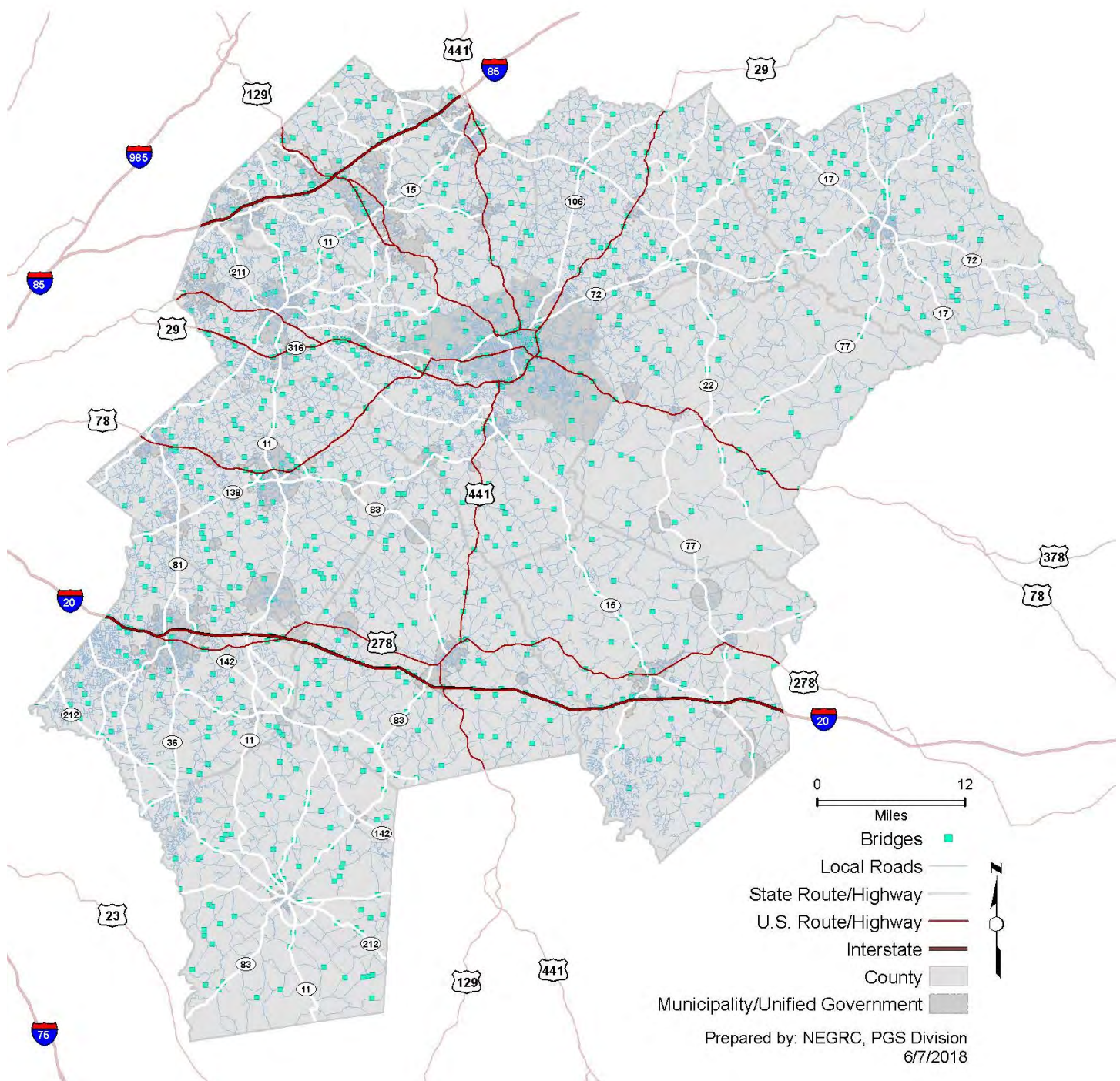
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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) website. Retrieved on February 4, 2011, from <http://www.epa.gov/osw/nonhaz/municipal/>.

## Transportation System

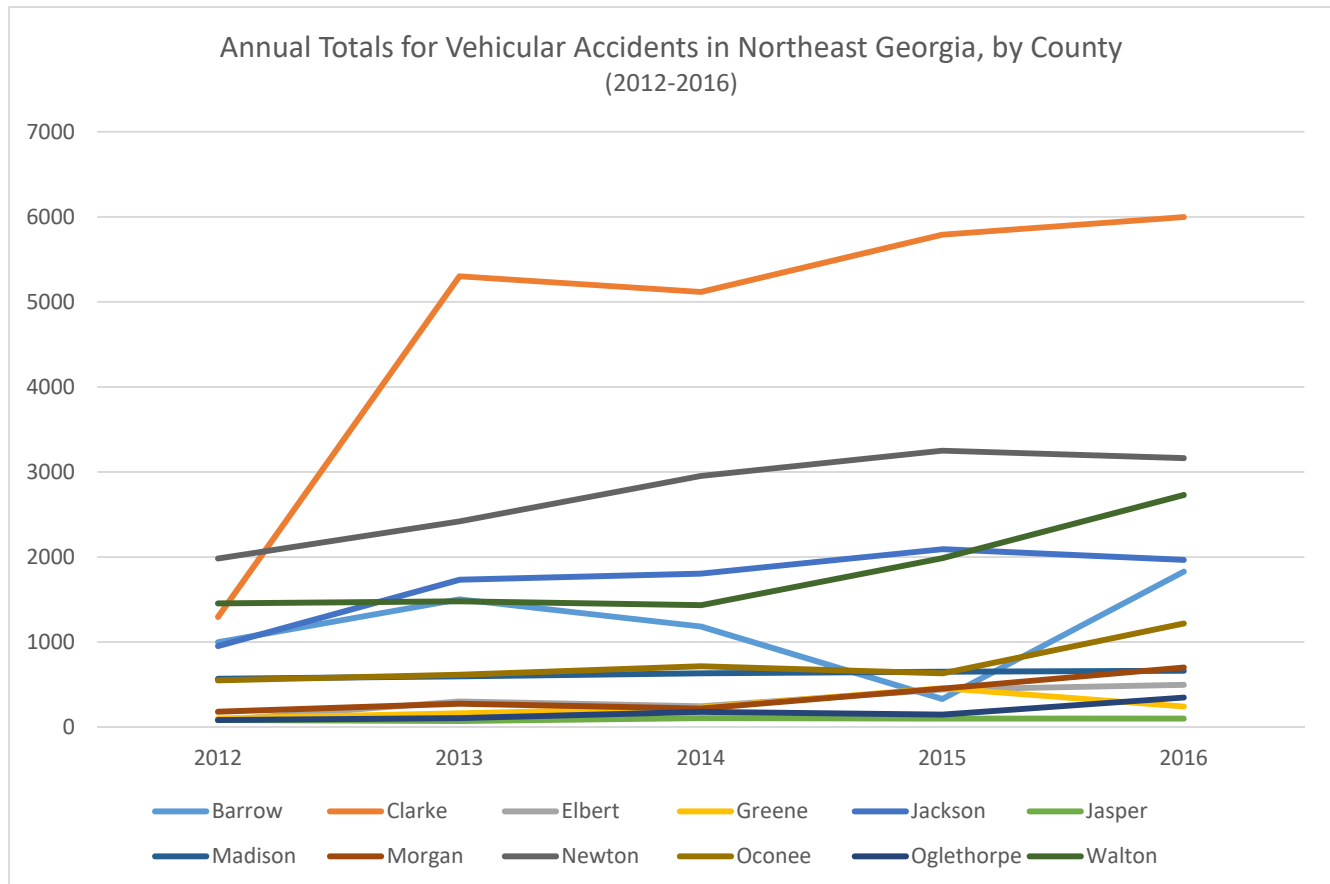
### Road Network

The Northeast Georgia region contains a relatively comprehensive road network, outlined by the major I-20 and I-85 interstates and crisscrossed by state highways, leading to the 10 Loop that circles downtown Athens. The NEGRG, in partnership with the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions and Georgia Department of Transportation, is currently working to update the existing local road inventory within the region (MAP-21). This process will result in a comprehensive dataset identifying traffic control devices (TCDs), operational directions, surface types, and other local road attributes that will assist in funding allocations for resurfacing, road widening, TCD upgrades, and other improvements to enhance safety along local roadways.



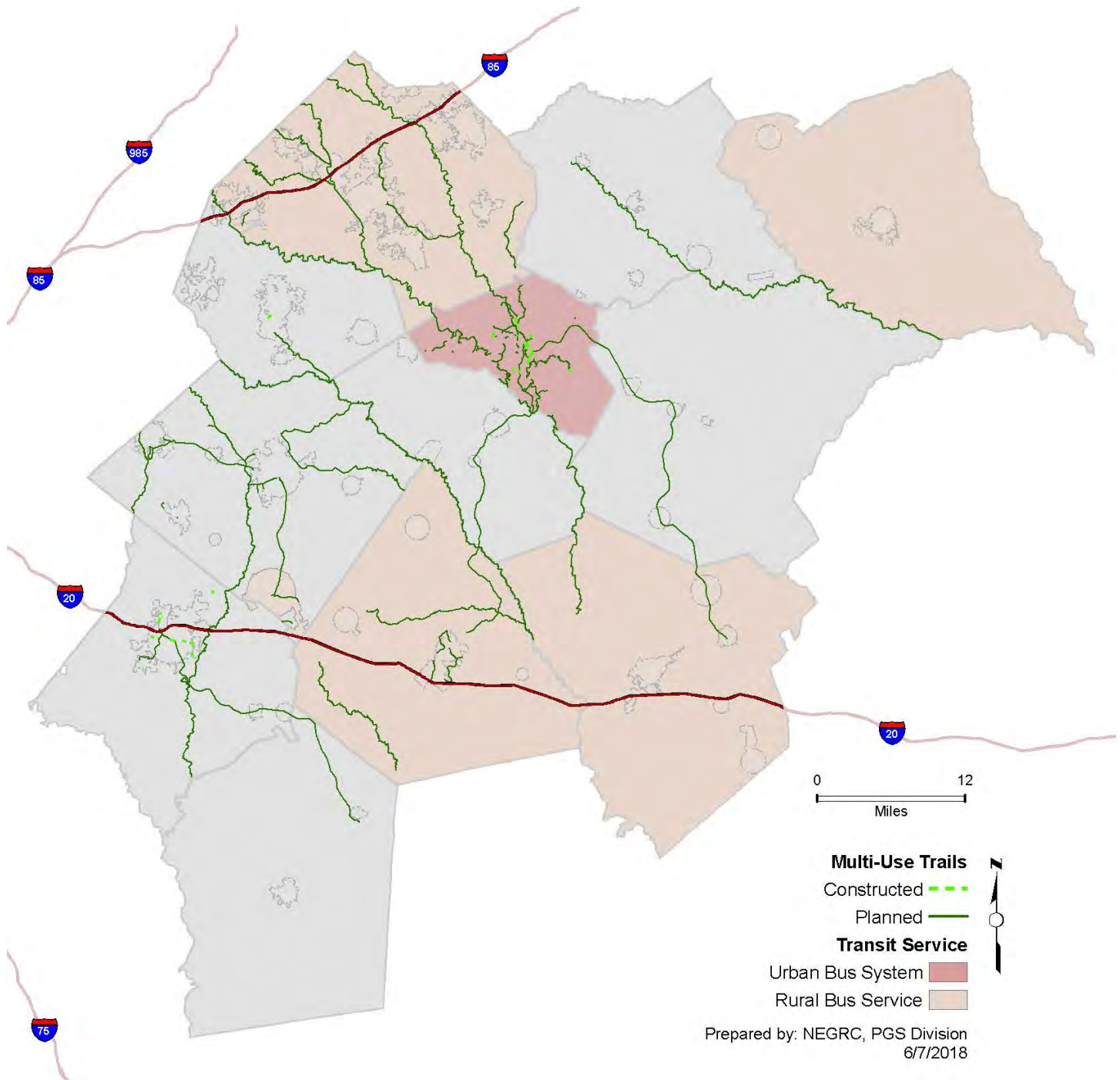
## Safety

The number of annual crashes accidents has increased throughout the Northeast Georgia Region since 2012. The majority of crashes occur in the more urbanized areas of the region; this makes sense since the majority of vehicular activity occurs in those areas. Areas of particular concern (due to significant recent increases and/or significantly higher crash rates compared to other areas of the region) include: Athens-Clarke (Clarke), Barrow, Jackson, Newton, Oconee, and Walton counties. Local law enforcement hopes that the recent passage of the Georgia Hands-Free Driving Law and increased monitoring of speeders will help reduce the number of accidents over the next few years.



Source: Governor's Office of Highway Safety





## Bicycle/Pedestrian

Plans are in place, at a regional level, for a relatively comprehensive multi-use trail network (refer to map above). Topography, low population densities, and major roadways and rivers serve as significant barriers to establishing multi-use trail systems connecting to the eastern and southern edges of the region.

At a local level, Athens-Clarke County and Newton County (Covington, Porterdaile, and Oxford) have established and are actively expanding their multi-use trial network. In addition, the Athens-Clarke County/City of Winterville portion of the Firefly Trail, a multi-jurisdictional multi-use trail, is currently under construction.

The majority of municipalities within the Northeast Georgia Region have complete sidewalk networks within their downtown areas. Expansion of sidewalk and bicycle facilities beyond these downtown nodes is needed for most areas;

nearly all counties and municipalities with zoning ordinances in place require that sidewalks are installed along road frontages for all new planned and non-residential developments. Funding for sidewalk improvements and upgrades are also needed, particularly to meet ADA standards and optimize access and safety for all users.

## **Transit**

Athens-Clarke County (ACC) and the University of Georgia bus systems are the two urbanized transit systems within the region. UGA bus transit is free to all riders; ACC is a fixed-route fee-based system.

Elbert County, Greene County, Jackson County, Morgan County, and the City of Social Circle offer fee-based, demand response rural transit services within their jurisdictions. Some systems also offer scheduled trips to Athens and health/government organizations outside of their service area.

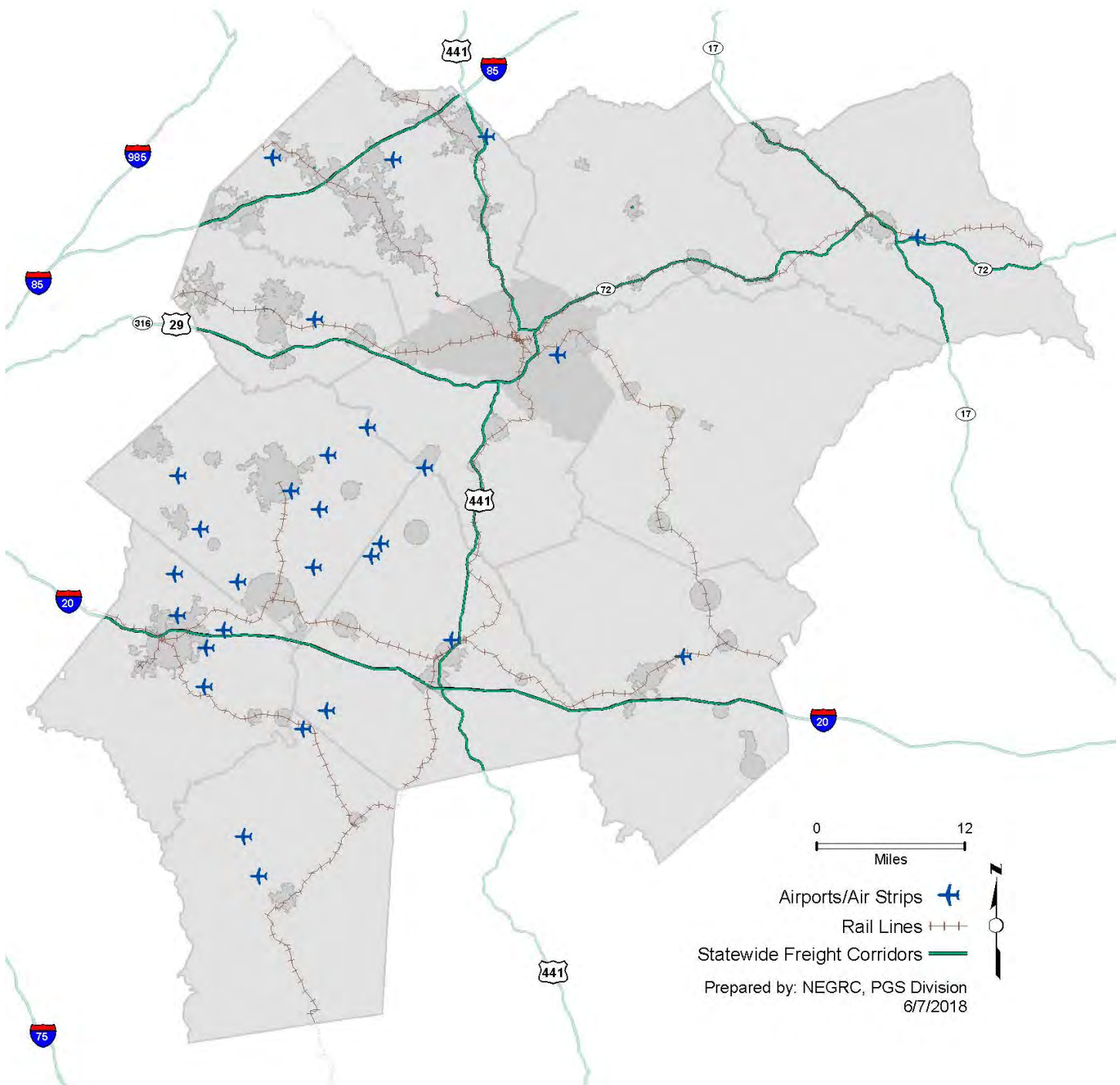
The NEGRC is actively working on a Phase II of the Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan (RHST). Phase II is intended to assess the feasibility and identify best practices on establishing and funding multi-jurisdictional transit systems that would serve areas of the region currently without transit services. Phase II also hopes to assist areas of the region transitioning from “rural” to “urban” on how to changeover funding and new administrative requirements.

## **Choice and Access**

Available modes of transportation are most limited in the rural areas of the region: Jasper County, Madison County, and Oglethorpe County. NEGRC, with funding from GDOT, is available to assist local communities in developing transit studies and exploring possibilities for rural transit systems (local and multi-jurisdictional). NEGRC recently completed a transit study for Madison County, identifying a need and demand for rural transit services connecting residents to jobs and healthcare facilities. Jasper and Oglethorpe counties likely have a need and demand for similar services; further assessment is needed to identify whether the level of demand and available resources are adequate to establish rural transit services in these areas.

As discussed, bicycle and pedestrian facilities require improvements throughout the region; ACC is actively expanding their greenway system with funds from the recently passed TSPLOST. NEGRC, with funding from GDOT, is available to assist local communities in creating trail/greenway network plans, developing complete streets plans, and facilitating Safe Routes to School plans.

## Railroads, Trucking, and Airports

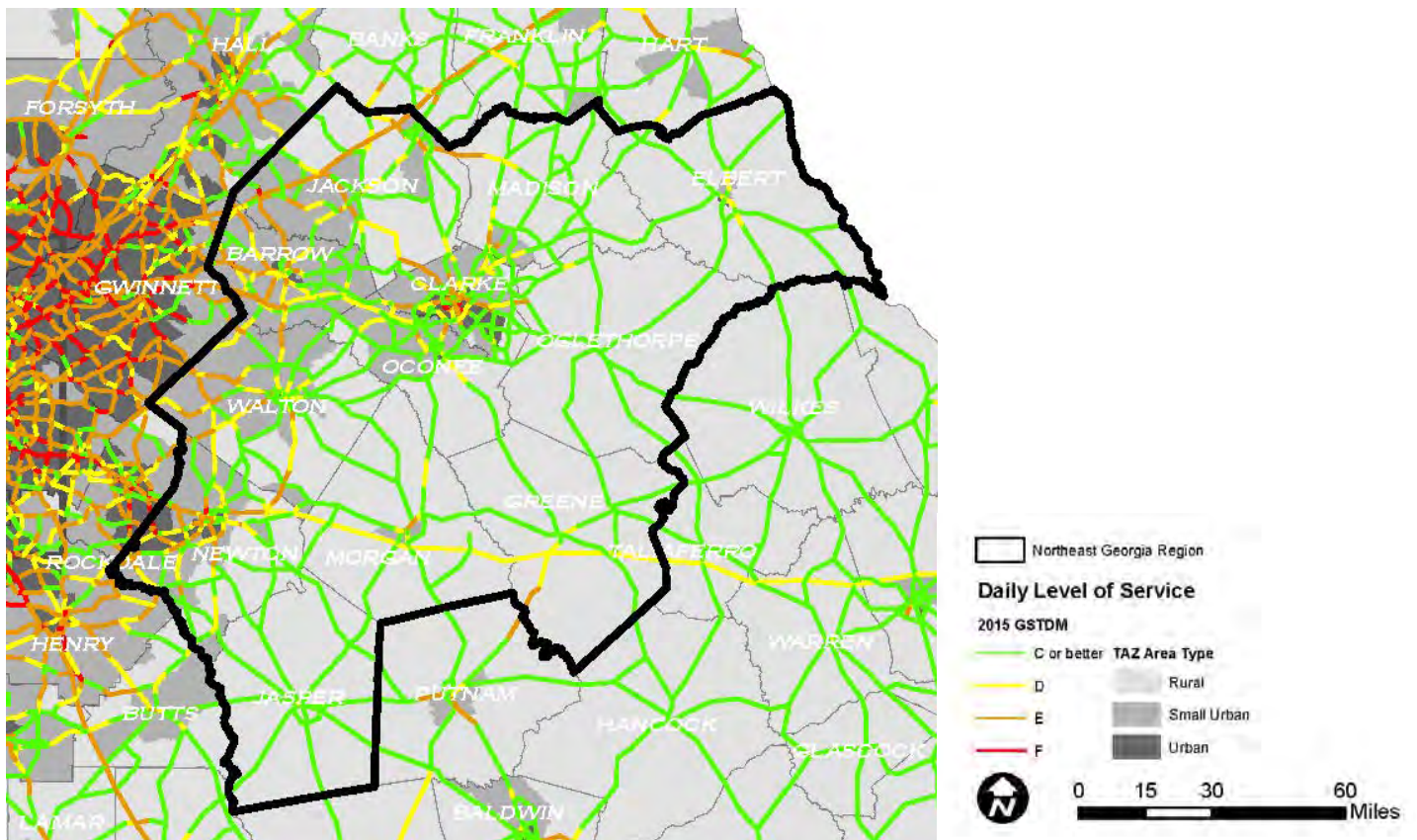


Regional airports, open to the public, are located in Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Newton, and Walton counties. Passenger travel to and from these airports is limited for those without access to private or business accommodations. Athens-Clarke County does have plans for improvement and expansion of the Athens-Ben Epps Airport, funded by the recently passed TSPLOST. Currently, no major passenger airline provides regular service to the region.

Private airports are located along the western portion of the region, adjacent to Metro Atlanta. These primarily offer cargo and private or business passenger services.

Active rail lines run through most of the region and serve as valuable assets to attracting and retaining industry. Northeast Georgia serves as a central location along the I-85 and I-20 corridors between the Atlantic Coast, the Carolinas, and Atlanta. Areas of the region where rail and freight corridors are in close proximity are ideal for industrial development including manufacturing and warehousing.





#### LOS Thresholds Using Volume to Capacity Ratios

Urban/Small Urban	Rural
v/c less than 0.7 – LOS C or better	v/c less than 0.35 – LOS C or better
v/c between 0.70 and 0.85 – LOS D	v/c between 0.35 and 0.55 – LOS D
v/c between 0.85 and 1 – LOS E	v/c between 0.55 and 1 – LOS E
v/c greater than 1 – LOS F	v/c greater than 1 – LOS F

As shown in the Level of Service map, Northeast Georgia's most significant areas of traffic congestion are located in the central core and west, where the majority of the region's Urban and Small Urban Traffic Analysis Zones are located. While the central core (Athens-Clarke County, Oconee County, and southern Madison County) is expected to grow, the majority of development expected will take place in the

western edge of the region, which borders metro Atlanta. Jackson, Barrow, Walton, and Newton counties are planning for significant increases in population, jobs, and traffic. The stresses to the transportation system shown on this map can be alleviated through a combination of land use and transportation planning adjustments. Compact development that situates residents closer to employment, shopping, and recreation centers will reduce trip generation and make automobile dependency less prevalent, enabling individuals to take advantage of improvements in bicycling and walking infrastructure and expanded public transportation.

It is important to note, however, that the goal of the fields of transportation planning and traffic engineering is not to build roadways that never experience congestion. Overinvestment in roadway construction is not only costly; just as water and sewerage infrastructure do, new roads can create latent demand for residential and commercial development in areas that might not otherwise be planned for growth. Areas with underutilized road capacity include the southern and eastern portions of Northeast Georgia, and planners and decision makers here should exercise caution in directing development based on existing land use plans, not roadway capacity.

