

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT:

NORTHEAST GEORGIA

CEDS ANNUAL REPORT REVIEW (CEDSA PR)

October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020

Submitted To:

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economic Development Administration
401 West Peachtree Street, NW, Suite 1820
Atlanta, Georgia 30308

Submitted By:

Northeast Georgia Economic Development District
Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
305 Research Drive
Athens, Georgia 30605-2795
(706) 369-5650

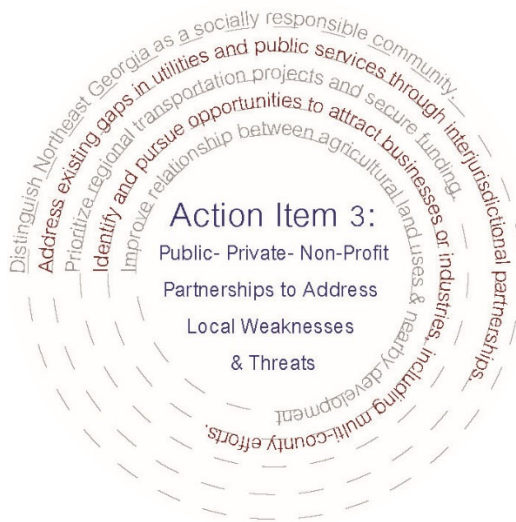
Introduction

This report is submitted to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission that serves as an Economic Development District (NEGEDD). Its purpose is to report on the progress of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) implementation. The NEGEDD’s CEDS was adopted in August, 2017 to cover a five-year period. This report serves as one of the four CEDS Annual Performance Reports (CEDSAPR) required for submission to the EDA Regional Office by 2021.

The CEDSAPR includes the following twelve counties served by the NEGEDD’s region: Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton. The following table outlines the CEDS Action Plan’s five Action Items with corresponding strategies and performance measures for each:

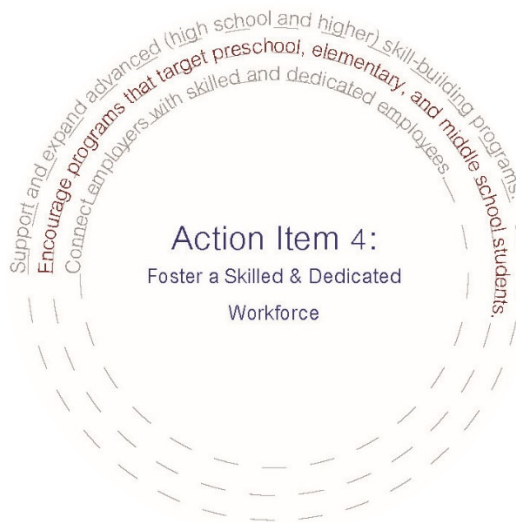
 <p>Action Item 1: Develop and Implement Public Information & Marketing for the Region</p>	<p>Performance Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identify desired “hits” per month for applicable webpages ▶ Northeast Georgia listing counts on GDECD site and other national or global databases ▶ Word of mouth (local officials & staff) ▶ Set goals for numbers of social media followers (if accounts established) ▶ Periodic polling: “How did you hear about ___?” ▶ Number of App downloads (if created) ▶ Track webpage “hits” ▶ Recognition of local philanthropy by state or nationally distributed publications
 <p>Action Item 2: Support and Encourage Local Entrepreneurs & Artists</p>	<p>Performance Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Regular reports identifying local providers’ service area expansions ▶ Newly awarded grants or established incentives ▶ Track the number of jobs created and retained by businesses within business incubators ▶ Track annual business “births” ▶ Use tools like Innovation 2.0 to track regional business incubators in comparison to the rest of the country ▶ Reduced vacancies of downtown storefronts ▶ Number of attendees to related local events ▶ Quantity of awarded funds to local artists and/or entrepreneurs ▶ Track associated webpage “hits”

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Performance Measures:

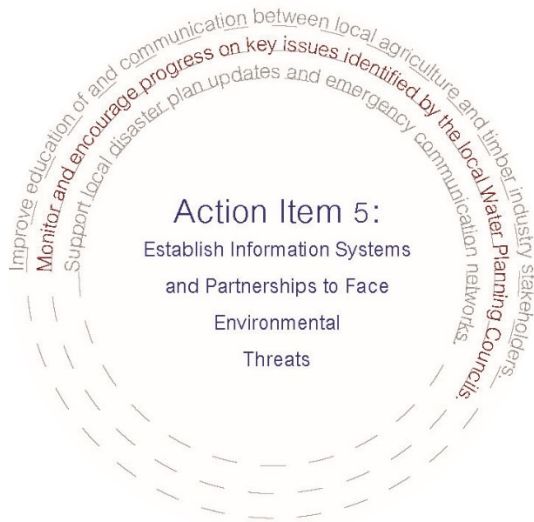
- ▶ Track increases in local charity event participation, organization memberships, and donations
- ▶ Inventory recurring fundraisers and events
- ▶ Identify new partnerships or organizations that address local issues
- ▶ Note the number of non-profit and charity organization jobs
- ▶ New utility or infrastructure projects that benefit multiple jurisdictions
- ▶ New or improved medical services
- ▶ New bus routes, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, rail lines, and road projects
- ▶ Increased sanitary sewer or water capacity
- ▶ Regular reports of resurfaced and newly paved lane mileage
- ▶ Regular reports of new rail mileage
- ▶ Awarding of DOT, GDOT, and other transportation project funding
- ▶ Number of jobs created through projects that received grant funding
- ▶ New multi-county projects
- ▶ Inventory active incentive areas (OZs, RAS designations, and others)
- ▶ Newly certified sites (ex. Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) certification)
- ▶ Number of jobs created and retained by agricultural industries
- ▶ Expansion of local agritourism
- ▶ New agriculture-based partnerships (ex. Farm-to-table, farmers markets)



Performance Measures:

- ▶ Opening of new academies
- ▶ Internship placement in local jobs
- ▶ Student academy enrollment numbers
- ▶ Post-graduate placement in local jobs
- ▶ Local student achievements in the STEAM fields (ex. competitions, awards)
- ▶ Number of new STEM or STEAM programs
- ▶ Number of new programs and/or events that encourage cross-generational interactions
- ▶ Increase in residents that live and work in the region
- ▶ Decrease in unfilled positions at local businesses
- ▶ Incorporation of affordable housing options into new developments
- ▶ Track and compare home values to local incomes

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Performance Measures:

- ▶ Implementation of new BMPs
- ▶ Establishment of local professional networks
- ▶ Continued absence of local infections (timber/agricultural/poultry/livestock/other)
- ▶ Track webpage “hits” for water resource webpages
- ▶ Increased investment in water conservation efforts
- ▶ Up-to-date PDMs for all counties
- ▶ Awarded PDM grants and/or other project funding
- ▶ Inventory of new facilities that offer emergency support services

The reported activities of the NEGEDD, more broadly, addresses the five Action Items and fifteen corresponding strategies developed and contained in the adopted CEDS (Chapter 4). When appropriate, updated information is provided on these strategies and their implementation. This report does not contain any changes in the technical components of the EDA-approved CEDS; a public review was not required.

CEDS Implementation (Performance Measures)

The NEGEDD’s CEDS, as previously noted, listed performance measures for each of the Action Item strategies for the region. Applicable measures were applied to projects undertaken by the NEGEDD staff during the project period and current reporting period. The attached project list contains projects and provides both quantitative and qualitative project-specific information. A summary total is listed below:

- Jobs Created/Retained: 1,149
- Public Sector Investments (Projects): 18
- Private Sector Investments (Projects): 5
- Total Investments (Dollars): \$86.4M - \$101.4M

In regards to changes in the regional economy during the period, several occurrences are noteworthy. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, many of the region’s top industry sectors for the first quarter of 2020 have remained relatively stable (including manufacturing, wholesale trade, construction, and transportation & warehousing). A number of companies within those sectors have seen increases due to increased grocery and online-based sales. Companies involved in bio-tech research, supplies, and development have also seen increases, with a number of entities pivoting production to focus on coronavirus response efforts, from vaccine production to hand sanitizer. Unfortunately, going into March 2020, a large portion of the region’s workforce was employed in the retail trade and accommodation & food services

industry sectors. In addition, the top sectors for small businesses in Northeast Georgia were retail trade and other services. Unemployment in Northeast Georgia climbed from a 2.8% low in 2019 to 5.2% in September 2020 (Georgia Dept. of Labor (DOL) preliminary estimate). Unemployment statistics are still forthcoming and the current data available does not reflect the status of businesses and employment following the end of the Paycheck Protection Program and other funding temporarily made available through the CARES Act. The NEGRC is coordinating development of a regional COVID-19 Economic Impact Assessment and will continue efforts for region-wide economic recovery and resilience-building through its EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance funding.

Community and Private Sector Participation

The CEDS Committee for the 2016/2017 update was comprised of public and private sector economic development professionals, educators, local business owners, and elected officials from throughout Northeast Georgia. The NEGEDD requested that each County Chair within the Northeast Georgia Economic Development District appoint two CEDS Committee members (1 planning professional, 1 economic development professional). Appointed members were primarily from the public sector.

The Planning & Government Services (PGS) Committee and the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council provided guidance and assistance during development and adoption of the CEDS Update. The CEDS Update identifies the PGS Committee as the monitoring entity for the CEDS, with three primary duties: reviewing regional progress on pursuing the five Action Items; discussing regional trends, opportunities, and needs; and determining whether an annual update is necessary.

In implementing the CEDS Action Plan during this reporting period, there was a significantly greater amount of public sector projects funded than private sector projects.

Updates on Projects, Programs and Activities

As previously mentioned, the attached project list provides essential information on projects active during the year. The “Status” column indicates the stage of the project. To supplement this list, several updates are provided below that include projects that seek to implement one or more of the fifteen strategies contained in the CEDS. The Action Plan (including the fifteen strategies) continues to serve the region well and requires no changes at the present time.

Joint Development Authority

As noted in the CEDS, the Joint Development Authority of Northeast Georgia (JDANEG) is a key organization that functions, among other things, to implement regional economic development strategies. The NEGRC staff continues to help coordinate the efforts of the JDANEG through hosting meetings and through the facilitation of a strategic planning process helping to guide the Authority in its future endeavors. NEGRC staff also assists the Authority with the following: issuing and administering bonds and developing marketing materials and a webpage in order to further promote economic development in the Northeast Georgia region. The membership of the JDANEG is provided economic-development updates by the NEGRC and five members sat on the CEDS Committee in the CEDS update in 2016/2017.

Redevelopment Planning

The NEGRC staff actively engaged communities in updating comprehensive plans and providing related strategic planning. In this reporting period, NEGRC staff have completed several comprehensive plan updates and strategic planning facilitations. During the reporting period, NEGRC staff met with the following counties (and their municipalities) leadership to review and discuss the effectiveness of planning objectives outlined in local, comprehensive plans: Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, and Walton. Meetings with Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Madison, and Oglethorpe counties are scheduled for 2020/2021. NEGRC staff prepared the recently awarded CDBG for the City of Elberton to rehabilitate the historic, downtown Bailey Building into commercial and residential space. In addition, the NEGRC is assisting Jackson County in preparing an Urban Redevelopment Plan and developed a Complete Streets Guide for local governments (available here: <https://negrc.org/uploads/sites/4/2020/08/A-Complete-Streets-Guide-NEGRC-2020.pdf>).

Small Business/Innovation

NEGRC staff developed a Small Business and the Northeast Georgia Region document to analyze small business in the region and provide a guide for local governments to improve and expand their resources in the support and creation of small businesses (available here: <https://negrc.org/uploads/sites/4/2020/08/Small-Business-Development-2020.pdf>). The NEGRC has also presented at and attended the University of Georgia Innovation District's seminar series and is assisting both the Innovation District and Athens-Clarke County Economic Development in exploring funding options for incubator, angel funding, and other support systems for startups and entrepreneurs in the region.

Tourism

Information is continuously provided to local governments on various resources and funding sources for promoting tourism in their communities. NEGRC staff recently completed a Tourism Marketing and Promotion Guide, intended to assist local governments in developing, expanding, or improving local tourism programs and efforts (available here: [https://negrc.org/uploads/sites/4/2020/07/Tourism Marketing and Promotion 2020 s.pdf](https://negrc.org/uploads/sites/4/2020/07/Tourism_Marketing_and_Promotion_2020_s.pdf)). Planning assistance and grant development services were also provided to communities seeking to utilize historic preservation to promote tourism. For example, NEGRC staff provided Historic Preservation Commission support for the City of Winterville, provided Main Street program support to all designated Main Street communities in the Northeast Georgia Region, facilitated Annual retreats for Elbert County and the cities of Madison, Social Circle, Watkinsville, and Winder, and facilitated strategic planning sessions for the cities of Oxford and Winterville. The NEGRC is also preparing the City of Winterville's Economic Development Strategy and bicycle/pedestrian plans for the cities of Social Circle and Winder. The NEGRC facilitates Firefly Trail Inc.'s strategic planning and assists in preparing applications for state and federal funding, easement acquisition, and other steps toward implementation of the planned trail. These projects all focus on enhancing existing features of the Northeast Georgia region and promoting them for the growing tourism industry.

Water Planning

Water infrastructure and resource planning remains a key component to the region's economic development efforts. In keeping with CEDS Action Item 5, the activities of the various Water Planning Councils were monitored and progress on key issues encouraged. NEGRC staff are attending Oconee River Watershed Partnership meetings to monitor efforts and opportunities for assistance with protection efforts for a key source of drinking water for the region. Staff also prepared and submitted two applications for water system expansions (City of Winder and City of Hoschton). In addition, NEGRC staff are administering the awarded CDBG for wastewater infrastructure improvements in the City of Hoschton and are beginning preparation of a re-application for water infrastructure improvements in the City of Oxford. NEGRC staff stay informed in the activities and initiatives of the Water Planning Councils and incorporate goals and objectives into regional and local plans and initiatives, where applicable.

Transportation

NEGRC staff recently completed the Northeast Georgia Regional Housing & Transportation Analysis, including analyses of each county's housing and transportation systems and associated costs (available here: https://negrc.org/uploads/sites/4/2020/08/Northeast-Georgia-Regional-Housing-and-Transportation-Analysis_sm.pdf). The document is intended to assist local leaders with gathering data and selecting tools to address their communities' needs. It will also guide development of a housing guidelines/best practices document.

NEGRC staff play a key role in assisting Firefly Trail Inc in gaining community momentum to support a multi-use trail from downtown Athens (Athens-Clarke County) to Union Point (Greene County) that will promote tourism and economic development in each community it goes through. The majority of funding for the Athens-Clarke – City of Winterville portion of the trail was approved as part of the Athens-Clarke County TSPLOST 2018 in November, 2017, and additional funding was approved as part of the Athens-Clarke County SPLOST 2020 in November, 2019. Approximately four miles, including a 500' bridge over the North Oconee River, are currently open to the public. NEGRC staff is preparing a joint application for \$2.8M in Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program funding for segments in unincorporated Greene County and the cities of Maxeys, Union Point, and Woodville.

Summary Information

Unless otherwise advised, the NEGRC will follow the same process in subsequent years for reporting on its CEDS implementation. As previously noted, no changes to the CEDS technical components are needed this year. In addition, no extensive changes are required to existing projects, programs, or activities. Projects that are completed have been noted on the attached project list.



Northeast Georgia Economic Development District
CEDSAPR Report Project List: October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020

Local Government	Project Description	Estimated Investment		Funding Sources	Status
		Dollars	Jobs		
Elberton City	Bailey Building Rehabilitation	\$914,157	6 new/6 retained	CDBG	In Progress (funded)
Oxford City	Water System Improvements	\$1.3 million	N/A	N/A (Preparing CDBG re-application)	In Progress (preparing re-application for CDBG funding)
Hoschton City	Water System Expansion	\$1.5 million	N/A	N/A (ARC application pending)	In Progress (submitted application for ARC funding)
Winder City	Water System Expansion	\$7.9 million	N/A	N/A (EDA application pending)	In Progress (submitted application for EDA PWEAA CARES Supplemental funding)
Clarke, Oglethorpe, & Greene Counties	Firefly Trail (39-mile multi-use trail)	\$30-\$45 million	158	Georgia DNR*, GDOT, Firefly Trail Inc. (501c3), Local, SPLOST, Private	In Progress (partially funded; approx. 4 mi constructed) *Prepared pre-application for \$2.8M in Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program funding
Hoschton City	Wastewater Improvements (Panther Court Neighborhood)	\$860,000	N/A	CDBG	In Progress (funded)
Madison County	Madison County Agricultural Education Center	\$2.7 million	N/A	One Georgia, Local, Private	In Progress (partially funded)
Braselton City	Green 4U	\$26 million	250	Economic Development Authority FY18 Disaster Recovery Funding Opportunity	In Progress (funded)
Barrow County	Industrial Park 53	\$1 million	0	ARC, One Georgia	In Progress (funded)
JDANEG/NEGRC	Joint Development Authority	N/A	N/A	Bonds	Ongoing
Jackson County	Brownfield Assessment	\$61,903.02	N/A	EPA	In Closeout (assisting County in exploring funding options for greenspace/infill development)

Northeast Georgia Economic Development District
CEDSAPR: October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014

Local Government	Project Description	Estimated Investment		Funding Sources	Status
		Dollars	Jobs		
Porterdale City	TE Porterdale Historic Depot Renovation II	\$250,000	N/A	GDOT/Local	In Closeout
Winder City	Trail Connection to Fort Yargo State Park	\$1.3 million	N/A	Georgia DNR (Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program)	In Progress (funded)
Covington City	Covington EIP Program	\$750,000	110	CDBG, Local	Completed
City of Winder	Wimberly Center Master Plan Implementation	\$2,466,979.84	N/A	ARC, Local, Private	Completed
NEGRC Region	GARC-ED Projects Map	N/A	N/A	EDA, GDEcD	Completed
Franklin/Madison County	Georgia Renewable Power	\$8.5 million	617	ARC, EDA	Completed
City of Jefferson	Preservation Plan for Historic Theatre	\$65,000	N/A	Fox Theatre Institute	Completed (assisting City in pursuing funding for implementation)
Auburn City	Auburn RDF	\$826,000	2	CDBG	Completed